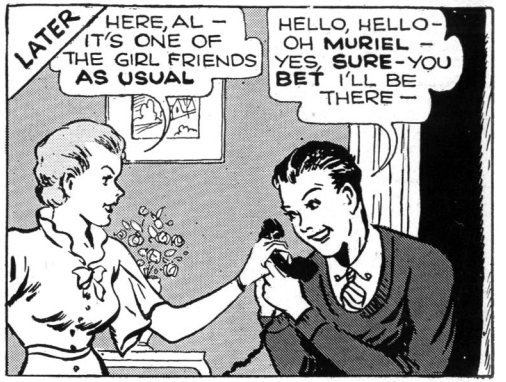
BLUE BOOK

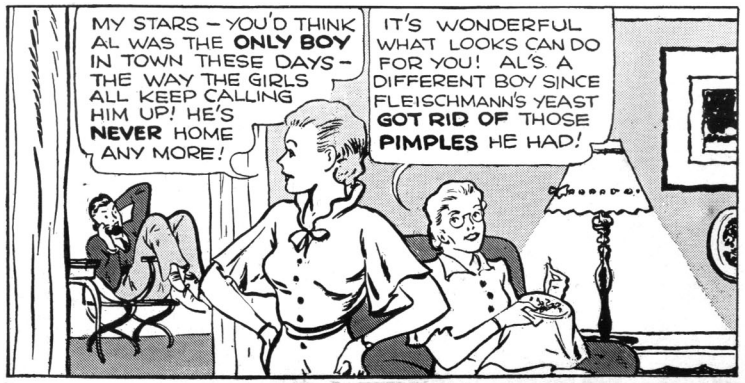
An Illus[trated] Magazine ~ December, 15 cents

"LIFE'S A FIGHT, KIT!" by Gordon Keyne

Achmed Abdullah, H. Bedford-Jones, Carl Sandburg,
Fulton Grant, Robert Mill, Bill Adams

– BUT PIMPLES WERE THE REAL REASON AL SAID "NO" TO PARTIES





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by clearing skin irritants out of the blood

Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, Etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912,

of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE published monthly at Dayton, Ohio, for October 1st, 1936.

State of New York, County of New York, ss.

Before me, a Notary in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared John D. Hartman, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Assistant Treasurer of The McCall Company, publisher of The Blue Book Magazine, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher: The McCall Company, 230 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y. Editor: Donald Kennicott, 230 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y. Managing Editor: None. Business Managers: None.

2. That the owners are: The New Publishing Company, Wilmington, Delaware; McCall Corporation, Wilmington, Delaware, (Owner of The New Publishing Co. stock). The following are the names and addresses of stockholders holding 1 per cent or more of the capital stock of McCall Corporation:

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Sworn to and subscribed before me this 9th day of September 1936. Frank H. Murray, Notary Public, New York County, New York County Clerk's No. 306. New York County Reg. No. 8M334. My commission expires March 30, 1938.

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

DECEMBER, 1936 VOL. 64, NO. 2

Two Fascinating Serials

Memorable Short Stories

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

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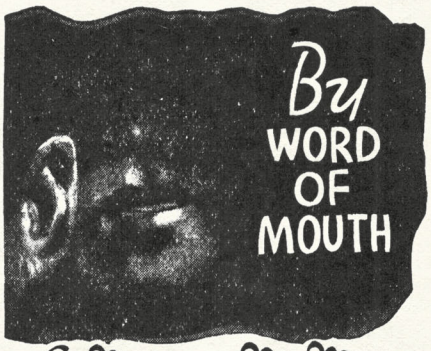

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Steel and Men

A preview from that splendid novelette "Beelzebub," by R. G. Kirk, which will be a feature of our next issue.

YOUNG Jimmy Doan, just out of college, was standing before Beelzebub himself, with only the width of a desk between him and that icy-eyed man-wrecker.

Beelzebub looked this young bucko over. Beelzebub liked them young. He often said: "I hire 'em young and wear 'em out myself!"

So Sebold, with an avid eye, looked this hard-knit young trouble-seeker up and down.

And finally, "Can you," inquired B. L. Sebold, "take it?"

"Abuse," the young buck stated, "is the one thing I am fondest of. Can you," he wanted to know of B. L. Sebold, "dish it out?"

B. L. Sebold smiled at this belligerent young man bleakly. He was asking for it, eh?

"How much do you think you are worth to me?" asked Sebold.

Jimmy Doan told him how much he was worth.

"You will get what you receive," said Sebold. "But if you're here a year from now, I'll double the figure you named. Report to Steve Takacs, over at the open hearth."

[*Four years later Jimmy Doan was in charge of the rail mill, and had married magnificent Helen Petrovitch of Montenegro—Helen, whom Beelzebub also coveted.*]

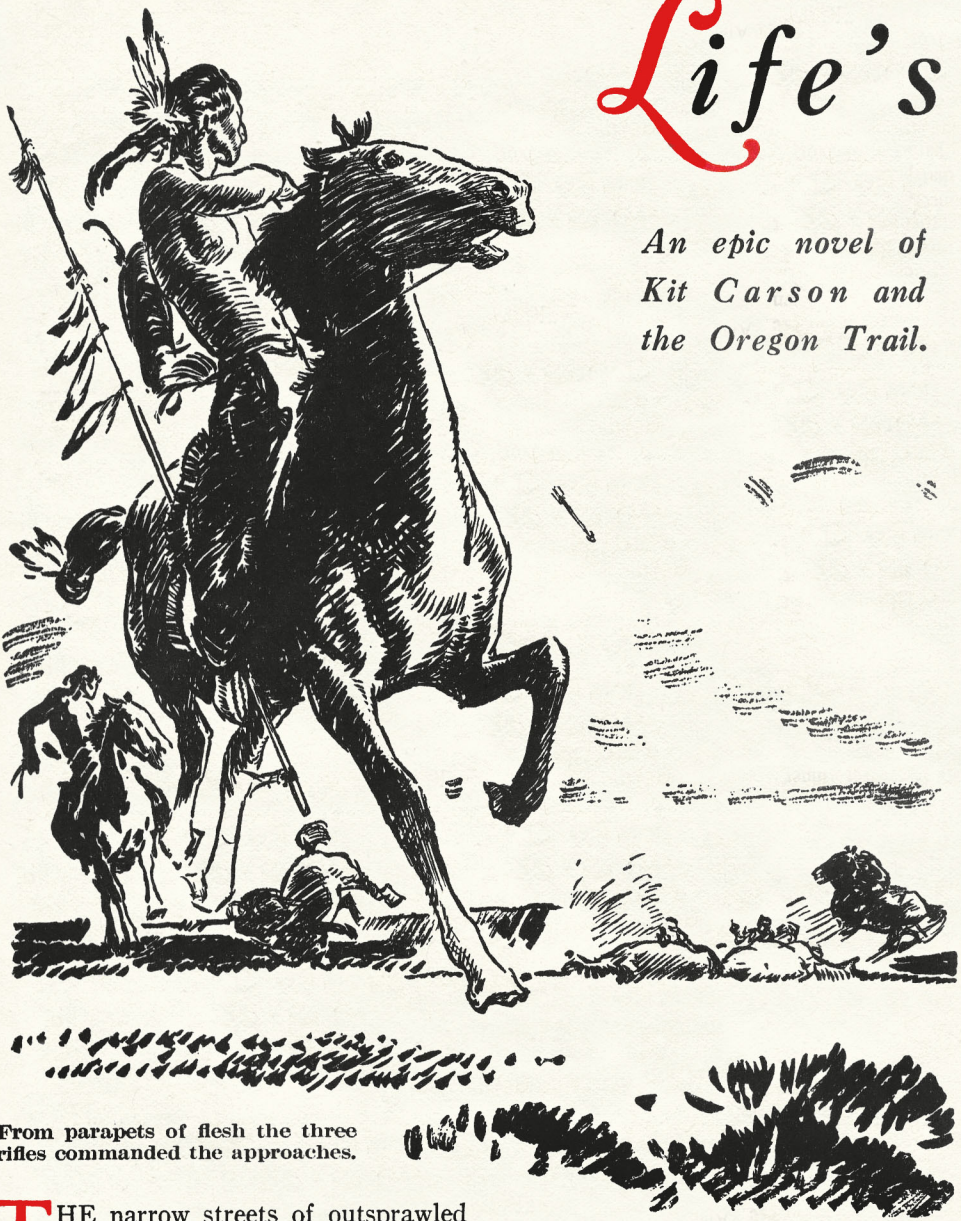
But what of their romance? What of celestial hours spent together which bind two with a chain as soft as though of welded rose-leaves; but which is strong as though forged out of steel? Bonds such as these are made in hours of balmy leisure.

Balm, eh? Brother, there is no balm in Ironville, Pennsylvania. Leisure? At Ironville the tall stacks smoke again. They belch grime twenty-fours hours a day, seven days a week. They set their pall upon Thanksgiving Day; they smudge the snow of Christmas; they smear with soot the pure, white-shining face of Easter. Holidays, did you say? Sundays? Have you any idea how much it costs to let an open hearth cool off and heat it up again? Six days, in Ironville, they labor; and on the seventh day they work like hell.

Don't miss this vital and moving story, in our next issue.

Life's

An epic novel of Kit Carson and the Oregon Trail.



From parapets of flesh the three rifles commanded the approaches.

THE narrow streets of outsprawled Santa Fe were dark. In the plaza, where the hard bare ground defied spring with a rearguard skift of winter's snow, dying embers glowed here and there. These marked the evening mess-fires of teamsters and wagoners of the Santa Fe trail, and their companioning trappers in from the mountains. The hooded wagons, parked until the open roads beckoned again to Missouri, stood spectral and silent, sentineled by bordering ax-scarred cottonwoods. Beyond, the Governor's Palace and the flanking seats of power, military, civil and religious, held the gateway of Mexico's northern frontier.

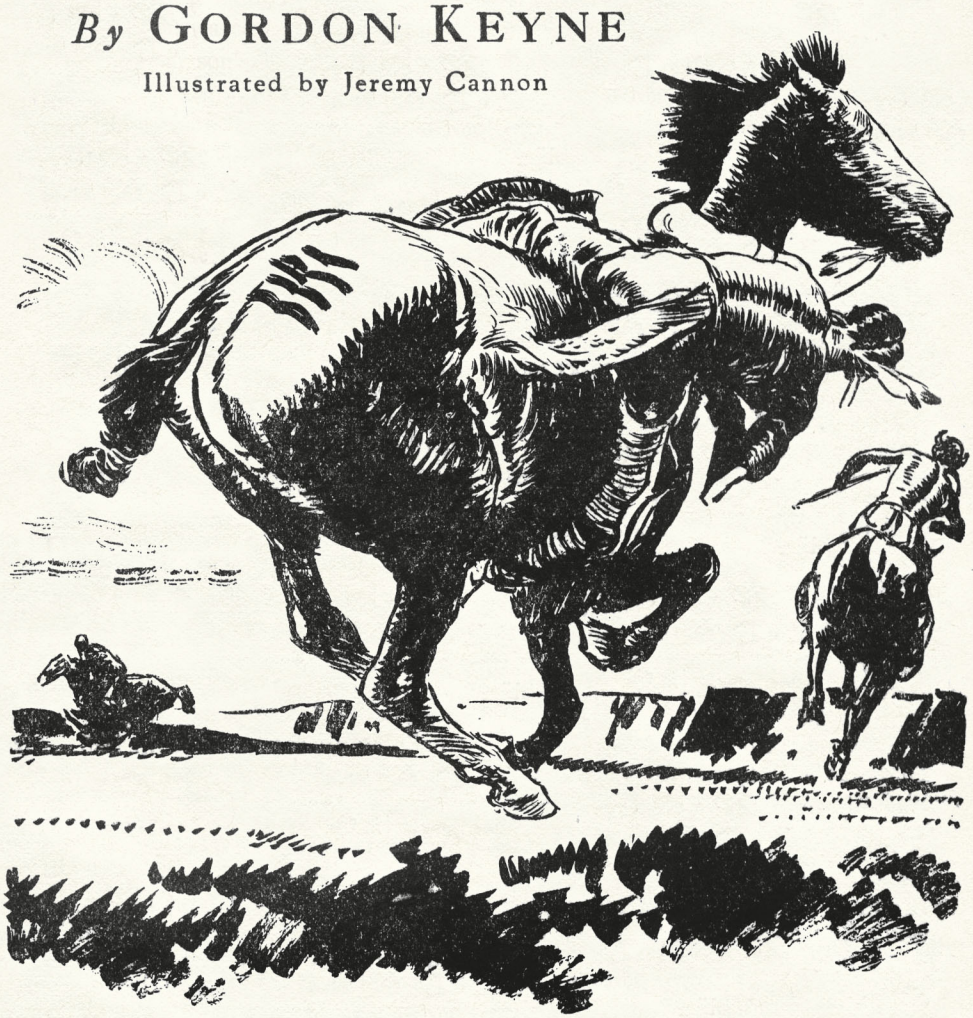
Around this central plaza occasional lights glimmered from low doorways and deep window embrasures. They promised cheer to be found within the thick adobe walls; whisky-bar, monte bank, fiddle and guitar, women to be valued in beaver pelts and monthly wages.

The night's doings centered in the Fonda, the one-story tavern marking the end of the Santa Fe Trail. The doors of the main entrance stood hospitably ajar. Slipping past the walled corral where trail mules and oxen hunched and snorted, Kit Carson, with rifle poised in buckskin arm, entered out of the night.

a Fight, Kit!

By GORDON KEYNE

Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon



"How, Kit!" went up a yell of recognition.

"Here's Kit Carson down from Taos!"

"Warm your gizzard with a swig of lightning, Kit! Hurray for liquor and gals! Who's aiming to shake a moccasin?"

Carson plunged at once into rude but hearty welcome, strident gayety, hazy smoke and flickering lights, the warmth of piñon knots flaring in the fireplace, the warmth of weltering humans. Chairs and stools and tables were occupied. Men squatted, Indian fashion, along the walls: Trail hands garbed in cowhide, linsey-woolsey or flannel, with wool hats and untrimmed hair; mountain men like himself, in from the snow-bound traplines, shaven for the settlements; in moccasins, leather leggings and hunting shirts, skin caps and beaver hats, with every man his rifle and his butcher knife in sheath. Whites and breeds. Mexicans, hatted to their eyebrows, serape-wrapped to their ears, flashing black eyes watchful. A background of señoras and señoritas, slippered and cheek-stained for a frolic with the Americans. These were not of the quality, however. Gentle blood disdained the public fandango.

The bar was busy. Carson swallowed his dram and took the stool offered him by big Rube Herring. Slight of build, fair-haired and blue-eyed, his rifle between his knees, its muzzle topping his hat-brim, he took in the show, watchful, wasting no words.

NINE years ago he had come over the trail from Missouri. Out of Taos, eighty miles northeast of Santa Fe, he had trapped across to Mexican California, and also beyond the mountain divide into British Oregon. As soon as the streams and passes opened with the spring, he was off again with his trap-sack; but behind this simple prospect now lurked perplexities and problems to be set at rest.

"Doin's in the big lodge, hey?" bellowed Rube Herring above the uproar. "Hurray for ol' Kaintuck! One time it's fat cow; next time it's toasted moccasin. Where from?"

"Taos," replied Carson laconically. "What's the sign hereabouts?"

"A-plenty, Kit. My feet itch to dance Injun. Will you wet your whistle?"

"Had my liquor. If there's a scrimmage, I don't aim to lose my hair."

"Never got so drunk I couldn't line hindsight and foresight!" And Herring guffawed. "Last time I seen you was at rendezvous on the Green. You'd come in from the Snake, after trapping with a Hudson's Bay party."

Carson mused a moment, then nodded.

"That was a hunger trail, Rube. The squad I was with got down to drinking horse-blood. After we reached Fort Hall trading-post on the Snake, the Injuns run off what stock we had left. Had to buy animals from Tom McKay of the Hudson's Bay, so as to get to rendezvous. I haven't paid for mine yet."

"Where do you set traps this beaver season? For the Britishers again?"

"Dunno, Rube. I'm a free trapper. The H.B.C. hold a prime beaver country and pay well for pelts. The east side of the mountains is getting crowded with greenhorns. They leave the streams poor."

"While we old-timers take our pay in goods at rendezvous!" snorted Herring. "It's a damned cut-throat system. If I wasn't from Kaintuck, I'd go over to the Britishers. In their country you don't risk your hair every time you set a trap. But hell! First thing you know we'll have all that Oregon country ourselves, and ketch beaver there by nobody's say-so."

"Nobody's say-so now, except the Blackfeet," said Carson. "Free country for a spell, by treaty."

"Well, I hear there's fellers in Washington who don't want Oregon. They say let the Injuns have the plains, clean to the mountains! If the Hudson's Bay keep coming with their posts, we'll be fighting everywhere for our topknots. The Injuns think a heap o' British blankets. . . . Hurray! There's moccasin call!"

Fiddle and guitar, for some time a-tuning, now burst into a wild strain. Back to the walls went chairs and tables. Rifles clattered into a discard, but every man knew where his own iron went. There was a rush for the women. The agile Mexicans were first.

"Hyar, you greaser, fair play!"

Confusion, wild hilarity, black looks; the Mexicans far outnumbered the Americans present. The plank floor shuddered to the beat of heavy feet; the candle-flames swayed and tilted at their moorings. Trapper and teamster left womanless fell into bear hugs, prancing awkwardly over the floor. Dust eddied. Carson, caught in the grip of old Laforay the 'breed Iroquois, pivoted hither and thither, as the music swirled.

Carson's head swirled also. He had been brought here, as had others of his ilk, by rumors of something impending, of some special entertainment, of "medicine" and all the word comprised. Also, by prospect of the usual scrimmage.

Like these others, he lived largely in a world of Indian lore and language and custom. Younger than they, less given to excess and spendthrift energy, he was known already for his cool head. Only times like this of mob excitement could sway him. Carson had attained early, through bitter boyhood and back-breaking trails, the lesson of repression.

But now the springtime of life was quickening in him.

HE swayed in the Iroquois' arms, stamped with the others, lifted his voice with theirs; but behind his eyes stirred thought. He was one of them, these forerunners, pressing forward across plains and mountains, matching wits and rifles with reds and hostile whites. A scant few years back, he had listened wide-eyed to tales of dim unknown lands —California, the Yellowstone, Oregon. Now he had been there and back; and what of it? He was poor. Life gave him a wage of living, no more.

So it was with them. The annual rendezvous of trappers, when furs were brought in, when the scattered hundreds met for carouse and lawless joy, drank up their earnings. He himself was still in debt for those horses to Tom McKay of the Hudson's Bay Company, that hated and feared H.B.C.—"Here Before Christ," as men said—now waging a silent, invisible, relentless war for mastery of the whole Oregon country.

"Wagh! Ah, wagh!"

Reflection vanished. Rube Herring was dancing Injun. Body bent and knees high, moccasins flatly planted, he was circling the center of the room. The guttural chant spread.

"Wagh! Ah, wagh! Augh! Augh!"

Trapper after trapper joined in the medicine-dance. The steady rhythmic thumps of flat soles, the throaty grunts, the zestful voices of men eagerly showing off, drowned the music and cleared the floor. The panting women sat laughing and clapping. Americans beat time with foot and calloused palm. Mexicans glowered from the bar and the walls.

THE circle tired, and finally broke with a united scalp halloo. The music fell away. Then something happened, all in a flashing instant, ere the music picked up and pulsed a newer, more seductive strain. Something that held the whole place gripped and motionless. An inner door had swung open. She stood there, then lithely advanced across the threshold, smiling as she confronted the staring eyes.

Silence, save for the music. Then stirred a gust of breaths, a volley of low amazed oaths flogging the blue-hazed air. Carson's sweat dried upon him; heated eyes were all around. The quiver of men poised like dogs held to a scent, came to him, and set his pulses racing. He too had eyes, senses, sensations. And she was looking straight at him, smiling straight at him.

A girl, golden, swelling-breasted, wearing tightly fitted doeskin which revealed rather than concealed. A slimly rounded woman, her small head crowned with twin-braided hair the rich color of the northern beaver. The parting, Carson noted, was deeply vermilioned. Dusky golden features, warm with glow of blood. Forehead low, brows nearly meeting and well arched above eyes soft and lustrous as those of the young cow-bison. Straight proud nose, a perfect oval face curving to the passionate, strong chin and

Kit Carson

Rube Herring

lips. And upon her feet moccasins with tiny bells. Thrust between girdle and soft thigh, a knife in beaded sheath.

"Look'ee! Here's a likely piece!" Herring exploded. Then he stiffened, and a low, fierce growl rose in his throat.

For as the girl stepped aside, as she smiled, another figure appeared in the doorway behind her. A warrior, erect, contemptuous, watchful; a Comanche, painted of visage, with dressed buffalo robe sweeping his figured moccasins. At sight of him Carson sensed a movement around, of hands flitting to knife-haft or seeking discarded rifle. Then, suddenly, the girl-woman was dancing.

She danced to the languorous sway and tinkle of her moccasin bells, while the music pulsed. Undulating, provocative, laughing, she quickened as the fiddles quickened. Carson started; it was the April moon Young Squaw Dance of the Arapaho people. Others recognized it also, as a murmur testified.

With gradual circuit of the room, she was coming. Carson felt her eyes touch

on him. Now she had come; she was pausing before him, with uplift of eyes and arms extended. He felt the warmth of her. He saw her lips move; he heard the word: *"Come!"* Thus, in April, the Arapaho girls would bid the young men. But here and now, it was to dance that she invited him.

Suddenly the spell was broken. Carson moved, but another was before him with a wild sharp animal cry:

"Caspita! No, American dog! *Yo, caballero Mejicano—"*

A Mexican sprang for her, avidly seized her and caught her to him. Arm cutting into her waist, the Mexican faced around, snarling, hand whipping out knife. But swifter even than Carson was the girl herself.

"You?" she cried in quick scorn. Her fingers darted; her blade came clear; her hand drove it in to the very haft. The Mexican gasped. His clutch relaxed. He slumped, and slid to the floor.

"Fracas, boys!" went up a yell. "Three to one's fair enough—down 'em for cold meat!"

Fandangos usually ended this way; a blow, a knife, a charge and scramble. Now there was a rush. The Americans, heavily outnumbered, took the offensive. Bodies met bodies; knives clashed; stools and rifles were swung. The lights were being hastily snuffed. Women shrieked in wild affright.

Carson had snatched up his rifle, even as the girl's knife drove home. Now, with agile rapidity, he swept her back, covered her from a rush of Mexicans with his flailing rifle-barrel. Her laugh rang in his ears as she slipped back through the doorway and disappeared.

DARKNESS fell upon the place, ruddily relieved by the piñon coals. Carson stumbled away, broke through the Mexicans. His own people were retreating to the entrance. Fighting cool-headed, he joined the retreat. Trappers and teamsters were pouring out into the street, laughing, swearing, shouting. The rear men faced about with final thrust and smash, then backed away. The heavy doors slammed shut, and the bolts were shot. Outside, Carson found himself in a din of voices.

"Hooray! Warn't that a picnic for you!"

"Wagh! I threw two o' them *pelados* cold. Where's the gal?"

"Carson had her, last I see. Hell's full o' such gals. Who's for a drink?"

MEN trooped away, shuffling, laughing, bragging, with curse and vaunt and broad wit, bent upon fresh adventure. Carson found himself left with Herring and Laforay.

"By damn!" panted the old Iroquois 'breed. "That young woman, I see her before now! What she do here, eh?"

"Huh!" said Rube Herring. "I seen her with a Hudson's Bay party west of the mountains, near rendezvous time last summer. She's a 'breed, half Injun, and half French."

"Mais oui! Her mother's a Blackfoot," said Laforay. "I see her las' year in Yellowstone country, in Plenty Eagle's lodge. I hear the Crows talk about her. The Snakes, they talk too. Go Everywhere Woman—that's her! By damn, I hire out again this spring to Hudson's Bay. They have the open hand. Maybe I get rich, marry her."

"She sure takes the shine off'n them Injun squaws in the mountains," Herring declared. "She can make a man come like beaver to bait. I'd hire out to the Hudson's Bay myself, with promise of her in my lodge."

"Non, non!" Old Laforay grinned. "She not for American, *mon ami. Moi,* I am French. My father was old Nor'-west man. I think I go find her in Oregon."

"She made a dead set for Kit, here. Hey! What's the sign, Kit?"

"Never saw her before. If she's got Blackfoot blood, I wouldn't touch her." Carson grimaced and rubbed his shoulder. Some one had hit it in the scrimmage, and the bone was still sore from a Blackfoot bullet. "Plenty Eagle, huh?" he added, with a low oath. "It was his ball that downed me, time I near froze, stretched out all night. Aint forgot it, neither."

"WELL, that scrimmage left me dry as an old buff'ler skull," said Herring. "Let's go wet our gullets."

Another was before Carson.
"No, American dog!"

"I'm going to spread my blankets," Carson answered. "Come morning, I'm off for Taos again, and then over to Bent's Fort on the Arkansaw."

"Yeah? Watch out the 'Paches don't lift your hair on that trail. I hear their hearts are bad."

"I'll run the chance," grunted Carson.

The other two trudged away, to finish the night. He turned about, rifle on arm, with a bed in the corral as his purpose; but the dancing woman filled his eyes and mind. Go Everywhere Woman! He had heard talk of her. Not that he was deaf to Herring's warning; he, too, had heard that the Jicarillas, the Basket Apaches, were out again on the warpath. Just why, nobody seemed to know.

But the woman, this dancing girl! There was a flame of fire in her. French-Injun breeds were like that, thought Carson. And she knew how to take care of herself; that knife talked. Blackfoot blood, eh? Bad medicine. Blackfeet women didn't shine with Americans. Lord, but she was handsome! Soft and warm as a squaw-dressed beaver pelt. He could still see her; he could still feel her, as when he had shoved her ahead of him to safety. The touch of her burned through him.

If he went back to McKay in the spring, he would ask about her, he decided. Typical of Carson, this decision. Another man would have gone bursting ahead this moment, this night, here in Santa Fe. But Carson thought of the coming spring, of the mountain country, of the future; he was still so young that to him the future seemed illimitable, and time an uncharted endless thing.

Suddenly his hair bristled. He was skirting the high wall of the Fonda corral; even before he heard the slight *pad-pad* of moccasins in his wake, the alarm seized him. He whirled, ready, peering into the obscurity. It was the tall Comanche of the framing doorway; robe reversed now, hair side out.

"Amigo!" The Comanche spoke in guttural Spanish. "Young woman say Little Chief come."

No mistake. "Little Chief"—so the red folk knew him, a name eloquent in its laconic significance.

"That is good," said Carson gravely. His heart was weak; he must see her again. He could not refuse. She knew his name, had asked for him; his pulses leaped.

The Indian turned, wordless, robe-enveloped and straight-footed. Carson followed. They rounded the farther corner of the Fonda and came to a single doorway, and passed in. Here was a small room, lamp-lighted. The Comanche ush-

ered Carson in, then came in and closed the door and stood against it.

She was here, sitting on a couch. She had wrapped herself in a crimson shawl. She sprang up, her moccasin bells tinkling, and held out her hand, white-woman fashion.

"Kit Carson is welcome," she said in English, spiced with accent. "Will he sit down?"

CARSON let her fingers slip from his hard hand. He sat upon an ox-hide stool, held his rifle between his knees, and waited, his eyes devouring her.

"I have to thank you for what you did, in there, for me."

"It was nothing," said Carson, but not in words. With the Comanche's intent eyes glowing upon him, the universal sign-language came more naturally. It steadied him to use his hands, thus. His cool poise returned. Blackfoot, eh?

"You would have danced with me?" she asked, smiling.

"I would, yes," he replied with slow words. "A man doesn't refuse, in that kind of a dance. He'd be damaging the girl's reputation."

Shrewd words, those. He wondered if she knew that only virgins were supposed to parade in that Arapaho dance. . . . She knew; a flush stole into her cheeks. She drew her two braids forward and sat toying with them, her eyes searching into him.

"I know of you, Kit Carson. I have heard Captain McKay speak of you. You were with him, after beaver."

Carson nodded. "Last spring, into the great basin south of the Snake. That's a country of empty traps and empty bellies."

"Captain McKay was sorry for it. He helped you with horses when yours were stolen, eh?"

"He had them. We didn't." Carson was laconic, alert.

"Indians don't steal Hudson's Bay horses."

"Those devils of Blackfeet will steal anything that has four feet and a coat of hair."

"Yes?" She showed no anger. "You think the Blackfeet all bad? But they get on very well with the Hudson's Bay men. And supposing that I, Marie, am of the Blackfeet?" With the smiling question she leaned toward him, provocative. The budding swell of her breasts stirred him. "Am I so bad, then? Maybe you will go with Captain McKay again, into rich beaver country this time. I will tell him. I am of the Hudson's Bay people, you see. And I'll meet you again, west of the mountains."

What was she after? Carson shifted on his stool. His thoughts were on those horses for which he owed McKay. She read his mind, and smiled anew.

"The horses do not matter; they shall be nothing, my friend."

Carson grunted, uneasily. Not the matter of horses, nor the staring Comanche, worried him, but this girl; the room was too small. He sensed danger, a fascinating danger. She was sleek beneath that crimson shawl. Her eyes drew him, and he felt as he had once felt when matching eyes with a crouched panther. Abruptly, he stood up.

"I'll be going," he said, finality in his air. Her eyes widened, but she made no protest. Indian training, on both sides.

"Don't forget, then. Captain McKay will expect you."

"Good night."

He left the word for what promise it might hold, opened the door, and went out. In the open night air, he breathed more freely.

He made his bed on some straw in a corner of the Fonda corral. The sheltering walls and the huddle of beast-bodies tempered the air. He had no money to pay for lodging. He must get a stake of spring supplies from Bill Bent, over on the Arkansaw.

In the night, his shoulder ached from the wound of Plenty Eagle's ball. Damn all Blackfeet! She hadn't come here just to seek him out and cajole him over to the Hudson's Bay outfit. Yet he had read queer things in her face and eyes; a queer intentness, and invitation, a promise, that quickened his blood. She was not the sort to look that way at all men. . . . Well, time enough. Right now, the most urgent thing was to reach Bent's Fort and get an outfit.

At last Carson fell asleep.

CHAPTER II

WILLIAM BENT reflectively stuffed his pipe. It was a Cheyenne pipe with blackened bowl and long hollow-reed stem gayly painted and hung with a weasel-tail pendant. He and Kit Carson were sitting on the flat roof of his fort, out before the second-story quarters, in the sunlight. His dark features were almost Indian, marked by the small-

pox. He was a man of careful speech, of plodding thought.

Never in all his life had he, or any other white man, beheld such a sight as now greeted him. His grunt intimated as much.

Before the flat, graveled roofs of the trading-post, the Stars and Stripes lazily flapped in the plains breeze from the cupola sentry-box atop the main gateway. This was the north bank of the Arkansas River, a scant hundred miles from the Rocky Mountains boundary. Bent's Fort had advanced the flag five hundred miles to this southwestern corner of the United States.

Bent lighted the tobacco with a lucifer. His words followed the gush of smoke from lips and nostrils.

"Ten thousand on 'em, and ten thousand more within a day's ride. If those fellers only knew how easy they could wipe us out, Kit, they'd be dancing our scalps before another sundown."

Carson pulled at the short clay pipe stuck in his tanned face. His eyes, narrowed on the outspread scene, belied the brief smile on his lips.

"They don't know, Bill. They do know they'd lose a heap of lives trying. And an Injun counts lives."

The February day was mild. Here on the roof, the beams of the westering sun were warm with promise of approaching spring. The courtyard below, enclosed by the post walls and the abutting living-quarters, was a busy scene. Blanketed Indians stalked through the double gates; clerks dealt out trade-goods from the store; 'breed and white trappers in long hair and leather posed as on parade, or squatted for yarns, brags, tobacco and whisky.

But out beyond those walls—ah!

NORTHWARD, running clear over the plains horizon, a late afternoon sun gleamed level upon a far-scattered forest of lodges—Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Utes from the mountains; the plain was whitened by those bleached buffalo hides. The crossed lodge-poles, cutting from the peaks of the cone-shaped tepees, broke the sky endlessly. Few men had ever seen so many redskins at one time.

The noise of them ululated upon the afternoon air. Dogs barked everywhere; the voices of women and children rose shrill. Mounted warriors dashed hither and thither. They, and the women who bore the burdens, formed a constant procession of moving shapes.

"Fifty whites at best, and close on twenty thousand Injuns; counting men and boys both, half of 'em fighters," reflected Bent. "And plunder a-plenty, if they had the grit to stand losses."

"Shucks, Bill! You're married into the Cheyennes; why worry?" said Carson. "Besides, you've got an open hand. You're big trader to them; they and the 'Rapahos know which way their stick floats. Before you came, they were poor. Now they're rich. They turn in buff'ler robes to the post, and get their pay in goods."

Bent looked down at his Cheyenne leggings and moccasins, fringed and beaded like those of a chief. A slight, wiry, swart man, he was slow to voice what lay deep in his mind.

"Old Thunder, my wife's father, gave me this medicine pipe. He's my friend," he said awkwardly. Beside him was the one man in whom he felt that he might confide.

"He's had something on his mind lately. I can't get much out of him. It's something about a medicine beaver.* He's Cheyenne, you know, and keeper of the Cheyenne medicine arrows; he knows a lot. But this medicine beaver is new to me. Ever hear of a white beaver?"

Carson considered. "Yes. . . . Legends, mostly. Ghost-dance stories. Nobody ever saw one, of course. That is, not real white fur."

"Where there's smoke, Kit, you're liable to find fire. Owl Woman, my wife, loosens her tongue a bit. Looks like the Comanches are stirring up trouble."

"Reckon they might be," Carson assented. "They and the Kiowas are infernal devils for that. I hear tell the Comanches are jealous about this here post of yours, which leaves them poor while it makes the Cheyennes rich. Any Comanches trade here?"

"No. They won't come in for trade a-tall," Bent said simply. "They want a trading-post down in their country. But that's not the word, Kit. Now look yonder. See that bunch of lodges there, keeping by themselves?"

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*MEDICINE: Among North American Indians, (according to Webster) any object supposed to give control over natural or magical forces, to act as a protective charm, or to cause healing; also, magical power itself; the potency which a charm, token, or rite is supposed to exert.

"The North American Indian boy usually took as his *medicine* the first animal of which he dreamed during the long and solitary fast that he observed at puberty.

"F. H. Giddings."

"I see your knife red with Blackfoot blood," Plenty Eagle said suddenly.

Carson nodded, squinting at the groups of tepees.

"Comanches, sure. Keeping clear of the Utes, huh? And the Utes stay clear of the 'Rapahos. Before this camp pulls up lodge-pins, hell's liable to bust loose."

"I dunno." Bent puffed for a moment. "Owl Woman says those Red River Comanches, yonder, from below the Arkansaw, are making bad talk. The last batch of newspapers from Missouri say that Texas is all set to fight Mexico and break away, and counts on help from Americans in the States. When white men fight each other, that's Injun meat."

"It is if I know Injuns," drawled Carson. He began to get the drift of Bent's worry now. All except that white beaver talk: that puzzled him.

"Well, there's been Mexican agents among the Comanches, urging them to go ag'in' the Americans in Texas," went on Bent. "That means, against all Americans, anywhere."

"Comanches don't need much urging."

"Nope; but they and the Kiowas are brothers. The Kiowas are out again; our last train to Missouri had to fight its way through. Now, these Red River fellers are carrying war talk to the other tribes. What's all this huge gathering about, anyhow, if it aint to talk over a big Injun war to clear Americans off the plains? And I hear the 'Paches tried to jump you on your way here."

"We still got our hair," said Carson.

"And reckon to keep it. But Owl Woman tells me to stay close," Bent said grimly. Then he started, his head lifting, his black eyes focusing on the northwest. Pipe poised in fingers, he peered out. "More Injuns! Kit, look yonder! Them aint Utes from the mountains. That bunch don't belong down here."

Carson leaned forward, narrowing his blue eyes upon the band of riders that now appeared more distinctly, swooping in for the great camp. The ponies raced under tossing lance and feathered crest. Gun and bow were flourished; painted shields glinted.

"Blackfeet!" grunted Carson. "No women. All chiefs and warriors. Dunno what they can be up to. Must know the Utes will kill 'em."

Bent showed traces of excitement.

"Nope. They came down the neutral strip outside the foothills, Kit. If they had women, I'd think they were on a visit to the 'Rapahos. Them two tribes claim to be cousins. But there's no women along—"

"There's the peace sign!" exclaimed Carson.

The cavalcade came to a sudden stop, hoofs plowing the soil. A robe fluttered upon the air. From the Ute section of the camp, defiant shouts were being uttered; warriors were running about in that part; but the rest of the camp had gazed in dour silence upon these newly arrived Blackfeet.

Now a number of Cheyenne and Arapaho chiefs came galloping out. The Blackfeet braves rode in with them to the Arapaho lodges.

"One or two Sioux with 'em," said Carson, "if I aint mistook."

"Yep. I never saw Blackfeet on the Arkansaw before now," Bent exclaimed, his keen eyes glinting. "When they visit the 'Rapahos, they do it in the buffalo country farther north. Siksika from the heads of the Missouri! Maybe Owl Woman will know what they're doing down here in the south."

Carson spat, then spoke deliberately.

"If you want to know about them Blackfeet, better ask Shunan, down below." And he gestured with his pipe to the courtyard. Bent eyed him for a moment, blew twin whiffs of smoke, and spoke slowly, unhurriedly. Behind their words, these men were pondering empires of trade, the conflict of peoples, the making of history.

"Shunan, that Hudson's Bay man, huh? I can read how the stick floats. You've come up to trap, Kit. Huh! The Comanches and Mexico are nothing to them Siksika; the Blackfeet are friendly to the British—throw their trade to the H.B.C. posts in the west and in Canada. Plumb hostile to Americans, and they hold the prime beaver country. They're figured thirty thousand strong."

"Well,"—and Carson smiled,—"I never had time to count 'em, Bill, but I've been in scrimmages where they sure *seemed* like thirty thousand! Shunan's here, in from the mountains: Hudson's Bay man—got a Blackfoot woman, and he's a big man to his squaw's people. Yep, that's it. I reckon there'll be a council out yonder. These Blackfeet aint here by accident. They were sent for."

"And Shunan will talk for the Hudson's Bay outfit!" exclaimed Bent.

"Yep. There's your big Injun war, Bill. Blackfeet will help the other Injuns wipe out Americans. The Hudson's Bay men will cross the mountains and set up trading-posts among their Injun friends. Shunan's an agent, or I don't know beaver! I've heard my pap tell how the British and Injuns worked together in the War of 1812—"

He checked himself suddenly.

Bent looked around, with a quick inquiry:

"What's wanted?"

MOCCASINS thudded on the graveled roof. The man had come up from the court and around these second-story private quarters.

He was a flaming red man, bright russet hair shaggily draping the borders of his yellowish beaver cap, fiery whiskers cloaking his flushed face to the wolfish hazel eyes. A tasseled scarlet sash was about his buckskin waist. Tight leggings were fringed with scarlet. His moccasins had red flannel anklets, and the three beaded prongs, fan-shape, of the Blackfoot confederacy.

Large features, large beaked nose parting his whiskers, large body, mighty calves supporting his bulking stature. He set down his flintlock fusil for prop and swayed as he regarded the two seated men. Liquor was in him, obviously.

"Kit Carson, *hein?* And M'sieur Bent. Have a leetle smoke. Shunan, he smoke, too."

Bent turned a trifle, but kept his seat as token that he dealt with an inferior.

"We don't smoke with you. Get out," he said curtly. "This place is private. The court below is for you."

Shunan shrugged his broad shoulders. His laugh was insolent, with a display of wide white teeth through his whiskers.

"Big talk! But me, I am Captain Shunan. Maybe some day Captain Shunan sit here and make big talk like a factor of one big post. To hell with you, leetle man! See big camp out there, *hein?* Maybe pretty soon big talk there too."

HE turned his eyes and his attention to Carson.

"How, Leetle Chief! You go back to mountains in the spring, for beaver? I think you see that leetle 'Rapaho girl again, come rendezvous? By gar! You want her for your lodge? You and I will have a smoke and talk together. I have words for you, like a bird singing in your ear. Now I go back."

Shunan swayed, turned, and went lurching away.

"Damn his impudence!" Bent rasped in dark fury. "Brags he'll sit here as post factor, eh? His tongue's loose with drink."

"Straight talk. I told you what the sign is," said Carson. He rapped his pipe against his palm and stowed it in a beaded sack at his belt. "All right. I'll see what the Frenchy wants with me."

"Wait." Bent's anger was gone as suddenly as it had risen. "Think slow, Kid. Time was, he was a great man."

"Who?"

"Him. Sun Buffalo, the Injuns named him—Shunan." Bent squinted out at the horizon. "Seen him twenty year back. His Blackfoot gal was like a—like a—well, I dunno. Nearest to a live angel I ever seen. Cap'n Shunan, he was crazy about her. Plumb worshiped her, he did. Gawd, what a woman she was!" Bent was speaking softly, dreamily, reminiscent of dead years. "Never seen her like

afore or since. She got killed in a 'Rapaho raid. Shunan had the girl left, and he wrapped himself around her, but went rotten. Took to liquor. Down and down. Never got over it. I hear he lives for the girl now. He's a wild, bragging, indecent devil now, the black shadow of himself. Lost his grip. Watch out for him."

Carson was silent a moment, before this glimpse into Shunan. Then he came to his feet and picked up his rifle.

"I'll be going."

"Aiming to set up your own lodge soon?" And Bent gave him a twinkling glance.

He nodded. "Reckon so, Bill. I've been in the mountains going on four year. Gets lonely."

"Picked one out?"

Carson nodded again.

"Daughter of a head man. Those northern 'Rapahos keep a clean lodge. I made her pap a present of a pistol last summer."

"Has she come to trap yet?"

"She understands."

"Good thing, Kit. Don't pay to wait too long." Bent was still meditative. "White women a thousand mile away—that's hell. We got to do the best we can, sure. Folks like me and Jim Bridger have cut our bridges. Life's a fight, Kit; been a fight for us all the while. We got to be better'n the Injuns, and we are, a damned sight better. But you're comin' up. You got time to think, to be careful; we aint. By Gawd, what I'd give to see a white family around here! You'll see 'em, plenty. Your day's coming; ours is passing." He waved a hand toward the sea of lodges. "You'll see the day when there aint one of these left."

"Not likely." And with a short, incredulous laugh, Carson departed. He wondered at finding Bent in such a mood. Strange, when the surface was scratched, what queer things showed beneath!

This was no love-dance, but a medicine-dance to the Great Spirit. Now Go Everywhere Woman's words became audible: "When the white beaver crosses the mountains!"

He made his way to the courtyard. Corded bales of robes and furs from the hand press were stacked high, waiting upon the next shipment by wagon train to the Missouri. The furiously red bulk of Shunan, seated in a circle of hunting shirts and long hair, was his guide.

CARSON came straight forward, rifle in hook of arm, and spoke down at the broad hunched back.

"You aim to talk with me, Shunan?"

The other scrambled up, swayed, and braced in recovery.

"Oh, Leetle Chief! Yes, we talk, over yonder. Will you drink?"

"I'm not drinking."

Carson followed to a deserted corner of the courtyard. They sat on their heels, Indian fashion. Shunan beamed affably.

"First make medicine so our talk will be good. Pipe, *tabac;* we will drink the smoke."

"I'm not smoking."

Shunan eyed him with reproachful scowl.

"Why should we not be frien's? Maybe when you hear what I have to say, you be glad to smoke pipe with Captain Shunan."

"Short talk, quick said," Carson rejoined. "I want you to keep away from that 'Rapaho girl. Understand?"

Shunan spread his hands, with a guffaw of good humor.

"Oh-ho! So leetle a thing don't stand between us. One Injun *femme* when there are thousands? Listen. You have been hunt the beaver a long time. T'ree, four year?"

"Going on four in the mountains. Six year on the trap-line. Went out first to Californy, in 'twenty-nine."

"And you found the Hudson's Bay Company there, with full packs. Peter Ogden, *hein?* I know him. A smart man."

"We caught fur a-plenty," Carson said shortly.

"You took the leavin's. Listen. The H.B.C. is everywhere, west of the mountains. Maybe you get rich since then, *hein?*"

"I've took my share both sides the mountains," said Carson. "And never asked permission of anybody."

"Some day, my frien', maybe you lose your hair. You Americans never get on with Injuns. But my company, they make the Injuns good frien's. Listen while I tell you. You're good man. The Cheyenne and 'Rapaho name you Leetle Chief. Maybe you be big man yet. Me, Shunan, I go to the Crows, the Blackfeet, the Sioux, all who hate the Americans. They are glad to see me in their lodges. They know me for Hudson's Bay man."

Carson could sense that something was coming.

"Well?" he demanded laconically.

"I hear of a big council tonight. You have seen who come. Don't think my frien's the Blackfeet come so far just to sing their death-song for the Utes! *Non!* I will take you to the council. Then we talk some more."

CARSON gave no indication of his shocked amazement. A 'breed, yes. But a white man in that council lodge? It was preposterous.

"The medicine is bad," he said coolly. "I'll keep my hair, thanks."

Shunan uttered a taunting laugh, then checked himself and spoke earnestly.

"Listen. Leetle Chief's frien's the Ute, the 'Rapaho, the Cheyenne, cannot protect him. I, Shunan, will protect him. It shall be for the Blackfeet to say. If Plenty Eagle say for him to stay, he stay."

"That Blackfoot devil out there?" Carson paled with swift anger. "I'll have his scalp! I lay all night in the snow with his bullet in my shoulder."

"Oui? Let us forget that. You speak the Ute, the Cheyenne, the 'Rapaho?"

"Toler'bly."

"Me, I speak the Blackfoot, the Sioux, the Snake. I will tell Plenty Eagle you help us talk." Shunan laughed confidently. "By hell! So many Injuns they not give one damn whether you there or not. You say yes?"

Carson, leaning on his rifle, hid his utter amazement behind a mask of reflection.

Any white trespasser upon a war council forfeited life. Even William Bent had been warned to keep to cover. If he accepted this invitation, if the Blackfeet and Comanches demanded his life, the tribes to whom he was favorably known could not and would not protect him.

He weighed the facts. These Blackfeet were guests of honor, had been certain of their position or they would not have come. They, and the Sioux, were the lords of the north; the Blackfeet despised all other tribes except the Arapaho, who claimed to be their cousins.

If this were a war council, the Blackfeet would have much to say. Shunan, as representing the Hudson's Bay Company, had influence with them. Plenty Eagle was a head chief. If he declared that Carson, known enemy of the Blackfeet, might remain, the other tribes in the council would assent. They would wait, to learn Plenty Eagle's reason for tolerating an enemy in the council lodge.

Carson wanted to know that reason himself—Shunan's reason. Guile? Did this man, this Sun Buffalo as the Indians called him, merely want to show off a leader of the trappers as his friend? Scarcely that. Was he trying to show off Carson as beguiled over to join the Hudson's Bay people? Possibly; not likely. Something deeper to it. The reason he must and would learn.

He flicked an eye at the sun. The shadows in the court were long. The Indians were driving their last bargains, ere the gates were closed at sunset. The blankets had thinned out, laden squaws were hustling through the gates, the air to the north was hazed with the evening lodge fires.

Guile? Yes. Instinct told him that he and Shunan were as bison bull and wolf, enemies without reason, bitter foes by prod of invisible forces. And yet he sensed earnestness in the man's desire. Shunan offered him something no other white man could attain—why? Not in guile or treachery. Carson could feel a queer honesty in the offer. It was incredible, but he had to admit it.

"It is good," he made the sign, and then spoke. "What time?"

"Bon!" Shunan drew breath of relief. "In two hours. We make rendezvous outside the gates, *hein?"*

"I'm a free man."

"Oui, sure, but say nothing."

Carson laughed silently, as he turned away. He was going to say nothing. He wanted no palaver, no arguments. Bent might even use force to keep him from going. A war council of the tribes—name of the devil! What a thing to see, to hear, and still live!

That is, if he did live. That would depend on Plenty Eagle, the one person in life whom he hated bitterly, and who repaid the hatred full measure.

CHAPTER III

SUPPER was over. Dusk, settling over plains and post, deepened into night.

Carson led his saddled horse through the gate of the post corral fronting the river bottoms, on the south side. He sprang into the saddle, as the sentry closed and barred the gate again, and flung the man a word.

"Be back 'fore morning."

He cantered along toward the main gates, at the east or down-river end of the post. Passing these, he descried horse and man vaguely, in the obscurity ahead, and caught a low word of greeting.

"Bon! You are come."

"You made your brag; I'm here," answered Carson. "What now?"

"To the council. Maybe you not liked there; but I am Shunan. See Plenty Eagle first."

AT dependence on this Sun Buffalo and on the Blackfoot chief, Carson felt irked; but he was bound to see the game through now, and repressed his irritation. The air was damp and chill. Under a murky sky whence the stars had vanished, the far-flung Indian camp merged with the plain and the low horizon.

It was dark, save for lodge-fires that shone ghostlike through whitened, thin-scraped hide walls, or from opened flaps. Everything was ominously silent, save for barking of dogs, occasional plaints of children, gutturals of command and reproof, and the coughs and stamps of pony herds.

Shunan led on, confidently. Carson became uneasily conscious of snapping dogs and statuesque, robe-wrapped figures that stared as he passed among the lodges. Here was the Cheyenne camp. He was well known to these people, as he was to the Arapaho; but no "How?" of salutation was offered; nor did he offer any.

It was the same in the Arapaho camp, when they reached it. Carson had noted a steady movement of individuals setting in this direction; and he and Shunan joined this general movement. It converged upon a large lodge whose entrance was ruddy from the reflection of a central fire.

"I have spoke for you, but there must be more talk," Shunan said, drawing rein. "Plenty Eagle must say. Wait till I come out."

He vaulted from his horse and went on into the council lodge.

Carson waited, his hardy features impassive, but with senses keened and ears alert. His hide was prickled by the hostility of figures and eyes all around, burning like ice upon naked skin. A danger camp, this, of hot hearts and savage pride and edged temper. He thought again of what Bent had said: "If those fellers only knew how easy they could wipe us out!"

If they but knew! And he sat here alone, one white amid the reds and breeds in their thousands. Many a man here would find renown and envy, could he dance the scalp of Little Chief; many a hand must be fingering knife at this instant with itching grip. Something stirred in his heart as he sat waiting. Pride of race, perhaps; or mere surety in himself, or confidence of youth.

Shunan came out again. And with him was a stalwart tall figure, magnificent in painted buffalo robe and tailing feathered head-dress of ceremony. Plenty Eagle! Carson's fingers tightened upon his rifle. The knife at his belted waist seemed to stir and quiver in its sheath.

For a long moment Plenty Eagle, standing at his very knee, surveyed him as he reined in his horse, which was snorting at the scent of Indian. Hatred hung heavy in the air between the two men. A countenance dark and long, imperious, graven with lines of pride—broad of nose, straight of lips, with hot-coal eyes penetrating and relentless.

"I see your knife red with Blackfoot blood," Plenty Eagle said suddenly.

Carson retorted in the universal sign-talk:

"I see your hair in my belt."

Plenty Eagle grunted. "A dog barks. No harm." Then he turned, waited, and made the sign. "Come."

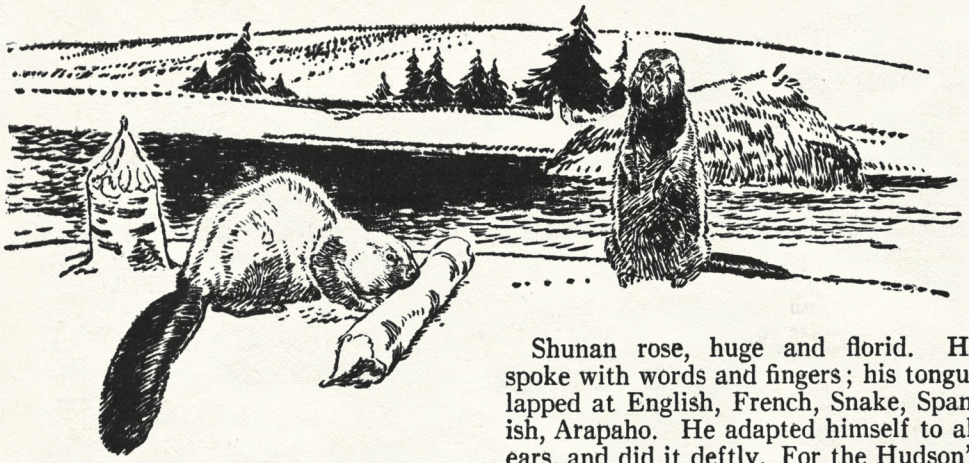
"A boy will watch the horses," said Shunan.

Carson slid off. The chief erectly paced back into the lodge, Shunan at his heels, Carson following, thrilling to the marvel of it.

The interior of the big lodge was warmly mellow from the blaze. The air was rank with the familiar redolence of stale kinnikinnick and tobacco, which the red willow bark pieced out to make last longer. Smoke-fumes, odors of drying leather, of painted Indian bodies. An old squaw crouched beside the central fire, to feed it with shreds of cottonwood and willow; smoke and sparks spiraled up for the peak vent. The flames, flickering in the draft from the entrance, sent shadows dancing eerily, and played with somber highlights upon faces and squatted forms of the council chiefs, densely ranged in a solid circle.

ONE tense instant of silence and fixed eyes greeted Carson's entry—then a storm of furious, savage voices that flattened the blaze. Plenty Eagle dropped the robe to his waist and stood with chest bared, painted stripes and bear-claw necklace glimmering. His voice lifted in imperious authority and beat down the tumult.

"It is said. The white man shall stay; it is Sun Buffalo's wish. Who cares



what he hears? The Americans are few; we are many. Soon we will burn them up like dry grass in fire. Let him sit with Plenty Eagle."

A gesture of finality. He gathered up his robe, swept back to his vacant niche in the circle, and seated himself. Shunan sat at his knee. Carson took place beside the flaming breed.

This lodge made a white man feel very small. He could easily read the tribal signs; Cheyennes, Arapaho, Utes, a couple of Sioux, the Blackfeet, Comanches—yonder was the same chief who had been with the dancing woman in Santa Fe—Go Everywhere Woman! No Apaches, Crows or Kiowas; but that meant little. There would be plenty to tell Bill Bent, thought Carson, if he ever got out of here on his two feet.

Chief after chief stood up, robe dropped, sweaty face and body glistening, and made harangue, with lips and nimble gesture: Indian harangue of metaphor and simile, passionate and moving, striking fire from savage emotions, yet with meanings to be sensed rather than outrightly grasped. Here the meanings were clear enough: alliance against the Americans, the war-trail everywhere! Only the Utes sat silent, and rose not. The Utes, friends of the Americans.

CARSON could guess that this council was but a preliminary, that nothing would be settled here tonight; that later, weeks or months, perhaps a year, the embers of menace would blow up into a flame of red war. *A medicine-sign*—over and over, the words were repeated. Something had been promised. The tribes were to wait until the medicine-sign appeared.

"Sun Buffalo! Hear Sun Buffalo!"

Shunan rose, huge and florid. He spoke with words and fingers; his tongue lapped at English, French, Snake, Spanish, Arapaho. He adapted himself to all ears, and did it deftly. For the Hudson's Bay Company, of course: a shrewd speech, pointing to the controlled beaver-take of the Company, the wasted and desolated streams left by the Americans, whose ruthless hands spared nothing, but stripped clean.

The Blackfeet bore out his words. They held truth, as everyone knew. Carson knew it also, and was angered by the knowledge. Fame and fortune and hearts' desire, so Shunan painted it; all these things awaited the friends of the Company. Presently the man sat down and turned, sweating and grinning, to Carson.

"Maybe Leetle Chief have something to say? He speaks for the Utes, *non?*"

"I speak with this, when the time comes!" Carson tapped his rifle. "Utes can speak for themselves. They'll never join with your Blackfeet and 'Rapahos. You can tell these bad hearts that while there's one American on plains or in mountains, he'll fight to keep free country and open trails."

Shunan laughed, and clapped him on the knee.

"Such talk is only smoke through the nose. Now wait; you see why I brought you here. Ha! By gar, you see something!"

The council circle was leaning forward, eyes expectant, faces tensed. The entrance flap rustled; a figure swiftly entered. On the instant, the old squaw tossed a strip of buffalo-fat upon the fire. The flames sizzled and leaped high, until all the lodge interior was lurid.

The figure was ghostly, robed in a white blanket, a pure white blanket of the Navajos such as Carson had never before seen. The blanket dropped from head and shoulders, from waist and limbs.

It was the woman of Santa Fe!

"Go Everywhere Woman!" The murmured words reached Carson, but with intonation of awe and wonder.

She was stripped now to girdle and breast-cincture and moccasins. Slimly rounded form, skin warmly tawny like smoke-tanned buckskin, she stood bold and lovely; and Carson caught breath, seeing now all that he had scarce guessed before. She was ruddy in the hissing rush of light, ruddily beautiful, so that the whole circle sat in silence, eyeballs glinting, fierce visages held in leash.

Then a medicine-drum struck hollow, measured notes.

THE girl, braids tossing, slipped forward in a dance. Her moccasins beat perfect time to the quickening taps of the drum while she circled the central fire. This was no love-dance, but a medicine-dance to the Great Spirit, such as the young warriors of the Blackfeet put on when setting out against the enemy. Everyone recognized it. The implications of her bared loveliness, even to Carson's eyes, were at once changed and uplifted by the postures of the dance to the Great Spirit.

Moving faster and faster, words became gradually audible on her lips. A reiterant refrain in the Snake tongue: words that seemed to come from her with involuntary pantings. They stirred the circle. They were translated, picked up and passed on:

"When the white beaver crosses the mountains!"

Carson caught the words, wondered briefly, returned to the glowing sight before his eyes of pulsing youth. The circle of chiefs sat with hiss of breath through lips and nostrils, eyes following each step and gesture. Then, suddenly, she ceased the dance. She caught up her white blanket. The last vestige of the flaring buffalo-fat hissed and died; and she was gone.

Shouts broke from every chest in a volcanic burst of passionate fury. Entranced, Carson sat motionless as the chiefs broke into movement, until the hand of Shunan clamped on his arm.

"That was something to see, *hein?* Come, my frien'; all is done."

Mad excitement and confusion—Carson sticking close to Shunan. The chill of the dark night freshened eyes and lungs. Carson drew deep breath and steadied his pulses. He was groping for the reason why Shunan had brought him; would he be permitted to go freely, with what he had heard and seen? He peered for the obscured forms of the waiting horses. Then Shunan gave bluff assurance.

"The horses have been taken to my lodge. We go too, for leetle talk."

"So you're camped Injun, huh?"

"*Mais oui.* Not so good for you to run around alone, maybe, till camp quiets. Then I, Shunan, put you on your trail."

The hulking French 'breed led with sure step among the pegged-down lodges. Carson found the warning good. He could sense a change in the atmosphere. The excitement of the council had spread abroad, so that all the murmurous air of the camp was charged and vibrant. Restlessness was kept alive by low voices as dim figures in buffalo robes hastened about; women spoke in undertone; dogs dashed hither and yon. . . .

Shunan's lodge at last. By the snatches of voices in the tepees around, Carson found it was set in the Arapaho camp. The two horses were standing before it. He followed Shunan inside—then stopped short.

She was here. Sitting composedly—still panting a little, and wearing now the doeskin garments of Santa Fe—on a soft cow-buffalo robe beside the wakened fire. At Carson's startled look, she flashed a smile, a tinkling laugh at his wonderment. Shunan, turning, laughed broadly.

