

BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure for MEN, by MEN ★ OCTOBER ★ 25 Cents



THIS IS OUR LAND—X... Trail Herds Moving North
Painted by **HERBERT MORTON STOOPS**

CAVALRY MOUNT by **FAIRFAX DOWNEY**

A complete book-length novel by the author of "Army Mule"

CHAMP GOES HOLLYWOOD by **JOEL REEVE**

SNAKE RIVER JIM PLAYS POKER
by **WILBUR S. PEACOCK**

THE TRIGGER FIGHTS HER WAR
by **Commander EDWARD L. BEACH**

Who's Who *in this* Issue



Captain Raymond Moore

OPERATION Dormouse" (which begins on page 64) can best be described by the following citation: AWARD OF SILVER STAR MEDAL CAPTAIN RAYMOND E. MOORE 01 301 529 Infantry, Army of the United States. For gallantry in action on 11 August 1945 when he served with a special team operating behind enemy lines with the mission of sabotaging enemy lines of communication. Captain Moore led three Sino rifle squads with bazookas attached and a section of light machine guns in an attack against Japanese positions, along a key railroad in Central China. His section was pinned down by the heavy mortar and machine gun fire while advancing across broken country within two hundred yards of the Japanese positions. Captain Moore tried to maneuver his men into firing positions, but failed due to accurate enemy fire. Seeing his men were helpless, he crawled back to his machine guns, through enemy fire; while bullets kicked around him, and led them to the enemy's right flank. In order to place effective fire on the ene-

my, it was necessary for him to set his section of machine guns in plain view, so that the pressure on the rest of the team would be released. A mortar shell knocked out one machine gun and Captain Moore put it back into position and effectively manned the gun while mortar and small arms fire searched for him. His accurate fire forced the enemy to keep low and only return a weak and inaccurate fire. His personal bravery, tactical skill and devotion to duty were responsible for the withdrawal of his section with few casualties and was immediately responsible for the success of the team's mission. His achievements reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States



*Captain Moore, Major Austin and
Captain Allen.*

Peter Wells

I WAS born in Port Clinton, Ohio, in 1912. My youth was not very adventurous because I got spanked every time I got that way.

However, my school and college vacations were spent going trans-Atlantic as a deckhand, a whim of my naval architect father, who gets seasick. Was in Leningrad for three weeks in 1932 and am thus qualified as an expert on international affairs.

After graduating from Yale in 1935, I set out on a mad chase through the advertising and art fields, seeking pro-

perity. So far, it has eluded me, but I've held some interesting jobs—selling everything from stuffed mice to wall plaster. I finally landed a publisher and the New York *Herald Tribune* award for "Mr. Tootwhistle's Invention," a juvenile epic concerning the cow-catcher, and am now firmly established as the Ernest Hemingway of the 4-10 age group.

The Navy took me on as an eager, if elderly, Ensign and trained me to a frazzle on 16" guns and armor plate before assigning me to Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron No. 16 for duty. I arrived in New Guinea just in time to shove off for Leyte and Mindoro in the Philippines, a good place not to go at that time. P.T. 220 had the best crew in the business. I needed them. We worked with the guerrillas and Army scout teams and got a Navy Unit Commendation for not being sunk. Later we did some Government yachting around Sarawak, Borneo, with the Australians—a very fine bunch. I was extremely cautious throughout and do not enjoy having folks shoot at me.

My hobbies are curiously varied and unfortunately expensive. They have narrowed down recently to sailing on other people's boats and drinking in Hakluyt's Voyages and beer under an apple tree.

With my wife, poor wretch, and three noisy sons I inhabit a lower Connecticut ridge. After reading Blue Book for so many years, I am quite proud of having hoodwinked the editor into printing me beside the elect.



Readers' Comment*

For Men—But Not Men Only

THREE years, on my war job, I laid off writing—and reading. I'd go back all fresh. But I didn't; the think-tank was dry as dust. Today I meandered into a friendly little newsstand, surveyed the layout, began buying.

"Men's mags," I told the prop. "That's what I like."

He pointed out the standards. I paid. Then I looked.

"BLUE BOOK faded?"

"Nope; it's a family magazine now. Lotta women buy it, too." He hauled one out.

"Just for their men," I defended.

"Women in most stories," he pointed out.

"Purely incidental," I argued.

"One thing—no ads on hair-remover, cold cream, lipstick, and how to make your hair grow," he admired. I was pleasantly surprised. We can concede a few women in the yarns after that boon.

Now I'm reading it happily. B. B. has not changed. It's still a man's magazine. And somehow, the women in the stories seem to add a nice background touch, like a spot of color against a gray sky.

B. Coursin Black

Serials—But No Fact Stories

SINCE reading my first copy of BLUE BOOK more than twenty years ago, I have not missed an issue. It has been a constant source of pleasure and inspiration to me.

I am satisfied with your magazine as it is being issued now with but one exception, concerning which I have this suggestion to offer. Why not eliminate the department—"Stories of Fact and Experience," which now occupies so many pages? Now that the war is over, the book-stands are flooded with publications featuring such matters so numerous that it makes the mind weary to contemplate them. Why add to the burden? Why not make BLUE BOOK a magazine wholly given over to entertainment and refreshing relaxation?

I believe that a return to serials would be appreciated. The longer story appeals to me strongly. Two-part serials, please!

S. Otis Swafford

*The Editors of BLUE BOOK are glad to receive letters of constructive criticism and suggestions; and 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 17, New York.

BLUE BOOK

October, 1946

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Vol. 83, No. 6

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Painted by Herbert Morton Stoops

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

DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

McCALL CORPORATION, Publishers, The Blue Book Magazine
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Published monthly at McCall St., Dayton 1, Ohio. Subscription Offices—Dayton 1, Ohio. Editorial and Executive offices—230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, October, 1946. LXXXIII, No. 6. Copyright 1946, by McCall Corporation. All rights reserved in the United States, Great Britain and in all countries participating in the Pan American Copyright Convention and the International Copyright Union. Reprinting not permitted except by special authorization. Subscription Prices: one year \$2.50, two years \$4.00, in U. S., Canada and Pan-American countries. Extra in other foreign countries \$1.00 per year. For change of address give us four weeks' notice and send old address as well as new. Special Notice to Writers and Artists: Manuscripts and art material submitted for publication in the Blue Book Magazine will be received only on the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury thereto while such manuscripts and art material are in the publisher's possession or in transit.

Entered as second-class matter, November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879

Printed in U.S.A.

On either side the foaming rocks came out from the shore to meet us. But Ulffa declared that beyond all chance of mistake this was the place.



The HOMELESS

I LAY in a dark numbness of brain and body.

"Land!"

Like the call of a war-horn came the cry, clear and startling above the never-ending shouts and singings of the wind.

"Land! Northumbria! Land before!"

Cold and grief and gloomy forebodings fell away, forgotten in those wild awakening shouts! I crawled

out from under the low shelter that we had made with what was left of the gale-torn spare sail, laying it from the edge of the reardeck over the four stern rowing-thwarts.

The bitter sword-edged wind struck across the open breadth of the ship. White ice-flakes of flying sea-spray scaled by my face.

The ship plunged and burst up in the great rolling ocean-troughs. Overhead, across the rocking sky, the wind

drove the clouds, gray and streaming, the banners of winter storm.

It was young Sturre Thordson who had shouted, standing high on the prow-point of the foredeck. The men came in haste from under the small space beneath both decks and from out the poor protection of the sail-covered thwarts. Raud Enirson, who was Sturre's uncle, was just before me. I followed him to the slippery foredeck, thick with the gray ice of salt



The stirring saga of a Vi- king raid on Britain

COMPANY

By
Anthony Elsen

water. Behind us pressed the other men.

All about the ship, as far as eye could reach, there stretched but foam, foam, foam, and the heaving, heaving waves.

"Northumbria?" Braced to the pitch of the ship on the narrow deck, Raud, ever unmoved and slow to believe, shook his head and frowned heavily. "On the third day's sailing, ice-laden as we are? Have we wings?"

And standing beside him, I was thinking the same, but we both peered ahead to the farthest vague meeting of sea and sky.

Sturre's face was afire with belief in his discovery.

