

February

15 cents

# BLUE BOOK

An illustrated magazine of Adventure, Mystery and Humor



*Two Important New Features*  
by George F. Worts and H. Bedford-Jones.  
Edgar Rice Burroughs, Beatrice Grimshaw

# *Read—if You Want Really to Live*

**D**ONALD RICHBERG, a man who has within a year deservedly won unique national distinction, recently gave significant testimony concerning the value of reading. It seems to us that his words merit repetition here. Said Mr. Richberg:

“Without reading a man can see only a small part of the world. He can enjoy a fraction of the experience of living. The world is too vast and complicated, it covers too much time and space, to be explored physically by any one alone.

“A man or woman who would know something of the world must travel mentally with thousands of companions through lands he will never see with his own eyes. He must journey back through history and live with Homer and Caesar in Greece and Rome. He must read the prophets of the Old Testament, and the romances of Walter Scott.

“He must suffer with *Père Goriot* in Paris, or learn the way of all flesh with the *Pontifex* family in England. He must adventure in strange lands seeking some treasure island far from the crowded highways of civilization. He must even set his mind free from the prison of reality and wander hand in hand with *Alice* in her fantastic Wonderland.

“A man must read books in order to understand the values as well as the possibilities of the world in which he lives. What is the value of human effort and achievement? How can you tell if you know nothing of the long struggle upward of human life from slime and savagery into the glory and spiritual beauty of human creativeness today?

“Read what interests you; not to be bored, but to be entertained; not to be instructed unless you actually want to learn.”

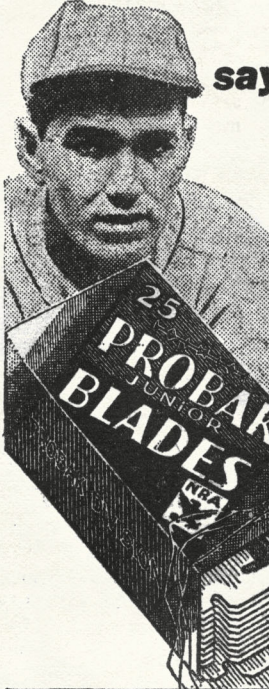
Each month Blue Book strives to give you fiction that will “interest you—not to be bored, but to be entertained.” The pages of this issue speak for themselves. You may look forward in the next number to specially worth-while stories by Achmed Abdullah, Beatrice Grimshaw, George F. Worts, H. Bedford-Jones, James Francis Dwyer and other able authors.

—*The Editor.*

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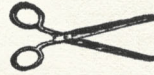
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# BLUE BOOK



FEBRUARY, 1935

MAGAZINE

VOL. 60, NO. 4

## *Eight Exceptional Short Stories*

- Arms and Men** By H. Bedford-Jones 6  
All down the ages new weapons have continually conquered the old. This fascinating series begins with the first use of flint in, "The Spear of Gleaming Willow."
- The Madness of Horseface Maud** By George F. Worts 18  
The first of a fine group of Western stories by the noted author of "The Phantom President."
- The Final Splendor** By Jacland Marmur 29  
A writer new to these pages contributes a sea story you will not soon forget.
- Stumble-bum** By Kingsley Moses 38  
He was an artillery horse—and his gallant heart won forgiveness for his mistakes.
- The Lost Sniff** By Arthur K. Akers 48  
Bugwine Breck takes a job as hotel detective—and hell pops in that hostelry.
- The Murder at Dark Lake** By Robert R. Mill 56  
A specially interesting case handled by Tiny David of the State police.
- They Hunt—No More** By Beatrice Grimshaw 88  
Another of those poignant South Sea dramas that have made this writer famous.
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A spirited tale of the range country by a cowboy writer who knows it well.

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To one of the moons of Mars via a space-ship. . . . Seized by the invisible Tarids.

## *A Spirited Novelette*

- Mystery on Indian Key** By Leland Jamieson 110  
A lively adventure with the Coast Guard air patrol.

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- Pants Costs Money** By Eric Hammond Manring 129  
A tenderfoot in Idaho teaches a tough pony to behave.
- Reeling Round the World** By Jack Glenn 132  
This reader financed a world tour with a motion-picture camera.
- Rammed!** By V. S. Godfrey 138  
Aboard a British submarine attacked by a destroyer.
- Fire Back-stage** By Joe Lippman 140  
Caught high in the scene-loft by a theater fire.
- The Modoc Massacre** By Maurice Fitz-Gerald 143  
A first-hand story of the Lava Beds tragedy.

*Except for stories of Real Experience, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.*

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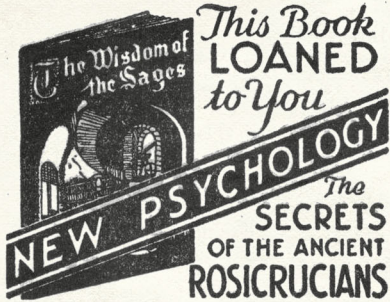
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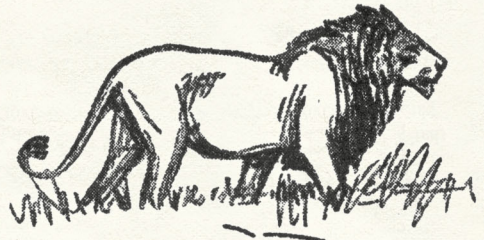
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**A Naturalist's  
By WALTER J.**

**L**IONS have always intrigued me. Many hours, year after year, I have been trying to capture their forms with brush or pencil.

In 1933 I had a very exciting time sketching lions. My blacks built a *machan*, or platform, in a tree for me and we placed a kill near by to attract lions. Three of them came, falling upon the dead kongoni bait in the ravenous manner of their kind. Aware of my presence, they gave vent to their dislike by vicious growls and by charging toward the *machan*, to scare me away. I was scared, all right; but no one but a madman would have descended while they were below.

One old male was particularly savage. He ran into cover and I thought he had deserted; then, without warning, he came roaring at me, and it seemed as though he would leap into the *machan*, which was built far too low. I shot into the ground in front of him to keep him away, but I had to spend the night in that *machan*, not daring to descend. It was bitter cold, and I sat wrapped in a blanket, listening to the cracking of bones, tearing of flesh and deep-throated growls, as the lions fought over the kill. The next day I had to kill the old male when he made a vicious charge, or he would surely have leaped on me in the *machan*.

One expects things like that in Africa, but is not prepared to risk one's life with lions in America. Yet in the training quarters of a circus I had some exciting moments with a lion.

The trainer had a new lion act and wanted me to make some sketches and photographs of it for advertising. I accordingly entered the arena with him, where four black-maned lions were already seated on their props.

Having obtained the pictures, the trainer asked me to remain where I was, seated on one of the props, while he opened the dens. No keeper being about, he asked a yard-man,





# Sketchbook

WILWERDING

named Ernie, to stand by the door with a rod, so the lions wouldn't rush the door while the trainer went down the runway to open the dens.

Ernie came into the arena, standing stiffly at attention with the long iron bar in his hands. As soon as the trainer left, Nero, a huge Barbary lion, jumped from his pedestal and walked to where I was seated. Doubts about him raced through my mind, but I steeled myself to remain where I was. So there I sat, while he sniffed at my legs and then placed his chin on my knee to look long and coldly into my eyes. I wanted to climb up the bars, but instead I sat and out-stared him, until he turned with regal dignity and walked toward Ernie.

I was greatly relieved until I looked at Ernie, and discovered that he was frightened as no man that I had ever looked upon. "Nero!" he screamed, ashen of face and beside himself with fear. "Keep back there, keep back there!" With this he started to swing the iron bar to ward the lion off. If that bar struck Nero, I knew he would bat it aside like a feather, and then hell would have been loose in that arena. As calmly as I could I told the wildly agitated man to stop swinging the bar and remain quiet.

It must have taken a tremendous effort of will to stand there quietly, frightened as he was, but somehow he managed it. Nero just looked at him disdainfully, while he spread his great front paws before him to stretch mightily, opening his fang-armed jaws to yawn.


Soon the lions were bounding down the runway to their cages, and it was with great relief that I saw the last tufted tail disappear. Ernie now turned to me excitedly, saying: "You're a hero—you're a hero; I was never in the arena before, and I was scared to death!"

"You're the hero, Ernie," I said.



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## A PRIZE OFFER

**T**HE truth that is stranger than fiction; the hour so crowded with excitement that it shines bright before all others in memory—these are tremendously interesting to everyone. For this reason The Blue Book Magazine prints each month in our Real Experience Department (beginning on Page 129 of this issue) a group of true stories contributed by our readers. And for this department we are glad to receive true stories of real experience, told in about 2,000 words; and for each of the five best of these we will pay fifty dollars.

In theme the stories may deal with adventure, mystery, sport, humor,—especially humor!—war or business. Sex is barred. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Real Experience Editor, the Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. Preferably but not necessarily they should be typewritten, and should be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope for use in case the story is unavailable.

A pen name may be used if desired, but in all cases the writer's real name and permanent address should accompany the manuscript. Be sure to write your name and correct address in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your story, and keep a copy as insurance against loss of the original; for while we handle manuscripts with great care, we cannot accept responsibility for their return. As this is a monthly contest, from one to two months may elapse before you receive a report on your story.



# Arms

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

**Y**OU know, scenes and things throw me into queer mental fantasies at times. Call it mental suggestion, psychic aura, too much mince pie—what you will. Once a little bronze elephant

studded with crystal gave me a mental flash of a man dying at sea. Absurd? No; it turned out to be absolutely true. Things like that.

One day I drove down the Coachella Valley to get some pollen for my date-trees. It was fairly warm, about a hundred and six. I got a puncture, and ran the car off the road into one of the bays under the jutting peaks. Then I stripped and went to work.





*One of America's ablest writers here gives you the first thrill-filled story of a brilliant series which follows the development of fighting mankind's weapons down the ages.*

# *and Men*

## I—The Spear of Gleaming Willow

This was all ocean once, this valley the bed of an ancient sea; the sand is composed half of tiny shells, and along the sides of the peaks you can see the old sea-level. There are fish-traps in the rocks, where the aborigines of probably a few million years ago caught fish. Perhaps you know the big Coral Reef ranch down there. No coral, of course, but a good name. And the isolated peaks were all islands once, the longer ranges run-

ning back into the mainland where the orange groves now run to Los Angeles.

My work done, I strolled along the line of ancient shore, idly seeking fossils or aught else. I found nothing. I started back to the car. And there, fifty yards from what had been the old tide-mark, I picked up a flint—as though some one had thrown it out to sea, or had drowned with it in hand. A queer big flint it was, very little worked. As I held it, and

looked back along the huge crags to the flank of San Jacinto, it seemed that I had stood here before, in some other life. A familiar flash came to me. I suddenly knew how this flint came to be where I found it; the name of Gleaming Willow rose in my mind. I could see her.

**S**HE was a superb creature, this Gleaming Willow. Tall and beautiful with her wealth of reddish-gold hair, she was strong withal, so strong that when she ran down one of the little three-toed horses on the plains to the east, she could tear the animal apart with her bare hands before devouring it. She had stark, wide blue eyes, and her mouth was like a flame of fire. No wonder that all men desired her!

She fought their desire savagely. Old Stone-cleaver, who lived in a hole above the flint beds and was wondrous rich, had sought to beguile her with gifts; even now she wore girded about her body a fragment of mammoth-skin he had bestowed on her. It was thick and shaggy red, and few claws could pierce it. But Stone-cleaver? Bah! He sat there all day working out round knobs of rock and bits with a straight, sharp edge, wherewith women could scrape and treat skins, and he was old.

Tiger-killer wanted her—he, the giant who could wield an enormous club that battered down any other man alive. It was he who had found a saber-tooth tiger caught in the pitch bed over toward the coast, and hammered the life out of the huge beast with his club. A great deed, that, but Tiger-killer was a growling, inarticulate creature, not much better than the beasts he slew.

So Gleaming Willow fled from them all, fled here into the savage hills near the sea, and was at peace for a while.

She had weapons, the best that men knew. A long straight spear of hard wood, its point rounded down finely and hardened in the fire. With it a foot-long splinter of wood that could drive into the heart of a man or beast—a miniature spear for close work; and a club, knotted and brutal. Tiger-killer would have laughed at this club, as indeed he did before long, but it served her well enough.

They would come after her, she knew; but the future worried her little.

Here in these savage hills were few people or none. There were strange beasts that came crawling up out of the sea, and enormous lizards of varied

kinds, and reptiles. These made the best of food. She did not go near the great ledges where her people came twice or thrice a year to trap fish in the stone pits; the fish were not running now, and Tiger-killer might look for her there.

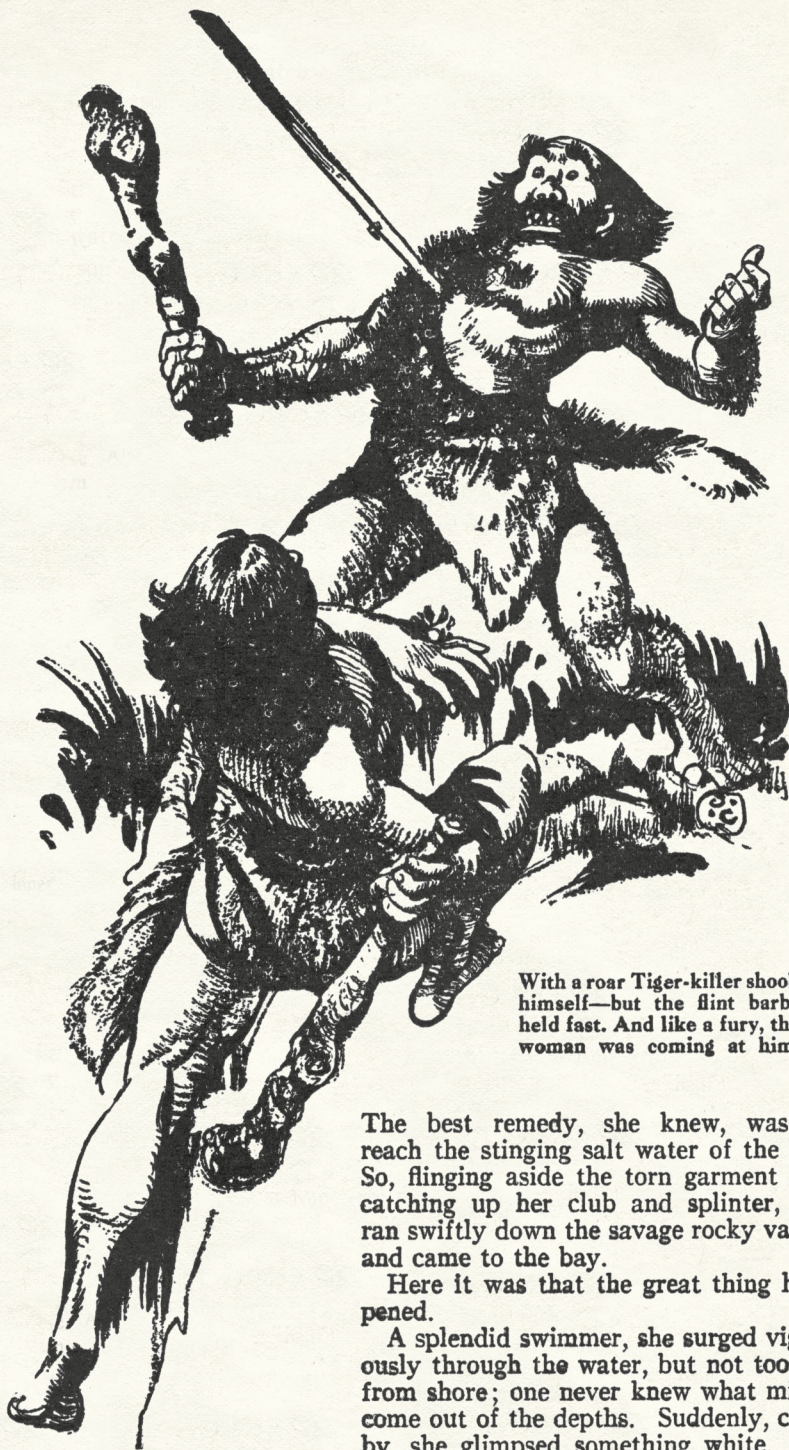
Two nights before the great thing happened, she wakened suddenly. She was in a shallow cave she had found, and the danger-sense brought her wide awake. Moonlight filled the night and penetrated into the cave, and she was aware of a man stooping to seize her. Thinking it Tiger-killer at last, she caught up the wooden splinter in a frantic spasm of fear, and drove it through that man again and again. He coughed and staggered outside, and sank down there, without a blow. He was a stranger, and no great fighter.

She came out and stared at him as he sat, the life bleeding out of him. He looked up at her, and she was astonished by his expression; it held no passion, no hatred, no snarling lust to give her death for death. Instead, he was smiling, and he held out one hand to her and spoke in a strange language. Then he died, very quickly. She lifted the body and carried it into the next valley, so that it would not attract the wolves, and found a pouch around his neck on a thong.

In the pouch was a queer stone, flat, pointed, large as the palm of her hand. Just as Stone-cleaver worked the edges of his scrapers, this stone had been worked, but nearly all over its surface on both sides. Evidently the strange man had done it, and had not quite finished his task. But the point and edges were very sharp.

**N**EXT day and the next, Gleaming Willow played often with this stone, studied it, tried to comprehend its use. On the second afternoon two of the huge scavenger wolves scented out her refuge and came for her. She held them off with her spear. The trouble with this weapon was that while its round sharp point drove into an animal, unless she could make a home thrust and actually impale a beast, he would draw off the point.

And with these two huge six-foot creatures, she had no time to make a home thrust. At last she got the spear fairly into one ravening throat, drove it home, and leaped back to seize her club. As she did so, the second beast was upon her, fastened its teeth in the mammoth-hide,



With a roar Tiger-killer shook himself—but the flint barbs held fast. And like a fury, the woman was coming at him.

The best remedy, she knew, was to reach the stinging salt water of the sea. So, flinging aside the torn garment and catching up her club and splinter, she ran swiftly down the savage rocky valley and came to the bay.

Here it was that the great thing happened.

A splendid swimmer, she surged vigorously through the water, but not too far from shore; one never knew what might come out of the depths. Suddenly, close by, she glimpsed something white. Instinctively she swerved, turned like a flash for shore. She remembered the queer white thing with long arms like snakes that had come, one day.

Looking back over her shoulder, she saw that this was merely some floating object. She turned and cautiously headed for it. Then she found it was a man.

and bore her backward. But she had her club.

There was a bad two minutes for Gleaming Willow. Only that tough mammoth-hide saved her; as it was, she was pretty well clawed and cut up before she beat out the brains of the foaming brute.

He was on his back, moving very feebly, his eyes open. Still alive, then, but little more. A queer sound came from his lips; she did not understand the words. Astonishment and curiosity seized upon her, for she had never seen a man like this one. Catching him under one shoulder, she struck out for shore.

When she got him landed safely on the rocky beach, he had fainted dead away. She examined him with growing interest. He was of a new and strange people. Sunburned and yet white, even whiter than she was, he had hair of a golden yellow—and no beard. No beard! She could not get over her amazement. His hair had been burned off, but the beard seemed to have been plucked out. Something clean and wonderful about that chin, like the chin of a boy. And the smooth cheeks were fascinating.

With a laugh, she picked him up and carried him toward her cave. He had been in the water a long time, for his skin was puckered and shrunk, and his short hair when the sun had dried it, was thick with salt. He had been badly clawed and torn, also.

Once home, she got rid of the wolves, hurried over the hill and located a fat four-foot lizard, and bashed in its head. With this for food, she collected wood and hurried home again to get the fire-stick to work.

Darkness came down upon her efforts. The stranger had not wakened. She passed her hand delightedly over his smooth cheeks and chin, laughed at the play of the firelight on his short curly hair, and finally shook him into life. He sat up, only to fall back again weakly. She fed him, gave him water, tended him like a baby. Then she found that he was asleep again, and this angered her unreasonably.

He did not waken, indeed, until the next daylight flooded into the cave.

SHE found another strange thing in him; he was full of laughter. Life had not wrought him into a tense, nervous creature, like the men she knew. He had an effortless ease about him, a slow, unhurried enjoyment of things. When his gray eyes widened on her and a smile came to his face, Gleaming Willow laughed aloud and clapped her hands. Then the two of them finished the big lizard.

Still, the stranger remained terribly weak. When he tried to walk, Gleaming Willow caught him as he reeled, and

set him down gently. She sat beside him, and when he laughed, she tried to get his name. But neither of them could understand the other.

"All right," she said, with a shrug. She had donned her mammoth-hide again, and he evidently recognized the shaggy red wool for what it was; it brought wonder to his eyes. "Your name is Laughter, my friend. Laughter!"

She made signs, laughed, finally caused him to understand that it was his name. He broke into a peal of mirth and accepted it. Then he inquired hers; she was at a loss to make him understand, for there were no trees hereabout. He made his own name for her—Sunlight. Presently she comprehended this, and they laughed together.

This was the beginning.

HER interest grew, mingled with curiosity. She could make nothing of the tale he told, nor of the signs he gave, nor of what he scratched in the dust. There was no clue, and it remained a blank to her. He had queer ways. She brought up fish, and he refused to eat until it was cooked. This was new; she had never heard of cooking fish. Once tasted, she liked it.

She liked him, too. When night drew down, it was cold. Her little store of skins was scanty; those of the two wolves were not yet ready for use, of course. She stretched out beside him and tickled his ears, and took joy in his laughter. It was like being a child again with her own brothers and sisters. He was no passionate wild beast like those she had left behind. They fell asleep hand in hand, like two children.

Day found him able to walk a little, but it was evident that his weakness would be slow to pass.

Now their food was gone. She must forage, bring in nuts and green things; this meant a day-long hunt, and she feared to leave him. This was no safe place, and he was too weak to use the club. As she worried over the matter, she caught sight of the strange flat stone lying on the floor of the cave.

He too was a stranger; he might know! She showed him the stone. He fingered it blankly and shook his head to her inquiries. She caught it and flung it down angrily.

"What good are you after all, you helpless baby!" she fumed at him. Laughing, he caught hold of her. For an instant, amazing strength flowed into

those smooth, rippling arms of his; under his quick, firm grip she felt a keen joyous panic. Then his hands relaxed and he fell back against the cave wall, still laughing. She had caught her spear and drove the point at his breast, in gusty anger. He parried the blow, caught hold of the smooth pointed wood, and examined it with a frown, suddenly absorbed in it.

"Well?" she demanded impatiently. "Have you never seen a spear before?"

He shook his head, made gestures, and vainly endeavored to tell her his thought. It was impossible for her to grasp what was in his mind. She thought he wanted another spear, and with a leap was gone out of the cave. She had seen a straight length of tree, a sapling, floating at the shore the previous night.

With this she returned, and proffered it. Laughter frowned, puzzled. After some time she made him comprehend why she had brought it. This amused him, and his amusement infuriated her. She knocked him flat, stood over him, upbraided him at the top of her voice; then she drew back. Instead of flying into a rage, he so evidently admired her that she felt helpless. He caught hold of her hand, examined it attentively, then pressed his lips to it and laughed, as he looked up into her eyes.

She caught up club and spear, put the splinter of wood into his hand for weapon, and with a significant gesture went away at a dead run.

A kiss! In that first moment, she could have clubbed him for such an insult. She had seen couples mouthing one another; a disgusting thing to do. Even the wild men did not do that—the all-hairy wild men who scarce walked erect. As she ran, she rubbed her hand furiously; then she desisted.

What a lovely laugh he had, what glorious sunlit eyes! After all, a kiss

from those smooth, firm lips was **not** like the hairy osculation of the men she knew. There was a laugh in it, a sweetness in it. . . . Bah! She ran on and on, putting all these thoughts away from her. She was gloriously happy this morning despite that kiss. The earth was a new and better place. She looked back again and again, and waved her club in the direction of the cave, and went leaping on joyously. It was a long trip to the first trees and the edge of the forest, where the nuts were to be found.

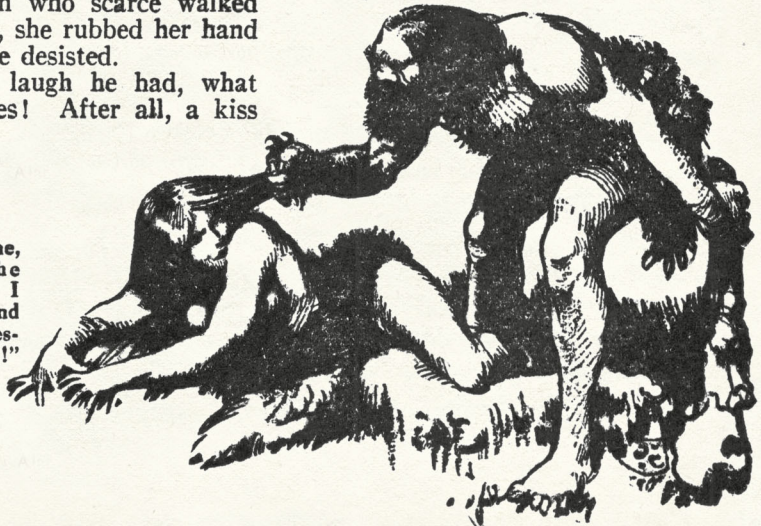
Noon found her among the trees, resting, a heavy load of nuts and green leaves in her discarded mantle that served as a sack. So far, she had found no fresh meat.

Suddenly she leaped fully erect, seizing her weapons, ready to fight or jump for the nearest tree. There was a riotous crashing in the brush. A deer burst forth, blind with panic, squarely in front of her—a doe. Instinctively, without the loss of an instant, Gleaming Willow swung with her club. The frightened doe swerved too late. That club smashed down and broke her neck, and she tumbled forward.

Then, in swift alarm, Gleaming Willow whirled around. Here was the cause of the beast's panic—a man, running. She knew him at once. It was Slyfoot, the friend and companion of Tiger-killer. Slyfoot the sneak, despised of all, treacherous—

"Gleaming Willow! So I've found you, eh?" cried out Slyfoot, coming to a halt and staring at her. From neck to hips he was girded in a long elk-hide garment. He carried a club, heavier

"Run away from me, would you?" he growled. "Well, I have you now; and I'll teach you a lesson or two, my girl!"





The stranger did not waken until the next daylight flooded the cave. Then the two finished the big lizard.

than her own, but had no spear. Like Tiger-killer, he was hairy; black, glossy with hair. Except for his beard, he might have passed for a wild man.

Gleaming Willow eyed him scornfully, yet with fear. Not of him, but because wherever Slyfoot was, Tiger-Killer was not far away.

"Come along back with me, woman," he said, licking his lips at the sight of her. "Do you know that Tiger-killer is looking for you?"

"Beast!" she spat out. "Get away from me."

"After you've killed my deer?" he jeered. "Hardly. I need that skin. It'll help to buy me Bigfoot's daughter."

"Foul beast!" she said, in cold anger. "I tell you to leave me."

"Ho! A woman talks thus to a man?" Slyfoot grinned at her. "You need a lesson, my pretty one. A good clubbing would do you good, and put you in the right shape for Tiger-killer to handle."

He slipped forward in his subtle, shifty fashion. But Gleaming Willow did not await the attack. She flew at him suddenly, ducked the swing of his club, sent her spear driving in for his waist. The spear went through the elk-hide mantle, true, but Slyfoot twisted away from it, and the wooden point slipped out, and his club swept down to catch her at the knees.

Swiftly she leaped over that cunning blow, leaped high and came to earth again, and her spear flicked out at him. Again it pierced the elk-hide, and this time reached the flesh beneath. A howl of agonized fury burst from Slyfoot. He wrenched clear of the hard wooden point, clutched the shaft in his rage, bit at it with his great teeth until the wood was gashed—and before he could evade, Gleaming Willow was upon him. Once his club went up, met hers, parried the blow; but the second crashing impact landed full on his skull. He whimpered once and fell over sidewise, and lay with one arm about his crushed head.

**G**LEAMING WILLOW drew back. A flicker of terror filled her eyes. A woman had killed a man in fight—ah! Then a laugh broke from her, and the fierce joy of victory was hers.

"So, beast! This will pay you for the time you crept up on me when I was asleep, and tried to make me take you for mate!" she cried out ringingly. "Take this message to Tiger-killer!"

She had a burden now—a tremendous burden, even for a woman of the shore people. Her own weapons, and the club of Slyfoot; a gift for Laughter, a trophy of her hand! And the sack of nuts and green food. Lastly, the body of the deer, which she slung about her shoulders with the sack.

She started away. Abruptly she halted, trembled, looked back. From somewhere in the trees rose the roaring voice of Tiger-killer:

"Slyfoot! Slyfoot, you slinking devil, where are you?"

Panic seized her. She turned and fled, with that gigantic roaring voice still in her ears. None the less she fled craftily, seeking the rocky ground where her feet would leave no tracks. And presently, away on the savage hillsides, she was toiling up a cañon with no sign of pursuit. A long way back to the cave, now; no haste about it.

She thought back on her fight. The spear angered her, it was so futile. Even when she speared fish, half of them fell off the straight pointed shaft. If the thing had only held in Slyfoot's mantle, she could have reached him easily with her club—halted him with the spear and then finished him. But it never held. It would pierce, and slip out.

Not until the sun was setting did she come staggering wearily up the rocky cañon to the cave. There was no spiral

of smoke; the fire was out, yet the ashes were still warm. Laughter was not here. Near the fire were splinters of wood, where teeth and stone had gashed a stick; she frowned at them, then rid herself of the burdens. Clothed again in her tough mammoth-hide garment, she set off to gather the sparse brush for a fire.

When she returned, Laughter was there, standing near the deer. She came running up, and he turned to her, his smiling features like sunlight in their welcome. Then he swung the stick in his hand, the stick she had fished out of the water. He drove it into the deer, tugged at it, straightened up and waved his hand gayly. Then he slumped over and lay quiet, watching her, weakness suddenly upon him.

She caught the stick to draw it forth, but could not. Amazed, she stared at it. The long shaft was solidly between the ribs of the deer. Only when she exerted all her great strength could she free it. She held up the point and saw what Laughter had done this day. In the wood, with teeth and sharp stone—the same flat stone the stranger had bequeathed her—he had wrought rough barbs in the pointed shaft. Barbs! She comprehended instantly. A simple and yet unheard-of thing. No one had ever done this before.

She flung herself upon him joyously, tumbled him like a puppy, roughed him about the ground in her delight; and, abruptly, realizing how weak he was, she caught his head and hugged it in sudden compassion, holding it against her breast.

Then, ashamed of her motherly instinct, she fell to work furiously.

**T**HEY feasted that night. She told him of the encounter; the thought of Tiger-killer worried her, drew anxiety into her eyes, but the tale of victory banished this. When he comprehended, and took the club she handed him, he put his arm about her and hugged her in delight, and put his lips to her bare arm. The kiss stung her—then she relaxed and laughed in his face, and repeated the name he had given her in his own tongue. Sunlight!

"Laughter!" said he, and together they broke into wild, joyous mirth. Then she thought of his spear, and examined it again, and showed him her own shaft, much stronger and better. He read the inquiry in her eyes and voice, and nodded.

"Tomorrow," he said. He had learned this word from her. "Tomorrow, Sunlight."

But the morrow was to hold something worse.

THEY had worked late, cutting up the deer, saving hide and sinew and all else. They slept late; when Sunlight—she had changed her name now, liking it—wakened, it was to an evil, deathly terror. The hand of Laughter was on her face. He cautioned her, helped her to sit up, and pointed. Then she heard the voice of Tiger-killer.

He was there, on the opposite hillside, staring around. At the sight of him, frantic terror seized her; she shoved closer to Laughter, trembling, and his arm enveloped her, held her close.

Tiger-killer! Seven feet tall, naked but for a clout of hide about his waist, black-haired, with huge massive beard, and that enormous club of his that no other man could swing. He slowly turned, looking about, not seeing the cave because he was facing the newly risen sun, and it blinded him. Then he was gone.

Instantly, Sunlight leaped to her feet. She was afraid, less for herself than for this splendid youth that she had saved from the sea. She knew Tiger-killer, she might even dare to cope with him; but he would kill Laughter as one pinches out a fly. Once himself, Laughter might well face the brute, for these smooth thews of his were like corded vines. Now he was weak. She must protect him. And she had the plan, in a flash.

She forgot everything save the man beside her. Seizing his hand, she ran with him, tugged at him, forced him along over the hillside and down to the shore. There, only a hundred yards away, was one of the naked, rocky islets that studded the coast. She knew Tiger-killer could not swim. Once over there, Laughter would be safe.

She tried to make him understand, and could not. So, turning, she plunged into the water and beckoned him. He followed, swimming after her lightly and easily. A few moments and they gained the islet. She emerged, led him across its jagged summit, and found a niche among the rocks on the seaward side. He sank down exhausted, and her arms crept around him in happy thanksgiving. He held her close, and his face touched hers, and she learned that a kiss might be, after all, thrilling and delightful.

Then, suddenly, she was up and on her feet. Food! Weapons! Everything had been left there in the cave. Life itself depended on those things. And water, too.

She made Laughter understand quickly enough. She must go back and get these things. With weapons, water and fire-stick, they could go on to one of the larger islands. There was no danger to her. Before this, she had escaped from Tiger-killer by water, and could do so again. To make Laughter comprehend this, was difficult, but at length he grudgingly acquiesced.

Together they went to the ragged ridge of rock and scrutinized the mainland. No sign of Tiger-killer anywhere; the coast was clear. Laughter held her close to him for one instant; her arms went around him, she looked into his gray eyes, laughed, touched her lips to his. Then she was gone like a bird, leaping over the rocks, diving headlong into the salt water and swimming for the shore beyond.

Once there, she looked back, saw Laughter, and gestured imperatively. He waved his hand and sank from sight. She turned and headed for the cañon over the ridge, with its cave. She had a scooped-out gourd there, to fetch water from the spring.

ON the dividing ridge, she paused, crept forward cautiously, and scouted the cañon. No sign of Tiger-killer anywhere; she breathed more freely, searched the surrounding rocks, found all secure. One last look at the island. Laughter was gone from sight. Then she ran for the cañon floor, and the cave. Best get it done swiftly, swiftly!

Everything was as they had left it. There was the notched spear Laughter had made, and the club she had brought him, outside. The other things were inside. Sunlight stooped for the low, small entrance, started in. Something moved in the darkness—something dark and huge. Something shot out and took a terrific grip on her ankle.

The hand of Tiger-killer! He had been waiting, there in the cave!

She was flung off balance. Still gripping her, he shot through the entrance, almost too small for his huge body. A whimper of sheer panic came from her; then she tried to fight him off, bare-handed. Her teeth met in his biceps. He hammered sense into her, beat her face away, thudded huge hands and feet into



her; before his awful brute strength, she was helpless.

She lay in his grip, relaxed, bleeding, panting. Tiger-killer peered at her with his cruel little eyes. A spark of angry red fire glimmered in them, then died away; he passed one of his great paws over her smooth body, and she shrank.

"Run away from me, would you?" he growled, seizing her roughly by the hair. "Well, I have you now; and I'll teach you a lesson or two, my girl!"

"Beast!" she spat. "Wild man!"

He grunted. "You're the wild one, my girl. Who's this mate you've taken? Where is he? Hiding somewhere from me, eh? I saw the sign; you've got a man here, right enough. He's the one who killed Slyfoot and took his club, eh?"

"You lie!" she cried hotly. "I killed Slyfoot myself."

Tiger-killer rumbled out a scornful laugh. "Yes, likely you did! Well, I'm going to get this man of yours, and tear the arms and legs out of him, do you understand? Right in front of you. I'll get him! But first, I'll eat, with thanks to you. Get in there!"

He hurled her at the cave entrance. She struck and fell heavily. He shoved her in, followed her, and dragged the food and the gourd of water outside. After a moment she heard him grunting and heaving; then a tremendous rock came rolling down, and with it Tiger-killer blocked the cave entrance.

"Get that away if you can!" he growled. "I'll be back presently."

She heard him eating outside, gorging himself on the deer and the nuts she had won; fury seized her, and she flung herself at the jagged rock. She could not budge it, and Tiger-killer laughed at her puny efforts. As he ate, he described in detail what would happen when he came back with her mate.

Then he went away.

**D**AYLIGHT crept in around the top of the barrier. For a little, Sunlight lay in miserable futility; she was caught, helpless to act, trapped by the cunning of this huge brute. Thought of his face, the matted beard over his chest, the animal smell, brought a sickening revolt to her mind. Somehow she must fight him! Her weapons were here, but they were of no avail against this monster.

She sat up. Yes, there was her club. And her spear—what was that? She stiffened, and her eyes widened. The

smooth, sharp point was broken off. Tiger-killer must have broken it while he waited. And the broken end of the shaft was lying by sheer chance on that queer flat stone she had taken from the stranger.

She reached out, drew back her hand, stared at it; in her brain something was stirring strangely. As the spear-head lay on the flint, the latter suddenly took on shape. It was a perfect point, and on either side were barbs—barbs! Why, the unknown stranger must have meant it for this very purpose! It would make a head for the shaft, a head with barbs, a keen pointed head that would tear through flesh and hold fast—if it could be fastened to the spear shaft. The unfinished portion below the barbs—

"Oh!" she cried suddenly. "Oh! It can, it can! The sinew from the deer!"

**S**HE picked up her spear. Then all her wild exultation died out, and a groan of sorrow fell from her lips. Not only had Tiger-killer broken off the point but he had split the shaft. He must have smashed it against the wall of the cave. The wood was split. It was useless.

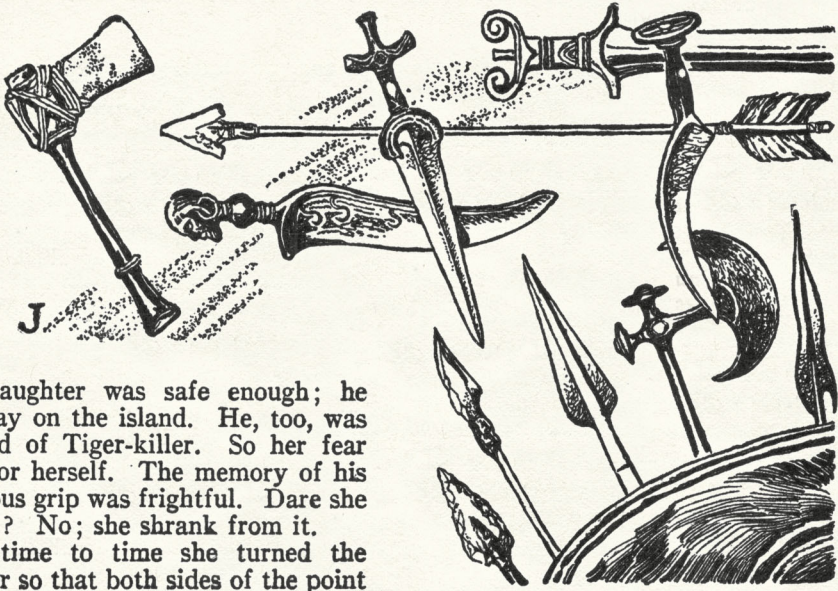
She mourned over it. She had loved this spear; it had taken her days and days of hard work to make it. She took up the flint point, held it against the wood. She forced it between the split ends—

Her heart turned over for an instant. Her pulses leaped.

Why, it was in place! If it could be held there, the split wood tied together with sinew, strongly wrapped—the very thing! Eager, incoherent words came from her. She fell to work avidly, feverishly. The sinew was not dry, but so much the better. Those strong fingers of hers drew it taut, stretched it about and about the point and the shank.

She worked, careless of time. When she had finished, she held up the weapon. What a weapon it was! Why, with this one might even hope to meet Tiger-killer—she flinched even at the thought. Terror of the great brute was ingrained in her. No; at best, she could hope only somehow to trick him and get out of his grasp. Still, here was a new weapon, a wonderful thing, a creation! And the flint point was sharp.

She stuck it up above the boulder, in the few inches of space left there, so that the hot sun would dry and shrink the sinew. Then she settled down to



wait. Laughter was safe enough; he would stay on the island. He, too, was frightened of Tiger-killer. So her fear was all for herself. The memory of his tremendous grip was frightful. Dare she fight him? No; she shrank from it.

From time to time she turned the spear over so that both sides of the point got the sun. At sight of the firmly fixed point, delight filled her. Ah, if she had only had this weapon yesterday! Those flint barbs once set between the ribs of Slyfoot, she would have had an easy conquest. With a bear, a huge dog, with any animal, it would be the same. That long spear-shaft fastened to his body, and she would have him.

But not Tiger-killer. The very ferocity of his strength made one's heart chill.

At long last, she heard him outside. He had been running; he was panting in hot breaths like a dog. She snatched away the spear out of sight, left it on the floor, as he set his strength against the huge boulder and dislodged it, so that the opening was clear.

"Come out, you wild woman!" he growled at her. "Time for your lesson."

She peered forth. Then horror fell upon her, for she heard her name called, and it was the voice of Laughter. Tiger-killer whirled about. There, down the cañon, was coming Laughter, with no weapon but a jagged rock in either hand.

"Sunlight!" he called. "Sunlight!"

He saw Tiger-killer, of course, was coming toward him. A cry broke from Sunlight. Frantic, she warned him away, shouted at him to get gone. He did not understand her, but Tiger-killer did, and caught up his club.

"So this is your mate, eh?" he grunted. "All right, wild woman. Watch."

"No, no!" In a frenzy of fear, she leaped from the cave, flew at him. Tiger-killer struck her down with one careless paw. From Laughter broke a wild and furious cry. He started forward.

Too well she knew what would be the end of this matter. Tiger-killer was used to the wild men who threw stones; he hunted them down for sheer fun. Then Sunlight remembered her new weapon, her club, and darted back into the cave. She caught them up and leaped forth with a wild shout at Laughter to stand back. Fear for him, not for herself, was upon her now.

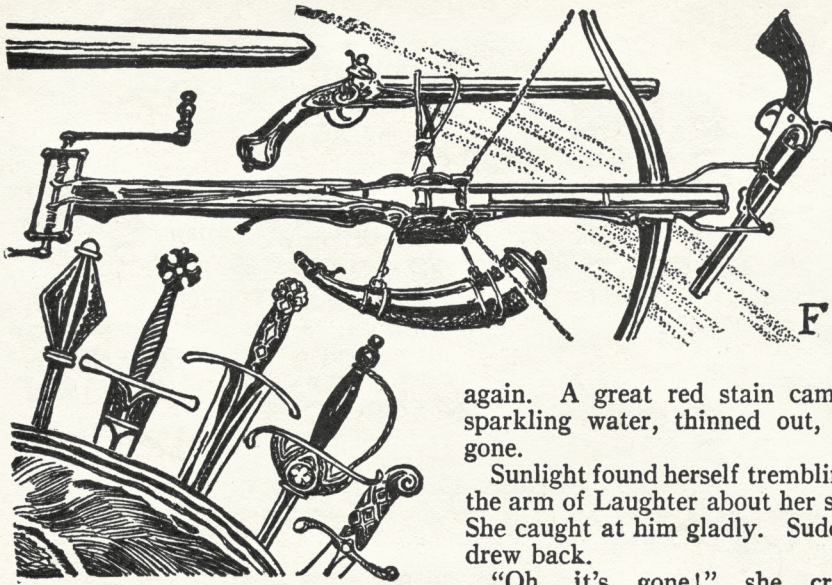
Tiger-killer glimpsed her, whirled about, stared in furious incredulity as she rushed for him. Then, with a great roar, he started for her. He could finish her before Laughter could get to the spot. Like the roar of an aurochs was his tremendous voice, and he came at her straight, terribly, his club waving.

And she met him, desperate. Met him in midleap. Met him with the spear thrust out, driving it at him with all her weight behind it.

Craftily, Tiger-killer swerved a little to let the round hard point of wood slip past his shoulder. But it did not slip from his tough hide. It bit. It slashed into the hide and the flesh beneath. He was halted in his rush. With a roar of mingled pain and fury, he shook himself, drew back, got his left hand on the shaft and tugged—it was easy enough to slip off these skewers.

But he did not slip off. The flint barbs held fast in him. And like a fury, the woman was coming in at him with her club swinging.

Roar upon roar burst from him. He swung for her with his club, but the spear-shaft hampered him. She thrust



at it and nearly swung him off balance. His blow missed—and her club smashed him between the eyes and bore him back. Again he swung for her. This time, she dodged the blow easily. She caught the spear-shaft and threw her weight on it, and as he staggered, she came in. Her club drove him on his right elbow, smashed the joint, and the great knotted weapon slid out of his hand. Again she swung and again smote him in the forehead.

Tiger-killer rocked. Blood streamed down over his face and beard. He was blinded, and the spear twisted in him terribly. He tore at it with his left hand, and tore the shank clear of the point. But the barbed point remained in him. Free of the thing, he turned and burst into a run, blindly, frantically.

Sunlight darted after him. Now she must finish him! Roar upon roar of pain broke from the great staggering figure. He rushed up over the ridge, and she was close upon him when she was suddenly aware of Laughter coming up beside her, clutching at her, halting her. He pointed, and she stood there panting, staring.

Tiger-killer rushed on, frantic, out of his head, a horrible thing on two legs. He went down the slope, headlong at the water. He reached it, hurled himself into it, seeking only relief from his agony. He floundered, sent the spray leaping up, ran out through the shallows, went down. Once he came up, then vanished

again. A great red stain came in the sparkling water, thinned out, and was gone.

Sunlight found herself trembling, found the arm of Laughter about her shoulders. She caught at him gladly. Suddenly she drew back.

"Oh, it's gone!" she cried out. Laughter questioned her with his quick gray eyes. "The point! The flint—" she pointed out at the water where Tiger-killer had vanished. She swung around suddenly, and a glory of laughter and exultation leaped into her bruised face. "But we'll go back and find Stone-cleaver! I'll tell him what to do. He can make us another, half a dozen others! Oh, Laughter, we'll be lords of all the earth, you and I, with such weapons!"

He nodded, laughed, drew her joyously to him. She perceived that he did not comprehend her words or her idea; no matter! She would not forget. She had found the first weapon—for her man.

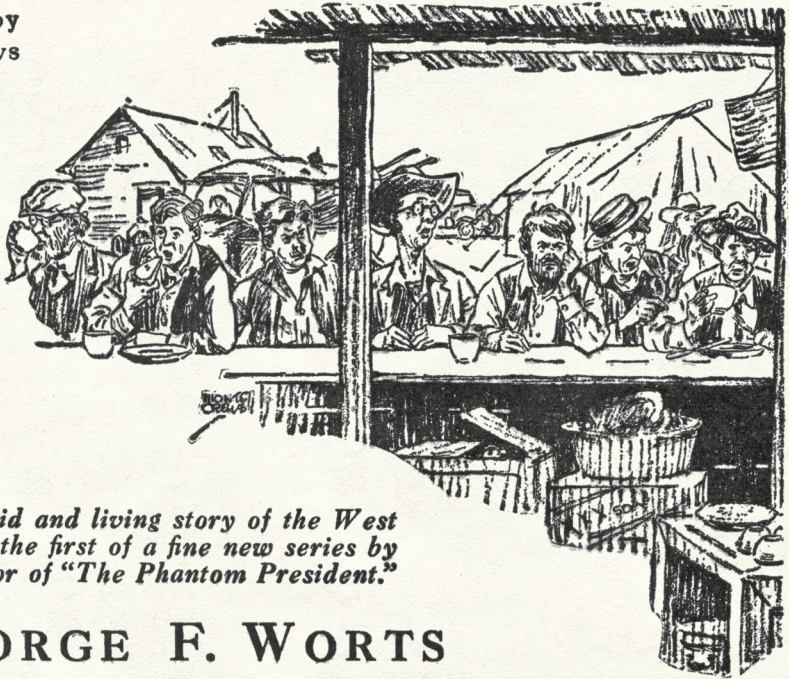
SO I found the weapon lying there, where it had fallen from the rotted body of Tiger-killer. The ages had left it for me; the sea had rolled back and become a stark and naked desert. The worked stone in my hand still lived and breathed of ancient days.

Lived and breathed? Yes. There is life in stone, in minerals, even molecular life. I took it home with me, and turned it over to the strangest man I know—old Martin Burnside, who is a pagan, a mystic, a collector of ancient weapons and queer things connected with them. He took it, heard my story, and cackled at me with a glance over his spectacles:

"And you think that is queer, my friend? You don't know the half of it," he said, shaking his head. "Wait! Wait till I show you some of my things—"

The second vivid story of this unique series, "The Iron Knife," will appear in our forthcoming March issue.

Illustrated by  
Monte Crews



*This vivid and living story of the West today is the first of a fine new series by the author of "The Phantom President."*

By **GEORGE F. WORTS**

# The Madness of

**H**ORSEFACE MAUD TACKABERRY plunged her strong brown hands into the dishpan full of bread-dough and bellowed:

*Oh, gimme a land where the bright diamond sand*

*Flows lee-surely down the clear streams,  
And a gur-raceful white swan goes a-glidin' along,*

*Like a maiden in heavenly dreams—*

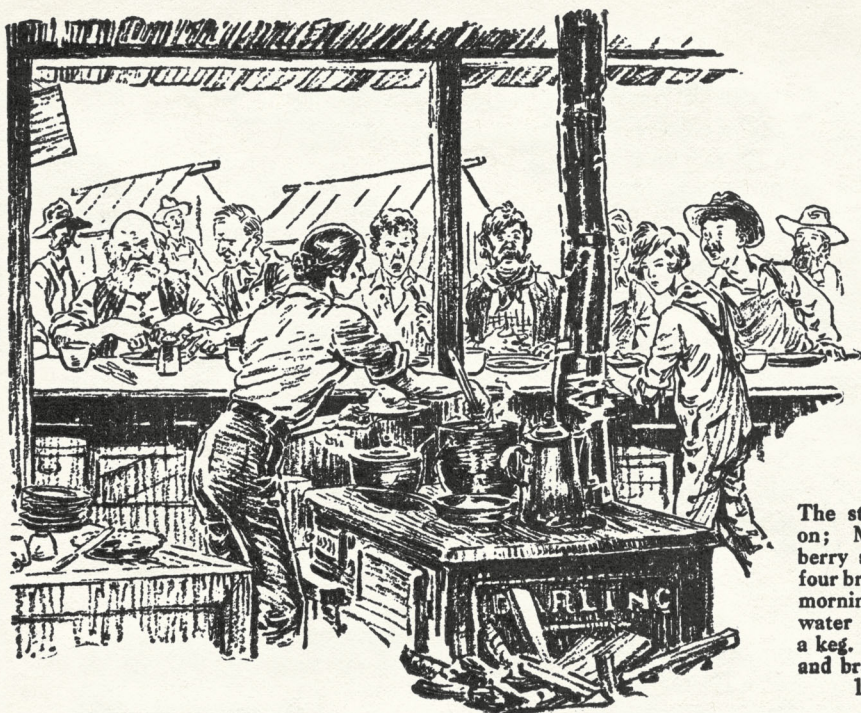
Certain of life's ironies could always get Mrs. Tackaberry down; and she felt better if she boomed into song. Being short of grub was one of these ironies. Any blow to her pride was another. Blueness gave her a homesick longing for the green whispering cornfields of Kansas—which, she periodically reminded herself, she had been a sucker to leave.

She was in revolt this morning against life in Gold Valley—a pretty name, she brooded, that didn't mean a doggone' thing. What good did the rising price of gold do you, if you couldn't find the gold?

In thirty-one years of chasing from gold-boom to gold-boom with her talented husband Tellurium Tackaberry, Horse-

face Maud had seen nuggets the size of your fist, she'd seen a tail of coarse gold stretching halfway round the pan, she'd seen high-grade ore with raw gold sticking out of it like corn on a cob. But it hadn't been Tellurium's gold. She'd seen excited men armed with bottles of whisky and rolls of bills you couldn't plug into a horse-collar, counting out thousands for claims near the strikes. But none of it went into Tellurium's pockets. When booms grew feverish, he became a victim of dazzling visions. A claim he had valued at one hundred dollars would cost you ten thousand, cash, and by God, you could take it or leave it. Tellurium never came down, never sold his claims, never learned.

Horseface Maud was the grubstaker. In thirty-one years of rainbow-chasing she had called governors, millionaires, great geologists and famous gold-rush characters by their nicknames. She was a famous gold-rush character herself—this profane, booming-voiced, superlative cook. She was a tall, deep-chested woman, with powerful shoulders and flat hips, a torso developed in earlier years by working alongside her husband



The stampede was on; Mrs. Tackaberry served forty-four breakfasts next morning. She sold water for a dollar a keg. She sold pies and bread, beef and lumber.

# Horseface Maud

with pick and shovel. Her face was remarkable. It was long and thin, as brown and shiny as a well-used saddle, and would have been grim except for her close-set liquid brown eyes, and a little quirk at each corner of her long, muscular mouth. The lower lip usually caught a highlight at its outer edge; and this, with a slight pucker of her under eyelids, gave her an air of dauntless energy. Her cheekbones were high and prominent and always flushed. Her hair, brushed back and rolled into a bun, was still as brilliantly black as Chinese ink, although she was fifty-seven. She looked part-Indian, say one-sixty-fourth, but wasn't. She was pure plains stock. And her bark was sometimes worse than her bite.

She was proud of her face, her nickname and her reputation. She couldn't drive into a boom camp in her old Model-T stake-truck without a mob of hungry prospectors begging her to open up an eating-place. At the Johnny boom, she had served a good hot appetizing meal to fifty-three men two hours after her arrival—at six bits a head. That wasn't a record—it was a habit.

And that's where the money to finance Tellurium's everlasting hunt for gold had come from—not out of the ground, but from Horseface Maud's cook-shacks.

Gold Valley was Tellurium's personal find. Three years ago they had broken a road through the sagebrush and into this mountain vastness, and Tellurium had given it the name. Gold Valley would be a greater mining district than Goldfield or Virginia City—if somebody would only come in and open up something. You might have to dig deep for the values, but they were there—or geology was a liar!

Prospectors had come, found no gold, departed.

**S**INGING, Horseface Maud scooped dough from the sides of the pan, working the fragrant spongy mass in toward the middle. It was the last of the flour. There wasn't enough grub to last another week. Lately, the camp had subsisted chiefly on beans and Brigham tea, which is steeped from a desert herb. The lard was about gone. The deer, usually so plentiful, hadn't come down this spring, and the jackrabbits were too wormy to eat.



It was the last of the flour. There wasn't grub enough to last another week. . . . Mrs. Tackaberry bellowed: "Hey, baby!"

Outside the cook-shack, Tellurium was valiantly trying to wheedle a grubstake out of Walter Jernigen, a young rancher who had spent the week-end deer hunting, and was now starting for home. Walter didn't want to grubstake Tellurium, and Mrs. Tackaberry was ashamed of her husband's persistence.

With a sigh as gusty as a desert whirligig, she draped a clean dishtowel over the dough and set the dishpan on the wood-box.

Out the back window she saw her daughter Nevada, a thin, warmly tanned, tousle-headed girl of eighteen, bending over to pick up a pick and shovel. The patch on the seat of her overalls was worn so thin you could see the skin shining through.

The girl started toward the hill where she was digging a new location-hole. Nevada was her father's own daughter, a never-say-die prospector. But it wasn't, Horseface Maud reflected, putting any meat on her. The kid was downright skinny, and she should have had a sweet figure—she wasn't getting enough to eat.

Frowning, Mrs. Tackaberry bellowed: "Hey, baby!"

Nevada stopped and looked back. Her rose-and-brown coloring and her large blue eyes made her pretty in a wistful, haunting way, in spite of her thinness. Her eyes were the bright deep blue of cobalt crystals. Her thin brown hands clasped the handles of the pick and

the shovel. Her dark, wistful eyebrows were flat. Her lean little mouth was set with defiance.

"Yes, Mom?"

"Aint you sayin' so-long to Walt?"

"He was talking to Tellurium."

Wrinkles like countless rays of light appeared at the corners of Horseface Maud's liquid brown eyes. "That hole won't walk away. Don't be so shy. Walt's an awful nice boy."

"Shy!" Nevada cried. She laughed. Her mother recognized it as Nevada's silvery, tinkling laugh. It expressed exquisite disdain. "How perfectly absurd! Walter merely amuses me."

She threw down pick and shovel, tossed her raggedy brown head, and went to say good-bye to Walter. With a grin, Mrs. Tackaberry strode to the screen door.

Walter Jernigen, behind the wheel of his little green pick-up truck, looked unhappy. Tellurium leaned on the window, making gestures, talking rapidly, with one foot on the running-board—a position from which he couldn't politely be dislodged. Tellurium was a plump, hearty little man of sixty, with a round red amiable face, and the soft blue eyes of a dreamer. His pink head was bald except for a fringe which grew upward in white feathers. Most men had forgotten Tellurium's first name. He had acquired the nickname soon after the Goldfield boom by insisting he saw tellurium, which is a rare ore often carrying gold and silver, in every piece of pale gray quartz that he found. Tellurium's enthusiasm was honest, but he had too much of it.

"It's the strongest dike in the country," he was saying. "It's a true fissure vein, Walt. When we strike our values, they're gonna stay with us. This aint no water formation."

There were beads of sweat all over his pink dome. Talking a grubstake out of a man as experienced as young Walt Jernigen, was hard work.

WALT looked up as Nevada, a study in airy indifference, with hands in overall pockets, came around to the other window. She was blushing, and her eyes were a shining liquid blue. Horseface Maud suspected that neither Nevada nor Walter knew what was going on between them. But there was nothing you could do about it. Nevada had outgrown both dresses. A young man might fancy a girl, but fancy didn't become fact when he never saw the girl

in anything but oversize overalls, under-size shirts, and shoes that made her look like a movie comedian.

The unfairness made Maud Tackaberry feel lower than ever. What chance was there for a girl, even a pretty girl, in a place like Gold Valley, eighty miles from the nearest filling-station, when the only male, aside from her father, was blond, bow-legged, foxy Bob Trumpett?

TRUMPETT was lounging against the front fender, listening to Tellurium with his foxy-wise smile and watching Walter from the tails of his foxy-wise gray eyes. Aside from Tellurium, he was the only prospector who had faith in Gold Valley. Bob was forty-five. A good talker, he generally managed to keep himself grubstaked. His latest grubstaker, a man who ran a gambling saloon in Las Vegas, had stopped Bob's grubstake three weeks ago, after a quarrel over the amount of work Bob was doing on the claims they jointly owned. Bob was now going into debt for his grub to Maud Tackaberry. She didn't have much use for Bob Trumpett. He was too smooth, too smart. He would agree with you to your face, then jeer behind your back. And she didn't approve of some of the deals he had put over on some of his grubstakers. He certainly wasn't the man for Nevada.

Walt, now, was young, ambitious, prospering—and he wasn't a prospector. He owned a fine alfalfa ranch in Indian Springs Valley—an oasis in the desert, beautiful with cottonwoods, fruit-trees and the luscious green of alfalfa-fields. He had character. And he was nice-looking, in a sun-browned way.

"The prices alfalfa is bringing," Walt was saying in a low, pleading voice, "I just can't afford to gamble, Mr. Tackaberry."

"Doggone it, this aint no gamble," Tellurium said heatedly. "The shaft's only down twelve feet, but I've found the foot-wall and we'll find a hangin' wall before we sink another twenty feet! That's where we'll find the values—plastered against that hangin' wall. The way the formation lays, it'll be high-grade! In six weeks, we'll have us a mine!"

Horseface Maud placed her big bony hands on her flat hips. In her patched work-shirt, her skimpy overall pants, her scuffed miner's shoes, planted two feet apart, she looked menacing.

Walter saw her, and smiled vaguely. He had the air of a man cornered. Ne-



Nevada's lean little mouth was set with defiance. "Yes, Mom?"

vada was staring at him belligerently. Walter said: "Well, Mr. Tackaberry, I guess maybe I could take it on for six weeks. I'll send out a load of stuff tomorrow."

Horseface Maud bellowed: "Don't be a sucker, Walter! It's nothin' but another hole in the ground!"

"You aint even saw the shaft!" Tellurium cried. "You don't even know what claim it's on!"

"It's on Horseface Number Three," Nevada said in a sweet, businesslike voice that was exclusively for Walter's benefit. "It sidelines Bob's Hummingbird Number Four."

"I don't have to see the shaft!" Horseface Maud roared. "I've seen hundreds of his shafts. If it aint tellurium all the way to hell and back, it's high-grade as soon's you hit the other wall. . . . Hogwash!"

"You don't know what we're openin' up here," Tellurium said indignantly.

She approached in long strides.

"Walt," she boomed, "don't let this old coot bamboozle you. He could talk the whiskers off a mountain lion."

The embarrassed young man blushed scarlet. It made him even more appealing. Nevada's eyes were a pair of danc-

ing blue bees. He grinned and said: "But I've got a hunch, Mrs. Tackaberry. I think he's struck it this time."

"Maud," Tellurium argued, "you don't realize we'll have a mine here inside of a month! We'll be shippin' ore in six weeks! In two months this pair o' wheel-tracks'll be the main street of a big town!"

"With a saloon on every corner, and a pitcher-show in every block," Mrs. Tackaberry said with raucous scorn.

"The formations prove it!" Tellurium shouted. "I know my geology!"

"Quit braggin' on yourself!"

"Don't fergit tobacco, Walt," Bob Trumpett edged in with his foxy-wise smile. "We been smokin' butts for a week."

"I won't forget," Walter said. He started his engine. Over the rattle of tappets, Horseface Maud yelled. "I hate to see a nice boy like you made a sucker of. It's nothin' but charity. Prospectin' is the bunk. God, how I wish I had a nice little chicken-ranch!"

