BLUE BOOK

Magazine June

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THERE'S MURDER in the AIR A great novel by ROY CHANSLOR

Writer and Inventor

IN this issue begins "There's Murder in the Air," a novel based upon an extraordinary idea—upon an idea entirely fantastic, perhaps. Yet how many once-called fantastic ideas have come true even in our own brief lifetime! Rudyard Kipling, who is still living, once wrote a "fantastic" story of an imagined future, "With the Night Mail." Last year Leland Jamieson, himself an air-mail pilot, wrote for Blue Book "With the Night Mail—1932," a story of the air mail as it has actually come to be. (This same story, by the way, is to lead a new book of "Best Short Stories of 1932" shortly to be published.) Radio, of course, would have been incredible a generation ago. And within our own middle-aged memory is the comment of a sweet old grandmother on receiving her first telegram: "But this doesn't look at all like John's handwriting!"

It is commonplace to comment that the inventions of this much-decried machine age are marvelous. We have not, however, thus far achieved any invention remotely approaching the marvel of the human brain. And we know less, probably, of the powers and mechanism and limitations of that brain than we do of electricity or light or radio. So it requires no great effort to follow Mr. Chanslor in imagining a mind whose powers somewhat exceed the abilities of a normal mind. And in following him in this idea, we have some grounds for believing that this "fantasy" may also sometime come true.

Indeed fact follows fiction, as we have observed before. And this is logical enough. For the same endowment of creative imagination which gives the inventor his power is likewise a necessary qualification for a fiction-writer. His stories are inventions built out of facts—some facts old, some new, and some daringly imagined.

In each issue, then, we aim to give you the best of these fiction-inventions procurable. Mr. Chanslor's is built of many old and well-known facts, adroitly put together. It has the novelty also of making use of this one idea which is as yet "fantastic." Who knows whether it may not some day prove true!

—*The Editor*

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Except for stories of Real Experiences, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events.

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Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine
DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

Published monthly, at McCall St., Dayton, Ohio. Subscription Offices—Dayton, Ohio. Editorial and Executive Offices—230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. The BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE—June, 1933, Vol. LVII. No. 2. Copyright, 1933, by The McCall Company, in the United States and Great Britain. Entered as second-class matter, November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Subscription Price, $1.50 per year. Canadian postage 50c; foreign postage $1.00. For change of address, give us four weeks notice and send old address as well as new. Special Note: Each issue of The Blue Book Magazine is copyrighted. Any republication of the matter appearing in the magazine, either wholly or in part, is not permitted except by special authorization.
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By ROY CHANSLOR

IN a dark and silent old house in East Seventy-ninth Street, two people, a middle-aged man and a young girl, sleeplessly counted the hours. They were waiting, waiting: the man tossing restlessly in the bed in his room at the front of the house; the girl lying quiet in her room at the end of the long hallway.

The man—Daniel Tyler, retired lawyer and one-time District Attorney of New York County—was listening, in fascinated dread, straining his ears for a sound expected and feared. The girl, his motherless daughter, was merely waiting, with an almost fatalistic resignation, for that strange compulsion, the compulsion which she did not understand but could not disobey.

Since shortly before midnight both had known that it would come during the night. And after what had happened a week ago, when her terrified screams had wakened him, brought him running to her room, there was no question of sleep for Tyler. As for the girl, on her part there was no desire for it.

He had tried to persuade her to let him keep vigil by her side, wrapped in a blanket in her big chair. But she had refused; and when he had tried to argue, had pleaded with him to leave her alone. So now he agonized, waiting, listening. If only it were some tangible thing from which he could guard her!

The girl lay quite still, her body relaxed, trying not to think at all, fighting her nameless terror. And presently she had conquered it, her mind was composed, serene. After perhaps fifteen minutes, perhaps twenty, she threw the covers back, fitted her feet into the little mules by her bedside.

Swiftly, surely, she walked across the dark room. Her hands encountered the violin-case, opened it, took out the mellow old violin. In the darkness she placed it to her shoulder, and very softly, tentatively, drew the bow across the strings. Then she began to play, firmly, the Moonlight Sonata.

At the first strains Tyler sat up in bed, fumbled for the reading lamp. The clock told him that it was twenty minutes past four. He sprang out of bed, seized his dressing-gown. Then what he was dreading, happened. In the middle of a bar the music stopped!

Tyler strode across the room toward his door, flung it open. Down the hallway, the violin clutched closely to her breast, the girl was already running. He hurried toward her. She stopped, swaying, pale, her breath coming quickly.

"Ruth!" he said, going to her swiftly. "*Ruth!*"

She gave a little shuddering moan. He drew an arm about her shoulders. They were shaking. Quickly he led her into his room, seated her on the edge of his bed. She dropped the violin and covered her face with her hands.

"*Murder!*" she half-whispered. "Murder has been done!"

His face gray and haggard, the man bent over her, took both her hands in his. She lifted her face. With the greatest effort he controlled his voice.

"Where, Ruth? Who?" he asked.

"I don't know where! Oh, I don't know!" she said. Then, slowly, wonderingly: "Martha. . . . Martha. . . . That is her name! *Martha!* He was strangling her! He has killed her!"

Tyler stared down into her face.

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the Air

Illustrated by
Joseph Franké

Images began to come to her: Death and hate. . . . Vengeance. . . . Fear. . . . Lust for gain. . . . Murder was in the air!

"I couldn't stop him. I *couldn't!*" she said.

"Who, Ruth, *who?*" Tyler cried, his voice rising. "Who is *Martha?*"

But the girl shook her head miserably, and dropped her face against his arm. He caressed her dark hair. Then his eyes went to the short-wave radio cabinet beside the bed. With an exclamation he leaned over it, swiftly turned the dials, tuned in on Police Headquarters. If murder *had* been done—

He straightened up, listening. Then his face showed keen disappointment. Police Headquarters was on the air, but it was a mere routine call.

". . . . Twenty-nine," he heard. "Calling Car Thirteen. Proceed to Seventh Avenue and Christopher Street. Automobile wreck. Twenty-nine. Calling Car Thirteen. Proceed—"

The girl stared dully at him. Tyler, with a little gesture of impatience, leaned over to turn off the radio. Then the announcer's voice, from Headquarters, broke off its droning call.

The voice raised, sharply.

"Thirty!" it said. "Calling Car Forty-six! Proceed at once to Eighty-sixth Street and Park Avenue! *Thirty!* Calling Car Forty-six—"

Tyler switched off the radio and reached for the telephone.

"Thirty!" The new police radio code for crimes of violence—for murder! The code adopted to keep departmental details from the curious ears of listeners-in on the increasingly popular short-wave sets!

The girl's white face stared at him as he dialed the number of the reporters' room at Police Headquarters. "Doc" Crandall, for twenty years night Headquarters reporter for the *Star,* and an old acquaintance, was the man he wanted. He got him on the phone.

"Dan Tyler speaking, Doc," he said. "Just picked up a 'thirty' on the short wave. Park and Eighty-sixth. Got a slip on it yet?"

"Yeh," said Crandall. "It just come down. It's a moidah. Guy strangled his wife in a penthouse. How you been, Mr. Tyler? Aint seen you in a coon's age."

"Strangled?" said Tyler, his heart racing. "What's the name, Doc?"

"Erik," said Crandall. "Ralph Erik, the musical-comedy star."

"The *wife's* name?" said Tyler.

"Martha," said Crandall uninterestedly. "Drop around some time."

IT was the next morning. Daniel Tyler, seated in the office of Dr. Jan Karasc, the celebrated psychiatrist, glanced once more at the newspaper headline:

RALPH ERIK, STAGE STAR, STRANGLES WIFE, CONFESSES

Then he handed the folded paper to Dr. Karasc, a dark, quick little man, with bushy iron-gray eyebrows and wavy, almost blue-black hair. The psychiatrist said nothing, but his bright little eyes gleamed.

"And here," Tyler said, "is the whole story."

Dr. Karasc, without a word, took the paper, began to read, nodding rapidly, making odd little clucking sounds with his lips.

"You will notice," Tyler said, "that in his confession Ralph Erik says that he waited for his wife in the apartment, for hours, seething with a jealous rage, determined to kill her when she returned. *My daughter knew that.*"

Dr. Karasc appeared not to notice. He kept his eyes on the paper.

"You will also notice," Tyler persisted. "That the people in the adjacent penthouse heard the woman's first scream at four-twenty o'clock—the exact moment that Ruth began to play."

TYLER stopped. Dr. Karasc read on, still making little clucking sounds with his lips. When he had finished, the psychiatrist peered up at Tyler with his curious little eyes, blue and oddly incongruous in his swarthy face.

"But yes," he said, in the fluent, precise English of a highly cultured foreigner. "Interesting, very interesting, no?"

He darted a searching look at Tyler's face, and began to drum a vigorous tattoo on the arm of the chair with his spatulate fingers.

"How long," he asked softly, "has your daughter been blind?"

"She was born blind," said Tyler.

"And you say that she knew, merely, that a woman named Martha had been strangled?" Dr. Karasc pursued thoughtfully.

"That is all," said Tyler. "The unusual part of it is that this was the first time she had ever been able to get a *name.*"

"Ah, yes," said Dr. Karasc. "And the —ah—last time?"

"Was last week," said Tyler. "I woke to hear her screaming, ran to her room. She knew that some one had been shot —*who,* she did not know. You recall the newspaper stories of the murder of Augie Klauss, the beer baron?"

"I never read newspapers," said Dr. Karasc.

"This man was shot at one-thirty-five A. M. in a night-club in West Fifty-fourth Street," said Tyler. "The *exact* time that Ruth's scream aroused me. I am convinced that she knew about this murder."

"I dare say," said Dr. Karasc. "And the—ah—the *other* times?"

"She was terrified," said Tyler, "but never knew of *what.*"

"I see," said Dr. Karasc. "Most interesting."

"You'll take the case?" asked Tyler.

"If I only could!" said Dr. Karasc. His little eyes were shining. Then he shook his head, slowly, regretfully. "But it is impossible. Tonight I must go to Baltimore. I am committed to an important case there. A pity!"

"But Dr. Karasc!" Tyler cried. He

Tyler sat up. What he was dreading, happened. In the middle of a bar the music stopped.

stopped, hesitated and went on: "If it's a question of money—"

"But no," said Dr. Karasc, turning upon him a look of mild astonishment. "Do you think that a mere matter of *money*— Have I not told you that I am *committed?*"

"I can't tell you how disappointed I am," said Tyler heavily. "I'd set my heart on you, as the *one* man in your field. . . . I—I certainly thought you'd be interested."

"*Interested!*" exclaimed Dr. Karasc. "But certainly I am interested, my dear fellow! I would give almost anything —why, this is a fascinating case, sir, *fascinating*. I'm not one to exaggerate; so you will believe me when I tell you this case may prove to be one of incomparable—yes, *incomparable* importance to the study of mental phenomena!"

"Then why—" Tyler was bewildered.

"The case to which I am committed involves the sanity of a dear friend," said Dr. Karasc. "Perhaps the lives of his wife and children. If it were anything else—any other case at all, I could turn it over to my assistant. But this is a personal responsibility."

"You spoke of an assistant," said Tyler hopefully.

"Yes," said Dr. Karasc thoughtfully. "But he is young—and not himself a psychiatrist."

"Oh," said Tyler, disappointedly. "I —can't you even give me advice, Dr. Karasc?"

Again the little man turned his look of mild astonishment upon Tyler.

"*Advice?*" he said reproachfully. "In a case of this importance, without a personal investigation? My *dear* sir!"

"But what shall I *do?*" cried Tyler desperately. "If your assistant is not qualified—"

"I did not say he was not qualified," said Dr. Karasc mildly. "I merely said he was young, and not a psychiatrist."

"Then do you think—" Tyler began, his hope rising.

"He is extremely competent," said Dr. Karasc. "He has been my confidential assistant for four years, understands my —ah—methods. He has a good education, comes of excellent family, and has a very keen, observing mind. I have known him fifteen years. He is entirely trustworthy. But I would not urge—"

"I rely upon your judgment, Dr. Karasc," said Tyler earnestly. "If you think this young fellow qualified—"

"*I* think him qualified," said Dr. Karasc. "But you—"

"If you say he's all right, then he *is* all right," said Tyler.

"WAIT," said Dr. Karasc. "I shall tell you more about him. His name is Nathaniel Hawthorne Benson, 2nd. I first met him during the war. At sixteen, unable to get into the American forces, he had run away to Canada, joined the Canadians. Though a mere boy, he became a flyer, a gallant one. He was brought down in a fight with two German planes, and cracked up inside our lines."

Dr. Karasc paused and smiled:

"The *American* lines, you understand? He had a piece of steel in his skull, touching the brain. I was with the base hospital. The steel was removed, but he had suffered a terrific shock. In short, he was a mental case. I had charge of it. I was fortunate enough to cure him. After the war he went to college at the University of Pennsylvania, and we kept in touch with each other. He was an accomplished, even famous athlete as well as a fine student. His own case had made him keenly interested in my work. After college, when I was head of an institution in Philadelphia, he came to me, asked to work with me. I soon made him my assistant. When I left to become a private psychological—what he calls 'trouble-

shooter,'—I took him along. He has worked on my most important cases. That is all."

"He could—consult with you by telephone?" asked Tyler.

"Yes," said Dr. Karasc.

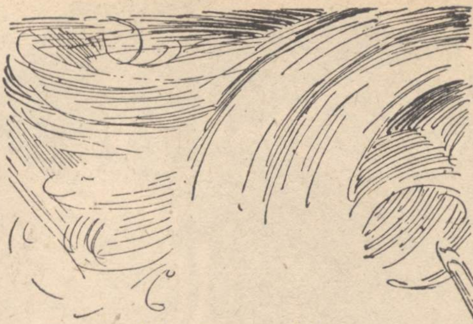
"Then he will do," said Tyler.

"Very good," said Dr. Karasc. He regarded Tyler thoughtfully.

"One thing," he continued. "I think it advisable that you—ah—let him find things out for himself, eh? I think you should—ah—tell him only the girl's background. Ah—not the details of the —ah—the—shall we say peculiar manifestations. He has ears—and eyes. Let him use them, eh? Then he will have no preconceived—ah—notions about the case. He will come to it freshly, cleanly, no?"

Tyler nodded. "He will come—immediately?" he asked anxiously.

"He returns from a case in Boston tonight," said Dr. Karasc. "I shall have left before he arrives. But I shall leave a message. . . . And in the morning—"



"But couldn't he—couldn't he come *tonight?*" asked Tyler.

Dr. Karasc nodded slowly. "As you wish," he said. "Tonight, then."

NAT BENSON pulled his coat closer about his throat as he turned off Fifth Avenue and faced the icy blast of wind which blew down East Seventy-ninth Street. At the corner of Madison he stopped for a moment under a street lamp and looked at his watch. It was five minutes after midnight. A strange hour to go out on a case! But it was like old Doc to shoot him out like this with that cryptic little message.

He pulled the slip of paper from his pocket and stared at it again. It read:

Her fingers trembled on the strings, then were quiet. "Murder," she said hoarsely, "I can feel it more and more. Black hate. . . . A mind churning with hate. Death. . . . Death. . . . Kill all rulers—all kings. . . . Kill Roosevelt!"

"Please report to Mr. Daniel Tyler —— East Seventy-ninth Street, immediately on return. Utmost urgency. You have an opportunity to discover something that may be of revolutionary importance—that may affect the whole course of human relations. —Karasc."

Nat's eyes brightened. This was something to look forward to! He confirmed the address again, and plunged on into the wind. Presently he began to scan the house numbers. It was an excellent neighborhood, mostly of new buildings. Ah, there was the house! He gazed up at an imposing old house, distinguished, aloof, aristocratic among the shiny new apartment buildings.

It was dark except for a beam of light from the window of the parlor floor. He mounted the broad curving steps and pressed the button. The bell was answered, after a moment, by a white-haired butler, as distinguished-looking, in his way, as the house itself.

"Mr. Benson," Nat said. "I believe Mr. Tyler is expecting me?"

The butler nodded, and led him into an old-fashioned living-room on the parlor floor, seated him and vanished silently. Nat glanced about him curiously. It was a noble old room, high-ceilinged, a room with a much-lived-in atmosphere. Nat liked the soft, heavy rug, the big period chair in which he sat, the

massive old furniture, the mellow grand piano. He relaxed, felt comfortable, almost at home.

In a moment a tall, sparely-built man of middle years, clad in dressing-gown, appeared. His strong, high-boned face, framed under a great mane of white hair, was immediately illuminated by a charming, friendly smile.

"Ah, Mr. Benson," he said, in a rich, grave voice. "I am Daniel Tyler."

Nat admired the thin, high-bridged nose, the finely-chiseled features, the patrician quality of the man's whole bearing as he advanced toward him across the room, hand outstretched. He gave an odd impression of both delicacy and power, an impression strengthened when Nat grasped his hand, a smooth, almost soft hand, flexible, with incredibly long, tapering fingers, and then felt its firm, strong clasp.

"I'm glad to see you," Tyler said warmly. "It was good of you to come at this hour. Please sit down."

Nat sank back into the great chair and returned Tyler's appraising glance with a smile. The man coughed deprecatingly.

"Forgive the—scrutiny," he said. "But this is—a very delicate case, you see. And I—"

"I understand," said Nat quietly. "Now, hadn't you better tell me just what this 'delicate case' is?"

Tyler looked at him steadily, thoughtfully, for a moment.

"It is the case of my—daughter," he said.

"A mental case?" Nat asked sympathetically.

"No, no," said Tyler quickly. "That is—don't think that she is at all deficient, mentally. On the contrary—"

HE paused, and Nat raised puzzled eyebrows but said nothing.

"It's—well, it *is* a mental case, of course, to a certain extent," Tyler went on. "What I mean is, my daughter is not at all unbalanced. You understand?"

Nat did not, but he nodded gravely.

"I want you to make—certain observations," Tyler said. "To do that, you will have to live here in the house with us. . . . And it is important that my daughter does not know why you are here. Is—is that satisfactory to you?"

"Yes," said Nat. "But it may take some arranging."

"I'll take care of that," said Tyler. "Let me see: Let us say that you are the son of an old friend. Your father's name was Nat too, eh? Let us say that he was a college friend. You are here looking for work—my guest. You will be on intimate terms with the family, of course. It will be perfectly natural for you to stay as long as necessary. Nobody can find a job nowadays."

"That sounds practicable enough," said Nat.

"I will explain briefly—" Tyler began. Then he stopped, turning his head, as if listening. From somewhere in the house there came the sound of music, the music of a violin. It was faint but indescribably beautiful, haunting.

TYLER stood quite still, as if frozen, staring upward, toward the sound of the music. Then, abruptly, in the middle of a bar, the music ceased. Tyler turned swiftly toward Nat, his face drawn.

"Come!" he said. "Come!"

Then he strode from the room, Nat close at his heels. His long legs took the stairs, two steps at a time. Nat followed. Down the hall Tyler went, half-running now, Nat keeping pace just behind him. Before a door at the extreme end of the hall the man halted, raised his hand as if to knock.

Then he brought it down slowly, placed it on the knob and quietly opened the door. It was quite dark inside, and still. Tyler fumbled for the light-switch; there was a click, and the lights came on. In the middle of the floor, facing them, a girl in negligee stood rigidly, a violin at her shoulder. The fingers of her left hand were on the strings; the bow drooped at her side in the other hand. Enormous dark eyes stared out of an alabaster face, a face filled with unutterable terror.

"Ruth!" Tyler cried huskily. *"Ruth!* What is it?"

The great eyes closed; the girl swayed toward Tyler. He took her in his arms, held her closely. She buried her face against his sleeve. She seemed incredibly small and fragile beside his tall figure. She trembled in his arms, drew herself closer to him.

"Ruth," he repeated, but very gently now. "What is it, dear?"

With one hand he tilted her face up toward his, smoothed back the long dark hair. She did not open her eyes. Again he repeated: "What is it, dear?" She opened her dark eyes slowly. To Nat, motionless in the doorway, they seemed

to rest upon him. But she gave no sign of noticing his presence.

"I don't know," she whispered. "It began — as always. And then — it stopped! Oh, I don't know what it is!"

Nat stared into her eyes, so large, so fixed. There was still no sign in them. And then, with a shock, he realized that she was blind.

"Interested!" exclaimed Dr. Karasc. "I tell you this case may prove to be one of incomparable importance!"

CHAPTER II

"There's Murder in the Air"

IN the big chair in the living-room, Nat sat waiting for Tyler. He had been there nearly an hour now, trying to compose himself, trying not to puzzle too much about the strange actions of the girl with the violin. What had caused the terror in her face? How could she, blind as she was, play the violin so exquisitely? For it *had* been exquisite, that fragment he had heard before the strange interruption.

In the grip of whatever emotion had possessed her, she had apparently not realized his presence there, in the doorway. Tyler, when she did not speak, had picked her up suddenly in his arms and carried her to the bed. And she had smiled up at him, then.

"It's no use—now, Father," she had said. "But I'm all right. Good night."

"No," he had said. "I'll stay here with you a bit."

He had glanced up then, at Nat, who had flashed him an inquiring look. Tyler had shaken his head, slowly, and by a movement of his hand had suggested that Nat wait below. So Nat waited, as patiently as he could.

Presently he heard a sound on the stairs, glanced up and saw Tyler's tall figure descending. The man came into the room wearily. He stood in the door,

rubbing one side of his face with one of his lean hands. Then he took a chair, facing Nat.

"She is sleeping now," Tyler said.

Nat nodded, said nothing. The man stole a curious look at him.

"*That* was what I wanted you to observe," he said slowly. Then he shook his head. "But it—it was incomplete. What—what did you make of it?"

"Nothing," said Nat frankly. "Except that she seemed badly frightened."

"She *was* frightened," said Tyler. "She was terrified."

"What of?" said Nat.

"I wish you'd tell *me*," said Tyler.

"But haven't you any idea—"

Tyler shook his head.

"I don't know," he said. "I hoped *she* would know, so that you could see—see the thing at work. But something happened. In a way I was relieved. . . . But it will come again. And I want you to be on hand when it does."

NAT nodded. "Perhaps you'd better explain," he said.

"I—I'll try to tell you something about her," said Tyler. "She is a remarkable musician, as perhaps you noticed, even though she played only a few bars."

"Yes," said Nat. "It was—superb."

Tyler nodded and went on: "She's what they call a prodigy, I believe, has been since she was a child. Odious word, *prodigy*. But she has shown a remarkable talent for the violin from childhood."

"I'm surprised that she isn't a very famous violinist," said Nat.

"She has never played publicly," said Tyler. "She's too delicate for that sort of thing. She's led a very quiet, sheltered life. Her mother died when she was born. She has always been blind. When her talent became evident, I gave up my practise, took her to Europe, where she studied under the greatest teachers. Most of them think it's a crime I won't permit her to do concert work."

"I think I can understand your feelings about that," said Nat. "One thing puzzles me. A blind violinist—does she play entirely by ear?"

"Not exactly," said Tyler. "She has a remarkable ear, can play anything she has heard. But she has a very complete musical library in Braille—and an almost incredible memory. She can read the music—then remember every note."

"That is extraordinary," Nat murmured.

"She's an extraordinary person," said Tyler.

"I can see that," said Nat. "Now, about this fear—"

Tyler hesitated.

"Dr. Karasc," he said, "feels that you should—start from scratch, as it were."

"He wants me to observe this thing at work?" said Nat. "I know; that is one of the tenets of his credo. To investigate every phenomenon at first hand, to take nothing from hearsay. Very well. I'll do my best, Mr. Tyler."

"No one can do more than that," said Tyler with a faint smile.

"One thing only," said Nat. "This—this fright—it has something to do with her playing the violin?"

"It has," said Tyler. "That is, it always comes when she is playing—and always at night."

Nat rose.

"I'd better be going now," he said. "I'll report in the morning."

"Oh," said Tyler. "But you must remain *tonight!*"

He routed out Raines, the old butler, who had gone to bed, and Raines showed Nat Benson to a large room on the top floor, about midway between the rooms of Tyler and the girl. He fetched him tan silk pajamas, slippers, a brocade dressing-gown, a cellophane-wrapped toothbrush, dental cream and shaving materials.

Nat lay awake for a long time, going over the case in his mind. He kept listening, wondering if the music would begin again—and then stop. He was hoping that it would, so that he could see, more definitely, its effect upon the girl. But he heard no sound, and after a time he dropped off and slept.

WINTER sunshine streaming through a window wakened him. He rose, stretched, breathed deeply of the brisk morning air. Then he bathed, shaved and dressed leisurely, finding, somewhat to his surprise, that socks and linen, new and of his correct size, had been laid out for him while he slept.

This mystery was explained when Raines, the butler, arrived to ask him to come downstairs. He had simply come in early in the morning, noted the sizes, and gone out and purchased the necessary things. Now he told Nat Mr. Tyler and Miss Ruth were awaiting him.

Nat found them in the living-room, Tyler and the girl of the violin. She looked perfectly fresh, unmarked by

her experience of the night. The great dark eyes turned toward Nat as he entered. They did not seem like sightless eyes. They were warm and alive in her delicately oval face, which was touched now with healthy color.

When Tyler introduced him, the girl smiled sweetly, and Nat took her outstretched hand, soft like her father's, with the fingers so slender and delicate and long, yet so firm and strong.

"How do you do, Nat?" she asked, in a voice gentle as a caress.

"How do you do—Ruth?" he answered.

She held his hand a moment, smiling up into his face.

"You are very tall," she said. "Almost as tall as Father. You have a nice voice, too. Father has told me all about you. I am very happy to know you."

Nat suddenly felt a pang of regret for the rôle he must play. But he murmured his sincere pleasure. She sat on the edge of one of the big chairs, her little feet barely touching the floor. Nat thought that never had he seen a human being so exquisite, so spontaneously and naturally charming. His heart warmed to her.

BREAKFAST was announced. It was served in a sunny room overlooking what, in the spring, would be the garden. They asked him how he liked his room, and when he replied enthusiastically, they both smiled their gratification.

They chatted pleasantly through the meal, Tyler indulging in some fictional reminiscences of Nat's father, and their youth together. This, again, made Nat slightly uncomfortable, although he realized the wisdom of keeping his purpose from the girl. But somehow he did not like the idea of deceiving this lovely creature.

Presently she asked him if he liked music. And he had a sudden thrill. This, after all, was the key. He assured her that while he was not a musician, he did like good music and hoped to hear her play often.

"I shall play for you tonight," she said.

No mention whatever was made of the events of the previous night.

After breakfast Nat excused himself and went to his apartment to get his luggage. He packed, made a few purchases, and returned to the old house in the late afternoon.

He did not see either Ruth or Tyler until dinner-time. They dined quietly. Afterward, at Tyler's suggestion, the three of them took a long walk in Central Park. Ruth was quick with appreciation for the sounds and smells of the night. She walked surely, easily, almost as if she could see as well as they. And her seemingly fragile body was tireless.

When they returned to the house, Ruth announced matter-of-factly that she would play. Nat again felt that thrill of anticipation. He took a chair in the soft-lighted living-room and relaxed his body but not his mind, waiting. Tyler produced the violin and sank back in his own chair, his long fingers interlaced, his face brooding as Ruth briefly tuned the instrument.

Then she began to play, softly, and her small glowing face, so tender and alive, became transfigured. Nat stole a look of curious awe at her. She was no longer either the lovely unspoiled child of the morning, nor the poor frightened creature of the night, but a great artist, completely absorbed in the music. She played with fingers disciplined by a lifetime of hard practice, and with her heart and her soul.

This, Nat knew, was genius. It was an experience unique in his life, this first glimpse into the matchless artist which inhabited the girl's slender little body. He was entranced, drawn out of himself by the spell of the music.

She played for a long time, all kinds of music, from the classics to charming Viennese waltzes, simple folk-songs, gay modern melodies. Then she began a languorous love-song. . . . And suddenly, in the midst of it, there was a crashing discord and the music ceased.

JARRED out of his mood, Nat glanced quickly at Tyler, who had leaned forward, the bones in his thin face standing out sharply. The girl stood stiffly, bow aloft, fingers still on the quivering strings. Her face, except for two vivid spots of color on her cheek-bones, was dead white. Her fingers trembled on the strings, then were quiet.

"Murder!" she said, hoarsely. *"Murder!"*

The two men sat immobile. Nat was fascinated—and chilled.

"I can feel it more and more," the girl went on. "Black hate. . . . A mind churning with hate! Death. . . . Death. . . . Death! Kill all rulers—all kings. Kill Roosevelt!"

She gave a little gasp of horror.

"He is going to kill Mr. Roosevelt! He is going to shoot!"

She moaned helplessly.

Unable to restrain himself further, Tyler sprang to his feet.

"Who, Ruth? Who?" he cried.

She shook her head, bewildered, frightened.

"I don't know who—I don't know! But I can feel it—a dark evil thing. He—or is it she?—is going to strike!"

The pupils of her great eyes dilated. Nat felt himself powerless to move.

"Ruth!" Tyler cried again loudly. *"Ruth!"*

"Hush," she said. "Hush!"

She waved him back. Tyler stood helplessly, his eyes on her face.

"Now!" she moaned. *"Now!* Shots! Many of them. . . . *Five* shots. . . . Mr. Roosevelt is safe! Missed! But others fall—several. . . . A woman—two women—a man—a big man, an important man. Words now! . . . Words. . . . *'Missed Roosevelt! Glad I got Cermak! Too many people are starving!'"*

She stopped, suddenly, the violin sinking from her shoulder. Tyler put an arm about her, supporting her. As if released from a spell, Nat jumped to his feet, staring at the radio cabinet against the wall.

"Roosevelt is speaking at Miami Beach!" he cried.

He ran to the radio, turned the dials. A confused roar, then a voice, an excited voice, could be heard, the voice of the radio announcer at the very scene:

"An assassin has just attempted to kill the President-elect! Mr. Roosevelt is unharmed, but Mayor Cermak of Chicago and several others were struck by bullets. The man is being overpowered! A gun is taken from him. He is screaming: *'I kill all Presidents! All the officers! Too many people are starving to death!'"*

In her father's arms the girl slowly crumpled. He picked her up, held her inert little form close to his breast. Over the radio the excited voice of the announcer was still pouring out the whole amazing story.

NAT and Tyler faced each other across the flat-topped desk in the library. Spread before them were the extras of the newspapers. Upstairs at last, Ruth was asleep.

"Well?" Tyler asked.

His face had grayed, aged in the last few hours. His lean hand shook as he raised it to brush back his heavy white hair.

"Don't be so upset," said Nat gently.

"I—I know it's foolish of me," said Tyler. "I—I'll try not to be."

"That's the way to talk," said Nat. "Now. . . . As long as I have seen and heard this thing myself, do you feel able to tell me about the *other* times? I assume there *have* been other times?"

Tyler put one hand over the other, held it firmly. His quivering nerves quieted. He nodded, slowly. "I'll explain as well as I can. It began several months ago. She was playing for me alone. And suddenly, just as she did tonight, she stopped—and was deathly afraid. Of *what* she did not know. It was as if something were in the *air."*

Nat nodded but was silent.

"Always it happened the same way," said Tyler. "At night, when she was playing, sometimes downstairs for me, sometimes when she was alone in her room. And always it terrified her. I got so I lay awake nights listening, afraid to hear that music begin—and then stop. And then, a week ago, it broke through, much clearer, much more definite. She knew that a man had been shot."

HE told Nat, then, of the murder of Klauss, and the strange coincidence in time. And of the girl's dreadful certainty, two nights before, that a woman named Martha had been strangled—of the confirmation through the radio and Doc Crandall, and later the newspapers.

Nat sat quietly, drinking in every word. Tyler stopped and regarded him soberly.

"Then—" he said. "Tonight!"

Nat fought to control the excitement which possessed him. He must be very calm, very cool and detached, scientific. He did not speak for a moment. Then he said, as quietly as he could:

"Mr. Tyler, we may be on the threshold of something so big—so important—so far-reaching in all its implications—"

"You—you don't think it's anything—anything—" Tyler stammered.

"It's nothing supernatural, you can rest assured of *that,"* said Nat.

"Oh, I know that," said Tyler quickly. "But it's—uncanny, to say the least. . . . And it frightens me. For *her* I mean. I—I wish you could—explain."

"It's something that science has not

been able to explain yet," said Nat. "We know that some persons, a very rare few, seem to have the power of receiving, as it were, *thoughts* or *images* or *something* from the minds of others. Almost as if the mind were a sort of superacute radio antenna. At first, these things seem to be caught in the subliminal mind—that is, that part of the mind which lies just below the threshold of consciousness. *Sometimes,* but not always, they enter the conscious mind."

Tyler nodded, his face strained.

"Your daughter seems to have this power to a remarkable degree," Nat went on. "And yet in a very special sense. Her mind seems extraordinarily perceptive to one particular kind of stimulus, the intense, almost maniacal will to destroy, to kill."

"You don't think—that it will—will affect her mind?" Tyler queried anxiously. Nat shook his head.

"Not if she isn't forced. Not if we leave her alone. The girl is a genius. . . . Bernard Shaw, I believe in 'Saint Joan,' says that a genius is one who sees further and probes deeper than other people, and has the energy to give effect to that extra vision. Ruth has a mind like a tuning-fork, quiveringly sensitive. Think what it may mean to people who are in danger, if, instead of knowing when disaster strikes, *she can foretell it!*"

"What a terrible responsibility for a child!" said Tyler.

"And for us," Nat said, gravely.

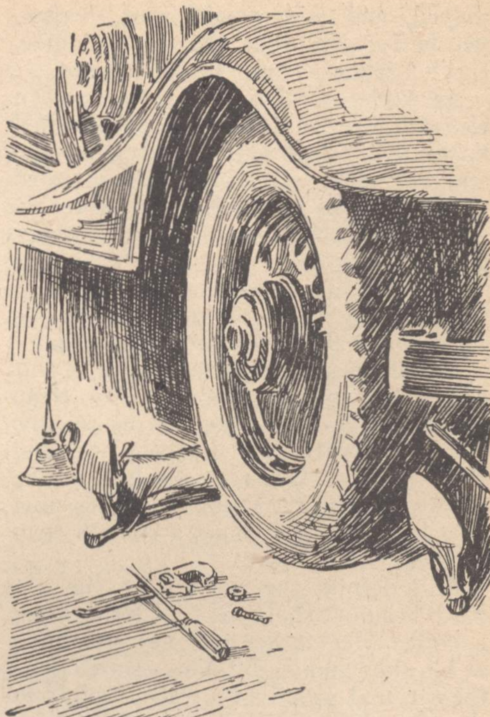
IN the morning Nat telephoned Dr. Karasc in Baltimore. As succinctly and matter-of-factly as possible he told him the story, giving no opinion of his own. Once or twice he heard the psychiatrist's characteristic little clucks of interest, and he visualized the dark little man, with his bushy eyebrows and his darting, searching smile.

There was a long moment of silence when he had finished. Then Dr. Karasc murmured: "Ah, interesting, no?"

"What do you make of it?" Nat asked, knowing it was a useless question, knowing the exact little shrug the man would give.

He could almost see the psychiatrist as he answered: "I? I make nothing of it, my dear fellow. You are on the spot. What do *you* make of it?"

"It's obviously a case of supernormal cognition," said Nat. "Exactly *how* the thing works in her mind, I don't know."



Two high-heeled slippers protruded from under the car, then two sheer-stockinged legs appeared.

"No more do I," said Dr. Karasc. "But it is very, very interesting, eh? Perhaps it will come again. Who knows? You will stand by, no? And *observe.*"

And that was all he could get from Dr. Karasc. . . .

But in the days that followed, there seemed, alas, nothing more to observe. They were completely uneventful. Ruth seemed to bloom with health. That morning when she appeared, she was her old self. On one point only did Nat question her. That was why she had fainted. She replied candidly:

"It was just—just that I was so horrified when I heard the voice on the radio and realized that I—I had known exactly what was in that man's mind—some of the very words—before he had spoken them."

Nat took daily horseback rides in the park with her, renting horses at one of the public stables. More color appeared in her cheeks. She seemed utterly cheerful and happy.

Every night she played for them in the living-room. Always they were watchful, alert. But she never faltered. And afterward, when she had gone to her room, the two men would strain their ears, listening. Sometimes she

played, and they would wait, hoping, yet half-fearful that the strange interruption would come. But it did not.

As weeks went by and spring was in the air, Nat felt both relieved and disappointed. Relieved, for Ruth's sake and her father's, and yet disappointed that there was no further chance to observe that curious manifestation of her power. . . .

He need not have been disappointed, for the long peaceful interlude was to come to an abrupt and startling end.

It was on a night in late April, a soft and balmy night. The three of them had taken a long drive in one of the open cars, with Nat at the wheel and Ruth and her father beside him in the roomy front seat. They were proceeding at a leisurely pace along a smooth road in Westchester.

And despite the warmth of the air, Ruth began to shake, as if suffering from a chill. Her father felt her trembling at his side, and so did Nat. He stopped the car, and Tyler got a warm robe from the rear of the car and covered her with it. Still she shivered, silently, and Nat hurried for home.

WHEN they reached the house, Ruth, looking pale and drawn, went to her violin, without stopping to take off her coat. Tyler, in a quick movement, seized the instrument, held it away. She groped for it in the familiar place.

"You're tired, dear," her father protested. "Hadn't you better go to bed?"

But the girl shook her head, strangely, a little impatiently.

"My violin," she said. "Give it to me!"

Tyler hesitated, looking at Nat, who nodded his head.

"I—I have to play," the girl said, insistently.

At another nod from Nat, Tyler reluctantly handed her the violin. She tucked it under her chin, drew the bow across the strings, tentatively. Tyler, a worried frown on his face, stared at her apprehensively.

She hesitated a fraction of a moment. Then she began to play. The healthy color drained from her face, leaving only the two vivid spots over her cheek-bones. A few bars, and she stopped, stood stiff, rigid, her fingers on the strings. Nat leaned forward intently. Her lips moved.

It had come again!

"Murder," she whispered. And then, clearly: *"There's murder in the air!"*

CHAPTER III

The Man Marked for Death

"THERE'S murder in the air!" Ruth said, and for the first time since the vague dread had first made itself known in her mind, she knew what she must do. All at once, as if a shutter had been opened in her mind, to admit a flood of light, she was no longer afraid of her power. She welcomed it, determined to use it to its utmost.

For a fraction of a second she felt the strained nerves of her father and of Nat. Then she shut them out, completely. She did not even hear her father's sharp exclamation, nor Nat's warning, "Shhh!" She did not know that Nat had seized her father's arm, held him back from her. She moved her fingers slightly on the strings, waited, tense, nerves taut, every faculty sharp and clear.

It was very plain, that *feeling:* Murder in the air! As plain as it had been the night Zangara had made his wild attempt on the life of Mr. Roosevelt. But now her mind was much more aware of its import. She stood rigid, waiting—waiting for the *words* which would tell her who was in danger.

Then they began to come: *Death. . . . Death* and *hate. . . . Vengeance. . . . Fear. . . . Lust for gain. . . .* Her nerves were quiveringly on the *qui vive* for the *name.* It must come now. . . . It had to come! But there was some barrier, some disturbance. She tried to shut it out. But it intruded, exasperatingly.

SHE heard her father's voice: "Ruth! Ruth! For God's sake what is it?" And Nat's frantic: "Mr. Tyler! Let her alone! *Please!*" Then her father's arms were about her; and the thing like a shutter came back over her mind.

"Ruth," her father was saying, intensely, "who is it? Who's in danger?" She felt him shake her. "You've got to *know,* Ruth!"

She gave a shuddering moan.

"Oh, I don't know. I don't know!" she cried.

"Ruth," her father said. *"Try!"*

"It's no use now—no use," she said helplessly. Then she heard Nat's voice, bitter and exasperated: "You've spoiled everything, Mr. Tyler! My God, are you insane? *Let the girl alone!"* But it was too late. Her father's arms relaxed. She stood alone and free, heard him muttering, half-apologetically, but it was too late now.

"It's all right, Father," she said then, gently. "I think I'll go to bed."

"I'm sorry, Ruth," he said brokenly. "But I was frightened. Do you forgive your stupid old father?"

"Of course," she said. "Good night."

She felt his lips brush hers, felt his arm tremble. Then she hurried from the room, her violin held close. When she had gone, Tyler turned a contrite face toward Nat, who shrugged.

"Perhaps it doesn't matter," Nat said. "It will probably come again—later. But if that peril was immediate, as it was in the case of Roosevelt—"

"I lost my head," said Tyler.

IN his room Tyler paced up and down, prey to a thousand conflicting emotions: Contrition for his interference—fear for Ruth—concern for the unknown person in danger. . . . What if it should be Ruth herself! He groaned and ran his hands through his hair. What a fool he was! Well, the damage was done. He must get hold of himself.

He stopped his restless pacing, forced himself to undress, get into bed. He lay with his ears strained, fearful of hearing that music commence—and then stop! And just as fearful that it would *not.* There could be no peace, no rest for him now, until Ruth *knew.* . . .

Nat did not undress. He was convinced that the girl would play again, sometime during that night. And equally sure that unless murder had already been done, she would get the danger-signals once more. He arranged a reading-light by the open door, placed his chair so that he could see Ruth's door at the end of the hall at all times.

He made himself read a novel, but he kept his ears alert; when the time came, he would get to Ruth before her father could reach her. . . .

Ruth lay very quietly in her bed, waiting. She heard her father come up the stairs, recognized the so-familiar footsteps. And her supersensitive ears caught the vibrations of his restless pacing. Her heart went out to him, but she lay still, waiting. She heard Nat come upstairs too, heard him moving the chair, the lamp, knew that he was keeping vigil. That knowledge warmed and heartened her.

She was thankful when she realized that her father had stopped his agonized stalking of the floor. She hoped he would sleep. She would not sleep if she could—and could not if she would. The hours passed slowly. In her mind she groped for the shutter which would let in the light—until she realized that it was beyond her power to open it.

No, the shutter had to be opened from the *outside.* And when that realization had become very clear to her, she knew that it would open, *soon* . . . . presently she knew that it was time. Very quietly she got up, felt for her violin. She would play it very, very softly, hoping not to wake her father. Nat would hear it, of course. But Nat would not interfere.

She tucked the violin under her chin. It was a wonderful instrument, a very old Amati said to have once been the property of the Italian magician Castiglione. She poised the bow, waited for the utter compulsion to play. It came almost at once. Gently she drew the bow across the strings. And in her mind the shutter slowly opened, and the light came in. She stopped, her fingers taut on the strings.

At the first sound Nat was out of his chair. He stood waiting, unwilling to allow a single footfall to break the tension. Then the music stopped, and Nat started swiftly down the hall. He heard Tyler's door open. The man was coming too. Nat reached the door first, opened it swiftly but quietly, switched on the light. Tyler crowded close behind him. Nat flashed him a warning look, and Tyler nodded, humbly.

They stood tense, still, staring at the girl. If she realized their presence, she gave no sign. Then she began to speak:

"Gordon. . . . Gordon. . . . Gordon. . . . The name is *Gordon."*

Tyler started to open his lips, but Nat's swift pressure of his arm restrained him from speech. Both men were thinking the same thing: *Gordon!* A common name. There are many Gordons!

RUTH stood as before, waiting. . . . Would nothing come but that name, Gordon? She resolutely shut all thought from her mind, kept it open, as completely receptive as she was able, and waited. The feeling of another's hate that came to her was a malevolent, malignant thing. Yet she was not afraid now. It was a different kind of hate from that of Zangara. That had been a fanatic, almost maniacal thing. This was colder, even more evil, but controlled, cunning, careful. It was planning death for this Gordon; that, she knew. But the will was not yet ready to translate the plan into action. It was a waiting hate.

And then she got the complete name, in a flash, as if that hate were dictating it, gloatingly: *Paul Gordon. . . . Paul Y. Gordon.* That was all she wanted now. She was aware, completely, then, of the presence of Nat and her father. She dropped her bow, turned to them quietly.

"The man marked for death is Paul Y. Gordon," she said.

"Are you sure?" said Nat gently.

"Quite sure," she said, in her most natural voice.

"There is only *one* Paul Y. Gordon that I know of," said Tyler.

"The international banker?" Nat said.

Tyler nodded.

"I'll get him on the phone," Nat said.

He thumbed through the Manhattan telephone-book. There was no Paul Y. Gordon listed.

"Either he has a private, unlisted wire, or he lives in the country," Nat said. He dialed Information, and was told, after a time, that there was a Paul Y. Gordon listed in Westchester. He took down the number and dialed the operator. . . .

A lean man with a hooked nose sat in the small lodge which guarded the main gate to the Westchester estate of Paul Y. Gordon. He was tilted back, comfortably in a chair, his feet toasting before a gleaming Franklin stove, but his eyes were open, very much so, and they never left the roadway which shone white in the darkness in front of the gate. Across his knees lay a sawed-off shotgun.

Behind him, brooding over the countryside, the huge house sprawled, a hundred yards back from the road, dark and silent. Inside, secure in the knowledge that trusted armed men guarded every entrance, the master slept, alone in his suite on the top floor. Below, in their various chambers, slumbered his household, unaware that any precautions to ensure security were necessary.

Off to the right the lean man heard sounds approaching. He leaned forward. That would be Nelson, probably —Nelson, who made the complete rounds of all the outposts every hour. But he wanted to be certain. The lean man rose, holding the shotgun easily. Yes, it was Nelson.

The squat, tow-headed Swede paused only to pass the time of night and went on, toward the next guard. And the lean man tilted back once more in his chair. Then the telephone rang—not the intercommunicating phone which connected all the scattered lodges, but the trunk-line phone. Lazily wondering who could be calling at such an hour, the lean man answered. . . .

In his top-floor retreat, Paul Gordon, always a light sleeper, heard the first tinkle of the phone from the main gate. Wide awake immediately, he seized the receiver, his nerves taut. It was Cooke at the main gate.

"There's a feller on the wire says he's got to speak to you, personal, right away," said Cooke's voice. "Says it's very important."

Nat was thinking—of a pair of high-heeled slippers sticking out from under a yellow roadster.

"What fool is calling at this hour?" demanded Gordon, irritated. "Find out what he wants." There was a low murmur over the wire, Cooke talking into the other phone. Gordon's irritation turned to curiosity. It couldn't be a business matter. His close associates knew his private number. Who could be calling on the regular trunk wire at this ungodly hour?

"SAYS his name's Benson," said Cooke's voice. "Nat Benson. Says the matter's urgent."

"Benson?" said Gordon. "Never heard of him. Tell him to call my secretary in the morning."

"Says he's calling for Mr. Daniel Tyler," Cooke went on, after a moment. "Tyler that used to be D. A."

"Oh," said Gordon. He knew Tyler by name and reputation. But who would be using his name to call him in the middle of the night? He grunted impatiently.

"Ask him what he *wants,*" he said.

There was another low murmuring, then Cooke's voice, anxious:

"This guy says it's a matter of life and death, boss; you better talk to 'im."

"All right," Gordon growled. "Put him on."

In a moment he heard a clear, intense voice on the wire.

"This is Nat Benson, Mr. Gordon—secretary to Mr. Tyler. We have reason to believe that your life is in danger; and we—"

"What's that?" Gordon demanded.

"Your life is in danger," the voice repeated. "We want to see you, and explain the first thing in the morning."

"What is it you're driving at?" said Gordon sharply.

"I can't explain on the phone," said the voice. "But both Mr. Tyler and I—"

"Can't you tell me what information you have?" demanded Gordon.

"In the morning," said the voice. "Meanwhile, take the utmost precautions for the balance of the night. You can confirm this call by asking Information for Mr. Tyler's number."

"Right," said Gordon. "Hang up, and I'll call you back."

Puzzled, alarmed and vaguely annoyed, Gordon obtained the Tyler number from Information and put through a call. The same voice answered:

"What time may we come?" it asked.

"Eleven," said Gordon, and hung up.

He stared at the receiver for a long moment. Cold perspiration stood out on his upper lip. He wiped it, nervously. Then he called Cooke.

"Have you seen or heard anything?" he demanded.

"Not a thing, boss," said Cooke. "What'd the guy have to say?"

"He warned me I was in danger," said Gordon. "Keep your eyes and ears open and pass the word along."

"Kayo," said Cooke.

Paul Gordon sank back on the bed. He pulled the covers close about him. But still he was cold. For a long time he lay straining for the slightest sound. Everything was quiet. Presently, unable to allay his uneasiness, he got up, donned dressing-gown and slippers, and went out into the hall.

He proceeded softly down the stairs, two floors. He hesitated in front of the door to his wife's apartment, the apartment she had occupied since his illness, two months now. Then he knocked, a low knock. After a moment she answered, and he entered. She sat up in the bed, her mass of lovely black hair framing her olive face.

"Carlotta?" he said. "I—are you all right?"

"All right?" she said. "Why—of course."

He went close to her, smiled down at her dark beauty, stroked her hair.

"Silly of me," he said. "But I couldn't sleep."

He leaned down and kissed her forehead.

"Sorry I woke you, darling," he said. "Good night."

She lifted her face and gave him a slight little kiss, smiled.

"Good night," she said.

Gordon, feeling slightly foolish, returned to his room, but not to sleep.

CHAPTER IV

The Skeptical Mr. Gordon

THE day was bright and only slightly windy; so Tyler decided on the open car. Ruth wore a warm coat, and Nat tucked a robe about her snugly before he took the wheel. He headed northward, the powerful car humming.

Once out of the city they obtained specific directions from a motorcycle patrolman and continued.

Presently they came to the side road described by the policeman and turned

off. Five miles back, he had said, a huge house on a rolling hillside. Nat increased speed. As they rounded a slight curve, he slammed on the brakes, screechingly, and they came to an abrupt stop just behind a long rakish yellow roadster.

It was apparently stalled, but no one was in sight. Nat stared curiously at the yellow car. Then he grinned as he glanced down at the road beside it. Two absurdly high-heeled slippers toes up, protruded from under the car.

They wriggled slightly, and then two sheer-stockinged legs appeared, and after them a girl, clad in tan skirt and a silk sweater the exact color of the roadster. She wore no hat, and a flood of golden hair half covered her face.

SHE sat up in the road, flung her hair back and blinked up at them, the sun in her eyes. Both Nat and Tyler laughed. Her left cheek and her nose were smeared with oil.

"Hello," she said.

"Hello," Nat answered.

She scrambled quickly to her feet, dabbing at her nose with one hand, but only succeeding in spreading the oil.

"What's the trouble?" Nat asked.

"It just won't work," the girl said ruefully. "How about a lift?"

Nat hesitated, and glanced at Tyler.

"We're only going a mile or two," Tyler said. "Just to the Gordon place."

"That's far enough," said the girl. "I'm Doris Gordon."

"Come ahead, then," said Nat.

The girl reached into the seat of the roadster, pulled out a small handbag, glanced at herself in the mirror, gave a little gasp of dismay and then began furiously to rub her nose and cheek with a ridiculously small handkerchief. Nat grinned. She was an extraordinarily pretty girl, smeared nose and all, tall and slim and vibrantly young.

She finished her emergency toilet, shook back her tousled hair and smiled.

"Now," she said. "I'm ready."

Nat opened the rear door, and the girl climbed in beside Ruth and Tyler. Tyler introduced Ruth, Nat and himself, and Nat started the car.

"I hope you're expected," said Doris Gordon.

"I believe we are," said Tyler.

"That's good," said Doris. "Because you'd just have the trip for nothing if you weren't. Dad hardly sees anybody these days. I say, it's lucky you came along. I don't mind walking, but not in these shoes."

"It must be fun to drive your own car," Ruth said.

"You don't drive?" said Doris incredulously, turning to Ruth.

"No," said Ruth, smiling. "You see, I'm blind."

"I say," said Doris, astonished. "Oh, I'm terribly sorry. I didn't mean—why I'd *never* have guessed—"

"Few people do at first," said Ruth composedly.

There was a long silence as the car forged powerfully ahead. Nat guessed that Doris was embarrassed and a little ill at ease. He began to talk, casually, over his shoulder. He felt the tension ease.

"There we are," said Doris presently.

The big house gleamed in the sunshine. There were several smaller building to the rear, garages, stables, two houses that looked like employees' cottages. A broad white roadway wound up from the main road.

A closed gate barred their entrance. A man leaned out of the small lodge by the gate and stared at them. Doris waved to him, and the gate opened. Nat drove inside and stopped as the man came out of the lodge. He was a hard-looking customer, and he peered at them narrowly.

"Mr. Tyler," said Doris. "Dad's expecting him."

"Okay," said the man. He waved them by, and returned to his post.

NAT drove to the main entrance to the house. A man came around the side of the building, a burly fellow with a heavy-jowled face. Nat thought that neither he nor the man at the gate looked like the typical employees of a multimillionaire. They looked pretty tough, both of them.

"Mr. Tyler and party," Doris cried, opening the door. She alighted from the car. The burly man got onto the running-board.

"Around to the left," he said.

Nat looked at Doris, standing in the driveway, smiling.

"Thanks a lot," she said. "Hope you stay for luncheon."

"Thanks." Nat grinned, and stepped on the accelerator. When they reached the other side of the house, the burly man told Nat to stop. Tyler helped Ruth from the car, and they followed the man to the door. The man announced them

by telephone. The door opened, and he nodded for them to go up.

He remained outside, closing the door after them. At the top of the stairs they were met by a middle-aged man of a different type, obviously a servant. He bowed.

"Mr. Tyler?" he asked, politely.

"Yes," said Tyler.

"This way, sir," said the man.

HE showed them into a sunny sitting-room, seated them and disappeared through a door on the other side of the room.

"I say," said Tyler, "this is a strange place."

"Like a regular fort!" said Nat. "And did you get a look at those two plug-uglies who met us?"

"They certainly looked like thugs," said Tyler.

Across the room the door opened, and a vigorous-looking man of fifty-four or five, wearing a loosely comfortable old tweed jacket and gray flannel slacks, appeared, adjusting his glasses. The door was closed behind him.

On the other side of it stood the servant who had admitted the visitors. Beside him was the burly man who had directed them upstairs. He held an automatic pistol in his hand. The two men stood close to the door, poised, listening.

Gordon advanced into the sitting-room with a smile.

"Ah," he said. "Mr. Tyler?"

"Yes," said Tyler. "How do you do, Mr. Gordon?"

The men shook hands, and Tyler introduced Ruth and then Nat. Gordon peered at him a moment, then extended his hand with a half-smile.

"You routed me out at a devilish hour, Mr. Benson," he said.

"Sorry," said Nat. "But we thought the matter was urgent."

"I dare say," said Gordon. "Sit down."

Gordon indicated chairs, and they sat, facing the bright windows. He himself took a chair with his back to the window, so that he could watch their faces closely while his own was in shadow. Tyler smiled. It was an old trick he'd learned in the District Attorney's office. In a sense he knew they were all on trial before the keen-eyed banker.

Gordon looked at them quietly for a moment. Then he said, inquiringly, "Well?"

"I must ask your indulgence for a rather roundabout introduction to the point," said Tyler. "But it's necessary, if you are to understand, that I start at the beginning. My daughter Ruth, as you must have noticed, is blind."

"Eh?" said Gordon, astonished.

Ruth smiled, and Tyler went on with the story. He told of Ruth's talent for the violin, her studies abroad, the sheltered conditions of her life. Then he brought in her first troubled experiences. Gordon listened politely, but with a puzzled frown on his face. In detail Tyler recited the occurrences on the night of the attempt on the life of the President-elect.

Gordon said nothing, beyond an involuntary exclamation or two, but he kept his eyes on Ruth, who sat serene and at ease, listening to her father speak. When Tyler had finished, he sat back, watching the financier's face.

"This is extraordinary," said Gordon after a moment's pause. "Very interesting. But what has it got to do with *me?*"

"I am coming to that," said Tyler. "I have told you how Ruth was able to pick up the hate of this man Zangara, his determination to kill Mr. Roosevelt. How she knew when the shots were fired, realized that the assassin had failed in his attempt to shoot Mr. Roosevelt but had struck others, a woman and Mayor Cermak included. We have said nothing of this to anyone except Dr. Jan Karasc, the well-known psychologist. We didn't want any notoriety. But now we feel that we must speak—to you. Because my daughter knows that some one is planning to kill you."

"Ah," said Gordon, softly. "She has—ah—picked this up out of the air, as it were?"

"Yes," said Tyler.

GORDON regarded the girl keenly. "I see," he said. "And who, may I ask, is this would-be assassin?"

"I don't know," said Ruth.

"All that she has been able to get is this fierce determination to kill you," said Nat, speaking for the first time. "We thought we should warn you. So that you can—"

"Quite," said Gordon, interrupting. "I'm grateful, of course. As a matter of fact, I know I'm in a certain amount of danger. Any man in my position would be, especially in these parlous times. The world is full of fanatics and cranks."

"We feel that this is not a haphazard matter," said Nat quietly. "And we

thought if you would tell us who is likely to hold a hatred against you, we might be able to help you."

"I appreciate your interest and the trouble you've taken," said Gordon. "But I feel quite safe, I assure you. I am thoroughly protected."

"So we noticed," said Nat dryly. "But nevertheless, we feel that you are in great danger, and we'd like—"

"It's very kind of you," said Gordon quickly. "I'm sure you're sincere. Your story has been extremely interesting. But —the fact is, I'm a rather hard-headed chap. I'm realistic and pretty skeptical. I don't take much stock in 'psychic stuff.'"

Tyler flushed.

"My dear fellow," he expostulated, "this is not 'psychic stuff,' as you call it. A reputable psychiatrist assures us—"

"No offense intended," said Gordon.

"THEN you're not interested?" said Tyler a little stiffly.

"Of course I'm interested," said Gordon. "But I'm not disposed to go into a cold sweat, old man, merely because a slip of a girl reads my doom in the stars or something."

"You don't *believe* me?" said Ruth wonderingly.

"My dear child," Gordon protested, "I didn't say I didn't believe you. I'm sure of your perfect sincerity, sure that you believe yourself. But after all—"

"Dr. Karasc accepts Ruth's power as a matter of fact," said Tyler a little impatiently. "He's a trained psychologist, and has heard of similar cases—"

"Psychology," said Gordon a trifle pontifically, "is not yet one of the exact sciences. I happen to have the scientific temperament. I believe what is demonstrably true."

"You believe in the radio, I take it?" said Nat pleasantly.

"Of course," said Gordon sharply.

"The radio is a mere mechanical device, yet it can pick up waves from the air and reproduce sounds a thousand miles distant," said Nat. "The human brain, an infinitely more subtle instrument, sometimes has a similar power. Why can't a mind as sensitive as Ruth's, the mind of a child of genius, pick up *thought*-waves, especially when they are broadcast, as it were, by a mind obsessed with the powerful emotion of hate?"

"Perhaps it can," said Gordon. "Perhaps there is a case for telepathy, hypnosis, mind-reading, psychic communication, all sorts of fol-de-rol. But I don't happen to believe in them; that's all."

"Then you don't feel disposed to take us into your confidence?" Nat asked.

"I *have* taken you into my confidence," said Gordon. "I know there are people who would gladly kill me. I have taken precautions to protect myself. What more can I do?"

"Perhaps, through Ruth, we could trap this would-be assassin," persisted Nat.

"Nonsense!" said Gordon.

Tyler rose quickly.

"I think we had best go," he said.

"Don't be offended," said Gordon.

Tyler shrugged, exasperated.

"Is there anyone in particular who has cause to want to kill you?" Nat asked.

"Any crank, I suppose," said Gordon. "No one I know of definitely."

"Thank you," said Nat, rising. "We sha'n't bother you further, Mr. Gordon."

"Please stay to luncheon," said Gordon.

"Thank you, no," said Tyler. "We must be going."

He took Ruth's arm, and she rose. She smiled and held out her hand to Gordon. He bowed low over it. Nat took advantage of this to peer at the telephone which stood on a desk near the window, apparently Gordon's private number. He made a mental note of it.

The servant appeared, and escorted them to the top of the stairs. They said nothing as they descended to the door, which was opened by the same burly man who had let them in. They got into the car. As Nat stepped on the starter, he saw Doris, her face free of the smear of oil, smiling at him. He smiled back and lifted his hat.

"I say," she called. "Aren't you staying for luncheon?"

"Sorry," said Nat, and he meant it.

DORIS waved to them as they started down the winding driveway. Nat glanced back when he stopped at the gate and waited for it to open. She was still in sight. She raised her hand and waved gayly. Nat waved back. Then the gate swung open, and they descended into the road.

A mechanic was bent over the open hood of the yellow roadster. Nat grinned as they passed. Tyler was sitting stiffly

"Mr. Gordon!" said the voice on the phone. "Look *out!* Some one is about to fire!" Simultaneously there was a spurt of flame, the crash of a pistol-shot.

silent. No one spoke until the car reached the main road.

"Don't be cross, Father," Ruth said finally. He smiled and patted her arm.

"That man is afraid," said Ruth, quietly but positively.

"Eh?" said Tyler.

"He's frightened," said Ruth. "And he's keeping something back. Oh, I know he thinks I'm a sort of freak. . . . But I don't care. He's in danger, and I'm going to try to help him, whether he wants me to or not!"

"I thought you'd feel like that, Ruth," said Nat. "And I took the precaution of noticing the number of Gordon's private wire."

"I think he'll have cause to thank you for that," said Ruth.

CHAPTER V

The Killer Strikes

In the sunny sitting-room Paul Gordon sat by the window, glancing up inquiringly at the two men who stood before him—the well-trained and courteous personal servant, and the burly fellow with the heavy jowls.

"You heard everything, Johnson?" Gordon asked the servant.

"I did, sir," said Johnson.

"And you, Harrigan?" Gordon asked the burly man.

"Sure, I heard it," said Harrigan.

"What do you make of it, Johnson?" Gordon asked.

"No more than you, sir," said Johnson.

"It all sounds screwy to me," said Harrigan. "Just what *is* their racket?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Gordon. "Perhaps they haven't any racket."

Harrigan shrugged with disbelief.

"Did the whole business strike you as —well, as suspicious, Johnson?" asked Gordon.

"I wouldn't say it did, exactly, sir," said Johnson. "They don't seem that sort. After all, sir, the man was once a reputable lawyer, even District Attorney."

"It all smells phony to me," said Harrigan. "I've heard of plenty of crooked D.A.'s, and I've known a few shyster lips in my time that was supposed to be reputable lawyers. I'd put a tail on 'em all, boss."

"Hmm," said Gordon. "Thank you. That's all. We'll be doubly careful from now on, please."

"I think that's wise, sir," said Johnson.

Harrigan patted his hip with a grin.

"Nobody's gonna get up here, boss," he said.

When they had gone, Paul Gordon drummed idly upon the arm of the chair with his fingers. Then he reached for the telephone. When he had got his party, he spoke in a low voice, rapidly:

"This is Paul Gordon. I want a thorough investigation of the past life of Mr. Daniel Tyler, retired lawyer and former District Attorney, his daughter Ruth, who is a blind violinist, and his secretary, one Nat Benson. And I want you to look up a Dr. Jan Karasc, a psychiatrist or psychologist or something of the sort. Also I want them all watched night and day. Understand?"