"You are surprise', *hein?* Maybe glad you come. You see her before in Santa Fe, yes? You not know she's my daughter."

There was shock in the words, but Carson smothered it.

"I never heard you had a daughter."

"You never see her in the mountains? She have been at school, when she's young; sometimes with the Blackfeet, her mother's people. You will be frien's. Let us sit down. My lodge is yours."

Carson took one of the two low couches of furs, and Shunan sat opposite upon the other. The girl was between them.

HER presence filled the place with strange witchery. Carson's eyes caught at details—the long twin braids, the vermilioned part in the sleek black crown, tawny rich skin, allure of rounded limbs and body, lissome, flawless. She sat and smiled, with eyes constant, inviting, deliberative.

"A comfortable lodge," said Shunan. "Marie, she's a good keeper. Good to look at too, maybe. *Hein?*"

Brave Elk

"You said you have a talk to make," Carson rejoined.

"For Leetle Chief, yes. He has been in the council, he was safe; now he is safe here. Will he smoke?"

"Not yet. What's the talk?"

Shunan's big face drew into grave lines.

"We'll talk with straight tongue," he said, and evidently meant it. "You have heard, you have seen, in the council. Maybe you not like; but you heard."

"I heard a lot of nonsense about a war to wipe out the Americans and turn over the country to another nation," Carson said coolly, slowly. "By your own words there, that'd be the Hudson's Bay outfit, from Canada and the Oregon country. Shunan, you'll never get these tribes together on that. They've too many wars of their own afoot. You'll notice the Utes didn't rise and speak."

Shunan smiled. "No? But when the white beaver is passed, they will. Quick."

The white beaver again! Carson felt his pulses flicker. He was learning, now. It was coming. Whatever this incredible thing was, it was coming.

"White beaver?" he repeated. "What's that?"

"Go Everywhere Woman, they call her; but now they give her another name, White Beaver Woman." And Shunan nodded toward his daughter. The firelight reddened his mass of shaggy locks and flaming beard. "You have heard Marie sing as she danced. She sing of white beaver medicine. But that, my frien', is not the answer. The white beaver is the sign. You have seen white beaver, maybe?"

"No. Never heard of one come to trap," Carson said. "Did you?"

Shunan nodded thoughtfully. "Once in the Oregon country, I heard of one. It had been seen in a dream by a Blackfoot medicine man, and it say to him: 'I am White Beaver Woman. Whatever people have me to take across the mountains will be strong forever.' That is medicine, that dream. Big medicine."

"What?" Carson, puzzled, glanced at the girl. "You mean her?"

"No, no, no!" And Shunan laughed, then shrugged. "But yes, the man who has Marie, he be strong too. She is not the dream medicine, although she be ver' good medicine, for sure! The medicine-man say that the dream mean the white beaver skin. Marie, she only sing about it, carry the word everywhere. When the pelt of the white beaver is found for the Injuns, that is sign from the Great Spirit. I tell you, plains and mountains get red with blood that day!"

Clear enough now, as the explanation burst. Thus was history made. The dream of an old savage medicine-man, interpreted to suit his fancy, seized upon by interested parties, passed around afar among the tribes; a sign from the Great Spirit!

"And furs, trade, country, all go to the Hudson's Bay," said Carson. "You're an agent, stirring the Injuns up with this nonsense."

"I will talk straight," said Shunan. "You are Kit Carson, Leetle Chief. You are good man, big man; everybody speak well of you; Captain McKay think well of you. Will you come again to the Hudson's Bay employ this spring?"

"With a good catch, I'll pay what I owe McKay," evaded Carson. Would he come, eh? Come over to the Britishers, and draw many a stalwart trapper after him!

"Good catch, sure; you be certain of that. What you owe? Nothing. To forget! You get much. A long time past in the mountains, and poor. This nex' time, rich! You think for leetle squaw to keep your lodge? Bah! You can set up a lodge like a chief, in fat country where no Injun will harm you—head man, chief trader, factor!"

SHUNAN waxed eloquent with his urging to the silent man.

"Tonight you have heard much war talk. It come, sure. Americans are too few to fight all Injuns at once. They lose their furs, robes—hair! By gar, Marie was good medicine for Americans to see, at Santa Fe! They all think to set their traps for her, maybe."

The girl laughed softly, silkily.

"I'm not to be bought in beaver or horses! But let Little Chief come to the Oregon country. Let him come to Captain McKay and set his traps again, for a sure catch."

Her eyes dwelt upon Carson invitingly, warmly, eagerly. Then she was up, gathering the robe around her, and gone from the lodge. Carson sat motionless. He could not believe what his groping senses told him, what her eyes had conveyed to him. But in the silence, Shunan leaned over, put one great paw on his knee, and spoke softly. Again the sense of the man's earnestness made itself felt. Here was straight talk.

"You see, Leetle Chief? One time she watch you, at rendezvous last year. She set her heart on you. By gar, I tell you that girl crazee about you, Leetle Chief! That be true, *oui*. I, Shunan, tell you so. I want for make her happy."

So that was it. Apparently stoical, Carson sat with a flame eating at his brain, his thoughts in struggling confusion and wonder. She loved him? Maybe, although it seemed absurd. Seldom was there any talk of love in such arrangements. However, Shunan's interest was thus accounted for.

And in another way also. Carson was not blind to his own status. He knew that his influence among the other mountain men, among the uncertain Utes his friends, was desired. There was no definite reason why he should not go straight to the Hudson's Bay Company and cast in his lot with them. He could see himself a power in the land, his hair safe, with this girl queening it in his lodge, and in his trading-post, where he would be the chief factor.

With an effort he stood up, controlled the eager little tremble in his sinews, and made the "cut off" sign to indicate that the talk was closed.

"Time I was getting back," he said.

"The word is what?" demanded Shunan. "You open your heart?"

"I will think." Carson meant his words. This must be considered. There was more than his personal interest at stake, much more; the responsibility terrified him vaguely.

"You'll tell Bent? No?"

"Bent has ears."

"You have been guest in council, in my lodge. Let another bird sing in Bent's ears."

"His Cheyenne kin will tell him everything. I'm going."

"Good. It shall be *au revoir*, my frien'."

Without a look aside, Carson went out. The night was quiet, the great camp had relaxed in sleep. Was she waiting out here? He did not know or look to see, but mounted his horse and headed for the post.

His thoughts were milling in chaos. The night had been one of amazement. The council, the words and speeches, the dance, the white beaver revelation, the tempting, incredible bait offered him.

BAIT, yes. He recalled the mad eagerness of Rube Herring, of old Laforay, at sight of her. But she was for him; Shunan spoke the truth; her eyes told him so. She had Blackfoot blood in her; she sat in the lodge of Plenty Eagle —so much the better! She would open the prime beaver country of the Blackfeet, where an American now trapped with rifle at cock and the trail bloody. She would open all Oregon, all the Hudson's Bay country west of the mountains. A golden vista! Not to be lightly cast aside.

His thoughts leaped to William Bent. What would the trader say now? Bent might scoff at the notion of any confederacy among the tribes, north and south; but Bill knew Injuns and could think like an Injun, and was already worried over this talk of medicine beaver. If such a sign from the Great Spirit were passed around, then all the tribes, even the Utes of the southern mountains,

would believe and accept; there'd be hell to pay on every trail. And somewhere there must be a white beaver. Shunan had heard of one somewhere existent. Possibly it was being sought far and near. . . .

A shadowy figure springing in air, then another. Carson felt the impact as they hurtled into him, cast sinewy arms about him, bearing him toppling from the saddle. No time to think, to act, to speak!

Fingers like a steel trap gripped his throat. A blow cracked down on his head. He was vaguely conscious of an Indian palm clapped over his mouth, of his breath whistling, and then of motion. He was being lifted and carried, a prisoner. He knew better than to struggle and invite the knife.

CHAPTER IV

TIED hands and feet, Carson lay in the lodge where he had been dumped. He had slept; no use wasting strength and energy by staying awake, after his head cleared. The lodge was dark, cold. He heard breathing; an Indian was stretched across the threshold, inside the pinned flap.

Now the feel of morning was in the dark air. The very dogs, curled together for warmth, were plunged in that final heavy sleep which precedes the dawn. This was a camp of exhausted vital forces being rekindled.

A shuffle of quick moccasins was heard outside. The watcher across the threshold alertly roused; the entrance flap was opened, and cold air gushed in. A few words were exchanged.

Nimble fingers loosened Carson's feet. He was hauled upright and shoved along, half dragged through the low entrance. The dawn-light was just breaking. Horses were waking, Indians outlined astride them.

Half hoisted, half prodded, Carson was put into the saddle of his own horse, and his feet were tied by a hide rope passed under the belly of the animal. Ropes were made fast to his body, a rider on either side taking one. The group enclosed him and moved away, some twenty men in all.

Young men, hot hearts, he noted as he kept his balance in the saddle. The sky had cleared, and by the paling stars the course lay northward, skirting the camp and heading straight for the plains. By the few guttural words that reached him, these were Arapaho and Blackfeet. His mouth was to be shut—by whose orders? Shunan? Plenty Eagle? Impossible to say. More likely, not by orders at all, merely by voluntary action on the part of these young braves. No, Plenty Eagle's word had been given, and would be proudly inviolate.

When in the growing light he saw his rifle and other "fixin's" carried as plunder, anger mounted in him. There was no one in this party whom he knew.

"Where are you taking me?" he asked of the young warrior on his right. Not for answer, but to test the temper of his escort. The only reply was a jerk on the rope and a quirt applied to his horse's rump, the animal's jump nearly unseating him.

They rode smartly on, with general trend toward the northwest and the foothills. When Carson glanced back again, the great camp was out of sight behind the swelling crests of the plains. In the air, however, he fancied marching columns of dust, as though the camp might be breaking up.

What hope? None! When Carson did not return to the post, Bent would make inquiry. "Little Chief has gone on a visit," the Indians would say. Shunan might say worse. Damnation! The girl, the mountains, the lure of the Hudson's Bay Company. So would a bird sing of Kit Carson in the ears at the post. Gone over to the Britishers.

AND the worst of it was, Carson was not sure of what he might have done, except for this seizure. Why not go over, where fame and fortune beckoned? There was nothing against it, save the indefinable pride of a free man, and the spring was at hand now, calling to him with the voice of Go Everywhere Woman. Yes, he had been thinking about it. All ended now. . . .

The party made halt at noon. Whither going? Impossible to say or guess; but no doubt was in Carson's mind. They sought some spot where they might dispose of him at leisure, with torture and slow enjoyment. This open country afforded no such spot. They went on through the afternoon, and made camp at sunset. A morsel of dried meat, a ragged blanket, and rest. Gurgles, snores, the uneasy movements of the horses. Time passed, and night drew on. . . .

For hours, it seemed to him, Carson had been working to free one arm. He

lay with an Indian to either side, robe-wrapped to the scalp against the cold. His swollen wrists had been unbound, so that he might eat and care for himself. But during the night, a rope from either of his arms was held fast by his outstretched guards.

One warrior shifted posture in his sleep; the rope was slack.

CARSON gradually got the slack to his lips. He set his teeth to it, bit and gnawed, masticated until the rawhide was pulp and his jaws ached. The hide yielded and parted. Instantly, Carson was plucking at the knotted loop about his other arm. He loosened it, slipped it down over his hand—and barely in time.

The man on his right muttered, rolled over, threw off his buffalo robe, and rose. Carson lay stiff, breathing evenly. The Indian stooped above him, peering hard. As he stooped, the man below acted, like a coiled reptile at strike.

An arm went about the warrior's neck, dragging him down in vise-like grip that choked off words and sounds. The other hand drove for the keen knife, hanging in its beaded sheath at the brave's waist. Plunging for it, seizing it with sure grip; then the blade driving home between the red shoulders, severing vertebræ and spinal cord. Death as by a lightning stroke!

The warrior had no time for utterance. He shuddered; his flexed hips and knees gave way; his body sprawled down in smothering fashion. Carson still hugged him for an instant, then got the blade free and eased the body aside.

No alarm; none had been wakened by the slight sounds. Sure of this, Carson drew the knife across his ankle bonds, then shifted his own blanket over the corpse. There beside him, where this man had laid them, were his own rifle, horn and pouch. He seized upon them avidly, then was picking his way out from among the sleeping men with delicate tread.

To the horses, at last. His own horse sniffed and drew back at the scent of blood. Carson tore free the picketing rope, with one motion threw a loop about the animal's lower jaw, and was astride the bare back. Away now, with prod of moccasined feet—away, rifle in fist, bloody knife in belt!

The night was nearly sped. The sky overhead was lightening with the false dawn; the real dawn could not be far under the eastern horizon. There was an hour at most, ere the camp wakened—unless discovery were made sooner. Carson urged his stiff horse on, to make headway before the enemy had tracking light. The southward trail to the post, to Shunan, was closed. He cantered northwest for the still distant foothills and the rampart mountains beyond.

Shunan—the "Sun Buffalo."

As he rode, the dawn brightened, first signaled from the cloudlike snowy range, all rosily aglow, and then flooding the gaunt plains with pink. Carson, easing his horse from time to time, eyed the back trail.

The upflashing sun hailed a little nucleus of black dots, lined for an instant upon a swell of ground. The dots vanished, swallowed by a dip, but he had seen enough. They had his trail. The

devils had nosed it out until now they were following it by sight. Already the air seemed pulsating with the whoop and the view-halloo.

Carson pushed his horse, no longer looking backward, but measuring the span of grace to the foothills ahead. He would look only when the shouts rifted the breeze in his ears. Once in the foothills, there would be high ground and cover. His horse ran madly, with loose jaw thong. In the rear came the young warriors, vengeance-driven, heels hammering, quirts lashing, yelping like dogs; he needed no eyes or ears to tell him that.

A jolt threw him forward on his horse's neck. The animal sank a fore leg into a prairie-dog hole, recovered, went hobbling on. The first shouts drifted in from behind. Now what? Carson's gaze drove around. He could take stand with his rifle and wait out the end; but that was for the very last. Until then, always a chance. The horse was slowing painfully.

Cut off! Carson peered with watered eyes, incredulous. Figures there, on the rise. Suddenly his pulses bounded. White men, by the Lord! White men, with pack-mules, coming at the gallop—two of them, with the two mules lying back on the lead ropes.

He saw their jutting rifles, their flaring hat-brims, their tossing fringes, the packs upon the prick-eared, rebellious mules. Two, no more; but those two a very host. A yell broke from him. Rube Herring, and Laforay the Iroquois 'breed!

A MINUTE more, and they drew in on either side of him. The pursuit split before the ready rifles, split and raced past with an eddy of exultant whoops, to form and take counsel beyond.

"By damn!" Laforay cackled. "I dream right. My medicine was strong!"

"What's the sign, Kit? After your scalp?" demanded Herring.

"Carried me off from the camp. I knifed one of them in the night and took to horse."

"That's blood. Means business. What did they want of you?"

"Reckon I'd heard too much. I sat with Shunan and Plenty Eagle in council. If they're back of this, I'll kill 'em for it! But—how did you two come here?"

Herring's leathery face split in a grin.

"Laforay dreamed. He'll tell you; no time now. Cut trail for the hills 'fore we're holed in."

"With these damn' mules?" Laforay's voice rose sharply. "Look out! Coming!"

"Hold your fire!" rasped Carson. "Talk!"

The Indians, yelling, charged for the three, but again split and swept past on either flank, hanging low in the saddle. A Blackfoot swerved his mount, his palm held high, his voice sounding clearly:

"Give us the man who killed one of our warriors, and we go."

"You go to hell," Herring responded. He threw up his rifle, but Carson reached out and checked the movement of the weapon.

"Keep moving!" said Laforay. "My medicine say we not to die."

THEY pushed on compactly, Carson's horse limping, the mules tugging and plunging. The outflung circle around them shifted, threatening front, rear and flanks.

"Let the mules go," said Laforay, cursing heatedly. "Damn! 'Most pulled me out of the saddle that time."

"What?" snapped Herring. "Lose our packs, traps, everything? No! Better down 'em and take fort behind 'em."

"We get 'em again," Laforay insisted, his eyes rolling. "I dream. I see us in the mountains, setting traps. Kit too." A sudden explosive oath burst from him. An arrow, arched high from a lucky bow, was buried halfway to its feathers in his horse's neck. The animal screamed, then went to its knees. Laforay swung clear just in time. The horse rolled over and lay kicking, the wound pumping blood.

The pack-mule wrenched loose and went off at a gallop. Herring's mule snapped its taut rope and followed. The yelling redskins closed in. Arrows twinkled and hissed; lead slugs whined. Carson fired from the saddle. Herring fired; Laforay nursed his aim while they reloaded at speed.

Again the enemy's charge split, this time with two saddle-pads empty, two dark figures dragged by a foot until the loop released them. Herring growled an oath.

"There goes hair, damn it! And here stays hair."

"Fort!" The word, expressive enough, comprehending everything, broke from Carson. The others obeyed it, confident in his judgment. It was fort or nothing now.

Carson sprang off, knife to throat of his crippled horse. The severed jugular

gushed. The animal groaned, drooped its head, shuddered, then weakened and straddled. Carson, with a tug about and a powerful shove, threw the dying beast. Herring's animal was down likewise, so that the three dead and dying bodies formed a triangle. All was done with swift precision, lives hanging on instants. Now from the parapets of ribby flesh the three rifles commanded the approaches. "Fort"—this meant sacrifice of steeds, of all else, in the last desperate stand from which was no escape. . . .

The hours passed.

The sun was high in the blue. The rays aslant struck burning hot through the thin dry plains atmosphere. The bloating carcasses had drawn cruising buzzards. The little "fort" sweltered in the reek of stale blood and powder fumes. Once, twice, three times the young warriors tried, but they stood not for punishment.

Now, in another interval, they paused in widened circle, resting their sweaty mounts while they gibed, taunted, promising the end with word and gesture.

"By damn!" blatted Laforay. "Never knew this time year so hot. Sun, he drink me up! Pretty soon come night, more Injuns." His swart, wrinkled old features puckered as in doubt. "I dunno 'bout this. If my medicine wasn't so strong, it'd look bad."

"Where'd you fellers come from?" Carson asked. "Not from Bent's?"

"Nope. From Taos," said Herring. "Started three days ago. Laforay said we'd find you here, third march out."

NOTHING surprising in this. Many men, even of all white blood, inclined to the redskin belief in dreams and "medicine."

"You bet, I dreamed," said Laforay. "I saw Kit running under a red sky. My medicine tell me hurry north along the foothills, and on third day I save his scalp. I am Iroquois, me. My grandfather was one medicine-dreamer." He hesitated again, fixed by thought, groping for words, his Indian-black old eyes snaky bright. "There was something about war in the sky. Medicine-voice say White Beaver Woman speak, she be sign to make men strong."

Carson grimaced at the words.

"To hell with that sign!" His throat was dry, his blood heated. "Your dream doesn't shine with me. I heard her, that Go Everywhere Woman; some call her White Beaver Woman, too. She danced medicine and sung medicine in council, in the big camp outside Bent's, when I was there with Shunan."

He told them of the scene. Old Laforay considered, then dissented volubly. It was not of Go Everywhere Woman that he had dreamed.

"She's enough to make a man dream, yes, but this be something else, something different. You say Injuns wait for sign of white beaver come to trap and pass the mountains? No beaver slap his tail in my dream. An Iroquois dream be truer than any damn' Blackfoot. My dream say we're strong in medicine and we get out safe. It showed Kit. I saw us trapping in the mountains—"

SAVAGE yells, an outburst, interrupted. Hands gripped hot rifles, then relaxed. The surrounding Indians were facing to the south. Carson squinted.

"More of the devils," he said.

"Two a-coming," said Herring. "More behind, likely."

Laforay's Indian eyes were the sharpest, however.

"*Non!* One is woman. Slim and ripe like that Go Everywhere Woman." He licked his parched lips. "Other man Blackfoot."

"Plenty Eagle!" Carson ejaculated in recognition. The two figures were riding fast and hard. Plenty Eagle, yes. And with him Marie, no other—Shunan's daughter. Carson blinked amazedly.

The pair came racing in. They met the young warriors, were surrounded by them; the talk was furious, gesticulant, heated. The three whites watched, wondering what it all meant. Then the girl rode forward toward them, bareheaded and glowing, flung up a hand in the peace sign, and hailed. Her voice came clearly.

"The young men did wrong. You have your lives; I give them to you. Take Little Chief and go into the mountains. We leave you three horses and your mules. It shall be rendezvous in Oregon. Let your hearts be good, and good hunting!"

She turned and was gone, with the breaking group. They all went, taking their dead, leaving three horses and the captured mules and packs.

Utter amazement sat upon all three watchers.

"By damn! That girl, she big medicine," clacked Laforay.

Carson leaped the barricade, rifle in hand, anger still hot in him—anger at

Plenty Eagle, at everyone. Unreasoning, glowing anger. The others followed him, caught the horses and mules, then stood indecisive.

"Where were you fellers heading with your packs?" Carson demanded.

"Well, it's early season yet," Herring said. "We calculated to mosey through until we could cross and set traps."

"Huh? West of the mountains?"

"Well, that's most likely ground," Herring said sheepishly. Carson realized the truth. The girl dancer in Santa Fe had beguiled these two.

"I know Hudson's Bay people," Laforay prated. "They be glad to see us."

Carson mounted, settled himself on the saddle pad.

"I'm for Bent's, or for Taos by way of the Ute country," he said. "I'll hunt meat this spring for the post."

Plenty Eagle the Blackfoot chief.

"Non, non!" protested Laforay urgently. "My medicine show us together on the trap-line. It tell me to bring traps for you, Kit. We bring plenty."

Carson deliberated, gaze first to the southward, then to the snowy peaks in the northwest. "Rendezvous in Oregon," she had just said. What rendezvous? One with her? Or the regular fur-trade rendezvous next summer, across the mountains in the valley of the Green?

She would be there, and Shunan. Singing Bird, the Arapaho girl, would be there. He had warned Shunan to let that girl alone. She was marked out for him; not a matter of mawkish sentiment, either. But this Marie, this Go Everywhere Woman, she stirred queer depths in a man, roused queer, strange passions.

"Kit, don't fight medicine and lose your hair," warned Herring. "That back trail is danger trail. You'd be jumped sure."

Something in that; the argument shook him. Besides, Herring and Laforay had packs, had extra traps for him. Medicine was not to be disdained. Here was an outfit all ready for him, and sure companions.

"To hell with the Hudson's Bay!" he blurted out. "But I tell you, I'll trap through till the summer rendezvous, and get pelts enough to pay McKay what I owe him."

"You talk straight," approved Herring. He cocked an eye at the sun, and at the mountains. "Fur's the word, then! If the woman spiles by waiting, we'll ketch another. Snow'll be melting, streams running, beaver be out buildin' up their dams. We'll float our sticks by easy stages till rendezvous time, and join the big palaver on the Green. Git off your hoss, Kit. Smoke on it. Don't jump off like a scairt rabbit."

"Bon! Smoke, Kit." Laforay squatted, brought out pipe and kinnikinnick bag. Carson looked down at the two, dismounted, and joined them. Here was crisis and decision; let hot pulses cool, and words wait upon deliberation. Too much was at stake for haste.

"Jim Bridger, he'll be at rendezvous," went on Laforay. "My dream say something 'bout Bridger; I not remember for sure. War in the sky, white beaver sign. And you, Kit, with bloody scalp."

CARSON sniffed at this prophecy, took the pipe, and puffed.

"All you think about is scalps, you old buzzard!"

"Non, non," said Laforay gravely. "Maybe you think so. Listen! My squaw, my son, die five years ago by Blackfoot knife. Blackfoot smoke their scalp, 'most get my hair too. I'm be old buzzard for sure, Kit. Not much left for old buzzard like me—dreams, maybe." The wrinkled brown features were impassive, but the voice held deep music. "Some day you be old feller, Kit, like me. You be old buzzard, wings heavy, heart heavy, all alone. By damn, what you do? Keep sharp beak, make strong medicine; do your best, by damn! All you got left is dreams, Kit. Medicine dreams, maybe. You keep strong heart, look Great Spirit in the eye; you be a man, by damn!"

THE measured words in that deeply vibrant voice, were powerful. It was one of those rare moments when men together slide away the panel of appearances and reveal the depths behind. Carson felt his youth, his hot impulse, corrected and kindly chastened. A vision came to him of what age might mean to him too. An empty age, only dreams left. It shook him. Then Rube Herring was speaking over the pipe, unwontedly garrulous, somber.

"You talk straight, you bet. That gal has got me thinking." His shaggy brows drew down. "She pulls at me. Me, Bridger, Bent, everybody; we put a good face on it, sure. We drink, fight, work like hell. What for, Kit?"

"Just so many ways of earning a living," Carson said.

Herring shook his head. "Nope. Injun life, Injun country, Injun ways; that's all right. But what for? I tell you! All we think 'bout is lifting hair? Maybe. When a feller is squirming in the dark night, thinking 'bout his folks back home, woman waiting for him, his pappy layin' dead that was so kind, his ma maybe in the poorhouse—by God, I tell you straight, he's got to think 'bout something else! Scalps; why not? Beaver—powder—rendezvous and liquor. Me, I got a woman waiting. Maybe I'll fetch her out from Missouri, if we make a prime ketch this year. Maybe not. But I aint talking much 'bout her. You got to squeeze them thoughts away so's they won't weaken you. Maybe you take a lodge-keeper, to help. Why not? But all the while, you hurt like hell if you stop to think."

The smoke drifted. Carson took the pipe and puffed again. He was in a whirl; he could not think clearly. He saw a new Laforay, an old man broken, holding firm; he saw a new Rube Herring, tortured and taciturn, holding firm; he looked afar and saw other mountain men, each with his own inner problems and aims and ambitions, trapping and drinking and scalping—but holding firm.

"I dunno," he said slowly, letting the words drift as they came, like the smoke. "I dunno. I've always aimed just to be a prime mountain man, to do my job first rate—good hunter, trail man, everything. What for? Well, the horizon's too far to see."

"Sure, sure." Laforay's wrinkled features nodded sagely. "Trail cloudy to young eyes, Kit; too much sign everywhere. Some day trail, she be clear. One sign left to follow."

"By God, you said something!" exploded Herring. "I been follering too many sign, me. That 'breed gal, Hudson's Bay, any damned thing. Too many idears, sure. Maybe you got to think about things that weaken you, just to keep the trail clear. . . . Well, smoke's

"I'm not to be bought in beaver or horses! But let Little Chief set his traps again, for a sure catch."

ended. Fur's the word! What fur? Hudson's Bay? To hell with 'em! I say, trap through! Trap through to rendezvous, us three."

Carson looked from one to the other. The moment of weakness, of revelation, was gone with the pipe-smoke.

"I say yes," he agreed. "And after rendezvous, throw in with Jim Bridger for the fall hunt."

Laforay nodded assent. They had decided. Half an hour later they were riding away toward the mountains.

But to Carson, after this, these men could never be wholly masked again.

CHAPTER V

CARSON, turning in his saddle to look back at camp, ere making his morning round of the traps, was well satisfied; he was dreamily content; he drank the keen exhilarating air into his lungs.

This was the "high country." Full two weeks they had camped here. The aspens were in full leaf. The squawberries weighting the bushes were beginning to turn red; spring was soon and swiftly merging with the mountain summer. Beaver packs were getting heavy.

The rendezvous market lay at end of trail, at the foot of the western slopes, in the Green River valley. Thomas McKay of the Hudson's Bay would be there, Shunan and his daughter too. And more, Singing Bird would be there with the northern Arapahos. If a man took an Indian girl for his lodge, he could find none better than Singing Bird. And there must be a keeper; a lodge was no home without one. It was a matter of custom, of comfort, of necessity.

In a few days more, camp would be moved. The streams at hand had been well trapped. Herring had ridden in one direction, Laforay in another, to follow the waters to their forks and run traps there. Beaver were in plenty. Carson himself was to take the main stream.

He sent his horse on, leaving the camp to the two pack-mules, the graining blocks of smoothed, tilted stumps, the willow stretching-hoops, and the plunder of glossy peltries taken. Reaching the trap-line, Carson tethered his horse, and with his rifle in hand, trudged on to the first trap. Here it was. The chain from the planted pole was slack. No beaver at the end of it, then; the trap had not been sprung. Carson went on to the next, and here the chain was taut, out into deep water. He waded out, to haul the chain up and in. The anchoring carcass resisted him. Then it came, slowly surging to the surface. The first glimpse, as it rose through the amber current, braced him back with sheer astonishment. It glimmered there weird, pallid.

Now it broke into the daylight, swinging sodden and limp at his knees, touching him with the cold stiffness of death, as with its dragging trap it tugged at his arms. He stared, unbelieving, wholly incredulous, distrusting his eyes.

For it was a white beaver—the body of a large she-beaver. A dirty white as yet, stained as it was with muck, but of indubitable white nevertheless. White fur under his fingers, glossy as it parted, pure and lovely white.

Towing the thing, he made for the bank, and there sprung the trap jaws, plucked the hindleg free, then carried the beaver on among the bushes and stood over it. The stream rippled peacefully; the timber was silent; but his heart was thumping as he stared down. White beaver! White beaver woman—she-beaver—no, it was impossible. But here it was.

He squatted down, drew his knife, and with swift decision flung himself into the work. In short time he had the pelt off, dumping the denuded body into the current. He washed off the mud and dirt, and examined the fur again. White, yes—the whole fur was a perfect white. The tail and paws were dark like those of common beaver.

A thing unique, this, and all his own; the destiny of an empire in his grasp. Perhaps in other years some medicine-man had glimpsed this very animal, and the tale had spread, had been turned to use. This was the medicine-sign. There could scarcely be another. In all the yarns of campfire, rendezvous and trading-post, no white beaver had come to trap. Dark brown, light brown, yellowish, curiously blotched with white scars, yes; but never all white.

THIS vicinity was not Oregon by a good deal. It was east of the divide; that was of small importance. The skin itself, wherever produced, would be fact enough. Let this medicine-skin once pass by swift messengers from tribe to tribe, and there went the empire of mountains and plains, tossed hither and thither upon the tides of swift fanatic war. A sign given by the Great Spirit! Not any redskin, friend or foe, but would believe implicitly.

The buzzing thoughts, the whirling possibilities, quieted. This medicine pelt was not to be seen by any Indian eye. No, not even by Herring or Laforay; their tongues must wag, could not be trusted. Too much was at stake. Destroy it? That were wisdom, perhaps, but Carson could not. This pelt was worth a small fortune.

To work, then! Carson fell to squaw labor, here and now. He scraped the skin with minute care, bent a willow hoop, and presently had the skin stretched over the hoop. It was too green to pack now. He hung it to dry in the sun and breeze, high in an open spot, secure from all varmints.

BACK at camp, he met the other two men, but resolutely closed his mind to them. He was suddenly afraid now, about Laforay's medicine-dreams. Perhaps there was something to that nonsense, after all. He would not even think about the white pelt, lest somehow Laforay catch the thought. After all, something might have happened to it. When he saw it again, the white might have changed—anything was possible, with so unheard-of a marvel.

He lingered in camp until, with late afternoon, Herring and Laforay went forth to bait and run their traps anew. Then, taking his own bale of furs with him, he rode away and came back to where he had left the pelt. The heart shook in him as he fingered it again, saw it glossy white, unchanged, beautiful. It was dry enough, well enough cured; a prime fur, first quality, even though she-beaver.

Carson folded it small so that no edges showed, and stowed it carefully in the middle of his bale. He compressed the bale, tied it again, hastily went over his traps, and managed to beat the other two back into camp.

"I reckon we'll up traps in a couple days," said Herring, over their evening smoke, "and move on acrost the divide, follering down. Rendezvous time is getting nigh. Huh?"

"By damn, my dream say true so far," Laforay cackled. "She say good hunting."

Carson sucked at his blackened clay pipe and assented.

"Suits me." Hard to keep the quiver out of his voice. Nothing could move too fast for him now; anything to get out and off, be away with this edged secret!

There was sense to it, none the less, as next morning proved. He was riding for a full hour and more, before he left his horse and footed on, upstream, to reach the first trap.

He leaned his rifle within ready grasp, prepared to wade out for the trap, then came to abrupt startled halt. The pole was here, but no chain led from it into the water. Chain was gone; trap was gone; only the dry aspen pole, scarred by the steel ring, remained. Trap-thieves! And red thieves, of necessity.

Carson darted for his rifle, caught it up and cocked it, eyes and ears querying the dappled coverts, the stream. No prints on the banks; the thief had waded the stream. Everything was a blank stillness of trees and brush, a stillness that made his spine twitch.

He went on to the next trap. This was gone, like the first. However, it had been set in the shallows and the pole planted back on the cut bank. In the sandy loam of the cove, a moccasin print. Carson studied it with swift deduction.

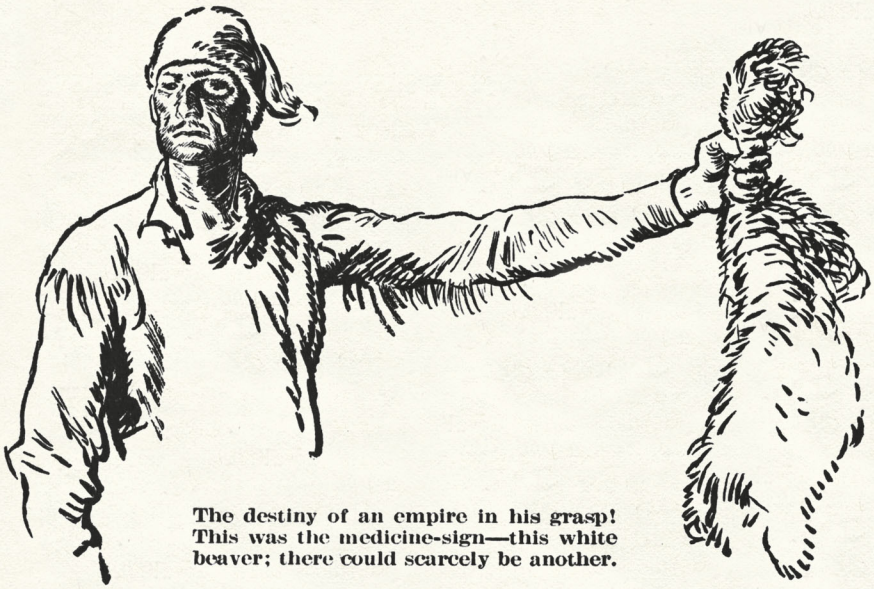
Not his own. A man setting a beaver trap did not enter or leave the water in line with the trap, else the beaver would smell the sign. The print had been made before sunup, while the water was still lowered from the night's frost. The water, rising again from the melting packs along its upper course, had almost reached the print and would overflow it shortly.

Carson went on grimly. Every one of his six traps was gone. The knife-slashed carcass of a drowned beaver-pup had been contemptuously awarded to him by the thieves. This made sure indication of warriors' work. Any thieving squaw would have retained the tidbit of the pup for her pot.

ALARMED, now, Carson footed back to his horse, vaulted astride the pad, and rode hard for home.

The camp was singularly silent. He drew rein, slipped to earth, and strode forward to stare in blank dismay. The two mules lay stiff-legged, shot with arrows. The camp equipage had been wantonly scattered about, and the baled pelts had disappeared.

He stood silent, rocked by the disaster. He was poor again; the thieves were richer than they knew. Everything was gone from his grasp. As he stood, the *pad-pad* of quick hoofbeats brought him around. Herring was riding in, and Laforay also, with hot oaths.



The destiny of an empire in his grasp! This was the medicine-sign—this white beaver; there could scarcely be another.

"All my traps stole!" rasped Laforay. "By damn, camp cleaned out too!"

"Yep. Packs gone," agreed Herring. "Same with your traps, Kit?"

"Every one lifted before sunup. Warriors. The party watched the camp, saw us leave, came in and cleaned it. Moccasin sign."

"Right. Be sign a-plenty here, I reckon," said Herring.

Carson walked over to one of the dead mules, and tore an arrow free. He turned it, examined it.

"It's a Ute point. Looked to me like the moccasin-print I saw was Blackfoot, but a wet moccasin spreads. I'll keep this for sure token." He thrust the arrow inside his shirt.

Laforay, riding the outskirts of the camp for sign, called out, his wrinkled visage fiercely dark.

"Tracks come together here, pointing out. They go. By damn, I get my pelts back or lose hair!"

"Yah! Your dream didn't tell you this," gibed Herring.

Laforay swung his hand excitedly.

"No! I see bloody scalp, but it was Kit's. Not come yet. Medicine say we no die. Traps? What they want with traps, huh? By damn, maybe they think to ketch medicine-beaver. We go, *oui?*"

Carson assented in silence. He was bitter with wrath, stung deeply by dismay of the secret he dared not broach now.

Quickly the three gathered a few discarded articles, and loosed rein along the trail. Laforay led, but there was nothing hidden about the trail. Eight horses, going full speed northward by easiest course.

In an hour by sun, the trail broadened and deepened, easily read by Iroquois eyes. Other squads had joined in; these would be the trap-thieves. Now the horses numbered around a score in all.

"Not too fast!" warned Herring. "This size trail aint to my notion. Keep your smellers open, or first thing we know we'll have arrers in our bellies."

"I think so myself, by damn!" said Laforay. Carson nodded, curbing his angry impatience with wisdom.

"Keep back, yes. Strike them in their night camp."

As he rode, he pondered this unwontedly hostile act. The northern Utes, secure in their mountain retreats, were not given to robbing the trap-lines.

On and on they rode, following the trail as the day wore and waned. The sun was down, dusk flowed from the hollows and crept up the slopes. Sign was getting hard to see in the low ground and on rocky soil.

On the next ridge Laforay, sniffing like an animal, drew to a halt.

"Smell smoke."

"Look there!" chimed in Herring, and pointed.

Carson was already looking, with face grimly set. Down to the right, tiny in the darkness, were red spots of flame. Laforay deliberated his thought aloud. The trail followed the ridge. The enemy might have split and doubled back. It was Carson who came to decision.

"Chance it. Let's leave the horses here, crawl in, see what's what. We can lie hid all night."

"By damn!" said Laforay. "If I see where those packs are, I sneak in when fires are out. Get packs and give 'em hell."

They rode down a little way, left the horses safely, and then stole forward to stalk the camp. The darkness had thickened and the going was slow.

Not until they came within half rifle-shot could they take any definite survey; this was a long time, for the approach had to be slow and careful. The camp was on a little rise of ground; the fires had died to coals. An occasional brief up-flicker played upon the outstretched figures. After a time, a dying spurt of flame showed the three bales of pelts.

All was quiet, as though even the picketed horses slept. The raiders evidently feared no pursuit by three men.

The three whites drew together.

"No guard." Herring's words were a mere breath.

"I go in," said Laforay. Carson put out a hand and pressed him down.

"No. My job. I speak Ute, if they hail me. Take care of my gun."

He stripped off his powder-horn and left it beside the rifle, then wormed through the brush and lush grass for the up slope. When he felt the rise, he bellied like a snake, inching along, feeling the way before him and with his hand parting the path for his body. No Indian could have done it more silently.

AT length he topped the rise. The first fire-embers were startlingly close. He discerned a prone form, moccasins to the coals, head covered with robe. Other embers lay beyond, other forms radiating from them. The central pile of bales bulked in the starlight. Yonder were the horses, all too ready to snort alarm with ears up-pricked. No time to lie waiting. Decision must be swift, action still swifter.

His head lifted, he planned the easiest passage to the bales, and then inched on again. Holding his breath, he rose and crept on, crouching on silent toes and fingertips. He skirted the shrouded heads, was by the last of them, within reach of the three bales. He gently came up, touched the uppermost bale—and from the night a horse whinnied sharply.

The call was instantly answered by one of the animals in the camp herd. An Indian leaped erect, poised and tense. Carson turned, the bale in his arms, caught an ejaculation of alarm and made reply in Ute. Other voices rang out. The brave came for him with a leap. Then a spurt of flame, the whip-like crack of a rifle, and the warrior pitched forward, the death-cry bursting from him as he fell. The agile figure of Laforay swept forward and gripped another bale of loot.

NOW the whole camp was on foot, a tangle of dismayed, bewildered figures seeking the cause of alarm. Carson ran for it, bale in arms, and behind him came Laforay, venting the sharp, hissing Iroquois whoop for greater confusion: *"Sassakway! Sassakway!"* The eerie yell lifted high. Redskins clumped together to bar the escape. Then a shot from below, the sharp crack of a second rifle, as Herring made use of the weapons left with him.

Again the death-shriek, and the amazed, ambushed warriors went flattening to earth, diving everywhere for cover. Carson and Laforay pelted away with their burdens, leaping down the slope to where Herring lay in the bushy bottom. Arrows paced them, and wild bullets.

"Ha! Got two bale!" prated Laforay in delight.

"Didn't know you were after me," said Carson.

"Dream show you with scalp bloody. Looked like this time."

"Come on," put in Herring. "We've rattled the hornets' nest. Now git!"

Carson, still for attack and fight, yielded to sanity. There could be no surprise assault now. The camp above was yelling vengeance, but was staying close until the numbers of the assailants could be determined. Herring, gathering the rifles, set off for the horses. Carson and Laforay followed.

"That damn' horse whinny," panted Laforay. "Then I had to run. No time to use knife, take hair. We leave two scalps, anyhow—two for ghost trail!"

"And one bale," said Carson, and wondered which one had been left.

Herring met them with the horses. Making fast the retrieved bales, they rode back up the ridge and proceeded to put the hornets' nest behind them, setting fast pace in the starlight.

On they hurried, until the pointers of the Dipper said midnight, then halted and slept, while the animals grazed at the length of their neck-ropes. Carson forced impatient uncertainty to rest. Too

dark now to distinguish any details. What was done was done, for good or ill, and sleep was imperative while it could be had. . . .

He wakened to gray morning. Laforay was exulting that the back trail seemed clean of pursuit. Carson went to where Herring, red-eyed from sleep, was blinking at the two wrapped bales with oaths of satisfaction. His eyes sought the markings on the bales. They leaped from one to the other, heart-hurried, and fastened dully upon the pair. The one bore Herring's mark, the other that of Laforay.

Carson turned and eyed the back-trail, silent. Chagrin and alarm spurred wrath anew, until the hot wave rose in him. Surmise and conjecture, sharp planning, balancing of the cost of another attack—even as he weighed it, he knew in his heart it would be folly. Then, as the other two talked, he caught Laforay's generous proposal.

"Kit! We turn round and go get your bale maybe tonight, huh? They won't look for us so quick."

"No," he said. "Make safe first."

"That's talk," approved Herring. "Little Chief has good head, you bet! Keep what we got, including our hair. This is Ute country. We'll cut in, trail 'em to their village, then wait our chance."

Wait our chance! There was still hope, then. Young hot-heads had done this; the Ute chiefs would not approve. But blood covered the trail now—this meant attack and not parley, once the village was found.

They rode on, gradually circling back, at an angle from their old trail. Carson rode in a bitter reflection, blind to what was around, until he saw Herring halt, in the lead, and lift warning hand.

A valley broadened in the vista below and ahead. There was filmy smoke, and a faint yapping of dogs. A good two-score of lodges, with figures moving about, horses herded under guard. A village was stationed there, beside a willowed stream.

"Utes, by God!" blurted Herring. "We got 'em. That's the village. What?"

AGAIN Carson felt the heat of wrath simmering to boil.

"I'm going in. I mean to have my beaver or know why not."

"You'll find out why not, damned quick."

"Hol' on!" said Laforay. "No squaws yelling for the dead. The other party aint come in yet. Wait till they do; then—"

"No." Carson swept the cautious advice away with a sharp gesture. "You stay here and keep your packs. If I don't come out, make tracks while you can. *Adios.*"

WITH the brusque farewell, he sent his horse straight on down the slope. The other two were following him, but at a little distance; they would let him make his parley. He was known to these Utes. The head chief might listen to him. Even at the cost of paying for the dead with most of the beaver, he might yet save three or four pelts, to conceal the one he most avidly desired.

The quick eyes of the horse-guards spied the approach. A blanket flourished the alarm signal, evoking excited voices and scurrying figures among the lodges. Then, ready, the village waited as Carson rode in upon snarling curs, and curious gazes.

Ahead was the large painted lodge of the chief, and he went straight for it. He slid to the ground and fronted the stoical, fixed gaze of the chief, who sat on a robe in the sunshine at the lodge entrance. Recognition was swift: Bear's Tongue; this was the Bear's village, then.

But a second figure sat beside Bear's Tongue. Here was the tall Comanche who had been with Marie in Santa Fe, who had been in the war council. Now he sat here, at the left of the lodge entrance, like a guest of state. Carson's blue eyes stabbed at him sharply, then went to the broad, dark, weathered countenance of the Ute chief.

"Little Chief comes on a visit?" asked Bear's Tongue.

Carson was in no mood for politeness.

"We talk straight," he said. "Since when have the Utes begun to rob traps, steal the beaver traps, and steal the furs of Americans?"

"Sit down." The Bear's dour countenance changed in not a muscle, but anger gathered in his glittering eyes. "What have you to say?"

Carson told him, with word and sign, making plea and accusation boldly swift. He ended with hot conclusion:

"When your young men bring in their dead, you will see my skins, and the stolen traps. Are the Utes making war on Americans?"

The Bear made answer with finality.

"They are not my young men. I know nothing about it."

Carson's fingers went into his shirt and brought forth the blood-black arrow, which he had retained. No words were necessary; here was mute accusation that shouted to heaven. The black eyes flitted over the shaft, then Carson saw a smile come into the dark face—a smile that sank his heart like stone. Somewhere he had slipped up.

"Little Chief is blind. Blood has got into his eyes and blinded them," said the Bear, relishing deeply this chance to set the famed Little Chief at wrong. "Ute point, but a point is easily changed. Blackfoot feathers." He snapped the arrow, disdainfully cast the shaft aside. "You must ask Plenty Eagle for your skins."

Chagrin overwhelmed Carson. Blackfeet! Perhaps it was the same party of young men that had captured him. His mind brushed chagrin aside, went groping swiftly for the truth. The same party, yes! Even now, his life had been spared, though all furs had been lifted. Why, the three trappers might have been ambushed easily enough, in their camp! Then this must have been done by orders. Whose orders?

"I saw the Utes sitting in the same lodge with the Blackfeet," he shot out. "Now I see Bear's Tongue sitting here with a Comanche. Go Everywhere Woman is in your eyes and ears. She is here."

"The woman is not here," said the chief flatly.

Carson's turn now. He took full advantage of it, conscious of other eyes and ears. For a moment he said nothing at all, but moved slowly. Suspense and curiosity rose high, as he picked up the broken arrow and stooped to the dust with it, the dust at one side of the entrance. A short, involuntary grunt of chagrin broke from the chief, as he realized the footprint there, the tiny print of a woman's moccasin, of a girl's foot—no broad, flat squaw's footprint. None the less, it was a gamble.

THE gaze of the Comanche glistened with appreciation. Carson knew his gamble was won; he himself had lifted in estimation. Bear's Tongue spoke composedly enough, before there could be more words. He saved his own face by seeming to continue with his denial.

"The woman is not here. She was here, with the big red man. They slept. They have gone on across the mountains."

"Do the Utes listen to the Comanches and the Blackfeet, and plan war?" snapped Carson. It was a bold question, that might well get contemptuous silence for response. But again he won, as the Bear made flat, uncompromising answer.

"I heard Plenty Eagle's talk. It was a good talk. I heard the young woman sing. It was a good song. The Utes wait for the Blackfeet to pass the White Beaver medicine."

SO the Blackfeet were going to send out that medicine! A point learned.

"The arrow would say that two people are one." And Carson dropped the shaft again. "The Blackfeet and the woman would lead you into trouble. White Beaver medicine? It is foolish talk. A girl has sung in your ears, and you are deaf to the speech of wise men."

Anger drove in the taunt. Then Carson abruptly made the "cut off" sign, turned, and went to his horse. He mounted and rode out to join the waiting Herring and Laforay. Utter failure!

"Well?" prompted Herring. "You don't get the pelts?"

"No," said Carson. "The party were Blackfeet, Bear's Tongue says. True. That damned Comanche is here. Shunan and his girl were in the village for a sleep. They've gone on."

"Ho!" said Laforay. "Maybe we ketch 'em and learn what she mean by telling us good hunting, huh?"

Carson glowered. Lost, lost! Then he quickened to a thought. Ten to one, the Blackfeet would not open that bale of furs. They would take it to the rendezvous; they would trade it to McKay of the Hudson's Bay. There was a chance still, a long chance!

"Hell!" said Herring thoughtfully. "Blackfeet stole our traps. Why? Too lazy to use 'em, as a rule. Now why?"

Carson's brain jerked to the question. The Blackfeet were going to pass the White Beaver medicine. Why? Because they were on the lookout for it. Blackfeet, searching the beaver villages. Blackfeet, trapping, outspread through the valleys and along the creeks. Blackfeet, using American traps.

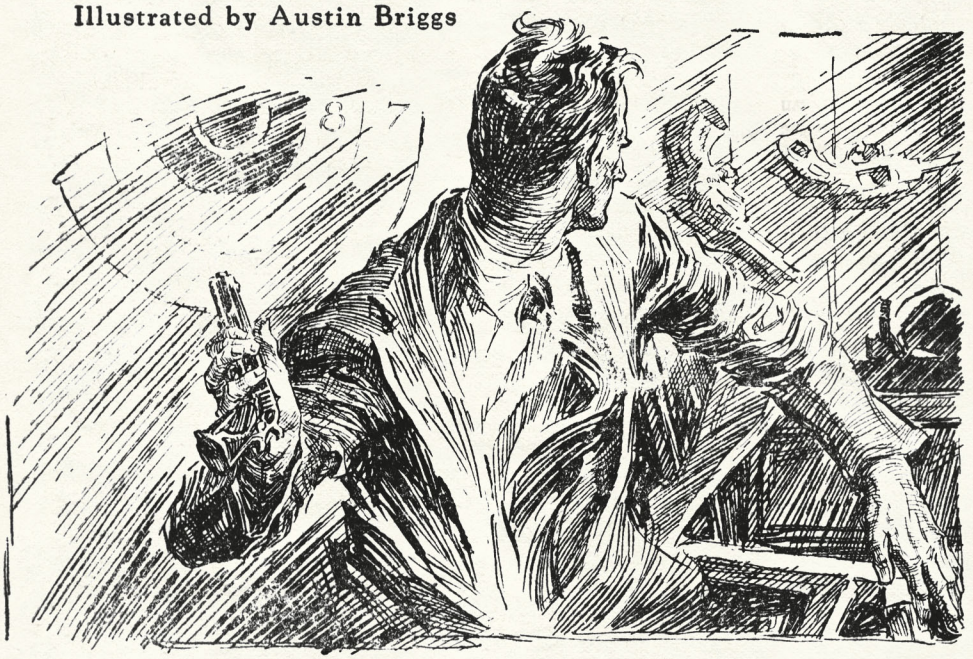
And all the while, unknowing, the prize of empire was in Blackfoot hands. Ha! A smile touched Carson's lips; the sparkle came back into his blue eyes. There was a chance, a long chance!

"Let's head on to rendezvous," he said.

Dr. Marcus Whitman and Jim Bridger come into the picture, and even more exciting events occur in the forthcoming January installment of this vivid novel.

Satan's Gunsmith

Illustrated by Austin Briggs



MECHANICALLY, the gun was a beautiful thing. The original barrel had been replaced by a longer one. The factory stock had been discarded, and the one substituted was at least twice as long and much thicker. The change had been made without affecting the balance of the weapon, which was perfect.

This gunsmith, however, had worked toward only one goal—ease and efficiency for the marksman using the weapon. So a wooden grip had been added near the muzzle. And the clips for use with the gun now contained fifty cartridges, instead of the ten that had marked its former existence as the ordinary variety of automatic.

In its present state—and this change had been brought about by a master craftsman—the weapon was a full-fledged sub-machine gun. It was small but deadly. Magnificent or sinister, depending entirely on the point of view.

The Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice, removed the gun from the glass top of his desk, and his feelings toward the weapon were revealed on his rather handsome face as he bent to examine it. He fingered the tag attached to the trigger-guard, and grim lines formed about his mouth.

The gun, according to the tag, had been the property of one Skip Dakris, who had operated in and about Syrport. He had failed to justify his name, which had been earned by his ability to move fast; and the result had been a meeting with special agents of the F.B.I. Skip had departed from Syrport, leaving the gun behind him. The pallbearers had voted his metal traveling-case quite heavy enough, without additional hardware.

The Director balanced the gun in the palm of his hand.

"Nice little toy," he mused.

A SECOND man, sitting across the desk, took the gun from the Director, and examined it with professional interest. This man had a keen, intelligent face. His eyes were masked by thick glasses. The white smock he wore added to the impression that he was a skilled research worker. That impression was heightened by the capable manner in which his sensitive fingers played over the weapon, in much the same manner that a skilled musician approaches the

Where do gangsters get their machine-guns? An exciting story of the F.B.I.

By
ROBERT R. MILL

Ashby's empty automatic went straight to its appointed target.

keyboard of a strange but perfect instrument, before striking the opening bars of some glorious sonata.

Less than a dozen men in the underworld of the nation knew this man by sight. Yet all of them, from gang-lord to punk, had heard of him, and hated and feared him. For them, the name of Carl Sherman, head of the great laboratory of crime maintained by the Department of Justice, was one to conjure with. This man, working with test-tubes and microscopes, had wrought miracles. Now, the underworld has very little interest in scientific accomplishments, as such; but Carl Sherman's miracles were all of the type that could be translated into workaday procedure by the special agents in the field, and with results that were deadly for the underworld.

Carl Sherman was speaking:

"A beautiful job. . . . Built by hand. . . . The work of a master craftsman in both the wood and metal arts."

He was attacking the matter in hand slowly, methodically and efficiently, treating it as though it were a scientific problem. But the Director, impatient as a thoroughbred prancing before the barrier, leaped ahead:

"How many men in the country are capable of turning out a gun like that?"

CARL SHERMAN pondered. The tips of his fingers were pressed together, but his approving glance never wandered from the work of art on the desk. All the artist in his soul responded to this genius, perverted though it was.

"In the factories—"

The Director cut him off with an impatient wave of the hand.

Carl Sherman bowed his head.

"Exactly. This is not a factory job."

Again he was deep in thought.

"In the underworld—" The Director supplied the cue.

"Possibly two," Carl Sherman answered. "Three at the very most."

The laboratory chief continued his almost reverent examination of the weapon.

"How long would it take to turn out a gun like this?"

Carl Sherman put the thing of wood and steel aside.

"With workmanship of this sort, at least two weeks. But a product just as deadly could be produced in half that time."

The Director was leaning forward in his chair, his face eager.

"And is there any reason why guns of this sort couldn't be turned out on a mass production basis?"

Carl Sherman weighed the question. After a few moments he replied:

"None—assuming they are able to obtain competent workmen, and have a master craftsman such as this to direct them."

The Director's smile was cynical.

"Money will buy lots of things, Carl."

The laboratory chief's smile was mellow. "True enough—but not some things," he amended.

THE DIRECTOR ceased scribbling upon a pad, and leaped to his feet. His voice became a staccato bark in his excitement:

"They'll do it! That will make every automatic a sub-machine gun. The underworld will be flooded with them. Every gangster will have the most dangerous and deadly weapon known to man. We can toss all our regulations and efforts to curb the illegal traffic in machine-guns out the window. This is the worst—"

Carl Sherman turned in his chair. He was unmoved by the outburst. His orderly mind had gone back to the first supposition, and taken up its methodical task.

"The woodwork is superb. That eliminates him."

He pressed a push-button on the desk, and gave a cryptic order to the clerk who responded. Soon the man returned with a handful of cards, and the Director and Carl Sherman bent over them.

They were the *modus operandi* cards: Mute bits of pasteboard, upon which were recorded facts, many of them seemingly unimportant, concerning the outstanding criminals of the nation:

Their talents, and their deficiencies; their tastes in food, drink and women; the crimes in which they specialized; the methods they used in accomplishing them. . . . The fondness of one gangster for avocado pears; the aversion of another to the odor of violets—all these were recorded on the cards.

Carl Sherman sorted through the group rapidly, and produced one with an air of triumph. He placed it before the Director, with his forefinger indicating the name.

"Lonesome Luke Bravic. Once a master gunsmith for Stallion Arms."

The finger traveled down the card.

"Here. Served three years in San Devlo. Assigned to woodworking shop, and showed marked proficiency. Did wood-carving in recreation hours, and three of his pieces won high honors at an exhibition outside the walls."

Carl Sherman's eyes blinked behind the heavy glasses.

"I imagine Lonesome Luke is our man."

The Director seized the card.

"Right! The card shows he operates in Syrport and Wilton." The triumph faded from his eyes. "He will be a sweet one to land."

Carl Sherman was thinking aloud:

"One of the greatest craftsmen alive in the world today. The pity of it! Just the hairline of difference that so often separates genius from normal, as well as straight from perverted thinking."

He came back to the present and its problems:

"Bravic has something to sell. He is selling it in the illegal market. We must enter that market—and buy."

The Director picked up the telephone:

"Call our field office in Druton. Tell the agent-in-charge to direct Special Agent James Ashby to proceed here at once by airplane."

Carl Sherman nodded approval. He was weighing the two adversaries impartially and scientifically. The fact that he loved Ashby like a brother entered into the problem not at all.

"Duke Ashby can do it," he said at length. "First, however, we must affect a plausible and logical entrance for him into that market." His eyes glowed with affection. "Duke will do the rest." The glow vanished, and Carl Sherman became the impersonal man of science again. "This must be perfect, for we are playing against a master craftsman, and a brilliant man."

The Director and Carl Sherman bent over the *modus operandi* cards.

RED BLAKE, star reporter on the Syrport *Globe*, answered the telephone-call with indifference, but he was shaking with excitement as he made his way to the city desk.

"This is a hot one," he told the city editor. "The town is flooded with F.B.I. men—Duke Ashby, Carl Sherman and all their heavy-hitters. They evidently have a tip on that First National job, and are all ready now to make a pinch. That will rate Page One on any man's paper."

The city editor nodded as he made a change on the dummy of what would be the first page of the next edition.

"Get it fast," he ordered. "We won't queer it by pulling the story before the pinch; but after all, this is a daily paper." An afterthought came to him. "Where did you get your dope?"

Blake grinned.

"Same guy who writes all the letters to the newspapers: '*A Friend.*' Wouldn't tell me his name, but swore this is all on the level." The reporter shrugged. "We'll know for sure just as soon as I can shag over to the Department of Justice offices."

A SUSPICIOUS calm lay over the Syrport field office when Blake entered. A very junior special agent was in charge, and he professed to know nothing. But the door leading to the inner office was partly open, and the reporter could see a number of the kit-boxes carried by special agents, and which hold sub-machine guns and other tools of the trade. These boxes were open, and the guns were missing.

Blake grinned, and went to work.

"We have all the dope. You are going to make a pinch on that First National job. Sherman, Ashby and all your clean-up guys are here for it. We aren't printing anything on it—yet. But we may have to, if you guys keep on acting like clams. Now that we understand each other, where did they go?"

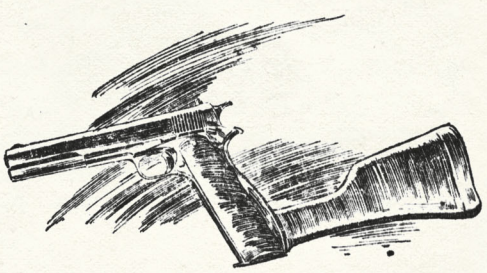
The special agent fought back the inclination to smile.