"Why don't you and Nevada come down and visit me? That place next to mine's for sale." Walter grinned. "When we make this strike, you'd better buy it, Mrs. Tackaberry. There's fifteen acres under irrigation, some fruit trees and a well-built little house. Mrs. Ledbetter wants to sell out and live with her daughter in Carson City. She'll take seven hundred—two hundred down. It's a steal."

Horseface Maud thumped him on the shoulder. "All right, hon; I'll steal it when we hit the high-grade that's plastered against that hangin' wall. Got plenty water? It's gonna be hot on Indian Dry Lake."

"Yes, thanks. Good-by. Good-by, Nevada."

"So-long," Nevada said with indifference.

When the little green pick-up had vanished around the juniper thicket, she said: "Now, maybe I can dig that hole without these constant interruptions."

NEVADA was now, her mother believed, imitating a certain "movie queen" whom they had seen in a picture the previous summer. But it wasn't funny to Horseface Maud.

"Don't let me detain you, Countess, from your high-grade," she jeered. Then she threw an arm about the girl's thin shoulders and said: "You're kind of crazy about that fellow, aint you, hon?"

Nevada wriggled free. She was blushing. Her blue eyes were a shimmer of indignation.

"I certainly am not." She put a thin little hand on a thin little hip and laughed with scorn. "Crazy about *him*? I certainly can't imagine where you got that idea."

"I certainly can't, either," Horseface Maud muttered. "I'm pretty dumb about these things, just like I'm dumb about all these values your father sees plastered against hangin' walls."

"Come on now, Maud," Tellurium said gently, "quit your worryin'. I know we've got something."

"You shouldn't have hog-tied that nice kid."

"But I just wanted Walt in on something that looks good, Maud. You know I aint one o' these slick promoters. This is the strongest intrusion I've found yet. Quit your worryin', will you?"

Horseface Maud sighed. "Okay. I'll quit worryin'."

SHE watched him waddle briskly off to the forge, where he would spend the day sharpening steel and whistling. Nevada had gone off to work in her location-hole. Bob Trumpett lingered.

"If Tellurium just used his head," he said, "he could work a six months' grub-stake out o' that fellow. Walt's easy."

Horseface Maud tightened her lips. "Tellurium don't do business that way," she barked. "He means what he says."

She went into the cook-shack, put on a kettle of beans and did the breakfast dishes, feeling lower than ever. She'd always done her best for Nevada; but what could you do, leading this kind of a life? If they only had that ranch! If Walt could see Nevada in a cute dress and silk stockings and little high-heeled slippers, with her hair cut trickily by a Las Vegas beauty parlor, and some meat on her poor little bones! But there was no money, and Tellurium's latest hole in the ground would turn out as usual.

Raucously, the lady known as Horseface Maud bellowed:

*How often at night when the heavens are bright,*

*By the light of their glittering stars,  
Have I stood here amazed and asked as I gazed,*

*If their glory exceeds that of ours.*

At dinner Tellurium announced he was just dyin' to get to work in that hole. He was glittery-eyed with excitement.





"Comin' up that wash, I seen all them wheel-tracks. Maud, I guess we're rich!"

"Gee whiz, Maud, do you realize you're apt to see the biggest boom here in the history o' the State? The whole world's just ripe for another big gold strike, and how do we know this aint it?"

His eyes were much bluer than usual, bright with the good old dreams.

"Them beans is gettin' cold," Horseface Maud said. "Drink your tea, Nevada."

The girl was as glowing-eyed as her father. Bob Trumpett was excited too. Tellurium had a gift for painting word pictures. He was sure the values were close to the surface in that hole—big values!

"You'll see a town of thirty thousand people spring up. You'll see fillin'-stations, dance-halls, pitcher-shows, department-stores and a railroad station. There'll be a public park with a lake, with swans floatin' on it!"

"Where's the water coming from, Pop?" Nevada interrupted. Water was at present trucked in drums from a spring five miles away. Nevada knew the answer to that question. She'd heard it a dozen times, but she loved to hear her father expand.

"We'll run a pipe-line from La Quinta," Tellurium answered. La Quinta was thirty miles away, the biggest spring this side of Indian Springs Basin. "A ten-inch pipe-line! Look at Goldfield! Look where they went for water! Expense'll be no object. Doggone! All we need is one good strike." He chuckled. "Remember Bullfrog, Maud?"

"I sure do," she answered. "And I'd

sure like to see another stampede like Goldfield."

They discussed booms. "Every depression the world ever seen," Tellurium asserted—it was his favorite assertion—"has been cured by a big gold-strike. It's time for a big strike. And if geology aint lyin', it'll be right here in Gold Valley. It sure will seem good to see the old crowd together again, won't it, Maud? Death Valley Scotty'll come. So'll Black Jack MacDonald, and Drywash Wilson, and Cleve Poplin, and Whisperin' Ben."

"When are you going to start work in the shaft?" Nevada asked.

"First thing in the morning."

"Hand-drillin' is hard work," Bob Trumpett said. "I just wish somebody with some money would come in here and open up somethin'."

"Oh, quit your wishin'!" Horseface Maud barked.

**D**URING breakfast next morning a bearded man named Fargo drove into camp in a car loaded with camping equipment. He and Tellurium squatted in the road for an hour, drawing diagrams in the dust with twigs. Puffing with excitement, Tellurium came into the kitchen and broke the big news to Horseface Maud.

Somewhere this side of the Calico Range, in the side of a flat-topped mountain, was a dead Indian in a cave that was full of high-grade ore. It seemed that twenty-five years ago a party of Indians had found this cave. One of them went in and dropped dead—was

struck dead, the Indians believed, by the Evil Spirit, because these Indians were trespassing on another tribe's territory. The Indians had fled and hadn't dared go back. One of them, now in Los Angeles, had told all this to a friend of Ted Fargo's, and Ted had hurried out here to find that flat-topped mountain.

"He wants me to help him find it," Tellurium concluded. "And I know just about where it's at!"

"But you aint goin'," Mrs. Tackaberry said grimly.

"Are you crazy?" Tellurium shouted. "Do you think ~~Wan~~ gonna pass up a chance like this? There's a fortune in that cave!"

"But how about the shaft? You can't go off and leave that shaft, after you promised Walter. It aint fair."

"I'll cut Walter in on it. If this cave's what I think it is, we'll get enough out of it to put machinery on the shaft."

Horseface Maud roared: "You aint gonna lay down on Walter to go chasin' down another dead Indian in a cave! You're gonna stay right here and earn that grubstake!"

For a half-hour they shouted and roared. Tellurium was an obstinate little cuss. For all Horseface Maud's cursing and bellowing, she lost the debate.

She remained wrathful and unyielding until Ted's car started. Tellurium leaned out and, grinning, pecked her pursed-up mouth. As the car rattled away, she roared: "Be careful and don't break a leg scramblin' around on that loose shale!"

All their married life, Tellurium had been deserting one rainbow to chase another. She knew he'd be gone at least a week; she knew Walter's grubstake would run out and leave them just as bad off as before. She burst lustily into song:

*It's when a miner leaves his claim,  
He starts out with a whoop.  
He doesn't travel very far  
Till his toe runs through his boot—*

AT noon, when Nevada came in from her location-hole, she squatted down as usual in the sunlight by the cook-shack door and peered through a prospector's glass at samples of ore. She presently sighed and said: "Mom, this is certainly good-looking rock. Gee, I wish somebody would come in here and open up something."

"Quit your wishin'!" her mother barked. For thirty-one years she'd seen

men squatting in the sunlight, peering through little glasses at pieces of rock which they always told you were good-lookin'. For thirty-one years she had heard men wishing that somebody would just come in and open up something. If something wasn't done about it, Nevada would become just another goofy prospector.

Nevada sulkily retired to a chair and became engrossed in a catalogue of compressors and hoists. Horseface Maud studied her, watched her eager blue eyes darting along lines of type. She strode over and snatched the catalogue out of the girl's hands, hurled it into a corner, and roared: "Why don't you look at the young ladies' dresses in the mail-order catalogue?"

Nevada began to cry. Horseface Maud softened, as she always did after a burst of temper.

"I'll give you a hair-cut this afternoon, hon," she said. "I've been neglectin' you lately."

THAT evening Bob Trumpett brought in samples of ore from his hole, and declared they were identical with Goldfield high-grade. Mrs. Tackaberry had been hearing that one for years too.

"Look at them white specks, Mrs. Tackaberry. Wet it with your tongue. Smell it! Smell that moldy smell? That sericite!"

Horseface Maud licked, sniffed and said it smelled like plain old quartz to her.

It was Bob's custom to leave his little canvas sack of ore-samples on a chair near the door while he was washing up for supper. Horseface selected a sample from the sack, took it into her bedroom and opened her old square trunk. It was filled with a curious assortment: odds and ends of old dresses being saved for a quilt; cigar boxes of arrowheads and gem stones which she had picked up all over the State; two sugar sacks of ground-up bread and other dried table-scrapings being hoarded against the day when she owned a chicken ranch.

There were several sacks of ore-samples which had been presented to her—Bullfrog high-grade, Goldfield high-grade, Johnny high-grade and a few ounces of the rare old Delamar high-grade. She had fifteen or twenty pounds of Goldfield high-grade. This rock was now "dead." She cracked a piece open, and compared it with Bob Trumpett's sample. They looked alike, but that

proved nothing. You could see no free gold in the Goldfield sample, yet it assayed more than five thousand dollars a ton.

After supper Bob ran an assay. He pounded up samples in an iron mortar until the rock was reduced to a fine powder. With this he mixed a patented fusing powder, placed the mixture in an iron crucible, and set fire to the mixture. It burned at terrific heat for perhaps a minute. When the slag was cool enough, he broke it up in a porcelain crucible. If the ore contained gold, it would show against the shiny white wall. But it contained no gold.

"Just another skunk," Bob said, and asked Nevada to go for a walk. Horseface Maud didn't approve of these regular evening walks. And Bob Trumpett had a way of studying Nevada from the tails of his gray eyes that Horseface Maud didn't like at all. But there was a full moon—a beautiful golden moon, and the sky was as blue as day. When they returned, Nevada's thin cheeks were flushed, her blue eyes were starry, and her freshly cut hair was rumpled.

Horseface Maud studied her in the bright, hard light of the gasoline lamp and said: "Did he kiss you?"

"Well, he sort of tried to."

"It looks like he sort of made good on it. You oughtn't to waste your time on that fellow, Nevada. He aint worth it."

"He amuses me," Nevada said airily.

Horseface Maud was really worried now. Nevada wasn't to blame, but if something wasn't done about it, she'd marry Bob Trumpett or some smooth-talking prospector just like him.

**M**RS. TACKABERRY slept very poorly indeed, that night. She worried about the future, but most of all about Nevada. When Walter's grubstake ran out, what in hell were they going to do? How she hated this hit-or-miss life! How she wished she could buy that ranch and raise chickens! How she wished she could buy Nevada some clothes! She wished she had just four hundred dollars.

She said harshly, into the darkness: "Oh, quit your wishin'." But the idea was born. All she needed was four hundred dollars. She considered this scheme and that. And presently it came to her—a mad, cruel scheme for making four hundred dollars.

She laid the foundations next morning as they were finishing breakfast. "Last night," she said, "I dreamed there was a

boom on. It sure was some dream! I dreamed there was a stream o' cars flockin' in here reachin' all the way to the highway. I seen shacks goin' up and shafts goin' down. You never saw such doings. I seen paved streets and churches and ice-cream-sody parlors and dance-halls and pitcher-shows. I seen big long trains puffin' in and out. I seen a thousand-ton mill down by Hall's well."

**F**OR once, Bob Trumpett wasn't gazing out of the tails of his eyes. He was staring straight at her. Prospectors have respect for dreams—if they are told after breakfast. A dream told before breakfast never comes true. She gave them lurid details.

"Where was the strike?" Nevada breathed.

"There was strikes everywhere," her mother shamelessly replied. "There was nothin' but a solid high-grade ore-body wherever anybody sunk a shaft. Oh, there's gonna be a boom. And I'm gonna be ready for it. I'm goin' high-gradin' over to Silver King."

They weren't surprised. A prospector who doesn't act on a dream is a fool. The two of them hurried off to dig in their holes. Horseface Maud cranked up her truck and drove to Silver King. She took rope and crowbars along. Tellurium's .30-30 rode on the seat beside her.

Silver King had been opened up as a silver property more than eighty years ago. For perhaps twenty years it had been a big producer. Fifteen miles from Silver King, in the desert, Mrs. Tackaberry drove past an historic relic—the bed of a steam engine which, on a day sixty years ago, was being hauled into Silver King by a six-horse team, when a horseman brought word to the driver that the United States had gone off bimetalism and gone on the gold standard. Since 1873, the bed of the old steam engine had been lying there.

Silver King was abandoned when the blow fell. Since then the mines had been worked on and off by leasers, looking for high-grade silver; but Silver King was a ghost town now. Roving prospectors and cattlemen had "high-graded" most objects of value left behind by miners and leasers, but they hadn't taken everything.

Mrs. Tackaberry spent the morning tearing down old buildings, loading the truck with lumber, old stoves, and odds and ends of furniture. She had plenty of cots at Gold Valley, high-graded from other abandoned camps.

On the drive home, she shot a yearling steer, skinned him on the spot, buried hide, head and entrails, quartered the carcass and hid it under planks. Returning to camp, she wrapped the high-graded beef in wet gunnysacks and hung it in trees. Walter's truck had come and gone in her absence, leaving a six weeks' supply of grub, tobacco and powder. There was enough flour, lard and canned stuff for her plans.

She spent the afternoon building an addition on the cook-shack and enlarging the table to accommodate thirty men. The next day she started building shacks of canvas and lumber. It took five days to build four shacks. She furnished each with two cots, a supply of old bedding and one chair.

ON the evening she considered her scheme ripe, Bob came in and left his sample-sack as usual on the chair by the door. When he went to his tent to wash up for supper, Horseface Maud dumped out the sack and refilled it with Goldfield high-grade. Ordinarily, a prospector has an Indian's memory for the size and shape of his samples; but Bob had a habit of cutting, or chipping, his samples across the bottom of the shaft, and they were always in the form of coarse powder and lumps, recognizable only by color.

After supper Bob ran his customary nightly assay. Mrs. Tackaberry heard him pound up the sample, then the hiss of the fired crucible. Her heart was riding high, and thudding like runaway hoofs.

Nevada suddenly shrieked: "Mom! Come here! It's high-grade!"

Horseface Maud clumped to the door in her miner's boots. The sun was just sinking behind Wheelbarrow Peak. Radiation from golden clouds lighted Nevada's thin, excited little face. Her eyes were blue shivering blurs. Bob was squatting on the ground, his face as red as if he'd been scalded, laughing and thumping the ground.

In the palm of Nevada's thin, trembling hand was a gold button as large as a pea, still so hot that she danced it about.

"It'll run four thousand dollars a ton, anyhow, Mom!"

Horseface Maud roared: "Hot dog!"

"And there's a mountain of it!" the prospector chanted.

They babbled until dark, until the stars were bright. There'd be a stampede like nothin' this State ever seen.

And it sure did look like Goldfield high-grade! Bob was going to pump up his tires and start for town right now.

"Tellurium's claims sideline Bob's strike!" Nevada bubbled.

"Sure they do, hon."

"I'll bet he gets five thousand apiece for them! I'm going to hold out for a thousand for my Black Cat—and it's a mile from Bob's!"

"Sure! Sock 'em good, baby."

Bob took advantage of the excitement to kiss Nevada openly before he went to his shaft to cut samples for the Las Vegas assayer. When he returned, Horseface Maud took advantage of his pumping the tires of his old roadster to dump out the sack and refill it with more of her Goldfield high-grade.

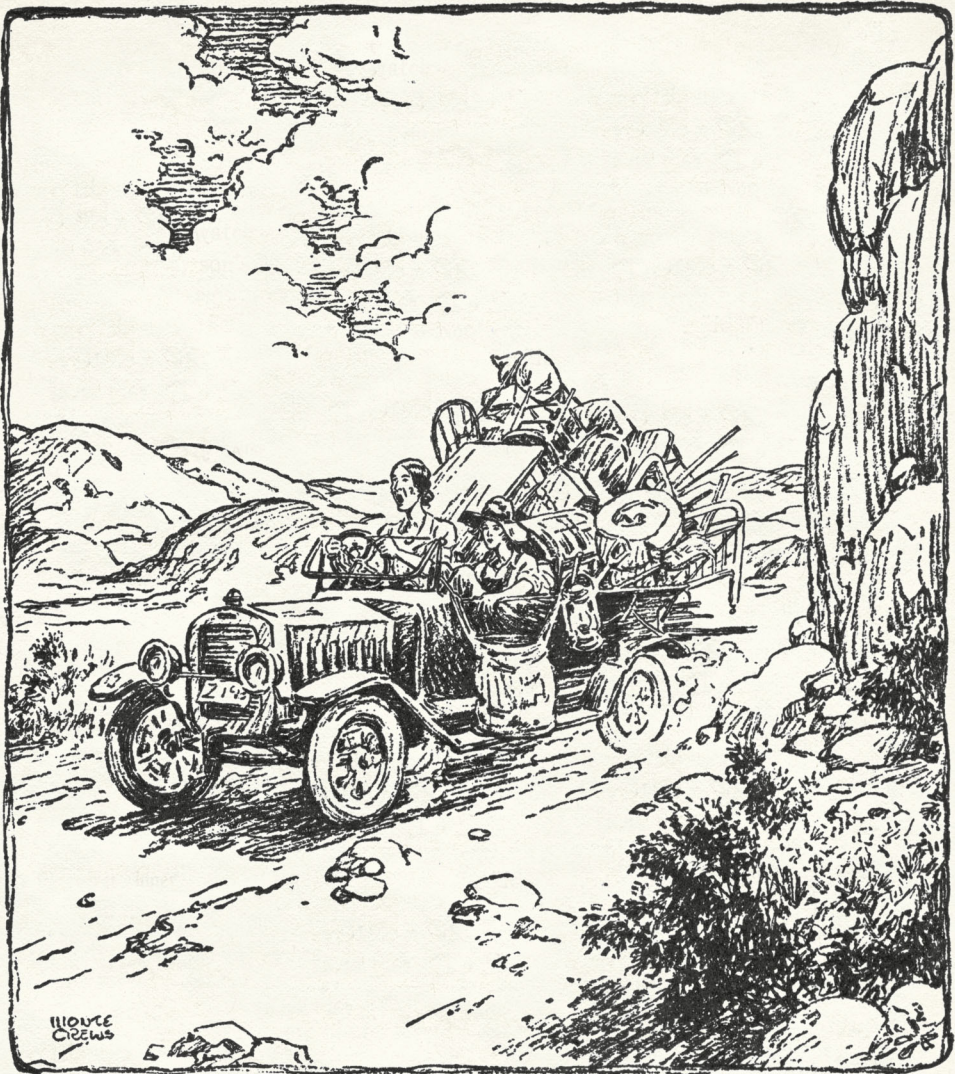
She went to bed soon after Bob, after again kissing the delirious Nevada, started for town to spread the news. And Horseface Maud slept with a mind as untroubled as that of an innocent child. . . .

All next day she baked bread and pies. That evening, by moonlight, she drove to White Blotch Springs for water. There was a fifteen-hundred-gallon redwood tank behind the cook-shack. She made three trips, filling the tank and having a few drums left over.

THE first cars reached Gold Valley a little before noon next day. Men scrambled out, wanting to know where there was open ground. Bob returned, and reported that the Las Vegas assayer had found the sample ran sixty ounces in silver and \$5,153.76 in gold to the ton—at the old \$20.67 price. It sure was a strike! And it sure looked like Goldfield high-grade!

The fortieth carload of feverish-eyed gold-hunters came rattling into camp before dark. The stampede was on. They rolled in all night. They pitched tents. Mrs. Tackaberry rented her four shacks for five dollars a night, and could have rented a dozen. She served forty-four breakfasts next morning. She sold water for a dollar a keg. She sold bread and pies, beef and lumber.

Tellurium returned shortly before noon, having found three flat-topped mountains but no dead Indian, and no high-grade in a cave. Gold Valley had become a tent city. Smoke rose from scores of cook-fires. Men with location blanks clutched in their hands scurried here and there. Horseface Maud was cooking dinner for fifty men—at six bits a head.



Mrs. Tackaberry and Nevada loaded the truck and started. For the first time in thirty-one years Tellurium was prospecting without her. She boomed into song.

Tellurium's round face was pink; his blue eyes were dazzling; his feathers of white hair seemed to bristle. He couldn't believe that this was happening to Gold Valley. He followed his busy wife about the cook-shack, saying: "Comin' up that wash, I seen all them wheel-tracks. I couldn't figure them out. Maud, I guess we're rich!"

She was sorry he was going to be hurt, but she didn't dare trust him with her secret. At least a dozen men, she told him, had been asking for him. They wanted to know about the Horseface claims.

"Oh, they do, do they?" he blustered. "Well, maybe they think them claims is for sale cheap! Maybe they think I'm

just givin' them claims away! I'll get backin' and sink my own shaft! Them claims aint sellin' for one dime under ten thousand apiece!"

"Take what you can get," Horseface Maud said, her head in the oven. "Don't forget Walt owns a half-interest in them claims."

Tellurium snorted.

"Don't you worry about Walt. I'll make that boy rich."

Over Nevada's bitter protests, Mrs. Tackaberry sold the girl's Black Cat to the first man who waved a hundred-dollar bill under her nose. And she added this to the growing bulk of the money-belt, strapped tight about her leathery flanks under her overall pants.

Next morning, an ugly rumor was heard. Several prospectors had cut samples from the walls and bottom of Bob Trumpett's shaft, had run assays with reducing powder, had found not a trace of gold!

Men swarmed about the shaft the rest of the day. The camp muttered and argued and cursed. Bob was accused of having salted his samples. The more conservative element believed that Bob had merely struck a pocket—a "little bitty pocket."

A man who had offered Tellurium five thousand dollars for his group of Horseface claims withdrew his offer. A smelter scout who had been negotiating with Bob Trumpett left camp.

The boom was over.

**B**UT the day's excitement was hardly begun. A man in a dusty roadster drove in to announce that Groom Dry Lake had been staked out from shore to shore. Men gathered about the newcomer. He shouted: "They've found a way to recover the colonial gold!"

This was stirring news, indeed. The hundred-odd dry lakes of Nevada are dead ivory areas of hard, dried silt, once the bottom of salt lakes. The hard-baked silt sometimes reaches a depth of a thousand feet and contains, as does seawater, gold in colloidal form, called, in the easy speech of prospectors, "colonial" or ocean gold.

The Tonopah man related that two men in a Los Angeles speak-easy had been overheard by a friend of his, discussing a secret new process for recovering colonial gold from the dry lakes. So thoroughly compounded is colloidal gold that even to assay it requires a special method, known to few assayers.

"They wired Jerry Toole and Lon Matlock to go out and stake out Groom. I just crossed Groom. And by God, she's staked out!"

Tellurium came puffing to Horseface Maud with this great news. His eyes glowed with a brand-new enthusiasm.

"We're quittin' Gold Valley!" he announced. "We're goin' to Squaw Lake! Remember that assay of Squaw I had run ten years ago? Remember how it run seven dollars a ton? The rest of the dry lakes won't run a dime over four. Maud, this is the biggest thing that ever opened up in this State! I'll sell Squaw for a million!"

"Will you?" Mrs. Tackaberry said sadly.

"I'm gonna leave the packin' to you and Nevada. I and Bob're goin' ahead in his car, to get our monuments up quick."

"Tellurium, I and Nevada aint goin' with you this time."

She knew he hardly heard her. "We're all through prospectin', Tellurium. I've made enough on this boom to make a down payment on that little ranch next to Walter's, with some left over to run things till my chickens start payin'. Nevada's goin' to live there with me."

He didn't grasp it. His white feathers stood up around his pink dome like the feathers of an agitated old hen. His blue eyes were watery with excitement. Gold fever! Later, when the secret process for recovering "colonial" gold turned out to be just another rainbow, when he came down to earth and started to miss her, he'd come to the ranch. It was on the Tonopah-Las Vegas highway. Tellurium was a clever mechanic. He could open up a service station. But he'd hunt gold as long as he could swing a pick. . . .

Mrs. Tackaberry assayed the contents of her money-belt. Not counting the hundred dollars Nevada had received for her Black Cat,—a sum sufficient for new dresses, silk stockings and the costliest efforts of the best Las Vegas beauty parlor,—Horseface Maud had cashed in on her hoax, from rentals of shacks, and from the sale of bread, pie, meals, water and beef, a total of \$687.65.

**S**HE and Nevada loaded the truck and started for Indian Springs Basin next morning. Her scheme had been a success, but Horseface Maud felt low. For the first time in thirty-one years, Tellurium was off prospecting without her. As she tooted the old truck along, she eyed the beautiful long erosion-slopes of the mountains with gloomy eyes. The purest sunshine, the bluest sky in the world failed to cheer her. Sadness filled Horseface Maud's tall, raw-boned, leathery being.

Lustily, she boomed into song:

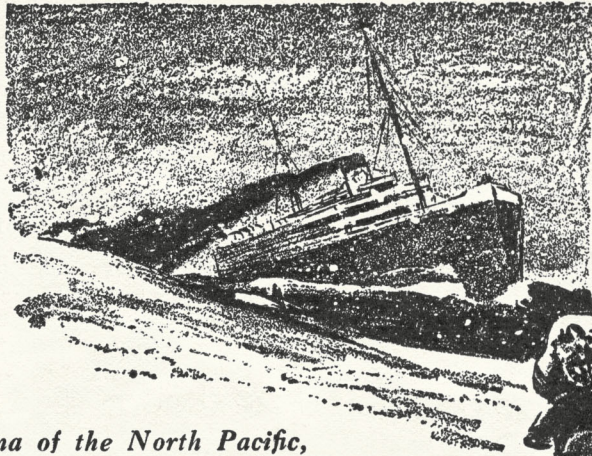
*From the valley they say you are goin',  
We will miss yore sweet face and yore smile,  
Be-ee-cause yi-ou are weary and ti-erd,  
You are changin' yore range for a while.*

She stopped singing, and sighed gustily.

"Mom," Nevada said, "have you decided on White Leghorns or Rhode Island Reds?"

"Oh, hell," her mother answered. "I just can't seem to decide."

Lord, the things a man thought about, with the fury of a north Pacific gale tearing at the entrails of a man's courage and endurance—and a ship's!



*A stirring drama of the North Pacific, by a writer new to these pages, whose books "Wind Driven" and "Three Went Armed" have caused the critics to hail him as a second Joseph Conrad.*

By JACLAND MARMUR

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson



# The Final Splendor

THE steamer *Calawaii* went blundering through the winter night in the grip of a north Pacific gale. She was having a time of it, the *Calawaii* that had outlived so many gales. An old ship, once the proudest liner of all the Eastern fleet, she was scarred with age now, past the time of her usefulness.

Perhaps the Old Monster sensed this, for the seas charged her with malignant savagery, green-bellied seas with their white crests hissing. It was a wild night, and a wilder gale, with the old *Calawaii* stumbling and rolling toward Japan.

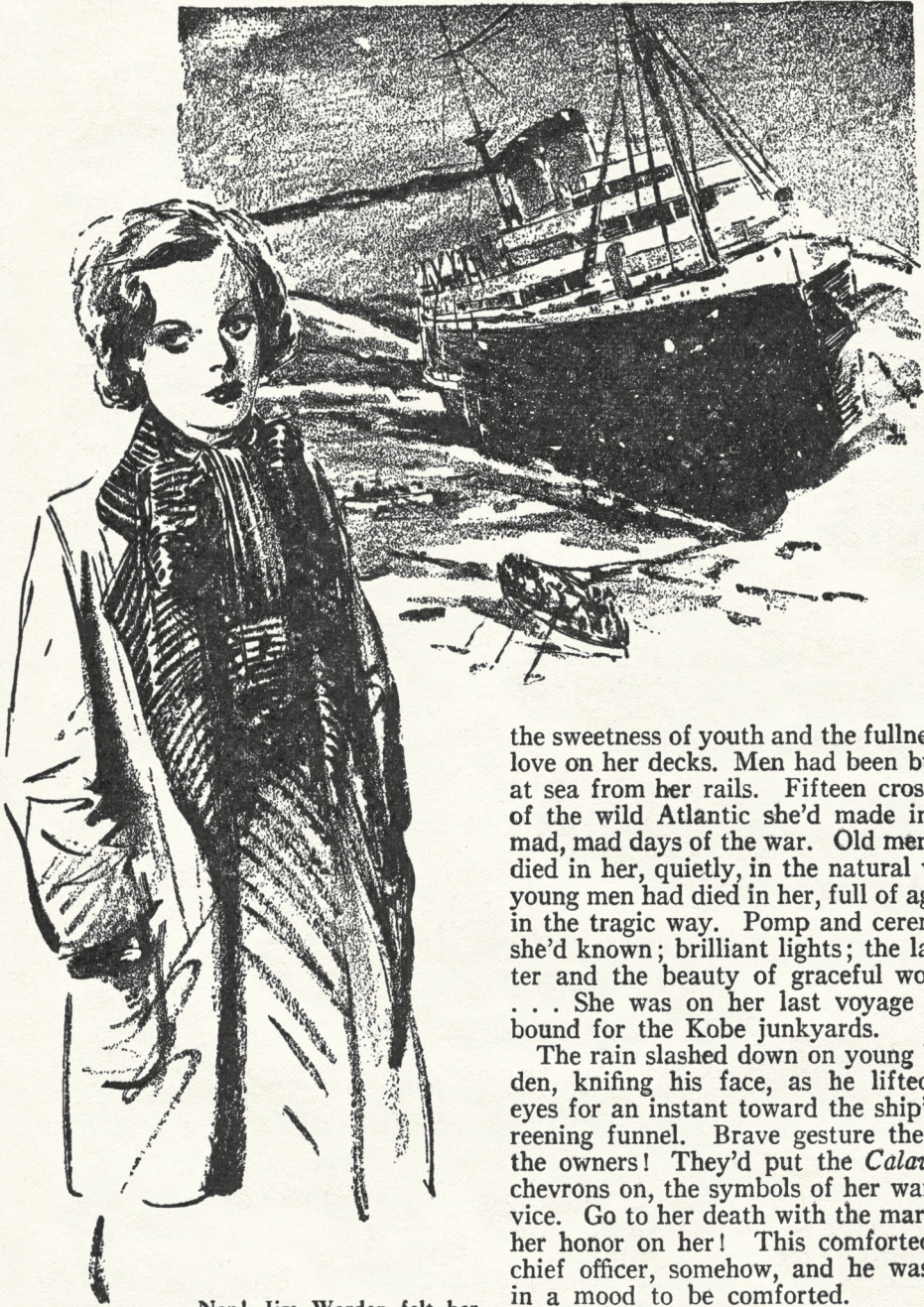
The Jap shipbreakers to whom she'd been sold, they'd soon make nothing but secondhand timber, old brass and copper and iron of her. She was on her last voyage, bound for the Kobe junkyards.

James Warden stood in the bridge wing, watching her forecastle head far forward below him. The ship staggered with each successive impact of the mountainous seas, spray-lashed in the shrieking wind. She lifted, shook herself, and plowed on. Wise, the *Calawaii* was, wise with the wisdom of thirty-odd years

of seafaring. She was older than Jim Warden, who was her chief officer—older by several years.

But he knew her well. His apprenticeship had been served in her, more than ten years before. It was on her foredeck he had first heard the sea and the wind in his ears, bellowing lusty halloos to a gangling boy not yet sixteen. The long sweep of her main decks had been aglitter then with the brilliant lights of passengers' cabins dancing on the running sea. They were dark now, dark and black and deserted. The *Calawaii* sailed alone to her end. Nothing but her green and red running-lights, high above the water, gyrated in the darkness of the stormy night, and in the wheelhouse a gleam of yellow upflung from the binnacle on the patient face of the sailor at the helm.

Jim Warden shifted his stance and dug his hands deeper into the pockets of his greatcoat. Sailors often seem older at sea than other men—and younger ashore. There was responsibility and authority in the chief officer's half-lidded eyes. It



Nan! Jim Warden felt her presence and her courage in all the terror of it.

was in the strong lines of his face, in the set of his generous mouth and jaw. Aye; he knew the *Calawaii* and where they were taking her. He knew what her life had been, and he honored it, as one seafarer another.

The old *Calawaii* had known the beginning and the end of life. Infants had been born in her cabins to the thunder of the oceans. Honeymooners had known

the sweetness of youth and the fullness of love on her decks. Men had been buried at sea from her rails. Fifteen crossings of the wild Atlantic she'd made in the mad, mad days of the war. Old men had died in her, quietly, in the natural way; young men had died in her, full of agony, in the tragic way. Pomp and ceremony she'd known; brilliant lights; the laughter and the beauty of graceful women. . . . She was on her last voyage now, bound for the Kobe junkyards.

The rain slashed down on young Warden, knifing his face, as he lifted his eyes for an instant toward the ship's careening funnel. Brave gesture there of the owners! They'd put the *Calawaii's* chevrons on, the symbols of her war-service. Go to her death with the marks of her honor on her! This comforted the chief officer, somehow, and he was not in a mood to be comforted.

For Jim Warden had gained a chief mate's berth, but he'd lost the girl he loved.

Not that he blamed Nan. She had her loyalties, just as he had his. Astonishing enough, that a young sailor such as he could have kindled that light of deep affection in her dear blue eyes. It was something to think about through the lonely watches of the night. Almost too good to believe. Something for a man to fight for. Lord, he was proud of loving Nan! But the Spencers were an old fam-



ily, among the oldest on the Coast. They had a tradition to live up to, and the heritage that went with it. And Nan Spencer was too fine to be disloyal to it. Jim Warden could understand that. Sailors understand loyalty and integrity.

There wasn't any objection to Jim Warden. Old Elias Spencer's Nan could marry a rag-picker, if she loved him and he was a decent-enough fellow. But he'd have to stop being a rag-picker, and take up the responsibilities of the Spencer timber-lands and cattle-ranges. That was a simple-enough philosophy, and an honest one. Yet it had cost Nan a deal to tell her Jim that. He remembered how her little face and her tip-tilted nose screwed up with the effort, and how she shook her blonde hair from before her eyes. For some time he'd laughed the problem off with that spontaneous grin of his. Quit the sea? Why, a man's work was a part of his life, as much for Jim Warden as for old Elias Spencer. They'd make his fortune for him! He didn't want his fortune made. He'd hew it out for himself. It was a philosophy of strength and manhood. In a way, Nan was proud of him for it. But her loyalty barred the way.

SO he'd lost her. There had been a note for him when he got in from his last voyage, a note full of Nan's love—and pain. She'd sailed for an Oriental holiday, and would be back and gone again before he returned. He wondered if she knew what it cost him. He wondered, standing there on the open bridge of the *Calawaii*, indifferent to the cold and the howling tempest, with his chin buried in his greatcoat and a dull emptiness in his heart. Lord! The things a man thought about in those dismal hours between four and eight in the morning, with the culminating fury of a north Pacific gale tearing at the entrails of a man's courage and endurance—and a ship's!

Clear from Cape Lopatka and the desolate wastes of the northern ice-fields it came snarling and whistling at the old *Calawaii* and Jim Warden on her bridge. How she dived and struggled against the seas! How the sleet clawed a man's face! Quit it and turn financier? Success on a silver platter! He remembered that forecandle forward there—buried in walls of green water now—where he'd taken his first hazing at the hands of the old seadogs. He remembered how, step by step, by the strength of his own arms

and his own will, he had climbed out of the forecandle and into the cabin. Ship's officer now. Chief mate of the *Calawaii*. Command in sight! How could Nan understand what it meant to him?

Captain Moresby understood, because he was a man and a sailor. Had a way of getting things out of you, old Moresby, things you wouldn't dream of telling to another human soul. Like a father confessor, with his snow-white hair and his brittle eyes peering kindly at you from his wrinkled and wind-hacked face. Taking the *Calawaii* to the junkyards of Japan, Moresby was. An old windjammer man, shipmaster in sail and steam. The *Calawaii* had been under his command when first he left the nitrate barques and the bitter Cape Horn trade. Old pensioner of the company, Captain Moresby, well on toward seventy years. But times weren't easy for shipping, and owners couldn't keep their pensioners idle these days. So they'd hauled him out of his peace and given him his old ship again—to take to the end of her days. Yet the old man had earned his rest. Indeed, he had. Three sons he'd given to the sea. Full-grown they were, in the prime of manhood. Older than Jim Warden himself. Two shipmasters and a chief engineer in the trade, and he was proud of all of them. But there was never any rest for fighting-men. Nan couldn't understand. She'd never stood a night watch at sea, with the universe a mangled wilderness of wind and untamed fury. How the *Calawaii* shouldered the green monsters aside! Listen to the old gale's shriek!

A DOOR slammed somewhere under the bridge, a feeble sound in the tempest. The chief mate did not turn his head, but kept his stare forward where the seas thundered, where the danger was. Presently he sensed a heavy deliberate tread on the bridge ladder. The master was suddenly at his side, hanging to the jackstay, a square-built, solid old man, undismayed in the midst of chaos. It wasn't surprising to have him appear thus abruptly at that unearthly hour of morning. Sleep doesn't enter into the calculations of shipmasters. He stood there beside his chief officer without saying a word. Together and in silence they gauged the run of the sea, the savage swings of the old *Calawaii*. Until he turned his face, and young Jim Warden lowered his head till his ear touched the master's lips to hear what he had to say.

"Third mate up presently," he shouted against the wind. "Come—my cabin. Want—to see you."

He was gone. Warden stared after his broad back lurching down the ladder. Wanted to see him? Routing the third officer out of his bunk! Something was up! He strained his ears, as if he thought that with keener perceptions he might hear some sound from the *Calawaii* that would betray her trouble to him. He heard nothing but the sea and the wind and the stutter of the funnel-stays in the gale.

**T**HEN Mr. Gridley, the third mate, came aloft, grumbling sleepily to himself as he stumbled into the chart-room. He found the light, flashed it on, knocking his eyes. Jim Warden was behind him.

"Sorry, Gridley. Not my fault. The Old Man—"

"Pulling me out like this!" the Third complained. "Not six bells yet. What's happened to her?"

"Don't know." Warden turned away. "Find out soon enough."

"Tell you what!" Mr. Gridley shot at the chief mate's back. "She's breaking up, the damned old hooker! Wouldn't surprise me a bit. What a job to give a man!" His voice echoed thinly in the narrow confines of the chart-room. "Nursing a broken-down, lousy good-for-nothing pot like this across the north Pacific in the middle of winter! Where's the sense to it?" he wanted to know sourly; and Jim Warden turned in the frame of the lee doorway to hear him out. "Where's the sense in it? I'll tell you! If she gets across, they sell her to the Jap junk-dealers. If she founders out here, insurance money's just as good to the owners. We, we can drown in her! What the hell do they care? She'll never live this through, the crumby old hooker! She's falling apart, that's what!"

The third mate scrawled at the log-book and reached up for the light. Jim Warden turned away before he snapped it off. He couldn't trust himself to speak. It wasn't decent, that voice heaping dishonor on the head of the old *Calawaii*. He went out and down the bridge-ladder quickly to the master's room, wiping the sea-water from his anxious face as he stepped in over the weather-board. The wireless man was just leaving, a youngster whose narrow features were white with determination, and a little of fear

at what he'd learned. Inside, Captain Moresby stood before his desk, a slip of paper in his hand, his white hair glistening with beads of spray. On the settle the chief engineer sat hugging his belly, a little serious-faced Oregon man in pale pajamas and carpet slippers. The ship plunged wildly under their feet. Outside, the gale howled, muffled to indistinct terror, rattling the ports with spray and sleet. The master turned his head at the chief officer's appearance. There was something hard and cold in his eyes, and his voice was not the voice of an old man.

"Mr. Warden," he said, "there's a decision to make. It's up to the Chief and you as well as myself. There's—"

"Good God, sir! She taking water that bad?"

The chief engineer grinned sourly. The master shook his head.

"Not that," he said firmly. "The *Calawaii* will do. Sparks just picked up an S.O.S. It's desperate. There's a ship out there, foundering in this dirty business. Liner, home-bound from the Orient. Hundred-odd passengers aboard. The *Huron*."

Jim Warden's face went suddenly white. He stepped forward a pace.

"The *Huron*, you say? Good Lord, sir! Nan—"

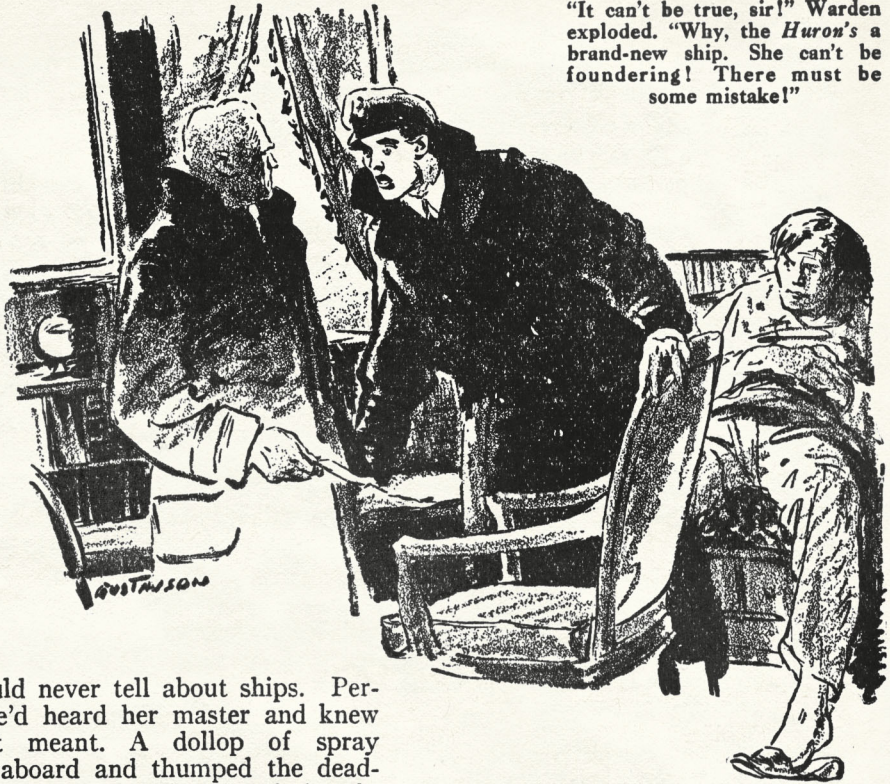
The master's fine head snapped up in an imperative gesture of interruption. That was an expression of weakness he wanted no officer of his to voice. His eyes bored at his chief mate.

"That has nothing to do with it!" he bit off: and his voice cracked a little as he went on: "Personal feeling can't have anything to do with our decision. Understand? We've a ship to look after, and a crew of men. The *Huron* is less than fifty—"

**I**T can't be true, sir!" Warden exploded. "Why, the *Huron's* a brand-new ship. She can't be foundering! There must be some mistake!"

"There's no mistake, Mister. She cracked her tail-shaft and gored her stern-plates. She's in an eighteen-degree list, going over and settling fast. New or not, she's in desperate trouble. Can't last long. We're closest. But the *Calawaii* is better than thirty years old. We've no right to rip her to pieces on a hopeless job. I don't know—"

He broke off. There was a moment of silence. The *Calawaii* soared mountain-high under their feet, then crashed her bows down the steep trough of a sea.



"It can't be true, sir!" Warden exploded. "Why, the *Huron's* a brand-new ship. She can't be foundering! There must be some mistake!"

You could never tell about ships. Perhaps she'd heard her master and knew what it meant. A dollop of spray slashed aboard and thumped the dead-lighted ports of Captain Moresby's cabin. The wind went brawling about the coaming, chattering in glee. The chief engineer stood up and scratched his head with slow deliberation.

"So far as I'm concerned, sir," he said in a thick chesty voice, "they don't spend any money on ships sailing to the junkyards. You know that. Boiler-tubes are just holding together, and that's all. We're pumping bilges twenty-four hours a day, watch and watch, as it is, and she's wheezing and thumping like a ten-penny mule. But I tell you what, sir!" His hairy hand grabbed at the desk for support. "I will drive her till she busts, if you say the word."

Captain Moresby's eyes snapped fire. "You?" he asked his chief mate. Jim Warden only nodded. "Haul her ten degrees to port, then. Watch her. I'll be up at once."

The chief mate tore open the door and stumbled aloft to the bridge. The *Calawaii* boiled her rails under, to the change of course. Mr. Gridley clutched at his superior's arm.

"Well?" he screamed. "How long's she got?"

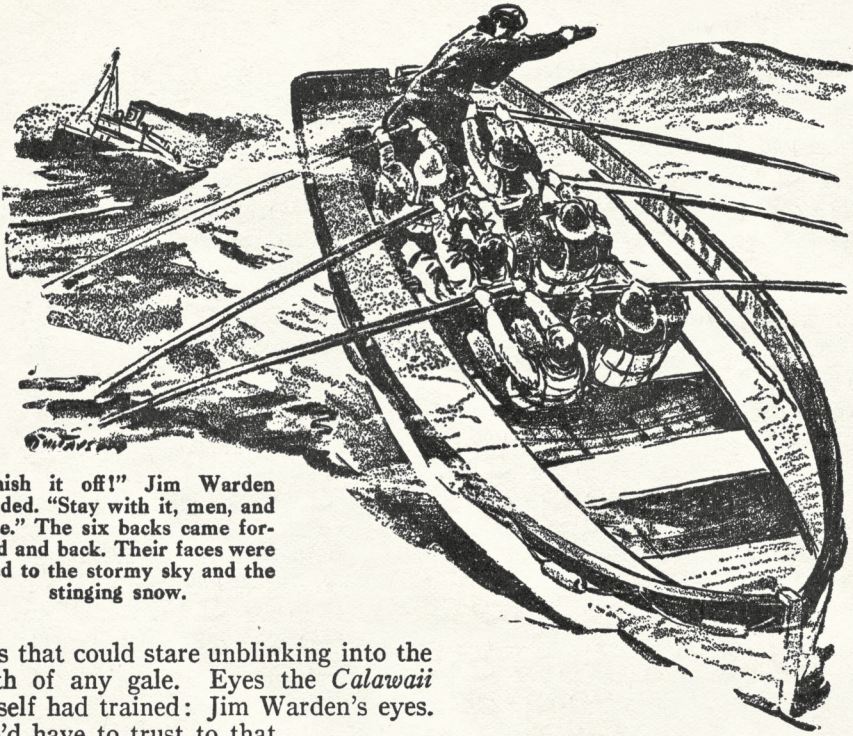
"Long as she floats!" Jim Warden shouted against the wind. "The *Huron's* sinking under the horizon. We're headed that way!"

"What? In this old tub? The Old Man's mad! We're lucky to live it out ourselves. She'll shake us all to hell!"

"Then she'll sink a-shaking, Gridley! We can do no more than drown trying."

He went out in the bridge-wing, searching the night. Black clouds poured from the *Calawaii's* dancing funnel, streaming in the wind. The master came up and took his place beside his mate. The gale leaped at them. The rain was like a freezing fog. The *Calawaii* stumbled on.

Something stirred in her. They opened her engine throttle wide. The draft-fan set up a whining song through the ventilators. Without mercy or pity they drove her. Shuddering, she hurled herself against the charging seas. Her timbers and all her straining plates groaned and creaked like the rheumatic joints of a hoary warrior. Old ship—good for nothing but junk. And a brand-new liner under the horizon, foundering in the dismal fury. More than a hundred human souls aboard. Irony, that! The Old Monster sea was having his little joke again. Well, she'd do her best, the old *Calawaii*. Couldn't ask any more than that. Her eyes were dim. No sight in them. Her hawse-pipes ran with brine each time she lifted above the sea. But there were eyes on her bridge, young



"Finish it off!" Jim Warden pleaded. "Stay with it, men, and drive." The six backs came forward and back. Their faces were lifted to the stormy sky and the stinging snow.

eyes that could stare unblinking into the teeth of any gale. Eyes the *Calawaii* herself had trained: Jim Warden's eyes. She'd have to trust to that.

The rain stopped abruptly. On the eastern board a finger of gray pried apart the sea and the sky. The weird light of a sunless day revealed more terribly the wilderness of crashing water, racing and tumbling before the gale. And the old *Calawaii*, swinging in desperate arcs, her masts lost in the leaden scud of heaven, her rails lolling in foam. The snow came, clouds of it, whipping in the wind. On the bridge two men stood gyrating violently between sky and sea, searching for all that was left of the liner *Huron*.

The chief mate saw her first. He flung up his arm, pointing at the heart of the white wall of snow. The crippled *Huron* lay drowned in wind and spume. Deep in the troughs she wallowed on her side, far down by the stern, the seas crashing aboard her weather rail. She disappeared as the *Calawaii* dived, then showed her dark hulk again above the ragged edge of the horizon where her funnels pointed at a drunken angle. Stark and solitary she was, a wounded thing, helpless in the midst of terror.

Jim Warden looked expectantly at the master, waiting for the order to change the course. That fine old face, wrinkled and cracked by age and the winds of the seas, was drained of all color. Snow clung to his coat, to his uniform cap, to the shaggy crags of his brows. The water dripped from his ash-white face. There was horror in his eyes as he saw what the

sea had done to the *Huron*. His lips moved. Jim Warden waited. Terrible things shot through his brain in that single instant. Great God! Lost his nerve, old Captain Moresby! It was enough to strike fear to the heart of any man, and the master was almost seventy. Called his chief engineer and his mate together to make a decision for him! A younger Captain Moresby had never done that! And Nan, Nan Spencer was aboard the sinking *Huron*. The Old Man knew that. Didn't want it to sway the decision. Mustn't say a word about it. No personal feelings. No! Did he think a man was a block of stone? The master's lips trembled a little. Jim Warden turned away, pity in his heart. It wasn't fair. They'd asked too much of that old man. But some one had to take over. It had to be done. He took a step toward the wheelhouse.

"Port, there!" he shouted, waving his arms. "Bring her up slow."

The *Calawaii* trembled. A green monster caught her bluff on the bows and swept upward to the bridge.

"Steady!"

Jim Warden spun about. That cry was unmistakable. Hard and cold. The cry of command. It came from the master's lips. There was nothing soft in Captain Moresby's face now—the face of a Cape Horn wind-ship driver.

"I'll shape her up, Mr. Warden!" His words cracked out dry and strong. "Have to get round to windward. Half her boats are smashed. We're going to have a time of it. Have to put our own over. She can't last very long. Do you think you can manage one?"

"Aye, sir!" There was a lift in the chief mate's heart at the sound of that old familiar voice crackling with sureness and authority. "Aye, sir," he cried. "I can!"

"Get about it, then. I'll make you a lee. Do the best I can. Good luck, Warden!"

That was all. He paid no more attention to his chief officer. This was a grim and a bitter business. Each man had his work to do. It had to be done on his own. No help from anyone else. The master gauged the sea, the breadth of it, the savage might of it, and felt the pulse of the old *Calawaii* under his feet. No telling if she'd stand the strain of it. Help her he would, help her all he could. It wanted some skill and management, maneuvering that ancient giant of steel with an iron heart.

"Port a little more!" he sang out, just as the chief mate dived down the ladder, tearing off his bridge coat. . . .

The first boat was leaving the *Huron's* side. They hadn't any time to waste! You could see it, an insignificant speck, clear of that pitiful dark hulk, full of human heads and waving arms, and the frail sweeps that bent like bows against the weight of the sea. How that small thing dived, swallowed in the troughs, then climbed again with unbelievable courage, battling toward the *Calawaii*, which was their only hope. Captain Moresby held his ship, beam-ending, to windward of the sinking vessel, breaking the force of the gale with her sheer sides. Knew what he was about, old Moresby. Found himself again!

OIL was set dripping from her eyes and her stern, washing into the deep cavern separating the two ships. The *Huron's* boats were coming, what was left of them. Jim Warden's watch was ready for them. Life-lines rigged fore and aft, low to the water on the *Calawaii's* side. Could do no more. The rest was up to judgment, to human audacity. Half the *Huron's* boats were smashed where they squatted on her boat-deck, splintered in the davits. They'd want some help. Never get clear without. God, what bitter weather for such a job!

From the sternsheets of his own boat, the chief mate turned his head quickly to the *Calawaii's* deck.

"Let run!" he shouted, and turned to face his crew.

The rope-falls smoked. Down, down they dropped, until the water smacked the small-boat's bottom. The patent blocks tripped.

"Give 'way!"

WARDEN ran out his steering sweep. They were clear! Six backs came forward, forward and back. The small-boat swept upward, dizzy on the crest of the first roller. Then with a sickening dive they were lost in the trough of the sea. Green walls of water closing in all around. Down in the heart of it now. Face to face. No ship's plates and gear and decks to separate you from it. Nothing but a frail shell of metal and wood. Face to face with the Old Monster and his diabolical jests. Face to face with yourself!

Jim Warden put his weight on the steering oar till his muscles ached. Keep her driving. Had to keep her driving. Head-on to the cracking seas. Once you flinched, you were gone. You and your men. And a hundred human souls aboard the sinking *Huron*. Didn't count her crew. They were seamen. Strange, that. Warden ground his teeth together. No; you didn't count her crew. Up to them to live or die, as the old brute sea thought best. Asked for it, they had. So had he! So had Jim Warden. Had a fortune offered him by old Elias Spencer. Success on a silver platter. And blonde-headed Nan with her spirit, and her love, and all she meant to him. Stubborn mule, he was. Hack out his own success! Out of his own strength. Out of the thunder of the sea in a rage. Out of the knifing wind and the clawing sleet and the freezing cold that cased you in a jacket of steel. Out of this! Good enough, then. This was what he wanted. Here it was! Had to see it through.

"Steady! Steady!" he called to the straining men before him. "Drive her now. Let her spit!"

Dripping and half-drowned they were, the six of them, and a giant of a young officer towering out of the sea in the sternsheets, shaping a small-boat up to the sunken rail of a brand-new passenger liner that had gored herself to death. Miles away, the *Calawaii* seemed. Miles and miles away. Rolling from side to side—streaming oil on the water and

dense smoke across the sky. Chained where she was by an old man's skill, thrashing the sea with her screw. Chained abeam of the *Huron*, to shelter those flimsy shells busy about their work of cheating the sea of its due.

JIM WARDEN looked up. How haggard and desperate those faces were, there low to the water on the liner's deck. Nothing between them and death but the *Huron's* boats and his. Take them aboard. And back to the *Calawaii*. Just once more now. Lord, how his back and his arms cried out for rest. Rest! Release from agony, from wet and cold and burning salt. And those six men on the thwarts, with rescued men and women clattering up their stroke. How long, their faces begged. "Finish it off!" Jim Warden pleaded. "Stay with it, men, and drive. Now! Steady and easy. See her run!"

The six backs came forward and back, forward and back. Their faces were lifted to the stormy sky and the stinging snow. Water drained from the creases of physical agony. They paid no heed. Forward and back, forward and back. Jim Warden steered, mechanically, with arms that seemed to belong to some one else entirely; his own had long since been torn from their sockets! From a forward thwart in the midst of that blur of faces, one small wet oval stared at him. Blonde hair streamed across it, and the eyes were wide with wonder and perhaps a little of fear. She saw him, the man with the steering sweep, crying his hoarse encouragement. Saw the anguish of endurance on his face and the labor of his shoulders and back and arms—at the work he could never renounce.

Jim Warden saw her too. Felt her presence and her courage in the terror of it. Nan. But he had no time and no sense and no strength for anything but the sea. He knew now what Captain Moresby meant. No personal feeling. A job of loyalty and integrity. Centuries of tradition behind him, generations of seamen. He looked up at the looming side of the *Huron*. All clear. Everyone clear and away. . . . Except forward, there where two gray blurred shapes stood on the drunken angle of the bridge. Dear God, not yet! Not all clear yet!

Warden swung himself on the sweep. The small-boat surged along the *Huron's* side. Above him, the master of the sinking vessel hid with his officer. Noth-

ing for them now, but to await the end. The Captain had a speaking-trumpet to his mouth, shouting across the stretch of water toward the *Calawaii*. Jim Warden turned his head. There in the murky distance he could just make out the solid figure of Captain Moresby, his fists grasping the *Calawaii's* bridge-rail. In that instant, through the misty cavern, he saw his master's face, white and ashen and set in agony. Then a booming voice came from the settling bridge of the *Huron*.

"Well done, Dad!" it thundered. "Get clear. We're going."

Dad! The word jarred Jim Warden's brain like a bolt of lightning. Captain Moresby's son! That scene in the *Calawaii's* cabin. The master asking his chief engineer and his mate to help him make a decision. Pitiful, it seemed then. Not like a shipmaster. Nan's name had leaped to Warden's lips. But Captain Moresby wanted no personal feeling to sway his judgment and his decision. No personal feeling! What that honesty must have cost that seventy-year-old sailor! Captain Moresby's son!

"Jump!" Warden shrieked. "Jump, sir! We'll pick you up."

"Get clear, you fool!"

"Jump, sir! In God's name—"

THEY came leaping into the boil of water, one after the other, the *Huron's* master and his officer. Jim Warden got them aboard. The small-boat turned its frail bows.

"Now, men! Give her a western ocean haul! Lift her! Break your backs and lift her!"

All that was left of Jim Warden's strength was in that cry of command. Nan Spencer, her wide eyes fixed upon him, felt the surging exultation, the power of it. The long oars bent. The small boat drove head-on against the seas. Behind the chief mate's back, the *Huron* settled deeper into the ravenous water. Before him he saw his own ship. He saw her very clearly, as if for the first time, the old, old *Calawaii*.

How she rose and fell and snarled as the seas sucked at her! How the salt brine drained and dripped from all her plates as she lifted herself from each beam-end roll. Gray-walled and rust-streaked, with driving snow and a wilderness of sea all about her, waiting to pick up her last rescue boat. Old—old. Past the day of her glory. Her once stately cabins empty. A lousy, good-for-

nothing pot, the third mate called her. Tearing herself apart, he thought. Her head seemed to weave toward where the brand-new *Huron* sank. What memories stirred in that ancient mass of wood and steel and iron! The things she had seen! The cargoes and the men she had carried! The glories she had known! Fifteen passages across the western ocean in the mad, mad days of the war. Last voyage now for the *Calawaii*. She was bound for the Kobe junkyards. But she'd stopped on the way to do a job and to have her final fling!

WARDEN never knew how he got aboard. The world had gone dark somehow, spinning dizzily around and around. He was staggering along a crowded deck that leaped and danced and dodged his feet. There were sailormen all about him, drenched and stumbling and panting, supporting him, supporting each other. Faces shot in and out of his consciousness. White swinging faces full of pride after danger, full of relief after terror. Nan Spencer's face too was there for a blurred instant. He thought he waved to her, counseling courage and patience. But he wasn't sure. His teeth were cracking against each other. He was chattering, he thought, like a maniac! Wouldn't do. It wouldn't do. He had to report to Captain Moresby. All hands clear and away, sir. All hands clear and away. . . .

For a moment clarity crossed his exhausted sense. He was looking up at the *Calawaii's* bridge. Captain Moresby was there. You couldn't miss that fine white head and that sea-hacked face. There was another there too, the master of the liner *Huron*. The old man's arm was about the other's shoulder, the shoulder of his son. Proper, that. An attitude of protection. They were staring off to leeward, where the *Huron* was protected too from the full fury of the gale by the hulk of the old *Calawaii*. A fierce hissing swept over the sea, and a sigh from the throats of many men and women. The *Huron* was going down in her last long dive. The surging noise of it swelled louder and louder. Jim Warden felt himself drowning in it. He tried to manage the bridge-ladder. But he couldn't. He knew he couldn't.

Somehow he found himself in his cabin, stretched out beneath the covers of his bunk. Warmth at last! Warmth and rest and peace, like a blissful drug creeping through all his limbs. The *Calawaii*

swung under him, firm and sure in the seaway. He heard the whine of the wind outside, and the chatter of water along the old ship's side. A faint smile twitched the corners of his lips. What he saw and what he heard couldn't possibly be true. He was asleep. There wasn't any question of it. He was asleep and dreaming blissfully.

But Nan Spencer's blonde hair and her eyes kept troubling him. Something in those wistful blue eyes he couldn't believe. And her voice kept drifting to him, faint and sweetly tinkling.

"Jim, my dear! Oh, my dear, dear Jim," that voice told him in his sleep. "I understand. I do; I do. I'm yours, Jim Warden, whenever you want me to be. Now go to sleep, dear. Go to sleep."

Something cool and fragrant touched his forehead and his lips. Then quiet. Peace he had never known before. How the ache of his back and his arms and his legs drained from him. No personal feeling, the Old Man said. Not for Nan; not for Captain Moresby's son. Just a job to do if you could—if a lousy good-for-nothing pot like the *Calawaii* could. . . . Jim Warden sank into the dark relief of exhausted sleep.

But the ship snored on, with the course set again for the coast of Japan. The *Huron* was gone, that brand-new Oriental liner, gone to the depths where the sea-snakes live. Darkness set in. The storm-scud streamed off to leeward. In the west three stars appeared, low and glittering. Captain Moresby was on the bridge, pacing back and forth, firmly, vigorously, eying the dying gale. He was at the end of his days, but he had no complaint to make. He had a man for a chief officer, and a man for a son. His life was complete. The end could come when it would.