AT the first station of the subway Nat turned the wheel over to Tyler and got out. He asked them to continue without him, explaining that there was some work he wanted to do, and that he could reach his destination more quickly by subway. He said he would probably not be home for luncheon.

Tyler, somewhat surprised, nodded and drove off, wondering what could take Nat off at a time like this. They drove home silently. Ruth did not seem to be in the mood for conversation. Sometime after luncheon Nat returned, and asked if he could have the privacy of the library for the afternoon. He had some more work to do and some telephone-calls to make, he explained.

TYLER was puzzled, curious, but he asked no questions. He assured Nat he would be undisturbed, and watched him retire into the shelf-filled room. There were many things he wanted to discuss, but he curbed his impatience and composed himself with what grace he could muster to wait for Nat. In the late afternoon his patience was rewarded. Nat appeared and beckoned Tyler to follow him into the library.

"I've spent most of the day looking into the past of our friend Mr. Paul Y. Gordon," said Nat. "I thought perhaps the search would prove fruitful. It has. The man has no past."

"No *past?*" Tyler echoed, wonderingly.

"I mean no past that I could discover," explained Nat. "His life, as far as I can check it definitely, seems to begin in about 1917, when he became a member of the banking firm of Street and Company. In that same year another member of the firm, a David Grahame and his wife Laura, were lost in the *Lusitania* disaster. Gordon adopted their only daughter, Doris Grahame."

"Then the girl we met is not his own daughter?" Tyler asked.

"Apparently not," said Nat. "But he legally adopted her and gave her his own name. She has a large fortune in her own right, of which he is trustee. 'Who's Who' records that he was married, his *second* marriage, to one Carlotta Montez, in Madrid, in 1916; but beyond that, the details of his life are sketchy, to say the least—and more important, *false."*

"What?" cried Tyler.

"False," said Nat. "At least some of them are false. I began to check on him through 'Who's Who,' in which the record of his life since 1917 is voluminous. The meagerness of the earlier history of Gordon interested me. I'm afraid I ran up a pretty phone-bill for you, because I checked them all. Item: 'Who's Who' gives his college as Northwestern, class of '04. There was no Paul Gordon in that class. Furthermore there has never been a Paul Y. Gordon registered at that university."

"Why, this is incredible," said Tyler.

"That's not quite all," said Nat.

"'Who's Who' also records that he married one Eleanora Cumming in Chicago on November 4, 1904. The Chicago Bureau of Vital Statistics has no record of such a marriage."

"How strange!" murmured Tyler.

"Finally," Nat said, "there is no record of the birth of his two children in Chicago on the dates recorded in 'Who's Who.'"

"Good Lord!" said Tyler, mopping his forehead. "A man of his position, his wealth and fame—how could such falsifications go undiscovered all these years?"

"I suppose because no one ever took the trouble to check them up before," said Nat. "After all, why should they?"

"I wonder if there is something discreditable about that man?" said Tyler. "Some skeleton in the closet?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Nat. "But Ruth was right. He *is* covering something up. And my guess is that it's a shadow from that secret past which threatens him now."

"No wonder he didn't welcome our well-meant interference," said Tyler. "He must be afraid we'd stumble onto his secret. He may be some sort of criminal. Perhaps what threatens him now is some kind of retribution. And yet that doesn't seem to fit the kind of man he has become."

"I also called Dr. Karasc," said Nat. "As usual, he merely commented that it was 'interesting,' and suggested that I keep my eyes open. Oh, yes, he did laugh and say it would 'teach Gordon a lesson if he got a knife in his ribs!'"

"Your Dr. Karasc has a macabre sense of humor," observed Tyler with a smile.

Nat laughed. "Well," he said, "there's nothing to do but wait. We've got to depend on Ruth."

"I suppose you're right," said Tyler.

BUT three days passed without incident. Ruth played every night in the living-room, without interruption. Afterward, in their own rooms, Nat and Tyler lay awake every night for hours, listening. On the second night they heard the music. But it did not falter.

On the fourth day, in the afternoon, Nat sat in Ruth's sitting-room, talking idly with her. Tyler had gone out directly after luncheon and had not returned. Nat's mind wandered. He hardly heard Ruth as she talked along. He was thinking of a pair of high-heeled slippers sticking out from under a yellow roadster, of a piquant smear of oil on a firm and delicate nose, of a friendly smile and the gay wave of a slim arm.

Ruth stopped, and he looked up to see that she was smiling at him.

"Your thoughts are far away, Nat," she said.

He laughed, a little embarrassed.

"You were thinking about the girl we met on the road?" she said.

"You *are* a mind-reader," he smiled.

"In the spring a young man's fancy—" Ruth said, gently teasing. "Is she very pretty?"

"Very," Nat said.

LATER in the afternoon he tried to read a novel. But he could not keep his mind on the printed words. He was anxious and uneasy over the prolonged interlude of quiet. If danger threatened Paul Gordon, might it not also threaten the lovely Doris? He hoped not. . . . And yet, if he could shield her—

His thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of Tyler.

"Would it interest you to know, Nat," said Tyler, "that this house is being watched, and that I have been followed all over New York for more than three hours?"

Nat stared at Tyler for a moment blankly. Then he chuckled.

"I guess Mr. Paul Gordon is doing a little checking up on his own," he said.

"Perhaps," said Tyler gravely. "But does it occur to you that this may be the work of *some one else?*"

Nat stepped quickly out into the darkness of Seventy-ninth Street and without looking about him, proceeded swiftly toward Central Park. He heard footsteps. Some one was following him. . . . Then it was a general surveillance of them all!

He smiled grimly as he turned the corner under the bright street-light, rapidly. Then he darted quickly in to the building line, waited. A man in a gray soft hat came around the corner. Nat stepped forward, almost bumped into him. The man turned a startled glance upon him and then looked away hurriedly, walked on up Fifth Avenue.

Nat gazed after him thoughtfully. He was satisfied on one point, anyhow. The man was neither of the two tough-looking fellows he had observed at the Gordon estate. Just to be sure that the man was really following him, Nat walked south to Seventy-eighth Street and then turning east, stepped back and looked up Fifth Avenue. The man in the gray hat was hurrying toward the corner.

Nat went on around the block and back toward the house. Across the street, in a shadow, he saw another man. Well, maybe they'd do some guessing now. He turned in at the Tyler house and started up the stairs, taking out his key. As he opened the door, Ruth came out of the living-room, the violin under her arm.

"Nat?" she said.

"Yes."

"Good night," she said. And for the first time she kissed him—lightly, a sweet sisterly caress; and then she was swiftly, surely mounting the steps. He watched her out of sight, and then turned to find Tyler in the living-room doorway, looking at him with a grave face.

"It's come again, Nat," Tyler said.

NAT followed him back into the living-room.

"You were hardly out the door when she asked for her violin," said Tyler. "I almost called to you. But I didn't want to break the mood. I could see she had that strange compulsion to play. She played only a bar or two, and then stopped." He paused and looked at Nat.

"Yes?" Nat said.

"She says the attempt to kill Gordon will be made very soon," Tyler said.

"Nothing more definite?" asked Nat.

"Nothing," said Tyler.

"Should we warn him now?"

"I don't know," said Tyler. "It's a frightful thing, I suppose, to gamble with a man's life. We'll do all we can for Gordon, despite his attitude. But you know how he is—he wouldn't believe us, unless we had something very definite."

"Then it's his gamble, not ours," said Nat. "We can only wait, and hope that Ruth will know when the time comes."

Tyler nodded. He bade Nat good night and went to his room. Nat thought of telephoning Dr. Karasc. But it was late, nearly midnight. And he doubted whether the Doctor would give him any definite advice. No, the thing to do was to be ready. When the time came, they could warn Gordon. If he ignored it—

He went to his room and prepared to keep a long vigil. He read for hours, doggedly, finishing a novel. Then he rose, yawned, stretched and looked at the time. Ten minutes to four. He'd better get some sleep. He was just taking off his tie when the music began.

He stopped, his hands still on the tie. His face stared back at him, tensely, from the mirror. Then what he strained for, waited with pounding pulse for, happened. The music stopped suddenly, on a crashing discord. Stopped as it had the night when Zangara the assassin was about to strike!

Nat flung himself at the door. Tyler was just emerging from his own room. Without a word, the two men ran down the long hallway. Tyler opened the door. It was quite dark. Nat fumbled for the switch. When the lights came on, they saw Ruth standing still in the middle of the floor, her fingers caressing the strings, her face dead white.

"Thank God you've come!" she said. "Quick! There's so little time. Phone Gordon. *There's murder in the air!*"

Nat sprang to the phone, dialed the operator, barked Gordon's private number, urged the utmost speed. Ruth had begun to speak again.

"Warn him that the assassin is about to strike," she said. "The danger is *immediate.* It's a matter of minutes at the most. I can feel it. . . . *Death*—waiting—waiting—but horribly imminent—dreadfully close!"

THE dark house on the rolling hillside of Westchester slumbered quietly. At the main entrance Cooke, the lean man with the hooked nose, was passing the time of night with Nelson, the roaming sentry. It was five minutes to four.

The phone at Gordon's bedside jangled. He was awake in an instant. The private wire! He seized it quickly, without bothering to turn on the light.

"Hello," he said.

"Mr. Gordon," said an excited voice. "This is Nat Benson."

"Are you crazy?" barked Gordon. "I thought I told you—"

The voice interrupted peremptorily: "Don't be a fool! I'm trying to warn you. You are in great danger! At any moment you—"

"Good God, man, let me *alone!*" Gordon cried angrily. "Can't you understand—"

Another voice came on the phone, suddenly, tense, vibrant, a girl's voice.

"Mr. Gordon!" it said. "*Look* out! Some one is about to fire!"

Gordon, in a swift reflex motion, flung himself sidewise in the bed. Then, simultaneously, there was a spurt of flame, and the crash of a pistol-shot.

Ruth, on the other end of the wire, turned a white face toward her father.

"It's happened," she said dully.

Don't miss the next installment of this unique story—in the July issue.

The Sportsman's Scrapbook

By EWING WALKER

VII—Bull Baiting

NOTICE! On Monday next there will be a bull baited at the Bull Ring in Sedgley when a £5 wager will be laid on Mr. Wilke's dog Teazer of Wednesbury that he pins the bull's nose within an hour. Entries of dogs can be made at Mr. Perry's on or before Saturday. Fee, 5 shillings.

TEAZER won for his backers, but paid dearly. The bull, with Teazer swinging from his nose, broke loose, ran a considerable distance, and—freed of Teazer when the flesh of his nostrils tore loose—proceeded to trample to death his pugnacious adversary.

Similar notices had been appearing for several hundred years. Good Queen Bess was an ardent votary of bull- and bear-baiting and she keenly deplored the inroads which playhouses threatened to make in the sanguinary sport.

The dogs first used were active, powerful animals, a variety of English mastiff; the bull-dog, as we know that undershot worthy, came later.

It was a national sport. Noblemen, at specified times, presented bulls to their tenants for baiting, and as late as 1738 fines were imposed for "not baiting bulls" and for "killing bulls unbaited."

A rope about fifteen feet in length was fastened at the base of the animal's horns and the other end to a stake in the ground, thus giving the bull a circle of about thirty feet in diameter.

In the inner ring stood the dogs held in leash. In an outer ring clustered the eager spectators. One dog at a time was released and made for the bull, whose horns, if sharp, had been covered with a wooden sheath.

If the bull is wise at the game, he will not try to gore the dog, but instead, to get his horns under him and toss him so high the fall will stun him or perhaps break his back. The dog has all the best of it. His friends stand ready with long poles held slantwise, the object being to somewhat break the dog's fall by letting him slide down these; others bend over, endeavoring to let him fall upon their backs; the skilled gunsmiths of Birmingham would catch the falling dog in their apron.

Casualties were common, for not infrequently the tormented bull would break loose.

As late as 1822 stage-coaches would pause so their passengers might enjoy the bull-baitings along the way; and in 1829 the parishioners of Christ Church, West Bromwich, arranged such an entertainment for their clergyman.

Jack Willets was far-famed as a "bullot." But Jack, returning from a trip to Spain, decided the British event was too drab; he would inject some color and pageantry. So, in 1743, the sober town-crier, bedecked in a new gaudy uniform, led the procession that escorted the bull, gay with ribbons and garlands, to the stake. Jack, wearing his old uniform and a wicked Spanish sword, was the proud master of ceremonies. The band was comprised of a wooden-legged fiddler and an asthmatic piper, supported by the village morris-dancers.

Numerous dogs were rendered *hors de combat;* one man was tossed violently by the bull against the barriers; the bull broke loose; shouts, screams and curses filled the air. Women and children were trampled. Only Jack remained cool. Faint from loss of blood, the bull finally sank to the ground, whereupon Jack Willets, to crown his day of glory, dispatched him with his Spanish sword.

"There in the jovial days of yore,
The mad bull weltered in his gore,
And bullots trembled at his roar,
In the old days of Walsall.

"A cock, a bull, a surly bear,
A cur tossed yelping in the air,
These were the frolics of the fair,
In the old days of Walsall."

Big Jim

That legendary hero of the North, Paul Bunyan, was a mere piker beside Big Jim and his famous rival Pecos Bill. . . . A joyous tale by a gifted young writer.

YES, sir, 'twas up in the Wind River country that Big Jim was foaled. Right there where the men all grow eighteen hands high, an' every baby puncher uses a six-gun handle for a teethin'-ring.

Big Jim, he was a rip-snortin' son-of-a-gun right from the start. His mother took one look at him, an' she sang him this song, kind o' sad:

You're just a baby cowboy,
An' you'll die as the cowboy dies.
You was born to be a killer,
'Cause I see it in your eyes.

An' so Big Jim, that was Little Jim then, kept a-growin' an' a-growin', until presently he was most as good a puncher as his daddy. He could ride, rope, an' shoot with any cowboy on the Lazy K Bar, an' he had two notches on his gun-handle before he was a twelve-year-old.

One day his daddy called him: "Little Jim!" said he. An' Jim got so mad he couldn't scarcely see. The blue fire jumped right out of his eyes.

"I aint Little Jim no more," he said. "From now on—

I'm Big Jim Turner, from the Lazy K Bar,
I aim to spread my loop afore I git far.
I'm a pizen Gila monster from out of the sky,
I'm a ridin' son o' thunder on the fly."

With that his daddy looked at him kind o' sad-like, an' he saw it wasn't any use to argue. So he said: "I seen it comin', son. It's the itchin' foot, like I had when I came out from ol' Kaintuck'. You wasn't never born to die with your boots off. So go spread your loop, son, an' don't ever wear a glove on your right hand. From now on you're Big Jim Turner, from the Lazy K Bar."

So Big Jim went into the ranch-house, an' greased up his boots with bear-grease, an' went out to catch up his blue roan mare that was smarter than most men an' could turn on a dime. Jim drew his six-gun faster than a man can see. He shot once, half an inch to the side of the right front ear of his mare, an' she came a-runnin' like a streak of light.

Jim said nary word, but turned an' walked back to the pole corral, his blue roan mare a-followin' him like a little lamb. He threw his silver-mounted center-fire saddle on her, buckled on his chaps, an' was plumb ready for to pull his freight. He took a last look around the home ranch, an' then turned to the mare, throwed a leg across her, and sang:

Foot in the stirrup,
An' a hand on the horn,
Best damn' cowboy
Ever was born!

Big Jim lit out south, his blue roan mare a-eatin' up the miles on a runnin' walk. He was pretty sad for a while about leavin' the old Lazy K Bar, but the birds were all a-makin' music, an' the spring sun was a-shinin', an' the

Comes Ridin'

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

By BEN NEWCOMER

"I seen Pecos Bill ridin' hell-fer-leather on his grizzly bear, down a ridge. He was runnin' down a timber-wolf, and the poor brute was yelpin' in terror."

breeze singin' through the jack-pines in the little cañons. So pretty soon he perked up an' began to listen to the saddle-leather a-creakin' under him kind o' rhythmical. He looked right handsome, too, with his chest a-swellin' out underneath his beaded vest, an' the silver conchas on his chaps shinin' in the sun.

Well sir, Big Jim rode along on his blue roan mare that was smarter than most men an' could make sixty miles a day an' never turn a hair. Never a soul did he see exceptin' for stray cow-brutes an' coyotes till along about sundown, when he came rattlin' out of a little cañon an' saw the town of Thirty-Mile below him. He cut off the main road, an' came slidin' right down the bluff that overhung the town. The citizens watched him comin' in a cloud of dust, an' wondered at the color of his blue roan mare.

An' that, folks, is how:

Big Jim Turner came a-ridin' down the trail
With his silver spurs a-jinglin'
An' the Devil on his tail.
He didn't have a dollar an' his throat was full o' dust,
He was lookin' for excitement,
'Cause his gun was like to rust.

Jim left his horse standin' outside the First Chance Saloon, an' went a-stridin' in. He didn't have but a lone four-bit piece in his pocket, but he was born lucky an' knew it, so he matched the bartender for a drink an' won. The bar-keep got out his toughest forty-rod, an' poured out four fingers, just to test Jim out. But Jim took her down an' never blinked an eye. First he tried a black-jack game, an' ran up quite a stake. He was wonderin' at his good luck, so it didn't surprise him any when a dance-hall girl called Lou motioned him inside. She told him the game was crooked, an' that they were buildin' him for a fall, thinkin' he had a roll.

So Jim cashed his chips, an' went out to see that his blue roan mare was taken care of. When he came back in, he saw that a gambler named Smithy, who laid a claim to Lou, was workin' himself up with whisky, an' eyin' him. But Jim just laughed in his face.

"I'm Big Jim Turner, from the Lazy K Bar," he said. "I'm a large curly wolf, an' it's my night to howl. I'm a ridin' son o' thunder, Mr. Smith, an' if you crave to call my hand, there aint no better time than right now."

Smithy went for his derringer like a scared antelope jumpin' out of the brush, but Jim drew from the hip so fast you couldn't see him move. There was only one shot, an' presently Jim was filin' another notch in his gun-handle.

Well, Big Jim camped down in Thirty-Mile for two-three days, makin' a play for the girl called Lou; but she saw she wasn't the kind for a fellow like him. "Big Jim," said she, "I've seen your kind

before. Your itchin' foot'll carry you into far places, an' your nervous gun-hand will land you in lots o' trouble. This is goin' to sound strange, comin' from a girl like me, but you're a fine up-standin' feller, an' here is a little advice:

Jest take a little tip from me:
Of evils in this world there are three.
So stay away from cards an' likker,
But a skirt'll get you quicker,
'Cause a woman's always prone to jealousee."

With that she kissed him an' sent him ridin' off south on his blue roan mare, his chaps a-flappin' in the breeze. An' that's how Big Jim Turner got his first lesson in stayin' away from gamblin', women an' whisky.

Well, Jim kept a-driftin' along, with no particular place to go, an' no special time to get there. Daytimes the changin' scenery kept him interested, an' at night-fall the coyotes sang him to sleep from the hill-tops. Finally the money he'd won gave out, an' said he: "Blue, we can't ride the grub-line no longer. We got to get us a job." So his mare nick-ered to show she'd understood, an' took off across the country on her runnin' walk that could cover sixty miles a day. Presently they came to a ranch-house, an' there was a big crowd of punchers standin' round the corral. Inside the cor-ral there was a big rangy bay outlaw stal-lion a-kickin' an' a-rarin', an' the puncher on top of him was pullin' leather for all he was worth. All his pullin' did him no good, though, because presently the cinch broke, an' the puncher an' the saddle went a-sailin' plumb out of the corral, to land flat in the dust.

Standin' alongside the fence was a dark-haired, likely-lookin' girl, about nineteen or twenty. Big Jim took one look at her, an' his heart went a-flutter-in' in his chest like a new-hatched sage-chicken. The girl's eyes were a-blazin'.

Neither was faster than the other, so there they stood, holdin' their guns!

"If none of you so-called bronc-busters can ride old Diablo, I'll ride him my-self!" said she.

Big Jim heard her, an' climbed down from his blue roan mare. It took him just three strides to walk over.

"I'm Big Jim Turner," said he, "from the Lazy K Bar. I'm a ridin' buster from up in the Wind River country where the men all grow eighteen hands high. I kin ride anything that's got four legs an' wears hair, an' I aint goin' to stand by while a woman rides a outlaw broomtail."

The men standin' round looked kind o' sheepish as Jim took down his braided buckskin lariat.

Inside of a minute an' a half Big Jim had thrown his saddle on the bay out-law, an' had climbed aboard. Well sir, then there was such a ride as you never heard tell of. That outlaw horse sun-fished an' crow-hopped an' swapped ends, a-squealin' at every jump. He bucked across the corral an' back again ten times, but Big Jim rode him straight up an' rolled a cigarette in the air, a-smilin' easy-like all the time. Finally the wicked look went out of the out-law's eyes, an' Jim shouted: "Open the gate!"

So Jim rode old Diablo out of the gate, an' he was just as docile as a little lamb. "Here's your bronc, ma'am," said he to the dark-haired girl, 'lightin' down an' handin' her the reins.

"Big Jim Turner," said she, "you've rode your way into a job on my ranch any time you want it. My name is Conchita, an' I want to say that we never saw a prettier rider than you hereabouts."

" 'Ceptin' mebbe Pecos Bill, from down Texas way," put in one of the men.

"Who is this here Pecos Bill?" in-quired Big Jim, a-frownin'. "If there's a better man on this or any other range, I want to meet up with him!"

So they all gathered round an' told him all about Pecos Bill, the wild punch-er of the Rio Grande, who was raised with the wolves, an' used a rattlesnake for a quirt. They told him how Pecos Bill couldn't find a horse big enough to mount him, so he went out an' caught a grizzly bear for a cow-pony. They told him how whenever Bill wanted a

light for his cigarette, he hit a piece of granite with his fist until the sparks flew, an' how he was greased lightnin' with a six-gun.

"Well," said Jim, "I got a hankerin' to meet up with this here Pecos Bill feller." But he took another look at Conchita, an' her eyes were a-pleadin' with him, so he decided to stay on awhile. So after that, Big Jim rode out with the punchers every morning, an' did the work of three ordinary men. Pretty soon whenever Conchita's cattle heard him comin', they'd all bunch up an' come a-runnin', because they knew it wasn't any use to run away. Life got to be pretty much all the same for Big Jim, exceptin' when he an' Conchita would go walkin' under the big yellow moon at night.

Yes sir, things were pretty dull—that is, until the Chisholm Kid started in to rustlin' Conchita's cattle. Now, a lot of you folks have heard lies concernin' how the Kid was killed, but it wasn't any sheriff that got the Chisholm Kid. It was Big Jim Turner, from the Lazy K Bar, just like the song says:

The Chisholm Kid, he fanned his gun,
An' he roamed both wide an' far.
No livin' man could face him 'neath the shinin' sun
But Big Jim Turner, of the Lazy K Bar.

Yes sir, Big Jim had the Indian sign on the Kid for fair, but still Conchita's cattle kept disappearin'. So Jim sent the Chisholm Kid a challenge, sayin' that he was a yellow-bellied snake if he didn't show up in the town of Big Springs on a certain day. Of course no self-respectin' bad-man could turn down a challenge like that, so the Kid was there all right when Big Jim came ridin' in on his blue roan mare, with Conchita followin' on old Diablo, unbeknownst to him. Jim was a-walkin' down the main street, free an' easy-like, when the Kid stepped out through the doors of the Oro y Plata Saloon behind him, an' got the drop on him.

"Big Jim," said he, "yore ridin'-days is over. You may be a ridin' son o' thunder from the Wind River country, but you're goin' to eat hot lead now!"

Just then Conchita came ridin' up from behind, an' called out to the Kid, real sudden-like. He turned his eyes a second, an' Big Jim drew like lightnin', to drop him in the dust. An' that's the straight of how the Chisholm Kid was killed.

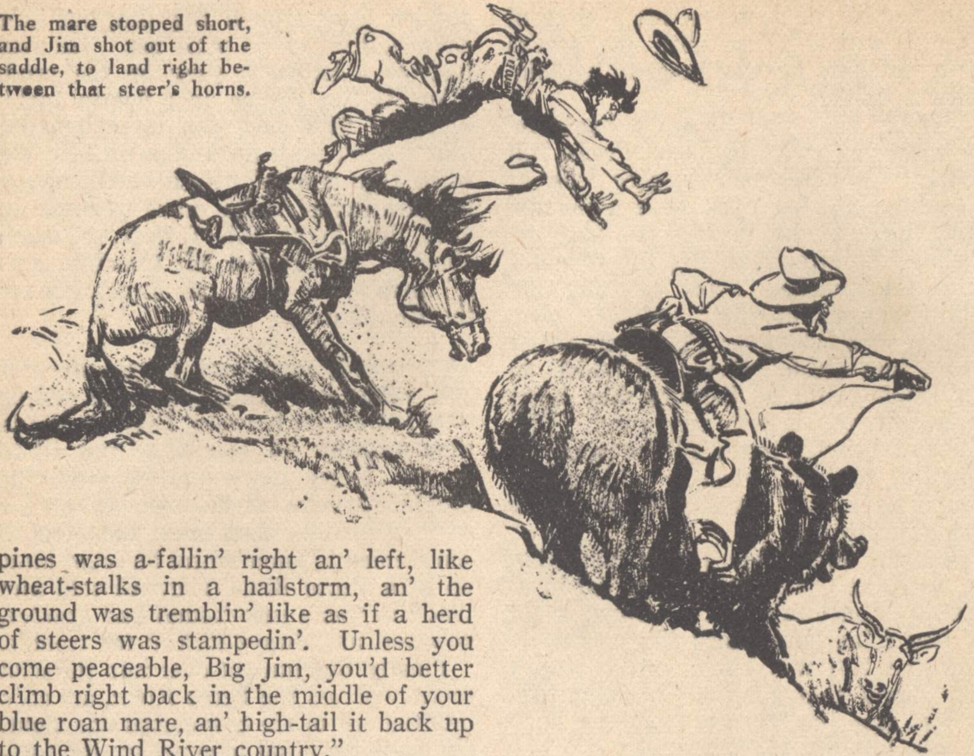
Conchita came runnin' up, cryin', to put her arms around Big Jim, but he'd have nothin' to do with her. He was mad as a longhorn steer on the prod. "I'm Big Jim Turner, an' a fightin' fool," said he. "I'll have you to understand that I don't need no woman to help me when I go gunnin'. Besides which, my feet are itchin', an' I crave to meet up with this Pecos Bill I hear so much about." So Big Jim left Conchita cryin' there in the street, an' struck out for the Rio Grande.

As he rode southward, the country got wilder an' wilder, an' the people were few an' far between. Even the cattle were scrawny, an' seemed to run all to horns. Every place Jim stopped, the people marveled at his size, an' at the color of his blue roan mare, but none of 'em seemed to know where he could meet up with Pecos Bill. They all told him that Bill was a sure-'nough bad *hombre,* however, an' always lookin' for trouble.

Finally Big Jim got over into the wild country across the Pecos River, an' rode into the last of the cow-camps one night. He made his usual inquiry, an' the foreman asked him to 'light an' eat.

"So you're Big Jim Turner," said the foreman, "an' you're lookin' for Pecos Bill. Well, I seen him ridin' hell-fer-leather on his grizzly bear, down a ridge west of here yesterday morning. He was runnin' down a timber wolf, an' the poor brute was yelpin' in terror at every jump."

"I seen him the day before," said another one of the punchers, "up in the timber. He was mad, an' clearin' out a path with his bare hands. The jack-



The mare stopped short, and Jim shot out of the saddle, to land right between that steer's horns.

pines was a-fallin' right an' left, like wheat-stalks in a hailstorm, an' the ground was tremblin' like as if a herd of steers was stampedin'. Unless you come peaceable, Big Jim, you'd better climb right back in the middle of your blue roan mare, an' high-tail it back up to the Wind River country."

Well sir, Jim 'lowed he was goin' to have a run-in with Pecos Bill, no matter what happened. "'Cause," said he, "I'm a pizen Gila monster from the sky. I'm a ridin' son o' thunder on the fly, an' there's no man livin' can face me down. I cut my teeth on a six-gun handle, an' my mother used to feed me rattlesnakes for breakfast, regular." The cowpunchers saw it was no use to argue with him, because he was as dead set on trouble as a bay outlaw comin' out of the buckin' chute. So they bedded him down for the night, an' he got up the next mornin', a-rarin' an' full of fight.

He climbed aboard his blue roan mare that was smarter than most men, an' lit out into the wild country, the light of battle a-shinin' in his eyes. Pretty soon he heard a deep rumblin' noise that seemed to come from a little coulee off to his left. Old Blue pricked up her ears an' headed straight for it. The rumblin' kept a-gettin' louder, an' presently Big Jim an' Blue came onto the cause of it. It was Pecos Bill, fast asleep on the coulee bank, a-snorin' for all he was worth. The ground was shakin' with the sound of it, an' Big Jim thought he'd never seen so much man all in one piece as he saw a-lyin' on that arroyo bank.

But he was nothin' daunted. "Git up, Pecos Bill!" he shouted. "Git up, an' let's see if you're a better man than I am!"

Pecos Bill rose up an' stretched, his mighty muscles ripplin' underneath the hide. "Who might you be, young feller?" he inquired, kickin' aside a boulder with the toe of his boot.

"I might be Daniel Boone, but I aint," said Jim. "I'm Big Jim Turner, from the Lazy K Bar, an' I aim to prove that I'm a better man than you are." With that, he 'lighted down from his mare.

Well sir, Pecos Bill began to get mad, right then and there. He let a roar out of him like the bellow of a big bay steer, an' made his brag, like the song says:

I'm a howler from the prairies of the West,
If you want to die with terror, look at me.
I'm chain-lightnin'—if I aint, may I be blessed!
I'm the snorter of the boundless prairie.

"Well," said Big Jim, "I been around some myself:

I been bit by wild tarantulas,
An' the timber wolf I've dared.
The grizzly grim, I've battled him,
In his native wildwood lair.

Whereupon the both of them went for their guns so fast you couldn't see their hands move. But neither of them was any faster than the other, so they stood there holdin' their guns, each knowin'

that he couldn't pull trigger fast enough to beat the other fellow.

Finally Big Jim smiled. "Well," he said, "I come from the Wind River country where the men all grow eighteen hands high, an' where every baby puncher cuts his teeth on a six-gun handle, but I never seen a faster draw than that. Looks like we'll have to find us some other form of amusement." So he threw his gun aside; Pecos Bill did likewise.

"I've heard you lay some claim to bein' a cowpuncher, Big Jim," said Pecos Bill. "I know where there's a wild herd of longhorns. If you think you're man enough to hog-tie cattle 'long-side of me, why, come on. Wait till I call my mount." He gave a whistle so loud that it woke all the Mexicans on the Rio Grande from their siestas, an' presently his grizzly bear came a-lopin' out of the timber. Pecos Bill looked sideways at Big Jim, but Jim never turned a hair, an' the blue roan mare just cocked one ear up, sassy-like.

SO Pecos Bill climbed on his grizzly an' went tearin' across country, goin' through brush patches like a steam roller. But Big Jim an' his mare were right behind him every jump. Presently they came onto a smooth green valley where a herd of the wickedest-lookin' longhorns you ever saw were a-grazin'.

"Well, here's my little pets," said Pecos Bill. "Tie into 'em!" An' he went ridin' into the middle of the herd, bull-doggin' those big rawboned steers right an' left, from off his grizzly's back. He handled them like they were spring calves, hog-tiein' them with the long cane grass that grew in the valley. Big Jim wasn't far behind, his rawhide reata a-flyin' through the air like a blacksnake, an' his blue roan mare holdin' back tight on the rope, so Jim could run up an' hog-tie a steer after he'd been roped an' thrown.

There was such a bellowin' of cattle as never was heard before or since in all that Texas country. Every time Pecos Bill would hog-tie a steer, he'd call out his total: an' every time Big Jim got a longhorn down, he'd do the same. Finally, "Five hundred an' ninety-five!" called out Pecos Bill.

"Five hundred an' ninety-five!" Jim shouted back. They both looked around, an' there the whole herd was, lyin' hog-tied in that valley—all except one, that is. He was a big rawboned critter, an' he was high-tailin' it for a coulee like a scared coyote. Both Big Jim an' Pecos Bill jumped for their mounts an' started after him, neck an' neck. They caught up to him, goin' hell-for-leather, just as he slid down over the coulee bank.

Pecos Bill's grizzly started slidin' down the bank too, but the blue roan mare stopped short, an' Big Jim Turner shot out of the saddle, to land right between that steer's horns, at the bottom of the coulee. Well, by the time Pecos Bill arrived, Jim had the steer bull-dogged an' hog-tied.

Pecos Bill saw he was beaten, all right, an' he let a bellow out of him like a mosshorn pawin' the ground. He dismounted an' came chargin' at Big Jim, his big fists a-swingin' through the air. Jim knew that if he ever let Pecos Bill get a hold on him, he'd be mashed like a prairie dog in a rattlesnake's coils. So he kept a-dancin' in an' out, hittin' Pecos Bill just enough to make him mad

Well sir, for the better part of twc hours those two giants battled in the afternoon sun, an' every blow they landed was enough to kill an ordinary man. Bill finally began to see that his blind rushes weren't gettin' him anywhere, so he reached down right quick, picked up a boulder the size of a man's head, an' let fly at Big Jim. Jim was quick enough to duck it, though, an' it buried itself three feet in the coulee bank back of him.

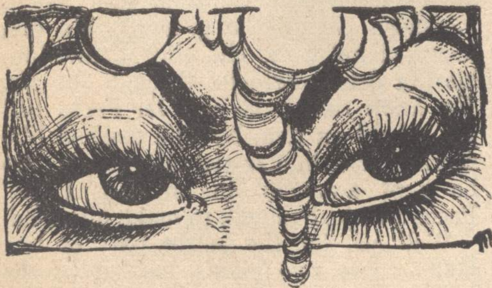
Then Big Jim really began to see red, an' let loose a blow like was never seen before. He pulled it from his boot-tops, an' Pecos Bill could no more dodge it than a statue, because he was off-balance from throwin' the rock. Jim's fist thudded on his jaw like a mule's kick landin' on a shaky corral gate, an' Pecos Bill dropped like a fallin' tree.

WHEN he came to, Jim was a-standin' over him. "Well, Pecos Bill," said Jim, "you've met Big Jim Turner from the Wind River country where the men all grow eighteen hands high. An' you'd better light out of this country in a hurry, 'cause I'm a fightin' fool, an' if you're not careful, I might really git mad an' hurt you." Pecos Bill said never a word, but rose up an' called his mount. The last anybody ever saw of him in that Texas country, he was headin' due west, as fast as his grizzly bear could travel.

An' that, folks, is how Big Jim came a-ridin' down the trail an' acquired his first herd of longhorn steers.

It Happened In Port Said

By WILLIAM J. MAKIN



In this tremendously exciting exploit, the keen Intelligence officer known to the natives as the Red Wolf of Arabia rescues an English girl—and once more comes into conflict with the Woman of Antioch.

Illustrated by John C. Clymer

"GIT out and stay out! We don't want your sort poking their noses in 'ere, see!"

The Cockney in the bowler hat gave the fair-haired youth a push that sent him sprawling into the sand and mushy fruit débris. For one moment, in the moist darkness that floated over this Arab quarter of Port Saïd, the Cockney in his bowler hat assumed the terrifying proportions of a guardian fiend. He was silhouetted against an amber light that suggested an inferno within. Then the vision was lost as he slammed a door. One amber light remained, revealing to the pale youth that this dubious paradise called itself L'Inferno.

He rose slowly. As he dusted himself with grimy hands, three fezzed Egyptians standing in the vicinity laughed. The young man scowled. Then he looked about him. He was standing in the sand-dusted square of Port Saïd's Arab town. Against one edge of the square a few masts of feluccas rubbed against each other as the waters of Lake Menzaleh licked the rotten timbers of the wharf.

"You want buy nice amber necklace? Ver' good—ver' cheap!"

The fair-haired youth swung round to find an Egyptian peddler of cheap jewelry at his side. Beneath his fez, cocked at a jaunty angle, the fellow grinned and winked an eye.

"The ladies 'ere, they like these necklaces," went on the peddler. "They think you mighty fine fellow if you give them necklaces of amber. Real amber. Ver' good—ver' cheap."

"I don't want any of your damned necklaces," said the youth.

The smile on the face of the Egyptian widened.

"Why not buy amber necklace for your sweetheart in England?" he went on. "English girls like these necklaces. Bring them luck. Ver' good—ver' cheap."

"My sweetheart!" A sob escaped from the young man's throat. He clutched the dirty but gayly colored *kuftan* of the peddler. "Look here," he cried, "do you know Port Saïd well?"

The peddler opened his eyes in astonishment.

"Do I know Port Saïd!" He grinned again. "It is my 'ome."

"Good!" The young man was plainly excited. "I suppose you know all these dens in the Arab quarters."

"Where the—ah—ladies dance and—"

"Exactly."

The peddler spat in the sand.

"I know them as well as—I know the back of my hand."

"Good. Which is the worst?"

The peddler drew back.

"What—ah—did you say?"

"Which is the worst of these damned dens? I—I've just been thrown out of *L'Inferno*. Is there a worse den?"

His clutch upon the startled peddler tightened. The fellow began to whine.

"That first walk in Africa was our last walk together."

"Could I but lock my fingers round her throat!"

muttered the blind man.

"There are plenty of worse places, Mister. But please, I only sell amber necklaces. Ver' good—ver' cheap."

"I'll buy all your cursed necklaces," went on the young man excitedly, "if you'll be my dragoman for tonight. I want to go into all the worst dens in Port Saïd, the very worst, you understand. I want to see the face of every European woman that this Arab town holds."

"European women! There no European ladies," whined the Egyptian.

The young man thrust his pale face forward.

"Don't lie to me," he hissed. "I know Port Saïd well enough now. I've been a fortnight hunting—"

Again a sob choked his voice. The peddler was now eying him in a curious, appraising fashion.

"If I show you these dens," he asked, "how much you pay me?"

"Ten pounds. But I must see them all."

The peddler considered briefly.

"Ver' good," he smiled. "I leave my amber necklaces with a friend. One moment, please, Mister, and I come back."

THE young man found himself alone. He was an incongruous figure in that ill-lit sinister square. But Port Saïd saw thousands of incongruous figures walking the streets every week. They were tourists, bound for the Orient, probably for the first time. They purchased spotless white sun-helmets at Simon Arzt's, and drank tea served by shabbily dressed European waiters at the Casino Hotel. Many of them bought amber necklaces from the Egyptian peddlers.

"My sweetheart!" muttered the young man again, and a steely glitter flicked across his blue eyes.

"I am ready, Mister!" whispered a voice at his elbow.

The Egyptian with the jaunty fez was there, a grin on his brown face.

"Well, come on!" growled the fair-haired youth.

"One moment, Mister, please," whined the peddler. "We go into dangerous places. P'raps you gentleman enough to pay me half before we begin?"

The young man laughed harshly. He fumbled in his pocket and brought forth a wallet.

"Here you are! Five pounds. The other five when we finish."

The peddler licked his dirty thumb and counted the notes carefully. He

stowed them away within the folds of his gay *kuftan.*

"All ri', Mister," he grinned, and led the way out of the square into a street where pavement and road merged in one sandy defile. . . .

The peddler who sold amber necklaces did his work well that night. Followed by the fair-haired youth, he padded in his sandals down the trenches of Arab town where men selling rotting fruit and highly colored confectionery mixed with gossiping women, naked children and a medley of goats, sheep, hens and ducks.

They shouldered their way past men who created a pandemonium by shaking hand-bells and crying the delights of bilious cakes or poisonous lemonade hung in cases about their bodies. Negro women, walking Epstein sculptures, stalked past carrying piles of cakes on their heads with superb grace. And through this medley twisted an occasional cyclist, pedaling with bare feet, ringing his bell and shouting at the top of his voice.

BUT the fair-haired young man had no eyes for the streets. It was the gayly painted taverns and the miserably painted women that interested him. The peddler watched him from the corner of an eye as they sat in the infamous *Maison Dorée.*

The young man waved all preliminaries aside. He flung a pound note on the imitation Oriental stool and demanded to see the women entertainers.

"De—ladees!" corrected Madame, trying to hide the wisp of mustache above her capacious mouth. "Dey all European," she added.

Into the shoddy Oriental room, lit by garish kerosene lamps, the women filed. They babbled and circled about the fair-haired youth. They looked him over, but kept one eye on Madame, who perambulated the room with a swish of her lurid green silk frock.

And always the same scene was enacted. The fair-haired youth would rise eagerly as the women filed into the room. He would scan each face as it materialized from the darkness beyond. His blue eyes would blaze into each painted face. Smiles, laughter, endearing calls, oaths—they left him unmoved. His face would droop with disappointment at the entry of the last girl.

"Surely there are others?"

The proprietress shook her carefully arranged transformation.

"You 'ave seen all," she muttered.

"You are quite certain?"

"C'est toute, mon garçon!"

Once again his blue eyes would roam over the faces looking pallid and dead beneath the kerosene lamps. Greeks, Armenians, Bulgarians, an occasional Spanish girl, Levantines of all kinds, and once an Austrian girl. But always these faces disappointed him.

"Good night!" he would say curtly, and walk out.

"Mister ees difficult to please!" muttered Madame. But she pocketed the pound note with a grin.

For hour after hour, the peddler and the fair-haired young man shuffled futilely through the streets; from each place the young man turned away wearily.

AT last, as the dawn was flushing the eastern sky and a cool breeze rippled across from the Mediterranean, the young man and the Egyptian peddler seated themselves at the little table of a coffee-house in that square where their strange companionship had first begun. Already the amber light of *L'Inferno* was dimmed by the flamingo pink of the dawn. The cool breeze ruffled the fair hair of the young man, and he turned his tortured pale face toward it. A cup of Turkish coffee sat untasted before him.

"Supposing you tell me all about it," said a quiet, cultivated voice.

The young man turned his head swiftly. It was the Egyptian peddler who had spoken. He was removing his fez and also baring his head gratefully to that clean breeze. The young man saw that the peddler possessed a flaming crop of red hair.

"Who are you?" he asked in a whisper.

The peddler smiled.

"I am an Englishman. My name is Paul Rodgers. Some of my native friends call me the Red Wolf of Arabia. A sort of sobriquet, you know. I have a reason for wandering about this quarter in this garb at the moment, but I confess that it is the first time in Port Saïd that I have ever played guide to a young Haroun-al-Raschid. But Haroun-al-Raschid sought pleasure. What is it you are seeking in these damnable dens?"

There was silence for a moment. Then, quietly, the young man said:

"I am seeking my wife."

Paul Rodgers sipped his coffee. He placed the cup back carefully into the saucer and then stretched a lean brown hand across the table. He gripped the young man's hand in his own.

"I want to help you," he said impulsively. "I can see that you're in a hell much worse than those we passed through during the night. Won't you let me help you?"

For hour after hour the peddler and the young man shuffled futilely through the streets.

The young man regarded him wearily.

"Of what use can any one man be," he replied, "when the whole police force of this cursed city has failed? I go to police headquarters at eleven o'clock every morning. I shall go there this morning. And they'll shuffle with irritation. Even the Egyptian policeman on duty now scowls at me. I'm a damned nuisance—the man who keeps asking if his wife has been found."

"So your wife disappeared, eh?" murmured Rodgers, lighting a cigarette.

"She disappeared while I sat drinking coffee, exactly as I'm doing now," said the young man.

"But you're not drinking your coffee," urged Rodgers. "Supposing you try, and, here, smoke a cigarette. Then tell me the story in your own words, Mr.—er—"

"Peter Casson," replied the young man. "I'm an attorney. Not many clients, so far, but I've been working hard and have become known a bit. You understand?"

"I think I do."

"Two months ago I married the girl I always wanted to marry—Jill. A wonderful girl. Fair-haired—oh, I can't describe her. I've tried to do it for these damned policemen. If you want a description of sorts you can get it at the police station. To me, she's just—Jill."

Rodgers nodded.

"Both our parents are comfortable—financially. They own neighboring estates in Somerset. That's how we met. My father was keen about the marriage, and so were her people—the Huxleys. I'd been doing sufficiently well in my practice for Father to feel satisfied I'd make a go of it. In other words, nobody saw any reason why we shouldn't be married. And so we were. At Taunton. My God, she was wonderful—"

THE young man drained his coffee at a gulp. His face was flushed a little as he continued:

"Then came this mad idea of a Mediterranean cruise for a honeymoon. We were both too much in love with each other to care a damn where we went. Margate or the Mediterranean would have been the same. And so it happened to be the Mediterranean.

"The ship was comfortable. Nice people aboard. Neither Jill nor myself troubled much about the other passengers. We were discovering each other, and what was all the more delightful, falling more and more in love if it were possible. We saw Naples, pottered about Pompeii, touched at Malta, landed at all kinds of places, but all the time we were so busy gazing into each other's eyes that we might just as well have stayed in Somerset. If only we had!"

There was silence for a moment. Rodgers had covered his hair with the fez again, slanting it at a jaunty angle.

"Then we came to Port Saïd. We were to stay exactly three days. Jill was entranced with the place. Africa always meant a lot to her. She hurried me over breakfast. Within an hour of the ship entering port we were ashore and walking the streets. There's something glorious in that first walk beneath an African sun. . . . But that first walk in Africa was our last walk together."

AND to hide his emotion, the fair-haired young man lighted a cigarette jerkily. He rubbed his eyes as though they smarted from the smoke.

"We sat down in a little café to drink the Turkish coffee that we ordered. The walk in the hot sunshine had tired us. It was then Jill noticed that we were sitting opposite the post office. She pointed it out to me. 'It makes me think of home,' she said. 'I must go across the road and send that cable to Mother.' She rose. I started to get up too. But she saw that I was tired, and insisted on going alone. Like a fool, or rather because that damned African sun had lulled me into laziness, I let her go. 'What are you going to tell your mother?' I asked, as she stepped toward the road. She turned. Her face, beneath the shade of the broad-brimmed hat that she wore, seemed more beautiful than ever. 'Just three words,' she called back. *'Adorably happy—Jill.'*

"I saw her enter the doorway of the post office. She disappeared. I sat smoking a cigarette and enjoying my coffee. I waited fifteen minutes. Then I became worried. Since we had been married, I don't suppose we had been out of each other's sight for more than fifteen minutes. It sounds absurd, I know, but there it is. I stared at all the people entering or leaving that post office—Egyptians, Greeks, Armenians and an occasional European. I even noticed a few passengers from the ship. But not a sign of my wife.

"I paid for the coffee and walked through that doorway myself. The usual babel proceeded there. No sign of Jill. I came out. I walked up and down the street. Still no sign of her. Then I got

into a panic. I almost ran back to the ship. I questioned the stewards, the ship's officers, anybody. Nobody had seen her. I stayed on the ship until evening. She did not return. Then I went to the police headquarters. . . .

"There is nothing more to tell. I've never seen Jill since she entered that post office. I stayed on in Port Saïd. The ship sailed away. I shall remain in this damned city until I trace her."

SILENCE followed the telling of this story. The gray eyes of Rodgers gazed in the direction of that house called *L'Inferno* where some hours previously a bowler-hatted Cockney had flung the young man into the débris of the square. With a sigh, the Intelligence officer turned and regarded the young man.

"My dear boy," he said kindly, "these weeks must have been hell for you."

Casson did not reply.

"What induced you to search these dens of Arab town?"

At this question the young man laughed harshly.

"Because police headquarters told me that Port Saïd was now a clean town. They assured me that the so-called 'sink of iniquity' disappeared with the war. They also told me I had been reading sensational fiction when I suggested that Jill had been carried away to some den. One white officer, bless his soul, told me that the League of Nations had stamped out anything in the nature of white-slave traffic. Port Saïd, they insisted, again and again, was a clean town. A clean town! Some of those fellows are as ignorant of this Arab town as I am of Limehouse. But I can certainly tell them now that Port Saïd is as foul as could be."

The young man twisted the cigarette between his fingers and flung it into the sand.

"Nevertheless," said Rodgers quietly, "I think police headquarters were nearer the truth in their ignorance than you are with all your knowledge of Arab town."

"What d'you mean?"

"I'm almost sure that you could go on searching these dens for the next three months and you wouldn't find your wife."

"Why?"

"Because, my dear boy, the prize was too big, too costly for these rats to dare to steal. Believe me, the Marseillaise in her green silk frock whom we saw at the Maison Dorée, the Arab women of Les Folies Bergères, and the Kurd of the Pension Constantinople, have no difficulty at all in obtaining the women they require. The traffic is old and well-organized, and they can smile at the international office in Geneva so long as their own international office in Marseilles remains open. And because of this they are not likely to resort to such sensational methods as kidnaping a white woman in one of the main streets of Port Saïd."

"Then you think Jill is—safe?" cried the young man, anguish in his voice.

"I only suggest that you are seeking her in the wrong quarter," replied Rodgers gravely.

"Where, then, shall I seek her?"

The knuckles of his hands showed white beneath the tan.

Rodgers was about to reply when a blind Egyptian beggar squatted in the sand at their feet. His sightless eyes and scarified face gazed up at them. He whined dismally for alms and presented a dirty paw.

CASSON half turned away, but Paul Rodgers fumbled in his *kuftan* and dropped some coins—one, two, three—in playful methodical fashion into the outstretched palm.

"May Allah protect you!" whined the blind beggar.

"And open your—ears," murmured Paul Rodgers incongruously.

The blind man half rose, shuffling in the sand; the Intelligence officer, staring away from him, nevertheless leaned negligently toward him.

"She is in Port Saïd," murmured the beggar in Arabic.

"She?"

"The Woman of Antioch."

A steely glint came into those gray eyes. Rodgers' lips set in a hard line.

"I heard it in the beggars' coffeehouse," said the blind man. "She has business here. By Allah, could I but lock my fingers round her throat!" he muttered.

"Enough!" whispered Rodgers. "Go back and drink yourself stupid with coffee, but keep your ears open. And bring me more news this evening. There is other work for you. Listen!"

With his eyes fixed indifferently on the feluccas swinging away from the wharf toward the sunlit Lake Menzaleh, the Intelligence officer whispered in Arabic the story he had just heard from the fair-haired youth who sat before him. It was told in a few terse sentences. A

nod from the blind man was the only response. He gave a parting whine:

"Allah protect you!"

The next moment he had shuffled away in the sand.

Paul Rodgers regarded the astonished Peter Casson with a smile.

"One of my spies," he murmured.

"But a blind man!" protested the youth. "What can he see?"

"Nothing," replied Rodgers. "But because his eyes are sealed, his ears are all the more open. He hears more than many a man who has his eyes to gaze upon the world. People never imagine that a blind man can be dangerous."

"Is he dangerous?"

Rodgers smiled.

"Very dangerous," he said softly.

HE rose. The young man followed him, and talking together, they left the sinister square now flooded with morning sunshine. As they reached the house that called itself L'Inferno, the door opened, and the Cockney, still in his bowler hat, came forth yawning.

He spat disgustedly as the Egyptian peddler and the young Englishman passed by with their backs turned on Arab town. . . .

Paul Rodgers left the young man at his hotel.

"Give me forty-eight hours," he said, "and I'll bring you news of your wife. But for those forty-eight hours I want you to remain here and wait."

"Forty-eight hours! It's a lifetime," protested the haggard Peter Casson.

"Nevertheless, I want you to obey," insisted the Intelligence officer. "Swallow a sleeping draft, and try to rest. You need sleep. I promise you I'll have news of some kind."

"News! Of Jill!" cried the young man, and, flinging himself on the bed, he sobbed aloud. Quietly Rodgers tiptoed out of the room, and into the sunlit streets of Port Saïd with its lazy lounging crowds.

"So easy are promises," he murmured to himself.

Frankly, he had not the slightest idea where the wife of Peter Casson was to be found. The problem was disturbing his real activities in Port Saïd. Actually, he was in the garb of an Egyptian peddler in an endeavor to discover the inner organization of the hashish-smugglers who had made Port Saïd their headquarters. For while Rodgers had driven out their leader Prince Ali, the traffic continued. Well-advertised police raids having failed to stamp out the organization, the constabulary had shrugged their shoulders and handed the problem over to Paul Rodgers.

He ought to have been flattered. He *was* flattered. Strange legends had grown up about this slim red-haired man who could disguise himself so effectively as an Arab or an Egyptian. Again and again the Red Wolf of Arabia had succeeded where organized police effort had failed. His many exploits were as well known in the higher quarters as his brilliant piano-playing was known in all those ports that swelter on the shores of the Red Sea. Only to himself, and that strange creature known as the Woman of Antioch, his implacable enemy, were known his failures.

Would he fail again? The vision of that sobbing youth, lying across a bed and murmuring a girl's name, stiffened him. He dared not fail. Yet the whisper of a blind man had stopped the beating of his heart for a second. *She* was in Port Saïd. The Woman of Antioch! Once again they would meet. It was written, as the Arabs say.

"Insha 'allah," he murmured, with Arab fatalism.

For the moment he had to concern himself with the mystery of the missing Jill. A vague plan was forming in his mind. He padded softly along the wide streets of Port Saïd where cafés and shops were bustling with activity. A big ship was expected at the entrance to the canal within the hour. All the peddlers and touts were preparing themselves. The vendor of questionable postcards was methodically counting his stock. The *"galla galla"* man, or conjuror, was secreting the little fluffy chickens in his dirty *kuftan* ready to produce them from nowhere to the laughing delight of credulous passengers aboard the ship. The Armenian who hawked spurious and cheap Egyptian cigarettes was biding his time by smoking a cigarette that was not in his stock. The Turk who sold Oriental carpets made in Germany was festooning himself so that he resembled a caparisoned elephant.

WITH his tray of amber necklaces and cheap jewelry, Rodgers shuffled easily through this crowd. His business was not with the passengers of the big ship from Europe. He made his way toward the bazaar, the real Port Saïd where the women of Egyptian harems did their

shopping in ancient, veiled fashion. Rodgers knew that these black-veiled women, whose dark eyes alone were visible to the men, gossiped as freely as their white sisters shopping in the little towns of Europe. Scandal was whispered beneath the black veils. And it was the scandal of the harems that he wanted particularly to hear.

Dangling his enticing necklaces in a dirty brown hand, he took up his position outside a shop favored by Egyptian women of the better class. Around his neck he had hung several necklaces of a brilliant turquoise blue. They attracted the attention of many women, for such colors keep off the power of the evil eye.

Women passed in and out of the shop. Black *charshafs* rustled as they passed the slim brown Egyptian whose fez was cocked at such a jaunty angle. It was permitted for veils to be lifted on enter-

A whisper, almost inaudible: "She is staying in the house of Ahmed Abbas."

ing the shop, but they must be let fall before returning to the street. Nevertheless, more than one pair of dark eyes that had glimpsed the handsome Egyptian with the necklaces in the doorway seemed to forget until the very last moment the commands of the Koran.

Some of the women stopped, delicately fingering those tempting necklaces of brilliant turquoise. They asked the price in a whisper. A bold smile met them. They haggled. Rarely were the necklaces sold, but much whispered scandal came to the ears of the Egyptian peddler. Hour after hour he stayed there, until a tired look came into the gray eyes. He had heard much, yet nothing. The mystery of the white woman, who had walked into the post office and then disappeared, was still a mystery.

During the day the blind beggar whined his way along the street. He had presented a dirty paw to the peddler. And once again coins had been dropped into the outstretched palm—one, two, three—in methodical fashion.

"May Allah protect you!"

"And open your—ears."

A whisper, almost inaudible:

"She is staying in the house of Ahmed Abbas. He is a rich young man."

"Whom do you speak of?"

"The Woman of Antioch. The curse of Allah be upon her!"

"But the white woman, she who disappeared in the post office?"

"Nothing."

And with a grateful whine the beggar shuffled away.

"Nothing."

THAT was the admission Rodgers had to make that evening to the distraught young man pacing up and down the bedroom of his hotel. There was reproach in the young man's eyes.

"You said you would bring news. Some news."

"In forty-eight hours."

Paul Rodgers spoke confidently. But in his heart he knew that he was gambling on a chance. Secrets, and particularly the secrets of the harem, are well kept in Egypt. The whole of Port Saïd knew that the police were searching for a white woman who had disappeared, and lips were closed when the subject was mentioned.

"Don't despair!" were his parting words to Peter Casson.

That night he spent staggering between the many hashish-dens so carefully hidden away behind the shops of Port Saïd. Perhaps some smoker in the realm of fantasy would blurt out a few words that would send him nosing the right trail. With smarting eyes and reeling brain he entered one den after another. He listened carefully to the garrulous ecstasies of the hashish-smokers. But when the dawn again flushed the sky above Port Saïd with a flamingo pink, the secret was still a secret. He had learned nothing.

Twenty-four hours had passed. Once again the peddler of necklaces of a brilliant turquoise blue took up his stand outside the shop favored by Egyptian women of the better class.

In the rustle of their black *charshafs* passed the hours.

IT was at seven o'clock that evening that the Egyptian peddler came quietly into the room of the hotel where Peter Casson lay on his bed. The atmosphere was thick with cigarette-smoke. The eyes of the fair-haired youth were open.

"I have news," said Rodgers quietly.

The youth leaped from the bed.

"You have found her?"

Paul Rodgers shook his head.

"I'm not certain," he murmured. "But there is every possibility that you will see her—tonight."

"Then you do know where she is!" cried the young man.

Rodgers' strong hand gripped the other's arm.

"I want you to promise," he said quietly, "that you will obey me implicitly."

"Of course I will," said the youth impetuously. "But let us go at once and find her."

Again Paul Rodgers shook his head.

"It is not as easy as that!" he said.

"Jill is in danger?"

"At the moment, no. But one false step will ruin everything. It is you and I who will have to face danger tonight."

"I am ready," said the young man, straightening himself.

"Good!" Rodgers eyed his physique appraisingly. "There may be a rough-and-tumble—"

"All the better!"

"And therefore we must begin by getting into evening-dress at once," went on Rodgers imperturbably.

"Evening-dress!"

A slow smile sidled across the sunburnt face.

"You promised to obey me implicitly."

He gave a quick glance at the clock in the room. "Can you be dressed in half an hour? Shaved? Looking like a young English gentleman?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll be back for you. Remember, full evening-dress, tails and white waistcoat."

And with that enigmatic smile the Egyptian peddler slunk out of the room.

PETER CASSON needed no urging. He was ready within five minutes of the half-hour. He braced his muscles in anticipation of that rough-and-tumble promised him. Punctually at the half hour, there was a knock at the door. The young man opened it. He started back in astonishment. Standing there in immaculate evening-dress, his red hair smoothed and carefully parted, and the general air of a European man-about-town was Paul Rodgers.

"You look surprised," he laughed.

"I never imagined—" began Peter Casson, and then hesitated.

"That I could look like anything but an Egyptian peddler, eh? Well, I do find stiff shirts rather uncomfortable on occasions, but I think that at a time like the present they will be our safest breastplates."

"Why is that?" asked the young man, slipping a revolver into his pocket.

"Because nothing awes a native more than evening-dress," smiled Rodgers. "Half the secret of a British administration east and south of Suez is that we dress, religiously, for dinner. In this garb we could walk the worst streets of Port Saïd and be perfectly safe. It is as though we had donned a holy garment."

"Is that why you suggested it?" asked Peter Casson. He was walking alongside the immaculate Rodgers, as they made their way to the hotel entrance.

"Not entirely," murmured Rodgers. "We are going to an affair where evening-dress is *de rigueur*."

He stood on the steps of the hotel and lighted a cigarette. An Egyptian servant raced for a taxicab. As they were stepping into it, a blind beggar came whining at their feet.

"Go to the devil!" snarled Rodgers, pushing the fellow aside. But as he bent down to push the blind man aside, there was a whisper in Arabic.

"Allah's curse be on you!" spluttered the blind man, but the rest of his mouthings were lost in the grinding of the gears as the taxi-driver set off.

"Where are we going?" asked Peter Casson, gazing at the glittering lights that overhung the entrance to the Suez Canal.

"To the house of the richest Egyptian in Port Saïd," replied Paul Rodgers. "You will find it an interesting affair. Some of the best known people in Anglo-Egyptian society will be there tonight. I'm also told that several diplomatic representatives will be present."

"Oh, damn the diplomats!" cried the young man. "What about Jill?"

"My dear boy, keep your eyes open and your lips closed," was the quiet reply.

A drive of twenty minutes along the road to Ismaila brought them to a big house glittering with electric light, and set in the midst of a palm grove. The setting was ideal. The house was a mixture of Riviera villa and Cairo mosque.

The taxi throbbed gently at the entrance. Paul Rodgers, head thrown back with all the arrogance of a European who had lived long among natives, stepped out, followed by Peter Casson. The doorway was ablaze with light. Somewhere in the palm grove a band was playing, a brass band that mixed military marches and musical comedy melodies in an odd mélange.

A fat, smirking eunuch in gold-embroidered trousers, a curved sword at his side, bowed to the two Europeans in evening-dress. Without a word he led the way up a red-carpeted staircase, beneath a glittering electric chandelier, and between two rows of bowing servants.

AT the top of the stairs there waited a languorous-eyed hook-nosed Egyptian. He also was in evening-dress, but the black and white of his garb was relieved by a green Turkish order stretched across his shirt-front, diamond studs, and the brilliant red fez perched on his head. He held out a white-gloved hand.

"It is good of you, gentlemen, to honor me with your presence on such a happy occasion," he murmured in excellent English.

"No pleasure can be greater than your happiness, Ahmed Abbas," replied Paul Rodgers, and shook the Egyptian's hand with stiff formality. Somewhat bewildered, Peter Casson did the same.

"Thank you," said the Egyptian softly. "You will find champagne being served, gentlemen, in the room beyond."

And with a smile from his brown face, the two Europeans were dismissed.

These black-veiled women gossiped as freely as their white sisters.

They passed into a room that was a hothouse of flowers, and thronging people. Peter Casson saw most of the Europeans in Port Saïd there, the women in their flimsiest and most attractive frocks, the men chiefly in uniforms and glittering with miniature medals and orders. Several Egyptians, men alone, walked like brown shadows through these groups. They seemed sadly detached.

A little orchestra began to play a waltz. Couples began to dance. The music was soft and voluptuous. With the suspicion of a smile in his gray eyes, Rodgers looked on at the scene. He stood with his young friend in the shadow of a flaming hibiscus plant.

"What the devil are we doing here?" suddenly burst out Peter Casson. This placid waltz taking place amidst brilliant lights and well-dressed men and women seemed unreal to him, after the desperate nights he had spent searching Arab town.

"Be quiet!" murmured Rodgers, commandingly.

Another gayly clad eunuch stood before them with a tray holding glasses brimming with champagne.

"Have a drink, my dear boy!" ordered Rodgers, at the same time helping himself.

Mechanically, Peter Casson took the glass that was offered him.

Rodgers sipped gently. But above the rim of the glass his eyes were searching the swirling couples in the room.

"Not bad champagne," he said aloud.

