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A remarkable story of the post-victory fight to win the peace.

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Murder in the Blackout

A short mystery novel, complete.

by F. W. BRONSON

Who's Who *In this* Issue

F. W. Bronson

I WAS born in Minneapolis, Minn., in 1901. I grew up in Pennsylvania, summered on the Jersey coast, and have lived in various other places, including Italy and Bermuda. Even marriage failed to stop me from moving around—but the two daughters who arrived in 1929 and 1931 turned out to be port and starboard anchors. The permanent mooring seems to be Connecticut. Since 1937 I've been president of Yale Alumni Publication, Inc. and Editor of the Yale Alumni Magazine (to date I haven't rejected a single one of my own manuscripts). Before that I was on the staff of *News-Week*. Before *that* I had been more or less of a free lance since graduating from college in 1922. Results: five novels and a number of magazine stories. "Murder in the Blackout" is my first attempt at the novelette length. (Experiences as an air-raid warden in New Haven started me off on it.)

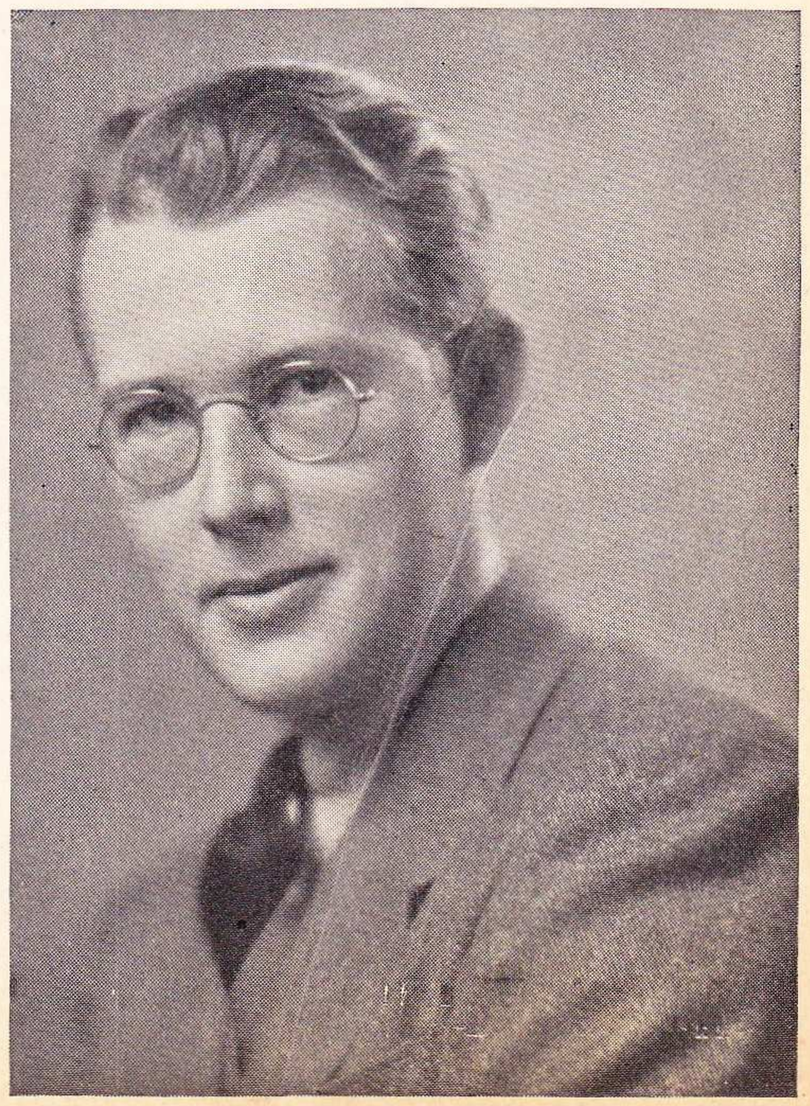
Harley F. Cope

BORN at Dallas, Texas, Commander Harley F. Cope was admitted to the Naval Academy at Annapolis, from Louisiana in 1916. His record reveals how various the appointments of a Naval officer. His first assignment after his graduation from the Academy in 1919 was to the transport of American troops returning from France. Later he was attached to a destroyer flotilla and after that sent to the Orient on an engineering job. Next came five months' intensive training at the Navy Submarine School at New London, Conn.

At Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in May, 1924, he was on the submarine R-10. Only a year later he received his own command, the R-9, which he held for two years. Commander Cope undertook special work at the Naval Academy in 1929, followed by a similar engagement at the University of Madrid.

After another tour of duty in command of a submarine, he went back to the Submarine School at New London as an instructor, then Aide to the Commander of the Submarine Base there. Since that time he has had assignments also aboard many varying types of warships.

Richard Sale



I WAS born thirty-one years ago in New York, N. Y. After a thoroughly extrovert education in New York and Pelham, N. Y., schools, I invaded the South for three years at Washington & Lee University. I now live with my wife and two children on a green acre six miles out of Greenwich, Conn.

I tried to gain a Naval commission last January, but my poor eyesight—without glasses—turned me down. The local eye-doctor says I can't make the minimum 20-200 for the Army, so at this point I am studying for my second-class commercial radio-telephone and radio-telegraph licenses so that I may aid the U. S. Signal Corps in a civilian capacity. This hobby of radio evolved from research I had to make on a short story. By the time I finished the research, I found myself a "ham" operator with my own station running 450 watts, now silenced for the duration, of course. Other hobbies: photography, medicine (which I never use myself), model railroading, gardening, music, pistols, naval matters.

Since 1936 I've written five novels, the first of which "Not Too Narrow Not Too Deep" was subsequently filmed as "Strange Cargo" by MGM.

BLUE BOOK

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

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READERS' COMMENT

MORE NEW WRITERS?

I am seventy years old, retired a few years ago, and now I indulge a great deal in reading.

BLUE BOOK *has long been a favorite magazine of mine. I read it literally from "cover to cover," and am always sorry when I've finished it. My only regret is that it doesn't come oftener.*

I like variety in any magazine. If variety is the spice of life, as has so often been claimed, it certainly adds spice to any magazine. As one of your other readers stated in a recent letter, I like to read material from several writers, and not so much from a single writer. I too think that BLUE BOOK *could improve its offerings by giving us more stories from new writers. It's just possible, though, that new writers are hard to find just now. If so, that would be a satisfactory explanation of why you stick to some of the old contributors so closely. Of course, I like the old writers, but even at my age, new viewpoints appeal to me very much.*

I wonder how many readers, when they have finished reading BLUE BOOK, *throw it into their scrap heap. I don't. I send it to a soldier friend of mine. He is always pleased to get it, and says that it is literally worn out as so many of his buddies read and enjoy it. He says they get so much reading material that is old and out of date, but* BLUE BOOK *is always fresh and modern. Its stories are stories of today and not those of twenty-five years ago. I agree with him, too.*

Wesley R. Karre,
Columbus, Ohio.

WE PREDICT A STURDY SON

We agree: leave it as it is—a man's magazine. I like my ladies' hints, recipes, etc., separate! BLUE BOOK *was entirely new to me when we were first married, but I gradually absorbed it until now I think I read it more thoroughly than does my husband. He says it's the best—has read it over twenty-five years. We just bought our December issue, but this time we are not going to do an Alphonse-Gaston act over it. It's agreed that he is to read it first this time. When I go to the hospital in a few weeks for our first baby,* I'm *to have the* BLUE BOOK. *Imagine reading it without interruptions!*

Mrs. Carl Covell,
White River Junction, Vt.

(Continued on Inside Back Cover)

A Flag Bright

GRISWOLD, with the Negro slaves all out of hearing, had come over to the hedge by the road, where Job Lovat's cart stood. He stood leaning on his hoe, listening to Lovat's words; then he looked out across the tobacco plants to glimpses of the sea. Nothing appeared there—the horizon was sparkling blankly; yet a fit of trembling seized him, as a dog trembles at the sight of game.

"Are ye sure? Sure?" he breathed with a catch of his breath. "God ha' mercy!"

Job Lovat, who had crossed the hedge to speak with him, laughed excitedly. He was a spry little man, a gunner's mate if ever he got back to sea.

"Aye, Griswold; seen her with my own two eyes, I did! Up at dawn, a-milking of them damned cows, I was. She stood in from Yellow Cay, that islet four miles off the coast, and I knew her at once for a Yankee craft —a sloop. She stood in close to shore, and a boat put in and landed a man, and back again. Then she scooned out back to Yellow Cay and was gone, hiding back of the isle; and all afore the sun was up. Landed a man, d'ye see? What does it mean?"

Griswold shook his head. "I don't know, Job. What could it mean?"

"Summat's up, that's what!" said the other. "I'm taking the master's load o' cotton to town, and I'll find out. Trust me! But there's a Yankee sloop four miles offshore, that much is certain. Trust me to know the cut of her jib! And why would she be hiding by that empty isle?"

Griswold drew a deep breath, and his eyes were shining.

"It can't be true, it can't!" he murmured. "To think of it—getting away aboard her! Me here a year past, slaving for Ben Fraser. . . . Freedom! Job, it can't be true!"

"Well, it is," averred Job Lovat. "I must be off to town. A man was landed, and he'll be there. If I don't see you on the way back, look for me tonight."

Griswold's tone was eager.

"Aye. Where?"

"Midden's Hole, around ten o' the clock. Can ye make it?"

Griswold nodded. Lovat went back to his cart and creaked away on his road. Brawny and slow and plodding, Griswold looked out seaward longingly, heart and soul aching to be away and free, mate of his own ship once more. And yet a chill rose within him at the thought of leaving what he must leave here.

He was heavy-built in the arms and shoulders like a proper ship's mate, but his build was all hard muscle. Gray smiling eyes quickened his sun-darkened face with the dimple in the chin, but beneath the dimpling humor was a cold bony structure. He seldom lost temper or showed anger, being slow to move.

The place, New Providence, chief island of the Bahamas. The year, 1778, with January close to its end. And Herb Griswold a year from home and captive, working like a slave on Fraser's little plantation.

No, not like a slave, except in outward seeming; it was a decent enough captivity in actual fact. Job Lovat worked a few miles down the road at Kirk's place. The others were scattered up and down the twenty-mile-long island, for slaves were hard to come by these days. Most of them had escaped from captured ships lying in Nassau harbor, and the British winked at their employment by the planters, who gave them keep and a niggardly wage.

Fraser's place lay well south of town among the pine barrens; he had good soil and was raising tobacco in quan-

with Stars

Flags of Our Fathers—X

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

tity, with Griswold to oversee the Negro slaves. The canny Scot himself was in Nassau today, arranging the wedding of his daughter Margot to Lieven the wrecker. The banns had been said and all formalities done with, and the wedding was for the Saturday.

More like a funeral, thought Herb Griswold; and Margot agreed with him. She had no say in the matter, being but a lass, and Fraser what he was, and Black Lieven what he was in turn—with money to burn and a laugh out of hell and a fisted hand of iron.

TOWARD sunset, Griswold walked past the grubbing black men and women, making for the homestead among the fig trees and the broad banana leaves. Thought of a Yankee sloop danced in his heart; some message had got through, and the gates of this prison isle were about to open for the twenty or more Americans held here! Else, why had that man been set ashore here? It was coming, it was coming!

He passed up from the slave quarters to the house, and there stood Mrs. Fraser, a thin frightened woman, looking with wide eyes at the naked fig-trees whose yellowed leaves were gone.

"How gray and dark and ugly they are now!" she said. "All gnarled elbows and big-knuckled fingers; but look at the buds! In another fortnight they'll be living green and beautiful. Margot's gone to the cove, if ye'd know; and for God's sake fetch her before *he* comes home, bringing Black Lieven with him!"

"Aye, mistress," said Griswold in his slow pitying way. He strode on, calm and unhurried, taking the path to the cove—Fraser's Cove, well north of the house, a tiny bight in the coral shore with scraggly pine trees girding it closely.

He had to watch out for banana holes on this path—the queer pits rotted into the coral rock below, going twenty or forty feet down; but he knew the spots and avoided them mechanically. Fig buds on the gray trees; something worth thinking about in those words!

His mind went to Nassau town, under grim Fort Nassau with its big guns that commanded the harbor and the captured ships lying there. The pleasant houses and the shops by the wharves, the little garrison, the lazy pleasant people, white and black; the wrecker crews and spongers, Government House with its three-foot-thick walls of coral blocks built in a circle. An easy-going place, taking nothing seriously, drinking hard, careless of the morrow. But hard, mortal hard, on the poor captives they called rebels.

Griswold sighed. Only two years ago a little American fleet had landed here and sacked the fort and gone again—a year before he came. No chance of that any more. Admiral Barrington's line-of-battle ships and frigates stood up and down the Windward Passage, and Sir Peter Parker's towering frigates scoured the seas from the Jamaica station; they were always coming and going hereabouts, leaving prizes here to await crews for England. Half a dozen prizes lay in Nassau harbor this minute, fat ships with fat cargoes.

WHEN Herb Griswold came to the cove, there was Margot sitting with her head in her arms. His step startled her. She leaped up, but at sight of him, the spark of defiance died from her eyes.

"Oh! It's you!" she said, and held out her glad hands to him. Griswold held them and looked into her face. She was good to look at. If the mended clothes were poor, they were also neat and shapely; she carried her

auburn head high, and her skin was like white milk, as it usually is with red-haired women; but her blue eyes held a sad and watchful look.

Griswold leaned forward, and she kissed him frankly, unsmiling, meeting his gaze.

"That's better," he said. "I met your mother. The fig trees, she says, look dark and gray and ugly."

"Like the days to come," said Margot, with a catch of the breath.

"No. Buds are putting out. Look at the green fingers, not at the gray bark!"

"Too late, too late! And I must not love you—"

"But you must! Don't I love you?" he exclaimed, and kissed her again on the word. "And it's not too late. Saturday is long days away from now. Tomorrow's Wednesday; the green leaves are coming to hide the gnarled knobby bark, and anything may happen."

She searched his face, and her eyes leaped.

"What is it, Herb? You're different— Oh, what's happened?"

"God's mercy," said he soberly. He was not ashamed of his piety. He could read the Scriptures without blinking; he knew much of them by heart anyway, as did many a Boston man in those days. This did not keep him from superstition.

"Might be bad luck to talk of tomorrow's blessings," he went on. "Overnight the wind may change and the sun die and the waves rise; let be, sweetheart, let be! But we're not sunk yet. I'll know more come night, and we'll laugh in our sleeve at Black Lieven in the moonrise. It'll be up earlier tomorrow night than tonight."

"But what is it?" she breathed, as he drew her closer. "Think of me, prisoned all life long on this spot in the wide sea, and no hope! No hope, till you came—and now the awfulness of losing it once more in living death! For once I'm wedded to him, Herb, there's no hope left."

"No, none," he said, enclosing her in his big arms. "But trust me, lass, and don't oppose your father this night. He has his faults and his good points, as have we all. Which won't save him," he added practically, "if ever I catch him taking the strap to you, as has happened. There's hope, my heart; but never mind just yet what it is. I'm not sure myself."

"And you're sure you love none back in Boston town, Herb?" she asked, for the sheer joy of hearing him deny it.

He laughed softly. "Aye, plenty! My mother and my two aunts; the men of the family all dead at sea, and the fine ship I was mate of, till the *Calypso* frigate sunk her. There be other ships and other men, but you'll be the last of all women, my sweet! And this time tomorrow, mayhap, a smile will come in your eyes. So let's get home ahead of your bitter-eyed father."

They kissed again and started back for the house. Margot had a quick temper and a sharp tongue, and plenty of good sound common-sense; but there was a great love in her, and a deep tenderness, and if her tongue could gibe, it could also bless most wonderfully, and reach to the very heart of a man.

AT home, Griswold ate with the family but slept on a pallet in the cowshed; good enough for a rebel, said Ben Fraser. Yet the hard, dour man himself had come of rebel stock, for the Scots rebels of the '45 had been sold as slaves to the plantations throughout the islands.

In the dying daylight Fraser came home and brought with him Lieven—a dark, laughing man with curly black beard. Handsome he was and handsomely dressed, his reckless eyes wary and dancing with life, and famed for his seamanship and prowess of all kinds.

Out in front of the house rested a block cut from the soft sub-stratum coral, set to harden in the air and sunlight.

"I bade ye move it aside!" snapped Fraser in his bleak, harsh way.

"Ah, but I forgot," said Griswold, "and by now the slaves are at supper." He stooped to the block, and it would not budge. Lieven swaggered over, laughed, and set himself to the effort, and the block moved.

"Brawn," said he, "needs wit."

"And time," added Griswold, who had not put forth his strength too far. Lieven came close and looked him over; he was in ragged clothes and sandals. The black eyes touched on him with a scurvy touch, and Lieven spoke under his breath.

"I hear you've not wasted your time on work, ye rebel! That's ended now. D'ye know I can claim ye from the governor, and set you at labor where I please—under a whip, or out in a wrecker sloop to dive until your lungs burst?"

"English law," said Griswold, "is a queer thing. That's why some rebel."

Lieven showed his white teeth in a laugh, cruel as his heart.

"There's a merry-making at Government House tomorrow night in honor of my bride," he said. "If I provide ye with a clean shirt, will ye honor us with your presence? She and her family are to lie at my house in town afterward. You shall carry the torch to light us home."

Griswold scratched his head reflectively. "It's mortal kind of Your Worship, but I'd need decent breeches and shoes as well. Plantation workers have none."

"Ye shall have them." Black Lieven's cruel eyes dug into him. "Ye'll

"We're not sunk yet, sweetheart; we'll laugh in our sleeve at Black Lieven."

come with Fraser. The wedding's to be a step or two ahead of the time set, it'll please ye to know. There'll be a nuptial toast at my house beforehand."

"And thank you kindly." Griswold touched his forelock dutifully but mockingly, and Lieven turned away with a grunt. He was not fooled by that bovine appearance.

The bridegroom had brought gifts of silks and jewels to Margot, and his eyes followed her all during supper, which was the best meal Fraser could provide. By a word here and there between Lieven and bleak-eyed Fraser, it was not hard to gather that the secret thus broached to Griswold had been settled between them, though Margot or her mother knew naught of it. Herb Griswold looked on in silence, slowly apprehending the truth. When the pipes were lighted, he had reached comprehension and sat with a growing chill in his heart. So the wedding was to be held next night, and Margot knew it not!

The moon came up, and Lieven took Margot for a stroll and a look at it. He came back from the stroll flushed and thin of face—though Margot was laughing. Soon he took his leave with an ill grace and went back to town.

"What took place out there?" snapped Fraser, pale eyes fixed upon his daughter. "Have ye not been trained to be dutiful to your betrothed husband?"

"Not too dutiful," said she.

His harsh features darkened. "Have a care, lass, have a care, lest you go to your bridal night black and blue from neck to heels! Rebel, what are ye gaping at? To your quarters! You'll have a heavy half-day's work come morning, to make up for time lost later."

Slaves with lanterns came to meet them, and Lieven himself.

GRISWOLD sought his pallet. He knew that Black Lieven hated him. Little he cared, for the thought of a sloop standing into Fraser's Cove was dancing in him. When the house was darkened and all abed, he stole out in the moonlight and away to the road, and down the road to the big pit sunk into the rotten coral. Midden's Hole, they called it, after somebody who had fallen drunk into it in bygone days.

And there Job Lovat sat, sucking his clay pipe and chuckling to himself.

"I found him, I found him!" said he. "A New Bedford man they set ashore, one who had been here often afore the war and knew the town well, and none would notice him. I found him. He had come ashore to pass word to us, Herb."

"What word?" asked Griswold eagerly. "Do they take us off?"

"Aye, so I suppose. I've sent word up and down, reaching all true hearts rotting here. Be at Fraser's Cove, says he, before moonrise tomorrow night; they'll send boats ashore. That's all he would say, acting mighty mysterious, afraid the British might get some word of it."

"Here!" Griswold said, choking on the word. "Here! Close by! Fraser's Cove!"

"Aye, mate, so it stands," said Job Lovat. "And you'll see the new flag flying aboard the sloop, says the New Bedford chap. A new one Congress has ordered; bright with stars, says he. Free, Griswold! Free again, to work guns under the new flag!"

"What about the British fleet?" said Griswold. "Fraser heard in town they were expected in any day."

"Ha! We'll be off afore their top-s'ls lift!" scoffed Lovat. "Off and home again, mate! That's news for sore hearts! Well, I must be off and back ere they miss me. Rise of the moon at Fraser's Cove, mind! Our lads are meeting there."

He was off, padding down the road in the moonlight. Griswold headed back for home, and sank down upon his pallet in the darkness, a dumb awful misery crowding up in his soul. Moonrise at Fraser's Cove—no, no! He had been slow to comprehend what it meant, but now he knew. No moonrise at Fraser's Cove for him. He would be far away in Nassau town, at the north end of the island. He must, he must!

He lay writhing and tossing, trying to make himself face it, every nerve and fiber of him aching to deny it. Rescue, rescue—and he far away, miles away!

Then he straightened out quiet, and breathed slowly, slowly, getting his pumping blood under control; and so came face to face with it all, unshrinking, meeting it squarely. He

could cut and run, yes. He could meet with his own people, come to rescue him. He could go aboard the sloop with them and home again, out of captivity, free!

And leave Margot behind him. And carry back to Boston the thought of the merrymaking he had missed, the ball at Government House, Margot married to Black Lieven—when he might have found some escape for her. . . . Escape? He had not been able to find that for himself. Yet on the coming night he might do something, effect something: at least, he must warn her of the hasty impending marriage.

A hundred desperate expedients flitted through his mind—all vain and useless. He was, actually, helpless and knew it. None the less he must stick with her to the very end. He knew this, he acknowledged it to himself, and felt better thereafter. He must give up all thought of getting away with the others. He must forget the new flag bright with stars—no stars for him or for her, God knows! He must stand by her, take the shame and mockery that Black Lieven meant him to swallow, and at the end, light the newlyweds to Lieven's house. He ground his teeth in the darkness for sheer foaming fury—and got a grip on himself anew.

He fell asleep at last, and dreamed that he was throttling Black Lieven, and wakened in a sweat. Well, why not? That might be one way out! At least, it might save her for a little while. But then she would see him hanged, and this thought drifted him dismally to sleep once more. Again he dreamed that he stood with her under a great cliff, and foaming waves were bursting in to tear them away, and he fronted them, keeping between her and the world, as a man must protect his woman. From this he waked to the dawn and labor.

HE could contrive no word with her until, at mid-morning, she came tripping out to the field. He saw her coming and met her.

"What is it, Herb?" she pleaded. "The hope you spoke of! It must come ere night. They have something in mind, and it frightens me."

"A hasty marriage," he told her, and she went white with terror.

"But they can't—they can't do that!" she moaned, her eyes dilating upon him. "If I refuse, if they beat me, still they can't!"

"They will," he said, and his heart turned over at sight of her terror. "But think not of it, lass. I'll stand by you. I'll be close. When the time comes, trust to me."

"But tell me, tell me! There's hope, you say—then let it help me!"

No hope now, but he could not tell her this.

He smiled, though the smile hurt.

"Trust me, sweet!" he said cheerfully.

"You know well," she said, "they'll all be drunk. You know how the rum flows and the beasts it makes of them—even of my father! What can you do?"

"Ah, that's my secret!" he replied stoutly, with a knowing wink. "Slow and sure does it, my heart; trust to me, oppose them in nothing, do all your father bids! Then, when the minute comes and I give the word, be ready!"

For a moment she looked him in the face, steadily.

"You'd not lie to me; it'd be too cruel," she said. "Mayhap you're just trying to hearten me, mayhap not. You'd not lie to me, Herb? There's hope?"

He nodded slowly.

"Aye, by my soul! I'd not lie to you, my sweet."

"Then I'll trust you," she said, and turning around went home again. He looked after her, his hands gripping his hoe hard. His face was ashen gray, his heart was bursting.

"I never had to lie before," he muttered. "God forgive the lie now, for there's no hope at all! Except in some wild madness that would make things worse for her. A dozen things I might do, each more hopeless than the next."

Illustrated by John Fulton

THIS, too, he faced as he worked through the morning, and came to slow decision. Any thought of flight were utter folly. If he fled with Margot, they would be hunted down like escaped slaves; there was no refuge. If he managed to steal a boat, the hunt would be more bitter—the wreckers would be after them like wolves. Still, there lay the slim chance! The only chance; not of escape, but of a last try together. And having made up his mind to that, he dwelt upon the details.

The spot was good—the banana-hole just off the path, on the way up to the fort. If he could make it with her, unseen—in itself almost hopeless—at least they might hope for an hour or two together. No more. The end would be certain; daylight would see them found, and him triced up to the whipping-post with the cat slicing the flesh from his back. Of this he could be sure enough, in all truth: There was no escape.

"One thing at a time," he said, trudging in to noon meat. "I'll think o' that when they have me in irons. A man must do what he can, God knows!"

So his mind was settled.

"We leave for town at seven o'clock," Ben Fraser said during the noon meal. "By that time the day's work is over and naught lost. We go to Lieven's house first, to leave our gear and sample a rum punch with him; a family affair. Then to Government House."

"A family affair!" said Margot. "Then his family are to be there?"

There was a wee bit silence; then Fraser's voice rasped:

"Aye, ye minx. His future family."

Griswold grimaced but held his peace, at meeting her eyes. Black Lieven had no family. He had come from Jamaica, and dark gossip was passed about him; no one knew for certain. The best of it tarred him with a Spanish brush, or yapped about a serving-lass and a lean Dutchman from 'Statia, and the worst of it was not for Christian ears at all. Whatever his past, it did not matter here.

"You'll walk in behind the cart, rebel," Fraser spat at the American, "and change your shirt while we drink punch."

"Aye, master," said Griswold stolidly. The scheme was taking shape. The start at seven, in the gloaming; full dark by eight, in town. The moon would not be up till a bit after.

"Your punch is bad, Lieven. The rum hath soured." Lieven snarled as he looked up at Griswold: "Fool, rum sours not!"

The reckless, senseless, frantic thing—yes, it was possible, but the end was not nice to think about. So he thought not.

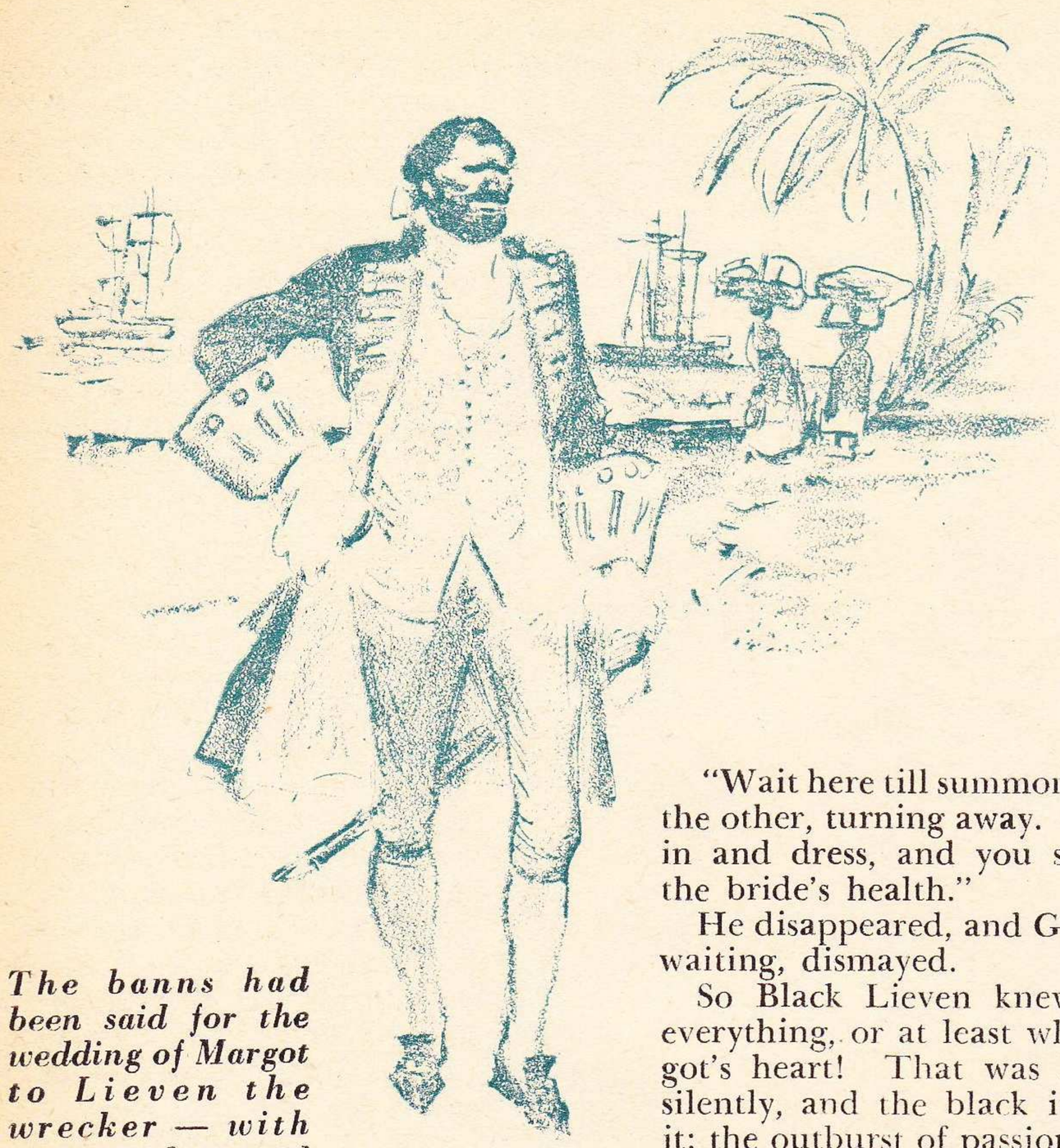
Hard dragged the afternoon but the long sunlight waned at last and the slaves trooped home. Griswold went down to the cove with Fraser, and they bathed there, speaking little. Fraser stamped back to the house to shave and dress. Griswold lingered, straining hot eyes at the empty sea. It was here the sloop was coming—here, with the moonrise! And he would be in Nassau when the moon slid up and the boats came in, and the Yankee seamen gathered to meet them and welcome freedom under the new starry flag. Queer! How could a flag have stars on it?

Temptation wrenched at him, and he faced doggedly away from it, back to the house; but he left a bit of his aching soul there on the coral sands.

Cleansed and shaved, they started for town in the cart,—Fraser and his wife and Margot,—Fraser in his Sabbath best, the two women with a bundle of finery to don later. At the cart-tail walked Griswold, and every step that he walked was another step into hell.

It was dark when they came into town. Lights showed from the fort and from Government House, and glittered in the harbor, where lay the half dozen prizes with fat cargoes to be sailed to England. Lieven's house was one of stone, with a courtyard; it was well away from Government House on the hill, but not so far from the fort.

Slaves with lanterns came out to meet them, and Lieven himself, and



The banns had been said for the wedding of Margot to Lieven the wrecker — with money to burn and a hand of iron.

half a dozen of his wreckers—dark laughing men who shook gold rings in their ears and talked loudly in a dozen tongues, and wore dirks and pistols amid their finery. Margot looked once at Herb Griswold as she went into the house with Black Lieven holding her hand, but he could not meet her eyes and looked away, and stood waiting. Presently Lieven came back, laughing.

"Well, ye rebel dog!" said he, the two of them standing close together. "The wedding clothes are awaiting you when the women have dressed. So you're going through with it?"

"With what?" Griswold asked.

"You fool, you're not the simpleton you look!" said Lieven in sudden fury. "Well I know she has eyes only for you; and this night she shall see you played for the fool you pretend to be! You're mine, d'ye understand! I've taken you off Fraser's hands, and you're bound to my service as a war prisoner, and you'll lie in my cellars this night, and what becomes of you depends on her. Aye, she had best play the good wife, unless she wants to see ye sent to sea with my sloops, and God have mercy on you then, you dog!"

Griswold felt his hands shaking for mad desire to be at that dark throat, but he folded them and lowered his eyes. He saw Lieven's purpose now, all too clearly.

"Wait here till summoned," snapped the other, turning away. "Then come in and dress, and you shall propose the bride's health."

He disappeared, and Griswold stood waiting, dismayed.

So Black Lieven knew or guessed everything, or at least where lay Margot's heart! That was hard to take silently, and the black intent behind it; the outburst of passionate fury had told its own tale. Black Lieven was master and would be master, forcing love with blood and submission with tears. This was all he knew or wanted in life—plunder.

GRISWOLD waited; laughter and wild song echoed from within the house. Here were only Lieven and his chosen hellions, and the rum was flowing like water. Even the blacks who passed in and out were giggling and staggering. Presently came a decent black woman and spoke to him, bidding him come inside. He followed her into a hall and up a stairs to the floor above, and into a large handsome room.

Candles blazed by the dozen in sconces. Here was a great bed with four rosewood pillars carven in curious shapes, and mirrors and whatnot; and on a chair, a new outfit of blue clothes with brass buttons, and shoes. She pointed them out.

"I'll stay out while you dress, master," she said, and departed, closing the door.

Griswold stripped and clad himself anew. In this room, he perceived, Margot and her mother had dressed for the evening. The great bed was heaped with pillows at the head and covered over with a handsome silk coverlet. The shirt and trousers and jacket he had doffed, Griswold picked up, glancing hurriedly about.

Then he went to the bed and thrust them under the coverlet, and smoothed all over again neatly, and was done when the black woman looked in and beckoned. He followed her down the stairs, and she opened up a door for him, and laughing voices burst out. He stepped into the lower rooms, which were flung into one, and saw Margot standing by her mother under the candles. Men were crowded about, most of them joining in a lusty catch trolled by Black Lieven, while two fiddlers in a corner scraped away, and a brace of slaves came staggering in under the weight of a monster silver punch-bowl.

QUICK as an eel slipping through water, Griswold was at Margot's side, speaking low.

"Margot! My clothes are in the room upstairs, under the silk bed-cover. Make an excuse, get up there, change into them, and slip out. Wait for me in the street. I'll give ye ten minutes, no more. Fast—fast!"

Lieven saw him and roared at him, dragging him forward to the punch-bowl. The music fell quiet; the voices ceased. Eyes probed from all sides at the Yankee seaman.

"Here's a proper rebel, comrades!" cried out Lieven. "An excellent good friend o' the bride—a good friend, eh, Margot? He's giving us the first toast to her health. Up on the chair, ye rebel dog! Up! That's right." He shoved Griswold at a chair and made him stand on it. "Now, ye Yankee, give a hearty toast and no mumbling! Speak out, speak up—three cheers for him, lads!"

They cheered and laughed and mocked, Lieven smiling cruelly, and then passing him up a silver flagon of punch. Griswold took it.

A cry burst from Margot, a scream from her mother. Her dress, a fine filmy lacy thing sparkling with jeweled gifts, touched a candle-flame, and the flame caught. Before any could move, she slapped out the tongue of fire, then stood with hands and dress blackened.

"No harm done!" she cried quickly, and laughed at their dismay. "I'll run above and make amends, and be back in no time. Nay, not burned a particle!"

They were all caught unawares and uncertain, even Griswold.

"Ha, *pardieu!*" burst forth a Frenchman, slapping the staring Fraser on the back. "A proper wench! A proper bride for Cap'n Lieven! Three cheers for the bride, *cameradoes!*"

Wild voices broke out in applause. Margot had slipped from the room, her mother fluttering after her. Griswold stood on the chair holding the silver beaker; it was a heavy, massive goblet, perhaps looted from some Spanish church. The noise quieted, and Lieven shook a hand at him.

"On with it, ye Yankee rebel!" he barked. "Art tongue-tied?"

"Nay," said Griswold. His hands were shaking again, though not from fear, as he lifted the flagon. He sniffed it. "But your punch is bad, Lieven. The rum hath soured."

Wondering faces lifted and Lieven snarled out an oath as he looked up at Griswold.

"Soured? Ye fool, rum sours not!"

"Then taste for yourself," said Griswold, and smacked flagon and rum slap down into the dark face. The heavy beaker caught Lieven over the eyes and staggered him; the punch poured over face and finery. And as he spluttered, Griswold leaped down at him.

At him and had him, drenched and cursing and dazed; had him in a vise-like grip, twisting an arm behind him and up, face to face, breast to breast, hugging him, lifting him from the floor so that he lost purchase and stance.

A roar of laughter arose that changed to savage growls and shouts and oaths when Lieven screamed with the hurt of his arm. He tried most desperately to clutch and fight, but the massive strength of Griswold had him nipped. For all his fury and steely muscles, he was helpless.

Steel slithered out; pistols were lifted—but Griswold was backing toward the door, using his victim as shield. Lieven screamed again; blood from his cut forehead was running into his eyes, and his hands beat frantically but unavailingly at his captor. None dared fire for fear of hitting him, but they moved forward in a circle, knives and swords flicking out.

"Back!" cried Griswold, and the deep quarterdeck voice of him startled them all. "Back! Bid them back, Lieven!"

He twisted the pinioned arm—and another scream of agony burst from Lieven.

"Back, back!" he shouted. "Kill the dog—*ai!* Mercy o' God, back, back!"

WITH his bare teeth, he tried to tear at Griswold's face, but more pressure on the twisted arm fetched his head back. Those mighty shoulders and arms held him off the floor, held him screaming and helpless, bloody eyes starting from his head. Over his shoulder, Griswold smiled grimly at the circle of faces, and smiled again at the staring Fraser.

"Shoot if ye like, ye blasted curs!" he said calmly. "More fun this night than ye bargained on, eh? Make the most of it, you and your cap'n both."

He loosed the twisted arm, reached behind him, still holding Lieven aloft with one brawny arm, and turned the door-handle. The door opened outward, as he had already noted. Lieven writhed frantically, flailing at him with beating hands. With his free fist, Griswold struck the wet bloody face,

struck it again—and suddenly hurled the man to the floor with a crash.

Then he was out of the opening door. Instantly half a dozen pistols crashed, and smoke blackened the candle-glow. Griswold went to the floor, as the bullets splintered the door above him, then slammed it shut. Bodies came hurtling against it, but the door held with his big foot braced in place. At least, it held for the moment he needed. Then he let go and was gone, darting past staring blacks, bowling over somebody in the outer doorway, and leaping forward into the night.

And there was no moon, for clouds were in the sky.

Mad tumult swelled behind, when he came into the street. A slim figure darted to him—it was Margot, clad in his discarded garb. He caught her hand.

"Run! With me!"

They padded along in the obscurity. He heard her sharp, reckless laugh, and choked back a groan. So little he had to offer her! An hour or two, no more.

They were making toward the fort. Somewhere behind, shouts and torches split the darkness, but the pursuers were at loose ends and knew not which way to seek. Griswold slowed, for there was the dark mass of the fort rising ahead. And here was what he sought: he pulled Margot to a stop.

"The Spanish Hole!" he exclaimed. "Into it, now. I'll lower you!"

"Aye," she said breathlessly, thinking only of swift escape and hiding.

It was one of those queer banana-holes that dotted the island, and still do. A big one, this, but shallow—half a dozen feet across, and a scant ten feet deep, with sand and loose litter drifted into the bottom. The Spanish Hole they called it, and had laid blocks of coral around the edge to keep children and drunken men from falling in; though years later, under Governor Allister, it was filled in to the brim and forgotten.

CLINGING to his hands, Margot dropped. He followed at once, for lights and voices were moving toward the water-front; if he had tried to take a boat, it would have been quite hopeless. The alarm was being given to the vessels in harbor, to the scattered houses of the town, to everyone within hearing—parties branching out, searching roads and fishing-boats and all dark corners.

"His jewels, his clothes!" she said, as Griswold held her close in the pit. "Ah, Herb, I'll take these honest rags of yours any day! What happened? Did they shoot at you?"

"Too late," he assented. "No harm. That was a risky thought of yours, to play with fire!"

"It worked," she said, and laughed a little. "And now what? How do we get away?"

He was silent a space. Then: "We don't, I fear. You see, my sweet, it's impossible."

Impossible? With boats up and down the beach? With the moon veiled and the long reaches of the island inviting them? With other cays and islets, forested with great trees, so easily gained under a scrap of sail? She was slow to accept the dread fact. But gradually, as he answered her dismayed questions and showed her how utterly hopeless such thoughts were, she came to understand.

Something else helped. Voices and trampling feet sounded from above, and a dim glow reflected from torches, and the bleak tones of Fraser reached them.

"De'il take it, man! They must be somewhere close by! Hast searched the boats?"

"Only too well." This was Lieven's voice. "And stopped all roads from town, and put the watch to work beating up sleepy citizens, blast 'em! There's no earthly way they can get clear. Come morning, I'll clap a hundred-quid reward on the rebel's head—and the whole damned island will be out running 'em down!"

"But if he had a boat ready and waiting?" demanded Fraser.

Black Lieven laughed. "They'd not get far, and with sunrise fifty smacks

will be out searching. Wait and see! Come along to Government House and bide the morning."

Silence, up above. Margot sighed and relaxed. Now she realized everything.

"Oh!" she said at length.

"That's it," Griswold confirmed. "At least, we've a little time together. 'Twas all I could manage. So fret about the morrow when it comes. Here, sit in the sand. Tell me about yourself, the things you've never told me—your thoughts and dreams, how you got that tiny scar under your eye, when those freckles came on your sweet nose—a hundred things!"

"And you, Herbert, tell me all about your strange and distant Boston!" she said, as she settled beside him. "Me first, and the scar: it came when I was a child and fell, and cut my face on the coral—"

SO they sat and talked, opening their hearts to one another without reserve, telling of childish things and peering a little behind the bright veil that hides life from the wide eyes of youth. After a long space the moon came out in the sky; her rays did not strike down into the pit, for she was not high enough, but they lent a radiance to the darkness. Then, later, clouds again veiled her silver disk.

By that time Margot had wormed out of him the whole story of the Boston sloop and how the other Americans on the island were by now on the way to safety. He spoke of it without bitterness now, or wrench; for the thought of how Black Lieven had been shamed before all his crew sweetened everything.

"And ye did that for me, Herb!" she breathed. "For this! Ye gave up so much—"

"Nay, won so much, child!" said he with a soft laugh. "It irked a bit at the time; but now I'm mortal glad. And maybe it'll be a good answer to the question."

"What question?"

"Why, my grandmother used to say," he answered, a trifle awkwardly, "that when a body reaches the Judgment Seat, the first question asked him will be the hardest to answer. She used to spit it out sharp-like, but in a way that made it probe deep."

"What question?" she asked again, clinging to him. "What's the question?"

"Like this: For whom gave ye a bit of your heart?"

"I don't understand."

"For whom," he paraphrased it, "did you, while you were alive, give a bit of your heart and lifeblood—don't ye see? Who did ye feel sorry for, and love and help, on earth."

"Yes. Oh, yes!" she replied. "How did she know it would be asked, Herb?"

"Don't ask me that. No doubt she just guessed. . . . Ah! Careful! Quiet, quiet!"

They heard a shuffle of steps, as of many people above. The pit caught up the sounds and intensified them. Muffled voices spoke together. A sharper one came clear.

"Here, sit down a minute. Damned bit o' stone in my shoe."

"Don't fall in," muttered another voice, one that made Griswold jump.

"Huh! No danger. Thank God the clouds are up! Ye say the gates aren't closed?"

"No, Cap'n, not without there's an alarm."

Griswold stood up. Apparently two men had sat down on the blocks of stone at the edge of the pit. He listened, strained and intent, unable to believe his ears.

"Then," said the first voice, "we'd better rush the place and ha' done. You take ten men straight to the barracks inside and mount guard. I'll see to the sentries."

"Aye, sir," came that startling second voice. "I'll count 'em off and—"

Griswold lifted his head and spoke, in wonder and amazement.

"Job! Job Lovat! For God's sake, Job—is that you?"

Gasps and startled silence, then response.

"Aye, it be me right enough. You, Herb Griswold? Where are ye, man?"

"Under you! In the pit, in the hole here!" burst out Griswold. "Give us a hand. Drop your jacket—oh, thank God for this miracle! Give us a hand, Job!"

There was a scurry, a low buzz of voices.

"Aye, coming," said Job Lovat. "But no noise! We're here, all of us, and Cap'n Rathbone of the *Providence,* to steal up on the fort. Quiet, mind! Here, now—"

Something was dangling. . . . Griswold guided Margot's hands to the cloth jacket that was let down, and boosted her. Up she went. A minute later he followed, to be pulled over the stone edge by Job Lovat and another man. Around them in the obscurity crowded a dark mass of men.

Hands clapped his back, voices he knew murmured at him—Lovat and other Americans gathered from the island plantations. And outside them, men with pistols and cutlasses, and Cap'n John Rathbone himself, brooking no explanations.

"Silence! No talk, no talk, ye cursed fools! Lovat, away with your men. You two from the pit, fall in and hold your tongues. All right, lads! Take it at the double—straight to the fort! Cold steel, and no pistols unless we must. Away, all hands, boarders away!"

It was like a dream, to be running across the sand and up the slope, hand in hand with Margot, dark shapes plunging ahead of them in a wave of fury. A startled shout, a clash of steel as the fort loomed, a ripple of panting voices and clashing weapons spreading through the dark precincts, and then all silence again, and Fort Nassau won with scarcely a blow and without a shot fired, while the town slept.

The moon came out again, riding high and white. Talk enough now on the parade ground of the fort, by the tall flagstaff, and everyone pumping hands with mad delight.

"But I thought it was to take us off, the sloop had come!" said Griswold. "Ye told me naught of any assault, any landing!"

"I knew it not, mate," said Job Lovat, laughing excitedly. "But they landed twenty-odd men, with weapons for us prisoners, and we came across the island. The sloop's gone around, to sail in at dawn and take the prizes in harbor, while we hold the town under the big guns. . . . Ha, here's the Cap'n."

Rathbone strode up in the moonlight, lugging a great flag.

"Aren't those halliards made ready yet?" he said. "Here, lads! Lend a hand and bend on the new flag! It must be flying over the walls at dawn, so the sloop will see it and know we've taken the place."

"Let's have a look at it," said Griswold.

He and Margot stood staring; as yet, none of them had realized that sne was not a man.

IT was his first sight of the Stars and Stripes; and when he said so, Rathbone pointed out the stars to him, thirteen of them, one for each State.

"But can ye hold the island, if the British fleet come?" asked Griswold.

"No, and no trying," said Rathbone. "We'll spike the guns, sail off with the stores and powder and the ships, and win safe back again, praise be. . . . There she rises!"

He stood at salute, as the flag went rippling up in the moonlight, and the halliards were made fast. Then he spoke again, gravely.

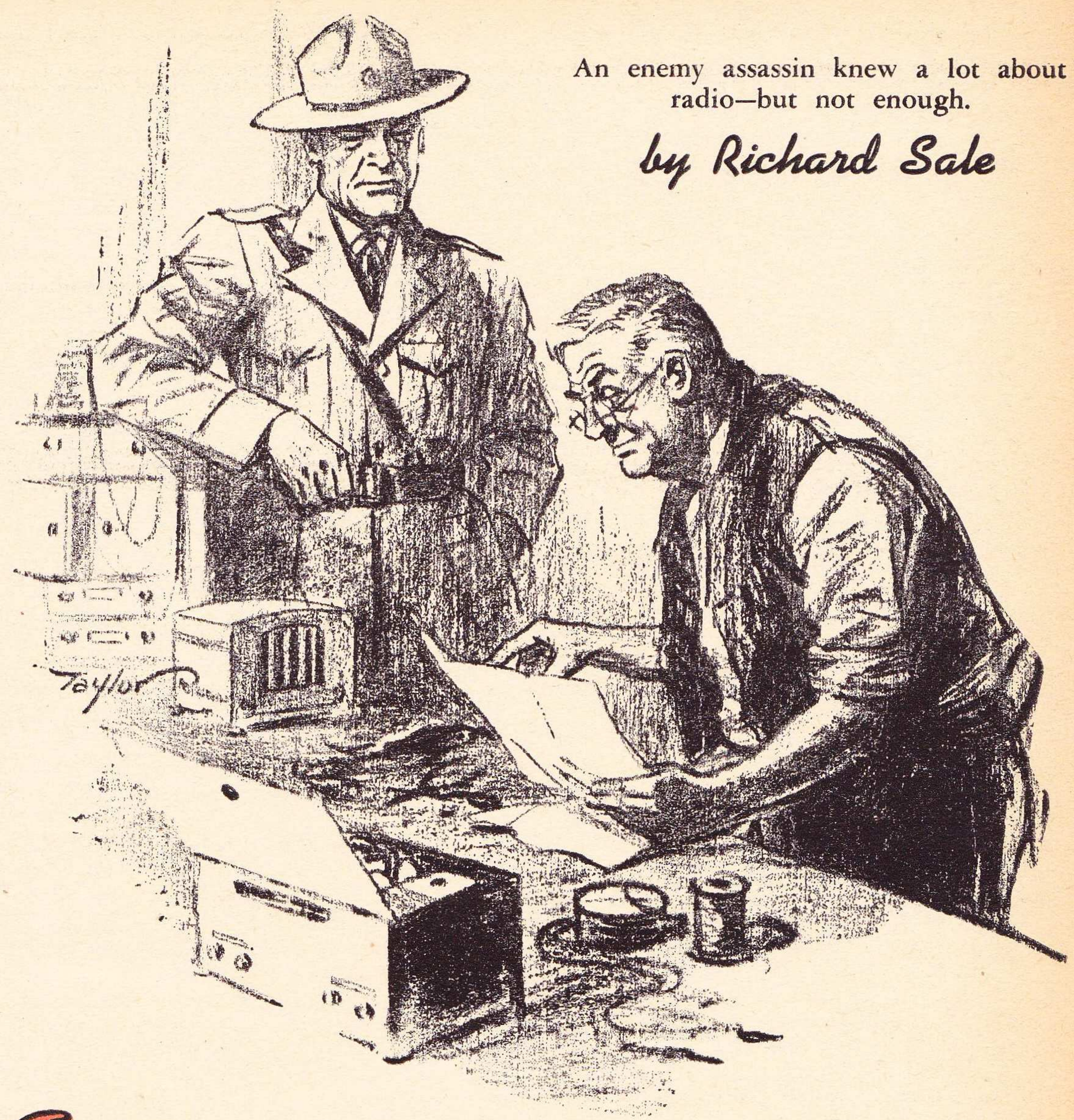
"Lads! Ye've seen something—ye've just now seen something to tell about when you're old men! The first invasion of a foreign land, the first capture of a foreign fortress, by the Stars and Stripes! But not the last, if God wills!"

"Amen to that," said Herb Griswold, his arm about the shoulders of Margot as they looked up together at the smiling flag of liberty. "I reckon we know more'n most folks will, Cap'n, what freedom means!"

Another story in this fine series, "Flags of Our Fathers," will appear in our forthcoming June issue.

An enemy assassin knew a lot about radio—but not enough.

by Richard Sale



ACTIVE DUTY

THE State Police car braked to a hasty stop in the parking space behind the Main Street Radio Service & Supply, and Mike Taggerty, who was in the back room working on a potentiometer replacement, raised his head at the rattle of pebbles and saw that it was Sergeant Jim Hanson. A moment later Hanson eased his big uniformed body through the back door.

"This is a fine time to come in for repairs!" Mike growled. "Can't your transmitter go on the blink any other time but closing-time, Jim? I've got to get my grandson home for dinner. His mother does her overtime at the factory on Friday nights."

"Listen to the old bull mink!" Jim Hanson said. "Keep your hair on. There's nothing wrong with my rig. It's been putting out plenty of soup since you fixed it that last time."

"Oh," Mike said, mollified. He grinned. "Just a social call, then? Have a stool."

"Not exactly social," Jim Hanson said, giving him a circular. "Where's Pudge?"

"Keeping counter for me out front. . . . What's this?"

"Have a look."

Mike put down his fine-nosed pliers and wiped his hands on his pants. He unfolded the circular. It was a handbill of the type he had often seen in the post office and over at Police Headquarters. "WANTED," the handbill said, "ENEMY AGENTS!" There was a picture of three different men. The ringleader, according to the legend, was Walter Franck. He was a good looking man; brown-haired, with a dark mustache and scholarly mien. The second man was George Kunz. He looked ugly and dangerous. He was dark-skinned and wild-eyed, no Nordic superman. The third man—

"Never mind the third man," said Jim Hanson. "We got him today."

"You got him?"

"He was planting dynamite under the New York Central bridge where it crosses that creek by Gaines' Mill. Franky Whalen put a bullet through him, but he'll live. He talked."

"Look, Jim, why bring this to me?"

"Ever see those men before?"

Mike looked at their pictures again. "To tell you the truth, this guy"—he

tapped Franck's picture—"looks familiar. I saw a fellow who looked like him hanging around the station one night and sort of looking the town over. I noticed him because he gave my little cottage up on the hill a long look, and I was sitting up there waiting for Amy's train to get in from Tarrytown. From that distance, I couldn't say it was the same bird, but they looked alike."

Jim Hanson frowned. "When was this?"

"Oh—Wednesday, around six, just before Pudge's mother's train came in."

"Haven't seen him since?"

"No."

"Well, look, Mike," said Sergeant Hanson. "Keep an eye peeled for him. You've got a gun here in the shop, haven't you?"

"Sure. A thirty-eight."

"If this guy ever comes in, lay it on him, and call State Police right away. If the guy tries to blow, shoot him. He's bad. . . . This is an F.B.I. circular. He's wanted alive *or* dead, by J. Edgar."

Mike frowned. "But why tell me?"

"Didn't you read the dope on him?" Hanson said. "He'll come in here sooner or later if he's hanging around this burg. He was a radio operator, and a would-be radio engineer. He's nuts about radio, can't keep away from it. Knows everything about it. He might—"

"Oh," Mike breathed. "I see what you mean." He set his long jaw.

"We're checking with all radioshops along the line, figuring sooner or later he'll walk in," Hanson said. "*Saboteurs?* Landed by sub like those others?"

"Not these boys," Jim Hanson said grimly. "These would-be Horst Wessels are fresh out of the Bund, and they're hot. . . . I've got to blow, Mike. Keep 'em receiving."

"So long," Mike said.

HE watched Jim Hanson climb into the car and drive off. Then he folded the handbill and put it into his pocket. "Pudge," he called to the front of the store, "near closing time. You'd better start clearing up, boy. I'm almost finished here."

"All right, Grandpop," Pudge said.

Mike looked out from the peephole in the door which separated the repair from the retail section of the little shop. Sometimes he could feel himself get choked up, just watching the boy. It was strange and wonderful, the only thing which could ease the bitterness in his heart. He wondered if he were just getting old, or whether most seven-year-old grandsons affected their grandfathers that way. It wasn't anything Pudge said, particularly. No bright sayings, nor quaint grammatical errors. It was the solemn expression on Pudge's long face, the deep hollow at the back of his neck, the close-cropped hair on a head that seemed too large for his thin body, the constant wonder in those curious eyes, and the intangible pride of responsibility when he engaged a customer on his own. As, for instance, Chief of Police Amos Kinzel, who had squeezed into the shop just before closing.

"Howdy, Pudge," Amos Kinzel said, sucking on his pipe. "Your grandpa around?"

"Yes, he is," Pudge said. "He's busy right now, Chief Kinzel. Really he is. Maybe I could help you."

Kinzel chuckled. "Maybe you could, son, but I reckon Camelia would feel a shade more easy in her mind if your grandpa fixed this radio set. It's busted down."

"Probably the mixer," Pudge said soberly. "We have a great deal of trouble with the mixers."

"Is that so?" Kinzel chuckled. "I figured maybe it was just the batteries'd run down."

"I'll get Grandpop," Pudge said. "He'll test up your batteries, Mr. Kinzel. But I'd say it was the mixer if you ast me. Really I would."

PUDGE went down the aisle and through the door into the workroom. Mike had listened, smiling. He tried to finish up the set he was working on. "If they make these midget sets any smaller," he grunted, "they'll need a midget to work on them. Getting so bad you can't even squeeze a finger into them to tighten a nut. . . . Okay, Pudge. Be right with you."

"Grandpop," Pudge whispered, "you really do think it's the mixer, don't you?"

"It's likely," Mike whispered back. "But we'll test his batteries just to make sure."

He put down the work, and followed Pudge out into the store.

"Hello, Amos," Mike said. "Been a nice day. Old Home Week for flatfoots, the way you constabulary've been dropping in."

"Hmmm," Kinzel said.

"Camelia?" Mike asked politely.

"She's fine, Mike. But peskier than August mosquitoes when this radio of hers goes bad."

"I'll test it up. The ohm-ammeter, Pudge."

Pudge handed his grandfather the combination ohm-volt-and-milliammeter. Mike tested the batteries. "They're okay," he said. "We'll have a look inside." He unscrewed the back of the portable and took the mixer-tube out. "Test it up, Pudge."

Pudge took the tube delightedly and swaggered to the tube-tester. He placed it in an octal socket and flipped a switch. The indicator moved into the red BAD section. Then he flipped another switch, and a neon bulb in the tester flashed.

Mike said: "The mixer's gone west, Amos. Grid shorted." He got a new tube, plugged it into the set, and turned the set on. They piped in a broadcasting station perfectly.

"You see, Chief Kinzel?" Pudge said, awed. "I told you! The mixer!"

"Say!" Amos Kinzel said, impressed. "That's a right bright boy, Mike. . . . How much do I owe you?"

"One buck. . . . Pudge, put out the light in back. We'll be closing up and getting home."

THE boy nodded and went back into the shop. Kinzel said softly: "Had any word from his pa?"

"No. Still missing. I don't think we'll get any word till the war is over. If he's dead, we may never hear. If he's a Jap prisoner, it'll take peace to get information."

"My boy is at gunnery school in Texas," Amos Kinzel said. "I reckon I couldn't stand it to have him missing, Mike. You take it mighty well."

"Do I?" Mike said, his voice hard.

"Well, you do. Least, it seems you do. . . . Oh, I know you'd rather be back in active duty instead of nursemaidin' the boy, but—" He shrugged. "Guess it's hard on you, at that, with the Marines battlin' out there like they are. Guess you'd like to be with 'em again."

"Marines?" Mike said. "Me? I was never no Marine!"

"You wasn't?"

"No. I was twelve years in the Navy, apprentice seaman to chief radioman. I was senior op. on the flagship *New York,* the day we joined the British fleet at Scapa Flow. Marines! I was a Navy brass-pounder, not a leatherneck in red britches."

"Well, you don't have to get so nettled," Chief Kinzel chuckled. "Just because you wasn't no leatherneck, don't make them social lepers, exactly, exceptin' maybe to the Japs." He leaned across the counter and said, "Mike, can you keep your mouth shut?"

"Like a clam."

"Listen. Tonight you watch the railroad station. Around nine."

"Nine? That's the express. She don't stop."

"She'll stop tonight."

"I can't leave the house. Got to stay with the boy. His ma works overtime on Fridays."

"Shucks, you can see the station from your front porch, can't you? Mike, you just wait for the nine o'clock train to haul in, and take a good look."

"What's it all about?"

"Can't say any more."

"That why the State troopers've been whipping around town all day?"

The third man—"He was planting dynamite under the New York Central bridge."

"Yep," Chief Kinze' said. "And I got to be gettin' along. Good night."

"Night, Amos," Mike said.

When Kinzel had driven off in his C card jalopy, Pudge came out of the back room with Mike's coat. Mike put it on. "We've got to hurry, son," he said. "Your mother will skin me if I don't feed you. . . . And don't you tell her I let you help me in the store. She wants you outdoors in the sun. She doesn't want you testing tubes."

"It was just for a little bit," Pudge said.

"I know, but—"

"I won't tell her, Grandpop."

"All right. Let's go."

They turned off the lights and locked the front door. Pudge stared at the gold-leaf lettering on the front window: MICHAEL TAGGERTY & SON.

Pudge said: "Some day you're gonna put my name on there too, aren't you, Grandpop?"

"No," Mike said. He chuckled. "That's good enough for an ignorant

shellback like me, and an overgrown ham like your dad, but you're aimed higher than that, Pudge. You're going to be a radio engineer and have charge of a fifty-kilowatt rig at some big station in New York. Either that, or President of the United States."

"If I was President, I'd never see you, Grandpop."

"Sure you would. The war would be over then. You could build yourself a little transmitter in the White House and talk to us up here every night on the air, hamming. Like we used to talk to your dad on my transmitter when he was in Cavite."

Pudge nodded soberly. "I could have my own microphone and wireless key and endensers."

"*Con*densers, Pudge. Sure you could. You'd be a better operator than your grandpop ever was."

THEY climbed the hill to the cottage. It sat on the eastward slope above the town. From the front windows they could look down on the highway and the railroad station below. They could easily distinguish Amy when she got off the train and climbed the road up to them. The back yard of the radio-shop was visible too, with the sand-pit, swing and seesaw where Pudge played. Looking over the town, they could discern the Hudson River, blue-gray between the cool green hills.

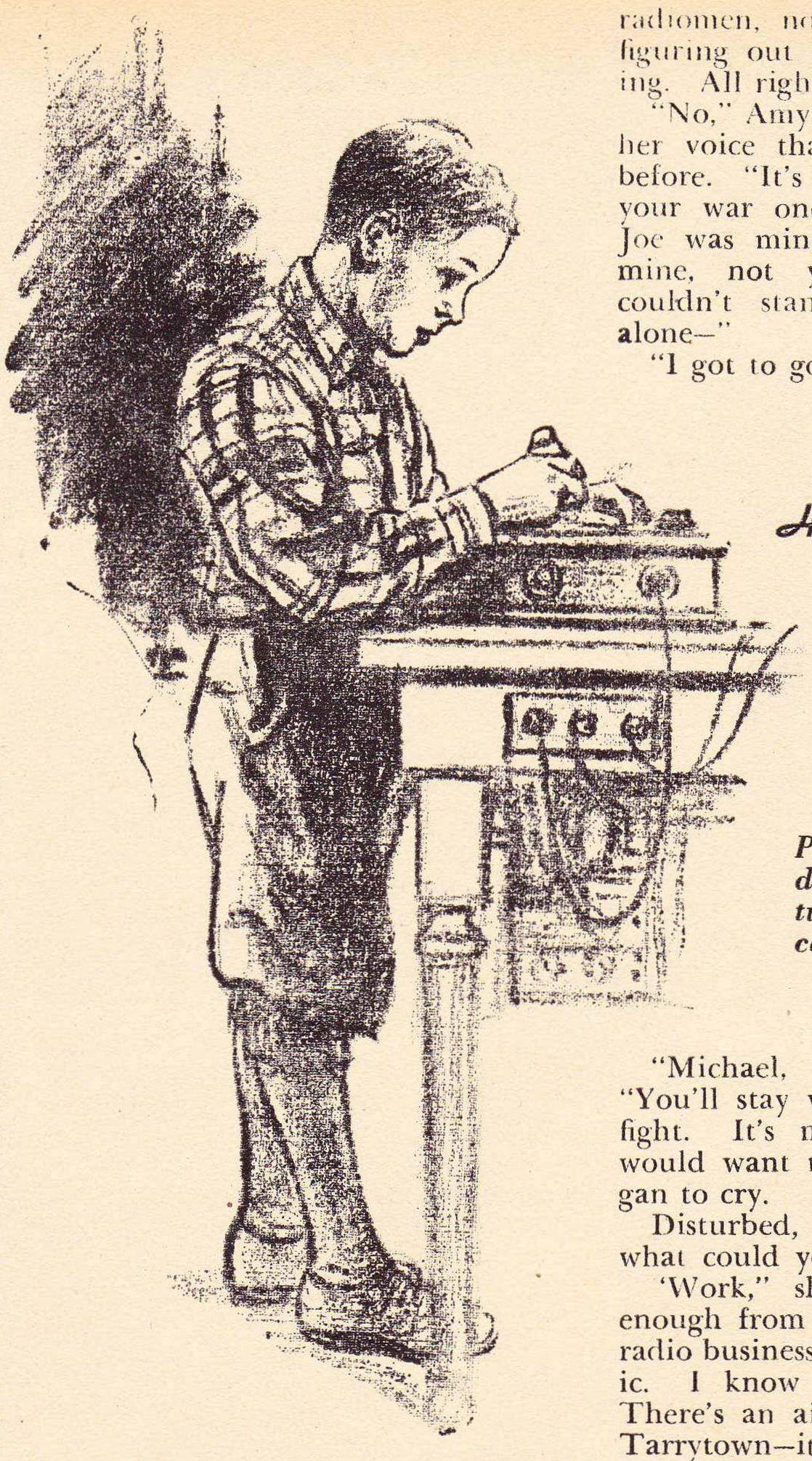
The cottage was small, a white clapboard Colonial in good paint and repair. The green window-boxes under the front windows were weedy and sad, however, for though Amy had nursed pansies in them from Easter through August in other years, this year she had not tended them at all. The outstanding feature of the cottage was the twin-three, flat-top rotary-beam antenna which perched on a thirty-foot wooden tower just clearing the treetops. This had been Mike's transmitting antenna before Pearl Harbor became something to remember. Using his amateur rig, which ran a thousand watts on twenty meters, Mike had been able to contact the Philippines where Joe was stationed; and for some time he, Joe, Amy and Pudge had been able to carry on by phone until war came and the amateur spectrums were silenced.

Now the antenna served no purpose at all. He did not even use it for receiving; there was little to listen to on the wave-lengths these days. It only brought back other days, when Joe could speak to them from Cavite when his ship was in, days before that ship was surprised and sunk.

"Wash your hands and face," Mike told his grandson. He was panting. "I'll rest out here a second."

"All right, Grandpop."

When Pudge had vanished inside, Mike sat down heavily in a rickety



Illustrated by H. Weston Taylor

Pudge took the tube delightedly to the tube-tester. The indicator moved into the BAD section.

lounge chair and diffidently watched the six P.M. train from the south puff into the station. It was hard not to be bitter. Being a grandfather didn't mean he was too old for war. He wasn't fifty yet, despite the gray of his hair. He was still hard, bullet-necked and muscular, despite the rhombic where his stomach had been lean. What was more important, he could still sniff and squirt thirty-five words a minute solid on a Navy key. He wasn't too old for the Navy. They would have been glad to take him back on active duty. Active duty! A chance at the Nips, instead of sitting on his ground potential, monitoring bad news all day long, nursemaiding.

The day the telegram came from the Navy Department, "WE REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT—" Both he and Amy read it, dry-eyed. Then he said, his voice ugly: "That does it with me, Amy."

"Michael," she said, "what are you going to do?"

"Join up," he said. "I've been aching to. They need radiomen, good radiomen, not raw kids who're just figuring out Ohm's law. Joe's missing. All right. It's my fight now."

"No," Amy said with a quiet fire in her voice that he had never heard before. "It's not, Michael. You had your war once. This one is mine. Joe was mine, and now the job is mine, not yours. If you left, I couldn't stand it, Pudge and me alone—"

"I got to go," he said heavily.

"Michael, you'll stay," she said. "You'll stay with Pudge. I want to fight. It's my right to fight; Joe would want me to—" Then she began to cry.

Disturbed, Mike said: "But, Amy, what could you do?"

'Work," she said. "I've learned enough from both of you about this radio business. I can follow a schematic. I know how to wire decently. There's an aircraft division down at Tarrytown—it needs all kinds of workers—radio wiremen—"

"You want to do that?"

"Yes, I do. I couldn't sit here and think. I'd go crazy."

IN the end, Amy won. She applied at the aircraft factory in Tarrytown, and landed the job. She was like a warrior about it. Each day she commuted between Tarrytown and home, arriving in time to prepare dinner at six. It was a grueling schedule, but she would have little sympathy or aid. She had set herself that line of active duty and intended seeing it through. Sometimes, Mike wished Joe could have seen her.

The train below the hill came alive and moved northward. It was the train Amy usually arrived home on, but there was no sign of Amy this night. On Friday nights she usually worked her overtime, and rather than make the trip late, she spent the night with a co-worker friend near Harmon.

Mike stretched and groaned, having recovered his wind after the climb

up the slope. He opened the front door and went inside. "Haven't you cleaned that face yet?" he called to Pudge.

Pudge did not reply. Mike, standing alone in the living-room, frowned. Then he took a step toward Pudge's small bedroom; but simultaneously, a stranger opened the door of the bedroom and stepped out. Actually, he was no stranger at all, for Mike had made his acquaintance an hour earlier in the circular Sergeant Hanson had dropped at the shop. Brown hair, brown mustache, sort of good-looking. He was named Walter Franck. The pistol he plucked from the holster suspended under his left armpit was named Colt, caliber forty-five.

"Mr. Taggerty?"

MIKE stopped in his tracks, his mouth slightly open. He looked at the intruder in mild surprise, too puzzled, momentarily, to be angry. Then he remembered Pudge, and his heart peaked to a high quick surge of fear. His muscles knotted hard and tight, and he tensed, watching the man with the same care that he would have regarded a timber rattlesnake in the woods which studded the hill behind his home.

"That won't do any good at all," the man said. "This has all been planned carefully."

Mike said hoarsely: "If you've touched that boy, I'll kill you."

"Don't be foolish," the man said. "Why should I touch the boy? I'm not after the boy. The boy is my greatest weapon. Are you going to be sensible?"

Mike said: "Get out of this house."

"That's impossible," said the man. "We'll get out in good time. Perhaps tonight. But impossible before then. If you behave yourself, neither you nor the boy will be hurt. If you attempt to stop me, George will cut your grandson's throat. That's all."

Mike did not reply. Nor did he relax. His eyes were hard, and he was trying to think. To stall, he said: "You're Walter Franck. The other guy would be Kunz."

"Well!" Franck said, mildly surprised. "Then my fame has spread throughout the land." He smiled coldly. "Taggerty, I've no doubt you are big of brawn and sharp of wit, and —pistol notwithstanding—you would as soon jump it and get yourself shot if only to raise an alarm. So think—about your grandson. He seems a very pleasant boy. I'm not a child-assassin, but at the same time, my very presence here would indicate my desperation."

Mike took a long breath and relaxed. "All right," he said. His arms sagged, his breath came back into his lungs, and the hard fury that had made his head ache, dissipated.

"That's much better," Franck said. "The boy thinks we are old friends—ham friends of yours from the radio—and I think it would be best if he continued to think so."

"There's no choice," Mike said. He was thinking. It felt good to be thinking again. He let his voice grovel. "No choice at all. I wouldn't want anything to happen to my grandson."

"Of course," Franck jeered. "The insidious weakness of filial love, eh? I don't want him frightened, and making a scene which might compel bloodshed. He is too young to think much, and I fancy he will accept anything here as long as you accept it. You understand?"

"Yes."

"I want you to do one or two things. That front window back of that table overlooks the railroad station. I have a machine-gun which is going on the table, the base of the tripod to be screwed there. You will provide an auger, the screws, and a screwdriver."

Mike turned toward his own room. Franck said sharply: "That isn't all. I noticed that your transmitter is dismantled."

Mike said: "I dismantled all transmitting equipment after December 7th, to make sure it wouldn't be used illegally by anyone."

"Good," said Franck. "You are worried about my using it? On the contrary, Taggerty, I was worried about *you* using it to put a signal on the air and warn the police of my presence here. I also noticed your communications receiver. It covers the State Police radio frequency. I want you to bring that receiver in here and put it over on the table where the machine-gun will be. I'll listen to the State Police warnings and messages while we are waiting."

"Right now?"

"Right now," Franck said. "If they should, by some fantastic luck, find our location, we would know it as soon as the car they sent for us, and we could fade away. I am not going to be caught before this operation is completed."

Mike walked heavily into his own room. His receiver was one of the finest available, and it had cost him twenty-four months of payments. He took it to the living-room and put it on the table.

Franck tuned it to the State Police frequency instantly; Mike could see from the way he handled the various controls that he knew his stuff. The police station came in very weakly. "This needs an antenna," Franck said. "Can't you run a wire from this room to that outside antenna I saw?"

"I suppose so," Mike said grimly.

"I saw a spool of EC-1 cable in your room. Use that."

"All right. But I've got to feed that boy his supper."

"Of course." Franck went to Pudge's room and opened the door. "George, bring the boy in. You may set up the machine-gun. On the front table. Anchor the tripod with screws. Taggerty will provide the hardware." He flipped up the safety of the pistol and slipped it back in its holster, out of sight.

Kunz brought Pudge out of the bedroom. Pudge was eying the bulk which Kunz cradled in his arms under a canvas jacket. "Put it on that table," Franck said. "I'll get the tools with Taggerty. I've taken care of everything." He smiled at Pudge. "Ever seen a real machine-gun, Pudge?"

"Huh," said Pudge. "Course I have. Sergeant Hanson had a machine-gun and he let me touch it oncet, didn't he, Grandpop?"

"But not like this one," Franck said. "You watch George set it up, Pudge."

"Okay," Pudge said.

Franck followed Mike into the other bedroom. Mike never referred to it as his bedroom, for though he slept there, eh always thought of it as the "shack," that eyrie where a ham operator keeps all his equipment. He found a hand-drill, screws and a screwdriver which Franck instantly took out to Kunz.

"Mount it," Franck said. "Then set the range at seven hundred eighty feet. I measured it off exactly with a range-finder the other day, from the station to this window. At such range, we cannot miss."

HE went back to the bedroom where Mike was waiting. Along one wall was the transmitter in a black relay rack. Though the tank tuners and milliammeters were still in the panels, the transmitting tubes had all been taken out, and the other components dismantled. Only the high-voltage power supply remained intact on the lowest shelf, with its rectifying tubes in their sockets. On the table where the receiver had been was the microphone, with a chamois cover and the bug key, coated with dust. Franck wiped dust from the green and red jewel light-indicators of the power supply. "Must have been a nice rig," he said.

"You'll never know that," Mike said.

Franck smiled unpleasantly. "Doubtless. Oh, well, let's get on. The antenna for the receiver inside, please. I want to listen to the State Police calls at once."

Mike picked up the spool of transmission wire, some tools, and a pair of battery clips his eyes had lighted on with a flickering smokiness. He fastened the cables to the lead-ins from the beam antenna above the

treetops outside. Then he unrolled the wire from the spool, passing into the living-room until it reached behind the receiver on the table there.

Kunz had finished mounting the machine-gun on the table, scarring the walnut with holes. When Mike fastened the EC-1 to the antenna posts of the receiver, he saw where the screws had come through the table on the under side. Meanwhile, reception on the receiver had gained tremendously in volume, as it should have with such a fine antenna. But Mike was not finished. Franck was playing with the receiver. Mike took the battery clips with wire between them and clamped one to the tip of a screw which had come through the table. The other battery clip he clamped to the bare ends of the cable he had just fastened.

"All right. Fine," Franck said. "That's all."

Mike nodded dully, holding the spool and pliers. "Should I put these back?"

"Yes."

I've got five seconds, he thought as he walked to the transmitter room. *Five fleeting seconds!* The instant he was out of Franck's vision, he dropped the spool of cable in the corner, yanked the transmission wire from the antenna lead-ins where he had just placed it, and hooked both wires over the B plus high-voltage terminal of the power supply in the rack. The haywire connection barely held. Then he opened the back door of the tall rack cabinet, and as he stood erect and started back to the living-room, he flipped on both the filament and high-voltage switches. But neither the green nor red jewels lighted. If they had, he would have been surprised.

IT had taken bare seconds, indeed. Franck watched him reënter without suspicion. The volume of the receiver was unchanged, despite the fact that the wires were not hooked to the outside antenna, because their own length made them a good aerial, and besides, the entire metal bulk of the machine-gun had become a rough antenna, the battery tips connecting it, from that single tripod screw, to the receiver's input.

"Now what?" Mike asked.

"George, just tie his ankles together," Franck said. "Just so he can't be precipitate. I think our friend will behave. Greater love hath no man than a *Grossvater.* Stretch out there on the couch, Taggerty."

Kunz tied his ankles tightly with a coil of rope he cut from one of the Venetian blinds with his sharp pocket knife. Mike leaned back on the couch, pale, not objecting. He wiped his face with a handkerchief. His face was wet.

"Could you put that cushion over them?"

"Why?"

"Pudge aint asleep yet. Little boys get habits. He'll want a drink of water at eight-thirty or so. I usually get it for him and then tuck him in. Then he goes to sleep. It's kind of a game with us. He'll have to get his own water tonight. I don't want him to see."

"Cover his feet with the cushion," Franck said. "My God, we are practically nursemaids here. You're trying my patience, Taggerty."

"He's only seven," Mike retorted.

THEY regarded him coldly and returned to their positions on either side of the gun, both staring down at the railroad depot at the bottom of the hill. Presently, Franck turned down all the lights, except the lamp in Mike's room. "There is the car," he announced tensely. "See it, George? The open one. The others are police cars."

"Lieber Gott," Kunz said. "So many!"

"Never mind them," Franck said. "Put the ring center cleanly on the back of that touring car. That is where he will sit. . . . Here, let me be sure." He looked down the sights of the machine-gun until he was satisfied. He was very nervous. "That is it, that is it. Now don't touch the gun, do you hear me? Not until it is fired."

"I hear you," Kunz breathed hoarsely. "The clip?"

"In. The gun is cocked. Not a move now. Don't touch it at all until he sits down there." Franck breathed deeply. "We are going to do it! We are going to do it, George!"

There was silence. Mike could hear them breathing heavily. He dared not breathe himself. Everything depended upon Pudge now, it was in Pudge's hands, in Pudge's indefatigable time-sense. Mike grated his teeth against each other to stop the ache over his eyes. The flowered porcelain clock on the mantel struck the half hour, eight-thirty. No word from Pudge. My God, Mike thought, has he snoozed off tonight, this one night of them all?

"Grandpop!" Pudge called from the other room faintly.

Mike's stomach turned over.

"Now what?" Franck asked irritably.

"The drink of water," said Mike. "I'll tell him to come and get it himself."

"Get rid of him," Franck said. "From now on, I want no interruption whatsoever. . . . Watch the car, George. The train is not due for twenty minutes, but it may be running fast. Listen and watch sharp."

"Grandpop!" said Pudge's voice.

"What is it, boy?" Mike called.

"I want a drink of water, please."

"You'll have to get it yourself."

Pudge came out in his droopy-seated pajamas, openly disappointed. His eyes told Mike that as a grandfather, he wasn't playing the game. "Talking with my friends here, Pudge," Mike said quietly. "You go through my room to the bathroom and get it yourself. And make sure the relay rack door is closed, Pudge. No dawdling, mind you!"

"Yes sir," Pudge said, let down. He went through Mike's room. Mike heard the relay rack door slam metallically as Pudge closed it. He said, his voice shaky: "His mother was always worrying that he was going to stick his hand into my transmitter, and if he ever found the back door of the cabinet open, he had to close it or be spanked."

"Very touching," Franck sneered. "Send the boy to bed and shut up, Taggerty. I have other things to be concerned with."

Pudge came back in a moment. He kissed his grandfather good-night. "I closed the dumb door," he groused. "Aint you gonna tuck me in, Grandpop?"

"Not tonight, Pudge. Say your prayers and get to sleep. What'd your mother say if she knew you were up this late?"

"G'night," Pudge said. He closed his door.

Mike shivered. He was trembling openly. He leaned his head back,

Kunz stood erect, dead on his feet. Franck sprang to depress the trigger himself.

and on the lower panel of the relay rack, he saw the green and red power jewels burning. That was that. Like all good transmitters, the back door of the rack had an interlocking safety switch. The minute you opened the door, it cut off all power so that you couldn't hurt yourself. The minute you closed the door, power was delivered to the rig again. Power was on now. The red eye said so.

The minutes ticked on heavily.

In the distance, they heard the sound of the train. Mike clenched his fists on his thighs. The locomotive whistled cheerfully down the track and in a few moments, the rush of the train into the station was plainly audible. It squealed to a stop, the brakes grinding, compressed air whistling noisily.

"There!" Franck said hoarsely. "There he comes! They are leading him right to the car! See?"

Kunz said: "But he iss covered—"

"They'll drop first," said Franck. "Only two on this side. The bullets will drop them quickly. . . . He's getting in the car—*he's in! Start firing!*"

Kunz reached forward and gripped the machine-gun lightly, pointing his index finger toward the trigger. The finger never reached it. He grunted with incredible force, transfixed by the surge of power through his body, his eyes dilated, his face purple. No sound came from him, but in the house was the hum of power-dissipation. He stood erect, dead on his feet as two thousand volts flowed from the power supply in the other room, through the wires, up through the battery clips, into the machine-gun by way of the tripod screw, thence through his body to ground via the metal cabinet of the receiver against which he had rested his left hand.

FRANCK uttered a hoarse cry of dismay. For a moment he thought Kunz had lost his nerve. The urgency of the moment warped his judgment. He saw the party below, at the station, settled, ready to drive off. He sprang at Kunz to push the man aside so that he might depress the trigger of the machine-gun himself.

He did not make a circuit like Kunz. But when he touched Kunz, the high voltage walloped him with tremendous force. He was flung bodily across the room, where he smashed the side-table by the couch from his impetus. He lay still where he fell.

Pudge was calling out at the crash. Mike shouted harshly: "Stay in your bed! Do you hear me? Stay in your bed or I'll spank the daylights out of you!"

He sat erect and went to work on the ankle-cords with his little penknife. He cut them. He went into his own room and flipped off the power switches. The green and red lights went black. He came back, pulled the cables from the receiver. Then he walked to the machine-gun and stared down the sights.

The bead in the ring was centered perfectly on the back of the touring car. As he watched, the car began to move, and the President of the United States moved out from under the muzzle of the gun. Mike sat down quickly, his legs rubbery. When he could walk again, he went to the hall, picked up the telephone, and called State Police. He told them quickly, spasmodically, exactly what had happened, hung up.

Pudge sounded tearful now. Mike joined him. He took the boy in his arms and held him tightly. "Take it easy, Pudge," he whispered. "Take it easy."

"I was scared," Pudge said.

"Nothing to be scared of now."

"I was scared you were mad at me. I was scared you were tired of being a nursemaid."

"Nursemaid!" Mike said hoarsely. "Where'd you hear that?"

"I heard Chief Kinzel say it in the store."

"You shouldn't eavesdrop, boy."

"You aint my nursemaid, are you, Grandpop?"

"How," Mike said slowly, "could I be nursemaid to a boy who's going to grow up to be President? Presidents have bodyguards."

"And — and grandpops?" Pudge asked hopefully.

"Yes," Mike replied. "Especially grandpops."

Bagdad Madness

LOOKING over my notes and memoranda, I came on a query that Norman Shane had dictated to me long before the war was over, back in the days before the Nazis had collapsed.

"Memo: What about the Soviets after the war? Will they try to jump on a weakened world and communize it? Can we trust the giant that will emerge from this struggle?"

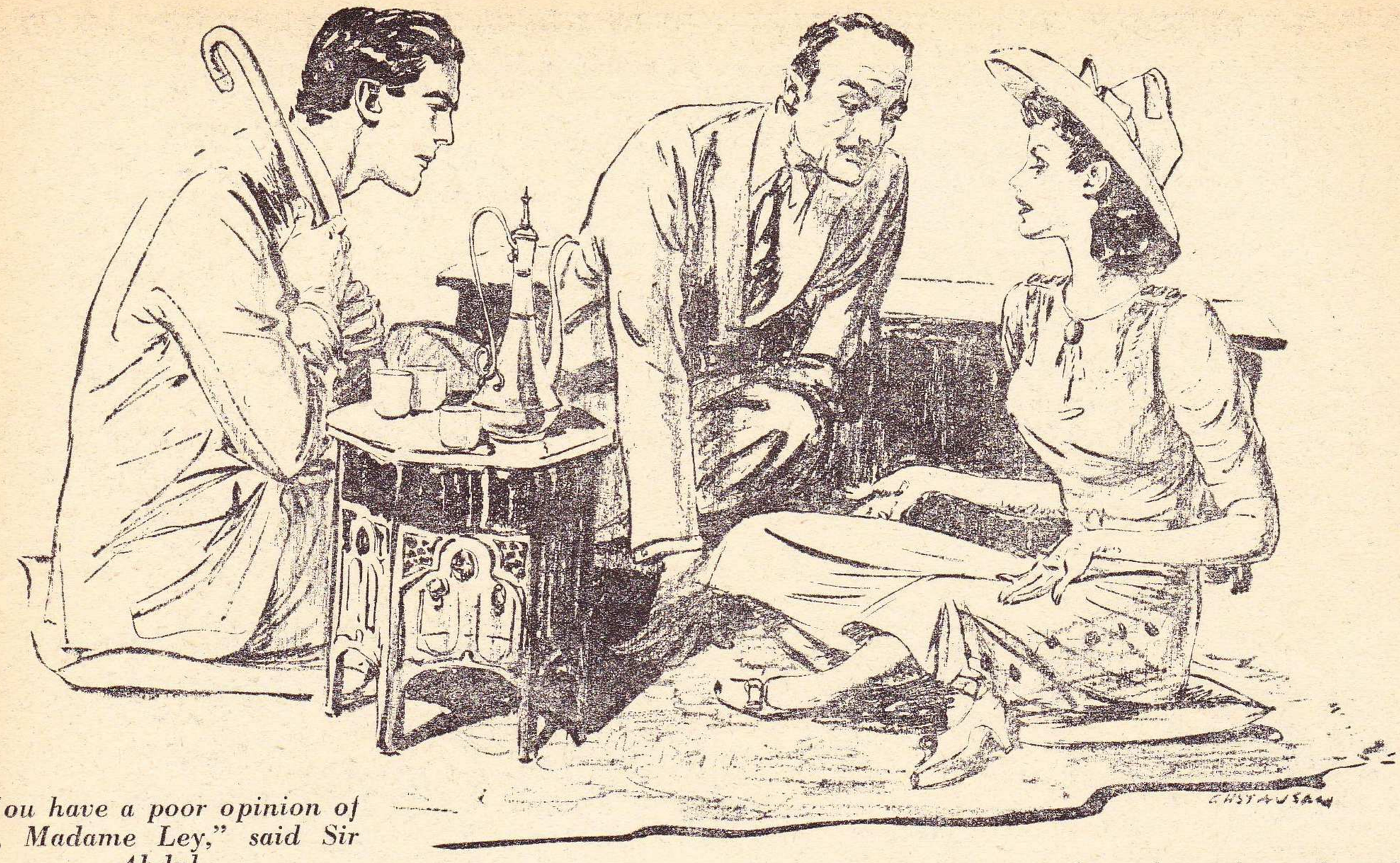
Our plane was roaring toward Bagdad; Norman Shane lay behind us in Egypt, knocked out of the game temporarily. Sir Abdul Mohand was snoring comfortably. I passed the memo to Kessiloy with a smile, for it amused me now—now that the war was long ended and we were fighting for the peace.

To my surprise, the big brawny Russian who had inherited Stalin's full power read the words and looked grave. Kessiloy was an idealist; he

had guided Russia into the new sunrise of the world, and now he was helping us hold the world in this sunrise, against the forces of greed and disruptive reaction. He, more than any other, had helped establish the International Court of Justice as the balance-wheel of the new order; and while the western nations bickered at

A colorful drama of our fight to win the peace after the war.

by Gordon Keyne



"You have a poor opinion of us, Madame Ley," said Sir Abdul.

the Vienna Conference, it was the firm hand of Kessiloy that held the passions of the Orient in check at the Asiatic Congress in New Dehli.

He turned to me, his broad, unlovely but powerful features thoughtful.

"D'ye know, Hammond, Russia has been asking me this same question in reverse. Will the world turn on the Soviets, blood-drained by their struggle with Germany? Can we trust your western peoples not to cut the throat of communism, now the war is won?"

It startled me; I had never thought of it like this. What was the answer—the conscience of the world? Bosh! Idealists though we were, we were also practical men, deadly practical; backing us were practical brains all over the earth, aiming at lasting peace and justice and liberty for all peoples.

Of course the answer was the International Court of Justice—that super-League of Nations devised by the noblest minds extant, and every day coming into firmer world-control It answered most problems, even those of colonies and mandates, since it knew neither bias nor politics; like our own Supreme Court at home, it was above suspicion. When I said as much, Kessiloy nodded and smiled.

"We'll see at Bagdad, Hammond." He jerked a thumb at the sleeping Sir Abdul. "It'll be put to the test there—his business."

I did not know what he meant. So far as I knew, our Bagdad business lay with Madame Ley the mysterious, but perhaps Sir Abdul had something else afoot. For a scientist, the greatest produced by India, he had some queer irons in the fire. However, at Cairo we had settled the Pan-Islam troubles and I was growing confident that we could handle anything that might arise to threaten the Asiatic Congress.

IT was still early morning when our plane came to earth at the magnificent Hinaidi field, one of the great natural airports of the world; a good thing too, for by nine o'clock the desert heat of Mesopotamia is insufferable.

Although Kessiloy was nominally incognito, his identity was known to the powers that were; a snow-white Rolls-Royce awaited us and whirled us into Bagdad. At the Residency, we shook hands with Sir Henry Lane (whose actual powers were greater than those of the young king) and sat down to a scrumptious breakfast in the marvelous garden with its plane trees and English lawn, overlooking the Tigris and the passing river traffic.

"Bagdad is at your service, gentlemen," said the tight-lipped Resident. "How can I serve you? Perhaps," he added with a shrewd twinkle, "by effacing myself?"

"No, no," said Kessiloy. "We have no secrets from you, sir." He looked in dismay at a tray between himself and Sir Abdul heaped with cables and radiograms. "This seems like an enormous bit of work facing us, Sir Abdul!"

"We'd best attend to it, then," the latter said. "That is, after breakfast. Affairs of the Asiatic Congress, I fear, must come second to those of the stomach."

I caught a glance from him, which I understood.

"Being free," I said cheerfully, "I'll go for a walk and enjoy myself. Perhaps you can supply me with a guide, Sir Henry?"

He could and did. Twenty minutes later I was off afoot, with a slim young Arab who wore the blue forage cap affected by so many natives, and who spoke perfect English. The sentries saluted smartly as we left—me, a little man who limped along with a stick! It was something of a sensation to me, who am not used to respect at first sight.

In my pocket was the wire we had received at Cairo, the unsigned wire we guessed had been sent by Madame Ley: "IF OFFER STILL OPEN, LOOK UP MAHMUD THE SCRIBE BY THE COFFEE-HOUSE OF THE BARBERS AT THE KHOTA BRIDGE." Thought of that message made my heart beat faster. If this woman could be detached from the service of Andrew Lessing, if she could be brought to our help rather than that of the unscrupulous world-gang now striving to defeat the aims of the Coalition of the Four Freedoms—what a stroke it would be! For she must know them all, and their schemes; those black-hearted men seeking to throw the peoples of earth back into war and selfish grabbing!

That she served them under some compulsion, we already knew. That her abilities could be of inestimable value to us and the Freedoms Coalition, as our backers were known, we also were well aware. But would she come over? Could she?

I directed my guide to the Khota Bridge, that artery of traffic leading to

the west bank of the Tigris. We went by way of the bazaars, but these did not interest me; I was not seeking romance and color. There was plenty of that in the street as we approached the bridge—donkeys piled high with loads of firewood, camels lurching along heading westward to Damascus and way points, and the scribes who sat against the walls in the shade, letter-writers with their little tables and ink cups and seals. They were both Arab and European in garb.

Here too were coffee-houses with high benches, where old men sat puffing at big water-pipes with a chunk of glowing charcoal atop the central tobacco, between sips at tiny coffee-cups.

"Find Mahmud the Scribe," I told my guide, "at the coffee-house of the Barbers; then you can leave me."

He gave me one astonished glance, assented, and turned in at a coffee-house just ahead. In the shade beside the door appeared a turbaned old man of bronze with an enormous white beard beautifully brushed, a little table before him bearing golden seals, and ink and brushes and strips of paper. This, it appeared, was Mahmud; he saluted me, gazing up with rheumy eyes. I handed a coin to my guide, who obediently disappeared; then I sat down cross-legged before the old scribe.