"Look!" The boy clung with one hand to the arched, ice-sheathed neck of our *Serpent* and leaned out over the waves of the wintry North Sea to point. "There! Low down and off a small space to the side where the wind

blows. A black point with a long low whiteness behind it!"

Our bow lifted high on a great wave-top. My heart leaped up with it, for before we pitched down, beyond Sturre's pointing hand, I saw plainly what he had said was there—a dark low point with a lower white line behind it. On this gray sea and against this gray sky that could mean only land, a black naked face of rock and snow-covered land behind it!

One glimpse we got. Then we tipped forward and the sea heaved up, hiding the sight. We plunged down a wave-slope that climbed mast-high from the ocean bed behind us. Our prow dived deep into the next rising ridge. Green-white, the water flung itself up to break on the fierce-eyed head of our *Serpent*. Sturre fell back as the wave poured over on the icy deck. The cold shock of that sea drove us all back to the edge of the foredeck. The water swashed about our feet and overflowed in little twisting runnels down into the ship on the ice already there.

"You saw it?" gasped Sturre. His long bearskin overwrap and his leg-bindings were as stiff with ice as the planking beneath our feet, but he only beat his hands together and stamped his feet for warmth.

"It is land," said Raud slowly, without taking his eyes from the distance as he brushed unthinkingly at the spume of the last wave that was already ice on the side of his beard.

He turned and called back to Ulffa Ragnarson, who was steering on the open reardeck: "You—Ulffa! Have you seen the land?"

Across the length of the ship I saw the white matted beard part and Ulffa's few teeth break out in his scornful leer. "A quarter league back!" he answered, short and sour.

"You would say nothing, I should know," muttered Raud. Then he called again, "What land is it? Can you say?"

The ship pitched and recovered herself before Ulffa saw reason to answer harshly, "Northumbria! What land should it be?"

"Perhaps part of Pictland, or even the Orkneys."

"Northumbria!" said Ulffa, and he turned again to his steering.

"Trust Ulffa's word," I said to Raud. "He has brought ships this way more times than there are fingers on both our hands."

"It may be," said Raud slowly, looking off over the water. "Yet, we have come half-blind in snowsqualls. Who can be sure of such a course?—And how we have sailed! The God of Storms himself set his breath behind us all the way!"

THERE was reason for his saying the God of Storms had driven us. A wild wind from the northeast had roared behind our sail for two days and nights. Throughout both nights and most of the daytime, Ulffa had steered and treaded the straining ship through seas, every one that could have overswept her. No man was wiser in sea-cunning than Ulffa the Shaggy, who had learned the knowledge of stars, winds, and the waves from his father Ragnar, who had been the steersman of two kings in time be-



fore us. Nor in all Norway, was there a stouter ship than this, King Harold's own *Serpent*.

And even so, I think we could not have gone to pieces. Every plank was frozen fast to the next, tighter than the best iron could have fastened it. Thus the seams were closed also, for we had launched the ship fresh from her winter shed, without pitching or refitting in any way. The ice made her heavy, and we had chopped it away wherever we could. We rode deeper and were beaten more by the seas because of the ice, but we were all the more staunch.

"Go back, some of you, away from the fore, here!" said Raud to the men as another wave washed high over the prow. "Too much weight at this end. You had best get back under cover. It will be a long while yet before we reach land."

The men, most of whom had caught a glimpse of the distant land, withdrew from the front of the ship to seek the protection of the shelters again, out of the wind. We rode better with their weight gone from the front.

"Do you think it Northumbria?" Sturre asked, left on the edge of the

foredeck with Raud, and Thorder—who had been Harold's standard-bearer—and me.

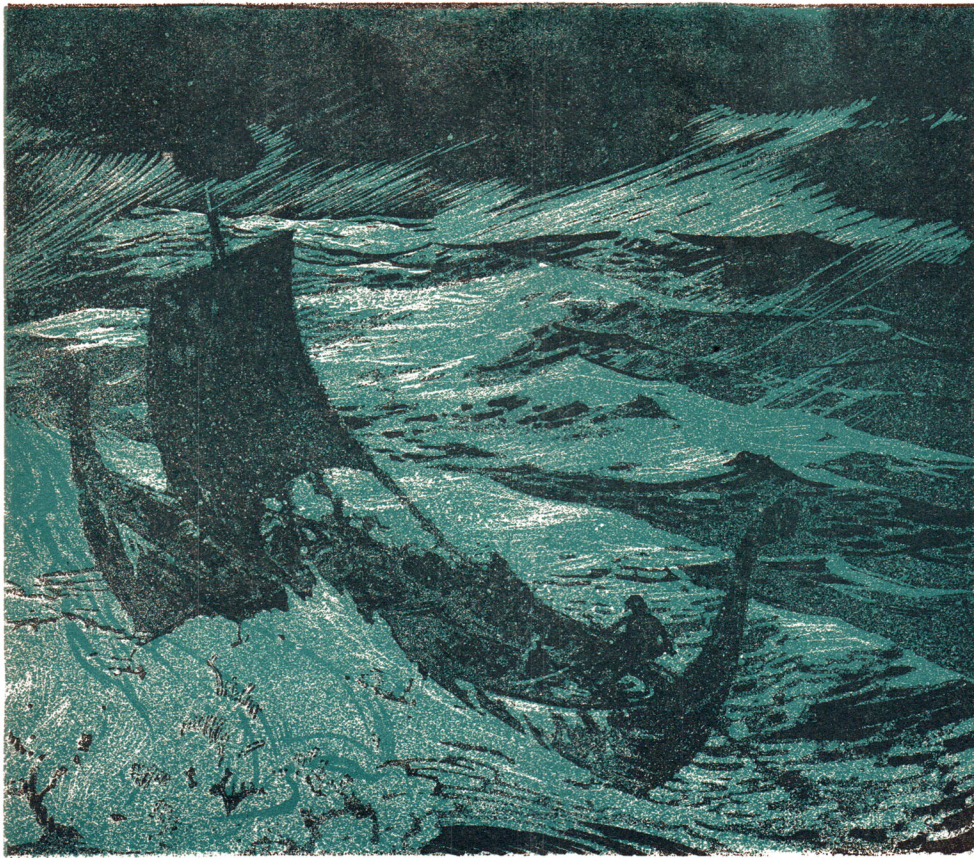
"Tonight or tomorrow will tell," said Raud. "And now you find a place out of this wind and **thaw** yourself." There was ice even in Sturre's long yellow hair where it hung down upon his forehead, escaped from under the hood of his great bearskin overwrap.

Sturre left us to find shelter for himself under the sail. Raud, Thorder and I stood looking over the water before us while gusts of wind beat across the ship. Again and yet again we saw the low distant marks of land.

"It would be luck for us if the country is deep in snow," said Raud at length. "Then, if our sail is seen, word cannot be spread fast."

"Why should we be seen?" said Thorder in bitter reasoning. "Who watches a barren winter sea? Men lie close in their homes around the fire in this weather."

Yes, I thought as we pitched amid this heaving waste of ocean, men lie close by their fires in this weather. And when, I wondered, would any of this ship's company know the warmth



“Northumbria? On the third day’s sailing, ice-laden as we are? Have we wings?”

of hearth-fires in their own land again? Even I, whose life it was to wander the world with the passing years, had many times been glad to spend the winter under the roof of some open-handed lord, when far away from King Harold’s long hall in Upsala.

Raud left the foredeck to go back to Ulfa at the stern. I dropped down into the hold of the ship. Wungon was sitting just inside the low narrow opening that led under the foredeck, working on an arrow held between his knees. He looked up and, with a short wave of his hand, made motion to me that there was room inside. I crawled in where he made place for me by drawing up his legs.

The space was small, filled mostly with goods and gear. Here, raised from the bottom of the ship on a flooring, the greatest part of our food, water and weapons was kept. Half a dozen men were huddled among these things. An open chest filled with arrows stood beside Wungon. During all the daylight hours of our three days’ sailing, he had sat there, sharpening arrowheads with a whetstone. These arrowheads were of his own making, three-sided arrowheads, mold-

ed and fashioned from an iron that he alone could smelt, an iron of wonderful hardness that he made somehow by mixing in ordinary iron, when molten, the wood of certain trees, after that wood had been dried in an oven until black and crumbling. I have seen these arrowheads strike full-force against stone and not lose their points. Swords made of this metal could be tempered to a hardness beyond all other swords.