Peter Casson came nearer. "What is this affair?" he asked, in a whisper.

Rodgers' gaze still traveled about the room.

"It is just a celebration," he replied, "arranged by the very wealthy Egyptian with whom you shook hands—Ahmed Abbas."

"Have we been invited?"

Rodgers grinned.

"No. We're gate-crashers. Hence the evening-dress! But sooner or later we'll be discovered. Then the rough-and-tumble will start."

"But I don't understand," persisted Peter Casson. "What sort of celebration is this?"

"Well," said Rodgers, draining his glass, "it happens to be a wedding. Our Egyptian friend Ahmed Abbas is to be married at midnight in full Oriental glory."

"But what has this to do with Jill—my—Jill?"

"Ssh!" Rodgers' hand gripped his arm again. "You gave me forty-eight hours to find Jill. Well, those forty-eight hours end at dawn tomorrow. I promise that if you obey orders Jill will be in your arms by that time."

"My God—do you really mean it?" The young man's eyes gleamed.

"If you obey orders—" insisted Paul Rodgers quietly.

As he spoke, he piloted the fair-haired youth over to a pale woman, seated listlessly and watching the brilliant scene.

"Jane," smiled Rodgers, "I've brought you a partner. Dance with him and keep him out of mischief, will you, until I call for him again. Please."

"But I say—" protested Peter Casson desperately. The words were lost as lean fingers tightened on his arm.

"I want a dance with you too, Paul," replied Jane, as she took possession of the young man.

"And so you shall. Before midnight!"

Rodgers promised. "After that, like Cinderella, I must run away."

"Ungallant!" she pouted.

As she and the bewildered Peter swept into the dance, Paul Rodgers moved quietly and purposefully among the brilliant throng. His eyes slanted toward the wall at the far end of the large dance room. Near the ceiling was a strip of lattice-work, a narrow window which looked down upon the scene. Behind that lattice-work the Intelligence officer knew that a dozen pairs of eyes, the eyes of the women of the harem, peered down at the gay throng they were not permitted to join.

LATER he stood once again in the shade of the hibiscus plant. There Peter Casson and the laughing Jane found him.

"I think your young friend is rather dull," sighed Jane. "He dances well, but his heart is not in it."

Peter Casson flushed. Paul Rodgers explained:

"I'm sorry, Jane. But our young friend is in desperate trouble. We want you to help."

"But can I help?"—blue eyes of innocent sophistication opening wide, and a smile parting her lips.

"Yes, you can," murmured Rodgers. He drew a chair forward. The girl sank into it. She looked up at him questioningly.

"Have you seen the bride?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Yes, of course. Several of us trooped into the harem. It's a luxurious sort of place, festooned with flowers and hundreds of silk cushions against the wall. Masses of presents there, and simply smothered with flowers—"

"Yes, yes," broke in Rodgers, impatiently. "Never mind the details. Did you see the bride?"

"Of course," she said, a little petulantly. "I had to fight my way through a crowd of Egyptian women to see her. Do you know, they say she's a German girl. She was dreadfully pale, and didn't speak a word. Just a set smile on her face. Loaded with costly clothes just like an overdressed doll. But she has the most marvelous honey-colored hair that I've ever seen in— But what's the matter?"

"Jill!" gasped Peter Casson. "My God, is she—"

Rodgers gripped his arm fiercely.

"Be quiet, you fool! She's safe, until midnight," he whispered. "And long before midnight you'll have her in your arms, away from this house."

"But what *is* the matter?" insisted Jane. "Both of you are whispering together like conspirators."

"We are conspirators," smiled Rodgers. His watchful gray eyes saw that the young man was controlling himself with an effort.

"Well, I wish you'd let me into the plot," said Jane.

"Perhaps we will—later," promised Rodgers. "One more question: When does the bridegroom make his ceremonial entry to the harem and thank all the women there for their attendance?"

"I was told that he was expected at eleven, precisely."

"And it is now ten o'clock. We have an hour, my dear boy. Thank you, Jane. Perhaps you'll now give me that dance I've been longing for for the past half-hour?"

Jane rose with a smile.

"Every dance, if you wish."

Rodgers turned to Peter Casson.

"Wait for me here," he commanded in a whisper. "Don't stir. Take another glass of champagne. You'll need it."

And with the easy style of a born dancer he piloted his partner into the throng.

PETER CASSON had memorized his instructions perfectly. He stood tense, waiting, beside the curtained doorway that led to the harem quarters in that strange villa.

At ten minutes to eleven a silence fell upon the glittering throng in the large dance room. A slim red-haired man had whispered a few words to the conductor of the little dance orchestra, and seated himself in the full blaze of the electric light at the piano.

He began to play softly. It was a Chopin nocturne that Paul Rodgers had chosen for this occasion. As the velvet notes, suggesting the romance of a moonlit garden, floated from beneath the touch of his long fingers, conversation died, and one by one the groups of people turned in astonishment toward the figure at the piano.

"Who is he?"

"He plays like a genius."

"A strange-looking fellow."

The words were whispered in the silence. Paul Rodgers, every nerve tense, nevertheless played that nocturne like a man possessed. And as his eyes wandered dreamily to that latticed

window in the wall, he sensed that a pair of dark eyes were blazing down upon him with all the hatred of recognition. The Woman of Antioch! She could see him now. Perhaps she realized that her great scheme to provide a rich Egyptian with a European wife whom she had kidnaped and drugged with hashish was now on the verge of disaster.

WITH slow tempo he proceeded with the nocturne, rejoicing inwardly that his scheme to attract attention and create a diversion was succeeding. Even Ahmed Abbas, sipping a little cup of coffee before making his ceremonial entry to the harem and his bride, was held by that music. He stood at the entrance to the dancing room, the cup poised in his jeweled brown hands.

"It's Paul Rodgers."

"The Red Wolf of Arabia."

"Of course, only Paul could play like that!"

The whispered English meant nothing to Ahmed Abbas. That velvet music made him dream of the lovely pale bride who had been brought to him by the Syrian woman. He would marry the white bride at midnight, and she would enter his harem.

But the music of Chopin had no beauty for Peter Casson, lounging by the curtained doorway that led to the harem. The first soft tinkling notes were a command to him. Swiftly but quietly he passed through the curtained doorway and mounted a stone staircase. He came to a corridor, thickly carpeted. A cluster of women were grouped about a latticed window that overlooked the dancing. As he tiptoed quietly past them, he heard a whisper in English come from the group.

"By Allah, it is Paul Rodgers!"

The next moment he was in another room. On a raised dais that was smothered in cashmere shawls sat a woman who looked like a lifeless idol. Satin robes, heavy with gold embroidery, were draped stiffly from her. A gold crown glittering with jewels was on her head. It held a thin veil. Huge brilliants hung from her ears, and she was loaded with a mass of rings, bracelets and necklaces.

But it was her face that held Peter Casson. It was painted like a doll in a toy-shop. A fine penciled line joined the eyebrows and made the whole expression seem set. Her lips were painted a bright vermilion. Only the glorious honey-colored hair remained untouched.

"Jill!" whispered the young man.

The eyes did not see him. They stared, listless and dull, into nothingness. The figure was solemn and mute. Only the lips seemed to quiver, as though they would express some thought lost in dreamland.

"Jill! For God's sake, tell me what they have done?"

The whisper was louder. Faintly, in the distance, the music of Chopin was being played gently and marvelously by Paul Rodgers. Once again the painted lips of the idol on its dais quivered.

"Peter!" she whispered. "You've come at last. I'm so tired."

The whisper roused him to action. He strode forward and ruthlessly began to tear the jeweled finery from her. The gold crown pitched to the luxurious carpet. The rings, bracelets and necklaces followed. Like a child Jill sat there while the young man tore the heavy stiff robes from her. Her listless expression never changed. Her head, with its mass of honey-colored hair, fell against his shoulder.

"I'm so tired, Peter," she murmured. "Take me home."

Triumphantly, the Chopin music came to an end. There was a second of silence, and then applause for the player broke out. It roared from below, filtered through the latticed window and was heard by the young man who, with one arm supporting the girl and the other clutching a revolver, was stealing toward the door.

At the same moment, from the group of women at the window, there came a moan like that of a wounded beast:

"This cursed Paul Rodgers must die like a dog!"

The Woman of Antioch, her eyes alight with hatred, burst through the surrounding women. Her gaze turned toward the doorway of the room where the bride, the white woman whom she had kidnaped, drugged with hashish and would sell at midnight to an amorous but rich Egyptian, waited.

"He has come for this white chit!" she muttered.

AT that moment it was, even while the guests of Ahmed Abbas were still applauding the playing of Rodgers, that every light in that brilliant scintillating villa was extinguished. Darkness, pitch darkness, like a swarm of locusts, descended upon everything. Women began to scream. Men were shouting. Ahmed Abbas stood bewildered in the darkness,

a cup of coffee still poised in his hand. Some one rushed past him, jerking the contents of the cup over his fingers. Ahmed Abbas cursed loudly.

Pandemonium seemed let loose in ten seconds in that villa of total darkness. Eunuchs scuttered about the corridors. Shouts and commands echoed. One woman was screaming hysterically. Men hunched their shoulders and began to strike out in the darkness at passing objects.

Through this hysterical crowd of the darkness moved Peter Casson, shielding his wife Jill. He had studied every yard that led toward the door. Rodgers had mapped the escape in detail. Just as he reached the doorway that led to the garden, a voice whispered to him:

"Good boy! You'll find the taxi waiting. Drive back to the hotel at once."

"But what about you?"

A soft laugh in the darkness.

"I want another ten minutes here. I've one more account to settle."

And with a clasp from those strong fingers that a few minutes ago had been playing Chopin with all the beauty of a great musician, Peter Casson and his wife were gently pushed toward the palm grove and freedom.

IN the first moment of that darkness that descended upon the villa, the Woman of Antioch moved instinctively toward the room where the bride was posed awaiting Ahmed Abbas. The glimpse she had had of Paul Rodgers warned her of danger. This man whom she hated, and yet in some queer fashion desired, whom she had tried to kill again and again, only to discover her own plans thwarted, was in this villa to unmask her. She raged inwardly, but her movements were decisive. The prize that she had brought to the villa, the white girl who had been kidnaped, must be kept. A pawn in the game was always worth while.

So, her hands outstretched, she walked quickly in the darkness to the room. In a few seconds she was at the dais, and realized from the débris of jewelry and clothes at her feet that the bride had gone. A curse was on her lips, but it was stifled by the sound of a door being closed softly behind her. Some one else had entered that pitch-dark room, and stood there waiting.

"Who is there?" she whispered in Arabic, expecting to hear the response of some woman of the harem.

There was no reply.

"Bring a light!" she commanded.

Still no reply. Only a quiet breathing that told her of the presence of some other person.

"Don't you hear me?" whispered the Woman of Antioch, a chill creeping to her heart.

She moved away from the dais. There was a quiet shuffle in the darkness, and she knew that the intruder was following her. She tripped over one of the cashmere shawls and gave a gasp of fright. There was a chuckle behind her.

SHE tried to remember the position of the doorway. The pall of darkness seemed to have enveloped her mind in a blanket. The room was strangely quiet, except for her own breathing and that of the other person. Where was the doorway?

"I can't see," she whimpered quietly.

"Neither can I," replied a soft voice in Arabic. "For I am blind."

It was the voice of a man.

"Blind!"

She almost shrieked the word.

"Yes; you, the Woman of Antioch, ordered your men to put out my eyes. Perhaps you have forgotten such a trifling incident. It happened in the desert, ten years ago; and the man's name was Amin Yusuf—"

"Then you are—"

"Amin Yusuf. Yes. I have been ten years without my sight. I have tried to find you during those ten years. Now we are together, in the darkness. You cannot see. Neither can I. But I am going to kill you."

With a gasp of horror the Woman of Antioch flung herself against the darkness. Her henna-ed nails clawed the plaster of a wall. Desperately she shuffled her way along the wall. If only she could discover the doorway!

A chuckle from the darkness. Then the soft slither of pursuit. The blind man could follow every movement. His sight had been taken, but he could see in the darkness. Even now he was watching her futile efforts to escape.

"Help me to get out of this room," she pleaded desperately, "and there will be much gold for you. It is only that accursed Paul Rodgers who must die."

"It is you, the Woman of Antioch, who must die. Prepare your soul for Allah. I am going to strangle you."

Desperately in that evil blackness she fumbled for the revolver that was always

hidden in her clothes. Her fingers closed upon it. She drew it forth, and pointed it in the darkness. Where was the blind man?

"Is there no mercy for me, Amin Yusuf?" she asked quietly, and steadied her hand for the shot in the dark.

"None," replied the blind man. "There is only death—"

A spurt of flame. She had fired in the direction of the voice. It was followed by a groan of agony. The bullet had gone home.

The Woman of Antioch laughed.

"You fool!" she cried into the darkness.

But at that same moment the blind man leaped forward. With the swiftness of a thug he had twisted a silk scarf about her throat and drawn it tight. Her hands clawed at that silken band, but the grip tightened. Slowly she began to choke.

"I—I'm—dying!" she croaked.

"And so am I," sighed the voice of the blind man.

But the hands slowly twisted the scarf even tighter.

Darkness disappeared. Lights danced and then blazed in all their brilliance before the bulging eyes of the Woman of Antioch. She was blinded with light. Another twist of the silk scarf. She fell upon her knees, dazzled by the radiance. Away, far away, chuckled the blind man. More lights. Then something snapped.

It was the end.

"THEY found her dead, strangled, beside the shot body of Amin Yusuf," said Paul Rodgers, quietly.

He was in the hotel the next morning, his gray eyes upon Casson and his wife.

Jill was recovering from the hashish with which she had been drugged for days, ever since that moment when, in the post office an Egyptian had told her that her husband had gone back to the ship and was waiting for her. Without question she had stepped into the taxicab which the Egyptian had commandeered at the side entrance to the post office. Then came a blank. She remembered nothing more until Peter had taken her in his arms and rid her of that ghastly wedding garment.

"How did you discover her?" asked Peter Casson.

Paul Rodgers smiled.

"Gossip from the harem. A veiled woman bought a necklace from an Egyptian peddler. She talked of a white bride for Ahmed Abbas. I guessed the rest."

"And what is to happen to Ahmed Abbas?"

The Intelligence officer shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing. He genuinely believed that he was marrying a European woman who wanted to be the bride of a wealthy Egyptian. He asked no questions of the Woman of Antioch. One glimpse of Jill's beauty was enough for him. He arranged a public wedding, believing that the bride was—just a European girl of no importance."

"Damn him!" spluttered Peter.

Jill blushed.

"BUT for diplomatic reasons," pursued Rodgers, "it would be well to say nothing further. And if you take my advice, you'll leave Port Saïd as soon as possible."

"We sail tomorrow," murmured Peter. "For home!"

"Thanks to you, Mr. Rodgers," added Jill.

He smiled, and turned away.

"By the way," said Peter Casson, "who cut out the lights at that villa? It was done very thoroughly."

"A blind man," replied Rodgers quietly. "The blind beggar with whom I worked in Port Saïd. A fine fellow, Amin Yusuf. I shall miss him. But he died in the happiness of revenge."

And the gray eyes mused upon the fate that had cheated him out of his own reckoning with the woman of Antioch. A strange creature! He flushed, remembering her kisses, while he was a prisoner in her house at Cairo. A miserable end for a great adventuress.

He held out his hand.

"And now I must be going," he murmured.

Peter Casson shook it warmly.

"I shall never be able to thank you enough," he murmured.

"Nor I," said Jill.

The Intelligence officer laughed.

"The adventure was worth it," he said.

"And what is to be the next?" asked the young man.

Paul Rodgers gazed into the distance with his gray eyes.

"Who knows? There are always adventures to be found along the Red Sea."

And with a nod from that flaming crop of hair, he went quietly out of the room.

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

A dark detective and his bloodhound set out in a radio-equipped motorcycle on the trail of a stolen fish-stand—and the subsequent events are exciting.

By
ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by
Everett Lowry

Framed Like a Picture

ASSISTANT-SLEUTH "Bugwine" Breck shut off the ignition of the "bath-tub" type ex-Army motorcycle in which the entire staff of the dusky Columbus Collins detective agency was cruising noisily for crooks, and coasted—that he might the better hear his chief in the side-car.

"Says, how you 'spect to pick up dem po-lice-calls on de motorcycle's radio," Columbus criticised heatedly, "when you is done hitch de superhet'rodyne to de tail-light and de amplifier to de muffler?"

"Aint git nothin' but jazz-bands and bedtime stories when de radio *is* workin'," defended Mr. Breck, who did his wiring by ear. "—Besides, dem po-lice-calls is all up in Bumin'ham: aint got nothin' to do wid us down here in Demop'lis nohow."

"No matter how tough times gits, you and dat dawg of yourn aint git no brighter!" quarreled Columbus. "Aint I been tellin' you for a week a firm is got to advertise to eat, dese days? And old radio's advertisin' us—eve'ywhar us goes it tell de world here come a pair of smart detectives; got all de modern improvements on dey motorcycle. So, when dey *is* a crime committed, whut gwine be de first thing eve'ybody thinks of?"

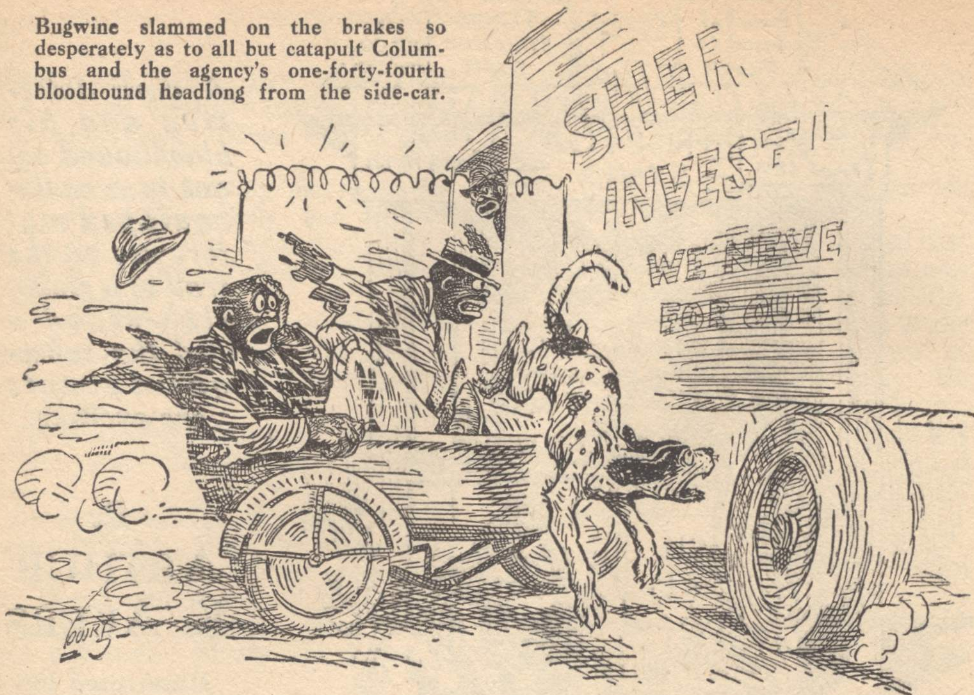
"Amos and Andy—"

"Naw! *Naw! Naw!*" raved Mr. Collins despairingly. "Dey'll remember us is up-to-date—got radio and eve'ything, jest like de white-folks' po-lice—and give us de case to handle. Keeps down competition dat way too, before it can start—"

"Whut dat, *comp'tition?*" Mr. Breck's ignorance again got out of bounds.

"Somebody else hornin'-in on your business. Hard times jest agg'avates it. And—"

Bugwine slammed on the brakes so desperately just here as to all but catapult Columbus and the agency's one-forty-fourth bloodhound, Coney Island, headlong from the side-car, as a truck suddenly shot out of a side street across



Bugwine slammed on the brakes so desperately as to all but catapult Columbus and the agency's one-forty-fourth bloodhound headlong from the side-car.

his path—a truck hand-painted and hard-driven, with a burly stranger of rich chocolate hue at its wheel.

Mr. Collins righted himself angrily, recaptured his dingy hat, opened his mouth to berate Mr. Breck—and left it open in tribute to the stranger.

"Boy, is you see dat?" he demanded of Chauffeur Breck.

"Jest in time!" quavered the still goggle-eyed Bugwine. "Goose-pimples, lie down!"

"I means de sign painted across de side of dat truck," persisted Columbus.

"Aint study as fur over as readin' signs, in school."

"Bein' dumb keeps you happy longer, noway—delayin' back de bad news twel somebody smart can read it to you," conceded his chief. "Aint nothin' else but bad news writ on de side dat truck."

"Bad news for who?"

"For *us,* dat who! Means us is done got comp'tition!"

Bugwine shied: old competition hadn't more than got mentioned before here it was! Sure gave a boy service! "Readin' how?" he stayed right with it.

"Readin' 'Sherlock Gardens, Investigator. We Never Need to Go Back for Our Tools.'"

"Yeah, but whut dat 'Investigator' mean?" Mr. Breck struggled up from his own rear.

"Means he gits fifty cents a case more dan jest plain detective, dat whut!"

"Coney Island, rally round!" croaked Assistant Breck groggily. "Fixin' be comp'tition in detectin'!"

"Foller dat truck!" hissed his chief. "See whar old Shylock roosts hisself."

But following brought no joy: it merely betrayed the new seriousness of things. For Sherlock Gardens had not only a truck but desk-room in a barber-shop, with his name and slogan white-painted across one window of the shop.

"Aint enough crime round here to feed *one* detectin'-agency, let alone two and a dumb dawg!" summarized Columbus gloomily. "So us got to do somep'n. Old situation done passed de saturation-point a hour ago."

Bugwine eyed the aërial he had mounted on an old bedspring-frame above his handlebars. *Saturation* was a new word, following too fast upon the heels of *competition.* But, whatever saturation was, it would be his fault! That was what assistants were for—to take the blame for anything that went wrong around the place; just like a husband—

Here memory reached up and smacked Bugwine for a fresh goal: he had forgotten Geranium — who had caught him stepping out with another girl—

"As junior partner in charge of competition," Columbus interrupted, as they spluttered to a halt before their office, "I leaves it to you, Bugwine, to git shet of dat new investigator before he gum up de detectin' industry no more."

Bugwine blinked, recalling the size and vigor of the new competitor. "Dat boy too big and large for me to run off," he demurred apprehensively.

"Disguise yo'self as a germ and skeer him to death, den! Do anything—I aint keer—jest so you gits rid of *him* before he gits rid of *us*," directed Mr. Collins sharply.

Thus prodded, Mr. Breck hesitated, swallowed resolutely, and took the bull by the horns. "Busts him one wid my brains!" he mumbled menacingly.

But the trouble about such a promise, it quickly developed, was that a boy had to make good or make explanations.

"At ease, brains!" Bugwine forthwith addressed that oft-unemployed organ. "Us fixin' rally round rations, is de wind lay right! Motorcycle, park yo'self for de restaurant-wide hook-up! Radio, tune out!"

Which concessions to quiet shortly brought Mr. Breck into direct contact with his competition again, in that, squarely in front of his house as he entered his home alley to sound out the outlook for nourishment, stood the truck of Sherlock Gardens!

"Well, smack my face!" exploded Bugwine in annoyance. "Old Shylock boy done park hisself in de wrong place."

Reconnoitering followed, but failed to help the looks of anything, revealing as it did that Mr. Gardens had an unerring nose for the nearest kitchen, an eye for the neatest figure, and a tongue deep-dipped in flattery.

"Sho is relish de way you fries a fringe of ham, Mis' Geranium!" was the overheard phrase that infuriated Bugwine.

"Pleasure to cook for a *sho-'nough* detective, Mist' Gardens!" . . . . Detective Breck heard repartee that carried a back-handed slap which a boy couldn't miss. "I bets de crooks scatters when dey sees *you* comin'!"

"Aint git fur enough *to* scatter, good-lookin'!" the visiting sleuth expanded. "I surrounds 'em first thing!"

Geranium's giggle aroused the rest of the berserk in the pint-sized Bugwine. Flinging back the flap of his overalls that concealed his pan-sized tin star of office, he kicked open his kitchen door and stood glowering in the lower half of the doorway.

Mr. Gardens leaped—then laughed. "Thunk for a minute you was a hawss," he explained the laugh, "—from hearin' de gallopin' in de hall."

Geranium's mouth-corners drew down. She reached for the amenities and a skillet. "Back is you, runt?" she addressed her lord ominously. "Well, meet Mist' Gardens, de big de-tective—and like it!"

BUGWINE hesitated. When Geranium flirted with skillet-handles, husbands flirted with hospitals. "P-pleased to meet you," he contrived a sickly draw between scowl and smile.

"Aims to settle down some place wharat dey aint no good detectives, and dig in," chatted the caller. "Eve'ybody say Demop'lis jest dat place. You de lady's husband?"

"So fur," Geranium settled Mr. Breck's current doubts, yet left the matter wide open for future discussion. "His name Bugwine; thinks *he* is a detective, too."

"Yeah?" Mr. Gardens kept right on eating Bugwine's ham. "Well, heaps of boys gits dat way—marries a smart woman, and next thing you knows dey gits de notion *dey* is smart too! But it aint nothin' to worry about, Mis' Geranium; it jest like de itch—pestersome but passin'. It aint last—"

"—Jest like my ham aint last!" Bugwine boiled over bitterly. "I—"

Bugwine made a fair start but a fast finish. Outrunning skillets took skill, but practise had made him perfect.

Geranium didn't bother to follow; Mr. Breck rarely even hesitated under four blocks when she grew peeved—and this new Mr. Gardens was infinitely more intriguing company, anyway. . . .

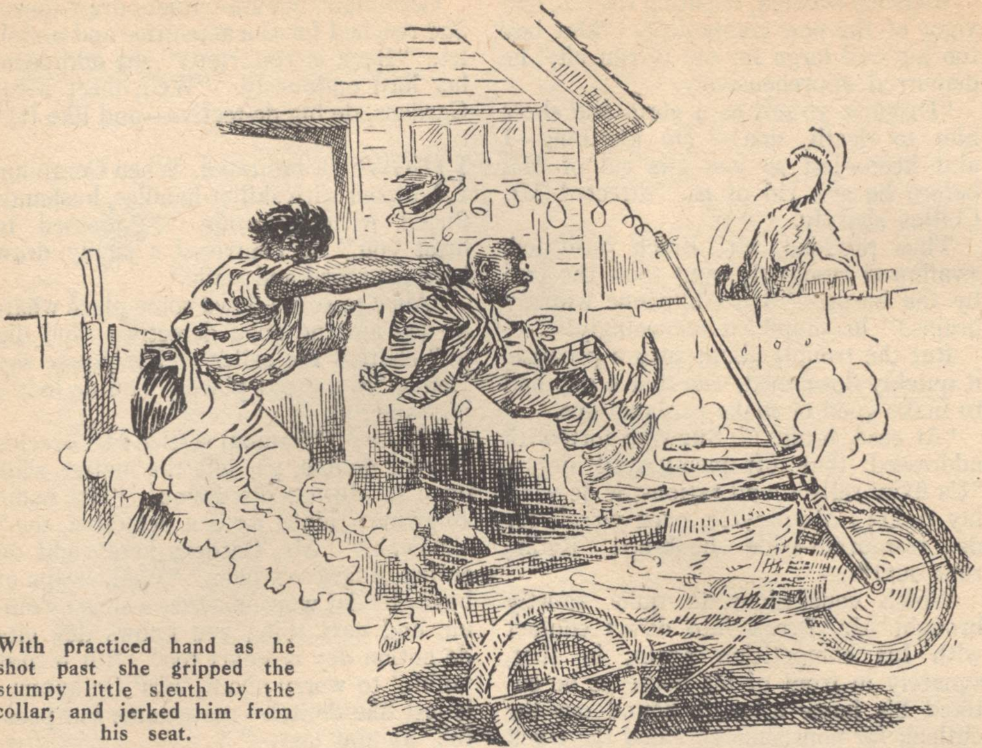
Back once more in the agency's dingy headquarters in the rear of the Hill's other barber-shop, Bugwine sagged heavily in lip, soul, and shoulders. Frustration had his name and address. This new competitor was closing in on him both at home and afield—domestically and professionally.

"Is you git shet of dat competition?" demanded Columbus pointedly, on sight.

"Fixin' to bust him one wid my brains now!" stalled the baffled Mr. Breck.

Which action, however, continued easier said than done, while his stomach sent up fresh reminders that Sherlock Gardens was doing all the eating around Bugwine's place. Roll-call of free-lunch prospects produced a thought: Geranium's morose and muscular brother, Henry Snews, ran a fried-fish stand in Kaufman's Alley.

Four minutes later it loomed before the famished Bugwine's hopeful optics. Not that it was much to look at, being but a



With practiced hand as he shot past she gripped the stumpy little sleuth by the collar, and jerked him from his seat.

rude shack of rough boards, crudely thrown together. It approximated a railroad-crossing watchman's shanty in size and a wrecked hen-house in architectural beauty. Henry stood inside it with the fish while his customers stood outside and ate where they didn't have to be swept-up after.

"Craves de back half of one dem channel-cat," ordered Mr. Breck the epicure.

"You is, is you? Well, your credit aint up to de channel-cat mark no more," countered Mr. Snews with all the frankness and rancor of a relative-by-marriage. "Detectives is on a cash basis, since de competition git so keen."

So Henry had heard of Sherlock Gardens too!

"Us smells 'em out whar others jest sniffs about: comp'tition aint 'mount to nothin'," offered Bugwine in rebuttal.

"Smells is all you does to my fish, too, twel I sees two-bits," Henry gave adamant further lessons in firmness. "And don't hurry back—done leased de land to move de stand nearer to Supply and further from de panhandlin' Demand."

"When you gwine do dat?" Bugwine made conversation; at least the aroma was nourishing around here.

"Quick as I gits a good bid on de movin'; so fur, aint find nobody but bandits and stick-up men in de truckin'-business. Couldn't hold me up no bigger, was dey a brother-in-law!"

Mr. Breck recognized dismissal when he heard it—leaving him no alternative, in his current domestic status, but to return to his office. Here he spent an uncomfortable night stretched across two chairs and a box, while above his restless head, the agency's framed motto "A Criminal with Every Case," tortured his dreams with a fresh fear—if this Sherlock Gardens ever considered him worth noticing, that notice would undoubtedly take the form of framing him; that would be the natural thing to do.

Bugwine awoke with the sun in his face and his stomach yelping like a kicked dog; eating by the calendar instead of the clock wasn't making any hit around a boy's belt. Despairingly he checked his list of possible breakfasting-places, with no luck. His famished fingers sought the lining of his overall jumper—and gave him an electric shock. Tremblingly Bugwine excavated, gasped, and brought forth a long-lost quarter!

"Channel-cat, kiss yo'self good-by!" forthwith clarioned Mr. Breck, *en route* instantly to Henry Snews' fish-stand and breakfast.

But arrival there merely induced new and blanker amazements. Henry was there, but the fish-stand was not!

"You done move de fish-house a'ready?" gasped the startled sleuth.

"Aint move nothin'!" Henry was shuffling in a bewildered circle where the stand had been. "Old stand right here when I lock it up last night—aint nothin' but de place whar it *was*, when I gits back here dis mawnin' to open up! Fish-house done *stole!*"

Instantly and instinctively at the word, Mr. Breck reached for his bear-trap and magnifying-glass. If something new in the local category of crime—a whole structure—had been stolen, there was but the more need for a good detective!

"Me and Coney Island smells 'em out whar others jest sniffs about!" crowed Bugwine. "Tracks down de strayed buildin' wid motorcycles an' bloodhounds!"

But Mr. Snews remained the sort of brother-in-law who remembers a boy's past, instead of concentrating on his bright future. "All dat dawg ever track down,"—he eyed the slat-ribbed Coney disparagingly,—"was a pork-chop. And when I loses a buildin', I aims to git me a *detective!* You can take de case, *too* —I gives it to you *and* Sherlock Gardens, de big new inves-ti-gator—and pays de fee to de boy whut solve de case and recover de stand *first*. Detective whut come in last aint git nothin' but de hawse-laugh. And de fee is a season-ticket to de fish-stand."

Mr. Breck gulped. Here was competition at its worst!

"Now, sic 'em, you and Fido de flea-farm!" reiterated Mr. Snews harshly. "Find dat fish-house crook. And is you craves de fee, find him *first!*"

Bugwine cast hopefully about him, but not even a truck-track showed for a clue on the paving. A fish-stand had vanished into thin air.

"Coney Island," he addressed his four-footed helper, "hit de trail!"

"Woof!" responded Coney hungrily, and sat down to scratch.

"But us stops by de agency first," Mr. Breck recalled something slurring in his competitor's advertising, "and git de b'ar-trap—'us aint never need to go back for our tools!'"

Again Baptist Hill buzzed, a double-barreled buzz that included not only the frantic and unfed shufflings and snufflings of Bugwine and his hound, but the keen scientific competitive efforts of the newcomer, Sherlock Gardens.

If Mr. Breck, straw-hatted and overalled, tore noisily up-hill and down-dale on his motorcycle in a radio medley of melody, cooking-recipes, and vaudeville gags, Coney Island barking deliriously in the side-car all the while, the contrast with the quiet cunning of the new Mr. Gardens was but the greater.

"Sho is a mess of dust and hollerin' you and dat dawg stirrin' up!" criticised Columbus at the expedition's fourth pause for a quart of gasoline. "Whut you think you is doin'—cotchin' crooks or goin' for a ride?"

"'Spectin' 'pawtant developments widin fawty-eight hours," quoted Bugwine.

"Gas aint gwine hold out dat long," estimated his superior sourly. "Also, Shylock Gardens liable to git under de wire wid de crook first. Den aint be nothin' left of you but de squawk! Also, whut clue is you got?"

"Clue?" Bugwine's jaw dropped. He had been too occupied with his public appearance to think of that again! "Been so busy wid de radio, old clue plumb slip me," he confessed feebly.

"Yeah? Well, whut you think dat damned dawg of yourn is, nohow—a mind-reader, den?" rasped Mr. Collins derisively. "Boy, you got to give even a one-fawty-fo'th bloodhound like Coney *somep'n* to sniff hisself or he aint git de scent—aint know whether he is chasin' a crook or a cat."

Mr. Breck stirred slightly in his overalls as his brains revived. Advent of an idea always affected him thus. "Jest thunk of de clue!" he burst forth excitedly. "Hold eve'ything!" He wheeled his motorcycle about.

"Whut clue? Whar at you git no clue?"

"Out my brains—and de river. Hold eve'ything!" And Mr. Breck was off.

En route to his destination, Bugwine's way lay through the section descriptively known as Frog Bottom—a district only feebly as yet coming into its own, commercially speaking. But all that Bugwine noticed there was what gave him fresh and breath-taking surprise. For, parked in front of a long-empty house there, was the truck of the new investigator, Mr. Sherlock Gardens. And in open and evident ease upon the porch lolled the great sleuth himself!

Bugwine gave himself more gas, and tried to be impressive in his passage. But a new knot of worry gathered between his eyes. So here was where Sherlock had settled down to live! But why the attitude of assurance and victory?

It was an ill omen for Detective Breck, still in a sweat and a swivet and merely on his way to accumulate a clue!

Yet as the speeding Mr. Breck sputtered onward toward the river the answer became insistent and inescapable: Sherlock Gardens looked successful because he *was* successful. Nothing else could explain his look of victory. Yet, until news of that victory broke, Bugwine could but carry on in hope that was weakening fast.

Torn by this conflict between disturbance and duty, Mr. Breck came at last to the river-bank. Here he fumbled dispiritedly in the side-car for hook, line, and sinker, spat professionally upon his bait, and began fishing for his clue. For the brain of Bugwine had already done its stuff: to the effect that if a fish-stand were missing, the clue to its hiding-place would naturally be the odor of fish. Hence, as soon as he caught one, Coney Island would have something to sniff and trail.

Proof of the correctness of this reasoning followed fast. Almost instantly, a startled perch was flopping on the hook. "Hot dawg! Old fish sho gives service noble!" exulted the little sleuth. "Coney, rally yo'self round de clue, soon as us git back to de agency whar eve'ybody can see you start!"

And, back at the agency, with an audience assembled, Coney Island frisked hopefully about the fish—as though he might get to eat the clue.

But Bugwine had other plans for him. "Bloodhound blood, *circulate!*" he addressed his four-footed aide sternly. "Sniff de clue; den find de fish-stand!"

"Snifff! Woof!" responded Coney hungrily, and the hunt was on!

UP Ash and down Decatur, legs wide-spraddled on the turns, tore the belling, baying Coney. Hard after him, in a bedlam of backfiring, cooking-recipes, washing-powder testimonials, and medicine ads, shot Bugwine with his radio.

"Hot dawg! Bugwine always gits his man!" rang admiringly from adjacent curb and chair. "Even de innocent cain't escape when old Bugwine hits de trail!"

But Mr. Breck had no time to listen to compliments. Not with the menace of Sherlock Garden's mysterious assurance ever looming in the back of his mind. Any minute might be too late for that season-ticket fee now. And dusk was deepening.

Then a new menace developed. Coney Island was heading straight for Bugwine's home, under the evident misapprehension that Mr. Breck was merely bringing him home a fish to eat!

"Hey, Coney, brake yo'self!" howled Bugwine as his dog's intention grew but clearer. "Detour! Turn to de right! 'Bout face!" This was no time to return within range of Geranium's skillet.

But the unfortunate combination of a blare of a seventy-five-piece band on the loud-speaker with the sudden failure of the motorcycle's brakes worked against Mr. Breck just here. He could neither be heard, nor could he halt. Headlong and helplessly he shot onward toward his domicile in an uproar that the deafest could not ignore.

And Geranium wasn't deaf. She paused in packing a suitcase to emerge angrily. With practised hand as he shot past she gripped the stumpy little sleuth by the collar, and jerked him from his seat. While, with her first words, Bugwine knew that he had wronged the yelping Coney Island deeply. Coney had been on the trail all the time and after all!

"What I craves to know, runt!" she shattered an adjacent ear-drum for Mr. Breck with her wrath, "is whut you has all dem planks hauled here and stuck under my house for last night?"

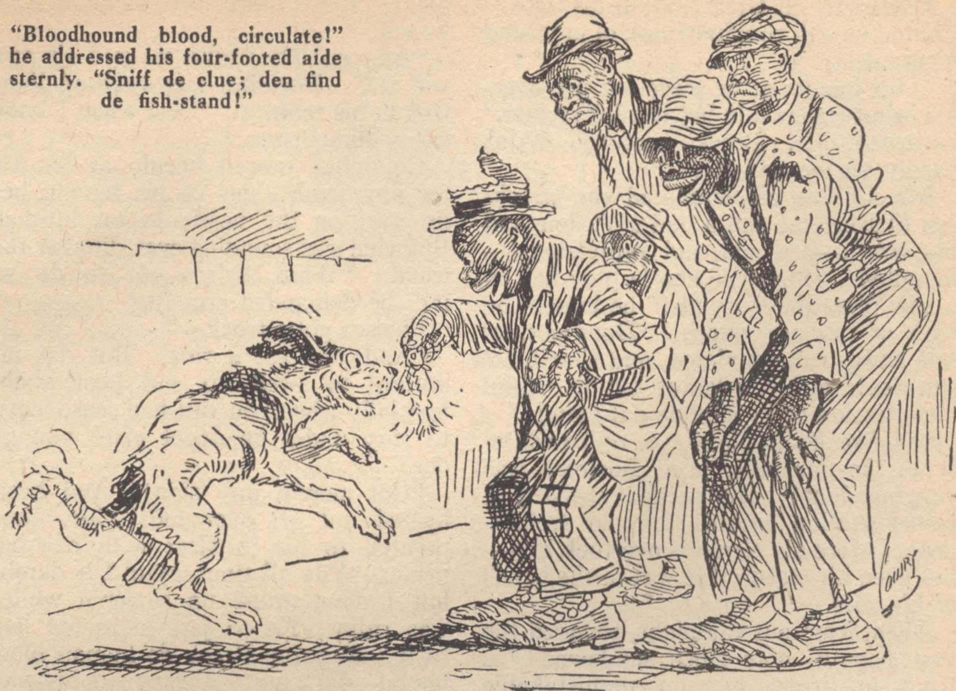
"Planks?" Bugwine's bewilderment was almost convincing to her.

"Planks! Boards; *wood*—like yo' head!"

Coney Island was baying frenziedly beneath the cabin—the baying of a dog that has treed his quarry. Bugwine stooped, peered into the dimness there, staggered, spun around—and saw all!

His nose knew what his eyes had confirmed. Coney Island had tracked the missing fish-stand to its lair—and its lair was under Bugwine's own house—which but brought on fresh anguish for Mr. Breck as the revealing rest of it appeared: while he had slept beneath the agency's framed motto, Sherlock Gardens had framed *him!* Had torn down and hauled the flimsy planks of the *corpus delicti* to his competitor's house! Where, shortly, he was bound to appear to unveil the circumstantial evidence.

Bugwine's brain sickened in its tracks. Now that he had found the missing fish-stand, he couldn't say anything about it! Whatever he said would be futile before the evidence beneath his house. And Sherlock Gardens would not wait long. No wonder he had looked like a cream-



"Bloodhound blood, circulate!" he addressed his four-footed aide sternly. "Sniff de clue; den find de fish-stand!"

fed cat on that porch so brief a while ago—he was but foretasting his triumph over Bugwine Breck, his five-foot rival!

Bugwine wrenched himself free and leaped like a rabbit aboard his capsized motorcycle, which sputtered uncertainly, roared once, and died—his get-away blocked by shortage of gas.

"Whar-at you think you gwine?" screamed Geranium after him as he had frenzied recourse to his feet; she still had things to say to him.

But only the wild *slap-slap* of soles on the sidewalk in the dark answered. If, Bugwine agonized, he could make the sanctuary beneath the old freight-depot in time, now—

But again he was thwarted. Let a boy start running, he groaned, and the world got against him. Now it was Columbus Collins' voice harsh within his ear, Columbus' grip in the slack of his overalls, and—

"Whar-at you think you is gallopin' to, mess?" rumbled his superior exasperatedly. "Whar-at de motorcycle?"

"Gallopin' to under de freight-house. And aint got no time to wait around on no motorcycles!" panted the fugitive sullenly.

"Tryin' to put over a fast one, wa'n't you?" Columbus' tone indicated new things on his mind. "But you wa'n't fast *enough,* dat's all!"

"Huccome *fast one?"* If there was any more bad news, Bugwine needed to know it! *"Fast one,* on who?"

"On Henry Snews, dat who!"

MR. BRECK gasped. Things were thickening up! "Whut I put over on Henry now?" he demanded apprehensively.

"Stealin' his fish-stand—"

"Who say *I* steal he fish-stand?" Bugwine knew the answer, but he needed to check up.

"Shylock Gardens, de inves-ti-gator, say so. And him and Henry lookin' for *you* wid both feet, Henry say. Henry say you done it so you could fake yo'-self a case, and den gits yo'self de job of solvin' it. But old Shylock too smart for you—he git de case, too. He gallop to tell Henry he seen de planks from de stand hid under yo' house. Now, soon as Henry git time to go see de evidence, he gwine pay Sherlock off; but he crave hisself to kill *you* first!"

Mr. Breck's bowed legs loosened and let him down hard. Here was a lie that kept hanging together like the truth. Sherlock had both framed him and got away with it. Circumstantial evidence was so strong against him that he was already feeling guilty himself, with Henry, Sherlock, and Geranium all after him—plus a superior, Columbus, who was peeved at him for the effect on the agency of Bugwine's being framed.

"And whar-at Geranium all dis time?" Columbus still couldn't think of anything pleasant.

"Still lookin' at de piece out my overalls whut come off in her hand, I reckon," hazarded Mr. Breck ruefully. "Aint hardly git loose in time."

Mr. Collins contemplated the wreckage of Bugwine and a bad situation, and his wrath—personal and professional—mounted. "Boy, you sho is play hell in a new place, bein' dumb!" he loosed the vials of this new wrath. "Done got yo' self hawg-tied, convicted, and shot befo' sun-rise! All you leaves out is signin' a confession dat you stole dat stand!"

Mr. Breck's troubled eyes rolled whitely in the darkness. Old Business was ganging him! He needed speed and transportation toward the old freight-depot before his Nemesis overtook him—but even his motorcycle was in the hands of his wife.

Then, from out the night, sounded the first hopeful note since sundown: The truck of Frisco Johnson, unmistakable from its running on three tires and a rim, was heard in the distance, coming fast.

"Stealin' a fish-stand in order to git yo'self a case!" raved Columbus blisteringly. "And den so *damn'* dumb you lets yo' competitor cotch you doin' it, and plant de evidence on you! He gits de glory and us gits de gate!"

"I aint even git de season-ticket to de fish-stand now—" The oncoming truck drowned the rest of Mr. Breck's defensive mumble as he swung himself despondently aboard it. In the face of all the evidence, a boy couldn't even believe himself now, about not stealing that stand!

BUT to the amazement of Columbus Collins when he morosely opened the door to his discredited detective agency next morning, Bugwine Breck was there!

"Thunk you'd be passin' Memphis by now!" he exclaimed disappointedly. "Henry liable be on his way over to yo' house now to see de ev'dence Sherlock got against you."

But this was not the old Bugwine, somehow. Inexplicably, assurance had replaced despair. His shuffle had become a strut. His countenance was a dusky glow. "Us smells 'em out whar others jest sniffs about—specially me!" he crowed exultantly. "Boy, I done find out I aint steal dat fish-stand!"

"*You* done find out you aint steal it? Don't make me laugh, runt! You's planted like a flower-bed, and cain't help yo'self."

"Aint nobody frame *me* and git away wid it!" Bugwine was swelling like a frog in his rebuttal. "Not when I knows a boy like Frisco!"

Columbus peered keenly at his aide for any fresh signs of his having been dropped on the head: to an intimate, Bugwine was sounding even dumber than usual. "Whut Frisco got to do wid it?" he demanded crossly.

"Frisco got a truck—"

"And *you* got a ride. But dat aint nothin' to swell up and bust about! Specially when you aint had sense 'nough to *stay* under de depot after you gits dar."

"Got more'n any ride! And brains busted out all over me!" Mr. Breck pointed to his intellect with new-born pride. "You all time sayin' I is dumb—but I done thunk up somep'n while I was ridin'; Frisco jest helps me 'tend to it. Bugwine Breck de human bloodhound—dat's me! Always gits his man! Wait twel Henry Snews see whut *I* done frame up and track down now!"

"Wait twel Geranium sees you, you means," croaked Columbus disparagingly. "Takes you up wid a blotter, den."

"Geranium see me nine years from now, and it still be too soon for me! But grab dat b'ar-trap and come on; shows you de evidence now whut clears me and cotch de crook!"

Now Columbus' attention was directed to another puzzle: the agency's motorcycle had been precipitately abandoned on Geranium's premises by Bugwine; but now he had it back. This indicated strategy, for Geranium was a notoriously light sleeper where a husband's footfalls were concerned. So if Bugwine had been around her house lately and returned unscathed, there was still something fishy about the situation.

"Git in! Git in!" the transformed Bugwine gestured toward the side-car. "And turn on de radio. Us rears back and rides noble to de acquittin'—and convictin'."

Thus again the streets of Baptist Hill echoed to the "One, *two,* three, *four! Left,* right! *Up,* down!" of the nation's early-morning setting-up exercises as the Collins Detective Agency rode uproariously to vindication and victory. Past Strawberry Street and into Frog Bottom they sputtered. Bugwine at length halted proudly before the very house upon the porch of which Sherlock Gardens had

so lately and so triumphantly sat after his dastardly framing of Bugwine Breck.

"Look!" Mr. Breck now pointed with ivory-toothed pride.

COLUMBUS looked—and gave a startled squawk. Squarely in front of the house, flush with the sidewalk,—unoccupied but wide open for business,—stood the stolen fish-stand of Henry Snews! It was unmistakable.

"Brains!" Bugwine answered exultantly the inquiry in Columbus' staring eyes.

"*Whose* brains?" Columbus wasn't reacting right; something seemed to have occurred to and floored him.

"Mine!" confessed Mr. Breck largely. "And Frisco's truck. But I done all de thinkin'! Is dat Shylock boy frame me, by pullin' down dat stand and plantin' its planks under my house, I make a monkey out of *him,* and goes him one better, by haulin' dem same planks over here. Builds back de whole stand out of 'em right *on* Shylock's place. So now *he's* caught wid de goods! I frames him like a picture! Dat fix him and clear me!"

But Columbus seemed suffering from a spell of some kind. Nor was his first explosion wholly clear. "*Dumb!* Dumb—from de neck nawth and back again!" he howled as he emerged from a paroxysm. "You so dawggoned dumb you cain't even plant a frame-up and git it right!"

"Huccome dumb?" Mr. Breck buckled, swayed weakly.

"You plants de fish-stand, *yeah,*" roared Columbus; "but you so dumb you *plants it on de wrong lot!*"

"On de wrong lot?" Feebly Mr. Breck clutched at his clothes and reason.

"Sure. *Dis* aint Sherlock's place; he jest visitin'—"

Bugwine watched Mars, Venus, and Jupiter reel dizzily, whirl, and then collide first with themselves and then with him. While out of the welter of worlds came the voice of Columbus:

"You so dead in de brains you has to buy tombstone for yo' own mind! And here come Henry Snews after you right now!"

Mr. Breck struggled feebly to flee. Just when he had been handed a fresh incentive to live, old brains had to stab him in the back like this! And now it was too late: Henry had seen him and was hurrying toward him with a new look on his face—a look made up of an amazing mixture of hostility, incredulity, surprise, and bewilderment.

"I never thunk it of you, Bugwine!" boomed this oncoming belligerent.

"G-g-gits mixed up in de m-mind—" stuttered the cowering Mr. Breck.

"*But,* I stands by my bargain," persisted a Mr. Snews grown unfathomable in his vengeance. "Says is you find de fish-stand first, you gits de fee: and *dar* she stands! So *here* de season-ticket to it for you! And here,"—the astounding Henry was thrusting forward not one but *two* pasteboards now,—"is a extra ticket for you, as your pay for movin' de stand for me—"

"For *movin' de stand?*" Bugwine swayed, staggered, stunned.

"Which clears up eve'ything now, except how is *you* know whar to move it to? I aint tell you whar I leased here."

"I aint. I—"

But Bugwine's damning confession got cut off just in time, by a sharply descending heel, while in his ears rang Columbus' venomous hiss: "Shet up! Grab de credit, quick! So dumb you is good! You moved de stand to de wrong crook, but de right land; and jest too damn' dumb to know it!"

Then, aloud—the day saved and the firm's future fixed: "Bugwine Breck de human bloodhound! *He always gits his fish-stand!*"

THEN a moment later, as the dazed Bugwine stumbled fog-bound in his rear, memory reasserted itself, and again the firm's future darkened dismally. For was not that shadow of competition, Sherlock, still blightingly upon the land? And winning one battle didn't mean a war was won.

"Boy, you aint helped yo'self none yit," Columbus harshly addressed his dizzied aide. "Old Shylock still competin'—and Geranium still yo' wife!"

But at this, memory rallied for Bugwine too, it seemed. And with such force that he blinked, straightened, and burst exuberantly from shadow into sunshine with: "Geranium aint pester *me* no more! Beca'ze old Shylock Gardens done *ruint hisself* now!"

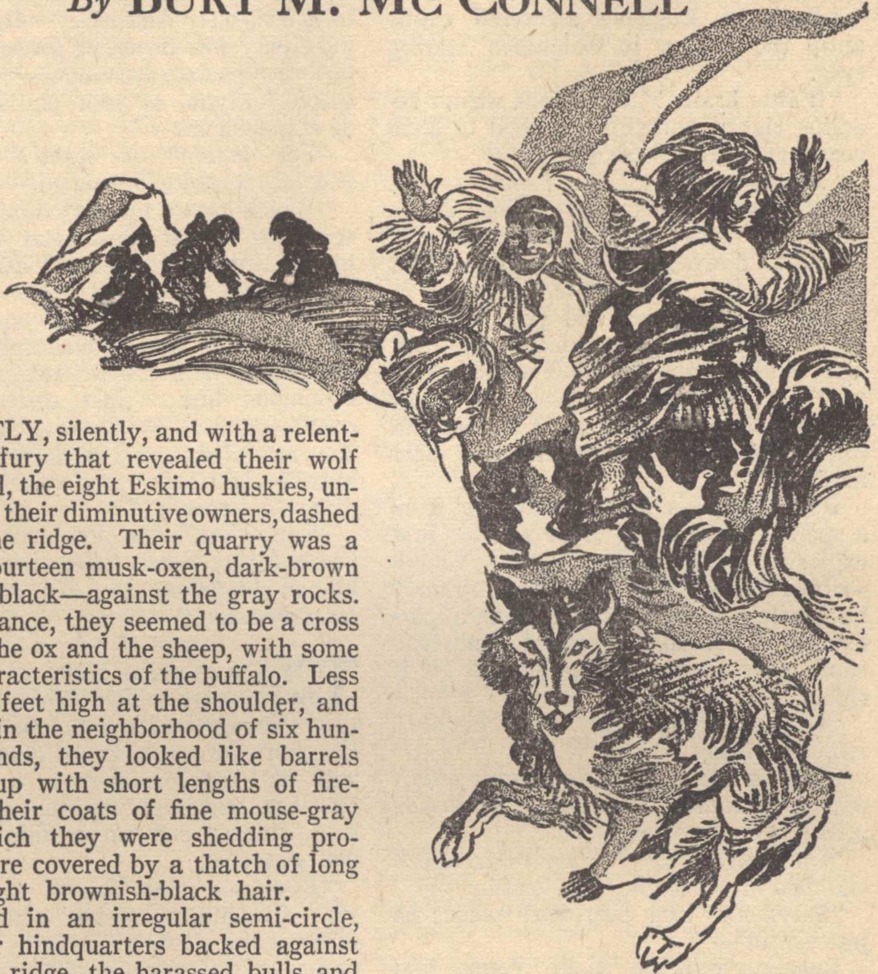
"Huccome *'ruint hisself?'*" Again Columbus feared for Bugwine's mind.

"Ever since 'bout two o'clock dis mawnin'!" clarioned Mr. Breck to the skies. "When me and Frisco comes after de first load of planks, and seen old Shylock drivin' off in his truck—*elopin' wid Geranium!*"

Kobuk Stands Alone

An arctic explorer here gives us a remarkable story of that little-known and specially interesting animal, the musk-ox.

By BURT M. MC CONNELL



SWIFTLY, silently, and with a relentless fury that revealed their wolf blood, the eight Eskimo huskies, unleashed by their diminutive owners, dashed toward the ridge. Their quarry was a herd of fourteen musk-oxen, dark-brown—almost black—against the gray rocks. In appearance, they seemed to be a cross between the ox and the sheep, with some of the characteristics of the buffalo. Less than five feet high at the shoulder, and weighing in the neighborhood of six hundred pounds, they looked like barrels propped up with short lengths of firewood. Their coats of fine mouse-gray wool, which they were shedding profusely, were covered by a thatch of long and straight brownish-black hair.

Huddled in an irregular semi-circle, with their hindquarters backed against the rocky ridge, the harassed bulls and cows faced bravely outward, while their calves, barely three months old, cowered in the center. The broad sensitive nose of Toot-lurak, the old bull, searched the balmy summer air for the wolf odor. He knew this odor well, but the mingled smells that accompanied the Eskimo hunters and their dogs were almost unknown. Here was a new enemy to be faced—a strange, fur-clad creature that ran about on two legs.

There was in the warm July air of the Barren Grounds a new menace—an intangible thing; and Toot-lurak, standing hoof-deep in the gray spongy moss, nervously pawed the slightly frozen ground. Tossing aside the hair hanging over his eyes, the old leader looked out upon the valley of the Kogyuktuayuk. Beyond the two-legged creatures that clambered up the rock-strewn slope were undulating ridges, bare here and there, but for the most part covered with arctic moss, heather, waving grass, and flowers in profusion. In the higher places numerous snowdrifts defied the scorching sun, which now shone for twenty-two hours out of the twenty-four. Scattered lakes, small and irregular, glinted in the morning light. Myriads of mosquitoes hov-

Illustrated by

C. Nelson White

His strength had increased; and in action he was a shaggy thunderbolt.

ered about the herd, and in the distance shimmering heat-waves curled upward from the Barren Grounds, making fantastic figures of the native hunters.

Toot-lurak's vision was not the best, but his sense of smell was keen as a wolf's, and superior to that of *pungyok* the caribou. Once, when a party of Eskimos and explorers killed four young bulls of his herd, the old leader had sniffed the strange odor of man. Now, as four of the stocky hunters labored up the slope in fanwise formation, he recalled those fearful moments when black sticks had belched forth fire and death.

Toot-lurak stood with the young bulls and cows, his head lowered, and snorting a warning. The dogs might have been so many wolves, so far as appearance went. And against wolves there was but one defense—a solid front. With horns curved and pointing downward and outward,—polished to a fine point and buttressed by an armor-plate of bone twice as thick as that of the domesticated ox,—and with their hindquarters braced against a wall of rock, they were not afraid.

Two of the dogs, younger and less experienced than the others, reached the herd and leaped, without slackening their headlong pace, straight at the throats of Toot-lurak and the young bull at his left, only to be tossed aside. The other bulls and cows eyed the advancing hunters curiously, and rather stupidly. Toot-lurak,—as became the leader,—rushed forward a few steps as if to charge; but the Eskimos knew, as did the old bull, that this was merely a bluff.

Retreating, the old leader backed into his place, bracing himself for the slash of white fangs. For years he had browsed over a few square miles of undulating hills. Unlike the caribou, his was not a migratory nature. Despite his stocky build and inherent clumsiness, Toot-lurak's speed was amazing when danger, real or fancied, called for flight or the rounding up of his cows. Mostly, however, his system of defense was the one that had survived the test of generations—a united front. But a united front was no match for either modern or primitive weapons. . . . Toot-lurak, snorting belligerently at the advancing figures, slumped heavily with two bullets in his shoulder.

OVERWHELMED by this misfortune and frightened by the sharp reports of the rifles, the herd huddled even closer together. One by one they sank beneath the withering fire. Even the calves were killed, until only Kobuk, son of Toot-lurak, was left. Instinct told Kobuk to flee. Bewildered, he sought out his mother, licked her face and nuzzled her anxiously. The exultant shouts of the Eskimo hunters frightened him. But

as he looked about for an avenue of escape, a plaited walrus-hide rope settled over his haunches and yanked his feet from beneath him.

In the month that followed, Kobuk found life with the wandering group of Eskimos vastly different from his sheltered existence with the herd. Despite his size,—he was more than two feet high and weighed sixty pounds,—the awkward bull calf twice was set upon by the ravenous huskies; again one of the starving brutes leaped upon a small Eskimo girl, and sank his teeth into her face and neck before he could be driven off. Often Kobuk's limbs trembled with fatigue as the strange two-legged creatures marched over the Barren Grounds, with food and camp equipment on their backs, in search of caribou. He missed his mother's milk, and there was little time for him to graze upon the succulent tundra grass during these migrations. They were fifty miles above the Arctic Circle, but the late summer days were unbearably warm. Luckily, the natives did not use him as a pack-horse, as they did their dogs; the shaggy, dark-brown bull calf was merely the pet of the children.

As the summer waned, and caribou-skins were at their best for clothing, the Eskimos pressed southward, toward the headwaters of the Hood River. Day after day, Kobuk waded through grass a foot high, and through an unending variety of flowers. The sun, which had set for less than two hours each day, now disappeared beneath the horizon for six hours at a time. September came, and with it a crispness in the air that the musk-ox calf had never known. The Eskimos camped for days at a time at each caribou kill, and now Kobuk grazed in absolute contentment, for the dogs no longer looked upon him as a juicy morsel. Besides, he had sprouted horns; his strength and stamina had increased; he was larger and fleeter of foot. His inherent pugnacity was beginning to manifest itself; in action against the dogs, he was a shaggy thunderbolt. A layer of fine wool protected him from the winds that blew from the Arctic Ocean, and an outer coating of long, coarse hair kept out the rain. By the time the first snow fell, Kobuk had developed from an ungainly little waif to a sturdy calf for whom the Eskimo dogs had a wholesome respect.

Triumphantly he reached the shore and climbed the bank. He could swim!

Weeks before, millions of ducks and geese had flown southward from their breeding-grounds among the arctic islands. The days were getting shorter. An inch of snow now covered the tundra. Inside the igloos, the women sewed unceasingly on the winter clothing of their men-folk. Outside, Kobuk pawed away

the snow and snipped off the rich dried grass beneath.

The sturdy bull calf was perhaps a quarter of a mile from the camp late one October afternoon when there came to him, over the hill, the unmistakable odor of one of his kind. For a moment he hesitated; danger might lurk in those hills to the southward. Then boldly he faced into the wind, his black nostrils sniffing eagerly. Over a gentle rise trooped a procession of hunters, leading two short-legged and clumsy-bodied creatures. The bull calf sniffed again, and advanced a few steps. These animals were of his own kind!

Curiosity and the instinct to herd with his kind brought him within a hundred yards of the weary hunters and their docile captives. The men carried backloads, as did the dogs; they had slaughtered another herd, and were bringing in the meat and two of the calves, which otherwise would have become the prey of the wolves. They came nearer as Kobuk halted, head up and black nostrils twitching; the newcomers might be hostile. One, slightly larger than himself, weighed perhaps a hundred pounds; the other was of finer build and smaller.

A bellow issued from Kobuk's throat, and was answered by the larger captive. Evidently he was a bull calf; the smaller one was a female. She would therefore need Kobuk's protection. Already there was arising in him the desire to battle with the strange bull calf. As the group drew nearer, he snorted a scornful challenge and could feel his sturdy heart thumping as the challenge was answered. Stepping lightly and carefully, as if the slightest misstep would bring defeat, the calves advanced to within a foot of each other, and sniffed appraisingly.

Before Kobuk could either open hostilities or make overtures of friendship, however, the impatient Eskimos dragged the captives onward.

IN the weeks that followed, before winter actually set in, Kobuk and the other calves browsed daily upon the tender grass, within sight of the igloos. At night they were tied in the shelter of the largest one. Here they slept, their shaggy coats effectually insulating them from the frozen ground. In the semidarkness that passed for daylight above the Arctic Circle, they staged frequent mock battles with the dogs and among themselves. As winter came on, the Eskimos scattered to set their fox traps, and once a week they returned to headquarters with the pure white pelts.

Kobuk was happy at the advent of the two strangers. But Tallyak, the bull calf, seemed to be of a quarrelsome disposition, and soon the question of leadership arose. Tallyak was two weeks older than Kobuk, and perhaps ten pounds heavier. Physical superiority alone should have established him as the leader. But Kobuk, son of the sagacious and lordly Toot-lurak, was the fleeter of foot and his brain worked faster.

