

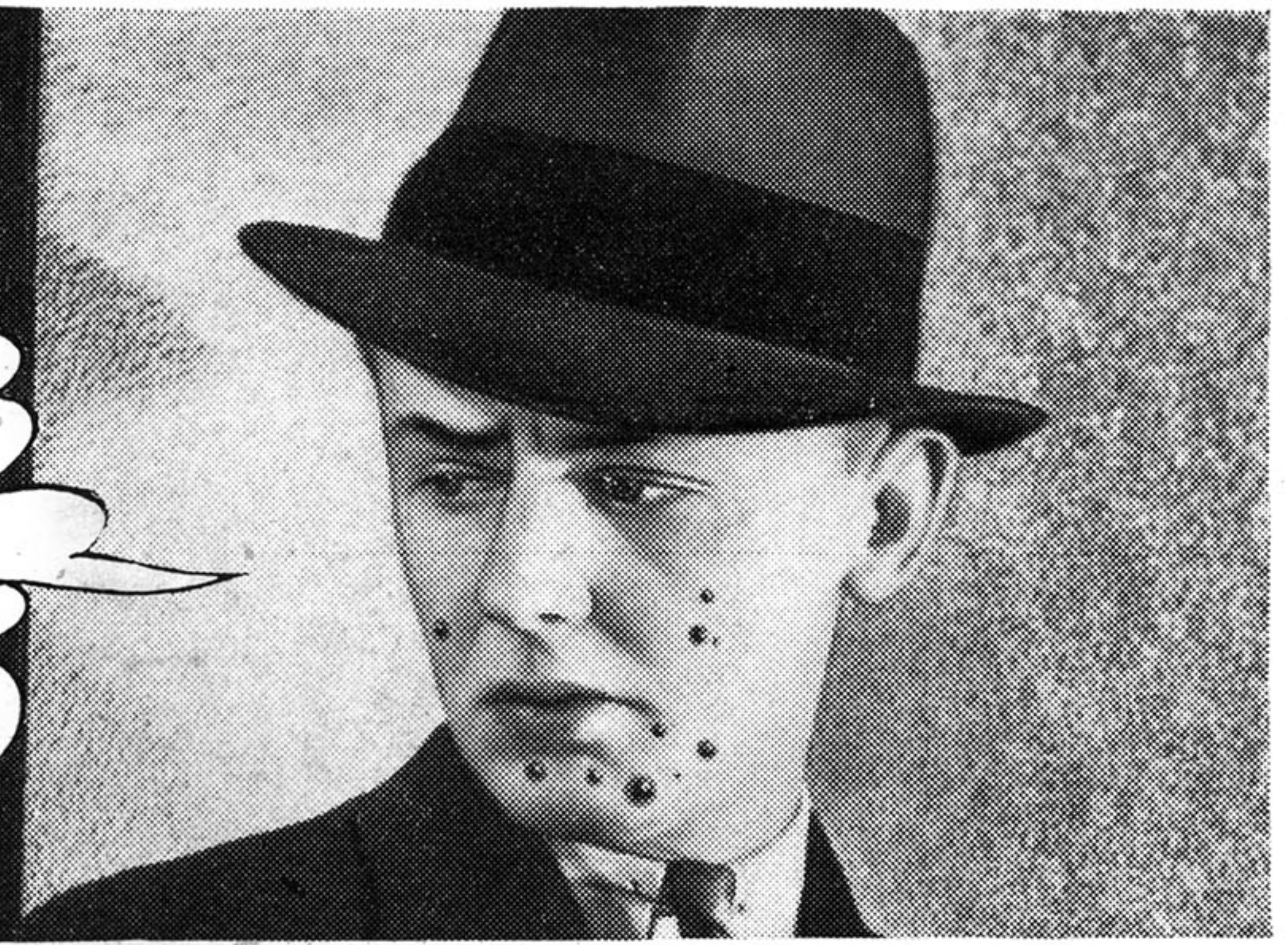
BLUE BOOK

An Illustrated Magazine ~ Oct. 15 cents

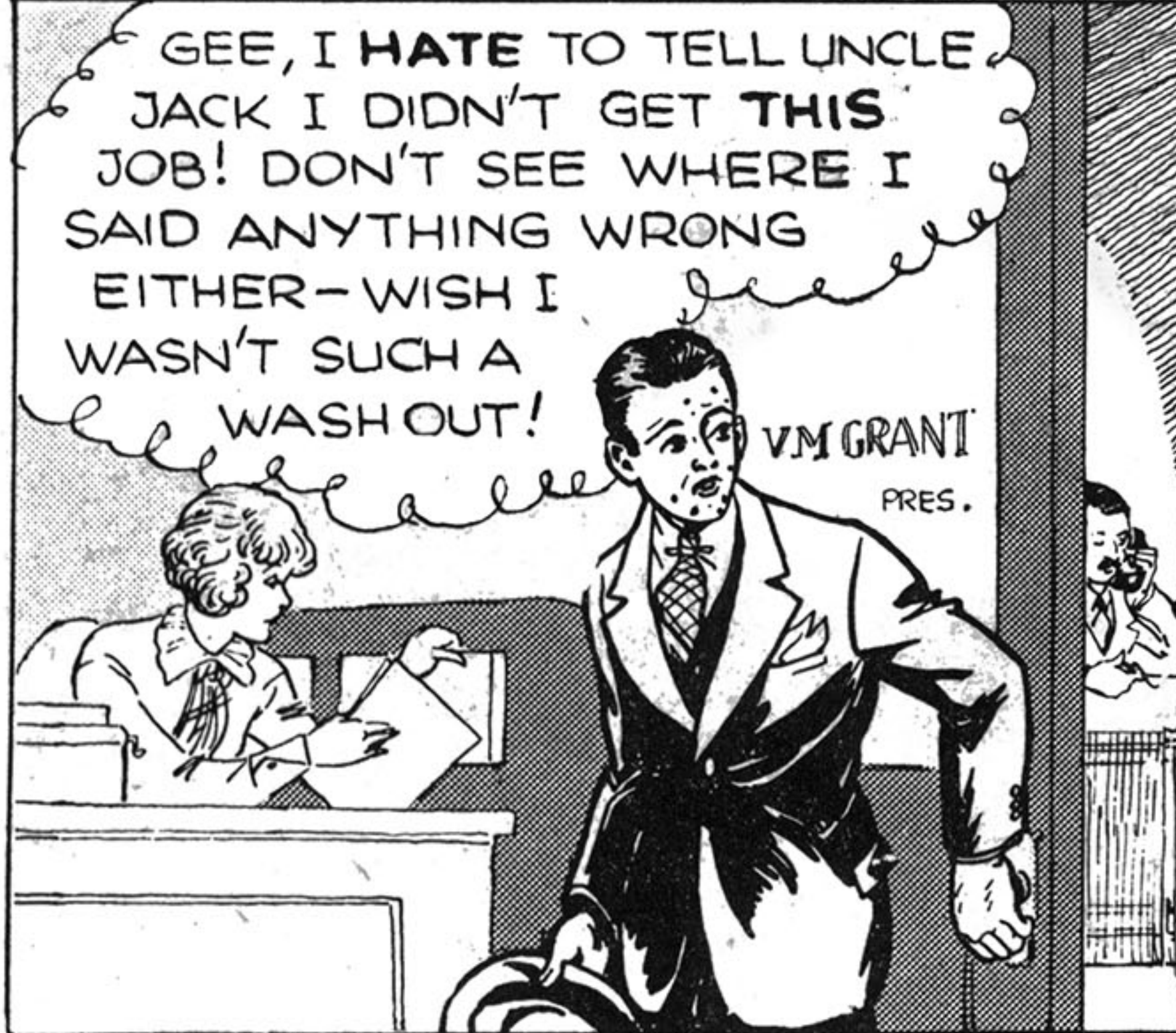


"Tempest over Africa," by Achmed Abdullah
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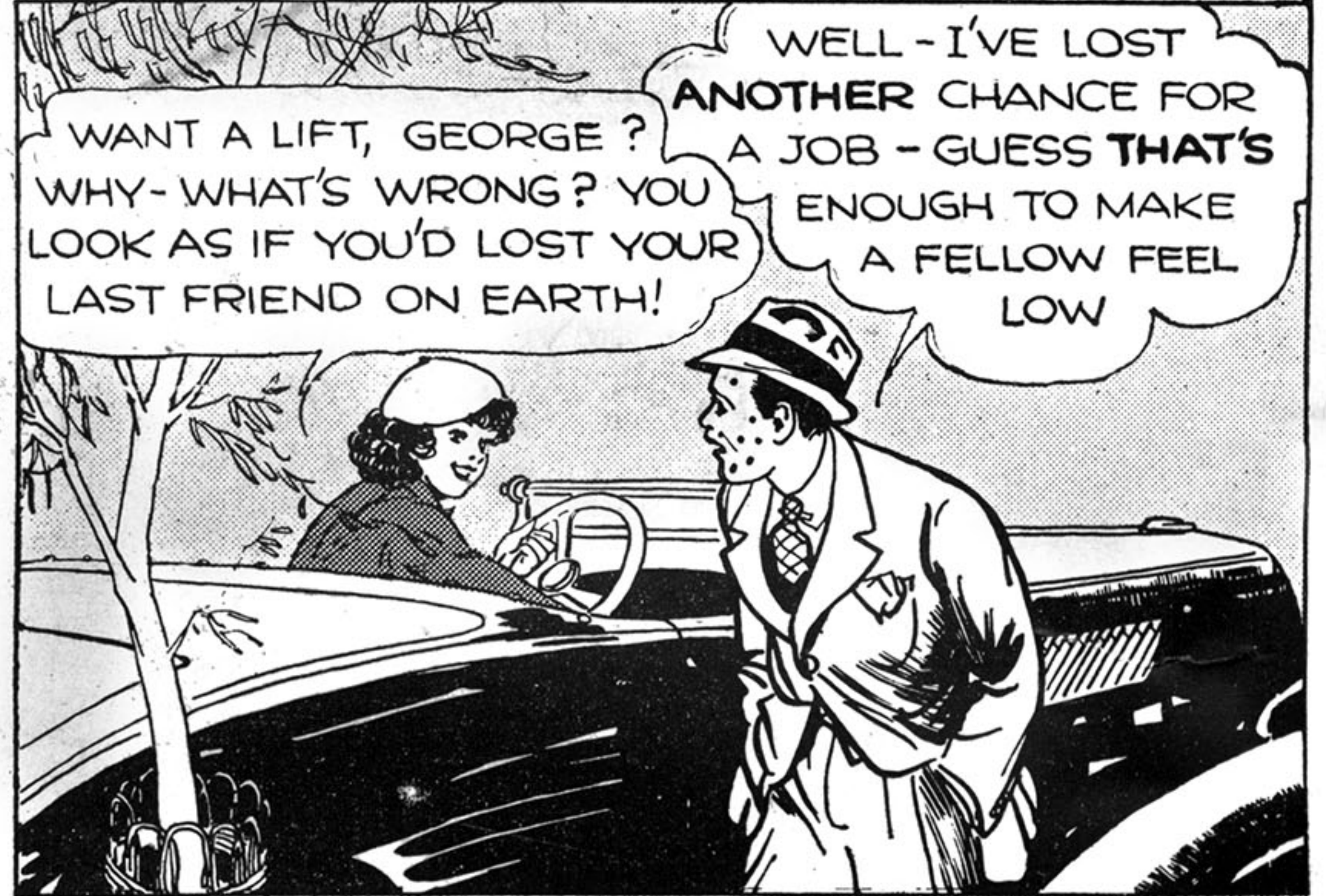
WISH I KNEW WHY THEY ALL TURN ME DOWN



A PIMPLY SKIN CAN SPOIL ANY BOY'S CHANCES FOR A JOB



GEE, I HATE TO TELL UNCLE JACK I DIDN'T GET THIS JOB! DON'T SEE WHERE I SAID ANYTHING WRONG EITHER—WISH I WASN'T SUCH A WASH OUT!



WANT A LIFT, GEORGE? WHY—WHAT'S WRONG? YOU LOOK AS IF YOU'D LOST YOUR LAST FRIEND ON EARTH!

WELL—I'VE LOST ANOTHER CHANCE FOR A JOB—GUESS THAT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE A FELLOW FEEL LOW

FEELING LOW WON'T GET YOU A JOB—AND LISTEN, GEORGE, I'VE A HUNCH THOSE PIMPLES DON'T HELP, EITHER. WHY NOT TRY FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST? IT FIXED UP BOB—AND HE LOOKED EVEN WORSE THAN YOU DO!

THANKS! FOR THE COMPLIMENT!

WONDER IF SHE'S RIGHT?



LATER
WELL THEN, ADAMS—WE'LL EXPECT YOU TO START IN TOMORROW

THANK YOU SIR—I'LL BE HERE ALL RIGHT

PEG WAS RIGHT ABOUT THE OLD PIMPLES—SURE GLAD I ATE THAT FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST!

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BLUE BOOK



OCTOBER, 1936

MAGAZINE

VOL. 63, NO. 6

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Cover Design

Painted by Herbert Morton Stoops

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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Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine

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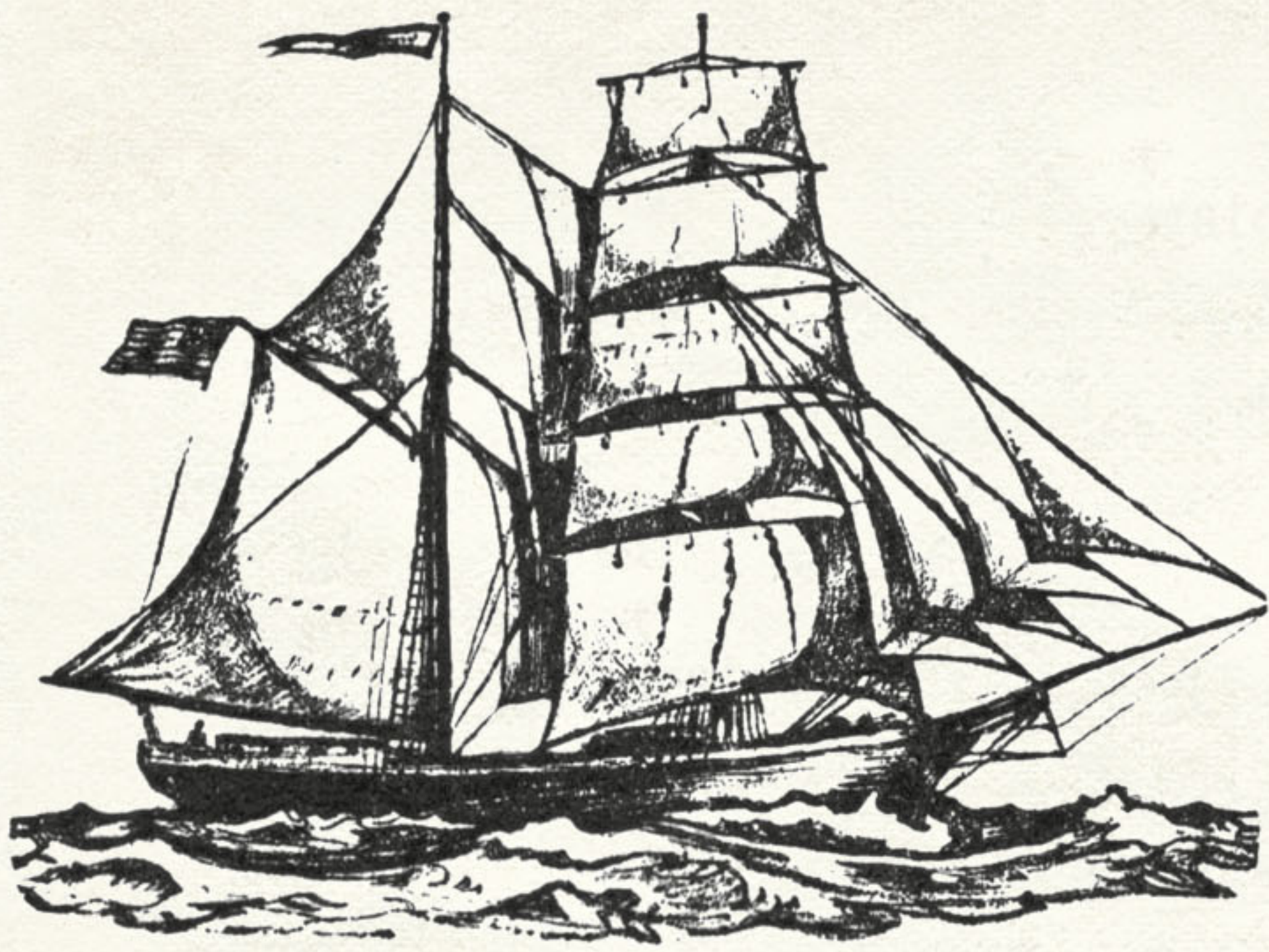
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From a Sailor's Scrapbook

By COULTON WAUGH

THE hermaphrodite brig, as its name implies, is half brig and half schooner. The mainmast is in two sections, fore-and-aft-rigged like a schooner. The foremast is in three sections, square-rigged just like the foremast of a brig. The triangular sails seen between the masts of all square-riggers are called stays'l's, from the stays on which they run, and take their name from the section of mast from which they originate—thus, fore top-mast stays'l, main top-mast stays'l, and so forth. These vessels are very often, though incorrectly, called brigantines.

This popular rig has been used for many purposes and has survived to the present day. The last square-rigger built on the Atlantic Coast was the hermaphrodite brig *Viola*, launched in Essex, Massachusetts, in 1910. This rig, however, can still be seen in European waters.

The World War brought a curious and sudden revival of sailing-ships. In June, 1917, the *Probus*, an armed hermaphrodite of one hundred and seventy-nine tons, sailed out of Falmouth, England, convoying a fleet of twelve sailing-ships and one steam trawler. It was extraordinary at such a late date to see a square-rigger actually in use as a man-of-war and a convoy ship at that. It was a fine, calm June day and no one paid much attention to a little fishing ketch sailing over toward the fleet. Nearer and nearer came the little vessel; finally the captains of the fleet began to realize she was acting strangely. There was something wrong with the set of those sails! Suddenly the whole ketch rose in the water, displaying underneath the grim lines of a German U-boat. *Whang!* A shell whistled over the still water. *Crack!* from the *Probus*, and the startled seamen witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of two sailing-ships bombarding each other, just as in the old days of Nelson. Most remarkable of all, the sailing-ship won the contest and the submarine slunk off, submerging beneath the glassy surface of the sea.

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TEMPEST Over

By
ACHMED ABDULLAH



The words came easily to his brain and tongue: "A land so strange my heart grows still— With gorge and rock and dust."

A GIGANTIC Galla strode ahead. "Give way!" he yelled. "Give way, by the Trinity! Give way, by the Savior the Adored! Give way, O unspeakable ones, O eaters of dirt!" His words of command boomed insolently; and the Ethiopian mob splashed sidewise, like a puddle beneath booted foot, as, accompanied by his retinue, a *ras*—a feudal Amharic chief, fat and bushy-bearded and statuesque, crowned by a large floppy silver-gray felt hat and

garbed in skin-tight white trousers and short cloak of deep-blue velvet—came down Addis Ababa's main street astride his horse—a sorry nag of a horse, hammer-headed and peak-withered and flea-bitten, that had never known brush or curry-comb, but was gayly caparisoned, the saddle-cloth embroidered with scarlet and purple and gold, little silver bells jingling on bridle and reins.

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AFRICA

The famous author of "The Swinging Caravan" and "The Mating of the Blades" here gives us the fascinating story of an American's extraordinary quest in the Dark Continent.



Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson

"Give way, O fathers of dogs!"
Neither to left the *ras* looked, nor to right. His pride would not let him. For was he not cousin-in-blood to His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Emperors of Abyssinia? Was he not, by the same token, a direct descendant of Solomon, resplendent King of the Jews, and his royal paramour, Queen Balkis of Sheba? Was he not a member of the historic clan whose paramount lord was known as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah?

Thus he rode along haughtily. Surrounded by his henchmen, over a thousand of them, a barefooted rabble of odorous kinky-haired warriors, their rifles and spears and broad-bladed daggers glistening in the rays of the strong tropical sun, their shroud-like *shammas* reaching to their knees and flowing behind them as they ran and hopped and leaped to keep up with their master's fast-trotting mount. Preceded by the Galla who carried the nobleman's round shield and sword—an ancient crescent-shaped sword forged centuries before Europe's chivalry had gone on Crusade; a wicked sword that from time immemorial had bravely fought for Christendom against Moslem and pagan; a preposterously long sword that again and again got caught between the man's thin legs and the folds of his *shamma*, though in no way interfering with his arrogant yells:

"Give way, by St. George! Give way, O leprous ones! Give way, by the Trinity!"

The shout was taken up by the retainers in a full-throated guttural chorus:

"Give way, by the Trinity! Give way, by the Cross! Give way, O ignoble ones!"

They cut through the crowd as a knife cuts through cheese. With democratic impartiality their rifle-butts and spear-hafts belabored the backs and thighs and heads of merchant and porter, priest and beggar, free man and slave.

"Give way, O camel-spawn! Give way!"

Pushing, jostling, elbowing each other, the men-at-arms disappeared down a narrow winding alley. The last that could be seen, bobbing high above the perspiring retinue, was the *ras*' wide-brimmed gray hat.

A small boy thumbed his nose at its haughty wearer.

"Bah!" he cried. "Fatted ass!"

Then somebody laughed. So did somebody else. Mirth rose in gusts—irrepressible, hectic, baroque, bubbling. Entirely primitive. For these people were Africans. Life to them was sweet—nor death much to be feared, as long as it was exciting.

SO, not many minutes later, necks craned, eyes stared, mouths split to even fuller and noisier cachinnations as across the road the door of the Grand Hôtel de Paris was suddenly flung open; as it revealed M. Zado Bagdadian, his

brown spade-shaped beard thrust out like a battering-ram, gesticulating wildly with nervous hairy hands, and addressing a tall young white man whom his servants had pushed across the threshold and down the front steps.

"Bandit!" screamed the Armenian in strongly accented English. "Vagabond!"

"Aw—dry up, whiskers!" advised the young man.

"Thief! Assassin! Ah,"—reaching the limit of his English vocabulary of vituperation and translating from the Armenian,—"you're as crooked as a pig's tail."

The other was amused.

"Say," he replied, "when it comes to swapping compliments, I know a few myself, you lousy little so-and-so!"

HIS words rolled on richly, eloquently; and the mob crowded in, listening, making comment.

"A *feringhee*, a foreigner," announced a caravan-man with the air of one imparting superior wisdom.

"An *Amerikani feringhee*," a lean-shanked Arussi cattle-drover quoted even deeper wisdom.

"A most violent and lawless *Amerikani feringhee*," a turbaned priest of the Coptic Church gave judgment with the sacerdotal unction of his calling. "How do I know? Look at his hair—red! Observe the color of his eyes—storm-blue! Be pleased to consider his features—snub-nosed and freckled! And though I am unable to understand his barbarous language, yet have the saints granted me enlightenment—harken to the exquisite saltiness of his abuse!"

Instinctively the priest had guessed it. For the young man was telling the polyglot hotel proprietor exactly what he thought of him; was telling him in the raucous, slangy, unpurged diction of New York's Second Avenue.

"Shut up!" he roared as, stammering angry words, the bearded face was thrust close to his. "Say it with flowers—not with a mouthful of garlic!"

The Armenian trembled with fury.

"Pirate!" he exclaimed. "Loathsome and unbeautiful Yankee hyena!"

The young man grinned. "Say," was his rejoinder, "when it comes to matching manly beauty, you aren't just a daffodil yourself."

"Crook! You refuse to pay!"

"Because I've nothing to pay with—see? Can't help being broke, can I?"

"Then why come to *my* hotel?"

"Had to go *some* place."



A hand dropped on his shoulder; a voice said: "Who may you be?"

"My hotel is for gentlemen, not for tramps. Eleven days' room and board you owe. And champagne last night!"

"Champagne, my foot! Tasted like hogwash to me."

"*Aughrr!*" the Armenian screeched like an enraged parrot.

"Ah—take it easy! You're keeping my baggage, aren't you?"

"And what does your baggage contain? Four neckties, six pairs of socks, three shirts—"

"High time you had a clean shirt."

This was more than Bagdadian was able to bear. He hurled himself against the American, who sidestepped neatly and, as neatly, let him have it—*bamm!*—on the point of the chin. The man dropped like a log; and at once the servants rushed to his assistance.

Perhaps there were too many of them for their comfort. They interfered with each other. They tripped and hit each other in their eagerness to get at the young American,—Jim M'Gregor was his name,—who was perfectly safe in striking whatever head came within reach.

His fists went like flails. So he did very well, bloodying a nose here, blackening an eye there, really enjoying himself with the onlookers pressing in more closely to get a better view, and laughing and cheering and making ribald comment. And an Asiatic among the African throng, a hawkish Afghan employed as doorman at the British legation, gave as his considered opinion that—by Allah!—this red-haired madman was the very pick of all the tall swank battling lads; that—by Allah and by Allah!—he was the sort whom a keen man, out for

sport of foray and raid, would choose to ride with side by side.

"Or to walk with side by side," suggested one pretty, golden-skinned girl who was hanging on to a Somali's arm. "Aye! With the same night of stars as canopy."

"Close your mouth lest your tongue catch cold, O creature of shameless begetting!" her lover admonished her.

Painfully he tweaked her right ear, while an old half-breed Arab woman said that—by the crimson pig's bristles!—the girl was right.

"*Wah!*" she went on, pointing at M'Gregor whose fists, again and again, were finding aching marks. "A lion has come to Addis Ababa!"

"A lion indeed!" agreed a ruffianly Tigrin muleteer. "A regal, jungle lion! *Hai,*"—encouragingly at the American, his voice peaking in a sharp treble,— "power to your teeth! Power to your claws, O lion *feringhee!*"

"A lion," remarked the Afghan, "who will presently be pulled down by the little, little jackals!"

For numbers were beginning to tell. Straining, wrestling, grappling, cursing, M'Gregor fell to the ground. A porter was sitting astride his chest. A second was kicking him in the ribs. A third danced about, swinging a club and watching his chance for a knockout blow.

The Afghan grew indignant.

"*Alhamdulillah!*" he growled—and he promptly came to the rescue.

He picked up half a dozen jagged stones. He threw them with a hillman's strength and accurate aim; and when momentarily the attackers gave way, he grasped the American by the arm, helped

him to his feet and jerked him into the thick of the onlooking mob that closed about them like a black-and-brown sea.

A FEW seconds earlier the Armenian had drawn a whistle and blown a shrill blast; and, "Quick, *saheb*, quick!" came the Afghan's warning in English as police approached at a rapid pace, while instinctively, as the world over, the mob became frightened and surged into motion, carrying M'Gregor along.

So, woolly polls and shaven polls, turbaned heads and tarbushed heads, bobbed crazily. Ragged cloaks and torn bur-nouses flared out like flags in a meeting of winds. Muscular naked legs moved up and down grotesquely, woodenly—faster and faster, on and on, off and away into a spider's web of dark, miry, unpaved alleys, a sinuous, sardonic winding of passages, a maze of drab, squat, fetid houses, built of mud and roofed with sheets of galvanized iron, and the policemen beginning their lumbering pursuit, panting, swearing, perspiring, shouting:

"Stop—in the name of the law! Stop—in the name of the Emperor's Majesty!"

But since bare feet can run more swiftly and trip less in slimy puddles than booted feet, the view-haloo of the police echoed fainter and fainter; the mob continuing at top speed, finally splitting and deploying; nor Jim M'Gregor ceasing his wild gallop until he reached the dusty Post Office Square and the Greek cafés that lined it.

Greek cafés scented with the pungent aroma of absinthe, the cloying aroma of anise, the acrid aroma of ancient Hellenic cheese and the greasy aroma of goat-flesh masquerading as spring lamb.

Greek cafés steeped in ancestral filth that went back to Homer and Socrates and centuries beyond, yet doing a thriving trade. For they were the local social Mecca as well as the local stock and gossip exchange of all the motley human driftwood that in recent years had come to Addis Ababa—had sailed from Liverpool or Marseilles or Hamburg or Naples to Djibouti, the port of French Somaliland, had thence traveled by railroad, the only railroad in Ethiopia; a wary railroad that ran only during daytime, since at night somber naked oil-smeared Danakil warriors had a sportive habit of tearing up whole sections of track and then, when the train creaked to a sudden halt, throwing heavy spears through the

windows and taking most bloody toll, thereby gaining a great deal of credit amongst the dusky maidens of their villages.

Once in a while these same Danakils were bold enough to try a daylight raid. To try—and succeed. To carry off, occasionally, a European whom they would kill in a lengthy and—so, at least, it seemed to them—humorous manner.

Still, in spite of the grisly dangers on the way and a plethora of discomforts, fever and dirt and wretched food and brackish water after they had got to Addis Ababa, the foreigners kept on coming. They came like vultures to the reek of carrion, since there were rumors—and more than mere rumors—of petroleum, precious minerals, vast fertile stretches where the best cotton and coffee could be planted. Thus bankers arrived, and usurers, merchants, traveling salesmen, oil experts, mining prospectors—all the elements of that warring, illogical motley which tramps through the pages of history under the hypocritical banner of modern progress. Too, a whispering legion of spies.

FOR this was the last of free Africa. Christian Africa—friendly, inoffensive Africa that minded its own business.

What of it?

It was a rich country. It was, furthermore, almost devoid of up-to-date armaments of war. Therefore, if a really good excuse could be discovered—

In former decades it would have been deemed plenty provocation if a trader or a missionary had had his gullet slit by some obliging local roughneck—the latter, often as not, having been paid for his bloody deed by a secret-service agent of a European power. Then a punitive expedition would have been sent, and quite a few thousand colored people—referred to as fanatics, because they defended their homes—would have been killed. Finally, amidst great pomp and circumstance and patriotic huzzas, the capital of the latest colony would have watched the unfurling of the Union Jack—or perhaps the tricolor of the French Republic or the black-white-red of former Imperial Germany or Italy's gay bunting.

But in these present degenerate days, with the League of Nations insisting on a veneer of international ethics, this sort of pretext was no longer considered proper. A really sound reason had to obtain before a stronger nation had the moral right—indeed, the moral duty—to

help itself to the property of its weaker neighbor.

Now this neighbor, forty-five years earlier, had not been quite so weak, had smashed an Italian army at the battle of Adowa. So, at least in the case of Italy, longing for revenge, too, was a motive.

But revenge was not sufficient to justify invasion and conquest. What else could be done?

Suppose a tribesman could be persuaded, or provoked, to fire a pot-shot across the border into Eritrea or Italian Somaliland? Clearly an act of war. Italy would be the attacked country.

And still—not *quite* enough. Something even bigger had to be found before civilization at large was roused.

For instance, if it could be proved that Abyssinia was utterly barbarous, that wholesale slavery existed? Slavery! Here was a juicy cud for preachers and professional reformers to chew, for newspapers to exaggerate, for docile public opinion to get incensed about.

Well, sooner or later some such excuse would be given to the world. And in the meantime Europe's vanguard, reinforced by the Levant's oily, obsequious rear-guard of Greeks and Armenians and Syrians, got under way.

Adventurers, mostly. Decent gentlemen, a few.

And it was ironic as well as pathetic that the men who palmed off long-spoiled canned food and worthless cartridges on the Abyssinians made more money than those who sold sewing-machines and automobiles; that the men who smuggled opium across the frontier made more than those who imported legitimate medicinal drugs; that the men who traded in a shipload of Scotch whisky manufactured in Japan made more than the financiers who charged a fair seven per cent on a fair loan.

BUT here they were, as they were. Waiting for the happy day when, after Ethiopia had lost its independence, there would be a rabble of new millionaires, a crop of freshly sprouted captains of industry. Preparing for the event by meeting daily at one of the Greek cafés—the Café Makonnen was the most popular—and there boasting, arguing, lying, bartering, drinking, getting dismally drunk.

And everybody on the make. Everybody endeavoring to squeeze something—in cash, or if cash was not to be had, in false promise or coördination of in-

trigue—from everybody else. Then all joining hands to exploit the crowd that passed through Post Office Square: the Ethiopian natives—a clashing, picturesque, melodramatic African hodge-podge, men and women of a dozen tribes and tints, ranging from the pasty olive of an Amhara to the pale yellow of a Falasha Jew, from the chocolate-brown of a Shankalla or Gouragi to the amazing varnished ebony of a splay-footed wanderer from the Great African Lakes.

But workers all; now, as evening drew near, wending their way home beneath the purple sky that was swelling like a bell. Wearily trudging along, eager to reach their humble homes after a hard day's toil.

"SUCKERS!" commented young Jim M'Gregor, watching them.

He had been here less than two weeks. Still, trained on New York's Second Avenue and Tinpan Alley, he felt he knew a sucker when he saw one.

"Fall guys!" he commented in his thoughts. "The fools who hold the bag!"

He shook his head; and addressing Abyssinia as a whole, he repeated aloud: "Sucker!"

A tough mariner from Liverpool's Scotland Road Division, who had deserted ship a month earlier and carelessly drifted overland, heard and misinterpreted.

"Meanin' me?" he demanded aggressively.

The American laughed.

"No, old boy," he replied. "Why,—come to think of it,—meaning myself."

On, yes, he reflected as he walked on, he *was* a sucker—no doubt of it. To come here, to the back of the beyond, because of a dream.

Two dreams, rather: The dream of a certain tune, he being a musician, a composer, whose haunting melodies—not that they had ever brought him in much cash—were hummed and whistled, and stolen by other composers up and down Tinpan Alley. And the dream of a certain girl.

A girl, he thought romantically,—since after all his was the artist's imagining that at times winged picaresque and bold above his slangy everyday mode of expression,—who walked with such harmonious grace, as if she were moving to muted music on the violin, whose curly hair was black as a raven's wing, whose red mouth was tender as well as adventurous, whose eyes were deep and violet-blue. Irish eyes—and indeed, her name being Kathleen O'Grady, why not?



"This, Mr. M'Gregor, is the moment to kiss me."

Eyes like some peaceful cloister into which a tired man might turn from the hubbub of an unquiet city street. . . .

Perhaps she was thinking of him; wondering where he was. . . . "Oh, damn the damned luck!" Jim exclaimed as he squashed a large, bloodthirsty mosquito. And he thought of his boast—his silly, arrogant boast to himself, after his quarrel with Kathleen—that he would show her, would show her father what stuff he was made of!

Wouldn't she laugh if she could see him now! He remembered her laugh. Such a jolly laugh; he had always loved it—had loved the whole girl.

He would tell her all about his love, as he had told her before, the next time he saw her. Oh—the blessedness of telling her! The dream of telling her. . . .

He cut off his musings.

Dreams, he decided, never came true. They were knocked flat by the first cold blast of reality—such as the fact that he was thousands of miles away from home, that his baggage was being kept, that he hadn't a cent; that he didn't know a soul here, in Addis Ababa.

ADDIS ABABA. It meant, somebody had told him, *the New Flower*.

Well, he brooded, as he walked along aimlessly through a crazy tangle of alleys where the black and the brown, the tan and dun and yellow swelled together in amity and powerful scents, the name was certainly a misnomer. Fifty-

seven smells—and all different, though all equally bad.

Except—

Why, he thought, as he passed an open-air restaurant where an old Galla hag presided over a mud-built kitchen range and iron pots, here was a most pleasant blending of fragrant odors: coffee freshly roasted and brayed; a well-seasoned porridge of *shimbura* grain which,—so Abyssinians rightly hold,—being good for horse and mule, must be good for man also; thin sheets of steaming-hot *bar-guta* bread; a partridge cunningly stewed with rice and onions and mushrooms.

He sniffed appreciatively—and morosely. How hungry he was! Hadn't eaten since last night, the Armenian not having permitted him to chalk up either breakfast or lunch. Gee, how hungry!

He looked at the pots. His mouth watered. The old hag made an inviting gesture.

He shook his head, then smiled. . . .

Put him in mind of something that had happened a little over seven years ago, when he had been sixteen—shortly after his widowed mother's death.

Even in those days, with melodies and twisted rhythms and syncopations always ringing in his brain, he had wanted to be a composer, a musician. Had wanted to be a composer, a musician, ever since he could remember, even as a little boy not much over six, when his playmates down along Second Avenue had nursed more heroic ambitions—deciding they were going to be policemen and firemen and street-car conductors.

Not Jim!

"I'm going to write music," he had said to his mother—who had laughed.

"I'm goin' to write music," he had said to their neighbor's child Kathleen O'Grady—who had not laughed at all.

She had looked up at him, had winked at him with that funny little quirk in her eyes.

"Goin' to write music for *me*?" she had asked—and Jim had gravely agreed.

Oh, yes. Music. It had always been all around him: in the rumor of the sea when occasionally he went down to the Battery; in the wind sighing and gossiping across the rooftops; in the clash and clatter of the city streets. A thousand contending noises. And he always listening to these noises, with breath caught and straining ears; and his mother embittered by too much work, no longer laughing at his fancies, but telling him:

"Aw—forget it!"

Well—his mother had died. He had been alone, had not changed his mind about what he wanted to be. A musician, a great musician! But music meant training, and training cost money; and he had been so poor.

He had tried his best to get employment, and finding nothing else to do, had sold newspapers. He had made just enough to keep body and soul together.

THEN a December evening: Christmas not far off; glittering snow-crystals coming down in gusts from a leaden sky, and a bitter wind booming up from the East River, and men and women hurrying, collars upturned, hands rammed into pockets, and fingertips working frantically to keep off the nipping cold, while young Jim tramped the pavement for hours, insufficiently clad, insufficiently fed, his bundle of papers under his arm.

He had not sold many. For it had really been too chilly to unbutton one's coat and go groping for pennies, and perhaps get snow down one's neck. Much easier to say—quite kindly, of course:

"Run along, young feller!"

Jim had run along. He had stared longingly into store windows displaying rich holiday assortments of cakes and candy and fruit and nuts, and fat jolly little German sausages. His mouth had watered, as it was watering today. He had felt weak, had almost fainted; and finally he had come to Pat Dugan's tough speak-easy, on Mulberry Bend.

He had known old Pat, having gone to school with young Pat. He had entered. Dugan had been in a jovial mood.

"Eats? Sure. All yer belly can hold. And say—feel like earnin' some dough?"

"Show me!"

"Attaboy! Listen: my son tells me ye can warble like a lark and swing the light fantastic like one of them Ziegfeld chorines. Well,"—indicating the packed place,—“give us a tune and shake a leg. And I bet the ladies and gents'll kick through handsome.”

So Jim had danced, while somebody had thumped the wheezy piano. He had sung—chiefly one sentimental ballad, he remembered: "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling." And there had been a rain of nickels and quarters. Even a five-dollar bill, the contribution of a nostalgic and slightly intoxicated policeman hailing from County Armagh.

It had been Jim's start in life.

For he had continued at Dugan's, as singing and dancing waiter, for a couple

of years. He had saved enough money to go twice a week to the garret studio of Signor Giuseppe Cartona, on Bleecker Street, and learn there the rudiments of his craft: score and mediant, counterpoint and modulation and diatonic scale.

His name was beginning to be known—at least, on Tinpan Alley. And he reflected that it was all due to Dugan's speak-easy; his singing there, and dancing, because he had been so hungry on that December evening.

No more hungry than he was right now. . . .

Therefore the sudden notion—why not repeat the experiment?

He would have to sing in English, a language of which the Ethiopians were ignorant. But he doubted that it would matter much. For he recalled how, not so many years ago, back home in little old New York, they had been enthusiastic about everything Russian, and had packed a Broadway theater where a Moscow company was playing, without understanding a single word of what they heard. Well, he reckoned, the late P. T. Barnum was right: there was a fool born every minute; and he had an idea that Addis Ababa was no exception to the rule.

Anyway, he'd make a stab at it.

FIRST he would have to locate the proper stage-setting, and not forget the proper audience. So he kept on his way, searching for a likely spot—stopped as he decided he had found it.

It was a fair-sized native café: open toward the street down its whole length; lit by candles that were thickly festooned with mosquitoes and flying ants; crowded with small tables round which a black-and-brown riffraff sat yelling, laughing, arguing, noisily eating and drinking.

He noticed a yellow cat nursing her five kittens on a mud shelf where a half-naked Arussi was carving a roast—noticed, on the floor in a corner, an old-style gramophone and a pile of dusty broken records. A sign that civilization had passed this way; and civilization meant snobbery—the snobbery, chiefly, of admiring whatever was alien, exotic, unintelligible. Therefore—sure!—here was the place for him.

He clapped his hands. Some of the people looked up, wonderingly.

He said to himself: "Let's go!"

Close to the street he saw an unoccupied table. He jumped on it, balanced himself precariously. They stared at him. They raised eyebrows, exchanged



glances that were both supercilious and tolerant. They thought that this man was just a *feringhee*, a foreigner. Thus he was, doubtless, mad—and, most likely, intoxicated.

They turned their backs on him, went on with their eating and drinking—then all at once changed their minds. For Jim had commenced singing.

A lilting, wistful song it was. A song—words and music improvised on the spur of the moment—which later on, in America, was destined to bring him in a great deal of money and of Broadway-plus-Hollywood fame. “The Ethiopian Blues” was the name he would publish it under, the following spring. . . . And here, now, it rolled forth into the Ethiopian night, the tropical night that painted the eucalyptus trees a silvery pastel shade, that clothed the spiky cactus clumps with a robe of lemon and violet and palest rose—that spread a filigree of liquid gold over the mazed alleys and the fetid dirt of the brown mud hovels:

*“I got the blues,
The dark blue bloo-hoos—
The husky blues, the dusky blues,
They haunt me, daunt me, fill me, thrill me
With delight,
By day and night!
I’ve got the blues, the dusky blues.
I heard the jungle drums of fate.
I drank an Ethiopiate—”*

He was conscious of stage fright. His voice was a little tremulous, the words halting and quavery.

But presently, as he observed the men in the café, as more came from neighboring streets and crowded in, as he read, in staring eyes and sucked-in breath, the impression which he was making, he grew more and more sure of himself. The artist in him came to the fore. These people—why, they admired him, appreciated him. They knew a good thing when they heard it! The realization was like incense in his nostrils, and his fine baritone voice bubbled from his lips with a warm intonation; the words came ever more easily to his brain and tongue:

*“I left my girl and traveled far
To see a white-hot blinding star
Fall, in a scorching symphony,
From heaven’s cornucopia—*

The melody sobbed in a rich *bel canto*. It rose higher and higher to a clear, bell-like note; rested there, dropped a full octave:

*“I’ve got the blues—
The dusky, musky bloo-hoo-hoos—
The Ethiopian blues. . . .”*

He gestured superbly. He gave them all he had, tossing it out jubilantly:

*“A land so strange my heart grows still—
With gorge and rock and dust. . . .
The mountain-tops bloom pale with snow,
Above the dripping heat;
The dark girls smile and softly go
On bare and dancing feet—
Naked feet. . . .
Mimosa shakes its yellow hair—
Faint fragrance is released. . . .
The blue Nile dreams of pomp long past,
Of Sheba’s gorgeous Queen,
Who sowed delight, dark as deep night,
For Solomon to glean.
And as the sluggish waters creep
Through thick reeds waving mesh,
The crocodiles stir in their sleep
To dream of warm brown flesh. . . .
Oh, jungle drums! Swift, cruel spears!
Song! Laughter! Battle cry!
Oh, harmony of hope and fear
And Africa’s blue sky!
I’ve got the blues—
The dusky, husky bloo-hoos—
The Ethiopian bloo-hoo-hoo-hoos.”*

Suddenly he stopped. There was a stark void of silence; and he smiled, pleased with himself. Gee, he thought, rather conceitedly, that had been good!

Then applause burst forth, steadily droning in hectic beats, swelling to a solid phalanx of sound.

Jim bowed. He was delighted with his success. He was, he reflected, as popular here as years ago he had been in Pat Dugan’s speak-easy; and as in Pat Dugan’s speak-easy, there was a rain of coppers, nickels, small pieces of silver.

“Thank you!” he cried as he picked up the money. “Thank you!”

He laughed. They laughed back.

He went away, a glow in his soul, and money—decently earned, was his defiant thought—jingling in his pocket. He counted it. Just about enough to buy a square meal. He’d go to the Café Makonnen and see if they knew anything about a three-inch porterhouse steak, German fried potatoes and apple pie.

He walked at a rapid pace, then halted as he heard a voice say in the soft drawl of Georgia’s cotton fields:

"Boss, that Blues song was a su'-nuff honey."

He turned, looked. Who had spoken?

Just one man there, directly behind him: a tall African warrior, glossy-black a lion pelt draped over his left shoulder, his kinky hair carefully trained with the help of clay and grease into two foot-high spiral columns, sticking out on either side of his head and resembling antelope horns; broad copper bands encircling his massive arms and ankles, a crude dagger at his hip, a brace of spears in his right hand.

JIM was puzzled. "Did I hear right?" he demanded. "Was it you who spoke to me?"

"Sure was."

"Is your name by any chance George Washington Brown?"

The negro broke into high-pitched, extravagant laughter.

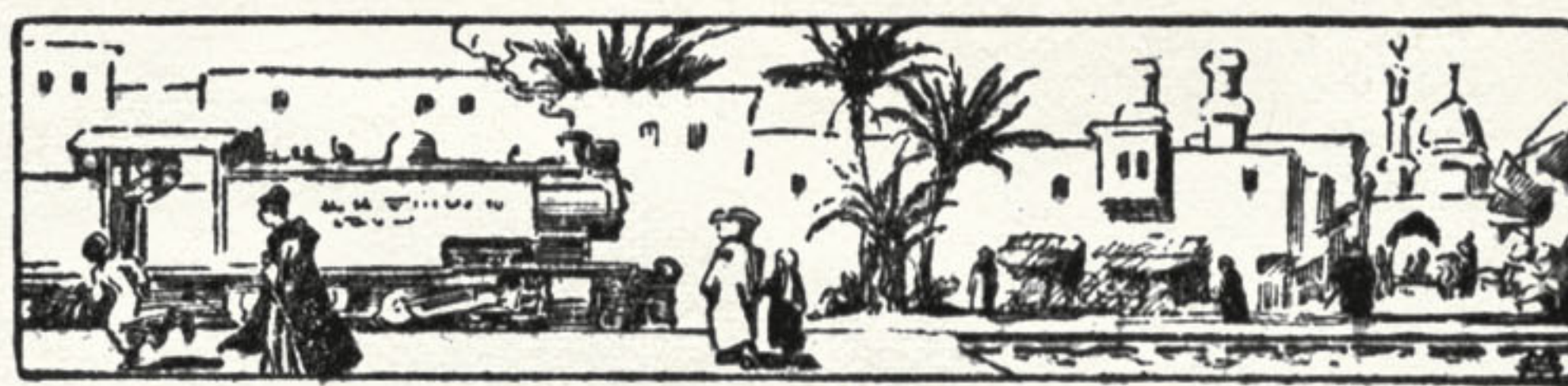
"Yo' dog-gone near guessed it!" he exclaimed. "Theodore Roosevelt Brown—that's me. At least,"—with a little sigh,— "used to be me. Aint me no mo'."

And then, in answer to Jim's "How come?" the other told a fantastic tale:

The tale it was of a Georgia field-hand drafted into the army and crossing the Atlantic with the A.E.F. Remaining in France after the war, earning a precarious living as stevedore on the Marseilles docks; getting drunk one night and enlisting in the Foreign Legion. Sent to Morocco; hearing there about Ethiopia, the last of free Africa, threatened with war by the haughty egoism of a European dictator—and atavistic racial pride stirring in his brave heart, deserting the Legion and trekking overland, to offer his services to the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Falling in, on his weary, amazing journey, with the Danakils, primitive, treacherous savages; overawing them with his strength and superior wisdom; and in the course of time, becoming one of their chiefs. . . .

"Yes suh—Theodore Roosevelt Brown no mo'," he repeated. "For them black boys gives me a brand-new monicker." He spluttered forth a succession of clicky gutturals—all Jim caught was something like "*Khifalu*"—and not ill-pleased with himself, translated; "The Bull Rhinoceros"—yes suh, that's how fierce a fighter Ah is. And yet," he added rather morosely, "there's moments when Ah feels like high-tailin' it straight home to Dinwiddie Corners, Georgia."

Jim was amused.



"Tell you what I'll do, Theodore," he said. "I'll cut out the German fried and the apple pie."

"Suh?"

"Never mind; it's a secret between my exchequer and me. I mean, seeing we're both Americans, I'll buy you a drink."

"Thank yo' kindly. But—may Ah take a rain-check?"

"Got a date?"

"Ah's late now." The man seemed nervous, embarrassed.

"O. K., Theodore. Run along. Be seeing you one of these days."

"Can't miss me, suh, with these here togs Ah's wearin'."

The negro was off, while Jim turned in the direction of the Café Makonnen.

Sudden and black, as it does in the tropics, full night had dropped. But the streets were still crowded. Through unglazed windows drifted the scraping of stringed instruments, the wailing of reed-pipes, and ever and again, from the distance, like a grim counterpoint, came the rubbing of wooden drums with their portentous staccato measure. In front of the houses the men squatted on their haunches, smoking and spitting and cackling, while the women swapped salty gossip or upbraided their husbands, and while children of all ages and all degrees of nudity played and yelled in the gutters.

NO doors—at least, no doors that closed. Doors had no official function here. For life was all in the open, untrammelled, brazen, savagely free.

Life, thought Jim, like a pot filled to the brim with a strange, rich motley:

A purple-black postern thick with coiling shadows, cut suddenly by the brutal flare of a torch and showing a twelve-year-old mother nursing her baby.

A dreamy-eyed youth twanging a one-stringed guitar.

The gleam of a water-pipe daubing a gloomy hole with ochre and lemon.

An old negress huddled on the threshold of her hut, her wrinkled neck twisted to one side as she blew into the fire of an open-air mud stove, where small skewered rags of mutton sizzled protestingly.

A veiled Moslem woman, the tinkle of her massive sand-molded silver anklets accentuating—*cling-clong! cling-clong!*—the soft thud of her feet.

Two Amharas of the ruling caste strutting along with the ruffianly urbanity of mincing gait and wanton eyes.

A huge Sudanese half-breed, drunk with spiced brandy, boring rudely his way through the crowd, waving a naked sword, roaring a bazaar ballad with the full power of his lungs.

He hiccupped. He lifted his robe and tried a clumsy dance step—stumbled against a tiny pot-bellied cow that was wallowing and nosing in a puddle of warm blue slime, aimed a kick at it, missed, fell; got up covered with mud.

He cursed. Then he laughed. So did the throng.

So did Jim. He loved it—loved it all: the confusion, the tumult, the riot.

IT meant something to him. The day would come when he would put it all on paper, in terms of music, as the ground-work for the symphony which he meant to write. The "African Symphony" he would call it; and it was going to be the real thing, rich, big, powerful; for he was tired of being just a cheap tinkly Tinpan Alley jazz-scribbler.

So he walked along, his hunger momentarily forgotten; gathering vocal impressions, drinking in the clashing sounds of Addis Ababa, letting them chime in his ears, beginning to shape and fashion them, to feel them in his inmost being, clear and high, tone on semi-tone, far up the scale.

He knew how he would handle it. Long strains would come first—monotonous strains on the bass-viol, neither swelling nor lessening, but singing together in even honey-smooth chords: that would be the eternal patience of Africa.

Then these strains would change, with the rush and surge of a wave, with an infinite joy and triumphal sweep: and that would be the sensuality of Africa.

Then the saxophones—keening, weeping, sobbing: and that would be the despair of Africa.

Then he would weave in a dozen violins, reinforce them with flutes and flageolets, stabbing a sharp, vibrant, rather cruel rhythm: and that would be the savagery of Africa.

Then the whining slapstick stammer of clarinet and oboe: and that would be the humor of Africa.

Then, after a sudden pause, a solo on cymbals and trombones and shrill fifes, gallantly raising a mighty diapason—louder and louder, deafening, absolutely deafening; and he would add here about

a dozen drums, both large and small: and that would be the future of Africa, the hope for happiness and freedom.

Then, after a sudden pause, a solo on the steel-guitar twisting into a labyrinth of baroque dissonances, an embroidery of fantastic arabesques; picking up the main melody, the *leit-motif*, with an abundance of eerie minor harmonies, dropping to a whispering, elusive *pianissimo*: and that would be the soul of Africa. . . .

The real thing it was going to be. As big and new and startling as anything George Gershwin had ever written. And he had it all figured out. All except—and he smiled with bitter self-irony—the *leit-motif*, the main melody, the vital essence and spirit of the whole symphony.

Rather, he had only half the melody. He had heard it that night in New York, after his quarrel with Kathleen O'Grady, when he had had a few drinks too many, and had butted into that queer Harlem joint.

But he did not know the second half. Nor was it a question of composing, of coaxing and digging it out of his imagination, his musical inventiveness. It had to be genuine, as the first half was genuine. That's why he had gone to Addis Ababa, to complete the *leit-motif*. And also because of Kathleen.

A double reason that blended into a single: a double dream that—once more his morose, pessimistic reflection—would never come true.

HE had known her first when they both were children, in adjacent flats of the same Second Avenue tenement. Their fathers had been friends; Kathleen's mother was dead; and often, when Dan O'Grady was working late on the docks, his own mother would have her in to supper.

He remembered her as a little girl—passionate, hoydenish, sometimes wild; never—"Thank God!" her father used to say—a good child, yet with all her failings so frankly, so gloriously manifest, and never one to stoop to mean stratagem. Jim remembered how she had looked, with her small oval face in a toss of black curls and her violet-blue eyes so merry, and ever a laugh on her red lips, the gush of a happy heart. He remembered, too, how she wept that morning when she told him she was leaving New York, her father having decided to try his luck out West.

He lugged her suitcase to the train.

"Say—goin' to write to me, Kathleen?"

"Sure. Every day."

"And I'll write you twice every day."

She never wrote. He did—scores of letters, telling everything. But he wrote them in his mind, not on paper. He did not know where she was.

So he forgot. She did too. They were children, taken up with their selfish young affairs. . . . The years passed; his parents died. He was on his own, battling life; and then, after a while, he did hear of her—or rather of her father, as all America began to hear of him.

For Dan O'Grady had struck it rich in Montana and was coining millions. Not only in gold, but also in copper, oil, real estate. One of those fabulous, cyclonic American business careers. Luck? Of course. But topping mere luck, and perhaps in some ways causing it, were courage, shrewdness, willingness to take a risk as well as to take a loss.

He had the eager, rather boyish trick of following a hunch and making up his mind recklessly, on the spur of the moment, though at times it might involve millions, and the loss of millions. Indeed, like so many great American financiers, he saw business less as a problem in abstract cut-and-dried mathematics than as a poem (his denial would have been profane had you told him), a grand poem which he lived, did not write.

That's how, after his return to New York, he became involved in Abyssinia.

He happened to be downtown, happened to go into a Pearl Street saloon for



"Shut up!" the young red-headed man roared. "Say it with flowers—not with a mouthful of garlic!"

a drink, happened to get into conversation with a mahogany-tanned Englishman.

They talked politics, then business. O'Grady became interested. For the Englishman—John Smith was his plain name—talked business as the other liked to hear it talked: not in terms of Wall Street, where security must always be gilt-edged, and where two and two total a prosy everyday four. But business in terms of careless, slightly piratical romance. Business in the far lands, where security is based less on engraved bond and stock certificates than on high imagining, and where two and two make five—or five hundred, or five thousand—or like as not, nothing at all.

Fluently he spoke, of a land that was waiting to be awakened, developed and made to pay—in millions.

"Millions, O'Grady!" he insisted, banging the bar counter with his fist. "I just came back from Africa. I know."

It was after the ninth drink that the American-Abyssinian Development Company was formed, and after the eleventh that O'Grady went home.

Home meant Fifty-third Street East. A triplex penthouse on the twenty-seventh floor, in simplified Louis Seize, complete from cornices to dadoes, from half-moon consoles to needlepoint chairs and Savonnerie carpets.

"Not that I give a whoop in hell for all this French muck," Dan O'Grady explained. "But my girl likes it, and what she says, goes—see?"

If the New York press grew epic, in its financial columns, about Dan, it grew lyric in its society columns about Kathleen. Not only because of her father's wealth and because she was lovely to look at, but because she was so typically, modernly American: strong, athletic, fearless; playing an excellent game of tennis; driving a racing car; piloting her own airplane, weaving the pattern of its great wings across an unamazed sky; yet entirely feminine.

JIM met her by accident, at a matinée of a musical revue to which he had contributed a few numbers. He spoke to her in the intermission:

"Aren't you Kathleen O'Grady?"

She turned, looked at him.

"I bet," he added, "you don't remember me."

"Bet taken and lost. You're Jim M'Gregor." Then, woman-like, she went to the attack: "You promised you'd write to me. And you never did."

"But how could I?" He was indignant. "You didn't send me your address."

"Perhaps,"—demurely,—“it might be my letter was lost in the mail.”

"Oh, yeah?"

"Jim, you're every bit as rude as you were down on Second Avenue."

"And you're every bit as fresh as you were down on Second Avenue. And as pretty."

"Like me as much as you did?"

"Shouldn't wonder." Then he paused. "What do you think of the show?"

"Not so hot. Except that last song, just before the curtain. That was a wow."

"I wrote it," he informed her, trying to appear modest.

"Did you really?"

"Yes. You see—I'm a composer."

"Wanted to be one ever since you were a small boy. I remember you promised you were going to write music for me."

"Got to make up for lost time. I'll write you a tune tonight."

"Come to the house and play it for me?"

"You bet. How about tomorrow?"

"At five, Jim."

HE went, and remained to dinner. Dan O'Grady was nice to him, asked him many questions. Jim became expansive when he spoke of his struggles. He was happy—would have been happier, had it not been for Sloane Van Vleet, who called later in the evening.

Of course, Jim knew who Van Vleet was. Who didn't know—in New York, Bar Harbor, Newport? Knickerbocker with a capital K. Millionaire with a capital M. Very Park Avenue, decided Jim—and exceedingly polo. Yet, though Jim hated to admit it, attractive.

Van Vleet was tall, dark, tersely masculine. His reputation was somewhat thumb-marked by having been hawked through several continents. When men spoke of him, they dropped a knowing, tolerant and slightly envious eyelid over his various sins. Women liked him, more than liked him, giving as their reason that he was "that delightful Van."

Oh, yes—attractive to both sexes. Nor was Kathleen an exception to the rule.

Jim minded it dreadfully. For he had fallen head over heels in love with her.

A girl in a million! But a girl, he punned unhappily, with far too many millions.

Dan O'Grady's only child. The top, in other words, while he himself was

mighty near the bottom. A cheap Broadway tunesmith who considered himself lucky when he earned three thousand a year. And when he did something good—as last winter, his “Pigs in Clover” song—some crook plagiarized it, stole it from him.

Of course there was the African symphony which he was going to write. But that needed long, unhurried preparation; needed money in the bank before he could really start.

SO, he told himself, he had no right to talk to her of love. But one evening they were together on the penthouse terrace. At first they spoke casually:

“Indian summer. But still hot, isn’t it?”

“Frightfully hot.”

A pause.

“Lot of war talk in the papers.”

“Is there?”

“Yes. Italy and Ethiopia.”

“Never heard of the place.”

“It interests Father,” said Kathleen.

“He invested a lot of money there.”

“Well,”—rather ungraciously,—“then it *would* interest him.”

“Should interest you too, Jim.”

“Why?”

“It’s in Africa, and you’re writing this African symphony. How is it coming on?”

“Lousy! You know,”—he shrugged his shoulders,—“I’ve my daily bread to earn. All I’ve had time to write is the title page—and the dedication.”

“Whom are you dedicating it to?”

“To you.”

She glanced at him. Her eyes, he thought,—but then, he was young and an artist and in love,—danced along her eyelashes straight into his heart.

“Why to me?” she asked.

“Do you mind?”

“No, no. I am glad. But—well, you know oodles of other people.”

“Sure. But there’s none who—” He slurred, stopped.

“None who—*what?*” she demanded.

“All right, since you insist: There’s none who has your eyes. They aren’t eyes at all. They are wonderful and amazing events. They are Edison’s discovery of incandescent bulbs. They are Rockefeller after he piled up his ’steenth million. They are Paul Whiteman’s orchestra in full blast.”

“What makes you say such sweet silly things?”

“It’s a gift.”

“That isn’t the true reason.” She sat on the arm of his chair. “Tell me!”

She smiled as he exclaimed roughly:

“Because—damn it all—you’re the dearest kid between here and Podunk! Because I’m nuts about you!”

“Is that all? Why, that’s no news to me.” She bent down until her face touched his. “This, Mr. James M’Gregor, is the moment to kiss me.”

He pushed her away, got up.

“No,” he said.

“No?” she echoed, hurt as well as astonished.

“Not until I’ve talked to your father.”

She gave a queer little laugh, while Jim left. He found her father in his apartment on the third floor of the penthouse that knew nothing of Louis Seize, but was furnished gaudily in yellow oak.

O’Grady looked up. “You seem all hot and bothered. What’s eatin’ you, Jim?”

The younger man swallowed hard.

“Oh—I,” he blurted out finally, “I want to marry your daughter.”

“Don’t blame you. But the answer is no.”

Jim bit his nether lip. Why, he told himself, he should have expected this.

“I understand!” he exclaimed. “Don’t want me for son-in-law because I’m—”

“Poor and a musician? Lay off that stuff, boy! I’ve been poor myself; and back in Montana I knew a fiddler who was one hell of an elegant boy.”

“Then—what’s wrong with me?”

“WANT me to tell you?” O’Grady asked.

“Sure.”

“All right. I’ve been a miner, you know. I’ve mined gold. I *know* gold. That’s what you are, Jim. All gold. Pure gold. And—it’s no good.”

“Eh?”

“It’s too soft. Can’t do a thing with it. Got to mix it with some baser metal. That’s what you need—the baser metal, the alloy—see?”

“What do you mean by that?”

“The willingness to fight.”

“Oh!” Jim flushed. “You think that I’m—”

“A coward? No, no. I guess I expressed myself wrong. Sure you’ll fight—when you’ve got to. But trouble is that you don’t fight to win. You’re always afraid of hurtin’—not yourself, but the other fellow. Jim, there are moments when you’ve got to hit below the belt. I had to—many a time.”



"And I don't like you any better for it."

"There you go—provin' my point. Now, I know Kathleen. She's fond of you. She'll marry you, in spite of what I've to say, if she makes up her mind. But she won't be happy with you. Not for long."

"Why not?"

"Because of what I've been tryin' to tell you—because she agrees with me. Because—well, what she admires most in

a man is the ability to take it—and to dish it out. Call it plain guts. Wait!"—as Jim was about to interrupt. "Let me say my piece: I've heard you complain how people down on Tinpan Alley swipe your tunes. And what d'you do about it? Not one damned thing."

"What would you do?"

"I'd swipe *theirs!*"

"Oh!"

"Shocked? There you go again!" O'Grady ashed his cigar. "I've listened to you bellyachin' all over the place how you never get the breaks. And what d'you do about it? Once more; not—one—damned—thing! You've got to *make* your own breaks—see? Oh, yes—you're a decent lad; and for all I know—not that I'm a judge—a musical genius. But you get nowhere."

"I'm doing the best I can."

"Not good enough for my Kathleen. Got to do better. Got to get somewhere. Be a man! Not a whinin' puppy whom everybody shoves around." He turned as the door opened and Kathleen came in. "Been eavesdroppin'?"

"Yes, Dad."

"Ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"I'm not. It's the only way to find out things."

"That's true."

She said to Jim:

"Let's go back to the terrace."

They went there. She faced him—and announced:

"Father is right."

He did not believe his ears.

"You—you mean that!"

"I realize it now. You and I couldn't be happy—for long. I wish never to see you again."

He stared at her.

"I get you," he said slowly, bitterly. "Leading me on—that's what you've been doing. Playing with me! Trying to find out what makes me tick!"

"It isn't true!"

He strode to the door, slammed it behind him.

"Jim!" she cried. "*Jim!*"

He did not hear.

HE tried not to think of what O'Grady had told him, what Kathleen had said. Tried not to think, because deep in his soul he knew that they were right; because he wanted to escape from the grim, merciless shadow of self-knowledge which jeered at him:

"You're a failure! Just a failure! You'll never get anywhere!"

He walked on. There was an ache in his heart, a loneliness and an emptiness. He pitied himself, then laughed at himself as he strode along the street.

Near the corner Policeman O'Neale was walking his beat.

"Officer," asked Jim, stepping up to him, "what would you do if your best girl gave you the gate?"

"I'd get me another jane," was the prompt reply.

"But suppose that in spite of everything you still know she's the one and only one?"

"If I had it *that* bad, I'd likely get soused."

JIM did just that. A couple of hours later, he found himself in Harlem, not exactly sober—nor exactly drunk. Only in two ways the whisky had affected him. For there was his defiant resolve: "I'll show Kathleen what stuff I'm made of! I'll show old O'Grady! I'll show all Tinpan Alley!" And while his musician's brain was always automatically registering sounds, it was tonight even more keenly receptive.

Eagerly he listened to the noises of Harlem: strident, lurching yells; high-pitched laughter; hiccoughy stumble and bray of jazzed Verdi and over-jazzed Jerome Kern. But with a beat and ring that was purely African; untamed, exuberant, shameless, yet moaning, wistful.

His imagination began playing with notes and cadences. But suddenly he shook his head.

No more syncopated tripe. He was through with prostituting his talent. . . . Honest, fine things he would write in the future. And first, his African symphony. He'd do it; and he didn't care if he had to starve, had to live in a Bowery flop-house.

If he could only get the right sort of start—find the main melody, the basic, chromatic thread! Must be genuine, not hoke. Cairo and Congo, not Broadway and Hollywood. Primeval it would have to be. Gorgeously barbaric, though with a tragic appeal: the plaint of a whole race in darkness. Something—oh, hard to express, with his intelligence, what he meant. But deep in his soul, he felt it. . . . And then, all at once, he heard it. Yes, just the melody he needed! He listened, quivering with excitement. Where did it come from?

Presently he located the direction of the sounds: a house on the far side of the street. He crossed the road. The

tune seemed to draw him on, to suffuse his whole being. Then it stopped, in the middle of the melody.

He reached the house. Lighted windows on the first floor, a smell of tobacco and food. Must be a restaurant, though there was no signboard proclaiming it as such. He went up the front steps, went slowly. For he was conscious of a queer sensation, something like a chilly premonition which told him:

"You are stepping away from life as you have lived it heretofore. Away from the life of tame conveniences, with ever a policeman around the corner to watch over you. Away into a new life of motley adventure and brooding mystery—of mazed, incredible happenings where only your own wits and courage can protect you."

He was now cold sober—and afraid. The realization that he was afraid made him wary; kept him, when he had crossed a badly lighted vestibule and come to a door, from flinging it wide. Instead, he turned the knob carefully, opened the door at a slant, peered in.

He saw a number of men, perhaps a dozen, sitting down, eating, drinking, smoking, conversing in undertones. They were dark of skin, but not negroes. Their hair was straight, their cheek-bones high, their lips finely drawn. He was unable to place them racially. Nor, when his ear had become attuned to the dim voices so that he could pick out single sounds, was he able to tell what language they were speaking. Not a European language, he was certain, nor an Oriental, but a kind of clicky, hissing utterance.

Again, unreasonably, he was conscious of fear, of something—how was he going to express it to himself?—something like an undercurrent alive with a seethe of evil, invisible forces, alien forces which he hated instinctively, which vibrated a dread and ominous challenge.