"You know more than I do. A squad did arrive from Washington this morning. I saw Mr. Sherman among them. I never have seen Duke Ashby, so I couldn't tell you if he was along. They went out about half an hour ago. My orders were to sit by this telephone and keep my mouth shut." The delayed smile appeared. "I like my job."

Blake dropped into a chair, and lighted a cigarette.

"Now there are two of us waiting for that telephone to ring," he announced.

They had exhausted the baseball situation, and had turned to politics, when the buzzer of the telephone sounded. After a brief exchange of words, the special agent turned to the reporter.



Blood was streaming from the face of a man he recognized as a special agent. "Is it bad, Roberts?" asked the reporter.

"It's for you. Don't keep that line tied up."

Blake's city editor was excited:

"Get out to Thirty-first and South right away. They pulled their raid, and it went sour on them. Guy got away, and it seems one of the Federal men is hit. Get after the story; it's only twenty minutes to the deadline."

The reporter snapped the receiver on the hook and paused long enough to say to the F.B.I. man:

"One of your bunch got it."

A look of concern crossed the face of the special agent.

"Hear who it was?" he asked.

"Nope," said Blake, as he bounded for the door. . . .

There was much confusion, much excitement, but very little of sound or coherent information to be had at Thirty-first and South streets. Grim-faced men, obviously special agents, were fading quietly from the scene. Blake spotted a little group in a doorway, and made his way there. Blood was streaming from the face of a man he recognized as a special agent attached to the Syrport office. An ambulance surgeon was sponging away.

"Is it bad, Roberts?" asked the reporter.

The special agent grinned.

"Just flying glass, Red. Think it will mar my peculiar style of beauty?"

"What is it all about?"

SPECIAL AGENT ROBERTS hesitated, then pointed to a man standing near by. This man wore thick glasses, and there was an expression of bitter disappointment on his fine face.

Blake sized him up, and took a chance.

"Mr. Sherman."

Carl Sherman turned.

"Yes?"

"This had something to do with the First National job, didn't it?"

The laboratory chief was silent.

"Who were you after?" persisted the reporter.

Carl Sherman appeared to come to a decision.

"It is no secret. . . . Blaze Horkus."

"Never heard of him," said the reporter.

Sherman smiled bitterly.

"I almost wish we hadn't. Stop at the office later, and I'll give you his picture and his pedigree."

"Was he hit?"

Carl Sherman hesitated.

"I am inclined to think he was. Quite a bit of lead went in his general direction." The bitter smile appeared again. "Not that anybody in this detail won any medals for shooting."

"Where did he get to?"

Carl Sherman's hand indicated the entire city of Syrport.

"He broke cover before we had our men in position. Understand, that is no excuse for what happened. He began to shoot it out, and he made it so hot we were forced to take to cover. Then he just faded out of sight."

The Federal man pointed to the buildings near by.

"They are all rookeries, and he probably knows them well enough to charge through them blindfolded. We searched them as well as we could, but didn't find a trace. We did locate his room, but there was nothing there to work on. It is my guess that he is out of the neighborhood, and probably on his way out of the city. All we can hope for is better luck next time."

Blake made his way to a telephone, followed by an excited resident of the street.

"Could that guy shoot? Just a little automatic, but every time he plunks it, one of them monkeys ducks for cover. And he aint ducked none too soon, for the glass and bricks is flying. This baby would have been trading lead with them yet, but his gat goes empty on him. Then he does a Houdini, and was it good! One minute he is there. The next he aint. And I always thought them G-men was tough! Just goes to show that what you get in the movies and the papers is—"

"Save the next installment for tomorrow," advised Blake, as he entered a telephone-booth.

PAUL, on duty behind the bar in the Commodore, a dingy dive in the tenderloin of Syrport, improved the late afternoon by swabbing, not too industriously, at the wooden surface of the bar. The Commodore enjoyed no vogue at the cocktail hour, possibly because the majority of its patrons preferred to do their circulating after dark.

So Paul was quite alone as he dabbed at the top of the bar, taking care to keep the rag from touching a ring on his finger, and pausing frequently to inspect the large diamond set in the ring. Paul liked big things—big automobiles, shirts with big stripes, suits with big checks. Big women, preferably blonde.

He liked to have a part, no matter how small, in big things. What he called big things were brewing about him all the time, and he devoted all his talents to edging himself into them. His mental processes were obvious enough to be plain to a boy of ten, but Paul deemed them really clever, and he prided himself upon being able to attain the same mental level as what he called the "wise crowd," which was composed of gangsters, politicians, gamblers, actors, newspaper reporters and numerous other gentry whose callings were slightly more mysterious.

When a newsboy entered with the late afternoon editions, Paul put the rag aside in favor of the front pages. It was

smart business for a guy to keep wised up to what was going on. Helped you to make conversation with the trade. The customers liked a guy who knew his way around.

THE headlines were devoted to the affair at Thirty-first and South streets. Paul derived considerable satisfaction from the manner in which this affair had ended. He had scant love for the Department of Justice. Three of his very best customers no longer favored him with their business, all because of the men of the F.B.I.

Beneath the headlines was a picture of one Blaze Horkus, who, it appeared, had been the leading spirit in the afternoon's festivities. Paul studied the features of the man in the cut.

He looked like a hard citizen, and a wise one. The stubble which was visible on his chin added nothing to his appearance. There was an expression about the eyes that caused Paul to make a resolve never to crack wise if he happened to meet up with Mr. Horkus. The average guy might not notice it, but Paul did. He was quick like that. Just one of the reasons, he reflected complacently, that made it possible for him to hold down a swell job like this.

Paul had finished with the papers, and had allowed his thoughts to center about a lady who in addition to being big and blonde, was very willing, when the door opened and a young man entered. He walked toward the bar with a peculiar motion, at the same time glancing about the room.

The bartender sized him up quickly: He was a stranger; he wasn't drunk, but he was trying hard to keep from staggering. A shave wouldn't hurt him a bit; but underneath the whiskers, his face was white.

"How about a geezer?" asked the stranger.

Paul placed the whisky and charged water before him.

"Nice day," he volunteered.

The customer completed certain preparations.

"For what?" he demanded.

Paul arched his bushy eyebrows in a manner which the blonde lady had described as "just too comical," and which had been highly approved by other customers, but the stranger was entirely unmoved. He devoted his entire attention to the drink.

"Try it again," he ordered.

Paul produced the necessary materials. Meanwhile he studied the man. There was something about his features, something about the expression around his eyes.

A warm glow swept over Paul as he recognized the original of the newspaper picture. There was no fear, just a thrill at being admitted to the circle of big things. But he must move warily.

Paul managed a smile which he fondly believed would kindle confidence, and at the same time convey the idea that the owner of the smile was fully aware of the drama in this meeting. He spoke in a casual tone:

"Guess you must be an out-of-town gent. Here for the races?"

That last touch, Paul decided, was very clever.

"Here on business," corrected the stranger. "From Philadelphia. Philadelphia, South Carolina."

Paul pondered over that.

"I thought Philly was in Pennsylvania."

"It is," said the stranger, "if they haven't moved it."

Paul went into executive session with himself again. After some seconds a smile of sincere admiration appeared on his face.

"I get it. It's okay, stranger. Didn't go to speak out of turn."

The customer, steadying himself by clutching the railing of the bar, appeared to see the bartender for the first time. His expression softened a trifle.

"You look like a right guy. Got a place here where a fellow can wash up a bit?"

Paul indicated a swinging door of latticework. The stranger started toward it, divesting himself of his coat as he walked. Then his step faltered, and a moan, almost a sob, escaped his lips.

PAUL was at his side, almost at once. He eased the coat from the man's arm, and supported him for a moment.

"Make it?"

"Sure," said the stranger, through set teeth. "Touch of cramp."

"Probably something you et," said the diplomatic Paul. A worried look crossed his face. "You aint going to pass out on me?"

"Hell, no!" said the stranger, who disappeared behind the swinging door. Paul glanced at the latticework, and then turned his attention to the coat in his hands. The labels told him nothing. But the coat, apparently, had been

marked by a cleaner with the name of the owner. The name *"Horkus"* was stamped on the lining near the collar. Paul nodded with satisfaction. Check and double-check.

The coat was draped neatly over the back of a chair when the stranger reappeared, obviously improved, but still a bit shaky and very pale. Paul produced the ingredients without order and without comment.

"Bad thing, cramps," said the stranger.

Paul nodded. "Ever see a doc?"

"I don't like doctors."

"There is doc's and doc's," countered Paul. He paused to allow this wisdom to sink in. "Some of them is gabby as barbers. Others aint. Now I know a doc—"

"Good on cramps?"

"Swell. He takes care of some of the boys what comes in here. He was Skip Dakris' doc. Skip had a bad case of—cramps."

"It's a thought," the stranger admitted. "Know your way around in this burg, don't you?"

"Some," said Paul, with a show of modesty.

"How about a room? A nice, quiet room?"

Paul did some of what for him was very quick thinking. The big blonde had a spare room over at her place. The heat was on full blast for this bird, but he would be safe there. And guys with the heat turned on them have to pay.

"This is a noisy town. You can get a quiet place, but it costs heavy jack."

The stranger produced a ten-dollar bill.

"Use that for telephone money. Call up and see what you can promote."

A few minutes later Paul emerged from the telephone-booth, shaking his head in pretended anger and sorrow.

"Got just the place. But they hold out for twenty bucks a day. It's a gyp!"

The stranger was smiling.

"Want that I should call you a cab to go up there? A right cab?"

The stranger nodded. He produced a roll of bills.

"Do I pay you or them?"

Paul was a picture of injured innocence.

"Pay them—her. Me, I wouldn't put the screws on a pal."

The stranger paused in the doorway.

"Be seeing you again," he promised.

Paul grinned. "Off and on," he agreed. "Me and the lady where you is stopping is—well, we is old friends."

NEXT morning they met again, when Paul, through for the night, hurried to the apartment where Daisy Morphee, the lady who was big, blonde and willing, had slipped easily into the rôle of hostess. Paul, anticipating a share in the twenty dollars a day, had relaxed to the extent of bringing a half-pint bottle of excellent rye. The stranger countered by sending out for another of the same. Miss Morphee demanded the right to prove she was no sissy by buying the third bottle. The gentlemen yielded. . . .

The party became less formal as the parade of the bottles continued. Miss Morphee, like Paul, allowed her manner to imply she knew the identity of her lodger, although they both were careful to address him by the name he had given—James Collins. Soon "Mr. Collins" was shortened to "James," and then "Jim."

The arrival of the fourth bottle, courtesy Mr. Collins, found Miss Morphee in top form.

"You shee, Jim, old socks, you got here just too late for the parade."

"Skip it," ordered Paul.

Miss Morphee was properly indignant.

"Nonshense. Got to tell my old palsy-walsy Jim, 'bout big parade. Every lasht virgin in Syrport to march in it, Jim." A tear welled from Miss Morphee's eye, doing no good to rouge and mascara. "Had to call it off."

"Skip it," ordered Paul again.

"You shush your mouth before little Daisy puts handful of finner—fingers—in it. Tellin' Jim about virgins' parade.

Had to canshel because one girl had shprained ankle and other girl wouldn't marsh alone. Wanted me to marsh—"

Miss Morphee made an effort to raise her glass, found it beyond her, and subsided in one corner of the sofa, the first casualty of the party. An embarrassed silence fell upon the two gentlemen. Paul was first to break it:

"Ladies can't hold their liquor. No matter how gentile and refined they is, get 'em too much, and they gets—well, sloppy." He sighed. "I'll bet Daisy will want to cut herself a piece of throat tomorrow if she knows she pulled a risky joke."

Mr. Collins met this overture with the manner of one man of the world to another.

"I know. Like a dame I knew in Baltimore. Refined and almost nasty nice. Didn't know if I dared take her to a dance give by a club of sporting gentlemen I belonged to. Got her there, and on the outside of a few glasses of grape, and she is up on the table making a bum out of me. 'I feel a purple moment coming on me!' she yells. 'I am going to sin in a big way, and I'm giving you first chance, Blaze Hork—'"

Mr. Collins broke off abruptly. Paul was the soul of tact. His pointed shoe traced a pattern on the rug.

"That's that," said Blaze Horkus.

"Sure," soothed Paul. "All among pals." Then he added, quite unnecessarily: "Me and Daisy was wise. She's a dame you can tie to, Bla—Blaze."

"I had her doped out that way," Horkus admitted.

The fifth bottle, again by courtesy Mr. Horkus, né Collins, served to remove the restraint.

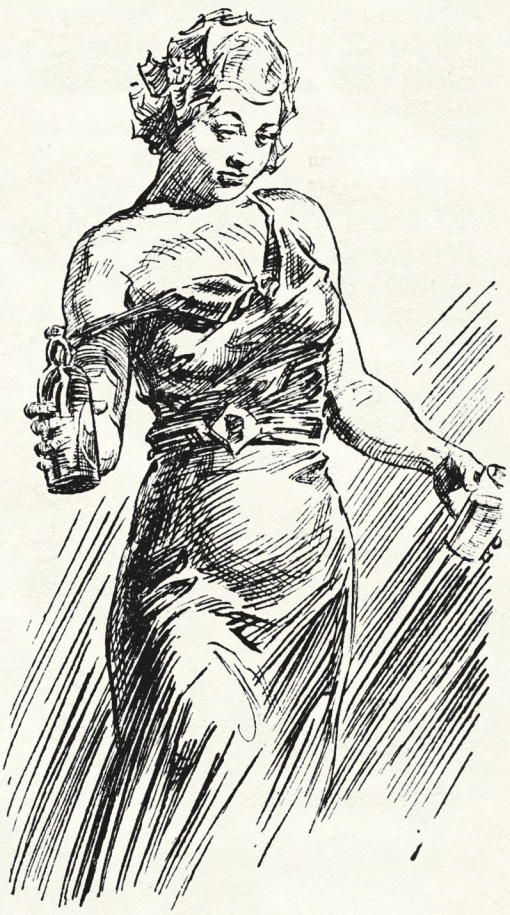
Paul, feeling that the ban had been lifted, made sage and admiring comments anent the technique employed in the robbery of the First National Bank. Mr. Horkus parried the compliments modestly. But common courtesy demanded some acknowledgment of the outspoken praise Paul heaped upon the hero of the afternoon's battle with the G-men.

"S'nothing," Mr. Horkus parried. "A rod whittles all guys down to the same size." A smile softened his face. "Had to cut it short because my cannon went empty on me, and the monkeys didn't seem to want to give me a chance to reload."

Paul's interest was professional.

"What do you pack?"

Mr. Horkus fumbled on the inside of the waistband of his trousers. Paul smiled with approval. Best place to pack a rod. Sling it right, and there was no telltale bulge. Nine cops out of ten



would miss it on a casual frisk. The bartender watched the hand reappear clutching a .38 automatic.

"Only ten, huh?"

"Only ten. I could of used some spares."

The light sparkling in Paul's eyes was the joint result of the desire to appear wise and important, and the knowledge that here was additional profit.

"Say, I know a bird who is a whiz on rods. He can put a stock on that roscoe, and make it spit fifty times 'stead of ten. Take a week or so, but you aint doing nothing, and you aint going to need no rod while you is holed up all snug here with me and Daisy."

Mr. Horkus appeared to be weighing the suggestion.

"This guy is nutty as a squirrel," Paul went on, "but can he do things with them hands of his'n! I leads you to him, and tells him you is on the up and up. Then

it's up to you. If he don't take to you, it's no dice."

Paul stood up, somewhat uncertainly, and reached for his hat. He inspected the recumbent Miss Morphee, whose open mouth and irregular breathing did nothing to improve her ample charms. "Good for three hours. Come on."

"Let it ride for a few hours," advised Mr. Horkus. "No guy is going to give three cheers when you crash in on him at this hour."

Paul waved that aside.

"Got to crash this guy now. Works all night, and sleeps all day. Nuts. But I wish I had me them hands of his'n."

THE head of Lonesome Luke Bravic, seemingly too large for his frail body, was tilted to one side, suggestive of the manner of a bird hunting a worm, as he heard Paul perform the necessary introductions, during which the bartender enlarged upon the exploits of his newfound friend.

Lonesome Luke halted the recital with a wave of a hand.

"You get out," ordered the gunsmith. "You are a fool."

Paul's glance shifted from man to man. Blaze Horkus was smiling. It was a sarcastic smile, and it stung the bartender, creating more anger than the manner and words of the gunsmith.

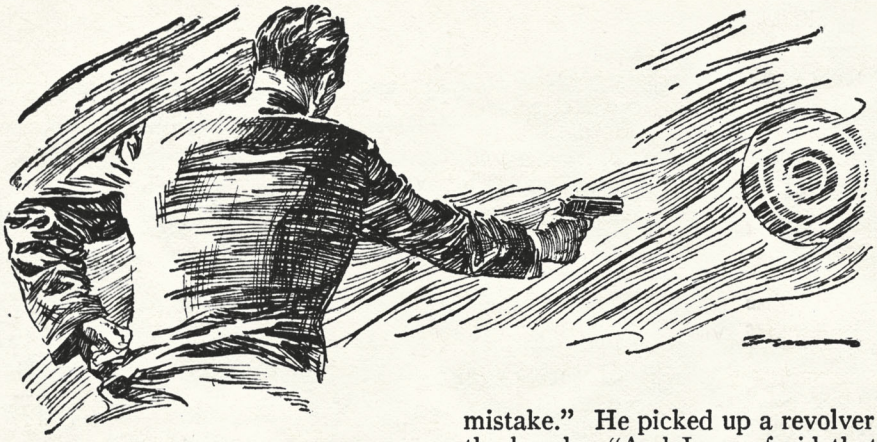
"Okay," Paul growled. He opened the door, and stepped from the house. Outside, in the cool air of early morning, he paused to take stock. Luke was a nut. But that other mug—after all he had done for him!

He scowled. Then muttering to himself, he started away.

"You shush your mouth before little Daisy puts handful of finner—fingers —in it," said Miss Morphee.

Back in the house, Lonesome Luke uttered a single word: "Come."

He led the way to the rear of the house, opening and closing doors, snapping on lights, and finally halting before a door that opened upon a stair-



way leading to the basement. The two men entered. Luke paused to close the massive door.

"Soundproof," he explained.

The basement, flooded with lights that almost duplicated daylight and extending underground beyond the rear limit of the house, was fitted up as a workshop. There were lathes, drills and all sorts of mechanical contrivances. Various weapons were scattered about. At one end was a target range.

"The gun," Lonesome Luke ordered.

THE visitor produced the automatic, balancing it in his hand, and fingering it fondly. The gunsmith, standing to one side, with his manner even more suggestive of an alert bird, made no attempt to take the weapon, but nodded with approval.

"Yes, hands made for a gun. The alert senses and control necessary for fine shooting." There was warmth in his voice, and the admiration of one craftsman for another. He indicated a revolver-target hanging on the wall at the end of the range. "Try it."

The stranger fired once, and the bullet tore a white hole in the dark circle in the center of the target. The second shot also scored a bull's-eye.

"Burst fire," suggested the gunsmith.

The automatic roared, a meaningless cough to the layman, but Lonesome Luke calmly counted the shots, starting at three and ending with ten as the fire ceased and only the echoes sounded in the basement.

"Master shooting," Lonesome Luke approved. His tone was conversational; and as he spoke, he moved toward a work-bench and away from his visitor. "The gun is empty." He paused for a fraction of a second. "That is your first mistake." He picked up a revolver from the bench. "And I am afraid that mistake will prove fatal."

The man with the empty automatic wheeled. The calm voice of the gunsmith halted him.

"We are separated by a good twenty feet. How long will it take you to travel that distance? Do you know how fast a bullet travels? Here, take this table." He tossed a sheet of cardboard to his visitor. "Work it out for yourself. It is a simple problem in arithmetic."

He sighed deeply.

"Every problem of life—death too, for that matter—can be reduced to the exact terms of an equation. Here is a world, too small to hold both of us. Ergo, one of us must die. Which one? The one with the empty gun, of course. These are simple facts. I am sure you agree with me, Mr.—Mr. Ashby, if my supposition is correct."

Special Agent James (Duke) Ashby managed a smile.

"You are correct." He bowed to the inevitable. This man was clever. Any attempt to continue the masquerade was doomed. Instinct, rather than reason, prompted him to stall for time. "You have won. I congratulate you." He was like a boxer at the start of a bout, feeling out his opponent, and groping for the weakness he knew must exist even though the man he was fighting seemed invincible. He launched his attack upon what is so often the vulnerable trait in genius —vanity.

"I, a humble worker, bow to a master craftsman."

Bravic's pleased smile told him the shot had winged home.

"Defeat is never pleasant. But respect for one's opponent softens the sting. That bartender!" A look of disgust crossed his face. "I felt ashamed

of myself for outwitting him. With you—"

Lonesome Luke Bravic smiled.

"Flattery, Mr. Ashby, is a powerful weapon." The gun in his hand moved slightly. "Lead renders it impotent." The smile was more pronounced. "It is human to desire to postpone the inevitable. You are a gallant loser, and I can be a gracious winner. At least, gracious enough to gratify the curiosity I know you must feel. After all,"—he glanced at a clock on the wall,—"we have time for that."

Ashby seized the opening.

"How did you know?"

"Sooner or later, you were bound to honor me with your attentions. That was inescapable. I flattered myself the trap would be an elaborate one. The headlines in the papers today told me the trap had been baited."

He went on and on, outlining with uncanny exactness the exact procedure. The death of Skip Dakris and the capture of his weapon had first put him on his guard. The following lull had not deceived him. That gun, he knew, bore his signature as plainly as if his name had been engraved upon it. The gunfight of the afternoon before, as described in the papers, had been convincing in all except one detail.

"The wanted man got away. He traded shots with your marksmen, and escaped alive. That didn't ring true."

Lonesome Luke went on. He pointed out that the choice of Paul as a dupe was obvious.

The two men made a strange picture as they stood there, framed in the glow from the lights. The loaded gun in the hand of the gunsmith was trained at the breast of the special agent. The hand in which Ashby held the empty automatic hung limply at his side.

"The way you handled a gun removed the last doubt," Lonesome Luke continued. "To you, even as to me, a gun is a thing of art, not merely something to throw a lot of lead. You showed that in every motion. No gangster could."

HE laughed, somewhat bitterly, glancing again at the clock.

"That is the story. Now to business. It will be over quickly, barring a third-act rescue; and I doubt if we have that here. Permit me to point out that even if it were tried, you would surely die before it was accomplished."

"That is true," Ashby admitted sadly. His keen ears had caught sounds unheard by the other man. They were the sounds made by trained men, who move rapidly but quietly toward their goal. His heart had raced with hope, but the words of the other man and the gun in his hand killed the hope.

There was the crack of splintered wood as the intruders, baffled by the stout door at the head of the stairs, threw caution aside and staked all on speed.

Lonesome Luke turned slightly, facing the sound. Ashby's muscles responded like a steel spring released from restraint. The empty automatic went flashing through the air, straight to its appointed target. It struck Lonesome Luke Bravic in the head just as he was turning back to fulfill his threat.

WITHOUT a sound the gunsmith went down. Ashby leaped upon him and tore the loaded gun from his grasp. He was sitting astride his fallen foe when a detail of special agents, headed by Carl Sherman, poured down the stairs.

Ashby rose, staggered toward them.

"*Carl!* How—how?"

Sherman's arm supported him.

"Easy, Duke. The bartender didn't like the way he had been treated here. He came to our office to bring about the arrest of Blaze Horkus. The night man called me at once. We went through with the raid to make everything look right. Then, on the way here, something seemed to tell me to hurry. So we—"

The mechanical appliances caught his attention. A spark of admiration gleamed in his eyes. Then his face became stern.

"Smash it," he ordered. "What a pity!" he murmured under his breath.

He bent over the fallen man. "Satan's gunsmith," he murmured.

"Call an ambulance," he ordered. He shook his head, thinking of the genius that was lost to useful industry, all because of a mental twist.

Then, his duty done, he turned to Duke Ashby, the man he loved as a brother.

"And you, Duke? You're not hurt?"

Ashby was smiling.

"Blaze Horkus is dead. But I am feeling great." The affection in the eyes of the man before him was answered in his own. "Thanks to you, Carl. You came just in time."

Another vivid story by Robert Mill will appear in an early issue.

Game As They Make 'Em

A conceited captain sends himself to the bench in this fine story by the author of "You're Young But Once."

By EUSTACE COCKRELL

EVERY time I think of it, I remember the first time I saw Lew Workman. I was sitting in the coach's little office on the first floor of the gym, talking to Matt Wood about some freshmen that were coming in. Matt was looking out the window, and I noticed him half get up and then sink back into his chair.

He sighed. "There goes a guy," he said. "I wonder if he's coming back to school."

I looked out of the window. I saw a person walking along. He didn't look like anything special to me. "Where?" I asked stupidly.

"That was Lew Workman," Matt said, and I could tell by his voice that Lew Workman had made quite an impression on Matt at some time or other.

"Oh," I said, "I've heard of him. He was down here five or six years ago. The original misanthropic wonder. Played one year and then quit, didn't he?"

"That's the guy," Matt said. He sighed again. "What a quarterback that fellow was!"

I don't know why that made me sore, but it did. I was captain at Eastminster that year, and I'd been All-Conference fullback two years in a row. "Well," I said, "he didn't look much like Dutch Clark, what I saw of him. Kind of light, for one thing."

"No," Matt said, and he still sounded wistful. "He never looked like much except on a football field. I wish I thought he was coming out this year—but I know he's not."

"Why not?" I asked. "How do you know he's not coming out?"

"I just know," Matt said. "I talked to that baby once before."

"*I* haven't talked to him," I said. I was still sore. It's not much fun to have your coach sit and pine for a football player when he's talking to you, and you know *you're* good. "If you want him out so bad," I said, "I'll get him out for you."

Matt looked at me kind of pityingly. "You do," he said, "and we'll win the Conference."

"We'll win it anyway," I told him.

"I don't think we will," Matt said.

"I'll get him out," I repeated. "You wait and see."

"I'm waiting," Matt said as I was halfway out of the door.

I got him out, all right. Or at least I had something to do with it. . . .

I came out of the gym and went over to meet Norah Wellington, the girl who was wearing my pin. I had a date to

take her to lunch. If I said that Norah was the best-looking girl on the campus, I would be doing her an injustice. She was far and away the best-looking girl on the campus; she was also the best-dressed, the best dancer, the best— But you get the idea.

She was waiting for me on the steps of the Administration building, as she'd said over the phone she would be. It was the first day of registration. I saw her standing there, and I had that old feeling—always when I see her.

She came down to meet me. "Honey," I said, "you aint faded a mite. In fact, I'd say you'd blossomed some, though last spring I wouldn't have thought you had room for improvement."

"Not bad," she said. "Not bad. Did you make that up yourself?"

"Mostly," I admitted. "Hungry?"

"Starved," she said. "And the cafeteria isn't open yet, so we'll have to go downtown."

We started off. I made a few remarks about this and that, football for one thing.

"Speaking of football," Norah said. "I met the fabulous Lew Workman this morning."

"Fabulous?" I asked, and I didn't try to keep the scorn out of my voice. I was sick of hearing of Lew Workman.

"Well," Norah said, "they say he was quite the lad on the gridiron in his day."

"I'm going to try to get him out," I said. "We'll see if he's so cockeyed fabulous, if he doesn't dog it like he did when he was here before, and refuse to come out."

"He asked me for a date," Norah said, two-fifths demure.

I laughed. "He's no shrinking violet, anyway," I said. "And he can recognize a good thing when he sees it. What did you tell him?" I figured the question was purely rhetorical.

"He's taking me dancing Thursday night," Norah said.

She must have seen the look on my face, because she went on quickly: "I told him about you—about us. And he said he didn't see how you could be jealous of anyone as unprepossessing as he was. He said he knew a place that had a splendid orchestra, and that you couldn't be running around at night anyway—that you were in training. He said," she finished, "that you really ought to be grateful."

I didn't say anything. I tried to look unconcerned but I knew I wasn't doing a very good job. "I'll see Mr. Workman," I said.

"Now, don't go get impetuous," Norah said. "And anyway," she added, "he's too small for you to play tough guy with."

"I won't hurt him," I said contemptuously. . . . I never spoke a truer word.

I waited till Friday. Then I went up to the registrar's office and looked up his address. He was living with some people he had stayed with before, way out at the edge of town. I borrowed a car from the one guy at the house that had one, and tooled out, Friday afternoon. I got there at four o'clock. I went up and rang the bell, and he let me in himself.

I sized him up. He wasn't very tall, about five ten, I guess, and he looked as if he might weigh a hundred and sixty. I found out later I was wrong about his weight. In fact I was wrong about almost everything about him. He was twenty-six or twenty-seven. He had an oval face with heavy eyebrows that slanted up. It gave him a sort of impish expression. His shoulders weren't very wide, kind of sloping.

HE invited me into his room, and I went in. I came right to the point.

"I'm Ralph Robertson," I said. "I'm football captain down here this year, and Matt Wood is anxious for you to come out. I told him I'd come see you."

"That's not why you came to see me," he said, and he sat down and lit a cigarette. "Matt knows it wouldn't do any good for you to come to see *me* about going out for football. You came to see me because I had a date with Norah Wellington last night."

"All right," I said, and I was talking tough, "if you want to put it that way, you're right. You're too yellow to come out for football, I guess, but whether you got a stripe up your back a mile wide, I'm gonna look you up and bat you around if I ever hear of you dating my girl again."

"But that," he said, and he had a sound to his voice as if he were talking to a two-year-old kid, "is Norah's business, don't you think? It's amusing," he went on, "that anyone as conceited as you are could be jealous of a person like me. You must have an inferiority complex. Perhaps a good psychiatrist could do something—"

I cut him off. "You can throw that stuff when I'm gone," I said. "I just came to tell you what I told you." I started to leave.

"But wait," Lew Workman said. "I have a date with Norah to take her dancing next week-end, so perhaps it would be—er—more convenient for you to bat me around, as you put it, now. I don't have my dueling pistols," he said with an irritating grin, "so that we could make it really according to Hoyle." He took a drag off of his cigarette, and his eyes crinkled up in a still more condescending smile.

"You won't keep that date," I said grimly. "You've got a few brains."

"I never stood a lady up in my life," he said. "And I must tell you that I'm really thinking of your own good when I suggest that you bat me around now. You might hurt your hand," he went on, "or something. And next week you must be in the pink for dear old Eastminster. You have a game, next week. Or had you forgotten it?"

He had me seeing red, all right, by that time. I shucked off my sweater. "You begged for it," I said. "Come outside."

He laid his cigarette down, carefully knocking off the ashes. He didn't put it out. "The back yard," he said, "will furnish privacy. There's no one else home." I waited for him in the back yard, getting madder all the time as he took off his jacket and carefully folded it on the step.

"Now," he said, "Papa spank." He put his hands up negligently and sauntered in.

I stabbed a quick left at his nose and whipped over my right in a beautiful one-two. I felt my right wrist hit his back as he ducked my left, and then a jack-hammer drill hit me four times in the left eye, a pile-driver caught me under the heart, and then somebody slapped me with a full swing on the chin with a two-by-four.

I was in good shape. I got up. The blood was in my right eye, and I couldn't see, but I walked toward the place he ought to be, trying to swing. My hands felt very heavy. "Don't be a fool," I heard his voice say softly, and I turned. I had been going the wrong direction.

"I wondered where you were," I managed to mutter, and I changed direction and went on in; my left fist hit something, and then there were a lot of lights.

I CAME around, back in Lew Workman's room. He was sponging out a cut over my eye with alcohol, and the burning brought me around. I noticed, foolishly, that the cigarette in the ashtray wasn't burned down yet.

"You're a game kid," Workman said when he saw me open my eyes. "Please hold still."

I tried to get up, but he pushed me down easily. "I wouldn't have cut you,"

he said apologetically, "if I hadn't forgotten to take off my ring."

"How did I get in here?" I asked. My brain wasn't functioning very well yet.

"I carried you in," he said. "You're quite heavy."

"Let me go," I said. "Let me up." It was gall and wormwood, and I wanted to get away from there.

He slapped a little bandage he had fixed, over my eyebrow, and I got up and staggered to the door. I couldn't think of a thing to say, but back in my mind I must have felt that if I could get him on the football field somehow, I could get even with him. I said what I said when I first came in: "Matt would like to have you come out for football. He said we could win the Conference, maybe, if you came out and were as good as you used to be. I still hate your guts," I went on, "but I think a lot of the school. I'd like to have you come out too."

"I told Norah last night," he said, "that I was coming out. She too seems to feel right strongly about the honor of dear old Eastminster. I hope I'm not a disappointment."

I went down and got into the car and drove back to the house. Happy Welch met me at the door. "Who owns the brass knucks?" he asked, innocent as Jesse James.

"There may be a guy around here can take me," I said, "but it's not you. I don't want to hear any cracks from anyone that's not feeling like backing 'em up." I walked on upstairs and went to my room and lay down on my bed. "This will be all over school tomorrow," I thought.

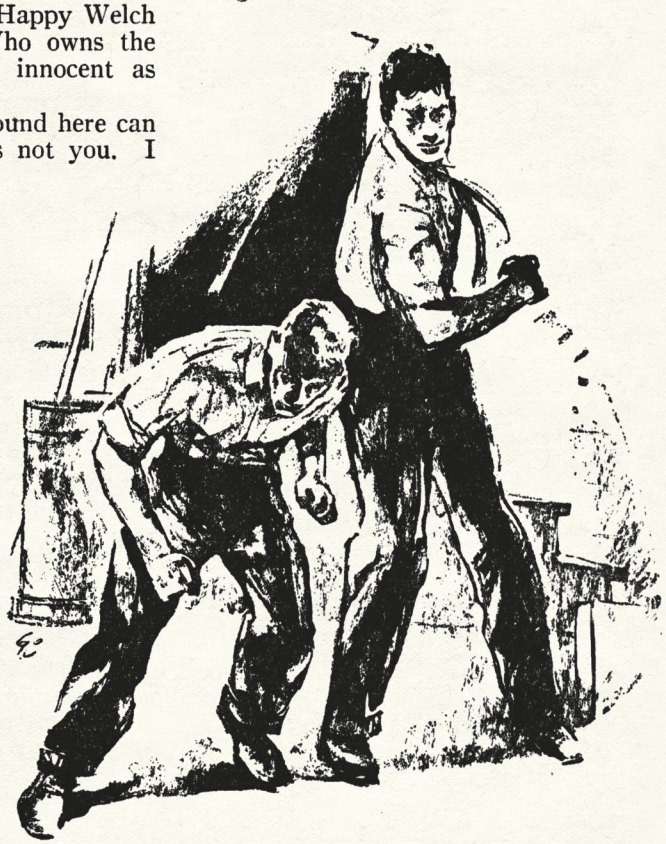
But I was wrong. Lew Workman never said a word. Nobody knew who handed me that lacing until I told them myself, and by that time considerable more water had flowed over the dam.

LEW was out on Monday. I couldn't help but grin when I saw Matt's face as Lew came down from his fifth-hour class to the gym and asked for a suit. Matt opened his mouth a time or two, but no words came. Finally, though, he got something out. "There's a catch in it," he said. "There's a catch in it. You've got a wooden leg."

"No," Lew said. "I've probably slowed up some, but that'll be just old age. I'm sound of limb."

I went out with Matt. "I don't want to sound as if I'm trying to tell you how to handle your own business, but I don't think it's such a good idea to carry on so over this Workman. He'll get swell-headed, and we won't be able to do anything with him."

Illustrated by
Grattan Condon



Blood was in my right eye and I couldn't see. "Don't be a fool," I heard his voice, and I turned. I had been going in the wrong direction.

"Who owns the brass knucks?" Happy asked. "There may be a guy around here who can take me," I said, "but it's not you."

Matt looked at me for a long minute. "No," he said. "*He* won't get swell-headed."

I gave Matt a sharp look, but his face was innocent. I said: "Well, he's out for football, isn't he? I went over and talked to him."

"Did you?" Matt asked dryly.

"Yes," I said defiantly, "I did. And," I went on, "I see they've got Roper and Bill Hardley eligible over at Freedmen U., and they are in our Conference that we're gonna win so easy now that the great Workman is out for football."

"I may have popped off a bit fast about winning the Conference," Matt said, and he sounded a little contrite. "But Lew Workman played a lot of football for me one year."

"This is another year," I told him.

I KEPT a pretty sharp eye on Workman when he came out. Matt had him do a little punting and passing and limbering up, and I've got to admit that when I was working with him, going down on passes, he laid them in there like nobody else I had ever seen before, and that didn't make me like him any more.

He didn't kick the ball a mile, when he was punting, but he was a spot kicker; you could tell that. He was already under the shower when the rest of us went in. And then I saw.

He was a horse of different color when he was stripped down. His body was thick and compact. He must have weighed a hundred and eighty. He had big hands on him, and the legs of a sprinter; and when I saw his forearms and his wrists, I didn't feel quite so bad about that beating he had given me. You could tell he was a fighter, just looking at him. I looked closer at him then, and saw that one of his ears was just a little thicker than the other, and that he had an anchor tattooed on his right biceps.

By the end of that first week he was running some signals with the first team, and Matt had him in there for the last quarter of the first game. And then I found out that he was really great. He had a head on him. We were ahead fourteen to nothing when he came in, and when the game was over, we had pushed over three more touchdowns. And it was Lew Workman that did it: I'll have to admit that. He felt around for weaknesses, and he found them. He ran plays quicker than anyone else I had ever seen call signals, and he had the imagination and the nerve of a really great field general.

I checked his signals twice, and both times he meekly followed my suggestions. And I was sour both times. He whipped me two perfect passes for touchdowns, took out two men for me, once on an end run, and never carried the ball once. But I knew he would start every other game that season.

Matt jumped me after the game about checking signals. "I put my quarterback in there," he said, "to run the team. I don't care if you're captain and All-American three years running, I don't want you questioning my quarterback—ever. I may have a low-grade moron calling signals, but what he says goes."

I saw Lew in the shower. "I see you popped off to Matt about my checking your signals," I said. He looked sort of nonplused for a minute, and then Happy Welch behind me said:

"Matt asked me what the delay was in those two huddles, and I told him." I turned around. Happy looked surly and determined. Happy—my roommate!

"I scored four touchdowns, didn't I?" I asked. "I'm still captain of this team, I guess. I didn't think those two plays were right." I turned my back and didn't say anything more. Half the team had heard the last of my remarks, but nobody said a word.

Things started going sour then, though I didn't realize for a month that that's when it started. We barely pulled through the next four games, and they should have all been easy. If I hadn't been going red-hot, we would have lost

the last one. As a matter of fact, Happy Welch jumped me up about it.

It was in the shower after the fifth game. Lew Workman hadn't undressed yet. Happy and I were the only ones there. "What did you think of that run?" I asked. I couldn't help feeling pretty good about it. I had intercepted a pass and run ninety yards for the only score of the game.

"Sweet stuff," Happy said, plenty sarcastic. "You intercepted a long fourth-down pass on your own ten-yard line. If you had batted it down, we'd've had the ball in the middle of the field."

"Middle of the field!" I said. "I *scored* off that play."

"Yeah," Happy said. "Lew gets over there, being fast in the head, and cuts down a couple guys for you, or you would've been tackled before you'd gone ten yards."

"And it would have been a nothing-nothing tie," I said, sarcastic as he was, now.

"Ah, no," Happy said. "We had plenty time. Lew would have figured out something."

"Lew," I said. "Lew! That's all I hear. The great Lew Workman! Well, let me tell you this: This is my fourth year out there. Lew Workman was too damned independent even to come out when he was a junior. He wanted everybody to beg him or something; and then when they didn't beg him hard enough, he got sulky and wouldn't come out. The lousy tin-horn—"

Happy cut in. "Yeah," he said, "that's a fine way to talk about a guy who has fed you into high scorer for the Conference, blocked for you, carried you—"

Lew Workman came in the shower. I didn't know whether he had heard or not. He didn't have any expression on his face.

"Nice run, Ralph," he said. I turned my back on him.

WE went all to pieces after that. Played a little team out of the Conference and got beat fourteen to nothing. But it wasn't my fault. I played my heart out on defense, backing up the line. But they wouldn't shake me loose on offense, and we didn't have a passer. Lew Workman wasn't in that game. He was sitting on the sidelines with a wrenched ankle.

And the next game he still wasn't in there. We played a nothing-nothing tie. I was raging. My own line wouldn't let me gain, and I wouldn't let this other team score. I backed up that lousy Eastminster line that day. Freedmen U. had beaten this outfit twenty-eight to nothing the week before. There would be no gold footballs for the Eastminster team that had elected Ralph Robertson captain, and I didn't give a hoot.

I had trained; I had stayed in shape. I had lost my girl; I didn't give a damn about anything. Hardly anybody on the team was speaking to me. Matt Wood was sticking the same line-up in there, grimly. He didn't have the reserves to do anything else. We had Freedmen U. coming up next week for the last game and the Conference championship. I came out of the gym after that nothing-to-nothing tie, and ran smack into Norah Wellington. I hadn't called her since she had had her second date with Lew Workman.

"Hello," she said, just as if I had been over to see her the night before. "I want to see you for a minute."

I was pretty well whipped down. "Have a look," I said, but I felt that old funny feeling that I always had when I saw her.

SHE fell in step beside me. "I hear there's some dissension on the team," she said. "I even hear that you are getting downright unpopular."

"You hear right," I told her.

"The last two games," she said, "—they don't look so good, with Freedmen coming up."

"Your boy friend," I said, "has been injured. But he'll be back next week. Lew will pull us through. The great Lew Workman will pull us through."

I looked down then, and it was dark, but it looked for a minute like Norah had tears in her eyes; but her voice was steady.

"No," she said at last, "he won't pull us through." And she paused a minute, then went on: "He's not my boy friend, and he won't pull us through. But I used to know a fellow that *could* do it. I was very fond of him." She turned abruptly then at a corner on the campus walk, and disappeared down a cross-walk in the gloom.

I walked home slowly, thinking. . . .

Lew Workman started that game, the way I said he would. Matt put him up beside me on defense, playing a two-two-one. He wasn't as big as I am, and he had an ankle taped stiff, but he

backed up his side of the line, and they didn't throw any passes over him. I'll give him that.

And he played 'em canny, too, when he was calling signals. Twice he caught a halfback coming in too fast, and both times he threw passes that would have been touchdowns for me against any team but Freedmen.

But my line wouldn't shake me loose, and they tossed that big Roper at our line, and they shot that Hardley off our ends until we were dizzy. And this Roper was a bull. He hit the line like a big rock rolling down a mountain. And every time he hit that line of ours, he had a hole. But Lew and I stopped him. We stopped him, and we stopped him; but he finally scored. And on the play he scored on, he scored right over me. I missed him cold. Lew came over and picked me up.

"That guy aint tough," he said. "He's just ugly. I should have got him."

Which was a lie. And I told him so. "You're a good guy," I said, "but a poor liar." I took his hand and shook it. I felt like a heel.

WE went in down seven and nothing at the half, and I finally had it figured out. But I waited till five minutes before we went out before I went into my act.

I got up, then, and spoke my piece. I knew finally what Norah had meant.

"We got a great team down here," I said, and I held my voice level, dead level. "Best football team I've ever seen. Greatest quarterback I've ever seen, a great center in Happy. I've roomed with Happy going on four years: now we're not speaking. We got Ross and McKay, couple of great guards. We got Emerson and Wilson, a couple of great tackles. We got two great ends. We got a bunch of boys sittin' on the bench just as good. We got plenty backfield men—good ones. In fact, we got too many backfield men. We've got a space louse, and a poor sportsman and a general heel for a fullback and captain. That's the catch. So I'm quitting. I want you all to go out there and go to town. I want you to win. I want you to win bad enough to sit on the bench and watch you." I managed a grin then. "And as you know how I love my headlines, you know how bad I want you to win." I grabbed up my headgear and beat it out on the field and sat down on the bench. The end of the bench.

In a minute the Eastminster team came out. They looked more dejected than ever. I noticed then that Lew Workman wasn't going out on the field.

He came and sat down by me.

"Ralph," he said, "I want to tell you something."

I started to ask him why in heaven's name he wasn't out there, but he stopped me.

"I used to be like you," he said, "—too proud. When I had to spend my afternoons grading high-school papers in order to make my way through my junior year of school, I didn't tell anybody. I had been a good football-player. Everybody thought I wanted the campus to play. I thought that if they didn't give me credit for having a legitimate reason for not playing football for the school that I loved, I'd see them in hell before I'd tell them anything. It made a miserable year for me, and I finally chucked it and joined the navy. Then I got out of the navy, and my—and somebody I loved very much was going to school here, and she suggested that I come down and finish.

"I had the money for that then. I came. She wanted me to pass judgment on you. I jockeyed you into a fight and won from you. . . . I made you the Conference star. I fed your natural conceit after I had knocked some of it out of you. I deliberately disrupted the team and made your team-mates hate you. I knew you were game when I fought you; but I never knew you had the—the moral courage to do what you did today. I won't go back in unless you go too."

"Let's go," I said. "You took a Grade A heel and made me—made me—" I caught the catch in my voice and grinned. "This football game is nothing. But if it can be pulled out, let's try and pull it out."

MATT WOOD didn't even look in our direction. "Robertson for Johnson," he said. "Workman for Redding. . . . You can always hock a gold football for a fin. Get in there now; you might need a fin some day."

We went in.

"Well, Norah," I thought, "you get what you deserve: somebody who loves you more than he loves himself." It made me feel sick in a way, but it made me feel clean—the way a dead game sport would feel, I guess.

The game? The game isn't important. We won the game. A kid, a sophomore

"I knew you were game, when I fought you," Lew Workman said, "but I never knew you had the moral courage to do what you did today."

by the name of Hale, ran wild. He had holes in the line you could drive a wagon through. He was a great star. We beat Freedmen twenty-one to seven. I never carried the ball. Every time Lew called my signal, I checked them. They never made a first down in the second half, Freedmen didn't. It got to be sort of fun, slapping that big Roper down, though three-fourths of the time he never got by the line of scrimmage. And the way Lew turned that kid Hale loose, it was a revelation.

There was a lot of hilarity after the game, everybody shouting in the shower and cutting up and having fun. I got dressed in a hurry. I wasn't having fun. I was thinking: "'Somebody I loved very much suggested I come back and finish.'" I hadn't been thinking much during that second half, but I couldn't help thinking now. I didn't feel much like a sportsman. I felt like a sick kid.

I came out of the gym and ran into Norah. You'd have almost thought she had been waiting.

There was a big bonfire going over on the field. The student body of Eastminster, small but elect, was having fun. The light from the fire shone clear over here. It was a big bonfire. I could see Norah quite distinctly—well, pretty distinctly.

But I tried a little longer to play that I was a sportsman.

"Hello, kid," I said. "Lew told me about you-all. I give you my best. He's a grand guy. He knocked hell out of me one time; he must be a grand guy."

Norah said suddenly, and her voice was tight: "What did he tell you?"

"He told me," I said, "that he loved you very much—that you asked him to come back."

She laughed. I thought it damnably cruel of her.

"That's right," she agreed. "I asked him to come back and put you through the mill. I wanted to see how you'd come out. I knew when you didn't start the second half, how you'd come out. It was a cruel thing for me to do, but I had to know, Ralph—because I'm going to marry you."

"But—" I said. I tried again—same results. On my third *but,* she stopped me.

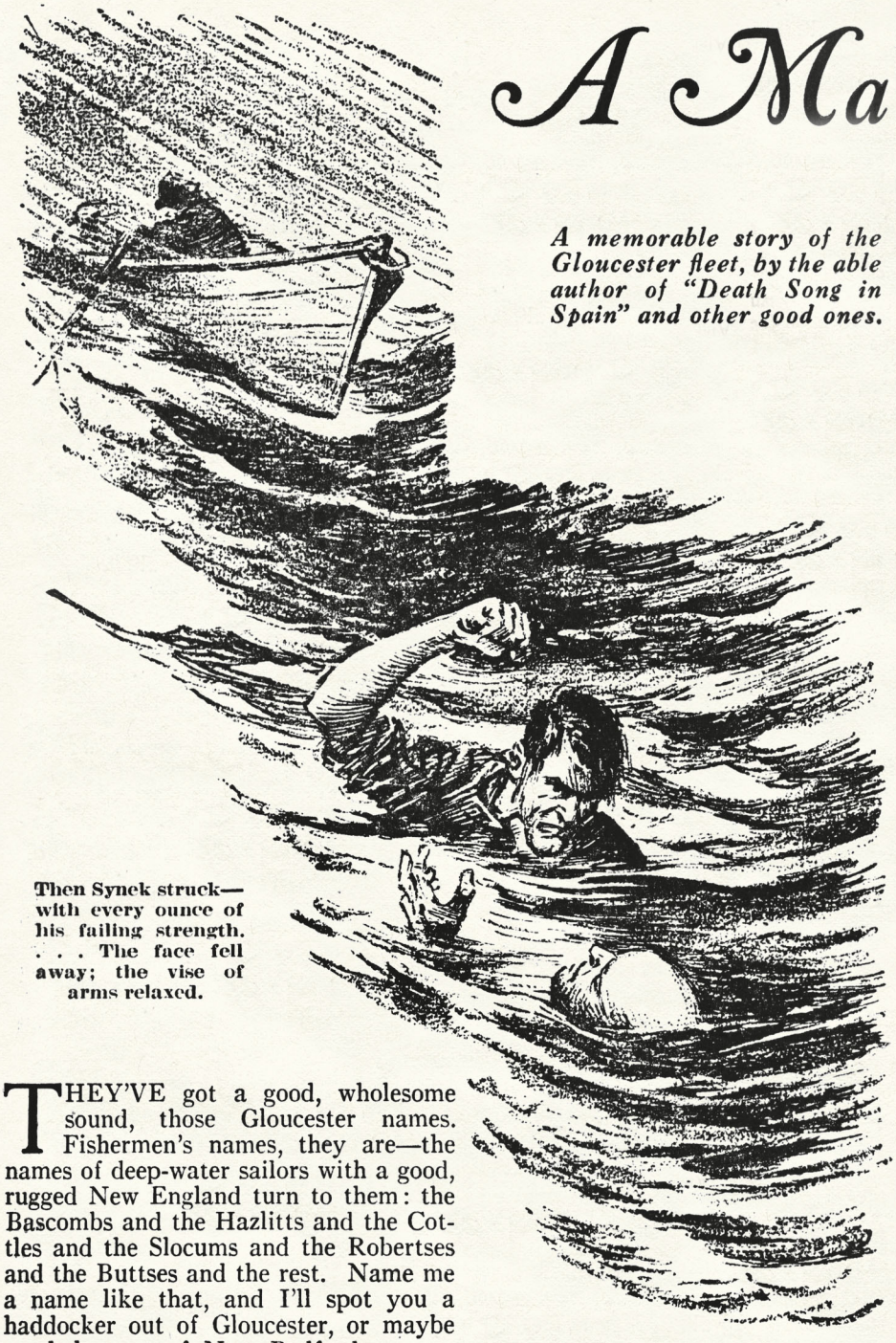
"He's my brother, silly! My half-brother, rather. He has a nice left hand, hasn't he? He was heavyweight champion of the Fleet."

I STEPPED back, fortunately against a tree, and I stood there. "Beautiful!" I said. "But not half so beautiful as his sister, God bless him!" I stopped a second. "Had I thought last September that you could be handsomer at Thanksgiving than you were then, I'd not have been able to stand it. In fact," I finished, "I *can't* stand it." I let go of the tree. I couldn't see a thing—smoke from the fire, I guess; but I started groping. I got a pretty good left hand myself. And my right's not bad either.

"It's much more practical," Norah said after a long time, "to have a man for a husband instead of a boy."

A Man

A memorable story of the Gloucester fleet, by the able author of "Death Song in Spain" and other good ones.



Then Synek struck—with every ounce of his failing strength. . . . The face fell away; the vise of arms relaxed.

THEY'VE got a good, wholesome sound, those Gloucester names. Fishermen's names, they are—the names of deep-water sailors with a good, rugged New England turn to them: the Bascombs and the Hazlitts and the Cottles and the Slocums and the Robertses and the Buttses and the rest. Name me a name like that, and I'll spot you a haddocker out of Gloucester, or maybe a whaler out of New Bedford, or one of those hard-fighting, unsung saints of the sea who put out of Edgartown after swordfish.

That's fine. That's easy. But what about this Synek fellow? Whoever heard of a Gloucester fisherman called Synek? . . .

All right; I'll tell you a story about a Bascomb—old Cap'n Jo Bascomb, erst of the *Josiah B. Simms;* and a Hazlitt, too, who is "Peaceful" Eb Hazlitt of the *Mary Simms,* and first master of the Simms fleet. But my story is about this self-same deep-water haddocker called Synek, and if it isn't a good Gloucester name today, then something is wrong with the way we judge men. A bohunk name, you'd call it? Listen!

You might see Peaceful Eb Hazlitt in the flesh today; but you'd never get

Came Out of the Sea

By FULTON GRANT

Illustrated by Louis F. Grant

the story of Franz Synek out of him, nor how that "bohunk" got to be mate on a schooner of the Simms fleet. You'd have to go to old Cap'n Jo Bascomb for that yarn; and even then you might not get it, because Cap'n Jo is pretty proud of Synek, the sailor. Proud? To hear the old man tell it,—when he takes a notion,—you'd think he had a hand in the business, which he really did not. Peaceful Eb Hazlitt did it—Peaceful Eb, and fate, and the sea; it's all a part of the epic history of Gloucester and the greatest fishing fleet in the world.

But get acquainted with Peaceful Eb. Even today he stands five-feet-eight on two barrels of legs, and nearly as broad as he is high too; and he would balance two hundredweight of iron on the scales with his own bulk of bone and muscle and downright good nature.

Peaceful Eb Hazlitt was a powerful man then, five years back, and he has not slipped back any today. Cap'n Hazlitt, he is now, but he was Cap'n Jo Bascomb's mate on the *Josiah B.* then, and the greatest all-round haddocker in the Simms fleet. Bald of head, is Eb, save for a little fringe of curly yellow hair that looks like a doll's wig, and red of face. His voice is soft, and so is his temper, whence the name "Peaceful"; and there is a gentle firmness about him that shines easily out of his eyes. But the jaw of him tells you about the great heart inside. That belongs to a fighter—a fighter, not of men but of elements. Read about wars and their heroes; read about adventure and lion-hunts and men pitted against men; then go off, for the good of your soul, and ship on a Gloucester haddocker and get a first-hand lesson of what the gods of storm and water can do to a mere handful of humans, embarked in a man-made toothpick with a few rags for sail. Go and see. Go with these men to their work in the churning caldrons off the Georges or Havre or St. Peters or Quero, and see how men can rise to heights of bravery that defeat the telling.

Five years back, it was. Last run for Cap'n Jo Bascomb and the old *Josiah B.* Men and ships grow old. Ships, being man-made, age and die with their makers and masters. Insurance-companies are not sentimental; they won't take risks on ships that reach the *Josiah B.'s* age. And the Simms fleet was putting in new-fangled vessels with auxiliary motors and mechanical gadgets; the Simms Company, like the insurance people, deals in fish, not sentiment. And when the *Josiah B.* was finished, her master was finished too. Cap'n Jo was nearing seventy.

SO that trip was Cap'n Jo's last run; the last, too, for his ship. He did not whimper; none of your tear-squirting old mariners, not he! But Cap'n Jo had pride, and his pride was to make that run—his last—the very best on his long, fine record.

Nobody expected trouble. Why should they? Those were good, loyal men in his crew, and they loved their work. Loved Cap'n Jo too, in their unshowing way. But trouble began on the very first day's run. It had, in fact, begun before they put out of Gloucester, except that no one knew it. Trouble clambered over the side and went aboard the *Josiah B.* at night, secretly, and hid —an unhandsome specimen, this youth, what with that bullet-sear across his face that increased the pinched, twisted leer on his lips, and that haunted self-pitying look that had grown on him in months of constant dodging. Dripping and cold, he found an empty keeler, and hid in it, with no plan in his head and no hope in his soul.

Not a man of the crew suspected. Who, after all, would stow away on a haddocker? A fair question, that. . . .

Straight tack of one hundred and thirty-five miles, and no weather in sight. Cap'n Jo's last run had a fine beginning. The watch was short, and most of the crew were playing cards or reading in the fo'c'stle. Mate Hazlitt—Peaceful Eb Hazlitt—had a cribbage duel with

the Old Man while the Second stood watch; and night shut down caressingly.

Two bells: Mate Hazlitt, going to relieve the Second, stepped into the galley for a "mug-up" of coffee. But he looked in vain for Pete Judd, the cook; he even called him. But there was no answer; and when Eb pushed out onto the deck, he stumbled over a body, limp and inert.

That body was Pete Judd, the cook.

NOT dead, was Pete; but not well, either. His skull was near cracked, blood was dribbling from his mouth, and there was a great welt over his temple. Eb Hazlitt has quick sense, and so it was only a minute before he was lifting Pete and pouring down whisky from Cap'n Jo's locker into his mouth.

"Whar'd he go? D'you find him?" asked Pete in that clipped speech that fishermen use, and when he could sit up he told Eb the story.

"Jes' walked into my galley, he did, an' lammed me over the head. Didn't say nothin', neither. 'Twa'n't none o' the crew, an' 'twa'n't nobody I ever seen. Jes' a young feller, he was, an' no kind of a sailor man, neither, jedgin' f'm his clothes."

"Hmm!" said Peaceful Eb. "Queer."

The mate took himself into Cap'n Jo's quarters and reported a stowaway on the *Josiah B. Simms,* which was the queerest part of it.

"Never heered o' no sech thing," stated the Captain; nor had anyone else. Stowaways do not, as a rule, favor sailing ships in these days of steam-driven greyhounds, and least of all, fishing schooners. It is doubtful if in all the hundred years of history of Gloucester fishing a true stowaway has been reported on a haddocker. Stowing away implies the desire to get somewhere without paying passage. The insurmountable obstacle to stowing away on a haddocker is that haddockers do not go anywhere at all except to the Georges Banks or Quero or to some other destination which is merely a large, rough, uninteresting area of solid seawater, marked upon the charts, and without any tourist inducements. Furthermore, such vessels return whence they started as soon as they are full of haddock, and therefore the essence of purpose in stowing away is shunted.

Freak or not, however, there was a stowaway on the *Josiah B.*, and it required no more than a half-hour of searching for the crew, who knew their ship, to locate him in his keeler.

"Keeler" is the technical name given to yard-square boxes into which fish are eventually piled when caught and ready to dress. It is not quite a magnificent cabin. It is not quite the ideal of passengers, stowaway or otherwise. Bluntly, it reeks of fish—dead fish, long-dead fish. And to hide away in a keeler is, undoubtedly, almost an heroic thing.

Nevertheless it was in just such a stifling, stench-filled box, covered over with another inverted empty keeler, that a handful of the *Josiah B.'s* men found their stowaway, uncomfortably curled up and in clothes which had once been citified and costly but were now wet and odorous.

"Keep away, yah punks!" came the man's voice, in a manner of speaking quite foreign to Gloucester and haddocking. "Yah better keep to hell away from here, or I'll let yah have it, see?"

