BLUE BOOK

An Illustrated Magazine — July, 15c

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—clears the skin

by clearing skin irritants out of the blood

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YOUNG PEOPLE are frequently distressed by pimples after the start of adolescence—from about 13 to 25, or even longer.

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Eat 3 cakes daily, a cake ½ hour before each meal—plain, or in a little water—until your skin clears. Start today!

Next Month!

A Remarkable Story

By FULTON GRANT

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

JULY, 1936 VOL. 63, NO. 3

A New Feature

Spirited Short Stories

Two Outstanding Serials

A Deeply Interesting Novelette

Prize Stories of Real Experience

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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Prize Offer for Real Experiences

THERE is material for a novel in every person's life, it has been said. Whether this is true or not, we do believe that in the lives of most of us some experience has occurred sufficiently exciting to merit description in print. With this idea in mind we shall be pleased to receive and to print true stories of real experience, running from one thousand to four thousand words each. For each of the five best of these received each month we will pay, according to our appraisal of its length and strength, an average price of $50.

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 lefthand 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 a monthly contest, from one to two months may elapse before you receive a report on your story.

Ad Man and Author at 22

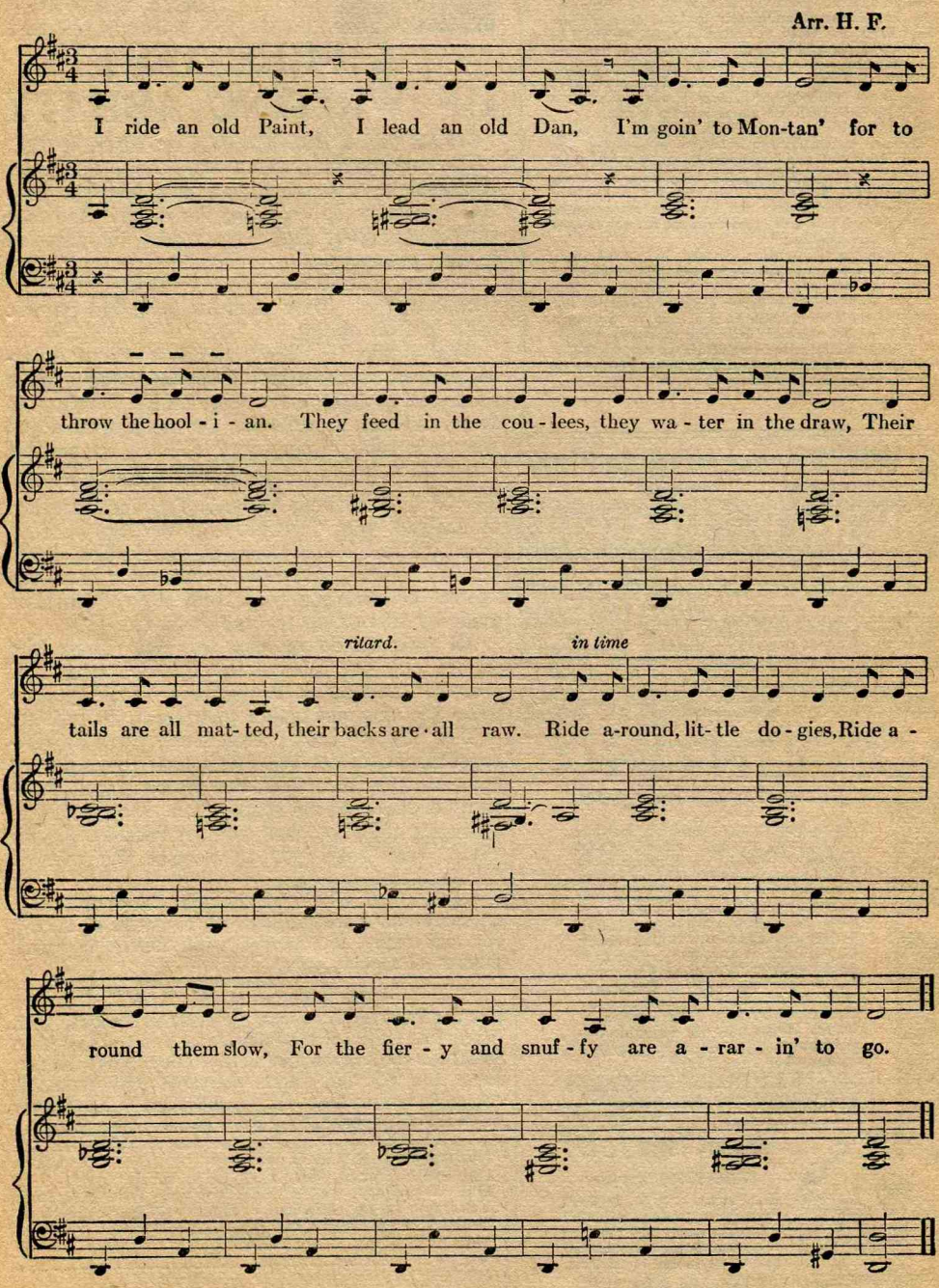
Took the N.I.A. course at eighteen. Today at twenty-two am Assistant Eastern Advertising Manager of The Billboard, and editor of Ad-vents. Have just sold a story to Famous Detective Cases for $185. So as an ad man and author permit me to say, 'If you want to write ad copy or fiction, try N.I.A.' "

JOSEPH G. CSIDA, JR.
3063 Williamsbridge Road
Bronx, New York, N. Y.

Made in America

I

I Ride an Old Paint



Several hundred of our pioneer songs have been gathered by Carl Sandburg, and published in book form by Harcourt, Brace and Company, under the title "The American Songbag."

Guaranteed Antiques of Song and Story
Edited by CARL SANDBURG

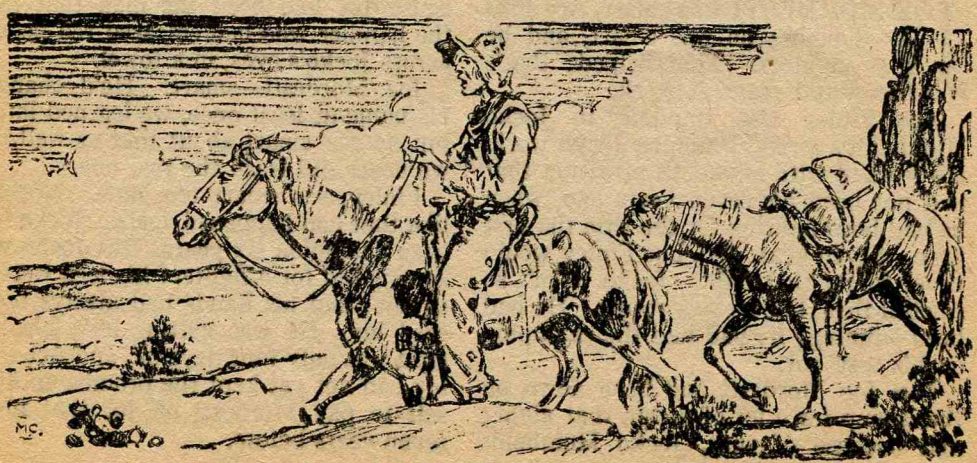
Author of "Abraham Lincoln," "Smoke and Steel," etc.

THIS song smells of saddle leather, sketches ponies and landscapes, and varies in theme from a realistic presentation of the drab Bill Jones and his violent wife to an ethereal prayer and a cry of phantom tone. There is rich poetry in the image of the rider so loving a horse he begs when he dies his bones shall be tied to his horse and the two of them sent wandering with their faces turned west. This arrangement is from the song as made known by Margaret Larkin of Las Vegas, New Mexico, who intones her own poems or sings cowboy and Mexican songs to a skilled guitar strumming, and by Linn Riggs, poet and playwright, of Oklahoma in particular and the Southwest in general. The song came to them at Santa Fe from a buckaroo who was last heard of as heading for the Border with friends in both Tucson and El Paso.

I ride an old Paint; I lead an old Dan,
I'm goin' to Montan' for to throw the hoolian.
They feed in the coulees; they water in the draw,
Their tails are all matted; their backs are all raw.
Ride around, little dogies,
Ride around them slow,
For the fiery and snuffy are a-rarin' to go.

Old Bill Jones had two daughters and a song,
One went to Denver and the other went wrong.
His wife, she died in a poolroom fight—
Still he sings from mornin' till night:
Ride around, little dogies,
Ride around them slow,
For the fiery and snuffy are a-rarin' to go.

Oh, when I die, take my saddle from the wall,
Put it on my pony, lead him out of his stall.
Tie my bones to his back, turn our faces to the West,
And we'll ride the prairie that we love the best.
Ride around, little dogies,
Ride around them slow,
For the fiery and snuffy are a-rarin' to go.



Very Good

Right

The story of a courageous gentleman who fought a good fight.

JOE MORDESTI was smart, Ace Finley thought; he was smart, and he knew fighters. That helped; that's what would make it work.

Ace Finley was standing in Jocko Humboldt's corner, watching Jocko work. He worked with a smooth precision that had not been his seven years ago, when he had been fighting for the title the first time. Seven years ago, but Finley would never forget that fight. Jocko wasn't so smooth then, but he was young. He had been winning; he had had the champion on his way out.

But Joe Mordesti had been down on the champ for a lot of dough that night; and because of that, Jocko Humboldt had stumbled through the last five rounds half-blind. He had been cut to pieces. Joe Mordesti had cut him to pieces, in a way, Ace Finley knew; because Joe had been the man that paid the handler who had smeared red pepper across Jocko's eyes, in a towel.

Joe Mordesti—smart. He'd changed his name at least once, we learned later; but he was smart about that as well, for we never did learn the real one.

Finley was smart too, now. Nothing like that had happened again. Jocko had been champion six years. But Jocko was getting old for a fighter; his legs weren't so hot; and his hands had always bothered him. He was getting old; his last fight was only four days off, and Ace Finley had not yet kept the promise to himself to pay Mordesti off for that night seven years before.

Hand Man

By EUSTACE COCKRELL

Well, it was okay; they were ready now. Mordesti was smart and knew fighters; and they had rehearsed this thing. They had it pat.

It would help with the odds, too. And they needed that. Jocko was broke. For a moment Ace Finley wished again he had taken better care of the boy. But he forgot about it then. With the odds right, the purse and what they'd win, would do the trick. Jocko wouldn't have to fight any more. Whatever else, Finley thought, his boy would retire as the champ; he would never let him get punch-silly. This was the last fight.

Finley glanced around the gym where Jocko was working now. Mordesti was not there. He'd be along, though; he dropped by and watched the champ work out for a while each afternoon.

The round ended and Jocko moved to the ropes, walking around the edge of the ring, breathing deeply. When he glanced down at Finley, Finley shook his head very slightly in negation. Finley called time and Jocko moved in again, boxing carefully, paying attention to his feet and now and then glancing at Finley who called monosyllabic directions.

A couple of newspaper men came in and shouldered their way through the crowd to the side of the ring. Jocko waved a left hand to them and smiled. They waved back.

Three more men came in a little later. They moved unostentatiously to a point from which they could see the ring and stood there expressionless.

Jocko had been clowning for a moment for the newspaper men, and the spectators around the ring were laughing. The three men who had just come in did not laugh.

Finley had seen them standing there; so had Jocko. Now the sparring partner who had been in the ring came down, and a colored boy climbed in when Finley told him to. He was a well-muscled boy, with crinkly short hair pasted to his small skull. He was badly marked, and his ears looked like little leather buttons.

The sparring partner who had just come down tossed his headgear into the ring, but the colored boy just kicked it back out again, a simple contemptuous grin on his face.

Jocko smiled and shrugged expressively. Finley called time, and they started boxing. Jocko made the heavier colored boy seem to be wading in water ankle-deep. He stabbed him twice with his left hand and moved away. The black followed him, unconcerned.

Jocko was taking it easy, clowning a little. He hit the colored boy easily and whenever he wanted to. The boy didn't care, though. He just came in or stood his ground.

Presently, in close, he drove his left hand hard to Jocko's stomach, and Jocko winced, danced away and quit clowning.

He was coming back in now, carefully. Everyone around the ring became suddenly alert, intent. The newspaper men drew their breaths slowly, and the three expressionless men in the corner kept their eyes fastened on Jocko.

NOW Jocko was different. He moved flat-footedly; he looked as slow as the colored boy. He carried his hands a little lower; they looked open. The colored boy was the only one who seemed to sense no change.

He shuffled forward, heavy-footed, his small round head protected halfway up his jaw by one shoulder, held high.

Jocko feinted—so swiftly that he got no reflex from the boy. But his own body had shifted, and he was already crossing his right. Everybody in the gym heard it hit. It landed on the colored boy's brow. With a pop.

Jocko Humboldt danced away; his lips were thin. His right elbow jerked twice convulsively.

Then he grinned a slightly funny grin and danced in again. He feinted again with his left; he hooked his left. His head bobbed and he jabbed the colored boy twice with his left. The colored boy backed away, grabbing the top rope.

Blood was coming from a cut over his eye where Jocko had hit him.

Jocko dropped his hands. The colored boy was biting at the laces of his gloves, turning for the audience to see the crimson side of his face, grinning at them.

Finley was shouting to Jocko and Jocko walked to the corner where Finley was standing and then shook his head in negation to the question in Finley's eyes. And he grinned again, but to some one watching very closely that grin looked just a little odd.

Finley said: "Okay. That's enough for now. Come on down."

Jocko Humboldt went into the dressing-room for his rub and shower then. Ace Finley went with him.

The three men in the corner, Joe Mordesti and his two companions, looked at one another when they had gone. Joe Mordesti and his two companions were still in the gym, later, when Jocko came back out, dressed now. Ace Finley was walking beside him and talking to him rapidly.

As they passed through the crowd, Finley fell silent. He looked concerned. He grinned once, but only briefly.

Jocko was talking to the kids that crowded up, but he did not shake hands with any of them. His right hand was in his topcoat pocket.

When Ace Finley and Jocko got into a cab outside and drove off, Joe Mordesti and his two companions were standing in the door of the gym. Mordesti signaled another cab.

It followed Finley's cab to an office building thirty blocks away. When Finley and Jocko Humboldt, two hours later, came from a door marked T. J. GRAYSON, M. D.—one of Mordesti's companions happened to be in the hall.

Joe Mordesti visited Dr. Grayson's office that night with a friend of his. Grayson wasn't there, but that didn't matter. Mordesti's friend was a fellow who knew a lot about locks.

"I TELL you," Joe Mordesti said again, "I can't be wrong."

Harry Bartzo, manager of Young Roland, the challenger, took a long drag on his cigar. He laid it on the table beside him and got up and walked once back and forth across his hotel room.

"What are you tellin' me for?" he asked suspiciously.

Mordesti spread his hands. "I was going down on the champ. He was goin' to take you. You may not think so, but he'd flatten that mugg of yours in four, five rounds. But he can't do it with that right gone. Well—" He spread his hands again. "What the hell, your boy can win now. Only if you don't know Jocko can't swing his right you're goin' to tell your boy to go in there and not leave no holes for that right. If you did that the champ might just wave it at him and beat him with his left. Why wouldn't I tell you?"

"You know a hell of a lot," Bartzo muttered.

"My business," Mordesti said, "is knowing a hell of a lot. And I mean *knowing*. You've seen X-ray plates. Have a look at this one."

FROWNING, Bartzo took the plate and held it up to the light. He looked at it silently for a long time.

"That came out of Doc Grayson's office," Mordesti said. "It was in the file marked *Humboldt*. How it came out of there don't matter. But I'm the only one knows; I'm the only one tumbled."

Bartzo was still frowning.

"It's a break," he said. "I've seen plenty. He can't hit with that hand." He ran a hand through his scanty hair and handed the plate back. "But why wouldn't he call off the fight?"

"I'll tell you that, too. If he calls it off he'll have to let this out. He'll have to wait some months before he can fight again. His hands never were much good; they'll heal slow. And it might never heal. And he needs dough. His wife is sick. He's broke. He never laid up a dime yet. And he's about through. He figures nobody knows about this—so he'll go ahead. He knows his right is dynamite, like everybody knows, and he figures you're sending Roland in to be careful of that right. What the hell, he'll just tap with it and outpoint Roland, he *thinks*," Mordesti added with a little complacent smile.

Harry Bartzo walked back to his chair and sat down. Slowly a grin spread over his face. He nodded a little. "If the boy goes in there and doesn't have to worry about that right he's a cinch. A dead cinch." Then he stopped grinning and looked at Mordesti closely. "Wait a minute; how do I know you're not stalling—that the picture isn't a fake? That you're not bettin' on the champ to win by a knock-out and this is just—"

"You know," Mordesti cut him off, "because as soon as you tell me you're sending Roland in there swingin' from

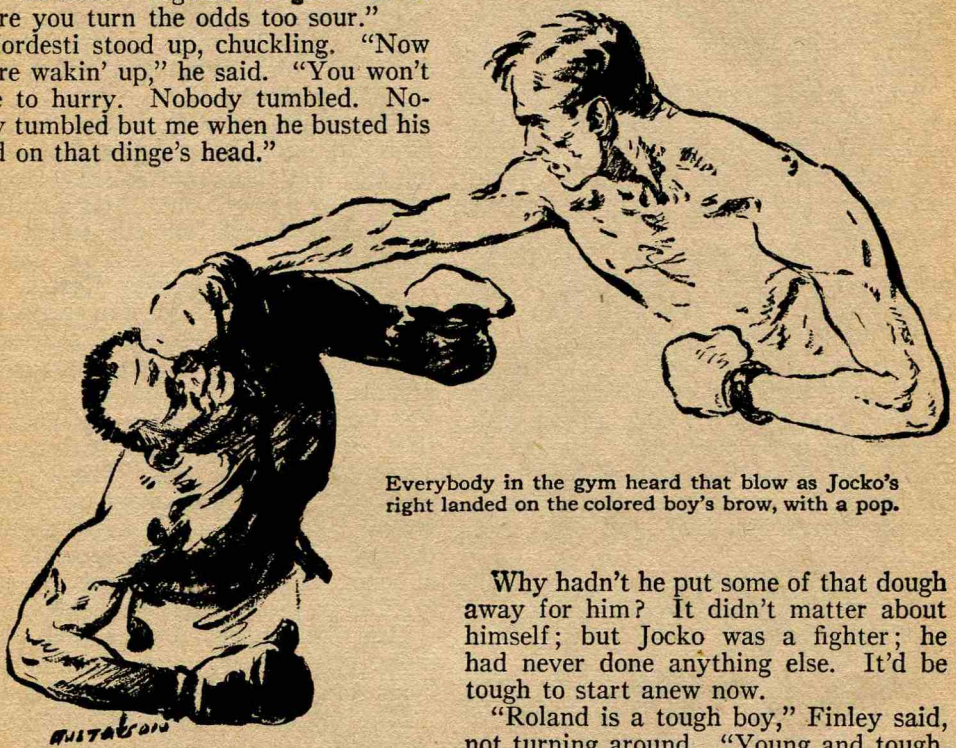
the bell, I'm layin' fifty grand on Roland to win. I mean fifty, see? And maybe —maybe more. And if you don't believe that—you can lay some of it for me."

Bartzo began to look very pleased.

"I guess I can stir up a few G's myself," he said. "I guess I'll get it down before you turn the odds too sour."

Mordesti stood up, chuckling. "Now you're wakin' up," he said. "You won't have to hurry. Nobody tumbled. Nobody tumbled but me when he busted his hand on that dinge's head."

Thinking about Jocko Humboldt, one of the greatest lightweights that had ever pulled on a glove. No man had ever stepped into the ring with a heart greater than Jocko, and Finley knew it more surely than ever now.



Everybody in the gym heard that blow as Jocko's right landed on the colored boy's brow, with a pop.

It was a little after ten o'clock the next morning when Ace Finley came into Jocko's room. Jocko looked at him with a question in his eyes but Finley didn't say anything for a moment. He took his topcoat off.

"Well," he said then, "well, they got it. They got the plate. I just talked to Doc Grayson."

"Yeah," Jocko said. There was no elation in his voice. "Yeah. I thought they would."

There was silence in the room for a little while.

"Well," Jocko said finally, "did you talk to Doc Grayson about—the other?"

"Yeah," Finley muttered. "I fixed that. That's set if we have to play it out."

Jocko Humboldt smiled a little, but there was no humor in his smile. "We've got to play it out," he said.

Finley looked away from him then and wandered over to the window. He stood there thinking about all the money that had gone through their hands; money that could not be recalled now. Why hadn't he put some of that dough away for him? It didn't matter about himself; but Jocko was a fighter; he had never done anything else. It'd be tough to start anew now.

"Roland is a tough boy," Finley said, not turning around. "Young and tough. We—don't *have* to play it out."

Jocko said slowly: "I need the dough, Ace. It'd be—too long. We'll play it out."

Finley nodded a little and turned around. "Yeah, I guess so. It's the only way." He shook his head.

Jocko Humboldt pulled a grin onto his face. "Don't worry," he said. "Don't worry about it. Just go ahead. We'll see who's smart."

"I guess we will," Ace Finley said. "I guess we will." And he tried to grin back at Jocko, but it was a bum job.

"Don't forget," Jocko Humboldt said, "don't forget—I'm champion of the world."

You had to manage a lot of fighters, Finley thought, to get one like this guy.

THAT day money which said Jocko Humboldt would not retain his title suddenly became plentiful. At the original odds of one to two, after eight hours, this money went begging. The day before the fight, five bucks would get you eight if you thought there would not be

a new champion—and turned out to be right.

For rumors were flying around then, among the boys who like to bet without gambling. For Joe Mordesti was very heavy on Young Roland; and when Mordesti bet, he knew something—when Mordesti bet as he had been betting—so much that he couldn't conceal it, though he had tried.

And Jocko Humboldt had not pulled on a glove since he had worked out against the hard-headed colored boy; he had not punched the bag. The champ had never had strong hands; everyone knew that.

And by noon that day five bucks would get you nine if you thought the champ would win. *And* were right.

Ace Finley began his betting then. A little here; a little there. Some of it went out of town and came back in under another name. Ace Finley raised cash against his boy's guarantee. He bet it. He borrowed two thousand on his word; that's all he could get. Jocko could borrow fifteen hundred, and did. Ace bet it all.

He bet it on the champion to win. And if he won they would have slightly over a hundred thousand dollars; for he had got good odds.

Thinking of those hand-made odds Ace Finley's thin face twisted into a grin; a bitter, ironic ghost of a grin.

JOE MORDESTI came into the large, ornate restaurant and looked twice around. He saw his man, caught his eye, and beckoned with his head.

Harry Bartzo got up and came over to Mordesti, who said: "Come on."

They went out of the restaurant and presently turned down a side street. Mordesti didn't say anything. They went into a small quiet restaurant and sat down in a booth.

A waiter came, and Mordesti cursed him and told him they'd call him when they wanted him.

Bartzo looked at him queerly and said: "What's eatin' you?"

"Nothin'!" Mordesti said bitterly. "Nothin' at all except Doc Grayson just bet a thousand bucks that Jocko wins by a knockout!"

"Doc Grayson? Who's he?"

"He's just the guy we lifted that picture from. That's all. That picture we thought was a picture of Humboldt's right hand. The X-ray. You remember?" he added with heavy sarcasm.

Bartzo was blinking. "Why," he said, "then—are you sure?" Bartzo almost whispered it.

"Of course I'm sure," Mordesti growled. "He bet it with Ike Loomis. He must not've known I know every dime that's bet with Ike and who bets it. He couldn't have known," he added, "or else—"

"Hey!" Bartzo said quickly. "Hey! I don't get this. What the hell is goin' on? Why should—"

"You know what it means, though," Mordesti said. "You know that. He's the guy that they went to see. He bets he wins by a knock-out. And Humboldt don't never knock 'em out except with his right."

"Jeeze," Bartzo whined. "Jeeze! The hand's okay. And I got five grand—"

"Five grand!" Mordesti snarled at him. "Five grand! Listen, you goddam plunger, I got *fifty* grand on your boy. You hear? Fifty grand in cold cash and that aint all. I got twenty-five more. Twenty-five on the cuff. Twenty-five I aint got." His face went pale for a second. "Twenty-five G's, and if this falls through—I'm gone. I'm through. Out of town. I'm lucky," he finished grimly, "I'm lucky if I don't get rubbed out."

"But it's screwy," Bartzo said, pleadingly. "It's screwy, aint it? I mean it don't make sense."

Mordesti was calm again now—calm and cold.

"It makes sense," he said. "Plenty. I been thinkin' about it. I got it all figured out. It ties together. I beat those guys one time. I beat 'em with a punk of a handler and some red pepper. And they aint forgot it. They pulled this thing for me. The whole thing. It was all a phony, from beginnin' to end, includin' the picture. Doc Grayson was in on it. He had to be. That picture wasn't Humboldt's. They were plenty smart. But they slipped up. They didn't know Doc Grayson was gonna get greedy and put his dough up; and *he* didn't know I'd find it out in time."

"Damn you," Bartzo said. "Damn you, you got me into this. Now what're we gonna—"

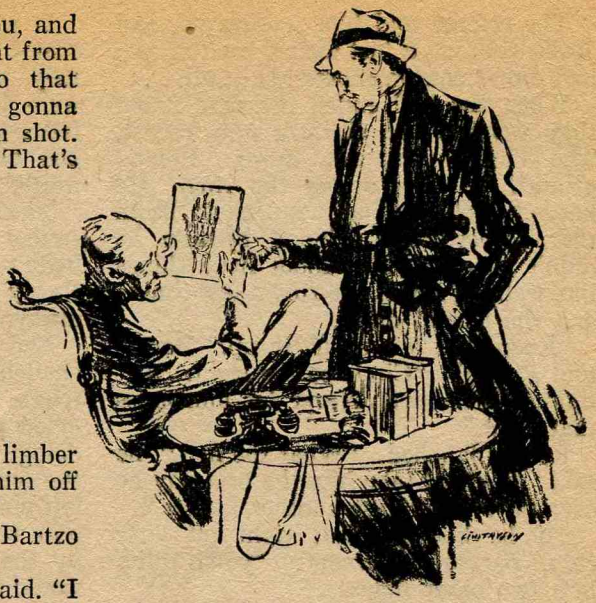
"Shut up!"

Bartzo heard Mordesti's flat cold voice and saw his eyes. Bartzo shut up.

"I'm tellin' you what we're gonna do," Mordesti said, "and I'm tellin' you why. You just listen, see?" He paused a moment. Then he went on.

"Jocko can't go the route," he said. "They didn't do this just to get back at

me. They knew I'd come tell you, and you'd send Roland in swingin' right from the bell, payin' no attention to that right. Jocko's gonna hold it. He's gonna hold it until he's got a wide-open shot. What happens? He lands once. That's all he needs. He's got Roland limber like a rag doll and he polishes him off quick. Early in the fight, see?"



"That came out of Doc Grayson's office," said Mordesti. "It was marked *Humboldt*." Bartzo was frowning. "It's a break," he said. "He can't hit with that hand."

"But if he don't get the shot?" Bartzo asked.

"You got the idea," Mordesti said. "I thought Jocko could take your boy okay. But they don't think so, or they wouldn't have done all this. And they know more about it than we do. Anyhow that's the only way we can figure and have a chance. Three years ago it wouldn't've mattered. Jocko would just bust in there and smack your boy's guard down. He can't do it now and still have enough left to finish him off. He can't go the route. He's old, see? So we can win. You're sendin' Roland in there and he's gonna stay in his shell. He's gonna stay there until Jocko's tired. Just box him. Till the ninth or tenth, if it takes that long. He can go on and win then. But he never gives him a shot with that right. That's what you tell him and that's what he does."

"If—if I don't tell him?" Bartzo murmured.

Mordesti stared at him a moment; his right hand came up and patted what lay beneath his left arm-pit.

"You'll tell him," he said. "You'll tell him. I'm gonna be sittin' right there in your corner. Helpin' you, see?"

Bartzo saw. He shrugged. "Okay. It's the best way, anyhow."

SMOKE hung in the air. Young Roland came along the aisle through the smoke and climbed into the bright lights of the ring. A roar of sound had followed him, growing as he neared the ring.

He walked around the edge of the ring now; his green bathrobe made a blob of bright color against the white of the canvas. Young Roland walked with his hands clasped above his head; he was grinning. He was young and tough and he had a lot of fights before him. He liked to hear them yelling. . . .

Jocko Humboldt swung his legs off the rubbing-table and stood up. He hunched the bathrobe closer about his neck and said: "All right."

Ace Finley picked up a towel and water-bucket and motioned to a boy in a yellow sweater.

Jocko, looking at his manager's tight, lined face, said hurriedly:

"Damn you, Ace, you're thinkin' you shoulda been a wet-nurse for me and made me put away some dough. Forget it. Listen, you managed me and you made me the champ. You made me a lot of dough and if I aint got it now it's not your fault. Forget it, you hear? But don't forget this, Ace. I'm still the champion of the world. Let's go."

Jocko's face was grim and strained as they left the room. But it was different when they were walking down the aisle, between those two walls of sound which rose on either side. It was still grim; but it looked confident now. He walked quickly through the reaching hands. He looked like a champion. . . .

Young Roland had his orders. He had been told the why of those orders. He looked at the champ when they came to the center of the ring for instructions. The champ looked worried, but Young Roland thought he could see a little light of confidence behind the champ's eyes.

Young Roland grinned at the champ. "It's tough," Young Roland said, "that this aint only five or six rounds. Huh, champ? *Ex!*"

The referee told him to shut up, and Jocko Humboldt just looked back at him and didn't change expression at all. . . .

When the bell ended the first round they were in the champ's own corner. The champ just sat down. Roland grinned, walking across the ring. He knew the champ had arranged to be in that corner. He grinned because he didn't have to think about little things like walking across the ring a few times; and the champ did.

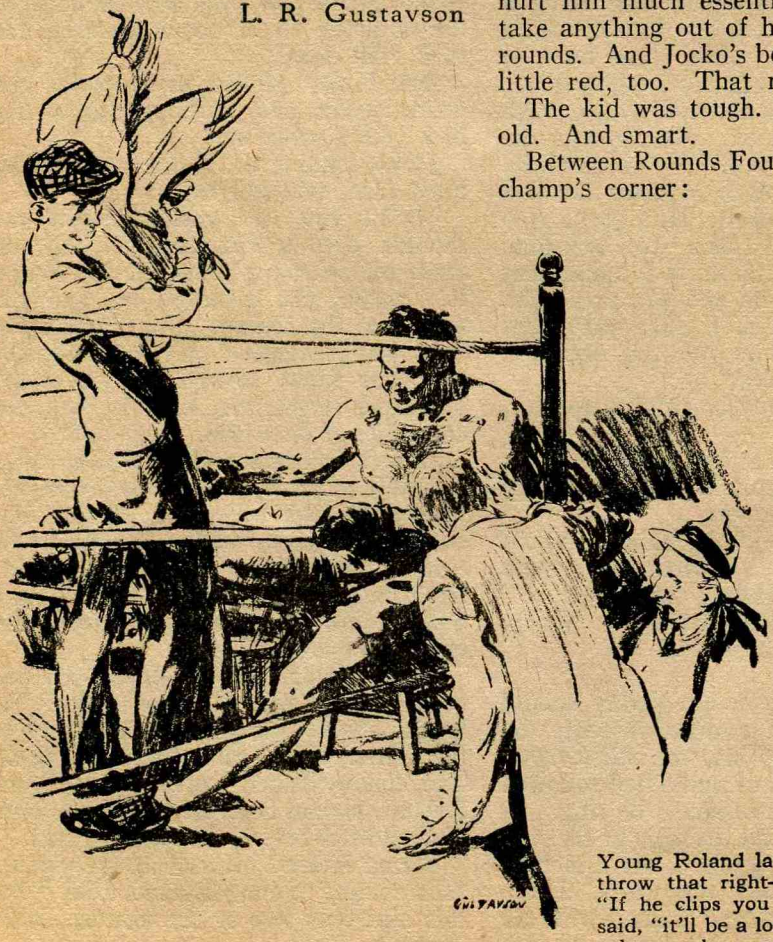
"Keep that left shoulder up," Bartzo told Roland. "Circle to the right. Airtight, remember! Never let him cross that right."

Roland laughed. "What the hell!" he said. "I could take him the best day he ever saw. He's just another fighter."

"If he bounces that right off your chin," Bartzo said fervently, "you'll think he's two other fighters."

Roland laughed again; but he remembered about that right. . . .

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson



Young Roland laughed. "Let him throw that right—I can take it." "If he clips you with it," Bartzo said, "it'll be a long time 'fore you know where you took it to!"

It was a slow fight at first. But the crowd didn't boo. Some of them thought they knew something. Most of them were just watching a fight. But they felt something in the air and they didn't boo because it was slow. They just waited.

There was Jocko—the champ. He smiled a little, like always. But he hadn't thrown his right. He moved slowly and easily. And that right was always cocked. But he didn't throw it.

And there was Young Roland—the challenger. He was young and he was tough. He wasn't hurrying. But he made you think he knew what he was doing. He was young; he could travel the route. The champ stabbed with his left and danced away. He had Roland's nose beginning to turn reddish. Maybe by the end of the fight Roland's nose would look like an apple.

But that didn't mean anything. They didn't pay off on that, and it didn't bother Roland. Maybe you sting a man, popping him on the nose, but you don't hurt him much essentially. You don't take anything out of him for those last rounds. And Jocko's belly was getting a little red, too. That meant something.

The kid was tough. The champ was old. And smart.

Between Rounds Four and Five, in the champ's corner:

"Keep the right cocked, ready. Don't move away too much. Let him come in and tie him up. Break slow."

Jocko grunted. "He's good. He's in shape. He'll keep coming."

"Let him," Finley said. "Tie him up. Save your legs and feed him the left. You take these first four by a mile. A mile."

The bell brought them out again.

YOUNG Roland kept coming. . . . He might, ten years from now, be fighting some second-rater, taking a beating, trying a come-back, and his name would be just a name. A joke.

But tonight Young Roland *was* young. He was a thick-set kid, tough; he was a hooker, moving in. He was resilient and his legs were just things that carried him close enough to punch; things he didn't think about. His breathing came back to normal between rounds.

And the champ was old. The champ had been young once, like Roland. Once, when the champ was young, he had fought five rounds blind. That was seven years ago and you have to fight seven years to know how long they can be; what they can do to your legs.

Between Rounds Seven and Eight, in Roland's corner:

"Careful, kid. Don't go in with both hands that way." Roland, as the round ended, had got under the champ's left and sunk two solid shots to the body and they had seen the champ wince under his grin clear back in the row named Z. But Bartzo went on now: "Don't hurry. I'll tell you when. It's a wonder you didn't get your head torn off with that right then. He knew the round was nearly over, is all."

Roland laughed. "What the hell! He's just another fighter. Let him throw the right. I can take it."

"If he clips you with it," Bartzo muttered, "it'll be a long time 'fore you know where you took it to!"

And Roland was careful in Round Eight.

There were tentative boos from the crowd now. A few catcalls. This would rise to cruel uproar in another round or so like the last seven had been. They had faith in the champ; they knew the challenger could take it. But they wouldn't watch unmitigated, air-tight boxing forever.

Jocko had his right cocked. He had it cocked all the time. It was a threat for awhile. It was a promise. But he didn't use it. He stabbed with it, now and then. He tapped Roland a few times. But it wasn't the right that had made him champ. It wasn't dynamite; it wasn't the night-cap.

Roland's face was cut up some; it was red. But that didn't hurt a man if he came through right in the last few rounds. And the champ was getting reluctant now, when he came out of clinches. He was moving flat-footed, and his right was a joke. Just a joke; not the murderous weapon of eye-defying speed which had made it famous.

And Joe Mordesti, sitting just behind Harry Bartzo, telling Harry Bartzo what to say to his boy, and listening to see that he said it, began to get a little worried, and began to wonder a little in the ninth round.

Because the champ was getting slower. He was getting slower, and never yet had he crossed that right. Never yet had he cut loose. He had had a few openings; not perfect, but good shots. And he hadn't crossed. Not like he meant it. He had just tapped.

And now between the ninth and tenth rounds Roland said over his shoulder: "His right? Hah! He aint got any. What the hell! I said he was just another fighter. Let's get this over."

Bartzo started to speak, but Mordesti tapped him on the shoulder and Mordesti said evenly: "Not yet. Wait one more. I'm not taking any chances."

IF Jocko could throw that right, Mordesti was thinking, then why hadn't he thrown it? Because Jocko was tired now, Jocko was about through now, or else he was putting on one hell of a good act. Good? It was too good! Mordesti couldn't understand it.

But it was all right. Either way they should come out okay. The bell rang and Mordesti stopped thinking to watch, watch closely with those bright, black little eyes of his; never missing anything. And why wouldn't he? This fight couldn't mean more to anyone else than it did to him. All the money he had; too much that he didn't have. And maybe—maybe his very— Mordesti forgot about that then.

For as the round neared its end, coming out of a clinch, pushing Jocko back and disregarding that right, Roland left an opening that a first-time prelim' boy would have been ashamed of.

And all Jocko did was paw Roland's face with the right. That's what it

looked like; he just pawed it. Pawed it, Mordesti thought, just like you'd wipe a baby's nose. Mordesti grinned for the first time that night.

Roland, back in his corner, was irritable. "Hell," he said. "Another fighter? Why, this guy's just another tramp. I been wasting time. Nuts with you, chief! I'm turnin' it on this time."

Mordesti heard him, and looked carefully at Jocko, sitting across the ring. Jocko just sat there, slumped down. His face was pale and his body was limp under Ace Finley's anxious, punishing hands, hands that tried to punish a little life into that tired frame. And couldn't do it, Mordesti told himself. They couldn't do it. It didn't matter—the whys of this thing. It was in the bag now.

Mordesti leaned forward and tapped Bartzo on the shoulder and nodded to him.

"Now's the time. He can cut loose. We're in the bag. Either Finley and Jocko are dumb as hell, or Doc Grayson is a lunatic, but it don't matter which. Give him the go sign." And then Mordesti sat back and looked with satisfaction at his score card. The fight was even, up to here. These last two rounds would do it. Mordesti knew he was right; he had kept score on too many fights and had been right too many times. The ten-second whistle blew.

ACROSS the ring Ace Finley, with the anguish showing plainly on his face, looked down at Jocko and then blurted suddenly:

"Damn it, I oughta be killed for tellin' you, but you're champion and you ought to know. It's these two rounds. It's even up to here, Jocko. It's these last two rounds. I oughta have my neck wrung, but damn it, you're champ, and you'd want to know."

Jocko Humboldt heard him, and came to his feet two seconds before it was necessary. His face had a strange grin on it.

"That's right," he said. "That's right. I'm Jocko Humboldt, and I'm champion of the world."

Ace Finley had to turn his eyes away from the boy. Jocko hadn't been talking to him. Jocko had been talking to himself.

The bell rang—and Jocko Humboldt, lightweight champion of the world, came from his corner, with his right cocked high, threateningly.

But Young Roland didn't give a damn for that right; Young Roland had tasted it and didn't care. Young Roland was mad because he had wasted time. He would have looked better if he had won early.

Young Roland came in and gave Jocko a shot at his jaw to prove the right was nothing, and Jocko just wiped his jaw with a soft glove. Young Roland sank a left hook into the champ's belly. The old champ.

The lines in Jocko's face didn't change. He seemed to be trying to dance away and he seemed to be trying to grin; but he managed neither. Still, he was hard to open up, Roland found.

But finally Young Roland got him where he wanted him. He got him around against the ropes, near a corner, and the champ couldn't get out. Young Roland set himself.

Young Roland set himself—and two lefts hit him in the face. They weren't dazzling for speed; but they hit him, and they kept him off balance. And he hadn't been expecting them.

Then Jocko Humboldt, with the stretched ropes tight behind him to add power, crossed his right.

Young Roland was without motion for two full seconds.

Then his knees buckled.

Jocko Humboldt moved to a neutral corner and stood with his arms along the ropes. The ropes sagged a little, but Jocko looked ready to come out. He watched Roland closely, except for one second.

Except for one second in which he turned his head and looked down at Bartzo, in Roland's corner, and at the man behind Bartzo, and laughed a short quick laugh of triumph and derision.

Then he was watching Roland again.

Young Roland was not yellow, and he proved it for good and all that night. He got up. He pawed at the second rope; he got hold of it with both hands, and then got a hand on the third rope. He got a foot under him at "seven" and got the other under him at "eight."

Jocko Humboldt moved in—and the bell rang.

JOCKO sat there waiting for the last round with his hands on his knees. Ace Finley was talking to him, but Jocko couldn't hear what he was saying. Jocko didn't know anything but his right hand, which was now the whole right side of his body above his waist. And

Jocko couldn't remember when he had last claimed acquaintance with whatever was below his waist.

It didn't matter that he couldn't hear Ace Finley. Ace Finley didn't know what he was saying.

The bell.

IT wasn't much of a round to look at, that last one. Roland came out shaking his head, trying to clear some of the cobwebs. But Roland was slowed down. Roland tried gamely, instinctively, to move in and work. But he was jabbed five times with a left before he ever got on balance and got in close enough to function. And then he found he was in a clinch.

He was in a clinch, and heard jeering words in his ear:

"So you're just one of those guys that believes everything he sees in the X-ray pictures, huh? You had me worried. I thought you weren't going to swallow it."

Young Roland heard that, and then he heard a malicious, happy chuckle; and as the champ moved away, Young Roland got a good look at his eyes.

They were bright and they had something in them now not quite human—something wickedly eager and hungry. Something that was in Humboldt's voice also, as it taunted him, urged him, invited him:

"Well, let's make it a clean fight. . . . You've tasted it. . . . Have another nibble. . . . Let's don't leave it for a decision. . . . Let's have a kayo. Can't take it? . . . Ah, what do *you* know? Maybe it really *is* busted now. . . . Try again. . . . Have another whirl, kid. . . . It—"

Young Roland heard, and he wanted to move in, and he told himself to. But he didn't do it. He saw those eyes, he heard that voice, and saw that right hand cocked there. And as the champ had told him, he had tasted it. It was too soon; he didn't have time; he couldn't forget it. Young Roland hid his chin behind his shoulder.

Young Roland never forgot the night. He had seen what a champion looked like. . . .

The bell caught him going around to his right, a baffled look on his face, backing away from Jocko's occasional left.

Ace Finley was in the ring, cutting the laces on Jocko's right glove. The referee was reaching down for the slips on which the judges had written their decisions.

Then he walked over and took hold of Jocko's right hand and started to hold it up. Ace Finley yelled at him.

Jocko Humboldt hooked his right elbow over the top rope and held it there, while the referee lifted his left hand high.

Every winner in the house yelled out; and then the losers began to yell. Presently there was a complete, shrill, triumphant bedlam.

And only the next day did they realize fully what they had cheered. . . .

Two cops made a lane to the dressing-room. Another cop had Jocko Humboldt's left arm, supporting him. His right arm hung over Ace Finley's shoulder. Doc Grayson, with that little black bag, walked close behind them.

In the dressing-room, Jocko seated himself on the table. He had no expression in his face. It was vacant-eyed, gray; he was just about out. The face will not react at all to the kind of pain that owned his whole right arm.

Doc Grayson had cut the bandage off and now he was jabbing a hypodermic needle into the pulpy mass which had once been a hand.

Four feet back, two feet to one side, Ace Finley was standing with tears running down his face for the first time in twenty-eight and a half years and he didn't even care. The dressing-room was full of people and he didn't know it and if he had he wouldn't have given one half-hearted damn.

As Doc Grayson pulled out the needle he handed Jocko a brandy flask, made him drink from it, and then gave him another shot. This time in the biceps of that right arm.

Three minutes later then, slowly, Doc Grayson started the examination which was no more than confirmation as far as he was concerned. Handling Jocko's now numb hand very gently, and casting up through his bushy eyebrows occasional questioning and wondering glances, he presently put the hand tenderly in Jocko's own lap and stood back a step.

"THE other day," he said to Jocko softly, "I told you your hand would never heal to fight again. Well . . . . I was wrong." Doc Grayson was an old man who had been around Broadway and been around fighters until he had thought he knew all the answers. But Doc Grayson's voice caught a little bit now and he looked down. "I—good God, man," he said, "I sure was wrong!"

Then he looked straight at Jocko—his gaze very grave. "But son," he said, "I'm not fooling now. If you ever can pick up a pencil with this thing again," —and he touched Jocko's right hand lightly,—"you'll be lucky. You'll never fight again."

The brandy had got a flimsy hold on Jocko, but it was too flimsy for the way he felt. He lifted the bottle and wet his lips from it.

Then he grinned at Doc Grayson. "You're tellin' *me,*" he murmured. "I—I think I'll lie down a minute," he added, and he folded back on the rubbing-table. Quietly. . . .

Finley had his back turned. "He's a great guy," Finley was saying to himself. "He's all right. He's got a hundred grand now. It aint a fortune; but I'll never let him touch it. He'll be all right; him and his wife. Maybe a kid. The income will do; it's *gonna* do! It's funny," Finley's thoughts went on of their own accord, "—it's funny how there's such a lot of guys they call champ.

"Anybody could hit a man as hard as that with a busted hand, maybe. One time. But then to grin and put on an act that convinces—that's something different. With a numb hand cocked high like you *wanted* to hit. That's what a champ does. That won the fight for Jocko."

People kept punching Finley on the shoulder, gently but insistently. He turned around.

"YOU were there," he said to the newspaper man. "You were there and didn't notice. . . . That's right. He broke it in the gym four days ago. When he hit the dinge. It was just an act, but he got too damned intent about it. Too much realism. Get Joe Mordesti to tell you about it," he finished abruptly. "Know? Sure he'll know. Better than anyone in town. You'll find him. Grand Central—Pennsy—the pier of the first boat out of town. Some place like that. Just give him the password," said Finley. "He'll be glad to talk. . . . What? Oh, it's *Triplecross.* He'll know. Oh, sure he will."

Ace Finley paused a moment then, staring at the blank wall of the dressing-room. "A champion," he added, "is a funny sort of guy. A very funny sort of guy. Sometimes."

No one heard him. The reporters had gone. He didn't know that.

ARMS

and MEN

Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon

By

H. BEDFORD-JONES

XVIII—LANCASTER IRONS

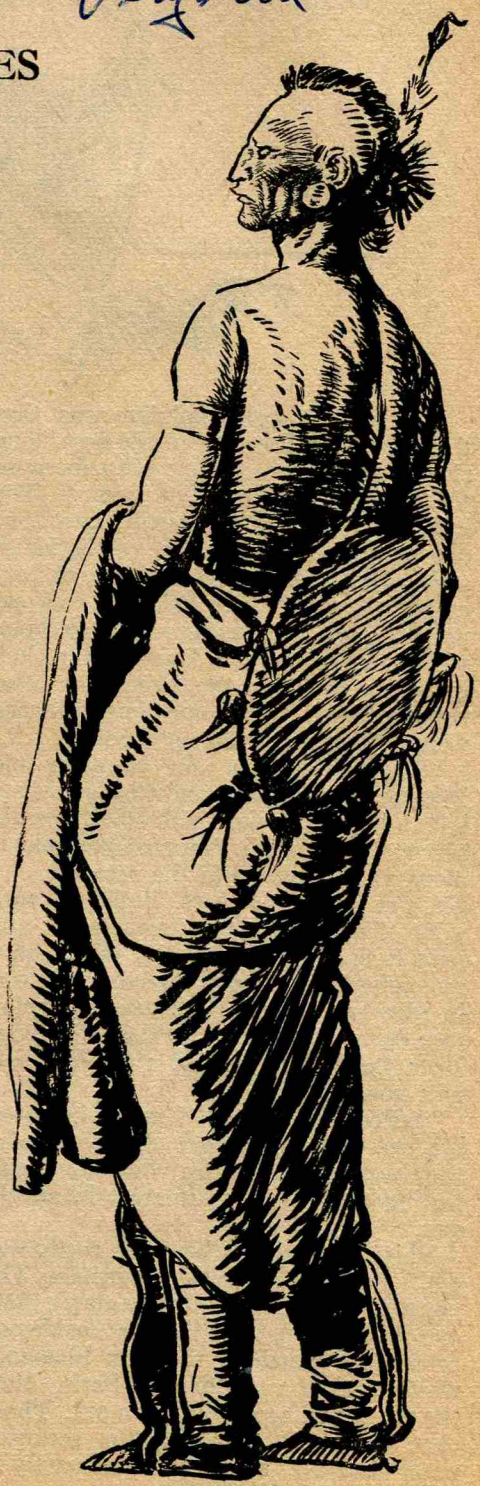
The famous long Kentucky rifle which bore so large a part in the winning of America by our pioneers was made in Lancaster, Pa., and first used in the French and Indian wars—as witness, this fascinating story.

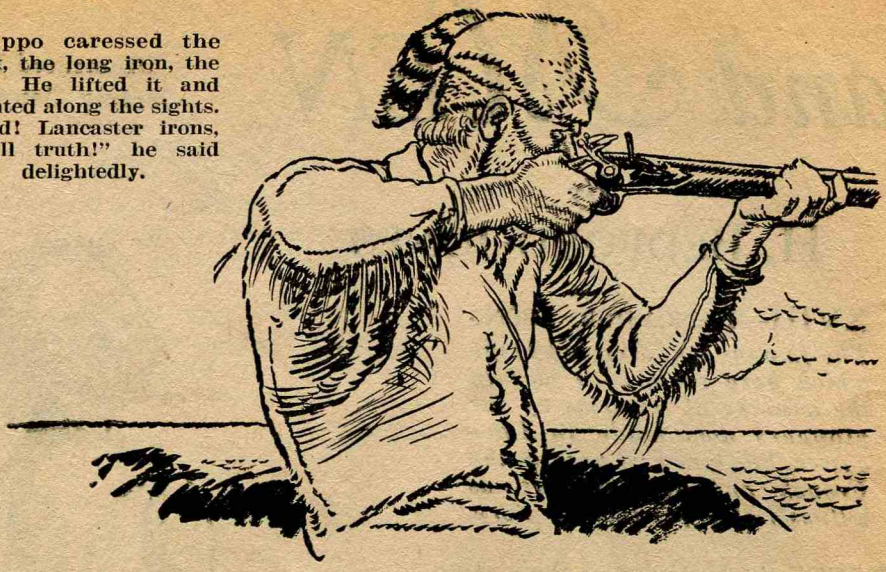
SINCE the beginning of these chronicles, which were aimed to deal with the arms collection of my old friend Martin Burnside, it has been my good fortune to receive at the most unexpected times gifts of aid and of enlightenment from others who became interested in the hobby and its tales. Few of these occasions came as more of a surprise than the presentation to me of the Bumppo notes.

On this particular evening I dropped into the Collectors' Club with my prize of the day—an old rifle, garnered after much wrangling in a dingy downtown emporium of antiquated household goods. The proprietor said that it had come, when he was a young fellow starting in business, from some house in Bleecker Street.

Finding half a dozen members in the Club lounge, I displayed my treasure. Most of them followed that misguided hobby called philately; and as they knew little about arms, I pointed out the lovely details of my old piece, visible despite its encrusted dirt:

The admirable iron work, the fine metal itself, of the fifty-inch octagonal barrel, with its rifling of seven grooves. The chased flintlock, the beautifully engraved brass patch box on the right side of the full curly maple stock, and above all the name of *Sellers* sunk in the metal. Here was one of the so-called "Kentucky" rifles, really made in Lancaster County by Pennsylvania Dutch artisans, that changed the history of American pioneering and introduced a weapon before which the redskins could not stand, and which wiped out the British veterans at New Orleans.





Bumppo caressed the stock, the long iron, the lock. He lifted it and squinted along the sights. "Lord! Lancaster irons, in all truth!" he said delightedly.

My very inexpert opinion was that this must have been one of the first "long rifles" to be made, about 1750, because the maple stock was not carved. The initials *N B* were cut deeply into it at one place, but it bore none of the handsome carving so typical of the later Lancaster County rifles. While I was expatiating on the beauties of this weapon which had helped win America, the Club treasurer went to the safe, and after rummaging in it for some time, returned with a dilapidated old notebook.

"Since this came out of some old Bleecker Street house, and what notes are left in it seem to deal with rifles," he observed with a laugh, "suppose you take it along as a memento of the occasion. . . . Oh, I've had it for years. Bought it with a lot of old letters from some attic, and kept it because it was a bit odd. All I remember about it was that the attic was in Bleecker Street—the house was being torn down at the time. It'll go with your Nota Bene rifle, or *N B* rifle, or whatever you call it."

"Sellers," I corrected amid laughter. No use correcting those chaps, though; they were too taken up with stamp-collecting to have much interest in an old gun.

This old notebook, however, really was odd. Once it had been handsome. The paper and binding pointed to about 1830, and it had come from France; inside one cover still remained the tiny blue-and-white label of a stationer in Paris. Half the pages had been quite torn out. Those that remained bore hastily scrawled notes done with a bad quill pen, partly in French, partly in English.

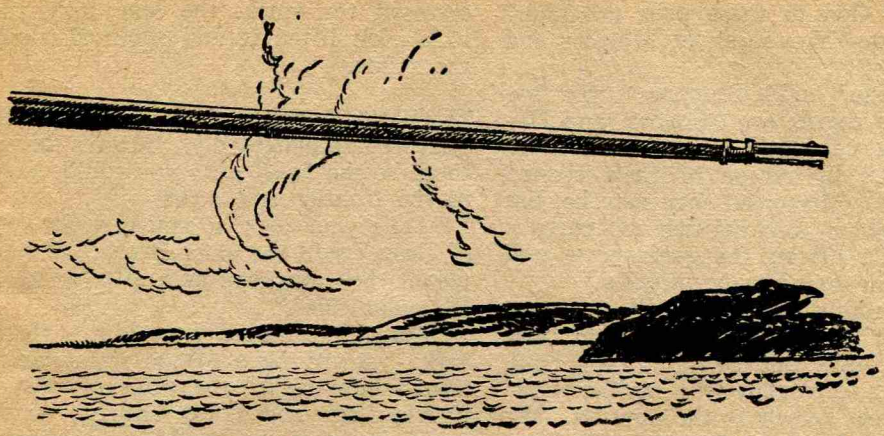
Apparently they were notes for the scene of some story or play. They were fairly coherent. As I began to decipher them, a mild excitement took hold of me.

True, these notes actually illustrated all that I had been saying about the use of the Kentucky rifle, and how it had literally won the frontiers for the whites; but it was not this that caused my deep interest. Rather was it the names which came to light in the course of the notes.

Longest of all was the first note, which went into great detail regarding a scene on the shores of Lake Ontario in the year 1755. It was not written in modern style, but it brought the highly important location of the whole thing vividly before the mind's eye.

On the northern shore of this lake, thickly verged by the luxuriant green masses of the forest, a narrow promontory of land studded with rocks ran out at an acute angle; its end was just beyond musket-shot of the shore. The only vegetation on this sandy, rocky spit consisted of a few silver-birch saplings.

On the stretch of shore opposite this spit a canoe was drawn up, and about a small fire three people were making noonday repast. One was a slatternly, unshaven, unkempt backwoodsman, as his stained and greasy buckskin attire testified. The other two were apparently father and son. Both were garbed in black. The graybeard had a lofty and serene countenance; his son, also glossily bearded, looked exceedingly like him, but was more energetic and vigorous. That they were anything but woodsmen was strikingly evident in their attire and speech.



"We should soon come to words with the savages, Paul," the elder was saying, as they ate a little apart from their guide. "We're beyond the farthest rim of civilization; and if I mistake not—"

His words died abruptly. Without a sound, the bushes parted to reveal a tall, well-knit figure clad in buckskin, at whom all three stared in startled astonishment.

"Why any man would want speech with the Mingoes," said the apparition in a slow, contained voice, "is past me; but every man to his natur'. And you'll have your wish in no great while. . . . Simon Grange, I made bold to steal up on your smoke, with word that it's to be seen afar, and to seek a bit of your provender—if so be you can spare it."

THE slovenly Grange had come to his feet.

"Oh, it's you, Bumppo!" he observed with no evident pleasure. "Plague take me, if you don't move like a ghost!"

"Like a Delaware, you might say with more truth." And the newcomer laughed in a silent fashion. His garb was neat, even a trifle dandified, with its touches of porcupine quill embroidery; his powder-horn and pouch were handsome, but he carried no rifle. His features bore a singular expression of candor and sincerity.

"Bumppo, did I hear?" exclaimed the older man. "Not, perchance, Nathaniel Bumppo? Aye? Then I am delighted, sir; we sought your services in vain, having heard much of you, but you were gone from Fort William Henry when we passed the frontier."

"Moravian missionaries, seekin' the Wyandot villages," said Simon Grange, jerking a thumb at the pair, not without a certain contempt. That there was no love lost between him and Bumppo was fairly obvious. "And you're horning in to j'in the party?"

"You'll never make a woodsman, Simon, with your mighty poor knowledge of human natur'." Bumppo shook his head. "Not to mention your knowledge of forest ways, which is a gift denied to some. A smoke-trail that any redskin eye can pick up, your weapons piled in yonder canoe, and a dozen Mingoes on the war-trail—well, well, every man to his gift, say I. By your leave, friends, by your leave."

And stepping forward, Bumppo seated himself by the fire and proceeded to seize ravenously upon some of the food in sight. The younger Moravian addressed him eagerly.

"Sir, are you truly the man they call Hawkeye?"

"Aye, aye; but the eye hath served me poorly on this scout," said Bumppo, his mouth full. "Killdeer, the rifle I boasted of, in the folly of my heart, lies with a broken lock, well hid and where it can be found; but the Mingoes are close by."

"Mingoes!" burst out Simon Grange in sudden anger. "And you've brought 'em down on us?"

Bumppo's calm gaze searched him.

"They were here afore me, friend Simon, as a look along the shore might show you. There is a Huron moccasin-print, made less than an hour since."

Grange erupted in a savage growl, but the elder Moravian spoke gently.

"We come not in war, Master Bumppo, but in peace, seeking to flee the evil and sin of the settlements, and bring the word of God to these poor misguided Wyandots. You speak of Mingoes and Hurons—"

"All one," said Bumppo. "To my mind, all rogues are Mingoes, and Hurons but carry the French name for Wyandots, by reason of their crested scalplock. Misguided they may be, but if I'm right in thinking that this party is led by La Flèche, the guidance is well enough for their bloody purposes."

"But surely, sir, they will not meet us evilly?" protested the Moravian. "My name is Beyer, and this is my son Paul, who seeks to emulate with me the works of the great apostle to the Gentiles. We have come from the Pennsylvania frontier in peace."

SIMON GRANGE shoved himself at the three, glaring at Bumppo.

"La Flèche, say you?" he growled. "That bloody war-chief on the trail? I say again, what made you bring 'em down on us?"

"Hunger, friend Simon," Bumppo rejoined calmly. "And the need of a warning to the slovenly and them that neglect the lawful gifts of a white man."

"You call me slovenly?" cried Grange in a burst of fury.

"Sartin, sartin," the other coolly replied. "You've a name for it, friend Simon. If you were a wise man, you'd put your charges into yonder canoe and be off, away from these Mingo vagabonds."

"But sir, I wish to meet these vagabonds, as you term them," said Beyer, his deep serene eyes very earnest. "I wish to go with them to their villages. That's the purpose of our coming here."

The gaze of Bumppo searched him with subdued wonder.

"Every man to his own gift, say I; and amen, if that be your wish. But I misdoubt La Flèche will pause for no smoking of a treaty. You've rifles in the canoe—"

"Not for war, sir," the younger Beyer said. "For hunting, which is a necessity of life. We brought three rifles from Pennsylvania with us, made by Sellers of Lancaster, and excellent weapons. Since you have no gun, might one of ours serve you?"

Eagerly enough, Bumppo rose, went to the canoe, and his eye struck at the three rifles there; that of Simon Grange was leaning against a fallen tree. He picked up one of the three weapons, whistling softly between his teeth, and caressed the stock, the long iron, the lock. He lifted it and squinted along the sights.

"LORD! Lancaster irons in all truth!" he said delightedly. "Master Beyer, these be the finest gifts you could carry to the frontier and acrost—"

"Take your pick, if you care for one of them," said the elder Beyer. "I had meant the extra iron as a gift for some Wyandot chief."

"Anan?" Bumppo gave him a sharp look. "A gift for a Mingo, did I hear? That's clear ag'in' the dispensations o' Providence, friend. A Bible, which could be used for wadding; a knife, even, or a hogshead of tobacco—but a rifle! And such an iron as this! No, no; I'll take the gift with all my heart—"

Again Simon Grange intervened, this time with deeper anger.

"It was agreed I'd have that rifle for my guidance of you," he broke out hotly.

"A rifle, friend, a rifle," said Beyer, with a smile. "You'll have one of the others; we need no more than one. And this good gentleman has fetched us warning and tried to do us a service."

"Lord! Don't lay such a word to me," Bumppo laughed silently. *"Gentleman!* I'm no such thing, friend Beyer. The word carries a queer sound in the forest. . . . But listen!" He started suddenly, his ears having caught a sound no other heard. Then he spoke, urgently. "Into the canoe, I tell you, and be off! Friend Simon, do your duty, man, do your duty if you have the heart for it! There's no greater scoundrel in these parts than La Flèche, and no greater warrior either, for that matter."

"They don't want to be off," said Grange sullenly. "Besides, the canoe has a hole in the bottom, and won't swim a mile until it's patched."