The secret of this iron Wungon had brought with him from his own country, and where that was we did not know, except that it was somewhere to the south and the east. He always pointed in that direction when asked, for he had no tongue and so could not tell more.

WHEN King Harold had been young, he had wandered with a few companions in a part of Russia far to the east. There one day he was present at a show held by a king of that land. Wungon, a captive of that king, to make sport, had been thrown to fight two wild bears in a pit, armed only with a short sword like a dagger.

In the midst of the fight, when one of the bears was dying and had fallen on Wungon, who was half-dead himself, Harold had leaped down into the bear-pit and killed the other bear before his friends could help him or the Russians stop him. Then he had bought the half-dead Wungon from the Russians and cared for him while his wounds had healed.

A speechless giant—his tongue had been cut out during his slavery—Wungon could tell nothing of his own country, except to point off to the south and east when asked about it. His very name, “Wungon,” had been partly guessed, for he could say it only very imperfectly. Harold had offered him his freedom when he was well, but he had chosen not to take it. And since that time he had followed Harold. . . .

So among the chests we huddled now. For a long while we sat without speech, listening to the steady rasping of the stone on the arrowheads and the beating of the waves on the prow over our heads, five paces before us. Once, one of the men asked me to tell song or story to pass the heavy time. But I would not, saying that I had no

heart for such task then. For I had no desire to force myself to change my thoughts, and I would not have cheered them by telling the tale that was in my mind.

It was the Song of Olaf the Exile that had slipped into my brain there under the foredeck, the cold rhymes arising from my dreary mood and beating through my mind, line after line, while I was yet only half-conscious of them, thinking of other things. That has been my gift since early youth, when I first heard the sagas of the skalds. I remember them all, word for word, and can call them up at command, but more often the verses come unbidden, in response to the life around me.

A gift of joy and sorrow mixed, this is. All the world comes to a man closer and clearer when he has lying in his memory the gatherings of the understanding and the heart-words of the ages before him. Raised by many great hands and souls, the heights are so much the greater; but dug by the same mighty forces, the depths are as much the deeper. And myself an exile from my own native Iceland, I have known many of the depths as I have wandered by land and sea over the world.

Like the endless slide of waves along the ship's sides, the verses of Exile Olaf's Song slipped across my brain. And as I sat there in a cold half-trance watching Wungon at work, the first few lines repeated themselves over and over again at short spaces, like a burden to the rest:

"Our lone prow shares the closing ocean track,

Pathless before, the furrow falling in behind;

White waves in front and storm clouds lowering in back,

Falls night in gathering gales—what will gray morning find?"

Aye, what would gray morning find?

The only answer was the noise of iron on stone, the shrill singing of the wind, and, now and again, the splatter of sea-water on the ice at our feet, outside the low doorway. I drifted deeper into my far-off state of dreaming, perhaps fitfully sleeping, and the time must have passed.

WUNGON, closing the arrow-chest, aroused me to full consciousness again. The whole afternoon had gone by unknown to me, and dusk was falling. In our space under the deck the light was growing dim.

I crawled out through my doorway, and nearly fell at my first effort to stand, so numb and stiff was my body. The wind had fallen somewhat but the air was less cold, although night was coming down. A glance across

the foredeck showed me that the speck of land we had first seen had now risen to dark cliffs along a shoreline. Farther back stood snow-covered hills, still clear to the sight in the gathering dusk. A dozen men were standing in the open along the ship's length, gazing at the land.

The waves had lost something of their wild tossing with the falling of the wind. Yet we still pitched enough to make walking on the icy planks difficult, and our sail still billowed full and strong. Raud, who was standing 'midships, came forward to join me.

"Do you know that land?" he asked.

"It's nothing that I can say as having seen before," I said, peering at the cliffs and hills that were now fading in the darkness. "What does Ulfa say?"

"He swore by the blood of Thor's sacrifice that it is the land we seek. . . . And he also just swore."

"Then what need to question?"



*"Barbarians!
Barbarians!"
I heard Odar
whisper aloud,
but he was peer-
ing forward to
watch, and those
mild eyes were
strangely alive.*

Raud shook his head and looked off from under lowered brows. "We sailed for two days and nights wrapped in snowstorms. And now we come out of that shroud and find that we have come as true as the flight of a falling arrow. For all his cunning, this seems beyond even Ulffa, unaided by the sight of either stars or sun, as he was most of the time."

"His father," I said, "was known to steer by knowledge of the great fixed ocean-currents that are said to run in set courses through these waters, coming from between the Orkneys and Pictland. It is said that Ulffa's line as far back as Illing, his great-grandfather, have been able to feel the flow of these streams when they are met, and to tell their paths by the different degree of heat or cold of the waters."

"So I have heard," said Raud; "but never from Ulffa's mouth."

"It takes fifty words to tell," I said. "And when did Ulffa ever speak more than twenty at one time?"

"It may be," said Raud, still staring loweringly at the dimming land.

"And what matter how he found the way? We have arrived. What more should be asked?"

"True, we have arrived. . . . But where? It would be better not to blunder along the coast while word spreads of our being here."

"Trust Ulffa," I said. "And what else can we do?"

"True," Raud admitted. "He's the only one of us that knows this whole coast. . . . He should know it. He has robbed it from end to end with the Jutes, and even those fen-pirates, the Wends. . . . But I wish he had sailed by some sure reckoning these past two days. We cannot risk false landings."

"Let be with doubting," I said. "What comes, comes."

Raud left off his musing abruptly. "Look, the land is lost."

EARTH, sky and the distant water blended into one. Overhead, the cold, far-off stars of winter were twinkling pale and green between the scattered flying clouds.

"The moon will be up before the night is a quarter through," I said, studying the heavens.

"We'll need her light," said Raud. "Ulffa has declared that we'll land at this priest's hold before daylight."

"A landing by night." I turned the thought over aloud.

"What better time?" said Raud; and I knew how his face looked at that moment, although I could not see it in the darkness.

"And yet," I said, "Harold trusted this priest enough to send his only son to him for bringing up."

"Harold was a king, with a king's power."

"It was not his power that he trusted when he sent his son so far away."



Illustrated by John Costigan, N.A.

"Much has changed since then," said Raud. "A kingdom has been lost, and without doubt, gold has passed from hand to hand in many separated places."

"Harold could read the lust for gold in a man."

"Men are ruled by more lusts than the lust for gold," said Raud. "There is even the lust for life—the keeping of it—that will influence a man's actions." His voice took on an edge. "Which lust can be used to make a man do what he might not do otherwise; or, again, to undo even that."

"As it comes we shall meet it," I said, banishing further talk, seeing that his mind could not be changed just then.

I FELT my way back over the thwarts in the gloom to the reardeck, where the dark shape of the steersman loomed up against the night.

"I hope you can smell rocks beneath the water," I said to the thick-wrapped figure. "You'll need that gift soon if the clouds keep the moon hidden when it rises."

"Ulffa says the water is deep and free of rocks all along here." It was Sturre instead of Ulffa who answered.

"You steering at this time, boy?" I said in surprise.

"Will the ship sail by itself because it is night?" broke out Ulffa's voice at my feet, dry-harsh like the wind through fen reeds in winter.

Then I saw him. He was sitting on the steps that led to the deck, huddled against the low bulwark. From there he could watch the steering of the ship and could also rest and warm himself somewhat. All things considered, the wonder was that he was yet a living man instead of a stiff corpse, frozen fast to the rudder. Vikings we were, men of the cold North and the stormy sea, but not another one of us, had he been able to keep the course, could have stayed on that open reardeck as Ulffa had done through the worst of our voyage. We had two small tuns of mead aboard, of which he had drunk often during that time. The heating liquor helped him partly to face the fearful cold, but mostly it was his own body, gale-beaten as the shore rocks that endlessly batter back the heaving ocean—it was his own body that of itself had stood against the cold and wind.