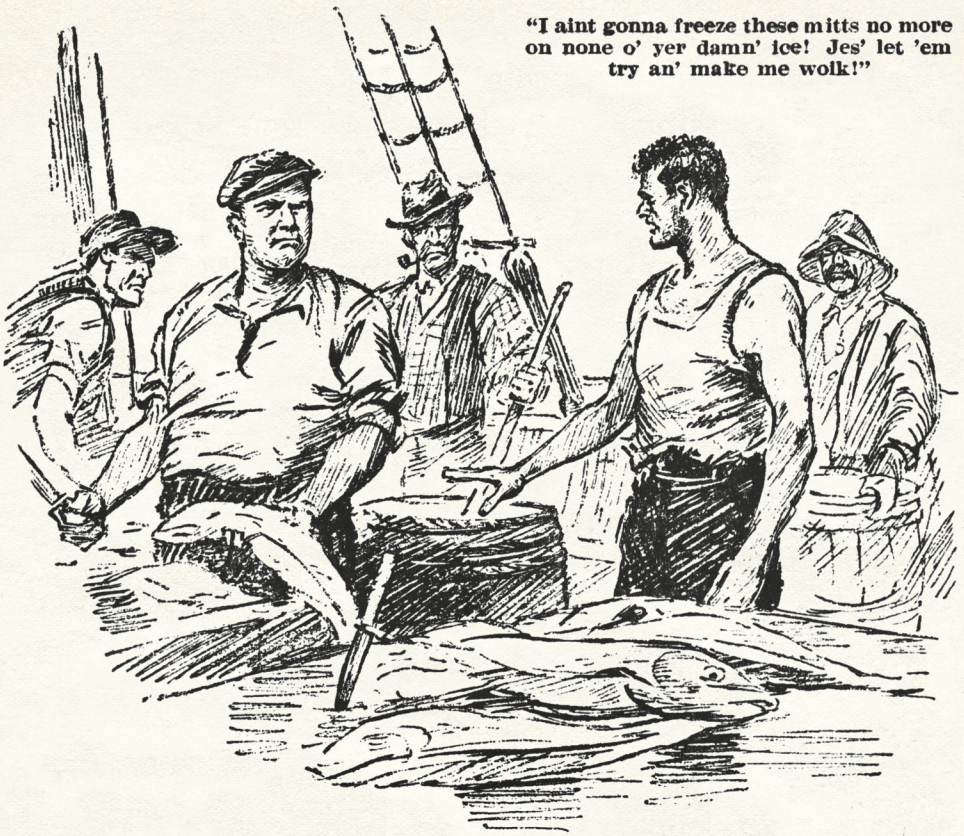
"It," we may suppose, was a discharge from the revolver the man carried threateningly in his hand. Black, ugly revolver; black, ugly scowl on the man's face. Shoving back the inverted stowbox that formed the upper half of his cabin, the man held them at bay. Not through fear, precisely. They were not afraid. Merely practical, they were; merely prudent. Revolvers are not a part of haddocking experience; nor is coping with such weapons a portion of a seaman's prerequisites. And more, the man himself—scrubby, unshaven face, the fresh welt across it flecked with blood, the dull eye of cold, applied egoism—was a type beyond the knowledge of those men.

HE stepped toward them, surly and leering.

"So, yah found me, hey? An' what yah goin' tuh do about it, hey? Yah punks!"

What, indeed? They had no answer to that. Their silence was no answer. But they saw their answer approaching, which this man could not see, and so they waited. No, the man could not see behind him. He was too conscious of his own insecure feet on a moving deck that changed its plane with the will of the sea under it. He was too conscious of the power in the little black thing in his hand. He could not see Eb Hazlitt, barefooted, moving up from abaft the pile of keelers, checking the search-parties as a mate should.

But a wave took the *Josiah B.* across her beam, and the wind leaned hard on



"I aint gonna freeze these mitts no more on none o' yer damn' ice! Jes' let 'em try an' make me wolk!"

her canvas, and that instant's lurch of her deck was enough to toss this gun-brandishing landsman off-balance. That same instant a hand reached out from the shadows and closed over the man's revolver, quietly and without effort removing it from his grasp. Another hand found his armpit, powerfully, and the man was suddenly lifted clear of the deck as by a derrick. And then he was flung his length, sprawling and cracking his surprised head against a davit, dazed and unnerved.

Peaceful Eb Hazlitt's voice said, quietly:

"Cal'late you won't be a-needin' thet there toy, Mister. Goin' to be purty busy now. You kin set there if you're a mind to, an' cogitate, or you kin come along of me, quiet an' peaceful."

The mate gave a little motion which dismissed the three men of the search-party, grinning. Then he picked up the sprawling fellow with his hands, kicking, swearing, struggling, and dragged him aft to Cap'n Jo Bascomb's cabin, as a nurse might drag a naughty child.

A kindly man at heart, was Cap'n Jo, but gruff and sharp and roaring. Seventy years of voicing commands and opinions (for we may believe that he began such voicing in earliest infancy), and fifty of them spent in roaring against a sea-wind, had given him lungs which rivaled a steam whistle in power. The roar of his voice was enough to disconcert and quell even this surly stowaway, or if not, the powerful arms of Eb Hazlitt made every attempt at violent effort useless.

The interview must have been an experience to such a man. Before a police court he was at home. His kind were strong, did not "spill," defied the slow, inadequate machine of the law, demanded their "mouthpieces," sneered in silence. But this was no court of law; this was a ship in midocean with Cap'n Jo Bascomb doing the questioning and Eb Hazlitt doing the holding from behind —holding and shaking and twisting an arm if necessary. And there was no mouthpiece.

SO he talked. Not willingly, not even pleasantly, not without profanity and sullen distaste. But he talked:

He was, he admitted, from New York. His name, he said, was Franz Synek—"Mitt" Synek.

"Yah can see it in the papers if yah look," he said.

He was, to employ his own neat expression, "on the lam." He told a strange story about trucks and whisky and the Canadian border and opponents which he called "tha Feds," all in a language which was entirely foreign to Cap'n Jo or any other Down East fisherman.

"Yeah," he said, "bootleggin'—yah get me? They spots us jist outa Pittsfield, see, an' they toins on tha heat. Me, I take a powder, see? I scram. One of 'em creases me in the pan, like yah see, but I gets away. Only I aint got no luck, see? I get a wreck. Yeah, I smash tha truck, but I aint hoit much, so I beat it. That's how I hit Gloucester, see? So las' night I take a dive, see, and I swim to yer boat. Tough, hey? How tha hell do I know you aint goin' no place? How tha hell do I know youse punks is fishin'?"

CAP'N JO may not have understood all details of this recitation, since the jargon was distinctly foreign; yet he did grasp the general idea. Plain duty, as he saw it, was to turn this man over to the authorities. Yet plainer duty was to catch haddock; and on a haddocker there is no room nor time for prisoners. Cap'n Jo was a fair man—he made a fair offer.

"My man," he said, no longer bellowing, "you can take your choice. Either you work with my crew to pay your salt, and behave yourself, or else you stay down below-decks in the hold."

Work!

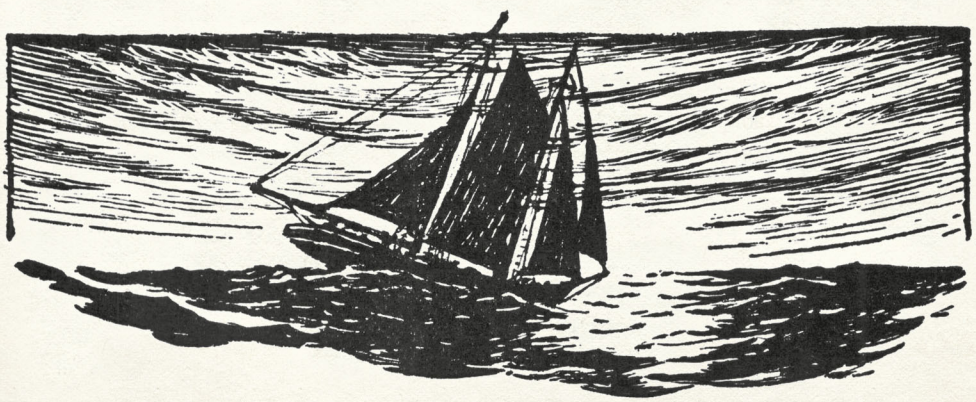
"Woik!"—as the man Synek phrased it. "Yah mean yah wanna make me mess around with fish on this tub? Gees, what a laugh! Listen, you mugs: yah aint got what it takes tuh make me woik, see? I'm sittin' pretty, see? You can't toss me in tha lake because that's moider, see? You gotta take me back, an' you gotta feed me. Woik? Gees, guy, you're nuts!"

And he would have seated himself in the Captain's chair with a swagger, except for Eb Hazlitt's strong hands. Those hands, however, lifted him clear of the seat and dangled him in the air and carried him out of the Captain's cabin. Those hands carried this surly tough mobster down into the store-hold, there to repose in the utter dark amid hundreds of tubs intended for the packing of fish. And there Eb Hazlitt locked him. He returned with Pete Judd, the cook, to supervise the bringing of tinned salmon, bread and water for the preservation of the man's health; but he listened not at all to the profane complaints which Synek already howled at him when the bulkhead opened and closed.

The seas did the rest. . . .

Toward midnight Cap'n Jo changed his tack and took a westerly course. Weather was now to be expected, and weather there was, directly. A stiff blow came from the northeast, and the *Josiah B.* behaved like any good Gloucester schooner and took her seas riding high. To her crew, hardened by years of such sailing, it was just another night's run; but to the man—the tough gentleman—in the store-hold it was something more than an ordeal.

A fine night's run. Morning saw the schooner lying off the Georges; but the dawn brought a sizable squall which burst with that astonishing fury of maddened waters against a thing of wood rashly venturing to challenge the sea-gods. Cap'n Jo fought for position, but the sea was boiling, and thirty fathoms of water is too little under you when a squall hits. So into the wind he threw her, and brought her to, waiting for the storm to lessen. An old story, this, to



Cap'n Jo Bascomb and his men. Fearless, but you don't take foolish chances with thirty seamen's lives.

BUT there was another responsibility, unwanted, it's true, in the store-hold, and that responsibility began to give voice as soon as the *Josiah B.* headed into the wind.

From below decks came a scream—not a yell but a scream, plainly if weakly heard by all. There was no malice but much amusement in the faces of the crew, and there was a quaintly amused smile on the face of Peaceful Eb Hazlitt as he went below and unlocked the bulkhead.

Synek, the tough, lay sprawled on the false deck of the hold in agony. Hard-boiled Mitt Synek was sick—with that nausea with which Mother Ocean chides man-children who are not accustomed to her ways. Sick, he was, and retching. Groveling, he was, and beseeching mate Hazlitt to take him out of that dark, stinking hold.

Would he work? He would.

"Oh, gees, guy—gees, have a heart! Lemme outa here! Fer Gawd's sakes, guy! I'll woik—sure, I'll woik. I'll do anythin', only lemme outa here."

"You keep your eye on this feller, Eb," was Cap'n Jo's order, "and see if you can make a man out o' him, which I doubt me."

That sentence began it. The clean air of the sea, the spume and the pelting rain wiped the nausea from Synek's pinched face, and he followed Eb Hazlitt to this unfamiliar thing he called "woik."

Peaceful Eb tried: Told him things—ropes and lanyards and bights and stays and gaffs and other fundamentals of the haddocking-sailing trade he tried to make clear to him. He urged the other men of the crew to "keep a weather eye on thet there feller," to watch him and to help him. Not in an hour or a day is a seaman made.

The storm broke up toward three that afternoon. Cap'n Jo put about once more and made back to the Georges. Good fishing was ahead, and the order to bait-up came bawling across the dock. The man Synek, included in the orders, was furnished with a knife, and joined the hands in cutting up frozen herring for the trawling lines.

Have you ever carved frozen fish, in freezing mist—on an open deck in a choppy sea? With no respite, no recess, no varying your motions? No, you pay your twenty-cents-the-pound for your haddock without a thought to the men who bring it to you—without a care for their torn hands, their leathered skins, their aching muscles. Their job to fish; yours to buy and to savor. And now that the sickness of the sea was not on him, this monotonous labor became a maddening persecution to young Mitt Synek, gangster-bootlegger, who was hardened only in his soul and not in his muscles. It dimmed for the moment even the memory of that reeking hold.

About him men worked in silence—cheerful, useful, accustomed, and ignorant that theirs was a hard lot. Who aphorized that there is no suffering and no poverty until you point it out to the sufferers? . . . Their very silence and submissiveness infuriated Franz Synek. "Punks," they were. "Dumb punks! A bunch o' saps tuh woik like that. Gees, what a bunch o' saps!"

And so he revolted.

Flinging down his knife with a clatter on the deck, and flinging an oath into the astonished men's faces, he revolted.

"Whaddya t'ink I am, hey? I aint gonna freeze these mitts no more on none o' yer damn' ice, yah bunch o' punks! T'ell wit' yer lousy woik, I say! I wouldn't make a nigger woik like that. Jes' let 'em try an' make me woik!"

The crew's faces were as frozen as the fish they cut. Their livelihood was those fish, and time was short. They heard but ignored him.

Mate Hazlitt saw his gesture—saw him squat down on a hox of herring, saw him puffing his cigarette, saw the knife rolling useless in the scuppers. Quietly he rolled over to this man, retrieved the knife and handed it back, saying:

"Them there haddock is running, Mister. Git to work. Smells pretty bad down below-decks in the hold."

Then he turned his back and rolled off again, ignoring the black hatred in Synek's face.

But Synek went back to work. There was something compelling in Hazlitt's face, his quiet manner—and his remark about the hold.

TIME for only one catch that night before dark would shut in and blot out the dories. Fast work, hearty work. They dropped the boats over. They manned them, two to a dory. Eb Hazlitt's strong hand guided the man Synek

to the rail, held him steady on the ladder, crawled past him and held the dangling, tossing thing for him to swing from. No simple trick it is for a landsman to man a dory in a choppy sea. You don't always swing down from davits; there aren't enough davits for ten dories. And when Mitt Synek's foot missed the pitching gunwale and he swung wide, dangled, yelled in sheer fright, it was Eb Hazlitt's powerful arm that reached out and lifted him free of danger.

Two men to a dory, but three in Eb Hazlitt's, one not counting. What good was he to fishing men? They didn't trust him with an oar. They couldn't use him on the trawl-line.

"Set still, now, and you might learn you somethin'," was Eb Hazlitt's laconic command; and the man Synek had only to obey, sullenly, disgustedly.

Good catch!

Eb Hazlitt hauled line in the bow, gaffed the ganglings as they came up on the hooks, freed hooks with a never-missing twist, drew the line clear and through for his man in the stern to cast free. Synek watched him. There was an uncertain amazement even in his sullen mind. Cruel, punishing work, it is. Your hands are bare. No gloves on that job. You beat them on the gunwales between hauls to keep them from freezing. Many a haddocker has lost fingers, even whole hands, in the bitter cold of winter from this trivial unsung labor of trawling for Mr. Landsman's Friday dinner.

Good catch. They sculled in, loaded to the gunwales. They fought a sea, sheering off the bobbing dory from the dangerous sides of the schooner by skillful prodding with the oars. They hauled and dumped and filled the keelers with flapping fish; and still the work was but half done, for haddock must be ripped and gutted and dressed and stowed, and the decks cleared for the next catch.

DRESSING is everybody's job—even Cap'n Jo joined one of the gangs. The race was on; group against group, a race of deft fingers against time. Reputations are built that way. Haddockers are proud of their speed and skill at this lowly task of gutting and dressing.

And this very thing caused the trouble.

The man Synek was squatting on deck with Eb Hazlitt's ripping gang, not that he mattered. And in spite of him, it was Peaceful Eb's men who finished first. Usual, that was, for Eb had a talent for working and leading workers that was famous in the Simms fleet. And when, some five minutes before the others, the men stood up, dripping fish-blood and slime and beaten with fatigue, ready for their coffee, Cap'n Jo Bascomb made the regular inspection of the stow-boxes.

Then came the explosion.

The fresh-caught fish were packed in ice and stowed, but Cap'n Jo discovered several boxes containing untouched, undressed fish, and his furious roar rang out over the ocean.

Every man on the *Josiah B.* knew the answer. That was no mere accident. This man Synek, the landsman, the surly stowaway, had passed his fish through untouched.

Silently Eb's crew went back to work, losing their race, lowering their pride. Not a word was said to Synek; but now his knife worked again with the rest, not sneaking them through this time, but ripping and gutting his fish, while Cap'n Jo stood over him. Eyes covered him. But not a word was spoken.

THIS meaningless, useless work done, the men shuffled away to the galley, silently indignant, but restrained as is the manner of the Down Easter. Synek too would have followed them, but Eb Hazlitt's arm lay on his shoulder, and his strong hand spun him around.

"Mister," said Eb's quiet voice, "you an' me, we're goin' to have a kind o' understandin.' Cal'late I got to expatiate to you the fust principles o' decency."

Synek laughed. This kind of thing he knew. He faced the mate, bristling, resentful, defiant, saying:

"Yeah? So what?"

Soft, gentle, chiding, was Peaceful Eb.

"You aint a man, Mister. You're a pig; thet's what you be. If them there fish hed got through to the dock thet way, Mister, this here crew would 'a' lost their shares. You cheated, Mister. You cheated honest men out o' their honest gain."

Coarse laughter from Synek.

"Aw, yah bunch o' saps!"

"Ef there's one thing on this here ship that's holy, Mister, it's fish. I got a mind t' put you back in thet there hold where you'll get good an' sick for a piece, but maybe there's some piece o' man left inside thet dirty carcass o' yourn, an' I'm goin' to find out now. So put up your hands, Mister, an' take care o' yourself."

Synek spat. This was his stuff. He put up his hands, weaving back into a crouch like a trained boxer. Then, before the bigger man could move, he had hit Eb Hazlitt three times. Smack! Crack! Smack! His own game, this. Learned on the East Side, where kids have to fight. If you can't fight, you can't sell papers. Ring-champions come from there—not from our fishing fleets.

PEACEFUL EB bled—bled slowly from the mouth. But he stood still, his great fists stiff, awkward, slow, almost pathetic. Twice more Synek's lightning jabs ripped his face, and then the younger man came tearing in, cutting the fisherman's flesh, chugging into his middle, slashing, ripping, grunting with the joy of the very effort. This was Synek's chance. He would show them now! But Eb Hazlitt only hunched his shoulders a little and watched, making no effort to defend himself.

The next few minutes were terrible. Compared to the slow, muscle-bound sailor who had never fought in his life save against wind and storm, this hard-eyed youth was a master. His flying fists cut the mate's face to ribbons, tore his body, welted his skin, bruised his muscles, flayed him and beat him and rained upon him from every angle and every direction. Men crowded to see, came running from the galley, came to help, would have killed this surprising terrier who worried their mate and idol.

But Eb Hazlitt shook his head and they let be. Like a human Gibraltar, Peaceful Eb stood stock-still and took it. Led, as they say, with his chin. His eyes half closed, his face unrecognizable, blood streaming from him, he took that barrage of knife-like fists, weathered it calmly and with a good-humored grin on his lips.

Synek was puzzled, as who would not be. This was a new thing to him. What kind of a man would stand there, defenseless, and let himself be cut into bacon strips? And puzzled, he drew back, breathing fast from his own exertion, unafraid of those big, hamlike fists that never moved, but puzzled. Wondering.

And while he was wondering, one of those same fists that had only pawed the air vainly, moved—moved slowly, not as a blow, but merely seeming to push. Short, it was, and slow; but the fist broke through the younger man's guard as through twigs, brushed away those practiced hands, and apparently pushed—against Synek's surprised chin.

That was all.

It was all over.

Peaceful Eb Hazlitt turned away, wiping his fingers across his eyes, while Synek, the tough, lay sprawled on deck, quivering, then still. Eb turned to the men who stood watching, awed, and said:

"Thet's too bad. Guess I shouldn't have done thet. 'Fraid I must 'a' lost my temper. Jest a young feller, he is. You men see if he's bad hurt."

Then he rolled away and went below.

"Bad hurt," indeed, was Synek. His jaw was fractured, and it was no small business for Cap'n Jo to splint that jaw and tie it fast. But inside of the man Synek was another hurt—a new hurt, that spelled release from unfathomable things, a hurt that cures.

Complex is a human; and it was a complex human called Synek, born a gutter-rat, steeped in the lees of slums, flux of a fermenting race—Synek, who had never had that thing we call "a chance," who had possessed only what he could take—that complex Synek it was who sat in the darkness of the fo'c'stle, alone, and contemplated a puzzle.

NIGHT passed and day came; and the man Synek, the gangster, sat alone upon a box, watching the men at work. Idle, he sat, and none could read his thoughts. Even Cap'n Jo Bascomb, who had never in his fifty years at sea seen a man sitting idle when haddock were running, saw him, swore, and could not read his thoughts. A barnacle, he was, useless, unwanted.

The crew came in that evening with the last catch, broke into their dressing gangs, and went deftly to work. Synek, with his face tied in cotton, watched them, uneasy. Then, with a grim jerk of his body, as if forcing its motion with all his will, he straggled over to Eb Hazlitt and favored the big man with a surly remark.

"Hey, mug, gimme a knife too."

The man said that; and Peaceful Eb, his own face patched and bruised, replied gently, "Why, shore, Mister, here you be," and handed a knife up to the reluctant but waiting hand.

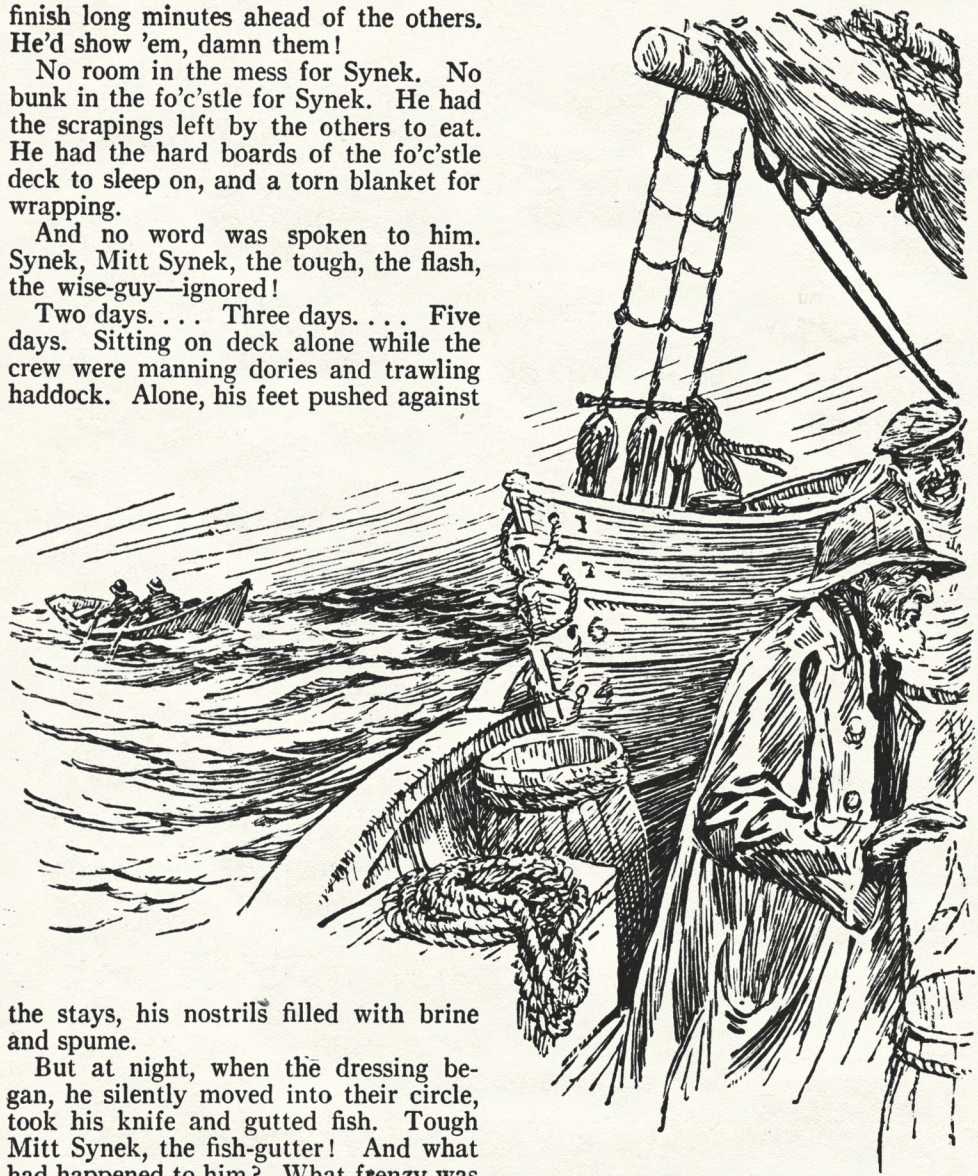
Synek ripped fish. Synek gutted fish. Synek imitated the motions of the other deft hands. *He* knew, if the others did not admit it, that it was *his* help and effort that brought Hazlitt's gang to a

finish long minutes ahead of the others. He'd show 'em, damn them!

No room in the mess for Synek. No bunk in the fo'c'stle for Synek. He had the scrapings left by the others to eat. He had the hard boards of the fo'c'stle deck to sleep on, and a torn blanket for wrapping.

And no word was spoken to him. Synek, Mitt Synek, the tough, the flash, the wise-guy—ignored!

Two days. . . . Three days. . . . Five days. Sitting on deck alone while the crew were manning dories and trawling haddock. Alone, his feet pushed against



the stays, his nostrils filled with brine and spume.

But at night, when the dressing began, he silently moved into their circle, took his knife and gutted fish. Tough Mitt Synek, the fish-gutter! And what had happened to him? What frenzy was in his fingers? In his knife? He was showing skill, and his skill brought Hazlitt and his gang—eleven men to the gang, now—constantly to the finish of their boxes before the others.

So there was grumbling. Naturally.

"'Taint fair. 'Taint nowise fair. What chancet hev we got with him workin'?"

And Synek knew they grumbled, so his grin was there.

"Punks!" he muttered inwardly. "Them guys is all punks! I kin make monkeys out o' them mugs! Watch me."

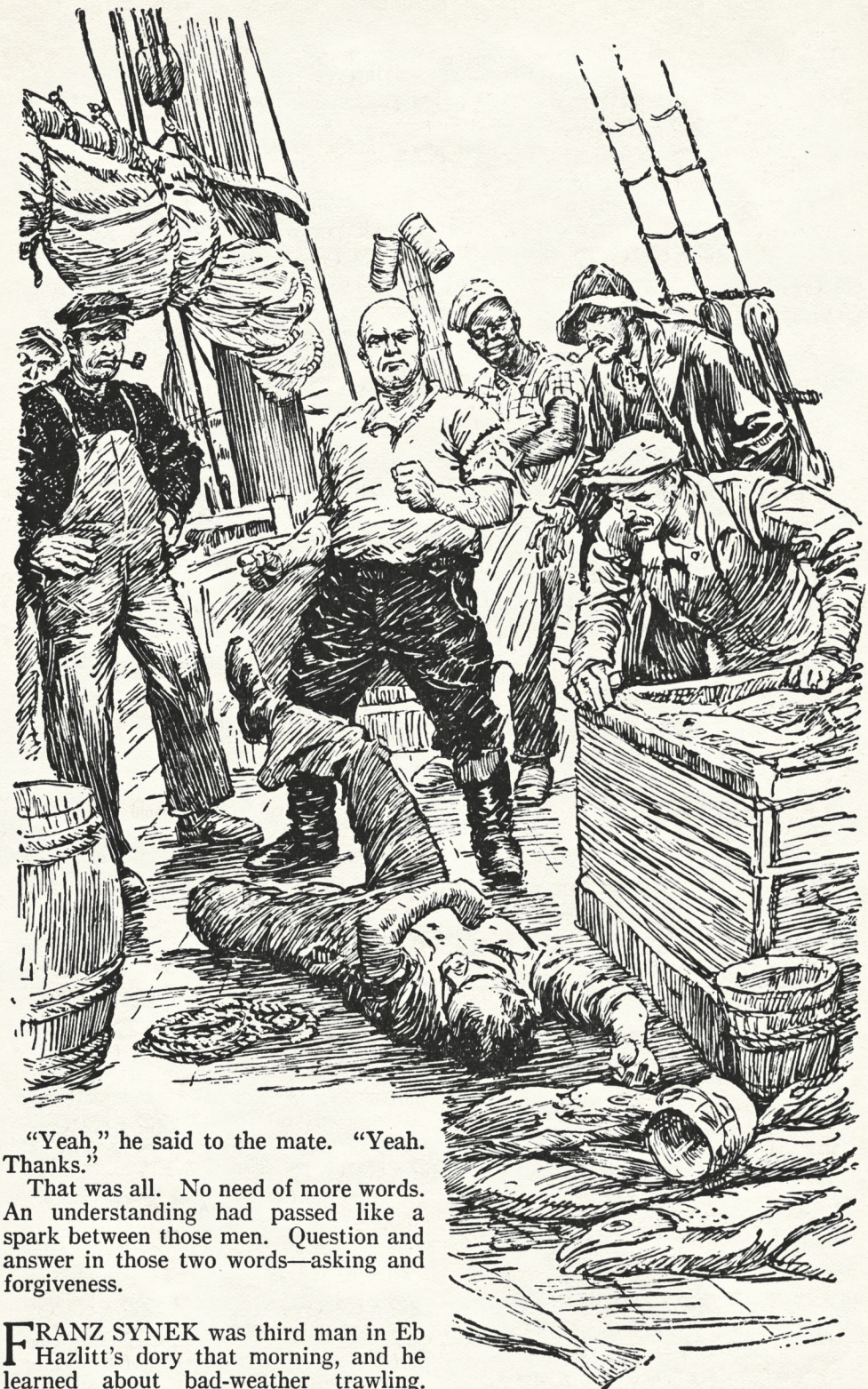
But it was not to be. Next night, when he came to take his knife, there was no knife for Synek. Eb Hazlitt only shook his head and motioned him back to his lonely seat at the stays. He understood. Synek understood. There was no need of talk.

"Tha dirty mugs! Tha punks won't give a guy a chancet!"

But in the morning, when the men were going overside into the dories to haul in the last day's catch, Peaceful Eb rolled over to the man Synek and faced him, looking down at him with his clear blue eyes.

"Cal'late you might like to take a hand, today, Mister. This'll be the last day out. Come along of me, if you've a mind to."

Synek stood up. There was a straight, keen look in his own eyes which had not been there before.



The mate's fist broke through the younger man's guard as through twigs, and pushed—against Synek's chin. That was all; it was all over.

"Yeah," he said to the mate. "Yeah. Thanks."

That was all. No need of more words. An understanding had passed like a spark between those men. Question and answer in those two words—asking and forgiveness.

FRANZ SYNEK was third man in Eb Hazlitt's dory that morning, and he learned about bad-weather trawling. Not a squall, exactly, but the wind was whipping the sea into milk, and any of your pleasure craft, your sleek-hulled racing sloops, your fair-weather dingh-

ies, would have stowed canvas and battened down and laid to. But Gloucester men have work to do, blow she or blow she not. . . . Overside, dories—overside, men! Baited hooks on fathoms of line to ply in that skillful fashion so little known or understood by you gastronomes of filleted haddock. And in that dory, that mere chip on the high-seas, a young tough named Synek was learning about toughness, learning the feel of sea-fighting, learning those deft movements that turn death into risk, and risk into daily labor.

An hour or so; and then—it happened.

ALMOST unbelievable, it was. Since boyhood, Eb Hazlitt had plied the trawling lines, acquiring skill that was now legend in the Simms fleet. But suddenly, when a wave lifted their twenty-foot toy boat and threw his helper in the stern off-balance, wresting the oar away from his controlling hand, and whipping the heavy dory broadside in a second's flash—then, at that instant, skill served him not. The tugging line with its hooks doubled back, just as Eb was jerking a hook from a gangling's mouth. The barb ripped the flesh of his hand and lodged in bone. The jerk of his reflex to sudden pain, timed only too perfectly with the next wave which hurled the boat into an impossible angle and dropped it again into a valley of water —that jerk threw his poise awry. Line fouled. Man lurched, reached at nothing—sprawled over the gunwales and was washed up in the flood.

Those things happen fast. The helper had recovered his oar, was straining to throw the boat's prow into the sea, while another wave washed big Eb Hazlitt thirty feet beyond reach.

"God! He's not a swimmer. Stand by there, you!"

That cry was born by the wind into the ears of Franz Synek. That cry had agony and astonishment—agony for the struggling man in the stern, astonishment for Synek, the East River waterdog, to whom swimming was part of childhood, a game of marbles or tops or fly-cop. But it was true; Eb Hazlitt could not swim. On the sea, not in it —that was his trade. Many sailors are like that. Swimming is a seaside privilege; a sport, not a trade. Working sailors like these men have never known the beaches at Nantasket or your Narragansett Pier. But the little urchins of New York's East Side—the Syneks, the bohunks, the wops, the micks—they had plunged off the East River docks to the distress of policemen since they were ageless.

The oarsman's cry was still in the wind when Franz Synek made his dive. Heedless of his still hurting jaw and of the lashing waters that tore at it, he was suddenly akin to these men, fighting with them, fighting for them. His body was tussling mountains and sliding down valleys from whose depths he could see neither boat nor man.

No finished swimmer, Synek. No technical skill of crawl or trudgeon, but strong with frantic effort, he flayed the ocean with his young arms, returning buffet for buffet and blow for blow. From the pinnacle of a wave, searching, he saw only a hand and a blond-fringed bald head. He slid down from that pinnacle into the abyss in four frenzied strokes. Another blow, in its fury, hurled a ton of water over him as the stiffening wind whipped up the sea. Through it he fought, and into it, tearing at it and biting it, blinded and weakening.

Then his hand struck a solid—fumbled it, struck again. Clutched it. The solid struggled, fought, kicked. It grew into a human shape which Synek could only feel and not see. A powerful vise clamped upon his shoulder, paralyzing his strokes. He fought free of it. Shook himself—reached again for the body.

And then, right there before him in the water, was a face. Was it the man Hazlitt? Could a human face become altered and maddened and diseased with the insanity of panic to that degree? Was this the face he had hated, had cut with his fists? Somewhere he had heard of the panic of drowning, of strong men whose strength is done. Life-savers tell of those things; newspaper reporters love to dwell upon them. And the sight of that almost inhuman face gave him a new strength, a new pride, a new courage. No panic in Synek. He would show those mugs, by God!

GRIPPING hands closed about his neck, convulsively clutching at life. Terrible they were, and he kicked out against them, without release. Powerful legs wrapped themselves about his body, and a great leaden mass of flesh and bone, electrified with human terror and death, dragged at him, pulling him down. Black water closed above him. The human vise at his throat tightened insanely, and the strength was ebbing from him.

He'd show them, the punks! He'd show this dumb punk. The might of the ocean's surge hurled them both upward again into the spume and the damp air. He saw that face, leering in the half-life on death's brink, pressing to him.

Then he struck. With every ounce of his failing strength, Franz Synek struck that face that hung there next his own, struck a short, cruel, chopping jab to the point of the jaw.

Relax. . . . The face crumpled and fell away. The vise of arms relaxed. The body floated away from him, riding down the wave's mountain-side. He surged after it—grabbed it, clung to it. He struck out feebly with one arm, holding with the other. A wave burst over him, smiting his face, beating him down. He fought on. Another wave exploded over him, and blackness absorbed him.

FRANZ SYNEK, bohunk, street-urchin, petty crook, tough, booze-runner, gangster—Mitt Synek, that surly, soul-poisoned jetsam, speed-truck guy of the Petrone mob—was on his back.

The pain in his fractured jaw was dull and throbbing.

It was hard underneath him—hard and bruising to his bruised body. There was a noise of voices about him. Babble. Confusion.

Something lifted his head: a hand.

Something touched his lips: a bottle.

Something flowed into his unresisting mouth: warmth and liquid fire that flowed into his soul.

Light grew and waxed brighter as he drank, more friendly.

A voice said: "There you be, there you be. . . . Easy, now, don't choke yourself, Mister."

Another voice said: "Thank God, sir, he's comin' round."

And another said: "Put him in the fo'c'stle. . . . Give him my bunk. Easy, now. He's hurt bad. Altogether now, lift him—*u-u-u-up* she comes! By J'osephat, thet there's a stout feller, you betcha, else he'd never held on, I cal'late."

And so the voices. They lifted him, but he could not open his eyes. They carried him, but he was still blind to them. They set his body down on softness—delicious softness. Hands loosened his clothing. Hands tenderly touched him, bathed him with touches. Voices buzzed about him.

Then his eyes came open, and he could see their faces: Hard, dirty, grimy, weather-worn faces of simple men. "Punks," he had called them. "Saps." "Dumb clucks!" He could move now. He could move, painfully. He could try to sit up. Hands lifted him. E-e-e-easy, now, feller!

He was on a bunk in that queer-shaped room where he had found rest only on the floor. The sailor faces about him were new, friendly and new. Same faces, but new. There was embarrassment—his and their embarrassment. Deep-water men are not much at fluent expression. Their world is a physical world, a world of hands, not of mouth. Their hands talked for them—touching him, a little roughly, crudely, patting him, not without comfort, on the back.

"Thet there was pretty—stout—what you did, Mister."

And he heard his own voice say: "Where's that guy—Hazlitt—the mate-guy?"

"Who, Eb Hazlitt? Oh, *he's* all right. He'll come around. Most 'a' drunk mighty near half an oceanful o' water, though. If 'twa'n't fer you, Mister, he wouldn't never 'a' lived to tell it, neither. Got his feet fouled in the trawlin' line, he did. Not much of a swimmer, neither. Cal'late we owe you so'thin', Mister, seems like."

Relax. . . . Gray dark. . . . Sleep. . . . Franz Synek slept. It didn't matter now. He had shown them, the punks! He had shown that mate-guy Hazlitt, the mug. . . . Sleep. . . .

The *Josiah B. Simms,* oldest schooner of the great Simms fleet, made her homeward run before the wind, with the seas chasing her merrily, without accident or incident, with a happy crew and a happier master, with her hold filled with haddock and her deck piled high with crammed boxes—a great catch, a record catch for her last run.

CAP'N JO BASCOMB, oldest master of the Simms fleet, checked his course toward Gloucester and his coming pension with the satisfaction of an aging man who has put years of solid, satisfactory work behind him. But he was troubled—troubled and baffled. For the first time in his life of seventy years, he was baffled about his duty.

Mate Hazlitt sat uneasily in the Captain's cabin, studying the insignificant pattern of a worn carpet, listening to the staccato, clipped speech that rumbled from his superior; and in his own turn, he was also baffled.

"It don't make no difference what this feller's been an' done, Cap'n—'ceptin' maybe murder."

"Thet's just it—murder. I aint got no right to go deprivin' the law of a murderer. We don't know nothin' about him."

"I'd ask him, hisself, Cap'n."

"Think he'd say?"

"Cal'late."

"Then bring him here to me."

Franz Synek, in dungarees—Franz Synek, ex-gangster, now in dungarees and sea-boots, with a coil of rope dangling from his hands, and the scowl gone from his face, and a bright, eager, youthful eye, came to the summons and stood before Cap'n Jo Bascomb, saying:

"Yessir. Yah sent for me, sir?"

Cap'n Jo, who had never faltered in fifty sea-years, hesitated. Then he said:

"My man, I've got my duty to do. My duty as a citizen is to hand you over, soon as we make port."

The man Synek stood straight, but the light faded from his face.

"Yeah," he said. "Yeah. I guess so. Guess I can take it."

Silence. Then, the Captain:

"What they want you for?"

"Bootleggin'."

"Thet all?"

"Yeah. Aint it enough?"

"I read in the paper about you gangsters an' booze-runners killin' folks all the time. You aint killed nobody?"

"Nossir."

"Sure?"

"Yessir."

"H'mmm."

Silence again. Then the Captain:

"I hate like pizen to turn you over, my man. Hate to see a man who done what you done, go to jail. Now I was just wonderin'. If you sign the articles on the *Mary Simms,* Eb Hazlitt here'll give you a berth as an ordinary, an' there aint no policemen goin' to look over a haddocker's papers to find a bootlegger. Eb Hazlitt's master o' that new Simms schooner, jest as soon's we make port. You won't make no easy money. You won't hev nothin' but hard work, an' pretty small pay. You've seen haddockin' aboard this here ship, an' you know what 'tis. So I'm tellin' you to make your choice. Maybe it'll be better'n jail, Mister."

Young Synek's face brightened.

"Gees, Cap!" he said. "Gees, I'd like tuh—be on a—ship wit' that mug—that guy Hazlitt."

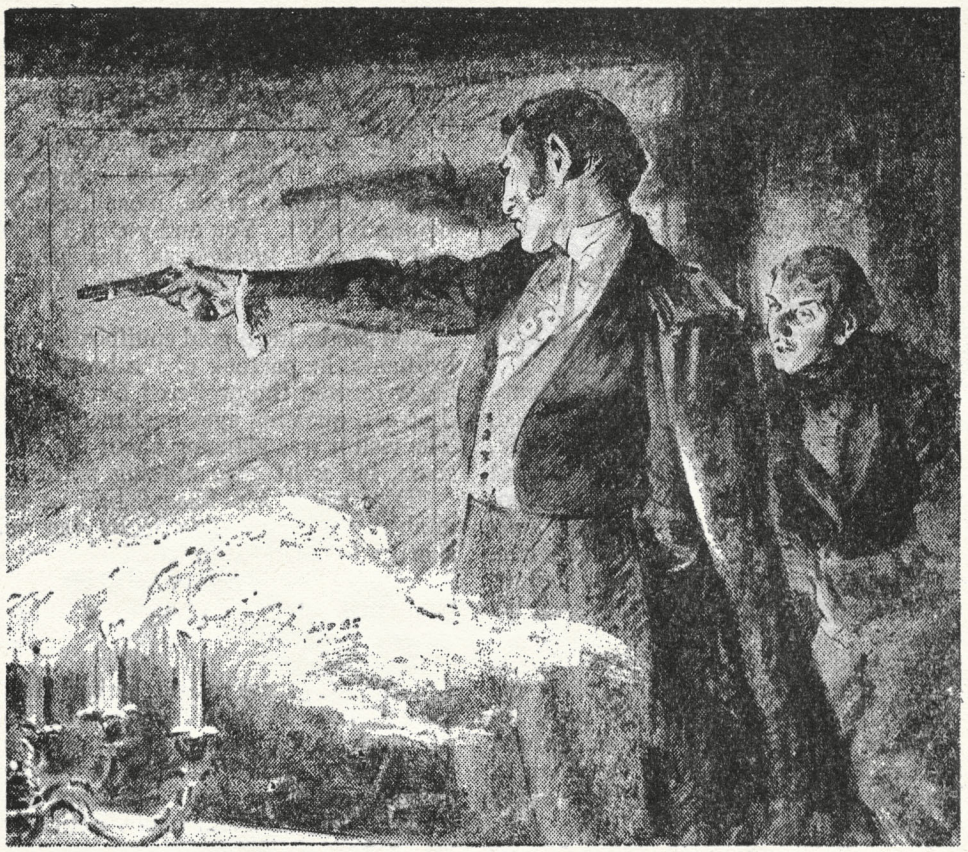
ARMS

XXIII—"COPPER FOIL," based on the invention of the percussion cap, is one of the finest stories in all this series.

I SUPPOSE nothing can be more disconcerting than to set down a story of actual happenings, knowing that the majority of readers will scoff at it, some will read it with interest; perhaps a few will regard it with thoughtful approval. However—

You may be unfortunate enough to know how suddenly and sharply toothache can make itself felt and heard. This happened to me in Philadelphia, in the Year of God 1936. It happened hard and fast, and I went out of the William Penn hotel like all possessed, to get that tooth taken care of, so I could go about my business.

I found a dentist, named Yoakum, but instead of grabbing his tools and going



Shaw did not lift his weapon; Sir Peter pulled the trigger.

and MEN

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

Lithographs by Peter Kuhlhoff

to work, Dr. Yoakum insisted on an x-ray and all *les convenances* of his profession. However, he was a good talker. Further, he went hunting every fall Still further, he was a great student of firearms and weapons.

"I've seen those Arms and Men stories in Blue Book," he observed cheerfully while we were waiting for the x-ray. "And my opinion is that you need a trifle of help from me."

"Correct," I said. "That's what I'm here for. Get after that tooth, I tell you!"

"All in good time," he rejoined. "Do you know that on the site of this office-building once stood the house in which Joshua Shaw lived, in the year 1818?"

I fear that I damned Joshua Shaw in no uncertain terms. Yoakum disregarded my comments. On the tray below his infernal machine he placed a little glass box, in which lay a tiny copper disk, and pointed to it with a flourish.

"While we wait for the x-ray photograph," he said, "look at this bit of history. It came out of Shaw's house. He made it himself. In my reception-room are two of his sketches; he was an artist, you know, and a famous one. Came over from England in 1814 and became a citizen here. And this tiny invention of his, I assure you, changed the entire history of the world."

"That?" I rejoined, incredulously. "That little disk?"

"Precisely that. It is one of the first percussion caps ever made."

"Oh!" I exclaimed with real interest. "I remember now, a man named Shaw is said to have invented them; but claimants are numerous. He's merely one of many."

"No; he was the actual inventor," Yoakum rejoined. "His claims were later recognized by the Government and fittingly rewarded. . . . Hello! Here are the films now; yes, that tooth will have to come out. No doubt about it."

"Confound it, I told you that twenty minutes ago!" I snapped. He laughed, the diabolically gleeful laugh of his ilk.

"Well, well, just relax and let me put this over your mouth. You breathe deeply, now, and just think about other matters. About Joshua Shaw, for example. You know, he was a handsome fellow, about forty-two at the time, and his house one of those charming old places so common in the Philadelphia of that day. You can imagine him, after his painting was done and dinner past, retiring to his workshop—a room lighted by candles, of course, for he held to English notions and could not abide whale-oil lamps."

That soothing, monotonous voice could make me see the place. The silver candelabra lighted the work-bench, the flood of yellow light throwing Shaw's face into high relief. A handsome face, proud and strong and humorous at once; a man to tell a hearty story or sing a rousing song over the port.

HE looked up from his work, as the door opened and his daughter Eliza entered, a girl of seventeen, her eyes wide and round, a flush in her cheeks.

"Father! That man has come again, that Englishman."

"Oh-ho! Send him in, my dear, show him in by all means!" And laughing, Shaw picked up a long dueling pistol from the bench before him, and snapped the trigger. There was a flash, a sound, and the girl hastily retreated. She ushered in a tall, swaggering man very lordly in his fine ruffles and blue broadcloth, a beaver hat under his arm, who removed his gloves and shook hands heartily with Shaw.

Dark, fierce features lit by an eager smile, a dangling gold watch-fob glittering like his dark eyes. Shaw set a chair for his guest, his shrewd gaze probing.

"So the beau of London town finds my house a haven from the crudeness of this former colony," he said, half jesting and half sober. "Welcome, Sir Peter Hawkins! If you came about the portrait, it is not yet finished."

"Not about the portrait, egad!" said Sir Peter. "This adopted country of yours is devilish crude, indeed, but you lighten it a bit. You and yours, I should add. A most lovely lass, this Eliza of yours. 'Pon my word, she's won my heart!"

And producing a gold snuffbox set with brilliants, he partook of the brown dust. Shaw refused the proffered box; and his deep-set, questing eyes darkened a trifle. The visitor was glancing about the workroom, his swift gaze missing nothing.

"D'ye know, Mr. Shaw," said he very affably, "I hear a ship is leaving very shortly for the old country; I may be forced to cut off my tour and return hurriedly. D'ye think I could have the portrait on short notice?"

SHAW, for some reason, looked almost relieved. Perhaps he had not missed the flush in his daughter's cheeks, her bright eyes, or the affected carelessness of her mention of "that Englishman."

"Why, yes, on a few hours' notice," he rejoined.

"Excellent, 'pon my word. There's a hundred guineas." And Sir Peter tossed an embroidered purse on the workbench. "What's this? May I ask what sort of work you're at here? Pistols, eh?"

"Aye; fired by a percussion cap."

"And what the deuce may that be? A pistol's a pistol, the world over."

Shaw laughed. "It won't be, one of these days. You know, I suppose, about the Scotsman, Forsythe, who adapted fulminate and found it could be used in place of any priming and flint?"

"I've heard some silly talk about it, yes," said Sir Peter. "A lunatic!"

"On the contrary, a very shrewd man. I've carried his idea farther, but have for some years been not too successful. You see this?" Shaw picked up a tiny copper disk and held it in his palm. "Here is a cap. A pinch of fulminate compound enclosed in metal, which explodes on impact of the hammer and fires the charge; the cap fits over the hollow nipple—thus." And taking up a pistol, he put the cap in place, pulled trigger, and laughed at his visitor's quick astonishment.

"I've tried tinned iron, steel, pewter and tin for these caps, and have now found copper the most satisfactory; cop-

Shaw looked up from his work as the door opened. "Father! That man has come again, that Englishman."

per foil, rather," he went on. "For the fulminate, a mixture of chlorate of potash, powdered glass, and fulminate of mercury. The thing is near perfection. I'm working now on a lock-action to use the caps."

"Why, demme, it's marvelous!" exclaimed Sir Peter with enthusiasm. "Applied to a musket or rifle—eh? Rapid, safe, sure! Nothing like it has ever been invented, Mr. Shaw; something absolutely new! You've patented it, of course?"

Shaw frowned and shook his head.

"No. When I first came here, I applied for patents, but was refused, not being a citizen. That has been rectified, but the patents are not yet forthcoming. However, it's no secret. My experiments were well known in England, and I make no doubt have been stolen right and left by others. But this copper foil—ah! That's different."

Eliza came in, with a silver tray bearing cakes, glasses and a decanter of old port. Shaw caught the exchange of glances between his daughter and Sir Peter, and pipe in hand, crossed to the other side of the room, to get tobacco from a jar. A mirror hung on the wall there. He looked into it, and saw the smile, the gesture, the note that was passed from Sir Peter to the girl.

He turned, stuffing his pipe, and held it to a candle for lighting. Then he resumed his chair and poured the wine. Eliza departed, dropping a demure curtsey as she retired; and a thin, grim smile touched Shaw's lips for an instant.

When he had sipped and supped, Sir Peter waxed confidential.

"D'ye know, Mr. Shaw, I'm tempted to carry you with me tomorrow evening," he said. Those dark, fierce eyes of his masked curious things by their glint. "D'ye know a merchant here who lives in one of those old houses in the poorer part of town—a man named Esprit? One of these Frenchmen who escaped the black massacres in San Domingo twenty years ago and settled here."

Shaw shook his head. "I never heard of him."

"Ye should, then; he's a bit of a gentleman, even if he is in trade," said Sir Peter complacently. "I'm arranging about some sugar shipments from my Jamaica estates, and am to see him tomorrow evening. He has some of the most glorious port, sir, ever passed my lips! I know you'd appreciate it, having the right sense for wine. He took over the stock of some gentleman here, who laid down this port in '87."

"It must indeed be splendid," said Joshua Shaw, who in fact had a taste for old port. He held his own glass to the light. "This is not bad. I understand it was laid down in 1803. But a wine fifteen years older—that would be something, indeed."

"And so it is," Sir Peter replied. "I'll drop past for you about nine, if you've finished dinner by then; say nine-thirty,

to be safe. You Americans have confoundedly early meals. It's an outrage to think of rising from the table before midnight, 'pon my word it is!"

Mr. Shaw agreed genially. He was interested in that old port. Besides, this purse with the hundred guineas was a very handy sum. He had been none too sure about getting his money for this portrait.

"By the way," said Sir Peter, "I'd like a brace of these pistols of yours. I must show them to the Duke of Kent; he takes a live interest in all such matters, as you may know, in behalf of the army."

"I happen to know His Grace very well," said Mr. Shaw a trifle coldly. "But you forget, Sir Peter, that I'm an American. If any army is to profit by this invention of mine, it should be the American army."

"Oh, quite true, quite true," admitted Sir Peter very handsomely. "Your pardon, sir, and very good health. Say no more on the subject, I beg of you."

WHEN the visitor took his departure, Shaw saw him off to his coach, for Sir Peter, who had large estates both in Jamaica and in England, could well afford to do his visiting and traveling in style. His stay here in Philadelphia had been marked by all manner of balls and routs and gay parties, though he spent several hours each afternoon in the house of Joshua Shaw—for the painting of his portrait, naturally. And if Shaw happened to be away, so much the better.

Going straight to his daughter's room, Shaw kissed her and then, with a finger under her chin, looked into her eyes.

"My dear," he said gently, "I've warned you that you're playing with fire. I'm an old fool, no doubt, but I'm not blind. Sir Peter Hawkins is a rich man, and a rascal. He's a rake; he has a name for it, and one can read it in his face. Yet you find him very fascinating, no doubt; he's the proper type. What was in the note he gave you?"

The startled eyes of the girl widened.

"Note? Why, sir, he gave me no note at all—"

"Careful, Eliza!" Shaw's eyes hardened a trifle. "Don't say what you might be sorry for, my dear. Regrets are expensive things. I was looking in the mirror and saw him pass you the note."

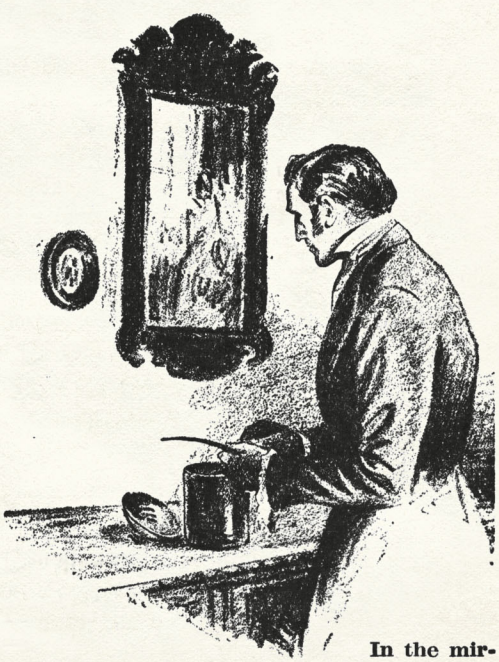
"Oh, la!" The girl broke into a laugh. "That silly little verse! It was one of Lord Byron's he had clipped from some newspaper. I read it and burned it over a candle. Truly, it was an indelicate thing; but I think there was no harm in his mind."

"Good night, my dear." And kissing her, Shaw departed. His deep eyes were somber and sad as he sought his workshop again. He knew well that she had lied to him.

True, Sir Peter was no byword for virtue. Shaw was alone here with his daughter for a few weeks, all his family away; and he had found control hard, for the girl had a will of her own, and Sir Peter was used to cozening shrewd fathers. A very rake indeed, with the money that glossed over other matters in society, and the plausible, reckless, dominant personality to make a man well hated or well loved. And besides, away off here in America, Sir Peter had rather flung overboard any restraint he might have had elsewhere.

The title aided him too. Some toadied to him, and others did the opposite, because of it; the man in the street hated Englishmen and titles alike. But Shaw cared nothing about the man, one way or the other. That it was but a passing fancy, a girlish imagination caught and whirled up, he knew very well. But Sir Peter was the man to take hold of such a fancy and carry it to ruin. And there was the rub. . . .

Shaw worked over his caps, his deadly "detonating powder," and his pistols. From curiosity, he was making some cautious experiments with the strength



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of his powder, and tried a very weak fulminate of gold. The result astonished and alarmed him, for the strength of the explosion was so violent as to make him beware of consequences.

The sight of Sir Peter's embroidered purse irked him. Somehow, he had a most uneasy feeling about this hundred guineas—as though it had been flung to him as the price of his daughter's honor. Unreasonable? Yes. Without foundation? Yes and no; there was simply the feeling. He could sense queer things in the air. He had sensed them last night as he sat with Sir Peter. And his daughter had looked him in the eye and lied.

NEXT morning Shaw rose late, did a little work in his studio, then sauntered forth to get the news at the coffee-houses and exchange greetings with his friends. He little dreamed what this day was to bring forth in the way of news.

Only when he entered one of his less accustomed haunts, and discerned his mulatto house-boy Manlius in earnest conversation with Sir Peter Hawkins, did he suddenly waken to a sense of shock, and come alert. He affected not to observe the pair, and when he had looked again, they were gone. His house-boy! And Sir Peter the exquisite!

Joshua Shaw could be at times, as shall appear, a very stern and terrible man. Yet withal, he was possessed of a deep and calm wisdom that precluded hasty thought or action, and pierced with unerring insight to the heart of things.

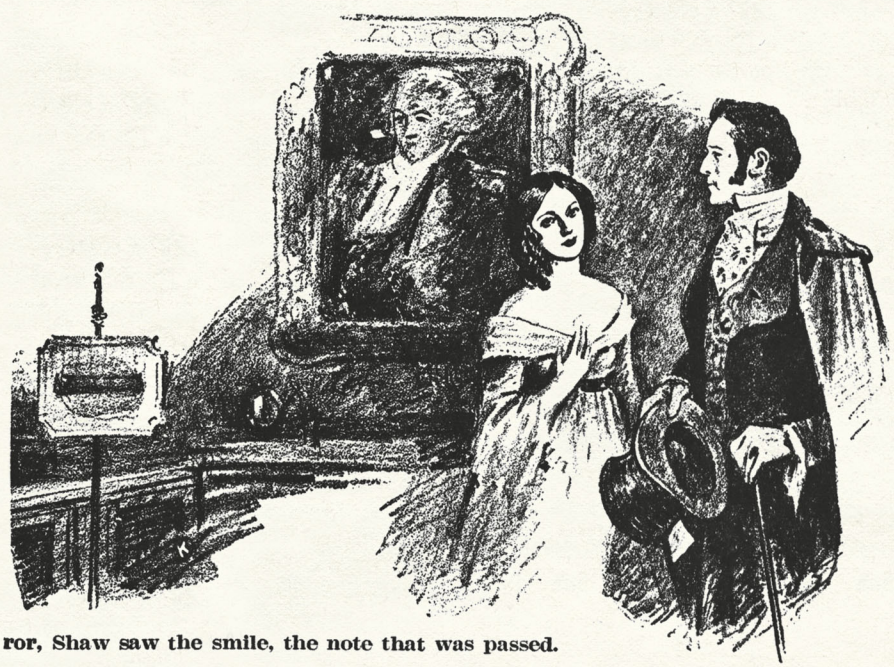
He lingered here and there, sipped his chocolate, exchanged gossip with his cronies, kept his ears open. He ventured occasional inquiries about one Esprit, a merchant; no one knew such a person, which was very odd. Here were importers, seamen, traders, money-lenders, dealers in a thousand and one things. None of them had heard of any Esprit.

A knot of busy merchants drew Shaw, welcomed him briefly, went on with their talk. The British brig *Laxholm* was sailing unexpectedly this very night; the news had just become known. She had not been due to leave for a week to come. Now there were letters to be sent to England by her, hasty last-minute shipments to be got aboard before the tide came to flood.