PERHAPS the *Calawaii* sensed his feeling. There was a lift to her, a lift of pride and courage, as she took the sheeting spray aboard. Chevrons gleamed on her swinging funnel. Like an old veteran, decked in the uniform of a youthful strength, trudging with weary old feet on the last parade. A hundred-odd passengers were in her cabins again. Lights dancing from her decks on the wine-dark sea. Old glories recaptured. Old courage rewon. The Kobe junkyards were a thousand miles away! The old *Calawaii* reared her bows, flinging the spume aside in that brave gesture of ships in the final splendor of her long and useful life.

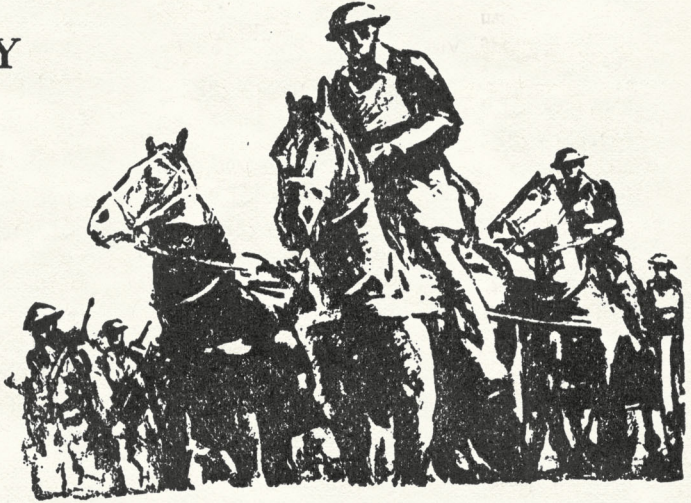
# Stumble-bum

By

KINGSLEY

MOSES

"Who you wavin' at, Pot?" cheered the lead driver. "It's just me—not the jig-adier-brindle—who is now passin' in review!"



WITH his shaggy fetlocks and matted mane, the powerful French drafter who was to be known as Stumble-bum did not make a favorable impression upon the veteran animals of A Battery. But it was not until one evening at watering, when the B. C. detail's single mounts were crowding the sluggish pool, that the sixteen-hand chestnut was pointedly informed of the fine shadings of class distinction which exist even in the American Army.

"Barge over, you big-brisketed bum!" snorted Red, the sorrel pet of the chief of section. "Don't go snufflin' and slobberin' round in the water afore the likes of your betters!"

"The gall o' some guys—my gaskins!" agreed the instrument sergeant's blue roan, who was unduly proud of his quarter strain of Thoroughbred blood. "Some of you Frog *chevals* are so hopped up with the *Égalité* idea that you don't know where to head in at."

"Damn' tootin'!" whickered Orlando, the captain's bay charger—he was out of Mercy by Trumpeter, the Trumpeter who once won the Governor Ogle steeplechase. Orlando backed contemptuously out of the pool, well aware that the stable police would water him later anyway, out of a nice, clean bucket.

Even in a war to make the world safe for democracy, the sorrel Red pointed out, this was carrying democracy too far. "The officers have their own mess; the non-coms eat together—they don't have to associate with the ranks. Naturally, we single mounts have our own picket-line; it aint logical we should all have to come to one common waterin'-place, where any cheap French chunk can foul the pool—"

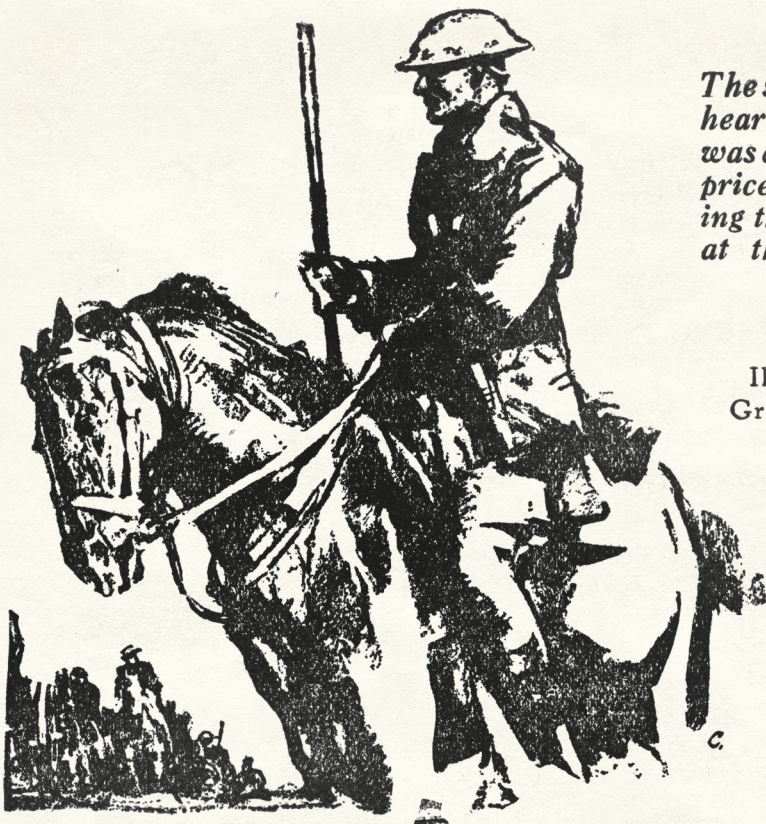
"You said it, bud!" the waspish blue roan agreed. "I'll kick him one in the stifle joint tomorra, while his driver's tryin' to back him into the breechin'."

But the threat was not fulfilled. The night brought an abrupt drop in temperature; and the aristocrats of the detail's picket-line had somehow not been properly blanketed. By noon there was sniffing and snuffling, and eyes were watery red. "Catarrh, and maybe ozena for some of 'em—dammit," the veterinary officer announced. "Not half of 'em are fit to be saddled."

"Satan's side-arms!" sighed A Battery's "old man," Captain Harry Hardwick. "And we march thirty kilometers today!"

"They can mooch along after the spring-wagon. That's the limit of their exercise, Harry," the vet assured him.





*The story of a great-hearted horse who was endowed with a priceless gift for doing the wrong thing at the right time.*

Illustrated by  
Grattan Condon

"You've got a smooth road all the way. Two teams to a carriage will do—you'll be damn' lucky to have two teams per, by this time next week! Saddle up some of your drafters, and let it go at that."

Thus a kind fate—and the excess weight and height of the veteran guidon "Pot" Prine—suddenly promoted Stumble-bum to be a guidon's mount. Amazingly, at the head of the column, his sturdy peasant strength not in the least feazed by Pot's two hundred pounds, the chestnut horse led the battery down the long road which led to the front lines.

Barring the undeniable fact that his beam and buttocks were rather the shape of a rowboat's stern; that he sloped altogether too sharply forward; and that his fetlocks were so heavily haired as to appear feathered—that, and the fact that his forelegs were rather short and seemed set too far under him, so that he had something of a wheelbarrow stance: outside of these peculiarities, Stumble-bum somewhat resembled a charger.

Moreover, willing and strong, his suddenly stimulated pride now gave him altogether quite a decent bearing. He curved his neck till it hurt him, and tucked in his chin. He lifted his rather small feet in an action exaggeratedly fine. His nostrils, clear and clean, un-

like those of his supercilious detractors who now shuffled miserably in the rear, flared wide to snuff and appreciate the cool air of the morning.

"Some horse, Prine!" Captain Hardwick grinned, firmly holding his own Orlando boot-to-boot. "If—" Arrived just at the crest of the low hill they were climbing, Hardwick spotted a railroad-crossing. "Crossing, Prine," he pointed. "Mark."

Stumble-bum had not employed his intelligent French perceptions for nothing. As well as anyone, he knew the duties of a guidon at a railroad. You posed magnificently at the crossing, pretending to be one of those grand equestrian statues on a pedestal in a park.

A Battery led the battalion. The first section piece and caisson rumbled smoothly over the rails. Sergeant Sandy Quinn, chief of section, had reason to be proud of his outfit: drivers sat soldierly erect; harness from martingales to breeching was speckless; every animal was in draft.

"Yeah, looks slick," said the Captain, sitting the haughty Orlando. "Increase the gait, Sergeant, for a hundred yards or so, in order to clear the crossing."

Sandy Quinn saluted. "Increase the gait," he ordered. "Section—tee-rot!"

Back yonder where the fourth section lagged, and the spring-wagon tolled the tired trailers, something seemed at this moment to have happened to the piece limber. The Captain galloped back to investigate. The right limber wheels were bogged. Nothing serious, though; the grunting cannoneers worked the gun out quickly enough.

But meantime up ahead—

**P**OT PRINE, stout and tall, favored excessively long stirrups. So when the mount Stumble-bum accidentally put his off rear hoof into a hole between the steel rail and the wood planking of the crossing, and then nervously crouched to pull free, Pot's right heel and spur came all the way down to the ground in his stirrup. The butt of the guidon-pole was in the boot of that stirrup. The slack stirrup-leather gaped.

*Kee-rack!* The horse got his foot free. And, as neatly as if it had been planned, the foot came swinging forward, and the hoof popped right into the gaping opening of the stirrup-leather.

Stumble-bum was not nervous. His distinct Percheron strain had probably been diluted with some Flemish, and a dash of Orloff too—with possibly a little good old Yorkshire Coach on the side. But no equine in the world, no matter how mild and gentle, particularly appreciates having a hind-leg hung up helplessly in the air.

When the stirrup-leather had relaxed, the staff of the guidon slanted forward, giving the scarlet pennon a neat if unintended dip. When Stumble-bum tried to free himself, and the stirrup-leather came tense again, the staff returned to its vertical norm.

But many interested eyes had appreciated this maneuver. "Who you wavin' at, Pot?" cheered the pleased Gyp Jones, lead driver of the second section piece, which was just then clearing the crossing. "It's just me—not the jigadier-brindle—who is now passin' in review!"

"Eyes ri-i-i-ight!" agreed the wheel driver.

And, "Yo-ho, Skinnay, I see you!" from the corporal on the limber chest.

"No, Potty, I'm awful sorry; but my momma says I can't come over. Got to stay in the house an' do my home work," sighed the humorous Number Two, perched beside the corporal gunner.

Pot Prine, in his peculiar predicament, had very little time to appreciate his friends' sense of humor. The guidon

pennon, by now, was whipping and jerking about like a signal-corps wigwag. Pot would have helped his case had he given himself his own order to dismount. But it had been stamped upon Pot's mind that when marking at crossing, a guidon should sit stiff and motionless. Thus now—even if not stiff or motionless—he nevertheless continued to sit.

And Stumble-bum to kick. And the guidon to bob and dip! And down the track a train's whistle!

To any railroad man, even to a Frog engineer, the vigorous waving of a red flag can mean but one thing in the world.

The engineer did his valiant best. But alas, the grade was against him. The long string of passenger coaches, faded to that sad hue of G. I. coffee which has stood out in the rain, the three flat-cars directly behind the locomotive's tender—all came bearing down relentlessly. Red képis and innumerable steel hats popped startled out of the windows. The air was shrill with cries.

But just as the engine arrived, Stumble-bum three-stepped sidewise, and by a miracle unhung his fouled foot from the stirrup-leather. So he and Pot, with guidon-pole properly vertical, were once more punctiliously at attention.

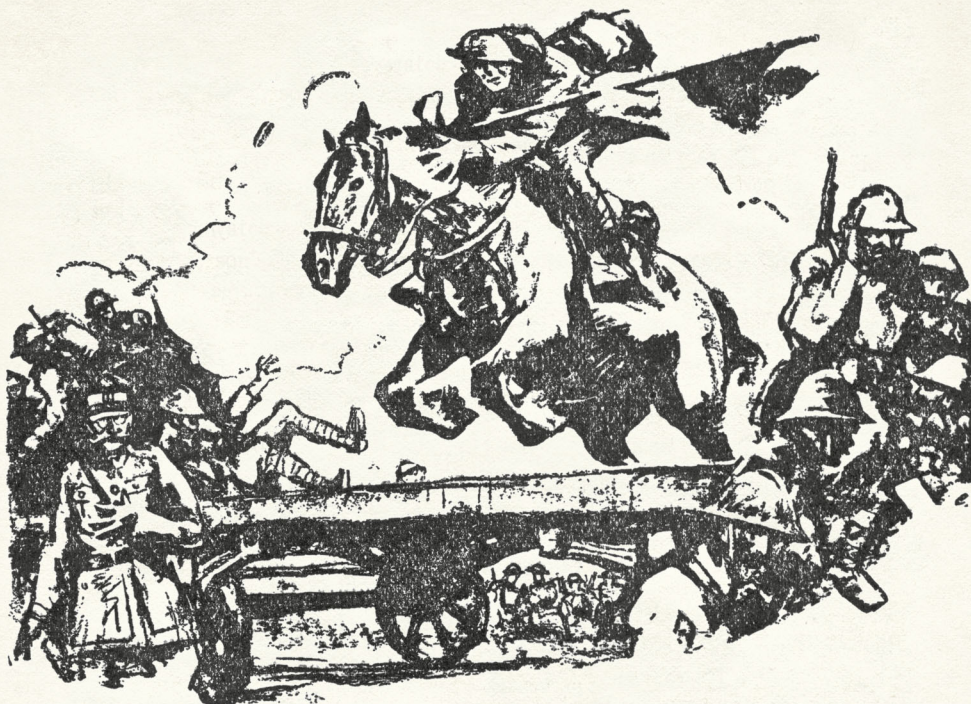
The French engineer, from his cab, said a great many things very fast. An adjutant, four captains, eight lieutenant-colonels and a major general displaced forward to reinforce the engineer. They had an *épatant* time!

But whatever may have been the emotions of Guidon Pot Prine, it was his stout mount who now proved the horse of action. Better than his temporary master, Stumble-bum understood the blistering remarks which were passing freely just then. Once they would have seared his equine soul, but no longer. Now he was an American horse—had *U.S.* on his haunch to prove it. He took orders from only one head.

**S**O when Captain Hardwick, returning at a hard gallop on the other side of the train, commanded explicitly, "Come here, you one-toed ape—you blunderin', bogged-down son of a bejiggered jug-head!" it was not for an American mount to hesitate to obey orders.

With unsuspected *élan*, and the grace of a kangaroo, Stumble-bum leaped completely over the flat-car in his way.

Pot Prine swan-dived to the cinders. But Stumble-bum, quivering and proud, stood strictly at attention.



When Captain Hardwick commanded explicitly, "Come here, you one-toed ape!" it was not for a mount to hesitate—with unsuspected *élan*, Stumble-bum leaped completely over the flat-car.

For human beings in battle, there is a harsh, savage excitement which certainly permits of no sense of boredom. For the patient beasts of an artillery team there is nothing but discomfort and fear. They are jammed into prickly woods for cover, or are herded down slimy quarries; scared horse-holders yank them about; they are generally deafened and confused.

Stumble-bum, observing the miseries of his mates, could take quiet pride and comfort in the fact that he was now a single mount. The noise was pretty bad—yeah: but at least a fellow could see.

For his abrupt display of prowess as a high jumper, his ability to stand still under fire, his essential sureness of foot despite his stumbler's conformation—all these had won the good chestnut another "step." The snooty Red, the chief-of-section's sorrel, had been disgracefully busted back to the ranks, when, at the first shriek of H. E. shell, Red's underlying yellow had bloomed plainly through his pink hide. So Stumble-bum carried Sergeant Sandy Quinn now.

Of course even a high-ranking single mount is not posted directly on the gun trails. Even the Captain's charger, the overbearing Orlando, was in the nearest cover behind the base line. But always

four or five of the handiest single mounts were close to the Captain's C. P.

Hitherto, when the guns had been booming, that had been just fine. At the present moment, however—well, even Orlando had observed in his superior way: "'Struth, a pukka *mêlée*, what!"

A Battery realized that it was all of that. The battery was firing at no more than three-four hundred—an uncomfortably short range. Their position on a narrow shelf on the down slope of a hill which overlooked flattened wheat-fields was none too well sheltered. An infantry division in the thin wheat below and in front of them was being raked by machine-gun enfilade now. But A Battery was just as open to that cross-fire—when the enemy should decide that it would be a good idea.

At that, A Battery on its shelf was not in nearly so precarious a position as was the second battalion of the artillery regiment out in the open to the left there. From Captain Hardwick's C. P. it did look as if D, E and F batteries were unnecessarily and wantonly exposed. Through his eight-power glasses Harry Hardwick could make out the cannoneers distinctly, could spot the officer in command walking up and down back of his trails, apparently entirely without cover.

Furthermore, the second battalion had been pushed forward so far that they were now out in front of the three lines of barbed-wire entanglement which the enemy had deserted only yesterday. Suicidal, it looked. It wasn't, of course, quite that. Any battery actually in the open has less than five minutes of life left: a couple of howitzer shells—easily dropped on such a target—will fix that.

No, flat as the seared wheat-field looked, it actually rolled in long waves. The battalion down there to the left had been deftly trundled into a dead space, so far as enemy counter-battery fire was concerned. The searching .77's whizzed over them and burst harmlessly.

On the other hand, the second battalion was just as open to enfilade as was the infantry which was now attracting the enemy's attention. It was to choke that off, that A Battery, operating alone, was up here on its shelf. "Keep those Krauts off the back of our neck, Hardwick!" had been the colonel's orders.

Well, the second battalion was reasonably well protected yet. The infantry, dug in, were getting it, though obviously not very seriously. It was a whole brigade of the 8th Division out there two kilometers to the front. But once that infantry began to move and got out of convenient machine-gun range—

"They'll be on the second battalion's tails," Sandy Quinn conjectured.

"Nor overlook us, son," his captain agreed.

Less far-seeing members of the outfit had no such gloomy forebodings, however. The rapid enemy retreat during the past twenty-four hours had convinced them that thenceforth there would be little opposition. Fritz was *fini*.

"Sure, war's *kaput*," pronounced the wheel-driver, Gas-pipe Granger. "We're all set to roll the caissons right into old Berlin."

"And get us some good beer—what I mean!" agreed Orson Ott, the greaseball. In the dim light even of midday, drizzling as usual, but not too cold, the group squatted comfortably enough in the mud, playing pinochle.

"What you doin' in the lines, High-tail?" Sandy Quinn popped up again. High-tail Howard was a swing driver, supposed to be back in the echelon. "You'd better hiper home and make horsehair charms outta your plugs' tails, soldier."

"Not me, I'm lateral lazin'. I maintain contact to the left—out yonder with the second battalion."

"So we do get lateral *liaison*—even if it's only you playin' pinochle. But I might as well tell you Johns that we think we know the Krauts' H hour—when they open up with their own barrage. An' that'll be just twelve-thirty."

"Awk!" remarked High-tail, swiftly



"Down, boy!" the Captain ordered. Stumble-bum keeled over and stretched out prostrate. But the large eyes were brightly interested, asking: "What is it?"

rising, to "lateral laze" in a safer place. "When they start to crash down, it'll be right here—"

"Aw, direct hits don't hurt," Gas-pipe Granger comforted. "They just pick up a coupla o' buttons and the buckle of yer belt—"

Gas-pipe tripped and fell over a pintle-ring as the sky was split wide open and the tempest of death descended.

Eastward, the tilting hills were solid with enemy positions which had been established there for almost four years. Even the old enemy lines, those trenches which furrowed across the blighted wheat-fields beneath the rows of barbed wire, had been held for several months now. To try to cross that freshly blazing flat seemed like the suicidal splendor of another Pickett's Charge. Yet there was the infantry doing it—the whole brave brigade of the 8th.

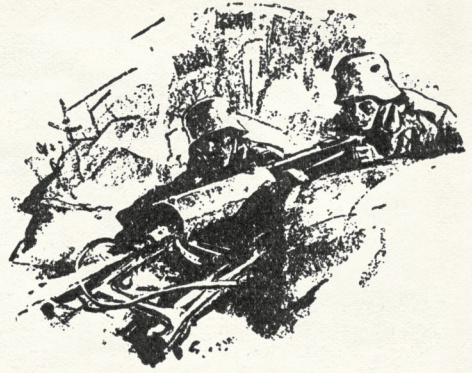
Over a half-mile front the stumbling black figures were advancing: they surged onward and out in irregular lines of skirmishers, zigzag black waves lapping forward. On them the German front concentrated. Shrapnel bloomed in close-massed puffs of white cloud. One could not see the deadly spray, but the dark figures fell in swathes where the sweeping fire scythed them down.

From A Battery's right, to the south, a wind seemed to sway the weedy wheat, a wind which crawled up gently yet relentlessly to the flank of the struggling brigade of doughboys. Machine-gun fire in enfilade, creeping to adjust range: the machine-gun fire in enfilade which hitherto A Battery had been diverting from its own exposed second battalion of field guns.

"See if we can't neutralize those birds." Captain Hardwick guessed his base deflection. Eager hands swiftly shifted the trails so that the guns were stepped in echelon as his rapid orders bespoke immediate fire with the reliable Mark I shell. Harry Hardwick must make his own mission just now: for more than an hour, in fact, he'd been waiting for some definite word from headquarters.

**T**HAT word must come by runner, he knew. The enemy's irregular blasting, desultory as it had been, had obviously blown every wire out of the earth in the open. With but one or two exceptions, his Routon switchboard had been dead since ten o'clock this morning.

Once Captain Hardwick had attempted wigwagging from farther back on the



hill; but that enemy machine-gun outfit yonder on the right had opened up on so conspicuous a mark immediately. And that seriously imperiled the refuge of the too-shallow draw where he had disposed his horses and limbers. At six rounds per gun per minute, Hardwick slammed his H.E. shell into the approximate vicinity of the hidden machine-gun nests. He walked his fire up and down through a deep bracket: he traversed and swept two hundred mil's.

Vainly. The black thick vomiting smoke, the vivid flare of his spaced bursts, seethed over the whole valley to southward. Yet the machine-guns pertinaciously kept on. Out there in the hillocks and gullies nothing now could be heard—not a thing seen—not a glint of metal or a single *Feldgrau* figure. But a score of thin threads of steam continued to trail up in white spirals through the wet, lazy air; and each thread was the telltale mark of the overheated water-jacket of one of those enemy weapons.

"Toughest thing in the world to dislodge," Hardwick growled to his one lieutenant, a nervous youngster called Reynolds. "Two men and a machine-gun you can cover with one Turkish towel—about. You've got to register directly on 'em."

The lieutenant massaged his mustache. "And I thought the boche was off—headed hell-bent for Berlin!"

"Well—not for Berlin."

And the Captain had a right to be worried. High-tail, off to the left, supposed to be furnishing *liaison* with the second battalion, had vanished. Nothing, nothing at all, came from regimental headquarters safe back westward. Inevitably Hardwick's field-glasses would swerve again and again and again, to focus on the shattered infantry so valiantly plugging across the open in front of him.



"They're swingin' north, to the left, Reynolds, little by little," he muttered. "That damned machine-gun *strafe* has turned 'em. And likely they don't know it." Like leaves blown by a gale—and as unconsciously as dried leaves too—the few hundreds remaining of that harassed charge were being slowly driven out of their direct line of advance.

"If we could only give 'em a rolling barrage in front of them!" That was Hardwick's thought. That might help a little. Every meter the infantry advanced took them just that much farther from the enfilading machine-guns, but brought them closer and closer to the enemy's main front line in the deeply wooded valley. On his own unsustained responsibility, though, Hardwick must not attempt such a measure. Other friendly troops might already have sifted into that area.

And another development just behind him drove the rolling-barrage idea out of his mind. There was the crackle and hiss of bullets. A horse screamed and plunged among the single mounts which were held ready in the scrub oak not

twenty paces behind the caisson chests. Another horse broke and fled crazily—the instrument sergeant's blue roan.

The Captain, crouching and jumping, got to the spot immediately. Some enemy observer, yonder, high in a distant tree, no doubt, had spotted this huddle of horses even though he had not been able to range direct on the battery personnel. . . .

The Captain's thoroughbred was through. Two more mounts, following the terrified roan, went weaving away painfully. Only the sturdy chestnut—the humble plug known as Stumble-bum—stood steadfast, if quivering. Lead whistled almost through his mane.

"Down, boy!" The Captain slapped the thick neck, and pulled down hard on the bit-ring. Some horses understand that, but only old and well-schooled animals.

Yet, neither old nor schooled, the chestnut was readily apprised of what was being asked of him. He clumsily sank to his knees, then keeled over and stretched out prostrate—flopped with such a *plump*, that the Captain feared he had been knocked down. But there wasn't a scratch or spot on the sleek and shining coat—he'd lately been getting grooming. And the large eyes were brightly interested, asking: "What is it?"

"At least we've got one mount left," Captain Harry thought as he sprawled alongside the warm chestnut belly. Just overhead, hardly more than three feet above them, was the whine and rip of the flying steel. Not comfortable, but in one way, a good thing. Those *mitrailleuses* were off the doughboys now, had returned to a target they could really range on. So far—jake! But if—"If, horse, they depress their damn' muzzles—"

They either didn't, or couldn't on account of the lay of the terrain. And that was very fortunate for the new and unheralded arrival.

This was a staggering youth, tolling his spent horse behind him. "Gallop, sir," the lad announced. "Gallop, sir, from brigade."

At last orders had arrived. Hardwick could proceed intelligently now, use his fire against something besides invisible holes in the ground a mile distant.

"Low bridge, then, boy!" He sat up. "And let your horse make out for himself."

No need to emphasize that advice. The runner went down on his knees.

"We got—we got—to get through to the second battalion, Captain," he croaked. "They're firin' a box barrage. They can't see those infantry Johns—the doughs can't see 'em—" He collapsed. His whole right sleeve was blood-soaked.

The Captain fixed the boy up deftly and as best he could. Lad would live all right, looked like. Just out from excessive loss of blood.

And the message of this courageous galloper was not hard to interpret. Major Morandy, commanding officer of the Second Battalion down yonder, had apparently had orders to lay down a box barrage on a sector directly in front of of him. That was sure to be a heavily held enemy position; the ragged hedge of woods in the glen which fringed the blood-drenched brook. The box barrage would coop the enemy there, hold them while the infantry brigade was supposed to move round to flank.

But suppose, with sense of direction awry, the American doughboys went wandering off their true parallel of departure and slanted directly northward into that blasting box of fire!

Major Morandy with his battalion, batteries D, E and F, was deep down in a swale. It would be next to impossible for him to get observation forward. His only choice was to keep his long guns slamming away straight ahead according to standing orders.

And the infantry could not guess that they were straying into certain annihilation—faced by the rifles of the foe, blown out of existence from behind by the artillery which was supposed to support them.

Easy enough to go wrong in the murk and smoke and confusion of that fierce concentration of fire. The clouded, lowering sun, no more than a pale disk now and then, gave pitifully little guidance. Landmarks were wholly blotted out.

**S**OME one had to choke off that barrage, though—some one who could see and realize what a massacre it did mean. Who else could see and realize? Headquarters? Yes: but two shell-blasted miles away.

"Try Major Morandy again, Evans. Try getting through to Division. They might have communication—" But Captain Hardwick shook his head even as he watched his operator wringing his dead board.

Of course—who could tell?—Second Battalion might have orders to shift its

fire in good time, or lift it and roll it forward.

The Captain watched.

Two runners he finally picked out, working their way across the open and obviously headed for Morandy's guns.

**T**HE two tiny running, dodging figures had nearly a mile yet to cover before they might reach the relatively sheltered basin in the swale where the second battalion was stationed. But almost all of that exposed journey lay wide open to the enemy's fire across that undulating wheat-stubble. And there were the three bristling tangles of barbed wire to cross.

Given plenty of time, a man might work his way, crouching and creeping, to Morandy's guns—if he were lucky. Now there wasn't any time to lose. Each minute of delay must mean a score more lives.

Sandy Quinn said quietly: "I'll make a stab at it, sir."

"Thanks, Sandy," Hardwick nodded. "But we're short-handed now. I'll need you. Beside, you've no more chance—"

He didn't need to finish. Separated though they were, the same shrapnel shell caught both runners. One whirled and dropped flat. The other, scrambling through barbed wire, was tossed into the air, fell limply, and hung on the wire a bundle of rags, dangling.

D, E and F Batteries continued to salvo and volley. The far fringe of that hedge of woods in the glen, into which the infantry had vanished, blazed fitfully here and there as the detonating shells fired it.

"Slaughterin' our own!" sobbed young Reynolds. War wasn't so pretty now. The lieutenant had the stuff, though. "I'll—I'll go myself, sir." He shivered, but went on with it: "You got to save your sergeants, sir. But shave-tails are expendable, like—like soap an' shoelaces."

"Guts, kid. Good work. Not yet, though. See, yon's a tank—one of those new-model whippets. Good idea." The Captain's field-glasses followed this clumsily swift new thing. Yes, it moved a good twenty miles an hour.

"They won't need wire-cutters. Ride 'em!" The looey was a little hysterical. "Ride 'em, cowboy!"

The grotesque, bumping bug of a thing was indeed plowing along valiantly, and at a speed far greater than it seemed from this distance. To impress a tank

as a courier was new to military maneuvers. Not a bad idea, at that. Rifle-balls and shrapnel pills could pelt all over it innocuously. It would trample wire entanglements like so much brittle shrubbery. Yes, the new fast tank might win through.

"They got to crack down right on it, sir." Sandy Quinn knew his *matériel*. "Go it, you old steel stallion!"

But some artful artilleryman yonder also knew something about shooting. . . . A single field-piece had been set for precision firing. A black burst and scarlet flame whipped out a hundred yards behind the tank; almost instantly an identical burst was a hundred yards ahead of it.

"Bracketed," groaned Hardwick. "If he's got the line—"

*Thoom! Thoom! Thoom!* the bursts came. Fifty yards behind the tank; fifty yards in front of it; about twenty yards behind—

Hardwick dropped his field-glasses. They swung on their strap against his lean stomach. He didn't need them to see any more. Flying fragments of machinery, great shattered shards of steel were tossed high from that black volcano.

Direct hit. Finished! A dead lump of junk, inert in the wire.

Captain Hardwick wheeled about sharply and peeled off overcoat and field-glasses. He stepped over to where the chestnut horse still lay sprawled out so obediently.

"Up, Stumble-bum, ol' socks. Here's where we go ridin'."

"Hey, Captain, it aint up to you to take a hand," Sandy Quinn protested, etiquette ignored.

"I'm sittin' in," was the answer.

**F**OR the next five or ten minutes A Battery was quite out of action in that particular engagement. Every gun was deserted, as the entire personnel tried to follow the Captain's mad progress. Through dust-clouds and flashes and bursts and ghastly streamers of shrapnel fluff, across a plain which seethed with fire and belched with the muck of explosions, the lone figure of one flying horseman made its erratic way.

Now it was completely gone, smothered in a wave of smoke laced through with threads of flame; now it was clear in the open again, rising and falling jerkily. Sometimes it swerved in a wide arc and seemed canted over to topple; again it lined straight ahead, incredibly

invulnerable. Shrieking shells smashed just where the flitting shape must be; again and again and again the horseman was out galloping.

A man could never get through there—never! Yet this man and his horse were doing it. His speed balked artillery precision fire; his bobbing and falling over rolling ground made it tricky to level rifle-sights. Yes, now the Captain and his chestnut were abreast of—but well behind—the dimly discerned line of the Second Battalion.

**B**UT there intervened those dreadfully snarled barriers of jagged wire. Somehow he had to get through those. Here his mount could hardly help him. Otherwise, rather—for, though shell-fire might have broken up the line of those barbed entanglements, a horse caught even in a trailing strand will almost invariably become panic-stricken and kick itself into bloody shreds.

"He might," groaned Sandy Quinn, "get shet of his horse now, an' wiggle on through by himself."

"Yeah, if he'd ditch 'at Stumble-bum!" from dumb Pot Prine, crying with excitement.

But Captain Harry Hardwick did not essay that effort.

Instead, as the sun broke through, just topping the sinister hills behind and illuminating other hills where swarmed a desperately massed enemy, the galloping man's reckless maneuver was vividly to be descried: Headlong, at top pace, he put his pounding chestnut at the first snarl of the wire. He cleared it sailing, and went on.

A short dash over the flat, low as a jockey at the winning post. Slashing spurs caught glints of light. Then over the next obstacle: a long, flat swoop—perfect. Once more: just one last line of wire.

Some enemy battery closed its sheaf then, and thumped four thundering shells just where Harry Hardwick must be. Smoke and dirt and fire vomited blackly upward. Man and horse were gone.

Ah, not the man, though! Crouching, Captain Harry was running toward the safety of that dead space of field where the twelve pieces of the battalion were so relatively well masked from any hostile fire.

"It was a good hoss!" allowed Sandy Quinn.

"Poor, ol' pot-bellied plug!" even fat Prine quavered.



"Man, but it got him through," little Reynolds was blubbing. "Got him through—got him through!"

The flash of the battalion's guns ceased. There was a frantic scurrying of tiny men hither and thither. Harry Hardwick's figure, so easily spotted when alone, was lost in the group of milling figures. Beyond through the woods and the glen at the foot of the enemy hills, there was the sharp rattle and flashing of determined hand-to-hand fighting. There was no shell-fire to smother it.

Slowly that bayonet-work ceased too. The woods were becoming quiet. The infantry had its objective—were digging in, consolidating. Shadows stole over the plain. It seemed no time until darkness.

It was just half an hour after full dark when Captain Harry Hardwick returned to his command—returned, moreover on his chestnut horse, walking ponderously and deliberate.

The sagacious Stumble-bum had well learned his lesson to lie down doggo when bidden—lie down and stay down. Well, it was a pretty useful trick when things got too hot to be comfortable. But only when your officer told you to.

On through the "Oregon" woods, and up to the Armistice; and then afterward down along the slow way to Coblenz, Captain Harry Hardwick rode only his extraordinary chestnut charger.

**STUMBLE-BUM**, despite frequent ill-timed comments by the ignorant, was living his great hour. He could afford entirely to ignore the envious gibes of the few single mounts which had survived the terrors of the Meuse-Argonne. The numerous glossy replacements, sleek and grain-fat from America's Western ranges and remount stations, were quite beneath contempt.

An officer's charger he was—Stumble-bum. Take it or leave it! His name headed the list of the battery's mounts.

Care and attention, plucking and grooming, could not remedy his conformation. He still tilted forward from astern; his saddle was prone to climb his withers. But Captain Harry had proved him in the sternest test and was altogether content with him. And when at last the Captain cashed a paycheck, the very first thing he

did with his bale of francs was to take personal title to his peculiar pet.

Then there came a horse-show to Coblenz.

"Up to carrying 165 pounds," or "Suitable to become hunters," were not classes Stumble-bum would have outstandingly adorned. Even his partisan proprietor had to recognize that. But in the "Touch and Out"—what were painted pasteboard walls, or a few fragile fence-rails, to a stout fellow who could broad-jump a couple of rods or so of rusty, tangled barbed wire!

A spring sun shone vividly on suave emerald turf. A fashionable world, freed from war, assembled in all its urbanity to patronize and approve this demonstration of a return to a civilized state of society. There were envoys and admirals and excellencies in odd lots; bishops, burgomasters and barons; and the blonde local beauties, buxom and sincerely grateful to be able to don the pleasing Parisian fashions once more. Two regimental bands blared.

Harry Hardwick on his chestnut was nearly the last entry to come out from the paddock gate. Stumble-bum flew the eight jumps with the effortless ease of a grasshopper.

Doughboys agreed, "Damn' good!" to stout ladies', "*Schön!*"

Only one other entry had completed the course. The two perfect performers repeated the course: and the other ticked behind at the second cardboard "stone wall."

Stumble-bum repeated faultlessly.

People laughed. Let 'em! In the center of the wide oval lawn Captain Harry sat contented as could be. Five thousand eyes admired.

To him, with a large rosette, walked the major general, master of ceremonies. Stumble-bum arched his neck in pride. This was his zenith of glory. British and American bands—the busbies one beat behind—blared "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean: the home of the brave and the free-hee!" Stumble-bum pirouetted and caracoled.

The major general raised his hand. "Down, boy!" the officer soothed. "Down, boy!" And gripped the bridle.

Stumble-bum knew that command. . . . He dutifully sank to his knees, flopped over and stretched out prostrate.



# The Lost Sniff

COLUMBUS COLLINS, lank and dusky head of the detective agency bearing his name, took one startled look at his oncoming assistant "Bugwine" Breck, and apparently fell prey to hydrophobia.

Coney Island, the agency's flea-ravaged, one-forty-fourth part "bloodhound," looked, sniffed—and shot under the sink like a scalded goldfish, where he too developed loud and alarming mental symptoms.

All this caused the five-foot, coal-colored Mr. Breck to take a worried look at himself in the office mirror, and grow perplexed. For the mirror showed no error—only improvement. Working north from his twin left shoes, his mystified gaze took in his usual plaid plus-fours—relic of a duck-hunter twice his size—and came complacently to rest upon his newest glory, an also over-large belted brown sports-coat, before passing on to his regular detective headgear, a plaid hunting-helmet.

To the puzzled Mr. Breck, all was still well—including the fact that his able-armed ex-wife Geranium didn't know where he was.

But, "Dar you go! *Dar you go!*" Coherence came to Columbus. "—Gittin' dumber and dumber!"

"How-come *dumber?*?" Bugwine kept twisting and looking.

"*De coat! De clue!*" raved Mr. Collins. "Dat coat you got on is *de clue!* For de bloodhound to sniff, runnin' down who pass dem funny fifty-dollar bills on Samson G. Bates. Crook drap de coat when he run—it's all Coney got to sniff him out by; and now here you is ruinin' de sniff by *wearin' de clue!*"

"Old coat's hot-cha-cha," defended Mr. Breck bewilderedly.

"But you's ruind de sniff!" Mr. Collins' seizure grew worse. "Dat's what ail Coney, dar under de sink, now: you done got him all mixed up in de nose about who he's *after!*"

Mr. Breck wilted before something that hadn't occurred to him before.

"And Geranium, your wife, been round here lately lookin' for you, too," Columbus backed up a fresh load of trouble, ready to dump it.

"You tell her I works here?" Bugwine paled before possibilities.

"Not yit, I aint. But I will, is you keep on makin' a flop of dat Bates counterfeitin'-case and de twenty bucks Samson done hung up for us, for solvin' it."

Abeance of that threat came to Bugwine just here—in a letter which the postman threw in at the open door. Mr. Collins pounced upon it, read it—and even Coney's befuddled clamor died down before the new note in Columbus' voice as he whirled on his addled aide with, "Boy, git bright in de brains!"

Mr. Breck kicked himself sharply in the shin, to produce synthetic animation.

"You done fizzled on de counterfeitin'-case, but I gives you one more chance to make good, before I tips off Geranium whar is you!" bellowed Columbus. "Now, git dis: One of us is gwine to town, and I cain't go."

"Rallies noble amongst de bright lights," Bugwine nominated himself vaguely.

"Dat's jest what I is scared of. Dat, and de job what de letter says is callin' for somethin' you aint got—"

"I aint got what?"

"Standard equipment between de ears. So dumb you gums up everything you touches. Like wearin' dat coat-clue and messin' Coney all up in de sniff! Runt, every time you does right, it's a accident!"

"Rearin' to accident! What town de letter say?" The sidewalks of Selma were already calling.

"Birmingham—"

"*Bummin'ham?*" Mr. Breck had been fishing for perch and caught a shark.

"Yeah. Colored hotel-managin' boy up dar orderin' hisself a house-detective from de old reliable Collins agency, and you—"

"How-come 'house-broke detective'?"

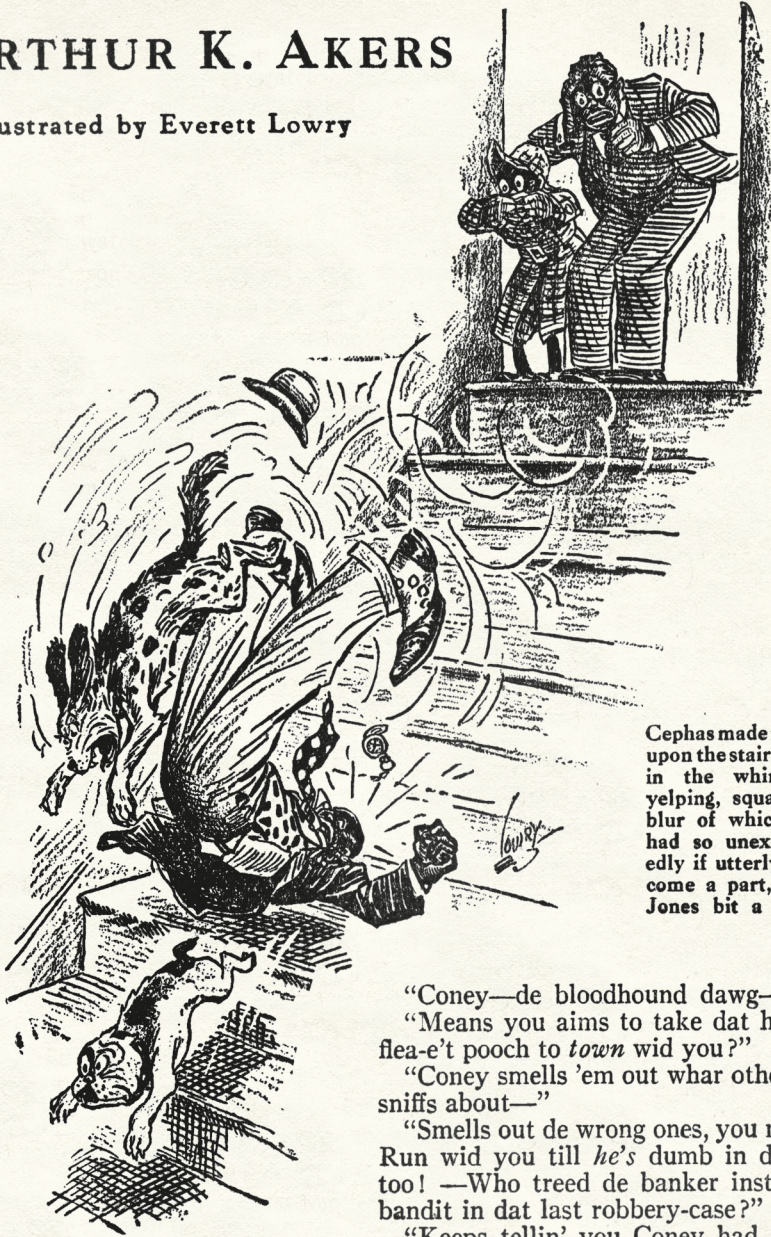
"Shet up! Your mouth fixin' to talk you out of a trip."

Bugwine remembered Geranium's grim quest, and shut up.

"You flops on de counterfeitin'-case—and now I gits stuck wid you and dem two left feet of yourn on a big-town assignment!" grumbled his chief. "City streets and your brains aint mix. But

# By ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by Everett Lowry



Cephas made news upon the stairway: in the whirling, yelping, squalling blur of which he had so unexpectedly if utterly become a part, Mr. Jones bit a dog!

flop on dis, and you done messed your last mess: I tells Geranium whar is you."

"Still on counterfeitin'-case—jest adds on hotel-detectin' on de side," rebutted Mr. Breck. Let Geranium lay hands on him now, and they'd be taking him up later with vacuum-cleaners. "Who de hotel-boy? How I git dar?"

"Darius Horn, at de Royal Presidential Hotel—Number 1746 Fourth Avenue, north side. Bus leaves at nine in de mornin': you be on it, or else—"

"Me and Coney sleep in de bus; cain't miss it."

"You and *who*?"

"Coney—de bloodhound dawg—"

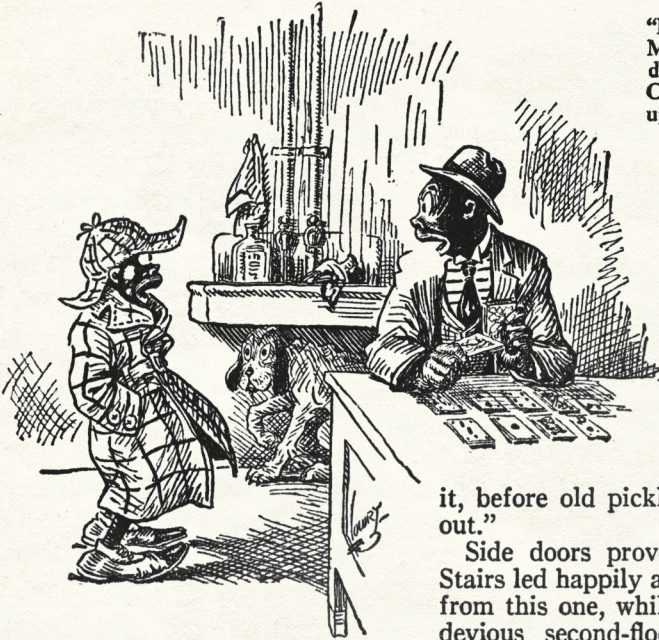
"Means you aims to take dat half-wit flea-e't pooch to town wid you?"

"Coney smells 'em out whar others jest sniffs about—"

"Smells out de wrong ones, you means! Run wid you till *he's* dumb in de head too! —Who treed de banker instead de bandit in dat last robbery-case?"

"Keeps tellin' you Coney had de distemper den: sniffin' noble now." Then Mr. Breck broke for the back door as their dissatisfied client, Samson G. Bates, came in at the front. . . .

With half of Baptist Hill at the station to see a modern *Sherlock* and his hound off on a metropolitan assignment next morning, the Birmingham bus tore out of Demopolis. Magnificent in the sports-coat that covered him to the heels and kept his bloodhound in an olfactory haze as to whom he was trailing in the Bates counterfeiting-case, Mr. Breck was too busy waving farewells to women—while watching out for Geranium—to worry about dogs.



"De coat! De clue!" raved Mr. Collins. "You's ruint de sniff! Dat's what ail Coney: you got him mixed up about who he's after!"

And five crowded hours later he had mastered the revolving door to the Royal Presidential, and was in its lobby. Business might be good in the Presidential, but it didn't look it; the shadow of the cost-sheet lay visibly over its frayed upholstery and skimpy furnishings.

A big darky whom Bugwine disliked on sight bore down on him. "Federal Transient Bureau's further over, on de north side. Beat it!" he misunderstood Mr. Breck and his bloodhound.

"Lookin' for Mist' Darius Horn, de big hotel-boy. I's de house-broke detective from de Columbus Collins agency in Demop'lis," Bugwine stood his ground.

"Detective? Den what for you come here disguised as a stunned halfwit?" rumbled Mr. Horn resentfully. "Also, dogs aint allowed de help in high-class house like dis. Pooch is out."

"Coney aint no pooch: he's a bloodhound dawg—cotches crooks—"

"Aint care is he cotch cold and die—he's out!" Mr. Horn grew louder and firmer. "All time fannin' fleas wid his hindleg in de lobby, aint no class! Come back by yourself—or stay out!"

Mr. Breck undertook the revolving door again while he cranked his brains by hand—to be encouraged about them by finding himself on the sidewalk at the end of the third round of his bout with the door. "Whuff! Old squirrel-blood in me risin' to de top!" he bugled. Then in the flush of victory he evolved strategy. "Coney, sniff out de side door, and lay low!" he voiced it. "I bootlegs you in

it, before old pickle-face boy boots you out."

Side doors proved Coney's specialty. Stairs led happily and secludedly upward from this one, while at the far end of a devious second-floor corridor Bugwine came to the unlocked door of an unoccupied room. "Two—forty—two," he spelled out the figures of its number. "Dog, park yourself. Don't let nobody in dar till I gits back, while I does business wid Pickle-face."

And, removing the disturbing influence of his coat from range of Coney's nose, Mr. Breck slammed a spring-locked door on trouble, and left.

But below-stairs further vital events had transpired in his absence, signalized first by the leap of Manager Horn for his front sidewalk as a taxi whirled up to the curb there. Baggage came out of it like a liner unloading, followed by a Personage. Miraculously, it seemed to Mr. Horn, this well-fed and dusky newcomer kept his tan derby hat off the hot end of his skyward-cocked cigar, while beneath his gray coat and above his white flannel trousers, an inflammatory shirt and tie fought it out to a noisy draw. Finally, at the heels of the great man, followed his dog. And what a dog! Only being smacked in the face by a freight-train, marveled Mr. Horn, could have produced a physiognomy like that, while generations of growing up under low furniture must have been required to achieve that bench-legged effect between floor and dog.

Scenting tips larger than the local dimes, two bell-hops in patched red uniforms flung themselves upon the Personage's baggage, with Darius a close third: this big boy looked like what might yet stand between a hotel man and his sheriff.

"Registers you my ownself. Jest gimme de name and home-town, and de house is yours," purred Mr. Horn at the great one's heels. A good first impression might help a lot in selling him the hotel!

"Cephas Jones, U.S.A. And you said it!" boomed the guest.

"How-come I said it?" Out of a sea of red ink flashed the first glimmer of a dawn for a hotel man.

"Means I is lookin' around for a good hotel-lease to buy."

BY the hardest, Mr. Horn restrained himself from dashing into the barber shop, seizing a whisk, and giving this Santa Claus a good brushing-off. "Sends up your bags and dog right away!" he burst into a blur of hospitality instead. "And how about you steppin' in my office, first? Git de figures and about three fingers in a washtub, while dey gittin' de bridal suite ready for you?"

The stranger eyed Mr. Horn narrowly, and reached some internal decision. "And tell de boy to tie my dog in de bathroom careful," he concluded. "Last hotel, he e't a bell-hop by mistake."

"Boy, de best for Mist' Jones and dog!" directed Mr. Horn imperiously. "Two-forty-two—and make it snappy!"

In the managerial office, Mr. Cephas Jones looked appraisingly about him. "I *is* been lookin' for a good hotel-lease to buy," he further let fall above an emptied glass. "Jest aint find no good ones—"

"Aint need to look no further: when I runs a hotel, it's lousy wid class," Mr. Horn's heart leaped at the outlook. Supply and Demand would not only meet but collide here! "I even has a house-detective."

Cephas started suitably. Darius had known *that* touch would impress him!

"Quiet and classy, eh?" Mr. Jones recovered. "Well, I'll see for myself. Way I do, I jest sort of soaks in de at-mosphere round a place, while I's makin' up my mind."

Mr. Horn blinked before that new name for gin. Cephas sure could soak *that* up!

"Aint mind tellin' you," pursued Mr. Horn, "dat your prop'sition looks fair. But it got to prove up. You say de place is classy: lemme *see* de class. It clicks wid me now, but is it gwine keep on clickin'? Also, how about your price—which is too high before I hears it!"

Darius recognized the earmarks of a business-man, and beamed. "Everything under control," he purred, "includin' de

price, which is six hundred dollars for de four-year lease and *everything*. Longer you stays, better you likes dis—"

"Till dey locks us both up 'bout dat six hundred," interrupted Cephas; "—you for burglary and me for bein' foolish in de head. Git reasonable!"

"It got swell clientele—" essayed Darius, then stopped, amazed, for Mr. Jones was reaching into his inside coat-pocket.

"When I talks business," he paid no attention to Darius' rebuttal, "I likes to know I aint gwine waste my time. *And* I don't 'spect to waste nobody else's time talkin' to me, neither."

Cephas' hand came out. And at what was in it Mr. Horn's eyes began to resemble those of a cat in a liver-shop.

"I puts up dis hundred: you puts up a hundred too," elaborated the Croesus—"wid some good reliable third party; so is nobody back out on de deal, de other party to it is still got somethin' to show for his time. How dat hit you?"

"Right between de eyes!" Mr. Horn never had seen anyone so reckless with big bills before. Like they weren't worth a thing! But already he was reaching for his own reserve—the hundred dollars he kept in his wallet against the now-certain day that some creditor attached his bank-account. If anybody backed out on this deal it wouldn't be Darius!

"Bringin' up de matter of who holds de kitty—somebody what's dumb enough to be honest," continued Mr. Jones.

IN Mr. Horn's memory bells rang. "Bugwine Breck!" he fitted description to detective.

"Who?"

"Boy what's obleeged to be honest becaze he is a officer of de law." And Mr. Horn opened his office door and issued summons.

Sports-coat, plus-fours, and hunting-helmet, Mr. Breck answered—producing a profound and instant impression upon a big business-man: Mr. Cephas Jones practically choked on the interior of his own neck as he glimpsed the half-portion Mr. Breck in that coat. But Bugwine was certainly equally staggered by the *ensemble* of Mr. Jones. Mr. Horn rushed to introductions.

"Mist' Jones, dis here de house-detective, Bugwine Breck," words identifiable as Mr. Horn's broke through the fog that enveloped Mr. Breck from pole to pole. "Me and Mist' Jones craves for you to hold a couple of hundred bucks for us, Officer."

Bugwine pushed his eyes back into their sockets, and rallied his ears for a fresh try at the incredible. "H-hold *what?*" he gurgled.

"Gittin' up a little deal to sell Mist' Jones de ho-tel," Darius explained. "Boy what backs down loses de kitty what *you* holds. Git de idea?"

"By de tail!" burst from the recovering Bugwine. "I's de stakeholder. Puts your money in one my pockets; his'n in de other. Aint never mix nothin' up."

"You said it!"

Action followed. Mr. Jones' currency went into Mr. Breck's left-hand pocket; Mr. Horn's dingier bill into the right-hand one. "Mist' Jones' is in de left—Mist' Horn's in de right," chanted Bugwine carefully.

"Both is a hundred bucks, so what difference do it make?" puzzled Mr. Horn.

"Let him alone—start him thinkin', and it liable to stun him in de brains," advised Mr. Jones hastily.

"Mist' Horn's in de right; Mist' Jones' in de left—" Bugwine's eyes glazed under the mental strain of keeping the deposits straight and separate.

"Now park yourself in the lobby, sleuth, and watch for crooks," directed Darius.

"Always gits my man! Mist' Jones in de right, Mist' Horn's left—" Bugwine's chant faded.

"Think at first you knowed dat boy, Mist' Jones—you jumps so," Darius made conversation as Mr. Breck departed.

"Jest dat coat of his'n knock me for a loop at first: never seen him before," Cephas dismissed underlings. "Whar can I get a toothbrush before I goes to Room 242?"

"Corner drug-store; you cain't miss it."

AS he turned from watching Cephas' departing back, Darius bumped into something hard-boiled at the hotel desk. "Well, Darius, how about it now?" This white-folks seemed to feel his errand needed no explanation.

"Have de money by mornin', way things is lookin' now!"

"Yeah? Well, you have the money for that meat-bill by morning, *or* we padlock your hotel till you do!" ultimatumed the packer's representative grimly.

Darius winced. Padlocked hotels were hard to sell! Then he rallied at sight of Bugwine mounting the stairs toward the second floor. Let Cephas back out now, and Darius would have his hundred!

But in the meantime, the guest's room required personal attention from the proprietor until the deal *was* closed. Pausing only a moment for further survey of the shabby lobby, Darius started slowly up the steps too.

As he mounted, something above quickened his pace. There was a new and inexplicable note on the second floor, a note Mr. Horn could not place. And it was swiftly heightening. Then, as he rounded the final corner to the corridor that led to the bridal suite, Room 242, he had it! Sounds indicative of the Meadowbrook Hunt Club riding to hounds in his hospice, burst appallingly upon his ear.

INVOLUNTARILY Darius Horn broke into a groan, a sweat, and a gallop. If Cephas Jones should return now—

The beleaguered door of the bridal suite was suddenly unlocked from within, and out through the opening shot sixty frenzied pounds of dog, with tail tucked and toenails tearing at the painted floor, the while he gave terrified tongue to his pain and panic. "*Cephas Jones' dawg!*" was wrenched from the shuddering Mr. Horn.

But if Cephas' pet was first, the cause of his speed and anguish was not far behind; for close upon his heels came Coney Island, previously—and surreptitiously—parked by Bugwine in the bridal suite.

Then also from it burst Bugwine Breck, in full-throated and full-coated cry after the traveling dog-fight of his career!

"*Heah, Coney! Come back heah, Coney! Dat dog aint aim to room wid you on purpose, Coney!*" rang the agonized clamor of Mr. Breck above the sounds of battle.

By now, noted the wrathful Mr. Horn, amazed and angered guests were crowding every doorway. Bedlam rocked and ravaged his hotel. Through the whole hostelry reverberated the uproar of House-detective Breck and his hound. "*Lay off de room-mate, Coney!*" yowled Bugwine in his extremity.

But Coney paid no heed. For, finding himself come to the end of a blind corridor, all the cornered-rat in the guest-dog's ancestry surged to the surface. Open-jawed and fairly shrieking at his own temerity, he whirled to face his pursuer—at which development every drop of hound blood in the embattled Coney went to his vocal cords, as the pair

locked jaws upon each other at the tops of their respective voices.

Rolling over and over, snapping, snarling, yelping, *ki-yi-ing*, raged and ranged the fight. High over it still rang the despairing yells of Mr. Breck: "*Git back dar, Coney! Lay off de dawg, Coney! Git classy, Coney!*" as he glimpsed the oncoming Mr. Horn.

On the sidewalk below, traffic slowed, stopped, and began to clot in a curious mob, seeking the site of the murder. Suddenly the visiting canine saw his chance—a loophole in Coney's offensive—and was off toward the stairway with the speed of light. An ascending guest was halfway up, and between this guest's legs he shot in his blind, frenzied rout, with the pursuing Coney, not to be denied so soon, hot upon his heels.

The ensuing impact was too much for the ascending one's balance. And, beholding this climax to catastrophe, Mr. Horn's contorted face darkened. Reason left him, and as he skirted apoplexy by a hair's-breadth, there burst from his tortured soul and tonsils, cries reminiscent of some *Tarzan* caught in a steel-trap. For, rolling inexplicably and inextricably in blurred uproar down the stairway now were two fighting dogs and the white flannel pants of Mr. Cephias Jones—with Mr. Jones unmistakably and irreparably within the pants. . . .

But even as Mr. Horn yearned at the top of his voice for something with which he might brain the brainless and still yowling Bugwine, Cephias made news upon the stairway: in the whirling, yelping, squalling blur of which he had so unexpectedly if utterly become a part, Mr. Jones bit a dog!

Instant and amazing was the result. At such absence of good form and violation of canine Queensberry rules, it was as though the blurred mass of man and dogs exploded. In a world gone into reverse—where the Law had taken on the coat and scent of the crook, and a man had bitten him instead of his biting the man—the bewildered Coney shrieked, quit fighting, and started south at the top of his speed and lung-power.

North—at no mean speed, either—shot the dog of a master still too busy spitting out white dog-hairs, for utterance.

"*Classy hotel, huh?*" speech came at last to Mr. Jones.

"I lets you *help* me kill him!" screeched Darius generously as he lunged for the frog-eyed cause of a ruined hotel-sale.



"Me and Mist' Jones craves for you to hold a couple of hundred bucks for us, Officer."

"Kill him your ownself!" spluttered Cephias. "He's *your* detective!"

"Fires him, too—soon as I kills him!" the berserk boiled over anew in Mr. Horn as he thought of his last and only hundred dollars still at stake.

Wall-eyed and ashen-gilled, Mr. Breck listened to their plans for him. In dodging Geranium *here*, he was but fleeing the frying-pan for the fire! Again Columbus was right: when he touched anything, it got gummed up! Only blood could wipe this latest outrage out—Bugwine's blood. Making it time for a boy to climb a tree and start squaring himself from its top limb before somebody started measuring him for a tombstone! For if Columbus got word now, and added this fiasco as a hotel-sleuth to his former flop on the Samson Bates counterfeiting-case, Geranium would be set instantly on his trail. And Geranium always got her man, if Bugwine didn't—especially if the man was a husband of hers. . . .

"Coney aint mean nothin'," rang Mr. Breck's instant propitiatory tenor from his perch within the nearest transom then. "Got hisself mixed in de sniff, tryin' to figure out who he's chasin', after I wears de clue, and gets his brains—*Owwhhh!! Oww-hhh!!*"

For just here the circling Mr. Horn had seized an ankle, to bring Bugwine crashing to the floor.

But as the semi-stunned Mr. Breck immediately began slapping frantically at his side-pockets, a forgotten angle flashed across the mind of Darius Horn: Bugwine still had on him the two deposits to guarantee completion of the hotel-deal. Hence, if Cephias tried to back out now, Darius was at least in a hundred dollars!

"—Left-hand money's Mist' Horn's—right-hand's Mist' Jones'—" Mr. Breck's monotone resumed.

But the same thought seemed to have occurred to Cephas, as though he had now recalled his original scheme. "Half-wittedness in de head liable to happen anywhere," he cooled down. "But, if anything else happen screwy around here, *it aint gwine* be no accident, and I gits my deposit back and de deal's off too."

Under the combined glares of buyer and seller at this possibility, the prostrate Mr. Breck began to smoke and sizzle slightly around his own edges. He either had to retrieve this fizzle or let mathematics take its course: adding fiasco to flop produced the last straw as their sum, with Geranium starting in on him where mathematics left off.

"Rallies round after my dawg, and I be back," hazarded Mr. Breck inanely in his emergency.

"Fotch dat damn' pooch on de place again, and I fries him for his own lunch!" bellowed Mr. Horn.

"Wid me firin' de stove!" added Mr. Jones venomously.

Mr. Breck stood uncertain upon one leg. Coney was no dog to be left to his own devices in a strange city: he was liable to tree the mayor. And yet—

**T**HEN Mr. Horn had another thought. "Boy as dumb as you," he rasped, "cain't be trusted wid other people's cash, even when dey's watchin' you. —*Gawge!*"

Stove-hued proof that the human race has evolved—but not too far—answered.

"Gawge, here, is de 'sistant-manager in charge of baggage," Darius explained rather than introduced him. "Gawge, you take dis half-portion boy in de coat to de bank wid dem two hundred dollars of mine and Mist' Jones' dat he got on him. Git a couple of cashier's checks, for a hundred apiece, wid it, payable to bearer. He cain't gum *dem* up. Dat way—" Mr. Horn turned to a newly perturbed Cephas, "is dog-wagon git dis Bugwine, bank still got de money for us. Dat's business, aint it?"—as the pair disappeared bankward.