FOR almost a month the fighting urge was held in leash. Then, on a crisp October morning, when a northeast wind swept across the Barrens, carrying veils of snow in its wake, Kobuk, pawing the snow from a luscious bunch of grass, was knocked to his knees by Tallyak. Amazed at such treachery, Kobuk scrambled to his feet. Off to one side, a silent spectator, was Owana, the little heifer. Wheeling, Tallyak charged the shaken figure of his rival, looking for all the world like a shaggy rocking-horse as he bobbed up and down. The hoofs of his stocky limbs left flying clouds of snow as he dashed toward the unoffending Kobuk. Then he stopped. For a moment the two faced each other, Kobuk with hoofs planted firmly, muscles taut, and armor-plated head on a level with his sturdy knees. For the first time in his life, he felt the thrill of impending struggle. His right to survive was being put to the test.

Tallyak had stopped to reconnoiter, and now Kobuk took the offensive. An immature bellow, calculated to frighten his antagonist, came from his young throat. Then he snorted—and as Tallyak hesitated to take up the gage of battle, Kobuk charged.

Without time to brace himself, Tallyak was thrown backward as Kobuk's forehead met his own. There was a loud crack, like the rending of timbers. Earnestly, for such youngsters, they shoved and swayed, their budding horns scraping away tufts of wool. Instinctively—for they had never witnessed a battle between two of their kind—they faced each other, like wrestlers looking for a hold. Then as if by mutual consent, they backed off to regain their breath.

With his strength thus renewed, Tallyak now became the aggressor. Gathering his stubby legs beneath him, he launched himself with tremendous force

at his lighter antagonist, bowling him completely over. Twice Kobuk regained his feet, only to recoil from another rush. Then, overconfident at his success, Tallyak slipped on the snow-covered tundra, and before he could regain his footing, Kobuk launched an attack directly at his short ribs. With a grunt, the breath knocked out of him, Tallyak sank to his knees. But the merciless Kobuk gave him no quarter. Backing off a few feet, he again rushed at Tallyak. Another terrific smash to the midsection doubled up the instigator of the fight, and left him gasping.

Breathing heavily, Kobuk snorted and walked away; instinctively he felt that never again would he have trouble with Tallyak. He was trembling from exertion and from excitement. But he was buoyed up by exultation; he had fought —and won—his first fight. Owana, at first hesitant, now ranged alongside and began to lick his ears and face with her rough tongue. It was her first show of affection. Turning so that he faced the little heifer, Kobuk reciprocated by licking her neck.

The sun, a dull red ball of fire, sank beneath the rim of the world. Kobuk and Owana walked slowly back to their shelter. About them lay a dreary frozen immensity, unbroken by trees or rocks. Overhead, swishing across the dark-blue vault of the heavens, the aurora, sighing and crackling from the mysterious currents of electricity that gave it birth, hovered above the ice-encrusted land. From endless miles of snow there glowed a pale, cold light.

WITH the coming of spring, Kobuk, unlike his forebears, in whom the migrating instinct had lain dormant for centuries, felt an urge to travel—to put as much distance between himself and the Eskimo camp as possible. There had been food aplenty under the snow, hard-packed by many an arctic gale. His shelter had been more than adequate, and the Eskimos had treated him well. The children had even melted ice in order that the musk-ox calves might have fresh water, though the animals persisted in scooping up snow instead. The natives had built a shelter of snow blocks, but more often than not, Kobuk and his two companions slept out in the open with the dogs. Kobuk's life had been pleasant and uneventful, but his restlessness increased as the hours of daylight lengthened. Stronger than ever before in his sturdy heart was an urge to strike out into the world.

In June, Kobuk began to shed his fine under-coat of wool; it caught on the stunted willows of the creek bottoms, and trailed behind him as he followed the Eskimo group from place to place. Often he stopped to rub against a rounded boulder. The myriads of mosquitoes that came with the first warm days of June caused him little discomfort; his long, dark-brown hair, like the mane or tail of a horse, was ample protection.

KOBUK, now a year old and weighing two hundred and fifty pounds, was as large as Tallyak. His horns were almost three inches long. A thick layer of fat and the long, straight, brownish-black hair served to protect the vulnerable part of his neck against his greatest enemy of the Barren Grounds—the wolf. It was good to be alive on these arctic prairies, with their waving grass and warm sunshine. The willows were budding along the banks of the river, and the snow-patches becoming fewer and fewer. The three calves used a near-by snow-patch as a wallow to protect them from the pestiferous mosquitoes. On exceptionally warm days, they lay for hours at a time in the half-melted snowdrift.

In July, when the Eskimos broke camp and started swinging in wide circles about the tundra in search of caribou, Kobuk determined that he had had enough of this nomadic life, and one night, after the exhausted hunters and their families had stretched out on their fur mattresses, Kobuk stole quietly away to the southward. Once out of sight of the encampment, he broke into a gallop that did not slacken until the sunlit, flower-strewn Barrens were cold and sunk in shadow. By that time, with fifteen miles between his erstwhile captors and himself, he could afford to graze for an hour. . . .

At noon the following day, from the top of a high ridge the runaway perceived the entire encampment—men, women, children and dogs—hot upon his trail. With pounding heart, the year-old bull slithered down the steep slope to the river beyond. He was not a swimmer, nor did he trust the snow-covered ice that fringed the shore. But if he wished to retain his freedom, he must transcend some of the inhibitions of his ancestors: he must swim as the Eskimo dogs swam, by keeping their heads up and their feet in motion. With many

Enraged by the thought that this bloodthirsty brute had dared to attack him, Kobuk rushed upon the writhing body.

misgivings, Kobuk stepped gingerly out upon the ice-foot, just as his pursuers topped the ridge a quarter of a mile away.

Across the tundra there came a cry of triumph—for the Eskimos knew well the inherited dislike of the musk-ox for ice-covered rivers and bays and for large bodies of open water. By using the other calves as decoys, they believed Kobuk could be enticed back into the fold. But the young bull's mind was made up; he was free, and he proposed to remain so, even if he had to swim the river. A strange thrill suffused him; he walked gingerly out upon the ice. Pools of water lay scattered on the surface, and through these Kobuk sloshed. How cool they were! If only he might wallow about in one for an hour or two! But the Eskimos were now within two hundred yards; he could see them dragging Tallyak and Owana. There was no time to be lost; Kobuk advanced to the edge of the shelf.

Weakened by the intense rays of the sun, an outer section some fifty feet in diameter broke away and dropped into the river. Panic-stricken, the bull-calf wheeled and started back to shore. At the sight of the rapidly widening stretch of water he paused; he had no desire to jump into the icy depths. In this moment of indecision, the current carried the ice-pan out into the river. He could see other drifting cakes glinting in the sun. On shore, the disconsolate group showed no sign of following him downstream. His ice-floe was low in the water and it swirled about at the mercy of the eddying stream, but it was as solid underfoot as the tundra. Reassured, Kobuk selected the largest of the pools, doubled his forefeet under him, dropped to his knees, and lowered his hindquarters into the soothing depths. Dipping his muzzle into the pool, he drank his fill. Dozing in the early afternoon sun, he was carried toward the arctic sea.

When the calf woke, he was still drifting. He got stiffly to his feet in the shallow pool, and looked about. There was no sign of grass, either on the ice or on the river-banks. This worried Kobuk, who was accustomed to grazing every

three or four hours. He drank again from the pool, clambered up its slippery incline, and gained the highest hummock on the comparatively smooth floe. The bull calf was hungry. He looked longingly toward the steep banks of the river. He was in the center of the stream now, and in the distance he could hear a strange murmur. His natural barge began to move faster; the shore-line was slipping past at dizzying speed. Ripples appeared on the surface of the placid stream, and soon the ice-cake was plunging about on the agitated waters. The murmur grew into a roar, the ice-cake tipped perilously, and a small section broke away. Instinctively, Kobuk staggered toward the center, and braced himself. The floe reeled drunkenly, and, with an "all-gone" sensation in his midsection, the sturdy bull calf felt the mass being carried swiftly over a cascade that submerged its edges and threatened to engulf him. Occasionally the white-topped waters hid the high banks on either side. He was pitched and tossed about until finally he slumped to the bottom of a small pool, and lay there, shivering from fright.

THE journey of the floe and its strange passenger through the falls seemed interminable. At the lower end its speed slackened perceptibly, and a mile farther down, where comparatively still water was encountered, the musk-ox calf found courage to leap into the water and head for the bank, a hundred feet distant. It was the first time he had ever been beyond his depth, but he struck out bravely, paddling "dog-fashion" with broad, concave hoofs. Triumphantly he reached the shore and climbed the bank. He could swim! Back on the tundra the green grass waved in the morning light. He was fifty miles from home, on the south bank of the Hood. And he was free!

Kobuk was now almost half grown. For some inexplicable reason, he turned eastward, traveling in leisurely fashion and browsing as he went; he was in no hurry. Once, in traversing a country of rolling hills, broad valleys, and rocky ridges, he felt that he was treading upon familiar ground, though he saw no musk-ox or caribou. The days became shorter; cool, crisp nights betokened the coming of winter. Kobuk's early fall coat had replaced the straggling tufts of wool shed the previous summer. The prevailing northeast winds swept the Barrens almost free of snow, and grass was to be found in abundance everywhere.

In all these weeks since his enforced journey down the river, Kobuk had seen no living thing larger than a lemming, an arctic hare, or a snowy owl. Never had he had any misgivings, as he lay down to sleep, about his safety. Late one October afternoon, he watched with equanimity the circuitous approach of what seemed to be a grayish-black husky dog. The strange visitor circled about him, and approached up-wind. A faint breeze carried the promise of a juicy morsel to the old dog-wolf, traveling without pups or mate. Kobuk fluttered his nostrils and sniffed assiduously as the crafty one drew near, but the breeze kept the wolf scent from him. Sharp and frosty, the northeast wind went sweeping over the snow.

Agawok the dog-wolf knew he was seen. As patiently as his empty stomach would permit, he sat on his haunches to await developments. If this musk-ox was as young as he appeared from a distance of a hundred yards, curiosity would quickly get the better of his caution. And it did. With no precedent to guide him, with no warning of danger, the half-grown bull sauntered in the direction of his arch-enemy. The warm, rich odor of the musk-ox traveled down the wind; Agawok licked his chops, and blinked his watery eyes.

Halfway to the newcomer, Kobuk halted and gazed somewhat suspiciously. Instinctively he bore to the left, across the wind. Opposite the wolf, now crouching in the snow, Kobuk sniffed again. Caution urged him to take to his heels; curiosity led him in a wide circle. His keen nose now caught the faintest scent; instantly he stopped, braced himself, and lowered his head. Kobuk had had no experience with the wolf odor; it was unfamiliar. But it was filled with menace—that he knew instinctively. Further dissimulation on the dog-wolf's part was useless; the half-grown bull knew that here was his most relentless enemy. Snarling, with bared teeth, Agawok came bounding over the hard-packed snow. The son of Toot-lurak lowered his head still further. His sharp eight-inch horns pointed outward and to the front.

HAD his quarry been an old and decrepit caribou bull, the dog-wolf would have leaped straight for his throat. Driven to desperation by hunger, his seventy pounds would have dragged down

a two-hundred-pound caribou. But such a maneuver would have been useless against Kobuk's coat of wool, the long cloak of coarse hair, and the inch-thick layer of fat on his neck. Besides, he was a bull in his youthful prime, inexperienced but lithe and strong. As the wolf circled round and round, Kobuk constantly shifted his position, keeping lowered head and sharp horns toward his antagonist.

Agawok's plan of battle, inherited from generations of forebears, was a lunge toward the enemy's throat, a quick retreat, then a slashing of white fangs across the jugular vein. The second most vulnerable spot were the hamstrings, particularly of the musk-ox. Kobuk, less agile, with stocky legs spread far apart, seemed to realize the weak spot in his armor; he kept his head toward the enemy. He was young, but he knew instinctively that death would be the result of the slightest mistake in judgment on his part.

ROUND and round trotted the wolf. With the coming of darkness, the attacker's chances of success would be doubled. But he was hungry and overconfident; increasing his speed until he was broadside to the young bull, Agawok charged directly at the hamstring of the left hind leg. Kobuk "swapped ends" with surprising agility, thrust his horns upward, and missed the ribs of the gray wolf by less than a foot. Agawok dashed in again, snapping his dripping fangs. Kobuk avoided the charge, and deliberately raised his head, exposing his throat. This temptation was more than Agawok could resist. Forgetting for an instant that it is comparatively easy to cut the jugular vein of a caribou, and next to impossible to reach the inner tissues of a musk-ox, he leaped upward.

The counteracting movement of the young bull was amazingly swift for such a clumsy-bodied creature. Lowering his head while the dog-wolf was still in midair, he gave a savage lunge, and impaled his antagonist. Then, dumfounded and frightened at the success of his instinctive maneuver, he hurled the mortally wounded Agawok to the ground, and backed off. But, enraged by the thought that this bloodthirsty brute had dared to attack him, Kobuk rushed again upon the writhing body, twisted his head to one side, and pierced the old wolf's vital organs, again and again. Then he backed off, snorting a challenge to others of the wolf tribe. He had conquered his most dangerous natural enemy; he had won his first real battle for existence! Kobuk no longer felt afraid of any animal in this world of ice and snow. Boldly he struck off to the southward.

IN the winter months that followed, Kobuk gained weight and height at an amazing rate. Less than two years old, he stood four and a half feet high at the shoulder, and weighed more than three hundred and fifty pounds. January found him on the north bank of the Annatessi River, a hundred miles from the winter hunting-grounds of the primitive "blond" Eskimos. Four hours of twilight each day offered little incentive to travel in this world of whirling snow and cutting winds. He browsed whenever the pangs of hunger assailed him; then for hours he would lie on the snow, and permit a drift to collect about him. Soon, however, he would grow uncomfortably warm, even in a temperature of forty degrees below zero, for the mantle of snow kept out the cold, and at the same time acted as a blanket, imprisoning the heat given off by his body. When the heat became unbearable, Kobuk would rise and shake himself vigorously.

With the return of the sun in February, the lone wanderer again took up his instinctive search. Kobuk was gregarious by nature, but the strange urge that had kept him traveling throughout a tempestuous winter remained unfilled until one June day when, from a gentle rise within thirty miles of Coronation Gulf, his keen nose detected a scent like that of Tallyak and Owana. Following the scent upwind, the musk-ox bull, now two years old, saw from the top of another rise a moving brownish-black patch in the distance. He had come upon a herd of his own kind!

For the first time since the young orphan of the Barrens could remember, he was stirred by a feeling of contentment. This was what he had longed for in all those solitary months—companionship! With pathetic eagerness, he rushed toward the approaching herd, now less than a mile distant, bellowing a fervent appeal to be taken into the group. No longer would the winter nights be cold and dreary, the blizzards cutting and blinding in their violence, the days gray and opaque. No longer would he have to stand alone, graze by himself,

travel alone, and fight unaided. His months of ceaseless travel were to be rewarded.

In the van of the herd, moving toward him, was an old bull and half a dozen males of Kobuk's age. They saw the lone stranger at a distance of half a mile, and halted.

After hesitating a few moments, the entire herd veered sharply to the left, as if to avoid contact with the alien. Bewildered by this move, Kobuk ran more swiftly, in a desperate attempt to attach himself to the herd. They traveled slowly, for each of the eighteen cows seemed to have a calf less than a month old. There were also year-old bulls and heifers —altogether, between thirty and forty animals.

Hurt by their indifference, Kobuk halted within a hundred yards of the slowly moving herd. Only the bulls of his own age paid the least attention to him. He bellowed softly. One of the two-year-olds detached himself from the herd, and sent out a roar of defiance, then quickly regained his place. This reception was disheartening. Kobuk stood motionless while the herd disappeared over a rise. Then disappointment gave way to belligerence; snorting defiance, he broke into a gallop and quickly overtook the strangers. They had spread out, and Kobuk's arrival created not a ripple. There was no demonstration, either of welcome or hostility. The young cow on his left turned her big brown eyes upon him, but the glance was neither friendly nor suspicious, only curious.

For an hour the march continued; then the cows stopped to suckle their calves. The old bulls lay down, and those of Kobuk's age gathered about him and sniffed appraisingly. Kobuk, on guard for the slightest hostile movement, bore this scrutiny with equanimity, and in turn did a little investigating of his own. The result was mutually satisfactory, and soon the entire herd fell to grazing. When the march was resumed, Kobuk was added to the straggling bunch.

All that summer he stayed with the herd. He had not reached the age of maturity, and took no interest whatever in the shaggy young heifers. Therefore, it was all the more amazing that in September one of the old bulls should suddenly challenge him to do battle. A hundred yards away, the other old bull was going through a similar performance with another two-year-old. Kicking his stubby heels in the air, this youngster turned tail and ran; Kobuk did likewise. Then the two old bulls selected other victims, until the seven adolescents had been put to flight.

Amazed at this first maneuver of the mating season, the young males stood in a puzzled group. In two other herds, about equally divided, were the cows; they had been through all this before. The two-year-old heifers apparently were wondering, like the young bulls, what it was all about; with them were the summer calves. For a moment the two aged leaders glared at each other; then, with a snort, the smaller of the two turned tail and began rounding up his seven cows. The senior leader circled about his band of eleven, occasionally driving back a bawling calf.

And so Kobuk was initiated into the mysteries of the mating season. Had the old bulls challenged him in open combat, Kobuk gladly would have fought them. But their only wish seemed to be

Roaring a challenge, Kobuk launched his vigorous five hundred pounds at his wabbly antagonist.

to keep their harems intact until the mating season was over. . . .

In the year that followed, Kobuk grazed with his new-found companions. Late in October they were attacked by a wolf pack, consisting of an old dog-wolf, the mother, and three year-old pups. But the herd presented a solid front, with the calves in the center, and the wolves finally became discouraged and trotted off. A month later, within twenty miles of the ice-covered gulf, they crossed the fresh trail of a polar bear in the snow. The bulls, old and young, sniffed at the tracks, but they displayed no fear. During the months of semi-darkness, the herd browsed over an area never more than eight miles wide, but in the spring they headed westward toward the Coppermine River.

In August they sighted a musk-ox herd, and the leaders immediately headed in another direction. But Kobuk's curiosity was aroused; he had known so few of his kind that the sight of these thirty or more animals intrigued him. He was now physically the equal of the largest of the three-year-old bulls, and stronger and more agile than the leaders of the herd. Within a month the annual fight for supremacy would be staged, and Kobuk would be no mean antagonist in these affrays, for he was five feet high at the shoulders, and weighed close to five hundred pounds. The old bulls outweighed him more than a hundred pounds, but it was mostly fat. Their dark-brown horns were perhaps four inches longer than his own, and projected around and in front of their eyes —but his horns were sharper and less brittle. It was not without a feeling of relief, therefore, that the leaders saw Kobuk pause,—undecided as to whether to cast his lot with the strange herd,—look longingly at the invaders, then trot off in their direction, bobbing up and down like an animated rocking-horse.

Curiosity was the main incentive behind Kobuk's defection. He approached the newcomers at a trot, head high and "snoofing" a challenge.

The herd proved to be small, with but one leader. He was larger than the lone wanderer, but much older and less vigorous. Fourteen cows and their miscellaneous progeny made up the herd. Three of the young bulls, about the age of Kobuk, welcomed his arrival; but a fourth held aloof. It was Tallyak, his bull-calf rival. The leader was not openly hostile; he sniffed at Kobuk, as did the youngsters, and Kobuk in turn investigated all of them, particularly Tallyak. The herd then resumed its march.

At the next grazing stop, a comely young heifer, of perhaps three years in age, detached herself from the group, walked up to the newcomer, and began to lick his face and ears. Something in Kobuk's sluggish brain came to life; Owana had done that very thing years before, after he had conquered the aggressive Tallyak! Instinctively, he licked the heifer's neck, and sniffed at the thick mane of hair; he recognized the smell. It was Owana. She was placing herself under his protection—and for the next three weeks they traveled side by side.

No members of the herd except the leader and Tallyak objected to this—and Tallyak was unimportant. Soon the reason for the leader's animosity was apparent: The mating season had arrived. One September day Kobuk heard the sudden thud of hoofs, accompanied by a menacing roar. The old bull, a hairy thunderbolt, was bearing down upon him from less than a dozen feet away. There was no time to turn and face the enemy, and Kobuk reeled from the crash of the old leader's head upon his hindquarters.

Owana, frightened by this unprovoked attack, ran to one side, where the cows stood quietly watching the fray.

Kobuk felt a wave of anger such as he had never known. He was now fully grown; he had certain rights; now he would assert them. As the old bull wheeled for another charge, Kobuk set himself, lowered his head, and waited.

WITH a terrific bellow, loud enough to frighten even a seasoned fighter, the leader charged. The inexperienced Kobuk stood his ground. Their heads, armored with broad plates of bone, met with a terrific whack that drove the younger bull back upon his haunches. But the impact seemed momentarily to stun the old leader, and he was unable to follow up his temporary advantage.

In that scant second or two, Kobuk regained his feet. Roaring a challenge, he launched his vigorous five hundred pounds at his wabbly antagonist. For the first time in his life, the heavy tuft of hair on his shoulders came erect; Kobuk was fighting mad. Moreover, he was jealous of the old bull's leadership—envious of his harem of fourteen cows and six heifers.

Straight past the horns of the slightly muddled leader flashed the challenger. Once at the shoulder of his adversary, he thrust sharply upward. His horn pierced the tough old hide and ripped off an irregular piece of flesh. Thrusting out his sturdy forelegs, Kobuk stopped short, again swung his head upward, and caught the old bull in the flank. But the more experienced fighter was not to be defeated so easily. Backing off until he faced Kobuk, he rushed again, and again their bone-covered foreheads came together with a crash. Outweighed by a hundred pounds, Kobuk nevertheless had youth and strength on his side. For a moment, nose to nose, they felt each other out while they regained their breath.

Kobuk was the first to feel a resurgence of vitality. Without warning, he lunged beneath the leader's guard, seemingly intent upon knocking his forelegs from under him. But the old bull sidestepped and ripped open his antagonist's neck with wide-spreading horns. Kobuk, however, was learning as he fought; instinct told him that his only recourse was to wear down his weaker opponent. Again facing the old bull, he braced himself and charged. *Crack!* Their heads smashed together; and the old bull gave ground. Bleeding from shoulder and flank, he was weakening rapidly.

The pace was becoming too swift for the aged leader; he gave ground at every charge, and when Kobuk evaded his horns and hooked him in the right shoulder, the old bull decided that he had met his master. A telepathic message acknowledging defeat seemed to travel from him to Kobuk; with a bellow of victory the younger rival, head up and snorting a challenge to the world, raced over to where the cows and heifers were standing. With short, swift steps, he picked Owana out of the group, and herded her off to one side. Next he selected a young cow that had been friendly from the day of his arrival. There followed the rounding up of two other cows and all the heifers. Kobuk now considered his harem complete; as far as he was concerned the old bull could have the others.

But encouraged by Kobuk's good showing, and craftily appraising the leader's wounds, one of the three-year-old bulls now roared a challenge. With lowered head, he charged the staggering old fellow who a year before had driven him forth at the beginning of the mating season. In the end, the younger bull ran off with five of the latter's cows, leaving him but six of the original fourteen. Another youngster attacked Kobuk in an endeavor to win a cow or two, but soon turned tail and rejoined his two disconsolate companions.

Kobuk gathered his herd, nine in all, and gently hazed them off to a little valley a quarter of a mile away. Looking back, he saw that the deposed leader and his successful antagonist were doing likewise, apparently content with their smaller numbers.

FOR perhaps three weeks the three groups would remain apart, yet within half a mile of the spot. The young calves and the one-year-olds would herd with the recently matured bulls. At the end of that time, with the calves thus forcibly weaned and the mating season over, the four groups would unite—until the following September. Then, Kobuk, like the old leader, would find his leadership challenged by one or all of the three discomfited bulls. Such was the law, handed down by uncounted generations of musk-oxen. But there were compensations; never again would Kobuk have to roam the arctic prairies alone.

Planes across the Sea

A memorable story of those celebrated adventurers, the Free Lances in Diplomacy.

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

GRAHAM came out of the telephone-booth and went back to the gorgeous main dining-room of the Royal George, overlooking the river, where he joined the party of eight at a table in one of the window alcoves. There sat Schumann,—a Berliner with whom he had been conferring over a Continental merger,—Grosch, a Hamburg capitalist, —Ames, sometimes associated with Graham in Wall Street deals,—Mrs. Graham, —Mrs. Ames, Sir Everard and Lady Violet Coningsby,—a delightful English couple,—and Svendborg, a wealthy Dane who occasionally had business interests with the other men. They looked up as Graham rejoined them, and he said explanatorily:

"Our New York office, calling. Looks like a big bear raid on our stocks all along the line. With general conditions as they are, I ought to be in New York within forty-eight hours, if there were any way of getting there. . . . No telling whether a panic is brewing or not. Can't get quick enough action when one's phoning across the Atlantic—impossible to foresee what's going to happen five minutes ahead."

"With luck in weather conditions, the Deutsches Oberseeluftdienst will set you down at Port Newark by six P. M. day after tomorrow—" Schumann began; but Graham shook his head doubtfully.

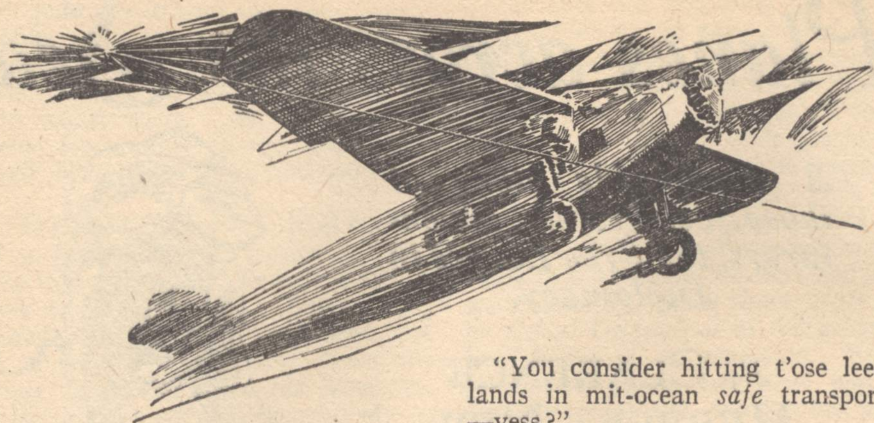
"With luck, yes—but they haven't had much luck for the last week or two! Planes reported missing for two or three days—then at Labrador—then getting down to Newark four days overdue. I believe they've only got in on schedule three times in two weeks—with a ship leaving once in three days that isn't so good. If the *Bremen* was only leaving Cherbourg tomorrow I'd make better time on her—get in Sunday night; but she won't be along until Monday."

Sir Everard put in quietly:

"Why not go by our English service, Graham? Tomorrow'll be Wednesday—they'll set you down in New York Friday afternoon about three, with good weather—prob'ly before ten in the evening, no matter what they strike."

There were contemptuous protests from the Germans. Grosch sputtered:

"Oh, if he like' to take t'e risk, mit his wife and child—yess! But t'ey must take t'e pad luck shoost like ot'er ships. And pad luck mit t'at Pritish Serwice iss much more tangerous t'an mit der Deutsches one—pecause, if der weat'er wass goodt, we make der tip of Greenlandt in one hop; if der weat'er's pad, we go north and land on our Iceland field near Reykjavik. All so big targets we could not miss t'em! From Greenlandt to Rigolet on Labrador—undt t'en down to Port Newark. But der Pritish Serwice—he mus' hit der leetle flyspecks of islands in middle of Atlantic—Azores—Permuda. So far—well, he hit t'em pretty straight. Good weat'er—good luck. But you miss t'ose fly-specks—you use up all der petrol—you must gome down on der water of der ocean. If no steamer come along to help—well, soon you get swamped.



Moreover—t'ere haf peen rumors t'at der Pritish Serwice haf enemies w'ich sometimes catch t'eir ships out over der high seas, undt try to crash t'em. Perhaps Sir Everard would tell us t'at iss not'ing but lies. Eh?"

To this long harangue Sir Everard replied imperturbably:

"No, Herr Grosch—it is true that a ship, presumably from Hamburg or Stettin, did come out a couple of months ago and try to crash one of the British Ocean Air Service planes—but it never got back. I believe that most of the crew were picked up from floating wreckage by a Portuguese cargo-boat. You see, all ships of the British Service are equipped with thorough defense against aërial attack in any place or at any time, without subjecting passengers or mail to much risk. The Deutsches Oberseeluftdienst, on clear circumstantial evidence, is the only organization having any direct interest in wiping out our ships—but we figure their northern route puts them out of the running as competitors, so haven't considered retaliatory measures necess'ry. I think I can assure Mr. and Mrs. Graham that the British Ocean Air Service will set them down in New York Friday afternoon after a safe, comfortable, and int'resting trip—if they care to try it."

"You haf inwested in der company, Sir Everard—yess?"

"Not tuppence worth! I'd like to be—because it is already on a paying basis, except for int'rest on the capitalization. But there are no shares to be had at any price. An' they have a contract with the Portuguese Governm'nt which prohibits the erection of any wireless station or airdrome on the islands of Pico, Fayal or São Jorge except those stations which are already existing."

"You consider hitting t'ose leetle islands in mit-ocean *safe* transportation—yess?"

"Well, they've been making New York inside of thirty-five to forty hours from Tilbury every day for the last five months, with only five exceptions. Three times, they've had to fly well above a hurricane in the teeth of a pretty strong wind, even up there—and didn't make it until the middle of the night. Once the eastbound plane had to go up three miles while the comp'ny's scout-planes, below, were chasing off two bombing-planes that tried unsuccessfully to destroy one of the repair-floats; and another time the westbound plane had to send down some mysterious unknown ship which evidently meant to attack her. The passengers never knew a word about it until some of them came back a month later."

"Does der Pritish Serwice warn its passengers t'ey must expect occasional attack, *en route?*"

"They don't put it that way, Herr Schumann. It is understood passengers travel at their own risk from acts of Nature or piracy on the high seas—just as every steamer-ticket reads, when one books passage that way. If the passenger asks about the possibility of such attacks, he is told frankly of the two which have occurred so far, and then shown the record of ships arriving at destination without injury to passengers. The British Service has nothing to conceal. There's the record of what they've been doing day after day for five months, without injury or even annoyance to a passenger. Their attitude is 'take it or leave it'—fly with them an' see life—or go some other way an' find they've reached port before you. However, Graham happens to be the interested party in this case. Which way had you rather go, Graham?"

"If it were not for my wife and little girl I'd like to try that southern route—it sounds pleasanter. But the Prus-

sians seem to have more safe places to land on in case of trouble—more certainty of getting through sometime. Have your people a London office, Schumann?"

"Yess—but I find out quicker about accommodation if I have t'em put me t'rough to Von Lahm in Stettin. *Ja!*"

HE ascertained that the next day's plane from Doulus Head in the Irish Free State could pick up the Herr Graham, with his wife, child, and child's nurse, at noon, unless delayed. "Yess, my friendt—four goodt seats in der *Tristan*—thirty-passenger boat. Shall I take t'em for you?"

Graham looked across the table at his wife.

"How about it, Frances?"

"Oh, I don't want to go that cold, freezing way, Jack! Why can't we all go by that southern route?"

"Well—they've got a corking good record, but there's got to be a first time when something goes wrong—seems to me we're more certain to get through with a minimum of delay by going up north. Suppose I go ahead that way, and you come with Connie by steamer—eh?"

"Not much! If you get killed I want to pass out at the same time, Jack! I'd worry myself sick until I heard you'd got through! If you've decided upon the Prussian Service we'll go that way and see what it's like."

"All right, Herr Schumann—tell your friend we'll take the accommodation from Ireland tomorrow and we're much obliged to you both," said Graham. "Will you come with us, Harry—and Vera?" —to the Ames couple.

"No! I'm damned if we will!" said Harry Ames forcibly. "I wouldn't go across through all that cold for fifty thousand dollars! Tell you what I *will* do, though—if Sir Everard and Lady Coningsby have four or five days' spare time, I'll invite them to go over with us and return at my expense. We'll take that British ship from Tilbury at eight tomorrow morning—I think somebody said it was the *Condor*—thirty-eight passengers—and we'll just make a little side bet that we book at any New York hotel you say, twelve hours before you do! How about it? Make it an even thousand dollars. I'm banking on what I call a phenomenal five months' record for the English Service, against a Prussian record not so good—even if there were not a much better one. Are you on? And while we're about it, Schumann—just to give you an int'rest in the game, I'll bet you five thousand that we beat your ship by six hours at least."

Sir Everard made the same two bets on his own account, with a smile.

Schumann and Grosch nodded acceptance, and snakily glanced at each other out of the corners of their eyes—the same unspoken thought perfectly understood. If the British plane got in six hours ahead—it would cost them twelve thousand dollars, gold basis. If the Prussian plane got through anywhere near on schedule—and the British ship mysteriously disappeared, never to be heard from again—they would have twelve thousand in cash and the British Service would be given a terrific black eye. . . .

As the Coningsbys were chatting with Ames and his wife while waiting for the lift to take them up to their rooms, two men of distinguished appearance came out of the dining-room and spoke to Sir Everard. They were introduced, and were then told of the wagers on the ships of the rival ocean air services.

"BIT of luck, your tellin' us this, Sir Everard!" said one of the men, after an instant's hesitation. "We'd not mind havin' a bit on those ships tomorrow, ourselves—what? That is, if we can find any takers."

"Hmph! . . . . Judging by the way Schumann and Grosch snapped us up, just now I'd say pretty much any Prussian in London would take a bet on their service against the English one!" Harry Ames chuckled. "They're all sore because you English have had no serious casualties up to now—and they're as positive as they can be that you *will* have them pretty soon, just because they consider your route extra-hazardous, Marquess! I can't see it that way, myself. I'm a pretty good amateur engineer in radio and other branches of electricity—with up-to-date radio equipment, I can't see anything hazardous at all in your route. This is why my wife and I are going across on the *Condor* from Tilbury in the morning—and why I made those bets. By the way, how is it that the Stettin Service, when it was going to pick up passengers in the British Isles anyway, didn't lease ground nearer London for their field?"

"Fortunately, we had influence enough to prevent that—on the basis that it was unfair competition with our British Service. But over in the Irish Free State they gave 'em the pick of any

land they wanted. I say, Mr. Ames! . . . . If Sir Everard an' Lady Coningsby are goin' across with you just as a sportin' proposition, I fancy Lammerford an' I will join you—make it a sort of personally conducted show with a good bit of money on, if we can get it down."

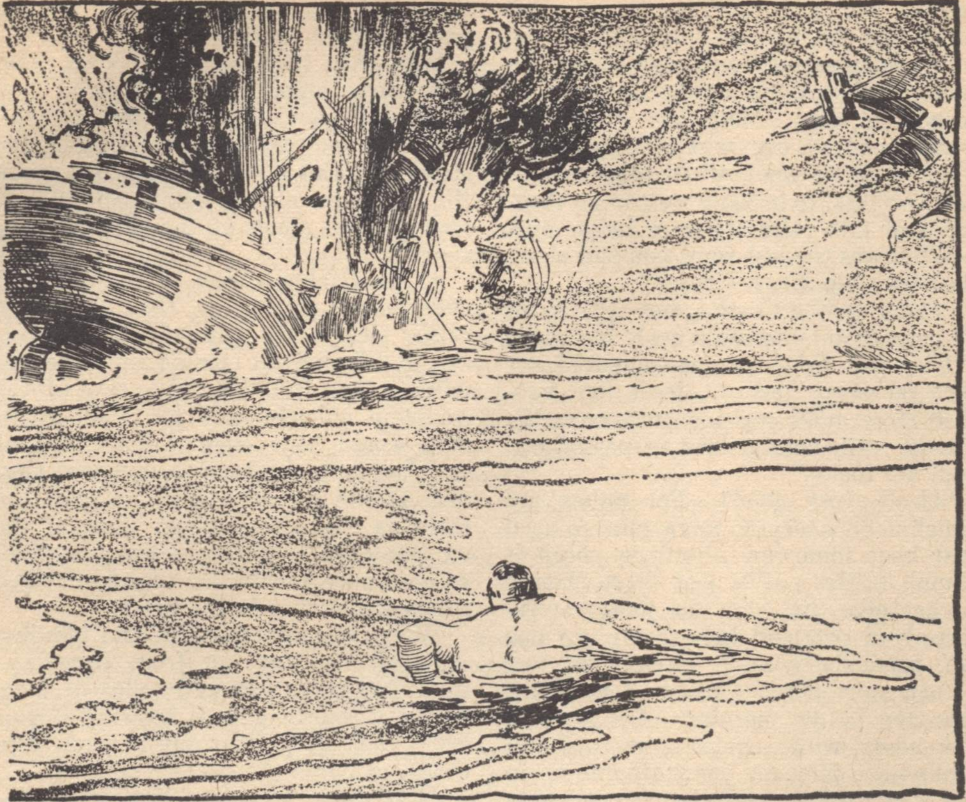
THE Prussian banker and capitalist remained at the table with their Danish friend after the Grahams had gone up to their suite. Schumann presently asked Svendborg if he didn't feel inclined to put a little money on the *Tristan.*

The Dane hesitated; then he said:

"It's a temptation, I confess. Those Americans blindly offered you twelve thousand dollars to stop their plane if you could (that's what it amounts to—not?) And unless imagination is playing me tricks, I'd say that Von Lahm has been quietly taking almost infallible measures to do just that, without any cash inducement. But I prefer not to know anything definite in that direction. And I'd bet on the Stettin boat were it not for two considerations: American luck—and the foresight of the Marquess of Lyonesse, who is supposed to be managing director of the British Service. No, I think I will not bet. It would not surprise me if you lose."

The three went down below the street-level to the cab and car tunnels, where the Dane went off with his own chauffeur and the other two stepped into Schumann's big car—which was driven across Westminster Bridge and down through Surrey to an isolated manor-house on the Sussex Downs. None of the main turnpikes were within three miles of the building—except for the main drive and a farm-road, there was no vehicular access through the estate, and trespassers were severely dealt with. A former owner had experimented with an irrigation system supplied by a couple of big windmills on skeleton steel towers nearly two hundred feet high—though, being on the edge of a wooded tract in which there were a number of elms and tall chestnuts, they did not give the impression of being anywhere near that height. They projected above the trees, of course, but with both slats and steelwork painted a light horizon blue, were almost invisible even from the manor-house. So nobody in the neighborhood ever had noticed the two copper wires stretching eight hundred feet from one tower to the other. Nor was there now any trace left on the surface of the ground showing where a narrow and deep ditch was cut for the three-inch pipe filled with coal-tar pitch which carried those copper wires into a cellar under the side garden of the manor-house.

Schumann figured that he had little or no time to spare that night. Going into the spacious Georgian library with Grosch, he touched a spring in the wainscoting, slid back a panel, and stepped on the landing at the top of a flight of narrow wooden steps going down twenty feet. At the foot of these, they went along an underground passage until they came to a concrete chamber in which was a powerful motor coupled to a good-sized dynamo—a long experiment-bench for electrical work—and several powerful wireless-sets, both receiving and transmitting. Starting up the motor, Schumann seated himself by the wireless sets—tuned them to seventeen meters—and commenced calling a code-number, which in a moment or two was acknowledged. Then, with Von Lahm at the other end in the private office of his airplane plant, he told him of the dinner conversation, the transportation-bookings for the next day, and the bets



"The end of our forward deck was blown off by an aërial torpedo. . . . Here comes anoth—" Silence followed.

which had been made. They spoke in German, but with pauses between question and answer to give time for coding and decoding, so that nobody picking up the conversation could understand it.

"You must be about ready to try the plan out at this moment, Von Lahm—is it not so?"

"Ja! . . . . Final arrangements completed at six o'clock. It is better that you give the instructions from your broadcasting station, because too many are guessing at our wave-length here and trying to decode us. It is understood that you will use the Number Five wave in the case of the steamers—and from this moment the Number Eight wave for all planes. wherever they are. I am doing the same here. Order the North Atlantic operations at once, commencing as soon as possible, then lying in wait for the English plane tomorrow."

MEANWHILE the Marquess of Lyonesse and Earl Lammerford of St. Ives had descended to their car in the hotel cab-tunnels, driven around two or three blocks, back to the narrow street on the west side of the Royal George—down through a private tunnel to a cross-tunnel two levels below the street. Then they let themselves into a private passage with a lift going up through a sealed shaft from the end of it, until they stepped out into the Marquess' beautiful apartment on the twentieth floor of the big central "keep." Here they sat down on the window-seat of a deep bay looking down upon the river, east and west, and the whole southern expanse of the great city. On a long table near them were periodicals from ten world-capitals —cigars, tobacco, wine and liquor—and seven French telephones, three with dials, and four without. Picking up one of these, the Marquess said—while dialing the chief operator at Trevor Hall in South Devon to switch him in with the powerful beam-station:

"I fancy it wouldn't occur either to Graham or Ames, Lammy, that they shoved up their life-insurance rates about twenty per cent by those fool wagers they made! Dev'lish annoyin' just at this time—when that crazy northern route is givin' the Stettiners enough trouble to make 'em vindictive as hell over our success! What? We're goin' to have our work cut out for us, gettin' the *Condor* into New York without killing

any of our passengers or crew. But we've had the luck to intercept an' decode something of Von Lahm's dirty unsportsmanlike plans before he began to suspect a leak. With the excessively wide range of our wirèless equipm'nt, we're sure to spot what other waves he's switchin' to because we can go thousands of kilocycles above or below him.—What was the last word you had about the new ship *Gray Goose?*"

"Sister to the *Condor,* but with a bit more space an' improvem'nts? She made a trial trip this morning—hundred per cent on every test—at least five hundred more miles cruising-range than the *Condor* with normal load of passengers, mail an' fuel—"

"Good—very good! For unless my hunch is all pie-eyed, we're goin' to need that boat tomorrow afternoon—need it damn' badly! I'll just have Harry Archer give that ship the most careful three-hour overhaul he's ever given one yet, particularly as to wireless an' fuel—then start her out after us not later than ten in the morning. Let her follow along with regular crew an' full tanks—one pilot an' one mechanic up in the after cockpit with the port an' starboard electrodes ready, lookin' for trouble as they come up to Repair Float 'A'—lookin' above, behind an' around them for attackin' planes, as they come along. Now I'll talk to the float commander an' give him his orders!"

BEFORE retiring that night, the Grahams went into one of the outfitting shops in the great hotel, on the street-level, to purchase soft fleecy sweater-vests and breeches which could be worn under other clothing, for themselves, little Connie and her nurse—also three light but warm traveling-rugs of soft fluffy wool.

At nine the following morning they were at the Croydon airdrome waiting for the Irish plane, which appeared in the western sky three minutes later. In less than two hours, they came down at the airdrome on Doulus Head in the mouth of Dingle Bay, Kerry. Here they strolled about inspecting the runway, flood-lights and wireless-station for half an hour. Shortly after twelve, when they'd had sandwiches and coffee in the concrete Service Building, they came out to watch the approach of the *Tristan,* coming along at a good clip from the east. The pilot came down on the field in a perfect three-point landing, and the little crowd hurried along to inspect the big plane at close quarters.

When the steps were let down from her entrance-port, the pilot who had flown her from Stettin came out, followed by two passengers for Dublin, the steward,—who at once began to supervise the stowage of provisions,—two mechanics, and some of the through passengers.

As the Grahams were looking the ship over before getting in, they noticed a rather swaggering figure in leather helmet and flying-suit coming from the Administration Building with two of the company officials—and the Wall Street man would have been a shade less at ease had he understood the guttural German of the low discussion between the three as they came along. One of the uniformed men evidently was the chief wireless operator, for he referred to some recent dispatches in his hand:

"Wassermann says thick and blinding snow all the way out from Greenland to within three hundred miles of here. A stiff westerly gale is blowing it this way—ceiling's presumably a good three thousand meters."

"The devil! . . . . Not so good—that! I'd better take her up within fifteen minutes, if we can get away, and make north for the Iceland 'drome. When we get there one of the scout-pilots you've been talking with will have gone up to see what conditions are above the snow-ceiling."

"*Donner,* Johann! . . . . I think you wass right! You hurry up the mechanics and steward—myself, I run back to the Administration and have the booking clerk chase all the passengers on board at once. Then—I send out the band—and all iss ready."

As the pilot stood with hands on hips, a cigarette drooping from the corner of his mouth, giving the mechanics and steward the rough edge of his tongue, an Irish-American near the Grahams smiled a little and muttered:

"The *Tristan* and her passengers seem to be highly honored this trip! That is Johann Weiss, pilot-in-chief of the service—and he's evidently taking us across! Wonder if this is a special occasion of any sort? By Jove! They're not giving us any three hours here! There is the band, coming out!"

VON LAHM and his backers had spent thought and money on the problem of making their air service at-

tractive to the traveling public, regardless of what the outside weather might be. The exhaust from eight motors coupled in four tandems furnished heat enough for climatic conditions in the Arctic Circle—when it was all available. The ships and their fittings were built with duralumin, light but strong. The food and wines served were exceptionally good and perfectly cooked by a French chef. The chairs, convertible into curtained double berths at night, were the last word in pneumatic comfort. And the northern route was, by reason of there being fewer miles to the degree of longitude as one goes further north, the shorter of the two competing services, weather conditions being equal. However, weather conditions never *are* equal. Winter or summer, the southern route, though longer, is the easier-flying, better-weather one of the two.

SIX hours after the German plane *Tristan* took off, it ran into a snow-laden gale from the west, and though the pilot flew in the top layer of the snow-clouds, where the wind lost most of its force, the increased cold at that altitude formed ice on the wings. This weight kept forcing the ship lower and lower before the network of small exhaust-pipes just under the top wing-surface could loosen it off. Two hours before they managed, after nerve-wrecking breaks in their wireless communication, to come down at the airdrome near Reykjavik, Weiss cut out two-thirds of the heat from the cabin, mail and operating-rooms to force it through the wings—a proceeding his mechanics warned him was risky, from the danger of melting the soldered joints of the pipes. Fortunately the extreme cold outside offset this—but there wasn't another pilot in the service who would have dared risk it.

The passengers spent the rest of the night in the 'drome-building, inadequately heated—and in the morning hopped off in much clearer weather for Lindenow's Fjord at the tip of Greenland. But they were then a good ten hours behind their schedule. The assistant pilot spoke of this to Weiss, who began to laugh.

"Evidently there is something you do not know about the proposition, Heinrich. You heard about those bets that they made?"

"*Ja*—I hear! Thirty thousand dollars altogether, that the *Condor* beat the *Tristan*."

"*Ja!* . . . . But remember that every one of those bets say the *Condor*, or any substitute ship of the British Ocean Air Service leaving England yesterday morning must be in New York twelve hours ahead of the *Tristan* to win the six-thousand-dollar bets, or six hours to win the one thousand! You catch it?"

"*Ja!* . . . . That's what I said!"

"Not quite, *mein Freund*. We could be a week late at Port Newark and still win all bets, provided that any English ship leaving yesterday morning didn't get to New York before us! Nothing was said about our making it on a schedule of so many hours—or the English ship either—just that one of them must beat the other to destination. You see?"

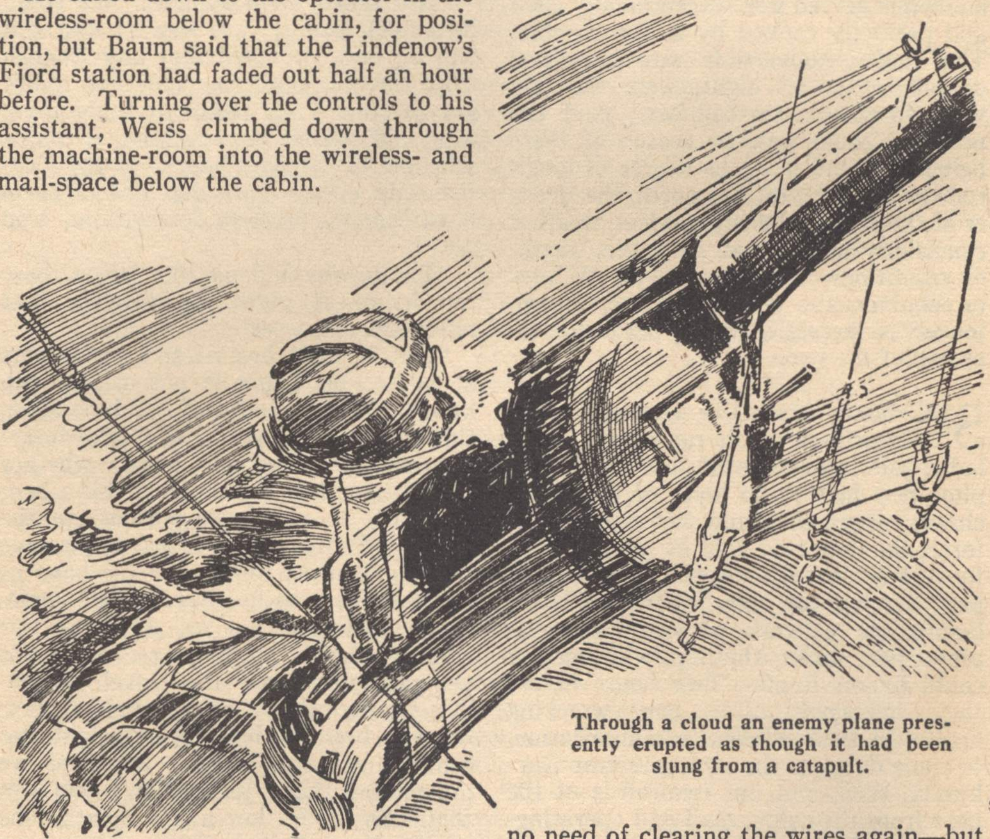
"That's why I don't like losing these ten hours—it gives the English that much advantage—"

"Not if their bus doesn't reach port at all! Von Lahm is not asleep, you know! We have a lot of bad luck along this route. We lost one ship with forty-one on board—nobody knows whether she dropped into the ocean, or hit a berg and went to pieces, or got lost in the middle of Greenland, where her people froze or starved to death. We have as much as three to five days' delay, sometimes. Other times we get in a few minutes ahead. But the service is not yet satisfactory for the traveling public. On the other hand, the British service has been at least ninety-eight per cent on schedule—among ourselves we must admit that. Well—Von Lahm sees that. So he lies low a few months—he studies those British ships. They have repair-floats in fixed position at sea—always in same spot—always ready with wireless-beacon. One between England and the Azores, and two between the Azores and Bermuda. The first proposition is to sink or put out of business that first float with her wireless. Do that, and the west-bound plane is flying blind—her pilot cannot always be sure of the beacon on the Azores. And before he might pick it up, two or three combat-planes could send him down into the ocean. So you see what happens to the *Condor*—while we get across safe, taking our time if we have to."

A FEW hours later, however, it wasn't a question of Weiss' taking time—the weather was doing that for him. They had run into snow again—more blinding and persistent than before. As he tried to climb out of it, thick ice

formed on the wings—and with a muttered statement that the passengers would have to keep warm any way they could, he turned three-quarters of the exhaust into the wing-tubes; but every time the ice was loosened and dropped off, it formed again as soon as he got up a few thousand feet.

He called down to the operator in the wireless-room below the cabin, for position, but Baum said that the Lindenow's Fjord station had faded out half an hour before. Turning over the controls to his assistant, Weiss climbed down through the machine-room into the wireless- and mail-space below the cabin.



Through a cloud an enemy plane presently erupted as though it had been slung from a catapult.

"What's wrong with the outfit, Heinrich?"

"Ice on the aërials—snow in the air—I suppose!"

"Come up to the after-cockpit with a couple of poles!"

They tapped off the thick encasing ice from the heavy copper aërials, then went below again.

"Now try to get somebody—a steamer will do—turn your dynamo up to three or four times the power you were using!" Weiss directed. "The fjord station may have lowered their aërials to overhaul them, or the sponge-static may be forming lanes between us, like in fog sometimes!"

In another half hour they got the station faintly—but a good ten degrees farther south than they were heading—the drift of the gale being almost impossible to judge at their shifting altitudes. Weiss did not dare head directly for the fjord, lest he overshoot the extreme tip of Greenland and have to fight his way across Davis Strait with low fuel tanks. With the heavy wattage they were putting into their aërial-output there was no need of clearing the wires again—but there was risk of "shorts" fusing some of the connections in their short-wave transmission, considering the amount of ice and moisture.

In the cabin, extra-heavy clothing had proved burdensome as long as the heat was supplied—but with three-quarters of it turned off into the wings, at least a third of the passengers, relying upon the "heated-cabin" assurance in the company's advertising, and neglecting to provide themselves with emergency protection, began to suffer acutely. Little Connie Graham came around and climbed, shivering, into her Mother's lap, whispering: "I'm cold, Mummy! . . . . I'm just *awful* cold!" Turning to the nurse, Graham said: "Take those wool undergarments into the washroom, Mary, and both of you put them on under your clothes. Then come back and wrap up loosely in the big wool rugs—there'll be

some boiling hot coffee ready. When you're out of the washroom, Mrs. Graham and I will put ours on. I suppose the pilot had no choice but to use the heat to clear the plane from ice, considering what we ran into—but we'll know enough never to pick this route again. They may figure out ways of meeting these conditions satisfactorily—but they won't experiment on *us* again!"

The last half of that flight was a series of cold thrills. They made Greenland during a lull in the storm, coming down on a flat field of ice and waiting there, almost frozen, until they reëstablished communication with the fjord station fifty miles south. By the time they made that, they had lost fourteen hours more. After refueling they were up again heading across Davis Strait for Hamilton Inlet and Rigolet on Labrador—through more snow and cold. From there, their course lay southwest up the Strait of Belle Isle and over Halifax to Port Newark, which they finally reached, forty-four hours behind their schedule. Mrs. Graham, Connie and Mary went to bed in a New York hotel for several days with heavy colds that narrowly escaped pneumonia. Graham wasn't seriously injured, and reached his office two days earlier than he could have made it by any steamer—but three of the other passengers died of pneumonia.

THE *Condor*, on the morning of her departure, went up from Tilbury, and circled gracefully over Kent and Sussex, to head straight down the English Channel. Until Land's End was three hundred miles behind them, the Marquess and Earl Lammerford spent the time showing the Ameses and Coningsbys over the plane, calling their attention to the little silver amphibian which the wireless operator had pinned upon the beautifully colored map of the North Atlantic painted across the forward bulkhead of the cabin to show the exact position of the ship in the air at that moment, explaining that Repair-Float "A" for which they were heading was just two hundred miles southwest of the silver plane. Then the two peers went below to the wireless-room where they seated themselves by the operator, Tarrant, and lighted their pipes.

"Getting Pico and our own beam-station at Trevor Hall clearly, Sam?"

"Aye, sir—an' Chincoteague, Virginia, as well. Atmospheric conditions would have to be pretty bad before you'd fail to get all three of those stations in any part of the globe, on short-wave. Here's the commander of Float 'A'—he wants to talk with you."

"Lyonesse at this end, Farnsworth! Have you got your torpedo-nets in place all around the hull—an' your funnels telescoped down?"

"Aye, sir—everything cleared—one bomber and two combat-planes on deck, ready to go up. What sort of attack on us were you expecting—and how soon?"

"Right now! Any sign of a steamer in sight of you?"

"Nothing but what looks like a cargo-boat, about twelve miles west of us, sir."

"That'll be the one! Get the crews around both of the five-inch guns and one torpedo-tube. Don't make a move until after she's discharged a torpedo or a gun at you. When she does—well, let her have it! Sink her if necess'ry, but not otherwise. I'd say she has prob'ly sent up two or three bombers or combat-planes already, before they were close enough for you to see them; so you may expect aërial attack as well as on the water—after which, those planes will get after us. Get all of your planes into the air at once, including the reserve bomber—put half a dozen gas-torpedoes on her. I've an idea you may be able to put the cargo-boat out of business with gas and not kill anybody—might send down one of their planes with gas, also. You'll prob'ly find that cargo-boat is a camouflaged light cruiser before you get through with her. Keep reporting to us on the 'point-fifty-five' channel every little while. Pico an' Trevor Hall will pick it up, easily—rush help to you if needed!"

When the Marquess had signed off, Lammerford went up with one of the mechanics to start the fan-generators for their high-frequency "*n*-ray." Then he cast loose from the coaming at the sides of the after cockpit the twelve-foot copper electrodes encased in one-inch glass tubes with rubber hose outside of them. There was another on the under side of the fuselage for use on any plane which happened to be below them.

IN the wireless-room, meanwhile, Tarrant was doing some serious thinking. Finally he said:

"I—er—I suppose, sir, with all the precautions you've taken there isn't much chance of their bein' able to send us down with all these passengers an' the mails?"

"Well, pirates have existed on the high seas in all ages," His Lordship replied. "And it's diffic'lt if not impossible to prove a case. Outside of the three-mile limit you're in 'No Man's Land'—anything or everything may happen—an' nobody knows that better than the Deutsches Oberseeluftdienst. The worse failure they make of service over that northern route, the more determined they'll be to prevent success over any other route. —Yes, Farnsworth?"

"One of our aërials has been carried away by shell-fire; two torpedoes were caught and exploded by nets, without damage—couldn't get through our double-skin, anyhow! Ten feet were blown off the end of our forward-deck by an aërial torpedo, but the bomber was sent down by one of our own ships. One of our torpedoes hit other craft, but she's not sinking—yet. Look out for two of their ships up there after you. If they get our remaining aërial we'll try to rig up something!"

AFTER an interval of twenty minutes the float commander again reported: "Either they've run out of torpedoes or have given up trying to sink us that way—one bomber's gone out of sight—look out for it. . . . Our gas-ship has just dropped one container squarely down their after funnel by a lucky fluke—another just outside an open companion-way—and a third where it bounced back through what seems to be an open hatch. They have resumed fire from four-inch guns, sweeping our deck—last shot within a foot of our other aërial—here comes anoth—" Silence followed.

"By Jove!" Trevor exclaimed. "Evidently they did get the last aërial, Sam—but there must be enough gas below their deck to put 'em out of business in a few minutes!" He switched in the pilot in the forward cockpit. "I say, Comyn! Can you see anything ahead that looks like the float?"

"Not yet, sir—but I fancy we should, within ten or fifteen minutes."

"Aye—prob'ly! But keep an eye out, both of you, for an enemy bomber an' a combat-plane—pretty well up, I'd say—comin' along to look us up."

The Marquess repeated this by phone to Earl Lammerford and the mechanic in the after cockpit. Then came questions from Trevor Hall and the Azores—who had picked up what Farnsworth had been reporting and wanted to know whether other planes should be rushed to the neighborhood of the float. When they had been answered, Farnsworth came in again:

"They suddenly stopped firing, Your Lordship—so we put on gas-masks an' went over to 'em for a look-see. Got aboard up a trailin' line, for'ard—traced the lead-in from her aërials through a pipe to the wireless-room on spar-deck of the midship-house—I'm talkin' from there, now. One of us had to go below an' start dynamo in engine-room. Their crew lying about unconscious on decks and gratings. What do we do with them?"

"Put a skeleton prize-crew aboard (ask Trevor Hall to send one down to the float by plane), and send them up in irons to the Naval depot at Plymouth. I'll wager you'll not find anything on that craft or the men to indicate her ownership or flag—but we'll let an Admir'lty Court try 'em as pirates just the same! Iron that crew an' get back on the float—we'll be picking you up in a few minutes!"

From their two cockpits, they saw a couple of their own planes send down an enemy combat-plane which went so far under water that not even a bit of wreckage came up during the time they could see the spot. Then their ships appeared to be playing hide-and-seek through a fat white cloud, from which an enemy bomber presently erupted as though slung from a catapult, with the other planes after her. Although they were fast overhauling the bomber, she was in a direct diagonal line with the *Condor*, some eight hundred feet below; the pilots were afraid to use their "*n*-rays" on her lest they also shoot beyond and put the *Condor's* motors out of business. But the two peers and the mechanic in the after cockpit were in the unlucky postion of having to stop the bomber or take the chance of an aërial torpedo which would scatter the ship and her thirty passengers into small fragments—she was already spitting machine-gun fire as she approached over them. They lined up both of the twelve-foot electrodes on her and threw over the switches. She staggered and pitched as if she had received a body blow in mid-air—then dived directly upon the *Condor*, neatly slicing off at least half of her tail. The doomed craft went on below to a watery oblivion, while the English ship was out of business for any further transportation-service during the week. They saw Comyn look

around from the forward cockpit, and pointed to the damaged tail-rudders. Ahead and a thousand feet below, Float "A" was now in sight. In answer to the Marquess' questioning nod, Comyn signified his ability to land the *Condor* on her deck,—as long and wide as that of an airplane-carrier which, to all intents, she was,—though His Lordship quietly walked through the cabin to the machine-room door at the side of the map on the forward bulkhead and stood behind the pilot ready to take the stick if he showed the slightest indication of losing his nerve.

Fifteen minutes later the *Gray Goose* joined them.

IN the sealed and soundproofed cabin the passengers had neither seen nor heard anything of what had been going on—so they were amazed at the wrecked appearance of the float's deck. But the Marquess pointed out that the damage was merely superficial—that the hull, motors and everything else inside was still in perfect condition. The passengers got the impression that some fourth-rate State had wanted an airplane-carrier and had tried to steal this one from a private company—which, however, seemed well able to protect its property.

An hour later, they, with their luggage and the mail, had been transferred to the *Gray Goose.* Then they were up again—up until they could see nothing but a rolling sea of clouds far beneath them. About six in the evening, Sir Everard asked if he might be taken up to the after cockpit—and His Lordship agreed. When they were up there with the trap closed under their feet, he said:

"One infers, Sir Everard, that you are gettin' a bit curious—what?"

"Well, of course, you know—an old Royal Navy chap isn't to be fooled into the belief that a course five degrees south of west from that somewhat mauled float is a direct line to the Azores. (Always carry a three-sixty-degree compass with me as a pocket-piece.) And a fourth-rate Power stealin' your float was pullin' the old leg a bit—what? Besides, I happened to be lookin' down out of my port when her tail was sliced, d'ye see—couldn't help seein' that ship goin' down to everlastin' damnation. Well, might one ask when we're due at Pico an' Horta—an' that fine Service hotel where we're to dine?"

"On the return trip to London, Sir Everard! The float was attacked by an old camouflaged cruiser with two five-inch rifles, two four-inch quick-firers, four torpedoes, an' four planes—two combats an' two bombers. One of our planes gassed the cruiser—Commander Farnsworth of the float captured her with gas-masks, an' ironed the crew. Three of his planes sent down three of the enemy's, an' the *Condor* got the other while you passengers were reading your books or magazines in the cabin. We've reason to believe the other floats between Pico an' Bermuda will be attacked in a similar manner when the west-bound plane is due.