He cut off his thoughts, told himself it was only his imagination. He was here for a harmless purpose: to get the end of that tune; and—the people in the room still unaware of this presence—he was about to enter, when a hand dropped on his shoulder and a voice said:

"Who may *you* be?"

WITH a start, he turned. Two men stood in the half-light. An electric torch flashed, bringing his features into relief. At once, before he had a chance to defend himself, they were upon him, dragging him rapidly down the vestibule.

Hold-up men? The idea amused him. He had all of ten dollars with him.

To the right of the vestibule was another door. They pushed it open, forced him across the threshold, slammed it shut. The light was switched on. He found himself in a small room; saw the two men distinctly.

ONE—he seemed vaguely familiar to Jim—was a white man, tall and bony, with deep-set, strained eyes and a wrinkled clean-shaven face strongly resembling that of a weary bloodhound. The other was a negro, squat, powerful.

The white man said slowly:

“Caught you.”

“Sure. Be a sport and leave me car-fare,” Jim laughed. But the next moment his laugh changed to an exclamation of sheer terror as, at the other’s command in the same clicky dialect, the negro flicked out a revolver.

“Cut out the rough stuff!” cried Jim. “I’ll come across with the dough.”

“Playing comedy?” The man spoke with a soft Slav purr. “Won’t do you any good.”

“But what have I done?”

“You”—coldly—“came here.”

“Why the hell shouldn’t I? It’s a restaurant, isn’t it?”

“It is not!”—as coldly as before.

“Sorry I butted in. But the street door was open.”

“Even so, you had no right to—”

“Let me explain!”

“Be quick about it!”

Jim was—very quick: About his being a composer; the symphony he had in mind; the melody that had drifted from the house—half the melody. He wanted to get the rest.

“Can you prove who you are?” interrupted the other.

“Sure.” Jim displayed letters.

“Such things can be forged. Anybody to vouch for you?”

“Lots of people.”

He mentioned acquaintances up and down Broadway—musicians, writers, actors, stage-hands. The stranger shook his head—remarked contemptuously:

“They would swear to anything for the price of a drink. Know somebody who—well, matters?”

Jim hesitated; should he give O’Grady as reference? He decided against it. The latter was bound to tell Kathleen; and it would convince her more than ever that she was right—that he was a nincompoop, a failure.

What about Van Vleet?

“Sloane Van Vleet,” he said.

“Very well. I’ll telephone to him.”

The stranger left. Jim sat down, the negro watching him with unblinking, bloodshot eyes. He speculated what it was all about. A gambling club? A gangsters’ hang-out? Must be something of the sort; yet why had the man seemed so familiar? He searched his memory. Then, suddenly, he knew.

The dailies, sometime back, had been full of him: Prince Igor Garatinsky, a former officer in one of the murdered Czar’s guard regiments. He had come to America and had been well received, until a foreign correspondent, returned from Moscow, had exposed him. Not that the man wasn’t who he claimed to be. But after the revolution he had joined the Bolsheviks; had become a member of the OGPU, the Secret Police; and—there was grim humor in the situation—had been expelled from Russia, because his Red masters had considered his methods too harsh and cruel. After the exposure, certain New York newspapers had urged that he be driven out of the country; the authorities had taken up the case; and even now deportation proceedings were in progress.

GARATINSKY came back.

“I talked with Van Vleet,” he said. “He vouches for you. In fact,”—with a thin smile,—“he’s ready to pay your fine.”

“What fine?”

“I led him to believe the police were calling him up. Well—sorry about this *contretemps*. Neither your fault nor mine. Fault of the fool who left the front door unlocked.”

“Is it a gambling club?”

“The stakes we play for are rather high.” The Russian was amused. “So you’d oblige me by not mentioning this little adventure.”

“No fear. Nobody would believe me. But—favor for favor: I told you about that melody. I’d like to hear the rest.”

“Out of the question.”

“Listen! My symphony—if I could explain”—he was so in earnest—“what it means to me—”

“No!”—sharply. “Impossible!”

“Well—at least, do you know a place, somewhere, anywhere, where I can hear that tune?”

“Yes. There is such a place.” The Russian laughed disagreeably. “In Addis Ababa.”

"Never heard of it."

"It's the capital of Ethiopia. I don't suppose,"—ironically,—“you've heard of that either?”

"I have, too."

JIM grinned. He had heard about it tonight, from Kathleen. She had said there was talk of war between Ethiopia and Italy.

He looked up, as Garatinsky continued:

"If, being an American and therefore inquisitive, you should go to Addis Ababa—if by chance you should find this place—you'll be sorry. That is, if dead men *can* be sorry."

Jim went down the steps. He was excited—less about the strange happenings of the last half hour, than about the melody. If only he could find the other half!

In Addis Ababa?

Not that he took any stock in all that scary boggy stuff the Russian had spilled. Still, it was far away—at the back of the beyond. Would cost him a young fortune to get there; and all he had was ten dollars. . . . Ten dollars. No good for anything. Might as well blow himself to a taxi.

He hailed one. The car sped south, through deserted streets, narrow streets, poor, unwashed. Then, suddenly, arrogantly, Park Avenue, flinging its spires and towers and massive, bragging blocks aloft. Gloating in the black night with its black pride, pierced here and there by a yellow clock-face, a light behind a twenty-seventh-story window.

Van Vleet lived here. Oh, thought Jim, he *would*!

The next moment he called himself churlish, ungrateful. The man had behaved like a brick. He'd tell him so—right now.

He stopped at a drug-store, telephoned Van Vleet, thanked him.

"Don't mention it," was the laughing answer. "How sober are you?"

"Sober as a judge."

"Tammany judge, I suppose. Where are you?"

"Two blocks away."

"Come on up—we'll open a bottle."

He found Van Vleet in pajamas, engaged in a game of solitaire. Again he thanked him.

"Forget it, Mac," said the other. "What'll you have? Scotch—or Scotch?"

"Scotch."

Van Vleet left; came back with bottle, glasses, ice.

"What have you been playing?" asked Jim.

"Poker solitaire. If I catch a royal flush, I win a million bucks from myself. Ever try it?"

"The poker part—without the solitaire. Fact is, I invented the game."

"Having a good conceit of yourself?"

"For reasons."

Jim smiled reminiscently. Poker was another thing he had learned at Pat Dugan's speak-easy.

"Take you on for a few rounds, Mac."

M'Gregor hesitated. His pile, after he had paid the taxi, was less than eight dollars. He said:

"Seven-ninety is all I can afford to lose."

"You'll have lost it in about two jiffs."

But Van Vleet was mistaken. For Jim was an inspired player. His face, when he picked up his hand or asked for cards, showed less emotion than that of the late Calvin Coolidge; his elocution, when he said, "I guess I'll play these," was a pure product of art; his strategy was never twice alike; and when, once in a while, Van Vleet abandoned a pot to him without calling, and afterward, with the spirit and voice of an early Christian martyr, inquired what Jim had had, the latter would lie like an Armenian stockbroker with a Greek mother.

Three o'clock came—and Van Vleet yawned.

"I'm dog-tired. Mind stopping?"

"I'm ahead—"

"What of it? You can give me revenge some other time."

Jim pocketed his winnings. Eleven hundred and fifty-three dollars! A pot of money. Enough, it occurred to him on the way home, enough to take him to Africa; to stick around there for a while, see if he couldn't trace the rest of that melody!

Then and there, he made up his mind.

FOUR days later he left New York. He said farewell to nobody, not even Kathleen. He felt a little ashamed when he thought of her. He had been rough with her, unfair. Still, her fault quite as much as his. . . .

Just wait till he came back! He'd get what he was after. He'd write that symphony, would become famous. Then she would whistle a different tune.

But he had miscalculated—at least, financially.

For, arrived at Marseilles, he quickly discovered that—with international in-



trigues reaching the point of explosion, with hostilities between Ethiopia and Italy expected as soon as the rains were over, with all sorts of adventurers hurrying south like hyenas to the lion's kill—steamship fares to Djibouti had doubled. In Djibouti itself prices had soared sky-high. The railway journey thence to Addis Ababa had taken all but his last seventy dollars, while a few days at a decent hotel had accounted, frighteningly, for all but nine. He had moved to the dirty third-rate Grand Hôtel de Paris; had put his pride in his pocket and cabled to a Broadway music publisher, begging him to wire an advance on the next

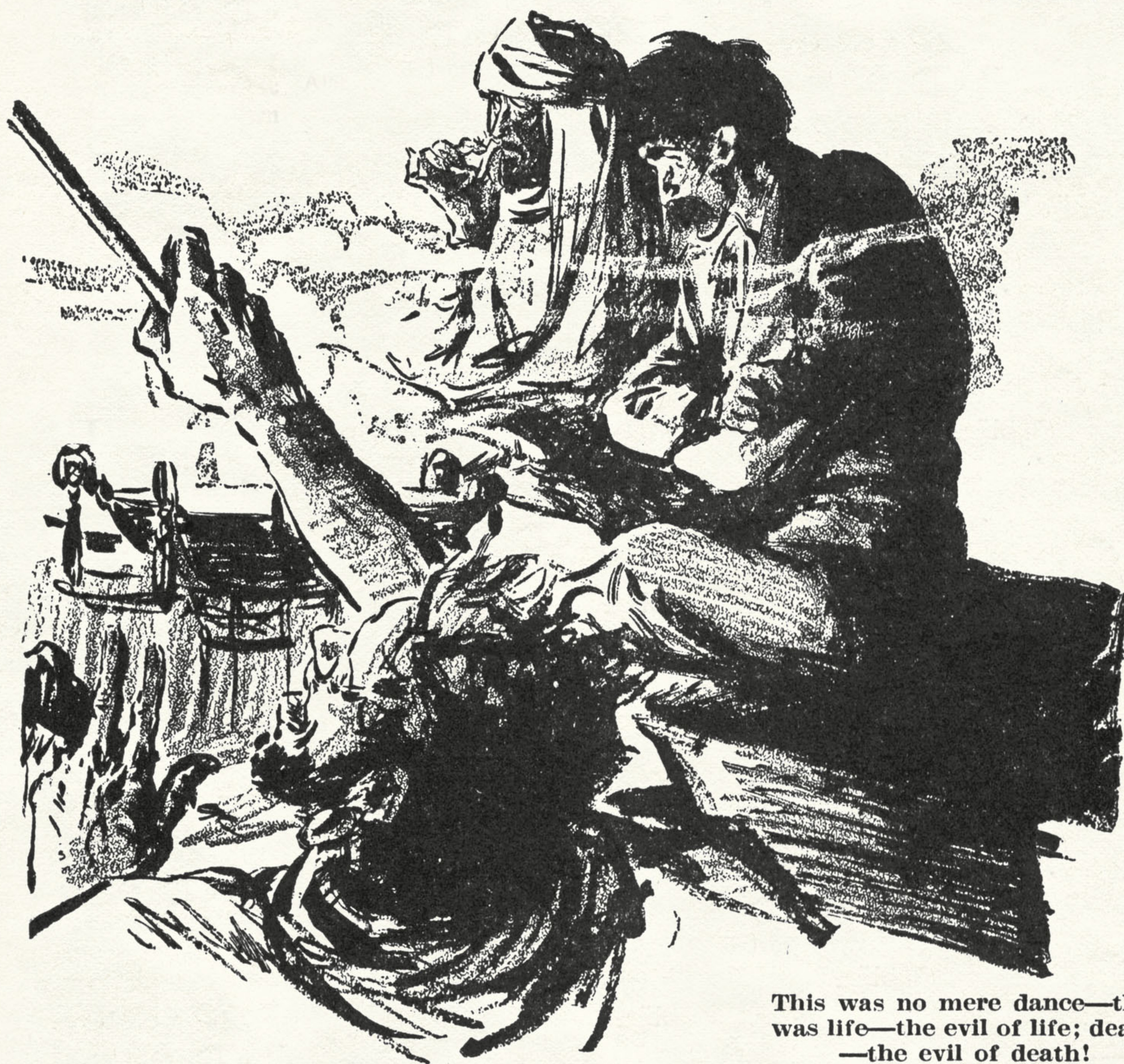
song he was going to write. No answer had come. And here he was now, thrown out on the street, his baggage held, and only enough money in his wallet to pay for one meal.

Well—happen what may, he'd get that meal and do it full justice. He hurried

on toward the Café Makonnen; and all at once he realized that, his mind occupied with memories of the past, he had lost his way. Though he stopped people, addressing them in English and his few words of French, nobody understood him; "Café Makonnen" was all they caught. They explained volubly and unintelligibly; they pointed, gesticulated. He tried to follow the directions. He turned right, left—got twisted, doubled on his tracks. It grew darker and darker, until finally he found himself in a network of byways with no lights at all.

peaking—as if the blackness, the night, Africa herself, were screaming in agony and despair. The wail stopped, was succeeded by a swathing, excessive silence more appalling than the cry had been.

Jim crossed himself. He walked faster—and presently he knew, by the absence of slurring voices and pattering feet and swishing garments, that he had left the town behind him, that he was out, somewhere, in the surrounding wilderness. No sound there was except the wind which howled like a leashed, starving dog, and the melancholy *yaup-yaup*



This was no mere dance—this was life—the evil of life; death—the evil of death!

So black it was that he could see neither house nor man nor beast. Yet life was everywhere about him. He was maddeningly conscious of eyes staring at him through the inky darkness, used to that same darkness. Whispering voices he heard; bare feet slithering away on incredible and mysterious errands; the rustle of garments brushing past, touching him; a woman's brittle, tinkly laughter; a clash of jewelry and crackle of steel; and once a cry—a cry of infinite desolation, trembling, stretching, shrilly

of an egret dropping through the air like a spent bullet. And it seemed to Jim as if he had been exiled from the kindly earth as he knew it, with its virtues and vices, its loves and hates, its gayeties and sorrows, and was now coming to another planet high up in the sable starless heavens, with the former earth he had known spinning below and far away through the eternal fields of space and time. And he felt surging over him a wave of stark, abstract terror; terror—thus his curious imagining

—of the soul, not of the body, unconnected with the realization of any actual physical danger. And he gave a sigh of relief as, a few moments later, lights flickered and stuttered on the horizon.

He hurried. He tripped, stumbled over the rough ground, bumped against a hedge of euphorbia trees in his eagerness to get there.

He saw, as he came nearer, the outlines of a house, not the usual humble mud hovel, but a building that loomed vast and pretentious. The lights came from a window high up on a wall. They danced, broken at a sharp angle by the jutting-out of a shutter left slightly ajar, with elfin-green and frosted, silvery blue and strong red; like sun-rays, he thought, streaming through the leaded, stained glass of a cathedral.

Perhaps it was a native church—mitered and turbaned priests, white-and-gold-cloaked and barefooted, celebrating their ancient enigmatic Coptic ritual, praying to their own particular Christ who was so amazingly Oriental. At all events, people were in there. He'd ask them to put him on the right road. He'd *make* them understand. . . .

He noticed a door. He was about to knock. Did not.

FOR just as he was raising his hand, he heard music. He heard again the melody—yes! *Yes!* There was no doubt about it! How could he be mistaken? The melody that had brought him to Africa.

Men singing:

Ringindjé! Dzédzérumbé!
La pouela a ouami—
Ho! Ringindjé—

The chanting stopped. Its place was taken by instruments: the clash of cymbals, the rubbing of tomtoms, the hollow drone of a wooden drum, the plaintive nasal notes of reed-pipes. Louder and louder—an unbridled display of Africa's passions, suddenly dropping to a sobbing pianissimo, a wail of haunting cadences, more fleeting than the shadow of a leaf through summer dusk.

Once more the singing: "*Ringindjé! Dzédzérumbé—*"

It gathered strength and volume. It flamed with a great, sensuous magic. It swished—the simile came to Jim, as he stood there leaning forward a little so as not to miss a single note or modulation—like a naked sword across the Ethiopian wilderness. Nor did it break

off in the middle as it had that night in Harlem. But it went on and on, complete, fulfilled—the entire melody, this, straight to the end.

HE was excited, elated; here was the theme, the core, the soul of his symphony—indeed, the soul of all this far exotic land: the crimson heat-drenched days, the purple nights, the matted miasmatic jungles, the mountains towering their jagged summits toward the sky, the desert sands that spawned their golden brittle eternities into the south and west—the seven winds of God athwart the immense, untrodden waste. . . .

The chanting continued, awesome and compelling and irresistible, stirring the mysterious regions beneath the surface of his soul:

Ho! Ringindjé!
La pouela a—

Clicky, meaningless words.

Meaningless?

No, no! They seemed to express—something: something vital and terribly important, something like a vast cosmic force. Almost as much as the music!

If he could get hold of these words, write them down! He'd weave them into the symphony, maybe use them as a solo during the finale. But he'd have to get them precisely right, or some know-it-all critic would accuse him of having faked the stuff. . . .

He'd ask the people in there, whoever they were—explain to them, try to—

Again he raised a hand to knock at the door. Again he desisted. For just then Prince Garatinsky's warning came back to him:

"If you should find this place—you'll be sorry. That is, if dead men *can* be sorry!"

The Russian had meant it. No doubt.

Well—he had fooled him. He had found the place, had stored away the glorious melody in his brain, and was still very much alive. He told himself:

"I'll fool Garatinsky some more. I'll hear it again—go after the words as well."

Cautiously he looked about. Only that one window. It was too high; while the door, as he pressed a tentative ear against it, was too thick to hear distinctly.

The roof might give him his chance.

He noticed, as his eyes became used to the darkness above the dancing lights, that it had a balustrade surrounding it. Noticed, furthermore, three feet from

the ground, a narrow ledge with iron rings, evidently a sort of hitching-post for horses and mules.

He jumped on it, stretched his long arms, caught the top of the balustrade and swung himself, with only a soft thud, onto the roof. It was flat, made of palm-wood slabs.

There was, to the left, a faint yellow gleam. On his hands and knees, shielded by the balustrade from anyone who might pass outside, he crept up to it. The gleam—oh, blessed African carelessness!—came from a crack in the wood a foot long and nearly an inch wide.

The scene below, as he leaned over and peered, leaped at him with a confused massing of colors and sounds. From swinging lamps, veiled by incense smoke, streamed lights, wavering and glimmering, blazing with the golden brown of topaz, trembling into jasper and opal. Round and round whirled the scented smoke, painting the air with fantastic shadows, pouring from floor to ceiling and back again, while from the mass of humanity that squatted about rose the chanting of, "*Ringindjé! Dzédzérumbé!*" blending with the instruments of the musicians seated in a corner.

Some of the men were like those he had seen that night in Harlem, and had been unable to place racially; he knew them now: Amharas of the ruling Abyssinian caste. The majority were negroes—savages. But superb savages. Giants, many of them, their naked bodies stained with scarlet and ochre stripes, head-dresses of ostrich plumes fastened into leather frames that encircled their faces, capes of hawks' feathers floating from their shoulders, round their legs anklets made of long monkey-hair.

They were all in a queer state of excitement, all swaying from side to side as they chanted. Swaying, swaying, swaying—like chained jungle beasts.

TWO men sat a little apart on an earthen platform.

One was an Arab, rather dandified, with his silken snow-white burnouse, the crimson rose over his left ear, his long, delicate fingers that occasionally took a perfume vial from his waist-shawl and held it daintily against his nose. The other was—Prince Igor Garatinsky.

Jim was not really surprised at seeing him here. Naturally there must be a connecting link between this place and the one in Harlem. What did surprise him was that, as the music swelled more

loudly and ominously, the Russian, too, began swaying and chanting.

Why, Jim said to himself, it was so damned unlikely, so utterly absurd, the idea of this white man, this Russian aristocrat, sitting there chanting and swaying—like these savages!

Ludicrous! Yes.

Still—*was* it ludicrous?

SUDDENLY he was not sure; for as he listened to the music, he too became aware of a quiver of excitement that ran through his body from head to toe, like an electric current. The drums and tom-toms thumped. The reed-pipes sobbed and whimpered like dead souls astray on the outer rim of creation. The incense-smoke rose, rose. It was like a cloying, poisonous thing. It dried his mouth; it bulged his eyes. It touched his spine with hands of cruel softness. And he too commenced swaying from side to side, commenced droning: "*Ho! Ringindjé! Dzédzérumbé!*"

He tried to control himself. Did not entirely succeed—or more correctly, succeeded with his intellect, not with his emotions.

He grew increasingly conscious of a trembling and unclean elation, an elation that blended with fear, a fear that peaked to a climax, a throaty cry of horror and disgust quickly suppressed, as Igor Garatinsky got to his feet, ran to the center of the temple, and suddenly began leaping up and down.

Up and down. . . . Up and down. Beating his breast in a frenzy, a paroxysm. Yelling loudly, gutturally: "*Inhumé! Inhumé!*"

Just the one word, over and over again; and it was taken up by the crowd: "*Inhumé! Inhumé! Inhumé!*"

A cataract of voices. A challenge, a demand, a mad chorus, swelling and decreasing in turns, dying away in a thin tremolo, again bursting forth in thick, palpable passion, like a satanic litany.

"*Inhumé! Inhumé!*" An insane, whirling chant, with a taint of death, a savor of dread tortures, a horrible hectic fervor of excitement. . . . And a few moments later a curtain across the farther wall slid to one side; and there, outlined in a wedge of intensely white light, Jim saw an idol.

It was a crude idol, six feet tall, roughly hewn out of some dark wood. No more than a tree-trunk on which the ax of a jungle priest-craftsman had whittled just enough to indicate arms and legs

and head. Bits of ivory had been set in to show a toothy grin. Stones had been inserted to represent the eyes.

Once, in a museum, Jim had seen a similar statue. It had been labeled "*Fetish God from Central Africa.*"

That's all it was. An idol. A mere block of wood, carved by the mere hand of man.

Nothing to be afraid of? Exactly. Nothing to be afraid of, nothing to cause a white man, an up-to-date young American, to shudder with superstitious awe.

So he said to himself, tried to convince himself—and didn't succeed. For there it was, a black bitter scrawl across his brain: awe, apprehension, terror, as he looked at the idol. Its lips were painted a bright red; thick, sensuous, they curled in a leer—fiendish lips, malevolent.

And the staring eyes, even more fiendish than the lips, more malevolent. Immobile eyes, made of stone.

And yet—was it hallucination, a trick played by his quivering nerves?—those immobile stony eyes—were they not flickering, winking—winking down?

Jim's eyes followed the idol's; saw on its pedestal a number of knives and metal cups. Knives and cups. . . . The feeling—no, the knowledge—came to him that smelled of blood; acrid, pungent, decayed; and dread in his soul, surging hysterically as, a moment later, through the curtain, stepped a man—ebony-black, naked except for a loin-cloth, his face plastered and splotched with crimson, a dagger in his right hand, round his neck dozens of witch-charms that flittered and rattled.

The man was ridiculous in a fantastic way—as if, thought Jim, he had been created by a motion-picture director's whisky-soaked imagination. Yet there was something stately about him, something grandiose—and ominous.

HE lifted his arms. The chanting stopped. The instruments blared swiftly, clamorously, while with a sidling movement the medicine-man whirled into a dance.

His eyes were half-closed. His face was tense, ecstatic. Around and around, faster and faster he whirled, spinning like a top, in widening circles that swept him from the idol toward the onlookers, who watched shivering, spellbound—as, up there on the roof, Jim also watched, shivering, spellbound.

He pulled himself together. . . . A repulsive savage—that was all, he reflected—doing a ritual dance before a juju. A hideous, ludicrous dance. . . .

Dance?

No. This was no mere dance, no mere physical stamping and jumping and gliding. This was life—the evil of life!

This was passion—the evil of passion! This was death—the evil of death!

"Evil! Evil!" thought Jim, as the medicine-man whirled faster and faster, then suddenly stopped in front of a pale-skinned Amhara of the ruling caste.

IMMEDIATELY, with startling abruptness, the music broke off. The medicine-man's left hand shot out, touching the Amhara on the shoulder.

He spoke in a low voice:

"*Inhumé!*"

"*Inhumé!*" The word was echoed in a hushed chorus. "*Inhumé!*"

The Amhara stood quite still.

"*Aie—*" he cried.

Just the single exclamation, weak, ineffectual, in a sort of blind puerile wonder. Then he turned. Jim saw him jumping back, taking a few running steps in the direction of the door. Saw a dozen Gallas pounce on him, pull him to the ground, carry him, fighting and struggling and kicking, up to the idol. Saw them rip off his clothes. Saw them tie him, naked, at the base of the pedestal. Saw the medicine-man lift his dagger, while another man held out a sacrificial cup to catch the victim's blood. Heard the crowd's monstrous insane demand, bleating savagely:

"*Inhumé! Inhumé! Inhumé!*"

A hell of cruel, unclean sound it was, reverberating like a great echo:

"*Inhume!*"—insistently, terribly.

The cry became a living, pulsing thing—an evil creature with heart of stone and wide-gaping, obscene maw.

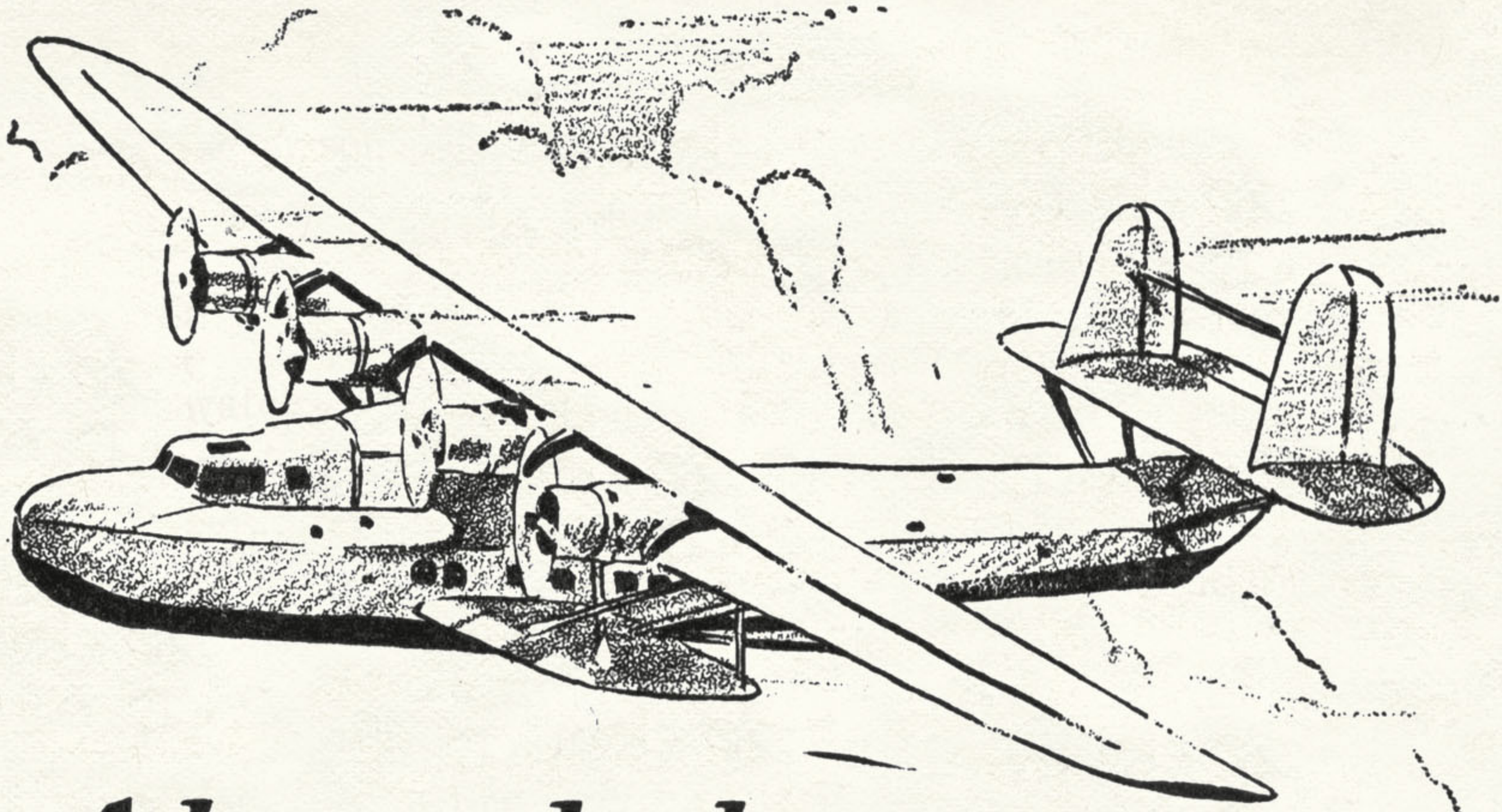
Jim hated it. He wanted to take it by the throat and crush its life out. Yet straight through he felt the elemental power, the elemental, burning, vital energy of the thing. . . .

"*Inhumé! Inhumé!*"—the chant of Africa's unclean tropical wizardry.

Jim was appalled. He felt the skin of his neck stir and crawl. Incredible, this—this thing. A human sacrifice—blatant, melodramatic. And it was happening—before his eyes. It was a fact!

Dear God—a fact!

How Jim M'Gregor sets out upon an amazing quest, and of the terrific adventures that befall him are related in our forthcoming November issue.



Aboard the Clipper—1936

*A navy pilot gives us an exciting story
of the latest development in aviation.*

By **BLAINE MILLER** and
JEAN DUPONT MILLER

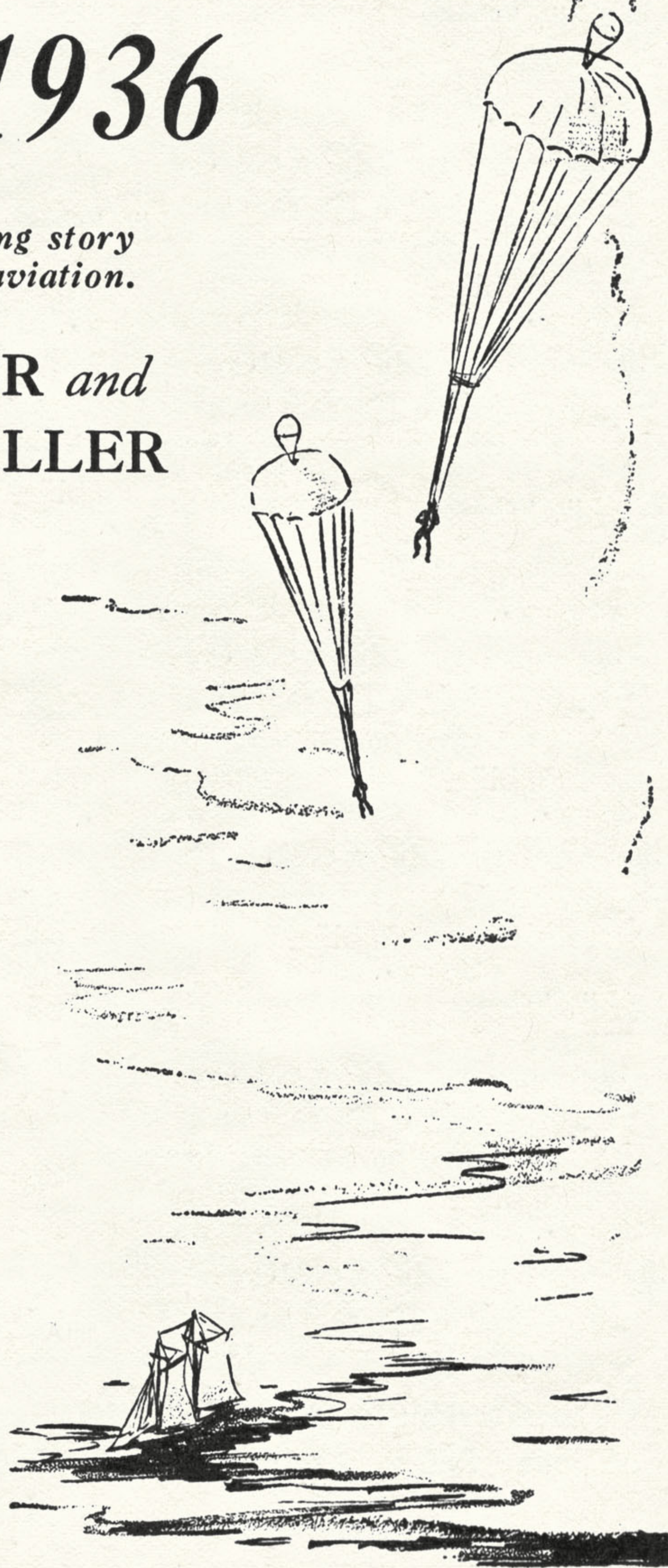
THE real fireworks took place between Honolulu and Samoa, but perhaps I'd better start just before the take-off from San Francisco, because trouble was brewing even then. Jim Canfield, the Division Superintendent of Oceanic Airways, summoned us all into his office. There wasn't anything very strange about that; he nearly always has a chat with us just before a flight. However, this time he had the passenger-list spread before him, and he was frowning.

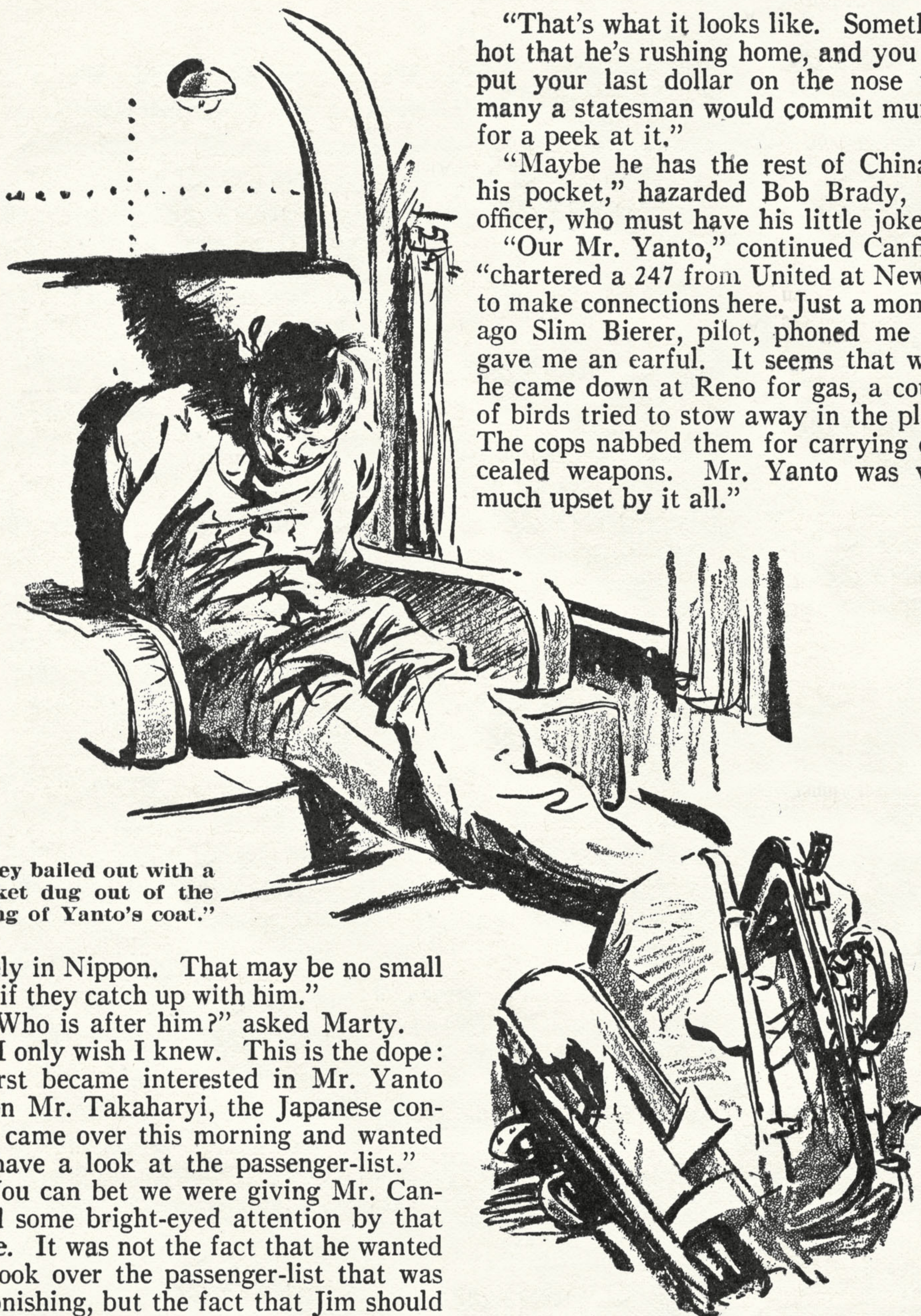
"You're going to have a little Japanese by the name of Yanto with you. Booked through to Yokohama," he announced in puzzled tones, glancing at Marty Kane.

Marty, of course, is Captain of the *Pacific Argonaut*. I'm afraid I'm going to do a lot of talking about my skipper. He's one swell guy, and nobody knows it better than the five of us who work with him on this trans-Pacific hop.

"What's the matter with Mr. Yanto?"

"Nothing that I can lay my hands on. I do know that as a matter of prestige, if nothing else, we must deliver him





"They bailed out with a packet dug out of the lining of Yanto's coat."

safely in Nippon. That may be no small job if they catch up with him."

"Who is after him?" asked Marty.

"I only wish I knew. This is the dope: I first became interested in Mr. Yanto when Mr. Takaharyi, the Japanese consul, came over this morning and wanted to have a look at the passenger-list."

You can bet we were giving Mr. Canfield some bright-eyed attention by that time. It was not the fact that he wanted to look over the passenger-list that was astonishing, but the fact that Jim should mention it at all. You see, we have a good deal of polite supervision from the little brown brothers. Particularly in the case of the *Argonaut*, which leaves Samoa and flies west through the Marianas. That's where the Pan-American outfit is lucky. Their bases are almost all on islands that belong to Uncle Sam. We have more international complications to handle.

Now, Jim was explaining: "It seems that our friend is making a mad sprint between Europe and the Far East. Does that mean anything to you?"

"A treaty?" asked Berry, our engineer.

"That's what it looks like. Something hot that he's rushing home, and you can put your last dollar on the nose that many a statesman would commit murder for a peek at it."

"Maybe he has the rest of China in his pocket," hazarded Bob Brady, first officer, who must have his little joke.

"Our Mr. Yanto," continued Canfield, "chartered a 247 from United at Newark to make connections here. Just a moment ago Slim Bierer, pilot, phoned me and gave me an earful. It seems that when he came down at Reno for gas, a couple of birds tried to stow away in the plane. The cops nabbed them for carrying concealed weapons. Mr. Yanto was very much upset by it all."

The call-boy knocked on the door at that point and announced: "Twenty minutes till take-off, Mr. Kane."

The superintendent stood up. "So that is the set-up, boys. Personally, I'd rather you were flying a case of T.N.T., but since you have him with you, deliver him and his effects, sunny-side up."

As we started out the door, Canfield called after us: "Oh, Marty, your favorite little supercargo is going to be aboard."

"I don't get you."

Marty's voice was steel on ice, and I knew he understood Canfield perfectly well. If it had been any of the rest of

us, we would have shut up. But of course the superintendent is privileged.

"Miss Arlene Edison," he proclaimed, "will occupy Seat Three, Compartment Two, as far as Honolulu—and farther if there is a vacancy."

"We'll get her there along with the mail and the passengers," snapped Marty.

Jim's booming laughter followed us out. I could have wished he'd chosen another time and subject on which to rib the skipper. You see, I've been with Marty longer than the others. We were both fresh out of the Navy, and we were with the trans-Atlantic outfit on the east coast. Everyone there suspected that Marty was sweet on Arlene Edison. I was the only one who knew they'd been really in love with each other. When they broke up, it had hurt Marty a lot.

As I walked down the ramp with the skipper, I started talking very fast about a plan I had to cut out the static between Samoa and the Mariannas. I saw him stiffen suddenly. I followed his eyes; and there, sure enough was Arlene, trim and smart in her tailored suit.

I don't blame him for falling for her. She was a little Kentucky girl with black curls and big gray eyes. She'd been a stewardess when we first met her: capable and clever, she handled the cash customers with just the right mixture of cordiality and reserve. She'd been promoted to hostess at the company hotel in Samoa. Lots of passengers lay over there for a holiday on the beach before they take planes either south or west.

NOW there wasn't any way of avoiding a meeting; they both said hello very quickly and entirely too politely. Just to ease things, I piped up with an idiotic remark:

"By golly, if it isn't the queen of Pago Pago we have with us this trip!"

"How was your leave?" asked the skipper in a dead level voice.

"Don't think this is a holiday, you two," said Arlene, looking at me but speaking to Marty. "I was over here buying fishing-tackle, and bathing-caps, and draperies for the new cocktail lounge—and, oh yes, games for the long winter nights."

"The natives," cracked I, "know better things to do with a tropical night than to play Monopoly."

"The natives," replied Arlene lightly, "don't have the blessings of civilization."

"No," said Marty rather bitterly, "they don't even have careers for women."

Their eyes met, then, their glances clashing. Marty raised his fingers to his cap, most formally, and strode off to the ship. Oh, I could see that it was going to be a swell trip: the skipper's lost love aboard, and Mr. Yanto with his particular brand of trouble!

THE passengers were already in their place and the engines were turning over with a quiet pulsating exhaust when Marty took his place in the captain's seat. The oil temperature was already up to sixty degrees, and Marty gave the signal to the ground crew to cast off the lines. The leading chief clapped his hands over his head, and Marty gave the outboard starboard engine a burst of gun to pull us away from the float.

We taxied on out past the breakwater, and turning up one engine at a time, Marty turned us around in circles for a couple of minutes. Satisfied with the power-plants, he headed into the stiff wind which was blowing over San Bruno Pass. Then, with a quick look to see that we had a clear path ahead, he pushed the throttles wide open.

As the wheel was pulled clear back, the *Argonaut* began to plow ahead into the whitecaps. Immediately the bow had ridden up on the bow-wave, Marty pushed the wheel forward and the plane climbed up on top of the swell, putting herself on the step. Planing along in this fashion I could feel her picking up speed. I always get a kick out of a seaplane take-off, skimming along with the white spray being tossed aside by the hull.

Finally, the hull lifted higher and higher out of the water until she was just barely touching. Marty held her there a bit longer, and then with a gentle pull on the wheel, the *Argonaut* became an airplane instead of a fast speed-boat. With the last bit of suction on the bottom removed, the plane leaped ahead as if eager to get going.

Marty always climbs the *Argonaut* slowly because we generally are loaded down. But we had enough altitude when we reached Market Street to go over the new bay bridges. As we headed out the Golden Gate we were met by a wall of whirling fog. Down below, I could see steamers fading out of sight. But it didn't bother us. Marty went on instruments and continued his slow climb as the clammy vapor closed in on us. Once we cleared the Gate, Marty put us on our course, and the compass scarcely moved after we swung into our heading.

We had about the usual lot of passengers that trip: Mostly business men—officials of oil, rubber and copra companies. Some of them we knew from previous trips. You can imagine we all took a look at Mr. Yanto as soon as opportunity afforded. He was sitting serenely and reading a book on begonia-culture. He and Arlene were in the same compartment.

LATER we admitted to each other that we had also looked for some one who might be taking a pointed interest in Mr. Yanto. It just goes to show how poor an amateur detective can be. Our only unusual passenger was a Dr. Dantzar, and we checked him off the list right away. He was a big, awkward man who wore glasses and a Vandyke. He was very genial and open with everyone. He told everyone who would listen that he was going out to the Orient on an expedition dedicated to marine biology, and he insisted on keeping right with him a clumsy square pack which he said held priceless scientific instruments of his own design.

The fog opened up about seven o'clock, and Marty took a blow. Bob Brady was at the controls with Harry Thatch. My time off is apt to be snatched whenever I can get it. Marty and Arlene came forward together to the pilots' compartment. I couldn't help thinking that the skipper looked gayer than I'd seen him any time in months.

She must have been thinking along the same lines, for she said: "This trans-Pacific job was always what you wanted, wasn't it, Marty? I'm so glad all your dreams have come true."

"But they haven't all come true—you should know that."

She didn't answer. Maybe she hadn't heard what he said.

After that, he took her up to the navigator's compartment. That's where you feel that you could reach into the rushing air and pull down a star. They were there about half an hour and I've a suspicion they discovered what I could have told them at San Francisco. . . .

Along about eight-thirty I went after a snack. Marty was back on duty, and Thatch took the key for me. I took my sandwich and sat down by Arlene. She looked as though she might have been shedding a few tears; and I took a chance on giving her a little Dutch uncle talk.

"You can't have your cake and eat it, too," I reminded her, finally. "Oceanic

Airways doesn't have married women employees."

"I know. Sometimes I think nothing else matters but Marty. Other times, when I think of sitting in an apartment in San Francisco with nothing to do but wait for the *Pacific Argonaut* to come in—well, I'm not sure I could stand it."

"You modern girls," I pronounced, feeling very judicial and wise, "are swell when it comes to the quick and clever stuff, but you weaken when there is an endurance run."

"What do you know about it?" asked Marty's girl fiercely.

"Not much," I admitted; "only I had a grandmother who was married to a clipper-ship captain. She used to wait two and three years for her man to come in—"

Arlene didn't say anything to that; but when I started back to my key, she asked me: "Was she ever sorry?"

"The old lady?" I shook my head. "She used to say she'd do it all over again."

The passengers settled down for the night, the compartments were darkened, and up forward we tended strictly to our knitting. Weather reports came in from Manila, Samoa and Pearl Harbor, full and clear. Occasionally, one or the other of us took a turn through the ship just to be sure that all was well. On my last inspection you couldn't have found anywhere a more peaceful scene.

It was all the more shock, then, when the pilots'-compartment door banged open around four-thirty, and I turned to see Arlene. Her face was white and frightened.

"Marty! *Marty!*" she called.

Even though he must have been startled, the skipper, perfectly cool, turned the wheel over to Bob. Then he turned to Arlene.

"What's the matter?"

"Come—quick! One of the passengers has been badly hurt."

THERE isn't much I can tell from personal experience of what happened during the Honolulu lay-over. I had to be present at all the investigations, of course, but the rest of my time was taken checking up on the sets and working on the generator. I do know that all of us were relieved when Marty taxied the *Argonaut* into the wind, opened the throttle, and pulled her tail off Pearl Harbor. We didn't kid ourselves, though, that we were leaving our troubles behind.

"I'm so glad all your dreams have come true, Marty," Arlene said. "But they haven't all come true—you should know that," Marty replied.

One thing had been accomplished by the Honolulu office. They'd managed to calm Mr. Trumbull down. He was the passenger who had been slugged, sometime between my last inspection and the time Arlene heard him groaning and discovered him. His clothing and one hand-bag he had with him had been ripped and slashed by some earnest searcher. When he stepped off the *Argonaut* at Pearl Harbor, he was mad enough to swear out a warrant for the crew and passengers. But in the end they'd talked him into keeping quiet. Who had done it? We didn't have the ghost of an idea.

One interesting item had been brought to light by the investigations. After the lights had been dimmed, Mr. Trumbull had changed places with the polite little Oriental. The American had an idea that there was less noise farther aft. Mr. Yanto had volunteered the accommodation, and undoubtedly Mr. Trumbull had taken on the chin something not intended for him.

About midnight Marty had come out to Pearl Harbor to take a look at the weather map, as he usually does.

"Well, what's the answer?" I'd asked.

He shrugged his shoulders wearily.

"There isn't any that we can find."

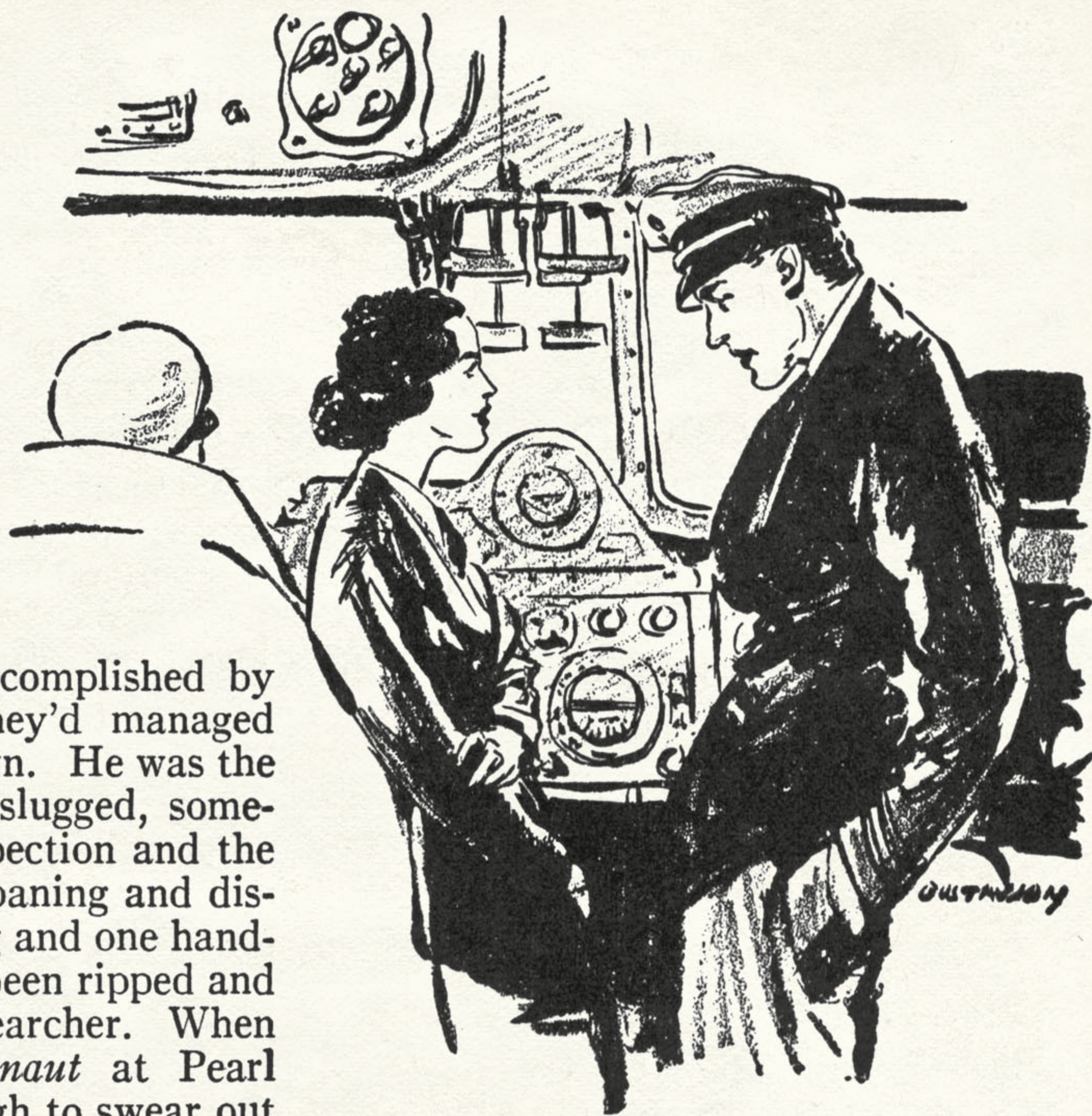
"Are we going on?"

"Sure. The company can't hold up a mail schedule."

Our take-off was as smooth as usual. Marty might have been lifting a scouting plane into the air instead of a job weighing over twenty tons. Anyhow, as Oahu dropped behind us, I unreeled the antenna, cut in the generator, and established communication. Pearl Harbor answered up right away with "v's." So then I reached out for Palmyra.

It timed just right. Bob Brady shoved a piece of paper in front of me.

"Bat this out, Jerry. Or maybe you aren't ready yet?"



Bob always says that to me, because I have red hair and he knows it makes me mad.

"You big moose! I was all set when you left the water."

It was the usual departure report. Airspeed, wind, passengers and expected time of arrival. Then, on my own, I reminded Lewis, at the key at Palmyra, that he owed me a bet on the Giants.

"R"—which means "*Message received*"—came through brightly. It was followed by the weather. Lewis denied the bet. The big welsher!

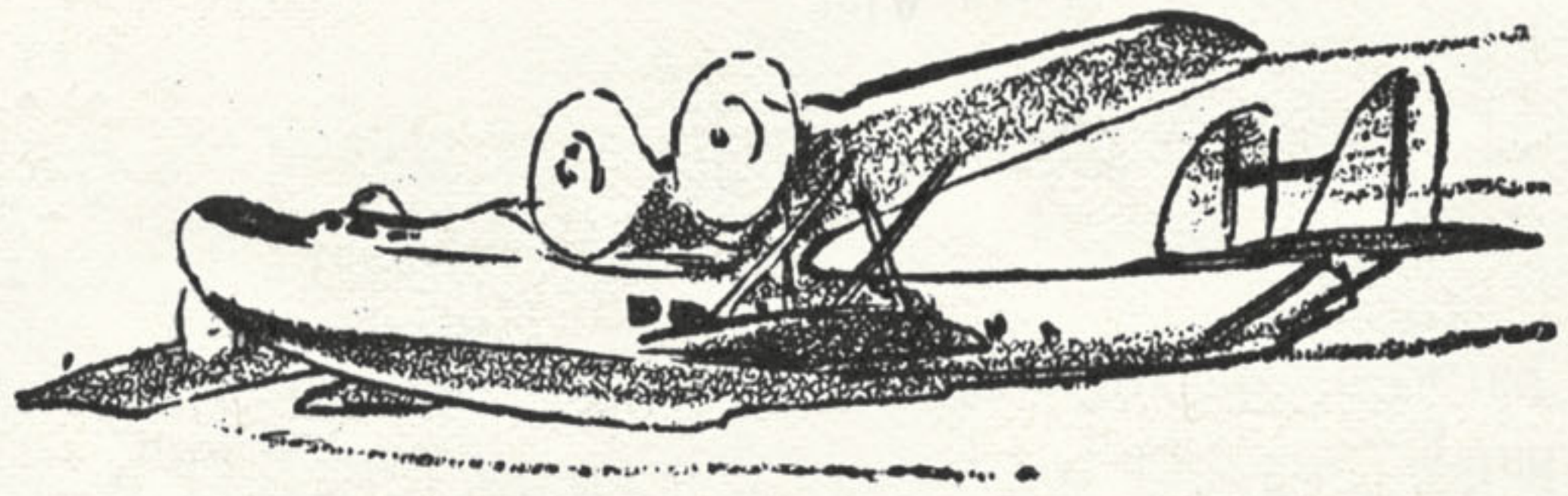
Marty had the first control watch. I glanced over at him. He wore his usual intent look; yet he must have had plenty to think about. For one thing, Arlene was still aboard, in the seat by Mr. Yanto.

As I sat playing with the dials, our call came through with an urgency which any operator will tell you means something hot.

PASSENGER METCALF OF ORIGINAL FLIGHT LIST FOUND BOUND AND GAGGED IN HONOLULU AFTER TAKEOFF PERIOD PLACE TAKEN BY GEORGE METSOL AT LAST MINUTE PERIOD KEEP CLOSE OBSERVATION PENDING INVESTIGATION

What a sweet kettle of fish that was! "Let Thatch take your key," Marty directed. "Go back and see what you can find out. Look Metsol over."

As I went through the passageway, I noticed that the tropical heat had already begun to penetrate the flying boat. This, combined with the droning of the engines, had induced drowsiness in most of the passengers. Arlene, however, was awake, staring into space with a none too happy expression on her face. The little Japanese was peacefully sleeping, his book on begonias spread out across his chest. Next to him sat the Metsol bird, a fair, lean young chap who never took his eyes off his book. I beckoned to Arlene, and when she came and stood in



the passageway beside me, I whispered the situation to her.

"What do you make out of it? Can you shed any light?"

She shook her head: "I'll keep my eyes open, though."

"Good girl."

I was hastening back to Marty to report, when Dr. Dantzar buttonholed me.

"My boat," said he, "the boat of my expedition—I have word should be at latitude $12^{\circ}37'$, longitude $159^{\circ}41'$. That is on the plane's course, is it not?"

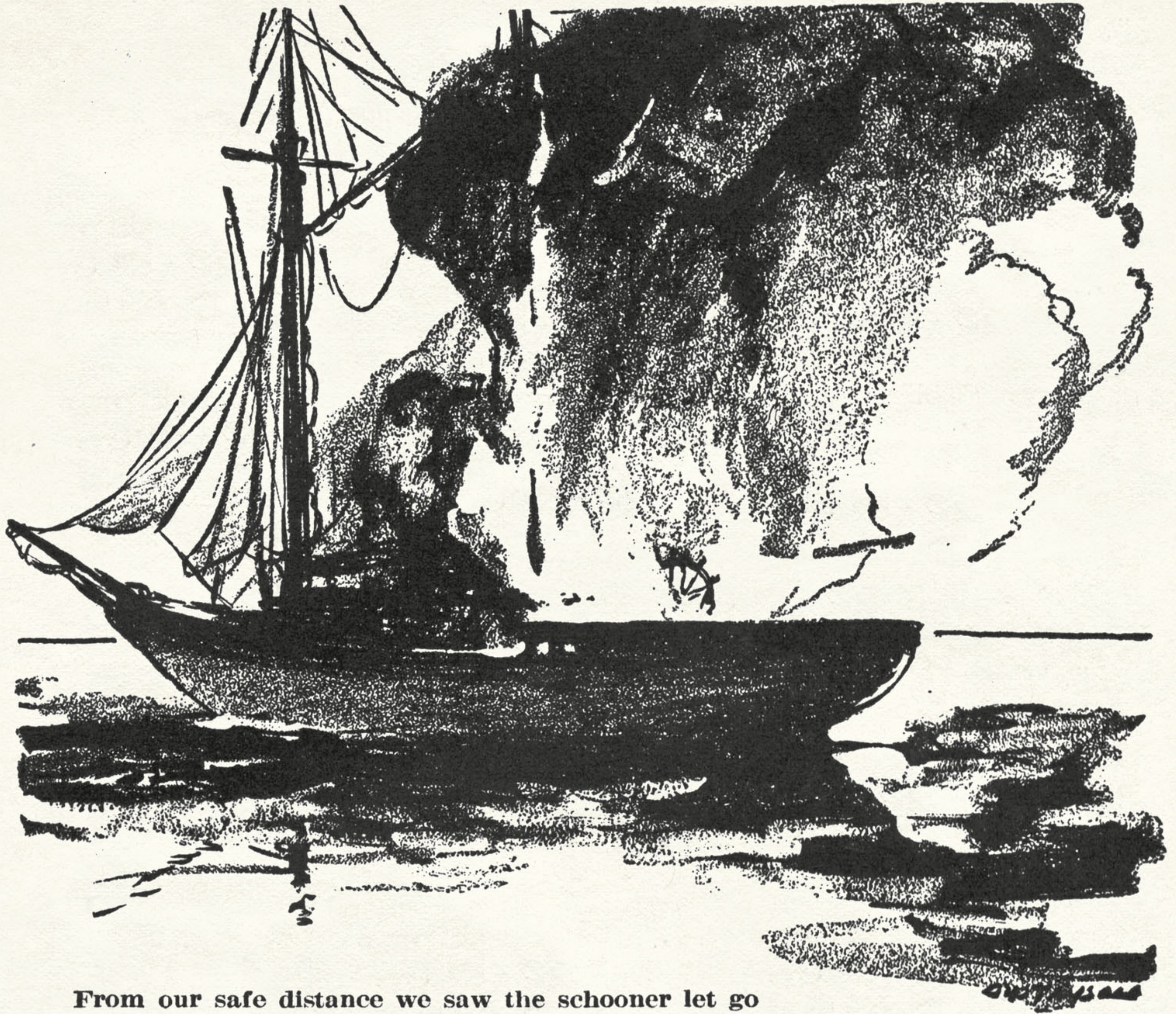
"Just about."

He asked affably:

"Could I send a radio and tell them please that we fly over them? It would give much pleasure. They would be encouraged to see that their leader goes on to—how do you say?—burn the path ahead?"

It appeared to be a logical request. Nor could Marty see any reason to deny it when I explained matters to him.

The skipper plotted the boat's position on a chart. It was directly on our course. Laying down the distance with his dividers, he figured for a minute.



From our safe distance we saw the schooner let go as if she were loaded with dynamite.

"We'll be over them in about three-quarters of an hour," he decided.

"That is good! That is fine!" beamed the scientist. "Now the message, if you will."

"Do you know their call and frequency?" I asked.

"Oh, sure. Sure." He gave them to me, along with the message, which appeared perfectly normal and routine.

WILL ARRIVE YOUR VICINITY NINE O'CLOCK
HAVE INSTRUMENTS ABOARD

Now that I look back on it, I realize that we were all as stupid as guinea hens. I shifted my frequency and gave the call. It was answered as promptly as if somebody at the other end had been sitting and waiting. That should have told me something.

"We'll let you know when we sight them," I promised Dr. Dantzlar.

"Ah, that is very fine service. Very fine," beamed our friend, and bowed himself out.

We sat and discussed developments, not very happy over any of it. The best we could do was to hope to heaven that when the situation broke it would not

happen in the air. Presently, Marty's hawk eyes picked out a speck on the horizon, which a few minutes later developed into a small auxiliary schooner. We had hit her right on the nose just when Marty said we would. I wasn't surprised. He never misses.

Brady had taken the wheel sometime before. Now, Marty took it back. "Go tell Dr. Dantzlar, Bob, that we'll be over his boat in five minutes."

THINGS happened so fast from then on, that it's a little hard to remember their sequence. I'm sure, though, that we heard the scream before Bob could have reached the compartment where Arlene and Yanto were. It came to our ears, high and thin, above the normal noises of the plane. We sat electrified. A moment passed. Then we heard shots. Two of them—from an automatic.

Thatch, who was off duty, had been up in the engine-room. He came down on the double, and Marty turned the wheel over to him. Disturbed as he was, he went through the whole routine, repeating the course and our speed, as calm as a Buddhist priest at a ritual.

If you don't think it took self-control to sit by my key, you have another think coming. But if the skipper had wanted me, I knew he'd have said so. Thatch and I sat with our ears pinned back.

Suddenly Thatch cried: "Look, Jerry! Down and aft!"

I was just in time to catch a glimpse of two great white mushrooms floating away from the *Argonaut*—parachutes! We were wild!

Marty came back, his face white and grim: "We're a choice bunch of boobs. Dantzlar had two 'chutes in that precious pack of his. He and Metsol have bailed out with a packet belonging to Mr. Yanto which they dug out of the lining of his coat. They'll make the sloop nicely, thanks to us."

"The shots?" I asked.

"Bob's been pretty badly hurt, I'm afraid. Arlene's giving him first aid. Dantzlar and Metsol took charge of Compartment Three and ransacked it. Arlene was objecting, and they were treating her roughly when Bob jumped them, and they let him have it, damn them!"

We were stunned for an instant, but Marty soon rallied.

"Thatch, go back and unbind Yanto, and keep the other compartments calmed down. Jerry, send this message, and then come sit by me."

This is what we poured into Jim Canfield's astonished ears at Alameda:

DANTZLAR AND METSOL BAILED OUT WITH PAPERS STOLEN FROM YANTO PERIOD BOTH PICKED UP BY SCHOONER PERIOD SEA CALM WIND ONE PERIOD REQUEST PERMISSION LAND AND EFFECT RECOVERY OF STOLEN PROPERTY

The answer came back promptly and was just what we might have expected:

PERMISSION NOT GRANTED

I slid into the pilot's seat next to Marty and handed it over to him. He nodded. He'd been expecting it, too. No matter how Jim felt, he couldn't give an official okay to any such foray. But even while I was sending the message, we'd wheeled on our course and were flying above the auxiliary in wide, slow circles. Dantzlar and Metsol were being hauled aboard neatly.

It takes one of these calm lads who doesn't bluster and seldom swears, to get really mad. Marty was so sore that his whole appearance had changed. His eyes shone, and his jaw stuck out in a way I knew meant trouble.

The schooner was undoubtedly carrying firearms, being on the mission she was. I knew that no matter how angry he was, Marty wouldn't risk taking his passengers into a hail of gunfire. We had automatics, since we carried mail, but that was all. No, I didn't see how his rage was going to get him anywhere this time. But I was wrong.

"Phone up Berry and find out how many night drift flares we have."

Boy, oh boy, oh boy! That was the answer, of course. I was so excited that I could barely get the words out as I reported: "Fifteen, Berry says, and we can get a new supply at Pago Pago."

"Make contact with Dantzlar's outfit and tell them we're going to sink their schooner, so they'd better take to their lifeboats."

Through my phones I could hear the receiver clicking on the schooner's set as the operator turned around, but he didn't answer me. They probably thought that Marty was merely bluffing.

It was Berry and I who did the dirty work—a minor part, though it sounds spectacular. It was Marty at the wheel who did the trick. If there's ever been sweet flying in the world, it was that day in the middle of the old Pacific.

You know how those flares are. Once they're afire, all the angels in heaven couldn't put them out. Berry had a bucket of water, and we put on heavy flying gloves. You have to moisten the flares before they will ignite. So he'd wet them and hand them to me, and I'd let them go through the port!

The first flare missed, but it came close enough to make the men aboard scamper for cover. Oh, it was a swell show! Marty came lower the next time, for he figured they'd stay under cover now.

The engines were howling as we walked down on them to leeward. We were stepping plenty. Again, Marty gave the signal, and I let one fly. Down she went, a curling flame following it. It landed smack on the after-deck of the little craft. Well, we got action that time. Some one jumped out of the cabin and grabbed the flare. You should have seen him let it go! We couldn't hear him, of course, but from his actions he was bellowing like a stuck steer. Three others came up to help him, and they finally kicked it overboard. The man at the helm started zigzagging.

Marty smiled. He held up two fingers, and Berry plunged two flares into the

bucket. We came down to about the height of their radio mast, and both pots hit the deck. It didn't take long after that. I'll say this much for the fire-brigade aboard: they were pretty game. But there was one they couldn't dislodge. It had rolled into the well of the gasoline tank. Smoke and flame started breaking out. Marty gave us the signal to cease firing; and as we went over them again, we saw that they were scrambling into their small lifeboat.

They pulled away from the crackling vessel as if their lives depended upon it. Nor were they wrong. Marty swung out in a wide circle, which just goes to show he does the right thing by instinct. From our safe distance we saw the schooner let go as if she were loaded with dynamite. When the tower of green water subsided, there was nothing left but a ring of débris around a whitish blister, where she'd gone down.

I went back to my key and sent Marty's latest to Canfield:

SCHOONER HAS EXPLODED PERIOD FOUR
MEN ADRIFT IN SMALL OPEN BOAT PERIOD
ESSENTIAL TO LAND AND RESCUE PERSON-
NEL PERIOD SEA CALM WIND ONE

They gave me an "R."

We waited, scarcely breathing.

Then Alameda answered, using the speed bug:

PERMISSION GRANTED TO MAKE LANDING
FOR RESCUE PURPOSES PERIOD YOU'RE AN-
OTHER.

Ha! Try to fool Jim Canfield. He knows Marty even better than I do.

It was easy after that. Marty brought the *Argonaut* around into the wind and set her down as pretty as you please, then taxied over to the rowboat. Berry and I were on the reception-committee standing on the port water wing. As they came aboard, I frisked them for weapons, and Berry lashed their hands behind them. We stowed them away in various compartments, keeping them separated as much as possible.