"And you spending this time in eating and lazying?" Bumppo exclaimed harshly. "I tell 'ee, friend Simon, you've not the gift of your trade! Well, well, look to it. I'm not the man to take such presents, friend Beyer, onless with reason; but I give you thanks for such a gift as I've had but once in my life afore this. If the Lancaster iron be not the equal of Killdeer, which is scarce to be expected, at least it's an honest, noble bit of work. I'll not trouble you

further, and if the chance offers, may be of some sarvice to you in future. Your sarvant, sir."

And he was gone, with swift agile silence, into the recesses of the forest—gone before they realized it or guessed his purpose. With an exclamation, the elder Beyer frowned.

"I'm sorry for that; I would have stayed him, Paul."

"A worthless vagabond, taking army pay," snorted Simon Grange. "We're better off without him; I'm capable of handling my own business. We'd best clap a patch on the canoe, or maybe paddle up the shore a bit before doing the work. I mislike the notion of having La Flèche come on us. The Arrow, as he's called, has too much room at his belt for scalps."

"He'll not harm us, Mr. Grange," Beyer replied. "I thought you said, when we landed here, that no Wyandots were anywhere close."

Grange suppressed an oath.

"And who knows they are now? Because that rascal came with his cock-and-bull story, and walked off with your best rifle, does that prove anything?"

HE bent to the weight of the canoe, lifting it. The elder Beyer went to his aid. There was a little stir in the wall of greenery. Paul Beyer, looking up, uttered a sharp cry—too late.

A musket-shot crashed out from the leafy thicket, followed by two others. Grange whirled about and fell over on his face, dead before he struck the sandy beach. The elder Beyer toppled forward and fell headlong into the prow of the canoe, whose stern, thus lifted by his weight, rose clear of the sand. The impact of his fall carried the frail birchen craft out from the shore, but he did not rise into sight again.

As for Paul Beyer, the bullet designed for him merely passed through his black hat, without lifting it from his head. An appalling chorus of war-whoops rose from the trees. An Indian started from the cover, then another. Again a musket roared out—but Beyer was now flinging himself at the rifle of Simon Grange. He caught hold of it, lifted it and cocked it, sobbing out incoherent words.

Then he froze in every muscle. The redskins who had come into sight likewise froze, painted faces uplifted. Their heads, shaven except for a central scalp-lock that rose in a high, stiff crest, showed they were Wyandots, or Hurons.

The sound that held one and all transfixed for a fleeting instant came from somewhere near by. It was a human voice, emitting a hissing scream of piercing and appalling nature. The Hurons, who knew it to be the war-whoop of the Mohawks, by whom their entire tribe had been nearly destroyed, were bound by amazed consternation. Paul Beyer, knowing not what it was, was yet bound by the instinctive ferocity of the cry.

"Sassakway!" it shrilled in wild crescendo. So it was once transcribed by Mohawks themselves; but letters cannot convey the indescribable, drawling horror of the scream. *"Sassakway! Sassakway!"*

One flash, and the Hurons disappeared, momentarily relinquishing their helpless prey in order to investigate and face this unexpected menace. Once more the entire stretch of shore was deserted and empty, save for the dead Simon Grange.

Anxious, astonished, disconcerted, Beyer darted to the side of Grange, found him past help, then rose and called:

"Father! Father!"

A weak response, in words that could not be distinguished, came from the drifting canoe; carried on by its impetus and a faint current inside the point, it was part way over to the spit of sand by this time. Evidently the elder Beyer was hurt and unable to lift himself.

Paul Beyer was no fool. Whatever the reason, the Hurons had left him to himself for the moment; and one glance showed him there was no hope or refuge here. The drifting canoe pointed the way. Pausing only to uncock his rifle and fling off his long black coat, the young man threw himself into the water, holding the rifle above his head.

PAUL had almost gained the canoe before he needed to swim. He held up the weapon in one hand, struck out with the other, and coming to the canoe, gripped the edge and put the rifle inboard. He could not, however, see into the craft.

"Father! Are you hurt?" he gasped.

"Aye, son Paul," came his father's voice. "Praise be to the Lord, it's naught very bad, but painful. I think the leg is broke. Was it the red men, son?"

"Aye," replied the younger man. "Lie still, now; Grange is dead, but they've gone. I'll push the canoe."

"Speak them fair, son Paul," came the response. "The poor heathen know not what they're about. Speak them fair

With yells of exultation the redskins came bounding. Bumppo aimed, fired; then swiftly followed with the other, while Paul Beyer reloaded the first gun.

when they come back, bid them to remorse for their evil acts, and move their hearts to compassion and gentleness."

The face of the younger man, framed by long wet hair and beard, contracted in a grimace; he muttered something to himself, which certainly had no gentleness in the sound, and fell to work shoving the canoe as he swam. The only possible refuge was the promontory ahead; and thus far, at least, the canoe would ride without taking in too much water. The high stern had been gradually swung about by the breeze, so that when at length it touched the shore, it lifted well up.

Paul Beyer, emerging from the water, pulled it higher, cast a glance at the forest verge, then helped his father from the canoe.

"In among these rocks, Father!" he exclaimed. "They'll give us cover, at least, until we can speak with the savages. And I can look after your leg. Put your weight on me—that's right."

Among the rocks, safely sheltered, he disposed the elder man, with blankets and all other contents of the canoe. Kneeling, he opened a pack, produced bandages and splints, and fell to work.

The leg was broken below the knee. The bullet once out, Paul Beyer set the shattered bones, applied splint and bandage, and only then glanced at the face of his father. Beyer had uttered no sound, but had fainted from the pain.

"So much the better," muttered Paul Beyer. "Speak them fair, indeed! Well, at least I'll have the rifles loaded, in case they don't pause for speech."

A distant yell pealed up from among the trees, then others in response. As he loaded the two empty weapons, Beyer looked only at the shore—until the sudden sound of a voice made him whirl around toward the lake.

"Ahoy! Well done, young man, well done! Now the rascals have discovered the false scent, and they'll be back in no time. But the Mohawk yell served its purpose."

IN utter amazement, Beyer gawked at the water. There, evidently having swum from a lower projection of the lake shore, appeared Bumppo, swimming and pushing before him a hastily contrived little raft of sticks and brush, on which his rifle and powder-horn and tinder pouch rode high and dry.

"Don't halt in your task, I admonish you," went on the voice of the swimming head, now aiming in for the point of rocks. "The Mingoes aint back; hows'ever, you'll see them quick and sartin. They've l'arned a white voice gave the Iroquois yell, and now they'll be after scalps once more. Load, man, *load!*"

Paul Beyer, thus admonished, fell to work again. Presently Bumppo rose dripping in the shallows, having left his leather hunting-shirt behind him. Hastily gaining the cover of the rocks with his belongings, he shook his head at sight of the elder Beyer, still unconscious, and settled down to wipe some splashed water from his rifle, open the pan and examine the priming, then carefully replace it. His keen eyes swept the line of shore.

"I hope you're a good workman with the iron, young man? The rifle, I mean."

"I cannot fire upon my fellow-creatures, sir," Paul Beyer replied firmly.

The eye of Bumppo rested upon him for a moment; then the woodsman nodded.

"I thought the same thing once, friend; but every man must take the trail accordin' to his natur' and gifts. We've time to put your father into the canoe, patch the hole, and be off acrost the big water; I take it you've no mind at present to seek the Mingo villages."

"And no paddles," said Beyer in a low voice, pointing to the shore. "I forgot them; they are there, where we camped. If you like, I'll swim for them—"

"Hark!" exclaimed Bumppo, and the disappointment over the paddles was chased from his features by sudden alert energy. "They're back. Cover, for your life!"

With the sudden, silent appearance of a wild creature, a painted Indian came into sight on the opposite shore. He darted to the figure of Simon Grange, stooped to girdle the head with his knife—and in the very act, leaped like a startled buck as the rifle of Bumppo cracked. The scalp-yell was changed on his lips to the death-yell, and he plunged half into the water and lay quiet.

Muskets crashed among the verge of trees; smoke plumed and rolled on the breeze, and bullets whistled among the rocks. Bumppo, already reloading his rifle, spoke calmly and quietly:

"Down, young man! We're in little danger here; the musket's a chancy weapon in redskin hands, and we're beyond shooting pace. But the rifle carries farther, and this Lancaster iron of yours is a sweet piece. Set the others close to my hand."

Yells pealed up. Bumppo's gaze flitted along the trees, on to the end of the little promontory, whose birch saplings afforded no cover to an enemy. Judging by the silence, the muskets were being reloaded now.

BUMPPO faced about, as though fully aware of the next development. He spoke without taking his eyes from the trees.

"Young man, be ready to reload, with apt hand and a well-greased patch. The Mingo rascals have their lesson to learn. . . . Ah! I thought so."

A musket from the opposite trees sent a harmless ball whistling, then another. But at the same instant, a number of figures appeared where the neck of the little promontory came from the land. Five in all darted forward full speed, just as Bumppo discharged his rifle at the trees opposite. He had not wasted the ball; a figure came plunging forth upon the shore.

With yells of exultation and vengeance, the five redskins came bounding among the saplings of the promontory, thinking the rifle of their adversary discharged. Bumppo caught up another, aimed and fired; then, swiftly, followed this with the other, while Paul Beyer reloaded the first.

The death-yell echoed high, amid other yells of dismay and consternation.

One of the charging warriors remained motionless; another dragged himself away into covert with trailing foot. The third shot had missed, and Bumppo shook his head sadly.

"That useless scamp Simon Grange could no more load a rifle aright than he could read a trail. . . . Ah, well, he's dead, and no use discussing him. Young man, have you any pine pitch and patches of birch, or did Simon neglect proper supply?"

"Yes, in the pack beside the canoe," Beyer replied.

"Then we've time to be thinking of precautions. La Flèche has no canoe at hand, but he'll locate one afore night."

Rising, Bumppo went to the canoe, lifted it, and carried it over to the shore on the lake side of the point. Muskets crashed out, but he disregarded them, merely muttering something about a waste of French powder. He lifted the packs after the canoe, and told Paul Beyer to get the scraped hole patched.

The voice of the elder Moravian summoned him. He brought water to the hurt man, who had now revived, and listened patiently to an admonition against warfare and further fighting. While he listened, his eyes kept flitting to the wooded shore; and then he made reply in a thoughtful and impressive voice:

"Your argyment follows your natur', friend Beyer; and while I don't hold to it, I call myself as good a Christian as any. Providence put such devils as yonder Mingoes in the land, and gave them their own gifts, and gave the white man his own gifts, such as this Lancaster iron. And each man follows his own trail, accordin' to his own natur', as is fitting. I don't propose to have my hair lifted by a Mingo knife, like poor Simon Grange yonder—for there's no way of saving the scalp."

"But these savages will listen to reason!" persisted the missionary. "Once they understand the situation—"

HE paused, as Bumppo uttered his silent laugh.

"They understand well enough, friend Beyer, that they've a sad tale to take home to their villages, and no plunder to sweeten it. No, no! But you shall hear La Flèche for yourself. If I mistake not, yonder comes the Arrow now."

He rose to his full height, as a figure appeared striding out along the promontory—an unarmed Huron, hand lifted in the peace sign.

To this, Bumppo replied, and the warrior advanced confidently.

He was a splendid savage, painted with skill, his high, erect scalp-crest holding the hawk's feather of a chief. The ferocity of his visage was tempered by a certain bold shrewdness; his voice was harsh and deep when he spoke. As he came close, his gaze settled upon Bumppo, after taking in each detail of the scene here.

"AH! Now I understand why my young warriors lie dead," he said in French. "La Longue Carabine!"

"I see you recognize me, Chief," said the scout, with a slightly gratified air. "And if I mistake not, you're the Arrow."

The eye of the Huron flashed. "La Longue Carabine is far from home; he runs in the trails of the great French father; he kills my young men. Why?"

"Because your young men are foolish; their eyes are weak, they shoot before they see the mark aright." Knowing that the other undoubtedly understood English, and probably spoke it, he continued in this tongue for Beyer's benefit.

"Look'ee, chief. Your young men fired upon these missionaries, who came in peace to seek your villages—"

La Flèche burst in hotly, discourteously, a murky fire blazing in his dark eyes.

"We want no missionaries save those sent us by the Great Father in Paris. Give up these men to us, my brother, and go free. Give them up, that the widows and children of our village may be gladdened in heart by their torments! Give them up, and you shall go free."

"Not likely, Arrow, not likely." And Bumppo shook his head. "Well I know your aim and purpose in coming here. Don't talk like a woman who has never seen the warpath."

The chief again broke in hotly.

"My brother is very wise. He has a canoe, but no paddles. My young men are coming from the villages. They will be joyous at hearing that La Longue Carabine is in their power. Once more I say, give up these men, take a canoe, and go!"

Bumppo smiled in derision. "Aye? Now I see that the Mingoes are truly told of, in saying they know not decency or honor. They make a chief of one who cannot speak with the courtesy of a warrior. They flee in panic at the Mohawk war-cry. They send a child here dressed as a warrior, to see how many are in our camp, and whether we have paddles for

our canoe. Go back, little child, go back and tell your warriors that we have no need of paddles, and your muskets cannot reach us; and when we are ready, we shall go our ways; and if the Mingo dogs bite, we will give them back bullets."

Almost livid with fury at these deserved reproaches, La Flèche turned and stalked away. Natty Bumppo cast one glance at Beyer, and saw that the meeting had served its purpose. This close contact with the Huron had opened the Moravian's eyes to the sort of men he sought to deal with; the elder Beyer sighed, and this sigh spoke volumes.

"Is the patch on, young man?" called Bumppo, catching up his own rifle again and watching the trees along the shore. "Is it on?"

"On, but the pitch is not dry," rejoined Paul Beyer. "But we can't go without paddles."

"Aye." And the scout laughed silently. "Run and cut two of those saplings, and quick about it! Eight-foot lengths. I'll cover you. Run!"

The young man obeyed, darting toward the slender birches. La Flèche had by this time disappeared among the trees. A whoop announced his return to his own men; then a silence fell. Slowly, Bumppo lifted his rifle.

"I thought as much," he muttered. "The varmints well know that a musket from that tree would carry down—"

ONE enormous pine, growing at the shore's edge, leaned over the water. A dark shape showed on the upper reaches of this leaning tree. Bumppo lifted rifle to shoulder, sighted carefully, and the piece cracked.

A yell made response. The dark object in the tree came crashing down and disappeared from sight. Muskets made futile response, as Paul Beyer came running in with the two saplings he had cut.

"Here they are," he announced.

"Trim them," said Bumppo. "Make fast one of the blankets, a pole to either side. You see those trees along the shore? The afternoon breeze is coming up. The big water is narrow here. We'll spread the blanket, and the breeze will carry us straight across the lake—"

THERE the scribbled notes came to an end. The story was done—the story of the Lancaster irons, as Bumppo called them.

The tale, as I managed to expand and interpret it, left me in something of a fervor. While I was still under its spell, I chanced to run into the editor and I told him of it. He listened closely while I spread the whole thing before him, nodded at my mention of the Lancaster rifles and all the story inferred about their superiority, and then made thoughtful response.

"Well—I think you have something here! It's a fact that James Fenimore Cooper lived in France for some years; and in the early thirties he came back to New York—and lived in Bleecker Street too! Let's see the notebook."

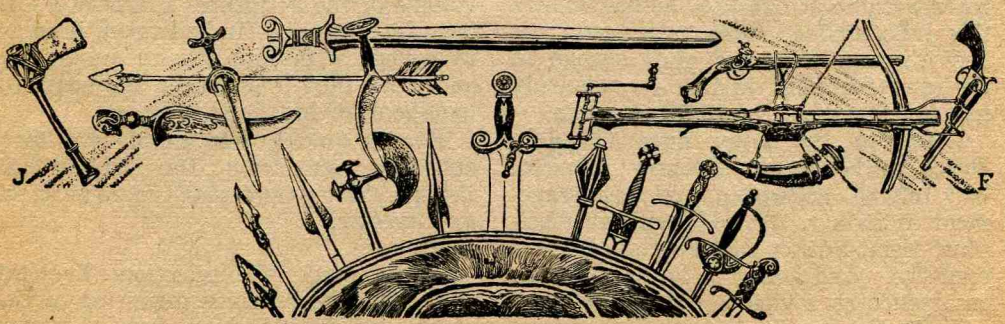
He shook his head over this.

"Doesn't look like his writing; but who knows? And there's the rifle; there are the notes; there's the name of Bumppo and the initials cut into the rifle stock! Look here; d'you suppose that the original of his character *Bumppo* could have been a real person, after all? And that Cooper got a rifle he had owned, made some notes about him, and used this as a basis for his later Leatherstocking tales?"

"It's a fascinating theory," I rejoined. "But of course, there's no proof—"

"Proof be hanged!" he exclaimed. "It's one of those things that are better without proof. . . . I don't know what to think of it, hanged if I do!"

Neither did I; but as he said, here was the rifle.



Another of H. Bedford-Jones' brilliant stories of Arms and Men will be a feature of the next, the August, issue.

The Lord

A gangster puts a clergyman on the spot; and—the worm turns. . . . A brilliant story by a writer new to this magazine.

THIS rainy afternoon the boy brought the newspaper all the way to the manse porch. The Reverend Leonard Bryce took it from him there, gave the boy a friendly pat on the head, then reëntered his study.

There he tossed a fresh log on the fire. His wife and children being away on a visit, the Reverend Bryce this week was especially in need of cheer. Now he stood for a moment at the window and watched the rain as it struck aslant on the deodars, and as it dripped from the eaves of his Episcopal charge next door. Except for the paper-boy splashing away on his bicycle, the streets of this California foothill suburb were deserted. Altogether the vista gave to Bryce a sense of unusual isolation.

"I wonder," he thought aloud, "what they decided about poor Jake Striker!"

And when he sat down and spread the paper on his lap, the feature headline made him wince.

DEATH SENTENCE FOR STRIKER

Leonard Bryce was always sympathetic toward men in trouble; but in this case his sympathies were especially captured because at one time he had known this Jake Striker. Seventeen years ago, Bryce and Striker had gone abroad in the same regiment, Striker as an unruly private, Bryce as a youthful chaplain.

Often in the army days Chaplain Bryce, although consistently rebuffed, had offered friendship and encouragement to Striker. At odds with all discipline then, Striker had continued so in civil life. And last year he had become catalogued as a vicious public enemy.

None the less it distressed Reverend Leonard Bryce to read this account which informed him that Jake Striker was finally convicted by a local court, and had been sentenced to death. The paper said:

> Tomorrow morning, Jake Striker will be taken from the county jail and conveyed to Folsom Prison, where he will be confined in Death Row. Government agents assert that except for Michigan Mike Mungo himself, this conviction disposes of the notorious Mike Mungo gang.

With a sigh of sorrow, Bryce laid the paper aside. The usual serenity of his face, as he gazed into the fire, was painfully disturbed by the fate of Striker. He was inclined to censure himself that he had failed to help Striker in that contact long ago, and contemplation of Striker's execution gave him a sense of almost personal defeat. An older man would not have felt so, but Leonard Bryce was still boyish and eager; he had never lowered his sights; and in the fine, spiritual upswing of his life there had been no conspicuous defeat. . . . The clock struck four-thirty, reminding him that he should be getting to work on next Sunday's sermon.

The Bible which he took from the study table was a King James version. Bryce thumbed through it with a gentle, adoring touch, for this particular volume of the Scriptures had been a gift from his mother. He had taken it away to college with him twenty years ago, and since then it had been the constant handbook of his clerical career.

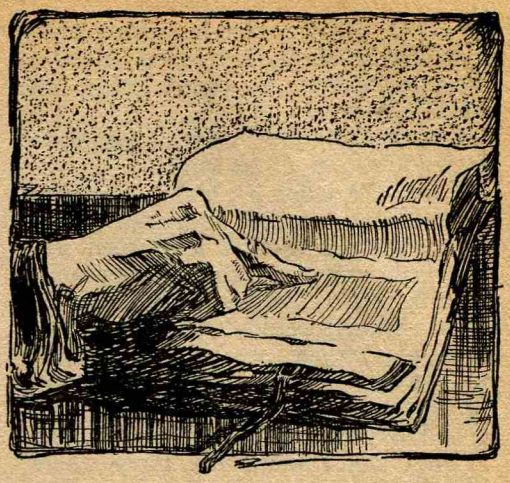
Now he quickly selected his next text, choosing one from the Ninety-first Psalm: *"His truth shall be thy shield and buckler."*

AS he made the selection, Leonard Bryce heard steps mounting to the porch, and the bell rang. Bryce inserted a ribbon marker at the Ninety-first

Delivers

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

Illustrated by Austin Briggs



Psalm, laid the Bible on his study table and went to the door.

Opening it, he was confronted by a stranger whose coat-collar was turned to his chin and ears, and who wore a dripping felt hat low over his eyes. The stranger was of about Bryce's own age and build. The fact that his face held something like a desperate tension did not alarm Bryce; he was always quick to welcome anyone in trouble.

"Are you Preacher Bryce?" the man asked.

"I am," Bryce smiled, adding cordially: "Won't you come in?"

The caller stepped inside, and Bryce closed the door.

"How may I serve you, my friend?"

"Your family, they're off some'res on a visit, aint they?" the man inquired.

"Why, yes," Bryce answered, puzzled rather than disturbed by the question.

"D'yuh know anyone down at the county jail? I mean, d'yuh know the county sheriff, the jailer or any of the turnkeys?"

"No, I don't think I do. Why do you ask?"

"Just wanted to make sure, mister." A bold slyness curved on the man's lips and made Bryce stare.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

A grin of bravado creased the visitor's face. "Michigan Mike Mungo," he announced. "The Sandman to you, mister—because right now I'm putting you to sleep."

Even as he spoke Mungo produced a heavy revolver and crashed it upon the clergyman's head. Bryce, battered to his knees, felt the shock of a second blow on his skull. He did not feel the third and fourth blows. For by that time he lay unconscious on the study floor.

Mungo drew down all the window shades. Then he dragged his victim to a closet, rolled him in there and locked the closet door. At this moment he did not take time to ascertain whether the clergyman was dead or only stunned. Just now the job at hand was to make himself look a little less like the notorious Mike Mungo.

FIRST he explored the manse from cellar to garret. He found it to be unoccupied except for himself and his victim. Readily he discovered the latter's bedroom and wardrobe. From the wardrobe he took a well-pressed black suit of clerical broadcloth, the formal and conventional habiliment of an Episcopalian divine.

"And here," chuckled Mungo, "is one of those choker collars that buttons behind."

The man stripped to his undergarments. Carefully he then garbed himself from head to foot in clergyman's attire. Descending to the study, he paused for a moment outside the closet into which he had rolled his victim. The door of it was still locked. No sound came from within.

"Chances are I croaked him," muttered Mungo.

Probably, he thought, no one would miss this preacher until he failed to appear at his church next Sunday. "And by that time I'll be back in Michigan. Me an' Jake!"

From the study rack Mungo took Bryce's black shovel-brim hat. He put it on his head, then looked about for a Bible. Readily he found one on the study table, the one whose silver ribbon marked the Ninety-first Psalm. Michigan Mike Mungo didn't know a psalm from a lamentation; nevertheless he took

the Bible, put it under his arm. Then, assuming what he presumed to be a pious expression, he posed before the study mirror.

A brazen grin grew on his face. "Jake, get ready to pray!" he said.

Would the jailer let him in? Mungo was fairly certain that he would. It was his understanding that a doomed man may, even out of regular visiting-hours, properly send for his lawyer or his priest. Mungo couldn't possibly impersonate the lawyer, because the real lawyer was well known at the county jail. But this preacher, Bryce, was not. Mungo had Bryce's own word for that fact.

"They don't know *me* down there, either," Mungo mused. Rarely had he ventured out to the Pacific coast, his usual stamping-grounds being in Michigan, Indiana and Illinois.

His errand here now was to "spring" Jake Striker. For one virtue Mike Mungo could claim—he was unalterably loyal to his men. In this case he especially owed it to Jake Striker; for only a year ago Michigan Mike himself, confined on a murder charge in a Grand Rapids cell, had been rescued therefrom by Striker. And while Striker had not "talked," there was always the chance that at the last minute he might. And he knew a lot about Mungo. . . .

One good turn of that sort deserved another anyhow. So just after dark this evening, Jake Striker was primed to break down and cry. He was to go all to pieces. That should be convincing enough, inasmuch as today Striker had been sentenced, and in the morning was to be removed to a death cell at Folsom prison.

Tonight, bursting into an hysteria of remorse and contrition, Striker would not only call for the consolation of a priest, but would name a particular priest. He would assert that in all his misspent life he had only known one—an army chaplain named Bryce who now had a charge in a near-by suburb. Striker would again tearfully and truthfully assert that Bryce, in the army days, had been a comforting comrade and friend.

When Jake Striker begged the jailer to send for Reverend Leonard Bryce, it was Mungo's guess that the request would not be denied—especially, since this evening would be the last chance. In the morning they were taking the doomed man to far-away Folsom; only tonight could he seek solace from Bryce. The jail authorities might telephone Bryce, or they might send a messenger. In either case Mungo, posing as Bryce, planned to receive the call himself.

"When I show up down there in this sky pilot rig-out," Mungo told himself,

"Michigan Mike Mungo," the visitor announced himself. "The Sandman to you, mister—because right now I'm putting you to sleep!"

"with this backside-front collar chokin' me and a Bible under my arm, I ought to go over big."

After that, he thought, it should be easy enough. Once in the cell, he could slip Jake a gun. They could use that one to take away the guard's gun; then the two of them could fight their way out of the jail.

Mungo now returned the Bible to the study table. Crossing to the closet, he unlocked it and looked in upon Bryce. The clergyman, in the dimness there, seemed to be dead. At any rate he lay inertly on the floor, just as Mungo had left him. Blood trickled from an ugly gash on the victim's head.

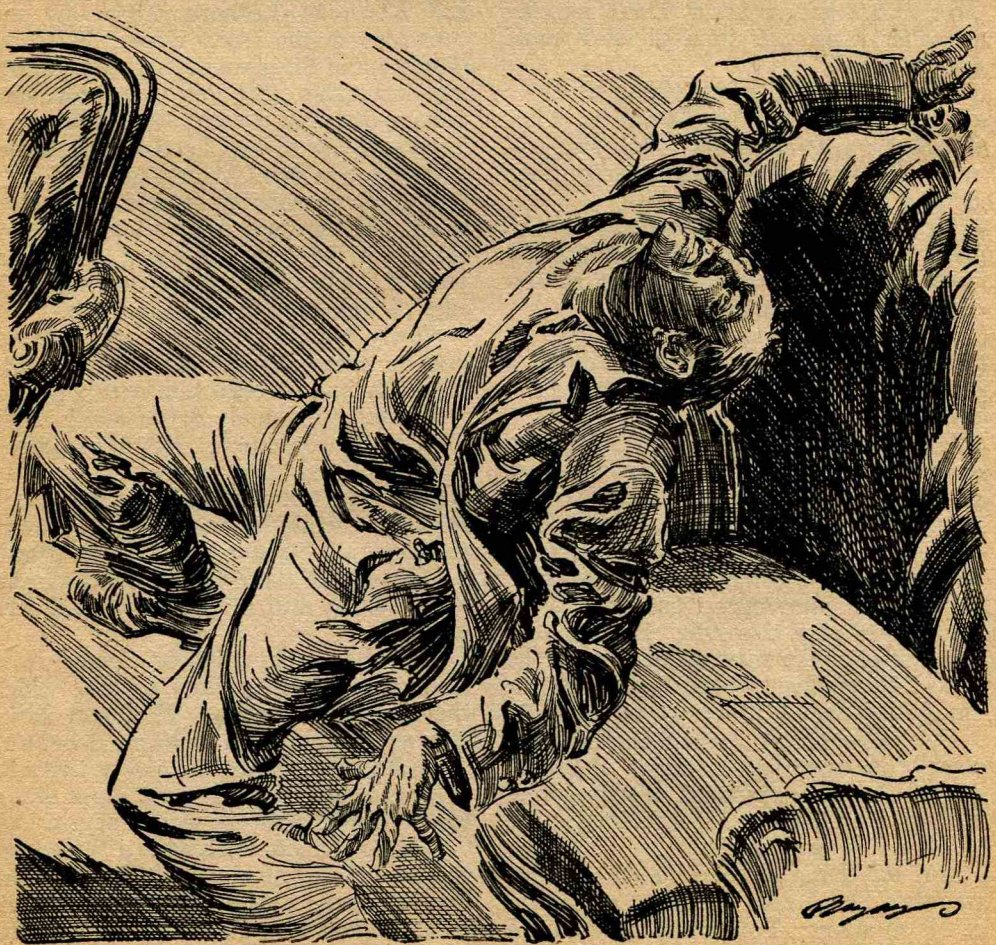
If he wasn't dead he would be soon, Mungo decided. He relocked the closet and moved over to the hearth. There he tossed on another stick of wood and sat down to consider details. What about smuggling that gun in to Jake? Did they search a preacher before permitting him to visit a felon's cell?

Mungo had an idea that a preacher would be immune from search. Still, he wasn't sure. They might pat his pockets for a rod, just on a chance. Mungo, stretching himself before the fire, gave cautious consideration to the matter of concealing a gun in some manner so clever that it would defeat a search of his person.

He had plenty of time to think. In the first place, he preferred the cover of darkness before making the drive to the jail, and before taking flight *from* the jail with Jake; and in the second place, he could not precede his cue, which must be a summons by the jailer himself.

Profoundly absorbed with the detail of concealing a gun, Mungo became suddenly aware of footsteps approaching outside. Then came a ringing of the doorbell. Mungo, startled, swore under his breath. Was it a messenger from the jail already?

He could scarcely believe it, because Jake was primed not to ask for a preacher until after sundown. The doorbell rang again. It worried and alarmed Mungo. He wouldn't answer, of course, and the door was locked. Still, smoke



from the hearth fire must be emerging from the manse chimney. Callers would therefore know some one was at home. Not receiving a response to their rings, would they be persistent or suspicious?

WHEN the bell rang a third time, Mungo moved silently to a window near the door, raised the blind a bare inch and peered out. Beyond the pane, on the porch, stood three persons: one was a grinning taxi-driver; the others were a girl and an extremely self-conscious young man.

The young man held in his hand what appeared to be an official paper. It might, Mungo thought, be a marriage license. This was a pair of rattle-brained elopers, possibly, coming here to get married. In that case the taxi-driver was being brought in for a witness. What to do about it? Mungo didn't dare open the door and chase them away. The best plan, he decided, was simply to discourage them by not answering the bell.

The bell rang a fourth and a fifth time. Then Mungo heard the taxi-man say: "Let's go. I know where another preacher lives. Or in a pinch I could dig up a J.P."

The girl giggled nervously as all three of them withdrew from the porch. They scurried across the lawn in a drizzle of rain. Mungo relaxed as he saw them enter a taxi and drive away.

Yet the incident continued to disturb him; it warned him that even on a rainy weekday a preacher may have professional duties to perform.

"It'd be just my luck," Mungo reflected, "if somebody brought around a couple o' babies and wanted 'em christened!"

The man now discreetly scattered the embers of the fire, so that it would soon go out. Smoke must no longer be seen drifting from the chimney of this house. And on no account must he answer the doorbell or telephone, unless the caller should be a messenger from the jail.

"I got to play this safe," he kept telling himself. He scowled darkly at the locked closet door. "And I was a prime chump for tippin' him my name!"

The more he thought of it, the more sharply he regretted the mood of bravado which had prompted his reply to Bryce: "I'm Michigan Mike Mungo; the Sandman to you, mister!"

But for that, Bryce, if he came alive, wouldn't be able to report the identity of his assailant. Police tomorrow would be looking for the rescuer of Jake Striker, but not necessarily for Mike Mungo.

"I always did talk too much," Mungo reproached himself.

It meant, he decided, that if he hadn't already killed Bryce, he must definitely do so before leaving this house.

Then once more he trained his thoughts upon the business of smuggling a gun to the cell of Jake Striker. He must conceal that weapon so that even a search of his person would fail to expose it. He picked up Bryce's Bible again, put it under his arm, squared the black shovel-brim hat on his head, ducked his chin low over the sharp seamless edge of his clergyman's collar, then posed before the mirror. He saw himself just as the officers would see him when he arrived at the county jail.

And now he saw something else—a way to deceive them about the gun. "It's a cinch," he decided. "It'll take me maybe an hour to get ready, but I got just that much time."

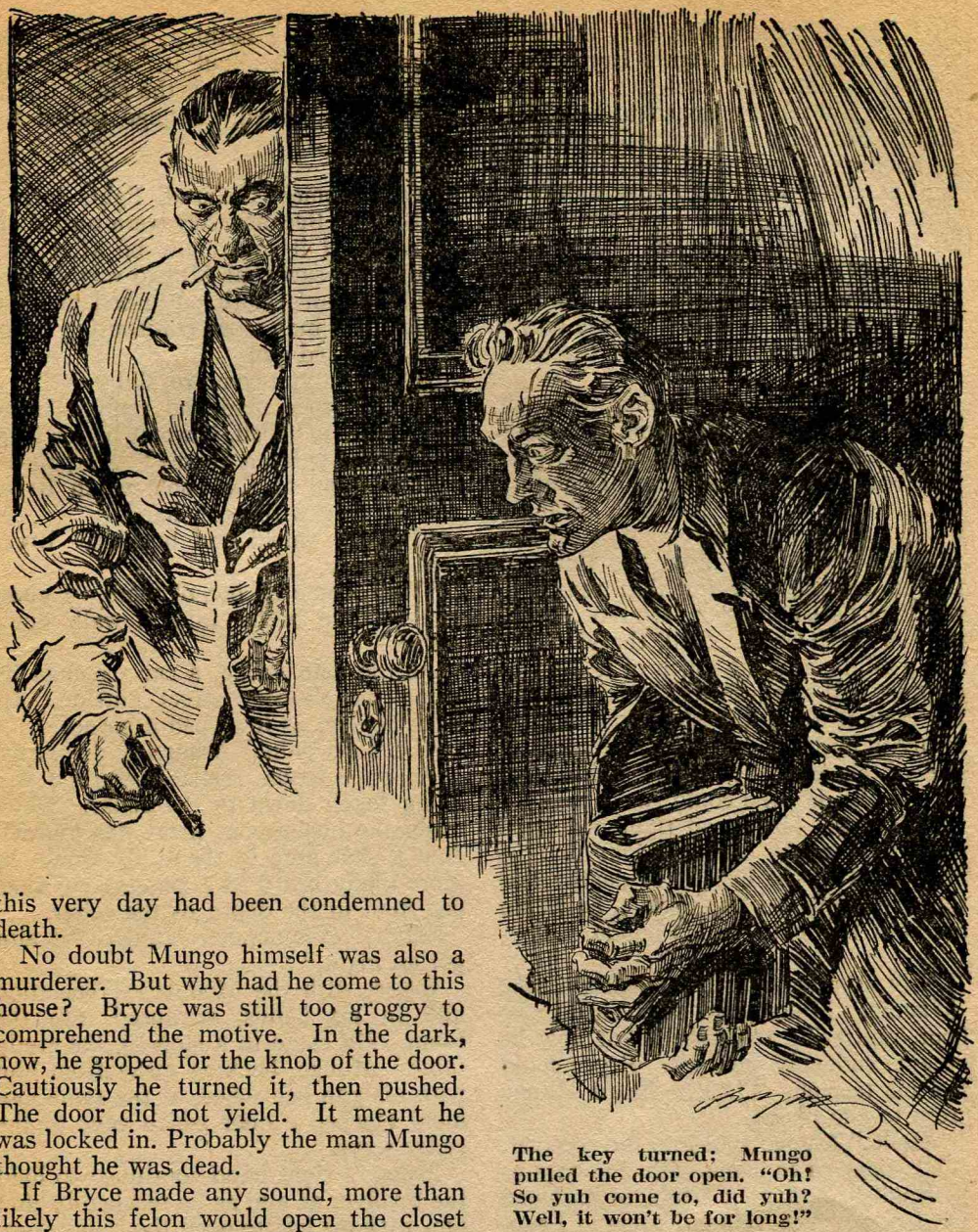
DURING most of that final hour the Reverend Leonard Bryce lay unconscious in the study closet. He came slowly out of the blankness with a thumping headache, like one who awakens from a drug-fed dream. When he put a hand to his throbbing head, he felt blood.

Where was he? At first he could only tell he was huddled in some dark, narrow space. His groping fingers touched what seemed to be a closed door. Then, beyond it, he heard some one moving. His ears caught an oath of impatience.

Slowly his shattered wits reassembled, and he remembered. An intruder into his study had clubbed him with a gun.

Making no sound, Bryce arose stiffly to a standing position. His hand groped again, and this time touched a shelf of books. The bindings had a familiar feel. In a little while he knew that he was in the closet off his study. The man prowling about out there must be his captor. Why was he still here, and what did he want?

As more of the cobwebs cleared from his brain, Bryce recalled a name which the man had spoken. Michigan Mike Mungo! Where had he heard it before? Then he remembered that only this afternoon he had read it in a news story. Mike Mungo was the leader of a criminal gang which included a murderer named Jake Striker. That Striker who once had been a member of Bryce's regiment in France! The same Striker who



The key turned; Mungo pulled the door open. "Oh! So yuh come to, did yuh? Well, it won't be for long!"

this very day had been condemned to death.

No doubt Mungo himself was also a murderer. But why had he come to this house? Bryce was still too groggy to comprehend the motive. In the dark, now, he groped for the knob of the door. Cautiously he turned it, then pushed. The door did not yield. It meant he was locked in. Probably the man Mungo thought he was dead.

If Bryce made any sound, more than likely this felon would open the closet door and again assault his prisoner. Bryce sensed that much, and so remained fearfully still. He heard his captor cross and recross the study. Again his ears caught an impatient oath.

Apparently the man was waiting for something. For what?

Then a bell rang shrilly. The doorbell? Bryce parted his lips to shout. But the ring was repeated, and this time he recognized it as his telephone. The telephone was on the study table.

He supposed Mungo would of course refrain from answering. But no, Mungo *did* answer the phone promptly. His response was so quick and eager that it occurred to Bryce the man might have been waiting here for that very purpose.

"Hello. Leonard Bryce speaking," Mungo's voice said.

The bold impudence of that assertion shocked Bryce. A criminal, a man of profane violence, deliberately impersonating himself, a man of peace!

"Oh!" Mungo's next response registered disappointment and annoyance. "No, Mr. Cartright, I know nothing about it. If your daughter eloped today, she did not come here to be married. Sorry."

The phone clicked.

If Mungo expected a call, evidently this wasn't the one. Again Bryce heard a nervous, impatient expletive. . . .

Bryce himself continued to keep very quiet. For long and sweltering minutes he remained standing in the dark closet, with an elbow touching either wall of it. Then his hand groped forth again, and he felt the shelf of books. They were reference books, old friends which he had often consulted—so often that he could now identify each separate one of them by the feel and shape of the bindings.

One of the books was bound in rough, black leather and had wide, overhanging edges. The feel of it at once gave to Clergyman Bryce a sense of comfort. He knew it was his Moffatt's Translation of the Scriptures.

Bryce did not so often use this particular volume and for that reason it was kept here among the reference books on this closet shelf. Still, the Moffatt's was a Bible, and the touch of it brought comfort and strength to Leonard Bryce. He took it from the shelf and held it firmly in both hands. It was of an exact size of his cherished King James, and here in the dark he could easily imagine that it was. His grasp tightened upon it. The thought came to him that he now stood in the hazard of death; and that if God willed that he die, he would die with this book in his hands.

TEN minutes later the telephone rang again. Mungo had been pacing the floor, muttering to himself, but now he became suddenly subdued. Bryce could feel his tension. Then he heard Mungo cross to the phone.

"Hello," Mungo said into the receiver.

His next voice came with fine care as to English, and in a strain of assumed gentleness: "Yes, this is Reverend Leonard Bryce. What may I do for you, Sheriff?"

A pause. Then:

"Ah, indeed? Jacob Striker? The poor fellow! I'm rather surprised that he remembers me, Sheriff. Yes, I read about his conviction."

Another pause. Then again Mungo purred with an oily sweetness into the phone: "Wants me to call on him? Why, of course I will, Sheriff. He's at the county jail? Very well; I'll be there in an hour."

The receiver clicked.

Bryce realized now that a *coup* of jail delivery was being engineered by Mungo. There was nothing, however, that Bryce could do about it. And now he heard Mungo approach the closet door.

The key turned. Mungo pulled the door open.

FOR a moment the study lights dazzled Bryce. Because they were turned on, he assumed it must now be after sundown. He saw that Mungo was dressed in clergyman's cloth. Flushed and impatient, the man stood confronting Bryce with a cocked gun.

"Oh! So yuh come to, did yuh?"

When Bryce made no reply, Mungo snapped out: "Well, it won't be for long. What's 'at yuh got there?" He pointed with his gun at the book which Bryce was holding with both hands.

"It's my shield and buckler," Bryce said quietly.

"Well, come on out o' there. I guess you an' me better take a walk down cellar."

As the man spoke, a car streaked by along the slippery street outside. Its horn honked as it turned a corner.

"Let's get goin'," Mungo said sharply.

At once Bryce realized why he was being taken down to the cellar. Obviously the business at hand was murder. And a shot here in the study would be more likely heard by a passing car than one fired in the depth of the cellar.

"Hep!" commanded Mungo. "I aint got all night."

Bryce, with the Moffatt's Translation still in his hands, advanced into the room. He came to a stop by the study table. Mungo, backing away from him with his gun held level, at the same moment reached a door which gave to the cellar steps.

Mungo's right hand continued to hold the revolver at aim as he reached behind him with his left to open the cellar door. Three paces from him, and by the table, Leonard Bryce still held the book with which he had emerged from the closet.

Yet Bryce saw another copy of the Scriptures on the table beside him. It was the King James version which he cherished above all others, the special, intimate handbook of his ministry. It was a peculiarly personal possession too, because all the Bryce births, marriages and deaths for three generations were recorded in it.

"Hep, you!" Mungo said. "Take a walk down cellar."

But the steep cellar steps were dark. So Mungo, his eyes and his gun still on

Bryce, groped with his left hand for the light-switch—the usual button on the wall just inside the open cellar door. But the groping hand of Mungo failed to find it. And he therefore turned for a hasty moment so that he could see the button. He did see it, and pressed it. Light flooded the cellar steps. And in that same brief moment Leonard Bryce, prompted purely by sentiment, laid his Moffatt's Translation on the study table and picked up the King James version.

When Mungo turned to face him again, he saw the clergyman exactly as he had been a moment before, standing by the table with a book in both hands.

"Hep along!" Mungo repeated. He advanced and put a gun against Bryce. With it he drove Bryce down the cellar steps.

The basement was clean and bare, except that in one corner was a furnace, and near this an empty coal-bin. Mungo forced Bryce to a blank, concrete wall, then stood back with a deadly grimness.

"I'm puttin' you to sleep, mister. And this time for keeps."

Bryce braced himself for the shock of death.

Then once more an automobile whirred by along the rain-drenched street outside, the sound of the splashing tires coming clearly to this cellar. Mungo, holding his fire for a moment, saw that a small fuel window was open just over the coal-bin. Since that open window permitted traffic noise to reach here, it would also allow a gunshot to carry to the street.

If another car should pass, Mungo didn't want the occupants to hear shooting in this cellar. So he backed a pace or two to the coal window. His eyes and his aim did not leave Bryce as he reached up to close the window.

IN this short respite, Bryce opened his book. Naturally he expected it to open to the ribbon marker which he had placed at the Ninety-first Psalm.

But when the book opened, he saw that the Ninety-first Psalm was gone. So was every page of the book from the first page of Genesis to the last page of Revelations. Those two pages were intact. But of the thousand-odd intervening pages there was nothing left except a half inch margin extending around three sides.

Closed, the book still had the look and weight of a Bible. Open, one could see that it had become in effect a box. And wedged into the well of the box lay a short, snub-nosed automatic pistol.

Sight of it there sent a righteous rage through Bryce. This was a blasphemy, a sacrilege, an impious desecration which at once lashed him into a blaze of fury. His own family Bible, and with the very heart cut from it to make room for a tool of crime!

He snatched the thing out of there exactly as he would have snatched dynamite from a child.

MUNGO, as he closed the bin window, was dumfounded to see a gun in Bryce's hand. As Bryce flourished the gun, his voice roared a challenge. He was suddenly transformed—livid with a mighty and righteous wrath.

The change so startled Mungo that his aim jerked. The bullet of his first shot missed, chipped into the concrete wall behind Bryce.

Then Bryce himself in a frenzy of resentment began squeezing his trigger. The automatic kicked his hand back, but he pulled on the trigger again. Roars deafened him, his own and Mungo's. Thin lines of flame stabbed at him; Leonard Bryce staggered, stood with his back to a wall, still firing, still trading shot for shot with Mike Mungo.

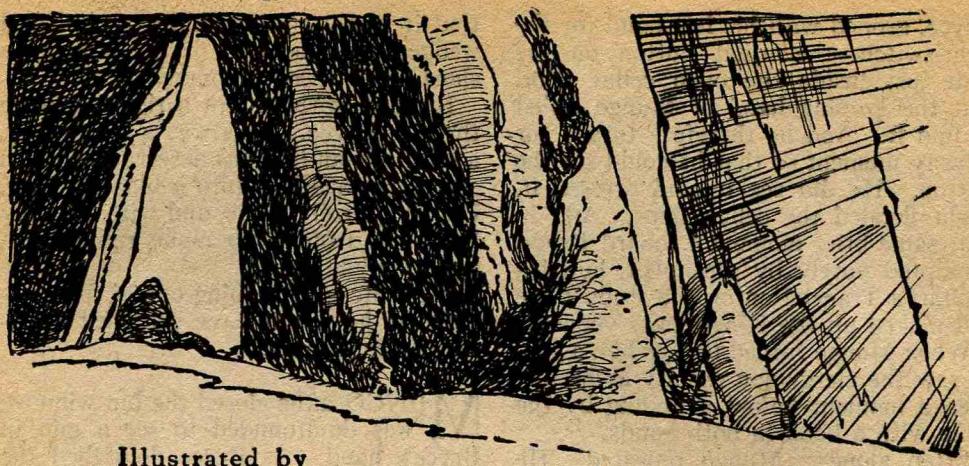
Then Mungo pitched forward. Never would Bryce forget the look on Mungo's face as he fell, or the hollow, deadly thump as the man's head struck the concrete floor.

The fury then drained from Bryce. A terrible ache replaced it as he looked down upon Mungo. Remorse broke on him in cold beads. He, a man of peace, had struck the living, dead!

His right fingers opened, and the pistol fell from them with a clang. But his left hand still held the book, clutched it now more desperately than ever. Always before it had brought him a sustaining comfort. Hoping it would again, Bryce raised it to his eyes. He looked down into the deep well of those desecrated pages to all that was left—the last page of Revelations.

What he read there *did* serve to sustain Bryce. Not himself, he saw, but an avenging Providence had struck this felon down. For it was there written:

"And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part out of the book of life."



Illustrated by
John Richard Flanagan

This fascinating story of a desperate quest beyond the Sahara here comes to its amazing climax.

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

CARAVAN

The Story Thus Far:

SEVEN years my uncle Thurland Spillane had been away, when one wild winter night he came home to my father's farm, which is on the road from Glengariff to Kenmare. He and his brother Flane had always been untamed hawks of trouble.

"And where might you have come from now?" asked my father.

"Out of Russia," answered Thurland. "By China and other places. I have hurried here because another person—a person that I love more than my two eyes and my two hands—is coming here."

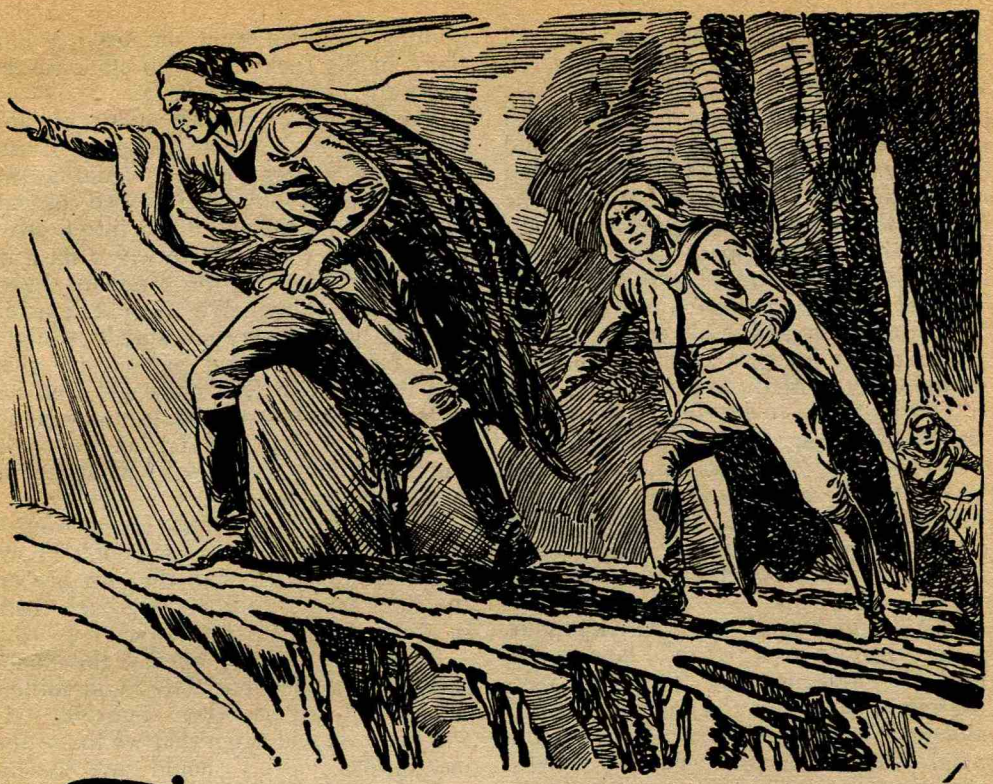
And he went on to tell us of this lovely lady, daughter of a czar and a woman of Perm. In Irkutsk, the assassins of Czar Nicholas had sought to kill her too, and Thurland had fought for her, and killed the assassins—and there was a price on his head in Russia because of that. . . . They had fallen in love, but had to part to evade pursuit. And he had given her the name of our farm in Kerry as his only fixed address. Now, he had learned, she was coming—and he was here to meet her. . . .

She came at last, a lady even lovelier than Thurland described her. But pursuit caught up with them—in the person of a giant Russian. Thurland fought him, choked him—left him for dead, and fled the country again with Anastasia.

Long months passed. Then came a letter from Thurland—mailed from Fez, where he and Flane and the lady were making ready for a hazardous journey into the far Sahara in quest of a rich buried treasure Flane had heard of.

I was fifteen, and strong for my age. And Africa came up and snuffed around my bed. That night I made a bundle of my clothes, climbed out of the window and took the road to Kenmare.

In Cork I made friends with a boy of my own age, and through his help won a job as cabin-boy on a ship sailing to Morocco. At Algiers my friend Felix and I were given shore-leave; and there, by the grace of God, I found my Uncle Thurland.



TREASURE

Felix rejoined the ship; but I stayed with my Uncles Thurland and Flane—and with Anastasia, who was with them. They had a map which located this grand Caravan Treasure far in the southern Sahara, and were making ready to set out. With them I went—to Fez and Marrakech and thence out into the desert beyond the last French outpost. With us also went three others: an Arab wrestler, Ahmed Mansour, whom my Uncle Flane had beat in a great bout, and had made friends with; the hairy man Blore; and a strange dwarf who knew of the Caravan Treasure. . . .

A mad and desperate journey it was. Often we had to ride for our lives, for the farther reaches of the Sahara are the haunt of raiders and robbers. Sometimes we had to fight. But there was no turning back; my uncles grew more determined on their treasure quest. And accompanied by a fierce one-eyed Moor who volunteered to go with us, we pressed on into the Great Unknown.

And at length we heard the roar of the mysterious underground river that flowed, so our information told us, past the Woman with Golden Feet and the Treasure she guarded. We followed the sound made by that subterranean stream; we had to fight our way past hostile natives again, and we lost the hairy man. But we took a huge emerald from one of the hostiles who was wounded and made captive. . . . And so presently we came to the Black Mouth—the entrance to the labyrinthine cavern through which the Secret River flowed. Leaving Anastasia and the others outside, Thurland and Flane and I entered the dreadful depths of this place. And presently, after groping our way for a long distance,—and passing the skeletons of men who had ventured this path in the past,—our flashlight showed us that we were on the verge of an abyss. *(The story continues in detail:)*

WE knelt there half-stunned for some minutes, my Uncle Thurland turning the flashlight this way and that in an

effort to get his bearings, and now and then he turned it on the compass that he carried, and then again he would flash the cat-walk along the edge of the abyss. Perhaps he knew that the cat-walk would be there, knew from the stories he had gathered about the place. Anyhow, he jiggled the arm of Flane when the light swept the slippery path that was not more than six feet in breadth, and the thought that we were going to walk along it made me squeal with terror; but I couldn't hear my own squeal on account of the thunder of the waters.

Thurland got to his feet. He turned the flashlight on my face to see what effect the place had upon me, and I tried to control my foolish features so that he wouldn't think I was the most fear-stricken boy that had ever left Ireland. Which I was at that moment.

FLANE lit one of the greased torches and held it aloft; then, Flane in the lead, I following, and Thurland paying out the cord in the rear, we moved along the edge of the terrible trench, the wind biting at us like snarling wolves, and the noise pounding our brains to pulp. And as Paddy Moran said when he went to the picnic of the deaf and dumb, we might have left our tongues at home, speech being out of the question.

The torch burned down; Flane lighted another. And the cat-walk went on and on, wet and slippery and murderous, a sidewalk that the devil had laid for fools. And I thought of our return—if we ever did return; for the cord which Thurland paid out was jiggled by the wind so that now and then we had to stop and find lumps of rock that we placed on top of it to keep it from being blown into the ravine.

In a niche in the wall that rose on one side of us the flashlight found another adventurer. May the blessed angels in heaven be kind to adventurers, they being filled with a mad urge to do things and go places that only the Almighty can understand. There he squatted, jammed into the niche that might have been made for him when the world came into being, a little niche such as you see for saints at crossroads. A lean Arab, his skeleton head on his knees, his eye-sockets turned toward the river. I shall see him always, for he picked a corner of my brain as a memory pedestal when the light fell on him.

Thurland gave the fellow's tattered clothing a quick look-over, but found nothing, and we went on, leaving him there in his rocky nook to stare at the abyss till Judgment Day.

The cat-walk widened suddenly, and we moved back from the edge of the river into a great cavern. And as we pushed into it, something dashed through the circle of light and dived into a great crack in the wall. There was a flash of poisonous green in the circle of light, and then nothing. We thought it a big serpent, but we were not sure. It might have been some kind of monster that was living on in that place after all his relations had died, and he not knowing it.

We moved back as far as we could from the river, and now by shouting we could hear each other.

Thurland spoke: "This is the route," he said. "How long it is I don't know, but something tells me that we are on the right track. And the boy back there in the recess is a proof of it."

Flane agreed. He opened the knapsack and handed out dates and millet-cakes, and we ate them hungrily. It was after we had eaten that we found the inscriptions. Or, I should say, the inscription. For the things scratched on the wall of the cavern in Arabic and Tifinagh characters were meaningless to us, and we had grown tired of them; as Flane said at the place of the red rocks, they must have been written by sad devils who were funeral reporters when they were home. But the inscription we found was in English. Ay, in English, and that was the great wonder of the thing.

It had been written with a charred stick on a smooth stretch of the cavern wall. And with the flashlight turned full on it we stared at it with our mouths open. Stared at it as if we had come face to face with a miracle. And it was a miracle. For a Spillane had signed the statement on the wall, a hundred and twenty years before! And that was the marvel of it.

This is the writing, word for word as we read it, and as it can be read there today by anyone who has the courage to enter the Black Mouth:

September, 1805.

I'm giving up, and going back. I don't believe there's anything here. I was with Mr. Mungo Park, the great Scotchman, on the Gambia when I heard of the treasure that's supposed to be here. There's devils, but no treasure. I've had enough.

John Xavier Spillane.

Thurland shouted the name. *"John Xavier Spillane!"* he cried. "With Mungo Park! Glory be to God! A Spillane! Why—why, he was our great-grandfather! He was! He was! Do you remember, Flane? The picture of Sierra Leone, in the parlor at home? There was some story! Do you recall it?"

"I remember," cried Flane. "There were old wooden gods that came back from Lagos or somewhere. Damn it, this is strange!"

This scrawl on the wall set our hearts beating even faster. The name Mungo Park was a thunderous one to see written down in that black cavern, and the man who had been with the great explorer and who had then tried to reach the Woman with Golden Feet was of our kin! Of our blood!

Thurland suddenly swung the light onto the cavern. Round and round the cavern went the searching disk, as if he were hunting for the wraith of John Xavier Spillane, his restless kinsman, who had written a warning to mad treasure-hunters who came that way.

My Uncle Thurland was affected greatly by the writing. And now he was certain he was the person that destiny had picked to find the great treasure.

"Come on!" he cried. "This is an omen! It is the dead speaking to us! The warning might have kept back little people, but he knew it wouldn't keep back one of his own blood!"

We went back to the cat-walk beside the abyss, taking up the slack of the cord that we had paid out in the cavern, and on we marched. The thunder of the waters shook me so that I had a fear the noise would shake the flesh from my bones. And I think we were mad, all three of us. Mad with the thoughts of the treasure, the sight of the message on the cavern wall, and the wild thundering of the waters.

We had gone about two hundred yards from the cavern when Flane halted. I bumped into him, not being able to see him, and Thurland bumped into me. Flane was waving the searchlight up and down; then, as we did not understand, he turned it on himself to show us that his free arm was pointing ahead.

We looked with startled eyes. Far ahead we could see a skewer of white showing in the thick night, a skewer that thickened to a fine sword of silver in the pit of darkness. From some small hole in the cavernous hell in which we were moving, God's sunshine had driven down

We prayed—for Thurland and Flane, and for our own souls.

to tell us that we were alive. To tell us that He knew where we were, and although our greed was smashing all the commandments that He had laid down for us, we were not entirely lost. . . .

Now we could see the outline of each other. And that was a joy that I cannot tell in words. . . . The track was plain to us now. The vapor that rose from the river was like tinted smoke as the light struck through it. Three hundred feet or more above the path was a jagged hole about four feet square, and through this streamed the light of noon.

The path broadened into another cavern like the one in which we had found the message, and as we moved into this, we turned our faces to look at the pothole.

And then, as we stared across the ravine, much narrower at this point, the cold skeleton hand of fear fell on us and made us paralytics with the power of its slimy fingers. For the Almighty had hurled it suddenly at us, like you'd hurl a coin at a beggar that was caterwauling after you. "There," said He, nearly rubbing our noses on the stones, she seemed so close, "there she is." For Thurland and Flane and I were staring pop-eyed at the Woman with Golden Feet.

CHAPTER XXII

The Masque of Death

THE statue was directly opposite us, rising up from the brink of the abyss which at this point was not more than eight yards across, the river having narrowed here, running with greater force and noise through the narrow crevice.

Nature had made the rock in the form of a sitting female, and this likeness had been improved by much rough carving so

that the form stood out clearly. An enormous nude some twenty feet in height, the arms carved more carefully than the rest of the figure, the nose somewhat chipped away by the years, almost breastless,—like the picture drawn by the legionnaire,—the huge feet and ankles stained a yellowy tint with some pigment that withstood the damp that came up from the river. An alarming figure with the light from the pothole streaming down on her; the mist rising from the abyss making us think that small devils were burning incense to her on the floor of hell.

The yard-wide face of her, flat and cold and cruel, looked at us, the mist from the river making a sweat that dripped on her shoulders and flat bosom. And the face spoke to us as old things sometimes speak. Spoke to us so that our ears deceived themselves and made believe they had heard. "Here I am," said she. "Here I am in my nakedness guarding the things that bold people like yourselves want. All the fine things that have been lost to the world through the thunderous centuries are tucked around me, in a treasure-chamber. Come and rifle it, my bold Thurland Spillane!"

The light grew less as we stood and stared. The sunshine slipped away; the darkness closed in on us; and the Woman with Golden Feet disappeared.

We moved back from the crevice, up into the cavern; and at the very end of it we found an alcove that was sheltered from the thunder of the river, so that we could hear each other by raising our voices. And there Flane lit another of the torches, and we stared at each other.

"Tomorrow," said Thurland, and he licked the word as if it was a piece of honeycomb, "tomorrow when the sun comes up, we will make an attempt to reach the lady."