"Well, d'ye see, the British Ocean Air Service contracted to deliver thirty passengers from Tilbury, with their luggage an' the mail, in New York tomorrow afternoon—safely, an' as near four o'clock as possible. Only way to do it without too much risk at those other floats was to cut out the Azores an' Bermuda altogether—makin' the twenty-two hundred sea miles from Float 'A' to New York in just one hop. Fourteen hours, with luck—an' we've a tail-wind right now. Call it six o'clock tomorrow morning, barring unforeseen delays. There are bets runnin' to some thirty thousand dollars that all passengers leavin' Tilbury by our air service this morning should book at their New York hotel by five tomorrow afternoon—but at all events, six to twelve hours before those on any ship of the Deutsches Obersee-luftdienst leavin' Dingle Bay any time today get into New York. If we make it by six in the morning, we'll do eleven hours better than our wagers—"

"At a bit more risk—what?"

"Don't see it! This ship was built with a cruising-range of four thousand miles, normal load—or a hundred extra miles for every vacant cabin-seat made up in fuel weight. Sometime after dinner tonight, I take the stick myself—until I bring you down at Port Washington on Long Island Sound in the morning."

THE *Gray Goose* came safely down in the New York area at five o'clock Friday morning—twenty-one hours from Tilbury, and fifty-six hours before the rival ship reached Port Newark. And the Stettin men paid their wagers—because they were sportsmen. But there was a heavy expense-account—a strictly private one—about which the newspapers never did hear!

Another of these fine stories of the Free Lances in Diplomacy will appear in an early issue.

Old Man River

This engaging novelette deals with a great flood, a cruel crime, some able detective work and several interesting people; and its climax comes in powder-smoke.

By MEIGS O. FROST

OLD SHERIFF WHITTLESEY picked up the telephone receiver, for what was perhaps the hundredth time that day.

"Sheriff speakin'," he said. "Hello, Sam. Sho, now! That a fact? Up by Mack Pressley's store, you say? No sand-boils? Just risin' steady, is it? Levee looks like she was softenin' up in that one spot, huh? Little seepage, is there? All right, Sam. I'll have you some men and sandbags up right away. Reckon you'll need brush mattresses, too. Need some two-by-fours and one-by-twelves on the crest, do you? All right, Sam. Pete Beasley'll be there with a coupla trucks in 'bout an hour. I'll have extra men for the night patrol, too. G'by, Sam."

The tall, wiry old Sheriff turned to his deputy.

"Take your flivver down to Rawlston's Bend, Ed," he said. "Pete Beasley's just finishin' up his sandbag job there. Tell him to step on it, gettin' in here, and load up and head for the levee up by Mack Pressley's store."

He gave minute instructions how many sandbags and how much timber Pete was to load. Then he drew from a desk drawer a sheet of paper with a list of names.

"When you've given Pete his orders, Ed," he said, "you drive right on up past Mack Pressley's and tell these boys to show up for levee patrol tonight. I been holdin' back, hopin' not to have to use them, but it's beginning to look bad. Tell 'em Mack'll have orders where to station 'em at six o'clock."

Sullenly Ed Ballard departed.

"That's a peace-making telephone of yours, Sheriff," said young Dr. Tarleton, who had come in to see the Sheriff a few moments before. "Ringing the way it did, I didn't have to answer that damn' skunk when he came in and spoke. If I had answered him, I don't know how I could've helped bawling him out, the—"

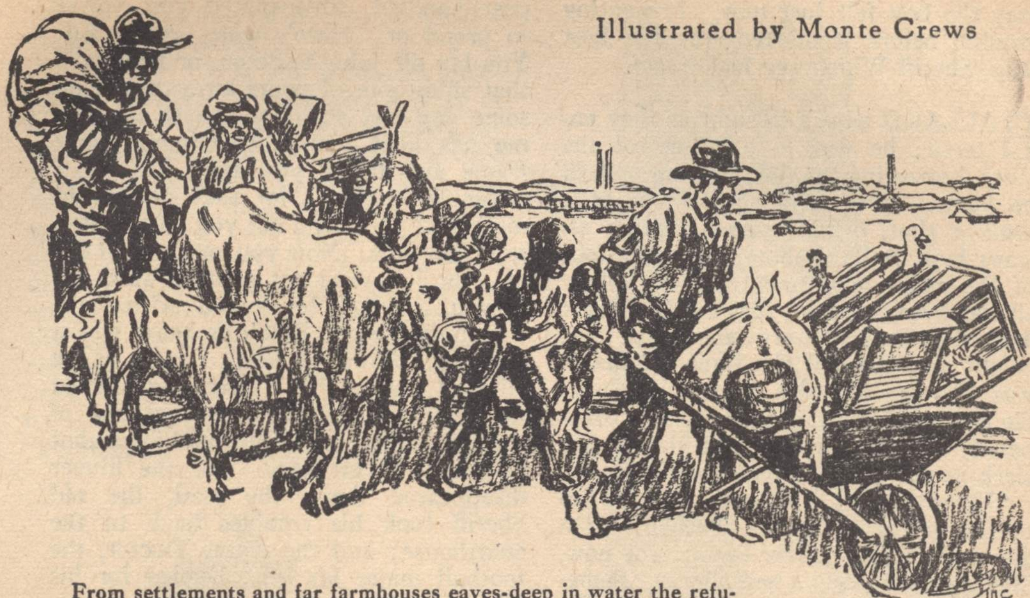
"Now, John—now, John," said the old Sheriff quietly. "This is no time to wear yourself out fighting for me. Take all we've got to handle things round here, if the ol' Mississipp' gets much higher—this rampage it's on. Hate to think what a crevasse'll do to Tensahoula Parish. Some of the best land in Louisiana, now. Couldn't give it away for the taxes, for a long time, if that river comes bustin' through. Listen, John; I'll be keepin' an eye on Ed Ballard, never you fear."

He turned to look at the office doorway again. Another deputy was returning.

"Just you take over the office about half an hour, Chuck," said the Sheriff. "Don't get out of hearing of that telephone. Dr. Tarleton and me, we're goin' to have a cup of coffee over at the Short Order. Be right back."

"Outside my troubles, son," grinned the Sheriff, as they strode out of the courthouse side by side, "what you got on your mind today?"

Illustrated by Monte Crews



From settlements and far farmhouses eaves-deep in water the refugees came, some with a few treasured belongings, most with none.

"Well, I've got the plans all finished for that flood refugee camp, if we need it. Got some patients waiting at my office. Got a few patients to drive out and see this afternoon. And say! Gosh, that reminds me—I got so damn' mad over the stuff Wilse Horton told me about what Ed Ballard and that back-room gang at Treadway's were cooking up on you, that I plumb forgot! I got to drop in at Caldwell's store and get a football he phoned me he got for me by parcel post. Didn't have one in town."

"You aimin' to play football again, John? Thought you got enough of that down at Tulane."

"Not me. This is for little Ted Burton."

"Not the Widow Burton's kid?"

"Sure." Dr. Tarleton was enjoying the Sheriff's puzzlement.

"But John, I thought that boy had tuberculosis of the hip. Thought that was why he couldn't walk on that withered leg. Everybody understood so. That was what ol' Doc Freeman said, I remember. What could that kid do with a football?"

"My new x-ray told another story, Sheriff. I'm going to get that kid's leg back for him, normal. He's crazy to play football like the other boys. I helped him get that way—part of the treatment."

"I'll be daggoned!" There was a father's pride as the old Sheriff looked at the young physician. They had worked out many a problem of rural and small-town health and sanitation in Tensahoula Parish together, these two, but nothing like this. Two normal legs for young Ted Burton! Sheriff Whittlesey knew what that would mean to the boy's mother. The greatest thing young Dr. Tarleton had done since he had taken over old Dr. Freeman's practice.

THEY went into the Short Order Restaurant and had their coffee.

"Reckon I'll walk down to Caldwell's with you," said the Sheriff. "Do me good to shake a leg. Been in that desk chair of mine too long."

He left word with the cashier where he could be found if any message came, and started for the store. But it wasn't any desire to "shake a leg" that had sent him. Just before he entered the Short Order, his keen old eyes had made out the outlines of a familiar flivver down the street—Ed Ballard's flivver, parked in front of Caldwell's store on the far side of the courthouse square. What was Ed Ballard doing, still in town, the Sheriff wondered with rising irritation, when he had given orders Ballard was to step on the gas to Rawlston's Bend with that message for Pete Beasley—when he had those levee-patrol-duty notices to give, past Indian Lake, beyond Mack Pressley's country store? That had been his first thought; his second was that he didn't want young Dr. Tarleton to tie into Ed Ballard, not the

way the boy felt just now. Preventing trouble before it started was the best way, Sheriff Whittlesey had found.

BALLARD wasn't in sight as they entered; he was in a corner of the store, borrowing ten dollars from a clerk he knew. Even with corn liquor at a dime a shot, drinking and treating always kept Ballard short. He came out of the men's department, a new yellow slicker over one arm, just as the Sheriff and the Doctor were examining the bright new football old Rance Caldwell was blowing up with a bicycle pump. He had grabbed that slicker with a whispered: "Charge it to me, Bill," to the clerk as the quickest possible alibi.

"Howdy, folks," he said, walking up to the group about the football. "On my way to Rawlston's Bend right now, Sheriff. Had to get a new slicker. Somebody picked up my old one. Sho looks like we get rain mighty soon, now." Then as his eyes caught the football: "When's the game, Doc? You playin'?" with an effort at humor. "Thought you got all that rah-rah stuff out o' yo' system down at college."

With Sheriff Whittlesey's eyes meaningly upon him, though his fists clenched involuntarily, Dr. Tarleton restrained the bitter words that rose to his lips.

"It's for a patient," he said shortly.

"Sho, now!" said Ed Ballard. "Who?"

"Young Ted Burton."

"That pore kid with the withered leg, huh?" Ed Ballard's voice rose, coarse and raucous. "Well, I be damn'! Only thing I know meaner'n givin' a football to a kid like that, would be givin' picture-books to a blind man. Hell of a way to devil a pore youngster, I say."

"See here, you—" began the young Doctor, fists still clenched, as he took a step forward. But old Sheriff Whittlesey had eased in between the two.

"Quiet, now, John," he said. And though his tone was low, all the authority was there. "I'll take care of this."

His sinewy old fingers gripped his deputy's arm.

"Come here, Ed," he ordered, still softly, leading the way toward the entrance. "I done told you what to do some time since, and you aint started yet. Listen to me, Ed—you been drinkin' corn liquor again. Don't deny it; you smell like a moonshiner's back shed right now. Shut up, Ed! I'm doin' the talkin', long's you wear that badge you got gold-plated and long's you pack that pearl-handled, silver-plated gun you're so proud of. Here's more orders, Ed: You lay off John Tarleton, or he'll take that shiny gun of yours away from you some day and spank you with it. It's me has kept him from climbin' your frame and takin' you apart today. I swear, if it wasn't for that decent old mother of yours, I'd cut you off the payroll right now. Now you get the hell out on your job—and not another word out of you, or you'll be tanglin' with me!"

Deputy Sheriff Ballard's heart was a stewing caldron of black curses as he climbed aboard his flivver and started for Rawlston's Bend. But not one of them bubbled past his lips within earshot of Sheriff Whittlesey. As the flivver disappeared down the road, the old Sheriff took his troubles back to the courthouse; and the young Doctor, the football under his arm, headed for his office and his patients. . . .

Ed Ballard, his message to Pete Beasley delivered, drove for Mack Pressley's store upstream, to notify the new levee-patrol reinforcements. And as he drove those roads, poisonous thoughts kept stewing within him: Mean little schemes filled Ed's life. He was the last of a line of good stock that had run to seed in the pine-hills and clay-bottoms of Louisiana's Tensas Basin. Back in pioneer days men had come into what they knew as the Louisiana Purchase, with their arms, tools, wagons and oxen —some few with their slaves; or they had come down the river on raft, flatboat and broadhorn. They had conquered the Indians and the wilderness. But that was nearly a century and a half before. Good men were there in the Tensas Basin yet; good men came out of there. But Ed Ballard was not one of them.

HE loved to roll mean little hates under his tobacco-stained tongue, to plan mean little revenges. His hate for Sheriff Whittlesey came first of all. Ed knew he held his job by grace of the "High Sheriff," as they still called the office in the Tensas Basin. Ed's father had been one of a posse years before; he had been killed in a fight with an escaping murderer in the brush-filled bottoms. True, he had been killed while flagrantly disobeying Sheriff Whittlesey's orders. But his wife, Ed's mother, had been a decent woman in great trouble, and the Sheriff had given her son that job the minute he was old enough, to help in her support, even though his

friends remonstrated at his far-fetched sense of responsibility.

Naturally, the Sheriff being his greatest benefactor, Ed hated him worst of all. And at Bill Treadway's place, the pool-hall where raw corn liquor was sold for a dime a shot in the back room, and where Ballard "hung out" most of his spare time, the boys liked to egg him on to air his views of "that old fugamaroo." There it was that Amos Dexter, anybody's yes-man, had first suggested that Ed run for High Sheriff at the next election, now drawing near. There had been conferences and plans in that back room for discrediting the old Sheriff, for "building up" Ed Ballard as a candidate.

"We got some funny old codgers here," said Ed. "One old feller keeps his cash hid on the place. . . . If he took sick, nobody'd hear him call for help."

It started in burlesque, but it became serious with Ballard. And Wilse Horton, dropping in at Treadway's for a drink, had overheard fragmentary echoes of one such plan. Wilse got just enough to take it seriously too, and he had repeated it to the Sheriff's steadfast friend, young Dr. Tarleton.

There were other hates in Ed Ballard's life, also—hatred of young Dr. Tarleton, another Leeboro boy who had gone to school with Ballard in boyhood. In the back room at Bill Treadway's place, Ballard found plenty of exercise for his barnyard style of humor at young Dr. Tarleton's expense: His plans of rural sanitation, in which Sheriff Whittlesey coöperated; his new x-ray apparatus he had gone into debt to buy; his hobby of fly-fishing in a country that still cut a sapling for a pole, dug its bait, and referred to black bass as "green trout."

Then there was Ballard's hatred of young Charley Harris—that hatred had been nursed along for several years now. Charley Harris was the nephew of rich, miserly old Walker Harris. Charley had broken with his uncle over Mary Bigelow,—Charley's sweetheart since Leeboro high-school days,—and had gone down to Tulane as had John Tarleton, though Charley was working his way toward an electrical engineering degree. None of this, except Mary Bigelow, had anything special to do with Ballard's hate. Somebody—Ballard never knew who—had once told Charley of a remark Ed Ballard had made about Mary, as she walked past. And Charley had quietly looked Ed up, and given him the licking of his young life.

Yes, Deputy Sheriff Ed Ballard had plenty of mean little hates to cherish, as he drove up to Mack Pressley's store above Indian Lake. But just now he was thinking most of his hate of Sheriff Whittlesey. And there, handed to him by Mack Pressley, what he saw as a perfect revenge on the Sheriff came squarely into his hands. . . .

IN front of the store three gasoline tourists stretched their legs while Mack's boy filled their muddy car with gas and "lube." Their camping-kit filled the back seat and packed one running-board. Just ahead of Ballard, as he entered the store, one of the three walked. He ordered crackers and cheese, sardines and cold pop, and took his purchases back out on the steps. There the three ate, drank, joked and casually talked of fishing. Then Ballard noticed Mack Pressley beckoning him mysteriously to the rear of the store.

"Might be worth your while to keep an eye cocked on them three, Ed," he whispered.

"What's on your mind, Mack?"

"Well, somehow'r other I don't exactly get this comin' into the Tensas Basin on no fishin'-trip just now. We aint advertised for no tourists, and fishin' aint specially good here these days. How'd fellers with an Indiana license-plate ever hear 'bout this neck of the woods? Top of that, just before you came, they was talkin' over somethin' right smart among themselves, and when I come out on the gallery they shut up sudden—just the way anybody would, who didn't want folks to hear. Ed, they been too many small-town and country banks busted wide open by safe-blowers,—over Mississippi and Alabama way,—lately, for comfort. Mebbe it's gettin' round our turn. I'd keep an eye peeled, Ed. Might make yourself a reppitation if they was wanted, and you found anything justified you in nabbin' 'em."

AN idea bit Ed Ballard, suddenly and deep. Make a reputation, huh? Well, it would help. Suppose these *were* crooks somebody wanted? Crooks, huh? On a fishing-trip. Well, what kind of bait did crooks bite on quickest? Cash! His crafty brain began to circle about that idea.

"I'll find out, Mack," he said. He strolled out on the store gallery. In five minutes he and the three were swapping stories with the freemasonry of the country store. The strangers ventured a casual question or two about the Tensas Basin, its folks and its fishing. Made to order, this opening was, Ed told himself.

"Fine country. Fine folks," he said. "Fishin' is up and down—good and bad, too. And folks—say, we got some funny old codgers down here! You drivin' down Leeboro way, past Indian Lake, huh? Well, you'll pass the place of the richest dangedest old fugamaroo we got."

"Who's that?" one of them asked idly.

"Old feller named Walker Harris," said Ed Ballard. "Richer'n two banks. One of them old-time misers you read about. Keeps his cash and Liberty bonds hid on the place. That's all he takes for his pay-off. Been lendin' money and collecting with interest ever since the Indians left, I guess."

"What soured the old settler on banks?"

"One bank he had money in, it folded up when the cashier ducked with everything but the furniture," explained Ed. "He's been cash and carry ever since."

His brain, muddy with corn liquor though it was, noted the masked gleam in their eyes. He played another card craftily.

"Got to see a few fellers up the road a piece," he said. "Be back in 'bout an hour. Drivin' back your way. Show you the place, if you're curious."

"Well," said one of the strangers, "we got a little tinkering to do with this tin can's engine. Might be here when you get back."

They were there. Ballard, who had picked up a flask of corn liquor up the road, gave them all a drink. They headed back to Leeboro together. And

Deputy Sheriff Ed Ballard peered through the slatted shutters — but he made no sound; he was too frightened. These were not men—these were devils out of hell!

abreast of old Walker Harris' place, where it lay more than half concealed under the spreading ancient trees in the tangled old garden, Ballard signaled a stop and pointed it out to them.

"Don't see how the old codger stands it," he said. "Not only all that money he's got hid somewhere there, but if he ever took sick, he could holler his head off and nobody'd hear him call for help."

"Well, it's a free country," said one of the strangers. Ballard could see they were giving the place a sharp, though veiled scrutiny, before they drove on. A little farther on, they passed his car and stopped as they came to Indian Lake.

"Looks like a good place to camp, this lake," one of them told him as he caught up. "No need spendin' money for hotels when you don't have to. Looks like good fishin', too."

"Pretty good," said Ed.

"Well, see you in church," said the man at the wheel. He drove down among the trees by the lake shore.

"Sunday-school too, brother!" Ed called, heading for Leeboro. And to himself, he said: "See you at Walker Harris' tonight, I bet a million. See you in jail in the mornin'—if I got any luck!"

He drove into town. At the courthouse he filed his report on the levee-patrol job, and headed for Bill Treadway's place. He was off duty till the night levee-patrol's rounds began, and he was due for some sleep. But he wanted a few more drinks. He wanted to wisecrack with the back-room boys, and hear Amos Dexter say: "Aint he a card! Thinks up the daggonedest things!" He needed to soothe what passed for his soul, ruffled by old Sheriff Whittlesey, with the secret knowledge of what he might hand the boys for a surprise before midnight. If that plan clicked, it would ring through the Tensas Basin! The old High Sheriff could chew on that, and see how he liked it—a Sheriff who would call down his own deputy in front of a young squirt like John Tarleton!

He had his drinks and departed, another flask of corn liquor in his pocket. He'd want a stiff bracer, he knew, before he tackled the kind of a job this might be. He oiled his gun and filled his belt loops with cartridges before he set the alarm-clock and went to sleep.

THE moment had come for which Deputy Sheriff Ballard hoped and waited. He crouched in the dark on the weather-beaten gallery of old Walker Harris' home, peering through the slatted shutters of the tall French window. But in spite of what he saw, he made no sound. He didn't even draw his pistol. He was too frightened.

Above the moaning wind that told of impending storm, he could catch almost entire the sharp, snarling demands of the three; the stubborn refusals and denials of their victim. These were not men who were stripping off Walker Harris' shoes and socks and producing matches they lighted and held to the soles of his naked feet—these were devils straight out of the pits of hell!

Cold sweat ran down Ed Ballard's forehead. The pit of his stomach shivered. If he drew and fired, could he drop all three by fast shooting? But if he missed! He wished with sick afterthought that he had brought pump gun and buckshot. Those three and their cold savagery were no job for a man with a shaking pistol-hand to tackle.

Suddenly, shivering and sweating, Ed

Ballard crept softly off the gallery and slid into the dark. He lurched out into the road to reach his car, parked behind some bushes down the highway. Then he leaned against a tree by the side of the road, and became violently sick at the mingling of his day's drinking of raw corn liquor, and the sight he had seen that night. So sick he could not set up a shout for help, even if his drunken pride had permitted, when he saw automobile headlights come up the road.

YOUNG Dr. Tarleton had many worries on his mind that afternoon, as he drove his mud-splashed car up the road from Leeboro to see twelve-year-old Ted Burton and his mother.

But if all the worries in the world had been his, they would have faded into the background a little later, as he saw the light in the eyes of the youngster clasping that football in his skinny arms. On the plain board wall of the little farmhouse room were tacked pictures out of Sunday newspaper rotogravure sections. They constituted what the young doctor gravely called the Burton-Tarleton Art Gallery. They showed various All-American halfbacks making touchdowns amid a haze of diving tacklers. Little Ted Burton had been the hottest of football fans ever since Dr. Tarleton had taken him, heart-breaking limp and all, to see a high-school game in Leeboro.

"I've got some grand news for you, Ted," said Tarleton. "Old man, you're going to have two good legs before you and I finish this game."

"Gosh!" said Ted. "Honest, Doctor?"

"Cross my heart, Ted. It'll take time, but we'll do it. You see, this guy we're playing against, you and I, he isn't the same guy we thought he was—this feller who's biting your leg. We can't make a first down against him every time we hit him, but we can stop him and we can put over a touchdown on him if we keep on trying. If he was this tuberculosis-of-the-hip baby we thought he was, he'd have been one tough guy to stop. But this feller, why, his name's the only hard thing about him! Let's see if you can say it after me. Come on, now: *'Osteochondritis-deformans-juvenilis'*."

Ted made a noble stagger at it. He was thrown for a loss. But he grinned back at his Doctor's grin.

"You say we can lick him, Doc?"

"We sure can, Ted."

"Well, by golly, we'll do it."

"Attaboy!" It was most unprofessional language.

Dr. Tarleton rose as Mrs. Burton entered the room.

"I want you to walk down to the front gate with me," he said. "We're going to find the redbird this young devil got his hair from. So long, Ted. See you later, old man."

Ted grinned in farewell, hugging his football. Mrs. Burton smiled faintly. She couldn't help liking this youngster's foolishness, and the way he cheered up her crippled boy.

Out at the gate young Dr. Tarleton spoke earnestly. "Ted can be cured," he said. He held up to the light the x-ray negative he had taken two days before in his office at Leeboro. "It's too bad he was never x-rayed before. I wanted you to see this with your own eyes. See where the hipbone goes into the socket? If that was tuberculosis of the hip, as we thought, the joint would look all hazy—a lot of what we call granular detritis. But you see there isn't a trace of it; only the cartilage is affected. It's what we call Perthes' disease, for short. It can be cured; there's a specialist in New Orleans who's doing wonders with it."

Years of bitter, grinding poverty made Mrs. Burton's question automatic:

"How much will it cost?"

"I don't know," lied young Dr. Tarleton bravely. In fact, it was the first time he had thought of that. He had been so thrilled at his discovery that all other thoughts for the moment had gone. "I don't know," he repeated. "But don't you worry, Mrs. Burton. We're not going to let a little money stand in the way of curing a fine boy like that."

Simple faith was in the mother's eyes and voice as she spoke—the faith the Good Book says moves mountains.

"I've prayed," she said quietly. "It's an answer to prayer to know that he *can* be cured. Now I'll pray he *will* be cured."

The young physician gripped her hand. "Don't you worry, Mrs. Burton. We'll make it somehow."

THEN he was in his machine, driving back down toward the river road, deeply troubled. He plunged into calculations. Board and lodging, for maybe five months in New Orleans. Hospital. Masseur's fees. Steel braces, specially made. Doctor's fees—even if he could get them reduced. At least it would take

close to two thousand dollars to bring Ted Burton's leg back to normal again. Two thousand dollars! Oh, it was plain hell to be a poor country doctor, alive to misery that could be conquered at the price of some men's foolish whims. How could he manage it?

"Well, by golly, we'll do it," that kid had said. The young voice seemed to sound in his ears. The boy had faith in him. Young Dr. Tarleton repeated the words as one would repeat a prayer.

"We will, Ted," he said softly, but with conviction. "I'm damned if I know how we will—but we will."

INDIAN LAKE stretched ahead of him, set gemlike amid the green of fringing trees, its waters agleam in the rays of a sun just preparing to sink in cloudy splendor behind the piney crests of the Gros Tete hills. Over against the horizon bulked black the promise of a storm. He loved this spot. Here he could slip away from time to time, laden with rod and reel, lines and flies, to lure the black bass that lurked in its depths. He stopped the car to light a cigarette and sit there quietly for a few minutes, drinking it all in.

Then, just ahead of him, he saw another car parked under the trees. Its occupants, three men, had noticed him. One waved casually. Sociably he started the car again and stopped beside them. Then he saw they were breaking out fishing-tackle. The camping-kit of the gasoline tourist was partly unpacked.

"If you're after black bass," Dr. Tarleton said with fisherman's freemasonry, for he saw these were not Tensahoula Parish folk, "I'd try a Parmachene Belle or a Royal Coachman. It's a little too cloudy for a Silver Doctor. And the water's bad, with the heavy rains we've been having and the river up the way it is."

He saw now their car bore Indiana license-plates.

"I don't get much chance to fish, lately," he said. "I'm Dr. Tarleton of Leeboro," he went on, advancing with outstretched hand. "Between patients and helping with this fight we're having to hold our levees against the river, I haven't had my tackle out of the closet for a month."

"Glad to meet you, Doc," said the man nearest him. He held up a book of flies fresh from the sporting-goods store. "Here, this is your neck of the woods. You probably know these fish by their first names. Pick out your pet fly and we'll go to it."

Dr. Tarleton took the fly-book with the caressing touch of the born fly-fisherman. From it he plucked a brilliant Parmachene Belle.

"That ought to coax 'em if anything will," he said. "Wish I could stay and try a few casts. But I've got to be getting along. Patients, and a four-hour hitch with the levee gang tonight."

He had dropped his cigarette as he took the fly-book. Now he lit another. He felt a faint sense of puzzlement as it dawned on him that none of the three men had given him their names. More puzzlement, that after he had told them what fly to use, this man had asked him to pick one out. His doctor's brain, trained to observation, was working automatically.

"Have you fished much around here?" he called, for the man with the rod had started for the bank and the other two were going with him.

"Not around here," said the man for whom he had selected the fly; "but a lot up north and east."

"Well, good luck," Dr. Tarleton called as he climbed into his car. The man with the rod was preparing to cast from the bank. John Tarleton leaned forward, keen, speculative curiosity in his eyes. Then with a wave of his hand he drove away.

Presently he was quieting the worries of the next patient. Visits to three others followed. There was a hastily snatched supper back in Leeboro, a few moments of relaxation over coffee and cigarette, and he was off for his four-hour tour of duty with the levee gang.

NEARLY all the parish's able-bodied men were in that battle. Through the night the long lines, whites and blacks alike, fought the rising river. Endless two-by-fours were driven in the levee's crest; endless one-by-twelves nailed to the posts; endless bags of earth piled, rampart-wise, behind that wooden barrier. Patrols with flash-lights made an endless scrutiny for seepage, for water-blister, for sand-boil—lest the crevasse come crashing through.

It was close to midnight when Dr. Tarleton sank into bed. He dropped into the slumber of utter fatigue, the drumming rain on the roof sounding distant to his ears. But before sleep closed over him, his mind for a moment played with the picture of Ted Burton, clasping his

football—and, strangely, with the fishermen by Indian Lake.

IT had been a cinch, "Duke" Monahan told himself as he drove the machine through the night over the level State highway. He said so out loud to his pals.

"Hell, that was one tailor-made cinch."

Steve Stanewski and "Flash" Carter, crouching behind the storm curtains, agreed with him.

"Who'd 'a' thought they was any more of them miser guys outside the movies?" said Steve.

"Yeah, who'd 'a' thought?" agreed Flash. Then, nervously: "Pity we had to bump him off, at that."

"He asked for it. He got it." The Duke was cryptic. "What gets my goat is we hadda bump off that dog too. That was one peach of an Airedale. I'd 'a' liked to take him along." The Duke fancied himself as a dog connoisseur.

"Yeah?" Steve's inflection was ironic. "Maybe you'd like to have us stop at some sign-painter and get a banner says we're the guys did the job? It pays t' advertise!"

The Duke took this good-naturedly. You can take a lot good-naturedly, when tucked away in your car is a small fortune in currency and Liberty Bonds. All of the Duke's mind not centered on his almost effortless driving through the dark was ranging into the future, anyway.

"Lucky we bumped into that gabby deputy sheriff and learnt about this guy," he said. "Easier job than cracking that country bank we come after. Got about as much, too. . . . Listen, you babies. Lean forward here so I don't have to talk so loud, and let's see if you got it straight. Two miles outside the junction, we change clothes. Sink the license-plates in the creek there. This extra five gallons of gas and a match, and up goes this tin Liz with all this fishing-trip camouflage. We catch the rattler with our little sample-cases. Three busy little drummers land in Chi before they even find the old bozo. I cash these bonds at Jerry's, and we meet next day at the South Side Wop's. Got that right, you guys?"

They had got it right, Steve and Flash conceded. Then all three lapsed into silence, for talking had become difficult. The Duke was now driving with added care. The storm had grown to sheets of rain that slashed viciously. Salvo after salvo of thunder reverberated; rapierlike, the blade of the lightning ripped the blackness. Huge squat live-oaks, ghostly in their long beards of Spanish moss, stood in sharp silhouette, then vanished. The headlights bored steadily into the night.

Then the car stopped with a shriek of brakes.

"God!" gritted the Duke. "Take a look ahead, will yuh! Solid water!"

Far ahead of them the levee had broken and the crevasse had come crashing through; so far ahead they could not even yet hear the roar of its voice. . . .

Far behind them, on the library floor of his ancient plantation-house on Leeboro's outskirts, old Walker Harris lay strangely sprawled. His feet were bare. The soles were scorched and blistered. Burnt matches, blackened and curled, cigarette-butts lay about. One arm still was outthrust as it had been when in a desperation of agonized fury, he had wrenched his hands free, half risen, and lashed out with a futile blow, only to be struck down ruthlessly. The faded rug where his head rested was marked with a dark stain. The door of an old-fashioned wall safe sagged open; the picture that had hung concealing it lay shattered in the corner where it had been flung.

A curious sound filled the room, a sound no man forgets once he has heard it. An Airedale that had escaped a crushed skull like his master's by the mere chance of a glancing blow which stunned instead of killing, had regained his senses and crept across the floor to sniff a moment at the still, sprawled form. Then the dog gave voice.

FAR up on top of the ocean of sleep in which he was sunk, John Tarleton heard a bell ring faintly. The sound grew louder, shriller, more insistent. He stirred sleepily and reached for the receiver at his bedside. With the first words he came wide awake.

"Dr. Tarleton? Sarah Brent, the telephone-operator, speaking. The levee's out. There's a crevasse half a mile wide in the upper part of the parish. The whole Bayou Bœuf section's under water. It's heading for Leeboro fast. I'm sending out a general alarm to everybody to report to Sheriff Whittlesey at the courthouse. Good-by."

Dr. Tarleton leaped from his bed.

There in his closet hung his uniform as a captain of the Medical Corps in the

"Mary and I found him—I'd just lifted his poor old head into my lap, when that damned fool Ballard came in, yelling: *'I got you!'*"

Louisiana National Guard. He dragged it on, stamping his feet into the boots. Crevasse meant martial law.

Swiftly he assembled his kit. Thank God, he had a good supply of smallpox vaccine and typhoid serum. And the Red Cross would send more. Food and tents, too—blankets—cots. The National Guard and the U. S. Coast-guard, now working far inland, would be on the job.

At the courthouse he found old Sheriff Whittlesey at a telephone, reporting the crevasse to the governor at Baton Rouge, telling what help was needed. Presently the Sheriff hung up and turned to greet him.

"Right on the job, John, aren't you? Hell's a-poppin'. Never rains but it pours, for a fact." The Sheriff ran his sinewy old hands through his thatch of

white hair. "Specially when it rains trouble! Here we're going to have the whole parish under water inside three days—but that aint enough. Got the worst murder on my hands this parish ever had."

"Murder? Who?"

"Old Walker Harris. Murdered last night. The way the old fellow was savaged would make an Indian sick. Burnt his feet with matches and cigarette-butts to make him tell where was the old wall safe he kept his stuff. Made him give up the combination too, looks like. Safe was open. Didn't blow it. Then whoever did it crushed his skull in with half-a-dozen blows would 'a' laid out an ox. John, it'll knock you cold as it knocked me, when you hear who's arrested for it."

"Who?"

"John, I swear I hate to tell you! Sounds too awful. I can't believe it yet. Even if Ed Ballard did find 'em both there—and blood all over the boy's hands. Ed brought 'em both in."

"For heaven's sake, who?"

BUT old Sheriff Whittlesey seemed almost dazed, Dr. Tarleton thought.

"Ed says he was comin' back from levee-patrol when he met old Walker's nigrah runnin' down the road, scared half crazy. Seems the nigrah heard old Walker's dog howling, in his cabin 'way out in back. Came in and found the old man dead on his library floor. Nobody else in sight. Nigrah busted plumb through a window, gettin' away. Bumps into Ed Ballard, down the road. They both go back. That's where Ed finds 'em."

"Listen, Sheriff—finds who?"

"John, you'll never believe it. Charley Harris—old Walker's own nephew! And there with him is Mary Bigelow, the girl Charley's been sparkin' ever since they were kids. Ed brought 'em both in. Charley's charged with murder, on an information Ed filed. Mary's held as a material witness. They're both next door in the parish prison right now."

"Does he admit it?" young Dr. Tarleton's voice said, shaking and incredulous. "Why, that boy wouldn't do that in a million years. And if he'd wanted to, that girl never would let him."

"Neither one of 'em'll say a word, John. Act like they're dazed, sort of."

"I don't know that I blame 'em, Sheriff. I'm damned if I can see how you could hold 'em, even on Ed Ballard's sworn charge. He's always hated Charley."

"Hadn't no choice, John. Don't think it's any easier for me than it would be for you." The Sheriff's seamed old face was etched by emotion with lines even deeper.

"Why, I've knowed that boy and girl since they was knee-high to my old houn'-dawg. And you know something 'bout how I feel on the subject of Ed Ballard. But the way Ed lines it all up, there's stuff I can't ignore."

"What stuff?"

"Well, you know, John, like everybody else here, what a temper both Charley and his uncle had. Runs in the family. And you know old Walker's been rawhidin' the boy about wantin' to marry Mary Bigelow. He's hated the whole passel of Bigelows ever since he had his fight with Mary's daddy, goin' on twenty years ago. Took Charley and raised him like a father after Charley's own daddy died, but wouldn't give him another cent after Charley refused to keep away from Mary. Everybody knows that's why Charley's been workin' his way through college. Whole town knew about that fight, inside of a week. Lot of 'em have heard old Walker bawl the boy out from hell-to-breakfast—before Charley went down to New Orleans; they've seen Charley go white and ball his fists."

"But even that wouldn't make a boy torture and murder his own uncle!" Dr. Tarleton said indignantly.

"THERE'S one thing else might, Ed Ballard says," went on the Sheriff's voice. "Ed's been snoopin' round, seems like, and says he's got some evidence weeks ago from a pussyfootin' deputy sheriff he met down in New Orleans, one time he took a prisoner down there for me."

"What kind of evidence?"

"Evidence that Charley and Mary've been—well—been passin' as man and wife down there, when they aint. Now those two met in Leeboro last night when Charley come up on the evenin' train; we know that. Ed says, spose'n they both went out to old Walker Harris' house to plead with him for some money they need account of Mary. . . . Spose'n the old man tells 'em both to go to hell and starts rawhidin' Mary. That's the kind of thing would drive a boy crazy, Ed says."

"That's the kind of thing a skunk like

Ed Ballard *would* think, with that slimy mind of his!" burst out Dr. Tarleton. "And I think you have gone crazy as hell if you tell me you really think that yourself. I grew up with that boy and girl; I know 'em. See here, did you find any money or bonds on 'em? Everybody knows that's what old Walker hoarded."

"No, thank God," said the Sheriff. "Ed Ballard says probably they was just hidin' it when the nigrah came in, which is why the nigrah didn't see 'em. The safe's empty. Whatever it held is missin'."

"I'm not sure I'd believe the Mississippi River was wet on Ed Ballard's oath, Sheriff, unless I fell in and proved it myself." Dr. Tarleton's brows were knitted. "See here—I ought to be on my way to that refugee camp-site right now. But I'm going over to the jail and talk with Charley a minute before I start. —All right with you?"

A FEW minutes later John Tarleton was facing Charley Harris through the bars of a cell.

"John, I give you my oath on everything holy, it's as big a mystery to me as it is to you." The youngster's voice was shaking. "I can hardly talk even to you—though you've got sense. I couldn't trust myself to say a word, even to the Sheriff, after the way Ed Ballard talked to Mary and me when he found us there. I'd have killed him with my bare hands, if he hadn't kept that gun of his pointed at me. I told Mary not to say a word to a soul till she heard from me. John, do I need to tell you *I* didn't do it? Mary and I stumbled in there on that horrible scene—"

His voice went from him utterly, lost in the choke that rose in his throat. Young Dr. Tarleton waited, watching keenly as the boy sat on the edge of his cell cot, his face buried in his hands. Presently he said:

"Charley, I suppose you know Ed Ballard has told the Sheriff he has as motive some evidence that you and Mary were passing as man and wife in New Orleans —and he's making the most of it."

"How did he make that remarkable discovery?" Charley Harris' voice was bitter with scorn.

"Seems he had some deputy sheriff he knows down there keeping tabs on you —which sounds characteristic."

"I had to give Ed a licking once," said Charley. "Seems it got under his hide pretty deep. Well, I could count on him to put the worst possible construction on whatever report he got. John, we've been married for months, Mary and I. That last time she came down to New Orleans on a visit, she told me her people were getting ready to send her away on a long visit. Uncle Walker's fuss about us had worked them up too. So we slipped across the river to Gretna and got married by a Justice of the Peace. Why, John, it looked as if everything was coming out fine for us. Those folks I'd been working for, earning my way through college, they'd just told me of the engineering job they had ready for me when I graduated this June. That's why I came rushing up here to tell Mary, and we both started out to tell her folks and Uncle Walker. Drove out there last night in her father's car. I wanted to make friends with him; he's been mighty good to me, outside of the way he bucked about Mary. Lord, John, I was so proud that I'd made good! And then we found him—the way we did— Why, I'd just lifted his poor old head up into my lap, when that damned fool Ballard came in with a gun in his hand, yelling: *'I got you—'* "

Again the boy's voice slipped its control.

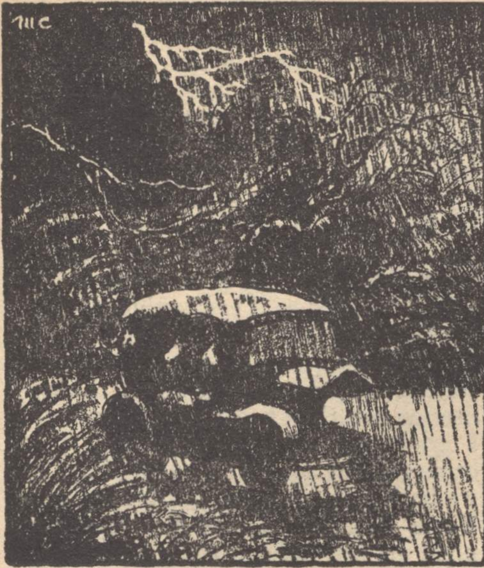
Young Dr. Tarleton's voice was steady. "Charley, I believe you; and the rest of our folks up here are going to believe you too, before we get through with this. There's something so rotten here I can smell it a mile. Keep the old courage up. Take a grip on yourself, old son. We'll get Mary and you out of this place in no time. I've got to get along now. You may not have heard of it, but the levee went out this morning, just north of here. I'll be back the minute I can. Here—"

Hastily he emptied his pockets of cigarettes and urged them on the boy.

"JOHN—who in the name of God could have done a thing like that?" Charley asked.

"I don't know, Charley," came the sober answer. "But I do know this— there never was a crime that didn't have a loose end somewhere. Find that loose end and grab it, and we've got the answer. Right now I'm wondering if I don't see one loose end in sight."

"If there's any evidence that could help us, I guess that damned river has washed it out," said Charley Harris. "My God,"—the words were like a prayer,—



"I'd give everything I ever expect to have, if you could find it."

"Buck up, old man." John Tarleton's voice carried assurance he was far from feeling. "I'll be collecting on that offer yet. Don't cuss Old Man River too much. He sure makes us live in danger; but I've heard it's a good thing for you to live in danger now and then. Makes a man of you."

His forehead was furrowed as he strode into the open air again. He breathed deeply to take the bite of that prison smell from his lungs. What a world of woe it was, he thought, as he drove to his office and the drug-store to load his car with vaccines, serums, all the other emergency medical supplies he could pack into it.

Gloom settled upon him as he raced toward the first of the Gros Tete hills, where the camp was to be made. He could get there hours before the water reached that far, he thought. But his car was running almost hub-deep in the flood's sinister yellowish soup before it gained the foothills.

Swift and remorseless as life and fate, the river was, he told himself before he clamped his mind on the tasks ahead. All his life he had lived behind the levees in the valley. Floods were an old story to him. He knew what awaited him.

ALL he had foreseen came crashing down on his shoulders—and more. From settlements and far farmhouses eaves-deep in water, the refugees came—white and black—men and women and little children and hound-dogs and half-drowned chickens. They came in barges hastily sent from the rescue fleet, in skiffs and pirogues and square-ended "john-boats," and on rafts—some with a few treasured belongings, most with none. But fast as they came, relief kept pace with them.

A city of khaki tents arose amid the pines of the Gros Tete hills. Mess-shacks rose. By barge loads came the cots and blankets on which hundreds slept; on which babies were born and a few refugees, old and feeble, died.

Hospital tents rose and filled. National Guardsmen patrolled them with rifles, for there was smallpox and typhoid in some of the far isolated settlements and lonely little farmhouses, and rescue-boats brought the sick ones in. Over wide plantations, over distant farms, the surf-boats of the Coast-guard ranged to rescue. High above it all, seaplanes from Pensacola, trained observers scouting with binoculars, droned with Navy pilots at the controls, spotting the isolated refugees in the far corners of the parish, bringing back the news to the Coast-guard fleet where to find them.

Through it all young Dr. Tarleton worked endlessly. All Leeboro worked endlessly. For all Leeboro was now under canvas in the Gros Tete hills, save for a handful who remained with skiffs at hand, camped on the few flat roofs,—or in the courthouse upper story,—of a parish seat submerged above the second-story floors of its houses.

Even the parish prison had been vacated, the prisoners brought to the refugee camp.

"Any feller can get away from here, he can swim the English Channel," said old Sheriff Whittlesey dryly; "and I aint seen no Channel-swimmer in this bunch." So he set them to work too.

They slept nights, those prisoners, in a little row of tents, with a guard in charge. They worked days, helping at the innumerable tasks which the refugees created.

"See here, Sheriff," protested Deputy Sheriff Ed Ballard, the first time he saw two of those prisoners apparently out of armed custody, "you mean to tell me you're lettin' Charley Harris and Mary Bigelow loose around this camp?"

"Sho, Ed," said Sheriff Whittlesey quietly. "They're doin' a powerful lot of good work, too. So why not?"

"What's to keep that cowardly murderer and his woman from grabbin' a

boat and slippin' out, first night they feel like it, or first day they got a chance, I'd like to know?" Ballard demanded hotly. He had been "keepin' himself goin'" on frequent drinks of corn liquor, and his voice was ugly.

"Well, Ed," said the Sheriff, "answerin' your question first, they both done give me their word they're staying to see this thing through, without any foolishness. And Ed—"

"The word of a dirty rat who'd put lighted matches to his own uncle's feet before he murdered him!" Ed broke into his chief's talk with a sneer. "And the word of his woman, who'd rather go crooked with him down in New Orleans than stay decent up here, the—"

"Hold on, Ed!" There was a dangerous glint in Sheriff Whittlesey's old blue eyes. "I was just about to say, when you lost your manners and interrupted, that I don't aim to hear Mary Bigelow called any dirty names, specially not by no deputy of mine. I been givin' you plenty rope, Ed, but you're beginnin' to make it creak, lately. You've arrested 'em. That's your legal right. But no court's done convicted 'em yet. What I want to make mighty clear to you, Ed, is that if I ever hear you usin' any more rough talk 'bout either Mary or Charley, what's going to happen right then between you and me aint going to be pleasant for neither you nor me. But it's going to be specially unpleasant for you. Do I make myself plain, Ed?"

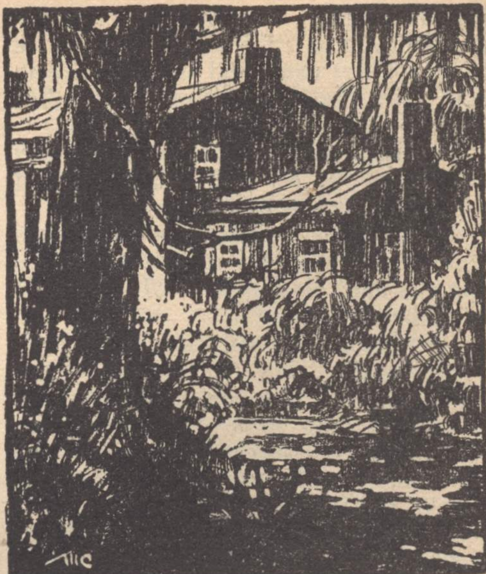
Those old blue eyes were fixed steadily upon Ed Ballard's red face; the low voice was clear and steady. There wasn't a quiver in it. And into Ballard's muddy brain began to creep memories of how this old man had handled himself—and others—in certain episodes of the earlier, rougher days in Tensahoula Parish's piney hills that had become almost folklore now.

"W-w-well, Sheriff," he said slowly, "if you're makin' a personal point of it, I'll—"

"I'm makin' a personal point of it," cut in that chill, even voice.

"O. K., Sheriff. You're the boss," said Ed Ballard, with a poise he was far from feeling, and he departed from that spot to make himself very busy with a force of negro refugees stacking cases of Red Cross supplies. . . .

The boys who used to make their hangout in the back room of Bill Treadway's place in Leeboro had just naturally come together in the refugee camp. They had



managed to raise a shelter in the piney woods several hundred yards back of the main camp, chopping saplings for uprights and cross-beams, and thatching it slantingly with pine branches.

NOW in front of it a campfire burned brightly, and on a blanket inside, by the light of that fire, a crap game was in progress. The only thing they really missed was the pool table back at Bill Treadway's,—now deep under crevasse water,—and the idle evenings at the drug-store soda fountain, kidding such girls as ventured into repartee with them.

They didn't even miss the corn liquor Bill Treadway had served them in the back room. For many a refugee family had come into camp with a "kag" or demijohn of the fiery white stuff to "keep out chills and fever," and Deputy Sheriff Ed Ballard had upheld his reputation with the boys for being a card, just a card, who could think up the daggonedest things! Ed had pulled a master-stroke.

Family by family Ed had visited the refugees quietly after dark, followed by a couple of husky negroes whose services his badge had commandeered. He had confiscated all the liquor he could find.

"Listen, now," he told them. "I'm savin' you-all a lotta trouble. These National Guard milishy soldiers, I hear they got orders to arrest anybody they find got any liquor on 'em. F'r all I know, they'll try you by court-martial if they catch you with the stuff. I'm takin' it all over and puttin it outa sight till this flood ruckus is up. This prohibition law

sure is tough! Between you'n me, my hardest job's to find some hide-out where them soldiers can't find it and break in and drink that liquor themselves. But I'll find one."

The boys had held their sides with laughter when Ed told them that, and produced the first keg as evidence.

"Reckon they're goin' to learn them damn' milishy done found out where this kag was hid," Ed grinned. "Tap her and drink hearty, fellers."

They laughed until they held their sides again. They "tapped her" and drank hearty. The crap game went on.

But the crap game didn't last long. There was too little cash for stakes. The boys knew each other's weakness too well to gamble on credit.

"To hell with this, fellers," said Amos Dexter at last, scooping up and pocketing the dice. "Le's have another drink, Ed."

AS the tin dipper they filled from the keg passed around, Amos turned to Ed Ballard again.

"Say, Ed," he drawled "how-come Charley Harris is walkin' round this camp all free 'n' footloose? After the case you was tellin' us you got against him, looks to me like he'd get outa here on a log, if he couldn't steal a boat—if the Sheriff don't keep him chained to a tree."

Ed Ballard was in the ugly stage of his liquor now.

"I'll tell you-all how-come," he said. "That ol' buzzard of a Sheriff,—if you concede he's actin' on the level,—he's behavin' like he thinks because he saw Charley Harris growin' up, the boy cain't do nothin' wrong. The High Sheriff's official stand is that this low-lived murderer done give his word he wouldn't try to escape. Do you get that? So Charley's ramblin' round this camp like any honest man!"

Amos Dexter was virtuously indignant.

"You mean to tell us the High Sheriff's lettin' him loose all over this camp, and him charged with murder 't you-all but catch him in the act of committin', just because he says, 'Honest, Mr. Sheriff, I won't run away!' You mean that?"

"I mean that's what the High Sheriff tells me," said Ed Ballard.

"Le's have 'nother drink," said Amos Dexter. "An' while you're passin' it, d'you mind makin' clear, Ed, just why you say that's the High Sheriff's official stand, '*if* he's on the level.'"

"Sho, I'll tell you," said Ballard as he emptied his dipper. "If you ask me, I don't think ol' Whittlesey's aimin' to have any trial of this case, a-tall."

"What you mean, Ed?" Several voices shot the question.

"Well, if you-all want it in words of one syllable, I mean just this: If Charley Harris swings for murder, who gets the credit? The man who arrested him! There's one High Sheriff who aint honin' to have this deputy get no credit for nothin'."

"You're right about that, Ed," said Amos.

"'Nother thing," Ballard went on, "any you-all done stopped to think there's a heap of good cash money and bonds missin' from old Walker Harris' safe? Everybody knows he had 'em. Nobody's found 'em yet. All *I* know is I find that wall safe open and empty. . . . Well, if I was gettin' old and there was an election comin' on, and I warn't so danged sure how it was comin' out, I might want a little something tucked away for my old age—if I didn't use it persuadin' folks how to vote. We don't pension ex-sheriffs up here, yet! Now spose'n Charley Harris and his woman light outa here with half what he got outa his uncle's safe. That's plenty for a college kid to make a start somewhere else under another name, aint it? The other half's plenty for an ol' coot of an ex-sheriff to eat on till he dies—even buy himself a couple of buggy-whip fishin'-rods and another box of them flies, outa the small change, if he wants to! That ever strike you-all? Gimme 'nother drink."

"Looks to me," Amos Dexter's voice rose out of the group, "like this was a fine time to show that crooked old buzzard where he gets off his perch."

"What yo' mean, Amos?"

"What's on yo' mind?"

"Show him—how?"

THE boys from Bill Treadway's back room were pricking up their ears and showing interest. This promised something more exciting than a crap game with next to no cash. And Amos Dexter swelled with importance at the attention they were paying him.

"Looks to me," he expanded, "like it was time for some of us in Tensahoula Parish to take the law into our own hands. Need an ol'-fashioned necktie-party out here in the piney woods."

"But there's them milishy—"

"Shucks," said Amos, beset by a flight of ideas. "Just one milishyman walkin' guard on them tents where the prisoners sleep, aint there? Spose'n somebody gives him a coupla drinks and keeps him busy down one end of his beat. Half-dozen of us can pussyfoot into that tent where that young murderer is. Do it in the dark—bat him on the head with a gun, gag him and snake him outa there, before he comes to. He aint goin' to do much yellin' with a towel stuffed into his mouth. Then we take him back into the trees and string him up. That'll show this damn' crook of an ol' High Sheriff what we think about him, hey?"

IT was the liquor he had drunk that was talking in Amos Dexter; but it was also the liquor the boys had drunk that heard him. The idea of a lynching spread like fire in dry grass.

They fell into an excited discussion of ways and means.

The rope? Sure, they could get it out of the stack of camp stores in the two big supply-tents. Plenty of rope there for towing the small boats of the rescue fleet through the shallower flooded areas where the deep-draft boats couldn't go.

The time? A coupla of hours after supper, next night. Plenty dark by then.

The place? About a mile away from where they were right now; better make it two miles, down at the far end of this part of the Gros Tete ridge.

Deputy Sheriff Ed Ballard was conspicuously silent in this discussion. But he put in no word against the plan. The man who lights the fuse doesn't have to make a sound like an explosion. Ed knew what it meant to a Sheriff's career to have a lynching pulled under his very nose; a lynching when the National Guard was right there on duty and the whole flood-bound population under his very eye in a refugee camp.

Presently, hiding what was left of their liquor under some brush near by, they went weaving toward the tents to sleep. In Ed Ballard's mind one last thought was stewing in liquor: The boy who as a boy had licked him, had something coming to him now that he couldn't lick!

Ballard lapsed into drunken sleep with the pleasant reflection that if you waited long enough and used your head, well, the folks that had it in for you, they got theirs. . . .

In the swirl of refugee-camp activities next morning, nobody noticed the subdued air of excitement among the habitués of Bill Treadway's back room. From time to time one would drop some word, low-voiced, to another. The news spread to all of them at last. The rope was ready; Amos Dexter knew where it was hidden. The spot had been picked; Amos had seen to that. The kidnaping squad had been named; Amos had selected them.

Amos was enjoying the most magnificent sense of importance in all his life. And as Charley Harris went about his duties, which now were to issue stores from one of the supply-tents to the camp cooks, the boys found satisfactory humor in the passed word that the rope had been snaked out of the tent next to where he was working, and he never noticed it.

To the row of hospital tents where the morning inspection of patients was being made, came an orderly with a message for Captain John Tarleton, Medical Corps, L. N. G. It was just after mid-morning. Three Coast-guard surf-boats filled with refugees had just been sighted making for the camp. It was familiar routine now. John Tarleton took a sergeant and a squad, and went down to the spot where the waters washed the foothills, to sort out the new arrivals.

"SMALLPOX aboard, sir," reported the Coast-guard boatswain in charge as the keels grounded and he came ashore. "We got these folks out of that spot way up beyond Bayou Castor where the air patrol spotted those distress-signals yesterday. Had to run the boats up against the eaves and chop holes in the roof to get the sick ones out of the attic, Doctor."

"I wish I had medals to give you men," said John Tarleton. "But I've fixed up a new disinfecting shack that'll make your minds easier than a medal. New outfits you can change into while your things are being disinfected, too. You're the gamest gang of sports I ever had the privilege of playing ball with."

"Thanks, sir," grinned the boatswain. "But there's another thing. Three guys in this bunch swear they aint got smallpox and say they got to get out of here on the first boat for civilization. Tried to slip me some money to land 'em where they could tramp to a train, sir. Then they got ugly because I wouldn't. Drummers out of Chicago, they tell me. Sore and ugly as hell about it yet. Going to

lose their jobs if they don't get out of this right now and report to their boss, they been telling me all the way down."

Dr. Tarleton's tired eyes inspected the boats and their passengers. His face was impassive as he listened to the protests of the three.

"Sorry," he said, "but you've got to go into quarantine with the rest of this outfit. Sergeant, march 'em up to the quarantine camp. Bring back stretchers for these smallpox cases."

The sergeant saluted. With an ugly look at the rifles and holstered automatics of the squad, the three, still protesting, fell in with the other refugees who could walk. All three clung to their sample-cases.

They were twenty feet away when Dr. Tarleton called the sergeant back.

"Detail a good man to stand guard on those three drummers," he ordered, low-toned. "Put 'em in a tent by themselves. Don't let 'em out of sight a second."

His tired eyes lighted up in his drawn face as he strode across the camp. His heart was beating like the roll of drums that once sounded the charge for fighting men.

He burst into the tent where old Sheriff Whittlesey after a sleepless night, was stretched on his cot, dead to the world. He gripped the Sheriff's shoulder and shook it. Wrinkled lids rose on a pair of pale blue old eyes. Instantly the gaunt old figure was on its feet.

"What's up, John?"

"If you don't mind facing a little smallpox, Sheriff," said Dr. Tarleton, "I think you can get your hands on the men who murdered old Walker Harris."

SHERIFF WHITTLESEY sat down on the edge of his cot and started pulling on his boots.

"Smallpox!" he said. "John, I'd walk through hell barefoot to get my hands on 'em."

A moment later he straightened up, buckled on his worn old pistol-belt, shrugged on his wrinkled coat.

"Let's go," he said. "Where are they, John?"

"I was just wondering," said John Tarleton, "how would you like to have Ed Ballard come along with us?"

"I've heard worse ideas." The old Sheriff chuckled dryly.

Side by side they crossed the camp to pick up Ed Ballard. And misgivings began to clutch and tug at Dr. Tarleton's heart. Misgivings in case he had guessed wrong; misgivings in case he had guessed right.

"Would it be better to take a squad of National Guard for these fellers, Sheriff?" he asked quietly. "If I'm right and they're the ones I think they are, they can be mighty hard to handle, I'm afraid. There's three of them."

He glanced at Sheriff Whittlesey. On the seamed old face was a look he had never seen before.

"I'm kind o' hopin' you're right all the way down the line, John," said a voice with a chill ring in it. "I'd like to find those babies hard to handle."

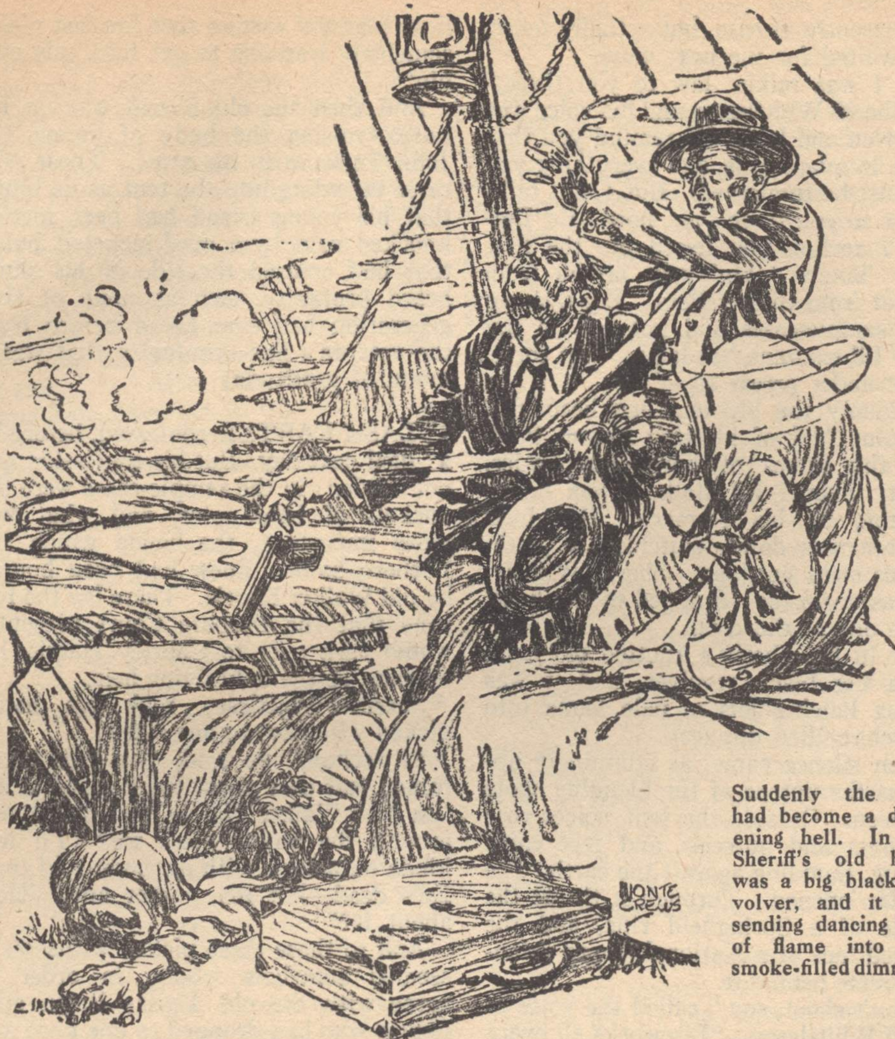
A little later the Sheriff strode into the big pyramidal tent, Doctor Tarleton and a wondering Ed Ballard behind him. Ed Ballard wasn't wondering long, though. One glance, and a sick pallor spread over the deputy sheriff's face as he saw the three who sat on cots before them. Worn and muddy, their leather sample-cases lay on the ground beside them.

"These your men, John?" Sheriff Whittlesey asked.

"Yes, Sheriff." Dr. Tarleton's voice was grave.

"You three say you're drummers out of Chicago, I understand," said the Sheriff quietly, addressing them directly. "I'm Sheriff Whittlesey of Tensahoula Parish. I want to see what's in those sample-cases. And I want you to answer a few questions."

There was a moment of tense silence. Then Duke Monahan, his dapper tailoring sagging and wrinkled, but his deadly calm unruffled, asked: "What's the racket? Anybody charging us with anything?"



Suddenly the tent had become a deafening hell. In the Sheriff's old hand was a big black revolver, and it was sending dancing jets of flame into the smoke-filled dimness.

"Yeah," chipped in Flash Carter, "any law down here against a guy getting his feet wet when your river slops over? We arrested or anything?"

"You'll find out whether you're arrested or not before long," said Sheriff Whittlesey evenly. "Ed, you take up them sample-cases and open 'em. If they're locked, you three, you'd better give him the keys."

"Listen, Grandpop," said Duke Monahan, "if this is a pinch, show us your warrant. Keep your mitts off our baggage till you do, see? And another thing, if we're pinched, we do our talking through a mouthpiece, too. Get that! You get us a lawyer and you get him fast. You start anything with us first, old feller, and you're likely to need that doctor you got with you for something besides smallpox. Leavin' out that you'll need a bank to settle the damage-suits we'll slap on you. We're business men from Chicago. We know the ropes. We don't come out into the hayseed belt to have any smart-aleck stuff slipped over on us by any cross-roads constable with a tin star."

Steve Stanewski said nothing. But between him and Duke a meaning look had flashed, and each knew what was in the other's mind. Flash Carter had caught his silent signal, too. All three were set. And in the Duke's mind it was all clear.