Gruff, sour old bear of the sea, I thought, looking at his dark shape, if ever this skald makes saga again, the name of Ulffa Ragnarson shall have high place in those rhymes; and perhaps a hundred years from this day, around the after-supper fire, men shall hear of your sea-knowledge, or the long oars of some ship deep in Norway fiord or off Shetland Skerry shall strain and recover to the beat of the song of your hardihood!

The clouds across the face of the sky grew less and less as the night wore on. We sailed straight in for the land that showed again darkly under the starlight. Ulffa went under cover to sleep for a while, and Thorder, who was second best steersman aboard, took the rudder from Sturre. Many of the men slept also, who had been unable to sleep before because of the cold.

When the first third of the night had worn through, just as the pale part-moon began to rise, we awoke Ulffa again. We had come in close to the shore now. Ulffa studied the broken snowy cliffs in the dim yellow light of the moon and changed our course to bear along the shoreline, although we still sailed on. A man was stationed on the prow to watch for signs of rocks.

The wind had fallen much and the sea had lost the greater part of its madness. At about the middle of the night, the man on the prow called out a warning of rocks before us. We were sailing easy but steady now and Ulffa did not change his course any that I noticed. Then I saw the white fringes of waves breaking over the rocks as we sailed by them, two hundred feet away. They seemed to extend out all the way from the shore.

The moon was full-risen now and the night sky was almost clear. The heavy sullen crash of waves on the beach under the cliffs came to our ears. Ulffa turned in directly for the land again. On either side the foaming rocks came out from the shore to meet us. But always a wide channel lay in the center, through which we sailed. We went around a point of land and before us opened a wider bay, set in cliffs like a Norway fiord. The waves fell at the same moment, their height cut in half.

ULFFA declared that beyond all chance of mistake this was the place. Of all the crew he was the only one who had been here before. Raud, Thorder, and many of us had sailed by these cliffs at some former time, but we had never landed here, nor had we known of this hidden reach of the sea.

All the men were awakened now. We lowered the sail—a great heavy sail of two-fold thickness, seamed and resewed where every cord was fastened—a sail made to hold a king's ship before the might of that wildest of thotfellow, the roaring north wind. The long oars were unbound from under the rowing thwarts where most of them had been fastened. The oar-holes were cut free of ice with hatchet and knife. We took places along the thwarts and thirty-six ash blades swung together, threshing across the face of the moonlight that glittered within the water.

The rowing was welcome work. It was good to trust to our own strength again after being for two days helpless, in the power of the storm. The shimmering swirls spun back from the driving oars and we moved steadily along one shore of the bay. Twice Ulffa went aside to pass rocks, and once at the fore-man's cry we brought up on the sudden and backed water to avoid a water-level reef.

The night must have been entering its fourth quarter when we drew in to the landing that we had crossed the wintry North Sea to find. Facing the stern, I did not know we had reached the place until Ulffa gave word to ease off rowing. With short slow sweeps we moved on until the gruff warning came to raise oars. I turned my head to look just as our *Serpent* glided alongside a low level mass.

"Fasten here," said Ulffa from the reardeck as we drew in the oars.

BY the moonlight I saw this was a wharf of stone, extending from the shore, by which we were coming to rest. The icy sides of our ship ground against the rough ice that sheathed the wharf. Men at fore and stern leaped on the landing with dry ropes taken from the sheltered store-space.

I looked at the shore that was only a few hundred feet away. It was silent and deserted, for what I could see. The cliffs, two or three hundred feet high, seemed to rise almost from the water's edge. Patches of snow showed still and white in places, but mostly my sight was stopped by the vague darkness of the naked cliffs.

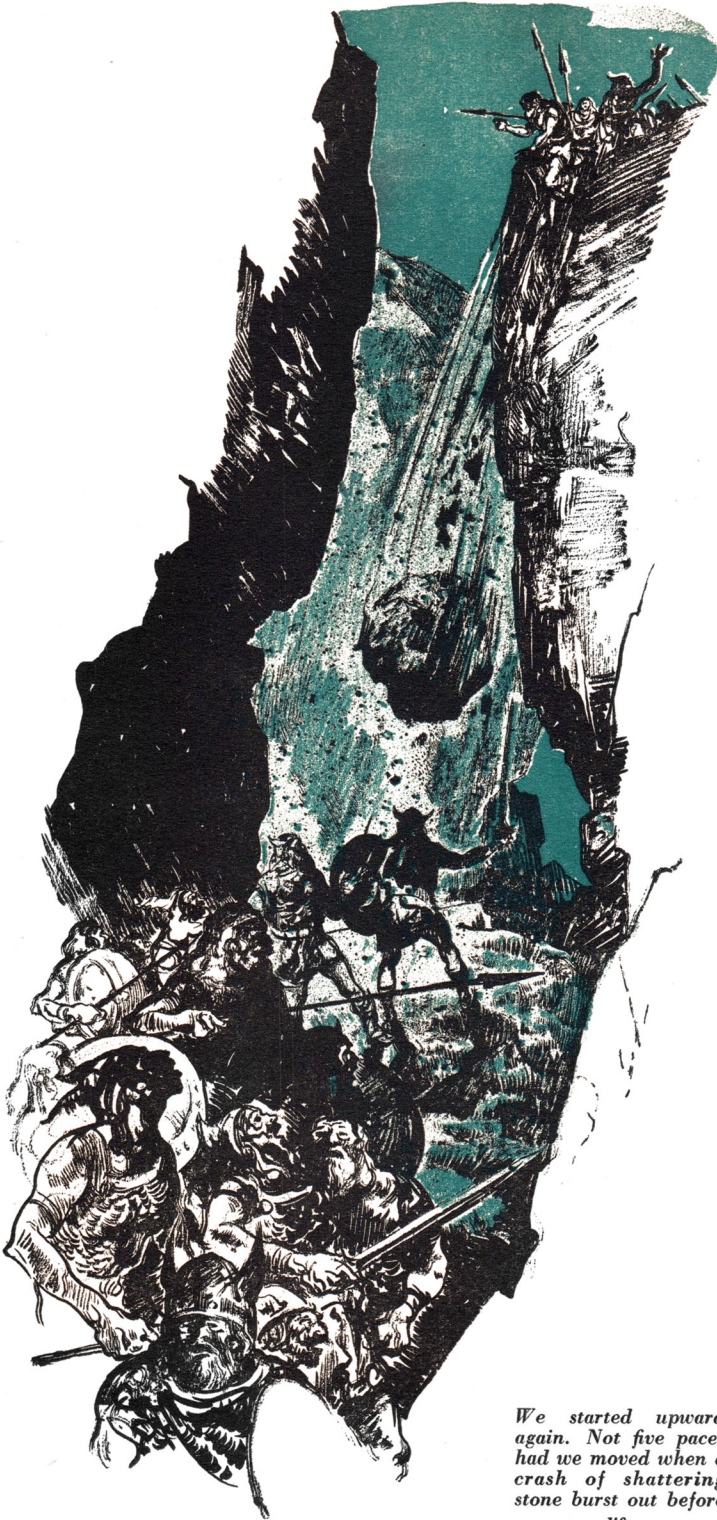
The ship was stirring with life in a hushed and hurried way. With one accord, as soon as they dropped the oars, the men had made for the fore store-space. The pale light of the moon struck dull glances from sword-haft and shield-stud as the weapons were swiftly handed out. I went to the fore with the others and Wungon handed me my sword out of the black space below. He knew every man's arms and somehow in the dark he found and recognized each weapon. Armed, I leaped out on the wharf.

Low-spoken, the word was passed around that Ulffa had said that the buildings were close by the shore. We lost no time. Four men were left with the ship. The rest of us moved noiselessly in along the wharf. All was silent on the shore, as silent as a pine forest of Norway in the frozen hush of a winter night. If someone had been awake and looking out over the water, our *Serpent* in the moonlight could not have come unseen. But no sign or sound of alarm disturbed the dark cliffs before us.

We reached the land. Abruptly, sheds and small buildings appeared along the shore under the cliffs. A



Wungon handed me my sword. He knew every man's arms and somehow in the dark he found and recognized each weapon. Armed, I leaped out on the wharf.



We started upward again. Not five paces had we moved when a crash of shattering stone burst out before us.

wide path, trampled in the snow that covered the land, led in from the end of the wharf. We were among the dwelling-places of men.