"Sho is." Mr. Jones' heart seemed missing from his answer, as his brow knitted. His lips moved, as though about to speak but thinking better of it; then more resolutely, and he spoke. "Done decided," he snapped. "Make out de papers for five hundred, cash-money on

de barrel, and you's done sold me your lease to de hotel in negotiable shape."

Mr. Horn leaped; he had been expecting to drop his price to four hundred when he had to.

After which so fast did the details progress that Mr. Jones' pen was poised nervously above a bill of sale, all set for dipping and signing, while Darius' eyes shone like a skunk's in the dark, when feet were at the door.

**B**UGWINE burst in first, with the burly George close behind.

"One dem hundred dollars aint no good!" blurted Mr. Breck, distraught.

Mr. Jones caught at the table, but Mr. Horn's chair went over backward with him; his "*Huh?*" rang flatly from the floor.

"Money what Mist' Horn gimme, out my left-hand pocket," Bugwine could hardly hear his own voice for the clamor of his feet for far places—"bank-in'-boy say it *counterfeit*. Say he confis-ti-cate it—and aint gimme no check for it."

"My money counterfeit?" Mr. Horn's tone was thick, menacing. Mr. Jones' expression was that of one rescued just in time.

"Dat what de bankin'-boy say when he bit it and look at it through de telescope!" Bugwine saw his job gone, his dog gone—failure and Geranium at his heels. Then the voice of Cephas arose to harrow further: "So *dat's* de kind of crook you is!" he had turned on the flabbergasted Darius. "Guaranteein' a bum deal, wid phony money! I jest cotch you in time! Well, I craves back from dis detective of yourn now my *good* money; den I's gone and de deal's off. You can go hollerin' round de bank for your bad bill—"

Bugwine buckled, aghast. If Darius Horn had passed queer money on the magnificent Cephas, what about on Samson Bates—

But before the question could fairly take form, before Mr. Breck could resort to confirmatory slappings of his pockets, confirmatory reiterations of, "—Left, Mist' Jones'—*right*, Mist' Horn's—" there shot through the door from outside that constant harbinger of mishap Coney Island! A Coney now with apparently a nasal New Deal. Scarcely pausing for ecstatic sniff of Bugwine and his coat, he whirled; a baffled yelp burst from him as though respite had been brief.



Yet at the yelp Cephas Jones cleared the floor in a bound, and was swinging wildly upward to the transom that had been Bugwine's earlier refuge. "Pull dat pooch off me! Shet him up! Tell him I aint *aim* to bite him on dem stair-steps!" Mr. Jones combined instant explanation of Coney's now-evident antagonism with frantic appeals for help.

But above all, clear and high now soared the recovered Mr. Horn's earnest



Forth flashed his trusty beartrap handcuffs, and "Wheee!" pæaned Mr. Breck as it snapped on an elegant ankle above him.

call for double-barreled shotguns: one barrel for Coney and the other for Bugwine—both for the pair that had half-sold and then wholly ruined his hostelry!

Again guests flocked, resentful of uproar, and the anguished Mr. Jones clung like some loud and fatted sloth to the underside of the transom cross-bar. Below him Coney was dashing madly back and forth, first to the sports-coated Bugwine, then back to the shuddering Cephas, giving tongue at every leap.

Then from the befuddled Mr. Breck there suddenly burst in agonized discovery: "Dawg-gawn! I gits dem pockets mixed, after all! Dat was *Mist' Jones'* money in de *left* side, what de banker bit!"

But as Cephas only clawed himself higher here to avoid the jaws of Coney, further and staggering developments came. For as he hung half upside down his coat sagged, its inner pocket tilted—

and from it cascaded that which bulged Mr. Breck's eyes yet farther from their sockets as even he caught its corroborative significance, and leaped for his own imminent salvation. Where *now* was Columbus' sting, Geranium's victory?

Forth flashed his trusty beartrap handcuffs, and "Wheee!" pæaned Mr. Breck as it snapped on an elegant ankle above him. "No wonder Coney been splittin' hisself wide open tryin' to tell me he had done hitched up *your* sniff wid *my* coat, Cephas Jones! I's wearin' it *now*—but *you* wore it *when you slip Samson G. Bates dem bum fifties!* No wonder you tryin' git *Mist' Horn* here to put up his good hundred against your bad one—and buy his hotel wid some more like it—same kind as what spilled out your pocket *here*, and goes to court against you now!—Coney, spit out dem britches! Us done had another accident—and always gits our man!"

# Murder at Dark

**P**OLICE WORK, any old-timer who is honest will admit, is largely a matter of guesswork. If you guess right, you are a hero. If you guess wrong—well, unpleasant things happen.

Lieutenant Edward David, with the best intentions in the world, guessed wrong.

His superior officers were sorry, but there was nothing they could do. He traded his silver bar for the chevrons of a sergeant, masking the hurt with a remark to the effect that it would be a relief to have his thinking done for him.

That wrong guess also was responsible for bringing to the Black Horse Troop of the New York State Police a substitute for David in the person of Lieutenant George Homer. Both the country and the men were strange to Homer, who had won his commission two weeks before, and with it a transfer to the Canadian border station.

Here, with many isolated patrols, police work was largely a matter of individual effort. Lieutenant Homer, a firm believer in close supervision over his men, was prepared to rectify this. He made that very apparent at the first school session he conducted, surveying the twenty or more sergeants, corporals and troopers before him with a complete lack of enthusiasm.

"You are out on patrol," he began. "A car bearing the license S-01547 approaches. What would you do?"

A dozen rookies raised their hands. Homer nodded to one of them.

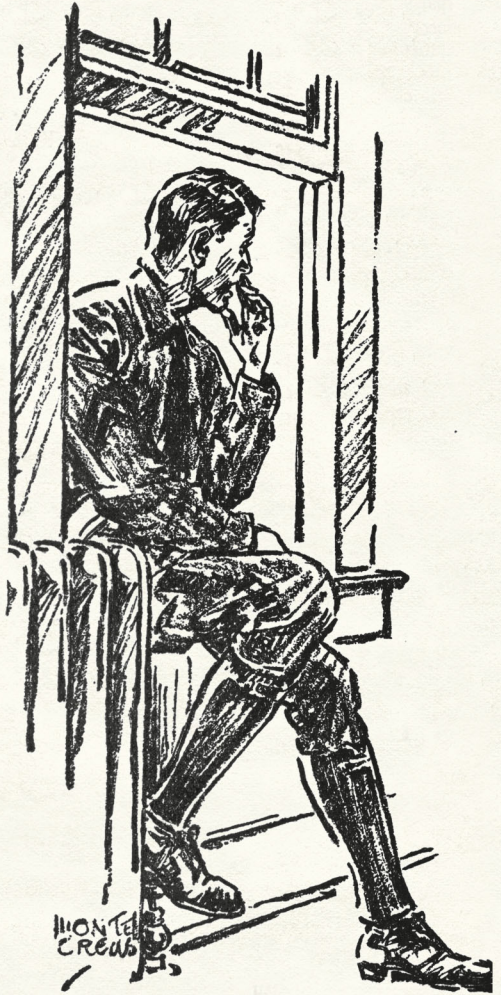
"That car was stolen in Syracuse, sir. I would halt it, arrest the occupants, and bring them to the barracks for investigation."

"Very good," said the Lieutenant. He produced a picture, holding it so the writing beneath it was hidden from the men before him. "Do you want this man?"

The same hands went up. Homer ignored them.

"We will hear from our sergeants, our much publicized sergeants. You, sir—I mean that man sleeping in the window-seat."

Sergeant David climbed to his feet, and looked at the picture, apparently



seeing it for the first time. He spoke with a drawl:

"No sir. I don't want any part of that man."

"Indeed!" snapped Homer. "If you did less sleeping, you might know that this man escaped from Clinton Prison after killing a guard."

Some rookies giggled. But the drawl continued:

"I heard of the escape, Lieutenant; but I don't want the man."

Tiny David's listless manner vanished; his voice became stern.

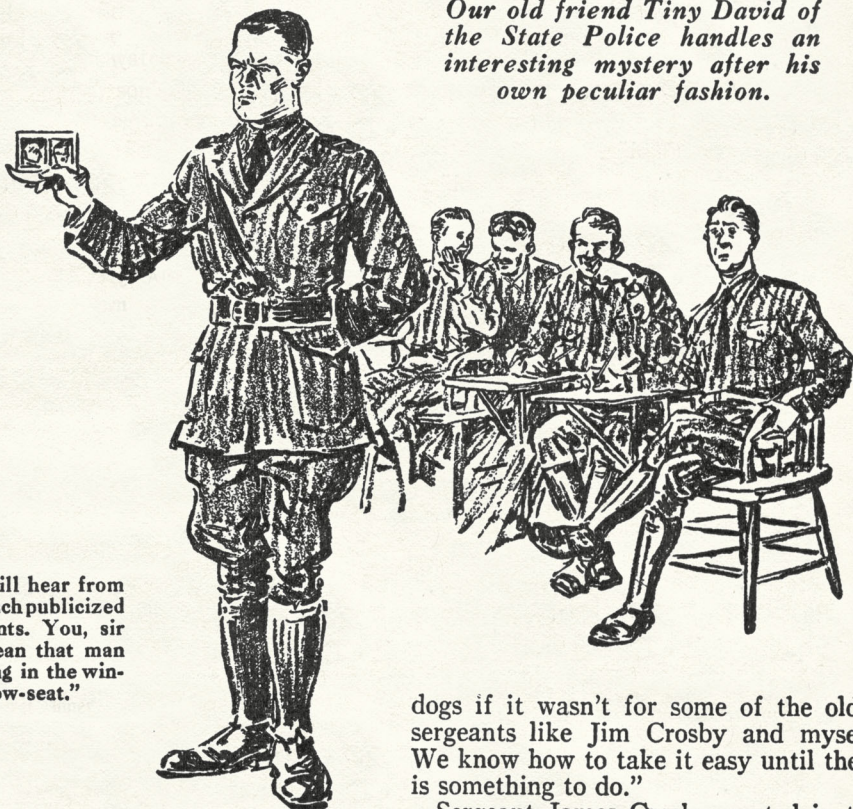
"That man—his usual alias is Joseph Bravatore, or Gentleman Joe, and I arrested him for murder—was drowned this morning while swimming the St.

# Lake

By ROBERT R. MILL

Illustrated by Monte Crews

*Our old friend Tiny David of the State Police handles an interesting mystery after his own peculiar fashion.*



"We will hear from our much publicized sergeants. You, sir—I mean that man sleeping in the window-seat."

Lawrence. General Order 2087 explains that, and cancels 1967, the order covering the escape. They just put the new order on the board."

His manner was that of a father chiding an erring son as he went on:

"All men on reserve in barracks are supposed to watch that board constantly. Captain Field is very firm about that. Of course, the Lieutenant has not been with us very long, so he didn't know. But that doesn't excuse these rookies. They have all been told."

The drawl returned.

"You'll get fed up with them yourself, Lieutenant, after you have been here awhile. Full of rule-books, and nothing else. Super-cops in the barracks, and clowns on the road. Always chasing around when there is no point to it. Filled to the brim with misinformation."

He sighed, ignoring the giggles coming from the group.

"Seems like this outfit would go to the

dogs if it wasn't for some of the older sergeants like Jim Crosby and myself. We know how to take it easy until there is something to do."

Sergeant James Crosby, seated in the front row, fought a desperate battle and succeeded in erasing a smile.

Lieutenant Homer's face was red as he spoke:

"You are Tiny David, aren't you? I thought so. I've heard about you. Couple of good cases that fell into your lap have given you a big head. Well, Sergeant, put this down in your notebook, along with the general order you copied so promptly: As long as I am in this outfit, you'll work. You won't ride along on your past laurels, if any. Do you understand me, Sergeant?"

**T**INY DAVID'S smile was bland. He answered smoothly:

"Yes sir. It's right nice of the Lieutenant to promise to give me a chance. I'll do everything I can to help the Lieutenant. You see, sir, Captain Field has hinted that he might restore my commission; and—"

A trooper entered and saluted Lieutenant Homer.



"Miss Holmes, suppose I told you that you were seen coming out of this room, at about the time your uncle was murdered?"

"Captain Field's compliments, sir. Lieutenant Homer and Sergeant David are to report in the office. Dark Lake reports a murder."

Sergeant Crosby silenced the guffaw that went up when the three men left the room.

"The stable-watch," he declared, "will consist of Jones, Cassidy, Mervine, Holt and Watkins. You birds had your mitts stuck up, trying to strut what you thought you knew. Now you'll get a work-out with a broom."

THE two men spoke once on the thirty-mile trip from the barracks to Dark Lake.

"Let's get there all in one piece, Sergeant," growled the Lieutenant.

"Yes sir," Tiny David answered. The car slowed down a trifle.

Then they were in the outskirts of Dark Lake, and Sergeant David was ordered to draw to a halt before a passing pedestrian.

"Where does Gordon Prescott live?" asked Lieutenant Homer.

"Big house at the end of Church Street." The reply came from Tiny David. "That all you wanted to ask this gentleman, sir?"

The car was in motion again.

"How do you know where the house is?" Lieutenant Homer asked.

"Stationed here once, sir. Nice town. Nice people. Had a good rest."

Then the Sergeant piloted the car along a private driveway that led to a large stone house. A trooper on the front porch saluted smartly as they entered.

"Sergeant King is waiting for you, Lieutenant. We have put a guard on the house, and nothing has been moved."

"Very good, trooper."

Inside the house, Sergeant King led them to the front room on the second floor. A man, obviously a physician, bent over a still form on the bed. He stood up as they entered.

"Mr. Prescott died instantly," he said. "The wound was inflicted with a long, slender knife, and it reached the heart. He was asleep when he was stabbed. You will want an autopsy, of course."

"Yes, Doctor—"

"Hinds," the physician supplied the name. "How's your conduct?" he asked Tiny David. Then, turning to the officer: "There is nothing more I can do here now, Lieutenant."

"How about the time of death?" The question came from Tiny David.

"The body was discovered by Mr. Prescott's secretary," the Doctor answered. "He tells me that was at five o'clock. Mr. Prescott usually took a nap in the afternoon, and the secretary always

called him in time to dress for an early dinner. I was notified at once, and I was here half an hour later. I should say that Mr. Prescott had been dead only a few minutes when Hamilton entered to call him."

When the physician departed, Sergeant King opened the door of an adjoining sitting-room.

"It will be quiet in here, Lieutenant. I suppose you want to question the occupants of the house."

"Yes," said Lieutenant Homer. "Bring them in, one at a time."

**L**OUIS HAMILTON, the secretary, came first. He was a tall, thin man, obviously nervous. He told of finding the body.

"Where were you before that?" asked the Lieutenant.

"In my room on the third floor."

"See anybody on the stairs or in the hall? I mean just before you found the body."

Hamilton hesitated.

"Speak up!" barked the Lieutenant.

"I was standing at the head of the stairs on the third floor, and was about to descend. I saw Miss Holmes in the hall outside this room. She walked to the stairs and went down to the first floor. I waited until she was out of sight. Then I came down to call Mr. Prescott."

Lieutenant Homer straightened.

"Who is Miss Holmes?"

Tiny David shifted his position in the chair he had found.

"Miss Julia Holmes," he said, "is Mr. Prescott's niece. Swell girl."

"We aren't interested in your observations," declared the Lieutenant. He turned to Hamilton: "Anything else you can tell us?"

The secretary walked to the wall and pulled back a curtain, revealing a small safe.

"Mr. Prescott usually kept quite a sum of money there. Perhaps it might be well to see if it is untouched." He paused. "Robbery might have been the motive."

"Wait a minute." Lieutenant Homer was at the safe, and Sergeant David, as he watched him at work, was forced to admit that the officer was capable and efficient.

"Hmm," the Lieutenant muttered. "No prints. Looks as if the dial had been wiped clean." He stared at Hamilton. "Know the combination?"



The girl drew herself stiffly erect. "I have nothing to say. You can't make me talk."

"Yes," Hamilton admitted.

"Open it."

When the door swung open, numerous papers were revealed. No money was found.

"That's strange," Hamilton muttered. "I saw more than a thousand dollars in there this morning."

Lieutenant Homer, after a final search, closed the door of the safe.

"Know anything else?"

"No."

"That's all. Don't leave the house."

"Just a minute," drawled Tiny David. "When I was stationed here, you and Miss Holmes were right clubby. Still friends?"

The secretary stiffened. He glared at his questioner. His reply was directed to Lieutenant Homer.

"My relations with Miss Holmes are the usual relations of a secretary with the members of the household where he is employed. No more, no less. Friendship hardly enters in. Does that answer your question?"

"Yes," said Tiny David. "That's all."

**J**ULIA HOLMES came next. She was young and attractive. The tragedy, Tiny David noticed, had banished the smile that usually lurked about the

corners of her mouth. But she brightened when she saw him.

"Hello!" she said. "Going to arrest me again?"

Tiny David grinned.

"Lieutenant," he asseverated, "Miss Holmes has a criminal record." His voice was serious. "I once arrested her for reckless driving."

LIEUTENANT HOMER coldly ignored this statement.

"Miss Holmes," he asked, "where were you before this happened?"

"Why, on the front porch, of course."

"Who was with you?"

"Richard Dobson. He lives just next door."

Tiny David entered the conversation.

"He is the boy friend, isn't he?"

The girl colored slightly.

"Yes, I suppose you could call him that."

Lieutenant Homer was leaning forward, gazing steadily at her.

"I suppose Dobson can swear that you didn't leave the front porch?"

She hesitated, glancing at Sergeant David, as if for support, but his face was expressionless.

"Why, yes. Of course. What makes you ask me that?"

Lieutenant Homer's voice was stern.

"Miss Holmes, suppose I told you that you were seen in the hall outside this room, and actually coming out of this room, at about the time your uncle was murdered?"

The girl's face went white. Her fists were clenched.

"Is it true?" demanded the Lieutenant.

She drew herself erect.

"I have nothing to say. You can't make me talk."

"That attitude won't—" began the Lieutenant.

But Sergeant David was on his feet.

"Excuse me, Lieutenant. —Now, Miss Holmes, did you know your uncle had been stabbed, until you heard Hamilton make the announcement?"

"I did not."

"That's the truth?"

"Yes, Tiny."

"Thanks."

Sergeant David glanced at Lieutenant Homer.

"You may go, Miss Holmes," said the Lieutenant. "But don't leave the house. And I warn you that you still have some explaining to do."

James Blood, the butler, came next. He had been in the pantry, off the dining-room, cleaning silver. The secretary had called him when he made his gruesome find. The butler had telephoned to the State Police.

"Does the hall off the pantry lead to the kitchen?" asked Tiny David.

"Yes sir."

"Was the door to the hall open?"

"Yes sir."

"See any strangers pass through that hall?"

"No sir."

"That'll be all," snapped Lieutenant Homer. He turned to the Sergeant, as the butler left the room. "Any fool would know this was an inside job."

"Maybe any fool would," Tiny David admitted. He studied the end of a cigarette. "But I don't, sir. That's why I am trying to find out."

A dull flush mounted to Lieutenant Homer's face.

"If you are so hot on the trail of knowledge, why didn't you ask the girl about strangers at the front door?"

"Because she didn't see any," came the answer. "She would have told me if she had. Right now she is in a tough spot. A convenient stranger would help her a lot."

There was a sneer on Homer's face.

"She wouldn't invent one, of course?"

THE cigarette again was claiming Tiny David's attention.

"No," he said, "she wouldn't. She doesn't go in for lies. She just shuts up when she doesn't want to talk. But all this isn't getting us anywhere." He turned to Sergeant King. "What else do you have to offer?"

"Harold Roberts," was the answer. "Will it be all right, Lieutenant, if his—"

"Roberts," Homer interrupted. "You mean the explorer?"

"Yes sir," said Sergeant King. "He has been a guest here since his return from the polar regions. He came back snow-blind. Can't see a thing. That was why I was going to ask the Lieutenant if it will be all right if his nurse comes in with him."

"Certainly," was the reply.

"You see, sir," Sergeant King continued, "Mr. Prescott financed the last trip. It was known as the Prescott Expedition. So, when Roberts came back blind, Mr. Prescott had him come here."

"Is this blindness permanent?" asked the Lieutenant.



The explorer's hand found the hand of Tiny David. "I surely do remember Tiny David. Have you grown any? I can't see you, you know."

"No sir," Sergeant King said. "Mr. Hamilton told me last week that the specialists in New York promised Mr. Roberts he would regain his sight in a month or so. It was common talk in the village that Mr. Prescott was going to finance another trip, and that Mr. Roberts would start next year."

"Bring them in," directed the Lieutenant shortly.

**R**OBERTS, guided by the pressure of a nurse's hand upon his arm, entered the room.

Tiny David was standing now.

"I am Sergeant David, of the State Police. Perhaps you remember me. I had the pleasure of being in charge of the escort when you returned to Dark Lake after one of your previous trips. The papers say you did even better this time. Congratulations, sir."

The big hand of the Sergeant was outstretched. The hawk-like face of the man before him was lighted by a smile. The explorer's hand found the hand of Tiny David and grasped it.

"Thank you, Sergeant. I surely do

remember Tiny David. Have you grown any? I can't see you, you know. That is the curse of this—this groping about in the dark."

Tiny David laughed.

"No, I haven't grown any; but I've held my own. And I understand the doctors say you won't be in the dark very long. I am glad of that."

He walked beside them as the nurse led her charge to a chair.

"The gentleman at the desk," Sergeant David explained, "is Lieutenant Homer. He wants to ask you a few questions."

"Not very many, Mr. Roberts," said the Lieutenant. "This is a terrible thing we have to deal with here."

A shadow crossed the face of the explorer.

"Damnable, Lieutenant. It has left me groggy. I have sustained a double loss. The death of Mr. Prescott robs me of a friend, and of a backer. Men with money to finance polar expeditions aren't plentiful these days."

"I suppose not," Lieutenant Homer agreed. "Mr. Roberts, where were you before this happened?"

"In my room—my room at the rear of this floor."

"Was Miss—"

"Miss Mary Cluett, my nurse. No, she was not with me. Miss Cluett had been in the kitchen for half an hour. She was preparing hot water and other things used in treating my eyes."

**L**IUTENANT HOMER'S voice became jovial.

"Mr. Roberts, for our sake, it is unfortunate that your affliction is so recent. The blind usually develop an acute sense of hearing. They can identify persons by their footsteps. You didn't happen to hear any footsteps, either strange or familiar, did you?"

The explorer smiled.

"I fear I can't duplicate the blind man of fiction. Jove, what great publicity it would be if I had recognized the murderer by his footsteps! But the sad truth is that I didn't hear a thing."

Sergeant David addressed the nurse.

"Miss Cluett, when you were in the kitchen, was the door open?"

"I think it was."

"Any strangers come in?"

"Nobody."

"Did you see any strangers outside?"

"Not a soul."

"I guess that is all," said Lieutenant Homer. "Thank you."

"Not at all," the explorer protested. "Wish I could do more. Let me know how you make out, will you? You see, I have a selfish interest."

Miss Cluett piloted the explorer from the room. . . .

Norah Donovan, the cook, had little enough to offer. She had been in the kitchen with the nurse.

"Plain hot water she wanted, but devil a bit would she trust anybody else to get it for her."

The outside door had been open. Nobody had entered. There had been no strangers outside. . . . She departed, still discoursing upon trained nurses and their ways in trained cooks' kitchens.

"Richard Dobson comes next," said Sergeant King.

"Ah!" Homer leaned forward with interest. "The boy friend. I've been waiting for that bird."

Sergeant David stood up and yawned.

"If it's all right with you, sir, think I'll walk around a bit."

The glance he received was withering.

"Certainly, Sergeant. We'll try to struggle along without you. Up to date,

your services certainly have been invaluable."

Tiny David made no reply as he departed. Then Sergeant King entered with Dobson.

"You were on the front porch with Miss Holmes?" the Lieutenant began.

"Yes."

"Did she go into the house at any time?"

"No."

"That's a lie. She was seen outside this room."

"Then why ask me about it?" The youth attempted a show of bravado, but it was very thin.

"Are you and Miss Holmes engaged?"

"Ask her about that."

"I'm asking you."

"I'm telling you to ask her."

"What do you do for a living?"

"I work in a garage."

"How did Mr. Prescott like that?"

"He didn't work there, and he didn't own the garage."

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, young man," warned Homer, whose face was livid. "You know what I meant. Did Mr. Prescott approve of his niece's becoming engaged to a garage mechanic?"

"He didn't like me."

The Lieutenant leaped to the attack. The questions were continuous, the answers defiant. Half an hour later the session ended with a blunt declaration from the youth:

"I have nothing more to say. You can't make me talk."

"I can't, eh?" snarled Homer. "We'll see about that. Get out now, but don't leave the house. You have another session coming. Think up the answers. Talk it over with the girl. It won't help you."

**T**HE door closed, then reopened. Sergeant David entered.

"Back, are you?"

"Yes, sir. Took a look around the house, and picked up a few little things here and there."

Tiny David produced a dagger with a long, slender blade. He held it just beneath the hilt as he placed it on the table before the Lieutenant. There was fresh blood upon the point.

"That came from Mr. Hamilton's room," the Sergeant drawled. "Found it hidden in the mattress." He smiled. "Always suspect a male secretary. He's nearly always guilty—in the best magazine stories."



Lieutenant Homer jumped to his feet. "Well, I guess that's enough."

"Not quite, sir," Tiny David objected. "I picked up a few other little things." He pointed to, but did not touch, two initials scratched upon the hilt of the dagger. "'J. B.'" he read. "That stands for *James Blood*, the butler. Always suspect the butler. He's usually guilty, when the secretary isn't." He produced a handkerchief saturated with fresh blood. "Found that in Blood's room. It was hidden under the carpet."

"BRING up that butler," ordered Homer. "He probably planted the dagger in Hamilton's room."

"Maybe Hamilton planted the handkerchief on *him*," Tiny David objected. "Maybe the secretary scratched the butler's initials on the dagger. Maybe a third person planted the dagger, the initials and the handkerchief on them both. Who knows, sir?"

"How about fingerprints on the dagger?" demanded the Lieutenant.

"Not a sign." Tiny David sighed. "Wiped clean, just like the safe. And speaking of the safe—" He fumbled in his pockets and produced a sheaf of banknotes. "Fifteen hundred dollars. I found that small sum in Miss Holmes' room. It was hidden in the toes of three pairs of slippers." He studied the money. "I'm betting it came from the safe."

Lieutenant Homer was on his feet again.

"And I am betting I was right from the start. We'll get that dame and her boy friend up here. Neither one of them looks good to me."

Tiny David sighed again.

"Yes sir. It looks right bad for her. Oh, I almost forgot to tell the Lieutenant. The slippers with the money in them were packed in a traveling-bag. The bag was all packed and ready for a quick get-away."

"That makes it a cinch," declared the Lieutenant.

"Yes sir," Tiny David admitted. "We surely have a nice case against her. That reminds me: The boy friend brought a packed bag over with him too. It was hidden in some bushes near the front porch. Stumbled over it when I went out for a smoke."

"Well," demanded Homer, "what are you waiting for? Giving them a chance to make a get-away?"

Tiny David eased his huge form into a chair.

"No sir. Trooper Morton is guarding the front door. I sent over to the sub-station for Trooper Stevens. He is on duty at the rear. Both of them have orders to watch the windows on the sides of the house as well. I sort o' figured we have something in this house we ought to hold."

He sighed and went on explanatorily:

"Sort o' figure we ought to hold it until tomorrow morning, when we can get Captain Field here. You see, Lieutenant, these are big people, and we don't want to make any mistake. Might just as well pass the buck to the old man, and then our skirts are clear."

He glanced at his watch and partly suppressed a yawn.

"It's getting late. Darned near eleven o'clock. The men outside will stay on duty all night. Sergeant King will take the Lieutenant over to the hotel. Tomorrow morning, as soon as the Captain is here, we can go at this thing hammer and tongs."

He smiled.

"I'll sleep here, and see that the inmates don't start carving up the survivors. They did that in a mystery play I saw once, and everybody said it was a good play. Cap'n must not know much about the theater, because he said that if any man of his was dumb enough to let that happen, he would break him. So I reckon I better stay here and sort of ride herd on the gang."

Lieutenant Homer hesitated.

"All right, Sergeant," he assented. "You stay in the house overnight. I have decided to send for Captain Field. There is bound to be considerable feeling here in the village when they learn Miss Holmes has been arrested."

Tiny David's smile was very bland indeed.

"Yes, Lieutenant," he answered.

AFTER leaving Homer and Sergeant King at the front door, Tiny David entered the living-room, where Julia Holmes and Dobson were seated.

"Hello, suspects," was his cheery greeting.

The girl smiled, though rather wanly; but the youth scowled.

"How long do I have to stay here?" he demanded.

"There are worse places than this," came the Sergeant's answer. "I am going to ask Miss Holmes to put me up for the night. Why don't you stay too? You see, we both are in the same boat. If

you leave here, a trooper will grab you. If I leave, I lose my job."

"You'll both stay," the girl declared. She walked toward the door. "I'll have Blood fix your rooms."

"MAY I have one on the second floor?" Tiny David asked. He chuckled. "Nothing like being a particular guest."

"Surely," the girl called back over her shoulder.

Tiny David turned to the youth.

"As soon as your room is ready for you, why don't you go up and go to bed? I'd stay in that room until morning. I'll have the bag you packed and hid in the bushes sent up to you."

Dobson flushed a dull red. His shoulders squared.

"I am not going to leave her here alone for you to bully."

Tiny David grinned.

"I don't go in for bullying, particularly not nice girls. You run along, son."

He was examining a painting when the girl reentered the room.

"Why did you send Dick to bed?" she demanded.

"Time for children to be in bed," he countered. "I'll send you there in a little while." He studied the painting. "First, you are going to tell me what you have been up to."

Her face hardened.

"I said once before that I wouldn't talk."

Tiny David smiled.

"That's good enough for the Lieutenant. It doesn't go among friends. We are old friends, you know. We have arrested each other." He shrugged his shoulders. "Well, if you won't talk, I'll have to help you along. It isn't any crime to plan to elope."

"How did you know that?" she demanded.

"We save the explanations for the last act. You think I am clever. If I explained, you'd change your mind. But you tell me something: How long did your uncle stop your allowance that time I pinched you for reckless driving?"

"Two months," she answered.

"Thought that was what you told me. Well, at that rate, he would hold out a lot longer if he thought you were going to marry a man he didn't like."

She flushed.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Nothing," he answered. "Just trying to tell you that it's no crime to take money that really belongs to you." Sud-

denly he was at her side, with his hands on her shoulders, and his eyes searching her face. "That's all you have done, you two kids, isn't it?"

She nodded. "Yes, Tiny."

He laughed. "I knew it. Now you run along to bed. Stay in your room until I call you in the morning. There may be a lot of traffic in that hall tonight; and if you are mixed up in it, you might get arrested for reckless driving again."

She was smiling as she faced him.

"Then you aren't going to arrest me for murder?"

He chuckled.

"You know," she continued, "you are rather a remarkable person. You arrested me once, and I liked you. You almost arrested me again, and I still like you. I wish somebody else was more like—"

His voice was gruff.

"If you don't believe he is perfect now, you better think it over." He grinned. "But I am not handing out advice to the lovelorn. Go to bed, young woman."

He whistled a gay little tune as he mounted the stairs five minutes later. Blood, the butler, stood in the second-floor hall.

"This is your room, sir. I hope you sleep well."

"Thank you, Blood. By the way, is there a telephone on this floor? Just remembered I have to make a call. Sort of hate to climb those stairs again. Had a lot of chasing around today."

"Yes sir." Blood glided to a corner of the hall and produced a telephone. Sergeant David accepted it. The butler disappeared, as the Sergeant called a number.

"Sergeant David speaking. I want to talk to Sergeant Max Payton."

He whistled while the connection was being made.

"Hello, Max. Tiny. . . . Yeah, it's a pip of a case. . . . You were right about the Lieutenant, Max. . . . Cocksure, and goes off half-cocked. . . . Well, I got rid of him and stuck on the job. . . . Yeah, I have it all worked out, ready for the pinch when the Captain arrives tomorrow."

FROM somewhere in the house he heard the sound of an opening door. Off in the distance a board creaked.

"No, Max, the Lieutenant doesn't have the dope. . . . He is all wet. . . . Wants to pinch the girl and her boy friend. . . . Little Tiny has the secret all to him-



The coverings revealed a bulky figure, relaxed and motionless. The moonlight coming through the windows flashed on a long narrow blade.

self, locked up in what he jokingly calls his mind. . . . Nightie-night, Max. . . . And if those rookies muss up that jigsaw puzzle I have on the table in the living-room, there will be another murder to solve."

He turned away from the telephone. Blood appeared at his elbow.

"I couldn't help overhearing, sir. I am so glad there is going to be no more unpleasantness for Miss Julia." He peered into the bedroom. "Do you have everything you need to make you comfortable, sir?"

Tiny David smiled.

"Everything, Blood. Everything has been taken care of. Good night, Blood."

"Good night, sir."

Tiny David closed the door.

**SOMEWHERE** in the village a clock chimed the hour of three. The house was very still.

Outside the door of Tiny David's room stood a white, pajama-clad figure. One hand of the figure found the knob of the door and moved it experimentally. The door opened noiselessly. The figure glided into the room, and the door closed without a sound.

The coverings on the bed revealed a bulky figure, relaxed and motionless. The elbow of one arm, which was above the covers, showed the occupant of the bed was clad in gayly striped pajamas. The head of the sleeping man was burrowed in the two pillows.

The white-clad figure walked softly to the bed. It stood there motionless for just a moment. The right hand of the figure went up, and the moonlight coming through the opened windows flashed upon a long, narrow blade. Then the hand descended with terrific force, and the blade, aimed at the heart of the sleeping figure, tore its way through the sheet and entered something soft and yielding.

Surprise and fright were blended upon the face of the man with the knife. But before he could move, a bulky figure loomed up from behind the bed. In the right hand of that figure there was a revolver.

"Stick your hands up!" ordered Tiny David. "Leave the knife in that dummy. Make it snappy now, or I'll drop you!"

He walked forward, and stood between the man and the bed.

"Sit down in that chair over there. I'll sit on the bed here with my pal the dummy. He cost me a lot of work, but he was worth it." He stroked the arm of the figure. "Good old pal!" He turned to his prisoner. "We are going to have a nice, long talk."

**S**HORTLY before eight o'clock that morning Blood admitted Captain Field, commanding officer of the Black Horse Troop, Lieutenant Homer and Sergeant King.

"This way, gentlemen. Mr. David has not come downstairs."

Lieutenant Homer snorted. Captain Field smiled. Sergeant King's eyes were twinkling.

They followed the butler, who knocked on a door on the second floor.

"Come in."

They entered, to find Tiny David seated on the edge of the bed. Roberts, the explorer, sat in a comfortable chair, but he was not at ease. Tiny David stood up and saluted.

"Been up all night entertaining, Captain, so I'll make this as brief as possible: Roberts killed Prescott."

He kept close watch on the explorer as he continued:

"When Sergeant King told me he was one of the occupants of the house, I remembered stories of bad feeling between him and Prescott. The old gentleman had put up the money for his explorations, but he let Roberts take all the danger and hardships, while he took all the credit possible. He tied Roberts up with contracts so he couldn't cash in on writing or lecturing. He insisted on calling the outfit the Prescott Expedition.

"All that was fresh in my mind; and when Sergeant King said Roberts was blind, I couldn't help thinking that a blind man was the most unlikely suspect in a murder case. But I like to eliminate the most unlikely suspects first. So I tried a simple test to see if the man really was blind.

"I told Roberts I wanted to congratulate him, and put out my hand. He found it without fumbling. A blind man, particularly one whose affliction is recent, instinctively waits for the other man to grasp his hand. And Roberts, if he really were blind, had no way of knowing that my congratulations were accompanied with the offer of my hand.

"This little test put Roberts very much in the picture, but the motive for the murder, as I knew it, was a bit thin.

That caused me to try a second experiment. I made a telephone-call from the hall, where my conversation could be overheard by any persons who were interested enough to listen. I intimated to the barracks that I had solved the case, and would tell the solution to you when you arrived. That made it necessary for the murderer to get me out of the way before I had a chance to talk.

"The trap worked: Roberts came to my room to commit his second crime, a crime to cover up his first. He didn't get me, but he did get my pal, a dummy. And what a pal he was! He could take it—could take a knife with a blade six inches long.

"We had a bit of a tussle. Then Roberts talked. He told me that when his nurse went to the kitchen yesterday, he planted a bloody knife in Hamilton's room. He had scratched Blood's initials on it. He obtained the blood from his own arm. For good measure he put a bloody handkerchief in the butler's room. You might call that clever, but—a man doesn't do murder with a knife bearing his own initials." He glanced at Homer. "Any fool would know that.

"After he had done all this, Roberts went and killed Prescott. He was back in his room when his nurse returned."

Tiny David moved so that his back was turned to the explorer.

"Roberts' blindness was faked, but he has other ailments that are real enough." He tapped his forehead with a finger. "He was alone in the polar wastes for months, with nothing to do except brood on what he believed were injustices. I am going to ask him to explain to us now his full motive."

**T**HE explorer bowed.

"Thank you, Sergeant. You are fair." And he addressed Captain Field: "My relations with Prescott were humiliating from the start. The support I received depended entirely upon his whims. He imposed impossible conditions.

"The climax came just before I started on my last expedition. He told me that was the last support I could expect during his lifetime, but that he had made provisions so I would be able to resume my work after his death. He made a cruel joke of what was a crushing blow to me, and pointed out that I now had every reason to wish him dead. He added that he would take ample precautions lest I attempt to sacrifice him on the altar of science, as he sarcastically expressed it.

"I started out with my heart full of bitterness. My suffering intensified that feeling. You must try to realize what I went through. I really was snow-blind for weeks. You'll never know the itching, stinging madness of it. It was during those days that I made my decision. My work must go on. This fool, who stood in its way, must be removed.

"Even before I recovered my sight, I realized that blindness would serve a double purpose. It would disarm Prescott—cause him to relax his vigilance in my presence. It also would divert suspicion from me if he was murdered.

"So, when the other members of the expedition came to my post to relieve me, I feigned blindness. I kept up the pretense during the long trip home. The plan worked well. It excited Prescott's sympathy. He invited me here. Everything worked out, until fate chose this sergeant to upset work that means so much to the world of science. The dummy that took the blow intended for him will be recorded in history as—"

HE went on and on, raving with the zeal of a fanatic. The low drawl of Tiny David interrupted him.

"That's enough, Roberts. We understand." He turned to Captain Field. "Just a few other odds and ends, and we have the whole picture:

"Miss Holmes and Dobson were planning to elope at about the same time Roberts was killing her uncle. The money she took from the safe was her allowance, which her uncle had withheld from her and taunted her about. He did that because he didn't approve of the boy in the case. He did the same thing when I arrested her for reckless driving about a year ago. At that time she told me she would take the money from the safe, but I advised her not to. I figured that she had done it this time. And when I found the money in the toes of her slippers packed in a bag, I knew that was too elaborate for one of Roberts' clumsy plants.

"Hamilton knew where the money had gone when he directed our attention to the safe. There is a simple explanation for that: Hell hath no fury like a male secretary scorned."

Tiny David yawned.

"Guess that covers everything, sir."

"Guess it does," Captain Field admitted. "Lieutenant Homer, suppose you and Sergeant King take Roberts to the barracks. He needs a doctor."

The two men departed with the prisoner. Captain Field and Tiny David were alone in the room.

"AS a sergeant," said the Captain, "you are a menace to the outfit. You start off by making a monkey out of a lieutenant."

"I didn't make a monkey out of him, sir," protested Tiny David.

"Shut up!" roared Captain Field. "You were going to pull that crack about nature beating you to it, weren't you? I thought so." He pondered. "Lieutenant Homer's old outfit wants him back. I can't find any objections. I am sure he will be glad to go. That leaves us shy a lieutenant."

"Yes sir."

Captain Field's voice was stern.

"When you are a lieutenant, the only person you can make a monkey of is yourself."

"Thank you, sir," said Tiny David. "Now—I've been up all night, and had a lot of chasing around to do. Is it all right if I get a little sleep?"

"Yes," barked Captain Field. "That's the best thing you do. Is there any unfinished business I can take care of for you?"

Tiny David hesitated.

"On his way out, the Captain might knock on Miss Holmes' door and tell her she can come out now. I told her to stay in her room until I called her."

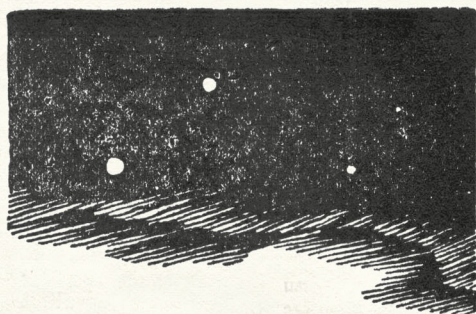
"I'll do it," said Captain Field. "She's a swell girl. Isn't there anything else you want me to tell her?"

"She is a swell girl," Tiny David admitted. "But until my commission comes through again, I am still a sergeant; and a sergeant has to have his thinking done for him. So will the Captain please tell her whatever he thinks is appropriate? After I have had some sleep, I'll tell her a few things myself."

"Humph!" was the only comment of the commanding officer of the Black Horse Troop, and he slammed the door.

And now the higher-ups wish a police-dog on the troop, and Tiny David gets the job of making a thief-catcher out of the beast. Plenty happens—as you will discover when you read Robert Mill's fine story in our next issue. (Watch for Achmed Abdullah's remarkable Chinese-American story too—"Pell Street Blues," it's called.)

*Aboard a space-ship controlled by a mechanical brain, we journey from Mars to its moon Thuria—inhabited by the weird cat-men, by men who can make themselves invisible, and by creatures even more strange. . . . All this is made real and plausible by the magic pen of a master craftsman.*



# SWORDS of MARS

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Illustrated by Robert Fink

## *The Story Thus Far:*

EVER since I—John Carter of Virginia, an emigrant from Earth—had become Warlord of Mars, I had been seeking to extirpate the vicious criminal organizations and guilds of professional assassins which infest that planet. With this end in view, I finally decided to go alone, secretly and in disguise, to the city of Zodanga—nearly two thousand miles from my capital Helium—which is headquarters for the most powerful guild of assassins on Mars.

My wife Dejah Thoris and my son Carthoris sought to dissuade me from the dangerous undertaking; but my purpose was fixed; and so one night I set forth in a fast one-man flyer. Taking advantage of the heavy air-traffic next day, I contrived to evade the patrol planes, slipped into the city and landed at an unpretentious public hangar.

I found lodgings for myself in a public house. And here I contrived to strike up an acquaintance with a professional assassin called Rapas the Ulsio (the Rat). And when I stated that I too was a fighting-man, and that I had been compelled to flee my own city because of a murder, he offered to introduce me to his employer, the wealthy inventor Fal Sivas.

That night a slave admitted us to a great walled mansion; and presently I was answering the questions of Fal Sivas. He had many enemies, he explained, chief of whom was a rival inventor who sought to steal his inventions and destroy

him, and who had employed the assassins' guild headed by Ur Jan for that purpose. To test my ability, Fal Sivas proposed a fencing-match between me and Rapas. In the duel which followed, I twice disarmed Rapas, earning his secret hatred; but Fal Sivas, highly pleased, hired me.

That night I was inspecting the commodious quarters assigned me, when a girl burst in and begged me to hide her. Later, she told me a dreadful story.

"Fal Sivas," she told me, "is not so great an inventor as he is a murderer and a thief. He steals ideas from other inventors and then has them murdered in order to safeguard what he has stolen. . . . His greatest invention is a ship that will travel through interplanetary space, controlled by a mechanical brain. To duplicate the human brain, he must examine it. For this he needs slaves, who are purchased or kidnaped for him—slaves like me. By means of rays which penetrate the tissues, he watches their brains function. For hours he applies various stimuli, and watches the reaction. Imagine the suffering of his poor victims!"

Next day I selected this girl Zanda for my slave, and so contrived to protect her for the time being. And that night, with Fal Sivas' permission, I undertook a scouting raid upon the headquarters of Ur Jan's guild of assassins. Boarding my flyer, I cruised to the building described, and alighted undetected on its roof. I let myself down to a balcony, and made



"Had I not been expecting this," said Jat Or, "I should have been streaking it for Helium by now!"

my way within. Off a corridor, I presently found an anteroom, and beyond a closed door I heard the sound of voices. I hid behind a cupboard; just as I did, two men entered from the corridor. One was Rapas. I overheard him tell Ur Jan of my employment by Fal Sivas, and agree to point me out for assassination.

I slipped away from this dangerous spot, and later succeeded in foiling repeated attempts upon my life. Upon the bodies of my would-be assassins I cut a cross in the flesh above the heart—the mark of John Carter, Warlord of Mars.

Meanwhile Fal Sivas had shown me his marvelous airship controlled by a mechanical brain; and secretly I had discovered it would obey my thought-commands quite as well as those of Fal Sivas.

After several days I discovered that the guild would meet that night; so I again took my flyer from its hangar, and landed on the roof of the assassins' headquarters. This time I lowered myself by a rope to a balcony outside the coun-

cil-room. The guild was in session, and I overheard plans to kidnap my wife, the princess Dejah Thoris, take her to the planet Thuria in a space-ship flown by Gar Nal—an inventor who was a rival of Fal Sivas—and hide her there while negotiating for a huge ransom. Meanwhile I was to be captured—and then killed.

The assassins chanced to hear me on the balcony and it was only by good fortune that I escaped them, and later successfully evaded a Zodangan patrol boat.

But my hurried return to Helium to safeguard my princess proved too late; she had been abducted the previous night. So, taking with me the young padwar Jat Or, I at once returned to Zodanga. Here, I directed Jat Or to take our flyer to a point west of the city and there wait for me to arrive in Fal Sivas' space-ship. Fal Sivas, however, proved too cowardly to emulate Gar Nal; therefore I fought off his servants, seized control of his great ship, and rescuing the girl Zanda I started for Thuria—directing the mechanical brain to take us first to where Jat Or waited. Just then I heard the siren of a patrol boat. (*The story continues in detail:*)

**A**LTHOUGH I had realized the likelihood of our strange craft being discovered by a patrol boat, I had hoped that we might escape from the city without detection. I knew that if we did not

obey their command they would fire on us—and while the armament of the ship, as described by Fal Sivas, would have given me an overwhelming advantage in an encounter with any patrol boat, I hesitated to stand and fight, because of the chance that a lucky shot from the enemy's ship might disable us.

Fal Sivas had boasted of the high potential speed of his brain-conception; and I decided that however much I might dislike to flee from an enemy, flight was the safest course to pursue.

Zanda had her face pressed to one of the numerous ports in the hull of the ship. The wail of the patrol boat siren was now continuous—an eerie, menacing voice that pierced the air sharply.

"They are overhauling us, Vandor," said Zanda; "and they are signaling other patrol boats to their aid."

"They have probably noticed the strange lines of this craft; and not only their curiosity, but their suspicion has been aroused."

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"We are going to put the speed of Fal Sivas' motor to a test," I replied.

I glanced up at the insensate metal sphere above my head. "Speed up! Faster! Escape the pursuing patrol boat!" Such were the directing thoughts that I imparted to the silent thing above me; then I waited.

I did not, however, have long to wait. No sooner had my thoughts impinged upon the sensitive mechanism than the accelerated whirl of the almost noiseless motor told me that my directions had been obeyed.

"She is no longer gaining on us," cried Zanda excitedly. "We have leaped ahead; we are outdistancing her."

The swift staccato of rapid fire burst upon our ears. Our enemy had opened fire upon us, and almost simultaneously, intermingling with the shots, we heard in the distance the wail of other sirens. Reinforcements were closing in upon us.

**T**HE swift rush of the thin air of Mars along the sides of our ship attested our terrific speed. The lights of the city faded swiftly behind us. The searchlights of the patrol boats were rapidly diminishing bands of light across the starlit sky.

I do not know how fast we were going but probably in the neighborhood of 1350 haads an hour.

We sped low above the ancient sea bottom that lies west of Zodanga; and then,

in a matter of about five minutes—it could not have been much more—our speed slackened rapidly, and I saw a small flyer floating idly in the still air just ahead of us.

I knew that it must be the flyer upon which Jat Or awaited me, and I directed the brain to bring our ship alongside it and stop.

The response of the ship to my every thought direction was truly uncanny; when we came alongside of Jat Or's craft and seemingly ghostly hands opened the door in the side of our ship, I experienced a brief sensation of terror, as though I were in the power of some soulless monster; and this notwithstanding the fact that every move of the ship had been in response to my own direction.

**J**AT OR stood on the narrow deck of his flyer gazing in astonishment at the strange craft that had drawn alongside.

"Had I not been expecting this," he said, "I should have been streaking it for Helium by now. It is a sinister-looking affair with those great eyes giving it the appearance of some unworldly monster."

"You will find that impression intensified when you have been aboard her for a while," I told him. "She is very 'unworldly' in many respects."

"Do you want me to come aboard now?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, "after we make disposition of your flyer."

"What shall we do with it?" he asked. "Are you going to abandon it?"

"Set your destination compass on Helium, and open your throttle to half speed. When you are under way, we will come alongside again and take you aboard. One of the patrol boats at Helium will pick up the flyer and return it to my hangar."

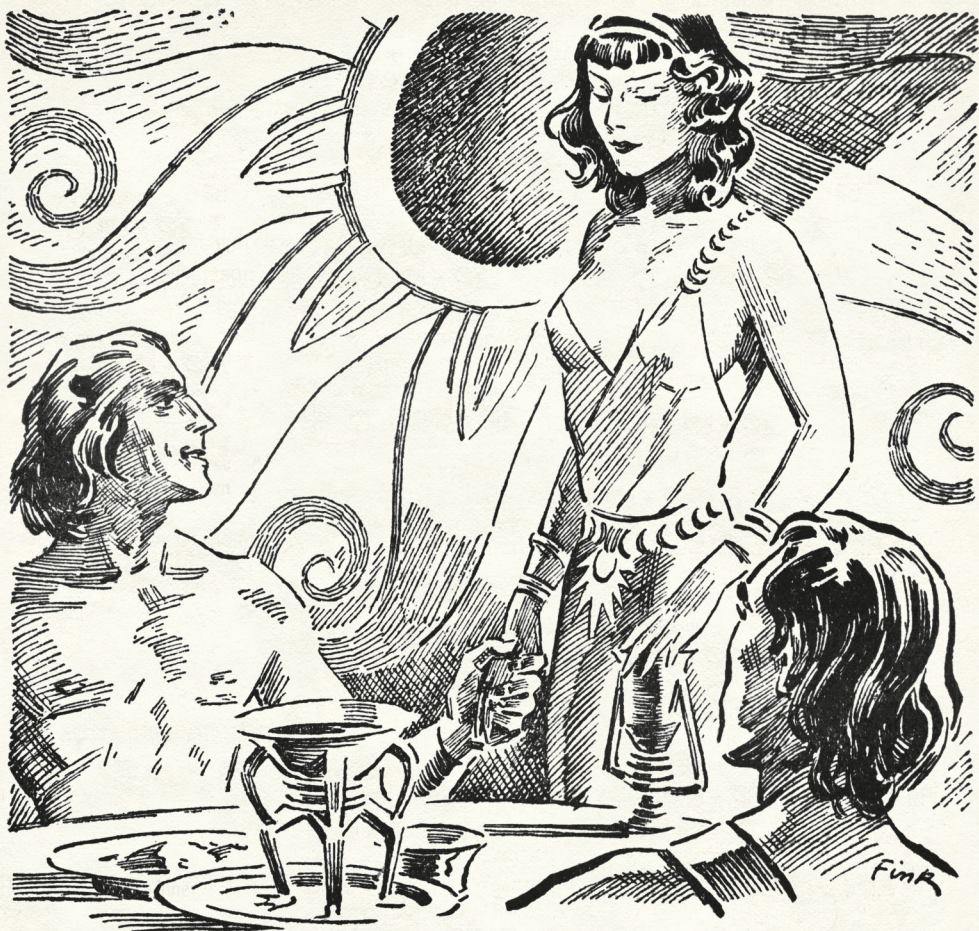
He did as I had bid, and I directed the brain to take it alongside of him after he had got under way. A moment later he stepped into the cabin of Fal Sivas' craft.

"Comfortable," he commented; "the old boy must be something of a Sybarite."

"He believed in being comfortable," I replied, "but love of luxury has softened his fiber to such an extent that he was afraid to venture abroad in his ship after he had completed it."

Jat Or turned to look about the cabin, and it chanced that his eyes fell upon the doors in the side of the ship just as I directed the brain to close them. He voiced an ejaculation of astonishment.





"It is not seemly," said Zanda, "that a slave should eat with her master."  
 "If you insist upon this ridiculous attitude, Zanda," I said, "I shall have to give you away to Jat Or. How would you like that?"

"In the name of my first ancestor," he exclaimed, "who is closing those doors? I don't see anyone, and you have not moved or touched any sort of operating device since I came aboard."

"Come forward into the control room," I said, "and you shall see the entire crew of this craft reposing in a metal case not much larger than your fist."

AS we entered the control room, Jat Or perceived Zanda, and I could see his surprise reflected in his eyes; but he was too well bred to offer any comment.

"This is Zanda, Jat Or," I said. "Fal Sivas was about to remove her skull in the interests of science when I interrupted him this evening. The poor girl was forced to choose between the lesser of two evils; that is why she is with me."

"That statement is a little misleading," said Zanda. "Even if my life had not

been in danger and I had been surrounded by every safeguard and luxury, I would still have chosen to go with Vandor, even to the end of the universe."

"You see, Jat Or," I remarked, with a smile, "the young lady does not know me very well; when she does, she will very probably change her mind."

"Never," said Zanda.

"Wait and see," I cautioned her.

On our trip from Helium to Zodanga, I had explained to Jat Or the marvelous mechanism that Fal Sivas called a mechanical brain; and I now saw the young padwar's eyes searching the interior of the room for this marvelous invention.

"There it is," I said, pointing at the metal sphere slightly above his head in the nose of the craft.

"And that little thing drives the ship and opens the doors?" he asked.

"The motors drive the ship, Jat Or," I told him, "and other motors operate the

doors and perform various other mechanical duties aboard the craft. The mechanical brain merely operates them as our brain would direct our hands to certain duties."

"That thing thinks?" he demanded.

"To all intents and purposes, it functions as would a human brain, the only difference being that it cannot originate thought."

THE padwar stood gazing at it in silence for several moments. "It gives me a strange feeling," he said at last, "a helpless feeling, as though I were in the power of some creature that was omnipotent and yet could not reason."

"I have much the same sensation," I admitted, "and I cannot help but speculate upon what it might do if it could reason."

"I, too, tremble to think of it," said Zanda, "if Fal Sivas has imparted to it any of the heartless ruthlessness of his own mind."

"It is his creature," I reminded her.

"Then let us hope that it may never originate a thought."

"That, of course, would be impossible," said Jat Or.

"I do not know about that," replied Zanda. "Such a thing was in Fal Sivas' mind. He was, I know, working to that end; but whether he succeeded in imparting the power of original thought to this thing, I do not know. I know that he not only hoped to accomplish this miracle eventually, but that he was planning also to impart powers of speech to this horrible invention."

"Why do you call it horrible?" asked Jat Or.

"Because it is inhuman and unnatural," replied the girl. "Nothing good could come out of the mind of Fal Sivas. The thing you see there was conceived in hate and lust and greed, and it was contrived for the satisfaction of such characteristics in Fal Sivas. No ennobling or lofty thoughts went into its fabrication; and none could emanate from it, had it the power of original thought."

"But our purpose is lofty and honorable," I reminded her; "and if it serves us in the consummation of our hopes, it will have accomplished good."

"Nevertheless, I fear it," replied Zanda. "I hate it because it reminds me of Fal Sivas."

"I hope that it is not meditating upon these candid avowals," remarked Jat Or.

Zanda slapped an open palm across her

lips, her wide eyes reflecting a new terror. "I had not thought of that," she whispered. "Perhaps this very minute it is planning its revenge."

I could not but laugh at her fear. "If any harm befalls us through that brain, Zanda," I said, "you may lay the blame at my door, for it is my mind that shall actuate it as long as the ship remains in my possession."

"I hope you are right," she said, "and that it will bear us safely wherever you wish to go."

"And suppose we get to Thuria alive?" interjected Jat Or. "You know I have been wondering about that. I have been giving the matter considerable thought, naturally, since you said that that was to be our destination; and I am wondering how we will fare on that tiny satellite. We shall be out of proportion in size to anything that we may find there."

"Perhaps we shall not be," I said, and then I explained to him the theory of compensatory adjustment of masses as Fal Sivas had expounded it to me.

"It sounds preposterous," said Jat Or.

I shrugged. "It does to me, too," I admitted; "but no matter how much we may abhor Fal Sivas' character, we cannot deny the fact that he has a marvelous scientific brain; and I am going to hold my opinion in abeyance until we reach the surface of Thuria."

"At least," said Jat Or, "no matter what the conditions there may be, the abductors of the princess will have no advantage over us—if we find them there."

"DO you doubt that we shall find them?" I asked.

"It is merely a matter of conjecture, one way or another," he replied; "but it does not seem within the realms of possibility that two inventors, working independently of one another, could each have conceived and built two identical ships capable of crossing the airless void between here and Thuria, under the guidance of mechanical brains."

"But as far as I know," I replied, "Gar Nal's craft is not so operated. Fal Sivas does not believe that Gar Nal has produced such a brain. He does not believe that the man has even conceived the possibility of one, and so we may assume that Gar Nal's craft is operated by Gar Nal, or at least wholly by human means."

"Then which ship has the better chance to reach Thuria?" asked Jat Or.

"According to Fal Sivas," I replied, "there can be no question about that."

This mechanical brain of his cannot make mistakes."

"If we accept that," said Jat Or, "then we must also accept the possibility of Gar Nal's human brain erring in some respects in its calculations."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

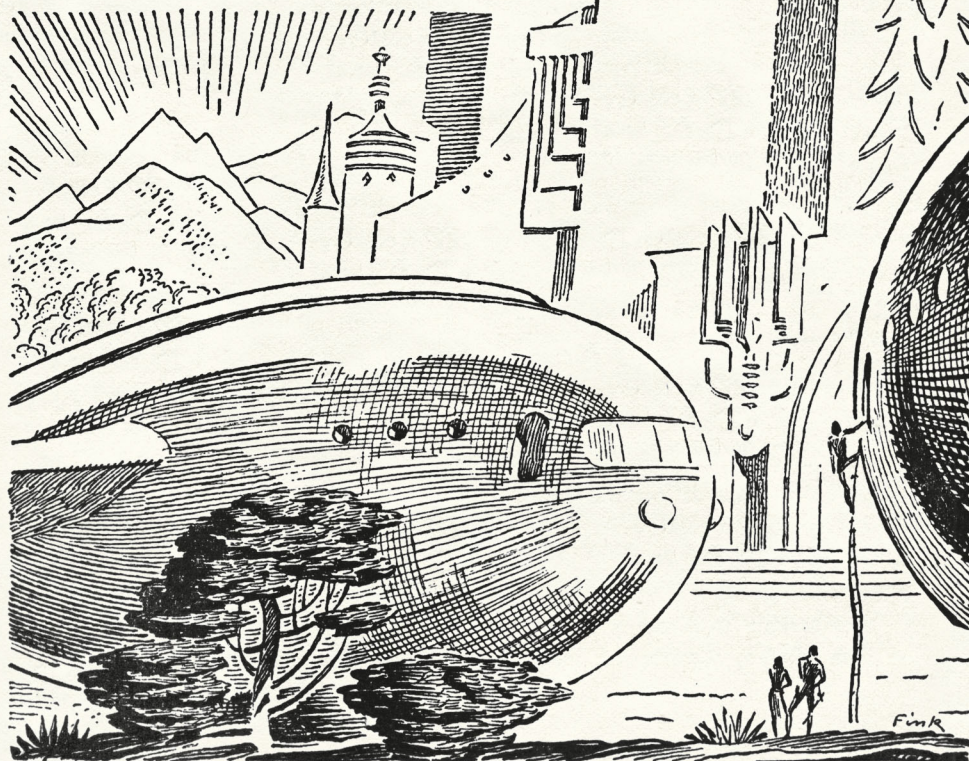
"It just occurred to me that through some error in calculations Gar Nal might not reach Thuria; whereas, directed by an errorless brain, we are certain to."

"I had not thought of that," I said, "I was so obsessed by the thought that Gar Nal and Ur Jan were taking their victim to Thuria that I never gave a thought to the possibility that they might not be able to get there."

The idea distressed me, for I realized how hopeless my quest must be if we reached Thuria only to find that Dejah Thoris was not there. Where could I look for her? Where could I hope to find her in the illimitable reaches of space? But I soon cast these thoughts from me, for worry is a destructive force that I have tried to eliminate from my philosophy of life.

Zanda looked at me with a puzzled ex-

A deathly silence hung over the scene. . . .  
 "There is something eerie about the place,"  
 said Zanda in low, tense tones.



pression. "We are really going to Thuria?" she asked. "I do not understand why anyone should want to go to Thuria; but I am content to go, if you go. When do we start, Vandor?"

"We are well on our way, now," I replied. "The moment that Jat Or came aboard, I directed the brain to head for Thuria at full speed."