They were in a hot spot and they knew it. It would be a tough job to shoot their way out of a camp like this, with soldiers and all. But there were a lot of trees just back of the camp. With a few breaks, three men might have the luck to hide out long enough to steal some kind of a boat for a get-away. It was a long shot. But what would happen if this old Sheriff opened those sample-cases, would be harder than anything that could happen if they had a little luck.

Apparently at ease, but actually tense, they waited for the next move.

"If I was talkin' law to you three," said Sheriff Whittlesey, and his voice was very even and low, "I'd remind you that you're in quarantine, and everything you got must be fumigated. But I aint talkin' law to you three—not now. Ed Ballard, I reckon you heard me the first time. You're takin' your orders from me, not from these fellers. Ed, take up them sample-cases and put 'em in my tent. I'll examine 'em later. You three, you're under arrest as—"

Suddenly the big tent had become a deafening hell of blasting sound, thick with the fumes of burnt gunpowder. Deputy Sheriff Ed Ballard was down, clutching at his stomach. Dr. John Tarleton was down, clutching at nothing, his arms outflung. Sheriff Whittlesey was down too—dropped to one knee, beside one of the cots.

But in the Sheriff's knotted old hand was a big black revolver, and it was sending lancing jets of pale flame into the smoke-filled dimness.

Then silence came, as stunningly abrupt as the uproar of the blending shots had been. Outside the tent voices rose in shouts and outcries, and feet came running, thudding against the earth. The tent-flap opened. Through it thrust the muzzle of a Springfield rifle, and the strained face of a National Guard infantry private behind it.

"Don't shoot, son," called the voice of Sheriff Whittlesey. "Fireworks all over! But you better get some of those hospital boys here fast— You would, damn you, would you?" And with a leap he kicked loose the automatic that Duke Monahan was trying to raise.

Then swiftly he collected the weapons of the three men that lay in sight; and made fast search of the fallen bodies for more they might have concealed. There was no need. Flash Carter was unconscious; Duke Monahan and Steve Stanewski were dead. And dead beside them lay Deputy Sheriff Ed Ballard of Tensahoula Parish.

SHERIFF WHITTLESEY stood looking at him for a brief moment. Ed Ballard would have felt uncomfortable, had he known what was passing through the High Sheriff's mind.

"Might be lucky you got it here the way you did, Ed. Sure would 'a' hated to have to kill you myself tonight! But after what I heard you and them hellions plannin' around that fire last night, somebody was due to get hurt this evenin'."

And then the old Sheriff was on his knees, raising the body of young Dr. John Tarleton in his arms. Those who came crowding into the tent as he found that his young friend had been merely knocked cold by a steel-jacketed bullet that had creased the side of his skull, heard profanity such as none of that generation had ever heard before from the veteran's lips—profanity that was a hymn of gratitude!

FLASH CARTER confessed, before he died next day. But his confession was not needed; in the sample-cases were the packets of bank-notes, and what was more important, the bonds which the Leeboro banker knew had been bought by old Walker Harris. There lay the fortune that the Probate Court presently would turn over to Charley Harris, his nephew, as the only living heir.

Sheriff Whittlesey took his hand-picked witnesses to one side.

"I reckon," he said, "we can kinda forget that part about Ed Ballard tellin' 'em how Walker Harris kept his money around the house, can't we? I'd feel kinda outa sorts with anybody told that. Ed's dead—but his mother aint. How about it?"

And to those three picked witnesses it seemed somehow wholly in order to agree with the old Tensas Basin gun-fighter who had dropped to one knee and slain three murderous gangsters in a haze of smoke and flame and whistling lead, in the narrow confines of an Army tent.

"Never live long enough to forgive myself, John, I came so damn' near gittin' you killed," that gun-fighter was saying to young Dr. Tarleton, who sat with bandaged head between Charley Harris and Mary his wife, a little later that same day. "Guess I must be gettin' old and slow in the head. Never dawned on me, somehow, those three men would all start shootin' like that, in a camp full of soldiers and all."

"Well," said John Tarleton, "you may be slow in your dumb old head, but you sure make up for it by being hell-on-wheels with your pistol-hand."

Sheriff Whittlesey wouldn't be lured to smile.

"Feelin' well enough yet, John," he asked gravely, "to tell me just how you spotted them three, minute you laid your eyes on 'em?"

"They were the loose end I was telling Charley about," said John Tarleton. "They stuck out and they didn't fit. It was a long shot, one way, Sheriff, but I figured it was a good shot. I never believed for a minute that anybody around Leeboro committed that crime. And yesterday morning wasn't the first time I saw those three men, either. The day old Walker was murdered, day before the crevasse, I found them by Indian Lake. Fly-fishing for bass, they said. Told me they'd fished a lot, north and east. . . . After this, Sheriff, folks around here have got to quit rawhiding me for using flies instead of worms. It's a good thing I know something about fly-fishing."

"If you'll tell me what you and your buggy-whip and your tail-feather fish-hooks got to do with this—" began the Sheriff.

"Just this," broke in John Tarleton. "I watched one of those fellows put on a Parmachene Belle. Had to pick it out for him at that, out of his brand-new outfit. And he fastened the fly to the end of his fishing-line, though he had gut leaders in his kit—I saw them."

"What's that got to do with it?"

TARLETON glared in mock severity. "Sheriff, I'm ashamed of you! Even as dumb an egg as you, Oldtimer, ought to know bass won't strike a fly if they can see it's fastened to a line, when the water's clear—and often when it isn't. That's what the gut leader is for; it's invisible in water. I didn't say a word at the time. But it stuck in my mind. I drove away wondering, if three fellows came all the way down here from Indiana, posing as fly-fishermen, and didn't know any more about fly-fishing than that, just what their fishing-trip was a blind for. Then when I got thinking over the murder, I took a long guess. If you wanted to ramble a strange section and not be specially noticed, Sheriff, what better camouflage could you ask than a camping- and fishing-trip, with the roads all cluttered up with flivver-tourists the way they are these days? And then the crevasse threw them right back in my hands. Three drummers! Holding on to their sample-cases like grim death, and trying to bribe a rescue-party to set 'em down near a railroad. You're not a fisherman today—with your own car—and a drummer tomorrow—looking for a train—down here!"

Old Sheriff Whittlesey was swearing softly—oaths of full-hearted admiration. But young Dr. Tarleton turned to Charley Harris.

"Charley," he said, his voice was curiously vibrant with feeling, "back there in jail the other morning you told me you'd give everything you ever expected to have, if I could find out who committed that murder. I'm going to collect, old man. I'm going to be a regular loan-shark when it comes to collecting this."

Then he smiled at the puzzled look on the faces of the two who sat beside him.

"You'll soon have plenty of money, Charley," he said. "My fee isn't going to be exactly all you ever expect to have, but it's going to be stiff. It'll be about two thousand dollars, more or less, Charley. It's going to give little twelve-year-old Ted Burton two good legs instead of one. It'll pay all his expenses down in New Orleans. Going to make that as a thank-offering, old man, or do I have to sue you for it?"

Charley Harris turned to his wife.

"Mary," he said, "you stick around here and soothe this loan-shark's fevered brow while I go look up that kid. I want John to have the fun of breaking the news to him all by himself."

And the man before whose eyes the shadow of the noose no longer dangled went out to search for little Ted Burton.

HE found the youngster limping from camp toward the long, lagoon-like puddles left by the water's edge. Under his arm was a toy boat, roughly whittled, and a length of string. Ted Burton was going to play by himself. He couldn't join the rough and running games the other children of the camp were playing.

For the children could play now. The days of sodden despair were past. Men and women were venturing a laugh and a rough jest and even a bit of gossip, now and then; they were again planning.

The river was falling. As though sated with its gorge on the Tensas Basin, the tiger born of the black magic of the crevasse was shrinking to a kitten once more—lapping at the land as a kitten laps at a saucer of cream. Romping southward to the Gulf of Mexico, tawny in the light of a sun that fought free to shine again. It was falling, this river that brought ruin and destruction and death to the valley—that brought also in its impartial arms vengeance and justice and happiness.

THE END.

The Legion Takes the Field

By WARREN HASTINGS MILLER

THE quiet little officer in the blue burnous and blue kepi listened with a grim smile to Sergeant Ike on the subject of Erfoud. A year ago that town on the northern edge of the Tafilelt oasis had been a mere *poste* built by the Légion; it was now a small French city with military walls, gates, a market-place of Roman arches having the usual *suks* and commercial quarters. Its army and administrative buildings were laid out in wide rectangular streets planted with palms. It was, in fact, a brand-new metropolis such as the Romans would have built in their day, and for the same purpose—a signal of the imperial power on the very borders of the largest rebel district left in all Morocco, and a broad hint that that power was here to stay.

Erfoud, the city, was all the work of one man, Duvigny, this officer of the Intelligence in the blue burnous and kepi of his corps. Ike, who had seen his own Texas towns grow in the same lively fashion, was enthusiastic. "You-all ought to hev a mayor an' sheriff an' a city gov'mint *pronto,* sir—all good Democrats, of course!" he exclaimed naïvely.

Duvigny grinned. "*Aiwa!* Politics! They are outside, my Sergeant. You do not believe that Belkacem likes all this, or me, do you?"

"He shore must be scratchin' his haid over it, sir," Ike agreed. "Lookit this here market; it's full of them Filaliens all day long. You're showin' 'em thar's another way to git money besides lootin' and pillagin'."

He had put his finger on Belkacem's difficulty. That sultan of the Aït Atta confederation of desert tribes scorned trade. The way these tribes got money was by spectacular raids, on galloping *mehari* camels, with powder-play and massacre—also by exacting a heavy tribute from the Filaliens, those peaceful date-growers and leather-tanners who formed the bulk of the Tafilelt population of about a hundred thousand souls.

"No. Of a verity, Belkacem does not like Erfoud!" Duvigny smiled grimly. "Nor does he like it that I am winning over the Doui Menia tribes of the Ghorfa to the south of here. We have had secret conferences, by night, with their notables. They would come over to our side if they were sure we were here to stay, and not to leave the Tafilelt as we had to ten years ago, at the opening of the Riff War. I have asked for you and your combat-unit of the Hell's Angels as an escort, my Sergeant. I and my *goum* are not force enough when we go to pay our return visit to the Ghorfa country."

"Shore, we'd like nothin' better, sir!" said Ike with enthusiasm. That cavalry combat-unit was Ike's pet, his own invention. It consisted of a squad of horses lent them by the Légion Cavalry Brigade, two automatic rifles carried in saddle-boots, and a fast led mule burdened with ammunition for the quick-firers. It had the speed of cavalry combined with the firing-efficiency of a whole platoon of infantry and could keep up with Duvigny's *goum* of mounted native police.

"Report tonight, then," said Duvigny. "Belkacem will know. He will send the Aït Hammou against us, for he would give many warriors to capture Duvigny and his *goum!*"

Those devoted Intelligence officers who were always extending the French influence into the dissident areas beyond, certainly led uneasy lives! Raids and counter-raids, hired assassins, ambitious snipers trying for the Intelligence officer

"Choose!" called Sidi Yakoub as Ike stopped. "Die they with us, or are we allowed an honorable retreat? The Aït Hammou will never surrender!"

Our old friends the Hell's Angels squad of the Foreign Légion play a desperate part in a desert battle which begins as a sham but ends in deadly earnest.

Illustrated by Charles Fox

as he rode at the head of his *goum,* these were all in his day's work.

"We go to arrange a *baroud,* my sergeant," said Duvigny. "You know what is this *baroud?* It is an affair of honor. The Doui Menia cannot submit to us without a battle. The other tribes of the Tafilelt would taunt them if there is no fight first. So it is agreed between us and their notables that there shall be one. On the day of the *baroud* the *group mobile* will move out of Erfoud under our esteemed Commandant Knecht—Légion, tirailleurs, Senegalese. I and my *goum,* and you and the fighting Hell's Angels, are the advance guard, the attackers by their flanks, the raiders in their rear. There is shooting all day long. Everybody is happy, everybody satisfied. In the evening come the notables of the Doui Menia to our camp, bringing the bull to be sacrificed in token of submission."

Ike grinned. It was a typical Arab custom, where honor was everything; but if *he* was that Aït Hammou sheik he would have something to say on the day of the *baroud* too. There were gorgeous chances for stratagems and spoils, in this understood affair where a third party understood nothing but to do the most damage he could to both sides!

"We won't have no trouble gittin' there, sir; our trouble will be gittin' back," said Ike.

Duvigny gave him a glance of quick intelligence. "*Parfaitement!* We arrange the *baroud;* the Aït Hammou catch us afterward and *de*-range it! We shall not let that happen, my cowboy friend!"

Ike could not see how he was going to prevent it. There wasn't the slightest hope of there being no raid by the Aït Hammou. From their fastnesses of the Djebel Sarro the *goum* and its escort would be pounced on. The only question was, where and when?

LATE that night the great gates of Ksar-el-Arrash, the principal citadel of the Ghorfa country, opened to them. As Ike rode in through those portals of a red mud-brick stronghold with four tall towers at its corners, a sense of entering prison assailed him. They had made the trip from Erfoud without incident. To their left the rocky ramparts of the Hammada du Guir rose high above them—a desert plateau haunted by the Aït Hammou and having but a single road bisecting it. To their right were the palmeries of the Tafilelt along the river Ziz—fifty miles of palmeries and fortified farmhouses, three million date palms. No sounds but the barking of dogs in the

night; and yet—watching eyes that saw everything, but could not be seen. . .

Ike had six men whom he could absolutely depend on; Corporal Criswell, the giant Michigander; Anzac Bill, their Australian soldier of fortune; Di Piatti, their tall Italian count; Mora, their thick-set Spanish bull; Calamity Cyclops, their one-eyed sharpshooter, the best in the battalion; and Rütli, the little Swiss machine-gunner. They formed the famous "Hell's Angels squad," so named by the battalion. They were a hard-boiled and unlovely lot, but Ike's invention of a cavalry automatic-rifle unit made them equal in combat efficiency to any platoon of infantry. And there was Duvigny and his devoted *goum* of fifteen Berber partisans. . . But Ike would have remained outside this Ksar-el-Arrash—where the mobility of the two commands would count for something!

THEY were received in the audience-hall with ceremonies. Haunting fear, however, lurked in the eyes of all the notables gathered around the Caïd Sidi-el-Aman, that old hawk of a chieftain. These Doui Menia had been sitting on the fence all through the Tafilelt troubles, paying tribute to Belkacem but hoping for the coming of the French, to stay. Now they were unfavorably impressed with this force of one *goum* and six Légionnaires, as the sole visible military power that France had seen fit to send. This agreement for a *baroud* and submission meant life or death to them. For ten years they had maintained an uneasy and humiliating neutrality with the Tafilelt. Once they went over to the French there could be no turning back. Belkacem would launch the entire confederation of the Aït Atta on them in reprisal. . . . Were the French really coming in force?

Duvigny was in a very delicate position here. The Intelligence officer is the father of his district; after the army has conquered it, his task is to restore the life of the pasturages and palmeries again, to punish banditry hard and swiftly, to stand at the Caïd's right hand, advising him, supporting his authority while preventing tyranny. It is he who aids the people in their plantings and the betterment of their flocks. He starts with a tent in a desolate land. He builds a *poste* for his headquarters, a rallying point for the fighting men of the newly surrendered tribe. The people come back; the *ksours* are rebuilt, and flocks dot the pasturages once more. His job is, then, to protect them from raids by neighboring dissident tribes and at the same time carry on penetration into the rebellious areas by intrigue, by small combats, above all by encouraging commerce with his own pacified district. Often an Intelligence officer wins over a whole district to the Morocco Government without any army action at all. . .

Here Duvigny had to deal with a whole confederation of tribes occupying a territory the size of an American State. He had to promise them, on his honor as an officer, that France would not back out again, once having set her hand to the work. Duvigny spoke of the immense army concentration now going on at Erfoud. General Grimaud, with twelve thousand men, was preparing to advance against Belkacem and drive him out into the desert. He spoke of the long trains of lorries coming down the line of the Ziz, over the new road built by the Légion, guarded by armored cars, carrying tons of provisions and ammunition. Would France retreat again, once having set on foot an army of that size?

The Caïd nodded his head. "*Aiwa!* We were neutral once before, when eight thousand soldiers of the French came down here. Allah be praised that we

were! What happened to Mouley-el-Mahdi and his brother—to all the tribes that submitted to the French? Thou knowest, Sidi Duvigny! Belkacem fell upon them all when your soldiers abandoned the Tafilelt; count ye the number that he left alive!"

The Riff War, Duvigny explained—it took not eight thousand, but a hundred thousand soldiers to settle that! Three years of fighting—three years of restoring peace and prosperity. Then three years spent in pushing through the Grand Atlas,—where there were many dissident tribes, the Caïd would understand,—and one year in getting ready at Erfoud. . . Thus slowly but powerfully did France move, as had the Roumi of old.

It was his own town of Erfoud that won for him. The Caïd had been there. He had seen it grow to a city from a mere *poste*. He had seen the thousands of Légion soldiers boring the tunnel through the Atlas that made the road possible. And he had ridden in a steel car with the machine-gun in its roof—Duvigny had craftily seen to it that he had, before he ever commenced these negotiations!

"Aiwa! I have seen!" returned the Caïd with conviction. "Would ye but push boldly and stay! This Belkacem —may Allah curse him and destroy his father's house!—is but an adventurer thirsting for loot and glory. No holy marabout is with him. He has but a hundred faithful for a bodyguard. But ye taught him the military ways of the Roumi and he uses the desert tribes as he wills. The Aït Khebbash, the Aït Moghad, the Aït Hammou—all the Aït Atta confederation. One good battle with cannon commanding the water from the Gheris river, and they fall away from him like a bundle of straws! Ye have the young Khalif at Erfoud—may Allah salute him! No marabout will give this usurper his blessing. . . Go, then, to the *baroud!* . . . It is necessary,"—the Caïd smiled,—"that our young men shall be breathed and let off some powder—"

"May Allah not have mercy on your graves!" These words, in harsh, menacing Arabic, broke in on the Caïd's discourse from a dusty desert chieftain standing in the doorway. His arms were crossed under his burnous, but two points that were evidently the muzzles of pistols projected from the folds. "Down on your knees, every one of you!" he thundered. "I am Yakoub-el-Mansour, of the Aït Hammou!"

There was an instant of stupefaction. With that announcement the desert chieftain threw open his burnous in a swift gesture and the two automatics in his hands bore on them all. The Caïd and his notables bowed trembling on all fours, their beards on the carpet. The guns swung on Ike and Duvigny. "You! Hands up!" barked the sheik.

IKE wondered, as his hands went in the air, what had become of Hell's Angels and his prized cavalry combat-unit. He had left them "at ease" out in the court, and the *goum* as well. He cursed softly, regretting bitterly that he had not followed his own instincts and picketed them outside around this citadel. The trouble with nativedom was that all Arabs would look alike to his troopers. It had been easy for the Aït Hammou to get into the court, ostensibly tribesmen of the Doui Menia coming to the conference. Ike figured it out that at a prearranged signal they had grabbed and disarmed both the *goum* and the six men of Hell's Angels, each taking his man. There might have been a brief struggle, which he had not heard.

Yakoub-el-Mansour rapped out an order, and in came two Aït Hammou, also dusty and desert-worn, who deftly tied Ike and Duvigny with wrists crossed behind them. The chieftain then turned on the groveling Caïd and his notables.

"The *baroud!*" he said with scorn. "*We* will be the *baroud!* On your lives, ye shall not send a man!"

At a silent gesture of his hand Ike and Duvigny were led out. Ike was glad to learn the name of this great strategist

who had outwitted them all so handsomely at Djihani—Yakoub-el-Mansour or Jacob-the-Victorious, sheik of the Aït Hammou—but he certainly was a hard man to deal with. Their prospects looked blank, at present. Commandant Knecht and the *group mobile* would move out from Erfoud next day, expecting to find a perfunctory *baroud* opposing them, where no one would try very hard to hit anybody. There would be a lot of firing, some gallant combats, medals for certain ambitious officers, glory for the Doui Menia in valiant doings; then the gesture of submission signalized by the sacrificial bull. Instead of this, the *baroud* would be quite a different affair, with a man like Yakoub-el-Mansour managing it!

Outside in the court there was no sign of either the *goum* or of Hell's Angels. It was jammed with lean and tall Aït Hammou, Belkacem's famous Iron Brigade, so to speak. They all carried Lébel rifles and bandoliers of cartridges, product of their raids into the Saoura valley and around Bou Denib. They all looked half-fed, but were wiry and capable of any amount of endurance. They gibed at Duvigny as he was led out but laid no hand on him. At Ike they looked with curiosity, with murmurs of respect.

"Sidi Sergeant, you taught us a good lesson at Djihani with your mounted machine-guns!" the sheik said. "We have adopted your combat-unit entire. *Shabash!* We Arabs are not slow!"

Ike listened uneasily. The hell of it was that the Arabs were mechanically minded. It was they who bought American agricultural machinery up north in cultivated Morocco. The Frenchman bought a tractor, and as soon as it got out of order he let it go to rust; the Arab tinkered with it and fixed it up. They would have no difficulty in handling his combat-unit with the same intelligence as had Ike's own squad. And that weapon, turned suddenly on Knecht's flank, for example— This *baroud* would cost men, if it did not turn out a disaster!

DUVIGNY was looking at Ike meaningly. Poor Duvigny—the work of a year had gone for nothing! And he himself was in the hands of the enemy. However, he was not thinking of the fate they proposed for him. His glance seemed to say: "This is all very well, my friend; but it lacks one thing: Knecht will expect a report from us before he moves out. One of us must escape to Erfoud!"

Ike nodded imperceptibly. After that they attempted no communication. They were led outside the great gates of the citadel. There was sporadic firing off in the night—the surrounding *ksours* being attacked and their warriors kept indoors. The Caïd had managed very badly, Ike thought. He should have assembled enough of his fighting men as at least to safeguard his visitors during such an important conference as this. On the other hand, the meeting had to be secret, in the dead of night, lest all the rest of the Tafilelt pour out its tribes to stop the *goum* and the Légion squad. A gathering of the Doui Menia at their citadel would cause curiosity, talk. And how could he dream that the Aït Hammou would strike thus boldly, in a raid on the citadel itself? They must have made a night march of over thirty miles, from the distant ranges of the Djebel Sarro.

They would not go back there again. They would pick a likely place for this *baroud* and stage it, so as to be all ready for Knecht in the morning. All it needed was false information sent in somehow to the Commandant at Erfoud.

IKE guessed that this was about what Yakoub-el-Mansour would be doing during the rest of this night. He saw no horses save his own seven and the sixteen of the *goum* picketed outside; and those now were in charge of stout tribesmen. The Aït Hammou raided on foot. They had discovered that cavalry and bombing airplanes mixed disastrously for horses. Now they made incredible marches on those lean legs of theirs.

Presently the whole command of about a hundred and fifty Aït Hammou moved out, leaving Ksar-el-Arrash to cower in terror. They climbed immediately the heights of the Hammada du Guir. One dark mass ahead, closely guarded, was the Hell's Angels squad; the other was Duvigny's *goum*. Ike and the Intelligence officer were kept with the sheik. Along the edge of the plateau they marched northward until the limits of the Ghorfa country were nearly reached. There was a halt, a conference between Sidi Yakoub and his lieutenants. Below them a promontory of the Hammada plateau ran out toward the palmeries of the Tafilelt, like dozens more—but this one continued in a low ridge broken with ravines and hollows. It was an ideal place for a *baroud*.

"*Aiwa!*" The sheik laughed. "We

"On your knees, every one of you!" thundered a desert chieftain in the doorway.

send a message to Knecht! . . . Scribe! Thy pens and parchment!"

A little wizened warrior, who was the *kitabji* or scholar of the command, produced his implements from his girdle—a heavy brass pen-case with an ink-well in one end, a roll of goat-skins. Sidi Yakoub dictated in a rich bass voice.

"Write: *To the Illustrious, the Sword of the Roumi at Erfoud, the Commandant Knecht, whom may Allah salute! We, Yakoub-el-Mansour, Sherif, Defender of the Faith, Lord of the Aït Hammou, do invite you to hold your baroud with the traitorous Doui Menia! We will be present!*"

Duvigny and Ike exchanged uneasy glances as the *kitabji's* pen scratched.

It was subtle, that message! A challenge to the gallant Knecht, which would change his whole plan of attack. A descent by the Aït Hammou would have to be provided against, his reserves held back against attack from he knew not what quarter.

"*Aiwa?* Write!" went on Sidi Yakoub. "*As for the goum of Duvigny—may dogs defile their graves!—and its Légion escort, my spies have seen them depart from Ksar-el-Arrash. Await them not at Erfoud, ya Commandant! May Allah give thee long life and multiply His blessings upon thee.*

(Signed) Yakoub-el-Mansour."

That too was a poisonous subtlety. He did not say what his Aït Hammou had done to them, if anything. Knecht could imagine what he liked. He would move out to their rescue and the *baroud*, however—which was just what Sidi Yakoub wanted.

"Take to Erfoud! On your lives!" He had beckoned to him two stout warriors. They departed into the night and Ike and Duvigny glanced at one another blankly. The message would be delivered by two o'clock in the morning—Belkacem's spies within Erfoud would see to that. The *group mobile* would move at four. By dawn they would be here, ready for the battle.

What would happen to them then, this wily Aït Hammou sheik was now busily arranging. A thin detachment went down on the ridge, leading the *goum's* captured horses. It would make a respectable *baroud*, with the usual riding about and firing by foot-soldiers from pockets in the rocks. Ike saw his pet, that cavalry combat-unit that he had used so effectively many times before, riding off to parts unknown. But it was now mounted by Aït Hammou instead of by the redoubtable Hell's Angels. At the same time the main body of tribesmen with Sidi Yakoub climbed down the escarpments and took position in ambush in a ravine some distance back of the *baroud*.

It was Hannibal's ancient strategy of letting the enemy drive in your front, only to come under heavy flank fire from the main body. Ike was acquainted with Hannibal only by name, and not at all with his strategy, but his common-sense told him there was plenty of grief for Knecht if he advanced rashly. Nor could he lead off with the whole *group mobile.* The best of it, probably the Légion battalion, would have to be kept back to guard against the Aït Hammou.

THEY were being left alone up here, under a scanty guard. Somehow the mere absence of that brainy sheik emboldened Ike to start groping a way out of their difficulties. "This bird's having everything his own way, looks like," Ike fretted. "We oughta fix up somethin' to throw a monkey-wrench inter the works, seein' as we got our fool selves inter this mess!"

The lieutenant of the guard growled; he did not approve of this talk that was neither French nor Arabic. He cuffed Ike roundly by way of emphasis.

"All right, ol' shorty," said Ike amiably and fell silent. There was not much they could do, anyhow. The lieutenant of the guard stood back from him with rifle grounded and was watching with interest what was going on below. A sentry stood over both himself and Duvigny. Near by in the gloom two seated groups were indistinctly visible, Hell's Angels and the *goum.* Their guards stood motionless, spaced at intervals some paces away. Ten of them, Ike counted. Not much to hope for from twenty-one unarmed men, each with his wrists tied behind him!

Then he heard a faint whisper in English from Duvigny. "Lie down. . . Extend your heels toward me."

Ike sought a comfortable spread on the stony soil of the hammada. There was a good deal of him, measured vertically—six-feet-six. He enlarged it as far as he dared in the direction of that whisper. Presently he felt a tug at his cavalry spurs. Another. It kept up steadily, that plucking motion, and Ike held his heels rigid. Duvigny had managed to back up within reach of them and was using Ike's spur-rowels as a species of saw to cut through the thong that bound his wrists.

Hope! Even two unarmed men could do a lot here if both were free. Ike looked up, calculating their chances. Three men standing over them—weapons, if you could grab them by a sudden attack! He was tensed to second Duvigny in whatever the Intelligence officer planned.

A twist of his foot in the grip of a human hand. Ike understood the signal. Curl up again; he would find something. . . . He sighed petulantly as if changing to a better position and brought his knees in close. The lieutenant looked down at him, grunted, then was watching below again. Ike's fingers felt carefully over his ankles, and was not surprised to feel an open pocket-knife, with its blade stuck through a boot-lace. . . It did not need much manipulation with his fingers to sever the thong. . . . Now his hands were free behind him. Duvigny was also free. Ike waited for further orders.

"Punch! Quick! Hard! Now!" came Duvigny's tense whisper. Like a coiled spring Ike shot to his feet. The smash of his right fist drove the lieutenant headlong over the brink; his left caught the sentry's chin, and Ike grabbed his rifle as he fell. Duvigny had been as prompt with his man. They both flung themselves prone and opened fire on the guards. There were curses of surprised alarm, bodies falling, the clatter of Lébels dropping among the rocks, a spattering and ineffectual return-fire; then the rest of those Arabs had followed their instincts by a simultaneous bolt for cover among the near-by boulders.

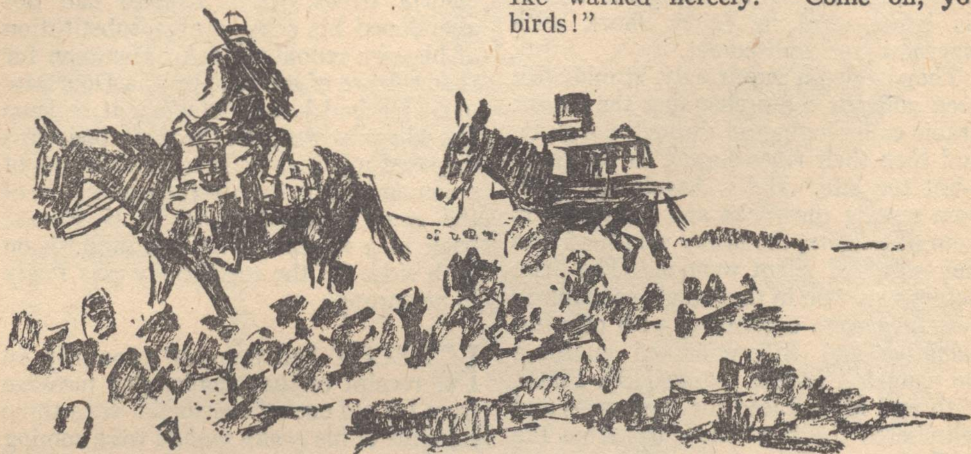
"YOU take your men, Sergeant; I mine—we meet just under the brink. We haven't a second to lose!" Duvigny rapped out those orders as they leaped swiftly for their groups. Ike slashed hurriedly with the pocket-knife, cutting thongs. Hell's Angels, who had all gone prone after that first instant of fire, squirmed, wrung their freed wrists and cursed relievedly. Criswell, Bill, and Calamity hastened to pick up fallen rifles and grab for clips. The Aït Hammou survivors were now sweeping their position with everything they had. Then Calamity got one, in one of his famous snap-shots, and started out to retrieve the man's rifle. The rest followed, on the jump. Ike could not stop them! It became a man-hunt up there—the object, rifles and cartridges. They hated being disarmed, did Hell's Angels—they seemed to feel it a matter of honor to settle with these tribesmen for the treacherous surprise attack in Ksar-el-Arrash.

Ike finally collected them and led the

party down over the brink. The hammada itself was a flat, stony waste where no small party would have a chance against any considerable body of tribesmen such as the Aït Hammou. But below were ravines, gullies, escarpments, rough and broken terrain where the squad could lie doggo in the shadows, or push on to escape as seemed best.

only four rifles between them, lay watching grimly in the rocks. The promontory beyond would expose them like a lot of flies on a wall; if they stayed where they were, they would soon be smoked out.

"Jim," Ike husked to Corporal Criswell, "we got to do a grand sneak up on the derned hammada ag'in, 'pears like. Up this lil' gully. The fust man kicks over a stone I'll lam the pants off'n him!" Ike warned fiercely. "Come on, you birds!"



Sidi Yakoub, having heard that firing, was coming up from the ridge in haste with a big band of his brigands. Those fifteen horses of the *goum* were with them. If Ike ventured down on the plain, that cavalry would soon round him up; if he stayed up here the foot soldiers would track him and corner him somewhere. There was no hope in a surprise attack on them, vulnerable as they were now, for the Aït Hammou still outnumbered them nearly thirty to one. Duvigny and his *goummiers* seemed to have vanished.

That big body of tribesmen stopped in the gloom and listened. Sidi Yakoub, confound him, seemed to divine just what his prisoners would do if they *had* escaped! There were reports being called down from the brink above—from the survivors of those guards, quite evidently. A commotion and some excited talk, where a group had come upon the body of the lieutenant whom Ike had knocked over the cliff. Then there was movement in the main body—ordered, swift. The cavalry clattered down at a long slant to get beyond them in the direction of Erfoud; a file of infantry moved out along the flanks of the plateau slope to reach positions below them; scattered searchers began coming directly toward the little gully where Ike's six, with

The men climbed with the utmost care. Their little gully rapidly narrowed to a mere crevice, full of boulders of stratified rock. It had a waterfall over a shelf of living rock during the spring rains. Silently they negotiated it, surrounded by enemies in the dark, with no hope of getting anywhere save into more trouble. But cheerfully they crept on, with the rugged courage of soldiers used to the adventures of war. . .

To their pleased surprise, that ledge developed quite a basin above, a dark hollow with frowning ramparts of rock rising to the hammada above. And out of the dark of that cavernous hollow came a low whinny—the whinny of a Government mule! Ike stopped the squad with a tap on the leg passed from man to man. They could hardly believe their luck. For that nicker belonged to the ammunition-mule of Ike's combat-unit! The other six horses must be here too, then—and six more tribesmen!

Ike lay flat, peering and considering. The glint of star reflections in water caught his eye. A tank in the rocks, trapped here after the rains had produced their waterfall! The Arabs knew of it, though the military men did not. And this gully would be directly on Knecht's flank when the *group mobile* came for

the *baroud* in the morning. Just the place for Sidi Yakoub to select for an attack by the combat-unit!

They heard calls in the gully below; then there was movement, grunts, in the darkness of the hollow. The six tribesmen were arousing from their wait—probably employed in sleep. Hell's Angels lay tensed, waiting for them to come on. Ike knew that if he could once get to his automatic rifles the game was in his hands—and he fairly shook with eagerness and excitement.

They came on inquiringly, stupid with sleep and not comprehending the urgent Arabic calls ringing up through the gully. And then their rifles sprang to the carry—but too late. Hell's Angels had risen from among the rocks and launched on them like tigers, the heavy smash of fists their sole and silent weapon. The little victory was won in that single encounter; then they were organizing with celerity. Calamity and Bill remained guarding the waterfall ledge; Criswell, Di Piatti, Rütli and Mora raced for the horses and unlimbered the two "sho-shos" from the saddle-boots. Tripods were set up, the machine-guns mounted, and ammunition loaded in; in a trice that combat-unit was ready to hold this hollow against any number of infantry that cared to attack it!

A scattering fire came from below—yells, shouts—return fire from Calamity and Bill. One automatic covered the entire gully below, in case of a rush; the other swept the brow of the hammada above. All they had to do was to wait for dawn—and Knecht.

DAWN came, after an hour of ineffectual attempts on their position by Sidi Yakoub's detachments. First a rosy glow on the snowy peaks of the Grand Atlas far to the north; then a general lightening and increased visibility; then the flanks of the hammada cast faint shadows and the escarpments beyond the palmeries of the Ziz were touched with orange-red. The plain of the Tafilelt spread out below, scanty pasturage sparkling with dew and threaded with white camel-trails; beyond that the bushy tops of millions of date palms, fringed with the pink cubes of *ksours* lit by the morning sun. The Tafilelt! That thorn in the side of France for ten years, now. A hundred thousand Filaliens lived there, peacefully raising dates and tanning leather; over them ruled a sultan of the desert tribes—Belkacem, who once had been a sergeant in the Spahi and now commanded the twenty thousand guns of the Aït Atta confederation. It was to drive Belkacem out of the Tafilelt, once for all, that twelve thousand men under Grimaud were assembling at Erfoud.

Through the gap in the gully they had a magnificent view of the *baroud* that was to be staged here this morning with the Ghorfa tribes. Sidi Yakoub had not abandoned his scheme of a substitution of his own redoubtable Aït Hammou for that gesture of a battle by the Doui Menia. He had left a detachment to keep Ike where he was, but the main body was disposed much as before. A thin line of commanded the twenty thousand guns of the *goum's* horses disposed as scouts; back in a lateral ravine the ambush on both sides by the main body was ready to be sprung.

KNECHT had marched promptly on receipt of that challenging message from his old enemy the sheik. The three columns of his *group mobile* were coming across the plain, the white kepis and blue sashes of the Légion, the red *chachias* and red sashes of the tirailleurs, the red fezzes of the Senegalese. A platoon of the Camel Corps formed a fringe across the advance. But there was more. Ike grabbed Criswell's arm and pointed. "See them four trains of mules, Jim? Them's mountain guns, them lil' ol' sixty-fives that kin go anywhar troops kin go! Knecht's answer to this here attack by the Aït Hammou while he's tendin' to the *baroud,* them guns is."

It was a good answer, and they were glad to see the mountain-guns, those little old reliables that supported the infantry when no seventy-five could come within miles for lack of roads. But Criswell fretted: "That's jest it, Ike! The Old Man still thinks them's Doui Menia down there. He's all fixed for the Aït Hammou if they show up, but—"

"Golly! He thinks he's comin' off 'cordin' to schedule—aint it the truth?" Ike exclaimed with exasperation. "By rights Duvigny an' his *goum* oughta be ridin' at the head of that column. The Intelligence officer is allus there with these *barouds.*"

"Well, he aint; an' cause why? He can't make it, that's what," said Criswell with conviction. "Mebbe they hadn't no luck gittin' any rifles. Duvigny'd be out there by now, if he could."

Ike waved his kepi frantically. "Git back! Stay where you are!" he bellowed.

"Gosh! We got to do somethin' about it!" Ike turned to give an order. He hadn't much time left nor any too much opportunity. Knecht's columns were deploying now. Contact had been made with the supposed Doui Menia and bullets were flying. Wisps of smoke rose along the ridge, spurts of sand in puffs blown by the wind on the plain. The deployed lines went prone and began their attack. The mountain-guns were held back, but they were unlimbering the pieces from the carrying mules.

"Limber up them sho-shos—*houp!*" Ike yelped. "Out'n this, ef we has to fight our way out!"

He joined Anzac Bill and Calamity at the waterfall brink. There were not more than a dozen Aït Hammou tribesmen guarding this gully, but they gave more trouble than so many hornets. They were all well concealed in cover; it was impossible to get the horses down past them. Ike called Di Piatti to him and the four started an attack of their own along both flanks of the gully.

Meanwhile, down below, the ridge had been carried by the tirailleurs and Senegalese. The Légion remained back near the guns. Knecht was still uneasy and wary. He had seen no Aït Hammou yet, but Sidi Yakoub would surely make good his boast. The *baroud,* so far, had gone as he expected.

Ike swore savagely at the next development. Those ardent young lieutenants of the tirailleurs were pushing on from the ridge—straight for destruction in that ambush! He tried signaling Knecht with his kepi but got a bullet through it for his pains. The distance was too great, anyhow—more than a mile. Nothing but sporadic firing, without apparent purpose, could be seen up here from Knecht's position below.

"Chance it—hev to!" said Ike resolutely. "Criswell! Bring on them hosses!" he yelled back up the ravine.

The four rifles kept down the enemy as best they could. The horses appeared, footing gingerly around the waterfall ledge, with Criswell leading the foremost. Rifles blazed among the rocks below. Through the storm of it the combat-unit slipped and floundered down the steep slopes, their precious ammunition-

mule coming last. It seemed to Ike that now, if ever, was the time to display what his invention could do, at the crisis of a battle, in just the right nick of time.

"*Mount!*" he roared as Hell's Angels closed in compactly around its horses, shooting avidly at every head that showed up in the bush. "Down thisaway, you fellers!"

In a trice that combat-unit was ready to hold the hollow.

They clattered off along a species of ledge that ran down to meet the ridge. Cheers from the tirailleurs and the blacks greeted their sudden appearance. Ike waved his kepi frantically. *"Git back! Stay where you are, bozos!"* he bellowed at them, but it was all lost on those French sergeants. They had not halted their advance.

BUT Ike had far greater speed than they. His unit galloped on down, gaining on them, closing up the distance to that lateral ravine till it was not over five hundred yards. They commanded it from here, in a plunging flank fire that would be ghastly when sprayed into that crowd of tribesmen filling it.

"Halt! Chuck it to 'em! Hustle, fellers!" Ike's order checked the unit on its haunches. Hell's Angels unlimbered the automatics in the quickest time that any of them ever remembered.

Prat! Rat-tat-tat-tat! A stream of bullets was pouring across into the ravine. The Aït Hammou effervesced like a disturbed swarm of bees. The tirailleurs stopped just in time. Their line had not reached the ravine mouth yet. They dug in prone; for those chattering machine-guns up on the slopes of the hammada were warning even their sergeants that enemies might be around somewhere. . .

Knecht's field-glasses told him, first, that the missing Ike was still at large and was pushing this *baroud* with a good deal more energy than seemed necessary for Doui Menia who were about to submit anyhow; second, that the missing Aït Hammou might very well be in the ravine that Ike was firing into—though Knecht could not see any ravine; third, some sixty-five millimeter shells lobbed over there would explode them out of it in a blizzard of flying burnouses. . . .

Ike saw the two batteries of mountain-guns being wheeled into line, eight of them in a row; then *Boom! boom! boom!* they were off. The ravine was being thrashed with smoking shrapnel. The effervescence among the Aït Hammou increased, boiled up and over into an eruption of fleeing tribesmen, each man for himself and all heading for the Tafilelt, their one refuge left. The Camel Corps got in motion to head them off. It was a terrible cross-fire of artillery and machine-guns for any flesh and blood to have to endure. It did not seem that Sidi Yakoub had a single gesture left now but incontinent flight.

But he had. Ike saw the sheik and a group of his bravest climb out of the ravine and stand there waving their arms valiantly, in all the storm of shrapnel. He was asking for a parley, a truce; and it seemed urgent. Ike stopped his machine-guns and raced down there with Criswell and Di Piatti at his back. His shouts shut off the tirailleurs, who had by now reached the ravine mouth and had begun firing into it. Knecht stopped the artillery; he could see Ike running down to within earshot of that enemy group, and he was willing to await events.

"Ya Sergeant!" called out Sidi Yakoub as Ike stopped within a hundred yards. "Choose—Duvigny or me! We have your *goum*. It is to save their lives that I make this truce. There are five of them dead already by your own gunfire, and the Sidi Duvigny lies wounded." He gestured down into the ravine. "Die

they with us? Or are we allowed an honorable retreat to the Tafilelt? *Aiwa!* The Aït Hammou will never surrender!"

Ike was prompt to grasp the situation. They had recaptured Duvigny and his *goum,* while Hell's Angels had been lucky enough to run into their own combat-unit up on the hammada. Duvigny's people were enduring the shrapnel combing the ravine with the same heavy per cent of casualties as the Aït Hammou themselves. Like them, they would all perish, to the last man, before Sidi Yakoub would surrender. He was offering a chance to retreat in exchange for the Intelligence officer and his *goum.*

It was a hard choice. But Ike could see no hope of saving Duvigny, otherwise; nor could they be sure in the end of capturing Sidi Yakoub. He and his Aït Hammou would vanish out of this ravine somehow, in spite of both the shrapnel and Ike's machine-guns. They were masters in the art of escaping in broken and desert country like this. Ike had seen Arabs disappear before, just when he thought he had them securely bagged.

He called a sergeant of the tirailleurs to him.

"Lend me your helio, feller," Ike requested. "Message to the Old Man about all this!"

His sun-flashes began sending the terms to the Commandant a mile away, back there with the guns and the Légion. And prompt was the answer from Knecht: *"Agreed. We cannot sacrifice Duvigny. Am recalling meharistes."*

The *baroud* was over.... Sidi Yakoub saluted Ike with an ironic smile. "May Allah cherish thee, ya Sergeant! Lo, a fighting man after mine own heart! Fare thee well!"

He was gone with that gesture. He and his followers evaporated up the ravine, in that inconspicuous way peculiar to tribesmen, and reached the palmeries of the Tafilelt unseen by anybody—though the Camel Corps could have found them, had they been allowed to. Ike went down through the carnage in the ravine to find the officer in the blue burnous. Duvigny was unconscious from loss of blood. And they retrieved not more than half a dozen of his devoted *goum;* the rest had suffered with the Aït Hammou in the shrapnel-storm that had made of the ravine a place of death.

Back at Knecht's P. C., the Intelligence officer was revived under the surgeon's ministrations. Duvigny wept when he learned the terms that had been accepted as the price of his life. But he was priceless to France in this region. His work outvalued anything the army could do. The army destroyed; it had to—Duvigny built up. Not only that, but if a tribe was not composed of mere bandits, like the Aït Hammou, unchangeably hostile to any peace whatever, he could win them over by persuasion, by example, by object-lessons in the benefits of peace with the French.

HE gave proof of that as soon as his wound let him take up the threads of his work again: "On to Ksar-el-Arrash, my Commandant!" he begged. "You have the *group mobile,* the artillery, the force. Let them see; and we will not need any *baroud,* this day, to win over the Doui Menia—have you not beaten the dreaded Aït Hammou in their place?"

He was right in that estimate of the native point of view. That afternoon Ksar-el-Arrash opened its gates, with rejoicings, to the *group mobile.* Nothing was said about the *baroud;* but the young men of the Doui Menia took it out in a grand fantasia, with powder-play and feats of horsemanship. And that evening the sacrificial bull was slaughtered by the notables in token that the Ghorfa country had gone over definitely to the French. Those mountain-guns looked as if they had come to stay!

One grim little Intelligence officer, lying wounded on a cot, smiled serenely and assured them that this time they had.

Red Terror

A deeply impressive story of two Americans' terrific adventure in the strange land that is Soviet Russia today.

By S. ANDREW WOOD

The Story So Far:

THE Public Prosecutor took the four *dossiers* from the portfolio, and gave them to his bullet-headed secretary to read aloud.

"'Prohackai,'" began the secretary, "'a Mongol of the Kinghan Mountains. Priest in a Buddhist Monastery. Abandoned religion and preached the Brotherhood of Man in 1927. Moscow 1928; then propaganda in the East. Greatly successful. Reputation flawless. Agents' reports on his movements all favorable till early this year. Proved then to be receiving heavy bribes from counter-revolutionaries in Asia. Vanished three months and was seen in Kabul with agent of British India. For details see *dossier* "Espionage GPU."'"

"The next," directed the Prosecutor.

"'Lee Armitage, American citizen,'" the secretary's voice went on. "'Architect and consultant designer of the Schnitzler Building, New York. Engaged under the Five Year Plan to design and assist in building the new Asiatic Palace. Was in Moscow during the Revolution. Speaks Russian and knows Moscow like a native. Difficult under surveillance. Has no political opinions, but is Capitalist in ideology. Works conscientiously. Agent reports that he is enamored of a woman of his own nationality, Ishbel Dane, who belongs to the Party in Moscow (see *dossier*). No friend of the Revolution. Possibly dangerous. Being watched closely. . . .

"'Lidoshka Wei, artiste of the Eastern Propagandafilm. Chinese girl revolutionary (see GPU Agents). Girlhood spent among armies of Chang. Counter-revolutionary General Tse died while L. W. was in his tent.'" ("Judith and Holofernes!" commented Koregorvsky, wagging his head). "'Brought to Moscow as reward and became cinema-star. No flaw in her devotion to the State.

"'Ishbel Harrison Dane, American citizen. American woman of society who has thrown up her possessions to come to Moscow. Does not live among American Communist colony, but with the artiste Lidoshka Wei (see *dossier*). Enthusiastic but untried.'"

And now the dread Gay-pay-oo began to function in its sinister fashion. The suspected Prohackai was found murdered —pinned by a sword to a Buddha in the apartment of Lidoshka Wei. The Chinese girl had loved him—and had killed him at the order of the terrible Three Letters. And though she plunged from a window into the ice-filled river afterward, she was cast up alive again.

Armitage's turn came next. For Erik Valentine, a handsome half-Russian secretly in the service of the Gay-pay-oo, was also in love with Ishbel Dane; and he knew he could never win her while Armitage lived. He therefore provoked the American to a quarrel, and taking sudden advantage, strangled him. Thrown, supposedly dead, on a refuse dump, Armitage was rescued by a band of child waifs and brought back to life. And Sasha the Frog, chief of these waifs, took him under his special care and provided him with the clothes and identification-card of a Russian workman.

Valentine at last won Ishbel's reluctant consent to a marriage ceremony. Back at his luxurious quarters, he confessed to his bride his connection with the Gay-pay-oo. And Ishbel, terrified and rebellious, slipped into another room and down the fire-escape.

Outside she came upon Armitage in Russian peasant costume, who had been trailing her. He helped her on her way to her own home, then resumed his wandering of the streets. For he was, he well knew, officially dead; and should he be discovered alive, his shift would be short.

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Illustrated by
Joseph Franké

There came the double crack of pistol-shots—a scream. "God in heaven!" said Koregorvsky. "Assassination!" He tore himself free from Lidoshka.

A few days later his watchfulness over Ishbel was again needed; for the GPU agents kidnaped her and delivered her to Valentine's house. Armitage gained admission by a ruse and had the satisfaction of knocking Valentine down. But a concealed microphone betrayed him, and with Ishbel, he fled for his life.

Sasha the Frog again came to Armitage's rescue and delivered him over to the care of Lisa, the blind girl whose drunken husband Armitage was impersonating. And now suddenly and strangely an apparent path to freedom opened: Lidoshka Wei offered to take Armitage and Ishbel across the frontier to Poland in her airplane.

The plan was carried out; Armitage and Ishbel were landed at twilight on the edge of a forest and started walking. And then— Armitage's foot caught on something. . . . Wire.

Afterward he knew that he flung Ishbel headlong into the bluebells. The air above them tore and whistled; the quiet of the forest was hellishly shattered, and lit with tiny flashes of lightning that made the undergrowth jump red.

"Machine-guns," gasped Armitage, when silence came again. "That wire sent them off. We're not across the frontier!"

"No. This path just—leads back!"

"GPU tricks. This is one of their game preserves. . . . Lidoshka sent us into it." ***(The story continues in detail:)***

ISHBEL shivered, but kept silent. Armitage raised his head slightly. He had known traps like that in Revolution days. Probably the machine-guns were hidden and they fired and reloaded automatically by some sort of clock-

work. People had used that forest to cross the frontier, agents, smugglers of *valuta*, refugees—so the path had been boomeranged, and fitted with machine-guns. Soon the frontier-guards would come to look for their bodies. . . .

He began to crawl at a tangent from the path and Ishbel followed, her mouth dry. She was frightened at Lee's face—it was so savagely impassive. They reached the rim of the hollow without springing that grim booby-trap again. It seemed that now there was more radiance to be seen through the tree-trunks.

"See! We've doubled right back."

THEY were on all fours, like two animals, on the edge of the forest. The emerald-green marsh they had fled from lay before them again, with the *Red Dawn* and the smaller monoplane resting side by side upon it. There were figures about them—Lubin, Yissun Timur the Mongol, a man in the bottle-green of the Gay-pay-oo—all strained and still, watching the forest. But that was the background. It was the figure in the foreground which focused Armitage's eyes and made them feel bloodshot—Erik Valentine!

He was close to the trees, peering into them, with a blanched face.

Armitage blinked the red mist from his sight. He looked at Ishbel.

She smiled gently and in a very low voice said: "I think it's surrender, Lee."

"We'll do it my way, dearest. Shall we?" His hand fell on her arm; he watched her nod. "I want you to call to Valentine—as though you were wounded, if you like."

"Yes. And you—"

He pressed her lips, smiled. His will enveloped hers and crushed it. Faintly Ishbel called, "Erik!"—and all but thrust her hands against her mouth at the sound.

Valentine wheeled with a start, and came quickly over the pine-needles. . . .

The whole weight of Armitage felled him. They thudded to the ground together, twisted among the trees, slithered down the slope. Armitage was on his feet first. He held Valentine for a moment, and hit him as a butcher hits a refractory beast. He flung him over his shoulder and went crashing into the forest like Caliban with a capture. He put him down again, when Valentine's fingers came groping over his face for his throat; put him down, pinned his arms with both knees, and clubbed him with both fists till the delicate face was bloody.

"Not too much, Valentine. I'll keep you awake. You're conscious, Valentine, quite conscious?"

He waited for no reply, but went trampling down into the hollow where the machine-gun wire lay. In times past, he had not troubled much about his strength. He had a bull's muscles, but seldom used them. Valentine, kicking and writhing, was wrapped about both shoulders, and his limbs were taking giant strides through the bluebells. Once Valentine's face got tangled among branches, or seemed to. Armitage tore it free, impatiently. The arms of the captive he carried clawed his bare head, but only feebly. . . . He wanted to feel Valentine's body kick as the lead filled him. Lying on the ground and holding him aloft, the machine-guns ought to get him first. . . .

Behind all that red killing, there was a cool patch in his brain. With Valentine gone, Ishbel might be fairly safe, even in Moscow. And she might get out of Moscow quietly, now the scales had fallen from her eyes. In any case, Lee Armitage the architect was dead, and Feodor Petrovitch the metal-worker was booked the same way. . . .

"Here we are," he said, and found his voice crisp and laughing.

HE slackened his grip, because he found he was choking his burden. It was necessary to find the wires, those signal-wires that dropped the semaphore of death. . . . Down on all fours, dragging Valentine as carefully as possible. He still struggled, but only weakly, blowing red bubbles as he breathed, his eyes fixed and wide open, as stark a picture as the propaganda poster of the proletariat in the hands of Christ, which was on the walls of his studio on the Moscow boulevard.

Ah, there was the pile of rags with the scurrying forms about it. Perhaps those of the same unhappy peasant who, mortally wounded, had crawled to bury his ikon in the ground as a warning. Evidently the frontier-guards did not always come to mop up.

"Sit up, Valentine!" He propped his burden against a tree. "This is up your street: An execution—a shooting. Machine-gun. Understand?"

"Both of us?" Valentine's head hung.

"I expect so. But you first, you Gay-pay-oo hound. Have I hurt you?"

"A little." The dabbled mouth crooked. "Not more than I did you in Lidoshka's house, Armitage."

The wires gleamed in the grass, within reach of Armitage's foot. He had a sudden stab of dread that perhaps this time the machine-guns would not answer—or had changed their aim to some other part of the path. He thought of these things with a clarity which he was fully aware approached insanity. Vaguely, too, he was disappointed that Valentine was not sobbing with fear. He leaned over and grabbed greedily at the man. Valentine laughed thickly.

There was a crunch of breaking twigs behind his back, the loom of a gray uniform and glinting top-boots. Armitage saw the falling rifle-butt, but could not evade it in time.

MOSCOW. . . . It poured about Ishbel Dane again as though she had never left it, as though she had never found love in a death-forest on the frontier, and lost it again; as though Lee Armitage was not lying—if he still lived—in the Butyrka prison, while she herself was free—terrifyingly free.

In the *Red Dawn* with Lidoshka at the controls, they had returned—a nonchalant Lidoshka who gave no sign; a Lidoshka who, with an impassive ivory face, watched Lee Armitage, still bleeding and manacled, carried out of the cabin to the black van waiting behind the airdrome buildings; a Lidoshka who never glanced once at Ishbel Dane.

Ishbel was back in her old life. She had clicked back into it like a part of a well-oiled machine. Invisible fingers gently thrust her there; the clinic, the K. K. hostel, the *komsomolkas,* the throbbing exhaustion when the day's work was over. Only one thing was new: The sick and futile despair.

Terrifyingly free!

She dragged her hot and tired feet over one of the Moskva bridges, aware of steady footsteps that always kept their distance behind her, however deep the crowd. When she leaned over the parapet the man did the same. She got to know the turnip-faced, expressionless creature. Alternately, he would use a toothpick, or light a cigarette. He had broken teeth. Whenever the Moscow streets called to her, he was there—as were others. An old beggar-man whined at her, enveloping her with a sharp, vulpine stare—photographing her on his Three Letter brain. A woman picked up a handkerchief with a "Yours, comrade!" It was not hers. The woman's green eyes roved over her—photographing her. . . .

Ishbel sank wearily into one of the chairs in the small rest-room of the hostel. A letter had been thrust into her hands on the steps below. She did not see the messenger, he was gone so quickly.

With a bitter smile she saw that the letter was in the handwriting of Lidoshka Wei.

"I deserve all your curses, Ishbel. Believe that I betrayed you. Believe that I am tiger-cruel. Believe what you wish. But I meant to land across the frontier. We were but half a mile away. I knew nothing of the airplane which followed. Curse Lidoshka, Ishbel. Destroy this, or hand it to Koregorvsky, as you wish."

"Feeble! Why did she trouble to send it?" murmured Ishbel, slowly tearing the note to fragments.

There was a slight rustle behind her. It was little Xenia, of the Ear, Nose and Throat, leaning over the chair. Ishbel swung round and caught her hand, drawing down the scared, shrinking face to hers. She laughed.

"So they've set you to watch me too, Xenia? How comradely!"

"No!"—a parched little voice, shaking with guilt.

"Have you ever followed me? I'm only curious."

"One night. To that old brewery—the Little Sretinka. They said that as a loyal citizen I must do it—" Xenia covered her face with her hands and burst into tears. She ran headlong from the room, overcome with grief and fear, a very pitiful and inefficient hireling of the Ogpu.

Ishbel went out of the empty room. She could not stay. The thought of Lee Armitage throbbed all through her. She ached as though she physically hurled herself against a dead wall. Tired as she was, the streets called again.

SOMETHING was happening in Red Square, that giant shop-window of the *Politbureau.* There was talk of Japanese aggression in Manchuria. It was scarcely dark, but a vast yellow monster labeled "Japan" was bathed in floodlights there, nodding its huge head and slobbering electric saliva from its jaws. The crowd surged, murmured, listened, like something engaged in a merciless rhythm of life that had no music, but only the beat of the hammer, the swish

of the sickle. The Russian national anthem, Lee had called it. . . .

Loud-speakers. Ishbel clenched her hands. Prohackai's voice—always Prohackai. It stopped, and a feminine voice came, clipped and plangent. A searchlight swung to the granite square of Lenin's tomb and showed the figure of Lidoshka Wei, poised there like a *Mercury*, her arm upraised, speaking flaming words.

ISHBEL pulled her coat about her, and pushed blindly out of the crowd. Her shoes turned on the cobbles in the frantic haste she made to get out of the range of Lidoshka's voice. Turning, she saw the turnip-faced man. He brushed past her, stayed ahead a little to fasten his shoe-lace.

"A red rosette, comrade?" said a bearded Kalmuck at the curb, with a tray slung round his neck, running slit eyes over Ishbel.

She turned, with the first snap of her nerves, to cross the street, and ran through the traffic. As she moved, Ishbel found that unconsciously she kept to the shadow of the wall. It was some street of fine and dignified buildings, for she passed by porticos, with here and there a foreign automobile at the curb. Consulates—English, German, French. . . . If she ran up one of those wide flights of steps and poured out the wild story that Lee Armitage was alive and in the Butyrka—

Her foot was on the first step. It was the English consulate, with a very English-looking *commissionaire* sitting behind the glass door. . . .

Then she saw that a big car slid softly to the curb. It stopped noiselessly, expertly.

"Comrade Ishbel Dane?" The broad-backed officer, genial and red-faced, saluted punctiliously as he sprang forth. "You are requested to accompany me, if you please."

"Again?" Ishbel could not keep back the contemptuous smile. Her heart sank. But she might have known she was watched.

"Pardon. I was instructed to assure you that, this time, it is strictly official, and there is no cause for any kind of fear."

"I don't think I'm afraid," said Ishbel slowly.

The car started like a thing of India-rubber. She looked out of the window with a kind of frozen curiosity. Turnip-face and the Kalmuck were in the distance, exchanging cigarettes and listening gravely to the outer ring of loud-speakers which resonated the clear voice of Lidoshka Wei, the Little Lotus. . . .

For a few brief moments, as she sat in the car, Ishbel had experienced a wild hope that she was being taken to see Lee Armitage. At the thought, her heart beat suffocatingly for the first time.

It stilled again. A brightly lighted elevator was whisking her and the officer up through the velvety silence of the new GPU building. High up, they stepped forth, the officer fingering his revolver-holster, perhaps merely out of habit. High up; and Lee was underground, in the Butyrka—or perhaps farther underground even than that. . . .

"In here, if you please, comrade."

It was a small, luxuriously carpeted room. A soft light shone at the ceiling; leather chairs gave it dignity and comfort. They contrasted with its sole occupant, a shabbily dressed girl who sat sullenly before the electric fire, her kerchief hanging over her shoulder, her red curls all tousled.

"Lisa!" whispered Ishbel involuntarily.

A husky voice answered wearily. The girl did not turn her head.

"So they have women! Do you wear spurs and a sword, Madame Ogpu? Or beautiful frocks made out of baby-skins —like the capitalist women have, I was once told. In any case, I am sick of questions."

"Don't you know me, Lisa?" asked Ishbel in low tones.

The girl flung round passionately. Ishbel saw then that her wrists were manacled, her cheeks hollow, her violet eyes burning. She spoke as coarsely as any other denizen of the Little Sretinka.

"Know you! Spit on that, Madame Ogpu. What is there in a girl being blind? All kisses taste alike then! Would to God that I was deaf, too. I am tired of questions. Why do they set a woman on me? Is it delicate questions about my underclothing, to compare with that unlucky Feodor's notes on the subject? I had very little, anyway. Feodor stole my wedding-frock, and sold it."

WITH a scornful sniff, Lisa turned to the fire again.

Ishbel kept the breath in her throat and prayed for quick wits.

She understood, before the prayer was finished. Her eyes glided round the

room. This was a confrontation-chamber: Every whisper in it was heard, every movement seen by hidden eyes. Lisa, quicker-witted than she was, knew it.

"I am no Ogpu woman, comrade," she said gently. "I am here for nothing too. It is all for the good of the State, I suppose, but they go too far at times, like the police in my own country. For a moment, I thought that red head of yours was known to me—a *komsomolka* of my clinic."

"They will put my eyes out," said Lisa, with a doleful shudder, "and they are beautiful eyes, though they are useless. Men have told me so—even Feodor, who was my husband and has got into some terrible scrape with the Government, told me that; may flames scorch him, if he is dead as I think he is."

The silence that followed hung like a velvet weight. Not a murmur came in. Watching eyes seemed to hang all over the pigskin-lined walls. With a great ef-

Valentine had finished his work upon the model of Buddha-the-Bloody. He forced himself to action, humming now and then at the thought of what Feodor Petrovitch might go through before Mother Butyrka clasped him to her breast.

fort, Ishbel crushed the fancy. She dared ask no questions. Tears of rage and pity came into her eyes. Lisa,—who had given Lee refuge,—with manacles on her hands, pretending, playing a part, sending her unspoken, urgent warnings. . . .

"I have been two days in their dirty clink, but it was enough. I shall write to Stalin. Hell! Give me a cigarette, Comrade-whoever-you-are. Light it for me."