"Do you speak any French or English?" I asked.

He blinked at me. *"Bismillah!"* he croaked, and replied in fluent English. "Tell Sir Abdul Mohand that his servant Syed Amir watches; that Patna Rajah gathers with the jackals tomorrow night; and that Vera Ley will be in the bazaar of Al Hamadani the carpet merchant at four this afternoon. Upon these three things hangs the will of Allah; go and bear witness, little man; time waits not on limpers."

THIS cool impudence nettled me. I accepted my dismissal, but left a barbed shaft.

"And," I said, as I rose, "age that mocks at infirmity betrays second childhood; your gray beard bespeaks a wisdom that lacks in your tongue."

Not bad, I thought, for a come-back in Oriental style. It consoled me for having come a long way on a little errand of thirty seconds, as it seemed. When I got back to the Residency, I changed my mind.

My friends were at work in a room with two deft secretaries, who were sent away. My report made Kessiloy blink and lick his chops. Sir Abdul's brown features were impassive.

"Ha!" exclaimed the big Russian. "She wants us to meet her—good; and the Rajah of Patna, that accursed trouble-maker of the Asiatic Congress, here! Stirring up new evil, eh? In touch with Lessing, no doubt. Who is Syed Amir?"

"My man," said Sir Abdul laconically. "The best spy in all Asia."

"Who's this Rajah?" I demanded.

"He's one reason for our presence here," Kessiloy explained. "A deposed ruler of an Indian state, enormously wealthy—and a bit of a communist. He's a delegate to the Congress from Afghanistan. The Chinese Communist party is behind them; so are Siberian and Indian elements."

"And you, who represent the Soviets, can't squash him?" I asked in surprise. Kessiloy grinned, and waved his hand at Sir Abdul.

"Oh, he's not my problem! Abdul, what are we going to do with your friend?"

"Nothing." Sir Abdul blinked at us sleepily.

"But he's threatening to disrupt the Congress! If it were not for him, we'd be forging ahead at New Delhi. He has brought together all the old communist radicals and a lot of new ones. He trades on the name of communism for selfish purposes—his communism is really anarchy! It's dangerous to our aims, to Russia, to the world!"

Gradually becoming earnest, Kessiloy turned on the steam.

"The Soviets have tempered their old flaming radicalism; the rest of the world has largely adopted the best elements in communistic beliefs, and we've met halfway," he went on. "We're working together, trying to establish the Four Freedoms. This damned rogue is aiming at sheer anarchy! If he ties up with this American traitor Lessing, heaven help us all! You take it too lightly, Abdul."

Sir Abdul nodded. "There must always be troubles," he said, "because the ideas of man are not those of God. His ideas can be approached but not met; the most to be expected is that man will each time come a little closer to the true ideal. Such an ideal is the International Court of Justice, as is proved by the fact that furious blackguards like Lessing and Patna Rajah are going to every length to destroy it."

A great scientist is, more commonly than one would suppose, a mystic; but at bottom Sir Abdul had a sound practical stratum. His eyes twinkled.

"I take nothing lightly that threatens our cause of peace and liberty," he continued. "But I prefer to wait until we confer with Vera Ley. Tell Hammond what information has just reached you, Kessiloy."

Certain facts about this amazing woman were well known. She was the widow of Voldimar Ley, the Soviet field-marshal presumably killed during the great Nazi crack-up in the Caucasus. Just how and why she was forced to serve that devil Lessing had remained a mystery to us all, since it was obviously against her will.

"I've been working on this for some time," said Kessiloy to me, tapping the pile of cables and messages he had been answering, "and here, providentially, we have reports from some of our agents in the field. One confirms the rumor that Marshal Ley is still alive. Another says that Ley was recently seen in a border town north of India. And a third—but here, here, look for yourself, Hammond! A photograph not a month old!"

HE seized a tiny snapshot, picked up an enlarging glass, and shoved them at me. The picture showed a man looking out from behind the bars of a cell; he was a bearded but very handsome man, and he wore chains. I looked at Kessiloy and he nodded eagerly.

"Yes. I knew him well. It's Ley, right enough! In Yezdikand, among the Himalayan foothills to the north."

"A prisoner?" I said. "Then you can go to work at once!"

Kessiloy, a troubled look in his eye, shook his head regretfully.

"No. That district is bound to the Soviets; but the authority of Moscow is just now non-existent there. It's practically in the heart of this cursed radical movement. Oh, we could move in troops and planes, yes! We could start another war, yes. But that's the very thing we don't want! Patna Rajah is the dominant influence there. Once we start bombing, every anarchist element in Asia would flame into revolt; besides, such a move would put me on the spot at once. I'm working for peace; Russia stands for peace. You see the dilemma? The Asiatic Congress would be split wide open."

He went on to make the thing clear, and proved his point. Nothing would better suit the anarchic elements headed by Patna Rajah, which extended throughout Asia, than repression by brute force. The whole purpose and campaign of the Coalition of the Four Freedoms would in that case be denied by its own action. The International Court might act, but as yet it was not established in the Orient. War and ruin, aided by the reactionaries of the world whom Lessing represented, would result.

"If that devil Lessing is here," I exclaimed, "he should be grabbed! He's an outlaw; he can be seized at any time and brought to trial for past misdeeds. Once rid of him, we'd be rid of all this turmoil and peril."

Sir Abdul chuckled. "He's an American—therefore, my dear Hammond, a man of resource and infernal cleverness, backed by no end of influence and wealth. We've tried to catch him and have failed; the International Court has driven him out of the Western World, has made him a fugitive, but has failed to arrest him.

And he is still very powerful. Once he joins hands with Patna Rajah, we have acute trouble ahead."

"Then what do you suggest?" I demanded.

"There's always luck in leisure," said he. "I suggest that you and I talk with Madame Ley this afternoon, while Kessiloy does honest work."

Kessiloy gave him a sharp look. "What kind of work?"

"Statesmanship, my Russian friend! We're away from New Delhi. Patna Rajah and others are away. The Asiatic Congress is in adjournment for two weeks. But you are still president of that Congress! Get busy with wires, with radiophones, with everything. Summon an urgent special meeting of the Congress for tomorrow evening. Address it yourself from here, by radiophone. Our friends will assure a quorum being present. Pass the measure adopting the International Court of Justice, introducing a clause to bring the Court into effect at once. The opposition will be caught by surprise; it will be a fact accomplished."

"There will be objections," said Kessiloy, frowning. "I do not know if it is legal—"

Sir Abdul waved his hand blandly. "Let tomorrow take care of its own worries. Place each detail carefully, then move at speed. Get off a plane today for New Delhi, bearing your proxy and mine. You see?"

"I see you're a genius, a wise man!" exclaimed the Russian, kindling.

"That is because I began life by being a fool, like most men. The gods helped me to attain wisdom, which came from watching those who had none."

Nobody would have thought this bland, docile Hindu was a man of sharp action as well as a scientist.

THAT afternoon, when the day's heat was overpast, he and I strolled into the bazaars, following my guide of the morning. We had received good news from the Vienna Conference; the Netherlands Commonwealth of former colonies had just been approved by the International Court and by the countries concerned, and would begin to function in thirty days: Another forward step toward liberty and justice. And now, if the Asiatic Congress adopted the program of the Coalition of the Four Freedoms, and sanctioned the International Court of Justice, the future was assured and our work was done.

Sweet is optimism—and dangerous as the devil. . . .

We plunged into the bazaars near the Mosque of Merdjan, passed the grain market and came into those long galleries parallel with the river that huddle half underground in cramped, crooked, appalling quarters where the goldsmiths work. Sir Abdul made a few purchases for his womenfolk, then we sought the carpet bazaars on the upper level, and prompt to the hour stepped into the establishment of Al Hamadani, a sleek Persian who greeted us with elaborate ceremony.

The guide was dismissed. Except for a man who displayed rugs, we were alone with the Persian. He bowed us into a little niche at the back of his shop, just large enough to hold a bench and a tiny table. Coffee was on the table; and cross-legged on a rug sat Vera Ley.

She smiled, shook hands, and motioned us to the bench.

"I am glad to see you," she said. "Where is Norman Shane?"

"Tell her," said Sir Abdul, as I hesitated. "We've no time for evasion."

"Ill in Egypt," I said. "I'm representing him. Sir Abdul and Kessiloy are with me."

Her face changed; despair came into her eyes, and she sat as though stricken, looking like some dead thing. In repose, she was not beautiful. Animated, she emanated a flashing radiance, an amazing magnetism, a suggestion of power and tenderness.

"So—everything is lost." Her words startled me. That melodic voice, so vibrantly musical in its overtones and singular frequencies, rang harsh and cracked and dissonant. "I risked much to come here. Without Shane there is no hope."

"Any man can be replaced," I began.

She gave me a look. "Not by you."

I felt myself flushing; the words were true. Lord knows I could not replace Norman Shane. But now Sir Abdul Mohand took over, suavely:

"You have a poor opinion of us, Madame Ley. First, look at this."

He handed her the tiny snapshot showing Voldimar Ley behind bars. She caught her breath, color leaped into her cheeks, a blaze lifted in her eyes. Sir Abdul went on smoothly; his voice had a hypnotic quality in its quiet flow. It was compelling.

"We know, dear lady, that your husband is alive and where he is. We know that you are compelled, against your will, to serve these human plague-bacteria who hope to restore the old era of war and crime and greed. Your heart and hopes are with us; but you are forced to lend your influence and ability and genius to the service of evil. Why?"

He paused. She was looking at him, lips parted, eyes alight.

"Because," his voice flowed on quietly, "the husband you love is hidden away and in the power of these men who disgrace the name of man. For his sake you serve them—to save him from torture and death, perhaps. Eh?"

"Yes," she breathed. The word was like a rose-petal.

"Patna Rajah is here, Lessing is here," went on Sir Abdul, "in this city of the Caliphs. No doubt others are meeting with them tomorrow night. Madame, abandon them; join us."

FRIGHT showed in her face. "No!" she exclaimed. "No! If Norman Shane were here, as I hoped, it might be possible. But now—no, no!"

"You are thinking of the man you love." Sir Abdul touched the snapshot. "But think of the world, of the cause we serve! Madame, you are magnificent; Norman Shane once said you were an angel incarnate. But Satan, remember, also was once an angel; a metaphysical truth the Jews inherited from Babylon. And Judas, too, was once one of God's elect."

"I don't care!" she broke out. "No, no! Let the whole world perish—there's only one man who matters to me and—he matters above all! I don't care what happens!"

"But we do," said Sir Abdul gently. "Norman Shane has a plan for you; we are putting it into effect. Part of our new economic program embraces work and education among the peoples who used to be called inferior races—the teeming millions of India, the millions in Java and China brought into subjection by Japan's opium and morphia, the Negroes of Africa—those who are our brethren. It is planned to reach them by work among women, by the preaching of love and service and brotherhood, by coördinating their independence and culture. Here is an upbuilding, a constructive work, such as you could do splendidly. Shane planned it."

His words wakened her; she was transfigured by force of the vision he brought her. He continued:

"This will be your work and that of Voldimar Ley, your husband. We guarantee his safety and freedom."

"You cannot." A sigh escaped her, the light died out of her face. "Oh, if you could, if you could! But you cannot. No, it is useless, useless! You little dream what devils they are. You could not even seize them here; they have airplanes, hidden ways of evasion—no, no, no!"

She rose and brushed past us and was gone with a rush, as though desperately tearing herself away from an overpowering temptation. Sir Abdul looked at me and nodded.

"We need that woman, Hammond; we must have her. Win her over at any cost, Shane said!"

"We've failed," I said bitterly. He only smiled.

"No. We've won. Now I must go and talk with my man Syed Amir, the scribe whom you first contacted. The next move is yours to make. Tomorrow, you and I and Kessiloy will have work on hand. Remember, she said truly that these devils are beyond our

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

A small doorway admitted us. Our guide halted and spoke softly to Sir Abdul.

grasp; they have neglected no detail of safety. No doubt every precaution is taken—against what they know. But us three they do not know or expect. Therefore we, and we alone, may be able to act."

He bewildered me. "We can't guarantee Voldimar Ley's security," I said. "Kessiloy admitted it. We can't even reach him or free him. He'd be murdered."

"In which case, his wife would join us and exact vengeance. But we don't want that, except as a last resort. We know he's in Yezdikand, and we're unable to reach him, eh?"

"Precisely."

"Where's the closest concentration of the International Court?" he asked.

"In Bombay," I said, "awaiting the decision of the Asiatic Congress."

"That decision will be made tomorrow night. Who's in charge of Bombay?"

"General Blaize Hunter, the Australian. He's to assume supreme command in India, once the International Court takes over control there."

"Reach him. You are Shane's assistant, you've been given all his powers. Reach Hunter. Phone him. Have him raise a hundred planes, five hundred, a thousand! Surround Yezdikand with a circle of planes. Cut off every communication by wire or phone, jam every wireless; isolate that city in the hills completely. Can it be done by tomorrow night?"

I reflected; it was a big order. On the other hand, Shane's powers were unlimited, and so we had the entire authority of the International Court of Justice to work with.

"Can do," I said, "and I'd better get busy doing it. Anything else?"

"Nothing except prayers to the gods, and what brains we can furnish."

I started back to the Residency, feeling none too jubilant. We had lost out completely with Vera Ley, and I was not at all confident of the success of Sir Abdul's scheme.

When I found Kessiloy, I knew something was wrong; his big nostrils were flaring and his bright eyes held savage glints. He said nothing until I had reported our interview and what Abdul had said; then he nodded.

"Right; a gamble worth while taking. Now, can you chaps do without me?"

"No," I said in surprise. "Why should we?"

"To put this thing across with the Congress, I must be there in person. I can get a plane here, if you'll use your influence with the Air Control, that'll land me in New Delhi tomorrow afternoon. I must leave in half an hour. My presence is imperative if our special meeting is to be held and our program shoved through."

"All right," I said, though my heart sank a trifle. His force and blazing energy would be sadly missed. "Go ahead. I'll reach the Air Control at once."

My work began by radiophone, cable and wireless, and kept on hour after hour. I had a hurried dinner with the Resident. Kessiloy was gone, winging eastward. General Hunter proved obdurate at first, until I convinced him of my authority, then he went all out doing what was wanted. We had to coördinate with the Air Control headquarters in London and

Just as Vera Ley gripped my hands, Lessing broke clear; a pistol lifted in his hand.

what with one thing and another it was ten o'clock that night before I drew a free breath.

And Sir Abdul had not shown up.

There was a riot on the west bank that night, with a good deal of shooting. Sir Henry was just back from some function, and we were enjoying a cigarette and a drink together when the hubbub broke out. After a bit word was brought that three men covered with blood asked for admittance, claiming to be my servants. Sir Henry lifted an eyebrow at me.

"Suppose we have a look at them," he said, to my shake of the head. "Bring them in."

THEY were escorted in, all three ragged and filthy. But one was the gray-bearded Syed Amir, or Mahmud the Scribe; another I did not know. Between them they supported a figure caked with dust and blood. It was Sir Abdul, barely able to stand.

We got him into bed. The other two vanished completely. Sir Abdul, aside from a few bruises, had nothing the matter with him, and chuckled at our mystified questions.

"It is nothing," he said to Sir Henry, and tipped me a wink. "A riot between Hindus and Moslems, in which I mixed. Give me, I beg of you, a good night's sleep, no more."

Sir Henry, having business in connection with the riot, departed, whereat Sir Abdul motioned me to sit on the bed beside him.

"I have learned a lesson, Hammond," he said, "in unpreparedness. Two of my best men killed—ha! They think I'm dead also. Syed Amir got me away. Not a word to Sir Henry, now! He must know nothing about my having men of my own here, or what we're doing. But I've learned everything—or rather Syed Amir has. Go to sleep, Hammond, and dream pleasantly, for tomorrow night we have work to do."

"What kind of work?" I demanded.

"Rescuing a lady in distress. By Siva! If I could throw off thirty years and enjoy romance again—well, well, I don't pretend to like it, but it must be done. What have you accomplished about Yezdikand? Where's Kessiloy?"

I told him. He smiled, turned over and went to sleep without another word of explanation to me. Dream pleasantly? I could scarcely sleep at

all, for worry and fret! I was almost tempted to think I had fallen into the company of madmen. There was something in the air of Bagdad that inspired madness, I had heard—a queer sort of ecstatic madness. I could well credit it.

Next morning I found that Sir Henry had accompanied the young king out into the desert to a tribal council of some kind. When I looked in on Sir Abdul, he was gone, no one knew where. He came back for tiffin, accompanied by a man weighed down with packages, and rubbed his hands gleefully as we ate in the garden.

"Once a chemist, Hammond, always a chemist!" said he. "Last night? Oh, never mind; think of tonight, and Madame Ley! The program? Not to be breathed, my friend. What news?"

"All's set for the Yezdikand affair," I told him. "None from Kessiloy?"

I was angry, and no wonder, at his childish delight in mystery. I slept that afternoon, leaving Sir Abdul to his own devices; which was just as well. I wakened, bathed and shaved, and was just dressed when he came into my room and put on my dresser half a dozen tiny vials of very thin black glass that I could have crushed between my fingers. They were stoppered with wax.

"Don't touch these till we leave; then stow them carefully in your pockets," said he. "And whatever you do, don't break one!"

"Will you condescend to enlighten me about the evening?" I asked.

"Not yet, my friend. I await a message which will arrive at six o'clock. An hour after sunset, Bagdad is abed and on the road to slumber. Then comes our time to go a pilgrimage to the tomb of Sidi Halil, where seats are reserved for us. A modern Arabian Night, truly!"

"If you're pretending to be dead, why did you go out today?"

His dark eyes twinkled. "Because I changed my intentions. Trust me! All goes well."

Being something of an amateur at direct action, Sir Abdul was enjoying himself and my mystification. So, concluding to play the part of wisdom and trust him, I said no more.

At six o'clock, the Resident had not returned. Sir Abdul and I were sitting at supper when a note was brought to him. He read it and chuckled.

"That rascal Syed Amir is a poet. 'The stars,' he says, 'have not changed from their courses.' In other words, all goes as foreseen, and in half an hour we take the north road, afoot, to seek adventure. Let me tell you about the tomb of this Halil, who died nine hundred years ago; these Muslim used to think him a saint, but of late centuries they have forgotten him."

He talked on. The tomb was one of the old half-ruined shrines such as abound in this region, and was located on what was now a private estate several miles upriver. It was used as a sort of guest-house by the owner, an enormously wealthy and influential native leader of the "outs."

"Patna Rajah is visiting him," said Sir Abdul complacently. "So, I think, is Lessing. So are other gentlemen from afar. Two are delegates to the Congress at New Delhi. It will be a most interesting meeting to witness."

"We're going there?" I demanded. "But that's impossible! Any such meeting will be carefully guarded—"

"Precisely," he broke in. "Syed Amir has been at work here for the past six months. Two of his best men are employed as guards on this estate. I have a dozen men in all here, just as I have other men in other cities. The Asiatic Congress, my friend, conducts its affairs in the manner of Asia —or has until now. Tonight I think we'll have Patna Rajah and Lessing under lock and key. Our host the Resident, of course, is quite ignorant of my activities."

IN the quick desert gloaming, we left the Residency. I limped along beside Sir Abdul, and we headed out of the city by the great New Street that cuts the northern Arab quarters asunder like a sword. Presently I saw a figure swinging along close to us; this was Syed Amir, big beard and all. He joined us and led us to a landing on the Tigris. Here in the starlight was waiting a boat with a man in it. Syed Amir joined this man at the oars, we got in, and we were off—all without a word spoken.

It was eerie. We headed northward, past the olive groves and the spectral date palms. The rowing was done in absolute silence, but we made headway. I had brought Sir Abdul's little black vials along, carefully wrapped in handkerchiefs. He sat beside me and only spoke once,—as though to warn me,—and this was a murmur under his breath.

"The important thing is to learn what the enemy is up to, my friend. That is why we move indirectly toward a most direct end."

Like a leaf floating on the stream we came into the river-bank. All was darkness to my eyes, but here were steps, and here was a man in a dark burnouse awaiting us. I followed Sir Abdul to the stone steps, and the boat drifted out and was gone. Our guide led us through gardens, until something black bulked up against the stars; this was the tomb, whose high and narrow dome was broken but whose part seemed intact.

The Oriental idea of a saint's tomb is a place for relaxation and enjoyment, for gossip and meeting with friends, and perhaps for prayer and worship. This building was of some size, its outer wall enclosing gardens of which we could see nothing. We halted at the entrance. Another man appeared, spoke briefly with Sir Abdul, then with our guide. These two men were obviously the two spies planted among the guards; both were heavily armed.

With the new guide, we crossed a strip of scented gardens and reached the building, in which lights appeared here and there; additions to right and left had been built on. A small doorway admitted us into obscurity, but light grew ahead, faintly. Our guide halted and spoke again with Sir Abdul and each of us was given a dark burnouse of camel-hair—not the sort of camel-hair sold on Fifth Avenue, but the genuine article, smelly and rough as steel wool.

"Be ready to pull up the hood of the garment," said Sir Abdul to me, "as soon as things happen; it will conceal the face and merge us into the background. It's remarkable about these sun-baked bricks—they absorb sound. A building constructed of them is almost sound-proof. I must write a monograph on the subject, one day. Will you kindly give this man four of those little glass vials? Retain two; one for each of us."

I got out four of the black objects, and handed them over. Our guide bowed to us and went away with a slap-slap of sandals. We sat down on a raised platform of adobe bricks, and I began to take in the scene. It was not unlike the amphitheater of a surgery.

Before us was a low little wall, not as high as our heads, which circled the place. In front of us was the circular floor of the tomb, on a slightly lower level so that we could look down at the twenty-foot expanse of tiles. To our right was a niche in the side of the tomb, with a lighted lamp hung in it by chains; under the lamp was a raised slab in the floor—the grave of the holy man himself.

The place was chilly and damp; the warmth of the burnouse felt good to me.

"Syed Amir has informed Madame Ley that we'll be here," said Sir Abdul. "If she betrays us, it will be unfortunate; but I think she will not. I think it best not to talk."

I agreed. It was his show, not mine. He took the two remaining little vials from me and put them on the wall in front of us, and we waited.

My eyes became accustomed to the place. I made out carpets on the floor below, and other lamps hanging on chains. After a time appeared a dim figure with a light; he went from lamp to lamp, lighting them. The place lit up with a soft, brilliant glow. The tiles of walls and floor, often

broken, were in richly warm colors. Cushions and Arab seats of stuffed leather dotted the carpets.

Two natives came in. Against the grave-niche they hung and unrolled a big map of Asia and the western Pacific; then we were alone once more. The wait became interminable; my nerves were jumpy. When the talk and laughter of men suddenly reached us, I was startled.

THEY appeared abruptly, coming in by more than one entrance, with the loud talk and jests of men who had dined well. They were muffled in Arab garb, but of the eight only two seemed to be Arabs; these saluted the grave of the saint, then ignored it. Two others came in, then two more. Some were smoking. I saw Sir Abdul smiling with enjoyment; their words, unintelligible to me, were evidently known to him. The greetings over, they seated themselves; and then came Lessing and Patna Rajah. Eager voices greeted them from the assembled company.

Lessing wore no burnouse; he was in whites, a lean dark man with aquiline features, all ablaze with energy—a human dynamo. But the other! I must have caught my breath at sight of him, for Sir Abdul reached out and gently pressed me back on my seat. Dressed in extravagant Rajput costume, this bronze figure was a fit comrade to Lessing. Jewels blazed on turban and aigrette and fingers. Patna Rajah was erect, handsome in the extreme, white teeth flashing in dark face. Many of the men present knew him; he stood chatting and laughing with them.

Madame Ley entered. She was dressed as I had seen her yesterday, very plainly, in a gown of dark crimson brocade. There was a quick movement to welcome her; some kissed her hand, others shook hands, others merely bowed. I saw that Lessing was watching her keenly.

Patna Rajah went to the map, and silence fell. His voice rang out; one could feel the man in the voice—steely, challenging—a magnificent voice, subtly handled with different emotions; it almost made me understand what he said, as he pointed to various sections of the map. Sir Abdul leaned forward, hood pulled up around his face as was mine.

During this harangue, I saw Madame Ley look up and circle the place with her gaze. For a bare instant, her eyes were turned toward us, and she made a little gesture—to show that she knew we were there. Sir Abdul exhaled a deep breath; he had been worried.

Tongues broke out in vociferous questions, which Patna Rajah answered; abruptly, Lessing stood up. He broke into English speech, which most of those present seemed to comprehend; he was no orator like the Rajput, but vented blunt, savage words.

"Patna Rajah has told you of the movement in this part of the world. I'm from the other part, from America. We have the best brains there behind us, and in South America also, with the backing of money and power. We must destroy this International Court of Justice, as it's called, this tyranny of the world! Destroy it by every means; by war, by racial struggle, by private sabotage, by unceasing activity! Otherwise we'll become mere slaves, doomed to ruthless exploitation, regimented by an unscrupulous fascism."

Such was his keynote, twisting all facts as radical actionists have ever twisted them, turning the Four Freedoms into a symbol of grinding oppression in the good old long-forgotten style of the Bolshevists of fifty years ago. Wild applause greeted him.

He spoke of the Soviets as the enemy of humanity; the Russians, said he, were traitors to the great cause. Kessiloy would have appreciated the irony of this; the Soviets, swinging from the extreme of communism to the mean of balanced democracy, thus termed foes of progress!

"We have centers of action and we have arms," Lessing went on. "In Yezdikand, in China, in India and elsewhere, we have radical groups at work. In South America we are growing fast. In the United States, we have already promoted extensive racial conflict, and bitter hatred between returned soldiers and labor. In Canada, social conflict is proceeding with great rapidity."

MUCH of this, as regarded the troubles at home, was only too true. But I stole a glance at Sir Abdul and he was beaming; to get this first-hand information delighted him. Lessing proceeded in his rabble-rousing style and kept his auditors on their toes, so to speak. He swung around suddenly and pointed out Madame Ley, who was seated at the rear of the group and fairly close to us.

"There is our angel of the revolution!" he cried. "She who has already done so much for our cause, and will do so much more! Tomorrow she goes to New Delhi, to spread our doctrine among other delegates to the Asiatic Congress. Such a whirlwind of dust and blood will result as India never saw, even in the latter days of the war! Vera Ley, speak to our friends here—tell them of the hour when slavery shall end, when man shall once more be entitled to the fruits of his own labor, when his shackles forever shall fall away! Speak to them!"

Madame Ley stood up; the faces of the men swung around to look at her. The music of her voice lifted in its rich, haunting melody; but it was not the sort of music Lessing had anticipated. As she spoke, I felt a sense of abrupt shock, and found it echoed in the faces of each one turned to watch her.

"Yes, my friends, let me speak to you," she said. "Let me tell you the truth, the exact truth! You have heard Patna Rajah and Andrew Lessing—the one a pariah, outcast by his own people, the other a creature of selfish greed who fattens by promoting strife. Like all evil beings, they fear and hate the light. They fight against the idealism and the noble aims that would halt their cruel purpose. They hope to involve the world once more in war and blood and conflict. I am finished with them and with you forever—you who are their dupes and pawns—"

LESSING, who had listened to her words with stupefied incredulity, burst into one wild yell of almost maniacal ferocity. Others joined in. Through the hubbub and storm of voices and whirl of figures in commotion, Vera Ley turned, came to us.

"Quick, Hammond! Help her over the wall!" came Sir Abdul's voice.

I obeyed, leaning forward, putting out my hands to her. Startled yells had arisen as we were seen. Just as Vera Ley gripped my hands and I pulled her up, Lessing broke clear of Patna Rajah, who had caught hold of him. A pistol lifted in his hand; I heard the muffled thunder of shots reverberating from the dome above. The whole place was gripped by a tornado of yelling fury—

She came over, and we crouched behind the wall. Sir Abdul was standing; his arm moved. He threw out the two little black vials. There was a splitting, rending crash, a burst of flame; the yells became screams of panic. Sir Abdul was tugging and pulling at my arm.

"Come along! Come quickly!" he cried.

I helped Vera Ley up. Somehow we got into the little passage and the little doorway, and stopped there with the cool night air before us. In the main entrance, a guard was standing, throwing something into the main chamber—throwing the little black vials I had given him. Vera Ley clung to me. Sir Abdul stood laughing, enjoying himself hugely.

"One explosive, the others a harmless but choking gas!" said he. "By the time the police reach here, if they do, my men will have struck. We'll have the whole lot of them, Hammond—the filthy dogs!"

He turned to Madame Ley. "Bravely spoken, Madame, bravely done!

In return, my promise shall be fulfilled. Your husband—"

She swayed abruptly. "I'm afraid—you won't get Lessing—and Patna Rajah," came her voice. "I must tell you—tell you—"

If she had told us, at this instant, their plan of escape, we must have succeeded in stopping and seizing those agents of evil. Instead, she gasped and collapsed. It was a moment or two before we discovered the truth—one of Lessing's bullets had done its work, striking her under the shoulder.

"To the boats, Hammond!" cried Sir Abdul, no longer placid but in a frenzy of activity. "To the Maude Bridge and the hospital—quickly! I can carry her. Have a care, now—"

We lost not a moment. Boats were waiting at the stone steps, and men. We put her into one and rowers fell to work, while Sir Abdul examined and stanched her wound. Behind us all the tumult fell away into silence.

Not for nothing was Sir Abdul one of the world's greatest surgeons. At the hospital I waited in an outer room. Presently a man came in, pawing his gray beard; it was Syed Amir, who saluted me and stood in silence.

I got to a telephone and called the Residency. Sir Henry came to the phone; I said we would return soon and asked if there were any messages. Yes, there was a radiogram from New Delhi. He read it to me. I thanked him and rang off, as Sir Abdul came in the room.

"She will live," he said, "but she must remain here until she can get about; she is out of the game, and at a cheap price, too! Well, Syed?"

SYED AMIR gave brief report: Choked and strangled and helpless, the whole crowd had been gathered in and arrested, and were being turned over to the police now. The whole crowd—with the exception of Patna Rajah and Lessing. Those two archdevils had seemingly melted into thin air. They had disappeared.

A sigh escaped Sir Abdul. "So we lose!" he said.

"Not entirely," I told him. "The Asiatic Congress met tonight and adopted the full program of the Four Freedoms, including the International Court of Justice. In three days Kessiloy meets us at Karachi."

Sir Abdul looked at me. His face lit up; he gripped my hand.

"Magnificent!" he exclaimed. "Magnificent! And now there remains—Yezdikand! That's why he meets us at Karachi. The three of us—to Yezdikand, and Voldimar Ley, before they murder him in his cell! We must manage it—for her sake!"

But three days was a long time.

The concluding story in this fine series will appear in the forthcoming June issue.

The Watchdog

Another good one by the man who wrote "The Mystery of John Swift."

by WILLIAM BRANDON

WE climbed to the top of the hill and looked over, and saw a black cow in full bloom staring at us from a clump of young birch.

Undavid bowed his head so his white hair fell over his face, and he sniffed like an eager hound and prodded his cane around him in the air.

"What's there?" he asked. "What are you looking at?"

"Nothing but a black cow," Ilya said. She put one arm around the old man's waist and the other arm around me. She was cool and lovely and golden in the sun. She rested her body against me. We stood with the wind in our faces, resting, and the black cow went back to eating grass. "She is with calf," Ilya said. "She is going to be a mother soon."

"Who?" Undavid asked. "Who is?"

"The black cow." Ilya laughed teasingly. "Who did you think I meant, Uncle Undavid?"

"Well, you're a young married woman. I hope you'll be a mother sometime. You're a good sound girl."

Ilya closed her lashes over her blue eyes and laughed, and her hand was close and secure in mine. The sun blazed hot; the white clouds gleamed like piles of pearls. I bent and kissed her. Undavid was blind—he couldn't see. What if he could? Ilya was my wife. But it was too new to take for granted. It was too new to be believable. I couldn't be that lucky. But she was beside me, her touch, her kiss, the brush of her wind-tangled hair telling me she was mine. Her voice whispered in my ear, and I couldn't hear the words, but it didn't matter.

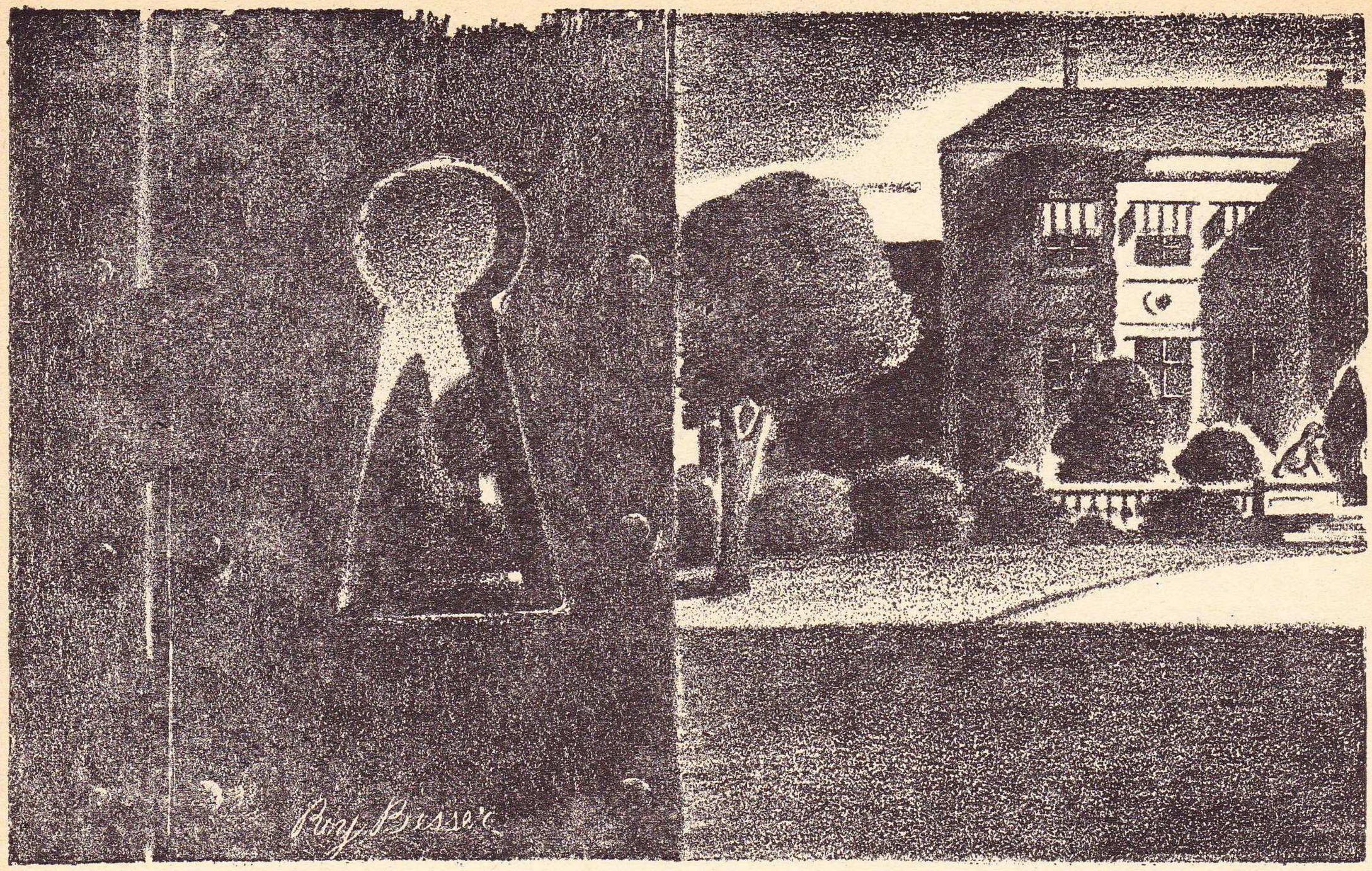
Undavid said: "I'll go back home alone if you two want me to."

Ilya swung away from me and caught his hand. "No, we came out to find your dog." We walked along the spine of the hill, and Ilya said: "You're an evil old man."

"I was evil a hell of a long time before I was old." Undavid tried to elbow me in the ribs, but he missed me and lost his balance and staggered. He recovered himself, still with a smirk on his weathered old face. "But I will admit I feel eviler every year. I wish I could see you, Ilya. You feel as if you've grown up good looking, all right. Do you look like your mother?"

"Oh, no. Mother was really beautiful."

"Yes. She was. I'd have married her myself if she hadn't taken my brother instead. Still, I'm happy she was kept in the family." He stopped and whistled, long and shrill. The sound curled like a whiplash over the



hills and hollows. "Damn that boy," he muttered, speaking of his dog as he always did, as if the dog were human. "He must be losing his mind. Third time he's run away in a week. For six years you couldn't get him away from my side." He whistled again, and waited vainly for an answer. He was hurt and puzzled; he seemed to take the dog's strange behavior as a personal offense. It was evident how much he thought of the dog and its faithfulness to him, although he tried not to show it.

We went on. We rounded a line of elms and saw Undavid's dog at the foot of the next hill, trotting across the pasture. He was a big Belgian shepherd named Apmuir. Long, ropy muscles rippled under his tawny coat; a clean intelligent head thrust forward, swaying with his gait. His cleverness was uncanny; it wasn't surprising that Undavid thought of him as human. But at the moment he looked all animal, all dog, until we called to him.

Then he changed at once. The vaguely wolflike air of a beast slid from him, and a human expression of guilt took its place. He came trotting to us with a pretense of enthusiasm, exactly in the manner of an acquaintance who has gone out of his way to avoid you, and become artificially effusive when caught in the act.

Ilya bent and petted and scolded him; but Undavid only grunted and snapped the leash he was carrying to Apmuir's collar. The dog headed straight for home, guiding his master. He was panting, his tongue lolling from his open mouth. Occasionally he threw back a sidewise shamefaced glance.

"You silly thing!" Ilya said. "You'd think you were too good for us or something." The dog gave her a peculiar look, and she laughed on a note of surprise and said: "He looks for all the world as if he's frightened, doesn't he?"

"Don't talk about him," Undavid said shortly. "You don't need to rub it in. There's something about the house he doesn't like. That's all."

THE old man wouldn't admit that Apmuir might be running away from him; the dog was only running away from the house. Ilya and I fell back and walked together. Undavid strode along now with confidence, led by his dog. His cane swung from his arm. His head was up. You could not tell he was blind. At the pasture gate Apmuir went up on his hind-legs and dropped the gate-latch with a forepaw and shouldered the gate open for Undavid to go through. By the time the massive gray house came in sight, the old man and the dog were far ahead, trailing their way through the shrubbery about the grounds.

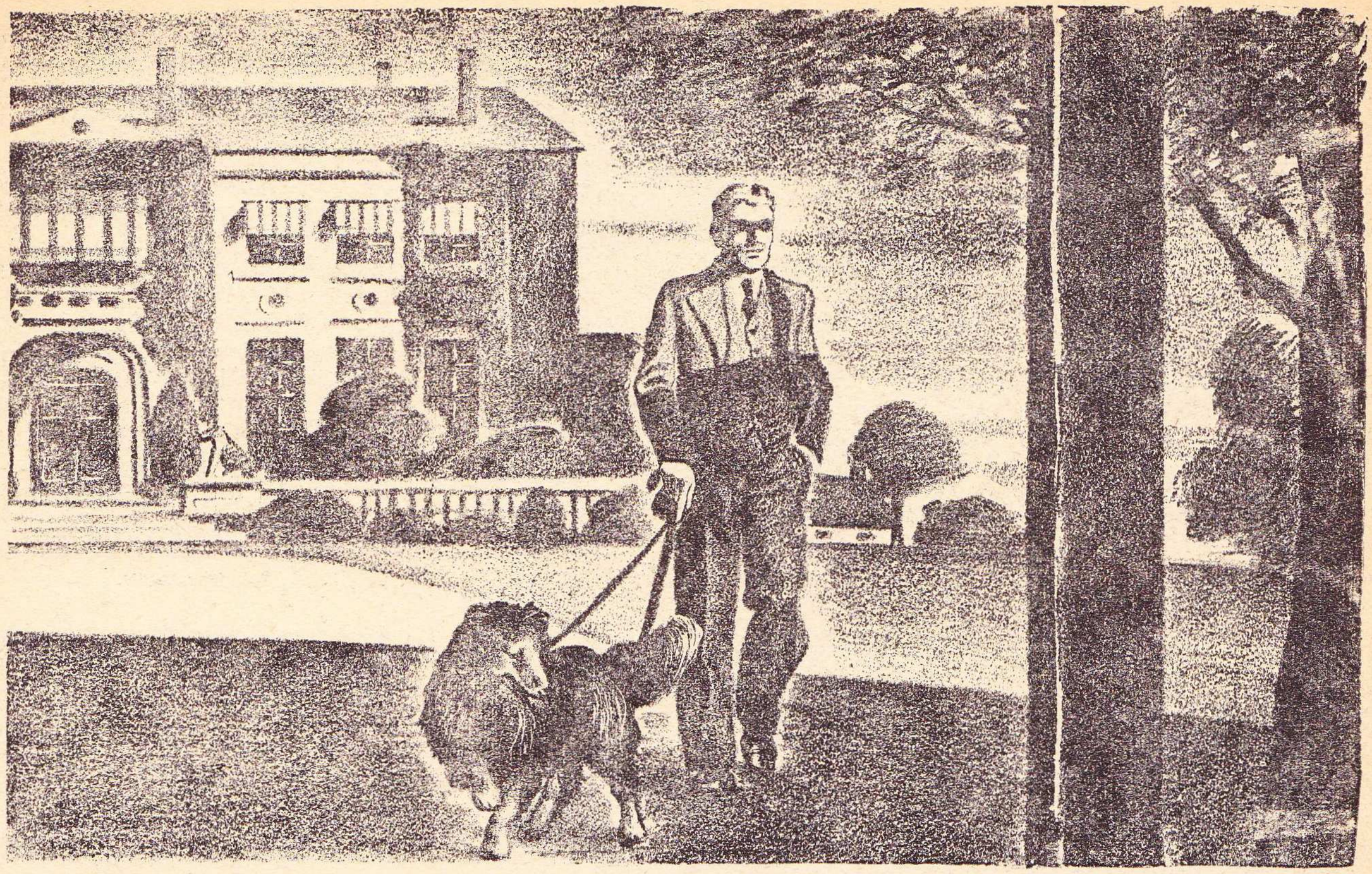
Undavid (we all called him that—Ilya's childhood syncopation of "Uncle David") was a rich man, a millionaire, probably. Ekktarn, his estate, was crusted with gold. You thought of it that way. Next you thought that it was too bad the old man was blind and couldn't see this precise and polished beauty he had bought and paid for. All his family had been wealthy, except Ilya's father, who had spent his life in the diplomatic corps, and had lived on his salary.

It was a wonderful place to spend a honeymoon. We were grateful to the old man for inviting us; and for his part he was grateful to us for coming. He was lonely—lonely in his blindness, lonely in his wealth.

There was a dusty coupé under the *porte-cochère* when we reached the house, and a man and a woman standing talking by the door. Undavid and Apmuir had disappeared inside the house.

The man and woman were middle-aged; the woman wore a starched white dress and had a pile of youthful golden hair on her head; a little too youthful—it looked as if it was dyed. The man was short and fat through the middle, and he was smoking a cigar. They were talking earnestly, and they were holding hands. They were too interested in each other to see us until we walked near them on the gravel of the drive. We could hear the tone of their voices, and they seemed to be arguing; and then we recognized the woman as Miss Bluitt, Undavid's housekeeper, but we had never before seen the little fat man.

WHEN Miss Bluitt saw us, she dropped the fat man's hands and was confused for a moment, and then recovered herself and spoke to us, and the fat man turned and looked at us and glanced at Miss Bluitt and back again at us with a pleased expression, and he took his cigar out of his mouth.



Ilya laughed and said, "Why, Miss Bluitt!" Miss Bluitt's face stiffened, and she was confused again. Ilya squeezed my hand and asked: "Exactly what is going on here?"

The fat man laughed, but it was not funny to Miss Bluitt. You could see her old maid's soul shriveling inside her. Her tongue twisted when she tried to talk.

"This is Mr. Gogand. Mr. Gogand is a real-estate man in the town. Mr. Gogand, may I present Mr. and Mrs. Clark? Mrs. Clark is the Mister's niece." Her face turned red at the awkwardness of her words, but Mr. Gogand only chuckled and bobbed his head, entirely at ease.

"Sure," he said. "I knew who they were. You can't mistake newlyweds. Maybe you two will be in the market for a nice little house some day. You just let me know."

HE waved a salute after us when we went on in the house, and he winked at Miss Bluitt, but she was standing as rigid as a statue.

"Oh, romance!" Ilya said. "Romance comes to Miss Bluitt. I wonder why she should be ashamed of romance? Or maybe she is only ashamed of Mr. Gogand. I wonder why old maids have such a weakness for pool-room characters? Didn't he make you think of a pool-room, Perry?"

"What's wrong with a pool-room?" I said.

She giggled. "I just can't imagine Miss Bluitt holding hands with one."

One wing of the house was ours, and it was like sailing alone on a chartered ocean liner. Servants appeared at the ring of a bell. We had a dining-room of our own. It was very good, but at first I had kept thinking about how a three-room apartment was going to be after six weeks of this. Then after a while I had understood that it would be all right; luxury can get dull in itself, especially if it doesn't belong to you. The three-room flat would be ours. Now the six weeks were nearly up; we would be gone in another two days. We would be home, and we were both beginning to look forward to it.

Undavid telephoned us at seven and asked us if we would have dinner with him, so at eight we went through the house to his wing and found him seated at his table, as distinguished as an ambassador in a dinner jacket and a starched shirt. Apmuir was at his side.

We had cocktails and chutney, and onion *gratiné* for an opening, and we realized then this was to be a state affair, like the captain's dinner on the last night out. We didn't talk much. The food was good, and we were all hungry. Undavid asked us several times to set a date for our next visit, but we didn't have any idea when we would have a chance to come back again. We kept telling him how much we had enjoyed being there, but he seemed to be afraid we hadn't enjoyed it, since we wouldn't name a definite time to return.

There was *vol-au-vent* of shrimps and scallops *marinière* and roast *contre filet* of beef bordelaise, broccoli hollandaise, and lima beans in butter, and Maryland candied sweet potatoes, a romaine salad. The dinner went on for a long, leisurely time, and Undavid was questioning me about my business. Seeing him eat, you would never realize the old man was blind. I thought of the practice behind that accomplishment. The old man had an iron will.

The old man stopped talking abruptly and felt around his chair with his hand. He said sharply, "Apmuir!" and I saw that the dog was gone.

UNDAVID pushed back his chair. His thin, sun-blackened face was angry. "I thought I heard him moving a minute ago." He stood up and sat down again irresolutely.

I got up and went across the room to the French doors and opened them, and went out to the terrace and looked around at the night. I thought I saw something sliding across the lawn, and I called and whistled, but the shape melted into the darkness. I was sure it was Apmuir.

I went back in and heard Ilya saying: "Maybe he's taken a dislike to us," and Undavid didn't answer. A muscle was working in his jaw; the evening had been spoiled for him.

I was awakened some time after midnight by the howling of the dog.

He was a long way off. The howls floated in through the windows like messages sent from a long distance, sent to the house. I had the feeling, as I struggled into wakefulness, that the sound could not be heard in the intervening space, but was transmitted

The beam of light fell upon a form sprawled face down.

only from the dog to us, like radio signals from transmitter to receiver.

Ilya sat up in bed, and I could feel her shivering beside me.

She whispered: "What on earth is that?"

"Apmuir, I think. . . . Listen."

She laughed nervously. "What is he doing—howling at the moon?"

"No moon," I said. Her hand slipped around mine. The dog's howl rose and broke on a bubbling eerie note, and a series of rapid barks followed it.

"What could be the matter with him?" Ilya was still whispering.

I got out of bed and went to the windows. The night was dark. Hazy stars showed dim through holes in the clouds.

The dog's howling stopped. Suddenly. I stood listening for a minute or more, but it did not begin again.

"Come back to bed," Ilya said. "It's cold."

"You're scared," I said; and she giggled and burrowed under the covers.

Someone pounded on our door. I threw on a dressing-gown and called that I was coming, but the knocking persisted, loud and frantic, as if someone was beating against it with both fists.

I switched on a light and opened the door and saw Miss Bluitt, the housekeeper, with her yellow hair in curlers, but otherwise fully starched and dressed. Her eyes were wild and frightened. She didn't seem able to make them focus on me.

I said: "What's the matter?" I grabbed her shoulder and shook her. Ilya appeared at my elbow.

"Come with me," Miss Bluitt said, breath in her voice. "Something's happened to the Mister."

"To Undavid?" Ilya asked. "What do you mean?"

"Come along," Miss Bluitt snapped huskily. She placed a hand over her heart. "Please hurry."

SHE was gone down the hall, and Ilya and I went after her. I noticed Miss Bluitt's well-kept white shoes, swinging back and forth in quick little arcs to her steps. She was going along at a half trot.

We caught up with her. Ilya was beginning to be frightened. She pulled at Miss Bluitt's sleeve and asked again what had happened to Undavid.

"He must have fallen in the stream," Miss Bluitt said. "He must have been out walking."

Ilya cried: "Fallen in the stream? You mean he's—he's—"

Miss Bluitt didn't answer. We left our wing and went outside to the drive and crossed it, and walked on the lawn. Miss Bluitt produced a flashlight, and its yellow circle bobbed along ahead of us.

"I've called the doctor," Miss Bluitt said finally. She was out of breath. "But I don't think—I don't think he can help."

Ilya spoke again, shocked, unable to comprehend, and I gripped her arm and silenced her.

"Wait until we see," I said. I asked Miss Bluitt: "How did you happen to find him?"

"I thought I heard him, calling for help. I went out, and—"

"Did you hear his dog howling?"

"Yes. I thought the dog must have found him. Here, it's just ahead."

The grass was wet with dew; and here, where the lawn sloped down to the brook, the turf was soft and muddy.

"Here," Miss Bluitt said, running ahead a little. I could hear the mud splattering under her steps, and I had the irrelevant thought that her white shoes would need a lot of cleaning.

She stopped at the edge of the brook and we joined her, but we could see nothing more than the rippling water. She played her light up and down the bank.

"I thought—" Her voice dried up, and I heard her breathing deeply

again, making an effort to put herself in order.

"Can't you remember?" Ilya said. "Was it right here?"

Miss Bluitt seemed helpless. I took the flashlight from her and walked downstream, running the beam of light along the banks.

I went a hundred yards or more before I found him—a form sprawled face down on the bank, with his head in the water.

But it was not Undavid. It was a short, fat man in a blue serge suit. His hair, stirring with the motion of the current, was black, not white.

I bent over him and lifted him up and saw that it was Mr. Gogand, Miss Bluitt's friend. There was a great raw wound torn at his neck, and blood was still running from it into the stream, but he was dead.

Miss Bluitt screamed at my shoulder. She pushed me back and tried to lift up the body in her arms, but its weight was too much, and she went down on her knees in the mud, and I caught her and pulled her away.

"Ilya!" I said. "Go back. Go back to the house." Sounds were coming from Miss Bluitt's throat. She scratched at my face. Her strength was insane. "Go back, Ilya," I said. "Don't stay here. Go back and call the police."

I heard her running away through the mud, and then Miss Bluitt quieted and said: "Let me go to him. Please let me."

"He's dead," I told her. "He's been murdered. The police won't want anyone to touch him."

MISS BLUITT shivered with each breath. She whispered:

"It was the dog. You can see it was the dog killed him. I knew, as soon as I saw him. I knew it was the dog. The dog has always watched us. We've seen him watching us, every time we met. He'd run away from the house to follow us, if he could. I knew. I told Freddy. He laughed at me. I knew that dog. He's more than human. He knew what was in our minds. He's been watching us." She caught her breath in a sob and went limp; and when my hold relaxed, she lunged forward and nearly tore free. I held her as gently as I could. She stopped struggling again at once. "It doesn't matter now," she said.

"What did you have in your minds?" I asked. "What was it the dog knew?"

"You know," Miss Bluitt whispered.

I said: "I know you lied to us when you told us Undavid had been drowned in the stream. You hadn't even been outside to see. Your shoes were dry."

"He was supposed to be," she said. "When I heard the dog howling, I thought it was over."

I said: "You two were going to murder him?"

"Murder him!" Miss Bluitt said, anger in her voice. "What has he got to live for? What has he got to keep his money for? We went to him. We asked him to loan us the money. It was only—only fifteen thousand dollars. Freddy could invest it and make a fortune. He—he could have married me then. It was only fifteen thousand dollars. What would that have meant to him? He wouldn't let us have it. He told me Freddy only wanted the money, that he only said he'd marry me for the money. I could have killed him then! What does he know?" She stopped and then said: "You don't need to hold me. I'm all right. . . . Freddy!"

"Why would you murder Undavid? That wouldn't get you the money."

"It was in his will. He was leaving me some money in his will. But he wouldn't give it to me now! What did he know about Freddy? And it would be so easy. Freddy said it would be so easy. Isn't the old man blind? It would have been so easy to make it look like an accident.

"I told Freddy to kill the dog. I told him the dog knew. Dogs can tell. Oh, dogs can tell what's in your mind, without your saying a word. And this dog—I knew he was watching us. He would know, when Freddy intended to do it. I told him, but he only laughed. He said he couldn't kill the dog, because then it wouldn't look like an accident." She began to sob again. "I told him the dog would never let him reach the house. He only laughed."

In the distance, out on the highway, I heard a siren screaming.

ILYA said: "The doctor's just been here. He said not to tell him yet—it might be bad for his heart. So I just said there'd been an accident out on the highway."

She held my hand while I looked in at Undavid's room and spoke to him.

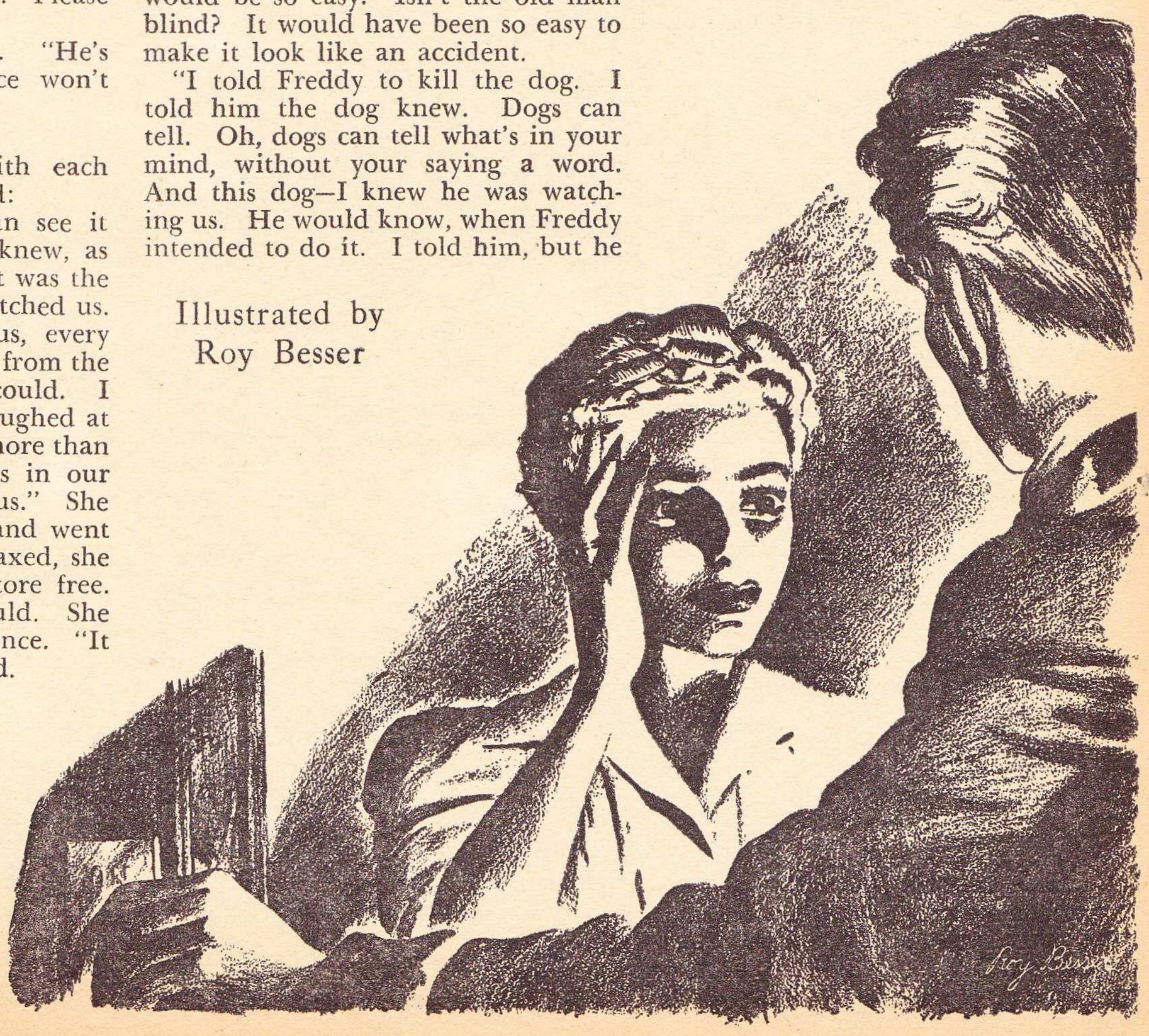
The old man was sitting up in bed, and Apmuir was squatting on the floor beside him. The dog was dripping wet. Undavid rubbed him behind the ears, and the dog shook himself and grinned at me.

"Apmuir just came back," Undavid said. "He heard all that excitement out on the highway, probably, and thought he'd see what was going on. The old fool's all wet; he's been swimming. Fine thing to run away for!"

Apmuir extended his forepaws and slid down on his belly and began to lick his forelegs. Undavid's hand groped for him and couldn't find him.

"He knows I'm sore at him," the old man said. "Doesn't matter if I pet him; he knows it all the same. Funny, the way that boy can read your temper."

Illustrated by
Roy Besser



I switched on a light. Miss Bluitt, the housekeeper, said, "Come with me. Something's happened to the Mister."

QUICK BUCKS

A brief drama of the hectic home front.

by Theodore Pratt

SURE I'll talk to you, Mister, but what I talk about depends on what you want to know. This place is too close to the bird-factory down the road for me not to be in on a lot of stuff about the planes they make there. And that aint supposed to be let out. After what happened, I'm plenty leery about that. Maybe I'm only a juke-girl, but I'm an American too.

That's what you want to hear about —Quick Bucks and the killing? All right. It'll show you that not all the heroes is on the battle-front. Quick Bucks, she was a hero if there ever was one.

You see this place. The Bomber, it's called. You see the pictures on the walls, the one showing a plane being built, then another one with it flying, then dropping bombs, and then having a dogfight over there by the door. Pretty, aint they?

You see, the slot machines and the sign on them. *"In case of an air raid."* it reads, *"crawl under this machine. It's never been hit."* You see all these workers from the four-to-midnight shift coming in from the bird-factory. You hear the juke-box going and the other girls working men with dancing and drinking.

Looks tough, don't it? Well, maybe it is. But in other ways, it aint so tough. There's nice people here too. Anyway, it's what Quick Bucks come to and gets herself a job at, same as me.

She's about seventeen, maybe eighteen at the most; she never would say exactly. Pretty? You should of seen her. She's frail, almost skinny, with a long white neck sticking up that graceful head of hers with the hair like honey. She's got color in her cheeks and lips without buying it at the dime store, and the biggest blue eyes you ever seen. They stared at you, wide-open, trusting everything you said.

I could see she don't know her way around a free-and-easy like this, so I take her under my wing. I explained how everything worked, how us girls get six leaves of lettuce a week straight out, and a percentage on the take of the box, and then a percentage on the drinks we get men to buy, like this down you bought me, which is only fruit-juice with no liquor in it but a liquor price on it. I make it plain to her that she's got to get the men to buy fast to make any money. "Quick," I tells her, "to make the bucks."

"Quick Bucks," she says. That expression fits so good the way it's done that she's called like that by everybody. And she could certainly make the guys buy. Pretty soon she's making more than any of us—which is all right with us; we liked the kid.

In a couple of weeks she knows better than most what's going on in the bird-factory, too. Though the guys don't talk about it much, they talk some. What one of them spills, usually proud, aint a giveaway, but from a bunch it adds up. And being here all the time with them, it sort of seeps through your pores. I guess we know as good as anybody how many birds they're hatching every day, what kind, where they're sent, how many men is working, and on like that.

To understand what happened next, you got to know how it works that Solly, the manager here, gets business in the slow hours before the shifts change at night. About nine o'clock he takes us out in his truck, the whole bunch packed in like cattle standing up. One by one he drops us off down the roads. We stand there, and when a guy or guys come along, we thumb them for a ride, saying we work at the Bomber, and won't they take us in.

That aint so pretty a way of doing things, but it's the way Solly does. It makes more business for us too, so we don't kick. Most of the guys come in for a drink. Then when things slow down, out we go again, three-four times a night.

Quick Bucks does this right along with the rest of us. One look at her standing by the road in the headlights, and the brakes go on fast. I'm worried about her, but she always gets back. She can pull them, and who does she pull in one night but Red Druggin, the foreman of the night-shift before he's due to go on.

Now get me, Mister, that Red is nice people. I don't have to yank him away from Quick Bucks like I did some of the others. He aint thirty and already he's foreman of the toughest shift. He's a big guy, with shoulders you can spread a yardstick on. He's hard, but he's fair, and his hours turned out more birds than any other. His mind is on his work, and he don't have nothing to do with women. That is, until he meets Quick Bucks.

Even then Red claims he don't care about her. He slaps a guy down, who says he guesses Red had changed when he sees Red buying a drink on her time and a down for her. And when you're slapped by Red, you stay slapped.

When Red picks her up the second night, he tells Solly it's a crime to take a kid like her out on the road and leave her there. You should've seen Quick Bucks' face when he said that. She went kind of still, and them eyes of hers turned on him and kept there, like a kid looking at his mother, the way she sometimes looked at me.

Well, Solly gives back that Red's got his business to run, and him, Solly, has got his business to run, and they'd both better keep to their own. Red, looking purple, says that if anything ever happens to Quick Bucks, he'll take the Bomber apart piece by piece, starting with Solly. Then he stamps off to his shift.

Now this is all between Red and Solly; it's their fight, and it don't seem to have much to do with Quick Bucks, like she wasn't there, or was just a piece of nice machinery that wasn't being handled right.

NOTHING happens for a long time. Red picks her up and brings her in and buys a drink every night she's on his road. When she aint put down on his road, he stops in to see if she's all right. That's all they see each other. They dance to the box a couple of times. Nothing's said about anybody loving anybody. If Red had any feeling for her then, he wouldn't admit it, but if he'd looked at her close enough, he'd found she knew it on her side.

Now here comes the part that has to do with the war and how Quick Bucks done some fighting in it that I can't see is any different from shooting a gun or running one of them jeeps.

There's a guy been hanging around for a while. By the name of Burl, he calls himself. None of us go for him, even if he spends plenty. He's long and lanky, but nervous at times. It come on him like an attack of something—one minute he's all right; the next he's jumpy and looking around and jerking his arms like he's scared. He's got a lot of questions to ask. Most of them aint about anything, but enough is about the birds to make

you see what he's getting at. Anyways, you think you do; he goes just far enough and then stops, casual-like, so there aint anything to pin down.

We don't like it. We got them posters up to button your lip, and we all of us know more than enough for this to mean something. We don't tell this Burl a thing. He picks on Quick Bucks especial, but then it's like as if he's making a play for her, nothing else. He don't get anywhere with it, and he don't go at it too hard, bringing her in when he sees her on the road and not trying anything.

THEN it busts. One night Red comes to the Bomber, and Quick Bucks is still out on the road. All the rest of us is in, but not her. We're worried a little ourselves. But Red is fit to be tied.

He asks Solly where she is, and Solly says he dropped her about a mile out of town on the Ridge Road. It's been over an hour since them.

Red just looks at Solly. I think he would've went for him, except just then the factory whistle blew for the night-shift, Red's shift. Red turned on his heel and went out. At first we thought he'd gone to work, forgetting about Quick Bucks. But looking out the window, we see Red's car going off the other way, burning the rubber in the direction of the Ridge Road.

He don't find her there. He keeps on, looking up and down, and along the side roads. She aint there, even in houses and gas-stations where Red pounds on the door and wakes people up. Red starts on the other main roads then, keeping it up for miles around. He's about crazy, but still he don't find her.

He don't, because she's with Burl. He'd picked her up to bring her in. That's what she thought. But he don't do any bringing her in. He drives down a side road, going so fast she can't jump for it. He stops in a God-forsaken place out in the fields and grabs her.

He wants to know, right out, everything she knows about the birds. I guess somebody on top of him had got him going, or he figured it was the only way to get the dope, and he would kill Quick Bucks afterward without anybody knowing who done it, and get away.

She's scared, Quick Bucks is, and who wouldn't be? When she won't tell him anything, he starts bending her fingers back. This is after she's used them to scratch up his face. Burl breaks a couple of her fingers. He breaks her arm when he can't handle both of them at the same time.

Quick Bucks aint talked yet. She don't even yip when he starts slapping her face. She keeps quiet when he stops slapping and hits with his fist. He does other things too, pinching and like that, in a way maybe I shouldn't mention. He had half her clothes off. It was just plain torture, no different from the kind you read about in Germany or from the Japs.

Quick Bucks is bleeding at the mouth and nose; her eyes is blacked closed; and her body is—but there aint any use going into that. Burl is a maniac by then, from her not talking after him taking this risk, and maybe the pleasure he gets out of it too. He hits her one for the finish and lays her back with that long neck of hers twisted around.

That's when Red finds them.

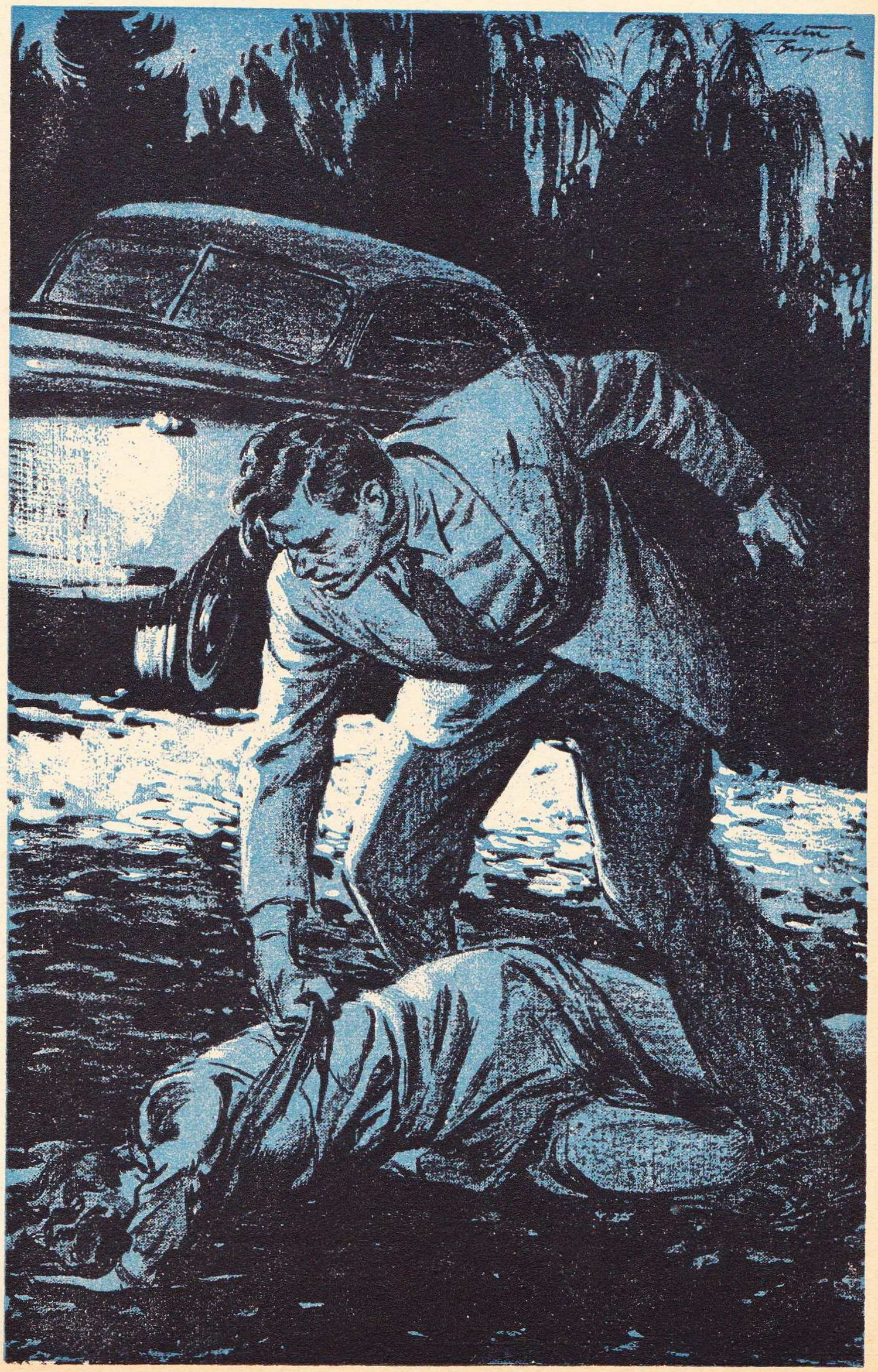
I don't know how Red killed him. It never come out, and he wouldn't say.

The cops jumped Red before he got very far at the Bomber. Solly beat it before he come, and Red had only smashed about fifty bottles back of the bar before they hauled him off to jail.

But there wasn't any trial, not for anything. They congratulated Red, though not in public or the papers. And they wasn't losing him at turning out the birds. The only thing was, they thought it'd be better to shift him to another factory.

No sir, Quick Bucks wasn't dead. She was pretty near about dead, but her neck wasn't broke like they thought first. Her and Red was married as soon as she come out of the hospital. I was bridesmaid. Me! Last I heard, they was starting a production line of their own.

Quick Bucks ought to turn out something pretty good. She was a soldier. Right in the front lines, Mister!



Arms and Men

Significant pictures from a scrapbook of wartime art.

Above, medieval soldiers on the march, by Hans Sebald Beham. Below, left-hand page: "The Charge for Glory and Earth's Applause." Right-hand page, lower left: Knight and Foot-soldier, by Albrecht Dürer; lower right: Commando stuff, medieval style.

Pictorial Archives

in Picture

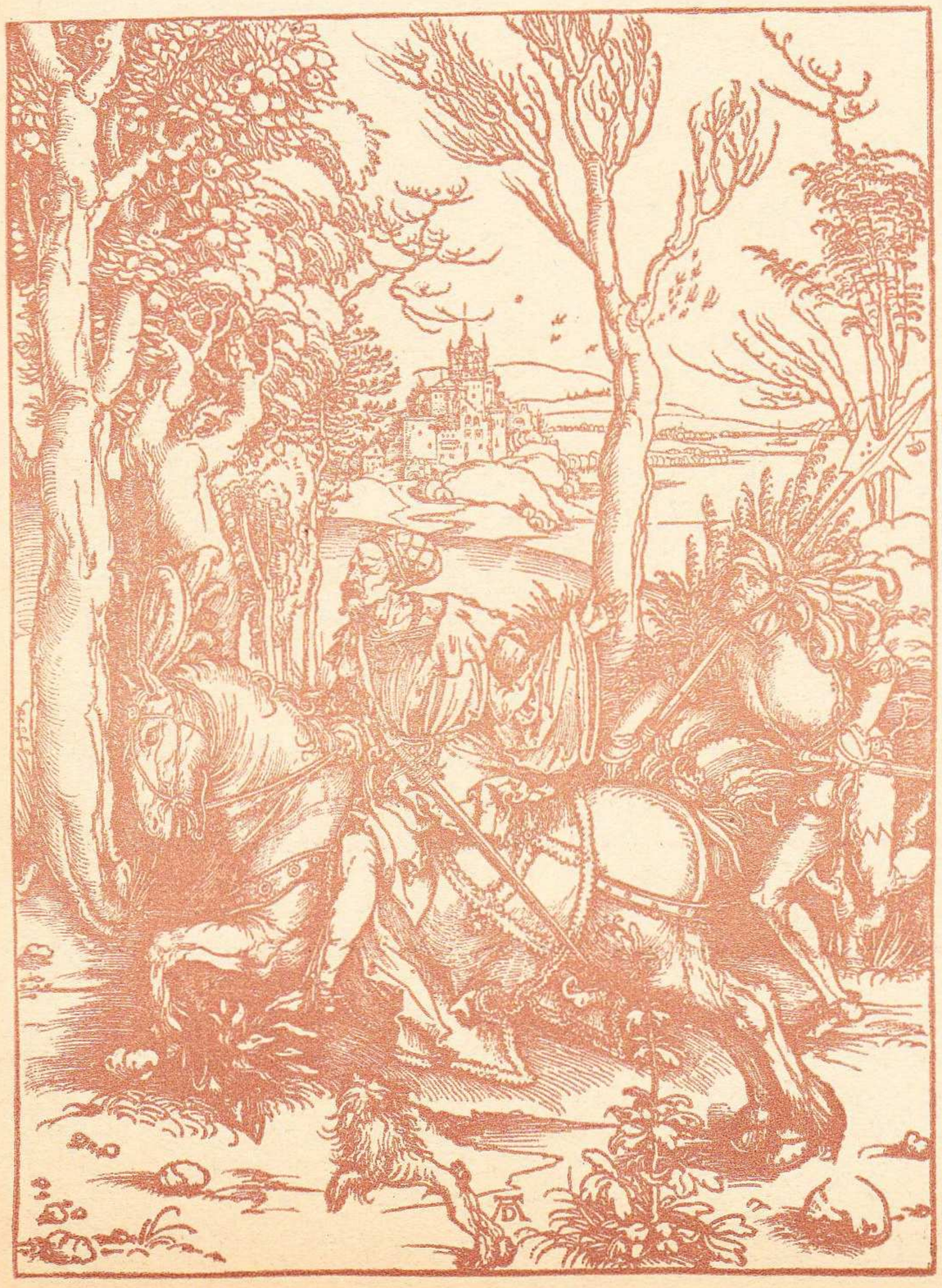
EVEN as war has always brought out the best and worst in men, so too it has brought out the best and the worst in art. For—as Tolstoi has written:

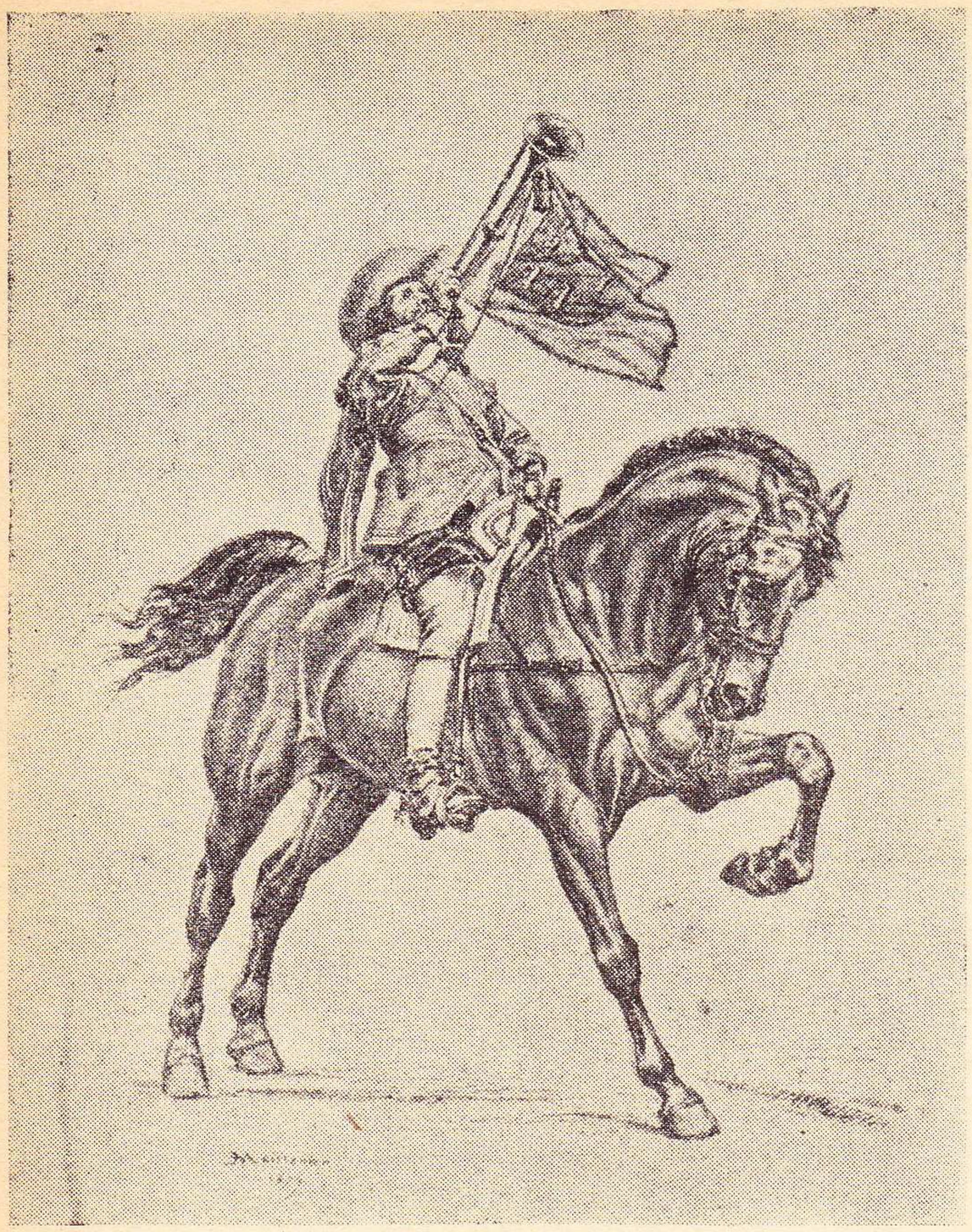
Art is not, as the metaphysicians say, the manifestation of some mysterious Idea of beauty, or God; it is not, as the esthetical physiologists say, a game in which man lets off his excess of stored-up energy; it is not the expression of man's emotions by external signs; it is not the production of pleasing objects; and, above all, it is not pleasure; but it is a means of union among men, joining them together in the same feelings, and indispensable for the life and progress toward well-being of individuals and of humanity.

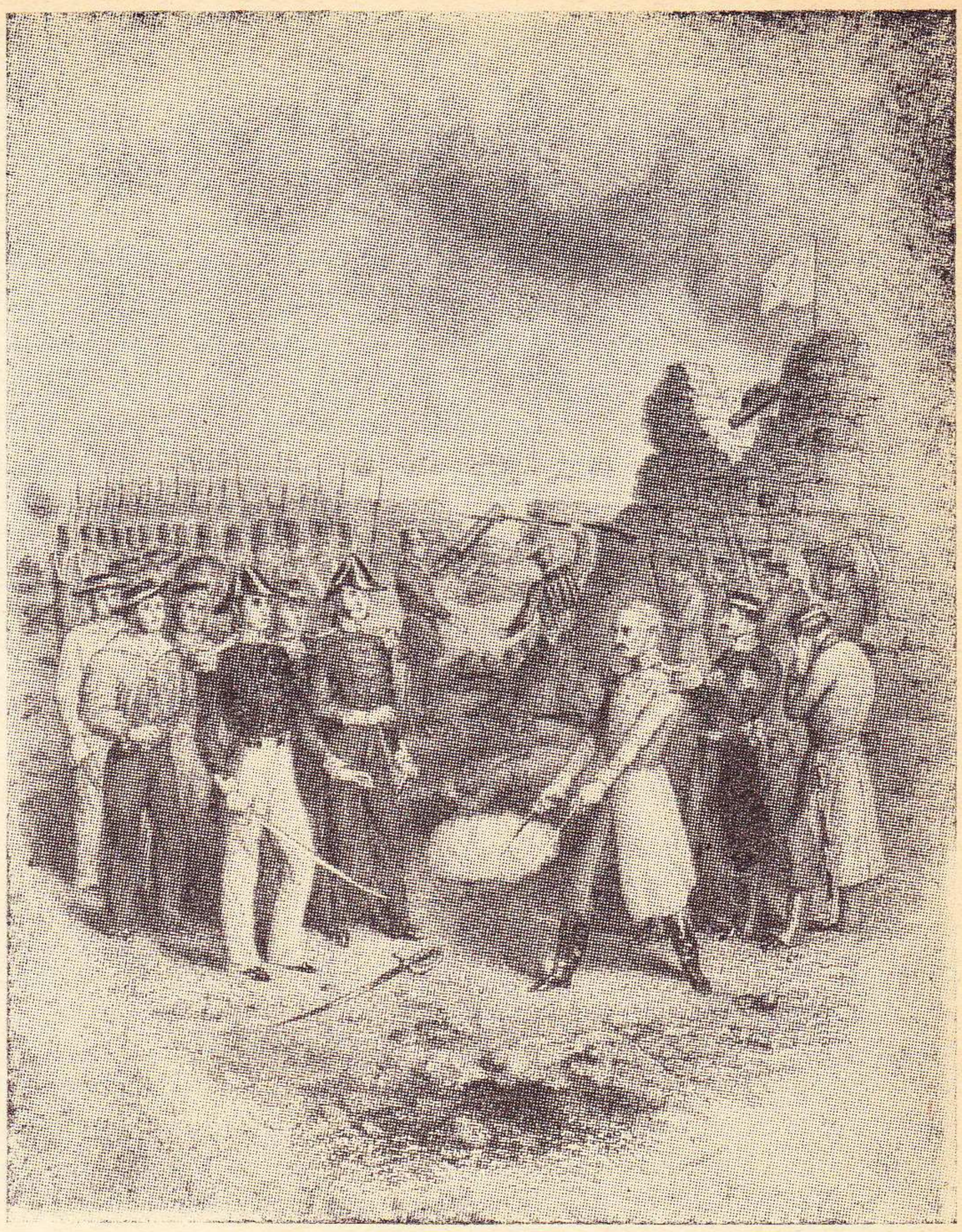
To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced, and having evoked it in oneself, then, by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling—this is the activity of art.

Art is a human activity, consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings, and also experience them.

A means of unity among men. . . . With the idea of suggesting to our artists—both those in the armed forces and those in civilian life—the infinite possibilities afforded by the events of 1943 for pictures which will offer far more in feeling and significance than any photograph can hope to achieve, we are reprinting herewith what may be described as an historical scrapbook of wartime pictures. It is interesting to note the pendulum-swing of mood they suggest—from the sardonic realism of some of the medieval drawings to the glorifications of the Napoleonic era, back to the realism of the first World War. What sort of pictures will tomorrow bring forth?







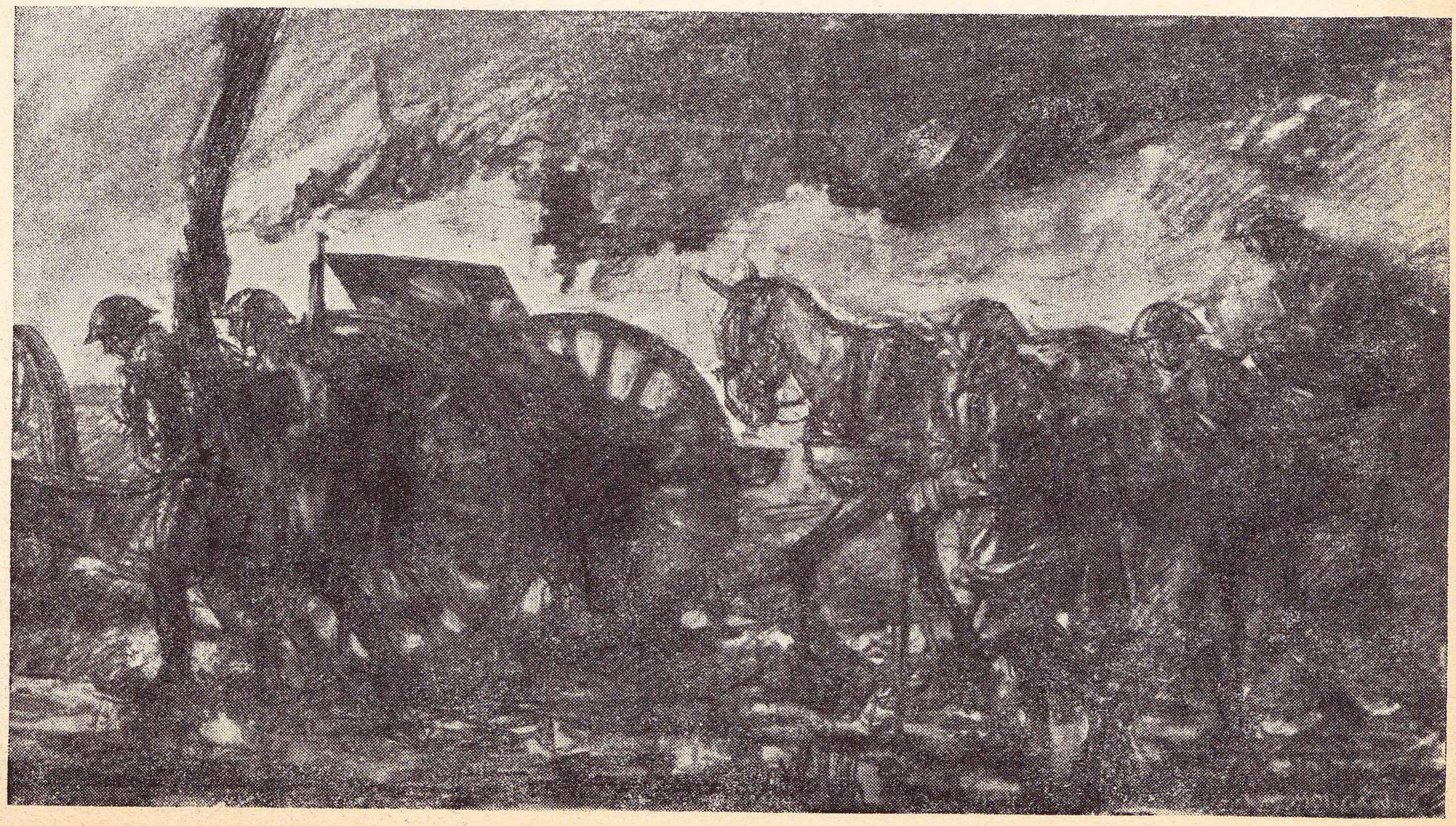
Left-hand page, above: A trumpeter by Meissonier and a surrender scene from the Crimean War; below, Wiertz's "Napoleon in Hell." This page, above: An old print of the Revolution, and another of Meissonier's trumpeters; below: "1807," by the same artist. (Pictorial Archives.)

Above, Trumbull's "Battle at Bunker's Hill;" below, the Death of Lawrence—"Don't Give Up the Ship," by Alonzo Chappel. (Pictures on these two pages from Pictorial Archives.)

Above, Chappel's "Battle of the Thames—Death of Tecumseh."
Below, "The Battle of Bull Run," from Harper's Weekly.

Twenty-five Years Ago

Above: "The Long Range Gun in Paris" (Church of St. Gervais, Good Friday, 1918), by E. L. Blumenschein; Right-hand page, above: "The Boche Looter" and "The Engineer," by Harvey Dunn. (The foregoing are reproduced by courtesy Smithsonian Institution, United States National Museum.) Below: "Opening of Argonne Barrage, Sept. 26, 1918," by Wallace Morgan. (Courtesy of *Collier's Magazine.*)



The story of a Mississippi steamboat gambler in the wild old days —a gambler who tried to play a crooked game straight.

GONE TO

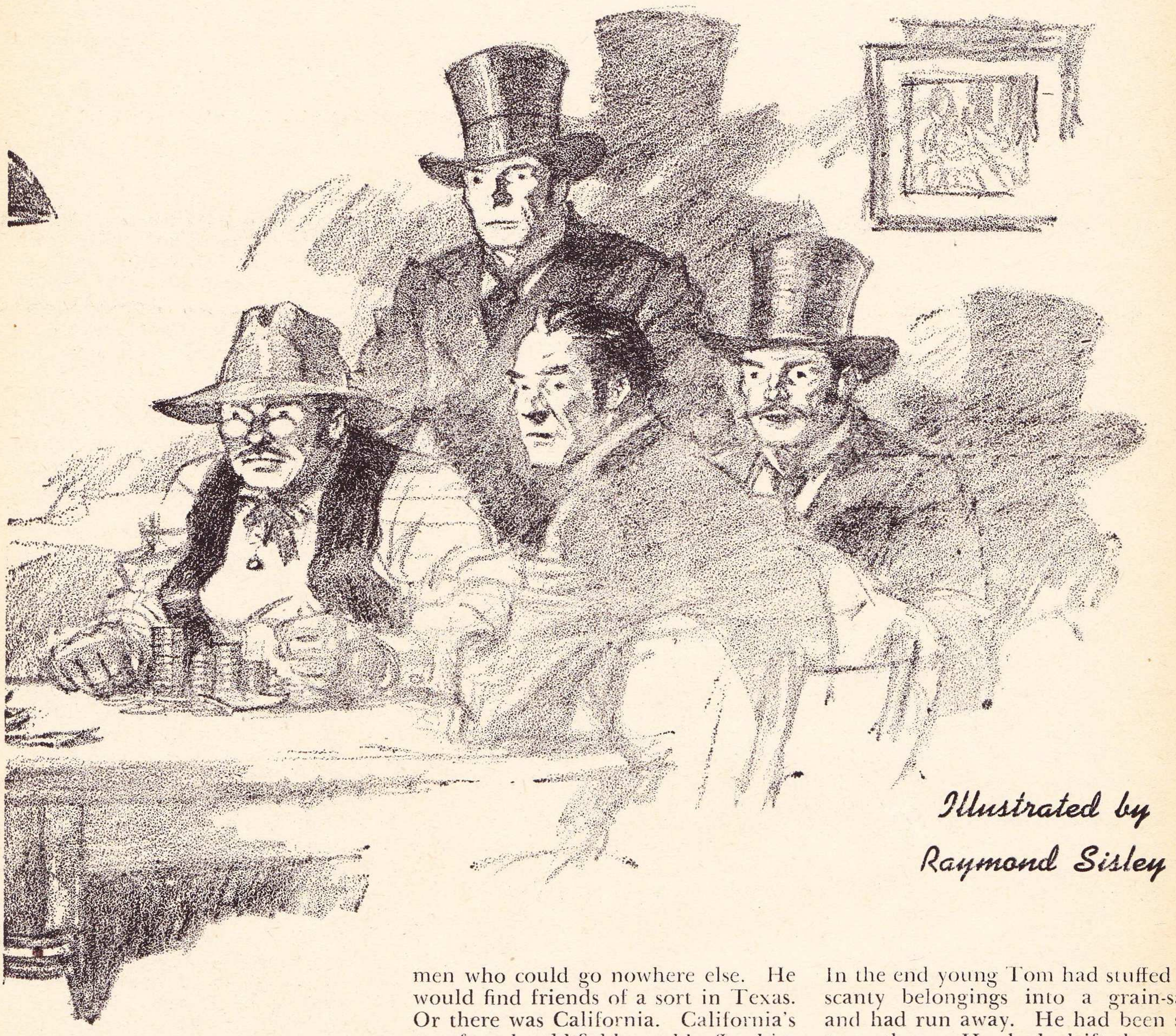
Tom picked up the coin before Manders could speak. "I'd like a gold-piece for luck," he said.