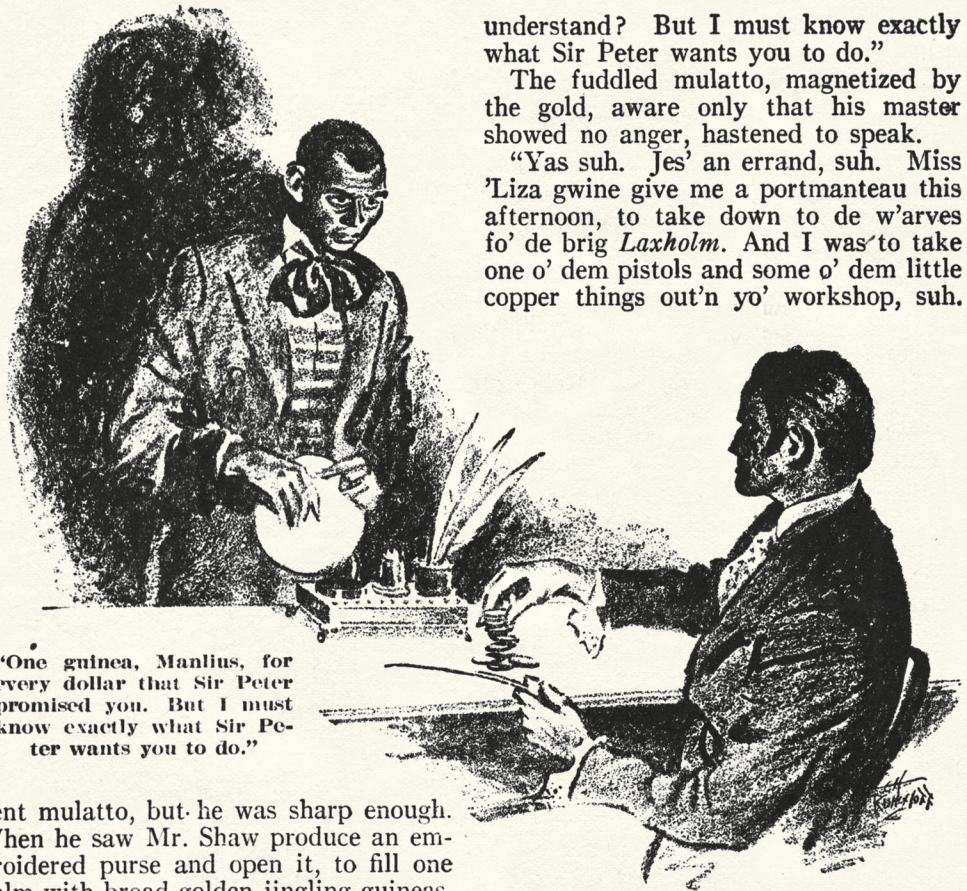
And when, queried Shaw, would the tide take her out? Not before midnight, he was assured. If he had letters for England, he might get them aboard by then.

Mr. Shaw sauntered home, unhurried. He went to his studio, at the other end of the house from his workshop, and filled a long clay pipe with Virginia tobacco. He sat down before his easel with the covered portrait of Sir Peter, lighted his pipe, and smoked thoughtfully. Presently he summoned the house-boy Manlius.

Manlius came in, shut the door, and stood waiting. He was not an intelli-



ror, Shaw saw the smile, the note that was passed.



"One guinea, Manlius, for every dollar that Sir Peter promised you. But I must know exactly what Sir Peter wants you to do."

gent mulatto, but he was sharp enough. When he saw Mr. Shaw produce an embroidered purse and open it, to fill one palm with broad golden jingling guineas, his eyes rolled and his jaw dropped.

"Well, Manlius," said Shaw, smiling a little, though his eyes were hawk-like, "just how much did Sir Peter Hawkins promise to pay you?"

Manlius jerked. "Why, suh—Mistuh Shaw—"

"Just tell me the amount, Manlius," came the calm, quiet voice. "No harm done."

"Why, suh—ten dollars, suh," said the frightened mulatto.

Mr. Shaw nodded slightly. From the heap of gold he took ten beautiful bright guineas, made a little pile of them on his knee, and pocketed the rest.

"I'm not angry, Manlius," he said. "You know that Sir Peter is a very good friend of mine, and anything he'd ask you to do would be all right."

"Yas suh," said the hugely relieved Manlius, but none too confidently.

"So," pursued Mr. Shaw placidly, "I know your intentions are quite honest. In fact, I purpose to reward your honesty with this gold. One guinea for every dollar Sir Peter promised you; it will be a small fortune for you. Instead of being angry, I'm giving you money, understand? But I must know exactly what Sir Peter wants you to do."

The fuddled mulatto, magnetized by the gold, aware only that his master showed no anger, hastened to speak.

"Yas suh. Jes' an errand, suh. Miss 'Liza gwine give me a portmanteau this afternoon, to take down to de w'arves fo' de brig *Laxholm*. And I was to take one o' dem pistols and some o' dem little copper things out'n yo' workshop, suh. He don' want to bother you none, suh, he say—you'd done promised to lend him one—"

"Quite right, quite right, Manlius," and Mr. Shaw smiled. "He was to meet you at the wharves? When?"

"After he left here, suh."

"I see. Well, here you are." And Mr. Shaw extended the gold-pieces. "Be very careful not to mention our little talk either to him or to Miss Eliza. Just go right ahead as though you hadn't discussed it with me. You'll find a pistol and some of the caps on the workbench in an hour; just take them, and do exactly as he wished. But don't mention our talk. He might be angry."

"No suh," Manlius said with emphasis, and grinned widely. "Fo' Gawd, suh, I aint gwine open my face! Thank you, suh; I sho' does thank you!"

Left alone, Mr. Shaw removed the cover from the portrait, sank back into his chair, and looked at the handsome, aquiline, fierce-eyed countenance of Sir Peter.

"Clever, charming, unscrupulous to a degree," he observed. "A fine gentleman, God save the mark! And the devil

shows in your face, my friend. You gave me the hundred guineas because you'd no intention of taking this portrait with you; you'd not want to look at what I've put into your face, I think! Blood-money, as I thought. Give the fellow a hundred guineas, and he's well paid for his daughter's honor, eh?"

He resumed his pipe, nodding now and then as he puffed.

"Hm!" he mused. "I perceive now why the brig is sailing so suddenly. You come here this afternoon and keep me engaged, while Manlius takes the pistol, caps and portmanteau to the wharves. Tonight you take me to enjoy the marvelous old port of Mr. Esprit—some gentleman of your own kidney hired for the occasion. Do you expect to kill me? No, I fancy not. Merely to keep me fuddled and busy while you come here, take my daughter to the ship, and leave. . . . A charming little adventure to while away your idle hours, eh?"

He rose. His smile was not very nice to see, as he made his way to the workshop.

There he carefully locked away all the pistols and caps, except two very handsome pistols. Upon one of these he worked for a time with great care and delicacy, loading it and then adjusting a large cap which he filled with the same delicate touch before crimping the edges of the copper foil. The second pistol he also loaded, but this one he left bare of any cap. Only a keen, fierce eye would note the omission.

The two pistols he then put into their morocco pocket-case and left lying on the work-bench, while he repaired to his studio to don smock and palette.

THERE, later that afternoon, Sir Peter found him, and took position with a slightly bored air, for the final touches to his portrait. As Shaw worked, the two men talked and chatted lightly, until Eliza brought in wine and cakes. When she had gone, Sir Peter remarked that the girl was indeed a lovely minx.

"You do her too much honor, Sir Peter," said Mr. Shaw. "Indeed, she is greatly taken with you, I fear. To a young maid, there is a certain fascination in a man of the world, one who has traveled far and is among the famed beaux of London. Your health, sir."

And smiling, he sipped his wine, while Sir Peter eyed him shrewdly.

"It is not to your liking, perhaps?" the visitor inquired.

"To my liking? Nonsense! My dear sir," said Shaw earnestly, "these fathers who insist upon their position, who rant and rave to their daughters, who think to bully and browbeat a woman—stuff and nonsense, sir! If a girl is set in her way, well and good. Nothing can change her. If she's merely giving ground to youthful emotion, it will pass."

"Demme, sir, a truly sensible opinion!" said Sir Peter with enthusiasm. "Why, sink me if ever I've heard such wisdom from a father! A cool head, sir, a deuced cool head. I congratulate you. And when may I see the portrait?"

"Now, if you like," said Shaw.

SIR PETER stood back and viewed that painted face. Color rose in his lean cheeks and his gaze narrowed momentarily; then he laughed and tapped the lid of his snuffbox, and vowed it was a very perfect likeness, truly admirable.

"Somewhat after the style of Mr. Benjamin West, eh?"

"Who is my very good friend," said Shaw. "I trust that you will convey my respects to him, should you encounter him in London."

"With all my heart," Sir Peter replied. "I hope to take ship next week. The portrait will be boxed by then?"

Mr. Shaw bowed and assented, and Sir Peter took his leave. He would call with his coach about nine of the evening, or a little past, said he in departing.

Back in his workshop, Shaw observed that the brace of pistols had vanished; whereat he smiled slightly and went about his work as usual. He dined early with his daughter, who had an unwonted trace of color in her cheeks, and even got in a hand of piquet with her before the coach of Sir Peter sounded.

"Off to bed with you, my dear, and God bless you!" said he, and kissed her.

"Yes, Father. Until morning!" she responded brightly, and little dreamed how the lie upon her lips burned into him. Of these matters Joshua Shaw gave no sign.

So off he went with Sir Peter Hawkins, who was wrapped in a heavy blue broadcloth surtout, and the coach deposited them in the old section of town. Presently they were sitting before a bright fire in a shabby little long room, and their host was prattling volubly about Jamaica shipments of rum and sugar while the decanter passed around.

A garrulous little man, this Esprit, and paid for his garrulity, thought Shaw

with some contempt. A dark, smiling, fawning little man who fitted ill into Sir Peter's description of him. Shaw sipped his port, which fitted its description as ill, and tried to place the vintage. He was a much better amateur of ports than Sir Peter had supposed, having come from Bristol town, where the wines of the Peninsula were matters of deep study.

And all the while, Sir Peter's coach waited outside.

NOW Esprit and Sir Peter waxed hot in discussion of certain shipments, until Sir Peter vowed he would prove the other man wrong in his claims.

"I have the papers and accounts at my lodgings," said he heatedly. "I'll back and get 'em, demme if I don't! Mr. Shaw, you'll excuse me a matter of minutes, and Mr. Esprit will entertain you, I make no doubt."

Shaw stretched his legs to the fire.

"Not a bit of it," he said calmly, so that the brows of Sir Peter drew down.

"Eh? I mistook you?" said Sir Peter.

"No," replied Shaw. "Look you, Sir Peter: I've met many a man ere this who was, as the poet Shakespeare says, a goodly apple rotten at the core. There's no doubt in my own mind that where one kind of honor lacks, all's lacking; a rogue who'll lie to you will do worse."

The hot fierce eyes of Sir Peter narrowed slightly.

"Your drift, Mr. Shaw, escapes me."

"I'll make it plainer,"—and Shaw smiled, as he sipped his port. "This is far from the mark; if I mistake not, it was laid down not above a dozen years ago, sir. And as for the papers and accounts and so forth, you need not trouble. She's not there."

"Eh?" and Sir Peter stared hard at him. *"She?"*

"Exactly. No doubt you've heard the maxim of physicians, *similia similibus curantur*—cure like with like? So with a girl's emotion, Sir Peter. She's gone. She's been gone a good three hours and more; we got word her poor mother was dying, and now she's aboard the stage-coach for the north, and you're driven out of her heart by a greater fear. You and your lies and your roguery. You see, Sir Peter, the mulatto boy confessed everything to me."

Now there was a hot, tense silence upon the room, while the little Frenchman glanced from one to the other with frightened gaze, and Sir Peter turned pale as death.

"Is it to me, Mr. Shaw, you apply such words as *rogue* and *liar?*" he asked at last.

"To you, Sir Peter Hawkins." And Shaw met the fierce eyes with a calm smile. "To you, who disgrace the name of gentleman, and would think to rob a sweet girl of love and honor and all regard. I fear your heart is black and rotten, Sir Peter Hawkins."

Sir Peter came out of his chair with hot fury.

"You'll answer to me for such words!" he cried passionately. "Demme, you can't insult me and not answer for it!"

"I thought as much," said Shaw, still smiling. "Blackguard to the end, eh? It yet remains to be seen," he added cryptically. "Unluckily, we've no pistols, since you've stolen my own."

Sir Peter turned to Esprit.

"There's a case of pistols out in the coach. Get them."

Esprit scuttled out. Sir Peter faced Shaw with blazing countenance.

"You fool!" he snapped hotly. "You, with your philosophy and good sense—faugh! You're no gentleman, yet I shall give you what you deserve."

IN pattered the Frenchman with the morocco pocket-case. Shaw looked at it and spoke with a slow laugh.

"My own pistols, eh? Excellent. We'll put you to the proof, my good blackguard. I loaded them both myself this afternoon. Take your pick. I'll take the other and cross the room. Mr. Esprit, you'll oblige us by giving the word?"

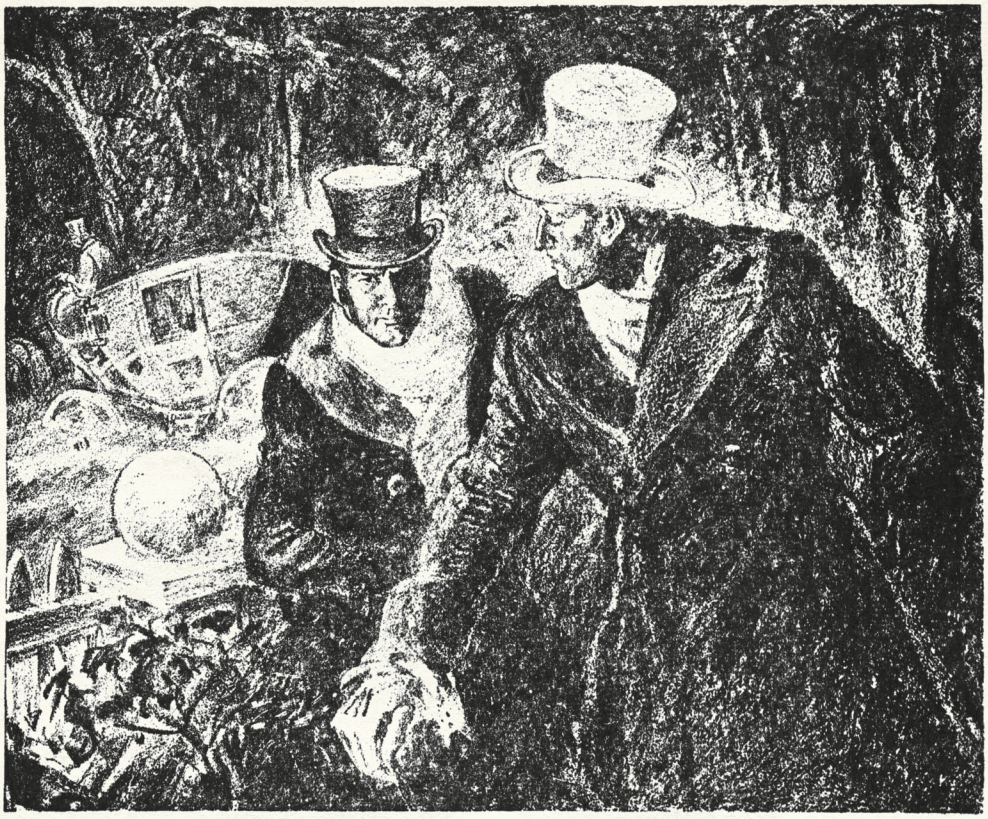
Esprit stammered assent. The case was opened by the light of the candles. For an instant the hot fierce eyes of Sir Peter devoured the two handsome weapons lying there; then he seized one of them.

"You yourself loaded them, so one's as good as the other to kill you," said he.

Shaw took the remaining pistol, which had no cap on the nipple. He affected not to observe the fact. Then, very pale, suddenly very sober and grave, he hesitated as though to speak. Sir Peter laughed harshly.

"What? You quail when it comes to the test, do you?"

Shaw inclined his head with a slight gesture, and walked to the other end of the room, and turned about.



"I'll drop past for you," Sir Peter had said. . . . So they set out together.

"I see that I judged you aright, Sir Peter Hawkins—"

"Ha' done!" cried Sir Peter fiercely. "The word, Esprit!"

Stammering, nervous, the little Frenchmand complied.

"Ready, gentlemen! Fire at three. . . . One—two—*three!*"

Shaw did not so much as lift his weapon. At the word, Sir Peter pulled the trigger. A frightful explosion shook the room, and smoke spouted. A scream burst from Sir Peter, and clapping both hands to his face, he dropped to the floor, writhing.

"You'd best call a surgeon and then escort him to his ship, which is waiting," Shaw said calmly to the Frenchman. "And you might tell him that if he'd played the least part of a gentleman, if he'd not chosen the one pistol he thought to be capped, he'd be better off. I doubt if he'll ever see again. That pistol, sir, was loaded with fulminate of gold—and that's why it exploded. Good night, Mr. Esprit."

And with this, Joshua Shaw walked out of the house and set off for home, where his daughter waited, and wondered vainly why her lover came not.

SHAW'S striding figure lessened and dimmed. . . . It faded into darkness; then the darkness was gone in a burst of light, and I looked up into the face of my cheerful dentist, Dr. Yoakum.

"Tooth's out—all's over!" he exclaimed. "Now lie down for a bit, and you'll be all right. Would you like to look more closely at this percussion cap?"

"No, thanks," I said, with a shiver. "By the way, about that artist Shaw—do you know whether he ever painted a picture of a certain Sir Peter Hawkins?"

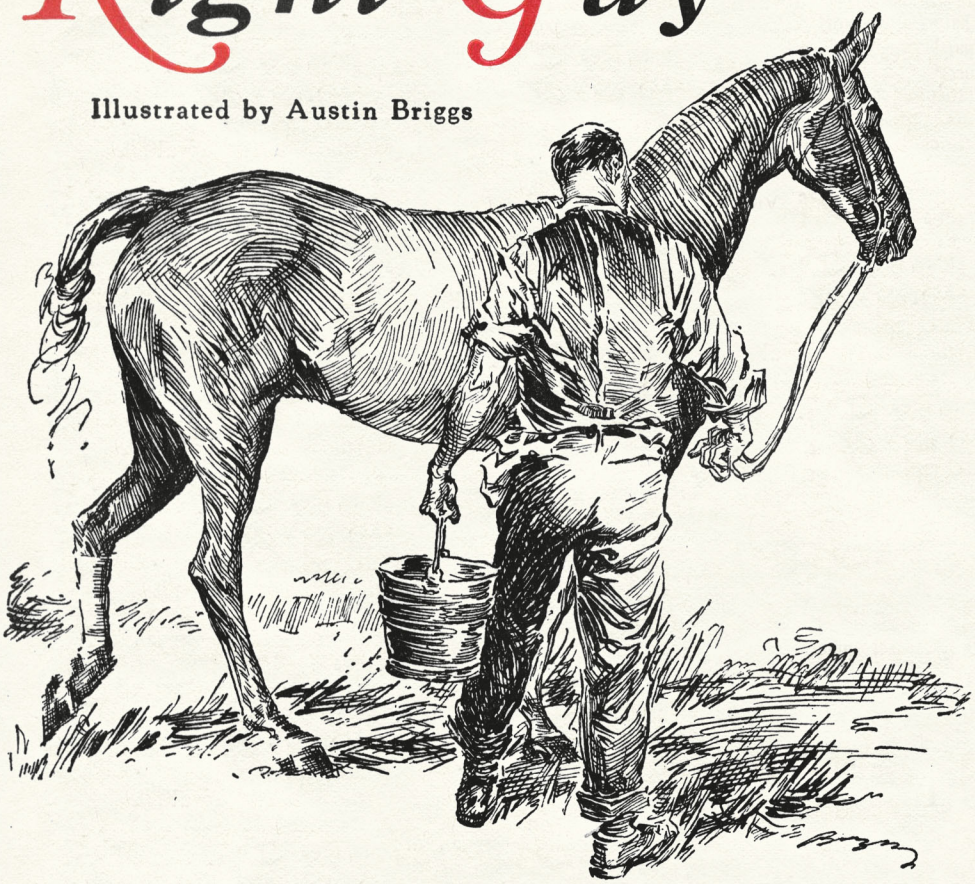
"Upon my word! Queer you should ask me that!" said the dentist in surprise. "Yes, it was sold at auction here last week. There was quite a story in connection with it, which ran in the papers. I suppose you saw it."

Well, I suppose I did, though I have no memory of seeing it. That is the only logical explanation of the story that acted itself out before me as I lay under gas in the dentist's chair—the tale of the man behind the first percussion cap.

Another colorful story in this much-discussed series will appear in our next issue.

Right Guy

Illustrated by Austin Briggs



THIS had been the quietest season I'd ever supervised. Outside of a slight effort on the part of the then chairman of the Racing Commission to frame me, just before the first meet, there had been no trouble at all. It was a shame to take the money for being chief racing cop in a State where nobody even tried to dope a horse; but I took the money and hid my shame as best I could.

We were on our way to our third meet now. The way the season goes, out our way, the first meet is at home, the second in Cape City upstate; then there's this bucolic affair we were about to run off, then back home, then to Cape again. By the way, *bucolic* means countrified, or rural.

I'd taken a compartment; and my head dick, Joe Lavery, old MacNamara, the head of the uniformed force, and I were sitting as near the window as three people can in a compartment, and playing sequences. It was a game I invented; and the way you work it, each player takes two numbers, one between one and three, and one between seven and nine, and you bet about the last two numbers of the license plate on the next car stopped at a grade crossing.

We'd played it all season, on each hop, and I was fifty bucks in the hole.

"Mac's turn," Joe said. He was sitting next to me, away from the window.

Old Mac began muttering: "Eighty-two. Come on, give me an eighty-two, Detroit, give me—"

A grade crossing went by with a clanging of bells, and Mac yelled: "Twenty-eight!"

"I saw it," I said sourly. "That's six more each of us owes. My turn. Come on, seventeen—"

Elizabeth, my secretary, love-life and traveling companion—in a nice way—looked up from her magazine and said: "If you master minds could gather your

A hard-boiled race-track detective handles his most difficult and dangerous case in this fine novelette by a new and gifted writer.

By RICHARD WORMSER

forces, we'll be in Cranville in about two minutes."

I turned my head to answer her, and a bell clanged outside the window. I looked back, but it was too late. "I'll bet it was a seventeen," I said. I looked at Mac and Joe, but they just looked back at me. "O.K.," I said. "Couple of tinhorns. I ought to fire you both. You too, Betty." She doesn't like to be called Betty.

"Don't pout," she said. "It makes you look even fatter."

Joe got up and grabbed his bag, and went out. We make it a practice never to get off in a group; railroad stations are good places to surprise people who'd rather not be surprised.

Old Mac went out and I stood up, stretching. "I'll have to cut down on the beer," I said. "This suit's getting too small—"

"You've said that every day for two years now," Betty sniffed, as the porter came in and began to work for his tip.

When we hit the platform, I saw Tex, one of my dicks—a Southerner who had signed on for the season. I'd sent him ahead to get the lay of the land, though it hardly seemed necessary for a one-week meet such as this, in a one-horse town. . . . He accidentally on purpose came opposite me just as a red-cap was going for my bags.

"Got a match, Mister?" he drawled.

I said: "Yeah, but don't bother with it unless you really need one. Stop acting like a detective. What's on your mind?"

He relaxed and looked grieved. He was one of these dicks who reads detective stories and mystery novels and wants to be mysterious all the time. He was a good cop, though, once he got going. He said: "There seem to be twenty or thirty bookmakers in town; every bar and the lobby of the hotel are swarming with them."

"O.K.," I said. "Report to Joe Lavery. You and he, and as many men as he thinks he'll need, go tell 'em to get out of town. Tell 'em I said so."

"They seem to be all working together," he said, sadly. "Leastways,

they're all taking anything they can get on the Cranville Stakes, unless it's Red Roger."

"Plugging one horse, eh? Red—what did you say his name was?"

Tex said: "Red Roger. —Hiya, Miss Elizabeth. I—"

"Stick to business," I said. "I never heard of the horse. Elizabeth, go on out to the track and get the office opened up. Send a man back with the official handicappers' sheets on the stakes. Also, the file on Red Roger and his stable. Who owns him, Tex?"

"One-horse stable, Chief," he said. "Name of Ellery Richards."

"Uh-huh. Used to be a bootlegger. Runs a horse or two for amusement—he

says. O.K.; Tex, go tell Joe Lavery what you told me; then you and he try giving a polite bum's rush to one of these bookies. Report to me when you get through. Don't insist—this time."

Elizabeth said: "We'd be a more efficient force if we knew where to make all these reports to you, Chief."

I looked at Tex. He drawled: "A place called Schultz's Tavern says that they're bringing their beer all the way from New York."

Elizabeth snickered, and my face got red. I said: "O.K. Get going."

I went up to the hotel and left my bag. When I registered, the clerk said: "The manager says to tell you he has two cases of imported Pilsener he's been saving for you, Mr. Van Eyck."

I sighed. "There go my good resolutions. By and large, though, that's life. If I have the same room as last year, send my bags up to it; I'll look at it later. Is Ellery Richards staying here?"

"Yes, Mr. Van Eyck. He's in 412. Want me to ring him?"

"No. If he should happen to pass through, though, tell him I'm down at Schultz's. He might like to look me up."

"Yes sir. Oh, and Mr. Van Eyck—I have a few dollars that—" He looked embarrassed.

"Bluebird in the third tomorrow. Low odds, but better than he deserves in there."

"Thanks, sir. I'll tell the manager you said to put that Pilsener on ice."

I went out on the street. Louisville at Derby time, Saratoga in August, have nothing on Cranville during its one week of glory every year. There aren't any very big stakes—the Cranville Stakes itself is only ten grand added; but there's a lot of tradition, and a lot of society people. The neighborhood is full of big estates and fox-hunting, and horses and dogs, and there are two races every day, and a steeplechase for ponies bred in the region. It's a lot more personal than the big meets, and by the same token, a lot less attractive to the race-fixers and con men I am hired to attack.

I shoved my way through the dense crowds down the street. Out in the middle of the street there were almost as many horse-drawn vehicles as motors; two-wheeled traps from the fox-hunting country, farmers' wagons, and even some old victorias doing service as taxies.

I passed three men I knew to be illegal bookies. But I didn't do anything about them. I had told Joe Lavery to clear the town, and it would not do Joe's opinion of himself any good to have me step in over his head. Joe had worked for me for years, in my agency in the winter and on the Commission's pay-roll in the summer, and I knew that by the time we opened tomorrow there would be no in-town betting to cut down the take at the track-gate.

SCHULTZ'S turned out to be the sort of place I like: booths in the rear for conferences and a long bar to scrape acquaintances when that seems the thing to do. I went in, and corralled the head barkeeper. "I'm Van Eyck, chief of the track force. Anybody looking for me?"

"No sir." He seemed a little flustered. "But I'll keep an ear open. The boss has been expecting you." He wavered down the bar, passing the message to his assistants and came back with a fat man. The fat Schultz and I shook hands ceremoniously, and the bartender produced the biggest glass I have ever seen.

"I got this for you especially," Schultz said. "I hoped that you'd drop in. The brewers say they'll give a keg of beer free to anyone who can drink this dry in less than five minutes."

"A swell reputation I've got," I growled. Betty was right; I was drinking too much beer for my figure. Spaced as it was during the day, I never let it muddle my head, but I do have a tendency to fat, like most active men when they pass thirty and start to settle down.

But the gambling fever had me. I said: "It's not worth it. I can do it, all right, but it's not worth a keg of beer to throw my Adam's apple out of joint."

A man standing next to me turned, his elbow brushing my vest. "You mean to say you can drink all that glass can hold in less than five minutes?"

I said to the man: "Don't you think I can? Money talks, brother."

He said: "Twenty-five."

"To twenty," I said. "This is an odds-off bet."

"Done." He had the thin-lipped look of the professional gambler.

I signaled the bartender to start filling her up and flashed my roll. When I ended up, I had a good shot at five hundred dollars, when, as and if the last of that beer trickled down my throat before five minutes clicked by.

The barkeeper was pouring beer, and pouring beer. That glass was deceptive; the tap ran on, and on.

Some one said: "I got your message. I have to—"

I looked around. It was Ellery Richards, the man who owned Red Roger. I said: "In a minute, Richards. I'm about to make a hundred dollars a minute—it's worth watching."

The bootlegger said: "But I've been waiting two days—"

"Five minutes more won't hurt you." I took my stop-watch out, laid it on the bar and got a firm hold on that beer-tank. I squeezed as I swallowed.

It took me a full two minutes to drain what looked like half of that glass. Richards plucked at my arm and said: "But, Van—"

"I'm busy." Feeling as though I never wanted to look at beer again, I hoisted once more. . . . I was so battered that I kept on swallowing for a good two seconds after the huge glass was empty. I squeezed the stop-watch blindly and looked down. My head was reeling. I had done her in four minutes and forty-eight seconds.

I picked up my roll, said, "Pay Mr. Schultz, here," nodded at Richards, and made my way back to a booth.

Richards slid down opposite me in the booth, putting too much weight on his hands as he lowered himself. He said: "I thought you'd never get to town."

I SAW two men take the booth opposite us. There was nothing about them to mark them as gunmen—nothing but the careful way they moved, and the more than careful way they watched us. I said: "For an ex-bootlegger, you're awfully dependent on the law, it seems to me."

"You can't count on these small-time cops. I'd have gone to the police here, but you can't count on these—"

"You said that once. What's it about —Red Roger?"

"Yeah!" His voice was eager. "You know. You know what they been—"

One of the men across the way slid out from under the table in their booth and came over. "Shut up," he said softly, fiercely, to Richards. "We told you if you called a copper, we'd take care of you. Now, baby, get up and march. And if we catch you talking to this fat badge-toter again, we'll—"

I said: "You talk too fancy to be much good with a gun. Scram, little flower! Out of this bar, and out of this town. You can come back when the meet's over and I withdraw my force."

"Fatty," he said, "my pal across the aisle has been covering you ever since you sat down. Shut up, and stay shut up. —Richards, come with me!"

I wished, badly, that I hadn't taken all that beer, though the five hundred would come in handy. But while my fist was moving up for his jaw,—and a moment like that lasts years,—I thought, and the thought made me afraid, that I had slowed myself down past the point of usefulness.

THERE had been no sense in going for my gun, because that would have brought fire from the bird across the aisle. But gun-fighters are not used to fists; and I am. I'm a big man, but a lot of my fat isn't fat.

I thought all this, and a lot of other things I'm scared to mention, in just that second before my fist hit his jaw. He went backward with blood coming out of his mouth, and I knew I'd missed, because he wasn't going backward onto his pal, but off at an angle. . . .

Then I was fumbling furiously for my gat, knowing I was too late, knowing I was sunk. I'm not ashamed to admit I was scared then, plenty scared, while time stood still and the man across the aisle fired.

The queerest thing happened:

Richards, whom I'd forgotten completely, heaved an ashtray. The guy across the aisle fired, yes, but he fired high, because the heavy glass tray mashed his wrist. There was an awful lot of noise; the heel with the gun was caroming into the man I had hit and throwing him back at me; me trying to get out, and only upsetting the table onto Richards' legs.

When I did get loose, the gunman was halfway down the bar, squirming through the panic-stricken drinkers. And Joe Lavery was there, too.

I yelled: "Drop it, Joe! Don't fire. Hold it, Joe!" Because this guy hadn't done any killing, and we could either pick him up later or he would run out of town; and if Joe went on with the battle, some bystander was sure to get it.

I righted the table I had knocked onto Richards and said: "Get up. It's O.K. —get up."

But he didn't. He hadn't been shot, hadn't been hit. He'd just fainted. His heart was strong when I poked at his vest; I got out from there, then picked up the guy I'd hit.

He'd been hit too much. Either it had happened when I socked him or when his pal knocked him back; but at sometime his neck had hit the edge of a table, and it was broken.

Schultz came running up, saying: "You all right, Mr. Van Eyck? You're not hurt, Chief?"

I said: "No. Just shaken up a little. Bring Richards here a brandy, and give me the money you collected for me."

"Yes sir. Don't you want a brandy too?"

"No. Never touch hard liquor. Bring me a beer."

He said, "Yeh—yes sir."

Joe Lavery came up and said: "This is a hard, tough town this year, Van."

I looked at the stiff on the floor, and at Richards, and nodded slowly. Schultz came back and put the beer into my hand; I tasted it, and was surprised for a moment that I didn't want it. Then I remembered my gallon or so, and handed the beer to Joe. "I don't want it," I said. "—Yeah, Joe, this seems to be a tough town. Little Cranville growing up: playing gangsters when all the rest of the country is quitting. Get a town cop, and take care of this corpse."

As soon as Richards came to, I said: "Don't talk. Come on over to the hotel." I had to help him out; he was still wabbly.

Outside I saw one of my patrolmen getting out of a car. He handed me an envelope and a salute. I remembered that I had asked Elizabeth to send papers on the Stakes, with special mention of Red Roger.

You don't take cabs in Cranville; you walk. I walked Ellery Richards through the crowds that heaved and shoved around the Tavern; a lot of people turned to look at us, and I could hear my name being muttered. By evening I would have downed three or four tommy-men with my bare hands or my teeth or something.

I walked him straight to the hotel, through the lobby and to my room. I said: "This would be a fine time to do some talking." Now that I was over being scared, I was getting mad,

He said: "All right. I've been virtually a prisoner since I came to this town. A prisoner at large. They haven't let me write a letter, or make a phone-call, or talk to anyone."

"Who's *they?*"

"The ring. I don't know who's behind them; some of the gun-carriers have been named Franny Forrester, Spud Gidale, Larry Mann."

I took a deep breath. "If they've had gunmen following you all this time, why didn't you tell a cop? It's against the law to shoot citizens in this State."

"And get my ribs blown in?"

"Why come to me, then? I'm just the same as a cop."

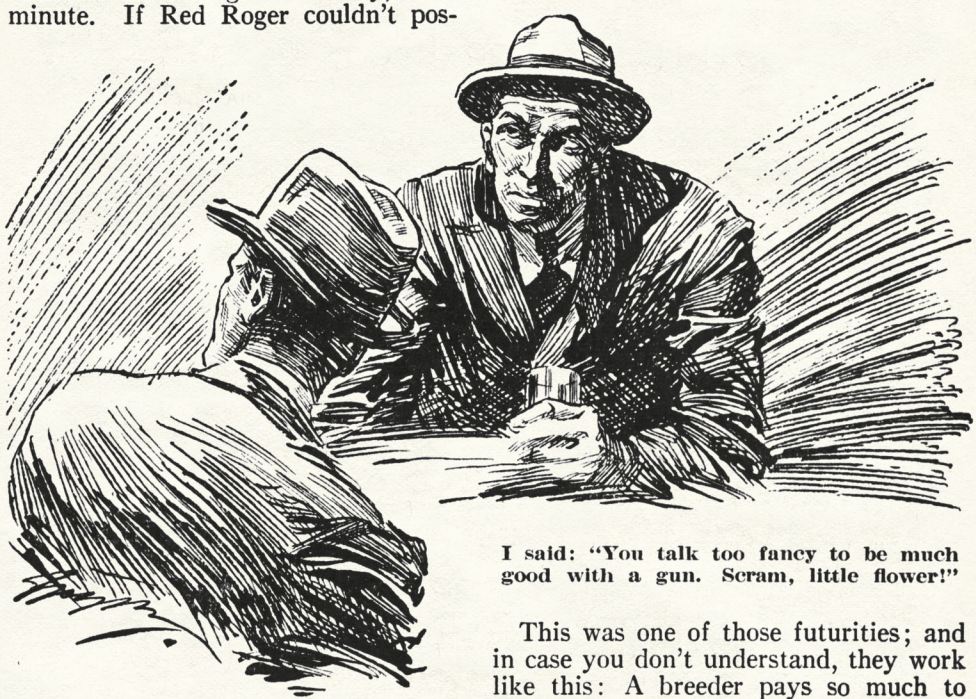
"Because you won't make me do anything that'll get me killed. You're regular." He paused. "Van, Red Rogers isn't Red Rogers. They've got my horse some place; I don't know where. The horse in my barn is a stranger to me; I never saw him before."

I began to see light. "A ringer, huh?" The oldest game in racing. "All right, scratch him." But I knew it wouldn't

work. If he scratched Red Roger, they'd bump him off. I couldn't ask him to do that. He'd come to me in good faith, and I couldn't ask him to suicide. I said: "Stay in your hotel room, and stay alone. I'm going to run them out of town; I'll let them know you're not in on it."

"That would be swell, Van. But they don't go. They're tough."

"Considering what happened about ten minutes ago, I don't think they're too tough for me. Now, get out of here, and let me start working. . . . Hey, wait a minute. If Red Roger couldn't possibly win the race, why pay the entry fee for the Stakes?"



I said: "You talk too fancy to be much good with a gun. Scram, little flower!"

He turned back. "I don't know, Van. Maybe because the horse has done well by me; I've made a lot of money in the small runs this season. Maybe because he was nominated when he was foaled, and it didn't cost much to go the rest of the way. And—well, maybe because anything can happen in a horse-race, and it would be a swell thing to win the Stakes."

"You're O.K., Richards. Go to your room and stay there."

He went out, and I took off my coat and reached for the phone. I called the town police station. I got the chief on the wire. "This is Van Eyck. How did that mess at Schultz's come out?"

"We sent the body to the morgue. His fingerprints were in a couple of bulletins; I had the coroner make it 'killed resisting arrest.' That O.K., Van?"

"Yeah, thanks. Is Joe Lavery still there?"

"Yes. By the way, Van—er—"

"Bluebird in the third tomorrow. He's due for a break. Let me talk to Joe."

When Joe got on the wire, he gave me our private signal that everything was going smoothly. I told him to come up to the room when he could get free. Then I stretched out on the bed to study the form sheets on the Cranville Stakes.

This was one of those futurities; and in case you don't understand, they work like this: A breeder pays so much to the holder of the stakes—in this case, the Cranville Jockey Club—at the time that he sends his mare to be bred. When the foal is born, he looks at it, and if he thinks it looks as if it'll grow into a racer, he pays so much more. In this case, it was two hundred dollars each time.

He has to ante up again a few months later, say when the colt is six months old. Then again at a year, at two years, and a couple of times during the two-year season. If his horse begins to look sour, he just stops paying, and the money goes toward the stake.

Finally he renominates the horse at the beginning of the three-year season, this time by paying five hundred bucks. And if he doesn't make a further payment on the night before the race, the pony is scratched.

Then the Jockey Club adds the stake, ten thousand dollars in this case, and it

is all divided up among the first four horses. So this so-called ten-thousand-dollar race was actually worth about eighteen thousand to the winner alone. I didn't blame Richards for making a play for it. But Red Roger hadn't a chance in the world of winning.

The best race he had ever taken paid him six hundred dollars. He had been running two or three times a week since the beginning of last season, and he was a good consistent money horse—usually ran second or third, and always came home with expense money by being fourth. You could make a living with a horse like Roger, and that's a pretty good horse to have; but you couldn't make much more than a living, because you couldn't run him in claiming races without losing your meal-ticket; and after this season, there wouldn't be many races he'd be admitted to on the good tracks that he could place in.

On the other hand, there was some beautiful horseflesh in the Stakes. World O'Mine, who stemmed from Big Red himself, was the favorite; and he'd have a tussle with such ponies as Rein In, Mr. Maloney, Valiant Starter, and the mare Lady Swing Along.

I'd have given fifteen to one against Roger. He was too steady a horse to count on a fluke; he did no better on a dry day than a wet one—just a good horse who did his mile around one-fifty.

It looked as if Richards' story was true. Tex had said that the ring who had taken over the off-track betting were going heavy for Roger; and that must mean that Roger was not himself, but some other horse. I looked at his description and swore. He was a chestnut gelding, fifteen-three, white star on forehead. Hell and Maria, about half the thoroughbreds in the world answer that description!

JOE LAVERY knocked and came in. He was grinning as he sat on the edge of the bed.

"Hear they tried to kill you, Chief."

"Yeah. What luck did you have with Tex's ring of big bad gamblers?"

Joe kept on grinning. "No luck at all, Van. They don't scare. Looks like we have to play rough."

I shook my head. "I hate that. After all, we work for the Racing Commission, and any rough stuff will involve a bystander or two, and that's bad for racing. That's why I let that heel get past you today. I'd sooner he ran out of town than we had to make a shooting pinch here."

"I know that," Joe said. "You don't have to tell me our business."

"I was just thinking out loud." I reached for the phone. "Get me the editor of the Cranville *Dial*. . . . Hello. . . . Van Eyck, of the race-track police. Want you to run a notice, warning people not to bet with bookies off the track. Tell them that we're going to run them out of town, and people won't be able to collect; you'll find the exact phrasing in last year's paper. Run it as an ad, and send the bill to the Commission. . . . Huh? Bluebird in the third tomorrow; he's a good buy at the price he'll get."

Joe said: "Now, what?"

I said: "It's this way, Joe. I know you're more than competent to handle the plain-clothes force; but there might just be a flare-back on this thing, and—"

HE stood up, tilted his hat forward on his head. "O.K.—O.K. You're taking over. Come on out, and I'll show you some of the bookies. Tex is down in the lobby."

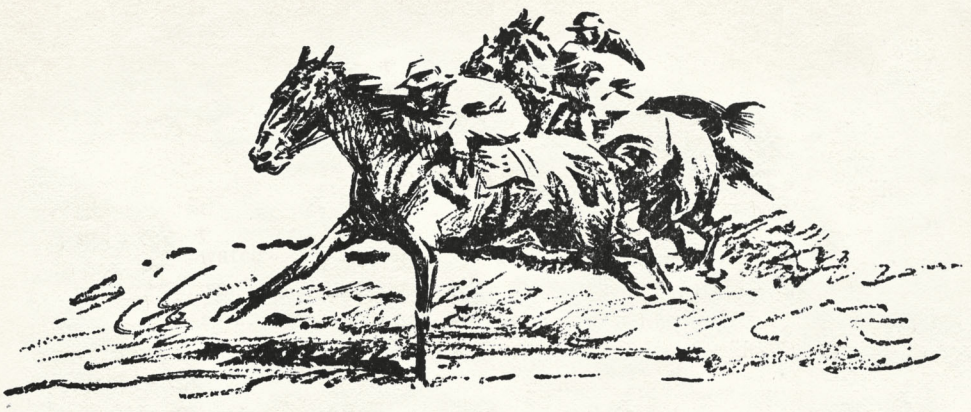
I checked my gun, put on my coat, and joined him. We had to jam into the elevator to go down; I began sweating again. The lobby was almost as packed as the elevator; when I went by the desk, the clerk was sending newcomers out to private houses around town. I said: "It looks like one of the best seasons we've had up here."

And I knew that that was because—partly, anyway—I had built up a reputation for racing in our State. The customer got good clean races, no fixing and no doping, and he didn't get his pockets picked while he was watching them. Also, he didn't get shot at by a bunch of haywire dicks trying to make arrests.

Joe said: "There's one—the very thin guy in the checked suit; he makes book; and the broad egg, close to the ground, behind him, is Spud Gitale, who carries a gun."

"Fine." I elbowed my way politely through the crowd. There was a little murmur that followed me; a whispering of my name—"Van Eyck.... Van Eyck." It was stronger at Cranville than at other places; recognizing me was the sign of an insider. It did not make me self-conscious, but I liked it.

I went to stand in front of this thin man, and I said: "I understand you make book."



"Yeah. That's right." He dropped his eyelids half over his snaky eyes, and stared up at me. "Wanta place a bet?"

"No. I'm Van Eyck, chief of the track cops. We don't allow off-grounds booking."

"I know who you are. If you don't mean to bet, get out. I'm busy."

I didn't raise my voice. But I said: "Gitale, keep your fat hand away from that gun. Now, listen—this goes for both of you: There's a train in an hour; get it and get out of town. I'm not bluffing; go on down to Police Headquarters, and they'll show you pictures of other guys who thought they were—"

Gitale said, over the bookie's shoulder: "Nuts. If you're going to pinch us, go ahead; otherwise get out."

WELL, it's an old trick; I'm always surprised when it works. I shot my hand under the bookie's elbow and caught Spud Gitale's right wrist; he had been keeping it away from his clothes to show me he wasn't going for his gun. A quick pull up, and a twist, and a quick pull down is the only way I can describe what I did then; anyway, there was a sharp cry of pain that made heads turn in the lobby. . . .

When there was no more disturbance, they turned back again. Gitale was feeling his wrist with his left hand, his dark eyes glowing with hate.

I said: "It isn't broken—just sprained. It'll stay that way about ten days, if you take good care of it. At any rate, you might as well get out of town, now; you won't be any good as a gunman till this meeting's over."

He was too mad to say anything. I bowed politely and took the bookie by the arm; with his gun-backing gone, he was docile as a lamb. I walked him through the lobby with my hand hooked inside his elbow; Joe Lavery stayed where he was; but I saw Tex dropping in behind me. I had no trouble.

When I got him to the police station, I searched him in the presence of a town officer. We found six hundred bucks on him, and a list of names with figures after them. When I took hold of his wrist, and smiled at him, he signed a statement right away that this was gambling money, and belonged to the people whose names were on the list; he was very, very helpful, and told us how much went to each person. I gave Tex the list and the money, and told him to take it out to the track and give it to Elizabeth to send back to the people who bet it.

Then I said: "Have you got enough money to get out of town, old man?"

The bookie—he had given Eliphant as his name—said, "Naw—not on me. The boss makes us turn in our own dough before we go out to take bets."

"Why, the heel!" I sympathized. "Doesn't even trust his own bookies. Come on; I'll get your money for you." I slapped my hat on and led him out before he had time to think. I never knew a bookie's runner yet who was very smart; they pick 'em for their adding-machine ability, not for their reasoning power.

He led me back to the hotel, and up to the sixth floor. He rapped twice on a door; it opened, and we went in.

The guy who let us in would have been nice-looking if he hadn't dressed so fancy. He said: "Huh?" and put a lot into the syllable.

"Franny," my pal said, "ask the boss to give me my dough. I'm on my way out of town."

Franny—I guessed him as the Franny Forrester Richards had mentioned—said: "Where's Spud?"

"I sprained his wrist," I explained. "Take me to the boss, and I'll tell him about it."

Forrester growled something in the back of his throat and said: "Come on." He opened a door and said: "Here's Van Eyck, Larry."

A nice-looking man, about forty, but with snow-white hair, stood up and said: "You're a reasonable man, Chief Van Eyck. Glad to see you got here so quickly."

It was my turn to say: "Huh?"

I SHUT my mind down, and got dogged. There was something here I didn't understand, and I was supposed to know all about it; the best thing to do was fight it out my own way. I said: "This boy, here, has decided to leave town; I came up to see you and tell you it wasn't his fault." I grinned, and did my confidential act. "I like bookies, myself; you may have heard I'm supposed to be the hottest gambler in the State. Only you boys made a little mistake when you tried to pull a clean-up while I was running off a meet; there are States where that's all right, I know, but not this one."

Larry Mann said: "Go on back to your post, Eliphant. . . . Where's Spud, and how much have you taken today?

"Six hundred bucks," Eliphant gulped. "And the Chief here broke Spud's wrist, and took the dough from me to send back to the suckers."

"Sent it yet?" Mann asked. He raised his voice. "Get the Chief a bottle of beer, Fran. He likes beer. Sit down, Chief Van Eyck."

I said: "Sure. No, I haven't sent it yet. It's on its way; I sent one of my men out to the track, to have the office force do the mailing."

"He'll be back," Mann said. Something in his voice was giving me the creeps; he was too sure of himself.

I said: "I'm glad to see you're going to be reasonable. Thanks for the beer, Franny. Yeah, I hate trouble. I'm too fat a guy to go Nick Cartering all over a town. Pull up and get out, Mann; you'll make more money in the end."

"Not at all," Larry Mann said. "I hope your beer is cold enough."

I was still fishing for time. "By the way," I said, "Ellery Richards came crying to me, on the condition I didn't get him croaked. Give him back his pony, Larry; he's real fond of Red Roger, and that horse you've got in his barn must be worth a lot more than Roger."

"Sure," Larry Mann agreed. "Roger comes back—after the Stakes."

I said: "You sap, you're not going to go through with it, are you? Why, in five minutes I can have sixty cops up here; if they're not enough, I'll wire the capital and we'll add a couple of hundred State troopers to them."

Larry said: "You know, I kind of like you. Just because you carry a badge, you haven't got a swell head, Van. Yeah, we're going through with it. We stand to make a couple of hundred G's by this deal."

I was completely at sea now. And very damned scared. But I said: "You're a gambler—you lost on this one."

"Like hell we did," Larry Mann said. "Call the track and ask for your secretary. Another bottle of beer?"

I said: "No, thanks. I drank several hogsheads of it on a bet, at Schultz's." I had the phone in my hand. "Chief Eyck. Get my office at the track."

"Yeah,"—and Larry Mann nodded. "At Schultz's, where you croaked Joe Reynal. He was my cousin." He smiled.

A voice in my left ear said: "Track Police Office."

"This is Van Eyck. Let me talk to Miss Lindale."

"Why, Chief," the patrolman said, "she left half an hour ago, right after she got that message from you."

The pit of my stomach dropped, and my throat clogged up. "Is Tex there?"

"He's just coming in the door. . . . Here, wait a moment. The Chief, Tex."

I croaked: "Let the letters go. Bring that dough and that list back to 619 at the hotel." I hung up the phone and said: "A snatch, eh?"

Larry Mann said: "No more than that, if you play a little ball with us. We're good guys; but we picked your State because the suckers all believe they get a square deal here."

MAYBE it was the first time in my life my self-confidence cracked. I don't know. All I know is that I felt worse than I ever felt in my life. They had snatched Elizabeth and they were holding her till the ringer who was going to run under Red Roger's name had won his race, and come in for them at fifty to one, more or less. They had snatched Elizabeth, for whom I didn't care much more than I did for my right eye.

Not much more, anyway.

I shot my hand under the bookie's elbow and caught Gitale's wrist. . . . There was a cry of pain.

In the next couple of minutes almost any of my thoughts would have got me suspended by the Commission. After all, I thought, the whole racing business was just a gamble; and people oughtn't to bet money they couldn't afford to lose. What difference if they lost it on the square or on a stacked deal?

I thought how I'd risked my neck for the Racing Commission many times and then not got much more out of it than their lawyer, who'd sat smug and safe in an office while I was out carrying the law to the roughnecks. I thought how nearly every State in the Union that had racing had some crooked racing, and even if one dirty race was run in our home, we were still better than most.

I thought how I cared more for the fuzz on Elizabeth's hairbrush—and she not giving me a tumble—than I did for all the thoroughbreds in the world.

And I said, wearily: "All right, you win. Red Roger doesn't get scratched. Only, get your bookies out of town, and put the money on him at the track." Maybe I meant it, then.

Larry Mann said: "Be reasonable. Money bet at the track affects the track odds. We can't do that. We got to make a play on the outside."

I said: "You're just sticking your neck out. The whole Racing Commission will be up here for the Stakes. When they see the town crawling with bookies, what'll they want—they'll want to know why. If I don't tell them, they'll get a cop who will. There'll be an investigation."

"The girl goes free when Red Roger is posted as the winner, and we collect. In the meantime, you're going to get a

break. A friend of mine down in your home town is putting a check in your bank for five thousand, eight hundred and seventy-two dollars, exactly. You're going downtown with Forrester, here, and buy a special body sedan they got in one of the windows. Its drive-away price is five thousand, eight hundred and seventy-two dollars."

"I see." I did. Any investigation would show that they had bribed me with a "car as long as a block," as one of the jurors in a certain notorious case said. Just taking money, I could turn it right in to the Chairman, and say it was a bribe I had taken to get into the confidence of some crooks. Buying a car with the dough committed me, forever and a day.

"I thought you would," Larry Mann said. "I used to be a cop myself. An honest one, like you, a sucker. A couple of crooks higher up in the department framed me for their cover. I served two years in the pen."

I nodded. There's nothing worse in the world than the ex-cop turned heel. "Let me see the girl," I said. "I'm playing ball." And I guess I would have, too.

Larry Mann shook his head. "Sorry, Van Eyck. After the race."

Tex showed, then, and I got the money and the list from him. I turned them over to Mann, and I almost blushed under Tex's eyes. They were not reproachful; they were wise and understanding, and I knew that he was thinking that at last I had proved a crook, like most of the world. He was thinking that I had my price; and I did: it was Elizabeth.

Tex stepped out into the hall and Larry Mann stuck out his hand. "There's no use, or sense, in holding you," he said. "You'll behave. And if the word of a crooked gambler means anything to you, the girl won't be harmed if you don't interfere with us."

"Thanks," I said. "What crooked gamblers say doesn't mean much to me; but your word does." I got out of there as quickly as I could; that last remark told me that I was no longer the tough copper, but a kid, a little scared kid clutching at straws, trying to propitiate a tough crook, an ex-cop, with sweet and trusting words.

Tex was down the hall by the elevator. He didn't meet my eyes. I said: "Get Joe Lavery up to my room. On the double." I was down a flight, on the fifth; and I used the stairs, while Tex waited for an elevator.

Maybe the town smelled of trouble by now. Anyway, Joe made it up to my room as fast as anything I've ever seen. He said: "What's the score, Van? Tex was winking at me like he'd gone out of his head."

"Tex thinks I'm selling out," I said. I raised a hand to stop Joe. "He's right: I am. They've got Elizabeth, Joe. They're going to hold her till Red Roger's posted the winner."

Joe sat down, his face white. "O. K.," he finally said. It was like him that he never thought of letting Elizabeth down. "After she's loose, you and I'll go find 'em."

I told him about the car—how I'd either have to do everything in my power to cover for them, or take the rap myself.

"Well," Joe said, "there's other jobs."

"For guys who are supposed to have taken a bribe and then sold their pals out?" And I laughed.

HE said: "I got a hunch. Not much of a hunch, but something. Call this ex-copper—Larry Mann, you say?—and tell him I just came in with a story that there's a lot of smell around town that Red Roger's a ringer. He'll suggest that you go out there and tell the assembled suckers that this is the horse you've known all your life. Right?"

"And put myself on record as approving—" I broke off. "O. K., Joe. I'm dumb. You mean we might get a line on this Mann from the horse?"

"Where else?" Joe asked simply. "If we knew what horse it was—"

I reached for the phone. "Six-nineteen—Van Eyck. Let me talk to Larry.

. . . Hello, Larry. We can't go through with it . . . No, hold on, now. There's already a smell, and it'll be a stench before the race. The word's getting around town that there's something phony about Red Roger."

Larry Mann's smooth voice said: "That's what we got you for, Van. The honest guy, the guy who made a racket of being on the up-and-up! You go out to the track, and you make a big fuss of looking Red Roger over. Then you say he's all right, and the suckers'll continue to tumble dumb."

I said: "All right, but—"

"You heard me, Chief."

I HUNG up and said: "He fell for it, Joe. How much do you know about horses?"

He said, somberly: "The back end kicks, and the front end bites. You know anything?"

"About enough to run a saliva test and that's all. Even after we look at this nag, how're we going to be smart enough to know how to trace him?"

"We gotta be, Chief. . . . Hey! Tex used to be a cowhand, he says. He'd know about—"

"We can't bring Tex in on this. He has to go on thinking I'm a crook."

Joe nodded on that. "Yeah, I see. What does he care for Elizabeth? If he turned this gang in when you couldn't, he'd get your job." He stood up. "Come on, Chief."

I said: "I got a small idea. Not much, but a small one. Go out and buy a half-dozen candles, or better still, some of these cakes of paraffin your mother used to use to seal jelly. Meet me in the lobby. I'm going to pick up Richards."

"Maw never made jelly in her life," Joe Lavery said. "She was a hoofer in vaudeville."

I found Richards cowering in his room. He looked glad when he saw me, and that didn't make me feel any better. He'd been counting on me to get him out of this mess, and all I'd done was get myself into it. But I told him the score, because there was no sense in holding out on him. I was the only law he trusted; he wouldn't run to the Commission, the locals, or the State troopers.

Joe met us in the lobby with his pocket bulky. He didn't say anything, but gave me a sort of half salute: "You'll want the car, Chief?"

I nodded. It didn't take as smart a boy as Joe to know that we were tailed; Franny Forrester and another mug were ten feet behind us. When we piled into our heap, they got a car from the curb and wheeled it out into the thick traffic behind us.

Richards sat in the back; I sat next to Joe. Joe said: "I got paraffin. It's melting in my pocket."

"Good," I said. "This is the first time a guy my weight ever was thankful for hot weather." I fished the wax out of his pocket and unwrapped it. It was in a box, six long slabs of white, translucent stuff. I removed the paper from the slabs, keeping my hands low, and started kneading the stuff with my fingers. It softened almost at once, in all that heat. I made it into a ball and then flattened the sides, like a hamburger steak.

Joe said: "If I didn't know better, I'd think you was making mud-pies."

I said, over my shoulder: "Richards, how much do you know about horses?"

"Well, quite a bit," he said. "You know, I've been crazy about them since I was a kid. Say, once I had a pony who—"

"Let it go," I said. "Joe, while we're in the barn, go over to the office and draw about a thousand bucks. You won't need that much, but you better have it. Draw it against my account; I'm writing a check for you under the dash, here. They won't follow you; it's me they're watching."

Joe kept his eyes on the traffic.

"Yes, Chief."

WE went through the officials' gate into the track; the heels—they had never been far behind us—had to go in the other way. Richards and I got out and walked on slowly toward the stables; Joe stayed behind a few minutes. I knew he would pick up the check, change it for money and be in the car when I got back.

It surprised me a little that my feet moved so steadily, that the crowds who parted, muttering my name, didn't see the difference in me. Because I felt what I had never felt before: weak, and cold and helpless. I forced myself not to think of Elizabeth, locked up, maybe in a cellar some place, with a couple of gorillas guarding her who might be hopheads. For all that I didn't think Mann would hurt her,—he knew I'd get him if he did, honor and reputation or no,—I'd known gangsters and mugs to get out of hand. You don't get the finest

I was just inside the door when I heard footsteps coming across the pavement. It felt good to be in action again. . . . Franny Forrester started to fall; I socked him with the gat. I was thinking of Gitale, a thirty-eight in his hand, and so close to me that he had no chance of missing.

grade of skilled labor when you hire gunmen.

Richards said: "The one time I run to the law for help, I have to hit a copper who's carrying the torch."

I said, bitterly: "If you don't like it, go get some other law. They'll make you scratch your horse, and you'll be dead by morning."

He shut up.

WE went by the big barns and down toward Poverty Row, where a man can rent one stall at a time. Red Roger was down there—or was supposed to be. I looked behind me, and there was quite a crowd following us. Franny Forrester was in the middle of it. I winked at him.

Richards and I went into the stalls. Red Roger was in a big box stall, and I shut the upper half of the door, through which this horse had been shoving his red head, and turned on the light. All the time, my hand in my pocket was cuddling that ball of wax. I said: "Richards, you're the guy who knows horses. Can you tell me anything outstanding about this pony? You know, something so we could find out what horse he is, whom he belongs to?"

Ellery Richards said: "No. He's about Roger's age, a three-year-old, and his markings are almost the same. . . . Well, I'd know him—the white star on his forehead is a little different shape."

"You can't tell his breeding, or anything?"

"No, I don't think anyone could. After all—"

I sighed. "Ah, nuts with it! I wish to Gawd I'd gone to a cow-college. Look, we might as well play all our cards. Go out and send a swipe for the track vet."

Richards said: "All right, but it won't do you any good." He turned and went out.

I looked at this pony for a moment; then I said: "O. K., horse, be gentle." I'd opened horses' mouths before, but always when there was a groom or some one who really knew, to help me. I thought the way you did it was by reaching behind the teeth and squeezing. His mouth came open.

I popped my ball of wax in and let go. I nearly lost a finger, but a minute later the wax was back in my pocket. Richards and the track vet came in.

I said: "Hiya, Doc. There's been a little talk around town that this horse isn't Red Roger. Would you know?"

He started feeling the horse's legs, looking at his teeth, pounding his side. "A long three-year-old, fifteen three and a half, chestnut with a white star," he said, "I wouldn't know." He went and opened the door. "Here, boy, get me a sponge." When the sponge came, he used various stuff on it and scrubbed. "He's not dyed," he said finally. "Looks like Red Roger to me."

"Thanks, Doc," I said. "Your word's good enough for me." I stepped outside and raised my voice. "Guess it was just one of those rumors gamblers start to switch the public to a bad horse." I dropped my voice to Richards. "There's no real reason for you to hole up, any more. They won't hurt you if you do stay out at the track."