Without pausing, Ulffa led the way back to the cliffs. We followed him in a close group, making no noise but a dry crunching of snow with our feet. Broad steps of stone led up the rough rock wall. We ascended after Ulffa. To come in this stealthy way was none of my planning. But the rest had been with Raud in thought, and so like men of dark purpose we climbed silently upward.

"*Hold where you are!*" Above our heads a voice cried out these words in the language of the Danes.

We stopped motionless, every man of us.

The same voice, clear and strong, repeated the words in the kindred tongue of the Angles and Saxons of north Germany. Over our heads, from where the voice descended, we could see nothing but the edge of the cliff. Ourselves, we were in shadow.

Above the heavy breathing of the motionless men, I heard the soft slithering sound of a sword being drawn from its sheath, and Raud whispered fiercely: "Up!"

All about me arose the dry whisper and whine of clearing blades, and the close-grouped men jostled each other. Though still against this, I laid my hand on my own cold sword hilt. We started upward again. Not five paces had we moved when a crash of shattering stone burst out before us. A large rock had hurtled down to smash on the stone stairway just in front of the foremost men. We were all thrust back as the men in the van recoiled for an instant.

Shields swung up and I felt the wave of fighting fierceness that ran over the men. In the next instant they would have rushed the stairs with drawn swords, and for an instant I might have joined that rush, but suddenly I cried with all my power of breath, "Wait!"

The single word, bursting out in the stillness, held every man in his place.

Then I shouted up at the top of the cliff: "Hold your rocks up there! We are not enemies."

A short space of silence, and then the voice that had stopped us called down in Norse (in which speech I had just spoken): "What sort of friends can they be that come creeping like thieves or murderers in the night?"

Our stand was poor and I could only answer: "Men who would speak with the priest Odar."

"The priest Odar can better welcome visitors by the open light of day."

"The sea gave us no other choice in landing, and we came flying against time."

"Whence do you come?"

"That is best told to Odar's ear alone."

"By fifty swordsmen?"

"Let a few of us be given hearing."

"Let the rest of you return to your Snake-ship."

The men had listened with indecision while I spoke with the voice above us. Halted on the brink of a headlong storm of whatever might wait on top of the cliff, they still swayed between that and what I now had asked.

I PUSHED through the men that were between Raud and me.

"We were seen well out on the water," I whispered to him. "They were ready for us. The best way now would be to try truth and reason with this Odar. The sword remains if that fails. What can the attempt lose us?"

"They may have sent for aid, and perhaps they play for time," said Raud.

"By fair talk or otherwise," I said, "our business here will be settled long before aid can be raised at this season of the year."

"That may be true," Raud admitted. "I have never seen this priest. Yet I know that Harold trusted him. Where my king puts his faith I will put mine."

I remember the warmth that filled my heart as I found myself speaking these last words, calling Harold my king. At that instant, all my longing to return to Iceland, far rocky isle of my birth, from which I had been banished for a death in a blood-feud in my youth fifteen years before—all my longing to return to the narrow green valleys sheltered by the stark mountains and the wide sea left me forever. Hereafter, my homeland was the land of those of Harold's blood.

The speaking of Harold's name moved Raud also.

"We'll talk with this priest," he said. "Ask if the two of us may be allowed to ascend."

"You up there," I called, "give leave for two of us to ascend unharmed to speak with Odar."

"Let the rest of you go back as far as the open moonlight on the beach," came the reply.

"Their trust of us is as small as our trust of them must be great," muttered Raud. Yet he raised his voice to say loudly in the quiet to the men on the stairway below us: "Go back to the beach while Ring and I talk with this priest Odar. Thoroder will take my place while I am gone. If there is treachery and we return not, come back to seek us. Those wooden sheds on the beach will serve as torches to make light enough for your coming."

There were some mutterings of the danger of trickery, but the men did as Raud bid them. They passed down

into the deeper shadows below and I thought that Raud and I were alone when I made out Ulffa's thick form standing beside us.

"Are you going up with us?" I asked him.

"I didn't come to spend the night walking up- and downstairs," was his answer.

"Ask safe passage up there for the three of us," said Raud.

Once again I shouted up to the silent cliffs: "Have we Odar's word that three of us may be allowed to ascend and then return safely?"

"Come up," said the voice.

"There's nothing else to do now," said Raud, and we started up.

By the wide easy steps we climbed until our way was abruptly barred by a black roof over our heads. On either side the stairway was walled in by the bare rock from which it had been cut.

Raud raised his shield and struck against the barrier above us. It was wood, not stone, that answered the thud of the shield. There was a scraping over our heads and a strip of dark sky appeared in the middle of that barrier. It widened once and then again, and I guessed that planks were being thrown aside.

"Come up," said a voice through the opening, a gruff voice, not the one that had spoken to me before.

The opening was wide enough to let us pass. I went up the last few steps and thrust the upper part of my body through. I emerged into shadow. A dark half-circle of men were standing two or three paces back from the opening, and instantly I made out the heavy shape of sword, battle-ax and pike among them. I drew myself out and stood up. Raud and Ulffa followed me. By a brief glance around I saw that we were standing on a flat surface atop the cliff. Another rock face arose farther back, cutting off the light of the moon that now must have been low, leaving this place all in shadow. On the beach by the wharf, two hundred feet below, I saw the group of our men standing.

A man stepped forward from those that awaited us.

"Follow me," he said in a voice like the croak of a raven. The rest drew silently aside and we followed him. I glanced back to see the planks over the stairs being replaced. Five or six men walked behind us. I could see nothing of their faces, but by my one long look I saw that they were fair of size and at least two carried battle-axes, while the others were armed with heavy pikes.

A wide one-storied building loomed up before us, a blackness against the black of the cliff. Our guide led into an entranceway that swallowed him like the cave of midnight. While we paused outside, cautious of following,

he threw open a heavy inner door and the hallway was flaringly lit with torchlight from within. A lean carle with a smooth face stood inside, holding the torch.

"Our guide stood aside and made motion for us to enter. I saw him clearly now. He was broad and full of body, with the look of a fighting carle. He watched us in lowering sullessness as we passed. Then he shut the door behind us, and we were alone with the torchbearer.

The torchbearer gave us a fearful glance and almost shrank away to lead the way down a long stone passage. We followed, never speaking a word. We passed by stout oak doors in the wall, turned a corner, and the hallway ended before an iron-studded door, on either side of which were iron brackets fixed to the wall. The torchbearer drew his dagger and rapped sharply with the handle on the door. He waited the space that it might take for a heart to beat five times and then opened the door. He stood aside for us to enter.

Raud and I looked at each other and then our eyes went to the brackets alongside the doorway. Ulffa seemed to see nothing. The carle, waiting for us to go in, still held his drawn dagger in his hand. Raud's grim look fell upon that, and the carle sheathed it in haste, shrinking back with both fear and hate in his eyes.

I could see that the room within the doorway was strongly lighted. Nothing was to be gained by waiting further, so I entered. My eyes were struck by the light of half a dozen torches in brackets along the wall. Then I turned and I knew it was Odar the priest who was sitting before me at the other end of the long room.

He sat with his hands folded on a table, looking at me. Behind him were more torches, and one in a stand on either end of the table smoked at his right and left side. His head was brightly ringed by the light of the burning pine. His hair and beard were full and long, and white, white, white—as white as wave-foam on a blue, blue sea. And his face! Only Harold's face among men have I seen so calm and gentle.

THE end of the room where he sat was built above the level of the rest by a wooden platform, perhaps ten feet wide and a foot above the stone floor. At the edge of this platform, along the walls and the roof overhead, there was hanging a heavy green cloth, a yard wide, fringing that end of the room. In the larger part, where I was standing, there were a dozen benches, and a fire blazed in a great fireplace in the center of one wall.

"A feast hall with one table," said Ulffa's voice in a low growl behind



"Ring!" he exclaimed in surprise and momentary gladness as he came to me with outstretched hand.

me, and he and Raud came to stand at my side.

Although he sat forty feet away, I saw the slightest trace of a start pass through Odaf's eyes. I guessed that it was sight of Ulfa that surprised him. Raud I knew was unknown to him.