SUDDENLY, unexpectedly in the darkness, Tom Carter's feet touched bottom. In another minute he was floundering through the shallows, clambering unsteadily up the bank and through the willows. Once on solid ground he sat down heavily, his breath coming in deep weary gasps. "Another half-mile and I wouldn't've made it," he thought dully. It was still an hour before dawn. Tom Carter knew only that he was somewhere in northern Louisiana—and that he could never go back to the river.

He wore a white cambric shirt, its ruffles bedraggled now, and sodden trousers of fine black broadcloth. His feet were bare, his pockets empty save for that knotted handkerchief. Everything else that had been his was a long hour up the river by now, pounding on toward St. Louis aboard the *Belle Key*. Two well-filled carpet-bags and a heavy money-belt; his diamond shirt-stud and pearl sleeve-links; the pair of matched pocket-pistols he had

TEXAS

by John Reid Byers



Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

been given no chance to use; the key-winding Jeurgensen repeater with the ruby set in its stem—he would never see any of them again. And it did not seem to matter.

"But just the same it was a fool thing to do," he told himself wearily.

He sat where he was, waiting without impatience for the sun to rise across the river that had been his home for ten years, and was his home no longer. The physical weariness began to leave his lean young body: he found himself thinking, a little dully, of the future. There was Texas, of course—there was always Texas for men who could go nowhere else. He would find friends of a sort in Texas. Or there was California. California's new-found gold-fields could offer him change and danger and the chance of wealth obtained in one way or another. But it was not any of these things that Tom Carter wanted now.

FOR the first conscious time in years he thought of his boyhood—a boyhood spent on the Illinois farm where he had been born. It had been a solidly rooted life, with a fixed, predictable future. Tom Carter had never disliked it. "If Ma hadn't died—" he found himself thinking, almost wistfully now. But she had; and his father had married again, married a widow with children of her own, in whose way young Tom Carter stood. In the end young Tom had stuffed his scanty belongings into a grain-sack and had run away. He had been sixteen then. He had drifted to St. Louis, and at St. Louis the river had claimed him.

The sun's bright rim pushed above the horizon at last. Tom Carter held his hands out toward its light and studied their soft white palms for a thoughtful moment. At last he smiled tightly, a little contemptuously. "No, I don't reckon they'd still fit a pitchfork." he muttered as he got to his feet. For a minute he stood looking out across the swirling golden freshet the river had become. Then he turned and began to walk westward, directly away from the river.

He moved without haste, placing his bare feet a little gingerly. In half

an hour he came to a straggling road. He followed it. In time there would be a farm. A small farm, of course; a shoeless white man could hardly ask for aid at one of the great plantations. But there would be grits and molasses and black coffee for breakfast; if he was lucky there might be a pair of worn-out boots and a lift on somebody's wagon to the nearest town. In any town he could raise money. "Have to take half what it's worth, though," he reminded himself. But there would be enough for new clothing, new boots, a razor and comb. Enough for a horse and a gun too, if he decided for Texas.

HE had walked for another hour; his clothes were nearly dry when he came to the first small farmhouse that showed a thread of smoke from its kitchen chimney. He paused a little puzzledly at its gate. His ten years on the river had taught him to think of the discouraged small farmers of the South as "poor-whites"—shiftless, lazy, without pride. But there was pride in this little farm's neatly tilled fields and well-kept fences; and there were flowers instead of hogs in its dooryard. "Why, it's like a place back home, pretty near," Tom Carter thought as he opened the stanchly hung gate. He moved soundlessly along the beaten path that led toward the kitchen door. Then, at the corner of the house, he came to an abrupt stop.

A stocky, strongly built young man stood just around that corner. His face, still boyish, was sick and white and desperate. He held a small pepper-box revolver in one hand, and as Tom Carter watched he raised it jerkily to one temple. Tom Carter took a long step forward: his muscles were tense and ready, but he kept his voice conversationally low.

"Don't," he said gently. "Likely it's not that bad."

The gun dropped as the other man turned toward him. His eyes met Tom's in a dazed, half-seeing stare. He did not speak.

Tom risked another step. "Not at your age," he said in the same quiet voice.

But the boy's dull eyes brightened feverishly. "Keep off!" he cried, and raised the little five-barreled gun to his head in another quick, desperate gesture. Tom Carter hurled himself forward.

For a moment the younger man struggled fiercely. But both Tom Carter's hands were tightly locked around the gun and the fingers that held it. It exploded twice, harmlessly, into the air; then Tom stepped back, breathing a little quickly, the gun in his hands.

The other man stood looking toward him for an instant; then he turned to lean against the side of the house, his head buried in his arms, and began to sob like a tortured child.

Light feet were running from the direction of the kitchen door. Tom Carter turned to face the tall girl who was the runner. She was perhaps twenty, perhaps a year or two younger. She had soft brown hair and frightened brown eyes. She would, Tom found himself thinking, be pretty when she smiled. And she reminded him of somebody or of something—something far away and long ago.

The clear brown eyes swept over him, widening in sharper fear as they saw the gun in his hand. Then she was clutching the shaking shoulder of the man by the house.

"Davy, are you hurt?" she was crying. "What happened? Who is he?"

The man called Davy did not look around. But one of his hands dropped to a pocket, fumbled there for a moment and drew out a crumpled piece of paper. "But he stopped me," he said brokenly as the girl took it from him. "He stopped me!"

Horror and a sort of sick unbelief chased the fear from the girl's eyes as they scanned the penciled note. "Davy! Oh, Davy!" she whispered.

THE paper fluttered to the ground as she slipped her arm inside the man's. "It'll be all right, dear," she said gently. "It doesn't matter. Everything will be all right." She was drawing him away now. He moved beside her stumblingly, his head bowed. Tom Carter, still holding the pepper-box revolver, watched them disappear through the kitchen door. The thing the girl had reminded him of had come to him when he heard her speak. At the end of a doubtful minute he bent to pick up the crumpled note.

His eyes grew bleak as he read its unevenly written lines:

They say it's cowardly to kill yourself, Nancy. But I don't guess it's any worse than what I've done already, and I couldn't face telling you about it. Because we can't sell the place here to move back home. I've lost it, gambling, Nancy. Even before Pa died, those nights I rode to town I was gambling it away. He let me give notes when my money was gone. But last week he made me give him a bill of sale before he'd let me have the money to make a last try to win it back. And I didn't win.

Tom Carter continued to stare down at the crudely penciled lines long after he had read their last word. The lines of his mouth were suddenly very tired. He looked up slowly as he heard those light footsteps come toward him again. They came at a walk this time; but it was a steady walk, and the girl's face was grave and contained.

Tom Carter flushed darkly as he held out the note. "I hadn't any right to read this, ma'am," he said. "I ask your forgiveness."

The girl's eyes met his steadily. "You had a right to know, Mister, after what you did," she said quietly. "I—I'm mighty grateful. Davy will be too, some day." She was looking at him fully for the first time now; and her lips parted in a shocked gasp. "Why, you haven't any shoes! And your clothes—"

Tom smiled faintly. "I fell overboard off the *Belle Key* last night, ma'am. I reckon I was lucky to make shore even this way."

The girl's eyes brightened eagerly. "We can fix you up with something to wear. I'm mighty glad there's something we can do. Pa was tall and spare like you. And his things would just be thrown away when we—when we have to move out."

Fifteen minutes later Tom Carter sat in the little bedroom that opened off the kitchen, easing his feet into a dead man's boots. He had already donned the heavy gray suit that he was sure had been the one the dead man had worn when he drove to market Saturdays. His own father had worn just such a suit. It did not fit badly; it would be quite good enough, he thought grimly, to wear on the road to Texas. He got to his feet and moved toward the kitchen door. Then he turned back quickly to remove the damp handkerchief with the knotted corner from the pocket of his discarded trousers. A moment later he opened the door.

"The boots are just my size, ma'am," he told the girl as she looked up from the stove. "I'm obliged to you."

"I'm glad," the girl said simply. "And if you'll sit for a minute, breakfast'll be ready."

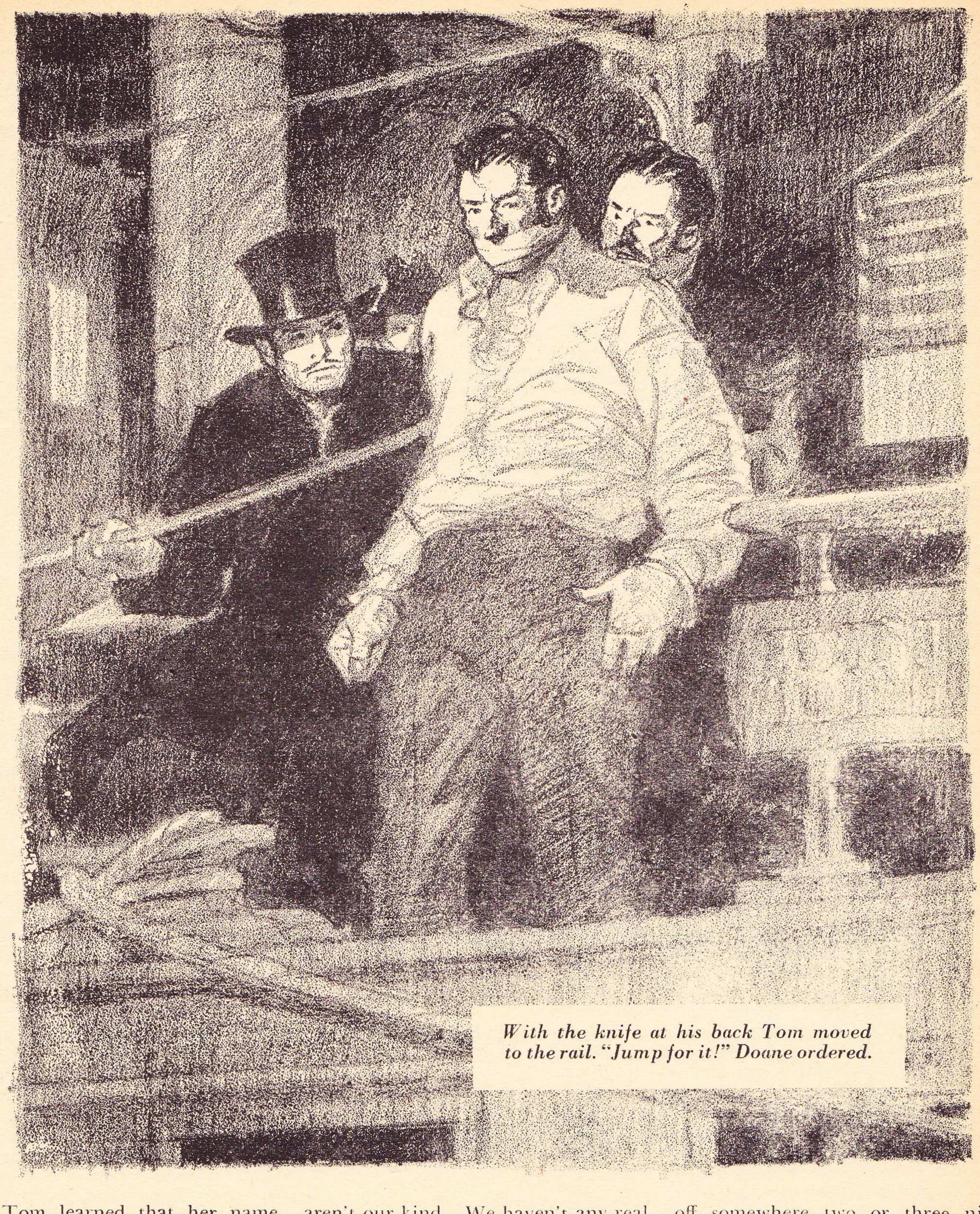
Tom shook his head quickly. "It's kind of you, ma'am, but I'll be going now. I reckon you and your husband will want to be alone."

"You won't go without eating," the girl said firmly. Then she was looking at him with wide, startled eyes. "Why—why, Davy's my brother, Mister! Somehow I thought you knew."

AT that Tom drew in a long breath. He sat down slowly, his eyes on the floor. "If you're sure it won't be putting you out, ma'am—Miss Nancy," he said uncertainly.

Davy did not join them for breakfast. "He's just lying on his bed," the girl told Tom gravely. "He feels pretty bad. But he's promised me not to—" She looked away hurriedly for an instant.

They talked a little over their meal; the girl shyly at first, with less restraint



With the knife at his back Tom moved to the rail. "Jump for it!" Doane ordered.

later. Tom learned that her name was Wilson, and that—as he had known the moment he heard her speak—she and her brother were from the North. Their father had owned a farm in Indiana.

"It was a nice place. We had lots of friends there, too," Nancy Wilson said wistfully. "But then Pa started to ail, and the doctor said he likely wouldn't last out another cold winter. So we sold out and came down here and bought this place. We've got it fixed nice too, by now; but it's not the same. The people down here aren't our kind. We haven't any real friends here. I guess that's why Davy finally got started to—to going to town. You—you mustn't judge Davy just by this morning, Mr. Carter! If you look at the place and see all the work he's done— But he never liked it here, either. We both used to talk about moving back to Indiana.

"And then Pa died last spring. I wanted to sell right off, but Davy didn't. First he said we'd get a better price if all our crops were in. And then he wanted them to be up enough to show a buyer. And he kept riding off somewhere two or three nights every week. Sometimes I used to think it was a girl some place—some girl he was ashamed to tell me about, but couldn't bear leaving. I—I couldn't ask him questions about it. But I never guessed—till this morning—" Her eyes filled suddenly. Tom averted his own for a minute.

From the barn a cow mooed plaintively. Nancy jumped to her feet. "Oh, I forgot!" she cried. "It's an hour past her milking-time."

She was reaching for the milk-pail as Tom rose. "Won't you let me,

Miss Nancy?" he asked. "It's ten years since I milked a cow. I'd like to see if I've forgotten how."

He had not forgotten how to milk. But he had, he discovered, forgotten the soft warmth of a cow's flank against his forehead and the strange serenity that the simple task brought with it. He carried the brimming milk-pail carefully, a little proudly, back to the house.

"I'll tend the horses too, if you're willing," he volunteered. "I used to be pretty good around horses." But he did not leave the kitchen door at once. "Miss Nancy, I've been thinking. It's likely your brother won't feel much like doing anything 'round the place for a few days. But it'd be too bad not to keep it up, even the way things are. And if you're going to have to move right soon—well, an extra pair of hands might be helpful. What I'm getting at is that there's no place I have to be in a hurry. I could stay to help you for awhile if you'd like." He smiled briefly. "After all, I reckon I ought to. Right now I haven't any other way of paying for my new clothes."

The girl's eyes darkened with quick reproach. "You couldn't pay for them! For them or anything else we've got! But if you'd like to stay for a few days we'd be proud to have you. And—and glad too, Mr. Carter!"

TOM CARTER slept that night in the little room that had been the dead father's. There were blisters on his soft palms, and muscles unused for years protested with each movement. But he was smiling as he relaxed between the coarse, clean linen sheets. "I'm not heading for Texas yet awhile," he told himself drowsily. "And maybe—just maybe—" He fell asleep with his thought half-completed. His night's sleep was the soundest he had enjoyed in more than three months.

A week later he was still there; and his shoulder muscles no longer ached at the end of a half-day in cornfield or cotton-patch. Davy Wilson had accepted his continued presence in moody silence; had allowed him to take over the daily work of the farm without protest. Davy himself spent most of his time in his own room, or in wandering slowly about the well-tended acres.

Tom Carter had hitched the team to the plow that afternoon, and had plowed four quite useless furrows the full length of the pasture. Nancy Wilson was sewing on the shaded bench outside the kitchen door when he finished putting the team up. "There didn't seem much point to that, Mr. Carter," she said wonderingly as Tom came toward her.

"There was, though," Tom smiled. "It showed me that I can still plow a straight furrow and swing the plow at the end of it." His smile died slowly. He had seen Davy sitting under a tree by the creek at the other end of the farm; he was sure of half an hour alone with the girl. "Might I sit down, Miss Nancy?" he asked formally. He seated himself at the end of the bench as the girl drew aside her skirts. "I've been wondering if you and your brother have talked it over yet, to decide what you're going to do," he said gravely.

The girl nodded quickly. "We had a long talk this morning, while you were out in the cotton. He—he's beginning to feel a little better, Mr. Carter. And we're going back where we belong just as soon as we can get away. The stock and the wagon and tools are still ours. We can sell them for enough to pay our way North, and still have enough left to last a month or two while we look around." She was silent for a moment. "There's people back home that'd help us if we asked it. But that would mean telling them—I don't know that we can bring ourselves to doing that. We thought maybe we could find a place to rent or work on shares for awhile. But if we can't we'll likely go over into Illinois where nobody knows us and—and hire out for a few years, till we can save enough to make a new start. It—it won't be very easy, I guess; but we'll make out somehow. And we won't either of us ever forget what we owe you, Mr. Carter!"

Tom stared darkly at his own knees. The things he had to say must be taken in their order. And the first one did not come easily. The girl spoke again before he did. "Men are funny about things," she said thoughtfully. "What seems to help Davy about as much as anything right now is feeling sure that he lost it all in an honest game—that he didn't get cheated."

Tom laughed harshly. "Let him think that way if it helps him any. But it's fifty to one he did get cheated. I ought to know!" He braced himself grimly for the next words. "I ought to know, because I'm a gambler myself—or was, till just lately. A steamboat gambler, Miss Nancy!"

HE did not look toward the girl. It was bad enough to imagine the loathing her clear brown eyes must hold now.

"You mean that you—that you cheated people?" she asked finally. Her voice was very low.

"No. I always played square. A few gamblers do. But not many. And it's a pretty slim chance Davy ran into one."

He heard the girl draw in an uncertain breath. "I suppose it's a little—a little different if you don't cheat," she said slowly.

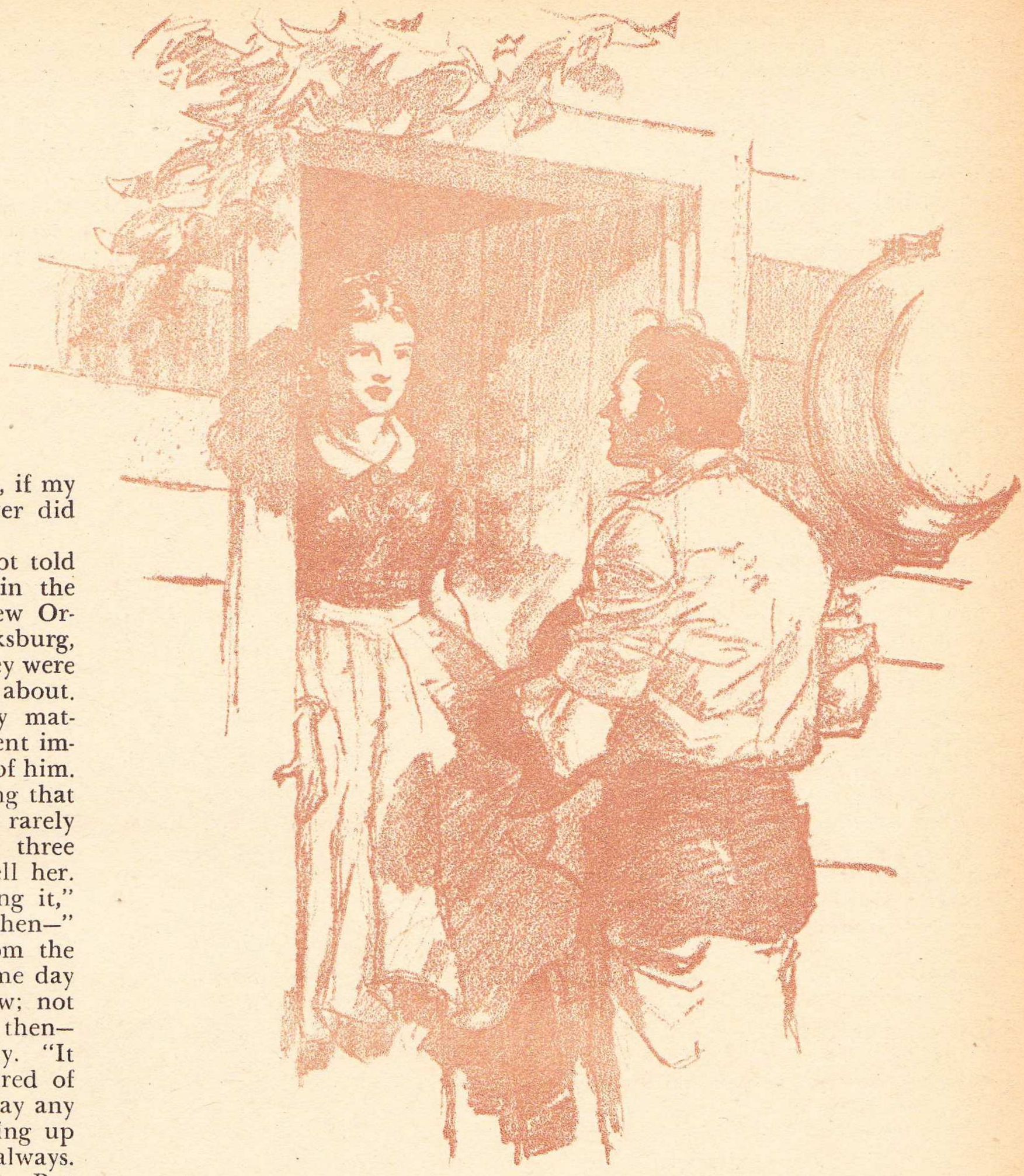
"It isn't really," Tom said wearily. "Maybe it takes you a little longer to get a man's money that way. And maybe you feel a little better about how you get it. But in the end you get it just as sure as a sharper would. The other man gambles maybe a couple of times a year. You don't do anything else. He hasn't got any more real chance than—than your brother had!" He did not speak for a moment. "Would you listen if I told you about it all, Miss Nancy?" he asked humbly then.

"If you want me to, Mr. Carter," the girl said quietly.

SLOWLY, pausing awkwardly as he sought the right words, Tom began to tell the girl about the river. About the river and the hungry Illinois farm boy who had come to it at St. Louis and had the incredible luck of getting a cabin-boy's job on the *Sultana*. The *Sultana,* with her thirty-foot paddle-wheels and towering twin chimneys, her gilded saloon and prism-edged chandeliers, had been a new and glamorous world thrown open to young Tom Carter. And the people it contained were as strange as the world. Pilots and roustabouts and bartenders; plantation owners and cotton-buyers and titled European travelers. And, strangest and most glamorous of all to the wide-eyed farm boy, the river gamblers who were almost a race apart. Men like John Powell, tall, distinguished, well-educated, the friend of Jackson and of Douglas; men like slim, handsome Dick Hargraves, the young English gambler and duelist—all expensively dressed, cool-eyed men, carefully polite, who won and lost small fortunes without change of expression. They captured young Tom Carter's imagination as did nothing else. At nineteen he was one of them; nor was he the youngest gambler on the river.

"It was men like Powell and Hargraves and Poley White that I admired the most," he explained heavily now to the silent girl. "They were square gamblers, so I set out to play on the square. Like enough I'd have learned to cheat if there'd been need for it. But there wasn't. I was lucky from the very start. My luck never did run out."

He tried, a little futilely, to give the listening girl some idea of the feverish, reckless years that had followed; years during which three-quarters of his time was spent aboard one or another of the great passenger-packets; years of change and excitement and wealth easily won. He tried to explain the hot fierce thrill that came of winning or of losing alike when a thousand in piled gold-pieces depended on the turn of a card. "And I liked it, Miss Nancy. I never saw anything wrong about it," he said grimly. "I



"I fell overboard last night, ma'am." The girl's eyes brightened. "We can fix you up with something," she said eagerly.

never expected to stop liking it, if my luck didn't turn. And it never did for long."

There were things he had not told her. The wild nights spent in the Swamp on Girod Street in New Orleans, at the Landing in Vicksburg, at Natchez-under-the-Hill. They were not things you could tell a girl about. And they had not ever really mattered; they had left no permanent impress, had never become a part of him. But there was one thing—a thing that had mattered; a thing that had rarely been out of his thoughts for three months now. This he must tell her. "I never expected to stop liking it," he repeated grimly. "And then—" But his mind shrank back from the words that were to follow. Some day he must tell her. But not now; not yet, not so soon after— "And then—I stopped," he hurried on lamely. "It was—it was just like getting tired of something. I didn't want to play any more somehow. I kept on going up and down the river, just like always. I thought I'd get over it in time. But I didn't. In three months I didn't touch a card. And then, the night before I came here, Miss Nancy, I did something. It was a fool thing to do. But it showed me that I was—was through with the river." His lips curled in a tight small smile at that memory. "I reckon it showed some other people the same thing," he added, half to himself.

He began to tell about the slender, handsome Creole boy who had boarded the *Belle Key* at New Orleans. The only son of one of the great sugar planters, he was on his way to Paris, his pocketbook bulging with cash and bank drafts. Simon Doane, Pat Dignam and a pair of their cappers had him sitting in a poker-game before the *Belle Key* had passed Twelve Mile Point. Wearily, without much interest, as he had watched most things for three months past, Tom Carter watched them. It did not matter; this boy could afford to lose. And when, smoking a cigar on deck after the evening meal he found the Creole boy at his elbow the sudden impulse to warn him against his company startled Tom Carter.

He had received the meddler's usual wage. He could still see the dark youngster, his handsome head thrown arrogantly back as he said, "When I require the advice of strangers, sir, I am in the habit of asking for it!"

AN hour later he had seen the boy back at the poker-table with the same players. He had smiled mirthlessly and turned away. It had not occurred to him that the boy might report that brief warning. But two hours before dawn he had been wakened by the creaking of his stateroom door—wakened to feel the point of a knife at his throat and a heavy hand clamped over his mouth. "Jes' try yellin'!" an angry voice whispered.

In another moment a rude gag had replaced the heavy hand. "We're swimmin' you, Carter," a voice that he recognized as big Simon Doane's told him. "An' it's better'n you deserve! . . . Wanted the boy for yourself, didn't you?" The knife-point stayed at his throat while deft hands searched beneath his pillow, found his money-belt, his watch, his jewelry. Then it was withdrawn. "Get up!" another voice ordered. "You can have your shirt and pants." There were half a dozen men crowded into the pitch-dark stateroom. Tom knew most of their voices. Two of them were the voices of men he had counted as friends.

He had slipped into shirt and trousers obediently. With the knife at his back now he had moved without protest out onto the deck, across it to the rail. Resistance would only mean that he would go into the river dead instead of alive. "It's better'n you deserve!" Simon Doane grunted again. "If I had my way— But I reckon you know what you'll get if you're seen on the river again!" Tom knew well enough. A hundred men would be ready to put a bullet or a knife-blade into him on sight when word of his treachery had gotten around. "Jump for it!" Doane had ordered savagely. And Tom Carter had jumped.

"The *Belle Key* was a quarter of a mile upstream before I'd got rid of the gag," he told Nancy Wilson quietly. "But even if she'd been right alongside I don't think I'd have yelled. I was—I was glad it'd happened, Miss Nancy. Glad that it was over, with a clean break!" He was silent for a minute. "That's the story, Miss Nancy," he said finally. "I haven't enjoyed telling it to you much. But it's all over and done with now. I couldn't go back to it if I wanted to."

FOR the first time in several minutes he turned to look at the girl. Her sewing lay unheeded in her lap; her face was a little pale, her brown eyes were clouded. But her low voice was steady when she spoke.

"I'm glad, Mr. Carter," she said simply. "But what are you going to do now?"

"That's what I wanted to talk to you about, Miss Nancy. Only I had to—to tell you first. . . . You see, I haven't any money right now. But I've got something else. Look!" He had taken the wrinkled handkerchief from his pocket. He untied its knotted corner carefully.

The girl caught her breath. "It's a diamond," she whispered raptly. And then, "Could—could I hold it for just a minute, Mr. Carter?" She took the glittering stone almost reverently, cradling it in one palm to catch the sunlight. "Oh, it's beautiful!" she said softly. "I never saw one so close before. Or one so big, anywhere!"

"I used to wear it in a ring," Tom said steadily. "But it came out of the set, and I tied it in my handkerchief to keep it safe till I got it put back. It was the only thing they missed when they stripped me." He hesitated for an instant; then plunged onward. "This is what I've been thinking, Miss Nancy. I can get upward of a thousand dollars for it in any city. And what I had in mind was that if you'd let me go with you when you go North, I'd sell it in Cincinnati. With that and what you'd have, there'd be more than enough for the three of us to set up on a good farm, without your having to ask help from anybody. And with Davy and me both to work it we could swing a big place without having to hire any help. That is, if you and Davy'd be willing to—to go partners with a man like me."

The girl's eyes had lifted to meet his. They were wide and startled and very bright.

"But—but why would you want to do all that for us?" she asked.

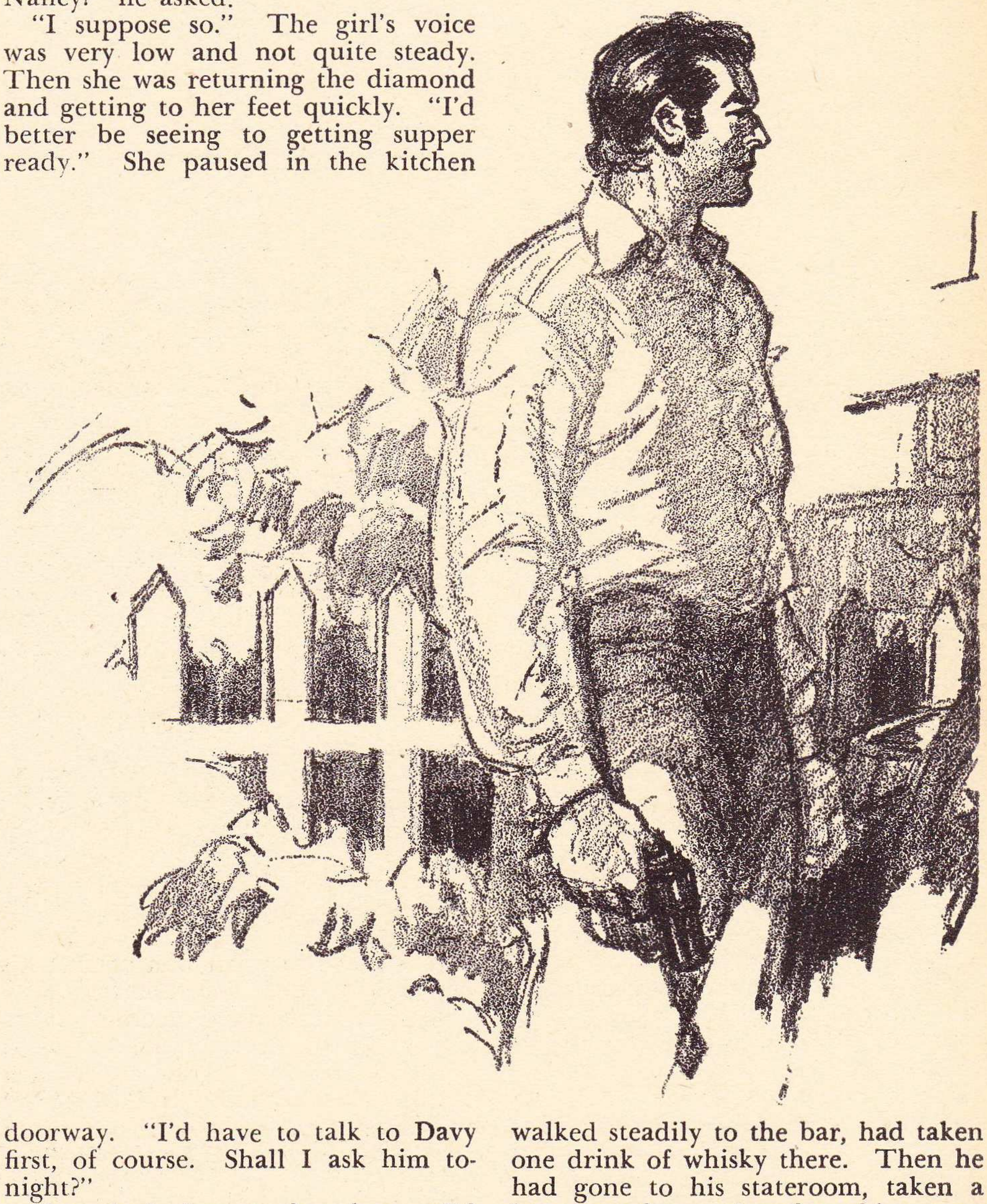
"It wouldn't be all for you, Miss Nancy. It would be for me, too. It—it would be the best chance I'm ever likely to have to get back to—to something that's solid and real. Back to some way of living where a man can look ahead and know what's coming, and plan for it. Back to living like—like I've been living this last week, Miss Nancy! That's what I want." But there was still a half-doubtful question in Nancy's clear eyes; and her cheeks were reddening slowly. Tom looked away suddenly. "If—if maybe there's more than that in my mind, why it's something that ought to wait till later." His voice had grown heavy once more. "Don't you think so, Miss Nancy?" he asked.

"I suppose so." The girl's voice was very low and not quite steady. Then she was returning the diamond and getting to her feet quickly. "I'd better be seeing to getting supper ready." She paused in the kitchen doorway. "I'd have to talk to Davy first, of course. Shall I ask him tonight?"

Tom had risen to face her. "I'd like you to think it over by yourself first," he said gravely. "Maybe you could let me know this time tomorrow."

The girl was smiling down at him from the doorstep. It was a shy smile, still a little doubtful; but it did all the things to her face that Tom had known it would. "I—I don't hardly need a night to think it over, Mr. Carter," she said softly. "I'll do it if you want, though."

She turned away into the kitchen then. Tom took one tense step toward the door. Then he stopped dead. He had no right to say anything more now. Not until he had told her about the thing that had happened aboard the *Eclipse* three long months earlier. About the last time when Tom Carter had sat in a poker-game; about the tall youngster who had sat across the table and lost heavily to him. A handsome well-mannered boy he had been; very nearly Davy Wilson's age. When his last chip was gone he had risen with a shrug and a polite good night to the other players. He had

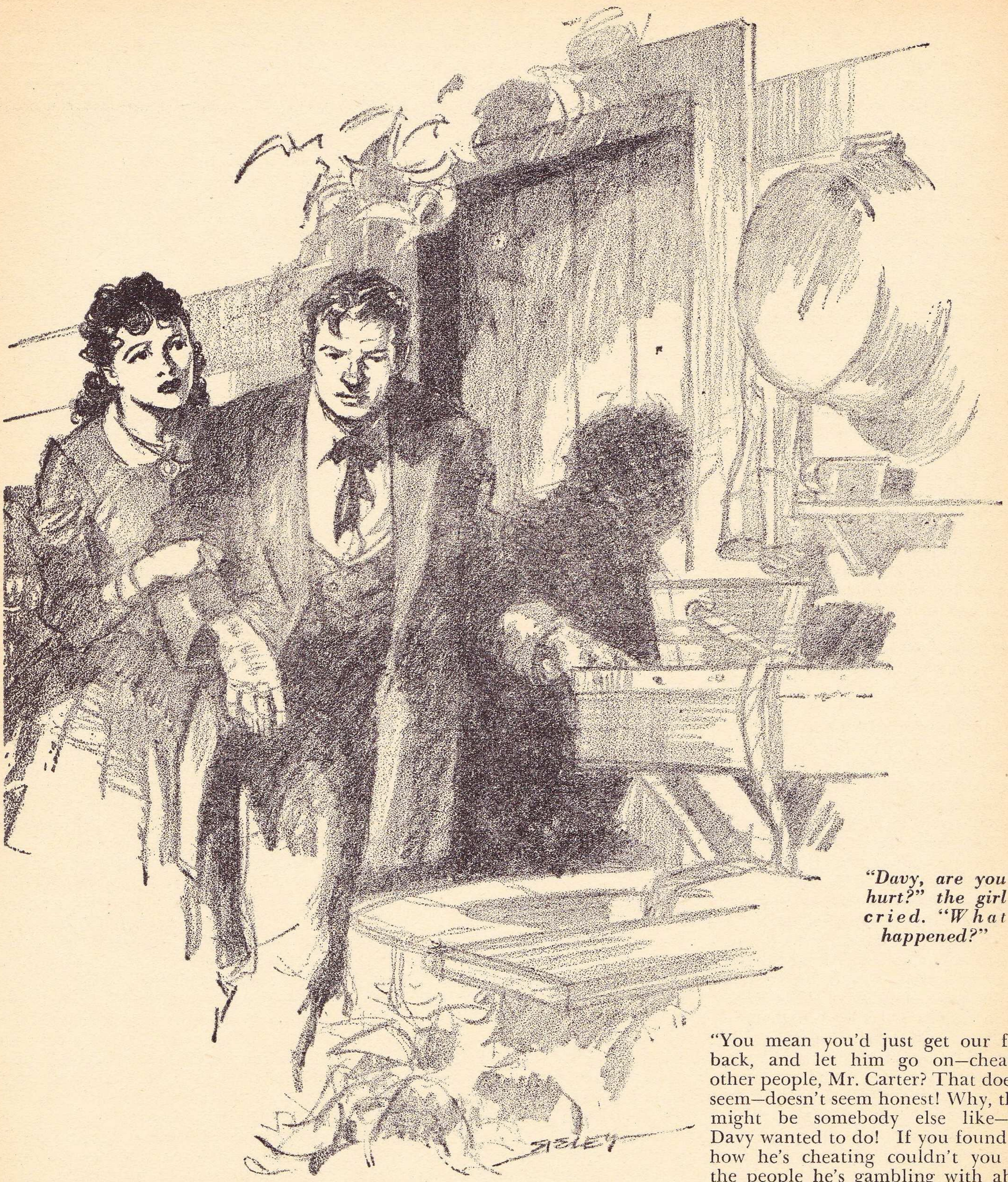


walked steadily to the bar, had taken one drink of whisky there. Then he had gone to his stateroom, taken a heavy cavalry revolver from his carpetbag—and succeeded where Davy Wilson had failed.

"I daren't tell her yet," Tom Carter thought grimly. "Not for a long time. Not till we're safe settled back up North somewhere, and she's learned to—to sort of depend on me. But I've got to tell her some day."

He worked in the cotton-patch most of the next afternoon. Nancy Wilson was sitting on the shaded bench again when he finally came back to the house. She smiled up at him; still a little doubtfully, but less shyly than on the night before.

"I'll talk to Davy tonight, Mr. Carter," she told him. "If—if you're still of the same mind, that is."



"Davy, are you hurt?" the girl cried. "What happened?"

Tom nodded contentedly as he sat down on the end of the bench. "Everything's all right, then," he said happily. He had little fear that Davy Wilson would reject his offer. And there was something else in his mind now. He leaned eagerly toward the girl. "Miss Nancy, I had an idea awhile back. It's about this gambling man in town. You see, I know just about every trick a sharper'd be apt to use. And I was thinking that if I could go to town and watch his game for a bit, I could probably find out how he's working it. And then—well, I could pretty likely scare him into giving back that paper Davy signed. . . . I was thinking I might ride in this evening, if you don't object."

The girl caught her breath quickly. "Oh, if you could do that—" But then her forehead wrinkled suddenly. "You mean you'd just get our farm back, and let him go on—cheating other people, Mr. Carter? That doesn't seem—doesn't seem honest! Why, there might be somebody else like—like Davy wanted to do! If you found out how he's cheating couldn't you tell the people he's gambling with about it? Show him up right in front of them, I mean!"

TOM frowned thoughtfully. Certainly the exposed cheat would be deprived of his winnings. As certainly he would be lucky to escape with a coat of tar and feathers and a ride out of town on a rail. But why should he concern himself with the fate of some petty sharper? "I see what you mean, Miss Nancy. And I reckon you're right. If I can do it, I will."

He rode the six miles to town on Davy Wilson's little saddle mare that evening, cantering happily through the scented Southern dusk. It would be nice if he could somehow get back Davy's bill of sale. But even if he couldn't things were going to be all right. He smiled as he remembered something tall John Powell had said to him once as they stood together at the *A. L. Shotwell's* ornate bar. "A man can do practically anything he sets his mind to, Carter," John Powell had told him, his cultured voice a little grim. "—Except one: He can't ever turn back the clock." But John Powell, usually so right, had been wrong there. You could turn back the clock. And Tom Carter was going to do it.

WITHOUT prompting the mare stopped at the hitching-rack before the rambling hotel. Tom tied her and loosened her girth. "I may be awhile, girl," he told her cheerfully. He sauntered carelessly into the hotel bar and moved at once toward the open door at the end of the room, from which the chink of gold and the rattle of chips came clearly to his ears. In that open doorway he paused for a moment, his cool eyes sweeping the room and its occupants.

There were more than a score of these; six of them seated around the cloth-covered table that stood directly under a huge whale-oil lamp with a burnished reflector, the others looking on. After that first comprehensive glance Tom looked more closely at the gross-bodied man who banked the game. Nancy had told him that he was called Jack Manders. He had not recognized the name, nor did he know the man's face now. He was not surprised. A man who could play with success on the river would hardly be likely to content himself with the pettier takings of a small market town.

Jack Manders was a heavy man, with hulking shoulders, large short-fingered hands and a square, doughily soft face. He played in his shirt-sleeves, but his black slouch hat still shaded his eyes from the glare of the great light overhead. He wore two diamond rings and the large diamond shirt stud without which no gambler felt completely dressed. His eyes were small and dartingly quick as they peered over his silver-rimmed spectacles at the other players. The lenses of those spectacles were the thickest Tom could remember ever having seen.

There were neat piles of chips, white and red and blue, at Manders' right hand; a pile of bills lay beside them. But directly in front of him lay a careless pool of gold coins; a jumbled mass which must hold two or three thousand dollars' worth of gold. Manders' stubby fingers toyed constantly with the loose gold as he waited for the other players to bet or to pass. He moved and turned the gleaming coins; he built them into little piles; he demolished the piles again. Tom smiled faintly as he watched him. Most of the play would be in chips, redeemed with bank-notes. But the shining gold lay there for the other players to see, to covet, to win if they could.

He left the doorway to stroll easily forward and join the onlookers. The place he chose was almost at Jack Manders' elbow. He bowed politely to the man who made room for him there. Then he began to watch Jack Manders: grimly, intently, with eyes that missed nothing. And at the end of half an hour they had seen nothing to confirm his suspicion.

His first glance had told him that the cards in use were of an honest make, and a minute's closer scrutiny convinced him that they had not been marked since leaving the manufacturer's hands. He waited for Manders' deal. But when it had passed he felt sure that the big gambler was not manipulating the cards either as he shuffled or as he dealt. He dealt with his hands and arms well out over the table and the flattened heap of gold; dealt slowly, almost clumsily. Too slowly, too clumsily for him to have been using strippers, dealing seconds, palming the bottom card. And the position of his hands made the use of a "shiner"—the tiny mirror held on one knee or clipped below the table's edge, by means of which the cards' faces could be read as they came off the pack—a practical impossibility.

HE began to watch the circle of onlookers then, searching for any sign of a confederate who might signal the hands held by other players to Manders. He discovered no trace of one. To every outward appearance Jack Manders played alone, and his game was utterly straight. He might as well ride back and admit his failure to Nancy. But he did not move at once. It would, he told himself, be as well to give her a little more time alone with Davy. He stayed where he was, automatically following the run of the cards, the size of the pots, the value of the winning hands, appraising the skill of the various players. His eyes were still alert for any suspicious move by Jack Manders; but when more than another half hour had passed he had seen nothing to alter his belief that the game was honest. Manders, he discovered, played a sound, slightly cautious game—a game quite good enough to win eventually from most men. "I could beat him, though," Tom caught himself thinking. He grinned a little wryly at that involuntary boast of a skill he would never again employ.

The man directly across the table from Manders saw his last chip raked in by another player and rose yawning widely. "Well, gentlemen, I reckon that's my bellyful for this evening," he observed as he pushed back his chair and turned toward the door. Jack Manders peered inquiringly over his thick spectacles at the circle of standing men, his stubby fingers playing with the gold in front of him. But no one offered to take the vacant chair. It stood there, invitingly, temptingly empty as the cards were dealt to the remaining players. And a new thought came suddenly to Tom: "It's three months since I touched a card. My luck might run strong tonight." He tried to put the thought from him. That was all over and done with. But if he could win back Davy's bill of sale —if he played that long and no longer, "She oughtn't to mind *that,*" he told himself doubtfully. He moved slowly toward the empty chair, still half hopeful that some one might take it before him. But no one did. He stood with his hand on its back until the pot had been won.

"I'd admire to join you gentlemen," Tom smiled, "but I haven't any cash with me right now. If you'd be interested in buying this, though—" He had already taken the diamond from his handkerchief; he rolled it challengingly into the middle of the table.

Manders turned it in his fingers under the light for a moment. "It's a fair enough stone," he said finally. "I could let you have five hundred."

"It's worth a thousand," Tom said calmly. "And you know it! But make it six hundred, and I'll give you a chance to win it back."

Manders nodded curtly and began to count chips and bank-notes into the center of the table. Tom seated himself deliberately; hitched his chair close to the table, pulled his hat down to shade his eyes. "I don't allow these new-fashioned flushes, Mister," the gambler told him as he pushed the last stack of chips across the table.

Two hours later Tom Carter still sat in the same chair, watching Jack Manders' big hands as they shuffled the cards for another deal. He had been winning. He had a gambler's superstitious distaste for counting his chips; but he knew that he had nearly doubled the six hundred dollars. But Manders, too, had been winning. In the last hour he had won three heavy pots on his own deal. He had lost on his own deal, too; but never heavily. It could have been—it probably was—sheer coincidence; but Tom still watched the big man's hands.

Manders was extending the pack to be cut now. The fingers of his other hand were playing carelessly with the gold coins in front of him. He turned a last coin carelessly as he picked up the cards and began to deal. And

Tom Carter caught his breath softly. That last coin was worn and shiny. More than just shiny—its center was polished! Polished until a tiny golden mirror, less than half an inch in diameter, had been formed in it. Only for an instant had it been visible. Jack Manders' hands hid it now; it lay just under the deck as he dealt with his customary clumsy slowness. Tom's eyes were half admiring as he watched. The trick was new to him. And the little yellow mirror would not be easy to use. It accounted, of course, for the brightness of the lamp overhead, for the powerful lenses of Manders' spectacles, for the slowness with which he dealt.

The deal finished, Manders covered the telltale coin with the hand in which he held his cards until the betting before the draw was over. Once more he held the deck above it as he gave cards to the players who asked for them. As he resumed his own hand he turned the coin over carelessly, moving it a little to one side. Tom marked its new position, kept his veiled eyes fixed on it while he thought. Manders was in his power now. At least two of the other players and half a dozen of the onlookers were the sort of men who would take hot-blooded, instant action if they were shown that tiny golden mirror. Tom had only to reach out and turn it over.

And he did not want to do it. It was not the thought of what would happen to Jack Manders that troubled him. It was the idea of the betrayal of one of his own kind—of another, a second betrayal, he found himself thinking. He felt no liking, no respect for the gross-bodied sharper across the table; yet somehow he was closer, more nearly akin to him than to anybody else in the room. But he had promised Nancy. It occurred to him suddenly, a little startlingly, that for two hours he had not thought of Nancy.

Tom had thrown in his hand before the draw. Jack Manders was raking in the pot now; his hands were busy stacking the chips he had won. Tom took a bank-note from the pile at his elbow and pushed it across the table. "If you don't mind, I'd like a gold-piece for luck," he said easily.

He had picked up the coin before Manders could speak or move. The big man stared darkly across the table at him. There was anger in his eyes.

But Tom smiled gayly as he spun the gold-piece in his fingers. "Maybe I better put this away, at that," he said cheerfully. "It could be I'll need it to buy my breakfast." Casually, as Manders' eyes hung on his movements, he dropped the coin into a pocket of his vest. "Still, I might not," he went on carelessly. "I feel mighty lucky tonight. And there's nothing I like much better than a tough, square poker-game. If you should feel like taking the limit off the betting, I might break you tonight."

There had been relief in Manders' eyes as Tom pocketed the coin. Plainly he had decided that chance had governed its choice. As plainly he meant to do nothing that might lead to its examination.

"If it's high stakes you want, Mister," he said harshly, "you can have them. I'm a gambling man, too!"

THREE hours later Tom Carter sat staring thoughtfully across the table at Jack Manders. "Cards?" the big man was asking. His voice was thick; it sounded drunken. His heavy square face was white now, and beaded with tiny drops of perspiration.

Those three hours had passed quickly for him. Though they had not left their chairs the four other players had long since dropped out of the game. It had become a savage personal duel between Tom Carter and Jack Manders, a duel which Tom had been winning. All of the bank-notes lay on his side of the table now, and a good half of the gold. His unset diamond lay on top of the piled notes; and under them was the folded sheet of foolscap that represented Davy Wilson's farm.

"How many?" Manders demanded impatiently. Tom looked down at his hand again. He had opened the betting by shoving five twenty-dollar gold-pieces into the center of the table; a bet made without even looking at his cards, in careless dependence on the floodtide of his luck. When Manders had raised him a hundred he had raised back the same amount. Not until Manders had responded with a five-hundred-dollar raise had he picked up his cards. He had smiled faintly then; but he had met the raise. He hesitated for another moment now; then discarded slowly.

"Three cards," he said evenly.

Manders gave him the three cards. The big man was dealing much more quickly, less clumsily now. Tom let them lie face down on the table. Manders laid down the deck. "I'm playing these," he said. He began to push the remainder of his gold into the center of the table. "That's six hundred 'n' twenty there," he grunted. He drew a heavy repeating watch from his pocket, stripped two diamond rings from his thick fingers, unscrewed the diamond stud from his ruffled shirt front. "The watch cost me five hundred," he said thickly. "The rings're worth fifteen hundred for the two. The breastpin cost me eighteen hundred. I'm playing the lot of 'em for three thousand. That's fair!"

Tom nodded gently. "That's fair," he agreed. He had not looked at the three new cards. Now he turned their corners up slowly, one after the other. His face did not change. For a minute he stared expressionlessly at the heaped gold in the center of the table. Then he began to count out bank-notes and gold. "That calls you, Mister," he said quietly at last.

A savage smile had spread across the other man's white, sweating face. He turned his hand over with a quick, triumphant gesture. "Full house! Kings on aces!" he cried harshly.

Tom faced his hand deliberately, a card at a time. Behind him he heard somebody expel his breath in a long whistling gasp. "Four treys!" a voice said reverently. "Drew to a pair of treys for a ten-thousand-dollar pot! I never seen such poker!"

The big man had sagged back into his chair. His heavy face was gray and weary; the life had gone out of his eyes. "That cleans me out," he muttered. Then he was sitting erect again, and his eyes were bright with a new hope. "There's my big saddle gelding," he said quickly. "He's worth three hundred, if you can use a horse."

Tom's lips tightened. He nodded slowly. "I reckon I can use a horse," he said softly. He counted out fifteen broad twenty-dollar gold-pieces, pushed them toward Jack Manders. He drew the rest of the huge pot to his side of the table. Manders thrust the cards after it.

"Deal them!" he said fiercely.

IN the cheerless first light of dawn, Tom rode through the Wilson's gate. He rode the tall gelding, led Davy Wilson's mare. There was a light in the kitchen; as he led the mare toward the barn the door opened and Davy stumbled sleepily into the yard.

"What happened? Did you get into trouble? We've been worrying. Nancy didn't go to bed till an hour ago. What happened, anyway?"

Tom dropped the mare's reins and reached into his breast pocket. He held out the folded foolscap sheet. "Here's your farm back," he said quietly. "I got it back the same way you lost it. . . . I reckon I'll be going now." He swung the gelding's head toward the road.

"But—but aren't you— I mean, Nancy said—" The boy's voice died away as he looked up into Tom Carter's set white face. "Aren't you even going to wait to say good-by to her?"

"No. You tell her—" His mind sought wearily for the words that would make her understand. But all he could think of was something he had once heard a preacher say. Something about "a dog returning to its vomit." That wasn't a message you could leave for a girl. He tightened the reins, touched the gelding's flank with one heel.

"Just tell her I've gone to Texas."

High Lights of the New Books

A TIME for

CHAPTER ONE

WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

MEN and women who have always been secure come to feel that life will stay the way it is, or that it will "get back to normal" after a disturbance. It did not seem possible in Europe in 1913 that anything fearful was about to happen. The signs were there; but they were disregarded because the Western world had known a hundred years of security. And in 1918 it did not seem possible in Europe or America that we should fail to find a way back to the "blue remembered hills" of the prewar world, which we had learned to accept as the normal lot of man.

From Poland to Pearl Harbor many Americans indulged this desire to think that life can stay put. Faced with a world that was turning inside out, we pretended that wars and revolutions and the fall of empires were blights that came to other people—not to us, unless we asked for trouble. We dreamed that we had only to mind our own business in order to save our familiar and fortunate way of life.

When such banal dreams are dispelled, men are likely to go to the other extreme. Alarmed at finding that life does not stand still, even for ostriches, they conclude that everything must alter radically, and for the worse. They change overnight from believers in a static world to believers in a revolution. Deploring revolution, they think that everything has gone to the dogs. Thus their last state is even more will-less than their first. They never learn that if man has firm intentions the flow of life can be directed, at least in part, down a desired channel.

Hitler has presumably convinced everyone that the world we have lived in cannot remain exactly the way it was; but he has not thereby shown that it must be remade on a new pattern. He may just as well have shown that it must live up to itself, becoming an example of the virtues of a civilization. In fact Hitler may have proved, not the need for an overturning and a Götterdämmerung, but the need for creative conservatism. When he wrote that "something has come to an end," he wrote the truth; but the interpretation which history puts upon the sentence may differ from that intended by the author. He meant that our Western world has come to an end; it may be that what has ended is the period of the betrayal of that world. The savages who assail us may teach us to re-examine our faith, to review the greatness of our tradition, to remember that we have not done it justice.

We shall be more disposed toward this reform if we understand that the crisis of today is no accident. Such plagues as Hitler are not irrelevant to history, like falling stars. They happen only in bad times, in a world whose institutions are failing to meet the demands of life. At such times the great question is whether the failure is irreversible, or whether there is still a chance for renewal. If the first is true today, Hitler is right in his interpretation of his own sentence. If the second is true, we can save our civilization by serving it zealously.

The word "serve" covers a multitude of efforts. Our enemies deny each article of our Western faith. They think we are sentimental in morals, greedy in economics, anarchic in politics. They know that many inhabitants of our world agree with them, and that our will to total effort is thereby weakened. They think the time has come when they can seize power from our fumbling hands, not to write new rules, but to abolish all rules for the benefit of the buccaneer. The degree of their success is a measure of the accuracy of their judgment.

Luckily, however, as it became clear that the enemy had nothing but corruption to offer in the place of the world he was destroying, the will of all good men hardened. The United Nations were united by shock, to save the world from wreck. The motive may be sufficient for victory; but it will not inspire us afterwards to the long task of warding off fresh challenges by making our way of life good enough so that most men respect it. This can only be done if we know the causes for the disrepute into which our world fell, and insist on curing them.

Can reason and virtue strengthen the human will as much as madness and hate? The question cannot be answered during a war, for many special forces are then at work upholding the will. But when the war is over the question becomes paramount. It is our duty as Americans to answer "yes." This is the task that has been prepared for us by history. When George Washington first stood on the divide of the Alleghanies and looked at the western country, he said to himself that Providence must have laid some new responsibility upon the people to whom it had given such grandeur and such hope. We have long enjoyed the benefactions of Providence; the consequent responsibility has caught up with us at last.

We dare not say that Providence is asking the impossible. We have learned in grief what happens to a world that strays too far from its moral purpose. All men desire life, and we have lately seen that a social order without our moral purpose fails to sustain life. Therefore we must strengthen our purpose. The duty to take a lead in this reform is put upon us Americans because of our long good luck. This means that America must grow up fast. The process may not be as hard as it sounds, for we are living in a forcing house of history. The heat is on us, and we must either grow quickly or die. The time for the second-rate is past; in an apocalyptic day, fate itself calls the bluff.

The contemplation of principles can never be popular. Principles bring, not comfort, but obligations and hard choices. They are "the thorns of life on which we bleed." Only in a mood of high seriousness can people face their principles for more than a polite few minutes on Sunday. Yet face them we must, because we are called on to perform prodigies in the field of works. And the works will not be accomplished unless we first renew our faith. Those who are called to live in a day of terror must learn to accept high seriousness much of the time.

In the early years of our Republic the United States was an oligarchy. The tone of public life was set by a few hundred or a few thousand men. In an oligarchy the virtues or the vices of the few can communicate themselves to the entire state. Luckily for us our original

Lt.-Commander Agar saw service also in World War I; has been a newspaper editor and the author of books such as his Pulitzer Prize winner "Land of the Free." You may not always agree with him, but you will find him courageous, stimulating and both fair- and high-minded.

GREATNESS

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leaders were born to greatness; they gave the public life of the country a Roman flavor. But today we cannot be saved by a few men. In the intervening years we have chosen to become a thoroughgoing democracy, thus imposing upon ourselves and our neighbors the obligation of helping to serve the state. We can no longer delegate the job of facing first principles to a group of our betters. We must all take part actively. And we must be unforgiving with ourselves if we fail to do so. For the price of failure is the death of our world.

As R. H. Tawney has said, at a time like this a nation makes a decision even when it refuses to decide. This is what we did in the years after 1918. The whole Western world, working in unity for once, made the decision not to decide. Thereby we let bad enough alone; we pretended that the institutions of society were working well; we denied that there was need to overhaul them in the light of principles, or to discuss principles at all. The result was ten years of triviality, followed by ten years of collapse, followed by the world-wide civil war of today.

Already those decades, with their belief that if problems were ignored they would go to sleep, seem far away. Yet to recapture their mood we have only to recall a few of the events of 1935-1936, the tragic years when the Axis revolt was allowed to become inevitable. History has rarely given such a copybook lesson on the evil of ignoring principles. Into a world which dreaded the idea of war and which believed that things which were too unpleasant simply did not happen, Italy brought a shudder of alarm by preparing to attack Ethiopia. It was a test case for the League and for the Kellogg Pact—and a peculiarly troublesome test case, because there were plausible excuses for pretending that Ethiopia might be better off if Italy was allowed to introduce "good government" and "civilization." Perhaps the world should be excused for not understanding at that time what fascism meant; it cannot be excused for not understanding what promises meant.

ETHIOPIA had been allowed to join the League and to sign the Kellogg Pact. If principles were admitted as a factor in conduct, Ethiopia was entitled to protection. If principles were not admitted as a factor in conduct, nobody was entitled to anything except what he could snatch with his own arms or bite with his own teeth. It all seems so simple today; but in 1935 it seemed far away and confused. Yet the only confusion was in our own hearts and minds, because we had no principles by which to judge conduct. We thought it was rhetoric when the Emperor of Ethiopia cried:

"Do the people of the world not yet realize that by fighting on until the bitter end I am not only performing my sacred duty to my people, but standing guard in the last citadel of collective security? Are they too blind to see that I have my responsibilities to the whole of humanity to face? *I must still hold on until my tardy allies appear.* And if they never come, then I say prophetically and without bitterness: The West will perish."

by

Herbert Agar

How many murdered nations have since held on for their tardy allies to appear? And always in vain. And always for the same reason: that none of us had firm principles, and therefore all of us could find excuses for doing nothing. We found more than excuses: we praised ourselves as realists, as hardheaded sensible men who took the economic view of life and who could not be moved by moralistic propaganda. It is human to sin and to be selfish; but to boast of our crimes and to make a virtue of them is as sacrilegious as the black mass.

We fooled ourselves exceedingly; but we did not fool Adolf Hitler. In March, 1936, Hitler took his greatest gamble; he reoccupied the Rhineland. When the gamble succeeded he felt that he had judged the democracies: they had not only lost their principles, but they were so afraid of war that they had even lost prudence and foresight. After March 7th, 1936, Hitler was confident he could beat the world. War had become inevitable, not merely because of the evil in one man's heart, but because of the slackness in all men's lives.

The demilitarization of the Rhineland was in the Locarno agreements which had been voluntarily accepted by Germany in 1925. France, England and Germany were co-signers. The world had welcomed Locarno as a step forward toward peace and amity. Hitler himself had promised in 1935 that the German government would "uphold and fulfill all obligations arising out of the Locarno Treaty, so long as the other partners are on their side ready to stand by that pact. In respecting the demilitarized zone the German government considers its action as a contribution to the appeasement of Europe." If promises meant anything, here was a time to enforce them. If promises meant nothing, we were back in the world of Gauleiter Wagner who defended Hitler's action with these words: "Anything that benefits the German people is right; anything that harms the German people is wrong."

If security meant anything, here was a time to fight. The reoccupation of the Rhineland changed the whole strategic picture in Europe. France could no longer take effective help to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia or Rumania—all, at that time, her allies. The Maginot Line was no longer a base from which an offensive might be launched; it was transformed overnight into a wall behind which to hide. Hitler was handed the whole of Europe east of the Rhine. From that time forth he was prepared to go to war if necessary, and he could not be bluffed.

It is easy to look back today and sneer at our blindness and our moral palsy; but it is more important to understand how we contracted such diseases. For these things were not done by other men. They were done by us. It was we, the citizens of the free world, who watched helplessly, supinely, as if from a sickbed, while we lost our last chance to avoid the blood and sweat and tears of today. It was indeed a sickbed on which all the democracies were lying, a sickbed of inertia where only negative motives prevailed. Such a motive was the overpowering fear of war. The whole of human life has proved that order cannot be maintained unless there is willingness to use force, that justice cannot be promoted unless there is order, that peace cannot exist unless there is justice. Yet the fear of war (as opposed to the love of

peace) was so great that no free nation dared to preserve order.

Everyone complained about the destruction of Locarno. Everyone pointed out that the Rhineland *coup* had nullified France's eastern alliances. But no one except Poland offered to act. Poland said she would march against Germany if France would march also. But Poland was rebuffed, was left to be murdered alone on a later and even darker day while her allies stared helplessly across the Siegfried Line. Four years after Haile Selassie had spoken, it was no longer possible for even a great army to hold on until its tardy allies appeared.

The point of recalling those days is that while they look so ignominious now they seemed so sensible at the time. Most people were relieved when Hitler was not attacked for putting troops into the Rhineland. France and Poland were considered quarrelsome for even discussing action. We still thought we lived in a world where utter disaster was impossible; therefore, we should not "ask for trouble" by taking small wrongs too seriously. If an Ethiopia was flung to the wolves here, a Rhineland there, the "practical man" would avoid an undue fuss. However distasteful it may be to remember such conduct, we must learn what made us behave that way. . . .

Some of the American press, to be sure, took a wise stand as to what the British and French should have done in 1935 and 1936. But we should not feel too comforted by the behavior of the American press. The American press was bold because the idea of American action was too bizarre in those days even for discussion. There are never many appeasers while the danger is far away. Even from a sickbed it is easy to see how other men should respond when their morals or their lives are attacked. It is only when the danger comes close that the reasons for doing nothing begin to look pretty.

After the fall of France, when the war moved out into the Atlantic and began to threaten the United States with obvious immediacy, the tone of the American press changed. Appeasement, defeatism, inaction, ostrichism—all the old sickbed whines were then repeated here. We too began to talk about "peace" as if it could be had by not doing things. We too became a proof of how far the civilized world had disintegrated from within. We too discovered that the spiritual values on which we had once lived were eroded. We too waited for the enemy to kick us in the face.

It might be argued that in March, 1941, when the Lend-Lease Bill was signed, the United States had at last served notice on Germany that there was to be no compromise, that the fact of war was admitted. Yet the Lend-Lease Bill was defended in Congress, by Administration leaders, on the ground that it was an act to keep us out of war. We were the last of the "tardy allies" for whom the world waited, and we too allowed our enemies to pick their time and place.

IT was one common illness which afflicted the whole of our civilization, and the United States had her full share. Like the rest of the victorious nations which had earned on the field of battle the chance to make a better future, we refused to decide anything in 1919 and the following years. We refused to examine first principles. We insisted the world was a jolly place, which had happily survived a bit of German-trouble and which could now settle down to being itself again. We treated the means of life as if they were ends, degrading the moral status of our world and making possible a revolt against civilization itself. Now, at last, our errors have caught up with us. We can no longer wait, or palter, or turn over on our moral sickbeds and hide our faces against the wall. The hospital itself is on fire.

An example of our confusion between means and ends is the tendency to put economic problems first on our list of woes. The economic problems are a sign of our sickness; and they are most painful—just as boils, which can also be most painful, are a sign that something is wrong with the blood. No ointment on the boils will make the blood healthy. No tinkering with the economic system, even if it leads to much-needed reform, will cure the malady of our times.

For decades the Western world has talked as if civilization were a by-product of economic progress. But the essence of civilization is a restraint, imposed either by divine law or by reason, upon the instincts of man. Civilization means rules and promises which are kept. It requires, not only the conquest of the material environment, but the discipline and the standards with which to judge the value of acts and thoughts and passions. Without such discipline and standards, victories over the forces of nature may be more disastrous than defeats. We now know that a people can be heir to all the technics and the knowledge of the ages and still behave pathologically, like hordes of vicious and sadistic children.

Power to control the material environment, which is the economic aspect of life, is a means to an end. The end, which is civilization, rests upon power to discriminate in the name of moral values. The second power cannot be won by studying and improving the economic machine. A world which thinks it can understand itself and cure itself by concentrating on the economic problem is a world which has failed to put first things first, which has substituted the means for the end.

The idea that our great culture—freedom and science and respect for the divine in man; Judaism and the Christian Church and the classic passion for clarity—the idea that all this is a by-product of economic progress is the heresy that helped bring Nazism and the Axis barbarity into our world. Implicit in the heresy is the thought that anything which may be wrong with society can be cured by still further economic progress. If a man's soul is sick, raise his income and let him add another bathroom to his cottage.

Millions of citizens of our Western world have believed that the problems of life were on their way to being solved by such progress. Some thought the progress would be brought by capitalism; others insisted that before life could be made good capitalism must give way to a socialist or communist state. But under one dispensation or another it was agreed that economic progress was the harbinger of a happy world. Public discussion, therefore, tended to become an argument about which method to use. Men wrote books to prove that the decline of capitalism was certain, or that the success of communism was impossible, and they thought they were adding to our understanding of life. But fewer and fewer men wrote books on moral philosophy, on the purpose for which this much-discussed economic machine was to be used.

One of the disheartening facts that modern man has to face is that in spite of generations of economic progress the world has not grown better. In terms of goods and services and population and standards of living, the world has gone forward. Temporarily, millions of citizens found life less painful, more agreeable. But the good society did not come to pass. What came to pass was world war, revolution, bitterness and triviality, and then the great depression. Neither capitalist nor communist progress brought dignity, self-respect or comfort to the heart of man. The whole vast expansion of production during a century and a half did not add permanently to man's inner peace; but it added to man's power to enslave and brutalize his neighbors. As Hitler pointed out, for the first time in history the technological means are now available for one nation to conquer the globe.

Used as a means, as the servant of a social philosophy, economic progress might have been a world-blessing.

Used as an end, as a social philosophy in itself, it proved a fraud. Modern literature is one long sign of the despair which settled upon our world when economic progress was found insufficient. No new social philosophy arose to fill the void. The failure of Russia to build a free or a magnanimous society was the last step in the process of disillusion. Here was the ultimate hope for those who believed that the right economic scheme could save mankind. When communism in Russia produced an Asiatic tyranny, the world of pure materialism was discredited. What could we put in its place?

THE nations which shared the democratic heritage of the West had a chance to provide the social and moral ideal for which the world was longing. They did not take the chance. It was time for a noble restatement of a noble cause, time for the moral and intellectual clarity of that lost world of light in which Hamilton and Madison and Jay wrote *The Federalist*, time for grandeur and adventure. But our leaders were not in a mood for high thoughts. They were in a mood of complacency, which is the enemy of all things noble, and of caution, which is the enemy of adventure. Mr. Hoover told the American people in 1928 that we had "come nearer to the abolition of poverty, to the abolition of fear of want, than humanity had ever reached before." It was insensitive of Mr. Hoover not to know that men's spirits were already a little heavy, and that they could not be assuaged with the news that our larders were heavy too.

Mr. Hoover did not know, and could not have been expected to know, that he spoke to a world which stood on the brink of despair and suicide. But he could have known that the world was sickening for boldness of thought, largeness of vision. Because he missed this fact, the leadership of the new world failed like the leadership of the old. Mr. Hoover was as inadequate as Stanley Baldwin or Georges Bonnet or the Social Democrats in Germany. They were all inadequate for the same reason: they had forgotten how to think in terms of the moral purpose of our culture.

While these small minds frustrated themselves, the faith in physical progress, in naïve materialism, was dying and the world was waiting, hoping, for something to come forward to take its place. The great tradition of the West was there to be used; but it is an exigent tradition, demanding much from those who honestly profess it. So no one challenged us to take ourselves seriously. There was much talk about democracy, which was no longer the fighting cause our fathers knew. There was much talk about freedom, which was on the verge of contracting as the depression began to grind the lives of increasing millions. There was much talk of equality, which was nonexistent. But the words were used like incantations, not like the counters of clear thought. As incantations they were of no use. They had been too often debased, and had lost their magic value. The magic could only be restored by rethinking them, reliving them. That was too bold a course for a leader to recommend.

So the greatest of opportunities was neglected during the greatest of emergencies. Nothing good was brought forward to fill the emptiness in man's spirit; therefore, it was filled by something bad. It was filled by Nazism, a dynamic but uncreative revolt against civilization. It was not in Germany alone that people turned to this new and terrible creed. All across the world were men and women for whom the tension had become unbearable. They could no longer live.

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born.

In frustration and despair they gave themselves to revolution against everything they had long wanted to believe.

On January 5th, 1933, Calvin Coolidge, whose life was a series of symbolic acts, died. The postwar world, which had decided not to decide, died with him. On the thirtieth of the same month Hindenburg asked Hitler to become Chancellor of the German Government. The new war had begun.

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The statement that economics is a means, and not an end, does not imply that economics can be ignored. It implies that life can neither be understood with clarity nor lived with dignity unless the modern confusion as to the role of economics is resolved.

Economics is the study of wealth—its production, distribution, and consumption. Because wealth is usually distributed by means of money, economics includes the study of the theory of money. But the primary subject is wealth—that is, goods and services. And the purpose of the study of economics is to help us define what can or cannot be done in the use of the wealth of nations. The purpose is never to define what ought or ought not to be done. That is the province of ethics. And the province of politics is to find ways of doing what ought to be done.

At a given moment in history there are many ways of organizing and using the wealth of a country. In terms of the technology of today it is possible for the United States to have a variety of economic systems, or combinations of systems. The study of economics can help us to gauge the wealth-producing capacities of the various systems, and the burdens that each system would put upon the citizen. It cannot help us to decide which system we prefer. That depends on what sort of people we are. For example, let us assume that the Nazi nightmare comes true and that a slave system based on the labor of conquered and bullied peoples proves the most effective way of producing wealth. This is theoretically possible. If it comes true we shall have added a distressing item to our knowledge of economic fact. But we shall not therefore embrace and copy the Nazi system. The issue would be so clear, so black and white, that we would not be tempted to confuse means and ends. We would say unhesitatingly that the production of wealth is a means to a good life, and that we refuse to use a system of production that makes our concept of a good life impossible.

Sometimes the issue is not conveniently black and white. Suppose it were proved that communism can produce more goods and services than the variety of economic systems now in use in America. Would we therefore choose communism? Only if we were convinced that it would not only produce and distribute more wealth *but do it in a manner that fosters freedom and self-dependence and the other moral aims of our American life.*

Much of the violence and the vanity of the arguments about communism would be removed if we could treat it merely as a proposed economic system, a proposed means for forwarding certain ends. It is a system we are using in parts of our economy today—for example the Postal Service. We would be glad to use it in the whole of our economy if we knew that it was the best means available for promoting the American idea. Many of us believe that total communism would be the death of the American idea, on the ground that as soon as the state provides all the jobs the state becomes the worst form of tyranny—a tyranny run by political hacks and panders, or else by one man who is ruthless enough to starve millions of his fellow citizens in order to enforce his way.

Yet the question whether communism as an economic system serves or does not serve the idea which is America might be discussed in an atmosphere of reason and good faith. What cannot be so discussed is communism as an end in itself, for communism as as end in itself is

necessarily a fraud and therefore a menace to life. How can a mere system of production set itself up as a guide to morality and to man's relations with himself and with his God? Communism has become a conspiracy, instead of a plan offered for sensible debate, precisely because it has never distinguished between economic method and moral aim.

There is nothing heretical or disturbing—there is nothing even original—about Marx the prophet. He reaffirmed the ancient dream of man—the longing for justice and fellowship during our lonely days on this revolving prison. And he reaffirmed the equality of suffering.

> If here today the cloud of thunder lours
> Tomorrow it will hie on far behests;
> The flesh will grieve on other bones than ours
> Soon, and the soul will mourn in other breasts.

Man has always known that the brotherhood of sorrow is a primary fact of life. It transcends the trivial pleasures and privileges that divide soul from soul. The fact that none of man's deepest desires can be wholly satisfied, that the spirit is unappeasable, helps to remind us that we are all brothers, all in some sense children of another world. From the dawn of time man has been bound to his fellow man by this grief—bound not only to the living but to the innumerable dead. Grief for the lost garden where the world began, grief for an unattainable idea, for a broken love.

The prophets and the poets have tried to state this grief in words that would bring man together. They have tried to tell us that only by sharing the tragic dignity of life on equal terms can we feel ourselves members of one another, and that only as members of one another can we be strong enough to bear the burdens and the exaltations of living.

It is interesting that when Lord Halifax tried to tell the American people of the new unity that has been born in England he said it arose "in the shelters, as men have heard the beating of death's wings and learned how strong are the things by which they are united, compared with the things by which they may seem to be divided."

An English clergyman of the seventeenth century preached a sermon that Karl Marx the prophet (not the economist) would have been proud to sign. In those days the church bell was tolled when a man died, so the neighbors would often send to ask for whom the bell was being tolled. The preacher reminded his parishioners that it was always being tolled for everyone. "No man is an island," he said, "entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a mannor of thy friends, or of thine own were; any man's death diminisheth me, because I am involved in mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee."

John Donne was saying that all men are brothers, which is what Marx the prophet was saying. Yet how much blood has poisoned the ground because men read Marx's book! Marx the prophet has been destroyed by Marx the contumacious economist—which could not have happened if he and his followers had not confused life's machinery with its moral purpose. Marx had two doctrines: one was the doctrine of a noble moral aim, the other was the doctrine of a dubious economic system. And there is hardly a corner of our world where men have not been murdered, tortured, jailed, blackmailed or vilified because, while accepting the moral aim, they question the economic method. As one result of this madness, men of good will have done such harm to one another that the world is in danger of being taken over by devils.

"Any man's death diminisheth me, because I am involved in mankind." This is the same truth that Marx saw as he worked in the British Museum, spurred by indignation at the pain, the sickness, the hunger and the frustration that men were imposing upon one another. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Here is the same eternal hope, restated. Our basic national document does not lay down propositions about the economic means to be used. It states an act of faith about the nature of man: the faith on which our nation rests.

Many Americans have become distrustful of such high language as that of Donne, or of the Declaration of Independence. They prefer to state our national purpose in humbler terms. Maury Maverick, for example, writes: "Democracy to me is liberty plus economic security. To put it in plain language we Americans want to talk, pray, think as we please—and eat regularly. I say this because there is a lot of nonsense in talk about liberty. You cannot fill the baby's bottle with liberty."

No one who loves America is likely to reject the statement. Maury Maverick is writing as the professional tough guy who is tired of "nonsense" about liberty. He has learned to distrust big words as the fig leaves for a bare mind. He is saying in effect that there are a few simple moral aims that we Americans want—that among them are a chance to be healthy and to respect our neighbors; that we are willing to discuss any plans for attaining these ends, but that there is no use promising us all the kingdoms of the earth, or all the plumbing, if the price of such glory is abandoning our aims.

THE age-old temptation to confuse aims with methods sometimes comes to us in a most perplexing way. For example, economists point out that one reason for the farm problem in America is the great increase in productivity, as a result of technical progress, combined with a relatively inelastic demand. Many more farm goods have been produced, but it was not possible before the war to find a much larger market. The economic solution which would be recommended by the textbooks is for a number of farmers to leave the land and to take jobs in factories or in shops for whose production there is a growing demand.

The textbooks are correct, from their point of view. If there were nothing to consider except economics, the thing to do would be to have fewer farmers. And if further technological progress developed, we should then have still fewer farmers. And if the agrobiologists were to make their fantasies come true, we might have almost no farmers. So much for the purely economic point. But concealed in the farm problem is a moral and political decision which America is called upon to make. The decision will be made whether we ignore it or whether we face it; but if we ignore it the decision will be made by default, which is not the proper way to meet fate.

The decision rests on our answer to the question, Do we want fewer farmers? Farming is not only an economic system for producing bacon and eggs; it is also a way of life. When it is a successful and relatively prosperous way of life it produces a type of citizen which America has valued highly. Many of our great national leaders have believed that the health and well-being, and even the freedom, of our society is promoted by having a large number of farmers. Let us assume that we agree with them. Are we nevertheless to allow the number of farmers to diminish drastically? If the economic machine is allowed a free hand, millions of the marginal producers, and millions more of the migratory workers, will probably be driven off the land after the war. Do we want to interfere with the economic machine? Do we want to prop up, by "uneconomic" methods, a system of

production which pays a social dividend? Can we find a way to put farming on its feet without such "uneconomic" aid? Or don't we care what happens to farming as a way of life, to our farmers as a class?

All these are political decisions. They can only be made wisely if we distinguish at every moment between the moral purpose of our society and the economic machine. It is never good to say that such-and-such developments are taking place, and must continue to take place, because of economic law. Why must they? If they are undesirable developments it is our duty to interfere. Economics knows nothing of desirable or undesirable, good or bad—which is precisely why the great decisions must all be made on political and moral, not on economic, grounds. When the decisions have been made, it is the purpose of the science of economics to tell us how to work them. If the decisions are unworkable they must be revised. But within the realm of what is possible, no healthy society can allow its ends, its choices, to be determined by the economic machine.

The relation between economic necessity and moral choice is well stated in *The City of Man:* "Projects of political and ethical interference in economic life remain Utopian unless they are in agreement with the interests of groups strong enough to enforce their ideal premises. So far we must accept the materialistic point of view. But, beyond this initial coincidence, such premises or principles act far more powerfully than as mere labels for material interests, and they acquire a dynamic power of their own. Marxism would hardly have gripped the masses if its economic motivation had not been implemented with the resources of a moral will to justice. In the same way, Washington's and Lincoln's wars would have collapsed in defeat at their very outbreak if Washington had cared for little more than the abolition of the tea-tax and Lincoln had fought as the *condottiere* of New England industrialism. This means that an economic reform must start from the two-fold foundation of technical necessity and of moral, or religious, purpose. A real *Realpolitik* is applied ethics."[1]

The problem of unemployment is an illustration of the importance of this principle. Unemployment has been described as "the chief cancer in modern society." It is the most violent expression of the old paradox of poverty amid plenty, rising income and deepening social misery. This paradox "has emerged in all industrial revolutions." Professor Tawney points out, "to the confusion of those who forget that 'the timid, staring creature, man,' is so compounded as to require not only money, but light, air, and water, not to mention such uneconomic goods as tranquillity, beauty, and affection." More than sixty years ago Henry George told us this problem would wreck our world if we did not face it. "It is the riddle which the Sphinx of fate puts to our civilization," he wrote, "and which not to answer is to be destroyed. . . . The despair and the revolt of mankind which made possible the Nazi revolution could have been prevented if the Western world had faced unemployment realistically, putting first things first. For it must now be clear to everyone that we had only to face the problem in order to take the curse off it. We had only to say that the soul and the honor of man come first, and that these demand that our fellow human beings shall not be idle and in want in a world where there is an adequate supply of food, coal, iron, oil, and men and women who are technically ingenious. In the United States alone, for example, Stuart Chase estimates that during the 1930's one hundred million man-years of work were wasted through unemployment; two hundred billion dollars of production were never produced. He reminds us that this is "the equivalent of a $6,000 house for every family in the country, or enough to build the railroad system of the nation five times over."[2]

PREVIOUSLY the same thing had happened in Germany. Why? The economic machine was ailing, and no one had the strength to say that men must come first and money second, that man's well-being is the end and the economic machine is the means, and that men must be put to work, regardless of any necessary violence to the machine, producing food for the hungry and clothes for the cold. We could patch the injured machine later. But all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot put together again a people's lost faith in the good will of their society.

If we had remembered this truth from the beginning we might have found a solution to the horror of unemployment—or at least a mitigation. But we were content to follow the rules. We were content to be negative. So the necessary will to put the unemployed to work was never generated by those who believe in the human race. But it was generated by a man who despises the human race. And when the will took form, and the order was given, it was obeyed. For malignant purposes Hitler decided that all men in Germany should go to work. And immediately they did. He did not ask the advice of the experts, who would have told him all the best reasons for not acting. He commanded the experts to devise means. And the experts immediately found that a country need not go bankrupt for monetary reasons, that it need not go bankrupt so long as it has men and raw materials. So everyone in Germany went to work on preparations to kill the world. And now everyone in America will go to work on preparations to resist the murder. It is a pity that the work could not have been lavished on preparations to save man from these grisly years of blood.

It is not suggested that we could have solved our problem of unemployment by a copy or adaptation of the Nazi system. The Nazi solution meant putting the entire nation upon a war basis. In order to maintain the tension which makes a war economy possible, it was soon necessary to have a war. During the war the Nazi economy has been propped up by means of plunder. But plunder is not a system of economics. It is a system of piracy.

Pirates conquer a merchant vessel, kill the crew, take the cargo, and live for a while like princes. Then the cargo is exhausted and they are poor again, until they sight another ship. In the same way, the Nazis conquer a country, kill or enslave the inhabitants, steal the goods, and for a few months they have butter. But when the country has been sacked there is nothing to do but conquer another country.

If this is an economic system, it can only be described as a system based on the export of troops. Germany goes without butter in order to build and equip an army. When the army is ready it is sent abroad (in lieu of the more conventional exports of a capitalist system) to steal the butter which the Germans had denied themselves. The system may seem like fun to the Germans, so long as someone else is producing goods for their army to steal.

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[1] *The City of Man: A Declaration on World Democracy.* New York, 1940. It was my good fortune to be a member of the committee which prepared this declaration. The experience had a deep effect on my thinking. I can never be sure, therefore, when I am repeating what I learned from my fellow members on the committee. So I make a blanket apology to my confreres for all the thoughts I may have stolen.

[2] *The Road We Are Traveling, 1914-1942* Twentieth Century Fund, New York, 1942. Mr. Chase's figures are borne out by other students. Lewis Corey estimates the income losses for 1930-1935 at 154 billion dollars. The National Resources Committee estimates the losses for 1930-1937 at 205 billion dollars.

But the system is self-defeating. By the time the Germans have conquered the world and sacked the world, they have destroyed the world and themselves along with it. They cannot eat their own tanks and airplanes, and presumably they will not choose to eat their own soldiers.

It was estimated by Glen Stadler of the United Press, on May 17, 1942, that Hitler's firing squads had already killed about 400,000 Europeans in the process of looting conquered areas of 36 billion dollars in cash and goods. The system is almost as wasteful as our own depression-system of not producing goods. There is one quality of the Nazis, however, which we could profitably copy: their effective will to act. Having decided to abolish unemployment by means of a system of piracy, they did the job. If we had decided to abolish it, at any temporary cost, by methods consistent with the American system, it seems likely that we too would have succeeded.

The air is full of brave promises, today, as to what we shall all do about this problem after the war. Sir Stafford Cripps tells the British people, "After the prodigious expense of life and wealth which this war will have entailed, the scourges of unemployment, malnutrition and unnecessary ill health and waste of human ability, which our educational and social system permitted in the past, will no longer be tolerated." And the sober *Times* of London approves, saying that a program to raise the standards of nutrition, housing and health would "create an effective demand for human labor and human service, which is one real safeguard against the scourge of unemployment."

Is this only a belated echo of Lloyd George's "land fit for heroes"? Or is it the beginning of a new approach to economics? The answer depends upon the strength of our will. There has never been a time since the flowering of modern technology when we could not "create an effective demand for human labor and human service" if we were willing to pay the price. But the price is high, since it includes farsightedness.

IF we are prepared to cultivate farsightedness and to exercise our wills, it seems probable we shall have both the leadership and the opportunity to build better than has ever been done in the past. At the instigation of the United States, many of the United Nations have signed lend-lease agreements which offer the world a new hope. Secretary Hull knows that economic freedom for all is a prerequisite to freedom for any but the most powerful. He has made this truth the basis for America's foreign policy. The United States has urged upon her allies a document pledging them to "Agree upon action . . . directed to the expansion, by appropriate international and domestic measures, of production, employment and the exchange and consumption of goods, which are the material foundations of the liberty and welfare of all peoples."

Those undramatic words contain man's best chance of a new order based on increasing justice, an order that can do more than tinker with the problem of want in the midst of possible sufficiency. The postwar attempts to destroy man's hopes and to wreck civilization will center upon the destruction of this policy. All our little short-term selfishnesses will work on the side of the enemy. Can we cultivate the long view, so that we may pay the price exacted for a better world? We can be sure that the men who hate our society and want to kill it will be working busily in collaboration with the men who can conceive of no policy but the preservation of the machinery to which they have grown accustomed.

The latter are the men who throughout the depression sought to preserve the economic machine, with all its wheezes and its loose parts, by making the decision that nothing could be done. Every attempt to break the trap in which the unemployed were bleeding to death was met with the same question, "Where will the money come from?" The question should have been phrased differently: "Where will be our self-respect, what will become of our spirits, if a nation that has abundant goods continues to allow millions to be in want?" It is a comment on our twisted outlook that such a question, asked in the United States Senate, would have been taken as a sign that the questioner was "visionary" and "impractical."

The "practical" men would have explained that there was no money to save those hundred million man-years of work. No money to save the hope and the good will of all the decent citizens who desired to do that work. No money to redeem from limbo the 200 billion dollars of unproduced production. . . . But it seems that the "practical" men were wrong. The money that would have been needed to do these things was petty cash compared to the money that has been found now that man has a purpose which he puts first.

Every great depression produces a crop of money cranks, of people who have schemes for a new money system that will redeem life from these phases of futility. Obscurely, in their several ways, the money cranks have hold of a sound idea. Bryan was right in saying mankind should not be crucified on a cross of gold. Major Douglas was right in saying that the productive resources of society were being half-strangled. But the critics have been caught in the same fallacy as the men they criticize. They assume that our failure to use our machinery wisely and well is a problem of money, whereas in fact it is a problem of morals. It is the usual failure to put first things first. It is the failure to ask the right questions.

A few years ago the "practical" men and the economic scholars were saying that Hitler was the greatest money crank of all. They announced that he had bankrupted Germany. In fact he had bankrupted the experts and the "practical" men. Today, in the dark continent of his contriving, the experts have been demoted to the job of finding ways and means of serving Hitler's will. (In the democratic world they are allowed to spend their time explaining why it is impossible to do what man desires.) And the "practical" men of yesterday, in Hitler's continent, can now be divided into three classes: those who have been murdered, those who have been put in jail, and those who have been blackmailed into becoming Quislings. It would seem that in our forcing house of history the "practical" view of life is not a success.

All the compromises, all the shifts and evasions, all the refusals to decide, are bound to fail today. Fate, in the strange disguise of Hitler, has called the bluff. For the time being there are only two possible worlds. Either the cruel hordes of destruction, set loose by the despair of man, will conquer our civilization and kill it; or we shall see in time why the challenge came, what we have done to provoke it, *what we must do to make ourselves fit to beat it.* We must keep three truths in mind. First, our civilization is good. There is no cause for modesty about the great tradition we represent, or about the universal quality of our ideals. Second, we have lately neglected to serve this great tradition faithfully. The result has been confusion and self-distrust, a weakening of our power to resist evil which has been one of Hitler's best allies. Third, we must therefore fight this inner weakness at the same time that we fight the enemy in the field. The only way to carry on the inner fight is to understand how and why we have failed, and to begin reforming. This is the essence of creative conservatism.

We shall be told that it is folly to worry about ideas, or to worry about moral improvement, in the midst of a fight for life. But it is not folly. This is the kind of fight we may well lose unless we worry about ideas and morals. There is a little of the Nazi cynic in all of us, a little of the totalitarian despairer about man's power to control himself. It is Hitler's secret weapon. It is all he understands about the mystery of man. But it is enough, so long as we refuse to understand it. We may lose this war, or the fruits of this war, unless we take the trouble to see exactly why the war had to be.

SERPENT *of the* SEAS

An authentic and spirited book about submarines and the men who fight in them.

by Harley F. Cope, Commander, U.S. Navy

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

UNITED STATES SUBMARINES IN THE GREATER WORLD WAR

OUR submarines were prepared and ready for action long before the treacherous Japanese attack on December 7, 1941. Ten years earlier on the China Station, while we moved up and down the coast between Manila and our northern operating base at Tsingtao, China, we were ready to fight whenever we left port. . . .

Once or twice as we passed through the Pescadores Islands to the westward of the Japanese owned island of Formosa we had boats that put into the lee of one of the islands for repairs to the gyro compass. On each occasion there came a Japanese destroyer to order them out gruffly, saying that the islands were closed to foreigners. We were as firm in telling them that it had not come out in the General Orders as yet, and that we knew nothing about it and politely informed them that we had no intention of leaving until the repairs had been effected. And of course we would have been sorry if they had tried to put us out. We had some very itchy fingers in the torpedo rooms.

When the blow was struck on that December morning our submarines at Pearl Harbor and elsewhere merely told the torpedo rooms what we had been preparing to say all along.

"The next one will be a warshot, boys, and make sure it's damn hot."

One of my old second officers on the S-40 on the China Station, Chester Smith, now a Lieutenant Commander, has command of a new submarine. "Smitty" saw that submarine built from the keel up. Putting it in commission he took it on a cruise out to Honolulu, then down to Samoa and the neighboring islands. The boat was all that anyone could wish it to be and in the hands of its Captain the torpedoes went hot and straight. Its gunnery record was something to be proud of.

Somehow, the Japanese got the news of the skill of this officer and endeavored to find out wherein lay the secret of his success. During my frequent visits to his home last year at Kahala, Honolulu, I noticed a different Japanese maid practically every time I went there. They were all very efficient and gave no cause for complaint except that one would work at the Smith home for a week or so, then leave without notice. I asked "Smitty" about it one day and he grinned.

"Must be waiting for me to spill something," he answered.

Forewarned was forearmed. Maid after maid frequented the Smith household and had to report to their espionage center that the Skipper never "talked shop" in his home.

I knew that if and when the time came for the Skipper to answer the call to arms his perfect gunnery score would continue. It did. "Smitty" was out amongst them from the very start. His torpedo had hardly torn a large gaping hole in the first enemy ship when destroyers began to play the death waltz about him. But confidence never left the crew. They had been with their Skipper for too long to have any doubts.

"Smitty" did not have the slightest intention of leaving that unhealthy neighborhood. He rose to periscope depth and sent another torpedo to its mark. That night, despite the vigilance of the Japanese anti-submarine screen, three additional enemy ships were sent hurtling to the bottom whence they would never again lend succor to the men from the land of the Rising Sun. Toward dawn the torpedoes remaining in the submarine numbered two, and with the prizes now to his credit "Smitty" could have chosen the safe way and headed back to Pearl Harbor. But he knew his mission was not yet completed. He still had two torpedoes and that meant more damage to the enemy. A large tanker was torpedoed, set afire and sunk by his remaining shots.