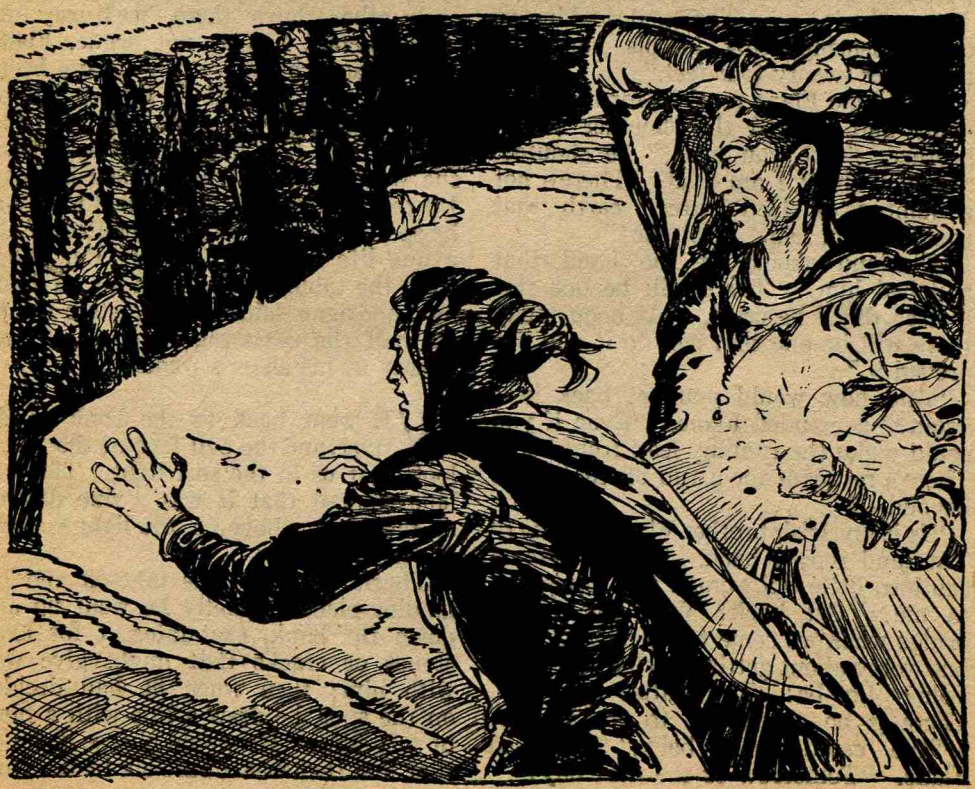
"How?" asked Flane.

"That I don't know," answered Thurland, "but a plan will come to me through the night. The crevice is small at the spot in front of her." He paused for a few seconds; then he said something that made my stomach turn over. "We haven't ropes," he said; "but a bright man could jump that gap."

"Like hell!" growled Flane.

"Let's eat something," said Thurland. "Let's eat and sleep. Tomorrow will be a great day in the history of the Spillanes. Can you tell me, Flane, if you kiss the

His feet lost their grip on the brink. . . . My splendid fearless uncle disappeared in the crevice from which came the thunder of hell.



hand of the King when you win the Derby, or just shake it?"

But my Uncle Flane didn't answer. The torch burned down in his hand, and he tossed the stump of it on the floor, and there it struggled against the night like a wee chick fighting a hawk.

And we sat with our backs against the stone wall of the place, and at odd minutes we dozed uneasily.

THE light began to filter through the porthole at about ten o'clock in the morning. We were down by the brink of the abyss waiting for it. Thurland had tied a stone to one end of the life-line, and when the bank opposite was visible to us, he tossed the stone across. When it rested, he pulled it carefully to the edge of the ravine and tightened the cord so that he could get the exact measurements of the gulf. Tying a knot in the string, he jerked the stone back to our side, stretched the cord out on the floor and stepped it. And while he was stepping it, I grew cold with fear. Anastasia had sent me with Thurland to stop him from doing mad things, and now he was thinking of the maddest act that a man could think of doing.

Together we went back to the alcove at the head of the cavern where voices were not strangled by the roar.

"I make it," said Thurland, looking at the measuring-string in his hand, "a trifle over twenty-four feet."

My Uncle Flane reached forward suddenly and gripped the shoulder of his brother. "Are you mad?" he shouted. "Do you think *I* am mad? There's not a jumper on God's green earth that could do that leap! Not one!"

Thurland shook off the hand that clutched him. "There will be one this blessed day," he cried. "At noon today there will be one that can do it and has proved it."

"And how would you get back here again?" demanded Flane. "Even if you could make the running leap from here! There's no room for a run on that ledge beyond—"

"Is it my Irish brother Flane talking?" Thurland roared back. "Or is it some cautious little old woman that so speaks to me? Get back? We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. Did Columbus worry about getting back? Or Marco Polo? Let be! The matter is settled. There is no other way to get across."

"We could come back," protested Flane. "Tomorrow or the next day!"

"With what?" demanded Thurland. "There isn't a rope within a hundred miles of us that could span the gap. And there isn't a yard of timber to bridge it. And if there was, I haven't the force to wait. Didn't I win the long jump at Kenmare three years running? Didn't I? And what distance did I jump? Twenty-five feet and an inch, and the prize was a tin mug with my name scratched on it. Twenty-five feet and an inch. A foot to spare, and now I am jumping for thousands of pounds. Millions of pounds! Shut up now, for I want to keep myself quiet in the little time that is left before noon when the light is at its best."

The courage of a god had Thurland.

Quietly and with no hurry, he stripped himself naked, and he massaged his legs and his arms so that they would be supple and springy. And Flane, beaten down by the stubbornness of his brother, lent a hand, slapping the legs of Thurland the way you see seconds slapping the calves of fighting men between rounds. Horror gathered in my throat and choked me into speechlessness.

The light increased. Flane looked at his watch; it was eleven. Thurland spoke: "We'll go down now to the edge so that I can examine the spot where I'll land," he said. "And as we can't hear each other down there, we'll say our words here. Let us not argue, Flane. It's a fine brother you've always been; and if I fail, in hell or heaven I'll remember you. That's all. And you too, Jimmy; for you found Anastasia when she was all in, on the Glengariff Road. I'll think of you." He laughed loudly as he spoke. "Come on," he shouted. "It's a fine life I've had; and if I'm pulled from the table, I've eaten a lot, as Johnny Landrigan said when he stole in and ate half the roast pig that was to feed twenty at his sister's wedding."

WE went back to the bank of the river, and the evil face of the statue looked at us in the soft light. The pothole showed that it was a fine day up on the desert above us, the light striking down like flames.

Thurland picked his take-off and his landing-place. Quietly he went up and down the bank, examining it for loose stones or cracks that might give way with him; then when he had decided on the spot, he drew a line with a piece of soft stone. He would charge down on that line that was a bare six inches from

the pit; and at the mark, the great thighs of him would hoist him up and send him soaring across the gulf. I was glad of the noise. I was sniffling so loud that I thought I could be heard above the devilish clamor.

Thurland took little trial runs along the floor of the cavern, stopping always at the brink of the abyss. He wanted to be sure of the take-off. And Flane walked around with his watch in his hand, one eye on the pothole in the roof. And the Woman with Golden Feet stared at us with her blind eyes.

IT came fifteen minutes to twelve. Ten minutes, nine, eight, seven, five. Thurland took a run of some twenty yards, pulled up when close to the abyss and walked back to his starting-point. I nearly choked as I watched him.

A second time he started, and a second time he halted when I thought he was going to make the attempt. Then Flane, with a glance at the hole in the roof, made a signal to show his brother that it was exactly twelve. Thurland sprang from his mark, and this time I knew that there would be no stop on the brink.

He gathered speed as he approached the great crevice. Tremendous speed! I wanted to turn my head away, but I couldn't. Like a streak of white fire his body tore down toward the edge of the chasm; then, as his flying feet touched the mark he had made, he lifted himself. Lifted himself up, his legs gathered under him like the legs of a wild goose, and he swept out over the gulf, the very poetry of flight in the splendid body of him.

My heart stopped. The arc of his flight was made with fire in my brain. He was coming down gracefully, but I thought he was short of the bank. I saw Flane make a mad rush to the edge. Then Thurland's feet touched the slippery stones on the farther side, sliding along them like a baseball player till he came to rest ten feet from the edge.

Slowly he picked himself up, turned toward us and waved a hand. And with tears blinding me, I waved back to him; and I thought joy would kill me. For a thousand hands were clapping within my heart; my head spun like a vane in a high wind. And I stammered words to God that He must have heard, words of gratitude. Words that my soul spoke.

Now we could only watch Thurland and draw our own conclusions from what he was doing. And watch him we did with unblinking eyes—Thurland on the very doorstep of the treasure-chamber. Within a few feet of the rich and beautiful things that had been lost to the world for hundreds of years.

Slowly and with care Thurland went about his investigations. We watched him approach the great statue of the woman, and we saw the interest that he showed as he walked around the base. Something at the side interested him, and he crouched down and scratched with his fingers as if he was trying to scrape the sand of the ages from an opening. Rising again, he waved a hand at Flane and disappeared behind the statue.

For ten minutes or more he was out of our view; then he reappeared with a sudden rush round a corner of the statue, and naked as he was born, he danced a jig. And we laughed and sobbed as we watched him caper in "The Wind that Shakes the Barley." We laughed and we sobbed, though we couldn't hear our own laughter or the sobs that shook us.

Back again behind the great figure went Thurland, and the minutes went by with the devil's tail around the pendulum, as they say in Kerry. We breathed heavily, and our eyes ached, and at times we prayed. Yes, we prayed. For I saw the lips of Flane moving, and I knew he was praying, although prayers were as foreign to him as Greek to a billy-goat.

Every cell in our bodies was asking the same questions: Where is he? What is delaying him? Had some devil of the place grabbed him when he disappeared behind the statue? And we couldn't cry out on account of the thunder that came from the chasm, so we stood on one leg and then on the other, and strained our eyes for a glimpse of him.

Now the space between the great golden ankles of the statue was in shadow, the thighs, close together, sheltering it from the light that struck down from above, so that from where we were standing it was a mass of gloom that might be a cave or just the black rock on which the figure was posed. Suddenly the darkness of this place showed a glimmer of white. It took shape; it was Thurland!

LIKE an apparition he seemed between the enormous legs of the statue. Through the mist Flane and I saw his face. And to use the word that I often found in the books that tell of the lives of the saints, his face was transfigured—a fine word that I never knew the meaning of till that morning.

The one-eyed Moor.

Ay, Thurland's face was transfigured. It shone through the mist. Shone with a great joy. And there was music on it. We knew—my Uncle Flane and I—that we would forever remember the look upon Thurland's face.

Thurland had found the treasure! It was around him. He was trampling on it. He was a child loose in the attic of the world. The attic he had dreamed of.

He drew back into the gloom. Once more he came forward into the light, and bits of flame sprang from something that he grasped with both hands. Bits of flame that blinded us. Golden flames. They tinted the mist that rose from the river, colored yards of it so that we saw Thurland and the thing that he held in his arms in a great glow like a sunset. And the fire of this thing made us think it alive—alive like a golden jeweled animal, that he was dragging out of the darkness of its cave into the shaft of light that struck down from the roof.

We knew not whether this marvel that Thurland held was the Masque of Death we had been told of, or whether it was the Golden Fleece old Jason sought—from where we stood it looked more like the Fleece. But our hearts leaped up at his triumph; and it might have been the mad joy on our faces that made Thurland move farther into the sunlight so that we could see the full beauty of that wonder he was holding in his hands. For the outstretched necks of Flane and myself must have been clear to him. It was surely our curiosity that lured him, our hunger to see.

For my Uncle Flane and I were staring at the treasure-dream of ten thousand adventurers! Ay, ten hundred thousand!

Thurland moved forward beyond the legs of the statue. He lifted the marvel in his right hand, and to steady himself on the slippery brink, he took a grip of one ankle of the huge stone figure. Of the yellow ankle that was stained so that it looked like gold. . . .

Flane shouted. I shouted. The angels in heaven shouted. For that golden foot was crumbling under Thurland's fingers. Of clay it was—or mayhap mud or mortar. So Thurland lost the support he had trusted; and it was too late to spring back into the cavern. The abyss was before him.

We saw him crouch on his haunches, still holding the flashing thing. Then, his bare feet lost their grip on the wet stones of the brink. They went from under him, and in horror we saw the white body slide. Slide with the flashing thing clutched in a hand. The devil's mist blazed for an instant, a horrible instant that was like a clot of blood in the heart of time. Then my uncle, my splendid fearless uncle Thurland Spillane, disappeared—disappeared in the huge crevice from which came the thunder of hell.

CHAPTER XXIII

Retreat in the Dark

THE grief of the Irish is terrible to witness. I was afraid that Flane would go into the abyss. His mad feet terrified me as he rushed up and down the slippery bank, indifferent to his own safety, thinking only of Thurland—Thurland who, as the wise woman prophesied, had found the Masque of Death but had slipped with it into the pit.

Up and down the slippery bank we rushed, heads peering down into the misty depths. Our brains dead under the shock, the worm of sorrow rioting in them. Time forgotten. . . .

The light from the pothole in the roof grew dim. Before, it had blazed to coax Thurland across the gulf. Now it slipped away softly as if the mad performance were over, drawing a black curtain over the stone statue.

I kept close to Flane as the light died away. For we couldn't find each other by shouting, on account of the noise; and I was afraid to be alone through the night—the night that would bring nightmares of the white body and the Masque of Death in their awful slide.

FLANE grew calmer with the darkness. He lit a greased torch and held it over the abyss. When it burned down, he lit another and then another, holding them high. And the flashlight bit holes in the night. And we watched with hope wilted and dead in our hearts.

When the last torch had been burned, Flane took my hand and we moved back into the furthermost part of the cavern where by shouting we could hear each other. And there I listened to the wailing sorrow of Flane. We sobbed in company; and now and then he would shout something about Thurland into my ears. Bits from the past. Far back. Thurland bird-nesting and fishing. Thurland earning the nickname of Thurland the Devil, spurning Ireland as the strong Irish spurn it.

Long past midnight Flane grabbed my shoulder and shouted of the doings of his brother. He had to speak of Thurland. "At Lourenço-Marques he beat six men that jumped him together in the dark at Reuben Point!" he cried. "And the smallest of them was bigger than him! With his fists he did it! With his bare fists!" He waited, as if hoping that I'd contradict him, and when I remained silent, he took up the saga again. "At Macao a murderous brute of a ship captain tried to shanghai him. A dozen of his thugs grabbed Thurl on the Praya Grande and dumped him into a boat. Did they get him? Did they? While they were holding him down, he drove the heel of his boot clean through the rotten slats of the sampan. Four of the devils were drowned. I'll never see the likes of him again. Never!"

We were on the brink of the abyss with the first light of the morning. Moving up and down, watching the gray mist that came up, hoping, hoping. The day died, and we stayed on. We had no more torches, but recklessly we used the flashlight. And again through the night in the far end of the cavern Flane talked of Thurland.

"And how will we tell her?" he screamed. "In the name of God, who will tell her what has happened?"

"I don't know," I shouted.

"Her heart and his were like two roses on a bush," sobbed my uncle. "Go back and tell her, and leave me here! That I would rather, than face her eyes. They'll be a judge and a jury and a hangman when I see them!"

"But you did your best to stop him!" I cried.

"My best?" roared Flane. "Damn you, I didn't do my best! I should have put my arms around him and held him. Did I do that? Did I? I stood around with my watch in my hand like a stationmaster starting a train, and I nodded my head to go when it struck twelve. If you say again that I did my best, I'll murder you!"

After that I was silent.

We had no food when the light came. And despair sat with us, cold and black, weakening our legs as we ran up and down the edge of the abyss, whispering of our foolishness, throttling the little hopes that sprang up when the wisps of mist shaped themselves into resemblance of a body—a white supple body.

And that afternoon, when the night blackened the pothole in the roof, Flane spoke when we withdrew from the abyss to the end of the cavern. "We'll go back," he said. "We'll go back and tell her." After a minute he spoke again. "We'll have to find our way in the dark."

"Haven't we the flashlight?" I asked, fear squeezing my words, so that they came out thin and squeaky.

"I'm sorry," said Flane. "I dropped it, and something broke. I don't know what, but it doesn't work any more. To hell with it! Come on. Let us go now while we have the courage. If you love life, hang onto the little cord that will lead us back. And keep one hand to the wall. For if we lose the string, we are lost."

Flane walked in front, and I close to his heels, though I could neither see him nor hear him. But now and then I reached out a free hand and touched him to let him know I was following.

WE were on the cat-walk, fingering the string with one hand, and touching the stone wall with the other, the fear of the abyss striking our souls like a whip. The blessed cord that Thurland had paid out on our coming was taking us back. It came out of the night in front of us where it had lain waiting our return, came out cold and wet and ran through our fingers that kissed every inch of it, so glad were they to meet it.

Yard by yard we stumbled along the wet promenade by the gulf. We came to the cavern—we only knew it as the cavern by the fact that there was no wall for us to finger, the string going straight across the mouth of the cave, we having pulled in the slack when we left the place. And that part of the journey was the most dreadful.

I felt for Flane and found that he had got down on his hands and knees and was crawling. I did the same; crawling inch by inch, our fingers feeling the darkness on either side of us, our ears trying to gauge the roar of the waters.

We found the wall on the other side, and again we went forward.

My blind fingers touched the dead man in the niche—touched the skeleton face of him, and the horror made me stumble so that I nearly went backward over the edge. The feel of his face was on my fingers for hours afterward.

WE came to the place where the string turned away from the river. Following this we got away from the wild roar of the waters, and we could speak, although we could not see each other.

"Jimmy," said Flane, "we didn't bring Thurl's clothes."

"I know," I said. "I thought—I thought you didn't wish to bring them, that you wanted to leave them there."

"I might have thought that," said Flane. Then, after a pause, he said: "The big green stone is with them. The gold coins I have, but the emerald we took from the Tuareg is back there."

"I don't care about the emerald," I gasped. "I want to get out of here!" A million emeralds were as nothing to me, at that moment!

We stumbled on along the passage, and the echoes of our feet went before us as they had done on the incoming journey. But here we walked faster, the string slipping quickly through our fingers. We tripped over the two dead men from whom we had taken the gold coins. Flane halted and addressed them in the darkness. "May the Almighty have mercy on your souls!" he said, and the echoes grabbed the words and shouted them back at us. "May the Almighty have mercy on your souls!" cried the devils in the roof of the place, and they put a jeering note into the words.

We climbed the slope toward the Black Mouth, and with a suddenness that startled us, the string rushed us to the opening. There before us was the sun getting up out of the sands, spilling red gold on a thousand leagues of desert.

Flane grabbed me as I made a rush forward. "Go ahead of me, Jimmy!" he cried. "Walk like a shield to keep her eyes from me! I'd sooner fall into a sea of sword-points than tell her what we know!"

The Arab and the one-eyed Moor saw us the moment the Black Mouth spewed us into the morning light. They set up a yell, and then from the tent came Anastasia. Quiet she stood as the canvas flap dropped behind her—stood quiet and looked at Flane and me as we came stumbling down the rocky slope.

Looked at us with her amethystine eyes—eyes that grew larger as we came nearer, the fingers of horror stretching them. And to me then there was no one else in the world but Anastasia; and no sound but her quick breathing. Her eyes went into my brain hunting for the story that was burnt there with fire.

"Don't!" I screamed. "Don't look at me like that! I tried! I tried! But the thunder of the river—he couldn't hear! He couldn't hear!"

And I would have died there and then, if she hadn't put out a soft hand and drawn me toward her. For in her own agony she saw mine.

Together we stood numb and speechless. We couldn't think, and we couldn't speak, for memory of Thurland, who was life itself to Anastasia and me. Life and love, and the sun and the moon and the stars, and the wind and the rain.

I think the story came to her without my speaking a word. I think she saw him as he measured the width of the abyss, saw him as he tossed his clothes from him with the proud exultant manner that he had, saw him as he raced toward the abyss, lifting himself on the very edge of it, gathering his legs under him like a wild goose and soaring over with the fine poetry of polished flight. I think she saw it all.

THE sun beat at us, but we stood there staring at the Black Mouth. And I knew that when people have said that they saw visions, they have spoken the truth. Five times that morning I saw Thurland spring from the *Akhel Foum*, and start to walk down the slope where the sunlight struck him and he disappeared in mist. And at times I am sure that Anastasia saw him, for her grip tightened on my arm, and a joy that was like the smile of God swept over her face.

Flane roused me out of the stupor. He touched my arm and made a signal that I should follow him out of earshot of Anastasia.

"Now," said Flane, when we had gone some distance, "we will talk of the future; the past must lie still for the moment. You are a man now, and you must play a man's part. Here's the map. Three hundred miles or so to the west is the coast. If you can reach it, there is a possibility of your getting a boat northward. If you can't, it's death."

"And you, Uncle?" I inquired.

"I don't know," said Flane. "If it was me that fell into the ditch,—and the Lord knows I wish it were,—Thurl would stay around. Aye, he'd stay around till hell froze over. I'll start you on the journey—but I'm coming back! Straighten your back and try to get Anastasia in a mood for the journey. It will be damned tough on her. If Thurland is in heaven, he's looking down on you and expecting you to act as a Spillane ought to act. Go to it. We'll get under way as soon as possible."

I went and spoke to Anastasia. She made no objections. She moved like a person in a trance. Hurriedly and without speech we struck camp. The only sounds were the protesting roars of the camels as we loaded them.

In the early afternoon we swung westward in single file, Flane in the lead. I rode beside Anastasia. When half a mile from the rock, she turned her head and looked back. I too glanced at the black rock. The sun hit the huge slit. It was grinning at us.

CHAPTER XXIV

We Meet the Robbers

OF that afternoon and the day that followed I have few memories. For the sponge of sorrow wiped away every impression that my eyes and ears carried to my brain. And for the moment I lost interest in the journey, though my Uncle Flane had told me to straighten my back and play the part of a man. What, I asked myself, was the use of fighting our way to the coast that was hundreds of miles away? We had no longing to get there, for grief lay in our stomachs like a hungry tiger and gnawed at the desire to live till there was nothing left of it.

On that first night in camp I repeated to Anastasia what Flane had said about getting to the coast and finding a ship.

"A ship to take us where, Jimmy?" she asked.

"He didn't say," I stammered. "He said northward."

"Northward?" she repeated, speaking like a little child who doesn't know the points of the compass. "And—and where will we come to if we go northward?"

"To Ireland," I gasped; then in an effort to cheer her, I went on: "To Kerry, and the Green Tree Farm! To my father and mother, who will be pleased to see you again! And you'll see Cromwell, the black cat that loved you and—"

She fell a-crying then, crying as if her heart would break, the big deep sobs of her, going off into the dark to make the jinn of the wastes rejoice in their dirty work. And I thought myself a fool for saying a word about the Green Tree Farm. Once, years before, she had wandered over Europe looking for that same farm, but then Thurland had been waiting for her. Waiting for her on the Glengariff Road. . . .

On the day following, we fell in with a family of wandering Tuaregs who had camels and grain. They were haughty, in the manner of Tuaregs, and had no wish to trade with us or speak to us.

But my Uncle Flane was in a dangerous mood. He pulled the veiled leader from his camel, and the fellow saw murder in the eyes of my uncle. For Flane wished to go back to the Black Mouth, and it was dangerous to stand in his way.

The Tuareg squealed with the fear that was on him, and he took the big notes of the Banque d'Etat du Maroc, in exchange for grain and dates and two fast camels that Flane bought for Anastasia and me. "For your safety might be a matter of speed," he said to me as he bargained for the beasts.

He bought also stout woven ropes from the Tuaregs, strong ropes; and when all the bargaining had been done and the Tuaregs had hurried away, glad to escape from the eye of Flane, my uncle sat himself down on the hot sand and made two piles of the banknotes which were left of the great bundle that he and Thurland had collected at Marrakech.

"There'll be your fares northward," he said quietly, as he pushed one pile of bills into my hands, "and there'll be expenses on the road. Buy yourself out of trouble if you get into it. I didn't want you along at all, at all; and now my heart is shot through with pain to think of you making your way to the coast. Ahmed Mansour is going along with you. Give him what you think he has earned when you part with him. The Moor is staying with me."

He paused and walked toward Anastasia. He put his arms around her and kissed her. "May God be good to you!" he said. "And to you too, Jimmy," he added, turning to me. "This is good-by for a little while, but on a bright day I'll see you both at the Green Tree Farm."

We climbed onto our camels and moved off, Ahmed Mansour in the lead. I turned and waved to Flane and the Moor, who were now moving along the track we had followed from the Black Mouth. And I wondered stupidly what my Uncle Flane could do. Thurland was somewhere in the devilish pit through which the waters of the *Wâd Serr* rushed in their mad hurry to reach some terrible underground lake like that which we had passed over on our way to the Black Mouth. Had Thurland perhaps been swept into such a place?

AHMED MANSOUR had been affected by the accident to Thurland. A strange terror of the desert had settled on him, and he babbled of Marrakech where he had wrestled nearly naked with Thurland. He went entirely mad, I think. Over and over he would yell: "Death is chasing us."

I tried to keep his yells from the ears of Anastasia, but the phantoms of the desert had got Ahmed Mansour. He heard them. He saw them. Their ghostly hands reached for him, so that he rode with his shoulders hunched forward and his head twisted sideways in an effort to see the jinn that he thought were riding at his stirrup.

The mirages danced around us. Cities and harbors, fine lakes and towers of ivory. Running up into the skies of brass. Cloudless, speckless, full of hate and deviltry: the skies of Africa. And all day long the words of old John Trench pounded in my ears. "The devil is plaiting a snare for your feet, Jimmy. A snare for your feet."

ON the fifth day we came to a well. The Arab pleaded for water, to the band of ruffians that were camped around it. I think they saw he was mad, or they would have killed us for sure. But they robbed us for the gift that they gave us. Money didn't satisfy them. They took the Arab's camel and part of our stores; then one of them showed a desire to keep Anastasia a prisoner.

When we started forward, Ahmed running at my stirrup, this fellow raced after us, clutched the headstall of Anastasia's camel and made to lead it back to his fellows who were squatting around the well. I begged him to let go, but he wouldn't. There was fierce desire in the eyes of the brute, as he looked up at Anastasia, and when Ahmed Mansour made to push him away, that desert tiger whipped a dagger from its sheath along his left forearm and stabbed the poor madman through the heart as if he were butchering a sheep.

A madness swept over me. I had Thurland's revolver that Flane had given me. And the thing leaped into my hand from the holster—leaped into my hand and pointed itself at the nomad. There was an explosion that shattered the stillness of the desert; the fellow dropped the headstall, clutched at his body where the heavy bullet had struck him and sank to the ground.

A yell went up from the crowd at the well, and the words of my Uncle Flane sprang into my brain as I turned to look at them running toward us. "For your safety might be a matter of speed,"

Flane had said as he bargained for the two camels for Anastasia and myself.

"Come!" I shouted; and at top speed Anastasia and I rode off across the wastes, a bullet or two whistling by our ears as we crouched low.

We rode into the eye of the setting sun—Anastasia and I, alone, now. Two of the group mounted their camels and started out after us, but my Uncle Flane had bought wisely when he purchased our mounts. The beasts that we rode easily outdistanced the pursuing pair, and after a short chase the two pulled up and returned to the well.

When the sun disappeared,—the great thousand-mile eyelid of sand seemed to rise and cover it,—we halted; and in the few minutes before the tropical dark fell upon us like a blanket, we stared at each other with frightened eyes. Anastasia and I in the God-forsaken wilderness—Anastasia and I alone and helpless as we were on the Glengariff Road in the long ago. But now there was no Thurland to come rushing to our aid. No Thurland.

I hobbled the camels; then we sat down together on the warm sand, our arms around each other for comfort. And the night walked around us like a mule round a well-head, snuffling and hissing and moving the grains of sand this way and that to frighten us with their trickling. And we prayed together. Prayed for Thurland and Flane, and for our own souls; for—and of this we were certain—on the next day we would die.

The morrow came with a rush of flame. Our lips and throats were dry, and we were hungry—hungry like the desert that waited for us. The desert that eats men and camels.

WE mounted, and with the sun at our back, rode forward. This, unless a miracle happened, was our last day. The sun would take the moisture out of our bodies and sap our strength, and when the night came, we would lay ourselves down and die. And that would be the end of the fine flirtation that my uncles had started with the Woman with Golden Feet who ruled the attic of the world in which was the treasure of the ages. The Woman with Golden Feet that were of gilded clay. . . .

We rode through the hot afternoon. We saw the sun slipping into the sand, the last sunset we would see; and as we stared at it, we saw the miracle. The Almighty took the great flaming globe of orange as a canvas, and on it with ink blacker than man ever saw, he drew figures—figures of camels and riders, figures like those that clever men cut out of black paper at fairs. But these were moving, moving across the sun. . . .

We came up with them after the night had fallen. The shouts of the men and the barking of the dogs led us to them. They tossed bushes on some coals so that the flames leaped up, and in the light they examined us and flung questions at us.

One of them spoke French, and Anastasia spoke back to him. She told a little of our misfortunes. He said that the caravan was making for a point fifty kilometers south of Villa Cisneros, and we could go with them if we could pay.

We paid there and then. We were too tired to eat the mutton stew that they offered us, but we drank the water without noticing the taste of the goatskin bags in which it was carried. And we mumbled a prayer with sleep closing our eyes.

CHAPTER XXV

The Terrible Russian

THERE were five men and two women in the caravan. They were a surly lot, and except for the man who spoke French, they showed no desire to have anything to do with us. But the man who understood French talked a lot to Anastasia.

He questioned her about the why and the wherefore of our visit to the desert, the light of curiosity blazing in his eyes.

They licked their thin lips and drooled, all of them, and their black shifty eyes went over our clothes seeking for pockets that bulged. The outline of the revolver in my pocket was a bag of gold to them, till I killed the thought by showing the weapon to them.

Out of the slather of questions came something that made Anastasia lift her head. She asked the fellow who spoke French to repeat it. He did so, then she turned to me. "I—I don't understand," she cried. "He wants to know if the caravan that came from Port Etienne found us."

"What caravan?" I demanded. "Ask him what caravan was searching for us."

Anastasia put the question, and I saw her face whiten as his words struck her. And one word out of the scurrying French of the fellow leaped at me like a hornet

A madness swept over me; the revolver leaped into my hand and pointed itself at the nomad.

and stung my brain. It was the word *"Russe."*

A key that unlocked horror-chambers within my mind. I had a vision of Thurland on the night years back when he came home to the Green Tree Farm. Saw him watching the door of the kitchen, his eyes blazing, and his fists closed tight. "She will be followed!" Thurland had cried. "Devils will trail her wherever she goes!" I saw again the great struggle with that other Russian assassin in the oak grove, and the flight of my uncle and Anastasia in Willy Hagerty's car. And there was the strange incident in the hotel at Marrakech when Thurland had dashed down the stairs with a ruble in his fingers. . . .

The word locked the jaws of Anastasia —locked them the way the mad dog locked the jaws of poor Teddy Healey when it bit him. She could only put out her hand and clutch mine. And I patted her hand and cried out promises to her, promises to die a thousand deaths to protect her. For I loved her with the wild love of a boy for a beautiful woman who is older than himself.

"Don't cry! Please! Please!" I begged her. "This fellow will see that you are afraid! He'll think—he'll think there is money to be made by telling the brutes where we are!"

And that was the fear that leaped upon me. For the eyes of the man were filled with greed as he saw the manner in which Anastasia received his story—filled with greed and cunning as they flicked from her face to mine and then back again to hers in an effort to find out the meaning of the words that I cried out to her.

She controlled herself and spoke in a whisper. "They are looking for me, Jimmy," she breathed. "For me! This man says that they came down the coast from Agadir to Port Etienne, and that they are now somewhere in the desert. He spoke to them. They—they asked questions about me. About Thurland and me!"

"What does it matter?" I cried. "They've missed us. They've gone on toward the Black Mouth. And if they run into my Uncle Flane he'll show them something for their snooping. Flane will

teach them. Don't you worry. We're close to the coast. Before they hear anything about you we'll be on our way to the Green Tree Farm."

The day went by. The talks between the five became more excited. They took the women into their confidence, and for blessed hours of the night they would sit colloguing, their whisperings bringing darts of fear to Anastasia.

"If—if they find me, it will be death, Jimmy," she murmured.

"They'll never get you!" I cried. "They'll have to kill me first!"

The heel of Africa had stamped on us. One after another we had been picked off. First was the hairy man, who had stayed with the slave girl to fight the Whining People; then the dwarf who had died from fatigue; then my Uncle Thurland. Flane and the one-eyed Moor had left us to hunt for Thurland, and Ahmed Mansour had gone crazy and had been killed by the robber. Anastasia and I were left out of the seven who had crept by Tiznit when the notes of the bugle from the French barracks came to us across the barren plain. We had been picked off, one by one, like the seven little nigger boys in the song. The hand of the Almighty was smashing us. . . .

On the second night I crept out from the shelter of the hair rug and watched the five men who were squatting in the sand, whispering to each other. There was a little moon and I could see them plainly. Hour after hour they talked, then the man who could speak French sprang up suddenly, walked to the place where the swiftest camel of the caravan was tied and hurriedly saddled the beast. The four were around him as he mounted. He waved his hand at them, and trotted out into the desert, heading eastward.

I swore softly as I lay flat in the sand. For the night whispered to me, and the trickling sands breathed in my ear, and the little moon cried out to me, and the wind that came from the direction in which he was riding brought the smell of the damned informer back to me. For he was riding to give the life of Anastasia —and perhaps mine also—into the hands of the bloody murderers who were seeking us.

After the four men had laid themselves down, I crept to the side of Anastasia and roused her. I told her what I had seen.

"Jimmy," she gasped, "we must get away at once! He has gone to find them!"

"All right," I said. "I'll get you out of camp, then I'll sneak back and grab the camels."

Anastasia was a little crazy with the terror that was on her. I led her to the back of a sand dune close to the camp; then I went back and brought the two camels and the saddles. And I stole a goatskin of water and strapped it on my saddle.

As we pushed off, there came a yell from the camp. A bullet whistled over our heads, but we had the start, and we knew that no beast of theirs could catch up to us. For the one swift camel they owned had been taken by the man who had ridden away.

At top speed we rode through the night, and we saw nothing that suggested pursuit, they knowing well that their own camels couldn't overtake us. With the sun on our backs we kept on through the morning, both of us wondering how far off was Villa Cisneros, the little military post that the Spaniards keep in the Rio de Oro.

At odd moments we rested, but the fear that had us in its clutch drove us on. Hungry and tired, we pushed on through the afternoon, but when the night pounced on us, we were so weary that we could not sit in our saddles. We halted and I hobbled the camels, then we stretched ourselves on the sand and fell asleep.

I AWOKE with a start and roused Anastasia. To the right of us, quite close, was a large dune. I thought if I climbed it, I might see the light from the beacon at Villa Cisneros. The nomad had said that there was a small lighthouse on the promontory that ran out into the sea, and I thought the light would guide us if I could catch a glimpse of it.

I told Anastasia what I intended to do, and she was pleased. "If you see the light, call out to me," she said; and

telling her I would, I started to climb the dune.

The night was clear, and there were great fields of stars, but it wasn't stars I wanted. I wanted a little winking light made by the hands of men that would lead Anastasia and me out of the wilderness of sand and deviltry—out of the clutches of Africa, to the cool green sea that rolled away up to Ireland, wet and frothy and lolloping with the life that is in it.

I reached the top of the dune, flung myself on my belly and stared at the rim of the world—stared at the gray line where the bowl of heaven came down on the desert like a teacup on a pile of brown sugar, pinning a few human flies like Anastasia and myself under it.

FOR long minutes I watched the gray line. Suddenly I saw something: a little white mouse of light that winked at me and ran into its hole again. Winked and fled because it had seen the desert when it wished to look at the sea.

Again it came out with a tiny flash of its tail, taking my breath with the wonder of it. A minute passed, a minute that was a thousand years; then I saw it again as it swirled hurriedly, turning its back for an instant to the fresh green sea. I was sure now. I was looking at the light of Villa Cisneros!

I sprang to my feet to shout the news to Anastasia, but the words were thrust down my throat by a fist made of little noises. For the devil himself had padded into camp, and my blood froze as I heard the cry of Anastasia and the throaty yell of triumph of the man who had discovered her.

I dropped in the sand, fearing I would be outlined against the sky, and my ears licked up all the scuffling frightening noises that told more than words. A voice struck at me. It made words that I didn't understand, but I knew them as hot and swaggering words, full of pride and gloating.

Anastasia answered in the same tongue, and I knew then it was Russian. Then, and this I knew she was doing for my benefit, she swung into English. "I am alone!" she cried, answering a question that had been put to her. "Both our camels have gone lame, and the boy that was with me has gone forward hunting for help." The beautiful lie ran up to the door of heaven, soft and perfumed and full of love. *"The boy that was with me has gone forward hunting for help."* Anastasia wanted to save me from the fate that she feared for herself.

Cautiously I slipped down the dune on the far side from the camp, and for a minute or two I heard nothing, the dune blocking the sounds. I crept round the nose of the great sandhill, crawling on my stomach like a snake, and then I saw and heard. Against the sky was Anastasia, standing up straight and brave, while a man who looked enormous in height and width was strapping her wrists together with a cord! Strapping them with such cruelty that she cried out with the pain; and when she protested, he jerked her backward and forward so that she lost her balance and nearly fell.

I had Thurland's revolver; and still on my stomach, I took aim. He lifted his right hand and struck Anastasia on the cheek; and when he did that, I fired.

For an instant I thought I had missed him, for he stood still and half turned in my direction; then the great body of him crumpled as if the stiffening had gone out of it. He dropped the wrists of Anastasia and sank down on the sand.

"Look out, Jimmy!" she cried. "Look out!"

It was the nomad who spoke French. I hadn't seen him, he standing in the shadow of the dune, holding the camels on which himself and the Russian had come hotfoot after us. And now he rushed me, his big stabbing-knife in his right hand.

HIS scream will be with me always and always! For it was like the yell of a hyena, choked suddenly at the end. The bullet struck him in the throat, though I fired hurriedly, not taking any aim at all. He fell forward on the sand, and he died within five minutes.

The Russian had got his in the chest, and it was three hours and more before he passed. He was conscious up to the last, and he cried for a priest of his own church; but we could do nothing for him.

I took the saddles from the camels of the Russian and the informer and turned them loose. They had been ridden to a standstill. And I scooped sand over the bodies of the two, feeling sick as I did it; then as the sun came up, we moved on in the direction of the light that I had seen from the top of the dune.

The cries of the Russian for a priest made me think of home, and a silence fell on me.

"What are you thinking of, Jimmy?" asked Anastasia.

"I'm thinking I'll never go near Father Brady again," I answered. "He's a frightfully nosey man, and he puts the devil's own questions to one."

I tried to laugh, but I couldn't. It's a terrible thing to kill a man. . . .

Toward noon I glanced ahead. "Look!" I cried. "We're there!"

Out of the sand rose the barrack buildings of Villa Cisneros; and just as the noonday gun was fired, we rode through the barbed-wire fence and the guarded gates into the big square filled with brown-faced soldiers from the Canary Islands, and a few Spanish officers who stared pop-eyed at Anastasia as she slipped from her camel. Before us slopped the blessed ocean, the sight of which was like an ice-cold cloth on our burning faces.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Green Tree Farm

THE commanding officer at Villa Cisneros was a blue-blooded Don. I know little of Spaniards and their ways, but I shall always remember the *Comandante.* Whether the big eyes of Anastasia roused his pity, or whether natural politeness prompted him, I don't know; but he did everything that he could for us. And the officers, who only saw a white woman once in a blue moon, fell over each other in their desire to be of service. Would we like this or that? What was our choice in the matter of food. And wine? Champagne? *Si, si!* And rooms were hurriedly fixed up for us. We could stay as long as we liked. A year, indeed, if we wished. They would be delighted to have Anastasia as a guest for a year!

"There will be a boat from Spain calling here in three weeks," said the *Comandante,* speaking in French to Anastasia. "A fine boat. It will take you up to Cadiz. The captain is my friend. I will arrange."

Anastasia translated his offer to me, but I thought of the two dead men out in the desert. A patrol might find them and that would start a lot of questions, so I begged her to get him to signal some tramp crawling up the coast. He could wireless her to stand in, telling the captain that it was important, and that we had money and would pay a big sum for our passage.

"That could be done," said the *Comandante,* bowing from the waist, "but it would be a great pleasure and a compliment to the garrison if the Señora stayed a little while." And if old Don Juan could have said those words with more sugar in them, I'd have liked to have heard him.

That very evening the wireless operator got in touch with a steamer that was lumbering up the coast from Dakar in Senegal. He talked with the captain, who asked if we had money to pay for our passage. When he heard that we had plenty, he said he'd stand in to Villa Cisneros and take us aboard.

At dawn the steamer was sighted edging in toward the promontory, and the *Comandante* himself came out in the motorboat to see us aboard. I think he was a little tearful when he bent over the hand of Anastasia, kissing it twice as he helped her up the ladder lowered from the deck of the tramp. A fine gallant man was the *Comandante,* and how he took a job in a place where there were no women is a mystery to me.

The steamer was a dirty Greek tramp that had no license to carry passengers; but the first officer, who spoke a little English, said he was signing us on as part of the crew.

"You one cabin boy," he said sharply, the moment we were aboard. "Now give me money. T'ree t'ousand francs."

"To what port?" I asked.

"Liv'pool," he answered.

I paid him with tears in my eyes. To Liverpool! We would take the boat from Holyhead to Dublin, and from Dublin the fine train southward to the kingdom of Kerry.

WE stood at the rail together as the engines of the ship rolled over. And we were both weeping as we watched Africa slipping away—Africa that had taken Thurland from us; Africa that still had Flane in its clutches; Africa that was brutal and cruel, and that loved to torture the fools who tried to tear secrets from the big hot belly of it that runs five thousand miles from Tangier to the Cape!

"A curse on you!" I cried, the tears blinding me. And I shook my fist at the land that had put marks on our hearts that we would carry to the grave. . . .

It was a dull voyage that we made on the *Leonidas.* A voyage on which sorrow walked hand in hand with us during the day and sat by our bunks by night. We were going home, to be sure, but go-

ing home with a pain in our hearts from which there was no relief.

We landed at the Mersey Docks, and we took the boat to Dublin, traveling with a lot of racing men who were going over to a meeting at the Curragh. One of the bright boys came up and spoke to Anastasia, but she didn't hear him, and, little astonished, he walked back to his friends, who jeered at him.

And here was Dublin and the train southward. And I thought of what the sharp-tongued neighbors would say when they had a whiff of the story.

"And have you news," they would ask, "from your fine brother Thurland?"

I wondered what my father would say back to them.

The same Bill Slavin who drove Thurland out to our farm on the wild night he came home, took us out from Kenmare; and I blessed Bill Slavin, for he asked no questions.

MY father was in the little flower-garden when we came to the Green Tree Farm, and he looked up as he saw Bill Slavin's trap coming. For a moment he stood staring at us, then he gave a great whoop of joy and started running for the gate.

"It's she!" he shouted, calling to my mother and my sister Kate, and my brother Pat. "It's she! And Jimmy! Mother o' God! *It's she an' Jimmy!*"

My father lifted Anastasia down, and she leaned forward and kissed him, which surprised him a little. And she kissed my mother, and Kate, and Pat, the tears running down her sweet cheeks, for her heart was touched by the warmth of their welcome.

"We thought," said my father, recovering his breath after the kiss, "we thought you'd be coming—on account of the cablegram."

"The cablegram?" breathed Anastasia, looking from one face to another.

"The cablegram from Flane," said my father. "It's addressed to you, but Tommy Rafferty, who brought it, said that it was from Flane, and that it had come from a place in Africa that no one had ever heard of." He turned to Kate and gave her a friendly push toward the house. "Bring her the cablegram!" he cried. "It's on the mantelpiece in the kitchen! Quick, now!"

Anastasia didn't move. She reached out and clasped the post of the garden gate, and my father and mother watched her, a little alarmed and a little puzzled. For the word *cablegram* had rushed the blood from her face back to her heart, and she trembled as she waited.

Kate came running with the cablegram, which she offered to Anastasia, but Anastasia motioned her to give it to me. "Open it," she whispered; and her voice, although I could hardly hear it, thrilled me with the strange power in it.

I tore the envelope open, and the words leaped at me—leaped at me as if angry because they had been kept waiting for days on the mantelpiece of the kitchen. And they put a collar of steel around my throat so that I nearly choked, and drove a knife of joy into my heart that made me cry out with the sweet pain of it.

I held the sheet before the eyes of Anastasia. And I think I shouted at her to read. To read! Cried out to her to suck in the blessed words that were written there. Words such as the finger of the Almighty might have inked on the scrap of paper.

These were the words:

THURLAND ALIVE AND FINE. NOW IN HOSPITAL AT PORT ETIENNE RECOVERY MATTER OF FEW WEEKS GOD'S GRACE. LOVE. FLANE.

My father caught Anastasia as she was falling. He took her up in his arms and carried her into the house, my mother following, giving directions to Kate as she ran. I was left alone, Pat running with Kate to get restoratives for Anastasia, who had fainted.

SARSFIELD, the dog that had feared Thurland's fur coat, came up to me, barking and prancing with joy; with him at my heels I walked down into the fields. I wished to be by myself. Belief in the message that Thurland lived had to be nursed back little by little.

Hope had died weeks before—in the Black Mouth, before the Woman with Golden Feet.

Now it had to be watered with tears and a thousand re-readings of the message I still clutched. I had to make it into a chant to sweep the nightmares from my brain. I threw myself down on the grass and repeated the words aloud. "Thurland is alive!" I shouted. "Alive! Alive! *Thurland is alive!*" I clawed at the grass as I screamed the words; and Sarsfield, sitting on his tail, watched me. "Thurland," I yelled to him, "Thurland, my splendid glorious godlike Uncle Thurland—is alive!"

THE END

"Shock Troops of Justice," we have called the F. B. I. men in the foregoing stories of this engrossing series. They well deserve the name—as we again discover in this moving and authentic story—

By
ROBERT R. MILL

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

Double Exposure

HIS livery was old, but clean and neatly pressed. He held his uniform cap in his hand as he rang the bell at the basement door of the brownstone mansion.

The butler who answered the summons greeted him with a supercilious lift of the eyebrows. This, his manner seemed to say, was some inferior form of life, and a form not to his liking.

"My name is Wilson," said the young man in the chauffeur's uniform. "The agency sent me."

The butler relaxed sufficiently to nod. He stepped aside, and allowed the young man to enter a basement sitting-room.

For a full moment the two men took stock of each other. The butler was the first to speak:

"Mrs. Maltorn will pass upon your driving ability. However, in event you are engaged, you will have certain tasks about the house, which you will perform under my direction."

The applicant was serious and respectful: "So the agency informed me, sir."

The butler unbent a trifle more.

"Come with me," he directed, and led the way upstairs.

Mrs. Richard Maltorn was an attractive woman of great poise and charm. She looked up from a writing-desk as the butler appeared in the doorway and coughed discreetly.

"Yes, Meakins?"

"A person to apply for the position as chauffeur, madam."

"Very well. Let him come in."

Silver was to be polished; Meakins had ideas upon just how it should be done.

The young man entered the room, and the butler retired.

"My name is Wilson, madam." He placed a letter on the desk. "The gentleman at the agency instructed me to give you this note." He produced two more letters, and placed them beside the first. "Letters of recommendation from two former employers. I trust I shall be able to give satisfaction, madam."

Mrs. Maltorn hesitated. The poise was gone. Fear and uncertainty were revealed in her eyes.

The man in uniform shifted his position, so that his back was toward the hall, and any person who might be lurking there. His lips moved, and although no sound came from them, the woman read the command:

"Tell me the salary."

"I will pay ninety dollars a month," Mrs. Maltorn said.

The man bowed.

"That is satisfactory, madam." Again his lips framed a silent command: "Tell me the hours. . . . How about living quarters? . . . What are my duties?"

"I hardly ever require the car before nine in the morning," the woman explained. "Occasionally, I shall require you in the evening, but the greater part of the time your evenings will be free. Meakins will show you your room. You will have your meals with him."

She hesitated, and shot him a questioning look. It was as if this had been a great effort, and she had reached the limit of endurance.

"YES, madam," came the reassuring voice of the man. "If everything is satisfactory, I can start at once."

The woman nodded uncertainly.

The chauffeur advanced to the desk, a pencil in his hand. He scribbled upon one of the envelopes he had placed there:

"Order the car at once. Say you are going shopping. Bring these letters with you."

He stepped away from the desk.

"Another city reference," he explained aloud. "Possibly Madam may know Mr. George Wilburforce."

He watched her closely. A slight noise from the hall convinced him that every word of the interview had been overheard. She was in mortal terror, this woman; but she was playing her part magnificently. Her voice was steady, and her tone casual, as she said:

"I have no doubt the references are satisfactory. What concerns me more, is whether your driving will come up to my rather exacting standards." She glanced at a platinum wrist-watch studded with diamonds. "It so happens I have some shopping to do. The garage is in the rear. I prefer to use the roadster." She touched a velvet bell-cord by the desk. "Meakins will show you the garage, and your room. I shall be ready in about fifteen minutes."

The butler appeared in just about the time required to go from the basement to the second floor. His face was expressionless as he received his orders, but in the garage he spoke:

"Drive slow in traffic, and everything will be all right." A smile appeared on his face. "You have had a stroke of luck. Chap who had the job before you was satisfactory in every way, but this morning he showed up with a breath like a blooming distillery. He was sacked on sight."

The newly hired chauffeur smiled as he fumbled with the gearshift of the ornate roadster.

"That was a bit of luck for me, sir," he admitted. "Jobs like this don't grow on trees—these days."

He backed the car from the garage, drove through an alley, and pulled to a stop before the house. There he carefully folded a blanket, threw it over his left arm, and stood beside the door of the automobile.

Just the suspicion of a smile was visible upon his rather handsome face. Scattered here and there, in various parts of the country, were people who would have derived keen enjoyment from this scene: high officials and bank-robbers, clergymen and murderers, gracious ladies and gun molls. Thanks to his calling, his acquaintances were a catholic lot. And one and all, though inspired by different motives, they would savor the sight of James (Duke) Ashby, special agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice, in the rôle of chauffeur.

The smile vanished as he recalled the seriousness of the situation. Mrs. Maltorn—she was a thoroughbred—had notified the Director almost as soon as the menace fell upon her. She had made the telephone-call from a booth in a large department-store. She was sure nobody was within hearing distance, and as far as she knew, she had not been followed.

That was all to the good. Meakins—he would bear watching—thought it was pure chance that the Maltorn chauffeur had appeared on the job in no condition to work. But the chauffeur had been the victim of circumstances—circumstances which the Director had arranged.

Right now, on the seventh floor of the Department of Justice Building in Washington, fresh laurels were being bestowed on a young special agent named Fordyce, who would go far.

FORDYCE had met the chauffeur, apparently by chance. They soon were friends. They met more friends, again apparently by chance. They made a night of it. The half-hearted attempts of the chauffeur to break away were greeted with derision by his newly found friends. The result was inevitable.

That had paved the way for the next step in the game. Mrs. Maltorn, with only slight prompting, had done her part nobly. Now Ashby was in striking position. From now on, it was up to him. He squared his shoulders. Then as Mrs. Maltorn appeared, he touched the peak of his cap with his finger, and threw open the door of the car. . . .

The roadster purred its way along the avenue.

"You were a brick, Mrs. Maltorn," said the special agent.

There was a nervous catch in her throaty voice as she declared:

"I was scared almost to death. I still am. Let me tell you all about it. That will be such a relief."

"START at the very beginning," Ashby directed.

"A man came to the house," she began. "I didn't want to see him, but he was very insistent. He asked for a contribution to some vague charity. I told him that—that under present conditions, I had been obliged to give up almost everything of that sort, including some things in which I was deeply interested.

"Then he became angry. He opened a brief-case he carried, and threw some photographs before me. They were—they were horrible."

A wave of red flowed across her face.

"I know exactly what they were," came the quiet assertion of the special agent. "Your face, and the face of some man of your acquaintance. Both faces pasted on the pictures of bodies of human rats who go in for that sort of thing. Then some clever trick photography, and the mob is all set for a neat bit of extortion. The victim can't win; for innocent or guilty, the public always believes the worst."

She nodded slowly.

"The public is not the only thing to be considered, Mr. Ashby," she said.

He pulled the roadster to a halt, as the traffic lights changed to red. A taxicab drew alongside; and its driver, bent indolently over the wheel, studied them with appraising eyes. Mrs. Maltorn, about to go on with the explanation, felt the elbow of the special agent pressed against her side. Ashby spoke in the respectful tone of a servant:

"Ford and Gaylor's first, madam?"

"Yes," she answered, "Ford and Gaylor's."

The red lights became green. Ashby was purposely slow on the get-away. The two cars pulled apart.

"Go on, Mrs. Maltorn. Tell me everything."

She spoke reluctantly:

"Mr. Maltorn and I have separated."

"I know," he said. Vague bits of gossip he had heard returned to him: Chorus-girl parties. . . . Drunken debauches. . . . Public insults to the patrician wife. "I understand—go on," Ashby added.

"I have Guy, my boy, with me," she continued. "My—my husband would glory in anything, no matter how false, that would tend to besmirch me."

Tears formed in her eyes.

"He hates Guy; but it would be the happiest day of his life if he could gain legal custody of my boy, knowing that would break my heart."

There was a harsh note in Ashby's voice:

"After our experts get through with those pictures, I doubt if any judge or jury would consider them in their findings."

Mrs. Maltorn made a gesture of despair.

"Now you are not being frank, Mr. Ashby. You summed it all up when you said that the public always believes the worst. Win or lose, I couldn't ask Guy to add that to the heritage his father already has provided for him. God being willing, Mr. Ashby, Guy, when he is old enough to realize those things, will know nothing to make him ashamed of his mother. I would die rather than have it otherwise."

ASHBY made his voice matter-of-fact, in an effort to check her rapidly mounting hysteria.

"How much did the rat ask for the pictures?"

"Thirty thousand dollars."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him the truth: that I didn't have that much money. Very foolishly, I turned over all I had to my husband when we were married." There was bitterness in her voice. "Now I exist on his charity. He gives me just enough to maintain the house. He does that only because he fears the opinion of our friends."

"How did you get rid of the rat?" Ashby asked.

"I didn't know what to do," she confessed. "So I told him he would have to give me time to raise the money. He said he would wait just one week. That week is up day after tomorrow."

The special agent nodded.

"Plenty of time." His voice was reassuring. "What else did he say?"

"He said that I would receive instructions how to pay over the money; and that if I didn't have it, he would turn the pictures over to my husband, together with full information as to where and how they were taken."

Ashby spoke quietly:

"Where were they supposed to have been taken?"

She flushed. "At the Hillside Inn."

"Who is the other person in the picture?"

Her flush deepened. "Henry Lomast."

"Were you and Mr. Lomast ever at the Hillside Inn?"

"Yes." She admitted it calmly. "He met me there at my request. I was desperate. I needed somebody to advise me."

SHE moistened her lips with her tongue before she continued:

"We had luncheon at a table in the far corner of the main dining-room. We did not go above the first floor of the place."

She faced him almost defiantly.

"Do you believe me, Mr. Ashby?"

His glance left the road ahead, and was turned upon her momentarily.

"Yes," he said simply.

"Thank you," she murmured. "I know many men who wouldn't."

Ashby shrugged.

"To get back to the rat with the pictures: did he threaten you?"

"Yes. He told me that if I communicated with the police, they would kidnap Guy. He also said that if there was any trap at the time the money was paid over, other members of the band would kill my boy. He warned me that the police could protect him for a while, but that they would get him, even if it took years."

"How did you happen to think of us?"

"I was afraid to trust the police," she admitted. "Even if they were honest, I was afraid they would make some horrible mistake. That evening I had the radio turned on. I was so distracted that I didn't know what was being said, but it must have been a program about your organization. I heard the word 'kidnap,' and it caught my attention. Then the announcer listed a number of various crimes, and gave a Washington telephone number to be called at once.

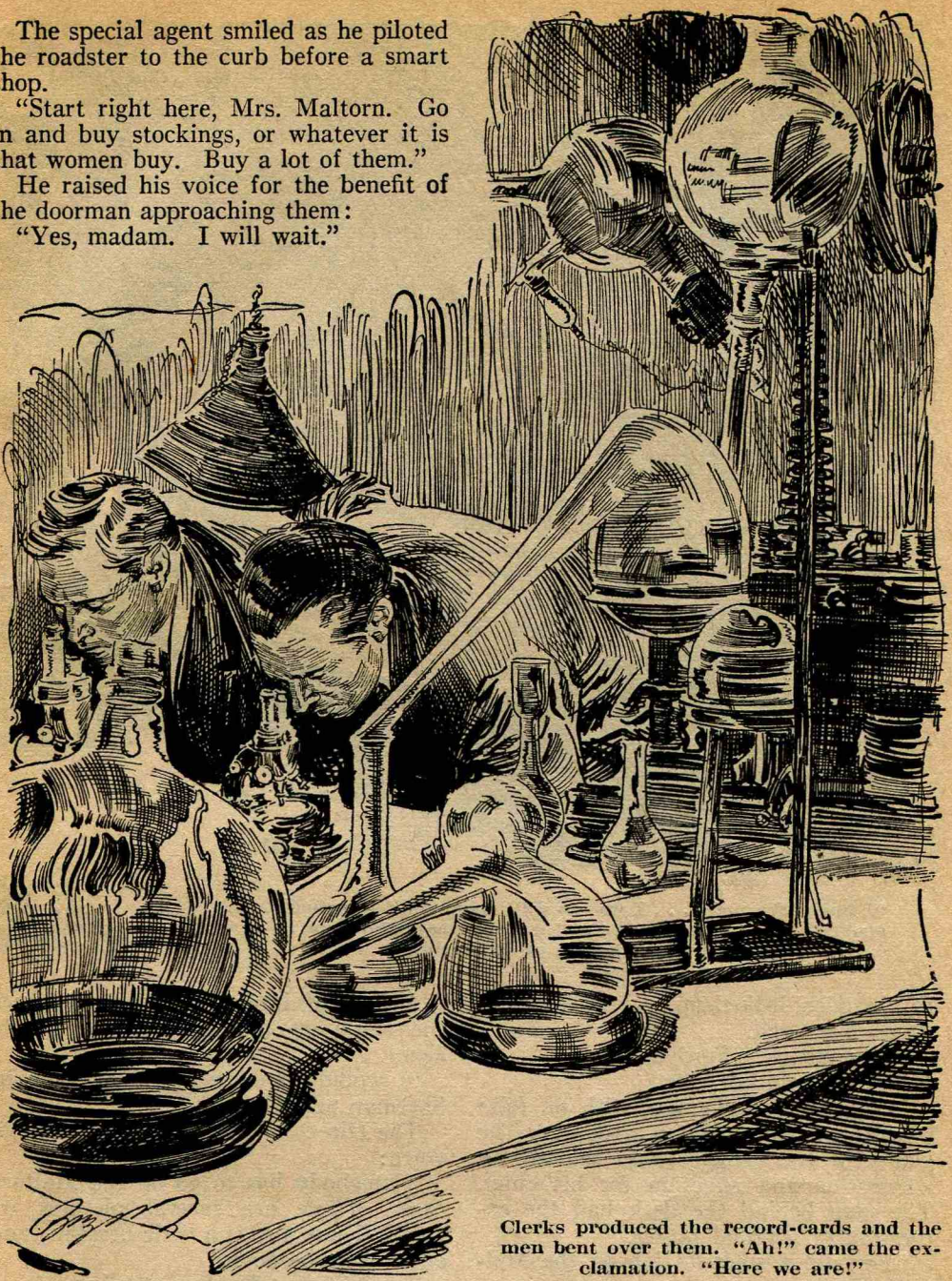
"I was afraid to telephone from the house, so I waited until the next day. Even then I was afraid I would get some clerk who wouldn't understand. But your Director came on the wire almost at once. He was so kind, and he made everything so plain. I promised him I would do exactly as I was told." She drew herself up proudly. "And I will, even if it takes my last ounce of courage and strength."

The special agent smiled as he piloted the roadster to the curb before a smart shop.

"Start right here, Mrs. Maltorn. Go in and buy stockings, or whatever it is that women buy. Buy a lot of them."

He raised his voice for the benefit of the doorman approaching them:

"Yes, madam. I will wait."



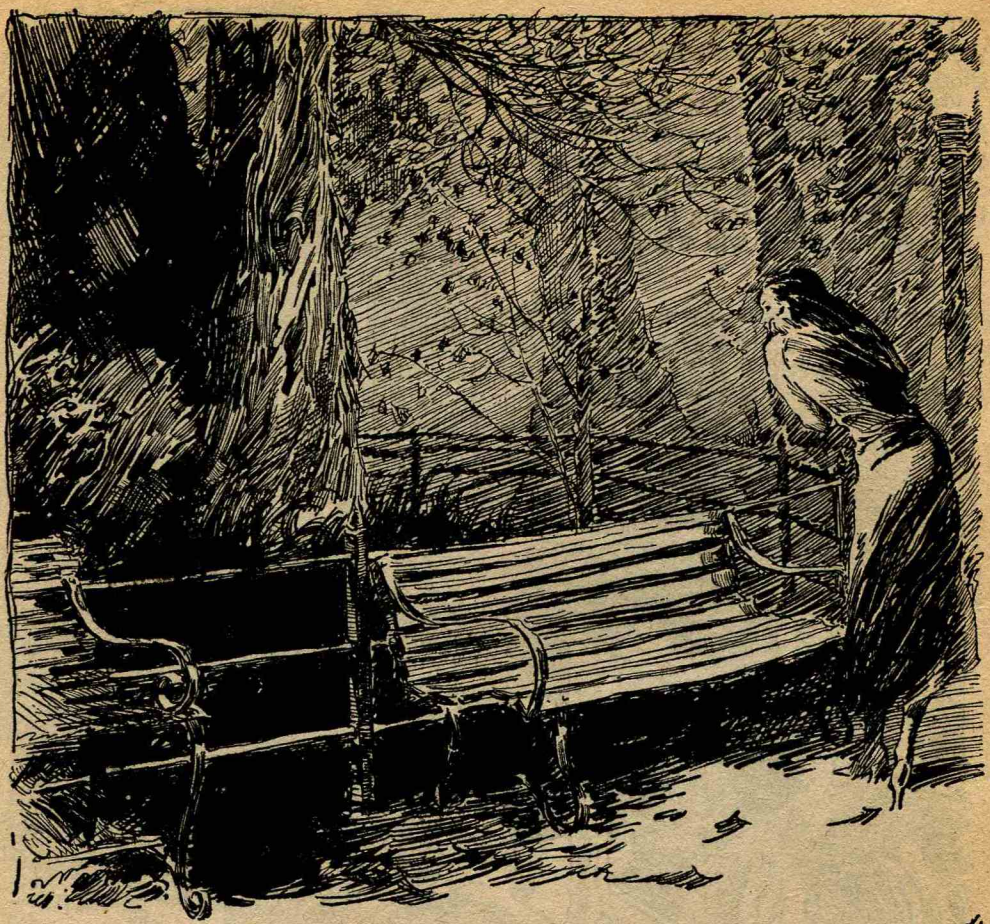
Clerks produced the record-cards and the men bent over them. "Ah!" came the exclamation. "Here we are!"