Only for an instant, barely to be noticed, did he start. Then he was back to his clear-gazing calm. Now he spoke, and at the first words I knew the voice that had stopped us on the stairs:

"You are Norsemen, I see. What false stories of the riches of my poor house could have come to you to send you out on your wolf work at this time of year?"

"Nay, Priest," I said; "no false stories, but the bitter truth sent us. And we came here not to steal but to ask."

"And if we had not been waiting for you, your asking would have been done with a sword at our throats."

"It is not yet too late," I heard Ulfa mutter.

"We did not know what awaited us here," I said to Odaf. "And though a man may want only peace, it is easier for him to deal in peace if he is master."

"I have seen the peace brought by Serpent-ships," said Odaf. "Its black smoke shows for thirty miles on a clear day. . . . But what is your story?"

I wasted no time, telling him directly the reason of our coming:

"We are men of Harold, king of lower Norway," I said. "We have come for his son."

Odaf brought his arms up to lean his elbows on the table and he rested

his bearded lower lip against his folded hands. The torches around him flared and crackled and their smoky lights shivered as a draft of air must have passed over them. There was a space of silence. Then Odaf spoke:

"Two of you I have never seen before," he began with a slow quietness. "And the third,"—he looked at Ulfa, and in looking, against his will it seemed, his face filled with wrath on the sudden, and his voice sprang hoarse with anger—"and the third I know as I know the beasts of the forest that leave me the half-torn bodies that I find and bury in my graveyard! But they are driven by hunger and they were made beasts by God! While these men-beasts were made men and are beasts only of their own savage will. . . . Yes," he cried at Ulfa, "I know you, wolf of the Sea! I have



joined with the forces of Svorund, king of the Swedes, and Knutwulf, king of the Danes. The Serpent is manned by those that remain of his men-at-arms, wanderers now, men without home or land. Hard-wounded, before he died and we dug his resting-place in the frozen earth, Harold told of his son's being here, and his last words were to seek out the boy and take him beyond the reach of treachery."

Odar had listened like a tranced dreamer to what I had said. Now he shook his head slowly and said softly and sadly, "Only where Harold of Norway has gone—if what you say is true—is there such a land."

"The boy must be taken from here," I urged. "We know that Harold's murder was planned long before; and somehow the enemies of the king learned that his son is here. Messengers have been sent—we know not how much earlier—to travel by land to northern Gaul, thence across the Channel-of-the-White-Cliffs to Britain, and so up to Northumbria here to deal with Aedgar the king. Aedgar ever needs gold to buy off the raids of those that will now fling him a handful for the deed. And his cowardice makes him doubly the fawning dog of the northern kings!"

"Where would you take the boy?"

"Northward, to the Orkneys, where Norsemen have settled. We would ask the hospitality of our own kind for the rest of the winter."

"That would be as wonderful a voyage as this which you tell me you have just made."

"We will creep along the coast of Pictland and then strike straight for the Orkneys."

"You are men without hope or care of life, to sail upon the sea at this time of year."

"Nay," I said, "we were that. We launched Harold's Serpent, little caring what next wave would wrap us in a green, numb, and silent death. But now the worst is behind us. Long life and change of fortune may wait for many of us."

"**WHO** are you?" said Odar suddenly to me. "You talk for men, and yet I think you are no chief."

"My name is Ring," I told him, "and among the northern people I am known as a skald. Iceland was my place of birth but I have not seen its sheltered valleys for fifteen years of exile. I have wandered tar through the lands that border on the cold and the darkness. Under Harold's roof I was always welcome. I owe him much. My hand on harp or sword is at the service of his blood."

The white-haired old man looked at me steadily while the flaring torches sent light and shadows flickering across his face. "You are a heathen verse-

maker," he said, "and a teller of bloody tales of sin and cruelty. Your barbaric chants, I do not doubt, have honored Thor and Woden in their dark unholy rites."

"Neither Thor nor Woden has taken great joy from prayer or song of mine," I said.

"You live among heathen, and your stories must please them."

"He talks for time," I heard Raud say very low. "Without a doubt men are being gathered. And I think there are armed men on either side of him, out of sight. But if we rush in we may be able to seize him and get what we want with a dagger at his throat!"

"Hold! Hold! Hold!" I whispered. I had glanced aside and seen that the door through which we had entered was now closed, and I thought of the bar brackets on the other side.

Raud and Ulfa remained still.

I SAID to Odar, "Is your God offended by tales of the rise of peoples, of voyaging in ships, accounts of strange men, and songs of the deeds of old heroes, without fear or baseness, who dared beat down the evils that arose before them?"

And now Odar leaned forward and his face grew intent in his study of me, and then he said quietly and slowly, "You say you are no heathen, and I think you no Christian. Tell me, skald: what belief of men's purpose in this life have you? Or are you, Skald of the Northland, a brute of field or forest—unknowing of soul, that precious life of life that lives within you—an animal, blind with base desires?"

And looking into Odar's eyes across the torch-lit room, the innermost depths of me were drawn to the surface, and strangely, in a glow and wonder, I spoke to him as I had never spoken to any other man.

"Priest," I said, "let things I have never seen rest for a while, and I will talk of what has lain before my eyes since the days of my youth when I grew to understanding in far-off Iceland. This I know:

"Here is a world, a place of land and sea and the sky above, lit with the light of the sun by day, and the sailing moon and the wide-sprinkled stars by night. Upon this earth I was born, as are the rest of men. Beneath this sun and under these stars I move and live. How? Why? From where come, whither to go? I know not! But the great, great wonder of it all! That such a place should be, and such a being as I should live!

"Neither Thor nor Woden, I think, set on high one eagle-blocking crag of Iceland's mountains, nor drew the green valley on one river's flowing, nor brought my life from the great shoreless dark that was before me; yet the mountains stand and the rivers

called down Heaven's curse again and again to wreck with the fury of red lightning and raging storm the pirate ships you steer!"

Ulfa only opened his mouth to fling out snarlingly at Odar: "Thor blast you!"

But Odar's fit was passing already. "Some day," he said as he recovered his calm of voice, "I shall see that evil dog's head set on a pike over the door of my chapel."

Ulfa spat among the benches that separated them.

"Harold's own ship lies down at your wharf," I said to Odar, returning the talk to the purpose of our coming; "and this is Raud Enirson, head of his men-at-arms, and his blood kinsman."

"Why does Harold of Norway send for his son by sea in stark midwinter?" asked Odar.

"Wait, Priest," I said; "all is not told yet. Harold is dead. His kingdom is in the hands of those that killed him, the jarls of the north,

flow and I live! Yea, the boundless wonder of it! Lost before the awful truth of this world's existence, men should clasp each other and cry, 'Brother who shares this mystic, fearsome, wondrous journey with me, let there be love and peace that we may grow to know ourselves and each other, and together drive back the darkness a little, so short a time we are here!' Nor ask the endless feasting of a Valhalla for reward of any virtue! For me, this is enough!"

All these things I said, carried away by the sudden outpouring of these thoughts which had lived deep within me, but which I had seldom before spoken to anyone. And when I had finished, this Odar was looking at me as sometimes a mother may look at a son—for truly, his face could be as softly beautiful as a woman's.

FOR a long space, Odar, Raud, Ulffa and I remained motionless and silent, and only shadows on floor and wall moved flickeringly. Then Odar stirred his clasped hands to a new place on the table before him, drew a breath and asked quietly: "How did King Harold die?"

"It was at the house of Jarl Tosig," I said. "Harold, visiting parts of his kingdom, was drawn there to settle a land dispute between Tosig and Jarl Sigvald. All was a trick of Tosig's. That black jarl had never cleansed from his adder-heart the hate of years gone by when Harold had restored to the rightful heir the property which Tosig tried to take from his own ward, his brother's son. Harold had checked him other times in the cause of justice also. For all of which Tosig raged in secret.

"At last he plotted with Svorund and Knutwulf and the northern jarls, who have always been greedy and treacherous. Their forces were hidden in the forest nearby, and they fell on us five to one. Bitter and hard was the fighting, with the King's small band ever falling back, being surrounded again and again, and cutting its way out. With darkness our enemies were shaken off for a time, but not before Harold was wounded—and mortally, as it turned out.