She should have hoisted the broom at her yardarm as she stood into Pearl Harbor later, emblematic of a clean sweep. Enthusiastic hands greeted the grinning, happy but tired crew that swung alongside the dock at the Submarine Base and the Skipper knew that his pretty blond wife and curly-haired son would be waiting there with the others. "Smitty" reported to the authorities that his torpedoes were expended and they had all run "hot." Planes had already reported the wreckage he had made out there on the Pacific. The Admiral wasted no time in awarding him the Navy Cross. "Smitty" was appreciative of the high honor, but quietly informed the authorities that he wanted more torpedoes right away and waved aside all suggestions that he take a short rest. . . .

CHESTER SMITH received another Navy Cross for this second trip, and you will hear of him again as will the Japanese. This officer, known to me for many years, is the perfect submarine officer. Coolness, courage, skill and daring are combined with perfect judgment in him. The Japanese can attest to his ability even under the most trying conditions.

Lieutenant Commander Smith's citation for his first Navy Cross simply read "for especially meritorious conduct as commander of a submarine operating in the southwest

Pacific." The second for which he was awarded the Gold Star in lieu of a Navy Cross was for "outstanding and continued successful actions against the enemy."

In announcing the award of the Navy Cross to four submarine skippers, namely, Lieutenant Commanders Elton Grenfell, Lewis Parks, David White, and Stanley Mosely, the Navy Department announced:

"All but the submarine credited to Lieutenant Commander Grenfell, were attacked in Japanese waters, and in all but that instance the attacks were driven home in the face of intensive enemy air and surface patrols. Only one of our submarines was damaged—that damage was slight—while there was no injury to personnel."

Lieutenant Commander Parks, "Lew" as he is known to his many friends, was my second officer in the S-40 after Chester Smith had been ordered home. His ability as a submarine officer was known to me a long time before he took his boat into enemy waters.

Lew took his submarine through the long stretch from Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay, four thousand miles, without encountering any worthwhile targets. In Tokyo Bay he discovered that the Japanese had awakened to the disconcerting reality that our submarines were able to operate in their backyard, and that we did not need bases at Manila and Guam to carry out such work. The result was that every ship leaving a Japanese port was strongly escorted by surface and aircraft. When Lew saw a large seventeen-thousand-ton enemy ship leaving port, he knew from the strong escort attending it that it bore something very valuable—something the enemy would need for his operations in the South Pacific.

The submarine drew closer to the large Japanese ship and when two white ribbons in the dark green sea suddenly pointed toward it there was not enough time to change course and avoid the torpedoes. One torpedo struck under the stack, the second under the bridge. Water rushed in and in a few minutes another enemy had slid under the seas.

Lew Parks' second officer, Lieutenant Slade Cutter, was known as a great fighter even while he was in the Naval Academy. Besides being the Inter-Collegiate heavyweight boxing champion and having been offered a fat two-year contract to turn "pro," Slade won renown as tackle on the Navy football team by kicking the field goal which cinched the game for his team against the Army.

During my year in the battleship *Idaho* when I was aide to Admiral Taussig, Slade was an ensign on the same ship. I never regretted talking submarines to him and later, seeing him at Pearl Harbor, I knew he was a natural born fighter. When he gets his own command, which will be soon, Slade will be out there forcing an opening on his enemy as he did so well in the ring, then closing in for the kill—most of his bouts ended in knockouts—and his future ones will be also, with him as the victor.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER GRENFELL, during the early months of the war had his submarine in Tokyo Bay, where he searched diligently and persistently for enemy ships. They were difficult to locate. The enemy had learned too well that our boats were able to operate from home waters. Only two ships were located and sunk by Elton Grenfell's submarine during his operating period.

It was very disappointing to him and to his crew to turn eastward and make room for another submarine, for there were still good torpedoes in their tubes. About two-thirds of the way home Captain Grenfell received the welcome news that an enemy submarine was en route to its own base and the reported position of the Japanese was given to him. With eager fingers the Captain and his Navigator placed the position on the chart and found that if the submarine continued on its present course it would all but run over the American submarine about dawn the next day. What wonderful, electrifying news! No more regrets were had for the torpedoes which had remained unexpended. Now there was a chance to get a real combatant ship. . . .

Before dawn the next day Captain Grenfell had his submarine slightly to the westward of the expected position of the Japanese boat. Peering through his periscope the Japanese submarine could be seen on the surface. It was heading to the westward at full speed on its engines, no doubt anxious to get back to its base.

Hoping that the enemy's listening device was not functioning too well the American drew slowly toward his track. When Grenfell had carefully checked his information as to the course and speed of his target he gave the word to fire his three remaining torpedoes. With eyes glued to his periscope he watched the first steel missile flash toward the Japanese submarine, whose lookouts were apparently still unaware of an enemy's presence in their neighborhood. Before the torpedo reached its objective, dark brown hands pointed excitedly toward it and frantic efforts were made to evade it. But it was too late. A large geyser of water shot up forward of the bridge. The explosion could be felt back in the American submarine. Two more explosions followed and the crew of Elton Grenfell's boat silently shook hands with each other. The saving of their three torpedoes had been really providential. Without them the Japanese would have merely dived and there would have been nothing that the American could have done to effect its destruction.

As there was a good probability of other Japanese submarines being in the vicinity, the American submarine did not expose itself by coming to the surface until well clear of the wrecked enemy ship. Upon reaching Pearl Harbor Grenfell's success was verified by the reports of our patrol bombers who had sighted the wreckage and bodies which had floated up from the destroyed enemy submarine.

Later Lieutenant Commander David White took his submarine out to Tokyo Bay for his assigned patrol. He located his first quarry at about the same time that a Japanese man-of-war made a contact on him with its very efficient listening device. He gave the signal to release the torpedoes and a minute or so later there was a loud explosion when his torpedo reached its target and blew it skywards.

Along in this same Pearl Harbor to Tokyo run was the submarine commanded by Lieutenant Commander Stanley Mosely. He got in six different attacks and was officially credited with the sinking of three ships—another dent in the Japanese lifeline to the southern Pacific.

A Navy Department release concerning the crews of the submarines on that long and dangerous Pearl Harbor-Tokyo run is worth repeating—it gives a fine description of the men we have in the boats. The release reads as follows:

"They came back to their base—grinning, triumphant, taciturn.

"Most of them hadn't seen the light of day for months. They had carried the war right to the enemy's front doorstep, torpedoed his ships, sometimes almost in view of lookouts at his principal home ports, and sustained the worst depth charge attacks he could launch.

"They were the submarines of the Pacific Fleet.

"When the war extended to the United States, they knew their job would be tough.

"Today they know this even more emphatically. But they like it."

Their stories, released at Fleet headquarters, reveal for the first time a type of heroism that gets scant publicity, because submarine operations of necessity are secret operations.

Take the case of one submarine which cruised for a long time to reach, patrol, and return from her objective

far from home. Many of her dangerous days were spent submerged. Of the crew, few glimpsed the sun from the time she first submerged outside her base area, until she last surfaced weeks later for entry into safe harbor. They saw the moon and the stars. That was all.

Yet their health was termed "excellent" by their youthful commanding officer. They devoured two meals a day; a new washing machine laundered their clothes in freshly distilled water; when barrages of Japanese depth charges thundered at them, they performed their duties calmly.

Long days after leaving sanctuary, this American submarine entered enemy waters—and promptly sighted a hostile destroyer. It was a bright moonlit night. Apparently the Japanese craft spotted the American submarine first, silhouetted against the dark sky, for her funnels belched black smoke as she drove in for the attack from five thousand yards.

Chapter Sixteen

OUR SKILFUL DARING SKIPPERS

THE American submarine made a crash dive.

In several terrific attacks, the enemy destroyer dropped dozens of depth charges. Inside the silent submarine the crew waited tensely. Paint flaked from overhead, covering dials which had to be wiped clean. Light bulbs chattered. Drawers in officers' rooms tumbled to the deck.

But the American boat survived.

Later, still patrolling tenaciously across the sea lanes she struck. Two minor targets had been disdained as not worth the risk of an attack that might bring disclosure of her whereabouts. Then, one blustery day, she sighted a freighter of the *London Maru* class—7,200 tons of valuable ship and cargo. Two direct hits sent the enemy to the bottom in fifteen minutes.

Another American submarine accounted for a 17,000-ton *Yawata Maru* class—a converted ocean liner.

In took weeks of cruising to get her; but it was worth the price of Diesel oil and man-hours.

The saga is this: scant days out of port, the submarine ran into trouble in the form of a batch of unidentified aircraft which wouldn't let her alone. Five times one afternoon she submerged. She was thoroughly bombed once by a plane first observed as it peeled off a formation breaking through the clouds at six thousand feet.

Then it became apparent that the Japanese might have deduced the submarine's course and cruising speed.

So her captain issued orders to submerge by day and travel on the surface at night. That was the last the crew saw of daylight. As they neared their assigned operation zone, attacks by planes became so persistent as to be almost routine. The submariners came to the conclusion that an enemy carrier must be lurking in the vicinity.

En route the American boat investigated Wake Island. It looked deserted. Even the two enemy destroyers, wrecked and beached during the savage Japanese assault on the atoll, remained there as mute testimonial to the heroic defense of the outpost.

Prowling through a rain-squall on the surface one night, the submarine's lookouts heard a bosun's whistle to starboard, and the sound of underwater propellers reached them. But they saw nothing and nothing saw them.

In the light of a full moon they reached their objective.

Far from home, the American submarine sighted the tall masts, funnels and bridge-top of a large vessel—the doomed *Yawata Maru* class liner, converted by the enemy to war uses. Forty-eight anxious hours elapsed while the submarine dodged patrol craft, dived at the approach of shore based planes, and waited for the steamer to sail.

At mid-morning of the third day, she stood out of the channel.

Promptly she caught two torpedoes amidships. Submerged a short time later, the submarine felt the slight jar of explosions in the *Yawata;* the latter's screws stopped churning, never to resume. When the submarine rose, the 17,000-ton liner had disappeared. Sunk.

"The Japanese," recounted the submarine commander, "have become quite cautious since the attack of their ship."

Even their patrol vessels clung close to the protecting reefs.

Weeks later, in port, the young officer added this epilogue to his official report:

"Moored at base . . . weather clear."

His superiors were more generous. They wrote:

"This submarine was the first to return from war patrol, having been ambushed by planes and depth charged by enemy anti-submarine vessels. Early attacks damaged her, but did not impede the mission."

Submariners don't talk much.

One returned from a remarkable trip, during which his boat sank more than fifteen thousand tons of enemy shipping, and made his report. His superiors read it. Then they commented that instead of saying that he penetrated to the very mouth of the enemy's stronghold, "he contents himself with a laconic statement of his position in latitude and longitude. . . . His report is a model of brevity, honest and factual reporting without any embellishment whatever. . . . Getting this commanding officer to admit anything that is to his own credit is almost as difficult as drawing blood from a turnip."

This submariner had accomplished "an undertaking which not long ago was thought impracticable, if not impossible."

He and his crew eased out of port one morning, not to return for many days.

They battled heavy seas, head-on, during the entire outward passage. Once they made their attack on a five-thousand-ton Japanese freighter in a full gale—and sank it. They eluded more destroyers than a rabbit does foxes. They sank two more ships and on the day they started homeward, they expended their last torpedo on an enemy destroyer that had hove to.

"Uneventful," the commanding officer noted in his log. "Submerged during daylight; running after dark."

And that is the kind of life these hardy men lead.

Sometimes, however, they have their "luxuries." One submarine commander listed his ship's diet thus: "Food and menus good, and not too boring." He dwelt briefly on the merits of canned butter and powdered milk. He observed that powdered eggs, scrambled, "lack flavor," and that dehydrated potatoes are "palatable mashed or French fried."

War broke when one submarine, scheduled to return to the mainland for overhaul and Christmas leave for her men, was on the high seas. That was that. Instead of a holiday, the boat got a stiff assignment that took her off on a long trip to the enemy's doorstep. She gave America a Christmas present—a five-thousand-ton merchantman.

Morale is splendid, commanding officers report, and it will stay that way. Such minor deficiencies as vitamin-lack caused by long sunless days are being met chemically, and with sun-lamps.

Submariners wouldn't swap their particular arduous sort of duty for the softest job ashore. They like work and they thrive on danger.

Their worst disappointment results from failure to bring home confirmation of an enemy sunk. One submarine commander, whose boat was attacked but whose own gamebag stayed empty, reported gloomily:

"Three torpedoes, six depth charges—no hits!" Thus ended the Navy Department news release.

HIGHLIGHTS *of the* NEW BOOKS

The submarines that were in Manila when the war was brutally thrust on us have had more than their share of excitement, and their prizes have been more than valuable.

When the Commander, Southwest Pacific Force, Vice Admiral H. Fairfax Leary, United States Navy, recommended Lieutenant Commander Frederick Burdett Warder, United States Navy, commanding officer of the submarine *Seawolf* for award of the Navy Cross for "heroism and especially meritorious conduct in combat with the enemy," the Navy Department released the story of the recent Pacific cruise of the *Seawolf* which will go down in the United States Naval history as one of the epic stories of submarine warfare.

WHEN the Japanese first struck at the Philippines the *Seawolf* was undergoing repairs at the Navy Yard at Cavite. Escaping the enemy bombing attacks with only slight damage the *Seawolf* got clear of Manila Bay and worked its way toward the newly established southern Base in the Dutch East Indies.

In a communiqué the Navy Department described the operations of the submarine commanded by Lieutenant Commander Warder. It stated:

"On routine patrol off Bali, in February, the *Seawolf* attacked and damaged a large transport near Bali. Later in February, on the same patrol off Bali, the *Seawolf* sank a Japanese destroyer and a large transport and damaged an unidentified vessel.

"The locale of the *Seawolf's* operations was then shifted to the vicinity of Christmas Island, south of Java, and there the submarine met with even more conspicuous success. During the Japanese landing operations on the island near the end of March and during the early days of April, the *Seawolf* played havoc among the enemy cruisers.

"During the early morning of March 31, a Japanese light cruiser was hit by one and possibly two torpedoes. Although positive confirmation is lacking, it is probable that this ship sank.

"During the night of March 31-April 1, a light cruiser was sunk by the *Seawolf*. On the afternoon of the next day, April 1, the submarine damaged a third light cruiser."

In further describing the epic cruise of the *Seawolf* the Navy Department stated:

"Lieutenant Commander Warder attacked and sank a Japanese destroyer and one large transport, which were part of a heavy screened force. The attack was pressed home in extremely shallow and narrow waters where very strong currents exist near the coast of Java.

"Off Christmas Island, Netherlands East Indies, he made repeated attacks on enemy light cruisers which were heavily screened by destroyers, sinking one cruiser and heavily damaging two others, one of which probably sank.

"All attacks were followed up to short range in face of active enemy opposition and after each attack his submarine was the target of heavy, prolonged depth charge counter attacks by the enemy. Lieutenant Commander Warder brought his craft through unscathed."

The citation of this thirty-eight-year-old skipper of the *Seawolf,* a native of Grafton, West Virginia, and a submariner since 1928, simply noted that he "sank a Japanese light cruiser, a destroyer and large transport, and heavily damaged two other light cruisers, a transport, and one unidentified vessel on a patrol cruise off the Netherlands East Indies. After each attack his submarine was the target of prolonged counter-attacks by the enemy, but he brought his craft through unscathed."

No citation could describe the hell which the submarine has to live through, hour after hour, day after day, to get to targets which are protected by a skilful and ruthless enemy. Our submarines expected to fight an efficient foe, and they are doing a magnificent job.

Other submarine skippers who took their boats from bomb-strewn Cavite and Manila Bay to the South Pacific and who have been awarded the Navy Cross for meritorious work against the enemy—sinking ships—are Lieutenant Commander William Leslie Wright, Morton C. Mumma, Jr., Eugene Bradley McKinney, James Charles Dempsey and Wreford Goss Chapple. The latter received special mention for making his hits under the most adverse and dangerous conditions.

Lieutenant Commander Chapple, or "Moon," as he is known by his friends, who are legion, took his submarine from Manila Bay in the height of bombing and proceeded to the area where it was felt that enemy ships were unloading men to fight General MacArthur. The Japanese had formed a very heavy and efficient anti-submarine screen about their large transports, anticipating that the American submarines would not lie idle within Manila Bay while there were targets outside. Advancing through a very narrow channel and worming his way within the harbor where the Japanese fleet lay, "Moon" obtained a fine firing position.

His torpedoes left the tubes. Those within the submarine waited for the consequent explosions, but there were none. Possibly the torpedoes had run under the targets. The Japanese had noticed the presence of the American submarine, however, and proceeded to rain dozens of their largest depth charges down on Captain Chapple's boat. There was nothing to do except lie on the bottom and hope that his boat would not be blown to pieces. Captain Chapple could have piloted her out of the harbor to safety but the husky, lanky officer from Montana, the ex-heavyweight boxing champion of the Naval Academy, and also its star tackle, was within the lair of the enemy and there were prizes to be had. He entertained no thought of abandoning his mission unless blasted out by enemy depth charges, which were continually exploding about him and giving his submarine a terrific jolting. To make sure that their enemy was clear of the bay or blasted out of existence the Japanese even dragged the waters. Those within the American submarine heard the wire going over them several times.

Once the barrage had been lightened and moved to another sector the American submarine rose slowly to periscope depth. Her main targets were still there. Within a few minutes the whole forward battery of torpedoes was speeding toward the two largest of the enemy ships. One was a big transport literally bulging with brown-skinned soldiers waiting to take up the drive against MacArthur's heroic men. This time all torpedoes reached their mark and the bay was full of wreckage and Japanese soldiers. Another deluge of depth charges followed as "Moon" skilfully guided his boat through the harbor, literally scraping past the anchored ships—the destroyers not desiring to blow up their own vessels—and then out to the open sea where the sound of the explosions gradually grew weaker and weaker.

THE Japanese, convinced that the American was still in the harbor, wanted to make sure of him this time. Before the American submarine reached the new rendezvous in the South Pacific her other torpedoes had been delivered and at the expense of three more Japanese ships. The sturdy boat commanded by "Moon" Chapple was literally pock-marked from the depth charges that had burst about her, and the paint in the boat was flaked off the bulkheads as neatly as if the boat had started a Navy Yard overhaul. I watched "Moon" fight often as a midshipman, and later saw him through the Submarine School. The victories he is punching out in the South Pacific are as cleancut and decisive as they were when he was boxing under Spike Webb's tutelage.

Another of our Asiatic submarines had a unique assignment. Lieutenant Commander Frank W. "Mike" Fenno was given the job of evacuating the precious metal belong-

ing to the Treasury of the Philippines and the banks from the Islands before the Japanese got their hands on it. This tall, sloping shouldered ex-captain of a champion Naval Academy baseball team—and who pitched our Asiatic Submarine baseball team to a Fleet victory when I was out there in the S-40—had been currently bringing in ammunition for the anti-aircraft guns on Corregidor. The shells also were worth their weight in gold.

OF course the Japanese knew that there was a large amount of gold stored on Corregidor and in the bank vaults of Manila. Needless to say they were most desirous to obtain it. Efforts to prevent the Japanese from getting the gold were under way immediately after the war begun. American and Filipino stevedores worked day and night collecting metals, currency and securities belonging to the Philippine Commonwealth, to banks and mines and individuals.

On the night of February 4th, Captain Fenno brought his submarine into the harbor on the south hook of Corregidor, unloaded his precious cargo of much needed anti-aircraft ammunition and took on gold and silver. Before the morning's early light could expose the submarine to the eyes of Japanese patrolling planes it had slid out of the harbor and remained submerged during the day. After nightfall it was again alongside the dock and ton after ton of gold and silver was loaded aboard. This task was completed about four A.M.—too late to carry out the next assignment. The next night the submarine kept a rendezvous with an auxiliary vessel carrying the securities that were to be evacuated.

Mr. Woodbury Willoughby, former financial adviser to Mr. Francis B. Sayre, Philippine Commissioner, to whom the Navy gave much credit for collecting the wealth of the Philippines, was on the auxiliary vessel and described the submarine's appearance in the dark.

"When nightfall came," related Mr. Willoughby, "the auxiliary vessel sailed from Corregidor to the rendezvous with her load of securities. The submarine did not make her appearance immediately. But, after a while, the dark hulk of the submarine pushed through the surface.

"It took about twenty minutes to transfer the securities. Then Commander Fenno made a remark I'll never forget. His crew had gone below and he was standing by the conning tower preparatory to giving the order to submerge. 'Any passengers?' he asked cheerfully. Any of us would have been glad to get aboard that submarine but it was not for us to leave. We had to tell him no."

During the long trip from Manila Bay to Pearl Harbor several Japanese ships came within range of the American submarine and Captain Fenno lost no time in sending them to the bottom. The mere presence of tons of gold aboard could not keep my good friend "Mike" out of a fight.

On March 20 Commander Fenno was awarded the Distinguished Cross and his entire crew of six officers and sixty-four men received Silver Stars for the feat of spiriting out a vast treasure of gold and silver from Corregidor right under the nose of the Japanese forces, and then sinking three of their ships.

Mike Fenno did not take a very long rest at Pearl Harbor. There were too many Japanese ships in the Pacific to suit him and the torpedoes in his tubes were restless to search them out. He has already been awarded the Navy Cross for his continued sinkings and I predict that Mike will be responsible for the continued loss of many thousands of tons of Japanese ships.

In a recently published article by Mrs. Francis B. Sayre, wife of the former High Commissioner to the Philippines, another exploit of my old second officer, Chester Smith, was recounted.

Mrs. Sayre related how the submarine which had evacuated President Quezon crept back to the north dock at Corregidor to get her little party. Admiral Rockwell's parting words to her merely corroborated my high opinion of the submarine skipper which was going to effect the evacuation. "Good luck," the Admiral said. "You are going out with our ace submarine skipper. He'll get you through." I could have told her the same thing. And two weeks later Chester Smith had taken the party intrusted to him safely through Japanese infested waters and delivered it to Admiral William Glassford, USN, at Fremantle, Australia....

We shall continue to hear of the splendid exploits of our submariners in the Pacific, operating as they do many thousands of miles away from their bases, and accepting and forcing combat whenever an enemy is in their neighborhood. Already fine reports have been made of their work in the Coral Sea battle, later off Midway and recently in the Aleutians and Solomons. Their curve of tonnage sunk will continue to rise. If and when Axis ships make their appearance in Panamanian and Gulf waters we will have the same good reports of our submarines that are operating in those waters at present, eating their hearts out in disappointment over the dearth of Axis ships in their neighborhood.

I HAVE already spoken of the finely constructed submarine Navy that the Japanese started building some years ago, and the frenzied interest their officers and men took in their undersea craft. This enthusiasm led them to place much confidence in the two-man submarine, mentioned earlier in this book. The build-up they gave them was to make the other nations believe that in them Japan's enemies would encounter a blight worse than a swarm of hungry locusts pouncing on a farmer's green field.

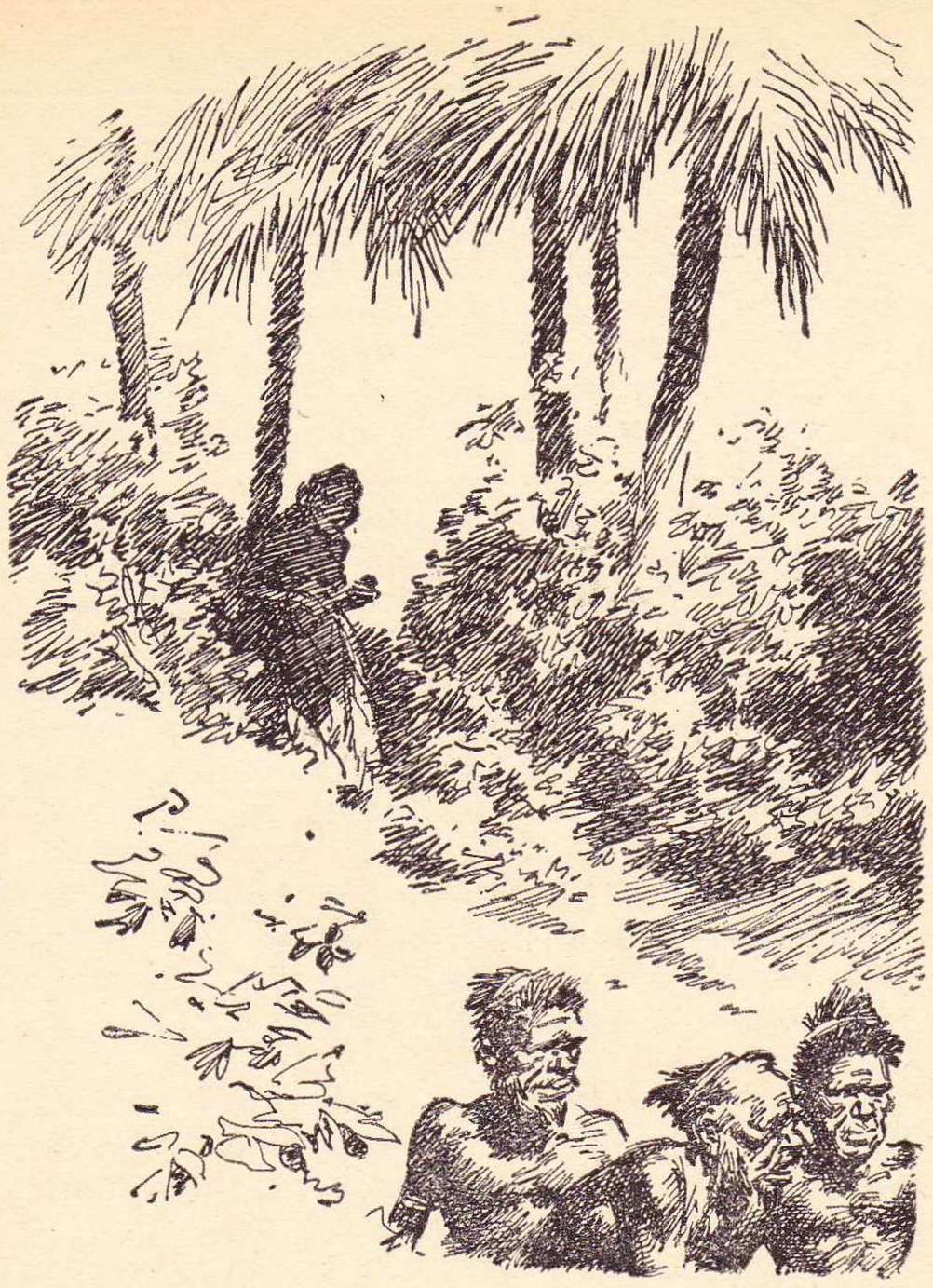
Now I have continually harped on the fact that no submarine is better than its skipper. While the Japanese is a brave, courageous, daring, and skilful fighter, he is not a good submariner, and certainly his two-man boats have been fizzles. They were all destroyed at Pearl Harbor, where the only thing they had to do was to fire their torpedoes, and in this they failed. Their submarines outside of the Harbor fared no better. Only recently a number of the two-man boats worked their way into the harbor at Sydney, Australia, and were summarily destroyed, without getting in a single torpedo hit on a worthwhile target —a ferry boat was the only prize they could claim.

In these days of excellent listening devices that all warring nations possess, it is becoming more and more difficult if not impossible for submarines to get within striking distance without being detected.

When depth charges commence tossing the Japanese submarines about, like a captive balloon in a gale, their skippers simply cannot get in their attacks. They do not lack intestinal fortitude, they have plenty of that, and cheerfully face death without a thought; but it is characteristic of the Japanese to move in a groove where he is mechanically perfect. The depth charges throw him out of the groove and he becomes batty-eyed. Despite the powerful submarine fleet the Japanese had, as compared to the few boats we had in the Pacific at the start of the war, very few victories have been chalked up by their boats.

On the other hand all our submarines were severely depth charged even before they moved in to the attacks and in no single instance were they turned away from their mission. Our submarines have already sunk more Japanese ships, ton for ton, than the Axis ships have of ours. As our new submarines are commissioned and reach the Pacific areas the long line of communications from Japan to its southern occupied States will be squeezed to the breaking point.

The submarine is unconquerable, either by land or sea when commanded by skilful, daring skippers, and thank God we have the best and plenty of them.



Blossom

Home wounded from the war, a South Sea Island planter deals with a weird situation.

by Kenneth Perkins

BEFORE the war broke out, this steam schooner had traded in ivory, pearl shell and sandalwood. But now, with somewhat of the same inter-island route, she carried medical supplies and copra for the making of explosives.

Sergeant Wynthrop's home, it so happened, was only fifty miles off the boat's regular run—an island southeast of Suva. The dinghy just left him on the beach with his duffel-bag—a thin-faced, moderately tall young man garbed in worn khaki.

The native workers on his father's plantation came running. They saw few trading schooners these days, for the old-timers that still risked the sea stuck to the convoy routes. Actually the Kanakas of Wynthrop's Island saw more planes than ships!

To the invalided soldier they had brought *lei* wreaths and tangerines and flowers, and they sang songs to him. He seemed as strong as ever, except for the thin face. He had been wounded many times, yes, but the wounds were healed. He had come home—to live!

Ned Wynthrop sat on a coral rock while his boyhood friends, Mogo Tom and Sea-legs and Panolo stood behind him. When they stopped singing, Wynthrop said: "All right—thanks, everybody. It's great to be home and see you all. I've got to go up to the house now."

But they begged him. He must see the end of the ceremonial which had been rehearsed for him for three months, ever since his father died and they expected the son to come home.

Tom-toms, measuring the sound of wind and sea, excited him. Old men with salt-stained hair, women with hair whitened by lime paste, slim girls with hair like black floss, gathered around an open space of sand in front of the rock where he sat.

One of the Kanakas wearing a wooden mask with feathers and dog's teeth, walked into this circle and squatted on his hunkers. He dug a small hole in the sand and planted a seed, then made passes over it as though warming his hands over a fire. By some primitive trick or other he made it appear as if a twig were growing from the ground. Similarly by sleight-of-hand he replaced the twig with a larger branch, a sort of dwarf apple tree with tiny red apples.

Before Wynthrop enlisted, he had studied horticulture in the States—at Davis, in California. He had specialized in tropic plants, in order to help his father develop this island. He knew that the twig was from a manchineel tree, but it was withered.

"Is this old Sam Guam who is acting the part of the witch-doctor?" he asked.

One of the young Kanakas behind him said it might be, and it might not. But it was Sam Guam who had taught this ceremonial to the younger men. He had told them it was an old legend of Death who once planted a tree on this island long before the coming of white men who planted yams and oranges.

While the tree was "growing," a young native girl stood at some distance on the fringing reef, playing a Hawaiian guitar and singing. With her hair blown by the wind about her bare shoulders and torso, she was the prettiest Kanaka girl Wynthrop had ever seen. Apparently one of the long-legged, pot-bellied children of the plantation had grown up and blossomed since he left for the States. She seemed to be part of the performance but aloof from it.

The song which the girl was singing was a savage and haunting one, even though it was definitely an old hymn the islanders had learned when Wynthrop's mother lived among them:

'Sus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly!

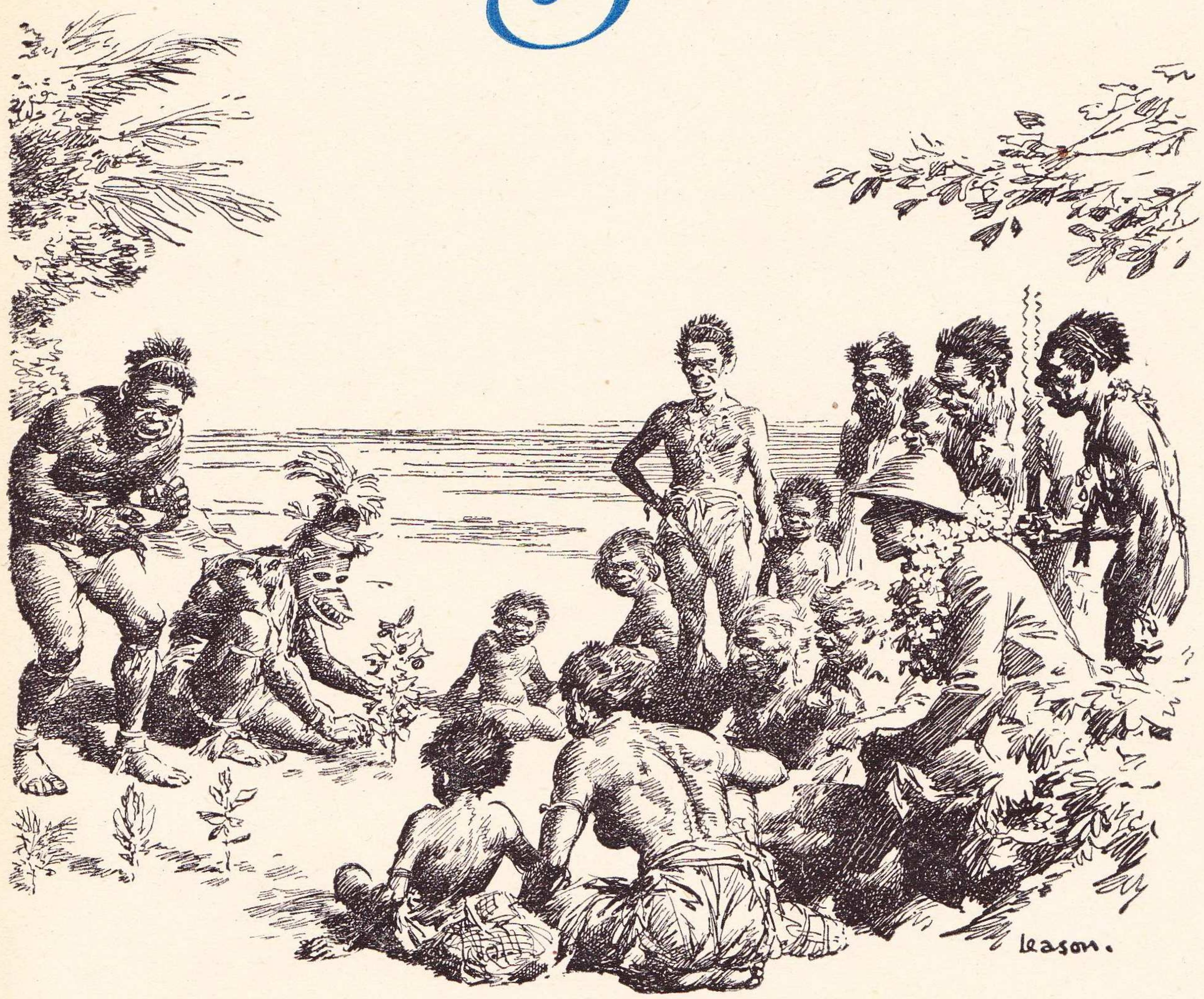
Another actor came into the circle of sand—a huge, flabby brown hulk of a youth, the blubber of his chest and stomach quivering so that the tattooed birds and flying frogs came alive. This brought laughter from the natives.

The witch-doctor took more sprigs from a copra bag and handed them to the fat man, who then planted them in rows. They were varied specimens, Wynthrop observed—papayas, mangoes, oranges and betel-palm branches. When the witch-doctor had his back turned, this fat man came to the first tree and cut an apple from it.

When the red fruit was cut open, the fat man pretended that some of the juice had spattered on his forearm. He waved his hands at the splashed spots as if at stinging ants. There was more laughter. Obviously enough, none of the audience knew how deadly the poison was. They had never seen the tree on the island. Nor had they ever heard of this story when the old *parapores* were recited and sung. Murder was a new plot to them. But like children they enjoyed every gesture and trick of this pantomime despite the tragic import.

WYNTHROP alone understood the plot as the fat man cut the fruit in small bits and put the pieces in a coconut shell of food. This was a dish which Wynthrop had liked as a boy,

in the Sand



which his father had enjoyed—rice cooked in coconut milk and stained yellow with berries.

The fat man presented the bowl of rice to the witch-doctor. The latter ate, and died.

Some of the younger children were frightened, but their mothers persuaded them that this was only play. The old men sat amused and silent and respectful, their hands clasping bony knees, the sunset throwing red gleams up under their gray brows.

The lovely brown girl on the coral banks sang louder, and all the musicians started to strum a dirge on guitars and ukuleles. Skin drums beat slowly. The man who had "died" got up and stalked into the palms up there on the banks where the girl awaited him. The red light had faded fast, so that there was an unplanned effect as though the dead one had passed into a region of deep green shadows. Wynthrop guessed easily enough, as the girl threw her arms about this man who had ascended to her, that she was not supposed to be of the living. She was dead, and this man who died was one who loved her and one whom she had loved well and he was joined to her in death.

THIS would seem to be a proper ending. But there is no ending to the play or plots of children. Another actor, one of Wynthrop's companions, went out onto the sandy stage. He carried a paddle as if he had just come up from the waterside. In the other hand he carried a shark-tooth sword.

He made for the fat man, and with such vehemence that Wynthrop feared it was not play-acting after all. The fat man stood his ground, but they did not clash: The fight and the murder—if that was the intention—was stopped by Wynthrop himself.

He separated the two, then vaulted up the bank to the girl and the man in the mask. The latter was certainly old Sam Guam, headman of the tribe when Wynthrop's father was first given the concession to develop the island. But Wynthrop did not tell him he could recognize the wrinkled, leathery old body beneath the disguised head. He spoke to him, respecting his incognito.

"Go and tell Sam Guam," he said, "that I've listened hard to this *parapore*. Tell him I understand it, and that I know what that branch was, and that nothing more need be said."

He went down to the beach again and picked the sprig of manchineel from the sand.

Followed by two houseboys carrying his bag, and by the crowd of girls and youths and old men and babies and dogs, he went up to the plantation bungalow. They sang their songs during the procession, drifting back over and over again to the theme which pulled most at Wynthrop's heart-strings, calling him back to the place where he was born:

"Let me to Thy bosom fly!"

For in that short walk through the groves of papaya and mango and betel-palms, Wynthrop yearned for peace. He had come here to rest from combat and death. For a short spell his spirit was calmed by the musk

warm air, the thick fragrance of many flowers, the moaning of the surf and the natives' singing. The murder and the violence in which he had been drenched at Guadalcanal ebbed out of his soul. For this place was paradise.

The one white man on the island, manager of the plantation, greeted the new owner on the veranda. Bion Blake, fat, genial, with damp whites clinging to his shapeless frame, apologized for not coming down to the beach. He had just got home from work when he heard the singing. And besides, he had not expected Wynthrop home from the war so soon.

"Thought you'd be invalided to Honolulu or the States if they didn't keep you in Australia," he said. "But here you are! Let's drink!"

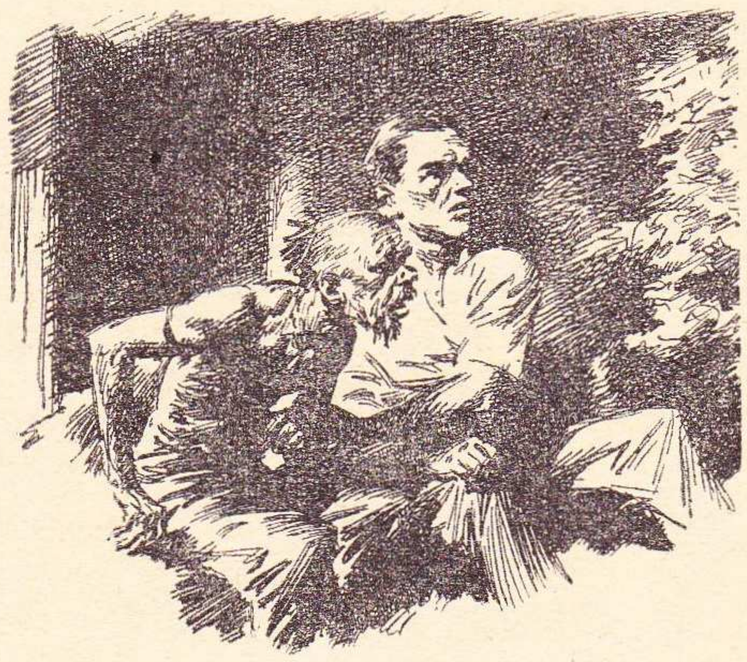
WHILE the natives still made mournful music to the rising of the moon, they went inside the great main room of the bungalow. Wynthrop took off his pith hat and wiping his forehead, stood before the portrait of his father and mother. An artist of some fame had stopped here long ago and done the canvas—the two white-clad figures against a pattern of giant red leaves, a green sky, purple fruits. The man in the picture was gaunt, florid-faced and thin-haired, with deep glowing eyes—eyes like his son's. The mother was girlish and slight, sitting at a collapsible mission organ.

Wynthrop looked back at Bion Blake's fixed, fat smile, and a queer illusion took hold of him. It was an aftermath of that ceremonial he had just witnessed on the beach. The temporary and flimsy drama of the native actors was projected into something real and perpetual. It was like their thrumming song merging into the everlasting moan of combers beyond the reef. Here were the same actors in this room, except that they were white and they were not playing. The witch-doctor who planted the manchineel tree was Wynthrop's father; the pretty Kanaka girl was his mother up there, seated at the organ, her eyes blue instead of black, her skin shell-pink instead of brown. The man with the flying frogs tattooed on his stomach was the enormous figure in wrinkled whites—Bion Blake, and the Kanaka youth who had come with the shark-tooth sword and paddle was Ned Wynthrop himself coming home from over the sea.

But the pantomime was not ended. It carried on—in reality.

They had dinner on the veranda, Wynthrop sitting at one end of the long koa-wood table, the fat perspiring Blake at the other. Bion Blake's past was obscure beyond the fact that he had once been curator for a royal museum in Europe and a botanist at Heidelberg. No one knew what had brought him to the South Seas. His love of flowers had drawn him—perhaps naturally—to Nagasaki. He knew Japanese and he knew some of their tricks of gardening. He had dropped off from a copra trading schooner intending to stay at the Wynthrop plantation a week, studying the flora for a book. He had knowledge which Seth Wynthrop could use. He fitted into the dream of a great island garden where every fruit in the world, it seemed, would take root and grow. Blake came for a week, and stayed ten years.

He talked of this magic fruition of the groves, all during that dinner.



Wynthrop made him stick to that subject, preferring to forget the war. The soil was incredibly rich, Blake said, the air warm and lush, the trades soft, and there were light rains every afternoon as if a gardener systematically watered each plant. They had brought in alligator pears from Hawaii, nutmegs and pomegranates from the Celebes, oranges from California, lichee nuts from China. But while he talked, Wynthrop's lost gaze roved to the hills where he could see the groves in the mixed light of gloaming and moonrise. With all those blossoms, the island was an endless flower garden, warm and fragrant and breath-taking. It was his father's dream come true, lasting beyond the dreamer's life. It was not a place for murder. It had escaped even the bloody touch of the Japanese.

Wynthrop held himself in until the houseboy brought coffee and brandy and cigars. Then he said casually: "My father wrote he was experimenting in the nursery with some poison plants—black henbane and *kaapi*."

"And datura from India," Blake said with enthusiasm. "There would be a big market for tropine after the war. We had big ideas. Tomorrow I'll take you around the groves and show you everything."

Wynthrop took the twig of manchineel from his pocket and laid it on the table beyond his coffee-cup. "And what sort of a crop did you expect from this?"

His level glance struck across the table at Blake's face and held there steadily.

Blake's pale eyes showed a slight rim of white, the tallow of his jowls hardening. He asked in a tight voice: "Where did you find that?"

"On the beach."

"Yes, I—I believe I see why you're so interested. It doesn't belong on this island. It's from Haiti. A Jap fisherman brought it to us—I dare say the Kanakas have told you. We planted one tree, but the overseer—old 'Tico's still the overseer, you know—he was nervous about it. The children might eat the little red apples. It's a caustic that burns like hell's fire. Besides, 'Tico thinks anything the Japs possessed is cursed—now that we've found what a taste those yellow vermin have for killing and torture. 'Tico cut it down."

Wynthrop lit a big cigar and kept his eyes on Blake through the smoke. The latter said: "I suppose one of the Kanakas brought it to your attention?"

"I said I found it on the beach."

Blake returned the steady gaze. Evidently he did not believe what Wynthrop said. But he did not press the point. Neither did Wynthrop. When they were through with their coffee, he knew that Blake went out to the compound to make some inquiries. He would find out about Sam Guam's pantomime soon enough. And then something would happen.

WYNTHROP sat alone on the veranda puffing his cigar and watching the blue glow of insects lighting the shadows in the flowers. There was happiness on this island, a long life of peace. There was a girl in the States whom he would send for when the war was over and Pacific travel would be safe. That is what he thought as the fragrance and the warm air of the trades and the spicy heat of blossoms soothed him. The veranda plants parted in a gust of sea wind and let the moonlight strike his face suddenly. It lit the anger in his eyes—if anyone could have seen him.

It would be dangerous, he reflected, to eat another meal in this house. In order to get proof of Blake's guilt, he had found it necessary to show his own hand. It made the situation tense: whatever was done must be done quickly.

When a houseboy came out for the coffee-cups, Wynthrop told him to get the overseer.

'Tico had been overseer on the plantation since Wynthrop was born. He was a brown little man, a Chamorro, but three-fourths Spanish. He wore puttees and khaki, smoked black native tobacco, had been to school in Guam, then at Oahu College. He had

a musical ear which helped him speak, without much accent, Spanish and English, as well as the island languages.

NED WYNTHROP asked: "'Tico, how did my father die?"

'Tico rolled his pandanus hat in his hands. "There are no doctors nearer than Bogo-Maru. Tropic fever, maybe. Señor Blake was going to send for a doctor, but the death came fast."

"And his ashes were strewn out beyond the lagoon, Blake wrote me."

"Your father wanted it that way—out there with your mother's ashes."

Wynthrop shoved the box of cigars and brandy bottle to the side of the table where 'Tico stood.

"When did you decide to destroy that manchineel tree?" he asked.

The overseer seemed astonished at this sudden tack. "Your father— Oh, you mean the manchineel tree. Yes, I know what tree you mean."

"Was it after my father died?"

He had to think. "Yes, after. I remember the day exactly, because Señor Blake had been stuck by one of these sea-centipedes, a *veri,* which will prick a man badly with its legs. It was on that day that Señor Blake told me to destroy the tree."

"Oh, it was Blake who told you to destroy it!" Wynthrop checked himself. This old fellow was innocent, or he would not have given the secret away so blandly.

"You are going to be my overseer, 'Tico, the same as you were my father's."

"I will work for you till I die, Señor Ned."

"Have another drink."

Wynthrop got up and went to his room. Somehow the innocence of these Kanakas, the healing influence of the air and the flowers kept him calm even though what he searched for was his gun.

He had left the padlock off his duffel-bag when he got out a shirt for dinner. There had been nothing of value in it—nothing except a gun. It was the drowsy perfumed atmosphere of his home which had put all thought of that gun out of his mind. He had had no intention of using it except in defense. He discovered now that the gun was gone.

In attending to that exigency, Bion Blake had given another proof of his guilt.

Wynthrop did not go to bed. Instead he went for a hike into the jungle to find Sam Guam

He knew the nipa-thatched hut where he had been many a time as a boy, to be healed of insect-bites or the feverish sting of coral scratches. Doubtless old Sam Guam expected him, for he sat on a rum-barrel outside the hut, alone, waiting, chewing betel nut.

He was a frightened-looking little man despite his black-toothed grin. He wore ragged dungarees and nothing else. His nude torso was something inconsequential, hidden in folds of tattooed leather like a shriveled tangerine. It was old Sam Guam who had taught the boy Ned Wynthrop all the *parapores* sung by old island grandfathers. He had made toy outriggers for him when Ned was a child, and then taught him to hew the planks of a real one and calk them and inlay the gunwales with mother of pearl

and feathers. Ned and old Sam had fished for the spirits of drowned men and caught instead sea-rovers and flying fish.

"Sam, how did you find out the truth?"

"The thing cannot be said."

"Hell, you've said it plain enough in gestures! I saw your actor with that manchineel tree. Blake had burns on his hand as if he were stuck by a sea-centipede. The sap from a manchineel will burn a man's hand like hydrochloric. It all adds up. My father wrote me that he suspected Blake of contacting the Japs with a field radio set. My father had no proof, but he had a hunch. Blake was spending a lot of time watching planes and convoys. The next letter I had was from Blake himself, telling me that my father was dead."

Sam Guam spat red juice. "You saw the *parapore* acted and sung, but you did not let them finish. The finish was a prophecy: you yourself will be killed."

"Prophecy, hell! All I want is to be sure of the truth! Did anyone see Blake put something in my father's rice?"

Sam pondered over his betel cud. Then he nodded slowly, and touched his own chest with a bony finger.

"That settles it. I'm going to kill Blake!" Ned declared.

"How?"

Wynthrop took out his knife and thrust it deep into the bark of a tree. Gum oozed from the tree.

"If you do it," Sam Guam said, "there will be no peace on this island which you love. Big-one Blake has half-breed sons by the Kanaka women. They will kill you. Murder will flow back and forth like the tide through the reef. Blood will flow here as it flows in the Solomons and all the islands the Japs have stained! You came here for peace, for you are sick of the war. But there will be no peace!"

Wynthrop had thought of this. And he had thought of something else. He did not intend to spend the rest of his life in jail for taking the law in his own hands and executing a man. He wanted to spend his life here on this island. Nor did he intend to take Blake to trial. There was no remote chance of bringing him to justice. Sam Guam and 'Tico the overseer would fear to testify because of those half breed sons. . . . Again Wynthrop stabbed the tree, this time in vicious frustration.

When he caught Sam's eyes, he was shocked at the bulging stare of them. They were fixed on the bleeding sap. "It must be done," the old man said slowly. "But if you do it, you will destroy your home and these groves." He watched the sap eagerly, panting. Then: "My grandfathers," he said very softly, "could kill a man from far off."

"I know all about that. Fingernails in a coconut, and then burn the coconut. I can't do tricks like that, Sam."

"I can."

Wynthrop gripped the shriveled old arm, for at that moment he heard a rustle in the lianas. A young Kanaka, Sea-legs, ran out into the clearing.

"Sam Guam! Sam Guam!" Breathlessly he gave his message in the island idiom. Big-one Blake, he said, was angry. Someone had told him about the ceremonial on the beach, and that it was Sam Guam who had rehearsed the actors. Big-one Blake was sending the overseer to bring old Sam to the bungalow. Sea-legs finished in English: "Hell-dam', Señor Ned! What will Sam do?"

"He's not going to be punished," Wynthrop said calmly. "Hide in the jungle, Sam, until I finish this business once for all—myself."

But old Sam shook his head. "I will go to the *motu* and take my coconut idols and pray to them."

THIS *motu* was a small island two miles or so off the reef. It was little more than a ring of coral filled with sand, but without palms. In other words, a "table." It was not exactly a place for a fugitive to hide. "At sunrise Blake will come there and find you," Wynthrop said. "One long reach and one tack, the way the trades are blowing, and he's there."

"And the long reach must always be a starboard tack," Sam said, as if in complete assent. He looked up at Sea-legs. "You go on home. In the morning when Blake sets sail, call everyone to the beach to see what will happen. Let them witness that he was destroyed by the spirits of the dead that hover over the sea.'

The young Kanaka was not a superstitious man; neither was Ned Wynthrop. But old Sam Guam had a mad frenzy burning his withered frame. The heat kindled his eyes like coals and made his voice shake like a *kona* that blows harder than it sounds.

When Sea-legs had backed away into the shadows, Wynthrop said: "How are you going to do it, Sam? With a blowpipe?"

Sam Guam did not answer. He tore off the fiber from some coconuts and cleaned the gum from the wounded tree, as if he were nursing these groves that he and Ned Wynthrop loved.

But then he kneaded the husks into a compact ball which he rolled in soot from fire embers. Perhaps it was not a ceremony symbolic of mercy and the preservation of trees and life. It looked more like the devil-magic that was ancient and fearful before Sam Guam's race began.

NEXT day Wynthrop was up at dawn. He had tossed all night trying to decide on the right time to strike. But there was no right time. Blake would be armed and keenly vigilant from now on. It was Blake, not Wynthrop, who would choose the time!

As he tossed in his fever of indecision, the words of old Sam Guam sang in his ears: "It must be done! But it must be done so that no man would know how. Blake must be destroyed, not by human hand, but by the spirits of the dead!"

"I'll kill Blake tomorrow," he had decided, circling back helplessly to the starting-point. "But first I'll give Sam Guam and his tricks a chance!"

As a boy Wynthrop had always taken a swim in the lagoon before breakfast, and this was how it happened, without coincidence, that he saw old Sam hobbling along the shell path down from the jungle.

There was enough pearly glow in the air to see the black hunk that Sam carried. Wynthrop was not close enough to see what the thing was, but he remembered the ball of coconut husks, still black and sticky, perhaps from gum and soot. Without doubt this was some symbol of the black magic Sam Guam talked of, which would "kill a man from far off."

Floating and lazily flipping his hands, Wynthrop watched the old man wading into the black water. When Sam Guam reached the sloop, he was in the inky shadows so that no eyes,

"Where did you find that?" asked Blake.

whether of man or gull or tern or fish, could see what he was doing. But Wynthrop saw him swim back to the beach and then limp out, dripping red drops of water. He hobbled off to a good distance then, and launched his outrigger. He was doing what he had said: sailing off to the *motu,* where he would be alone—a piece of bait, so to speak, to entice Bion Blake out there.

Swimming with a silent rhythmic stroke, Wynthrop moved out to the deep lagoon. Compared to the morning wind, the water was warm, caressing his body with that same miraculous touch of the fragrant air. This was life! Why be jailed or hanged for murder? Life was too good. Every flower breathed that quiet message. And old Sam Guam had said it in his own way: "Let it be done from far off, so that his blood will not be shed on this island."

He swam back, churning handfuls of phosphorescent fire at each stroke. Red beams leveled through the palms now, lighting the beach and the great white hulk of Bion Blake.

Wynthrop was not a bit surprised to see him. Judging from his puffy eyes, he must have spent a sleepless night trying to track down the author of that "legend."

"Haven't forgotten your stroke, I notice," Blake said.

"Water's fine. You ought to learn to swim, Blake."

They grinned at each other, although the light in their eyes was as glinting hard as the sunrise.

"Too many sharks," said Blake. "They get after a white man more than brown men, the Kanakas tell me."

Wynthrop's eyes narrowed. This man not only intended to kill him, but he was already thinking of a story to cover his tracks.

"By the way," Wynthrop said, smoothing the salt water from his arms and chest. "The natives greeted me with quite a ceremony yesterday. I've been thinking you might like to see it—a return engagement, perhaps?"

"I heard about it, and that it was Sam Guam got it up," Blake said casually. "Thought I'd ask him what it all means. The houseboy just told me the old duffer's gone out to the *motu* yonder."

"Think you can make these islanders come out with the truth in words, Blake?"

"I'll make him come out with what's in his mind. I'll flense his tattooed hide for him, the damned cockroach!" He checked himself and turned wheedling. "We mustn't have gossip on this island, Ned. I don't know what it's all about. If there's any suspicions being talked up by that old Kanaka, I'll have the resident from Bogo-Maru over here to settle it right. You'll be glad to know this island is a very law-abiding place."

"It always has been, Blake, and without benefit of residents or police."

Wynthrop went up the shell path to the bungalow and dressed. Then he told one of the houseboys to call all the servants and all the field-workers. He said that he was going down on the beach, this being his first morning home, and that he wanted them all to sing the songs his mother had taught them. Like the islanders, he would perform the rites of the eldest son—in this case the only son—over the ashes of his father. His father's ashes were strewn out where the sunrise lighted the sea. Let there be the singing of hymns, and hulas.

BION BLAKE had set sail and was standing through the pass in the reef when a crowd of Kanakas gathered on the beach. Most of them knew where Blake was standing for—that *motu* a few miles offshore whither Sam Guam had fled.

Before they started to thrum their guitars and ukuleles, Wynthrop said: "The legend that Sam Guam made you act out for me is a bad legend. He wants you to forget it. I want you to forget it. There's no poison on this island. It is a garden with flowers only, a place where we are all to live happily, never thinking of the murders that have been done here, if any have been done."

But several of them asked: "What will he do to Sam Guam?"

"My father's spirit hovering there over the breakers will take care of old Sam Guam. So sing your songs to the waves and let the girls dance."

The natives did not see his eyes; nor would they have suspected anything if they had. There was no violence here. The son of their former master, contemplating the sea where his father's ashes were spread, made no devil-magic. If he had wanted to see Bion Blake die, he had done nothing to cause the death, for the sloop was bowling along to the breeze, her prow churning white water as she

heeled on the long starboard tack. There was nothing wrong with the sloop, and there was no magic under heaven that could cross the waves to such a distance and cause the sloop to sink. But they knew—all the islanders including Blake's half-breed kin—that a man can be killed from far off. They believed it even though Wynthrop's mother had taught them that it was a heathen belief and hence a lie.

They all sang: *"Let me to Thy bosom fly!"* Some knew that old Sam Guam was to be punished. If the fat white man killed him, then the resident from Bogo-Maru would come and try him and he would be freed as a matter of course. And Sam Guam would be dead. Only a few knew all this, and perhaps it was they who prayed most fervently that Tuan Wynthrop's spirit, hovering over his sea-tossed ashes, would protect old Sam.

And their prayers were answered. No one could understand it. Unless Sam Guam had got back some of his old power—the devil-magic that was denied. Perhaps it was the spirit of Tuan Wynthrop, walking on the radiant water, who made this miracle.

When Blake came about on the port tack, he made good weather of it for a few cable-lengths. Then for no apparent earthly reason the sloop turned groggy, stricken with some miraculous curse. Her boom swung when she came into the wind and luffed. Blake, a large white blot at that distance, stood in the cockpit waving his arms for help. Some of the Kanakas put off in outriggers. But long before they got there, the sloop foundered.

Blake had no time to loose a plank or spar. Some few gadgets from the sloop floated, but not enough to support a man who could not swim. He had succeeded in getting steerageway and coming about again, doubtless sensing the fact that it was this tack that had put the lee freeboard under. But too much water had already poured in. On the first tack again, she did not heel, but rode groggy and upright like a drunken man trying to hold himself straight. . . .

Sam Guam sailed back from the *motu,* in his outrigger, followed by those who had gone out to attempt a rescue. He came as if he were a chief in a war canoe with an escort of warriors. When he landed, the crowd gathered around him, and many of the men, who knew every inch of those waters, jabbered at him like crows. How could Blake's sloop sail so far out without his suspecting that she was leaking? Unless she struck a reef just as he came about. But there was no such reef at that spot two miles out, as every Kanaka knew.

UNLESS perhaps the spirits of Wynthrop's father and mother had thrown up a reef with the magic of the dead!

Sam Guam's rheumy eyes slipped over to Wynthrop and then away again fast. "There are the spirits of the dead who guard all the children of this island."

"But what really happened?" asked Sea-legs, Wynthrop's boyhood chum. "Something hit his boat, and she is *pau,* done, and sunk, while our ukuleles have time for one hymn. What the hell, Sam, you call that?"

Sam Guam must have thought it wiser to give a materialistic explanation for such of the children as were of Sea-legs' type. "Maybe he hit a coral rock right here in the lagoon and sailed off blind to danger."

"Oh, no!" Sea-legs objected. "A man can tell by his hand on the tiller, the boat don't steer good when she fill up. He could tell long before he come about on that port tack."

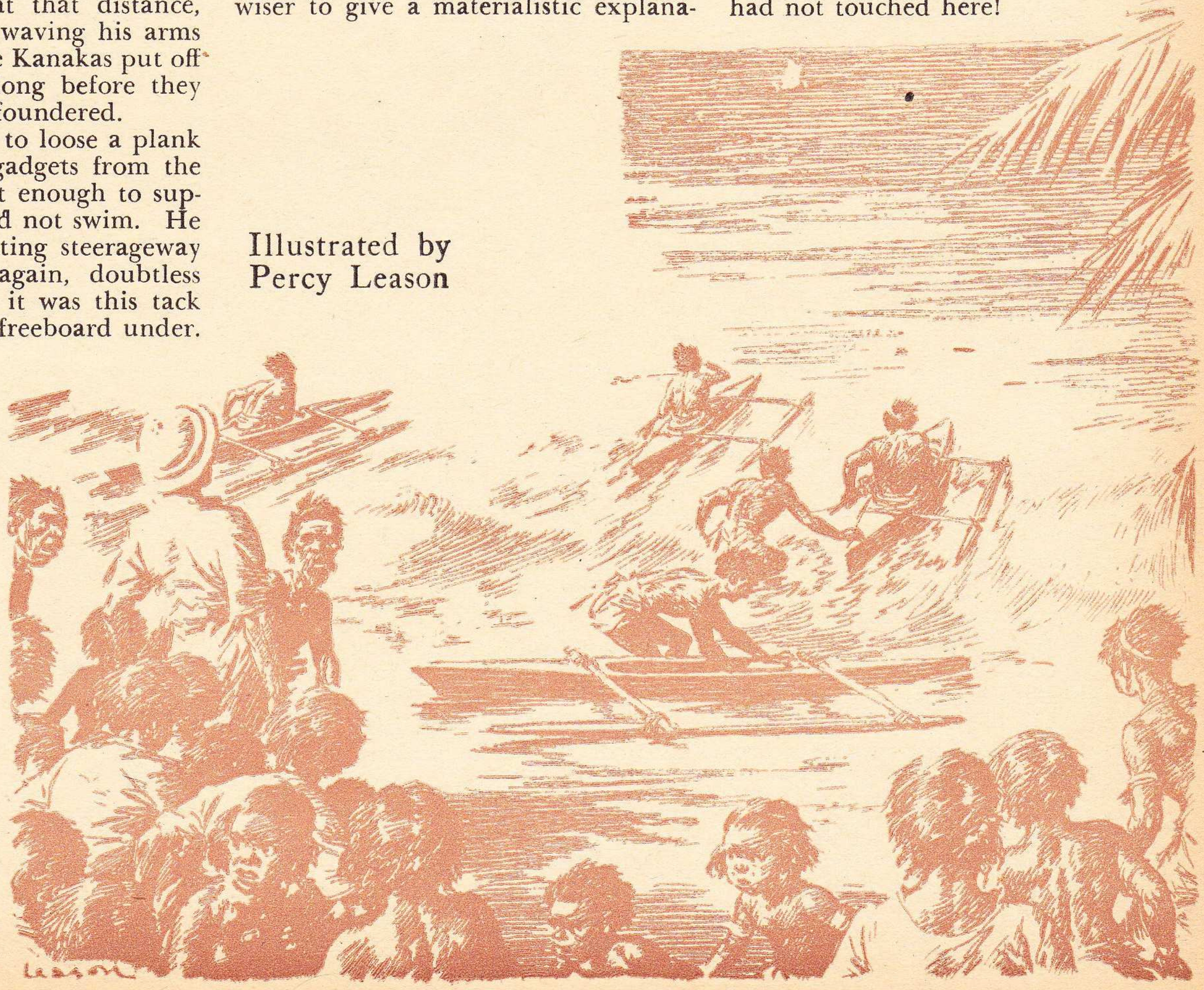
Wynthrop was thinking and puffing silently. "If a man hit the rock on the starboard side," he thought, "he could sail off a long way, because the hole would be above the waterline." Wynthrop grinned. "Especially since the hole was stuffed with husks and gum smeared with soot, no one could notice it against the black of the freeboard!"

Wynthrop kept his thoughts to himself. "The hole was not under the waterline until he came about on the port tack. Then the sea poured in."

The Kanakas preferred to believe in the magic of their forefathers. The prayers and the singing of hymns were heard by their young master's father and mother, whose spirits hovered there like sea fire by night.

Wynthrop let them think what they wanted. At that moment he himself was thinking of a long walk he would take through the fragrant groves with Sea-legs and Mogo Tom and 'Tico the overseer, and old Sam Guam. It was his home. Murder was unknown in this paradise. The war—and death—had not touched here!

Illustrated by Percy Leason



Blake stood in the cockpit, waving for help. Some of the Kanakas put off in outriggers.

The able author of "Big Timber" and "Wings North" gives us another fine novel of the Northwest mining country.

ROCKY

by Robert Ormond Case

The Story Thus Far:

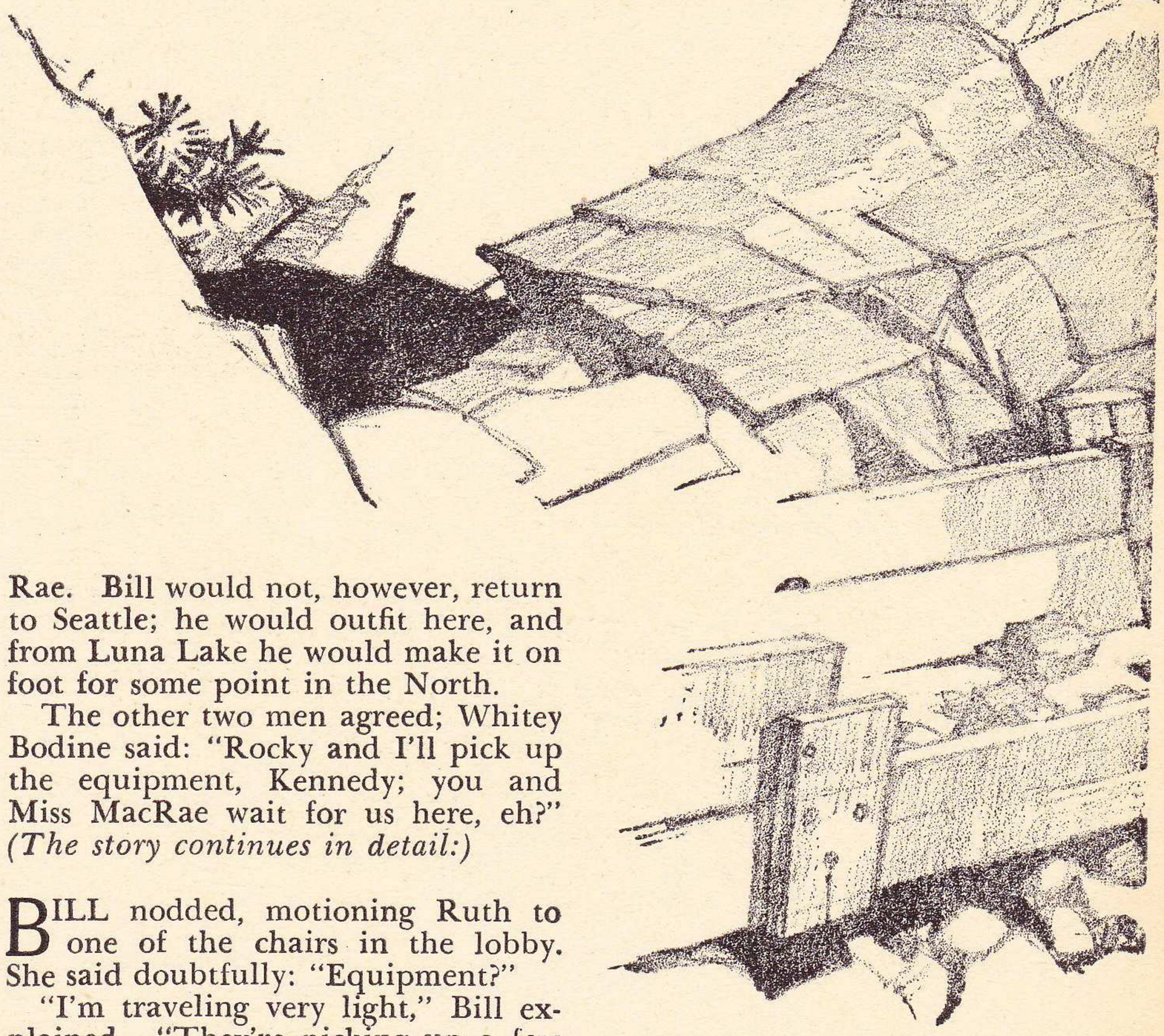
YOUNG BILL KENNEDY, coming to Seattle from the mining country up north, shortly after the death of his father Hod Kennedy, had in mind only to reorganize his life; he had no intention of revenging himself on Red Schafer, who by chicanery had cheated the elder Kennedy of valuable mining claims. Hod himself had said: "Forget it, son—just call it the luck of the draw, and go on from there."

But waiting for Bill in the crowded lobby of the Hotel Chanford was one "Rocky" Flynn—a battle-scarred old wolf in sheep's clothing—who under plea of "cutting Hod's son in on a good deal" proposed that Bill uphold Rocky's story that his stockholders' money had been lost in attempts to develop an alleged body of ore on the shore of a tiny and remote mountain lake, named—by Rocky—Lake Luna. Between stiff drinks of potent "squareface," Rocky candidly admitted that the deal was a racket—but he offered Bill five thousand dollars to attest to Ruth MacRae (a young woman who was demanding an investigation after her investment of eighty thousand dollars had been reported lost) that Rocky and his partner Whitey Bodine were in reality on the level with her, and that the mine had failed solely because the ore had petered out.

Bill refused flatly to accept the offer; but—somewhat under the influence of repeated drinks—he later found himself, with Rocky, entering a shady gambling-den and bar known as De Silva's. Here too was Red Schafer, who gave Bill derisive greeting; Bill forgot his intention to ignore Red, and a fight followed in an adjacent alley. Red was knocked out; unluckily his head struck a cement ledge as he fell, and he was later pronounced dead.

Bill, dazed with horror, was hurried away by Rocky from the gathering crowd—was rushed to the airport and out to a big amphibian, its motors idling. Here he met Rocky's partner Whitey Bodine, and an attractive young woman whom Rocky introduced as Ruth MacRae. Without delay Whitey took off with Bill, Ruth and Rocky as passengers, bound for Luna Lake, by way of Prince Rupert.

Realizing he had been trapped by Rocky into a jam, with acceptance of Rocky's offer as the only immediate "out," Bill decided to play this his own way. At the first stop, Prince Rupert, he offered to write a report that the ore-vein was exhausted, but that a "substantial amount" had been spent on the mine; this should clear Rocky and Whitey with Ruth MacRae. Bill would not, however, return to Seattle; he would outfit here, and from Luna Lake he would make it on foot for some point in the North.



The other two men agreed; Whitey Bodine said: "Rocky and I'll pick up the equipment, Kennedy; you and Miss MacRae wait for us here, eh?"

(The story continues in detail:)

BILL nodded, motioning Ruth to one of the chairs in the lobby. She said doubtfully: "Equipment?"

"I'm traveling very light," Bill explained. "They're picking up a few odds and ends for me. . . . Here's the list, Rocky." He drew the others toward the center of the lobby.

When they were out of Ruth's hearing, he said: "Look the list over, Rocky—you'll know better than I what I'll need. If I've missed anything, put it on."

Rocky nodded.

"Keep her right here," Whitey told Bill, indicating Ruth. "Don't let her talk to a soul. You know why we can trust you to see that she doesn't."

"I know," Bill said. "My neck's involved. . . . Don't bet that stack too often, Whitey, m'lad. It pays off only once."

"Let's go," said Rocky, hurriedly. "That said eleventh hour's sneaking up on us. Fact is"—and his mustache spread,—"for a minute there I dang' near heard it strike!"

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MOUNTAIN

scending toward the town's business district. They moved past the corner of a frame building, and were gone.

She faced him more fully. "You thought I was silly in there,"—she indicated the dining-room with a tilt of her head—"accusing you of being in collusion with them. Didn't you?"

"It's all right," he said, with a guilty twinge. "You're afraid there's some foul plot?"

"I'm sure of it. To be quite honest,"—she flushed a little but met his gaze squarely,—"I'm a bit dubious now about your part in it. . . . Am I merely being naïve?"

"Not at all. But what are you afraid of?"

She got up restlessly, and he arose with her. They moved closer to the window and stood looking out over the bay. It was drenched in sunlight and the water was entirely green.

"Why," she asked, "did you suggest that the trip was too dangerous for me, and then change your mind when I mentioned the Provincial Police?"

Bill came back and swung a chair around so he could sit beside Ruth. In view of the suspicions that had flared up in the dining-room, this interval of waiting might be a trying one. To hold her in line, soothe her qualms, might take a little finesse.

She seemed matter of fact enough, armored by her usual reserve, but he knew she was on guard, undecided. He followed her glance and saw Whitey and Rocky at a distance, de-

"It was my duty to mention it. Any trip at this season's bad. It's a nice day here, but we don't know what sort of storm's blowing east of the Finlay."

"You've no reason to fear an official investigation?"

He looked at her steadily. "That would be a complication, wouldn't it?"

She was maneuvering him into something, he wasn't sure what. She tried another tack: "This whole thing seems a bit casual—this trip to the lake, I mean. It's agreed that we can't possibly get back until late tonight. Doesn't it seem odd that nothing has been said about food up there? Not even a lunch?"

"They probably forgot it," he said, with relief. Here was a diversion. "I'll go order something right away. A sandwich apiece. And some chocolate bars."

"You seem to have an answer for everything," she said.

HE came back from the dining-room warily. She was seated near the farther wall, writing. She appeared not to notice him, and he leaned against the window, watching her. He'd had gloves on with boxers like that. They circled and sparred, seemingly inept. But when the opening came and they stepped in, it was bad.

This was dynamite. She was writing a letter. To whom? She glanced up twice as she wrote, once at a calendar on the wall, once at the clock over the desk. She folded the letter, sealed it and looked directly at him.

"Mr. Kennedy."

He went over at once and leaned both hands on the edge of the desk, gripping it hard. He watched her moisten the stamp and affix it.

"It's to the Provincial Police here," she said. "About you, Whitey, Rocky —everything. They'll get it tomorrow. A good idea, don't you think?"

"Splendid," he lied. It was a ruinous development. He could explain nothing to her now. With this letter in the hands of the police, it would be too late. Yet how head her off? "Of course, you'll be back tonight," he said casually. It had to be casual. "You could wait and give them a complete report."

"If my suspicions are wrong, I'll be glad to apologize," she said, getting up. She left the letter lying on the desk. "Mail it for me. D'you mind?" She indicated the letter-box across the lobby, and sauntered toward the window. . . .

It was one of those things. Something had to be done, and quickly. He picked up the letter—and an empty envelope lying near by. On the way to the box he slid her letter into his pocket. At the box, knowing she was watching him, he dropped the empty envelope in.

I'm a heel to do this, he thought, coming back. *I'll tell her about it up at the lake.*

"Look," she said, pointing out the window. "Here comes Rocky. He's alone."

"Whitey's probably gone down to the ship," Bill said. "Yes—there he is." Whitey's distant figure was plain; he was just stepping out on the slip. Bill guided Ruth away from the window before she could notice the considerable equipment that Whitey was carrying. "Might as well shove off. Where are those sandwiches?"

"I've got them." She patted the bulging pocket of her coat.

"And here's Rocky."

"We're all set to travel," Rocky said, peering up at Bill. "Whitey's down there now. Everything jake with you folks?"

"Jake," Bill said.

Ruth laughed outright. For no reason that Bill could fathom, she was suddenly in high good spirits. She clung to his arm as they descended the steep sidewalk toward the docks. There were cleats nailed across the boards to prevent slipping. As they lurched down it, her firm body pressed momentarily against him. "You know," she said, "I like that. I've made a note of it." She repeated it musingly: "'Jake!'"

When they came down to the ship, distant loiterers began to move toward them. The take-off promised a break in the monotony for these curious ones. Rocky glowered at them. "Let's get going—before these rail-birds begin to ask questions. . . . Whitey wants you inside, Bill. He's trimming ship."

Bill immediately stepped out onto the pontoon and clambered aboard. Rocky kept Ruth ashore, and Bill soon saw why. The new equipment was outspread on the freight-compartment floor. Whitey's hammock and blankets were draped over a rack.

"Look over this equipment, Kennedy," said Whitey. "We figured you'd want to inspect it. It sure cost us dough."

"Charge it," Bill said.

Whitey laughed a bit unpleasantly. "We've done that."

It was good equipment, in every detail, and complete. Bill had known that Rocky would see to that. The rifle was in a leather scabbard—a necessity on a mountain haul, where a single accidental blow against a rock could ruin the front sight. He drew it out and looked at it. It was new and a beauty: spotless, its packing grease carefully wiped away. He slid it back, checked the ammunition, the eiderdown sleeping-bag, the grub, the nested cooking utensils.

"Okay," he said. "That's swell."

"You can help Rocky cast off," Whitey said. "Wait till I give you the high-sign. I'll stow this stuff way back. We're nose-heavy, with all the tanks full. . . . Tell Rocky to tell that egg from the moorage to stand by. I'm going to leave my junk ashore."

Bill nodded and swung down. He gave Rocky the message, and Rocky motioned to a grizzled old-timer standing on the main dock. The man slouched up to the pontoon.

"Can't I get aboard?" Ruth asked.

"Wait," Rocky said. "Whitey's the skipper."

Whitey appeared at the door presently and handed down his blanket bundle and a small bag. The man balanced the bundle on his shoulder, grasped the bag and staggered away. "Stick 'em in my locker," Whitey called after him. "I'll be after it tonight. . . . All right," he told the others. "We're set."

Bill helped Ruth aboard, then stepped back to help cast off. "I'll take the other side," Rocky said, and circled the end of the slip.

Bill cast off the outer line first. The ship's nose was pointing inshore, and as he came forward, Bill saw Rocky in conversation with a tall, dour man in the uniform of the Provincial Police.

IN spite of himself, a reaction not associated with conscious will, Bill halted and stepped back so that the intervening struts partly hid him from view. He pretended to busy himself coiling the line, amazed at the fierceness of the urge that had caused him to seek cover, its utter lack of reason. If the officer had come to arrest him, there was no escape.

But Rocky came around the slip alone. He motioned Bill aboard, and Bill stepped quickly to the pontoon and swung up into the cabin. Whitey was just beginning to wind the manual starter.

"Sit down here," Ruth whispered, indicating the seat opposite.

The ship was moving; Rocky fended it out of the slip, turned it, and at the last moment swung aboard. He came up into the cabin, bringing his coiled lines with him. The ship moved clear, and the whine of the starter approached its peak.

Having now stowed the lines, Rocky paused momentarily beside Bill, his back to Ruth. "That was a close squeak, son. See the guy I was talking to? Sergeant Henshaw, of the jolly Provincials."

"I saw him," Bill said.

Rocky nudged him jovially. "He's a curious critter. He wanted to look us over, particularly you, but I told him we'd all be back tonight. If he'd known you were from Seattle, we'd never have shoved off. . . . No charge, boy. Happy to oblige."

The motor took hold thunderously. Whitey throttled it down, and they

glided into open water. "Strap 'er on," he called back. "I warmed up an hour ago."

Bill tightened his safety-belt, and Ruth did the same; Whitey gave them a glance in the mirror, and the motor thundered. They crept forth sluggishly at first, but gathered momentum fast. The water became a speeding blur; the impact of small waves caused the whole ship to tremble.

Then they shook free and were off.

Bill did not look at the docks and the city falling away below. He sat impassively, face upturned to the blue of the sky. It was a narrow view—but better than looking through bars. . . . He was winging away from the police now—away from life and the roster of the living. And there was no turning back.

Ruth's hand touched his arm. He glanced at her, and she motioned him to lean across the aisle. When he did so, she placed her hand across his shoulder, pulling his head closer.

"We're in the air now," she said. Her lips were almost brushing his ear, so that he could hear her above the all-out bellowing of the motor, laboring in the climb. "Nothing can stop us. I couldn't wait to tell you how sorry I am."

She drew back so he could see her face fully. Her smile was touched a little with shyness.

"Sorry? About what?"

"Because I doubted you back there. When you mailed that letter, I knew everything was all right. I made you do it, and you didn't even hesitate. . . . So I'm not afraid now. And please forgive me."

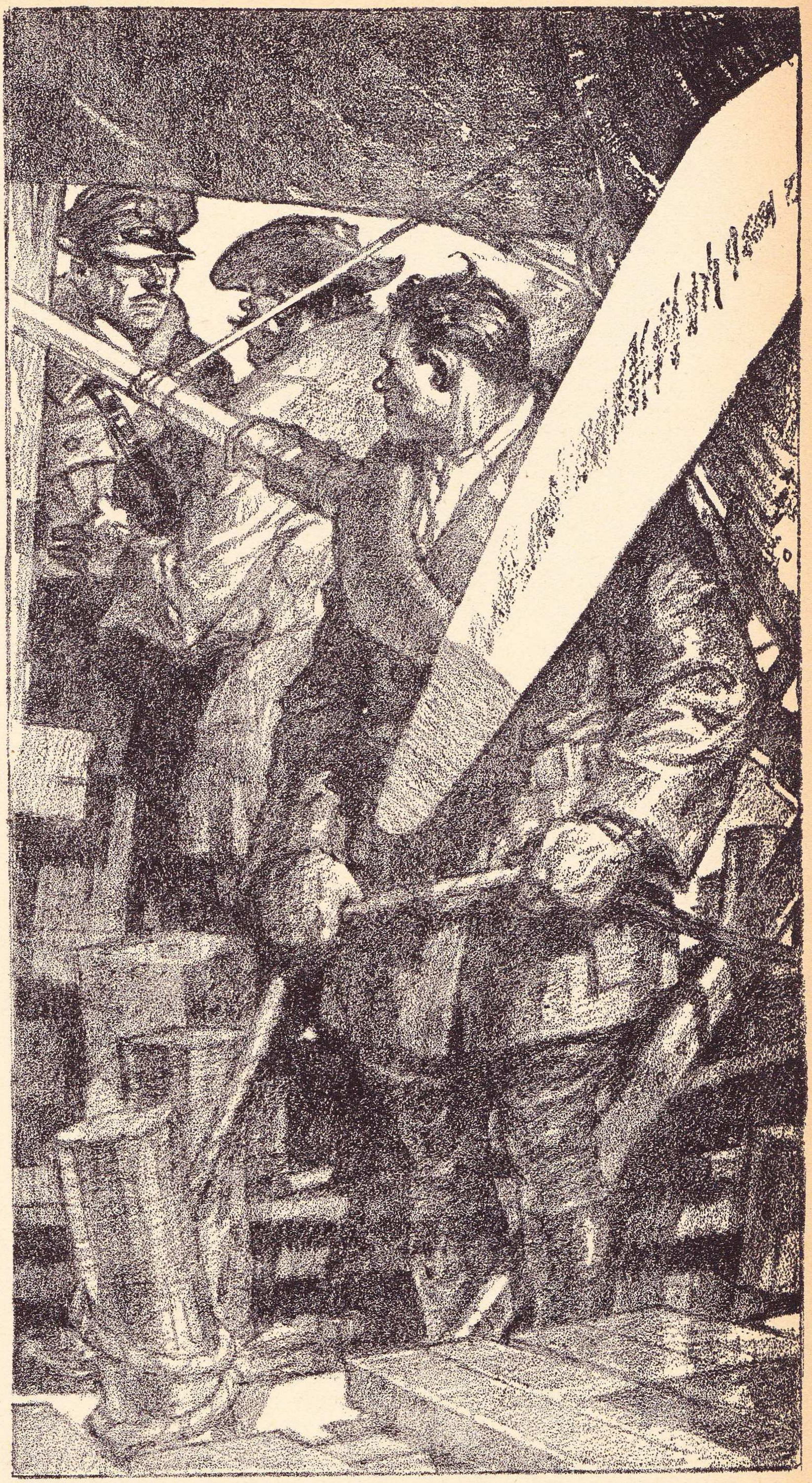
That hurt. He could almost feel the letter burning holes in his pocket. "Think nothing of it," he said, with attempted lightness. "It might have been just a bluff, you know. My past may be as black as Whitey's and Rocky's. Worse, even."

She laughed outright. "No doubt. Be sure to make a clean breast of it as soon as that motor quiets down."

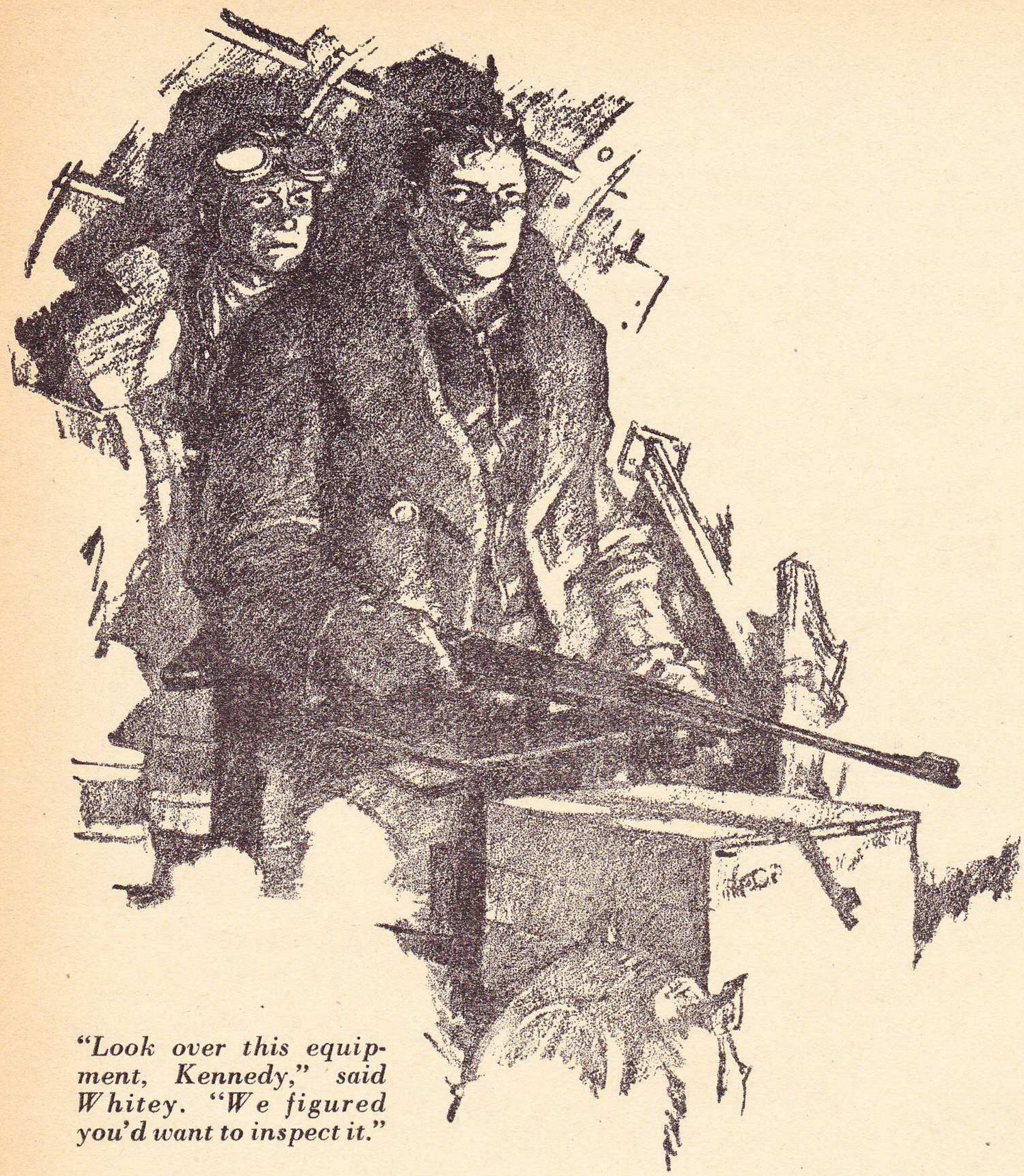
Chapter Nine

As the ship mounted steadily into the sunlight, bearing north by east over the forested hills of the interior country, Bill settled back comfortably, gripped by a sort of grim relief. They had missed official scrutiny narrowly at the take-off. Now they were winging away from all such complications—and the mistakes and tragedies of the past—at a speed of approximately three miles per minute. No living person except the four in this cabin knew their destination.

He had coppered that last bet himself, through his sleight-of-hand with Ruth's letter. This entailed an obligation that could not now be side-



Bill halted; he pretended to busy himself coiling the line, amazed at the fierceness of the urge to seek cover, its utter lack of reason—if the officer had come to arrest him, there was no escape.



"Look over this equipment, Kennedy," said Whitey. "We figured you'd want to inspect it."

stepped, at whatever cost to his own chances: before his own exit, he must see her safely into the clear, safely *en route* back to Prince Rupert. On the ground, up there at the lake, he must do two things. First, he must convince Whitey and Rocky that she was "sold" —sold on their honesty, on the theory that she had lost her money in a legitimate enterprise. They had to be sure of that point. They had too much at stake to leave any doubts about it.

Second, he must give her the true facts about the mine before she left the lake, warning her to pretend to be resigned about her losses until she got back to the protection of the police.

Toughest chore—and last—would be to explain to her why he was remaining behind. He'd have to cook up something on the ground, some plausible story guided by expedience, the fall of the cards. It wouldn't be necessary to convince her. She'd find out all about him—the letter, his record in Seattle, the whole picture—the moment she got back to Prince Rupert. She'd condemn him then, no matter what he'd done in her behalf up at the lake. He'd be on a par with Whitey and Rocky in her estimation—worse, even, because she'd trusted him.

They were presently winging past the northern ramparts of the Babines. The coastal forest was dwindling at the rear now: an undulating carpet spangled with the silvery threads of myriad streams. Eastward, mountain peaks were rearing like foam-crested billows frozen against the blue of the sky. Whitey's course was still north by east; they were crossing the divide into the lonely and turbulent wilds bordering the Finlay.

It was a modern miracle: air travel! Thirteen hours ago they had been in Seattle, hundreds of miles to the south. The mountains and valleys across which their shadow was drifting now would have taken weary days to penetrate afoot. Shortly now they would be five hundred miles inland, close to two miles up the slopes of the Rockies, in a trackless region designated thus far merely as "somewhere this side of Sifton Pass."

He had intended to say little to Ruth until they got to the lake. Two words must cover their entire relationship, during the fleeting hours left: strictly business. It was tough, but fact. It would leave fewer scars. . . . But it occurred to him, with the Rockies actually in view, that he must warn her to say nothing, announce no decision, until he gave the word. To that extent, she must be on guard.

He glanced at her and found her half turned toward him, an elbow resting on the window-frame, her chin cupped in her hands. She was studying him smilingly. A demure twinkle showed in her eyes.

"It's about time," she said. "And I hope I've read all those scowls and nods correctly. We're in this together, so let's not pretend any more, eh? . . . Very well. How are you, Bill?"

He stared. Her manner of saying it took him back through the years.

"You knew me all the while?" he demanded incredulously.

"Of course, you goose. As soon as I saw you—blotto and battered as you were. D'you think I'd have approved you so quickly if I hadn't?"

SHE was enjoying his astonishment. He was thankful that Whitey was not watching him in the mirror, nor Rocky. He couldn't analyze the force of the emotions that shook him. The old hurt was there—and a guilty, poignant thrill. *Watch your step, Kennedy,* he thought.

"You're looking quite pop-eyed," she said placidly. "Still, there's a doubtful touch. Like that dismal look you gave me when we first met at Seattle. . . . Incidentally, why pretend you didn't know me?"

"I didn't," he said, adopting her own light manner.

"Come, come—it was written all over your face. 'Heavens,' says you, 'here's that woman again!' It wasn't very flattering. Explain it, sir."

"I'll do that," he agreed. He was playing with fire, and knew it, but drove on recklessly. "It's true that I knew a girl named Ruth once, at Shawnigan. I didn't know her last name then, or care. A charming child —freckled, unaffected—"

"But very spoiled," she said. "And plump. You liked that, I recall—at least you said you did. I loved you for it, extraordinary as your tastes were."

"This Ruth I mentioned," he went on, "was my boyhood sweetheart. She still is. I've never forgotten her. . . . But she's only a memory. *That* Ruth's gone—if you follow me?"

"I'm a little outdistanced," she admitted. "I'm still here. Or were you talking about me?"