The garage, so Special Agent Ashby found upon his return, had a telephone, which was on a direct line to the central exchange. He took a walk about the neighborhood, found nothing to arouse his suspicions, and returned to the building. After carefully locking the doors, he called a number in Washington, D. C.

Then Ashby returned to the house. And under the guidance of the lordly Meakins, he who loved all the fine things of life, donned the apron of a houseman. There was silver to be polished; Meakins had strong ideas upon just how it should be polished. Ashby listened attentively.

The special agent was whistling softly, and his lips were framing a grin as he began his task. . . .

The Director, sitting in the shadows of an American flag draped on the walls



"I found the note. . . . I was to wait there until somebody spoke to me. I did; after a short wait the man who came to the house walked out of the bushes."

of his office, looked up as Special Agent Fordyce entered.

"Sit down, Mr. Fordyce."

"Thank you, Director."

They met man-to-man, with no false humility, or unwarranted arrogance. The glance of the younger man showed his admiration and affection for his chief. The man behind the desk had the expression of a proud father.

"You did a splendid job on the Maltorn case."

The special agent blushed.

"Your card shows that at one time you were a newspaper photographer."

"Yes, Director. I worked on the *Planet*."

"Ever steal a picture when the subject didn't know he was being photographed?"

Fordyce smiled. "More times than I care to remember, Director."

The man behind the desk chuckled. "I know you are a good burglar. You proved that on more than one occasion."

A look of intense eagerness replaced the smile on the face of the special agent.

"I would do more than that for Carl Sherman and Duke Ashby."

The Director spoke in a casual tone of voice:

"Somebody has to go on the Maltorn case. There are several pictures we need. There also is a little breaking and entering to be done."

Special Agent Fordyce stood up.

"As soon as you give me exact instructions, Director, I'll get started."

THERE were floors to be waxed in the Maltorn ménage the following morning. Meakins explained the process to the chauffeur he knew as Wilson, and then departed to do the marketing.

Ashby was at work in the sitting-room on the second floor when Mrs. Maltorn entered. She gave an exclamation of dismay.

"I can't allow you to do work of that sort." She spoke in a low tone. "And I refuse to have you ordered about by my servants, Mr. Ashby."

Duke Ashby, down upon his knees, looked up with a smile.

"I am Wilson, your chauffeur, madam. Think of me as that. If you do, it may prevent expensive mistakes."

He climbed to his feet, walked to the door, saw that the hall was clear, and returned to the side of the woman.

"We should hear from them tomorrow," he said. "I doubt if they will take a chance on another visit to the house. It will be either a letter or a telephone-call, probably the latter. If it is, tell them you have raised the money."

Mrs. Maltorn gave an exclamation of surprise. "But I haven't, Mr. Ashby," she objected.

"The Department of Justice has," he corrected. He tapped a pocket. "It came this morning." His eyes twinkled. "I took the liberty of ordering a new tire for the car. The money came with the tire. I'll turn it over to you when the time comes."

His raised hand checked her protests.

"Bait, Mrs. Maltorn. If it works, we will land the whole outfit, and nobody will be left for you or your boy to fear." Confidence vibrated in his voice. "We are so sure it will work, that we are taking a chance on losing thirty thousand dollars. We would have a swell time explaining that to the taxpayers."

He was smiling.

"We could use fake money, but in this case it wouldn't be safe. Besides, we have baited the trap so that payment of the full amount is a necessary part of the plan."

His smile vanished.

"They will tell you how the money is to be paid. Obey them implicitly. Very probably, the scene of payment will be some distance from the house, and you will need the car. In that case, call for me as if nothing out of the ordinary was happening. And whatever you do, say nothing to me until I tell you it is safe to talk."

He paused, then added:

"In event they communicate with you by letter, wait at least an hour and then order the car. When it is safe, we will go over the letter together, and decide what to do."

Again he paused, studying the woman before him.

"This won't be easy, Mrs. Maltorn. It will require every bit of courage you possess. If we are successful, it will mean that you and your boy will have the safety and peace you deserve for the rest of your lives. Do you think you can go through with it?"

She drew herself erect.

"Yes, Mr. Ashby. I can do almost anything for Guy. Only one thing worries me: When we are away from the house, Guy is here alone with his nurse. Couldn't they—"

Ashby walked to the front window, and pulled aside the drapes. He motioned Mrs. Maltorn to his side.

On the avenue below them, pushing his little cart, was a street-cleaner. He was dirty and unshaven, and only occa-

sional spots showed that his uniform had once been white. Every now and then he paused to sweep up débris, which he carefully placed in the cart.

"Special Agent Kennedy," said Ashby. His smile was contagious. "Princeton, '31. He had planned to take a week off, and join his uncle on his yacht off Newport. This case made us short of men, so his leave was canceled." He gazed at the man in the street judicially. "Not a bad whitewing," was his verdict.

Ashby dropped to his knees and resumed his task.

"Can't neglect my own work. Meakins would be very angry."

He turned to the woman, who had returned to the desk.

"If I am disturbing you, madam—"

"Not at all, Wilson," said Mrs. Maltorn perfunctorily.

"HAVE a good trip?" asked the Director.

Special Agent Fordyce smiled.

"Devlin flew me back as if Frank Hawks was chasing him."

He indicated a package at his side.

"I have everything, Director."

The man at the desk touched a button.

"Just a moment." Then, to the girl who answered the ring: "Ask Mr. Sherman if he will join us."

Soon Carl Sherman, head of the great laboratory of crime that is housed in the Department of Justice Building, entered the private office. His white frock was spotless. His keen eyes twinkled behind his thick glasses. His scholarly face lighted with pleasure as he saw Fordyce.

The young special agent produced a number of photographic plates.

"Numbers One to Seven are the interior. They are time exposures, taken at night, but I think you will find something there you can use."

He pulled out more plates. "Numbers Eight to Eleven are the subject. He walked right into the camera, and he was wide open. Numbers Eight and Nine were taken in the lobby of a building, and the subject was not wearing a hat. Less work for the artists."

Sherman nodded.

"Splendid work, youngster."

The flush that crossed Fordyce's face made him seem even younger. He covered his embarrassment by consulting a card.

"The subject is about five feet eight inches in height. Weighs about one hundred seventy-five pounds; portly old boy.

"He wore a plain light-gray business suit. White shirt and stiff white collar. Maroon four-in-hand tie. Tan brogues. No jewelry, except a heavy signet ring on the third finger of his left hand."

Fordyce handed the card to Sherman.

"Think you can read my scribbling, Carl? I'll have it typed off, if you can't."

Carl Sherman chuckled quietly.

"I rather pride myself on my ability to read almost any kind of handwriting!"

MRS. MALTORN turned from the telephone, her heart beating like a trip-hammer. The obsequious Meakins appeared at her side.

"Tell—tell Wilson to bring the car in front at once," she gasped.

Special Agent Ashby soon appeared with the roadster. A quick glance showed him the street-cleaner was on duty. He touched his cap as Mrs. Maltorn approached.

"Where to, madam?"

"The entrance to the Park."

Her face was white and drawn. She was fighting a valiant fight for self-control.

"Steady, Mrs. Maltorn," murmured the special agent, as the car pulled away.

They were a good six blocks from the house when Ashby asked:

"What were your instructions? Speak without moving your lips. And try to keep calm."

"I was told to bring the money. I must leave the car at the entrance to the park. Then I must walk to the fifteenth bench on the right. I am to find additional instructions in a note placed ten paces behind that bench."

She gasped for breath.

"He said that if any attempt is made to trap him, I will find Guy dead when I return."

Ashby's voice rang with sincerity as he declared:

"No attempt will be made to trap him. Even the telephone line was not tapped. The money is on the seat beside you. Pay it over to him. He will give you the pictures. Handle them very carefully, and touch the package in only one place, but avoid letting him see that you are using care in accepting or carrying the package. Is that plain?"

"Yes."

The answer was firm, but her manner was that of a person doomed.

"One other thing," the special agent continued. "I am not particularly inter-

ested in what this rat looks like, but I do want to know what he is wearing. Try to remember every single article of his attire. Will you do that for Guy?"

Her shoulders straightened. "Yes, Mr. Ashby."

"You make a brave soldier, Mrs. Maltorn," he said.

Then, as the car approached the entrance to the park, he was the outward picture of a chauffeur, bored and indifferent. He found a parking space on the Avenue.

"Shall I wait, madam?"

"Yes, Wilson."

He touched his cap. . . .

Mrs. Maltorn was back in the car, sagging weakly in the seat, utterly exhausted. Ashby drove slowly, keeping a sharp eye for vehicles that followed his progress.

"All right, Mrs. Maltorn."

"I found the note. It said to go to the fountain about five blocks beyond." She spoke mechanically, like a person giving a recitation. There was a pause after each sentence, as she fought for strength. "I was to wait there until somebody spoke to me.

"I did that. After a short wait, the man who came to the house walked out of the bushes. He asked if I had the money. I told him I did. He acted surprised."

Ashby chuckled.

The woman continued her recital:

"He told me that if there was anything funny about the money, it would be just too bad for me and Guy. Then he gave the pictures to me. I took the envelope very carefully."

"Fine work," said the special agent. "What did he wear?"

"A blue suit and a blue shirt. It had a soft collar. The collar was very high. His tie was a darker shade of blue than his shirt. He—"

"That's good enough," Ashby declared. "Just relax. Your part is all over. Now it is up to us."

DEVLIN, a special agent who was also an airplane pilot, was out of breath when he entered the Director's office and tossed a package upon the desk. Carl Sherman and the Director pounced upon the package and tore it open. They drew out a square brown envelope.

The entire surface of that envelope had been dusted with a black powder. Here and there patches of the powder had clung to the paper, forming im-

"We waited. Now we have you cold!"

pressions of fingerprints. About the prints in one corner—they were smaller than the others—a ring had been drawn. *"Disregard,"* was the caption written above the ring.

The other prints were covered with a protective coating of wax, insurance against their being rubbed off, or vanishing after exposure to the air. This is a science which has been highly developed by the Bureau of Investigation, and is known as *moulage.*

The men literally ran to the identification section. Carl Sherman himself classified the prints, "breaking them down" by counting the ridges between the deltas and the cores. He scribbled cryptic numbers on a card. Then the search began.

CLERKS gathered about them, ready to aid. The prints belonged to a large general classification.

"Use the machine!" barked the Director.

Punch-cards, each card representing a set of prints in that grouping, were placed on the ledge of a machine. The levers were adjusted to the key numbers of the prints taken from the envelope. The power was switched on. Five of the punch-cards dropped into the tray marked, *"Possible Identification."*

Carl Sherman called off the numbers on the punch-cards; and as if by magic, clerks produced the record cards to match them. The men bent over them, powerful microscopes in their hands.

"Ah!" the exclamation came from Sherman. "Here we are!"

"'Flash Gensook,'" read the Director. *"'Blackmail. Uses double-exposure photographs.'"* An expression of disgust crossed his face. "Why didn't we think of him before?"

They wasted no time. Taking the card with them, they darted to another room. Photographers and artists were waiting. Also a man about five feet, eight inches, who weighed about one

hundred and seventy-five pounds. He wore a gray suit, a white shirt, a stiff white collar and a maroon cravat. There was a heavy signet ring on the third finger of his left hand.

On the wall was the enlargement of the picture of a business office.

The Director consulted the card just taken from the files.

"I want a man about five feet eleven, weighing about one fifty. Dress him in a blue suit, and a blue shirt with a high soft collar. Dark blue tie."

Orders were barked. Soon a man answering the description appeared.

Carl Sherman took charge.

"Porter,"—he indicated the man in gray,—"is to pose for the figure of the man at the desk. Use this face." He picked up one of the snaps Fordyce had taken. "Cassidy,"—he indicated the agent in blue,—"is to pose for the figure of the man sitting before the desk." He indicated the picture on the card. "Use this face."

The photographers went to work. They photographed Porter sitting in a chair that resembled the desk-chair in the picture of the office. One man darted into a dark-room.

They photographed the other agent sitting in a chair exactly like the chair before the desk in the picture of the office. Soon they had wet prints. They cut the faces from them, and substituted the ones wanted. Artists did their magic with brushes. Their finished product, after Carl Sherman had passed on it, was photographed. The prints were "blown up" to the same scale as the photograph of the office.

Then they attacked the picture of the office with their scissors. They left two holes. Into one of them they inserted the picture of the man behind the desk. The picture of his "caller" filled the other hole. Again the artists did their magic. The cameras clicked. There was another short session in the dark-rooms.

They surveyed the finished product with satisfaction.

"Good enough," was the verdict of the Director. He turned to the pilot.

"On your way, Mr. Devlin." There was a smile on his handsome face, as he raised an imaginary glass aloft. "Here is hoping, gentlemen."

"REALLY I doubt if Mr. Maltorn will see you. You'd better transact your business with him through me. And just what is your business with Mr. Maltorn?"

The platinum blonde in the outer office, who had a beautiful but hard face, delivered her ultimatum with tightly compressed lips.

Duke Ashby, clad in careless but expensive tweeds, and with a brief-case under his arm, surveyed her with sardonic amusement.

"Ever stop to think there is a possibility Mr. Maltorn might not want you to know my business with him?" the special agent asked. He deftly snapped a catch, and passed through an opening in the counter before the irate young woman.

"And while you are pondering over that, I'll have a word with your Mr. Maltorn."

He headed for the inner office. The blonde attempted to block his path, but her attention was distracted by the appearance of a second young man who walked behind the counter and calmly seated himself at the telephone switchboard.

"Who—who are you?" the girl demanded.

Special Agent Fordyce beamed upon her.

"Hello, Jean Harlow. I am *not* the Fuller brush man. Just consider me as one of the help."

INSIDE the inner office, Richard Maltorn, thick-set, irritable, with telltale marks of dissipation on his face, looked up with a snarl.

"What do you want?"

Ashby made no reply as he selected the most comfortable chair.

"Get out!" barked the man behind the desk, lurching to his feet.

"Sit down!" The command was delivered with the force of an explosion. Involuntarily, Maltorn obeyed it. The special agent placed the brief-case on the desk.

"Seen Flash Gensook today?"

"No. I never saw—I never heard of him."

Ashby brushed the denial aside with a wave of the hand.

"When he does come in, collect thirty thousand dollars from him."

Maltorn passed a pudgy hand over a moist forehead.

"What—what do you mean?"

"Your wife paid him thirty thousand dollars yesterday afternoon."

A flush of anger crossed the face of the man at the desk.

"Where would that—"

"Be careful!" The warning was an ominous growl. "You can't understand where Mrs. Maltorn got thirty thousand dollars, can you? I'll give you the answer, you rat! The Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice, gave it to her."

Ashby watched the color recede from the face of the man before him, and the look of terror in the watery eyes; he saw the thick fingers open and close. He knew victory was very near, and he hastened to clinch it. In measured tones he summed up:

"You didn't plan it that way. You knew your wife has nothing except what you dole out to her from her own fortune. You thought she would be unable to meet the demand. That would give you a logical explanation for possession of that faked picture.

"With that in your hands, you knew you could dictate terms to Mrs. Maltorn. There would be a quiet divorce, with nothing made public to damage your reputation—what there is left of it. You would be allowed to retain Mrs. Maltorn's money, and hand out pittances to her, instead of the alimony any judge would award her when he knew the full circumstances. You were willing to pay Gensook and his outfit. Otherwise, they wouldn't have touched this with a ten-foot pole. Gangs like that check their prospects, and only a little investigation would have convinced them Mrs. Maltorn has no money to pay blackmail.

"We realized that from the start. We could have picked up Flash Gensook at the time of the pay-off, but we wanted the whole outfit, and particularly the man who planned the job. We waited. Now we have you cold."

MALTORN sagged weakly in his chair. He attempted a bit of bravado, but it was very thin.

"Prove it!" he taunted the special agent.

Duke Ashby smiled mirthlessly.

"You don't know Flash Gensook? You never talked to him?" He fumbled with the lock on the brief-case. He threw the composite photograph on the desk before Maltorn. "Look at that, you rat!"

Maltorn stared at the picture, horror in his eyes. His hands clutched his heart. His feverish glance came to rest upon a half-opened drawer before him.

"Don't try to reach that gun," Ashby warned. "That would give me an excuse to kill you." The special agent pushed the picture aside. He stood over the terrified man. "Where does Gensook hang out?" He made a note of the address Maltorn muttered. Then, "Who did the photography? Gensook is only the contact man. Who was the camera-man?" He jotted down the name and address. "Meakins was in on this, wasn't he?"

Maltorn nodded.

Ashby raised his voice:

"Fordyce!"

THE young special agent appeared in the doorway. Ashby handed him a slip of paper.

"Call the local field office, and have them pick up these two rats. Have them recover as much of the thirty thousand as they can. Flash hasn't had time to do any heavy spending."

A twinkle appeared in Ashby's eyes.

"Fordyce, you take a couple of men and pick up Meakins, the butler at the Maltorn residence. Tell him that Wilson, the chauffeur, will be unable to finish waxing the floors."

The twinkle disappeared abruptly as he added:

"Be a good fellow, Fordyce, and ask Mrs. Maltorn to give you my things, will you? Tell her that I stood in the hallway last night when she was reading the story of King Arthur and his knights to Guy. I heard her son ask her if there were any knights today. And I heard her tell him that there are men who roam over the country righting wrongs—that they are called special agents."

His expression was regretful.

"Tell her that we tried to do our best. We are sorry this has ended as it has."

"Ha!" A cry of triumph came from Maltorn, who had retrieved the photograph. "It was hot the day Gensook was in here. I didn't wear a coat. This thing is a fake!"

Ashby nodded gravely.

"We couldn't think of everything," he apologized. "The picture served its purpose. Even the one error we made brought out a second admission that Gensook has been here, and that you know him. It all helps, particularly when we tell the story to twelve men."

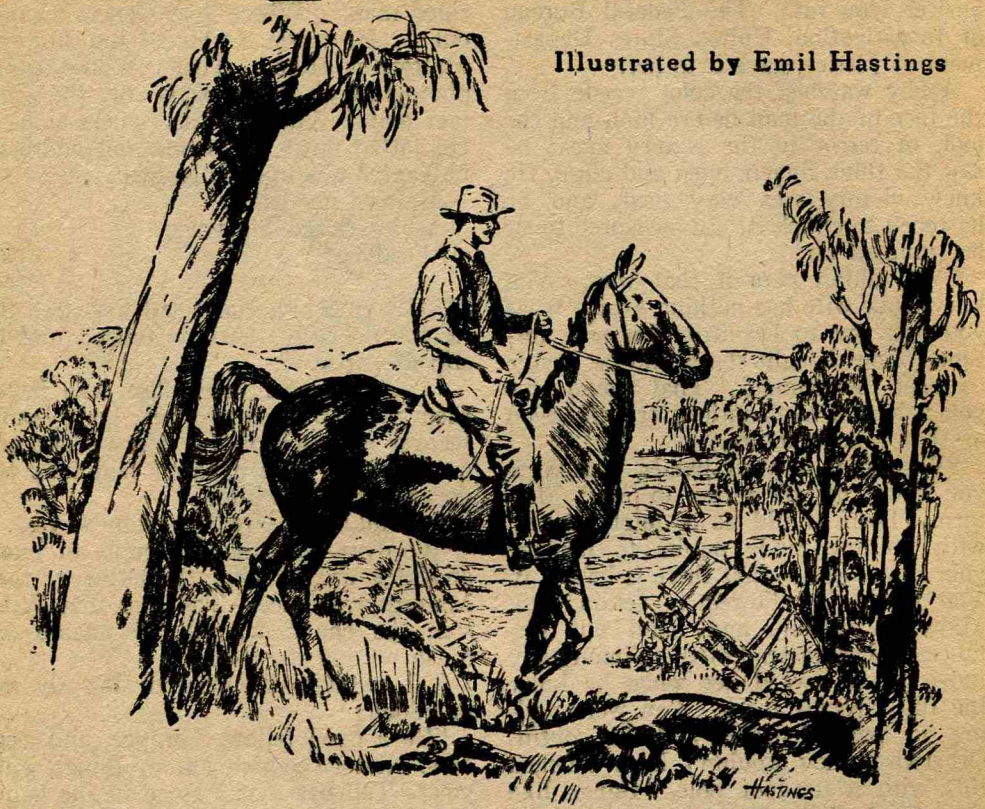
He bowed ironically to the man behind the desk.

"Any more flaws in it? You are an authority on fake photographs."

Another exciting story by Robert R. Mill is scheduled for the next (the August) issue.

The Outcasts

Illustrated by Emil Hastings



FOUR thousand feet aloft in the Queensland ranges, at Ramona, sun shone, day in, day out, through piny she-oaks and eucalyptus. The air had a crystalline quality, as if small diamonds had been broken and sprinkled through it. From the crests of the deep-forested ranges beyond, came breath of winds austere and pure.

In Ramona the one clean sandy street was populated by three horses, a cow or two, a dog, a loaded pack-mule tied to the hitching-rail of the hotel, and a man from "out back,"—as the interior was termed,—going up the steps by the rail.

Of course there were the "cockatoos," but they did not count. They sat on the narrow bench that ran from front door to side door of the hotel, and even a casual passer-by could not have missed the resemblance that had caused a town wit to name these old-age pensioners after Queensland's commonest bird.

On their perch they dreamed and chattered, backs humped and white crests ruffling in the wind. Like cockatoos, they woke up and cackled, when anything of interest occurred; like cockatoos, they were funny, testy, a trifle pitiful. The bank manager of Ramona looked out at them from his window, and superiorly smiled. The fat young hotel proprietor told his barmaid that they were poor devils, and never had the price of a drink between pay-days. The butcher, hacking beef that was almost a drug in the market, reflected that he could spare them a steak or two; it would do some of them good.

None of them knew, or remembered if they did know, that among the row of pensioners living on Australia's grudged bounty were two former hotel proprietors, one bank cashier, who ought to have been a manager, a grocer, and a cattleman who had done more butchering than the butcher himself. They were all Ramona men; and they were—though no one seemed to know it—a row of beacons set upon a reef.

The wrecked buildings of half Ramona had been sunk upon that reef; the graveyard on the hill was full of its victims. And the name of it was Tin—placer tin.

# of Diamond Flat

A moving drama of life in the tin-mining country "out back" in Australia, by the distinguished author of "The Eerie Island" and "The Flaming Sword."

By BEATRICE GRIMSHAW

If Ramona was dreamy, out of the world; if the sound of a motor horn was seldom heard there, and the shriek of a train whistle but once in twenty-four hours, nevertheless it seemed, in comparison with Diamond Flat, noisy, hot and fussy.

Diamond Flat was ten miles out. There, there was nothing at all but the she-oaks and the gums, and the grasses wimpling in the wind, and the small creek that leisurely ran across the flat.

You could stand beneath the balancing pale shadows, look far down to the valley of the Garmoyle River, and up through air like crystal, across the tumbling ranges, to the farthest vanishing peak of fairy blue, and see no creature but yourself: hear nothing but the immemorial wind-sounds in the grasses, and the tiny tattle of the creek. There was no one to blister you with the cruel curiosity of little country towns. There was no one to ask you what you were doing, and why. Utterly, you owned yourself.

A shaft in progress, and several abandoned, each with its heap of earth beside it, marked out the flat as metalliferous. One of the many small tin-bearing areas near the town of Ramona, that had been built by tin, carried on by it, and ruined by it in the end. Prices were down—but they were bound to rise. Mines were worked out—but new lodes would be struck, tomorrow or the day after. You and I were overdrawn at the bank, mortgaged up to the topmost rusty sheet of the roof—but next Christmas, next Easter, next wet season, next dry, we'd be rolling in money and taking trips Home. Hadn't we, you and I and the other man, made money out of the Gilda Mine, the Mount Jericho, the Tara? Hadn't we dropped it all back again, down the hole, with a full and lively faith in its resurrection?

SO the mine-owners and shareholders, in a big way. So, in a small way, the tin-scratchers of the bush, who located shows that were too small for the companies, worked them by own man-power, washed out in the nearest stream, and took the stuff to the tin-buyers of Ramona. And before them all, the rotting pleasure-houses of Ramona stood like beacons on a reef; and the gray, dwindling pensioners on the bench outside the hotel gave warning; and no one saw —or seeing, understood.

PERHAPS the man called Tiger came nearer seeing and understanding than any other of those scattered about the tin-bearing creeks and flats of Ramona district.

He reined his horse in now, as he came to the top of the last hill before Diamond Flat, and stayed for a minute, looking about him. Two tents, grayish-white, were just in view at the far end of the flat. Near them a man moved, busy with fire and supper.

"Lovely place—and an accursed hole," mused Tiger, and he set his horse to a canter.

The other man left the stone fireplace over which he had been bending, and came forward. "Any luck?" he said.

Tiger slung himself off the horse, unsaddled, and sent the brute away with a cheerful slap. "I'll not answer that," he replied, feeling in his pockets, "till we've opened the mail."

"Letter from the bank?" asked the other hopefully.

"No fear. Two newspapers, one bill, and—this." He held out an envelope of thick ivory paper, directed in neat penmanship to *"Julius Diamond, Esq., Ramona, North Queensland."* On the corner was *"Urgent and immediate."*

"Why didn't you open it?"

Tiger passed over that. "Open it, you," he said.

There was a minute's silence, while the other man, a dark lean fellow of middle height, ripped the envelope, drew out a sheet of paper, thick and smooth, and

slowly, quietly, read its contents. Tiger did not look at him. He tapped the leg of his trousers with his riding-switch, and stared down the gorge that hid the Garmoyle River. The neighboring creek tinkled in the silence. A cricket, large as a child's fist, sprang its wooden rattle, and ceased.

"BEN," said the dark man, lifting his head and showing a narrow well-bred face, colored brown, lit by fine gray eyes, "Ben, you ought to have read this. It's a—it's a startler."

Tiger, or Ben, said nothing: the time had not yet come. He went on tapping his leg. The cricket churred again, spitefully, as if anxious to be attended to, and desperate of attracting attention.

"Look here: You and I have been mates in this place for ten months. How d'you like it? How d'you like the life?"

"Too damn' well," was Ben's answer.

"I don't know what you mean by that. I like it. It's the cleanest life in the world. It's the essentials, with all the flummery let go. It's something else besides, that neither of us could ever put into words; but—the best thing on earth, better than money, or drink, or girls—"

"Wine, women and song! Well, one can have one's cake and eat it too, so far as that goes—with the remains of Ramona still above ground," finished Ben. "What put you on the talk of girls, anyhow?"

"The most amazing thing. My people have hunted me out. My uncle Julius died awhile ago, and left a crazy sort of will. There was only my young cousin Isabel to have the island and the plantation and the cattle station; and he's left things so that if she marries one of the name, she'll have the whole; but if she doesn't, she's to have half, and her first cousin Kate's to have half, and both their husbands are to take the name of Diamond. He was always batty in the belfry about the name, and I'm the only male left; we've nearly died out. He was born in the old country, you know, and saw a lot of life; my granddad went through the family money, and nobody but Uncle Julius ever made any attempt at picking up Humpty Dumpty again. He wrote the letter just before he died. I suppose one can understand the way he feels about it."

"One can," said Tiger. "What I can't understand is the way you seem to feel. You aren't exactly sending up rockets about it, are you?"

"Who, me? Oh, as for that—but it was a crazy sort of thing to send me a letter like that, when neither he nor Isabel has ever seen me! Bats in the belfry with a vengeance! No sane man would."

"Stop! He didn't; she was to deliver the letter, if she and her chaperon didn't object to the look of you: I'll swear that was it."

"But—"

"Julius, she did deliver the letter—at least, she ran and put it in the post office; I saw her."

"But—"

"Stop a bit. You can kick me as much as you like, but the devil entered into me, and I let them think it was me."

Diamond made no hasty answer. He looked thoughtfully at his mate—read part of the letter a second time, then asked: "Why did you do that?"

"I suppose," said Ben deliberately, "because I'm a rotter. And because I heard her say something." He did not mention what the something was, and Julius did not ask.

"Well," he observed, "you've tangled things up a bit. Will you tell me exactly what happened? As to being a rotter, you're unjust to yourself—you always were."

Tiger looked at him humorously. Not for the first time, it came to Julius that his friend was physically far his superior. Tiger (who had won his nickname by a playful habit of killing tiger snakes by whirling them round and snapping off their heads, as one cracks a stock-whip) was tall, long-legged and long-armed, and tough as fencing-wire; he had greenish, brilliant eyes deepset under black brows; his hard, clean skin was healthily freckled, and his hair, red as a rainy dawn, was so thick that nothing ever made it lie flat. He had a smile that disarmed even enemies, and won women to his side when he was most in the wrong.

MISS JOHNSON, the barmaid at the Ramona Hotel, had been known to say about Tiger: "It fair stops your thinkin', when he smiles at you; you just go cronk, and don't know what he's talkin' about."

Julius, not being a girl, kept his head against the insinuating Tiger; but even he was less inclined to blame when his mate, growing grave again, began the tale of the day.

"I went in for a drink," Tiger said, "and a yarn with Gracie, and a bite to eat. She said if I wouldn't mind having

it in the dining-room with the others, I could go in. She said they'd been asking the way to Diamond Flat—two ladies who'd come by train. And she called out, because she couldn't leave the bar: 'The gentleman from Diamond Flat.' And just as I was coming into the dining-room, I heard, the oldest of the two women say to the other: 'Bel, how do you like your husband?' And the young one said: 'For God's sake, shut up.'"

JULIUS stared at him, bewildered. "I think I see. But how—"

"Hold on a minute. Of course I pretended I'd heard nothing. We all had lunch together, and nobody said anything but, 'Your bread, I think,' and 'May I pass you the salt?' But we all kept looking at each other on the sly. Mrs. Sands was the old one—forty-five or so, a chatty little piece as a rule, I should think—"

"That would be my third cousin Mina Diamond, the one who married Hugh Sands in—"

"Yes. But yours was the beauty. Julius, do you reckon they've got any more like her in the family? Because if so, you'll wake up some morning and find me among your in-laws, sure as—"

"What's she like?"

"Aren't I telling you? Bit on the short side, but no worse for that; hair more like mine than yours—"

Julius nodded.

"Yes, there were always the two kinds: the red Diamonds and the black."

"Blue eyes, real blue; complexion like a clove pink; lips—well, she's your cousin; won't say all I'd like to. Figure like they make 'em nowadays, best brand. A bit more huggable than most, perhaps. Lace on her frock, and real pearls in her ears. Heiress, all right. And I fancy a bit of a little devil. But a girl is all the better for that."

"Your description," said Julius slowly, "sounds attractive." He looked at Tiger under his heavy eyelids.

Tiger went on:

"Since you asked me, you've had bonzer luck, and—and—of course, so has she if she happens to look at it that way."

"I should think," said Julius, still deliberately, "I should think the next in order would be a call on my cousin and Mrs. Sands."

"Yes," said Tiger, looking away. "And then things will be straightened out."

"Maybe. It's a mad business, altogether." Both men were talking on the surface of their minds; neither touching upon vital matters that lay unacknowledged and unspoken of, below.

Had he called? Julius did not know; perhaps Bel did not either. But she went straight as a homing bird to the nameless man!

"I don't know why you speak of it like that," Tiger broke in. "To have the offer of a raving, tearing little beauty, and a fortune—"

"She has probably half a dozen other suitors, and only came up here to prove a satisfactory negative."

"You talk exactly like a university professor."

"And," Julius went on, without answering, "even if she hadn't, which is hardly conceivable from your account, she would probably resent the position Uncle Julius has put her in. Why couldn't he marry and have children of his own, so that there wouldn't have been any need for this nonsense?"

"For the matter of that," retorted Tiger, "why don't you? No, you're not going to do the talking now; it's my turn to yap. If I said that I preferred a hole in the bush to a beauty and a fortune,—which is just what you want to say but

"Oh, God!" he said, and put his face in his hands; it was his good-by to Diamond Flat.

don't dare,—everyone would understand. I'm a bad lot. I've done most of those things which I ought not to have done, and if I've left anything undone, good, bad or indifferent, by gad, it was not my fault. I don't own my name—"

"You know that nobody—"

"Yes, as long as they haven't heard: no longer. Why shouldn't they mind? Don't you mind what sire and dam a race-horse had? Don't all of us illegitimates know that ours were rotten bad ones, or we wouldn't have been here? And I've been 'allowed to resign' from my regiment, and I've been in jail—"

"You know if you'd had the money to pay the fine—assault and battery isn't so—"

"Well, I hadn't, and I'm branded. All those things are true. I'm the one ought to go and hide my head down a tin-scratcher's shaft, for good. But you,—the darling boy of your family: M. A. and poet, the very 'moral' of a husband for that naughty delightful Bel, if her uncle only knew,—you to go backing and filling about what the gods have sent! Julius Diamond, if you don't saddle up tomorrow and ride in to that hotel, I'll punch your head myself."

"Has it occurred to you," said the other, "that I know nothing about station or plantation work?"

"It hasn't. Because you can ride near as well as I can—which is saying something—and you can learn anything you set your mind to, once you stop spouting and making poetry. Old Julius knew what he was about when he went looking for the Diamond blood. In men or horses, blood doesn't lie. Are you going to town tomorrow?"

"If I go," said Julius, fixing on the other his large shrewd gray eyes, eyes of a poet and a dreamer, but with something of the man of the world showing out of them too, "you'll have to answer a question first, and no shuffling."

"Ask it."

"Have you by any chance fallen in love with my cousin Bel?"

"How the deuce do I know? I go soppy over every pretty woman I see."

"Well, I'll put it differently: Did she seem to be—attracted, by you? She—she went and posted that letter, you know."

"My good God, don't you know that girls get soppy on me just the same as I do about them? What would it matter if she had?"

"It would matter this much; that she'd be lying awake, maybe, tonight, thinking of and fixing her fancy on—you."

"Well, she could unfix it—for a whole fortune instead of a half, couldn't she?"

JULIUS was silent for so long that the other, staring across the rapidly darkening valley, began to wonder what was coming next. But when his mate did speak, he said only: "Did you remember the sausages?" And Tiger—Ben William Alexander Hope, to give him all his names, Christian names every one—understood that the subject, for the present, was dropped. That was Julius' way.

"Now," thought Tiger, taking the sausages out of their parcel, and stirring up the fire, "he'll brood and brood on it all night, just as he does when he's hatching a new poem, and the longer he broods, the less likely he is to show common sense. I wish it would rain."

For Diamond Flat, delightful during the fine weather that made up three-quarters of the Queensland year, was somewhat less than pleasant once the wet season began. But the "Wet" was not due for weeks: and the little lost green tableland in the lap of the ranges, fresh with the running of the constant creek, bright with magpie's songs and kookaburra's laughter, all alone and merry, away from the world, was the place of all others to hold a poet's heart.

One poet's heart it certainly did hold. And Tiger, the poet's "mate"—word of significance in Australia, connoting love and faithfulness, matter-of-course self-sacrifice—Tiger, through the course of an unusually silent evening, could not make up his mind whether he was sorry or glad.

WITH morning, it seemed that the dam of Diamond's silence was broken; he became almost talkative.

"Ty," he said, over the remains of the sausages, "I've worried it out in my mind."

"Well?"

"The only thing to do—the only decent thing—is to pretend that no mistake has been made. We can easily do that. We're not supposed to know."

Ben, in a moment, saw that he was right. With that certainty came a slight darkening of the early morning splendor, a faint depression of spirit.

"Good-o," he answered curtly. "When do you start?"

"Aren't you coming too?"

"I'd only tangle things up—as you said." Not for the life of him could he keep back that gibe.

It went unnoticed. Julius was grave, determined, concentrated this morning, on himself. "I don't see," he said, standing very upright and slim, very neat in clean shirt and cords and leggings, beside his horse, "I don't see that I have any right to deprive my cousin of half her inheritance, if she chooses to buy it by saddling herself with me. Anyhow, it's her right to look over the goods, and reject them if she doesn't fancy them. If you really won't come along, I wish you could find time to start a bit of a shaft in that place where we found the streak of tin under the stone: I fully believe you'd strike it rich thereabouts."

"We need to strike it rich somewhere or somehow," commented Tiger. "There's no letter from the bank, and we were overdrawn two pounds, last balance."

"We'll make it some day," declared Julius; "anyhow, there's fifteen shillings due me on a poem for the *Wanderer*."

"Your poetry won't keep the frying-pan in grease," retorted Tiger. "Take my advice, and strike it rich in the Ramona Hotel."

Diamond, mounted and away, might have heard him, and might not; there was no time for an answer. Ben William Alexander Hope, frying-pan in hand, stood looking after him.

"Please the pigs, she does take a fancy to you!" he said—adding, illogically, as he scoured the pan with a copy of the Garmoyle *Courier*, "Damn you!"

Meanwhile, in the pea-soup-colored parlor of Gibbs' hotel in Ramona, Mina Sands and Bel had finished the usual meal of goat and ancient bullock—sharply criticized by Mina, who had a dainty palate—and were debating the possibility of finding a new walk to take for the afternoon.

"I cannot," declared Mina, "I really cannot walk any more up the street, or down the street, or to the bridge and back. Ramona's getting on my nerves. I warn you, if you don't soon bring this affair to some conclusion, I shall have a repression or a complex, or whatever they call a fit of hysterics nowadays, and you'll have to take me home in a strait-jacket. Two days! It seems like eternity."

"I don't think," said Bel, "you'll have to wait much longer."

"The place may be a perfect sanatorium, but it isn't agreeing with you. You've lost half your color, and I heard you fidgeting about your room last night when you ought to have been asleep. As for me, I'm a wretched sleeper at all times; but you have no excuse—young and healthy and without a care in the world."

"Just so," answered her cousin. "Well, having come so far, it would be a pity to go without finishing the job. I can't say I'm in love with the idea of sharing the plantation with Kate and her possible husband. We can expect another call from Julius any time now, I'm sure; and if we both pass him, he can be asked to stay at the plantation and see how things settle themselves. That's the idea, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Mina, using her palm-leaf fan industriously, though the day was not warm. "If we both pass him. You promised to be guided by my advice, as a married woman and your elder, didn't you?"

"More or less, I did."

"And you haven't taken any sudden girlish fancy to Julius, have you?"

"I rather thought you had taken one to him yourself, yesterday. What are you driving at? What is Julius that he wasn't yesterday?"

MINA cleared her throat delicately. "I—I don't know that I can tell you," she said, flirting her fan and imme-

diately proceeding to tell. "I just happened to fall into conversation with the man who keeps the hotel, Gibbs, a very decent sort of fellow for his station; and he let drop quite a few things about Julius—Tiger, he called him; it seems they all do."

"What did he let drop?" Bel was sitting very still; her vivid color had faded, but she kept her eyes fixed firmly on Mina.

"There have been—scandals. Nobody quite knows what, but it seems he came up here to get out of the way. And he makes love more or less to every woman he sees. He paid attention to Miss Johnson, but she wouldn't have anything to do with him. Gibbs seemed rather sore about that matter. Perhaps—well, one mustn't forget that you're not a married woman, yet. But you can take it that he isn't exactly the sort of Diamond that Uncle Julius seems to have expected. If you'll listen to my advice, Bel, you'll go slow."

Bel, orphan, spoiled child, heiress, never in her bright life crossed until that day, looked wordlessly at Mina; and Mina shook. There was fury in those blue eyes: fury—and something else.

"I don't believe it," broke forth the girl. "I don't care. You're in love with him yourself, as much as any soppy middle-aged old cat can be— No, Mina, I don't mean that; I'm sorry. I don't know what I mean. You've been frightfully good to me, and I suppose you don't mean any harm, but—I—I wish Uncle Julius had been drowned before he ever made such a damned will!"

"Mr. Diamond to see you," came Gibbs' voice at the door.

Bel's fingers were instantly up, smoothing her curls, dashing away an angry tear from her cheek. Her color brightened; the laces on her breast heaved stormily, but she sat very still, and did not turn, as the door opened. Mina, however, glanced up; and her instant reaction was: "Good God!"

SHE was no fool. At once she understood what had happened. It did not need Julius' unmistakable likeness to the Diamond family, plainly apparent through the disguise of different coloring, to explain the truth. There was something quiet and reliable about the aspect of this man; something romantic too (Mina distrusted romance), but none of the engaging irresponsibility, the nameless, luring glamour, that like a coat of many colors enwrapped the man called Tiger. . . . Tiger! Who, what was he? And how on earth had he come barging into Bel's galley, just at the wrong moment? Mina, thinking what all this might mean, was furious against him—and sore. . . . She was not quite modern enough to understand what the soreness might mean. Perhaps Grace Johnson, wise with the bitter wisdom of the woman who ministers to any one of the vices of men, could have told her.

ALL this passed in an eye-blink. She found herself on her feet, shaking hands with Julius, introducing him to Bel: "Julius Diamond, isn't it? This is your little cousin Isabel, come to stay a while in Ramona. I hope you'll be friends." And Julius, with nice tact, taking it at that, sitting down, making conversation, and herself playing the chaperon, very nicely. Everything suddenly nice—that was the word. Nice and proper, and quite as it should be. Old Julius, that shrewd eccentric, had justified his eccentricity completely. The Diamond blood held true. This was the right man.

Mina, fanning herself, content to drop out of the conversation, saw it all. The coconut plantation in the Fijis, the cattle station combined with it, the stately plantation house, the launches and the motors and the horses, the hundreds of native laborers, the town bungalow in Suva, the dinner parties and week-ends at Government House—she knew it all: she had had her share of it, in a second-cousinly, tolerated way. It would all go on, as it should go. And she, trusted confidante and aid to the match, would be twice as often at the Diamond place. . . . Oh, it would be a good thing all round, it would pay.

Tactfully she kept out of the conversation as far as possible, prudently made an occasion to slip off and leave the pair together. That was the way they did things in France, wasn't it? Introduced young folks, and hoped for the best. There was much to be said for the French and their methods. . . .

Mina came back in time to see Julius rising to go. Warmly, she asked him if he would not come and stay at the hotel for a while. Julius considered this, and then begged to be excused. Nothing he would like better; but there was his mate, out at the mine.

"Oh, the mine," said Mrs. Sands negligently. "Now tell me about it." She spoke as one might speak to a child

"Some of you men would rather have freedom, than settle down and be respectable."

about his toys. Bel had vanished; the slim, grave Julius with the romantic eyes stood with his soft hat in his hands, at the door of the pea-soup-colored parlor, ready to go.

She was amazed at the flash brought out by her words; the sudden light in his face. "He didn't look like that at Bel," she thought, "not while I was in the room, anyhow." Then she realized that he was doing just what she, injudiciously, had asked him to do—telling about the mine.

How he had come up to Ramona by chance, from Garmoyle, where he was school-teaching. How he had looked for tin, in a spot where no one expected to find anything—no one but himself. How he had found it, five years ago. Spent his capital on it, almost all. Lived somehow—did a bit of literary work, paid his partner in shares only, but Hope was a capital fellow, never wanted anything, stood by him like a trump. ("Hope!" said Mina to herself. "The sort of name that sort of man would have.") How the mine had been developed, bit by bit; a small show, but a good one, promising infinitely more. Why, by next Easter at most, they'd be down to the real rich stuff, taking out a little fortune. Why, only last week he'd found a new show, more promising than the old. ("And 'promising' indeed the old one must be, after five years of nothing," mocked Mina silently.) There wasn't such a little mine in all the Ramona district as Diamond Flat. She and Bel must come out and see it. When would they come?

"Good God," said Mina to herself, "he's got it." She had not been the best part of a week in Ramona without knowing what *"it"* was, and what it did. Aloud she answered: "Any day you like: can one go in a car?"

"Oh, yes," laughed Julius, "but we tin-scratchers don't run to cars. May I expect you tomorrow?" She answered that he might, wondering the while why he did not say "we." Then he was gone.

Upstairs she hurried, to Bel's bedroom, and knocked on the door. She was suffering to talk it all over.

There was no answer.

Mina waited and listened. "She's in there," was her thought. "I can hear her washing her hands." Again she knocked, and this time the door opened. Bel appeared, smiling and very bright. Her cheeks had the deceptive freshness given by cold water, freely applied: she was powdered, and her lips had been newly rouged. But sharp-eyed Mina noted the swollen eyelids, saw the redness of the pretty nose beneath all that powder, and knew that Bel had been crying.

She decided not to notice it. "Julius wants us to come out and see the flat tomorrow," she said. "Will you order a car?"

OUT at Diamond Flat the cool of the evening was coming on: there had been heat today, not much, but just enough to remind a man how the pavements sizzled down in Port Garmoyle—how, far out in the Fijis, days away, warm

blue shadows of coconuts swung over burning sands. Julius had never been there, but he had heard much of the islands and of Suva; its busy social life, its shops, its business houses—how the great plantations, farther out, were run; how system, efficiency, modern method, held sway in Viti and in Vanua Levu, even as in Victoria. How the great places prospered, how hard their prosperity was earned.

"I'm not afraid of work," he said to himself, looking at the shafts that pock-marked the flat, at the heaps of tailings, at the creek where he had labored so hard and long, washing out. He thought of the five years of being his own man. He remembered lonely dawns, with the kookaburras laughing, in a crystal sky.

"Oh, God!" he said, and put his face in his hands. It was his good-by to Diamond Flat.

By and by he looked up again, dry-eyed. "She's the finest little girl in the world, bar none," he thought. "I like her damned well, and she seems to favor me enough, anyhow. And who am I to say that Bel's to have her inheritance cut in two? The family's calling, and I'll answer."

HE began to wonder where Tiger might be. There had been no sign of him when Julius returned an hour ago; and it was now near to dusk.

"Tiger!" he shouted. "Ben!"

A long way off some one "cooeyed" in reply. It was minutes before Tiger came in sight; minutes more before he reached the camp. Light had not yet failed; Julius could see the face of his mate. It had a queer, worn, hollow-eyed look about it; but Tiger as usual was smiling.

"You look what Gracie would call cronk," observed Julius.

"Been struck by lightning," explained Tiger. "It takes a little while to get over, but you do get over it, specially if you keep out of thunderstorms."

"I never did understand your brand of humor, but I suppose you mean well," answered his partner patiently. "Don't you want to hear about my call?"

"Dying to."

"Well—" said Julius, and stopped. What the deuce made Tiger look at him in such a way? "Well," he went on, "she—they're—coming here tomorrow. Mrs. Sands said something about asking me to stay at the plantation. I suppose that means only one thing: the Fiji boat leaves in three days."

"Quick work," said Tiger. "Almost as quick as lightning."

"You seem to have got lightning on the brain."

"Oh, not on the brain. . . . Going to show them the bag of tricks here, drop 'em down a shaft and so on?"

"I don't think," answered Julius with sudden bitterness, "that she or the other will care the shake of a lamb's tail about the whole blessed show."

NEVERTHELESS he waited with nervous anxiety, next day, for the arrival of the car.

He hoped the little old car would not break down or get bogged on the way. He wanted Bel and Mrs. Sands to see his darling, before he had to leave it. In years to come, when he was a planter and station-owner, Bel's husband, maybe the father of children, he desired that Bel should know what this, his first and best-loved child, had been like.

"But she'll never really know," the poet in him thought.

The car came early: there had been no breakdown.

Julius Diamond was man as well as poet; the sight of small Bel, sweet and bright-colored as any of the bush flowers round his home, stirred his heart. It wouldn't be his fault if he did not make her fond of him. He'd be good to her.

Mina, more like a peony than anything else in the way of flowers, led the way, looked at everything, cackled as was her custom, and covered over many awkward gaps. The young folk were shy of each other; yesterday's ease had vanished. Absently, as if she saw nothing, Bel made the round of the camp and the flat; uncomfortably, as one not sure of his audience, Julius showed her one thing and another, keeping, all the time, his eyes fixed on her face.

Why, she was more than pretty, more than beautiful! Eyes blue as the blue flames of a driftwood fire; curled russet hair short about her face and rainbowed with gold wherever the sun struck through; beautiful limbs shown candidly in the fashion of the day; a mouth fine-cornered, kissable—not all these things made Bel. "Flame," he thought, "Flame—not her eyes only; it's in her. It is Bel. Couldn't she flare, if the right man struck the match?" And he swore to himself that he would strike that light to kindle that flame.

Then, in a moment, he knew: For Bel's eyes, straying over his shoulder as he talked of things unheeded, widened and shone. And Julius, who had been blind before when Tiger talked of lightning-strokes, knew now upon whom the lightning had descended.

Ben Hope had told him, earlier, that he did not mean to meet the visitors. He would spend the day prospecting. And he had gone. That he had come back, Julius knew, even before he turned and saw his mate standing alone on the edge of the forest.

Had he called? Julius did not know; perhaps Bel did not, either. But she left her cousin, and went straight as a homing bird to the rotter, the nameless man!

They stood for a moment speaking together, and no one heard what they said. Almost immediately the she-oaks and brigalow hid them, and Julius was left alone on the flat.

Not quite alone! Mina wasted little time in letting him know that. She ran to him—he could hear her panting, and her corsets creaking.

"What's gone wrong?" she shrilled, out of breath. "Why have you let her go away with that—that—"

Julius, gathering himself together, spoke with dignity.

"Ben Hope is my best friend," he said. "We will go to the car and wait for them."

GONE were November, December; wet January had come.

In Port Garmoyle, four thousand feet below Ramona, eighty miles away, the power fans whimpered, the watered pavements steamed. The bar of the Bangor Hotel was dusk and almost cool; great blocks of ice reflected glassily the light that sifted through louvered screens; cane-covered lounges, with white marble tables, invited customers to rest. Gracie the barmaid was serving champagne to a squatter at one of the little tables. It was permitted to her, in the case of champagne customers, to desert the counter if asked to do so—to sit down and share the wine.

"So you got tired of living up in the Never-Never, did you?" asked the squatter, filling her glass and his. "Ramona's no place for a pretty girl like you. No one to make love to you but the blasted tin-scratchers. You did right to come back to Garmoyle."

Gracie Johnson drank, set down her glass, and laughed a little. "I didn't do so bad out of Ramona," she said. "Why, I own a hundred and eighty shares in the Mount Jericho, and fifty in the Gilda, and I did own half of Diamond Flat, but I sold it."

THE squatter laughed, securely. His right to order champagne was founded on a rock that had nothing to do with metalliferous strata. He thought he knew something about the value of mining shares, compared with herds of cattle. But he said nothing.

Gracie went on, the champagne loosening her tongue. "Diamond Flat was given to me, free for nothing."

Her companion gave her a skeptical glance.

"You don't expect me to believe—"

Gracie held up a hand.

"Expect or not, it's true. There was a bloke, and he was tin-scratching with the other bloke, and a girl came along with her aunt to marry him—"

"The aunt?"

"No blooming fear. The girl had whips of money; a highty-tighty little piece, but—well, the wrong bloke came along and took a fancy to her, and she got soppy on him. But she was going to have the other bloke, if you understand me, because of course the aunt wanted it; and the bloke, he wouldn't say anything. I heard things—the doors don't fit. . . . Well, they went off to the Flat to fix it all up, and he came into town—the wrong bloke, I mean, if you understand me. And he came to me, and says he: 'Gracie, I want to get drunk as quick as I can.'

"So I felt sorry for him, because I had a sort of a feeling for him meself, and I went and got him Gibbs' special brandy instead of what he ordered. 'That'll do the trick,' says I to him. 'No one ever touches it but him and me.' He'd had two, and I was pouring the third, when I says, to console him like: 'Anyway, she was cryin' her eyes out for you, up there in the bedroom.' And he lets the bottle fall on the floor, and every drop of it went bust. And he says: 'Cross your heart and die, is that God's truth?' And I says: 'Cross me heart and die! You men are as ignorant as brute beasts, but us girls know one another!' So he up and onto his horse, and I never saw him again. But when he went down to Garmoyle to marry her, he sent me the share-certificates of everything he had in Diamond Flat; and I had it, till I sold it to Gibbs."

The squatter whistled loud and long. "So that's the milk of the coconut in the story we've all been hearing," he said. "Well, she had pluck, to marry Tiger. Pretty much of a risk!"

"You don't understand," repeated Gracie, now glass-valiant. "It's chaps like him that settles down, and thankful to do it, once they've been through it all. A home and a job—what's that to a fellow who's had them? And a fellow like that other bloke, who maybe makes love to a girl once in a month of Sundays, with one foot in the stirrup all the time and an eye down the road—he can't tell what's what or when he's picked the right one. Tiger, he could."

"Your theory's as old as the hills, and as full of holes," said the squatter. "He may make drakes and ducks of the place. They've got the whole of it, I hear; the other heir died. And he may break her heart for her."

"I don't think," contradicted Gracie. "But anyhow, he was the man of her fancy—and you'd rather have your fancy man break your heart than not."

"It strikes me he was something of your fancy too, eh, Gracie? How did you come to let him go to another girl?"

"It happened," explained Gracie, with some stateliness, "that I was married to Gibbs of Ramona, just then. Private. And whatever I am, I'm no dog in the manger, if you understand me."

"What do you mean by 'just then'? What about now?"

"I got a divorce. A lawyer gentleman managed it for me. I had to do something, if you understand me; because Gibbs, he'd lost the hotel through mining, and he'd gone away tin-scratching in the bush. No lady could stand that."

"Who did he go with?"

"He went with the other bloke; and they're working Diamond Flat. Last time I was up in Ramona, I saw the other bloke, standing in the street and talkin' to those old chaps that sits on the seats outside the bars. One of them, old Micky Casey, he says—I heard him: 'Good morning, brother,' says he; and he laughed. But I reckon he's got his fancy, same as her, and doesn't mind paying for it. Some of you men would rather have freedom—and maybe a little mine in the wild country out back—than settle down and be respectable."

In "Adam-and-Eve Island" which will appear in an early issue, Beatrice Grimshaw returns to the South Seas to give you another glamorous and unforgetable story.

Good

The Outlaw

The story of a bandit dog-pack—and of the wolf who became king of the outlaws.

By ARTHUR H. CARHART

ALONE gray wolf was doggedly fighting his way over the broad snow-slashed saddle of the Junkins Divide.

He was a pack-leader. But no pack followed him. He was the only one left after the Biological Survey hunters had launched a campaign of extermination against this old renegade that they had dubbed "Alkali"—for the last of his pack had been suddenly whipped away two nights before by the leaping jaws of a well-set wolf-trap.

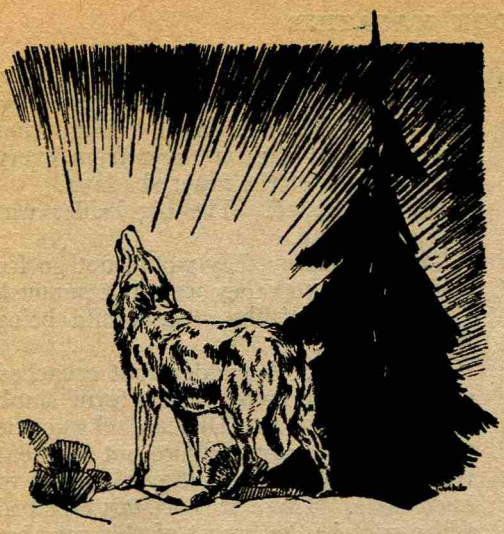
Now Alkali was looking for a new pack. When he found it he would be its leader, or be killed battling for pack supremacy.

The wind howled and tugged at the thick mane on his shoulders where the hair was darker, and it threw sandy snow into his eyes until they were red.

The wolf paused as he came to a turn in the trail at which he looked down into a broad valley where he dimly saw open pastures between piñon-pine thickets. At the edges of some cleared fields there were houses. The scent of domestic stock came to him on the screeching winds. Alkali licked his lips.

A snow-flurry threw coldness into his wind-combed coat, and the biting frost-teeth of winter reached his well-protected hide. Lifting his head, he howled defiantly into the face of the storm.

The wind sent eerie snatches of the wolf's voice into the cliffs above the pass. Echoes leaped back from the cliff faces, but were whirled into oblivion as wind-fingers caught them and tossed them into the frigid sky.



Illustrated by Victor Becker

Again Alkali howled his challenge. This was his new kingdom; somewhere, somehow, he would find the material for a pack. There would be raids—quick, death-fraught campaigns—against those peaceful ranches in the little open park-like spaces. There would be nights in which cattle would run futilely from the death-drive of the hungry horde that leaped at their heels.

Alkali stretched his head forward, squinted his eyes, hunched his strong shoulders, and started on a lope down the faint trail among the piñons. . . .

For a week he followed the trails in this wide valley where choppy cliffs, little forests of piñons and cedars mixed in with the open meadows of ranches made a great kingdom for a wolf leader. Nowhere did he meet resistance. Coyote-scent was on the range everywhere and once he sent a "yip-yap" and his mate scurrying into the shelter of the thickets. Dog-scent was there too, but he paid little attention to it. He was looking for a pack; he wanted leadership. It was his wine of life, this dominance over his kind, this rulership over a snarling, fighting gang of killers.

He reached the northern end of the valley where it dropped away in great steppes to the lower tumbled foothills that splayed out farther into the plains. He turned back.

Questioning came to the wolf. In the seven days he had found no band of four-legged renegades to master and lead.

The pinching cold of the starlit night touched his eyes with little lights as he trotted watchfully along the trail. Tiny snow streamers stretched across the pathway at points where the shadows of trees kept the white stuff from melting off.

A ranch-smell came to Alkali. There was the scent of warm cattle huddled down in straw-topped sheds. He knew there was risk there if he sought food. He trotted on.

He topped a rise, angled along the brink of a little cliff, stopped suddenly with one foot upraised, and listened.

To his keen ears, cocked forward to catch the sound, there came the terror-freighted bawling of a steer—and with it came mixed yelping and yammering.

Like a gray ghost through the darker night shadows of the piñons, Alkali leaped forward. His nostrils were quivering. He whined in sharp little yelps as he ran.

A steer was dying in a remote pasture; white fangs were ripping at warm flesh within the swale below.

He leaped over a brushy patch, stumbled, caught himself, charged excitedly through a barbed-wire fence. Ahead he saw the tumbling, leaping shadows where meat on the hoof still bawled in fear of death, and black leaping shadows slashed and bit with blood-stained fangs.

The steer turned, shaking off his pursuers. With a rush they came toward Alkali.

The wolf crouched; there was some ecstatic intoxication that gripped him and carried him into a delirium of killing joy. The steer loomed before him, bawling. The killers that followed were racing desperately.

OUT from the night Alkali leaped. His teeth clicked. One of the steer's legs flopped helplessly. The brute stumbled, rolled, tried futilely to get up.

Frantic in the wild abandon of killing, Alkali plunged at the steer again. The other tendon snapped as the bone-crushing teeth clipped through the hamstring.

Bawling, the steer struggled helplessly. With a leap the wolf was at the steer's throat; another quick slashing dive, and blood jetted from a severed jugular.

As Alkali leaped crazily to rip and tear, a big brawny body smashed into him. He turned on this other killer with a snarl.

Gripping tension seemed to pounce down to catch these two. Alkali, pack-leader, faced this great-muscled killer that had jostled him. Instinctively he

knew that this was the one with which he would have to fight for mastery. He strutted a step, circling.

Then, startling in its quick revelation, came the realization that this was not a wolf he faced; it was a dog—a powerful, rangy, big-shouldered police dog.

There were no wolves in this pack; the dog-smell came to Alkali's nostrils, even while they were cloyed with blood odors.

But it was a pack—it was a gang of killers. Clumsy, awkward, unable to throw a steer until it was worn down, they still were running in a pack.

No pack of any kind, dogs or wolves, could run this range without reckoning with Alkali; if a pack was here it would be his pack—or it would not exist.

WITH a leap the big wolf threw himself at the dog leader. Snarling, nipping, twisting, the great manes on their shoulders bristling, they clashed.

Alkali felt sharp teeth in his neck, and he bellowed in quick fury that this animal should even attempt to dispute kingship with him. He was mad with frenzy of fight. A smaller dog, a mongrel shepherd, came thrashing in, yapping and snarling.

With a supreme effort Alkali threw off the big police dog and whirled on the yapping cur. He sank his scimitar teeth into the shepherd dog, which rolled away, screaming in pain and terror.

An instant of tense, muscle-tight strutting followed; then the respite broke and Alkali threw himself to meet the smothering charge of dog-flesh that cascaded toward him. All the pack were on him now. He slashed and lunged.

A heavy body crashed into him; it was the big leader of the pack. As Alkali slammed into him in counter-attack, the flying leap of a hound from one side threw Alkali off his feet. For an instant they were on him, ripping, tearing, reaching for his throat.

Wrenching free, the wolf came up with all the strength of his hundred pounds of bone and muscle. There was a sharp collision; then he felt the dog leader rolling away from him. The tide of battle had turned. Alkali drove furiously; there was an exultation in the knowledge that he had the upper hand. He snarled in maniacal delight as he sank his teeth into the police dog, then whirled an instant to drive home his teeth at a dog that came flanking him from the side.