When I searched Dantzlar, I found Mr. Yanto's papers still sewed up in their silk packet in the pocket of a rubber life jacket. They were a bit damp and limp but that was all. I turned them over to Marty. Dantzlar, with his spectacles gone and his hair mussed, was the perfect picture of a man on a desperate mission, such as we amateur sleuths had been seeking. He admitted that he had knocked out Mr. Trumbull, thinking he

was Yanto. Unsuccessful as a lone wolf, he had resorted to an alternate plan which called for Metsol and the schooner, which had been planted on the *Argonaut's* routine course several days earlier.

WHEN we were in the air again, headed for Samoa all shipshape, Marty gave the controls over to Thatch and asked me to come aft to witness the return of Yanto's packet. The little man bobbed up and down as though he were on springs.

Marty said to him, severely: "Don't get the idea that I care whether you get your papers through or not. But nobody can pirate an *Argonaut* and get away with it."

Then Yanto said almost what Dantzlar had said earlier in the day:

"Very fine service. Very fine."

"Yeah? Well, next time you have a load of dynamite, please take a rowboat!" And the skipper turned his back on the cause of our recent tribulations.

That left him facing Arlene. They had that look again of two people who are starving for what they are too stubborn to reach out and take.

Suddenly, without warning, Arlene's eyes filled with tears and she sat down.

"I've been so stupid! So stupid! If you'd been hurt—you might have been."

Marty put his hand on her shoulder and made his voice gruff to hide the tenderness in it.

"You weren't stupid. You did very well. It was a nasty experience."

She shook her head. "That isn't what I mean at all. I should have been like Jerry's grandmother, and it's too late, now."

The skipper shot me a startled glance. Naturally, it was all gibberish to him.

"She's trying to tell you that she wants you to ask her to marry you again," I explained.

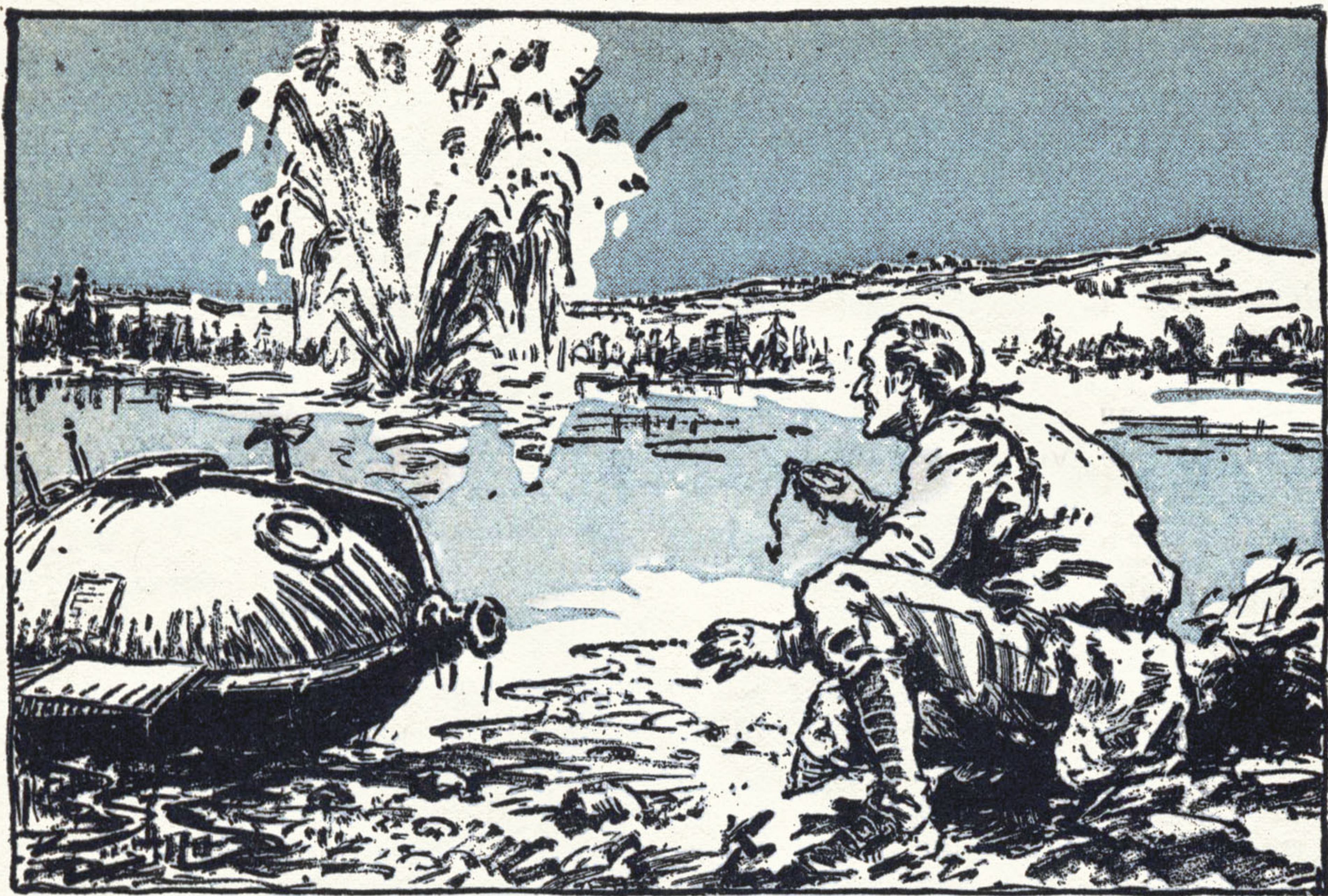
Then I bowed out.

It must have worked, for a little while later they came to the radio desk, all gay and shining.

"How about sending this message for us?" asked Marty.

PLEASE HAVE NAVY CHAPLAIN MEET ARGONAUT NUMBER SEVEN ON ARRIVAL PAGO PAGO

Since there is no place to go in Samoa, and since the whole population always comes down to meet us anyway, that was an unnecessary message, but I've never sent one I enjoyed more.



ARMS and MEN

Illustrated by George Avison

MAX JOHL came into the Collectors' Club one afternoon and advanced on me with intent eye. Max is the type of man usually referred to as "a prince," but he has one besetting vice: he collects stamps.

"What's become of Martin Burnside?" he demanded. "That chap who collects arms and armor, you know."

"In Europe or Mexico or China or somewhere," I replied. "Why?"

"I've got something he ought to have," Max said. "Got it up in Vermont with a bunch of old letters, from a farmhouse. A lot of 'em were too old to interest me, not having any stamps. I don't think you can make it into any story, because there's no story in it, but here's the stuff."

He started to empty his pockets, then paused and fastened me with his bright and glittering eye.

"You know something about Vermonters?" he said. "They don't talk."

"So I heard Woollcott say over the radio recently. How did you learn it?"

"Read this stuff, and you'll see. By the way, it's about the first submarine ever put into service. And here's a piece of the submarine that was labeled and ticketed and put away with the letters."

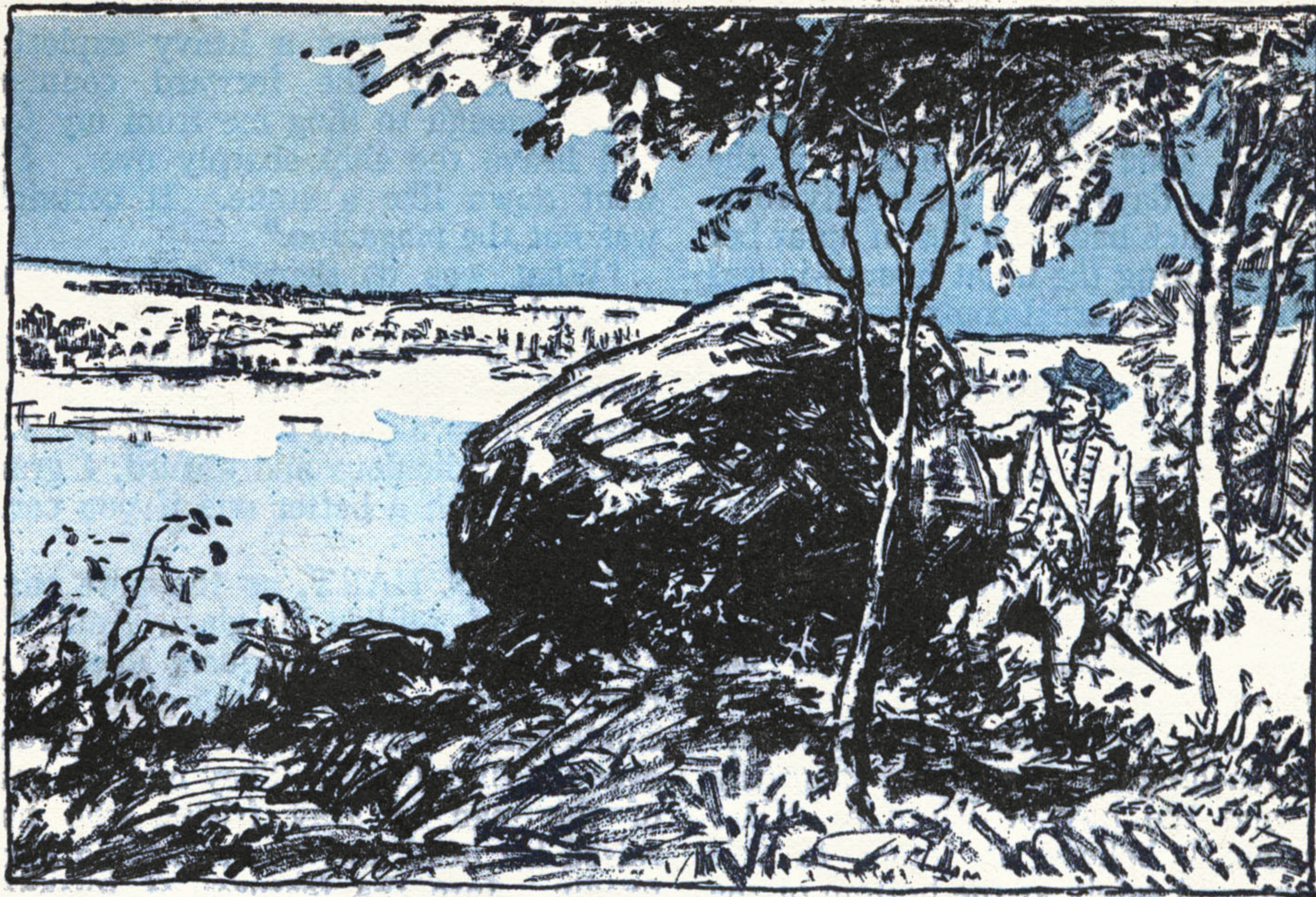
He laid down a chunk of wood, explaining that he had lost the label. Then he put down a batch of old letters.

"Here's a funny thing," he observed: "All those letters and so forth are just about one conversation in a New York tavern. From different angles and so forth, and from different people. One of 'em is the report of a Yankee spy. How they all got collected in one bunch, is past me; not that it matters. But I expect a whole book could be written just about that one tavern conversation! First from one angle, then from another, just like those letters. Even the spy! His name isn't signed to his report, and there's nothing to show which one of the bunch he was, except inference—which is plain."

"The idea is admirable," I said dryly. "But I'm not writing books. If it's so easy, why don't you do it?"

Max grinned expansively.

"The answer is also easy: I don't know how. Besides, my wife hollers already because I put in so much time of evenings on my stamp albums. No, this is your job; so go ahead and do it. Give that relic of the submarine to Martin Burnside, if you like, for his collection. And remember, do as I say: Cover the



XXI—"The First Submarine": It dates back to the American Revolution, and is the basis of one of the most interesting stories in all this fine series.

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

story from different angles, the way Conrad does. Then no one will care whether there's a real story or not."

Alas, Max suffers from the delusion that all his friends are Conrads, or Bayards, or Beau Brummels—which is no doubt one reason why he has so many friends.

Upon delving into the letters and reports here assembled, however, I was at once struck by the remarkable fact he had mentioned. They did deal almost exclusively with one evening's conversation in the ordinary room of the old Fraunces' Tavern, a famous New York hostelry of Revolutionary days. And they did cover this evening's talk from various angles, dipping by the way into all manner of things from naval tactics to the art of building chimneys.

It was a catholic and glorious conversation, such as obtained among a group of kindred souls, all British officers of family and culture, who no doubt gathered regularly in this tavern room to relax over long pipes and rich port. At this time the British held New York; Washington and his shabby Continentals were encamped somewhere among the Jersey marshes; and Yorktown was still long years away.

This particular night was rainy and foggy, so that the ruddy fire on the wide hearth was grateful. The only man not in uniform was one who sat somewhat by himself at a side table, busily writing letters and reports, quite unmindful of the officers who dropped in by ones and twos. He wore a frieze greatcoat and garments of very rude country cut, and had a rugged countenance.

The officers eyed him askance until Major Severance of the Quartermaster's Department came in, greeted the others jovially, then advanced to the lone man.

"Ha, Bushnell!" he exclaimed cordially, shaking hands. "Glad to see you again. Egad, man, you look busy! Gentlemen, let me introduce Mr. Bushnell, from Vermont. A loyal subject of the King, God bless him, who has done us splendid service with his supplies of forage and other matters."

Bushnell being thus vouched for, was prayed to join the circle, but begged to be excused. Unsmiling, taciturn, he pointed to his accounts.

"If my presence irks you gentlemen, I'll withdraw," he said.

This offer was set aside instantly; and as he evidently desired, he was left to himself.

The officers were of various ranks, some of the navy, some of the army, half a dozen in all. The talk, as was inevitable, fell upon the destruction of the *Warrior* two days earlier; a twenty-four-gun brig which had been blown up at her moorings during the night hours—it was said, by some infernal contrivance of the Yankees.

Another officer entered, cursing the fog; he brought with him a lieutenant from the *Warrior*, the honorable Fitzroy Spence Seymour, who knew most of those present. The circle was complete.

"Come along, Seymour! Tell us what actually happened aboard," cried one of the officers. "What touched off her magazine?"

"Nothing, apparently," drawled Seymour, reaching for one of the long clay pipes and the box of Virginia. "Her magazine, I believe, is intact to this moment, and safely at the bottom of the harbor."

"Nonsense, my dear fellow!" observed one Captain Hart of the Royal Rifles, a Colonial by birth. By some accounts he hailed from Maine. "I know Headquarters is trying to hush the matter up, but no need for you to assist 'em. Egad, man, the explosion was heard everywhere in the city!"

The man in the gray frieze looked up from his accounts for a moment, then went back to work. His quill did not move rapidly, however.

SEYMOUR laughed. "I don't deny the explosion, gentlemen; being watch-officer at the moment, I was only too devilish aware of it."

"Good! Now we'll have information," exclaimed Major Severance. "Y' know, Seymour, I've a guinea wagered that the thing happened because some of your seamen were smoking at the time."

"Not likely," intervened another. "Regulations order all smoking aboard done over a tub of water; eh, Seymour?"

The latter nodded, and got his long pipe alight.

"Right. What happened, was very simple—and damned mysterious. I had caught a muffled thumping, as though a small boat were lying alongside without fenders. Where it came from, no one could say. I had lanterns lowered, in case a log were hitting the hull, but nothing of the sort. The sound came from somewhere forward. As it was apparently of no consequence, I forgot it. Half an hour later, without the least

warning, there was a heavy explosion somewhere by the forward counter; heavy enough to fling me from my feet and heave the ship sharply over. She went down like a stone. It certainly was not the magazine."

"What was it, then?" came prompt demand.

Seymour shrugged lightly. "Who knows? I believe the damned rebels floated down a mine of some sort. The theory is ridiculous and absurd, I grant you. Furnish a better one if you can."

CAPTAIN HART, as the port came around, refilled his glass. Amid the confusion of talk consequent upon Seymour's words, he lifted the glass to the candlelight. His eyes, however, struck over the ruby liquid. They met the gaze of the man in gray frieze, who had raised his head and was regarding Hart fixedly. Into the features of Bushnell came no change of expression; but Hart's brows went up quizzically, and he moved the wineglass a trifle as though in silent toast, then put it to his lips and smiled as he drank, his eyes still on Bushnell. The latter resumed his occupation, indifferently.

No one else, it seemed, observed this byplay.

"Well, gentlemen, damme if the whole fleet might not as well follow this brig," exclaimed an artillery officer, smacking his lips over his port. "The fleet's been of no use for the past fifty years—call it treason if you like! So cursed much of tactics that there's never a battle of any decisive consequence. Your ships prowl around and around like dogs afraid to come to close quarters."

"Sink me, sir, if that speech doesn't smack of treason indeed!" hotly exclaimed Sir John Brill, who was a navy paymaster. His rubicund cheeks puffed out angrily. "The navy, sir, is the bulwark of Britain! Damme and sink me, if I like such words, in a city that's ridden with spies!"

The good beginning of an excellent quarrel was promptly stoppered by Seymour, whose drawl cut into the tobacco-smoke with astonishing effect.

"Stuff and nonsense, Sir John! Smith is dead right about it."

"What, sir?" cried Brill. "You, an officer of the navy, to entertain such dashed heresy?"

"Precisely, and I'm not alone in it," said Seymour. "Haven't you heard of Clerk and his pamphlets?"

"This odd boat opened to let out a man. He looked at the barge. 'Timed for fifteen minutes,' I heard him mutter. 'Then—'"



"All bosh!"—and Brill snorted hotly. "Absolute bosh, sir!"

"Who's Clerk?" asked Major Severance.

"Some damned witless Scot," Sir John Brill snorted again. "A daft fellow who prints letters telling the navy how to conduct itself."

"On the contrary, his pamphlets are to the mark," said Seymour lazily, puffing away at his pipe. "He claims that since the navy is superior in gunnery and general ability to all other navies, it should abandon its hold-off tactics and come to close quarters with the enemy. Come to a furious mingled strife, as he puts it. His pamphlets have been widely distributed in navy circles."

"Who reads 'em?" demanded Brill.

"Admiral Rodney, for one," said Seymour in sly triumph. "And the younger crowd generally. D'ye know, I met a strange fellow in the *Worcester* frigate last year, a chap named Horatio Nelson—a lieutenant now, I believe. This was on the Jamaica station. He used to swear up and down that some day he'd be an admiral; and when he did, he'd show the world that Clerk's tactics are correct. An odd fellow, this, a bit off in his head, I fancy. Used to talk of a nimbus of glory and whatnot. But it goes to show that all ranks of the service aren't so self-satisfied."

"Right, Seymour," spoke up another navy man, while Sir John snorted into his tobacco-smoke. "And more by token, I've heard that the French are picking up copies of Clerk's pamphlets. They say that Admiral Suffren has been studying them."

"WHAT of it? Why, here's a toast to 'em, and may they come under our guns ere Michaelmas!" cried Major Severance heartily. The toast was drunk with loud acclaim. "If they come to the help of the American rebels," he went on, "it means a merry war and a good one!"

"Aye," said Captain Hart; and through the gray drifting haze of tobacco-smoke his gaze once again struck upon that of Bushnell the Vermonter.

"Not a bit of it, egad!" exclaimed a Headquarters Staff man. "I have positive information that before the snow flies, this audacious fellow Washington will be ready to surrender. His army is melting away daily. What d'ye say, Hart? You know these rebels, what?"

"Very well indeed," Captain Hart rejoined coolly. "I'd wager anything, though, that this Washington doesn't give in so readily."

"Done for a guinea, sir! Before the first snow."

"Taken, sir, taken," rejoined Hart with an affable smile. Smiling, he was one man; smiling or talking, as he did very well indeed, his quick, hard personality holding the attention of his listeners.

When his features fell into repose, however, when he withdrew into himself, his face lost its affability and took on harsher lines. Although no one noticed it, his face then looked not unlike the face of Bushnell, who sat leaning forward with his chin in the collar of his gray frieze coat. Something of the same rugged nature was in the aspect of each man, one a Vermonter, the other a British officer.

"I DON'T like this talk, gentlemen, damme if I do," broke out Sir John Brill testily, as he laid aside his pipe. "Such words are scurvy folly; and by gad, I for one will hear no more of 'em! We know too well that the city is full of spies, even the army itself. I didn't come here to listen to folly. Good night to you, gentlemen!"

And rubicund Sir John stalked out. A chuckle and a grin passed around.

"Off to see that widow in the Bow-erie," said somebody.

"Where did the man get his title?" Seymour asked lazily.

"Inherited it, of course; fell slap into it last year, from a long distance. I say, gentlemen! We've not come anywhere

in this explosion question, you know. Seymour, what does the court of inquiry say? Your uncle is on it, I think."

Seymour smiled. "My worshipful uncle is like these colonials who come from that hilly district far up the river—what's the name of it? Vermont or some such name."

"How is he like them?" demanded Captain Hart pleasantly.

"He doesn't talk," Seymour chuckled. "Mum as an Iroquois, upon my word! The court is still sitting, moreover."

"That's an idea!" some one exclaimed hastily. "These red Indians are like snakes in the water, I hear. Perhaps one of 'em swam out to the brig and set off a mine under her counter. It could be done, you know."

"Aye; and with the help of an 'if' you could put London into a bottle," scoffed Major Severance. Amid cover of talk, he leaned over to the ear of Seymour. "I say, old chap! You rather said the wrong thing, you know—about Vermont and so forth. That fellow at the other table, Bushnell, is from those parts."

"Oh! Damned thoughtless of me," said Seymour with prompt contrition. He rose and went over to the side-table. Bushnell lifted his head with silent inquiry. The officer made an impulsive apology, and Bushnell smiled a little.

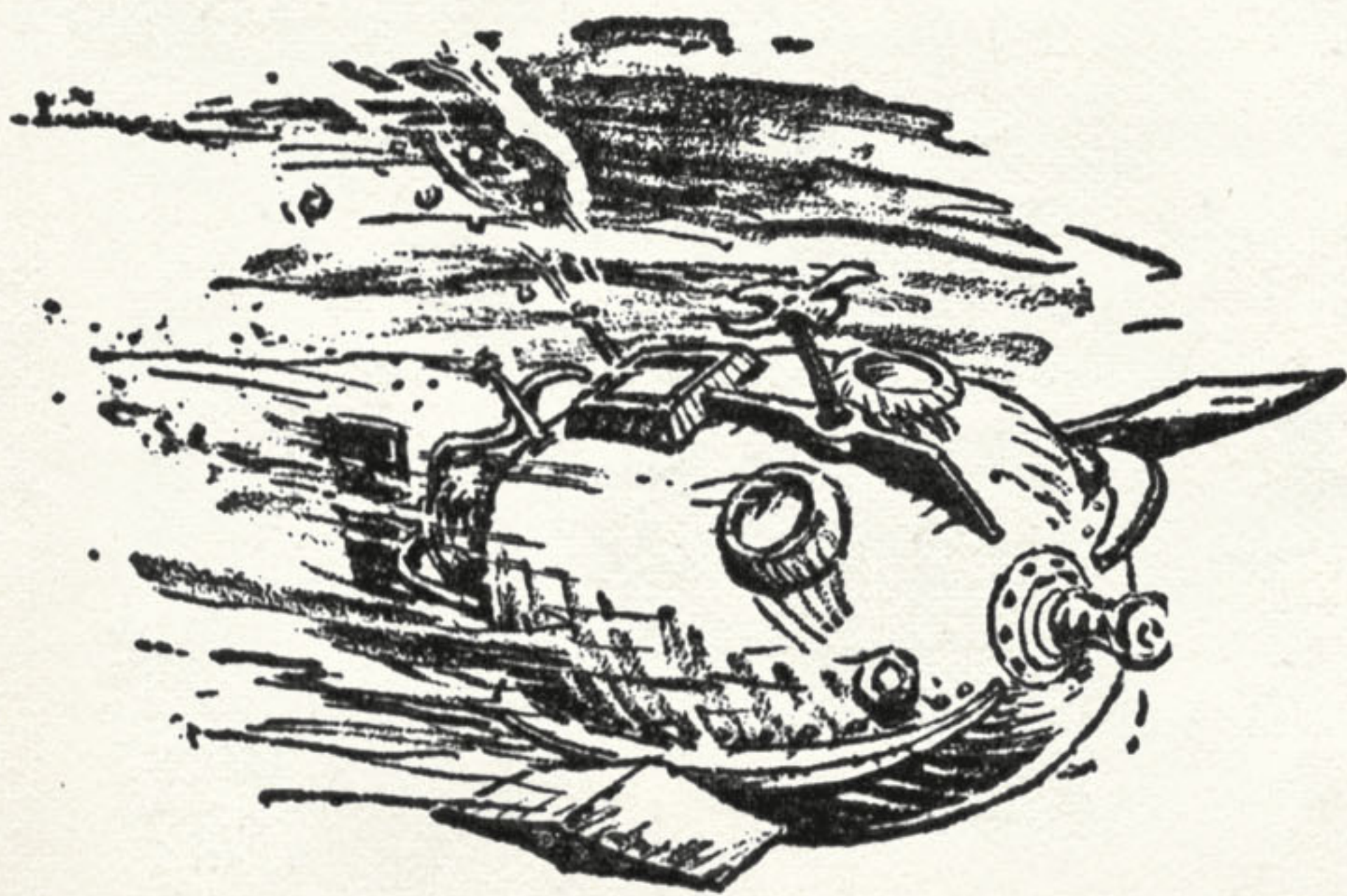
"I didn't hear the remark, sir. A bit deaf."

Then he went on with his writing. Seymour, a trifle angered by this brusque and laconic treatment of his effort, returned to his seat, muttering something about an unsociable ass.

Captain Hart, whose eyes appeared to be everywhere, had not missed all this. When Bushnell looked up again, he encountered the gaze of the Britisher, and found it rather amused; he frowned, and looked down again at his writing.

"PERHAPS," said Captain Hart softly, "you gentlemen might be interested in a very curious thing I saw a couple of years ago—just before the war started. Not that it has anything to do with chimneys, except to illustrate the great ingenuity of some of our colonials."

He said this, because the talk had indeed fallen upon the construction of the chimneys, here in New York and elsewhere, which to an English notion were excellently well built and with marvelous drawing powers. And knowing practically nothing about such construction,



the assembled officers talked about the matter very wisely.

"By all means," was the unanimous assent. Even Bushnell glanced up sharply, and as Hart actually smiled at him in mischievous sort, a glint of anger came into his gaze.

"I was exploring one of the mountain lakes, back in the hills, with gun and rod," said Hart, getting easily settled with a fresh pipe and refilled glass. "It was a very good-sized lake, rather deep, with no settlement close by. The singular thing about it was that, anchored out in the very middle, was an empty barge."

THE anger in Bushnell's features deepened; but he leaned again to his writing.

"A barge!" exclaimed some one. "But my dear chap, you just said no settlement was close by! How, then, a barge?"

"I don't mean an English barge," explained Hart with a smile. "We apply the term not to a many-oared boat of large size, but to a large flat-bottomed scow or skiff."

"Even so," Seymour demanded, "how could it have come there?"

"Exactly what puzzled me at the time," Hart responded. "However, I did find a trace—that is, a wagon-track—which showed the barge must have been brought here on wheels, with oxen. What on earth it could be doing out in the middle of the lake, with nobody in it, was the question. I determined to find out."

He puffed his pipe alight.

"By swimming out to it?" came the laughing query.

"No; by sitting down and watching it. However, I was tired, and dropped off into a doze. I wakened suddenly, and you may imagine my astonishment to find a second boat in sight!"

"Eh? I say, is this some kind of a nursery tale, Hart?"

"Wait and see. I say a second boat, because later I discovered it was just that. At the moment, however, I perceived only a queer object like an inverted tortoise-shell with a couple of pipes protruding from it. As I looked at the thing, it slowly sank from sight. A ripple in the water, however, showed me that it was moving beneath the surface."

There was a simultaneous burst of laughter. This died away, when the serious and even grave demeanor of Captain Hart was observed.

Seymour leaned forward uneasily.

"Look here, Hart! 'Pon my word, are you in earnest?"

"Entirely in earnest, sir," Hart said. "I am telling you something which I saw with my own eyes; and I purpose to give you the explanation of it, also. I assure you, the explanation is even more singular than the thing itself."

He sipped his port, and resumed his churchwarden pipe.

"This second boat was entirely lost to sight for perhaps twenty minutes," he went on calmly. His eyes flickered to the man in the gray frieze coat, but Bushnell was bent over his work. "Then, to my great astonishment, it suddenly emerged from the water near the barge, and moved toward where I sat, among the bushes on the shore. I don't hesitate to admit that I concealed myself rather hastily."

Glances were exchanged, and frowns. No one was quite certain whether the speaker were relating an actual occurrence or not.

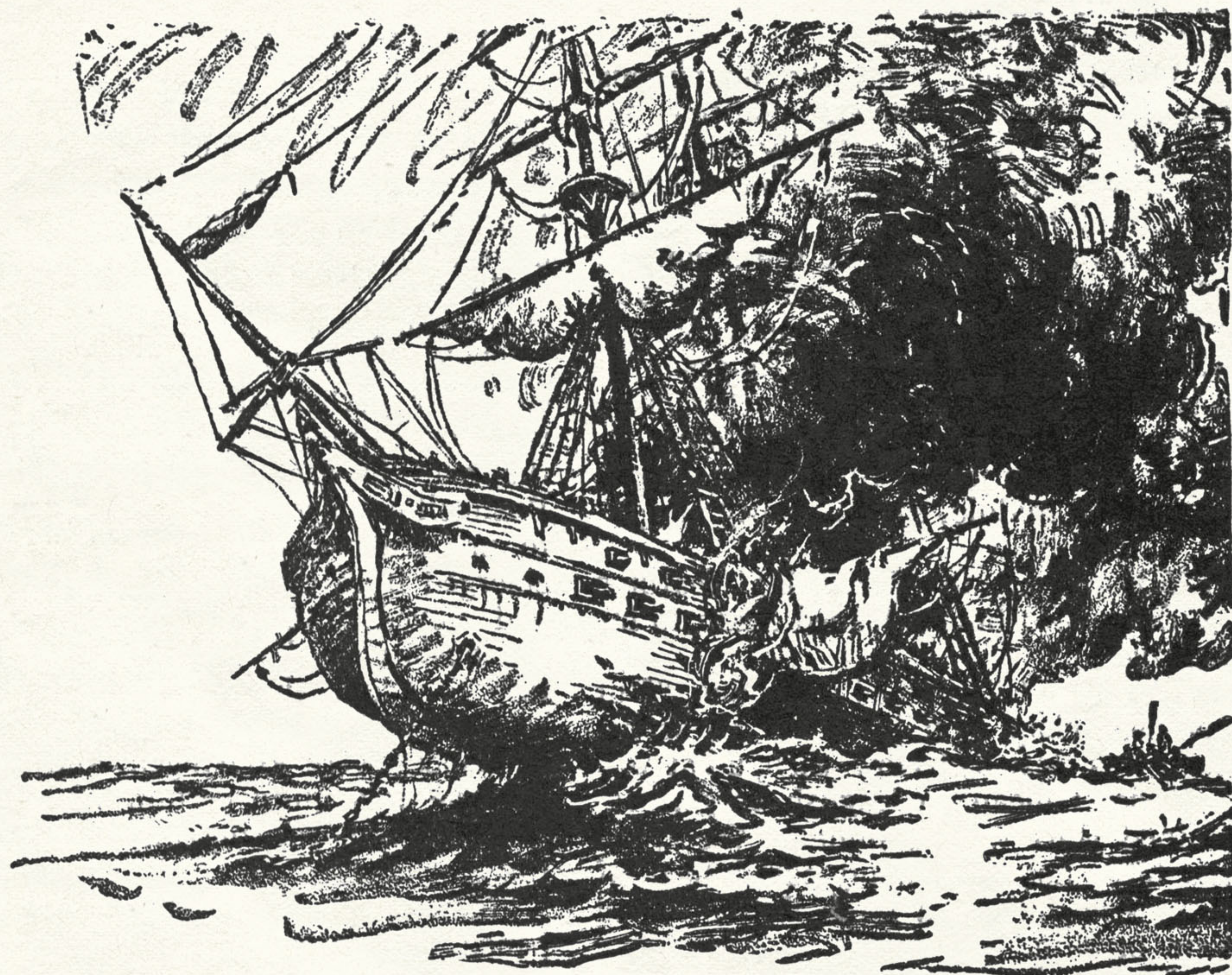
"Sink me! If the thing really happened, and to me," said some one, "I'd have taken to my heels! Who was in the second boat, Hart?"

"It showed a convex back like a tortoise-shell," Hart said quietly. "When it came to the shore, this back revealed a port or sort of window at one end, which opened to let out a man. The odd sort of boat, not unlike an egg in its entire shape, was just large enough to contain this man and his apparatus."

"He clambered out of his queer craft and pulled it up on the shore, then sat himself down not twenty feet from me and pulled out a watch, and looked at the barge. 'Timed for fifteen minutes,' I heard him mutter. 'Then we shall see! The one works perfectly, but does the other work?' As you may imagine, I did not show myself."

"What sort of man was he?" queried some one eagerly.

WELL,"—Captain Hart sent a reflective glance at the scribbling Bushnell,—"I did not see or observe his face, to be quite honest; I was excited. Quite an ordinary fellow, dressed like any colonial. Not an Indian, certainly. We waited in this fashion for what must have been a full fifteen minutes; it seemed much longer to me. Suddenly I heard a roar. There was an explosion beneath the barge, which was blown into fragments. The man on the shore exhibited indications of great delight;



"What happened was damned mysterious. Without the least warning, there was a

then he pulled his queer boat higher on the shore and took his departure."

Hart paused again. But by now his auditors were becoming convinced that he was recounting an actual happening, and their interest had quickened.

"Why, damme and sink me!" cried an officer. "He doesn't mean the *Warrior* was blown up in that manner?"

"Pray do not interrupt, sir," exclaimed Seymour, and turned to Hart with his face alight. "Continue, sir, I pray you! This story interests me vastly."

CAPTAIN HART inclined his head. "Thank you, sir. Finding myself alone, and realizing that this strange boat must hold the secret of what I had witnessed, I made bold to examine it. And it proved to be a boat which could actually travel beneath the water. There could be no doubt, indeed, that I had watched the man take his boat beneath the barge, affix the powder charge, light the time fuse—and then retire."

There were uneasy glances.

"Why, sir," sputtered somebody, "the thing is impossible! Rankly impossible! Mind, sir, I do not cast aspersions upon your story; I merely affirm that it's impossible for any boat to travel beneath the water."

"So I thought," Captain Hart rejoined, "until I had examined the craft in some detail. But perhaps I bore you gentlemen with this story?"

"By God, no!" swore Seymour eagerly. "Let us have it, sir! It begins to explain a good deal to me. A shell, you say? Did the man row it himself?"

Captain Hart puffed his churchwarden alight.

"Aye, sir; it was most ingenious. The vessel was of wood, with a rudder. An oar like a screw passed through the top, by which it might be sunk or raised; another oar, its spindle passing through the after end, propelled the craft. To submerge, valves were opened to let in water, which was discharged by hand pumps when the operator wished to rise. Also, a heavy weight was carried, which assisted in sinking the boat, and when released, helped it to rise."

"But air, Captain Hart—air!" Seymour exclaimed. "The operator must have air!"

"Apparently there was enough for his purpose within the shell," said Hart. "I could arrive at this conclusion only by calculation."

"How, enclosed within such a shell," asked some one, "could he have attached any powder charge to the barge?"



heavy explosion by the forward counter.”

“Exactly my thought, sir,” said Hart affably. “I discovered a wood screw at the forward end of the craft; it could be worked from within. I presume that this screw served the purpose of attaching the charge. This is only supposition, you understand.”

“But you mistake my question—what of the air?” Seymour reiterated. “Enclosed air, sir, grows foul. This is well known.”

“Exactly,” replied Hart. “I mentioned two pipes protruding from the hull, did I not? These, I discovered, were air pipes which opened automatically upon the boat reaching the surface—one discharging foul air, the other taking in fresh.”

Inquiries were at an end. Hart’s auditors stared at him, fumbled for questions, found none.

“Egad, what an idea!” cried Seymour, kindling to the thought. “A man in such a boat could bring it beneath a warship, attach his charge, light a time-fuse, and then be on his way!”

“If the time-fuse functioned properly.” The gaze of Captain Hart lifted for a brief instant to meet that of Bushnell, the man in gray frieze. “If it did not work, the boat would be blown to bits with its occupant.”

There was a sudden volley of oaths from the Headquarters officer.

“Captain Hart! You do not infer that such a boat was used to destroy the *Warrior*? Why—damme, sir! There was wreckage about which certainly did not come from the brig herself! Do you know of this?”

Hart’s brows lifted in surprise.

“Assuredly not. My dear sir, I merely recount a very strange happening which took place a couple of years ago, far from here in the hills! It certainly could have nothing to do with the loss of this ship.”

“I’m not so sure,” said Seymour. “By the Lord Harry, I’m not so sure! Tell me, Captain Hart—what became of this boat, this man? You must have gone back to the same spot?”

“I did,” confessed Hart. “Curiosity drew me back a fortnight later. There was no sign of any boat. The lake was absolutely empty. I could learn nothing of it from anyone in the neighborhood. It remained a mystery—one of those strange things which we encounter in life, and for which we find no explanation. As such, I have told the story.”

“And demned interesting, sir, demned interesting!” Seymour said thoughtfully.

So said the others, all of them. Captain Hart was plied with questions, but could tell nothing not already laid bare.

The story was so strange, so fascinating, so full of implied things, that beside it other talk paled and waned. Watches were produced; the assembly of officers broke up. Cloaks were donned, the waiters summoned, the score settled. By twos and threes the company broke up.

Remained none, at last, save Captain Hart. He buckled his military cloak about his neck, and then approached the man in gray frieze, who still sat scribbling at a side table.

BUSHNELL looked up, his brows drawn down, but without anger.

“Had your fun with me, eh, Brother Ezra?” he said.

“Shadrach!” The other gripped his hand eagerly. “I could not resist; I was so delighted to find you alive, that I yielded to impulse. Look here! I drew this from the water, down the river from the explosion.” And he took a fragment of wood from under his cloak. “I knew instantly what it was—examine it closely, and you’ll see for yourself.

ARMS AND MEN

You might like to keep it. Are you safe? Can I be of service to you?"

"Aye, brother Ezra," the other rejoined. "Don't talk so much."

"But you must need money, or help—"

"They'll hang you yet, brother Ezra," said Bushnell, "when they find who you really are."

"I'm sending out a report tonight to General Washington," Hart stated, in a low voice. "Shall I mention you?"

"No," said Bushnell, gathering up his papers. He rose and put out his hand. "Good luck."

"Same to you, brother Shadrach. If there's any earthly thing I can do for you—"

"Aye," said Bushnell, and turned for a last word. "Talk less."

And with this, he departed. . . .

So ended all the letters and reports, the whole account of that conversation in the ordinary room of Fraunces' Tavern. I had finished with everything, except the bit of wood from which the label or ticket had been lost. I took this up, examining it curiously, wondering if there were any proof of the singular story which had just come to me.

And as I wondered, my fingers struck an uneven surface in the wood. Rude carving was there; two letters, deeply hacked out as though with the point of a knife, mellowed by time: "E. B."

E. B.—why, they stood for *Ezra Bushnell!* Yet it was Shadrach who had worn the gray frieze; it was Ezra who had worn the British uniform and the name of Captain Hart! And yet, again, it was Shadrach who had been so nearly killed in the explosion which must have torn the first submarine to pieces.

Ezra, then, was the inventor! His whole story, that evening, had been a first-class lie, a Yankee fabrication from start to finish! And the fragment of wood which he had picked up, which he had given to his brother Shadrach as a souvenir—this same fragment of wood lay here, under my hand. There was the full story told in this tavern conversation, told to its fitting end, yet unsuspected by any of the auditors—the story of a spy, and of the first submarine boat in history.

"Talk less," said Shadrach Bushnell of Vermont. And only after a hundred and sixty years has his story been told.

The first military use of an airship (in the Napoleonic wars) will be the theme of the next story in this brilliant series—in our forthcoming November issue.



Just

By

ROBERT
R. MILL

Illustrated by
Monte Crews

THE teletype message read:

"Constable at Deerville reports man and woman walking in highway struck by hit-and-run driver who rounded curve at excessive speed. Car is 1936 Speedway four-door sedan. Black with orange trim. Steel wheels. Right front fender and bumper dented. Registration number not obtained. Driver believed heading south."

Patrols of the Black Horse Troop, New York State Police, stationed north, east and west of Deerville answered the call almost at once. But there was no response from the Plazy substation, located south of Deerville.

"Garumph," growled Captain Charles Field, commanding officer, who was pacing the floor in the barracks. "Who is stationed at Plazy?"

Max Payton, the top sergeant, made a pretense of consulting the duty sheet, and reported:

"Sergeant Henry Linton, sir."

Captain Field's grunt spoke volumes. Lieutenant Edward David, better known as Tiny, whose great form was draped over the teletype machine, attempted to pour oil on the troubled waters:

"Maybe Linton is out on the road," he explained in his customary drawl, "and his operator is waiting to get in touch with him before acknowledging receipt of the message."

This time Captain Field's grunt was even more expressive:

Like That!

Tiny David gets into a tight jam—but is quick to recognize Lady Luck when he meets her.



"Maybe I am the fifth quintuplet. Tell that operator to come to life."

The teletype keys clicked out a pointed message to the Plazy sub-station, and the answer was prompt:

"Waiting to establish contact with patrol before acknowledging receipt of Message 146. Lieutenant James Crosby and Sergeant Linton making inspection trip of territory. Will advise soon as contact established."

"Inspection trip!" Captain Field made a knife of each word. "Bums' reunion! Get hold of the Hatburgh patrol, and have them move north. And let me know when you hear from Crosby and Linton."

Captain Field departed for his private office.

"Do you think he is?" asked Sergeant Payton.

"Do I think he is what?" demanded Lieutenant David.

"The fifth quintuplet."

Tiny David gave this problem careful consideration.

"If he is, they will have to keep him out of the group pictures, or they won't have any advertising value. His face would curdle milk." The big man picked up his hat. "If he asks for me, tell him I have gone to Plazy."

Sergeant Payton nodded. "Now," he declared, "it will be a real reunion."

MEANWHILE, Lieutenant Crosby and Sergeant Linton, seated on the counter of a general store north of Plazy, were indulging in desultory conversation with the aged proprietor, all unaware that the teletype carried many and unflattering references to themselves.

"Where is the light of my life, Pop?" asked Crosby, jerking his head toward an empty cashier's cage.

"She quit," declared the proprietor. "Got to get myself another girl."

"That should be easy for a Romeo like you," Linton contributed.

"It is, and it aint," the storekeeper asserted. "The good-looking ones aint never smart. And the smart ones know too much to work here."

Mr. Crosby warmed to the task at hand.

"You are in a tough spot, Pop. If you ask me—"

The ringing of the telephone bell robbed Mr. Crosby of his audience, and the storekeeper, after a few words, turned around with a smile:

"Guess either one of you will do. Said I was to sweep off the counter, and brush one of the loafers in the direction of the phone."

Mr. Linton accepted the receiver reluctantly, and found himself in communication with a teletype clerk, who had sought him over most of the territory. The clerk's words were few and to the point. Mr. Linton was a changed man as he relayed the message to his partner and even Mr. Crosby wilted visibly. They left the store at a dogtrot and jumped into the troop car. Few words were wasted, and soon they reached the main highway leading from Deerville and went to work. There was a steady flow of traffic. From it they culled all cars even remotely answering the description, halted them and questioned the occupants. All were able to give satisfactory accounts of themselves.

"Guess either one of you will do—said I was to brush one of the loafers in the direction of the phone."



More than an hour had passed when Linton, working a good three hundred feet ahead of the troop car, stiffened to attention. A car was approaching from the direction of Deerville. Even at a distance the distinctive Speedway radiator was recognizable.

Linton waved to Crosby, who moved close to the troop car.

The Speedway roared on toward the crossroads. Linton, standing in the center of the road, checked off the distinguishing marks:

"Black. . . . Four-door sedan. . . . 1936 model. . . . Orange trim. . . . Right front fender and bumper bent."

Linton raised his arm; his cry sounded above the straining motor:

"Halt! State Police!"

The driver answered the command with an additional burst of speed. Directly in front of the oncoming car, balanced on his toes, stood Linton.

"Halt! Pull it over!"

Just as the car was upon him, the trooper leaped for the safety of the ditch. He made it, pulled himself to his feet and ran swiftly toward the troop car.

Crosby stood in the road near the troop car, which was headed in the di-

rection the Speedway was moving. The engine of the troop car was running.

"Halt!" cried Crosby.

The car roared on. Carefully Crosby checked the distinguishing marks, his glance lingering on the bent fender and bumper. His lips tightened.

"That's good enough!" he muttered.

He drew his gun, and fired three times. He heard the bullets crash through the radiator of the speeding car, noted with satisfaction the dark spots that denoted leaking water, and then jumped. Linton was at the wheel of the troop car when Crosby leaped in beside him.

The chase was short. Steam poured from the radiator of the Speedway as they pulled alongside. The driver remained at the wheel as the two troopers approached.

"Ever hear of James Makorn?" he demanded, naming a well-known political boss who was a real power in the land.



Crosby took charge: "Makorn? No, don't prompt me; maybe I can get it myself." A long pause. "I give up. Sorry—but I seldom read the crime news."

There was a sneer on the face of the driver.

"All right, wise guy. Colonel Makorn happens to be the power behind the throne around here, and has a lot of jobs in his pocket."

Sergeant Linton felt that he had been silent too long.

"And Hitler has a good job in Germany," he added.

Crosby planted a heavy foot on the running-board of the Speedway.

"For the sake of argument, we admit there is an important man named Makorn, who controls a lot of political appointments. What does that make you?"

The driver extended one hand, two fingers of which were pressed tight together.

"Makorn and me," he declared, "are just like *that*."

Mr. Crosby permitted himself the luxury of a grin.

"As I read the cards," he said, "something is about to come between you, casting a blight on a beautiful friendship."

"What?"

"The jailhouse."

"What for?"

Mr. Crosby waved a hand. "This and that. Little hit-and-run, with a spot of mayhem on the side."

"Why, you misbeguiled—"

"All right! All right! All right!"

THE interruption, delivered in dulcet tones mimicking the voice of the director of an amateur radio program, came from Tiny David, who was at the wheel of a coupé that drew up beside the damaged Speedway. "What have we here?"

Mr. Crosby told him. The driver, attempting to take part in the telling, was silenced by the not too gentle hand of Mr. Linton.

"Hum," was the profound comment of Lieutenant David, when the recital was ended.

"Hum, yourself!" retorted Mr. Crosby. "All set to pass on a good bawling out from the skipper, weren't you?" A look of triumph crossed his face. "Just because Linny and I put in our time out on the road, where things are happening, instead of warming a chair beside a teletype machine." Mr. Crosby removed an imaginary spot of dust from the skirt of his coat. "Care to trail along while we book this baby?"

"Nope." Mr. David was very emphatic. "Joe Farrell and I are good friends. This is going to make him right sore."

Mr. Crosby attempted to cover growing misgivings by adopting a formal manner.

"Just what does Sergeant Farrell have to do with this?"

Mr. David made a gesture of apology.

"Nothing much," he admitted deprecatorily. "Maybe he won't object to having a spare."

"What does 'spare' mean?" The question came from Mr. Linton.

"Well, Joe picked up a guy on this job. Found him the other side of Plazy.

Must have been an hour ago." Mr. David devoted his entire attention to adjusting the curves of his body to the fender of the Speedway.

"Go on," commanded Mr. Crosby, desperation in his voice.

"The guy Joe picked up confessed. They were reducing it to writing when I left. I mushed along to tell you to call the barracks before the old man reduces you to the ranks of the unemployed."

Mr. Crosby suppressed a groan.

Mr. David examined the bullet-holes in the radiator.

"This sort of complicates matters. I wouldn't be in any hurry about calling in. No use running to catch up with an accident."

THE driver of the Speedway found his voice:

"Now you two apes are going to listen to me. The criminal charge against you is assault. There will be a civil suit to recover for damages to this car. And wait until Colonel Makorn turns on the heat."

Tiny David roused himself at the name. Apparently it was a great effort, but he managed to clear the fender and stand at a point where he could get a view of the interior of the car.

"Colonel Makorn? You didn't tell me he was in the car. Where is he? Under the seat?"

Linton laughed hollowly, then displayed two fingers pressed tightly together.

"This guy and Colonel Makorn are just like *that*. We have this guy's word for it."

Mr. Crosby had reached a decision. Ignoring the other parties concerned, he addressed the driver:

"Maybe we did pull a boner, but you are a long way from being in the clear. You were hitting seventy. That's reckless driving, and then some. You ignored a command to halt. There is a law covering that. You tried to run us down. You might get a medal for that, and you might not—it depends on the jury."

Mr. Crosby attempted what was intended to be an amiable smile.

"Between us, we probably will be able to keep several lawyers in a state of luxury to which they are not accustomed." The wave of an arm was designed to register generosity. "The new radiator is on me. Taking all that into consideration, it might pay both of us

to forget and forgive. What do you say?"

What the driver had to say remained a mystery, because at that moment Tiny David went into action:

"Registration-card and driver's license," he ordered.

The driver produced them, and the troopers learned he was one José Mokus, who lived in a downstate city.

Then Tiny David turned to Crosby:

"Arraign Mr. Importance on charges of reckless driving and attempted assault on officers. Make two counts of the assault charge, one on yourself and one on Linton. If this guy gets bail, hold him on an open charge, pending investigation."

"Investigation for what?" demanded the driver. "I'd like to know."

"That's natural," Tiny David admitted. He turned to Crosby, who showed signs of hesitation. "Get started, Jim. Linny and I will tow this wreck to a garage."

"Wait until Makorn gets through with you!" stormed the driver.

Tiny David's sigh was deep and profound.

"He will have to wait his turn. A couple of other guys will get first crack at me."

When they were alone, and engaged in putting a towline on the sedan, Mr. Linton asked a question:

"What have you got up your sleeve, Tiny?"

Tiny David jammed a knot tight.

"The arm of a jackass, Linny."

"Anything else?" asked Mr. Linton, with a slight display of hope.

"Nary a thing."

"In that case," declared Mr. Linton, "we might as well plan everything now. Simple services at the house, and just a short prayer at the grave."

"Flowers?" asked Tiny David.

"No, that would mean another hack. We want to keep this as reasonable as possible."

MESSRS. David and Linton were still engaged in their towing job when Mr. Crosby escorted a protesting Mr. Mokus into the general store, where the proprietor, who doubled as a justice of the peace, greeted the trooper with a cackle of pleasure, which died abruptly when he saw the look on Crosby's face.

"What you got?" the old man asked.

"Trouble," said Crosby, with heartfelt sincerity.

Then, with the air of a man tending a dying friend, he proceeded to arraign his prisoner.

"Not guilty," snapped Mr. Mokus. "And while we are on the subject—"

Scattered among quite a bit of extravagant expression was the request for a warrant accusing Crosby and Linton of assault. Coupled with this was the demand that he, Mr. Mokus, be allowed to communicate with Colonel Makorn by telephone at once.

The justice scratched his head in perplexity.

"There is the phone over yonder. You can use it if you have the money to feed it."

Mr. Mokus asked for, and received, change for a twenty-dollar bill. They watched him move toward the telephone, and place a call for Colonel Makorn.

The justice spoke in a low tone to the trooper:

"Seems like you waded in where it was a mite over your head. My advice is free, and it probably is worth just about what you pay for it. If it was me, I would get the district attorney here quick as you can."

Crosby shook his head gloomily.

"Guess you are right, Pop. I might as well be hanged in a legal manner."

They stood by, listening to one end of a spirited conversation, and soon Mr. Mokus returned, radiating triumph.

"Colonel Makorn is going to call your barracks, and also the district attorney.

Then he is coming right on by airplane. And when he gets here—"

"Until he gets here," interrupted Mr. Crosby, who was nearing his limit, "you keep that tongue of yours quiet, or I'll pin your big mouth shut with a clothespin."

"You'll get nothing by threatening me."

"Probably not," Mr. Crosby admitted. "But it eases my feelings. And now I'll ease them some more by calling the district attorney."

But even that doubtful pleasure was denied him, at least for the moment, for just then the telephone bell shrilly sounded its summons.

The justice answered the call.

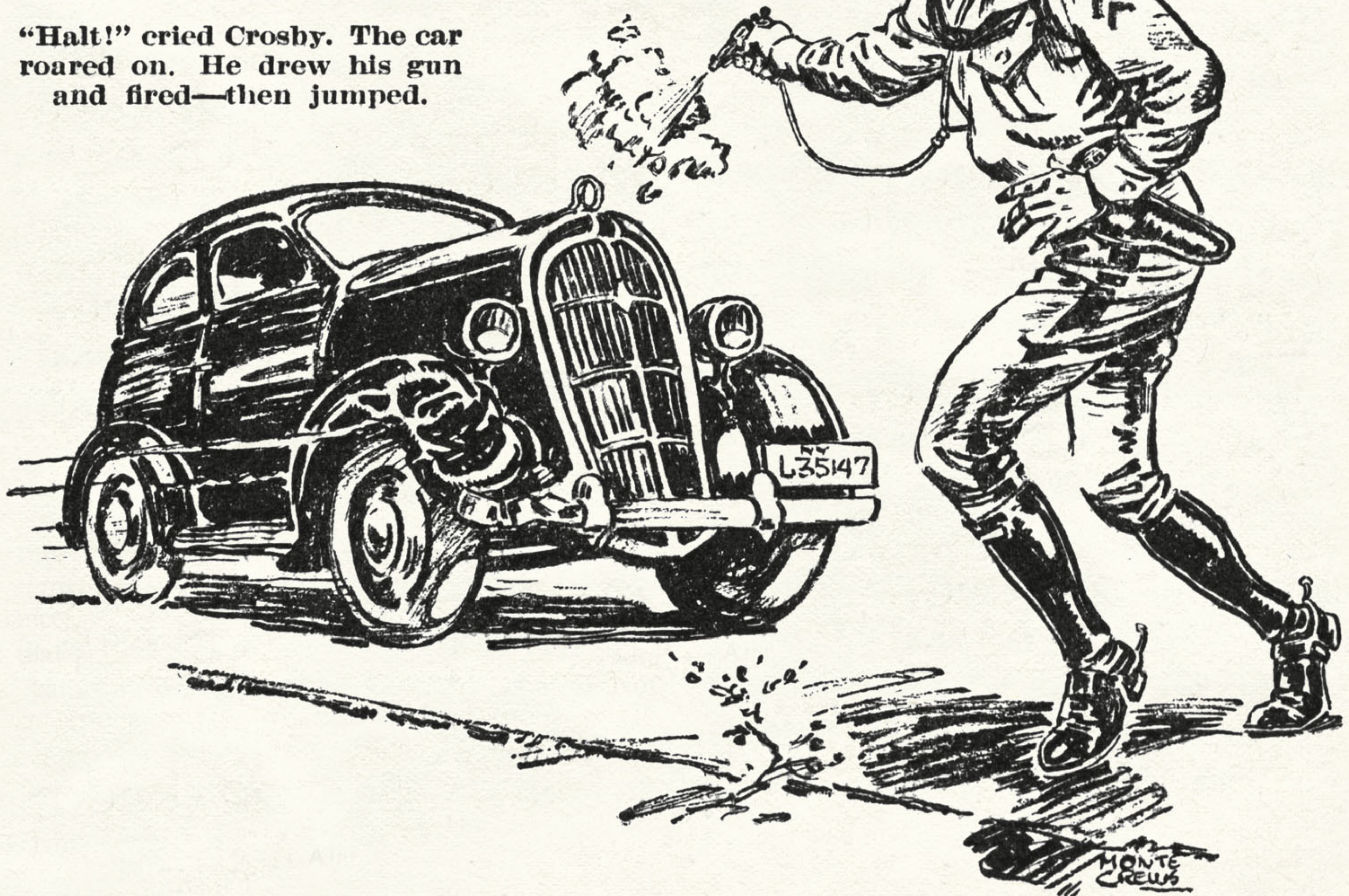
"It's for you," he told Crosby.

Mr. Crosby accepted the receiver with the manner of a condemned man seating himself in the electric chair. The strident voice of the trooper tending the teletype machine in the substation carried to him:

"Why don't you birds rent space in that store by the week?"

Conclusive proof that Mr. Crosby's morale was at the lowest possible ebb was forthcoming in the fact that he became official:

"Halt!" cried Crosby. The car roared on. He drew his gun and fired—then jumped.





"Makorn and me," the driver declared, "are just like *that!*"

"This is Lieutenant Crosby speaking."

"My error," came the unruffled response. "I thought it was Haile Selassie. All right, Lieutenant. The old man wants words with you, and he wants them bad. He also craves conversation with Tiny and Linny. He said something about it being time for a bums' convention to adjourn, and for the accredited delegates to get to work."

Mr. Crosby did what he would have described as quick thinking. Obviously, Captain Field was on the trail. The reference to the "bums' convention," however, indicated that Colonel Makorn was yet to be heard from. The future offered scant hope, but anything was preferable to immediate disaster.

His official manner vanished, and his voice became pleasing with a note of pleading in it:

"Pete, let's pretend you called up here and couldn't locate me."

There was a brief silence on the other end of the wire.

"All right," was the verdict. "No accounting for tastes. I would sooner have it happen over the telephone than in person."

"And I would sooner have it happen to you than to me," said Mr. Crosby pleasantly. "But we can't have everything we want. So hang up, and let me call the individual whom we jokingly call the district attorney."

AT about the time Crosby was connected with the county official, Messrs. David and Linton, piloting a mournful procession consisting of the damaged

Speedway and the tow-car, came to a halt along the road by unspoken but mutual assent.

They quit their posts behind the two steering-wheels and took refuge beneath a tree. Neither man realized the fact, but a subconscious desire to postpone the inevitable motivated them.

"Do you think he does know Colonel Makorn?" asked Linton.

"Not a doubt of it."

"What does that make us?"

"The late deceased."

A belated thought struck Mr. Linton:

"Say, why did you cut yourself a piece of this cake? You saw it was soggy before you picked up the knife."

Mr. David pondered his reply. When he spoke, his voice was gruff:

"Hated to see Jim make a complete ass of himself. That ratty guy would have yessed him on the proposition, walked away clean, and then carried his woes to the dear Colonel—whose title is phony, but whose power is real, I suppose. This way we at least have part of the turkey."

"Yeah," Mr. Linton agreed; "but which part?"

Mr. David shrugged his huge shoulders, then swung a playful punch at his companion.

"After all," he said, "we'll go out together." The gruff note returned to his voice. "Wouldn't want to be in the outfit without you and Jim."

Mr. Linton choked back his reply because he thought it sounded sentimental. He gazed straight ahead.

"Now," he declared, "is the time for the fleet to steam into the harbor and relieve the besieged town." He glanced up and down the deserted road. "You

haven't got a battleship in your pocket, have you?"

"Not even a treaty cruiser. All we can do is pad the fall."

"How?"

"For one thing, we can get this bus to a garage and have a new radiator stuck on it. That will rob the Colonel's boy friend of his choicest exhibit. All he will have left will be his injured feelings—if any."

Mr. Linton showed signs of interest.

"That," he declared, "is a thought. Let's roll."

WHILE they were rolling Captain Field held a telephone conversation with Colonel Makorn. The Colonel angrily recited the facts in the case at hand. He suggested various remedies. He wound up with a blunt demand that Captain Field state his course of action.

Captain Field was polite but firm.

"When I hear both sides of the story, I'll decide what to do."

The garage force trod warily as he backed out his car. . . .

Mr. Crosby, having derived small comfort from his telephone conversation with the district attorney, tried to ease his tension by giving the increasingly confident Mr. Mokus a verbal workout.

"How did you put that dent in the bumper and fender of your car?" the trooper asked.

Mr. Mokus first devoted his attention to lighting a cigarette, and then countered:

"I can refuse to talk until my lawyer gets here. Colonel Makorn will appear for me." He shrugged his shoulders. "But I don't mind telling you that I smacked a tree."

"Where is the tree?"

"At the side of the road, about three miles north of Wolfton."

"When did it happen?"

"This morning."

"Wolfton is right near the border. Were you coming from Canada?"

"I—no, I wasn't."

Mr. Crosby, fumbling about for some straw to clutch, saw what he thought might provide an opening.

"All right. We will soon find out."

He picked up the telephone and called the Customs and Immigration men stationed at that point. Neither the Speedway nor Mr. Mokus appeared on their records.

Lieutenant Crosby gave vent to a rather unconvincing, "That's fine," which

was for the benefit of Mr. Mokus, and returned to his task.

"The Customs men say they didn't clear you, but that your car was seen in Canada this morning."

If this assertion caused Mr. Mokus any uneasiness, he hid it effectually beneath a show of righteous indignation:

"The old frame-up, eh? Me, I haven't been to Canada for a month. How can I help what those monkeys think they seen? I can prove where I was, and I'll do it at the right time. The right time will be when Colonel Makorn gets here. Until then, I am not talking. See?"

"What made you hit the tree?" demanded Mr. Crosby.

"It's a nice day," countered Mr. Mokus.

Mr. Crosby didn't think it was, but all things considered, he didn't see anything he could do about it.

THE head mechanic at the Speedway agency in Plazy showed interest when Messrs. David and Linton towed in the exhibit.

"Where was the battle?" he asked.

"Got a radiator for this model?" asked Mr. David.

"Yep."

"Put it on. How long will it take you?"

"About an hour—for the radiator."

"What do you mean?"

The mechanic grinned. He knew these two of old, and many times had traded wise-cracks with them.

"What goes in, must come out—some-where. Lead is all right in gasoline, in small amounts; but when you start throwing it against motors, something is likely to happen. Better take a look before we plan on an hour. That is, if you planned on driving this away. Of course, if you are willing to go on towing—"

"Skip the comedy," commanded Mr. Linton.

The mechanic lifted the hood, put an electric light in position, and began a careful inspection. Messrs. David and Linton, leaning over his shoulders, experienced their first pleasure for some hours when they saw the motor apparently was unharmed.

"That's funny," said the mechanic, who was inspecting a black cylindrical object attached to one side of the motor. "This looks like the oil filter—"

"You can't always go by looks," interrupted Tiny David, whose relief had restored him to a state close to normal, and

whose interest in the Speedway, aside from damage done by bullets, was only academic. "Take Linton. He looks like a trooper. And you look like a mechanic."

Professional interest caused the mechanic to ignore the thrust. His fingers were exploring in the space between the object and the motor.

"Bullet clipped a piece right out of the side of this. But it isn't leaking oil. And there is no oil around the base of the motor. And there—"

Tiny David came to life with a quick jerk that belied his former appearance of laziness. A twist of his huge shoulders brushed the mechanic aside. One of his heavy, stubby hands darted toward the supposed oil filter and groped for the bullet-hole. A gleeful smile of anticipation lighted up his broad face.

"Maybe you are a mechanic. Maybe Linton is a trooper." A finger thrust into the hole encountered resistance. "And there is a god that takes care of fools, cops, and other incompetents!" he said joyfully. "—Linny, look here!"

CAPTAIN FIELD, detained by a blow-out, an irate citizen who halted him along the road, and a visit to the substation where the confession of the hit-and-run driver had been obtained, arrived at the store just ten minutes before the Colonel.

That ten minutes was devoted to a brief résumé of the past misdeeds of Messrs. David, Crosby and Linton. The commanding officer had just reached the current year when Colonel Makorn, accompanied by a man who obviously was an airplane pilot, entered.

Mr. Mokus and the Colonel shook hands warmly, and then went into executive session at the far end of the store. Captain Field took advantage of the lull to ask:

"Where are David and Linton?"

"At the garage, sir."

"All right. Now what in blazes is this all about?"

Mr. Crosby's explanation was cut short by the arrival of the district attorney. Mr. Crosby, with a sigh, began again, only to be interrupted by the Colonel, who advanced upon the group with fire in his eyes, and speaking in tones that would carry at least a mile.

"Don't you birds up here respect any human rights and liberties? Do you cut loose with your guns on anybody who comes along, if you don't like his face?"

Do you know that we have some laws in this country that govern even the actions of police officers? Do you know—"

Captain Field cleared his throat expectantly. Privately, he knew that his men had made a mistake. He was not sufficiently acquainted with the facts to decide if that mistake was justified. But justified or not, any abuse that was forthcoming would be delivered by himself. No outsider, be he colonel or king, was going to shower abuse on the men of the Black Horse Troop while their commanding officer stood idly by.

Captain Field was ready to go into action; and Crosby, whose judgment was faultless in matters of that sort, had decided his volume and vocabulary both were superior to those of the Colonel. But from outside the store there came the sound of an automobile siren, loud and insistent.

Colonel Makorn ceased his tirade. The horn, apparently, was familiar to Mr. Mokus. The storekeeper deserted his desk, and walked to the door. The others followed.

Tiny David was at the wheel of the Speedway, which was parked directly before the door. Behind the Speedway, was a coupé driven by Mr. Linton. Mr. Crosby centered his attention upon Mr. David, hoping to find some ray of hope in his manner, and at the same time assuring himself that this was the finale of the play, and that the show was a tragedy.

Mr. David climbed out of the car with tantalizing slowness. There was a rather silly, apologetic smile on his face. It vanished as he sighted Captain Field, and saluted gravely.

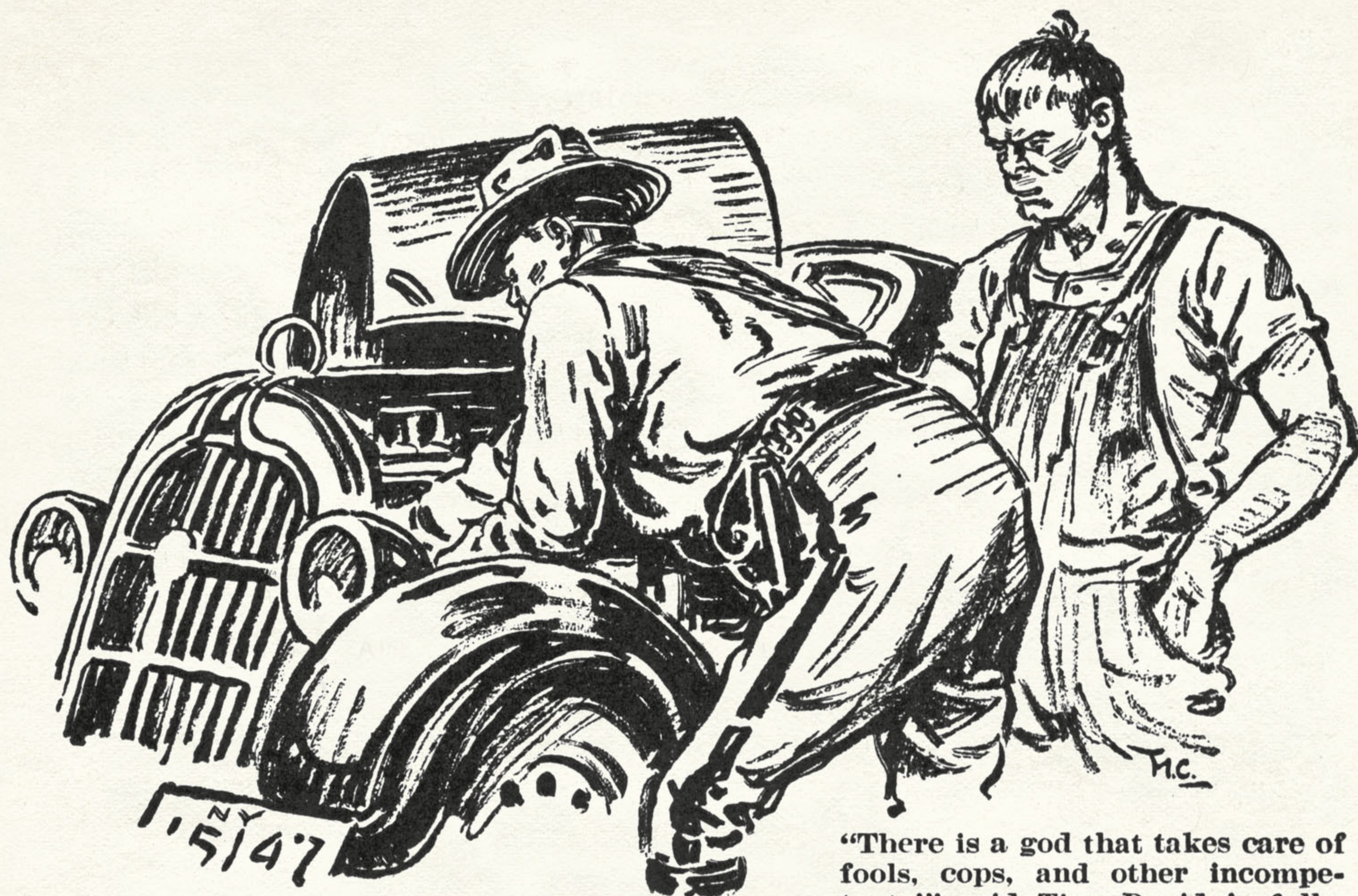
"What have you been doing?" demanded the commanding officer.