"No. The lady I met at the Seattle airport was Miss Ruth MacRae, granddaughter of Alexander MacRae."

"In person," she said, with a sigh. "Can I ever live that down?"

"A wealthy woman. Quite hard-boiled in business matters. Aware of her background, social connections and all that. Nevertheless quite charming, in her way."

"Thank you so much."

"But not my way," Bill said smilingly. "She was a stranger to me. *My* Ruth was gone—years before."

"Really? What happened to her?"

"She disappeared—like that!" He snapped his fingers. "Pouf! One of those female Yahoudis. . . . Don't tell me you've forgotten her exit line?" He sat up, gave her a haughty look and imitated her prim, mortified words of long ago. "'You live here? . . . My word—I thought you were one of *us!*' . . . . Remember now?"

"Perfectly. Only, you make it sound quite stuffy. It *was* stuffy, of course—" She gave him a level, doubtful glance, suddenly ill at ease. It made him feel like a low-life to see her confident good spirits dashed. "You've hated me all these years."

"Not hate. It's just that I'd never been high-hatted like that before—nor since."

"I think I can explain it," she said. She was almost timid about it. He had never seen her in more charming guise. "Shall I try?"

It made him feel ashamed, made his whole viewpoint seem trivial. "Forget it. It was just kid stuff. Water over the dam."

She insisted: "Please! And I also want to discuss that woman of wealth you mentioned. The granddaughter of Alexander MacRae. . . . Only, you mustn't misunderstand my motives. I mean—I didn't intend—" She floundered, groping for words. "I'm not just trying to win you over to my side. Please understand that."

"Of course." It was his turn to be embarrassed. "Proceed with confidence."

It was already too late. Rocky was turned out into the aisle, his gaze fixed vacantly upon them, exchanging a last word with Whitey. He was preparing to get up. The ship was pitching a little, riding invisible currents. The motor was roaring in a deeper, more robust tempo.

Ruth beckoned Bill closer. He caught something like relief in her smiling glance. "We'll have to compare notes later. Up there—or on the way back tonight. . . . Yes, on the way back."

"It'll have to be on the ground," Bill said. "Meanwhile, remember—" now he spoke warningly, dropping his light manner—"don't believe anything Whitey says, or Rocky, unless it's confirmed by me."

"You mean about the mine?"

"And about me."

She didn't understand, but her surprised glance touched and thrilled him. "Naturally," she said.

Rocky came back and stood between them, studying their faces in turn. What he saw appeared to please him; his mustache spread benevolently.

"We're flying at better than ten thousand," he said. "Just crossing into the Finlay. "Whitey's got some sort of breather going up there, so his windows are clear. Had you noticed how yours are frosted up?"

They hadn't noticed, but their windows were thinly spangled. Ruth placed her finger-tips against the glass, and shivered. "I'm glad I brought my big coat."

Rocky beamed at Bill. "You folks kind of got together, eh? You told her all about yourself?"

"Not yet. We've just been gossiping."

"No fooling?" Rocky stared at Bill under lowered brows, then turned to Ruth. "D'ye mind easing up there with Whitey?"

She glanced at Bill for confirmation. When he nodded, she got up briskly and went forward. Whitey leaned toward her at once.

Rocky settled himself into Ruth's place with a sigh.

"Might as well strap 'er on," he said. "We set right here till we hit Luna Lake. Whitey don't want us moving around. . . . You shorely missed the boat, son. You mean to say you aint told the gal where you stand with respect to John Law? You aint prepared her for nothing?"

"You expected me to?" Bill countered.

Rocky shook his head, with a species of bitter awe. "For a lad as hard-boiled as you, you're the hopefulest that ever stumbled into a bear-trap. You still got the quaint notion that all you got to do is look at the mine, tell the gal what you see and then walk out of the picture?"

Bill stared at him. "What else?"

Rocky sat back and pulled his hat low over his eyes. "Doggone!"

"What are you driving at? Is there something about the deal up there that I ought to know?"

But Rocky was plunged completely into gloom. "Plenty. I'd aimed to give you the works, gambling that you'd have her sympathies roused up, so she'd battle beside you to a finish. It's too late now. . . . I'll tell you this much, boy: Don't make a move up there, don't say a word—I mean, after you've read the cards—'less you've figured what the pay-off is. Just recall that there's more than your scalp depending on your guessing right."

Bill nodded. "Yours, for instance?"

"Correct. . . . And the gal's."

Chapter Ten

WHEN they left the watercourse of the Finlay, which was little more than a faint line meandering far below, it seemed that Whitey was hurling the ship directly into the face of vertical dimensions. Bill rubbed some of the frost from the window and peered out, awed by the nearness and stupendous mass of the continental barrier. High as they were, snowy crests towered above them, dwarfing their insect flight. Reflected sunlight blazed there; soft but blinding from the snow-fields, flaming with hard brilliance from icy cliffs and pinnacles.

They were mounting up a vast cleft whose bottom was spotted with islands of timber. It seemed to be a blind cañon, narrowing and pinching out somewhere in the chaos above. The timber thinned moment by moment and finally disappeared. Giant walls shouldered in and the floor of the crevasse mounted in great steps centered by thin ribbons of waterfalls.

Bill wondered what frail hunch had brought the discoverer of Luna Lake winging up such a forbidding gorge. A motor failure here would have meant disaster. Certainly, from the ground, exploration would be almost impossible. No expedition on foot, unless led by expert mountain-climbers equipped for an alpine ascent, could scale the successive barriers that choked the depths below.

Three giant bends between ever-narrowing walls brought the end in sight, far in the upper distance: a tiny V that framed the blue-white, jagged face of a living glacier. Above rose the cloud-like masses of the eternal snowfields. The glacier seemed to press against that meager cleft. Yet the crystalline air was deceptive: there could be a half-mile pocket between.

"That's it?" Bill asked, with a somber thrill.

Rocky nodded. "Question is, how much ice is on the lake?"

Bill was absorbing the impact of another question, belated and staggering: was *this* the terrain from which he had planned so glibly to emerge—afoot? Descent down the gorge, the way they had come, was obviously impossible. The first jump-off up there could not be scaled. This was evident from the manner in which the thin waterfall pouring out from the point of the V broke and faded into mists below.

The remaining sides of the basin that cupped the lake seemed equally formidable. The wall was sheer on the right, or south. Eastward, dead ahead, the roots of the glacier ended in snow-fields and outthrust escarpments that seemed to hang down from the sky. The only possible way out, if there was a way, lay to the north, over giant slopes whose contours were hidden.

Here we are, gambler, Bill thought, grimly. *The last chip—and we've bet it, sight unseen.* It had seemed plausible, on paper, in the safety of Prince Rupert. This was reality!

When they came to the gap, the crest of the waterfall was still above them. Whitey was forced to veer away and bank sharply, circling for

more altitude. It was a tight circle because the unyielding walls were close.

As they came about on the return swing and leveled off, pointing directly at the gap, the surface of the lake came into view, static and frozen. The arm thrusting into the base of the glacier, lined with scrub timber, was also solid. . . . But as the gap rushed toward them, and the interior angle widened, the west arm, or bay, was revealed as open water. It was blue water, rimmed by a thin line of frost and ice at the base of the black cliff.

The moment they were through the gap, Whitey nosed the ship down sharply. "Hang on!" he shouted, through the drumming quiet of the cabin. "We're liable to hit hard."

The ice streamed by underneath. Its ragged edge shot past, and they were over open water. The cliff hurtled toward them; the intervening distance seemed all too short. . . . They struck with a considerable impact; then they mushed down, and the pontoons took hold.

Whitey instantly came about, gunning the motor. Their left wing-tip seemed almost to sweep the face of the wall as they paralleled the shore. The motor roared once more, maintaining headway, then dwindled and died.

Whitey stood up at the controls, looking ahead. "Okay, Rocky."

Rocky, already free of his safety belt, snatched up a coiled line, opened the door and swung down to a pontoon. Bill followed, and together they fended away from the broken rock that crumbled down to the water's edge. Then Rocky leaped ashore, crunching through the marginal ice and bristling frost. He drew the ship in gently, and began to make fast to the base of a gnarled shrub.

Bill straightened up and looked about him, drawing the chill, thin air deeply into his lungs. Wind was far overhead, moaning in the upper crags. That desolate sound, and the distant monotone of the waterfall, merely sharpened by contrast the vast and imposing silence of the peaks. That was Bill's first impression of Luna Lake: its high and almost austere remoteness. Except by air, it was as aloof from the ordinary paths of man as a lonely crater of the moon.

They were moored against the side of a low headland that separated the two forks of the lake. It was a moraine composed of fallen and disintegrated fragments of rock that had thundered down from the heights in ages past. Beyond the ridge, on the glacier bay, was a stand of stunted but thick-limbed spruce, and a ragged fringe of willows. Partly hidden there was some handiwork of man not visible from the gap when they had winged in: a shake-roofed, log-walled cabin. The shakes were new, the unpeeled logs not yet weathered.

Then Bill saw the mine, just above the ridge and overlooking the bay where the ship floated. Its entrance was unimpressive: a tunnel peering blackly from the sheer base of the cliff. The broken rock disgorged from it sloped down in a widening fan to the water's edge. It was the volume of those tailings that carried significance to discerning eyes.

"How far did you go in, Rocky?"

"Better than eighty feet," Rocky returned, with virtuous pride. "Maybe twenty more after it pinched off. Plus a couple thirty-foot drifts north and south, trying to pick 'er up."

This was mystifying to Bill. He had assumed from the first that the mine was merely a stage prop in an out-and-out swindle. Yet in this tough-textured rock—it was durable igneous—the cost of such development and exploration, with every ounce of equipment flown in by air, might easily run high into five figures. Could he honestly give these two cutthroats a clean bill of health?

WHITEY'S brittle voice spoke at his back: "All right, Mr. Kennedy—give the little lady a hand."

Bill turned, found Ruth descending, and helped her down to the pontoon beside him. She stood there a moment, waiting for Rocky to come closer and help her jump ashore. She was wearing her great-coat and mittens, and her cheeks were already rosy with the cold. "Br-r! It's like an icebox, isn't it?"

"And getting colder," Rocky agreed, holding out his hand. "Hear that wind up there? It's from the east, which means a storm's brewing tonight, if I'm any judge. . . . Okay—jump!"

Ruth leaped ashore lightly, for all her swaddling clothes. Whitey, still standing inside the cabin door, spoke tersely:

"Listen, folks: We hit this right on the nose. A couple of hours more, and we couldn't have set down until the lake was solid. Which means we've got to do our business fast, and get out of here. We'll have to take off downwind, as it is. . . . You two start up there, Rocky. Kennedy can overhaul you."

Rocky and Ruth turned up the slope at once, their breath rising in white puffs above them. Whitey was squatting just inside the door of the plane, Bill's equipment near by.

"Here's your helmet," he told Bill. "And your rock-hammer and flashlight. It's all you need?"

Bill nodded, buttoning on the helmet. It was fleece-lined and comfortable. He lowered his voice, though Rocky and Ruth were already out of earshot. "How are you going to get my trail outfit ashore without Ruth seeing it?"

"While you're up in the tunnel. I'll hustle it across and cache it in the cabin. If she happens to see me, tell her anything that crosses your mind. I'm a mail-carrier. Or Santa Claus. She'll believe you, being beautiful and dumb. You're our star salesman, pal. But listen, Kennedy—watch your step."

Bill looked up at him quickly. "Meaning what?"

"Meaning just what you think, m'lad. You know what you've been hired to do—show her as little as possible, tell her as little as possible, but see that she's completely sold. She signs off here. . . . Rocky thinks you can do it. I'm the lad who's in a position to tell you, cold turkey: you've *got* to."

Bill waited. "What else?"

"This," said Whitey: "You'll find the west drift sealed up. A heavy door, with a padlock on it. There's tools and giant powder stored there, nothing else. Tell her so—and hurry by."

"Hm-m," Bill said. "A padlock. . . . What's inside?"

"Tools and giant powder. There's a crack on the left. Shine your light through and you'll see the tools, leaning against the wall."

"I know. But what else is in there?"

"Listen," Whitey said: "What you want out of this deal is two things—see that the gal gets a square deal, and save your own hide. Right?"

Bill nodded. Whitey's slanting eyes turned up toward the mine. Rocky and Ruth, climbing leisurely, were halfway up the slope of the tailings.

"This is the dope, then," Whitey said: "Cold turkey. . . . We thought we had something up there. We bet a hundred grand on it. Then it pinched off. Okay, so we folded. The other stockholders folded too. Ruth folded—and then changed her mind, bless her! Which left us out on a limb—plenty."

"Why?"

"We had that hole. We were stony broke. We had to get some capital together, fast. So we did some pick-up work with the ship."

"Pick-up?"

"We picked up a half-ton of concentrates when the owner wasn't looking," Whitey explained. "Never mind where. The thing is, the stuff's hot. We had to have a place to let it cool till it was safe to cash in."

"So you put it in the drift?"

"You're clicking," Whitey approved. "So where were we when dear little Ruth lit on us? Up the creek. We couldn't get rid of her long enough to get the stuff moved out. She clung to us like grim death, ready to yell for the police the minute we turned our backs. If we didn't show her the layout, we were sunk. If we did, we were sunk. . . . Got it now?"

Bill nodded, with sardonic amusement; and with inner relief. If Ruth hadn't been swindled, the biggest hurdle was past. What use these two had made of the drift was of no concern to Ruth, as Whitey had pointed out.

"So there's nothing in the drift, eh?"

"Oh, no," Whitey said. "Just giant powder and tools."

Bill grinned sourly and turned away. He grasped the flashlight and rock-hammer firmly, measuring the distance between the pontoon and the rocky margin.

"Make it snappy," Whitey warned. "I'll get your stuff over to the cabin, then wait for you here."

Bill leaped ashore. It gave him an odd feeling to walk through brittle frost and grinding shale. Sky travel was closed to him now, the trails of man remote. From this point on he was afoot in the Rockies.

He climbed up the long slope to the tailings, the sound of his progress raising up echoes from the towering walls. Ruth and Rocky were waiting at the mouth of the tunnel. He joined them there, puffing from the climb, and for a moment they stood silently, looking out over the lake. In mid-afternoon, by the clock, the sun was low in the southwest. Even the change in latitude was noticeable here; they were eight degrees of latitude closer to the Pole than at Boeing Field.

They were standing in sunlight, and a bar of radiance lay like a great wedge across the ice, its point on the gap. Otherwise the shadow of the great walls was upon the surface of the lake. Above, sheer and overpowering, the mountains flamed.

"It's beautiful, in a cold, heartless sort of way," Ruth said. "Why isn't this bay frozen?"

"Springs underneath, I figure," said Rocky. "She always freezes last."

DETAILS about the mine entrance caught Bill's attention. They were standing on a species of platform comprised of broken rock packed firmly as pavement. This was usual; many tons of worthless rock had been trundled out here. A pathway had been worn down the slope at his right, at the base of the cliff, a foot-path, paralleled by groups of heavy fragments, regularly spaced. From their appearance they had once supported a chute leading down to the water's edge. Some operation had gone on there, though no clue remained on the adjacent shelf as to what that operation was. The near-by water was black with depth....

There was one clue on the shelf itself: a dark splotch of oil that impregnated the rock. Some mechanical rig —gas-driven—had been in operation there. Why had all signs of this rig been removed so carefully?

"Which one of you is carrying the key?" Bill asked.

"Let's go," Rocky said, his voice brittle. "Viewing the remains is always plumb depressing. You want me to go in with you?"

"Better wait here," Bill said.

Rocky nodded, and turned up the collar of his mackinaw about his ears. Ruth moved at once toward the tunnel mouth. Bill went with her, aware of Rocky's intent gaze following him.

Inside the entrance, he halted. "Wait here, Ruth. There's some data I forgot to get from Rocky."

He went back and stood close beside Rocky.

"Whitey gave me the dope on the drift. That's straight, is it?"

"You mean the loot we got cached there?" Rocky hunched his shoulders. "Yeah. I been ashamed to tell you, Bill. Kind of penny-ante business, aint it?"

Bill gestured down the path. "What did you have down there—a little stamp-mill, maybe?"

"Oh, no," said Rocky, with a raised eyebrow. "Just a mortar. We pounded out samples as we went along."

Bill nodded. He had found out what he wanted to know—and it was bad. Rocky was lying.

"Okay. We won't be long."

He turned away abruptly and joined Ruth. Together they moved into the tunnel. Looking back over his shoulder, just before the angle hid the ship from view, Bill saw that Whitey was already standing on a pontoon, tossing the equipment ashore.

Chapter Eleven

WHEN the light of day had faded eerily, Bill snapped on the flashlight, illuminating the cavern. The roof was a ragged arc above them, glistening with a thousand frost-crystals. Vague contours merged into utter darkness ahead. The sound of their progress reëchoed through utter quiet.

Though the going was fairly even underfoot, Ruth clung to Bill's arm. He could feel her trembling a little.

"Cold?" he asked.

"And frightened," she said apologetically. "I've never been in a place like this before. It won't cave in on us?"

"No," he said. "It's safe."

He flashed the light from side to side and along the floor. The rock structure was broken by occasional seams. He paused at one of these, chipped off a sample, and was mildly surprised at the geological story it told. They were already past the igneous—it had merely been an outer sheath—and were piercing a dome. Anything could be encountered ahead. The litter on the floor, spilled from whatever wheelbarrow or primitive tram that had been used to move out the débris, was of still different texture.

He picked up one of the latter fragments—a small piece no larger than the first joint of his thumb—hefted it, and paused to hold it close under the light. He got out his glass and studied it minutely. Then he dropped it into his pocket and went on.

Ruth spoke in a hushed voice. "They *did* spend a lot of money here, didn't they?"

"Looks like it."

"More than a hundred thousand?"

"Could be."

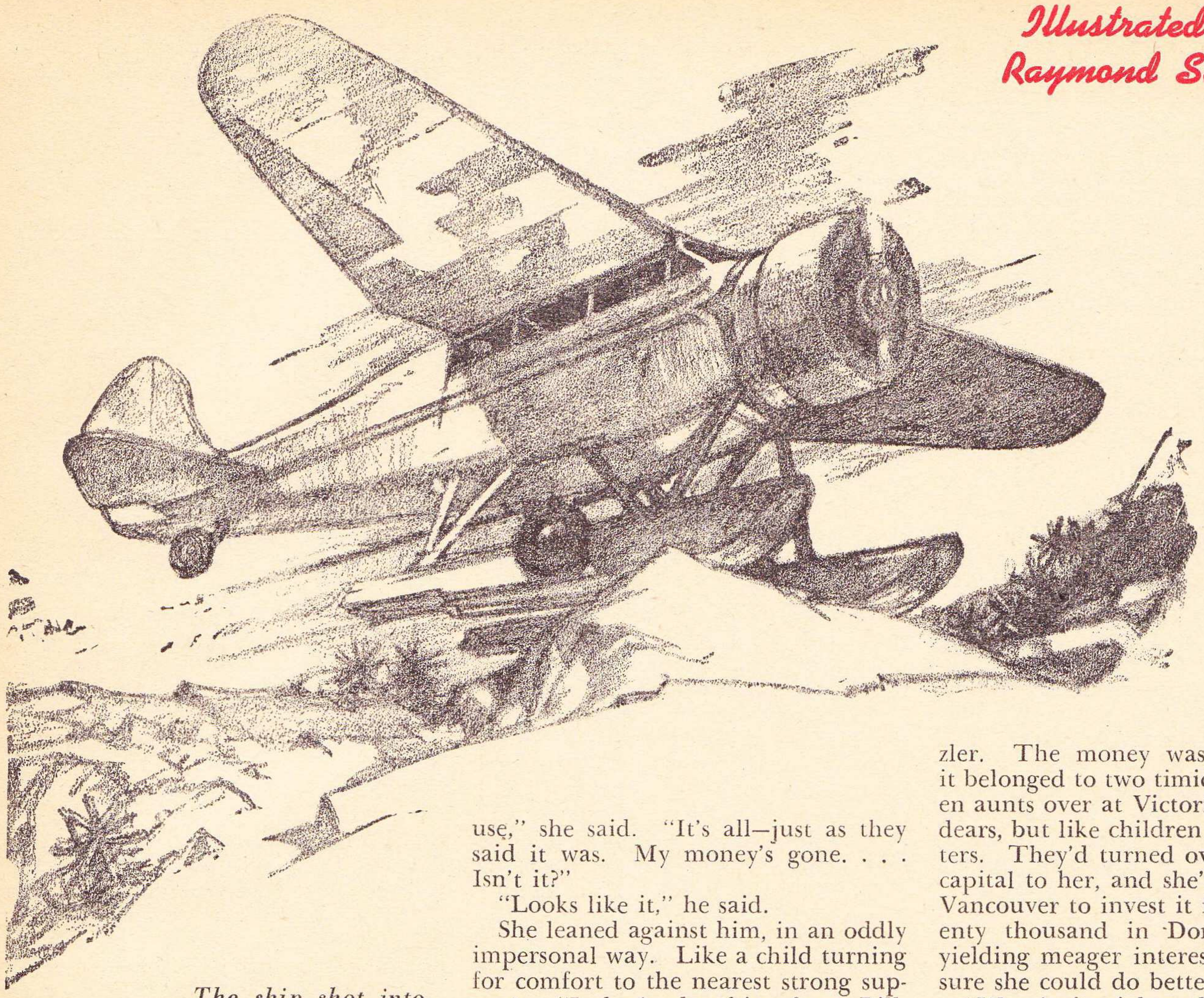
They came to the walled-up entrance to the west drift. The main tunnel pierced on into the darkness. The heavily timbered door was at the right, and as he studied the wall there, and to the left and in the semi-twilight beyond, Bill saw why they had tried here to pick up the lost seam. A major fault was in the structure ahead. They had gone on past the point of slippage, then returned here, computed the probable angle and pierced hopefully westward.

"Why have they got it locked up?" Ruth asked.

Bill pointed to the sign—Beware, Explosives. "There's always a chance that someone would stumble in here. They've probably got their tools locked up in there, too."

They went on, and the end was soon in sight: merely a dead end, in

Illustrated by Raymond Sisley



The ship shot into view like a javelin. . . . Whitey was dipping the wings in sardonic farewell.

black, unpromising rock. A drift led eastward and Bill led the way to its end, but merely to complete the casual survey. He flashed the light around and said: "Well, that's that."

As they went back, she said, in a low voice: "Bill—"

"Wait," he said.

When they came to the junction with the main tunnel, he looked down toward the entrance. It seemed far in the distance. Rocky's figure was in silhouette against the blazing sunlight, squat and bulging. His back was to them, his face turned to the left—watching Whitey returning from the cabin, Bill guessed.

Bill backed around the corner again, out of view, should Rocky look in. "Okay," he said. "We're alone."

He looked down at her, but she averted her face quickly, at the same time turning toward him and clinging more tightly to his arm.

"Turn out the light," she said. "P-please."

He did so, aghast and stricken. They were in utter darkness. "It's no use," she said. "It's all—just as they said it was. My money's gone. . . . Isn't it?"

"Looks like it," he said.

She leaned against him, in an oddly impersonal way. Like a child turning for comfort to the nearest strong support. "I don't do this often, Bill. I'm just not brave and casual, like you. . . . I—I've got to cry."

He placed his left arm about her shoulders. She was still clinging to his right, and she pressed her face against it. No sobbing shook her; she was merely rigid, and he knew that if there were tears running down her cheeks they were being forced out against her utmost will, one by one.

"Don't, Ruth," he said, gently. "Look—isn't it only just money you've lost?"

"It's my s-shirt," she said. "Isn't that what the gamblers say, when they've lost everything?"

"Everything?" he repeated.

"I can tell you now," she said. "I didn't want to b-bias you before. . . . D'you mind?"

"No," he said. "Tell me."

He remembered a flat fragment of rock at the base of the wall behind him. He found it, seated himself there and drew her down beside him. He leaned back against the wall and she huddled in the crook of his shoulder, her hair soft against his jaw.

"Proceed," he invited, smiling a little in the darkness. "You're not talking to a stranger. I'm a long ways from home myself."

It came with a rush: She was a cheat, a crook, practically an embezzler. The money wasn't even hers; it belonged to two timid, mousy maiden aunts over at Victoria. They were dears, but like children in money matters. They'd turned over their entire capital to her, and she'd gone over to Vancouver to invest it for them. Seventy thousand in Dominion bonds, yielding meager interest. She'd been sure she could do better by them.

"Wasn't it eighty thousand?" Bill asked.

It was. She'd persuaded them to mortgage their home for that last ten thousand; her home—for she'd lived with them since she was sixteen. They'd educated her, clothed her, even cashed some of their capital—an almost criminal gesture, in their view—to pay for her education abroad.

"We're talking turkey," Bill said. "Where's your slice of the MacRae millions?"

THERE wasn't any. Her father, the family ne'er-do-well, had gone through most of his inheritance fast. Malaria had done for him while on a big-game expedition in Africa. Her mother had died the next year, stony broke. That had been two years after that summer at Shawnigan. . . .

"Mother was awfully stiff-necked, bless her. She just couldn't live on the charity of Aunt Aggie and Aunt Beth. . . . She was an Ormsby, you know. She'd always looked down on the MacRaes a little."

Bill held her closer to take the curse off it. "Not one of *us*, eh?"

She moved her head, as though trying to look up into his face. "*You* want me to eat crow too? Listen, then. . . . After that day we went canoeing at Shawnigan—"

"Skip it," he said. "There's no time now. This is brass tacks. . . . Where did you run across Rocky?"

She'd met him at the Exchange. His stock wasn't listed; he'd explained that he was looking for private capital. No use letting speculators in on anything as good as this. He'd shown her samples, assay reports, painted a glowing picture of the huge body of ore up here at Luna Lake: Gold—free-milling. Surface out-croppings running hundreds to the ton. . . . He'd sounded so plausible.

"And now—this. I'd rather be shot than go back and face them. . . . It's got to be done, though."

He fought an urge to tell her that there might still be a chance for salvage, for big winnings, even. It was only a hunch—yet. No use raising up new hopes until he was sure.

They sat for a moment in a silence broken only by the ticking of their watches. It was like a race. Her watch was the faster; it overhauled his; they ticked momentarily in unison, then hers hurried on. . . .

Rocky's voice reverberated in the tunnel.

"Hey! You folks lost?"

"Coming," Bill said.

She pushed away from him briskly. "I'm feeling better. I've had my cry. . . . Sorry. There isn't another soul I could talk to like that."

"It's all right." He gave her shoulder a little pat. "How are you, Ruth? It's been a pleasure to see you again."

She knew what he meant. When he turned on the flashlight, she was smiling, though her long lashes were still wet.

They went back to the main tunnel. Rocky and Whitey were in silhouette at the entrance, waiting. When they came to the locked door, Bill paused and shone the light through a crack at the left, where the massive frame was a little away from the irregular contours of the rock. He could see tools leaning there—shovels, a crowbar, drills—but nothing more.

"What are you going to tell them?"

"I'm going to bring them in here and ask them one question," Bill said. "You'll wait outside. When we come out, be ready to follow my lead. No matter what it is, do as I say."

They walked slowly toward the entrance. She whispered:

"You mean, there *is* something funny here?"

"I suspect it. One joker. And if it's here, it isn't funny."

Light strengthened about them. The sunlight, when they emerged, was momentarily blinding. Ruth got a pair of goggles from her coat pocket and put them on; they also hid her eyes from close scrutiny. Bill looked about him, blinking.

"Well?" Whitey demanded. He seemed casual, but Bill noted the pinched, formidable set of his lips. "What's the verdict, Professor?"

"Step back to the drift with me a second. D'ye mind, Ruth?"

"It's all right," she said. She had her compact out and was powdering her nose. "I'll wait here."

"We take off in fifteen minutes," Whitey said.

Bill led the way back, with Rocky at his elbow and Whitey walking close behind. It reminded Bill, somehow, of that night—it was only *last* night—when he had descended from De Silva's with Red Schafer breathing on his neck. Forces more menacing than Schafer's brute strength were striding with him now. And greater stakes impended.

"Did he get my trail outfit moved over, Rocky?"

"Yeah. It's all cached in the cabin."

They paused at the door, and Bill turned the flashlight on the padlock. It was of the heaviest type, hanging from a hasp and staple bolted firmly through the four-inch planking.

"Which one of you boys is carrying the key?"

"I am," Whitey said. He shifted his position to face Bill squarely and his eyes narrowed.

"We don't have to show Ruth the concentrates," Bill said. "What she doesn't know won't hurt her. Let me see the stuff. Yes?"

"No," Whitey said. He was standing with his hands in his side pockets, and he kept them there, waiting.

Bill looked at Rocky.

"You had a stamp-mill out there by the tailings."

Rocky stared at him, the whites of his eyes glistening. "There wasn't any stamp-mill."

Bill took the fragment of ore from his pocket, hefted it, then handed it to Rocky. "D'you call that a concentrate? Or a nice chunk of high-grade?"

Rocky hefted the sample automatically. A touch of horror was in his quick glance. "Judas!" he said, almost in a whisper. "You determined to cut your own throat, boy? Look—before you go clean off the deep end—"

But Whitey cut in: "No—the hell with it. . . . All right, Kennedy. We struck it. We came up to freight our stuff out. There was some giant left, so we put in a last shot for percentage—and hit the jackpot. . . . So what?"

Chapter Twelve

BILL got out a cigarette and lit it, broke the match and tossed it away. The interval gave him time to think, his lips pursed in a silent whistle. He had had a hunch from the moment he had suspected Rocky of lying about the stamp-mill. This was certainty, and the ramifications of it were growing by the minute.

They hadn't swindled Ruth. There were no stolen concentrates behind this door. There *was* a body of high-grade ore of unknown dimensions.

"How big is it? How wide is the vein?"

"It don't amount to much," Rocky said hastily. "It's just—"

"Shut up," Whitey said. "Your bag of tricks is empty, old son. . . . Call it a pocket, Kennedy. Call it millions. It doesn't change the deal. Have you given Ruth any hint of it?"

"No."

"That gives you both an outside chance," Whitey said. He indicated the fragment still in Rocky's hand. "That's float. You just happened to drop it here, eh, Rocky?"

"Yeah, I lost it out of my pocket. I shore did. It's float."

"When we get outside, drop it in the lake. . . . So here it is, Kennedy: Just a legitimate hard-rock prospect. It cost better than a hundred grand, but it blew up. It's tough on Ruth. It's tough on the other stockholders. But that's the way of it. You'll sell her that theory and make it good. Correct?"

Bill inhaled deeply on his cigarette, debating his play. No use attempting now to follow his original plan: tell Ruth privately, verbally, what the true situation was. With the stakes on the table, this pair would permit no private word with her. There was only one way left to warn her.

"Correct," he said. "Let's go."

Whitey eyed him unwinkingly as they started back.

"Just like that, eh?"

Bill nodded. "It won't be hard. She already thinks she's lost out."

"That's fine," Whitey said. He brought out a sheaf of papers from an inner pocket and riffled through them. "Because she signs off here."

Bill glanced sharply at him.

"Here?"

"Before we start out. On top of that, she'll have to convince me, prove to me, that there'll be no squawks after she reaches Prince Rupert. She reneged on us once. This time the deal's clean."

Bill walked slower, in thoughtful pose, head lowered. No chance to talk to Ruth. . . . He stopped and ground his cigarette out beneath his heel.

"Ruth doesn't know I'm staying behind. She'll want to know why."

Whitey said: "So?"

"So you'll tell her, Rocky. After you've taken off. . . . Do it this way. You get her aboard, Whitey, ready to go. Rocky and I'll lag behind. Then Rocky dashes aboard, and you're off. Right away, Rocky can start explaining." Bill's lips twisted a little. "He's good at that."

"Like a blacksmith," said Rocky gloomily.

Whitey said, to Bill's inner relief: "Okay. Let's get out of here."

They went on out into the sunlight. Ruth had descended the tailings on an angle to the left, and was standing on the crest of the ridge. She was like a little soldier in silhouette against the lake. Sunlight was upon her, and the great bar of sunlight through the gap had swung more obliquely toward the east; otherwise the lake and great walls were in deepening shadow. The orchestration of the wind was louder in the crags above, and the air had teeth in it.

THEY came down to her, and she turned to them, entirely composed and with a resolute air. Her momentary weakness in the tunnel was but a memory now.

Bill kept it casual, kept the desperate heartache and hunger from his eyes when he looked at her. This moment represented his last with Ruth MacRae.

He said: "We're about to take off now. If you feel like it, you might apologize to these boys. *I* thought they were crooks too."

"Right," she said. She didn't look at Whitey, but squarely at Rocky. "Sorry."

"Do you happen to have your stock certificates, receipts and what-not with you?"

She nodded, thrusting her hand into one bulging pocket.

"Let's see them, please."

She took out a heavy envelope and handed it to him. He opened it and took out a stock certificate, beautifully engraved, and four assessment receipts.

"Might as well tear them up," Bill said. "Better still, burn them."

He had noticed that both certificate and receipts had been recorded. The recorder's stamps were upon all. Though she didn't know it, destroying the originals was merely an impressive gesture.

"You burn them," she said.

He struck a match and burned the stock certificate first. She watched him, her face pale but smiling a little. "Sixty thousand," she said, when the ashes fell to the ground. He burned the assessment receipts, and she said: "Twenty thousand—including a mortgage." When the flames had died, she said, with a Continental lift of the shoulders: *"Finis!"*

"Tout finis," Bill agreed. "Now we'll wind it all up. Whitey's got a release for you to sign."

She took pen and paper from Whitey, read the release, then spread it against her knee, and signed it. It brought a tightness to Bill's throat that she should accept his direction so blindly and implicitly.

It also sold Whitey on the completeness of her surrender. "No more squawks at Prince Rupert, then?"

She gave him a brief glance but made no reply.

"Righto," Whitey said, showing his teeth at Bill. "We're off. Two minutes should warm the motor."

Ruth started toward the ship with him, but halted when she saw that Rocky and Bill stood fast on the ridge. Bill waved her on. "We'll be along in a minute."

"No more than two," Whitey said. "We're cutting this thin."

Ruth hesitated, looking up into Bill's face, then turned and went on. Whitey took her arm to help her over the uneven footing. For an instant Bill stood looking after her. This was good-by. He had found and lost her in a matter of minutes.

He turned away quickly, motioning to Rocky. The ridge soon hid her, as well as the amphibian and the bay from view. . . .

Once fully in the clear, Bill halted by a clump of bushes that all but surrounded a huge flat-topped fragment of rock. He placed a foot on the edge of this fragment, rested an elbow on his knee and looked at Rocky. Rocky looked back, his jaw projecting and brows lowered.

Bill continued to look at him steadily, through a sustained, bitter silence. Rocky called on all his battle-worn tricks to maintain his truculent front. He pulled his hat lower over his eyes with a defiant gesture, produced his plug of tobacco, bit into it viciously.

But his bluff failed, moment by moment; and suddenly he was broken and ashamed—or appeared to be.

"Don't you look at me that-a-way, Bill."

Bill said: "We drank together last night. You said: 'Sleep sound, Hod. Where there isn't any frost, and the wind don't blow.' . . . What kind of a bluff was that?"

Rocky cringed, and looked away. "That's a foul holt, son. It's the only way you can reach me where I'm plumb unprotected. Don't you bear down."

"What's in the air?" Bill insisted. "A touch of frost, maybe? What's blowing up there in the pinnacles?"

"Give it a name," Rocky pleaded, clasping and unclasping his bony hands. "I've figured and figured, and I'm out of my depth. Can't you see how Whitey's had me over a barrel? *I* wanted to split with her. This here's clean money—honest money. Our cut would have made us well-fixed. Clean money, by the Eternal! . . . But no, Whitey's had a taste of the meat. He's never been this close to millions, and he's plumb crazy."

"Millions, eh?"

"I've seen that stuff over at Yellowknife," Rocky said, huskily. "This here's more and better. The granddaddy of all pockets, and you can pry out the pay with a toothpick. . . . D'ye know why I drug you into this, Bill? It was on your account as well as hers. I figured—"

"Skip it," Bill said. There was no time to listen to Rocky's devious excuses. "What's Whitey got on you?"

Rocky hesitated. "Plenty."

"Enough to put you behind bars?"

"Yeah."

"And you've got enough on him to put him behind bars? Outside of this deal?"

Rocky looked about him cautiously. As though to reassure him that they were utterly alone, the distant motor roared thunderously into life.

"Enough to hang him," he said: "A knifing scrape over east of the mountains. His name aint Bodine. The Mounties'll never give up. He knows it. We figured to work this pocket this winter, cash in and head south. Then the gal—"

"Listen," Bill said sternly. "You can still pay off. You can still copper Ruth's bets. That's all I ask. . . . It'll cost you plenty."

"Try me," Rocky challenged. "I'll go the limit. Give it a name."

"It's simple. When you get to Prince Rupert tonight, tell her the truth. There *is* a mine. Give her all the dope you've got on Whitey. Tell her to turn him over to the Provincial Police—quick."

"It would have to be quick," Rocky said. "Then what happens to Rocky Flynn?"

"Follow your own hunch. If money can get you out of whatever Whitey hangs on you, you'll have it. Ruth will see that you get your share. Otherwise, fade from the picture."

"I'll have to fade," Rocky said. "Once this busts wide open, I'm done for." It seemed to Bill, for a savagely cynical moment, that Rocky's eagerness had chilled the instant it was suggested that he, personally, foot the bill. Yet his bleached eyes were merely intent. "So you want me to play my last ace?"

"I've played mine," Bill said, watching him. "I might get out of here alive. I might not. . . . Wasn't there a squaw waiting for you up Fort Nelson way? Up along the Dease, where even the Mounties could never run you down?"

Rocky nodded and spat reflectively. "Name of Luna. A good trapper and wood-splitter. But a long ways from them marble halls."

"Well?" Bill said.

ROCKY turned away and walked up and down, hands clasped together and shoulders bowed a little. He stood for an instant with his back to Bill, looking out over the lake toward the gap. Sunlight fringed his

upturned collar, glinted on the shank of an ancient fishhook in the crown of his battered hat.

When he turned back his shoulders were more erect. The bitter lines of his face had softened a little and he said slowly:

"Okay, Bill. I'll do 'er."

Bill silently extended his hand, and Rocky gripped it, blinking.

Over the ridge the idling motor roared up suddenly, peremptorily—an obvious command for haste—then died again.

"Look," Rocky said, hurriedly. He produced a huge roll of bills and divided it roughly in half. "You'll need a little capital. There's half the six grand I took off Red Schafer. . . . Don't you argue, now. It's yours. Red stole it off your dad."

Bill took it, with a mirthless smile. It was the first time Rocky had admitted that he had rolled Red Schafer while Schafer lay unconscious in the alley behind De Silva's bar.

"There's one more chore you've got to do, Rocky. . . . Tell Ruth all about me. I'm a murderer, a wanted man. Above all, sell her on the theory that she'll never see me again. She can't. . . . She won't want to, if you do the job right."

"Yes, she will," Rocky said. "She'll be back looking for you."

"She won't find me. She'll find a note up there in the tunnel: A confession—and a sign-off. The note will say that I'm not even going to try to get out of here. The hell with it! If the authorities want to find my body, they can drag the lake. . . . That's for the police as well as Ruth. It wipes the slate clean."

"Don't you even want me to leave her a pinch of hope? She loves you, son. I seen it in her eyes."

"No," said Bill harshly. "She remembers a boy she knew once. *I'm* a stranger to her. . . . That's all, Rocky." He waved Rocky on, with a species of desperation. Once the ship was gone, it would be too late for debate. "Good luck along the Dease, old son."

Rocky ascended the ridge. He waved to the hidden ship and stood a moment, scratching his head. He looked up at the sky, out across the lake, kicked aimlessly at a fragment underfoot.

Then he jammed his hat low, nodded briefly to Bill, and strode away.

BILL stood there, listening. It seemed a long time before they got away—long, dragging minutes. Presently the motor roared on a powerful, sustained note. He could imagine the ship's maneuvers: wheeling, swinging back into the bay for the farthest foot of take-off.

The motor roared again, wide open. Bill stepped back into the protection of the brush and stood motionless there. The ship shot into view like a javelin; it rose like a gull, pitching in the air currents. . . . No, Whitey was dipping its wings in hard-bitten, sardonic farewell.

The roar of it filled the whole lake. The graceful bulk of the ship dwindled toward the gap, plunged through it, dropped down and was gone.

Bill stood listening to the dwindling drone of the motor. The echoes seemed to shuttle from the peaks in the remote distance. Presently there was only the sound of the waterfall beyond the gap, and the eternal sighing of the wind overhead.

The flashlight bulked in his left pocket. He got it out, looked at it, and put it back again. The rock-hammer lay on the slab beside him. He took it up, hefted it aimlessly, and tossed it down. The metallic sound of it rang across the lake and echoed there.

He turned abruptly and strode up the bay toward the cabin, his head bowed. He was soon in the scrub-timber, following a path lined with strips of ancient bark and weathered chips. Apathetically he noted the stumps near by: the logs for the cabin had been hewn here. Autumn leaves lay underfoot, crisp with frost. It seemed to be colder here, close to the blue-white wall of the glacier. . . .

The cabin was a mere log-walled box, with a blunt stone chimney at

The rough threshold creaked; Bill

came to his feet, gripped by disbelief.

the far end. The door was open, and he could see his sleeping-bag and part of his pack-sack inside, on the dusty floor. He could see the vague outline of a single bunk built against the wall on the right. A box stove was in the center, with rusty stovepipe leading to the chimney.

He paused, with his foot on the threshold, and looked up past the corner of the shake roof toward the glacier. The rough wall of blue-white ice was wedged between two great shoulders of rock. It was sheer on the right, across the bay, but on the left a crumbled moraine led up into the heights. That would be his trail tomorrow—or whenever the storm blew over.

He stepped across the threshold, and the chill of the abandoned cabin smote him. Might as well build a fire, he decided; get the place warmed up. If there was a storm, he would stay here and wait it out. He would stay overnight in any event, rest up, eat hearty and start out fresh. He was tired, tired in body and soul. . . .

He was squatting beside his equipment, and for the first time became aware of its meager bulk. There was no rifle and scabbard, no ammunition. He rolled the sleeping-bag over, took up the folded tarp and put it down again, shook the packsack and peered into it. It was entirely empty.

He looked about him; and was merely puzzled, at first. Where had Whitey put the rest of the stuff? The bunk held nothing but its mattress of flattened spruce boughs. On the shelf at the left was a débris of useless objects: a tea can, two tin cups, a glass jar partly filled with matches, a sway-backed bar of soap. On the floor was an ancient bucket and teakettle without a handle. In the corner behind the door stood a rough chair made of an old packing case. The other corner was empty.

THE impact of it came home slowly. He got to his feet, leaned against the door-frame, looking down at the sleeping-bag, the new, crisp tarp and flat pack-sack. It was a death-sentence written there. No rifle, no ammunition, no grub. . . . *You don't have to run a bluff at disappearing now, Kennedy,* he thought. *This is it—the spot marked X.*

He lit a cigarette and puffed slowly. It might have been sheer apathy, the let-down from the previous twenty-four hours of stress; but he felt no thrill of dismay. He was merely touched with somber amusement—at himself, at the simple, childlike manner in which he had permitted Whitey to stage this *coup*. Rocky had no part in it; he was certain of that. It was Whitey's idea. His, Bill's, usefulness was done. Even with grub, his chances of reaching the East Fork were slim. Without grub, they were nil. Why complicate matters further by permitting him even an outside chance?

How it had been done was obvious: the stuff hadn't even left Prince Rupert. Whitey had performed this sleight of hand while trimming ship at the dock, just before they had taken off.

He had been alone in the freight compartment. He had unloaded the big dunnage bag on the old-timer's shoulders—the moorage man—and the old-timer had staggered away under its weight. There was reason for it: a rifle and scabbard, ammunition and forty-odd pounds of grub had been in the bag. Since then, nobody had given it a thought. Even Rocky, watching from the tunnel awhile ago, had apparently been certain that Whitey was taking *all* the equipment over to the cabin.

But what larger scheme had germinated in Whitey's mind, even before they had left Prince Rupert? Whitey must be certain, beyond possibility of doubt, that neither he nor anybody else would return to Luna Lake for months, perhaps not until spring. Otherwise, this gesture would fail. A man sheltered and warm, though without food, could actually exist here for weeks. He would be bound to leave a written record behind him, telling the circumstances under which he had passed on. Whitey must be

entirely sure, in his own mind, that the first and only person to return to Luna Lake—next spring or whenever—would be Whitey Bodine.

In that event, what about Rocky? And Ruth? How, in his devious planning, did Whitey propose to eliminate them? He was playing a lone hand, and he was in too deep now to withdraw. Once in the air, his two passengers were utterly at his mercy. He didn't even have to return to Prince Rupert. He could set down somewhere in the wilds, an alleged forced landing.

Bill snapped his cigarette upon the cold hearth and pushed away from the door-frame. The ship was gone, and each turn of its propeller was taking it farther away. Whatever problems it bore were now utterly beyond his reach. However dark his forebodings about Ruth might be, he could not help her now. Further speculation must wait beyond an immediate and necessary chore: build a fire, warm up the cabin. At least—for what it was worth in enabling him even to speculate—he must have heat.

HE tossed the sleeping-bag on the bunk, kicked the tarp and pack-sack aside, and turned to the stove. Charred fragments were in it. He whittled shavings, piled splinters and more wood upon them, and knelt and lit them. The stove smoked a little after its door was closed. Still kneeling, he cleared away some of the ashes to make a draft.

The cabin door, directly behind him, faced southwest. Sunlight did not shine directly upon it, but it was a source of brightness in the cabin. It seemed to Bill, as he waited for the flames to take hold, that that brightness faded momentarily. The rough threshold creaked.

He twisted his body and looked over his shoulder. Then he came up to his feet without conscious effort and faced toward the door, gripped by amazement and disbelief:

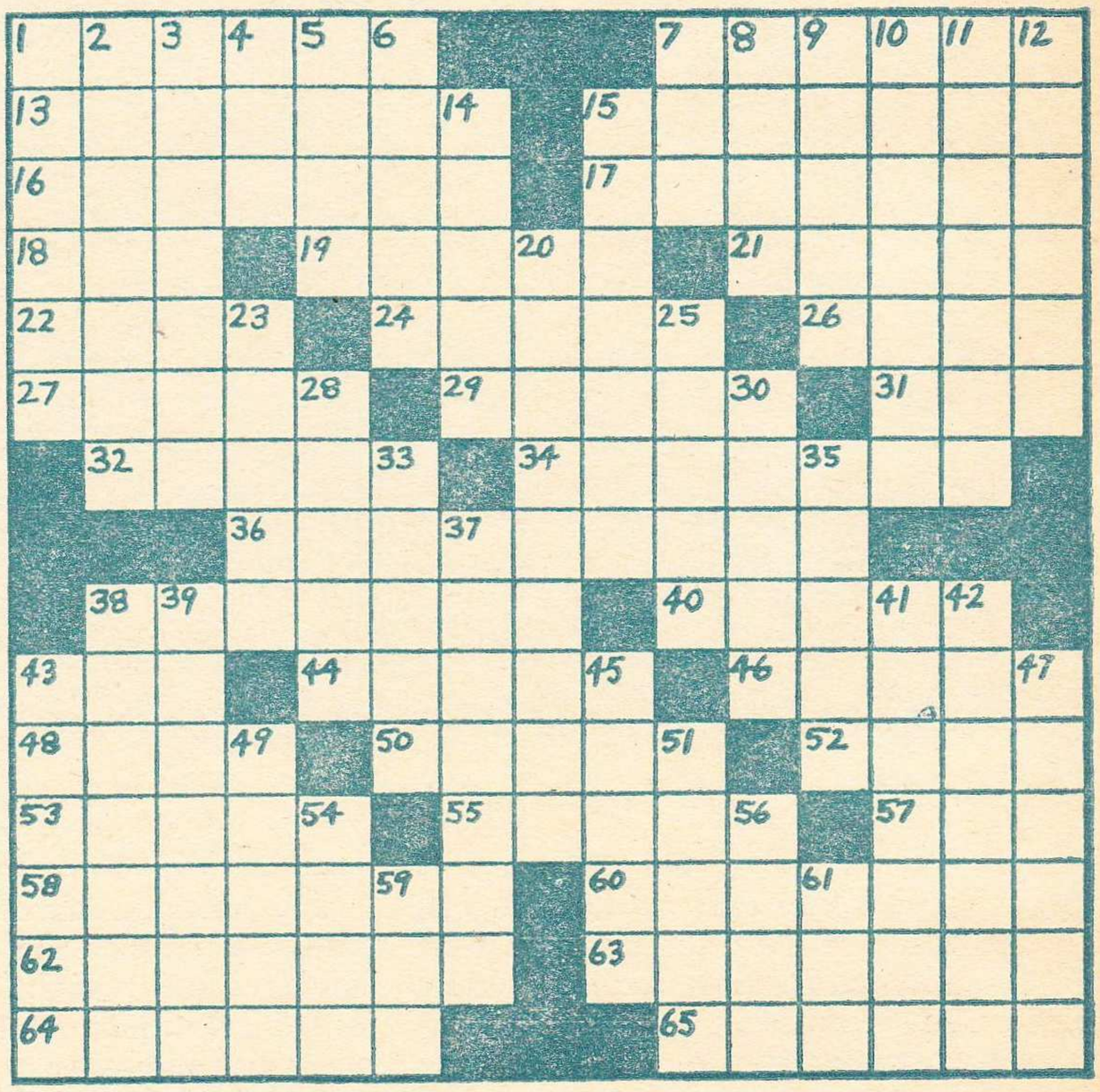
Ruth was standing there, leaning against the door-frame, her hands thrust deep into her pockets. She was watching him smilingly. Her pose was nonchalant; but about her—in the almost defiant tilt of her head, her hopeful manner of studying his expression—was the air of a truant child none too sure how stern its welcome will be.

This fine serial continues with mounting interest in the forthcoming June issue.

BLUE BOOK'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Edited by Albert H. Morehead

This type of crossword puzzle is designed to present an exercise for your imagination rather than a test of your vocabulary. In other words, the difficulty is not in the words themselves, but in the definitions. The main types used are the anagram, the enigma, the hidden word and—for variety to keep you guessing—some straight dictionary definitions. (Solution on page 113.)



ACROSS

1 Bit of Morse
7 Hen sat around when you put the egg on
13 Do I rave about one of the Dodgers?
15 Cassock, inside out, looks sane outside
16 Ever sit around? Apparently not
17 Where is the city of Natal at?
18 Common to Ireland and Eire
19 Ten ate (vulgarly, in my opinion)
21 A number is buried; dig it up
22 Amanda is an addition to a man
24 Predilection, pointed out; and what is left?
26 Homicide, at the end, can be solved, but more than one die
27 Inter-woven with salt
29 Sir, we sent messages
31 Before it was ever poetical
32 Stop, deer to take a drink
34 The monster is confused, but has friends to guide him
36 Recurring distortion via static
38 Can bail release the savage slave?
40 Peels, goes back to bed
43 The cap, from behind, seems woven of straw
44 12 pt. squares, and so on for a cubist
46 Cultivates meats around here
48 Abra cadabra, said the urchin
50 Fruits instead
52 Dog nurse, in *Peter Pan*
53 Giant needs another eye to be a red-head
55 Et the food with them
57 Began to urge back
58 Be alien in this city?
60 The proof puts an end to a scoundrel
62 Honors in reverse
63 Use salt in making kisses
64 View, observed to change constantly
65 I don't like to be tested

DOWN

1 It takes an airman to hold a girl
2 Do drive around (unless you've exerted too much)
3 Washington Square girl ate; found it pleasing
4 You'd be placed if you ate after this
5 It's correct to say the tide rises
6 Around five you'll reel up to the bar
7 Though in reformed spelling it's not so good
8 Mixed praise for old Scot
9 Makes it sad to be sober
10 Geraint (the ingrate) tearing granite (this is now Spanish)
11 Crazily sent around ice for the decoys
12 Cut, cut to make the utterance simpler
14 Weren't without tea to refresh them
15 So sarcastic it sears
20 Alien item is cut out
23 Temper is mostly mental
25 Sound judgment for money
28 This is tripe; change the point
30 Takes a long pole; gets on and is cheesy
33 Be in the midst of the raid—it'll make you furious
35 No place to venture in a canoe
37 Gets caveats and gets out
38 I be in the care of an Indian
39 Aviate with a thousand, all confused but loving it
41 The manatee, being a mammal, has issue
42 What gods ate in pens?
43 The invaders of Russia gave me a start
45 The Spee's hold leaks
47 Gas, set aside for the smartest
49 Packages of sable
51 Darts back for his fiddle
54 Tributary of the Tiber
56 Hale; but O for a hiding place!
59 Si wanted to make fresh cord
61 "In a starched procession of if and ——." *Dobson*

The Last Retreat

A drama of the marginal country, by the author of "The Last of the Thundering Herd."

by Bigelow Neal

A DAKOTA night hung over the valley of Vermilion Creek. The last upstream pond was blue and gray under criss-cross waves set up by the night wind. There was a scent of snow in the spring air from drifts like hoary eyebrows on the buttes above the valley.

Senon-a-kah—*Brother-of-Whom,* as the red men called him—came from the water, and a twitch of his broad back sent a shower of drops to either side. On land the old beaver lost the lightning movements and the infinite grace characteristic of his progress through the water. As he set out to climb the bank, his weight and size and strength became apparent, but he was awkward; he waddled badly.

Halfway up the slope he stopped. Sitting erect, propped in position by his broad tail, he sniffed at the night wind. Turning his head to look back along the pond, queer small sounds came from his throat, his upper lip drew back and his slender mustache flickered disdainfully. Obviously he was puzzled, exasperated and afraid.

Back there lay the past. It was not a pleasant past to remember. It was a record of endless persecution and of tragedy—traps, dynamite, rifle-shots; the red carcasses of his people turning black under the sun. It was a story of retreat after retreat, always falling back upstream to try again; periods of respite, followed by times of horror and the near extermination of his entire colony.

Tonight he had come to the end of another reign of terror. Also he had come to the end of Vermilion Creek; for here, in a spring under the face of a lignite vein, the stream rose.

A few days before, the pond had been deep and clear and cold. Then came the black-whiskered, greasy, smelly man with his dynamite, his clanking sack of traps and his rifle. Cornered, the colony had been decimated. Of the old, only Senon-a-kah, the oldest, survived. Of the young, he had gathered the few survivors as best he might. They were with him now, although even the night wind could not suspect their presence.

Senon-a-kah glanced back along the pond again. He knew what was at the other end—a shapeless form hidden in the rushes, a form covered by a blanket, a rifle thrusting its cold nose across the water. Now that the pond was so shallow and the beaver houses mere heaps of sticks and mud there remained no place to hide. With dawn would come the end.

But in the presence of certain death, the instinct—if it were such—that had guided Senon-a-kah through so many dangers in the past asserted itself again. Knowingly, or only instinctively, he had made a great resolve. Contrary to all the dictates of his nature, he was about to attempt an overland migration. He was off on a dangerous trail, for it would lead through a waterless land peopled with wolves and coyotes and mountain lions. The chances were all but one against him. The only hope lay in the sagacity of his people, multiplied by the long years of his experience.

If he had good reason to hesitate, he did not show it. The scent of the trapper was strong on the air. That scent he would never confuse with another—always it meant death. Senon-a-kah opened his mouth and closed it again rapidly, but the warning clicking of his teeth was subdued, like a sewing-machine in a distant room. Then he lifted his tail and struck the ground gently. He struck it again, and then again.

FROM the pond four small brown heads showed; they were the surviving youngsters of the colony, none of them as large as a muskrat. Knowing little beyond obeying orders to cling to the bottom of the pond in times of danger, and to come when called, they were distinct liabilities rather than assets at a time like this.

As they left the water, waddled up the slope and gathered about him, the old beaver sniffed them one by one. He thumped his tail on the ground for the last time; but nothing happened—only leaden waves broke on the shore. When the breeze again brought the scent of the trapper, Senon-a-kah turned toward the Bad Lands. And whether it was the instinct of the homing pigeon or the marvelous sense of the dog that cannot be lost, he seemed to know exactly the direction he must follow. Except for detours, he held that course until the end.

At dawn the trapper crawled from his pile of blankets. The night had cleared, and when sunlight flooded the pond, there was no question but what the old beaver had gone. And with only one place to go, there was no question of his destination. By noon Senon-a-kah's enemy was on the trail. . . .

Again it was night. But now soft moonlight flooded the valley of Clear Creek. Another pond lay like a crescent of blue between the hills. Down the last slope came Senon-a-kah. Behind him straggled four small beavers, footsore, and all but exhausted.

The last quarter-mile proved eventful, for the narrow, level plain was covered with sleeping cattle. They lay all around the pond, and there was no avoiding them. After a long period of sniffing and study, the old beaver moved on into the herd.

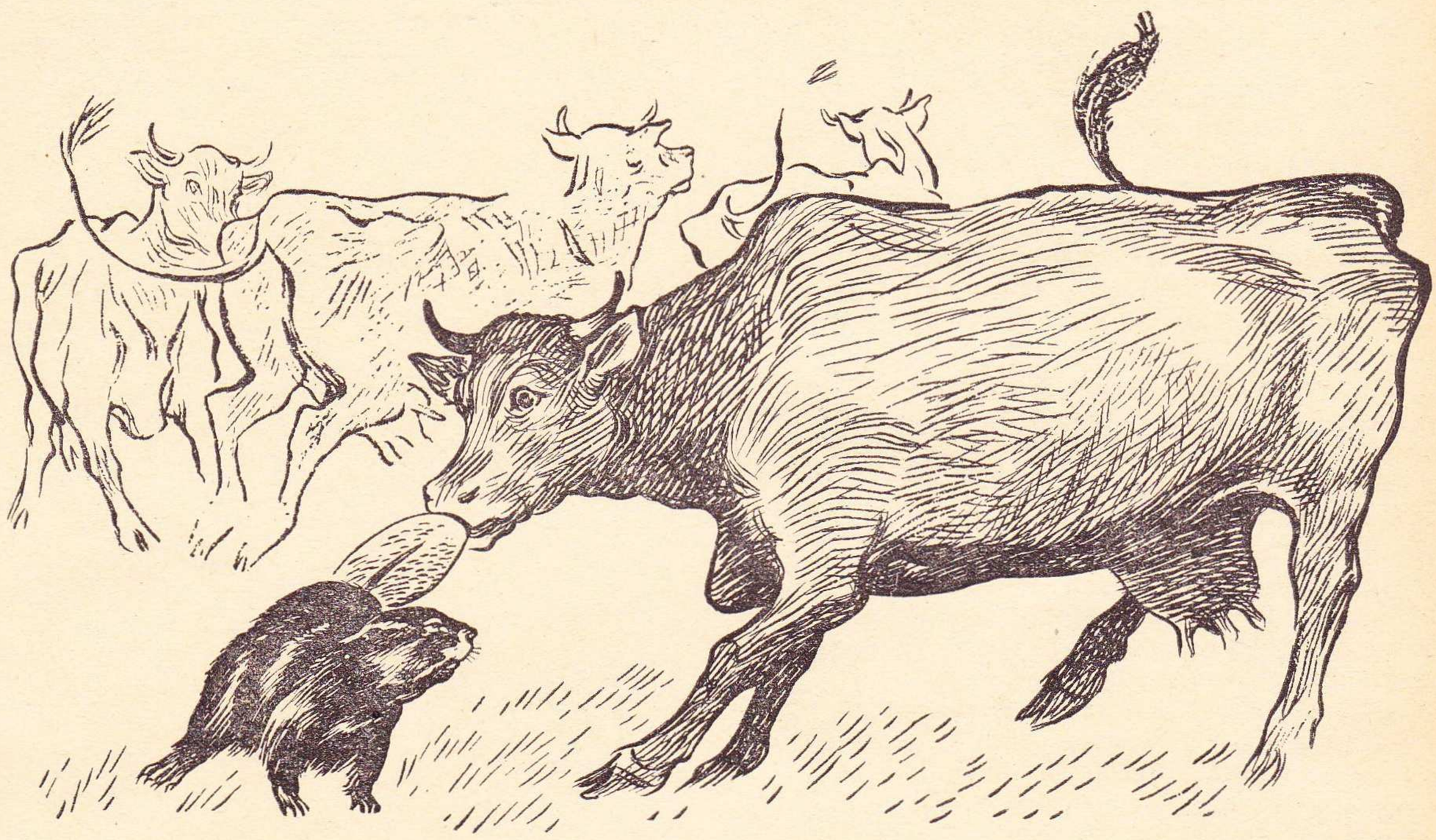
The first cow to see him got to her feet and blew a blast from her lungs that tore the top from a pocket-gopher mound. With another snort and a bellow, she was on her feet. The excitement spread rapidly; cows called hoarsely for their calves; calves blatted for their mothers; the herd closed in until it became an oval wall of cattle, and only a small arena remained clear. There Senon-a-kah sat bolt upright. Around him huddled his small charges.

THE situation appeared desperate. It grew worse instead of better, for the arena narrowed and shortened. The bellowing and blatting, the clicking of horns and the stamping of heavy hoofs, became a din. A dust-cloud rose and darkened the moon. Still the old beaver sat erect, his brown eyes filled with trouble, his teeth chattering unceasingly.

The cow who had started the fuss precipitated the second act in the drama. She advanced a step at a time, stretching her neck, smelling and snorting with all the power of her

lungs. Now she was so close that her heavy breath flattened Senon-a-kah's fur. She reached farther. She stretched her neck to the last inch. Then the unexpected happened.

Senon-a-kah, with perhaps the most deadly teeth and jaws in the animal kingdom, had never learned to use them in battle. But he had one weapon that a cow would never suspect. Suddenly the beaver struck, with



Suddenly Senon-a-kah struck. His tail cut across the cow's nose with terrific force.

every muscle in his tail doing its utmost. The tail flashed like a dull sword in the moonlight. It cut across the cow's nose with terrific force. With a bellow of pain, the cow recoiled, and turned and ran with all her might, and her fright spread to every other member of the herd. The circle broke and scattered to the four points of the compass.

Free of the inquisitive herd, Senon-a-kah resumed his march across the plain, down a grassy slope, and then the waters of the pond opened and closed with a splash. A series of smaller splashes followed. Then five brown heads appeared on the surface as their owners rested on the luxurious buoyancy of their own element.

But even here there was no promise of peace. Hardly had the beavers reached the temporary safety of the pond when a mounted man appeared against the sky. It was the trapper, still on the trail and only a few moments late.

The old beaver sent his charges to the bottom. Diving and coming up under heavy grass along the shore, he watched his enemy. But there was no immediate danger from that source. Obviously there was no dam to dynamite, no houses to tear apart and no place where traps might be set with any chance of success. After a time the trapper turned and rode away, but his return was no more than a question of time. The terror was sure to come again. . . .

In his new location Senon-a-kah was forced to change his habits in a major degree. It was well that he was to enjoy a short respite from persecution and danger, for he needed all of his faculties to meet the new conditions. Where on Vermilion Creek he had lived in a house of brush and mud, and had made cottonwood bark his diet, here on Clear Creek there were no trees, only buck-brush and wild rice and cattails, either for food or for building material.

But the old beaver was equal to the new demands, and his first adaptation came that night after the tiny colony had rested. After swimming the length of the pond without seeing a tree or even a bush, he dived under a bed of rushes and came up with a tangle of roots clamped against his chest. Then, on a shelf just above the water where the turtles kept the mud free of growth, he assembled his charges and initiated them into what was to be their new diet.

The problem of a temporary home was more complicated. He reached a temporary solution where run-off water from a coulee had cut a trench back from the pond, and wild hop vines formed a roof. Here, on a tiny semicircular beach, he located his young charges at daylight and they slept soundly throughout the sunlight hours.

But for the old beaver there was little sleep. While the danger had passed for the present, the future held little promise. Though the scent of the trapper no longer troubled him, something told him it would come again. Also to trouble him there was the set of farm buildings he had seen at the upper end of the pond, and the absence of deep water and the lack of brush for building a dam. But he had migrated. True to the code of his kind, he would stay in his new location until a new reign of terror came to drive him forth.

Where he lay with his nose at the edge of the water, he could see out across the pond. The view was not promising. He was a lover of clear, deep water. The pond was muddy, warm and shallow, and clogged with water plants and mosses that floated sluggishly on the waves. Through the moss protruded the triangular heads of snapping turtles, cold and ugly. Snakes lay on the floating plants. The banks were lined with basking mud-turtles, and while gray frogs, brown frogs and green frogs sat on every floating leaf. Even the water was filled with drifting algæ, slippery and slimy.

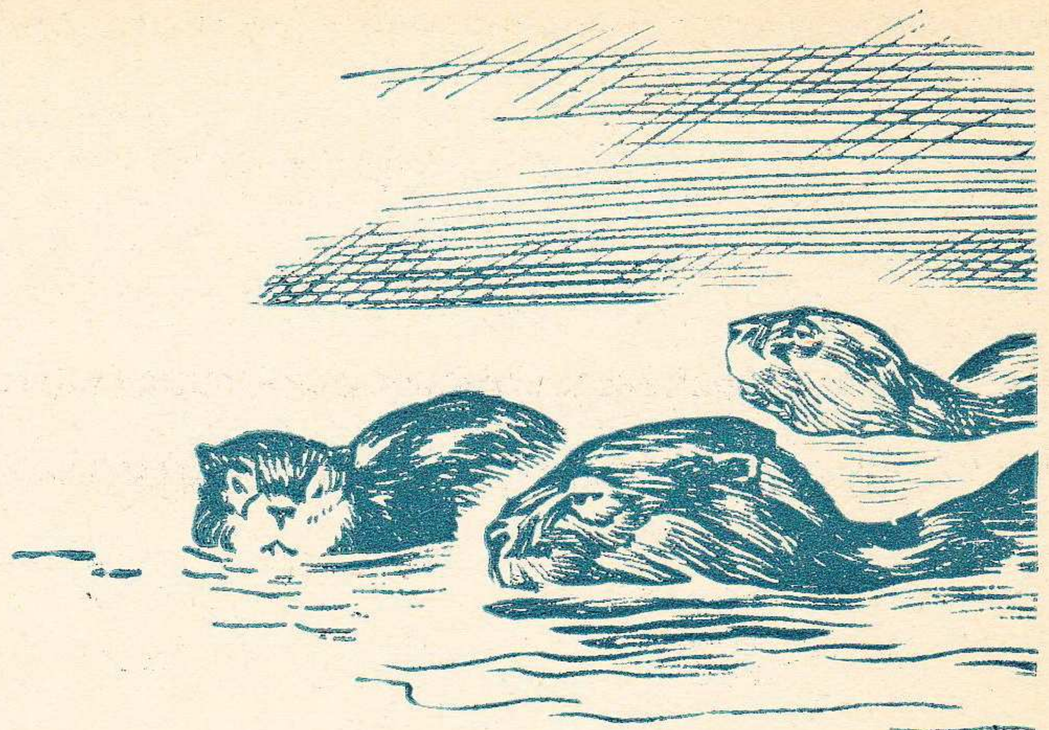
Now with the rising sun came another nuisance: The cattle lined the shores, sipping and smacking loudly, wading out to stir up the mud, and eternally bellowing and mooing. And then in the afternoon came the most disturbing factor of all.

A MAN came along the shore; he stopped where a post had been driven in the water, bent and looked at something and then raised his face to a cloudless sun-baked sky. He acted strangely, but he did not smell of traps or of smoke, and Senon-a-kah had no great fear of men until they proved themselves dangerous. After

a while the man went away, and Senon-a-kah slept.

At sundown the old beaver gathered more roots and fed his charges. Then he led them to the deepest part of the pond. There with the youngsters in no more effective rôle than that of an interested audience, he began to dig in the muddy bottom.

A night or two, and he had excavated a trench, gradually deepening as it approached the shore, and probably two feet wide. It was intended as an entrance to his home, and it began in the deepest water, where it would freeze last, if at all, in winter.



WHEN the trench reached the creek-bank, he continued it as a tunnel, sloping upward until nearly on a level with the prairie. There he excavated two rooms, one above the other; and from the upper, he drove a small shaft through the grass-roots for ventilation. The upper room was a living-room, eventually lined with sage and rushes. The lower was a combination storage and dining-room.

In the process, lasting over some days, Senon-a-kah taught his charges certain small accomplishments. They learned to fill their mouths with dirt and to carry it down to the bottom of the pond. They cut grass and rushes in small quantities, and carried them to the living-room, and they learned to dig their own roots and bring them to the dining-room.

Meanwhile the man had continued his daily visits, looking long and earnestly at the post in the water, then up at the sky, and then going away muttering to himself. His conduct, of course, was beyond the scope of Senon-a-kah's understanding, but the old beaver came to the same conclusions and the same worries in his own way, for he knew fully as well as the man that, day after day, under combined assaults of a hot sun and thirsty cattle, the water-line on the shores of the pond dropped inch by inch. If there was no other water to be had—and the beaver's intuition told him there was no more—the time would come when both cattle and beavers would be in sore circumstances.

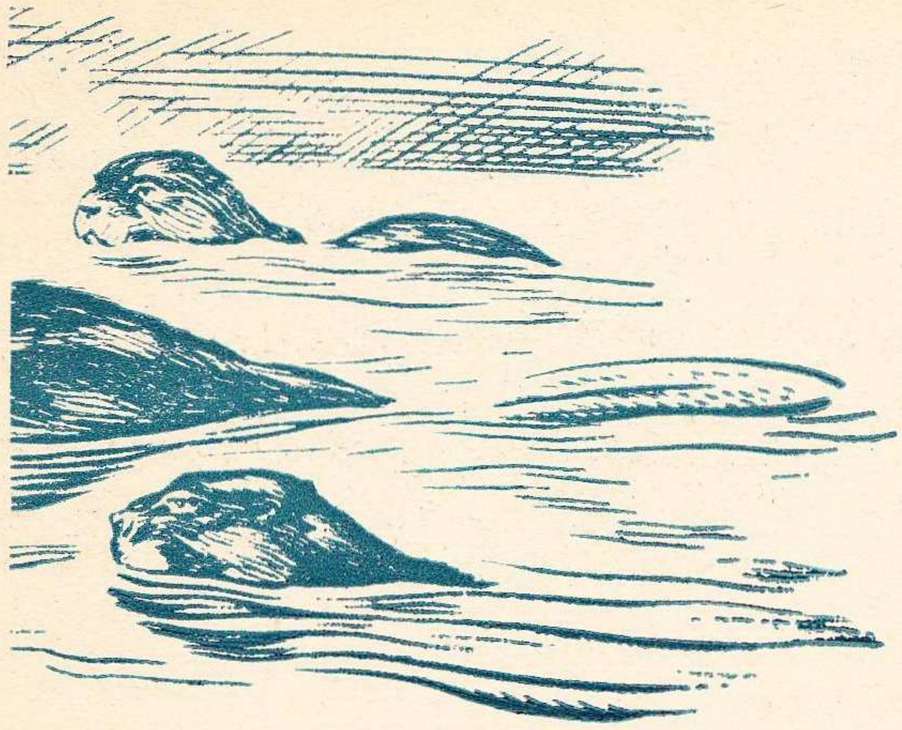
One night when Senon-a-kah found the lower end of the pond to be bare gravel and mud, he sat up on the shore and chattered harshly. He chattered just as the man muttered. They both meant the same thing. And it seemed that both intended to do something about it.

The man began by digging on the shore of the pond, a circumstance which annoyed the beavers. Senon-a-kah began that very night, first by climbing the bank and cutting an armful of buck-brush.

He carried the brush under one arm, and walking on his hindlegs, he came awkwardly down the slope to the foot of the pond. After a period of sniffing and chattering and peering about him, he finally selected a place and thrust the buck-brush into the mud with the branches upstream. Following another long period of apparent thought, he carried a mouthful and armful of gravel and piled it on the brush. Pulling an old buffalo head from the mud, he set it on the gravel. Gathering mud in his paws, he plastered the rude structure. Then he gathered rushes and wadded them into the mud. On top he placed a collection of clam- and turtle-shells, a good-sized rock and a waterlogged fence-post. Looking at his work and deciding that it was good, he went home and to bed.

THE next night the old beaver took the youngsters with him and taught them to carry brush and rushes, and when daylight came, the pile had become a ridge of woven brush and rushes, blocking the foot of the pond to the depth of several inches.

By now the man had made certain changes in his daily visit. Instead of



Illustrated by Edward Shenton

turning back at the stake which now protruded from dry mud, he went on to the dam and stood for long periods, studying the work of the beavers. Then, after a look at the sky, he would go back to his hole along the shore and dig. Unfortunately neither the beavers nor the man struck water. Day after day, the drought was unbroken; day after day the pond grew shorter.

Then came a day when the man gave up. Anyway, he no longer dug, and that night Senon-a-kah watched him loading a hayrack with household goods. With morning, the man and the cattle would be gone.

But that night, also, Senon-a-kah sat on the dam and sniffed the air. Whatever the senses he used, they made him exceedingly active, and he worked rapidly on the crest of the dam, weaving in a final web of brush and rushes that neither man nor flood could pull out. And when the storm struck just at dawn, the old beaver went home and to bed, to let the lightning flash and the thunder shake his home as much as it pleased. When he came out at night, he heard the thunderous roar of a waterfall where the groaning stream tumbled over his handiwork. And again he worked all night, weaving in brush where the water threatened to tear gaps in the dam.

When the flood subsided, the pond was six or eight feet deep where once it had been but half of that. It was twice as long as of old. But Senon-a-kah did not stop work on the dam, for fall had come overnight, and his time was short. As each rainfall raised the pond, the old beaver raised his dam a few inches at a time, and the last of it was easier because of the man again.

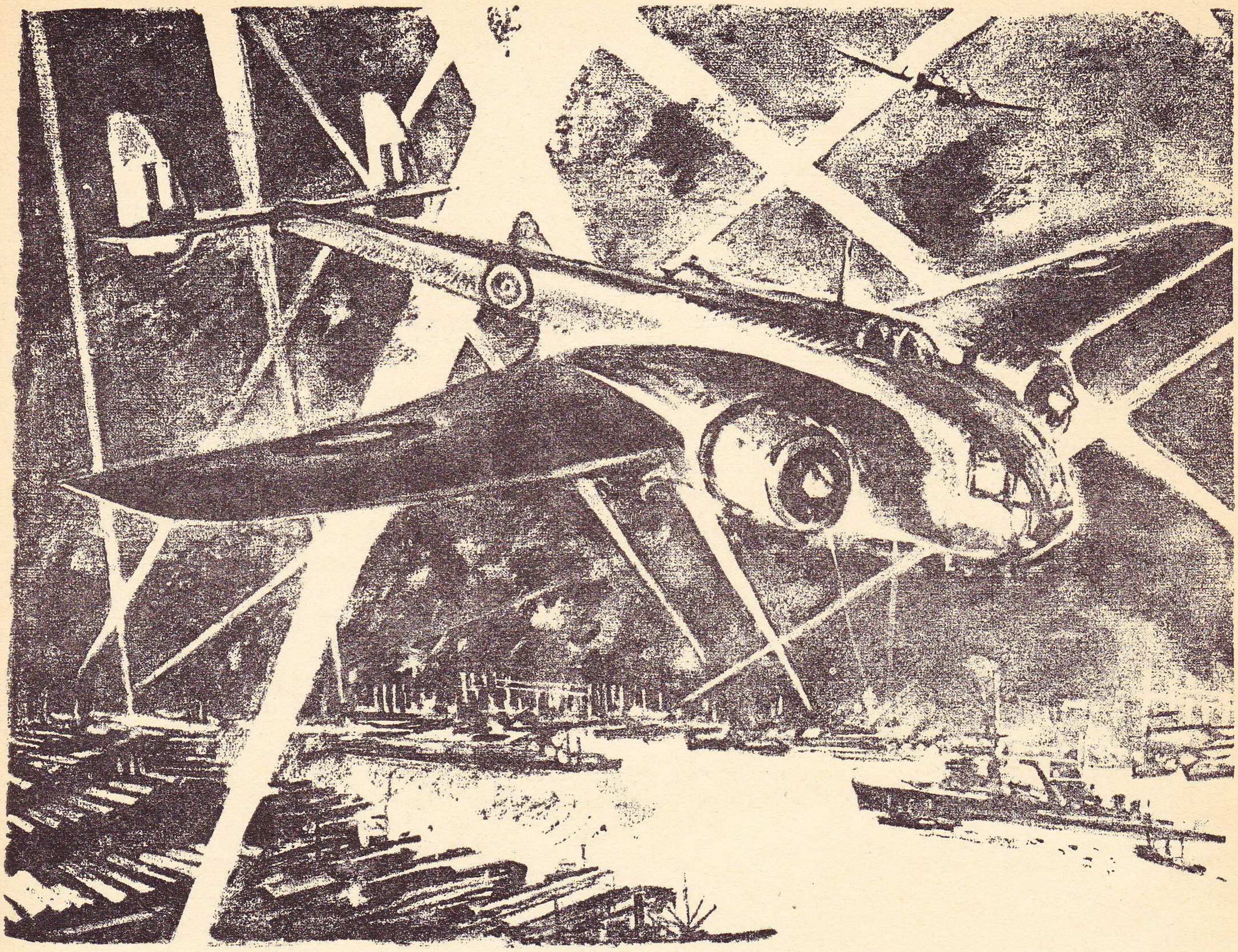
ONE day the latter stopped his hayrack above the dam. It was loaded with boughs of cottonwoods. He threw the boughs down the creek-bank, and that night Senon-a-kah and his half-grown charges had a banquet.

But the instinct of the beaver to guard against winter was even stronger than his appetite. Most of the boughs he took to the deepest part of the pond and thrust into the mud for a winter feed-bed. When a second load of boughs appeared, and then a third, and a fourth, he must have felt he had come to a beaver's paradise. And now he raised the dam another three feet on the strength of the boughs already peeled for food.

Thus on an evening in Indian summer, the pond was nearly ten feet deep and five times its original length. Next year he would have the water plants and moss pulled up and woven in his dam. Then would come bullheads and suckers and chubs from downstream to clean the water. After that, most of the turtles would leave for happier hunting-grounds, and ducks and geese would come.

But on this evening came the threat of another horror. It came with a tent and a campfire near the dam, and once again the smell of the trapper who had found the last retreat of Senon-a-kah. As the smoke curled above the pond, the old beaver lay under floating grass, watching the signs that could mean only death to him. But as he watched, the other man came on the scene. The men talked. They talked more loudly. And then the man from the farm above the pond shook his fist in the face of the smelly trapper. After that, the tent came down and was thrown on the wagon. The team was hitched up, and the trapper moved hastily away. As his scent died, night came.

The man still stood on the dam looking up the pond that guaranteed his water-supply for years to come. Senon-a-kah floated from the rushes out to open water. He sniffed the air and found it pure again. At that he raised his tail and brought it down with a crash on the pond. White water flew in all directions. As the waves ran out, stars danced on the pond. Then the ripples died, and the water became a mirror for a peaceful sky. Senon-a-kah had found a home at last.



Consolation

THE Roll of Honor just inside the door of the Officers' Mess of No. 435 is a fairly lengthy affair, as is to be expected from a mob that has been in action since November, 1939. There are a lot of Americans who took this Nazi-Fascist business seriously long before they'd ever heard of Pearl Harbor. That's the reason why you'll find a lot of good American names on R.A.F. casualty lists—and for that matter in the Gazette Honours list.

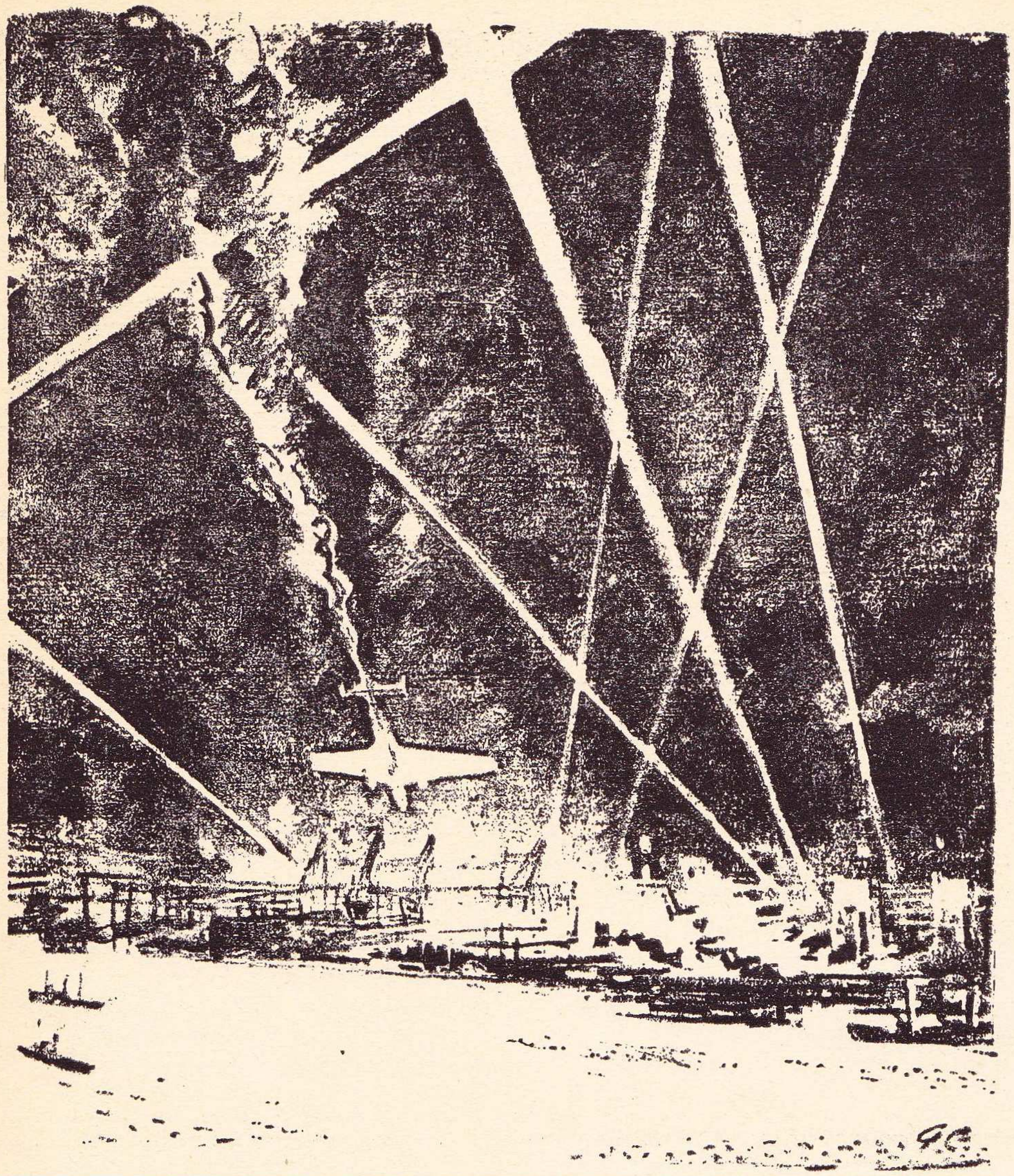
No. 435 doesn't do any real bombing, and they seldom get into a scramble. Just petrol-burners to the rest of the group stationed at Newport Pagnell. Some wag in No. 187 across the field presented them with a suggestion for a new squadron crest. It carried a giddy design of a bewhiskered airman straddling a long black canister on which was lettered, *"I'll Know When it's All Over!"*

Flight Lieutenant Ballentine and Sergeant Chester would have to click, for a mob like this. They'd volunteered, risked their citizenship and sat dumb for nearly four thousand miles, just to join the R.A.F. and find themselves aboard a Hampden in No. 435 Squadron.

Theirs is a ghostly show, unostentatious but deadly. Night after night they rumble off at ten-minute intervals, and rely on their navigators to get the pin-point. They've planted mines from Trondheim all the way to the mouth of the Gironde in Gascony. There's no knowing, but the mines they plant tonight may never explode. One may sink a battleship next week, but no one in No. 435 will know who planted it or when. The only consolation is that they may complete their bomb-load with two extra 250-pounders to drop on anything they may find on the way back.

But all that is off the record.

"You have to give them something to break the monotony," the Group



When the American crew of the mine-laying plane reported what they'd seen in the Kiel Canal, the Operations Officer didn't believe them—so they wrangled permission to go back and deal with same.

by ARCH WHITEHOUSE

Flight

Captain explains. "But there you are. You never know. Some take 'em, and some—just get queer ideas."

The Handley Page Hampden is a brute of a bus. She's slim through the flanks and carries a punch that shatters Krupp steel. You wouldn't like her if you spotted her harsh against the night sky—but neither does Jerry. Broadside, she looks like a bagman's cosh fitted with *kris* blades.

The Hampden marked B-ZN was on its regular prowl, heading for the estuary at Kiel. Flight Lieutenant Ballentine at the controls called for reports from the gunners aft, mainly for something to do.

"All right here, sir," Air-gunner Gage reported from the lower turret displaying two Vickers-K tusks beneath the fuselage. Gage had been a jockey at Doncaster before he had joined up, and he still breathed the tang of the paddock and the jauntiness of the betting circle. "Have you heard anything warm for the St. Ledger this year, sir?"

"Here he comes agayne," Air-gunner Bimbo Tucker responded from the upper turret. "I think he's in with the bookies at Wellingboro. All clear here, sir."

"Keep your nose out of that *Turf Echo,* Gage," warned Ballentine. "Or one of these nights you're going to cop it stiff!"

"They say the Aga Khan's Lady Moyne will be the odds-on favorite," persisted Gage from the cramped cupola aft.

Ballentine felt the pressure of reproach thump across his chest. Sergeant Chester in the navigation compartment below would catch it too. Why did that damn' fool gunner always poke at the sore place? And it was damned thoughtless, the way they named racehorses.

THE gleam of light from Chester's chart brought out the intense lines of his face. Ballentine caught it when he stared forward and down to the narrow front office.

"Still on course," Sergeant Chester announced up to the pilot. "Your vector now 156, one-five-six. That's Cuxhaven off our starboard engine."

Ballentine nodded with feigned interest. He knew Chester had made that formal report only to cover up the situation Gage had unconsciously created. He was certain Chester had heard Gage say something about a horse named Lady Moyne—the damn' fool! He checked his compass card with the new course, and consoled himself with the thought that he was doing the best he could for Moyne Chester. He couldn't help it if she was his navigator's sister. It wasn't his fault she should come over as a canteen worker and blossom forth at the American Eagle Hut in the Strand.

He did feel responsible for the fact that he had fallen for her and that he had assured her he would take no unnecessary risks. And what risk was there in mine-laying? Simply a chance of being bored stiff and dying of ennui!

He saw Chester cup his flap-mike over again and stare up at him.

"What is it?" Ballentine started to say. He hoped young Chester was all right. He was all right, of course. Swell navigator. Pick up a pin-point night after night with no trouble at all. A lot of stuff to a chap like Chester, but this business of his having a sister in the Eagle Hut made it uncomfortable.

"Someone's getting a greeting. That's flak and torches up there at Rensburg. Probably Digger Stanley. He had ten minutes on us, didn't he?"

"Want to skirt that?" Ballentine inquired.

"I wouldn't worry, Skipper. They're not so hot there. Still, if you feel—"

BALLENTINE resented that. If it wasn't for Chester down there, he'd have two extra 250-pounders hanging in the bomb gallery. But with Chester and Moyne worrying all the time, he'd never signed for them. Digger Stanley, that crazy Aussie, always took a couple!

"We'll go through!" Ballentine said.

Sergeant Chester accepted the decision and went back to his Hughes-Comrie tables. He knew Ballentine was putting up a front. By rights they should have played safe and skirted the hate around Rensburg and recharted from somewhere off Neumunster. They'd be able to pick up the canal anywhere from there. He wondered if Ballentine was putting on a show for his benefit. Damn' fool, if he was. Chester wasn't booking the qualifications of a future brother-in-law! If Moyne wanted Ballentine, that was her lookout. They'd make a go of it if they ever got the chance.

Chester went over it all again and agreed that everyone else aboard B-ZN was ambitious and resented their poisonous luck in being nailed for mine-laying. Both gunners were keen about having a smack at Jaguars and their air-cannon armament. Gage looked on the prospect as he might have considered his chances with weights in his saddle-flaps taking the water-jump at Beecher's Brook.

Bimbo Tucker was an out-and-out gong-grabber. He had a bewildering genius for it. Picked up a George Medal two weeks after joining up, by charging into a burning Blenheim to drag out the pilot. On his first show aboard a Hampden he clicked for a D.F.M. when there wasn't an enemy plane within thirty miles. Something to do with an oxygen bottle exploding.

Chester himself rather fancied the idea of going on one of these new low-altitude raids on Berlin. Those lads on the last Augsburg show did six hundred miles over the chimneys to nail down a Diesel-engine plant. Hit it on the nose too, which was damned fine navigation. That was the sort of thing Chester yearned for.

Still, he reflected, you can't expect a guy like Ballentine to take chances when there's a girl like Moyne back there in London. Chester felt that his was the responsibility of keeping Ballentine out of trouble and bringing him back signed, sealed and delivered.

The anti-aircraft fire about them challenged their intrusion. From the outskirts of Kiel, scalpel-keen blades of searchlight probed the night sky ahead, lancing through the eruptions from the flak shells, knifing for the malingerers that did not produce suitable results.

"About ready to make the turn?" Ballentine spoke over the inter-com to his navigator. "What about it?"

"Right, Skipper!" Chester responded. "You can take it on the curl now, and head her in southeast to northwest. You'll get the four-flash buoy with a one-second eclipse between flashes. That's our marker for tonight's pattern."

Ballentine nodded and cut his throttles. He sounded the usual warning: "Stand by, gunners! Taking her in now. No gunfire except in extreme emergency. Right?"

Chester folded up his chart-table. "Ready to discharge, Skipper. I'll go below."

The Hampden eased back as the throttles cut the power and her nose went down. Chester crawled into the prone position and watched the bomber approach the channel marker as it flicked on and off. Ahead and below, the estuary reflected the diffused glow of Holtenau, which provided a lightly spangled backdrop for Kiel harbor.

"Grubby business, this," Chester muttered as he punched the button to open the bomb-bay doors. "I could put that canister *boppo* on top of a lightship if necessary."

He rolled to one elbow and spoke into his flap-mike.

"Bomb-doors open!"