Then they were running fearfully, driven by the vision of this snarling, smashing, blood-smeared wolf that seemed to pounce on them from every direction out of the night shadows.

Alkali stopped. The big leader was scuttling away.

The wolf knew they would not go far when they found they were not pursued. Warm blood of the steer would bring them back.

He listened. A padded foot crunched on crisp snow, and a dark form slunk out of the shadows. Delicate odors came to Alkali. He saw a figure not different from the dog leader, but smaller and of finer bone. There was a starry-shaped white spot in the breast of this member of the dog gang.

Alkali whined a little, invitingly. The starry white spot disappeared as the mate of the big police dog ran a few steps from this new leader. But Alkali was wise in the ways of females and did not follow Star.

In a moment she had come back again, her feet padding softly; this time she whined invitingly to the new leader of the queer pack that had been followers of her former mate. Star was ready to shift allegiance, ready to concede to this gray-coated victor who had asserted his right to leadership in the valley, all the spoils of the conqueror.

Suddenly Alkali howled, a long-drawn, high-pitched sighing howl. It was the pack-call.

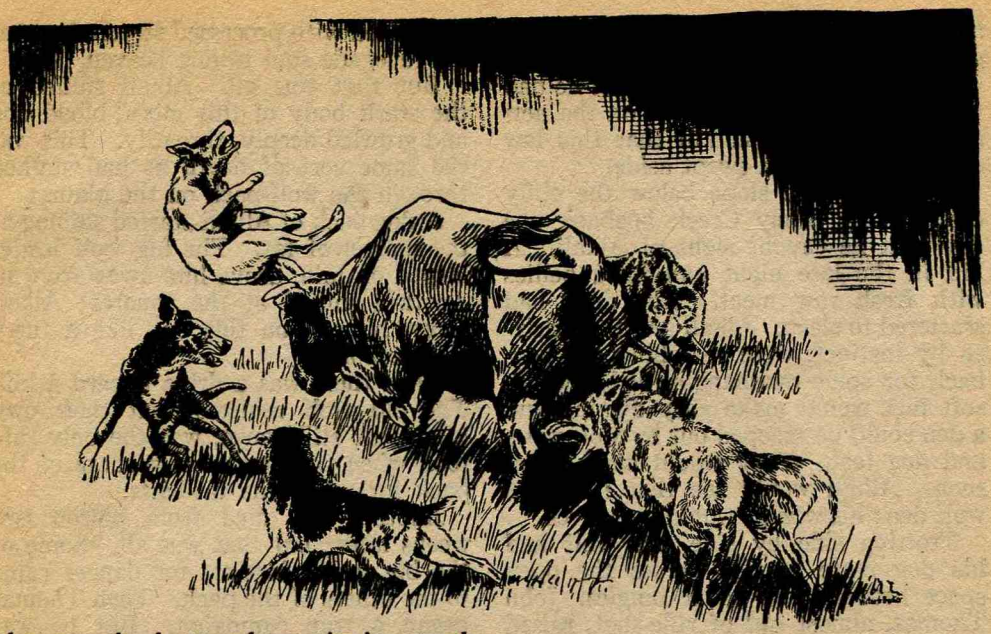
He lowered his head and listened. Star came closer. Another of the dogs came whimpering out of the dusk and stopped at a respectful distance.

AGAIN Alkali howled, his red throat vibrating with the blood-stirring call of the wilderness. Other shadowy forms came closer.

Alkali waited; one by one they came—sniffing, suspicious; others cringing to the ground, fawning and bobbing their heads as servile slaves bump foreheads before some pompous potentate.

With all the reserve of nobility, Alkali stood. There were moments when noses touched; other moments when there was sniffing and whining, queer little side jumps, a touch of playfulness—an instant when he knew that Star was close to his side, though he paid no attention to her. That would come later.

Then without further ceremony the wolf that had made himself commander of the half-wild dog-pack turned and led



Out from the night Alkali leaped. His teeth clicked—and one of the steer's legs flopped helplessly.

the way back to where ripping teeth stripped juicy morsels from the still-warm body of the steer. . . .

The valley lost some of the peace and security that had dwelt there for months. Steers ran and bawled and tumbled, as Alkali led the renegades in raids against the living chattels of man. With all the patience of a wolf father teaching cubs, he tried to impart the tricks of the wolf killer to his followers. But that trick of hamstringing the victim and then the final death-lunge at the throat, the dogs could not master. Only one, a renegade Airedale that had once been a medal winner in a show, seemed to get the sense of this technique; but he did not have the strength to throw the galloping steer. The other dogs would lunge at the head of the steer and suffer punishment from his sharp front hoofs until Alkali would drive vitally at the hocks and throw the victim. But the wolf leader did not give up. Patiently he gave his attention to the business of teaching his followers. He chastised when they deserved it; he gave preference to those who deserved it. This was a pack; he would make it a real pack that lived and acted in accordance with wolf law.

THE shy female police dog was a different being from any Alkali had ever met. She was an alien to the wolf, a queer, unfathomable female. All his wolfish ardor was squandered on winning her, tying her closer to him, making her, in truth, the queen of the pack. . . . .

Valley ranchers scowled at stripped cattle bones, where magpies flapped and jabbered. Some of their ranch dogs were in that pack. But no dogs could wreak the havoc that now spread in the wake of the band under leadership of the wolf killer.

Then came a bronze-faced man, who traveled the upper valleys and mesas on skis. He methodically started out to smash the pack that was led by Alkali.

"I've heard," remarked Jamison, the rancher on Little Beaver Creek, as he stood talking to this stranger, "that you Survey hunters are told to go out and get a killer, and not come back until he's got. That right?"

John Thomas, the man of the Biological Survey, nodded. "Yep," he agreed. "I guess it's pretty close to right."

"You've got a queer mixture here," continued Jamison chattily. "I cain't figure that bunch of dogs. They've been here maybe a year and a half but it's only the last month or so they've done so much damage. You account for it?"

"Not altogether," answered Thomas soberly. He had seen the dog-tracks scattered in a maze around new kills, but he had also seen one broad-padded track, often almost obliterated by the dog-tracks, that meant only one thing to Thomas. It spelled "Wolf!"

But he could not reconcile himself to the idea that the tracks were made

at the same time. It was against all general law that there should be a gray wolf in a band of wild dogs. Yet he had to admit there was evidence on the new snow around a fresh kill that this law of nature had been swept aside.

It was by the slope below the cliffy crest of the Stony Creek hogback one day that he caught sight of Alkali. A kill in the late night had filled bellies with fresh raw meat. The dogs had scattered to sleep. Alkali and Star, driven by instinct, were searching the hogback for some overhanging ledge where soft dirt would make easy digging and a den could be scooped out by wolf paws and dog feet. They would need a den soon. Alkali would see that it was a wolf den; his whelps would be wolves.

Trotting side by side, the wolf and his dog mate hurried across the open space between two cedar tangles. John Thomas, almost out of rifle-shot, raised his gun. Then as he recognized that one was a wolf, the other a dog, he lowered the gun, squinted his eyes, spat expressively.

"Huh," he grunted. "I'll be darned!"

A few moments later he was scanning the tracks, reading trail sign as he had never before scrutinized it in his life. As he looked at the maze of paw imprints he read the story of the wild-dog pack and the wolf-king leader.

HE talked one day to Jamison and hinted at this fact: that there was a wolf-pack leader with the wild dogs. The rancher scoffed at him.

"Gosh, that can't be," said the stockman. "Wolves've been out of here since all of five years back. No wolves here. Them's dogs—look how they tear up the noses of the cattle sometimes. I know they're dogs. One of mine gone wild in it—that confounded Airedale pup. I'd give a ten-dollar bill to have him corraled."

Thomas said nothing of his theory after that. But he broached it to the man from the Denver office, as they talked together on a field trip. The Inspector looked at him incredulously.

"Never heard of anything like that," said the Inspector. "Never did."

"I'll show you," said Thomas. And a half hour later he did—it was written in the trails that crisscrossed around a new kill.

Methodically Thomas set to work.

The first of the pack to go was the fuzzy mongrel shepherd. Chunks of fat loaded with processed strychnine sent his renegade soul to dog heaven.

But that was all. Alkali sniffed at the stark body of this mixed-blood dog and growled deeply, throatily. This was the same sort of death as had stalked through the wolf-pack on the plains!

A dog back of Alkali started sniffing at the morsel of fat. The big wolf leader leaped on him, drove him away from it. Another sniffed at the squares; Alkali threw himself on this one like a furry thunderbolt.

Then there was a drive toward a kill. The old wolf realized that their own kill, meat still warm, was the only safe food when this unknown scourge of the pack lurked in the fat-baits.

Another dog died from poison two weeks later; but that was all. Some of the big wolf's instinct for danger came to the others of the pack. Then Thomas began a trap campaign. But he was dealing now with a keen wolf mind aroused by the new danger that had crept into this valley, a wolf mind that had been trained in the school of traps and guns and had come through safely.

The pack was becoming more wolf-like now. Somehow their doggy minds came to know that a running attack at the nose of an animal would not down it—that the crucial slashing dive of Alkali at the hamstring was what actually brought down the game. And they tried with enthusiasm to emulate the leader. Sometimes they did a fair job of throwing a steer; at other times, they would revert to dog tactics, yapping and tumbling clumsily as the front feet of their prey slashed at them and bruised their ribs. . . .

Back under a ledgy bit of limestone, near a screening clump of cedar, Alkali had dug a den. It was a wolf den, with a place where the constricted tunnel allowed him to stand off any intruders, and several larger rooms back of that. Here Star entered one day; the next day there were whimpering wolf-dog cubs, that looked mostly like tiny wolves, that nuzzled her hungrily, and whimpered in squeaky voices. That night after the kill was made Alkali called Star to the feast, for she would not run with the pack now.

"I DECLARE," exclaimed Ed Jamison, "I've lost about all of the yearlin's I kin stand to lose this year, Thomas. What's goin' to be the end of this game with that bunch of hounds, anyway?"

"I swear I don't know," answered the hunter. "Ef they were just wolves I'd get 'em, or ef they were just dogs I'd land 'em. But one time they act like dog and the next time like wolf. And I'll agree they're killin' more than either dogs or wolves would. I just reckon there's puppies or whelps some'res."

WITH new trap-sets, new poison-stations, Thomas started a campaign designed to drive the dogs into the last corner. Alkali sensed it, and so did the dogs. They were uneasy; yet they followed him in killing.

The hovering threat in the valley seemed to brood over the den where Star cuddled those cubs which were to grow into a real killer pack. Alkali would train them as wolves; they would never have the dull noses, sluggish wits and blundering ways of killing cattle that the dog pack had.

New viciousness came into the wolf's leadership. He drove the dogs savagely, slashing at them, domineering them, sending them whimpering from the kill whenever they showed distinct doglike traits. Then he would range away from them, back to the den, and nuzzle the whelps now tumbling about, back in the recesses of their earthy home.

There came a night when he called the pack and there was no response. Alkali, listening to the night sounds, suddenly heard the yelp of a dog over a ridge. He threw himself along the trail, anger seething in his breast. They had chosen to disregard his call.

At the head of the mutineers ran the big wolfish form of the police dog, former mate of Star. Behind him streamed the yapping tangle of dogs, chasing a steer. It was open revolt.

Alkali's eyes blazed, his teeth chattered, the mane on the back of his neck raised, and there was a tingly feeling all over him as he started for the pack. Like that first night when he had gone in to whip his way to quick leadership, he threw his gray body into the racking turmoil. The steer bawled, floundered, dropped. Ripping teeth slashed his throat. And then the kill was forgotten.

With a roar Alkali threw himself at the deserters, roaring his anger. The dogs leaped away from this gray demon,—the pack leader they had deigned to disregard,—and Alkali lunged at the police dog. There were gleaming fangs wrestling with holds on throats, paws fanning the air, a moment when they were up on hind legs and tussling like quick-motioned men, trying to get at each other's throats.

Alkali shoved with his strong hind legs, and felt the other give. Then there was an instant when th dog was down and Alkali's teeth were reaching for his throat. In that instant, flame touched the wolf's flank and he whirled to meet the attack of one of the other dogs. When he turned back to his first antagonist, the police dog was gone.

But the rest of the pack circled and whined and circled again. For long moments the wolf stood majestically inside the circle where the dogs trotted and whined, offering new allegiance. Then he gave a queer gruff bark, an order for all to fall to, on the meal that was awaiting.

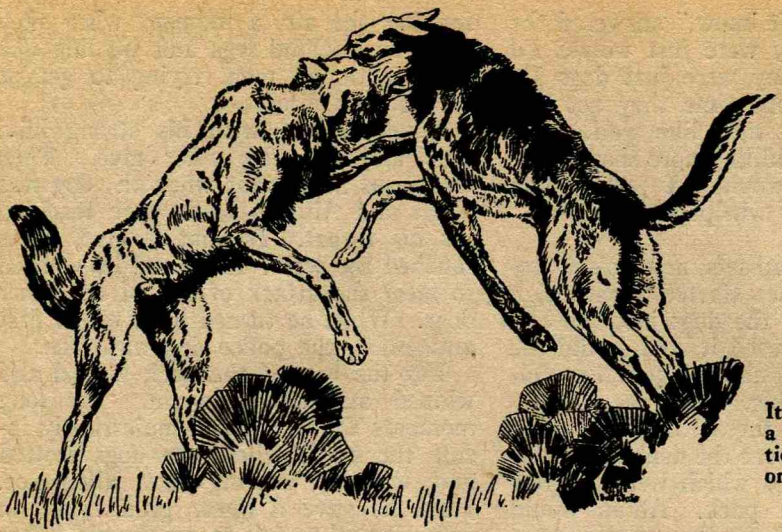
From that moment Alkali, knowing it would be only short weeks until there was a new pack following him, hunted more alone. Still the dogs would rally to his call, all but the police dog that had been the mate of Star; he hunted by himself. Alkali felt impelled to follow the trail and finish their feud. But the police dog ranged far from the denning place, and as the puppies became able to venture from the den, Alkali stayed closer to guard them.

ONE morning he came out of the den to find that there was scent of the police dog within a few feet of the den. He started on a lope, following the trail. Alkali knew there was a crisis coming. The two of them could not stay on the same range. But the trail swung wide; then it was lost. Finally Alkali headed back toward the den. The reckoning would have to come later....

The hunter, Thomas, was worried. He had read sign on every trail. He knew now that there were whelps somewhere, and patiently he started to trail them down. But the mixed dog-tracks with only the one wolf-track to guide him to the den misled him constantly.

Then there came a morning when the spring winds were whispering softly in new oak leaves, there were magpies quarreling and the darting blue of bluebirds winging up the mountains as spring started the climb toward timberline. Thomas was on a hogback near the head of the valley, scanning all the ridges with high-powered glasses.

Chance brought his attention to a little cliff. He saw a movement there.



It was a death-fight, a fight to extermination. . . . Wolf or dog, one would survive—and only one!

He hurried to his horse and started to work his way around to a point where he could come down-wind.

Cautiously he climbed to a little protecting shelter of rocky fins on the top of a ridge, and looked down into the glade.

Spread before him was the playground of the wolfish pups of Star. The mother was sunning herself on a grassy couch; the cubs were tumbling, yapping, gnawing ears, biting tails and legs. . . .

On a far trail Alkali was slowly trailing the police dog. He had caught the hated scent that morning as he had left the den and all day he had followed, hoping to meet the dog. . . .

Thomas unslung his rifle, gauged the distance, took quick, careful sights—only a short, jarring quiver went through Star as the bullet struck. The cubs were bewildered; they circled, dashed for the den, came back whimpering, then ran in circles of fright.

With a plunge Thomas leaped down to head them from the den. With expert dexterity he threw a coat over the mouth of the den. He whipped out his pistol; a moment more and the wolfish cubs lay still.

A ghostly howl rang in Thomas' ears. He looked up, then dived frantically for his rifle. Outlined against the sky was the police dog, Star's former mate.

With a leap the dog disappeared. Thomas huddled the bodies of Star and her cubs into a pile under some brush. He caught his horse that was snorting in the brush back of the hogback, and picked up the trail of the police dog. Here was one other renegade—a dog, but a bad one—that he could follow. . . .

Alkali trotted into a little open spot from which he could see the mouth of the den. He stopped, lifted a foot, whined. There was no answering call. He whined again. Cautiously he edged forward. He tested the wind; there was blood smell. Then he hurried forward.

As he entered the open space where the cubs should be playing, the police dog leaped away from the point where Star lay; he had circled Thomas, and come back. The dog halted and sent out a wild howl. It made the hair of Alkali rise. Then he was whipped by unreasoning anger. This dog was here to take Star and their cubs away!

He ran forward, but he stopped as he came to the pile of furry bodies that Thomas had stacked. For a moment he nosed them; then the truth fell with numbing realization in his wolfish mind. Star and the babies were dead!

ALKALI lifted his head; his throat vibrated as he howled. Then with a leap he was away, bent on vengeance. He knew only that something had happened—Star was dead; the pack had not saved her. They were away on their doggy errands, fooling around in doggish pastimes. And that police dog, leader of the mutiny, had been here trying to take Star away. Somehow he must be to blame for her death.

Alkali sniffed the trail and followed swiftly the scent of the dog leader. He passed a water-hole. Cattle, crazed with fear, leaped away. A calf ran in his path; he slashed at it in his crazy anger.

He passed a ranch within plain sight. A ranch dog set up a howl. Alkali

paused. His back bristled; his lips wrinkled back. Red anger now came when he scented dogs.

He had been king of a pack of dogs. And they had disobeyed; they had not measured up.

He would find them—and when he did, he would obliterate them!

He topped a ridge. Night hovered above the valley below him. He sped down, crept into a shadow a moment and looked, testing the breeze. Then he lifted his head and howled; it was the call of the pack. He waited. Again he called.

Out from the side of the brush came the police dog. Behind him, slinking slowly, came the other dogs. Alkali had found them again—but they were following the dog leader now.

Slowly Alkali advanced.

THOMAS, hurrying to locate the wolf howl, looked down into the little shadowy valley. Dimly he saw the gray wolf start the attack. There was a moment when there was a bolt of gray leaping at the big police dog; then instantly the little valley was filled with the chorus of fight. There were howls and quick, sharp yaps. Above all rose the fighting bellow of Alkali as he drove in to rip to shreds these despised dogs, his traitorous subjects.

Thomas hurriedly rounded a cliff. He wanted to make sure of this moment. Below him was the killer pack that he had tried so hard to smash. At close range, with his pistol, he could account for more than at rifle-range.

Below in the brush-walled arena, Alkali was venting his fury. He had taken these dogs as his subjects. He had worked with them. But they were dogs; they were aliens. And at the point where Star and her helpless cubs had died, there was the scent of these alien dogs!

He lunged at a gaping red mouth that yawned before him. He was down now, overwhelmed by the plunging mass of dogs. A grip snapped on his throat. He shook it off and came fogging up, whirling, diving, slashing, biting, driving madly at anything that came at him, disregarding the gashes being cut in his tortured rear quarters.

It was a death-fight, a fight to extermination. . . . Wolf or dog, one would survive, and only one!

A little dog dragged away into the brush, his back broken by a snap of Alkali's jaws. Another turned; but Alkali pounced on the hapless cur. Neck-bones snapped and the cur kicked spasmodically. With a roar, Alkali turned on the police dog. Their bodies crashed; then Alkali felt his teeth grip in a vital hold.

He twisted, tightened the gigantic muscles in his jaws, shook with all the might of his powerful body. He loosened his jaws, got a new hold, felt bone and cartilage breaking and crunching in that savage grip—while the big dog pawed frantically.

Thomas had reached a point where he could look into the small parklike space. He peered into the dusk.

A battlefield lay before him; but the battle was past—only the little dog with the broken back was still alive. The other bloody carcasses of the renegades were out there, thrown in grotesque postures as Alkali had tossed them and shaken them in a last wild frenzy of wolf wrath.

Cautiously Thomas advanced, looking for the great gray form of the wolf leader.

Stretched on the ground before him, he saw the whole pack of dogs. Quickly the story unfolded. The man's mind could not fully grasp the reason; but the evidence was there—the pack was smashed, smashed by a leader who did not consider them worthy. . . .

The western sky blazed and glowed. Suddenly Thomas felt the muscles at the back of his neck tighten; his ears tingled, as weirdly, filled with the cadence of the wild, freighted with the terror of fang and claw, came the challenging, roaring call of the king wolf.

Clean-cut against the western sky, outlined like a cameo, stood Alkali, a king without a kingdom or subjects. Again he howled.

SLOWLY Thomas raised his rifle. But it stopped halfway to his eye.

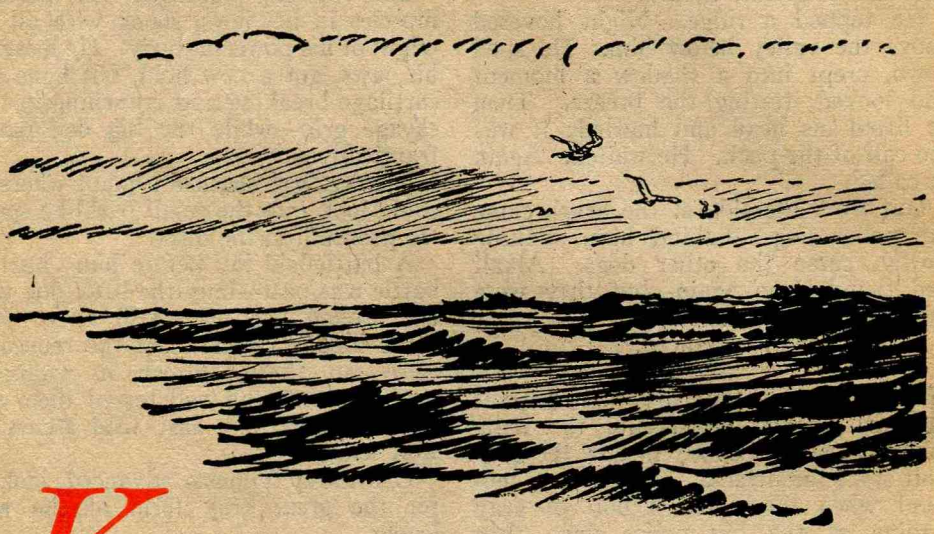
Again Alkali howled, and now there was a mournful lilt to it, the cry of a father bereft. In another instant the great gray wolf was gone.

Thomas lowered the gun, and lifted a hand in salute.

"Good hunting, old-timer," he breathed. "Good hunting!"

Night stars looked down on a lone lobo treading strange trails: a pack-leader seeking his kind, questing for his own kin, hunting a new kingdom—a worthy one.

By WILLIAM L. CHESTER



KIOGA of the

The Story Thus Far:

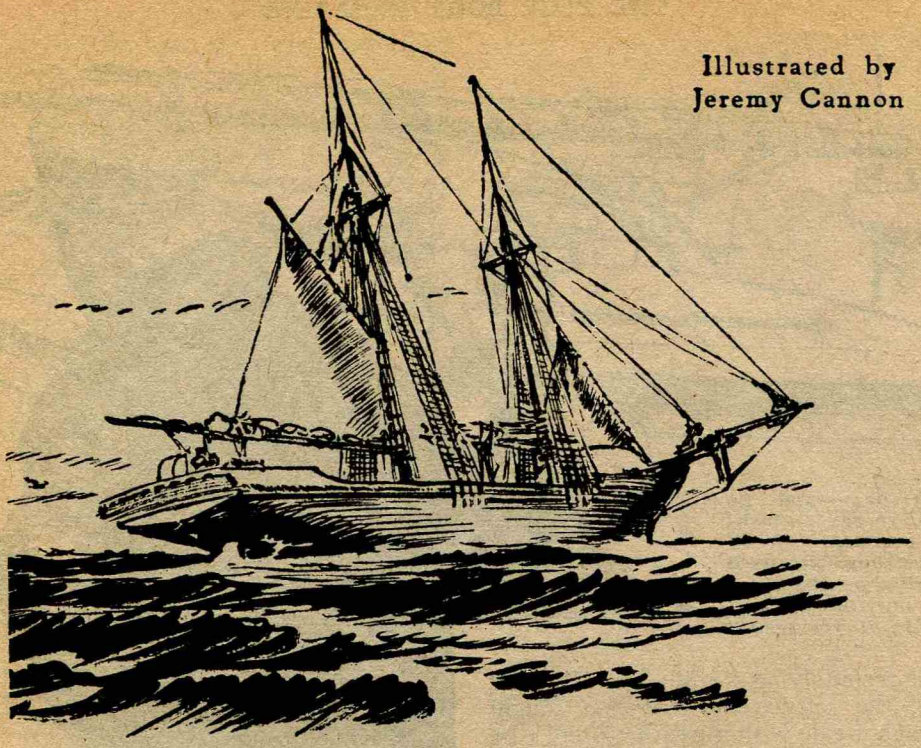
A GENERATION ago these amazing events began—when Dr. Lincoln Rand set sail aboard the schooner *Cherokee* on a great-hearted errand as medical missionary to the primitive people of the Northwest coast. With him went his young wife Helena and his Indian friend Mokuyi.

Blown far out of her course by North Pacific gales, through the Bering Sea and into the unknown Arctic north of Siberia, the *Cherokee* was wrecked upon a wild and reef-girt coast—the shore, it proved, of the great hitherto unknown land of Nato'wa: a region warmed by uncharted ocean currents and by great volcanic fissures and hot springs; a land thickly wooded with evergreens of the sequoia family, and supporting many and varied wild animals. Stranger still was its human population: a people so like the American Indians that Dr. Rand soon came to the conclusion that here was the original birthplace of the Indian race.

Not long after the arrival of the castaways, the son of Lincoln Rand and Helena was born; but only a few weeks later the child's parents were both killed in a raid by hostile natives upon the Shoni tribe who had given them shelter. Thereupon the child was adopted by Mokuyi and cared for by his wife Awena.

In this primitive life Kioga, or the Snow Hawk, as he was named, grew to a splendid manhood. From Mokuyi, and from books salvaged from another ship wrecked upon the coast, he learned to speak and write English; and from his wild comrades he acquired a wealth of forest lore. When Mokuyi was murdered by a Shoni secret society, Kioga avenged his death implacably. And his prowess in war and hunting at length made him war-chieftain of the tribe. When, however, another party of white people were wrecked upon the reefs of Nato'wa, foolishly fired upon the natives and were about to be put to death, Kioga rescued them. And for that he was exiled from his adopted people.

Yearning to see the country of his



Illustrated by
Jeremy Cannon

WILDERNESS

fathers, Kioga aided this castaway yachting party—Beth La Salle, her brother Dan and her suitor Allan Kendle—to build a boat and escape. On the southward journey, Kendle grew suspicious of Beth's growing interest in Kioga, and contrived to have him left marooned on the ice when a whaler picked up the rest of the party.

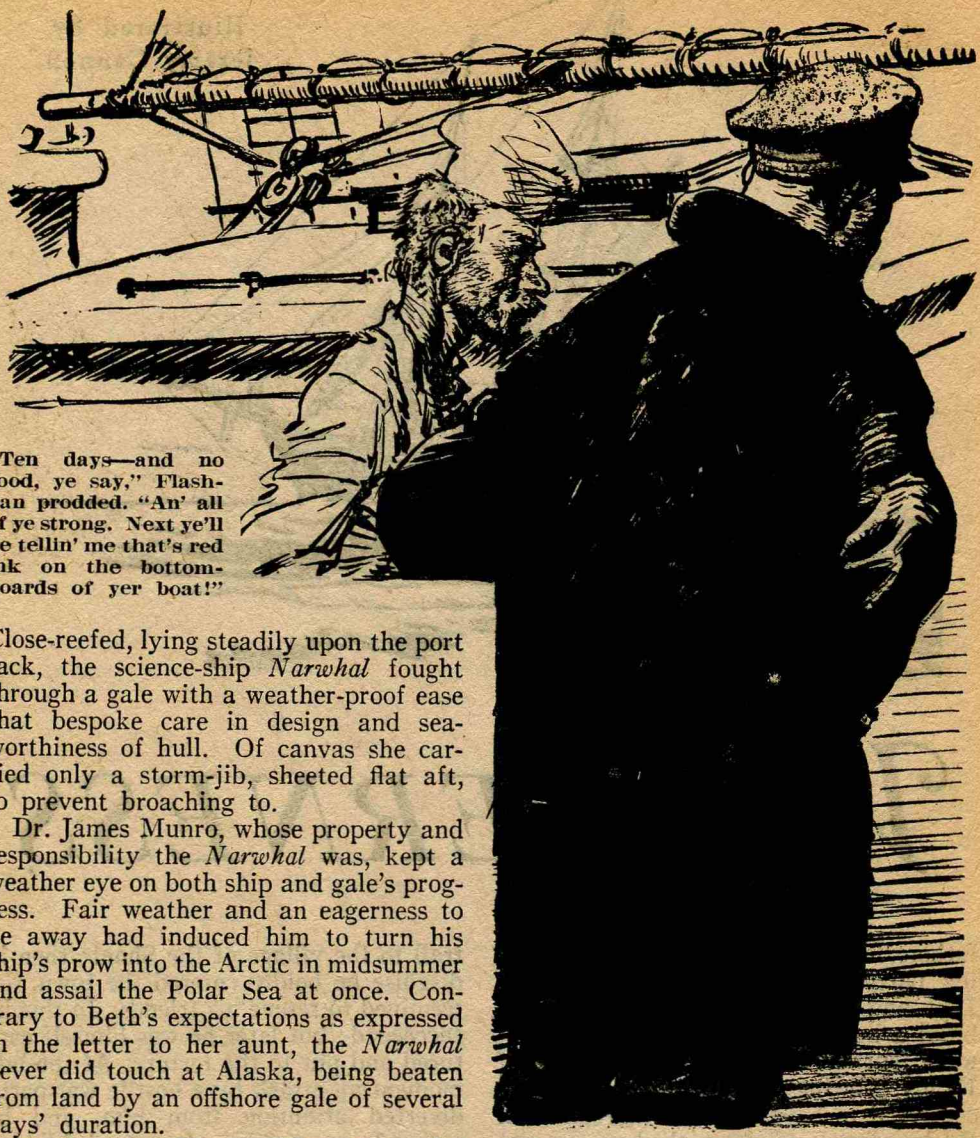
The Snow Hawk survived, however, and made his way to San Francisco. But civilization proved too much for Kioga. Disgusted by its many hypocrisies and believing his love rejected by Beth, he set out overland through Canada and Alaska to make his way back to Nato'-wa. And on the way he gathered a group of American Indians—people homesick for the free and simple life before the white man came—to take back with him to the land of their forefathers.

And at last they reached Nato'wa. But while Kioga was absent on a hunt for fresh meat, they were attacked by a Shoni war-party and either killed or made captive. . . . Kioga followed their trail to the village of the Shoni; then in disguise he boldly entered the town, determined to rescue his friends. In this he succeeded; but later he was himself captured and put to the torture. At the last moment an attack by a hostile war-party diverted attention from him, and he escaped—to wander alone and blinded in the forest.

A search-party of warriors from the few still friendly to the former young war-chieftain, headed by his "blood-brother" Kias and accompanied by little Tokala—whose boyish idol Kioga was—set forth to rescue the wounded man, but found what seemed certain evidence of his death at the jaws of a pack of wolves.

Meanwhile, Beth La Salle, her brother Dan and their friend the scientist Dr. Munro chartered the schooner *Narwhal* and sailed from San Francisco to overtake him. *(The story continues in detail:)*

SOMEWHERE to the north of Bering Sea a two-masted schooner scudded before the wind in a smother of spindrift.



"Ten days—and no food, ye say," Flash-pan prodded. "An' all of ye strong. Next ye'll be tellin' me that's red ink on the bottom-boards of yer boat!"

Close-reefed, lying steadily upon the port tack, the science-ship *Narwhal* fought through a gale with a weather-proof ease that bespoke care in design and seaworthiness of hull. Of canvas she carried only a storm-jib, sheeted flat aft, to prevent broaching to.

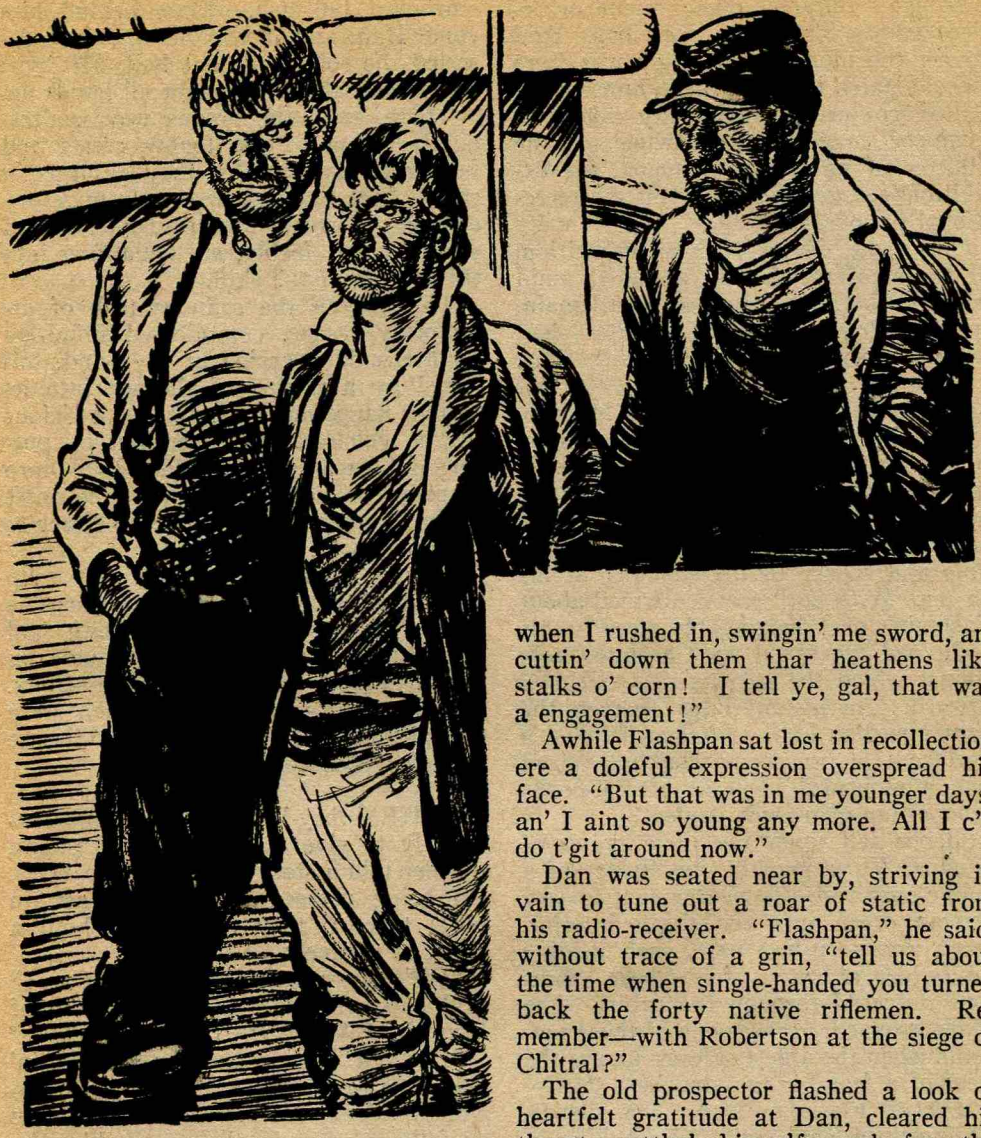
Dr. James Munro, whose property and responsibility the *Narwhal* was, kept a weather eye on both ship and gale's progress. Fair weather and an eagerness to be away had induced him to turn his ship's prow into the Arctic in midsummer and assail the Polar Sea at once. Contrary to Beth's expectations as expressed in the letter to her aunt, the *Narwhal* never did touch at Alaska, being beaten from land by an offshore gale of several days' duration.

Finding himself several hundred miles in the direction he wished to go, and far from land, with ideal weather and a strong wind, Munro consulted first with young La Salle and his sister. His decision to head straight for the Arctic met with the eager concurrence of both. Though they had anticipated meeting their father ashore at Nome and bidding him farewell, a stop would conceivably involve almost a year's delay. By continuing on, taking advantage of two or three months' open water in the Arctic Sea north of Asia, they might, with luck, reach the strange coast of Nato'wa before the end of the year. At worst they would be ice-beset—for which they were prepared—and in a position to strike northward with the ice break-up the following year.

Having gained their agreement, Munro crowded on sail, cut his engines to conserve fuel and made good northing at the rate of seven knots an hour, according to his entries in the log-book for those days. Soon thereafter he sailed his ship between the continents of North America and Asia, into the Northern Sea.

To the scientist's great satisfaction, Beth had taken readily to life on the *Narwhal*. The men, trained in Munro's scientific work, vied with one another in little acts of gallantry.

But of them all it was the cook Flash-pan who most openly laid his old heart at the girl's feet. Early at dawn coffee and buttered hot biscuits awaited her before she had yet risen. At noon and



supper-time she was first to be served. Come midnight, and if she were still up and about, a hot broth would be found mysteriously awaiting outside her door.

In return Beth gave Flashpan of her willing attention, to the immense satisfaction of the strange little man. Into her sympathetic ear he poured a thousand tales picked up in his world-wide wanderings, caring not for the doubting smiles of the crew.

"Such language, Flashpan!" ejaculated Beth, this day of the gale, covering her ears in mock horror. A deep flush rose behind the miner's straggly beard.

"'Scuse me, Miss Beth," he begged, gulping in embarrassment. "I fergit when I'm excited. But if you'd of seen me when I rushed in, swingin' me sword, an' cuttin' down them thar heathens like stalks o' corn! I tell ye, gal, that was a engagement!"

Awhile Flashpan sat lost in recollection ere a doleful expression overspread his face. "But that was in me younger days, an' I aint so young any more. All I c'n do t'git around now."

Dan was seated near by, striving in vain to tune out a roar of static from his radio-receiver. "Flashpan," he said, without trace of a grin, "tell us about the time when single-handed you turned back the forty native riflemen. Remember—with Robertson at the siege of Chitral?"

The old prospector flashed a look of heartfelt gratitude at Dan, cleared his throat, settled himself, and for the twentieth time retold his tale. A master *raconteur* was Flashpan, confident in his powers of elocution. He swashbuckled up and down the dining cabin, pausing to embroider his story with accounts of bloody details—in all of which he seemed to have been in the thick of the fight.

Flashpan was both story-teller and actor. But he was more than that. For on such a ship as this, on such a cruise, it is vital to the successful expedition that its members remain in an agreeable frame of mind. Flashpan did his share in keeping spirits high, with the aid and abettance of his shadow the quick-fingered monkey. Dan provided music from the radio, static allowing, and edited the ship's little paper—the *Narwhal Pole-Star*. Sometimes too, Beth sang to

Flashpan's guitar accompaniment, or devised games for special occasions. And among the most fascinating hours were those donated by Dr. Munro himself. A skilled conjurer, wonderfully adept at advanced magic and knowing all the oddities of natural phenomena, his exhibitions commonly rounded off the recreational periods.

One night, during such an exhibition, all those off watch had gathered amid ships. Their favorite feat of legerdemain, the vanishing of a bowlful of water—had just been performed for the tenth time.

NO less mystified than the humans, Placer the monk sat with head hung sidewise and mouth agape in ludicrous amazement. But of a sudden, in the midst of that hush, the little animal leaped frantically chattering upon the table and thence to the shoulder of his master. With both arms entwined about Flashpan's neck he gibbered steadily, his frightened eyes fixed upon a closed port against which the passing seas streaked forward. An instant later Nugget, the great guardian of the kitchen, lifted his head from the prospector's lap and voiced such a mournful howl as oft bespeaks premonition of tragedy or death.

Silence fell upon the little group of humans. Vibrating like the strings of a double-bass viol, the rigging sent uneasy tremors down into the ship's interior. Great waves rushed past, each dealing the rudder a heavy blow whose vibrations quivered through the cabin. The beams groaned. It was one of those moments when the ablest skipper knows the ghost of a fear for the stanchest ship.

"*Hist!*" Flashpan broke the silence, holding up a lean hand and speaking in bated tones. "Did ye hear that?"

"Hear what, man?" demanded Dan a little impatiently.

"There 'tis again."

"The wind," whispered Beth.

Flashpan's eyes grew big. "No; 'twas a banshee that wailed. Look at Nugget and Placer. They heard it—'tis an evil omen. God save us, amen!"

Indeed the great dog, fangs exposed, stood with stiffened tail. The monkey had taken refuge under Flashpan's coat.

Suddenly to the straining ears in the cabin came a faint sound that sent Munro leaping up on deck: A human voice from somewhere out in the gale. Fearing that he had miscalculated their course and was running on land, Munro strained his gaze through mist and foam over the starboard bulwark. Close behind him came Dan, and it was he who first descried the source of that hail. His cry: "Row-boat ahoy!" brought all hands up.

There, amid the tossing waves, alternately rising to the foamy crests and falling in the troughs, they glimpsed a small boat, taking water from every comber. Two men were visible, one of whom waved feebly, ere collapsing into the bottom of the skiff.

Then began the arduous task of attempting rescue, complicated infinitely by the sudden easing of the wind, followed by a raising of the sea into irregular dangerous hills. It was a vicious sea in which to maneuver, but by putting out bags containing fish-oil Munro managed to slick down some of the worst water to windward and ease up closer to the small boat.

Below, Flashpan prepared hot soup and coffee, to be ready for them when the men were brought aboard. Beth laid out Munro's first-aid kit and made up bunks to receive the unfortunate sailors.

Ten minutes later the seamen were safe aboard, their boat in tow, while the *Narwhal* proceeded onward.

WHEN they had recovered sufficiently to give account of their plight, the men told a story full of discrepancies. On being pressed to clear up certain parts thereof, they retreated behind a mask of surliness.

"We're here, safe'n' sound, aint we?" said one, who had given the name of Branner. "What's the third degree for?"

"He aint been a seaman long, usin' that tone to a master," muttered Flashpan to Edson, the mate. "I got a idee he followed more'n the sea in his lifetime, by gum! Burglin' would go better with that face. An' now, I wonder, where did I see that rascal afore?" Still wondering, Flashpan disappeared aft.

"Number One rule on this ship is civility," remarked Munro to Branner in a sharp tone which he never used with his own men. "That is, if you expect to stay aboard."

One of Branner's companions, who had given his name as Bucky Slemp, growled at him: "Pipe down, Bran, an' learn to respect your betters."

A head shorter than his gigantic fellow, Bucky looked a nefarious little man. A thin foxy face, with an accompanying air of sly cunning, advertised one of some intelligence. Clearly, he dominated the other two by virtue of a glib

tongue and a cold blue stare. As for the third man, he spoke seldom, habitually staring at the planks underfoot, avoiding the gaze of others and answering in monosyllables. He called himself Mitchell.

Slemp now undertook to tell of the foundering of their fishing-sloop and of taking to the lifeboat from which the *Narwhal* had rescued them. And until he was interrupted, his story sounded plausible enough. But Flashpan, returning forward at the beginning of Slemp's recital, fixed the man with a gimlet eye and twisted his mustache with a dubious air, obviously designed to attract Munro's attention.

"Something on your mind, Flashpan?" asked the scientist.

"Eh!" ejaculated Flashpan, as if surprised. "Oh, aye, sir! That they is. Been sleuthin' round a bit, I hev. Got a idee we-all have met 'fore this!"—indicating the rescued men with a curving thumb. "C'n I ask 'em a few questions, Cap'n?"

"Go ahead," agreed Munro.

For a moment or two Flashpan's eyes were intent on the deck.

"'Twarn't in the Klondike, we met," soliloquized Flashpan. "An' I aint been down Californy-way nigh onto twenty year. So that's out." He paused to scratch his grizzled jaw reflectively. "But I mind me of a time when I shot a man fer stealin' my pardner's poke up on Gold Crick. Got away, he did. But seems to me I recolleck wingin' him in the ear. An' if I'm not mistaken, one of our friends thar has a nick in his port listener."

Munro glanced at the head of Branner, and the latter paled.

"What I'm wonderin' is what were ye all doin' in these parts." Pausing, suddenly Flashpan snapped his fingers.

"Oho! I got it: ye were seal-poachin' in the Pribilofs."

THE effect of his words was instantaneous. Mitchell, the silent, denied his guilt volubly. Branner's bravado evaporated, and even the cold-eyed Slemp lost arrogance.

"You've got nothin' on us," he finally asserted with a feeble show of defiance.

"Mebbe not," answered Flashpan disarmingly. Then, squinting: "How long did ye say ye were adrift?"

"Ten days," repeated Slemp warily.

"Three men, ten days—and no food, you say. An' all of ye strong and healthy. Next ye'll be tellin' me that's red ink on the bottom-boards of yer boat."

Mitchell went green about the lips, at that. The unperturbed inquisitor went ironically on: "An' them holes in the tiller an' sternsheets warn't made by bullets, nohow! An angry narwhal punched 'em in, I presoom. An' ye carried sealin' knives to pare yer fingernails with!"

BY now the men were watching him in cold dismay. Then suddenly he spun round, driving home his questions with swift jabs of one bony forefinger: "Who—or what—did ye pitch overboard 'fore we picked ye up? What have ye been eatin' to keep so strong and healthy? Will ye tell the truth, or—"

"It's a lie!" cried Branner in hoarse appeal to Munro. "We didn't kill him! He got a bullet in the head, and—"

"Or will we hold ye for the Coast Guard?" interrupted Flashpan.

The features of Slemp were a study in cold venomous hatred. While Flashpan had been speaking, he had quietly laid hold of a spare turnbuckle. But Dan struck down his arm before the missile was thrown.

Flashpan struck an accusing attitude.

"I hold that ye're guilty of robbery, murder an' illegal poachin' on the Government seal preserves, an' what other crimes I cannot say."

"Whatever they may be," cut in Munro, "we'll know when Dan picks up the Coast Guard's signals. Meanwhile, lock them up in the forecastle."

But what with delays repairing the radio aërial broken by strong winds, and thereafter continuous Arctic static roaring into the ship's receiving apparatus, communication was never established between Government craft and the *Narwhal*. Faced with disastrous delay if he put into port, Munro decided to sail on with his unwelcome guests. Though he liberated them to avail himself of their seamanship, he assigned each to a separate watch, and allotted them bunks among his own men. Thus he thought to keep them apart and under constant supervision of his own trustworthy crew.

Indeed, the extra hands were welcome on the following day, and thereafter. For that night, with a change of wind, the occasional ice-pans were crowded into great fields. For the first time on this voyage the *Narwhal* came to a standstill. But Munro was of no mind to remain in that condition. Half an hour later the thunder of dynamite twice

rolled across the floes, and through the immense crack thus opened in a large pan, the ship passed at fair speed, her iron-sheathed prow grinding through whatever it came against.

From the crow's-nest Dan scanned the sea ahead and called out the location of open leads. . . . And so the days passed in unremitting battle, men's flesh and brawn, and ship's iron and wood, against the mightiest force on the surface of the sea—ice.

Wind was now both ally and their foe. It filled the sails, but also acted upon the pack. The day came when solid ice stretched to the far horizons. And here, in a vain effort to continue, all but a few sticks of their dynamite was expended. Once more, for the last time, the wind befriended them, and the grinding of a moving pack commenced anew, providing the ship with an open lead a hundred yards wide, through which she moved under power and sail. But morning found the *Narwhal* beset in earnest, already showing signs of rising as the ice-pressure increased round about her.

"We're caught, boys," Munro told his men. "Unship the rudder and get the screw up. Come down, Dan." And to the shipwrecked sailors: "Lend a hand astern."

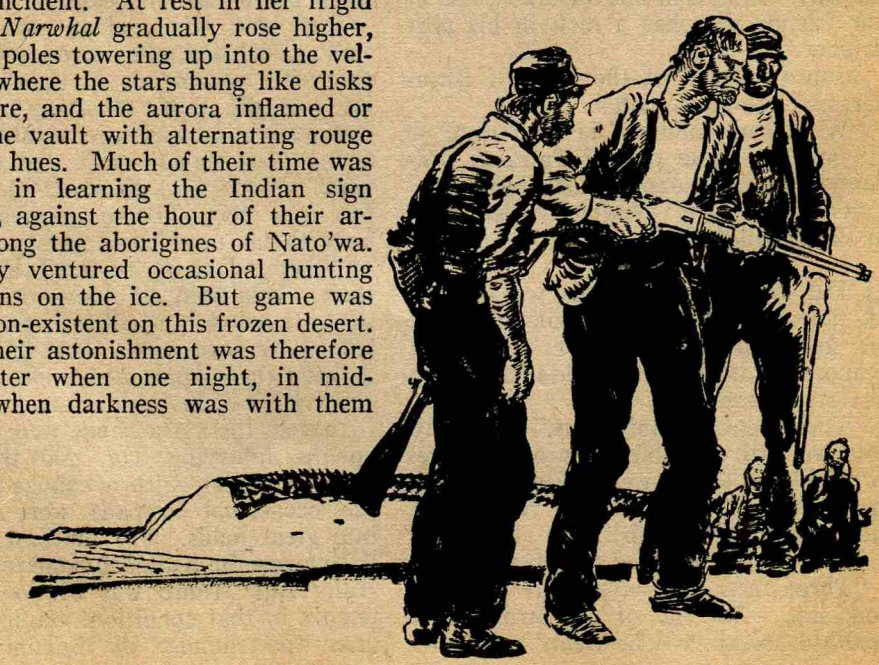
So came the *Narwhal's* progress to its end, save for the variable drift of the pack itself, which would soon end in a complete freeze-up. . . .

Two months passed thus, without noteworthy incident. At rest in her frigid bed, the *Narwhal* gradually rose higher, her bare poles towering up into the velvet sky where the stars hung like disks of wet fire, and the aurora inflamed or cooled the vault with alternating rouge or argent hues. Much of their time was occupied in learning the Indian sign language, against the hour of their arrival among the aborigines of Nato'wa. And they ventured occasional hunting expeditions on the ice. But game was almost non-existent on this frozen desert.

And their astonishment was therefore the greater when one night, in midwinter, when darkness was with them around the clock, there came two figures of men trudging out of the east. More surprising still, however, one glimpse of the fur-clad men sent Munro forth with outstretched hand to greet them. For one was Kamotok, his former companion on many scientific cruises in these northern waters, the other Kamotok's cousin Lualuk, with whom the scientist exchanged cordial greetings.

"The hunters are far from the home snow-house. How is this?" he asked in their own tongue.

"Seals are wary to the east, Doktamun," replied Kamotok, and then told further of how he and Lualuk had driven too far out, been caught by a sudden thaw and carried far from land into the moving pack. Delayed by the roughest kind of ice, they had been two weeks traveling a few miles. Preparing to spend a lean winter on the ice and eat their dogs if nothing else came to their harpoons, a snowfall had given them a better traveling surface. Judging their position by the stars, they struck due south for the coast of Siberia, the nearest land. Then they had struck the trail of one of the hunting expeditions from the *Narwhal*, and had followed it for a time out of curiosity. Then bursting star-shells, sent up to guide another exploring party back to the ship, had attracted Kamotok's eye. Changing their course slightly, they had thus come upon the *Narwhal* fast in the ice.



"Welcome, then, Kamotok," answered Munro. "But why does Lualuk quiver like a harpooned *Awuk?*"

"He has news. Some one's friend was here. He who some one rescued from the ice, long moons ago."

"Kioga? Here?" demanded Munro with a start. "When?"

"When the sun was going away. There were many with him—men, women, a new-born and a boy of ten winters."

Munro translated this to Dan. The younger man eyed Kamotok a little dubiously. The Eskimo, far from taking offense, produced some of the objects Kioga had given him, along with the caribou back-fat in exchange for the dogs. Among these objects were several which even Dan recognized as having belonged to the Snow Hawk.

Munro stood turning these things over in his hand, like Dan almost unable to comprehend that his young friend had actually led an Indian band safely through the very land of famine and across the ice in the few months since he had received Kioga's note of farewell.

"It doesn't seem possible," he mused.

"'Taint possible!" cried Flashpan.

"You never met him, Flashpan," interjected Beth, who stood to one side. She continued with a little thrill of pride: "If there were only one man on earth who could do it, that man would be Kioga."

"Shore, Miss Beth, shore!" said Flashpan, instantly deferential. "Leastways, we know he was hyar. But he's made tracks. Whar to?"

"To Nato'wa," said Munro quietly.

"Aye—Nato'wa!" shouted Flashpan, suddenly starting and setting his mustache more askew than ever. "Whar gold awaits the eager Argonaut, where a man's pick c'n bury itself in raw yellow ore a foot deep, an'—"

"Flashpan!" Beth reproved. "Won't you ever think of anything but gold?"

"Not till I fill your hands with nuggets, lass, an' lay the sacks of dust in little piles afore yore lovely feet! Until then I can think of little else!" And with that he slouched away, to look into the distance with unseeing eyes.

Meanwhile Munro and Kamotok were conversing once more.

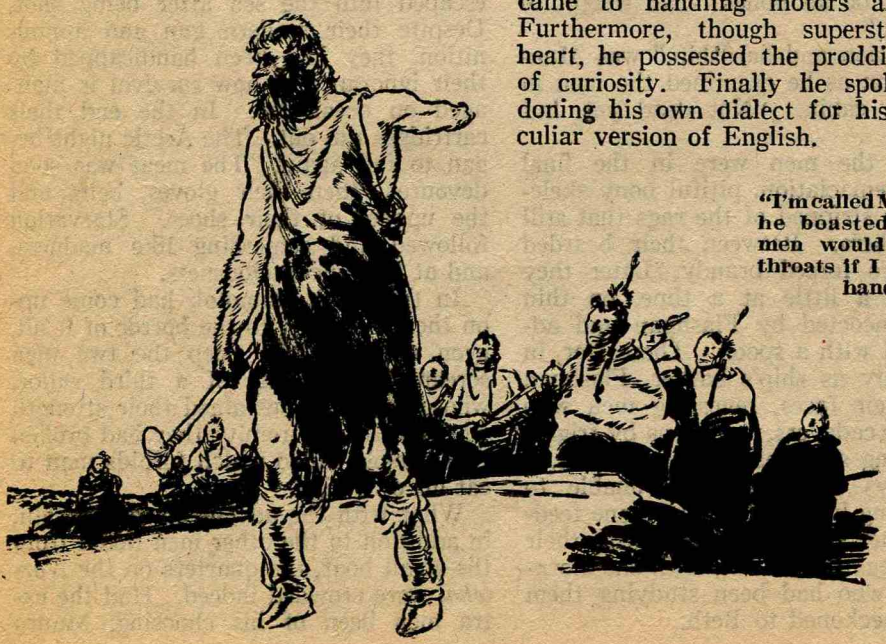
"Some one goes on a long journey?" suggested the Eskimo.

"North and west, to find Kioga," affirmed Munro. "Would some one accompany us?"

"It is a place of devils," discouraged Lualuk of the one hand. "Our people never go there. Lualuk's people will need much meat this winter."

"There is no abler hunter than Lualuk," replied Munro courteously, but observing Kamotok closely. "But is there no one else who would wish to go?"

Awhile the Eskimo sat in thought. For many years he had worked with this white man he knew only as "Doktamun." A genuine friendship existed between the two men; and like many of his race, Kamotok was a genius when it came to handling motors and tools. Furthermore, though superstitious at heart, he possessed the prodding virtue of curiosity. Finally he spoke, abandoning his own dialect for his own peculiar version of English.



"I'm called Mad Crow," he boasted. "These men would cut your throats if I waved my hand."

"Mebbeso takalook. Long tam sit around, thinkin' of some one who went away last year. Mebbeso I come 'long."

So it was agreed, and Munro congratulated himself on having the services of this expert dog-driver and his team. But Lualuk could not be induced to go; and after receiving a bag of gifts, departed later that night.

A DAY later another of many sledge-journeys was undertaken, using the ship as a base. These trips were for the purpose of locating, if possible, the warm ocean currents, somewhere in this frozen desert, upon which Munro calculated to reach his goal. Unhappily the ice became increasingly broken, with vast areas passable only at the cost of heart-breaking labor by both men and dogs; and in consequence no very great headway was made.

One night Kamotok went out alone to survey the ice in hopes of better traveling conditions. Several hours later he had not returned. Munro had all but determined to go forth with Dan to make a search, when the dogs from the first sledge, with a salvo of howls, signaled the approach of Kamotok's team. To the amazement of those in the ship's company, on Kamotok's sledge were two human creatures, so unkempt, tattered and emaciated as almost to deny their humanity. Helpful hands were at Kamotok's sledge at once.

"My Lord!" breathed Edwards, as he helped Munro with one of the men. "He must be all bones! No weight to him at all."

"Starvation and hardship," was Munro's opinion as he examined the men in the warm cabin. "Not dead yet, but near it."

Indeed the men were in the final stages of emaciation, pitiful bony skeletons when stripped of the rags that still covered them. Between their bearded lips Munro forced brandy. Later they were fed, a little at a time, on thin broths concocted by Flashpan and administered with a spoon. Thereafter, in his capacity as ship's barber, Flashpan shaved their faces, revealing men who were living cadavers, marked as by frightful suffering and unspeakable ordeals.

For days the men were unable to speak, living like animals from one feeding to the next. Then slowly their features began to fill out, until one morning Dan, who had been studying them intently, beckoned to Beth.

"Doesn't that man's face look familiar?" he asked in a whisper, eying the girl narrowly to get her reaction.

"When he turns his head under the light—yes!" answered Beth suddenly. Then: "Oh, heavens, Dan! After all these months—could they be the sailors from the *Alberta* who deserted when she sank?"

"Looks like it to me," muttered her brother.

"But how could they have lived, more than a year, on this ice?"

"The *Bearcat* left a cache of provisions and clothing and weapons for Kioga, when we sailed without him. You forget that."

"Forget!" said Beth in low tones that echoed some of the horror of that terrible long-past hour when circumstances had forced the abandonment of the man she had even then begun to love. "I'll never forget that night, Dan."

Young La Salle covered her hand with his. "I'm sorry, Beth. It was I who forgot. You were unconscious at the time, and couldn't have known."

WHEN the two men became at last in condition to talk, their story confirmed Dan's opinion. In addition to the provisions in the *Bearcat's* cache, they had come upon a walrus which Kioga had earlier slain. On this they had subsisted, short-rationed, for several months, living in a snow-hut in continual hope of rescue. A few seals had fallen to their single rifle, but many more had escaped into the sea after being shot. Despite their modern gun and ammunition, they had been handicapped by their ignorance of how survival is managed on ocean ice. In the end their cartridges ran out. The Arctic night began to fall again. The meat was soon devoured, then their gloves, belts and the uppers of their shoes. Starvation followed and something like madness, and at last unconsciousness.

In this state Kamotok had come upon them. Adding to the horror of it all, even now in their sleep the two men screamed the name of a third sailor, whose flesh had sustained their strength when in their extremity they had broken that age-old taboo which forbids man to eat his own kind.

What with the advent of these twain, in addition to the other men taken from the small boat, the quarters on the *Narwhal* were crowded indeed. Had the extra men been of his choosing, Munro

would not have felt concern; but already the fine comradely spirit prevalent during the early weeks of the cruise had been dampened by the churlish behavior of the newcomers, who were not slow to join forces in a rebellious bloc.

Munro's diary speaks, at this point, of their resistance to authority. With this he coped by penalizing insubordination with deprivation in the matter of food—a very effective cure—for the time at least. But if mutiny came—what then?

So the winter wore onward toward spring. For those with eyes to see, there was beauty on the floes when the moon uprose round and full to silver the jagged pinnacles of ice and cast long shadows from the *Narwhal's* masts upon the fields near by. The aurora was seldom absent in its endless transfiguration of the sky.

With spring came the long-hoped-for snow—upon which, with Kamotok, Munro set forth in a northwesterly direction, setting out meat caches along a line of march across which he hoped at last to sledge to the water which is kept constantly tempered and free of ice by the warm currents flowing about Nato'wa.

One morning after an all-night drive with dogs and sledge, he was successful, and his eye fell upon a lofty ice-peak ahead—the apex of an iceberg imbedded in solid field ice. The vast track forced through the smaller ice by the frozen colossus was still visible. By this token Munro knew that he had almost found his goal. For icebergs are the product of glaciers, and glaciers originate on land and hereabouts land could only mean—Nato'wa. A day's journey farther on, he was confronted by open water above which hung heavy fog-banks born of the meeting of frigid and warmer currents.

Returning, he informed his men of the discovery, and again the *Narwhal* was prepared for the day when the ice would release her upon the last stage of her epic voyage. Nor was that moment now long arriving.

CHAPTER XVI

In the Name of God and Country

THE great ice break-up began with a disquieting rumble as of distant thunder, continuing for hours, to the accompaniment of the dogs' uneasy howling. The *Narwhal* shifted in her cradle of ice; and tense hours began for all on board as they watched the great plates of ice, forced together by terrific pressures from afar, forming into great rock-like uplifts fifty and sixty feet high, mighty barricades of white solidity. The thunder was a constant uproar. The dogs, wild with terror, trembled in their kennels on the ship's deck. Open-water pools began forming beside the stern-posts.

IN anticipation of the break-up just ahead, Munro again had recourse to dynamite, and cracked up several hundred square yards of ice about the ship. But his operations were interrupted by a severe blow, accompanied by snow. Shift and shift about, the men came below decks, alternately warming themselves and eating, then going aloft to watch the action of the ice grinding and groaning about the ship's hull.