He nodded. I wanted to shake him, and I figured him as a sucker for the horse atmosphere. Some guys are that way; they'd rather smell horse-sweat than violets.

I walked slowly back toward the car. Remember, we were parked in the officials' gate enclosure; Franny Forrester and the other gun would have to leave me. I sat down beside Joe Lavery and saw Forrester and his man hurrying to get their car. I took the wax out of my pocket and said: "Keep it cool. If it melts, we're sunk. It's a cast of that pony's teeth; get out of town, and see as many of the track horse-dentists as you can. There are only about five in the East. If they shipped the horse in from the Coast, we're sunk."

JOE started the car and nosed it slowly out of the gate. The heels picked us up as we passed the main gate on the way to town. Joe said, slowly: "You're losing your grip, Van, just when you need it most. I'm going down home and have casts made of this: I got a cousin who works in a dentist's office, and she'll help me with the plaster of Paris and all. They'll go out tonight to our correspondents; we'll get an answer tomorrow. We can be sure no talk gets around."

I said: "I should have thought of that. I—I'm not doing so well."

He said: "Take it easy, Van. We got a line, now, if the teeth come through: a guy who used to be an ex-cop, and knows a racing owner well enough to borrow a horse. We'll spot him, Van."

I said: "Yeah. We got to put the heat on this Larry Mann without his knowing it's coming from us. A guy

like that's sure to have something in his past, isn't he, Joe?"

"Sure he is, Van. Hey, Chief, get a grip on yourself. Stop it, Chief. What're you making those noises for?"

I dug my fingernails into my palms and said: "I think maybe I'm crying, Joe." Me, the tough Chief Van Eyck, the hard-boiled racing copper!

MAYBE you'll believe I didn't get much sleep that night. I knew I must get rested so I could think. There was the possibility that no racing-horse dentist had ever done any work on that pony's teeth. Though that was a good hunch, because racing baby horses, as we do, they have to be helped through their teething, which goes right on through the major years of their racing; a horse doesn't get all his permanent teeth till he's four and a half.

I'd lost money once because a three-year-old's teeth were bothering him on the day of a race, and that was when I learned about horse-dentists. So it was a good hunch that some horse-dentist might recognize that mouth. What I wanted was a line on some reputable racing owner who might be mixed up in this.

Finally, supposing Larry Mann was on the up-and-up? If he knew I was pinching him, I was fairly sure that Elizabeth would die. What I had to do was find something he'd .done some other place, sometime, and then go to him as a friend and tell him out-of-town coppers were looking for him. I didn't dare get him mad at me.

As nearly as I could tell, I'd played my one card, and it was a good one, but no ace. So I tried to sleep; but every time I shut my eyes, I thought of Elizabeth and where she might be, and what might be happening to her.

I got up and did paper work, routine stuff like checking Mac's charts of where he had put his uniformed men, and inspecting the reports from our cops about known crooks run out of town; but lots of times I couldn't see the paper. I told myself it was the heat.

At two o'clock in the morning there was a rap on my door. I jumped like I'd been shot, and almost ran over to it, my hand on my gun. When I opened it, it was Franny Forrester. He said: "Larry wants to see you."

I nodded and shrugged into a coat to hide my shoulder holster. Then I followed him up a flight to the ring's room. Larry Mann was waiting for us in the inner room. He took one look at me and said: "You look awful, Chief. I hate to do this to a right guy like you."

Hating his guts, I was still affable. I had to be. I said: "Business is business."

"We stand to make over a hundred grand if Red Roger wins," Larry said. "And the race still four days off."

"I don't see how your guys get the suckers to bet with you. Unknown, and all—"

"I had a connection," Larry explained. "I borrowed agents from regular bookies in other States. They had their following, each of 'em."

"I see." Here I was sleuthing around, and this mug seemed to know everyone. But I'd never heard of him before. "You're going to have to cover them, then, if Roger loses."

"Yeah. But that horse can't lose against the goats he's racing. Ten grand added aint much of a race."

"No. Not for Kentucky or New York, or even Maryland." I watched his face to see if any of those names brought a flicker, but of course they didn't.

Larry Mann said: "I understand you sent your Number One dick out of town."

"Joe Lavery, yeah. He might have tumbled wise. He stands in line to get my job if he could show me up."

"Oh!" Larry Mann grinned at Forrester. "I told Franny you were a right guy. Of course you'd want him out of the way. Well, Chief, I thought I'd give you a break. You know this handwriting?" He tossed a slip of paper over to me.

On it was the date and Elizabeth's signature. I said: "Thanks, pal."

"You know she's alive. I thought maybe it would make you feel better. Once I was crazy about a dame too. . . . Wednesday night, you and she'll be eating dinner together. What the hell?"

"What the hell, pal! Thanks for the break. Anything else you want?"

"Franny'll take you down tomorrow to get that bus. After all, you're getting a six-grand car out of the deal."

"Yeah. Good night."

I WENT back to my room and suffered some more. The hardest thing was to keep from nosing around town looking for Elizabeth. But I was afraid if I got too warm, the look-outs—and they would have look-outs—might kill her. I lay on my bed and didn't sleep.

Eventually it was dawn; and dawn means the beginning of another day. It

had its problems. This was the opening day of a meeting, and usually I was busy, though Joe Lavery handled the details of the plain-clothes work, and old MacNamara the uniformed men.

The first thing I did was call Tex at the boarding-house he was using. "Joe had to go home, Tex. You've been acting as his assistant, haven't you? Take over. Let's see how good you are."

"Yes sir!"

Then old Mac called me. "Miss Elizabeth left the office yesterday without making out the passes for the gate. We haven't any paper for the free list, Van!"

I told him: "Mac, something's come up. Never mind what it is; take my word it's important. If you haven't got some kid on your staff who can type, hire a steno in town. And handle as much as you can, will you, Mac?"

He was a different breed from Tex. He said: "There won't be any trouble with the harness bulls this day, Van!" Then he got off the phone so as to give me free rein to do whatever I was doing.

Every time a bell rang down in the street, or any place, or a clock struck, I'd jump for the phone. I began to curse Joe Lavery with a reasonless, wholehearted cursing—because he didn't call up, though it was too early.

Well, I thought of something I could do. I got out the form-sheets. I began copying down every chestnut three-year-old who had won a big race. This horse had to be good, and he had to be the right height.

You'd be surprised how many fast races there are. At Hialeah, a horse had done the mile in 1:135, which is record. There was the winner of the Texas Derby, and the other big Texas race. There were fast horses who'd run on the Coast, in Maryland, at Chicago, New York, all kinds of places. There were a couple of hundred horses who were better, really, than anything entered for the Cranville Stakes. But the fact that it was a Futurity, and not a well-known one, eliminated them all. They hadn't been entered before birth.

Out of the couple of hundred—and I was not through the list yet—forty of them were chestnuts, and over fifteen but under sixteen hands. Twelve fitted the height exactly. Of course, that's just about perfect racing height.

I went on, writing 'em down, making my list. The phone rang—Joe Lavery.

"Van," he said, "it's no go. Two different tooth-pullers claim to recognize that mouth. One of 'em's in Louisiana —or rather, he says, he was in Louisiana when he did some work on a nipper; the other's in Chicago. All the returns aren't in yet."

"All right. Who were the horses?"

THE Chicago horse was a native out there; Buddy Mine. The other one belonged to Godfrey Nelston, only the dentist couldn't remember the horse's name. I ran through the forms; Buddy Mine was not a better horse than Red Roger, not as good. Godfrey Nelston had so many horses you wouldn't even believe me if I told you.

It was a hunch, though maybe not a good one, that I'd had. It looked as if it was washed up. Well, at least I could try. I picked up the phone and asked the room clerk if Nelston was registered. He said no, and since this was the only hotel in Cranville, that was that.

I lay down on the bed again, thinking my unhappy thoughts, and the phone rang again. I grunted into it. The room clerk said: "Mr. Nelston is staying at the Wright place out near the track. I just remembered."

I said, "Thanks," and got up.

The hotel had back stairs, but I didn't dare use them. I mustn't look as though I were trying to avoid Larry Mann and his boys. So I went out the front way and saw one of the rods—the one who had been with Franny Forrester —pick me up.

I couldn't go through with it. If Nelston was the right man, they'd get sus-

picious as soon as I went near him, and that might mean curtains for Elizabeth. If Nelston wasn't the right man, any questions I might ask him would do more harm than good.

So I drove the car around town as though I just wanted air,—it was hot enough,—parked it at the track and went in. I didn't go near the office; I was in no mood for work. I climbed up into the stands and watched them limbering horses in the infield, and watched the rod out of the corner of my eye. After a while he was joined by Spud Gitale with his arm in a sling.

The cops' office at Cranville looks out on the stand. I watched it too. And I saw that even this early in the day they were doing a pretty good business there. With me and Joe away, it'd be tough on Tex and the other plain-clothes—

I saw it with my own eyes. I saw Godfrey Nelston come out of the little police building, and Tex was with him. They were talking fast, and intensely.

I got up. I stretched. I felt swell. I walked to my car, giving Franny and his wrist-twisted pal plenty of time to tail me. The only thing I did at all covertly was to avoid going near Tex and his high-powered consultant.

I turned my car away from Cranville. The next town that I could think of was Austerville, and it was twenty miles away. As soon as I was sure the heels were trailing me, I stepped on the gas. When I did seventy, they did too; it didn't take us long to get to Austerville.

My memory for places is good. I'd been in Austerville only two or three times on business, but I remembered the way. So I didn't go down the main street, but down a little street that was almost an alley—Division Street—and I parked in front of what looked like a combination livery-stable and garage.

After I had lit a cigarette, the gun boys parked behind me. I got out of the car slowly and strolled into the horsy-smelling entrance of the building; they got out and started after me.

Just inside the door I ducked behind a watering-trough. It was dark and cool; I heard footsteps coming across the pavement; then the sun in the doorway was partly blocked. My hand connected with some one's coat. Buddy, it felt good to be in action again! I pulled, and Franny Forrester's knees hit the watering-trough, and he started to fall. I let go and socked him over the head with the gat, and there was a splash and the horses' water was spilled; but I wasn't thinking about water. I was thinking of Spud Gitale, holding a thirty-eight in his left hand, and so close to me that he had no chance of missing.

I fired, pointblank, and he did too, and I went over backward, and hit my head on the concrete floor, and that was all.

WHEN I came to, a lot of guys were around me, and they were all wearing uniforms. Sure, this was the stable of a State Police barracks. You don't think I was going to stage a battle just any place, do you?

A lieutenant said: "You're Van Eyck, aren't you?"

I sat up and felt the goose egg on the top of my head. I said: "Yeah. What happened to the other guy?"

"The other one in the watering-trough? He's still out. Here, we better send for a doctor. You're plugged in your shoulder. It didn't miss your chest-cavity much."

I said: "Lieutenant, you know my reputation. Can I count on you boys to keep this under your hats for eight hours?"

The trooper said: "Well—"

I said: "It's a snatch. They took my secretary to make me help them frame a race. I haven't been able to do a thing for a day, because I was afraid if I fought them, they'd kill her. Now I've got a line, and I have to act fast. These two were put on to tail me, because their boss was afraid I'd fight back. Now I'm fighting."

The lieutenant looked less dubious. "Why didn't you call the Federals—under the Lindbergh?"

"This isn't a regulation snatch. There's no ransom, and the Feds can't work except by paying ransom. Hold the live one in a cell and the dead one in your cellar, and keep your mouths shut, boys."

"For eight hours."

"That's all. Now take me to a phone."

My shoulder hurt like the devil, but they put some kind of dope in the wound from a first-aid kit while I got Joe Lavery at the home office. I said: "Joe, some place, sometime, Godfrey Nelston was pinched for something or other. The cop who let the indictment fall through lost his job over it. I don't know where, but Tex was working the same place, I'm pretty sure. Get a line on it; call me back, here."

I must say the Van Eyck office has good connections. Joe called back in ten minutes and said: "Norlich Downs, in the South. Nelston ran over a girl when he was drunk. A cop named Mensch made the pinch; when Nelson was brought up, the cop said he couldn't swear Nelston had been drinking, and that it was his impression the girl was crossing against the lights. There was some local rumpus about it, but Mensch skipped town."

"O. K. Get a cop Tex doesn't know and fly him to Cranville. Tell him to go right to the cop office at the track, and to tell the dick in charge that he's seen me, and I said I was off duty. He's to be a cop from Norlich, come up to bring Mensch home. He'll recognize Tex as much as Tex's record thinks he ought to be recognized."

"Yes, Chief," Joe said. "I'm going up with him."

He'd have come, no matter what happened. I said: "O. K."

I couldn't put my arm in a sling. Luckily it was my left one; I shoved it into my pocket, and put my gat in my right-hand pocket, and got a trooper to change into plain-clothes and drive me back to Cranville.

I went up to Larry Mann's room. I had to work very fast, there; when they saw me, they would expect Forrester and Gitale right behind me, and I had to get my trouble-shooting done quickly. Mann was with some boys I

There was Elizabeth—tape over her mouth, hands tied behind her back.

hadn't seen before, and he was counting money.

He said: "Hello, Chief. Be with you in a minute."

My pale face was accounted for by the fact that I was leaking blood fast, but he couldn't know that. I said: "It's important." In my head I was figuring air time from home to here; the cop and Joe ought to be in by now. It had been a half hour since I phoned.

Larry Mann said: "Wait in the other room, boys."

When we were alone I said: "What the hell, Larry? Forrester and Gitale have taken a run-out powder on you."

"They have not," he said. "Those boys—"

I said: "Wasn't one of them named Mensch? As I was getting out of my car, a man came up and showed me a badge. He's from down South, up here to serve a warrant on some one named Mensch. Said he'd heard he was in town. The boys left right away—said to tell you they were washed."

"The heels!" Larry Mann was thoughtful. "They sold me out. They think this mug'll take me away, and they can split the dough before—" He broke off and looked at me. "You wouldn't be bluffing, would you?"

I shook my head. "With my girl in the hole some place?"

Time had done it. The phone rang. Larry snatched it up, and this time he wasn't at all cautious. The apples were spilled. He said: "Yeah, Tex. The—yeah, Van Eyck told me."

He rang off. "This cop's always at your office out at the track?"

I said: "I told him I was off duty, and to go see the dick out there."

"The heels!" Larry Mann said again. "I'll be able to beat that rap—you can buy anything down there with the dough I have now. But I'll have to be away a couple of weeks—"

HE reached for the phone, called a number, said he must talk to Mr. Nelston. Oh, how right I had been!

"Nelston, that old matter's come up again. The charges I ran out on. You gotta—"

Nelston must have turned him down cold. There was some sputtering in the phone; I waited. Mann hung up and said: "This guy won't take a bribe. If he would, he'd have come right here before walking around town telling every cop who he was after—"

I said: "Look! You've treated me square. I got it. You and I get in your car. When he comes to pinch you,—I gather you're Mensch,—I'll say you're not, that I've known you all my life. With my rep—"

Larry Mann said: "Chief, you're all right. Sure. And this evening, when Forrester and Gitale get ready to split my dough, I'll walk in on 'em—"

"I have my price," I said. "Elizabeth Lindale is riding in the car with us, or I don't play."

"Hell, yes!" He grabbed a hat and got out.

We went downstairs, fast. Just as we were getting into my car,—he first, because I told him to drive,—Joe Lavery, in another Commission car, stopped behind us. I'd never seen the man with Joe before, but I said: "That's the boy, there. Duck your head and get out of here."

He took a quick look back and threw gears around. "I never saw him before, but I guess they got lots of new cops down there. Why not wait, and—"

"The girl," I said. "Go get the girl."

He started the car, but he kept on arguing. "You know I'm a right guy, Chief. If I saw—"

"Me too. Only my rightness has been printed in the papers. Go on—the girl!"

SHE was where I thought she would be; only, I'd been right about other things too. If I'd driven over to see Nelston, she'd have been croaked. There were men lounging all around the old Wright place, three or four men. Larry Mann waved to them, and they let us through, but if I'd been alone—

Elizabeth was in a guest cottage in the rear. We drove up this winding drive, and we never went near the house at all. Another man stepped out of the shrubbery as Larry stopped the car; but he saw Mann and disappeared again.

Larry Mann rapped a couple of times on this cottage door, and a mug in his shirt-sleeves opened up. There was a gun in his armpit.

We went through another door, and there was Elizabeth on a bed. She had tape over her mouth, and her hands were tied behind her, and there was a woman watching her—an old hawk of a woman, with *hophead* written all over her.

I ripped off the tape, fast—the best way to do it; and Elizabeth began moving her lips. I cut the rope on her hands, and right around them; she managed to

say: "You don't have to be so rough, Van. What kept you so long?"

I grinned, and squeezed her hands. "They hurt you, kid?"

"Not much."

"I figured you were just trying to get a day off. We had to hire an extra steno. —Come on, Mann."

I wanted to get out of there before I forgot myself and took a sock at some one. I had to help Elizabeth out to the car. It was pretty hard work, considering that my left side didn't function at all any more.

Larry Mann said: "You guys can break up. Pass the word along." The man who had opened the door nodded.

Mann drove the car down the winding road again, and started to turn into the highway. Joe Lavery's car cut across us and blocked us. I had Elizabeth on my bad side; I muttered: "Get ready to duck."

Joe was fast with his brain as well as with a gun. He and this cop he'd hired ran over, and Joe said: "Chief, you know who that is you're driving with?"

I said: "Yeah. This is Larry Mann, a kid I went to school with. Back in Missouri. He has an automobile agency there now, and he's here for the races."

Joe pretended to look dumbfounded. He said: "Well, if the Chief says so—"

The man he was with barked: "This guy looks exactly like Jerome Mensch. I got a warrant—"

Joe strong-armed him back to the car, shouting: "If the Chief says so, it's so!"

Larry Mann threw the car ahead. He muttered: "Thanks, pal. You're the only honest copper in the business. I knew you was a right guy."

I said: "Sure. I told you I'd front for you with that copper, and now I have. —Duck, Betty! —Mann, you're under a pinch for kidnaping."

Elizabeth jerked hold of the top of the seat and sprawled over it into the back. Mann squawked and went for his gun. I fished mine out of my pocket and turned to keep from shooting him.

I TRIED too long; for he fired first, and then when I fired, I broke a windshield, and then it was too close to shoot, because we were grabbing at each other; and then Elizabeth hit him over the head with a wrench or a jack-handle or something, and then a car came tearing down the road like a bat out of hell.

I thought it might be Joe, but it was the men he had told to drop the plant at Nelston's. I saw them tumbling out of the car and trying to get Mann; and I saw Elizabeth defending herself with her hunk of iron; but I saw all this through a red haze, because I was dancing around the road in little circles, going down fast; the wound in my left side had opened up again, and I knew I was going, and my gun suddenly clicked empty. I knew I had fired enough. And then I saw Joe Lavery. Then I went down.

AFTER a long time I opened my eyes again. Elizabeth said: "Maybe fat isn't a bad thing. You had two bullets in you, only the doctor pulled them out. I guess the fat stopped them from doing any damage."

"What happened?"

"Joe and that man he hired from another agency got there just as you went down. Anyway, the State troopers were on their way; it sounded like the Fourth. Mann's dead and the whole thing's in the papers; Joe had Tex heaved in jail till you could file a charge. They brought something over from the trooper barracks, and put him in jail too; the lieutenant wants to know the charge. I hear you and Joe did some real brainwork for a change."

"Yes," I said. "With the way you keep the files, we were scared to have you die. We'd have never straightened out the papers again. So we couldn't act till we were sure. Nelston seemed above suspicion. But I should have fallen wise to Tex—some one had to tell a bunch of out-of-towners what I thought of you, and how to get you. It was Tex, all right."

"Red Roger's been scratched. Joe Lavery is getting Nelston to return him, and Richards is going to get him and the other horse too. Joe wants to know should he have Nelston pinched."

I shook my head. "No," I said. "He was blackmailed into it. Probably Larry Mann has been blackmailing him ever since Mann skipped a bond to keep from testifying about that girl Nelston ran over." I looked around. "What are you punching that bell for, Betty?"

She said automatically: "Don't call me Betty—I'm punching the bell, as you so elegantly put it, for some of the Pilsener I brought over from the hotel for you. Do you want a kiss before it gets here? Not that I care, only I've never kissed a man in a hospital."

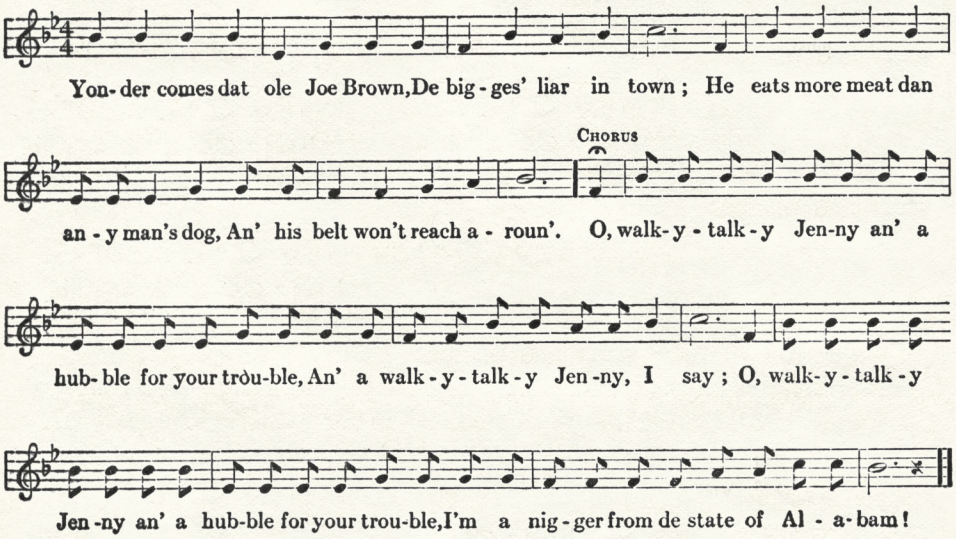
When her lips were near my ear, she said: "You're a right guy! Thanks."

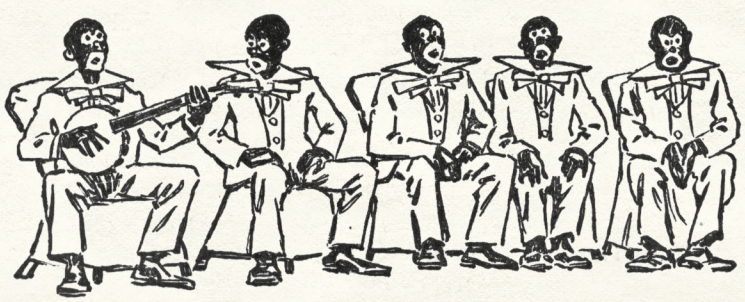
Made in America

WALKY-TALKY JENNY

THIS has the saunter and the swagger of the Southern mountaineers when they are having a luminous good time. Its style is comic rather than humorous; it has dangerous moods; its eyes have odd twinkles from under the hat-brim; it says to the city slicker: "You-all better looka out; we might be tellin' you to not let the sun go down on you hereabouts."

This version of "Walky-Talky Jenny" came from H. Luke Stancil of Pickens County, Georgia. He wrote the verses and monologues on the porch of the Holden home in Athens, Georgia, a house which is the residence of a niece and grandniece of Alexander Stephens. Long ago, perhaps before the Civil War, a minstrel troupe played one-night stands in the valley towns, performed with this song, and it was picked up by the mountaineers and made into what we have here. The mingling of comic bucolic monologue with song lines and chorus was a minstrel feature.





Several hundred of our pioneer songs have been gathered by Carl Sandburg, and published

Guaranteed Antiques of Song and Story

Edited by CARL SANDBURG

Author of "Abraham Lincoln," "Smoke and Steel," "The People, Yes!" etc.

I went down de road de udder day, I did, I did, so I did. When I got down dere I seed an ole man settin' on de bank o' de road, an' I says, "Hey! ole man, what time is it?" He said, "'Bout one o'clock," an' about dat time he knocked me down twice 'fore I could get up once. I said, "Ole man, I sho' would hate to pass yo' house 'bout twelve o'clock. If you eber do cross my path ag'in, I'm gwine-a make you—

Sing chorus:

O, walky-talky Jenny an' a hubble for your trouble,
An' a walky-talky Jenny, I say;
O, walky-talky Jenny an' a hubble for your trouble,
I'm a nigger from de State of Alabam!

I went on down de road a little fudder, I did, I did, so I did. I got down dere an' I seed a great big fine house afire. Dat house sho' was a-burnin' up. I got up a little closer an' seed somebody settin' up on top o' dat air house. I got up a little closer an' seed it was ole Aunt Dinah. I says: "Ole gal, yo' sho' am in a mell of a hess. I wonder how yo' gwine to git down from dere." I got up a little closer an' stuck a plank up to de side o' de house an' said: "Ole gal, yo' slide down dat air plank!" Here she come, a-slidin' down into my arms. When she got down dere, she made a face at me. I says: "Ole gal, what am de matter wid you?" She says: "I don' know, mister, dere musta been a little nail in dat air plank, mighta scratched me a little as I come down." I says: "Ole gal, yo' de bigges' fool I eber did see. If you eber do cross my path again, I'm gwine-a make you—

Sing chorus:

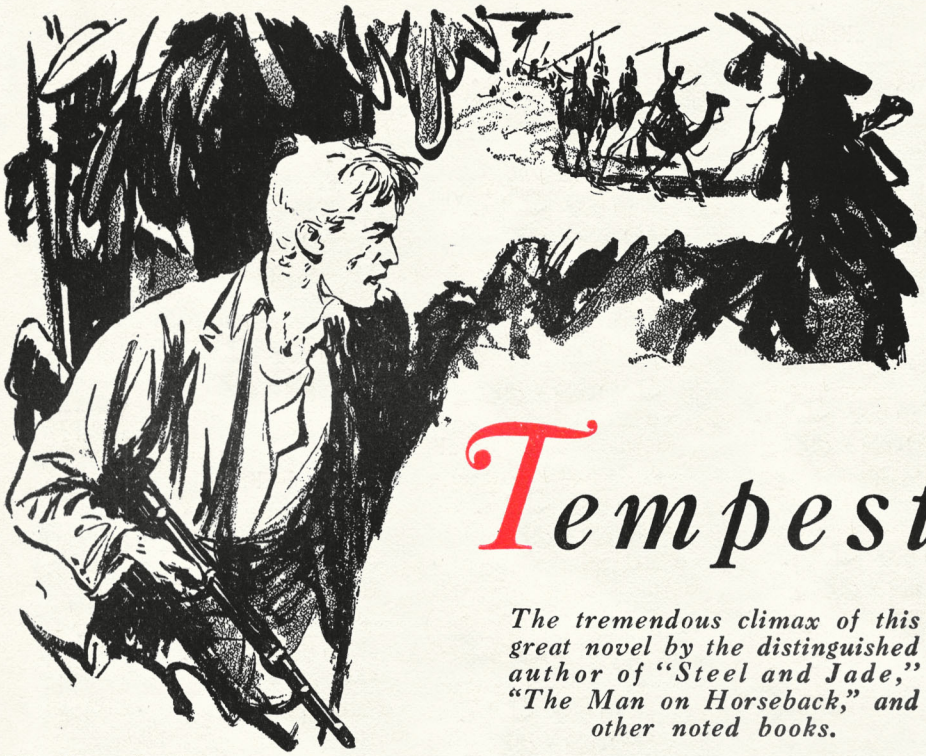
O, walky-talky Jenny an' a hubble for your trouble,
An' a walky-talky Jenny, I say;
O, walky-talky Jenny an' a hubble for your trouble,
I'm a nigger from de State of Alabam!

I went on down de road a little fudder, I did, I did, so I did. I went down in my corn patch to see how my field was a-growin'. I got down dere an' along come a punkin runnin' along, an' he picked up a calf in his mouth an' trotted off wid it. I went back to de house an' dere stood my baby in de door wid my wife in her arms. I stood dere a few minutes an' here come a little ole bark around de house a-doggin'. I put my pocket down in my hand, pulled out my tail an' cut his knife off. "Ole dog, if you eber do cross my path again, I'm gwine-a make you—

Sing chorus:

O, walky-talky Jenny an' a hubble for your trouble,
An' a walky-talky Jenny, I say;
O, walky-talky Jenny an' a hubble for your trouble,
I'm a nigger from de State of Alabam!

in book form by Harcourt Brace and Company, under the title "The American Songbag."



Tempest

The tremendous climax of this great novel by the distinguished author of "Steel and Jade," "The Man on Horseback," and other noted books.

The Story So Far:

HE was a perfectly sane young New Yorker named James M'Gregor; yet the reasons which led to his finding himself broke in Addis Ababa early in the war, and to his afterward undertaking a desperate mission of international importance—these might well have made you think him crazy. Probably he was something of a nut, at that; for he was a musician, a song-writer who yearned to write really great music—in particular, to finish his masterpiece "The African Symphony."

Moreover, Jim was in love, and when was an honest lover altogether sane? Kathleen O'Grady, her name was; her father was the Dan O'Grady who had made so much money in mines and such. "Don't blame you," said O'Grady when Jim spoke to him about Kathleen. "But the answer is no." Not because he was poor, O'Grady conceded, but because he needed an alloy. What Jim needed was an alloy of baser metal that would harden him—teach him to fight. . . . And the worst of all this was that Kathleen agreed with her father.

Pacing the streets that night, Jim wandered into Harlem; and suddenly a wild weird tune from a shuttered café woke the musician in him. He made his way inside—and found himself menaced by a gun in a strange gathering of dark men who were not negroes. He explained that he was a musician, that he simply must hear that music again—must have it for his African symphony. A white man named Garatinsky, who seemed the leader of this strange group, spoke sharply: "No! Impossible."

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

"Yes. There is such a place." He laughed disagreeably. "In Addis Ababa."

"Ethiopia!" Jim mused, as he tramped homeward. There was talk of a war there. . . . Dan and Kathleen thought him too soft, that he needed to learn to fight. . . . And there he could get the material to finish his African symphony. Crazy as it was, Jim took ship for Africa.

The journey cost more than he'd expected; and though he got to his goal of Addis Ababa, he soon found himself broke—and thrown out of an Armenian hotel on his ear. He earned a little money singing in a café. That night it was when, wandering in the darkness on the outskirts of the town, he heard that wild weird strain of music that had so fascinated him in Harlem. He made his way via a balcony to the roof of the palm-wood structure whence came the savage music, and peered through a crack. The scene within was even more

Over Africa

By ACHMED ABDULLAH

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

savage: a company of strange men chanting in the torchlight before a monstrous idol; and one of these men was seized, stripped, and carried to an altar. And while mystic words seemed to come from the idol's mouth, Jim looked helplessly on the actuality of a human sacrifice.

Later, Jim met an American negro named Brown, who had lived some time in Abyssinia; and Brown took him to the bedside of a dying zealot, a missionary named Frazer, who had been poisoned by emissaries of a dreadful conspiracy. For somewhere in Abyssinia, Frazer had learned, was a secret and sinister broadcasting station which sent out continual propaganda: inciting the Ethiopians to slave-raiding—which would justify European intervention; provoking rebellion and riot in Egypt and Palestine; sending out atheistic and ultra-red programs to Spain; stirring up war and hatred all over the world. . . . Frazer was dying because of his knowledge; and two other men who had sought to locate this lair of Satan, had been killed. . . . And that night Jim M'Gregor, who had come to Africa to prove his manhood, found himself embarked with the negro Brown upon a terrific journey across this wild highland of Abyssinia, sworn to find and destroy this mouthpiece of evil. *(The story continues in detail:)*

MILE after mile of lonely steppes, drab and tan, quiet, muffled, with no shocks of green verdure, with nothing in color or contour to jar the sober symphony; with a mere suspicion of rolling hills that seemed as if dovetailed into the tight, blue-gray horizon—like an empty theater abandoned to the ghosts of yesterday, the thought came to Jim.

There were, away from the river, few fertile stretches; here and there a squat, crouching skin tent pitched under the crest of the great yellow dunes or in some wrinkle of the rock face of the waste. Few humans. Only occasionally a half-naked savage working a pebbly field of small-grained wheat, pounding along doggedly with head downcast, as brutish as the oxen which he guided, bare feet dragging through the furrows as he pulled against the plow. Or some gnarled, berry-brown old woman leaning on a thorn stick, staring with her cold peasant eyes into the hot sinking of the sun; near by her scant flock, the goats bleating plaintively to be milked. Or a horseman jogging along sulkily, his jaw bound mummy-fashion against the wind and sharp, driving sand. And no attention paid to Jim and Brown, not even the faintest curiosity.

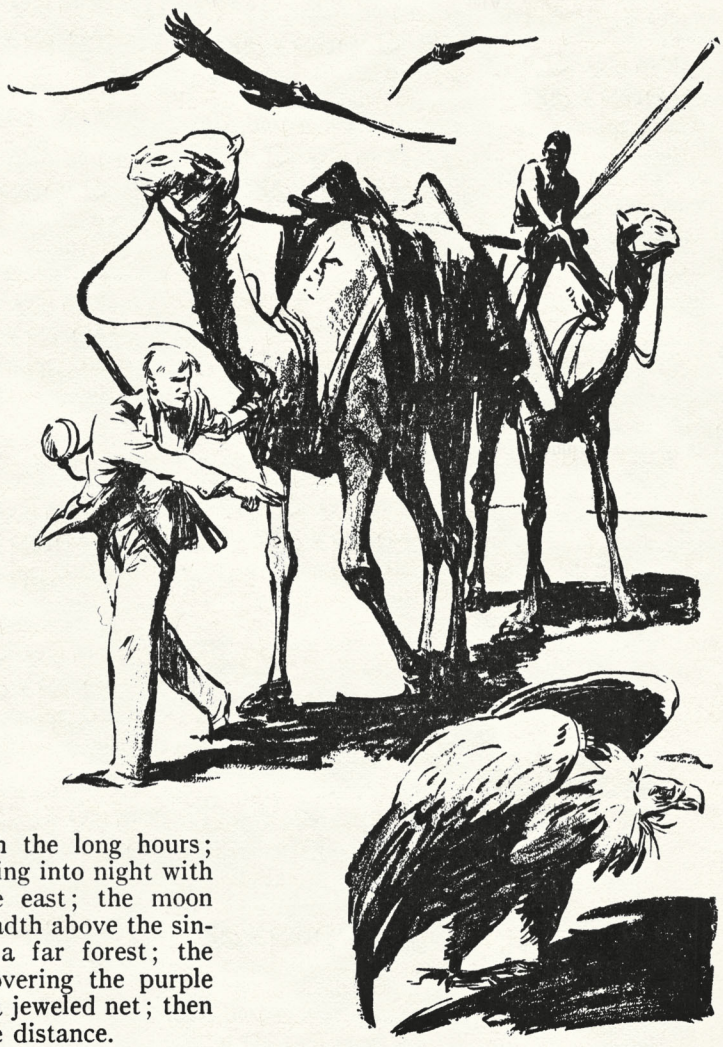
Let all the world ride past on prancing camels. Pah—what did they care?

Let Italy win, or Ethiopia. Again—pah—what did they care?

For they were people of meager living and prosy soul, bred to the frowning desert where there was no foaming plenty of nature. Life here was too hard and bitter. It could not rise above the tough facts of the soil.

Jim felt it. He was depressed. So was Brown.

It weighed upon them—made them morose, silent through the long hours; through evening blending into night with Sirius glowing in the east; the moon dropping a hand's breadth above the sinister fringed rim of a far forest; the stars trooping out, covering the purple velvet of the sky like a jeweled net; then camp at last, at a safe distance.



Hours later, they once more saw the antelope carcass. . . . Jim sneered: "You are a hell of a guide—bragging how well you know this country, fourflusher!"

There Brown told the other the news he had picked up in the camp of the *ras;* partly amongst the *zabanias* and partly from the pouting lips of the *ras'* private secretary, a fat, witty, silken, rather effeminate Egyptian with painted eyelids, gilt fingernails and a charming taste in Persian poetry.

News, of course, of the war.

The Italians driving resolutely on three fronts, pushing troops and building roads: from Eritrea to the region on the other side of Mount Mussa-Ali; southeast in the Ogaden sector; and south along the Webie Shebeli valley. Haile Selassie steadily retreating, replying to the wholesale, mechanical barbarities of tanks of poison gas and bombing planes with Abyssinia's own more primitive barbarities of torture and mutilation.

News, too, at least if one read between the lines, which involved Garatinsky's and Abdelkader's conspiracy. Not that their names were mentioned; surely not in the press notices given out by Italian officials to foreign war correspondents.

News also, of a miracle among a tribe living near a lone mountain known as the Tooth of Time: the priests and headmen of this region, it appeared, possessed strange little metal contraptions which, held to the ear, enabled one at

night to hear the music of the stars and the voices of the gods. ("Could they be old-fashioned 'crystal' receiving-sets?" Jim mused. If so, that sinister broadcasting station must be somewhere in the vicinity, for the range of a crystal set was only a few miles.)

News, finally, of certain gossip which, these last few weeks, had been going the rounds of Addis Ababa; filtering from humble *chicka* hovels to the Emperor's proud *gibbi,* from the Café Makonnen to the Cathedral of St. George, from Post Office Square to the foreign legations and consulates—causing consternation amongst Europe's diplomats, while the minister of the United States had chuckled and said nothing at all.

FOR it appeared that an American millionaire business man had obtained enormous oil and mineral concessions from Haile Selassie—who, heckled on the subject by the representatives of England and France, had announced that it was none of their business, that he was the ruler, his the right to dispose of his country's resources as he saw fit; and that, to quote him literally, "was it a crime to ask an American, a citizen of a friendly, disinterested and democratic nation, to lend a helping hand in developing Ethiopia's vast potential riches, thereby improving the living conditions and lessening the burden of the poor?" Besides, he had given a promise to the American; and—by the blessed Trinity! —he was going to keep it.

Then pressure had been brought to bear on the millionaire, who, as it happened, was passing through London. A British statesman had called on him; had varied subtle flattery by subtle threats—to receive decidedly unvarnished answer:

"Say, Sir Walter—who invited you to sit in on this game?"

"I am merely suggesting a bit of advice. The money which you are proposing to invest—"

"Forget it! You can't bully me; and you can't soft-soap me—see? I invest my dough where and how I please. And if you don't like it—well, you know what you can do, don't you?"

Thus, more or less, the gossip of Addis Ababa; and Jim, listening to Brown, reconstructing in his mind what the other, not knowing, did not tell, smiled reminiscently.

"Sounds like old Dan O'Grady," he reflected. And against his will he fell to thinking of Kathleen. . . .

ON and on they rode, day after day, grudging each hour of rest, across the desert the other side of the Assassibafourou hills that were an opaline welter of peaks on the horizon, blurred and wiped-over, a mirage beyond a mirage.

There was here no life. Life with its turmoil and news, its gayeties and its sorrows, its loves and its hate, its physical clamor and its mental clatter, had ceased.

There was hardly a distinctiveness of outer form. Just a hazy vagueness, all-enveloping: the soul of the infinite, where existence was but momentary foam.

Yet there was no monotony. For the dunes shifted and traveled; the sand-hills dissolved, rebuilt, dissolved again—lifting sculptured edges against the shimmering pigeon-blue of the sky, swelling like serried waves, patterning the waste with an exquisite design of gold and mauve and violet.

Not a tree nor a shrub nor a clump of hardy grass. A region of ancient primordial desolation, cursed, even before its birth, with planetary death—and death to the wayfarer who found no water or lost his way.

They found no water-hole—only a dry-glistening sardonic lake of salt and saltpeter—on the seventy-third day out of Addis Ababa.

They found a shallow pool on the seventy-fourth day. It contained barely enough water to half-fill Brown's canteen with the brackish liquid, Jim's still being full.

They finished Jim's on the seventy-fifth day, again finding no water between dawn and dawn.

They lost their way on the next day.

AT first they were not certain that they were lost, although they felt it, each in the subconsciousness of his own mind.

But neither voiced his misgivings, lest somehow speech should materialize into dread reality. And then reality came—hard, jeering, not to be gainsaid or argued out of existence. For earlier in the morning Jim had sighted a gazelle. With Brown following, he had set off in pursuit, cutting away from the dim caravan trail. He had shot the gazelle. They had eaten; had sliced off and taken along a few steaks and had left the rest behind.

Now, some hours later, they saw once more the carcass. It was almost covered by a cloud of vultures.

They looked at each other. They did not say a word.

Silence was all around them.

A gust of wind broke the silence. It set the wilderness into motion, with a mysterious, droning symphony of sounds, as though the tearing pace of the earth, launching itself through the eternities of space and time, had suddenly become audible.

At that moment fear rushed upon Jim full-armed. Fear no longer suffused with the keen thrill and elation of adventure, but fear that was a sheer stark horror. He was brave enough to admit it. And a blind, mute anger came to him.

He threw stones at the vultures. They flew off with a great lumbering thunder of black wings; cawing harshly, mockingly, as if to tell him:

"Presently we'll be back. And then we'll pick out your eyes—pick your bones clean and white."

HE shrugged his shoulders wearily. He had known all the time, he reflected, that Africa hated him, would suck him under and kill him. . . . Well—let death come. Let it come soon. The sooner, the better! A dead man did not feel the burning heat, did not suffer from thirst and fatigue, did not mind the sweat and stench and itch.

Listlessly he sat down—was ironically amused as he realized that his own death did not strike him as tragic, not even as regrettable. He observed his thoughts as if they were passing through somebody else's brain—somebody whom he rather liked, in a curiously impersonal manner. This other man was thinking of America; of New York, Central Park, Tinpan Alley, Fifth Avenue and Coney Island; was thinking of a girl whom he loved dearly—and who did not love him, but loved and had married another. . . .

Gee—how silly! A man doomed to die, yet dreaming of love and—

"Ow!" Suddenly he gave a cry of pain as a horned beetle bit him savagely on the neck. The pain was a new, most terrible indignity, added to an already intolerable load of despair. But it recalled him to his senses, gave him back his desire for life.

"Damn!" he yelled; and Brown laughed, a high-pitched African laugh.

The laugh annoyed Jim. "Shut up!" he shouted.

The negro was about to give heated reply, but he controlled himself.

"O.K., boss," he said. "Let's go."

"Let's go—*where* precisely?" sneered Jim. "Lost our way, didn't you?"

"Oh,"—affably,—"Ah'll find it again."

"Maybe yes—and maybe no. Odds on the *no*." Jim was unfair, unkind—was aware of it and ashamed; was unable to stop his nagging flow of words. They came of their own volition, and strangely, seemed to relieve his fear by switching his thoughts from himself to somebody else. "You're one hell of a guide, with all your tall bragging how well you know this country—you four-flusher!"

"That so?" Brown also gave way to his temper. "If Ah lost mah way, it's all yo' fault."

"Mine?"

"Yo' heard me, Mister! If yo' hadn't insisted on chasin' that measly antelope—"

Jim swallowed hard. He knew that the negro was right. The fact that he knew made him even more angry. He glared at Brown, who glared back. Without another word, simultaneously, they whipped up their camels. . . .

Late in the afternoon they regained the caravan trail, marked here and there by bleached, brittle skeletons of man and beast. But having gone back to it on a wide curve of many miles, they missed another water-hole.

Evening came, then night. There was, in the lee of a black basalt cliff, a meager tangle of growth: thyme and dwarf acacia, plants not green, but ash-gray, stiff, sapless.

They dismounted, hobbled their camels; lay down. Neither spoke. Each was conscious of a throbbing resentment.

THEY slept fitfully and were off again in the cool of the morning. But the cool did not last long. Soon the sun rose and stabbed, while hour after hour they rode—across a never-ending stretch of dun loam, scalped and flayed, covered with billows of sand which twisted and scudded to the fiery piping of the wind; occasionally vast clefts widening into inky caves or choked to the brim with glistening quartz-grains; and above, a sky of vaulted, polished steel with a tremendous blaze of blinding light.

They stopped for food. Brown picked up his canteen. He drank deeply—and Jim snatched at his hands.

"Don't be a hog!" he cried.

He too drank deeply. Once more they glared at one another; were on their way, brooding, morose. They hated the heat. They hated the loneliness. They hated the grunting, smelly camels. They hated the desert—so futile and tragic, cracked with gap and rift, disintegrating in age-old, ageless decay and abandonment. Suddenly, frighteningly, the knowledge came to them that they hated each other.

FRIENDS, these Americans; friends who for days had shared discomfort and danger, had trekked and ridden side by side on their selfless, quixotic errand. Yet here, today, was this hate, tense, bitter, like an inky scrawl across their brains; the unreasoning instinct and lust of it coming to them as it does, sooner or later, even to the best of friends herding alone in the far places of the earth. Had you dissected their souls just then, you would have found there, crystallizing rapidly and ferociously, all the contempt and disgust the white and the black have felt for each other ever since the earth evolved from a mote of star-dust; would have found the old racial mistrust and repulsion whispering to them in a language of dread stillness, with dull, muffled throbbings, with the shadows of unspeakable imaginings.

Not that this was the way they put it to themselves.

"Damned nigger!" thought Jim, glancing at Brown.

"Cheap white trash!" thought Brown, glancing at Jim.

They said nothing; rode on. The wind shrilled mockingly, then stopped.

Came silence—silence that gave the curious sensation as if here, in the flaming, clogged heart of the wilderness, Africa had ceased to breathe and were looking introspectively into her own heart. Again the negro laughed, loudly, unreasonably; again the other yelled:

"Shut up—for God's sake!"

On the next morning they drank their last drop of water. They kept on. Their eyes smarted; their lips grew black and cracked, their tongues swollen. For all this Jim blamed Brown, and Brown Jim. But they did not speak of it. For speaking meant an effort, and they were so weak.

They found, toward noon of the following day, a small water-hole—really no more than a shallow puddle where camels had wallowed. They fought over the putrid, green, malodorous slime. Wickedly they fought, bestially, because each wanted to be the first to drink, and drink his fill.

It was Brown who bore the brunt of the battle.

For as he shot a fist to the other's jaw, his foot slipped. He stumbled, fell; and immediately Jim was upon him, striking him, kicking him, with all his strength, in the face, the chest, the abdomen. He was drunk with insane rage.

He snarled like a wolf, with tongue protruding. His hands gripped Brown's massive throat, squeezing like a vise, breaking the skin, feeling the hot red blood, his fingers digging the flesh.

Grunts—animal-like, half sensuous—came from between his lips.

He saw nothing, heard nothing—only the vibrations in his own soul. They surged up immensely, chokingly, echoing with a terrible rhythm:

"Kill—kill—kill!"

IT was brutal, horrible, tragic and sordid. He rained blow after blow on the supine man. And then, inside his brain, something like a colored glass ball shivered into a thousand iridescent splinters; sanity returned to him; and looking down at the battered features, he said to himself in a queer sort of wonder:

"Why, this—this is Brown—this is Teddy Brown! This is my comrade, my pal!"

He dropped on his knees. He caressed the black, bleeding face. He wept like a child, with loud, ludicrous gulps. . . . And it was the negro who, regaining consciousness, sat up, threw an arm about Jim's shoulders and mumbled:

"That's O.K., boss."

There was a silence.

Jim got up. He shuddered convulsively. His brain felt dry, empty.

"I," he whispered, "I don't understand. How—oh—how could I?"

"Don't yo' mind, suh. Ah was aimin' to do the same. Ah'd have croaked yo' sure nuff if—"

"It—it wasn't me," Jim interrupted. "No, no, no—it wasn't me."

"Ah knows it wasn't yo'. It was this desert."

"The madness of the desert," whispered Jim. "The thirst—the heat—the loneliness—the despair—"

"Drives yo' haywire, don't it? Well—let's try and git out of it." Brown approached the camel and tightened the broad saddle cinch. He coughed, spat. Something white and shiny dropped on the ground. "That," he added, "was once a perfec'ly good tooth."

This time it was Jim who laughed—almost hysterically; and Brown gave him a reproachful look.

"It aint funny," he announced. "Besides,"—his foot grinding the tooth into the sand,—"yo' owes me a new one."

"I owe you a whole lot more than that. I owe you—oh, more than I'll ever be able to repay."

The other was embarrassed.

"Aw—shucks! Aint nuthin' to repay. Friends,"—softly,—"aint we?"

"Let's shake hands on it!"

They did; and later on Jim was wont to say that, but for the setting, it must have seemed like a scene out of some Broadway musical show—"Al Jolson or maybe Eddie Cantor in a black-face comedy part; me the handsome juvenile with the throaty tenor voice; misunderstanding early in the first act—then reconciliation, singing a duet while holding hands, staring soulfully into each other's eyes; swearing eternal friendship, let happen what will. Quite theatrical, quite silly and,"—with a certain defiance—"nothing really to be ashamed of—eh?"

Again they marched on.

They were now, the negro explained, not far from the frontier of the Aussan land whose *Anfari* or Sultan, Mohammed Yaio, was a vassal, although in name more than in fact, of Haile Selassie, and whose subjects were both Somalis and Danakils. Brown was well known hereabouts, the village of which he was headman being within the boundaries of the Aussan sultanate. Therefore he and Jim had decided to use this part of Danakalia as their headquarters, their base from which to launch.

HAREBRAINED, wild the plan had seemed, on that night when they had started out from Addis Ababa. Even more harebrained it seemed today, here in the bitter, derisive heart of the desert, with their aching limbs, and their parched throats, and their thighs sore with saddle-wolf, and their lips black and cracked and bleeding, and hunger twisting a sharp dagger in their bellies. . . .

Afternoon brought a haze of pink and lavender. It brought a steppe, no longer split with gap and rift, but gently undulating, presently descending to a wide, cup-shaped hollow. Brown rode ahead. When he reached the rim of the hollow, he stared out, then turned in his saddle and motioned excitedly to Jim.

The latter joined him. He too stared; and joy rushed through him.

For a short distance away the desert stopped, cut off as clean as with a knife. There was here a wide spread of rust-

brown bracken that lay like a scarf athwart the summer hue of a slow, gentle slope; a network of swift little streams bordered with scented wild peppermint and spiky wormwood and stiff, starry, azure gentian, and betwixt water-rounded pebbles, tufts of moss yellow as topaz or red as ruby, and here and there a lacy edging of ferns green as a spring wind.

It was not a mirage. It was real.

Water it meant, and food.

Life it meant; and life was sweet.

"Hurry!" Jim called to Brown. "Oh let's hurry!"

"What a silly fool you are!" "Aren't you rude!" she said. "Woman always says a man is rude, when he is merely truthful," Jim rejoined.

He felt strong, healthy, exuberant. Ah, he thought, but it was great to be alive, to breathe!

"Thank God!" he cried; it was not a mere exclamation; it was like a prayer.

Yes, it occurred to him, all at once, like an extraordinary and startling discovery, that God existed, as the stars existed, and the sun and the flowers and trees. This God was good and kind and great-hearted; he pitied the weak; He helped the unhappy and the discouraged; He fed the hungry; He clothed the naked; He gave succor to those lost in the wilderness.

"Thank God!" he repeated, sobbing, as he saw the feathery green of the date trees and the silvered green of the eucalypti that fringed a fair-sized settlement.

Kurrabara, Brown told him, was its name. He had a number of good friends here. So they would be hospitably received; would be safe.

They entered the village.

There, while their husbands were away in the fields, the women squatted on their haunches in front of the *tukul* huts: swapping shrill gossip from threshold to threshold; plaiting rawhide thongs; or weaving cotton on crude narrow looms; roasting *goeps* and *shimbura* grain on red-hot stones; rocking bladders filled with milk upon their knees until the butter rolled yellow and frothy; more than one recognizing Brown and calling out friendly greetings in Somali Arabic.

The negro turned to Jim, pointing to a grass-thatched hut.

"That's," he said, "where Ah's goin' stay tonight. Ah"—with a little cough—"Ah knows the lady."

Jim smiled. "What about me?"

"Yo' can stay with Manuel Caraballeira. Manuel's white folks. At least,"—with a loud guffaw,—"Mo' o' less."

"Who's he?"

"Keeps a tradin'-station here—and a so't of rest-house."

Jim shook his head doubtfully. He recalled his experience at Addis Ababa

with the Armenian proprietor of the Grand Hôtel de Paris. He spoke of it.

"I'm just as broke today," he added.

"Aint yo' forgettin'," the negro reminded him, "that Ah's a great chief in this neck o' the woods? *Khifaru,* the Bull-Rhinoceros," he went on, not without pride, "that's w'at them savages calls me hereabouts."

AND he lived up to his sobriquet a few minutes later, when they came to Manuel Caraballeira's compound, where the owner, a small lemon-colored man, after one look at the ragged, dusty travelers, declared that he had no room. His house was filled—filled, he regretted exceedingly, from floor to rafters. Therefore—ah—

"*Kooss marrathoo*—your mother's shame in your teeth, O goat-cheese at high noon!" the negro interrupted in hearty Somali Arabic. He stared at the other with a stony, chilly eye. "O pig," he exclaimed, "consider the shape of your nose! Consider the shape of the warts on your nose! Consider the hairs on the warts on your nose! Be pleased to consider the dirt on the hairs on the warts on your nose!"

An auspicious beginning which caused Manuel Caraballeira to tremble violently. He trembled yet more violently as Brown continued in a cold voice:

"Consider, furthermore, the strength of my arm and the ruthlessness of my soul! My friend,"—pointing at Jim—"will spend the night, and possibly the next few days, at your house. You will give him a soft bed and well-spiced food."

Manuel bowed.

"Listen is obey. But—"

"But?"

"The price will be—"

"Nothing at all. For great shall be your honor in being permitted to entertain such a noble *feringhee.* It is understood, O father of seventeen dogs?"

"Yes, yes! In your protection, *yah do inia*—O light of my eyes!"

Brown winked at Jim.

"Be seein' yo', boss," he said.

He turned to go, while Jim dismounted, gave his camel into the charge of a Danakil hostler who had listened—grinning, highly amused—and entered the compound, a fair-sized place that enclosed the rest-house as well as the business premises of Manuel Caraballeira.

The latter was the only foreigner in this part of Ethiopia; trading in millet, goat-skins and coffee; too—at least before the Italian invasion—earning a few dollars by putting up and selling supplies to the occasional big-game expeditions that crossed over from British Somaliland. Later on, Jim got to know him well—and unfavorably; and he used to give as his opinion that nowhere, throughout the Near East and North and Central Africa, had there ever lived a man less Nordic than this same Manuel.

He claimed descent from a noble Castilian hidalgo who had fought valiantly under the Cid against the Moorish kings of Granada; who had defended the Cross against the cutting, conquering steel of Islam's Crescent. It was a perfectly authentic claim.

But he never mentioned that in the course of the swinging centuries, the Caraballeiras had traveled far afield, maritally as well as geographically; and had intermarried, between battles, with half the world's gaudy riffraff. With Barbary Arabs they had mated, and with Byzantine Greeks, with Syrians and Egyptians, with Salonika Jews and coal-black kinky-haired Gallas; becoming part and parcel of that unsavory racial cross-word puzzle which is called the Levant.

Thus, then, was this Manuel Caraballeira: a Levantine of Levantines.

He indicated the half-open door of the living-room.

"Will you be good enough to wait in here? I shall have your bedroom prepared."

"Thanks."

Jim entered. It was dark in the living-room, with the rattan shutters tightly closed to keep out the dust and heat; and he must have seemed a rather strange and even ludicrous figure, standing there blinking his eyes owlishly, his clothes torn and stained, a smudge on his nose, the rifle slung over his back, the red, scraggly stubble curling on his lean jaw.

Not in the least like the dapper Jim M'Gregor of Tinpan Alley who went in for pleated trousers and suède shoes.

Small wonder, therefore, that there was mockery in the voice which said:

"Oh, Jim—you look such a scarecrow!"

KATHLEEN'S voice! Kathleen's gay, frank laugh. Kathleen sitting there on a low couch, near the window!

She jerked up one of the shutters. The sun-rays danced in with red and gold and silver, cutting across her features. He saw her clearly. He should have been utterly amazed. He should have—would

have—exclaimed, had he been an everyday, painfully normal young man:

"Good heavens! *How* did you get here?"

But not being an everyday young man, he did nothing of the kind. Instead, he walked over to her unhurriedly; casually and limply shook her hand and said:

"What a silly young fool *you* are!"

SHE was taken aback. "Why—" she stammered.

"Don't you realize that there's a war going on? Why—you're about as safe here as a safety-razor salesman at a barbers' convention. And as to that fat-headed husband of yours—"

"H-husband?"

"*Fat-headed* husband! That's what I said!"

"You—you mean?"

"Sloane Van Vleet—unless," he added with heavy sarcasm, "you're already divorced. He should be kicked round the block, the sap, for getting you here. Niagara Falls—that's the place for a honeymoon; not Abyssinia."

She smiled. "Who told you I married him?"

"Little bird. Little radio bird—Berkeley Beverley, by name."

"And you a native New Yorker," she cried, "baptized with the water of the East River!"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Believing Berkeley Beverley! Oh, Jim! Oh, my darling Jimmy hick!"

His jaw dropped. "Then you—you aren't—"

"Precisely! I am *not!*" Then a pleasing, strictly feminine thought came to her. She put it into words: "That's why you left New York so suddenly? That's why you disappeared? Because you imagined that I—"

He blew over her house of cards with a curt sentence or two:

"Gosh, no! I listened in on that radio gossip in Addis Ababa, weeks after I left New York."

"Oh—I see."

She did not see at all. She asked:

"Why *did* you go away?"

It was in him to exclaim:

"Because I loved you then, dear, as I love you now. Because you despised me at heart, thought me a weakling, a failure who'd never make the grade."

But he said nothing of the kind; instead said loftily:

"I had my reasons."

"Won't you tell me what they were?"

"No!" he cried. "Why should I?"

He looked sulky, absurdly sulky—with that sulkiness which is a man's refuge and silent protest when a woman tries to make him confess something which he does not want to confess, tries to dig at the roots of his soul so as to draw out that part which is his particular, secret and cherished property. Kathleen understood perfectly. She felt sorry for him. But she said with perversely cruel intent:

"You look sulky!"

"I can't help what I look like," he growled. "It's the face God gave me."

"Why blame God?" She paused; and choosing another angle of attack, went on: "Jim, your voice—"

"Well," he interrupted belligerently, "what's the matter with my voice?"

"It sounds—sulky."

"There you go again: 'Sulky! Sulky!' Don't you know any other words?"

"Oh—aren't you rude!"

"Woman always says a man is rude when he is merely truthful."

"Know a great deal about women, don't you?" It was her turn to be nettled.

"A whole lot more than I care to know."

She bit her nether lip in a style that betokened temper. This, she decided, was not the same Jim she had known back home in New York. Something had happened to him, had changed him radically and fundamentally. And the way he looked—like a scarecrow, sure enough. But such a romantic scarecrow, with his rifle and his whiskers and his skin tanned a rich mahogany. And the way that he stalked up and down, with something of a swagger— What *had* he been up to?

She demanded suddenly: "How's the African symphony getting on?"

JIM stopped pacing the floor. "I'm not writing at it," was his answer.

"Aren't you?"

"No. You see;"—slowly and very gravely,—"I'm too busy living it."

"Living it?"

"Just that." After a pause he continued: "You came with your father?"

"Of course. And what a time we had getting here!" She smiled reminiscently. "Both the British and the French moved heaven and earth to keep Dad out of Abyssinia."

"But he bulled his way through. I can imagine."

"He has business interests here."

"Yes, yes. I remember. And so he had to come barging in here, right into

"Hon! Hon! . . . Death to the foreigners!"

the hornets' nest, and—which is worse—drag you along."

"He didn't drag me. I *made* him take me. Nagged him till he gave in."