## CHAPTER XVI

### THURIA

LATER, as we hurtled on through the cold, dark reaches of space, I urged Zanda and Jat Or to lie down and rest.

Although we had no sleeping-silks and furs we would not suffer, as the temperature of the cabin was comfortable. I had directed the brain to control this, as well as the oxygen supply, after we left the surface of Barsoom.

There were narrow but comfortable divans in the cabin, as well as a number of soft pillows; so there was no occasion for any of us to suffer during the trip.

We had left Barsoom about the middle of the eighth zode, which is equivalent to midnight earth-time; and a rather rough computation of the distance to be traveled and our estimated speed, suggested that we should arrive on Thuria about noon of the following day.

Jat Or wanted to stand watch the full time, but I insisted that we must each get some sleep; so, on my promise to awaken him at the end of five hours, he lay down. And while my two companions slept, I made a more careful examination of the interior of the ship than I had been able to do at the time that Fal Sivas had conducted me through it.

I found it well supplied with food, and in a chest in the storeroom I also discovered sleeping-silks and furs; but, of course, what interested me most of all were the weapons. There were long swords, short swords, and daggers, as well as a number of the remarkable Barsoomian radium rifles and pistols, together with a considerable quantity of ammunition for both.

Fal Sivas seemed to have forgotten nothing, yet all his thought and care and efficiency would have gone for nothing had I not been able to seize the ship. His own cowardice would have prevented him from using it; and of course he would not have permitted another to take it out, even had he believed that another brain than his could have operated it,

which he had been confident was not possible.

My inspection of the ship completed, I went into the control room and looked out through one of the great eyes. The heavens were a black void shot with cold and glittering points of light. How different the stars looked when one had passed beyond the atmosphere of the planet!

I looked for Thuria. She was nowhere in sight. The discovery was a distinct shock. Had the mechanical brain failed us? While I was wasting my time inspecting the ship, was it bearing us off into some remote corner of space?

I am not inclined to lose my head and become hysterical when confronted by an emergency; nor, except when instant action is required, do I take snap judgment. I am more inclined to think things out carefully, and so I sat down on a bench in the control room to work out my problem.

Just then Jat Or came in. "How long have I been sleeping?" he asked.

"Not long," I replied; "you had better go back and get all the rest that you can."

"I am not sleepy," he said. "In fact it is rather difficult to contemplate sleep when one is in the midst of such a thrilling adventure. Think of it, my prince—"

"Vandor," I reminded him.

"Sometimes I forget," he said; "but, anyway, as I was saying, think of the tremendous possibilities of this adventure; think of our situation."

"I have been thinking of it," I replied a little gloomily.

"In a few hours we shall be where no other Barsoomian has ever been—upon Thuria."

"I am not so sure of that," I replied.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Take a look ahead," I told him. "Do you see anything of Thuria?"

He looked out of one of the round ports and then turned to the other. "I don't see Thuria," he said.

"Neither do I," I replied. "And do you realize what that suggests?"

HE looked stunned for a moment. "You mean that we are not bound for Thuria—that the brain has erred?"

"I don't know," I replied.

"How far is it from Barsoom to Thuria?" he asked.

"A little over 15,700 haads," I replied. "I estimated that we should complete the trip in about five zodes."

Just then Thuria hurtled into view upon our right, and Jat Or voiced an ex-

clamation of relief. "I have it," he exclaimed.

"What?" I asked.

"Your mechanical brain is functioning better than ours!" he replied. "During the ten zodes of a Barsoomian day, Thuria revolves about our planet over three times; so while we were traveling to the path of her orbit she would encircle Barsoom one and a half times."

"And you think the mechanical brain has reasoned that out?"

"Unquestionably," he said; "and it will time our arrival to meet the satellite in its path."

I SCRATCHED my head. "This raises another question I had not thought of before," I said.

"What is that?" asked Jat Or.

"The speed of our ship is approximately 3250 haads per zode, whereas Thuria is traveling at a rate of over 41,250 haads during the same period."

Jat Or whistled. "Over twelve and a half times our speed," he exclaimed. "How in the name of our first ancestor are we going to catch her?"

I made a gesture of resignation. "I imagine we shall have to leave that to the brain," I said.

"I hope it doesn't get us in the path of that hurtling mass of destruction," said Jat Or.

"Just how would you make a landing if you were operating the ship with your own brain?" I asked.

"We've got to take Thuria's force of gravity into consideration," he said.

"That is just it," I replied. "When we get into the sphere of her influence, we shall be pulled along at the same rate she is going; and then we can make a natural landing."

Jat Or was looking out at the great orb of Thuria on our right. "How perfectly tremendous she looks," he said. "It doesn't seem possible that we have come close enough to make her look as large as that."

"You forget," I said, "that as we approached her, we commenced to grow smaller—to proportion ourselves to her size. When we reach her surface, if we ever do, she will seem as large to us as Barsoom does when we are on its surface."

"It all sounds like a mad dream to me," said Jat Or.

"I fully agree with you," I replied, "but you will have to admit that it is going to be a most interesting dream."

As we sped on through space, Thuria hurtled across our bow and eventually disappeared below the eastern rim of the planet that lay now so far below us. Doubtless, when she completed another revolution, we should be within the sphere of her influence. Then, and not until then, would we know the outcome of this phase of our adventure.

I insisted now that Jat Or return to the cabin and get a few hours' sleep, for none of us knew what lay in the future and to what extent our reserves of strength, both physical and mental, might be called upon.

Later on, I called Jat Or and lay down myself to rest. Through it all, Zanda slept peacefully; nor did she awaken until after I had had my sleep and returned to the control room.

Jat Or was sitting with his face glued to the starboard eye. He did not look back at me, but evidently he heard me enter the cabin.

"She is coming," he said in a tense whisper. "Issus! What a magnificent and inspiring sight!"

I went to the port and looked out over his shoulder. There before me was a great world, one crescent edge illuminated by the sun beyond it. Vaguely I thought that I saw the contour of mountains and valleys, lighter expanses that might have been sandy desert or dead sea bottom, and dark masses that could have been forests. A new world! A world that no earth-man nor any Barsoomian had ever visited.

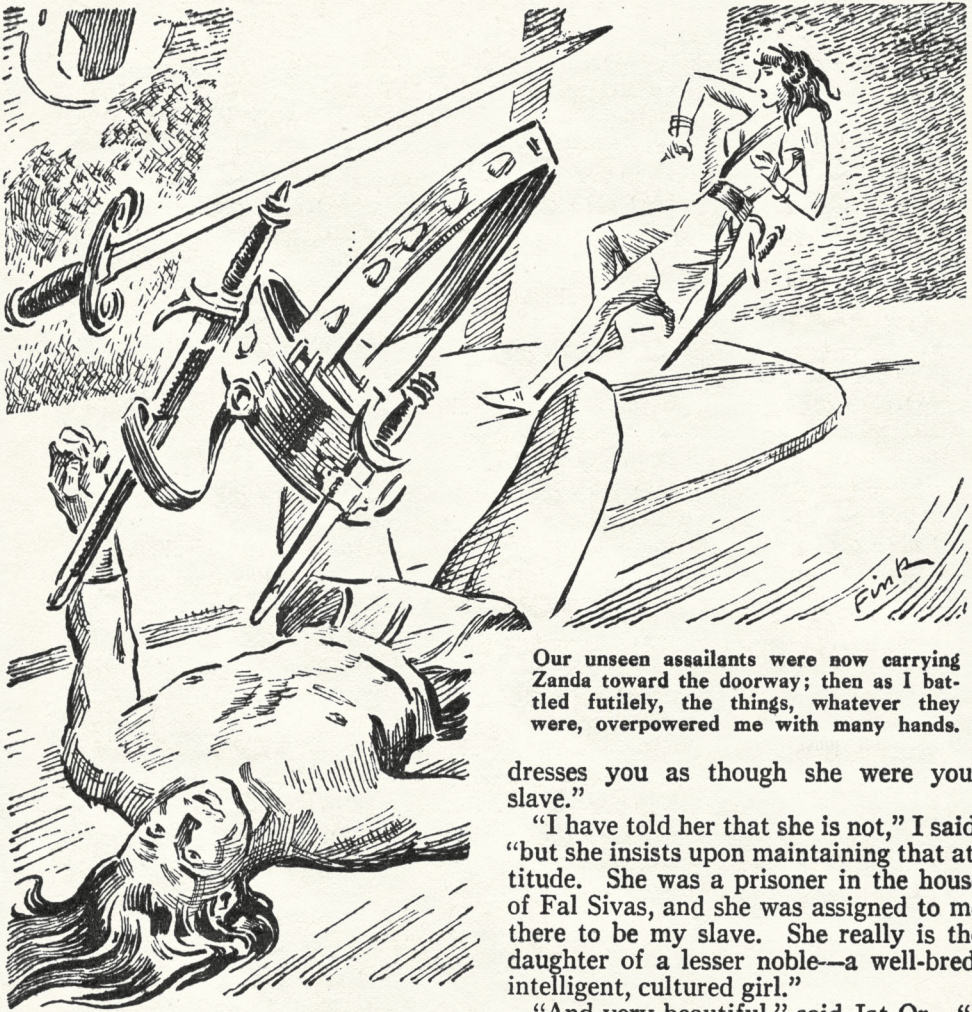
I could have been thrilled beyond the power of words to express at the thought of the adventure that lay before me had my mind not been so overcast by fear for the fate of my princess. Thoughts of her dominated all others, yet they did not crowd out entirely the sense of magnificent mystery that the sight of this new world aroused within me.

ZANDA joined us now; as she saw Thuria looming ahead, she voiced a little exclamation of thrilled excitement. "We are very close," she said.

I nodded. "It will not be long now before we know our fate," I said. "Are you afraid?"

"Not while you are with me," she answered simply.

Presently I realized that we had changed our course. Thuria seemed directly beneath us now instead of straight ahead. We were within the sphere of her influence, and were being dragged through



Our unseen assailants were now carrying Zanda toward the doorway; then as I battled futilely, the things, whatever they were, overpowered me with many hands.

dresses you as though she were your slave."

"I have told her that she is not," I said, "but she insists upon maintaining that attitude. She was a prisoner in the house of Fal Sivas, and she was assigned to me there to be my slave. She really is the daughter of a lesser noble—a well-bred, intelligent, cultured girl."

"And very beautiful," said Jat Or. "I think she loves you, my prince."

"Perhaps she thinks it is love," I said, "but it is only gratitude. If she knew who I am, even her gratitude would be turned to hate. She has sworn to kill John Carter."

"But why?" demanded Jat Or.

"Because he conquered Zodanga; because all her sorrows resulted from the fall of the city. Her father was killed; and, in grief, her mother took the last long journey upon the bosom of Iss; so you see she has good reason to hate John Carter, or at least she thinks she has."

Presently Zanda called us, and we went into the cabin where she had a meal spread upon a folding table.

She stood to wait upon us, but I insisted that she sit with us and eat.

"It is not seemly," she said, "that a slave should eat with her master."

"Again I tell you that you are not my slave, Zanda," I said. "If you insist upon maintaining this ridiculous attitude, I

space at her own tremendous velocity. Now we were spiraling downward; the brain was functioning perfectly.

"I don't like the idea of landing on a strange world at night," said Jat Or.

"I am not so enthusiastic about it myself," I agreed. "I think we had better wait until morning."

I then directed the brain to drop to within about two hundred haads of the surface of the satellite and cruise slowly in the direction of the coming dawn.

"And now, suppose we eat while we are waiting for daylight," I suggested.

"Is there food on board, master?" inquired Zanda.

"Yes," I replied, "you will find it in the storeroom abaft the cabin."

"I will prepare it, master, and serve you in the cabin," she said.

AS she left the control room, Jat Or's eyes followed her. "She does not seem like a slave," he said, "yet she ad-

shall have to give you away. Perhaps I shall give you to Jat Or. How would you like that?"

She looked up at the handsome young padwar seated opposite me. "Perhaps he would make a good master," she said, "but I shall be slave to no one but Vandor."

"But how could you help it if I gave you to him?" I asked. "What would you do about it?"

"I would kill either Jat Or or myself," she replied.

I LAUGHED and stroked her hand. "I would not give you away if I could," I said.

"If you could?" she demanded. "Why can't you?"

"Because I cannot give away a free woman. I told you once that you were free, and now I tell you again in the presence of a witness. You know the customs of Barsoom, Zanda. You are free now, whether you wish to be or not."

"I do not wish to be free," she said; "but if it is your will, Vandor, so be it." She was silent for a moment, and then she looked up at me. "If I am not your slave," she asked, "what am I?"

"Just at present, you are a fellow-adventurer," I replied, "—an equal, to share in the joys and sorrows of whatever may lie before us."

"I am afraid that I shall be more of a hindrance than a help," she said, "but of course I can cook for you and minister to you. At least I can do those things which are a woman's province."

"Then you will be more of a help than a hindrance," I told her. "And to make sure that we shall not lose you, I shall detail Jat Or to be your protector. He shall be responsible for your safety."

I could see that this pleased Jat Or, but I could not tell about Zanda. I thought she looked a little hurt; but she flashed a quick sweet smile at the young padwar, as though she were afraid he might have guessed her disappointment and did not wish to hurt him. . . .

As we cruised low over Thuria, I saw forests below us and meandering lines of a lighter color that I took to be brooks or rivers; and in the distance there were mountains. It seemed a most beautiful and intriguing world.

I could not be sure about the water because it was generally believed on Barsoom that her satellites were practically without moisture. However, I have often known scientists to be mistaken.

I was becoming impatient. It seemed that daylight would never arrive, but at last the first rosy flush of dawn crept up behind the mountain tops ahead of us; and slowly the details of this strange world took form below us, as the scene in a photographic print takes magic form beneath the developer.

We were looking down upon a forested valley, beyond which low foothills, carpeted with lush vegetation, ran back to higher mountains in the distance.

The colors were similar to those upon Barsoom—the scarlet grasses, the gorgeous, strange-hued trees; but as far as our vision reached, we saw no living thing.

"There must be life there," said Zanda, when Jat Or commented upon this. "In all that wealth of beauty, there must be living eyes to see and to admire."

"Are we going to land?" asked Jat Or.

"We came here to find Gar Nal's ship," I replied, "and we must search for that first."

"It will be like looking for a tiny bead among the moss of a dead sea bottom," said Jat Or.

I nodded. "I'm afraid so," I said, "but we have come for that purpose and that purpose alone."

"Look!" exclaimed Zanda. "What is that—there, ahead?"

## CHAPTER XVII

### INVISIBLE FOES

LOOKING down in the direction that Zanda had indicated, I saw what appeared to be a large building on the bank of a river. The structure nestled in a clearing in the forest, and where the rising sun touched its towers they sent back scintillant rays of many-hued light.

One section of the building faced upon what appeared to be a walled court, and it was an object lying in this court which aroused our interest and excitement to a far greater extent than the building itself.

"What do you think it is, Zanda?" I asked, for it was she who had discovered it.

"I think that it is Gar Nal's ship," replied the girl.

"What makes you think that?" asked Jat Or.

"Because it is so much like this one," she replied. "Both Gar Nal and Fal Sivas stole ideas from one another whenever they could, and I should be surprised indeed if their ships did not closely resemble one another."

"I am sure that you are right, Zanda," I said. "It is not reasonable to assume that the inhabitants of Thuria have, by some miraculous coincidence, constructed a ship so similar to that of Fal Sivas'; and the possibility is equally remote that a third Barsoomian ship has landed on the satellite."

I directed the brain to spiral downward, and presently we were flying at an altitude that gave us a clear view of the details of the building and the surrounding terrain.

**T**HE more closely we approached the ship in the courtyard the more certain we were that it was Gar Nal's; but nowhere did we see any sign of Gar Nal, Ur Jan, or Dejah Thoris; nor, indeed, was there any sign of life about the building or its grounds. The place might have been the abode of the dead.

"I am going to ground the ship beside Gar Nal's," I announced. "Look to your weapons, Jat Or."

"They are ready, my—Vandor," he replied.

"I do not know how many fighting-men are aboard that ship," I continued. "There may be only Gar Nal and Ur Jan, or there may be more. If the fight goes our way, we must not kill them all until we are positive that the princess is with them."

"They left Barsoom at least a full day ahead of us; and while it is only a remote possibility, still they may have made some disposition of their prisoner already. Therefore, we must leave at least one of them alive to direct us to her."

We were descending slowly. Every eye was on the alert. Zanda had stepped from the control room a moment before, and now she returned with the harness and weapons of a Martian warrior strapped to her slender form.

"Why those?" I asked.

"You may need an extra sword hand," she replied. "You do not know against how many foemen you will be pitted."

"Wear them, if you like," I said, "but remain in the ship where you will be safe. Jat Or and I will take care of the fighting."

"I shall go with you and fight with you," said Zanda, quietly but emphatically.

I shook my head. "No," I said; "you must do as I say and remain on this ship."

She looked me steadily in the eye.

"Against my will, you insisted upon making me a free woman," she reminded me. "Now I shall act as a free woman and not as a slave. I shall do as I please."

I had to smile at that. "Very well," I said; "but if you come with us, you will have to take your chances like any other fighting-man. Jat Or and I may be too busy with our own antagonists to be able to protect you."

"I can take care of myself," said Zanda simply.

"Please stay on board," pleaded Jat Or solicitously; but Zanda only shook her head.

Our ship had settled quietly to the ground beside that of Gar Nal. I caused the door in the port side to be opened and the ladder lowered. Still there was no sign of life either on the other craft or elsewhere about the castle. A deathly silence hung like a heavy mantle over the entire scene.

Just a moment I stood in the doorway looking about; and then I descended to the ground, followed by Jat Or and Zanda.

Before us loomed the castle, a strange weird building of unearthly architecture, a building of many towers of various types, some of them standing alone and some engaged in groups.

Partially verifying Fal Sivas' theory of the tremendous mineral wealth of the satellite, the walls of the structure before us were constructed of blocks of precious stones so arranged that their gorgeous hues blended and harmonized into a mass of color that defies description.

At the moment, however, I gave but cursory attention to the beauties of the pile, turning my attention instead to Gar Nal's ship. A door in its side, similar to that in our ship, was open; and a ladder depended to the ground.

I knew that in ascending that ladder, a man would be at great disadvantage if attacked from above; but there was no alternative—I must discover if there was anyone on board.

I asked Zanda to stand at a little distance, so that she could see into the interior of the ship and warn me if an enemy exhibited himself. Then I mounted quickly.

**A**S the ship was already resting on the ground, I had to ascend but a few rungs of the ladder before my eyes had reached the level of the cabin floor. A quick glance showed me that no one



was in sight, and a moment later I stood inside the cabin of Gar Nal's ship.

The interior arrangement was slightly different from that of Fal Sivas', nor was the cabin as richly furnished.

From the cabin, I stepped into the control room. No one was there. Then I searched the after part of the ship. The entire craft was deserted.

**R**ETURNING to the ground, I reported this to Jat Or and Zanda.

"It is strange," remarked Jat Or, "that no one has challenged us or paid any attention to our presence. Can it be possible that the whole castle is deserted?"

"There is something eerie about the place," said Zanda, in low, tense tones. "Even the silence seems fraught with suppressed sound. I see no one, I hear no one, and yet I feel—I know not what."

"It is mysterious," I agreed. "The deserted appearance of the castle is belied by the well-kept grounds. If there is no one here now, it has not been deserted long."

"I have a feeling that it is not deserted now," said Jat Or. "I seem to feel presences all around us. I could swear that eyes were on us—many eyes, watching our every move."

I was conscious of much the same sensation myself. I looked up at the windows of the castle, fully expecting to see eyes gazing down upon us; but in none of the many windows was there a sign of life. Then I called aloud, voicing the common peace greeting of Barsoom.

"Kaor!" I shouted in tones that could have been heard anywhere upon that side of the castle. "We are travelers from Barsoom. We wish to speak to the lord of the castle."

Silence was my only answer.

"How uncanny!" cried Zanda. "Why don't they answer us? There must be some one here; there is some one here. I know it! I cannot see them, but there are people here. They are all around us."

"I am sure that you are right, Zanda," I said. "There must be some one in that castle, and I am going to have a look inside it. Jat Or, you and Zanda wait here."

"I think we should all go together," said the girl.

"Yes," agreed Jat Or; "we must not separate."

I saw no valid objection to the plan, and so I nodded my acquiescence; then

I approached a closed door in the face of the castle wall. Behind me came Jat Or and Zanda.

We had crossed about half the distance from the ship to the door, when at last suddenly, startlingly, the silence was shattered by a voice, terror-ridden, coming from above, apparently from one of the lofty towers overlooking the courtyard.

"Escape, my chieftain!" it called. "Escape from this horrible place while you may."

I halted, momentarily stunned—it was the voice of Dejah Thoris.

"The princess!" exclaimed Jat Or.

"Yes," I said, "the princess. Come!" Then I started on a run toward the door of the castle; but I had taken scarce a half dozen steps, when just behind me Zanda voiced a piercing scream of terror.

I wheeled instantly to see what danger confronted her.

**S**HE was struggling as though in the throes of convulsions. Her face was contorted in horror; her staring eyes and the motions of her arms and legs were such as they might have been had she been battling with a foe, but she was alone. There was no one near her.

Jat Or and I sprang toward her; but she retreated quickly, still struggling. Darting to our right, and then doubling back, she moved in the direction of the doorway in the castle wall.

She seemed not to move by the power of her own muscles but rather as though she were being dragged away, yet still I saw no one near her.

All that I take so long to tell, occurred in a few brief seconds—before I could cover the short distance to her side.

Jat Or had been closer to her; and he had almost overtaken her when I heard him shout, "Issus! It has me, too."

He went to the ground then as though in a faint, but he was struggling as Zanda struggled—as one who gives battle to an assailant.

As I raced after Zanda my long sword was out, though I saw no enemy whose blood it might drink.

Scarcely ever before in my life have I felt so futile, so impotent. Here was I, the greatest swordsman of two worlds, helpless in defense of my friends because I could not see their foes!

In the grip of what malign power could they be that could seemingly reach out through space from the concealment of some hidden vantage-point and hold

them down or drag them about as it wished?

How helpless we all were, our helplessness all the more accentuated by the psychological effect of this mysterious and uncanny attack!

My earthly muscles quickly brought me to Zanda's side. As I reached out to seize her and stop her progress toward the castle door, something seized one of my ankles; and I went down. I felt hands upon me—many hands. My sword was torn from my grasp; my other weapons were snatched away.

I FOUGHT as perhaps I had never fought before. I felt the bodies of my antagonists pressing against me. I felt their hands as they touched me and their fists as they struck me; but I saw no one, yet my own blows landed upon solid flesh. That was something. It gave me a little greater sense of equality than before; but I could not understand why, if I felt these creatures, I could not see them.

At least, however, it partially explained the strange actions of Zanda. Her seeming convulsions had been her struggles against our unseen assailants. Now they were carrying her toward the doorway; and as I battled futilely, I saw her disappear within the castle.

Then the things, whatever they were that assailed me, overpowered me by numbers. I knew that there were very many of them, because there were so many hands upon me.

They bound my wrists behind my back and jerked me roughly to my feet.

I cannot accurately describe my sensations; the unreality of all that had occurred in those few moments left me dazed and uncertain. For at least once in my life, I seemed wholly deprived of the power to reason, possibly because the emergency was so utterly foreign to anything that I had ever before experienced. Not even the phantom bowmen of Lothar could have presented so unique a situation, for these were visible when they attacked.

As I was jerked to my feet, I glanced about for Jat Or and saw him near me, his hands similarly trussed behind his back.

Now I felt myself being pushed toward the doorway through which Zanda had disappeared, and near me was Jat Or moving in the same direction.

"Can you see anyone, my prince?" he asked bewilderedly.

"I can see you," I replied.

"What diabolical force is this that has seized us?" he demanded.

"I don't know," I replied, "but I feel hands upon me and the warmth of bodies around me."

"I guess we are done for, my prince," he said.

"Done for?" I exclaimed. "We still live."

"No, I do not mean that," he said; "I mean that as far as ever returning to Barsoom is concerned, we might as well give up all hope. They have our ship. Do you think that even if we escape them, we shall ever see it again, or at least be able to repossess it? No, my friend, as far as Barsoom is concerned we are as good as dead."

The ship! In the excitement of what I had just passed through I had momentarily forgotten the ship. I glanced toward it. I thought that I saw the rope ladder move as though to the weight of an unseen body ascending it.

The ship! It was our only hope of ever again returning to Barsoom, and it was in the hands of this mysterious unseen foe. It must be saved.

There was a way! I centered my thoughts upon the mechanical brain—I directed it to rise and wait above the castle, out of harm's way, until I gave it further commands.

Then the invisible menace dragged me through the doorway into the interior of the castle. I could not know if the brain had responded to my directions.

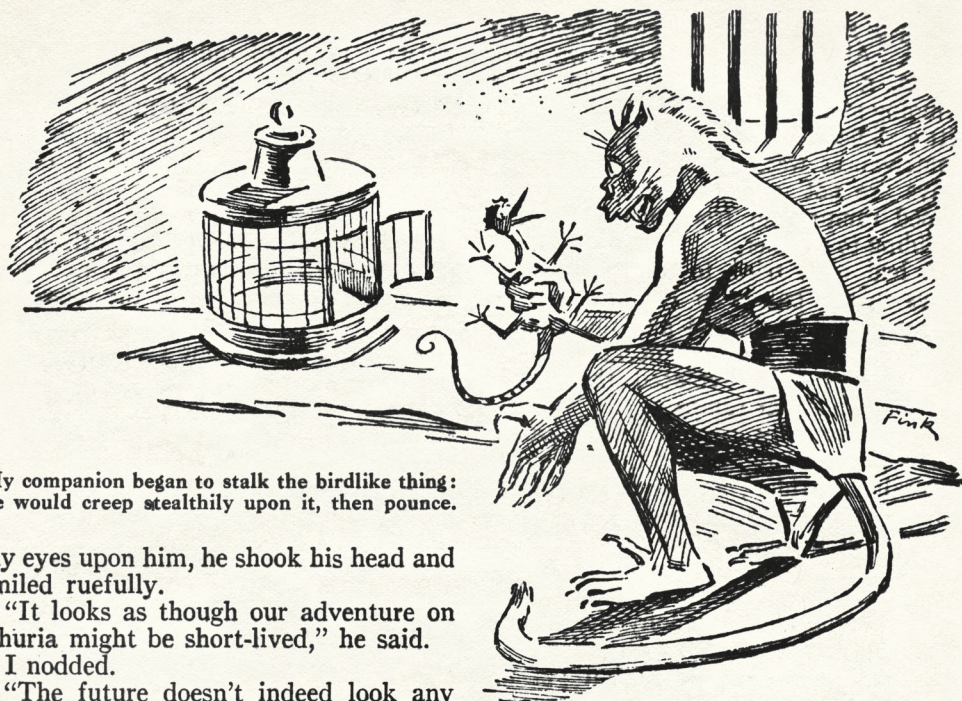
Was I ever to know?

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE CAT-MAN

MY thoughts were still centered upon the brain in the nose of Fal Sivas' ship as I was being conducted through a wide corridor in the castle. I was depressed by the fear that I might not have been able to impart my controlling directions to it at so great a distance or while my brain was laboring under the stress and excitement of the moment. The ship meant so much to us all, and was so necessary to the rescue of Dejah Thoris, that the thought of losing it was a stunning blow; yet presently I realized that worrying about it would do no good, and so I sternly expelled these subversive thoughts from my mind.

Raising my eyes, I saw Jat Or moving along the corridor near me. As he caught



My companion began to stalk the birdlike thing: he would creep stealthily upon it, then pounce.

my eyes upon him, he shook his head and smiled ruefully.

"It looks as though our adventure on Thuria might be short-lived," he said.

I nodded.

"The future doesn't indeed look any too bright," I admitted. "I have never been in such a situation before, where I could neither see my enemy nor communicate with him."

"Nor hear him," added Jat Or. "Except for the feel of hands on my arms and the knowledge that some force is dragging me along this corridor, I am not conscious of the presence of any but ourselves here. The mystery of it leaves me with a sense of utter futility."

"But eventually we must find some one whom we can see and against whom we can pit our own brain, and fighting ability on a more equable basis, for this castle and what we see about us indicate the presence of creatures not unlike ourselves. Notice, for instance, the benches and divans along the walls of this corridor. They must have been intended for creatures like ourselves. The beautiful mosaics that decorate the walls, the gorgeous rugs and skins upon the floor—these things are here to satisfy a love of beauty that is a peculiar attribute of the human mind, nor could they have been conceived or produced except by human hands under the guidance of human brains."

"Your deductions are faultless," replied Jat Or, "but where are the people?"

"There lies the mystery," I replied. "I can well believe that our future depends upon its solution."

"While I am concerned with all these questions," said Jat Or presently, "I am

more concerned with the fate of Zanda; I wonder what they have done with her."

That, of course, I could not answer, although the fact that she had been separated from us caused me no little concern.

At the end of the corridor, we were conducted up a wide and ornate staircase to the next level of the castle; and presently we were led into a large room—a vast chamber in which we saw at the far end a single, lonely figure.

It was Zanda. She was standing before a dais upon which were two large ornate throne-chairs.

The room was gorgeous, almost barbaric in its decorations. Gold and precious stones encrusted floor and walls. They had been fabricated into an amazing design by some master artist who had had at his disposal rare gems such as I had never seen either upon earth or upon Barsoom.

The invisible force that propelled us conducted us to Zanda's side; and there the three of us stood, facing the dais and the empty throne-chairs.

But I wondered if they *were* empty. I had that same strange feeling that I had noticed in the courtyard, of being surrounded by a multitude of people, of having many eyes fixed upon me; yet I saw none and I heard no sound.

We stood there before the dais for several minutes, and then we were

dragged away and conducted from the room. Along another corridor we were taken, a narrower corridor, and up a winding stairway which Jat Or had some little difficulty in negotiating—for such contrivances were new to him, as stairways are not used on Mars, where inclined ramps lead from one level of a building to another.

I had once tried to introduce stairways in my palace in Helium; but so many of my household and my friends came near breaking their necks on them, that I eventually replaced them with the more familiar ramps. . . .

After ascending several levels, Zanda was separated from us and taken along a diverging corridor; and at another level above, Jat Or was dragged away.

None of us had spoken since we had entered the great throne-room, and I think that now that we were being separated words seemed wholly inadequate in the hopelessness of our situation.

Now I was quite alone; but yet up and up I climbed, guided by those invisible hands upon my arms. Where were they taking me? To what fate had they taken my companions? Somewhere in this great castle was the princess whom I had crossed the void to find; yet never had she seemed farther away from me than at this minute; never had our separation seemed so utterly final.

I do not know why I should have felt this way, unless again it was the effect of this seemingly unfathomable mystery that surrounded me.

WE had ascended to such a height that I was confident I was being conducted into one of the loftier towers in the castle that I had seen from the courtyard. Something in this fact and the fact we had been separated suggested that whatever the power that held us, it was not entirely certain of itself; for only fear that we might escape or that, banded together, we might inflict harm upon it, could have suggested the necessity for separating us; but whether or not I reasoned from a correct premise was only conjecture. Time alone could solve the mystery and answer the many questions that presented themselves to my mind.

My mind was thus occupied when I was halted before a door. It had a peculiar latch which attracted my attention, and while I was watching it I saw it move as though a hand turned it; then the door swung in, and I was dragged into the room beyond.

Here the bonds were cut from my wrists. I turned quickly, intending to make a bolt for the door; but before I could reach it, it closed in my face. I tried to open it, but it was securely locked; and then, disgusted, I turned away from it.

AS I turned to inspect my prison, my eyes fell upon a figure seated upon a bench at the far side of the room.

For want of a better word, I may describe the figure that I saw as that of a man; but what a man!

The creature was naked except for a short leather skirt held about his hips by a broad belt fastened by a huge golden buckle set with precious stones.

He was seated upon a red bench against a panel of gray wall; and his skin was exactly the color of the wall, except that portion of his legs which touched the bench. They were red.

The shape of his skull was similar to that of a human being, but his features were most inhuman. In the center of his forehead was a single, large eye about three inches in diameter; the pupil a vertical slit, like the pupils of a cat's eyes. He sat there eying me with that great eye, apparently appraising me as I was appraising him; and I could not but wonder if I presented as strange an appearance to him as he did to me.

During those few moments that we remained motionless, staring at one another, I hurriedly took note of several of his other strange physical characteristics.

The fingers of his hands and four of the toes of each of his feet were much longer than in the human race, while his thumbs and large toes were considerably shorter than his other digits and extended laterally at right angles to his hands and feet.

This fact and the vertical pupils of his eye suggested that he might be wholly arboreal or at least accustomed to finding his food or his prey in trees.

But perhaps the most outstanding features of his hideous countenance were his mouths. He had two of them, one directly above the other. The lower mouth, which was the larger, was lipless, the skin of the face forming the gums in which the teeth were set, with the result that his powerful white teeth were always exposed in a hideous, deathlike grin.

The upper mouth was toothless and round, with slightly protruding lips.

His nose was wide and flat, with up-turned nostrils. At first I detected no

ears, but later I discovered two small orifices near the top of the head and at opposite sides.

Starting slightly above his eye, a stiff yellowish mane about two inches wide ran back along the center of his cranium.

All in all, he was a most unlovely spectacle; and that grinning mouth of his and those powerful teeth, taken in connection with his very noticeable muscular development, suggested that he might be no mean antagonist.

I wondered if he were as ferocious as he looked, and it occurred to me that I might have been locked in here with this thing that it might destroy me. Might I be intended to serve as its food?

Not once since I had entered the room had the creature taken that single, awful eye from me, nor in fact had I looked elsewhere than at it; but now, having partially satisfied my curiosity in so far as that could be accomplished by vision, I let my eyes wander about the room.

It was circular and evidently occupied the entire area and evidently the highest level of a tower. The walls were paneled in different colors; and even here in this high-flung prison cell was evidence of the artistic sensibilities of the builder of the castle, for the room was indeed strangely beautiful.

The circular wall was pierced by half a dozen tall, narrow windows. They were unglazed, but they were barred.

On the floor, against one portion of the wall, was a pile of rugs and skins—probably the bedding of the creature imprisoned here.

I walked toward one of the windows to look out, and as I did so the creature rose from the bench and moved to the side of the room farthest from me. It moved noiselessly with the stealthy tread of a cat; and always it transfixed me with that terrible, lidless eye.

**I**TS silence, its stealth, its horrible appearance, made me wary lest it leap upon my back should I turn my gaze away. Yet I cast a hasty glance through the window and caught a glimpse of distant hills and, below me, just outside the castle wall, a river and beyond that a dense forest.

What little I saw suggested that the tower did not overlook the courtyard in which the ship lay, and I was anxious to see that part of the castle grounds to ascertain if I had been successful in directing the brain to take the ship to a point of safety.

I thought that perhaps I might be able to discover this from one of the windows on the opposite side of the tower; and so, keeping my eyes on my cell-mate, I crossed the room; and as I did so he quickly changed his position, keeping as far from me as possible.

I wondered if he were afraid of me or if, catlike, he were just awaiting an opportunity to pounce on me when he could take me at a disadvantage.

I reached the opposite window and looked out, but I could see nothing of the courtyard, as others of the numerous towers of the castle obstructed my view on this side. In fact, another loftier tower rose directly in front of me in this direction and not more than ten or fifteen feet distant from the one in which I was incarcerated.

Similarly, I moved from window to window searching in vain for a glimpse of the courtyard; and always my weird cell-mate kept his distance from me.

**H**AVING convinced myself I could not see the courtyard nor discover what success I had had in saving the ship, I turned my attention again to my companion.

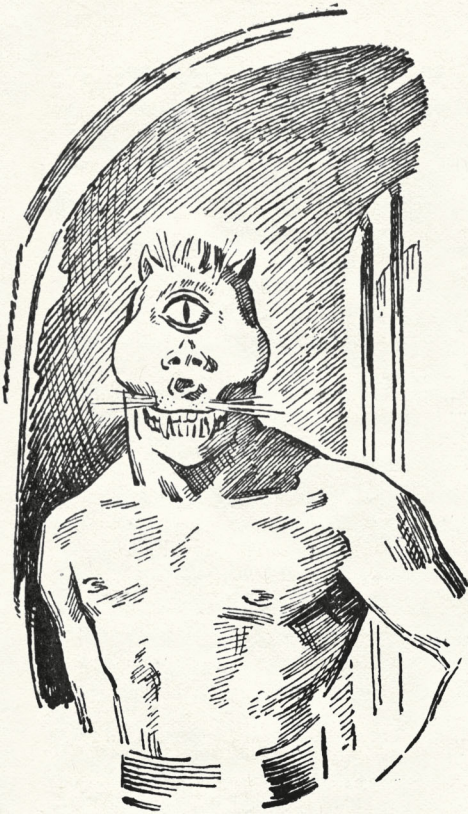
I felt that I must learn something of what his attitude toward me might be. If he were to prove dangerous, I must ascertain the fact before night fell; for something seemed to tell me that that great eye could see by night; and inasmuch as I could not remain awake forever, I must fall easy prey to him in the darkness of the night, if his intentions were lethal.

As I glanced at him again, I noticed a surprising change in his appearance. His skin was no longer gray but vivid yellow, and then I noted that he was standing directly in front of a yellow panel. This was interesting in the extreme.

I moved toward him, and again he changed his position. This time he placed himself in front of a blue panel, and I saw the yellow tint of his skin fade away and turn to blue.

On Barsoom there is a little reptile called a darsen which changes its colors to harmonize with its background, just as do our earthly chameleons; but I had never seen any creature even remotely resembling a human being endowed with this faculty of protective coloration. Here, indeed, was the most amazing of all the amazing creatures that I have ever seen.

I wondered if it were endowed with speech, and so I addressed it. "Kaor!" I



The creature's silence, its stealth, made me wary lest it leap upon my back, should I turn away from it. . . . Might I be intended to serve as its food?

said. "Let's be friends,"—and I raised my sword hand above my head with the palm toward him, indicating my friendly intentions.

He looked at me for a moment; and then from his upper mouth issued strange sounds, like the purring and meowing of a cat.

He was trying to speak to me, but I could not understand him any more than he could understand me.

How was I to learn his intentions toward me before night fell?

It seemed hopeless, and I resigned myself to wait with composure whatever might occur. I therefore decided to ignore the presence of the creature until it made advances, either hostile or otherwise; and so I walked over and seated myself on the bench that it had quitted.

Immediately it took up a new position as far from me as possible and this time in front of a green panel, whereupon its color immediately changed to green. I could not but wonder what kaleidoscopic result would be obtained were I to chase

the thing around this multi-colored apartment. The thought caused me to smile, and as I did so I saw an immediate reaction in my cell-mate. He made a strange purring sound and stretched his upper mouth laterally in what might have been an attempt at an answering smile. At the same time he rubbed his palms up and down his thighs.

It occurred to me that these gestures might constitute the outward expression of an inner emotion and be intended to denote its attitude toward me; but whether that attitude were friendly or hostile, I could not know. Perhaps my smile had conveyed a meaning wholly at variance with what a smile is usually intended to convey among the human inhabitants of Earth or Mars.

I recalled that I had discovered this to be a fact among the green men of Barsoom, who laugh the loudest when they are inflicting the most diabolical tortures upon their victims; although that is scarcely analogous to what I mean, as in the case of the green Martians, it is the result of a highly specialized perversion of the sense of humor.

Perhaps, on the other hand, the grimace and gestures of the creature constituted a challenge. If that were true, the sooner I discovered it the better. If he were unfriendly, I wanted to know it before darkness fell.

It occurred to me that I might gain some knowledge of his intentions by repeating his own gestures, and so I smiled at him and rubbed my palms up and down my thighs.

His reaction was immediate. His upper mouth stretched sideways; he came toward me. I stood up as he approached, and when he came quite close to me, he stopped, and reached forth one of his hands stroked my upper arm.

I could not but believe that this was an overture of friendship, and so I similarly stroked one of his arms.

**T**HE result astounded me. The creature leaped back, that strange purring noise issuing from its lips; and then it broke into a wild dance. With cat-like springs, it leaped and cavorted about the room in wild abandon.

Three turns about the room it took, as I seated myself again upon the bench and watched it; then, its dance completed, it came and sat down beside me.

Once again it purred and meowed in an evident attempt to communicate with me; but I could only shake my head, to

indicate that I did not understand, and speak to it in the tongue of Barsoom.

Presently it ceased its meowing and addressed me in a language that seemed far more human—a language that employed almost the same vowel and consonant sounds as those languages of the human race to which I am accustomed.

**H**ERE, at last, I detected a common ground upon which we might discover mutual understanding.

It was obvious that the creature could not understand any language that I could speak, and it would serve no purpose to attempt to teach him any of them; but if I could learn his language I would then be able to communicate with some of the inhabitants of Thuria; and if the creatures of Thuria had a common language as did the inhabitants of Mars, then my existence upon this tiny satellite would be fraught with fewer difficulties.

True, my captors might not permit me to live long enough to learn anything; but I must assume that I had plenty of time to learn one of the languages of Thuria, and I immediately set about to do so.

I commenced in the usual way that one learns a new language. I pointed to various articles in the room and to various parts of our bodies, repeating their names in my own language. My companion seemed to understand immediately what I was attempting to do; and pointing to the same articles himself, he repeated their names several times in the more human of the two languages which he seemed to command, if his meowings and purrings could be called a language, a question which, at that time, I should have been unable to answer.

We were thus engaged when the door to the room opened; and several vessels appeared to float in and settle themselves on the floor just inside the door, which was immediately closed.

My companion commenced to purr excitedly, and ran over to them. He returned immediately with a jar of water and a bowl of food which he set on the bench beside me. He pointed to the food and then to me, as though indicating that it was mine.

Crossing the room once more, he returned with another jar of water and a cage containing a most remarkable-appearing bird.

I call the thing a bird because it had wings; but to what family it belonged, your guess is as good as mine. It had four legs and the scales of a fish, but its

beak and comb gave its strange face a bird-like appearance.

The food in the bowl set before me was a mixture of vegetables, fruit, and meat. I discovered that it was quite palatable.

As I quenched my thirst from the jar and sampled the food that had been brought me, I watched my companion. For a moment or two he played with the bird in the cage. He inserted a finger between the bars, whereat the creature flapped its wings, voiced a shrill scream, and tried to seize the finger with its beak. It never quite succeeded, however, as my cell-mate always withdrew his finger in time. He seemed to derive a great deal of pleasure from this, as he purred constantly.

Finally he opened the door in the cage and liberated the captive. Immediately the creature fluttered about the room, seeking to escape through the windows; but the bars were too close together. Then my companion commenced to stalk it, for all the world like a cat stalking its prey. When the thing alighted, he would creep stealthily upon it; and when he was close enough, pounce for it.

For some time it succeeded in eluding him; but finally he struck it down heavily to the floor, partially stunning it. After this he played with it, pawing it around.

At last, with a hideous coughing roar that sounded like the roar of a lion, he leaped ferociously upon it and severed its head with a single bite of his powerful jaws. Immediately he transferred the neck to his upper mouth and sucked the blood from the carcass. It was not a pretty sight.

When the blood had been drained, he devoured his prey with his lower jaws; as he tore at it he growled fiercely, swallowing in great gulps until he had devoured every last vestige of it.

His meal completed, he crossed to the bench and drained his water jar, drinking through his upper mouth.

He paid no attention to me during all these proceedings; now, purring lazily, he walked over to the pile of skins and cloths upon the floor, and lying down upon them, curled up and went to sleep.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CONDEMNED TO DEATH

**Y**OUTH adapts itself easily to new conditions and learns quickly; and, though only my Creator knows how old I am, I still retain the characteristics

of youth. Aided by this fact, as well as by a sincere desire to avail myself of every means of self-preservation, I learned the language of my companion quickly and easily.

The monotony of the days that followed my capture was thus broken, and time did not hang so heavily upon my hands as it would otherwise.

I shall never forget the elation that I felt when I realized that my cell-mate and myself were at last able to communicate our thoughts to one another, but even before that time arrived we had learned one another's names. His was Umka.

**T**HE very first day that I discovered I could express myself well enough for him to understand me, I asked him who it was that held us prisoners.

"The Tarids," he replied.

"What are they?" I asked. "What do they look like? Why do we never see them?"

"I do see them," he replied. "Don't you?"

"No; what do they look like?"

"They look very much like you," he replied; "at least they are the same sort of creature. They have two eyes and a nose and only one mouth, and their ears are big things stuck on the sides of their heads like yours. They are not beautiful like we Masenas."

"But why do I not see them?" I demanded.

"You don't know how," he replied. "If you knew how, you could see them as plainly as I do."

"I should like very much to see them," I told him. "Can you tell me how I may do so?"

"I can tell you," he said, "but that does not mean that you will be able to see them. Whether you do or not will depend upon your own mental ability. The reason you do not see them is because by the power of their own minds they have willed that you shall not see them. If you can free your mind of this inhibition, you can see them as plainly as you see me."

"But I don't know just how to go about it."

"You must direct your mind upon theirs in an effort to overcome their wish by a wish of your own. They wish that you should not see them. You must wish that you should see them. They were easily successful with you, because, not expecting such a thing, your mind had

set up no defense-mechanism against it. Now you have the advantage upon your side, because they have willed an unnatural condition, whereas you will have nature's forces behind you, against which, if your mind is sufficiently powerful, they can erect no adequate mental barrier."

Well, it sounded simple enough; but I am no hypnotist, and naturally I had considerable doubt as to my ability along these lines.

When I explained this to Umka, he growled impatiently.

"You can never succeed," he said, "if you harbor such doubts. Put them aside. Believe that you will succeed, and you will have a very much greater chance for success."

"But how can I hope to accomplish anything when I cannot see them?" I asked. "And even if I could see them, aside from a brief moment that the door is open when food is brought us, I have no opportunity to see them."

"That is not necessary," he replied. "You think of your friends, do you not, although you cannot see them now?"

"Yes, of course, I think of them; but what has that to do with it?"

"It merely shows that your thoughts can travel anywhere. Direct your thoughts, therefore, upon these Tarids. You know that the castle is full of them, because I have told you so. Just direct your mind upon the minds of all the inhabitants of the castle, and your thoughts will reach them all, even though they may not be cognizant of it."

"Well, here goes," I said; "wish me luck."

"It may take some time," he explained. "It was a long time after I learned the secret before I could pierce their invisibility."

**I** SET my mind at once upon the task before me, and kept it there when not otherwise occupied; but Umka was a loquacious creature, and having long been denied an opportunity for speech, he was now making up for lost time.

He asked me many questions about myself and the land from which I came, and seemed surprised to think that there were living creatures upon the great world he saw floating in the night sky.

He told me that his people, the Masenas, lived in the forest in houses built high among the trees. They were not a numerous people, and so they sought districts far from other inhabitants.



The Tarids, he said, had once been a powerful people; but they had been overcome in war by another nation and almost exterminated.

Their enemies still hunted them down, and there would long since have been none of them left had not one of their wisest men developed among them the hypnotic power which made it possible for them to render themselves seemingly invisible to their enemies.

"ALL that remain of the Tarids," said Umka, "live in this castle. There are about a thousand of them altogether, men, women, and children. Hiding here, in this remote part of the world, in an effort to escape their enemies, they feel that all other creatures are their foes. Whoever comes to the castle of the Tarids is an enemy to be destroyed."

"They will destroy us, you think?" I asked.

"Certainly," he replied.

"But when, and how?" I demanded.

"They are governed by some strange belief," Umka said perplexedly. "I do not understand it, but every important act in their lives is regulated by it. They say they are guided by the sun and the moon and the stars. It is all very foolish, but they will not kill us until the sun tells them to, and then they will not kill us for their own pleasure, but because they believe that it will make the sun happy."

"You think, then, that my friends, who are also prisoners here, are still alive and safe?"

"I don't know, but I think so," he replied. "The fact that you are alive indicates that they have not sacrificed the others, for I know it is usually their custom to save their captives and destroy them all in a single ceremony."

"Will they destroy you at the same time?"

"I think they will."

"And are you resigned to your fate, or would you escape if you could?"

"I should certainly escape, if I had the chance," he replied. "But I shall not have the chance; neither will you."

"If I could only see these people and talk to them," I said, "I might find the way whereby we could escape. I might even convince them that I and my friends are not their enemies, and persuade them to treat us as friends. But what can I do? I cannot see them; and even if I

could see them, I could not hear them. The obstacles seem insuperable."

"If you can succeed in overcoming the suggestion of their invisibility which they have implanted in your mind," said Umka, "you can also overcome the other suggestion which renders them inaudible to you. Have you been making any efforts along these lines?"

"Yes; I am almost constantly endeavoring to throw off the hypnotic spell," I assured him.

Each day, near noon, our single meal was served to us. It was always the same. We each received a large jar of water, I a bowl of food, and Umka a cage containing one of the strange bird-like animals which apparently formed his sole diet.

After Umka had explained how I might overcome the hypnotic spell that had been placed upon me and thus be able to see and hear my captors, I had daily placed myself in a position where, when the door was opened to permit our food to be placed within the room, I could see out and discover if the Tarid who brought our food to us was visible to me.

It was always with a disheartening sense of frustration that I saw the receptacles containing the food and water placed upon the floor just inside the door by invisible hands. But hopeless as my efforts seemed, I still persisted in them, hoping stubbornly.

ONE day I was thinking of the hopelessness of Dejah Thoris' situation, when I heard the sound of footsteps in the corridor beyond our door and the scraping of metal against metal, such as the metal of a warrior makes when it scrapes against the buckles of his harness and against his other weapons.

These were the first sounds that I had heard, other than those made by Umka and myself—the first signs of life within the great castle of the Tarids since I had been made a captive there. The inferences to be drawn from these sounds were so momentous that I scarcely breathed as I waited for the door to open. I rose and stood where I could look directly out into the corridor when the door was opened.

I heard the lock click. Slowly the door swung in upon its hinges; and there, distinctly visible, were two men of flesh and blood.

What will next befall the adventurers, at the hands of these enemy Tarids—on this strange planet Thuria? Don't miss the next installment, in the forthcoming March issue.

# They Hunt No More

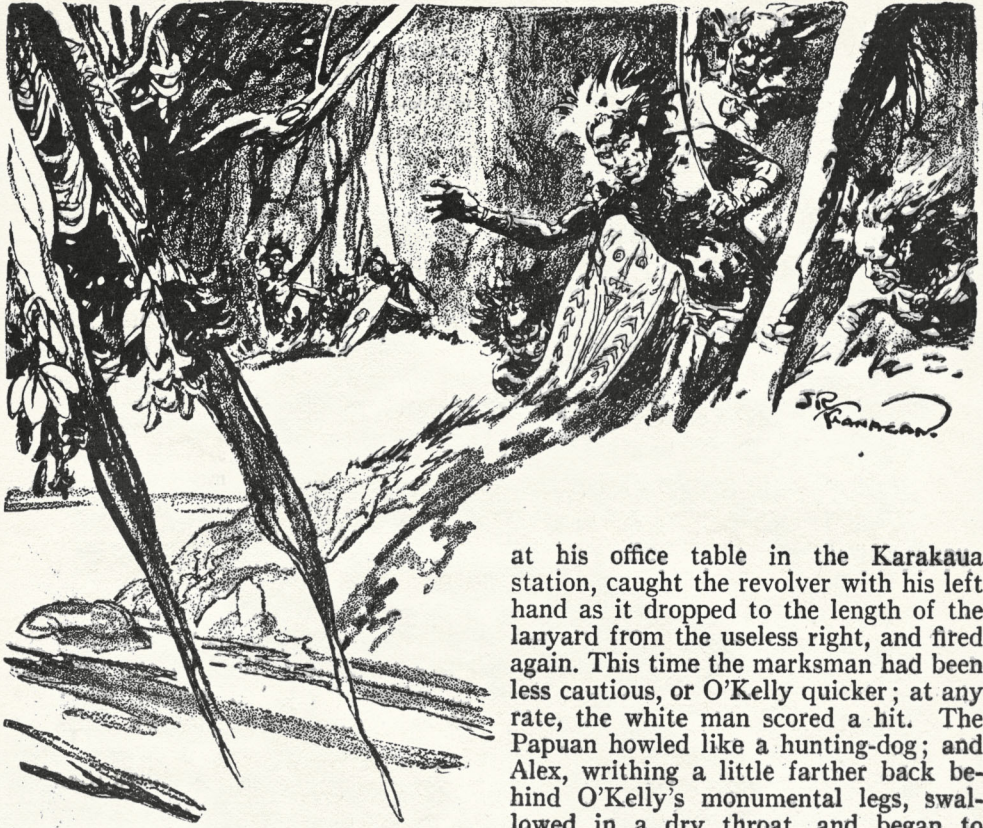
By BEATRICE GRIMSHAW

Illustrated by John Richard Flanagan

*A stirring story of wild Papua,  
by the distinguished author of  
"The Forest of Lost Men,"  
"Away From It All" and  
other memorable stories.*



O'Kelly caught the revolver with his left hand as it dropped to the length of the lanyard from the useless right, and fired again.



**Y**ESTERDAY, oh, yesterday! Yesterday she had been safe; going to live for years and years. Now she had minutes only before her; at least she hoped so. Or would have hoped, if connected thought had been possible.

But she could not think. She could only feel, and feeling was one blaze of terror. She was lying at the feet of Peter O'Kelly. He was standing up, trying to protect her. And it had begun to look as if protection were impossible.

Across the river, where the dragon-skinned sago palms stood huddling together in black slime, the Karakaras, worst of Western Papuan tribes, flitted ghostlike, hardly seen, save where their boar-tooth necklets, dangling on dark breasts, caught for a moment the fire of the afternoon sun. One man only kept still, three-quarters hidden behind a palm. He was the marksman of the tribe; and he had, in the last twenty seconds, shot one long arrow into O'Kelly's foot, just missing Alex Greville where she lay; and then—as O'Kelly fired at him and missed him because of the sheltering palm—another arrow, that pierced the white man's right hand.

O'Kelly, cool as if he had been sitting

at his office table in the Karakaua station, caught the revolver with his left hand as it dropped to the length of the lanyard from the useless right, and fired again. This time the marksman had been less cautious, or O'Kelly quicker; at any rate, the white man scored a hit. The Papuan howled like a hunting-dog; and Alex, writhing a little farther back behind O'Kelly's monumental legs, swallowed in a dry throat, and began to hope. . . .

O God, why had she come? Made him take her! One dared not think. One dared not remember what the Karakaras did to their prisoners; dared not let oneself guess why they were so carefully shooting not to kill. Had the marksman been disabled?

Thank heaven, there was a crocodile-haunted river between; but that wouldn't protect them for long, with their boat aground on a snag. The savages would get logs, a raft, come over. . . .

The marksman was not disabled. He was going to shoot again. She could hear, with senses sharpened to breaking-point, the creak of the bow and the scratch of the tortoiseshell gantlet against the string. O'Kelly fired first, with his unskilled left hand, and missed, by a hair. Almost in the same moment the arrow flew, making a whooping noise—struck O'Kelly's left hand, and went through it.

The big revolver dropped once more to the length of the lanyard, swinging there useless, blue against the green of the lalang grass. And O'Kelly laughed.

"Shoot yourself with the last cartridge," he told her. "Through the roof of the mouth. I'd have saved you the trouble, but—"



There was only one more; O'Kelly had fired five times; they did not use magazine-pistols in the wet Western country. . . . She knew she could not shoot herself. She was careless of the fact that he had given her his own last chance of escaping death by torture. She could only lie there and think, with her face buried in the grass, "It isn't true. It's not happening. I'm not here," while all the time she knew that it was true, that she was there, in the worst pass of her life, and that, barring the occurrence of a miracle, life was run. . . .

The miracle happened.

It took the form of a fleet of war-canoes, roaring down the stream, the sound of them, far-off at first, growing momentarily nearer; rattle of paddles on canoe sides, synchronized shout of paddlers, snapping beat of drum. Round the corner they came, paddles flashing, head-feathers flying, each man bending his knees to the stroke, and shouting as he rose. The canoes seemed to go like the wind; the drumming, rattling, howling, hypnotized you, made it impossible for you to think—and that was meant; that was, of course, the native way of terrorizing an enemy.

This was the end, Alex felt. These people would bring the others over the stream in their canoes, and then—

But O'Kelly had raised a shout. His big bass voice, rising over the sound of drums and paddles, addressed the warriors in the canoes. He called out commands to them in native; they heard, and obeyed. The canoes pulled in to the

bank. Demons, the men all looked; feathered and painted, with black eye-circles and red-streaked cheeks and noses; excited to the last degree of incomprehensible frenzy, shaking bundles of barbed arrows and swinging pineapple stone clubs, they were far from presenting the appearance of rescuers. But that they *were* rescuers became immediately clear; for the gliding shadows on the opposite bank, in one significant instant, disappeared. They were, and then were not. The sharpshooter, lamed, was seen for a moment hirpling through the clotted sago trees ere, like a wounded snake, he silently vanished. And the late sun, sinister, orange-gold, lay like a witch's blessing on the undisturbed green weeds and lilies of the river's bank.

The canoes had halted; one of them was approaching the spot where O'Kelly remained upright and perfectly cool, shot through both hands and a foot; ten eternal minutes ago, he had taken his stand there to protect Alex, on the tiny islet to which they had leaped when the dinghy struck and went down.

THEY'D been running down the river, bound for a friendly village some miles away; the current was strong, but O'Kelly, with his little outboard motor, made nothing of it going or coming. It was to be a swift and safe passage, along the most beautiful part of the lovely Kau River, which Alex, as an honored visitor from afar, had been most anxious to see. The Government whaleboat, with its complement of police, was away that afternoon, in charge of a patrol officer; O'Kelly had wanted to wait, but Alex said the *Merrie England* would call for her before long, and she didn't want to leave Papua's Wild West without seeing the wonderful delta of the Kau. O'Kelly had laughed, and taken her. And they would never have known that the hostile, angry Karakaras were following them through the bush, trying their best to keep up with the white man's puffing devil that worked the dinghy, had not that unseen snag caught the boat, heavily weighted aft, and in a moment sent her to the bottom. There was an islet just beyond the snag; and onto this, O'Kelly had leaped, dragging Alex with him. And then—the Karakaras had come.

They were notorious, in that pre-war day, even in the dangerous West that lay beyond the Bamu River, where a Government officer carried his life, if not in his hand, at least in the six chambers of his

revolver. They had accounted for hundreds of peaceful natives from other tribes, and for two or three white men, whose fate, at the hands of their torturers, was a thing you couldn't safely think of when you woke up at the dead hour of a roaring rainy night, under the sago roof of a Western station. O'Kelly, Paladin of the West, had broken more than one wild tribe; but the Karakaras still eluded him. They had almost won the last trick in the game, that day in the delta of the Kau. With any other man, they would have won it, before the friendly tribe of the Orori came on the scene.

Alex, bundled like a sheep into one of the Orori canoes, blind to the beauty of the spot she had risked her life to see (but the flaming D'Alberti creepers, the nipa palms, springing like giant ostrich-plumes from the very breast of the green water, didn't want her, didn't care, as they didn't want, or care for, any human creature)—Alex, as the canoe turned round, and with new shouting, rattling, drumming, made for the Government station, was conscious of only one feeling: admiration for O'Kelly that burned her heart to flaming tinder. She did not even pity him, sitting there in the bow of the canoe, wounded, between his lips a cigarette, that one of the natives, at his command, had lighted and popped in. You could not dare to pity such a man.

Even when they reached the station again, and she was handed over to Molly Raine, the trader's wife who was acting chaperon in the bachelor establishment of Magistrate O'Kelly; when, from her room, she heard him calling to the trader to come along and sharpen his penknife, and get these damned arrows cut out before the flesh swelled—even then, she was not sorry for him. He might be crippled for life by the arrows of the Karakaras, those formidable clothyard shafts, no less dangerous than the weapons that had won all England's battles, centuries ago; but if he were, he would take it with a laugh.

ALEX, maybe, was selfish; beautiful, spoiled young women of the better classes were selfish, more or less, in the days before the fatal 1914. No one expected them to be anything else. Not even Alex's fiancé, the private secretary of the Governor General in whose party she had traveled to Papua, would have quarreled with the right of this lovely twenty-year-old golden blonde to bend the world—her world—to her caprices;



to consider every happening, in the light of its relation to herself.

When she had left the party in Port Moresby, and gone down the wild Western coast in a trading vessel, with a trader and his wife for all company, Arthur Vicars (the Hon. Arthur), unable to detach himself from his chief, had lamented Alex's willfulness, hoped she'd come to no harm, but nevertheless thought it was very spirited, and, in fine, quite "pretty Fanny's way." Sowing her wild oats, one might call it; a crop of an entirely harmless kind, but one that it was as well to get rid of and done with. That wild, adventurous strain in Alex, inherited from an exploring, disreputable grandfather, wouldn't be much good to a future pro-consul like Vicars. Of course she had influence: A Very Great Lady for godmother, a prime minister for cousin, a score of titled relatives even better than his own. She would be a tremendous help to him; she would train on into one of the greatest of great ladies herself, when the time came. He could afford to let her have her hour of play. . . .

So the Honorable Arthur, following his Chief about in the rough new colony; visiting, with smiling boredom, plantations, missions, mines. He was quite sure of himself, of Alex; he calmly awaited her return.

Alex, in the Residency, with Mollie Raine stringing beans beside her on the veranda, and Raine and the patrol officer busy in O'Kelly's room dressing his martyred hands and feet, was thinking about Peter, and about no one else.