Tiny David sighed gently. His glance rested longingly on the top step, and his body bent a bit, but he apparently decided it would not be advisable to sit down just at this time.

"Been getting a new radiator put on this Speedway, sir. You see, this bird wouldn't stop, and Jim had to throw a little lead at him. Thought it would be a good idea to get the car in running condition again."

Captain Field, studying Tiny David through half-closed eyes, remained silent. He recognized familiar symptoms.

HOPE surged through Crosby. He glanced at Linton; the almost imperceptible nod that replied assured him



"There is a god that takes care of fools, cops, and other incompetents!" said Tiny David joyfully.

that all was well with the closed corporation that for so many years had roamed the border.

Colonel Makorn stepped forward.

"And do you think for one minute you were justified in—"

"You are Colonel Makorn." Tiny David stated the fact as though it was a brilliant discovery on his part. "Mr. Mokus spoke of you."

Colonel Makorn brushed this aside.

"Er—Mr. Mokus and I are business acquaintances. I have appeared for him in several matters. I represent him now. But that—"

"Mr. Mokus," Tiny David interrupted with a disarming smile, "said that you and he were just like *that*." The trooper extended a hand, two fingers of which were pressed close together.

Colonel Makorn cleared his throat. He glanced at Mr. Mokus. Mr. Mokus, in turn, glanced at the Colonel.

"Aside from our business relations, as lawyer and client, Mr. Mokus and I are bound by ties of friendship. But that is aside from the point. I demand an answer to my question. Do you think you are justified in shooting away at anybody who fails to stop when you order them to?"

Tiny David pondered for some time before he replied:

"In this case, yes. The car resembled one that had figured in an accident in which two persons were seriously, perhaps fatally, injured."

Colonel Makorn snorted his disgust.

"If I resemble a murder suspect, does that give you a right to kill me?"

"Well, no," Tiny David admitted reluctantly.

"And you had no legal right to shoot at that car!" roared the Colonel.

Captain Field, about to add that the driver of the car had no legal right to attempt to run down two troopers, shot a look at Tiny David, and thought better of it.

Mr. David shifted from foot to foot. He was a picture of woe.

"I am no lawyer. Just a journeyman cop. Guess we are in wrong, all right." The rather foolish smile appeared once more. "Only hope for us would be if we could prove this man really was guilty of something. Guess there isn't much chance of that." He turned to Mokus. "How did you dent the bumper and fender on that car?"

The hope that had sustained Mr. Crosby for the last few minutes died suddenly. He spoke in a low tone:

"I checked that by telephone, Tiny. He hit a tree."

Tiny David shook his head with regret.

"Then even that is out. Guess Mr. Mokus is in the clear, all right."

Colonel Makorn snorted again.

"Certainly he is in the clear." He studied the group before him: Couple of hick cops; in bad, aware of it, and floundering about; their captain either

unwilling or unable to help them; a light-weight of a district attorney, a typical hick. The Colonel was very confident.

"Mr. Mokus," the Colonel continued, "is absolutely in the clear. You gentlemen know who I am. I assume full responsibility for his actions. It is not necessary for you to make any checks. As a matter of fact, he was carrying out a commission for me when this regrettable incident took place."

Colonel Makorn examined the Speedway.

"I see you have had Mr. Mokus' car repaired." His manner was grave. "That, of course, does not relieve your legal responsibility for your illegal acts." His smile appeared. "However, I am inclined to be lenient, and I believe my client will follow my lead."

GREAT relief was visible in Tiny David's face, and that emotion was sincerely reflected by Mr. Crosby.

"That's very decent, Colonel Makorn." Tiny David's voice was a drawl. "Guess that settles everything. Particularly as you say you are responsible for all Mr. Mokus' actions, and that he was carrying out a commission for you at the time he was fired upon. You said that, didn't you?"

Colonel Makorn nodded his head in a condescending manner.

"I certainly did."

Tiny David took a quick step forward. Gone were the indecision, the awkwardness and the slowness. His voice was deep, and it rang with authority:

"That's just fine. Mokus, you are under arrest for the possession and transportation of cocaine. Makorn, you are under arrest as an accomplice. Twice you said you assumed full responsibility for Mokus' actions, and that he was carrying out a commission for you. I believe you. I think a jury will. We will help them, however, by checking back on Mokus, and eliminating all other commissions."

Roaring denials, Colonel Makorn was seized by Crosby, and silenced. Linton grabbed Mokus. There was a short struggle.

Then Tiny turned to Captain Field. So far, all was well; but as he well knew, he and his companions were a long way from being out of the woods with this particular gentleman. Messrs. Crosby and Linton listened eagerly to the ex-

planation—which, past experience taught them, would be a masterpiece from the standpoint of glossing over unpleasant details, yet avoiding all untruths.

"You see, Captain," Tiny David began, "Jim and Linny had a tough break on the car. Morally they were justified. Legally they weren't. Then this bird began to brag about him and Colonel Makorn being 'just like that'."

Mr. David swallowed hastily.

"That should be enough tip-off for anybody." (He failed to add that it hadn't been.) "Colonel Makorn always has been suspected of a tie-up with the cocaine traffic. Tried to have a bill put through one year just before adjournment, that would have flooded the State." Mr. David made no mention of the fact that all this had returned to his mind only a short time ago.

"Then, there was the fact that this bird in the car was so anxious not to stop that he took a chance on passing two troopers. That should be enough tip-off for anybody that he had something he didn't want found."

Again Mr. David overlooked the fact that he and his companions, confused by their mistake, had failed to make even a routine search of the car.

"Didn't take long to find it, when we went to work. A garage was the best place. Had a dummy oil filter. Filled with cocaine." (No use mentioning the fact that only the blind path of a bullet had disclosed the hiding-place.)

TINY DAVID decided all this justified some liberties; he seated himself on the top step, occupying a soft spot he had selected minutes ago.

"Hooking the Colonel was a bit of luck." He smiled modestly. "He walked right into it. Made his admission twice. He was feeling confident by that time."

Tiny David yawned. He allowed his head to fall back until it rested against the wall. His trooper's hat was pushed forward, so that it shielded his eyes from the sun.

Then Captain Field stood over him, his hands on his hips, his eyes twinkling, and his lips curved in a sardonic smile.

"Stay awake long enough to answer just one question," he commanded. "You and Lady Luck are pals, aren't you?"

Tiny David extended a hand, two fingers of which were pressed tight against each other.

"Just like *that*," he answered.

Another spirited story by Robert R. Mill will be a feature of our next issue.

Half-pint Goes Noble

A wild weird adventure in France—by the able author of "The Pirate's Beard" and "Springfield 00078596."

By
**FULTON
GRANT**

Illustrated by
Austin Briggs



I made a dash for the door, before the frog knew.



SURE, I've told this story to a lot of fellows, but what they always say makes me sore.

"Good old Matty!" they say. "Lucky you got deported from

France. That French judge was right. Only a guy whose thinking is screwy and French, could tell a yarn like that. Better go American, son."

That's about what they say, and it makes me sore. Maybe I did stay away too long. But if I got mixed up in this crazy business, it was on account of O'Brien, the Half-pint Duke.

You never heard of a duke named O'Brien, and neither did anybody else. His real name is James Algernon O'Brien—and he's from Telegraph Hill, South Boston. He stands about five feet five, and has a flock of degrees, a gentle, low voice, and an accent that is ve'y ve'y Hahvahd. But don't let that fool you. If you take a stick of dynamite and wrap it up in tinsel and ribbons, you've got yourself a small package of Half-pint O'Brien.

The Duke part of it is a gag. It started in the Marines. We used to call

Half-pint O'Brien "the Duke," because of the way he felt about aristocracy.

He got ideas about what he referred to as the normal supremacy of the natural governing classes. He used to claim that there were only two kinds of people in this world: a class intended by nature to rule, and a class meant to be ruled. Naturally, O'Brien put himself in the ruling class.

I met Half-pint O'Brien in the Marines first. I met his fist padded with a sixteen-ounce pillow and aimed at the point of my jaw; and when the birdies stopped singing, I was stretched out on a cot in the Y.M. building, and there was the little devil standing over me and trying to tell me he didn't mean to do it. Well, all that doesn't matter now, except that we got to be buddies, and we went over to France together in



Half-pint O'Brien was off that seat like a steel spring. Head down, he

the Fifth Marines and licked the Kaiser single-handed, to hear us tell it. When the Armistice was signed, we were discharged and chucked out into this mess called Life.

I lost track of O'Brien in 1927, when I went back to France to get in on the big tourist racket which had sprung up. After a while I was able to hang up my own shingle, and I had a nice little tourist business of my own. But the depression came, and pretty soon my swanky offices were just a place to hang my hat in.

Well, one day I was sitting at my desk, trying to figure out how to stall off the landlord and how to scrape up some cash to give my secretary Lulette her weekly insult, when she walks in, saying:

"Monsieur, *voilà*. Here is one chance to use the American genius. A monsieur who has the air very rich is here for you." She had a calling card in her hand, and I grabbed it. It read:

*James Algernon O'Brien, Ph.D.
Political History, Dewar College*

I gave a whoop that shocked Lulette, and ran to the outside offices, leaving her gasping at me. It was Half-pint O'Brien, the little Duke, all right. He was dressed

like the Prince of Wales, and was tapping the floor with a rhinoceros-horn stick. Worst of all, he was wearing a scrubby little tuft of hair on his chin, and had two wax-pointed bristles on his lip, all three of which were practically vermilion in color.

"By Jove!" he yelled at me. "It is Matty Burke!" And the next minute we were pounding each other on the back and practically necking.

O'Brien told me all about himself. He had been sent over by his college as an exchange professor at the Sorbonne, or some such gag. He had seen one of my prospectuses (he called them "prospecti," and it must have been over a year old, since I hadn't had any money to get anything printed for at least a year) and he had looked me up as soon as he could.

It was pretty swell, I thought, to find a real old-fashioned, disinterested friendship like that, and I was pleased. But all of a sudden he pulls this one on me:

"Matty," he says, "maybe you can do me a favor. Send the little girl away, will you? I want to talk—privately."

I told Lulette to run along home, since it was already five o'clock, and then O'Brien slipped me this:



jumped, and he butted Cressol hard.

"Matty," he said, "I'm in a spot. I want something very important delivered to another city. I can't trust anybody but you. It's a funny business."

"Business?" I asked him. "What kind?"

"Not exactly business," he said. "It's—er—politics, kind of; French politics."

I snapped him up on that. "Not me," I said. "I'm an American. Business may be lousy, and I may have a rotten tourist office, but I'm not mixing myself up in anything French. And especially not politics. You're a damned fool if you start anything like that here. I've seen too many people beaten up in the streets and slammed into jail, for mixing up in politics over here. No sir, I'm not drawing any cards, and you'd better chuck it yourself, son."

Well, he blinked a little, and fumbled the thing he thought was a beard, and came right back at me:

"I don't want you to do anything for nothing, Matty," he said, very earnestly. "This job is worth ten thousand francs. You could use the money, from what you say."

Ten—thousand—francs!

What's the use of trying to find reasons? What's the use of trying to ex-

plain what happened in this thing I so proudly refer to as my brain? What's the use of trying to tell you how I kidded myself into being a damned fool? Net: I told him I would do it. I'd deliver his package—for ten thousand francs.

Well, you should have seen him. He acted like a giddy schoolboy. I was the greatest guy in the world, a real buddy, a real friend. Nobody else would have understood him. Sure, he knew about the dangers of playing in French politics, but—well, this was different.

We had another drink or so, and he left me, telling me to come over to his hotel, the Crillon, at seven o'clock to get the final dope. I began trying to figure this thing out coolly, but the ten thousand francs kept getting in the way.

IT didn't make sense.

O'Brien was mixed up in something. He called it politics, but God knew what that lad might get into. He wanted me to take a package for him somewhere; but with James Algernon O'Brien, the package might contain a book on Egyptian hieroglyphics, or a pound or so of high-grade T.N.T.; you could never tell beforehand.

So after a while I decided to walk over to O'Brien's hotel and find out more about it. I did that. I went to Harry's Bar and got a snort, and then I walked down the Rue de Rivoli to the Crillon. O'Brien was waiting for me, all right. He was in the lounge and talking to a big burly guy dressed in corduroy pants and a white sport-shirt which left his arms bare and showed the feathers on his chest. It was some chest, too, and the arms would have made any wrestler proud.

Half-pint hailed me.

"Hello, Matty," he yelled out. "Come on over and meet the Count de Cressol."

Well, the Count handed me a funny eye. I returned the double-O on my part. He looked slippery to me, what with his William Jennings Bryan haircut and a rodent's face, and lips that were just too, too red. Honest, he looked like a squirrel who has just tasted blood.

Well, this Cressol turned on me what he considered to be his charm. "It is indeed an honor to know so good a friend of the Professor O'Brien." But he didn't look so happy about it, just the same. And that was okay by me.

But the little Duke pipes up with this:

"Now, monsoors," he says in that strange language he thinks is French,

"let's go upstairs where we can arrange everything." The Count made that funny French gesture, puffing out his face and moving his hands up and down, to show that he didn't like it, but it was beyond him. He said to O'Brien:

"If you insist—if you insist. But mademoiselle, what will she think?"

O'Brien just looked stubborn and set, and said shortly: "We'll discuss it when she arrives." Then he led the way upstairs to his three-room suite, and he ordered some drinks sent up. We just sat there and talked about nothing at all for fifteen or twenty minutes. Cressol said very little, and it was plain he was quite unhappy. But pretty soon there was a knock at the door; and just as if we were all living in a story-book, a fairy queen walked in!

No, she just wasn't real. She was not quite as tall as O'Brien, but she was—and believe me, I'm a judge on account of running a tourist business—the most beautiful piece of machinery you ever laid your orbs on. Her face was all ovals, lustrous and luminous like new ivory, and she had a nose that any Greek sculptor would have carved in gold and stuck on Venus. Her mouth was tiny and just a little pointed, as though she were just before saying "Please!" if you get what I mean. And that gorgeous brown hair of hers was drawn back, Roman fashion, and fastened with a silver band.

IT'S no use. I can't describe her, because you wouldn't believe me. She didn't even walk. She flowed and rippled. And she rippled and flowed right over to where the Count and I were standing, as soon as she had kissed Half-pint on each cheek in that sisterly way French women have when they want to show you what a nice, safe guy you are. Safe from them, I mean.

Well, right there I got an idea that if Half-pint was fool enough to get mixed up in French politics, the way he said, it was this girl and not the squirrel-faced Count de Cressol who had sold him the idea.

Anyhow, the Count bent over the girl's hand and tickled it with his red, red lips, and then she turned toward me, with a questioning look at O'Brien.

"Mademoiselle," said my little pal, "this is Matthew Burke, an old lover of France, and the best friend I ever had. I just discovered him here this afternoon. I brought him here for a reason which I

have been discussing with Monsieur de Cressol. We have been waiting for you to consult. Monsieur Burke will—ah—be of great assistance to us in a matter which you know about. Maybe the Count has told you."

She caught her breath and stared at me, and then I saw a quick flash of eyes between her and the Count. But O'Brien turned to me and purred:

"Matty, let me present Mademoiselle Marthe du Vast. Perhaps you have heard of her."

That one floored me. Heard of her? Why, this girl was a legend. She was the daughter of old man Felix du Vast, who manufactures those snappy little cars you see everywhere in France. She was the richest heiress in Europe, and maybe in the world. Sure I'd heard of her.

WELL, I smiled and mumbled something appropriate when we shook hands, but she never even saw my mitt. She looked into me. I say "into," because that's what it was. She just lifted those long purple slits that she used for eyes, and they sent their ultra-violet beam right into my soul. I could feel right then that she knew all about me—even down to the time I got drunk on Papa's hair-tonic when I was a kid.

She was going to say something, too; but I'll never know what, because the Count cut in with this crack:

"It is not so facile as that," he said in that oily voice of his, "this affair of selecting Monsieur Burke to make our little errand. But no. There is much which must be considered. It is a problem for mademoiselle. Now, if the messieurs will permit, it would be better that mademoiselle and I should go into another room to discuss these things—privately."

O'Brien gave an imitation of a French shrug. He waved the Count away, and I suddenly got the impression that he wanted them to leave us.

Anyhow, they did go into the next room; and as soon as the door closed O'Brien started in:

"Matty," he said, "I've got to talk quick. I think I'm mixed up in a revolution."

He let that sink in. It did. I was going to tell him how many different kinds of a fool I thought him, but he plunged ahead before I got going:

"No, listen. I said, 'I think' I'm in a revolution. There's a lot of funny angles to this. That's why I want you to help.

It may be on the level, and it may not. But I don't trust the Count."

Neither did I, and I said so. But O'Brien hardly heard me. "You see, old boy, this is the greatest experiment the world has ever seen. There's going to be a revolution—a great bloodless revolution. All the fine old noble families of France are going to step in and take hold of the government. It's the revival of the natural ruling classes. My God, boy, it's the greatest thing in history!"

Well, you can imagine how I felt. Did I care a hoot about French government? I did not. Did I want to get mixed up in a revolution and maybe have them drop my head in a basket after dropping the guillotine on it? Not I! Not old Matty Conservative Burke. And I was going to tell him so, too, when the door opened and those two Frenchies toddled back into the room. I could see that something had happened. Cressol was happier. The girl was easier. She walked over to Half-pint and held out both hands to him.

"Ah, my little *Professeur*," she cooed. "Always you Americans, you are so clever, so practical. But of course. What could be better than that your trusted friend should carry the—the *paquet* to my papa? It will give him of pleasure to make the acquaintance of a so good friend of France."

But I could feel somehow that this girl was acting. And I could feel that Cressol was acting too, and in a way so was O'Brien. I just felt lousy about everything. Screwy nuts like Cressol! Beautiful dames that talked one way and meant another! Revolution! Lord, no! I wanted to go back to Harry's Bar and get tight and forget it.

BUT I didn't. I don't know why, exactly, unless maybe it was because of the thing that Marthe du Vast did next. She said:

"*Eh bien*, since we are agreed, it is time to prepare. Monsieur le Professeur, I have the great pleasure of laying here before you the sum of money which I mentioned—all of it. You will count it, please?"

She pulled out a flat music-roll, unstrapped it, and spread it on the table. I nearly fainted. There was a wad of thousand-franc notes in that package that would have choked a horse.

"*Voilà!* See? Here it is, together with a letter to my papa which you must

read. It is now remaining for you, *Monsieur le Professeur*. The fate of France rests in your hands."

Half-pint's face was a study. He seemed completely baffled. He picked up those bills and counted them, but he just wasn't there at all. We all watched him. Cressol's little eyes just bored into him while he counted. Then my little pal turned and went to a drawer in his trunk and pulled it out. He took out of it a handful of nice, new, crisp thousand-franc notes and laid them beside the others.

"You see," he said, chiefly to the girl, "I keep my word too."

SHE kissed him and told him he was a hero and a savior of her sick country, and I don't remember what else. And she made him read a long letter she had written to her papa, and then she put the letter into an envelope and put all the money, Half-pint's and hers, back into the music-roll, saying:

"Look, I have brought this roll because it will not attract attention. Monsieur Burke, this becomes now your own responsibility. You will take this letter and this roll tonight by the eleven o'clock train to my papa in Clermont Ferrand. In return he will give you something which you are to bring to us here, tomorrow. See? We trust you, the friend of the Professor. You cannot know what importance it has—not only the money, monsieur, but the welfare of France, is in this roll. I have bought it for a few francs so that it will not be evident; but it is now an item in the history of France, in the history of civilization, monsieur."

And she handed me that wad of dough. Me—me with half a million francs on the body!

And Half-pint handed me a thousand-franc note for my ticket and expenses.

Then it got to be nearly ten o'clock; and after we had a couple of drinks, I left, because I was afraid I'd forget the train or something. The little du Vast girl kissed me when I left, and Half-pint darned near slapped my back off, and I thought Cressol was going to kiss me too, only I'd have slapped him out of his shirt if he had.

I got away, feeling like a hero; and as it was getting late, I grabbed a taxi and went home to my hotel at the Odéon. I packed a little bag with my toothbrush and pajamas, and I wrapped the music-roll up inside of the pajamas.

Then, it being ten-thirty and past, I took another taxi to the Gare de Lyon. The first thing I did was to get me a first-class ticket. They have a saying in France that "only fools and Americans travel first class," and maybe it's right. But if you can afford it, you're always sure of getting a compartment to yourself if you travel that way. And this time I could afford it.

THEN I remembered I hadn't had any dinner, so I went into the lunchroom and bought me a sandwich and coffee. I guess I'd been there ten minutes when I noticed that a man had been walking up and down outside the glass front of the place and looking in at me. All of a sudden I got scared; I felt positive the guy was a plain-clothes agent of the Sûreté Générale; and if you know what that means, you'll understand why that threw a panic into me. The Sûreté Générale in France is a mixture of Scotland Yard, the German espionage service, the American F.B.I., and the Russian Gay-pay-oo, all combined into a swell, tough, fast-moving organization.

I sat there in a cold sweat for a few minutes that seemed like all the Dark Ages rolled into one. Then I realized that it was only about a minute to eleven, so I pulled together what was left of Matty Burke, and got up slowly. I turned around, picked up my bag, and then made a wild dash for the back door and was out and across the street before the frog knew what was happening. I was directly in front of the "Grandes Lignes" entrance, and I had just time to run like blazes down the quay to the track. The train was there, and the big clock said just eleven o'clock. The conductors were blowing those silly tin whistles they have in French stations, meaning, "All aboard!" I dashed up the first coach steps I came to, and right then the train started moving.

I sat there, trying to relax and figure things out. Why was that cop after me? The Sûreté don't bother with little things, so they must know about the revolution, and that I was carrying that money. I didn't like that, because you can't get mixed up in conspiracies against the existing Government in France without coming in for a lot of trouble. I mean, they can actually send you to the guillotine in cases of conspiracy or anything that smacks of espionage.

Well, I had got about that far when my next shock walked in.

It was Half-pint O'Brien himself, cane, hair, mustache and all. He was puffing hard. I was speechless, because I just couldn't figure it. Why in thunder would he send me on a trip to Clermont and then get on the same train?

But I found out, all right.

"Hello, Matty," he puffed. "Thought—I'd—never—make it. Those people—they stayed till ten o'clock. Taxi only crawled. Couldn't get waited on at the ticket window. It was awful. Listen, Matty: I've found out definitely that Cressol and the girl are impostors! I've been having them investigated, and I just got a picture of the real Count and real Marthe du Vast!"

With that he hands me a couple of photographs. Well, I took one squint at the picture of the Count, and I got the jitters. It wasn't Cressol! I mean, it just wasn't the Cressol I had met. Not by ten years and a lot of muscles. He had the same W. J. Bryan haircut, but that was all. This Cressol—the real one—was ten years older, skinnier, and looked like a jackass instead of a squirrel. And the girl, too, didn't look anything like our mademoiselle. Well, I sat there getting madder and madder, but this crazy O'Brien grinned.

"Don't be sore, Matty. I couldn't help it. I don't know yet what it's all about. I tell you I still trust that girl—and I'm sure she's no crook or anything, because—well, there's the money they turned over. If they had given me a check or something, I'd have been suspicious. I didn't mean to hold out on you. Anyhow, I got on this train because I want to see myself what happens to that money."

I couldn't stay sore at him.

"Well," I said, "I don't trust that Cressol as far as I could toss this whole blamed train. And neither do you. I could see it."

HE agreed with me, and then he told me the whole background of the revolution and the girl. He told me that he had met this du Vast lady at the Sorbonne, and she had introduced him to Cressol. They had all talked about government, and of course Half-pint had to play the little duke and go aristocratic about the "natural function of the ruling classes." Anyhow, one thing led to another; and Cressol and the girl let it out that there was a plan to change the government and to turn it over to the nobles. Half-pint fell for that. He

wanted to join the "great cause," because he considered it the greatest experiment. Just imagine! Well, they couldn't let him, because he was a foreigner and not French. No sir, they just wouldn't have him. And finally he either suggested himself that he contribute cash money to the "cause"—or perhaps they slipped the idea in themselves. I couldn't make out which, and I don't think Half-pint remembered very well, either. Still, he had had the whole thing investigated; but it was not until after the Count and Mademoiselle du Vast had left, that his man had come to him with the full information.

WHAT completely twisted O'Brien up was that the girl actually came across with cash herself. The idea was, of course, that her father would finance the "bloodless revolution," if the nobles would contribute. Her job and Cressol's was to collect money from the noble families. But that didn't go so well. They only got a quarter of a million, and they needed more. Old Felix du Vast would double anything they could collect, but he had to see the color of money first. That was where Half-pint's money came in and fixed everything hotsy-totsy. Or so they said.

So we sat there, trying to figure it. The best I could do was to offer this:

"Listen, you little sap," I told him: "There is only one way this can be crooked, and that is by having me deliver the money to a third party who is also a crook. But you say that old man du Vast is supposed to *give* me another five hundred thousand, doubling the money and making a cool million francs?"

"That's the idea, crazy as it may seem."

"It does, lad; it is. But if they were crooks, then they would expect me to howl if there was any dirty work in Clermont?"

"Sure—if you could still howl," said O'Brien.

Then I told him about the cop from the Sûreté.

That crashed him again, and me too. The only explanation of that was that we *were* a revolution and the Sûreté had wind of it. But who could have spilled it?

Then something made me dig into my bag and get out the music-roll. . . . I guess I wanted to feel all that money in my hand once more. So I pulled it out and opened it up.



"Oh, *mon cher imbécile!*" she burred.

And—now hold it, friends: there wasn't any money in it at all! It was just plain white paper!

We sat there for a minute, staring at each other. Then O'Brien started to swear. He called me every name he could think of for fully five minutes.

"Listen, you hot-headed fool," I said: "I didn't lose those bills. That roll hasn't been out of my hands since I left your room. Not once! If they were switched, somebody in that bunch was double-crossing you. I'll bet it's that guy Cressol. He'd eat his mother's heart for liver. *He's* double-crossed you!"

Well, it was bad. I thought poor O'Brien would go crazy at first, but then

he just sat in his corner, morose and glum, and tried to figure something out of nothing. For my part, I was all in, and I couldn't think. I just sat there, smoking one cigarette on top of another, until we got to Montargis. We stopped there for a short time, getting water or something, and then we rolled on. Half-pint wouldn't even talk. We just sat and sat. I guess I closed my eyes for a minute too, and then suddenly the door opened, and in stepped a quaint little chap, dumpy and fattish and dressed in a black clerical jacket, with his collar buttoned in the back, smiling at us through his *pince-nez*. He was sweet-looking. You could practically tell he was one of those nice, comfortable American churchmen—a vicar or a rector in some smug little town.

He beamed at us for a moment, and then said very benignly:

"Well, well, well! I am lucky, indeed. I was so afraid I would not find congenial persons in this compartment. By the way, are not you gentlemen named Burke and O'Brien respectively?" I admitted it, and the next thing I knew we were looking into the nose of an automatic, pointed at our tummies.

"Fellow," said this nice little dominie in a voice like sandpaper rubbing your back, "I want that roll of bills—five hundred thousand francs."

It took us a minute to come up for air. We don't scare easy, but that little parson gave us a turn.

"My God!" I said, trying to kid him out of it. "You wouldn't be holding us up, would you? A man of your cloth!"

"Hand them over, fellow. I want those bills," he said, gritting the words. Well, I figured I had nothing to lose but a lot of plain white paper, so I gave him the music-roll.

Instantly he was the sweet little vicar again. "Thank you very much," he said. "I owe you both an explanation, naturally. Gentlemen, did you ever hear of the Rosary Game?"

I HAD. Every tourist agent knows of it; but in case you haven't encountered it, here's the idea: The crook gets a line on a rich American living in a prominent hotel abroad. The crook dresses carefully in ultra-conservative clothes, and wears a sad and holy expression. He hangs around the hotel until he sees the rich American sitting in the lobby, and he lets a rosary slip to the floor right in front of the rich American. The victim

naturally picks it up and brings it to the crook owner. The crook thanks him profusely, and they get to talking. Playing it carefully, the crook gets to be very clubby with the rich American, and after a while he tells him that he has a very special "opportunity," open only to fine, clean, upright and religious people—like him. He is going to let the rich American in on that "sure thing." And the rich American wants to get in on it, especially since his sanctimonious friend is putting his money in the same sure thing. And just to prove how honest it all is, another nice, fine, clean, upright man accidentally joins them, and the crook suggests that they let this man hold the money and act as depositor. Well, believe it or not, they do. And that is the last the rich American ever sees of his money, or his two fine, upright friends.

That's the classical way. There are a hundred variations, however, and most of them don't bother with the rosary at all. I can't see how-come anybody in his right mind would fall for it, but they do.

SO I said: "Sure I know the Rosary Game, but where does that come in on this revolution?"

"Fellow," said the little crook, still dangling his gun in his lap, "there isn't any revolution. The revolution is the rosary. Our professorial friend O'Brien is the victim. You may be interested to know that the gentleman you know as the Count de Cressol is actually a very clever international—er—operator. He enjoys a certain reputation. The name is Hutot."

Then I got it.

Boy, how I got it! Hutot was the name of one of the cleverest confidence men in Europe. He and his slick pals made a specialty of "taking" tourists for their cash; but in this case I could see pretty well how he had used Half-pint O'Brien's idiotic "duke" complex as the come-on. But I asked him:

"Okay; but where does the girl come in?"

He smiled blandly.

"Charming, eh? And remarkable, too. She is the—ah—the *amie*, the *petite amie* of this Hutot. She should be on the stage—a finished actress, really. It was not difficult, naturally, for her to interest our eager friend here. Do not feel disconsolate, fellow," he said to O'Brien. "I dare say she has had many victims as clever as yourself."

I will not repeat O'Brien's remark; it was vulgar.

Well, there seemed nothing to do at the moment but sit and talk. So we did. I asked the little parson where he came in.

"Ah, fellow," he said, "in every form of the Rosary Game, there is the inevitable stranger who is to be entrusted with the funds; in other words, the 'depositor,' as he is known to the—ah—the profession. I was the 'depositor.'"

I almost got it, but not quite.

"You were? But why didn't you 'deposit'? O'Brien never even saw you."

He frowned, as though the idea were unpleasant.

"My entry into the little scene was scheduled, but your interference—ah—obviated it. Consequently, I decided that our friend O'Brien's money would be more advantageous to me than to Hutot. I know Hutot. Brilliant chap, and all that, but greedy. Utterly greedy! And of course, his mind would not be capable of conceiving the little business of the false revolution. That was *my* concept, fellow. Rather pretty, eh?"

"Say, just who in hell are you?" O'Brien snapped at him, finally coming out of his trance.

"Fellow," said the little crook, with his most ministerial manner, "my name is well known in my profession—even to the police, I dare say, but of no consequence to you. It is, however, Pickering—Eustace Pickering. I am a member of that great fraternity of men who, professionally, avail themselves of opportunities as they arise. You, fellow, are my opportunity. You have arisen. I am taking advantage of you."

"You mean you're double-crossing your partner Hutot," I told him.

"I dislike your choice of language, fellow," he purred. "But it is substantially the case. I am *anticipating* Hutot."

WELL, I almost had to laugh. I was afraid if I did, he would suspect something and even might suspect that the money wasn't in the music-roll he had held us up for. So I played indignant and was going to bawl him out for being a double-crosser as well as a crook. But I never had a chance.

The sliding door of the compartment slid open with a slam. Two people came in; those people were Hutot,—the fake Count de Cressol,—and the fake du Vast girl. They had on the maddest expression you ever saw; and Cressol—I'll have

to call him that because I'll always think of him by that name—had a large, heavy, nasty-looking automatic which he flourished as if he meant business.

"*Haute les mains! Tous!*" he barked, which meant, "Hands up!" We did it *pronto*, and that blood-tasting squirrel snatched the music-roll out of the surprised Pickering's pocket so hard that I thought he was going to tear it.

THE girl was right behind him, all sweet and *chic* in a tailored suit, and looking more beautiful than ever. She looked excited, though, and she was trying to say something; but I couldn't hear it, because Cressol was roaring so loud at the little parson, calling him all the French names I ever heard of—cow, pig, spoiled fish, foot of a monkey and a lot more. I thought he was going to shoot him; and maybe he was, too, he was so mad. But right then something happened. Two things, in fact; and I couldn't tell whether one had anything to do with the other or not. The first thing was that the girl lifted her hand, almost as if to steady herself in the rocking car, and I thought she grabbed the little brass lever marked "*Alarme*," which you are supposed to pull in case of trouble.

Anyhow, the train gave a jar, a lurch and a jerk, and started slowing down as if the brakes were jammed on quickly. It threw Cressol off his balance; and right then little Half-pint O'Brien did his stuff. I told you that lad was dynamite.

He was up and off that seat like a steel spring. He jumped clean off his feet, head down, and he butted Cressol in the third button of his vest so hard you could hear the wind going out. Then he was all over him. I never saw anybody get hit so fast, so hard and so often. *Smack, smack, smack!* Like that. The girl screamed. Cressol's gun went off, but apparently did no harm. But it startled me out of my hop. I grabbed that gun while O'Brien was smacking Cressol, and I slammed it against the little parson's head with what the poets would call "right good will." The little chap hadn't done a thing with his own gun, either. I guess he was too bewildered; it dropped onto the floor, and he dropped onto the seat, out like a light.

Well, Cressol, as I have already said, was no cripple. He started to roar like a lion as soon as he got his wind, and he tore into little O'Brien. But he didn't

know that wildcat. O'Brien took one smack in the face that might have killed any ordinary guy not made of rubber, and then he really turned on the heat. He jumped up in the air, because he was a little guy, and landed on Cressol's neck. He got a full-Nelson on that neck and turned the big Frenchman completely around with it. Cressol butted him into the side of the compartment, but Half-pint never let go. Instead, he lifted his knee and caught the big phony on the point of his jaw with all the leverage you can get out of a knee, which is some. That ended it. Cressol went down and out, crashing to the floor with a noise that you could hear even above the train.

THEN I noticed things. There was a crowd outside the compartment. The du Vast lady—yes, I'll still call her that, too—was still screaming. The train had stopped. Men were pushing in. They had guns. And in a flash I knew those men were cops, in spite of their perfectly ordinary tight little French-style suits.

In about ten seconds we were under arrest. I mean we had bracelets on our wrists, and each of those wrists was at-

tached by the bracelets to the wrist of a cop. They hardly said a word, but in a very few more minutes we were taken off that train into the station yard of the little railroad town of Gien, just before you get to Nevers. Then they put us into one big Renault, and we were off.

Well, we were all pretty glum, but O'Brien was just dazed. He could only keep saying to me:

"What a fool I've been! Matty, imagine that sweet kid being a crook, being that beast's girl!"

Well, I had got so I could imagine it all right. And pretty soon, there being nothing else to do, I went to sleep and let O'Brien rave.

We left Gien about one o'clock, and we got back into the Paris boulevards about three in the morning. We drove down the Rue des Mathurins and the first thing I knew, we turned right into that big cement building where the Sûreté Générale has its headquarters. Then they took our shoelaces and collar-buttons and practically everything that was loose on us. They got my bag and the music-roll with fake bills, and they shoved each of us into a separate cell.



"Do you want to drive us ga-ga?" I yelled.
 "You can put me in prison—only let that girl go!" O'Brien pleaded.

Well, the idea of going into the Sûreté worried me. First I figured the pinch was caused by our fight on the train. Of course that didn't explain the plain-clothes men. But when I saw the Sûreté building, I knew it was something worse, something all planned.

Well, pretty soon somebody unlocked the door, and a neat little Frenchman with a wing collar, black jacket and striped pants came in with two Sûreté cops.

"Your name?" he asked me.

I told him; and I told him I wanted a lawyer and the American Consul and a lot of other things. But he just looked at me, turned on his heel and walked out, leaving the cops to lock the door.

I guess I stayed in that room for a few hours—I had forgotten to wind my watch, so I didn't know exactly—before that same little Frenchman came back again. He beckoned to me, and I came out. Three cops fell in alongside and behind me. The neat little man led me down the corridor to a heavy padded door which he pushed open, and in we all went.

NOW, life is full of little surprises, and that's all part of the fun; but the surprises I got in the next fifteen or thirty minutes just came too fast.

There was a large room inside that door, and it was filled with a lot of people, chiefly cops and plain-clothes men of the Sûreté. There was a platform at one end with a desk on it; and sitting at that desk was a man in a black robe with gathered sleeves—very dignified, very French, very stern-looking, and so fat that I wondered if the platform would hold him. Over in a corner was a bench with my old friend Cressol and his pal Pickering, the little parson, sitting there and looking pretty glum and seedy. On another bench, just in front of the two crooks, was my little pal O'Brien; and although he looked seedy too, on account of they had taken his shoelaces and his collar-buttons and everything else that was loose, he didn't look a bit glum. Not he! The reason was pretty plain, too. It was that little lady who called herself du Vast. She was sitting right there alongside of him, and they were holding hands and acting like there was nobody in the room but them.

Well, I didn't blame Half-pint. This girl might have been a crook or anything else you want to call her; but believe me, she was plenty good for your eyesight. Yes sir!

But I didn't have much time for speculation. The neat little man led me right up in front of the judge's platform and shoved me behind a rail. Then he said, in a voice like a talking machine:

"Monsieur le President,"—they call the judges *presidents* because they preside, I suppose,—"Monsieur le President," he said, "the accused: Burke, Matthew J., American citizen, agent in tourism, aged thirty-four."

"Uhr-r-r-umph!" remarked the judge, like a fat sea-lion. "Let the other be brought forward also." He made a signal to one of the *huissiers* or court officers, and that one went over to where little O'Brien and the girl were holding



"Gently, gently!" said the fat judge.

hands and chinning. He took O'Brien by the shoulder, pulled him up out of that, and led him over to the rail and shoved him in alongside of me.

The neat little man, who I gathered was some kind of a secretary, immediately pipes up with Half-pint's name:

"O'Brien, James Algernon, American citizen, professor at the Sorbonne, aged thirty-three."

Half-pint was in a daze. He looked as he had just been pulled out of a dream, and I guess maybe he had. He tried to whisper something to me, but the judge yelled:

"Silence!" Then he said to me in a soft, purring voice:

"Monsieur, you are the victim of a curious series of circumstance. Unwittingly you have been an instrument in the apprehension and capture of dangerous criminals, swindlers and counterfeiters who have for a prolonged period of time been a menace, not only to the law and order of the Third French Republic, but to the entire industry of tourism in France."

He was quiet for a minute, and I was beginning to feel good. Then he looked us both over and suddenly roared out:

"O'Brien and Burke, you are charged with conspiracy against the Third Republic of France, with plotting revolution, with fomenting a movement against the existing government of France! What have you to say to this charge?"

We had plenty to say, believe me. O'Brien went noble, and puffed and tried to get indignant, but I was just mad. I yelled—yelled because the whole screwy business had got me jumpy.

"You're crazy!" I yelled. "The whole lot of you are crazy. There wasn't any plot, and you know it. You've arrested Hutot and Pickering, haven't you? And that girl who calls herself du Vast, hey? Well, don't you know a swindle when you see it? Can't you figure out that there wasn't any revolution? My God, do you want to drive us ga-ga?"

Boy, but I was sore. And did it get me anything? It did not.

"Gently, gently," said the fat judge. "Is it that you wish also to face the charge of contempt? One does not, in France, suggest that the president of the *instruction* is insane, my little monsieur."

Of course that shut me up, and it closed Half-pint's mouth too, just when he was going to let off a lot of steam. And then the president went into a long-winded spiel from which we gathered that due to the brilliance of some guy called "Officer Thibault, inspector first class of the Sûreté," who seemed to be a combination of *Sherlock Holmes*, J. Edgar Hoover and *Hairbreadth Harry*, they had all the dope on us. Well, by the time the judge finished, I could see nothing in front of me but Devil's Island.

HALF-PINT O'BRIEN fooled me, though. He started talking calmly and nice, but in that awful French of his. He wasn't very clear, but I guess they understood him. He said:

"No, we can't deny any of your charges. I don't know who this Officer Thibault is, nor where he got his information, but there are some things he didn't know. One of them is that I got suspicious of this man who called himself Cressol. I guess I didn't like him. Anyhow, I had him investigated, and I was shown a picture of the real Cressol. So I knew then that it was a fake of some kind. I also had Marthe du Vast looked up, and I found that she was a fake too.

"Well, I guessed they were trying to get some money from me, but—well, if the Court will permit me to say it, I guess I liked that girl pretty well, and that's how I happened to get mixed up in this mess.

"But I don't care now. You can put me in prison if you want to, only I want you to let that girl go. She is a decent girl, and she's mixed up in a bad crowd. I love that girl. I want to marry that girl. I don't care if she's been a crook or anything. I want to marry her and take her out of all that. I want you—"

BUT he couldn't go on. Everybody was howling with laughter, as if it was the funniest thing they ever heard. Maybe it was, too; but we didn't know it then. Even the fat judge was grinning and shaking like a custard pie. Then he went on talking, but his voice was pretty shaky:

"Monsieur le Professeur," he said, "your chivalry is remarkable. It shall stand to mitigate the charges against you. Nevertheless, monsieur, these charges as brought by the Officer Thibault are grave. I shall shortly read your penalties. There is one more point, however, that I wish to clear up. It is drawn also from the report of the excellent Officer Thibault. You are not, perhaps, aware that the contribution of two hundred fifty thousand francs made by Hutot, *alias* Cressol, was in worthless counterfeit money—in notes, messieurs, fabricated by him from plates engraved by his associate in many criminal practices—Pickering, Eustace. But the woman called du Vast made a substitution of a false portfolio or music-roll, so that Monsieur Burke was never actually in possession of the moneys he had contracted to carry. Obviously, messieurs, this substitution was done without the knowledge of Hutot, *alias* Cressol, for his plan was to be present on that Clermont Express and to take the money by force of arms, if need be, from Monsieur Burke.

"We will not, at this juncture, discuss the motives of the substitution done by the woman called du Vast. The result, as you know, was that Hutot, *alias* Cressol, found not only that O'Brien had engendered suspicions and had come on the train; but that his own associate, Pickering, had made an effort to seize the money for himself. Furthermore, it was due to the efforts of this same Officer Thibault that a detective of the Sûreté—the agent second-class Petiot, Jacques

—attempted to withhold you, Monsieur Burke, and restrain you from taking the Clermont express and thereby completing an action hostile to the government and inimical to France. This, I believe, will be of interest to you, messieurs.”

Of interest? It burned us up. But he didn't stop longer than a second.

“Now, messieurs, the penalties.”

He grew solemn. There was silence in the court—nervous silence. Me, I shivered. O'Brien, beside me, was breathing hard.

“The Court d'Instruction de Paris, under the presidency of Baptiste Dufayeau, judge, imposes upon the American citizen, Burke, Matthew J., the penalty of expulsion from France, said expulsion to become effective within ten days after the sitting of this Court.”

I felt as if somebody had hit me with a club.

Me—deported from France! Me—without a penny in the world, kicked out of the only poor little business I had to live on! Me—a decent, law-abiding guy, with a decent reputation in the American colony, deported, kicked out, maybe trying to get a passage by begging from the American Aid Society!

And that judge went on:

“The Court d'Instruction de Paris,” he started to rumble, “under the presidency of the same Baptiste Dufayeau, judge, imposes upon O'Brien, James Algernon, the *double* penalty of constant surveillance by the Officer Thibault, Marguerite, Inspector First Class of the Sûreté Générale, for the remainder of his life, together with a similar expulsion from France, said expulsion to be effective within those same ten days after the sitting of this Court, allowing for the due publishing of marriage banns, as prescribed by French law. Officer Thibault, Marguerite—take charge of the prisoner.”

WHILE we were both struggling to consciousness, that little du Vast lady got up off her bench and came forward. She walked over to Half-pint O'Brien and held out her arms to him.

And friends, “Officer Thibault, Marguerite,” certainly did take charge!

“Oh, *mon cher imbécile!*” she burred. “Oh, my dear idiot! Oh, my little cabbage à la crème! Oh, my little *cocotte*, *mon coco*, *mon petit rouquin!*”

And what happened then? Yeah, it's just as screwy as you think. The fat cherub of a judge came down off his

platform and put his arm around O'Brien and the girl, saying:

“*Mes enfants*—this is a good thing that you do. To the Professor O'Brien, I apologize in the name of France. I apologize that, in an effort to apprehend the two criminals Hutot and Pickering, Officer Thibault, Marguerite, found it necessary to use the device of selecting you for a decoy, a *cheval d'api*, in the carrying out of her duty. Yet you should know, monsieur, that this young woman whom you will, I foresee, take as wife, is one of France's most remarkable agents of justice and the daughter of the eminent criminologist Auguste Thibault. For eleven months she has been in pursuit of those two public enemies, acting the rôle, not always pleasant nor amusing to herself, of belonging to the criminal fraternity. Now, through you, she has made her triumph. I cannot but regret, monsieur, that it will be her last act in the service of France; yet in her lifelong surveyance of yourself, I wish her all the good will and the happiness that so noble and gallant a character as yourself can bring her.”

“AS to you, Monsieur Burke,” he rumbled, turning to me, “France is also indebted to you. If your *interdiction de sejour* seems a penalty too rigid, it is that, evidently, with your business of tourism so precarious, and in view of your already long stay in France, you owe it to yourself—yes, and to your own country, too—to return, to become Americanized, to devote your unquestionable talents and energies to enterprises more profitable.”

Then he reached to the top of his desk and produced the package of money which my sappy pal O'Brien had tried to toss away into a revolution, and handed it to him.

“This money, monsieur, is yours. But do not fail to remember that ten of these bills are the property of your friend and countryman. You hold yourself to be an aristocrat, monsieur, so remember that an aristocrat scrupulously maintains his word.”

Yeah, that's how I got home.

Sure, and they were married, those two. I was star witness, or best man, as they say over here. And they live in Brooklyn, God knows why.

Well, I told you this was Half-pint's story, only he went noble on me on account of Marguerite.

Another colorful story by Fulton Grant is scheduled for the next (November) issue.

Made in America

Morrissey and the Russian Sailor

A BIOGRAPHY titled "Life of John Morrissey, the Irish Boy Who Fought His Way to Fame and Fortune" tells about a prize-fighter, gambler, politician who became State Senator and Member of Congress. His big fights were in the 1850's and he defeated Thompson, the Yankee Clipper, and the Benicia boy, in the squared circle, as related in this song. He was a "Paddy" and a ring hero, too, as related. But sporting authorities consulted on the point fail to find that he ever planted his knuckles in a Russian sailor's face nor fought any such thirty-eight-round contest as here described. Yet the song delivers the atmosphere of the old-time bare-fisted ring fight.

It is presented here as sung by M. C. Dean, of Virginia, Minnesota, author of "The Flying Cloud," a collection of lumberjack and Great Lakes songs and American ballads. On the currency of this and similar ballads Franz Rickaby wrote this eloquent and informative note: "In the logging camp the hegemony in song belonged

to the Irish. Although the Scotch and French-Canadian occur occasionally, the Irish were dominant, and the Irish street-song was the pattern upon which a liberal portion of the shanty-songs were made. Irishmen sailed the seas of the world. In the armies of England they fought against Russia and died on the fields of Indian insurrection. In Canada and the United States, whither they migrated in hordes, they fought wherever there was fighting. And in this New World those of them who were thrifty and provident laid foundations of homes; and those who were not, didn't. But whatever they did, they made and sang songs; and wherever they went roving, they took them along. Thus it was that the shanties rang with songs of ships and piracy, of American battle charges, and of prize-fights in far-lying ports of the world; of charging the heights of Alma, of dying in India for Britannia and Britannia's Queen, and of sailing the lakes with red iron ore—of all these, as well as of harvesting the mighty pine."



Come all you sons of E - rin, at - ten - tion now I crave, While I re - late the



prais - es of an I - rish he - ro brave, Con - cern - ing a great fight, me boys, all



on the oth - er day, Be - tween a Rus - sian sail - or and bold Jack Mor - ris - sey.

1 Come all you sons of Erin, attention now I
crave,
While I relate the praises of an Irish hero
brave,
Concerning a great fight, me boys, all on the
other day,
Between a Russian sailor and bold Jack
Morrissey.

2 It was in Terra del Fuego, in South America,
The Russian challenged Morrissey and unto
him did say

"I hear you are a fighting man, and wear a
belt I see.
What do you say, will you consent to have a
round with me?"

3 Then up spoke bold Jack Morrissey, with a
heart so stout and true,
Saying, "I am a gallant Irishman that never
was subdued.
Oh, I can whale a Yankee, a Saxon bull or bear,
And in honor of old Paddy's land I'll still
those laurels wear."

Guaranteed Antiques of Song and Story

Edited by CARL SANDBURG

Author of "Abraham Lincoln," "Smoke and Steel," "The People, Yes!" etc.



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

- 4 These words enraged the Russian upon that foreign land,
To think that he would be put down by any Irishman.
He says, "You are too light for me. On that make no mistake.
I would have you to resign the belt, or else your life I'll take."
- 5 To fight upon the tenth of June these heroes did agree,
And thousands came from every part the battle for to see.
The English and the Russians, their hearts were filled with glee;
They swore the Russian sailor boy would kill bold Morrissey.
- 6 They both stripped off, stepped in the ring, most glorious to be seen,
And Morrissey put on the belt bound round with shamrocks green.
Full twenty thousand dollars, as you may plainly see,
That was to be the champion's prize that gained the victory.
- 7 They both shook hands, walked round the ring, commencing then to fight.
It filled each Irish heart with joy for to behold the sight.
The Russian he floored Morrissey up to the eleventh round,
With English, Russian, and Saxon cheers the valley did resound.
- 8 A minute and a half our hero lay before he could rise.
The word went all around the field: "He's dead," were all their cries.
But Morrissey raised manfully, and raising from the ground,
From that until the twentieth the Russian he put down.
- 9 Up to the thirty-seventh round 'twas fall and fall about,
Which made the burly sailor to keep a sharp lookout.
The Russian called his second and asked for a glass of wine.
Our Irish hero smiled and said, "The battle will be mine."
- 10 The thirty-eighth decided all. The Russian felt the smart
When Morrissey, with a fearful blow, he struck him o'er the heart.
A doctor he was called on to open up a vein.
He said it was quite useless, he would never fight again.
- 11 Our hero conquered Thompson, the Yankee Clipper too;
The Benicia boy and Shepherd he nobly did subdue.
So let us fill a flowing bowl and drink a health galore
To brave Jack Morrissey and Paddies evermore.

The Pit That He

A deeply interesting novelette of the cattle-country today.

By WILBUR HALL



BECAUSE it was the slack season on the Big-B—Little-B, and because Henry Brookins had gone to San Francisco for his son's marriage, Boze Harter, the foreman, was in the ranch office belatedly putting to rights the late spring round-up tally-book. Virgil Dade—top-hand, lounging in their owner's leather chair—was making scandalous comments on the science of arithmetic, when the roustabout came to the outer door.

"The's a new waitress at the Downey House, Virge," he said laconically. "I told her how you spelt your name." He threw the weekly mail-sack to the floor, slammed the screen door and withdrew, whistling.

"I've been on spreads," Dade remarked, pulling the stout canvas bag nearer with one spurred heel, "where the roustabouts knew their place. Wonder if Mead and Scarbro have wrote me about that slicker I ordered."

"Look and see," Harter suggested. . . . "And nine is fourteen, and the four heavy cows we threw in the woods lot makes nineteen." The foreman heaved a sigh. "If arithmetic didn't come right up and eat sugar out of my hand, Virge, how do you think you'd get the fifty a month you don't earn? What's the matter now?"

Dade was turning a soiled envelope over in his hand.

"How do you spell *urgent*?" he inquired.

"*Pronto*. Why?"

"This one's spelled with a 'j'. What old-timer would be hen-scratching *urgent* on a letter to the boss from Pascort?"

Harter scowled.

"Pascort? That's over east in Mesoro County. I don't call to mind any—Here, let me see it."

Dade tossed the letter across the desk. Boze Harter studied it thoughtfully.

"Mr. Brookins only told me to open anything that came from the Stockmen's Association or a buyer. This here—"

"There's still mails running to Frisco."

"I hate to bother Mr. Brookins. Maybe he wants to get the boy married tight—you can't tell. And I know now who this is from."

"That ought to help."

"It's a two-fisted old trouble-shooter named Pom Rittenhouse."

"Does the ranch owe him money?"

"Not money. I've seen this man here visiting a few times. Sort of pious and queer, but a he-man."

"You're the foreman. But seems to me I've heard about a law against opening other people's mail."

Harter was scarcely listening. "Mr. Brookins told me that old Rittenhouse was a friend of his father's, and if he ever wanted anything from the Big-B—Little-B he could have it." With sudden resolution, he ripped the end from the envelope. "Urgent, eh?" he repeated.

The enclosure was not literature, but it said something.

POMFRET A. RITTENHOUSE

ABERDEEN-ANGUS CATTLE

Pascort, Jul 29

*Frend Brookins Im sort of bogged down
with trubbles an shore wood like it to have
you tie in at my barn if you can cut it.
Got my foot in one of Homer Cannings
long ropes over the killin of a sheepherder
frend of mine name of Basque Louie an
for a man that aint scared of anything Im
scared More when I see you*

Yore frend

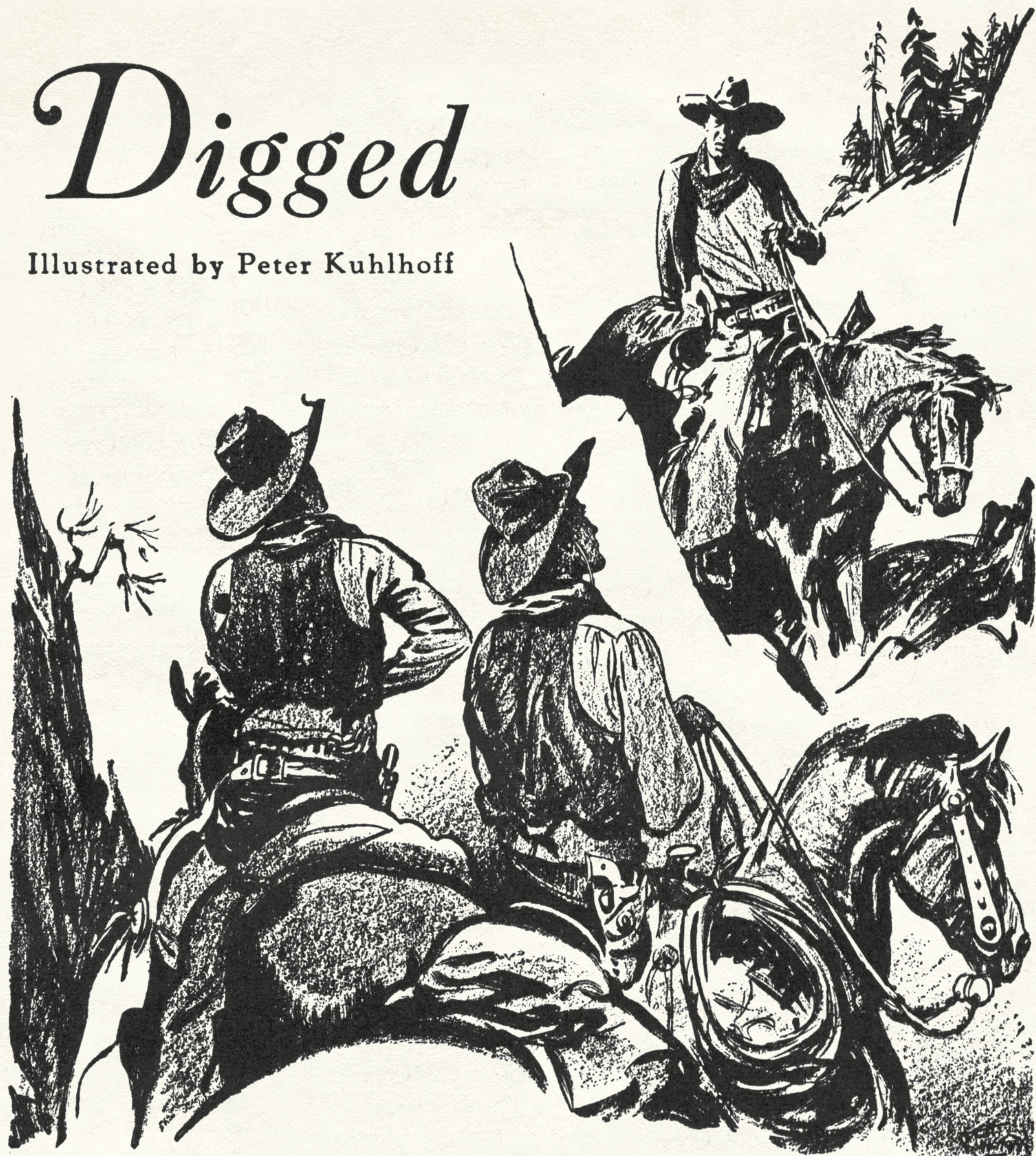
P. A. Rittenhouse

Virgil Dade was scornful. "You say the man that wrote that is full-sized?"

"Full-sized and plenty able to take care of himself in any ordinary kind of company," Harter said, puzzling. "I've

Digged

Illustrated by Peter Kuhlhoff



heard this Homer Canning is a big man over east of the hills. But what kind of troubles does old Mr. Rittenhouse mean?"

"There's three kinds," Dade replied, from the rich experience of twenty-six years, "—money, women, and a horse you can't rein Spanish."

"You can leave out two of those. Rittenhouse could rein a horse in any language, and he's older than you by fifty years and got more sense by three hundred. That leaves money; but—"

"Then why not mail him ten till next pay-day?"

"From what I've heard Mr. Brookins say, Rittenhouse could have anything that's left over from pay-rolls and black-leg serum." Harter was at the office safe, fumbling with the small combination knob. "I'll take some money along, but I've got a sort of hazy notion—"

"Take it?" Dade inquired. "You don't mean you're going over—"

"Not *me*. *We*!" The foreman opened the safe, took out a sheaf of currency, slammed the iron door. "I know what Mr. Brookins would do if he was here, and I know what you and I are going to do, now he isn't. We're going to take a little *pasear* into Mesoro County for to see and for to find out—and you can spell *urgent* any way you want to, as far as I care!"

PASCORT, publicized by the secretary of its aspiring Chamber of Commerce as "the Small Town with the Big Back-country" lay steaming in the heat of a muggy August day. Northward, ominous thunder-heads loomed above the mountains, threatening one of those violent midsummer rains that often come to break the back of a stifling and humid spell in Southwestern mountain regions. Along Cottonwood Street were a few outmoded automobiles belonging to farmers

and stockmen; a dozen saddled horses, too languid even to fight the flies, hung their heads at the deeply chewed hitch-rails still extant; such human beings as showed themselves did it spiritlessly, with dragging feet, and lost themselves as soon as possible in the comparative coolness of Zack's Place, the Bijou or the Mesoro County Mercantile Store.

Uncle Ambrose Garbutt, fanning himself on the sweltering portico of the Hughes Hotel, remained out of doors only because it was less uncomfortable for him there—his wife Martha having years before invented a fiction that somehow Ambrose was responsible for these hot periods and her prostration under them. Uncle Ambrose, indolently surveying the street between snoozes, observed that the one big car in sight was that of Homer Canning. It was parked before his offices in the Hammond Block; it gleamed and glittered in the sun as though immune to that planet's most subversive efforts; equally indifferent was hard-mouthed young Jess Morgan, its driver, who sat behind the wheel under his very wide-brimmed range hat, apparently contemptuous of the elements.

In a way, Uncle Ambrose soliloquized, Jess was a sort of symbol of the attitude of the whole Canning staff and retinue toward mortal weaknesses and the softer virtues. Likely Canning himself was upstairs there now, in one of his maze of mysterious offices, figuring out some nefarious enterprise—financial, political or personal—not even conscious of the sultriness that was laying low the rest of the Pascort Valley and enviroing mountains. Well, it was good judgment not to bother your head at any time about Homer Canning's activities; so the fat hotel proprietor sighed, dabbed at a fly, dozed off.

IN one trifling particular he had been mistaken in his surmise as to Canning's immediate preoccupation. True, the boss of Mesoro County was contemplating an enterprise, the nefariousness of which will be adjudged by each of us for himself; but he was not doing so while unconscious of the state of the weather. On the contrary, he was at that precise moment concerning himself particularly with the weather—had even twisted about in his big swivel-chair so that he could look out of window northward to where, above the patent flue of Dedderer's Bakery, he could see the great masses of gray-black clouds that rested heavily

on the peaks and pinnacles of the mountains.

Byington, a dark, sleek man with close-cropped hair and close-set eyes, spoke out of a corner of his mouth.

"O. K. But if you don't get a rain in the hills?"

CANNING swung back. He was a large, fine-looking man, with a smile both pleased and pleasing. His size, his good looks and his smile were definite assets, and Canning handled assets profitably. He smiled at his henchman.

"You won't even trust Providence, will you, By?"

"I don't trust anything, in a job like this."

"All right; if it fools me completely and we don't get a cloudburst up above Bain's sometime in the next forty-eight hours, it will be reported as just another disappearance; that's all. The Gorge will keep the secret, or a freshet will bring it out, miles below, enough later to be safe. I'm not such a fool as to play my cards on the strength of one ace!"

Byington shrugged. "I still don't see why you don't send Aguerre or Pete Rolls. I'd keep out of it myself."

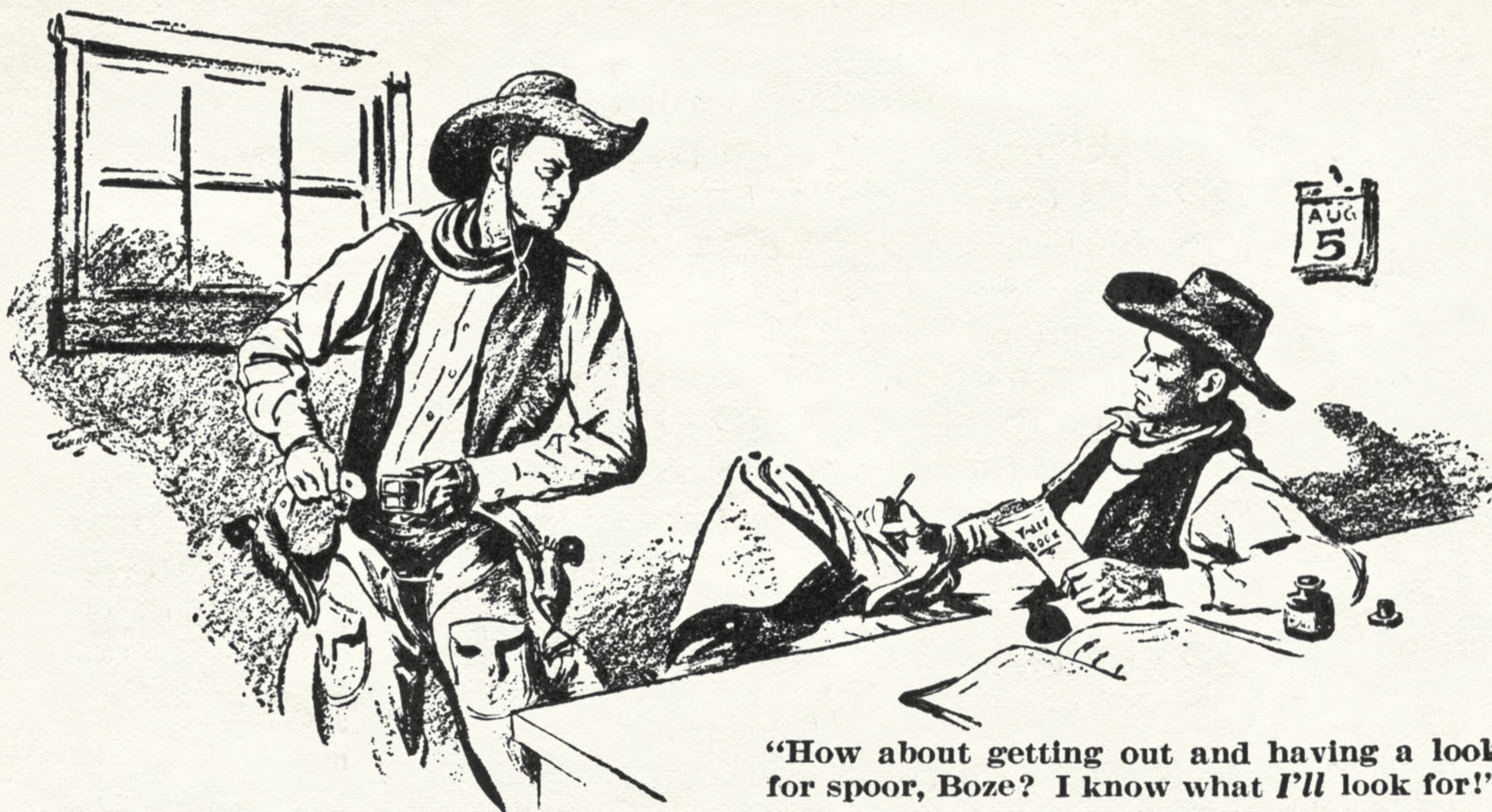
"It was just because you kept out of it that Aguerre made a mess of the Basque Louie job!" Canning retorted, more sharply. "And when he made a mess of it, along comes this damned stubborn, God-fearing Aberdeen breeder for me to take on." Canning examined a forefinger thoughtfully. "No, By, I'll attend to the business myself, thanks!"

"All right, chief. What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to be at home at Willows tomorrow morning and to let it be known that I'm coming to settle that Latchkey deal. Jess will drive me down along toward three o'clock, and we'll be in the ranch office all the rest of the afternoon. If you want to have the Spencers and Art Black and the supervisor in for a game of cards along about nine, it will be all right with me." He leaned forward a little. "I'm going to be at your ranch all afternoon and evening. Is that clear?"

"It's clear you're building an air-tight alibi—yes. But what I don't see—"

Canning interrupted: "No? There's no reason, is there, why one of your hands—say Goings, maybe, because he's about my build—there's no reason why Goings shouldn't take his car and go for a little trip in the late afternoon, is there?"



"How about getting out and having a look for spoor, Boze? I know what I'll look for!"