"So what! He shouldn't have let you. Damned fool—ought to be shot!"

Her instant, indignant protest was simultaneous with a voice that boomed from the threshold:

"Mighty free and easy with your cussin', aint you, young feller?"

Dan O'Grady entered; and the younger man faced him, not at all abashed.

"You haven't heard the half of what I think of you," he observed.

The other sat down; lit a cigar. "That so?"

"I'll tell the world that's so!"

JIM was now thoroughly enraged—because he was afraid, for Kathleen. War here—war cruel and bloody. Savage, merciless African war, rushing across field and desert, across forest and jungle and hill. Everywhere the cry: "Long live Italy!" And everywhere, more grim and ominous, was the answering yell: "Death to the foreigners!" And Kathleen in the midst of it!

The thought made him see red. He walked up to O'Grady. He clenched his fist. He felt like crashing it into the round, ruddy countenance.

"For God's sake!" he shouted. "What in hell's the matter with you? Haven't you the least bit of common sense? Of all the stubborn, complacent damned jackasses!"

The older man did not believe his ears.

"Look here!" he remonstrated.

"Look here!" Kathleen echoed loyally.

Jim turned to her. "Keep quiet—will you, please? This is man's talk."

She was silent. She stared at him—with anger, but also with something akin to admiration. No doubt of it, Jim had changed!

Jim was again addressing her father:

"Don't you realize the danger you're in?"

"How do *you* know so much about it?"

"I've been in Abyssinia a number of months. Crossed overland to this place from Addis Ababa."

Jim spoke nonchalantly. Perhaps too nonchalantly? Perhaps a certain pride in his words? A certain conceit?

That's what O'Grady felt, and he reflected:

"Well, he's got a perfect right to be conceited. Overland from Addis Ababa! Never thought he had it in him."

Aloud he asked: "Aren't you exaggeratin' the danger? I've had no trouble so far. I talked with some of the local high-muckamucks—that little yellow-skin Manuel interpreted for me; and I must say I found 'em friendly and quite intelligent and—"

"Just wait till they get news of Italian victories. Then they'll sing a different tune."

"Won't affect me. After all, I've nothing to do with this war—I'm an American."

"All they'll think of is that you're a white man, a foreigner—and they'll treat you accordingly. Not that I give a whoop in Hades about what's going to happen to you personally. But—there's Kathleen."

"I'll look after her, young man!"

"Oh, yeah? You won't know how! You may be the whole cheese back home in New York, on Wall Street. But here you're less than a piece of limburger!"

Jim banged the table. His words came like pistol-cracks. And it is interesting to consider that, in spite of his terrible fear for Kathleen, he was enjoying himself, enjoying the scene and playing it to the limit; that even at this moment of deep anxiety and genuine emotion, the musician in him, the artist and, in a way, the actor, came to the fore; that his gestures were a little studied, and the volume of his voice well regulated as he wound up:

"You'll leave here, the two of you, no later than tomorrow. You'll go by caravan to British Somaliland—"

"Say!" interrupted O'Grady. "Who's givin' orders?"

"I am." Oh, yes, Jim was enjoying himself—he was pleasantly recalling the scene, some months earlier, in New York, when the other had done the talking and he the meek listening. He turned to go. "I'll attend to matters. Better start packing."

And even as he spoke the last sentence, as he left the living-room, it occurred to him that he was bluffing. Arrange for a caravan? See that they reached British Somaliland? How was he to do it?

WELL, he thought, he'd make a stab at it; and he hurried through the village to find and consult Theodore Roosevelt Brown, while Dan O'Grady looked at his daughter.

"Was it you," he demanded, "or me who accused that boy of havin' no guts?"

"You did—and I agreed."

A silence. O'Grady shook his head.

"This," he announced, "aint the same Jim."

"Dad," was his daughter's slangy rejoinder, "are *you* telling *me?*"

AT the *tukul* where the negro was staying, Jim found him congenially occupied, his flat nose buried in a gourd filled with potent, foaming palm-beer, an arm round the ample waist of a good-looking, golden-skinned woman.

The negro got up. With a courteous, "By your leave, O Fathouma, O breaker of hearts!" he excused himself and joined Jim outside the hut.

Oh, yes, he said in answer to Jim's anxious question, he had heard all about the presence here of Dan O'Grady and his daughter; naturally, since the exciting gossip of it was being rolled over everybody's tongue throughout the countryside—gossip that had started on a day, the week before last, when they had arrived at Kurrabara, traveling with a caravan of Greek and Egyptian merchants who, bringing war munitions for Haile Selassie's armies, had continued their long trek into the south.

It seemed that O'Grady was popular here, chiefly with Suni Muhammad, the Somali *garasmatch* or governor of the district, an intelligent Moslem who appreciated the lasting benefits the land would derive from the investment of American capital, with no political strings attached. Still, Brown agreed, O'Grady and his daughter would be in the gravest kind of danger as soon as news came of Italian victories. It would mean a savage outburst of hate against all foreigners. They should leave immediately; he would talk to the *garasmatch,* who happened to be an old friend of his—would ask him to supply camels and guides and an armed escort to take the two Americans to British Somaliland and safety.

So the negro went to call on Suni Muhammad—came back twenty minutes later and reported gloomily:

"No dice, suh!"

Not that there was the slightest doubt about the Somali's honest liking for the New York business man. But, the *garasmatch* had explained, this very morning he had received a message from his overlord, the Assuan Sultan, that the Italians were forging ahead much more swiftly and energetically than had been deemed possible; that, in fact, an advance column, accompanied by planes and tanks, had already invaded the Sultanate itself,

had bombarded the border villages and taken bloody toll.

Besides, farther to the north, in the direction of Furzi, slave-raiders, acting in conjunction with treacherous local chiefs and medicine-men, had begun their inhuman operations on a large scale, had surprised and attacked half a dozen peaceful settlements and carried off the inhabitants. Small wonder that the tribesmen were enraged, many of them declaring that they preferred the Italians as the lesser of two evils, that they would welcome them with open arms and make common cause with them. For had not Mussolini promised to bring decent law and order and to end slavery for all time?

It was different, Suni Muhammad had said, where he and his people were concerned. They were strong and fearless and warlike. No slave-raider would ever venture amongst them. Too, they were loyal to the Assuan Sultan—loyal, though in a lesser degree, to the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. If the Fascist legions came—*wah!*—it would be swords out, daggers out, tall black spears out in defence of their hearths! Therefore, the *garasmatch* had pointed out, he must be prepared; this was a sparsely settled country; and while he was willing to let the Americans have whatever camels they needed for their journey, he could not spare a single man as guide or escort.

"Fi aman'ullah!" he had exclaimed. "Even the decrepit oldsters will have to follow the drums again! Even the women! Even the children! And as to the *Amerikani* and his daughter—ah, I give oath upon my own and my mother's honor that I shall do my best to protect them. More I cannot do."

AND what, reflected Jim, could this "best" amount to, once the news of Italian invasion and victories spread through the village, once the dread cry of, "Death to the foreigners!" echoed from *tukul* to *tukul?* He turned to Brown.

"Do you know the trails to British Somaliland?"

"Yes suh."

Well, considered Jim, there was only one thing to do. It was up to him, with the negro's help. . . . He interrupted his thoughts. He said to himself, sudden and stark:

"Can't be done."

Later on, speaking about what had gone on, at this moment, in his brain and soul, he insisted that, curiously, it had been as if somebody else had debated the point with him, had made up his mind for him. Had it been himself who had argued with himself and decided for himself, the hopelessness of the situation would have inevitably led him to panic, or to the wrong choice.

BUT the somebody else thought clearly and logically. He told Jim M'Gregor:

"There is Kathleen O'Grady. You love her, of course. She's the dearest, sweetest girl in all the world. There is, on the other hand, the promise you gave to Simon Frazer—and it is the most sacred, since he is dead. He made a covenant between the Lord God and himself and you. He made you swear to carry on his work, because it is your duty. Your duty to humanity, to the many—and duty to the many is more deep, more grave and binding than duty to one, though you love this one. This duty calls to you. Thunderous it calls to you, and harsh and poignant. For the slavers are already raiding and that strange radio propaganda is still going out, apparently—and blood is on the moon—and there is no time to lose. No, no, M'Gregor! No time to lose."

A silence. Then, again, the somebody else spoke to him:

"Do you remember how Simon Frazer died? Happily—because he trusted you. With a song on his lips he died. Do you remember the song? A hymn it was, so powerful and proud in its faith:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He has loos'd the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on.

Jim stared straight ahead where the sun was sinking to the west beneath a sky of jade. He said, in a hushed voice: *"His truth is marching on—"*

The Lord's truth—a bitter, hard, glorious truth. A great truth. Too great, he thought, to be mentioned by petty men who would cheapen it with their mean, narrow, grudging tongues. . . .

He went down the single village street toward the rest-house.

He thought of Kathleen—of his love for her, his love which was like a solemn anthem to the stars, and also, strangely, like the muted tune the crickets sing to the small winds of dawn. And pity and despair rushed like a flame through the

secret places of his heart. . . . Love and pity and despair. . . .

"Our Father who art in heaven—"

(And glory and sweetness—the glory of his passion—the sweetness of her face.)

"Hallowed be Thy name—"

(And courage!)

"Thy kingdom come—"

(Ah, but he needed courage, prayed for it: courage was the touchstone of manhood; courage was decency—was a man's armor against the gibes and trespasses of petty people.)

"Thy will be done on earth—"

(Oh, yes—God's will be done: by the hand of man, because it was man's duty, the reverence of man's duty—man's sole reason for existence; and only the ignoble, the knaves and cowards, put their selfish obstacles in the way of it.)

"Forever and ever—"

(And that might mean the eternity of life—or it might mean the eternity of death.)

HE reached the rest-house. Kathleen was on the veranda, sitting on a rickety bench. He sat down beside her.

"Hello, Jim."

"Hello, Kathleen."

"Dad and I talked of you."

"That so?"

"Yes. Did your right ear burn?"

A pause. A flying, horned beetle bit him on the nose, raising a painful welt. He said: "Damn!"

She laughed. It was a merry, frank, silvery laugh. It was, he thought, a "Kathleen laugh"; thought it was because of her laugh that he loved her so.

For such is the illogical, unreasonable way between a man and a woman. A man falls in love with a woman for no better, saner cause than that her lips curl in a certain way, or that her hair is a certain shade of red or chestnut-brown, or that there is a certain quirk in her eyes, or that she has a certain sort of laugh—merry and frank and silvery, and just the faintest bit malicious.

"Smoke, Jim?"

"Thanks."

He took a cigarette and lit it. The flare of the match cut sharply across his face.

She said: "You look so serious."

"I am serious."

"What is it?"

He hesitated. There was this thing of which he must speak to her: the terrible danger she was in; his hard decision that he would be unable to help her, that his duty lay elsewhere. And how was he going to explain?

He touched her hand. She smiled.

"What is it?" she repeated. "I want to know."

THEN he told her, straight out, in simple language—told her everything that had happened to him, beginning with the evening, months ago, eternities ago, when she and he had quarreled; when he had aimlessly drifted up Harlem-way, had come to the little house; heard there the eerie, mysterious melody which he had needed for his African symphony. Told her how the melody had reverberated in his brain with a droning, staccato rhythm and had broken off in the middle. Told her how he had gone to Addis Ababa to find the rest of it; how he had met the Reverend Simon Frazer, and had made a solemn covenant. . . .

He interrupted himself. He swallowed hard, made a hopeless gesture.

"Tell me the end, Jim."

He did.

There was a silence. She stared at him. He added:

"I'm leaving tonight regardless of what your fate may be. I,"—harshly, challengingly,—"cannot bother about your fate. Because there is my duty. There is—well, call it my manifest destiny."

Curiously stilted words; and Kathleen echoed them in a low voice:

"Your manifest destiny." She paused. She went on, saying what so many women have said to so many men: "I'm proud of you, dear! Terribly proud!"

The next moment she was in his arms. He saw her face close to his. He saw her eyes, soft and darkening, look at him through half-closed lids. She caught her lips to his with an almost brutal movement, in a desperate, aching surrender. And he wondered, with a queer shock, why a woman's mouth was so soft, so sweet, so vibrant.

She clung to him. "Do you love me?"

He held her close. He whispered his love into her curling, silken hair. She gave a little laugh. She said:

"I can't hear a word, darling! Such a rude way to behave—to whisper things I can't hear! Nice things?"

"Just two things."

"What *are* those two, Jim?"

He took both her hands in his. He replied:

"I know that God lives. And I know that I love you."

"You've forgotten the third: That *I* love *you!*"

Her eyes brimmed with tears; she raised his hand and pressed it against her lips.

"You are my oldest love," she told him, "and my newest."

He kissed her. He said:

"I don't give a whoop in hell how many millions your father has. I could buy him out tomorrow—spot cash. I'm richer than he. I'm the richest man in the world. Haven't I your love?"

"How much is my love worth to you?"

"The sun—and the moon and the stars—and my soul's salvation!"

IT grew darker, with afternoon dropping to meet the rush of evening. It grew more quiet, with the peasants home from the toil of the fields and squatting in their huts around the cook-pots. It grew cooler. Her head was nestled in the hollow of his shoulder. Silence was about them, like a thick cloak. Then, suddenly, violently, that silence was broken.

A wooden drum droning up, slashing through the distance—*banng! banng! banng! banng!*—muffled, nasal, sardonic. A tattoo of hoofs hollow and hearty on the stones of the road. A clash and crackle of iron. A guttural yelling of: *"Hon! Hon!"* coming nearer and nearer, peaking shrilly. The peasants rushing out of their huts and demanding excitedly: "What is it, O neighbor? What is happening?" And out of the clogging, swathing darkness, vague forms looming, ghostly forms of riders and horses. And ever louder the yelling of, *"Hon!"*—a giant heaving of energy bursting into sound, centering to a quivering minor note.

Jim sensed it, knew it. Knew it even before the eyes of his body registered its physical details—as he did, a few seconds later, with torches flaming orange and gold and the phantom riders galloping free. Black faces and brown and yellow; Somalis and Danakils, wolfish, grim. Crimson banners, blaring ivory horns, thudding drums. A flash of weapons and metal-bossed rhinoceros-hide shields.

Again and again, like the responses in a satanic litany, the yells of:

"Hon! Hon!"

The villagers' triumphant answer:

"Hai-yai-yai! W'allahi! W'allahi!"

And riding ahead of the cavalcade, erect on his peaked saddle, a young Somali chief, carrying high in his right hand, spiked on a tall bamboo lance, a human head. A white head, brown-bearded. The head of an Italian officer, crowned by a flopping *bersaglieri* hat.

Jim pressed Kathleen's forehead deeply into the hollow of his shoulder.

"Don't look."

"Hon! Hon!"

"W'allahi!"

"Hon! Hon! Hon!"

Followed other riders, carrying other heads. A forest of heads, topping lances and poles—heads of Italian soldiers and of black *askaris* in the Italian service.

"Hon! Hon! Hon!"

Then a single voice cut in, stridently:

"Death to the foreigners!"

"Death to the foreigners! Death to the foreigners!" the shout was taken up, as they rolled through the village, toward the house of the *garasmatch,* to put the bloody trophies at his feet in token of fealty and respect.

Again silence on the veranda; and Jim whispering to Kathleen: "Afraid?"

"Of course I'm afraid. But I don't mind. Why, I've lived a million years today, a million happinesses, my dear."

He kissed her. He got up.

"I must talk to Brown, arrange for the journey tonight."

"Of course." There was a quiver in her voice. But her words were casual, as if she were back home in New York, in the East Fifties: "Will you be in before you go?"

"Oh, yes." His words too were casual. His voice too quivered. "Be seeing you."

HE sought out Manuel Caraballeira. Their conversation was curious—less in what they said than in what they did not say.

Jim had thought it out ahead of time. For he had taken the Levantine's measure—a tragic measure; was playing up to his vanity—a tragic vanity.

He began by confiding in him that he was off for the north within the hour. He spoke of the grave danger that was threatening O'Grady and his daughter.

He went on:

"I beg you to look after them. We are strangers, you and I. Still, this is Africa—and we're of the same race."

"Eh?" slowly. "The same race?"

"White men, aren't we?"

Caraballeira smiled thinly.

"It is not often," he replied, "that another white man acknowledges my own white man's claim."

"This white man does."

"Because,"—with bitter irony,—"you need me?"

Drunk with insane rage, he saw nothing, heard nothing but the vibrations in his own soul. They surged up, echoing with a terrible rhythm: "Kill! Kill! Kill!"

"Doubtless because I need you. But also—"

"Yes?"

"Because your name is Caraballeira."

The little man drew himself up.

"You are right. My name is Caraballeira. An old name. An honorable name."

"None more so."

"None more so," echoed the Levantine.

"You know the country. You've lived here a lifetime. Will you look after my friends?"

"I am honored by your trust." Again the other smiled thinly. "You are kindly—and clever."

"Clever?"

"Very clever. For you did not mention Mr. O'Grady's millions, did not promise me a rich reward if—"

"Of course not—between gentlemen."

Caraballeira bowed stiffly. So did Jim.

He stepped out of the little office; found O'Grady on the veranda.

Dan said:

"Kathleen told me. You're O.K., my boy." He shook the younger man's hand. "I'll call Kathleen."

She came a moment later. She rushed up to Jim. But when she tried to speak her voice broke. She clung to him in an overwhelming anguish of tenderness. He held her tightly a moment.

Then she wrenched herself free.

"Go!" she whispered. "Go!"

He walked down the rickety veranda steps. He halted, turned—saw her face set like a white jewel against the black doorway. Like a light in the darkness.

Outside the rest-house compound the negro Brown was waiting, astride a camel, holding another by the halter rope.

Jim mounted.

"Ah begs yo' pa'don, boss," came the negro's soft voice.

"Yes?"

"Yo' loves that white lady?"

"I do."

They were passing the *tukul* where Brown had spent most of the afternoon.

"So," said the negro, "does Ah love that cullud lady in there. But—we's on our way, aint we?"

"Yes. We're on our way."

So they rode beneath the night—a black shroud it seemed, punctured orange and gold and vermilion here and there by the flicker of some distant campfire where a lonely nomad was shivering for the return of the sun. . . .

Day after day they rode—toward the end of their fabulous African adventure,

toward that region, near the lone mountain, called the Tooth of Time, where the people, by holding a strange flat foreign metal shell to their ears, could hear the awful voice of Ju-Ju.

From the moment when, crouched on the roof of the medicine temple, Jim had watched the dreadful juju rites, right up to the moment when he had kissed Kathleen good-by, the drama through which he had lived—though it had stretched over long weeks and athwart a wide land reaching clear from Addis Ababa to the stinking, festering core of Danakalia—had carried him along with the swing of the same rushing, breathless, impetuous motion. It was perhaps this very motion, the energy of fantastic and incredible events popping up with the speed of musketry fire and acting on his nature like a powerful tonic drug, which had helped him, was still helping him, to bear everything: the straining fatigue of the journey, the flying and crawling pests, the wretched food and brackish water, the gnawing moroseness, the paralyzing fear of what might happen to Kathleen, as well as the dull fear of what might happen to him. Oh, yes, perhaps it acted on him like a counter-poison, this breathless swing of events looming out of the dark, tumbling over each other, at times overlapping. . . .

How many days? He did not keep count. What mattered a day, or a week, or a month, compared to Africa's sardonic immensity?

BUT early one morning the negro reined in his camel. He pointed to the horizon where empty sky and empty wilderness were simmering and quivering together in a vast, heat-molten loneliness.

He said: "We'll get there tomorrow."

"The Tooth of Time?"

"Yes suh."

They looked at each other in silence. "Then what?" each knew, was the question in the other's mind.

After all, what was there to say that they did not know—or at least, guess? They guessed each other's gray fear. And they knew each other's high, blazing courage.

They stopped for noon rest.

Jim was unable to sleep. For the problem he had before him seemed to weigh on him physically, to lie heavily on his chest, his shoulders, the back of his neck: Even if he located this sinister hidden broadcasting station of evil propaganda, what could he do? True, Brown and he had ordinary weapons. And through Manuel he had got hold of a couple of sticks of old dynamite. But he knew little or nothing of how to use it, and had neither detonating caps nor fuse. . . .

He shut off his thoughts. Thinking was no damned good. . . . He awakened Brown. They rode.

The shadows lengthened. Night came. Again they made camp; again, in the morning, were off.

The Tooth of Time, a huge, jagged granite hill, rightly named, was etched clearly against the horizon. It was, said the negro, another three good hours' march ahead.

JIM must have had a slight heat-stroke, for his mind became more and more vague. He swayed now in the saddle He had indistinct impressions of a wedge of desert cleaving the wilderness—of a green oasis, of the sun's yellow blotch, again the jungle coiling in matted corruption.

There came a period of delirium. He felt himself drop from the saddle; wondered, hazily, why Brown did not come to his rescue. . . . Eternities of sleep—and a sudden awakening as he heard a cry, a cry of infinite desolation, cut off quickly, in midair.

He opened his eyes; looked.

He saw Brown stretched out on the ground; his black face had turned gray. Jim saw, gliding through undergrowth, three feet of pinkish, dull-glistening rope—a coral snake, most venomous of African reptiles.

He bent over the negro. There were, on his left calf, four tiny marks where the snake's fangs had struck.

The negro gave a little sob.

"Go on!" he whispered. "Straight on! It aint fa' off! Jis' a sho't ride, Boss! Yo' have to do it alone! And—Lawdy, Lawd—don't Ah envy yo'."

So he died—as Simon Frazer had died, in the great pride of his great humility.

Jim looked down at the dead man.

All over?

He could not believe it. It could not be true. Oh, it could not be true. . . .

How could these lips be still forever—these full, rich, sensuous lips that had loved so to laugh, to jest, to sing, with all a black man's extravagance of living and feeling? How could these hands be still forever—these strong hands that had wrought so loyally, so fearlessly? How could this heart be still forever—this heart that had dreamed of so many

things, small silly things, and great glorious things?

Death, Jim reflected, the utter, gray uselessness of death. . . . Uselessness?

No, no!

For it was Brown's passing-on which put a double duty upon his own shoulders; and queerly, he recalled a day, many years ago, when he had been a child on Second Avenue, and when, in Sunday school, an old clergyman had spoken the words of the Gospel, the plain words in all their grinding, elemental power—like the power of two millstones to crumble the haughty, human soul:

"'Are you come out with swords and staves as against a robber? All day I sat in your temple, and you took me not.'"

He knelt. He prayed for the dead; uttered the first sentence that came to his mind:

"God is in His heaven, and all is right with the world—"

He interrupted himself. No, no!

The truth was that the Son of God had come out of His heaven—to set it right with the world. . . .

To set it right! There was God's power—which was man's duty. . . .

"*My* duty!"

He mounted. He was off, toward the end, whatever it might be. And months later, he used to say that this end was different from what he had expected it to be. In a way he found it disappointing. Not that it lacked in purely dramatic thrills. On the contrary, it had a plethora of thrills. What disappointed him was the fact that, when the final curtain dropped, he could not see it clear cut, coming down as in a play; that some of the essential scenes which led up to the curtain were veiled to him—through his physical weakness, his sickness, the fever that was racking his bones.

Sickness. Fever. Heat-stroke. A touch of delirium. His feet and hands like leaden weights. His mouth parched. His temples throbbing. A retching nausea twisting his stomach. . . . But riding on, his whip descending on the camel's panting flanks, his cries peaking in guttural Somali:

"On your way, O infidel! On your way, O spawn of unthinkable begetting! *Yah hazrati! Yah nidamati!* O thou calamity! O thou enormous shame!"

NEARER and nearer loomed the Tooth of Time. It towered, high and rugged, pinched in between a jungle which emerged in spires of blackish-green foliage flickering with yellow and purple to the touch of the westering sun, and a small lake, its waters shoaling on banks of palms that rocked in the wind—in a silence broken a second later, by the far, muffled echo of a mighty chanting. . . .

Jim halted, at this, and with his binoculars searched the tree-tops and the lone crag. And now he knew he had indeed come to the end of his quest: for atop that crag he caught a thin long glint of copper. An aërial!

Above the tree-tops, too, a stretch of light showed a clearing. . . . He rode forward a little, came to a tiny stream, and dismounting, flung himself down to drink beside his weary camel. Then he led the beast to a secluded spot among some low brushy trees, tethered it, and moved forward on foot.

THE chanting he had heard in the distance grew louder. He had heard it, that night in Harlem—had heard it again, crouched on the roof of the ju-ju temple on the outskirts of Addis Ababa:

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

He came to the edge of the clearing and halted in a spot well concealed by the undergrowth. In the center of the open space before him was a crowd of excited natives gazing toward an advancing cloud of dust beyond. . . . The dust-cloud grew nearer, resolved itself into a half-score travel-stained men, some of them obviously wounded, mounted on worn-out, hard-ridden camels.

Soon the newcomers pulled up, and began croaking their tidings. . . . Dread tidings, it presently appeared. For from out the babble of voices the message presently grew clear to Jim as it was wailed or yelled over and over again—the news that Addis Ababa was fallen; and that the Lion of Judah was fled.

For some time Jim watched the milling throng, himself pondering the news of the Roman triumph. . . . How these people were receiving the report was not wholly clear to him: tremendously excited they were, certainly, but whether rage or grief or relief were dominant, he could not be certain. Nor did the use of his glasses, bringing their faces close to him, decide the matter.

The binoculars did, however, reveal one thing of importance to him: a road through the trees toward the foot of the

mountains, and a trail leading up the side of the crag itself. And with this knowledge he decided to risk discovery here no longer; and making his way back to the secluded place where his camel stood cropping the grayish-green brush about it, he flung himself down to debate his course of action—and utterly exhausted, fell asleep almost at once.

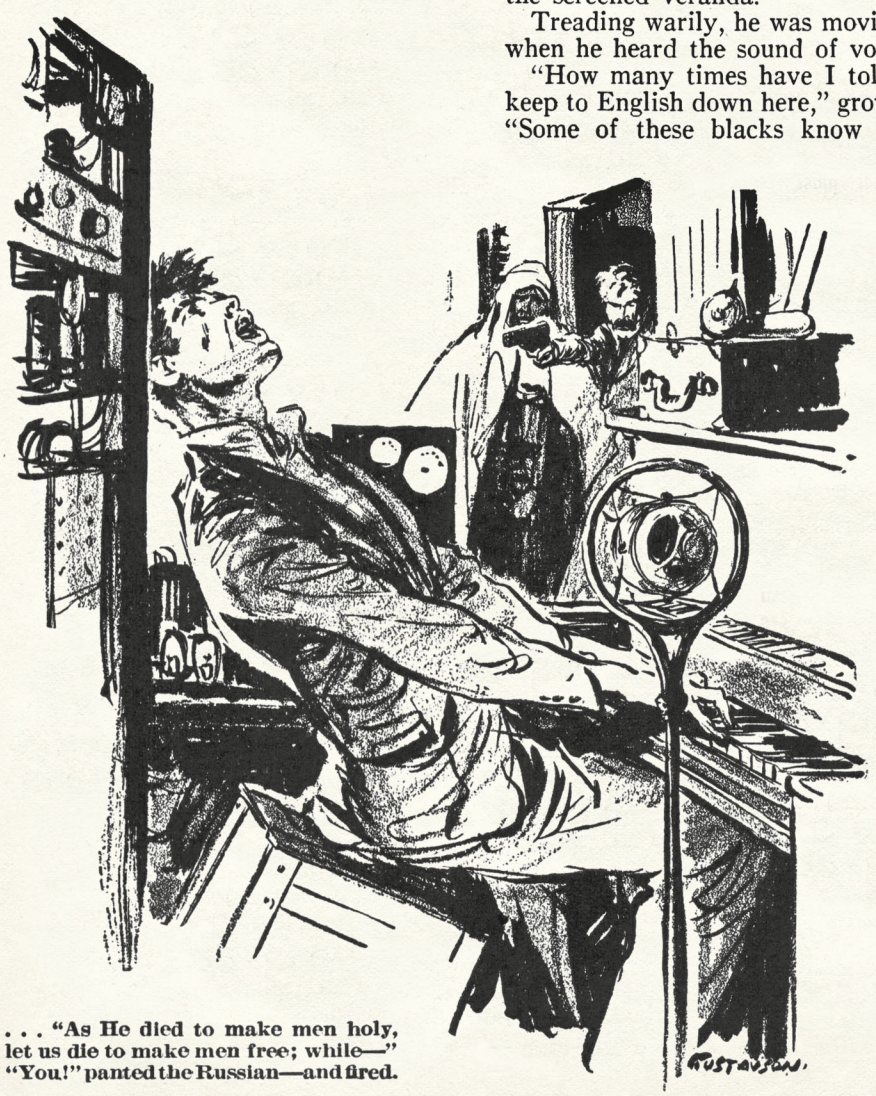
THE chill wind of dusk it was that brought M'Gregor back to consciousness—to consciousness of hunger and stiffness, to remembrance of that thin glitter of copper across the top of the Tooth of Time and the trail leading thither; to recollection of the milling crowd and the arriving messengers and their portentous news that Addis Ababa was fallen, was fallen, and the Lion of Judah was fled. . . .

Realizing that the crucial hour was at hand, Jim ate of his scanty store, refreshed himself as best he could and made such scant preparation as was possible. Then he set forth through the darkness toward the glow which marked, he knew, the cooking-fires of that native crowd whose excited babble still drifted faintly toward him.

Jim had learned something of travel-craft and trail-lore in his long journey with Brown; and without too much difficulty he skirted the village and its fires and made his way in the direction of that trail he had seen—guided now, in part, by a spark of white light that had appeared in the distance. Coming closer, he discovered the outlines of a house with wide verandas such as Europeans often build in the tropics, and saw that the light was that of a gasoline lantern on the screened veranda.

Treading warily, he was moving closer when he heard the sound of voices:

"How many times have I told you to keep to English down here," growled one. "Some of these blacks know a bit of



. . . "As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free; while—" "You!" panted the Russian—and fired.

French or Italian. And you can never be certain one of them isn't hanging around spying."

Came the sound of a closing door, and three men came out under the light—three men of whom Jim had seen two before: Prince Garatinsky and Abdelkader, the Arab who had been with him at that hideous place of sacrifice outside Addis; the third was a slim scowling Latin-looking fellow.

As they passed beyond the light of the house, Garatinsky snapped on an electric torch, and they turned onto that trail up the mountain. At a discreet distance Jim followed. And though the way was steep, he had little difficulty, for it had been well cleared.

"How much more time you theenk we have here?" asked the Latin.

"A month, anyway," responded Garatinsky. "This gang around here never loved Haile Selassie any too well, and I don't think they'll bother us. And I don't think the Italians will show up here for some time. They will have a lot of mopping up to do; and if the rains come on schedule, we may have a long time yet."

"They may have no love for Haile Selassie," said the Arab. "But they do not lack loyalty to their own families. . . . A lot of people have been killed in the air bombings, kindred of these folk, some of them, and they are well enraged against the whites. Those fellows who came in today had stories that stirred up a lot of hate. We would be wiser to get out while we can."

"Better lie low till they calm down," was Garatinsky's verdict. "We'll give them a little talk over the air to calm them down, too. Those crystal sets were a marvelous idea."

PRESENTLY they came to a natural gateway in the rocks; on one side had been painted several huge letters in the Amharic alphabet—a taboo sign such as Brown had pointed out to Jim at a number of places. Garatinsky flashed his torch on it and chuckled. "That was another marvelous idea," he observed. "I don't think one of them has ever had the courage to pass this. We can talk any language we please now."

Through the gateway they moved on; and Jim dropped back to a safer distance as they came out upon nearly level ground. Soon a dark bulk appeared ahead, and he heard the sound of an opening door. Then electric lights flashed up in one of two small buildings, the men disappeared within, and Jim heard the sound of a gasoline engine starting up. A moment later the three emerged and made their way to the other building, and here also electric lights flashed up, then one by one were curtained off.

Cautiously Jim moved up to the walls; and as he searched for a chink through which he might peer, he suddenly halted in amazement, for out upon the silent night of Africa there sounded the strains of the "Internationale."

A gleam of light pointed to a window not quite curtained, and Jim ventured to tiptoe forward and peer within. And no sight more weird had he ever beheld. For there in the heart of the Ethiopian wilderness was a crude but perfectly workable broadcasting room: microphones, sending apparatus, musical instruments—even a small piano that must have been assembled here.

The phonograph record of the red anthem reached its end; another was put on. Then the Arab and the dark fellow took drum and a queer stringed instrument and mouthed again that eerie chant:

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

This concluded, the Arab stood before the microphone and delivered a harangue in Amharic—a speech that Jim could understand in part, a speech designed for local consumption via crystal sets, and calculated to allay the excitement caused by the Italian victory. . . . A short program of Spanish music followed—canned stuff from the phonograph. Then the thin scowling man delivered a violent communistic tirade, which included an equally violent atheistic attack upon the church and the priesthood. . . .

So the evening passed, with short programs of specialized music alternating with shameless and often shocking propaganda in various languages. From occasional asides and bits of conversation Jim learned a little more, but not much: The crystal sets, for instance, had originally been merely a money-making scheme. The Russian, Garatinsky, had somewhere got hold of a hundred or two of these primitive affairs for a few cents each, and had readily sold what he had called "magic ears" to the local chiefs and priests for more than their weight in gold—a commodity mined in the vicinity and relatively plentiful. Later

they had used these, as now, to keep the populace roundabout in a proper state of mind. . . .

This much Jim learned; but of the forces backing and financing this diabolic enterprise he caught no hint; indeed this was something that he never did learn with certainty. But as he reflected upon the terrific power for evil of this satanic center of lies, he realized that no sacrifice he might be called upon to make for the sake of destroying it was too great. And he realized, too, that merely to destroy the station—the apparatus and equipment—was not enough.

The moon had risen and revealed this level place as apparently the floor of a small ancient volcanic crater—an oven, presumably, in the heat of the daytime, for the rim was a hundred feet or so in height, and entirely concealed the place except for that thin faint shimmer of the antennæ, simply stretched between posts on opposite sides of the crater. Easy enough to destroy this; easy enough, too, for these fellows to rebuild it or to repeat the performance elsewhere.

GARATINSKY concluded an ultra-red harangue in Russian, glanced at his watch and snapped off the switches. "Enough for tonight," he said in French. "We had better go down; and one of us had better stay awake to keep an eye on the village. They're still yelling down there, and probably are getting drunk."

"Why not stay the rest of the night here?" suggested the Arab. "That private trail we built over the rim across the crater might save our necks if they get out of hand."

"No risk of that yet," decided Garatinsky, who seemed to be in command. "I'm glad we had sense enough to get it ready, though."

The revealing moonlight made Jim's position precarious now, and he crouched motionless in the shadow behind the shack while the lights were turned off and until the retreating footsteps had faded into silence. . . . He waited for perhaps half an hour more—and then proceeded swiftly to put into execution a plan he had conceived: to fight fire with fire.

The door had been left unlocked—and Jim knew his way about a broadcasting station pretty well. Ten minutes later he himself stood before the microphone, making a speech in the Amharic he had learned from Brown and from natives on the journey. A simple speech, repeating the already known news that Addis Ababa was fallen, and that Haile Selassie had fled to the coast—but adding that the Ethiopians had been betrayed to the Italians by spies in their midst, of whom the chiefest and most damnable were the three strangers in this village which lay in the shadow of the Tooth of Time, these men who had barred the path to their signal-towers with a false sign of taboo.

Over and over Jim repeated this address in his halting Amharic, but he put into it a fervor of conviction that made up for any fault of accent, and might well have persuaded any listening-in native that he was hearing the voices of his gods. When, stepping to the door for the tenth time, Jim caught a new and wilder note in the murmur of excitement that drifted up from the wakeful village below, he knew that his message had been received. . . .

A sob of exultation—a moment of regret that gallant old Simon Frazer could not know of this. . . . Or perhaps did he? And with this thought, in a sudden access of emotion, Jim snapped on the mike again, seated himself at the funny little miniature piano, and triumphantly thundered out that old battle hymn that Frazer had loved so well:

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me.
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free;
While God is marching on.

Thus it was that Garatinsky and the Arab, halting astonished in the doorway, came upon Jim M'Gregor.

"You!" panted the Russian. And without another word whipped out a revolver and fired. Instinctively Jim dropped to the floor in an effort to dodge; and when he felt the bullet sear along his head and the warm blood flood over his face, he had sense enough to lie still. Twice more the Russian fired, but with a hand trembling from exhaustion; so that one bullet missed entirely and the other merely burned along Jim's ribs.

"Vite!" he heard the Arab yell. "You saw what happened to Peralta! The back trail over the rim! *Vite!"*

The lights went out, and Jim heard the two plunge outside again—heard also the savage shouts of the infuriate Ethiopians growing rapidly louder. He staggered to his feet, cleared his eyes with

a swab of his sleeve, and reeled out the door. In the faint light of the false dawn he made out a crag of lava rock a dozen yards away, and tottering thither, flung himself down behind it.

The shouting mob came closer, then broke into the yells of a view-halloo as they caught sight of their quarry running across the crater toward the opposite rim. The soft Russian was no match for these hardy desert dwellers; and as Jim watched, Garatinsky was overtaken and disappeared among the white shammas of the Ethiopians. The Arab, however, was a far abler man; he made the rim and climbed the trail prepared over it. Only when he was outlined against the sky at the top did a lucky shot from the scores volleyed after him bring him tumbling down again. . . .

The mob came back presently, and Jim saw that they bore two heads high on their spears—and trailed after them long lengths of copper wire. For a long time, then, he did not again venture to look out, but lay there motionless behind the rock, listening to the bellows of triumph that swelled anew as the crackle of flames announced the destruction of the two buildings. . . . Jim's job was done: he had kept faith with Simon Frazer—and with his own soul. The satanic lair high on the Tooth of Time was at last destroyed.

OF Jim M'Gregor's final journey in Africa he remembered little afterward. . . . Somehow, when the vengeful villagers had departed, he made his way across the now sun-blasted crater and over the rim by way of the trail which Garatinsky and his confederates had made ready for their own escape. Somehow he found his way back to the camel he had tethered in the brush only a few short desperate hours before. And somehow he eventually made his way across this harried land to a British outpost.

He thought of Kathleen. The thought twisted a dull knife in his heart.

What had happened to her?

He found out on the second day, at a village whose *shum,* or elder, a friendly Christian Amhara, gave him the gossip of the signal drums.

Gossip of the war. The Italians completing their conquest. The Ethiopians steadily retreating. Tempest over Africa, Jim reflected, because of men's greed and ambition. Men on Africa's plains and jungles—what had once been men. Dead men with limbs racked and twisted in ecstatic agony. Men daubed with scarlet, as if some practical jester had dashed whole pails of red paint over their bodies. And war not yet over. The Aussan Sultan fighting on. Swords out throughout the Sultanate, from the Golima river to the border. . . .

Kurrabara?

The *shum* scratched his head.

"Let me see—"

Oh, yes. He recalled. A Levantine trader—and, later on, Jim heard the tale to the glorious full—had defended two *Amerikanis,* a man and his daughter, when the cry of, "Death to the foreigners!" had sounded from *tukul* to *tukul.* Had defended them bravely, so bravely. So hopelessly—until the end. . . .

"The end?" echoed Jim dully. But the next moment he shouted with joy.

Italian scouts arriving at Kurrabara, the *shum* told him, in force. Defeating the tribesmen. And the *Amerikanis* and the Levantine—this too the gossip of the drums—were safe in Somaliland. . . .

So Jim rode on, for long days which stretched like a loomed fabric of dreams. Days of heat and thirst, fatigue and danger. . . .

He thought of Kathleen, awaiting him. He loved her, and she loved him. They would marry. . . . He had won through.

And the next thought, disturbing, jutting into his brain:

"What then?"

Kathleen. His love and hers. Children. Perhaps success as a musician.

All because he had listened to the pipecalls of the wilderness gods—had come here to Ethiopia. . . .

And he wondered—could anything, in life, ever, rival or top the high-keyed tension and fervor of the last few months? Could anything—musically, logically—be louder than a fortissimo?

He would be happy—prosily, soberly happy. He knew it. And then, suddenly, as he stared into the glowing violet of the night, with a pale moon growing fainter and fainter, an overwhelming fear came to him that this happiness would mean little, that his soul was marked and marred for life, with Africa, with the utter futility, the endless, eternal riddle of Africa—and what was a woman's love, what was sober happiness, compared to this riddle?

A shiver ran through him.

Rub-rub-rub-rumbeddy rub, droned the far drums, with a sardonic cadence.

THE END

Allah in Spain

A grim little drama of the Spanish Revolution.

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

A HORSEMAN cantered easily along the sun-hot road, such a horseman as these winding dusty thoroughfares had not seen in four hundred years. A brown *jellab* hid his gay uniform like a cloak, all save the brown hawk-face, the brown flashing hawk-eyes, the quivering nostrils and thin, finely curved lips and chin.

He rode with head upflung, with exultant chaos in his heart, with wild joyous incredulity bursting across his brain. It was true, it was true! He, Idris ben Daoud, Doctor of Laws from the Sorbonne, attorney of the Court of Appeals in Fez, Captain in the Expeditionary Force—he was stirring this dust, looking upon these skies, a conqueror!

The afternoon sunlight blurred the landscape with heat-waves. From afar drifted a faint hammer of rifles, an occasional staccato burst of machine-gun fire. Once, from a group of men in a field, plundering some prisoners before killing them, a yell lifted at him:

"Allah! Allah il Allah! W'allah!"

He waved his hand and rode on. Pride and a ravening glory thrilled in his veins. A litter of corpses strewed the road; he walked his horse across them indifferently. One of them, not a corpse after all, heaved up suddenly to show the disheveled, blood-stained figure of a woman, her rifle sweeping up at the horseman. Idris whipped out pistol and fired, rapidly, precisely. The woman slumped down.

He drew out a silver cigarette-case, snapped his lighter aflame, and puffed.

"These damned women!" he muttered in French. "They're wolves, these reds. One needs the eye of an eagle! Allah! The skies of Andalusia!"

They were ahead, over the hill; skies of this land of song and story, whence his ancestors had fled into Morocco. But more than this. A thousand years had unrolled to Idris ben Daoud. Spanish roads, Spanish blood, Spanish corpses—all of them under his feet! As they had been under the feet of his ancestors a thousand years ago, trampling this same dust in the wake of Al Mansur the Victorious.

"Prayers shall go up to Allah in Granada, in Toledo, in all the parts of Spain," he thought, kindling to the sight of those skies ahead. "We have come back. We, the lawyers and farmers and mercenaries of the old race, we Moriscos, we Moors —we Arabs, by God!"

Yes, it was true. Up across the straits, up from Morocco with Franco, had come Allah to ride the roads of Spain on the wings of civil strife. As they had come a thousand years ago under the same conditions, the Moors came now in their thousands, following the rebel flag.

Idris rode alone. Ahead, the loyalist or communist lines had crumpled and shattered. He was hot on the heels of pursuit and carnage, his own men mopping up and ravening. They had plunged into this civil war, this war of ferocity, of extermination, with the same mad whirl of exultation that now filled his own heart. The centuries were stripped away; a thousand years had rolled back.

Ahead, the walls of a convent broke the sky. At least, until a few hours ago it had been a convent. Now, in a field, Idris passed a dressing-station—for rebels only. Corpses began to strew the road more thickly. The gutted buildings of the convent had fallen in, reeking with slow smoke and the odor of mortality.

The reds had held this place to the bitter last, asking no quarter, giving none. Shells had smashed walls and buildings.

THE eye of Idris flickered over the scene. A line of black things littering the foot of a wall; priests, gunned down in a heap ere the rebel advance could save them. Gaps in the boundary wall showed glimpses of the gardens, where white splotches lay against the bright flowers. Nuns, shot down; but their killers lay here also, heaped in windrows.

Off to the left sounded volleys, slow, methodical. Prisoners being finished off,

Lithograph by Peter Kuhlhoff

His ancestors a thousand years ago had trampled the same dust. "We have come back," he thought, "we Moors of the old race!"

just over the hill. The road and fields were strewn with convent loot: sacred images, vestments, pictures, trappings of every kind. Idris flicked a sardonic eye around, and tossed his cigarette away.

A droning thrum grew in the sky. Idris looked up, and his thin lip curled. A French pursuit plane roaring across the the blue, gift of the radicals in Paris to the reds of Madrid. Well, the Italian flyers would get that fellow; Franco had a dozen of them on the leash.

Idris watched mechanically, but he was thinking of the key.

HE was more French than Spanish; yet he was all the same a Moor of Tetuan. In his old house in Tetuan hung a huge iron key. His ancestors had brought it from Spain when they were cast out. It was the key of their home in Granada. That house had no doubt fallen into dust long ago, but the key remained as a symbol to their children. Idris ben Daoud regretted now that he had not brought the key with him, as a matter of sentiment.

The last walls of the convent fell behind. Here the conflict had been stubborn, the dead were heaped in piles. Idris saw robes of his own men among the others. This sight delighted him. Moorish blood drenching Spanish soil! It was perfect; it rounded everything most fittingly. Allah was in Spain again!

These Spaniards fought like madmen or devils, men and women alike, and this was natural. They had a cause. Right or wrong, men fight for a cause as for nothing else. It was many a day since Spaniards had known a cause to die for; but now the reds had it, and the rebels had it—and the Moors had it.

Idris thought of how some of his men had landed on Spanish ground with tears, gripping the soil, clutching at it. He had felt like doing the same thing, but he was an officer and scorned to show such feelings.

Suddenly he reined in his horse, staring down beside the roadway blankly at first, then keenly intent.

Here, past the convent, the road was bordered by massive ancient oak trees, and about one of these old trees lay a huge pile of corpses. No sign of fighting. Obviously the wounded and the captives had been finished off here in a mass; this was the machine-gun fire he had heard. Nothing of all this caused Idris ben Daoud any interest; it was the face of the woman that held his astonished gaze.

She lay at the side of the pile, reclining on the bodies as though asleep, a pistol under her relaxed hand. Short red-gold hair surrounded her white face like a halo. Her left arm was extended, fist still doubled, as though she had died while giving the red salute.

"As Allah liveth!" murmured Idris. "It is Rosa, Rosa herself! But that's impossible. Some Spanish girl who looks like her—"

He flung himself out of the saddle and strode forward, his robe brushing the faces of corpses. Other women lay here in the pile, but none like her. He stared down. To recognize a woman asleep is sometimes difficult; yet there was one way of sure recognition.

Suddenly the color in her cheeks struck his attention. Her bosom was rising and falling; he leaned over, touched her face, found it warm. Alive, then! His eyes traveled, and he realized the truth. The right leg of her trousers had been hacked off. A red bandage was about the leg, under the knee. Wounded, she had crawled here, applied first aid, and collapsed. But—was she Rosa or not?

WITH one fierce, sweeping gesture, Idris put his hand to her shirt and violently tore it away, exposing the milk-white skin. Yes. There in the hollow of her throat was the mole, the little brown mole he had so often kissed. Only a year ago! He was getting his doctorate at the Sorbonne then. For a moment, but only for a moment, those days rushed back upon his brain as he stared down at the lovely haloed face of the woman who had loved him in Paris.

Turning suddenly, he went to his waiting horse, took the canteen from the saddle, and came back to her. He lifted her head and poured water between her lips. Her eyes fluttered and opened, eyes blue as the Andalusian skies.

"Dris! Then it's all a dream," she murmured. "You, Dris—ah! What's happened? It's not real?"

He kicked the pistol away from under her hand, and stood looking down at her. She sat up, eyes dilating upon him.

"It can't be! Idris ben Daoud!"

"But it is." He smiled thinly. "Yes. I was astonished to see you here, but after all, it's quite logical. You always were a rabid red, a leader of the cause. So you came to help the reds of Madrid, eh? You and the guns and the airplanes, from Paris. Well, we've come to help the rebels, Allah and I."

Her features became more composed. "Then what they told us is true! The Moriscos, the Moors—they've brought over Moors—"

IDRIS laughed lightly. He produced cigarettes, flicked his lighter, held it for her, then to his own cigarette.

"I'll have you taken to a dressing-station," he said casually. "Not that you're much good to anyone, but as a matter of sentiment—"

A distant, exultant yell drifted to him. *"Allah! W'Allah!"* His face, curiously free of lines like the faces of most Moors, hardened and thinned. Allah in Spain again! Here was something to dream about, to fight for, to die for! The blood began to kindle in his veins.

"Dris!" The blue eyes of the girl warmed and softened upon him. "You have such a queer look in your face—then I'm a prisoner? I'm French, not Spanish, so it'll be all right, of course. You can make it all right for me. We'll be together."

"No! Little red Rosa, still clever as the devil himself, eh?" Idris regarded her sardonically. "A thousand years have come between us."

"What do you mean?" Her voice took on an edge, her gaze searched him sharply. "What are you talking about?"

"What you with your background can perfectly comprehend, my dear Rosa, but what most others fail to see. The Moors are in Spain again! Do you hear me? And it's thanks to you. That's why I'll take care of you, reward you with life; not because of your kisses. Bah! You're a useless thing now, and not worth a peseta to anyone. But I'll reward you for what you've done."

"Are you out of your head, Dris?"

"Idris ben Daoud, to you." He laughed harshly. A guttural accent crept into his French words; he was thinking in Arabic again. His eyes lifted an instant to the skies of Andalusia, over the hill, then came back to her with a glitter. They struck her as with an actual blow.

Her face hardened. Her hands went to her breast, pulling the torn shirt together.

"A leader of the party!" he went on abruptly. "Little red Rosa, leader of the cause! You talk, you write, you shoot, you come like a firebrand to Madrid. Now you lie here, and what good are you? As a woman, none whatever. There are thousands of whole, sound women in the valleys ahead. As there were a thousand years ago when my ancestors came here with Al Mansur."

His mockery brought a flame to her face.

"Oh! You beast! You—you Arab!"

Idris laughed in irony. "Thank you, Rosa; the word is music, after the harsh Spanish term for us. *Morisco?* No; *Arab!* The sword of Allah has come into Spain again, do you understand? You and your cause—bah! You and your woman's body—bah! Why, you're no good to any man now."

Deliberately he thrust forward his boot toward her wounded leg. A scream burst from her. She shrank back, white and shaken, staring wide-eyed at him.

"No good. You can't even shoot down the priests and the black nuns now. You can't lead the rabble to massacre the men of culture and education. You can't wipe out this civilization, so Allah may possess the land. That little pellet of lead in your leg has ended your usefulness. But you've done all these things; you've brought us here to Spain; so I'll reward you for it with your pretty life. Your pretty life! Oh, you can understand well enough—you, with your prating of economics and sociology!"

"YOU'RE mad! You're insane!" she muttered, dry-lipped.

"Insane? But you, Rosa, are dirty," he said very sanely. "Yes, you need washing; camp life, I suppose. That dirt-ringed throat, that blood-caked hair, would scarcely exert appeal any more. Insane, eh? It is you who are insane, you Christians!"

The timbre of his voice deepened. The wild thrill of his pulses shook him.

"Insane, you say!" he cried fervently. "A thousand years rolled back—think of it! No fanatic's dream, no lunatic fancy, could envision anything half so fantastic as what you've brought to pass. Your Viejo Cristianos dying in every ditch, your churches gutted, your nobles and priests shot like wild dogs, your people slaughtering each other with insensate ferocity; and for what? *Allah!* As it was a thousand years ago, in every detail. For the true faith to rise upon your ruins. The Moors are in Spain again! Do you understand?"

"I understand you're a fool," she snapped, crouching tensely. She was sitting up again, watching him with wonder and scorn. "You're only a hired rabble brought over by Franco to do his dirty work. Killers! Cossacks!"

"As they said to us a thousand years ago." Idris tossed away his cigarette. It hissed in a pool of blood. Her voice rose at him in a snarl.

"You fool, Dris! Twisting things around to suit your madman's vision, blind to all reality, hired by fascist thugs to grind down the proletariat—"

Her voice fell silent before his wide, ecstatic eyes.

"But what's the reality, Rosa? Your economics, your radical patter, your united front, your Marxian pratings, your pat little vocabulary—it all comes down to this!" And he slapped the heavy pistol at his hip. "Exterminate each other; magnificent! You've brought it about, you reds, you communists. You've done it here, as you're doing it in France, in China, in India, in America. Why, it's a crime to shoot you agitators! Instead, reward you. Turn you loose to go your ways and prepare the path elsewhere for the old races to come back!

"Reality? Serve it, serve it; deny all faith!" he went on, exalted and passionate. "Let your Nazarene hang broken and destroyed; let your war against the ideal go on! Thus the prayers to Allah will rise from your smoking churches. The horse of the Moor dips his fetlock in your blood—look at that horse of mine! As it was a thousand years ago, so it is now. We're here; we've come over by the thousand; more are coming. There in the sky you can see the smoke now which hangs over the valleys of Andalusia—"

He had apparently forgotten her in his wild fervor. His eyes were lifted to the sky ahead, where gray masses of smoke were drifting.

Her quick-darting gaze found the pistol he had kicked aside. With one swoop she plucked it out of the dust and flung it up; but she was too slow. His automatic roared, and the heavy bullet drove through the little brown mole above her heart.

She lay back against the pile of dead things, one with them now. Idris stood gazing down at her for a moment, then shrugged and put up his pistol. A forward step, and he was stooping above her. His lips touched the blue hole his bullet had made—not in sentiment, but in mockery, if one might believe his thin smile.

Then he turned to his waiting horse, swung up into the saddle, and went riding on down the road with rapt eyes fastened on the blue sky ahead.

Lone

He'd begun to think a pilot's life as tame as a bus-driver's; and then—it happened.

CRASH CROWLEY was coming out of the weather room on his way to sign on for his Bâle-Paris duty when he heard that voice. You couldn't make a mistake about a voice like Victor Reeves-Raynor's. The man was standing in a group of uniformed officials of the air-line in the glass and chromium hall of the airport.

"Captain Crowley!" some one called; and Crash turned.

"Hello, Victor," he said. "What are you doing in Zurich?"

"Flying to Paris with you," Raynor told him. "And then on to Croydon—I hope."

"I only go to Paris today," he said. "You'll go from Le Bourget by Imperial Airways, I expect."

The official who had called the pilot over explained: "Sir Victor and Lady Reeves-Raynor are your passengers this afternoon, Captain Crowley. Sir Victor is returning to London from the Disarmament Conference."

Crash Crowley nodded. He had the reputation for being short—almost surly. "We've got twenty minutes yet," he told the statesman. "Care to come along with me?"

In the office he signed on and collected his manifest; then he led the way to the pilots' room to buy his friend a drink. At thirty-eight, Raynor was a baronet, a Cabinet minister with a European reputation, and a man who looked as if he was going to get where he wanted. He had been at school with Crowley, and together they had gone from school into the Royal Air Force.

"They seem to be making a fuss today, even for you," Crash growled as they stood at the deserted bar. "What've you done this time? Saved Europe again?" He wanted to keep off the subject of Elise. Perhaps she was already in the machine, for he had not noticed her in the hall. Crash had been in love with Lady Reeves-Raynor once. But that was before Victor came along like a comet.

Eagle

By

B. L. JACOT

Illustrated by Grattan Condon

"How are things going with you, Crash?" Raynor asked.

Sixteen years back, Crowley had taken this job of skippering Air-International passenger machines. He still had the job, and his pay was still just enough to live on. He was one of the senior pilots, and his hair was grizzled; and pilots were getting more like bus-drivers every year.

"I'm all right," he said gruffly. "Elise well?"

"They took her off to a ladies' room, or something. You knew she's coming with us today? She'll be glad to see you." For a moment he paused, running an eye over his old friend. It must have been a year or two since he had seen Crash Crowley. Crash had come out of the War with a reputation as a war pilot right up in the first dozen. For a man who had been shot down, shot up, and decorated as much as Crowley, this job with an air-line did not seem fitting to Reeves-Raynor.

"REMEMBER talking to me, Crash, about looking ahead?" he put in suddenly. "That was sometime ago, but I told you then there wasn't much future on the piloting side of commercial flying. Don't think I'm impertinent, but why don't you go on to the executive side? You could do something for yourself there, old thing."

Crash used to know this man pretty well: he did not mind the insinuation. "I'm all right as a pilot, Victor," he argued. "I don't reckon I should do much good at anything else. There are smarter men for the ground jobs."

"Not with your record, and experience."

"Men who are smart in the way I wouldn't want to be smart—even if I could be."

"Of course you could be! You're not married, I know; but you have to think of the future. What's the future in piloting? They'll be giving you a ticket-punch with a bell on it one of these days. Believe me, all this Lone Eagle stuff has had its day."

"Maybe. It's still a man's job, though, ticket-punches or not."

"So is coal-mining, if it comes to that." He finished his drink and laid a hand affectionately on the other's shoulder. "They don't want your sort of death-diving, split-hair-shaving acrobats today, Crash. Where's the use for them?"

The grizzled man in the neat uniform shrugged. "Time we got out," he said. "Is your escort coming all the way? It's not on the manifest."

Raynor buttoned his fur-trimmed coat. "I'm traveling diplomatic." He lowered

Braun's voice came harshly: "Come up this end and leave the case at my feet as you pass."

his voice. "You know how it is with these formulas and points for agreement. You'll be flying an interesting little budget this afternoon in my dispatch-case."

The pilot turned a sour eye over the crimson case. He had flown King's messengers before, and was not much impressed. That case with the gold crown explained the fuss in the hall. Without doubt Raynor would be met by people from the Embassy when they landed at Le Bourget. . . .

He did not meet Elise until she came out of the swing doors of the Douane on to the concrete of the apron. In spite of himself his heart beat faster as she exchanged a few words with him, standing by the steps of his machine. A beautiful woman, she never seemed to grow a day older; yet each time he saw her there was a different look. Gracious was too stilted a word for it; yet she looked more and more the sort of woman who could help a man on with his job.

The motor-truck with its great tires drew away from the machine, and the baggage-compartment door slammed. The mechanic climbed out, spoke a few low words to the pilot, and the pilot climbed in. They wheeled away the steps as he shut the door and turned the locking device.

As Crowley walked up the slope to his cockpit forward, he looked over the passengers. He had three besides Victor and his wife: two women—British according to the manifest, and looking like school-teachers; and a big, dark-skinned man, reading a German-Swiss newspaper. His name was Braun, and he was traveling to Paris on an Austrian passport.

"Taking you up on the ceiling," he informed Raynor as he passed. "We'll be smoother up there." In his single seat up in front, Crowley glanced over his dials. He gave his engines a burst to check the oil-pressure, then waved away the chocks. He liked these machines, fast, twin-engined monoplanes, German-built. They handled like bacon-slicers, and had a top speed of over two hundred and fifty miles per hour.

He collected his signal from the tower when he had taxied round the cramped field and opened her up. He trimmed his tail before he turned over the lake to settle his five passengers comfortably in his eight-passenger machine, then set his course, climbing steadily, east along the ridge of the Jura Mountains. At two thousand meters altitude he spoke to Zurich on the radio, then switched over onto his directional-gyro, leaving the machine to fly itself while he looked round.

The two Englishwomen were right at the back of the machine, sitting where they imagined it was safest. Braun was over on the port side halfway along the aisle. Raynor and his wife were close behind the pilot's seat. Elise, he saw, was sitting motionless, in the strained attitude women took when they were nervous about being air-sick. Raynor was reading type-script out of his dispatch-case. Braun was still reading his newspaper.

As they crossed the frontier into France, for want of anything better to do, Crowley slipped on his headphones and spoke with an operator at Besançon. He was thinking of what Raynor had said to him. Flying was a fool's game today, almost mechanical. He—

A touch on the shoulder made him turn, slipping off the earphones. The Austrian, Braun, was asking him their position. Crowley pointed over to starboard, indicating the French fortified area, explaining that they had to make a detour in order not to cross this prohibited zone.