Mollie was talking. She was a youngish Yorkshire woman, sturdy, blue-eyed, and stolid, very practical, and as plucky as one of the terriers of her native land. She was telling Alex about Peter O'Kelly, and what he had done to the district. How he had broken in those same O-ri people who had saved him and Alex yesterday; how, months ago, they had come to the station, hundreds strong, in war-canoes, when O'Kelly was alone, with no more than a dozen police. How he had gone down to the river-bank and addressed them, full within arrow-shot; asked them if they were going to start the fighting, or was he? Adjured them to hurry up about it, because he wanted his breakfast!

They had backed out and fled. The same night, when they were holding council in their village, twenty miles distant, telling one another that they must go farther away with dawn, go to the up-river country, because that white man was a devil and if they didn't look out, he'd be on top of them in a day or two—then, in the smoky torchlight, through the sound of the rising river outside (for it was heavy rain), they had heard O'Kelly's tremendous voice inside the council-house: "*He is here!*"

Oh, that was the time! With his dozen police, he had arrested fifty fighting-men—slapped them and kicked them and thrown them out of the house, to be handcuffed and taken away. He had killed nobody; miraculously, he had not been killed himself. He had punished the tribe; many of them were working, chained in the jail enclosure beyond; more were toiling in the forests to bring the thousand bundles of sago and of building-material laid on them as a war indemnity. He had done it all through the force of his own personality; the patrol officer was nobody, only did as he was told. O'Kelly was marvelous.

ALEX, turning round and round on her third finger the diamond hoop that marked her the property of Arthur Vicars, said nothing at all. Mollie threw a shrewd glance at the visitor from those small blue eyes of hers. She wondered. . . . Mollie, perhaps, good woman, good wife to the trader Raine, had yet a soft corner in her heart for O'Kelly.

Could you wonder? George Raine was dull, silent, kindly, as wholesome—and about as interesting—as a plate of cold porridge. Peter O'Kelly was hot curry, burning wine.

Alex, sitting silent, with the diamonds on her ring giving back the flashing river light as she turned and twisted, turned and twisted them—Alex was thinking, as she had never thought about Arthur: "What a lover that man would make!"

Lover? He was the kind of man you could die for—only to be his love for a night, a day. And if you were going to talk about dying, he had very nearly died for her, with no pay at all.

She sat there listening to, but scarce hearing, the river as it trampled in flood, down to the sea which is the goal of every river. Almost, she could feel it carrying her away. Almost.

O'KELLY came in after a while, leaning on a stick; making no remark—rather, indeed, repelling question—about his injuries. He joined the women on the veranda; and Alex, unable to sit still beneath the fire of those live black eyes, that said so much more than the tongue of their owner dared, found her mandolin, and began softly thrumming plantation songs.

In those days, before the wireless and before the war, mandolins were played; plantation songs, then new, used to delight the heart of the early Georgian. Alex, in her sweet thin voice, sang "Massa's in de Cold Ground," "Old Black Joe," "Old Kentucky Home" and on the choruses, everyone joined in—Mollie in a pleasant little pipe, the patrol officer and Raine in decent baritones, and O'Kelly in a booming, vibrating bass that went right through Alex's armor of blouse, camisole, corset and combination, to (she thought) the very marrow of her spine.

But she played on. Every evening, from that time, when the rains were beginning, punctually, to thunder down from a black sky, and all the edges of the sago thatch were running with crystal rods bright in the lamplight, Alex used to sing, and the two men and one woman used to join in. They were not easily tired or bored; in the "out back," where people listen patiently to the same story told a hundred times, read the same book till every letter is known, no one finds weariness in the repetition of songs. Your song, my song, his or her song—they are property, valued and well known. Of property you do not tire.

This dream of green rivers, green trees, wet green-seeming rains, of the odors of the forest, cool, calling, drunken-sweet—of three men and of one woman, whose presence had begun to prick Lord

Arthur's fiancée as a spur pricks an undecided horse—of the evenings when one sat and tinkled German-silvery music on the mandolin, and everyone sang in the choruses, with the river monotoning heavily below—all of it seemed as if it had lasted forever, was going on for ever more. Alex had lost sense of time. She had even forgotten when the boat was due to call. She was beginning to read her life in terms of the river country, the Wild West of Papua; to remember how her grandfather had lived in the kloofs and bergs of an unknown Africa, disapproved and happy. Every night, when the singing was done, Peter O'Kelly found means—lame, crippled as he was—to get her to himself, away from the rest of the little party; to talk to her as surely never a man had talked before. He could have wiled the Paradise birds off the trees, with his tongue. He wiled her—almost—at last.

There came an evening when Mollie Raine, coming unexpectedly down the veranda, backed away, blurting apologies, from the strange sight of a lame and hand-crippled man holding a girl in his arms, and passionately kissing her white neck above the line of her Early Georgian high frock.

Mollie Raine ran to her room, and pressed both hands, hard, against the closed lids of tearless eyes.

"I'd no right," she said to herself. "She'd ought to. They were made for each other—her with the golden hair, like a—like a beehive in the sun—and he black Irish; and both of them with the heart of lions, and liking the like of these places that George and me would be glad to get shut of, tomorrow morning. George says he'll be as sound as a new pin. She's not his mate—in some ways; but they ought to marry."

Mollie never doubted that Alex was earnest. Alex herself thought that she was. Only in the deep well of Peter O'Kelly's heart, which no man, no woman even, ever had sounded, there may have been doubts.

**I**N a pathway of croton shrubs, they met again, the day before the boat was due to call. The yellow and vermilion lights of the croton leaves, although it was high noon, made stormy sunset in the place where they sat; one would have thought the delta was working up her wicked weather, that thunder shortly would begin to bellow on the river reaches, leaping like giant: skip-

ping-stones from wide lagoon to lagoon. Perhaps there was thunder in the air, of another kind.

It was Alex who did the talking. She told O'Kelly, laughing a little, and rather excitedly, all about her grandfather, and about the other members of her family who had been known as explorers of wild countries. She discoursed, with fluent words, upon the thing that people were just beginning to know as the "call of the wild." She said she could have adored Jack London. She said there was something in her that nobody knew anything about, except Peter.

**G**RAVE, unsmiling, O'Kelly listened, bandaged hands set on his knees, his lamed foot lifted on a log. His eyes never moved from her face; that little egg-shaped face with the pointed chin, and gay, gris-amber eyes beneath the polished hair. It seemed as if he were writing it on his heart with a pen of fire, never to forget.

And Alex went on: She became cultured; she talked of atavism, of subliminal consciousness. She said she could hear her cave ancestors calling. She said she had always known without knowing, actually, that these wild places were part of her very self. She quoted Maeterlinck and "The Buried Temple." And she paused, for Peter to speak.

He said: "Will you light a cigarette, and put it in my mouth, please?"

She did. He smoked a little in silence, and then said, round the corner of the cigarette: "There's only one thing that matters: If you love me enough."

"But my dear man," she said shrilly, "I've been telling you!"

He said: "Nobody can have their cake and eat it."

"But I—but this place is—"

He said: "It's hell, sometimes. I like hell, myself. A man," he said, "*lives*, here. You'd—die. Most of you, being what you are."

There was silence. Only the river talked, spoiling the stillness, interrupting. It did not care. Not a y of this fierce, breath-taking country cared.

Suddenly Peter leaned to her, and said: "There are things worth dying for."

She knew that he spoke truth. Things—worth dying for, to all that you had known, wished for, planned to have. To everything else in the world. If you didn't have those things—then what?

What life would be like, without them, she would never know, if she stayed.

And if she went away, she would never know what life would have been like, without all the other things that people, everywhere, wanted and admired. As Peter had said, you could not eat your cake and keep it too.

She had to decide; and she did not know how she was going to do it. That was what she told herself. But as it happened, circumstances were to do the deciding. If Peter O'Kelly had had another day—

He did not have it.

In the wild country of Papua lives are made, death suffered or escaped, and fates decided, by boats: their coming, their going, their staying away. Alex's fate was to be decided by the steaming rate of the *Merrie England*. With boilers newly cleaned, the Government yacht made quicker time than anyone had expected, and came in a day ahead. And with her, unexpectedly, using the extra time, came the travelers.

A launch, running up to the station, whistled shrilly, just as O'Kelly spoke.

The cigarette fell from O'Kelly's mouth, dropped to the damp ground, and went out. "I'll light you another," offered Alex, now on her feet, and staring toward the river.

"Don't," he said. "I reckon I've had all that's coming to me." She did not seem to hear. She was still staring down-river.

"Why," she cried suddenly, "Arthur is there! They said they weren't coming. And look—they're running up the flag! It must be the G. G. himself!"

"Damn him," said Peter softly, limping toward the house. He was the official now; there was work, and business, toward.

Something had fallen to the ground, gone out, as Peter's smoke had gone.

**I**N all his glory the Governor-General came, and went, a day later. With him went his private secretary, that very promising and well-connected youth, and Her Excellency, who thought the place frightful, wouldn't wait more than twenty-four hours—and Her English Excellency's English cousin, the fiancée of the going-to-be-some-day Excellent Arthur Vicars.

And that night, when the patrol officer, who had had a banjo sent down from Port Moresby, was picking out tunes on it, trying to find an accompaniment for something he was singing, the resident magistrate limped across the veranda,

and with his swathed and crippled hand, struck the banjo to the ground.

"*They hunt no more*"—bleated the patrol officer. "Here, I say—hold on! That cost money." He picked it up, began again: "*They sing no more*—"

O'Kelly, staggering on one sound foot, raised his crutch and smashed the banjo to splinters.

**T**HE Honorable Mrs. Arthur Vicars was a widow.

A widow without children (because she hadn't wanted to be bothered, and Arthur hadn't cared), she was foot-loose; and being fond of travel and well-connected, she was a welcome visitor in the Government Houses of the colonial world.

Arthur had never gone very high, after all. It hurt her sometimes to see the splendors that might have been his, hear the guns that should have been fired for him, when men-of-war visited ports, and governors went on board. Arthur had been a colonial secretary in the West Indies at the last—good, but not quite what a woman like her demanded of life. She had had her cake; but there weren't enough plums in it, and some of it was dry eating.

And she had been, still was, so lovely! And she was romantic still, in spite of the want of romance in her own personal life. To lose your sense of romance and wonder was to die.

In the beautiful Government House of Fiji, looking down upon a peaceful purple sea, with motors humming by on leveled roads, she found herself thinking of another place, another Government Residency where she had been a visitor ever so long ago. No handsome houses there; only buildings of thatch and sago bark. No road but the road of the angry river, with war-canoes drumming and thundering along. And in the evenings, instead of the radio pouring forth classical music to assembled guests in evening dress and diamonds, herself with a silly mandolin in her hands, thrumming, through the noise of night-long Delta rains, a few easy chords for accompaniment to the old plantation songs that nobody, now, ever thought of singing. Goodness, the very idea!

Yet the very idea haunted her. It might have been because a native, in the back yard of the Government House, had been humming old tunes through his nose (natives know nothing of fashion); and one of them, if it wasn't a plantation song, was a little bit like.





With his dozen police, he had arrested fifty fighting-men—slapped them and kicked them and thrown them out of the house, to be handcuffed and taken away. He had killed nobody; miraculously, he had not been killed himself.

Couldn't she hear it! Couldn't she remember how they all joined in, in sad-merry choruses that sounded like the wind blowing through a keyhole: "*Weep no more, my lady*—"

And herself, in the thin soprano that nobody'd think of using nowadays when everything had to be professionalized and perfect:

"*They hunt no more for the 'possum and the 'coon*—" (But that was absurd; there were no 'coons.)

"*They sing no more by the glimmer of the moon*—"

Yes, "too right," as Australians used to say—too right. They sang no more. They, and all that they had meant.

With her beautifully waved and shingled head on her hand (Alex's hair was just as yellow as of old—well, yellower perhaps; you can't have everything), she sat at the long French window of her room, thinking. As a rule she avoided the habit of thought; it was bad for the complexion, and it made little lines come from mouth to nose—those cruel little lines that were so expensive to massage away. But this evening she couldn't help it. Confound that boy in the back yard, and his silly singing!

She was, almost, late for dinner; and that, as she well knew, would have been lese-majesty. She had dressed hurriedly with her head in a whirl, determined not to allow this silly thinking, unable, quite, to prevent it. And there, at the very dinner-table, she was assailed again by unwelcome thought: Somebody—a guest who had arrived by that day's steamer—was talking of Western Papua. She did not want to listen. There was nobody there—

Did he say "Peter O'Kelly?" But impossible! But absurd!

Alex Vicars looked across the table. The man was opposite to her; she caught his eye (of course) without difficulty. "Are you speaking of some one I know?" she asked.

The buzz of conversation almost drowned his reply: but she thought she heard the word, "Karakaua."

**I**T was only a short while after dinner that the stranger came over to where Alex was seated. She was impersonally pleasant to him for a little while, and then slipped in her inquiry.

Yes, he'd been to Papua. Yes, down the Western coast. Karakaua was a Government station. There were two

chaps there, good chaps both; one of them was called Jones, and the other Peter O'Kelly.

"O'Kelly—let me see," she said, looking down at her pretty shoes. "A girl I knew married some one of that name." It was her usual gambit; one did not always want to ask these things outright.

"Wasn't this chap," the man said. "He isn't married."

**A**LEX could see the paste diamonds on her shoes melting, glittering through a rainbow haze. . . . But absurd, to be so moved! She who had designedly put O'Kelly and Karakaua out of her mind all these years, who'd never heard—

Well, there was nothing to hear, it seemed. . . . He had never married.

She touched her eyes with her handkerchief. No one could suppose that she was crying. "These dreadful mosquitoes!" she said lightly, and gathered herself together to ask another question. But Lady Percivale had come to her chair; was bringing a new man who, it seemed, was "dying to know" her. And the visitor rose, and moved away. Next morning, before Alex could find him again, he was gone by the early-leaving steamer.

She thought a good deal, reckless of nose-to-mouth lines, all that day, and once or twice renewed her delicate make-up, damaged by more than tropic moisture. In the afternoon she went to the steamship office.

Alex was by way of being scientific, in a ladylike, amateurish fashion. She had heard of Einstein, and was (almost) convinced that she understood his theories. Relativity—that meant, didn't it, that time really did not exist; that past and future, if you looked at it the right way, were all one? Time was just a dimension of space.

When she came to Karakaua, she would have been more than ever convinced, had she been in the mood to think of such matters, that she understood everything about relativity. Because, as soon as the launch swept in from free ocean, and began panting slowly against the current, up the river, time ceased to be. . . .

It was before her wedding, and before the war. She had come down from Port Moresby, that tiny frontier town, leaving the Governor General of Australia's party, and her fiancé, young Arthur Vicars, to see the wild West of Papua, ere she settled down with Arthur to live the re-

strained and sophisticated life of the British colonial civil service.

She had ventured into the fastnesses of the wild headhunters and cannibals of the river country, had been all but murdered, and worse than murdered; she had been saved, at the risk of his own life, by O'Kelly, bravest of men; she had seen him wounded, shot through with arrows like the young St. Sebastian in pictures, all for her. She loved him. She had not been afraid to acknowledge her love, to give up everything else, to throw away the cake that she couldn't keep, and eat. It was nineteen-hundred-and-no-matter-how-little, and she was in love, and lovely; and Peter O'Kelly was going to marry her.

Nothing was changed. The sago palms that shot up scaly trunks, bursting in a ruffle of green leaves, beside the river, weren't the same palms (they grow and die soon), but they looked the same. The nipas, new generations, stood up like giant ostrich-plumes in deep water, like the nipas of long ago. From a good way off one heard dull drumming, paddles rattling; canoes were passing by. The greenness of it, like a world seen through the lens of a hollow emerald, the wetness and the perfume and the feeling of being very free and a very long way off, were just the same as they had been. And round the corner came the canoe with—

No, not Peter O'Kelly! How could he be so unchanged? Alex had kept her beauty, by dint of what hardships, expenses, sufferings, she alone knew. But how could he, who should (she knew now) have been the one man of her life, have kept his youth, his looks, absolutely untouched all these years in this hard country, where so many died? Yet he had done it. Standing in the bow of the canoe, swinging a paddle with the best of his uniformed police, he seemed exactly as she had left him, on that afternoon that was—she felt it now; to the winds with her half-baked science!—so very, very, very long ago.

SOME one was in the canoe behind him, an old white woman in an ugly frock. Alex hardly glanced at her. Ugly old women, in her creed, simply didn't exist. Besides, she could not take her eyes off this *Rip Van Winkle* of a Peter O'Kelly; her mind was jarred, thrown out of gear. Could such things be?

The old white woman spoke.

"We heard you were coming; we came down to meet you on the way. We're de-

lighted to meet you. You'll remember me—we had the trading station. This is—Peter, this is Mrs. Vicars."

Alex was no fool. Her keen mind, in the moment when Peter O'Kelly met her with the pleased, puzzled glance of a stranger, had jumped to the right conclusion. But she was so staggered by it that she could not, for a moment, speak. Then she gathered herself together, and with a practiced smile, said something—she didn't know what. But it was no doubt the right thing; she could have said the right thing in her sleep—to Peter O'Kelly's son.

Later, on the veranda of the Residency that wasn't the same, but looked just like its predecessor, only a little larger, young O'Kelly made an excuse to go back to his duties; he was only a patrol officer, he said, and the R. M. would row him if he didn't stick to it. The R. M. was away, but Mother would look after Mrs. Vicars—be delighted!

Mother?

THE old woman who had been young blue-eyed Molly Raine, sat knitting peaceably on the veranda above the river. The black boys had carried Alex's luggage to her room; she had stayed there a little, regaining her composure—touched up her face, and returned.

"And so you lost your husband, and married him?" she said brightly, unaware that, in that one pronoun, she had given her secret away.

Mollie O'Kelly, clicking bright needles, said: "Yes." She had never been talkative; Alex remembered that.

"And he? Curious, isn't it? I supposed he'd been here all the time. Is he—"

Molly laid down her knitting. "Did you think," she asked, "that a man like him, who'd never have made old bones anyhow, because of the daring in him—did you think he'd sit here through the war? They all said he was bound to have the V. C., or stop a bullet, in six months. Well, he did both—in three months."

Alex was thinking: "If I'd married him, I wouldn't have had to spend my life here, after all. I dare say I'd have married Arthur too. I dare say I'd have had everything—eaten my cake and kept it." She was sorry for herself. She was spiteful.

To Mollie, who had married him (but Alex knew he would never have cared much for her, for anyone indeed, but

## THEY HUNT NO MORE

herself), she said, wanting to hurt: "So you took what I left."

Mollie said, simply: "I had his son." And that seemed to answer everything.

Through Alex's mind, a verse of Henley's came toppling, destroying, for the moment, rational thought:

*For many a woman has lived for less,  
And many a man has died. . . .  
And who can tell what lives may live  
In the life that we bade to be?*

She pulled herself together. There was young Peter, coming back from the office.

"I can knock off now," he said. "Mother, what about taking our visitor a run in the launch? You've no idea how beautiful it is, about here, Mrs. Vicars. I'm sure you'd love to see it: I dare say you've never seen anything at all like our river country."

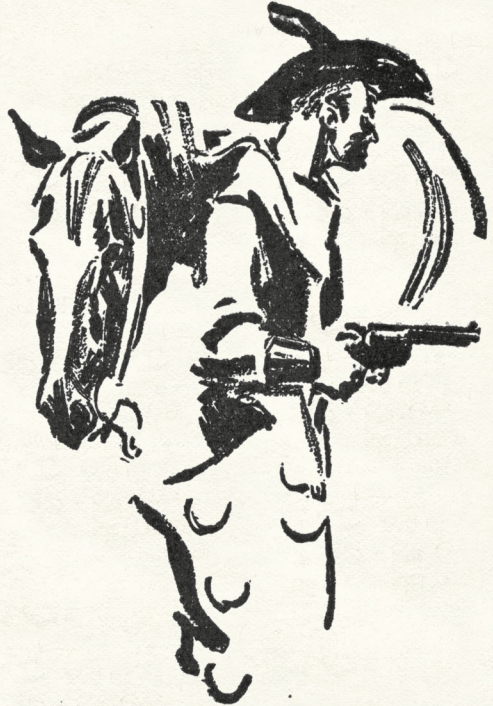
He threw a glance of keen admiration toward the charming stranger. It would be nice to have her out in the boat, all by themselves. One got a little tired of old people's company, no matter how you loved them. The world was made for the young, or the nearly young, like Mrs. Vicars. Lovely Mrs. Vicars, with her gold hair and gris-amber eyes. Lovely—

A spark seemed to fly between the black eyes and the amber-gray. Alex could almost see herself in those eyes of Peter's, know herself still beautiful, still young. What age was he? Near the age his father must have been, when he—almost—died for her. And like his father, very like.

Blue eyes were watching them. Mollie Raine's knitting fell unheeded to the floor, as she leaned over and spoke to her son. "Do take Mrs. Vicars out," she said. "She will enjoy it, I'm sure. She used to like it all so much when she was here before—before you were born."

ALEXANDRA VICARS is still a welcome visitor in the colonial Government Houses. She has not married again, but they say that the ancient General who rules the Fullanbye Islands is not without his hopes.

**F**ROM Beatrice Grimshaw's home in far Papua has come to us another fascinating story of the eerie South Sea islands she loves so well and describes so effectively. Be sure to read "Eyes of Pearl"—in the next, the March, issue.



# Wild

*A swift-paced story of the range country, by a cowboy writer who knows.*

**W**ILD JACK GIBSON'S huge Chihuahua spurs seemed to clang like brazen bells as he stalked uncomfortably up the aisle. He wished heartily that he had stopped to leave them at the livery-stable with his saddle and chaps—but he had not known that the inquest was to be held in the courtroom.

"Order!"

Wild Jack knew the call was meant for him, and he dropped into the only empty seat. What was wrong? He was conscious of hostile glances from all sides. Then came the deep, drawling voice of old Jeff Jones—tall, rawboned old Jeff Jones of the eagle eye:

"Doc, the jury finds that Deputy Pete Larkin was shot in the back while returnin' from the T-Cross, where he'd been investigatin' their fightin' with the J-B outfit."

There was a pause; then Jeff Jones continued:

"An' furthermore, the jury finds that everyone's plumb sick o' them two out-



"Stop!" Jack found himself snarling. "If you think I'm goin' back to that jail, yo're wrong! Stick 'em up!"

# Jack

By JAY LUCAS

Illustrated by W. O. Kling

fits cuttin' up, an' think Wild Jack Gibson, the range-boss o' the T-Cross, is most to blame."

For a moment Wild Jack could have sunk through the floor. Then the blood rushed to his head; he found himself on his feet and striding angrily up the aisle.

"Say, you sunburned old fossil!" he found himself roaring. "You're common enough to know that Hank Morgan, that damned nester that owns the J-B, is tryin' to steal my outfit blind!"

"Order!"

"Order be damned! This courtroom is full o' other damned nesters, an' not one o' them worth the powder to blow him—"

"Say!" he heard Sheriff Carson's voice in his ear. "You get out o' here now—you've said enough, Wild Jack!"

The Sheriff ducked just in time to miss a wild swing that would have knocked him unconscious. Then Wild Jack's arms were seized from behind, and he was hustled unceremoniously down the aisle, and through the door.

THERE came the clang of iron, and Jack found himself in a little concrete room with high, small windows crossed by iron bars. Two rough wooden bunks were built against the wall, and on each lay a small pile of cheap cotton blankets. On one of the bunks was stretched a filthy Mexican, dead drunk, and on the other, a still filthier and even more intoxicated white tramp.

A feeling of revulsion swept over Jack, a feeling of longing for the clean sweep of the open range, the clean breath of the wind and rain in one's face, instead of the stench that here met his nostrils—a longing for the crisp tang of wet leather and wet horses. Then he looked down at the little thin-faced, gray-haired man before him.

Sheriff Carson spoke at last, quietly and gently:

"How do you like it here, Jack?"

"Not worth a damn, Sheriff!"

"Yore father was the quietest man I ever saw—an' the best partner I ever had. Why don't you try to be more like him?"

Jack was silent, and the other added:

"Son, I wish you'd change yore ways! I'll do my duty, even if it comes to hangin' you with my own hands—but I'd feel better hangin' myself instead." There came a moment of brooding silence, and then two more quiet words from the Sheriff: "Get out!"

Jack felt himself pushed through the door, and as he hurried away in immense relief he heard Sheriff Carson behind him locking the jail door.

"Good Lord!" he gasped, jerking his silk kerchief from his neck to mop his face. It had been a dramatic warning—quietly dramatic, as was everything the little Sheriff did.

"Did he jest let you go?"

Jack turned, and found beside him "Fishpole" Watkins, his grizzled, hook-nosed lieutenant on the range. Like a tall, lean fishpole indeed did he look—erect, with a great Adam's apple protruding from a skinny, wrinkled neck.

"Oh, hello, Fishpole!" Jack grunted nervously. "Yeah—jest let me go, after dang' nigh scarin' me to death. I'm shore goin' to watch my step after this!"

Fishpole's wrinkled, seamed face broke into a sardonic grin.

"Aint goin' to lose yore temper no mo' this year!" he murmured, in the peculiar squeaky voice he reserved for irony.

"No, I aint!" grunted Wild Jack. "I'm changin' quick, an' that's all is to it."

"An' you'll change quicker first time you don't like how somebody's hat sets on."

"Yo're wrong, Fishpole! Let's go get our horses an' get out o' town."

Together they walked to the livery stable and saddled their horses, which were in two stalls inside. They led their mounts to the street, and threw the reins over a hitching-rack. Then they returned and pulled on their chaps.

"Now where," grunted Jack, "is Tim gone to? My gun's locked in the office here, an' I have to have it before I go."

"Mine too," murmured Fishpole. "Maybe Tim's out in the back corral—I think I heard some one talkin' there."

"Yeah! There they are!"

A burst of laughter had come from the back. Jack pushed the sliding door aside just enough to squeeze through, and with Fishpole behind him walked toward the group of men lounging beside the water-trough. It was a group of grinning nesters, with a few grim-faced and silent cowboys keeping well to themselves at one side, as though they feared contamination. Some one was sitting on the trough, telling a story which amused his listeners so much that they did not hear the approach of the two T-Cross men. Suddenly Jack stopped stock-still, and his face went a trifle gray.

"—So," came the voice of Hank Morgan, "the Sheriff just grabs Wild Jack by the sleeve, an' he says, says he: 'Say, you crazy son of a—'"

"*That's a lie!*"

The crowd fell back, and left the white-faced Jack confronting Morgan, who had sprung to his feet.

"What—what—" spluttered the big nester.

"What's *what* is that yo're a liar by the clock, Hank—the Sheriff never said no such thing."

"*Augh-h!*"

WITH a grunting roar, Morgan sprang forward, his hamlike fist shooting straight to Jack's nose—he wished to punish him well before knocking him unconscious, and a broken nose would do very well to begin with. But something went wrong somewhere, something that the bearlike Hank could not understand. His great fist shot through very thin air, and he recovered his balance after his wild swing just in time to avoid falling on his face in the dirt.

"*Cowboy!*"

It was a single shrill yelp from one of

the cowboys looking on, who had drawn near excitedly. Morgan whirled, and started to rush again. But again something happened—something he could not quite understand. There was a sudden crash against the side of his jaw, and he found himself squirming in the dust.

"*Hoo-raw for the boss!*"

Fishpole's prodigious length was bent forward queerly, as he stood with his hands on his knees, his eyes almost bulging from his head in his pleased excitement. Then his tone abruptly changed: "*Look out, boss! Look out!*" he yelled shrilly.

JACK dodged aside just in time to escape the slashing knife that had suddenly appeared as the nester lurched to his feet. Jack tripped, and the other was upon him as he fell. The watching cowboys were too taken by surprise to interfere in time. Somehow Jack squirmed to one side and as he regained his balance, Morgan in turn lost his from the fury of his own murderous rush. But in Jack's hand now was the object that had tripped him—a broken pick-handle. It cracked like a shot against the back of the nester's hand, and the knife flew across the corral.

"*Hoh-h-h-h!*"

It was a queer, quick sigh from the onlookers as the heavy pick-handle whistled through the air above the nester's bare head—for he had lost his hat long ago. Jack seemed crazed with anger; a single blow, and the other's brains would spatter the walls of the corral.

"*Jack!*"

The agonized yell of Fishpole came to Jack's ears and even in his rage he understood its meaning. For a fraction of an instant the pick-handle poised above Morgan's head; then it flew with a jerk across the corral, after the knife.

"*I'll—I'll kill you by hand!*"

Again Morgan was battered helplessly back against the corral, scarcely able to attempt to guard himself. Then Jack closed with him, perhaps because he was too furious to strike. The cowboy's hands twisted in the nester's collar even as the backs of the latter's legs bumped into something low but solid, and both went over, Jack on top.

"*Whee-ee-ee!*"

It was a concerted yell of delight from the cowboys, led by Fishpole, for Morgan had fallen on his back, with a tremendous splash, into the horse-trough. Jack's fingers still clutched his collar,

holding his head under the muddy alkali water. The impending tragedy of a moment before was turned into comedy, as the nester thrashed the dirty water wildly while Jack bumped the back of his head against the bottom of the trough.

Jack was like many high-tempered people—his temper fled as quickly as it came. Suddenly he saw the humor of the situation. He paused a moment; then he was standing back, his wet hands on his hips and his sides shaking with sudden laughter. Indeed, few could have resisted laughing at the disheveled, wet figure sitting dazed and open-mouthed in the horse-trough, with wet hair streaked across his face, and his hands idly paddling the water in which he sat as he tried to force his muddled head to become clear.

"Let's go, Jack."

Following his lanky lieutenant, Jack slipped back through the sliding door into the stable. They paused a moment at the office to buckle on the six-shooters the grinning Tim handed them, and then walked out to swing into their saddles.

"What'll the Sheriff say when he hears o' that?" chuckled Fishpole.

"Good Lord! I forgot!" The grin suddenly left Jack Gibson's face, and he stared aghast at his companion, as memory of the reeking jail came to him.

"Well," grinned Fishpole, "duckin' a nester in a horse-trough aint a hangin' matter, but I reckon we'd better get out o' town for a few days till everyone cools off. Let's drift back to the ranch."

Jack hesitated.

"You go on back an' look after those broom-tails in the corral. I'm tradin' this horse for that blue one o' the Box Bar's, an' I'll run over an' get him now."

"You mean that running blue—Blue Streak?" asked Fishpole incredulously.

"Yeah; he bucks too much for old man Sims. At that I'm payin' boot, an' he's worth it—while all you can say for this nag is that he's good-natured an' aint lame."

"Jack!" The call came from near by.

**B**OTH turned in their saddles as Tim, the owner of the livery-stable, came slowly toward them.

"Jack," he began gravely, "you don't mind, do you, if I give you a little advice? I'm old enough to be yore father, an' I've seen a lot o' the world."

"Heck, no! Shoot!" grinned Jack.

"It's jest this: Look out for Hank Morgan from now on. He's *bad*."

"Why, he— Oh, a! right—sure!"

Fishpole swung his horse down a side street, to take the short-cut to the T-Cross, and Jack continued straight ahead, a slight frown coming to his face. What if there were something to what Tim and Fishpole had said? What if Hank Morgan might prove dangerous?

"Shucks!" grunted Jack to himself. "What could he do?"

True, Hank had the name of being streak-lightning with a gun—but streak-lightning for a nester and streak-lightning for a cowboy were two different things, and it was among the nesters that Morgan had his great name. As to Jack himself— There! A bobcat had sprung suddenly from a little cluster of manzanita beside the trail. Jack's gun flashed up and roared on the instant, and a .38-40 bullet almost severed the cat's head from his body as he struck the ground after his first leap.

"Not so bad for a kid!" Jack grinned complacently, as he reloaded the empty chamber and thrust the gun back into its holster. What nester could equal that?

**T**HE shadows were long that afternoon as he skirted the town and struck the little-traveled trail that led to the T-Cross. It was more a wish to save time than anything else that had sent him around the main streets. Surely the Sheriff would not do anything to him for merely coming into the town. Surely no one could be angry with him, he thought. For with such a horse between his knees as he had now, everything must be all right! An optimist always was Wild Jack Gibson. . . .

"Whup!"

He jerked the horse to its haunches. In swinging around a bend in the trail, he had almost ridden into two men who were bent over the ground examining it. The Sheriff and Hank Morgan straightened up.

"Hello, Jack." The Sheriff spoke quietly.

"Uh—howdy!"

An uncomfortable feeling swept over Jack as a sudden memory of the reeking jail came back to him. He glanced at the nester just in time to catch the murderous gleam that had snapped into his eyes, and almost as suddenly become veiled.

"Hello, Jack. How are you?" came the slow drawl of Morgan.

Jack sat his horse looking down on him, but did not answer. The bruises

were still fresh on the face the nester turned to Carson.

"He don't seem to be very civil, Sheriff!" he drawled.

"Morgan," grunted the Sheriff, "he don't have to talk to you if he don't want to! I know Wild Jack's got a trick o' gettin' in trouble, but it takes two to make a quarrel, generally speakin'. I'm sick o' ranch quarrels, an' that's what."

**A** GRIN was coming to Jack's face, but a scowl from Carson wiped it off quickly. The Sheriff spoke again, this time more gently:

"Jack, I was out here lookin' over where pore Pete was shot, an' Hank happened to come by on his way home, jest like you did."

"Oh!" grunted Jack.

"Pete must have been ridin' jest at the side o' the trail, for he was clean off it when we found him. His head had hit that big rock there. His spine was cut where he was shot in the back, so he must have fell the minute the bullet hit him."

"Shot in the back!" grunted Jack. "That was one o' the dirtiest killin's I ever heard of, Sheriff! An' pore Pete, too—one o' the best-natured cusses in the country!"

"Dirty is right, Jack!" grunted the Sheriff. "An' it'll go hard with whoever did it if we catch him."

"Couldn't you find any trail away from here?"

"No; it had rained before we found him. You remember the big rain Thursday? We were jest tryin' to figure out where the shot came from. Let's see—he must have been about—"

The Sheriff swung onto his horse, rode away a short distance, and returned. Then he reined the horse to a stop.

"Yes," he continued, "he must have been about here, to fall where he did. Let's see, now—Jedgin' by how he was shot, the bullet must have come from about— Say! What's that?" he broke off, pointing.

Jack peered at the low ridge a short distance off.

"I don't see anything."

"No—there! That leaf—the hole in it, I mean."

"Worm-hole, I reckon."

The Sheriff had ridden a few steps and pulled down a branch over his head. He examined a leaf carefully, without removing it from the twig, and then allowed it to fly back to its place.

"I thought so!" he grunted. "Bullet-hole! We can sight through it an' find out where the shot came from."

He again brought his horse to a standstill about where he judged the deputy had been when the bullet struck him, and peered toward the hole in the leaf, leaning over in his saddle.

"Only one place it could have come from," grunted Morgan, who had also mounted, "an' that is about that pile o' rocks on the ridge."

The Sheriff nodded, and the three men rode quickly, expectantly, toward the little heap of loose stones on the crest of the ridge. They dismounted a short distance off, and went forward afoot, examining every inch of the ground carefully.

"What's that?" grunted the nester, pointing.

"That's it!" exclaimed the Sheriff.

He stooped and dug the half-buried empty cartridge from the earth. For a moment he looked at it curiously; then he rubbed the earth from it against his chaps.

"Don't know that this'll help us much," he grunted. "It's jest like any other cartridge."

Jack took it from his hand, and he too examined it carefully. He rubbed the base against his sleeve, and read the lettering aloud:

"M. C. Co.—.38-40."

"Well, I might as well keep it, though I don't see that it will help." The Sheriff thrust it carelessly in his pocket.

**M**ORGAN was looking absently across the hills. Absently he spoke:

"We sure needed that rain Thursday evenin'—the range was gettin' pretty dry. Greenin' up quite a bit since, aint it?"

"Yeah," grunted Jack, also absently. He was surveying the ground intently, and paying but slight attention to what he was saying.

The nester bit a chew from his plug of tobacco, before he spoke again, almost as though speaking to himself:

"I sure got a wettin' in that rain—I was wranglin' horses behind the house. Was you out in it, Jack?"

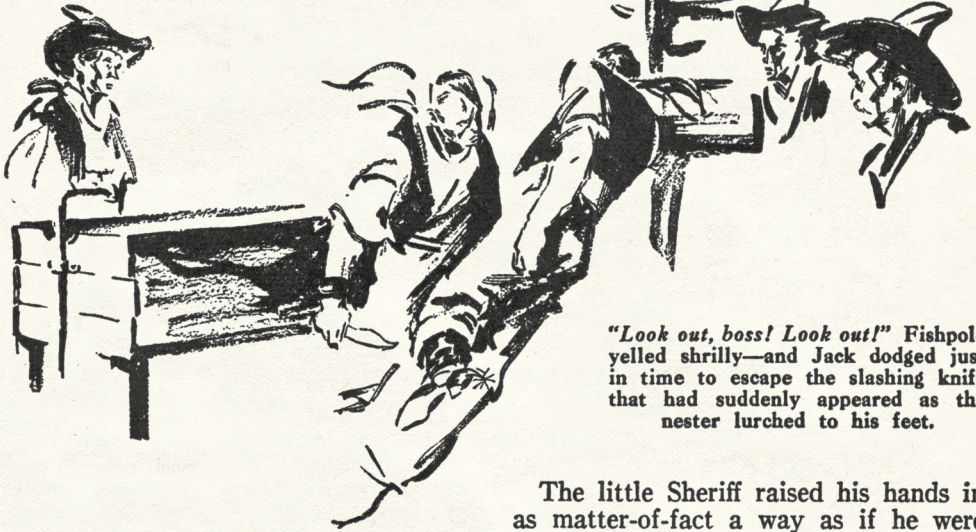
Jack stooped down to examine a half-obliterated mark that might have been a footprint.

"How's that, now? Oh! Yeah, I got a soakin'. Was jest over the next ridge here goin' home, an' no slicker. This track here, if it is a track—"



For some reason Jack stopped speaking suddenly, and looked up. He caught the triumphant glance the nester flung toward the Sheriff. And then it came to him! Thursday, just before the rain! That was when the deputy had been killed! With a cold shiver of apprehension darting down his back, he rose stiffly erect. Hank Morgan was speaking again, softly:

"—An' a .38-40 six-shooter, accordin' to that empty shell. Now, Sheriff, I wonder who carries a .38-40—it's a size they don't use to amount to anything



"Look out, boss! Look out!" Fishpole yelled shrilly—and Jack dodged just in time to escape the slashing knife that had suddenly appeared as the nester lurched to his feet.

around here. In fact, I know of jest one of 'em in the county right now."

A moment of deadly pause; and again the nester spoke softly:

"Sheriff, did you say Pete was comin' back from the T-Cross when he was killed?"

For a long time the three men stood in a stiff silence. The stench of the jail, with its human beasts for occupants, came to Jack vividly. And then, seemingly from a great distance, came the voice of the gray-haired little Sheriff, gently but with an awesome firmness:

"Jack, would you let me see yore gun a minnit?"

Jack's spirit seemed to come back from the distance where it had been—to come back more swiftly than a bullet. Somehow he found his .38-40 in his hand, before the hands of the others had touched the butts of their .45's.

"Stop!" he found himself snarling, in a voice he himself scarcely recognized. "Stop! If you think I'm goin' back to that jail, yo're wrong!"

MORGAN'S face had assumed a dirty, grayish color, but the little Sheriff seemed entirely unmoved. Carson knew that now his will would not avail against the young cowboy before him, but he did not speak—just stood there almost expressionlessly, waiting for the next move.

"Stick 'em up!"

The little Sheriff raised his hands in as matter-of-fact a way as if he were used to doing it every day. But there was something in his eye that said plainly that he knew his disadvantage to be only temporary, and therefore considered it of little consequence. Morgan, on the other hand, had his arms stretched as far skyward as he could reach without standing on tiptoe, and those hands trembled and shook like aspen leaves in the wind.

"Lower yore left hand slow-like, an' unbuckle yore gun-belt an' let it drop," Jack directed.

"But, Jack—" began the Sheriff.

"Quick!" snarled Jack fiercely.

Carson unbuckled the belt as ordered, but lowered it carefully to the ground; he was notoriously cranky as to the condition of his gun, and would not risk its being even scratched by falling among the stones.

"You too, Morgan."

The nester's trembling left hand unbuckled the belt with difficulty, and shot upward again as soon as he felt the leather slipping through the buckle. The tongue slipped into another hole, and

Morgan had to lower his hand a second time before the heavy .45 clattered to the loose stones at his feet.

"Now, Morgan,"—and there was quiet venom in Jack's voice,—“you jest turn around an' start yore Number Twelve low-heeled farmer boots goin', will you? You too, Sheriff. Don't look back.”

The big nester almost ran from the spot; the little Sheriff dawdled carelessly after him. They had not gone many steps when they heard the sudden crash of a horse making a flying start in loose pebbles. Jack had slipped silently into his saddle. Instantly the Sheriff whirled, and leaped to where his gun-belt lay. He knew that he was open to Jack's fire, but he knew also it would be far more chance than good marksmanship if he were hit from a running horse at that distance, and was willing to take that chance.

In a moment Jack was out of sight in the trees, heading toward Bear Butte, and then only did the nester, who had been darting frightened glances back over his shoulder, dare to turn and run to his horse. Close beside the little Sheriff, he crashed into the trees, after the flying Jack.

A sort of grin came to Jack's white lips as he touched Blue Streak with the side of his boot—there was no need to use the spurs. What chance had Carson and Morgan to catch him now? Then he actually chuckled. Wild Jack he had been well named, and the reckless streak in him made him begin actually to enjoy his present position—it was the first time he had played the rôle of fugitive. Could he cross that little cañon, he wondered, before the pursuers would reach the near rim? Well, what if he couldn't? What if they did get a shot or two at him as he dodged over the other rim? He turned away from Bear Butte, leaped Blue Streak over a ledge, and rode recklessly downward, running a race with the boulders his horse's feet dislodged, boulders that threatened broken legs for the horse, perhaps a broken neck for Jack himself. Well indeed had he been named Wild Jack!

*Crash!*

JACK found himself coming to his senses—indeed, he had not entirely lost them. He was sprawled among the twisted branches of a stunted, gnarled juniper, close to the ground. A dirty fall, that—worst he'd had in months! He'd been running a maverick— No!

He suddenly jerked to his feet as the truth came to him—he had been running from something, not after it! His hat was gone; so was his kerchief, and one spur. And his gun too—his holster was empty! Where was Blue Streak? Dead? Crippled?

Jack thrust himself out from the branches, and dug his high boot-heels into the almost vertical side of the cañon to keep himself from crashing downward again. He could find no broken bones—or perhaps a cracked rib; one side hurt severely. He was bleeding in many places—he had crashed through a patch of manzanitas, and manzanitas seem to contain almost as many dead, out-thrust snags and twigs as live branches, though fortunately manzanita snags are very brittle. But he was not crippled in any manner. Good!

HIS survey of his condition had taken hardly an instant. Now he was leaning out, holding to a branch of the cedar, to look down below him. Where the deuce could poor Blue Streak have rolled to! Such a fine horse, too! And two mounted pursuers, armed—which he was not—coming close behind.

There was a rattle above him. Jack whirled, ready to dodge like a rabbit into the brush, but a glance showed him it was his own horse, struggling to its feet, that had made the noise.

“Whoa, Blue Streak! Whoa, boy!”

Jack tore madly up the slope, knowing that an ill-judged step would send the horse crashing down again. But the blue heeded his voice and stood still until he seized the bridle-cheek. A hasty inspection showed him that Blue Streak was uninjured beyond a patch of skin missing from one shin, and a cut over the eye which was swelling rapidly, looking ridiculously like a black eye on a man. The right stirrup had caught on a snag as the horse fell, and had barely prevented his toppling over the low cliff onto Jack.

“I'm in luck! I shore—”

Jack broke off short as he heard his pursuers above, not far from the rim of the cañon. Almost without thinking—there had been no time to think since his fall—he snatched up the rein and darted into a little patch of high hollies. It was with surprised pleasure that he saw the horse leap after him on a loose rein. Every moment he thought more highly of this blue!

“Right here! Here's where he went!”

Jack crouched as he heard the voice of the nester above him. A moment later a horse was crashing by him, downward. The mild-looking little Sheriff was scarcely less reckless as a horseman than Jack himself, it seemed.

"*Whew!*" gasped Jack under his breath.

The Sheriff had almost touched him, so close had he come as he dashed down the faint game-trail Jack had been following. Now would be the chance to get back to the rim again, but for one thing—Morgan. Jack knew from the sounds above what had happened—the nester had seen the little Sheriff dash down among the loose stones, and his heart had failed him. He was coming down afoot, leading his horse.

"Damn his cowardly hide!" groaned Jack.

Morgan clattered down, always keeping a wary eye back to see that his horse did not lose its footing and fall upon him. Closer and closer he came, until at last he could have almost touched Jack. Then he stopped, and drew his red cotton handkerchief to mop his face.

"Good Lord!" he gasped, leaning forward to peer down into the cañon where the Sheriff had gone. "Good Lord, this is *hell!*"

"Hell is right, Hank!"

**T**HE nester whirled, his mouth flying open; but a fist holding a good-sized stone crashed against his temple, and he sagged to the earth like a sackful of wet sand. Jack snatched at him and pulled him back as he started to roll toward the little cliff.

"Should let you go, you skunk!" he grunted to the inert figure, as he dragged it to a safe spot behind a bush.

He snatched the belt from the nester's waist, but just as he was about to unbuckle his own belt, he saw something gleaming in a tuft of grass not far off. His own old .38-40! A glance showed him it was undamaged, and he thrust it in its holster with a sigh of relief. What to do with Morgan's belt and gun? He flipped them over a high bluff to the right. That gave him an idea. His knife slipped under the nester's cinch, and a moment later he was running closer to the bluff with the saddle in his hand.

"Here goes an eighteen-inch tree!" he murmured contemptuously, as he heaved it over.

He heard a stir, and turned to find Morgan trying to sit up.

"Jumpin' jackrabbits," Jack gasped, "but you've a hard head! If I could take that kind o' lick in the head I'd go in for prize-fightin'!"

No answer, but a sound from just below came to his ears.

"Well, Hank, I hear yore friend the Sheriff comin' back, so I reckon I'll be a-goin'. Give him my regards, will you, an' tell him to try to catch this blue nag o' mine if he wants to give me a good laugh. *Adios!*"

He picked up his reins and darted up the side of the cañon. Once on top, he paused to straighten his blankets under his saddle. Then, instead of mounting, he lay down and peered over a low bluff. A short distance below him, he could see the Sheriff coming toiling up, panting, and leading his horse. He thrust his head and shoulders over the cliff, with a broad grin.

"Oh, Sheriff!" he called.

Carson stopped suddenly, and looked up.

"Jest thought I'd stop to tell you good-by, Sheriff. Hate to have to rush like this, but you know what a busy feller I am! *Adios*, Sheriff; give the girls in town my love."

Sheriff Carson swore bitterly as a devil-may-care laugh floated down to him—swore, and climbed faster than before toward the rim. Hank Morgan had dropped discreetly out of sight.

It did not take long for Carson to reach the rim and slip into his saddle. He could hear the distant crashing of Wild Jack tearing through the trees, and dashed the spurs to his horse in pursuit. Although his horse was fast, he scarcely hoped it could overtake the blue, whose speed he had seen before.

"Well," he grunted, "I'll give the young devil a chase, anyway!"

**B**UT Jack, nearing Bear Butte far ahead, laughed as he heard the Sheriff crashing behind him.

"He'll have one sweet time if he catches me before dark now!" he chuckled.

He raced along close to the cañon, which rapidly became deeper. Then he swung to the rim itself, which was slightly more free from trees than where he had been riding. At his left an impassable bluff stretched ahead for miles. He slowed his horse to listen for the sounds of pursuit. Yes, the Sheriff was still coming on doggedly. And then another sound came to his ears.

"What the heck!" he grunted in dismay.

Another horseman was closing in on him from the trees in front. Hank? No; the nester could not have got ahead of him. Perhaps some deputy who had a fresh horse, and had tracked the Sheriff up. Jack turned as if to swing away from the rim, but knew instantly that that would mean meeting both pursuers at once. Well, there was but one thing to do—try to go straight on, and pass the man ahead before he could break from the trees to the edge of the cañon.

"Blue, let's see what you can do!"

For the first time he touched the horse with his spurs. The blue fairly flew, his small hoofs picking a way among the loose stones despite his speed. Still, the other had too much advantage. Jack saw he could not get by him. He drew his six-shooter, and rode with it balanced in his hand, muzzle in the air, ready for instant action. If he killed some one—well, that would mean a break to leave Arizona. If he got away alive, he could never come back.

"What's the difference?" he grunted savagely.

Indeed, it did seem to make little difference—was he not already accused of murder, and with all the evidence against him? Such a murder, too, that the cowboys of the neighborhood would take the law in their own hands and not wait for a legal trial.

Perhaps, after all, he could get by the man who was trying to head him off! His quirt stung the blue, and the animal increased its already incredible speed. But the man in the dense trees also had a reserve of speed left, and now he used it. They were due to crash into each other unless some one stopped. It was Jack who jerked his horse to its haunches, for he knew that a standing horse would give a big advantage in shooting. A standing man had still more advantage, he suddenly thought, as he tumbled from his saddle.

"Stop!" he snarled.

THE other jerked up his horse barely in time to avoid riding into Jack.

"What—"

"Huh!" A sudden grin came to Jack's face, as he saw the elongated figure on the thin horse before him. Two arms, long and skinny as a monkey's, were reaching frantically for the sky.

"Fishpole! How the heck did you get here?"

Fishpole's mouth, which had been open a prodigious distance, closed slowly. It had scarcely closed before his bony features were quite composed again, and a steady hand was reaching for his chewing-tobacco.

"'Lo, Jack," he drawled complacently. "Want a chew?"

Jack was hastily scrambling back to his saddle.

"Let's be goin'," he grunted. "I don't hear the Sheriff; reckon' I was goin' so fast, runnin' from you, that he gave up the race for a bad job. Still, we'd better be driftin'."

AS they trotted along at a mile-eating pace that did not unduly tire the horses, Fishpole explained:

"Was goin' home when I saw some cows near the top of Bear Butte, an' a yearlin' that looked like a maverick that got away from me last week. I rode up there, but couldn't find it again, so I left my horse an' climbed plumb to the top of the butte to look around. I was fixin' to climb down again, when I saw Morgan kind o' hidin' around in the bushes like he was waitin' for some one—you, I figured."

Fishpole turned in his saddle to aim a stream of tobacco-juice at the center of an ant-hill.

"Well," he continued, "whoever he was waitin' for, he saw the Sheriff pokin' around, an' j'ined him down there. Then you come along. I saw the whole thing, includin' the race you give 'em around the foot of the butte. I thought yore horse might be winded after runnin' in the cañon, so I rode down to offer you mine. Reckon he aint, though!"

"Reckon not!" grinned Jack. "This bronc' don't get winded."

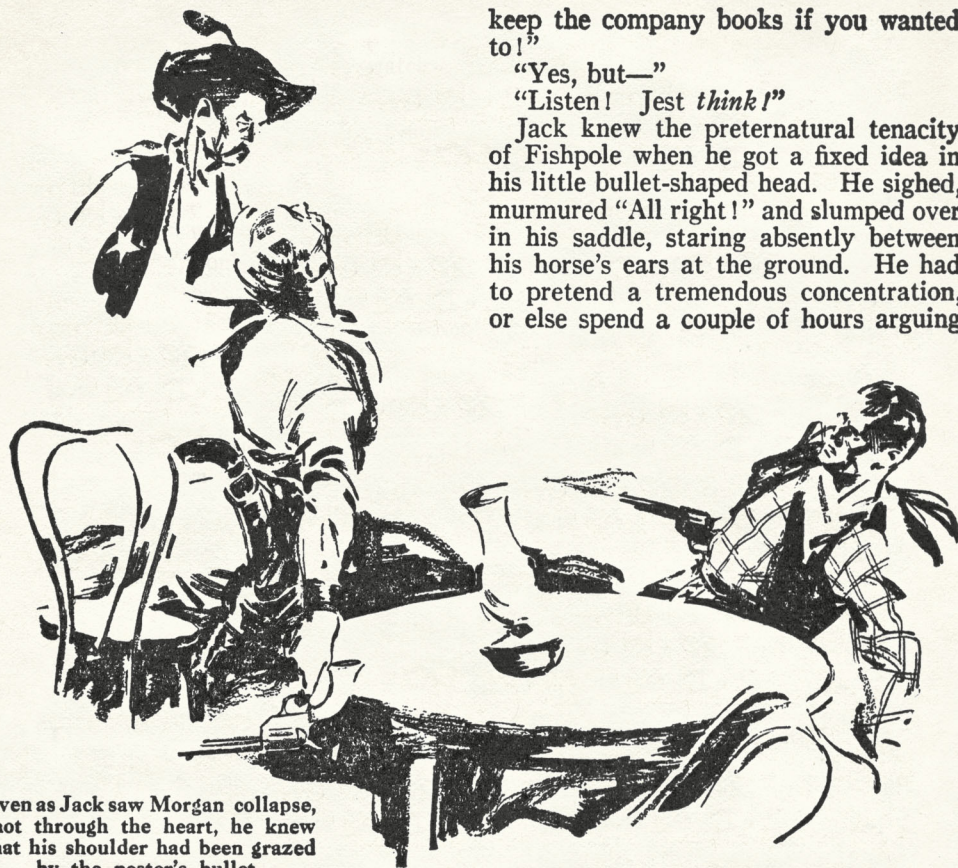
"Darned if he does! Some critter, him!"

A rattlesnake was crawling slowly along some distance from the trail they had been following. He raised his head from the ground to look back at them with his wicked, lidless black eyes. A long thin stream of brown liquid shot toward him with surprising velocity, catching him in the mouth just as he opened it to thrust out his little wormlike forked tongue.

"How's that fer a shot?" demanded Fishpole exultantly.

"Ugh!" grunted Jack.

"An' they say tobacker-spit is sartin death to a rattler, too! But, say—what was they chasin' you fer—the Sheriff an'



Even as Jack saw Morgan collapse, shot through the heart, he knew that his shoulder had been grazed by the nester's bullet.

keep the company books if you wanted to!"

"Yes, but—"

"Listen! Jest *think!*"

Jack knew the preternatural tenacity of Fishpole when he got a fixed idea in his little bullet-shaped head. He sighed, murmured "All right!" and slumped over in his saddle, staring absently between his horse's ears at the ground. He had to pretend a tremendous concentration, or else spend a couple of hours arguing

Morgan? An' what was you doin' in the cañon? I couldn't see down there from the butte."

Jack hastily told him all while they rode. They were gradually slacking the gait of their horses, for it was so nearly dark that they could not be seen from any great distance.

"Humph!" muttered Fishpole. "Kinda bad! Means lynchin' if yo're caught."

"Shore does!" Jack said dispiritedly.

"Can't you think o' nothin'? Now that book we have in the bunkhouse—that one that Doc Watson wrote, I mean. If that *Holmes* feller was here, he'd think o' somethin' in jest no time."

"Yes, but I aint *Sherlock*—an' besides, none o' that never happened."

"Never happened! Huh! You can't tell *me* that it never happened! Why, no one'd be smart enough to make all that up, an' make it so nacheral-like!"

"Well, anyway, I aint him."

"But jest *think*, Jack! Yo're smart, you are—jest as smart as that feller, anyhow." Fishpole was leaning over toward Jack, open-mouthed eagerness in his manner. "Why—why, I bet you could

with his single-track lieutenant. So they rode along slowly, with Fishpole turned in his saddle to watch Jack, open-mouthed, as though amazed at the workings of a tremendous brain.

Not that thinking would do any good, seeing that he wasn't *Sherlock Holmes*. And those stories were impossible anyway! Why, he didn't have a single one of those things they called clues, to start with! There was just nothing—only an empty cartridge that looked just like any other cartridge he'd ever seen; same size as his own.

He drew a cartridge absently from his belt and turned it over in his hand, reading the lettering on the base: "W. R. A. Co.—.38 W. C. F." That was what the Winchester Repeating Arms Company marked their cartridges of that size—.38 Winchester Center Fire. It meant the same as the ".38-40" of all the other cartridge-makers—Peters, Union Metallic, and Remington.

"Huh!"

Jack dropped the cartridge, jerked his horse to a stop, and sat staring blankly, unseeing in front of him. He was not

even conscious of the awed stare of Fishpole beside him—Fishpole, who hardly dared breathe, afraid of breaking the spell. There was a long silence; then at last:

"I got it!"

"Well, I *told* you, didn't I?"

Fishpole took a chew of tobacco, and spurred his horse forward. Of course Jack had solved it! Why not?

"Who killed him, Jack?" he asked curiously. "Was it the nester?"

Jack grinned.

"Hate to disappoint you, but I don't know. But I got what yore detective feller would call a clue. Maybe it's good; maybe it aint."

"A clue! *What?*"

Fishpole was breathless with eagerness. A real clue! He leaned so far toward Jack that his great length almost toppled from the saddle. He jerked himself back to a better balance just in time.

"Well, that cartridge was marked 'M. C. Co.—.38-40.' What cartridge company has a name beginnin' with M?"

Fishpole studied an instant. Like every other cowboy, he knew not only every make of pistol cartridge, but the good and bad points of each. There were not more than half a dozen makes, all told.

"There aint none!" he at last murmured dejectedly. "That M must have been a W—for Winchester."

"It wasn't—an' that aint how they mark their cartridges, nohow."

"Well, what?"

"It must be some new make. I might be able to prove that I never used that make. Furthermore, I might be able to find out who did."

"How?"

"Let's cut straight to town. Slim Jones will know, if anyone does. Wish we could get there before the moon rises, but I reckon it's too late now."

**B**Y a work-bench Slim sat idly watching the red ball of the rising moon break through a thin streak of silver-gray cloud in the east. How often he had thus watched the moon rise, seated in a stout saddle with T-Cross carved in its corner! That was before the bear had broken his hip, and left him too crippled to ride. It was his lifetime passion—hunting and firearms—that had thus imprisoned him. . . . The old outfit had been white with him—more than white, seeing that he hadn't been doing company work when he got crippled. It

had staked him to enough to buy this small, but growing, gun-shop. Now he could indulge his hobby of tinkering with guns, and actually make a very good living at it. Of course Wild Jack Gibson, his old range-boss, had been responsible for that—talking the company into the loan with no interest, and a lifetime to pay it back. Good old hot-head, Wild Jack!

Well, it was getting late—he might as well drill that tang and thread it. That Lyman sight had to be on the carbine for the Sheriff next morning. Carson was another gun-crank—otherwise he wouldn't have bought this new carbine with the fancy walnut stock. And he took care of guns too, which most of the cowboys emphatically didn't!

"Hello, Slim!"

**S**LIM JONES jerked back from the window. With a sweep of his hand, he drew the lamp to him and blew it out. A lunge, and the door was shut and locked, the shop apparently closed. He could still see fairly well, for the moonlight shone strong through the big window.

"Jack!" he exclaimed. "Aint you got no sense at all—comin' ridin' into town, with ropes hangin' on every saddle ready to string you up? Pile o' nesters in town too!"

"Have a chew, Slim?" offered Fishpole, to break the tension. Fishpole offered everyone a "chaw" under all circumstances. It was said that once, in an embarrassed moment, he had even offered a "chaw" to Mrs. Palgrave, the fat little wife of the Methodist minister.

"Slim," began Jack, without preliminaries, "what company marks its cartridges *M. C. Co.*?"

"Munson Cartridge Company—a new outfit in Connecticut, jest startin' up business. I wrote 'em for some samples—their terms would give me more profit than the others—an' jest got 'em last Wednesday evenin'."

"Any .38-40's?" asked Jack breathlessly.

"Jest one box, was all. They said something had happened to their dies of that size, so they were late in gettin' the cartridges out; had only that one box on hand, in fact. Seems to be a sort of one-horse company—won't last long, I figger."

"Where are they, Slim—the .38-40's?" Jack demanded.

They could see fairly well now, accustomed as they were to the dim light.

Slim glanced curiously at Jack as he answered:

"Why, I had intended to save it for you an' ask you to try it out, as I hadn't a gun that would handle it, but Hank Morgan came along wantin' that size. He said he wanted it for a rifle. Everyone knows he's a good shot, an' a rifle would beat any six-shooter that ever was, to test cartridges, so I let him have 'em. He hasn't been back yet to say how it worked."

"The dirty skunk!" exclaimed Jack. He added a few more heartfelt and profane remarks, and then turned grimly to Slim.

"Say—you can find him in the jail tomorrow, I reckon, an' ask him about it. Let's go round to the Sheriff's office an' see Carson. Would he be in, you reckon?"

"Shore. He always does his paperwork last thing at night; I see him in the office always as I go home. I don't see—"

As they locked the shop and turned down the street, Jack Gibson quickly explained to Slim.

"The snake—why, the dirty snake!" grunted the latter.

"No light in the Sheriff's office," murmured Fishpole. "Reckon he aint back yet."

"Say—that looks like his horse outside the restaurant," Jack pointed across the street.

"An' Mister Morgan's, 'less I'm mistaken!" Fishpole bit off a prodigious piece of tobacco in his excitement. He loosened his gun. Fishpole, despite his peculiarities, was to be reckoned with when things were happening.

"Let's cross!" gritted Jack, stepping off the sidewalk into the deep street dust.

**A** MOMENT later they stood gazing in the window. Morgan, battered and dusty, sat at a table, his gun swinging obtrusively from his hip, evidently none the worse for its trip over the cliff. Around him were gathered a group of other nesters, listening open-mouthed to some tale of prowess he was telling for their edification. Beside him sat Sheriff Carson, eating quickly and silently, but sometimes pausing to throw a glance, half of disgust, half of amusement, at his companion.