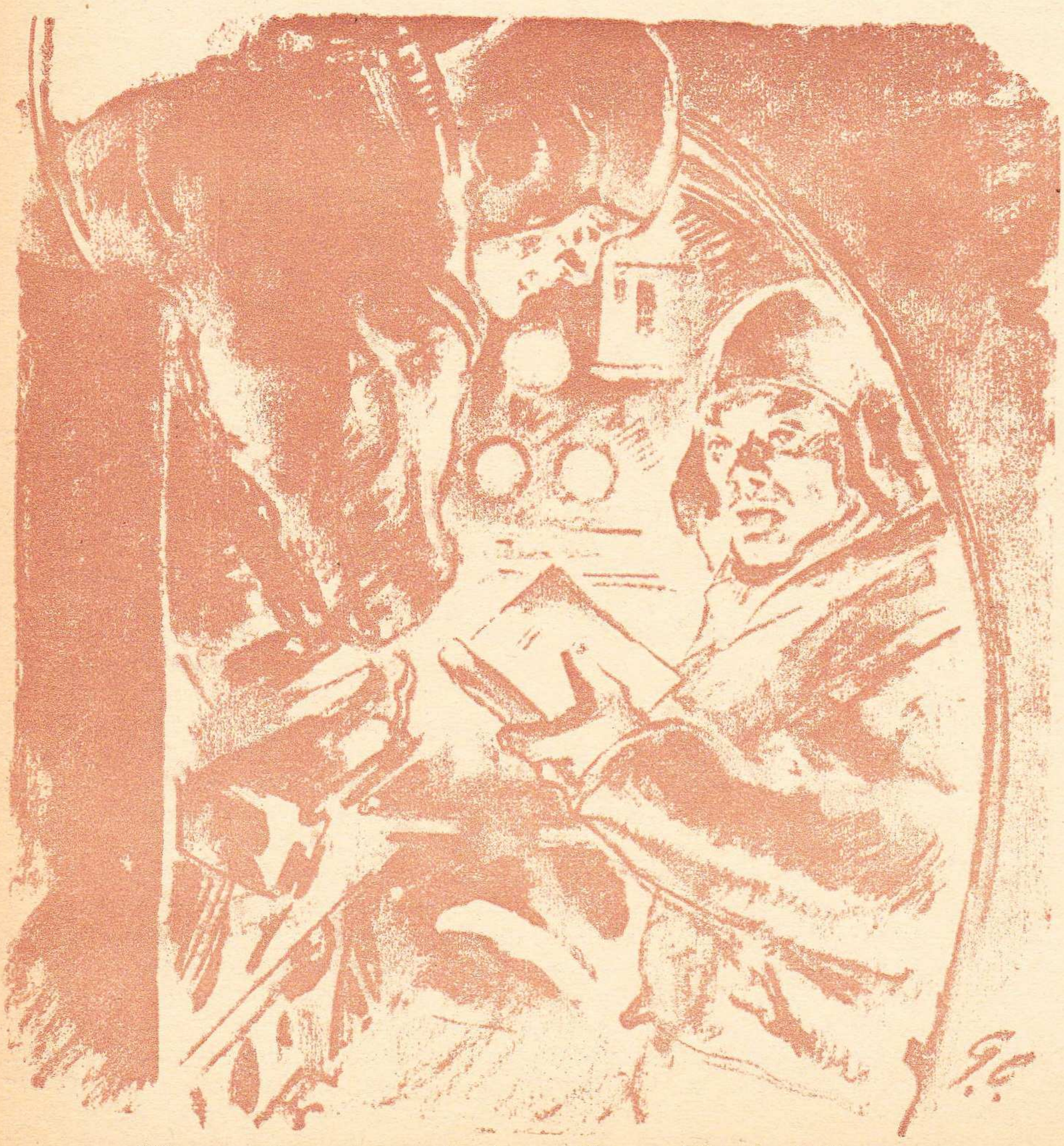
"Mine clearance!" authorized Ballentine. "We'll be well under eight hundred feet. Gliding speed 124. . . . Right!"

Chester replied and added: "Mine trigger and 'chute checked. Can clear her now. Stand by."

THE long black cylinder jerked from her rack hitches and went out with a scrawnch of sprung metal. A blast of forced draft came up through the open bomb-doors and swirled with frantic screeching along the catwalk. The navigator waited until he caught the plop of the parachute fitted to snub the fall of the mine, then snapped over the bomb-door mechanism.

"Mine clear, sir!"

That was all. Nothing more to wait for. So far as B-ZN was concerned, their job was done. There was no target below to take the brunt of a structure-shattering detonation. No flash of fulmination. No satis-



"You getting us some business, Skipper?" asked Chester.

factory reward of thudding destruction.

"I wish Ballentine would sign in those consolation eggs one of these nights," Sergeant Chester reflected as he shoved the bomb-sight to one side.

The pilot eased the throttles forward and drew the Hampden into the clear. The sky ahead was matted with searchlight streaks and the yolk of bursting shells. She danced against the rip-tide of concussion, and played skip-the-gutter through the scarves of smoke.

Ballentine considered the pattern a minute or so and then decided to chance a low-altitude return. He banked her smartly and roared for the opening of Kiel harbor, deciding to stay low and fly a contact course along the fifty-three miles of ditch. The glare from the defenses brought out the sluices in sharp relief.

"Stand by, gunners," the pilot called into his mike. "Take any targets visible once we pass the entrance to the canal."

"Number 1 turret ready, Skipper," the little jockey answered. "Heads and hearts up—hands and heels down, as we say in steeplechasing."

CHESTER listened in, then crawled back and stared up at Ballentine. He wondered if he had caught the order correctly. He straightened up and swayed toward the pilot's knees.

"You getting us some business, Skipper?"

"Going across—low down. Might as well. . . . Hello! What the—"

In the half-light of the cockpit Chester saw the pilot's face mull into a puzzled grimace. The circular observation plate up front presented a panel of maritime activity that was well worth closer inspection.

Chester caught it at once. "We should have brought—"

But there was no time to bemoan the fact they had nothing left in the bomb gallery. He could only lurch forward, wrench a K-gun from the wall rack and ram it on a stud.

"We picked a teaser this time," Sergeant Chester growled, fingering for the trigger.

The two gunners aft were wiping off the sides of the canal entrance. A two-engined night fighter swept across from Holtenau and coughed air-cannon shot at them. Tucker treadled his gun-mounting around with a wheeze of hydraulics, and swept a long burst across the path of the oncoming Messerschmitt.

"What the devil *is* that?" Chester repeated aloud with each long burst into a gathering of canal tugs.

Something whanged over them with a thunderous roar. Every man aboard ducked instinctively. There was a calico-tearing screech of tortured metal and a growl of released fury. The Messerschmitt, beautifully torched, gyrated into a flat spin and settled slowly toward the shipbuilding basins.

"There is a German cruiser in the canal, sir," Sergeant Chester reported.

"There's one for us, Skipper!" Tucker called over the inter-com. "Less than half a drum—that was!"

Ballentine had no ears for the braggart. He was weaving the Hampden back and forth over the canal, trying to see what it was the burning Jaguar was bringing out in such definite detail. The tugs were chugging and shoving like frowsy charwomen to get the nose of a great vessel into the sluiceway.

"They're sneaking her out of the Baltic to avoid our mine-field in the northern end of the Kattegat!" Ballentine raged. "The damn' fools, taking a chance like that!"

"They're good at it," Chester muttered grimly. "They got the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* through the Channel, taking a chance. This must be the *Leipzig* they've been looking for."

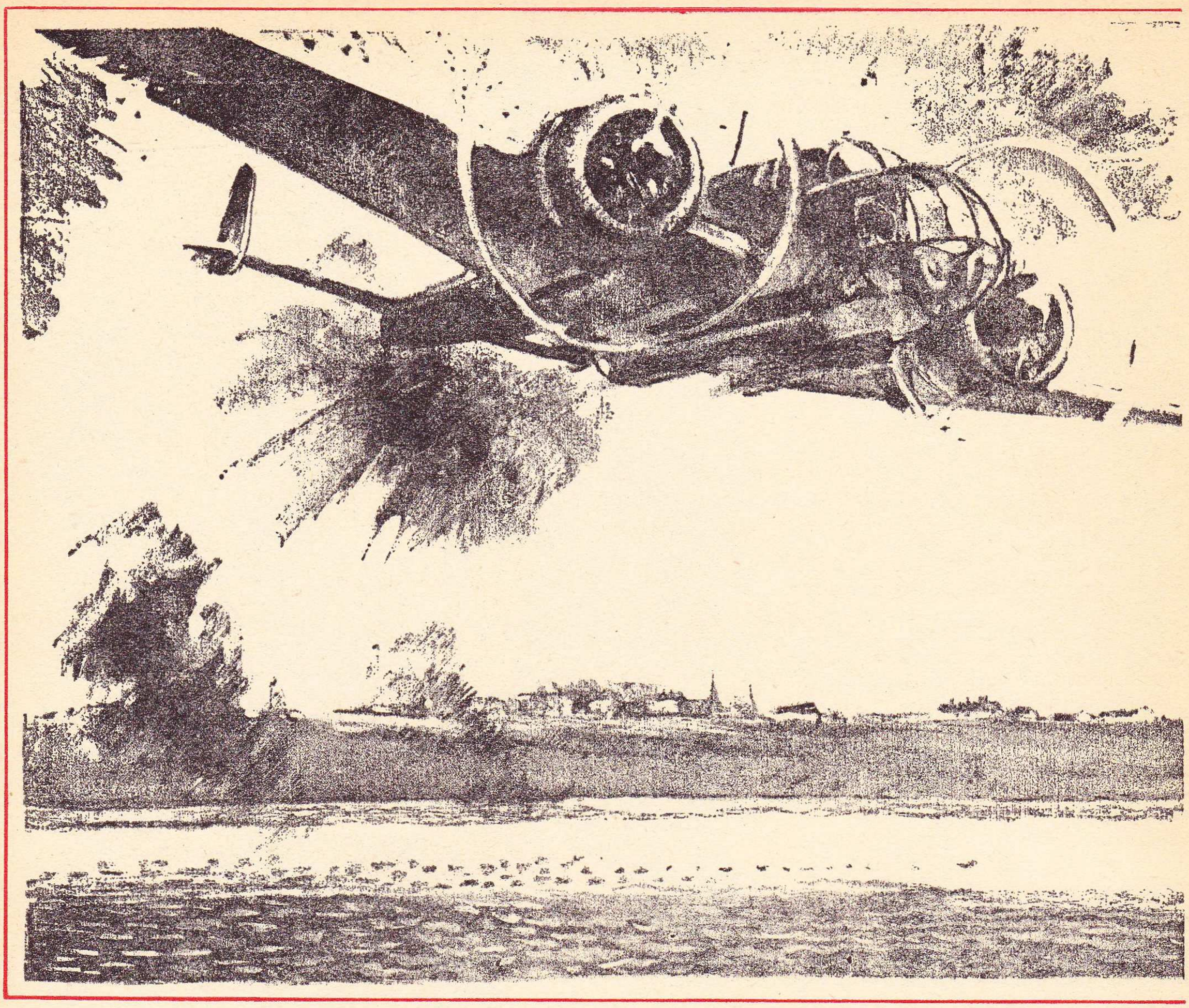
"She's a big one, whatever she is."

The doomed Jaguar spitted herself on a set of loading cranes and drenched the walls of a drydock with burning petrol. The glare slapped back at the sable sky and tried to erase the flicker of tracer that sped from the Hampden's turrets.

They were out of sight of the sluiceway now, and racing along the southern bank of the sleazy canal for the Brunsbuttel end, with the A.S.I. showing 225. The gunners packed the stuff home at every target. It was quite a canter all the way across.

RECROSSING the North Sea was a journey of somber reflections. Had they accepted the consolation bombs, as most of the others had done, they might have caught the enemy vessel cold. The big cruiser, limited to the narrow confines of the Kiel Canal, would have been money-from-home.

Ballentine knew what the vessel was. There was no question in his mind,



"Going over, stern to bow!" Bal-

and he wondered if Chester had identified it. A couple of bombs somewhere near the base of that trunked funnel would have boosted them to glory. You can't laugh off news-reels, correspondents and a possible visit to Buckingham Palace. That in itself would mean a trip to London. Moyne would love that.

He saw Chester below, looking gloomy, with the attitude of an eluded beagle. He had the book open and was studying the silhouettes. He hoped the navigator guy would check it for certain.

The inter-com scrawnched. Tucker was anxious to contact their station. "I'd say we got that Jaguar, wouldn't you, Skipper? And don't you think I ought to report that cruiser?"

"I'll see you're confirmed on that flamer," Ballentine agreed. "Hold off about that vessel. I'm not certain in my own mind."

By rights they should report the vessel at once, but Flight Lieutenant Ballentine had other ideas; and as was to be expected, Chester garbled them completely.

Sergeant Chester unjacked his helmet-phone cord and doubled back the page of the silhouette-book. He moved up alongside Ballentine.

"YOU know what that was entering the canal, don't you?"

"I'm not sure," Ballentine parried, his eyes on the Cromer light ahead.

"But, Skipper! It was as plain as day. That Jaguar lit up the whole show. She can do about eight knots in that canal. That means she'll be out of there in six or seven hours."

"You certain it was a cruiser?"

"Look at the book! This damned great ugly derrick and boom for loading seaplanes. No other vessel in their service has anything like that."

"It could have been a decoy," suggested Ballentine. "They might have planted the thing there. Probably lousy with flak."

Chester tried to gather a complete impression of the pilot's face. He was certain Ballentine was evading something. Would they arrange to have a Jaguar shot down just to illuminate a faked cruiser?

"It aint lousy with flak tonight," he argued.

"There'll be enough time to report it when we get in. Seven hours is plenty. She'll be nearer by then."

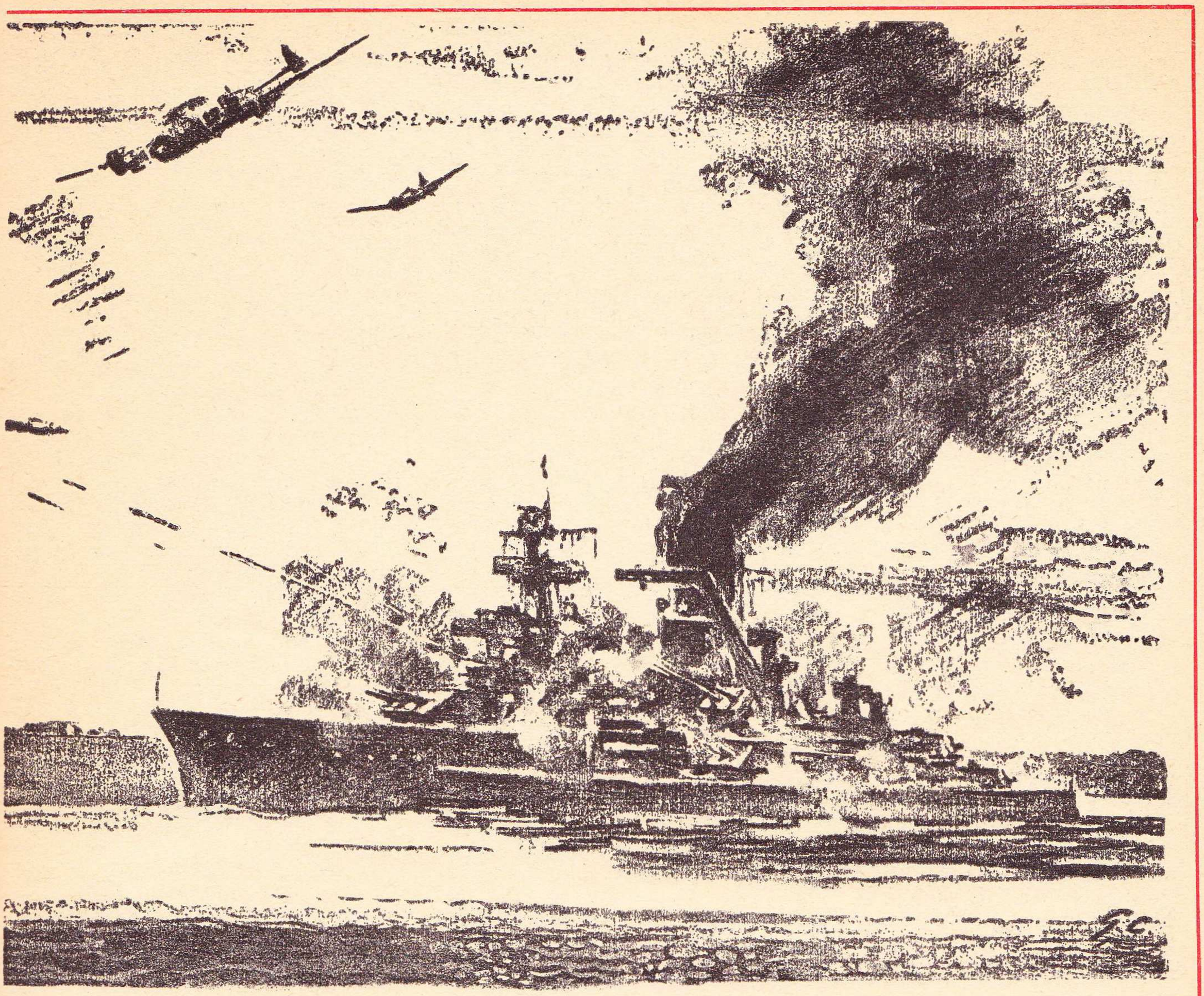
"It will be daylight by then, Skipper. They'll have her covered with fighters. We ought to report it, you know."

"I'll think about it," Ballentine said with annoying finality.

"I think the guy's chucking it cold," reflected Chester.

"If he thinks I'm going to give this one away, and have the torpedo birds skim in and knock her off, he's got another think coming," Ballentine decided. "After this, I'm taking those consolation eggs along!"

A GIRL reigned at the end of the Group Captain's desk, her pencil gleaming over the wad of Air Intelligence sheets. She searched the faces of the crew members called in for a special interrogation. Her eyes were fawn-colored. Her tunic fitted



lentine said over the intercom.

well, and her heavy ribbed cashmere stockings stole nothing from the grace and curve of her limbs.

In contrast the Group Captain was weary and irritated. His mustache needed trimming, and he had lost the knack of shaving clean below the curve of his jaw. He resented the environment created by this W.A.A.F. lass, for she definitely put the crupper on his determination to lay this air-crew out.

It wasn't that the Group Captain was British—English, as a matter of fact—and the chief members of this crew were Americans. He never considered the possibility of anyone on his side being anything but British. But what the devil did these fools mean, shoving in a patrol report like this?

"Will you read that over again, Miss Chetwynd?" the Group Captain demanded. "I want to get the full effect of it."

"Yes sir. 'Operational report of air crew of Hampden bomber B (B-for-Bertie) ZN, No. 435 Squadron.'" Her voice was cool and had a tonal quality that made a sonnet of a virulent patrol report. She spoke the names concerned with studied diction. "'. . . . and as a result of the glare from the burning Jaguar fighter, Flight Lieutenant Ballentine noted in full detail a German cruiser, believed to be the *Leipzig*. This was substantiated in the report of Sergeant-Navigator Chester. Both gunners aboard also state they observed a large German naval vessel entering the Kiel canal.'"

"That's enough!" growled the Group Captain, waving it all aside.

THE girl snapped the loose ends of the pages down and tucked her handkerchief deeper into her sleeve. Her eyes went to Ballentine with a warm glance of encouragement.

"I don't know what you chaps were up to tonight," the Group Captain began again with a throaty grumble, "but you're asking for it properly, you know. A German cruiser in the Kiel canal, of all things!"

"But there wasn't any question about it in my mind, sir!" Ballentine replied vigorously. "Tucker's flamer brought it out distinctly."

"Then why didn't you report it at once? No one else saw it, and we had a reconnaissance show over there today," the Group Captain bashed back at Ballentine. "What the devil were you doing, coming back along the canal, anyway?"

"It seemed like a good idea at the time," Ballentine smiled. "You're just as well off down low as you are at four thousand."

"You're supposed to set a course back that won't give your show away, when you're mine-laying. Didn't you chart back from Eckernford, Sergeant?"

"I did, sir, but we planted well inside their four-flash buoy, and we were over the sluiceway in a jiffy. Tucker's flamer occurred pretty fast," Chester explained, watching the girl's eyes.

"But don't you see," the Group Captain clattered on, "the Admiralty reports the *Leipzig* damaged in action

sometime ago, and that she is now under repair at Gdynia—that's in Poland. They have photos of her in a drydock or something."

"To get from Gdynia to the North Sea," the girl broke in unexpectedly, "they might risk a night in the canal rather than our mine-field in the Kattegat."

The Group Captain looked at her with the grimace of a man who has suddenly and unexpectedly been bayoneted.

"I think you two ought to withdraw your reports," he bleated weakly. "After all, if the Admiralty—"

"Mine still stands!" Ballentine said solidly.

"I can't withdraw mine, sir. There is a German cruiser in the canal," added Sergeant Chester.

BALLENTINE turned slightly and looked at him. He tried to figure out Chester's real meaning. Before, he wanted to give the gag away by reporting the damn' thing. Now he was acting as though he wanted to do something about it.

The Group Captain swallowed like a man who has swigged on a jug of lime juice by mistake.

"Look here!" He tried another tack. "Just what is it you two are trying to do? I mean to say, you don't expect anyone will believe—under these circumstances—that there's a German cruiser in the Kiel canal, do you? Now just what is it you're trying to work? Come on now, out with it!"

"But there is—" began Ballentine again.

"Wait a minute," snapped Chester, getting to his feet. "Here's the idea, sir: We didn't really believe we could convince you, but let's put it this way—"

Ballentine made a dubious effort to break it up, but Chester palmed him off with a lie-low gesture.

"Have you ever been on a mine-laying show, sir?" The navigator guy thrust his head forward bearing the expression of a nail-puller.

"Well, no—er—you see, I was day bombers. . . . Battles, in my time."

"Of course, sir. You were one of the few who came back from that Dortmund-Ems canal show in August 1940. That was a big story back home in those days. You probably haven't any idea how many Americans fell for that, and went across the border into Canada."

"But I don't see," the Group Captain floundered. "Americans?"

"If you haven't been on a mine-laying show, sir, you haven't any idea how lousy a war can be. We've made so many trips over with those damned cans of worms, we're sick of it!"

"Cans of worms? You'd better go, Miss Chetwynd."

"We don't care whether you believe there's a cruiser in the canal, sir. . . . All right, we made it up, just to kid you into giving us four five-hundred-pounders, a camera and a parachute flash."

"I don't quite understand," the Group Captain wailed.

"You were one of the screwballs who volunteered for the Dortmund-Ems canal business. A guy is entitled to be a screwball once in his life. This is our time—either that, or we put in for a transfer back to the U. S. Air Services."

"Sergeant!" the Group Captain spluttered. "You can't!"

But a sudden realization swept over him. These men were Americans, and they had volunteered from somewhere abroad. They could request a transfer. There were American squadrons somewhere in the vicinity. He'd seen some, and had visited one of their messes. They all talked like magpies and kept asking him about that Dortmund-Ems show. All this rattled through the Group Captain's memory in broken snatches, like something from a half-forgotten telephone conversation.

Ballentine sat stupefied with Sergeant Chester's unabashed crust. He was certain Chester was making it up as he went along, and he was amazed at the man's imagination. Still, he was afraid he'd overdo it.

"I think I see your point, Sergeant," the Group Captain managed. "We do volunteer for the damnedest things, don't we? Let's call this a consolation flight. Something to get in a few extra hours on your logbook before recommending you for a commission, shall we say?"

"You can put it any way you like, only don't forget that camera and parachute flare. We Americans are all screwballs about pictures."

"That would look silly in a Group report, Sergeant. However, I'll get you a clearance."

"And four five-hundred-pounders!" concluded Chester. "This isn't the Dortmund-Ems, you know. This is the Kiel canal."

EARLY morning light presented a pewterish gleam as they crossed the coast again. From his elevated post under the solar observation hood behind Ballentine's cockpit, Chester tapped the pilot on the shoulder and gave the "Thumbs Up" signal and bawled: "Course 150—one-five-oh. Are you staying down here?"

"Correct! The stacks on the Trinity House trawlers are the only obstructions. . . . Screwballs, eh?"

The pilot watched Chester move down the steps under his seat and go forward into the navigation compartment. The Sergeant pulled the seat around, climbed up and inspected the fixed gun set high in the nose, and assured himself it was properly loaded. That was something Ballentine could play with, should the opportunity arise.

Chester steadied himself against the porpoising of the big bomber as the pilot headed her across the North Sea and wriggled into position against the chart-table. He worked out a possible course that would take them northward to Heligoland and avoid the Brunsbuttel end of the canal; but on glancing forward and noting that Ballentine was still clipping the feather-topped rollers, he decided to let him enjoy himself, and completed a low-altitude course direct to the mouth of the Elbe.

"Neck or nothing, eh, Skipper?" he inquired over the inter-com.

"Why not? We'll never get another chance like this. Straight down the canal until we smack into her superstructure! What do you say?"

"What have we got to lose? Maintain course, then."

They got the first packet of flak from an anti-aircraft ship cruising outside of Scharnhorn, and Ballentine jinked her through a series of roller-coaster dips and zooms. Young Gage started to make pleading sounds from his dustbin. Tucker snapped off a long burst at a flak-ship.

They got it hot outside Brunsbuttel, and Ballentine knew they were expected. The ack-ack fire through the early-morning mist made him swing farther north toward Heide, where they forked out a hornet's nest of single-seaters that swarmed up after them and joined the mad chase for the canal.

Tucker's upper guns were splendidly manned, and Bimbo kept them off with careful harassing bursts whenever the Messerschmitts started down after them. Gage had to be content with intermittent shots at ground targets as they presented themselves while the Hampden contour-chased for the objective.

"If you can keep us in the air for another few minutes, Skipper," the nav. guy crackled over the inter-com, "we ought to pick her up and get at least two run-overs."

"Don't worry. I brought along an extra bucket of boost. This was your idea, remember."

"That guy and his Dortmund-Ems canal!" snorted Chester.

They cut back across the fallow fields of Schleswig-Holstein, and once more the leaden gash of the canal came into view. Chester studied it as far as he could see, and caught the fact that practically all traffic had been cleared. He was certain now the cruiser had been given an unobstructed run for it.

Tucker was dishing it out at two snarling Messerschmitts lancing in

from tight angles. They were getting the stuff home, too. The metal framework of the careening Hampden was hammered until she clanged like a boiler taking a rockpile. Growling bursts of heavy-caliber flak punched violent uppercuts of concussion from below, and she staggered through the uneven obstacles of pressure.

They were on her before Chester had the bomb-doors open. The cruiser gave her own show away by opening up with a spluttering festoon of ack-ack hate that hacked out a long jagged wound along the starboard wing-tip.

"There she is, down there!" Chester bellowed. "The fools marked themselves. Down there near the bend of the canal!"

Ballentine banked her and felt the tug of the damaged wing-tip dragging against the control-column. She whistled like a banshee as she came around, and he put her at it hell-for-leather while the nav. guy dived under his chart-table and hugged the prone position.

"Try to get one run-over, Skipper!" he yelled. "Get Gage alert on that parachute flare if we get one in. We've got a synchronized camera aboard, remember."

IT was a very efficient madhouse aboard the Hampden by now. Tucker, blubbering and wiping his nose on the back of his glove, fought it out with the Mess-ups. Gage was corroding the inter-com line with a juicy program of profanity that had all the gusty tang of the paddock. Only the bombs in the gallery retained their official austerity and poise.

"Get those bomb-doors open!" Ballentine raged.

The draft swirled up as curved panels were shoved down. The wind screeched an answer, and Chester made it official.

"Bomb-doors open, Skipper. Ready for target!"

The cruiser was hugging a variegated pattern of rafts designed to provide a marquetry of illusion. Someone had erred in ordering the batteries to open fire. The guns had put up a series of spark-streaked guidelines that directed their vision full on that which the rafts had so efficiently camouflaged.

Ballentine crossed the canal a few chains'-lengths ahead of her bow, and curled around the cover of a small village that pushed its narrow streets down to the turf-fringed banks of the canal. The German gunners hacked a gilded weather vane from the steeple of a church in an effort to stop the low-flying Hampden from proceeding any further.

"Going over, stern to bow!" Ballentine heard himself say over the inter-com. He was startled at his own calm and his selection of words. "I'll take it at 180—one-eight-oh. Flat over her stack on the first run."

"First run, Skipper? You making more than one?" gasped Chester.

"Put the first two down the funnel. They can't take it there. Second run, if we're still in the air, we'll go for the bridge and the gold braid. On target, Chester!"

"Best of luck, Skipper!"

"Another flamer, Skipper!" screamed Tucker from the aft turret.

"An' all I can do is pull a parachute-flare," wailed Gage. "Cabinet-size photos, two shillings extra. I say, what a life!"

"Stand by!" warned Ballentine.

THE Hampden came around with a Mess-up on her tail, and bounced her exhaust thud off the versi-colored waters of the canal. The cruiser was a mile ahead now, and Ballentine besought his gods that he live long enough to cover the next few seconds of flight. Just long enough to hear a bomb smack, and see the first splintering wound open up and feel the thankful belch of concussion to simoon through the gash of ruptured steel.

"You're on—dead, Skipper!" called Chester.

The words made Ballentine wince. He sucked in his breath, drew the control-column back slowly, and watched the gray mass disappear beneath the nose. There was a jerk and a release of load as the first two bombs went out.

Wham!

Ballentine treadled the rudder to make sure he was still alive. Everyone was screeching at him over the inter-com. Their cries were drowned out with the first bellow from a detonated magazine.

"Piece of their blasted flag caught on the bomb-door, Skipper! Blew the damn' chimney off! Good old Chester! . . . Right in the coal-hole!"

"Back! Back, Skipper, before they can replace that pom-pom crew!"

"Bow to stern, this time. Sight on center line of bridge, Chester. Gunners report!"

"All here, sir! That Mess-up rolled over on his back when he hit that back-draft!"

"About time. He was making a nutmeg grater of my funk-hole!"

The Hampden was back again before Ballentine could place their reports into an orderly pattern. The bomber bounced and gritted her ratchet teeth again, and two distinct explosions joined forces below and strained Ballentine against his Sutton straps. He shot her high, hanging on his props, came over in a climbing turn and yelled at Gage: "This is your shot, Gage. Pull the flare when we're just short of her. The camera will do the rest!"

"All bombs clear, sir!" Chester reported. "One near-miss on the rafts, one direct hit on the bridge. That's all, Skipper."

Something went *boom!* outside, and there was a blinding glare of light. An American parachute photo-flash went off and imprinted the evidence on a slab of camera film for future reference.

"Think we can get back in time for breakfast, Skipper?" Bimbo Tucker inquired.

ONCE again Ballentine cleared what was left of the church steeple on his way home and pushed the Hampden cross-country for the mouth of the Elbe.

"I'll get you a course from Gluckstradt to Yarmouth. How's that, Skipper?" Chester inquired as he steadied himself under the solar hatch.

"That'll do. Might be able to pick up a couple of bloaters for that hungry guy back there."

"We're well in the clear. That is—so far, we are."

"It's always a good idea to plan something," suggested Ballentine. "I mean something to do when you get back."

"Well, we've been pretty lucky, so far."

"That's what I mean. The minute I get back, I'm going to put a few quid on that nag Lady Moyne that young Gage likes in the St. Ledger. Nothing like playing your luck to the limit."

Chester grinned.

"Don't be greedy, Skipper. Two hits and a near-miss on a cruiser in one day will be quite enough for me."

PLEASE NOTE THIS CHANGE IN BLUE BOOK PUBLICATION DATES

Many years ago BLUE BOOK, in common with other monthly magazines, kept advancing its publication date to a point where for a long time it has been a full month ahead of the date appearing on the cover. This practice has led to confusion on the part of our readers, our contributors and our newsdealers.

BLUE BOOK's publication dates are therefore being changed. This issue should reach you on April 21st, instead of the end of March. Beginning with our June issue, each number of BLUE BOOK will appear on the Wednesday or Friday immediately preceding the first of the month shown on the cover.

(LOOK FOR THE NEXT [JUNE] ISSUE OF BLUE BOOK ON FRIDAY, MAY 28th.)

Mercedita Kindles

THE tinkly, provocative song of the little silver bells on her bracelets gave rhythm to the swaying of her narrow hips. . . . *Cling-clong, cling-clong.*

Cling-clong. . . . She passed slowly through the coiling streets of Lima, where overhanging latticed balconies filtered the sun-rays on wares of Christian and of heathen; wares, by the same token, of Spaniard and of Peruvian Indian—on copper vessels and clay pots, on damascened armor and Toledo blades and great feather Inca headdresses, on stout Galician boots and beaded moccasins, on thin silver-inlaid perfume bottles and on precious stones, on plumed beaver hats and Andalusian guitars, on wool and silk and motley embroideries. Everything here except gold, for gold went to fill the greedy coffers of the King of Spain—although occasionally it went to fill the coffers, no less greedy if heretical, of English buccaneer and Dutch corsair.

Still here, while not gold, were all the things that gold had bought or could buy—glittering and shimmering in the sun, gay with a running, ever-shifting play of colors, furnace-red and cherry-red, emerald-green and elfin-green and lilac subtle as a spirit flame.

Not that Mercedita cared. She had come here, with the *cling-clong-cling* of her bracelets, not to see, but to be seen. For she was sixteen years of age; and the night before, sitting by her grandmother's side—her parents were dead—on the flat roof-top of their house, she had heard a throaty love-song brushing through the purple stillness:

Dos besos tengo en mi alma
Que no se apartan de mi;
El ultimo de mi madre
Y el primero que te di.

A song of tenderness and desire. Sung by somebody—she had thought—to somebody. . . . But not to her. Dear Lord—not to her!

And she had envied. She had sighed. Then she had shrugged her slim shoulders.

Why, she had told herself, she knew what her mirror knew. Knew that her nose was short and high-bridged, her lips berry-red, her hair rolling in copper waves across the snow of her forehead, her eyes coal-black—eyes that were almond-shaped, heavily hooded, and with a quirk in them that held a promise and a hope.

Thus the day would come when somebody would sing to her. Would sing to her of tenderness and desire. Oh, yes—the day would surely come!

So she had smiled. . . . And then her grandmother's nagging admonition:

"By Our Lady of Mount Carmel! The manner of the younger generation! At whom were you smiling?"

"I smiled at the moon."

"A moon called Pedro—or Luis, or perhaps Carlos! A moon with an impudent black curly beard! A moon who, most vilely through his nose, warbles of love! By the Savior's wounds, it was different when I was a girl, years ago, in Madrid! But here, in this savage pagan Peru, where there are no manners, no modesty! *Ai-ai-ai!*" the old woman had screeched like an enraged parrot, and had soundly slapped her granddaughter.

So this morning, while her grandmother was out shopping (and swapping gossip and complaints with neighboring crones: how garlic and olive oil were getting more expensive every day; how much better things had been while Pizarro had ruled; how lawless the children were, born here in Peru; and all about the stirring news from Spain, with the King, it seemed, preparing a great Armada to invade the lands of the heretics, the accursed, and bring to them fire and sword and a return to the True Faith), this morning Mercedita had slipped out of the house to take a look at life.

Strolling along leisurely, she reached the end of the Avenida del Obispo.

There, closing the vista like an enormous seal of granite and marble and bold square-cut blocks of masonry, towered the castle of Don Rodrigo Carvallo y O'Donnell, Duke of Carmona and of Puerta del Ponte, Chevalier of the Golden Fleece, Lord High Admiral of the Western Sea, Viceroy of Peru, Hereditary Keeper of the King's Nightshirts, grandee of Spain and holder of a baker's dozen of similar glorious titles in the peerages of Portugal, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the Holy Roman Empire. And let us mention in passing that, a few months earlier, this resplendent nobleman had left Lima and ridden across the Andes, with the crackle of Spanish swords and the hollow thunder of Spanish drums, to "bring the Cross to the ultimate heathens"—which was a polite way of saying that his treasury was empty and that, according to reports, the farther Indian lands were bursting with loot to be had for the taking.

BENEATH the battlements of his castle the road split to both sides. Mercedita stopped. She was wondering which turn to take, when from the left came a lithe youth who carried on his head a great earthen jar filled with oil, while from the right, came another lad bearing two baskets heaped with fruit.

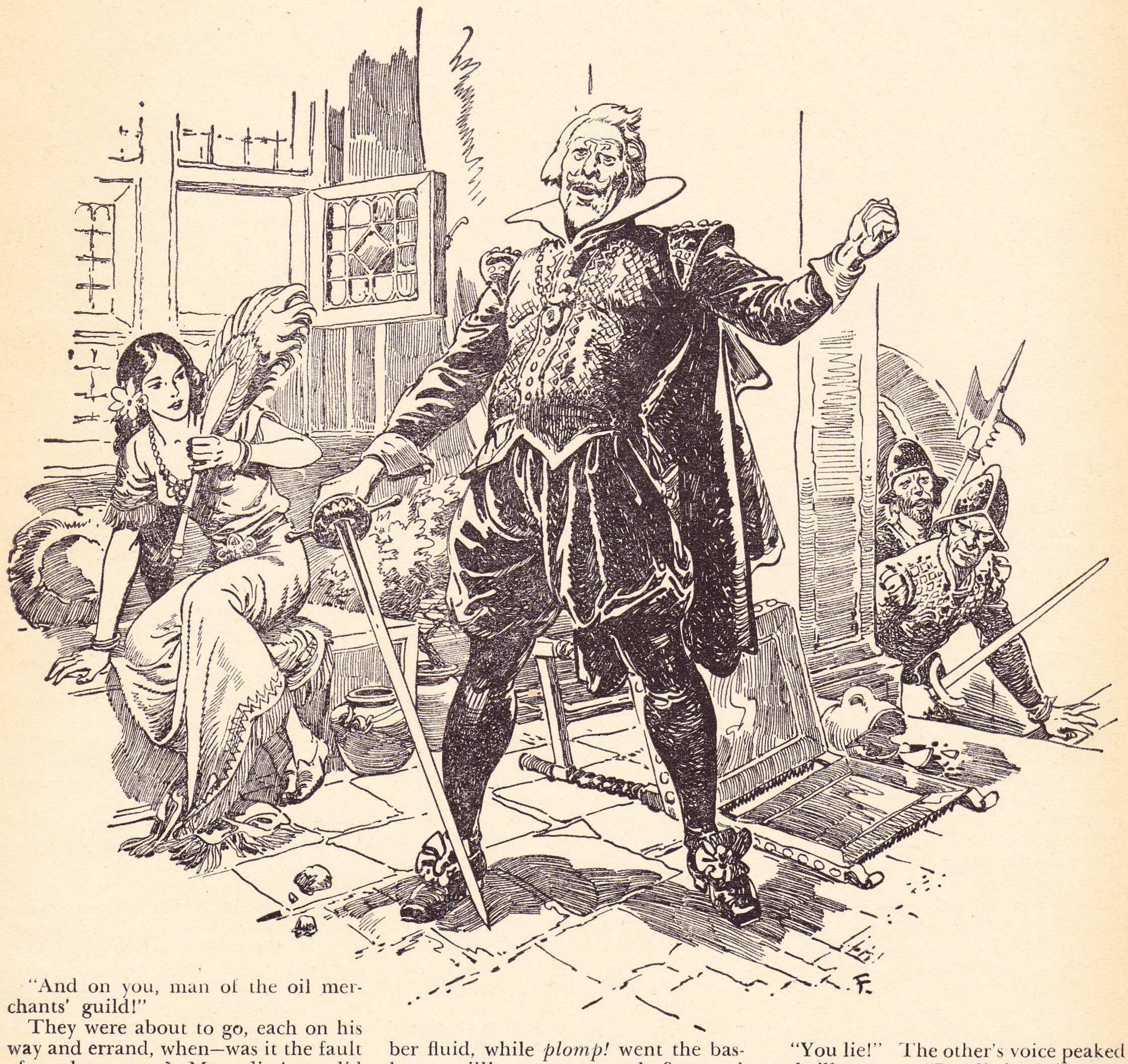
They knew each other slightly, exchanged decent Christian greetings:

"Blessings on you, man of the fruiterers' guild!"

a Flame

A legend of old-time Lima the Golden

by Achmed Abdullah



"And on you, man of the oil merchants' guild!"

They were about to go, each on his way and errand, when—was it the fault of a dust mote?—Mercedita's eyelid flickered with the faintest wink in the world.

Did she wink left, or right? If she knew it herself—which is a debatable point—she had no chance to explain.

For:

"Light of my life!" promptly exclaimed one of the two youths.

"Light of my soul!" as promptly cried the other.

Speaking simultaneously, bowing simultaneously with hands precariously steadying their burdens, their heads met, bumped painfully. And *crash!* went the oil-jar, wasting its thick amber fluid, while *plomp!* went the baskets, spilling grapes and figs and oranges in the slime of the road.

They stiffened, and stared at each other indignantly.

"See what you've done!" demanded the first. "You will pay for this!"

"Why should I? It was your fault. For what right had you to bow to the señorita?"

"What right? Ah,"—advancing a step,—"it was to my eyes this maiden's eyes spoke."

"Should a rosebud be given to a monkey, or a comb to a bald-headed man? No, no! It was to me her eyes whispered—sweetly, temptingly!"

"You lie!" The other's voice peaked a shrill octave. "By all the Saints!"

"It is you who are the liar—by the Trinity!"

"Ah, son of a dog!"

"Scoundrel!"

"Infidel Jew!"

So words spoke.

Then daggers spoke, leaping from loose breeches to the touch and thrust of strong brown hands. And there was, on this fine warm day, a pretty clash of steel, while Mercedita looked on, frightened yet thrilled.

She stood there, rooted to the spot, with the pleasing thought in her mind that here was a grand ding-dong pas-

sage of arms for the sake of her eyes. Impartially she urged on both lads with her shouts of:

"Go to it! Power to your arms!"

She clapped her hands. She laughed joyously; was a little ashamed, but

Illustrated by John Richard Flanagan

"I need men like you, Señor de Cantrava," said the Viceroy.

defiantly clapped her hands again. Then, all at once, she remembered her grandmother. . . . Dear Lord, she must get home before the old lady returned! And so she gathered up her skirts and ran away.

The last thing she saw was a spurt of blood as a dagger found flesh. The last thing she heard was a cry of pain, and shortly afterward, a quick patter of feet like hail on a tin roof, a rumble of angry voices steadily bloating in volume and threat, as men ran up from near-by shops and markets and closed in about the fighters, and took sides according to which guild they belonged.

"To the rescue, oil merchants! Oil merchants—ho!"

"Fruiterers! Fruiterers—hi!"

And, "By St. Irenaeus!" a noisy appeal to the patron saint of the oil merchants; and, "By St. Ephrem!" an appeal, yet louder, to the fruiterers' patron saint. And a massive iron measuring-ladle striking a handsomely beaked Castilian nose; and a short black knife, more frequently used for slicing off cabbage heads, drawing a crimson seam down an honest Andalusian snub nose. And the fight gathering momentum; rolling north, east, south, west. Stalls overturned. Doors smashed. Wares trampled in the dirt. And presently, this being the hour of the midday siesta, windows flung open and angry householders sticking out their heads to see what was going on—quickly withdrawing these same heads as bricks came whistling through the air.

"Mother of God!" demanded a tailor. "Must we have our proper sleep disturbed by all the yelping gutter-rats in Peru?"

"And," chimed in a pastry-cook, "with our taxes rising every day!"

"Send for soldiers!"

"The soldiers are with the Viceroy, raiding across the Andes. They've other fish to fry."

"Aye," — contemptuously, — "golden fish!"

"What's to be done?"

"Only one thing: We must stop this unseemly brawling with our own strength, señores!"

"Indeed!"

"Let us teach them manners!"

"Come on!"

So they ran from their houses, butchers and grocers, tailors and cobblers, weavers and blacksmiths and bakers and candlestick-makers. They were followed by their apprentices, their clerks and scribes and porters, their half-breed servants and Indian slaves; and at first they showed a valiant and united front against the disturbers of the King's peace.

But in no time at all, as business rival saw business rival and recalled deals in which he had been worsted, their personal grievances popped to the fore. Here, they thought in the midst of this fight, was a most gorgeous chance to wipe out these grievances. . . .

"The turnips you sold me day before yesterday," said retail green-grocer to wholesale green-grocer, "were full of vermin!"

"Less full of vermin," was the reply discourteous, "than your beard, Catalonian thief!"

"*Hai!*"—with a choked cry of rage. "Do you dare bandy words?"

"By Our Lady, and I bandy what I please! Words—or deeds!"

"Deeds be it!"

And deeds it was. A blow was struck, was returned with bloody interest.

And again people took sides. Again they were at each other—grave Spanish merchants cracking the heads of other grave Spanish merchants with stone pestles and steel-bound yardsticks; lean apprentices hopping about like young fleas hungry for blood and doing splendid work with pricking scissors and awls and well-heated pressing-irons; scribes and clerks depending on heavy ledgers to smash noses awry; porters using feet and teeth; and half-breed servants and Indian slaves boring in and out of the moiling mob—gleefully, and privately, righting various wrongs done them in the past by the superior white race.

The tumult spread all over town, like powder under spark. It grew, since near and far, more and more people rushed from their houses to bring peace—and to cause yet wilder confusion.

Mild enough they were as a rule, these citizens of Lima the Golden. Churchgoers they were, law-abiders, home-lovers. But not today.

Today it seemed as if a crimson madness had come upon them as neighbor talked to neighbor, as neighbor argued with neighbor, as all at once neighbor went for neighbor with whatever weapon happened to be handy, or no weapon at all, fighting it out, stark and dour and grim, with clutched finger at throat or clenched fist in the face.

THE women, seeing their lords and masters fiercely embattled, were throwing broken pottery and tiles from the roof-tops, or pouring scalding water from the windows. And—may the Saints intercede in his behalf!—a white-haired old priest, who in his youth, before taking holy orders, had been a sergeant of cavalry under Pizarro, dropping his rosary beads and picking up a heavy candlestick and announcing:

"What sense is there in biding here and watching and listening and doing nothing at all, when I might as well be rowing with the rest!"

So ever more men it was to brawl and struggle and assault; strife added to strife; and the younger men rolling out of the packed streets and through side alleys toward the Square of the

Lions of Castile, where there was more room to swing a club and wield a blade.

South this square was framed by the haughty palace of Don Juan Romero, Marquis de Cantrava; north by that of his cousin and worst enemy, Don Sigismondo Romero, Marquis de Padilla de la Cruz. Before age, gout and obesity had overtaken them, they had been famous soldiers in the armies of Colonial Spain, one having been Captain-General of the Mountains of Peru, and the other Captain-General of the Plains of Peru.

BUT today they were elderly men both; gray-bearded men; men who, daring gout and obesity as once they had dared Indian and English and Dutch, had freely partaken of a midday meal of highly seasoned food and pleasant Malaga wine and were now peacefully dozing.

Perhaps, very faintly in their dreams, they were conscious of the turmoil outside. Perhaps, in these dreams, it was merely a memory to them of former battles. At all events, they snored on, undisturbed by the riot beneath their windows, nor disturbed by the sudden cries of, "Fire! *Fire!*" as in a wool-merchant's shop, a stout hurled stick upset an oil lamp, and the flames licked swiftly across a high-heaped counter.

Swiftly they spread, stabbing red and treacherous through wooden partitions, popping and hissing and crackling, into neighboring shops.

"Help!" shouted the merchants.

"Help, help, help! Here is a king's ransom going up in smoke!"

"Bring water!" They twittered like canaries with their tail-feathers afire. "Bring buckets! Bring axes! Bring ladders!"

So they called to their apprentices and porters and servants, begging for the lusty strength of their arms. But the latter did not hear, would not have cared had they heard. They continued their battle on the Square of the Lions of Castile, while from the corner, hidden in the dark recesses of a postern, Mercedita watched what was, in truth, the deed and fault of her flickering eyelid.

She was excited. By the Immaculata, she thought, but here was life, life! The zest of it, savage and lawless and throbbing! The keen, glorious thrust of it, with no restraint!

She loved it. But she was a little perturbed, too. For with all this brawling, her way to her home was cut off. And what would her grandmother say?

"Oh!" She gave a cry of fear and pressed farther back into her hiding-place as a large stone hissed past her.

It was an apprentice of the carpenters' guild who, obeying a brilliant impulse, had bent down, pried loose a cobblestone and thrown it, laying low a lean, sharp-featured, lanky-haired Araucanian Indian, who sometime earlier had sent a whip whistling about his calves. Others followed suit. Presently there was a hurricane of jagged stones; and all at once—*crash!* —one flew on a high curve and smashed through a window of the palace of the

"I—I winked at the moon," said Mercedita demurely.

Marquis de Cantrava, where he reclined on a couch, a pretty Indian slave-girl keeping the flies away from him with a fan of jeweled heron-feathers, looted years earlier from the Incas' treasure.

The stone, thrown with full force, hit him on the jaw. It knocked out one tooth. It brought him up wide-awake and furious, and roaring like a wounded bull.

He jumped from the couch, picked up Toledo blade and a battle-ax.

He stood there, a graybeard, but still a giant, hale and hearty. His wide shoulders swayed heavily as he strode to the door, calling loudly to his retainers and knights-at-arms.

"Ho, there!" he yelled. "Here is this treacherous and malodorous goat," —he was referring to his cousin, the Marquis de Padilla de la Cruz—"who, most foully, like the coward he is, attacked me while I lay peacefully sleeping! He hurled seven large rocks at me, the unspeakable assassin! Follow me, my children! Let us give him the point of the red, red sword!"

"The Saints be praised!" shouted his men, as eager as any brisk lads for a bit of a fray.

Nor was the fray far to seek.

For Lolita, the Marquis de Cantrava's pretty little Indian slave-girl, had a lover who was third assistant cook in the household of the Marquis de Padilla de la Cruz.

Ah, if her Juanito were hurt!

So she ran out one back door and in another, bringing warning—with the result that, as the henchman of De Cantrava rushed into the square, cutting through the milling mob there as a knife cuts through cheese, they were met halfway by those of his cousin, led by De Padilla himself, who bore his seventy-seven years jauntily. And while cousin attacked cousin with thrust and vicious counter-thrust, their retainers, nothing loath, fell on each other like the ruffians they were, slashing, gouging, slugging—until presently apprentices and porters, half-breed servants and Indian slaves forgot their own quarrel and made common cause against the newcomers.

For the latter were an insolent, roistering crew, a steel-clad crew, flaunting the embroidered escutcheons of the noblemen in whose service they were, as if they were grandees of Spain themselves. Men they were who insulted honest tradespeople and made love indiscriminately—and here was

From her recess Mercedita watched. This was life! Savage and lawless!

an opportunity to pay off ancient scores.

Pikes and daggers then! Swords and lances! Ellwands and clubs and rocks, and broad-bladed cleavers and the sting of drovers' whips! A roaring, bully song of strife; while the conflagration swept on, with the merchants and the men of the fire brigade doing their best, which was not much; and while evening came to the west with orange and gold and crushed rose-pink—evening that found Mercedita cowering in her dark postern, no longer thrilled, but hungry, frightened to the core of her soul, and longing for her nagging old grandmother.

"Dear Crucified One, protect me!" she sobbed, as the tall tower of the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows caught fire, the flames lapping the sky with swirling, tossing ribbons of scarlet—and ever the savage chorus of strife growing and bloating, echoing from street to street.

It echoed, finally, beyond the walls of Lima and out into the foothills of the Andes, to blend there with another symphony of sounds that boomed out of the east—a crackle of swords, a dry rasping of lance butts, a clashing of arquebuses, a creaking of saddle leather, a faint thumping of drums. For His Excellency Don Rodrigo Carvallo y O'Donnell, Duke of Carmona and of Puerta del Ponte, Viceroy of Peru, was returning from his raid, followed by his soldiers, by thousands of captured Indians and

hundreds of llamas and burros that groaned under their loads of silver and gold and precious jewels.

He was in an excellent mood. The victory had been great, the loot rich. He had decided that, permitting the loyal citizens of Lima to pay for it, he would erect a monument to himself on the Square of the Lions of Castile, to acquaint all Christendom with the tale of his glory and prowess. He had decided, furthermore, that he would marry, would marry no less than the Infanta Eulalia.

He had seen her miniature portrait. Ah, a handsome, lithe, golden woman! Daughter of the King of Spain, was she? A Hapsburg and related to the princely houses of Lorraine and of Bourbon? Well—haughtily—what of it? He himself was a Carvallo on his father's and an O'Donnell on his mother's side. None better in all Europe; with never a drop of Moorish

blood in his veins—which was more than could be said of most Spanish grandees. Besides, he was a cousin to the Borgias, had great influence at the Vatican. . . .

Of course, the matter would have to be handled diplomatically. And he was about to consult with Don Anselmo, his Jesuit father-confessor who rode by his side astride a handsomely caparisoned mule, when (since, though stout stone walls resisted the flames burning inside, yet there were roofs aplenty blazing merrily besides, here and there a wooden scaffolding where buildings were being erected) he became conscious of a crimson light on the horizon and heard the distant echo of yells and clashing steel.

He frowned; motioned to a captain of the guard, who galloped up.

"Your Excellency?"

The Viceroy pointed straight ahead.

"What is it?" he demanded. "Have the good citizens of Lima already learned of my triumphant return and are making merry?"

"Either that," the captain replied, "or else—"

"Well?"

"The accursed English pirates—Don Francisco Drake or Don Juan Hawkins—back at their old game of plunder and arson and rapine."

"I doubt it," said the Viceroy. "Messengers would have brought word."

"There is," suggested the priest, "a third possibility." He smiled thinly. "No more nor less than the truth of an old proverb."

"What proverb?"

"When the cat is away, the mice begin to play."

The Viceroy put spurs to his horse.

"When the cat gets back—" he said.

SO it was that, twelve hours later, a most sheepish and decidedly frightened assembly bowed low before the Viceroy, where he sat on a great chair in the audience hall of his castle.

His glance swept over the long row of culprits.

Amongst them was Mercedita. On the left she was flanked by a sergeant of musketeers, who mumbled in her ear that she would pay with the gallows-rope stretching her pretty white throat for bringing fire and confusion to Lima; on the right by her grandmother, who whispered:

"You would not heed my warning, wretched child! And now it will be black death for you—and mighty small loss, say I!"

The next moment the old woman broke into tears.

"Ai-ai-ai!" she moaned. "And how I'll be able to keep on living, with you stark and stiff in the cold clods of the grave, the Saints alone know!"

And she wept so loudly that the Viceroy forgot his starched grandee dignity and exclaimed:

"Be quiet, daughter of the devil!"

Quiet then, enforced by the sergeant of musketeers clapping a large hairy hand over the old woman's mouth, while Mercedita, who had not spoken a word, stared at the Viceroy and thought that he was not bad-looking.

Nearer thirty than forty he was, of a lean, clean length of limb, with black hair and teeth drift-white and gray, shrewd eyes—O'Donnell eyes—and a slow, queer, rather ironic smile. He was splendidly clad in crimson-and-gold satin, with the arms of Castile and Leon embroidered on his broad chest, a great, square-cut emerald twinkling on his forefinger as—having listened to accusation and counter-accusation and sifted evidence and fault and responsibility—he pointed it and proceeded to pass judgment.

First he turned to the porters and apprentices, the servants and slaves.

"You have proved," he announced, and his accents were as soft as a cat's lapping milk, "that you are brave and strong. Therefore great honor shall be yours. This coming month I shall send an army against the Indians of the south and a navy against the English pirates. It is you, my stout lads, my hearty, plucky lads, who shall carry weapons in the forefront of battle, on land as well as on sea—and you will be happy in the knowledge that the Saints especially bless those who die fighting against infidel and heretic!"

He then addressed the merchants.

"The which," he said, "leaves you without help in house and shop. Very well. I brought back many prisoners from my raid. I shall sell them to you; the price"—he coughed delicately—"to be decided by me, who"—with another cough—"seems to have the monopoly."

A shudder went over the merchants; and he continued:

"There is also the matter of rebuilding what has been destroyed and burned. A large job. Contracts will have to be awarded."

Again he paused. The merchants smiled as they reckoned future gains—forgot to smile, as he added:

"To avoid arguments amongst you, and possibly more quarrels, I shall award the contracts to myself."

"Dear Lord!" exclaimed one of the merchants, while the Viceroy motioned to the two old noblemen, the Marquis de Cantrava and the Marquis de Padilla de la Cruz, who stepped forward.

"Years ago," he said, "because of your venerable age, I permitted you to retire from active service. Since then, by some amazing miracle, you have become rejuvenated, have become once more like young game-cocks, strutting each on his own dung-heap and crowing his challenge to the other. I am glad of it. For I need men like you. You, Señor de Cantrava, shall lead the expedition against the Indians, and you, Señor de Padilla de la Cruz, shall raise the admiral's flag on our finest frigate, warring bravely against the English pirates. Since, in consequence, you have no longer need for your town palaces, the State—as represented by me—shall accept them as presents."

So, with irony and wisdom and, too, with profit to himself, he meted out punishment, until there remained nobody in the hall except Mercedita and the two youths, the one of the fruiterers' and the one of the oil merchants' guild.

"You three," he said, "are the real evildoers. It is because of you three that here is the King's loyal city of Lima turned into a shambles—with people wounded, shops and a church gone up in flame, pavements torn up, confusion everywhere."

HE drew his lean Spanish hand across his gray Irish eyes to hide the smile that lurked in the corners.

"Why," he asked the two lads, "did you rogues fight each other?"

"Because of this girl," cried one, "who winked at me—sweetly—"

"No, no!" interrupted the second. "At me!"

"You lie, by all the Saints!"

"It is you who are the liar, by the Trinity!"

Once more they were about to fall on each other with blows and kicks, when the Viceroy roared:

"Silence!"

Then, silence restored, he turned to Mercedita.

"One of the lads," he said, "is wrong, unless you winked at both—being, perhaps, cross-eyed?"

"I'm not!" she denied indignantly.

"Well, then," demanded the Viceroy, "at whom *did* you wink? At this youth—or that?"

She looked up at him demurely.

"At neither, Excellency!"

"Eh?"

"I"—demurely, as she recalled what, the night before last, she had told her grandmother—"I winked at the moon."

He shook his head.

"The moon? At high noon?" He laughed. "Ah, you're not telling me the truth, child."

And then—was it the fault of a dust-mote?—once more Mercedita's eyelid flickered faintly; and the sudden notion came to Don Rodrigo Carvallo y O'Donnell, Duke of Carmona and of Puerta del Ponte, Viceroy of Peru, that perhaps he was a fool to think of marrying an Infanta of Spain, a king's daughter. A fool, indeed, to seek in Madrid for a handsome, lithe, golden woman, when here in Lima he had the pick of all the girls in the world.

And he turned to the two youths.

"Begone, rogues!" he said. "There is a private matter which I have to discuss with this small señorita."

The Shining Mountains

The story of an old prospector who believed that a man is as great as his hope.

by CHANDLER WHIPPLE

AT the topmost peak of the Doubtful Hills there is a gravestone without a grave. It stands higher than a man, and on a clear day there is a certain moment when the lowering sun casts its last rays upon it so that the stone seems to ignite into a blazing beacon. Then you may see it as far away as the town of La Rosa, a good fifty miles to the westward. Though few people would ever make the arduous climb to look upon it closely, it has been carved with painstaking care from the very rock itself and suitably and touchingly inscribed with equal care. Yet as I say, there is no body beneath the stone, nor will there ever be. The answer lies in the green valley below, where John Breakenridge, now graying at the temples, lives with his lovely wife and their three children in the big, well-shaded Nugget ranch-house.

WHEN Seth Barstow first set eyes on young Johnny Breakenridge, Johnny was the swamper in "The Golden Glow," in Singing Woman, and Seth was in the process of taking over that Idaho town, lock, stock and barrel. He had just struck it rich, and after six months in the lonely hills he aimed to make this a night to remember.

After the fourth round, which made it seven for Seth, the old sourdough began to tire of relating his mighty exploits, and turned to see what other amusement the Golden Glow had to offer. A pair of smiling dance-hall girls were making their way toward him, but at this stage of his inebriation women did not interest him except in retrospect. His glance lighted upon a near-by gambling-table, where a moment before, a gambler had ordered young Johnny Breakenridge to bring him a drink of whisky. The flowery-voiced, floury-faced tinhorn had been hanging around the Golden Glow for the past week now, and in that time he had had the bad taste to fleece Johnny out of fifty cents by means of a penny with an Indian on either side, as well as to lord it over him in other and equally unbecoming ways. Johnny went and got the drink.

Now, just as Seth Barstow happened to look that way, Johnny saw his chance to get even—and it was too good for any sound-minded boy to miss, regardless of the consequences. The gambler, in the process of fleecing an innocent pilgrim at the table, had slid the ace of clubs down into the top of one of his fancy boots; but it had worked up with his trousers until just the bare corner protruded. Magician-like, Johnny reached down and flicked it out.

"Here's your drink, Mr. Wyatt," he said. "And here's your ace."

THE gambler didn't start, but his white face got dark. "*My* ace!" he said. "Why, you damned impudent little—"

He came up from the table, taking a long swing with his fist at Johnny's jaw. Johnny dodged the blow and backed away. Then his breath caught.

Wyatt, instead of swinging again, was reaching inside his coat to his armpit holster.

Whether the gambler would actually have shot him down is hard to say, for at that moment Seth Barstow swept Johnny aside and faced Wyatt.

"What do you mean by treatin' him like that?" he cried. "That's my son!"

Wyatt looked his amazement. "Him?" he said. "Your son?"

Seth combed his white beard with his hands somewhat after the manner of a bellowing Brahma pawing the ground before battle. "Sir," he said, "do you mean to accuse me of prevarication? Do you mean to say I don't recognize the golden-haired little tyke that was stole from his crib by that son of Satan, Gunther Rayburn? Aint you got the reasonable, ordinary intelligence to see that here is the missing heir to the Barstow millions?"

Wyatt, at first, was puzzled. But he was a fair gambler, with a reasonable amount of the ability to see when chance favored him. There was that pilgrim who might at any minute remember about the ace and cause trouble, if his attention were not distracted. Instead of taking exception to old Seth's words, he sized the sourdough up. Here was a man who was out for a time and might be worth money before the evening was over, if you treated him right.

He put a hand, rather nervously and in a testing manner, on Seth's shoulder. "My friend," he said in a voice vibrant with emotion, "if I have been of a little help to you in finding your beloved boy, I am grateful. There is nothing deeper and more touching than the love of father and son. If I have seemed to be harsh with him, you must understand that I was seeking only to inculcate in him, in my fumbling way, that knowledge of right and wrong which his own vanished father, alas, could not offer him."

For a moment, that was too good even for Seth. He made no move to free himself of the gambler's hand, and in fact a tear trickled down his leathery cheek. "Why, pilgrim," he said, "I can see you have got a kind heart. I—"

"Of course," said Wyatt, "at such a time words must choke you. Think of it—after all these years. Sir, I want to be the first to congratulate you. I want to offer you a drink, and then—perhaps we can sit down to a pleasant little game in honor of the occasion."

Seth, suddenly freed of his imaginary but pleasant emotions, now sized the gambler up. He remembered the booted ace, but figured he could handle any tinhorn as incautious as that. The night, he felt, was picking up.

"I'll follow right along," he assured Wyatt. Then he turned on Johnny Breakenridge. "Boy, what in tarnation are you doin' in this house of sin and shame? Did your mammy let you come?"

"Aint got any," said Johnny. He was still puzzled, but he grinned, and the grin was whole-souled and boyish.

"Huh! Why, you aint even been eatin' proper," growled Seth. "Don't let it get you down, my boy. Remember, a man is as great as his hope. But you've got to stop shamin' your pa with them rags. Here, take this and get yourself some clothes." He brought from his poke and handed to Johnny the biggest nugget he had ever seen.

Johnny still could not get this—but it made him feel mighty good.

"Why, thanks," he said. "Why—thanks."

Seth slapped him heartily on the back. Suddenly he was realizing that he did not feel quite as lonely as he generally did, and he was happy. "I'd ought to have tended to it long ago," he said. "Now get along with you and meet me up in my room at the hotel tonight."

Although Johnny was quite aware that they had never set eyes on each other before, he can hardly be blamed for getting promptly out of the Golden Glow as Seth directed him to do. Whereupon Seth, for the moment, just as promptly forgot him, and he was surprised the next morning, when he awakened in his hotel room, to find Johnny bending over him with a glass of hot milk in his hand.

Seth got up on his elbows and shook his head and it hurt. "Now what in blazes!" he said. "Take that pizen away! What are you doin' here?"

"Why," answered Johnny with the excellent logic of boyhood, "you told me to come here."

SETH BARSTOW shook his head again and got out of the rumpled bed. He must have been panning gold with his mouth all night, he thought. He slipped on his boots, which were all that was lacking, combed his white beard with his hands and began to rummage about the room. At last he dug out his poke from a corner where he had hidden it. He opened it. There were a few nuggets in it, but they seemed far smaller than they had last night.

"I been robbed," he growled. "Blast it all, here I take on a orphan kid to raise, and now I got no money." He glared balefully at Johnny.

It isn't likely that Seth had been robbed—that is, in an illegitimate fashion. The strike he had made had grown to enormous proportions on his way to town, and it was natural that it should diminish with the morning light. Then too, in the course of the night he had sampled the complete entertainment bill of fare of the Golden Glow, and that can take a good many nuggets. But Johnny did not miss his angry look.

"I'll go," he said. He screwed up his face because he was too old to cry. "I'll go if you want me to, but I aint goin' to take back these clothes."

For the first time, perhaps, Seth fully grasped the situation and remembered what it was all about. He looked Johnny over from polished new shoes and store suit that would soon be too small for him, to washed face and freshly combed hair.

"Go?" he said. "What kind of a snake do you think I am? Turn my boy out into the cold with winter comin' on, because I'm broke? No sir—from here on, boy, we stick together."

Johnny beamed his relief. "Anyhow," he said, "we aint exactly broke. I got seventeen dollars and sixty-three cents left over."

"Why, that's mighty fine," said Seth. "That's splendid. We'll buy some breakfast with a piece of that. Then we'll take the rest to get you a good pair of hikin' boots. Boy, we're goin' huntin' gold. I feel it in my bones the time has come. We're goin' to the Shinin' Mountains!"

While they were breakfasting, Johnny learned of the dream that had been a staff to Seth for quite a spell now on the lonely mountain trails, of the gold that lay in the Shining Mountains in New Mexico. The Mother Lode was there, he said, and he had the map that would show him the way to it, and he knew it was right because it had been given to him by a prospector whom he had eased through his d ing hours, after Gunther Rayburn, Seth guessed, had dry-gulched him. (And it was not for a long time that Johnny learned just what was Rayburn's place in Seth's scheme of things—how life, to Seth Barstow, was a joyous and amazing fiction and Gunther Rayburn the villain of the piece.) Besides, Seth had seen the mountains once, many years ago, which seemed to cinch it in his mind. Strictly speaking, they were called the Doubtful Hills, but Seth had seen them as they were at sunset, and he saw them that way in his mind's eye ever after, and so they became the Shining Mountains.

The dream must have been a staff that Seth had preferred to keep on his pack, so to speak, rather than to use, for he seemed to have been a long time saying that the next thing he would try the Shining Mountains. There had been this and there had been that to delay him, of course, a matter of a grubstake or of other gold that was nearer, but now there was to be no more delaying. And young as Johnny Breakenridge was, it was plain enough to him, what with the fine future that Seth Barstow planned for him and the things he was going to do for him, that it was because of Johnny that old Seth aimed now to bring the dream to reality. The knowledge made him feel warm and good inside, while the tale of the Shining Mountains brought a brightness to his eyes until they were almost a match for Seth's.

At last Seth folded tenderly the map that he had showed to Johnny and put it back inside his shirt. "Yes sir, Johnny my boy," he said, "we'll start today. I've got enough of the stink of town whisky in my nose to last me a lifetime. We'll start right now, and we'll make it there come early spring."

TIME and space have a way of shrinking in the hot thoughts of an eager old man, and the truth is that by both of these measures the Shining Mountains were much farther than old Seth had counted on. That year had a bitter winter, and spring found them still in Idaho. Then there was the matter of odd jobs that would get them a grubstake, and another summer gone. After that there were other waiting winters, and other springs and summers, for somehow the gold, the little gold they needed to take them to the Shining Mountains, always escaped them.

When at last they came to the little town of La Rosa, where you can sight the Doubtful Hills but fifty miles away, Johnny Breakenridge was no longer a boy. Somewhere on that short road that had taken so long a time to travel, he had become a man, a tall young man with sturdy shoulders that could swing a pick with tireless ease, with quick hands that could flip a rope to down a running steer or palm a six-gun if the need came. In the hard school of Seth Barstow, he had learned much, some of it maybe not needful for a young man to know. He had tasted the brawling bitterness and sweet of cowtowns, and the hard bright salt of the snow-clad hills. Times when their stake was low, Seth would find an odd job where he could, and Johnny would head for the nearest ranch. But from Seth he had learned that for which he lived.

At first Seth used to say, with a snort and a pulling at his beard, "What in hell's great goblets do you expect to find up that cañon, Johnny? Don't you know gold don't grow in granite?" Or, "The way you was a-peckin' away when I come up, I expect you'll be huntin' for gold in the Painted Desert next."

But more and more, as time went on, Seth's snorts turned into grunts of approval, for Johnny knew now the places where gold was to be found, and the ways to get it out. He could spot a thin tracery in the rocks that Seth's old eyes would miss, and he had even garnered some knowledge of the way the earth was set, from books which Seth's eyes had never learned to read. Johnny was a sourdough now, wind-browned and mountain-tested. . . .

They made a striking pair, as they walked eastward down the lone street of La Rosa that September afternoon —Seth with his white beard and his

shapeless hat and the slow but certain walk that now was not quite so spry as it once had been, Johnny with his quick smile and the clean and eager look about him. People paused to give them more than a passing glance, and especially did women, from dance-hall girl to banker's wife, stop and cast an eye upon young Johnny.

But Johnny Breakenridge did not return their looks; his eyes were bent only forward to the thing he sought.

Old Seth had told him all there was to know of women, anyhow. Often Seth had asserted: "Johnny, my boy, there's just two kinds of women, and that's all you need to know, and you'd better find that out right now. There's the kind that'll show you a time and steal your poke when she's got you drunk enough, and there's the hoity-toity kind that'll show you her bleedin' heart and steal your freedom when she's got you drunk enough with love. And of the two the last is far the worst. You can always fill your poke another time, but your life is a kind of a cup that can't be filled again when once you've lost the free sky that's above you."

They came finally to the street's end, and they came at a good time. For the sun was just setting at the end of the long valley, and its last trick was to paint the tips of the Doubtful Hills with red and purple and gold.

WITH his great moment before him, Seth found it hard to speak. He looked at Johnny, and he waved his gnarled hand sort of weakly eastward. "There," he said in a husky voice. "There they be, Johnny—the Shinin' Mountains."

But he needed no dramatics and he knew it. One look at Johnny's face was enough to tell him that Johnny understood. Johnny's eyes were shining, and there was the same bright breathless hope in them that could be found in Seth's.

"I see 'em, Seth," he said. His voice dropped to a whisper. "That's where she lies. Mighty pretty, Seth."

Seth shook his head. "It's a shame," he said, "we couldn't have made it

here a month ago. There's no huntin' gold there when the snows've come. But we'll make it in the spring."

And for Seth it was indeed a mighty shame that they had not come earlier. Because, though they had not noticed it, they were not the only ones who looked upon the sunset, and it was probably a wonder that this kind of thing had not happened long ago. When Johnny turned about, he looked into the eyes of June McKay, and once he had looked he was in love with her.

June McKay had been in the town but a week, having come to teach the tiny school just opened, but already she was the talk of La Rosa and half the young men of the town were courting her. With her rich hair the color of midnight, her soft eyes and flashing smile, it was no wonder. She turned that smile upon Johnny now, and it was a fatal thing to do.

"It is mighty pretty," she said. "I come here every night to see it."

"You wouldn't have to come this far to see somethin' mighty pretty," Johnny answered boldly.

There was just enough of awe in his tone, and just enough of boyish guilt in the smile that quickly followed his words, to make June feel that it was the prettiest speech she had ever heard. It is doubtful if old Seth heard them speak or was even aware of her presence, so wrapped was he in the cloak of his dream—but there the damage was done, there before his eyes. After that, it was too late.

IN the next week, not one evening did Johnny Breakenridge miss of seeing June McKay. They walked the streets of La Rosa, and they walked out in the valley under the autumn stars. Of course Johnny told her of Seth and the Shining Mountains and the gold that would some day be theirs—which he shouldn't have done—and the bright fire of his hope fairly carried her away. What else they talked of, only God and lovers could say, but it is sure that to each other those were wonderful things they said. Yet during all these days Seth did not guess Johnny's secret, and the danger that lay over them. True, he knew that the kid did a lot of striding back and forth in the cabin they had taken in town, and that he said but little, but Seth could understand this, or thought he could. Johnny, like himself, was restless and pining for the winter to come and be gone so they could be off upon their quest. Perhaps Seth was really getting old and did not see quite so clearly any more; perhaps he had not noticed that Johnny Breakenridge was no longer a boy.

Seth had some other things to occupy his mind, at any rate. He was picking up some extra cash for their grubstake by spelling the bartender at the Silver Dollar Café now and then. The Silver Dollar was an oasis to which men came from near and far to slake their thirst, and he found many men who were willing and even eager to talk with him. Though he was not aware of it, Seth Barstow and the things he did and the gold he sought were known by now even in this far corner of the Southwest.

Certainly Seth was not troubled the evening that Johnny brought June to the cabin to meet the old man. After all, Seth was Johnny's god, and he could not rest till June had seen him. Once that was accomplished, Johnny just sat back and listened, for it was plain that there was some common chord of sympathy in them, and old Seth opened wide his heart. That was enough for Johnny, so he listened. He missed, as one eager for this to happen, the troubled look that came sometimes to June's eyes as old Seth rambled on.

Seth had a rich fund to draw upon, and he told some fine tales. He told of the days that had been, but even more of the great days to come.

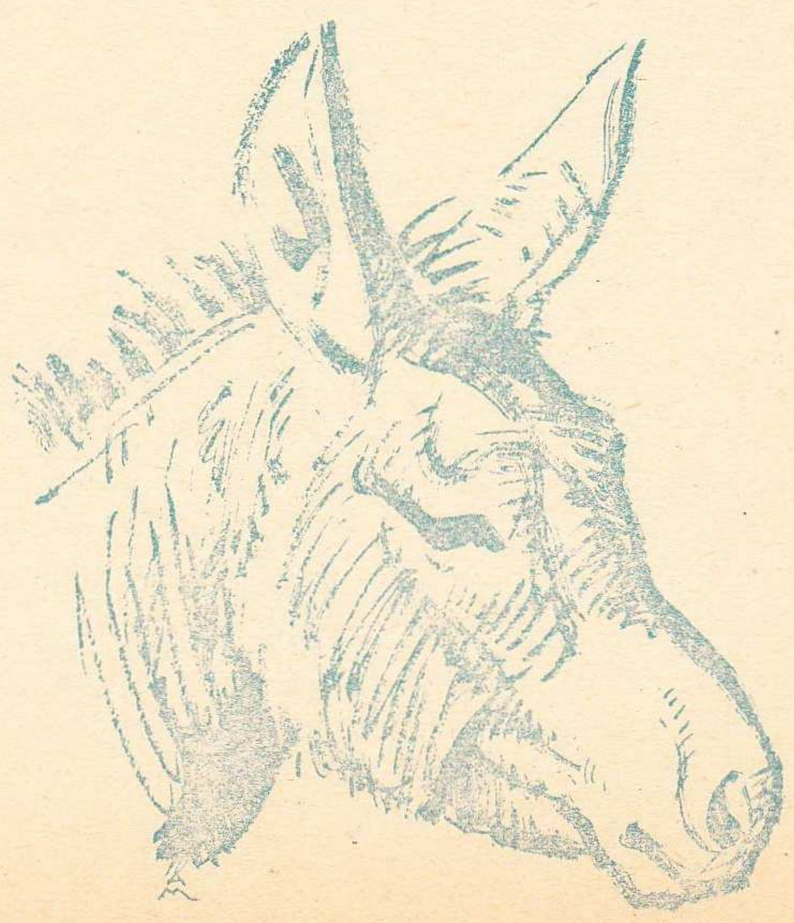
"You've struck it rich before, then," June said. "You must have struck it many times before."

Seth chuckled and filled his pipe. "Struck it rich?" he said. "Why, ma'am, three times I've hit it. Three times I've had more gold than a dozen burros could cart away."

"Where did it all go?" said June.

Seth slapped his knee. "Where did it go? Hee, hee! Now that's a fair question—if I can remember. First time, a skunk named Gunther Rayburn and his gang jumped my claim. I'll git him for it, some day. . . . Next time, let's see. . . . I had me a crooked pardner. Him and his lawyer got most of it. . . . Last time—"

He paused. At that moment, the sound of footsteps and raucous laughter floated through the open doorway of the cabin. Two girls from the Silver Dollar, spangled and painted fit to kill, walked by. Seth gave the briefest hint of a nod in their direction.



"The last time," he said, "a gal I knew, she somehow got her hands on it and she set herself up in business. Last I heard, she was doin' right well."

THE evening was mighty entertaining and perhaps the way June and Seth seemed to take to each other raised Johnny's hopes too high. At any rate, when he had taken June back to the Gilberts', where she boarded, and they were standing there on the porch about to kiss good-night, Johnny said huskily:

"Let's not wait too long, June honey. Let's get married in the spring."

June suddenly drew away from him. He hadn't realized it before, but she had been mighty quiet all the way home.

"Johnny," she said, "I can't marry you."

It took Johnny's breath away. "Why, June," he said, "what's the matter? You said—"

"I know I did. And I do love you, Johnny. But I've been thinking. . . . I can't marry a man who's always hunting gold, Johnny."

"But June, I told you. Don't you understand? I aint goin' to be always huntin' gold. Seth and me are goin' to strike it rich. Then we can—"

"I know," June said. "I know. Maybe you won't find gold there. But even if you do there'll be other places to try next, places where you'll be sure there's more." She bit her lips, trying to keep the tears from coming. "Johnny, I told you my father was a prospector, in California. I didn't tell you the rest. I didn't tell you of the years that we lived in rags, while he was away hunting gold beyond the farthest range. Johnny, I didn't really have any father all those years, and my mother, she died just pining away for the man she loved who was never really hers."

Johnny's first shock had changed to anger. "You want a man that settles down and turns into a farmer. You said once—you said once that you liked a man that was willin' to struggle for things he couldn't just reach out and grab, that had a far light in his eyes. Why, you said once that Seth was right in what he's always sayin'—that a man's as great as his hope."

June turned and walked away, because the tears were coming now and she had to hide them. "I know I did, Johnny," she said. "I still say it. It's true. That's why—that's why I've got to make you go. Hunting gold is a man's job. I couldn't ever help you. I'd tie you down. I'd take away your freedom. You'd hate me for it."

Johnny came after her and seized her by the shoulders and leaned over her. "Honey," he said, "you're right. Prospectin' is a lone man's job. But June darling, I love you more'n anything else in the world. I've got to

have you. It means a heap more to me than all the rest. I can give up huntin' gold. I can get a job on one of the ranches hereabouts. You marry me now, June. Don't let's wait."

"No, Johnny—no." June shook her head. "Maybe that's what I figured on. Maybe I was selfish enough to count on that, once. But not now. Not since I've talked to Seth. Johnny, I love that old man. He's—he's just like my father was—just like you'll be some day. Johnny, he lives for you, and you owe everything you are to him. He counts on you to be with him, now that he's getting old. If you settled down—if you didn't go to the Shining Mountains with him—it would kill him, Johnny."

"But—" Johnny began.

"I—I just couldn't be that mean," she said. "Johnny, go away. Go away, please."

And Johnny, after a little more of that kind of thing, went.

WHEN Johnny came back to the cabin that night, it was very late. Seth heard him stumbling over something and cursing, and knew that he had been drinking. That could happen to any man, though, and Seth would not have suspected anything if Johnny had been all right the next morning; but he wasn't. Seth met him with a cheerful "Come an' git it!" as he climbed out of the bunk, but Johnny only grunted. He spoke hardly a word all through breakfast.

When they had finished Johnny got up and, not even pausing to roll a cigarette, began to pack his duffel.

"Where in tarnation you goin' to?" demanded Seth.

"The Circle Y," mumbled Johnny. "Heard they might be needin' men. It'll help us with the grubstake."

And with no further word, he was gone.

Seth knew at last that something was wrong. He still did not suspect what it was, though, until perhaps an hour later. Then—it was just a short while before time for school to open—there came a knock at the door. Seth opened it, to find June McKay standing there. Her eyes were red as if she had been weeping, but she tried to smile.

"Hello, Seth," she said. "Johnny—is—is he here?"

"Come in," said Seth. His voice sounded as if he had been struck. And it was true that, all at once, the truth had hit him like a blow. Johnny unhappy—the girl crying—why hadn't he seen it before?

Having seen this much, he saw it all. It seemed he could feel the world cracking beneath him. Johnny had fallen for this girl. Maybe they'd quarreled, but that wasn't permanent. Johnny wasn't going to the Circle Y to help on their grubstake—he was

Seth

going to get a job so the two of them could get hitched.

That was the end of it. The boy he'd raised . . . They'd never see the Shining Mountains. Like all her kind, she'd make a farmer of him.

June was inside the door now. "Johnny," she said again. "Where is he, Seth?" She had tried to make the words sound casual, but the attempt was a dismal failure.

In his long career Seth Barstow had done a good many things that would not have gained the approval of the forces of law and morality, but it is doubtful if he had ever done a mean or cowardly thing. Now he did, for he was a desperate old man. He had to keep these two apart.

"Johnny?" he said. "Why—why, didn't he tell you, Miss June?"

"Tell me what?" she asked. His voice had held a portentous note, and her face showed instant alarm.

"Good golly," he said, "I—I'd of thought he'd have told you *somethin'*. I—it aint for me to tell, Miss June."

"Seth!" she said. "Tell me!"

"Why," said Seth, "he—he had to go. They was after him. He'll be all right—don't you worry, Miss June."

She came up and seized him by the vest. "Seth!" she said. "You've got to tell me—all of it."

Bit by bit, she wormed the seemingly reluctant lies from canny Seth Barstow, till they piled up mountain high. He hated to tell her, he said, but Johnny was a wild one. He didn't know what he'd done before, but he did know that the kid had killed a gambler in Singing Woman, Idaho. Seth had got him out of town just in time to save him from a mob. Of course the kid wasn't really bad, he said, just kind of wild. It was a pity that someone in La Rosa had recognized him and sent word to the sheriff in Idaho, because Johnny'd had to light out of here fast, and even Seth wouldn't be quite certain where he'd gone till he got word from him.

Seth looked as upset as June, and for a different reason he was. He just wished he hadn't told her this, he said time and again, because the boy was really all right at heart.

It was a good job, that first mean lie of Seth Barstow's, so good that by the time June McKay at last had to leave and go away to her school he was almost convinced himself. Well, that would fix her, he figured. She was too confounded respectable to want any truck with a killer—especially one who had lied to her. Johnny'd be away on the round-up for a month and maybe two; by that time she'd have taken up with somebody else. Maybe she'd even be gone home for vacation; he knew that schools let out sometimes for vacations, though he didn't know when.

Well, that fixed that, anyhow. Or did it? Somehow, it didn't make him feel elated. More and more, as he sat there trying to chuckle over how smart he'd been, he became convinced that it was no use. He'd saved the kid once, but he was lost to Seth. They would never get to the Shining Mountains. All the long trails ahead, Seth would have to travel alone. And he was getting old. . . . He'd done everything he could for the orphan kid he'd raised; he'd tried to make him into the kind of man he ought to be; but it hadn't been any use: Johnny would never go to the Shining Mountains with him and find the Mother Lode.

What Seth did, after a good deal of this sort of thinking, was a pretty natural thing for Seth Barstow, under the circumstances, to do: he went to the Silver Dollar and proceeded to get good and drunk. He plied himself with liquor far beyond the reasonable capacity of an average human being, and in the course of his rise to the bitter battlements of bliss, visions of the past rose thicker about him than did those of the future which he wanted to avoid.

SOMETIME early that afternoon, Seth stumbled into a water-tank and into a new awareness of the present. What had happened in the past few hours was somewhat cloudy in his mind, but the lonely path he must now tread lay clearly in his mind and straitly before him. He would have to follow his map through the mazes of the Shining Mountains alone—and now. He'd show the pair of them. . . . Supposing it was late in the season—he'd find the gold and be back before winter struck the hills. If it was gold they wanted, he'd have a plenty of it to fling at them when he came back.

These were the thoughts that shaped themselves in old Seth's trouble-twisted mind. Actually, there was another and perhaps a stronger reason that drove him to his decision. After what he had done, he could not face young Johnny Breakenridge

again; the thought of having to do so panicked him into flight.

Seth got to work at once. First he took his burro from the livery-barn where he had stabled it for the winter, then set to work to supply the burro's pack. Seth could hardly have realized fully how soon winter might be upon the mountains and how impossible his task once it had come, else he would not have attempted to go at all. Yet he must have realized it to an extent, for it is a matter of record that he garnered a complete assortment of winter clothing from McGowan's drygoods store.

In one more way, despite the muddle of motives in his mind, Seth's natural canniness asserted itself. When he returned to the cabin for his personal belongings, the thought came to him: suppose Johnny shouldn't get that job at the Circle Y? Suppose he should come back and see that schoolma'am tonight? Now that he'd gone this far, he had to make his story stick. So, before he left, remembering a scrap of conversation overheard in the saloon, he got out a piece of wrapping paper and a stub of pencil and wrote:

Dere Johnny—

If you dident locate at OY; there is a sure job beef round up at rockin H 40 mi SE of toun. Better go rite away starting this pm immedate if you come back so to be on hand tomorrow AM. I have to go out of toun on busness so will not see you till after.

SETH

P. S. Think I seen Gunther Rayburn sneakin around so watch out.

That would cinch the thing. Especially as there really was a job at the Rocking H. He gave a last sly chuckle at his wisdom. He tightened the burro's pack. Then, with a cluck to the faithful animal that had helped him along so many hopeful trails, he set out toward the Doubtful Hills.

IF the shining halo of his hope could have enveloped him just then and made him invisible, as perhaps Seth Barstow thought he was, things would have been different. Unfortunately, a special note of his progress was made by at least one person—June McKay.

June had had a long time to think over the things Seth had told her that morning and, probably to the detriment of elementary learning and to her pupils' morale, she had done so. Her first impulse, when she learned from Seth that Johnny had deceived her about his past, was, as Seth had expected, anger and revulsion. But Seth in all his wisdom did not know how the mind of a woman in love works, or else did not guess how much June McKay truly loved Johnny Breakenridge. For her second impulse, and it was not long in seizing her, was to find Johnny. He was in trouble and she must help him.

She had been unable to think of any way to do this, until she saw Seth Barstow pass the schoolhouse with his laden burro. She reasoned then that Seth knew Johnny's whereabouts and was taking him supplies. The way to find Johnny, then, was to follow Seth.

It seemed a full eternity to her, that last half hour of school, but at last it was over and she had all but rushed the pupils from their seats. Then, knowing what the mountains were like, she resisted her first impulse to run to the livery-stable and commandeer a horse. Instead, she went home, put on her riding-clothes, then went to the grocery and bought enough supplies to last her a day and a night. After that, she got the horse and started out.

In one other way Seth had figured wrong. Soon after this Johnny Breakenridge rode up to the cabin to tell Seth that the trip to the Circle Y had proved futile, and found Seth's note instead. His natural reaction was to start at once for the Rocking H, but he took time to pull the bridle off his horse and water it, and to help himself to a pan of cold beans that set on the table. That was just long enough for Seth's note to have sunk in, and for him to have noticed something vaguely wrong about the cabin.

Yes sir, that was it: the old man had taken most of his belongings, including his fry-pan and coffee-pot. It looked as if he were going prospecting. But he wouldn't be fool enough to head for the Doubtful Hills with winter coming on, and with the sky looking like a Texas norther was due, would he? Still, there was that note—which one of Seth's vagaries unfortunately had caused him to add—about Gunther Rayburn. Something was wrong.

Johnny walked over to the livery-barn. Yes, the burro was gone. Seth had taken it a couple of hours or more ago, the stableman told him.

That tied it. Johnny went back and got his own horse and started, at a swift trot, for the Doubtful Hills.

There were some hoofprints on the trail across the valley that he traveled, but so sure was Johnny of the facts that he did not trouble to look at them. Unlike June McKay, he did not have to follow a trail slowly for fear he might lose it, and so he traveled much faster. Dusk had fallen and June, not even having sighted Seth Barstow, was almost ready to give up in despair, when she heard hoofbeats behind her.

She drew rein in sudden alarm. The hoofbeats were coming on, swiftly. She urged her mount off to the side of the trail, seeking for such concealment as she could get in the shadow of a tall cactus.

At sight of the oncoming rider, though, a cry of relief escaped her lips. "Johnny!" she said. "I thought—"

Johnny pulled in his horse.

"June!" he said. "Have you seen Seth? Is he up ahead?"

"I came to tell you—" she began, and then she said: "He must be, Johnny—somewhere. I was following him but I can't find him."

"Confound it," said Johnny, "the old goat's probably hidin'. I've got to find him."

"Then we will," said June.

JOHNNY had started up his horse. Now he stopped again. "No, June," he said. "There's a storm comin' up and it may be bad. It might be I couldn't even find Seth tonight."

"But Johnny," she said, "what is it? What is Seth—"

"June, I don't know. But if Seth was feelin' right he wouldn't be fool enough to set out for the mountains in this kind of weather. Nor he wouldn't be writin' that he thought he'd seen Gunther Rayburn. That's a name Seth kind of conjures up out of the past to blame when he's in trouble. The real Gunther Rayburn was hung twenty years ago."

"Johnny," June said, "if Seth's in trouble it's my fault. I'm going along with you."

Despite all Johnny could say, she followed him.

They did not find Seth that night, though they hunted until near midnight, when the moon was clouded over and the dark so thick the horses could hardly find their way and they knew the chase was hopeless. They camped at last in a shallow depression, and Johnny gathered wood for the tiny fire while June prepared such food as she had brought along, for Johnny had brought none.

Already, when they rolled up at last in their blankets, the storm wind was rising, and they awoke before dawn to the feel of cold rain that lashed at their faces. June did not even offer to prepare a breakfast for them, for she could see the sharp worry in Johnny's face and knew they must be on their way again at once.

They had not gone far before they picked up the rain-washed marks of Seth Barstow's trail. He had camped less than a quarter of a mile from them, and must have been aware of their presence. As Johnny had suspected, old Seth was hiding. Obviously he had discovered that someone was following him. Whether he thought it was Johnny and June or the legendary Gunther Rayburn out to steal his claim, none but Seth could ever know.

They followed while the storm increased in fury. The wind grew more bitter and the rain—almost snow—struck at their faces and blinded them. And all the while they fought to follow the unpredictable trail of a canny old man. Seth must have started well ahead of them this morning, else they would easily have overtaken him. As it was, and probably as Seth had intended, three times they lost the trail, washed out by the rain or undecipherable on rocky ground, and each time it was a long while before they found it again. Yet they dare not head straight for the mountains, lest Seth get to one side and let them pass.

It was late afternoon when, deep in the foothills, they came at last upon Seth Barstow, and even then they might have passed him by had not June spotted his burro, tail to the wind, hunched in a rocky draw. A little farther on Seth lay, only half-conscious from pain and exposure.

The story was plain, and it was as Johnny had feared. Seth Barstow, who had tramped the hills all his life, had forgotten how old he had grown in the doing. He remembered only that he still was able to take the trail, forgetting that in these past few years it was Johnny who gathered the wood for the campfire, Johnny who cooked the meals when Seth was too weary from the trek to move.

SOMETIME during the day, Seth, coming to this draw, had decided it was a good spot to make a fire and dry himself and warm a little food. He had unpacked the frying-pan and coffee-pot, then gone in search of wood. In a cleft well up the side of the draw he had spotted a mesquite shrub that was protected from the rain and fairly dry. He had climbed the rocks all right, but at the first blow of his ax, his foot had slipped and he had fallen to the bottom of the draw. It was not a far fall, but somehow when he struck one foot had wedged among the rocks and he could not get it free. He had lain here a long time, evidently.

Neither June nor Johnny spoke as they set to work to pry the rocks away, but June's eyes were frightened. As they got him free, new pains shot through Seth's leg and he cursed. "Lemme go!" he cried weakly. "Damn you, Rayburn, I'll—"

They wrapped Seth up as best they could in the dryest blankets they had and, with Johnny holding the old man before him in the saddle and June leading the burro, they started back to town. It was a long ride and a hopeless one through the storm and the dark blackness, but they made it to La Rosa in the early morning hours and got Seth to the cabin. Then, while June was putting him to bed, Johnny routed out the doctor.

Seth's leg had not been badly injured but he was sick inside. His breath came in wheezing gasps, and when Dr. Gallup had looked him over he shook his head. "Pneumonia," he said. "Exposure did it."