"We bore him back to his own hall at Upsala, where he died, the forces of the enemy not far behind. But before he died he told us of his son being here, and the few that were left of his picked fighting men swore to their dying king to protect that son. Yes, and Ulffa, who was there at the time, swore, and I swore, though neither of us was born under Harold's kingship.

"It was Ulffa who spoke of launching Harold's *Serpent* into the bare white teeth of the winter waves. None but he would have dared steer such a voyage. So now, the rest of the

people are dispersed among the mountains, and here we are, the last of King Harold's bodyguards and a few others who knew and loved him, come for his son, our king, who has no kingdom."

Odar bowed his head.

"Evil, evil, evil world," I heard him whisper aloud, and he shook his head wearily. "Will His Word ever pierce through the dark and savage fastness of northern fen and forest? They have murdered the one man among them that would seek for a higher truth!"

"His son lives?" I said quickly.

"Yes, his son lives." Odar stared off into the blazing fireplace. "Many years ago I met Harold of Norway, when he was traveling through these lands. We talked much and he thought long on some of the things I said, although I was little more than a scholar then, not with my true life's work yet begun. Then he was called home to Norway to rule. But he did not forget me, nor I him. He learned of my place here, and three years ago he sent me his son in secret for teaching. I had thought to send back a prince-missionary, but it is a homeless boy-king that I will now send out wandering."

"Give him to us then," I said, "and we will take him beyond the reach of murderous cowardice that serves murderous greed and guilt."

Odar arose from his seat. "Warm yourselves by the fire. I shall bring the boy."

He passed out of sight behind the long hanging cloths that I have said hung along the top and sides of the raised platform where he sat.

"I have seen many bargainings and sat at many councils in my life," said Raud, shaking his head; "but this one I do not understand. I do not doubt that this priest now goes to bring the boy; and yet, but a short space back I knew that he was playing only for time. And the talk that changed him I do not understand."

"I think he has grown to love our young king," I said.

Ulffa moved over to the fireplace and spread his hands to the heat. Raud and I followed him.

Suddenly a desire to look behind the hanging cloths came to me. I walked to that end of the room. The recesses on either side behind the cloths deepened as I approached. I reached the platform and leaned over it. My eyes looked straight into the lowering faces of armed carles back in the right-hand depth. I looked to the left, and weaponed men were there also, sullen and silent. They made no movement at sight of me.

I had suspected their presence from the very first, as had Raud. But what I had not suspected I now saw in startled surprise over my head. Across

this end of the room, just within the edge of the platform, a heavy drop-gate was suspended from the ceiling. From wall to wall it ran. The cloth across the ceiling hid its lower part from anyone out in the room where we had been standing. Over the platform the roof was built much higher than out in the main part of the room. In that space the gate was drawn up out of sight, and yet I saw that it was high enough to block off the rest of the room completely when dropped.

All the time we had talked with him we had been entirely in Odar's power. Had we started forward to seize him, at a sign from him his men would have released the gate. The bar-brackets on the door through which we had entered fitted into the scheme now also. What a death-trap this could be!

The carles watched me like crouched sullen house-hounds as I made this discovery. Then Odar entered by the way he had gone out, bringing with him dead Harold's only son, Erik.

The boy was dressed for winter travel in heavy woven garments and a cloak of fur all fringed with ermine. It was three years since I had last seen him. He had been ten years old then. Now, at thirteen, he seemed to have sprung toward manhood, so much had he grown.

His face was grave and set. I could see that tears had flowed from his eyes but a short while ago.

"Ring!" he exclaimed in surprise and momentary gladness at sight of me. He had not lost any of his boyish love for the wandering skald at whose feet by the hearth it had been his great delight to curl up, listening to saga or song while the Northern nights wore along. Many times had Harold his father or I carried him off to his chamber fast asleep before the long evening's tale was finished.

RING!" he said again, coming to me with outstretched hand. He had meant to leave tears behind when he entered this room, but sight of me must have brought a rush of feeling, for his face filled with pain on the instant, and his eyes could not hold back their grief. I took his hand in both of mine, and he bowed his head and sobbed with his face down upon our clasped hands. I freed my right hand gently and laid it on his shoulder. His sobs grew less and less and died away. He raised his head.

"Raud, my distant uncle," he said gravely, greeting Raud.

"Erik Haroldson, my king," said Raud.

"Ulffa!" said Erik. "Even you here?" "This place is not new for me," said Ulffa, more gruffly than usual.

"Come," said Odar; "day is breaking and men will soon be gathering here. It is better that you leave now."

We started back down the length of the room.

"I saw that you were looking at my drop-gate," he said to me. "I had you brought to the hall where I preach to the Picts of the North, who sometimes come here. They are very sly, and they come in large numbers. It was for the good of their sly souls that I built that gate. For what chance of learning of the true faith would they have if they were allowed to carry out what is oftentimes in their heathen hearts? I find it useful for receiving other envoys also."

THE door-of-the-brackets now was open before us; we went through. The same torchbearer was waiting for us in the passage. He led the way back. Near the outer door Odar stopped us for a short while and went into a side chamber. He came out wearing an overwrap and carrying a leather-wrapped bundle under his arm. Then we passed out into the cold grayness of breaking dawn.

Odar's fighting carles were waiting along the edge of the cliff. There were no more than a dozen in all, and among them I saw the men who had been hidden within the recesses alongside the drop-gate. By the faint light I saw other houses farther back on this level. A group of women were standing at one side, watching.

At Odar's word the planks over the stairway were taken up again. I looked down over the cliff edge. A dull whiteness on the water, our ice-sheathed *Serpent* lay alongside the wharf. We started down the stairway.

A woman suddenly appeared when Erik was on the top step, a tall, stalwart woman. Without a word she gathered our young king in her arms and kissed him on the cheek.

"That is Alfreda," said Odar to me. "She cared for Erik once when he was sick, as his own mother might have."

"Good-by," said Erik to Alfreda in a voice that stumbled upon itself. "You were very good to me. Tell the others that I shall always remember them. I shall come back some day."

He turned, and, following Ulfa and Raud down the stairs, left this place behind. Odar and I were behind him and Odar's carles came after us. Down we went, descending the way we had climbed. I could see now that the steps had been hand cut in a natural slope up the cliff-face for the greatest part of the distance. A final turn and there, ringed close about the foot of the stairway, the men of our *Serpent* were waiting.

Raud stopped and pointed back with his shield-hung arm to Erik standing behind and above him in the pale light.

"Erik Haroldson, our king!" he cried.

A roar like the boom of breakers in a tidal sea-cave went up from fifty hoarse throats, to be as swiftly drowned in a clashing of weapons on studded shields.

"Barbarians! Barbarians!" I heard Odar whisper aloud, but he was peering forward to watch, and those mild eyes were strangely alive.

"We were soon going up after you," said Thorgerd, as we descended among them.

"I would have you rest and warm yourselves here for a while," said Odar, "but I have already sent men to arouse the countryside. You must be on your way before full daybreak."

Raud raised his voice to the men: "Back to the ship! We leave now!"

With glaring eyes and bared teeth, our *Serpent* lay waiting for us. His chin was bearded with hanging ice, and he rocked and ground measuredly against the wharf. The men went aboard.

"You have enough fresh water?" Odar asked.

"Open tubs of it," said Raud. "We chip off pieces and suck them when we are thirsty. It does not spoil."

"And provisions?"

"Enough to reach the Orkneys," said Raud, boarding the ship.

Odar, Erik, and I stood together on the wharf.

"A king and a skald," said Odar, looking at us. "That is a royal household among you Norsemen." He turned to me, and his eyes were strangely glowing. "But the tales will not be all of your telling this time, Skald. Your young king will tell you of a great saga that happened four hundred and fifty years ago far in the Southland in the province of a Roman ruler named Pontius Pilate. And you will learn more of that thing within you that stands lost before the wonder of mountains having been reared, and rivers flowing, and the awful knowledge of its own being."

Odar the priest and I clasped hands, and I silently rejoiced that I had believed in Harold's judgment.

Then Odar turned to Erik and took him by the shoulders.

"Good-by, my son," said the white-haired priest. "If ever in my life I have earned a small share of heaven's blessings, may they fall on you. My son—my son!" The shoulders under his hands had begun to shake. "Remember, for all else I have taught you, you are still by birth a sea-king! But no, I would not have your eyes dry now. Your manhood will lose nothing if you keep this weakness. Out of brave men who can shed tears are heroes made. . . . Kneel for my blessing."