A crisis came. Breathless with excitement, Edson rushed in: "Berg bearing down through the small ice, sir. Coming head on, and we're right in her path!" he reported.

In two bounds Munro was on deck; and one glimpse was all he required, before his command rang out: "Stand by! All hands stand by, to abandon ship!"

In another half-hour, at its present rate of relentless progress, a spur of the berg bade fair to take off the partly canted *Narwhal's* masts and gouge out half of her side. And as the great berg came grinding on, powered by wind and current, and slowly smashing and crushing through the broken pack, each man save one leaped to his emergency post.

Casting an eye over his crew, "Where's Flashpan?" demanded Munro. For the moment there was silence, while Dan went below. "Not down there," was his report.

Of a sudden Beth's cry rang out: "There he goes! Look!"

Far out on the heaving ice they could now see their prospector-cook, his long mustaches flying in the wind, leaping like a mountain goat along the quaking footing until he came abreast of the relentlessly grinding berg. In one hand he carried a short coil of thin cordlike stuff, in the other an ice-chisel and small ax. For a moment he vanished behind the spur, then appeared scrambling along its top. Working swiftly with ax and ice-chisel, he hastily drilled several holes in the body of the spur next the berg. Into the holes he could be seen rapidly dropping cartridges of dynamite, which he rammed home with the handle of his ax, placing on top of each charge the primer

Again the bow went forth, like the extended feeler of an eyeless insect.

with its length of fuse, and pouring from his pockets a tamping of sand.

The coolness with which he worked at his perilous task moved those on the *Narwhal* to give him a rousing shout of encouragement in his self-imposed task of dynamiting the ice-spur from the main floe, in the hope of minimizing the peril to the ship. Now he was cutting the fuses, and Munro shouted a warning.

But Flashpan paid no attention. He struck several matches, sheltered them with his body, then applied them to the fuses. With a composure which attested an icy nerve, he waited to be sure all were alight. Then with an agile jump and a shrill yell of triumph he dropped out of sight, and soon they saw him running for life back the way he had come. . . .

On came that ponderous white mass, lifting the thick ice-floes upon its mighty forefoot. A mere fifty feet now separated the berg from the *Narwhal*, whose people—all save Munro—were abandoning ship. It was clearer than ever that the spur would tear out the ship's vitals from stem to stern.

Then—on ears the heavy concussion of the detonated triple charge burst suddenly. Shivered to icy shards, the entire spur slipped away from the mother berg, leaving a cavity, and falling heavily into the rubble at its base.

Its center of gravity disturbed, with ponderous slowness the berg began to roll. With Flashpan it was now a race for life, and he was scampering with all speed at an angle away from the direction of the berg's roll. From about the *Narwhal* the others were shouting encouragement. But as the berg shifted the ice beneath Flashpan heaved. He put forth a burst of added speed, but the tilting of the berg upheaved the floe upon which he ran, and the little man was flung bodily in air and pitched sliding and rolling a dozen yards amid the jagged pinnacles to one side. Beth covered her eyes and prayed.

An instant later the ship quivered to the impact of ice being forced against its side. The chill of the iceberg's slow passage was with them a few minutes as the crew boarded her anew, the danger past. But the frozen juggernaut was forging onward through the wreckage of its own creation, and the *Narwhal* floated free in the berg's wake.

While the crew were putting out an ice-anchor, at the risk of life and limb Dan leaped down to the ice and rushed over to where Flashpan lay as one dead among the jagged shards of ice, his face and chest streaming blood. Picking him up, Dan bore him alongside and handed him aboard the *Narwhal*.

As Beth knelt at his side, taking the grizzled head tenderly into her arms, the prospector's eyes came open. His attempted grin was a painful grimace, but he was still his gallant self.

"Don't worry over me, gal. Y' cain't kill an old turkey like me. Not with dynamite, leastways." But soon thereafter he became unconscious; and for several days Death waited outside the door of Munro's cabin, in which he had been honorably installed. But a week later the injured man was hobbling around and at the end of two weeks he was performing his dexterous miracles with flapjacks in the galley again.

HOWEVER unwelcome the close passage of the iceberg, it had at least cut a wide swath in the solid pack, into which Munro instantly turned his ship, the gainer by almost a month in time. They cleared the pack without serious damage, running with the wind behind the drifting berg almost to open water.

Here fog, that great destroyer of shipping schedules, delayed them for many days—but they were days filled with wonder. For all about them disported the wonderful teeming life of these strange mild northern waters. Sea-lions and walrus abounded in mighty herds; orca spouted almost under the *Narwhal's* bows. Two polar bears were shot from the gunwales, roped aboard by means of snatch-blocks, and their skins pegged out beyond reach of the dogs to cure. The greatest peril no longer was ice, but the floating derelicts with which this area is plentifully encumbered.

The days were slightly longer now, adding to their enjoyment of the sights in this strange sea. They came at last into view of the basalt pinnacles which mark the entry into the Nato'wan reefs. Stripped for action, with hatches battened down tight and all shipshape aboard, the *Narwhal* entered upon her final battle with her old enemy the sea.

Following the chart which Kioga had drawn for him long months before, Munro gave his engineer one bell for "Slow ahead," and nosed his ship gently into the so-called outer labyrinth, which comprises many miles of treacherous reefs, overcast by intensely heavy banks of smoke-like fog.

Forward could be heard the *splash-splash* of the seven-pound weight as a seaman cast the hand-lead and called back his endless depths: "By the mark, nine," and, "Mark under water, nine," and again: "By the deep, seven!"

BETH and Dan stood amidships, recalling the circumstances under which twice before they had threaded these deadly waters. Of the first occasion, when the yacht *Alberta* hammered her way through to pitch on shore, a battered leaking cripple, Beth dared not think at this similar hour. But of the *Alberta's* second passage outward, she thought oft and again. Then the ship had been guided by Kioga, who knew the channel well; and she recalled how her fears had seemed to vanish when he stood at the forepeak, shouldering full responsibility for the ship's safe passage. For all her confidence in James Munro, how different she felt now as the *Narwhal's* bow grated along some submarine ridge!

But for the first day this was all the damage the *Narwhal* sustained. Like others before him, Munro was amazed at the range and swiftness and irregularity of the tides, which added immeasurably to the difficulties of navigation. He made quick cross-bearings when visibility permitted, and in this way roughly charted his course—but only very roughly under the circumstances. Several times they came to emergency anchorages.

But on the fourth day a serious mishap occurred with a suddenness that added to the danger. The *Narwhal* was proceeding at a small-boat's pace under power and a rag of foresail, when of a sudden came that dread tearing grind and stoppage which spells the beginning of disaster. Instantly Munro gave the engine-room four bells. But though the screw was quickly pulling full speed astern, the *Narwhal* would not come off her rocky perch. An instant later Flashpan popped up out of the forward hatch like a strange jack-in-the-box, shouting that the ship was taking water near the chain-locker.

In answer to that, "Man the collision mat!" shouted the mate. Every man available jumped to obey. The mat was quickly drawn over the hole and held there by passing lines under the bow. The leak was checked. Then began the exhausting labor of lightening the ship forward. But as fast as heavy objects were shifted astern, the falling tide nullified the work. Mindful of the tidal drop the day before, Munro said to his mate:

"It's now or never, Edson. Break out those boxes in the hold. Quick, man! Get that heavy stuff all astern while there's still time. What you can't handle fast—over-side with it! We've got to lighten her forward at any cost."

All hands were now concentrated on the task. In their haste the men dropped and smashed the radio storage-batteries, and Dan heaved them into the sea, with other objects too heavy to get aft with the requisite speed.

At length the *Narwhal* lurched, listed and then grated off the ridge. There was not time to repair the damage forward, but the pumps would take care of that. Fortunately no further important injury was sustained during the three-day passage of the inner maze.

EARLY one morning when the fog lifted, Munro pointed out a Gibraltar-like shape, in the distance. With varied emotions those aboard the *Narwhal* strained their eyes to see the new-found land, each reacting in his own way.

"Land, ho! *Land!*" shouted the men of the crew, with the enthusiasm known only to those who have been long at sea.

Quivering with suppressed excitement, "Eldorado!" muttered Flashpan, imagining a seam of gold in every mountain.

"Somewhere here—Kioga!" breathed Beth, with swiftly beating heart.

Eager thoughts also rushed through young La Salle's head: "Adventure—exploration—wild tribes!" He felt his blood surge swifter, for it was his second visit to this savage shore, and the first was burned forever into his memory.

"Nato'wa—a new land!" murmured Munro, scientist and explorer. "A new frontier!" Somewhere upon this nearing strand lay the remains of the woman

he had once loved, and of the two closest friends of his youth. His task it was to affirm the astounding discovery of a great new Northland, made by Lincoln Rand a quarter of a century earlier. More than that, he must amplify his meager knowledge of this new frontier—an adventure so strange and extraordinary as to surpass and crown the many exploits of his life.

SLOWLY the *Narwhal* clove the unknown waters of the coastal reefs, welcomed inshore by a host of ivory gulls funneling above her topmost spars. Rarely a vessel's hull enters here intact to ground upon the rocks of Nato'wa. The *Cherokee,* early in this century, was such a one. The American yacht *Alberta* was another. Both, by strange chance, were cast upon these shores in a span of twenty-odd years, with living men aboard. But the *Narwhal* was the first ship in all known history to enter the coastal waters of Nato'wa under her own power. In so doing she joined the famous company of ships which have borne men to discovery down all the ages, from the hollow log of antiquity to the cedar triremes of old Tyre and Sidon, and the Viking long-ships and Old World caravels which went forth to seek the unknown.

The *Narwhal* had certain advantages. Her skipper had knowledge of a new land in the North, and therefore a goal. He had a rough but accurate chart of the only channel deep enough to admit a ship of any considerable draft, and aid in reading it from Dan, who had been here before. For the rest, a rare combination of favorable weather conditions, added to the born explorer's indomitable will to conquer adverse conditions, had aided the *Narwhal* to accomplish the impossible. . . .

The vapors of morning rose mysteriously from the gloomy waters of a hidden cove as Munro gave the engineer one bell. The engines ceased. Slowly the *Narwhal* lost headway, with the leadsman still heaving the weight and calling depths. A few minutes later there was a scraping sound as the *Narwhal* passed over the last ridge. The black cliffs loomed up. Munro ported his helm. The *Narwhal* came about in three fathoms, with the idle among her crew hanging over bulwarks and from rigging, peering anxiously through the mists.

Without realizing it, all aboard had been speaking in low tones as if fearful of breaking the breathless silence of this wild and menacing place. Munro likewise gave his orders quietly.

"Stand by port anchor. Stand clear port chain."

"Aye—all ready, sir," came the mate's reply.

"Let her go!"

A brief roar of chain in hawse-pipe, and a splash as the hook went under. Then: "Twelve fathoms as the water, sir," said the mate.

"Good enough. Hold chain," returned Munro. He heard Edson clap on the stopper forward of the windlass and drop the pawl on the riding chock. Ten minutes later, with all shipshape and the *Narwhal's* boat riding alongside, Munro prepared to go ashore. . . .

In all the excitement, vigilance over the five castaway hands on board had become relaxed—a most unfortunate oversight; for no sooner had they opportunity than the seal-poachers and the deserters from the yacht *Alberta* joined heads below, and in whispers hatched a plot to seize the ship. Acting instantly upon their scheme, Slemp and Branner slipped aft below decks. Opening the arms-cases, they removed the contents, and after secreting some weapons on their persons, carried others forward. What they could not carry they consigned to the sea through an open port. Then carefully closing the boxes again, they awaited a moment favoring their intended piracy.

BUT behind them, emerging from a dark corner, whence he had observed all with intense simian perplexity, Placer the monk approached the boxes, peering through the cracks with a wrinkle of anxiety between his sparkling eyes. For several minutes he climbed over the cases, ridden by the twin hags of uncertainty and curiosity, both intolerable to any monkey. Then, possessed of a brilliant idea, he excitedly fled forward like some grotesque caricature of a human dwarf. He would take this portentous matter up with the master who knew all things.

Bursting in shortly upon Flashpan, below to inspect the forward timbers, Placer chattered volubly, tipped his hat, tugged Flashpan's apron and induced the little man to go with him aft.

"What mischief have ye been into now?" wondered the cook irritably as he followed to where Placer danced on the ammunition-chest. Then suddenly

glimpsing new marks of tampering about the nails: "Oho!" muttered Flashpan. "Oho, sez I! No monk did this, me lad! What in the name o' tarnation—" A second Flashpan stood thus, eyes slitted; then he hastened on deck.

ON the ship's landward side he saw Slemp and his confederates near the boat-falls, and the tattooed hand of Branner passing rifles from the nearest porthole into the boat. Then he understood. And running swiftly astern, he dropped a quick warning to Munro.

"Mutiny, sir! They've rifled the gun-box! They're passin' rifles into the ship's boat. What'll I do, Cap'n?"

Munro's thoughts moved like lightning. Then quickly: "Act as if nothing were wrong. I'll post our men to tumble them into the boat and cut it adrift. Even with guns, they'll be at a disadvantage. Too late to try and stop them—they'd open fire the minute they knew we'd waked up. You go below and cover them from the galley port. Then I'll send the other boat and bring 'em back."

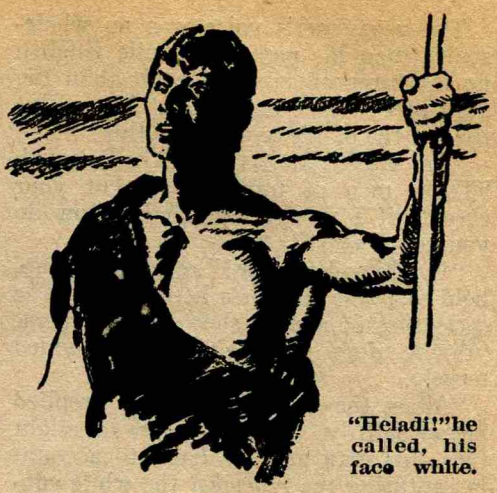
Flashpan dropped below. He heard the sudden activity and surprised shouts as Munro's men went into action. Seizing his pistol, he rushed to the port in time to see a boathook shoving the boat off, with its five momentarily bewildered mutineers picking themselves off the bottom. When they recovered enough to produce their arms, not a man was visible on the *Narwhal*—all had taken cover behind bulwarks and deck-cabins. Thrusting his pistol through the port, Flashpan ordered the rebels, in a clear loud voice:

"Drop them guns, and raise yore hands!"

In consternation two of the men obeyed. But the remainder, desperately aware of the consequences to come, seized the oars and sculled frantically away from the ship. The report of Flashpan's pistol rolled out, its bullet splintering one of the oars. Undeterred, the man plunged a rifle-stock deep, paddle-fashion, and though a second shot brought a yell of pain from Slemp, in another moment the boat passed round a great rock, out of the line of fire.

On deck Munro accepted the situation calmly enough.

"A rush might have been better on our part. But none of our blood has been shed. Let them go. We're well rid of them, and we still hold the ship."



"Heladi!" he called, his face white.

So it was that at a moment when their services were most required, the discontented among Munro's men, laden with the choicest of the *Narwhal's* remaining weapons and provisions, deserted. South along the coast they went, building a fire before an open cave wherein they spent the night, well barricaded.

Morning found them up at break of dawn; noon found them still arguing as to a future course. All agreed the *Narwhal* must be boarded and captured, but none on the method to be employed.

THEIR endless plottings terminated strangely. Branner was arguing in defense of immediate violence, when of a sudden he stopped and leaped to his feet, staring at something along the shore. Wheeling, Slemp reached for his gun. The others stood tense, eyes riveted upon a strange figure approaching down the shore, followed by a band of painted Indians, bearing spears, war-clubs and skull-breakers in their hands.

The leading figure paused. At a signal his followers likewise halted, spreading out to hem the seamen in. Then the leader shambled forward again, a ragged unclean deer-skin flapping about his unwashed knees, around which leggings of hide were fastened with twisted leathern thongs. His hair was black and lank, his beady eyes glittering snakelike as he moved softly up to the uneasy seamen. What manner of man he was could not be ascertained beneath the smears of paint which hid his features.

Almost instinctively Slemp drew back, before falling naturally into bluster.

"Ahoy! Stand where you are! Who are you, and what d'ye want, sneakin' up on us with your hoodlum gang!"

The newcomer's voice was no wholesomer than his person, his vile English no more reproducible in print than the aura of evil that hung about him. But the weight of his words was this:

"I'm called Mad Crow," he boasted. "These men of mine would cut your throats if I waved my hand. How do you come here?"

"By ship—how else?" returned Slemp, bold to assert himself a little more. The caricature of a man showed excitement. "Where does she lie?" he demanded tensely.

"Along the coast somewhere," replied Slemp shiftily, wondering how he might turn this man and his band to account in capturing the *Narwhal* the while conceding him nothing in return. "Well guarded by twenty guns," he added deceitfully.

"Guns or no guns, we'll have her!" shouted the other in sudden animation. "It won't be the first time I—" But there he checked himself, flashed a glance at Slemp and his men, then was silent. But the slip was not lost on the other man, nor the signs of fear prompting its repression. Slemp made mental note to fathom it at another time; meanwhile he wondered at the anomaly of such a creature, obviously from the outside world, dominating this band of red-skinned warriors.

"Maybe, if we c'd get together," began Slemp as if considering it for the first time, "we c'd take the ship and sail her out to sea. She's a fine craft, well provisioned an'—"

But the other interrupted him there: "Any rum aboard?" he asked with feverish eyes.

"Barrels of it!" lied Slemp; and then, suddenly: "By God, you're a white man, sure enough!"

"Aye!" shouted the other. "White of skin and black of heart. Pirate and murderer and worse than that! But square with them what's square with me."

"WHERE are we, and what are *you* doin' here?" asked Slemp.

"Stayin' because I can't get away. I don't know where I am, nor does anyone else. But I got friends!"—indicating the silent savages standing around. "They think I'm crazy, and fear me for it. 'Tis the way of the bloody heathens. If I aint crazy, I soon will be in this God-forsaken place!"

"Been here long?" pursued Slemp in his crafty manner.

"Too long! Came on the *Alberta*, devil wreck her, 'long with a gang o' shipwrecked cutthroats she picked up on the high seas! Wolves got most of the others—and a bit of me besides." Now for the first time Slemp noticed that the man's one arm was off above the elbow. He recalled talk he had heard aboard the *Narwhal*, of how some of her company had been wrecked upon this unknown coast before.

Doubtless this man, whom the Indians had named Mad Crow, was one of those pirates who had been driven from the *Alberta* more than a year ago. To the sharp-witted Slemp, here was one of his own kind, a conscienceless rascal whose tolerance was well worth cultivating. And so he made his proposition.

"Take us to a safe place, where we c'n get our heads together. It's not often I meet a man I like as well as you, my hearty," he said cunningly flattering.

And so it came about that this one-armed renegade joined forces with Slemp and his men in an unholy alliance. Followed by the Indians, the white men tramped into the forest.

FLASHPAN'S pistols and old hunting rifle, and Munro's revolver and rifles, were all that remained of firearms after the theft of their other weapons. Arming the men with boathooks and axes, who were to go ashore, Munro stepped down into the boat beside Dan and Beth. He gave the order to pull for shore; and as they went, the sun was half risen behind them, a dull rust-red ball dimly seen through the hanging mists.

When the boat's prow grated on the rock-strewn shore, Dan leaped up, eager to step on land. But Beth's restraining hand fell on his arm. He saw that her eyes were on Munro as she whispered: "Wait, Dan. Let him go first."

A moment Munro stood poised. Then with a spring he was on *terra firma*, bearing the American flag and staff, which he planted upright in the ground. In fringed buckskin, hunting-shirt open at the neck, bare-headed and with eyes alight, he was indeed a commanding figure that might have sprung bodily from some old historic painting. He stood there transfigured by this proud moment of triumph over wind, ice and wave.

The Stars and Stripes were unfurled. Then in tones that echoed bell-like in that misted haven, Munro spoke history:

"In the name of God and Country, I claim this new land of Nato'wa, and all

"O Great Ones! Hear me now. Give me but leave to see the stars again!"

that it contains, for the United States of America."

As one man, the others of his party bared their heads in a moment of solemn silence. A spontaneous thundering cheer burst from the watching men on the *Narwhal* and was returned by those ashore.

And out of the following stillness, from some far escarpment in the forested hills near by came an answer—a deep and ominous howl rocketed skyward from the quivering throats of the Dire Wolves.

CHAPTER XVII

The Missing Arrow

IN the days that followed his accident, blind Kioga, like many another wild thing, lay close hidden in his comfortable lair. Inaction was his chief enemy now, for it bred thought; and thinking revived the keen agony of his anxiety for Heladi, and for the American Indian companions for whom he felt responsible.... Thinking, too, brought back memories of Beth La Salle and of his former way of life. That way madness lay.

Accordingly he filled every moment with some task. He shortened the handles on what few tools he already possessed, made of stone or iron. In the course of his toil he soon found himself able to manipulate ax and hammer without need to see them. And he learned the strange sensitiveness of the tongue in checking the operations of his fingers.

Also, in snare-line and pitfall Kioga threw up his cunning defenses against the slow death of starvation, drawing on every resource of his active brain to forestall the likelihood of foodless times. The forest near his cave was fairly lined with pits and traps. But he dug no more, after the day he fell into one of his own traps. . . .

One day on visiting his snares Kioga found, suspended by a foreleg, a three-months tiger-cub, very much alive. How it came there, whether wandering from the mother and becoming lost, or bereaved by jungle accident, he never learned. But there it hung, bawling noisily. It was but a matter of seconds to drop it into the leather sack in which he collected his smaller prey. He took it home, liberating it in his cave. And now there were two mouths to be fed. But Kioga found compensation in the pleasure of the little beast's companionship.

As the weeks passed, the sightless warrior lived from the net and the snare, moving always up-wind, armed ever with lash or spear. Sometimes he carried bow and arrows, but as a rule only when a captive in a pitfall required killing.

His heavy twelve-foot whip served him well, for with it he controlled a diameter of nearly thirty feet at the center of which he stood. Such a whip is manipulated half-instinctively, for sight is not necessary to its control; and many were the smaller marauders he lashed off from the plundering of his trap-line.

So passed that lonely winter, its circle of darkness unbroken for the sightless hunter by star's gleam or aurora's flicker. With its passage the Snow Hawk gradually increased the area of his range. And wherever his moccasin-prints were to be seen, the round pugs of a half-grown tiger-cub showed beside his trail. Nor had ever living man so exhaustive a knowledge of his immediate habitat as had Kioga. He carried within his mind a kind of mental map whereon obstacles of all kinds were marked by repeated experience. Many were his mishaps, but never twice at the same spot. For each misadventure threw up a danger-sign on the mental photograph on which, by imagination, he followed his own progress.

Blind men have before climbed the steepest rocks and found their way in the complexity of great cities. But the civilized blind may fall back, as a last resort, upon their seeing fellows. Kioga had no such last resource.

When the Snow Hawk fared off his customary route, he must blaze the way for his return by notching tree-trunks with his tomahawk or knife, or by breaking chest-high branches and allowing them to hang, so that he might touch them on his return. But he finally abandoned these crude makeshifts for a superior device.

SINCE boyhood there had hung on the wall of his cave several medicine-rattles, pebble-filled gourds used by the medicine-men when they sing over the sick. He chanced one night to knock one of these rolling to the floor, and traced it almost immediately into a corner by its sound. Thus was born the germ of another stratagem against his affliction:

When again he went off the beaten track, at intervals he strung up bits of copper in pairs, where the wind might blow them together, setting up a continual metallic tinkle. By this sound he could hear his way back again. A dozen such signals might well enable him to

extend his wanderings for half a mile on a quiet day. In other bad places he ran cords along the worst part of a trail, using these to guide himself.

If in all of this he surpassed what a civilized blind man might do, he owed it to a previous intimate knowledge of the area which he now roamed, to his life-long habit of going in semi-darkness, and to his matchless powers of scent and hearing. Without these last he must have perished the first week.

One night during a storm it seemed to Kioga that he saw the flicker of lightning against the blank backdrop of his blindness. But of this he could not be sure, for no thunder followed. Again, weeks later, on hearing the crackle of electricity above his head, he fancied he saw a meteorite fall. Whether true sight, or one of those optical phenomena common to every eye he could not tell. And these illusions—if illusions they were—disappeared, replaced by the darkness to which he had so wonderfully adapted himself.

THE sense of near-by obstacles, scent, and touch, all these enabled him to find his way about. Trifling variations, bumps of many kinds, slopes and declivities—all these and numberless other signs were carried to his brain by his moccasined foot's mere touch, telling him the nature of the ground he trod. Thus to some extent he could locate himself automatically, free of the need to seek unseen landmarks whereby to know his whereabouts.

Here muscular-memory was his tool. You may close your eyes and write out a legible sentence; the hand remembers every movement. You may mount a familiar flight of stairs by night, and know instinctively and without counting the steps when the landing is reached. The limbs become automatic registers retaining memory of an oft-performed act, just as does the writing hand. And by aid of muscular-memory blind animals move about with sureness. So with Kioga.

He had in his lean and striped companion yet another aid. If those lonely mountains in the Ghost Country could speak, many a tale would they tell of the blind warrior preceded through the forest by a tiger's whelp with eyes of phosphor fire. Between man and beast there was some inexplicable bond; where one went, the other was sure to be found. And when the moon was bright, sometimes the wilderness denizens paused on their hunting-rounds to watch the startling spectacle of a man and an awkward young tiger eating from a mutual kill.

But snowfalls were the bane of his existence. The blue-white beauty of evergreens, banked high with the thick soft blanket, he could see only in imagination. Worst of all, snow dulled sound; and sound was a vital asset to him. For whereas we live in a world of visible things, Kioga dwelt in a world of sonorities. In like manner snow obliterated the lesser irregularities of the ground, on which Kioga depended to feel his way through his moccasin-soles.

In the beginning he thought by counting his steps to memorize his position better. But the effort to coördinate voided the instinct, leaving him worse bewildered than before. Thereafter he trusted to the inner voice.

But many were the times when Kioga, the sure of foot, sprawled clumsily upon his face, his fine optimism smashed to earth by the crushing conviction that his blindness was to be permanent. For long he fought against this dread specter. But it grew upon him. And at length this man who had asked little of his Creator, relying always in the hitherto sufficiency of his own mighty strength, sought a high cliff, wherefrom to address the Great Unknown, in accordance with the tradition of his adopted people in their times of deep trouble.

Garbed in his finest robe and most valued headdress, he ascended to the heights. From under his robe he drew his calumet, feathered and hung with tassels of fur. Into this he tamped a pinch of native tobacco, grown and held sacred by the Shoni. From a round box he drew forth a smoldering nugget of fire, pressing it against the tobacco. Six puffs only he took, blowing smoke to the four compass points, once upward to the sky and once earthward. This ritual concluded, upon the cliff he then laid out his offerings. His finest bow was there, among others of the most valued products of his cunning fingers, along with a much-prized volume from his little library.

Now in the tones which his Indian foster-mother had taught him long ago, he sent up his simple request in the soaring chant of the Shoni supplicant:

"O Great Ones! Hear me now.
I am Kioga—a warrior who sees not.
By your grace I live and bring these gifts.
O you who look upon my misery,
Give me but leave to see the stars again."

Then awhile he waited, head thrown back and arms upstretched: waited for the sign that did not come—the down-falling scream of hawk or eagle, the hissing crackle of a meteor, or aught else that might be construed as a favorable omen that the gods would grant his request. And so for day after day, impoverishing himself of all he valued, until, dejected and unanswered, he felt his way down again, like some stricken miserable animal returning to its den.

To make matters worse, his fierce companion of the past months did not answer his summons. The tiger-cub had now answered a wilderness call too strong to resist and probably would never return. Thus utter loneliness was added to Kioga's other trials. . . .

One day in spring, in the Moon-When-the River-Ice-Breaks-Up, Kioga was returning, spear in hand, bow at back, from a steam-bath in the vapors of a mountain hot-spring. As was by now his well-established habit, he was coming home to his lair by way of a shallow creek navigable only in the lightest of canoes. The creek was almost clear of its winter ice, and at a certain rock he paused, turning to begin the short ford which would bring him to the opposite bank. He was halfway across, moving without sound into the wind, when of a sudden, strong and pungent, came the scent of wapiti. So warm and nose-filling it was that without an instant's hesitation the Snow Hawk's spear-arm flew back and then forward as he hurled the weapon straight ahead.

Rising erect, that he might meet his death face to face, Kioga braced himself.

The throw was one of those lucky accidents which occur now and then in the life of every hunter. Kioga heard the impact of iron against flesh, and felt a shower of sand kicked up as the stricken animal bounded in its pain and surprise. Throwing hesitation to the winds, he flung himself in the direction of the sound, lest it escape and bear away his spear. And it happened that his spring was timed with the fall of the wapiti, upon which he dropped with knife bared and plunging for the lungs. And as the Snow Hawk ended the deer's struggles, a silent canoe, bearing the figure of a woman, drifted round a bend.

It was Heladi, who had seized upon this first opportunity of setting forth in search of him. She had come far on the twisting streams, defying alike a natural fear of the so-called Ghost Country and the danger from tigers who haunt

these streams and have been known to drag men out of their canoes.

On the verge of admitting failure, Heladi had seen Kioga make his kill, had seen him hurl the spear with all the certitude of a man in full command of

every faculty. In another moment she would have called his name. But as he rose, drawing forth his knife, his gaze fell upon her, there where she floated not ten yards away. With her heart in her throat, Heladi waited eagerly for his greeting, looking straight into those glowing deep-set eyes.

Yet for all their fire, she had the feeling that she was unseen, for his glance did not engage with hers, but roved uncertainly off to one side. How this might be she could not conceive; for proximity, light and all else were in her favor.

Unable longer to control herself, she raised her paddle in greeting. From its edge there flipped off a dozen droplets which, falling, made a faint watery sound.

Quick as a flash, at that sound the Snow Hawk wheeled. As she drifted a little to one side she saw that his eyes did not follow, but remained staring intently at the spot whence the sound had come. His head was slightly tilted, and every feature strained in an obvious attempt to see and hear. Yet it was as if some veil were hung between them. Unsuspecting the truth, the girl yet felt nameless fear clutch suddenly at her heart.

Now, slowly and without a sound, Heladi lifted one hand, experimentally. Kioga plainly did not so much as notice her movement. But inadvertently then, her paddle touched against the gunwale. Simultaneously Kioga's hand flew back, with a lightning movement. Heladi saw the light glint on his knife as it sang toward her, turning twice in air. She sat rigid with utter horror as the sharp heavy blade leaped past, a fraction of an inch from her side, on a level with her breast. What with the force with which it had been thrown, it sank halfway to its quivering hilt in a branch overhanging the stream.

The distance between them was constantly increased by the slow current. Heladi watched, then, in complete fascination, the man's strange actions. She saw him move forward tensely to where she had been, and listen. She saw his nostrils quivering as he whipped out an arrow, fitted it to the bowstring and loosed it, to lodge somewhere in the soft bank. Again, a long moment he stood tense. Knowing that he was alert for the slightest sound, Heladi was yet silent—silent because in that moment she understood, and paled at the knowledge, as at something too dreadful to admit.

HE quartered the stream, back and forth. Finally he found the branch wherein his knife was buried, and retrieved it. He felt about a longer time for the arrow, but though it was within easy reach, his searching fingers missed it repeatedly. At last he abandoned the fruitless search and circled back to his deer. Shouldering it, he bore it easily along the path, which he touched intermittently with the extended bow as he went. Before turning into the forest, his perplexed eyes once again crossed Heladi's unseeingly.

And then, of a sudden, she saw him drop his deer with a crash and come bounding back, his face as white, almost, as the snow still lying in the wooded hollows. She heard him call her name:

"Heladi!" and yet again, *"Heladi!"* She knew that those acute nostrils must have borne to him some faint suggestion of her presence; she could only imagine, from the deeper lines etched in face and brow, the agony of mind he suffered, knowing that he had not recovered that swiftly-sped arrow.

His bow went forth, reminding the girl of the extended feeler of an eyeless insect, using its palpus in lieu of eyes.

With new and terrible intentness he went over the ground time and again, repeatedly passing and repassing within a yard of the missing shaft. With a stick he measured the depth of the water. He would be calculating, Heladi supposed, whether or not a canoe could have passed here. Then he returned, and this time brushed against the feathers of the rigid arrow. With the indrawn breath hissing through his teeth, he satisfied himself that it was embedded not in a woman's soft flesh but in wood, from which he cut it with his knife.

The watching girl saw him draw a hand across his brow, leaving the marks of his fingers through the cold sweat that bedewed it. He whose endurance was that of a wolf, in this moment showed a terrible weariness—the exhaustion not of body, but of nerves and of mind.

And because she knew, by some faultless instinct, that he would not wish her to come upon him thus—a pitiable groping creature, he who had once strode a conqueror through the forest—she kept her silence. All that made his present life tolerable was the belief that he had concealed his infirmity from every other living soul. Let him think his nostrils had erred in reporting her. Though her heart yearned to him, filled with her pity, she held herself in iron check, making no sound. For of all things else, Heladi knew that that pity would soonest crush the spirit of the proud war-chieftain, once a leader of his people. . . . The antlers of his deer vanished slowly in the thicket, as she watched.

Crushed by what she had seen, awed by the knowledge that even in his blindness he could hunt, exist, even thrive where any other man must surely have perished, Heladi comforted herself in the knowledge that she had done nothing to break the fine lonely pride which sustained Kioga in these terrible hours.

But from her canoe, Heladi removed the little basket of food she carried. It was not much to give—but it was all she had. This she placed carefully in the very center of the trail, where Kioga must find it if he returned.

THUS Heladi let Kioga go unspoken, though it wrenched her heart to do so. Returning to Hopeka village, she told no one of what she had seen, not even Kias, nor her confidant, Tokala. But from that day forward each sunrise found Heladi at the south wall, addressing in the Wacipi dialect the sun she worshiped, chanting her petition for the safety of the Snow Hawk.

BACK in the forest, bearing his kill to the cave, Kioga was shaken as a result of his momentary fear that he had slain Heladi. But finally he concluded that his nose had deceived him and that no one had in fact been present on the sand-bar. He blamed his nerves for the betrayal.

Nevertheless that joust with the unknown had left its mark; and the spirit of the Snow Hawk was at its lowest ebb since the first hours of his blindness, as he hung his deer outside and entered his cave; and then, as if to enhance his mood, the unbearable happened.

Seeking surcease from his dejection in manual work, Kioga was casting about for his hammer, wherewith to beat out a few copper arrow-heads. His hand, moving among his other implements, came upon an object which momentarily puzzled his sense of touch.

Turning it over and over, he instantly deduced that it was a circle of metal, perhaps of his own manufacture forgotten moons ago. Of a sudden he detected the engraving on its flattened surface. Remembering then, he felt as if some cruel and heavy hand were pressing his spirit against the ground. It was the silver bracelet which had belonged to Beth La Salle. He recalled how he had brought it to her here, as an earnest of his good intentions, proof that he had visited the ship *Alberta* to ascertain the welfare of her people.

Dejection the Snow Hawk had known well, of late. Hopelessness had been his daily companion. But now he plumbed despair. What he had long put from his mind came picturing forward in vivid detail. He thought of her whose laughter had rung in this rock-bound fastness one happy day; and of her smile and her lithe beauty, and her eyes that had looked into his with something more than interest before this same fireplace. And of a sudden this, his sanctuary, became the lair of desolation.

On a fierce impulse, he flung the bracelet aside, and fled that place with all its reminders of Beth La Salle.

Down the rocky path he went, like one hag-ridden, to pass through the forest, fording shallow streams when he came to them, swimming across those too

deep for wading, however cold they were. Along half-forgotten trails and precipitous ridges and through ravines Kioga went, recking not of a hundred falls and bruises sustained on his way.

And in the going, what with his heedless haste, the Snow Hawk passed far beyond the outer limits of his accustomed range. Nor did he come to his senses until, paradoxically, he took leave of them, falling into a narrow fissure between two rock walls, where, stunned, he lay slowly recovering his wits. . . .

Rising, Kioga would have retraced his steps. But what had become a simple matter on familiar ground, was now an impossibility. For the first time in his life the Snow Hawk was completely lost.

The fine optimism of his first blind weeks was gone; the hope of ultimately regaining his sight was gone. In another week, thought Kioga, he too would be gone. But he was past all caring now. He moved forward in a world that was suddenly as strange as Mars. When the trail sloped upward, he followed up—what matter in which direction it went?

Thus he passed along an unfamiliar treeless slope, knee-deep in melting snow and loose sliding rubble that bruised his feet. That he was at a higher altitude he knew, for the air knifed his lungs, and his heart beat faster. And that was well: upon some lofty pinnacle he would lay his tireless body. There, as close as might be to the unseen stars, he would leave his bones in blessed isolation, like the wilderness hawk he was.

But this was not to be. For as he trod upon a softened bank, the snow gave way beneath him. Thrown upon his aching knees, he felt the earth suddenly shift, moving beneath him. Rocks and earth caught at his heels as he lifted his feet, and the downward movement of the shale on which he tried to stand was perceptible now.

He had witnessed this thing a hundred times from afar, this slow beginning of mountain landslides. It might end as suddenly as it began, checked by an upthrusting ridge. Yet almost at once he knew it would not. The slide was gathering momentum, with a mounting roar.

INSTINCTIVELY Kioga threw himself flat to distribute his weight, and rolled sidewise, striving to twist away from the main moving body of the churning slide, onto the area of slower moving rubble which he knew would be right next it. Though he welcomed death, he had lived a mole too long, and did not wish to die like one, underground. But his own momentum set the side-current of shale and stones moving more swiftly, and upon the churning masses of rock, earth and snow he was tossed about as the slide attained its swiftest pace.

He could hear the cracking sounds of the lesser trees being shorn close off; then the smash and crash of greater monarchs breaking off and uprooting as the monster slide roared downward, bearing on its tossing crest a million tons of splendid hardwood forest. Somewhere very near, a mountain goat bawled piteously and almost unheard, caught like Kioga in the rocky maelstrom whirling to a distant level.

About the Snow Hawk's ears the flying pebbles whistled like bird-shot, drawing blood sometimes when they struck him. The roar of the slide ahead was deafening now, but suddenly ended in a silence far more ominous—for the moving mass of stuff was slipping over a cliff, to maim and kill all in its path in some cañon or valley far below.

Rising erect, that he might meet his death face to face, Kioga braced himself. An instant later came the thunderous rumble from the distant depths. He felt himself uplifted as by some mighty force as the slide on which he was borne so irresistibly poured over the brink into the cañon's gloomy darkness.

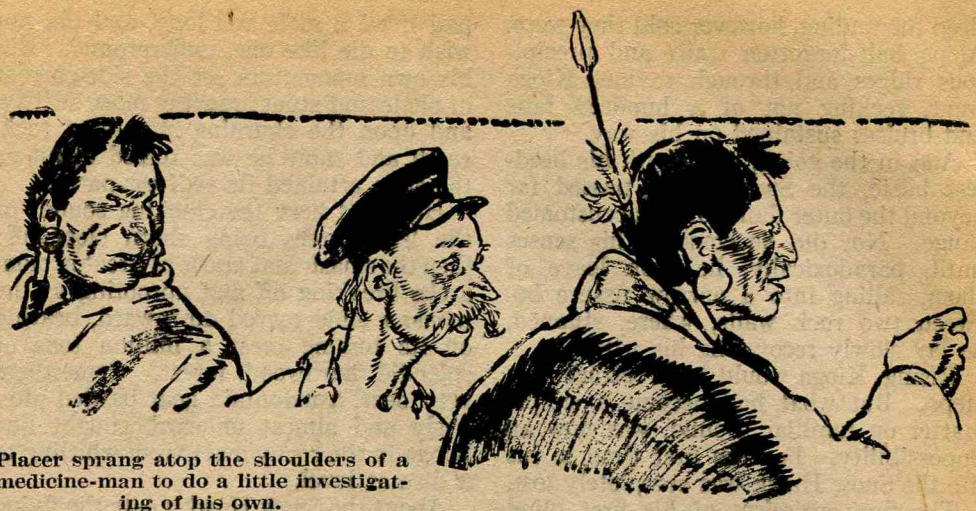
CHAPTER XVIII

When Races Meet

HAVING planted his flag, laid formal claim to Nato'wa and made an appropriate entry in the logbook to commemorate the historic event, Munro and his party explored as much of the coast as daylight permitted, before putting back to the *Narwhal*. Assuring himself that the tide had fallen as far as it would fall, and that therefore they might safely spend the night at this anchorage, the scientist finally gave the welcome order to his men to turn in for a needed rest.

He himself, with Dan and the mate Edson, went on watch while the others slept, and in turn were relieved by the second watch a few hours later. Dan and Edson retired gratefully. Beth was sleeping the sleep of complete exhaustion. But there were two on board to whom sleep would not come.

Flashpan, in the privacy of his galley, and superintended by the monkey Placer,



Placer sprang atop the shoulders of a medicine-man to do a little investigating of his own.

was feverishly polishing his old cavalry saber, oiling and reloading his pistols and sharpening his bowie knife to a razor edge against the eventualities of the morrow. Now and then he put out the galley light, and drawing the curtain, peered cautiously shoreward through the galley port, as he muttered Hood's lines:

Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!
Bright and yellow, hard and cold,
Molten, graven, hammered and rolled:
Hoarded, bartered, bought and sold;
Stolen, borrowed, squandered, doled,
Heavy to get and light to hold.

Returned from his eager glance ashore, the little man then hammered a wedge into a fresh new pickax and filed an edge on his ancient shovel.

Astern in his own cabin Munro tossed restless on his bunk, fully dressed. Unable to sleep, he finally rose, turned on a reading light and picking up the logbook, tried to write. But after a few trials he put it down and sought to calm his mind by reading. Chance brought his hand to Dixon's "Vanishing Race," which he perused a little while before deciding to go on deck for a breath of air.

He came aloft by way of the main cabin companionway. Aft he could see Barry Edwards, a vague shadow standing near the binnacle. Forward, a faint cough apprised him that Lars Hanson was wakeful in the chains. The scientist paused, struck a match and puffed at his pipe in its glow. He was repeating half-aloud the last sentences he had read, before laying aside his book a moment before:

"We are standing at the center of a mighty circumference. An Indian world revolves for the last time upon its axis. All the constellations which gave it light have burned out. The Indian cosmos sweeps a dead thing amid the growing luster of the unfading stars of civilization and history. . . .

"The solemn centuries look down upon this day. Look down upon the sheathed sword, the broken *coup*-stick, the shattered battle-ax, the deserted wigwams, the the last red men mobilized on the plain of death. . . . their muffled footfalls reaching beyond the margin of an echo."

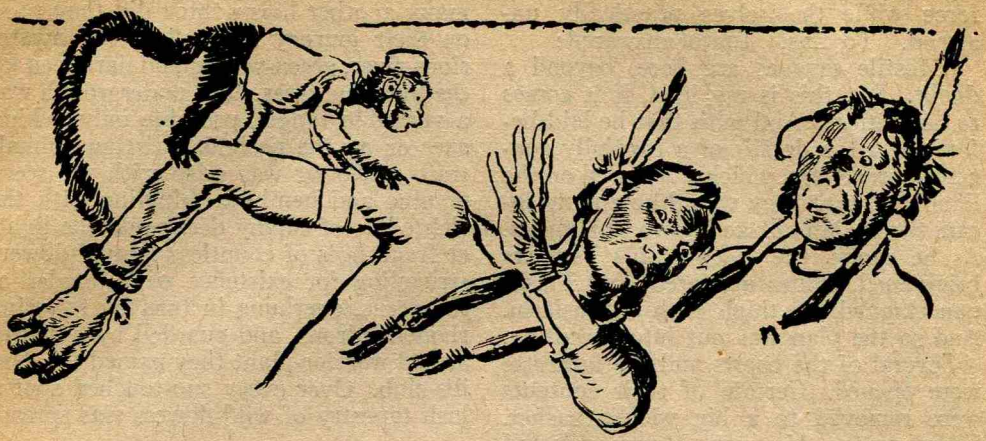
Words, these, born of the Last Great Council, held by the American Indians on Washington's birthday in the year 1913. Thinking upon them, "I wonder!" murmured James Munro.

And scarce had the words passed his lips, when from the near-by shore of this grim new Northland there came a sudden answer. At a brisk hissing sound James Munro instinctively stiffened. An instant later the pipe flew from his lips, clattering into the scuppers. Came a thud—sharp, quick, venomous, as something struck into the deck-house wall.

Not a finger's-length from his mouth, its feather-vanes still vibrating, and imbedded to its barbs in the wood, an arrow quivered—an *Indian* arrow, with ownership-marks painted round its shaft in red and blue design!

Already Edwards and Hanson, attracted by the sound of Munro's rolling pipe, had come amidships. Edwards, glimpsing Munro's startled features in the light of the sputtering match, was first to speak. "Anything wrong, Doctor?"

The match went out. "Don't strike another," said Munro calmly. "Nothing's



wrong, Barry. But I've just had a close shave."

"Close shave? How, sir?"

"Two inches from my chin—what do you feel sticking into the cabinhouse?"

In the darkness Barry Edwards reached forth to touch the shaft. An indrawn gasp of astonishment from the Canadian. Then: "It's an arrow, sir! Came down from above, by its angle of entry, I'd say."

"And so saying, you'd be right, Barry," returned Munro in that dead-level tone he used when most stimulated by excitement. "We're welcomed to Nato'wa! Pass the word around and wake the men. But don't let a light show. We've got to find a more sheltered mooring than this."

SO, in the silence of the dark, the *Narwhal* cautiously warped her ghostly way along the coast, following the route Munro had worked out while exploring it in the ship's boat earlier that day. It was slow going, and dangerous to ship and crew, for no other coast on earth is so rugged and honeycombed as Nato'wa's. But at last, just at full high tide, the ship was worked into a little cove barely large enough to receive her. Rock walls ran precipitously up on three sides, well above the mastheads. Atop these a mat of ground-vines swung from ledge to ledge and hung downward, screening the vessel from casual view on the landward side.

"Snug's a bug in a rug," declared Flashpan admiringly, as Munro lashed the wheel; and indeed the *Narwhal* was securely berthed in one of those natural rock-girt basins wherein the tides are least felt. In a little time the ridge over which she had entered would be bare, its base sloping seaward, leaving the ship landlocked; for the deep hollow of the cove was never emptied of its water, nor did it change its level, save with an exceptionally high tide. Only at the full swell of the tide could the ship be worked out of her haven. On the other hand, the encircling walls which imprisoned her were also a protection from the swift storms which whirl seaward from this birthplace of the winds.

Such a storm now roared from inland with a fury that brought more than one prayer of thanksgiving that the ship was safely cradled in this impregnable berth. In the fury of the blow Munro glimpsed another reason why Nato'wa had remained a land apart down all the ages: no bottom to hold an anchor in such a wild wind. What with reefs, fog, uncertain tides and a polar ice-barrier to be overcome, little wonder that Nato'wa is as primeval now as in the day of the prehistoric elephant.

Elsewhere enormous waves rose towering up to crash against the rocky cliffs and foam bubbling back; and the sound of the winds boomed and roared incessantly as for two days the elements warred with one another. But for all the fury of the tempest, in her sheltered berth the *Narwhal* rode at ease. Only the rain, slashing down upon her battered hatches, evidenced the fearful violence of the blow—that and the coming of hundreds of storm-driven seabirds seeking haven on her bare spars.

IN his comfortable cabin Munro matured his plans for exploring the interior of the new land. As broached to

his men, his ideas met with certain invited criticisms, chiefest among them being the danger of encountering a superior force while themselves practically unarmed. To this, Munro answered:

"Hostile savages are here, beyond a doubt. But this is my idea, if it comes to hostilities." And with that he laid before them the details of a carefully conceived procedure, which was based on the likelihood that they would be able to locate the Indian village known as Hopeka. As he spoke, the faces of his listeners brightened, smiles appeared, and Flashpan clapped his thigh with enthusiasm. And so the plan was put into execution.

Several of the chests and the lazarette were opened. Certain of their contents were removed to a big wicker basket. From among his men Munro selected Dan, Flashpan and Hanson to accompany him in search of the Indian capital.

Edson the mate, and Barry Edwards, were to remain aboard with their only serviceable rifle, and see that all went well; and Kamotok was to stay and tend the dogs. But when Munro urged that Beth La Salle remain on the comparatively safe ship, she answered quietly: "Remember our agreement, Dr. Munro." It was her first and only reference to the fact that she had paid part of the cost of the *Narwhal's* expedition in exchange for the privilege of sharing their risks in the search for the Snow Hawk.

The scientist thereupon raised no further objections.

WITH Munro in the lead, the party began the exploratory journey inland. Flashpan wore his pistols in his belt and carried his pick. "Jest on the chance," was his reply to good-natured chaffing by Dan. "Y'never know. Might find gold anywheres hereabouts."

Dan was armed with a harpoon; Hanson had his double-bitted ax, and a supply of nails and baling-wire. Between them Dan and Munro carried the wicker basket.

From what Dan remembered, and what he himself had learned from Kioga, Munro knew better than to seek a river navigable from the coast. None such exists on this part of coastal Nato'wa. Instead the little party struck inland north and west until they came to a winding river. On its bank they felled trees and wired them together into a serviceable raft. Loading their little equipment on the raft, they were presently poling upstream against the current, scanning the river closely in anticipation of contact with the red-skinned inhabitants.

But though they saw as yet no Indians, many another living thing did they raise on their journey along this wild mysterious river, green-walled and darkened by the towering trees. The undergrowth was a veritable tangle, passable only behind axes or on the perilous twisting animal-trails. The air was crisp with the scent of pine and hemlock, mingling with the rich odors of earthy decay and the lighter fragrances of countless ground-flowers struggling for existence with jungles of tall ferns, overhung in turn by towering rhododendrons, and guarded by a thorn-armed warrior-plant they named the devil's-club. Over every sun-touched spot a lush tapestry of wild-flowers was spread.

DEER and elk sprang back from drinking-places as they poled past. Wildfowl rose in clamorous clouds to settle again behind the moving raft. Among these was a dense flock of passenger-pigeons, driven to this last sanctuary by white men, whose scientists call the species extinct. From behind a cluster of purple clematis the black-marked face of a snow-leopard appeared, regarding them icily out of its cruel eyes. And a great panther, flame-orbed, was barely glimpsed as she stole along a fallen tree-bole, a shadow among shadows—then a sleek young tigress lying near a kill, plying a sinuous tongue on the flank of a cub but a few months old.

Finally, a thing that brought a gasp of admiration from Beth: Upon a broken stump near shore a variety of dragon-flower grew, its downy golden sheath giving way to petals as pure-white as new-fallen snow. On Munro's order they drew near shore, that Beth might pluck it. But the watchful Flashpan struck up her hand just as she stretched it forth.

Close below the bloom another type of beauty lay—coiled with jaw agape and poised to strike: a water-snake, plump, triangular-headed, revolting—yet handsome withal in its gaudy markings of black and red.

And so it went. Here a thing fair and fragile, and right beneath a deadly horror, made by the same Creator; the sinister and the beautiful side by side—but with the sinister oftener prevailing; for this was Nato'wa, surely the last unconquered wilderness, and probably also the first. . . .

It was Munro's initial acquaintance with the wondrous fauna and flora of the

new land. He began now the first of hundreds of sketches and drawings that were to enliven that remarkable notebook of his.

UNTIL this moment no sign had they seen of living men in this strange land save that arrow sent out of the dark to graze Munro's cheek on board the *Narwhal*. Now a low warning from Beth found the men alert.

"Don't look now," whispered the girl tensely, "—but I saw some one move, on the bank just ahead."

Flashpan reached for his pistol. "A Injun?"

"I think so," answered Beth guardedly. "I only saw his head—*there!*" Her voice came sharply now. Focusing upon the bank, the others saw a grim and ghastly painted figure rising slowly, like some supernatural being from the nether world. His dark and glittering eyes looked on them with a surprise equaling their own. For a moment this savage conned them, and they him, ere with a lightning movement he whipped an arrow close over the canoe, and dodged behind a tree-trunk.

A shot rang out, and Flashpan stood gun in hand, searching for his target again. But a rustle of leaves and crackle of trodden twigs told them that the terrified Indian had fled.

"Ol' Betsy shore does need a cleanin'!" complained Flashpan as the raft continued on downstream.

So the white explorers came slowly upriver toward Hopeka. Unlike other discoverers in other ages, they sought not conquest but knowledge, not war but peace. And surely never did exploring party present more picturesqueness.

Forward with plunging pole stood Flashpan, laboring like one possessed to keep the rude craft headed straight, and swearing fine round oaths at the constant interference of the restless monkey prancing around the raft. Amidships sat the young white girl, striving to recall landmarks from the time she had come this way before. Laboring with Dan and Hanson astern, Munro clad in his buckskins reached and pushed rhythmically as nightfall came upon them.

THEY were rounding a bend in the darkness when with a hiss Flashpan ceased poling and pointed. Every eye in the party fell startled upon the towering palisade of Hopeka, their first ocular evidence, dimly seen, of actual human residence on Nato'wa. Unlike the tent-circle of the nomad plains tribes, here was a permanent village of major size strategically located. Though far from impregnable, it was defensible in time of war, and evidenced one other variation of the Nato'wan tribes from those of continental America.

And as they came into view, from the opposite direction a longboat, laden with a dozen warriors, sped southward. For a moment both craft floated silent, the whites fascinated, the Indians utterly astonished—like an allegorical painting depicting the first meeting of modern and primitive men. Then from the longboat a strange cry went up, to be returned from the village walls. The quick staccato of the Shoni tongue shot back and forth, laden with information and warning. The gate swung open, and armed warriors darted out to man their canoes, of which a dozen were almost instantly afloat and bearing down upon Munro's unwieldy craft.

MUNRO gazed momentarily at these fierce-featured savages of fine physique, with the keen interest of the anthropologist who has realized a great hope. Unmistakably these men were of that mysterious race called Indians; and here one of the oldest enigmas in science was becoming solved, the known past of mankind moving back through the ages. But Munro's interest became alarm when quick arrows cut the water roundabout and thudded into the raft.

"Redskins, shore enough!" cried Flashpan, drawing and cocking his pistols, coolly deliberate. "Jest say the word, sir. I'll snip the top-knot off'n the fust one."

"No shooting, Flashpan," admonished Munro sharply. "Not yet, anyway." Then to Beth: "The box—quick!"

The girl threw open a wooden case within the chest itself. Into this Munro reached, while Dan—well drilled in his part beforehand—struck a match. Applying the end of a long stick-like object to the flame, Munro pointed it above the heads of the on-forging warboats. A moment's pause, while the red fire fizzed as if from the end of his hand. Then—a soft puff and away went a ball of blue fire, arching over the nearest canoes. Then another of red hissed skyward, and another, and yet another as the Roman candle hurled its molten balls aloft.

Quick to catch the spirit of the occasion, Flashpan had stuck a pinwheel into

the raft's side and applied a light. The wheel spun faster and yet faster, throwing out its whorls of fire and sparks. Nor had Beth, Dan and Hanson been idle. From the raft there suddenly sprang skyward half a dozen rockets, rising in graceful parabolas and bursting aloft with varying effects to scatter their brightly colored stars. These were yet bursting when bundles of firecrackers, tied to the river-poles and held aloft, were spitting and barking; while Flashpan applied six-inch cannon-crackers to the nearest flame and hurled them gleefully in air, to crack with amazing volume of sound, rolling across the water like gun-fire—and all this in but that single moment of time.

One crowded moment of such display was more than enough to check the advance of the Indians. The hissing shafts fell no more. In their amazement and bewilderment the savages had forgotten to loose them, and sat as if paralyzed by the blinding pyrotechnics.

Meanwhile, roused from its sleep by the noise and excitement and brilliant lights on the river, all Hopeka was crowding to the gates and overflowing in colorful force upon the sandy riverbank. Cries of awe and pleasure and wonder greeted each brilliant eruption of a red-tailed rocket.

On the river itself the warriors only drifted, as the raft moved slowly shoreward, offering no barrier to its coming. And for this moment Munro had reserved the most brilliant of his fiery theatrics.

At every corner of the raft pinwheels now spun, interspersed with those long-burning "sparklers," throwing out their incandescent glitter. Fore and aft several flares burned with silent rosy glow. Amidships a tin of prepared combustibles threw up a blazing shower, volcano-wise. And as these burned lower, Munro prepared the grand finale—his largest rocket, to which he now touched a match.

The fuse fizzed; the rocket leaped on high, exploding soundlessly into a veritable cascade of blue, yellow, green and purple lights, which burst and burst again with wondrous coruscations into separate fan-formations of falling stars. And amid those falling stars Munro, followed by his little party, set foot upon the sands before the village of Hopeka.

All that he had hoped for of his display had been achieved. They enjoyed a momentary exemption from further hostile acts. To hold this gain, he would need to draw on other resources; but the worst moment was past, the ground prepared for planting the seed of friendship.

The populace, warriors included, were silent in awe, curiosity and fear. No injury was offered Munro as he stepped forward with upraised hands toward a band of several elderly chiefs pushing their way through the throng.

Before the others could speak, Munro had anticipated them. He began to talk in the Shoni syllables as he had learned them from Kioga. He conveyed his peaceful intentions. In the name of the Great Ones, he asked of the Shoni a bloodless reception for his friends and himself.

A moment the chiefs stood silent, startled by the strange white man's fluency in their own language. Then one of the older men stood forth imperiously.

"Come in peace," was his greeting. "And tell us why you are here. Tell us the meaning of these miracles you have just performed. For the night was day, and we were blinded as by the sun."

"We come from a far place, where the sun lives in winter," answered Munro. "Such miracles are common there. Men fly in the air and walk afar beneath the seas. Their lodges are like mountains. Their skins are white, like snow. Their numbers are like the needles of the pine-tree. Of those people am I. Men call me,"—and here Munro gave the name by which he is best known to red-skinned men on other continents,—"men call me Swift-hand. For behold! What I have, I have not!" And at this point the scientist smoothly caused a round stone to vanish from one hand, before their watching eyes. The chiefs gasped, for though the Indians of Nato'wa are not the gullible innocents which the first American ex-

plorers met, the wisest of men may be deceived by the magician's hand.

When Munro's interlocutor smiled, another seed was sown. "As Swift-hand we will know you," asserted the elderly chieftain. "Hopeka welcomes its white-skinned visitors."

Having negotiated for their safety thus successfully, Munro gestured to Flashpan and Dan to bring the chest they bore between them. Obeying, followed by Beth and Lars, they were conducted through Hopeka's gates toward the ceremonial ground.

Pausing at an open spot, Dan and Flashpan had set down the wicker chest, when the prospector bethought himself of one until now overlooked.

"Placer!" he roared. "Placer! Where are ye? Come to me, monk!"

Suddenly, with a startling noise, the cover of the chest flew up. Out in one flying bound, like the djinni from Aladdin's lamp, came the screeching Placer. But the effect his appearance had upon the whites was as nothing to the terror into which it threw most of the Indians. No one of them had ever hitherto dreamed of such a creature as Placer. The women, children and most of the men fell back, some with fear, others in amazement.

Indeed, garbed as a miniature pirate, still full of the fear which had prompted him to hide when the fireworks began to fly, Placer was an incarnation of Fright. Glimpsing Flashpan, he bounded upon his shoulder, only slowly to be calmed by the miner's soothing voice.

ONE by one the Indians took courage and approached, showing keen interest in this little exotic from another clime. Placer soon returned the interest in his own peculiar way, springing suddenly atop the shoulders of a medicine-man near by to do a little investigating on his own. Before the horrified shaman —a man of much decorum—decamped without dignity, Placer proudly flourished aloft his war-cap and medicine-rattle.

It was long before the Indians would approach where Placer sat. Only later did Munro learn that they at first believed him a deformed little man, turned monstrous by the scientist's magic. But soon, aware that little physical danger attended nearness to the monkey, the villagers were again crowding about the chest, wherefrom Flashpan produced toys and dolls for the naked children swarming about his knees. The tooting of tin flutes and the sound of tin harmonicas blown without regard to harmonics mingled with the shrill cries of the children struggling over possession of these delightful new trinkets. So another stone was laid in Munro's plan to gain tolerance for himself and his people by the giving of gifts.

While distributing these trifles in the top of the basket Flashpan had exposed the more desirable objects just beneath —the colored cloths, glittering steel knives, beads and needles. By now the more arrogant of the warriors had had some of their awe conquered by the strangers' manifest good-will. One in particular, a forward and bold young witch-doctor, presumed upon his position to dip suddenly into the chest and come up with a handful of choice articles. But he had reckoned without Flashpan, who realized that to allow the man to succeed in this first act would embolden all the others.

Hardly had the Indian risen, flourishing his new acquirements, when the miner's hand dropped upon his wrist. Little knowing with whom he had to deal, the Indian laughed derisively at the notion of this little man attempting to wrest away his new gains. Then the amazing grip of Flashpan began its work. A quick and unexpected twist caught the red man off guard and forced him to one knee. Caught in an unfavorable position, his superior strength availed not. Then the fingers at his wrist began tightening.

Munro, tense, was watching sharply. The outcome was of great importance to their prestige—a vital thing among Indians; but recalling an experience of his own with the mighty grip of Flashpan he smiled grimly. Of a sudden the shaman's

stoicism broke in a grimace of pain. The trade articles slipped from his hand back into the chest. Flashpan let go as suddenly as he had taken hold. The savage described an undignified twisting fall, amid the smiles of his own people.