Lisa steadied the match in Ishbel's hand. On her wrist the machine-calloused finger-tips pressed warmly, comfortingly, for a fleet instant.

THEN Ishbel became aware that the light in the room was changing slowly. It crowded into the center of the room, leaving the rest in darkness.

"Come forward, Lisa Semenovna. There is nothing to fall over."

At a desk, a familiar bald-pate shone effulgently, a pair of horn-rimmed glasses glinted. It was just as though a drop-scene had gone up, to reveal Comrade Koregorvsky, Deputy to the Public Prosecutor. His cheek-bones bulged; the lower part of his face looked sucked in. . . . A bloodless little weasel on the trail. He poked a stiff finger.

"Feodor Petrovitch is your husband?"

Lisa shook herself free from the two guards who steered her into the bright light. They had appeared as though by magic, through some silent door.

"He *was*." A hoarse little virago faced Koregorvsky in the bright light, but a virago with the outward tranquillity which blindness brings. "He left me weeks ago. He is dead."

"He is in the Butyrka, alive and kicking—yet. When did you last see him?"

"In the Butyrka? *Jesu!* I have never seen him. I am blind. But he came home last, a month or so ago."

"You know he is counter-revolutionary—a spy in the pay of the White Russian colony in Paris? Your room was searched. Under the flooring were discovered letters, code-messages, enough to hang a regiment. He was go-between for Paris and the enemies of the State who would cripple the *Pyatiletka*. You know nothing of that, of course, Lisa Semenovna?"

"Nothing!" Lisa snarled like a little dog, though a wave of pallor passed over her. "—Since the flooring is of concrete, and my Feodor was nearly an illiterate, a metal-worker, a mere vodka-swiller!"

"I assure you you are mistaken about the flooring," said Koregorvsky coolly, "and Feodor knew a dozen languages, more or less. As for the vodka, he probably had an India-rubber pipe and a pig's bladder hidden somewhere about him to deceive you. He is the best catch that we, the guardians of the State, have made for months. Those documents weigh half a stone, I swear. You knew all about it, Lisa mine. But in the hands of such a cunning rat you were powerless, loyal citizen as you are. Well, you need fear him no longer. You shall sign the accusation and the indictment. The State always prefers it to come from the prisoner's wife. Sign here, little Lisa."

Almost carelessly, the Deputy thrust forward a document, stamped with heavy seals. The suave and amorous little Koregorvsky of the salons was not there. This was a high-shouldered little vulture, not distinguishable from an interlocutor of the old Ochrana, the secret police of the Czar, in which Koregorvsky had so faithfully served. Ishbel shivered. . . . Russia never changed, in this secret part of it. Men and women worked and dreamed and built something that had never been before, but this remained. . . .

"There is some mistake," said Lisa, with a heavy scowl. "If I signed that, what would you do with that devil-husband of mine?"

"Shoot him. So sign it quickly while there is the chance."

"*Jesu!* I thought it was you who signed the death-warrants."

"I do!" A glint of cold amusement in the red-rimmed twinkle. "But this helps. Take off her bracelets."

LISA approached the desk, and took up the pen. Then she dropped it, and threw back her ginger-hued curls with a defiant laugh.

"Well, I will confess! It was I—I am the White Russian agent. Those documents were all mine. They picked upon a blind girl to hide them. I loved a White Russian officer who is at this moment in Moscow, you understand. I hate the State and the Party. I spit upon Lenin. I would have gone to Paris and joined the French army when it invades Russia, next year. *Nitchevo!* Take me away and shoot me."

The frosty twinkle deepened behind the horn-rims; the Deputy leaned his elbows on the desk. Unexpectedly the vulture changed into Comrade Joseph Koregorvsky.

"All in good time, little Lisa. So you

will not help to put away that worthless husband of yours? Well, well! —Take her away, but do not shoot her. On the contrary, set her at liberty. She is a brave child; in Russia we need such."

UNCTUOUSLY, Koregorvsky bent his head over the red-sealed document, tapping upon it thoughtfully with his fingers, leaving only the stretched, glossy skin of his cranium visible. Out of the bright light, Lisa, her little white teeth still snarling, disappeared with her two custodians. It left silence about Ishbel where she stood unseen in the cut-out shadow of the chamber. She wanted to move forward to Koregorvsky, but something kept her rooted to the spot. This was the Gay-pay-oo incarnate, all that she had heard whispered—and had laughed at incredulously! The solemn, tortuous buffoonery that framed a charge against Feodor Petrovitch, since Lee Armitage was dead. . . .

She clenched her teeth. The light was changing, flooding the room normally again. But Koregorvsky still bent over the document. He took up the pen which Lisa had thrown down, and carefully wrote, by the side of a great black seal, *"Attested and sworn by Lisa Semenovna, wife of the accused."*

He looked up, his bony face irradiated with welcome.

"Why, Comrade Ishbel!"

Ishbel was very white. "You can't!" she blazed down at the shining skull. "You can't kill Lee Armitage like that —an American citizen—"

Koregorvsky looked up mildly. He had held out his hand in almost affectionate greeting, but lowered it again, with gentle concern in his voice.

"I hardly understand. Lee Armitage? The architect Armitage met his death a number of days ago, Comrade Ishbel. It was in all the Moscow and New York papers. This document concerns Feodor Petrovitch: A rogue, a veritable rogue—a spy and *saboteur* caught red-handed. I have his *dossier* here. It stinks. But such things are only for a tough old policeman like me."

Ishbel's fingers caught the edge of the desk. She fought for coolness, but only a sense of crushing futility came. It was not Koregorvsky. It was the vast, smoothly moving machine behind him, the silenced engine which, in the clamor of the New World, nobody dared to notice. . . .

She began passionately, pleadingly.

"Let him go. Expel him from Russia. Escort him to the frontier and—and make up some story about him. Anything you like. But let him go. He did no harm. He'll keep that secret. So will I. You can keep hold of me and make me—"

"To whom do you refer?"—Koregorvsky was puzzled.

"Oh, Lee Armitage"—wearily—"or Feodor Petrovitch, whichever you like. Listen! I'm rich in my own country. I could get *valuta* to hundreds of thousands of rubles—secretly—"

A shock passed through Koregorvsky, a shock of outrage and indignation. He stood up and inclined his head icily.

"Capitalist ideology, Comrade Ishbel. And you are of the Party! Luckily this room is soundproof. I, who am human, understand your feelings about the death of a fellow-countryman. We are liquidating the *Bez Prizorny* quickly, if that is any consolation. They are almost extinct, save for a few gangs. This Petrovitch—pah, he is scum. He will be in quicklime in two days. We shall not trouble to send him to the schools of anatomy."

Koregorvsky's eyes became tiny beads, his mouth a rictus. He was again the weasel who had interrogated Lisa.

"The Larger Purpose, the Sacred Flame! Remember the death of Prohackai. There is no Self, no Individual in the Three Letters. You have yet to learn it. But we are kind to the novices. One must always have novices."

FOR the first time Ishbel felt a chill of real terror. This, then, was what she had been brought here for. She seemed to see a vision: Years before Koregorvsky had sat in some underground place within smell of the charnel-house and the execution-pit, throwing his web about men and women, bargaining—their services or a revolver in the neck. . . . The new GPU building was like some office-suite in New York or Chicago. But this was the same. . . .

She found herself smiling; it must have been a very pale ghost of a smile.

"Perhaps I shall learn not to be too tender-hearted. I am undisciplined yet, Comrade Koregorvsky, and adventurous." She managed to laugh. "A woman of the West!"

"So!" Koregorvsky had her hand and was patting it. "I understand. Lidoshka explained. We want them adventurous and clever—as many as we can get.

For, between ourselves, the Kremlin is a little jealous of the power we police have. Some of the softer comrades there even talk of the time when the State will do without us." He smiled. "Do you know that that rascal Valentine is pining for you? He is Western, too. A cave-man —but I think he has repented. He would do anything for you. Will you come to the opera tomorrow evening, Comrade Ishbel? It is a little party. Let us have forgiveness all round, and make yourself beautiful for Valentine. This Moscow is too drab. We are brightening it up a little."

He opened the door for her, twinkling, bowing. The red-faced officer was waiting for her. Somewhere the click of the typewriters came; telephone-bells tinkled. But the silent elevator shot down.

Ishbel refused the black automobile. She walked slowly home through the exhausted-looking crowds. She felt that she made a figure of despair. What hope was there?

She became aware that Turnip-face was missing. She was no longer followed. Nobody stopped her upon pretext to look into her face. . . . They must be sure of her!

ERIK VALENTINE had finished his work upon the pasteboard model of the Great God Buddha-the-Bloody, for a play of that name which was to be staged at the First Art Theater. All day he had forced his damaged tendons to action and even hummed to himself now and then at the thought of one Feodor Petrovitch, and what he might go through before Mother Butyrka clasped him to her breast. A well-known plastic surgeon had worked wonders with Erik's face, even in twenty-four hours. With a touch of the make-up which was not uncommon among the male *intelligentsia* of Moscow, he was presentable.

Alexandra, his old servant, teetered about the studio with a broom, dabbing here and there, but mostly talking. She was an old aristocrat, who in the past had survived starvation, beatings and arrests, till she was as near dead as mattered, except that her tough, skinny body still lived. Short of strangling, Valentine's friends said, that ancient body would last till it fell to pieces.

"One does not know whether you are married or not," she scolded. "Today a woman in the house; tomorrow—flick! and she is gone. And you are handsome. What do these up-chinned young *komsomolkas* want—a football team each? That pretty Comrade Ishbel, for instance. Where is she?"

Alexandra never waited for an answer.

"Some of the little goslings got pepper up their nose the other day, I hear. It was neither in *Pravda* nor *Izvestia* nor the loud-speakers." She chuckled dryly. "There was some sort of lecture on poison-gas in their hostel—such strong stuff that it would turn a Jap into a Chinaman, and grow a pigtail for him. There was an old woman *concierge*—a half-witted *bourjoi*—and what should she do but get this poison bomb when they were not looking and throw it among them as they sat listening to the lecturer! They thought she was dead, you understand —they thought no one over the age of twenty was alive! Hallo! And who can that be?"

Alexandra curtsied and tittered at sight of the visitor, and Valentine took a quick step across the room. Almost humbly he spoke, though he could not hide a dark flush of triumph.

"I never expected this. How lovely you look!"

He lifted the musquash coat gently, to look at the silver tissue frock and green girdle beneath. Ishbel steeled herself not to shrink. Instead, she smiled gravely.

"I want you to take me to the opera tonight. As the wife of an artist, the people won't tear me to pieces because of this frock, I expect."

"I understood we were divorced!" His faun's face crinkled.

She took a sheet of stamped paper from her handbag, and tore it into little pieces.

"There goes the certificate they gave me, for what it's worth. One must do something dramatic. I'm not sure what our status is now, exactly."

Valentine's arms in their rough painter's blouse went slowly about her. But Ishbel freed herself with a swift "No!" He heard her quick breath.

"I'm not so easily available, even yet, Erik, though I'm chastened—more than a bit. I've got a bargain to drive."

"I'll beard Beelzebub for you, if that's the bargain."

ISHBEL kept her smile mysterious, though inwardly she felt arid. This was just one last wild hope of helping Lee. She was a little sick at herself, since she was vamping Erik Valentine like any odalisque-woman of the capital-

Lidoshka Wei crept down the broken steps of an old quay and a flashlight in her hand twinkled twice.

ist countries, or like one of the "Beautiful" ones of the old Cheka—when all the time she wanted to bomb and machine-gun the Butyrka, and tear Lee free. . . .

"It's about Armitage?" Valentine held her shoulders and looked down at her. A pang of delight shot through him. How fragrant she looked in that unfragrant city, with her proud, dewy mouth and steady eyes! He had been crude. She was for the epicure.

She nodded.

"You know some of the members of the *Politbureau*. You're painting Molotov at the moment, aren't you? I want you to tell him that Feodor Petrovitch is Lee Armitage, the American, and get him sent out of the country. If you like, let them make him understand that he'll be shot if he comes back. The moment he goes, I'll come to you."

"Marry me again?"

"If you think it's worth the ceremony. I wouldn't want to go, once you had had me. You see I'm quite the frank *komsomolka*. I don't want your answer now. Think it over while we are at the opera."

Valentine nodded gravely. He masked his expression. It needed thinking over. Butter out of a dog's mouth. . . . The Gay-pay-oo, which was never mentioned nowadays, had the almighty *Politbureau* in its iron palm, in the sacred name of Loyalty. A Prime Minister was not exempt from its crushing fingers, if he became suspect. True, some of the Big

Ones were growing restless at the power of the police. But they seldom interfered. . . . Ishbel thought he could go behind Koregorvsky's back. Valentine could see the Deputy's gaping grin and hear suave reproaches which merely to think of brought sweat on his brow! For Koregorvsky had promised him the privilege of being present at the execution of Feodor Petrovitch, a privilege he certainly did not mean to deny himself.

BUT this was cloaked as they entered the foyer of the Bolshoi Theater. He looked very civilized and handsome in the belted blouse and Byronic collar which was *de rigueur* at the Moscow ballet, thought Ishbel. The dowdy women, shawled and kerchiefed, sent her satin slippers and jade necklace glances that were at once contemptuous and wistful. Ishbel cared nothing, now—she was self-absorbed in a hope so terribly forlorn that she dared not face it. But when Koregorvsky approached she could smile. Even Lidoshka Wei—exotic in flowered bronze, sleek hair elaborately dressed, lips like geraniums—she could greet. . . .

"I'm thinking a way out. It's hard —but Koregorvsky hasn't signed the warrant yet."

Erik Valentine's whisper came through the glittering music of the "Sleeping Beauty" ballet. In the box, Koregorvsky's baboon-head nodded to the rhythm of white bodies and voluptuous sound. By his side Lidoshka sat as straight and sweetly masked as a mandarin's daughter. Ishbel controlled a deep shudder. What was she, Ishbel Dane, doing there? What quicksands was she treading?

"Blast-furnaces and concrete-mixers—that is one Russia. But they get this for three kopecks, Comrade Ishbel. Exquisite!"

The Deputy Koregorvsky was in good spirits. He kept concealed from the crowd, as usual. But within his little party he sparkled. He stroked Ishbel's hand till she felt the cringe run up to her shoulder. But it was the scented Chinese girl by her side who infatuated him and held him captured with her spell. He seemed to savor her like a dangerous drug, with some hidden and fearful thrill.

Now and then Lidoshka murmured softly to him—but not once did she look at Ishbel. Only when they stood in the flood-lighted portico of the Bolshoi after the performance did Lidoshka Wei, pressed by the crowd, come close to the American girl for an instant, and the empty luster of her eyes lighted up fleetingly like those of a dog that had offended and craved for understanding. . . .

It was raining steadily, the streets a greasy glimmer, the brilliant lights blurred. Ishbel felt her head throbbing, but a black car slid to the curb, moving apologetically through the streaming people. An automobile to take the Deputy's party to his private apartment. . . .

Suddenly out of all the faces that moved on the crowded pavement of the Bolshoi, one passed close beneath the hanging arc-lamps. It was that of a slender boy in a rough cloth cap, a cigarette hanging from his lips. He slouched past quickly, but not before Ishbel saw clearly the violet eyes and freckled features. She stood still. Lisa of the Little Sretinka! What was she doing, dressed as a boy?

Valentine's hand fell on hers.

"Come! Koregorvsky likes you, remember. He gets mellow in his cups."

The sweet perfume of Lidoshka was overpowering inside the car. But it was dark. It would be a relief to sit with hands tightly clasped and try to think. . . . Koregorvsky waited on the pavement till his guests entered. He had put one foot inside when Lidoshka gave a little scream of excitement.

"Flowers—azaleas! See! I must have some. You promised me the first I saw in Moscow."

WITH a rustle, she was out on a wet pavement, pointing to an old woman with—unusual sight in Moscow—a basket of flowers. Koregorvsky turned after her, with an indulgent chuckle, and they stood together a moment by the old woman and her basket. A moment, only, for there came the double crack of pistol-shots that clapped, muffled above the street noises; a scream, a sudden surging stampede. . . .

"God in heaven!" said Koregorvsky.

Yellow-faced, he turned dazedly on the pavement and ducked, and the panic-stricken spectators saw the Chinese girl who was with him clutch at him and hang on with a terror that was deeper and more dazed than his own. The old woman dropped her basket and scuttled dumbly away. There came two more shots. The Deputy gasped as though from a punch in the liver. Somewhere on the brilliantly lighted steps of the Bolshoi, a doorkeeper reeled against the glass doors, clutching his arm. The

whole blurred night was all at once dynamic with fear and consternation.

"Assassination!"

Thickly, Koregorvsky muttered the word as he tore himself free from Lidoshka, and sprang for the automobile. He sprawled into the open door. Behind him Lidoshka flung herself in. From nowhere a man in uniform whose revolver-butt was only half withdrawn from his holster, slammed the door behind them. The car leaped like a live thing, scattering the opera-goers. Behind rose a hoarse shouting, the sound of a siren. On one of the little *balkonchiki* upon the façade of the Bolshoi theater, a searchlight spluttered and swept its white eye over the crowd—the stampeding crowd which, with memories behind it, knew how to run when assassination raised its head in the streets of Moscow. . . .

"You are not hurt? It was terrible!" murmured Lidoshka. Her eyes were half-closed, her head hanging.

Koregorvsky sat shriveled in his dark corner, the whistle in his breath dying down. He looked at a bunch of crushed azaleas in his hand, and dropped them to the floor. Feebly he said, "It was some madman!" His eyes, luminous like those of some sick and badly scared animal, rested upon Lidoshka.

"I was so frightened!" she said in a low voice. "So frightened!"

The Deputy's eyes came roving to Ishbel. But they swiveled again, as though by magnetism, to Lidoshka. Some of the carmine had run from the Chinese girl's mouth onto her skin. She dabbed it lightly, and put out a timid hand. Never had the strange Oriental lisp in her voice seemed so pronounced:

"So glad, beloved! They might have killed you. You will hunt them, catch them, torture them?"

Koregorvsky wiped his gray face.

"A miss is as good as a mile," he said huskily. "Yes, if they are caught, you shall see them dealt with, little kimono."

HIS head sank into his shoulders. There was something inhuman and repulsive about his cowardice. At the touch of Valentine's hand on his shoulder he jumped, looked greedily at the flask he offered, but shook his head. . . . Obviously every hidden means of separating Joseph Koregorvsky's soul from his body occurred to him at that livid moment!

He sat like a carted stag among the hounds, whilst police motorcycles which had exploded into being from the glare of Sverdlov Square closed protectingly upon the car from behind. His very glasses were misty with sweat as he spoke with a crowlike hoarseness.

"I am driving to Headquarters. A thing like this must be seen to. One of them struck me over the heart, but the bullet-proof chain-mail I wear at times, saved me. Zounds, I might have been meat!"

The automobile with its escort zoomed into the archway of the new GPU Building. Like robots, the motorcyclists closed round. The Deputy waved a shaking hand before vanishing, his head still cautiously ducked as though palsied to that position.

"Take your little wife home, Valentine. Go you, too, home, Little Lotus. The supper-party is postponed."

THE glowing face of a clock in the GPU archway pointed to eleven. It had been ten minutes before, by one of the clocks in Sverdlov Square when Lidoshka cried out for the azaleas, and the clocks in Moscow were synchronized, nowadays. Ten minutes. It all registered upon Ishbel, like something that was part of the Tschaikowsky ballet she had just witnessed. It was so unreal that when a troop of Red horsemen clattered down the dark street toward the Bolshoi, Valentine had to draw her quickly aside.

"Heaven help that old flower-woman and a few dozen others," he said with a flashing smile, and a quick, curious glance. "There'll be haystacks afire, Sverdlov way. It might have been luckier for friend Petrovitch if that bullet had been a little higher. On the contrary, it might not. . . . Have you any idea whose was the homicide's hand, Ishbel?"

"None. How should I?" Ishbel answered calmly, thinking of Lisa Semenovna in boy's clothing.

Lidoshka had gone. She had disappeared with a murmured "Good night." Ishbel passed her tongue across her dry lips. She was beginning to think of Moscow in brutal, unfinished impressions now. Like some of the crude and white-hot scenes in Lubin's films. Kremlin walls that shot up in her path for her to beat her hands against in vain, darkness lit with furnaces and fire-signs, and droning with maddening loud-speakers that spoke nothing clear to her. . . .

"Jump! Roll among them. But get inside!" said Sasha's voice. There was the crash of a rifle behind, and it seemed to Armitage that he felt his shoulder-blade splinter as he flung himself headlong down the steel ladder.

She raised her face. "Have you thought of anything? Are you going to see somebody? There isn't much time."

Valentine stood looking down at her. He felt robbed of a sensation. There was no sacred flame in him. In his soul, he was a free-lance. Whether it was a race of mechanical robots or a wonder-people that was coming to life about him, left him uninterested. But it would

have been amusing to see the lid of Koregorvsky's bald pate sheared open by that last bullet and his brains on the foot-mat of the black automobile, as he sprawled inside. It could have made but little difference to the fate of Lee Armitage.

"Come to my studio and talk about it, Ishbelovna."

"Not likely!" She gave a wan smile. "I feel all out—defeated. But I still have my wits. I told you the bargain. I'm helpless. I know there's no chance of forging an order of release and smuggling Lee to the frontier. But you—I'm worth it, Erik. I'd be a good wife, treated fairly decently."

She heard him make a passionate sound. How could she know it was so hopeless? How could he think out some gentle treachery that would give her to him?

"The Kremlin's over there," she said. "I believe the offices of the *Politbureau* are always open to anyone who is privileged to go inside. You can always get me at the hostel."

Her satin shoes tapped on the greasy pavement till he lost the sound. At the corner a street-car stopped to take her aboard. . . .

Lidoshka Wei sank gracefully to the flowered carpet by the side of the comfortable slippered feet of her lover. She made the footstool comfortable, and refilled a crystal glass with wine. Koregorvsky listened to the amber sound.

"The devil!" he said softly. "People have tried to kill me before. There are so many ways of doing it. Poison, knife, lead, and even a proletarian lamp-post if the circumstances were convenient. But I have come through them all."

The Chinese girl glided a roguish look upward.

"Even this wine. And I am from China, where poisons leave no trace!"

"It is Madeira. I love it, but it is too heavy. Sometimes I drink it, sometimes not. Tonight, my stomach is out of order with the shock of everything. So do not trouble to poison it, Chrysanthemum. I will have the claret instead, and be safe."

The Deputy made an odd grimace. He pulled at the silken cape of Lidoshka's robe, then bent down to kiss her tawny bare feet. A vein stood out on his neck.

"These tiny feet were rooted to the ground, outside the Bolshoi Theater tonight. And how the arms clung! I could not move."

Lidoshka giggled faintly. She put up the arms in question and pulled down the infatuated face.

"It was to hold my beloved while the man shot him, of course."

"Man! It was a boy, they said. Some tool of the Idealists, I daresay. He got away, the young hare. But my dogs will get him."

"It was a man," said Lidoshka Wei contemptuously. "A man in a velvet cap. I saw him; he shot from his pocket. I was so afraid that my eyes were as sharp as Buddha's."

"Ah, Buddha!" The Deputy sipped his wine, but drank also of the stronger waters which the very scent of Lidoshka Wei always brought to him. Let the fire of terror burn him suddenly and he crumpled. But let him approach it fastidiously and he loved to pass his finger through it. . . . In his day, the Deputy had supped of many sensations, but this brew of infatuation never palled.

THE carmined mouth kissed his blunt finger-tips.

"Better than a supper-party," murmured the Little Lotus. "Lidoshka is jealous of Comrade Ishbel, though it is the American she loves. Poor Valentine! Is the American dead yet?"

"Days ago!" The warm and lissom little body in the Deputy's arms, the scent in his nostrils, the sharp sweet terror in his soul. "But one Feodor Petrovitch still lives, more or less. A spy of the White Russians indicted by his own wife. His cervical vertebræ will be dealt with, quite soon. Why do you ask, Dragon Maid?"

"Nothing. Perhaps I am growing compassionate in the arms of my beloved. More wine—more poison?" Lidoshka giggled and lifted the goblet again. "I have never seen a death-warrant signed by my master's hand. Is it here, in this apartment?"

"At Headquarters," replied Koregorvsky, resting his cheek on the amber bosom and dousing himself with thrills. "Signed an hour ago. Now, strike—but it would make no difference, compassionate one."

"I have no dagger," laughed Lidoshka, and then pouted at a joke which palled, "nor any interest in the smutty Feodor, now. I had my pleasure out of playing cat-and-mouse with him on the Polish frontier. Lidoshka liked that. But it is over. One gets tired of things that are over. I am even tired of Prohackai. But Prohackai lives."

"The State can keep the dead alive, even as it can make the live ones die. Prohackai lives. Lubin, Lidoshka and the talking-machines have seen to that," said Koregorvsky, tightening his arms to feel the tiny shudder which passed through the Chinese girl, and shuddering in unison, with the jarring sweetness that spellbound him. . .

It was late before he slept. Three o'clock chimed out in the empty night before Lidoshka Wei, the Little Lotus, stirred on her couch of skins and tiptoed in to look at the bald head, where it caught the fugitive gleam of some electric lamp from the street.

Koregorvsky snored gently.

She dressed quickly and silently, in leather jerkin and breeches. She wiped the paint from her face and changed from Lidoshka of the centuries to a Chinese Communist-girl of modern Moscow; ivory skin, snaky eyes, arrogant head.

Once in the street she glided along noiselessly. Every horizon was lit with furnaces, but Moscow itself was dead at that hour. The embankment of the river stretched wet and deserted, the water ran past the lamps like black silk. The Chinese girl crept down the broken steps of an old quay and crouched there, staring at the opposite shore. A flashlight twinkled in her hand once or twice. The answer came from a dimly seen huddle on the water. Without a splash the lithe figure slipped into the current.

IT was a crazy pile of slimy wood and old iron that stood islanded a score of yards or so from the other shore. Once the old brewery which was now the Little Sretinka had kept its gasometer there, for safety. The great rusty cylinder had dropped through its framework, but still stood above water for the rats and pigeons to nest in.

"Careful does it, comrade."

A voice whispered; a pair of stunted but strong arms helped the Chinese girl onto the slippery piles, and piloted her through some narrow slit which was carefully battened behind her. A lantern which had been momentarily hidden came into view again and shone on the red-rusted interior plates of the gasometer.

"A cozy hole. I have had worse," said Sasha the Frog, stumping across in a dishabille of green shirt and velvet trousers. "This is Maria Vassilissa. The American saved her life. And there is Lisa Semenovna. She is inconsolable. But if the spawn chose to wear armor what could one do?"

Lisa, sitting on an upturned box, lifted miserable eyes.

"I deserve to die," she said.

Lidoshka sat down by her side. Maria Vassilissa left the small oil-stove where she was making coffee, and came timidly forward. Sasha the Frog shuffled near to the lantern, and squatted. It was a strange little *komintern* that the light shone upon, while the waters of the Moskva river gurgled about.

"I wish the police had caught me and torn me to pieces," said Lisa. "But it was easy to get away. I changed from boy to girl in one minute and joined in the chase."

"It was not your fault," said Lidoshka. "I should have seen that he did not wear the armor. Twice I have blundered. How Ishbel hates me and thinks me less than dirt! Now,"—she took out a soaked envelope and smiled at it bitterly, —"this is the order of release, and a visa for Ishbel. They were both well forged. I took a lot of trouble with them. If Koregorvsky was dead, he would not be able to deny his own signature. But he lives."

"Fal-lal!" said Sasha. "Let us weep no more. Could you not tickle his ribs with something tonight?"

A spasm crossed the Chinese girl. Waif and vagabond of an Eastern land as she had once been, she looked at one with the strange Muscovite waifs about her. As she answered, her black eyes glazed with a terrible mysticism.

"It is not written. I have no word from Prohackai yet. But it will come."

Lisa coughed. The handkerchief she took from her lips was bright with a patch of scarlet before she put it away without glancing at it.

"They will shoot him tomorrow—my Feodor. I think of him as that. Why not? He was good and kind."

"Hell and damnation," said Sasha with his angel's lips. "Let us not bury him before he is dead! Women were always too good at funerals. Let us all sit silent and think."

A PIECE of white cardboard was over the grille door of Armitage's cell. Upon it was neatly written *"F. Petrovitch, 227"* and an electric bulb burned over it. He could see neither, save when the jailer opened the door to put in his food. It was good food, and the whitewashed cell was clean. The jailer had apologized for the stains of squashed bugs on the walls and promised a new coat of whitewash. What Armitage could see of the corridor shone with steel and polished stone. The filth and squalor of the old Lubianka was not there. The New Efficiency reached even to the Butyrka, nowadays.

BUT they still kept the old execution-pit; he saw it at morning exercise. A courtyard had been constructed around it. The pit was a circular vault some ten feet deep. The naked doomed had descended a steel ladder to meet the half-naked executioner. But that was in the bad old days. Now it was more likely to be a silenced pistol in one's own cell. That was tradition and more humane, when all was said and done, than hanging or the electric chair. Or, if a prominent political case, a firing-party with some official present to see justice done. The old execution-pit was a curiosity. Presently it would be filled with concrete—presently. In the meantime, the rats had it to themselves. Big fellows, intelligent as cats. They showed ruby eyes at the dark opening and made nervous prisoners at exercise turn livid at the thought that the execution-pit was still used—in a new way! But they never ventured into the courtyard, which was regularly sprayed with a disinfectant they detested. . . .

"The sentence has been promulgated, Feodor Petrovitch. You are found guilty upon evidence and accusations of espionage and counter-revolutionary activities. The sentence is in accordance with Article 59, Paragraph 4 of the Criminal Code to the Highest Measure of Social Defense: Death by Shooting. I herewith communicate it to you."

That was on the third day. The prison governor was a lean man in *pince-nez,* with exquisitely parted hair. He stood punctiliously, and asked:

"Do you still persist that you are not Feodor Petrovitch?"

"I guess I'm Feodor Petrovitch, if my papers say so," said Armitage, with a grim smile, and speaking American. "But tell me: will it be a firing-party or a pistol? And will Comrade Erik Valentine of the State Police be present?"

"I don't understand French," replied the governor politely, "and I'm afraid there is no interpreter in the prison."

That was the day before. Armitage understood that the pistol barrel sometimes came through a little trap-door by the bed, during the small hours. But he slept soundly, undisturbed even by a

They moved steadily on; Sasha the Frog had his own grim signposts—a skeleton, a great crypt, the very tang of the sewer-gas.

single flea, and was alive in the morning. Toward dawn, indeed, he did hear a sound like a crisply shut door—and a quavering old voice which had sung Russian hymns in some adjacent cell before breakfast troubled him no longer. . . .

He ached for one sight of Ishbel, one touch of her fingers through the grille. But that could not be. She must not come near him. For all that, he found himself listening for light footsteps in the labyrinth of corridors which wrapped him like a mole's burrow. There were other times when he pictured Valentine's face peering through the bars at him, so close that he could catch him by the neck and break it against the grille before the guards could beat him off. . . .

In the creeping hours of that last day, Armitage wondered a little at his own resignation. True, it was the resignation of a hobbled beast in the abattoirs of a canning-factory.

This was not a blotting out of Lee Armitage, he pondered. That had been accomplished some time before. It was just the end of some obscure Feodor Petrovitch who was also probably long ago *non est*. He could not help but grin, as he sat on his haunches by the bars and looked out into the clean corridor. Somewhere in the great gaunt building there was something much worse than this, he guessed. But to the last the Ogpu propagandized and impressed the foreigner whom they were shooting as a

Russian by putting him in a condemned cell that was almost antiseptic. True, there was a sort of clinical terror about it all which suggested that it might as easily be a vivisection as an execution. . .

Footsteps on the other side of the grille. The door was thrown open. That was the authentic clatter of the call to execution, at any rate—better than that sneaking pistol, perhaps.

"You are to take your exercise pinioned, Feodor Petrovitch. It would be foolish to resist."

"Little Feodor knows better. Am I to have the privilege of a bandage also, Comrade Governor?"

"The privilege of a visitor, friend Feodor. Or, since you seem no coward, in spite of your treachery to your country, shall I say a witness? But wait. You will see."

Armitage conquered a sense of nausea and dread. They couldn't be bringing Ishbel, to watch! He controlled his features and the governor watched him curiously through his *pince-nez* while two guards pinioned his arms expertly. It was perhaps about noon. Daylight. Armitage had thought it all cheap about condemned men craving for a glimpse of the sky before they died. But he breathed less tightly when, between his escort, he reached the courtyard and looked up the shaft of high walls to a spot of flecked sky that was visible. He grinned, and turned his bearded face and matted head impudently. He would die as Feodor Petrovitch, if it was Ishbel the cold-blooded hounds were bringing. They should have no satisfaction out of him and out of that brave soul, God helping them both.

UNEXPECTEDLY he found that the guards had fallen away from him. They marched back to the gloomy prison archway and left him alone in the courtyard, standing awkwardly with his pinioned arms. The ring of disinfectant about the old execution-pit smelled very powerfully. It was some potent mixture of coal-tar and chloride of lime the solemn research-chemists had discovered, when two tons of concrete would have dealt with the old execution-pit and the rats at the same time. But perhaps they still used it. Possibly that was how the body of Feodor Petrovitch would be disposed of. The rats probably knew. He thought he saw the whiskers of one of them at the opening. Quite friendly whiskers, they looked. . . .

"Greetings, Armitage!"

He almost spun round, but controlled himself just in time. His visitor had arrived. A bursting gratitude that it was not Ishbel almost blinded him. Valentine—the lean face pale, smiling, suavely vindictive. . . .

"I do not understand French, comrade," Armitage grinned, speaking in Russian and staring full at Valentine. "Is it the reprieve?"

"Ave atque vale, for you and me, my dear Armitage, this time."

THE pinioned Armitage shook his head.

"And that is Chinese, by the beard of Lenin! The world is mad. They truss up poor Feodor and then bring some fool to speak foreign to him. I thank God that some better man has evidently battered the fool well beforehand. It is nicely patched up but fairly obvious yet."

Still the smile stayed like a scar upon Valentine's face. He had left his veneer outside the Butyrka, and he was like a lean tiger—beautiful in the jungle twilight, but beastly over its prey, meat that he had thought warm but was cold.

"If you have a message for my wife, I'll take it. She had none for you."

Armitage spat gently but copiously in a manner he had learned since becoming Feodor Petrovitch. The genuine Feodor could not have excelled it. It expressed a peasant's contempt for what was incomprehensible clowning. He shook his head again, moved away from Valentine, and roared with grisly humor: "How much longer do I wait for my firing-party?"

Later, Armitage knew that the moment had a kind of icy exhilaration that anæsthetized him. The joke was on Valentine, and that, just then, was more important than death. In the archway the governor stood with his escort, who had been joined by three green-uniformed soldiers with rifles. The governor walked quickly forward to Valentine and said:

"There is nothing to be gained, Comrade Erik. He is a block of iron. Let us get it over— What the devil!"

He broke off with sharp amazement. Over the courtyard floor something was moving—small, scurrying shadows. Both Valentine and the governor jumped back. There was the thump of a rifle-butt and the sound of an oath in the archway. The governor's *pince-nez* fell as twin shadows swarmed up his leggings and he knocked them off with his fist.

"Damnation! The rats! I warned the presidium—"

They were swarming from the execution-pit in battalions, pouring out of the dark opening—long brown shapes seized by some unknown panic which forced them out into the courtyard, in spite of its disinfectant. There was a tinge of nightmare in it all which destroyed Armitage's belief in his own eyes. He could only stand rooted to the spot while the creatures squeaked past, poured into the archway, tried to leap the stone walls; not so much individuals as a fluid army in eager retreat.

Involuntarily, he stared at the execution-pit and saw something there which made him want to break into hysterical laughter. After all, he was not so cool as he had thought, to see such things—for the head of Sasha the Frog was in the entrance to the execution-pit, and he was gesticulating wildly. . . . Armitage felt his legs moving; he was aware that Valentine and the governor had already taken refuge. But he was treading on soft bodies on his way to the execution-pit. . . .

"Jump! Roll among them. But get inside."

He felt sick, with hope and cold fear. There was the crash of a rifle behind, and a red-hot spurt of agony in his shoulder-blade. It seemed to him that he felt the bone splinter as he flung himself headlong down the steel ladder.

THE fall all but stunned him. He clumped to his feet in darkness, scurrying, crepitating darkness. For a brief while the agony in his shoulder was wiped out. His head crashed against something. All his body was a-crawl with the fleeing rodent multitude that ran over him but ignored him. Then he felt a blade slip through the rope that bound his arms to his side, and the pain of returning circulation was like coming up from death.

"Hold your breath," spoke Sasha's voice. "Keep shut your mouth, Comrade Feodor. Then hang on to the breech of my trousers."

Some liquid drenched him from head to foot—a stinking carbolic that hit the nostrils like a blow and stung the skin.

"They will not hook onto you now—the little furry proletarians. We have to go through them, you understand. I filled the bottle in the laboratory of the Sanitary Commission. The furry ones know their little Frog. This is a dirty trick I have played on them. But come. Ah, but you are hurt!"

"Not much, I think. But for God's sake, Sasha—"

"My breech. Catch on to it, if you can. It is very urgent. The water is rising. In a half-full conduit one can swim. When it is altogether full, one cannot."

It was easy to do Sasha's bidding, since the Frog's velvet trousers had belonged to a ringmaster of good physique in the new Circus Technicum which the State had just started in Moscow.

LUCKILY it was his left shoulder-blade which was injured. Armitage could feel the warm blood, trickling down to his waist, tickling him stickily. . . . The Frog's electric torch searched the wall of the execution-pit and rested upon an opening at its base, from which the rodents still poured, but in a diminishing stream. He went on hands and knees and though he seemed to Armitage to have no such stinking protection as himself, the creatures slipped over him as though he was one of them. There came the lap and gurgle of water. Sasha touched a rusty hand-wheel and lifted a smutty face in the light of his lamp.

"There was a water-gate. Years ago, the situation was thus: After one was kissed by Shukoff, the executioner—though some say that Koregorvsky himself took a hand now and again,—one was dropped through here. For a while one lay dry till others came. Then when the floods came and the river was high, the passage was flooded and one floated down in company. That was in the wholesale days. Nowadays it is finished. . . .

"It made me sad to drown out the little brethren. But one had to create a diversion in that courtyard. Besides that, they will guard us. Not one of those rats-without-tails will dare venture among their brothers in here. The water rises. Are you able to swim? Ah, if only I had been made big enough to carry you! Well, then—*now!*"

The water was still unquiet with the impulse of its flood. It rose steadily. There was still, perhaps, half a yard between the rocky roof of the passage and the surface on which Sasha's lamp shone like a firefly as he swam like his namesake. Armitage followed, with a sense of fate upon him. Nor for the moment did his wound hurt, though it brought a sickness to the back of his throat. He had little hope of ever reaching freedom;

nobody ever escaped from the Butyrka. . . . Rats—the brutes skimmed past his cheek-bones, paddled over his shoulders. Some were like small, sharp-snouted dogs. . . .

Broad daylight above. They would be watching the river. Loud-speakers, perhaps. No, this was all muted, hidden. Radio and telephone would be working. Feodor Petrovitch would be posted as dead, even as Lee Armitage had been. That odd impulse to laughter came again.

Sasha shouted. There was the lip of a big, tubular opening in the side of the passage, and the Frog squattered into it, shaking the water from himself. A sober pleasure glowed on his angel's face.

"I will bind your wound. Through here we get into the guts of Moscow—the sewers. In them we lose ourselves. Heaven's delight! I think you have escaped from Madame Butyrka, Comrade Feodor, though we never see daylight again. Now, the hurt. How it bleeds!"

IT was a deep flesh-wound in the shoulder-muscle. Sasha was able to bind it up with a strip of his shirt. The bullet had torn the flesh and glanced out again. When it was finished, Armitage buried his head in his hands. The reaction was coming upon him; the strange sense of being detached from his own personality—of watching the impossible adventures of another. In silence the Frog handed him a very handsome silver-and-crystal flask, full of brandy.

"The passage is full to the roof with water, now," said Sasha unemotionally. "We reached here just in time. Certainly the guards cannot follow now. —Ah, I was wrong!"

The Frog leaned over with both his hands thrust down to the water as a head broke the dark surface. It was one of the guards, a man with a stupid and inhuman face now stamped with living terror. There was a dark floating festoon about his neck and, at the sight of it, the Frog lowered his hands with an impassivity which proved how often he had met death in strange guise. The man went under almost immediately.

"He was a little too venturesome," said Sasha.

"God, you strange child!"

"Possibly. I am as that same God made me, comrade. It took a little thinking-out. I had been as far as the Butyrka execution-pit before, for I assure you the little scaly-tails are my friends and I visit them. I know the King Rats and they know me. Could I not tell you something about their *kominterns,* their shock-brigades, their *politbureaus* that would make your eyes pop. . . I was waiting in the pit since your last exercise yesterday. It was then that I overheard one of the guards say you were to be shot in the courtyard this morning. The rest was easy."

"*Easy,* Sasha!" Armitage smiled wryly and lurched to his feet. "Where now?"

Long, dark labyrinths, arches and galleries, main sewer and branch sewer, zigzag upon zigzag, crypt and pool and blind ditch. Thirty miles of horrific honeycomb, a subterranean city beneath Moscow and the old Kremlin, started by Catherine the Great and only disused in Soviet times. The bloody history of Moscow in two centuries had been written overhead and the grim red ink of it had flowed often through the honeycomb which had memories that no human being could have supported. They were washed away, now. Each spring, the melting snows flushed it thunderously.

But the sewer-gas was always there. The centuries-old morasses did not change. The terrific darkness and silence was eternal. Time lost itself for Lee Armitage, but Sasha the Frog moved steadily. He had his own grim signposts; a perfectly blanched skeleton, propped up against the wall, one great crypt into which his companion glanced quickly and then away again, for during the Terror it had been a hiding-place for half a hundred people, and the machine-guns had discovered it.

BY the very tang of the sewer-gas, Sasha knew where cesspools lay, and steered Armitage past. Now and then, a manhole or grating gave feeble light as they passed and the thud of a streetcar above sounded dully. But it was by the size and plumpness of the rats, by some rag he had thrust into the wall, by the direction of some underground brook that the vagabond guessed whether they were beneath the Tverskaya or the Strasnoi, Sverdlov or Red Square. He was panting harshly and the cherub face which gave no sign of the imp within bore a fixed grin. There was more courage than stamina in the little ditch-born *Bez Prizorny*. Armitage himself felt as though a knife cut across each lung with each step. He was still bleeding, and agonized by the posture which his size entailed. His clothes were mere wet

rags. He must look like some half-animal, some gigantic rodent of the sewer. . .

"Courage, comrade!" croaked Sasha, his queer body goblinesque in the glow of his torch. "We are not lost, yet. It will interest you when we pass beneath the Kremlin presently. Believe it or not, it is there where the King Rat who is like Stalin has his dwelling."

"You're beat. The pace is too hot. I'll carry you on my good shoulder, little Frog."

"Carry your *bourjoi* grandmother!" snarled Sasha, skittering forward.

They were silent after that, moving into a wall of blackness that always lay ahead, past galleries and embranchments that would have lured them into oblivion—silent even when for ten eternal minutes they struggled together in some unseen quicksand. Armitage's knees were sagging; he moved automatically through underground water, and dry and ancient main-sewer alike, among the underground masonry of aqueduct and pantile built by the serfs of a Russia that was now dead.

THE Deputy Prosecutor's head was inclined to nod a little this morning at his desk. His horn-rimmed glasses lay negligently on the blotter before him, his hands loosely clasped his waistcoat. The details of some twenty-five interrogations concerning a dastardly attempt upon his life lay before him, unopened. He already knew the net result of them, which was nil. There was no other business at the moment till the news of that morning's execution came over the telephone from the Butyrka.

He sighed, took up the glasses and wiped them with a handkerchief of Chinese silk that carried a faint perfume of ylang-ylang. A grin, half-foolish, half-distorted, flew across his face, but it was gone when the door opened. It was a man in the tight alpaca undress jacket of one of the technical specialists of the building.

"The large rat walks again in Catherine's Sewer, directly beneath the Kremlin, Comrade Koregorvsky. He has just rung the alarm-bell."

"This must be stopped," said Koregorvsky gravely. "It is some madman, or vagabond, no doubt. It might even be the maniac who shot at me."

He took up the telephone daintily, but as he did so, it buzzed in his ear. Listening, his mouth pursed noiselessly, a blue vein at his sunken temple beating, his gravity did not change. He said precisely:

"I will await your written report, Comrade Governor. An incredible business; I will deal with it immediately. In the meantime, stop up all the holes you know of."

He turned to the technician. "We will have a *battue,*" he said. "It might be a large rat worth the catching—a very devil of a rat."

SUNSHINE over Moscow, and the boulevards singing-green.

But Ishbel Dane had to fight against a languor of despair. In those days, there was danger of slipping into the stupor which she saw in some of the older faces in the street crowds, though that was the stupor of fatigue and striving. Luckily, there was the Clinic. She worked there, among the babies. Babies mattered most; babies and young people—grist for the mill of the future State.

"The telephone for you, Comrade Ishbel." Little Xenia, of the Ear, Nose and Throat brought the message. Little Xenia had ceased to spy upon Ishbel. But there was a dull scared look stamped in her eyes. Her work had suffered. She was not of the hard metal of the other *komsomolkas* and bade fair to be cleaned out at the next *cheestka.* There was no room for little Xenias in the March to the Future. . .

It was Erik Valentine's voice. At the sound, Ishbel's heart leaped and then hung still.

"Well, I've done it. It was the devil's own job, but it was managed. He'll be in Warsaw by now. Does it please you?"

"Warsaw?" Her voice lodged in her throat. The sun-smitten street outside turned to a lonely wilderness. Then—"I'm glad. Thank you, Erik. Tell me—"

"Not now. I want you out this afternoon. I'll tell you everything then. But I wanted to set your mind at rest."

Ishbel looked at the fingers of her tightly clenched hand as she walked from the telephone. She wanted to laugh. But it would be very tearful laughter. Lee free, released from the Butyrka. . . Would he write, send a telegram? Perhaps not. Erik would have driven some bargain. Of course, Lee was right to accept any bargain. One did not haggle in the Butyrka, she imagined. . .

Erik was to wait for her in October Park. The clatter of the other Clinic-assistants at *zakuska,* the midday meal,

glanced past Ishbel's ears. She was American. Not Russian. Almost for the first time, she felt a foreigner, now that she was double-locked in Moscow, with Lee Armitage outside, Erik Valentine's woman. . . What part of his secret suave machine could Koregorvsky possibly make out of her?

Bursting leaves, cloudy lilacs, emerald grass, in October Park. Brown young bodies practising for the *Spartikiad,* mutilated beggars, off-duty, lying in the sun. A cock-a-hoop young Communist in black silk shirt, nose in the air as though he smelled the rotten ordure which was the world outside the Third International, an old *bourjoi,* swollen with dropsy, fierce memories in his dying eyes as the wind blew sap and soil and flower to him.

Erik came to his feet from the seat by the Rosa Luxembourg group of statuary. He looked lissom, very alive. Only, perhaps, in his eyes, was a touch of strain, as he smiled.

"Happy? I ought to be jealous—and I am, but it'll pass."

"Tell me."

He looked at her steadily—came close. Two lovers meeting in October Park.

"It was Trubisch, one of the *Politbureau* secretaries who worked it He got an order of release above Koregorvsky's head and promised to keep my part secret. But the lynx will get to know. I don't care, Ishbelovna. Your Armitage was taken by special plane, at dawn this morning. He's clear, and will never come to Russia again."

Ishbel plucked a bloom of lilac. Women in red kerchiefs were sweeping the paths, driving small steam rollers over hot asphalt. They watched the two lovers curiously, indulgently. The man looked as beautiful as one of the stone group behind him. He looked like a *barin,* a gentleman. But he was too young for that, and one could forgive him in any case.

"I claim my reward"—with a rueful smile. "It's hard to have to remind you. Even yet, I can't get over the notion that you're my wife."

"I hadn't forgotten. As soon as I hear from Lee—"

"Nor had I forgotten that. He promised to send you a wire from Warsaw."

Ishbel smiled, to hide the sick chill that passed over her. Lee had promised Erik. Why not? He had had a bitter choice, a firing-party or freedom without her. He knew that, though she gave herself to Erik Valentine, an emanci-

"Blast-furnaces and concrete-mixers —that is one Russia."

pated woman was not smirched by that sort of thing, nor did she, in any way, lose her personality or self-respect, as she might do in the comic ideology of other countries. . .

"We're going to celebrate," said Valentine, a bloodshot tinge in his eyes.

ONE could dine in Moscow now. There was a restaurant on the Tverskaya if one did not outrage the conventions of shorts and tennis shirts by trying to dine in evening-dress. Ishbel could feel Valentine's glance burning at her across the table. He was more tigerish than he had been; some veneer had peeled from him. The streetcars clanged past behind the green trees. The new white buildings climbed to the sky.

"It's not unlike New York," said Ishbel, "except that sometimes you can't leave it when you wish. Not when you're caught."

"Armitage did." Erik's eyelashes fell, his hands closed over Ishbel's. "You wouldn't try to—now. In a very few days you won't want to, even if—"

"Even if I could get a visa, even if I didn't know something would happen to me on my way out if I tried. All right, Erik. Moscow doesn't look melodramatic at the moment. That's the devilish part of it."

"Not devilish. Only Russian. We don't look on life and the individual as sacred, like they do in the West. There is always something bigger. At the moment it is the Cause and the Plan. A big watch-dog is needed. Hence, the Gay-pay-oo. If the watch-dog shoves its master into the kennel and takes control, well— Hullo! See who was in that droshky?"

"Lidoshka. I saw her." Ishbel involuntarily shut her eyes for a moment. The droshky which held Lidoshka Wei, the Little Lotus, had paused to allow a straggling trail of American and English trade-union tourists, in charge of shock-brigade guides, to cross the street. There seemed a sort of shrill laughter in that.

"She's the star talker at a great meeting of Asiatic delegates in the Kremlin in a day or two," Valentine remarked. "She and Prohackai. . . . I'm designing some costumes for a masque. God, how I love you, Ishbel!"

She could feel his look burning at her profile. It was as though she had reached the end of the world and was about to step off it into his arms. For the moment, all the thrilling things which had happened since Prohackai's death hung suspended in that medium of a sunny Moscow afternoon. Yet there was something steely about Erik Valentine, something vaguely desperate. His faun's face was bleak and hungry. Perhaps he was a bit afraid of Koregorvsky's anger.

"Come home now, Ishbel."

"No. I shall wait for Lee's message to tell me he is safe."

A vein stood out on the fine skin at his temple, but he laughed ruefully.

"I've a heap of bad reputation to wash out, haven't I? You don't distinguish Koregorvsky's Erik from Erik himself. So be it. I'll wait."

He took her to the entrance of the Clinic. As they stood there a man brushed against him and glanced at him with heavy-lidded eyes as he apologized. It brought a fine sweat to Erik Valentine's upper lip, but Ishbel did not notice it. She passed a little blindly into the antiseptic odors of the Clinic.

"Little fool!" She whispered it to herself, trying to shake herself into the old Ishbel. She had saved Lee Armitage. The price to pay for it was not high. A few short weeks before, she had been in love with Erik—and, after all, she was his divorced wife in a country where marriage and divorce were a kind of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. And she would never see Lee Armitage again.

She sat with a feeling of exhaustion through the lecture at the hostel that night. It was some maimed delegate from Afghanistan who moved with a limp that reminded her of Lidoshka. But, in imagination, she was in the Death Wood on the frontier, with her hands on Lee's shoulders and his lips on hers. When would his message come? Her heart tightened at the first thought that Valentine might be playing false.

But the wire came, next afternoon.

AM IN WARSAW, HOTEL SIGISMUND. WAITING FOR YOU. —LEE

Ishbel waited till the closing-time of the Clinic. When the *komsomolkas* scurried to the hostel she was not among them. She had finished with the hostel. She was walking along the roaring streets to Erik Valentine's studio as the clocks were playing their eight o'clock revolutionary tune.

"COURAGE, comrade!" croaked Sasha the Frog again, but more feebly.

In that part of Catherine's Sewer which passed directly beneath the squares

and palaces and cathedrals of the Kremlin, the masonry was comparatively modern. Nicholas, who feared disease more than assassination, had seen to that. The water which flushed it was up to their middle at times.

Armitage was feeling very weak. His shirt was like a plaster on his wounded shoulder, but it still bled steadily. A few more red corpuscles to the myriad which had flowed in that underground sewer, he thought grimly.

"A mile yet," said Sasha. "My signposts do not fail, never fear."

Suddenly, like the fall of an impenetrable curtain, his electric torch blinked out. Armitage felt the small hand on his arm, and caught a hissed "Silence!"

BARELY a minute before, they had passed through a tubular chamber and breathed themselves for a few seconds beneath a manhole through the grating of which a glimpse of cupola and hoary walls was visible. This chamber, the meeting of several ways, was filled with bright light now. The sprawling shadows of armed men danced in it. There was the crash of a pistol-shot that set the hollow echoes rumbling. A random and exploratory shot, for it was aimed the other way.

"Kremlin guards," muttered Sasha, under his breath. "They have damned bell-wires, then—I never thought of it. On all fours and head under water to the very nose, Feodor mine!"

They moved in a wall of black darkness, but not for long. A hand-searchlight whitened the slimy walls and the silky dark water. A fusillade of bullets came that chipped the stone and plopped in the water. Then a shout of laughter. The guards took them for rats.

Through all his exhaustion and pain, Lee Armitage felt an impulse to join in the laughter. Sasha's glossy head did indeed look like one of his furry proletariat friends moving on the water, in the shadow-streaked light. His eyes were as red and luminous. The stream was with them, but even so, submerged to the chin their progress was slower than the wading *battue* of men behind them.

Ahead, the passage crooked in a sharp elbow. The drenched rat that was Sasha's head quickened. Round the bend of the elbow, his lamp glowed again, searching the wall. His hand dragged Armitage upright. There was perhaps forty seconds before the searchlight came round, ten seconds for Sasha to find what he sought, and each one an eternity of breath held chokingly. . .

It was a long narrow fissure where the old masonry of Catherine's Sewer had lesioned under the weight of the splendid buildings above. Under Sasha's hissed command, Armitage crept in. Their soaked bodies wrapped close, it held them while the glaring light brightened and the jack-booted hunt scrambled past, cursing audibly.

"We go home now by the by-lanes," said Sasha's voice, small and whistling.

The sewer became a dull dream to Lee Armitage, after that. The courtyard of the Butyrka belonged to another world, another epoch; Ishbel and Moscow were of another planet; only that bent and stumbling torment, with his limbs moving mechanically, remained on his consciousness.

The passage slanted up a little; the air turned cleaner, fresher.

"So," wheezed the Frog, "this is our *cul-de-sac*. We have come three miles. The Kremlin is far behind."

They crawled beneath some vertical shaft which, by contrast with the inky dark, seemed to be filled with bright sunshine. It came down in dusty streaks through a manhole cover. Both man and child lay beneath it in the silence of complete prostration. But presently Sasha uncovered Armitage's wound and tightened the sodden bandage.

"It bleeds no longer. Sleep!" Sasha's own head nodded. "They may beat all Catherine's Sewer, but they will never think of this little place. We wait here till dark."

"And then—"

"Have I not got you clear of Madame Butyrka?"—with grandiloquent reproach that ended in a snore.

THE light was red and dim with sunset when Armitage woke. It went away as he watched. Sasha was awake and sat musing, sunk in some cloud-cuckoo of robbed childhood which no man would ever know. He shook it from him, blinked at Armitage and beckoned him along the ascending *cul-de-sac*. It ended at a semi-circular grating, red-rusted and foul. Beyond it, some sort of brook wound its sluggish way between the backs of the wooden houses of old Moscow that still remained. Sasha shot the bolt of the grating which he had obviously oiled well beforehand, and, in the darkness they crossed the runnel. Sounds

of life came from the light-pricked huddle of houses and filled Armitage with a mingled pleasure and fear that gave him the measure of his own strained nerve.

"Hold my breech again," murmured the Frog.

He crawled through the weeds of a tiny garden and opened a basement window softly.

"No light. This house is empty. It has been closed because of the small-pox. But one does not worry about small-pox in the circumstances."

The place was cold with the static smell of the overcrowded humanity which had been driven out of it, and still reeked of stale sulphur and ammonia. Heaven alone knew how the Frog had discovered it—but also, heaven alone knew anything about the Frog. Stepping from his thigh-boots and moving noiselessly, he turned a faucet in the wall and filled a tub with tepid water. All his life, Lee Armitage remembered that paradisaical bath which he shared with the brown, pathetically misshapen body of Sasha the Frog, while the pale moonlight came through the dirty window, and the crickets chirped. . .

A clock, still ticking in the dark, chimed.

"We must be brisk," said Sasha.

From a cupboard he took a large fiber dressing-case, and toppled from it some clothing. There was a leather *rubashka,* navy-blue breeches, a swaggering black slouch hat; all the regalia of a young Communist, as Armitage saw at a glance. There was also a razor and a pair of hair-clippers.

"Shave," Sasha bade. "It will take some little time. You will find a box of *Poudre d'Amour* or some such muck there. The young men of the Party use it at times. Ask me not where I got them all. I forget. But there is also a nice clean bib and tucker for your little Sasha. . . Did I tell you that you are taking your young *brudderkin* to the circus this evening, Feodor mine?"

"You did not."

Sasha slid across, with his pearly teeth shining in the moonlight that trickled into the room.

"To the Circus Technicum. Does this all seem clownery? It is not. I sat and thought it out. My father—who was an accident—must have been a great general. No, it is grim earnest. But we shall do it; I will tell you how. Listen!"

The tremendous climax of this thrilling story follows in the next, the July, issue.

The Fighting Contract

By

CONRAD RICHTER

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

UNEASINESS reigned in the small office of the Mulligan Mine. The telephone had rung twice—a long-distance call, by the imperious quality of the bell—and the chunky superintendent hadn't answered it. He sat with his feet on the desk, the bell of the telephone pealing out a foot or so from his ear. He couldn't be asleep, because his eyes were wide open.

The bell rang a third time, long and indignantly. Every eye in the office was on the superintendent. The timekeeper could no longer keep still.

"Long distance ringing you, Mr. Irwin!"

Broady Irwin turned his eyes until they rested narrowly on the timekeeper.

"Figure I'm deaf or something?"

"No sir," stammered the timekeepr, and began devouring the book of figures before him.

The telephone rang again, three long imperative demands. Broady's thick bulk started to move. The office breathed relief. Then it saw he was getting a small tobacco-tin from his pocket. He sifted a quantity of cut plug in his brawny palm, leisurely clapped it to his mouth, then settled down to immobility again.

The telephone broke out once more. It began ringing in sharp staccato peals. It called. It shrieked. It nearly drove the small office force of the Mulligan Mine crazy. Broady sat through it all like an elephant at a dog-fight.

Broady the hard-rock man takes on a job to produce mine timbers—and finds life just one scrap after another.

The ax came driving down. But Broady's head was not there now.

When silence again settled over varnished telephone-box and office, Broady put his feet down heavily one by one. He turned in his swivel-chair and took down the receiver. Then he spat into a box of sawdust.

"Put the Scotchman on!" he growled.

Nobody in the office expected anyone to be remaining on the line. But they didn't know how accurately the man at the other end knew Broady. In less than a minute he heard a low distant voice say, "Thank you, operator, for smoking the bear out of his den!" It brought the old glint back to Broady's eyes.

"Hello, you no-account Scotch yapper!" he shouted.

"Hello yourself, you lazy Missouri mule!" answered the familiar voice. "How did you know it was I?"

"Ask me a tougher one," said Broady. "Nobody but a tight Scotchman would stick that long to save a report-charge!"

"I wouldn't, ordinarily," admitted Tracy B. Stevens, mining engineer. "But something's broke, Broady. How's your job going?"

"Fine as flea whiskers!" declared Broady. "The timekeeper just fell in the sump and got drowned backward." His eyes turned on that young man, who paled and hastily licked the point of his pen.

"Listen, Broady!" said Steve. "I've gone into the consulting business on my own. I just had an S. O. S. from our old stamping-ground in Missouri. How'd you like to come back to the Joplin district on a red-hot job?"

Broady Irwin's recently tired eyes gleamed like a world-weary boy who has suddenly found a railroad-ticket home. But there was no hint of it in his voice.

"Sure, when I'm dead!" he derided.

"Save that line till you see me," said Stevens patiently. "I'm telephoning from the Casey Hotel at Joplin now. It's costing me four dollars and ten cents every three minutes."

"Hold the wire for about two dollars' worth!" urged Broady. He beckoned to the startled timekeeper, and gave him the receiver. "Keep him hanging on till I get back," he directed. Then, cool as a beef on ice, he walked out of the office. The last thing he heard as he passed the window was the nervous voice of the timekeeper: "Yes sir. Mr. Irwin's coming back in a minute. Just hold the wire!"

Broady interviewed Mr. Mulligan at his palatial cabin on the hill. Afterward he went to his own cabin and packed his few belongings. When he walked into the office an hour or so later carrying a suitcase of old clothes and a bag of new, the telephone receiver was on its hook and the timekeeper back at his desk.

"What the hell!" blustered Broady. "Didn't you hold him for me?"

Beads of perspiration clustered on the timekeeper's pale forehead.

"I tried to, Mr. Irwin! I just kept telling him you'd be back. But after a while he got mad. He said it had cost him fifty or seventy-five dollars!"

Broady turned his head. After a minute he telephoned the following telegram to the operator at Cañon Junction.

TRACY B. STEVENS,
HOTEL CASEY, JOPLIN, MISSOURI.

YOU TIGHT LID ON A BOX OF BEEF BRAINS YOU COULDN'T HOLD WIRE HALF AN HOUR. IF TELEPHONE RECEIVER HAD BEEN BOTTLE YOU COULD HAVE HELD IT UP ALL DAY. YOU GIVE ME A PAIN WHERE MY MOTHER MENDED MY PANTS. IF I EVER WORK FOR YOU, I'LL BE DEAF DUMB BLIND AND DRUNK. I'M LEAVING FOR JOPLIN TODAY.

BROADY.

THREE days later Broady had supper with his old mother in Missouri. Next morning he was in Joplin. The hotel clerk at the Casey told him he would find Stevens at the Lindsay Mining Corporation at Lindsay.

It was afternoon when Broady's thick bulk pushed into the handsome brick office building of the mining company. The male operator at the switchboard told him Mr. Stevens was out, but Mr. Lindsay would see him. The president was busy right now. Would Mr. Irwin sit down and wait?

Broady would. He deposited his solid body on the bench used by salesmen and messenger-boys. He sat there minute after minute. Two men who had come after him were admitted to Mr. Lindsay's office before him. A long hour passed. Broady had never known anything like this. Anybody had walked into his office, and he had always walked into theirs. He got to his feet and walked over to the switchboard. His eyes had a baleful glint.