"Oh!" Byington studied the question. "But suppose you meet somebody that knows Goings?" He laughed without mirth. "I mean, suppose Goings does!"

"If Goings takes the old Indian Trail road and moves right along, the people he meets won't worry me."

"The Indian Trail road? You couldn't ride a burro over parts of it!"

"I'm not riding a burro. Goings is driving, alone, in his car."

Byington shrugged once more. "Nothing stops you, does it?" he exclaimed with grudging admiration. "You've thought everything else out—have you thought out that old man Rittenhouse is touchy about you right now, and that he's still awful fast on the draw?"

"You may be surprised, Byington, to know that I've even thought of that." He turned and picked up a walking-stick that leaned against a window-ledge. "You've noticed that I carry this now and then. Did you ever happen to handle it?"

"No." Byington took it into his hand. His eyebrows lifted; he raised the cane slightly and dropped the elaborately carved silver knob into his left palm. "I'll be damned! Why, I never even guessed!"

"I don't advise you to try using it without some practice, By. For instance, how would you hit a man with it so as to leave the smallest trace?"

"I don't know anything about it. I suppose I'd just—hit him."

"And smash his skull like an eggshell. A coroner's jury would spot you and your walking-stick clear across the county." Canning rose and took the cane, holding it lightly a third of the way from the ferrule. Almost daintily he dropped it

alongside his lieutenant's left ear, and onto the shoulder where it joined the neck. Byington uttered a sharp exclamation of pain; his head was pulled awry and his left arm dropped inert to his side. He reached for the numbed hand—rubbed wrist and forearm briskly. His fingers, limp and of a gray-white pallor, began to function, regain their color.

"I feel like I'd been hit with a meat-cleaver!" he complained.

"That was a glancing blow—and light. But it can be given punch."

"And not leave a mark?"

"The sort of marks a body might get by falling into a gorge, for instance, or if it was pitched and rolled and tossed down that gorge by high water." Canning smiled—a cold smile, not so pleasant to see. "That's why I turned weather prophet just now, Byington," he added, as he put the loaded stick aside.

The black-haired man seemed to review the project. He said: "It's too bad you couldn't work it some way to get Rittenhouse to sell you that herd of Aberdeens of his. Some day that's going to be a money-making breed out this way."

"You know more about that than I would." Canning leaned back in his swivel-chair. "I overlooked that possibility, I'll admit. And I don't want to overlook anything."

"No reason why the last thing the old man did he couldn't sell you his string."

Canning laughed. "If I could get away to go up tomorrow and see him, I'd make him an offer. But I'll be busy at your ranch, and I couldn't trust Goings to buy for me."

"Hell! That's right." And Byington frowned. "Why couldn't you go tomor-



row, and then the next day—well, Rittenhouse might fall off his horse on the fifth as well as on the fourth, I should think.”

“Wait a minute. I will go up on the fifth.”

“You’ve got me balled up now. I—”

Canning interrupted: “It gilds the lily!” he exclaimed with a laugh. “Unless somebody stumbles across the body first, which they won’t, I’ll buy that herd Thursday—the fifth. Don’t get so jittery! It’s simple!”

“To you!”

“Listen, then: I’ll take Dad Pastor up with me that day—he’s as old as Noah’s grandfather!—and he’ll ride old Rittenhouse’s horse around the corrals and stock till some neighbor sees us. On the fifth—Thursday.”

Byington was checking all the steps. “It’s bold enough!” he admitted. “If the storm holds off, you’ll be safe any way you take it.”

“I’m crowding my luck, By! I’ve got a hunch it won’t rain in the mountains before Thursday. It takes eight or ten hours for the run-off to get down as far as the Gorge, and by that time—”

There was a quick knock at the door, and a tight-lipped youth came in with a bundle of checks and papers.

“Davids brought the mail, Mr. Canning,” he said.

“Davids? Who’s Davids?”

“That sick man in the post office. You—er—made friends with him.”

“Oh. What made him bring it?”

“He said he was coming by. I think he wants to see you.”

“Send him in. You breeze, By!”

In a moment a pale, stooped man, obviously nervous, entered.

“Maybe I shouldn’t bother you, Mr. Canning,” he said. “But you said a while back if I saw anything at the office—”

“That’s right. Sit down, Davids. Do you want a little cough medicine?” Canning’s smile was friendly and easy.

“I guess so, thanks.”

CANNING opened a desk drawer, extracted a bottle and poured two generous drinks. The clerk choked over his, but he put it all down.

“Something on your mind, Davids?” his host inquired.

“You wanted to know about any letters that—that a certain party sent.”

“I don’t remember mentioning it. But that’s all right. I’m always interested in the people around Pascort, you know.”

“Yes sir. Well, that party sent a letter two or three days ago. I heard Bob—I heard one of the rural-route carriers speaking of it. He said it was marked ‘urgent’.”

“Urgent, eh? I hope our old friend isn’t in any trouble.”

“That’s what made Roberts—that’s how the carrier came to bring it up. He’d heard from somebody—Mrs. Bass, I guess; Harve Bass and his wife live up just beyond there—”

“Oh, yes. I know the Besses. And your friend the carrier said—”

“He said Mrs. Bass—I think it was Mrs. Bass—said that Rit—that party was worrying over something, sort of. Some friend of his—a shepherd—”

Canning interrupted him with a laugh. “Oh, I don’t want to know any of Mrs. Bass’ secrets, Davids, or anyone else’s. And I guess most of this is just imagination.”

“I guess so. But anyway, I thought you might want to know.”

“It was kind of you to think about it. Your man in the office didn’t happen to say who this letter was going to?”

“Oh, yes—I forgot. I asked him. It was addressed to a big cattleman over in Tonto County—Henry Brookins. I suppose you must know who he is.”

“Yes. He runs the Big-B—Little-B brand. Brookins, eh? Well, I’m sure everything will be all right for our old friend up on the Gorge. I’m going up that way Thursday, and I’ll make it a point to stop in and see if there’s anything I can do for him. Another little dose, Davids?”

“I better not. I’ve got to be on duty for the mail when the evening stage comes in.”

“Whatever you say.” Canning pulled out a bill-fold. “By the way, Davids, I wish you’d put a five-spot on that lottery

for me. I think I'll take another chance at it."

Davids stepped back. "You don't need to—"

"Of course I don't need to. But you don't object to placing it for me? I'm feeling lucky today."

The clerk's face was the color of beef-steak; his fevered cheek-bones flamed. But he took the five-dollar bill and stuffed it into his pocket hastily. "Much obliged, Mr. Canning. Anything I can do for you—"

"There isn't anything, Davids, particularly. Only, as I've told you, I'm interested in the people around here. And it's a favor to our office to have you bring the mail over, when you're coming this way. It saves Parsons going for it, and Parsons is a pretty busy boy, you know. Come in any time. Good-by!"

Davids hurried out, his feet making a shuffling sound on the floor. Smiling, Canning raised his voice.

"Byington!"

The black-haired man appeared.

"He's yelled for help," Canning informed him.

"Who has? Rittenhouse?"

"So I'm told. Wrote to Henry Brookins, over at Whitehorse."

Byington sat down abruptly. "You know what that means, chief!"

Canning's smile was particularly pleased. "You look scared, By! You're not afraid Henry Brookins will come over here and bite you, are you?"

"Nobody's going to bite me, Canning. But Brookins would be a bad man to have on your trail. Or on ours!"

"Think so? Well, maybe. But—by the way, Byington, you're the fellow who doesn't believe in Providence, aren't you?"

"Me? I don't know what you're talking about now."

"This time Providence is playing my game. Do you read the State news in the *Item*?"

"Not much. You mean that third page?"

"Yes. Throw me last week's paper. It's on that cabinet."

OBVIOUSLY puzzled, Byington found the required copy. Canning opened it wide—ran his eye down the columns on an inside page.

"Here it is—listen: 'Henry Brookins of the Big-B—Little-B Ranch on White Horse went to San Francisco on Sunday to attend the wedding of his son Robert



Brookins to a Coast girl named Miss Angela Call. While away, the cattleman will attend a meeting of the Pacific Coast Stockmen's Association, and likely go to Hollywood and other places to see the sights.' The rest of the article is about the bride, but that would bore you, wouldn't it, By?"

His lieutenant had brightened considerably. "I guess I'll have to take more stock in Providence after this, chief," he said. "And read the papers, too. By the time Brookins gets that letter, we can certainly scratch Basque Louie off the list, can't we?"

"Byington," Homer Canning observed thoughtfully, "you have the worst habit of bringing up names I've ever known a man to have. Especially a man who might very well be charged with—well, half a dozen offences that even my influence couldn't get him clear of. I've spoken to you about it before. You'll have to learn!"

Byington grumbled: "If we can't bring up names here in your office, we're in a hell of a spot! But anything you say."

Canning's voice cracked like a whip. "There's one thing I am going to say, Byington! This business at your ranch office tomorrow is important. I don't want any slip to be made. I'm at your place all afternoon and evening Wednesday, August fourth. Are you sure you aren't the least bit hazy about that?"

"Yes. I've got that." Byington was considerably subdued.

"You have? That's good. Sometimes I get tired of men who growl at me and talk back; I get most tired of men who mix names, dates, places and circumstances. And you know what happens to a man when I get tired enough of him, don't you? All right. Now get out! Right this minute I'm getting sick of seeing you around!"

CHAPTER II

THAT sultry August day when Uncle Ambrose Garbutt engaged in soliloquy concerning the likely projects of Homer Canning in Pascort was the third. The letter marked "*Urgent*," thanks to the leisureliness of mails in far-flung regions, did not come to the hand of Bozeman Harter on the Big-B—Little-B Ranch until the fifth. But after it had come to that trusted and ready hand, there were no further delays in the orderly progression of events that were appointed to occur.

On the afternoon of the fifth Brookins' hired men climbed the long Freestone grade, fox-trotted down an interminable stretch of gently falling cañon and out across a basin, passed up and over the range; they rode into and out of half a dozen light showers of rain and saw evidences that they had just missed a heavier summer storm of the preceding night. They caught three hours' sleep at a Sash Brand line cabin after midnight; making such inquiries as were necessary, they came to the one-man ranch of Pomfret A. Rittenhouse on the eastern slope of the mountains about eleven o'clock of the next day, with unsweated horses, having covered the round hundred miles judiciously like men who, riding, may have to ride some more.

They found the old log house unlocked but empty—no one in sight.

That "*Urgent*" had sharpened their first-rate powers of observation. They stood appraising the house of the old man who, for one who was scared of nothing, had been scared. And the first thing they saw was that Pom Rittenhouse was above all things else orderly and precise. Each piece of crude old furniture had its place; there was no clutter of tack anywhere about; on a center table of pine were stacked files of the *Breeders' Gazette* and Aberdeen-Angus literature; in a room at one side—marvelous to behold!—the bed was made up. But despite a bright sun without, the interior was dank. Rain had fallen down the straight stone chimney of the big fireplace, and dampened the old ashes on the hearth.

"No fire last night," Harter observed.

DADE had crossed to a door beyond. "The kitchen leanto looks like he'd started something he didn't finish. Some dried potato peelings and a stew on the stove that had a long ways to go before it would be a stew."

"He's got his working togs on him, because here's his mail-order visiting clothes hanging up."

"I'll see maybe he's asleep in the barn," Dade said, and went out.

He was gone ten minutes. "That's funny!" he said, returning to lean against a hand-hewed door-post.

"I've got a couple of funny ones myself," Harter averred. "What's yours?"

"I found a rangy rawhide horse loose out there, with the saddle and bridle still on."

"Still?"

"That's what I said. He was trying to chew down red-oat hay over a long-spade bit, and he was considerably ga'nted."

"Were the cinches eased up any?"

"They weren't. I undressed the horse, and he was so tickled I thought he was going to kiss me." Dade inhaled cigarette smoke. "What's your funny ones?"

"Here's the first."

Harter passed over a sheet of letter paper; it was dated August fourth—was unfinished and unsigned. But it was in the handwriting of the other letter.

Frend Brookins

Looks to me like you maynt get here so jest a line to let you no if anything throws me fix it up with a lawer to sell the place and send proseedes to my girl Annie R. Low—

Dade looked up from the reading. "Do you know any lawyers, Boze?"

Harter frowned. "Maybe it isn't that bad, Virge. Likely enough the old man has gone to town or was caught out on his range somewhere by a cloudburst last night or the night before."



"Mr. Canning!" the

"What did he go to town or out on his range on—his bicycle?" Dade snorted. "Would he mosey off anywheres and leave his riding-horse to starve to death in a barn full of good oat hay and rolled barley? You're wasting time!"

"No, I'm stalling. He started to write that letter on the fourth. Do you know what day this is?"

"Me? I never do know."

"I wasn't sure till— Look here!"

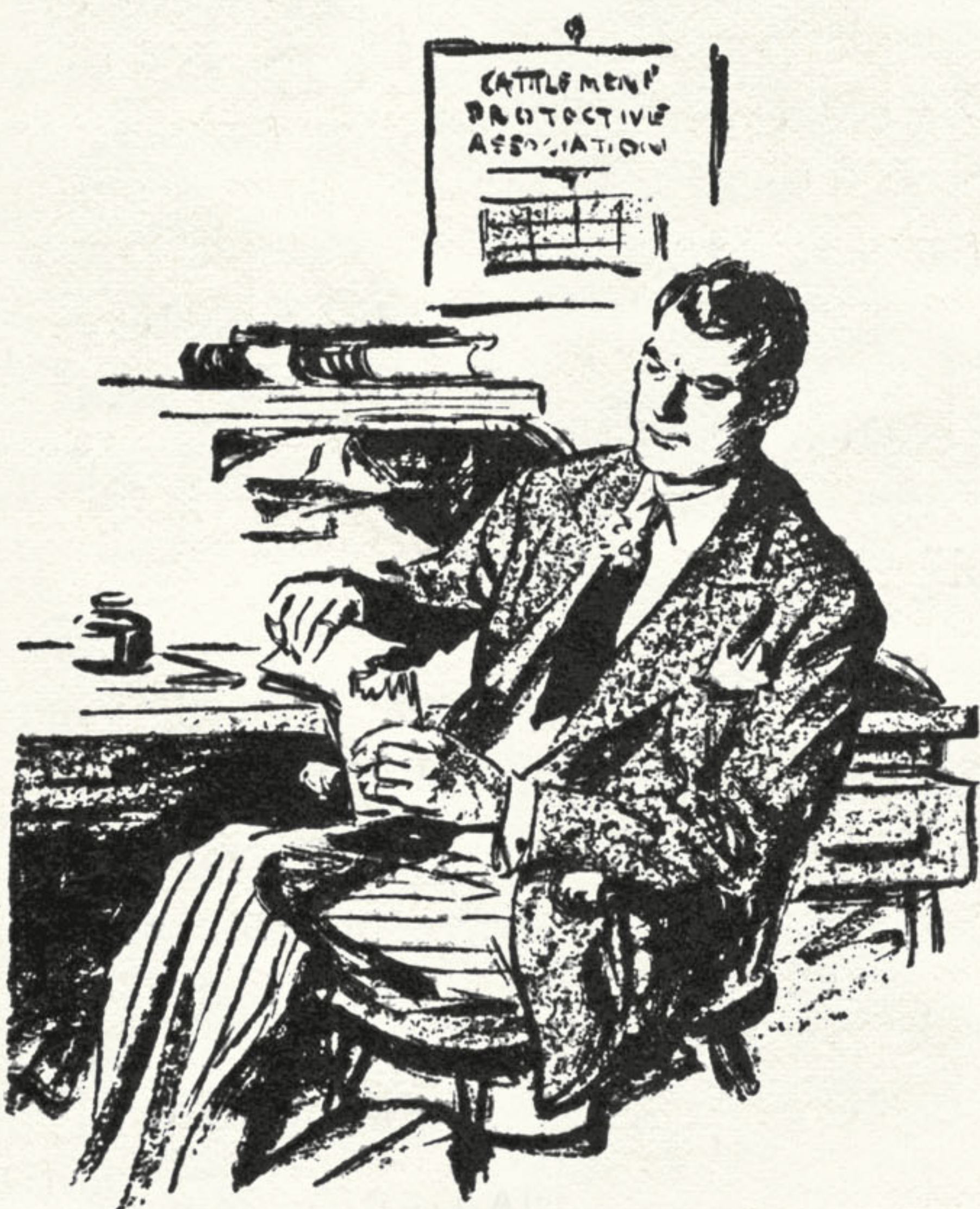
He led the way into the kitchen leanto Dade had discovered. There were dishes on the table in which dust had gathered—one in which a fly had chosen to die. Some one had interrupted himself or been interrupted in the process of preparing that stew already mentioned; the firebox of the stove was empty, as though the pot of meat and vegetables had been put on and started, but had been neglected thereafter. Through a half-open casement window, latched back with a long hook from the sill, heavy rains had driven—leaves and straw been blown. There was water still on the floor.

"He started to write to Mr. Brookins along about the time he began to see supper in the distance. It would be supper, with stew coming up."

"Or suppose he finished up breakfast, say, and began on the stew and the letter when he'd done up his chores here," Dade suggested.

"His alarm clock stopped at two-twenty. How long would an alarm clock run without being helped along?"

"Let's see! I wind the one by my bunk around eight or nine in the evening. If I forget it, she'll pull through till next noon or so—"



widow cried. "Is—Isn't that my mortgage?"

"Or say two-twenty on the second day. No, this was supper, but the clock wasn't wound that night."

"You keep changing the subject," Dade complained. "You started talking about what day this is."

"Oh, that!" Harter went to a pantry closet door and opened it. Suspended by a nail on the inner side was a square of cardboard lithographed in high colors—a sylvan scene presenting a finger-waved and manicured girl in a wisp of Grecian draperies dabbling one foot in a mirroring pool. This work of art commended to the observer the solid virtues of the Mesoro County Hardware and Implement Co., Pascort—"The Small Town with the Big Back-country." On the bottom was stapled a pad of square sheets of white, each bearing a single date and day-name. The one exposed was that of Thursday, March 5.

"That can't be right," Dade said; "the old man must've forgot to wind his calendar too, that day. Today's Friday, I thought."

"It's Friday, the sixth. And it looks like yesterday might have been a day when Mr. Rittenhouse could have used a friend." Boze Harter's eyes roved unhappily. "I still hope we're wrong—Hello!"

"Hello yourself," Dade countered. "What's those—lottery tickets?"

HARTER was thumbing a pad of loose leaves transfixed on a bill-hook inside the closet. A glance showed what they were—the dated sheets from the calendar pad that had been torn off with the passing days. But what engaged Harter's interest was the fact that on the reverse of each were scribbled memoranda, a few in pen, mostly in pencil, in the handwriting of Rittenhouse.

"And me—I spent twelve dollars and a half for a mail-order course in book-keeping and business methods!" he mourned. "Listen, Virge! *'Four veal to Vickers—thirty-eight seventy. Weather breeder today. Split stove-wood.'*"

"I'm waiting for the next installment," Dade said, puzzled. "What's the main idea?"

"Here's another one: *'Writ Brookins but no answer yet. Some rain. H. C. sent Agarry out but he left pronto.'*" He turned a third sheet. "*'Annie wants I should give up here and come out to Cal. but dam if I'll—'* Wait a shake! Oh! *'But dam if I'll be driv off by killers.'*"



Dade leaned in. "It's a—one of those things you write in every day!"

"Diary. Hand-made diary." Harter grasped the sheets and pulled them all from the hook. He spread them on the table—kicked a chair closer. "Every night the old man entered up his cash, and the main happenings, on that day's page. Here's Sunday, the first of March: '*Redded up the haymow. Washt my shirt and turned off a chapter of Bible. Some rain.*'"

Dade read one: "Here's June ninth, Boze: '*Basque Louie was kilt, that's sartain sure. Found tire-tracks of car turning into his place. Them that live by the sword shall die by the sword. Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.*'"

The cowboy scowled. "What's that?"

"A verse out of the Bible. The old man was pious—I'd forgotten that. Come on along through the rest of those you have, and see if you can find out anything more about this Basque Louie."

"Seems to me I've heard the name some place before."

"It was in the letter to Mr. Brookins. '*Got caught in one of Homer Canning's long ropes over the killing of Basque Louie*'—it was something along that general line."

"Tally. If this man Canning makes big medicine in Mesoro County it might be such a thing as our old friend Mr. Rittenhouse had got himself a good reason to be scared." Dade's mouth was a straight line; his eyes hardened. "I'm getting to sort of like the old gentleman!"

THE story they read was sketchy and full of breaks and gaps—but damning. A sheepherder to whom Rittenhouse had given his friendship—through gratitude, perhaps, since one calendar

sheet carried the phrase, "for what he done when I was laid up;" a dispute with Canning over coveted springs; the mysterious death of the Basque, Louie. A lackadaisical coroner's inquisition; Rittenhouse's indignation when the whole matter was officially dropped; the beginnings and pursuit of his own slow, patient, increasingly implacable inquiry, yielding results, one by one and step by step, because of his intimate knowledge of the country and its people, and of his lifetime of experience in reading signs.

The scribbled entries began to deal with the initials *H. C.*; with various devices that had been tried to shake the old man from the chase—to get him to sell out and retire to distant parts; with his growing weariness (he recorded his seventy-ninth birthday on June twelfth), which still could not defeat his self-elected purpose. "*Mighty nigh reddy to quit here,*" he had written on July seventeenth, in a noticeably feeble hand, "*but I aint agoin to be run off my own range by a scoundrel.*"

Boze Harter dropped a fist to the table angrily. "If the old fool had only telegraphed Mr. Brookins!" he exclaimed. "And look how close we came to riding in in time to be some good!"

Virgil Dade rose, hitching up his belt and pulling his wide hat down. "I'd say we've done enough home-work, Boze. How about getting out and having a look for spoor?"

"This is a big country to look for anything in, especially when you don't know what you're looking for."

"I know what *I'll* look for!"

"I'm just afraid we'll find it. But there ought to be a neighbor or so around somewhere that could give us a lead." The foreman took down the calendar, began gathering the loose sheets neatly. "If somebody should happen to drop in here to see if he'd overlooked anything, he'd sure light a fire with Exhibit A. I think I'll take care of it." He glanced at the pile he had made, then began thumbing back through it. He became more grave.

"What are you looking for now?" Dade inquired sharply. "—The will or something?"

Harter put down the pack and straightened. "The fourth isn't here, Virge!"

"What fourth isn't where?"

"The page for Wednesday, the fourth." He swore. "That sort of puts us afoot again. Maybe those troubles didn't move in on Rittenhouse on the fifth, after all."

"I don't see that page gone means anything. He likely used the fourth to start the kitchen fire with."

"Oh, yes!" Harter growled. "Or to wipe his razor on! Here's a man that keeps all his accounts and everything he wants to remember to tie to a date; and then, when he's rounding up a murder case and writing for help because he's scared, he rips out a page to use for kindling! You talk almost as foolish as you look, Virge!"

"I was just sort of projecting around," Dade apologized. "You've got to admit one guess is as good as another until—"

"Until we find that sheet for the fourth, if, as and when! Because, if, as and when, and while we're guessing, my guess is that the page for day before yesterday, Wednesday, August fourth, would just about put handcuffs on somebody who isn't expecting it one little bit! Let's go looking for that spoor you were talking about!"

RIDING into the place from the west, the two Big-B—Little-B men had not touched the county road which, they now found, ran generally north and south, from higher regions of the mountains down toward a valley which they could see spread out in the far distance and holding in its center a litter of children's blocks that would, they surmised, be Pascort. To reach this road from Rittenhouse's cabin, they descended sharply into a cañon that, below the old rancher's rickety bridge, fell away into the gorge that had given the region its name.

It was now that they discovered how violent must have been the summer storm, the fringes and skirts of which had brushed them on their way. A brawling mountain stream tumbled below the bridge, but drift and débris piled in irregular heaps and sodden tangles higher than its level by several feet proved that a torrential rain, bursting abruptly and perhaps in an hour's time, had sent a flood down through this cañon, as perhaps through others to the east and west. More than their own country this was one, they knew, of occasional violent midsummer rains; such cloudbursts, freshets, would bring a draining stream up in half a night to flood height; in shorter time the flood would pass and the creek return to its normal course. At the moment the sky was cloudless and a warming sun shining; but everywhere water still lay in pools; the ground all about was heavy with moisture, and in climbing up the

far bank, they came on an old tree that the unwonted rush of waters had wrenched loose and brought down.

But they were not diverted by climatological data—not for the moment. What did divert them was the appearance, in the road they presently gained, of a glum man, slouching, surly, who straddled a fine well-made pinto horse, and who carried in its scabbard under his near *rosadero* a heavy carbine. This countryman pulled up when he observed the strangers, perhaps for courtesy's sake, perhaps not.

"Well, here's somebody that's tickled to see us!" Harter said, in a low voice, without turning his head. "That's something."

"I'd swap horses with him," Dade replied similarly, "but not looks."

"Howdy, Mister," Harter said, reining in.

The man only grunted, eying both mounts and mounted.

"Nice day? Think the storm's over?"

"I aint thinkin'!"

"If it isn't too much to ask, do you live around here?"

"Who wants to know?"

Harter grinned disarmingly. "That's a fair question. We're from over west of the mountains, scouting for feeders. My name's Harter, and this handicap I carry is Virge Dade."

"Hell of a country to scout for feeders in," the other man growled. "Anyhows, we fat our own feeders up this way."

"We heard something about a man named Rittenhouse that might have a bunch of cross-bred Aberdeens. But he isn't home. We rode by there."

"Yeah?"

VIRGIL tried his hand. "You don't happen to own the full brother of that horse you're riding, do you, neighbor? If you do, I'd be in the market."

The appraisal the cowboy was given would have abashed a more sensitive youth—angered a quick-tempered one. Dade gave no sign of being conscious of it. He could be guileless, Virge could.

"We ride our own colts up this way too," the native said. "Got any more fool questions?"

"If you'd give us an idea where we might find this Mr. Rittenhouse—" Harter began.

With something like ferocity the man cut him short. "I got plenty to do without keeping tabs on Pom Rittenhouse; but if I knowed where he was at, I

wouldn't tell you." His right hand fell carelessly to the stock of his sheathed rifle, and he spat into a wild lilac bush. "I've knowed outsiders to get plumb lost here in these hills—especially the kind that comes into a good summer grass country to buy feeders in August."

His well-knit pinto went into sudden action, narrowly missed collision with Dade's dusty gray, and carried its surly rider down-cañon at a reaching lope. Harter laughed ruefully.

"Those feeders were a mistake," he admitted. "But I always was a second-rate liar!"

"You better have told him you were looking for a two-bit piece you dropped along here summer before last, Boze. I guess I'll take over the perjury department, for a change."

"What's that man so edgy about Rittenhouse for, do you suppose?"

Dade grinned. "Sure opened up wide, didn't he? Told you about everything you'd want to know. When it comes to guessing him, I pass this round. You bet!"

"I'm not betting anything except that this Pascort Big Noise, Canning, probably has friends like him. But let's give the neighbors another chance—we might find a human being, by looking close!"

"There's chimney-smoke off to the right," Dade said a little later.

"Our talkative friend came from the left; maybe we better swing off and see if there's a house hitched to the chimney where that smoke comes from."

THEY came, by a winding road cut through second-growth timber, to a clearing that ran something like thirty dogs to the acre. The bedlam set Harter's horse to mincing, and brought to the door of the small unpainted house ahead a tall, gangling woman in a cotton dress and a man's boots.

"Hi, Rowdy! Bess! The hull of you shet up!" Her shrill voice calmed the turbulent reception committee, the older parties returning to the shade, the youngsters closing in around to sniff and criticize. "Howdy, boys!" the lady of the house called. "Them dogs won't bite. Throw down and light!"

Thus colloquially handed the keys to the place, the strangers grounded their reins and sat on the edge of the dilapidated porch before the house. Dade took the lead, as he could with the ladies; he became chummy with Mrs. Harvey Bass, made conversation about dogs and hunt-

ing, exchanged grave opinions about the weather—began to dilate on the prophetic gifts of an uncle of his, of whom Harter had never heard before, whose genius in foretelling everything from protracted droughts to hailstorms had been attributed by his friends to the mercurial sensitiveness of one knee, which had an old bullet in it.

"Do you happen to know Mr. Rittenhouse, that lives below you here?" the cowboy inquired presently.

"Shore. I know Pom. What about him?"

"Uncle Bill Randolph,—the one I was telling you about,—he asked me if I ever was up this way, to drop by and say hello to Rittenhouse for him. But we couldn't find him around."

"Where'd your uncle know him?"

"I'm not sure. I think it was out on the Coast some place."

"Maybe. Pom's got a daughter in Long Beach that's always after him to quit ranching and come and live with them. He's been for a visit once or twice."

"That's the place—Long Beach. Have you seen the old man around the last day or so?"

Harter, seeing that Virge Dade's Uncle Bill Randolph was more productive of easy converse than beef feeders, sat back out of it, whittling a match-stick painstakingly, and appearing to note the points of a hound pup at his feet.

"I saw him yesterday. He was out at his corrals working some young stock. With Homer Canning," said Mrs. Bass.

Dade, sitting back on his heels, stared with open mouth. His foreman hastily picked up the tale.

"Yesterday, eh? That was Thursday."

"Was it? Tuesday, Harve had one of his spells, and Wednesday— That's right. Wednesday there was a cloudburst up in the pinnacles that like to washed us away, down here. Yesterday was Thursday, all right."

"Who did you say was with Rittenhouse?"

"Homer Canning."

"Is he a buyer, or—"

"Canning?" She looked from one to the other of them sharply. "You boys must be strangers here, for sartain. Homer Canning is jest about the hull of Mesoro County. Runs a bank and owns lands, and buys and sells, and sort of bosses things over at the county seat."

An old hound rose suddenly from beside the house, baying a deep-voiced

alarm; the tribe leaped into action. As suddenly they changed their tune, looking ashamed of themselves, and a shabby little man rode out of the timber, mounted on a woebegone mule.

"There's Harve," Mrs. Bass said. "You boys better stay and eat a bite." She raised her voice. "You dogs hush up, will you? A body can't hear himself think!"

IT was an hour later that the two inquiring minds rode southward, replete with food, the taste of good cider still in their mouths, and their bafflement complete.

"I'm sunk clean to the top of my high boots, Boze," Virge said gloomily. "Guess we might as well burn up that calendar and start from the weanin' age again!"

Harter nodded. "I wish young Bob Brookins had picked Christmas to get married on! What this organization needs right now is some brains."

"I roped me one thing, though," Virge volunteered.

"We need it."

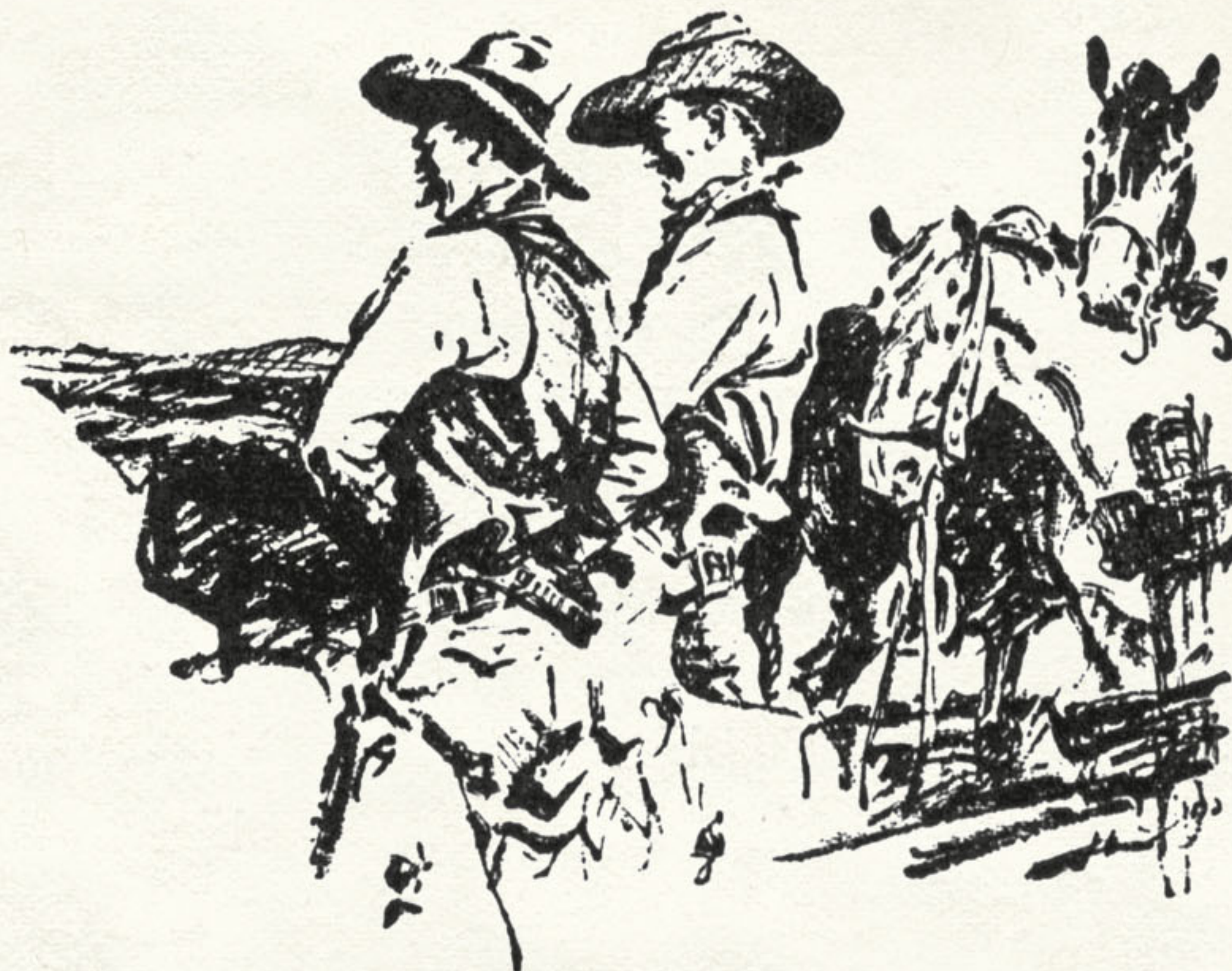
"Our friend Harve is too henpecked to speak out in meeting much, but he certainly was caught up short on the dally when his wife mentioned seeing Canning working stock with Rittenhouse yesterday."

"The Basses know more than they were telling about old Mr. Rittenhouse, Virge. Harve started to make a talk about that shepherd friend of the old man's, till she slowed him down."

"He couldn't jest get the idea of Rittenhouse even as much as selling a head of veal to Canning," Dade observed. He laughed. "I got another thing too—a nice, cheerful one. What they had to say about the man on the pinto horse—Gotch."

"One of Canning's side-kickers. Yes." Harter grinned. "I wonder if Gotch can shoot straight with that carbine he carries."

They decided to push for Pascort, to see what luck might do for them there. They rode thoughtfully, feeling themselves beyond their depths in a welter of contradictory and always vague conjecturings. Their way led them presently almost along the rim of the gorge through which the mountain creek fell away; turning off the road to view it, each, without mentioning the fact, began to think that here would be a place where almost anything could be lost beyond easy finding. So they watched closely,



riding near the precipitous edge—occasionally dismounting to peer down.

They looked down at all times thirty, forty, at places seventy or eighty feet, to where the stream, still muddy from Wednesday night's freshet, tumbled and shouted rowdily. Drift, scored banks, damp cuts and fresh slides showed clearly how high that short-lived flood had risen. But that had been on the night of the fourth; and on Thursday, the fifth, Mrs. Bass had seen—

Dade reined in sharply—swore.

Boze Harter, riding ahead, pulled up. "Saddle-galled?" he inquired mildly, shifting to glance back.

His top-hand gestured; Harter looked across the Gorge and downstream.

On a shelf of rock fifteen or twenty feet above the stream, and caught in the twisted roots of a stubborn dwarfed juniper, was the body of an old man that had been tossed up capriciously like any other random piece of drift by the torrent that had come and gone again in one night.

"I'll stay here," Boze Harter said. "You go back to Bass' for help. Pascort will have to wait."

CHAPTER III

HOMER CANNING frowned a little as he glanced through the papers that shrinking Mrs. Shurtleff had taken from her old-fashioned reticule. He was in a very complacent mood, feeling a crisis passed and a shadow lifted from his mind; he was moved to be expansive—to merit anew the regard in which he was held by most of the humbler people of Pascort Valley. But he liked to dramatize these occasional incidents, and his frown was meant to prolong the widow's suspense.

It accomplished that purpose, for silent tears welled in her faded eyes. Canning cleared his throat, glanced at a wall calendar.

"The sixth. Your loan is due tomorrow, then, Mrs. Shurtleff."

"Yes." She wiped the tears away hastily. "I can see I better not have come, Mr. Canning. And I want you to know that I don't feel hard toward you, because you can't do anything. I just thought there might be some way—"

"I'm sorry, but the banking law—"

"I s'posed maybe your bank, sort of belonging to you, as folks say it does, was different."

"A private bank has to obey the law."

"Yes, likely it does." She rose. "Well, Lawyer Gaines told me I can stay in the house thirty days. That's true, isn't it?"

"I think that's the law." And Canning smiled. "You see, Mrs. Shurtleff, the person who owes money has some rights, after all." He took up a paper from his desk and began tearing it in two abstractedly. "And I hope things may improve for you—"

"Mr. Canning!" the widow cried. "Look what you're doing! Is—isn't that my mortgage?"

THE smiling man looked down. "Hm-m-m! So it is! Well, isn't that too bad?" He turned the halved sheets of the document in his hands, tore them across again and dropped them into his wastepaper basket. "There! And by the way, I just discover that my office has paid your taxes for this year on the place. You'd better take this receipt along, in case there's any question later." He stood up, towering above the stunned little woman. He put out a hand—took hers. "Now, now!" he said. "Everything's going to be all right. If there's anything we can do for you here—"

His door opened, and the young clerk appeared.

"Telephone, Mr. Canning."

"Who is it?"

"Talmadge."

"All right. Put him on." His manner changed. "This is very important, Mrs. Shurtleff. Come in again some time." He almost hurried her from the office, then picked up the receiver.

"This is Canning! . . . What in hell ails you, Tally? Can't you talk?" After that challenge he listened for some moments; his face did not change, but his voice became quiet—tense. "Two of them, eh? You don't know who they

are? . . . All right. Sit tight there, and let me know what's found out. . . . No! I want you there! Good-by!" He hung up the telephone, turned: "—Byington!"

The black-haired man appeared from beyond an inner door that stood ajar.

"What's up?"

"That was Talmadge, calling from the sheriff's office. The body was found in the Gorge by a couple of strange cow-punchers and Harve Bass."

"Bass? That's not so good."

"You telling me? Bass phoned in from Bain's store, and the coroner and Sheriff have gone up. And Waltz!"

Byington whistled softly.

His chief glared at him. "If I'd had my way about it, that upstart wouldn't have been appointed. I told you then—"

"Are you blaming me because Rod Waltz is assistant district attorney?" Byington interrupted angrily. "I was in Washington—"

"Oh, shut up!" Canning rose and began to pace the floor. "What I want to know is who those two cowboys are, and what they were doing at the Gorge."

"Wait a minute, Canning. Maybe that's what Gotch was babbling about."

"Sam Gotch?"

"He rode into town around three o'clock, but he had to stop and see a man, and he's as drunk as a fiddler."

"Where is he now?"

"In your back room, sleeping it off."

"Get him in here!"

Grumbling under his breath, Byington hurried out; he returned presently with a loose-jointed, slouching man who bore himself truculently.

"What the hell d'you mean, draggin' a fellow roun' thisaway, Can'n'? Got flea to put in y'r ear, but aint goin' to take no slack—"

Canning, striding to and fro, wheeled on the drunken mountaineer savagely. "Close your trap, Gotch! What did you come here to tell me?"

Gotch wagged his head stubbornly. "That aint no way to talk, Can'n'! I'm mean when I'm trod on—wha's more, I'm sick o' bein' kicked roun'!" He fumbled for the revolver that hung low at his hip.

INSTANTLY Canning was on him, slapping his head from side to side with stinging, open-hand blows, forcing him to retreat. Gotch swore, snarled—struck a chair with the backs of his knees and collapsed into it. Canning slapped him once more, then stepped away.

"Now talk!" he ordered curtly. "And talk fast!"

"'S all right, Can'n'—Mister Canning. I'm frien'—you know that. Come to town to tell you—two punchers up to the Gorge tryin' fin' ol' Ritten'ouse!" He laughed foolishly. "Di'n't get no place with me!"

"When did you see them?"

"'Smornin'. They was ridin' out fr'm ol' man's. I tol' 'em make 'emselves scarce."

"Go on."

"Damn' fools stuck roun'. They was to Bass' place. You said keep eye peeled f'r anybody nosin' roun'. So I rid in."

"Did you know these two riders?"

"Never seed 'em 'fore. Youngish. Ridin' stale hosses."

"I don't suppose you had sense enough to notice their cavvy brand."

"Hell I didn't!" Gotch winked at his interlocutor. "I'm shmart man, I am!"

"Too smart—or not smart enough! What about the horse brands?"

"Kid was ridin' flea-bit gray. Jes' kid. Bran' on foeshoulder, his gray was. Double B."

BYINGTON drew in his breath sibilantly. Canning crossed to his desk and sat down.

"Two B's? You sure of that, Gotch?"

"Gimme penshil." The man pulled himself together and walked unsteadily to the desk. Canning threw him a pencil and a memo pad, but he was paying very little heed to his courier now. Gotch wet the pencil on his tongue—laboriously drew a capital B and then a small letter b. "Tha's it. Fore-shoulder—low, nigh side. I'm shmart, Can'n', know that?" Gotch laughed his foolish laugh again.

"Take him away, By!" Canning said.

"Come on, smart man!" the lieutenant said. Gotch protested that he wanted to have one little drink with his old friend Canning, but was finally ejected by the lithe Byington, more agile and competent than he appeared. Canning rose from his desk and began pacing the floor again. Unwontedly he felt his nerve shaken by the news Ford Talmadge, a deputy under Sheriff Grossbeck and heavily obligated to Canning, had telephoned him. How was one to account for the presence at the Gorge of two Big-B—Little-B riders? If old Brookins had returned,—if he had not gone to the Coast at all,—he would have come himself. Perhaps he had come and was



up there somewhere now, nosing around, asking questions, ingratiating himself with those troublesome Bases! Two of Brookins' cowboys, brought there by chance or sent by a wire from their owner in San Francisco, would not find anything. There was, Canning told himself, nothing to find. The body: yes. But finding the body would only—

Suddenly he stopped dead. He stood examining one forefinger intently for a long minute; Byington came on him so occupied.

"I put the damned fool to bed," the lieutenant said. "It's not so good for you—for any of us! If—"

Canning wheeled on him. "Those two cowboys evidently killed old Rittenhouse," he said, with such conviction that for a moment he took Byington off his guard. "They've got to be rounded up!"

"The two cowboys? Oh, they killed him?" Byington tried to get the implications. "It's O.K. by me, Canning. But what would they kill him for? I mean, there'd have to be some reason!"

"For twenty-two hundred dollars in currency." Seeing Byington still at a loss, Canning added: "The amount I paid the old man yesterday for his breeding stock."

Byington laughed aloud. "By God, Canning, you think clear through, do't you?" he chuckled.

CANNING scowled irascibly. "Let that part of it go! Your job is to get those two Brookins men corralled." He stepped to his desk and picked up the telephone.

"Get me the Highline Ranch!"

"I thought of that," Byington said superfluously. "Hackett could take two or three men across to the Gorge; it's only seven or eight miles by the horse trail."

"You let me do a little thinking, Byington! . . . Hello! Hackett? . . . Telephone over to Bain's or some of the

neighbors on the Gorge side, and find out what you can about a killing up there. . . . Old man Rittenhouse. . . . Wait a minute! You can cry in your milk in the morning! I'm interested, because I bought Rittenhouse's stock yesterday. I'm going to put them on the Highline. . . . That's right; I'll be up tomorrow or the next day, and you can ride over and take them back with you. . . . We'll go into that later. By the way, Hackett, if you cross the trail of a couple of strange cow-punchers up around the Gorge— . . . What's that? . . . He didn't know them, or where they were from?" He listened intently for a moment. "All right! Call me back."

He hung up. He had control of his jangled nerves now.

"One of our Highline riders saw those two strangers an hour or so ago, coming this way, Byington," he said. "Get out and spread your men around town to watch for them. Don't crowd them unless they begin to talk too much; if you handle it right, they'll be telling everything they know after the second drink; then we can decide which way to jump."

"Probably the Sheriff and Waltz will drive through town on their way back to Dorrance this evening," Byington suggested.

"That's a thought. Well, all the more reason for getting these two punchers cooled off before we turn them over to Grossbeck."

"And Waltz!" Byington added, a little maliciously.

"Damn you, Byington," Canning cried, instantly angered, "you'll give me too much of your lip one of these days! Do you suppose I'm overlooking Waltz? I'm certainly not worrying about a pair of lunkhead cow-hands! And don't grin at me again!" He paused, drew a deep breath, relaxed. "All right, that's all. Just give me a chance to have a talk with Henry Brookins' riders; I might be able to do something for them, seeing that they're strangers in Pascort. I'll be here in the office—till morning, if necessary."

Byington went out by a back way. Canning, with steady fingers, penciled a memorandum, put it in a billfold he carried; then he took up the telephone once more and called the cashier of his private bank.

"Willis? Send me up twenty-two hundred, right away; you can charge it to the Highline account. . . . It doesn't matter—fifties will do. That's all."

CHAPTER IV

BOZEMAN HARTER and Dade were not picture-book cowboys; except for their boots, which undistinguished overalls covered, and the high-peaked, wide-brimmed Texas-style hat that Dade wore because he had practically been born with one on, they should have attracted no attention anywhere in the Southwest.

And yet, increasingly, they found themselves attracting attention in the little town of Pascort. At nine o'clock in the evening they entered Zack's Place, which seemed to be the gathering-point for the region; though they minded their own business and took up inconspicuous places at the far end of the bar, near where it bent back to join the wall, they knew themselves to be observed and commented upon.

"It's my fatal beauty, I reckon, Boze," Virge opined, when the foreman mentioned the fact. "There's just something about me—"

"Your fatal beauty may live up to its name," Harter interrupted. "We've been in town maybe two hours, but somebody has had time to wonder how long we'd better be allowed to stay."

Dade nodded. "This man Canning sure raises a lot of dust in his own home town, Boze. And they all cover up when he's named. Take that fat man at the hotel—what was his name?"

"Uncle Ambrose somebody. Even he knew where Canning was on the fourth."

"And Canning certainly told the world he was at Rittenhouse's yesterday and had bought him out." Dade looked into



Dade called out, "Howdy, Mr. Rittenhouse!" The old man spun about; he squalled: "Look-a here, damn you—"

his empty glass. "Only thing I wouldn't like about those alibis, if they were mine, is they're polished up too high."

"I'm betting my stack on that young district attorney, Virge. Bass thought the Sheriff might wobble."

"He won't with Waltz riding herd on him. But Canning wouldn't need to get bail if he was hauled up for breaking a window—not in this county. Anybody could see that."

"He'll drive a herd over the tracks as fast as they're pointed out," Harter said. "I wish we had found that calendar sheet for the fourth; but even without it, maybe Waltz can make a case." He ordered another drink, and the bartender reached for the bar whisky. A bottle and two glasses he flipped toward them dextrously, so that they came to rest at Dade's elbow.

The cowboy, pouring, said ruefully: "Hang-take that Mrs. Bass, anyhow. If she hadn't seen Rittenhouse yesterday—"

"She didn't, Virge. But what did she see? If she was a drinking woman, now—Well, I pass that one!"

HIS eyes were on a group of five or six men playing cards negligently at one side of the room. Three of them he had seen about town before: one of them was a black-eyed man people called Byington, with a respect that might have been tinged with fear; this person's manners and clothes made him seem out of place in a frontier town; yet he was quite at home. A second was a very dark Mexican, young and lithe; another a tall, cadaverous gentleman, doubly weaponed,

who wet his lips frequently and who had more than once glanced their way since they had come in. The other players were nondescripts, but none of them seemed very deeply engrossed in their game.

Still looking at them, Boze Harter said: "I wish I hadn't dragged you into this business, Virge. It's my job, and—"

"Dragged?" Dade laughed. "I haven't noticed losing any hide!" He looked his companion in the eye. "We've sided each other before now, Boze, and I don't like you saying *dragged!*"

"All right, Virge. Much obliged."

An elderly cow-man, mellowed by the juice of the grape or of the sour-mash vat, left the bar halfway down its ample length and started toward the players' table. Dade, very "noticing," observed him. Then he set down his glass.

"Maybe I've been sort of underfoot up to now, Boze," he remarked. "But it looks to me like here's a play I can make alone."

Without explanation he started away from the bar—walked quickly across the open floor, came up behind the mellow old cow-man just weaving to a stop behind a player's chair. In a voice that could be heard distinctly the length of the room, Dade called out, cheerfully, "Howdy, Mr. Rittenhouse!" and slapped the old man on the back.

Harter, uncomprehending, saw the Mexican come to his feet, upsetting his chair; he saw the black-eyed man, Byington, rise with a silver-headed cane in one hand. The others twisted around and stared. As for the old man Dade





had saluted, he had spun about, with a face blanched of all color; he squalled:

"Look-a here, damn you—"

But in that moment Harter, even from where he stood, had seen what Dade had seen. The bucking belt the old man wore bore traces, faintly outlined but unmistakable, of the initials *P.R.*

Meantime Dade had stepped back, as though to cover his confusion. "My mistake, Mister! I guess I owe you a drink!"

It seemed to Harter that the man they called Byington gave a signal; a bartender near the front of the place turned and lifted a hand.

Instantly the saloon lights went out—the place was plunged into total darkness. There came exclamations, startled oaths, the sounds of scraping feet—chairs shoved back. Harter sprang into the sheltered curve of the bar, his gun in his hand, but it was useless to him. He was crowded upon by several men—struck blindingly on the side of the head.

WHEN a shock of cold water on face and chest revived him, he was being half-carried through the night along a deserted alleyway, and his left wrist and hand seemed paralyzed. He made out that Virge Dade, competently propelled and helpless, was in advance.

Harter shook his head to clear it, with slight success. He tried to bring his mind to a focus, but it played tricks on him. For instance, he seemed to remember that old Pom Rittenhouse had been in the saloon, slightly the worse for liquor, and that Virgil Dade had hailed him familiarly, to the great surprise of bystanders. Plainly an hallucination!

The party turned into a rear entrance, hastened down a long hall, climbed stairs. There was another corridor vaguely at the top, then a heavy door that was opened from within, then a low room, dimly lighted, where what seemed to be substantial walls were plain and unadorned, where there was only a sparse complement of dilapidated furniture, and where the windows, small and high in stone embrasures, were adequately

barred. The Mexican took up a place against a far door; the cadaverous man stood before the door through which they had entered: both had guns in their hands. There were other men present, but all of them waited on the big, handsome, well-dressed personage who had strolled in with Byington from the Mexican's door, and who now seated himself on the edge of the battered desk against one wall.

"My name is Canning," he said mildly, looking from Harter to Dade and back. "What seems to be your trouble, boys?"

"That's what we'd like to know, Mr. Canning," Virgil Dade answered, dulling his voice. "I mistook a man in a saloon for another man, and then the ceiling fell on us."

The elderly cow-man spoke up angrily. "He clumped me on the back and says to me—"

Byington interrupted, quickly though casually: "Shut up, Pastor. Gotch, tell Mr. Canning where you saw these two men first."

Harter was thinking more clearly now. He noticed that the old gentleman called Pastor had removed his kidney-belt—recalled fairly clearly what had happened, and how. The hulking man Byington had called on was the one they had met, mounted on a good pinto horse, at the Gorge.

"They was up our way," Gotch was growling. "Said they was lookin' for feeders at Rittenhouse's." He laughed in ugly fashion. "I knowed that was a lie, and told 'em so. This afternoon they was all over the country—down in the Gorge and up to Bass'—"

Byington interrupted. "Rittenhouse was murdered," he said abruptly. "But you've heard that, Mr. Canning."

Canning raised his eyebrows. "Then he didn't fall into the Gorge?"

"He didn't *fall* in," Byington said, with a slight sneer.

"I see." Canning gave his lieutenant a cold look, that Byington seemed to return. The big man said calmly then: "Well, I'm still in the dark about these boys."

"Gotch told me he'd seen them hanging around Rittenhouse's today," Byington said. "So when they rode into town this evening, I looked them over. I had Pete Rolls with me, because he's a deputy sheriff." He gestured slightly toward the tall, square man who guarded one door, and Rolls nodded.

"Where did you catch up with them?" Canning asked.

"I kept an eye on them all evening. But just now in Zack's Place the kid gave their hand away; I thought we'd better bring them in for safekeeping."

BOZE HARTER straightened a little in the chair into which he had dropped on entering. There was beginning to be a new significance in what was said by these cold-eyed men, in this secluded room, to which only faint sounds came from without. He glanced at Dade, who was standing on the balls of his feet, watchful and ready; and he shook his head at him slightly.

Canning said: "What happened at Zack's, Byington?"

"This boy pretended to recognize Dad Pastor as Rittenhouse. Some cockeyed notion of building up an alibi, I suppose."

"Cockeyed, maybe," Virge Dade exploded, "—but it was to spoil an alibi, Mister!"

"Keep your stirrups, Virge!" Harter said sharply. "Let them do the talking!"

Canning smiled. "That's good advice, Virge, if that's your name." He turned to Harter. "Yours is?"

"I'm Bozeman Harter."

"Well, Harter, I've had dealings with old Pom Rittenhouse; as far as I know, he was a respectable, honest old man. In fact, I was up there yesterday—" He stopped, stared a moment, slapped his leg. "Byington," he exclaimed, "have you searched these boys?"

Byington said: "We took their guns."

"Is that all they had on them?"

"W-well—" Byington replied slowly, "no." He reached into a coat pocket and pulled out a sheaf of double bank-notes. "I took these off that man who calls himself Harter. I was going to turn them over to the Sheriff, but I'd rather you'd take care of them till he gets here, Canning."

"How much is there there?"

"Around twenty-five hundred dollars."

Canning said, as though to himself: "I paid Rittenhouse twenty-two hundred yesterday. In bills, because he didn't have any use for checks."

Harter, steadying Virge Dade with his voice, inquired casually: "Were you buying stock, Canning?"

Canning replied at once: "The old man's breeding line. Aberdeen-Angus." He took a billfold from his pocket. "I haven't even had time to put the bill-of-sale into the safe. Here it is."



"You bought cheap," Harter said. "You must be a good trader."

Old Dad Pastor spoke up, angrily: "Pom Rittenhouse was a friend o' mine!" he cried. "My idear is to take these two fellers out and string 'em up!"

The Mexican at his door laughed—spoke for the first time. "Eef per'aps they don' tries to r-run away!"

"Or put up a fight in here!" Deputy Sheriff Pete Rolls suggested.

These veiled threats appeared to infect Canning with their indignation. He stood up, glowering at the two outsiders. "What in hell kind of county did you think this was, that would let you ride in, shoot an old man down, dump his body into the Gorge and rifle his house?" He turned to Byington, his voice rising. "Give back their guns, By! If they want a chance to get clear, we'll give it to them! How about it, boys?"

A snarling chorus arose. The Mexican side-stepped like a cat, to improve his position. Pastor, Rolls and Sam Gotch shifted their weight; they were all ready with drawn guns now.

"Pom Rittenhouse never did nobody no harm!" Gotch croaked. "Give 'em their guns, Byington—we'll see how far they get!"

Byington stepped to the desk on which Canning had leaned, and picked up two revolvers. Boze Harter checked him.

"We don't want our guns, Byington," he said. He spoke so quietly that the shuffling and muttering of the gunmen had to be stilled before they all heard him add: "Make it another murder, and let it go at that."

Canning cried furiously: "We'd save Mesoro County the expense! Don't talk about murder here, you two!"

Harter said: "I am talking about murder, Canning. I'm talking about the murder of a shepherd called Basque Louie by this Mexican of yours, on your orders, because he owned some springs you wanted up in the hills."

The Mexican snarled an oath—spoke to Canning in Spanish. But Canning cut him short. "Close up, Aguerre!" He seated himself on the desk and spoke



with a sudden quiet, cold deliberation. "So you're making charges now, eh? Have you any more?"

"Enough! I'm ready to talk about the murder of old Mr. Rittenhouse because he knew too much about the killing of the shepherd and couldn't be bought off or bluffed out or scared away, though you tried all three!" He put up a hand. "Wait a minute, Canning! I'm not talking through my hat, either. At Harve Bass' place, up in the Gorge, we turned over to the officers the evidence you overlooked Wednesday night, when you drove up there and killed the old man and dumped his body into the Gorge to make it look like he'd been drowned. We found his horse in his barn, still saddled and bridled, the way you left him to help your story out."

CANNING took this all quietly: it was difficult to tell from his blank face whether he was dumfounded or was biding his time. Byington, glib and cold-blooded, offered an interjection.

"Your story is the one that leaks, Harter," he said with a laugh. "Wednesday Mr. Canning was with me at my ranch down—"

"Near Willows," Harter interrupted. "All afternoon, and in the evening you had some well-known people in to play cards." It was his turn to laugh. "Mr. Byington, whoever you are and however you come into the picture, I would have said you'd be too smart to pull that one. Because there were plenty of people to do it for you."

"What do you mean?" Canning cut in.

"I mean that when a Canning man drags up that alibi, it shows how carefully it was framed."

Canning's face was white now, but it seemed to be from rage. He spoke in a hard, loud tone. "You won't live to drag my name into this business to save your own necks—either of you!" he cried. "I went up to Rittenhouse's Thursday—the day after I was at the Willows—and I bought the old man's

breeders. I've got this bill-of-sale for them—"

"That you must have forged," Harter said. "Because, on Thursday, Pom Rittenhouse was lying dead on a shelf at the high-water mark in the Gorge—fifteen feet above where he would have been found if it hadn't been for the cloudburst in the mountains on that Wednesday night you're talking about."

VIRGE DADE took two steps—caught old Dad Pastor by the shoulders, whirled him around and pointed. "If he was on Rittenhouse's clay-bank horse, would he look like the man you bought Aberdeens from Thursday?" he inquired.

Canning's face grew livid. He turned—snatched up one of the guns Byington had taken from the strangers—whirled with it. Byington uttered a cry, but Canning pulled the trigger.

It fell on an empty cylinder.

Harter, standing now—wanting to die on his feet—laughed abruptly. "Those were the guns you were going to give us to fight our way out with, then, Byington!" he said.

The door behind Pete Rolls opened, and in it stood a slim young man, wearing heavy-lensed glasses and carrying a lawyer's brief-case. Behind him loomed the unhappy moon-face of Sheriff Dal Grossbeck.

"Excuse me, Canning," the young man said, "for not knocking. But what I heard sounded as though time was of the essence of this whole matter."

"What in hell do you want here?" Canning cried, completely thrown off his guard.

Byington picked up the threads swiftly. "We've got your men here, Sheriff," he said. He indicated the two strangers with a gesture.

The Sheriff cleared his throat—colored. "Well," he said, awkwardly, "we aren't exactly looking for that pair. I—I hate to come here for what we are looking for, Mr. Canning. It's you and Pasquale Aguerre—for murder."

"You won't get far with this frame-up, Waltz!" Canning cried, foam flecking his lips. "When I get through with you—"

The studious-looking young assistant district attorney shook his head. "Give it up, Canning," he said in an earnest tone. He crossed to stand between Harter and Dade—he offered his hand to the foreman. "It's a complete case, Mr. Harter," he said. "After you left,

we found the only thing that was lacking."

The Sheriff interrupted, crying out loudly: "Don't try that, Aguerre!" He drew a heavy, awkward revolver, but he held it in a steady hand that made it the deadlier. Aguerre, looking pinched and venomous, turned back from the door, which he had almost succeeded in opening. "*Bien, señor!*" he said placatingly. And he gave Byington and Canning a glance that was murderous.

Boze Harter spoke: "The only thing that was lacking, Mr. Waltz? I thought we found that here—the man Canning used to look like Rittenhouse yesterday. The one Mrs. Bass saw." He indicated old Dad Pastor.

"We could have surmounted that difficulty," Waltz said. "But we needed one piece of definite proof that Canning actually was at Rittenhouse's ranch Wednesday evening." He opened his brief-case and took from it a soiled, creased, wrinkled envelope. "This morning, you told me, you and your friend found a letter Rittenhouse was writing to your owner. It was dated the fourth—Wednesday."

"That's right. I turned it over to you."

"Quite right. That letter said that if anything happened to the old gentleman, your Mr. Brookins was to sell the place and send the proceeds to a daughter. A Mrs. Annie Low."

"He didn't give any address, though. We noticed that."

"You didn't find the calendar sheet for Wednesday, the fourth, either, Harter. You recall that."

HOARSELY Canning spoke: "What's this all about? Let me in on it!"

"Your attorneys will attend to these details for you, Mr. Canning," young Waltz said politely. "And I'll be done in a moment." He addressed Harter and Dade as though no one else were in the room. "The fact is that Mr. Rittenhouse probably couldn't recall his daughter's address. So he put off looking it up; instead he went out to check on some calves. And he took with him that calendar page for the fourth to make his count on, as was his custom—as the filed sheets prove was his custom. Here it is."

Harter took it eagerly, as a man who sees something that he has known familiarly, has misplaced and has found again. He turned over the sheet, so

boldly printed with the words: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST, and with the large block numeral: 4.

"Well, I'm damned!" he exclaimed. "Listen, Virge! Here's thirty-seven—thirty-nine calves tallied—five by five. And under that the old man wrote: '*H. C. driving in here. Annie's address on letter.*'"

"Exactly," Waltz said, with the careful preciseness of an able young prosecutor. "While he was at his tally, he saw his enemy coming into the field. He knew that he was in danger—had known it for weeks. He wrote that Canning was driving in. He had just time to put that message, on the page for the fourth, into this envelope." He held it out. "It is one mailed him by his daughter, in California—with her address on the outside."

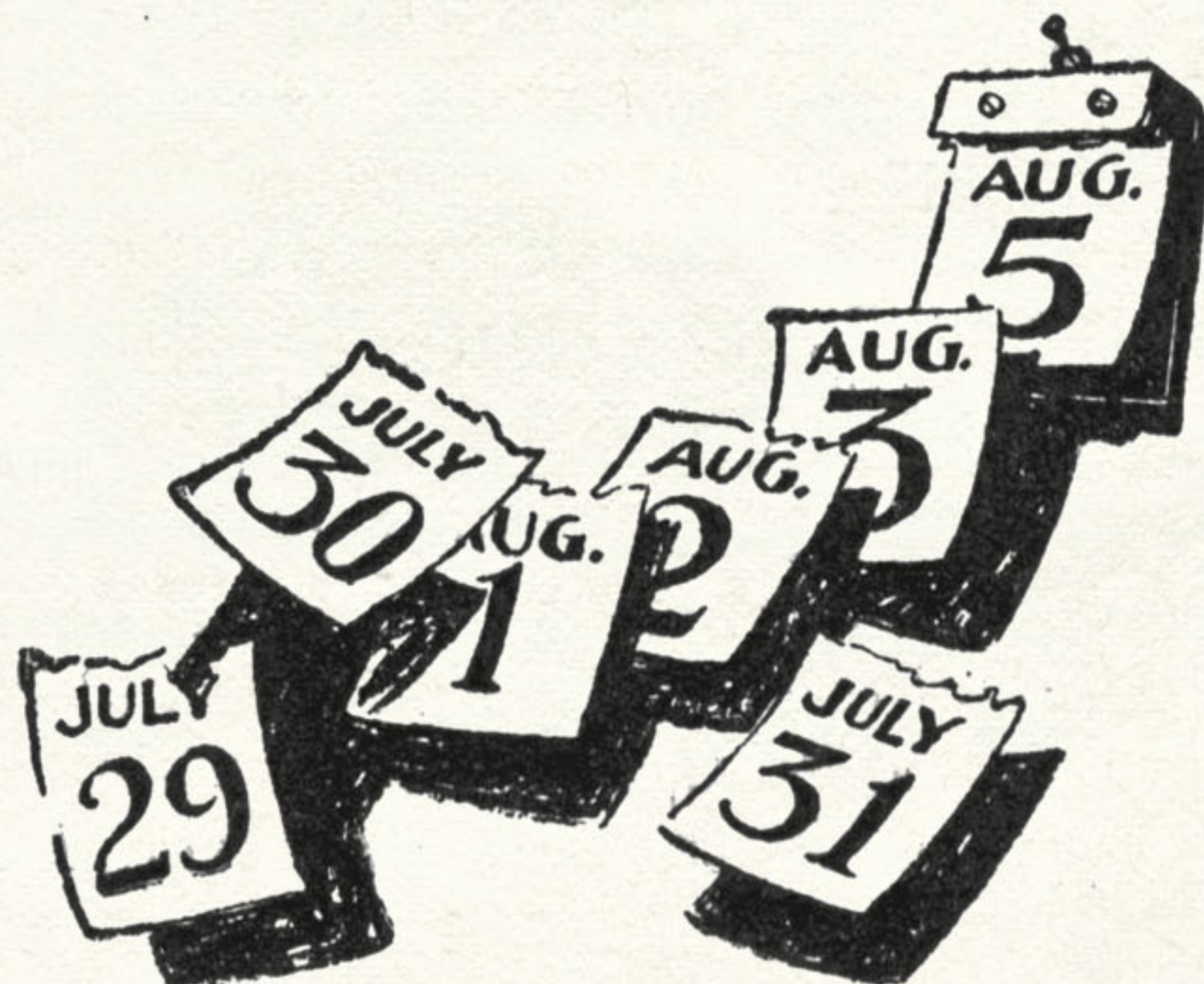
Canning made a peculiar sound—a laugh choked by a snarl. Byington, looking scornfully at him, turned to the district attorney's deputy.

"It looks like a pretty air-tight frame-up, from where you stand," he sneered. "But all this talk about letters and calendars and pieces of scratch-paper—anyone could manufacture them!"

WALTZ turned a grave face on Canning's right-hand man; then said:

"If I were you, I'd speak softly, Byington. Because if Aguerre begins to talk, as I think he'll soon be ready to do, you may be glad you had!"

Involuntarily Byington glanced at the Mexican; what he saw there did not hearten him. The deputy district attorney went on, almost as though addressing a jury: "Evidence can be manufactured—that's true; but this piece could not be. No, not this one, Byington. The Sheriff and coroner and Mr. and Mrs. Bass were present, late this afternoon, when I took this one from the coat-pocket of the dead man, old Mr. Rittenhouse."





The Nail and

*A vivid drama of Chinese life,
by the author of "Wild Metal."*

LUNG WEN sat at the door of his shop by the river-side in the city of Canton, in the midst of two and a half million of his compatriots and an infinity of smells.

Lung Wen was a silk merchant and very rich. He grew his finger-nails long, and was very proud of them. The making of money was the one all-engrossing occupation of his life.

He now sat in the summer evening sunshine, when the heat of the day was past, regarding his finger-nails. And to him came his only assistant, Ah Sing, who had served Lung Wen more or less faithfully for as long as seven years.

"Is it time to shut up the shop, Lung Wen?" asked Ah Sing.

Lung Wen rose to his feet, folded his hands in the sleeves of his coat, and entered the house, followed by Ah Sing.

Ah Sing wore a necklace of yellow jade, of which he was just as proud as was Lung Wen of his finger-nails, for it had belonged to his grandfather. Ah Sing was a poor man; but because he believed that there was much merit in his necklace, he would not part with it.