Rising furiously, he walked a few paces away, then whirled suddenly and in a blind passion snatched a tomahawk from the nearest hand, making as if to hurl it at Flashpan's head. Simultaneously the miner's hand moved, flash-like. As by some magic there was a pistol in it—which exploded once.

Munro held his breath. But Flashpan had but fired at the tomahawk. The weapon flew from the startled Indian's hand to a spot near the palisade, leaving only its broken handle in the grasp of its wielder.

The savage rose, bewilderment on his face. The loud report, the acrid smoke of the gun, added to his throbbing swollen wrist and the superstition that this little man must be invincible, put an end to his hostile acts. He vanished forthwith into the crowds, followed by Indian laughter. All unknown to himself, Flashpan had already acquired prestige enough for several men among these red-skinned peoples—and with Munro, too. But the glance of the vanished shaman had boded no good. Flashpan had humiliated one of the most active members of the Long-knife Society.

Throughout this episode Placer the monk had been moving from shoulder to shoulder among the Indians. The whites could scarce forbear smiling at the uneasiness with which these bold and fearless people suffered the attentions of Flashpan's long-tailed pet, who paused at each scalp for investigations which were unsuccessful, for the Shoni are a very cleanly people. Discouraged, Placer finally desisted, and curling his tail about him, sat down upon the chest.

THAT night another incident occurred which was to affect the villagers in their estimation of these white visitors.

In the lodge of weeping Seskawa, an old woman who had long inhabited the village, a child lay dying from the bite of a poisonous snake—not of the cowled *koang*, whose bite is almost instant death, but a lesser viper, allied to the copperhead, as Munro's examinations of the killed snake later proved.

Seskawa appealed in frantic grief to the white scientist; and accompanied by a few chiefs and many curious, Munro went to the old crone's lodge, where two medicine-men were in attendance.

One was in the act of exorcising the poison from the child by chanting magic-songs. The other held one end of a long tube made of animal leg-bone between the child's bluing lips. Frequently he sucked at the tube, appeared to draw something into his mouth. Thereat he made wry grimaces, ground his teeth savagely, spat ostentatiously into his cupped hands, then made a great show of tearing something limb from limb.

Observing him, Flashpan scratched his head. "By the bones of Beelzebub! What's he a-doin'?" he demanded of Munro. In a whispered aside came the answer: "He's drawing out evil spirits, and chewing them up fine. But the poor patient is almost dead."

After a while Seskawa with righteous anger drove the medicine-men from the child. Kneeling at its side, Munro felt of the pulse. It was imperceptible. The blue-red puncture-marks of the snake's fangs showed in the badly swollen leg.

Munro's first act was to apply a tourniquet above the swelling to check the spread of the venom. Then he deeply cross-incised the fang-marks with a scalpel from his first-aid kit. Behind him the witch-doctors gasped at what to them was medical heresy.

After he had applied suction with a suction-bulb from his kit, Munro took a vial of permanganate crystals, sprinkling these sparingly into the open cut where the fangs had gone in. Then came a hypodermic of the serum his forethought had provided—which might or might not counteract the venom of this strange snake. So, moving the tourniquet slowly in advance of the swelling, and continuing his treatment with wet antiseptic pads, for several hours Munro worked over the all but lifeless child. But though the swelling subsided, the boy seemed little nearer life than before.

As a last resort Munro removed his shirt and held the child against his skin so that his warmth and strength might assist nature. Thus the hours passed, old Seskawa watching with dull sorrow, convinced that her great-grandchild was doomed.

But Munro knew better. He could feel the current of life moving softly through his patient's veins, and caught the strengthening flutter of the little heart. At midnight a shrill ear-piercing cry rose from the lodge of Seskawa. When the populace gathered round, the old woman threw open the entrance, that

all might pass in and witness the reality of the child's resurrection. Then she cried the praises of the scientist throughout the village. And men said of James Munro: "He has performed a miracle." But the discredited shamans found his success not to their liking and went away muttering jealously.

Among themselves the whites spoke freely in English, little thinking that there was one among their red-skinned listeners who could comprehend their words. Nor did Tokala the Fox betray himself. Who knew but what these white-skins had come to take him back to civilization and the hated reservation? A dreadful thought—but it did not prevent Tokala from being on hand when gifts were being passed out, or from starting a furtive friendship with Placer the monkey.

Lingering near the visitors' lodge he overheard much of their talk. Hearing then the Snow Hawk's name, at once he was all ears. And gradually, adding two and two together, he realized that here were friends seeking Kioga. The more he learned, the harder he listened, until his fearless presence won their attention.

"Here's one, at any rate," said Beth to Flashpan, slipping an arm around the boy, "who's not afraid of us." With that she smiled on Tokala, showing teeth that compared favorably even with Heladi's. The Fox, returning the smile, shyly slipped away.

On his way rushing home, Tokala met a man he knew and loved for a hundred lessons in shooting the arrow and throwing the knife. And unto Kias, newly entering Hopeka from a river journey, the boy told all he had overheard near the white men's camp. Awhile Kias thought on this. Then: "Perchance these be more friendly men than those of our skin," he said. "Yet if their tongue be not ours, how shall I talk with them?"

"They know the language of the hands," said Tokala.

"It is good," averred Kias. "Go, then, and tell Heladi."

Parting, each went his opposite way.

CHAPTER XIX

The Search—and What Was Found

IN a distant part of the village the excited Tokala flew into the lodge of Menewa to bring Heladi tidings of the white men's coming. He told her about each of the men he had seen, describing them in detail. Finally he spoke of the white-skinned woman who accompanied them—whereat Heladi looked up abruptly, stiffening with a sudden premonition.

"The white woman," she demanded of Tokala, "was she slender, with hair like dark wild honey?"

"Yes."

"Had she eyes the color of—of—"

"Gray—like the morning sky," offered Tokala as the girl hesitated. Then: "But why do you look at me so, Heladi?"

"It is—*she!*" whispered Heladi, scarce hearing Tokala's question, and heeding it not. She was recalling a painful scene a year ago: Kioga, accompanied by a wounded white man whom he had rescued from the stake at the cost of his standing among the Shoni, sat in a moving canoe. A lovely white woman, rescued from the renegade white men, sat before him. For these two Kioga had sacrificed all he held dear. For this woman he had all but destroyed himself. After an absence of long moons, he had returned with something changed within him—because of which Heladi hated this white-skinned young woman of bitter memory.

"*Ai!* It is she!" she repeated. But certain as Heladi was, she put aside her needlework. "Come, Tokala. Guide me thither. I would look on these white-skinned ones. I would know if—she—is more beautiful than Heladi."

Impetuously the boy hugged her. "No one could be, elder sister," he assured her with boyish adoration, in the English they sometimes used.

"We shall see," said Heladi quietly, laying aside her work. "Hand me my knife. And bring your spear."

And with that the pair set out for the white men's lodge.

SEATED in a new lodge which the grateful Seskawa had vacated for their benefit, the whites ate of the feast provided by their red-skinned hosts. Their meal was interrupted by Flashpan's low awed whistle as he poised a deer-rib chop in one hand and gazed up the street.

All eyes followed his to where an Indian girl moved down the lane between the lodges. Close beside her strode the lithe young dark-skinned Tokala, a lynx-kitten, half grown, straining in his grasp.

"Wal—cut my braids!" exclaimed Flashpan. "A chorus-gal!"

"By Jove!" breathed Munro. "She's better than that."

Even Hanson grunted a grudging agreement, and Beth caught her breath. "Oh, Dan! How lovely she is!"

Dan alone answered nothing. But in his eyes was something more than tribute as he looked upon this lithe Wacipi maid. Serene and outwardly composed, but for the flashing eyes that leaped among them, briefly stabbing each in turn, he would never forget her as he saw her this first time. For in that moment, while his gaze dwelt on her, Dan's whole life had changed.

One other too watched, suddenly tense with recollection. And as the eyes of Heladi met hers, Beth knew a moment of something resembling fear—fear that was quickly banished by admiration of the Indian girl. How lithe she was! What queenly poise, what bearing of a princess! And princess had Heladi been, indeed, did Shoni ways permit. Surely no man could look on her with unseeing eyes—and Kioga had known her well.

In Beth, Heladi saw her for whom Kioga had sacrificed all; and despite an instinctive antagonism arising out of this, primitive and civilized woman found one another of keenest mutual interest. Though whole worlds stood between them, they shared one thing in common: Both loved the Snow Hawk.

For long the eyes of these two women were locked in gaze, in the quick appraisal of their sex. Each in the other saw a threat to her own happiness.

Nor was this hostile tension lost upon Tokala, watching from Heladi's side. Though there was something here he did not understand, his loyalties were all with Heladi. To the white girl's smile this time he turned a face of stone.

BUT having held Beth's gaze those long full moments, Heladi turned to James Munro, he of the resurrected child, the magic hands, the performer of miracles. Munro could not but wonder at the strange expression in her face and eyes. So also had Seskawa looked —old Seskawa, whose great-grandchild had lain at death's door. It was as if this girl's eyes spoke at once of hope and yet of terrifying fear, probing him deep, weighing, betraying some strange deep yearning.

And so indeed it was with Heladi. The white medicine-man had restored life to a snake-bitten child. Might he not restore sight to one who was sightless? But not yet would she voice this thought. Another time, soon, when the eyes of others were not on her, she would come and bring the white man gifts and lay her plea before him. Until then the secret of Kioga's blindness would rest with her alone.

As she turned away, one she had noticed but fleetingly now stepped forward. Regarding her speechless until this moment, swayed by the strong appeal of this primitive beauty, young La Salle, in his limited command of the Shoni tongue, sought to bid her stay. But the words seemed to stick in Dan's throat. There are times when silence is a stronger pleader than speech itself. Perhaps this was one such time; for as Dan's eyes bespoke the feeling in his heart, Heladi's glance held his, as with interest. And as she slowly turned away, he saw what set his pulses leaping. A little smile played round her mobile curving mouth.

AFTER Heladi had gone, many others came to gaze at the white visitors. With danger to their persons no longer a matter of great concern, Munro looked about him with the interest of the student of races.

He saw in the Shoni a tall, handsome, cleanly and healthy race. But many were terribly disfigured by their contacts with the wild beasts of the forest.

Mortality from this cause was great. Tigers' depredations only last week had terrorized two smaller villages, and had caused their abandonment, the inhabitants coming to live in fortified Hopeka. With his own eyes Munro saw a panther speared down from a perch atop the palisade. It had been seen before it could hook its claws in the body of a child, hanging in its cradle-board just out of the animal's reach against the wall.

For this fierce boldness of the greater killers Munro blamed the Indian custom of scaffold-burial, which, as in other lands, breeds man-killers among tiger, panther and wolf by developing their taste for human flesh.

As is the way the world over with mountain peoples, the Shoni were proud, arrogant, fearful of none; given to periodic marauding against one another solely to acquire prestige. And their social system was therefore a fertile soil for the malcontents to dig in.

In the conversations to which Munro listened, there was frequent talk of the war-chief Kioga. To these the scientist attended closely. Tales of the Snow

Hawk's fate had lost nothing in the telling. Some there were who said he had been of those dead given to the water-spirits; others swore that even at this moment he was assembling a war-force to subdue Hopeka. Rumors from everywhere amply attested the amazing renown of Munro's young friend.

In the throng of red men the eye of Munro watched continually for the one who, of them all, might most probably know Kioga's fate. Oft had Kioga told of Kias, who had been friend of his boyhood and close ally in later years. But the name had escaped the memory of the scientist now; and he knew he must seek him not openly but in roundabout fashion; for of the undercurrents eddying in Hopeka he had become aware. He must wait, fathom the dark intrigues which filled Hopeka with strange unrest, and not till then inquire too persistently. No time, this, to show his hand!

His patience was rewarded. There came to the scientist's lodge a tall figure close-wrapped in a deer-skin blanket. The newcomer had come to Munro for treatment of wounds. One arm was hung in a crude sling, stained with blood. But when Munro would have drawn off the wrapping, the visitor gestured at the lodge.

With an imperceptible signal to Flash-pan to guard against possible treachery, Munro followed the Indian within. Pronouncing his name, Kias identified himself as the friend of the missing Snow Hawk. And from Kias, Munro learned the strange circumstances under which Kioga had returned to visit his people.

FOR the first time Munro had a clear picture of the troublous days confronting the Shoni tribes. For the first time he felt a foreboding of danger to come, a sensation that not all the world's diplomacy could avert the coming struggle for dominance between two forces within the Seven Tribes.

In this first talk with Kias was born in Munro's mind the need for a strategy of his own to protect his party and himself against the possible rise of bloody insurrection. Here, in Kias, was one of strong and fearless mold. How many more such might be found?

"Not two score," Kias assured him gloomily. "Men follow those whose force is greatest!"

"Here as elsewhere in the world," mused Munro. "But let us watch and listen. It may be we shall gain allies."

"If only Kioga were here! There's a name which would raise our numbers! With one hand he would crush the Long Knives. Around his torch a thousand men would rise."

"Then let us seek him," said Munro.

"To seek him is no use," answered the Indian heavily. "The wolves fed full. Kioga is no more." Whereupon he told Munro what he had seen on the river sands that night when with Tokala he had gone out to disprove or affirm, the Snow Hawk's death.

"Blind, Kioga may be," said Munro. "But dead—I cannot believe that."

"Where, then, went he?" asked Kias.

SIGNIFICANTLY Munro made answer:

"Where goes a wounded tiger? Where goes a wolf with broken bones—a bear whose eyes are arrowed out?"

"To the home lair," said Kias. Then suddenly comprehending, he rose quickly up, tense and eager. "*Ai!* If he lives, he will be near his hidden cave, of which he often spoke."

"And where is that cave?"

"Long journeys hence," the Indian replied, lowering his voice, "Somewhere in the forests of the Tsus-gina-i—the Ghost Country."

"You fear the dead?" asked Munro, eying Kias narrowly.

"I respect them," was the answer, "but I do not fear. Where Swift-hand would go, there I will lead."

"Well spoken," commended the white man. "Tonight we'll think on this. We need canoes and men to paddle them. We need a cause for leaving Hopeka, lest suspicion be aroused."

"No," denied the other. "You need but ask the chiefs. They'll dare not refuse the worker of your miracles. There are warriors known to me who will stand with us. Men of my mother's clan, good fighters all. Two stanch canoes will bear us."

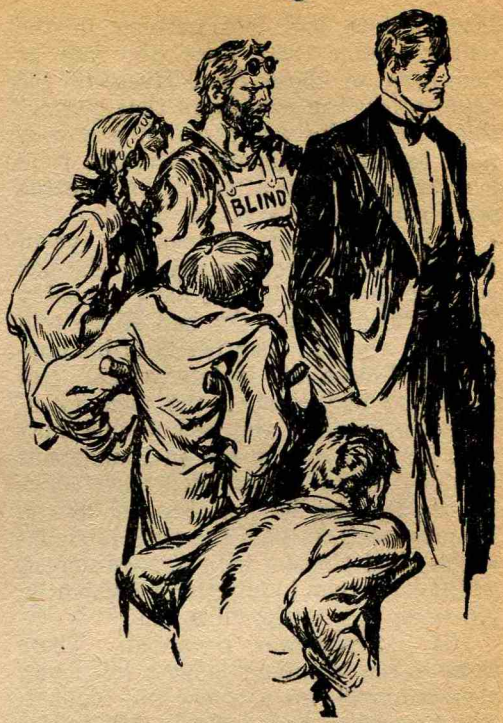
"Good! Tomorrow we will talk again." Then, smiling: "Will your wounds trouble you this night?"

Grinning in return, Kias affected anew the fiction of an injured hand, thrusting it back in the sling. "It will pain me when the sun comes up," he answered.

"Until then, good resting," said Munro as Kias left the lodge.

Even more exciting are the events which now follow in the next installment of this unique and brilliantly imagined novel.

Very Good



Duelists

IT was just after eight in the evening. Isaac Heron, who had just dined at the Savoy, came through the swinging glass doors; and a uniformed porter was about to beckon a taxi for him when the gypsy shook his head.

"No, thanks; I'll walk."

Once again the gypsy was in evening dress. Despite the stamp of Savile Row on his clothes, and their perfect fit to his slim, lithe body, Isaac Heron was always a slightly incongruous if striking figure in this garb. The brown face, the aquiline nose, the jet-black hair and the oblique eyes definitely marked the gypsy blood in him. Yet an inheritance from his English father, plus a university education, made him very different from the ordinary Romany. And when a lucky chance had enabled him to help Scotland Yard catch a murderer, he discovered in himself a real detective talent.

Just as he was turning into the Strand, his searching gaze discovered a beggar cringing against the wall. Dangling from the neck of the beggar was a brass plate with the single word *Blind* engraved on it. Dark blue spectacles covered the eyes; a grimy fist held a collection of match-boxes.

A murmur of sympathy came from Heron. He plunged a hand into his pocket and brought forth half a crown.

"Take this," he said.

The result was startling. The blind beggar seemed to peer from beneath his blue spectacles at the gypsy in evening dress. He brought the half-crown to his lips, spat disgustedly upon it, and flicked it across the pavement into the gutter.

"I don't take money from dirty police spies," he snarled. "I was sent here to give you this."

And he thrust a folded piece of dirty paper at Isaac Heron, and the next moment he had cringed away into the darkness, away from the glittering lights.

Surprised, the gypsy stared after him. Then he looked down at the piece of paper. Standing there, while theater-going crowds jostled past and taxies slurred alongside, he read a strange note scrawled in the Romany language. It was couched like a proclamation:

A Brother of the Black Tents declares that you are a police spy. You have been seen in company with those of Scotland Yard. Many of the brethren have suffered from the police. It is contrary to our law that one of the brothers should work with the police.

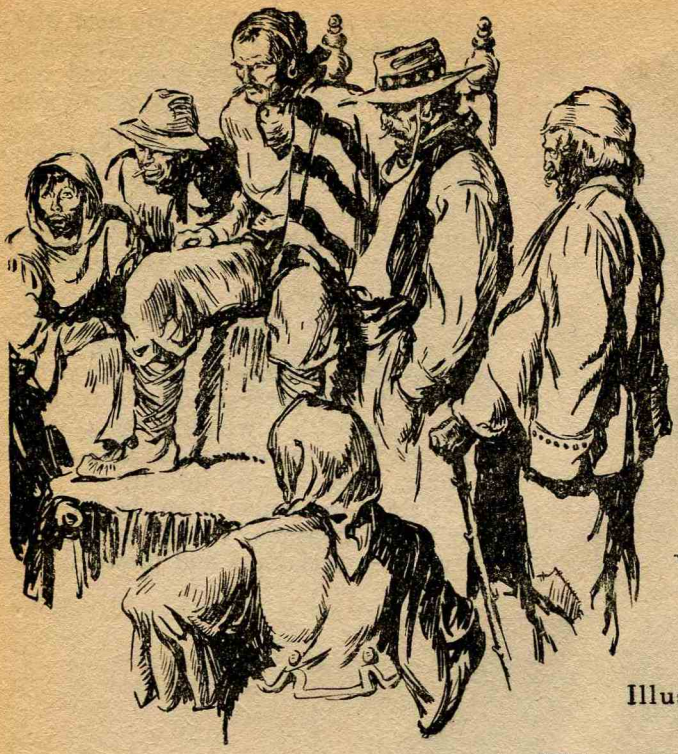
Know then, Isaac Heron, that tonight at eight o'clock the Brothers of the Black Tents and the Beggars of London are meeting in their usual cellar at John Street, Adelphi, to try you on this serious charge. Whether you are present or not, sentence will be pronounced. And if you are found guilty, the penalty of death will follow you to the four winds of the earth.

Signed by me, Raymond Dager
King of all the Gypsies.

Twice, Isaac Heron read that strange note, scrawled upon a piece of dirty paper. It seemed fantastically unreal that a man in evening dress, who had just dined well and was on his way to see a performance of the Russian Ballet, should be reading such a note in the cheerful glitter of the Strand.

"Good evening, sir!"

A constable, slowly perambulating, saluted Isaac Heron, standing there.



A fascinating novelette in which a congress of beggars and gypsies, meeting in the heart of London, condemn the detective Isaac Heron to death, and in fantastic fashion try to carry out the sentence.

By
WILLIAM J. MAKIN

Illustrated by Harvé Stein

in the Dark

More than one constable had seen the gypsy in company with Detective Inspector Graves of Scotland Yard, and the uncanny powers of detection possessed by this man with the keen mahogany features were well known and appreciated.

"Good evening, constable," replied Heron.

He screwed the note into his pocket. His forehead was creased with a frown. So they had dared to call him a police spy! Even the beggar spat disgustedly upon his charity and flung it into the gutter. And behind this was the high-flown declaration of Raymond Dager, who called himself "King of all the Gypsies."

"Raymond Dager," mused Heron. "I've heard much of you. And now you are in London, we're going to meet."

He took a piece of paper from his pocket and tore it to shreds. But it was not the dirty proclamation, but his ticket for an orchestra stall at the Russian Ballet.

With a quick determination he walked a few paces along the Strand, then turned down a side-street. Beyond him was the river, creeping with mist. Tugs hooted in the queer darkness.

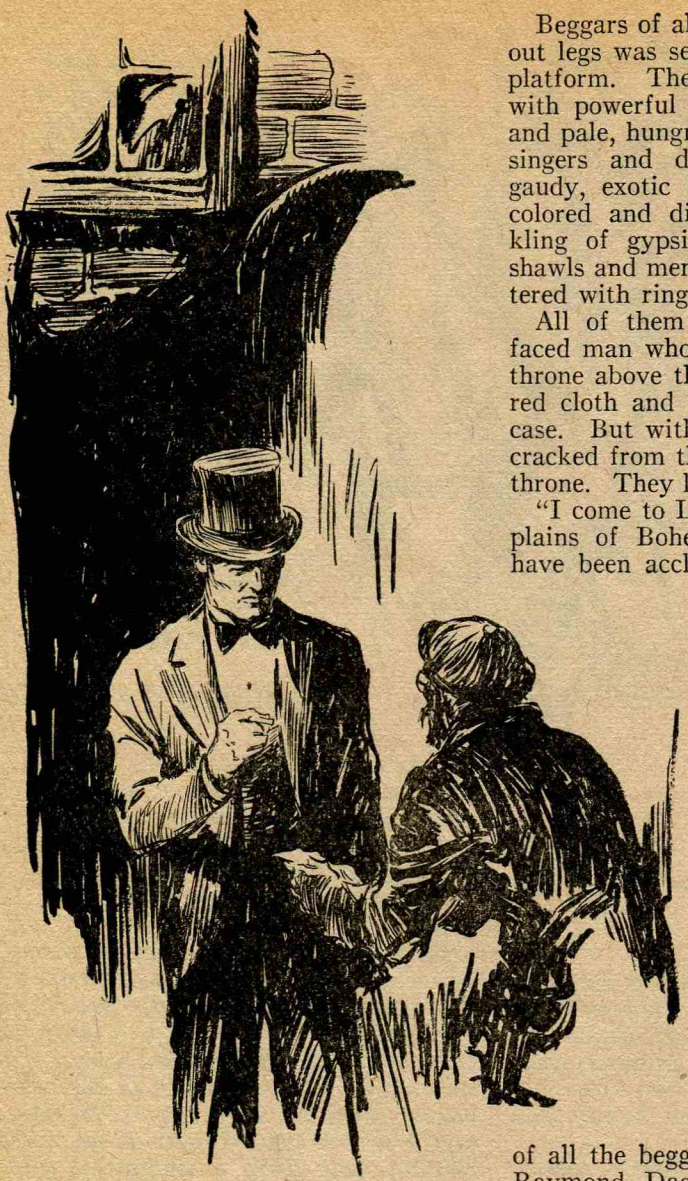
Once again he turned a corner. He was in John Street, Adelphi.

Beneath the fluted façade of one of those beautiful London houses built by the Adams brothers, the gypsy discovered a row of railings that led to a flight of stone steps, downward. Not a light was showing either in the house or the basement. Even the street was in darkness, except for the lighted foyer of the Little Theater that flung a comforting glow across the road some yards behind him.

Like a man dropping into the bowels of the earth, the body, then the shoulders and finally the head of Isaac Heron disappeared down those steps. A well-oiled door opened easily. The gypsy, whose catlike eyes glowed strangely in the darkness, did not hesitate, but plunged forward.

The dank smell of the Thames and these rat-infested cellars came pungent to the gypsy's nostrils. Some twenty yards along the passage, he was confronted by another door. He tugged it open, and found himself again with a short flight of steps at his feet.

But for a moment he paused there, looking on at a queer scene. A large,



The blind beggar seemed to peer from beneath his blue spectacles. "I don't take money from dirty police spies," he snarled. "I was sent here to give you this." And he thrust a piece of paper at Heron.

roomy cellar was lit by odd pieces of candle stuck about the walls and on the floor. There must have been a hundred candles; and by their flickering light the hunched, huddled figures of men and women could be discerned.

IT was as though the underworld of London had spewed its queerest characters into that cellar. Hunchbacks, like gnomes, squatted together in a group. Blind men, most of them really blind, sat there with sticks between their knees. Many had the tin cups into which coppers rattled, dangling from their necks. And among them was the blue-spectacled man whom Isaac Heron had met in the Strand.

Beggars of all kinds! One man without legs was seated on a little traveling platform. There were one-legged men with powerful crutches. Maimed men, and pale, hungry-looking women. Street-singers and dope-peddlers. And like gaudy, exotic flowers among this dun-colored and dirty crowd was a sprinkling of gypsies—women with colored shawls and men whose swarthy ears glittered with rings.

All of them faced a swarthy, cruel-faced man who sat on something like a throne above them—a chair draped in a red cloth and perched upon a packing-case. But with a whiplike sting, words cracked from the lips of the man on the throne. They listened intently.

"I come to London from the far-away plains of Bohemia, to tell you that I have been acclaimed and crowned king of all the beggars and gypsies. It is I, Raymond Dager, who speaks to you, who is here to bless you, my subjects."

In an almost mocking gesture, he spread his brown hands above their heads.

"And I tell you, beggars and gypsies of London," he went on, "that I demand obedience in the name of the Brothers of the Black Tents. Already I have been told that there is a spy in our midst, one Isaac Heron, who—"

The lash of that voice ceased, suddenly. The dark, blazing eyes had raised themselves, and glimpsed the man in evening dress standing on the edge of the cellar. A cruel gleam came to his eyes, a sinister smile to his mouth.

"So you have dared to face us," he said quietly.

As one man, the beggars and gypsies in the cellar twisted their heads.

"It is the gentleman gypsy?"

"Isaac Heron himself."

"The son of the Romany Rye."

The whispers floated toward him. Slowly Heron descended the steps and walked toward that figure on the throne. Instinctively, the maimed and the crippled shrank away from him.

"I have decided to face you, Raymond Dager," nodded Isaac Heron.

LIKE an encircling army, the beggars and gypsies closed in behind the figure in evening dress.

"At least you have the courage of a true Romany," sneered the man on the throne. "But there is also the blood of a Gorgio in you."

"Of which I am not ashamed," said Heron quietly. "At least, I do not pretend. I am no seeker of titles. It is you who dare, Raymond Dager, to come here, and call yourself king of all the gypsies."

The dark eyes facing him narrowed.

"I have been acclaimed and crowned on the plains of Bohemia," said Dager.

"Nevertheless I say you are no king of the gypsies," went on Isaac Heron, quietly. "The royal caravan of our true king, Michel Kweig, is still in Rumania. And you know it."

A murmur arose among the crowd. It ceased as the man on the throne rose and held up his hand.

"So this is the man I find so many of you respect," he whipped out. "This man whom one of the brothers has called a police spy. Why, he stands confessed, half Gorgio."

The lashing voice of the pretender had its effect upon that gathering of beggars and gypsies. Raymond Dager knew his power and utilized it well.

"I come to visit my kingdoms," he went on, "to enter into your tents and break salt with you. And what do I find? A man who luxuriates in cities, who feeds in the pig-sties of the rich, and who has forgotten the smell of woodsmoke. A white-livered Gorgio!"

"He speaks the truth!" shouted the blind beggar with the blue spectacles.

"He speaks lies," shouted Isaac Heron in turn.

The roar of dispute swept toward him.

"Let us see who is speaking lies," shrilled Raymond Dager, his swarthy face alight with passion. "Let the brother stand forth who declares Isaac Heron a police spy."

"Aye, let him stand forth!" roared the crowd.

Hands and bodies were thrusting a man forward into that circle lit by the flickering candles—a sneaking, hungry-looking man whom Isaac Heron had never seen before. He knew, at first glimpse, however, that the man had come from the plains of Bohemia recently. He was foreign to the English gypsies.

The man's shirt was open at the chest. He thumped it, dramatically.

"I, Pandomescro, tell you that Isaac Heron is a police spy. I have seen him with my own eyes go into Scotland Yard. He has helped the cursed ones of the police again and again."

"Do you deny that?" asked the self-styled king of the beggars.

"I do not deny it," replied Isaac Heron quietly.

A mutter of disapproval went round the crowd.

"And maybe you have brought your police spies here tonight?" sneered Raymond Dager.

At this, there was a flutter of alarm. The legless man on his platform began to wheel himself toward the steps. The blind beggars stood up with their sticks. But Isaac Heron faced them, his hands held high.

"Be not afraid, brothers," he shouted. "I am no traitor."

"Nevertheless we will make sure," nodded Dager; and he whispered instructions to some of his followers, who went up the steps and along the passage.

"I have said that I have helped the police," went on Isaac Heron, still holding out his hands. "I am not ashamed of it. Where murder has been done, I have helped to find the murderer. In this country the spilling of blood is a crime. And whether the criminal be Gorgio or Romany, he deserves to pay the penalty."

"No, no!"

"Yes, of course."

"I tell you—*no.*"

Shouts and counter-cries greeted this.

"This police spy has caused some of our bravest brothers to dangle at the rope's end!" shouted the gypsy who had denounced Heron.

"That's a lie!" cried Heron.

BEGGARS, cripples and gypsies surged forward. The two men faced each other. Poised aloof, Raymond Dager smiled evilly. A crooked thought had come into his mind, and his voice came

through the tumult, a dangerous acid quality in it.

"Brothers!" he said. "Here are two men who throw the lie into each other's faces. There is only one way in which it can be decided. This matter must be settled as we have always done it on the plains of Bohemia—by blood."

"Yes, that's right!"

"Let them fight!"

"Blood!"

Like dogs they yapped. Isaac Heron faced them unmoved. But the gypsy who had denounced him, paled. He gave a swift look around, and caught the gaze of Dager, followed by a significant nod. It partly reassured him.

LIKE a receding sea, the roar died away. Isaac Heron took advantage of that lull.

"You talk like a fool, Raymond Dager," he said. "This is England—London. No duels are fought here."

"Ah! So the police spy is frightened, eh?" laughed the man on the throne. "He might even dangle at the end of a rope himself. That would be real justice, brothers!"

And his chuckle carried a chill with it.

With a dramatic gesture, two daggers were thrown to the ground.

"I tell you I will not fight," said Heron quietly.

Dager raised himself from his throne.

"But we will make you fight, Isaac Heron," he announced with an evil grin. He stretched forth his hands. "Gather round, brothers, and hear my plans for these two men to make a duel to the death."

The cripples, the beggars, the blind, the gypsies—they came forward like a wave. Isaac Heron felt their hot breath upon him. This crowd wanted blood, and shrewdly Raymond Dager knew it.

"Not a hundred yards away," smiled the king of the beggars, "is the ideal dueling-ground for these two. All of you know it well—the dark tunnels that are called the Adelphi Arches."

"Aye, we know it."

"Many of us sleep there."

"Many of us have died there."

The crowd knew it well.

"A slimy hole, where many of us shiver and die in the winter," nodded Raymond Dager. "And only a step from that lighted trench of this great city, the Strand. A fit place for a gypsy duel!"

And he enfolded the crowd in the cellar with his evil smile.

"My plan is this," he went on: "Two of the brothers will escort Isaac Heron to the Strand end of the tunnel. Two others will take Pandomescro to the other end by the river. Then we give the signal. Alone, each of the duelists will walk into that tunnel of darkness from opposite ends. Each will carry a revolver. Somewhere in the darkness they will meet." With an expressive gesture, he shrugged. "Only one of them will come out of that tunnel alive."

"Yes, yes!"

"A fair duel!"

"He who lies shall die!"

The idea appealed to the crowd.

"And I tell you that I will fight no such duel!" shouted Isaac Heron, turning his back upon that sneering figure on the throne.

He started to walk toward the steps and the door. But like a circle of watching rats, the beggars and cripples encircled him. He progressed a couple of yards. The legless cripple on his platform was before him. A brutalized face stared up at him.

"Are you going to kick me out of the way, Gorgio?" asked the cripple.

Even the blind men tapped their way closer. The hungry faces, hungry now for a gypsy duel, closed in upon him. Isaac Heron raised his arms. He felt a sudden grip upon them. Two powerful gypsies were standing at either side. He was their prisoner.

"Very well, let us go," he sighed.

The beggars and cripples fell aside. In a tense silence the prisoner and his escort walked up the steps, along the passage, up another flight of steps and into John Street.

Isaac Heron felt the prod of a gun in his side. The members of his escort were taking no chances.

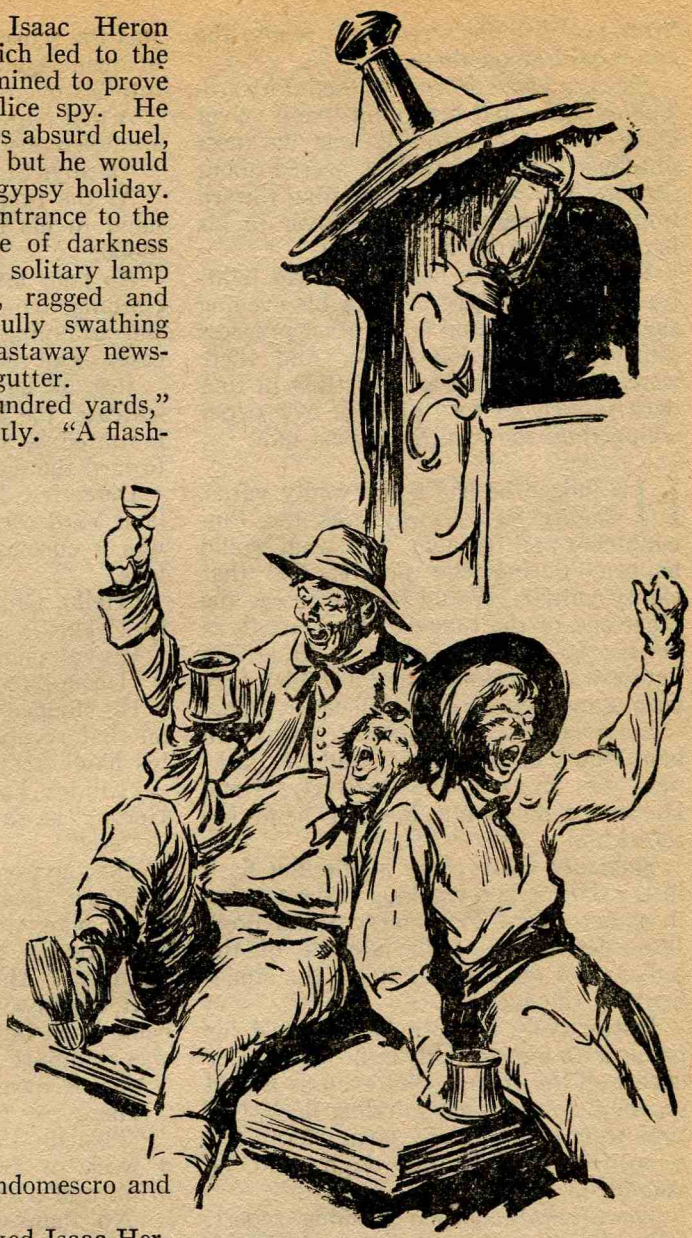
The fantastic adventure continued. Isaac Heron and his escort reached the Strand. They merged with the crowd, and walked past the Tivoli, where a poster and show of lights announced that a New York underworld drama of the films was being shown.

ALMOST at the entrance to that slit between the buildings that led to the Adelphi Arches stood that policeman who had greeted Isaac Heron earlier in the evening. Once again he nodded, and the gypsy half-opened his mouth to cry out a warning. But from the pockets of their overcoats, the guns of his escort prodded him threateningly.

Obediently, therefore, Isaac Heron entered that dark slit which led to the arches. He too was determined to prove that he was no mere police spy. He would go through with this absurd duel, risk his life if necessary; but he would shed no blood to make a gypsy holiday.

Now they were at the entrance to the arches, and the half-circle of darkness loomed before them. One solitary lamp revealed an old woman, ragged and homeless, who was carefully swathing herself for the night in castaway newspapers retrieved from the gutter.

"The distance is two hundred yards," said one of the escort quietly. "A flash-lamp will signal when Pandomescro and his escort are there."



Wandering musicians, horse-dealers, vagabonds—all had gathered to celebrate the coronation. Strange primitive songs were being chanted . . . wine and beer passed from hand to hand. The whole gypsy city gave itself over to a bacchanale.

"And the weapons?" asked Isaac Heron.

"Revolvers. One will be put into your hand as you enter. You should meet somewhere in the middle of the tunnel."

"And afterward?"

There was a significant shrug of the shoulders from one of the escort.

"The survivor must make his own getaway. By the way, I suggest, Heron, that you cover that white shirt-front of yours. It makes an easy mark, even in the darkness."

Isaac Heron drew his overcoat across and buttoned it at the throat. In the tense silence that followed, he could hear the comforting roar and rumble of traffic in the Strand a hundred yards away. And oblivious to these exciting happenings, a constable was standing outside a cinema.

"There's the signal!" whispered the escort. Three flashes from an electric torch had come from the other end of the tunnel. "Pandomescro is walking toward us. In you go!"

A revolver was thrust into Heron's hand, and a quick push from the other man sent him stumbling into that dank darkness. His first impulse was to turn and come out again. But he realized he would have to shoot his way to the

Strand. With their revolvers ready, the escort still stood there.

Slowly, Isaac Heron walked forward. The darkness fell upon him like a velvet cloak over his head; it was darkness unrelieved. His gypsy eyes peered about desperately. Somewhere, coming toward him, was a man with a revolver in his hand, and murder in his heart.

Instinctively, he began to tread lightly. But the cobbles beneath his evening shoes were slimy and made quiet progress difficult, almost impossible. And there were queer stirrings and rustling in that dark tunnel. A torn piece of newspaper whipped by the wind went past him.

HE judged he had gone twenty yards. Eighty yards away was the Embankment and freedom. But what would happen, during the progress of that eighty yards? Would he live to see the other end of the tunnel? He started, as he nearly stumbled over a squatting figure in the darkness, and a sodden face with a toothless grin stared up at him.

Forty yards. Pandomescro, gun in hand, must be near now. And the darkness was intense. Instinctively, Isaac Heron stretched out his left hand before him.

Suddenly there came a blinding flash in the darkness, a crashing reverberation in that tunnel. Pandomescro had fired. Isaac Heron heard the whistle of the bullet, and the thud as it hit the stonework of the tunnel.

Instinctively his own hand jerked his revolver to aim at that flash. His finger curled on the trigger; but even as he did so, there was another blinding flash, this time from behind him. Isaac Heron felt a searing pain in his thigh, and he stumbled.

There came another crashing report, followed by a high-pitched scream. There was no mistaking it: was the death-cry of Pandomescro. Isaac Heron heard the thud of a body against the cobbles.

Recovering himself, he stumbled forward. Forgotten was the pain in his thigh and the revolver still clutched in his hand. His only object was to get out of that nightmarish darkness and reach the other end of the tunnel. A chill had gripped his heart. Ten yards more, and he would be free. But even as he reached the end of the tunnel, he heard the shrilling of police whistles in the distance.

The cold wind of the river came to the gypsy's perspiring face. He had reached the Embankment. Behind him was the scurrying of feet and the shouts of men. Quickly he thrust the revolver into his overcoat pocket.

A taxi crawled past. He hailed it, and stumbled inside, faint with pain.

"Jermyn Street!" he said to the driver.

As the taxi rumbled away he put his hand to his thigh. It was sticky with blood. . . .

An hour later Heron had changed his clothing, bandaged the flesh-wound and was tumbling a few things into a suitcase. The revolver lay upon the table.

Just as he snapped the locks of his suitcase, the bell of his flat rang. Heron hesitated a moment; then he walked toward the door and opened it.

Detective Inspector Graves of Scotland Yard was standing there; and there was a curious expression on that dour face.

"Hello, Graves!" said the gypsy easily. "This is an unexpected call."

Graves nodded, and entered.

"Unexpected," he repeated, "and—"

He stopped. His gaze had rested upon that revolver on the table. Quickly his hand stretched out and took it.

"I didn't know you carried a revolver, Heron," he said significantly.

"No?"

The gypsy hesitated. The worst seemed to have happened. The Scotland Yard man walked into the bathroom. The evening suit, bloodstained, was lying there. Graves picked it up, looked at it, and shook his head sadly. Then he came back into the lounge where Heron was standing. He observed the suitcase.

"Going away, eh?" he suggested.

The gypsy nodded.

"Thought I'd get away from town for a week or so," he replied. "Have a drink and a cigarette, Graves."

"No, thanks."

THERE was a grim tone in the Inspector's voice.

"Well, why the visit?" smiled Heron.

"A matter of murder," said Graves shortly.

"Sorry, but I can't let that interfere with my holiday," said Heron, taking a cigarette from the box and lighting it. "This time you must discover the murderer yourself, Graves."

"I have," replied Graves shortly.

The gypsy extinguished the match.

"And who is he?" he asked.

Graves gulped.

"Heron, this is the most difficult job I've ever had in my career—"

"Go on!" encouraged the gypsy.

"Isaac Heron," said Graves with an effort, "I arrest you for the murder of the gypsy Pandomescro, in the Adelphi Arches this evening. And it is my duty to warn you that anything you may say will be used in evidence against you."

There was silence for a moment.

"So Pandomescro is dead, eh?" said Heron.

"Killed by a bullet fired from this revolver," said Graves, holding up the gun. "You were seen by a constable to enter the Adelphi Arches a few minutes before the shooting occurred. I might also tell you that three gypsies have made statements that you had arranged a duel to the death with Pandomescro, and that you shot him in the darkness of the tunnel."

"I see." There was a strange calmness in Isaac Heron's voice. "I'm sorry, Graves. This must be a bad moment for you."

"It is," replied Graves miserably.

"But at least I can point out one thing to you," went on the gypsy. "You've only to look at that revolver to see I haven't even fired it."

Graves hesitated. Then, quickly, he opened the gun. His lips tightened. He slanted the barrel at the light and glanced through it. Then he shook his head.

"It isn't like you to lie, Heron. This gun *has* been fired. One bullet is missing. And it is a bullet of the same caliber that killed Pandomescro."

Isaac Heron started. He stared down at the gun in Graves' hands. There was no doubt about it. One of the chambers was empty. And there was the smear of powder along the barrel. So Raymond Dager had tricked him nicely—had arranged for the escort to thrust the revolver, with one chamber fired, into his hand at the last moment!

But had he fired? He tried to remember the details of those awful mo-

The bony hand of the toothless old crone stretched out for the second card. A twist of her wrist and it came, face upward. The ace of spades! "Death—ugly death—so soon!" mumbled the old woman.

ments in the darkness of the tunnel. He remembered leveling the gun at the first flash. His fingers had curled about the trigger, and—

"Better come along with me, Heron," the Scotland Yard man was saying. "I have two men down below, and—"

He got no further. Isaac Heron's fist shot out and caught the Inspector fairly on the jaw. With a grunt, Graves slid to the floor.

"Sorry, old man," muttered the gypsy, gazing down at the prone figure. "But this affair has got to be cleared up."

He seized the suitcase and let himself quietly out of the flat. A few seconds later he was stepping down the fire-escape at the back of Jermyn Street.

"And now for the king of all the gypsies!" he muttered to himself.

"SO there's to be a coronation at the gypsy camp in Kent tonight!" murmured Detective Inspector Graves.

The constable, who had placed a typewritten slip on his desk, nodded.

"Yes sir. It's that gypsy city at Belvedere. More than two thousand gypsies live there, in caravans, tents and any kind of shanty. The land is owned by a gypsy, so that they have a perfect right to be there."

"You can't move 'em on, eh?"

"No sir." The constable did not appreciate the humor of the remark. "Not that they give much trouble, sir. The only time we were called upon to interfere was when a razor fight started among a group that had just landed in England. Otherwise they keep well on the right side of the law. That's why they've notified the local police of the junketings which will go on this evening."

"And who is to be king of the gypsies?" asked Graves.

"A queer-looking Romany whose name is Raymond Dager," replied the constable. "His papers are quite in order. He came over from Bohemia about six weeks ago."

"Just about the time Isaac Heron disappeared," sighed Graves.

"That's the man wanted for the Adelphi Arches murder, isn't he?" asked the constable.

The Scotland Yard man nodded, and instinctively stroked his chin. That farewell gesture of Isaac Heron's was still a sore point with him.

"I wonder if he'll be at this coronation?" he mused.

"We've been through that camp twice searching for Isaac Heron," said the constable. "No luck, though."

"Every gypsy camp in the country: Blackpool, Lincolnshire, the Midlands—have all been searched," muttered Graves bitterly. "And no sign of him. I guess he must have gone abroad."

"It's easy enough for a gypsy to hide himself, sir," said the constable.

"Too easy," agreed Graves. "And even a reward hasn't tempted any of the brothers."

At local police stations throughout the country, bills were still pasted on boards offering a reward of £250 for information which would lead to the capture of Isaac Heron, gypsy, wanted for murder. But not even a whisper of the existence of that strange character had been given to the police. It seemed that the four winds of heaven had blown him away from all human ken.

"He'll turn up before long, sir," nodded the constable. "Or some one will turn him up."

Detective Inspector Graves sighed. "Perhaps. But be sure to have the local police to keep an eye upon those celebrations tonight in Kent. It's always possible that Heron may be there."

"He's a dangerous character, isn't he, sir?" ventured the constable.

Again Graves stroked his chin.

"Very," he replied dryly; and with that the constable was dismissed.

EVEN as the constable tramped along the corridors of Scotland Yard, however, an unusual happening had occurred in the green fields of Kent.

A five-seater airplane which had just crossed the Channel from France appeared to have developed engine trouble. It circled lower and lower, as though the pilot was seeking a landing-place. Suddenly the engine was silenced, and with a *swish-swish* of the wings, the plane glided to earth and came to a rest in the center of a field.

Immediately four figures stepped out of the plane. They were all dressed in the rough peasant fashion of Rumania; their legs were swathed and criss-crossed with pieces of hide. One of them, who wore a dark sheepskin coat, seemed to be the leader of the group, for he approached the figure of the pilot, who was still sitting in the cockpit.

"Thanks very much, Anstruther," he said in perfect English. "I won't forget this good deed."

The young pilot grinned.

"That's all right, Heron. Better get yourself and the brigands out of the way before old Farmer Giles arrives. Good-by and good hunting."

Heron and the three strangely garbed gypsies faded away into the hedge that lined the field. Five minutes later they were tramping a lane that led to the gypsy town of Belvedere.

At the same time the young English pilot was shouting to a farmhand who had appeared on the scene and was staring vacantly at the unusual sight of an airplane in the middle of a field.

"I've run out of petrol," shouted the pilot. "Can you telephone the nearest village to send me some?"

"Surely!" nodded the yokel.

And he set off toward the farmhouse.

A QUEER city in the heart of Kent: along one side flows the River Thames; on the other is the electric railway that runs to Dartford. And in between, a huddle of huts, caravans and tents housing the biggest collection of gypsies in England.

Dusk was falling as the four strange men made their way to the gypsy city; already a huge bonfire had been lighted in the center of the camp, and in the evening air the strains of Tzigane fiddlers could be heard.

The four men who were approaching the city muttered among themselves in the Calo tongue.

"The pretender is doing things in style, brothers."

"Perhaps he has even secured a crown for himself."

"And maybe a queen."

"A queen!" It was Isaac Heron who spoke. "I had heard nothing of that."

"It is but a rumor, brother," said one of the other gypsies. "Nevertheless, it came on the winds."

"Careful!" warned Heron. "We near the pretender's guard."

They had reached a broken iron gate through which a muddy path led toward that cluster of caravans and tents. Standing there was a powerful gypsy armed with a heavy cudgel. He advanced upon the four men.

"Who are you, strangers?" he asked, gazing suspiciously at their dress.

It was Heron who replied:

"We are brothers of the black tents," he said easily in the Calo tongue. "And we are lately come from across the water. We have been told that the king of all the gypsies is to be crowned here today. So we are come to pay our respects."

The man at the gate hesitated.

"Are you for Raymond Dager or Michel Kweig?" he demanded.

Isaac Heron spat disgustedly on the ground.

"That for Michel Kweig!" he snarled. "He lives in luxury and grows fat in the royal caravan of Rumania. We are come to shout for Raymond Dager."

"For Raymond Dager!" repeated the other three.

The burly gypsy smiled, and pushed open the gate.

"Enter, brothers! You will be welcomed by all Romany."

They were in the gypsy city. Besides the thousands who lived on that strip of land, hundreds of visitors had arrived from gypsy camps throughout Britain. Groups greeted and kissed each other everywhere. Strange primitive songs were being chanted. And round the crackling bonfire in the center of the city, Tzigane fiddlers from London restaurants played with a fierce ecstasy that caused many to fling themselves into wild dances that stirred the dust.

BEER and wine in cups went from hand to hand. Isaac Heron and his companions squatted in a group and accepted the liquor and food that came their way. Dark, flashing eyes gazed at them as they drank. Should wine be spilled, then tragedy would surely follow. But the four gypsies drank calmly and without hesitation.

Gaudy shawls and colorful dresses swirled everywhere. Fortune-telling gypsies, men and women from the fairs, wandering musicians, horse-dealers, vagabonds and beggars—all had gathered to celebrate the coronation of a new gypsy king. Only occasionally was there a mutter of protest and a shrugging of shoulders. One old crone, half bent to the ground, went about mumbling:

"What has happened to Michel Kweig? He was a real gypsy king."

She came face to face with the four men in peasant garb.

"Here are Romanies from the far-distant plains," she shrieked. "Tell me what has happened to Michel Kweig!"

Again Isaac Heron spat out his response.

"Michel Kweig grows fat and lazy in his caravan. Let us have a king who will fight and shed blood."

"Aiee! Well spoken!" cackled the hag, and stumped away.

To a mad saraband played by the fiddlers, a young girl was dancing wildly. The gypsies clapped their hands and roared encouragement. Her wide full skirt whirled in the fierce caperings and twists of her lithe body. The slim brown legs without stockings or shoes danced as only those of a gypsy could. And the wind blew her tangled black hair so that she seemed the very embodiment of the dance and the mad saraband.

BUT there came a trumpet blast through the city that transfixed everyone, even the dancer. The fiddlers faltered; the shouts and murmurs fell away.

Following the blast of the trumpet came the sound of a single voice:

"Women, to your tents. Hide your faces. The king of all the gypsies, Raymond Dager, approaches."

There was the scurry and flurry of skirts; women ran hither and thither. But all with a purpose. They dived into caravans, tents and huts. In less than a minute the city seemed deserted of women. Only the men remained, still transfixed.

Isaac Heron glanced at his companions. In their swarthy faces burned a quick anger. He whispered to them.

"Remember, brothers! We must but watch and have patience."

Once again the trumpet blared. Then, from the distance, came the chanting of a choir. It was a religious song, with a fierce Wagnerian quality in it. The sound of the singing came nearer. Then the watchers by the bonfire saw the choir itself. Some sixty men dressed in gaudy clothes walked solemnly in this processional.

They formed themselves into a huge circle around the bonfire. Then came another group of men who sweated and panted beneath the burden of a wooden throne placed on poles, the whole covered with rich carpets. And seated on the throne, bowing regally, that evil smile still on his face, was Raymond Dager, the man who dared to call himself king of all the gypsies.

His brown hands, covered with cheap jewelry, spread out in benediction on that sea of brown faces. Slowly the throne was carried forward, and placed in position several yards from the bonfire.

The chant of the choir rose to a shrill pitch. Then from out of the brown throng there advanced three old men. They were the oldest in the gypsy camp; and for this great occasion they wore long yellow robes. One carried a scepter, another a chain of golden coins, and the third a crown.

"He has dared to imitate the Holy Chain!" snarled one of the gypsies at Isaac Heron's side.

"And a crown!" added another.

"Patience, brothers!" insisted Isaac Heron. "Can you not see that they are cheap and worthless copies of our real king's regalia?"

The three old men in yellow robes advanced to the throne and made deep obeisance. Raymond Dager waited; his jeweled fingers alone drummed impatience.

The old men were mumbling the ritual of gypsy coronation. Then one of them advanced and placed the chain of golden coins over his shoulders. Another mumble, and the scepter was placed in his hands. Then came the great moment. The third old man advanced and placed the crown upon the sleek dark head of Raymond Dager.

"And by this crown I do declare thee king of all the gypsies."

"King of all the gypsies!" shouted the whole assembly in unison.

Raymond Dager rose from his throne, his jeweled hand uplifted for silence.

"I declare," he cried, in that whip-like voice, "that I will be faithful to the gypsy traditions and protect my people against our enemies. And I demand, in turn, loyal obedience from all!"

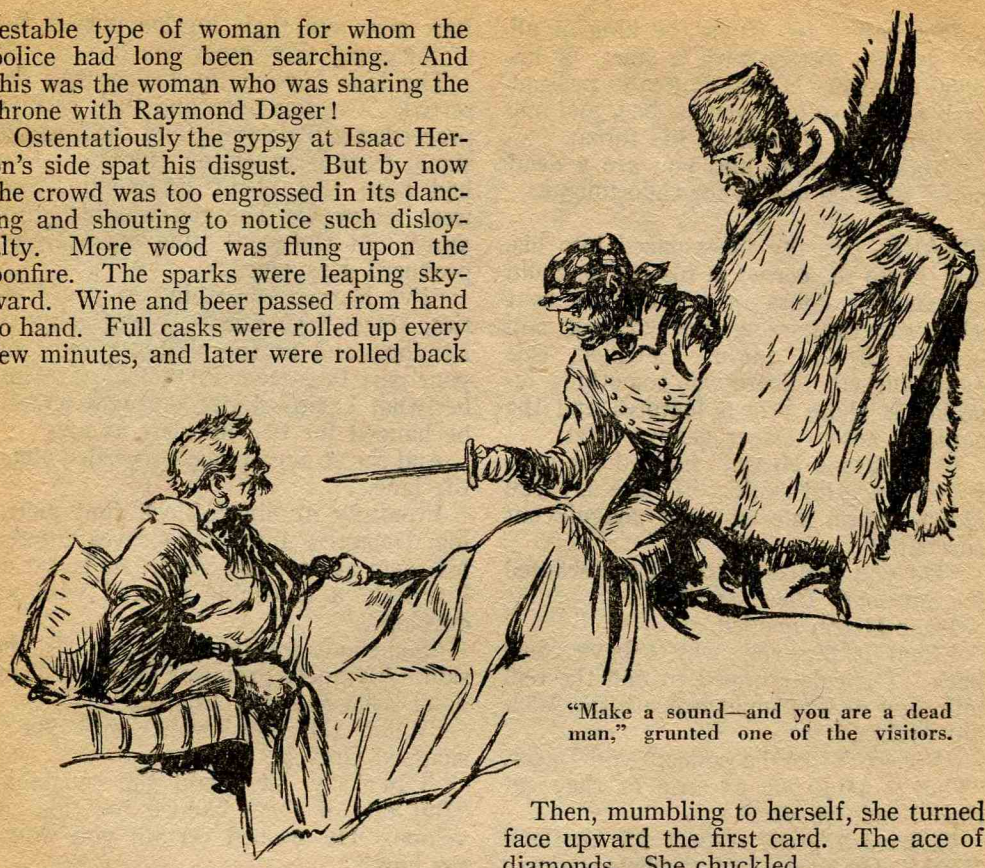
A SHOUT rent the air—a signal for the fiddlers to seize their instruments and begin a blood-stirring melody known to all. It was a signal, too, for the women to come forth from the caravans and tents, shrilling with their voices to the general acclamation. The singing of the choir rose to a crescendo as another carpet-covered throne was seen to be borne through the crowd, this time by panting women.

"The queen—queen of the gypsies."

Isaac Heron and his companions jumped to their feet and stared through the crowd at the advancing throne and the beautiful woman who sat upon it. Torches had been lit, and their flickering glow lit up the high cheek-bones, dark slumbrous eyes and rich red lips. Isaac Heron recognized her—Gypsy Jane, the clever fortune-teller of Bond Street who had also supplied society women with cocaine and heroin. A dangerous, de-

testable type of woman for whom the police had long been searching. And this was the woman who was sharing the throne with Raymond Dager!

Ostentatiously the gypsy at Isaac Heron's side spat his disgust. But by now the crowd was too engrossed in its dancing and shouting to notice such disloyalty. More wood was flung upon the bonfire. The sparks were leaping skyward. Wine and beer passed from hand to hand. Full casks were rolled up every few minutes, and later were rolled back



"Make a sound—and you are a dead man," grunted one of the visitors.

empty. Lights appeared in the tents and caravans. Fiddlers were everywhere, playing their mad music. The whole gypsy city gave itself over to a bacchanale.

Aloof and silent sat the four men in peasant garb. Ever and anon they would draw nearer to those two figures seated upon the thrones. The king and queen were happy. They kissed each other ostentatiously. There were roars of laughter about them. They drank deeply of the wine.

Then into the circle before the bonfire stepped the toothless old crone. She flashed her pack of cards before the king and queen.

"I am here to tell the new king's fortune!" she screamed. "I am the greatest fortune-teller in this gypsy camp. I have told the fortunes of the princes of Europe. Let me now tell the fortune of the king of all the gypsies."

"Cast your cards, old hag!" laughed Raymond Dager.

Painfully, the old woman knelt on the ground. Wetting her thumb, she began to flirt the cards. Face downward in a row she spread them on the ground before the throne.

Then, mumbling to herself, she turned face upward the first card. The ace of diamonds. She chuckled.

"Riches are yours, King Dager!" she shouted.

Her bony hand stretched out for the second card. A twist of her wrist, and it came face upward. The ace of spades!

A shudder went through that old body, and there was a gasp from the onlooking crowd. Even the king of all the gypsies shrank back on his throne.

"And death, ugly death, so soon!" mumbled the old woman.

WITH a supreme effort King Dager recovered himself. He stepped down from the throne. One smear of his foot, and the cards were sent scuttling into the darkness.

"Go away, hag!" he snarled. "We want none of your bad witchery at our coronation feast." The ancient crone shrank away from his wrath. "Bring me wine!" shouted the king. "More wine."

Isaac Heron and his companions sat and watched.

Beyond the hedges of this strange gypsy camp two constables yawned.

"They seem thoroughly soused now and ready for sleep," grunted one.

"And I'm ready for sleep myself," yawned the other. . . .

Just before the dawn the king of all the gypsies awoke with a start, in his royal caravan. Three figures in peasant garb were bending over his bed, and one of them held a knife at his throat.

"Make a sound, and you are a dead man," grunted one in the Calo tongue.

DARK, swarthy faces gazed into his. From the corner of his eye he could see another figure in a sheepskin coat who was completing the gagging and binding of the queen. Satisfied, this figure turned. There was something familiar in those brown features and the aquiline nose. Dager gave a start.

"Yes—Isaac Heron," nodded the gypsy with a grim smile. "I dare say you didn't expect me at your magnificent coronation."

"Do you realize that you are wanted for murder?" Dager snarled.

Isaac Heron nodded.

"That is precisely why I have come back. I am determined to find the real murderer of that night beneath the Adelphi Arches."

"You can't fool the police," said Dager. "They'll hang you as soon as they get their hands on you."

"I have a great respect for Scotland Yard," said Heron. "But whereas a man can only be hanged once, it is possible for that man before he is caught to commit more than one murder."

"What do you mean?" gasped Dager.

"I mean," said Heron sternly, "to rid our gypsy camps of something unclean, a pretender to the throne which has its real king in Michel Kweig. It may interest you to know that I and my friends have just come from the royal caravan in Rumania. We were picked specially by King Kweig for the purpose."

"What purpose?"

"Your death," said Isaac Heron calmly. "The gypsy throne cannot have a pretender. A gypsy vengeance is swift and terrible."

"What do you intend to do?"

"Take you to your death!" was the stern reply.

Raymond Dager would have cried out, but the keen point of the knife pressed against his throat. "Gag him, men, and bring him along!" commanded Heron.

In a few minutes they were carrying the bound figure of the self-styled king of all the gypsies through the darkness of the camp. Heavy, sleeping forms were sprawled everywhere. The bacchanale of the night had had its effect. The four men and their burden passed out of the gypsy city unperceived.

The lane beyond the hedges was deserted. The four men and their captive proceeded a little way; and then, at the signal from Isaac Heron, the bonds that had been tied about Raymond Dager were removed. The gag was also torn away. At the same time Isaac Heron produced a revolver.

"I've learned something of your tactics, Dager," he said. "We're going to London; and at the slightest effort on your part to escape, I'll shoot. Remember what I said—a murderer may as well be hanged for two murders as one."

And the strange group proceeded along the lane. . . .

Promptly at nine o'clock that morning, Detective Inspector Graves entered his room at Scotland Yard. As he sat at his desk, a constable entered with an envelope.

"Somebody waiting to see you, sir," he said. "A queer group of dagoes. They don't seem to speak English."