THE passenger nodded, and simultaneously with the thought that this man seemed to be taking an interest in the instruments, Crowley noticed that he had a parachute harness crossing his chest. And then—a hand pushed him back as he rose in the pilot's seat, and amazement turned to a cold anger as he

found himself staring at an automatic pistol held in the other's hand.

For a moment the drone of the engines was unbroken as raglike fragments of cloud tore past the windows of the plane; then the man spoke. "There is no need to alarm your passengers yet," he threatened. "I could pilot this machine if I had to kill you. But I do not wish to do that. Will you give me your word not to notice what I am about to do? Not to interfere?"

Crowley was thinking quickly. "What are you going to do?"

"Take something from our English friend, and jump."

The automatic was hidden from the rest of the passengers. To them it would seem that the pilot was talking, probably of the route, to this man. It was the thought of Elise that snapped his control. "I'll see you damned first!" he shouted. *"Victor—"*

AS he pushed up in his seat, a heavy blow on the back of his skull sent a numbing crash of pain through his head. He felt himself slump over the wheel; but he still had enough grip on his senses to fend himself off with his elbows.

When his head cleared, the passengers were herded together at the tail end of the cabin, and Crowley's first thought was that the gyro had trimmed the ship. Raynor stood in the aisle, the dispatch case under his arm, and Braun's voice came harshly:

"Come up this end and leave the case at my feet as you pass."

Elise, Crowley saw, had noticed his return to consciousness. Her face was drawn and white. Confidence grew in him as he shook his head at her almost imperceptibly, warning her not to shout. He remained slumped over the wheel, watching his chance.

After a doubtful pause, Raynor walked down the aisle. He came to a stop before the gun-man. "If you think—" he began, when a blinding crash rang out.

Elise screamed as Raynor slid to the floor; in that moment Crowley's thoughts came crystal clear. He was thinking the way he used to think back in the war, when a split second was all the margin allowed you between getting safe home, and sudden death in a whining scream of tracer bullets. This man was going to kill the pilot of this machine as well as Raynor. The crate would crash and burn out, and no one would be left to tell of his escape by parachute. It would be assumed that Raynor's state papers burned in the wreck.

From under the crook of his arm Crowley watched the gun-man pick up the dispatch-case. His fingers itched to get at this man's throat, but he had not lived to be an ace of air-fighters by going bull-headed at anything when he saw red. He was going to get this man yet. And Elise would see him do it. . . . He had been in love with her for seventeen years.

Raynor on the floor was not moving, and a spread of crimson was circling his shoulder as he lay. Crowley spread limp and motionless against his instrument panel. The gun-man motioned the women forward; and as Elise came, he tried to warn her once more. One of the other women was too weak to move. The gun-man left her where she sat. He moved over to the door of the machine at the rear, and still covering the others with his gun, felt over his 'chute equipment.

As he slipped the safety-catch, Elise turned on the pilot. Her eyes blazed at him. "You're a man!" she cried. "Do something! Are you going to let him get away? Oh, *Victor!"*

The look in her eyes cut him like a knife. She thought he was shamming—and yellow! He remained slumped and motionless, and for an awful moment he

As Crowley rose, a hand pushed him back.

saw the man at the door hesitate—if he shot again, nothing could save them.

For an age, it seemed, he stood at the door balancing the risks; then a quick rush down the aisle from Elise told him that he had gone.

The woman watched him hover for a moment at the open door, then plunge down out of sight. The door slammed back, torn by the slipstream, and in a moment Elise was back at the pilot's cockpit. "Help me get my husband into—"

Her voice was ice, and contempt showed in her eyes, but Crash Crowley ignored it. *"Get to a seat, everyone!"* he yelled. *"And hold tight!"* As he shouted the order, he pushed the nose sweetly down into a power dive. The rev's sang up into a shriek as he put his ship onto her back, then banked her off vertically into an Immelmann turn. He had to get back on his tracks. . . .

He could hear nothing now except the shrieking whine of the slipstream and the tearing roar of his peaking engines. Down below, a white puff bobbed and swayed. He went into his turn at two thousand meters. Braun was then, by the size of his 'chute, already eight hundred meters below on his way to the ground.

Calmly, as in the old days, Crowley measured off his angles and drops. The controls were taut, and sensitive as a violin-string under the strain of speed. They felt sweet to his insteps and fingers. This was a lovely ship, and he had often thought of something like this.

He heard a muffled scream behind him as he put her right up on the port wing tip. The earth wheeled round dizzily as if turning on a plate; then Crowley was loose on his power dive.

Wind blasted and shrieked; the rev's of the engines set the hull throbbing with a dynamo hum; the floor slanted at a crazy slope as the machine stood on its nose as if to arrow into the earth that was galloping up. But the man holding the ship to it did not move a muscle. His eye was fixed on a white mushroom, coming up at them bigger and bigger. Like a rifle, he had his screaming ship sighted on the swelling chute.

THE man under the parachute had no chance. Without shifting the line of his dive, the war ace ripped through the silk with the spats of his undercarriage; and as the tiny black figure turned over and over in the tangle of cords, falling like a stone to the earth, Crowley eased his ship out, cutting his engines and circling back on a flat turn.

Crowley came out of his dive with four hundred meters to spare. He dropped lower yet, as he cruised to fix in his mind the spot in the woods where Braun and the dispatch-case fell; then he headed northwest for the emergency landing at Baille, switching over to the gyro to keep him on his course.

Elise was on the floor beside Raynor. She looked up quickly as he knelt beside her. "He's all right," she said. "How long before we can get him to a doctor?"

"Say twenty minutes," Crowley allowed. "I'm landing at Baille. I'll get back to the controls."

As he went he caught her eye. "I'm glad you got that man," was all she said; but it was enough for Crowley.

AT Baille he had to ground his ship, reporting damage to the landing-gear, and a bullet tear where the bullet had ripped into the aluminum after passing through Raynor's shoulder. They took one of the women to the hospital as well as Raynor, suffering from shock; but they were otherwise none the worse off for having been mixed up in one of the most sensational stories of the year. The French army picked up the dispatch-case —and put what was left of Braun into a sack. . . .

Crowley went with Elise to the hospital that night to see the invalid, and they had to dodge the newspaper men. Crowley had never been happier; and yet, seeing so much of Elise all at one time, he was unhappy too.

"I'm only in love with her because I didn't marry her," he told himself. But he did not quite believe it. He would have liked to try to make sure. They talked of a lot of things round that white hospital cot, avoiding the afternoon's dramatic happenings. But when it came time for them to leave, Raynor said:

"Lucky for us all you kept your head, Crash."

"Just a bit of excitement," he growled.

"You seem to order your life," the Cabinet minister reflected, "in the way of winning medals. What sort of medal would go for what you did this afternoon?"

"Light-headed, Elise," Crowley explained sympathetically. "That's what it is. We'd better leave him." But at the door he paused. "The sort of medal," he said, "that makes a *ting*—like a ticket-punch."

REAL EXPERIENCES

Here follow a group of true stories of adventurous experience contributed by our readers. (For details about our Real Experience story contest, see page 3.) First a famous soldier of fortune, who has fought under eight flags, tells of his service while an officer of the Spanish Foreign Legion.

by
MAJOR EDWARD (TEX) O'REILLY

Banner of the Mahdi

LAST night I sat in an easy chair sleepily listening to the evening radio news-report. Suddenly I sat alert as the announcer began to talk of the desperate fight of the Spanish Foreign Legion in the mad civil war in the bleak mountains of Spain.

On two fronts the Legion had charged to victory. With their bayonets they had cleared the way for the rebel troops. Only a few sentences droned from the radio, but a vivid picture came to my mind like a gaudy canvas. . . .

Only ten years ago, I too had charged with the Spanish Legion. It was in another war, fought in the Riff mountains of the Morocco; we battled then against the fanatic Moslem Berbers and Moors led by the wily Abd-El-Krim, who dreamed of a new empire under the green banner of the prophet.

Today the Berber tribesmen and the Moors are fighting side by side with my old comrades of the Foreign Legion against the government of Spain. It is confusing. For centuries the Spaniards fought to drive the Moor across the Straits of Gibraltar. Now the Moor has returned as an invited guest.

My own connection with the Legion was an accident. Since I was a kid soldier of seventeen in the Spanish war in Cuba, I had served in many campaigns in far corners of the world. I had fought under the flags of eight nations and was determined that in the future I would let the old world settle its quarrels without my help.

A commercial errand had brought me to Spain late in 1924. My work ended, I found myself in Malaga, Spain, the recruiting depot of the Spanish Legion. A war was on, across the narrow straits, and as a veteran soldier and newspaper man I wanted to see it—as a spectator.

Fortunately I was not a stranger in Malaga. Some of the high ranking officers had served with me in Latin America and Mexico. I had little trouble in securing permission to go to the front at Melilla.

When we arrived at Melilla, the Spanish fortunes were at their lowest ebb. The army had been defeated by the Ber-

ber tribes of Abd-El-Krim. An army of twenty thousand men had been almost exterminated. General Sylvestre, the commander, had committed suicide.

Behind the lines of a defeated army is a poor place to view a war. I wanted to get to the firing-line and the next day my wish was granted with a vengeance. A *bandera,* or battalion, of the Foreign Legion had mutinied. Such a thing was unprecedented. The high command did not know what to do about it.

That evening I was called to headquarters, where I met General Zammora and was introduced to the Dictator of Spain, General Primo de Rivera. He said that he had heard flattering reports of my military record, and that if I so desired, I would be commissioned as a captain in the mutinous bandera of the Legion. It seemed to me a mighty poor job. Finally I asked permission to visit the camp of the mutineers and talk to the men before giving an answer.

Next morning I rode on horseback to the Legion camp in the outskirts of the city. I called for a meeting of the non-commissioned officers of the company. Much to my astonishment, the first man to report was Sergeant Timothy McGuire, whom I had last seen ten years before when I was an officer in the Mexican army of Pancho Villa, and he was a cop in Mexico City. Another sergeant was named Gunderson. He was a Norwegian, educated in England, who had been an officer in the British army.

"You're a fine bunch of soldiers to refuse duty in the face of the enemy," I told them. "What's the trouble?"

"We are not refusing duty; we are on strike," they explained. "For months we have been under fire. We have lost more than half our force. That's all right: but—we have not received our pay; the civilian contractors have stolen our grub; they have stopped our wine ration; and we haven't even shoes for our feet, or bandages for our wounded."

I inspected the company. They were a sorry-looking lot. A splendid body of men, the majority trained veterans from other armies, but they were ragged and gaunt from hunger.

"We'll go back into the line tonight if we get supplies," they assured me.

When I returned to headquarters, I reported that I thought the men had a good case. General Zammora got busy. Before nightfall the men were paid, and clothing and rations issued, not only for my company but for the entire bandera. That afternoon I took command and reorganized the company. Tim McGuire was made top sergeant. He had served two enlistments in the American regular army, had fought during the World War with the French Foreign Legion, and for two years had hiked with the Spanish Legion. Tim was one of the finest soldiers I have ever known.

WITHIN forty-eight hours after I took command, our company was under fire. If I wanted to see a war, all I had to do was keep my eyes open. I had blundered into another campaign. For more than two years I fought under the red and gold banners of the Tercio los Extranjeros, the hardest-fighting outfit that ever led a forlorn hope. It was first organized by General Milan Astray, a splendid officer. One of our junior officers, Francisco Franco, now commands.

It was a strange organization that can only be compared with the French Foreign Legion. Our recruits were a polyglot bunch hailing from most of the countries of Europe and Latin America. More than eighty per cent were trained veterans who had fought in other armies.

I will not attempt to tell the history of that bitter campaign. For two years it was a repetition of relief expeditions, desperate battles in the hills with the fanatic Berber tribesmen, who are a white race. Our loss was appalling. In two and one-half months on the western front the First and Second banderas lost 110 per cent of their officers and 85 per cent of the enlisted men. Our own losses were almost as heavy. Yet the recruits kept coming, and our ranks were refilled.

At last we were transferred to the western front, where the campaign had settled down to a knock-down-and-drag-out fight. The Spanish army was retreating from the city of Shesuan, to the sea-coast at Tetuan. The entire civilian population was also being evacuated.

The memory of that six-weeks' retreat is still a nightmare to me. We went in five thousand strong, but only eight hundred of us reached the coast on our own feet. The Legion formed the rear guard, and bore the brunt of the fighting.

At Tetuan the officers of our bandera were fêted at a garden party as guests of King Alfonso and the Dictator. We were given medals and decorations, patted on the back, and told we were heroes. It does not pay to be a hero.

The next morning we hiked out on the road to Shesuan. It was a fine paved

highway about sixty-five kilometers long; but it was truly a Via Dolorosa. More than fifty thousand refugees were fleeing in terror before the victorious Moslems.

It was the duty of the Legion to clear the colonists out of the villages and farms in the Riff valleys, and to hold the rear guard of a horseshoe-shaped line. Several times the Berbers broke the Spanish line and slaughtered the troops; but they never broke the Legion.

Abd-El-Krim had tried to rouse all Morocco in a holy war. His mullahs and holy men had roused the highlanders to a fanatic frenzy. As part of the campaign to stir up the religious frenzy of the tribes, old Krim had used a number of sacred banners. When these were sent forward in a charge the enemy usually smashed through the lines. Thousands of the tribesmen went yelling into the seventh heaven before the machine-guns of the Spaniards, but they were killing infidels, and death was welcome.

One of these banners in particular was noted for its holiness. It was called the "Banner of the Mahdi," and was said to have been used in the war against the British in the Soudan, when General Gordon died at Khartoum. It was a black flag about six feet square, with a wide green border. In the black center was woven a sentence from the Koran. The letters were stitched with human hair, and the legend proclaimed that it was from the beard of the Prophet Mohamet.

Twice this flag had been used in an attack, and both times the Spaniards had been routed. One day I received notice that the Banner of the Mahdi was being brought up before my position.

We had entered the fight a few weeks before with over seven hundred men in the bandera. That day we only had one hundred and eighty-five fit for duty. Although only a captain, as ranking officer I commanded what was left of the bandera. In fact we only had two other officers; Gunderson, who had been made a lieutenant; and Lieutenant Tomas Sanchez, a boy of twenty-one.

Our little force was deployed across an arroyo. On each side the steep hills were guarded by the Spanish troops and native partisans. Behind us, less than two miles away was that dreadful road, crowded with a panic-stricken mob of refugees. If the Berbers broke our line it meant a massacre of civilians, women and children.

I asked for reinforcements but none were available. Neither was there any artillery to be had. I did succeed in getting three extra machine-guns by the simple process of taking them by force from a quartermaster's truck. We dug shallow trenches and placed the guns to rake the mouth of the valley.

About sundown the holy banner came up before our position. I could see it plainly through my glasses, surrounded by a guard and a number of mullahs in their white *djellabas,* beating drums. From the enemy lines not more than two hundred yards away, came wild cheering and barbaric songs.

The escort with the flag took position in a shallow *cañoncita* just behind the Berber line. Then darkness came, and we awaited the attack. Our little company was opposed to probably two thousand of the enemy.

That night was an anxious one for me. I inspected the company and saw that every man was ready. Intermittent firing kept up, but I knew that the real attack would probably come in the gray of dawn. That was the Berber custom. The more I figured the situation, the bleaker was the outlook.

If that maddened horde of fanatics charged in wave after wave on our weak position, I did not see a chance of holding them. They would sweep over us behind the lines of the half-trained Spanish militia, and down into that crowded road.

I hated to think of what would follow.

THERE is an old military axiom which says the best defense is an attack. I decided that this was one of the occasions when the axiom might be true. I resolved to attack first, drive through the native position and get that flag—or make Arabic the court language of hell.

For the job I selected twenty-one men. They were ordered to strip to the waist and blacken their skins with charcoal. This was not only for concealment in the night. It would have to be a hand-to-hand fight. If our men touched bare skin while groping in the dark, it would be a comrade. If they touched cloth, it would be an enemy.

I had the squad leave their rifles in the trenches, and managed to rake up a pistol for each man. Each soldier also had some kind of knife or sharpened bayonet. We took nine Mills hand-grenades, all we had.

After midnight the moon went down, and darkness fell like a curtain. I formed the squad into a V-shaped for-

mation, something like an old-fashioned football flying wedge. Lieutenant Gunderson was left in command to protect our retreat. Sergeant Tim McGuire took the lead at the point of the wedge. In a whisper I gave the command, and we walked forward silently. We walked, almost strolled, into the enemy ranks before we were discovered. Then hell took a holiday.

Fortunately the surprise was complete. The Berbers shot wildly in all directions. We threw our bombs, and charged in double time with our pistols. If a man went down, it was just too bad. We closed ranks and drove forward.

In a few moments I estimated that we must be near the position of the banner. Then suddenly a little ahead in the blackness, I heard Tim's voice:

"Gangway!" he yelled, and then: "Captain Tex, this way! I've got the whiskers of God."

We fought our way to him. He had the flag. Crouched down on his knees, he was still cutting and slashing; but when I tried to lift him, I found that he was literally hacked to pieces. We gathered him up in our arms, flag and all, and I yelled the command to retreat.

Of that little band of twenty-one men, only nine came back alive, and most of those were wounded. *(Major O'Reilly neglects to mention that he himself received a sword-thrust in the throat during this encounter—a wound the like of which not many men have survived.)* Tim was almost disemboweled. There was no hope for him. We laid him in the trenches, gave him a bottle of cognac, and turned to face the counter-attack.

It came, a succession of charges; but the Berbers were in confusion. Their sacred banner was gone. Their gods had deserted them. We held the line that night, and early in the morning were reinforced. Sergeant Tim McGuire died about daylight. . . .

The King we fought for is an exile. A red government sits in Madrid. The Banner of the Mahdi hangs in the War Office of the capital.

My old company of the Foreign Legion is fighting near Toledo tonight. Brigaded with them are these same Berbers we fought against in 1926. Why did we fight to conquer the Moor ten years ago, and why is he a guest in Spain today? I do not know. . . . All I know is that Sergeant Tim McGuire, and thousands of his comrades, are still sleeping beside that haunted road to Tetuan.

My Life at Sea

The distinguished author of "Unfenced Meadows" and "Wind in the Topsails" takes you round the Horn with him on a clipper-ship.

By

BILL ADAMS

THE vertigo was always with me when I had to go aloft. Height was my utter horror. I dreaded taking sail in, dreaded setting it. On deck I loved my ship; but up aloft I feared her with a ghastly fear. And God knows how I hid it. Sailors don't notice things, perhaps. At any rate, none else ever knew of it. I lived with horror ever at my elbow. And so did Wood. He suffered just as I, but he let others know. Daytime was worst; but night was bad enough. I mind the first time I went to a royal, the highest sail of all, above the big topgallant. I went up on the mainmast. The ship was racing through a windy sea, spray flying high. Hickley went first, ahead of me. Two lads to a royal. I somehow made my way to the high spar, a hundred and seventy feet from the hard deck, and farther from the sea that awaited me. I set my foot upon the swaying foot-rope, no thicker than my thumb; and I walked out along it. I could not see a thing with any clearness. All was a dim and sickening blur. The tall mast swayed through a terrific arc. I don't know how I did it, but I gathered up the flapping sail, lashed it, and came down. And God, how good it was to feel the solid planks beneath my feet again!

Pleasant it was upon the tropic sea. We sat upon the hatch at evening, sing-

ing. Sometimes we danced, for Alexander had a queer old fiddle made of coal-oil cans. We boxed; we wrestled, had tugs of war, played leap-frog. And one sunny afternoon I sat out on the boom's far end with Douglas, fishing for bonito. They sported in the thousands under our bare feet, leaping, playing. And now and then a school of flying-fish flashed from the sea to dart away down wind. Seated out there, we could watch the tall ship coming, her cutwater lifting, up, up, and up; then pitching deep, deep down. Dancing she came, and swaying lightly with a gentle roll. Oh, lovely!

Then Douglas spoke, "A few more weeks, and we'll be off the Horn."

The Horn! There was a sort of something in that name. A dread—or call it challenge. And could I meet that challenge? I said no word; I wondered. . . .

Well, I forgot Cape Horn. For when I went on duty, the mate said: "Get down the fore peak, you boys. Get up a barrel of pork, and one of junk, and fill the harness casks."

The harness casks were two fine teak-wood casks that stood on top of our half-deck. Bound with wide bands of brightly shining brass, they were, and the varnished teak-wood glistened in the sun. And when we opened up the barrel of pork, a reek spread all along the lovely ship—a stink of rotten pork. We took it from its barrel piece by piece, and piece by piece we put it in the harness cask. And then, for many days, we ate it. Putrid pork. And back in Liverpool the owner ate roast beef, and maybe Yorkshire pudding. We didn't think of *him*. We damned our grim Old Man, blaming it on him, as we blamed all things hard, never realizing in our hot youth that he as much as any of us was the sea's slave, serving a ship-owner. . . .

We ran from the tropics, and came soon to the roaring forties. Rain beat down; wind blew cold. Sailors and boys knelt in a long row on the rain-wet planks, each with a bucket of salt water and a large flat sandstone. To and fro, to and fro, we pushed the holystones, scouring her long decks white. Monotony, day after day. One does not love his ship on days like those days were. But the mate said: "Come on, now! Keep those holystones moving!"

Soon we were preparing for Cape Horn—lashing the weather-boards to the taffrail, to make a solid bulwark lest the seas burst on the high poop. Long ago the most skilled of the sailors had got all her rigging ready for the hurricanes.

Darker the dark sea grew while each day passed; colder the air. June—midwinter off the Horn. The Old Man's eyes were solemn. The mate was mute. MacDonald cursed more mightily than ever. And flocks of little black-and-white sea pigeons circled all about the ship, and now and then came larger birds—Cape hens, and mallemucks. At dusk one day a pod of sperm whales passed within a hundred yards. They rose to spout, and dived, and rose again. Playing as trout play in a mountain pool, they sported. One monster bull leaped from the sea, his whole bulk leaving it; and falling back to his cold element brought down his tail with a great crash, flat on the sullen water. A bull sperm whale, ninety feet long or more, with the bulk of four or five big elephants. They passed, sporting toward Cape Horn.

AN evening came when the wind was fallen quite; the sea was level. The clouds hung high and dark, without a break—a canopy of omen; the horizon a sharp line around a solemn sea. The ship lay motionless, her sails all hanging flat. Sea pigeons in hundreds sat on the dark water; a few Cape hens and mallemucks and one lone snowy albatross—all utterly still, to fly an effort on

the windless air. And from the distant west there rose a slow-upcreeping glow, a fan-shaped lurid light that slowly spread from the sharp-cut horizon toward the higher sky. The center of that glow, where the cold winter sun was setting, was a ruby light. The outer glow was like slain bullock's blood. The ruby faded, and all the western sky was one great bloody light. It was as though the gods had slaughtered bullock herds for sacrifice, and their hot blood had dripped and soaked into the canopy of cloud, empurpling it.

Old Man, mates, apprentices, sailors, gazed at that bloody west: sheer silence, no voice, no footfall, no rope creaking. And then the lights went out, as though a curtain had been dropped. The sun was gone. The cook came from his door and flung a hunk of pork rind to the sullen water. An instant flurry rose, of hungry birds all winging toward the rind. They screamed and fought above it. The albatross winged thither, and lesser birds made way for his white majesty. The silence fell again. The Old Man turned and murmured to the mate. The mate came down to the main deck.

"Clew up the royals!"

The royal yards slid down, to rest upon the heads of the topgallantmasts. We waited word to go aloft and furl them. Instead came: "Clew up the topgallantsails!" Their heavier halliards groaning, they slid down. Again we waited word. Instead came: "Clew up the cross-jack!" We hauled that great sail up, a hundred feet across its head, by forty-five or fifty deep. And after it we hauled up the yet larger mainsail. The foresail next. Then we lowered the upper topsails, and slid the staysails down. Then the sole sail left set was one small narrow strip upon each towering mast—three narrow strips of board-hard canvas, the lower topsails.

IT was pitch-dark by now, nigh to five o'clock. Then came the order to go aloft and furl the lot of them, and up we went and gathered in her wings, the canvas rustling in the sheer sea silence. Blocks creaked, and sailors cried, *"Ho, roll and bunt her!"* And, *"Yo—ho—ho—roll her, bullies!"* And Alexander sang: *"That's the way we'll pay Paddy Doyle for his—"* Rolling the mainsail up, he sang that; and all hands, giving the sail a last roll, roared together *"boots!"* We stripped the ship of almost all her dress, left her a scant-clothed lady on the hidden sea. And all night long there was not any sound nor any motion. Only her clanging bells, to tell the hours away. Only at each hour's passing the lookout-man's clear high cry, "All's well, sir." Then the mate's quiet answer, "All right." Her sidelights gleamed, throwing a red and a green glimmer on the forward water. We saw some sea birds floating, red and green. There was an eeriness about the night.

JUST ere I went below to roll into my bunk at four of the freezing morning, there came a moaning from the far dark west—the sound of a great gale yet far away. And when they wakened me for breakfast, there was a thundering outside our half-deck—a rage, a roar. The ship was laboring. And I heard water crashing to and fro upon the deck. It was my day to fetch the breakfast coffee from the cook's galley. I stepped from the half-deck door into barbarous fury. The sky was inky, close on the reeling mastheads. The lower topsails strained, tighter than war-drums. I could not see a hundred yards away on either side, for mountainous seas black as the lowering sky. I ran for the cook's door, and passed the carpenter's. He stood in his doorway. He looked at me, and shouted. Wind swept his words away. But I just caught them: *"This is the Horn!"*

All day it blew, and all the next, and all the next, and all the next; and then blew on, and on, and on, and ever on. Ofttimes the snow whirled by. Darkness till nine, and dark again soon after four. Salt pork, salt junk, pea soup, bean soup, and Harriet Lane on Sunday. And margarine in place of marmalade now when Monday came. And vinegar, of course, and daily limejuice. And no man had a dry rag on after the second day. Though all wore rope-yarns tightly tied about wrists and ankles, about the oilskin trousers and the jacket sleeves, to keep the water out, water got in. We call those rope-yarns, "Soul-and-body lashings," because they kept our souls and bodies in one piece. We stuffed towels within our oilskin collars, to keep the water out. They didn't, for you can't have great seas sweep over you and water not get in. And everybody's sea-boots as they stepped went, "squelch."

Day upon bitter day we hauled the braces tight to hold her rolling spars from having too much play. Sails worked loose from lashings. We went aloft to

lash them. One yelling day the galley stove was swamped because the cook, for just a moment's space, left his door a half-inch too wide open. We ate hard-tack at every meal that day. The thick skin on our palms split open at every finger-joint, in the barbaric cold. Beneath the splits we saw the raw red flesh. The sails, with ice upon them, knocked our knuckles raw, bare to the cold white bone. Our oilskins, chafing wrists and neck, caused salt-water boils.

At last there came a morning when the wind was low, out of the frozen south. We put some sail on the ship. I went aloft to loose an upper topsail, and had that vertigo. And on the rigging there was ice, and on the sails. I almost slipped and fell from the ice-sheathed rigging. And then I all but fell from the frozen foot-rope of the frozen sail. It would have been quite bad enough without the vertigo. God knows how I got up, or how came down again. I did, and that is all I know. We hoisted that topsail in a lightly falling snow, and Alexander sang:

Boney was a warrior,
To me waye, aye, yoh!
A warrior and a tarrier
A long time ago.

Then, as the mate called, "Good! Make fast that rope!" the snow ceased. And, about to walk off, old One-eye turned and gazed across the northern water. And all hands stopped, and gazed where he gazed. And there I saw a hard black triangle of land, a dark hill snow-capped.

"Cape Stiff!" said One-eye. And looking round at us, he grinned and rubbed his horny hands together, saying: "I 'opes she makes a long voyage. More days, more dollars, b'ys!"

Then snow came back, and hid Cape Stiff. Before the day was gone, the wind was savage as ever. On, on, and ever on we fought the hurricane. And I lost count of days, of weeks. Sometimes, in lulls, we set a little sail and all hands sang. You cannot hoist a sail without a song for sailormen to pull by:

Oh, blow today, and blow tomorrow,
Blow, boys, blow!
Oh, blow for all poor tars in sorrow,
Blow, my bully boys, blow!

There came a murderous day when we were taking in an upper topsail. All hands were at the gear. Great flakes whirled by. The bitter sprays beat on us. "Aloft and make it fast!" MacDonald shouted, when it was ready for furling. The crowd climbed into the reeling, ice-sheathed rigging, till only Glynn and Wood and I were left on deck. "Get up there, you!" MacDonald bawled to Wood. But Wood was beaten. He could not face the Horn's mad music any more. He ran, and vanished through the half-deck door. I felt like following, God knows. But Glynn, catching my eye, laughed and cried: "Who wouldn't sell a farm and go to sea?" Then he leaped for the rigging, and I leaped after him. And that time I had no least touch of vertigo. The first time.

One night a flat calm fell upon the hidden sea. The ship lay still. Pitch black, and very cold. At two that morning the mate cried: "Wash the decks down!"

We fetched the deck buckets, the brooms, and we fetched sand. We hung a lantern in the icy rigging. We flung the sand upon her planks, and scrubbed the green sea-slime away, making them safer to walk upon. With that green slime they were grown treacherous; you could not move along them, unless you gripped a lifeline. Next day the hurricane was back.

SIX bitter weeks we fought the blasting Horn; forty-two days. No man ever had a dry rag. And no man had palms that were not red and raw. And always hungry. And never rest enough. And never, never for a moment warm.

At last there came an evening when the sky was high. There seemed a sort of benison of peace upon the sea. We piled full sail on her again, the first time in six full weeks. She seemed to say, stealing all eager over that quiet untossed sea: "Give me a wind behind! Oh, do let me go!" And not far away, upon the starboard quarter, lay a small group of tiny islets.

"Diego Ramirez," the word went round. Those tiny islets lie fifty-eight miles sou'westward from the Horn. Then Stiff was left astern! We gazed at them. And then there came a sudden ringing cry from our high forecastle head where the lookout-man stood: "Sail right ahead, sir!"

We had not seen a ship in many a day, and ran to see her come. The light was fading. But soon we saw her name, *Aladdin*. She hoisted flags, and we the same. And word went round that she was out of Callao. And then we saw

a sailor stand upon her rail, and on her deck behind stood all her company. His voice rang out, over that peaceful sea:

Good-by, and farewell to you, fair Spanish ladies!
Good-by, and farewell to you, ladies of Spain!
For we've received orders to sail for old England,
But we hope in a short time to see you again.

And in a moment then the crews of both tall ships were singing:

We'll rant and we'll roam, across the wide ocean,
We'll rant and we'll roam, o'er the waters so blue—

Soon the *Aladdin* was gone. We saw her bright lamp winking for a little space. And as we turned away, with darkness falling, Johansen, that huge Scandinavian sailor, said: "Vee beats der Horn, py Gott!" And all hands laughed, because he spoke so funnily. And I was glad that I had come to sea—the first time I had known that I was fully glad. We'd won our victory, and I'd been there. *Oh, sailor, sailor, sailor!*

And now the good winds came, and day by day she flew northward and ever north. And still the flocks of white sea pigeons followed her, and gray Cape hens, and mallemucks and many albatross. The wind came ever warmer as she flew. And presently there came a ramping night with a wild wind that whooped from dead astern. That night she staggered, running like a stag with hounds too close at heel. Going below at dark, the Old Man said: "Take nothing off her, Mister. She can stand it." The sprays whipped over her. The seas came roaring in across her rolling rails, her long decks deep in water. We laughed. We shouted, "Go!—Go!—Go!" And when the day came back, there was no bird at all, on all the warm blue sea. They were gone back, to watch while other ships came battling out around the Horn where their homes were.

I polished brass-work now, and scoured the rust away from rails and deck-houses. The elder apprentices worked aloft, helping the men repair the damage of the Horn's barbarity. I envied them; and yet, fearing that vertigo, was glad to be on deck. I envied Glynn the most. He was a monkey in the swaying rigging. He'd hold with one hand to some slim rope a hundred and sixtv feet up in the webby rigging, and laugh, and jest if anyone should say, "You're too damned careless, man!" A *sailor,* Glynn was.

The Horn had bound us all in comradeship. We knew each other now. Men chummed in pairs. Thornton and Billings ever had been chums, and so had One-eye and the lanky Scot. And now young Erickson and Furst were close as brothers. They never were apart when evening came. And Glynn and I were chums, I a bit shy because he was my senior. We were a happy crew. At evening time we gathered on the hatch and sang, and danced barefoot. "Hurrah! We'll soon be in!" said Glynn. And we would often sing that song of merry sailors. Young Erickson had picked up English well. We'd make him sing it. He'd blush and shake his head; then urged by Furst, would sing:

Merry are vee, merry are vee,
Dere is not on eart' like zee sailor at sea.

We'd laugh, and clap him on the back; and he and Furst would hug each other, laughing. Some light of hope was come into even Wood's eyes.

We'd crossed the Line, and left it far astern. The wind blew pleasantly, driving her on at maybe ten an hour. That night all hands were more than ever merry. And Erickson stood up, and sang unasked. MacDonald, passing, stayed to hear him sing. "Bully for you," he said. And Erickson, smiling happily, replied: "I verree merrie, sir. Yow bat I am."

THE mate's watch went below at eight that night. . . . I wakened suddenly. A cry—a shout—a shout unheard. The words, swift-breaking in upon my sleep, indistinguishable. But yet I somehow knew. And in an instant we of the watch below had all dashed to the deck. Black dark, the night was. They'd stopped the ship, and all were running now toward the quarter boat, the Old Man shouting: "Lively! For God's sake, lively!"

We swung the boat away. The mate leaped into her. Billings and Thornton leaped, and Johansen, and Alec—the stoutest of the crew, most brawny-armed. In a moment she was gone.

"Who is it?" some one asked.

And some one said: "It's Glynn."

MacDonald's watch had been furling the royals; Glynn had gone up to the fore royal yard and must have fallen from it. The lookout-man had heard him cry

out as, falling, he struck the bellied canvas of the foresail, and bounced off to the sea. The foresail had broken his fall. The helmsman heard him yell as the ship drove past him. Some one had flung a lifebuoy to the sea. And that was all that anybody knew.

"Coil up them ropes, lads!" ordered MacDonald. And coiling a rope, I heard Glynn's voice beside me in the dark.

"Glynn's here!" I shouted.

Glynn said: "It's Furst. He went aloft with me. I heard him curse the flapping sail; then I heard him scream."

We stood beneath the lantern, hung in the mizzen rigging to direct the boat back. And no one spoke. . . . Silence. Above us on the bridge our Old Man stood. I saw young Erickson, his face white as chalk.

Erect she lay, and still upon the soughing sea. The wind thrummed drearily in her webbed rigging. We waited on, and on. We peered into the night. . . . Silence. An hour dragged by. . . . Another. The Old Man, leaning toward us, asked: "Could he swim?"

And some one answered: "Yes, sir. He was a very fine swimmer."

By and by we saw a speck of white upon the night-hid sea. It dipped to a sea hollow and was lost. It rose again. We heard the solemn-seeming *clunka-clunka* of the oars. The boat came in. We gazed down into her, counting—one—two—three—four—five men; no more. They climbed aboard. And still no one spoke. In silence we hoisted and swung her to her chocks, the water dripping mournfully to the mournful deck.

We gathered underneath the bridge-head—all hands. Our Old Man spoke.

"Anything more you want me to do, lads?"

Johansen replied: "Nuddings more to do, sir."

The Old Man said: "Square the main yard!"

The ship sailed on.

There was a hush upon the ship next day. Alone upon the forecastle head, young Erickson sat weeping. He was excused from any work that day. And when the evening came and seven of us lads were in the half-deck, we were silent.

Next morning when I went on duty, the order came to loose the royals. I was nearest to the fore rigging. He who is nearest rigging when such an order comes, is the one who goes aloft. And a cold horror came on me. But then Johansen strode up, and to me he said: "I goes to der fore royal, mine poy. Dot yard is cursed. Ven from a yard falls sailor, den der yard is cursed. But not can dot yard scare *me*. Yow see? I goes. Yow stays der deck on." And up he went; and oh, how glad I was I did not have to go to that cursed yard whence Furst had fallen to his death!

ONE morning I was at the wheel as night gave way to day. I'd never steered till we were past the Horn. Since then I had, taking my regular two-hour trick with all the crew; only Wood didn't steer. I loved it. That morning all the sky was hung with stars, save far ahead. With all sail set she seemed to dance along the murmurous sea. I was most happy standing at her helm. At my least touch, she'd shift her long lean shape, swift-answering me. I loved my ship. Maybe I could not then have said it. Today I know I did. . . . Youth's unvoiced love for what is beautiful. The dream the soldier knows, thinking he has a holy cause. The dream that brings the quiet to priests' faces, be they right priests. The dream that makes the tailor cut with eyes contented, shearing his finest woolen goods to shape. To each man his own calling. There is no calling like the sailor's was. Today the steamers have our sea.

I stood there humming that old merry song that Erickson had sung that night before we lost Furst. And soon I saw ahead of her, far off, a great mass of tumbled cloud that rose in a dark wall from the horizon. The mate had seen it too, and he went down to the main deck and forward, and stood upon the forecastle head awhile. I just could see his shape in dawn's first opalescent light. Then a sudden fragrance came, filling the air. And then I heard a little fluttering sound. A tiny land bird settled on the deck before me! And then there came from the lookout-man a high ringing cry, *"Land ho!"*

The crew came running, eager, to the deck. The mate spoke down the tube that led to our Old Man's pillow. "The land's ahead, sir."

More than five months since we'd left Barry Roads! There is not anything in all the earth as wonderful as that first scent of shore to sailor-men come in from deep-sea voyaging: except it be a woman's kiss—and she the right woman.

Further vivid episodes in Mr. Adams' unforgetable story will appear in our next issue.

Three Crashes

By BOURKE LEE

THE World War did not end in 1918—at the Naval Air Station at San Diego, California! We went right on training flyers from dawn to dark. The total flying time for the station mounted until we had flown an impressive multiple of thousands of hours without a crash. It was such a fine record that the commanding officer proposed to make it even finer. So he issued a written order prohibiting any and all crashes in his command. . . . It was this sacred decree that I knocked galley-west.

Donald W. (First-Around-the-World) Douglas had designed a torpedo-plane and secured a contract to build three of them for the Navy. The wing section was the first thick aërofoil, the first high-lift wing, to be produced by an American designer. Later on, that same wing was to be First Around the World.

Doug's first plane was sent to San Diego for test. The trial board was drawn from the First Torpedo-plane Squadron, and consisted of William (Wild Bill) Masek, Earl (Chubby) Reber, and myself.

The Douglas ship weighed over 7,600 pounds with a torpedo nested in its sling under the fuselage; and a single Liberty engine dragged it along, thanks to the high-lift wing. The ship passed its early tests with ease, and we rejoiced that we would soon have a real torpedo-plane to replace the rattling berry-baskets we were then flying as torpedo-planes. In those ancient crates every time we dropped a torpedo, the splash tore out the bottom of the fuselage, the ocean came into the cockpit, and we looked around to see if we were still in the air. We wanted Douglas to go into production on his torpedo-planes. We were sure they would be safer. Everything looked rosy for the torpedo-planers—until Our Hero made the speed runs.

Official instructions had made it plain that speed runs were to be made at sea-level. Since John Paul Jones, the Navy had been doing most of its seagoing work at sea-level, and the mere fact that it was impossible to fly a plane at sea-level did not deter me from trying. Orders were orders. I suspected that I might be able to fly at mean sea-level, if the tide was out, but not at sea-level. I was to find out that my suspicions were correct.

I flew three record runs each way over a measured mile. The first run was made twenty feet off the surface, and thereafter I dropped closer to the water on each run, with my speed increasing.

I had a record-sheet strapped to my leg, and every thirty seconds during the runs I recorded the readings of various and sundry gauges on instrument-board and wing-struts. The single cockpit was wide and deep, and the instrument board so far ahead, and deep in shadow, that I had to duck my head to read the gauges.

In between the thirty-second recordings, I flew the torpedo-plane.

After the last run I examined my records. The first run was so slow that it was obviously below par. I decided to throw it out and make a fourth run.

That torpedo-plane with its high-lift wing had a negative angle of incidence in horizontal flight. In other words, when flying straight and level, the plane was actually nosed down. And so were its pontoons.

Coming up the home-stretch, that torpedo-plane was booming along almost at sea-level. The actual speed is probably a naval secret—and they put you in jail for telling those. But it was plenty.

I ducked my head to read the instruments. The nosed-down pontoons kissed Old Man Sea-Level—and I was on the bottom of San Diego Bay with twenty feet of water and the whole plane upside down on top of me.

I opened my belt and fell off my seat, and my life-preserver popped me back up into the cockpit. I have said that the cockpit in that ship was roomy. It was. I held my breath and swam around in that cockpit trying to get out, endlessly, it seemed. At last I pushed myself down and clear.

My life-preserver shot me up into one of the crumpled wings—and a submarine wire entanglement such as the Western

He tried to follow orders in testing a torpedo-plane for the Navy. . . . But his worst crash never happened.

Front never saw. I fought a snarl of streamlined wires for another seemingly endless period. At long last I broke free to the surface, very short of breath.

The tail surfaces were just below the surface of the water; I sat on them, counted my arms and legs and wondered why I was there. All that had happened to me was that my teeth had met in my tongue.

The newspapers said it was a miracle that I was alive, but the Board of Investigation which sat on me was divided in its opinion as to whether I really was alive. Some members of the board spoke of my stupidity, but more friendly members with wings on their breasts advanced praise for my overzealousness, and the result was a draw.

The commanding officer alone remained irate. I had violated his order prohibiting crashes. He was beyond consolation until some one pointed out that the Douglas ship was undergoing acceptance tests, was not yet a naval vessel. Only then did the C. O. lift his head and begin to eat his porridge again. But I was in wrong with him for years.

It was all the fault of Donald Douglas. He should not have had the courage and vision to start on a shoestring and build high-lift wings. But for that high-lift wing and the negative angle of incidence which nosed down the pontoons on the torpedo-plane I was testing, I'd have bounced off the bay instead of diving into it. Of course without that same courage and vision, the Douglas airliners and military and naval aircraft would not be what they are today. But that's beside the point.

It's clearly the fault of Don Douglas that I bit my tongue and spent forty-six thousand dollars in Government funds that afternoon in San Diego Bay. The pilot is never wrong. . . .

Crash No. 2 occurred at Pearl Harbor, T. H., in 1926. Fresh from duty at the aërial Annapolis at Pensacola, Florida, where I had organized the school in aërial combat and gunnery and written a book on aërial fighting tactics, I joined Fighting Plane Squadron Four as gunnery officer, delighted to find that Nat Chase was my skipper once more.

Nat had been skipper at Bayshore, Long Island, in those dizzy days of 1917 when I learned to fly behind a four-cylinder engine that had a foul habit of blowing out its spark-plugs, and with an instructor who was a veteran of twenty-five hours' actual flying in the air.

It was good to serve under Nat again. We were flying Chance Vought's single-seaters, and drilling in aërial combat and tactical formations. We went up one morning to simulate a formation attack upon a two-seater.

At five thousand feet I dived upon the two-seater, got under his tail in the blind spot, and hung there with him squarely in my gunsights.

WITH all my attention centered upon my gunsights and the two-seater, my hair almost broke through my helmet as a pair of wheels flashed across my head. I could have reached up and touched those wheels.

And then my plane staggered under a crash. The pilot of the other plane, trying to zoom clear, had driven his tail into my plane. His tail-skag slashed through my upper right wing and tore out the front spar. My plane went out of control. Down! Nose down, broken wing down, it fell with a sickening rush that was half-spin, half spiral.

I got out of my belt and found the ring of my parachute. And then I let go of the parachute ring and closed the throttle. I didn't want to bail out unless I had to.

I worked at the controls with the engine idling. Slowly the nose came up. Slowly the wrecked wing came up part way. I eased the throttle open. She was plenty wing-heavy, but she would fly.

Far below me, the other ship was spinning. It flung a dark mass from its cockpit. I watched for the cheering white blossom of a parachute, but the whirling dark mass hit the earth, and no parachute appeared. I flew back to the field. The other planes came in. Nat Chase was missing. We were a saddened squadron. Our skipper was gone. . . .

My third crash was pure terror.

In 1928 Steve Calloway and I flew one of the big tin transports Bill Stout designed for Henry Ford from Washington, D. C., to San Diego, California, to ferry eight Marine flyers under Major Papa Lutz back to Quantico, Va.

Westbound, we raced bad weather out of New Orleans. The air was rough. The ship bounced around with all the grace of a freight-car. Steve and I weren't flying; we were working. We took the controls in half-hour shifts, and we quit our stint at the controls wringing wet and worn out.

The bumps slammed us around as we flew the leg that would end in El Paso. Steve had the controls when we came up to the Guadalupe Mountains. I was asleep in the cabin. And then the air did get rough. I was awakened by a resounding blow that sounded like a locomotive running wild in a tin-can factory.

Thrown half out of my seat, I looked forward and saw Steve's big shoulders heaving at the controls. Only half awake, thoroughly scared, I looked out my window. The left wing was almost gone. Halfway out, it bent straight downward, crumpled and distorted. We were doomed to pile up in the Guadalupe Mountains!

I bounced to my feet and struggled back along the heaving, pitching aisle for my parachute. Our mechanic was sleeping there. I shook him awake.

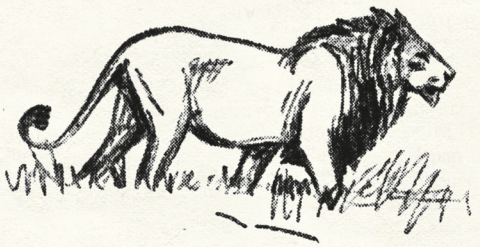
"Get your 'chute on! Bail out!" I roared. Would there be time for me and Steve to get our 'chutes on?

The mechanic regarded me sleepily.

"The wing's gone!" I howled.

I pointed out through the mechanic's window to the fearful wing I had seen through my window. And then—my heart and stomach fell back where they belonged, and I was fully awake. The mechanic's window-glass had not been cooked in hot sunlight; it was not full of ripples; it did not tie the left wing in knots when you looked through it. There was nothing at all the matter with the left wing.

So my third crash never happened. But it was by far the most terrifying.



ABOUT the fifth week after I became a real trouper, Mr. Barnes the boss came to the barns with Bert and stood watching me work. When I came out of the ring he called me over.

"Bert wants you to ride the lion for a finale in his act. He says you're game enough to do it. How about it?"

I stared at Bert, and he grinned at me. This was the first I'd heard about riding a lion.

"But I don't like lions, Mr. Barnes. I wish you'd get me some more tigers!"

Barnes laughed. "Go ahead and put over this lion specialty, and I'll buy you a dozen tigers!"

The act wasn't as simple as it sounded. Sampson the lion seemed docile enough, and I wasn't afraid to walk up to him, but he didn't like having me climb on his back. I didn't care much about it, either. Bert had it doped out that Sampson was to get on a platform. I was to climb on him and then while they pulled the platform to the top of the circus tent, I was to set off fireworks around us by touching off a battery. The first time they lifted the platform, with me straddling the lion, Sampson jumped as if he'd been shot and turned to snarl at me. Bert cracked him on the nose with his whip, and the lion lay down sulkily.

"Get back on him," he ordered me.

I straddled him reluctantly. Again Sampson turned and snarled, and I jumped three feet in the air.

Bert got mad. "Damn it! Do what I tell you! Get on that lion's back. He can't do more than kill you."

So I climbed on Sampson's back again, and again they raised the platform. This time he lay quiet though he snarled and hissed with fear. Each day they lifted the platform higher and higher until Sampson would lie quietly while we went up forty-five feet in the air.

One day just before we were ready for the road, I went out to the barns to practice. I knew the minute I saw Bert that something was wrong.

"Toby is sick," he told me quietly. "I am afraid we can't save her."

The Lion Act

A famous tiger-trainer learns about lions.... As told to Gertrude Orr—

By MABEL STARK

She was dead within fifteen minutes. I cried like a baby. Toby was my best tiger; I loved her, and I think, in her way, she loved me. She never came into the cage without purring to me.

"What are we going to do, Bert?" Mr. Barnes asked, worried. "We've billed a tiger act. This is going to cost us thousands of dollars."

Bert stood staring at me. Suddenly he snapped his fingers. "I've got it! We'll work Mabel's two tigers with Humpy and Bill from my act. They're my two best lions."

"You can't work lions and tigers in the same act," said Barnes.

"Sure we can," said Bert excitedly. "It will be a sensation. Come on, Mabel. We've got to work fast."

I stood rooted to the ground. They were afraid of the tigers getting the lions. But what about me?

"I don't like lions—" I began.

Bert glared at me. "Are you going to quit now? We're in a spot."

I looked at Mr. Barnes; then I shrugged. "All right. I'll try."

"Good girl!" said the boss and patted my shoulder. "If it works I'll double your salary."

"If it doesn't work, please omit flowers," I snapped, and followed Bert.

"THIS will be a cinch for you, kid," he assured me. "If you can handle those tigers, you won't have any trouble with Humpy and Bill. But we've got to work fast. We go on the road in two weeks."

He opened the arena door. "Come on, Mabel. Look here. I'll show you just what to do. Here, Bill! Come to Papa." Bill walked slowly across the arena and lay down. "Here, Humpy!" Humpy roared a couple of times and stretched out beside Bill. "See—they're tame as mice." Bert fell down across them as if they were a couch. He pulled their ears and patted their heads. "All right, children! Seats!"

Up they got and walked over to their pedestals. Bert turned to me with a grin. "See how easy it is?"

"Am I supposed to lie down on those two lions?" I asked breathlessly.

"Sure." He cracked his whip at Humpy. "Come here, boy." As Humpy jumped down and walked over to him, he grabbed the lion's mouth and pulled it open—then stuck his head into it.

I gasped. "That's *one* thing I won't do!"

He scowled at me. "All right, 'fraidy-cat! I'll teach you an easier one."

He called Bill to him and placed both lions on their pedestals. Then he threw his whip down on the ground. Stepping between the two lions, he placed one hand under each throat and raised their heads until their chins rested on his shoulders, their noses touching his face. Turning from one to the other, he kissed each lion. Then he raised their heads high, stepped to the front of the arena and took a bow. Turning, he raised his hand.

"Seats!" he shouted at them.

Obediently they jumped down.

He beamed at me. "See how easy it is? Come on, now. Let's see you do it." I hesitated a moment, and he shoved the whip into my hand and gave me a little push. "Your turn, Mabel." He stepped out of the cage and snapped the door locked behind him. Instinctively I started after him. Humpy was glaring at me, and growling.

"Watch him," shouted Bert. "Crack your whip and do just as I did."

I obeyed him because I couldn't help myself. I called to them in what was meant to be a loud and commanding tone, but it was just a little squeak. My throat was dry, and my heart was going like a triphammer. The two lions came forward sulkily and jumped up on the pedestals.

"Throw your whip down on the ground." Bert's voice was relentless. Again I obeyed. "Now turn them face about."

"H-how?" I managed to whisper.

"Slap them on the hind end with your hand!" he said impatiently.

I stared at him in horror and timidly slapped at them. They turned around with a grunt.

"Now step up between them and take hold of them, just as I did. Go ahead! *What are you waiting for?*"—as I hesitated. I managed to catch hold of their heads and get them on my shoulders. My hair must have tickled Bill's nose, for he sneezed. I dropped their heads and ran for the door.

"Some animal-trainer," snarled Bert as I rattled the door, trying to get out. "You'll spoil my lions if you act like that. Get back there and finish the act."

"Please, Bert," I pleaded. "Isn't that enough for today? I—I'll get used to them if you'll just give me a little time."

"Time is just what we haven't got," he roared. "We've got to work fast to lick this act. Go over there and grab their heads as if you meant it. I'm not going to let you out of this cage until you do! I thought you were an animal-trainer!"

I was mad now. Turning around, I marched up to the lions, yanked their heads to my shoulder and gave each one a resounding smack.

"Get back to your places," I shouted at them, and they jumped down docilely.

Bert was chuckling as he opened the door and walked into the cage.

"That's something like!" He took two strips of meat from his pocket. "Take these pieces of meat and hold them between your middle fingers. Hold your hands out high and let each lion eat the meat while you hold it."

I was too numb to protest any more, and much to my surprise the lions took the meat as nicely as if they were house-cats.

"That's all for today. Tomorrow we'll bring in the tigers."

By the time dress rehearsal rolled around, I felt like a seasoned trouper. I didn't even turn a hair when Mr. Barnes suggested he would like me to ride parade in the cage with Sampson. Well, why not? Sampson and I were on kissing terms now. I wasn't afraid!

MY knees felt pretty wabbly the first night I was to go on.

When the announcer sang out my act, I sailed into the arena and took my bow as if I'd been working lions and tigers all my life. The act went off like clockwork. Mr. Barnes was standing by the door when I came out of the cage.

"Good little trouper," he said quietly.

I ran to change for the "balloon act" with Sampson. I was singing as I dabbed powder on my nose and put on more lipstick.

"You're a lucky girl, Mabel," I told my reflection in the looking-glass. "Keep your feet on the ground."

I got Sampson on the platform, then climbed on his back and signaled for them to raise the platform. Up we went, forty-five feet in the air, with fireworks crackling all over the place. The gasp from the audience and applause went to my head. I was drunk with success as we came down to earth—hit earth, I should say; for as I stepped off Sampson's back, the lion turned and grabbed me in the thigh.

I DIDN'T scream. I couldn't, I was so stunned. I heard Bert shout, and there were splitting shrieks from the women in the audience. The noise snapped me out of it. I grabbed up my whip and cracked Sampson on the nose. The lion slunk into the runway and ran for his cage. Putting my hand over the place where blood was welling up, I saluted the audience with my whip and ran out. There was a moment's silence, and then a thunder of applause.

Mr. Barnes ran up as I left the tent. "Are you hurt?"

"Just a scratch," I lied. "But I'm afraid he spoiled my costume."

I ran to my dressing-room. Bert dashed after me. He pulled my hand away from the bloody spot on my thigh.

"You darned little liar! I could kiss you for this."

"Thanks, but I'm all right," I insisted, and pushed him away from the tent.

I keeled over in a chair and almost passed out. Mrs. Mac was at my side instantly with a glass of water and some bandages. She cut the costume away. Her eyes widened as she saw the deep gash in my side.

"I'll call the doctor," she began.

"Please don't!" I caught her arm.

"But that place will have to be washed out with carbolic acid."

"Then you do it. I don't want the others to know."

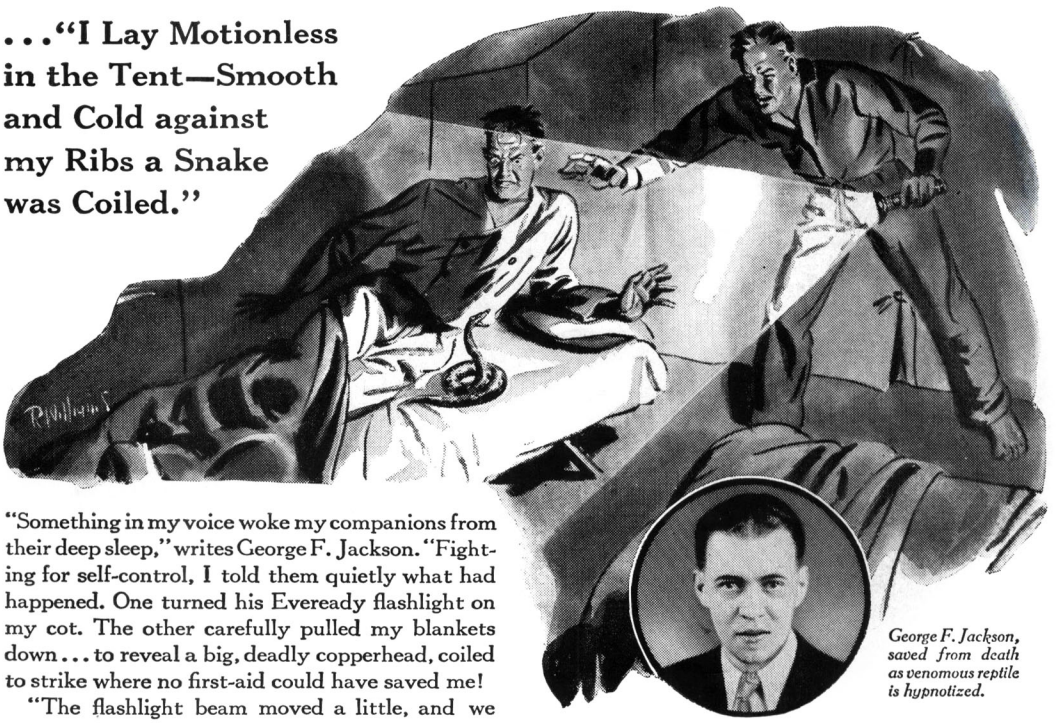
The stuff burned like liquid fire. Carefully she bandaged the wound with tender hands.

"It's my own fault," I said as she finished. "I got cocky."

She nodded. "They all do. And that's why some animal trainer is always getting killed."

'STARK TERROR WAS SQUEEZING AT MY HEART'

...."I Lay Motionless in the Tent—Smooth and Cold against my Ribs a Snake was Coiled."

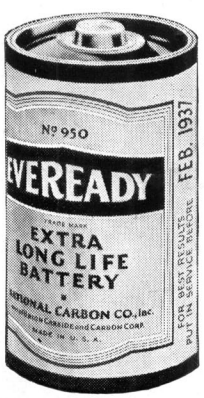


George F. Jackson, saved from death as venomous reptile is hypnotized.

"Something in my voice woke my companions from their deep sleep," writes George F. Jackson. "Fighting for self-control, I told them quietly what had happened. One turned his Eveready flashlight on my cot. The other carefully pulled my blankets down... to reveal a big, deadly copperhead, coiled to strike where no first-aid could have saved me!

"The flashlight beam moved a little, and we noticed the snake followed it with his beady unblinking eyes...My friend moved the light slowly, farther and farther. The snake continued to turn his hideous head. Gradually he began uncoiling to keep his eyes on the light. Now the snake was facing directly away from me . . . my other companion reached quickly for me, gave a mighty heave and I sailed out of my bunk and against the tent wall. Then I fainted, while they killed the deadly reptile.

"But for the *fresh* Eveready batteries that kept that light strong and steady through this horrible emergency, there could have been no happy ending. Needless to say I never take chances any more on batteries that may have grown old on a dealer's shelf."



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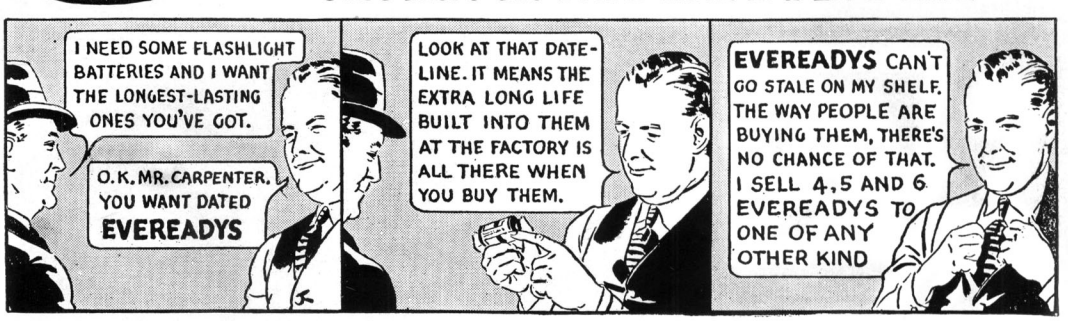

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