Slowly, for Lung Wen could not walk very fast, they went from room to room, locking up all the cupboards, chests and boxes in which the merchant kept his silks. It was a large, rambling house, similar to many others in the city, standing upon the very margin of the river-bank. But though the house was so dilapidated and so out of repair, the rooms contained rolls of silk to the value of several thousand dollars, to say nothing of Lung Wen's steel safe that had come all the way from Osaka in Japan.

When all the rooms on the ground floor had been locked up, and the shutters had been put up in the narrow street, Lung

Wen entered his counting-house, seating himself upon the high stool at his desk.

"Your wages are due to you, Ah Sing," he said. Very carefully, lest he should make a mistake, Lung Wen counted out fifteen silver dollars.

Ah Sing took the money and bowed.

"You may go, Ah Sing," said the merchant. "You will be here at six o'clock in the morning."

"At six o'clock," said Ah Sing. And he shuffled out of the room.

Outside in the street, he turned and looked at the house, smiled and shrugged his shoulders. He had already made up his mind to be there long before six in the morning—but Lung Wen would know nothing about it.

With this reflection, at once comforting and disturbing, Ah Sing wended his way to a distant quarter of the city, to a certain opium-house where he had friends with whom he was wont to gamble, to whom week by week he would lose the wages he received from his master, the silk merchant, and to whom he was heavily in debt. . . .

In the meantime, Lung Wen presently he got to his feet, produced his bunch of keys, and selecting the key of the steel safe he went to the safe, and opened it, and took out the bag of money he had just put in.

Every evening of his life Lung Wen did the same thing: before Ah Sing had gone he unlocked the till in the shop, took out all the money that was there, put it in a canvas bag, and locked it up in the safe; and as soon as Ah Sing had left the house, he would again unlock the safe, take out the money he had just put in, and hide it in a secret place of which no one but himself knew.

From this it would appear that he did not trust Ah Sing, who had served him more or less faithfully for seven years. And what is to follow will prove that Lung Wen was right. He generally was.

With the bag of money he returned to the counting-house, put down the bag on the desk, and rolled up the painted mat-

the Necklace

By CHARLES
GILSON

ting that was spread upon the floor. Beneath were the floor-boards, in which Lung Wen opened a small trapdoor, just large enough to admit one of his hands. Then he drew back a bolt and lifted a rectangular piece of flooring.

When he had done this, he went to his desk, lit the lamp, and brought the lamp to the opening. Beneath was a kind of well; and some twenty feet below, the light glittered upon the smooth surface of dark, oil-like water—the water of the Canton River.

Lung Wen lay down upon the floor, flat on his face, by the side of the opening, and removed one of the bricks by the side of the well. And beyond this brick was a deep recess, into which he thrust his bag of money to the full extent of his arm.

Then he put the brick back in its place, covered up the mouth of the well, shutting the trapdoor and rolling back the matting.

Returning to his desk, he seated himself upon his high stool, and thoughtfully examined his finger-nails in the light of the lamp. Lung Wen was a man of method, and nothing if not discreet.

SHORTLY after midnight Ah Sing left the opium-house, smiling to himself as he went his way through the streets, in spite of the fact that five of his creditors had hounded him unmercifully. He smiled because he had smoked much opium, and because he carried in his pocket a duplicate key of the steel safe of Lung Wen, the silk merchant.

After a while he came to Lung Wen's shop. The street here was dark and deserted. He crept round to the side of the house, opened a small window that he had purposely left unlatched, and climbed into the counting-room where was the steel safe that had come from Osaka and of which Lung Wen was so proud.

In front of the safe Ah Sing went down on his knees, placing upon the floor an iron bar that he had brought with him. He had not brought a lantern. He did



not need a light. Though the whole house was quite dark, he knew where everything was. Very quietly he opened the safe—and felt inside. And his jaw dropped, and his squinting eyes slowly revolved, and he made a strange kind of noise at the back of his throat, when he learned that the safe was empty.

No man could have been more surprised than Ah Sing, or more genuinely disappointed. On that account he may be excused if he got to his feet and he swore. Then he caught his breath, for he had heard some one moving.

On tiptoe Ah Sing glided into the shop, the victim of two emotions: anger and fear. And then from the darkness, near him, came a husky, frightened whisper: "Who's there?"

Ah Sing held his iron bar in his hand. He struck with it, with all his force—and he struck nothing but air. Then it was that old Lung Wen sprang upon his back, and clinging to him like a leech, shouted at the top of his voice:

"Robbers! Murder! Thieves!"

Grappling with one another, they rolled over and over, and for a moment it looked as if the merchant would get the better of Ah Sing. For Lung Wen had grasped the jade necklace that Ah Sing wore round his neck; and he was twisting it—twisting it slowly and slowly, until Ah Sing felt that he was becoming black in the face, and the blood was beating in his temples—beating like the gongs at the Dragon Festival when all honest men have paid the debts they owe, whether to the gods or to their fellow-men.

Desperate, Ah Sing put forth the whole of his strength, flung back his head, freed himself, and at once sprang to his feet. A second blow with his iron bar, although aimed at random, ended with a dull thud,

a soft, almost inaudible groan—and then all was still.

Ah Sing stood motionless for several seconds, breathing heavily and with great difficulty.

What had he done? He had killed Lung Wen, his master! Sooner or later, Lung Wen would be found dead in the shop, and Ah Sing would be suspected. For all that, he did not lose his head completely. He had enough presence of mind to return to the counting-house, to lock up the safe with his duplicate key, and then to make his escape by the window by which he had entered.

Returning to the hovel where he lived, he flung himself down on his couch, and he tried his best to think: If he ran away, he would at once be suspected by the yamen authorities; and if he was arrested, there would be very little doubt that he would be led to the Potter's Yard, and there beheaded. It was therefore—or so it seemed to him—a case in which the bolder course might prove to be the safer; and hence he decided that, at six o'clock in the morning, he would go to his work as usual, and pretend to discover the crime.

PUNCTUALLY at six next morning, therefore, Ah Sing arrived at Lung Wen's shop, where, to his amazement, he saw that the shutters had already been taken down, that the door was open, and Lung Wen himself was standing on the threshold with his head bound about with a bandage, regarding his fingernails.

Though taken aback for a moment, Ah Sing was clever enough to feign surprise. He flung his hands in the air; he opened his eyes as wide as he could, and he squinted worse than ever.

"What is this?" he exclaimed. "What has happened, Lung Wen? What calamity has befallen my august and honorable master?"

"A robber," Lung Wen replied, as if that was a matter of no importance.

"Has anything been stolen?" Ah Sing inquired.

"Nothing," said Lung Wen. "Nothing has been stolen."

"That is fortunate," Ah Sing remarked. "Very fortunate, indeed! And may I ask, has the thief escaped?"

Lung Wen did not reply to that question. He merely looked at his fingernails; and he observed what he had seen already; namely, that a corner of the nail of the right hand second finger had been torn off completely.

And after he had looked at his fingernails, Lung Wen looked at Ah Sing; he looked him straight in the face. He did not look at the jade necklace that Ah Sing wore around his neck, because, being a very observant old man, he had already seen that there was a torn strip of finger-nail wedged between two of the jade beads.

"The sages and the philosophers of our enlightened country have taught us," he remarked, with a nonchalant shrug of the shoulders, "never to regret what is past and done with. All that concerns you and me, Ah Sing, is to see that such a thing can never occur again. Therefore, Ah Sing, to work! Let us remove the safe into my bedroom. Do you think you can carry it?"

Ah Sing took off his short coolie's coat.

"I can certainly carry it," said he. "It is heavy, but I am strong."

"Then let us move it at once, Ah Sing, before the customers begin to arrive."

Together they went into the counting-house, where Ah Sing, with some difficulty, hitched the steel safe onto his back, and then gave vent to a grunt.

"It is heavy!" said he. "And it hurts."

"It is your necklace," said Lung Wen. "The jade beads are hard, and the weight of the safe presses them into your neck. I advise you to take off your necklace, Ah Sing. It is a pity you ever wore it—a pity, so far as you are concerned."

After Ah Sing had put the safe down upon the floor, he took off his necklace and he handed it to Lung Wen, who went into his counting-house and sat down at his desk.

IT took Ah Sing nearly five minutes to carry the safe up the stairs; while he was doing so, Lung Wen removed the little strip of finger-nail from between the beads of the necklace, and discovered that it fitted exactly into the broken nail of the second finger of his right hand. That was all he wanted to know.

Presently Ah Sing returned.

"Is the safe in my bedroom?" Lung Wen asked. "You are a good servant, Ah Sing. It is a pity we must part. But only for a little time. Life on this earth is brief. I have not yet told you that I must leave this city at once on very important business. I have to go to Chungking."

"Chungking!" exclaimed Ah Sing. "That is a long way away!"

"A very long way," Lung Wen agreed. "But it cannot be helped. I want you to

go down to the shipping-office on the Island of Shameen and inquire if there is a boat leaving today for Ichang. We will have to shut up the shop. But you shall have your wages in advance. Of a certainty, you shall have your wages. Will you go at once, if you please? There is no time to lose."

WITH certain grave misgivings, Ah Sing shuffled out of the room. The moment he was gone, old Lung Wen was like a man under the influence of some wonderful rejuvenating drug: his eyes became bright, he was no longer slow in his movements. He rolled back the matting from the floor, and opened the little trapdoor. And he removed the lid of the well.

For a moment he stood looking down into the darkness. "It must be very cold, down there," he remarked. "Very cold and dark and still!"

But a moment after on hands and knees, he was hard at work again. He removed all the loose bricks at the top of the well, save two, which he very carefully placed at points opposite each other, half sticking out of the wall. And upon these two loose bricks he placed the lid of the well, so balanced that the slightest weight upon either side would cause it to topple over. Lung Wen was a man of method.

Then after hiding all the bricks in one of his silk chests, he fitted the matting neatly over the balanced lid of the well. And finally he tidied up the room. And when he had done all these things, he sat down on the high stool at his desk, and waited for Ah Sing to return. . . .

At last he heard the front door open, heard footsteps in the shop; and then Ah Sing made his appearance.

"Well," asked Lung Wen, "have you obtained the information I wanted? Is there a boat to Ichang today?"

"Master," Ah Sing replied, "the boat has already gone. It sailed soon after I got there."

Lung Wen looked surprised, and also very annoyed. He was neither one nor the other: he knew quite well that the boat had gone.

"How unfortunate!" he exclaimed. "But what is a day, when life is so short? Here is your necklace, Ah Sing."

Quite suddenly Ah Sing had become afraid. He could not understand why, but he had begun to tremble all over. Lung Wen was holding out a hand in which was the yellow jade necklace.

"This is a very beautiful necklace," Lung Wen remarked, as if he had not looked at it before. "I would like to own such a necklace myself." Then he shrugged. "But take it, Ah Sing," said he. "It is yours. I envy you nothing else."

So Ah Sing stepped forward to take possession of his own property—and immediately he fell into the trap that had been laid for him: in other words, he dropped down into the well, and the floor swallowed him up. He went down into the darkness and the dampness, into the cold, silent water of the Canton River, which is not pleasant water in any sense of the word, because it is mostly mud. But that did not matter to Ah Sing, because he struck his head against the side of the well and reached the bottom unconscious.

As for Lung Wen, still sitting on the high stool at his desk, he put the jade necklace round his neck, and looked at his fingernails. And there he sat, without moving, for quite a long time, until he heard a violent knocking on the door.

HE got to his feet in no particular hurry, and shuffled into the shop. And there on the threshold were five men, all looking very disreputable, very hot and very angry.

"What do you want?" asked Lung Wen, politely.

They all answered together.

"Ah Sing," they cried. "We want Ah Sing! Where is he?"

"I do not know," Lung Wen replied. "I do not suppose anyone knows. He went away this morning. I have an idea he has gone to Chungking."

All five threw up their arms.

"Chungking!" exclaimed one, who was better dressed than the others. "What did I tell you? He has given us the slip!"

Lung Wen lifted his eyebrows.

"Did you particularly wish to see him?" he asked in his mildest voice.

"I *have* seen him," cried the man who had spoken before. "I saw him little more than an hour ago. He came down to the docks. I might have guessed that he would cut and run, rather than pay his just debts!"

Lung Wen looked doubtful.

"If Ah Sing has gone," said he, "I'm afraid your money has gone with him. I am sorry for you, but I can do nothing. I am not concerned in the matter, because Ah Sing owes me nothing at all. In fact, it was the other way round."

Trigger Men

MUDD didn't want to go. We'd been having a nice time as we were: Mudd because I'd brought a bottle of very special Scotch over to him, I because I had finally got him to talking. Detective Sergeant Joe Mudd couldn't talk without being interesting.

He had been telling me about the time two or three years before when a couple of guns had tried to free Jake Zeppechi when they were putting him on the train, taking him to the Federal prison. The guns were dead; they had killed Zeppechi and killed three of his guards; two of them had been F.B.I. Men, and the Department of Justice had squared up with them. The other one had been Red Armstrong, a White Falls detective.

"Yes," Mudd had said. "They took care of the trigger men. A couple of coked-up lads doin' a job of work for their price. The papers said they were tryin' to lift Zeppechi. They weren't. They were hired to kill Zeppechi, because Zeppechi was gonna talk. The guards just happened to be in the way when they turned loose with their typewriter."

Just then the phone had rung.

Mudd came back swearing dispassionately. "Yes," he went on as if he hadn't been interrupted, "they can't ever prove that, but I know it's so. And I know the guy that had it done, and I'll take care of that some time. Red Armstrong got his that day, and Red was a friend of mine. . . . I got to go downtown now. You want to come?"

"Where to?" I asked.

"Carlotta's," Mudd said, pulling on his coat. I got up and put on my coat too. Carlotta's was exciting, even if nothing happened.

We went down in the elevator and out through the lobby and got in Mudd's car. I didn't ask him why we were going, or what the phone-call had been, because I knew he wouldn't tell me until he wanted to, and then I wouldn't have to ask.

Carlotta's is down on the river-front; you have to drive over three blocks of rough cobblestones, between high walls of unlighted dinginess, to reach it.

Inside, the ceiling is low and the lights are never bright. Usually the air is



stale. But the rough tables are solid walnut, the checked cloths are linen, the glass is crystal. And there is a swell band there—the swellest that has ever been in White Falls.

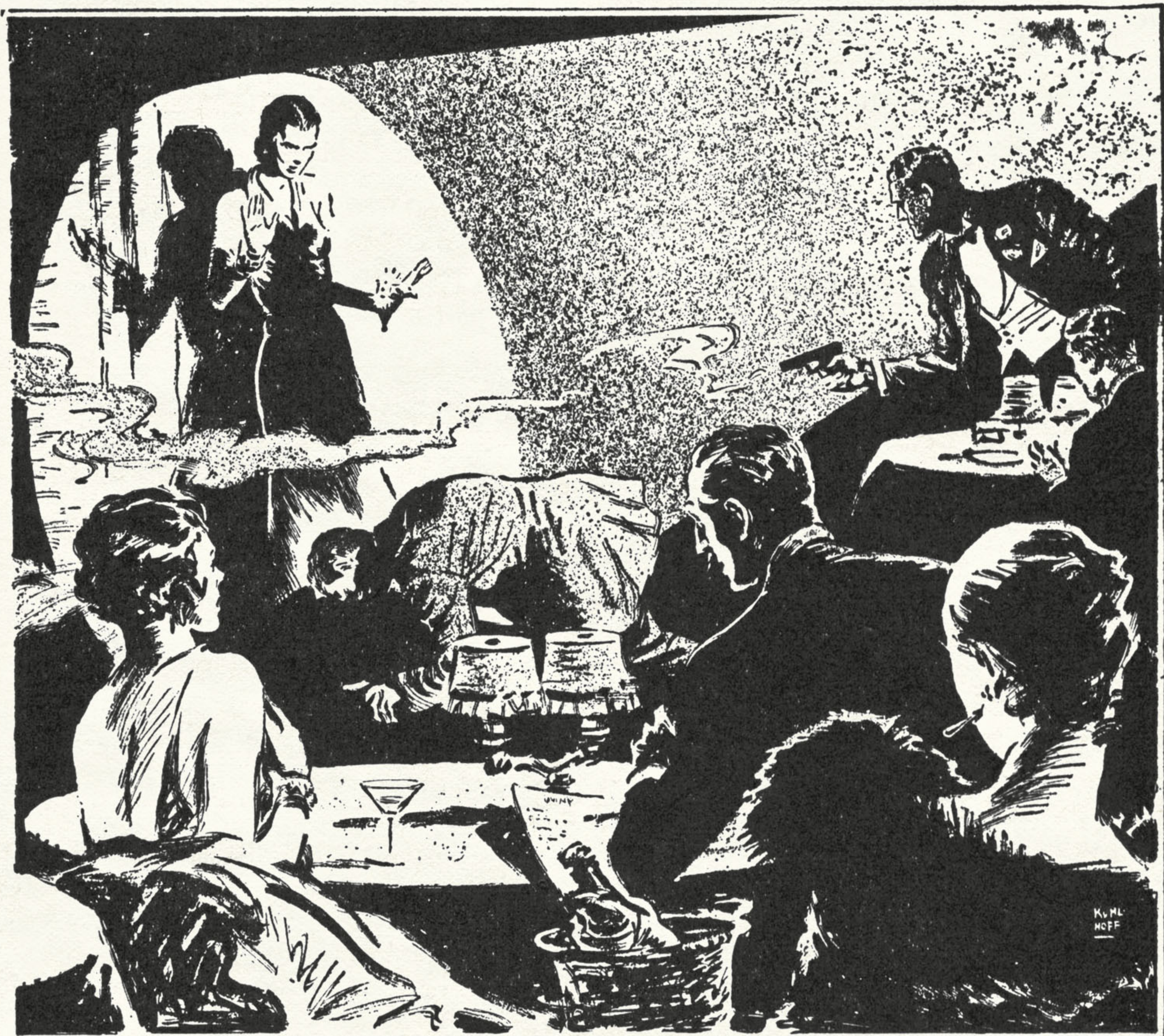
Mudd pulled his car up across the street from the little sign, and my heart started beating a bit faster in spite of myself as I watched him check over his service revolver, which he was wearing in a shoulder-holster under his coat.

"Just routine," he said. "Some dame called me up and told me to come down here. Said somebody was scheduled to get bumped off, and if I was sittin' in the place it probably wouldn't come off. The chances are a hundred to one it was some crank, or some of my so-called friends with that kind of a sense of humor." He put the gun back in its holster. "But anyway," he added, "there's no use takin' chances."

*Detective Mudd remembers a friend and
deals in his own way with a case of murder.*

By **EUSTACE COCKRELL**

Illustrated by E. H. Kuhlhoff



There was a good crowd when we got there at ten-thirty. All sorts of people. It was always like that. Thugs and punks and gangsters, play-boys and men-about-town and aristocrats.

"Margot," as the orchestra leader had announced her, was dancing. Margot was a small blonde, and to my mind no dancer. I was looking around.

Joe Mudd and I were seated at a table for two over against one wall, and from it I could see the entire room; but I saw it only as a composite picture with little attention to any person or detail that went to make up the whole.

Later I was sorry there was no complete clarity to my mental image—a clarity about which I could be definite and certain. But as I looked back on it, I got only the same picture I got that night when I tried to reconstruct the scene of those first few minutes.

Margot had finished her dance and was leaving the floor. I remember that. The place was now full of people. A lot of them I knew myself, and some of them Mudd had identified for me.

But I didn't see them as people so much, this important moment. I saw them more as impressionistic flashes of different things that went to make up the night-club that was Carlotta's.

Carlotta herself had come onto the floor and begun her song. And when you saw and heard Carlotta, you knew why the place was as popular as it was. She was singing "Midnight Babies," and the light on her had begun to dim. All the other lights in the house were out then, as always when she sang.

In the hazy reflection from the spot, as my eyes swept the room and then fastened on Carlotta, I got only these momentary glimpses of people.

I saw Ike Stein, a small-time racketeer, sitting at a table by himself at the edge of the dance floor and eying the sultry beauty of the singer with a not too subdued covetousness in his eyes. . . . I saw Arnold Marshalt sitting at a table behind Ike Stein's. He was with his sister and Bud Fenston, his sister's fiancé. Marshalt was young and good-looking and rich. His eyes were not readable but they had something somber in them and they were not on Carlotta. They were on Bud Fenston—Bud Fenston, sitting pale and drawn, looking determinedly at Evelyn Marshalt, whose face held a hopelessness strangely out of place on those finely chiseled features you felt were designed to reflect gayety. . . . I saw Junky Rothfuss sitting at a table beside Marshalt's. He was with some other people, but he might have been alone. He was cold and quiet, and there was no more in his eyes than in those things that hang in front of optometrists' shops. He was a known power in the White Falls underworld. How high his power reached no one knew. Carlotta was said to be his girl.

I saw—but of course, I didn't see these things: I only got impressions of them. All I saw was Carlotta, for she was singing, and when she sang, that's all you knew about.

The spot of light was getting dimmer, as it always did when she sang. Then on the last note of her song the light would go out entirely, and there would be darkness complete for one moment while utter silence held the place. Then the light would come on, and the band would play, and everyone would be talking at once in a sort of uneasy way. That's what Carlotta did.

That's why you watched her. Tonight it was like other nights. She was standing there singing. Then it happened.

THERE was no warning unless you count the tenseness that always hung over things down there. But it went very quickly. Too much so, for when it was over, I could remember it only in fleeting glimpses, like a movie in which everything has been falsely speeded up.

The detonation of the shot rumbled in that low room, and I saw a figure dive awkwardly toward Carlotta's feet and lie there, blood spurting from what had been a head.

The spotlight on Carlotta, the only light, went out. But as it went out, there was quick movement across the

room, scuffling noise, a grunt; I saw Bud Fenston moving, and I saw Marshalt move, jostling Rothfuss as he rose.

And then across the table from me a chair scraped harshly on the floor, and there was a rattle as it fell.

JOE MUDD was standing up, and in the darkness there was the hoarse and reassuring bellow of his voice:

"Lights!"

Maybe it was two seconds; it couldn't have been a minute. The lights came on—the spot first, then the little lights that hung around the wall; then the faint lights overhead. And then—

"Drop that guy! Get him!"

They got him near the door. A waiter tackled him. It was Arnold Marshalt, and I remembered that the flame that had stabbed the darkness on the far side of the room had come from his table or from very near it.

Carlotta stepped back slowly, chalk-colored, and the long white evening dress she wore had a red border on the bottom where it trailed in Ike Stein's blood.

Mudd strode across the floor, knelt a moment. Then he rose, and I saw his lips form the obvious words to Carlotta, still moving slowly back: "He's dead."

Then there came a steady rustle of brittle chatter, punctuated by chairs scraping on the floor as they were pushed back from the tables.

Mudd's voice cut through everything loudly:

"Sit down! Everybody stay right where he is for the moment."

A man who had got to his feet said patronizingly, bold with drink: "Who the hell are you, anyhow?"

Mudd reached in his pocket for his shield. "I'm Detective Sergeant Mudd, buddy; and I love it when people get cute with me. Sit down." The man sat down. "I'm sorry," Mudd went on to the crowd. "We'll get through here and let you go just as soon as we can. In the meantime just keep your seats and take it easy." I sidled onto the floor, and Mudd turned and told me to call Headquarters.

When I came back into the room a minute later, Mudd had moved from the dance-floor and was walking between the tables toward where the waiter had tackled Marshalt.

Mudd turned to Carlotta, who had followed him. "I'll need a room—"

Carlotta nodded automatically. "You can use my office," she said. Then there

was the scream of sirens outside and in a moment men from headquarters started pouring in. Inspector Jaffre, men in uniform, plainclothesmen, photographers, men from the lab. There must have been fifteen or sixteen of them.

Mudd walked over and talked hurriedly to Inspector Jaffre, and I saw the Inspector nod.

He came back then to Marshalt. "Okay, son," he said. "Let's go." He nodded to me, and the three of us started for Carlotta's little office in the back. Jaffre stopped us.

"I want him," Mudd said, jerking a thumb toward me. "He came down with me. I want him." Jaffre nodded again doubtfully, and we went on back through an aisle of white faces, Marshalt in front, I following Mudd. As we went into the little office I heard Bud Fenston, his voice desperate, yell: "Wait!"

I turned and saw him half rise before a big cop standing behind his chair shoved him back down.

We sat down in the office, Mudd behind the desk. "You killed him," Mudd said. "What did you do it for?"

"No," Marshalt said, and his voice was little more than a whisper. "No."

Mudd said amiably: "You shot him, all right." He turned to me and barked: "The shot came from his table?"

"I—yes," I stammered. "It looked like it."

"No," Marshalt said again in that small voice. "No."

"Your sister speaks with a broad A, doesn't she?" Mudd asked then, unexpectedly.

"Why, yes, but she hadn't anything—"

"She called me up," Mudd said. "You shot him. Where's the gun?"

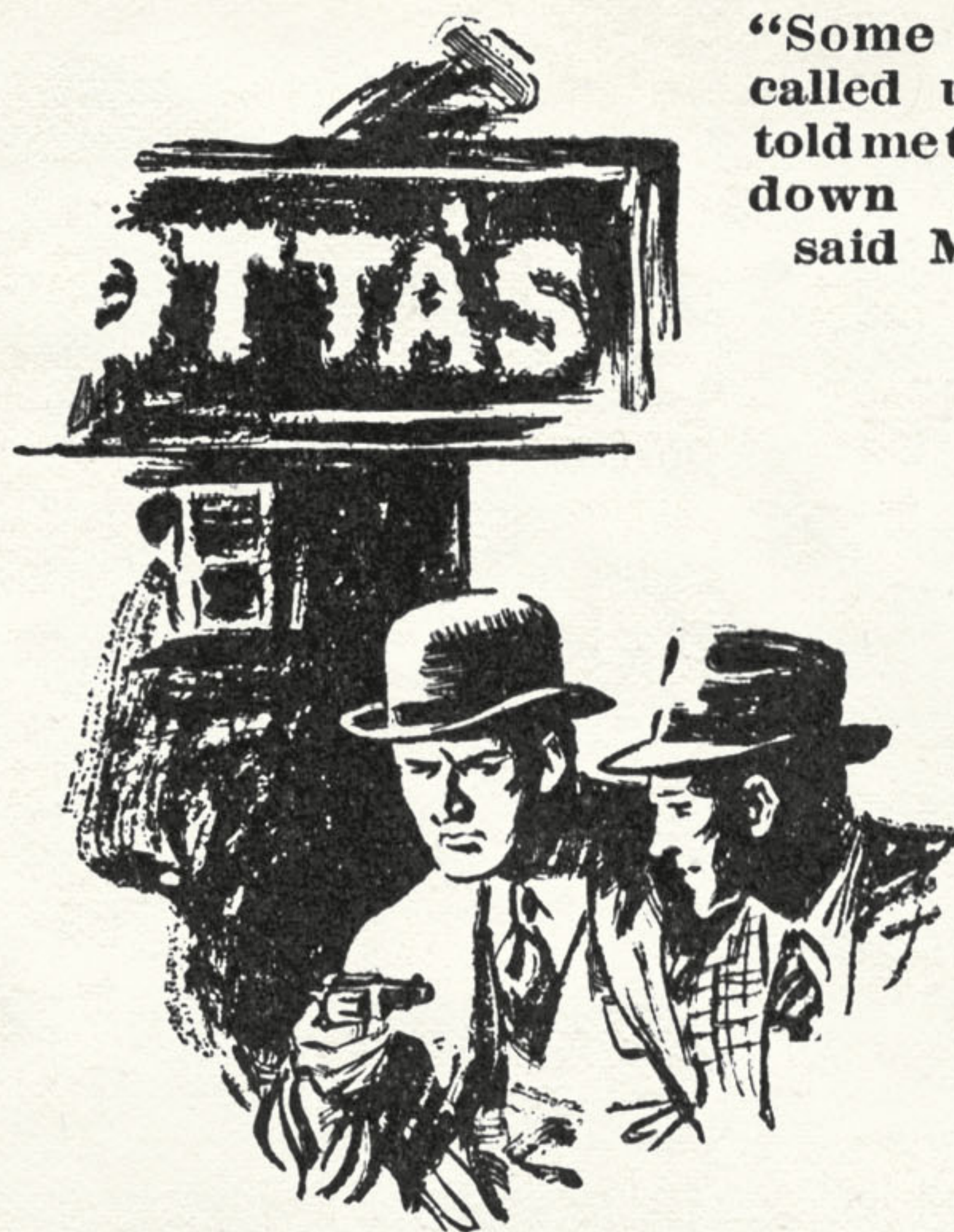
"I didn't," Marshalt said. "I didn't." Then suddenly his expression changed. "Yes," he said dully, "I killed him. He had some letters—my sister's. He was blackmailing her, trying to. Yes, I killed him. Let's go."

"Wait a minute," Mudd said. He looked puzzled and the heavy creases in his face deepened. "Where's the gun?"

MARSHALT stuck his hand into his inside jacket pocket. "Here it is," he said, "What difference does it make? I lost my nerve and ran."

Mudd took the gun, and holding it by the barrel with his handkerchief, he sniffed it. He grunted.

"I'm glad Stein's dead," Marshalt said slowly. "The letters were old letters. I



"Some dame called up and told me to come down here," said Mudd.

don't know how he got hold of them. They didn't mean anything, but they looked as if they did. My sister wants to marry Bud Fenston," he concluded disjunctedly.

"Son," Mudd said, and his voice sounded as though he were trying to make it kindly, "go out there and sit down. Give me your word you won't say anything to anyone, until I tell you or send you word. Give me your word."

"All right," Marshalt said. "What difference does it make? I'll give my word."

When Marshalt had left, Mudd called me to the desk. The gun was lying there. "What kind of gun is that?" he asked me. "Don't touch it."

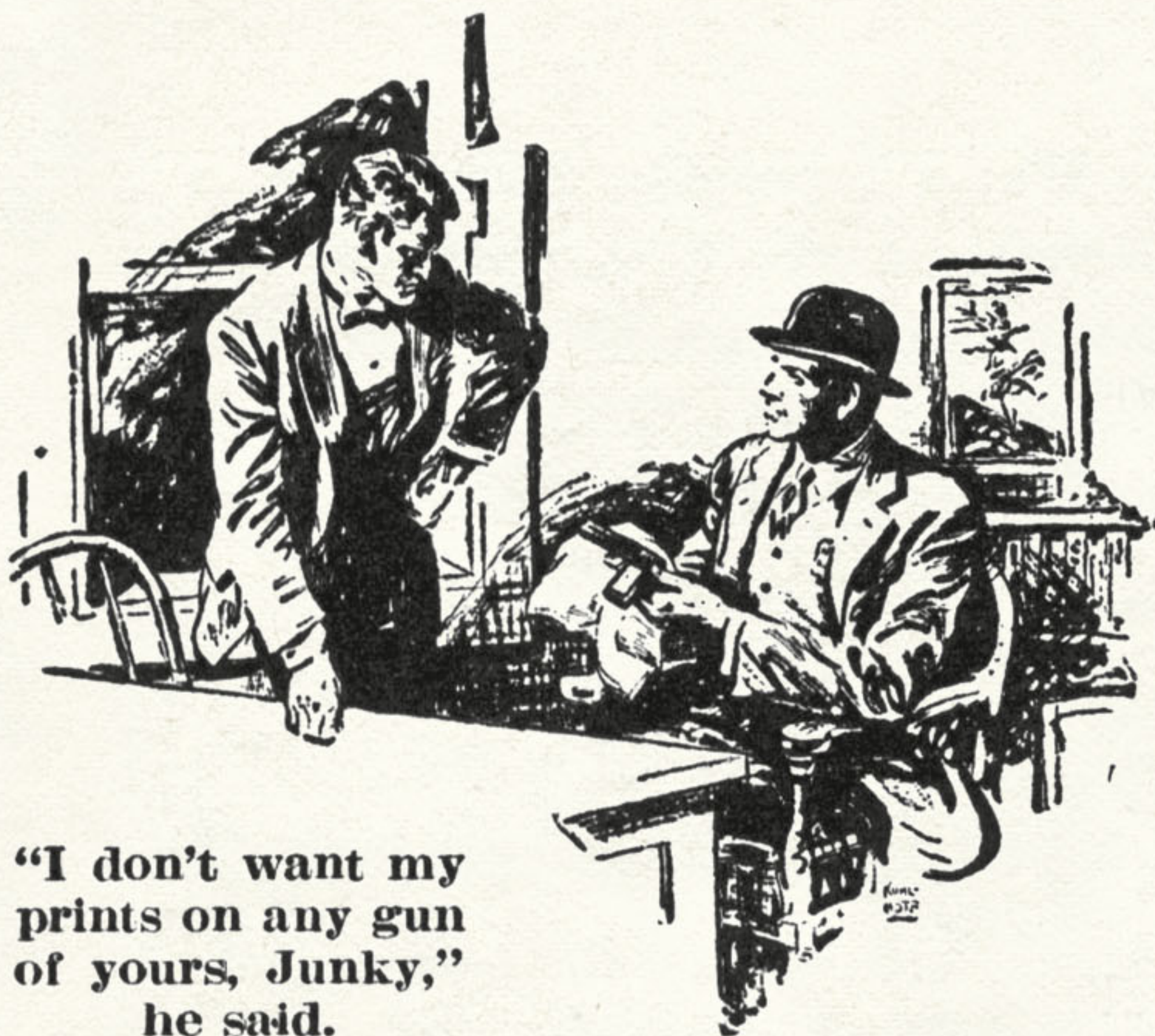
"It's a thirty-eight," I said, "seven-shot automatic—say, what in the blazes is this? You're not blind. You know more about guns than I do."

Mudd picked it up and began polishing it with his handkerchief. "I may want you to take a message for me," he said, "and I won't have time to explain—if you take the message. If anything happens in here in the next fifteen minutes, I want you to pick up the gun on the desk and put it in your pocket, and throw it in the river going home. And then forget all about it." He left then, but in a minute he was back, and Bud Fenston was with him.

He didn't question Fenston. Fenston didn't give him time. When he saw the gun on the table, he said quickly, his voice tense: "That's my gun. I killed Stein. Arnold grabbed the gun away from me. I killed him. It's my gun."

"You shot him?" Mudd asked.

"Yes, I shot him. I—I had to. Arnold grabbed the gun away from me."



"I don't want my prints on any gun of yours, Junky," he said.

Mudd grinned. "What did *you* shoot him for?"

"That's my affair," Fenston said defiantly.

"All right. All right." Mudd's voice was soothing. "Will you go out there and sit down and not say anything, not say anything to anyone until I send you word? Will you give me your word? Your word of honor?"

"It won't involve Miss Marshalt or Arnold?" Fenston asked, and keen hope showed in his face.

"No," Mudd said. "My word on that."

"All right," Fenston said. And Mudd let him go.

He turned to me. "Open the window," he said. "From the bottom. What sort of a drop is it to the ground?"

I looked down out of the window. "No drop at all," I said. "Six feet, maybe." And then, because I couldn't keep it back any longer, though I knew it wouldn't do me any good, I blurted out a question. "What's the answer? Fenston killed him—Marshalt killed him. Which one did? And why all this stuff about the gun, the window? Tell me something?"

"I'll tell you this," Mudd said. "I'm the greatest detective that ever hit the city of White Falls, and there's no question about that. Let me handle this case. Let me try to solve a case without you buttin' in with a lot of questions. And if I solve it, you keep your trap shut. You do what I tell you and keep your trap shut. I know what I'm doing. You watch."

"But," I said, trying to keep exasperation out of my voice, "one of those boys is bound to have done it. There's the gun, and there's the motive. Why all this business about letting you solve the case? The case is solved."

Mudd looked at me. "Sit down there in the corner," he said to me, "and let me be the detective." And so I did.

He went out then, but in a minute he came back, with Junky Rothfuss.

Mudd sat down at the desk and beckoned Rothfuss to the chair by the window. "Well, Junky," Mudd said, and though his voice was soft, it gave me a shivery feeling, "it's nice to see *you* here. You're heeled, I guess?"

"I got a permit, copper, from the sheriff's office," Junky Rothfuss growled.

"Okay, Junky. Just routine. Let me see the rod," Mudd said.

Junky Rothfuss looked at Mudd a minute. "Sure," he said. He reached under his coat and handed Mudd a gun. Mudd took it, holding it by the barrel with his handkerchief.

"I don't want my prints on any gun of yours, Junky," he said good-humoredly.

I noticed then, suddenly, that the gun on the desk was gone.

"Yeah," Mudd said, sitting down behind the desk. "Thirty-eight automatic. Nice gun." He laid it in his lap. "Now let me see the permit, Junky."

Ruthfuss dug in his billfold and handed Mudd a card. Mudd looked at it carelessly, picked up the gun with his handkerchief and handed it back with the card. "All shipshape, Junky!"

Junky Rothfuss replaced the gun and card. "Talk fast, copper," he said. "I got other things to do besides listenin' to you gab. I gotta get home."

"All right, Junky," Mudd said evenly. "You'll get home—home through the green door! Home to the old easy-chair. You've been away too long."

Junky Rothfuss grinned, and his grin was mirthless too. "Make 'em up as you go along, flatfoot?" he asked.

AND Mudd grinned back. "Carlotta was your girl, wasn't she, Junky? Carlotta was your girl, and you had shot off your kisser about rubbin' out Ike Stein if he didn't stay away. That was dangerous talk, Junky. I thought you were smarter than that. Lots of people heard you. It even got around so bad that the dumb coppers heard about it."

Junky Rothfuss made his voice weary. "You got nothin' on me. And I'm gettin' sleepy. Speak your piece."

"Well," Mudd said, "you're the best suspect we got. We'll have to run you in, Junky."

"You won't make that hold, copper," Junky Rothfuss said. "I'll be out in an

hour. I seen the guy that let Ike have it. It was the Fenston punk, and the kid with him grabbed the gun and run."

"Yes," Mudd said. "We'll make it stick. We're gonna burn you, Junky. We'll make it stick." He paused a moment, and lit a cigarette. "Who'll believe a member of one of the town's finest families would kill a rat like Stein for no reason, when they know that you'd threatened to kill him yourself for a damned good one?"

ROTHFUSS didn't change expression except a hair's breadth, but it converted his face into a sneer. "You got nothing on me," he repeated.

"Yes," Mudd went on, as if he hadn't heard him. "They shave your head, and they hook the plates on tight to your legs, and then they pull the volts through you. The scientists say it doesn't hurt, but they don't know. It looks to me like it hurts when the smoke comes up, and you smell the old burning flesh, and you sort of jerk and twitch—"

I sat tense, listening to Mudd's droning voice, dripping conviction and grim assurance, and I wondered.

"It looks like it hurts plenty—and nobody has ever come back to say it didn't."

"You've jumped your trolley," said Rothfuss. But his smile was mirthless.

Mudd said evenly: "We've frisked everybody in the joint. The gun aint there. The gun in your holster has been fired once. The ballistics boys will check the slug with the one in Ike Stein's head, and they'll prove it came out of your gun. The one in your holster."

Junky Rothfuss jerked out his gun, and he sniffed the barrel. He whipped the clip open and looked. He sat there tense, the gun in his hand.

Mudd had his service revolver out, and he was leveling on Junky Rothfuss.

Junky put the gun back under his coat. Mudd said slowly, putting his own gun up too: "I've been after you for two years, Junky. And now I've got you framed. Framed cold!"

"Switched guns, eh?" Junky Rothfuss whispered.

"You guessed it," Mudd told him. "Here's your gun." He laid another thirty-eight automatic on the desk.

And Junky Rothfuss moved, a fraction of an inch only, it seemed to me. And suddenly there was the gun in his hand again, and he fired once as Mudd slid down behind the desk.

I half jumped up as Junky snaked over the window-sill. I couldn't help it. I figured that it was suicide, but I liked Joe Mudd. I was on my feet and starting to move as Junky saw me and turned, one arm crooked over the window-ledge, his gun in the other.

But I started to move forward even as Junky began bringing his gun into careful alignment. Then I heard Mudd's voice as he crawled around the desk.

"Here's one for Red Armstrong, Junky!" the voice said. And there was a shot. I saw Rothfuss' thin-lipped snarling mouth go suddenly, horribly, red and round. And his arm relaxed, and there was the empty window.

I grabbed the gun off the desk and stuffed it into my pocket as Jaffre broke into the door then, a sawed-off shotgun in his hands.

"Junky Rothfuss," Mudd said, standing up. "Killed while attempting to escape. He's out the window there. His gun has been fired twice, and the ballistics men will find the slug in Ike's head was the first one. You can tell the people to go home." He walked over to me and hit me on the shoulder, and then started awkwardly peeling off his coat, and I noticed one was dripping blood.

"Damn," he said to me. "You scared me when you jumped up. What were you gonna do—bite him?"

"I don't know," I admitted shakily, feeling foolish; but I looked up and saw Mudd looking at me with a funny light in his eyes, and I quit feeling foolish because his look was one of respect. And I was suddenly proud. Joe Mudd didn't respect or admire many things.

"Send the sawbones in here, Chief," Mudd said, turning, and unbuttoning his shirt with one hand, clumsily. "I gave him too much head start. He got lucky and nicked me. I must be gettin' slow."

HE turned to me and added, bending so no one could hear: "Go out and tell the kids how it is—all three of 'em." Straightening up, he concluded, in a normal voice: "And come up to the hotel pretty soon, and I'll tell you the end of that story."

"Okay," I told him, but as I made my way to Marshalt's table, it occurred to me that I knew the end of the story now.

So I told it to Bud Fenston, and Marshalt, and Marshalt's sister, while they drove me home; and they stopped on the bridge over the river, and I threw the gun a mile.



KIOGA of the

The great climax of an epic novel.

The Story Thus Far:

HEROIC indeed, that strange figure Kioga of the Wilderness! And a strange heroic land—Nato'wa, the wild newfound region beyond the Arctic north of Siberia, warmed by ocean currents and by great volcanic fissures and hot springs; a land wooded with evergreens, and supporting many wild animals. Stranger still its people—who were so like the American Indians that Dr. Rand (a medical missionary whose ship had been blown out of her course and wrecked upon the coast of Nato'wa) soon decided that here was the original birthplace of the Indian race.

Not long afterward, the son of Lincoln Rand and his wife Helena was born; but only a few weeks later the child's parents were both killed. Yet in this primitive life Kioga, or the Snow Hawk, as he was named, grew to a splendid manhood. Eventually, indeed, he became war-chief of the tribe. But when another party of white people, wrecked up-

on the reefs of Nato'wa, were about to be put to death, Kioga rescued them. For that he was exiled from his adopted people.

Longing to see the country of his fathers, Kioga aided this castaway yachting party—Beth La Salle, her brother Dan and her suitor Allan Kendle—to build a boat and escape. But civilization proved too much for the Snow Hawk. Disgusted by its many hypocrisies and believing his love rejected by Beth, he set out to make his way back to Nato'wa; on the way he gathered a group of American Indians to take back with him.

And at last they reached Nato'wa. But while Kioga was absent, they were attacked by a Shoni war-party and either killed or made captive. . . . Kioga was able to rescue his friends; but later he was himself captured and put to the torture. At the last moment he escaped, indeed—but only to wander blinded in the forest.

Meanwhile, Beth La Salle, her brother Dan and their friend the scientist, Dr.



WILDERNESS

By WILLIAM L. CHESTER

Munro chartered the schooner *Narwhal* and sailed from San Francisco to overtake him. After a winter spent with the *Narwhal* frozen in the ice, and accompanied by a group of castaway seal-poachers whom they had rescued, they reached Nato'wa—only to have these renegade whites desert, after stealing weapons.

Munro found a safe berth for the ship in a hidden cove; then, with Beth, Dan and his men Hanson and Flashpan, he journeyed to the village of the Shoni and made friends with them. Learning of the fate which had befallen Kioga, Munro and his party, accompanied by Kias and Kioga's boyhood sweetheart Heladi, set forth to attempt his rescue.

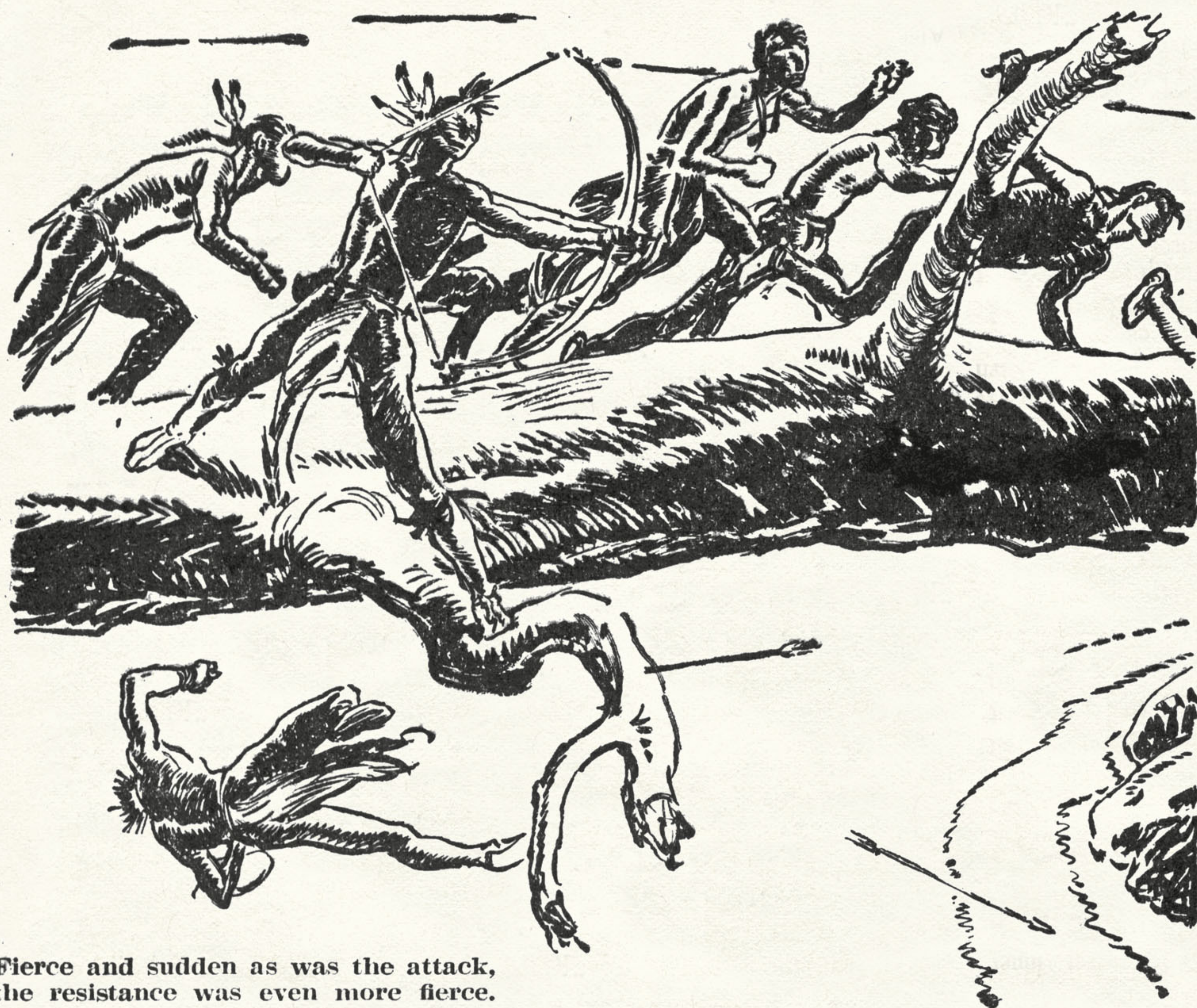
They found the cave where he had made his home. But they found also his tracks leading to a tremendous landslide which had apparently engulfed him.

Mourning Kioga as dead, the expedition returned to Hopeka, the Shoni capital. Soon after, Flashpan discovered

large deposits of gold in the river-bed. But they had incurred the enmity of the powerful Long Knife society. Just in time, the white voyagers, with a number of friendly Shoni, escaped to a rude fort they had prepared on an island in the river. There they were besieged by the Long Knives and by the renegade whites, who had joined forces.

Meanwhile Kioga, who had escaped the landslide, had recovered from his blindness. Wandering northward to a plains region, he encountered the Wa-Kanek, a tribe of horse-riding natives; and because he possessed a knife formerly owned by a son of their old matron-chief Magpie, he was received as the long-missing Wa-Kanek youth. And soon by a series of brilliant achievements, he rose to high place among the Wa-Kanek.

FAR to the west of Fort Talking Raven, before the tall painted tent of old Magpie, a great bear-skin hung stretched



Fierce and sudden as was the attack, the resistance was even more fierce.

to dry upon a rack. Blanketed feathered figures stood wonderingly before this evidence of Black Shield's victory over the beast.

But near the lodge stood a silver-coated stallion, unriden for many a day; and the Indians before the lodge spoke in softened tones.

Kioga would have preferred to endure his hurts in solitude. But the penalty of fame is publicity, even among the people of the Tall Tents. Twenty medicine-men, at one time or another, had come at the anxious Magpie's bidding, to exhort the evil spirits from her favorite.

Sudden silence greeted the appearance of the old matron chief, who emerged from the lodge lean and gaunt after her long vigil over the wounded Black Shield. A small brown naked boy plucked at her deerskin skirt, with a childish query that spoke the thought of all the older folk gathered near by: "When will Black Shield ride again?"

"Tonight, perhaps, or on the morrow," answered Magpie with a tired but happy smile; and the faces of men and women lighted up.

But in the lodge of Wolf Jaw the news was received with ominous silence, for among the twenty who had sought to aid

Kioga's cure was Many Hunts, whose piercing eye had fathomed Black Shield's true identity.

"You heard?" demanded Wolf Jaw fiercely of his assembled friends. "These many weeks I've called Black Shield impostor. Now Many Hunts confirms me—and was he not with our warriors at the battle of the Painted Cliffs, where the Shoni chief Kioga turned us back? Did he not look upon their blue-eyed chieftain? Who would better know than he that Kioga and Black Shield are one and the same?"

Meanwhile to Kioga came Me-Kon-Agi, ostensibly to smoke a friendly pipe, but in fact to warn his friend.

"Wolf Jaw and his fellows," he said hurriedly, "hold secret councils. Men come and go at every hour. They mean no good."

"Watch carefully," replied the Snow Hawk in an undertone. "And fear not: I am stronger than they think. I but pretend a weakness. . . . Magpie approaches. Go now, and be alert."

As the warrior took his leave, Magpie drew nearer, well pleased by Kioga's advanced recovery, to speak to him in softened mood. "The night is warm. Let us ride," said she; and willingly Kioga



accompanied her out a way upon a high ridge commanding a view of the village.

It was dusk on the prairie, the hour of rest and ease. Close above the tents a hazy scarf of blue was hanging—smoke from within the lodges. As darkness fell, the skin tents glowed redly with the supper fires. The air was crystalline and wonderfully transparent. Arcturus shone down in blazing splendor. Sirius soon joined the watchfires of the immortals, green-white. Then out came Vega, diamond-blue and cold as ice, and Betelgeuse, orange with age and slow decline; then Capella—a liquid yellow pearl, and Aldebaran, glowing steadily like a blot of phosphor in the sky.

To their ears came the sad chanting of the Old Warriors Society, and the musical notes of heralds' voices rose and fell in regular rhythm as they moved among the lodges. At Kioga's side the gray stallion nuzzled his arm and sent forth a neigh, long-drawn and silver-noted, across the swelling prairie.

Magpie's talk was of matters closest to her heart, the welfare of her scattered tribes.

"I am the Magpie," she said in hoarse and quivering tones; "I have gone to war, counted *coups*, taken scalps. But I

am old. My bones grow heavy. My voice weakens, since some no longer listen, as of old. 'Tis time I named a chief to fill my place."

Foreseeing the trend her thoughts were taking, Kioga made as if to speak. She gestured him to silence, and continued:

"Among our people the woman owns the lodge and all within it. She owns the children, the tribal lands. Blood kinship is traced through her line, and she selects candidates for chiefs of clan and tribe."

Pausing a moment, she sat staring into the distance. Then again the hoarse monotone of her voice continued: "You are my only son. You are young, but you are wise, cunning as the wolf. You have been back with us but a few moons. Yet already your name is like a torch borne in the dark. . . . Respect to the aged—wait until I finish! I have named your name before the council. We shall see tomorrow night what comes of that! *Ehu*—now speak, for I have done!"

But Kioga was past speaking. Intending daily to clear himself, daily he had found himself deeper involved in his rôle of Black Shield. Because he had come to love and respect old Magpie, that rôle had seemed all the more blame-

worthy. Yet he who shrank from no pain inflicted on himself, drew back from giving pain to this lonely old matron who walked so proudly through life.

Constantly assuring himself that today would be the last of the imposture, each day had found him postponing revelation, until at last he had decided to carry it out to the end. He would perform such deeds as would wipe out what slight wrong existed in permitting this bereaved old mother to think him her son. But now—

The voice of Magpie recalled him:

"Say you nothing to this honor?"

"Mother Magpie," he answered solemnly, "this I say: Tomorrow morning you will do me honor. Tomorrow night you will stone me from your village."

IN amazement she looked at him. Then her hearty laughter at what she took to be a joke, carried back to the village.

For Kioga wielded, by tacit consent, a power second only to that of Magpie herself. Admitted to blood-brotherhood in the war-fraternities, he knew all their secrets. Never before had the fortunes of the Wa-Kanek run so high, nor the herds swelled to their present dimensions.

Where war and individual valor were the only sources of social standing, he had in a few moons risen to high place. And on the morrow, said Magpie, he would be nominated to succeed her. And yet he was not a happy man, for reasons which deprive many another of contentment: he could not foresee the future, nor forget the past.

How were the Shoni doing? What of Kias, the noble-hearted friend of other days? What of Heladi the beautiful, and Tokala, whom he had left in her care? What of James Munro, that guide and mentor of his days in civilization? But above all, what of Beth La Salle, memory of whom linked him to another way of life altogether? These were thoughts which had crowded one another during the long hours of his recovery, as now.

"*Ehu!*" said Magpie at long last. "A warrior thinks of some one far away."

Kioga started, as before when this keen old woman had seemed to read his very mind.

"Farther than the stars, O Mother," he answered gravely.

"Go, then, and bring her here. I'll give my tent, my herds and all I own to make her welcome."

"It cannot be," said Kioga quietly.

"Cannot? That from you, who slew Twenty Man and brought all our victories to the Wa-Kanek! Do I hear aright?"

"Some things may not be done, Mother. Man cannot shoot down the stars with his arrows, nor cast his noose about the sun."

"Is she then so out of reach?" wondered Magpie. Then, violently: "Bah! Take a hundred horsemen—take five hundred!—and go for her. If any stand in your way, strike them down. If even then she will not come, drag her by the hair, *ehu!* That's how I was won!"

Kioga could not forbear smiling at her vehemence, but—

"How bright the stars this night!" he answered evasively.

Magpie snorted, and grumbling, left him. A man must be a fool who dreamed of only one, when ten willing wives might be had to keep his lodge!

Kioga did not immediately follow, but rode farther out to water his horse along a wooded stream-bank. Dismounting, he bent to cup a handful of liquid to his own lips. As he did so the image of a human head—not his own—appeared on the still moonlit pool below him.

Giving no sign that he observed, Kioga calculated the angles of reflection while drinking, and rose to remount. Directing his horse casually past the thicket which concealed a lurker, when near the spot he released the reins and dropped unexpectedly upon a hidden warrior.

Grunting in surprise, the Indian sought to strike with his knife. But in an instant Kioga's hand was at his throat, one knee at his breast, while he disarmed the stranger.

Recognizing him by headdress and face-markings as a Shoni of the Tugari tribe, Kioga spoke in the man's own tongue.

"What seek you on Wa-Kanek hunting-grounds, Tugari?"

"Who are you who know my tribe and tongue?" gasped the other.

"Whom seek you?" repeated Kioga.

"I seek the Snow Hawk, rumored to be alive among the Wa-Kanek," answered the Shoni brave.

KIOGA permitted him to glimpse his features in a better light. "Whose face is mine?"

The Indian started. "I would know you anywhere! Have you never heard men speak of Wehoka?"

"I recall you not, warrior," said Kioga slowly: "but no matter. How go things among the Shoni?"

"Ill—very ill," said Wehoka heavily. "The Long Knives have risen up again. White-skinned men have come among them."

It was Kioga's turn to start. "*White men! Speak carefully, Wehoka. What manner of men be these?*"

"White of skin and pale of eye—not unlike the Snow Hawk," answered Wehoka. "They dwell in a mighty place which they call 'fort'—and fight with weapons that blaze and thunder."

"By what names are they called?" demanded Kioga swiftly.

"One known as Swift Hand leads them," said Wehoka. "And he sends the Snow Hawk this!"—drawing from his pouch a roll of birch-bark, with this note scrawled thereon:

To Kioga—(Lincoln Rand):

Dear Friend:

Rumor has it that you are still alive. This comes to you by Wehoka. There is no time to tell you all that has happened since you left America. We are among the Shoni. Dan and Beth La Salle are here. We are in desperate straits.

If this reaches you too late, you will find our last messages and keepsakes to you buried seventeen paces from the corner of the south wall. A notched log marks the place.

If you live and can aid us, use utmost caution in approaching. We are surrounded, cut off from our ship, and threatened momentarily by capture.

Wehoka has instructions to seek aid among the northern tribes, who are less influenced by the Long Knives. He can best tell you of his success or failure. We pray for the impossible in hoping this will reach you. Meanwhile we place our faith in God and the resources He has given us.

James Munro.

Momentarily staggered by this astounding news, Kioga swiftly gathered his wits. These tidings were almost unbelievable, and yet the note was undeniably authentic. Turning to Wehoka:

"What of the upper tribesmen—did you meet with them?"

"Yes. Two canoes wait my return at the three forks of the Hiwasi."

"It is good, Wehoka. I know the place well. Go as you came. Await me there and recruit others if more warriors may be found."

"*Ahi!*" said Wehoka eagerly. "Delay not. Time is short."

Parting without another word, the two went their opposite ways, Kioga mounting and spurring toward Magpie's village. To aid those in the fort, quick action was needed.

When still some distance from the village, he glimpsed a small fire in a hollow on the plain. An unusual number of shadows were grouped around it, but whether friends or foes, he could not tell.

Approaching stealthily, by the dim light he first descried the face of Wolf Jaw. Instantly suspicious, Kioga circled the hollow in search of the means to approach within hearing, which he found in the narrow ridge behind which the group were hidden from the village.

WRITHING nearer, the Snow Hawk heard the harsh voice of Wolf Jaw.

"Hitherto," Wolf Jaw was saying, "he has deceived us. But his hour is come. Who this Black Shield is you all now know. He is an impostor. Doubtless he slew Magpie's true son. And therefore I say he must die, and with him those who are close to him. And if it comes to that—if even old Magpie stands against us—" He left the sentence unfinished.

A hubbub of mingled protest and agreement rose; for Magpie was both loved and feared. At last, however, a young and fiery warrior, whose name was Falling Star rose and spoke: "I too weary of the Magpie's counsel. What Wolf Jaw says is good for all the tribe, I think. If need be, I will take her life."

Listening, Kioga bethought himself of what he had so recently learned from Wehoka. Time was of the essence, no matter what he did. But to leave his friends unarmed against the secret plottings of Wolf Jaw was not to be considered.

Might not the fort already have fallen? Might not its inhabitants even now all be dead? The answers to these things were in doubt. But there was no doubt as to the fate of Magpie and Kioga's friends. At any moment Wolf Jaw might bare his tomahawks. . . . At once Kioga crawled back to his horse and rode straight to the village.

What immediate action Wolf Jaw may have intended was interrupted unwittingly by Magpie herself, who this night gave a great feast in honor of Kioga's recovery. Following the feast came a parade on horseback. The fires were fed with buffalo chips until they roared hotly. Prancing horses moved in and out



"All that I possess belongs to Black Shield. . . . I ask your forgiveness — and tonight I bid you farewell."

among the tapering lodges, to the tune of singing and the heavy beat of thumping drums.

The eyes of old Magpie were on Kioga proudly. Bareheaded, astride the finest horse on all the Nato'wan plain, he rode as if sprung from his mount's own spine. Its tail and mane were hung with painted plumes; beneath its saddle of fine buffalo-hide trimmed with elk-skin was a back-protector of antelope, worked in multicolored horsehair designs; the rings and cinchas were of polished copper; the

stirrup leathers were draped with gleaming weasel-tails; even the breast-straps worked with rare silver proclaimed the high station of the rider.

Enviously, and with eyes gleaming in anticipation of Black Shield's downfall, Wolf Jaw looked on. By prearrangement he and his band but awaited the moment of Kioga's elevation to high chieftainship to strike the blow which would fell this upstart and all who supported him. . . .

When the parade had ended, came presentation of the symbol of high chief-

tainship—a certain medicine-shield noted as an heirloom, handed down from one generation to the next.

Forth from the lips of Gro-Gan' rolled the sonorous syllables of ancient Wa-Kanek, impressive as the Latin of the Roman Church.

"O Black Shield, I speak to your heart. Behold this shield of your forefathers. It hung before the lodge when you were born. It shaded your eyes when you grew in the cradle-board. And so with many chiefs before you. By the power of this shield you become the Keeper of the Herds, the First Hunter, Chief Over All Chiefs. So long as you hold to it, no harm will befall you. It is *wakan*—sacred, possessed of great power. Take it in your hands. Bring only honor to this ancient shield."

With affection and pride in his voice at being able thus to honor this friend of many battles and adventures, Gro-Gan' held forth the priceless heirloom. No slightest sound disturbed the council, save the rustle of rich robes and the click of bone ornaments.

KIOGA turned to face the council. His face seemed oddly white beneath its summer bronze. He did not touch the extended shield, but answered Gro-Gan' thus:

"Not many moons ago I came among you, O Councilors. You accepted me as Black Shield, the son of Magpie. I shrank from telling Magpie that Black Shield was dead. I thought to replace him in her heart, and by my deeds rise to high place among you. But the office of hereditary chief is too great. I cannot take the sacred shield, for I have no Wa-Kanek blood. Nor am I Shoni, though I held high place among them. I am of another race, of white-skinned men, dwelling where the sun sleeps."

Completely dazed, the council stared at him. Not a muscle in the faces of all that circle moved, but amazement looked from every eye. In a deathly silence Kioga concluded:

"All that I possess belongs to Black Shield. My horses I give to Mother Magpie—long may she rule! My tent and all my robes and weapons I give to my loyal friends." One by one he removed his ceremonial ornaments, stripping down to waist-cloth, and piling all his vestments before him. "Thus I amend my offense to you who honored me. Black Shield is dead. He died a brave man, laughing at his pain. I who used his

name was once your greatest enemy, known to the Shoni as Kioga the Snow Hawk, a chieftain. Now I reduce myself to nothing. I ask your forgiveness—and tonight I bid you farewell."

Pausing an instant before Magpie, Kioga searched her face. It remained expressionless, but haggard beyond words, the eyes tightly closed.

Disarmed by this unexpected stroke, Wolf Jaw and his cohorts sat gaping with the rest. But Kioga had not yet done with them.

"If my deeds be adjudged wrong," he continued, "what of those dozen men who came with hidden tomahawks to do murder at this council?"

At these words Wolf Jaw went white to the lips, and all his confederates with him, for well they knew themselves but a minority in this assemblage. Relentlessly Kioga went on:

"Rise, Wolf Jaw—and those twelve to either side of you. Rise and throw aside your robes, that all may see how you prepared to slay not only Black Shield, but Mother Magpie too. Rise up and show your teeth, wolves!"

A moment the accused chief sat stripped of poise and self-command, returning the Snow Hawk's gaze as a viper might return an eagle's. Already White Bear and other ranking chiefs were getting up, suspicious of treachery at what was to have been a peaceful celebration.

Even now the furor might have died, reparations been made, and the incident overlooked. But Falling Star, the fire-brand among Wolf Jaw's followers, rose from where he sat near old Magpie and sprang toward her with brandishing tomahawk. In a moment the council was in an uproar, during which Wolf Jaw and his little band were swiftly overwhelmed and stripped of their arms. A hundred chiefs of every rank rallied round the sacred person of Magpie.

With satisfaction Kioga saw the enemy exposed beyond all further hope of injuring those attached to him. And amid the general confusion he disappeared.

CHAPTER XXXI

POWDER AND LEAD

IMMEDIATELY on quitting the council, Kioga turned his steps toward his own tent. The gray stallion, saddled and in full caparison he led away by the rein, tying it before Magpie's lodge. Returning for his rope and weapons, he ap-

proached the village herd, roped out a horse and mounted. Uproar, he expected, must follow his revelation; he would depart before it had time to begin. Without a word to those who followed wherever he went, he rode off in an easterly direction, leaving the village behind.

For several hours he traveled at a rapid gait. A Wa-Kanek party passed him going in the opposite direction, but he carefully circled to avoid the meeting. Echoes of the Brave Heart song came to him from the traveling band. He listened for the familiar words:

Moon-Woman shuts her sleepy eyes. . . .

Hai-yeh' ho! Hai-yeh-ho!

We'll take the foeman by surprise. . . .

Hai-yeh' ho! Hai-yeh-ho!

The time is come; we steal away. . . .

Hai-yeh' ho! Hai-yeh-ho!

To raid their tents at break of day. . . .

Hai-yeh' ho! Hai-yeh-ho!

And carry many shields away. . . .

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh! Hai-yeh-eho!

The sound of the chanting died away far back upon the plains. How things had changed since these warriors had gone forth at his bidding! Swiftly Kioga continued on his way, and finally after many hours he arrived where begin the mountains which gird the Shoni realm.

Removing the fine saddle, he gave the horse its liberty. He hid the saddle in a deep unoccupied cavern, rolled a great stone across the entrance and began the climb which would carry him across the mountain divide separating the domains of plainsmen and forest-dwellers.

Topping this divide at last, he found himself looking down upon that vast mountainous area north of the Shoni strongholds. Below him was home, the forest, the mountains he loved. He drew in an exultant breath.

But behind him, far out across the plains, old Magpie stood before her tent. The silver stallion was tied to the door-flap. All its caparison gleamed in the firelight. Across its back the leathern stirrups were tied, and at the saddle horn hung three broken arrows in token of Kioga's farewell. Near by stood Me-Kon-Agi, Gro-Gan' and all the chiefs and great warriors of the tribe the Magpie ruled.

And as she stood quivering, unable to speak, men turned away. For such a thing had only once been seen before—when she thought her son had returned from captivity: Two great tears rolled silently down her wrinkled cheeks. . . .

High in a rocky eyrie Kioga slept an hour; and in the morning he knew again the touch of cool leaves parting to admit him into the green chambers of the damp pine-scented forest. Traveling almost continuously, snatching only a little sleep now and then, the Snow Hawk came at last to a familiar scene—the torn area marking the landslide which had so nearly carried him to his death. And skirting the rubble at its lower end, he came unexpectedly upon a curious structure made of stones, the work of human hands. At its top two hawks had built a nest, and defied him to draw nearer.

Wondering what had inspired the erection of such a monument, he scanned it intently, and came to a wooden slab bearing this inscription burned into it:

RAISED TO THE MEMORY OF KIOGA
CHIEF OF ALL THE SHONI TRIBES
WHO PERISHED IN THE LANDSLIDE
FROM WHICH THESE STONES ARE TAKEN
ERECTED BY THOSE WHO SOUGHT HIM
LONG AND FAITHFULLY
Rest in Peace

Recent lightning had struck the rock-pile, obliterating the names of all who had subscribed to the memorial save that of James Munro, which appeared in a lower corner of the slab.