"But Doctor, he'll get well, won't he?" pleaded June. "That wouldn't lick him, would it? He's tough, you know."

"He's an old man," Dr. Gallup said. "A man's no tougher than his age."

June stayed on to watch over him all that night, and even the following day—but it was a losing battle.

At noon next day Seth seemed to rally a little and began to mumble: "I'll show 'em. . . . Get the gold and give it to 'em! Want to settle down, they can. . . . Rayburn, this is the last time you'll—"

June, worn with the long struggle and the sleepless nights, must have felt then that hope was gone. Sobs burst from her, and she could no longer keep back the tears. Johnny tried to comfort her but he could not.

"Oh, Johnny," she said, "don't you see? It was all because of me—and still he wanted to help us. . . . Johnny, I came to tell you—I came to tell you yesterday but it's too late now. I was going to tell you, you were right—that it didn't matter as long as we could always be hunting together, the three of us!"

"I know, June honey," Johnny answered. "I was goin' to tell you it'd be all right. . . ."

Once that afternoon, Seth opened his eyes and they were clear and sane. He looked up at them and grunted. "Confound it," he said, "a man don't get to be a danged fool but once. It's a shame. But there's gold there, kids. You'll—you'll get it, won't you?"

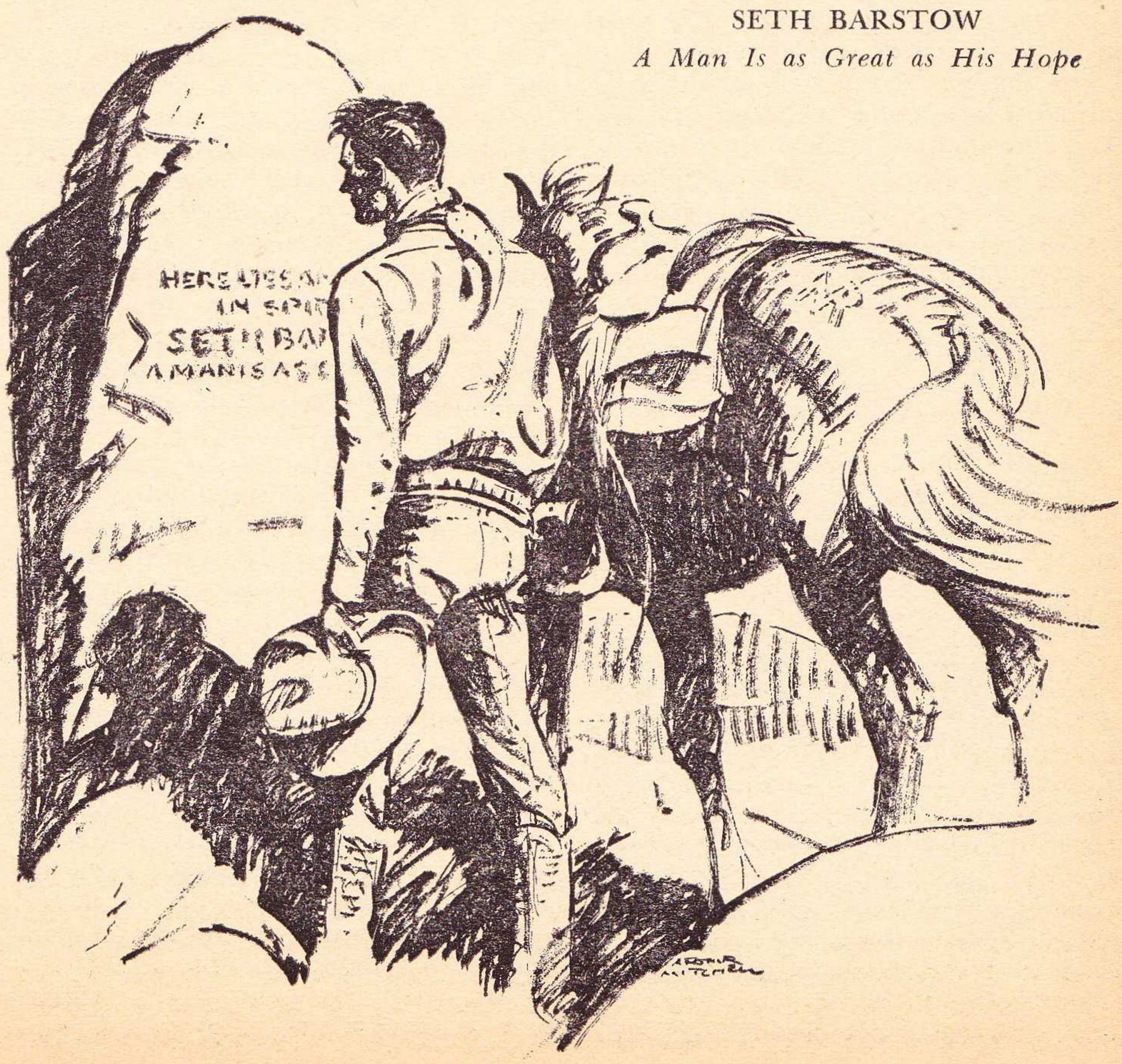
"Yes, Seth," June said chokingly. "We'll get it—I promise you."

"You can count on that," said Johnny.

Seth smiled at that, and went back to his dreams again.

SETH BARSTOW died that night, and he was smiling when he died. Maybe he had picked his time at that, for he was left with the finest dream of all and no chance of shattering it. Though they hunted for a long time, it is doubtful if June and Johnny ever found gold in the Shining Mountains. Still, John Breakenridge can be a close-mouthed man at times, so no one can be sure. What they did find for certain, is the green valley on the far side of the hills where they now live so happily, with the shadow of the Shining Mountains upon them at sunset. And if you go there at a time when the calf round-up is done and the hay is cut and there has come a short lull in the work of the Nugget Ranch, either June or John will be glad to take you to a high peak and show you the stone that John carved from the very hills themselves, and the words he carved thereon:

Here Lies, and Lived,
In Spirit
SETH BARSTOW
A Man Is as Great as His Hope



What Do *A Readers'*

A Soldier's Problem of Worry

EACH day I witness a few of the soldiers in my platoon suffering from worry—a worry from which so many soldiers are suffering. . . .

This worry I am speaking of is the worry of leaving a family back home and going into the theater of war. Some have just a wife, others a wife and a baby. Then a smaller few have maybe two children back home. Some are expecting to be a father soon.

To all of these soldiers I have a message: One year ago I was a rookie. My wife and I were expecting the stork in a few short months. At that time we only drew twenty-one dollars a month; we did not have the fifty dollars privates receive now and we did not draw any dependency allowance. So for four or five months I nearly went crazy. I thought I was the only one in such a spot. My love for my draft-board and even for the Army was very shallow. But now I am a wiser man and a different man.

My boy was born last October. I managed to get a furlough, and I was at home at the time. Now I realize I was only one of several thousand who were suffering from such worry.

My message or advice to soldiers who have the worry of leaving a wife is a simple one: You are not the only one who is in such a spot and who is is the Army. Your wife is drawing an allowance enough to pay doctor bills and such. You cannot do your best work, worrying. Put your mind on your job of winning this war. If the several thousand who spend their spare time worrying would be reading training manuals or doing some kind of study, it would help them and their country. We are all in the same boat, and we are not going to sink. We can't sink, but we haven't time for our men to be worried. Keep on the alert, and you will not be the man to cause formation to be broken up when you go left instead of right. Your country is deep in war, and so are you.

I am soon to be transferred to a new outfit, probably across the U. S. somewhere. And from there it will be a long boat-ride. Sure I am happy. I have a wife and a six-months-old boy. He will be a big boy when I get back. And already I am counting the days until the war is over and my family and I can be united again. War is war. My father came back in 1918, and I was a baby then as my boy is now. Sure I am going to do my part. Maybe more, if I can. I don't plan on my son having to wear a uniform because of my mistake. Our daddies made one after 1918, or at least did not end wars forever.

See, soldier, we have only one time to put our hearts in this fight and finish it right. We can't have our sons taking what we are taking. Or do you care about his future? Sure you care, and worrying before he gets here, or if he is here, will not help you or him.

W. E. Scarsbrook,
S/Sgt. U. S. Army.

A Push-Over for America

IT was just before Christmas—1942. The station's chief newswriter was laid up with a bad throat, and I moved down from my commercial copy-desk to write local news for a few days. Almost the first story I was called upon to write concerned the passing of a close friend—a Marine flyer who went to a flaming death in action over Guadalcanal.

I do not hesitate to mention that tears flooded my eyes as I sat dumbly at the typewriter, trying to condense all my memories of Dick into eight or ten well-worded lines. Radio news must be terse, brisk, to the point. It leaves no room to go back over boyhood days at summer camp, over experiences in college, over care-free evenings spent together. I remembered talking with Dick in an avenue café the last night of his final furlough. I remembered seeing him walk away into the crowd and thinking: "How different he looks in a uniform —and how swell!" Thinking: "I wonder if I'll ever see the guy again."

But all that was months ago. Since then I have taken his mother's hand and have seen the look in her eyes as she talked of her son, as she thanked me for what I had written about Dick for radio and newspaper. I have looked again at the card she sent me: *"I have finally pulled myself together so I can write to some of Dick's friends. He had so many I don't think he realized it."* Then she went on to relay what her son had said of me, ending: *"...If I didn't tell you, Billy, you would never know. Some folks wait until a person is dead to give him his reward. I believe in letting folks know while they are on this earth, for it is very trying to live nowadays."*

Dick had written home many times, asking for "more and better planes!" He was among those first South Sea heroes who were forced to fight back the enemy with the obsolete and insufficient equipment on hand at the time. If God had only awakened America to her need a few years earlier—how many of those brave young men would still be fighting today!

But I shall not hide the thoughts I had in 1940 behind the thoughts I express today. I was like most of the other young Americans. I was safe. I was smug. I was scared. I resented the mere suggestion of the draft. I believed in letting foreign races fight their own barbaric battles. I wanted to write; I wanted a career. I was glad I could claim dependency. I had an unfinished novel. I was just beginning to show a little profit for all the social life and freedom I had denied myself to sit into the cold wee hours over a dead typewriter. How dared they ask me to give up all that into which I had invested years of time and energy and sheer tenacity?

And so I landed in 3-A and, together with a 4-F friend of mine, I smiled and leaned back comfortably in my chair while all hell broke loose over a vulnerable world.

Just two weeks ago I attended a farewell party for another friend of mine—the best. He too is headed for the Marines. Once I had fought against his going. I had written a mock obituary for him, and reading it, he had cried. I was relieved that his parents refused their permission for his enlisting. That was almost two years ago. Since then the 18-19 draft

MOST of us are interested to know how the other fellow deals with his dilemmas, whether they are wartime problems or not. With this idea in mind, we would welcome letters from you, our readers, telling us what you are thinking about—about your business now or your career after the war; the war's effect on you or those dear to you; or if you are in one of the armed Services, a letter which would interest your fellow-readers on your recent experiences or expectations for the future—these within the censorship regulations, of course.

We will pay twenty-five dollars for each letter bought by us. No letters will be returned. All letters submitted will become the property of McCall Corporation. Address: "What Do *You* Think?" Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y.

You Think?

Forum

came along. He joined the Marines, and I was happy and proud. But we couldn't face each other as we said good-by. Fighting men aren't supposed to show such undue sentiment. So he asked me over the telephone if I'd write his obituary when he actually did get his. I couldn't and I won't —for he *must* and *shall* return!

Yes, one by one they go away; and the home town becomes a ghost town. That is why, today, I face induction without a doubt as to my purpose or my goal. Rhodes, Eddie, Dick, Bernie, Jim—all of them younger than I —all of them scattered to the far-flung horizons. North Africa, Panama, somewhere in the Atlantic, somewhere in the Pacific. *Postmaster, New York. Postmaster, San Francisco.* How can I sit here at home, safe and secure, planning a career, nursing my insignificant needs, perturbed by curtailments and restrictions—living on borrowed time?

No longer do I beam with self-satisfaction. I think and hope and pray. I lie down at night and see each distant face before me, momentarily warm and near. I use the time allotted me on the air to rally the folks in my home town, to shake them from their mental drowsiness. I use the newspaper column to remind them of their debt. A movie here, a book there, but little else beyond a moment's escape. For there is no true escape for any of us. A task ignored is not a task forgotten nor a task done. Six hours of sleep a night, sometimes less. Meals when and if time permits.

And back of it all I am wondering. Who was I back in 1940? An appeaser, an isolationist, a coward? How I would have scoffed then had they said to me: "Bill, by 1943 you'll be sinking a fifth of your weekly check into War Bonds and Victory taxes."

Yes, I'm a sucker. I'm a quick pushover for a country like America. Those calculating politicians in Washington can get me to do anything—anything for the privilege of enjoying a postwar hot dog, a postwar movie, a postwar summer at the lakeshore, a postwar party for my returning friends—the biggest party in the history of a guy who once said: "Let 'em fight their own battles! I have a career to think of."

But I thank my lucky stars and stripes I awoke soon enough to salvage the wherewithal to make that career a permanent one! No longer skeptical, I know we must fight together to win!

Billy L. Bennett.

A World Government?

WAS it premeditation or one of those queer quirks of the gods that rule men's destinies which caused you to place the announcement of "What Do You Think?" in the middle of Gordon Keyne's "Peace Hath Her Victories?"

That made me think!

It was one of those queer happenings which cause one to wonder if perhaps there is such a thing as "exchange of thoughts"—mental telepathy; because for the past several years, as a columnist on a country weekly, I have expressed the idea that only by scrapping all "vested interests;" by forming a world government of brotherhood without secret treaties and business cartels; by having treaties dictated by and for the people rather than by and for diplomats and statesmen; could there come a lasting peace to the world.

It is exceedingly important that the Two Freedoms—Freedom from Fear and Freedom from Want—shall be the guiding note of future peace conferences, and this cannot be so long as terms are drawn by decadent diplomats, handmaidens of "vested interests." Only when the people speak, guided by the Peacemaker who said: "Another commandment I give unto you: 'That ye love one another'" can there come an enduring peace.

There can never come lasting peace based on a "balance of power," either military power or trade power. Only when a free exchange of ideas and ideals and trade exists in the world will there come peace.

What am I thinking during these perilous hours? I am at present engaged in social welfare work for a county Welfare Department. What do I think between the times hurt and battered people come to me? I am thinking of course:

What will be the result of the tremendous amount of labor thrown upon the open market after the war?

How can we in social service best serve disrupted and broken families and homes?

How can we cushion the eventual collapse?

What is my part in re-shaping a war-torn nation and world?

And then I think of Carlyle and what he said:

"It is not to die, or even to die of hunger, that makes a man wretched. Many men have died. But it is to live miserably and know not why, to work more and yet gain nothing, to be heartworn, weary, yet isolated and unrelated."

And then I know the answer: I see a mother standing by an open door with outstretched arms saying to a weary world:

"Send me your poor, your homeless, tempest-tossed, I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

Then I see that in America we will find a way to lead the world in peace away from decadent diplomatic treaties and cartels into the light of faith and understanding.

I shall watch with interest for the rest of the Keyne series.

What do I really think? I think Blue Book is doing a marvelous job by *helping America to think!*

Geo. E. Taylor.

A Home, a Family, a Business of His Own

I AM a man twe ty-five years of age, married, and have an adopted chiid; my home is in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where I have lived all my life. Before I came into the Army, I was working in a theater in which I had spent nine and a half years of my life working for the same company. I started to work when I was fifteen, carrying a poster advertising a show and I have worked myself to become the manager of the theater, the job I was doing when I was drafted.

Solution to Crossword Puzzle on page 84

M	O	R	S	E	L	■	■	H	A	S	T	E	N	
A	V	O	I	D	E	R	■	S	O	U	T	A	N	E
R	E	S	T	I	V	E	■	A	T	L	A	N	T	A
I	R	E	■	T	E	N	E	T	■	D	I	G	I	T
A	D	A	M	■	R	E	L	I	C	■	D	I	C	E
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■	■	■	A	T	A	V	I	S	T	I	C	■	■	■
■	C	A	L	I	B	A	N	■	S	L	E	E	P	■
T	A	M	■	P	I	C	A	S	■	T	A	M	E	S
A	R	A	B	■	D	A	T	E	S	■	N	A	N	A
T	I	T	A	N	■	T	E	E	T	H	■	N	A	G
A	B	I	L	E	N	E	■	P	R	O	B	A	T	E
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S	E	E	S	A	W	■	■	D	E	T	E	S	T	

I met my wife in the theater where I was working in May 1941. I fell in love with her on first sight and we were engaged in August and then we were married on November 2, 1941.

On February 19, 1942, I was drafted into the Army. The first two weeks in training sure was hard; we would get up at five-thirty every morning, eat breakfast at six and then we would start our day's work; we would drill for hours at a time; then we would have lectures to go to. After the first two weeks you get use to the Army life, and then it doesn't bother you any more.

I was in Virginia for eight weeks and then I was transferred to a camp in Georgia, where I really got down to the Army life; we have worked a many a day out in the sun a hundred and twenty degrees, but that is all in your Army life, and we soon got used to it. We had two big theaters there and a swimming-pool, that we could enjoy when we were off.

I was at this camp for five months; then I was shipped overseas; on our trip across we saw some of the most beautiful scenery in the world, and I have had many experiences since we arrived in this camp.

Since I came into the Army I wanted to take up theater business or to be an operator of the moving-picture machine; here where I am now, I am first operator and have in charge all the repairing of the machines.

When this war is over and I get back in civilian life, I hope to own a theater of my own and to buy a house and have two boys and a girl. That is what I want out of life: a home of my own and a family and a business of my own; if everything goes good with me that is what I am going to have. I know every crook and turn in the theater business, and I have done every job that could be known around a theater, and when I own one myself, I am going to build the business up so that one of these days I will be the owner of a chain of theaters, so you can see that theater business is my life ambition and I hope that I can carry it through.

Cpl. Duncan G. Ramsey

"God Bless You, Bud"

NOW that Uncle Sam is calling my particular job "essential," and since my wife and son are dependent on my support, I am beginning reluctantly to accept the fact that my wartime rôle may be right here, with my nose on the same old grindstone.

Every day I ride the train with a crowd of soldiers, sailors and other service men. Maybe you can understand how I, being still young and healthy, feel conspicuous in a tweed suit and white shirt when the fellows around me are in khaki. And as for those visions I've had of doing my part in a Guadalcanal jungle or a Tunisian mudhole—well, I reckon I might as well kiss those things goodby. Not that I ever thought it would be a picnic. I have dug ditches myself, and walked many a mile on hot, blistered feet.

Whether I wind up in the Army or on the home front, nobody is going to hear me squawk. Every time I see our planes overhead, I am thankful that the gasoline is up there and not in some jalopy in my back yard; and when an Army truck roars by I take personal pride in the thick tread on its tires. We are all probably going to be healthier as a result of sugar and coffee rationing and the extra walking we have to do. My wife, I am proud to say, sees eye to eye with me on this.

In the kitchen we have a batch of coffee grounds, already used once. Tomorrow we sprinkle on a little chicory and make another pot on the same grounds. Then we are out of coffee, which we dearly love, until the next ration period. So we're out, and we don't care. We only hope that the service men can get all they want.

This is my country and my war. My friends are in the camps and aboard the ships. The Red Cross has sent blood out of my body to the fighting fronts. My son's chances for a higher education are tied up in war bonds.

After the war is over, I would like to see some changes in the educational and medical fields here in the United States. I want to see every keen-witted, knowledge-thirsty child have the very best of educational facilities at his disposal, regardless of his financial circumstances, his family, race or religion. I want to see good physicians, surgeons, hospitals available to all people, regardless of their wealth. I want to see it worked out so that a family in moderate circumstances will not be thrown into hopeless debt by a few major operations or illnesses.

I do not believe that through such changes we would lose the American way of life. I claim that the people of the U. S. A. have enough strength and sense of humor to carry out any internal changes they please, and still preserve and perfect the American brand of freedom.

There are two mysteries arising from this war which I would like to see explained in full after the armistice: One is the Rudolf Hess case. The other is Jean Darlan. Was the little Frenchman, by any chance, one of the hierarchy of the World's heroes—a man who was willing to take the hateful rôle of traitor-collaborationist so that at the right moment he might be able to cripple his nation's enemy? Or was he merely a cheap opportunist? If the latter, how could he hold the respect of his navy as he did; why was he content to walk unguarded through the streets of a North African city that was a wartime hotbed of political conflict? Maybe we'll learn the whole story after the war. There may not be much to it, but on the other hand, it may be a magnificent thing when all the evidence is in.

Well, tomorrow I will be riding the train again with the soldiers. I seldom have occasion to talk with them, but every time I look at one of them—homely or handsome, black or white, tall or short, Jew, Gentile, Catholic, Protestant, Yankee or Southerner—I think of these four words:

"God bless you, bud."

Dave Warner,
Massapequa, N.Y.

Postwar Security

I AM one of the millions who have deserted lifelong trades and occupation to rush to war plants and big money. Sure, we are all working in the interest of our country, but I have often wondered if we haven't more to lose than we have to gain, personally. Though we become rich in currency, and war bonds, and lose our equilibrium, we have gained nothing.

I, like most of my fellow-workers, am making more money than I have ever made in my life. It is not too hard to give ten per cent for war-bonds and pay the required taxes and still have money to splurge as we have never been able to splurge before.

I have watched men all around me speak disdainfully of old cars and houses that have served them long and faithfully. In short, they feel they can afford something better now. They do not seem to realize this period cannot last, and we will all settle back to our normal level again.

Such loss of equilibrium, I think, is often the cause of postwar break down of morale. Not only soldiers and service men must come back and make a fresh start, but the men on the home front who have been making high wages find them swept away and new adjustments necessary. In that light, they are in no position to lend moral support to younger men, and so confusion and bedlam mounts.

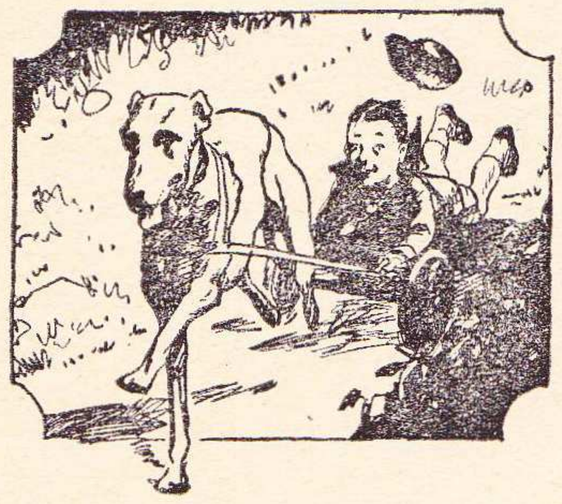
I, for one, intend to live on in my five-room house on a dirt street and drive my old car as long as it will go. My wife is sensible and agrees to buy nothing unnecessary for the home. Then afterwards, if we are still hale and hearty and financially equipped, we will step up the ladder one more rung; but we, my family and I, absolutely refuse to add the weight of our confusion to a postwar burdened world; and that, I believe, is my very greatest effort in behalf of my country.

Post-war security depends upon wartime equilibrium.

Alex Kennedy,
Akron, Ohio.

KING of the ALSO-RANS

A Twice-told Tale, reprinted by request from our October, 1921, issue



by Paul Fitzgerald

The field is large and the start is bad,
And the green colt runs as he can;
But see the weight that he packs, my lad,
Ere you brand him an "also-ran!"
Hearts and Hoof-beats.

"THAT'S the three-eighths pole, and you mustn't touch it!"

Mrs. Tupman contemplated the broom in dismay.

"But, Tommy, the room must be swept, dear."

"Not now, Mamma; it's nice and cool, and I want General Jack to work three quarters this morning, 'cause he starts tomorrow. See, you've pulled my paddock all out of place! It belongs over here alongside the grandstand like it is in the picture. And the judges' stand is *crooked!*"

"Which is the paddock, dear?"

"*That* chair with the string around it, and the other is the stables, and I would like them to face the track, so the horses can come right out through the gate."

"Like that?"

"Yes, and now I am going to bring out General Jack."

Presently a framework of twine, spread over cross sticks and suspended from the ceiling, yielded to a pull on one end, and from the opposite side an empty catsup bottle, with a purple ribbon tied around its throat, began a spasmodic progress by means of a wheel and a small pulley. Along a second strand of twine a smaller bottle decorated with a yellow label trailed the first starter.

"That's Yellow-hammer," explained the owner. "General Jack doesn't like to work alone, but you watch him extend himself as soon as he hears his stable-mate coming up."

Mrs. Tupman watched the two bottles as they were maneuvered into position opposite the three-quarters pole, which was the washstand. Suddenly the miniature track tilted, and General Jack lurched forward, Yellow-hammer at his side.

"Sure you got him, Mamma?"

Mrs. Tupman nodded and glanced down at the stop-watch in her hand.

The make-believe thoroughbreds rolled past the half-mile post, careened around the far turn and straightened out for the run home. Gradually, General Jack assumed a commanding lead which increased at the paddock, still more as he approached the judges' pagoda, otherwise the bed.

"Now!"

Mrs. Tupman pressed her thumb sharply, and then came forward with the watch.

"Why, he made it in one-eleven and four-fifths!" reported the owner of the Tupman stables. "And the Tijuana track is over two seconds slower than Belmont. He's a stake-horse, Mamma. You better let me have them now, 'cause I got to rub 'em down."

Mrs. Tupman unrigged the bottles and put them by the pillow.

"Please, Tommy, don't exert—"

"I won't," he promised. "Only I got to give Yellow-hammer special attention; he's the best horse I got."

"Poor Yellow-hammer—you never let him win!"

"That's 'cause he's an also-ran, Mamma. I like also-rans the best, because there's always something the matter with them, and I pretend that one day I am going to fix it."

Mrs. Tupman turned her back quickly, and a moment later found it necessary to leave the room. Mothers sometimes find the road to Calvary a little beyond their strength.

At an imaginary feed-trough General Jack and Yellow-hammer reposed contentedly. Their owner fumbled at the stop-watch and looked out the window. A street-car passed, and he timed it between telegraph poles; a dog snooped around the corner, and he measured its progress; machines whizzed past, and he caught them accurately—likewise hurrying business men, and women strolling along behind baby-buggies.

Tommy liked everything that moved. That was because he himself could not move at all.

Perhaps it would be just as well if you didn't visual Tommy *too* distinctly. He had very large blue eyes set in a very pale small face, and according to his mother's Bible he was twelve, or should have been. But Biblical references to time are susceptible to various interpretations. Tommy was ages old in some respects; in others he had not lived at all. He had been in bed for a long time because of something with a big name—it doesn't matter what, but it had no business picking on a little fellow whose father was a trainer of fast horses and had always measured life with a stop-watch. That should have been obvious enough even to the Great Handicapper, who must surely have been looking out the window when little Tommy Tupman was sent to the post carrying all that weight.

But, again, handicappers are shrewd judges of quality, and when they assign top weight to a thoroughbred, even a small one like Tommy Tupman, the reason is sometimes apparent after the race is run.

Tommy inherited his father's estate, exempt from taxation because it consisted principally of the watch and a motley collection of photographs, notebooks and form-charts.

MRS. TUPMAN wept a great deal at first, but of course that did not help; so she moved into a rear upstairs flat in the Fourth Ward and bought a sewing machine on the installment plan, and made children's clothes for neighbors.

Tommy himself did very well. He capitalized his inheritance, and fashioned therefrom a world of his own in which he was the king. It was a rather strange world, for it existed for the benefit of also-rans. Tommy was not clear in his own mind about some of the rules, but the winners only won because he *let* them win, while the also-rans—the horses that finished out of the money—were always the real winners because he knew that if he hadn't asked them to go outside their distance, or had given them less weight, or a better rider, or had let them set the pace as they wanted to—why, they could have won, *easily!*

You see, Tommy was a student of the speed-sheet, which is only made for very wise men, or for little Tommy Tupmans, because to apply it, you must first reduce the time made by various horses on different days and over different sorts of footing to the common basis of a standard fast track. Then you must establish a track-variant for the day, converting time into speed, and translating poundage into points, bearing in mind that a horse runs his length in a fifth of a second, that the weight-bearing capacity of horses varies, and that sometimes in a long race the whole field is pumped

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out at the head of the stretch, so that the final time must be discarded in favor of the early pace if the speed-deductions are to hold.

If you know all these things, and fifty others, it is theoretically possible by means of the speed-sheet to forecast the actual performance of racehorses, always providing, of course, that the owner is trying and no accident occurs to upset the calculations.

The Tupman stable was always *trying,* but neither General Jack nor Yellow-hammer ever won. They were likely always to remain maidens, unadorned with winning brackets, because their owner persisted in sending them outside their distance, or giving them too much weight or in trusting them to stable-boys who rushed them off their feet so that they had nothing left at the finish. He entered them both in the Kentucky Derby once, and let a rank outsider—a pepper-can from the Cupboard Stable—romp home all by himself.

THAT was the day Tommy got Kressy to write the also-ran letters which were responsible for so many things. Kressy was tall and dark and young, and on Monday afternoons he acted as starter, timer and assistant judge at the private racetrack of His Majesty. His name was Dr. Ward Kressinger, and he had progressed so far in his studies as to conclude that there was no God, and that what mankind needed most was not materia medica but sociological surgery. When he first met Tommy Tupman, Kressy was more than ever convinced that the only cure for society lay in a capital operation—wherefore he made of his profession a cloak, and of his black bag a receptacle for certain literature which he distributed among comrades.

His convictions were expressed so forcibly to the little group that gathered occasionally to discuss their plans, that Comrade Max Wolfram, who ran a cigar-factory on Ninth Street, appointed Kressy on a committee where he could have more power and be better watched. For Max was really an agent for the Department of Justice and very much interested in young Dr. Kressinger's views.

"The real Derby was yesterday," said Tommy, "and Mamma has read me the form-chart out of the paper. Now, I should like you to write the letters for me. I shall write to the owner of Empress of India first, because that one propped at the start, and finished last. Do you think if we addressed Mr. Van Lessing at Churchill Downs, it would reach him, Kressy?"

"If we can't reach him one way, we may another," said Kressinger grimly, and unscrewed his fountain pen. "What shall I write?"

"You should say," dictated His Majesty, "that we are very sorry about what happened to the Empress of India, because the times of the day before showed that the track variant was almost 80, which meant that with only 121 pounds, she should have gone the mile and a quarter in 2:02 2-5. That would have made the Empress win by two lengths, Kressy."

"Two lengths?"

"Almost three—you should say *three,* Kressy, 'cause with that early pace she would have been rated with the leaders instead of back where she usually is; so—we are very sorry that she did not win."

Kressinger's lips tightened. "How much money would Lessing have won if the Empress of India had not propped? I suppose you don't know that, Tommy?"

"Oh, yes, I do, Kressy—it is in the form-sheet. There was fifty thousand added—"

"Think of it!" said the amanuensis. "Fifty thousand dollars because an animal—what did you say the Empress of India did?"

"Propped—it is in the footnote. The Empress reared up when the barrier sprang, Kressy—that is very bad, because sometimes they come down sideways or turn around, and then of course the field is ever so much in the lead."

"How in the devil—where do you learn such things, Tommy?"

His Majesty considered this question.

"Why, I don't know, Kressy; I guess it's from the pictures and the books, my Daddy's books—and from just thinking. I think an awful lot. We will write some more letters now—or are you tired, Kressy?"

"Tired?"

"Don't you get tired, Kressy?"

"H'm! Well, not of writing letters," said Kressinger, and added something under his breath.

"I get tired sometimes," Tommy confessed, "and it hurts, don't it, Kressy?"

"H'm!"

"That's what makes some horses also-rans. I always pretend that Yellow-hammer is *especially* tired. I think I will write to Mr. Jake Sterling now, and then to Colonel Rawlings, and then to Mr. Herbert—"

Kressinger looked up quickly. "Mortimer Herbert?"

"Yes," said Tommy. "He owns Star o' Dawn, which finished fourth—"

"Must you write to him?"

"It is very important," declared His Majesty, "'cause Star o' Dawn carried my favorite colors—light blue on silver. What color do you like best, Kressy?"

Kressinger mused a moment, thinking of a military decoration that reposed at the bottom of his trunk. Those days seemed far away. His lips twisted ironically.

"There is only one color for also-rans, Tommy, only one great color—the red of purification, the flame that reflects the heart of universal brotherhood, the blood of Adam, the clean *red* blood that must save the race. Yes, I think red is my favorite."

"It is a nice color," said His Majesty, politely, "but I like light blue and silver because they are the colors of the sky and the stars, and those things do not move; they are like me, and sometimes I talk to them."

Kressinger's pen traced idle circles and crosses on the note-pad. He rose abruptly and crossed over to the window. Once he used to dream of taking Tommy Tupman in his arms when the great day came, and making a speech from the courthouse steps that should live in history; but that was before he knew Tommy very well. Now, it appeared that His Majesty's soul, or whatever one called it, contradicted the twisted body, and the example was not as clear as might otherwise have been.

"If you are tired," suggested the voice from the bed, "we will only write to Mr. Herbert today, and Mamma can send the other letters tomorrow."

Kressinger wheeled back to the chair, reached for the notebook and considered. There was a very good reason why he should not write to the Herberts, of all people—but the letter would certainly never reach the mining magnate, and anyway it was Tommy Tupman who was doing it.

"I'm not at all tired, Tommy," he assured; "what shall I say?"

"You should say, Kressy, that they are not to feel badly because Star o' Dawn was an also-ran, because he comes from the Glorioso line, and they are strongest in the fourth year. You see, he really carried very much more than one hundred and twenty-pounds because his jockey only weighed ninety-two, and that means twenty-nine pounds of lead, which is one and a half times as heavy as live weight. I think, Kressy, that Star o' Dawn really won, because he did one-half point better than his figure. Do you think he would send me a picture of Star o' Dawn, Kressy?"

"We will ask him. Shall I sign it 'Tommy Tupman'?"

"Yes."

KRESSINGER penned the name thoughtfully and then wrote underneath—"The little king of the also-rans."

There were other letters, all devoted to horses who had lost, and His Highness explained very clearly how each animal had really run his race, all difficulties considered, and therefore was to be considered a winner. For instance, there was Gray Daughter, who had the misfortune to draw

the outside position, whereas she was at her best when running on the rail; and there was Knight Norfolk, whom the footnote said was pinched off three times, and coming like a whirlwind at the end.

"Don't you see, Kressy, the also-rans really did ever so much better than those that finished in the money? I think it is lots more fun to be an also-ran."

"You do, eh?"

"'Cause they have to keep on wishing and trying, and I like that best. If I let Yellow-hammer or General Jack win, I don't think they would do as well any more, 'cause now they know they must *improve*."

It was a strange viewpoint. Dr. Kressinger's finely chiseled features were softened in revery.

"Is there anything you'd like especially, Tommy?" the Doctor asked presently.

His Majesty was silent a moment. He was always thoughtful when anyone offered him anything. "I like lots of things, Kressy," he confessed, "but I get to thinking about it, and then it seems that I don't really *need* them, after all. There is no use wanting what I can't use, is there, Kressy?"

"No," said Kressinger, "probably not—probably not!"

He gathered up the letters and went out, promising to return again the following Monday; and this was the night that down at Max Wolfram's cigar-store, the executive committee issued the "Great Call." There were many letters, all of them in code, and they summoned to a conference such men as Iram Bonfield of Seattle, Olof Krunsen of San Francisco, Ryan of Brooklyn and Wyckoffsky of Philadelphia, who were dark horses in the Great Handicap of the Also-Rans.

Dr. Ward Kressinger did not write any of the letters. He was not even present when they were written. That was because he was detained at the corner of Ninth and Elm streets by Mrs. Luiza Vezina, who ran shrieking from her tenement into the darkness, crying: *"Santa Maria—un dottore! Un dottore per bambina mia!"*

She recognized Kressinger's black bag, and made for him. In her arms she clutched something in a smoking blanket. Kressinger took it from her grasp, and the heat seared his hands. The bundle writhed. He jumped in the path of an automobile, and brakes ground while the driver swore.

"Emergency hospital," said Kressinger, "two blocks up and then to the left. Quick, man—or I'll be cooked too!"

So, while Max Wolfram was supervising the council of comrades five blocks distant, Dr. Ward Kressinger, his hands very shockingly burned, stood over the blackened form of little Elsie Vezina, who clung to life so very hard that it was necessary to coat her blackened body with air-excluding salve as a man might plaster the wall of a house, and also use very much morphine, until mercy was granted in the early morning.

In due time the also-ran letters reached their various destinations—all except one. Mortimer Herbert had the misfortune to be killed in an automobile accident and so he never knew that Star o' Dawn figured to carry weight much better in his fourth year. Tommy Tupman's letter, with others that seemed to be of a personal nature, were turned over by a lawyer to Miss Dorothy Herbert, along with a million dollars or so, and the beautiful Miss Herbert became more than ever a favorite in the Social Sweepstakes....

It was weeks after her father's funeral before Dorothy Herbert got around to Tommy Tupman's letter. She read the missive one morning, in the library of the stone mansion on Cypress Drive. It was tucked between an invitation from the Carroll Browns to visit them in Honolulu, and a note from Whit Spence, saying he was getting up a party for the Winter Horse Show, and could he have the honor?

SHE might have dismissed His Majesty's letter, as beyond her comprehension, had it not been for the handwriting, particularly a curious upward twist of the *k* in *King*. Miss Herbert read the letter three times, and then went upstairs to the escritoire in her bedroom, and resurrected a bundle of letters from a drawer that was always locked. These letters bore the mark of the military censor, and in the upper left-hand corner of the envelopes was an address culminating in the mystic "A. E. F." She spread several letters out before her and compared them with Tommy Tupman's missive. Her white teeth bit meditatively at the tip of a penholder.

In her own way Dorothy Herbert was a direct-actionist. Two hours later a limousine was threading its way across town, toward the North Bridge and the unfamiliar neighborhood that spread beyond. Among the rear cushions sat the daughter of the late Mortimer Herbert looking dreamily out the window, and by her side, wrapped carefully in tissue paper, was the best portrait of Star o' Dawn she could find.

It was Mrs. Tupman who came to the door, drying her hands on an apron.

"Good morning," smiled Miss Herbert. "Is this where the little king of the also-rans lives? I have brought the picture of Star o' Dawn."

Mrs. Tupman looked bewildered.

"Little king—"

"Master Tommy Tupman, I mean. I am Miss Herbert, you see. The request interested me greatly. May I see Tommy?"

Mrs. Tupman read the letter, and her face cleared. "Oh, Tommy must have got Dr. Kressinger to write the letter. It was very kind of you to answer it like this—but he is rather shy of strangers. You see, he has been in bed for such a long time—"

"In bed?"

"Yes, he cannot move at all, you know—except one hand. It is his spine. But he loves race-horses—"

"Oh," said Miss Herbert. *"Oh!* How old is he?"

"Just twelve."

"Of all things!" exclaimed the beautiful Miss Herbert. "Where is he? No, no, no—Mrs. Tupman—I am going *in!* You must not try to stop me."

So that was the way the little king of the also-rans came to receive in audience the owner of Star o' Dawn. First it was with the bed shielded by a screen, with a long-legged white stork looming against a blue sky.

But soon the screen was down, Miss Herbert had been admitted to royal favor, and His Majesty's eyes were feasting on the picture of Star o' Dawn, while his ears drank in the wonderful story of the great mare Dawn o' Virginia, with certain embellishments which the daughter of Mortimer Herbert invented on the spot.

Later, Tommy Tupman brought out General Jack and Yellow-hammer for an exercise gallop, and let his visitor hold the watch, while the stable companions breezed a half-mile between the washstand and the bookcase. He explained his theories about also-rans so very clearly that Miss Herbert understood, and remained very still, sitting with her eyes on the small pale face turned sidewise on the pillow.

"Everything about you is very pretty, isn't it?" he said wistfully. "Mamma hasn't got as nice clothes, or as pretty rings, and her cheeks aren't the color of yours. I guess she's older. I guess you're not an also-ran, are you? Kressy's an also-ran, he says."

"Kressy?"

"Dr. Kressinger, you know. He comes on Mondays to see me—only he didn't come last Monday. I wish you were an also-ran, 'cause I like them."

Miss Herbert bit her lip and came forward to sit on the bed and run a light hand over the King's high forehead.

"Dear child," she whispered, "what ever made you think I wasn't an also-ran? The only thing I ever tried to win, I lost. And I'm not really pretty—I'm just fixed up."

His Highness betrayed quick concern.

"Why didn't you win?" he demanded.

Miss Herbert pursed her lips thoughtfully. "I don't know, Tom-

my. I guess I didn't just measure up. Maybe a little too much weight," she added whimsically. "Some day I'll tell you about it. I'm going to call regularly, you know—and we are going to be good friends. I want you to give me a special name, too—the way you do for Dr. Kressinger."

"I think I will call you 'Lady,'" said His Highness, "—just Lady—'cause there was a Lady Courageous once—it is in my daddy's book with a picture; and she was an also-ran until Sandy McKee trained her for almost a year, and then she came out in bandages and beat Lord Ivan at Latonia a neck on the post and going away. My daddy has it down in the book that it was a very wonderful race, 'cause Lady Courageous ran twelve points above her mark, and that was 'cause she loved Mr. McKee, and they both had waited such a long time."

"I see," nodded Miss Herbert. "I shall be Lady, then—lady in waiting." She rose abruptly.

"Tommy, I don't think I should say anything to anyone, if I were you, about our little visits—"

"Not even to Kressy?"

"No, not even to Kressy, dear. It will just be a jolly little secret between ourselves, and I will come on Wednesdays so that you can show me all about the speed-sheet. Is there something you would like me to bring you, Tommy?"

"Yes, I would like some new string for the track over at the far turn where it is knotted. Yellow-hammer most always stumbles when he strikes that place—it is like the Pemberton track, which my book says is most always cuppy. I would like it to be the Belmont track, which is very fast. I would also like you to put Star o' Dawn on top of the paddock. I will pretend that is a very special stall."

Miss Herbert complied, and then leaning over the bed put her lips to Tommy Tupman's forehead. He flushed and looked up shyly.

"Why did you do that?"

"Just because," explained the lady in waiting, "I couldn't help it!.... Good-by, Tommy, and I shall bring some brand new twine on Wednesday."

"Good-by, Lady!" said His Majesty.

BEFORE reëntering her limousine, Miss Herbert interviewed Mrs. Tupman to learn exactly what sort of weight it was that had been assigned to the small monarch of the also-rans. Then she drove straight to her family physician, who referred her to a distinguished surgeon, and the latter took a long time to explain a simple thing, which was that the one man who might have done something for little Tommy Tupman was dead, and the medical world was helpless.

Next, Miss Herbert visited the toy-department of a great store, and for an hour clerks and even the department manager himself waited on her—until out of a wealth of imported novelties, a miniature racing-establishment materialized. But on her way down the elevator, the tactful Miss Herbert remembered poor Yellow-hammer and the faithful General Jack, and she realized that she had been on the verge of a diplomatic blunder. The elated salesman saw her returning, and anticipated an additional investment.

"I wish to cancel the order," she told him. "You may give me, instead, just a ball of twine."

In the evening Miss Herbert wrote a polite note of regret to Whittington Spence, and an equally polite note to the Carroll Browns, and other missives—all regretful. It was really quite a negative day for the usually positive Miss Herbert, and it ended much as it had begun—at the little writing-desk in her bedroom, with a half-dozen letters spread before her, all of them in the handwriting of Tommy Tupman's amanuensis.

It is one of the most pronounced characteristics of also-rans that on certain days and on certain kinds of track they behave in a very peculiar manner. The same, for that matter, may be said about certain kinds of favorites. Even her most ardent admirers might have experienced some difficulty in recognizing the daughter of Mortimer Herbert the following Wednesday afternoon when she visited the court of His Majesty. Moreover, she had her back turned to the door, and was standing on a stool endeavoring to rebuild the turn at the five-eighths pole, when Dr. Ward Kressinger, his hands still bandaged, entered unannounced.

"Why, hello, Kressy!" cried His Majesty. "I have some more string, and this is Lady—my new friend. She is trying to fix the track so it won't be cuppy."

"So I see," acknowledged the physician politely. "My hands are rather out of condition, but perhaps I can—"

And then he recognized Lady.

Miss Herbert looked down and smiled. Her quick laugh bridged the situation. "Dr. Kressinger and I are old friends, Tommy. —Ward, do you think you could manage this pulley? . . . . Why, what happened to your hands?"

Kressinger had to fight for his composure, but finally he managed it. "I burned them a little bit—nothing serious. I think if you pass the string *under* the top wheel, and then over—"

"Like that?"

"That's it; and then down the home stretch, *so*. —How's that, Tommy? Pretty good track superintendent, isn't she?"

"Yes," said His Majesty. "And I am glad you know her already. She is lots prettier when she is fixed up."

"Why, *Tommy!*"

"Well," argued His Majesty, "you had a lot of pretty rings the last time, and your clothes were a lot nicer, and your hair—"

"I think," suggested Kressy, "that we had better try General Jack and Yellow-hammer on the new track to make sure that it works properly."

IT was really a very important little speech, because had Dr. Kressinger laughed, or even smiled, Miss Herbert would never have forgiven him, and His Majesty's court would have been disrupted on the spot. Instead of that there was an excellent work-out between the stable companions, and General Jack breezed a half-mile over the new track in .48 with his mouth open, Kressy holding the watch.

That was, of course, a smart performance, and it should have elicited great enthusiasm from the owner of the Tupman string. Kressinger knew from experience that such should be the case. He was strangely perturbed by the King's apathy.

"What's the matter?" he asked quickly. "Doesn't it work all right?"

His Majesty inclined his head against the pillow. "Yes," he acknowledged, "that is winning time. I did not think it would be quite—so *fast*."

Perhaps it was that the sky was cloudy, or His Highness was not used to more than one visitor at a time. He looked suddenly frailer than usual. Kressinger's dark eyes expanded, for there is a mystic kinship between also-rans.

"Tired?" he asked, and strove to put the question lightly, but the lady in waiting recognized the tremor in his voice, and shot him a quick glance.

"Not very," whispered His Majesty, "just a little. What is back of the sky, Kressy?"

Kressinger hesitated and looked at Miss Herbert, who came quickly.

"Why, there is Some One who looks after little boys, and makes everything come out all right, dear," she explained. "Now, you must try to go to sleep, and Kressy and I will come back some afternoon when you are feeling stronger."

His eyes assented. "If you will put the watch here where I can see it," he whispered, "I can time the clouds. Is it the Some One that makes the clouds move?"

"Yes," she answered, "but don't think about it too much. Good-by, Tommy."

"Good-by, Lady—good-by, Kressy."

"Good-by," said Kressinger.

Out in the hallway the lady in waiting turned upon the official timer.

"Ward, he's not *going?* Not without ever having lived? You're a doc-

tor—isn't there *anything* that can be done?"

Head down, Kressinger studied his bandaged hands. "Perhaps now, you will understand the wall that arose between us. There are so very many Tommy Tupmans—so many also-rans—and they have no chance under the present system. It is far worse in Europe. I went there to study one thing, as you know; and I learned many others. When I came back, such things as your family stood for seemed—forgive me—a little criminal. There were only two paths open to me: you—and what I considered my duty."

"I begin to understand," she said. "You had to choose duty because you were a born physician; isn't that it?"

Kressinger looked up suddenly, and she saw that his eyes were flooded.

"It is kind of you to put it that way," he said brokenly. "But I was never anything but an also-ran. I have tried to do what seemed right at the time, but the path always grows harder. I gave up you; I surrendered my profession; now it seems that I must give up Tommy—and God help me, I love you both so very much!"

They were silent a moment.

"I went to see Marshfield at the Children's Hospital yesterday," said the lady in waiting.

Kressinger nodded. "He knows the case. I brought him here once, and we made a lumbar puncture for a test of the spinal fluid—"

"He said," continued Miss Herbert, "that if Tommy continued to like things that moved, he would live, but that he would never be able himself to move, unless some one took up the research work where Heifetz of Vienna left off, and found the serum for which the world is waiting."

There was another moment of silence. Kressinger broke it.

"You know, then, that I was Heifetz' pupil when the war broke out?"

"Yes," she answered. "Marshfield said he understood you were with him when he died. He said that no young doctor could afford to devote his life to such experiments, for it meant sacrificing everything, and then probably failure in the end."

MISS HERBERT laid her hand on Kressy's coat-sleeve.

"Ward," she pleaded, "it may seem a million-to-one shot, but surely if you help little Tommy Tupman, you are helping the world."

Kressinger eyed her wistfully. "And so I give up still another dream," he mused. "Yesterday I was to operate on society; today I am committed permanently to the company of rabbits and guinea pigs and white mice—all because the little king of the also-rans admits to being tired."

He drew a deep breath. The flame of the visionary was already illuminating his finely cut features. The lady in waiting held out her hand impulsively, and he grasped it.

"Good luck!" she said.

"Wait," he reminded her. "You forget that the little fellow must *want* to go on living."

Miss Herbert smiled mistily. "Suppose, Ward, that you leave that part of it to me?"

So Dr. Ward Kressinger went no more to Max Wolfram's cigar-store, which was just as well, since Max took the trouble himself to find out why, and being a man of considerable parts, kept his conclusions to himself, but at the proper time, saw to it that the balance of the Council of Comrades was quietly seized for deportation.

Dorothy Herbert made two important investments, and gave both away:

One represented an even million dollars and was for the construction of the Tommy Tupman Children's Hospital, permanently endowed, while the other was a more modest affair—only sixteen hundred dollars—but it was the highest price ever paid for a month-old puppy. Of course, this was an exceptional sort of puppy, sired by the imported greyhound Wellington out of Lady Lightning, the pick of the litter.

"Yes, ma'am," assured old man McTigue, "there's a dog that will one day, with the right kind of handling, run the five-sixteenths in close to thirty seconds; mark my words, ma'am, that pup will outrun his own shadow!"

All of this information Miss Herbert treasured up for transmittal to the King when she brought the absurd little long-legged creature into the royal presence in order that His Highness should desire to live.

We will have to pretend that the blue screen with the white stork was in the way, for it would be lese majesty to intrude upon that presentation ceremony. Even Kressy and the lady in waiting deemed it necessary to withdraw for a little while.

Later they went back, and discovered that the royal pet had made the acquaintance of all the furniture, and been christened Lord Bumps, and was now asleep under the judges' pagoda.

Miss Herbert was inclined to be disappointed until Kressy explained that lots of good horses are called sleepers, and they always come to life at the most unexpected times, and especially when the price is right. Nevertheless they stirred up Lord Bumps, and shooed him around the room, while His Highness timed him between every post.

"I love Lord Bumps," he told them, "'cause I own him, and I don't have to pretend that he is alive. You don't suppose he will mind if I don't let him run so very fast, do you?"

"No," Kressy assured, "it will be all right for him to be an also-ran; but some day we will tell you of an idea that none but the Lady could have thought of, and maybe you will like him to go fast. She is a very wonderful lady, Tommy."

"I love her," stoutly proclaimed His Highness. "Don't you, Kressy?"

"Always have," he answered.

Tommy looked at the beautiful Miss Herbert. "I love Kressy," he challenged.

"Do you?" smiled the lady in waiting. "Why, I do too!"

THE new Tommy Tupman Children's Hospital overlooks the upper end of the lake. Sight-seeing buses operate along the boulevard below, and leather-lunged pilots announce through megaphones to tourists that the stone bungalow on the eminence to the left is the home of Mrs. Kressinger, daughter of the late Mortimer Herbert. Her husband is the distinguished scientist whose experiments in the cure of spinal meningitis have attracted the attention of the medical world.

But not even the chariot orators know that behind the high elm trees which flank the bungalow there is a sixteenth-of-a-mile replica of the Belmont course, with a paddock and stables and judges' pagoda; and the track is always fast, because it is macadamized. Further, the inside rail is padded all the way around, so that there can be no accident at the turns.

On warm mornings Lord Bumps—old now, disgracefully out of condition—is brought from the stables by a groom. Then His Majesty appears, lying prone on a little coaster, equipped with four rubber-tired wheels. He wears a jockey's cap of pale blue and silver. The vehicle is piloted into place at the barrier, and Tommy Tupman rests one hand on a strap which girths Lord Bumps.

A glance at the stop-watch on the dashboard, a look at the groom, and the barrier goes up. They are off! Lord Bumps has never worked five-sixteenths better than 3:49 2-5, but His Majesty has it figured out according to the speed-sheet that such a mark is twenty points above the handicap figure, and therefore the son of Wellington is really entitled to the winner's circle.

Sometimes a man in a white apron emerges from his laboratory long enough to watch these work-outs and compliment His Highness. Then he goes thoughtfully into his hermitage again, and if you would accept Tommy Tupman's word for it, plays all day with guinea pigs and rabbits.

Of course, no one can really tell yet; but Kressinger is quite a wonderful man, and what is more important, his soul is in his work.

Mr. Honey Takes a

MR. HOBART HONEY left the office late on the fourth Christmas Eve of the war —so late that he invigorated himself all the blacked-out way home with the thought that he deserved all he could get during the rest of the eve in question. It was a mild spell after a snowfall (what is sometimes called a "green" Christmas), the streets were full of slush, and the air was full of fog—as was Mr. Honey by the time he reached home.

He had that day been censoring the outgoing American mail and had run into a bunch of contracts addressed to film producers in Hollywood. These mainly concerned the sale of certain film rights of the plays of a famous English playwright. Judging from the grim legal safeguards of every known variety verbosely introduced into the enormous documents, the English playwright and his merry legal men appeared to labor under the impression that the celluloid moguls of Hollywood were a kind of cross between playwright-eaters, tanks out of control, and devilfish. Hollywood's legal representatives for their part, seemed to be absolutely certain that the playwright was partly a ravening cannibal, partly a half-starved vampire, probably a born thief, and in his spare time doubtless a mad highbinder. So they protected themselves against each other accordingly—and Mr. Honey had been reading scores of pages of such protection all day, just to make sure that the whole thing was not some new and deadly form of Nazi threat against the United Nations.

It is understandable that he waded home through the slush and fog as fast as he could, ate his dinner, visited the port decanter enthusiastically and, well-established in his armchair before his fire, swallowed one of the Lama's pills as quickly as possible. He was in just the mood to return for a spell to one or other of his earlier incarnations.

His mind cleared rapidly. Whether it was because he was becoming more susceptible to the influence of the pills or whether it was just the way things were destined to be, Mr. Honey never discovered, but nowadays he slipped from his life in the Twentieth Century to that in any other incarnation with the smooth easiness of a wet eel swimming down a fast river.

In a few seconds he was no longer the Londoner who wrote under the pen-name of Hobart Honey. On the contrary, he was revisiting an incarnation in which he was Sir Baldur de Huhne, formerly knight of the Court of the great King Arthur. He had never been actually a member of the goodly company of the Round Table —but he had been on the waiting-list. Actually he had sat at the next best—the Oval Table which was as far above the Square Table as the Round was above the Oval.

(Knights not entitled to any of these, sat on the Royal Floor.)

Sir Baldur de Huhne had long outlived these glorious days. He had been but a dashing and unprincipled youth in Arthur's day—but now Arthur and most of his knights had moved on into later, and probably better, incarnations, leaving Sir Baldur and a few others in the rear. If not an old man he was far from young, and now that knighting had largely died out as a profession he was, like the few knights remaining, finding it hard to make a living.

He was sitting in the practically unfurnished hall of his practically demolished castle, with a quart vessel of hard cider in his hand, staring thoughtfully at a few sticks smoldering in the practically burnt-out fireplace. He was incompletely sober—but the knights of his period usually were. He was not wearing his armor at the moment—that was standing in a corner supported by a post. Its mouth or visor was open, and it, too, looked incompletely sober and seemed to be leering at him in a coarsely confidential sort of way.

Sitting on his haunches before the fire was Sir Baldur's gaze-hound, Six-Leopards, gazing at his master.

But Sir Baldur de Huhne did not notice his armor or the gaze-hound. He was busy doing his accounts—in his head, for he could not write.

His calculations were not accelerated by the presence of a lady of certain age though with the remnants of great but slightly acid beauty, who sat in a ramshackle chair on the other side of the fire. She was asleep—but she was talking in her sleep. Talking pretty frankly. And when she was not talking she was constantly grinding her teeth.

Sir Baldur did not pay any attention to the sleep-talk of the lady—he got all of her conversation that he needed when she was awake. Nor did the grinding of her teeth distract him —he was always ready to admit that she had, on the whole, excellent reason to grind them.

She was the Lady Yeolande Blanchemains Iseult Lynette de Luxe de Laine de Ruffe. She did not actually look all that but appearances are deceptive. Once she had been a Maid of Honor to Queen Guinevere but that had been a long time before. She was now chatelaine and cook-housekeeper to Sir Baldur de Huhne. She had eloped with Sir Baldur at about the time Guinevere had eloped with Lancelot—the day after Baldur had all but jousted the head off of Sir Roderic de Ruffe. It was at the period when King Arthur's Court was in sore need of the overhaul which it never received and it is a noticeably small exaggeration to say that knights and dames and demoiselles were eloping all over the landscape in all directions.

SEVERAL times since then the Lady Yeolande and Sir Baldur had drifted apart and drifted together again. They had stayed put this time—neither had the money to leave the other, though each had the inclination. The vast possessions once owned by Sir Baldur's ancestors had shrunk now to a few acres of poorish land and the huge castle had long been in ruins. It consisted now mainly of holes and corners. For forty years Sir Baldur had suffered from squandermania—though he was now cured. He had nothing left to squander. The farm was not very productive, for it was badly tilled and understaffed. It was worked by two idle serfs—who were paid by results. They had produced no results recently on account of not having been paid for some earlier results.

Our London author with the sweet pen-name takes another magic transmigration pill—and finds himself in trouble with the ladies again.

by BERTRAM ATKEY, ESQ.

Flyer in Chivalry

Whenever they saw a party coming, they pulled themselves together. Sir Baldur rode with hand on sword-hilt; Merlin flaunted the great shield.

So that the Knight and his chatelaine would have been deeply ditched but for the spasmodic efforts of their servitor—an elderly person called Merlin who was outside splitting firewood while Sir Baldur was drawing up his balance sheet. Merlin also was a come-down. He dated back to the heyday of Sir Baldur and the Lady Yeolande at the Court of King Arthur. He had slithered up to the castle of the King one day, arrayed in a black bombazine dressing-gown with silver moons, stars, crescents, triangles, circles, bars and ordinary blobs all over it, red shoes curled up at the toes, and a long black beard, and announced that he was the Foremost Magician in the world.

Most people believed everything they were told in those days. The awed sentries called the captain of the guard, a fat and purple man o' the world, overfull of wine, mead, beer and ignorance, to whom the magician repeated his story. It failed utterly to impress the captain of the guard—and he said so loudly, so loudly indeed that the guard turned out (after a fashion), a crowd of troops gathered, and quite a little bevy of lovely ladies craned their charming necks over the battlements to see what was happening. Among these was Queen Guinevere who was taking a stroll up there with the King and her boy friend Sir Lancelot.

Presumably the quick eye of the old soldier took in his august audience and he repeated his challenge to the strange self-styled magician, very noisily indeed. He evidently saw himself promoted to major before long.

"No man, magician, or devil approaches the King's Grace till I am well-assured of his quality!" he declared excitedly. "Give me, therefore, a taste of this magic!"

(Afterward, it was freely acknowledged that the man was foolish to talk in this way—everybody, in those days, knew that magicians were to be treated with the utmost respect.)

Merlin faced the captain. Then he raised his right hand and drew off the glove. He pointed his finger at the captain of the guard, intending to per-

"You are like two crows on the bough of a dead tree," cried the Lady Yeolande.

form some minor conjuring trick, no more. In those days the simplest conjuring trick of today was a major operation.

Merlin pointed his forefinger at the captain—and the man dropped as dead as a snipe before the gun of a good snipe-shot. Apoplexy. It had been coming to him for years.

It was Merlin's luck that it happened at that moment. He moved his arm involuntarily and half a regiment ducked out of the line of his forefinger. Pale with fear of the consequences, he threw up his arm, intending to swear that he had meant no harm to the man—and all the ladies dived backward from the battlements into the arms of their lovers. Those who had no lovers just dived backward. Queen Guinevere had to put up with Lancelot's arms, as the King had tripped and missed her.

Merlin, a quick-witted bluffer (considering the times) saw how it was; he slowly pulled on his glove and concealed his fatal forefinger in the bosom of his dressing-gown.

Then he walked round the body into the castle. Every time he moved as much as his right elbow folk ducked.

The King fortified himself with a quart of old mead and gave him a gracious reception.

His reputation was established for the next twenty years. He was made Court Magician for life—on the understanding that he kept his right forefinger unloaded in the presence of the King and Queen—and Lancelot.

But the years passed, times changed, and people got wise to Merlin. . . .

In the end, they pitched him out. He had constantly given himself a hearty welcome and had not saved a cent. He took up the patent medicine racket and traveled the country with his celebrated cures for rheumatism and more intimate complaints in people, glanders in horses, hydrophobia in dogs, and despair in jackasses. But he was getting old and we are told that an old man's business never prospers. *His* didn't, anyway. In the end he was glad to take the post of odd-job man about the place at Baliheu Castle, the residence of Sir Baldur de Huhne.

He was out in the yard while Sir Baldur figured, Lady Yeolande ground her teeth and the gaze-hound, Six-Leopards, gazed. Six-Leopards was claimed by the knight to be quite comfortably the best gaze-hound in Wessex. In a way, this was true—though good judges were in the habit of maintaining that the technique of Six-Leopards was faulty. The gaze-hound proper, they insisted, should always be on the watch or lookout or, in fact, on the gaze for deer.

Six-Leopards, they agreed, gazed well but never for deer. Some said he gazed for food, some said he gazed for affection. He got very little of either, but he still went on gazing his blank, mournful, completely unintelligent gaze, usually at his master, sometimes at Sir Baldur's old falcon which, as a rule, sat on a broken spear over the mantelpiece. It was moulting. Sir Baldur never went hawking nowadays and the falcon had long ago forgotten how to hawk, anyway. It seemed to be always moulting. Once Merlin had undertaken to re-awaken the spirit of enterprise in the hawk and had taken the bird into the fields in order to let it stoop at a few fat partridges. The gaze-hound had gone with them.

But it had been failure. A covey of partridges had risen and Merlin had shouted *"Heu! Heu!"* and lifted the hawk high in the air so that it could stoop at them.

But the bird had merely started moulting on him. Six-Leopards had gazed sadly at the hawk, the hawker and the horizon—and they had all returned to the castle, short of partridge. Perhaps it was because of a tendency of these old sporting memories to intrude on his mind that Sir Baldur's figures did not work out to show any result but sheer insolvency.

BUT more probably it was because with a startling suddenness the Lady Yeolande shouted in her sleep:

"He shall make an honest woman of me yet!"

She made the statement so loudly and violently that she woke herself up, and drew the gazes of the startled knight, and his gaze-hound, and his moult-hawk instantly upon her.

Her rather bitter eyes fixed themselves on Sir Baldur.

"You, I meant!" she said. Evidently her dream had been vivid.

"Why, yes—if possible," he agreed. "But Yeolande, permit me to ask when I have made a dishonest woman of you? Was it in the days of the Round Table? When you were wife to the good Irish Knight Sir Roderic de Ruffe—whom I slew? Was it when you whipped me away with you into a region which you called Wonderland? I have wondered mightily about that for years—in Wonderland. I have put the question to myself these many times. I have said, 'It is for her to make an honest man of me—if she can. But she cannot!'"

He utilized the cider vessel again.

"Wit ye well, Yeolande, you cannot make an honest man of me, I cannot make an honest woman of you; for we are both naturally dishonest. There was a time when I grieved for this. But I observed that my grief did not change the facts. Therefore I ceased to grieve—and concerning—"

He was rambling on when Merlin entered without any ceremony whatever.

"The pig is dead; the horse refuses to work; there is disease in the bee-

hives, and I am well convinced that the serfs have stolen most of the oats. Thus, fair sir, there will be neither bacon nor ham, nor honey from the hives, nor a sufficiency of porridge for our winter provender!"

The Lady Yeolande uttered a sharp exclamation of sheer dismay.

"The pig dead? What has caused him to die? What have you been doing to him? This is ruin!"

Merlin stared at her with a water-eyed dignity.

"Doing to him? Doing to him? Forsooth! What should I be doing to my winter meat but waiting upon him hand and foot these months past! But pigs do not thrive upon air and water alone, and woundily little of that! The creature died of sheer lack of enthusiasm for a life in which there was not half enough, nay, nor quarter enough, to eat!"

"Why did you not cast a spell or an enchantment upon him, so that he took a happier outlook on life?"

"Good lack, lady, I have long forgotten the difficult art of casting spells, and enchantments do not serve as a substitute for barley-meal!" said Merlin sourly. "I am no longer a working magician—I am a retired one!"

The Lady Yeolande was agitated.

"But, pardie, I cannot provide the meals in this establishment unless I get the raw material therefor. I am utterly undone!"

"Probably it is not the first time you have been utterly undone—nor I—nor Merlin. Yet we survive!" said Sir Baldur, a little muzzily.

He stared at them. "It comes to this," he stated. "I must make a foray! Other knights do!"

"A foray! 'Swounds, what kind of a foray do you think *you* are capable of making?" snapped Yeolande.

"I shall show you!"

He turned to Merlin. "Fill my tankard—and fill one for the Lady Yeolande—and one for yourself while you are at it!" he commanded.

"One sees why the cider sinks low in the barrel ere ever the winter is upon us!" said Yeolande sourly—but she did not refuse.

"Nay, nay, but we are in evil plight. It is no time for parsimony. We go now into conference—thou, fair Yeolande, Merlin, and I. And it is necessary to well-stimulate our brains. Therefore let us not be niggard of a couple of gallons of the acrid and belly-griping fluid which we call cider, God wot!"

MERLIN, nothing loath, forayed himself to the cellar, muttering. On the broken spear the hawk, its head so sunk in between its shoulders that it looked neckless, moulted silently; the suit of rusty armor looked more intoxicated than ever; and Six-Leopards gazed vacantly at Sir Baldur.

The hound irritated the Lady Yeolande.

"Oh, sally forth into the fields and catch yourself a rabbit, imbecile!" she said.

But Six-Leopards merely twitched a shapeless, pendulous ear and shrugged a loose-jointed shoulder. He knew better than Yeolande that there was naught in the fields to eat but grass—and not much of that. The serfs had long ago devoured all the rabbits.

Sir Baldur got up and went over to look at his armor.

"Humph! Merlin must polish it—if he has any polish," he said.

"Yes, and oil the joints—if he has any oil," sneered Yeolande.

"Also, he must mend the spear! And sharpen the battle-ax!"

He stared around the room.

"Where *is* the battle-ax?"

"In the woodshed—where it hath served for many years!"

"Hah! It is time and overpast that we had an alteration here," said Sir Baldur.

"That is right sooth and I recommend you to make the same, for albeit so late in the day—" Yeolande began; but broke off as Merlin tottered in with a very large quantity of cider indeed.

When their brains were well stimulated, Sir Baldur spoke briskly:

"First, the horses!"

"Horses—why horse*s*?" inquired the Lady Yeolande. "Is it your design to take Merlin?"

"I deny not that the times are woundily scant but there are some appurtenances which no Knight can dispense with. A Squire to ride behind me I must have!"

"The horse will refuse to carry both you and Merlin!" said Yeolande, deliberately. "Probably he will refuse to carry even one of you—for he is becoming fanciful, querulous and crabbed in his old age."

"*I* will deal with the horse," said Sir Baldur. "And as for my Squire we must contrive."

He took a long soop at his cider. Then his eyes brightened.

"I have it. You shall borrow from our neighbor, Sir Maravaine le Gros, his great mule. He will deny you nothing, Yeolande—and the loan of his mule will not totally wreck his fortunes, strained, like mine, though they may be!"

"Oh, I doubt not I may contrive that!" said Yeolande carelessly. "But ere you equip the foray would it not be the better strategy to decide whither you purpose foraying—and what for?"

"That is well spoken, madam," said Merlin, wiping his beard with the back of his hand. "For wit ye well, fair sir, what shall it profit you to mount the horse and me the mule and ride forth trusting to chance? It needs a goal, a destination!"

"True, true!" Sir Baldur nodded rather irritably. "So think of a goal, an object, Merlin! *I* cannot think of everything!"

Merlin took it slowly—by degrees.

"This is a desperate venture," he said. "And much consideration must

be given unto it. Let us begin at the beginning—only thus shall we fare smoothly unto the end. Our object, fair sir, is money."

"That is well put, Merlin," agreed Sir Baldur. "Money. Whither shall we wend to acquire it?"

"First we must ascertain where is money or treasure—and go thither."

"Right again, Merlin."

"There is the root of the problem! Point One—*where* is money—or treasure to be found?"

SIR BALDUR nodded.

"I begin to see your line of reasoning," he said sagely. "First find out where money is—Point One. And having found out where it is then—Point Two—how shall we get it?" he proceeded.

"That is Point Three of the problem—and must be dealt with when we arrive at the place where the money is!" explained Merlin gravely.

The Lady Yeolande drained her tankard and put it down with a crash.

"If it is your desire to see a good woman go raving mad before your eyes," she cried out, "keep on talking for a few more seconds just exactly as you are talking now! Pardie, you are like two crows on the bough of a dead tree in a black frost, discussing the worms asleep out of reach under a foot of frozen soil! Look you, this is no case for a flux of words—this is a case for action! I will speak plainly for time is short and the need is desperate! Upon this foray, so-called, depends the continuance of my presence here. Succeed quickly and I remain—fail and I go to a place where a good chatelaine will be appreciated at her worth—Sir Maravaine le Gros has long desired such a chatelaine to control his establishment—and I doubt it not that he will be overjoyed to—"

A sudden exclamation from Merlin stopped her.

"By Excalibur, I have it! The Treasure of Sir Bustyr de Fysshe!" he cried.

They stared at him.

"If, by good hap, we may once lay hands upon this treasure, then shall our griefs and troubles vanish like the morning vapors that dissolve under the rays of the rising sun!"

"I have not heard of that treasure," said Sir Baldur. "Where is it to be found and, by good fortune, won by the victor in a trial of arms? Sir Bustyr de Fysshe—de Fysshe!" he mused. "Yes, I have heard of him these many years past. Tell me, Merlin, is he not a short, thick swarthy man of mine own age who bears upon his shield three dogfish *argent,* a catfish *azure,* a lobster *gules* and a couple of cod-hooks sinister? Methinks that many years ago I ran a course with him in a tournament at Camelot and jousted him into hospital for several months!"

"That is verily the selfsame knight!" said Merlin.

Sir Baldur stood up and stretched, accompanying himself with a hiccup or two.

"Should be easy to pick a quarrel with him, as between two knights, and joust him into hospital again. Have done it once—should be able to do it again."

"You are not so young as you were nor so sober," Yeolande warned him, "—sometimes!"

He stared. "Nor so sober—sometimes!" he echoed. "I can amend it! 'Swounds, unless I come down upon this man's treasure and that right soon, meseemeth I am doomed to be sober for all my days hereafter!"

He sat down again and fixed a rather wandering and watery eye on Merlin.

"Tell me more of the treasure of Sir Bustyr. Where doth he keep it? Is it locked away in deep cellar? In steel-barred cell? How is it guarded? Is it much? How do we come at it?"

But Merlin shook his head, clawing at his grizzled beard.

"Nay, fair sir, I know not. No more I know than that it hath come back to me, a memory of the past days when all the secret news of the kingdom trickled through to the King's Own Magician. The Treasure of Sir Bustyr Fysshe: I seem to hear again the words in these ancient ears. By your good leave, Sir Baldur, it is in my mind that we fare forth nigh unto the City of Sarum, outside of which, I mind me, is the domain of the Fysshes. There we may abide making patient and subtle enquiry concerning the treasure. Then, when we have discovered where he keeps it hidden away—"

The Lady Yeolande broke in.

"Tarry awhile, Merlin, and make clear to my mind the following—is this an adventure of knight-errantry or is it to be an ordinary burglary?"

"Burglary!" snorted Sir Baldur. "Not so! Am I not a knight? Is it not the correct, nay, the only decent thing for me to challenge Sir Bustyr to attempt some small deed of arms upon me and when I have vanquished him to require his treasure for ransom? That is the rule to which all knights are bound, and may dogs howl on the cowardly hound that shrinks therefrom!"

Six-Leopards threw up his head and howled like a wolf till Sir Baldur smote him sore and silenced him.

"He thought I was talking about him, the intelligent animal! He is very quick—he shall accompany us on this desperate adventure!"

Six-Leopards heard and crawled behind the arras—evidently not an enthusiast about desperate adventures.

For many hours and more tankards they discussed it.

In the end the knight and Merlin fell asleep.

The Lady Yeolande stood up and looked them over.

"Knight and Squire! Huh!" she said and ground her teeth a little. "Unless my mind most woundily miscarrieth I see my finish! Chatelaine to Sir Maravaine the Fat! Bah!"

She looked to see if there was any cider left, found there was not and so went to bed.

Sir Baldur de Huhne

TEN days later the foray started in earnest. Compared with what a foray by Sir Baldur de Huhne had been twenty-five years before, this was little better than a fragment.

First rode Sir Baldur on the horse—an elderly, sneering, grouchy cart-horse, of no beauty whatever, whose distinguishing characteristics were bone-idleness and low cunning. Sir Baldur was wearing several parts of his armor—all of it that was not rusted out or broken. His visor would not shut but that only made him look as if he were having a hearty laugh at things in general. The feathers at the top of his mild-steel bonnet drooped a little but that was the fault of the moths. It would not be seemly to blame a knight for what the moths had done to his feathers. He rattled as he rode a good deal, but after all, armor that did not rattle was like spurs that did not jingle—frightened nobody.

The Knight's personal outfit was, then, shabby but genteel—shabby-genteel, call it. He would have looked better if Merlin had used a little more metal polish on him. But they had run out of polish. Still, Sir Baldur had been a pretty hot knight in his day, and like a retired professional time-serving soldier of these days, he had not lost the hallmarks. One could tell that, though he was out of prac-

tice, well past his prime, and definitely on the down grade, he was, in a way, the genuine article. He sat upright and kept one hand quite imposingly on the sword-hilt at the top of the scabbard clanking by his side. It would have been a good guesser who guessed that there was no blade left under the hilt. The battle-ax wasn't bad considering its years of honorable service in the woodshed.

Six-Leopards, the spotted old gazehound, shambled alongside, looking sick of the foray already and sicker still of himself.

Riding behind, on Sir Maravaine le Gros' mule, was Merlin, looking like a fool—as he himself grumbled. He had dug up out of an amazing collection of junk which he had amassed for himself in one of the bat-haunted, belfry-like upper attics, an armoring consisting of what looked more like a tattered chain-mail shirt with the tail missing—a "model" which had once been very popular among knights who wanted something a little more flexible than the heavier, showier, jointed and riveted armor. It did not suit the ex-magician very well, but, in a limited sort of way, it protected him from the ears down.

He carried Sir Baldur's spear and shield—the latter a triangular affair upon which was pointed a yellow beehive with blue bees carting honey to it from all directions and the motto *"Huhne non jam"*—a bit of hideously inaccurate and ignorant Latin which obviously was intended to express the slogan "Honey, not jam!" Behind him, various more useful but less decorative articles were slung—a kettle, a pot, a stone jar and some parcels of victuals. By and large, a good big load. The mule did not seem any too well satisfied about it. But then that mule never was and never had been satisfied about anything whatsoever. He was what a mule-and-ass psychiatrist would have classed as a frustrated mule—and this in spite of the fact that he usually got his own way in most things for he was also a fighting mule. Also a kicking and biting one. He was a blackish-brown brindle with a totally hairless tail that looked like India-rubber. His name was Rosamund—which means Rose of the World.* By any other name he would have smelled as fragrant.

Sir Maravaine le Gros, who came over to see them off, and was standing at the door with the Lady Yeolande, bethought himself of an omission just as they started.

"Hey!" he shouted. "The Squire has forgotten Thunderbolt the falcon. For his dignity's sake Sir Baldur must have his falcon, man!"

———

*In those days of romance they were oddly careless about the gender of the creatures they christened. —Bertram.

Merlin

"Thunderbolt cannot come upon the foray," bawled Merlin.

"Why not?"

"He's moulting!"

"Oh!" said Sir Maravaine, and said no more till they were out of sight. Then he turned—all the eighteen stone of him—to Yeolande.

"Whither go they—and why?" he asked.

"Alack, Sir Knight, the treasury of the good Sir Baldur hath dwindled low. Now he sallies forth to challenge Sir Bustyr de Fysshe to knightly combat. If it befall that he knocketh out Sir Bustyr then naught shall serve for ransom but the whole of the treasure of Sir Bustyr—of which doubtless thou hast heard rumor these many times!"

The fat Knight thought.

"Yea, fair Yeolande, I have heard rumor of the treasure of Sir Bustyr. But it had never occurred to me to sidle along to Sarum and take a flyer at it. Am somewhat too big-about these days, alack!"

"Yes," said Yeolande, eyeing him thoughtfully. "Indeed I fear that your *embonpoint* would get somewhat in the way!"

AT this, they both sighed.

"The times are very hard on we knights of old!" he complained. "But there is still to be found a cup of cider—no?"

"Yes," said Yeolande, and led him to it. She glanced at him sidelong as they went.

"And wit ye well, Sir Maravaine," she said. "I, speaking for myself, I am not averse to a reasonable *embonpoint* in a knight. Seen in silhouette meseemeth it stabilizes a man!"

For a long time the foray progressed in austere silence through a cold, heavy rain which began to fall when they were rather too far from Baliheu Castle to make it worth while turning back. Moreover it was the horse and Rose-of-the-World who felt the impact of the climate most severely. Sir Baldur was, in a sense, indoors out of the weather—so, of course, was Merlin, except that there were more leaks in Merlin's chain-mail than in Sir Baldur's armor. Both were turning bright red with rust—but neither cared. Six-Leopards walked under the horse, gazing at the mud.

But with Rosamund it was much otherwise. He mooched along under Merlin, seeming as meek and resigned as an aged cow. But he was not so. Slowly, and very gradually, as the muddy miles passed, his enormous ears left their usual angle and shaped themselves to the fiddle skull of the animal. Merlin noticed this. He also noticed that between his shanks the mule seemed to be swelling up, becoming more and more electric—like a battery on a charging bench.

"There is evil toward. It accumulates—like lightning!" muttered Merlin apprehensively—not quite knowing from whence or whereunto it was accumulating. But some subtle instinct informed him that evil was in his immediate neighbourhood.

But, in spite of these things, the general reception accorded to the foray by such of the public as were abroad in that inclement weather did much to raise the morale of the Knight (and Squire) of Baliheu.

Whenever they saw a party coming they pulled themselves together. Sir Baldur hauled on the horse's jaw till the unfortunate animal's neck curved like that of a Greek war-horse, and himself sat up in the saddle straight and stiff and rode sternly by with his hand on the sword-hilt; Merlin held the great spear pointing straight up to the sky and flaunted the great shield well to the fore—with a *Huhne nor jam,* take-it-or-leave-it, air.

The met parties usually took one glance and hastily removed their hats (if they had any) and bowed to the ground nearly humbly enough to satisfy a stockbroker. Or else they got off the road into the ditch and bowed there. Or, if they were young and nimble, they hopped over the hedge and departed from the neighborhood at a right smart clip. Knighting—for poor knights—may have been out of fashion but there was still a great number of people who remembered the customs of the knights of King Arthur's day. After all, it was not considered servile or cowardly or wretched or small or lousy to duck into the ditch or kneel down in the mud with your hat off and apology for living written plain all over you

"Well?" Lady Violente asked impatiently. "Art thou a chivalrous knight—or not? . . . Why camest thou here, Sir Baldur?"

when an iron-clad knight, probably as lousy as yourself, passed by with a battle-ax in his one hand, his other hand on his sword-hilt, and a Squire with a horseload of further implements, tools and weapons behind him. It was generally held to indicate that, on the whole, you were publicly expressing your personal preference to continue living all in one piece.

This was the Age of Romance—and one had to pay close regard to one's step in those days.

They came to an inn—a humble affair, built of mud and wattle with some pigsties built of wattle and mud at the back.

Sir Baldur pulled up and read the signboard—which merely announced to all comers that the proprietor was Gulph and that he was licensed to sell *"Beers, Wines and Spirits."*

Sir Baldur broke a window* and the innkeeper ejected himself from the inn, bowing about two-thirds flat to the ground.

"Varlet, what hast thou in thine hovel fit to serve to the most goodly ——

*Not glass, in those days, of course, but the thin skin of some creature's intestines stretched to the point of transparency. We use it for sausages nowadays.

—Bertram.

knight in all Christendom—none less, Got wot, than the great Sir Baldur of Baliheu!"

"Beers, wines and spirits, may it please Your Grace!" babbled the innkeeper, apparently half paralyzed.

"Set them forth, set them forth—one double order of beers, wines and spirits!" bawled Merlin, as good a Squire as one could require. "And haste thee, haste thee, varlet, lest a goodly knight, weary from sore conflict with the cannibal infidel on thy besotted behoof, should parch him this day!"

"Now, Heaven forbid!" croaked the innkeeper—and set them forth.

The beers were flat; the wines were acid; and the spirits were low to the point of melancholia. The foray consumed them, discussing their plans, and rode on. Nobody hit the innkeeper. This appeared to be regarded by all, including the innkeeper, as payment generous to the point of overtipping.

THE next people they met (in a way) were two small-business thieves. They saw the thieves lurking in the rain by a gallows-tree about two hundred yards ahead.

When they reached the gallows-tree there were no thieves there. There were two black dots far across the fields that looked like two crows flying rather rapidly over the furrows. . . .

Next they ran full tilt into a knight in black armor, evidently out on strict business.

Six-Leopards left them temporarily there—he was rather afraid of dark knights.

They halted face-on and studied the heraldry on each other's shields as these were advanced by the Squires.

Sir Baldur did not know the first three letters of the alphabet but he understood heraldry. The dark knight's shield was jet black and upon it was painted two wickets silver, three skillets blue, four mullets red, five gullets pink and a watermelon gold, the whole surrounded by a *fesse dancette.*

"It is *not* possible!" said Sir Baldur. "This knight is an illusion!" He passed on.

"No, sah! I's no illusion—but Ah suah am glad to be on mah way!" said the dark knight, and passed on also. Foreigner, evidently.

Both seemed glad to pass.

Six-Leopards rejoined them—hind foremost out of a drain into which he had taken a look.

Then, gradually leaving behind them the wolf-haunted wastelands, the dark forests wherein things rustled and squealed and outlaws prowled like leopards, they passed through a region where the slovenly fields showed signs of a rude tillage, improving as they progressed.

The farther they went, the greater the improvement, till suddenly, when the afternoon was well-advanced, they perceived that they were in a fair land.

At the top of a steep hill, Sir Baldur suddenly stopped the horse and gazed out over a region of corn and cows, of sheep and fat hogs rooting, lost in genuine admiration.

"Now, by Excalibur, here is a land of which these eyes have never seen the like!" he exclaimed.

Merlin muttered agreement.

"We draw nigh unto Sarum," he said. "This is that land enriched by the Treasure of Sir Bustyr de Fysshe. No man but a master of treasure unlimited could so conquer and subdue the savage soil of our land, Sir Knight!"

The rain swept clear across the land, the last great shadows of the cloud swung off the corn as they stared, and the sun illumined the whole lovely green and golden countryside.

Sir Baldur, thinking of his own starved acres, sighed.

"Yes—treasure is needed for this!" he said. "Capital—no man may so transform the face of this uncouth earth, lacking capital!"

They turned into a track which took them along the side of a field in which a serf was working. This person, peremptorily questioned, told Sir Baldur that he was indeed upon the lands of Sir Bustyr de Fysshe, and with a boldness very unusual in a serf, added in a very obsequious tone indeed, that Sir Bustyr was a very great knight with but one slight prejudice —namely, a dislike amounting almost to a horror of having strangers riding over his land.

"That might well be for the common folk," said Merlin haughtily. "It is not intended to apply to so mighty a Knight as my master!"

A VAST voice from behind promptly corrected him.

"Art wrong!" it bawled. "The prejudice is especially directed against such as thou and the Knight thou art squiring from the back of thine evil-smelling mule. We want no strange Knights and Squires hanging around the fields. Quit them therefore and that right soon, lest an ill thing befall ye!"

It was a short, broad swarthy man with a rather uneasily hectoring manner. There was a curious quality of sham or imitation fury about the general delivery of his abrupt invitation to quit. It was almost as if his wife were listening to him, having first set him at the strangers.

"That, fair sir, is but a churlish fashion of address to the noble and distinguished Knight—" began Merlin. But he was promptly interrupted.

"Knight! Knight! We need no Knights loose in this parish—especially so-called noble and distinguished ones. Better the crows—they come less expensive about the place. This is a farm and a good and a great one and we have no time for foolery. Therefore, get off the farm!"

The foray hesitated.

"Knight! Knight!" continued the man. "They are behind and far behind the times! Good lack, these useless ironclads but encumber the face of the fair earth! I, too, was once a Knight in the days ere I was instructed in the error of my ways! Hast never heard of the great Sir Bustyr de Fysshe —he who overthrew and brake and smote forty-seven knights on an afternoon at the tourna—"

But here he seemed to catch a sound from the little wood behind him, and changed his tone abruptly.

"Get off this land, I charge thee—and now—forthwith! Thou, in the ancient iron suit—and particularly thou on the mule!"

He rushed forward raising his agricultural-style cudgel, a severe-ish looking bat to use for the simple purpose of mule-starting. He brought the cudgel into contact with the mule

in no half-hearted fashion—an error in tactics.

All day long Rosamund, notoriously the most evil-tempered mule in Wessex, had been stewing and steaming up his amperage, and he was just about fully charged when Sir Bustyr, the knight-turned-farmer, made contact with his club.

IT was all over in a matter of seconds. Rosamund slewed half round in a peculiar, writhing motion, and Merlin departed from the saddle in an involuntary hurry. Then, freed of his load, the mule whirled on Sir Bustyr, and with uncanny speed and absolutely fatal precision, kicked the blustering farmer clean out of this incarnation before the man could possibly have realized that he had cudgeled the most dangerous member of the foray he could have selected. He had intended to start Rosamund off his land—instead he had automatically started himself on a new incarnation.

The serf rushed up with a spade, but Rosamund whirled on one hindleg to face him and the serf altered his direction, changed gear up and headed for the horizon, leaping everything that got in his way.

Sir Baldur clanked off the horse and helped Merlin up. Then he took a look at Sir Bustyr.

Merlin shook his head.

"Fair sir, he hath been in Valhalla this five minutes!"

He was pale.

"Little I dreamed what I have this day bestridden. I have been riding a catastrophe—not a mule! Thus ends our quest for the treasure of the late Sir Bustyr even ere it be well-started!"

"Be not so sure thou speakest that which is sooth!" said a grim voice behind them. They turned quickly to see, striding from the little path through the wood, a lady.

She was of middle-age and she looked, talked and acted like a strong and steely man.

She stood there studying them for many minutes. Her hard eyes took them in from head to foot and back again.

"Yes, it is even as the innkeeper sent word! 'Fore God, ye are, of all the knights and squires in Christendom, the very lousiest I have set eyes upon. Thou, Sir Knight, art the rustiest thing in armor I have seen these many years—come out of it ere thou rustest completely up!" Her glare swept on to Merlin. "And as for thee, thou poor depraved wretch, thou hast no tail to thy shirt! . . . Nay, bandy no words with me, nor proffer me lies. I have had word of ye and of the purpose for which ye came. Ye spoke too freely of your evil plans at the inn and all your works have been reported to me, the mistress of these fertile domains. Deny it not—ye came here to win away the treasure of Sir Bustyr de Fysshe! Look around upon these fat and profitable lands, upon the flocks and herds, the corn! And know that I, the chatelaine of Sir Bustyr,—who, poor man, was as ignorant of the art of husbandry as doubtless thou art,—I transformed his starved and untilled lands into this. I—the Lady Violente la Sterne—*I, who for that reason and for none other, am known far and wide as the Treasure of Sir Bustyr de Fysshe!* And I am not yet buried treasure, wit ye well, Sir Knight!"

She laughed harshly.

"Now Sir Bustyr has left me lone—aye, I saw it all. An accident—no need to protest—I saw all. Had he but been a better judge of a mule he would never have approached that wild animal. Yet it is thy fault, Sir Knight, that I am bereft of an obedient and docile friend for whom I have managed these many years, and whose estate I now inherit. Now, I am minded to hand ye both over to the King's troops who are encamped beyond yonder hill under command of mine own blood cousin—short shrift for treasure-stealers have they—if suitably rewarded! . . . But I am a merciful woman—I will first *see* thee, Sir Knight."

She turned to Merlin.

"Get him out of that armor and right quickly!"

There was a rasp in her voice that made Merlin jump. Reluctantly, Sir Baldur moved to comply—albeit rather stiffly—and after sore trouble Merlin got most of his metal off him.

The Treasure of Sir Bustyr looked him well over.

He was not so young as he had been but, for his age, he was not a bad-looking old blackguard.

Her hard face softened just a shade as she studied him.

He twirled his mustache at her.

"Thy name, Sir Knight?"

"Sir Baldur de Huhne of Baliheu!"

"Art wed, Sir Baldur?"

He bowed deeply. "Nay—a single man, oh, Lady Violente!"

"Hast means, Sir Baldur?"

"No means, madam, beyond my horse, my hound, my hawk and a ruined castle! I stand alone!"

"I, too," she said. "Thy coming has bereft me of mine only friend!"

He stared.

"Well?" the Lady Violente asked impatiently. "Art thou a chivalrous knight—or not? . . . . Am I, the Treasure of Sir Bustyr, to live the rest of my life alone? Why camest thou here? Art not so bright as I thought thee, Sir Baldur! In plain English, what art thou going to do about it?"

He looked at her, thought of the troops over the hill, and reflected swiftly. He had forayed all the way from Baliheu for the Treasure—here she was before him. A little masterful and undoubtedly a strict, even severe lady. A knight would have to watch his step—there would be only one boss about the place if he stepped into the shoes of the unfortunate Sir Bustyr—and it would not be Baldur.

Still—she was inviting him to marry her—a woman of quick decisions and one who knew her own mind.

He did not hesitate. There was no way out even if he did hesitate.

"Nay, but it were over-bold, Violente—" he began.

"I like a man to be bold—sometimes," she said. "At other times he need be but obedient and docile and interfere not with the farm—Baldur!"

He dropped on his knees and proposed to the Treasure in true knightly style.

He was accepted. (Just as well for him—for, he learned later, the Lady Yeolande had already left Baliheu for good with Sir Maravaine.)

"Thy squire—dost need him, Baldur? I like him not—he hath a hangdog look," remarked the Treasure.

"Wilt abide with me, Merlin—or wouldst prefer that I give thee Baliheu and all within it? I do not return—nor do I need it now!" said Sir Baldur, who already had a shrewd idea that Yeolande had taken care of herself.

Merlin did not take long to make up his mind. He had made but a very moderate hit with the Lady Violente and knew it.

"A knightly gift, fair Sir Baldur—accepted in the spirit in which it is proffered. Doubtless I can make me a living out of it!"

"Mayest have the horse also, Merlin!"

"Now God be praised for that, Sir Baldur—I had walked back else, for never will I again bestride yonder catastrophe."

"Well said! So ends as goodly a venture as ever knight launched upon. Farewell, Merlin!" said Sir Baldur, and turned to the new life—and his new wife.

"Short and sharp—but that is the way of it nowadays, my love," said Violente, who had been issuing orders to a gathering of serfs concerning the late Sir Bustyr. "Come then—home!"