"Where'll I find that Scotch yapper?"

The operator looked up.

"Mr. Lindsay will see you, sir, in a minute. If you'll wait—"

"Wait, hell!" exploded Broady. "I've waited a hole in that bench now! If I wait any longer, the only thing you can use it for—"

The boy turned to answer a call on his board.

"Yes, Mr. Lindsay!" he said respectfully. "I'll send him right in." He pulled out the plug and turned to the caller. "Mr. Lindsay's ready to see you now."

Broady closed his jaws as if the dentist had told him, "Now bite hard!" Then he pushed into the door whose frosted glass had been lettered with the imposing word, *"President."* He saw a huge office more luxurious than that of any other mining man he had ever known. The furniture was mahogany, polished till it looked like shiny red glass. Under his feet lay a thick, soft, blue rug. Long silk curtains hung at the wide windows. Between two glinting desks sat an immaculate figure with his hair perfectly brushed, and an arctic face. He did not look up as Broady came in.

For what seemed like a long time Broady stood just inside the door, holding the knob with his hand. The executive at the desk continued to read a letter. Broady stood it as long as he could. Then his contempt for the furnishings of the room gave the knob in his hand a push. The door slammed back with a bang that brought the president's head up with a jerk.

"My name's Irwin!" said Broady briefly, narrowing his eyes.

Pink spots had appeared in the executive's indignant cheeks. He rose angrily.

"What do you mean by coming into my office like this?"

"I'll tell you what I mean!" roared back Broady. All the slow wrath of his hour's wait rose up in him. "I got a message out West to drop everything and jump like a jack-rabbit for Missouri. I dropped, and I jumped. And then you keep me hanging around like a moldy ham in the smoke-house. If you don't want me, say so, and I'll dust out of this lousy hole suddener than a barefoot Jew out of hell!"

The president glared for half a minute. Then he coughed slightly, and sank back into his cushioned chair.

"Won't you sit down?" he asked, waving a hand to the right.

"I've been sitting down on that iron bench till I'm half crippled for life!" Broady retorted. "I'm r'aring to go to work."

"Certainly, I understand," said the president smoothly. "I believe Mr. Stevens did not give you the particulars. I'll give them briefly: We supply all our mines with our own timber. A year ago we leased one tract and took an option on a much larger one. On account of the depression we were able to lease these tracts at extraordinary bargains. Unfortunately our option requires us to clean everything off the smaller tract by

"You're doing no cutting here!" he announced. "How'd you like to be wearing one of these stones on your head?" inquired Broady.

December 31st, or the lease on the larger one is off. Is that clear to you?"

Broady had been staring at him, almost transfixed.

"Clear!" he bellowed. "You mean to tell me you brought a metal-miner all the way in here—a thousand miles—to tell him you got a job for him in some lousy timber?"

"We will pay you well—"

"In a pig's eye!" roared Broady. "I wouldn't take the pay of a wood-butcher long enough to see you get carried to hell on a shutter!" He stood for a moment struggling with the insult to his profession. Then he turned and strode out. He gave the door marked *"President"* a final bang, and the jangle of glass behind him brought stenographers and department heads to their various doors. Broady paid them no attention. He halted by the staring male operator of the switchboard. "Where's that fish-eyed, clubfooted Scotch yapper—Tracy Stevens, the preacher called him when he found he couldn't break a soup-dish on his thick head?"

"He's not in the building!" stammered the operator.

"Tell me straight," came back Broady savagely, "or I'll trim your face so you won't have to shave for a month!"

"I think he's in the stores department," hastened the other. "It's inside the wire fence, sir, just outside the building."

Broady left the brick office-building. To the right of it he saw the stores department—buildings for parts, sheds for lumber, skidways for timber, old rusty machinery out in the weather. It was all enclosed in a high woven-wire fence. At the gate sat a small round-headed gate-keeper with gimlet eyes.

"I want to see this bird Stevens!" Broady barked.

The gate-tender didn't move.

"What d'ye want with him?"

"None of your business!" roared Broady.

"You can't come in here!" glared the gate-keeper.

That was all the invitation Broady needed. He started through the gate like an Irish groom at his own wedding. The

Blue Book— 2-Color-

Broady spied a round tank to drop his kicking burden in.

gate-keeper snarled and leaped for him. Broady caught him in midair. He fastened one arm about his middle and held him on his hip like a loose sack of squirming cats, while he looked around the fenced yard. About twenty feet away he spied a round rusty tank seven or eight feet high. Broady had to step on a broken flywheel to drop his kicking burden in. He heard a splash. Looking over the rim, he saw about two feet of rusty rainwater in which the drenched gate-keeper was struggling and sputtering.

"Swim, you loafer, swim!" Broady told him as he went on his way.

He found Stevens with the head storekeeper in the latter's office. The mining engineer leaped forward to grab his old friend's hand.

"I never was gladder to see you, Broady! Did Lindsay give you the layout? Another man killed this morning on the cemetery tract! They just phoned in from Pine Mills. A log threw him into the saw. That's four men in two weeks. The crew won't work. Not an ax swinging or wheel turning! Ridley's quit cold. He's the fourth foreman in six months!"

Broady had been waiting to give his old friend a blast of sizzling opinion. Now he only narrowed his eyes.

"What's the matter with this cemetery tract?"

"It's queered!" interjected the chief storekeeper. "Lindsay didn't know there was a cemetery on it when he leased it. But he found out after the crew moved up. One thing's happened after another."

"Where is this place?" crisped Broady. Interest had crept into his eyes.

"Bloody Ax Valley, in the Ozarks,"

said the storekeeper. "I've been in plenty of gloomy mountain country, but that cemetery tract gave me the creeps. The mountains are so close together you can't see to read a newspaper except around dinner-time. And this old cemetery makes your hair rise, about sundown. Just old stones setting under the black trees. Most of them don't even have names chiseled on. Whoever's buried in there—"

He was interrupted by the angry appearance of two men. One was the tall and well-groomed figure of the president. The other was the small and dripping form of the gate-keeper.

"That's him, Mr. Lindsay!" declared the latter, pointing a finger at Broady.

The president of the Lindsay Mining Corporation advanced until his tailored figure towered over the chunky form of the metal-miner.

"I thought it was you!" he shouted. "One of my clerks saw you from his window. I want to inform you that if I ever had an idea of employing you, I emphatically don't any more. I wouldn't give you a job now if you came to me begging on your knees."

"Save your wind!" interjected Broady calmly. "I'm not crawling to any brass statue with his hair combed like a horse's tail. Also I'm not chasing out of here! You and your consulting bottle of Scotch whisky got me to leave a job out West that was running smoother than a greased piston. You got me to spend a roll of cash to get here, and by Judas and the Twelve Apostles, I'm going on this Bloody Ax Valley job and stay there!"

The president swallowed. A shrewd gleam came into his eyes.

"You understand that three foremen have been either badly hurt or killed?"

"Lord, yes!" exploded Broady. "You told me! The storekeeper told me! The Scotch yapper yapped it to me. Didn't you boys ever know before that men get hurt in this world?"

The president struggled with his dignity and emotions.

"Very well," he announced. "You may go. But don't expect me to mourn if the same thing happens to you."

NEXT morning at daylight Broady was on his way south in a small unmarked truck of the Lindsay Mining Corporation. Soon after noon he hit the mountains. By three o'clock he left the railroad and telephone wires for Bloody Ax Valley. It must have rained there for days. The road was one of the worst he had traveled. Heavy timber-wagons had channeled the road-bed into a succession of incredibly deep ruts. Crawling out of one rut only meant dropping into another. There were no bridges. His car splashed again and again through muddy runs. The woods closed in on all sides, dark, damp and sinister.

"They sure named this valley right," Broady reflected, spitting a healthy shot of tobacco juice over the running-board. "I never saw nicer places to commit murder."

An hour later he had entered the narrow space between two mountains. He remembered what the chief storekeeper had said. In sight of a forested knoll set with old gravestones he found a number of rough slab buildings. On one of these had been nailed a sign-board:

LINDSAY MINING CORP.

Cemetery Tract Camp

AT the sound of the car three or four woodsmen had straggled from the largest shanty. One of them cupped his hands to his mouth and bellowed:

"Hey, Ridley! Here's the undertaker after that body!"

A two-hundred-pound lumberman in high-top shoes and a leather jacket pushed out of the shanty.

"About time you came!" he scowled. "I'm going along back with you."

"Not with me, you aint!" informed Broady.

The late foreman flushed angrily.

"Why not?"

"Several reasons," said Broady. "For one, I don't give quitters a lift."

The foreman heard with astonishment. He saw his crew gazing with open-eyed interest at the chunky stranger. He threw off his leather jacket.

"You eat that, or I'll measure you for one of your own coffins!"

"You couldn't measure a chicken for the frying-pan!" Broady derided.

With a roar of rage the big foreman came for him. Lumbermen poured from the shanties. They were sure the fight would be over before they got a taste of it. Broady looked so plump and smooth-faced, standing there. Ridley was like a gigantic bear, with teeth bared and upper claws curved dangerously. When within a couple of feet of his victim, he leaped and tried to clinch with those great arms. Broady's face suddenly became something hard and cold. His arms pumped

like the rod of a fly-wheel. Ridley staggered back, reaching one hand to his face. To his anger, he found it red with blood.

A howl went up from the woodsmen at the sight of that blood. Nothing arouses a woodsman so perfectly to the joy of life as a rousing fight. At the sound of that howl, the foreman lost his head. He picked up a double-bitted ax whose blade had been sunk into a stump, and rushed on Broady. The shouts died, and mouths fell open as the ax came driving down.

IT reached the exact spot where Broady's chunky head had been an instant before. But it was not there now. The force of the blow carried the ax to the ground. Wresting it from the other's unprepared hand, Broady tossed it a hundred feet. Something new and terrible had come into his face. Even the maddened foreman could see it. He retreated step by step toward one of the buildings.

Broady, following up, pushed into him with a sudden speed that made his thick arms fairly twinkle in the early mountain dusk. The contact of each fist sounded on the foreman's face like the thud of a pick in solid clay. The foreman's big face looked astonished as if the heavens had opened and dropped something on his head. The whites of his eyes showed, and he went crashing back against the slab side of the mule-stable.

Broady rubbed his right wrist.

"Get some mountain gin out of that crick, and wash his face! Maybe he hasn't finished his argument."

"Good gravy, man!" protested a loose-jointed woodsman. "What d'ye think he wants to do—go along back with you in a rough box?"

"Not with me!" said Broady. "I'm not going back for six months."

The woodsman stared. "Aren't you the Pine Mills undertaker?"

"Not me!" Broady's face again had something firm and hard in it. "I'm the new foreman. Who's fireman around here?"

The woodsmen blinked. Their looks centered on a fellow in a green-checked shirt. The man stirred uneasily.

"I was fireman, but not no more."

"How much steam you got?" shot Broady.

"Steam! The boiler's cold."

"Well, if it's cold by sunup tomorrow, by noon you'll be cold as a board yourself!" roared Broady. "You're blowing the whistle at six-thirty. Get that?"

The fireman started to back away.

"Not me!" he protested. "I've quit. We've all quit. We're just sticking around for our pay."

Broady took off his coat. His eyes gleamed.

"Nobody's handed any quit-slips to me yet. You can start right now. Who's the first?"

The staring crew exchanged looks. Nobody moved.

"Just so we understand each other," said Broady. "Now who's timber-boss around here?"

"I am," sullenly confessed a short figure with a face like elephant-hide.

"You mean you were!" snorted Broady. "You look like some woman left you waiting at the church or something. Don't you like this job here, or were you born that way?"

"It's the dirtiest job I ever worked on," snarled the other. "There's things waiting to kill you the minute your back's turned—"

"Yeah, and you're an old woman under a nightcap!" bellowed Broady. "If you saw a hawk with a field-mouse, you'd swear it was the devil carrying off a stiff out of the cemetery. You got a pound of Limburger for a brain, and your blood's yellower than Granny O'Fallon's canary!" He rolled up his sleeves, glancing around the circle of grinning woodsmen. "Ridley got a taste of it. The next good-for-nothing that starts a dirty word about this job gets a square meal! Who's got something to say?"

A red-headed woodsman with his hat set cockily over one ear stepped out.

"Me!" he announced with a broad Irish accent.

"Then you're next!" roared Broady. "Say it!"

The Irishman stuck his feet wide apart.

"I'm saying right now this cemetery job is the softest I ever worked on. Every mother's son of us is safe as lying home in his mother's cradle. The woods are innocent as a fresh-born babe in its christening robe, and the boss has got a gentle touch on him like the pat of a breeze on a June morning."

A roar of laughter went up from the men. Broady grinned.

"Who the hell are you, you oily-tongued orator?"

"Mike Dockerty's me name."

"Well, Mike Dockerty, from now on you're timber-boss. And the Virgin Mary have pity on your soul if the mill runs out of timber!"

The men laughed again at the Irishman's rueful face.

"Every time I open my mouth, I put my foot in it!"

"Your wages are up, Mike!" called one.

"Sure, my widow'll be getting that—" He held up a hand hastily to Broady. "A slip of the tongue! My wife, it was in my mind to say."

"You can take me over the job before it gets dark," said Broady. And the two men started out together. . . .

Next morning at six-thirty, lonely Bloody Ax Valley was mildly surprised to hear the shrill blast of the cemetery-tract camp whistle. A few seconds more, and the woods were filled with the whining note of the saw and the exhilarating fragrance of fresh sawdust. All day the saw rang through the timber. Planking, square mine timber, mine and railroad ties came out the track in a steady stream, white, aromatic and new. At frequent intervals a rumbling came down the mountain, and one or another of the team of mules snaked in a drag of logs.

Everything went smooth as a fresh-barked maple. Next day it was the same. The taciturn restraint that had hung over the men began to wear off. By the end of two weeks the timber-boss was roaring songs of an evening, about the Donahues and the O'Reillys. The forest melted into white piles of sawed timber. The logging wagons crunched daily to the railroad. The brilliant leaves fell, and snow started to sift through the bare remaining branches. Broady bundled up and kept silence—but inside, he wished for the warm underground of a mine.

THEN in December, with only a few days more to go, the offbearer wasn't quick enough with a short slab the sawyer had sliced from a knotty old oak.

"Look out for that slab!" bellowed Broady.

Almost like a human hand, the saw picked up the short, triangular slab and hurled it point-forward toward the sawyer. He dodged. The slab cut the air like a javelin and felled the tail sawyer behind him. The stricken man went down as if a cannon-ball had hit him. They stopped the mill immediately. The tail sawyer died in Broady's arms. It took twenty minutes to get out the blood-soaked head of the slab.

The faces of the mill crew were a sickly white.

"I'm going!" announced the offbearer, starting away.

"You're going where?" demanded Broady.

The offbearer refused to meet his eyes.

"Just down the road for some corn whisky. I'll be back by tomorrow."

"You lie like hell!" declared Broady. "You're the one that helped kill this man, and now you want to run off and leave us shorthanded."

The face of the offbearer grew whiter. The fireman stirred.

"You're not running the mill any more today, Mr. Irwin?"

"Why not?" roared Broady. "You think you want to quit out of respect to this poor son-of-a-gun that got killed. But you don't! The only reason you want to lay off is because you got the bile scared out of you. We don't have time to lay off. We're up here to clip this tract clean as a bald head by the last of December, and we're going to do it if it snows bloody slabs and rains cant-hooks till Christmas!"

The body was carried to Broady's own shanty. A man who could be depended upon to come back was sent to Pine Mills with the news. The sound of the saw rose again from the clearing near the old cemetery. But there were no songs in the shanties that evening. Next morning one of the men was missing. It was Tom Strohecker, a gigantic young timber-cutter.

"He skinned out last night when everybody was asleep," confided Dockerty when the rest of the crew had gone reluctantly and sullenly to work. "I'm telling you right now the rest of them will skin out this evening. If a big man like Tom Strohecker quits, I don't know one that'll stay."

Twenty minutes later Broady drove his small truck down the rutted road. His destination was a log house where the road crossed the creek twice. He found it in an hour. Ignoring the savage bark of two ugly hounds, he rapped on the only door to the house.

The door was opened presently for a distance of ten or twelve inches. Behind it Broady saw a huge backwoods woman. So here was where Tom had got his size! The face of the woman was hard and unfriendly. Broady took off his hat.

"Morning, Mrs. Strohecker. I want to talk to Tom."

The woman glared at him.

"He aint here!" she snapped and slammed the door in his face.

Broady waited a moment. Then with a quick twist of the wrist he opened the

door and stepped inside before the startled occupants had moved. Broady found himself in the kitchen. His quick eye noted four persons—the Amazon of a mother, a small, henpecked-looking father on a chair behind the stove, and two sons, either of which could pass for Goliath.

Tom, the missing axman, sat at the table eating breakfast. He stared stolidly at Broady over a plate of cakes and syrup, his loaded fork stalled halfway to his mouth.

"Hello, Tom," greeted Broady. "Who the samhill told you you had the measles?"

The missing axman made no reply. He was staring at something behind Broady. The latter felt a brawny hand seize his collar.

"You fat snip!" the giant mother growled, shaking him like a bag of grain. "Who asked you in? This time you stay out!"

BROADY felt himself propelled to the door. He made no resistance. He heard the woman grunt with satisfaction as she bundled him some distance out of the doorway. Abruptly he twisted like a trout out of her surprised grasp, leaped back through the open door, closed it and snapped the bolt behind him.

An indignant pounding arose from the outside, but Broady didn't hear it. He saw the older son coming to meet him.

"Maybe you can handle a woman," he snarled, "but you can't me!" He rushed like a bull moose for the intruder.

For several minutes the worn plank floor of the backwoods kitchen rumbled with the sound of conflict. The Amazon mother peered in through one of the narrow windows. Behind the stove the small father had risen to watch the fray. He didn't offer to lend a hand. Sometimes when Broady got in a good blow, the glimmer of a smile seemed to cross his face. At the table Tom took an occasional bite of breakfast, but his eyes never left the combatants.

The giant brother could fight. He made just one mistake. That was when, failing to reach inside the circle of Broady's fists, he picked up a chair. Up to this time Broady had been fighting only to hold his own. He had nothing against the other brother. He didn't blame him for taking the part of his Amazon mother. But when he picked up a heavy oak chair, Broady's eyes narrowed.

From the window came a fierce yell of encouragement. Behind the cookstove the shrunken father stared fascinated, while at the table the younger brother sat with his mouth open. Then the older brother swung his heavy chair. Broady ducked it with so few inches to spare that it crashed into the floor like a truck into a store window. One broken leg sailed up and knocked down the stove pipe. Another spun like an Indian club for the window and the astonished face outside.

"Jake, you dumbhead!" she shouted.

Jake didn't pay attention. He was raising the heavy back of the chair for another swing. Broady put off his blasting equipment no longer. Wading into that giant figure, he let loose all he had. It was necessary to uppercut and leap off the floor in order to reach that towering jaw. But his balls found the catcher's glove with sickening thuds. Jake's heavy face looked astounded. The frame of the broken chair dropped from his hand. He went back with a jolt that shook the log house and rattled the glass in the broken window.

Broady turned to Tom. That diplomatic young giant was already slipping on his coat. His face was sober. He fished something from a pocket.

"Have a chew, Mr. Irwin!" he offered companionably.

Broady paid for the window. An hour later as he and the returned giant walked up to the timber crew in the cuttings, slow crosscuts and axes halted altogether. Broady gave the staring woodsmen a slow look.

"Next man that walks off without giving me notice personally," he announced, "gets brought back with a bucket and shovel!"

THE middle of the next morning a small, shrunken, middle-aged man came to camp to see him.

"Hello, Dad Strohecker!" Broady called. "Looking for a job?"

"Oh, no!" denied the old fellow hastily. He looked around with care, then lowered his voice. "I want to tell you something about that cemetery."

When he left a little later, Broady clapped his shoulder and thanked him twice.

"That's nothing aside of what you did for me," chattered the old fellow. "The old woman's been decenter than in fifteen years. And Jake jumps like a rabbit when I only ask him to bring in wood."

The last day of the lease found the cemetery tract almost cleared. About the middle of the afternoon, they felled the last stick on the mountain. Before the débris in air had cleared away, four men had jumped on the fallen tree, swinging axes. Limbs were lopped off. Before they had finished, one of the drivers had hooked his mules to the long trunk and started down the drag-road, several of the axmen following and slashing at a few remaining branches as they went.

"Now for the old cemetery!" called Broady.

"You aint figuring on cutting the couple of sticks left in that old cemetery!" demanded Dockerty.

"You know the lease, don't you?" came back Broady. "It says every stick of timber over two inches on the tract must be cut. That cemetery's on the tract."

Dockerty shook his head.

"Here's where I quit. I won't cut timber out of no cemetery."

"Nor me," declared a quartet of others.

"All right," said Broady. "Tom and me will have to do it."

Accompanied by the young giant and followed by the rest of the cutting crew, he went down the drag-road. At the camp a surprise awaited him. A big car stood among the shanties. Some one called to him from the piles of sawn timber. It was Steve, with Mr. Lindsay. The latter held out his hand.

"Well, I see you've put it over, Irwin!" he praised. "The men tell me you're all cleaned up."

"Not quite," said Broady. "A few sticks there in the cemetery to fall."

He twisted like a trout out of her surprised grasp . . . . leaped back through the door.

"The cemetery!" The president stiffened. "You can leave those trees!"

"Can't do it," said Broady briefly. "They got to come down."

The president's face flushed.

"Who's running this business, Irwin?"

"Listen," said Broady patiently. "You sent me up here to finish the job, didn't you? You told me I was to clean up every stick of timber over two inches at the stump, didn't you, or the lease was flat? Well, that's what I'm plumb going to do."

"You're discharged!" cried the president of the Lindsay Mining Corporation.

"Discharged, hell!" said Broady. "I wasn't even hired." He started away. "I'll talk to you after we get these sticks down."

"Listen, Broady!" protested Steve,

catching his arm. "You don't want to deface an old family cemetery! You're pretty raw, but not that raw!"

"How'd you like to eat a porcupine raw?" came back Broady. "If you can't swallow a porcupine, try polishing your nose on the buzzsaw!"

"You'll regret this!" shouted Mr. Lindsay, blocking his path. "If you touch one of those trees, I'll have you sent to prison for malicious destruction!"

"Yeah!" replied Broady. "And if you touch me, I'll have you sent to the hospital for having your face kicked in by a mule!"

Broady went on without further interference. The little knoll grown with oaks and maples, and sprinkled with gravestones, was very close to the shanties. Some of the stones were down. The majority were old and unlettered. Two or three of the marble slabs disclosed weather-worn names and dates. Broady slung off his coat.

AT that moment a lanky figure appeared from behind a tree.

"You're doing no cutting here!" he announced hoarsely, eying Broady's ax.

"How'd you like to be wearing one of these stones on your head?" inquired Broady.

Grim hate darkened the other's face.

"Don't lay an ax to one of these trees!" he warned.

Promptly Broady's ax bit into the nearest trunk. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the lanky stranger pull something from his pocket. Broady jerked back and swung. The lanky stranger had to dodge to escape the hurtling ax. Before he recovered, Broady was on him. He knocked the gun from its owner's hand. With a curse the stranger tackled him around the legs. Broady discovered his adversary had arms like steel. Another moment, and the two were rolling on the ground among the gravestones—first one on top, then the other.

Losing his sense of direction in the rough and tumble, Broady felt his head come into terrific contact with one of the trunks. It stunned him for a moment. Quick to seize his advantage, the other reached for his revolver. For a second Broady felt his left arm free. Still on his knees, he swung with his left. It was more of a hook than a swing, but it landed with all the jolt of a track-laborer's hammer. The triumphant gleam died out of the other's face. Then Broady followed with his right. . . .

When the lanky stranger came to, most of the cemetery trees had been felled. As the last trunk cracked, the indignant figure of Mr. Lindsay appeared from the shanties, followed by the uncomfortable Steve. The president fixed his eyes on Broady.

"From now on," he began with a voice like a mason's hammer, "I shall see to it that no reputable mining company employs you. Of all the—" He stopped abruptly and began to sniff. His eyes came to his foreman. "So that's what's the matter with you. You've been drinking!"

"You aint so dumb as I figured," complimented Broady. "Anyway, you can smell whisky when you have your foot in it." He glanced up to see the lanky stranger vanishing down the road. He turned to the mining company president. "You still figure I busted up a cemetery?"

"I saw you with my own eyes!" flamed the other.

"But you didn't see any cemetery!" said Broady.

"Why, you drunken liar!" exploded the president. "These stones—"

"Sure, these stones!" roared Broady. "But stones don't make a cemetery. If you walk over to where that crooked maple went down, you'll find a branch busted through the top of a barrel. Since when have they been planting corpses in barrels?"

STEVE, after a sharp look at Broady, went over to the felled maple. A stubby branch of the fallen tree had been driven straight into the ground. Steve stared, and sniffed.

"It's a barrel of whisky!" he shouted.

"Yes, and probably a hell of a lot more," said Broady. "About the time you bought this tract, a bunch of mountain-dew distillers were expecting a call from prohibition agents. They buried their stock and still in this little knoll and fixed it up natural with dead leaves and tombstones. God knows where they stole the tombstones. Nobody got buried under them in *this* valley! Before they got their stuff back in circulation, your crew came along, and they've been waiting for you to clean up and get out."

President Lindsay was staring speechlessly at an old tombstone from which peeped out the head of a broken barrel.

"Say, Chief," said Steve suddenly, "how about a little celebration over the cleaning up of this lease—according to Hoyle?"

REAL EXPERIENCES

What was the most exciting adventure of your life? Here five of your fellow-readers tell of their most thrilling experiences. (For full details of our prize Real Experience Contest, see page 3.) First, Captain Grant writes of storms at sea; and while the episodes that he describes are perhaps less unusual than some of those which follow, he writes of them so impressively that we feel he deserves first place here.

Storms at Sea

By CAPTAIN GEORGE H. GRANT

STORMS are the breath of life to a mariner. They blow the cluttering cobwebs of fear from his thoughts, and compel him to face the dangers of the day or night with a steadfast eye. If by any chance a perpetual calm should settle upon the sea, he would become a sea-laborer, losing all the verve and glamour that is rightfully his. He would lose more: Lost to him would be the stimulating bluster of the gale, and the serene peace when it had blown over. . . .

Last night I stood behind the weather-cloth on the flying-bridge and listened to the wind making wild music on the pressure-gradients that stretch like violin-strings between the sea and sky. They were not visible but the notes, now low like the mewing of the gulls at dawn, now high like the mad swirl of the pipes in the cry of battle, told me that they must be there. Danger was forgotten in the exhilarating enchantment of warring elements; fear was smothered by the orgy of fiendish screeching; only joy, the fierce joy of battle, was in the heave of my stanch vessel, buoyantly exultant.

I walked into the shelter of the wheel-house, and listened to it all. I looked out of the forward window and became a part of the storm. I wanted to sing, to blend my voice in the crescendo of the hurricane squalls. But I was mute, cowed into silence by the magnificent fury of the powers around me.

The sky was a pale gray, and blurred with a film of stratus haze. Clouds, a deeper gray, scudded past. Ugly they were, like vultures swooping over their prey. In the storms they are the feeders for the destructive squalls. Beneath them there was a blackness that was the sea. It was a heaving blackness that at times destroyed the line of the horizon

and rose up to meet the sky. When the vessel fell into the trough, there was naught but the sea and we were in a cradle of hurtling water.

A great white crest like a hand outreaching loomed close to windward. It roared—broke—and raced down upon the beam.

WITH a frightening crack it slapped against the plating beneath the forecastle-head. The vessel staggered, quivered. A column of silver-gray shot fifty feet or more into the sky to burst and drive down upon the wind in a beautiful filigree of mad water.

A light flickered on the forward well. It was in the hands of the sailor who made the rounds every half-hour to see that the tarpaulins had not been torn from the hatches by the raptorial winds, nor the vital parts of the vessel damaged by the surging water. A green sea flung on board over the bulwark-rail, baring its ravenous teeth as it broke. I could hear it growling like a wild beast among the winches and the deck obstructions. The light went out. There was a moment of anxious waiting, when I wondered if the sailorman had been caught and hurled against a hatch or winch.

Then the glow from a light struck upon the bridge from aft. A heavy footstep stumbled on the port ladder. The glimmer from the binnacle lamp shone on a streaming oilskin and sou'-wester.

"All secure, sir! But it's bloody wet on the well!"

The sailorman spat and lurched away. All secure! I sighed happily and turned again toward the window. The wind had drawn more abeam, and had attained an intensity that would have been terrifying if land had lain under our lee. But out on the open sea, as we were, with illimitable space in which to maneuver, there was no danger. A bolt might shear; a rivet might work loose in the underwater hull; but on the land there were even greater chances of meeting an untimely end.

Spindrift flew across the vessel in a constant stream as a squall raced down. It wove into a web of delicate green before the starboard's steaming light, and was tinged with ethereal fire before the port, while over the forecastle-head the foremast light made a dazzling lantern, a gigantic fairy lantern of the soaring spray.

Suddenly a crash came from abaft the wheel-house—a splintering of wood. The third mate shouted an order. A sailor flashed a torch to illuminate the night. A second of waiting!

The sailor cried: "The starboard lifeboat has been stove in, and is adrift!"

The third mate felt his way against the lurching of the vessel to the wheelhouse door. He cried: "The starboard lifeboat has been stove in, sir!"

An order was given: "Get all hands out and make it secure!"

Sailor-men tumbled from their warm bunks. They struggled in the darkness and the storm. A star peeped through between the rifts in the gathering banks of cumulus, and it was so bright against the dead gray environs that it seemed like a beacon light lowered from heaven to illuminate the night. It was shut in! And a hurricane squall swept down, whipping the leaping seas into a smother of white. The wind sang in the wild music of the storm.

The third mate came back on to the bridge: "All secure, sir, and all's well!"

All secure and all's well! There is no fear in such a cry. Duty has been done, that is all.

As I write out here on the sea, a voice from the radio on my table announces that a vessel—the *Exeter City*—is foundering. Somewhere south of Newfoundland, veiled by the mists driving over the Grand Banks, a tragedy is being enacted. There men have been already drowned, swept from the flying-bridge by a towering, crashing sea; others are being saved by the bravery and resourcefulness of the crew of the *American Merchant;* yet as I sit here in my cabin, my vessel rolling to the heaving swells of a gale that is spent, visualizing the scene I can find nothing of terror in it. Death, yes! And the sadness which falls upon most sailor-men when a ship goes down. But of terror —none.

Most sailors will, I believe, agree with me in this. Years of combating storms have blessed them with a serene outlook. They take everything in their stride, the fine weather and the foul, and become nervous and wary only when one or the other prevails too long. Yet they have all in their early years come through the valley of fear.

I WAS only fifteen when I went to the wheel of the *Monarch,* a tubby old tramp-steamer, outward bound from England with a cargo of coal. All night long a storm had raged, piling the seas

after each other in gray-bearded procession.

"Try and keep her steady," the captain said, when he stepped into the wheel-house to light his pipe. "It's up to you, lad. Let me know if she falls off too far."

I was young and I felt my responsibility keenly. A long hour passed, the steering becoming more difficult every minute. . . . Soon the weight of water on the forward well hampered her, held her down by the nose, making her sluggish on the helm. I walked to the wheel-house door. The captain was standing behind the weather-cloth on the lee wing of the bridge.

"She won't hold up, sir," I shouted.

HE answered me with a wave of his hand. The third mate entered the wheel-house and blew down the whistle-tube to the engineer.

"Give her two more revolutions, Fourth," he ordered. "And stand by in case we have to reduce her again."

For a time the extra speed held the vessel closer to her course, although the wheel was hard over most of the time. Then the third mate shouted excitedly.

"Look, sir!" he cried. "Look at that one!"

Instantly the captain was at the wheel-house door. "Watch your helm now, my lad," said he; "there's a brute coming!" His voice was hoarse with excitement and anxiety. Fear passed a cold hand along my spine. I was afraid to look, even when I heard him shout to the third mate: "Pass word along for all hands to hang on!"

Against my will my gaze was drawn from the compass. Close ahead I saw water—nothing but water. Solid as a mountain, it towered over the bow with an onrushing frightfulness. Then, as I watched, the vessel took the slanting mass at the right angle. Up—up she rose until the sea was lost and the smother of nimbus hung close on board; then down—down she went diving madly; and there, waiting, was the succeeding wave into which she fell.

I saw the fury of the spume-curling comber. I saw it break with the weight of a sixty-mile gale behind it and I closed my eyes tightly and clasped the wheel when the avalanche of destructive water flung upon us.

The *Monarch,* fifteen thousand tons of steel and cargo, staggered at the blow, recovered slightly with a stubborn quiver as though surprised at the rude attack, then she was forced backward by the wave's relentless weight. Then over to starboard she heeled dangerously and, with a roar like that of thunder, the bursting sea was over the bow and I heard the rending of iron and the crashing of resisting wood. The wheel-house windows gave before the mad assault, glass flung around me, water dashed into my face and, scared almost to death, I thought the vessel had been engulfed.

"All right, lad. Put your helm hard aport and let her come head to wind again!"

The calm voice steadied me. I opened my eyes and looked round at the captain. A smile was on his sea-seamed face.

"You won't see many like that one, laddie. It was a whopper!" And he sighed deeply, and went on: "There's danger with it and destruction. . . . But it stirs you up in a queer sort of way. You feel fully alive. . . . You'll look for them as you grow older." And now, as I sit here after the passage of more than twenty years, I know that it is so.

Say what they like, deny it if they will, but it is this fascination and stimulation of the great storms which hold sailor-men to the sea even when they are offered a secure berth on the land. When they retire you'll find them on the shore gazing out with longing toward the far horizon while the salt spray falls upon their faces with a soft, caressing touch.

THIS same stimulation is what impels land-lubbers to voyage upon the sea. They will declare to their friends that they want fine weather but, deep down in their hearts, will lie a longing for the "ocean's boisterous mood."

Last summer, off Cape Hatteras, in the early afternoon, a squall struck down when my vessel was bound to the southward on a cruise. Out of the west it came, boot-foremost, ripping the smooth bosom of the sea into a million gaping wounds and flinging live water against the vessel until she quivered, staggered, and bowed down before the hurricane pressure so that her lee waterways lapped up the sea.

Out of my cabin on to the deck I ran, the wind clawing at my clothing. A girl stood by the rail, her face bared to the spray, her hair streaming in the wind.

"You'd better get below," I told her.

She shook her head. I shook mine, and raced up the ladder on to the bridge. There was no time to argue.

"Get all hands out!" I cried to the officer on watch. "Take all the awnings off her before they blow away. Get the boats in and put lashings on all gear!"

Sailor-men came from their bunks, from their lazy-day jobs, and struggled with bellying canvas that flapped exultantly as if glad to feel the pressure of the wind within it. The poop awnings were furled, and the sailor-men came forward through the driving spindrift, laughing as they came. The hurricane squall had brought a touch of excitement to their lives, and they rejoiced.

The after awnings on the boat-deck were in ribbons. The squall increased in violence until it seemed as if the planks would be lifted from the decks. Water dashed against the lifeboats, the funnel and, in fan-like streams, broadened by the wind, ran gurgling toward the scuppers.

"I don't think we'll be able to manage the boats in this wind," the chief officer volunteered. "It's too broad on the beam. The wind will lift them over our heads when the gripes are released."

The course was altered and the wind brought aft. The speed was eased. The vessel ceased to vibrate but rolled more heavily. The squall howled as if in terror. The green seas leaped higher, wild white pennants on their crests.

The sailors tackled the lifeboats, swung them up and into their position within the limits of the hull where the leaping water could not reach them. The awnings, those that still withstood the voracity of the squall, were cut from their stops and lashed to the spars and stanchions. Spare gear about the decks was stowed away.

"Back to your course again!" I ordered. "Let her go full speed."

The chief officer went below, followed by the sailor-men. The vessel, beam on again to the hurricane wind, was kicking up her heels, glad to be on her way toward fair weather latitudes.

I walked down the ladder from the bridge. The girl still stood by the rail. For two hours she had been there, in the wind, the spray and the rain. Her clothing was saturated, but a bright light shone in her eyes. I halted beside her.

"Haven't you had enough of it?" I asked.

She shook her head. "I couldn't get enough of this," she said. "I'm never going to be afraid again. The sea's wonderful when it's mad. I love it!"

I smiled; for, you see, I loved it too!

The first-hand story of one of the great airplane flights of history — the daring transatlantic crossing from Maine to Rome. Mr. Williams has held many other airplane records; but this, the longest over-water flight ever achieved, is remarkable indeed.

The Air Road

By ROGER Q.

WE had been in the air thirty hours and thirty minutes, since leaving Old Orchard, Maine, the day before. My nerves were strained to the breaking-point, for the previous night and day had been a succession of unexpected thrills and uncertainties.

First, there had been the danger of taking off the heavy load. Then seven hours of "blind" flying through a dense fog, during which I was undecided whether to go on or turn back before it was too late. This was followed by weary hours at the controls, flying over clouds. My course was easterly. The dull monotony of always reading "East" almost drove me mad. Any other point on the compass would have been a relief. Only once had I seen the ocean, for just a moment, at the eleven-hundred-mile position.

Night had come on. There was no moon and bright stars to guide me and I was forced to maintain stability and direction solely by means of a poorly lighted instrument board and cheap magnetic compass. My expensive electric compass, engine-revolution counter, and ice-warning indicator had been disabled since the start. The dimly lighted instrument board was my only hope of continuance. Therefore, fear of that light's failure keyed me to a high pitch. The end was ever only a few seconds away. It was worse than any nightmare.

I was compelled to climb fourteen thousand feet to ride over a storm. The *Pathfinder* was tossed about helplessly.

to Rome

WILLIAMS

After what had seemed ages, dawn crept slowly in. As daylight increased, I could see a thick layer of angry, cumulo-nimbus clouds clashing angrily to and fro, just beneath the plane.

I had just entered in my log book, *"30 hrs., 30 min., in the air—11 more to Rome."* Suddenly I caught sight of the white puffs of cumulus clouds. Rough air ahead, I realized. My supply of gas was getting low. So I did not try to avoid them, as ordinarily I should have done. I held to my easterly course and, after a while, reached smooth air again. I was just about to congratulate myself that the goal toward which I had striven through two years of unceasing preparation would be achieved, when the *Pathfinder* began to act queerly.

First, the plane tried a dive. Then it shot upward. The pressure on the rudder increased until my right leg was ready to snap under the strain of holding the plane to a straight course. It seemed, at one moment, to my tired, over-wrought, perplexed brain, as though the tail of the plane was broken. The next instant, I felt sure the trouble was due to a broken rudder cable. Then in addition, a new sensation developed—I could feel a mysterious draft in the cabin. For a while, I attributed the capricious behavior of the *Pathfinder* to the faulty coördination of my too-taut nerves and lame muscles. Soon, however, I was to know with fearful conviction that *I* was all there, but that the plane was not!

By dead reckoning, I had estimated our position to be in the neighborhood of the Azores. My navigator, Yancey, crawled over the big gas tank in the fuselage and opened the hatch in the roof of the rear cabin to "shoot the sun" with his bubble sextant. Every time he opened the hatch, the draft in the cabin increased; it became so powerful that only my safety-belt kept me firmly in my seat.

I stuck my head out of the window. I happened to look back at the tail. I almost froze in my seat. Half the bottom of the plane was loose in the air—not only loose, but flapping in the wind! Attached to the loose end of the huge sheet of linen (ten feet long and three feet wide) were solid metal fasteners. These were pounding the control surfaces of the tail with machine-gun rapidity. What if they should tear the controls to shreds?

Again Yancey took a sight. What did it matter, I thought, where we were, at a time like this? The only thing that could save us was a miracle, or—a parachute. I reached for one. My hand struck only an air cushion where the 'chute should have been. It was then I remembered dropping it on the beach in a last-minute-decision to save weight.

By this time, the *Pathfinder* was cutting up worse than ever—diving, climbing, pitching and skidding. It was harder to fly now than through the fog and storm of the night. My foe was no longer the elements but those metal clips that were tearing at the frail control surfaces. The race was not to reach Rome but to cheat them from plunging us to certain death. More than once I straightened out only a few feet above the crests of the waves. Fifty times, I thought I saw land ahead, only to find it a mirage. One thought was uppermost in mind: to get down before the plane fell apart in the air. It was a swell idea if I got to Rome, but right now I secretly wished that I had stayed at home and left the hero stuff to the other fellow.

I stretched my neck over the side, seeking a steamer to land by. Instead, through a brown haze I could barely discern a string of fishing boats. This haze, I had been told by old sailors, would be a sign of nearing the coast of Spain. When I saw the ships, my first impulse was to attempt a landing near one. However, some inner caution bade me continue until the last drop of gas

was gone. So I set the course by the boats: first, a large three-masted schooner, one hundred miles offshore, then smaller two-masted boats fifty miles offshore, and, lastly, a great number of one-man boats with a single sail—ten miles offshore. It seemed longer to reach land from that first schooner than to fly the entire Atlantic Ocean.

At last, a white beach hove in sight. I recognized Cape Ortegal, Spain. I throttled down the motor to try a landing on the beach. I thought the shallow water might offer safety, but the sharp rocks strewn along the sand prevented a landing without crack-up and injury. So I straightened the *Pathfinder* out for level flight. The fields on top of the high, precipitous cliffs, were too small to land in. Moreover, they were bounded by dangerous stone walls.

Desperately I followed the coast line, keeping over the water. Finally long shadows of night warned me that I must land at once.

I climbed in a big, wide circle to get more altitude, then shot across a ridge of foothills, following a beam of light that proved to come from a lighthouse on Santander Bay. It was a big effort to fly away from the safety of the water, but my hunches have never failed me. I was reasonably sure this one was right. Yet it might have been the exception.

I stalled the *Pathfinder* over what I judged, by the silhouette of white masonry against a black sky and blacker ground, to be the ruins of a Spanish castle. I said a little prayer—waited. It seemed a lifetime. At last, the wheels struck the ground with a dull thud. The *Pathfinder* rolled swiftly along in the inky night. Then I deliberately ground-looped to the right. As I did so, the shadow of something taller than the ship slipped past the left wing. Later I learned it was made by a pile of 100-liter rusty, empty gas cans. Then the plane came to an abrupt stop in total darkness.

WHEN I investigated the trouble with the plane, I found the entire bottom ripped out. The tail-control surfaces contained hundreds of small holes that had been punched out by the solid metal fasteners. A large piece of linen was wrapped perilously around the rudder wire. And only ten gallons of gas remained in the tanks. I knew, then, that Lindy did not have all the luck in transatlantic flying!

The Temblor

SHORTLY after my return from France, where I served in the Foreign Legion, the Los Angeles *Times* offered me the opportunity of returning to Mexico to investigate the Jenkins case, which at the time threatened a rupture of relations between Mexico and the United States.

William O. Jenkins, American consul at Pueblo, had been kidnaped by the bandit Cordoba, who had boldly entered the consulate in Mexico's third biggest city and had carried the official into the mountains, holding him for ransom. Mrs. Jenkins appealed to the authorities, and the U. S. State Department made strong representations to the Mexican Government, but no trace was found of the missing consul. Eventually Mrs. Jenkins, fearful of bodily harm to her husband, paid the ransom of $350,000 in gold, and the consul was set at liberty.

The incident was but one of many and would have had no special significance had it not been for Jenkins' official status and the remarkable aftermath. Eventually I sent my story to Los Angeles by courier, fearing to trust the mails. . . .

That evening, Jan. 3, 1920, Pueblo was shaken by the worst earthquake in its history. I joined a relief expedition sent out by the government. Disinclined to go empty-handed to scenes of disaster, I got up a subscription among American friends and purchased medical supplies.

We took the railway as far as Limonar and spent the evening at Cuautolapa, a half-million-acre hacienda that raises century plants or "maguey" from the sap of which pulque, the Mexican national drink, is brewed. Thence we proceeded on horseback to Saltillo Lafragua, a village built on the slope of a mountain. The temblor had created a landslide that had carried most of the village into a ravine three thousand feet below. At least five hundred people perished. We found the ruins deserted save for dogs and pigs.

The official relief expedition stopped at Lafragua, hearing that the roads were impassable beyond. I hired Indian bear-

A war-correspondent here tells us of another lively adventure in the land of mañana—and of revolutions.

By
GERALD BRANDON

ers and pushed on afoot toward Chilchotla, a town of six hundred houses and some twenty-five hundred inhabitants. We might have passed Chilchotla unknowingly. It was no longer there. A few survivors pointed out what appeared to be freshly plowed fields and explained that the temblor had shaken the outer strata of earth off the mountains and that the village had been buried under one of these falls. We found many similar phenomena in the course of our next few days of travel, although there were not always villages under the masses of disrupted rock and earth that we encountered in the valleys.

My surgical supplies came in very handy as well as my experience with infected wounds. I dressed hundreds of hurts and even performed minor operations when they were necessary.

As there was no train service out of Jalapa on account of the revolution, I had to await a military train to return to Mexico. There was an armored car attached to the rear of this train with forty soldiers and two machine-guns. The freight cars were full of military supplies, and the soldiers' wives rode on the roofs.

Suddenly we felt an explosion, and the engine and three forward cars ran off the track. At the same time from the rocks beside the road, brisk firing began. We were being attacked by the Zapatistas.

The sole officer on the train leaped to the ground to see what was happening. Immediately he fell with a bullet through his groin. We brought him back into the car, and he begged me to take command.

Our armored car had not left the track, and I brought our machine-guns to bear. The Zapatistas fled, leaving a dozen dead. We also captured a few wounded bandits, whom we immediately strung up on telegraph poles as an example to the countryside.

Our casualties were few. A dozen of the soldiers' wives, however, were injured when their cars went off the track. The officer died that night before the wrecking train reached us.

I HAD had quite an active time in Mexico, with the Jenkins case, the temblor and the train hold-up. My tribulations were not over, however, for as soon as the mail brought back copies of my dispatches which had been syndicated rather extensively by the Los Angeles *Times,* I was arrested and held incommunicado by order of Carranza.

After a week of solitary confinement, during which no one knew what had become of me, I was officially deported from Mexico as an undesirable alien, my articles on the Jenkins case, on the inefficient earthquake relief and the general situation of Mexico being cited as proof of my undesirability.

Barely two months had passed, however, when I was proven to be a pretty fair political prophet. As I had foretold, Obregon headed a military revolt and deposed and killed Carranza. He was the third President of Mexico to be deposed and killed shortly after deporting me for writing the truth about the political situation. Madero and Huerta had been the other two.

(More of these interesting adventures will appear in an early issue.)

Here's a story of real sport for you—a fight with a great shark that strangely and savagely attacked two youths in a small boat in an enclosed lagoon.

The Sea Devil

By M. E. O'LEARY

THE adventure I am about to relate happened in May, 1917, near the little island of North Bimini, in the Bahamas, a place that was then almost unknown. At that time I was the fortunate possessor of a fourteen-ton yawl, the *Etta May,* and was living a happy-go-lucky sort of existence, gathering sea-shell, and occasionally running passengers between the islands. I had a good friend who acted as my mate—a young fellow from Miami, Florida, whom we will call George.

On this particular morning George and I decided to take a flat skiff and pull out over the sandbars looking for odd pieces of coral and anything in the shell-fish line that might be worth something as a curio. Besides our lunch, we took a small landing-net, a big gaff-hook, and our fish-knives, and at the last moment I threw in an old rifle that a native had brought to me to repair a couple of days before, as I thought this was a good chance to try it.

We had pulled about two miles to the south over the flats before we came across anything worth picking up; then we discovered some rose coral. I dived several times, and got some very fine specimens. About half a mile farther on we found a couple of big star-fish. Then we ran onto six "queen conch"—very large white beauties, without a solitary barnacle or blemish on them, and at that time worth about five dollars apiece on the New York market.

That was where we first met the shark. He came drifting over the flats so lazily and languidly that we thought there was never a nicer or more gentlemanly shark in the sea. I had just brought up the third conch-shell when my partner pointed him out to me. As I stood in the stern of the skiff, filling my lungs with air for my next dive, I watched him for a few minutes to see if he would leave the vicinity, for somehow or other I have never hankered much for salt-water bathing with a shark for a playfellow.

I noticed just then, for the first time, that the tide had dropped so low that we were now in a lagoon about half a mile wide and three-quarters of a mile long, with dry sandbars stretching about us in every direction.

BY now the shark had come within thirty feet of the boat and was lying head-on toward us. We could see that he must be all of twelve or fourteen feet long. I have seen lots of sharks in shallow water, but never one as large as he was. The water was about eighteen feet deep where we were, but it was not more than four feet at any other place on the flats. Even at high tide it couldn't have been much over five feet in depth, on an average, for miles in every direction, and there were lots of places where at high water you could hardly float a keel boat. How the shark came to be in such an unusual place for him I don't know.

"Say," said my partner suddenly, "I don't like the looks of that bird! This

boat's too small altogether, and he looks as hungry as the devil."

"What's the matter with you?" I asked, smiling. "He's only a gray shark, and wouldn't hurt a fly."

WITH that I picked up an oar and started splashing. Mr. Shark did just as I thought he would—he left at once, and he left in a hurry. He made one mistake, however: he forgot about the sandbars, and as a result ran himself half out of the water before he had gone a hundred yards. I turned to George. "Here goes for those shells, George!" I told him.

Over I went, and brought up the shells all right. George called me several kinds of a fool, but I only laughed at him, and told him it was all right, for I thought I knew sharks a great deal better than he did.

We ate lunch, and let ourselves drift around, waiting for the tide to come up sufficiently to allow us to pull over the bar. Our friend drifted with us. But at last he went, and stayed away so long that I was sure he must have found a way out of the lagoon, for we couldn't see a fin cutting the water anywhere.

We had got about a third of the way back when we found a bunch of micromoc shell. These are bright-colored shell about four inches long on the average, and about two and a half inches wide, and as they were worth about fifty cents in tourist trade, we stopped to get them, storm or no storm.

I went down three times and brought up eight shells, when just as I was shaking the water out of my eyes, I heard George shout:

"Look out—he'll get you!"

I dropped those shells in a hurry, took one look behind me, and started for the boat. I believe I made it in record time, for that big shark's nose was only about two feet away when I grabbed the stern of the skiff! I made such a splash when I tried to climb in that I must have surprised him a bit, for he turned slightly to one side. As it was he only missed me by inches; it was so close a shave that his forward fin struck me on the thigh and sandpapered about six inches of skin off.

When George had helped me into the boat all I could do was to lie and shake, with cold sweat breaking out on me like beads.

I was lying in the bottom of the boat, feeling about as bad as a man can feel, and George was stooping over me with a bottle, when that shark, or devil, whichever you please to call him, charged the skiff. What made him do it I don't know, for I have had several years of experience with sharks and never knew one to attempt such a thing before.

That shark was fourteen feet long and the skiff was ten. He hit us broadside on, and it was a mighty good thing for us that the craft was flat-bottomed, for when he struck it he knocked my partner overboard. As the skiff was flat, however, the shark shot underneath, which left George on one side and him on the other. As a result, George was able to get back, with my help, before the shark could get to him—and he meant business, too, for he came back like an express train.

We recognized him then as the same shark that had been with us all the morning.

Again and again he charged us savagely, and every time he hit us he took away about half an armful of splinters. A ten-foot skiff can't stand that very long, no matter how solidly it may be built. All we could do was to sit in the bottom of the boat and hang on. You may ask why we didn't use the rifle, but to tell you the truth we didn't think of the old relic.

At last it occurred to us that we had a rifle aboard.

"I'm going to get that brute if it takes a week," I growled to George. So I took the rifle and started to fire at the devil. The cartridges, however, wouldn't fire until I got down to the last one. That went off all right, and the bullet took him just below the dorsal fin. Back he came like a battering-ram! Every time he hit us, he must have knocked us twenty feet or more.

PRESENTLY I grabbed the gaff-hook and started to use it—and almost went overboard. The hook got caught in his gills, and the loop on the end of the handle caught my wrist, and I felt myself going after him. Not quite, for George seized me by the legs and held that part of me in the boat while the rest was under water. Just as he thought he couldn't hold on any longer, and *I* thought I was going to be drowned, the lashing that held the hook proper to the shaft gave way, and George succeeded in pulling me back again.

Though the losing of the gaff appeared to be a calamity, it turned out a bless-

ing in disguise, for it made us put our wits to work.

George and I thought of the saving idea at the same moment. Why not lash our knives to the gaff-hook shaft?

Still, it was a rather difficult job. Imagine yourself inside a football that is the center of a real lively scrimmage, and you will have some idea of how we were getting pushed about. And, to make matters worse, the boat was beginning to let in a lot of water, and a boat full of water is no place for a couple of men with a man-eating shark around.

Well, after about fifteen minutes of hard labor on my part, trying to hang on to anything that was solid to keep me from going overboard, and at the same time holding an eight-foot pole, a sharp knife, and a ball of twine, endeavoring to fasten the knife to the pole in such a manner as to make a lance, I eventually succeeded in fashioning a decidedly useful weapon.

AFTER we got the lance rigged up, I thought the fight would soon end; but our hopes were speedily dashed, for we found out that the knife-blade was not long enough to reach a vital spot.

I don't remember much about the next thirty minutes. It was just jab and thrust, jab and thrust, at a gray-black devil who was all mouth and tail—a tail like a thousand-pound trip-hammer.

How I did curse those starfish we had! I only had on a pair of cut-off overalls, and my legs up to the knees were just one mass of cuts and bruises from trampling and falling on them. Every time I tried to throw them overboard, the shark would hit the boat just at that identical moment and send me sprawling. Then the knife broke!

Somehow or other we got the other knife lashed on. It was George's, and our hopes were mighty slim, for it had a long slender blade, only about half as stout as the one that had broken. I don't know about George—I never asked him—but personally I thought that any little piece of land would have looked mighty good to me just then.

But luck was with us, apparently. The shark made a charge, turning on his side so as to use his teeth better. That was the only mistake he made, but it lost him his dinner and his life. For George, who had the improvised lance now, as I was completely done up, made a lucky thrust and caught him in the gills, driving the knife and about two inches of the haft right into him. That was the end, for it had struck a vital spot, though we didn't know it at the moment. The lance was torn out of George's hand, and he was knocked overboard by the force of the blow.

Needless to say he wasn't in the water any longer than was necessary; in fact, it looked to me as if he just stood up on the surface and stepped right back into the boat.

The first thing we did, of course, was to prepare to repel boarders; but we discovered that the fight was over. There was blood everywhere; I never thought that one fish could dye so much water. The sea was absolutely red for fifty yards around us, and it was so thick that it took us several minutes to locate the shark. We eventually found him about fifty feet away, lying on the bottom in about eight feet of water. He was not dead, but so weak that all he could do was to snap his jaws feebly when we hitched a line around his tail and started to tow him to the yawl, nearly two miles away.

After we had brought in the shark, we had a bite to eat, threw ourselves into our bunks, clothes and all, and slept the sleep of utter exhaustion till broad daylight the next morning.

Getting breakfast as soon as possible, we went on deck and took the shark's measurements. He was fourteen feet two inches long and seven feet eleven inches at his greatest girth. His jaws, spread open, measured full thirty-seven inches, and he had thirteen rows of teeth. Some of the center teeth were two and a quarter inches wide and two inches long. We wanted to save the hide, but it was worthless, for it had over six hundred cuts in it! You may judge how hard he was to kill when you figure that each cut was six inches deep and the wound that killed him penetrated over two feet into his vitals.

IT took me more than three months to get rid of all my scars, and we had to put twelve feet of new planking and eight ribs into the battered skiff. We extracted thirty-two of the shark's teeth from the planking when we repaired it, so it will be seen that he spared no pains in the attack.

After that fight I came to the conclusion that I did *not* know quite so much about sharks as I had thought I did, and I decided that in the future I would treat them much more respectfully.

The Descent into Kilauea

The remarkable story of a Japanese who risked descent into a volcano on a grisly errand.

As told by
RIKAN KONISHI
to
LORIN TARR GILL

NO one had ventured into the sulphur fumes and deadly gases of Kilauea Volcano, Hawaii, since the floor of the ancient firepit dropped hundreds of feet in 1923. Yet on June 2, 1932, it became necessary that some one make the attempt. For the first time in the history of the Islands, a human being had died in Halemaumau.

Sylvester Nunes, a young Portuguese of Hilo, had defied the wrath of the volcano goddess, Pele. Pretty Margaret Enos had spurned his love, and he had thereupon abducted her from her brother-in-law's home in Hilo, and driven her to Kilauea, thirty-eight miles away. On the very rim of the firepit, he had shot her, and had leaped with her body to the dreadful death below. The body of the girl could be seen lying on the talus slope, her dress forming a spot of scarlet about a hundred feet from the smoldering pit, while some fifty feet below her lay the huddled remains of the boy.

Early the next morning Rangers attempted to devise some means of descent. Could a trail be built into the pit?

A study of the formation revealed the imminent danger of landslides if rock should be dislodged along the precipitous slope—hurtling masses which might bury the two beyond recovery and cost the workers' lives. Yet it was felt that the bodies must be recovered.

It was finally agreed that should the descent prove too perilous, services would be held at the crater-rim, and dynamite used to send an avalanche crashing down, to form a natural tomb.

Shortly before one P. M. on June 4 a coroner's jury conducted one of the most remarkable inquests ever held. Identifying the two by means of a powerful transit, the six men announced that they were convinced that Sylvester Nunes and Margaret Enos lay dead nine hundred feet below.

I had been studying the situation since the morning when the bodies were discovered and had worked out a plan which I was prepared to carry out. But such was the fear engendered by the Hawaiian *kahunas,* priests of the ancient mystic cults, who had given warning that Pele would revenge herself on those who desecrated her altar, that my friends begged me not to make the attempt.

However, I went to the superintendent of Hawaii National Park, E. P. Leavitt, and outlined my plan.

"I want the job done right," I told him, "and when everything is ready, I myself will go down for the bodies."

Mr. Leavitt was so convinced of the possibility of success that he issued a permit authorizing the police to enter into a contract. It was understood that I should be paid a thousand dollars if my plan succeeded; but if I failed, I would not ask for a cent.

On June 5 I moved my equipment from Hilo. I had two platforms constructed and placed on the northeastern and southeastern edges of the chasm, and a mile-long cable loaned by the Olaa Sugar Company was stretched between them and anchored to two heavy tractors.

My men built a cage six feet long,

thirty inches wide and three feet six inches high and wired it all around with steel and, as we hooked it to the trolley cable, they named it *Inochi no Hako*—the box of life.

We made repeated attempts to get the contraption down into the pit but it was not until June 11, when we managed to lower it to within fifty feet of the bodies, that I considered the test a success.

As soon as the mists arose from the pit on the morning of June 12, two physicians looked me over and gave me a certificate of health. Mr. Leavitt made a careful inspection of my equipment and then I made a speech through my interpreter, urging the crowd to keep back.

I am a small man, less than five feet tall, and I weigh but eighty-five pounds. So, as I entered the cage and sat on a stool with my head almost touching the roof, there was still room for the equipment I had decided to take with me.

The crowd gasped as the cage was slowly swung to the rim, the cable was paid out and it started over the abyss.

When I had been lowered about seventy-five feet the rope fouled. There was nothing for me to do but to climb out, dangling in mid-air, and release it.

I landed at last on the talus slope at noon. After trying unsuccessfully to push the cumbersome box toward the bodies, I resorted to a coil of rope, running it from the cage down the slope, and descending on it two hundred feet over the loose rocks, viewing the remains of Miss Enos and of Nunes at close range. The girl, I thought, had landed feet-first, but the boy had fallen on his side. A great rock lay against his chest. Both bodies were badly charred.

I returned to the cage, got the canvas slings and descended again to the body of the girl, bundled it into one of the slings and returned for that of Nunes. Great rocks became dislodged and once the body nearly rolled into the firepit, but I finally got it wrapped in the other canvas.

Then I rested and ate some lunch—a guest of Madam Pele in her awesome home! With the exception of the red-tailed koae birds, I was the first living thing to set foot in the smoldering maw of Halemaumau.

I gazed about me. Rocks which from the rim had seemed like sand, proved to be boulders far larger than I. Great slides thundered above me, adding their clamor to the hideous din in the crater. Swirls of blue smoke rose around me and small streams of lava twisted and boiled in the crater's heart.

I picked my way around the huge ash-hills and ventured onto the surface of the smoking lava, taking temperature records and collecting specimens for the observatory. Then I planted a white flag to indicate success.

The boy's body was too heavy for me to carry, but as the ropes holding the canvas slings were fastened to the cage, I gave the signal for it to be hoisted a short distance. When the cage was lowered again, I fastened them securely to its sides; then I climbed inside and signaled for the up-pull.

When the cage approached the horizontal cable an hour later, I telephoned to my men to cease pulling; then, fearing an accident, climbed out again on its top and secured a rope twice around the hook in the cable. When I was pulled to the rim I climbed once more onto the cage and secured an extra rope, the other end of which I tossed to my men. Then I made my way to safety.

Much to my surprise, the crowd applauded wildly. Friends rushed up to congratulate me, and placed *leis* of gardenias and roses about my neck.

I told them that my success was due to those who had assisted me. But they gave me a series of cheers.

THE bodies of Margaret Enos and Sylvester Nunes, tied saddlewise to the "box of life," were swung to the rim, viewed by physicians, placed in sealed containers and sent at once to Hilo. The tragedy had aroused such interest that six hundred automobiles had arrived from Hilo, and over a thousand persons had visited the scene.

Sheriff Henry K. Martin and Deputy Sheriff Peter N. Pakele, Jr., told me I deserved the words of congratulation offered me, and that evening I was the guest of honor at a Volcano House dinner where the white people hailed me as Pele's friend. Had I not removed the bodies from her fiery threshold?

The Hawaiians, however, were gratified to think that the uncertain temper of their fire-goddess had withstood its unprecedented test.

After lying for days in the smoking crater, the broken remains of the victims of Hilo's love-tragedy were laid to rest in Homelani cemetery. I am glad to have been able to give the parents of those young people the slight comfort it was possible for them to have.

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ILLUSION: A boy is bound and thrust into a small basket. Seizing a sword the fakir plunges it into the basket. He jumps up and down as proof that the basket is *empty!* The boy then steps out of the basket, unhurt.

EXPLANATION: The nimble assistant curls around the *side* of the basket for the sword-and-jumping act. He guides the sword past himself and into the opposite wall of the basket.

SOURCE: *"Illustrated Magic" by Ottokar Fischer, translated and edited by J. B. Mussey and Fulton Oursler, The Macmillan Company, New York.*

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IT'S FUN TO BE FOOLED ...IT'S MORE FUN TO KNOW

One of the nimblest tricks of cigarette advertisin is the illusion that "Heat Treatment" confer mysterious virtues upon a cigarette.

EXPLANATION: *All* cigarette manufacturers us heat treatment. It is a routine process of manufac ture. Harsh, raw, inferior tobaccos require co siderably more intensive treatment than choic ripe tobaccos.

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