FAR up the mountain-side a storm gathered. Lightning licked from cloud to earth. Weary with long and restless travel, and conscious of the drafts the morrow would make upon his strength, Kioga turned westward toward his old cave. There he would sleep out the storm.

Climbing the steep trail, he pushed in the door, entered and kindling a blaze, with his fire-bow, made a light. Glancing about him, something lying on the little shelf caught his attention—a finger-ring of gold, through which was thrust a little cylinder of birchbark. With narrowing eyes he drew forth the curl of bark, smoothed it, held it to the light and read:

I came all the way from America, with Dan and James Munro, to tell you what I should have said before, had you not left us so suddenly. Since fate wills I shall never see you again alive, I take this means of telling you, instead. I have loved you from the first, and will to the end. I leave this note and this ring. Though you will never read the one nor wear the other, it will always comfort me to know that you would find them here—if you could only return. —Beth

Dazzled by the message contained in that note, Kioga's weariness vanished. From that moment rest and shelter ceased to exist for him. Rushing quickly but methodically from place to place, he took up a short but deadly bow, a quiver of arrows and belted on a knife. Then he plunged forth into the storm.

Where every other living thing had denned up for the duration of the down-pour, the Snow Hawk fled through the forest with the speed and directness of the bird for which he was named. His way was often illumined by the lightning, but at other times he threaded the trackless mazes of the forest by instinct alone, speeding toward the river rendezvous with Wehoka and his canoemen. . . . Morning and storm's end found him still traveling, tireless as a steel automaton.

IT was now that season of the polar year when the daylight wanes, giving way to the enduring gloom of Arctic winter. The forest depths were hung with velvet robes of darkness, yet along the river on whose banks Kioga moved there was light enough to see by for a few hours daily. Pausing at dusk to sate his hunger with late juicy berries growing along the stream, he suddenly caught the tell-tale purl of water at the prow of a moving canoe. Lying silent beneath the thorny foliage, he heard voices and sought to identify one of several as that of Wehoka, Munro's messenger.

And as he crouched listening, something long and coiling came to life beside his arm. A gleaming triangular head reared slowly up, forked tongue darting in and out. Glistening lights reflected from the scaly geometric markings on a snake's lean back. Not ten inches from Kioga's eyes the cowed reptile fixed them with its own lidless terrible stare. The flicker of an eyelash, an exhaled breath, would draw an instant poison-stroke.

But Kioga neither blinked nor breathed. Like a creature without nerves he lay utterly still, both watching the snake and listening for the Indians' voices. Presently the reptile lowered its hideous head, and gliding slowly across Kioga's outstretched arm, flowed off into the thickets. And in another moment he heard the unmistakable voice of Wehoka. Rising quietly to his full stature, with upraised hands, he said:

"Peace to you, warriors!"

Unluckily, he had not counted upon the alarm into which his sudden appear-

ance would throw men so keyed up with excitement. Hardly had the words left his lips, when two spears and a heavy club flew at him.

Nothing could better have conveyed the sanguinary spirit of those times. Men struck first and parleyed later—if possible. And when the Indians realized their mistake, the damage was done. Their spears had passed harmlessly into the bank. But the club had struck more nearly true. As they came upon him Kioga lay felled by the flying missile.

"We have killed him!" declared Wehoka, looking upon the fallen Snow Hawk.

"Not so easily," came a voice as Kioga slowly sat up to look around him. Quick hands would have raised him, but the Snow Hawk rose unaided, scorning assistance.

"I have been long coming. It may be that we are too late. But dip blades, warriors! Let us be on our way!"

In an instant, propelled by sinewy hands, the long-boat leaped downstream.

CHAPTER XXXII

IN EXTREMIS

AT Fort Talking Raven, matters had reached a critical stage. Ever closer shrank the ring of Half Mouth's warriors. Ever more fraught with peril were the hunters' forays into the surrounding wilderness in search of game to feed those hungry mouths within the overcrowded fort. The hidden canoes, which Munro's warriors had been wont to use in obtaining fresh supplies of iron sand, crude sulphur and saltpeter, had been discovered and captured by the enemy.

Yet the fort still managed to maintain the appearance that all was well.

In the arms-room a strange array of weapons had taken form. There were short thrusting spears, and long lances for manning the walls, and loose-coupled military flails hastily designed for use in the event the enemy again attempted to storm the fort. But as yet the defenses remained impregnable to all assault from without.

No small part of Munro's time was taken up in caring for his wounded. In came Eccowa, having successfully run the gantlet of lurking savages in his trip from the *Narwhal* to the fort with messages. Half his scalp hanging down upon one shoulder evidenced his close



passage with the knives of the foe. A dexterous flip, a score of stitches using deer-gut to close the wound—and Ec-cowa was pleading to be sent with further communications.

Kias himself, hunting in the forest near by, came fainting into the fort, mauled by a snow-leopard before its den of young. The wounds were gashed, given a liberal sprinkle of permanganate in the incisions and fang-punctures. An hour later Kias was standing guard again at the north wall.

And this entry from Munro's diary of those dark days:

Brave fellows, these savage stoics! Yesterday Cimita came in, his hand a mass of lacerated tissue. Wolf-bite. Beast killed by companions. Wound gangrenous overnight. Amputated above wrist, stump cauterized in boiling deer-fat. Healing satisfactorily. Cimita went unconscious with pain. First question on regaining senses: "How will I shoot my bow?" Hanson our carpenter is making him a wooden hand.

Thus Munro's heroic surgery, aided by the unflinching stoicism of his patients, saved many who otherwise must have joined those buried beside the east wall, each with a terse epitaph burned into a peeled wall-log above his grave.

Meanwhile came word from Barry Edwards that on board the *Narwhal* repairs had been effected. Unfortunately, fire had broken out in the galley and eaten through a sail-locker, destroying most of their spare canvas. But fresh sails had been made by Kamotok of the dried intestines of whatever deer or sea-lions they killed in the ship's vicinity.

The falconet sent from the fort had been mounted near the fore-castle hatch;

and a cradle was already constructed aft to receive the larger cannon Munro had promised to send later in the week. All powder and ball previously sent was safely stored on board.

Everything, indeed, was well on board the *Narwhal*; but at Fort Talking Raven, several odd happenings gave Munro cause for troubled thought. The first was the interception of several additional new-made smoothbores intended for the *Narwhal*. These, along with a large supply of gunpowder, were seized by Half Mouth's warriors almost within view of the fort walls. Half of Munro's men bearing these supplies for the ship did not return.

An hour or two later fire broke out in the east tower, and was extinguished at a price of almost their entire water-supply. And thus far none of their borings had tapped another source of supply.

DOZING on his rifle one night, Flashpan was suddenly awakened by a jerk upon his mustache, and a nervous little simian hand tugging persistently at one ear.

"*Dang* ye, monk—that whisker aint no bell-rope!" he muttered irritably; but on feeling the tremble of the little body on his shoulder, peered squinting intently out into the dark. "Hist—what was that? Oh, bah! Ye've got me nervous, Placer. Owls, ye little coward, owls—hootin' like goblins, back an' forth. A fine sojer y'are, Placer—a fine soj—"

Once again Flashpan went silent, listening. From the darkness came a sound, faint but unmistakable, of several rolling pebbles. "A better sojer than me," amended the miner very softly. "Suthin's a-prowlin' out thar—bigger'n an owl. But whut—er who?" Flashpan fastened his gaze upon the blackness. Then urgently: "Oho! Injins, b'gum. An' I cain't leave me post. But you can. Go git that leetle Injin pal of yours, Tokala—git Tokala, monk! Bring 'im here quick!"

A moment Placer hovered hesitant; next he turned a doubtful cartwheel in the darkness; then suddenly he vanished like a dark flash, swinging down the inner wall and galloping back to where Tokala slept beside his leather water-bucket. A moment later the boy, wide-awake and led by the monkey, appeared stealthily at Flashpan's side.

"Son," whispered the miner swiftly, "bad bizness is in the wind. Injins—sneakin' up toward the spring. I had it

covered with the falconet. But the powder's soaked. Somebody poured water into it—an' she won't shoot. Go wake Doc Munro an' Kias an' Dan; tell 'em—*quick*—whiles I git this gun in workin' order."

Without a word Tokala vanished. . . . Flashpan heard the sound of guarded movements back within the fort. A few moments later three dusky shadows slipped out in the shelter of the inner wall. They were Dan La Salle, Kias the Shoni, and Tengma, his foremost warrior. Armed with pistols, tomahawks and a smoothbore apiece, they crept toward the spring, concealed by the log sluice. Unnoticed, behind these three came another, slower shadow—old Menewa, gripping a tomahawk and eager to aid in the defense of the fort which sheltered his daughter Heladi and others of his friends and loved ones.

Flashpan, meanwhile, worked frantically to empty and reload his falconet.

Menewa had not yet reached the spring when the first of the invaders climbed up the opposite side of the ridge, closely followed by seven others. Straight into their faces Dan and his two Indians fired their pieces, flinging aside the smoothbores to blaze away with their several single-shot pistols, before using their clubs and tomahawks. Surprised in their attempt to divert the spring, the savages faltered, but only momentarily. Though five had fallen at the volleys of the defenders, as many now replaced them. There in the moonlight, in full view of all those in the fort, a fierce fight raged, hand-to-hand.

FROM above Beth and Heladi were watching the struggle with dilated eyes. Suddenly the Indian girl uttered a sharp cry. Brave old Menewa had appeared suddenly to reinforce Dan and his men, swinging right forcefully with his long spiked club. But in his eagerness the old man overreached, stumbled on the precarious footing and went down. Simultaneously a hostile warrior rose beside him, aiming a smashing blow at his skull.

Using his gun as a club, Dan threw himself upon the enemy—struck, missed and went down before the blow intended for Menewa. But in falling he bore the savage also to his knees, and as his last conscious act drove his fist wrist-deep into the Indian's stomach. That, curiously, was the blow which ended the battle of the spring. The hostiles, having failed



in their surprise, gave over the attack and retreated. And as Kias and his warriors retired, bearing Dan between them and with Menewa following, Flashpan let go with his reloaded falconet, throwing a shot among the raiders. Thereafter the guns were booming again, hastening the departure of the enemy.

Sick with fear, Beth saw Dan brought in, covered with blood. Kneeling at his side, Munro examined the great swelling where the club had struck, touched pulse and heart, and reassured her.

"Hard hit, and no mistake. But with care he'll be all right. Keep cold packs on that swelling."

And so it happened that, groping his way out of the unconscious state, Dan La Salle found slim brown fingers moving gently over the bandage round his head, which was pillowed in Heladi's lap. With wonder he saw that her cheeks were wet as she bent above him, and at that his heart gave a mighty bound. For never until now had she given any sign of returning his love.

Feeling him stir, she raised his head against her breast, with some little murmur of endearment. Observing them, Menewa and Beth exchanged smiles. Beth's was crooked and quickly gone. Heladi and Dan had each other; but who was there who could ever occupy the place left vacant in her own heart and life?

Until now the perils of their situation had forced other matters into the background of her mind, and better so; for in some measure she had reconciled herself to Kioga's passing. But the growing attachment between Dan and Heladi opened the old wound. Heavy of heart she turned away and went toward where the fort's injured were sheltered, that she

might forget her grief in allaying the pain of others. . . .

Although the spring was preserved, a question still remained: How were the enemy learning of their plans, and of conditions at the fort? Surely not from outside. More probably from within.

JUST after dawn the following morning, the boom of a cannon came from the cliff across the river. Almost simultaneously a ball screamed into the fort, struck the wall, rebounded—fortunately injuring no one.

How had the enemy obtained that weapon? The question was soon answered, in part; for a hurried check-up showed that one of the falconets and a quantity of powder and balls were missing.

All that day Flashpan estimated ranges and gave shot for shot in an attempt to destroy the enemy battery. His efforts were useless. Slem্প altered his position after each shot. The quarters for women and children had thereafter to be kept closed, lest some wanderer be struck by this new menace.

More of the traitor's work was now discovered. When Flashpan went to the powder-room that night, the door was ajar. Instantly alert, the miner drew his pistol, entered cautiously, and discovered that of all their powder supply, scarce enough remained for twenty demi-cannon rounds. And several smoothbores had also vanished from the gun-room.

Running up on the rampart to inform Munro of this misfortune, he found the scientist and Kias intent upon something near the west wall.

"Your eyes are sharp, Flashpan," said Munro. "What do you make of that spark up at the spring?"

The miner turned his eyes upon it. For a moment he too was puzzled by a tiny speck of light, moving like a firefly toward the source of their water. In an instant realization flashed upon them.

"A fuse!" cried Munro.

"Aye!" roared Flashpan. "And half our powder's been sneaked out!"

Munro's face paled at information which gave that spark a suddenly terrible meaning.

"Flashpan, they've planted a charge at the spring! If it explodes, we're without water."

"Leave it to me, sir," began Flashpan with his customary readiness to assume any responsibility. His voice was drowned in a terrific detonation at the spring. A great ledge of rock slipped into the fort,

showering earth and stones down on the enclosures. The primitive sluiceways which conveyed water into the main storage vessels did not fall. But the flow of fluid through them ceased; the spring was destroyed, the fort waterless, save for what rain-water might be caught.

A desperate council was in discussion of plans to ferret out the traitor, when there came a muffled explosion. The heavy door of the arms-room burst out, torn from its hinges. A billow of smoke rolled over a dead body blackened by powder burns. Flashpan's search was ended before it had well begun. Eccowa lay dead, a coil of barken fuse still clutched tightly in one hand. The traitor was exposed at last; and the eye of the enemy, within the fort, was shut. . . .

Across the gorge, however, separating fort from river-bank, a gnawing fire had long burned against the bole of a certain immense tree rooted near the cliff's edge and slanting precariously outward over the river.

Hour by hour the burn, fed and tended faithfully by Branner, Slem্প's confederate, cut deeper through the mighty trunk. At last Slem্প ordered the fire extinguished, waiting on a coming storm. Glancing across the river he rubbed his hands gleefully.

"Let 'em guard the front door," he muttered. "We'll enter by the servants' entrance, and serve up somethin' they aint expectin'."

The storm struck swiftly, a typical sudden uprising of the elements, accompanied by great resounding thunderbursts and knives of gleaming lightning stabbing through the darkness. A wall of wind advanced toward the fort, bending the mighty forest trees like weed-stalks.

Clutching an out-jutting ledge with both hands, Slem্প watched the weakened tree-trunk intently, wiping rain from his eyes. As the wind pushed, it leaned far out across the stream. Then with a snapping, splintering sound the trunk and roots gave way; a second later the distant crown crashed down on a ledge of rock across the stream on the island. The moat about the fort was bridged.

WITHIN Fort Talking Raven all were busy, filling skins with rain-water; and amid the uproar of the elements the crash of the tree bridging the river passed almost unnoticed. Somewhere near another forest giant had fallen—that was all.

But that was not all. Halfway across the fallen bole, sixty warriors were coming cautiously, armed to the teeth. Nearing the fort, they were covered by the heavy foliage of the great tree's crown. Thus a large force of the enemy had made the crossing before a yell from Kias warned the fort. Discovered, the Long Knives raised their fearful war-whoop, throwing the fort into a confusion of women and children running for shelter in the rooms below the walls, and warriors rushing to their arms.

EMERGING startled from the hospital room, Munro looked on a sight that chilled his heart. Swarming into the fort from that seemingly unscalable river-side wall, came Half-Mouth's savages.

Dismay—that terrible heart-sinking of one who knows not how he has been out-manuevered—clutched at Munro momentarily. Massacre was within his walls.

But at sight of what transpired Munro's old self-command returned. They were surprised, but far from beaten. From the south parapet his sentries poured in a galling fire upon the storming savages, dropping the entire front rank in their tracks. An instant later Kias and his warriors suddenly appeared, charging down upon the intruders and meeting them with their own kind of weapons. Fierce and sudden as was the attack, the resistance was even more fierce and more savage. From the towers the smoothbores spat smoke, flame and hot lead, doing dreadful execution at that range. On the south wall Flashpan trundled around his falconet. Aiming just above the opposite wall, he touched off a blast, and cleared it of every enemy with one rattling slash of iron slugs.

Otowa, one of Kias' warriors, leaped for another falconet, swung it round and trained it on the Long Knives and pulled the cord. Probably, however, the ball had rolled toward the muzzle, owing to the pitch of the slanting barrel; at any rate, the gun burst with a terrible crash, killing Otowa with its flying fragments. This was their last casualty of the fight. For the ferocity and desperation of the defenders, coupled with the power of their smoothbores, proved too much for the invaders, who scattered and quit the fort as they had entered, leaving behind their dead.

In the growing light of morning the bridge was clearly seen spanning the river; and at its far end Slemph had thrown up a breastwork of rubble and

earth, commanding a view of the fort from the shelter of the immense stump.

Dan and Hanson, equipped with iron axes, slipped forth under cover of the trunk and fell to chopping, in an attempt to loosen the bridge and cause it to fall. But it was a futile effort, productive of small result. The iron-hard wood of the tree dulled their inferior tools. And a charge of precious gunpowder, touched off during the following night, did little more than settle the crown of the tree more securely upon the wall, while decreasing the already scanty supply of powder.

Flashpan next attempted to cut through the great trunk by bombarding it with his demi-cannon, but since the balls must be hurled aslant the fallen trunk, the damage was negligible, nor could the missiles do more than graze the enemy earthwork hidden behind it. After several further attempts Flashpan desisted.

Long since, Munro had shipped his accumulated treasure of robes and skins and scientific finds to the *Narwhal*. Last to go were his camera and carefully preserved films, and one cannon, their smallest.

The night after the latest skirmish with the enemy brought final word from the *Narwhal*. Three of Kias' most trusted Indians returned from the ship by trail and canoe, bringing with them one whose coming brought especial joy to Flashpan and his monkey. Placer was first to detect the presence of Nugget, the miner's faithful dog, and he rode his old friend madly about the walls while all the fort laughed at their antics.

Though the forest runners had pierced the warrior-cordon in the short period of laxity following the repulse of the red raiders, the Long Knives quickly renewed their vigilance. Open to momentary attack, it was now clear that lacking ammunition and water, and unable to procure food, the fort could not much longer hold out against the besiegers.

And at this desperate eleventh hour, Munro sent out his last messenger to the ship. Unwilling to risk losing Kias, he chose instead Chacma, a lean and taciturn Wacipi warrior, true as steel, and penciled this note for the little crew on his hidden ship:

My dear Barry:

Your messages arrived and glad to learn that all is well with you. With us things are critical. The fort is now cut off. If this message reaches you, it will be a

miracle. We can't hold out much longer. I tremble for Miss La Salle and our women and children if the savages attack us again in this condition.

If you do not hear from us within ten days, this will be your authority to set sail, and return, if possible, to America. A chart of the shoals and reefs is in my cabin. It would be useless for you to attempt to come to our aid. A few days will see our finish, barring aid from the Almighty Himself. We are saving our last bullets for each other.

We all send our best wishes.

Munro.

BEARING this message, Chacma departed secretly from the fort. But just before he had left, as it happened, scouts brought to Slep and his white renegades information they had long awaited: the berth of the *Narwhal* had at last been discovered.

Knowing that the ship might change her location, but that the fort must remain until they returned, the renegade whites set off for the coast, leaving the Indians under Half Mouth to maintain the siege. It was their intention to take possession of the *Narwhal* against the nearing hour when the fort must fall; having obtained Flashpan's treasure for themselves, they would then leave the fort and its gallant defenders to the tender mercies of their Indian allies.

So it came about that just as Chacma was drawing forth a dugout from its place of concealment in an under-shore cavern, the long-boat bearing Slep and his men swept suddenly into view, propelled by several muscular paint-streaked savages—Long Knives, by the paint-markings on faces and breasts.

Slep leveled his gun and spoke:

"Halt, you! Stand where you are!"

Wheeling, Chacma found several guns trained upon his heart. Recent experience had taught him their killing power. In no doubt as to what would reward disobedience, and knowing how much depended upon his arrival at the *Narwhal* with that message in his pouch, brave Chacma nevertheless sought to escape into the shore brush.

Slep's gun cracked; Chacma fell face forward into the underbrush as the canoe came upon him, bleeding from the head and by every evidence already a corpse. From his waist Slep plundered the pouch. And presently he turned triumphantly to his companions, flourishing Munro's message.

"We've got 'em smartin' in the fort," he declared with gleaming eyes. "An' here's our passport onto the *Narwhal*. We'll take the ship first thing we do, and then come back and take the fort. Our luck is changed, boys!"

Attracted by sound of the shot, and flattened close against a cliff a hundred feet above, a narrow-eyed witness to the death of Chacma looked down upon the scene and sought vainly to overhear what the white men were saying. Now as the swift canoe forged downstream and out of sight, that lurking shadow dropped to the river beside the fallen Indian and sought for signs of life.

Irked by the comparatively slow progress of the Shoni canoes, Kioga had hours since taken to the river overhang for several miles; whereafter by a short route which avoided the longer windings of the river, he came upon the scene of Chacma's downfall. Despite the appearance of death, the Indian still lived. Cold water at lips and temples revived him enough haltingly to answer the few questions Kioga put to him. Presently he could speak no more, and in a few minutes expired. And though Kioga had learned much, there were certain facts he had not uncovered. Chacma had not told whither he had been going when attacked; nor did the Indian live long enough to realize that he had been robbed of his message to the *Narwhal*. Had Kioga learned the contents of that note and the intentions of the renegade whites, matters would have gone altogether differently.

As it was, Kioga put aside all thought of pursuing the canoe bearing the whites, and turned back to intercept his Shoni warriors.

SLEMP'S canoe proceeded swiftly in the opposite direction as far as river travel permitted. The mixed party then set forth overland through the forest, and came finally to the sea-cliffs. Down the narrow paths they filed, guided by their scout who had located the *Narwhal*; soon they found themselves above the well-camouflaged cove in which, until a few days ago, the ship had remained successfully hidden. And dispatching a Long Knife warrior in place of Chacma to the ship with Munro's written message, Slep concealed himself with his band a short distance along the shore.

On board the *Narwhal* young Edwards, assistant to Dr. Munro on many previous scientific enterprises, saw the arrival of



“Why do you draw back?” Kioga asked. “Did you come all this way to Nato’wa to do that?”

a messenger, with mixed pleasure and apprehension. Insufficiently versed in the marks of clan and tribe to be able to pierce the impostor’s identity, he received the silent savage with a show of welcome and the gift of a trinket.

After having read Munro’s tragic message, he could think of little else, in his preoccupation with ways and means of aiding those in the fort. Besides himself, only Edson the mate and Kamotok the Eskimo were on board the *Narwhal*. Indeed, it was Kamotok who unwittingly had betrayed the ship to the enemy, for the barking of one of the dogs, brought on deck for exercise, had attracted attention in the forest.

Re-reading the note, Edwards laid its contents before the others. “We can follow orders, or we can go to their aid,” he said tersely. “Which will it be?”

For answer Kamotok took down from the cabin wall his favorite harpoon, and tried its edge on his thumb suggestively.

“You’re my superior, Mr. Edwards,” said Edson quietly, “and I’m here to take your orders. But not if you order me to sail and leave them starving in the fort.”

“If the three of us go,” said Edwards, as though himself, “it will mean leaving the ship alone.”

“Ship or no ship,” returned Edson, “I’d rather pass out trying to help ’em than tell the world we don’t know how they died. This fellow,”—indicating the watchful savage,—“can take us to the fort. And to make sure of him, Kamotok can keep his harpoon handy. But I’m speaking out of turn, sir. You didn’t ask me.”

“Edson,” said Barry Edwards softly but fervently, “you’re a brick.”

In sign talk Munro’s young scientific collaborator then made clear to the Indian their desire to be conducted back to the fort. The savage nodded understanding. Arming themselves and taking along

as large a supply of food as they could carry, the three men quitted the ship to carry aid to the unfortunate occupants of Fort Talking Raven—led by Slempe's own warrior!

They had scarcely vanished inland before Slempe and his men drew near the ship and stealthily boarded her by way of her rope ladders stretched from rocks to deck. At high tide they cast off her lines and warped her slowly out of the cove which had been her station for many months. By means of her engine they turned north a little distance and dropped anchor. Assuring themselves that the ship was well provisioned and equipped with small-arms, powder and shot for the little homemade cannon mounted fore and aft, they left her under guard and set out toward the fort. Its inevitable downfall accomplished, its gold once seized and brought hither, they need worry no longer about an avenue of escape out to sea and back to civilization.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE BATTLE OF THE BUCKSKIN MEN

A SUDDEN attack upon Fort Talking Raven by Half-Mouth's savages, persisted in to the bitter end, might this day have carried the stronghold. But long impatient with a method of warfare which had cost him many warriors and his white confederates nothing, in the absence of his pale-face allies, Shingas played a waiting game for a time.

Hourly the savory smells of meat, roasting in the hidden bivouacs of the enemy, drifted up to the fort, multiplying the hunger of its inmates. The last of the collected water was exhausted, with little prospect of rain to replenish it. Their rations had reached the vanishing-point. Yet no one complained. All went about their duties silently.

Of those who had gone forth to pierce the enemy line, none had yet come back. Finally Kias, twice scouting out alone, returned. "In numbers they are like the pine-needles. They watch night and day," was his report before the tense little circle of the defenders. "No man may pass through."

The words fell like sentence of death upon the ears of all within those battered walls—all save one, small and unnoticed, intently listening on the fringe of the council circle.

With quickening heart Tokala repeated the words through silent lips. From

face to face his sharp eyes flew. The confident smiles of yesterday were gone. On each was graven the lines of care and of near-despair. Even Flashpan worried fiercely at his straggly mustache; and at his side, as if to set the final seal of calamity upon the fort, crouched Placer the irrepressible—now the picture of simian dejection.

DAY by day Tokala had listened at the councils of his elders. The rumor that Kioga still lived had set his heart on fire. The leaving of Wehoka on his search had thrilled him to the core. What if his elders now discredited the report—Tokala had a faith that knew no obstacles! To him the Snow Hawk was immortal.

"No man may pass." Again the words echoed in his ears. And then Tokala's eyes came suddenly alight, like wind-fanned coals. In an instant the great idea sprang full-born into being. "If not a man, mayhap a fox might pass!"

On the very verge of blurting out his thoughts, Tokala bit his tongue to stop the words. These about him were full-grown men; and he, the Fox, was nothing but a boy—good enough to swab the muzzle of a gun, perhaps, but in times of danger cooped up in the redoubt with the women. If they divined what he contemplated, it would surely be forbidden.

He stole to the wall and climbed rapidly the ladder near the south tower. Peering over the inner rail, he took a last look. As before, the circle of men sat grim-faced about the fire. Tokala turned away.

Near the tower was kept a length of rope from the *Narwhal*. Groping in the dark, he found an end, made it fast to the nearest cannon and tossed the strand over the wall. Quietly he slid down to the outer ground, paused to listen for any sound to indicate discovery from within or without the walls. There was none. With every nerve keyed to highest tension, he slipped into the nearest thicket.

Not a hundred feet from the walls he came upon the first evidences of the enemy—the glow of small camp-fires, hooded from view of the fort and closely spaced. One by one of these he crept past in the gloom, seeking an avenue through which he might slip. In circling he came at last to the river Hiwasi. Here too the Long Knives were waiting in numbers. But cunning and sly deceit might yet prevail. Not for nothing was

Tokala named the Fox! Boldly he stepped forward into the fire's light, tomahawk in hand.

As one man, the squatting warriors sprang quickly to their feet, ere relaxing on perceiving that a mere boy stood there. One of their number seized him roughly by the arm, demanding fiercely: "What do you here?"

"I am from Hopeka," quoth Tokala defiantly, writhing in the warrior's grasp. "I would fight the enemy." A general laugh arose as Tokala brandished his weapon.

The brave who held him turned grinning to the others. "Shall we admit him to our band—what think you, warriors?"

"*Ahau!*" came an answer. "Let him stay. We may grow hungry. Little boys are sweet and tender."

"How will you be eaten," asked the first warrior sternly of Tokala, "—roasted or boiled?"

"Raw—if first I take an enemy scalp," answered Tokala swiftly; whereat another laugh rewarded his daring.

"He is too small to take a life," said a third savage. "What use will he be to us—if we do not eat him?"

"I will sharpen your knives and clean your guns," said Tokala, gaining confidence momentarily. "I will watch while you sleep."

"*Ho!*" answered the first speaker. "Wisdom from the lips of childhood! Better in the camp than in the belly." Laughing at this crude sally, the warrior gave Tokala a fat deer leg-bone to gnaw on. "When you have done with that, act as you talk. And see to our knives as well. White men's scalps are tough."

Tokala did as he was bidden, assiduously whetting away at arrow-points and knife-blades with a flat stone. Presently a warrior lay back and dozed. Others followed suit until but two sat up, awake.

"I weary of this kind of fighting," said one at last. "I too will sleep. Keep watch, O Crooked Nose!" And with that, he too lay back.

MINUTES passed, the silence broken only by the monotonous scraping of Tokala's stone. For a time Crooked Nose watched, gaping and stretching to keep awake. Glancing at the other sleepers, he took from the fire a lighted stick six inches long. Removing a moccasin, he placed the stick between great and second toe. Closing his eyes, he nodded the little time it took for the stick to burn short and wake him. A glance

around showed Tokala still at work. No one could take them by surprise. Taking up a longer stick, the sentry repeated the trick and composed himself again.

THIS time Tokala's eyes were on him keenly. Softly he crept near and gently moved the fire-stick. Crooked Nose stirred. Tokala drew back, not again to touch the stick. Instead he threw a handful of damp earth upon it, quenching the little flame.

Watching the man a moment, Tokala crept back to his little heap of weapons. Glancing round, he saw that none were awake. Now from the guns he shook the priming powder, replacing it with earth; and from each arrow quickly stripped the guiding feathers. A last pistol remained of the few firearms the little band had acquired from the fort itself. Looking to flint and steel as Flashpan had taught him, Tokala thrust it through his belt. The fire flickered and dimmed, as the warriors slept. When it brightened again, Tokala's place was vacant.

Along the banks of the Hiwasi, Tokala crept north away from the immediate area of hostilities. The forest animals, which had quitted that noisome vicinity, became more abundant. He almost trod upon a sleeping water-snake—he heard it strike as he jumped away; and he startled a deer, which fled in turn. Some prowling creature which he could not see sneezed almost at his elbow; and across the river a tiger's eyes burned redly at the drinking level.

But the Fox kept the stream in hearing, and clutched his pistol the more tightly. Hour on hour he trudged the trail, more wearily as time progressed. At last, in exhaustion, he paused in a gorge through which the river ran. Upon an elevated ledge he lay down to steal a moment's rest. He had no chance to fight off sleep. It assailed him the moment he stretched out. . . .

But sleep and fate were this night brothers. When Tokala awoke, it was to glimpse two canoes forging down the river. And in the foremost, alive and in the flesh, sat—Kioga!

In his haste to greet the Snow Hawk, Tokala almost slipped from the ledge with excitement. But eager hands hauled him safely into the canoe, and anxious ears heard his swift account.

"Two hours yet to sunrise," said the Snow Hawk when he had done. "The Long Knives will be guarding only

against the escape of those inside the fort. If we be quick, we'll pierce their line in safety."

His words proved true. Tokala had slept but a little while, and as the two canoes raced toward where but recently he had sat amid the enemy, the camp was just awakening to find that their youthful guest had disappeared. Indeed, hardly had Crooked Nose announced the fact, when Kioga's long-boats shot into their view. The surprise was complete. The speeding craft were broadside on before the enemy seized their weapons and leveled them at the paddling warriors.

Then uprose furious yells of quick dismay. For Tokala had worked cunningly. Not a gun discharged its bullet. Loosing forth their arrows, the Long Knives saw them darting every way but the right way; for nothing is more erratic than an unfeathered shaft—and the Fox had stripped them all of vanes.

Infuriated, one of the Indians raced along the bank, thinking to dislodge a great stone upon the passing canoes.

Tokala, holding the heavy pistol in both hands, steadied the muzzle on a gunwale, leveled, and fired. The ball flew wide, but checked the Indian's enthusiasm none the less. In another instant the danger-zone was well behind.

WHEN the savages delivered their final attack against Fort Talking Raven, it was with the one weapon against which the fort would be helpless. At a little past midnight the first arrows, tipped with flaming pitch, arched crackling into the fort. Such as could be immediately reached by the besieged were instantly stamped out. But there were others which pierced the tower, well dried by the previous fire, and swiftly set it to blazing.

With axes Dan and a number of others attacked the blaze, chopping away burning timbers in the tower. They checked the fire finally with buckets of earth, taken in this hour of extremity from atop the new graves at the east wall. But in the overhanging pall of smoke the Indian attack came with terrifying suddenness. From the north rampart, via the great fallen tree, and up over the south wall, Shingas poured his strength of men in two fierce waves of stout, well-fed warriors, each bearing a torch in one hand and a tomahawk in the other.

The half-starved men within the walls met them hand to hand. Already the women and children had been herded

into the redoubt formed by the living quarters at the north wall. From every corner the falconets spoke loudly, scattering death among the invaders. On the south wall Dan and ten warriors coped as best they could with the storming party, driving their lances home before many of the Indians could grasp the parapet in their upward climb.

But soon the falconets were silent for lack of ball. Still the enemy poured into the fort. Beside himself with battle fury, Flashpan went berserk. Uttering a blood-curdling whoop, he vanished in the furnace-room and reappeared bent under the weight of several deer-skin bags.

During a momentary lull Munro could hear him shouting down upon the enemy, as from the sacks he drew forth nuggets of gold by the double-handfuls and shoved them back into the falconets in lieu of other shot. He worked swiftly, with a mad glare in his eyes and a wild twist to his mustaches.

"Gold ye wanted, was it?" he shrilled out above the enemy warriors' heads to where Mad Crow the renegade could be seen urging on his red-skinned warriors. "Then gold ye'll git!" cried Flashpan.

Aiming his guns, he waited until the Indians drew closer. Then with a crash he loosed the first barrel, mowing down the attackers with richer slugs than ever came from cannon's mouth before. Now the second muzzle spewed forth its deadly treasure. Crash after crash, yell after frenzied yell from Flashpan, bespoke the swift exhaustion of the little miner's gleaming hoard. When all was gone save a small quantity, he threw the empty bags upon their heads, then rolled forward the falconets themselves, and hurled his seaman's cap, his empty pistol and whatever else came to hand, down full upon the enemy heads.

A moment later, wrapped in wisps of smoke like the very genius of battle, the miner, crouching gnomelike, vanished actively down the stair and ran toward the redoubt, where presently all the defenders assembled and knelt to fire, backs to wall.

HERE and there among the gallant little company a figure toppled forward and lay still. Hanson was of these, grievously wounded through the chest by a Long Knife arrow. Kias, twice wounded by bullets from guns which Flashpan had fashioned, fought on. Munro loaded and fired continually, though suffering from an immense swell-

ing over one eye raised by a flying missile.

One by one the others followed Flashpan, slowly backing, in this final retreat, toward the last stronghold—the living-quarters, whose slitted loopholed walls formed the fort's redoubt. Sixty Long Knives held the fort at last—all save that redoubt bristling with the muzzles of Munro's guns.

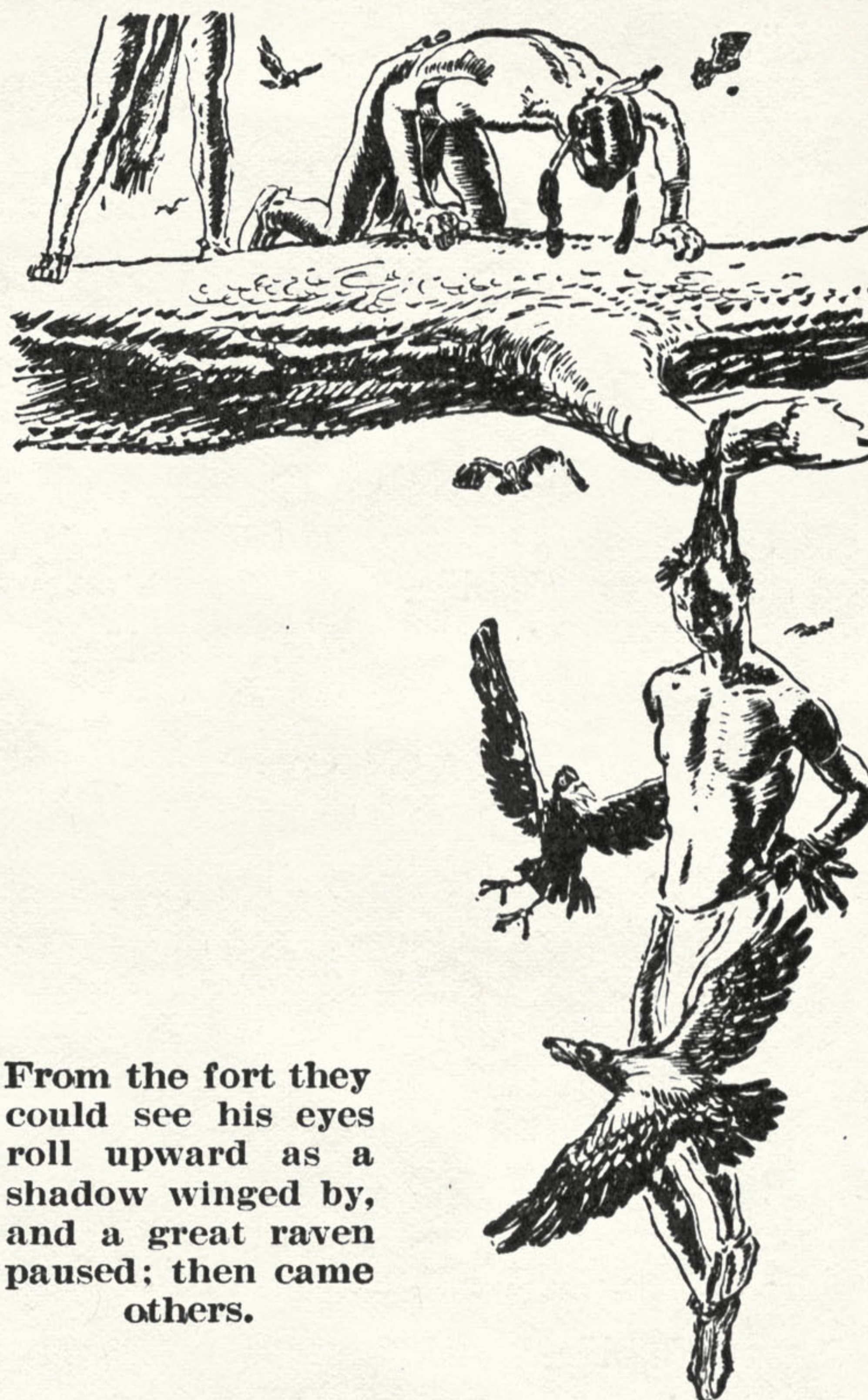
Three times the invaders charged those staring slits and loopholes, thrice withering before the blast that scorched them from within. But when for the last time the Long Knives came forward, the guns were all but still. Ammunition almost exhausted, their poor strength strained to the final limits of human endurance, the emaciated defenders but waited for the end, determined to save their last bullets for each other.

PALE but calm, Beth and Heladi sat side by side, speechless amid the uproar. Equally calm, but grim with the expectation of death, Munro and Dan knelt at their posts, grimy with sweat and powder-smoke. The occasional twang of a bow sounded within the redoubt, but the arrows were almost all gone. Within the redoubt children clutched at their mothers' skirts; an occasional bullet found its way in at the loopholes and struck viciously into the stone wall at their backs.

Suffocating smoke from the smudges lighted by the enemy, began to penetrate the redoubt, adding tenfold to the miseries of the occupants. Amid the eddying whorls, a savage painted visage appeared suddenly at one loophole, and reaching in, pointed a pistol at Dan's head.

Snatching up a musket from the ground beside her, Beth thrust its muzzle against the paint-streaked temple and pulled the trigger. She saw the painted face disappear, and herself leaned against the wall, suddenly sick and faint. Recovering, she returned to continue loading the muskets while Munro and the men still on their feet subjected the enemy to a final murderous cross-fire.

It was, however, but a futile, gallant gesture by that indomitable little band, with their backs to the wall. As the attack continued unabated, despair invaded the redoubt. Alone, the white men and their Indian friends could have fought to the bitter end without flinching. But realization of the fate awaiting their women and children embittered these final moments. Complete dejection had



From the fort they could see his eyes roll upward as a shadow winged by, and a great raven paused; then came others.

at last overwhelmed the wonderful resistance which had withstood all assaults but those of hunger and thirst.

Grim and white-faced, the besieged charged their weapons for the last time. While some guarded the loopholes, with heavy hearts their companions turned toward those who could not be permitted to fall into the cruel hands of the Indians for torture.

Knowing that death by pistol-shot was a mercy compared to capture by the Long Knives, the aged and the women and their few children quietly bade one another farewell and stood forward. With a last murmur to Beth, Heladi came over to Dan. Without a word she went into his arms, gave him her lips, then drawing swiftly back, stood erect and ready.

As he grasped his pistol, beads of sweat mingled and rolled down Dan's blackened brow, streaking it white. The weapon in his hand shook and fell as if his arm were paralyzed.

"Quick, Dan!" Heladi urged.

"God forgive me—I can't do it!" cried Dan, his voice choking.

Beth stood suddenly forth, cool as ice.

"Let me," she said quietly. Yielding up the pistol, Dan turned aside. There was a moment's pause. He wondered



Beth La Salle

dully if Beth could bring herself to perform the heroic mercy for Heladi, at which he had weakened. But he reckoned without her pioneer ancestry. He heard a click and the puff of priming powder close behind him—and simultaneously a cry from some near place without the walls; as deep and sinister a yell as ever broke from human throat.

Dan's blood ran cold. For all his manhood, Munro himself felt a little shiver run up and down his spine. Kias leaped as if snake-bitten, and twenty warriors with him.

Wheeling, Dan turned toward Heladi, expecting to find her crumpled. He saw instead a strange glad light in her eyes; while Beth stood staring at the pistol which had missed fire.

Again came that singular yell, closer now, every syllable clear and distinct. Amid all the uproar Munro could make nothing of the excitement among his Indians. But the meaning of the cry had affected the Long Knives as well. Checked in full rush, a babel of tongues arose, questioning, answering, denying—but what, no white man could have told.

Then, of a sudden, clear and shrill above the din of battle, came a lesser piercing cry. A small active figure appeared above the wall, where the fallen tree had overtopped its height. Two rifles instantly swung upon it. But Flashpan shouted:

"The cowards have sent a boy to do their dirty work—don't fire!" Then menacingly to the figure on the wall, obscured by smoke and semi-darkness; "Who be ye? Quick!—afore I drop ye!"

"Tokala!" came the treble answer, and then in shrill notes of boyish triumph: "Kioga the Snow Hawk comes, with Wehoka and twenty warriors!"

"Hooray!" howled Flashpan, then suddenly realizing Tokala's peril: "Git off the wall! Jump—I'll catch ye!"

Obeying, Tokala fell through space, his impact carrying both to the ground, but without injury. Together they were pulled by eager hands into the redoubt.

Quick commands brought order out of chaos. Munro led his little band from the fortified redoubt, through the chain of rooms, to where they commanded a view of the northern wall.

As they watched, a face appeared above the log head-cover. At sight of it Heladi caught a sudden breath. Beth's heart stopped as if she looked upon a ghost. Munro and La Salle stood rooted and speechless, doubting the evidence of their own eyes.

But on glimpsing that familiar and unmistakable face, Kias the Shoni gave the single welcoming call: "Kioga! *K'gonami!*—*Kioga!*"

The words were like some magic formula poured into the arteries of the Indians of the fort. Back to the wall they had stood—defeated, all but defenseless. But Kias' answer to the battle-yell, which had so often led them on to victory, ran like an electric shock through all their frames.

They flung wide the heavy doors and hurled themselves upon the startled Long Knives. From above, one by one and two by two, Kioga's warriors were coming into the fort. From twenty feet above the wall, amid the branches of the fallen tree-crown, Kioga was seen to drop, alighting upon a ledge like a bundle of loose-coiled springs, to bound along it toward the south wall where the fighting now raged hottest.

IN among the combatants he darted, dealing those lightning blows whose every fall laid low a warrior. Two savages sprang upon him, and were themselves hurled senseless to the base of the parapet. Aim and fire before, it was cut and thrust now. Roused by the advent of assistance Dan and his men fought with new fury, plying their clubbed pistols and reversed rifles with terrible effect, driving the Long Knives back into the fires they themselves had kindled.

In less time than it takes to tell of it the wall was cleared.

Just below the wall the gates sagged to the assaults from outside where a group of Half Mouth's Indians, unaware of what was transpiring within, sought to batter down the barrier. Presently

the doors gave way before the ram. Snatching up a military flail, Kioga dropped to the gates below, carrying down a Long Knife in his spring.

With tremendous swings of the deadly loose-coupled weapon he drove back the invaders almost single-handed, while several warriors tried to shut the ponderous barrier. But one of the huge iron hinges had parted and their efforts proved of no avail. Waving them aside, Kioga set back and shoulder against the gate, locked loins and thighs, and turned on the mighty generators of his strength.

The massive gate lifted, creaking. Exerting every ounce of his power, the Snow Hawk crashed it home, and Munro jammed a log against it. The fort was closed against the enemy outside.

Within, the battle raged with doubled fury, the Long Knives determined to sell their lives dearly, the defenders striving that not one man should leave alive.

Like wolves and leopards in a common pit, the entire court was filled with fighting warriors, red and white. No quarter asked, no quarter given; knife to club, tomahawk to spear.

HERE stands a Long Knife, striving to wrest a club from his foe. Then—stone meets skull, and the victor seeks another foe. There struggle two warriors, locked like twining, twisting serpents, each with a broken knife, carving his opponent's back to ribbons. Upon the wall two combatants at throat-grips wrestle. One falls to knees and drags his foeman down; both topple to the court and lie inert and motionless, still locked. . . .

A little rain begins to fall. No one notices in the heat of battle, smoke and blazing logs. From above a voice calls out. As one man the defenders leap from the court and man the walls. Forty bows strain at full tension; forty gut-strings twang with a single æolian chord. The barbs slash down and pierce and kill. It is the end. The fort is held. In the court nothing moves, nothing twitches. All is death below the swirls of heavy smoke.

A door opens in the arms-room. A girl comes forth—Heladi, savage woman, inured to sights of blood and sudden death. One look, and she turns back, to faint into Beth La Salle's open arms.

On the walls men speak in bated tones. Rain falls with a mounting roar. Thirsty men drink from little pools and slosh water on their heated brows. All look away from that central court.



Lincoln Rand
— who became
the Snow Hawk

Suddenly a small figure, wandering in search of a long-tailed monkey, darts out among the dead. Shrinking from one to another, like one entranced by goblin horrors, he stands quite still at last amid the dead.

Thus Kioga found Tokala as he returned from a last glance over the sound wall to see the enemy in full retreat. Placer the monkey had sprung from nowhere to Tokala's shoulder, gibbering there like the very soul of fear. Snatching both into his arms, the Snow Hawk bore them from the reeking court into the arms-room.

He spoke no word as yet to Beth, but hurried out again and mounting the north wall, paused to watch a savage bit of drama being enacted on the tree which spanned the river.

The battle was not quite over. Seeking only escape, out upon the great bole Shingas stumbled. With a deep whoop of triumph, Kias the Shoni closed upon the shaman from behind. Then above the river the full ferocity of primitive men was given grim play.

They were at each other's throats, Shingas armed with a knife, Kias buckled only by his vow to avenge his fellow-clansman, victim of Half Mouth's gift of poisoned meat. The shaman, turning, brought his knife upward in a curving stroke aimed at Kias' vitals, but Kias' fingers linked about his wrist, turning the blow and twisting until Half Mouth dropped the knife flashing into the river below. For an instant the shaman fought with teeth and nails, seeking to maim or gouge.

With deadly purpose Kias waited his chance, and struck suddenly with his clenched hand, knocking breath from the witch-doctor's body, and flinging him prone across a limb. Reaching swiftly for the shaman's braids, he worked them

into a knot, reinforced with a strip of rawhide. With the remainder of the rawhide thong he tied Half Mouth's hands behind his back.

In an instant the grim work was done, and Shingas hung swinging from a limb by his hair, only space and the river far below him. From the fort the occupants could see his eyes roll upward as a dark shadow winged slowly by, and a great raven paused; then alighted on a branch that sagged under its weight. . . . Then came others. Slowly the ring of black drew near. In a moment more the hanging figure was blotted from view by black wings and feathers.

The Indians in the fort watched steadily; the whites turned aside, revolted. But they were spared any outcry from Shingas. Fear did swiftly what the carrion-birds would have prolonged. . . . Shingas had died of utter terror. Darkness shut out the sight. The night passed; in the morning only a few strings of hair still blew in the breeze. Ravens, the Indians say, do not devour hair.

INSIDE the arms-room Beth La Salle, with swiftly beating heart, saw the door swing wide to admit one for whom she had crossed a continent and two seas. Panic seized her when she glimpsed Kioga's strange arresting eyes, the strong lines of his features softened as never before. Rigid and trembling, she felt strong arms encompass her swiftly.

But presently her civilized woman's restraint returned. Sensing this, Kioga held her less fiercely.

"Why do you draw back?" he asked her softly. "Did you come all this way to Nato'wa to do that?"

Some of her deserting wits returned.

"How can you be so sure of that?" she asked.

For answer he removed a little scroll of birch-bark from his belt-pouch and held it where she might read the despairing note she had left in the mountain cave, in the belief that he was dead. This time she did not draw back. . . .

Deep dark eyes upon Kioga, Heladi stood with Dan watching the reunion of the white girl and the Snow Hawk, with an emotion not even the uneasy La Salle could fathom. He knew Heladi had given him her love, believing Kioga dead. Would the Snow Hawk's revival raise that old barrier between them?

As Kioga and Beth came into the court, Dan La Salle withdrew to one side. Beth drew back a little also. that

Kioga and Heladi might meet alone. And she too knew a twinge of fear, for Heladi seemed more beautiful now than ever.

But Kioga and Heladi remained apart, still looking upon each other in silence, the man with simple pleasure, the girl with thoughts that will ever be a mystery. When they spoke it was in softest Wacipi—Heladi's dialect—that no one in the fort could hear. But presently the Indian girl's eyes lowered. Quietly she moved away and came to stand beside Dan. Removing an ornament from about her neck, Heladi placed it round Dan La Salle's. Thus, by the custom of her tribe, she made known her pledge to him.

REPULSED, the Long Knives licked their wounds in the forests surrounding Fort Talking Raven. Though discouraged and decimated by their final defeat, in the return of the Snow Hawk they had perhaps the one spur that could have induced them again to attempt the storming of the walls. For of all men Kioga, former warrior chieftain of the Seven Shoni Tribes, was one who could swiftest wreck their plans and organize opposition to the Long Knife rebellion.

Already the Indians had retaken possession of their work opposite the north wall, which Kioga and his warriors had found abandoned on their arrival at the bridge. Commanding this with a falconet, ready to blast down whosoever set foot upon it, the Long Knives also thronged the forest on the island itself; while up and down the riverways word had passed that the Snow Hawk was still alive, bringing consternation or wild rejoicing wherever the news became known.

In Fort Talking Raven, affairs had improved. One of Kioga's warriors had brought in a load of dried meat from the canoe supply. Rain had replenished their water store. Others of the newcomers shared their personal belt supplies of acorn meal with the hungry occupants of the fort. And as if sent from heaven itself, the night brought a flock of migrating geese to the walls. Twenty were shot down, cooked and eaten. And that night, by the firelight, amid stillness broken only by a far wolf's howl, Kioga told his listeners all that had befallen him since the time he had left civilization to return to Nato'wa.

Later, in council, it was determined to quit the fort. From the warriors he had encountered on the river Kioga had learned that a friendly welcome would

await the Indians at the upper river villages. Without an adequate water-supply and with food scarce and hard to bring into the fort, it seemed wiser for the whites to strike seaward to the well-provisioned *Narwhal*, before it had time to act upon Munro's earlier instructions to sail away.

Under cover of dark and fog, in the silence of the night, the plan was executed. Using ropes and a block from the ship, one after another of the occupants were lowered to the river-bank. Kioga's warriors brought up their sturdy dugouts. And an hour before dawn the enemy besieged an empty fort.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE RUNNING OF THE GANTLET

HAVING made their farewells within the fort, in utter silence Kioga embarked his own party in the waiting dugouts and gave the signal to push off. The Indians paddled off northward toward the distant friendly villages. The whites, accompanied by Kioga and his red-skinned friends, turned southward.

The paddles dipped as one; the shore faded behind; the mists enwrapped them.

In silent procession, roped together to forestall separation, the three craft moved slowly downstream with their human freight. Thus they passed the junctions of streams, and Hopeka village itself, well covered by the friendly vapors. Then suddenly, intensified by the mists, a questioning call rang out, close by.

Instantly the paddlers ceased laboring. Watching from amidships in the central canoe, Beth observed all the warriors' eyes fixed upon a single point. Seated at the bow, eyes riveted upon the water close below, crouched the Snow Hawk. On his signaling hand the eyes of all were fastened. What he saw to be guided by on that ever-changing surface only Kioga knew. Among the myriad ripples only his eye could have detected the little whirls of recent paddles, at sight of which he signaled for a sharp left turn. The turn was made. A moment later the voices of Indians, close behind them on their quarter, could be distinctly heard.

Their present movements were a blind groping in a world of nacreous half-tones. The mists hung down like muslin veils, visibly rising a few feet, then lowering inexplicably. Sometimes they had a glimpse of open space for fifty feet,

through wisps of smoky cloud hanging in tenuous passages, then merging into obscurity again.

Skirting close to shore, they heard a snow-leopard grate harshly. Dog and monkey showed teeth and fangs; but as if comprehending the need for silence, they made no sound. An instant later they glided upon a cowering fawn, so silently that it started only after they had passed. The analogy was clear: Both the deer and they were now among the hunted. . . .

Not until this moment had Beth realized how completely the outcome of their daring break from the fort hung upon Kioga's instantaneous decisions. Yet with the enemy long-boats fairly surrounding them, she experienced not the slightest fear, but only a fierce exhilaration. A wave of pride and gladness surged over her as he turned, saying:

"We're almost through them now."

He spoke too soon. Others had played the silent waiting game. Across their quarter, distant some ten yards, two long-boats rushed upon them under full way. It was close and fight this time, accomplished by the war-dugouts with astonishing quickness. The canoe bearing the white party dropped back, facing the foe to present a narrow mark.

The remaining two darted forward. The four combatant craft came together with a rush. Sheer weight told. The dugouts, hard-driven, crashed into the lighter birch-barks, glanced off and drove onward. And as they passed, with their hook-like river spears Kioga's men slashed the bottoms of the enemy, which filled rapidly.

Another moment found them well past the point of danger. Behind them the canoe-pack was in full cry now. But the mists still hid one foe from the other. The gantlet was run.

Bristling with random shafts and river-men's slim spears, the dugouts made swift headway toward their destination. The fleeing band camped that night on shore, having left their canoes behind on their journey to the coast.

BY the light of the cooking-fires Munro made his last entries in his diary, confiding it and his store of sketches and drawings to a runner, who went ahead of the main party with a note informing the *Narwhal* of their coming.

(I pause perforce at this point in my narrative, faced by a difficult dilemma. Until now I have drawn upon the record

kept by James Munro—a record whose later passages are writ in ink made from gunpowder mixed with water. But Munro made his final entries before dispatching the diary to the *Narwhal*. The diary, consequently, tells nothing of what trans-

Reduced to plain essentials from the poorly written, illiterate and badly sequenced notes of an ignorant seaman, I adduce the following facts, found under the icy hand of one who was dead aboard the *Narwhal* for many months



pired thereafter. Happily, I possess two other sources enabling me to continue—the written confession of one of the renegades; and an astonishing motion-picture film which, taken by the aid of the new infra-red photography, is truly extraordinary.

It will be remembered that the *Narwhal* actually returned to the ken of civilized men. Her sails were torn as by grape-shot; the arrows and spears of a strange race protruded from her sides. She bore a peculiar equipment of primitive guns, and a priceless treasure of aboriginal relics and artifacts. And there were none but dead men aboard her.

Yet through the medium of pencil and paper, in obedience to the scourging of conscience and the fear of death, one of those dead has spoken. What immediately follows is taken from his written confession.—Author.)

before the winds and currents cast her out of unknown seas with her strange and absorbing riddle:

Under sail and engine power the *Narwhal* made good her escape to the open sea, following the chart Munro had drawn on his course inland. Branner, shot dead at the wheel, was carried below and laid in the main cabin. Mad Crow also died of gunshot wounds, sustained in the cabin when a shot came through

the open porthole. Only Peters, the writer of the confession—one of those succored from the ice by the *Narwhal*—and the wounded Mitchell, Slemph's right-hand man, remained alive to pilot the ship.

After their ordeal of passage through the reefs, neither had the strength to carry the dead on deck for burial overside. Fortunately, it turned freezing cold. The dead were speedily refrigerated.

The engine soon failed. The *Narwhal* proceeded under a few square yards of

sail—the gut sail of Kamotok's manufacture. Mitchell, suffering from his wound, grew steadily worse and threatened to do Peters violence. One day, as the sick man stood on deck, he suddenly drew a pistol. Peters fired first, and at a roll of the ship Mitchell pitched over into the sea to sink and vanish.

With food in plenty, Peters could not eat. His teeth had been shot away in one of the raids on the fort. Hoar-frost sealed up the door leading to where wa-



Into view came a party of whites and Indians. . . . Bows were bent; arrows whisked toward the ship. But the shore continued to recede, while Flashpan labored at his gun.

ter was kept. Peters' diminished strength was unequal to battering the door down.

Perceiving his end near at hand, belatedly he sought to make peace with his Creator by writing a full confession, ending with the following entry:

December 26, 19—.

To-day . . . (*indecipherable*) . . . last day. All dead . . . but me. Last day. God forgive . . . (*remainder indecipherable.*)

So ends that illiterate note found under the cold hand of the last man to give up his ghost on the death-ship *Narwhal*. With food and drink on board, and every possibility of surviving for several years, the icy finger of the frigid North found a way into the vessel and robbed all on board of life; then as if in grim jest preserved one man in the semblance of life and cast the ship before the eyes of living men.

Thus from the hand of an actor in the drama, comes knowledge of what befell the *Narwhal* after she sailed from Nato'wa on her last voyage which was destined to end in fire, explosion and shipwreck in northern waters. Thus ends the saga of the *Narwhal*—a science-ship, discovery-ship, warship, and at last, funeral-ship.

BUT of the Kioga the Snow Hawk, of James Munro, Beth, Dan and all the others of that gallant little company which held a wilderness at bay, there remains a little more to be told.

Delivered to me this day was a small round tin containing a long strip of newly developed motion-picture film—the contents of the little camera found among other treasures on board the returned *Narwhal*. The expert who developed it apologized for the imperfection of the work—as if he could be held to blame for the conditions under which it was exposed four thousand miles away in a savage wilderness, known only to a little handful of civilized men.

How that camera came to be actuated—who trained it upon the scenes it so faithfully recorded upon sensitized film,—and why—may never be known. Perhaps in a spirit of derision, by one of the renegades making away with the ship. Perhaps—but no matter.

I took the little tin into a dark-room in the private museum which bears James Munro's name. I ran it into a projection-machine, flipped a switch and awaited the result with tense excitement.

The square of linen became suddenly illumined. Into its blank whiteness

drama stalked with a suddenness that took my breath away. I was no longer in a small museum in the heart of the largest city in the world. I was thousands of miles away on a ship near the shore of the last, most savage wilderness left unexplored on this earth—Nato'wa.

THE whir of the projection-machine might have been the wind vibrating through the crags on the sea-cliffs. What I saw the camera had seen, and those renegades on the ship as well. I even imagined the sounds were reproduced, so startlingly realistic was my illusion of being at the scene. . . .

I heard the creak of blocks and the roar of waters inshore. Across my vision slipped a vertical face of wet rock, against which a great swell broke, tossing up whitest foam. The wall ended. Into view came a party of whites and Indians who for a moment stood gazing in amazement. Among them could be recognized not only Dr. Munro and Dan, Beth and Heladi, and Kioga, but also Barry Edwards, the mate Edson and Kamotok. Apparently the latter group had discovered their guide was an enemy, had made way with him, and had somehow found and joined forces with the others.

Bows were bent. Arrows whisked across the waters toward the ship, striking sharply and vibrating where they pierced wood or sail. Several spears hurtled through the air and struck here and there on the ship.

Suddenly the *Narwhal* quivered, as from the bow the saker spoke crisply. Behind the party on the shore a ball struck sparks from a great rock. But there was no further firing of that forward gun. A copper knife, hard-thrown, struck the ship's side before she sheered away from shore—taking the outgoing channel leading to the open sea.

Now several savages, trundling a demi-cannon, appeared along the shore. Another followed with a leather bag, and behind him came a mustached figure—unmistakably Flashpan. The gun was turned and aimed. Flashpan rammed home a powder charge taken from the leather bag, rolled in a heavy ball, and leaped to the breech.

Chips flew from a great boulder behind Flashpan's head as a bullet from the ship struck it. In no wise troubled by his peril, Flashpan inspected flint and lock, made ready to fire, drew back, and jerked the cord. The crude cannon leaped. A gigantic mushroom of smoke

burst from its muzzle. Its ball, intended to hull the *Narwhal* amidships, flew high, lodging in the mainmast with an impact that rocked the craft from truck to keelson. But the shore continued to recede, while Flashpan labored at his gun. Another burst flashed out from the demicannon. A shower of granite stones slashed through sails and rigging like grape-shot. By now the *Narwhal* had almost run past the danger zone. But there were still keen eyes to reckon with.

From a pointed crag a pair of eyes squinted down a smoothbore barrel and put a bullet into the after cabin an inch from where Branner stood crouching at the wheel. Instantly the slim shadow that was Tokala passed the marksman another loaded gun. Again the crack of the weapon. This time the helmsman went down, limp as a thong of leather.

Slemp, dragging himself toward the shelter of a cabin, rose to his knees. Again another of Flashpan's smoothbores flamed, but the bullet went two inches wild. All the loaded pieces had now been fired. Flashpan danced about, beside himself with impotent fury.

Behind him knelt Dan La Salle, reloading hastily. Slightly to his right stood Beth, gazing out upon the vanishing *Narwhal* with an indescribable expression. Beside her, Heladi watched Dan load the guns. Close behind them Munro saw his *Narwhal* making an escape, with what emotions I can only guess.

ALL of this, you will realize, was as I glimpsed it, thrown upon a screen at the Munro Museum, in the heart of New York City. Yet so swift and realistic was the action that I seemed to hear the echo of the guns resounding among the cliffs where a myriad pinions beat the air—ivory-gulls frightened aloft by the heavy detonations.

Then suddenly, as if from nowhere, a tall, wonderfully proportioned figure stood forth in the garb of a Shoni Indian. With a few words to Flashpan he fitted an arrow to his bow, drew back the string and aimed as if to shoot about the ship. But his intention was plain when the arrow leaped from the cord, spinning rapidly as it came.

I saw the shaft in flight, followed its beautiful parabola in full soaring arc.

Slemp, struggling to drag himself within the cabin had been for that instant within the focus of the lens. He, too, must have seen the arrow coming, by the

expression of fear on his features. But if he saw it, he was powerless to evade it. Its impetus drove it deep, piercing him and emerging from his other side.

Ashore there must have been a hush following that wonderful shot. Kioga had not changed stance from the moment of loosing, but poised watched his arrow's arc, the personification of the hunter-warrior depicted on some ancient frieze. And then—

Then came a growing obscurity. A fog-bank was closing down upon the *Narwhal*, aiding in her escape; and finally blankness—utter blankness.

I WAS back magically from an unknown land, standing in a house in the heart of a great city, yet trembling in every fiber at what I had seen. The film was ended, and with it—for the present—my story of that land of mists and mystery, Nato'wa.

Munro's gallant band failed to hold that little outpost of civilization, Fort Talking Raven. But it was a glorious failure, in the best tradition of their race.

James Munro, scientist, who left behind the world and its prizes to probe the rumor of an unknown land and race; his loyal little indomitable band, tempered in fire and steeled by common adversity—these few souls are a symbol, as were the Pilgrims, of destiny. Their home is the last unconquered land in this modern world. Their neighbors are the savage vagabond hordes of the warlike Shoni. The roars of wild beasts disturb their slumbers. Their waking hours are filled with alarms.

But they have pioneered the way, hewn out the early routes to this unknown land. Their quiet tread foretells the tramp of many feet. In this Twentieth-Century world of crowded boundaries, the march of empire is unending. Other men will strive to reach Nato'wa—men who lust for adventure, free air to breathe, gold; good men who follow the lure of distant drums, and men of fiercer temper who ever seek new frontiers whereon to fatten by their lawlessness.

But will aid to Kioga and his little handful of friends come in time? Has all the heroism of these modern pioneers been in vain? Shall there be no men of iron will and brazen courage to succor them before it is too late?

I do not know, nor they, nor any mortal man. The answer is written in the tight-wrapped scroll of things to come.

THE END

My Life at Sea

*A distinguished writer's fascinating narrative of his career as a sailor.**

By **BILL ADAMS**

I SUPPOSE I ought to start my biography at the very beginning. All I know about it is that the doctor who was present when I arrived said that he did not think it would be possible to rear me. I was very diminutive. . . .

My mother was always in bed upstairs. I remember her only once. . . . It was in our little house at Berkswell. She was sitting in bed, propped up on her pillows, her jet black hair hanging in a cloud about her shoulders. Her blue eyes, large and very big, were looking right at me. And she was smiling. It made me feel very happy. Except for one other time, I do not remember her at all. She had been engaged to a Congregational minister when she ran away and married my father when he was sixty-four.

Maybe I could begin my biography with the other time I remember my mother, because it is the plainest of all the memories of my childhood. It was a gray day, with now and then a sprinkle of rain. I don't know where my brother Geoffrey was. Maybe he was away at Albert Villas, which was a private school for the sons of gentlemen, at Clifton. Our two aunties owned it. They were not really our aunties. They were our step-sisters, and Frank's sisters; the daughters of my father by his first marriage. Their names were Auntie Kitty and Auntie Polly.

I was alone, digging for worms in the wet cold earth of the back yard. I set the can down and went into the house, went upstairs and into a bedroom. In it were two chairs, and on them was a long wooden box. I had to tiptoe to see into the box. I looked into it for just a very few moments. And then as I went from the room, I met two servants in the hall. One looked at the other and said, "He's seen his mother." I don't know where it happened. And though, since I grew up, I have several times tried to find her

*For details of our plan in connection with these stories of real experience, see page 3.

grave, I have no idea where it is. She was thirty-five when she died.

It was while we lived at Berkswell that I first saw Dolly. She was the fourth of Frank's five daughters. He came to Berkswell one day with her and Edie, the fifth daughter. Geoffrey and I had each a glass jar in a sunny window, and in the jars were flies and other winged insects we had caught. Dolly took the lids off and set all our insects free. I was very angry and hated her and told her that I did. But I know that even then, deep down inside me, was a sort of respect for her. I was a barbaric, cruel little boy, and she made me conscious of it and that she was gentle and merciful. She was eight years older than I.