"What do they want with me?" snapped Graves.

"Can't say, sir," said the constable. "But one of them handed me this envelope. He seemed certain you would see him."

Roughly, Graves tore open the envelope. An ordinary visiting-card dropped from it.

He picked it up and read:

Isaac Heron—Jermyn Street

Graves gasped. So the murderer had come to give himself up.

"Show him in!" he said quickly.

"All of them, sir?" asked the constable.

"Yes, all of them," decided Graves. Then a thought struck him. "Better have three or four men within call."

A FEW moments later a queer procession entered: five men, four of whom were dressed as Rumanian peasants. There was no mistaking the slim figure in the sheepskin coat. Graves eyed him sourly.

"It's nice to see you again, Graves," smiled Isaac Heron.

"And I'm glad to see you," growled the Inspector. "You've given us a good deal of trouble scouring the countryside for you. Now we've got you, we'll keep you."

"That's hardly a pleasant greeting," said the gypsy.

"It was not entirely a pleasant farewell between you and me," retorted Graves.

"Ah, yes, I'm deeply grieved about that, Inspector," agreed Isaac Heron. "But you see, I had to leave my flat in a hurry to find out who really committed that murder of Pandomescro in the Adelphi Arches."

"I'd like to know where you went that night," said Graves.

"WELL, I went to the place where the police would least expect to find me," smiled the gypsy. "To the Adelphi Arches. I wrapped myself in newspapers like an ordinary down-and-out, and spent the night in the tunnel thinking out the problem."

"But the police were there too," said Graves.

"Of course they were. But they didn't expect to find me there. It's only in psychological novels that the murderer revisits the scene of the crime. They paid no attention to a poor devil who was sneaking a night's lodging in the tunnel."

"And what happened then?"

"I discovered several interesting facts before the dawn," went on Heron. "But most of them were based on the devilish intuition with which you've complimented me again and again. I had to prove my theories. And I knew that you wanted to lock me up in a cell where it would be difficult to prove anything. So I got up, walked out of the tunnel—and went to Rumania."

"To Rumania!"

Heron nodded. "Please don't ask me how I got there, Graves. It is a line of retreat I might have to use again. But I wanted to talk with the king of all the gypsies, Michel Kweig, whom I have the honor to claim as a friend of mine. I lived in his royal caravan for some weeks, until the time came to help you once again find a real murderer. And here he is."

Heron thrust the sullen Dager forward.

"Who is this man?" asked Graves.

"His name is Raymond Dager," said the gypsy. "Last night he had the audacity to have himself crowned king of all the gypsies. Actually, he's a fraud. He comes from Bohemia, but his father was a German Jew. He has bluffed the English gypsies into accepting him as their king. I, and these three brothers of the black tents, came over from Rumania to expose him. Incidentally, we had orders from the true king to kill the pretender."

"So you want to commit another murder, eh?" said Graves dangerously.

Isaac Heron smiled.

"It won't be necessary for us to stain our hands with his blood. You will do that detestable business for us."

"What d'you mean?"

"I'm handing over to you the real murderer of Pandomescro in the tunnel that night. It was only by the grace of God that he didn't murder me too. His aim was a little flurried."

"This is a lie!" shouted Dager.

"I can produce all the evidence necessary to hang him," went on Isaac Heron. "He brought me before him and the beggars of London on a false charge that evening. Pandomescro was his own agent from Bohemia. And Pandomescro did what he was told.

"But the idea of forcing a duel in the dark was a brilliant one. Dager was already finding Pandomescro a nuisance. No one knew better than Pandomescro how false were the claims to the gypsy throne which Dager had set forth. Pandomescro was indulging in blackmail. When Dager suggested the duel, he also whispered to Pandomescro that there was no danger. Dager himself was going into the tunnel, to seat himself in the darkness, and shoot me as I went by. What he did not tell Pandomescro was that he intended to shoot him as well. Thus he would be rid of two troublesome men."

"HOW did you learn all this?" asked Graves.

"Mostly from an old woman who shared her newspapers in the tunnel with me," said Heron. "She had seen Raymond Dager go into the tunnel and station himself at a point where he could shoot me. She was used to the darkness of that tunnel, and saw everything. She saw Dager take aim at me and fire. His bullet seared my thigh. Just before that, Pandomescro had tried his luck and missed. When Dager saw me stumble, he turned his revolver upon Pandomescro, and fired again. This time he shot well."

"And the bullet fired from the revolver you were carrying in your own hand?"

"Clever preparation by Dager again," nodded Heron. "I knew the revolver was loaded. The weight was sufficient. He gambled upon my not looking to see that every chamber was loaded. If I had tried to use it, that unloaded chamber would give anyone else a quick advantage. It also seemed to prove to you that I was a real murderer."

Graves eyed the gypsy closely. Then he held out his hand.

"Gad, Heron, but I'm pleased!"

Isaac Heron took the hand.

"Thanks, Graves. I can assure you it's a relief to me too. By the way, I have the old woman to call as a witness when you require her."

The Scotland Yard man touched a bell on his desk. Four constables came swiftly into the room.

"Take this man away," he said, nodding in the direction of Raymond Dager. "He's to be charged with the Adelphi Arches murder. Keep a close eye on him."

Then, with a puzzled expression, the Scotland Yard man regarded the three gypsies in Rumanian peasant dress. Isaac Heron followed his gaze, and smiled.

"Yes, that's a crime of which I am really guilty, Graves—of bringing three aliens into the country. No, I can't tell you how it was done. But I can assure you they're quite ready to go back. They've only been in England a few hours, but they hate it."

"Why did you bring them?" asked Graves.

"Because I didn't dare enlist the help of your admirable policemen," said Heron. "Nor dared I attempt alone the kidnaping of a king at his own coronation."

He went over to them and whispered a few words in Romany. They nodded, and treating Graves with stolid indifference, trooped out of the room.

"They don't seem particularly awed by Scotland Yard," remarked Graves.

Isaac Heron laughed, and helped himself to a cigarette proffered by the inspector. They stood together, a queer combination of wealthy gypsy and stolid official, gazing down from the window at the medley of roofs that made the greatest city in the world—London.

"And what after we've hanged that fellow?" asked the Scotland Yard man.

Isaac Heron sighed.

"I'm leaving London," he said. "I go first to pray at the gypsy shrine of Saint Sara, in the little church of Saintes Maries de la Mer. It is a place of pilgrimage for all gypsies. And when I have purged myself of all the detestable habits of city life, then I shall take to the road and wander across Europe. For the road has the wind across it; it is bathed by the sun, and it permits a man to throw away his burdens."

And his brown hand rested gently upon the shoulder of his friend the inspector.

Another fine story by Mr. Makin will appear in an early issue.

REAL EX-

Inasmuch as truth may be as interesting if not more strange than fiction, we print in this department, each month, five stories of real experience offered us. (For details of this contest, see page 3.) First one of our women readers tells vividly of a dangerous parachute jump.

Very Good

The Spot

By VIVIAN

I WAS fifteen—masquerading as nineteen, that I might be permitted to make my living. An orphan, no sisters or brothers—there was no one to forbid when I answered an advertisement in a newspaper calling for a wing-walker and parachute-jumper in a flying circus.

One October day found us in a small Mississippi River town. Up to this time I had done only light wing-walking; a girl wing-walker was novelty enough in those days, without my taking any extraordinary risks—or jumping parachutes.

Everything was going fine this particular afternoon until Johnny, our regular parachute-jumper, got his leg broken while trying to swing the "prop" on one of the old Jennies.

We had had difficulty in making our way in that region, and knew we must live up to our billing. A parachute-jump was billed; therefore we must have one; and—without my knowledge—I was elected! The first intimation I had was the barker's voice roaring through a megaphone to the tense, restless crowd:

"Ladies and gentlemen: Due to an unforeseen accident occurring among our personnel this afternoon, you are to be presented with an exceptional treat. The world's foremost lady parachute-jumper will attempt a spot jump promptly at five P.M. Never again in all probability will you be permitted to see—" And so forth! As his voice droned on, I stood rooted to the ground; amazement and anger struggled in my mind, then gave place to a very real consternation.

Jump

MARTIN

I was to make a parachute-jump—not only that; it was to be a "spot" jump! Johnny, who had made nearly a hundred jumps, had been attempting spot jumps for some time, and usually managed to land very close to the circle marked in white that was his destination when he left the plane two or three thousand feet above the field. But I had never jumped!

I turned and made a bee-line for Jerry, the pilot who always flew the ship for my wing-walking.

"Jerry," I cried, "what does that idiot mean? I'll *never* be able to make that spot! I've never jumped! Nobody even told me—they didn't even ask—"

Jerry planted himself in front of me. "Look, kid," he said. "We're up against it. That accident this afternoon gave us an excuse not to pull the jump, but it would be poor business. We figure you can do it, or we wouldn't ask you."

"Oh! Then I am being asked?"

Jerry grinned at me. "Darn it," he said ruefully, "how many times have you asked me to let you jump, anyway?"

WHAT with listening to instructions, getting the parachute tied to the wing of the plane (it was an old exhibition-type 'chute and was fastened to the first strut on the lower wing) and finally getting into the air, the following thirty minutes were too busy to permit any thinking. But as the ship left the ground and we started our slow, climbing circles, for the first time I thought: "What if the 'chute doesn't open!"

A chill swept over me and I crouched back in the cockpit, miserably afraid. If the 'chute failed to open; if it caught on the plane; if the cords broke; if—

I turned around to tell Jerry to land the ship. One look at his calm, serene face, and the friendly grin with which he regarded me brought me up with a jolt. If I failed to make that jump, I'd have to leave the circus, leave that bunch of happy-go-lucky good-natured boys who regarded, and treated, me as one of them. For if I lost my nerve today, I could never face them again. Gone would be the gay comradeship, the care-free gypsying around the country. It was because they had accepted me as a comrade, that they thought no more of thrusting the present job on me than if I had been another boy. . . .

The next few moments were blurred. One fear fought with another; but when Jerry throttled the motor as a signal for me to climb out on the wing, I got stiffly to my feet and climbed out. Even with the motor throttled, the wind is strong on the wings of a plane. It plucks at your clothes and throws you abruptly against the wires.

The familiar feel of the wing under my feet helped to bolster my shaken nerves. That harness had to be hooked on right, and in the face of action, my fear was replaced with an icy calm.

The wind beat into my face, forced itself past my goggles and soon my eyes were streaming. Unable to see, I fastened the left strap by feel, and with a prayer that I hadn't got them twisted or crossed, I swung off the wing and dangled the length of my arms below the parachute. I still couldn't see, but before I had time to do anything about it, the staccato *brrrp-brrrp* of the motor announced that the ship was in the correct position, and to cut loose. I reached blindly for the rip-cord, a piece of twine tied in a single bow-knot. I found it, located the longer string, and without giving myself time to hesitate, jerked it.

For what seemed an eternity, nothing happened. I shook my head to clear my eyes, and for a brief moment gazed upward. That rip-cord was moving, unlacing itself, but with maddening slowness. I watched, fascinated, and as my eyes again blurred, I dropped off into space with breath-taking suddenness. I fell—faster and faster. I, a novice, realized that I was falling too far. Something was wrong! The weight of one's body pulls an exhibition 'chute from the

pack fastened to the wing. They are supposed to open as they leave the pack. This one hadn't.

I whipped off my goggles, dashed the water from my eyes and looked up. The 'chute was just beginning to fill! I looked down. The earth was close; but before I could judge my distance and speed, I was swinging buoyantly under the full spread of silk. The sensation was so splendid—and the relief so marvelous—that I decided right then and there that I liked parachuting. But not for long!

I remembered that this was to be a spot jump. I looked hurriedly at the field beneath. There was the spot, almost directly under me. Beyond was the line of ships, with the mass of people behind them, part of them grouped under the row of tall cypress trees that bordered the field. Back of those was swamp land—high trees, vines, undergrowth and under all that the black, slimy swamp water. And the wind was carrying me across the "spot" toward the swamp.

To land in the swamp meant, in all probability, broken arms, broken legs—or a broken neck. If I wanted to get out of this all together, I still had a fight on my hands. That particular spot on the field was forgotten. I was fighting now to get into the field at any old spot.

A parachute can be guided to a certain extent by pulling the slender supporting cords in the direction you wish to drift. I was facing the swamp, and so I reached up behind me, and catching the cords, pulled with all my strength. It wasn't enough! Still I drifted toward the trees. Only one thing left to do: I would have to climb the ropes hand over hand until I had tipped the great umbrella and spilled the air from it. That would let me fall practically straight down; I would have to trust to luck that the 'chute would fill fast enough when it was released, to check the force of my fall before I reached the ground.

WORDS are inadequate to recreate any fast-moving incident; in this case less than a minute elapsed from the time I left the plane until I hit the ground with such soul-jarring force—

Sheer desperation gave me the strength to collapse the chute. But the abrupt fall caused me to lose my sense of where the earth was—and its proximity. It was those tall trees that, after all, saved me. I had a fleeting glimpse of their tops as I flashed by them—and turned loose of the cords. The 'chute filled—checked my fall somewhat; but again the wind caught it, and it was sweeping me backward. It's bad business to land backward with the wind blowing, and obstructions behind you. In that last intense instant I grasped the wooden wheel just above my head to which the guide-cords were fastened, and gave it a whirl.

Then the ground came up. I hit hard—partly on my left side, partly on my face. The 'chute didn't drag me, and dully I wondered if it were caught on a tree or one of the ships. I was so tired—I wanted to sleep. Dimly I heard voices shouting—and wished they would hush.

THEN some one spoke just above me. "Say, miss, are you all right? Are you all right?"

A hand grasped my shoulder. Weakly I tried to shake it off. *Why* couldn't they let me alone? "Sure, I'm all right," I mumbled. "Let me alone!"

"Oh!" screamed a woman's voice, "She's hurt! Look at the blood!"

That brought me out of it—more in disgust than anything else. What were they yammering about? I was back on the ground; I was conscious; I was all right—but supposed, rather wearily, that I would have to prove it.

Slowly I rolled over. Willing hands helped me to my feet. I shook the dust off and looked myself over. My whipcords were burst across the knees from the force of the landing. The skin across my wrists showed several small abrasions from the same reason, and the palms of my hands were bleeding from rope cuts—otherwise I was unhurt. And now that I was on my feet, the sleepiness was leaving me.

The crowd pressed close. Automatically I answered questions and congratulations while my eyes were busy correlating my position on the field. I had landed twenty feet in front of one of the planes—and not more than ten feet from the "spot." Darned good for a beginner! In fact, not bad for anyone!

Only one more little incident belongs with that day. As we were all leaving the hotel dining-room that night, Jerry ambled over by me.

"Say, kid," he mumbled awkwardly. "I'm sorry you had such a fight of it this afternoon. You see, I didn't signal you to cut loose. I've got to overhaul that blinkety-blank motor. It sure cut out bad there for a little bit."

Lion Trouble

A noted traveler tells vividly of a thrill-crammed moment.

By GORDON MACCREAGH

THE closest thing that happened to me in hunting, I wasn't out hunting. I was headed out of Kenya Colony, British East Africa, looking for no argument with lions, conducting a safari for a tenderfoot ivory-buyer who had heard of a deal across the Abyssinian border, away out by the old caravan-trail through Maji.

Bad country at its best, but just now the heel of the dry season: all hot yellow dust and parched thorn scrub. Game was ranging far and wide in search of food, and lions were consequently hungry and mean.

Smaller water-holes had entirely dried out; and if the next counted-upon big one should have evaporated too, it might mean just one more fool safari gone to hyena meat. . . .

I would never gone into that district at that season; but the buyer was scared crazy lest somebody might beat him to the catch; and he was tenderfoot enough to think that African safari was all just as he had seen in moving pictures. And—that *Mac* to my name—he offered me big money. So I went.

Flies were the worst trouble. Nobody who hasn't experienced bush flies will believe them. Not so many in sheer numbers, but a pestilence of persistent torture.

They were sticky-footed beasts, crazy for moisture in that dessicated air. They swarmed over one's mouth and nose and eyes. And they stayed there. No shooing them off with a wave of the hand. They had to be brushed off by actual contact.

If Pharaoh's first plague had been bush flies, he'd have given in right then and there.

We were out hunting meat when the lion trouble came. As near as I never want to be again! The tenderfoot, myself and my Masai gun-boy. A splendid great Elmoran, the Masai, a hereditary lion-slayer—for which I have since been thankful. Rock-steady as a gun-bearer in the face of any charging beast. Big-muscled and superbly naked, he wore only monkey-hair garters at elbow and knee, and a leopard-skin loin-cloth. He carried a great spear. He had a reputation as a spear-fighter that was worth an escort of six men.

The lion was lying in the shade of a jumble of upheaved rocks when we saw him, a couple of hundred yards away. Quite all right—normally. We hadn't shot our meat yet; and so we weren't carrying any joints of slaughtered buck that might blow a scent of raw blood over to him. We were not bothering him; no reason for him to bother us.

BUT nobody can bet safely on lions. A big rangy brute this one was, lean-flanked and skimpy-maned—he must have left plenty of it on the thorn bushes, hunting for the sparse game.

He stood up and stared at us in that intent way the cats have. Then his tail began to twitch up and down, and presently to lash his sides.

The Masai quietly handed me my heavy rifle.

"*Nathani atakuja,*" he said casually. "I think he is coming for us."

And so the brute was. All unprovoked, too! He must have been in a savage temper. He stepped down from his rock and began to walk toward us; then to trot.

The tenderfoot, of course, was anxious to shoot a lion. He had no license; but in self-defense, all game-laws go by the board. There are a lot of people who, until they have stood in front of a charg-

ing lion, think that to shoot one is just to shoot one.

And that's all right too. That's what safari-conductors and guides are for. I stood by, two paces behind his right shoulder, to cover him.

When a lion starts to come in earnest, his great reaching claws and his mouthful of gaping teeth bulge right out at you like those horror cartoons that come rushing right out of the movie screen into your face.

The tenderfoot, quite naturally, got rattled, fired at fifty yards, and quite naturally, missed. I put up my gun, held a high sight on the white spot on the lion's chin, and waited for fifty feet. At that distance I could be dead sure; and at that distance a modern .475 bullet, placed right, will knock anything endways, I don't care what it is.

Fifty feet! Split seconds now! And in that split second a damnable bush-fly crawled well into my wide-open right eye!

That's how suddenly death can come when you're feeling secure.

Split seconds! But in the first tick of them I was knocked sprawling out of the way. Dizzily I heard *"Szee Hai!"*—the war-cry of the Elmorani; and as I whirled, I saw his naked brown form crouched in front of me.

The spiked butt of his spear dug into the ground behind him, he poised like a sprint runner, directing the point, rock-steady, for the lion's chest.

Split inches now! But that splendid hereditary lion-killer held hair true. The lion impaled itself on the blade. The Masai yelled in wild triumph and sprang clear.

The brute's weight drove the spear to stand a foot out of its back, its thresh-ing claws tearing up great clods of earth where the Masai had been the split second before.

That's how close the lion trouble came. After I had been dead sure of an easy shot at fifty feet!

I CAN'T explain the tenderfoot's failure. But I admit I was jittery. The Masai, however, took a brass cartridge-shell from the lobe of his ear and tapped snuff onto his thumb-nail. He sniffed it windily.

"Whau! A good stroke," he said.

I gave him cattle enough to buy him a good-looking young girl of his village. But—that *Mac* to my name—I made the tenderfoot pay for them!

Good

Baked Alive

A weird experience with Aran Islanders.

By WILLIAM

WHEN the telegram arrived, I had twopence in my pocket; and downstairs, the landlady of the rooming-house in which I stayed, and to whom I owed three weeks' back rent, prowled the halls waiting for me to leave the negligible safety of my room.

I opened the telegram and read:

IF YOU'D RATHER FIGHT THAN STARVE STOP HERE'S YOUR CHANCE STOP STRIKE TROUBLE ARAN ISLANDS OFFERS YOU JOB.

HEALY

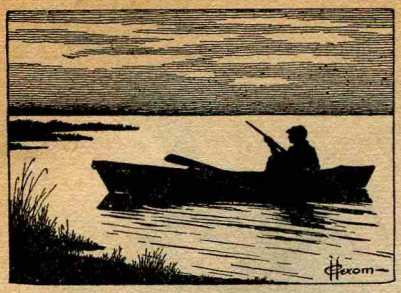
Tossing the telegram on the table, I walked to the window and stared across the blue waters of Galway Bay toward the Aran Islands, whose jagged edges were clothed in morning mist.

There was little cause for consideration. It was accept or starve. I lifted one foot and shifted the piece of cardboard that protected my foot from the eventual meeting of pavement through the hole in my shoe. And yet—I had heard tell of the men of Aran, and the women too. Wild people, who still spoke the slurring, high-strung Gaelic of the Aran chieftains of centuries past, and who, if they were aware of law, neither accepted or respected it.

Then, pivoting without further thought, I gathered a few belongings, crammed them into my pocket, and by dropping hand-over-hand down a clothes-line from the window, reached the street in back.

Two hours later I stepped from a row-boat onto the rock-strewn shore of the Aran Islands. My first warning of impending trouble came when the boatman, a grizzled old veteran of the Galway waters, turned to me as I stepped onto the sand.

"If ye're the new man to work for Healy, God protect ye, for sure an' there's the very devil hisself afoot."



CREAMER

Without further comment the old man pressed off from the shore and began his long row back toward Galway, leaving me wondering whether I should return while I had the chance, or take the dare. But I went on.

I found Healy's bakery without much trouble, and that night I went to work feeding the long ovens that baked the bread to feed the insurgent Aranites.

Earlier, seated in the dim rooms of Healy's house, he had briefly outlined the trouble that had broken loose.

It seemed that turf, which is gathered in the bogs, had been used for centuries by the people of Aran instead of coal. Healy, being a progressive business man, had substituted coal. But as the supplying of turf for Healy's massive ovens had been the means of livelihood for some of the poorer Aranites, they arose in arms and threatened all manner of dire things. Healy ignored them. Twice his Galway coal shipments were captured and the coal cast into the sea. And then his chief baker quit—providing me with the job I had at the moment.

ALL went well for a week; then one night as I stood in the basement of the bakery before the glowing door of one of the ovens, the silence was broken by the sharp splintering of glass. Turning, I saw a broad shoulder half through the basement window, and then a bearded man, dressed in the rough garb of the Islands, dropped into the room. He was followed by three companions.

I turned to grasp the massive iron poker at my side; but even as I turned, I realized the odds were against me. It was futile to call for help. The stone walls were practically sound-proof; and Healy and his family lived far above the heat of the oven-room.

The men said nothing—merely gestured. The bearded fellow took no part in the struggle that followed as his two companions grasped me by the arms and forced me to the floor. They then bound me with streamers torn from the baking aprons hung along the wall.

I don't believe their purpose was really apparent to me, until I saw one open the oven door and stir the bed of white-hot coals with the poker he had wrested from my grasp. Still uttering no word, the bearded man pointed. His two companions lifted me and laid me upon a long dough-board.

Suddenly I realized what the fiends intended to do. They were going to bake me alive! Hot as was the oven-room, I felt my limbs turn cold, and though I wanted to shout and struggle, the horror of the thing left me momentarily paralyzed.

Then as they lifted me, swinging me back and forth preparatory to pitching me feet foremost into the blazing oven, I screamed. I swore and wriggled in the arms of the men who held me; I bucked and struggled; and for one blessed moment that horrible swinging stopped as they strengthened their grasp and once more regained their hold.

The swinging had commenced again when I heard the bearded man roar. The two men who held me turned, then dropped me to the floor. The small lamp that lit the oven room was dashed out and pitched to the floor, spattering oil into the belly of the oven, where it burst into flame.

Suddenly out of the darkness a lantern appeared, and the long brown-cloaked figure of an Aran watchman. In the light thrown by the lantern he held in his hand I saw his deadly staff rise once and meet an onrushing shadow with a horrible crunch. The shadow fell, and I saw it was the bearded man, blood flowing from between his lips as he clawed at the hot concrete of the oven-room floor.

Once again the staff rose—and then I felt myself sinking, sinking. . . .

I awoke in Healy's arms hours later. Glancing from the window of the room, I could see the cobbled courtyard.

There were two still figures lying on the small grass plot; they were covered with horse-blankets.

"The dogs!" Healy said, looking down on the small crowd gathered about the still figures below. "To think they'd do such a thing!"

Illustrated by
Jeremy Cannon

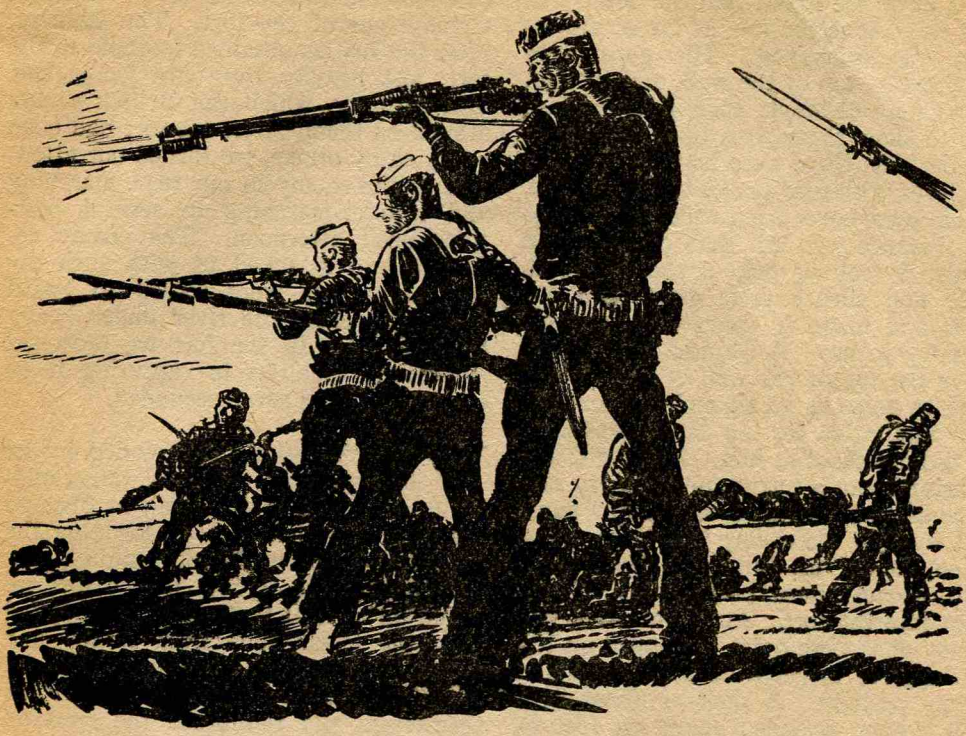
Fighting John

NIGHT fell on the column with the forces covering a wide front, and it was nearly midnight before they were again organized. Our ammunition was almost exhausted, and some contingents were without food. The British, French and Russians had no more ammunition for their artillery, which they abandoned after dismantling the breech-locks and throwing the pieces into the river. We had only three shells left for our lone field-piece. In addition, the enemy was plugging wells with his dead. Most of our drinking was what we dipped from the foul river, in which hundreds of bodies were floating. When we boiled it, there was always a couple of inches of scum on top, a thick sediment on the bottom. Sometimes we could not, or would not, wait to boil it, and one of the wonders of the expedition was that it was not wiped out by virulent intestinal disorders. There was not a single case of sickness among the one hundred Americans in the column—something I have never understood.

But we had plenty to worry about besides illness. Between us and the foreign concessions in Tientsin were two forts, a native city of a million inhabitants, and a large body of the enemy. There was also an enemy army of forty thousand that had left Pekin to overtake us. We were not, therefore, surprised at rumors that the council of war had decided to kill the wounded, abandon the river and strike directly for the coast. I do not know if these things had been considered by those in command; but the rumors were discussed among our men, and they did not seem unreasonable to us.

About midnight Billy Hamberger, the chief carpenter's mate, asked me for a working party to build stretchers to carry the wounded. We were on the river levee with no houses or trees in sight, and I asked where the lumber was to be had. He said he would get lumber and canvas from junks on the river. He performed a miracle that night in constructing twenty stretchers in the dark.

The story of a man who has twice won the Congressional medal of honor for valor on the battlefield.



As told to LOWELL THOMAS

By JOHN McCLOY

About three o'clock in the morning we resumed our march with the knowledge there was a fort not far ahead of us, at Pei-tsang, and that we were to stop for nothing until we entered it. We had barely got under way when enemy outposts opened fire from both sides of the river, which was about seventy-five yards wide at that point; but we went on for half a mile to a village. There was a high reed fence across our path, and the enemy was firing on us from behind it. We rushed forward and flattened it with our weight, but the enemy had vanished.

Chinese had set the village afire, but we pushed on through it and came out into the open before a stone wall, which we thought was the fort. We mounted it and found ourselves on what looked like a parade-ground surrounded by a stone wall four or five feet high. Hesitating on the wall, we were shown in bold relief by flames of the burning houses behind us. Suddenly the enemy firing ceased, and a voice from a distance hailed us in Chinese. None of us could understand the language, but we had an idea he was inquiring who we were and where we were going. Ensign Wurtsbaugh replied in English, saying we were peaceful sailors who had been attacked by the Boxers and wanted to pass. The voice, this time in English, asserted they were loyal soldiers of China and we could not pass.

When he finished speaking, a broadside of artillery opened on us, shells passing over our heads with perhaps a yard to spare. No one was hit, although the British told us later they thought we had been wiped out. Still thinking we were on the parapet of the fort, we charged in the direction of the artillery fire. Dropping into a gully and mounting the levee on the far side of it, we discovered that the fort was on the opposite side of the river, and that the levee was of the same height as the wall of the fort. Our supports had not followed through, so we deployed along the levee

and waited for daylight. In the meantime the enemy was blasting the countryside with his artillery and infantry fire.

At dawn we found that our levee was just as good as the fort as far as protection was concerned. His guns were mounted on top of the wall, and the gun crews were exposed; their infantry also had to show themselves in order to fire. On our side there were houses on top of the levee with reed fences between them, giving some cover from which to fire. As the distance was less than one hundred yards, it took us only a short time to clear and silence their guns with our rifles and make it dangerous for their infantry to fire. A Chinese officer rode along the top of the wall of the fort on a white horse as an example of courage. Our admiration for his daring was such we did not shoot at him. All he did was to bring about a further unnecessary sacrifice of men who tried to man the guns.

A force of the enemy had taken a position behind us, but their fire was a help, because most of it was high and went into the fort. At a time when the enemy guns were quiet, I stepped on top of the levee to get a better view of the enemy position. A shell of about five-inch caliber exploded about six feet in front of me. Some of the pieces grazed my skin, raising blisters on both legs and on my left hip, tearing my already ragged pants. Fragments of the same shell killed one man and wounded another who had been a few feet behind me.

MY father had served in the navy in the Civil War and, with seven others, was wounded by fragments of the same shell that killed Lieutenant Commander Charles W. Flusser on board the *Miami* at Plymouth, N. C., on April 19, 1864. I had often heard him swapping stories with other veterans, and as I recall it, they said a man would not feel pain when hit by a piece of shell. When I was hit, there was only a stinging sensation in several parts of the body, and in a short time I forgot all about it.

About an hour later a bullet plowed along the top of my skull; if it had been an eighth of an inch lower, I would not be telling this story. I was stunned for a while, and when coming to, I said: "I was not hit on the leg"—thinking of the shell-fragments. The officer who was stuffing cotton into the wound replied: "No, you were wounded in the head." I said, "I know damn' well I was." He, of course, did not know what I meant.

Our support arrived about nine o'clock. Under cover of our fire a contingent that was mostly British crossed the river on two junks and drove the seven thousand Chinese out of the fort. The Chinese, after the British obtained foothold in the fort, lost heavily from fire from their own artillery, which the British swung around on them. After the fort had been occupied by others, we turned our attention to the enemy in our rear, marching and counter-marching to several positions until afternoon. The enemy reformed and attacked us with such determination we were forced to board junks and cross the river under heavy Chinese fire. In the fort we reckoned American casualties in capturing it as three killed and seven wounded.

WE were entirely surrounded by an enemy whose numbers were rapidly increasing, and we began at once to modernize our defenses by lowering the big guns on the walls and building protections for gun-crews. In the fort we found an arsenal that was well supplied with the latest guns from Krupp and Maxim-Nordenfeldt. The Europeans, who had run out of ammunition, rearmed themselves and reinforced the guns on the wall with machine-guns from the arsenal.

We also captured twenty tons of moldy rice, which, with ass- and mule-meat, supplied us with our only food. What little canned goods remained were reserved for our wounded. And this brings us to the unhappy ending of "Clancy's Cavalry." The animals had served us faithfully while we were scouting on the way to Pekin, had packed a lot of equipment on the retreat to Tientsin. But now we were not getting enough to eat, and they had to be sacrificed.

I overheard a conversation in which Captain McCalla, the German captain, and a British staff officer talked of having one hundred men try to cut their way through to Tientsin with a message that would inform them of our whereabouts. McCalla wanted to go. The German told him that his men were overworked and were not made of iron. He also said there were men in the column who were much fresher, and they should try the job. I spoke up and said: "Why send one hundred men? I will try it alone, and probably will have greater chance of success than if you send a hundred." The German said I was crazy. McCalla looked at me pityingly. The Britisher

asked me how I would go. I replied: "The German captain has a fine horse; I'll ride him through." But the German said: "Now I know you are crazy; I will not give you my horse." McCalla said that he would think it over. That night one hundred British marines made the attempt, but were driven back from just outside the fort with the loss of their captain and nine men, who were left in the enemy's hands.

Americans were assigned to the northwest corner of the fort. A highway from a village about half a mile away led to a bridge across the moat at that point. I was sent with a message to the Admiral; and while awaiting his reply, I overheard an officer say the Americans occupied the most vulnerable part of the fort, and he did not think we had a sufficient force to hold it in the event of a strong attack. Admiral Seymour, who was British, remarked: "At least we do know that the Americans will not retreat from there, no matter how heavy the attack." We were not disturbed during the night, and therefore had no chance to justify the Admiral's opinion of us.

THERE is no doubt in my own mind that the fort would have been captured and the entire expedition wiped out had it not been for a terrific dust-storm on the following day that, at its height, reduced visibility to less than a hundred feet. The morning it descended upon us with a fury hard to describe, the Chinese Imperial Army was but half a day's march away. They were forty thousand strong. While we had two thousand well-trained, well-armed men in the fortification, we could have held out but a few hours. The fort was half a mile long and about two thousand feet wide, and our numbers were sufficient only to man the strategic positions.

The dust, which swept down from the Gobi desert to the northwest, was so thick it filled our eyes, ears and noses, even penetrated our ragged uniforms. Our food was covered and filled with grit. So much of it got into our rifles and machine-guns we could not operate the bolts; and the breech-plugs of the artillery also stuck. It was indeed fortunate for us, in an almost helpless condition, that the storm also halted the advance of the Imperial Army. Another bit of luck, we learned later, was that the column which was coming to our rescue had hiked under cover of the storm for twenty stifling miles from Taku to Tientsin. They were beaten back twice on the way to Tientsin before the dust hid their movements.

The main Chinese army had half as far to go to reach our fort. They were familiar with every foot of ground, and if they had taken advantage of this opportunity, there would have been a massacre of allies. For while the fort was surrounded by a dry moat, they could have crossed it as easily as we had, and could have scrambled up the sloping mud wall that rose to a height of about twelve feet. Thousands of them could have been over the wall before their presence was detected, and there would have been hand-to-hand fighting in which we'd have been overwhelmed.

It was planned, in case the fort was invaded by large numbers, for our forces to divide into two groups. One group was to occupy the arsenal, built of granite with perpendicular walls about twenty feet high. The other was to take possession of an inner fort about one hundred yards from the arsenal, and separated from it by a swamp in which reeds grew higher than a man's head. There we were to fight it out to the last man. But the Chinese did not like the dust any better than we did, and remained in their camps.

I thought it might be a good idea to have a doctor look at my head wound. There being no American medical force or medical supplies, I went to a British doctor. He advised me to go to bed, but I told him I only wanted the wound dressed. He said there was a shortage of dressings, and as the cotton in the wound had dried up, it was perhaps best to leave it alone. He then asked me if I would go into the village, about two hundred yards from the wall, for pots, pans and anything else that would be useful in the hospital. I took two men, George Rose and William Smith, and we entered a village south of the fort. After capturing two Chinese, we went through a number of houses and collected enough articles of different kinds to load them down.

IN the afternoon when I marched the Second Company to relieve the First Company at the wall of the fort, Joe Clancy told me that Captain McCalla wanted some volunteers to set fire to a village half a mile north of the fort. I said: "Why volunteers? Every man in this company is a volunteer, ready to go any place." I was starting out with the first squad when McCalla changed his

mind about the number of men, and sent the whole company, with Ensign Charles E. Gilpin in command. We set fire to the village with only slight opposition from the enemy.

The dust also enabled some of our men to destroy a bridge in the rear of the fort without attracting fire, and the British recovered bodies of some of their marines who had been killed outside the wall. These were terribly mutilated, and the head of Captain Bates was missing.

ON the next day everyone was busy for an hour or two getting arms in condition to be used. The main body of the enemy was probably similarly engaged, but his snipers kept up a rather steady fire on our position, and men of various nationalities were wounded. An attack in force was expected momentarily, but it failed to materialize.

Americans were ordered to the southeast end of the fort to mount a five-inch Krupp gun and carry a supply of ammunition for it from the magazine. The Germans helped with the work, and when the gun was in position, the German captain fired several shots at another fort. It was between us and Tientsin, and appeared to be firing into Tientsin, only eight miles away. The Krupp was used for the double purpose of diverting fire from Tientsin, and to let foreigners there know we were still alive. The firing might also give them our location.

I was placed in charge of the gun with orders to fire at five-minute intervals. I was still at it on the afternoon of the twenty-fifth when I observed a column approaching from the direction of Tientsin, and soon saw a second and larger one coming along the other side of the river. The troops I saw on our side of the Ho turned out to be a battalion of marines under Major Littleton T. W. Waller. The first marine to enter the fort was a captain who looked around at the home-made flags the other units had made, and did not find our emblem. "Where are the Americans; are you the only ones left?" he asked. I pointed in the direction of Admiral Seymour's quarters and sat down.

I don't know how the others felt about being relieved from our predicament, but I was so tired there was no reaction whatever. All I wanted to do was lie down and go to sleep. But before there was any relaxation, I was detailed to assist Joe Clancy, who had charge of a ferry carrying troops across the Ho. The Chinese did their best to hit these ferries with their artillery, and also fired into the fort. We put our lone field-piece out of commission, blew up the arsenal, and discarded all equipment not absolutely essential. Americans were among the last to leave, marching along the top of a wall as on parade, although they were not dressed for parade. The enemy laid down a barrage that filled the air with shrapnel, but the men never faltered, maintaining step until they reached cover, where they were ordered to break ranks and board the junk.

There were three hundred and sixty wounded men of various nationalities, and twenty-five of them were Americans. Four Americans who had been killed in action were buried where they fell, and lie today in unmarked graves. (A fifth succumbed to his wounds in Tientsin.) On June 26 we started to march to Tientsin with our wounded on stretchers, which we carried on our shoulders. The force that had come to our relief acted as our escorts. Although I was wounded in the head, I helped tote a man named Flaherty who had been hit in the leg. Four men carried a stretcher, and there were two in addition who acted as reliefs. The day was very hot, and we didn't cover more than one mile an hour. At the end of the eight miles, when we reached the American consul's house, I dropped from exhaustion and was carried to the Women's Hospital where a bath, a good meal and a night in a soft bed were a great tonic.

NEXT morning all the wounded who could be moved safely were ordered to report to their companies and return to the *Newark*. Before we left the city, Admiral Seymour and his British staff came to the dock to say good-by, and among other things, he said: "For dash and go in battle, I do not believe your superiors were ever born." We boarded a steamer which soon became stuck in the mud, and the next day we were back again in the marine barracks at Tientsin.

Captain McCalla had been wounded several times, and had remained in the hospital in Tientsin. No one in the command knew he had been hurt until we reached there; his iron will and determination had kept him going. His knowledge of military strategy, his valor and leadership were outstanding in the expedition. He would order an assault on what looked like an impregnable position, and you would swear it was going

to be your last charge. At other times he would halt and wait for the enemy to make the first move. His moves to right, left or straight ahead always turned out to be right ones. There were times when it seemed as if the enemy was sending him the information he needed. Now he was in the hospital; and we who were wounded but able to travel, felt his loss to the command intensely.

AS I said before, we had no medical unit or medical supplies, and when we returned to the marine barracks the wounded were given a room to themselves, and forgotten. After several days I asked the major who was in command of the marine detachment, for a doctor; clean dressings were especially needed. That seemed to be the first he knew there were any wounded around. He at once called a French surgeon to look after us.

Foreign concessions in the city were still armed camps and were filled with débris from shell-fire, which continued to come from the native quarter. The only road that was open led to Taku, and it was lined with foreign patrols. For days the Chinese had tried to demolish the pumping station of the water-works, a building about the size of an average two-story house. The ground around it was pockmarked with scores of shell-holes. On the twenty-seventh a shell demolished a marine barracks about fifty feet from my hospital cot. Marines had left it only a few minutes before to answer mess-call.

Transportation for men able to travel was provided on the thirtieth, and I went along on a lighter to Taku, where a temporary hospital was established. Another passenger was a white ass that had been appropriated by Captain McCalla. He had ridden the animal only when things looked blackest for us, and it had three or four wounds, was about half covered with bandages and was not very lively. It was sent aboard the *Newark*, where it died of its injuries within the week.

After a few days at Taku my strength returned, and although my wound was not completely healed, I requested permission to return to duty. I reported on the *Newark* on July 9 and was immediately ordered to take charge of a junk and carry the 1st Battalion of the 9th Infantry from a transport to Tientsin. Other nations were increasing the forces there, and fighting with the enemy in the native quarter was ceaseless. The British were firing into the quarter with seven-inch guns taken from the Chinese fort at Taku.

After the infantry was ashore, I searched for a place to sleep that would be out of the line of fire. Giving up in disgust, I bedded down on the roof of the cabin of the junk. About daybreak on the morning of July 13 I was hurled to the deck by a terrific explosion. About half a mile away a column of fiery débris was rising hundreds of feet, indicating the main powder magazine of the Chinese had blown up. This explosion was credited to the fire of the seven-inch gun. The morale of the enemy was lowered by the loss of munitions, but they put up a stiff fight before the quarter was cleared of them by nightfall.

THE Chinese, a peace-loving people for centuries, did not maintain a modern army or keep up with military science, although some of their officers were educated at West Point and some in European schools. While it was true that the so-called Chinese army had been equipped with the latest artillery and rifles from Germany, and machine-guns from England, and was instructed in military tactics by foreign instructors, their instruction was only perfunctory. Our first action was with the main body of the Chinese army, and showed amazing ignorance on their part. They marched out into the open, shoulder to shoulder, several ranks deep. Every eighth or tenth man carried a flag or pennant; every company was led by musicians; and every man was shouting as though trying to frighten the foreign devils to death. Their compact mass and bright-colored uniforms made conspicuous targets. Their formation destroyed any effectiveness that such a large body of men might have.

The sight of our shell- and rifle-fire ripping and blasting their ranks was cruel and sickening. After they were convinced that they would have to fight from behind cover, as we did, they did not know how to take advantage of it, and they seemed to be without knowledge of how to supply their firing-line. The guns on the forts were improperly mounted. The fortification of the Siku arsenal seemed to have been laid out by some one ignorant of the first principles of a defensive position. The Boxers were armed with swords, spears and a few medieval guns. They were taught

to believe themselves immune from the foreign devils' bullets. The valor of the Chinese army and of the Boxers was to be admired greatly, but their ignorance of how to use their bravery was pitiful.

I never heard of any estimate of the Chinese losses. They must have been enormous. From Yangtsun to the sea the banks of the Peiho River and the shoals in the river were covered with dead. I was informed by men stationed at Tientsin that it was necessary to open the pontoons of the bridge there several times a day in order to allow the bodies to drift by.

The expedition of two thousand trained sailors and marines of eight nations, poor in equipment but rich in skill, battled their way through one hundred miles of territory, burned villages and towns, and laid waste the countryside. That they could do all this against an army of fifty-seven thousand enemy soldiers, amidst a hostile population of millions—and with the loss of only sixty-six killed and three hundred and sixty wounded—should be given some thought by those of today who would destroy our knowledge of the military arts.

John Paul Jones became a national hero because of one hour of spectacular fighting; Capt. Bowman H. McCalla performed days and nights of spectacular fighting under the eyes of the fighting men of nine nations; and they all regarded him as a hero, not only because of his personal courage but because he was a master of tactics. . . .

President McKinley had ordered me promoted to any position that I was qualified to fill in the Navy, and I was awarded a Congressional Medal of Honor for distinguished conduct in the presence of the enemy in battles on June 13, 20, 21, and 22, 1900, while with the relief expedition in China. The president of the board, Lieut. Commander William Simms, congratulated me on passing the examination with excellent marks, and said he felt sure my appointment would come along soon. My enlistment had expired in March, 1901. It was now April, and I had served a month over the enlistment period. It would probably be two or three months before I would be paid off. I was tired and underweight, and had had no leave of absence in three years. I therefore asked for and received my discharge at Hongkong on April 3, 1901.

In a very different field of action this biography of battle continues next month.

Very Good

Brown Napoleon

Further experiences with the Lion of Judah.

By WILLIAM

MY first visit on reaching Addis Ababa was to the bank. There was no difficulty about this. There is only one bank, the Bank of Ethiopia, over which a Britisher, Mr. C. C. Collier, presides. Naturally, Mr. Collier is a person of consequence throughout the whole Red Sea region. He says with a smile that there was a time when the currency of Ethiopia was based on cartridges.

Now, of course, it is thalers—and as a heavy bag of these big shining coins was handed over to me, I heard something of this outmoded European currency which Abyssinia has adopted for its own. Actually the Abyssinian *talari* are the well-known Maria Theresa thalers which for a century and a half were minted in the Austrian mint. They are huge coins, big as the old English crowns, and bear on one side the portrait of the Austrian Empress Maria Theresa and the date 1780, while on the reverse side they have the Austrian double-headed eagle.

Curiously enough, Abyssinia is fighting Italy, in part, with Italian gold. The indemnity paid by Italy to Abyssinia after the Adowa disaster was ten million lira, or 166,000 pounds, at current rates. This, it is rumored, has been hoarded in Addis Ababa until a great national emergency demanded its use. Every ruler on ascending the throne has had to swear not to touch it except to save the country.

Addis Ababa is the strangest capital in the world. Apart from the packs of hyenas that prowl the streets at night and will even wander into your bedroom should the door be open, there are also hundreds of tame gazelles that wander through houses and streets with sanctity similar to the Brahmin sacred cow. And

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when added to the howling of the hyenas I lay awake in bed one night and heard the unmistakable roar of lions, I switched on my flash-lamp to make certain that I was in a hotel bedroom. It was only the next day that I discovered the lions' roaring to come from the Emperor's private menagerie. He has a particular fondness for lions. They used to be trained to crouch at his feet during an audience, to add a certain barbaric splendor to the throne of Ethiopia. But it is disconcerting to a caller upon the Emperor to find two loose lions regarding him from the doorway which he must enter.

Ras Tafari, now Haile Selassie, was born the eleventh of a family of eleven. All the others died. His mother, a Wollo aristocrat, told him that if he lived beyond the age of twenty-two he would achieve a high destiny. The age of twenty-two saw his mother's prophecies partly confirmed in a startling manner. He went out sailing on the treacherous Lake Tsana. With him were twenty-one companions. The boat capsized. Ras Tafari only survived. No wonder the figures 11 and 22 have a special significance for him. Now those numbers again obsess him—he is just forty-four.

I ONCE sat down and talked with this little bearded man in his drafty palace in Addis Ababa. Clad in an ordinary dressing-gown, he was in singular contrast to the gorgeously robed, jewel-bedecked and crowned figure that I had seen a few hours previously.

I had sat in an incense-stifled cathedral among a galaxy of European representatives including the Duke of Gloucester, Prince Udine of Italy and Marshal Esperez of France. A glittering array of military uniforms and rich native dresses. Airplanes of all nations had droned overhead. Proclamations had been scattered. Guns had boomed. Banquets of raw meat for the populace had left the gutters red. Now all this was over.

While we talked, the Emperor caressed a white spaniel at his feet.

"I have promised myself to visit your country again," he smiled. "But at the moment, my work is here and the future is in God's hands."

He began to question me closely regarding European affairs. Particularly did he reveal an interest in military and aëronautical matters.

"The ruler of the future must depend upon the air," he said wisely. "And in my country of great distances, the airplane is a necessity. Slowly, we are creating an air force of our own—but one dare not progress too fast in this still medieval country."

Actually, as I soon discovered during my stay in Addis Ababa, the Emperor has progressed faster than his critics imagine. European advisers have brought the Abyssinian army and equipment to a very high standard. In the event of being forced to evacuate the capital, Haile Selassie and his warriors are capable of holding out in their mountain and desert fastnesses in a longer and more powerful fashion than did the Riffs in Morocco.

The Emperor has been called a Brown Napoleon, and there is some truth in the high-sounding title. The story of his rise to power is amazing. It tells of a brown Empress as cunning and as ruthless in her dealings with men as Cleopatra herself, of two great armies meeting with spears, of the sudden appearance in the sky of airplanes spattering death with modern machine-guns; of a tank plowing its way through the doorway of the palace of the Empress; and out of the chaos emerging the directing genius—a sad-faced man with delicate hands. . . .

The Royal House of Ethiopia is jealous of its prestige and history. Its kings and queens claim descent from that meeting between Sheba and Solomon; and Christianity reached their country three hundred years before Britain.

Although invaded by the armies of Islam, Abyssinia assimilated them and retained her independence. Again and again armies have marched against her bulwarks of mountains, fought desperately and fallen back defeated. Ethiopia, the oldest of Christian countries, still held aloof from the outside world.

The Emperor Theodore, when faced by the successful invasion of British forces under General Napier, preferred death to capture and committed suicide. That was in 1868; and entering the old walled town of Harrar, General Napier took away with him the historic Ethiopian crown, set with jewels and valued at one hundred thousand pounds. That crown was restored to the present Emperor by King George when, as Ras Tafari, he visited England. And I saw it placed upon his anointed head at the great coronation ceremony in Addis Ababa.

After Theodore, came Johannes II. He was succeeded by the clever and astute Menelik II, who defeated the Italians at Adowa and consolidated his empire with a shrewd understanding of the scramble for Africa by European powers.

WHILE Menelik II was alive, he decided as successor upon the prince Lidj Yassu, the son of his daughter who had married Negus Michael, a native chief. Menelik II was without a son of his own, although he was twice married, his second wife being Queen Tai-tu. At the same time, as a gesture to a friend who had helped him in the great victory over the Italians at Adowa, Menelik had appointed Ras Makonnen to be Governor of Harrar. Nobody then imagined that the son of Ras Makonnen, known as Tafari Makonnen, would one day be the King of Kings and Emperor Haile Selassie I—nobody, except the boy's father who was ambitious and looked upon the Prince Lidj Yassu as a weakling.

Both boys, the elect of Menelik and the son of Ras Makonnen, played together in the dusty spaces of the Gibbi Palace at Addis Ababa. They were firm friends, but not long to remain so. In 1913 Menelik II died. Ras Makonnen, Governor of Harrar, tried desperately to prevent Lidj Yassu from coming to the throne. In this he was helped by several of the leading rasses. But in the midst of this intrigue came the Great War. Africa and Asia were drawn into the conflict.

Lidj Yassu assumed his grandfather's crown, but his desire for an easy, pleasant existence led him to seek the overthrow of the Church's powerful authority. At the same time he was visited by several German secret-service agents who made promises of much territory and wealth if he would send troops to help the sorely pressed General Von Lettow-Vorbeck, who was fighting with askaris against the British in East Africa.

The idea appealed to Lidj Yassu, particularly as by showing sympathy with the Mohammedans, he would enlist the support of the considerable Mohammedan population within his own boundaries. Word reached the British in Cairo that Abyssinia was in danger of joining the Central Powers. The Arab Bureau in Cairo was notified, and a British secret-service agent set off for Addis Ababa.

The Englishman arrived and studied the situation. He realized that the best way to upset the carefully arranged plans of the Germans and the Emperor Lidj Yassu was to fan the religious discontent. He knew also that the Emperor Lidj Yassu had a fondness for wearing Mohammedan dress. He began to think in terms of pictures, and called in an Armenian photographer to help him. They secured a photograph of a gathering of Mohammedan notables, paying their respects to an Imam. In place of the Imam, they cleverly substituted the face of Lidj Yassu. The result was a fake masterpiece. It showed the Emperor, in Mohammedan dress, benevolently receiving the tribute of co-religionists.

Hundreds of thousands of these photographs were printed on cards and showered upon the people of Abyssinia. The damning photograph even traveled along the Blue Nile and reached Khartoum. The sequel was an uproar. The all-powerful Christian priests denounced the Emperor. The people of Christian belief felt outraged. A mob seethed in front of the palace. Lidj Yassu fled.

AT once the son of Ras Makonnen was put forward as the man for the throne. But the young Ras Tafari could not claim direct descent from the Queen of Sheba. It was Zauditu, a temperamental woman and aunt to the unfortunate Lidj Yassu, who became Empress of Ethiopia. But such was the clamor for Ras Tafari that Zauditu was forced to accept him as Prince Regent and heir to the throne.

Ras Tafari had now one foot on the throne. There was still powerful opposition to him. And Lidj Yassu was still at large and collecting an effective army in order to march upon the capital. Ras Tafari set off with an army to break this resistance. After one of the greatest and bloodiest battles in Abyssinia, in which over sixty thousand troops were engaged on each side, Lidj Yassu was defeated and captured. Golden fetters were placed upon him, being a royal prisoner;

and he was incarcerated in a mud fort in the region of Fithte. His cousin, Ras Kassa, governor of the province of Salale, was held responsible for his conduct.

RAS TAFARI quietly consolidated his power. The chiefs came to look upon him as brilliant. But the Empress' hatred grew as the power and prestige of Ras Tafari increased. One day when Ras Tafari stepped into the throne-room to make his usual call upon the Empress, he found himself surrounded by guards and made a prisoner in the palace. But word was passed out to Ras Tafari's wife, the Princess Menen. She immediately called upon the Regent's forces to free their master. The young men who supported Ras Tafari commandeered an old war tank which had been presented to Ras Tafari by the Duke of the Abruzzi when he visited Abyssinia. With this tank at the head of their forces, they advanced upon the palace.

The heavy gates of the Gibbi and the stockade were closed against them. Receiving no response to their demands to free Ras Tafari, the tank was ordered forward. It lumbered against the gates of the palace, crashed through and lurched into the courtyard. The sight of this war machine in action was too much for the Empress and her followers. They fled, and judged the safest place to be the mausoleum where the body of Menelik reposed. The attacking forces entered the palace and released Ras Tafari.

The Regent immediately took command. He ordered an advance upon the mausoleum.

The conquering tank lurched along the dusty roads of Addis Ababa and came to a halt by the tomb. By then, it was midnight, and the terrified Empress and her followers inside the tomb were given until the morning to surrender. At dawn they were still hesitating. The followers of the Empress said Ras Tafari would not dare violate the mausoleum by an attack.

"I shall destroy the tomb and everyone within except the sacred remains of Menelik," declared Ras Tafari, "unless you surrender at once. Moreover, I shall build a bigger and more worthy tomb to the memory of the great Menelik."

The strategy succeeded. The Empress, her ministers and a group of warriors who all eyed the tank in terror, emerged from the mausoleum. The ministers were dismissed; the warriors punished. For the moment Ras Tafari judged it best to retain this old woman on the throne. He resumed his position as Regent, but was the real ruler of the country.

Even after this experience, the Empress Zauditu had not learned her lesson. She began to plot once more, and this time entered into relations with a previously divorced husband, Ras Guksa, a warrior who was no mean enemy for Ras Tafari. He had raised a considerable army of fierce fighters and began his march upon the capital. At the same time he sent runners to Ras Tafari with an ultimatum that the Brown Napoleon must give up his throne. But Ras Tafari sent his Minister of War, Molla Cheta, into the field with an army of twenty thousand men.

The two armies met about seventy miles east of Lake Tsana. It was evening. Each general grouped his men in battle order for the morrow. Most of the warriors carried spears and shields and were arrayed in the skins of wild beasts. But in each army there were old rifles. Gun-running by white men is still a profitable business in Abyssinia.

On April 1st the armies advanced against each other. Molla Cheta's army had the advantage of numbers, but there was a fierce fighting spirit among the enemy from the hills.

MILES away, in the capital, Ras Tafari had planned a decisive *coup*. The Brown Napoleon intended to make sure of victory. The sweating and dying warriors on the plains of Abyssinia heard a queer droning sound in the sky. They looked up. Winging toward them were three airplanes. The chief pilot was a Frenchman, André Maillet, whom the Brown Napoleon had paid to organize an air force. The other pilots were natives.

From a height of three thousand feet they swooped down. They picked out the headquarters of Ras Guksa and rained bombs and rattled their machine-guns. Ras Guksa himself in scarlet tunic and plumed headdress was an easy mark. He fell, riddled with bullets.

The French pilot landed. The enemy were in full retreat. A black observer leaped from the plane and went over to where the body of Ras Guksa lay. In a moment he reappeared again, carrying the severed head of Ras Guksa. Nonchalantly he tossed the head of the rebel into the cockpit, clambered in and nodded to the pilot. A moment later they were flying toward the capital.

There the confident Ras Tafari awaited them. He had gathered about him a number of chiefs and thousands of citi-

zens. Overlooking the race-course of the capital, beneath a red silk parasol fringed with gold, the Brown Napoleon awaited the airplane carrying its gruesome token of victory. There was only one royal personage not present—the Empress Zaudi-tu. She remained in her palace.

At last the plane droned overhead, circled and landed. André Maillet stepped out and bowed before the King. The Order of Menelik and a gift of fifty thousand francs was bestowed upon him. And a roar went up from the assembled thousands as they saw the black observer hold up the head of the hated enemy.

Twenty-four hours later the news was whispered about the capital that the Empress was dead. At first suicide was believed—she had followed the tragic path which Cleopatra once trod. But actually, she had died of pneumonia.

THE coronation of Ras Tafari as Emperor of Abyssinia may have appeared as the culmination of the Brown Napoleon's triumph. As I stood in the Cathedral of St. George on that eventful morning, however, and watched with the splendor of the foreign delegations this little sad-faced man being anointed with sacred oil and the orb and scepter placed in his hand by the leader of the Ethiopian Church, I was cynical enough to think that this was the beginning of the end.

Ras Tafari himself, however, was determined to impress the distinguished foreign visitors. Those parts of Addis Ababa unfit for European eyes to gaze upon had been hidden behind stockades. The bodies of criminals hanging from the eucalyptus trees were hurriedly cut down and buried outside the town where hyenas held high feast at midnight.

To add to the splendor of the ceremony Ras Tafari had imported the ex-Kaiser's coach from Austria, a gorgeous affair of gilt and glass, drawn by six horses under command of the ex-Kaiser's coachman in plush livery and wig.

I had spent a week in Addis Ababa, waiting. I had attended unveiling ceremonies, sought interviews with Abyssinian officials, met a hundred and one different individuals of various races connected with the coronation, visited the palace, and been turned out of the Cathedral of St. George by wild Abyssinians who were working night and day to prepare the thrones and altar.

I entered the cathedral at six in the morning. Two mattresses were being hurried away. I was told they had been in the cathedral at night for the use of the Emperor and Empress. The priests sang the Song of Solomon, gold clappers being beaten the while. The Archbishop, or Abouna, Primate of Ethiopia, wearing a high gold miter and a cape of cloth of gold, conducted the ceremony. He was a gentle, bespectacled man. Five Ethiopian bishops, in trailing capes of silver brocade with gold crosses embroidered in the middle of the back, accompanied him. Their huge tasseled hoods were raised over their heads.

The archbishop then approached the table where lay the regalia. In a loud voice he began to intone. Formally he presented the Emperor to the "Princes, ministers, nobles and chiefs of clergy, professors and priests," as "Haile Selassie I here present, descended from the dynasty of Menelik, first-born of Solomon and Queen Sheba, a dynasty which has been perpetuated without interruption until our day." The archbishop urged obedience and fealty upon all. Then the priests approached Ras Tafari. With his hand on a gold-bound Bible, the archbishop asked the Emperor four questions. Would he maintain the orthodox religion of the Alexandrian Church, the laws of the Empire, the integrity of territory, and favor the foundation schools for religious and secular instruction? The Emperor swore this. Then he signed the oath in a large book.

SEVERAL of the Psalms of David were then sung. In turn the archbishop blessed various objects carried by the priests to the Emperor. First came the vestments—heavy gold-brocaded red velvet robes—which were slipped over Ras Tafari's white robe. Then a jeweled sword was buckled on him with the chanted prayer: "By this sword execute true justice, protect the Church, the widows and orphans, restore that which is ruined, maintain that which is restored, chastise the wicked, render honor to the righteous and with it serve our Saviour Jesus Christ."

In a low voice, the Emperor replied: "May I be worthy thereof."

A golden scepter was handed to Ras Tafari, who held it in his right hand. A golden orb was placed in his left hand. Then came a diamond ring to be placed on a finger, and two golden spears. . . .

Acclamations burst forth. Men rushed wildly outside, proclaiming the news. Guns began to boom in salute. Ras Tafari had gained his greatest ambition.

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