"Let's go!" whispered Jack.

They walked slowly and quietly into the restaurant. The nesters drew back on the instant, but Morgan, without

glancing up, continued on, drawing a nap on the tablecloth with a tine of his fork:

"—An' as he cut round Bear Butte, like this, with me after him hell-bent-for-election, an' him scared stiff— *Augh—ugh—*"

Morgan had glanced up, expecting to meet the admiring glances of his friends. Instead the only eye he met was Jack's, basilisk-cold, deadly. The big nester's mouth trembled as he sank back in his chair, dropping his fork with a clatter.

"Hello, boys," drawled the Sheriff. He made no move toward his gun, although he laid down his knife and fork and rolled a cigarette slowly.

"Hello," grunted Jack, not taking his eyes from the cowering nester.

"Have—have a chew?" Fishpole presented the inevitable plug.

"Sheriff," Jack spoke, his eyes still on Morgan, "I wanted to see you."

"So I figgered, Jack," remarked the little man dryly. "What's the trouble?"

"Jest this: I've been findin' out more about Pete's killin' since I saw you last. Seems that he was killed with a .38-40 rifle, an' not a six-shooter at all. He was killed with a Munson cartridge, an' as there was likely only one box o' .38-40's o' that make in Arizona at the time, it looks like— *Ouch!*"

**M**ORGAN'S hot coffee struck Jack full in the face. It would have meant his doom but for one thing—the nester had talked so long to his fellows that the liquid had partly cooled. Still it stung; but Jack managed to hold his eyes open long enough to whip his gun from its holster and fire. Even as he saw Morgan collapse forward in the curious way of a man shot through the heart, he knew that his shoulder had been grazed by the nester's bullet. He quickly dropped his gun and raised his hands above his head.

"I give up, Sheriff—till I can explain!"

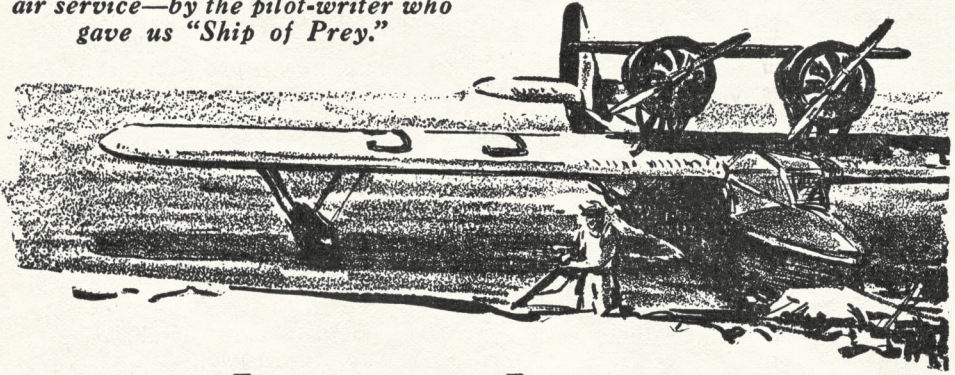
Carson's eyes bored through him a moment; then the gun lowered.

"Pick yore gun up, Jack, an' take yore time to explain. Seems to me that that confession of Morgan's—makin' that break, I mean—clears you. Anyway, son, though I might have arrested you an' seen you hung, I'd have known all the time you wouldn't do that kind of thing."

"Good Lord!" gasped Fishpole, unable to understand such ethics. "Have a chew, Sheriff?"

# Mystery on Indian

A swift-paced novelette of hazardous adventure with the Coast Guard air service—by the pilot-writer who gave us "Ship of Prey."



By LELAND JAMIESON

ON an early morning in late February, two officers of the Coast Guard Seaplane Base at Dinner Key were closeted with a Federal radio inspector in the leanto of the hangar. A hydrographic chart was spread in front of them on Commander Newsom's massive desk, and the commander, with Lieutenant Robert Hurley, sat listening tensely to Inspector Burnett's narrative.

"Of course the man's dangerous," Burnett said in his slow, sonorous voice, replying to a question Commander Newsom had just asked. "He's probably a killer, although, from my relations with him, that may be putting it a little strong. We have no record of a killing he has done. But he's been operating on the coast of Florida for a year, putting up an outlaw transmitter here or there, handling traffic in a queer cipher for a week or two, and then suddenly and quickly moving to a new location. We found him once, and two men from my department jumped him—that was up near Stuart; and he put a gun on them. But oddly enough, he didn't kill them—simply slugged them unconscious, tied them up and moved everything out to some new location. The mosquitoes almost finished what he started before we found the two I'd sent up there. . . . And that's the man we're after now."

For a moment silence held them all, while Commander Newsom and Lieutenant Hurley absorbed this information carefully. From the adjoining hangar

sounds of activity filtered through into the room—the clanking of a wrench dropped on the concrete floor, the angry curse of the machinist's mate who had permitted it to fall. Somewhere in the rear, the high, nerve-rasping whine of an emery wheel biting into metal reached their ears, an irritating *obligato*.

Commander Newsom had been leaning forward in his chair, unconsciously tracing a maze of tiny hieroglyphics on the chart edge. "The man you almost caught was Hames," he said. "How can you be sure that this is he?"

Inspector Burnett returned patiently: "By the similarity of his cipher, and by the way he sends—the way he keys his transmitter. In the vernacular, we call it 'fist.' God knows, we've listened to him long enough to recognize him when he's on the air."

Lieutenant Hurley dragged deeply at his cigarette, watching Newsom's lean and wrinkled face. "This may explain the uncanny operations of the crowd that's running dope. This man Hames may be the coördinator of the boats, to route them in and out. By keeping track of the position of all patrol-boats from Base Six, and of all our planes, he could almost insure being able to guide his own craft down there without a bit of trouble. We may be sending too many position-reports for our own good, Skipper."

"Possibly," said Newsom. "Inspector, how closely have you located this fellow with your direction-finders?"



# Key

Illustrated by  
L. R. Gustavson



"Come out, Hames!" Burnett shouted. "We've got you this time, son!"

"Closely enough to know that right now he's on Indian Key, or Lower Matacumbe. Probably we'll find him with his transmitter set up in a tent, or even in a dugout in the sand, and his antenna strung between two trees. This period—the last day—has been the most active one he's ever had. So I feel sure something's up. Probably he's getting ready now to run some boats in down around that area."

Commander Newsom glanced keenly across at Lieutenant Hurley, saying: "Bob, this looks like work for you. You'd better take the Seroson and have a look down there, with the Inspector. If you spot this operator, get back here immediately, and don't report by radio—he may be listening on our frequency, you know."

Hurley nodded. "Undoubtedly he is!"

Burnett said: "I should think you wouldn't make the search by plane—I should think the plane would warn him that we know approximately where he is—and then he'd move again. Wouldn't it be better to fly to some near-by point and then proceed on foot?"

Newsom smiled, a trace of grimness in his eyes. "If we can't take the plane, we'd better send for a patrol-boat. Have you ever been ashore on Lower Matacumbe? There are places on that Key, Inspector, where no white man—or Indian or Spaniard either, probably—has ever put his foot. Bob can take you with him, and fly there in thirty-five or forty minutes—just fly over in a straight line as though *en route* to Key West—go over very low, while you look at the places with a pair of glasses. If you find the station, then it's time enough to go ashore and tangle with the jungle."

**B**OB HURLEY, remembering tales of Ellwood Hames, and with curiosity eating at him, asked: "Inspector, do you really think this fellow will put up a fight—that is, if we get onto him with force? And haven't you deciphered anything from all the messages you've intercepted in the past?"

Inspector Burnett shook his broad head slowly. "I can't say if he'll put up a fight," he answered. "I can only relate what I know he's done before, when we went at him. But I haven't the least doubt, if it were man to man, he'd stand up and shoot it out with you. Remember, he's a shrewd, hard indi-

vidual." Burnett smiled, a whimsical expression. "Probably he's a great deal smarter than most of us who've been trying to run him down. I tell you, it's almost weird how fast he moves, and how he changes signals. A week ago we had direction-finders on him near Cæsar's Creek; we put automatic receivers on his signals, and they were in a new cipher that he'd never used before. He sent for fifteen or twenty minutes—quite irregularly—and then shut up. We never heard him there again. Then last night we centered him once more, and listened for ten minutes to a mess of steady signals—which were entirely different from the first, or from any others we had ever heard!"

Burnett paused, and ruffed thick fingers through his thatch of graying hair; Bob Hurley watched him closely. He was a phlegmatic, placid, massive man, incapable, apparently, of being hurried, yet having none the less a quality of efficacy, ponderous though it was. And though Bob Hurley was himself diametrically opposed to all those qualities of temperament, he liked the man.

"These signals," Burnett added, "baffle all of us. As you know, a radio transmitter can emit only dots and dashes, and groupings of them make up the symbols for letters of the language. But in the method Hames uses, evidently an entirely new system of groupings is employed, with several different arrangements meaning the same thing. I believe, instead of letters, whole words are sent in each code group. The transmission is extremely rapid—so rapid that our most expert operators, being trained to translate letter-groups in usual sequence, are unable to translate them—in fact, unable even to put them down as rapidly as they come in. They're all so unfamiliar to the ear."

COMMANDER NEWSOM tapped his pencil on the table top. "In that case, each smuggler who is getting instructions or orders from Hames must have an automatic receiver, and decipher the code-groups from a tape."

Burnett shrugged. "I imagine so. It would take months of training to learn these strange combinations well enough to take them the way Hames sends them. But the thing right now, Commander, is that we must move fast, or our quarry will have jumped and run. He never stays in one place long. And remember; we must be prepared for trouble. He's

up to something big, this time, and I suspect he'll fight to keep from being taken."

Newsom arose, an abrupt movement that gave the appearance of an unfolding of his bony frame. "Bob," he said to Hurley, "you take Inspector Burnett and go have a look. It shouldn't require more than an hour and a half. It may be that you can cooperate with a patrol-boat which is now somewhere in that vicinity. I'll check on that. If you can, you might arrange to land close by and go ashore and see this thing yourself. The experience would be valuable—but don't get shot!" He sat down, smiling wryly, and lifted the receiver from his telephone to call Base Six at Fort Lauderdale.

BOB HURLEY, stimulation sharpening his senses, got up and went into the hangar, leaving Burnett examining the chart. Uniformed in khaki shirt and slacks, Hurley was a lean, solid man in his late twenties, browned by sun and wind through two years of duty at this southern Coast Guard base. Keen-eyed and full of energy, at no time did he so enjoy life as when a mission came up unexpectedly—whether it was the rescue of a seaman from a deadly fever on a steamer two hundred miles at sea, or the long and nerve-exhausting search for some pleasure vessel that had been missing in the Gulf Stream for a week.

Those were but the routine duties for which, in main, this base existed. Law-enforcement lay within the province of Base Six at Lauderdale, in the majority of cases; and when the rare occasion of a real task such as this came suddenly, the taste of it was like wine upon a satiated palate. Now, no matter what they found down there, for a little while at least he could speculate upon the mystery of Ellwood Hames, and could look forward, possibly, to a fight worth getting into. As he thought of this variety of action, he grew impatient to get into the air. . . .

The Seroson was a Douglas, an amphibian normally, but now used altogether as a seaplane. As Hurley crossed the hangar toward it, checking its appearance with his blue sun-squinted eyes, he felt a curious kinship to the craft. And he remembered a dozen times he had gone out with it, into blinding squalls, where lightning arced on every side; or into placid skies, and thence down in tossing seas that seemed rough enough to swallow any plane, but from which,

almost miraculously, the Seroson emerged each time unscathed. The plane, to him, had come to be almost like a living thing.

He spoke to Baxter, chief aviation machinist's mate; Baxter nodded and started checking the gas-tanks before putting the sea-plane down the ramp into the water. The crew was ready, as it was always ready for emergency; the plane would be ready in five minutes. So, after a moment, Hurley turned back to the office for his final orders.

These were simple. He was to take Inspector Burnett on a reconnaissance to Lower Maticumbe and return, flying low above Indian Key in both directions. That was all. And yet, somehow, he sensed that it was not all. Even then, somewhere in his mind, was a latent warning that this was to be no ordinary flight. Later he remembered having thought that; but hindsight, then, could not do him any good. . . .

Inspector Burnett, it developed, had never flown before. Bob Hurley crawled up into the cockpit, with Baxter in the co-pilot's seat beside him. Jones, the radio operator, took his place in the little cubbyhole behind, with Hayes, a chief aviation motor mechanic, beyond; Burnett lumbered up the ladder from the dinghy and forced his bulk inside and took a seat. Then, with a final testing of his engines, Hurley swung around and taxied out into the bay, swung back and blasted power to the ticking props.

The hull sliced through the green wave-crests, the shocks of impact growing harder and more closely spaced with each moment of acceleration. Hurley rocked back on his controls, and the plane climbed easily upon the step, rode there for a dozen seconds and then skimmed away into the air.

**T**HEY turned southwest, climbing five hundred feet. Below, the Atlantic reached away into the east, merging with the sky in a blot of hazy, smoky distance that concealed the horizon entirely from the eye. The bay was mottled now, dark here and there with cloud-shadows and submerged weed that floated with the tide, bright greenish blue where the sun struck down upon the sandy bottom. Miami was a cluster of white buildings, silhouetted sharply for a moment, and then drifting backward; then suddenly all semblances of towns and habitation were obliterated, and they were over wide lagoons and marshes, where no roads

extended, and where no living thing was to be seen.

They were on their way, and here was action; and sitting there relaxed and yet alert at the controls, Bob Hurley felt the zest that made this job of his worthwhile. The keys were ahead, almost innumerable, stretching in a slow curve to the right, to end at Key West more than a hundred miles away.

**H**E liked to fly this course: riding here above it with the steady thrumming of the engines in his ears, it seemed to him that he could sense the glamour and the touch of romance that miraculously had been retained by all those squalid, insect-infested little spits of ancient sand. No man would ever know the complete history of any single one of them. Silence and baking heat and restless waves had obliterated every trace of the suffering and bravery, of the love and hate and loyalty, which had been in men who lived down there in centuries gone by. Yet some of it reached up to him. Mysteries never to be solved; buried treasure sinking deeper in the sand each year, never to be found; stark and bloody tragedy never to be known.

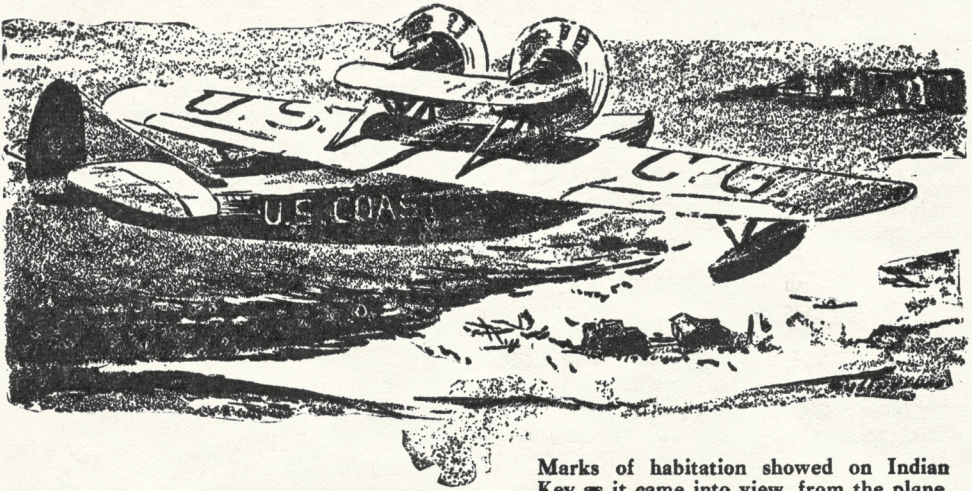
Inspector Burnett, restricted in the cabin, got up and poked his shaggy head through the companionway into the cockpit. He stood there for a time, watching Hurley's precise efficiency with the controls, watching the swinging needles of the air-speed and the turn-recording instruments, the slow oscillations of the compass-card, the swaying of the bar across the face of the artificial horizon.

"You've got too many things to watch at once!" he shouted. "I don't see how you get a chance to watch the ground at all!"

The steady pouring roar of the exhausts subdued his words. Bob Hurley turned his head and yelled: "Get used to it. How do you ever spot an outlaw station in the first place? You were trained—and I was trained. We neither one could do the other's job."

"Right. . . . Not much I can see back there," Burnett complained. "I'll never find this station, looking through that window. How's to come up front?"

Hurley nodded and sent Baxter to the rear; and when the Inspector had come forward to the cockpit, pointed out the landmarks on the coast. Elliott's Key was three miles on the left, a line of green-black vegetation that grew down to the water's edge. Largo was beyond,



Marks of habitation showed on Indian Key as it came into view, from the plane.

with here and there a fishing camp where tourists came. And in the distance, keys extended over the horizon, seeming to float in the air, suspended just above the burnished sea.

They roared on down the coast. Burnett rarely dropped the binoculars from his eyes. Behind, Baxter was dozing in the cabin beside Hayes; and Jones, the radio operator, sat at his little shelf, chin resting in cupped hands, head-set on his ears.

"There must be hundreds of coves and inlets down here!" Burnett exclaimed presently, turning back to Hurley. "I had no idea one could see so well when flying. Yet even so, I don't see how you catch rum-smugglers, with all the places here for them to hide. Anything could be down there!"

Hurley nodded, shouting: "You're right—and anything could happen down here too! . . . What will you do, once we locate this outlaw station from the air?"

But Burnett once more was scanning the horizon with his glasses, and he made no immediate reply. Jones came from the radio cubbyhole with a message scrawled in long-hand, thrust it into Hurley's fingers with the words: "The 240 just sent that as its position. He's running north from Newfound Harbor. We ought to pass him within thirty minutes, if we keep on going." He waited until Hurley had glanced at the numerals of latitude and longitude. "Any reply, sir?"

"No. Keep off the air. We're looking for a guy who may be listening, you know."

Jones sat down. Hurley handed the message to Burnett, when the Inspector

took the binoculars from his eyes. "We've got help here, if we should need it. The 240 is only fifty miles south of Indian Key, headed north. She can be there in three hours."

Burnett nodded. "How far are we from Indian Key?"

"About thirty miles."

"We'll see what we can find, and get in communication with the 240 after that. No transmission now, of course."

So Hurley settled once more to his task of flying. The plane skipped through the bumps, rocking gently, lifting sharply, sagging in descending currents, each in turn. But Hurley scarcely noticed these reactions. His eyes were fastened on ahead, with but a glance occasionally at the motor instruments in their myriad of dials across the panel in front of the control-wheel.

He came to Upper Maticumbe, and Indian Key was a dot upon the glassy water far ahead. Now he nosed down gently, losing altitude until the plane was a hundred feet above the sea, its shadow a fleeting, birdlike form that skipped from wave to wave. Some inner tension gripped his muscles as he came constantly nearer to that place where Burnett thought Hames had a station in illegal operation; a vague excitement sharpened every nerve.

But his features gave no hint of this. Burnett now had the glasses fastened on the key, and with one hand was changing the focus as required. Hurley held his course, bringing the seaplane across the island a little on the east, so that the Inspector could obtain an unrestricted view. And even with the blaring thunder of the engines in his ears, he heard Burnett's shout of triumph. With one quick

turn of his head he followed Burnett's pointing finger, and saw, down there, what Burnett himself had seen.

**I**NDIAN KEY is a patch of coral rock and sand less than half a mile from the northern tip of Lower Maticumbe. Thick brush grows over its entirety: tamarind, dense and thorny; cactus with peculiar long, wide blades, that resembles somewhat a variety of hemp; and then, closer to the decaying coral soil, countless sandspurs of a particularly vicious species. The key has a lurid and lively history, beginning three centuries or more ago, and running a gamut of violence and blood. On one edge a granite slab marks the all-but-forgotten grave of some sea captain who died there of a fever.

Marks and stains of habitation showed on Indian Key as it came into view from the plane; the most modern of these were two weathered wooden shacks standing directly in the center of the island. And in the one quick glance he could obtain before the Douglas had hurtled on and put the whole scene out of view, Bob Hurley saw a figure on the larger of these shacks. He saw a dangling antenna that stretched from one building to the other. And in the final moment before it all was gone, he saw the figure drop and scramble toward the ground.

Inspector Burnett shouted, "See him? There he is!" and whirled heavily in his seat to keep the shack back there in view. Hurley flew on, holding to his course, his breath queerly bated from the tension of his thoughts. He wondered if Burnett would want to fly on to meet the patrol-boat, and transfer to it, or would want to land right here. The Inspector yelled into his ear: "He must have heard the 240 send out its position—must have figured it was heading here. So he's pulling out, afraid he'd be discovered. We've got to cut back and land close enough to go ashore and grab him before he gets away."

Burnett did not ask if the plane could be put down there safely; he assumed that. He got up and stepped half through the companionway into the cabin, shouting at the operator: "Send word to the 240 to head direct for Indian Key—full speed. Tell Commander Newsom that we're landing here to grab Hames while we can." He stood there at Hurley's shoulder, as if mapping out his scope of action in his mind. His eyes

were bright, the pupils darkened; his wide, thin lips were compressed hard.

Hurley said: "We haven't enough men to leave one with the plane, and form a landing-party big enough to jump a lot of cutthroats back there. It's up to you—but I can circle up here, and we can see if anyone puts out by boat to get away. We can sit right here until the 240 comes along, and join their forces. Or we can land now and take a shot alone. I'm taking orders."

Burnett, his face gone rigid, looked back at that little dot of coral in the sea through narrowed eyes. "I've seen Hames slip away from better men than we. We've got him, this time, if we hurry. But he's an artist at escape, and we'd better land right now. Can you beach this plane, so all of us can go ashore?"

"I can land it in the brush, for that matter," Hurley said, feeling an inexplicable reluctance to go into this as precipitately as Burnett wanted to. "But I can beach it, and at high tide get it off again. . . . You'd better put your belt around you when I go to slide her in."

"Don't worry about me," Burnett snapped, and turned away.

**T**HAT appearance of placidity had been but an illusion, Hurley saw a moment later. Burnett was everywhere at once, bawling orders back to Jones and Hayes and Baxter in a penetrating tenor now, yelling instructions in clipped phrases, turning back to spill rapid plans in Hurley's ear. They were to land quickly, to slide up until the hull had beached itself, and then, each of them armed, go ashore as hastily as possible. Hayes was to guard the east side of the island, Jones the northern coral rim, Baxter the west side—from which, if escape should be attempted, undoubtedly it would be started. And then he and Hurley would walk up to that shack and bring Hames out.

Simple, or at least it sounded simple, in Burnett's confident voice. The three men at their outposts would back up the actions of the two who dived in after Hames—rushing back, if shots were heard, or there was an alarm.

"We've got him!" Burnett boomed. "If we get down there fast enough, we've got him this time, sure!"

And that seemed so. Hames could not by any chance negotiate that strip of channel to reach Lower Maticumbe. Not by swimming, for the sharks were thick

down there. Not by rowboat—before Jones or Baxter brought him down with rifle-fire. They had rifles; already those two had broken out rifles, and thrust clips into the magazines.

**Y**ET somehow things weren't right, in Hurley's mind. Something was lacking in these plans; even as he swung the plane about, coming back in a short circle past the island before easing off the throttles and sliding down into the wind, he tried to make a last analysis of what it was. But it escaped him. In that quick circle he had one more fleeting glimpse of the island and the shacks. Hames—if, indeed, the man was Hames—was now nowhere to be seen; the place had that same deserted look that it had borne for years.

They came down, gliding in from the northeast, to burn the hull upon the water at a hundred feet a second. This was no channel into which they landed; this was open sea, and the ruffled water in reality was rougher than it looked. The hull settled till it touched; and when it touched, there was a violent hissing sound. And then it spanked and bounced and touched again, this time to crouch low in a V of snowy spray, and slow.

Ahead was the four-foot coral shelf that rose up from the spongy, porous muck that formed the beach, a ledge of stone honeycombed and worn rough by the action of the seas through the centuries that hurricanes had roared across the Straits. But long before the plane had reached that minor cliff, it snuggled down to the water-line, and Hurley had to blast his throttles to go on. He didn't want to go too far; he could have beached the plane with one long burst of power, riding on the step toward land, and grinding the keel down into the coral muck that formed the bottom—but a barge crane would have been required to lift the Seroson away again. So he was cautious, unhurried in spite of Burnett's thundering expostulations to make haste; he felt the keel drag lightly, and slammed power to the throttles, and the Seroson lunged a final time and stuck there in the mud. The switches went off with one flick of his wrist; and even before that, Burnett was worming hastily up through the hatch, followed by Jones and Baxter, their side-arms swinging, their rifles clutched high above their heads as they clambered down upon the bow and then leaped into the swirl of muddy sea ahead.

Then Hayes jumped; and Hurley, with one last look to make sure the gas was cut off and all battery circuits killed, stepped up to the bow, slammed the hatch shut, made sure that it was locked, and then scrambled over and slipped into the water.

They knew that every moment counted, and haste aggravated their excitement. Five men in hot pursuit of a quarry they had sighted, they splashed through the ooze, reached the coral ledge and crawled out upon the island.

Here was brush and thorn and snag to hamper them; but Burnett, half running, led the way. There was no secrecy; the blasting of the Wasps in the amphibian had rendered secrecy impossible. Hayes turned left, obeying his instructions to skirt the eastern bank as his patrol; Baxter continued on around the coral reef, with Jones pushing at his heels; and Hurley followed Burnett along a narrow, ancient pathway overgrown by sandspurs, toward the building in the center of the key.

They did not speak again to one another, for their words, at this short distance, would have reached the house. Hurley tried to calm the thumping of his heart, and wondered why it should react so to this exertion. He wondered how Burnett would go about arresting Hames. The doorway of the shack was now within plain view; they, he realized, were in plain view too.

The larger building was of frame construction, showing evidences of age and slow decay. Poorly built when new, now its roof was sagging in the center, with patches of shingles ripped up by the fury of past winds, the holes covered with rough boards of odd lengths to hold back the pelting winter rains. There was no yard; tamarind grew almost to the door, but the open space outside was a litter of débris, tin cans and whisky bottles and broken crockery.

**B**URNETT, partially shielded now by brush, stopped two dozen feet away, and stood there poised, gun ready in his hand. Hurley, a pace behind and to one side, forgot that time existed, waiting for the answer to Burnett's bawling shout: "Come out, Hames! You've picked the wrong place, and we've got you this time, son!"

Silence. Hurley was conscious of the dryness of his throat, and a burning sensation at his eyelids. They were fools to stand out here and yell—they should

have rushed the place in silence, or sent verbal summons from a sheltered spot.

More silence, building up unbearably. The tropical sun beat down with a fierce and breathless heat among these sparse and thorny trees, a stagnant heat that brought perspiration through the pores and left it beaded on the skin. Burnett's vociferation washed back across their ears, an empty echo that vanished into deathlike stillness.

THE radio inspector yelled again, angrily; yet Hurley detected somehow an undercurrent of uncertainty about his tone. That husking voice must surely have been audible anywhere upon the island—the place had but eight acres in its total area. But the straining quiet was unbroken, filled only with the whine of insects and a mounting nervousness.

Baffled, Burnett unconsciously tugged upon his lower lip with forefinger and thumb. "He's in there," he insisted in a low, hoarse whisper. "He's had no time to tear out all his stuff and get away."

"Maybe," Hurley suggested, "he's hiding in the brush in the interior of the key, if he isn't inside. Or he may be in that other building."

"We'll rush him," Burnett snapped. "Come on! Swing wide—we'll take him from two angles. You move around behind—there must be another doorway in the back. Smash him! This looks like he might mean fight, unless he's gone. Take a look inside the other building as you go." Impatiently Burnett stepped out and walked briskly toward the door.

It crossed Bob Hurley's mind that this was folly; and it occurred to him again that he had misread Burnett's character at the Base. This move was impetuous and bold, an angry move—and at the moment needless.

He himself, carrying out Burnett's instructions, swung wide through the tamarind, circling the shack. There was a rear door, and with Burnett already out of sight in front, he left his cover and raced ten yards to reach it.

But there he paused, remembering the second little shack, which stood fifty yards away. He turned, looking at it anxiously, seeing the blank, staring windows, bereft of glass; the open door. No sound came from it, no sign of movement. A man, he thought, would be a fool to take shelter in such an open place.

So with that thought in mind he turned back and pushed open this rear door to join Burnett. Pistol ready, he went

through into a long, low-raftered T-shaped room—two rooms, really; and there was Burnett, standing in the second one, open to and adjoining the one Hurley entered. These two rooms, the east one having a north entrance door, the west one having a south entrance, were, so far as he could perceive, the extent of the structure.

Burnett snapped irritably: "I'm afraid he has gone. But there's a door in the south end of this room that looks as if it might lead somewhere." He stepped forward, out of Hurley's view, adding shortly: "This may be a closet or a storage-room."

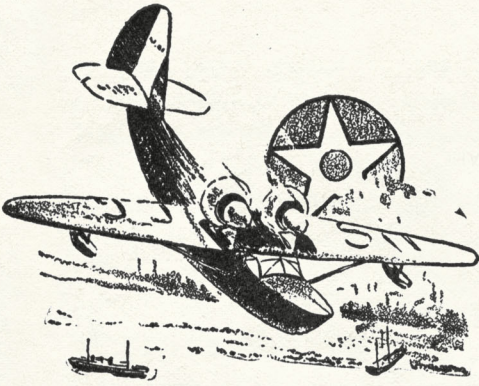
Hurley made no answer, for at that moment he was surveying the contents of the building: Rude brick grate with ashes smoking, dining-table set with plates and cups and glasses for three; beds, half-broken chairs, pictures of nude women on the walls, an enormous shark-jaw hanging overhead from barren rafters, rattlesnake skins nailed to the studding, an old rusty saber sticking upright in a coconut, a green glass demijohn of Bacardi, quite empty; and lastly, the remains of what had been a radio.

All that got but cursory examination. He heard the closet door creak on its hinges; he heard Burnett's heavy footstep and the squeaking of the floor. And then a single thunderous explosion of a gun, coming from the north entrance through which Burnett had stepped into this shack.

The sound clapped against his ears in this sordid, walled-in space. Then came a thin and strangled cry of pain, a choked-off shriek from the closet door Burnett had opened, and finally a sound as of a body sinking to the floor, and a long-drawn, gasping sigh.

SHOCK delayed Hurley's footsteps for an instant; then he got himself in motion. He crossed into the east room, glancing north to that open rectangle of light from which the shot had come, then south, to see Burnett as he had fallen, the feet and knees inside the closet, the head and shoulders and rotund waist outside. His reactions and his thoughts were blurred. Horror-struck, he did not react to horror then; he dropped to the floor beside the Inspector's heavy form.

There was nothing he could do. Before his trembling, exploring fingers came away from Burnett's breast, stained sticky red, he knew there was no use. Burnett's eyes were open, staring, al-



ready growing glassy; and Burnett did not move or try to speak.

He couldn't; he was dead.

In a kind of chilled, unfeeling disbelief Bob Hurley knelt there. From here he could see into the little storage-room, or closet, that Burnett had been upon the point of entering; he could see bare floors, the boards warped up at the edges, bare studding that extended to the roof, through which pin-points of sunlight filtered here and there. But the room contained nothing except a bit of scattered, broken glass and shattered reeds. A storage-room, no doubt, for dope or liquor; but Hames had nothing in it now.

For a space of seconds Hurley crouched there. There were three men here, from the way the table had been set. One of them had killed Burnett, and that one might still be within hearing-distance, making his escape through the tangled brush supported by this key. Grimly, hand on his gun, Hurley staggered to his feet, swinging back to the north entrance, straining his ears to catch the sound of running feet, of breaking branches.

**B**UT as he paused at the door, gun ready, that sound did not materialize. Through the blinding sunlight he could see no figure making off. And he knew that, one or three, they might be waiting just around the corner of the building, waiting for him to lunge out into the open in pursuit—waiting there to strike him down in turn.

So, on reconsideration, he did not rush headlong through the door. He poised in breathless silence for a time, straining every nerve to catch the sound of scuffing shoes near by in coral sand. The pounding of his heart was audible in his ears, but that was all.

Infinitely cautious, he moved with swift

quiet back into the west room, retracing the pathway he had followed when he first entered into this building. He reached that southwest door, and dropped from the stairless sill without a sound. For a moment he stood staring at the other shack across the clearing, debating on exploring its interior; but he decided against that. If the murderer had gone that way, surely his progress would have made some sound—but there had been no sound.

**T**HE house in which Burnett had died was built upon short piling. On his knees, Hurley peered underneath, fully expecting to see the feet and legs of some one standing on the other side. He did not find them. Gun in hand, pressing close against the wall, he made an exploring circuit of the outside of the house.

No one else was there. Utter silence held the key, filled with the baking heat that permeated everything. All traces of the murderer were gone.

Just then, from the west side of the island, another gun-report jetted thinly through the heat-waves. One solitary shot—not the round, broad detonation of a pistol, but the sharp explosion of an Army rifle, then silence. Hurley waited, seeking the solution of that incident in its aftermath of sound; but no sound came.

The shot had come from the direction of Baxter's post, but he could not be sure that it was Baxter who had fired. Perhaps this killer also had had a rifle; perhaps, encountering the Coast Guard man on his patrol, he had murdered him in turn.

Hurley shouted, then, bellowing at all his men, and stood rigid until their answering calls returned. Relieved to catch the sound of Baxter's voice, he waited. On the east, he heard Hayes crashing through the brush, and finally saw the man approaching fifty yards away. But Hayes did not even have a rifle; that shot had not been his.

Then Jones, with such a weapon, came running past a group of cacti, and labored up the path. Baxter was not yet visible through the mess of vegetation.

Hayes reached Hurley first, inquiring: "Anything wrong, sir? I thought I heard a shot back here. Then I heard you yell, and I knew something had happened, and I started back right—"

Jones, thin-bodied, panting, loped into the little clearing near the door. Hurley snapped, "Jones, did you shoot at some-



thing just a moment before I called to come back here?"

"No sir." Jones was out of breath. "Guess—guess that was Baxter. What's the matter, sir? You're white as paint!"

Hurley tried to keep excitement from his tone. Excitement had no place in this affair. But his voice, in spite of his effort at control, trembled just a little. He knew he must be pale; he felt a little sick.

"Inspector Burnett has been murdered," he said, his voice unnatural. "A man stepped to that door, while Burnett was opening a little storeroom—while I was in the far end of the shack. This gunman shot through the front door and killed Burnett—got away." He paused, wondering why Baxter did not come back here, wondering if the killer could escape from Indian Key while his men were talking here with him. But that was unlikely; it would require ten minutes to reach Lower Matacumbe in a boat, and he would have the sentries posted once more by that time.

"Where'd he go?" Jones asked, his hazel eyes turned green. "He's on this island yet—he aint had time to get away, that's sure. Only one place he could have run to if he tried to leave—he'd have to row a boat to Lower Matacumbe. He'd have to cross the channel, and that channel is more than a quarter of a mile across."

"He's still here somewhere," Hurley said grimly. "He's bound to be—and we've got to watch our step. He killed Burnett—so he'll pick off the rest of us

if he gets half an opportunity, or if we stumble onto him. All of you remember that. . . . I wonder where the hell Baxter is?"

As if in answer, Baxter emerged from tamarind a dozen yards away, slapping his bare arms at pestering mosquitoes. He came unhurriedly, rifle swinging from one shoulder by its sling; and as he walked up to the ground his first words were: "Catch 'im? I heard you yell, Lieutenant, and I figured you an' the Inspector had 'im in the bag."

HURLEY snapped: "Was that your gun I heard a second or so before I shouted at you to come in?"

"Why, yes," said Baxter. "Yes, it was, Lieutenant. I seen a shark out there in the shallows of the channel, almost to the other side. I thought by that time you'd 'a' rounded up everybody in the shack here, and I thought one shot wouldn't hurt—so I cracked down on Mister Shark. I hit him, too—and he was near a quarter of a mile away, up on the shallows, with his fin clear out of water."

"God!" Bob Hurley exclaimed acidly. "You're shooting sharks—and Inspector Burnett has been murdered! There's a killer loose on Indian Key, and he probably ran right by you while you were taking pot-shots at a shark!"

"Inspector Burnett dead?" Baxter's plain round face mirrored incredulity. "I didn't hear no shot, Lieutenant."

"I heard it," Jones declared. "Lieutenant, did you see the killer?"



There was a figure on the roof of the shack, and a dangling antenna that stretched from one building to the other.

Hurley shook his head. "No. I was standing in the west room, at the back—I'd just come in. Burnett had come into the east room through the front way. He saw a storeroom door ahead of him, and started to investigate it—which put him around the corner from me, so I couldn't see him. Just as he opened that store-room door, the murderer, who probably had been hiding in the brush near by all the time, stepped to the front door—on the north end of the east room—and cracked down once. I didn't see him, but the shot was fired inside the room itself.

"I ran first to Burnett. As I went out into the east room, I glanced toward the front door, and no one was there. I couldn't see anybody in the clearing. Burnett was dying, by the time I reached him. I stayed with him until I was sure there was nothing I could do, and then went to the front door, thinking, when I heard nobody running through the brush, that the killer was still outside waiting for me. So I went out the back door, and looked under the house, trying to make sure there was no one on the other side. There wasn't. There wasn't a sound. So I called to all of you to come back here."

"Funny," said Jones, "that Baxter didn't hear the shot, and yet he heard you call. I wasn't far from him, and I heard it plain enough."

"I guess I was watching that shark," Baxter explained sheepishly. "Big one. When we catch this murderer, I'd like to row over there and get it."

"Damn the shark!" Hurley exploded in exasperation. "Jones, you get back to the west side of the island. Find some cover so you won't be seen, and prevent anybody from leaving in a boat, or from swimming that channel to Lower Matakumbe. Keep your eyes open. Hames has only one way of getting off this key. If he goes south or east, that will take him into open sea; we'll watch for that. The north side will take him out into the bay, and you can see him. Of course, if he goes west, he'll be right before your eyes. . . . What about boats over there?"

"THERE'S a little dock on the north side," Jones said. "A dory tied up at the end of it, and another rowboat, pretty worthless, pulled up on the rocks. No sign of anybody."

"Another rowboat pulled up in the mud on the west side, over there," Baxter declared. "But it's been there through several tides, maybe several weeks, for

all I could discover. I looked for footprints all around, but there probably wouldn't be any, because there're a lot of big rocks on the beach. There wasn't any print of another boat being pulled up and then pushed off again."

Hurley nodded. "Jones, you start right now," he ordered. "If Hames is trying to make Lower Matakumbe, he'll be on his way by the time you get over there again. Be careful. If you see him, shoot first and we'll ask questions afterward."

Jones, face tense and worried, asked: "Will you be coming over there before long, sir?" And at Hurley's nodding answer, he turned into the tamarind, his rifle slung across his arm.

Hayes, looking around before he spoke, asked in a husky voice: "How many of 'em was there here, Lieutenant?"

"Three," said Hurley. "Let's have a quick look inside again, and then beat out the brush. There's another little shack over there, but I looked through its windows, and I don't think they're likely to be there. However, we'll look closer before long."

Leaving Baxter on guard just inside the north front door, concealed as much as possible, Hurley went inside, with Hayes a pace behind him.

IT was odd how he dreaded to come in here where the body of Burnett still lay—Burnett, so recently alive. The horror and the mystery of death for a moment took hold of his imagination. Magnetically his eyes were drawn to that grotesquely sprawling form within the storeroom door. And then, fighting to drive that recurring visual memory to the outer fringes of his consciousness, resolutely he turned and started a detailed examination of the contents of the room.

But he had seen most of them before, and he saw nothing new this time. Three beds, the dining-table set for three. Evidently the trio had been surprised at dinner; only one man had touched his food.

"Come on," Hurley ordered tersely. "We're going to dig this island up, if necessary. But slow and careful! There are three of them and three of us—and they'll let us have it if they can."

"This," said Baxter lugubriously, crushing a mosquito, "is where a bloodhound could earn his beans and jerky. We won't find any tracks, on all this coral rock."

They went out with slow caution, skirting the wall for cover in case Hames' men should be concealed in tamarind near by. Hurley knelt at the back of the building, to make one more examination of the ground beneath it, looking for a trapdoor or a tunnel-opening. The ground was hard and dry, with no mark of passage there. Beneath the stringers was strewn the same sort of ancient rubble that littered the small untidy yard.

**O**BVIOUSLY no cave or trapdoor was here, no tunnel where any human being could be hiding. Hurley scrambled to his feet, glancing at the smaller building fifty feet away, and then resolutely crossing to it. The plan of this structure was much different from the first. A kind of arched court was in the center, with a room built on either side. The court was overgrown with sandspurs from years of continual disuse. The place was empty.

"We take the brush," Hurley said to Hayes and Baxter. "Deploy at a ten-yard interval—and use your eyes."

They set out in a circuit of the buildings. In widening circles they beat through the bushes, flushing lizards and a snake or two, probing every thicket. It was tense and nervous work, and every man was jumpy, whirling at the cracking of a twig. They stopped frequently to peer hard ahead into the dusky shadows, finding nothing. A bird flew up occasionally, and each time they all brought up their guns, jerking in reaction, and then cursing at their foolish apprehensions. Thus they plodded on.

But they unearthed nothing in those first three swinging turns around the center. The sand-flies and mosquitoes swarmed up at their approach, settling on their necks and faces painfully, singing and whining in their ears. The heat was stifling, a sultry, humid heat that clung to them and all but wore them out.

They had beaten over almost every yard of Indian Key, when Hayes, close on the right, uttered a low exclamation and called out: "Lieutenant Hurley—here we are! Here's part of the radio!"

The others joined him, found him burrowing beneath a pile of brush, and waited till he dragged out a long black metal case adorned with dials and knobs. He set it out in triumph for them to examine. "Now how do you figure that?" he asked. "We aren't twenty yards from the west rim of the gol-darned island—

and this Hames must have come this way."

"He stayed long enough to hide that outfit mighty careful," Baxter observed presently. "But it's certain he was here not long ago—and where the devil is he now?"

Hurley crouched there, examining the transmitter at some length; he put it down and squinted at the little brush-obscured declivity in the coral soil. Dimly there was a footprint near the edge of it—so faint that the outline of the shoe was not discernible at all.

"Hames came this way," he mused, as if thinking to himself, aloud. "Hames, or one of the other two. . . . Baxter," he asked, "are you sure nobody was swimming that channel when you took your position on the west rim, right after we had landed here?"

"Not a chance, sir," Baxter said, his tone positive. "Besides, he never would have got across. Sharks—"

"Besides," Hayes broke in, "there were three of them. You might have missed one man—that's possible; but you couldn't have missed three."

"All of which should only mean they're still here on Indian Key," said Hurley grimly. "Keep your voices down. Come on. We'll pick up this radio afterwhile."

They set off again, more eagerly, yet with still more caution than they had exercised before. They knew they might rout Hames out at any moment, and they were prepared. The heat was forgotten. The mosquitoes were not felt. They expected to flush three men, and have it out with them.

**B**UT, moving stealthily around the island once more, twice more, thrice more—until Hayes was walking on the coral ledge that shelved off into the sea, they found no human being but poor Jones, who was pacing out his solitary beat, distressed by the mosquitoes.

There was no trace of Hames, no trace of any other man. No cave, no dugout where one man, much less three men, could hide. They found no heaped-up stack of leaves and branches which had held their quarry, or any quarry, recently.

Plainly—plainly and most bafflingly—Hames and his confederates had fled.

"But that *can't be!*" Hurley exclaimed aloud, reacting to the thought. "They have got to be here."

"They aint, sir," Baxter said. "If they are, they're sure invisible. There's

not a square foot of Indian Key we haven't hunted over, and there's no place a man could hide. They must have left before we got in our positions."

Hurley shook his head, completely puzzled. "At least one of them didn't," he declared. "You were on your posts several minutes before Burnett was murdered. Burnett was killed by some one who stepped to the open doorway, poked a gun inside, and fired. The killer has had no opportunity—positively no opportunity—to get off the island since then without being seen."

He paused, looking from one to the other of these men; and he discerned that they were just as baffled, just as worried, as himself.

Jones, picking sandspurs from his trousers-leg, suggested:

"Lieutenant, you've been all over the island. You've exposed yourselves to fire, probably, a dozen or two times. If there was anybody here, don't you think they would have popped you—especially since there were only four of us, and three of them?"

"Then who shot Burnett?" Hurley countered. "Nobody has left the island since then, certainly, according to you three."

"This is screwy," Hayes said jerkily. "We saw one man, and we know three of 'em were here while we were landing. They didn't none of them have time to get away before we took our posts, so they were here all the time—and so they're still here. But where are they? I'd think there was a cave somewhere, if I hadn't tramped around until my feet are burned. So they aren't here. And if they aren't here, who shot Inspector Burnett in the back? I'll get squirrel-brained trying to dope that out."

Hurley shook his head. "We're in a blind alley, hunting them, apparently. We'll go back to the shack and start again from there. We haven't even thought about a number of angles to the thing."

**MOTIVE!** If he could understand the motive for killing Burnett, he might have some premise on which to build a theory, which, enlarged sufficiently, could possibly shed some faint light on factors now obscure.

"Motive," he said half aloud. "No crime is committed without one, and the motive for murder must be strong—in this case it should be plain, if we could only recognize it."

"He was trying to make a get-away," said Baxter confidently.

"He'd already made his get-away. He was gone, and then he *came back* to shoot Burnett. It just doesn't add up to make sense. If I had been Hames, and was clean gone, believe me, I'd have kept on going!"

"What about that room that Burnett had started to open up?" Hayes inquired. "Maybe there was something in there, and this Hames was bound to keep it secret."

"He wouldn't have been able to keep it secret by killing only one of the two men who were examining the place—with three others spotted all around the island. No, he wasn't attempting to do that. When I was kneeling over the Inspector a few seconds after he was shot, I looked inside that room—and it was empty. . . . So that blows that theory full of holes."

**JONES**, the radio operator, suggested eagerly: "Lieutenant, maybe that shot wasn't fired by a man. Maybe Hames had really got away with his two pals, before we got to our positions. I don't see how he could have, but maybe he did. And maybe he had rigged up a gun to fire when that door was opened. He could have had a string, or a cord, rigged up to pull the trigger of the gun when Burnett opened the door."

In silence Bob Hurley considered this for a dozen paces. "The shot was well spaced *after* the door opened, Jones," he said. "I heard Burnett turn the knob. I heard the lock click, and the hinges squeak as the door came open. It was a second or two after that before the gun went off. Besides the possibility of the door tripping a gun when it was opened, I thought about a loose board on the floor that would jerk the trigger when weight was placed on it. It wasn't that. I was kneeling in that doorway for at least a minute, and there wasn't a loose board. I think the motive is the thing to look for now. Motive, then method, then the identity of the killer. That last seems fairly well established, provided it was Hames who had the station here, as Burnett thought."

"You've still got three men," Baxter suggested. "Any of 'em might 'a' done it. You can't pin it onto Hames, without some proof."

"We'll pin it on them all, and they'll all burn for it unless one comes up with a confession," Hurley retorted grimly.



less trouble to have plugged them—shows, at least to my satisfaction, that Hames wasn't a killer, by instinct or inclination, anyhow. Yet he killed Burnett—for no reason we can understand."

"Well," Hayes persisted stubbornly, "maybe he was afraid Burnett would catch him this time, and decided to fix it so there wasn't any chance of that."

"Hardly. He had already escaped to the interior of the island, somewhere. He knew there were several of us in the party, and he must have known, if he stopped to think a moment, that if he just laid low, and we found nothing here, we'd leave eventually. Killing Burnett only made it certain that we'd stay until

Burnett stepped forward. "This may be a storage-room." . . . Then Hurley heard the thunderous explosion of a gun.

"And then the other two will be accomplices."

"Well," said Hayes, "discussing motives: I read once there are just three motives for a killing—revenge, and money, and love. I guess there're others, all right, too; but those are the main ones. This might have been revenge."

"Revenge for what?" asked Baxter.

"Well, they say Hames had been run down before by Burnett's men, but he put a gun on them and got away. Maybe he was sore about that time, and wanted to kinda square things up for that, and at the same time get rid of an inspector who was too smart to have around."

"He'd have been crazy to do that," Bob Hurley said. "That was past. Hames didn't have a killing against him on the records, and he wouldn't put one there if he could help it. Besides, the fact that he patted those two men on the head and tied them up—when it would have been

we found out who had done it. We might have assumed that he had been able to swim across that channel in spite of sharks, or get across with a boat before we saw him—that is, if he'd gone on. But when he came back to that door and took a pot-shot at Burnett, after you and Jones and Baxter were already in position to see that no one left the key, we *know* he didn't leave."

"And yet," Jones said cryptically, "the so-and-so isn't on the island now."

They reached the shack, and filed inside with somber silence, to stand for a moment just inside the door. With a certain grimness Hurley walked across and stood by Burnett's body, making a detailed examination of the hinges of the door which the Inspector had thrown open just a second before death. There were no wires, no cords, no signs of any kind that the door had been a trap.

He dropped down beside Burnett's body, peering intently at the dark-rimmed bullet-hole. The lead had come through, causing frightful damage to the flesh in front, and then lodging in the

fabric of the victim's dark-gray double-breasted coat. Hurley picked it out and took it to a window, holding it between his fingers in a puzzled scrutiny. Plain lead, it had been flattened by contact with a bone until the caliber was uncertain. There was only one thing he could learn: the bullet had gone in at right angles to the Inspector's broad shoulders—straight in, and straight out. Obviously, to Hurley, it had been fired from the center of the front door.

ALMOST curtly he called the others from their morbid examination of the body. "Jones," he said, "you go down to the Seroson and report this whole affair to Commander Newsom. Tell him Burnett has been murdered, and the killer or killers have escaped from Indian Key. Ask him to send another plane down, to search Lower Matacumbe from the air—Hames must have reached it somehow, although that seems utterly impossible. Tell him that as soon as the 240 drops anchor, I'll bring Burnett's body back in the Seroson, and leave the 240 here awaiting further orders. Now get going."

Jones said, "Yes sir," and went out into the clearing and loped down the pathway to the plane.

"Strange—strange," Hurley muttered to himself, and with Hayes and Baxter, turned to a methodical and minute study of every item in this place.

The building was little better than a shell. There was no ceiling, other than the roof; the walls showed every stud, except on both sides of the front door, where at some time an ambitious occupant had started to cover the studding with cheap wall-board. Now the material had warped and discolored to a dun brown, and there were ragged holes in half a dozen places.

The furnishings were scant and poor. The beds were Army cots, sagging in the center, covered with dirty linen and smelly, moldy blankets. Hurley pulled the blankets off, one to provide a covering for Burnett's body, the others to see if something might be hidden underneath.

But there was nothing. In turn, beginning with the west one, the Coast Guard officer prodded and explored the mattresses. This first bed stood directly underneath a small slit in the roof, through which, within a week or two, a heavy rain had leaked, apparently. The mattress was still damp, and the sheets

were molding badly, matting to each other. The second bed was dry; but when Hurley tore the sheet up, a mother scorpion and three infants of that species, tails curled above their backs, marched toward the wall in an effort to escape.

Hayes, watching, said in perplexity: "Who the hell would sleep in a bed like that?" Hurley, busy with abstracted thought, did not reply, but walked to the third bed in the row, the head of which stood almost at the junction of the west room and the east one. He pulled the blanket off. There were no insects here, or mold, except within the blanket-folds.

Baxter, trailing behind, leaned across this third bed suddenly and pulled down on a brown cord that dangled by the pillow, saying: "He must 'a' liked to read in bed. Got a flashlight hooked up there on a nail, with this here string to turn it on and off."

Hurley looked up, and there was a flashlight, attached to a stud almost level with the eave. It was of that square, box type used commonly by railroad brakemen; and when Baxter jerked the cord, the light snapped on.

"That's funny," Hayes said, peering upward. "The light don't shine on the bed; it hits off across the corner of the room—about where the body is." He walked across to the remains of the radio equipment, three or four feet east of the Inspector's body. "Now turn it on again. . . . Yeah—the beam would hit me now, if it were dark. He had it focused on his radio outfit, so he could see to work."

Hurley said slowly, sweeping both rooms with his puzzled eyes, "This place was lighted by pressure gasoline lamps, if they were working." There was such a lamp, hanging on a long cord from a rafter. He crossed to it, procured a chair, stepped up and shook the bowl. So far as he could tell, the bowl was empty.

"That was it," said Baxter positively. "He wanted to be able to get over to that radio in a rush, if he heard a signal coming in—so he hooked this outfit up."

"Well," Hurley suggested, "let's get on and finish up this business." He turned to an examination of the dining-table and the scanty service on it.

HAMES' crew, obviously, had been surprised as they sat down to their meager meal—for one coffee-cup was almost drained, and showed the dry brown stain upon the rim which indicated it had been drunk from several times. The other two were almost full, the rims

clean. There was a porcelain and metal coffee-pot upon the table, of so-called "graniteware." Hurley opened it, peered down into its depths, and let the rusty lid fall back. The pot was empty to the dregs.

He turned next to the plates. Of the three servings of eggs and hash: one had been partly consumed; the others were untouched. The silverware, such as it was, beside these latter plates, was clean.

"One man was eating," Hayes deduced. "They had just heard the position of the 240 on the radio as they were serving themselves dinner. So they figured they'd better get away from Indian Key before the patrol-boat got here. I guess one man left his dinner and went up on the roof immediately. The second one started tearing out the radio inside, while the first one took down the antenna. Just then we come busting over in the Seroson, and interrupted them. So the two men working on the radio didn't get a chance to eat at all, and the third one didn't finish."

"Why," queried Hurley, "would one man go ahead and eat, while the other two were working?"

"Probably the cook," said Baxter, coming back from an inspection of the cooking grate. "On a patrol-boat, the cook always eats in spite of hell and high water. Maybe this guy was in the Coast Guard sometime."

Hayes said: "This aint the time for cracking wise, you dope."

"WHY," asked Hurley,—aloud, but as if to himself,—"would two men leave their dinner to tear out the radio and the antenna, when the 240 was fifty miles away, and wouldn't be here for three hours?"

"By golly, sir!" said Hayes, his face blank in sudden thought.

"Those scorpions were very much alive," the Coast Guard officer went on. "If a man had slept in that bed last night, he'd have crushed them, or they'd have stung him plenty often. The other bed was too filthy for anybody to get underneath the blanket."

"They probably slept on top," Baxter suggested.

Hurley shook his head. "This is February, and it's cold down here at night."

"The blankets were made up," said Hayes. "Pretty smooth. They didn't look as if they'd been slept in, at that. All three of them."

"Yes. All three of them. Hames slept

in the clean one, and made it up this morning. Hames was methodical, and neat. He was methodical enough to put that light up there, with a cord, so he could turn it on; he was neat enough to keep his bed clean, and the floor fairly clean. He would have slept in a bed and made it afterward. But any men who have slept in the dirty messes of those other beds wouldn't have made them afterward. So—the beds evidently weren't slept in."

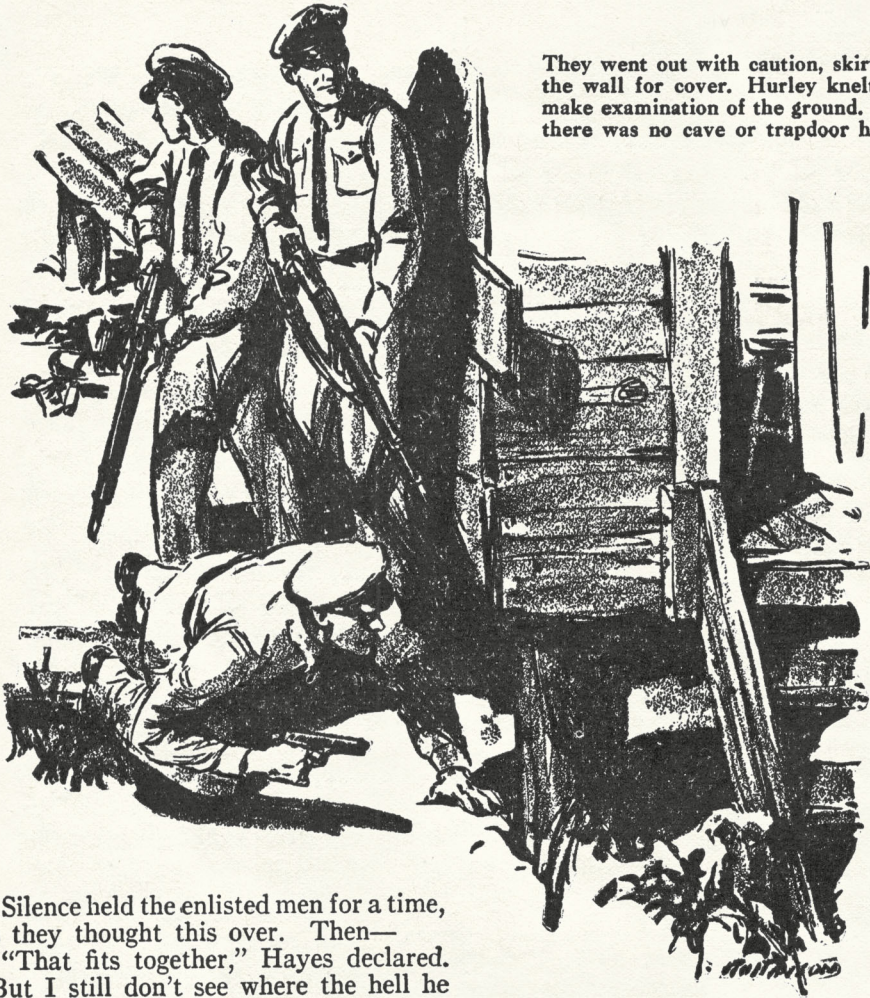
Hurley paused, and looked out the patched window toward the north, along the narrow path that disappeared in tamarind a dozen steps away. Jones should be coming back at any moment, now.

"SO," he went on, "Hames was alone on Indian Key. He didn't have two other men to help him. That's where we were mistaken until now."

"But Lieutenant," Hayes demanded, "these three plates, three coffee-cups—"

"Put there for the purpose of making us look for a hiding-place for three men, when only one was hiding. As I picture it, Hames must have been sitting here at dinner when he heard the motors of the Seroson, some distance off. Remember, we were flying very low; and sound travels a long way across open water. The doors of this shack were all open. He heard us far enough away to have time to get up on the roof, probably not to take the antenna down, but to locate our position. But he was looking up in the air, and we were right down on the water, so he didn't see us for a minute. He knew, if it was a Coast Guard plane, he'd have to work fast, so he probably started taking down one end of the antenna then, in preparation. Possibly, however, he had already heard the position report of the 240, and knew the antenna had to come down anyhow, and decided while he was up there to disconnect one end and save himself another trip. Anyhow, we surprised him by coming over him so low.

"When he saw the plane landing, he ran back inside, jerked the transmitter out, and got ready to leave. But, so we would overlook the hiding-place of one man, he set the table with two other plates, cups and service, poured the coffee out, using all of it—you noticed that the cups weren't full; took some of his own food and put it on the other plates, and then got out of here. That much, I think, is clear. We've been looking for three men, but there was only one."



They went out with caution, skirting the wall for cover. Hurley knelt to make examination of the ground. But there was no cave or trapdoor here.

Silence held the enlisted men for a time, as they thought this over. Then—

“That fits together,” Hayes declared. “But I still don’t see where the hell he could have run to so we wouldn’t find him on this cockeyed island!”

“No,” said Hurley abstractedly; “no, the thing’s not solved, by any means. I’m going to start in and have another look around here. Double-check each thing in both these rooms.”

“Anything we can do right now, sir?” Baxter asked.

“Just keep quiet while I try to think. This would be a good chance for you to go over to the shallows for that shark you shot, if you still want to go. Jones will be back here pretty soon, to help me, if I need help. It may require both of you to get it in the boat. Take that dory from the little dock, but be back here in fifteen or twenty minutes.”

Baxter said: “Lieutenant, I was mostly kidding when I said I wanted to go over there and have a look at it. If you’d rather I’d stick around—”

“Go on and look at it!” Hurley said irritably. “I won’t have to listen to you talking all the time.”

The two trooped out, glad of release from that solemn, pressing atmosphere. Bob Hurley, after they were gone, stood at the east bed, looking up at the flashlight nailed to the studding at the eave. He reached across and jerked the cord a time or two. Radioman Jones, returning from the Seroson, found him in this occupation.

Jones said: “Lieutenant, Commander Newsom says he’ll be leaving Dinner Key in twenty minutes, and will be here in an hour.”

Seeming not to have heard that statement, Hurley asked: “Jones, do you need to have a light on your transmitter and receiver, in order to send messages at night?”

“No sir. But you need to have a light to see to write ’em down as they come in.”

Hurley nodded, and abruptly dropped the cord. He walked to the front door, and then turned back to face the spot



where Burnett's body lay, now shrouded in a blanket. Finally, turning once more, he started tapping the fragments of wall-board with his pistol-butt, one side of the door and then the other. He was engaged in this studied, frowning occupation when Jones interrupted in a harried tone:

"Commander Newsom wants an immediate report, sir."

"This is one time when a commander waits on a lieutenant," Hurley answered, and went on with his tapping. . . . "It isn't here," he mused. "But it's bound to be somewhere very near. I heard its detonation well *inside* this room." He bit his lip in thought, and then instructed: "Jones, you go outside and bring me back a board, if you can find one—a long board. Tear one off the smaller shack, if necessary." He went on with his steady tapping on the wall. "Shoulder high," he murmured, "right here at this door."