MY father had long silky white hair that hung down over his shoulders. He wore a pointed white beard, in which was a tinge of ruddiness here and there. His big mustache was also ruddy-tinged. His eyes were deep blue, bright as those of an eagle. The veins on his wrists stood out, high and cordy. One day while I sat on his knee, I lifted his beard. Under it was a wide livid scar running from close to his ear down across his throat. An Arab spear had made it long ago.

As a lad he had quarreled with his father, run away from home, and enlisted in the French Foreign Legion. When the Legion lost its colors in battle, he had recaptured them. Then he was color sergeant of the Legion. But after a while he grew tired of being a Legionaire and deserted. Captured, he was sentenced to be shot. On the night before the execution was to be, he escaped and swam almost a mile out to sea, where an English ship lay at anchor.

So he returned to England. There he obtained a position as French tutor in a private school for young ladies, owned by a lady whose two daughters helped with the teaching. One morning a few weeks after he obtained the position, one of the



Etching by Yngve Edward Soderberg

Ships and salt water! "Tell the sea that I am coming soon."

daughters did not appear. Nor did he. They had eloped to America. The daughter with whom he ran away had been engaged to a man named Ben Sarsons and was to have been married in a few days. She was the mother of Frank and my two step-sisters. My father took out his naturalization papers at Elmira, New York State, on April the ninth, 1845. He did many things in America before he went back to England. He was a backwoods school-teacher, and for a time he practised law. When he returned to England, the Crimean War was starting. His elder brother was a general and commanded the Guard's Brigade at the battle of Inkerman, dying of wounds after the battle. Father rode with the Heavy Brigade and was with it on Balaclava Day, when it charged through thirty thousand Russians, wheeled, galloped back, and repeated the charge twice more. I used to have his sword, but lost it long ago in my wanderings. After the Crimean War, he returned to America, where he later rode with General Sherman from Atlanta to the sea. . . .

After my mother's death, Auntie Polly took charge of my brother Geoffrey and me. My father had no money and was cared for by Frank. I hated Frank, because he always teased me. I hated him more after Auntie Polly took me to Albert Villas, because she made me wear my hair in long curls; and that made him tease me still worse whenever he came on a visit. But I loved his wife Auntie Clarissa. I don't know where my father was during my first years at Albert Villas. Auntie Polly kissed me a great deal and taught me to say prayers at bedtime.

After Father came back, we went to live at Low Cop farm. There were no children there, but there was a brook in which grew yellow flags, and golden king-cups. There was golden gorse too, on the hill slope below Low Cop. And there was my father.

One evening at sunset Father took me down to the river Wye that flowed maybe a mile away. The sky was all shining gold. The air was motionless, and no bird sang. No sound came from the farm animals. The golden light glowed on the yellow gorse on the hill slope. All the world was silent and golden. It is the first sunset I remember. As we walked to the river, the lights faded. The air grew cooler. On the river bank Father stripped naked. He walked in, and swam to the far bank and back, his long white hair

floating out on the water behind him. And then he made me strip, and led me into the cold clear water. I learned to swim that evening. The Roman cavalry had splashed across that river, hunting the fleeing Britons. Norman knights had forded it, harrying the Saxons. King Arthur and his knights had ridden there. Father talked of them while we rubbed our white skins dry, our feet deep in meadow-sweet and ragged robin.

While we were at Low Cop, Father became acquainted with Mr. Pellew—George Israel Pellew, rector of Peterstowe parish. He was tall as my father, who stood six feet three. His head was bald, his beard snow white, his eyes blue. While he and Father talked, I sat in a great rocking-chair, which, as I rocked, moved slowly about the room. On the wall was a large picture of the bombardment of Alexandria, with Admiral Pellew, Mr. Pellew's uncle, on his ship's quarterdeck, a drawn sword in his hand. I pretended that my chair was a line-of-battle ship. Sometimes Mr. Pellew would say: "Captain, cease fire! Can't you see the enemy's forts are in ruins?"

Oh—Captain!—I liked that! *Ships and the sea!*

WHEN I was a bit past nine, Ben Sarsons, to whom my father's first wife had been engaged, died. He had never married. And dying, he left all his fortune to Auntie Kitty and Auntie Polly; left each of them seventy thousand pounds in direct legacy; as well as the residue of the estate when all was settled. Almost at once Auntie Kitty married a man named Robert Latham Frere. She bought a fine house six miles from Peterstowe—spacious lawns and shrubberies. Auntie Polly bought a place called High House, at the edge of Peterstowe common land. Two apple orchards, shrubberies of laurel, laurustine and lilac.

So now Auntie Polly had Father and me to live with her. On Sunday I must go twice to church, and on Wednesday evening to prayer meeting. And no more could I play with the village children. I was a "gentleman's son."

One day a telegram came, saying that Frank had died. And he died very poor, having lately lost all his money. I wore a band of black round my sleeve when I went back to Albert Villas. . . . A man named O'Leary used to come to teach us Latin; one day he caught me drawing the picture of a ship on my slate. He lifted

my slate and brought it down on my head with such force that it broke, and my head went through it, the frame resting on my shoulders.

"Don't draw ships! Draw anything you like, but not ships!" said Mr. O'Leary. And much I wondered.

When Mr. O'Leary took us walking, he always took us by the road along the river. And always he stared at the ships, a sort of hunger in his dark eyes. Not only English ships came up the river. Sometimes there would be a French or a German, a Swedish or an Italian ship. And now and again there would be a ship with swarthy men on her decks, and a red and yellow flag flying. Then one of the older lads would call "Look! It's Spaniards!" (*Spaniards, eh?* And there at once was Francis Drake, with Frobisher and his companions, and the sails of the Armada coming up from under the rim of England's sea. Aye, there was then a sound as of a drum beating!)

There were steamers too, but they interested me less. Lacking in grace, they were, and had about them a sort of smoky cocksureness. Yet there was one that brought with her always the sound of a bugle. The *Argo* her name was, and long ago she had carried troops to the Crimea. Seeing her come round a bend, a lad thought of such words as *Sebastopol*, *Inkerman*, and *Balaclava*. There was a quick vision of six hundred horses at the gallop, manes tossed, sabers shining. Then soon she would be gone by, and the bugle's note was stilled.

IN place of Mr. O'Leary a young soft-spoken man named Hook came to teach us our Latin. One Saturday afternoon he invited me to his home, and I had tea and cake with him and his white-haired mother. Then he bought a bag of bananas and took me down to the docks. He hired a rowing boat, and while I sat in the stern eating bananas, rowed all up and down the docks. And to me there came a feeling of release, of great freedom. Under the figureheads of ships we passed—figureheads representing women, and warriors, and goddesses. One ship had a red and yellow dragon for a figure-head, I mind. There was scroll-work about the ships' bow, in gold and bright colors. And some ships' names were in gold lettering. There was a scent of tar, of cordage, of brine. Sails hung to dry flapped gently in a little breeze. Men high on masts called one to another, in words unintelligible to me. And as we

passed beneath the bow of one great ship, a sailor seated beneath her boom called down to me, "Hey, shipmate! How about one of them bananas?" I tossed him one. He caught it, peeled it with a quick jerk, and crammed it whole into his mouth. "*Shipmate!*" A sailor had called *me* Shipmate! Ah, I cannot tell you how it was that then I felt! I was overjoyed, and filled with longing inexpressible to go with that sailor whithersoever he and that great ship of his might be going. *Rio, Calcutta, Cape Horn!*

It was soon after that that the holidays came. And now Dolly came into my life again. She was about seventeen or so. Auntie Polly and I drove to Ross to meet her train. On the way back, I sat beside her. I had never seen anyone so beautiful. One night I had a frightening dream, and woke up in terror, and cried out. Auntie Polly called to ask what was the matter from her bedroom on the landing below, told me not to be silly and to go back to sleep. And then in a minute there was a soft foot on the stairs, and a glow of candle-light. Dolly was come. There was kindness in her eyes, and pity for a small boy afraid. She asked would I like her to read to me, and when I said yes, read to me from "Pilgrim's Progress." But I did not hear a word. I lay looking at her, worshiping her; adoring the sweet tones of her voice. She kissed me at last, and left me. And I went to sleep as children in heaven go to sleep. It was as last night, so real it is still.

Many many nights are gone since then. But I see and hear her still. Oh, many many nights! A river winding to the sea. Cowslips in green meadows. Daffodils, primroses, wood anemones, dog violets. Blackbirds singing, and thrushes at the dusk. Lambs gamboling, scent of sweet hay. Old Mr. Pellew's voice, a clear bronze bell. And a small boy lost in wonder at the meaning of beauty, at the meaning of loneliness, at the meaning of hunger for a thing hid. And always a consciousness of names—of ships, and salt water. *Rio, Foo-chow, Cape Horn*. Always that level gray horizon in the west. Ah, ships!

TIME passed, and things were better at Albert Villas; I was getting well up in school. Now I was allowed at times to go out alone, and ever I went by the river or docks. My lesson-books were covered with drawings of ships.

Sometimes by the docks I dared to speak to a sailor. But sailors seemed never to have much to say to a young lad. Yet there was a day when one did speak to me. I was wandering one late afternoon along a dock when I heard loud words harshly spoken across the street; and I saw a big man quarreling with a little woman. Cursing her he was, and beating her with a stick. So over the street I strode, large as round thirteen or so might be, and began to take the woman's part. At once she turned on me, and the two of them, shouting, threatened to cut out my lights and my liver, and called me by many names the like of which I had not heard before.

Then it was that three sailors came across the street. While one knocked the man down, another walked off with the woman, who now was all smiles. The third turned to me, looked at me solemnly, and speaking in a slow drawled voice, said: "That's life fer ye, sonny boy! W'en a big man's fightin' a little man, take the little feller's part, sure enough. W'en two big or two little fellers is fightin', let 'em fight and settle it. But w'en ye see any kind of a man at all, big or little, raisin' hell wid any woman at all—lay low an' 'vast heavin', or ye'll have the two of 'em down yer neck, an' the woman furdest o' the two. 'Tis jest a way they have, sonny. Ye kin pin yer trust in a ship, but don't be pinnin' it in no woman. . . . Have ye a pocket-knife, sonny?"

I handed him my pocket knife, and he cut a chew of tobacco from a black plug, put the rest of the plug in his pocket, and my knife with it, and walked off. "Please, sir, you have my knife!" I called. To which, looking over his shoulder he replied: "No, sonny. 'Tis mine now, fer the advice I give ye."

When I was fourteen, I left Albert Villas and took an examination at one of the great public schools. Passing it gained me a scholarship that took fifty pounds a year off my tuition fees for three years.

SCHOOL terms came and went. The seasons passed. When I came home for my holidays, my father would be sitting in his great high-backed chair by the open fire. As I entered the room he'd look up. "Is that you, my son?" And then: "Tonight I shall sleep like a top." I was his all. He mine.

I was a sixth-form boy, and allowed to carry a walking-stick: I could read

Cicero, Virgil, Horace, Ovid. Long since I'd marched with Cæsar's legions over Gaul and Britain; seen British spearmen fall before the broadswords: seen captives walk in Roman triumphs. Over the sea was a new land where my father had ridden 'neath a new flag. "The bloody owld Yankee." Tea chests, in Boston harbor. Indians yelling, tomahawks in red hands. . . . The Matabele war was just over. Lobengula, the Matabele chief, had been to London. Not long since, Gordon had died at Khartoum. . . . Not long since a man named Stevenson had written a book, *Treasure Island*. I watched the ships pass.

And then there came a holiday when I went to London to stay a while at Auntie Clarissa's, Dolly was there. Twenty-five now. Soft-voiced, gray-eyed. I felt abashed in her presence. She was different to all other girls. And when I went back to school and other boys that night talked smut in the dormitory I stuffed my fingers in my ears. . . . Fresh-come from altar steps.

A LETTER came from Auntie Polly. Which did I want to do: enter Guy's Hospital to train to be a doctor, or go into the paymaster department of the navy? She sent literature. From being a clerk in the paymaster department, I could work my way into the combatant branch of the navy. . . . Drake and Frobisher—Jarvis, Howe, and Hood—Collingwood, Nelson. I knew the names of all.

I gave away my silk-worms, and my pet grass snake, and my box with lizards in it. No time for aught but study now. And by and by, I went to London, took the exam—and failed. Eight vacancies, a hundred and twenty candidates.

Auntie Polly engaged a young clergyman who lived at Ross, three miles away, to cram me for the November exam. Day by day I walked the three miles and back. Home by one o'clock, to study all afternoon. Going and coming, I leaned on the parapet of the old stone bridge that spanned the river; said to the flowing stream: "Tell the sea that I am coming soon."

Blinx followed me daily, flying along the hedges, or perched on my shoulder—a jackdaw a village boy had taken from its nest in an elm behind the church. At night he slept on my window-sill. At dawn his cawing woke me, to go to my books before breakfast. While I studied in the afternoon, he perched on my shoulder, and gently pecked my ears.

August came, and my father saddled the pony and rode off to visit friends in Hereford. Eighty-seven years old, an eleven-mile ride.

Came a day of wind and driving rain. Just back from Ross, I sat at lunch with Auntie Polly. The dining-room door opened. My father stepped in, mud from shoulder to foot. I helped him to his chair, filled and lit his pipe. He had been riding slowly, a mile from home, his feet not in the stirrups, the reins not in his hands, when a dog ran from the hedge and leaped at the pony's nose. Leaving him lying on the hard road, the pony trotted home. He walked the last mile, alone.

Undressing him that night, I asked: "Do I hurt you, Father?"

He answered me: "You never hurt me, my son."

FOR a time he walked as far as into the garden. Then, always indoors, he sat in his great chair. Came a day when he sat on the edge of his bed, his great chair empty. Next day he stayed in bed. And that day I stayed home.

Auntie Polly said, "You must go to your tutor, dear."

"No. I stay with my father," said I. And noting my tone, she was silent.

"Why are you not at your studies, my son?" he asked one day, waking from stupor.

"I'm not going in the navy. I'm going to sea in the merchant service, Father," I said.

"You'll find it a hard life, my son," said he, and in his voice was a ring of pride that his son had chosen a hard life. They were the last words ever he spoke to me.

That afternoon, wandering, he cried a woman's name. Not that of Auntie Polly's mother, not that of mine.

"My rose of roses! Oh, my dear rose of roses!" he cried.

"Some old flame," said Auntie Polly, scornful-voiced. But I—what was it to me? It was my father's business. Who shall come between a lad and his sire?

Clang—clang—clang—clang.... eighty-seven times, once for each year of the life that was over: the church-bell pealing over the meadows, the fallow fields, the woodlands, the brooks, the sere winter hedges, of Peterstowe parish.

It was November, with snow falling. I stood by his coffin. In the stone-floored kitchen sat his bearers; eating, in the Old Country fashion, cold roast beef and

bread and cheese, washing them down with ale. And presently the bedroom door opened, and Jones of Low Cop; Thomas of Bowers; Bill Weevin, shepherd at Flann farm; Jack Evans, wagoner at Flann farm; Padham the blacksmith; Jimmie Link the poacher; and Jack Hall of the Yew Tree Inn came in. In silence they lifted, in silence bore him away, down the stone front steps, past laurel and lilac, out to the lane. Walking alone, I followed. Behind me my aunts, his daughters. Behind them Polly Dobbins, the servant girl. No others. In deep snow we walked slowly, the bearers with their black hats in their hands. A little way from the churchyard gate Mr. Pellew met us, snow falling on his bald head, on his long white surplice.

"I am the resurrection and the life."

Next day I went to Hereford to stay awhile with my father's friends. Three days later a letter came. Blinx was dead. He'd refused to take food from anyone; had sought me everywhere, cawing. A little blackbird dead for love of a lad. . . .

On my return, Aunt Polly said that it would be beautiful for me to be a curate, and that we would go to Ross together to consult my curate tutor about my preparing for the ministry.

"I'm going to sea," said I.

She thought that I was referring to the navy clerkship, and that I had not realized that, through having missed the November examination, my chances there were done. "You can't go to sea, dear," she replied.

"I'm going to sea in the merchant service," I retorted.

WHETHER she was then aware that I was my father's son, or whether she realized that for me to go to sea would cost her less than preparation for the ministry, I don't know. She toddled off to visit an old fellow who lived not far away and was interested in a Liverpool shipping firm. He'd been friendly with my father, and he told her he would write to the son of the head of the firm on my behalf. A week or so later there came a letter from that young man, saying that he had found me a berth as an apprentice in the ship *Helenslea*, bound for West Australia. And then again I had names in my head. Ah, I liked the name *Helenslea*. There was music in it. And so also there was music in West Australia. I dug out the atlas and pored over it. But in a few days there came

another letter telling me that after all I could not go in the *Helenslea*. A lad whose parents had influence with her owners had been given the berth that was to have been mine. My disappointment was bitter.

Disconsolately I wandered the winter roads, wondering should ever I get to sea. And very gloomy I was when I saw the *Helenslea's* sailing reported in the shipping column of the newspaper. You cannot always tell, eh? From that day to this no eye has seen the *Helenslea*.

A letter came from Auntie Clarissa, inviting me to go and stay with her for a time. And very glad I was to go. And gladder yet when I found that Dolly was there. She was more than ever lovely. Loveliness born of bitter grief. She had been in love, and the man whom she loved had died. In her bitter sorrow she had tried to end her life, that she might go to him. But now she had gone to the Bible for solace, prayer the fountain whereat she drank deep. Knowing that I also was lone, she looked at me from soft tender eyes. I was shy in her presence, yet liked to be near her. Yet also I liked very well to be with Ede, her younger sister. Ede and I went to cheap music-halls together.

AFTER a while another letter came from that young man. I was to join a ship in Liverpool in a few days. And the ship's name was nicer than even *Helenslea*. The men who called on Ede looked at me condescendingly—a sailor! City men, content with the gas-lit offices of foggy days. Men to whom such words as *Rio, Callao, Cape Horn* were naught but mere names.

The night ere I returned to Peterstowe to get ready to go, Dolly called me to her bedroom. I see it yet. The snow of her pillow, the Bible on the chair beside. She had been away that day, visiting Auntie Kitty in London, and while she was there, a package had come to Auntie Kitty from Auntie Polly. A golden ring, set with pearls. Something more for Auntie Kitty to pawn, to raise money for Uncle Robert's dissipations. Auntie Kitty had pawned the ring, and Dolly had got from her the pawn-ticket, and later redeemed the ring. "It was your mother's," she said, and gave it to me. Never had I had aught that had been my mother's. Bidding me good-by next day, Dolly kissed my cheek.

The next installment of this fine autobiography takes you to sea on a windjammer to share with Mr. Adams the experiences that helped to make him a great writer.

When I came to Peterstowe, Auntie Polly saw the ring on my finger, and said sharply, as though I were a small boy who had done something wrong: "Give me that ring at once. Where did you get it?"

"I don't give you my mother's ring to pawn," I retorted. And she said no more, for the tone of my voice was a tone new to her.

THE night ere I left to join my ship there was a concert in the rectory barn. I was late arriving; it was crammed with the people of Peterstowe parish. But when I appeared, a farmer took my arm and led me to a seat that had been reserved for me. I heard a voice say, "Young maister, 'ee be gwine away come marnin'."

The rafters shook, to the voices of Peterstowe parish.

*D'ye ken John Peel with his coat so gay?
D'ye ken John Peel at the break of day?
D'ye ken John Peel when he's far far away
By the cry of his pack in the morning?*

And then a farmer rose and walked to the platform, and with kindly eyes turning to me, he sang—a song such as never before I had heard in the rectory barn:

*When his ship is trimmed and ready,
And the last goodbyes are done
When the tugboat's lying waiting,
And Jack aboard is gone,
Then the lasses fall a-weeping
As they watch his vessel's track,
For all their landsman lovers
Are nothing after Jack.*

And then, again:

*With a long long pull, and a strong strong
pull,
Cheerily, lads, yo-ho!
And we'll drink tonight to the midshipmite,
Cheerily, lads, yo-ho! Cheerily, lads, yo-ho!*

And I knew then that the concert was being given for "young maister," who was to be gone in the morning. And there was a lump in my throat.

"God bless you, my boy. I hope you'll succeed. I know you will if you try," said old Mr. Pellew, taking my hand in the doorway. And I walked from the barn, and turned from the rectory drive, through the gate into the churchyard. And I paused by a grave.

"You'll find it a hard life, my son," I seemed to hear—pride in the voice.



Drawn by Jeremy Cannon, from a photograph.

Hold that Tiger!

*The remarkable story of a famous tiger-trainer,
as told to Gertrude Orr—*

By MABEL STARK

TWENTY-THREE years I've spent studying and training tigers. I've been clawed and slashed and chewed until there is hardly an inch of my body unmarked by tooth or nail. And still I love my tigers as a mother loves her children even when they are wayward. To me, they are the most magnificent expression of all animal life.

The tiger has something no other jungle beast has. You can cow a lion, but never His Lordship. You can subdue but never conquer tigers—except by love. And now I've told the secret of all successful animal training. I learned it at the risk of my life.

Countless times I've thought my number was up when Whitey or his sister Nellie, or one of the other sixteen brutes in my act have sprung and left a slash or a scar as a souvenir. Once in 1928 two of them got me down and tried to finish me. But I was back with the show in six weeks, minus a deltoid muscle in my shoulder, and walking with a stiff leg

that never has completely unlimbered. I know I won't die until it's my time. And then I'd rather go out fighting it out with my tigers, than with a couple of starched nurses slithering around, or doctors shaking their heads over me.

I've been successful in training tigers because I love them. I never tire of studying them. You can't get bored with life when your work constantly demands everything you've got—when you know that every time you step into a cage full of the glorious beasts it is going to be a battle of will and wits. . . .

I'm not afraid. I like the challenge of their roaring defiance. I like facing them with just a buggy whip and a chair and the knowledge that my will is stronger than their rippling muscles. I can make them cringe with my voice or purr with pleasure. It's the biggest thrill I know. That's why I'm playing a lone hand today—for men are jealous creatures; they naturally want to come first in a woman's heart.

Don't get me wrong. I'm no sour old maid. When the spring moon is a young thing and the circus caravan starts out on the road, something stirs down where my heart ought to be. . . . Until I remember another spring, and a chap who joined up to handle the lion act. He wasn't afraid of anything. He laughed when we told him to watch his step with a grizzled old lion that had killed our boss animal-man the season before. He laughed when I walked out of the tent and wouldn't watch him work, because I knew fear for the first time in my life as I saw him, lithe and daring, cracking his whip and shouting at his snarling beasts. . . .

He was smiling when he died in my dressing-room after Nero got him. The show was still going on. The crowd inside the big top didn't know those lions had finished him when they got him down. They thought it just a gag—a new thrill. That's what he wanted them to think. He got up and walked out of the arena where three beasts had ripped him open—walked till he reached my dressing-wagon, and keeled over.

The doctors couldn't do anything but ease him out. He opened his eyes and saw their faces bent over him—turned and smiled at me.

"It's all right, Mab," he whispered. "That's the way I wanted it to be. It's been a good show. Heaven can't be any better than these two months we've been together—or hell any worse than those claws ripping me open. It's been a good show."

I had to leave him and go on with my act. The crowd in the tent was shouting with laughter at the clowns. They didn't know until the next day that our lion-trainer was dead. By that time we had hit another town. Both shows were a sell-out. Every one wanted to see the lions work—the same lions that had killed a man just the night before.

OF course there was another trainer on the job. There's always another to step in and put on a good show. At least, there is for a lion act. I've never had an understudy. I'm the only woman who likes tigers; everyone else steers clear of them. If one of them gets me, my tigers never will work again. Perhaps they will miss me. You see, that eight minutes twice a day in the steel arena is the only freedom they have from their narrow traveling cages. They may snarl and roar and slash out with mur-

derous claws, trying to get me, but they would miss me if I were gone.

If they do get me, I'll go out the way of all good animal trainers. And I'll say: "It was a good show!"

WHITEY was first to make a try for me this spring. It was during dress rehearsal at San Diego. Whitey weighs eight hundred and fifty pounds and measures eleven feet from nose to tail tip. He has a disposition like a dictator. When anything gets in his way, he tries to remove it by force. The boss has been after me for the past three seasons to take him out of my act.

"He'll get you yet, Mabel. Better be safe than sorry."

I just shrug. "He's the handsomest cat of the sixteen, and I won't spoil my act. Leave us alone. We'll fight it out, and may the best man win."

The night of dress rehearsal the cats were all nervous. It was the first time for several months they'd worked with a band. A band is necessary for tempo in a good animal act. It helps the trainer and the animals swing in rhythm. But for the first few performances after the cats have been enjoying winter-quarters' leisure, that band is so much dynamite.

That night they were all edgy, and I had to shout myself hoarse to be heard over the band. As I was calling them for the pyramid, I stumbled over the chair I'd been using to keep Princess, the roll-over tiger, out of clawing distance. As I went down, I instinctively grabbed my pistol lying on the edge of one of the pedestals. Whitey was just ready to jump from his place to the formation pedestal. Instead, he sprang at me. I did a Tom Mix lying there on my back, and fired the blank cartridge in his face. I can still feel his hot breath and see his green eyes glaring into mine. For a moment he crouched over me, then suddenly turned and slunk away to his place while I scrambled breathless to my feet. It wasn't the singe of the powder on his whiskers that stopped him. That was no more than a flea-bite to him. There's only one answer—it just wasn't my time, and Whitey knew it.

Our second accident almost cost the life of Pasha, my smartest tiger. The runway broke when the tigers were leaving the arena at the close of my Act One *matinée*. I heard shouts and commotion as I was taking my bow, and I ran from the tent.

"A tiger is loose!" shouted the man-

ager, dashing up to me, jerking out the gun he always carries.

"Put away that gun," I snapped. "Which tiger is it?"

"They all look alike to me," he snorted. "It ran under those wagons over there. I've told the boys to shoot to kill!"

Three cage men were closing in from different directions with drawn guns.

"Put those guns down," I yelled. "I'll get the tiger!"

Suddenly the tiger streaked out from beneath the wagon and came directly toward our manager—and *bang* went his gun, right in the tiger's face. I knocked it from his hand before he could shoot again. The cat threw back its head as the shot caught it in the nose, and let out a roar as blood spurted from the wound.

"Pasha!" I called. "Pasha, down!"

Pasha turned and glared at me, tail swishing murderously. I walked toward her slowly, purring, calling her name. The men were shouting for me to get out of the way so they could get her before she sprang for me. I moved deliberately so they couldn't aim without shooting me too, as I said: "Poor kitty! Down!"

With a little whine Pasha lay down and let me come close.

"Bring up her cage," I called softly. "I'll get her into it. She's badly hurt."

I stood there talking and purring to the wounded cat until the men pushed up the cage. She jumped into it gladly as I stepped back, calling her.

As the door shut, I turned furiously on the manager. "You almost killed my best cat. Pasha wouldn't hurt anyone. Why didn't you call her, instead of shooting?"

He looked sheepish. "I'm no tiger-trainer. How could I tell it was Pasha?"

I sent the men hurrying to get warm water and disinfectant, and after I wiped the blood from the cat's nose, tried to locate the bullet. We never did find it. She must have swallowed it as she threw up her head after it hit, cutting a clean hole through the roof of her mouth!

PASHA not only works in my group, but waltzes, and rides an elephant in a special number. She was pretty sick for several days. So was I; it meant a big loss if she died. And even if she got well, she might be too nervous to work after that harrowing experience. Night and day I worked with her, and gradually the wound healed. She was terribly frightened the first day I took her back

into the ring, but gradually that is wearing off.

The show went all right in Los Angeles in spite of the knee-deep mud that bogged a couple of the elephants and mired down three of the wagons so they had to be left behind for two days. I took Sonny Boy out of the act for three days, because Sonny has only been working a few months, and still has ideas that I'd make just a nice mouthful for him. He's a handsome brute, almost as big as Whitey, and I've taught him to throw himself up on his hind-legs every time I pass in front of him and lift my arm. He looks like a monster house-cat sitting up—slightly silly and decidedly self-conscious. He does his trick with a realistic snarl that brings down the house. The trouble is, he means it. And when he's released to leave the cage, he always makes a spring at me that would be just too bad if I didn't side-step it.

IN Santa Barbara, Whitey's sister, Nellie, drew real blood in our daily tussle. Thereby she won an honorary membership in her brother's fraternity. Nellie rolls a ball, and generally does it with good enough grace. But every now and then the family blood crops up, and she strikes out. The night in Santa Barbara she wasn't in a ball-rolling mood.

We argued and argued before I got her over to the ball. I was barricaded behind the chair in my hand, and cracking down on her nose to edge her toward it. If tigers didn't have sensitive noses, no one could handle them. They're as stubborn as they are fearless, and the more they know a trainer, the less fear they have. Lions are just the other way. You can cow them and break their spirit until they become reasonably docile. But you never can tame a tiger. They're born killers, and that's the way they die.

Nellie finally got to the ball; but as I turned, thinking she was going to jump on it, she sprang for me instead and caught my left hand. One stroke of her powerful claws stripped the flesh to the bone. Blood spurted out like a red geyser. I jerked off the cape of my white-and-gold costume and wrapped it around my hand as I shouted at her:

"Nellie! Get up on that ball!"

For a second she hesitated, glaring at me. There was the same look I'd seen in Whitey's eyes—the same unwilling submission—as she turned her head away and jumped on the ball, rolling it docilely to the end of the groove, turning and

HOLD THAT TIGER!

rolling it back again, then flashing through the air for her seat.

The crowd liked it. They thought it was a good thrill! Two thoughts were racing through my head: "Gosh, my best uniform is ruined!" For the blood was soaking through the cape and dripping all over the place as I finished the act.

And the other thought: "They applauded when those lions got *him* too!"

In my dressing-wagon an anxious-faced young doctor washed my hand with stinging alcohol and carbolic, while the boss scowled worriedly.

"What will we do? You can't work now!"

The doctor nodded emphatically. "Certainly she can't work, for three weeks at least. This hand has to go into a splint. . . . I'm sorry to do this, Miss Stark,"—as he poured antiseptic into the raw wound. "I know how it must hurt. Shall I give you a whiff of ether?"

I glared at him. "Any time I want ether, I'll let you know. Hurry and clean out that wound."

Then I turned to the boss. "And don't look so scared; I'm all right. The act goes on as usual tomorrow."

The boss' face cleared. He patted my shoulder, exclaiming, "Good girl!"

The doctor stared at me. "You can't work sixteen tigers with one hand in a splint."

I laughed. "Listen, Doc: You haven't been with this show but a few weeks, or you'd know that arms and legs don't count. It's nerve!" I held out my good hand. "See that! Not a quiver!"

He shook his head. "You're the strangest woman I ever met. And the gamest. Just the same, you're insane not to take better care of yourself."

"Certainly I'm insane," I agreed. "But I like my brand and I'll stick to it. Thanks for bandaging me up."

He put his stuff away in his case and started off. "I'll see you first thing in the morning."

"Oh, no, you won't. I'm broadcasting at nine-thirty—telling folks how to train tigers, and what nice back-yard pets they make. Drop around before the afternoon performance, and we'll change these wrappings. They're too tight."

"But Miss Stark—"

"Shush!" I waved him off. "I must get my beauty-sleep, or Whitey won't sing for me tomorrow."

He went off looking so chagrined that I was sorry for him. Doctors always look at me that way.

Blasted

*This miner twice owes
his life to his father.*

LAST hole of the fourth round—twenty-four feet—a hundred and forty-four dollars." That was the way I talked to myself all the time when I was contracting on that job. Alone, a thousand feet underground, almost the end of a shift with another eight hours to go, a fellow does talk to himself.

My dad and I were getting six dollars a foot for breaking a six-by-six tunnel down on Nine level in the old Silver Fleece gold-mine. But ask me if we earned it! Dad was running the hoist for me now. He was sixty-five years old; but like myself, he had another shift to do; he would spend half of the night sharpening our drill steel, while I was down here mucking out. We'd hired a German kid called Dutch to do the rest of the mucking. Though time meant money to us, we couldn't spend all of our time working; the sixteen hours a day that we did work were more than tough.

"Long steel on the last hole," I hummed again, and cocked her back. Through the fog from the exhaust, that piece of liner steel swayed back and forth like a cobweb in the wind, or at least seemed to. My head and lamp were doing all the swaying. The steel was eating into a glistening bulwark of granite at a rate of six inches a minute.

As soon as this last hole was deep enough, I pulled down the machine from the column to which it was bolted, and loaded it with the dull steel, air-hose, and water-hose into the bucket on the end of the hoist-cable, and pulled the bell-wire, signaling my dad, "Up."

Pretty soon the stuff moved out of sight, sliding along up the skipway, and I fell to work loading the sixteen holes I'd drilled. That was tedious work and couldn't be rushed. First I tamped four split sticks of powder into the back of each hole, using a wooden tamper. Then I put in the primer. That is a stick of powder with a hole punched in it for the cap end of a five-foot length of fuse to fit into. This one stick, set off by the

Underground

By DICK GROMAN



fuse and the blasting cap, in turn sets off the rest of the powder in the hole. On top of the primer I tamped nine more sticks of strong stuff—I was using forty-five-per-cent supposed-to-be smokeless gelatine.

And there she was ready to be spit (lighted). I went over to the opposite side of the winze (an inclined shaft) to get my spitting lamp ready. Most miners use a short piece of lighted fuse called a spitter to light the fuses in a round of shots, but I always lighted fuses with my head-lamp. This was a doubtful process, because if the lamp went out suddenly after half of the fuses in a round were lighted, one would find himself in an embarrassing position; but using the lamp was easier.

While I was putting fresh carbide into the lamp, the bucket came creeping down again and came to rest on the edge of the sump, as if it were sneaking up on me. You see, what I was driving was a short cross-cut (tunnel at right angles to the vein) from the bottom of a three-hundred-and-eighty-foot winze. The winze was sunk along the vein, which dipped at about seventy-five degrees—fifteen degrees off vertical. At the bottom of the winze was a sump about five feet square and four feet deep, where water collected and was pumped out during Dutch's shift. The round of holes I was about to spit was eighteen feet or so from the south side of the sump. All these details are, or rather *were*, important.

AS soon as I got the head-lamp burning with a steady flame, I carried it back into the cross-cut and set it down. I took out my knife and cut off the ends of the fuses; then I went back to the winze and pulled the bell-wire five times. That means, "Hell's bells," or, "Ready to shoot." The bucket moved up a couple of feet and then came back to rest on the edge of the sump. That was Dad's way of saying, "O.K." so I spit the round.

Things sometimes happen so irrevocably after a long succession of gathering

incidents that, looking back at the chain of cause and effect, we seem to see divine or devilish purpose at work. So it was at the Silver Fleece. After preparing the equivalent of twenty-five pounds of nitro-glycerine, timed to explode within seven and a half minutes, I sauntered over to the bucket, climbed up on its rim with my wet and slippery boots, and grasped the bell-wire. At that instant—I don't know how—my feet went out on each side of me, and I found myself standing up to my waist in icy water, jolted half-senseless, and surrounded by total darkness.

IT was the acrid odor of burning fuses that brought me back to my senses. Reaching up to my cap hastily, I was relieved to find the lamp would still burn. I started to climb out of the sump, when I noticed something hanging on my shoulder. It was the bell-wire! In falling, I had broken the wire and rung the signal to hoist. The bucket was out of sight.

Don't ask me what I thought; I thought too many things. Ask me what I *knew!* . . . I knew I couldn't ring my dad to send the bucket down. I knew I couldn't climb out; my first round of holes three days before had broken the lowest thirty feet off the ladder. I couldn't climb the air- or water-lines which were within reach. *And* I knew, though reason almost failed to function, that the greatest danger was of drowning, should the concussion from the shots stun me rather than kill me outright.

Weak from fear and nauseated by the smoke from the fuses, I braced my feet against the uneven bottom of the sump, leaning against its south side. My eyes were pressed tightly shut; my teeth were clenched; and my hands were pressed

BLASTED UNDERGROUND

with all my strength over my ears. My only chance of escaping lay in staying there in the sump, as low in the water as I dared, to protect my head from flying rock. The water should deaden the concussion somewhat.

Just as I got set, I remembered something about long-range gun crews protecting their ear-drums. What was it? I fumbled through my mind for the answer, while the dull hiss of the fuses and drip of water magnified to a clamor. The biting smoke from the fuses hurt my eyes and lungs almost beyond endurance. Then I had the answer: artillerymen opened their mouths to equalize the pressure on their ear-drums. I opened my mouth, prayed, cursed, and waited.

It came. I didn't hear it; I felt it—that "cut hole" number one. I felt them all. Every one of them hurt me, and I counted them—one—two—three—four . . . sixteen! I knew the dust and smoke would smother me, but I couldn't move. I think I felt myself being lifted; I'm not sure. . . .

My dad is twice the reason I'm here today. When the empty bucket reached the hoist-room at the top of the shaft, two or three shots had gone. Dad didn't know where I'd fallen off, or if I had; but he did the only thing that could possibly save his son's life: he dropped the bucket. It was sitting beside me by the time the sixth shot went. Then Dad gathered up a rope, climbed down the ladder beside the skids in the winze, reaching the bottom rung thirty feet above my head a minute after the last shot. He fixed his rope, slid down it, found me, lifted me into the bucket, climbed back out on the rope and ladder—three hundred and eighty feet!—and then hoisted me out of that hell of poison smoke.

Yes, and Dad had weathered sixty-five summers already. If I could, I'd write more about a dad like that.

It is interesting now to note that I never entirely lost consciousness, although I stood barely out of line and only some six steps away from a round of two hundred and twenty-four sticks of blasting powder.

I was deaf for only about four hours, but my ears rang for over a week. I didn't drill my round the next day; but I did the next and all following ones.

We fixed up the bottom section of ladder before I went to work again, and thereafter I climbed into the bucket, rather than trying to stand on its rim.

Swordsman's Hazard

By DURIS DEJONG

IT all began because of a scene in the motion-picture "Lives of a Bengal Lancer," in which British officers in northern India, armed with spears, and mounted on swift horses, hunt wild boars. My friends Hal and John agreed that this kind of hunting couldn't offer many thrills, because there didn't seem to be the slightest element of danger.

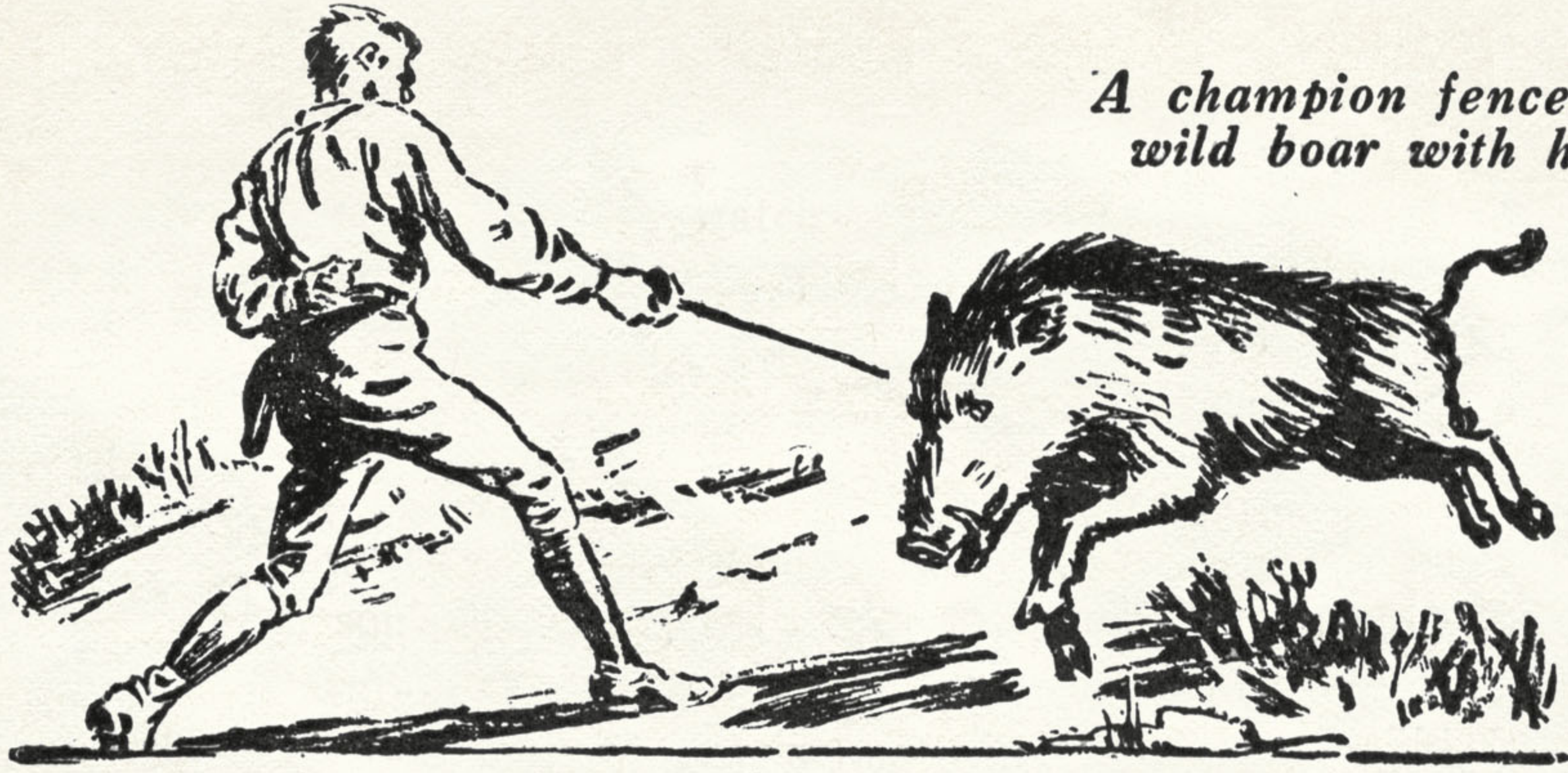
I remarked that it would be good sport to hunt boars with a sword. There would be some risk attached to it, of course; but, I argued, if toreadors without any knowledge of fencing and good footwork can kill a one-ton bull with a sword, why couldn't I, a good fencer, kill a much smaller animal with my trusted *épée*?

They agreed that they couldn't see any reason why not. We are fencers, all three of us: Hal Corbin was a member of the 1932 American Olympic Fencing Team; John Ely is the present Pacific Coast saber champion; and I have represented my native country, Holland, in the 1928 and 1932 Olympic Games, and have held the Pacific Coast three-weapon championship for the past three years.

So we decided to go after wild boar, and give me a chance to kill one with my sword. We were told that the island of Santa Cruz, some twenty miles off the coast halfway between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, was full of them.

People who had been to the island to kill wild boars, tried to impress us with the danger of facing a charging boar with anything less effective than a heavy rifle. We only laughed at them. Weren't we fencers, quick of hand and faster on our feet than they? Couldn't we, trained as we were, easily vault clear over the animal when it charged?

We had to take firearms, however, as the animals won't charge, or even come out in the open unless provoked. John, who is a good shot with a revolver, planned to take his .38. Hal, the stolid, the unimaginative, the conservative, said he was going to take his big 7mm. Lebel rifle, just in case—despite our jeers.



A champion fencer tackles a wild boar with his sword.

So one morning at daybreak, we set out in Hal's twenty-seven-foot sloop with auxiliary motor. The weather was all right in the morning, but shortly after noon the water became rougher and rougher. For hours we wallowed in the trough, but our little motor kept on chugging away until we got within protection of the island, and at sundown we landed.

The island of Santa Cruz is one of the most beautiful spots along the Pacific Coast. It is owned by the Caire family of San Francisco. With the exception of the farm-site, which forms a little self-contained village in the wilderness, and some fishing camps here and there along the coast, it is uninhabited and wild. The island is some thirty miles in length—quite mountainous, with Mount Diablo, fifteen hundred feet high, in the middle, and two small rivers. It is overrun with wild boars, small foxes, and numerous kinds of peculiar birds. The Caire farmhouse has its vegetable gardens, fruit trees, cattle, horses, dogs; great herds of sheep, hundreds of thousands of them, wild sheep that leap from rock to rock like mountain goats, herded by Indian shepherds, roam the island, and seem to be on friendly terms with the wild boars.

We slept the sleep of exhaustion that night, after our battle with the waves and the wind, under the great pine trees that grow right up to the stony beach. The next morning one of the watch-dogs of the farm woke us by licking us; after breakfast we went up to the farmhouse for hunting licenses, and for information about the best spots for hunting boars.

Just as the Santa Cruz wild sheep are different from the domestic docile underdone-mutton-chops, the wild pigs are entirely different from the animals to which we are accustomed. The boars are the descendants of a number of ordinary pigs put down on the island some two hundred years ago by some pirate ship as an easily accessible meat supply. The

pigs soon ran wild; their characteristics changed through the generations. They became wild, lean, fast and dangerous. Full-grown boars may be anywhere from a hundred to four hundred and fifty pounds in weight—vicious beasts, with a tough black hide, fairly long legs, thick bones, stringy muscles, a huge, ferocious-looking head with murderous tusks, and almost impossible to kill!

The next morning before dawn we set out on our hunt. John's .38 was swinging low in his holster; Hal was lugging his heavy artillery; I was armed with my light dueling sword, for which I had selected an extra stiff blade, which at the base, close to the bell, was as thick around as a fountain-pen. In my belt was a .32 automatic, should the sword break on the thick skull of some charging boar.

We began to climb in the dark, stumbling over loose rocks, guided by Hal's flashlight, working our way through bushes and around cactus beds. The sunrise on that mountain-side was a magnificent spectacle; then as we resumed our climb, suddenly we topped in our tracks: we had heard the unmistakable grunting of a pig, feeding not far from us. Since at that moment we were more or less hanging on with our teeth and fingernails, Hal using the big rifle as an alpenstock, we didn't particularly relish the thought of a hand-to-hand encounter with an infuriated four-hundred-pound wild boar. Looking inquiringly at each other, we shook our heads, ignored the grunts, and kept climbing. That moment I first realized the foolishness of our undertaking: true, in the gymnasium of the Los Angeles Athletic Club, I could easily have jumped over a charging boar—but here I was to meet him on his own ground. There was no question of jumping lightly, of using footwork; it was all I could do to keep from sliding down the mountain-side.

It was broad daylight when we arrived on a gentler slope, which leads to

the rolling plateau where the boars feed on wild oats that grow there. It was a perfect morning—but I would have enjoyed it more if my fear of being laughed at by my friends had not prevented me from backing out at the last moment.

SUDDENLY John stopped, and peered in the direction of a cluster of small, misshapen trees that looked like petrified hobgoblins in the white morning light. I too saw some black shape. Hal looked through his field glasses and nodded. John drew his .38, aimed carefully, and fired. A few moments later we knew what a charging boar looks like! He came tearing down the slope with the speed of a running dog, head low like a rhinoceros, uttering shrill, squealing grunts. John and Hal jumped to one side, as arranged, to give me first chance with my *épée*. Instinctively I stood "on guard" as before a fencing bout, knees well bent, the blade level, the sharp point aimed at the ferocious huge head.

Like a flash I realized that I'd never hit a vital spot this way: if I hit his head, the blade would most likely break on the skull without doing any damage. I had no time for looking for a better spot to hit, so I put all my strength in one tremendous leap and jumped to one side. The charging boar missed my thigh by about eight inches. A rhinoceros is said to keep on going after he charges and misses, and a bull closes his eyes as he charges; but this boar whirled as if on a dime and was almost on top of me before I realized it. This time, however, I stood higher than he, and I lunged. The sharp point entered behind the shoulder and penetrated deep into the body without stopping the boar's rush—and the *épée* broke off as he kept on coming!

Dropping the useless hilt, I drew my .32 automatic and fired three shots into his body before he reached me—but it did not stop him. He hit my thigh a frightful blow, and over I went, tripping over a boulder, as I landed flat on my back in the bushes. The boar was immediately after me again, squealing with rage, about to lay me open with his murderous tusks. In that infinitesimal fraction of a second I saw the anxious faces of my friends behind the animal's ferocious head, aiming their guns but not daring to shoot for fear of hitting me.

Like a snake I wiggled to one side and pulled up my legs, ready to kick his ugly snout with my heavy boots and thereby hold the vicious tusks away from my

body a little longer. I even fired two more shots into his body, but then he was on top of me. His tusks gashed my kicking leg from ankle to knee, tearing the leather as if it were rayon. The force of the next kick rolled me off the little ledge on which I was lying, and for a moment I was clear. That was the chance Hal and John had been waiting for: John's .38 banged three, four times, without stopping the boar for a moment; just as he was about to charge me again, I heard the heavy boom of Hal's rifle.

Then the boar was on top of me—I felt my leg double up and heard it snap as his full weight fell on me. The boar lay motionless, quite dead. Afterward I was told that Hal and John had found that all the bullets had landed, John's .38's, my five .32's; but none of the bullets had stopped the animal. The steel point from my broken sword had penetrated over six inches without hurting him. But it was the long 7 mm. bullet from Hal's big rifle that had torn through the boar and killed him on the spot!

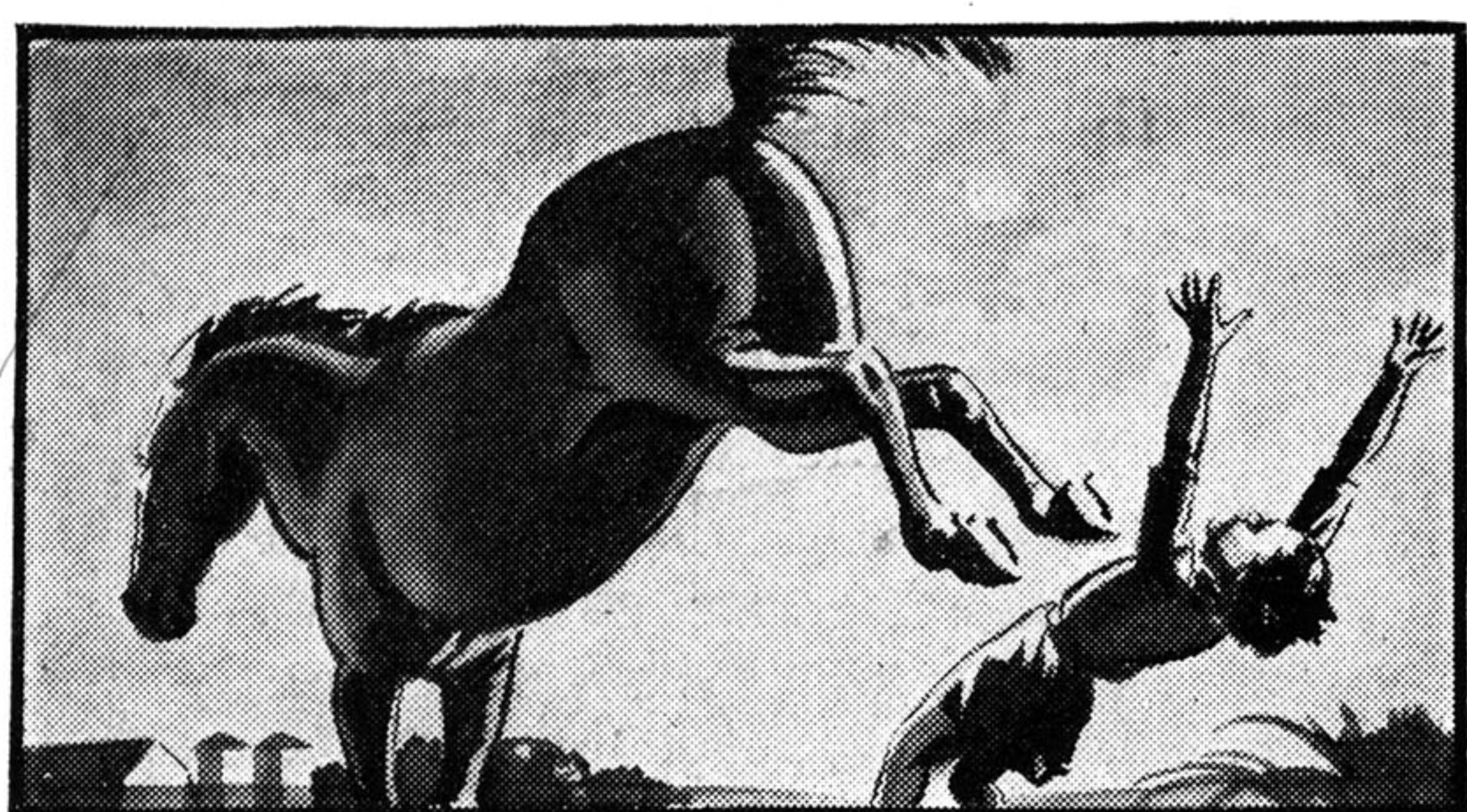
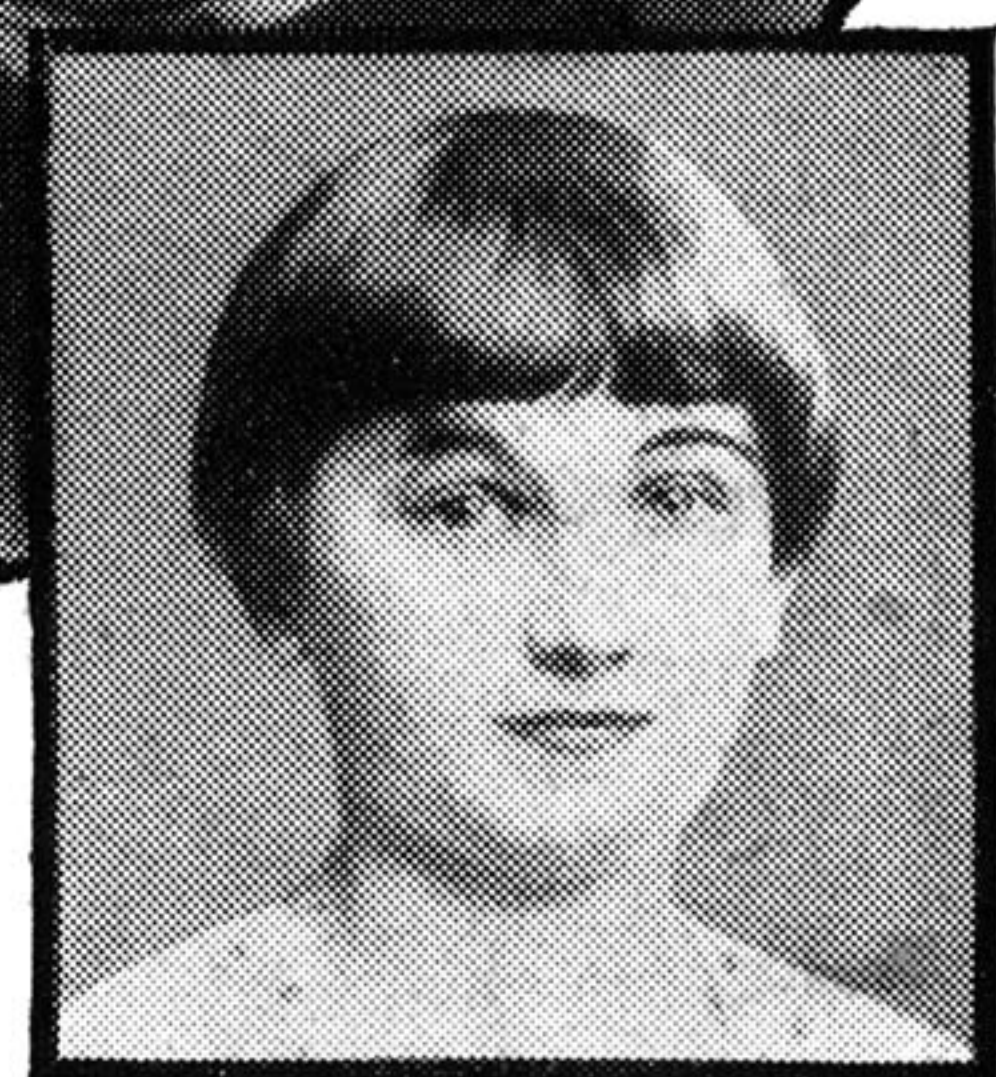
So there we were, all the excitement over, about a thousand feet up. My clothes were torn, my leg lacerated and broken, while I was bleeding from many other places. I was sore all over; and my friends didn't dare move me without a stretcher because my broken leg dangled at a queer angle when I tried to move with their assistance. So John slid down the mountain-side to the ranch house for help. After I fainted two or three times from the pain of the rough going, they finally got me down—I don't know how. One of the old Indian farmhands set my leg while I was unconscious—or probably I'd never have let him do it. But my doctor said afterward that the X-ray pictures showed a perfect job.

RETURNING in Hal's sloop was of course impossible, so I had to wait until the next sailing of the *Santa Cruz*, the cattle boat which also belongs to the Caire family. A few days later the boat took a load of sheep into Santa Barbara—and had a mighty sick ex-wild-boar-hunter on board too.

And although I did accomplish what I'd set out to do, hunt a wild boar with a sword, I heartily agree with everybody that I was one darned fool! One thing is certain: I'll do my future hunting in the conventional way—and if men of experience tell me to use a machine-gun, and sit on top of an elephant—I'll follow their advice!

"Out Went the Lights...I Said Goodbye to My Child"

Her Skull fractured by Horse's Kick, Irmgard Giess is Saved, though Hospital Fuses Blow.

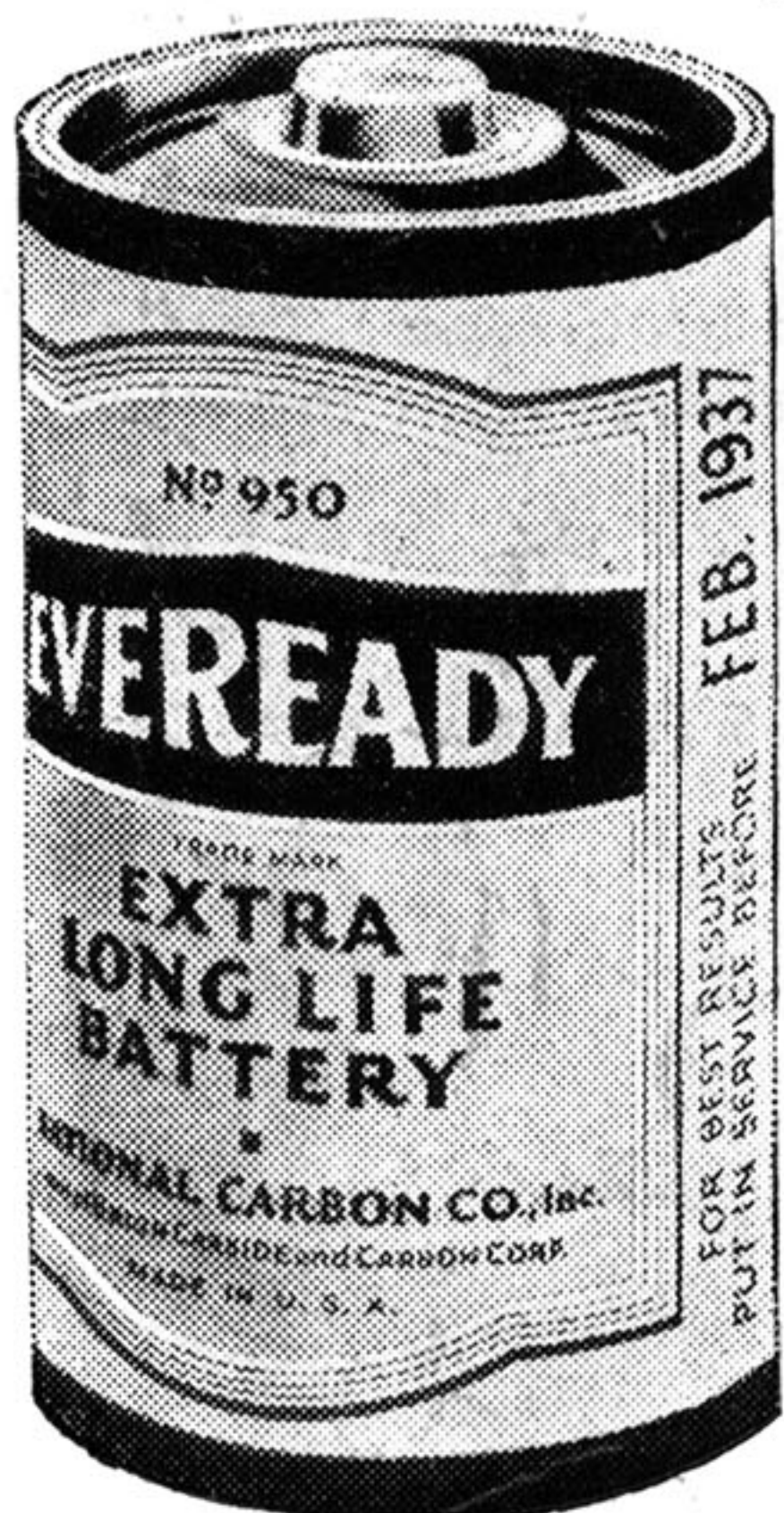


"The still form of my little ten year old Irmgard lay on the operating table," writes her father, Peter Giess. "The great brain specialist stood over

her in a cone of brilliant white light, his instruments flashing as he began the work that we prayed would save her life, save her reason and restore her sight.

"But he had hardly started when the room went black... the fuses had blown. 'Flashlights quick!' barked the doctor. I groped to the door, ran to my car and got my big flashlight with five Eveready Batteries in it...The operation went ahead... and my little girl is getting well.

"I'd used those batteries a lot, but they still had plenty of power left. When the lights went out I was sure she was gone. And I guess she would have been, if it hadn't been for Eveready Batteries that were good and fresh when I bought them, months before."

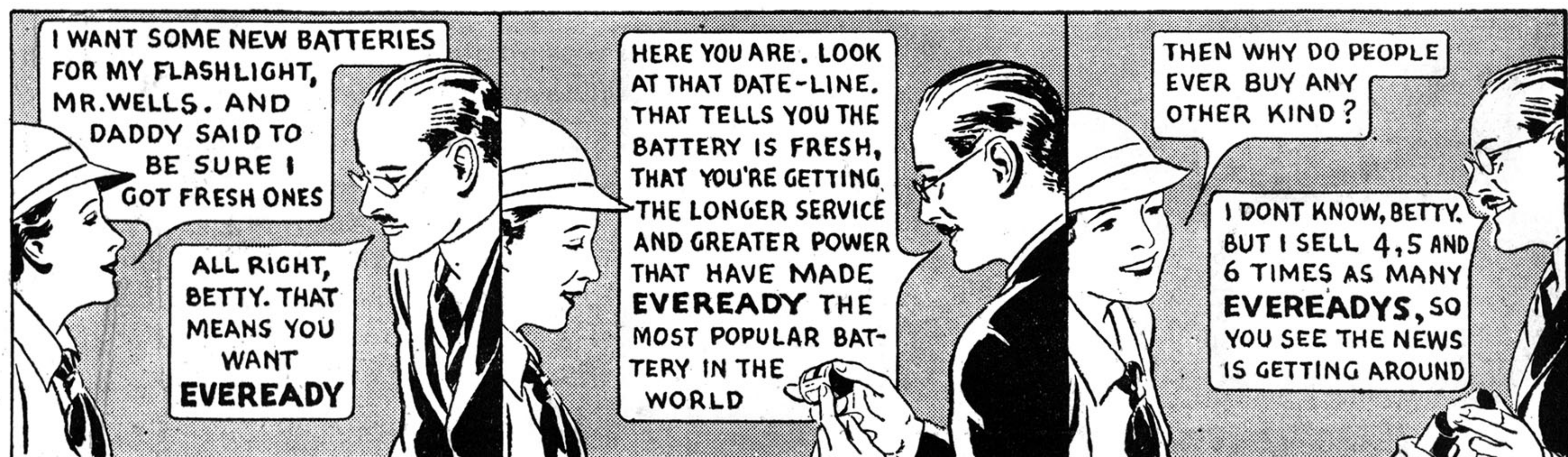


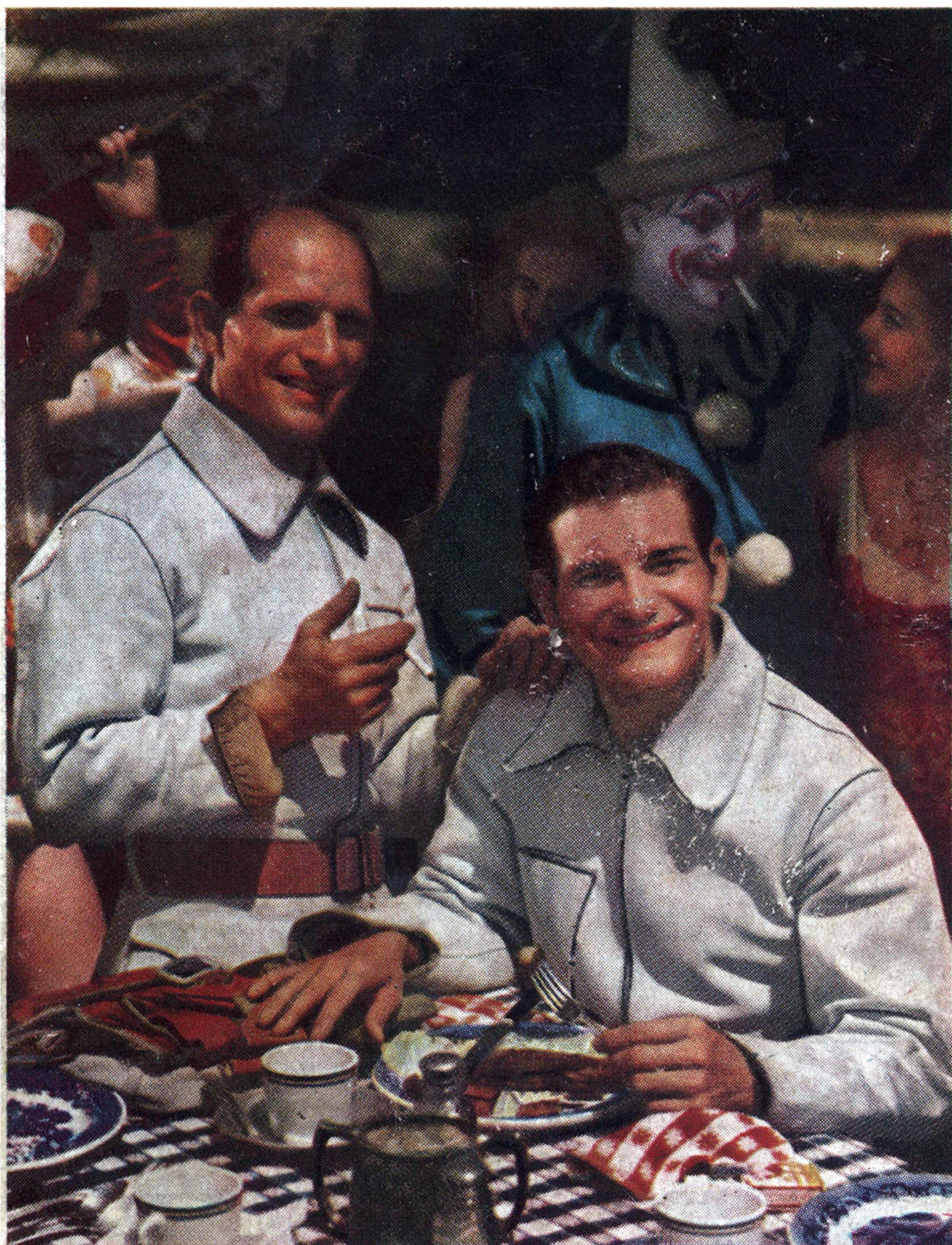
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