SHE spoke truly, for a few seconds later Mr. Honey was back at home—but in his London flat. Once more the Lama's pill had shorted on him just when a new life loomed before him.

He took off a port, thoughtfully.

"Not quite the quality of knight I might have been," he said at last. "But doubtless there were worse ones."

He refilled his glass.

"If possible," he added.

MURDER *in the* BLACKOUT

A short mystery novel of today.

By F. W. Bronson

TOMMY ENGLISH'S letter came with her breakfast tray. There was nothing unusual about the outside of it. Just her name and address in Tommy's large, likable scrawl—*Miss Sharon Kelley, 920 East 72nd Street, New York City.* On the back flap the University arms and Tommy's return address—T. English, Alpha Omega House. Outwardly it looked like any one of the hundred-odd letters that Tommy had written her since they became engaged. But the contents made her heart beat faster:

"Think I'll transfer from V-7 to V-5. That's naval flying. I want wings, Sharon—quick. But I want you too. Look, darling, let's get married now. Right away! If we put it off until I graduate, we won't have any time at all. As it is, there's only four months. We have that coming to us. And I'll fight a whole lot better later on if we can be together now.

"Look, darling, I'm pretty sure we could live in the cottage on the family's place. I'd keep on with college and finish with my class. It'll be O.K. with the dean; we only need our folks' consent. As soon as you get this, talk it over with your aunt. Then pack your bags and come up here. You can stay with the family; I'll be just across the street at the Alpha House. . . . Will you? Please wire."

Sharon had made up her mind before she finished the letter. Tommy was right. They'd been foolish to wait even this long. She had no parents to consult and she knew that her aunt was in favor. She lifted the telephone out of its cradle and sent a wire to Tommy. *"Yes,"* the wire read. And because there were nine more words to use up: *"Yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes love."*

She began at once to pack. . . .

There was always an anxious moment or two just before she saw Tommy. Could he really be as nice as her memory pictured him? Then she caught a glimpse of his hatless blond head in the crowd on the station platform. He looked even nicer than she'd remembered—a tall young man in a reversible overcoat, with a grinning brown face and a spike of tow-colored hair sticking out aggressively over one blue eye. Somehow, in the process of swinging her bags down from the train vestibule, he managed to kiss her twice.

In the taxi he looked her over from the tips of her shoes to the crown of her smart little sky-blue hat. From the expression in his eyes, Sharon knew that he approved one hundred per cent—trim silken ankles, a slender figure in a gray squirrel coat, wheat-colored hair that curled on her neck in a long bob, pink cheeks and lips and blue-gray eyes.

"Like me?" she asked.

"Boy, oh boy!" Tommy replied, and kissed her again. "What about Thursday?"

"Thursday?" Sharon said.

"I mean for the wedding."

"What does your mother say?"

"Mom's given us the green light. So has the dean. I haven't had a chance to talk to my stepfather yet. He just got home from Boston this afternoon and he's leaving for Washington tonight. Mom says we'll have to have his permission to live in the cottage."

Sharon had never met John King, Tommy's stepfather. She had never visited Tommy at his home. Their romance had sprouted in East Hampton and blossomed in New York. Sharon liked Mrs. King, Tommy's mother, and Mrs. King liked Sharon. But John King was still an unknown quantity.

"What if he doesn't like me?"

"He'll like you," Tommy said confidently, slipping his hand into the crook of her elbow. "There's the college."

Sharon looked out the taxi window at Gothic buildings and a stretch of campus patterned with unmelted snow. It was a cold, raw winter afternoon; the undergraduates strolling along the walks had their chins in their collars. Most of them wore reversible overcoats, dark gray slacks, moccasins, and disreputable hats. Some carried skates and hockey sticks and squash rackets. Bicycles swooped from all directions, grazing the taxi's fenders. Rounding a corner past dormitories and recitation buildings they entered Chanford Road—a broad avenue lined with elms and vine-covered fraternity buildings. At the far end of Chanford Road a big Victorian house stood on a rising slope of ground. Through the branches of the elms Sharon counted a dozen chimneys and three cupolas and a sort of medieval tower with a conical roof. A ten-foot stone wall surrounded the property and on either side of the entrance gate were piles of dirty snow. Under the gray sky John King's mansion looked vast and dismal.

"That's us," Tommy said cheerfully. "Cozy like a railroad station. And there's the A-O House across the street from the gate."

Sharon glimpsed the fraternity house briefly as they went by—a square stone building in the middle of a snowy lawn. Inside John King's gate, Tommy asked the driver to stop.

"Look," Tommy said, and pointed.

Mr. Biggs stared; Mrs. King, shuddering, gasped: "Get help, please!"

Close to the entrance gate, half-hidden behind shrubbery and evergreens, stood a white colonial cottage with the numerals 1781 over the door. Its saltbox roof sagged in the middle. With its red brick chimney and green shutters it had the charm of a brightly painted toy.

Sharon cried: "Oh, Tommy, it's adorable."

"Thought you'd like it," Tommy said complacently. "Wait till you see the inside. Mother's got it all fixed up with antique colonial furniture. She spends a lot of time in it—uses it sort of like a playhouse. I've always figured that the big house gets her down. When the old man's away, she practically lives in the cottage."

"Won't she mind letting us have it?"

"Not if it's okay with the old man."

The taxi continued up a winding drive to the main house. A butler in a white coat hurried out to handle her luggage.

Tommy asked: "Anybody home, Charles?"

"Your mother's at the Red Cross, Mr. Tommy. Mr. King is working in his study; he doesn't wish to be disturbed until dinner-time."

"Well, you'd better take Miss Kelley's bags upstairs." And to Sharon: "Look, I have an eight o'clock tomorrow that I ought to do some work on. If I get after it now, we'll have more time later. You go and unpack and fix yourself up for dinner. Then we'll be ready to nail the old man when he comes out of his study."

Tommy rode back to the fraternity house in the taxi. Sharon followed the butler into the hall. It was a huge, somber hall with thick rugs and a grandfather's clock ticking away solemnly in the shadows. The slam of the front door behind her echoed and reverberated in the stillness. For some reason she felt lonely and depressed.

SOMEONE knocked on her door. Sharon said: "Yes?"

"It's Charles, miss. Mr. Tommy and his father would like you to join them in the living-room."

"In just a minute—" Sharon pulled a comb through her long bob. She looked at herself in the full-length mirror on her closet door—slender, tall, buoyantly alive in a white dinner dress that molded the curves of her figure and accentuated the coloring of her cheeks and lips. Her bedroom on the second floor was in the tower. The furniture, including a four-poster bed, was massive mahogany. Sleet spatted against the casement windows. Sharon heard elm branches clashing in the wind and a shutter banging and the sound of leafless vines scratching against stone.

When she opened her bedroom door the corridor was empty. She had an impression of dark halls running off in all directions. There was a light at the head of the front stairs—but like all the lights that she'd seen in John King's house, it wasn't bright enough.

Sharon went down the broad staircase. Before she reached the living-room she knew that Tommy and his stepfather were quarreling. She could hear their angry voices above the sound of sleet rattling against the windows.

"I say no, Thomas—definitely *no*."

And Tommy's pugnacious voice: "You can't give me one decent reason."

"I have reasons." John King's voice was harsh and forceful. "They don't happen to concern you."

"Don't happen to concern me?" Tommy replied. "Good Lord, I want to get married and live in the cottage. You won't let me—and you say the reasons don't concern me. It doesn't make sense."

John King said: "I don't want to discuss it further."

"I do, though," Tommy said. "I want to discuss it a whole lot."

"Perhaps when I get back from Washington—"

"No." Tommy was losing his temper. "I want to discuss it *now*."

Sharon walked into the living-room. It was a long, oak-paneled room with an open fireplace and a thick crimson rug. Oil portraits looked down at her out of heavy gold frames. The windows, draped in velvet that matched the rug, were as big as doors.

Tommy was sitting with his legs over the arm of a chair. John King stood with his back to the fireplace. Tommy's stepfather was about fifty years old and six and a half feet tall. His gray business suit looked too tight for his bulging chest and shoulders. He had a shaggy dark head with streaks of gray over the ears. His face was lean and handsome—bold gray eyes, a hawk-like nose and a strong, tough mouth.

Tommy scrambled to his feet. "Sharon, this is my stepfather."

John King moved forward, looming over her. Even when he smiled, his mouth was hard. He shook hands.

"How do you do, Mr. King?" Sharon looked up at him with a sensation of despair. Unless her instincts were wholly wrong, she'd never hit it off with Tommy's stepfather. She also suspected that he didn't like her—or perhaps that he resented her presence in the house. His antagonism was as real as a physical impact.

"Ah—Miss Kelley—how do you do? Thomas has been discussing your engagement and marriage." John King frowned abstractedly. "Unfortunately, he tackled me at a very bad time. I'm afraid I'll need a few days to think it over—"

Tommy said: "I don't see what you have to think about."

John King turned on him. "And I have no time to explain." He looked at Sharon. "You'll have to excuse me. It's almost dinner-time." With a fierce look and an awkward bob of his shaggy head, he strode out of the room.

Tommy clenched his fists by his sides. "I—I could kill him."

Sharon said: "Oh, Tommy, he doesn't like me. I don't know why, but he doesn't."

"And I don't like him," Tommy said.

A voice from the doorway interrupted quietly: "Tommy, dear, you mustn't say things like that—no matter how you feel."

Sharon turned. Tommy's mother, a smile on her lovely face, advanced across the room, both hands out in greeting. Mrs. King, a tall woman a bit past forty, was wearing a low-necked dinner gown. Her golden hair was rolled softly around her graceful, aristocratic head.

"Welcome, Sharon," she said. "It's fine to have you with us."

"Thank you, Mrs. King." She managed to add: "It's good to be here."

"I'm late," Mrs. King hurried on. "It was the Red Cross. I'm sorry."

Tommy said: "Look, Mother—why does he object to our marriage?"

"I don't know, Tommy. I really don't. Perhaps because he wasn't consulted." Mrs. King smiled at Sharon. "My husband likes to dominate everything in sight."

"That's no reason," Tommy said.

Mrs. King slipped her arm through Sharon's, smiling. "Mr. King has been under a strain. His factory has been working night and day for the War Department. He's finished now, I believe. Tonight he's off for Washington to make his report. When he gets back, he'll relax and act like a different man. He won't stand in your way. I'm sure of it. So don't you young people worry. Sharon can stay here with me and we'll make plans for the wedding."

IN the rear of the house a bell rang. Charles appeared. Despite his white coat and black trousers, Sharon thought that he looked more like an assistant football coach than a butler—chunky legs, powerful shoulders, a youngish face with honest blue eyes.

"Professor Wolf, madam."

"Show him in, please." And to Sharon: "Professor Wolf teaches English at the University. I invited him for dinner before I knew you were coming. You'll like him, Sharon."

Professor Wolf entered from the hall and walked toward them across the crimson rug. A man of perhaps forty-five, he looked like a British major on leave—a spare, military figure in well-tailored tweeds, close-cut light hair, and a lean face with intelligent blue eyes and a clipped, rust-colored mustache.

"Harry," Mrs. King said, "this is Sharon Kelley, Tommy's fiancée."

Professor Wolf took Sharon's hand. His smile was attractive. "How do you do, Miss Kelley?" There was a trace of Oxford accent in his voice.

Mrs. King called to the butler: "Cocktails, please, Charles, in the library. Mr. King can join us there."

Chapter Two

DINNER was an uncomfortable meal. Sharon felt a tension that she couldn't analyze. John King dominated the table with his shaggy head and powerful voice. Sharon had an impression of silver glinting in candlelight, of rich old mahogany and Irish linen, of rain sluicing against the tall windows. Charles moved silently in and out of the shadows with dishes and platters of food—oysters on the half shell, filet mignon smothered in mushrooms, fresh asparagus with hollandaise sauce, alligator-pear salad, and chocolate layer cake.

In the middle of dessert John King pulled out his watch. "Sorry. I've got to go."

Mrs. King said: "Your train doesn't leave until nine-thirty. You have almost an hour."

"I'm stopping at the office to pick up some papers."

"But it's only a couple of minutes to the office," Mrs. King objected.

King replied shortly; "I heard a rumor at the plant that there may be a surprise blackout. I don't want to get caught in it on my way to the station." He turned to the butler:

"Charles, is the house equipped for blacking out?"

"Yes sir. We can black out the library, the kitchen and the upstairs servants' hall."

"Good. You can get my briefcase; it's in my room. And bring the car around."

"Yes sir." The butler went out.

Mrs. King asked anxiously: "Aren't you taking a bag?"

"I won't need a bag. I have enough stuff in Washington to last several days. I hope to be home on Thursday."

John King said good-by and strode out of the room. Mrs. King went with him. Sharon felt that the man was driven by a tremendous physical energy that would not let him slow down or rest.

"What's he doing that's so all-fired important?" Tommy asked. He had been silent all through dinner, eating little, molding bread-crumbs into pellets and lining them up beside his plate.

"I don't know exactly," Professor Wolf said in his Oxford voice. "Something to do with high-altitude flying."

Sharon asked: "You mean testing planes?"

"No," Professor Wolf replied. "He's developed a plan for manufacturing some new gadget."

Tommy helped himself to another piece of cake. "What sort of gadget?"

"I don't know. Even your mother doesn't know. It's a military secret—and so important it may win the war for us."

"How?" Tommy asked.

"By giving our aviation control of the stratosphere. I'm no engineer. However, my impression is that flyers aren't much good above a certain altitude. It's the cold and the lack of oxygen. Well, the first side that can raise the ceiling appreciably will have a tremendous advantage. Apparently John King has the answer in that briefcase of his. He's taking the secret to Washington with him tonight."

"You seem to know a lot about it," Tommy said.

Sharon glanced at Tommy reprovingly.

"Not at all," Professor Wolf replied easily, reaching for a cigarette. "Any number of people must know that much."

Out in the hall the front door slammed. Mrs. King reappeared in the dining-room. "He's gone," she said. "Charles will serve our coffee when he gets back from the station. Shall we have it in the living-room?" They rose, and, engaged in casual talk, moved on into the living-room. . . .

The air-raid sirens howled at a quarter past ten. Sharon and Mrs. King were alone by the living-room fire. Tommy had gone to the fraternity house at nine-fifteen to preside at a meeting. Professor Wolf had left at nine forty-five; he wanted to get some books out of the library before the ten o'clock closing hour. Sharon had enjoyed that half-hour alone with Tommy's mother. They had talked about the wedding. Mrs. King had explained that she married her present husband when Tommy's father died in 1935. Although Mrs. King didn't say so, Sharon gathered that she had married John King because otherwise there would have been no money for Tommy's education. Sharon wondered whether Mrs. King had ever really loved her present husband.

The sirens jerked them both to their feet. Mrs. King hurried around switching off lights. They crossed the hall into the library, where Charles was already lowering black shades over the windows.

Mrs. King said: "Don't forget the kitchen and the servants' hall."

"No, madam." Charles went out quickly through the dining-room.

"We forgot the living-room fire." Mrs. King opened the door into the hall. "We ought to screen it with a chair or something."

Sharon followed Mrs. King into the darkened living-room. Firelight flickered on the ceiling and walls. They swung a sofa around in front of the hearth and pulled the drapes across the windows.

Mrs. King said in a startled voice: "Someone's left a light burning in the cottage! Look, Sharon."

Sharon opened the drapes at one of the windows. The rain had stopped. Through billows of fog a light showed plainly in the cottage. While Sharon was still looking, Mrs. King went past into the hall and out the front door.

Sharon ran after her. On the steps, the raw air chilled her arms and throat. She could hear the crunch of Mrs. King's slippers on the gravel drive. She called: "Mrs. King! You ought to have a coat—"

Mrs. King didn't answer. Sharon stood for a moment indecisively. Then she groped along the dark hall until she found a closet. Opening the door, she grabbed the first coat she put her hands on; it was one of John King's. With the coat over her arm, she hurried down the drive toward the lighted windows of the cottage. Drops fell from the trees into her hair. Once she stumbled and almost fell. She would have gone back except that the main house was invisible through the fog. Then a light shone suddenly in the open cottage door. She hurried up the steps and into the hall.

Mrs. King was standing just inside the door. Looking past her, Sharon saw the huge body of John King sprawled face up at the foot of the stairs. His jaw was smeared with blood. There was blood on the collar of his shirt, and as Sharon looked, a trickle of blood near his head widened into a pool on the hardwood floor.

With a queer choking sound Mrs. King knelt beside him. John King, groaning, opened his eyes. Sharon heard him gasp: *"The briefcase—don't let them get key—first step—"*

Sharon touched something with her foot. She reached down and picked it up—a blue revolver with a curved

wooden butt. From John King's throat came a harsh, terrifying rattle.

Mrs. King cried: "He's dead!"

They stared at one another, silent and white-faced. Sharon put the revolver on a table and threw the overcoat around Mrs. King's quivering shoulders.

Off in the fog someone blew a whistle. A voice called: "Lights out! Lights out, there—blackout!"

"It's Mr. Biggs," Mrs. King whispered. "He's the air-raid warden."

Sharon stepped to the door. Icy rain blew against her face. "Help!" she called.

She saw the glow of a dimmed-out flashlight. Running feet pounded on the sidewalk. Out of the rain and fog came a roly-poly little man in a fuzzy green ulster and helmet. He had an air-raid warden's arm-band around his left sleeve. A whistle hung from his neck by a cord. He peered at Sharon through thick-lensed glasses.

"Didn't you hear the sirens?" he said, panting. "It's a blackout."

"Mr. King is dead," Sharon replied breathlessly. "He's been shot."

Mr. Biggs bustled past her into the hall. When he saw John King's body he stared; his mouth dropped open and his face turned white.

"My goodness!" he said.

Mrs. King, shuddering, gasped: "Get help, please!"

"First we'd better turn these lights out."

Mrs. King cried: "Does that matter now?"

"Afraid it does," Mr. Biggs said. "The Army, you know." Sharon decided that he was a self-important little man. "Where's the phone?"

"In there." Mrs. King nodded in the direction of a door.

"Turn the lights off upstairs," Mr. Biggs said to Sharon. "I'll handle things down here."

Sharon stepped over John King's legs and went up the gray-carpeted stairs. In several places there were dark stains on the carpet. On the second floor light shone from one of the bedrooms. Sharon glanced in at the pine furniture and green chintz curtains and apple-green rug. Someone had searched the room hastily. Bureau drawers had been emptied on the floor; mattresses had been pulled off the twin beds. One of the white counterpanes was blood-soaked.

Sharon switched the lights off and groped her way downstairs in total darkness. She could hear Mrs. King sobbing, and Mr. Biggs talking on the telephone. She stumbled over John King's outstretched legs.

"Sharon? Is that you? Go and get someone, Sharon. Get Charles—Tommy—someone—"

"All right," Sharon said.

Her nerves were jittery and her brain was confused. She rushed out of the cottage into the rain without even thinking about a coat. Her one dominant thought was to find Tommy. She was halfway to the main house before she remembered that Tommy was still at his meeting.

She turned around and hurried back toward the gate. Patches of snow along the margins of the drive helped her find her way. As she reached the gate and started across the street, the rain came down in solid, icy waves. By the time she had found the fraternity steps and pounded her fists against the door, she was soaked to the skin, half frozen, shaking with cold and fright. Her hand found the knob. She turned it and pushed the door open and went in.

Voices spoke out of the darkness:

"Hey, shut that door!"

"Who is it?"

"Creepers, maybe it's the warden!"

Sharon closed the door. She could see the glow of pipes and cigarettes. "Tommy," she said, her teeth chattering. "I'm looking for Tommy English."

"Hey, it's a girl!"

"Who wants Tommy English?"

"He left right after the meeting."

"No, he didn't. He's down in the blackout room."

Sharon said: "I want him. I'm his fiancée. Tell him his father has been shot—murdered. Just across the street. In the cottage. Hurry."

Voices rose excitedly. Footsteps approached and a flashlight blinded her. A more mature voice than the others said quietly: "You must be Sharon Kelley. I'm Dutch Jenkins. Good Lord, you're wringing wet! If you don't change those clothes right away, you'll have pneumonia. I'll take you home."

"I can't go without Tommy."

"Okay; we'll fix you up here. And we'll find Tommy if he's around. Come on."

Sharon followed the flashlight's beam across a hall, up a flight of stairs, and into a large double bedroom.

"Tommy and I live here," Dutch Jenkins explained. "We have our own bathroom. Take this light and go in there and get under the hottest shower you can stand. I'll dig you up some clothes."

Sharon went into the bathroom and closed the door. She propped the flashlight on the washstand, peeled off her wet clothes and piled her blonde hair in a knot on top of her head. Standing under the hot shower, her body gradually stopped shivering.

Dutch banged on the door. "I'm leaving some clothes for you. They'll do until we can take you home. Most of them are Tommy's. Leave your wet stuff on the floor in there; we'll see that you get it back. How'd you like a drink?"

"No, thanks."

Dutch went away. Sharon rubbed herself dry with the towel. She kept on rubbing until she felt a glow of warmth all through her. Opening the bathroom door, she poked the flashlight out tentatively, wary of stray young men. The bedroom was empty. Sharon dressed hurriedly in Tommy's clothes—shorts, socks, a crew sweater and tweed jacket, gray slacks with the cuffs rolled up, and a pair of moccasins.

The all-clear sounded while she was fixing her hair. She switched the lights on and looked out the window. Street lamps glowed dimly through the rain. A white police car stood outside the Kings' gate. Off in the distance she heard another siren—perhaps an ambulance.

Sharon went downstairs. A group of startled young faces gaped up at her from the hall. A dark-haired boy with a wide mouth stepped forward and said: "You look swell, Sharon." The voice was Dutch Jenkins'.

"Where's Tommy?" Sharon asked.

"Tommy's not here. Our meeting broke up at nine forty-five. Tommy left right away. He said he was going over to the house."

"But he didn't," Sharon replied. Fear tightened like a knot in the pit of her stomach. "He didn't come home before the blackout. I—I've got to go to Mrs. King."

"I'll go with you," Dutch volunteered. "Hey, you guys—find Sharon an overcoat and umbrella."

Figures scurried in all directions. Sharon wondered bleakly where Tommy had been when his stepfather was murdered.

Chapter Three

PROTECTIVELY Dutch held the umbrella over Sharon's head and slipped a hand under her arm as they crossed the street. An ambulance was parked by the curb, and a second police car stood inside the gate.

The figure of a man approached along the walk. The brim of his hat was turned down to shed rain. He walked

under a street-lamp—and Sharon recognized Professor Wolf.

Professor Wolf saw them, stopped, and asked: "What in the world's going on here?"

Sharon told him: "Mr. King is dead."

"The deuce you say!"

"Someone shot him."

"But that's impossible." Professor Wolf stared at her intently. "John King is on a train for Washington."

"No. He's in the cottage—dead."

Professor Wolf followed them into the cottage. At the hall table a policeman was dusting the revolver with finger-print powder. John King's body had disappeared, but there was still a stain of blood near the foot of the stairs.

In the living-room they found Mrs. King, Biggs the air-raid warden and a youngish, dark-haired chief of police. Professor Wolf walked over to Mrs. King and stood protectively beside her. Mr. Biggs hunched forward eagerly on the edge of his chair, eyes popping behind his thick glasses. No one paid any attention to Sharon's masculine clothes. The chief of police—his name turned out to be Ford—was questioning Mrs. King.

"You say your husband left for the station at eight forty-five?"

"At about that time," Mrs. King replied. Her voice was pitched low.

"Where's the butler who drove him to the train?"

"Up at the house."

Chief Ford made notes in a little black book. He had a sharp voice and a nervous, electric manner. His eyes under thin black brows were alert and slightly worried.

"And you didn't see your husband again between eight forty-five and twenty minutes past ten?"

"No."

"Why did he come back here?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"You say he was alive when you found him?"

"Yes. He lived long enough to speak to me. He said—" Mrs. King glanced at Sharon for corroboration. "He said: 'The briefcase—don't let them get key—first step.' After he said that he—died."

"What key did he mean?"

"I don't know. Perhaps the key to the briefcase. He was taking important papers to Washington."

Chief Ford cocked one black eyebrow. "Where's the briefcase now?"

"I don't know."

"You didn't see it when you arrived?"

"No. But of course I didn't look for it."

Professor Wolf stepped forward and said: "Find that briefcase. Find it as quickly as you can. It's terribly important."

Chief Ford asked sharply: "Who are you?"

"Harold Wolf, of the University English department. I tell you the stuff in that briefcase is important. Hitler would give a million for it. That's why John King was murdered—somebody wanted those papers."

"Okay. We'll have a look for the briefcase." Chief Ford called over his shoulder: "O'Brien!"

The policeman who had been fingerprinting the revolver came in from the hall. He was big, genial and portly.

"Only two prints on the gun, Chief," he said. "Looks like forefinger and thumb."

Sharon said: "Those are mine. I picked the gun up from the floor and put it on the table."

"Who are you?" Chief Ford asked.

"Sharon Kelley."

"Oh—the girl who followed Mrs. King down from the main house. Right?"

"That's right."

"On your way down did you hear a shot?"

"No."

"When you got here, Mrs. King didn't have the gun in her hand, did she?"

"No. It was on the floor. I picked it up and put it on the table."

Professor Wolf broke in impatiently: "The vital thing is to find that briefcase."

"Okay, Professor. I'll handle this." Chief Ford's voice sounded worried. He asked Mrs. King: "What sort of a briefcase was it?"

"An ordinary brown briefcase with the initials *J. K.* in gold on the flap."

Chief Ford wrote something in his notebook. He turned to Officer O'Brien. "How's Dr. Burke getting on with his examination?"

"I don't know, Chief. They have the body out in the kitchen—"

Chief Ford interrupted: "Go and search King's clothing. We're looking for a key—probably a briefcase key. If you find any keys at all, bring 'em here. After that get hold of Meyer and search this place. We want a brown briefcase with the initials J. K. on the flap."

"Right, Chief." Officer O'Brien ambled out through the dining-room.

Professor Wolf said: "Maybe we'd all better search."

Roly-poly Mr. Biggs jumped enthusiastically to his feet. "That's the idea."

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," Chief Ford protested. "Things are getting too balled up. Everybody go into the dining-room, please—everybody except Professor Wolf. Go into the dining-room and stay there. I'll talk to you one at a time. I can't get to first base with everybody chattering at once. Into the dining-room, please!"

SHARON sat in the small colonial dining-room with Mrs. King, Dutch Jenkins, Mr. Biggs. The cottage bustled with commotion and excitement, but in her heart was an unexpected stillness. Things might have been so different. This should have been her cottage, her dining-room. She had a picture of herself and Tommy at either end of the cherry table. Candles glowing in the tin sconces along the walls. Steak broiling on charcoal in the open fireplace. Every night for four months, a meal here with Tommy. It would have been heaven! But instead she was sitting here in the middle of a murder investigation, dressed crazily in Tommy's clothes, while official people tramped around through the rooms looking for a briefcase. And Tommy, for some reason, had gone off and left her. Again Sharon had a sensation of fear in the pit of her stomach.

Mr. Biggs said: "I can't believe he's dead. I just can't believe it. John King had more life in him than any man in town."

Mrs. King asked: "You knew my husband?"

"I certainly did, Mrs. King. I've given him a haircut every two weeks for the last six years. I gave him one no longer ago than this morning."

Mrs. King glanced up alertly: "You're a barber?"

"Yes."

"While you were cutting his hair, did my husband mention the fact that he was leaving for Washington tonight with valuable papers? I mean, could anyone in the shop have overheard—"

"No. He didn't come to the shop. His secretary called me and made an appointment, and I went to his office. My shop is farther down along the street—just around the corner from Mr. King's factory. I always went to the factory to cut his hair. He kept right on dictating and working. He was a wonderful man." Mr. Biggs arranged his air-raid warden's arm-band so that the emblem was more prominently displayed.

Mrs. King relaxed, sighing, and Sharon felt that she was disappointed. Had Mrs. King hoped to find another suspect in order to divert attention from someone?

Professor Wolf opened the door from the living-room and came in, mopping his rain-wet face. Chief Ford entered with him. "Mrs. King? A few more questions,

please." The Chief held the door until Mrs. King had passed through. He closed it behind them.

Dutch Jenkins said: "I know what time he was shot, sir. I didn't want to mention it in front of Mrs. King—too gruesome."

"You're Jenkins, aren't you?" Professor Wolf asked.

"Yes sir. In the Alpha-O House. One of our crowd—Billy Swan—opened his windows and went to bed at ten o'clock. He's in training for hockey, so he turned his lights off at exactly ten. Well, a few minutes later—not more than five—he heard a shot. He heard it plainly, you see, because his windows were open. He was too sleepy to pay any attention, but when his roommate woke him up to tell him about the murder he remembered."

"The Chief ought to know that."

"Yes sir. I'll tell him as soon as he gives me a chance."

Professor Wolf added dryly: "Not that he won't worm it out of you anyway." He rammed his fists into the pockets of his tweed coat and paced up and down. "If the shot was fired between ten and five minutes past, I have an alibi. I was in the library until it closed at ten. I went directly across the street to the Faculty Club and stayed there until the blackout was over. I guess that lets me out."

Chief Ford opened the living-room door. "Miss Kelley?"

Sharon, passing Mrs. King in the doorway, noticed that the older woman's lips were trembling. In the living-room Chief Ford scowled at his notebook and pushed worried fingers up the back of his neck. Without being able to identify any particular sound, Sharon was aware of other people in the cottage.

Chief Ford eyed her accusingly: "You're engaged to John King's stepson, Thomas English?"

"Yes."

"I've been talking to Mrs. King about you. I understand John King opposed the marriage."

"Yes," Sharon admitted, giving a hitch to Tommy's trousers.

"And young English quarreled with him about it?"

"I wouldn't call it that," Sharon replied. "Tommy was disappointed and angry, but he didn't make any scene."

"Was he angry enough to kill his stepfather?"

"Certainly not," Sharon replied indignantly. "Tommy wouldn't think of such a thing. You simply can't suspect for a minute—"

Chief Ford interrupted: "Where is he now?"

"I don't know."

"Well, perhaps you *can* tell me how you got all dressed up in boys' clothes?"

Sharon told him everything that had happened since the air-raid sirens went off at ten-fifteen. She mentioned the fact that one of the boys over in the fraternity house had heard the shot.

"That ought to help," Chief Ford nodded approvingly. "I'd better check on him, though."

Footsteps tramped along the hall from the rear of the cottage. Two men with a stretcher went past the living-room. The body on the stretcher was covered with a blanket. The men carried the stretcher out the front door, and a moment later a spry little doctor with a black bag called Chief Ford into the hall. They talked in low voices.

Chief Ford came back. "The bullet went into his chest, grazing the heart. He might have lived half an hour after it hit him, but no more than that."

"Where—where are they taking him?"

"The hospital," Chief Ford said. "They want to probe for the bullet."

Officer O'Brien came down the front stairs and into the living-room. "Not a sign of a briefcase, Chief. We've searched the whole place, even the cellar."

"What about keys?"

O'Brien handed over a small leather key case. "One of them fits this front door out here. There's also a regular house key and another for his office. That's all, Chief. The rest of the stuff we found in his pockets is in the kitchen—except for this." O'Brien held out a slip of paper. "I thought you'd want to see it."

Chief Ford unfolded the paper. Sharon read the typewritten note over his shoulder:

Tonight. Proceed to railroad station as planned. Return alone to cottage. Ten P.M. Wait in the green room. Leave door unlocked. Tell no one.

The note was unsigned. Chief Ford scowled at it. "Looks like King had a date with somebody."

O'Brien said: "Here's something else." He held up a lace handkerchief.

"It's mine," Sharon said. "Where was it?"

"Inside the door of the room with the green curtains."

"I must have dropped it when I went up to turn the lights off."

Chief Ford eyed her skeptically. "You'd better show us just what you did."

They went upstairs. The green bedroom was still mussed and disorderly. Sharon pointed to the light switch.

O'Brien nodded. "That's about where I found the handkerchief. Look, here's the way I figure it, Chief. King was shot in this room. Probably he was sitting on one of the beds. The murderer came in and let him have it. He thought he'd killed him; King must have lain on the bed for a while, because the mattress is blood-soaked. The murderer hunted for the briefcase, found it, and left. King came to, managed to turn the light on and stagger along the hall. He gave out there, and fell down the stairs."

Sharon objected: "I don't believe the murderer got the briefcase. Mr. King didn't think so, either—or he wouldn't have made that remark about it before he died."

"Maybe you're right," Ford said doubtfully. "But if the murderer didn't get the briefcase, where the devil is it?"

Chapter Four

DOWNSTAIRS in the hall a police photographer in a raincoat was screwing a flash-bulb into a camera. Sharon heard voices outside the front door, in excited chatter.

The cop with the camera said: "A boy named Tommy English just arrived, Chief. He's in the dining-room."

"Okay. Don't let anybody else in here."

The front door burst open, and half a dozen people surged into the hall. Some were youngsters with curious faces from the Alpha Omega House; the others looked like reporters.

Officer O'Brien advanced with his arms held wide like a man shooing chickens. "Outside," he said cheerfully. "Outside with the lot of you."

Chief Ford and Sharon went into the dining-room. Faces grouped around the table looked at them questioningly—Mr. Biggs, Professor Wolf, Mrs. King, Dutch Jenkins and Tommy.

Chief Ford asked Tommy: "Your name's English?"

"Yes."

Tommy was standing beside his mother's chair. His face, when he looked at Sharon, was unsmiling and sober. The spike of blond hair stuck out aggressively over his eye. His reversible was wet, and the bottoms of his gray slacks were soggy around his ankles.

"Do you know anything about John King's murder?"

"Nothing," Tommy said, and pressed his lips together.

"When did you first hear about it?"

"Just now. I was on my way to bed. I saw all the cars outside, and knew something had happened."

"Where were you coming from?"

"The main house."

"Where were you before that?"

"I went for a walk."

"In the rain?"

"It wasn't raining when I started. I guess that was about nine forty-five. I had something I wanted to think about. I left the fraternity house and went over into the park. I walked as far as the Diamond Creek bridge. I stood on the bridge a few minutes—long enough to clean my pipe and light it—and started back. I didn't quite get home before the blackout. An air-raid warden made me take shelter in somebody's garage until it was over."

"There were police cars here by that time. Didn't you see them?"

"I used the back gate and went in the side door. My mother and Miss Kelley had gone some place—the butler didn't know where. I hung around awhile before I decided to go home to bed. As soon as I opened the front door, I saw there was something going on down here."

"But you didn't know what?"

"Not until I got to the cottage. I heard it from the officer who let me in."

Chief Ford said: "It would have taken you just about half an hour to walk to the Diamond Creek bridge and back. Did you pass anybody on the way?"

"Not until the air-raid warden stopped me."

"In other words, you can't prove that you took that walk?"

Muscles knotted along Tommy's jaw. "I hope you're not trying to insinuate that I killed my stepfather?"

"I'm not trying to insinuate anything. I'm just trying to get the facts. Can you prove you took that walk?"

"I'm afraid not."

"That's all I wanted to know." Chief Ford glanced around at the others. "This house has too many people in it. And more are on the way. I want all of you except Mr. Jenkins to go to the main house. Mr. Jenkins will take me across the street to the boy who heard the shot. I'll join you later."

"Does that mean me too?" Mr. Biggs asked hopefully.

"Yes." And to Mrs. King: "Please tell the butler who drove your husband to the station that I'll want to question him."

Mrs. King nodded.

"I suggest you all go out the back door. In that way you'll dodge the reporters. I don't want anybody talking to reporters—yet."

SHARON stood before the open fire in the living-room of the main house. The stillness here was a let-down after the activities in the cottage. She pulled Tommy's trousers against her thighs so that the hot cloth warmed her legs. She thought of going upstairs and changing into her own clothes—but somehow she didn't want to be alone in the dark halls.

Mrs. King sat with an elbow on the arm of her chair, and her chin on her knuckles, staring down at the crimson rug. She lifted her eyes wearily. "Highball, Harry?"

Professor Wolf said: "Good idea."

"Ring, please, Tommy," Mrs. King said.

Tommy, hands in the pockets of his tweed jacket, was staring out one of the windows. He crossed to the bell and pushed it. Mr. Biggs sat on the very edge of a chair, his fuzzy green ulster unbuttoned, his helmet clutched on his knees.

The butler entered. Mrs. King said: "Highballs, please, Charles." And then: "I suppose you've heard about Mr. King's death?"

Charles stiffened. "No, madam."

"He was murdered. In the cottage."

Charles' neck turned an angry red. The color crept up into his stolid face. "But Mr. King left for Washington—"

Professor Wolf said: "He never left for Washington. He was shot. At a few minutes past ten. Where were you at that time?"

Charles said promptly: "In my room, sir. I went there a little before ten, and remained until I heard the sirens."

"Anybody with you?"

"No sir."

"You didn't leave the house for any reason?"

"No sir."

Mrs. King asked in her quiet voice: "When you drove my husband to the station, did you leave him there?"

"Yes, madam. Mr. King and I started out from the house around eight forty-five. First I drove him to the factory. He went in, carrying his briefcase, and came out again in about ten minutes. We reached the station at nine-twenty. Mr. King told me to return home, said good-by, and went into the station."

Professor Wolf asked: "With his briefcase?"

"Yes sir. He had it under his arm."

"And that's the last you saw of him?"

"Yes."

"All right, Charles," Mrs. King said. "Bring the highballs, please."

PROFESSOR WOLF checked him: "One more question: Have you any idea why John King returned to the cottage after being driven all the way to the station?"

Charles hesitated, glanced from Mrs. King to Tommy, and said: "No sir." He bowed and left the room.

Mr. Biggs squirmed excitedly on the edge of his chair. "That butler was lying! Didn't you see the way he hesitated? I'll bet he knows more than he's letting on. How long has he worked here, Mrs. King?"

"Two months," Mrs. King replied.

"Ha! Then you really know very little about him."

Mrs. King smiled faintly. "Anyone these days who can keep a butler two months feels that she's had him forever. Mr. King engaged Charles. His references were excellent."

"Just the same," Mr. Biggs said darkly, "I don't like the fellow's looks. I'll bet he's mixed up in it."

Professor Wolf sounded impatient. "Nonsense, Biggs! There's no reason in the world to suspect the butler."

Mr. Biggs, deflated, squirmed and said: "Well, I hope somebody keeps an eye on him. He looks like just the sort who'd murder a man to steal valuable documents and sell them to—"

Mrs. King said gently: "Please, Mr. Biggs. If Charles is guilty, the police will take care of him."

Sharon was on the sofa with Tommy beside her. Her hand was clasped in Tommy's hand. Instead of following the talk in the room, her mind wandered back over the evening. She kept hearing John King's voice: *"The briefcase—don't let them get key—first step."* There was a briefcase and a key and a first step. What sort of step? A first step in a process? A first step in some direction? Or an honest-to-goodness step of wood or stone or concrete? The longer she thought about it, the more convinced she became that the murderer hadn't succeeded in getting hold of the briefcase. John King had hidden it. But where?

The tension in the room had an electric quality. Looking out one of the windows at the cottage, Sharon saw headlights and moving figures and the beams of flashlights moving among the trees. The grandfather's clock in the hall struck midnight.

Charles appeared with a liquor tray. He mixed highballs for Mrs. King and Professor Wolf and Mr. Biggs; Tommy and Sharon refused. Charles went out again, returned with an armful of logs, and put the logs on the fire. Sparks showered up the chimney, and a crackling sound filled the room.

Charles straightened. "Mr. Tommy, could I have a word with you?"

Tommy said: "Shoot."

"I mean alone, sir."

Tommy looked surprised. "Sure, Charles," he said. "We can talk in the study."

Charles opened the door into John King's study. He followed Tommy into the study and closed the door.

Mr. Biggs couldn't suppress his excitement. "I told you the butler knows something."

"If he does," replied Professor Wolf coldly, "he's going to tell Tommy all about it."

"Is he, though?" Mr. Biggs argued. "And why doesn't he tell the police?" But no one answered.

The doorbell rang. Professor Wolf answered it, and let in Chief Ford. The Chief dropped his wet coat in the hall and entered the living-room. He stood with his spine against the mantel, legs apart, rapping his black notebook against the knuckles of one hand.

"John King was shot," he said, "at almost exactly five minutes past ten. Anybody who has an alibi for that time is in luck."

Professor Wolf said: "You've heard mine. I arrived at the Faculty Club not later than two minutes past ten. You can check that with the colored boy at the desk. I stayed until the all clear."

Chief Ford asked: "What about you, Mrs. King?"

"Miss Kelley and I were together in this room from nine forty-five until a quarter past ten."

He glanced at Sharon. "Did either one of you leave for any reason?"

Sharon said: "No."

Chief Ford turned toward Mr. Biggs. "You?"

Mr. Biggs, startled, bounced an inch off his chair. "Me?"

"Yes, you. Where were you at five minutes past ten?"

"I was home."

"Where's that?"

"I live in a rooming-house a block and a half down the next street."

"And you were in your room at five minutes past ten?"

"Yes," Mr. Biggs replied. "I know, because I was waiting for the Green Two."

"What's the Green Two?"

"It's the next air-raid warning after the Green One. The real warnings are yellow, blue, and red. In tests we use Green One, Green Two, and Green Three, so we won't think we're up against the real thing. Well, I was sitting there in my room when Joe Schmidt gave me the Green One at nine-fifty."

"Who's Joe Schmidt?"

"My senior warden."

"Okay. What did you do?"

"I put my arm-band on. I got out my whistle and report-pad and flashlight. After that I sat down and waited for the Green Two. It was late in coming—ten-twelve, to be exact. I scarcely got downstairs and outside before the general alarm went off." Mr. Biggs added importantly: "They really ought to do better than that out at the Report Center."

Chief Ford prodded him: "What did you do next?"

"My post is on this side of the street. I walked east first because the Bordens have a maid who reads in bed and goes to sleep with the light on. Sure enough, there it was. I blew my whistle until she woke up and turned it off. Then I walked down this way and saw the lights in the cottage. I gave 'em a couple of blasts and came on the run. When I got there, I found—"

"We know what you found," Chief Ford interrupted. "Tell me this: How long does it take you to get from your rooming-house to the gate down here?"

"I can walk it in three or four minutes."

"In other words, between the Green One and Green Two, you had plenty of time to run over here and shoot a man and get back again?"

Mr. Biggs looked scared. His eyes bulged behind their thick glasses, and his Adam's apple jumped up and down when he swallowed. "But I didn't. I wasn't thinking about anything except my duties as a warden."

"Was there anyone around who can prove you were in your room between nine-fifty and twelve past ten?"

"N-no," Mr. Biggs said unhappily. "Everybody was out tonight except me."

Chief Ford scribbled in his notebook. "Okay. That's all for now. You can go home."

Mr. Biggs looked disappointed. "I'd rather stay and help. I have definite ideas about this case—"

"You can help most by going home."

Mr. Biggs got up reluctantly and said good-night. He buttoned his fuzzy green ulster and walked slowly toward the hall—like a puppy sent home from a walk. It was obvious that he hated to miss the excitement. Sharon heard the front door open and slam again.

Tommy and the butler came in from the study. When he saw Chief Ford, Tommy thrust one hand quickly into the pocket of his jacket.

"I'll take that," Chief Ford said sharply, "whatever it is."

Tommy stood rigidly for a moment, lips compressed, eyes fixed on the Chief. He said slowly: "I would have given them to you, I think, anyway. They're typewritten notes—anonymous notes—to my stepfather. In them it is claimed that my mother and Professor Wolf have been carrying on an affair. Secret meetings in the cottage—that sort of thing." He turned to Mrs. King. "It's a lie, Mother, of course. Just tell them it's a lie, will you?"

Chapter Five

IN the silence that followed Tommy's request, the fire crackled; sparks popped against the iron screen. Professor Wolf stood behind Mrs. King's chair, his military figure erect, a puzzled look on his face. The butler, stolidly respectful, was behind Tommy. Sharon sat down unobtrusively on the sofa.

Professor Wolf said: "Of course it's a lie."

Tommy said: "What about it, Mother?"

Mrs. King lifted her head. Lamplight was reflected in her hair. "There's not a word of truth in it, Tommy."

"That's what I thought." Tommy took his hand out of his pocket and gave several slips of paper to Chief Ford. "There they are, sir."

Chief Ford opened the slips of paper, smoothed them, and arranged them face up on the table. Everyone except Mrs. King and the butler gathered around him. There were four notes, and someone—probably John King himself—had numbered them chronologically.

1: *Did you know that your wife and a certain professor of English are seeing a great deal of one another? Well, they are. Every time you go away on a trip, they meet in the cottage down by the gate. I'll keep my eye on them.*

2: *Things have been getting much hotter. I recognize all the signs. More later.*

3: *Now I'm sure. You can catch them red-handed if you want to.*

4: *Before your next business trip, I'll try to discover their plans. You can trust me in this. I hope you get the goods on them. Professor W. has done this sort of thing too often.*

Chief Ford took a fifth slip of paper out of his black notebook and placed it beside the others. It was the note that Officer O'Brien had found in John King's pocket earlier that evening.

Tonight. Proceed to railroad station as planned. Return alone to cottage. Ten P.M. Wait in the green room. Leave door unlocked. Tell no one.

Chief Ford said: "All of them were typed on the same machine. Look at the broken letter *t*, and the way the *g* drops below the line." He asked Tommy: "Where did you get these?"

"From the butler."

Charles stepped forward. "Mr. King turned them over to me, sir. He received the first one just before I came here. That was why he employed me, sir—to watch Mrs. King."

"Oh!" Mrs. King sighed gently. "Poor John!"

"Your husband was jealous, Mrs. King?"

"Frightfully."

The butler said: "I may remark, sir, that I never discovered any grounds for the accusation in those notes. Professor Wolf called frequently, but always here at the house, and never when there weren't others present. I told Mr. King as much on several occasions."

Professor Wolf exclaimed: "The whole thing's preposterous! There must be a lunatic mixed up in it."

"No," Chief Ford said. "If you ask me, it was a shrewd, cold-blooded scheme. He got King all burned up with jealousy. King would have gone to the cottage any time the murderer picked out. The murderer picked tonight—when he knew King would have the briefcase with him. There's nothing very crazy about that, Professor."

A number of things became clear to Sharon while she sat there listening. John King had opposed Tommy's marriage because it might have upset his plans. He didn't want anyone living in the cottage. He wanted his wife to feel that it was perfectly safe to meet Professor Wolf there. If he didn't catch them tonight, he intended to try again. Therefore the cottage had to remain vacant. It seemed like a farfetched reason for opposing a marriage—but John King was half crazed with jealousy. Sharon imagined him sitting there on the bed in the green room, in total darkness, waiting for his wife and the Professor to arrive. Instead someone came in—probably with a flashlight in one hand and a gun in the other—and shot him. It was a terrible way to die.

Chief Ford was saying: "The murderer asked King to leave the cottage door open. Therefore he didn't need a key. Nevertheless I'd like to know how many keys there are."

"My husband had one," Mrs. King replied. "And I have one. There's a third that the servants use when they want to clean."

"Where is it kept?"

"On a hook in the pantry."

"Is it there now?"

Charles said respectfully: "Yes sir. The cottage key has not been removed from its hook."

"Okay," Chief Ford said. "I don't see any reason for keeping you all up any longer. The butler can let me out after I've asked him a few more questions. The rest of you go to bed."

Sharon was all at once desperately tired. Saying good-night to Professor Wolf and Mrs. King, her eyelids burned and her legs felt weak. Tommy followed her up the stairs. He opened a door part way down the hall toward Sharon's room in the tower. When he switched on the light, Sharon saw framed pictures of athletic teams, a large photograph of herself on the bureau, and an assortment of hockey-sticks, squash-racquets, golf-clubs, and yachting trophies.

"My old room," Tommy explained. "I'm staying here tonight, just in case. If you get nervous or anything, just yell like blazes." He walked down the hall with her as far as her door, kissed her good-night, and grinned. "You sure do look cute in those clothes."

WHEN Sharon awoke, the luminous dial of the traveling-clock on her table said two-fifteen. She lay quietly in the darkness, groping for a thought that kept eluding her. Then she had it: *By the first step John King must have meant the first step of the cottage stairs—the step near which they had found him dying.*

Sharon sat up straight in the four-poster bed. She was positive that she'd guessed the answer. John King had fallen down the cottage stairs. He didn't know whether the person who'd shot him was still in the house. He had a key—a valuable key. He didn't want the murderer to find it in his pocket. So he hid it in the only place he could reach—under the carpet on the first step of the cottage staircase. It was so logical it *had* to be true.

Sharon turned on the light. She swung her legs out of bed and poked her toes into a pair of mules. Tying the cord of her wrapper around her waist, she went down the hall to Tommy's door and knocked gently. "Tommy!" she called in a whisper.

She could hear a sound in Tommy's room—a faint and rhythmic snore. Sharon turned the knob and went in, felt along the cold wall for the electric switch, and turned a light on. The comforter was pulled up over Tommy's head; nothing was visible except a spike of blond hair.

"Tommy! Wake up!"

Tommy grunted something that sounded like "Wazzamatta?" Sharon shook him until he opened one eye. Seeing her there by the bed jolted him awake. Tommy rolled over and sat up.

"What is it?" he asked. Sharon told him. Tommy yawned and eased down under the comforter. "Oh," he said. "Maybe you're right—have a look in the morning—"

"No," Sharon replied earnestly. "Not in the morning—*now!* That briefcase is terribly important. Please, Tommy! It'll only take a few minutes."

"Well—" Tommy said, weakening.

Sharon continued insistently: "Put some clothes on. I'll get the key from the pantry and meet you downstairs."

BEFORE Tommy could object, she hurried along the hall to the head of the stairs. She turned on the lights and descended to the lower hall, hearing nothing but the tick of the grandfather's clock. The stillness of the big house made her uneasy. It was better after the lights were on in the library and the dining-room.

Sharon crossed the dining-room and went into the pantry. The door swung shut behind her. There was a pantry smell of spices, dishcloths, ground coffee. Finding no electric-light button, she moved around in the blackness with her arms outstretched. Her fingers touched a cord, and she pulled it. Overhead, the metal chain scraped against the glass—but no light went on. Sharon jerked the cord several times. Nothing happened.

Fumbling for a box of matches, she stepped through another door into a passageway. She became instantly aware of someone near her in the dark. A foot scuffed the floor. A sound of breathing made her throat contract with terror.

She tried to make her voice sound firm: "Who's there?" she called. "Who is it?"

Someone rushed toward her. Sharon screamed. A heavy body hurtled against her, knocking her off balance. The split second during which she was falling seemed to last forever. She heard running footsteps. A chair tipped over, and a table crashed to the floor. Then her head struck hard against solid wood and she lost consciousness . . . . .

There was a throbbing pain above Sharon's right ear, a light shining on her closed lids and a wet, cold something against her skull. She opened her eyes. She was lying on the couch in the library. Tommy knelt beside her, dressed except for his tie. He was holding his wet handkerchief a little too firmly against the bump on her head.

Sharon said: "Ouch!"

"Take it easy," Tommy soothed her. "You're okay. Just a nasty bump. Who hit you?"

"Nobody," Sharon replied. "I cracked it against something when I fell. But there *was* somebody, Tommy."

"I know it," Tommy said. "He knocked stuff over on his way out. He was in such a hurry he didn't stop to close the back door. You must have scared the guy half to death."

Sharon sat up indignantly. "Scared *him,*" she protested. "How do you think *I* felt?"

Tommy, grinning, forced her head gently back against the pillow. "Don't you start being energetic until we get hold of a doctor."

"I don't need a doctor. I feel all right."

The next three-quarters of an hour were confusing. On his way downstairs, Tommy must have aroused the household. Mrs. King appeared in a kimono. Charles showed up a moment later, buttoning a white linen jacket across his muscular chest. Armed with flashlights and pokers, Charles and Tommy searched the kitchen wing and the cellar and the grounds. Mrs. King phoned police headquarters and the hospital. Maids fussed around Sharon, and offered her things, and got generally in the way. A doctor showed up, examined Sharon's head, and assured Mrs. King that there was nothing seriously wrong. By the time the doctor had finished with Sharon, Chief Ford was waiting to hear her story.

Sharon told him. Chief Ford listened attentively, one black eyebrow skeptically cocked. He looked dog-tired.

"It's too bad you went to all that trouble," he said. "I thought of the cottage stairs earlier in the evening."

"You mean you looked under the carpet on the first step?"

"It was the logical place." Chief Ford made notes in his little black book.

Sharon asked: "You found a key?"

"No. We didn't find any key. We took up the carpet on the first step, but there wasn't anything underneath it."

Sharon said disappointedly: "Oh."

Chief Ford closed his notebook with a snap. "Let's have a look at the place where you were knocked down."

Sharon's head throbbed a little when she stood up. They went through the dining-room into the pantry. Using his flashlight, the Chief discovered that someone had removed the outer globe of the ceiling light and unscrewed the bulb. In the passageway adjoining the pantry, another bulb had been loosened. Chief Ford tightened both, and turned the lights on. At one end of the passageway a flight of stairs ascended to the second floor. Near the foot of the stairs was an alcove. At the other end of the hall a door opened into a servants' sitting-room.

Sharon said: "I must have been standing about here."

"Right." Chief Ford looked carefully all around and poked his flashlight into the shadowy alcove. "Here's where he must have been hiding. When you came along, he made a break for the door and knocked you over. Probably your head hit the bottom step. He went on through the servants' hall and out the door. That's easy to figure. But who was it? And what was he doing here?"

Tommy and the butler came in from outdoors. "Can't find a trace of anybody, Chief," Tommy said, and yawned.

"I'd better have a look around myself," Chief Ford replied. "I'll also send a man over from Headquarters to stay on guard the rest of the night. The person who shot John King is getting desperate—that may mean trouble."

Chapter Six

IN the morning Sharon slept late. It was a gray day, with fog and a smell of thawed earth drifting in at her casement windows. She put on a pink-and-white bed-jacket, rang for Charles, and climbed back into the four-poster. Her head throbbed a little, and the lump over her ear hurt when she touched it.

Charles brought the morning papers with her breakfast. Front-page headlines announced the murder of John King.

Sharon asked: "Have they found out who knocked me down last night?"

"No, miss."

"Who do *you* think it was, Charles?"

"I really couldn't say, miss. I rather feel it was someone who had been hiding in the house. Otherwise, how did he get in? I locked up carefully before I went to bed, miss."

"What do the police think?"

"The police searched the house and grounds very carefully. They found nothing. What they concluded, I really couldn't say."

Sharon ate her breakfast and read the papers. John King's murder had shocked the country. Obituaries of him were long and impressive. Details about the murder, however, were conspicuously lacking—the briefcase, the anonymous notes, the words that John King had spoken before he died. Either Chief Ford had handled the press adroitly, or the Office of Censorship in Washington had been at work. There were references to the F. B. I. and the War Department and the Army Intelligence. Sharon gathered that high Government officials had paced their offices most of the night. It gave her a start to see her own name in print: "First to arrive on the scene were Mrs. King and Miss Sharon Kelley, 20, of New York City. . . ."

When Charles returned for her tray, he brought the clothes that she'd left at the fraternity house the night before. One of the maids had dried and ironed them, and put her dinner dress on a hanger.

"Mr. Tommy would like to see you, miss."

"Tell him to come up."

Tommy had a sleepy look around the eyes. "I flunked my eight o'clock," he said cheerfully. "How are *you* feeling?"

"I'm all right, Tommy," Sharon said.

"They've traced the gun," Tommy went on. "I ran into the cop named O'Brien on my way over here, and he told me. It belonged to the Old Man himself. He kept it in his desk in the study. Either he took it along with him to the cottage, or somebody swiped it out of the desk. If he took it himself, it means that anyone could have grabbed it away from him down there and shot him. If somebody swiped it out of the desk, it means that the murderer had access to the house."

"Which would eliminate Mr. Biggs," Sharon said.

"Not necessarily. He's our air-raid warden. He's been all over the house several times, from attic to cellar—advising us on what rooms to black out, and where to keep the stirrup-pumps—that sort of thing."

Sharon asked: "What do the police think?"

"They don't know what to think. There's a rumor around college that the Assistant Secretary of War for Air and J. Edgar Hoover in person are on their way up here. Of course there may be nothing in it. According to O'Brien, the Chief figures he'll have the answer as soon as they find the machine that typed those notes. That's what they're looking for now—a portable typewriter with a broken letter *t* and a small *g* that drops below the line. They'll find it, too—if they have to take the whole town apart."

Tommy went off to another class; and later, Mrs. King dropped in to say good morning. Sharon was reading the newspapers in bed. Mrs. King, pale and composed, had on a plain black dress with white collar and cuffs. She urged Sharon to stay in bed until she felt like getting up.

"The funeral will be tomorrow afternoon," she said quietly. "I've been busy all morning with the arrangements. I've also had dozens of telegrams and phone-calls; you can help me with them later." Mrs. King paused. "I don't see any reason, Sharon, why you and Tommy can't be married very soon—say next week. After all, Mr. King was only Tommy's stepfather; and the time you have left to be together is very short."

"Thank you, Mrs. King." Sharon's eyes, momentarily, were full of tears.

"After what's happened, you may not want to use the cottage. But you can live here. I thought I might go off some place on a trip—"

Sharon, dressing, was unable to concentrate on getting married. There were too many other things to think about. She couldn't get John King's dying words out of her head: *"The briefcase—don't let them get key—first step."* All the rest of the morning, while she helped Mrs. King, a part of Sharon's mind struggled with the riddle of John King's baffling, obscure words.

CHIEF FORD sat alone in his small private office at police headquarters. The desk-clock said eleven-forty-five. A conference was going on in the next room. He could hear voices and footsteps and a scraping of chairs. Half a dozen special investigators had been on his neck all morning—two from the State capitol, another from the War Department, a top-flight Washington F. B. I. man, the head of the State police, and the lieutenant governor. Chief Ford had ducked out on them to read some new reports. The reports lay face up on the blotter of his desk. The Chief studied them, and rubbed the back of his neck with his fingers.

Henry Milton Biggs. Forty-three years old. Unmarried. Proprietor of a barber-shop at 23 Wilkins Street. Native American. Baptist. Regular habits. Hobbies: photography and early-morning bird walks. Air-raid warden. No close friends or associates.

Charles Schmidt. Butler. Thirty-two. Unmarried. Former amateur boxer. Son of naturalized German-American parents. Born in Newark, N. J. Excellent references from a N. Y. domestic employment agency. Has worked for Harrison P. Twombly, Nathan T. Meyer, and the Baroness Froelich. Traveled extensively in Europe while employed by the Baroness. Corresponded for several years before the war with a cousin, Fritz Schmidt, in Hamburg. No fraternal, religious or Bund connections.

Harold Wolf. Forty-five years old. Unmarried. B.A., Princeton, 1918. (For additional degrees and published titles see "Who's Who.") Studied at Oxford and the Sorbonne. Has taught English literature at the University since 1927. Episcopalian, Republican. Occasionally a guest at the Newport home of Count Paul von Steen, since arrested for Nazi activities; visits purely social, however, and invitations usually came from the Countess while the Count was away—

Chief Ford looked up. A plain-clothes detective had tramped into the office.

"Nothing doing on the typewriter, Chief."

"Keep looking."

"There wasn't any typewriter at all in the King house or the cottage. Professor Wolf has one in his office, standard size, no soap. Biggs hasn't got one."

"Did you try his shop?"

"Yes. We found half a dozen portables in the fraternity house but none of them filled the bill."

"What about John King's factory?"

"I never thought of that."

The plain-clothes man went out. Chief Ford put the reports in his desk drawer, walked out of Headquarters, and got in his car. There were a couple of things that he hadn't had a chance to investigate. The big shots in the back room could get along for a while without him.

Noon whistles were blowing as he drove up through town to the University. Parking in front of the library, he walked across the street and went into the Faculty Club. A little way down the hall a uniformed colored boy sat behind the desk. When he saw the Chief's uniform the colored boy jumped to his feet.

"You were on duty here last night?"

"Yes suh. I come on at noon and stay until closing time."

"You were here at ten o'clock when Professor Wolf arrived?"

"Yes suh."

"You saw him come in?"

"Well, not exactly. From behind the desk here, I can't see the door unless I stretch. But I heard him come in."

"What do you mean, heard him?"

"He called to me, suh—told me who he was so I wouldn't have to bother to go and look."

"You're sure it was Professor Wolf?"

"Positive, suh. I recognized his voice. I couldn't be mistaken about that."

Chief Ford relaxed and chewed his lip. "Okay. You're sure he came in at ten o'clock? I mean, it couldn't have been eight or ten minutes past?"

"No suh. He came in just after the clock struck ten. I know because the club was empty, and I was thinking maybe I could close up. Then Professor Wolf came in and went into the reading-room. He was still there when the air-raid sirens went off about a quarter past. We blacked the club out and waited in the reading-room until we got the all clear. Pretty soon after that the Professor went home, and I closed up for the night."

Leaving the Faculty Club, Chief Ford glanced at his wrist-watch. He walked briskly around the corner and down past the physics lab and the Alpha-O house. Without hurrying, he made the Kings' front gate in one minute and fifty seconds. Timing himself again, he continued along the street to a yellow frame house with a ROOMS FOR RENT sign on the porch. It took him three minutes and twenty seconds.

Chief Ford climbed the steps and rang the bell. A rosy-faced little woman opened the door, wiping her hands on an apron.

"Sorry to bother you," Chief Ford said. "Does a man named Henry Biggs live here?"

"Yes. He has a room on the second floor front. But he's not here now."

"I know that," Chief Ford said. "I just wanted to find out what time he got home last night."

"He got home very late," the rosy-faced woman said. "Half-past two."

"How do you know?"

"I heard him. My bedroom is right at the head of the stairs. I went to the movies last night—I was in the theater during the blackout—and got home around eleven-thirty. Mr. Biggs wasn't in. His room was dark and the windows were closed, so I knew he hadn't gone to bed. I didn't get to sleep myself for a long time. I heard Mr. Biggs come in at two-thirty."

"How do you know it was Mr. Biggs?"

"I recognized his step."

"But you didn't actually see him?"

"I didn't have to," the rosy-faced woman replied. "I've heard him come upstairs so often I'd know his step even in a parade. It couldn't have been anybody else."

"Did he go out again during the night?"

"No. I would have heard him."

Chief Ford walked back to the library and got in his car. He drove through the park as far as the Diamond Creek bridge, climbed out of the car and stood with his elbows on the railing. Diamond Creek was frozen over. On top the ice had began to melt, but underneath it was solid. Near shore a few dead weeds sprouted through the ice, and hooked around one of the weeds was a pipe-cleaner bent in the shape of a V. Chief Ford scrambled down the bank and reached for the pipe-cleaner with a stick. When he pulled it in, he saw it had been used. He recalled that Tommy English had stopped on the bridge last night long enough to clean his pipe.

Turning the pipe-cleaner thoughtfully in his fingers, Chief Ford noticed something else: at a spot underneath the bridge, close along the shore, a hole had been broken in the ice. Chief Ford crawled under the bridge and looked into the hole. Lying in a foot and a half of water, he saw a black case with metal clasps and a leather handle.

Chief Ford rolled up his sleeve as far as it would go, and lifted a portable typewriter out of the water. With the

typewriter in the car beside him, he drove back to Headquarters.

Officer O'Brien was behind the desk. "Everybody's gone to lunch, Chief."

"Okay. Dry this thing off. It's the machine that typed those notes, but I want you to test it and make sure. I also want you to phone the Alpha-O house and find out whether Tommy English owns a bicycle."

Ten minutes later O'Brien entered Chief Ford's private office. The Chief looked up from a pile of messages.

"It's the one," O'Brien said. "The letter *t* is broken, and the *g* drops below the line."

"What about the bicycle?"

"Tommy English went over to his mother's for lunch. One of the other boys told me that he does own a bicycle."

"Okay. I'll be back." Chief Ford left Headquarters again. At the Kings' front gate a plain-clothes detective stood on guard. The Chief stopped long enough to say: "We won't have to watch this place any more. Come on along with me. I may need you."

Up at the main house the butler answered the door. Chief Ford and the detective walked past him into the dining-room. Mrs. King and Sharon and Tommy English were eating lunch.

Chief Ford said: "English, I'm taking you to Headquarters. Right now."

Tommy stood up, wiping his mouth with his napkin. "What for?"

"It's true that you went to Diamond Creek bridge last night. But you didn't go just for the walk—you wanted to get rid of the machine you used to type those anonymous notes. Unluckily for you, it thawed last night, and the hole you smashed in the ice didn't freeze over. It's my guess that you rode out there on your bicycle; you could have made it there and back in fifteen minutes. You'd have had plenty of time to get to the cottage by five minutes past ten."

"I don't know what on earth you're talking about," Tommy replied.

"You will pretty soon," Chief Ford said. "Now you'd better come along with us. Get your hat and coat."

Chapter Seven

SHARON was walking through the foggy dusk. She walked aimlessly, because her thoughts were with Tommy. All afternoon she had worried about Tommy. Where was he? What were they doing to him? How could she help him?

After luncheon Mrs. King had given the servants the afternoon off. "I've got to clear them out of here," Mrs. King had said, "or they'll have hysterics." Later she had asked Charles to drive her to the funeral parlor to discuss the arrangement of flowers. Sharon felt that Mrs. King would have done anything to keep herself from thinking about Tommy. Sharon had stayed behind because she *wanted* to think about Tommy. Tommy hadn't shot his stepfather. Tommy hadn't ridden his bicycle to the Diamond Creek bridge and dropped a typewriter through a hole in the ice. Tommy was innocent—but how could she prove it?

Sharon stayed in the big house alone until the silence got on her nerves. At four o'clock she put on her squirrel coat, took a front-door key from a hook in the pantry and went out. For more than an hour she had walked around the town. Now it was getting dark. Lights were winking on in University dormitories. Undergraduates with their collars turned up shuffled past through the fog. A clock in one of the Gothic towers began to chime.

A hurrying figure overtook her, glanced back, and said: "Hello, Sharon."

It was Dutch Jenkins. He slowed down and walked beside her. "What's all this about Tommy?"

Sharon told him. "But Tommy didn't do it," she concluded.

"Of course he didn't do it."

Outside of the University post office a newsboy was selling papers. Headlines stopped them: Thomas English Held in King Murder. Dutch bought a paper. They read it under the weak glow of a dimmed-out street-lamp. There was a picture of Tommy, and a brief statement that he was being held, and a lot of rambling speculation about the murder. They walked on up Chanford Road. Dutch squired her along the drive to the front door of the main house.

"Listen, Sharon," he said. "Everything's going to turn out all right. Don't you worry. And if you ever need help, just remember that there's a lot of guys just across the street who'll go to bat for you any time you holler."

"Thanks, Dutch," Sharon said gratefully.

"I'm going to tackle the dean about this," Dutch added. "He likes Tommy. Maybe he'll be able to help."

Dutch walked off down the drive. Sharon let herself into the house with her key. She switched on the hall light, took off her coat—and stopped short. A thought had leaped into her head out of nowhere: The meaning of John King's dying words was suddenly clear. No one had guessed, because no one had remembered that John King, a few minutes before he died, had fallen downstairs. When he mentioned the first step, he must have meant the first step *down*—not the first step *up*. Everyone had assumed that he had referred to the bottom step, the step near which he was lying when they found him. But that wasn't so. The key was hidden under the carpet of the top step—the first step down.

Sharon put her coat on again and went through the dining-room into the pantry. She found a key to the cottage on one of the hooks behind the door. Back in the front hall, she was suddenly afraid to go to the cottage alone. There was a telephone in the library; Sharon looked up the Alpha-O house number, dialed it, and asked for Dutch Jenkins. She had to wait several minutes before Dutch answered.

"Hello?" she said. "Dutch? This is Sharon. Can you meet me at the cottage right away?"

"Sure I can," Dutch said. "What's up?"

"I'll tell you when I see you."

"Shall I bring a gang?"

"No. Just come yourself. Right now. I've thought of something that may help Tommy."

"I'm on my way," Dutch said, and hung up. . . .

Sharon's heels crunched on the gravel drive. Fog hung thickly over the shrubbery and evergreens. She had to strain her eyes in the darkness to see where she was going.

Dutch was waiting for her on the steps of the cottage. Sharon unlocked the door and turned on the hall light.

Dutch asked: "What are we sleuthing for?"

"A key."

"A key to what?"

"I don't know. But I think it's the answer to the whole mystery. See if you can find a hammer or a chisel—something to pry up a carpet."

Dutch went off in the direction of the kitchen. Sharon climbed the stairs and tried to poke her fingers under the carpet on the top step. She couldn't do it; the carpet was tacked down securely. Waiting there for Dutch, she had a gruesome mental picture of John King dragging himself along the hall, bloody and horrible, with a key in his fist. Perhaps he thought that the murderer was still in the house, looking for the briefcase. Perhaps at that moment he decided to get rid of the key. He had enough strength left to push it under the carpet. Then he collapsed, and his huge body plunged down the stairs.

Dutch appeared with a screwdriver. Sharon told him to pry up the carpet on the top step. As soon as he'd

loosened one edge, Sharon slipped her fingers underneath and felt around. There was nothing. Disappointment was a sharp ache in her chest.

"Try the other side."

Dutch ripped out the tacks at the other end of the step. This time Sharon's fingers touched something—a smallish flat key.

"I've got it," she cried.

She pulled the key out from under the carpet. It was the sort of key used to open strong-boxes. On it was stamped the number 13. Before she could turn it over to examine the other side, Dutch said: "What's that?"

Sharon's fingers closed over the key. In the stillness she could hear her own heartbeats. Then she heard something else—footsteps. They were climbing the wooden stairs from the cellar to the kitchen. Her spine tingled when Dutch called loudly: "Who's there?"

No one answered. The footsteps stopped. A moment later she heard them again. Now they were descending the stairs—lightly, quickly. Someone was hurrying away. Presently the outside cellar door shut with a muffled bang.

Dutch started downstairs. "I'll get him."

"No," Sharon cried, following. "Don't leave me. We'll call the police."

"He'd be in the next county by the time they got here."

"He may be dangerous—"

"I know it," Dutch said. "You stay here, Sharon."

"Nothing doing!" Sharon replied. "I wouldn't stay here alone for a million dollars."

They went outside and ran around to the cellar door. Sharon stayed as close as she could to Dutch. Listening and peering off into the foggy darkness they heard drops falling from the trees and the purr of an automobile on Chanford Road.

"He didn't have time to get around to the gate," Dutch said. "He's here some place—" Dutch broke off and cried: "There he is! Hey, you! *Stop!*"

Off in the evergreens something moved. It was merely a darker shadow among shadows. Dutch ran after it. Sharon followed—because it was scarier standing there alone than chasing after Dutch. She plunged on up across the grounds, bumping against trees, dodging bushes and shrubs, her heels catching over roots. Twigs slapped against her face and stung her cheeks. On the lawn in front of the main house she stopped, panting. Dutch had veered off to the left. She could hear two people running around the side of the house. Obviously she couldn't keep up with them.

Sharon crossed the lawn and the driveway to the front door. The light that she had left burning in the hall guided her. She fumbled in the dark until she had wrapped the strong-box key in her handkerchief and wedged it into her skirt pocket. She no longer heard the sound of running feet in the darkness.

IT was better in the house with lights blazing in the living-room and library. The telephone was in the library. Sitting on the couch, Sharon opened the phone-book on her knees. Her hands were trembling so that it was hard to find the right page; and the first time she dialed police headquarters she got the wrong number.

When Officer O'Brien's voice finally answered, Sharon said breathlessly: "Tell Chief Ford to come to the King house. This is Sharon Kelley. I'm all alone here, and—"

"Now, now!" Officer O'Brien said soothingly. "Just tell me what it's all about, Miss Kelley."

"The murderer's here. Some place on the grounds. And I have the key—"

"What key, miss?"

"The key that everybody's been looking for. The key that John King hid before he died. Hurry, please."

The tone of Officer O'Brien's voice changed. "Stay right where you are. Don't leave the house. Stay right there and hang onto that key—"

Without being able to identify any particular sound Sharon became aware of another presence in the house. Her heart began to pound. Could it be Dutch? Scarcely—Dutch had no way of getting in. Where, incidentally, had Dutch gone?

Officer O'Brien was saying: "Do you hear me, Miss Kelley? Stay where you are. We'll be there as soon as I can locate the Chief. Do you hear me?"

"Yes," Sharon said. "But don't wait for anything. He's here—in the house with me—come quickly—"

Sharon dropped the phone into its cradle. She sat very still, listening. Officer O'Brien had told her to stay in the house. But there was someone else in the house; and Dutch was playing a crazy hare-and-hounds game with someone outside. Sharon decided to go to her room and lock herself in until the police arrived.

As she rose to her feet, all the lights in the house went out. Someone had thrown the master-switch in the kitchen. Sharon inched through total blackness until she found the doorway into the hall. There was a pulse throbbing in her throat, and her hands were icy with perspiration. She had only one thought—to get to her room and lock the door.

The stairs were somewhere off to the right. Sharon moved toward them, holding her arms out in front of her like a sleepwalker. It was important to move quickly, but it was just as important to make no sound. Her fingers touched the banister. With her foot she located the bottom stair. Climbing, she listened for footsteps behind her in the hall; there was no sound except the ticking of the grandfather's clock. . . .

At the head of the stairs Sharon felt her way along the wall in the direction of her room in the tower. She had almost reached Tommy's door when a light winked on. Someone with a flashlight was approaching along a hall that led from the back stairs. Whoever it was had outguessed her and cut her off from her room.

Sharon plunged off in the opposite direction. She bumped into a wall and careened around a corner. She wanted to find the head of the stairs again, but in the darkness she had lost her sense of direction. She merely knew that she was in a strange hall with doors on either side of it, and the dim outline of a window at the far end. Around the turn in the corridor behind her the flashlight winked on and off. He was tracking her down.

Sharon groped down the hall. She came to a door. Her fingers closed around the knob. Opening the door, she stepped inside and closed it softly. There was a key in the lock. Sharon turned it. Leaning against the door, she could feel the strength draining out of her body. She was in Mrs. King's room—a faint odor of perfume hung on the air.

Presently she heard footsteps outside in the corridor. Sharon moved away from the door; she was afraid that the murderer would hear the pounding of her heart. He was methodically searching that part of the house. Sharon could hear him opening and closing doors. He reached the door of Mrs. King's room and turned the knob. He rattled the door—gently at first, then violently. Instinctively Sharon stepped backward. She collided with a dressing-table and things crashed to the floor. After a brief pause, a heavy body rammed against the door—again and again, until one of the panels split.

In the dark Sharon located another door. Passing through into a bathroom, she closed the door and turned the bolt. For a moment she had a rat-in-a-trap sensation. Then she discovered that the bathroom had a second door. Stumbling blindly across a room full of tables and lamps, she came out into a hall. Her fingers touched wooden banisters. She was near the head of the front stairs. She heard Mrs. King's door splinter and crash open. Then there was silence.

Sharon, clinging to the banisters, descended the stairs. Before she could reach the front door, a light flashed on in

the upper hall. She dodged into the library. Carefully the flashlight explored the hall. It went out—and cautious footsteps came down the stairs.

Sharon crouched against a bookshelf; her cheek rubbed along leather bindings. The footsteps were crossing the hall toward the library. Sharon, desperately, took a book from the shelf. Standing in the doorway, she threw it as far as she could across the hall and into the living-room. The light flashed in that direction. Silhouetted against the beam of it, Sharon saw a dark figure. The figure rushed into the living-room. Sharon moved swiftly to the front door, opened it, and stumbled into the open. Headlights were swinging up the drive. A police car braked to a stop, and Chief Ford leaped out of it. Officer O'Brien was with him.

"He's in there," Sharon said hysterically. "In the living-room."

Officer O'Brien, gun in hand, pounded up the steps and into the house.

Sharon took the wadded handkerchief out of her skirt pocket. "Here's the key," she said. "He was trying to get it. He—he would have killed me—"

Chapter Eight

TWENTY minutes later Sharon was stretched out on the living-room sofa. Charles and Mrs. King had come home; Mrs. King was poking the fire into a cheerful blaze, and the butler was making Old Fashioneds at the liquor tray near the door. There were policemen and detectives tramping in and out of the house with flashlights and revolvers. Officer O'Brien hadn't caught the murderer. They were still searching the property.

Chief Ford had been busy on the telephone. Now he came into the living-room, rubbing the back of his dark head with the tips of his fingers. "Trouble is," he complained, "nobody around here has eyes in his head."

"Meaning me?" Sharon asked.

"You for one," Chief Ford said. "He followed you all over the house with a flashlight—yet you didn't even catch a glimpse of him. And now young Jenkins over at the fraternity house—the one you say chased him through the grounds—says he didn't get a look at him either."

Sharon sat up. "Is Dutch Jenkins all right?"

"Except for a bump on the head," Chief Ford replied. "It seems the fellow ambushed him and slugged him with something, maybe a heavy flashlight. Jenkins came to and went back to the cottage, because he thought you were still there. He couldn't find you, so he went over to the Alpha house and called Headquarters. He phoned here a minute ago to find out what happened to you."

"Is he coming over?"

"No. It isn't necessary. He can't tell us anything helpful."

Officer O'Brien entered. "Mr. Biggs is on his way, Chief. I can't locate Professor Wolf."

"Try the Faculty Club," Chief Ford said. And to Sharon: "It's easy to see what happened. After he slugged Jenkins, he came into the house. I don't know why—perhaps he thought it would be a good place to hide until the coast was clear. Anyway, he got in somehow, and heard you call Headquarters and tell O'Brien you'd found the key. He wanted that key, and he went after it—in the dark, so you couldn't recognize him. If you ask me, you got off lucky."

Mrs. King asked: "Can you tell us what the key was supposed to unlock?"

"I think I can," Chief Ford replied, "in a few minutes."

Sharon said: "At any rate, we've proved that Tommy English isn't guilty."

"Yes," Chief Ford admitted. "I've been convinced for a couple of hours that English was framed. This proves it. And I think I know who framed him—"

The doorbell rang. A plain-clothes man ushered Mr. Biggs into the living-room. The little man's eyes bulged excitedly behind his thick glasses.

"I got your message, Chief," he said. "I came right over."

"Take your coat off and sit down," Chief Ford replied. "You have some explaining to do."

Officer O'Brien looked in from the hall. "Professor Wolf is on his way from the Faculty Club."

Chief Ford nodded. He was pacing the floor with quick, nervous steps. Sharon had an impression that he was listening for something outside. Charles moved around silently with a tray of cocktails. Sharon took one; the whisky warmed her and eased some of her tension.

Chief Ford turned suddenly on Mr. Biggs. "Why in heaven's name did you stay here in the house last night?"

Mr. Biggs gulped. "I—I—"

"Don't deny it," Chief Ford snapped.

Mr. Biggs squirmed uncomfortably on the edge of his chair. "How did you find out?"

"Sharon Kelley discovered somebody hiding in the back hall between two-fifteen and two-thirty. The person—it was you—ran out of the house. Your landlady heard you arrive home at two-thirty. The answer was obvious."

"I just wanted to be helpful," Mr. Biggs said, blushing.

"You'll have to explain that."

"I was watching the butler," Mr. Biggs said. "I felt sure he'd stolen the briefcase, and that he'd do something with it during the night."

Charles stared at Mr. Biggs. He offered the roly-poly little man a cocktail.

"No, thank you," Mr. Biggs said. He avoided the butler's eye. "I only pretended to go home. I opened the front door and slammed it, but I stayed inside. I hid in the laundry until everybody went to bed. When the house was quiet, I unscrewed some electric-light bulbs and waited at the foot of the back stairs. I felt that I was only doing my duty."

Chief Ford said incredulously: "You expect me to believe that?"

"It's the truth," Mr. Biggs insisted. "I was sure the butler would sneak out with the briefcase during the night. I intended to follow him." He added weakly: "It seemed like a good idea at the time."

Chief Ford shook his head. "It was a crazy idea. However, believe it or not, you've helped me guess the answer."

The doorbell rang again. Professor Wolf took off his hat and coat in the hall and came into the living-room. His eyes were asking questions. "You sent for me, Chief?"

"Yes. The case is solved, Professor. I thought you'd want to be in at the finish."

"Naturally." Professor Wolf sat down near Mrs. King. Charles passed him a cocktail.

Chief Ford raised his head, listening. Outside in the driveway a car had parked. Two detectives came in. One of them carried a brown briefcase with the initials J. K. stamped in gold on the flap.

Chief Ford said quietly: "That's it."

"Good man!" Professor Wolf exclaimed.

"Take it to Headquarters," Chief Ford said. "Turn it over to the F. B. I. Have them notify Washington."

"Okay, Chief." The detectives went out.

Chief Ford stood with his back against the mantel, his dark eyes jumping from one person to another. "The murderer overlooked just one thing," he said: "Outside of that, his scheme was perfect. He was sure that John King would take excellent care of the briefcase—that he wouldn't let it get out of his possession. Rather than check it in a parcel-room at the station, for instance, he would carry it back to the cottage with him. However, the murderer forgot that you can check parcels and lug-

gage these days in steel compartments. They have them in most railroad stations, including ours. Last night John King undoubtedly would have taken the briefcase with him to the cottage if he hadn't seen those lock-boxes at the station. He checked the briefcase in Number 13, put the key in his pocket, and felt that his papers would be safe until he came back to take a later train."

Professor Wolf said: "Clever of you to figure that out."

"I didn't figure it out," Chief Ford replied. "Sharon Kelley found the key. It was plainly marked. All I had to do was send a couple of men to the station for the briefcase. Those anonymous notes were a much cleverer idea." Chief Ford hooked his thumbs in his belt. Officer O'Brien and a plain-clothes man edged into the room. "The murderer had to get John King and that briefcase alone together in a safe place. So he worked on King's jealousy. It was an elaborate way of going about it—but the person who shot John King has a brilliant, elaborate mind. It wasn't his fault that the plan slipped up. And when it did, he kept on trying. This afternoon in the cottage he was looking for the key. No doubt he'd guessed the answer—but Sharon Kelley had guessed it first. He slugged the Jenkins boy, came into the house, heard Sharon tell O'Brien that she'd found the key—"

"Who did it, man?" Professor Wolf leaned forward in his chair. "Are you going to tell us?"

"Do I have to?" Chief Ford asked.

"I don't know what you mean."

"Yes, you do, Professor."

"Sorry." Professor Wolf looked puzzled.

Chief Ford said: "You killed John King, Professor."

Professor Wolf laughed. "That's ridiculous."

"You wanted the papers in that briefcase."

"I've told you before," Professor Wolf replied, "and I can prove, that I was in the Faculty Club when King was murdered."

Chief Ford nodded. "It's true that you went to the Faculty Club at ten o'clock. The boy at the desk heard you come in. But he didn't actually see you. And it was a cinch to tiptoe out again a minute later; the boy didn't know that you hadn't stayed in the reading-room."

Sweat stood out on Professor Wolf's forehead. "You're downright insulting. By God, I'll—"

Chief Ford said sharply: "Sit still. When you left the club, it only took a couple of minutes to get to the cottage. John King was waiting for you there. I don't know whether he saw you or not, but if he did, it must have given him quite a jolt to know that you wrote those anonymous notes about yourself."

"He didn't see me"—Professor Wolf checked himself—"because I wasn't there."

"You've given yourself away, Professor," Chief Ford said. "Arrest him, O'Brien."

Professor Wolf rose. "Don't any of you touch me—"

"Get him," Chief Ford cried.

PROFESSOR WOLF lunged for the door. There was a brief, fierce struggle in the middle of the room. Handcuffs clicked.

"You shot him, Professor," Chief Ford said. "You searched for the briefcase. You didn't dare stay in the cottage more than a few minutes; the boy at the Faculty Club might discover that you were gone. You hurried back there, went in quietly, and were innocently reading when the sirens went off."

Professor Wolf, disheveled, handcuffed to Officer O'Brien, was breathing hard. "You lie!"

Chief Ford said: "Take him away."

"You'll never prove it," Professor Wolf shouted. "Do you hear? You'll never prove it—"

Officer O'Brien and the detective dragged him out of the house. They could hear him protesting until a car door slammed and a motor roared off down the drive.

Later that evening Sharon and Tommy were together on the living-room sofa. Tommy's arm was around Sharon's waist and Sharon's head was on Tommy's shoulder. They stared into the fire and talked about the murder.

CHARLES ushered Chief Ford into the room. The Chief looked weary but contented. "Thought I'd drop by and tell you that he finally came clean. It makes things easier; we might have had a hard time proving a case against him."

Sharon asked: "This afternoon you said that Mr. Biggs helped you guess the answer. How?"

Chief Ford grinned. "By staying here in the house last night. Look—I realized not long after I took him to Headquarters, that Tommy must have been framed. After he left the Diamond Creek bridge last night it rained cats and dogs. If he'd dropped a pipe-cleaner onto the ice, it would have been washed away."

"I didn't drop any pipe-cleaner on the ice," Tommy said. "I chucked it after I started home."

"Well, somebody left a pipe-cleaner there for me to find. He left it on the ice so that I'd surely go down there and discover the typewriter. I figured he must have done it some time last night. Why? Because he didn't know that Tommy had gone to the bridge until after the murder—and I couldn't picture him going out there with the typewriter in broad daylight.

"How many people heard Tommy say that he'd gone to the Diamond Creek bridge? Mrs. King and Sharon—but neither one of them could be guilty. Dutch Jenkins—he was with a crowd in the Alpha house when the shot was fired. Mr. Biggs?"

Tommy interrupted: "I suspected him all along."

Chief Ford shook his head. "No. This was big-time stuff. I couldn't imagine him cooking up any such scheme. Besides, he couldn't have planted that typewriter and pipe-cleaner. He was here in the house until almost two-thirty. At two-thirty he arrived home and didn't go out again until morning."

Sharon objected: "He might have lied. He might have gone to the bridge before two-thirty."

"Perhaps. But that didn't make sense. If he was guilty, and went out to frame Tommy, why on earth come back to the house? No, his story about waiting for the butler was so cuckoo I had to believe it. And since Biggs was watching the butler, obviously the butler didn't leave the house before two-thirty—and after that there was a man on guard. Which left only one person with time and opportunity during the night to take the typewriter to the Diamond Creek bridge—Professor Wolf."

Chief Ford continued: "He overreached himself when he pulled that one. But there were other signs pointing in his direction. For instance, he went to the library at nine forty-five to get some books—but he didn't have any books with him when he arrived at the cottage. He had plenty of chances recently to steal the gun out of John King's study. He knew what King was up to in the factory, what his plans were, and the importance of that stuff in the briefcase. He was the logical person to suspect, and nine times out of ten the logical suspect is the right one. It was the Countess von Steen who put him up to it, after the F. B. I. arrested her husband. He was mad about the woman. He would have done anything for her—even commit murder and betray his own country. But it's all over now. The woman is under arrest—and I wouldn't like to be in the Professor's shoes. Anything else?"

Tommy said: "I can't think of anything."

Sharon added: "It's clear as daylight now—but I'm terribly glad it's over."

Chief Ford went home. Tommy poked the fire. Afterward he sat down beside Sharon again and held her hand. "Let's talk about the wedding—and all the things we're going to do during the next four months."

THE END

READERS' COMMENT*

(Continued from page 1)

WHERE TEXTBOOKS DON'T REACH

Some months ago my son entered an Army Officer's Candidate School, and the course was tough. As an ex-soldier, I was trying in my letters to give him in my limited way the reasons for many things that were being taught him. The answers do not appear in any textbook and I was bungling the job.

Then one day in a railroad station I bought a BLUE BOOK *quite by accident, and solved my problem. In this issue was the story of a flying patrol squadron on the Mexican Border of some years ago. This fine piece of fiction gave in a masterly way the whys and wherefores for a lot of training the young recruit fails to understand.*

I marked the story and sent it to my son, and he writes me that the story did him much good, as well as many boys in his squadron. This is additional proof that good, clean fiction is an educational force that reaches far into places where textbooks have never been. Maintain your standard for good fiction and BLUE BOOK *will remain a top-notch magazine for* men.

L. A. Cassidy, Louisville, Ky.

HE'LL CATCH US YET

Perhaps you ought to hear about the rather peculiar hobby that I have:

You see, for ten hours a day, six days a week, fifty-two weeks a year, (no vacation for the duration) I work at my job as Final Assembly Inspector in an aircraft factory, and in that capacity I go over some half-dozen planes daily from prop to rudder.

Add to this the fact that I am an avid aviation mag. fan, and you have the picture: I delight in, and hunt for technical errors in stories of flying.

But the BLUE BOOK *and its authors are batting one hundred per cent so far—I haven't been able to catch them in a single error, as yet, but I'm always hoping!*

You have succeeded in capturing the big names in the fiction field, and these men turn out stories and articles that give real, accurate portrayals.

Here's to the BLUE BOOK, *its authors, and especially to the mature, finished work that they are giving us!*

D. D. Robinson, Inglewood, Cal.

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*The Editors of BLUE BOOK are glad to receive letters of constructive criticism and suggestion; for the ones we publish each month we will pay the writers ten dollars each.

Letters should not be longer than two hundred words; no letters can be returned, and all will become property of McCall Corporation. They should be addressed: Editor of Letters, Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York.

The HILL *of the* TERRIFIED MONK

A Complete Book-Length Novel

by Geoffrey Homes

Who wrote "The Street of the Crying Woman."

"THERE'S nothing to worry about," I said to Popol.

"Nothing but the rats and the lawsuit," he said bitterly. "Because of a ferret, we are being sued for five hundred dollars." He seemed on the point of hysteria. "Rats. A theater full of rats. So I hire a man with a ferret to kill the rats. And the rats kill the ferret."

He had a right to be hysterical; but I had been hired as promoter for this chain of theaters; and I had to get on with the job.

My next port of call was the office of the Daily *Frontier;* and there the editor dusted me off into the lap of a child of twenty just out of the University of Arizona.

The child's name was Eric Prentiss. He had blue eyes and long lashes and a complexion any woman would have peddled her soul for. He was six feet seven, and his eyes were troubled. "I need a drink," he told me after he had agreed to cover the opening of our show.

"Women?"

"Men," said Eric. "In recruiting offices. You know what those guys said about me? Too tall for the Army. Too tall for the Navy. Too tall for the Marines. What do they want, midgets?"

I couldn't answer that. But I knew how he felt. The armed forces didn't want me, either. I wasn't too tall, and I wasn't too short, and I wasn't too young or too old. My trouble was, I'd been a careless fool who had thought he could get away with taking a plane up without permission, a plane that got tired and refused to climb over a eucalyptus tree near the airport. So here I was with a bum knee, and a paper saying the Army didn't want me any more.

I drove over to the airport with Eric to cover a plane-arrival.

A Mexican detective named Madero, and two other men were waiting by the mail-truck—big lean fellows, casually dressed, with good weatherbeaten faces.

The ship rolled right up in front of us and stopped. A guy shoved the steps against it and opened the door, and out stepped a pretty girl, and then a dame carrying an amiable dog under her arm. A couple of generals; a couple of privates; and finally an undersized fellow with a briefcase in each hand—a little guy who would have looked good riding Whirlaway—came out and sauntered toward the gate.

All at once the jockey came to a sudden stop, then turned and with incredible speed made as pretty an end run as you could ask for, digging at the pocket of his jacket as he ran, and the two big guys trying to head him off. Then the Mexican detective cut in, and that thing he had in his hand wasn't a cigarette.

The fugitive skidded to a halt, spun around and headed back our way, and he too had a gun in his hand.

Six foot seven inches of youthful enthusiasm slammed into me, and I landed on my back in the gravel with Eric on top of me just as the man started shooting. He took three quick shots, then darted to the left, which was a mistake because he had runways to cross, several of them, and the Langton airport is plenty busy. A bomber was roaring down, and I saw it, and I saw the guy running, and I sat up and let out a yell; but what was the use?

(Geoffrey Homes goes on from here in the next issue.)

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