JONES came back with the requested board within two minutes and found Hurley now standing in the center of the room, a puzzled frown between his eyes.

He asked: "Jones, if you expected a visitor some night—somebody you expected to sneak in on you and look for something in your house, what would you do?"

"I'd try to catch him, sir," Jones returned unhesitatingly. "I'd sure try to catch him, if I could."

"And how would you do that?" the Coast Guard officer inquired.

"I don't know. But I'd set some kind of trap for him, I guess."

"Exactly. And perhaps you'd rig up a light that you could turn on instantly. You'd put that light where it wouldn't show your own position, but would show you the man who'd come to see you uninvited. Is that too much to expect of you, especially if you'd been visited by the same man before, and found things missing?"

"No sir," Jones declared.

"All right. We've found the light Hames had rigged up for such a purpose. The trap you would have rigged up is around here somewhere. Our job now is to find it—without getting killed. That's the danger, Jones. We mustn't spring this trap against ourselves. I'm afraid that's what poor Burnett did."

He took the board and walked over toward the shrouded body, and turned back toward the front door. For a moment his

eyes searched the wall, going over every inch of space there, finding nothing.

"Jones," he said, "I want you to stand over here where I am now—well out of the line between the front door and where Burnett's body lies. Look back toward the front door. Somewhere on the wall, when I locate the trigger to this trap, a gun should fire. Somewhere near the door. . . . Now, now—there's not a bit of danger if you stay outside the line of fire, son."

With some reluctance, the radio operator took his post, facing the rectangle of open sunlight. Hurley, standing to one side of the storeroom doorway, took the board in both hands and thrust one end cautiously inside. This was dangerous, and he knew it. Beginning with the inner end a foot above the floor, very slowly, he raised the board—very slowly, gradually and steadily—taking care to balance himself away from Burnett's body.

It made him shudder to recall that he had crouched within that lethal doorway when Burnett was dying. He would never know how close he himself had been to death in those long moments; he did not know how close he was right now, if the gun had jumped and swung a little from the former shot.

But nothing happened. The silence was acute and almost ghastly. The board came up to shoulder height. And then, when it reached a certain place, a flash of fire burst before Jones' eyes, and a gun volleyed and reverberated in a roaring explosion. The bullet flicked past Hurley's shoulder and spatted the far wall of the empty room.

"Spot it?" Hurley asked.

"Just over the doorway, sir!" Jones said, incredulous. "Under the eave. But Lieutenant, how—"

"High," said Robert Hurley. "That fooled me. The bullet went straight into Burnett's back. I suppose he must have been stooped over going through the door at the moment his body broke the light against this photo-electric cell. The bullet struck down, but he was bending forward, and it looked as if the shot was fired on a level with its target."

"BUT, Lieutenant," Jones protested, "I don't quite understand it, yet. I don't see how—"

"Hames was an ingenious cuss. This thing he rigged up here is nothing but a sort of burglar-trap. We'd better get that gun, before it shoots somebody else."

They got the gun, an automatic with two shells gone from the clip. And just as they were climbing down, they heard a shout, and then Baxter's raucous voice came through the sultry air outside: "Lieutenant Hurley—come down here!"

So they went down; and there, in the bottom of the dory, was a human form, still drenched from submergence in the sea.

Hayes' face was pale, and he looked sick. Baxter was subdued. "Lieutenant, that—that wasn't any shark I shot," he said, his voice unsteady. "I swear to God it looked like one—and here's the fin to prove it, sir."

Hurley nodded. "Shoulder harness to make the fin stay up in place. Swimming diagonally away from you, you couldn't tell the difference. Load the body into the Seroson, and then we'll bring Burnett down. The tide is coming in, and we'll be able to get off before the 240 has been here very long. I guess it will lay over for a while—might grab some boats Hames was expecting to come in."

LATER, with that gruesome cargo loaded, the Seroson afloat and anchored, and while waiting for the 240 to come around the point of land below, they sat on the wing outside, and Hurley answered half a dozen questions.

"The motive was the thing that bothered me so long," he said. "I could see no earthly reason why Hames should want to murder Burnett, nor could I see how he'd accomplished it. And I thought, until we went back to the cabin the last time, that we were looking for three men, instead of one.

"The flashlight put me on the right track, finally. Hayes, you went over to see where the beam pointed. It pointed to the radio, but the radio was lower than a man's face would be, and the radio was beyond the door against the wall. So the beam would have struck almost equally well into the face of a man who was standing just outside that door. I couldn't see why that flashlight should be there, with a cord to turn it on and off without Hames having to turn his head, or move more than his hand. Remember, he was lying directly under the light, where the light wouldn't show his presence, and where he could see that storeroom door himself. So, when I'd thought of it enough, I knew he put that light there to be able to snap it on somebody when that person came into the

room. The elaborate method of mounting the light made me sure he wanted to be able to see without being seen. So at last I figured that he had been expecting some one to come into the shack at night, expecting them to go to that storeroom. And he wanted to surprise them."

"But who," asked Hayes, "—who'd be prowling around this shack at night?"

"Hi-jackers," said Hurley. "Trying to get Hames' dope, or liquor. Possibly some of them had robbed Hames once before, and he rigged up a trap to catch them on the second visit, and a light to snap on suddenly after they were trapped, or to see any of them who weren't caught in the trap."

"You mean that flashlight was a trap?" Jones asked, frowning.

"No—no, no. Hames had a photo-electric cell inside the storeroom, about a foot beyond the doorway, so that when anybody walked into the room, and got fully inside, that photo-electric cell tripped the gun over the eave. That fooled me, too. I'd looked inside, and hadn't seen any cords, or strings, or loose boards that would have tripped the gun. This thing of his was good as long as the pistol had cartridges in the clip—it would have shot half a dozen men, in turn, as they crowded through the doorway. I suspect he forgot to break the circuit to the gun when he left as he did."

"Then killing Burnett—"

"An oversight on Hames' part, most probably. He'd meant to kill anybody who went into that room at night, and he forgot to turn it off."

BAXTER asked: "Lieutenant, did you know I'd shot Hames?"

"It never occurred to me, until I became sure there had been only one man living here, instead of three. Then I began to look for disguises—methods by which one man could get away from Indian Key while we were looking at him—looking, but not seeing. It just narrowed down, and finally I made a guess Hames was your shark."

He paused, squinting down the coast of Lower Matabumbe, across blue, ruffled sea. "There's your patrol-boat," he declared. "Well, let's get going. By the time we warm our engines, they'll be here. I'll go over to her and tell her skipper what has happened. Thank God we don't have to stay down here and look for dope-ships and fight mosquitoes all night long!"

# REAL EXPERIENCES

*Truth may not be stranger than fiction, but often it is equally interesting. In this belief we offer each month prizes for the best five stories of Real Experience submitted. (For details of this prize contest, see page 5.) First a one-time tenderfoot tells of the exciting episode whereby he won his spurs out in Idaho.*



## Pants Costs Money

By ERIC HAMMOND MANRING

WHEN we dropped off the train at Grangeville and landed in the heart of Idaho, Molly O. and I were as new to things Western as anyone raised on an Eastern farm could be. We had taken seriously an impulse to spend our entire summer in the wildest portion of the Rockies, though lacking both the equipment and the money to do the thing according to Hoyle. We had gathered our nickels together, packed sundry pieces of camp gear, and set forth with all the blissful confidence of the greenhorn. The information we had obtained painted a wonderful picture of the ease of making a living in that section of the mountains, and when the rig which we hired to take us into the high country had deposited us on the shores of a little lake far up in the Bitter Root Range, our first look around us seemed to confirm this report. There was plenty of game; wild fruit—service-berries, gooseberries, strawberries, red raspberries, and huckleberries; trout in the streams, and—well, about everything we needed.

Throughout the summer we hiked, rode, hunted, fished, and in general made ourselves at home. The ranchers in the foothills, the Nez-Percé Indians, and trappers visited with us and we with them. We learned rapidly from all of

these friends, but on some points our education was sadly neglected.

Late that fall we were on a trip into the high country when the sudden threat of a storm caused us to cut across to the old Elk City trail to reach the cabin of old Steve, who had been our hunting partner many times through the summer. We reached the cabin just as the first huge flakes of snow began to fall.

Steve lived alone most of the time, and being handicapped by a crippled leg, could not get around in the timber on foot very well. On this account I had found occasion to help him several times. So, when we pushed open the door, and found him gone, our first concern was for him. A search of the meadow through the glasses, and a trip to the barn, revealed that he had taken the team and buckboard.

"He has more than likely gone to town for supplies, bud," I said, and looking up at the rolling clouds, continued: "From the look of things, this storm may be a bear—maybe I'd better check up on the wood-pile while you throw together some grub."

One look was enough: Steve didn't have enough wood cut to fill the kitchen wood-box! Remembering the old man's condition, we talked it over as we ate,

and decided to stay until I could bring in enough fuel to keep the stoves going for a few weeks.

A second trip to the barn convinced me that getting the logs down after they were cut was going to take some figuring; for the only horse left on the place was a little buckskin saddle-pony which I found backed up against the lee side of the barn. He was a sleepy-looking, delicate-built little fellow, but— Well, there is where my education was shy several volumes!

**P**ASSING between head-high stumps on the slope where Steve cut wood in the winter snows, I climbed to the ridge south of the cabin. There stood a dense growth of tall lodgepole pine, many of them dead and dry. Selecting about fifteen of them, I felled them, and cut them into sixteen-foot lengths preparatory to skidding them down to the cabin. Then I returned to the corral for the pony. Farmer-like, I walked up and took him by the mane to lead him to the barn. He snorted, tore loose, whirled wild-eyed, and lashed out at me with his heels as he leaped away. I hurried to the stable for a halter, but when I returned with it, could not get within twenty feet of that fool buckskin. With my steam-pressure rising at every jump, I ran to the stable door, opened it, and hazed him inside after sundry maneuverings and whole-hearted clouts with the rope-end.

Billy, as I then remembered his name to be, became docile enough when he was shut into the box-stall at the end of the stable. That is, he was docile until I dragged out the smallest set of work harness and attempted to get it on him. Then hell broke loose! Around and around we went in the narrow confines of the stall: I was stepped on, battered and bruised, but finally got that harness cinched in place. We started outside, but just as we went through the door, the trace-chains rattled on the sill. Away went Billy with a bawl—and with me—a bucking, pitching cyclone. We went all over that clearing as unmindful of the increasing force of the storm as if we were in the snug log barn. At last, wild-eyed, and breathing hard, the pony stopped. I led him back to the barn to get the drag-chain and single-tree after having fastened up those traces.

Draping the chain about my shoulders, I picked up the rest of the gear in one hand, and swung to the pony's back

to ride him up to the cuttings. He went quietly enough, but every move he made, even to the way he held his ears, registered his anger at the insult he was being subjected to. I was too thick to take warning from those danger-signals, and rode between the high stumps up the slope in blissful ignorance of what was coming.

Billy twisted his head around to stare back at me, snorting softly as he watched me rig the chain to the first log. I led him forward when that job was done; the traces tightened under the load; then—things happened! Up in the air he went on his hind-legs until he nearly fell over backward; he squealed, and struck at me with his front feet; he bucked, sunfished, kicked and whirled, finally tangling in the misfit harness and going down with a crash. I lost my grip on the reins the first jump, and with it my temper; so when I finally got him untangled from the harness and on his feet again, I climbed aboard and took a death-grip on those ribbons.

**F**OR a minute nothing happened; then with a bawl that fool buckskin went into action again. The first flurry came mighty near being my last; for after two or three wild pitches, Billy reached for the sky with those front feet and went over backward into a pile of brush. We landed with a crash, and I picked myself up, thankful that I had not been caught underneath. My shoulder was cut, my shirt in ribbons from the stabbing points of the broken limbs into which we had fallen, and my "white man's pride" was bent upon calling out the reserves to a finish fight.

Looking at the struggling pony for a moment, I turned about, and leaving him to get to his feet when and how he could, ran down the slope to the cabin. The partner of my joys and sorrows was standing at the door with a worried look on her face, but the glassy-eyed stubbornness she saw on my face stopped her from asking me to call the battle off. Inside the cabin I quickly found the pair of Spanish spurs of Steve's for which I had come. Buckling them on, I rushed out into the storm again, jumped the creek, and ran up the slope. Snow beat into my face on the rising wind, but it went unnoticed.

Billy meanwhile had backed around with his tail to the storm, and the first inkling he had of my approach was when I leaped upon his hurricane-deck and

started "combing his hair" vigorously with those spurs.

In a flash the battle started where it had left off. I turned his head down the slope as he bucked and bawled, thinking he might dislike the punishment enough to make a break for it, but he wildcatted all over the same twenty-foot circle again and again. At last, breathing mighty hard, he came down stiff-legged, and stopped as though to think it over. He rolled his eyes and twisted his head around to see me; then, before I knew what he was up to, he suddenly bared his teeth, ducked his head back and made a grab. I don't know what he grabbed for, but he sure got a mouthful. With his ears flattened, and eyes as mean as a wolf's, he set those teeth in the leg of my pants and a generous area of hide beneath them, then pulled. The only thing that kept him from hauling me off his back was the fact that those aforesaid breeches were literally on their last legs. The most vital portion of them, including the most of the right half, was ripped off.

That move did not soothe my feelings much, and I sure put heart and soul into the next jab of those spurs. That crazy buckskin gave the piece of pants he held in his teeth a final shake, dropped it, and with his ears flat along his outstretched neck, lit out down that slope as if he were out to catch a train. I clung firmly to the bouncing hames and watched the tall stumps whiz by, expecting the zigzagging log clattering behind us to become wedged between some of the obstructions on the slope, and either jerk us to a sudden stop or tear the harness off.

But nothing happened save a lot of speedy motion toward the cabin, until we came to the creek. Billy had jumped that creek, waded in it, drunk from it, and for all I know had rolled in it, a thousand times; but now it seemed to strike fear to his heart—if he had a heart. He put on a four-wheel-brake stop at the edge of the water, while I slid up his rigid neck with the collar, as far as it went; then pinwheeled on over his ears to land on my back in the coldest water in the world.

**I** SAT up, taking in the picture of that fool pony: his legs still braced, his nostrils flared, and his eyes—well, I may have been prejudiced, but it seemed to me there was a look of amusement in those eyes. Any way, I bounced to my

feet and began rawhiding the south end of that buckskin with the first shillalah at hand. It was like spanking a baby, at first—I had everything my own way; then a pair of lightning heels flicked out at me about six times in a row, skinning my knuckles at last, and sending the club flying.

That put some sense into the proceedings. Climbing back aboard, I began with the spurs again. After a wild pitch or two, Billy jumped the creek cleanly, and with the log rolling and slithering behind him, made two laps around the ranch-buildings before he could be stopped beside the woodshed. He snorted and trembled while the chain was being unhooked, but barring a whirl or two, he went quietly enough back across the creek and up to the cuttings.

That was the major engagement. We skidded down the whole pile of logs that afternoon in the growing storm, with only a few half-hearted attempts at renewing hostilities. Wet to the skin, tired, and wolf-hungry, I cast a satisfied eye over that tarp-covered pile of pitchy wood, then took Billy to the stable, where I unharnessed him, rubbed him down and gave him a good feed of oats.

**D**ARKNESS had fallen when that was finished; and weary and bruised, I plodded to the cabin to clean up for supper. Boy, howdy, but those biscuits, venison, coffee and huckleberries, smelled like food for the gods! The warmth of the cabin was just beginning to dry out my soggy clothing, however, when a long-drawn "Yaho-o-o-o!" out in the storm caused me to grab for my hat again. I rigged up a lantern, and stepped out into the smother of whirling snow which was now falling.

Steve was just swinging his weary team up to the door, and his face beamed at the unexpected welcome of a warm house. He acknowledged our greeting as he climbed stiffly down.

"You duck into the house and get the ice out of your whiskers while I take care of the team, Steve," I said.

The old man handed me the lines without a word, then faced into the storm like a hound on a scent.

"Shore glad I'm here instid of somewheres on the trail," he remarked; "but I wisht they was a leetle wood in the shed. This looks like it might be a bustin' big snow. May keep this up a week."

"I cut and worked down about three

## PANTS COSTS MONEY

cords of poles this afternoon," I said quickly.

Steve paused in the act of opening the door, and turned around to look at me.

"You done which?" he queried.

"There's about three cords already down here, Steve," I repeated.

He looked at me for almost a minute, while I went ahead with unhitching the team, then asked slowly:

"But you come here afoot, didn't you? Where'd you git a horse to skid with?"

"That pony in the corral."

"That buckskin? You didn't put harness on him?"

"Yes," I replied, leading the team forward.

Suddenly Steve chuckled, and as I headed for the barn, he called after me:

"I'm shore goin' to take a good look at you when you come in!"

True to his word, when the team had been taken care of, and I returned to the cabin, Steve led me over to the full glare of the gasoline lamp. Slowly he turned me around. I was a little bit embarrassed, and made a grab for the hanging remnants of my pants to pull the gaping seat together. The old man chuckled, then roared with laughter. Weakly he dropped into the big bearskin-covered easy-chair. The first explosion of merriment had peeved me some, but when another good look started him off into another spasm, I felt my temper slipping anchor.

"What the devil's so funny?" I demanded.

After sundry snorts and chuckles, he regained composure enough to reply:

"Partner, you've shore graduated. You and me have been around some together this summer, but it never come around so's you had any mean hosses to handle. Never struck me you'd been around hosses much. But that buckskin, now, beats anything I ever heard of: the only other feller that ever tried to put harness on him, that pony took him around the barn like a man-eatin' tiger, and put him up a tree. That feller was a regular buckaroo from the Diamond outfit, too. Then here comes you, a blamed stubborn tenderfoot, and skids logs a half a day with him. Then you never bats an eye when you tells me about it. You aint no tenderfoot no more, after breakin' that broom-tailed bobcat to harness! Next time you skid with a saddle-hoss, though, you mind what I tell you, and put a saddle on him and skid with a rope. Pants costs money!"

# Reeling

*Two ambitious young men undertake to finance a world tour with a motion-picture camera.*

By JACK GLENN

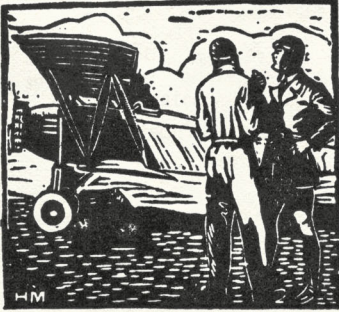
ON the left side of a street in Paris about halfway down as one walks toward the river, there nestles among the moldy buildings a tiny café. At night a dim gas lamp flickers over a crooked sign: "*Bal de Famille*." Inside, the laborers and gentlemen of leisure from the nether side of Parisian life gather each evening to sing, dance, make love and, if the occasion arises, fight. Just around the corner, a liberal-minded *gendarme* patrols the street, disturbing his tranquillity only to stop a murder.

Into this pleasure-house of the workingman Louis de Rochemont and I sauntered one Saturday night. Louis was the assistant editor for a news-film company with whom I had worked on the story of Lindbergh's flight. I had been back on my old job with the *Herald* for two weeks when Louis arrived. He had wanted to talk to me at some place off the beaten path, so I had suggested this little *Bal de Famille*, remembered from student days.

We sat down at a heavy table, scarred and wine-soaked by years of service. On either side of us, greasy men, smelling of garlic, lay against the heaving breasts of their women, perhaps dreaming, perhaps telling their tales of love, perhaps drunk—but all living their own lives unworried, at least for tonight. They had not bothered to remove their long-billed caps or ragged scarves; they had not washed the dirt of the day's labor from the calloused fists that held the perfumed hands of the women. An off-chord orchestra in a corner of the narrow room celebrated their escape from the world of toil. Music, wine, and love—they asked nothing more. They scarcely noticed us.

For a long time, Louis, silent, pulled at his cigarette, adding smoke-puffs to the murky air. I regarded him closely for

# Round the World



the first time: Six feet of energy topped by brown curls that defied "slicking." He had been everywhere, it seemed, and was I knew, one of those rare persons who successfully combine adventure and business. The Navy had claimed him as a mere boy, Annapolis had got him next, then the film business, and finally the *Wanderlust*.

This concoction of business and romance turned toward me and spoke through a cigarette fog: "Fellow, how would you like to come to Constantinople with me?"

My face must have betrayed skepticism, for he went on hurriedly: "I'm serious; I want you to be my actor. I have a leave of absence to make a series of pictures for the Navy. I'm going to show the adventures of bluejackets in foreign lands—going all over the world, and for a studio I'll have ships, the open sea and far-away ports.

"You'll be the only phony part of the picture, but nobody'll know whether you're a sailor or not—that is, if you learn how to salute. Besides being the main bluejacket, you can help me write the script and help direct." We would go by a roundabout route, Louis added; he hoped to pick up foreign news-reel stories that he could sell to American companies.

In a daze I tramped back to my garret on the Rue des Saints-Pères. My dreams that night toured the world. . . .

In Vienna we found a people embittered but proud, their hearts cracked like the rabble-ravaged palace in the heart of the city. But the music and the food were still there, and crowds still filled the *Volksgarten* to dine and wine.

After two days of sightseeing we finally got down to business. Work began in the courtyard of the old palace.

To get a good camera angle, Louis climbed up on a monument commemorating something or other. He was so busy adjusting the camera that he did not notice he was treading on the marble toes of an Austrian hero of the old régime. However, a dignified old man on a bench near by did notice it, and hailed a passing policeman, who swaggered over toward me, swinging a club.

Louis had not noticed what was going on. "Camera! Now act as if you'd seen this place for the first time. No, don't look scared. You're not scared of anything—you're an American gob!"

I must have been a pretty sorry-looking gob as the policeman strode toward me. How was I going to make myself understood to an Austrian cop?

At my elbow, he screwed up his face and spoke: "Yuh gotta be a little careful, Mac." Perfect Brooklynese! "The old gent's sore because he thinks you're insultin' the monument. Pretend I'm bawlin' yuh out, and signal your buddy to keep crankin'. That'll lemme in on the picture too. See?"

Did I see? I could have kissed him. "Grind away!" I yelled to Louis. "This is a gob getting arrested by a foreign policeman."

The cop did his part well. He tugged viciously at my collar. He shook me until my teeth rattled. The old man on the bench was all triumphant smiles.

I said to the policeman: "Where in the world did you learn the Yankee language?"

He bared his teeth and jerked violently at my arm. "I was a cop in Brooklyn for twelve years. Do you know Flatbush Avenue?"

"You said it. I had a girl friend out there once and used to go broke every week-end, paying taxi fare," I admitted.

I cowered low as if afraid. "Why did you come back over here?"

"I came over to see the old folks. Now I can't get back to America, dammitall. They won't lemme in. . . . Act a little more like you was afraid; the old guy has stopped smiling." And he drew back his club as if to strike me. The old gentleman began to smile again.

The cop pulled out his notebook. "Now I'll pretend I'm writing you up.

Here is my name and address; be sure and send me a clip of the film. I was in a movie on the Paramount lot in Astoria once—a extra. Had a big time." He growled, glared at me and handed me the slip of paper.

I promised to send him a clipping of the film. He wiggled a menacing finger in my face and said, "Much obliged." Then he went over to the old man. I suppose he told him I was to be shot at sunrise, for the old man slapped the cop on the shoulder in grim satisfaction.

**WE** wound up our work in Vienna and left for Bucharest, with plans to make a movie of a complete day with the five-year-old king. We sought out the American consul and told him what we wanted. He was sorry, but the young monarch, his mother, Princess Ileana and Queen Marie were up at Constanza, the watering-resort on the Black Sea, and wouldn't be back for a month.

Just outside Bucharest was the Baneasa air-field, a terminal of a French company. Small Spad-Bleriot planes, seating two passengers and the pilot, took you from there over Bulgaria, above a corner of the Black Sea, across European Turkey to Constantinople. A pleasant way to spend the morning, if you had courage and your digestion was in good order. At least, a quick way to get to Constantinople—if you had good luck.

Early in the morning, as the soft sunshine warmed the damp air at Baneasa Field, we climbed through the side of a small plane, deposited our bags and gear at our feet, and signaled the pilot that we were ready to go. The pilot was Jean Rugammer, whose young, friendly eyes flashed with the reckless abandon of one who lives each day as if it were his last.

And in that plane, any day might be. . .

The motor's popping swelled into steady drumfire, and in a few seconds we were bouncing across the field. The earth sank. Houses and people shrank to specks as we climbed. The roaring of the motor was frightful. The plane was primitive, old. Cracks in the floor revealed a convulsive earth far below. The plane pitched and tossed, as if shying at the enormous clouds that soared above and dwarfed the tiny craft roaring into their midst and hurtling us along helpless, between heaven and earth.

The countryside was a patchwork of brown, gray, green. Occasional streams, so slender they seemed skeins of silk,

twisted through the fields. Presently the whole countryside appeared to boil up: hills, then steep mountains, whose sharp sides plunged into black depths: a range in lower Bulgaria.

Rugammer was behind and a little above us. I turned to peer at him through the small window: writing backward on its cracked glass surface I scribbled a question as to where we were and how much longer the trip would take. Louis and I were both feeling warnings of stomach rebellion. Rugammer's lips shaped themselves into the word "Bulgaria." He held up two fingers to indicate the remaining hours of the trip.

He pointed to an infinitesimal village clinging precariously to the side of a mountain, then to a spot on a tattered map he held up. I lost interest; the rough air over the mountains had given our plane the hiccoughs. We were bumping along as if on a cobbled sky; the clouds were like boulders battering us about. The plane hissed and groaned as Rugammer turned its nose upward and roared into a strong headwind. The spitting of the motor into the howling of the gale produced an unearthly shriek.

To the pitching was now added a list from side to side. It grew more pronounced. I stared wildly through the side window as earth rocked up to heaven and back again. Louis seemed to be sideways on a violent seesaw.

We were about to surrender to that terrifying malady, air-sickness, when the motor suddenly stopped. We plunged down, down, at a million miles a minute.

I whirled toward Rugammer. His face was wild but firmly set. He was adjusting his parachute. He pointed toward the motor. We peered forward. The motor was red hot. Rugammer kept trying to explain something by signs. He was still working at his parachute. I looked about us. No parachutes.

I banged on the window. "What's the matter?" I screamed. He couldn't hear. A shrieking drowned my words as the plane plunged downward.

Down, down! Mountains beneath us, growing larger every second. Not even a fighting chance. . . . Suddenly the plane righted itself, the motor growled, began an angry roar. We climbed again.

We peered anxiously at the motor. The crimson had left its smoking sides, cooled by the plunge toward earth. But as we climbed we noticed the awful glow once more creep into the ashy metal. Landing impossible. Mountains every-



where, ready to crush us in jagged jaws. A broken water-line, improper cooling. The plane might burst into flames.

Louis, white, forces a weak smile. The plane again is rocking from side to side. It darts about, now rising, now falling. A blistered motor, plunging into the cold damp of the clouds, falling back as its scarlet cheeks grow hotter. It will burst and fall, a flaming cinder, onto the ugly mountain peaks. Three charred human skeletons sprawled on the desolate rocks. . . .

Once more the deafening roar ceases. Rugammer has shut off the motor. Down we go, a meteor hurtled through space, the ruddy nose of the plane searing the shrieking air. The earth rises to meet us.

"Louis," I yell feebly, "there comes the ground."

"Damned if it isn't." I scarcely can hear him. His grin is sickly.

Rocks rapidly magnifying; trees growing larger with each awful second. So this is dying!

Suddenly a popping, a stubborn choking, a buzzing roar of the motor, the nose points upward, and we are seeking once more the haven of the clouds.

This can't go on forever. But we are gaining distance. The mountains have dwindled to hills. We shall surely find flat country soon. If the motor will only hold out! It is once more growing red. Resigned, I look around toward Rugammer. His marble face is still determined, unafraid. He nods to me, reassuringly. I feel better.

A yell from Rugammer, which I hear even above the thunder of the motor: "*Voilà!*" He points earthward.

I look. Flat ground. A prairie. Houses, moving objects; a village.

Rugammer is anxiously peering downward. Suddenly he nods; he has made a decision. He jerks the controls; we shoot earthward, the steaming motor throbbing with the racket of a riveting machine.

We leave the clouds. They seem now to smile in the sunshine at the game we are playing with the earth. The motor chokes, groans, roars a bit, sputters, is silent. Swaying, circling, the plane glides toward the ground.

"Hold on!" I yell.

Down, down, down—housetops, a swarm of tiny figures running toward us. Only a few hundred feet now. A final circle, and Rugammer heads into the wind, the plane a fluttering, crippled bird.

My lips pressed together, I unhook the belt that holds me in my seat, ready to jump if the machine bursts into flames. A growing sense of security. The ground has never looked so wonderful. For years, it seems, we have been wandering helplessly among the clouds!

Down, down, almost scraping the ground. A jolt; a grinding beneath us. We are bumping over the rough field. We stop. We slump in our seats; we are safe.

Instantly Rugammer is out of the plane. He opens the side door.

"*Voilà!*" he says with a sweep of his hand; then with a grin, "*Quel sport!*" Hands on hips, he throws back his head and laughs. We see nothing funny.

Louis is still remote. Slowly he rises from his seat and steps to the ground. I follow.

By only a few inches we have missed the small iron fence of a graveyard. It could easily have upset us, claimed us. People are crowding all around; dark, greasy-looking people, streaming in from everywhere. Uniformed men—soldiers, no doubt. A curious chattering. Red sashes; dark, heavy eyebrows.

We are in Turkey.

**B**UT we were not long learning that airplane accidents are against the law in Turkey. With what seemed to be the entire nation breathlessly pouring in from all sides, led by half a hundred armed soldiers, we were soon the center of a chattering human vortex. The soldiers, no doubt perceiving that we were unarmed, smiled their good wishes, and one of them was brave enough to approach our crippled plane, reciting with a thick accent, "*Je parle Français,*" and informing us that we were on the outskirts of Kirk-Killissee, just across the border from Bulgaria. With a show of malicious satisfaction, he went on in lame French: "Messieurs have made a grave error. This is a restricted military district. Airplanes are forbidden to land here."

He said something in Arabic to another soldier, who took up a post beside the plane. Then he motioned for us to follow him. Rugammer made sure our luggage was intact, locked the door, and we pushed through the mob of ragged urchins and scarecrow soldiers and walked half a mile to an unpainted hut, where, with sugary ceremony, the interpreter turned us over to the chief bigwig of the Kirk-Killissee police.

This bigwig (whom for convenience I call a préfet, not knowing his Turkish title) was a short, muscular person with shining black eyes and a shaggy brow. He spoke no language we could understand. He took our passports and gave them to a gaunt boy in blooming trousers. Pants and passports disappeared through a crooked doorway. The préfet motioned for us to sit down. We sat. We sat for two hours.

FINALLY the gaunt boy returned with our passports. With a growl the préfet took them and wrote out two long papers, pasting one inside each of the passports. Then he sputtered away at the interpreter, who told us the man wanted six photographs of each of us. What? No photographs? And we dared come to Turkey? The préfet scowled and hurried us away in the care of the interpreter to get our pictures taken.

A photographer's shop at last. How different from the Turkey I had heard about, where photographs were thought to invoke the evil eye. The man took our pictures amid a great deal of giggling, and told us to come back in two hours. We lunched at a dirty shop on sour goat's milk and a clamjamfery of boiled rice, raisins, spices and ancient chicken—cooked to a pulp in a wash-tub. When we finally got our photographs and took them to the préfet it was midafternoon. The préfet growled long and loudly at the interpreter, who explained that Monsieur le Préfet would have us remember that although we were on Turkish soil we had not yet officially entered the country. "The police in Constantinople will attend to that," said the interpreter.

He refused to explain what he meant by the last remark, nor would he reveal the meaning of the two papers the préfet had pasted inside our passports. We followed him to a frame building, where dust lay thick on the unpainted planks: Kirk-Killisee's only hotel.

The proprietor opened the door of a room. Dust rose in cloudlets as he trudged across the squeaking floor. A nauseating odor sent Louis back out into the hall. Six rusty iron beds lined the walls. The interpreter told Rugammer to make his choice.

"You mean I must share my room with others?" asked the dismayed Frenchman.

The interpreter explained that unless one consented to having others in the

room with him he must pay for all six beds. Rugammer, peering through the window at a group of vulturous natives below, hastily accepted this condition.

As we walked down the hall, a splintered door opened. Stringy-haired, dark heads peered out. Wide-open eyes indicated an internationally feminine curiosity. Rugammer chuckled and slapped Louis on the back. "*Ah, des poules aussi!*" ("Ah, chickens, also!")

"You can have them all," said Louis. "We're leaving your beautiful city as fast as an auto can rattle."

"You mean," said the Frenchman, "you propose to go to Constantinople by automobile? *Diab!e!* You would be disemboweled and left on the plains to rot. The land is full of bandits!"

At the mention of the word "automobile" the interpreter had raced away down the street, and presently returned in an old car driven by an ape-looking native whose face twitched constantly from some nervous disorder. Here was the only car in the city, said the interpreter. When it had been made plain to the driver that we wanted to go by auto to Constantinople he began to protest with wild gesticulations. The interpreter drew him to one side, and the two argued in low tones. Finally the driver, mollified by we knew not what, indicated that he would take us. The interpreter announced that the fee would be fifty dollars. At our protests he gurgled, "Ah, but messieurs, the danger! Think of how the poor chauffeur is risking his life!"

We finally argued the price down to nineteen dollars, drove to the plane to collect our gear, and saying good-by to the still-protesting Rugammer, clattered away to the dusky south.

AT a village of flat-topped houses growing dim in the failing daylight we managed by signs to make the driver understand we wanted food. He drove us to a mud hovel we soon identified as a barber shop. It was also the village inn, and from its pudgy *kahweji* we procured six flat bread cakes and three tiny cups of coffee, which the *kahweji* dragged from a bed of coals that blushed in a corner of the dingy room. Here was a turning point in my coffee-drinking career. The contents of that overgrown thimble, frothing in brown bubbles over the side, planted in me a passion for Turkish Java that I have never overcome. I gulped it down with great

gusto, much to the disgust of our athletic-faced chauffeur, who sipped his coffee as if it were the choicest liqueur. Nothing I did seemed to please that guy.

When we took to the road again, night had arrived, a great moon lighted the prairie, ambering the hilly horizon, and the auto sang a sputtering tune as it scurried through the moonlit loneliness.

By a small stone bridge, spanning a dip in the grass, we stopped. The driver alighted and ran up a short hill to the left. Our anxious gaze followed him. Atop the hill, visible in the moonlight, we could see a hut that stood like a fat and ragged sentinel against the sky. From this a dwarf emerged as an animal from his lair. The two inky bulks moved down the hillside toward us. As they neared the car, chattering to each other, their black eyes reflecting the moon, we could see that the dwarf held a rifle.

**S**UDDENLY the dwarf pushed the driver toward us. The gesticulating driver pulled a ragged notebook from his sash, pointed to Louis' pocket and made vigorous signs as if writing with a pencil. Louis saw the light; he handed out our passports, a mouthful of teeth flashed in the moonlight, the grinning Turk jumped to the side of the dwarf, and the two were off up the hill toward the hut.

Relieved, I sank back into the cushions and sighed like a punctured tire. The moon was high. A timid breeze was stroking the long grass under the bridge. From afar came the faint notes of a pipe, captured by the wind. The grass blades danced in rhythm. Soft bleatings. A shepherd and his flock, just beyond the hill. The music rose and fell as they moved along. It grew louder, died away. Night time on these plains must not have changed for centuries.

Papers examined, we were once more humming along. The prairie rolled into hillocks. Still no sign of life. No village, no tree; only the stars, the moon, deep shadows between the khaki hills. About midnight we saw flickering lights beyond a hill. We arrived in a village and were driven straight to the police station. Two officers came out, and one of them, in French, demanded to see our passports. He wrote out two pages of Turkish and pasted them in the booklets, which began to resemble scrapbooks.

"You are on the outskirts of Constantinople," said the officer. He took

his fellow-policeman by the arm. "This man will go with you to the city."

The man got in beside the driver and we began to realize that there was something in the wind. We crossed a long bridge of irregular stones and shortly were snaking through crooked streets amid a jumble of things Eastern and Western. Here and there a minaret reached for the moon, and great domes curved into the starry sky.

"Old Stamboul," breathed Louis, with such a hungry look that I began to think he had left a sweetheart there. "Fella, we're here!" He slapped my shoulder, inviting enthusiasm. But between the growing mystery of the policeman in the front seat and the speed of the auto as it plunged at lighted doorways and swerved abeam of donkeys and old women, I was confused.

"Hotel Tokatlian!" shouted Louis to the driver, who for the first time during the whole two-hundred-mile drive understood an order. Louis, grinning like a homing prodigal as we passed haunts he had known, said with immense satisfaction: "Here at last!"

"Accompanied by a policeman," I added skeptically.

We crossed the Galata bridge into Pera, the more "up and coming" section of Constantinople. At the hotel, the policeman watched us register, followed suit, and was assigned the room adjoining ours. We went to our room. So did he. He unlocked the door between the two rooms, touched his cap to us, and entered his own quarters. I looked at Louis; Louis looked at me. Ten minutes later we started downstairs and found the policeman waiting outside our door, with an interpreter.

**W**E asked him what the idea was. "Tomorrow," said the interpreter, "you will see a few men."

"Policemen?" I asked.

"Policemen," was the answer.

"My God!" I wailed. "More cops!"

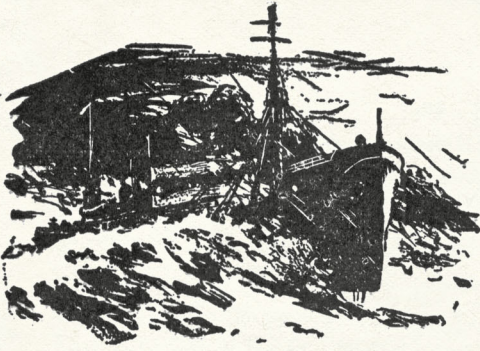
The interpreter assured us that everything would be all right in a few days.

"A few days!" I howled. "We haven't but a few days to be here. Say, we didn't come all the way to Constantinople to bum around with the police!"

The man told me to save my words for Galata Serai.

"Galata Serai is a prison," Louis informed me gently.

**Out of one jam—and into another! Further picturesque episodes in the career of these camera adventurers will be described next month.**



*What happened aboard a British submarine when she was attacked in a snow-storm by a mysterious destroyer.*

By V. S. GODFREY

# Rammed!

**D**URING the month of January 1917 I was serving as second in command of a British coastal submarine patrolling a part of the English Channel.

Our routine on these patrols was fairly simple: During daylight hours the boat would remain submerged, running at slow speed on the motors at a depth of about sixty feet, and coming up twenty feet every fifteen minutes to look through the periscope for any sign of Fritz. Every evening after dusk the boat was brought to the surface, the powerful Diesel engines started, and throughout the night a charge kept on the electric batteries to enable us to have enough "juice" for the following day's diving patrol.

During the day the captain, navigator and myself kept the "periscope watch" with the two latter officers taking the night watches on the surface. The commanding officer was a young lieutenant of twenty-four, the navigator an old shell-back from the merchant service. I was a young sub-lieutenant and very new to the game. . . .

That day passed like all the others. Nothing had been sighted except ships of our own Channel traffic and those of our allies.

It got dark about six-thirty, I remember, and at about seven we heard the welcome order, "Surface." It was most refreshing to open the conning-tower hatch and feel the cool breeze blowing through the interior of the boat. After eight hours of being submerged a submarine's insides become a bit "fuggy."

I had the first watch. We were about four miles south of Beachy Head, and I could just make out the outline of the

high cliffs through the inky darkness. At about ten o'clock it commenced to blow hard from the northeast and the sudden change of wind brought a snow-storm. The driving snowflakes brought the visibility down to a few hundred yards. The wind moaning and tearing through the wireless aërials piled the snow up in high ridges on the weather side of the periscope-shafts, and built up little tufts of snow on the bridge screen and sides of the conning-tower. Every now and again an extra large wave would rise up over the bows, race along the narrow casing over the pressure hull and slap against the outside of the conning-tower, drenching us with heavy spray which formed ice on the edges of our duffle coats.

In these war days all submarines were kept in what was known as diving trim, that is, with slightly negative buoyancy on the surface, so that when it was necessary to dive in an emergency and the main ballast tanks were flooded the boat would submerge very quickly. If a "crash" or emergency dive was necessary, the officer of the watch simply needed to press the diving klaxons, which sounded a warning to all hands in the interior of the boat. The crew then sprang to their stations, and the boat was dived quickly without further orders. In this manner an average-sized submarine could be brought from the surface to a depth of thirty feet in less than thirty seconds.

It was becoming increasingly difficult to stand on the narrow bridge. The wind had increased to a full gale, and the boat was behaving like a corkscrew in the heavy sea, turning and twisting like a frightened animal.

I had just decided to reduce speed and inform the skipper that I had done so,

when a shout sounded above the noise of the wind: "There's something dead ahead, sir; it looks like white breakers."

I craned my neck over the bridge-screen but could see nothing. The snow and sleet stung my face. I pressed the diving klaxons and saw the signalman disappear down the hatch as I did so.

Instead of following him on the instant, as I should have done directly I had sounded the alarm, I once more strained my eyes to try and catch a glimpse of what the signal-man had seen. On the starboard bow, not a hundred yards distant, was a huge bow wave. I had just time to see the dim outline of a destroyer's mast and funnels coming full speed to ram, before I sprang for the hatch.

A chilly feeling made itself felt near the region of my spine. The hatch was just visible under a vortex of whirling water! The boat had commenced her sharp dive into the sea, and the water had already begun to pour through the open hatch. The rush of water took me with it. I had a nasty moment closing the hatch but succeeded, after a few gallons of sea water poured into the boat.

The captain was already at the controls giving his orders quietly, one lean brown hand resting on the periscope-handles to steady himself against the steep angle of the boat. My arrival down the ladder was greeted by him with a slight smile. I knew I was in for a strafing when things had quieted down. I had not been very bright in leaving things so late, and by my stupidity had risked all our lives.

AS I picked myself up from the deck of the control-room where I had fallen in my mad rush down the ladder, a terrific crash sounded overhead. The boat rolled over to an alarming angle, righted herself and then seemed to lift bodily in the water. The whirl of a rapidly moving screw could be heard quite plainly overhead, then silence. Suddenly the bows dipped, the submarine took up a steep angle down by the bow and commenced a deep dive.

We looked at each other. It seemed as if we were in for it. Our enemy's keel had apparently cut clean through our conning-tower and upper deck casing, but by a miracle had missed our pressure hull. The sudden blow had, however, started us sinking like a stone.

"Blow Number one and two main ballast. Hard to rise forward hydroplanes.

Full speed ahead both motors." The captain gave his orders quietly, and the sharp hiss of air told us that the first order was being obeyed. Air at high pressure was being forced into the foremost tanks and driving out the water in an effort to lighten the bows. The indicator showed that the hydroplanes fitted outside the hull were set at an angle to force the bows toward the surface. I gazed fascinated at the depth gauge. Sixty feet, eighty feet, one hundred feet!

THE skipper glanced above. There was no sign of any leak. "Missed our pressure hull," he said. "I bet he's made a sad mess of our periscopes and bridge, though. Pilot, what is the depth—are we near the bottom?"

"Thirty-five fathoms where we dived, sir." The navigator was bending over the tiny chart-table. "The chart shows a rocky bottom, average depth forty fathoms."

I glanced at the depth-gauge again, as I think we all did. One hundred twenty feet and still going down rapidly. Good God, would she ever stop? Diving at this speed onto a rocky bottom! Suddenly a narrow bar of water shot across the compartment from the side, striking the opposite side with great force. The shock of the collision had loosened a rivet in the hull, and the tremendous water-pressure at this depth had forced it out. We tried the bilge pump, but found it would not work at this pressure.

It began to get fearfully hot all of a sudden—why, I do not know; maybe it was the way we were feeling. I know the sweat began coming out on my face when that pump wouldn't work, and I think it did on the others too.

"She's leveling off a bit now, sir!"—in a tone of relief from the coxswain, his eyes glued to the spirit level. True, the bubble had begun to creep slowly toward the middle. The angle of descent had become noticeably less. The depth-gauge needle now stood at 210 feet, remained there and began to creep backward for the first time.

The captain now gave the order to blow all tanks. We would have to come to the surface and risk it. Try to escape under cover of the darkness. It was no good remaining submerged with that leak in the control-room.

The submarine lost depth quickly, and in a short while was checked at a depth of twenty feet. It was found impossible to move either periscope up or down, and

## RAMMED!

we concluded they must have been badly bent or broken by our attacker's keel.

As we could hear no sound of a ship in the vicinity through the hydrophones, the captain judged it prudent to come to the surface. The skipper was the first up the conning-tower hatch, and I heard him mutter an exclamation as he stepped on to the bridge. I had followed him up the ladder, but was hardly prepared for what we saw in the dim rays of an electric torch.

The destroyer's keel had cut a deep swath from well forward on the starboard side of the upper deck casing right through the bridge, conning-tower and the after side of the casing. The foremost periscope was cut completely through and the after one was twisted over at right angles. A slight scoring was visible along the pressure-hull made by the scraping of the destroyer's keel. An inch or two nearer the surface when she struck us, and our hull would have been ripped open like a tin of sardines.

We made our way slowly back to the harbor, and as we warped alongside the dockyard wall we must have presented a strange sight to the few workmen who had gathered to take our lines. Alongside the jetty next to us a British destroyer lay with her bows and lower part of her stem crumpled back about a foot. We wondered a little. We ceased wondering when presently we were visited by the commander-in-chief, who, after inspecting the damage showed us a copy of a letter he had just written:

To my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty:

Sirs

I have the honour to report that while H.M.S. *Daisy* was patrolling she encountered a German submarine which she rammed on the surface and without doubt sank approximately four miles southwest of Beachy Head. She waited for an hour in the vicinity but there being no further signs except a quantity of oil which appeared on the surface she concluded the submarine had been sunk and returned to harbour. A detailed report of her damage is being forwarded.

"I shall have to write another, canceling that now, I suppose," he grinned. "Hard luck on the captain of the *Daisy*. I was going to recommend him for the D.S.O. No doubt he would have got it if you hadn't come back." We failed to see the point of this remark, but judged it wiser not to say anything.

# Fire Back-stage

*Trapped in the scenery loft of a burning theater.*

By JOE LIPPMAN

WHEN it happened, I was nearing the finish of a summer week's engagement at a theater in a large Eastern city. The current policy of the house was first-run pictures and that glorified version of modern vaudeville, the "unit," a condensed Broadway revue. The theater was a partially renovated opera house of the olden days, and much of the ancient equipment remained, some of it still in use.

It was the first evening performance, our third that day; and as the heavy velvet drapes swirled shut on the glittering finale, I descended from a twenty-foot upstage platform that supported a Grecian temple. Picking my way carefully between spotlight standards and flying leg drop sets, I went to my dressing-room, which I occupied alone this week in solitary grandeur.

After wiping off my make-up, and hastily donning old trousers and shirt, I left my room and crossed the already darkened stage in back of the flickering screen.

The enormous dull black talkie horns, suspended in their towering metal frames, were blasting forth the modernistic introduction of the feature picture. The stage crew, working in a dimmed blue radiance emanating from the overhead border light, hurriedly folded parallels, coiled up cables, and stacked away flats and set pieces, anxious to resume their poker-games. Dodging a cluster of thousand-watt floor floodlights with their colored screens, I located the fly gallery ladder almost hidden among piles of tall flats. I glanced up to see if my friend Jim, the old fly-man, was still up in his lofty perch.



The fly gallery in this old-time house was a heavily beamed wooden platform about eight feet in width, situated three-quarters of the way up, and running the length of the brick side wall to which it was fastened. Long, squat wooden frames, studded with wooden pins, were securely anchored here. To these frames or "pin-rails," were lashed the counter-weighted ropes which, through intricate systems of blocks overhead, supported the lights and scenery.

A faint glow of light, reflected against a patch of whitewashed brick, revealed he was still up there, and I hastily climbed the ladder in time to help him hoist the last piece of the finale set into the flies. The old chap finished tying off a set of lines and waved me to an ancient couch, while he sank grunting into a rickety armchair of Civil War vintage. Behind us loomed a wall of ropes, which arising from tangled confusion on the fly floor rose in serried ranks to disappear overhead in the gloom. Beyond the ropes, dark masses of canvas and velvet drops, flimsy gauzes and nettings, spot and floodlight borders swayed gently in the inevitable backstage draft.

We chatted a bit, my intense interest in stagecraft making us firm friends for here was an old-time stage-hand filled with reminiscences of the glorious past.

"Come, lad," he finally remarked, "I'll show you the old galleries and docks."

Armed with an old flashlight we ascended a decaying ten-foot ladder to a narrow catwalk leading backward to the paint bridge which, suspended high along the back wall, spanned the stage. On the far side was an old abandoned scene dock, recessed into the walls. Hoary

pieces of scenery seemed to glare at the intrusion of the present into their past. Ancient, moldy operatic props stood forlornly in the corners. Dust rose in clouds from under our disturbing feet. It was a fitting abode for the rats that scurried away at the brilliance of our flashlight.

"Watch out!" Jim cried as I narrowly missed precipitating myself through an almost invisible open trap that would have sent my body hurtling fifty feet to the stage proper. And then—

Without warning, a vivid blue-white glare lit up the entire stage, momentarily throwing into stark relief the startled face of my companion. We rushed to the railing and peered over the side at the darkened stage fifty feet below. The picture was still on, but the sound-track had given one squawk and was silent. Men were running from all directions toward a small portable switchboard that was ominously smoldering in the pale glow of the work lights.

"A short-circuit!" gasped Jim, and as we strained our eyes between the unevenly spaced rows of flied scenery, a pungent odor came to our nostrils.

We hastily ran back over the paint-bridge, then along the swaying catwalk, the flickering flashlight throwing eerie shadows. We scrambled down the short ladder, landing breathless on the fly-floor, there to rush to the pin-rail, mount it, and clinging for safety to the ropes, look downward.

Suddenly, so suddenly my spine chilled, a red glare seared our eyeballs and simultaneously with a wave of intense heat, a flimsy scrim drop in position on the stage flared up in a crimson horror of bursting flame. We stared, fascinated, as shouts, yells and orders arose from below. Flaming pieces of scrim were fluttering down upon the suddenly empty stage. The huge screen and its complement of sound-horns creaked and groaned as its motor, at full power, hoisted it slowly into the flies.

Lights, glaring and brilliant, flashed on everywhere.

**A**GAINST a noisy background of ringing alarms and buzzers, somebody was speaking to the audience, calming them. Scantly clad chorus-girls, emerging from their stage-level dressing-rooms, screamed, their voices adding a frenzied overtone to the tumult.

Flames whirled and danced, catching other curtains with terrific rapidity, devouring them with a crisp crackling.

Obviously, sparks from the shorted board had ignited the near-by drop. Amid all the confusion and racket could be heard a resounding crash as the asbestos curtain hit the floor. Weight-chains jingled as sliding fireproof doors slammed shut.

THE paralysis that had gripped us broke; both smitten with the same thought, we dropped to the fly-floor and tore at the unwieldy ropes, untying them, casting loose the tangled lines, at the same time yelling and screaming: "Heads up! Look out below!"

The counterweight sandbags we cut loose with a desperation born of fear as the flames gained ground. The flaming curtains we released fell in folds on the now smoldering stage, where twin streams of hissing water from the back-stage hoses played on them. But too late. Fully half the flies were set off, and heavy sets were crashing upon the stage in muffled thunder as the burning ropes parted.

A reverberating slam, tinkle of shattered glass, and a forty-foot light border had caved in part of the fifty-year-old stage flooring. Colored gelatines in the racked spotlights in the wings made individual cones of brilliance as they wisped into smoke. The lights winked out as the fuses in the old-fashioned house switchboard popped off in a series of erratic sputterings.

Jim and I were choking as we laid down our empty fire-extinguishers. The sprinkling system spasmodically gave forth feeble sprays of discolored water. Somewhere the antique water-pipes must have burst.

We stumbled our way blindly through billowing clouds of acrid smoke, moistened handkerchiefs to our faces, arriving at the ladder, there to pause in dismay. The stacked-up flats and antediluvian scenery stored against the wall below us were on fire, and little darts of flame were creeping up the dried wood of the ladder. Halfway down was a maelstrom of smoke and flame.

Faintly, in the distance, we could hear the screaming of sirens as fire apparatus raced through the streets. Jim, grimy face pouring with sweat, hastily beckoned, and we ran back, panting, over the smoking floor. The ropes at the rail were smoldering, and little jets of flame were blossoming among them as we swung up a narrow steel ladder imbedded in the rear wall.

Hand over hand we climbed—endless-

ly, it seemed. Alternate waves of heat and smoke washed over us, the iron rungs blistering my hands.

Finally we reached the "gridiron," a latticed false ceiling below the real roof, upon which the blocks and pulleys of the flies were mounted. We cast about for a possible exit, and carefully stepping among the maze of head-blocks, spot-blocks, and waist-high ropes, found a rusty iron door which Jim declared in a harsh croak was the emergency exit.

We attempted to open it, ending up by hurling ourselves bodily against it. To no avail; the door evidently was rusted or warped tight in its frame. Exhausted, we desisted in our efforts, and slumped down on a beam between the open floor-spaces. It was impossible to go down, all exits being cut off by fire; however the slightly cooler air circulating up here eased our smarting throats and burning lungs.

Squinting downwards as best as we could through smarting eyes, the entire stage was a mass of glowing flames and curling smoke. It burned its way along ancient wooden galleries and scene docks, seizing on piles of dusty canvas with chuckling glee and coming higher and higher, ever upward.

I looked at Jim, his white hair in disarray, his face set in a tense expression; and right there I felt an empty sensation in my stomach and blood pounded loudly in my ears. To say I was frightened would be a mild expression; I was *scared*! It was a tight spot.

A LOUD crash—shards of broken glass tinkled down about us; and we both looked up, to see booted and helmeted figures wielding fire-axes upon the glass skylights some eighteen feet above our heads.

The rescuing firemen lowered looped ropes into which Jim and I thrust our feet, and clinging to the ropes, we were hastily pulled up. Believe me, we led in the mad scramble to get off that ancient roof before it caved in.

The street was a seething mass of shining hose, panting engines, water-towers and other fire-fighting impedimenta. The theater, back-stage, was a blazing shell; a few minutes later the stage roof began to burn, and within a half-hour caved in. We had been yanked out just in time.

The entire backstage section of the theater was gutted; we lost all our scenery, costumes and trunks; but as any trouper will tell you—that's Show Business!





# The Modoc Massacre

*One of the last survivors of the Indian wars gives us a first-hand account of the Lava Beds tragedy.*

By MAURICE FITZ-GERALD

ON the 11th of April, 1873, I was a member of Troop K, 1st U. S. Cavalry, at the time a unit of a considerable force engaged in fighting the Modoc Indians who were under the leadership of the redoubtable Captain Jack.

When it was learned that the Modocs were fighting to retain possession of their ancient heritage against alleged encroachments of turbulent and lawless whites, great pressure was brought to bear upon President Grant to halt military preparations for the punishment of the Indians. He finally agreed to the appointment of a peace commission to go upon the ground, examine into and report.

The personnel of the commission was: General E. R. S. Canby, commanding the Department of the Columbia; Hon. A. B. Meacham, ex-commissioner of Indian affairs for Oregon; and Rev. Eleazer Thomas of California.

Our command was encamped at the foot of a volcanic escarpment on the western edge of the lava beds, and close to the southeast corner of Tule Lake. About one hundred yards up the bluff there was established a signal station from which messages were wigwagged to another camp near the eastern edge of the lava beds, which was under the command of Colonel Mason.

For a week or ten days emissaries of Captain Jack had been visiting headquarters for the purpose of arranging a time and place for holding the big powwow. Now the day had arrived, and place for the delegates to meet agreed upon, where an A tent had been pitched on a small spot of level ground about one-half mile from the camp, and probably a mile from the famous stronghold of Captain Jack. It was agreed that not more

than five were to represent either side at the conference, all to come unarmed.

Boston Charley, one of the Indian leaders, came into camp the evening before for the purpose of conducting General Canby and his colleagues to the rendezvous in the morning.

A short time after breakfast quite a number of the men, including myself, repaired to the signal station, as a vantage-point from which all the preliminary movements of those about to participate in the peace conference could be seen.

About nine o'clock we saw General Canby, Mr. Meacham and Rev. Mr. Thomas leave headquarters, and accompanied by Boston Charley, set out for the council-tent—all on foot except Mr. Meacham, who rode horseback, although the going was terribly rough for a four-footed beast. Shortly thereafter Mr. L. S. Dyer, Indian agent for the Klamath Reservation, who had recently been appointed an additional member of the Peace Commission, started out afoot for the same destination, accompanied by Riddle, the interpreter, and his squaw Toby, the latter mounted on a pony.

All members of the party arrived about the same time at the level piece of ground upon which the council-tent was pitched. They didn't have to wait long for the arrival of the Modocs. In a few minutes we saw the latter emerge from the rocks on the farther side and advance toward the white men. Then a general greeting and handshaking took place, after which all moved toward the council-tent, which they seemed to enter, though they actually were only taking seats upon some rocks on the outside. Then began their deliberations. We on the bluff could only indulge in specula-

tions as to what the conferees might agree upon.

We sat there for probably an hour, awaiting the termination of the conference, laughing and joking; then suddenly the sergeant in charge of the signal-station yelled: "They're firing on the peace tent!" As he spoke, we saw the white men run from behind the tent and scatter in different directions; at the same time puffs of smoke arose from near the tent, followed by the rapid report of firearms. Instantly every man sprang to his feet and darted down the hillside to the line of tents below where our arms were stacked.

WE knew then that the treachery of the Indian was again exemplified. We grabbed our carbines and started at top speed toward the council-tent, but before we had taken many steps, the command "Fall in!" rang out clear and strong. Then the military instinct of obedience prevailed over our individual human impulse. We quickly formed in line and were given the command, "Forward march—double time, march!" and started off at a good stiff pace.

It didn't take long to reach the "peace" tent. On the way we met Mr. Dyer running toward camp, almost breathless and greatly excited. A short distance behind him came Winema, or Toby, the squaw. Both had been shot at several times as they ran and dodged, but had escaped without a scratch. Luckily for them, the Indians had larger game to absorb their attention. Riddle, the interpreter, had taken a different route to reach camp.

When we reached the tent a gruesome sight met our view. About twenty feet to the south lay General Canby on his back, his body pierced by three bullets, and all his clothing removed. A short distance beyond lay the lifeless body of Rev. Eleazer Thomas, stark naked, while a few feet on the north of the tent Mr. Meacham was found lying on his side with blood dripping from his forehead, and stripped of all his clothing save a pair of red flannel drawers. He had been partly scalped; in their hurry they had left the job incomplete.

Dr. Cabaniss, a physician of Yreka, California, temporarily attached to the command, was among the first to arrive upon the scene; he made an examination of Mr. Meacham and found that life was not extinct. From a small flask he carried with him he poured a

little whisky down his throat, which soon caused him to show signs of returning consciousness. His wounds did not prove fatal. By careful nursing and medical skill he very soon regained his former strength, and enjoyed life for several years thereafter at his famous homestead in the Blue Mountains of Oregon, known as "Meacham Station."

General Canby, a man of unblemished character, with an excellent record in the Civil War, was sixty-eight years old. He was of a most kindly disposition and unassuming manner; and enjoyed, in a marked degree, the esteem and respect of those who served under him. Of the unfortunate divine who perished with General Canby in the praiseworthy effort to stop bloodshed and harmonize difficulties, I know nothing; but presume he must have been a man of parts, as President Grant deemed him worthy of appointment as a member of so important a commission.

As we stood there that day, filled with horror and indignation at the treachery of the Indians, the first impulse of the hot-headed young men was to press forward toward Captain Jack's stronghold, and inflict summary punishment. But fortunately wiser counsels prevailed. Had we then, in our unpreparedness, advanced into the lava-beds, there would have been few if any left to tell the tale of the disastrous adventure. At the command of our superior officers we reluctantly retraced our steps to camp.

ALMOST at the same instant that the firing on the peace tent was announced, a signal message from Colonel Mason's camp was received to the effect that some Modocs had approached within hailing distance of the camp, and raising a white flag, asked for a pow-wow. Colonel Mason thereupon delegated Colonel W. H. Boyle and Lieutenant Walter Sherwood to go and see what was wanted. When the officers got within a short distance of the white flag, the Modocs opened fire, killing Lieutenant Sherwood, but missing Colonel Boyle, who got back to camp uninjured. If further proof were needed that the Indians planned the killing of the Peace Commissioners, this incident furnished it.

Four of the leaders, Captain Jack, Scorchin' John, Black Jim and Boston Charley were tried by a military court in July following, found guilty, and suffered the penalty for their treachery on the scaffold at Fort Klamath, in October.

# ARMY GIRL

by Charles L. Clifford



Just a year ago this month Redbook published the seventh in its series of Complete Novels. It was called "Parade Ground" and its author was Capt. Charles L. Clifford. It created a literary sensation, was published in book form as "Too Many Boats," made the best-seller lists, and eventually reached Broadway as a play.

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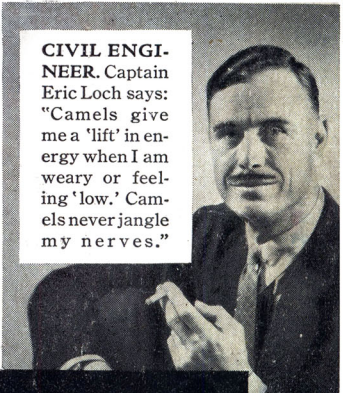


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