While his waiting crew, worshipers of Oden and Thor, watched from the *Serpent*, Erik their king knelt before Odar the priest. Odar moved his

hands over Erik's bowed head and his lips spoke soundlessly. Then he raised Erik to his feet.

One of his carles was carrying the leather-wrapped packet that Odar had brought from his hall. Odar took it and handed it to Erik. "Scrolls, both in Latin and Greek. You must not forget what I taught you. And now, good-by."

Erik caught Odar's hand and pressed it to his forehead. Then he turned and leaped aboard the ship.

"Thrust off!" came Ulfa's growl from the reardeck.

The *Serpent* sheered away from the wharf. The men swung their oars, dipped water, and our prow leaped ahead to part the waves. I broke out an oar and fell in with them.

Erik stood on the reardeck beside Ulfa, watching the wharf and the land draw away behind us. Up on the cliffs I could see people standing, and Odar and his carles made a little group on the wharf. We were moving swiftly now, rowing like men who hold their own against wind and wave. Erik raised his hand and waved. On the distant wharf, Odar waved back. Erik turned to face the ship and the rowers.

Giant, tongueless Wungon appeared at the foot of the steps leading to the reardeck. He dropped on one knee and touched his forehead on the steps before Erik, as it is said Eastern slaves do. In his raised hands lay a dagger in a sheath, and even from the distance of my bench, I could see the strange and wonderful carving that covered sheath and dagger hilt.

ERIK took the dagger and made a swift motion for Wungon to rise.

"You were never my father's slave," he said; "and you shall not be mine."

He sat down on the steps and looked into the faces of the rowers.

"Ring," he said suddenly. "Sing. Sing with the rowers."

"What shall the song be?" I asked as I swung my oar.

"The Song of the North Wind," said Erik.

I began to sing while Erik beat with the dagger on the edge of the reardeck to the time of the plying oars:

"The North Wind is our thofellow,
Stout of arm and stout of bellow—"

Other voices swelled out with mine:

"Louder roaring, harder striving,
Rougher blowing, faster driving;
Never friend so hale and gusty,
Never rower rowed more lusty—"

The yellow sun came up to greet us as we sang. Our *Serpent* drove forward under the lash of the oars, cleaving through the channel that would take us out to the open sea, to the wild wind, and the stormy road for the Orkneys.

Grandpa Was a

GRANDPA was a heller, all right. He was a pint-sized, white-haired Psalm-quoting old Scrooge. We loved him, I guess: after all, he was Dad's father. But when he put on his budget act, we kids could have screamed.

For Grandpa had a million dollars. That's right, a million. And all tucked away tighter than the gold at Fort Knox! Where he got it, we never did really figure out, and he was as close-mouthed as any man could be about his past life. Some stories claimed he made his money in Bessarabian oil, and others had to do with cattle in Argentina. But wherever he got it, he was hanging onto it at seventy-seven, and wielding it like a club over our heads.

"You children have got it soft," was his favorite saying. "When I was a boy, I picked cotton twelve hours a day for pennies. I herded cattle for thirty dollars a month. I worked and saved and didn't have one-tenth the education you have." His veined old hand would smack on the library table until the lamp danced and threw running shadows over the walls. "And by the Lord High Harry, you're going to learn the right way to live!"

His way, he meant—circa 1878.

He looked plenty determined when he spoke like that. Little and testy, with his blue eyes peering myopically from behind the thick glasses which clamped on his nose, he was hard to argue with. He was slightly deaf, too, and the deafness became a blank wall to his mind, against which any arguments bounced away without making any impression.

There were three of us kids to listen to him. Don—he's the oldest—was the luckiest. He got out from under Grandpa's thumb when he was eighteen; he went into the Army. Marjorie was next, still practically a girl and going to the staid exclusive school Grandpa had chosen for her. She came home on vacations, dressed in the neat practical clothes Grandpa thought young ladies should wear, and I felt sorry for her when her girl friends appeared, wearing the newest styles. I was the youngest, still going to Junior High, and just itching for the day I would graduate and could start training to be a doctor.

But of course Grandpa had our lives already planned.

Nobody challenged Grandpa—he could shrivel a cop with one cold stare! And when he became legal guardian of three lively young moderns, they had a tough time—so tough that at last they devised a rebellious plot.

by COLIN
MacLANE



When Father died, his will made Grandpa our legal guardian, and the will was worded so that the old man controlled the money he left—all of which wasn't so bad, except that Grandpa had ideas of his own.

As our guardian, he began to run our lives. He moved into our house, after living alone for thirty years; and the big friendly house became strangely changed and forbidding to us. The rumpus-room, which Don and Mother had worked so hard to make nice and cheerful, was closed. It held bridge-tables and a billiard-table and one slot-machine which nobody ever beat.

"Devil's abode!" Grandpa said, and ran his wrinkled hand through his skimpy white hair. "Gambling and cards and playing pool are not for nice people. Instead, each night we will sing hymns and good music at the piano."

He smiled then, his little wrinkled face beaming at us, and his bright blue eyes dared us to make any comment. And of course none of us dared. Not that we were afraid of the old man, understand that. It was just that *nobody* challenged Grandpa. He had a temper shorter than a Singer Midget; I've seen him shrivel a cop with one cold stare of his eyes.

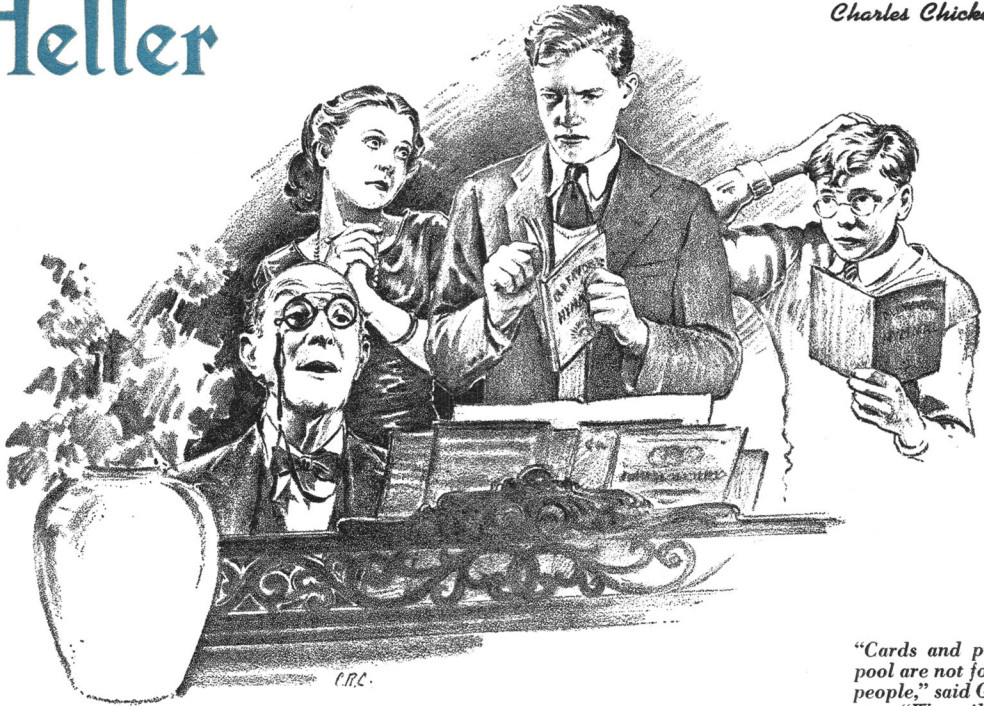
OH, he was a heller, as I said before. Trouble was, he was like that, usually, only with us. The church had made him a deacon, and his name was on the membership rolls of half a dozen fraternal organizations. He was affable and spry, and the ladies of the women's auxiliaries thought him a darling, and so gallant—if a bit queer in some ways.

He didn't think he was queer, though; he thought he was a very nice old gentleman whose only duty it was to make us kids good citizens. And that was bad, because we couldn't meet his arguments. He just listened to us with the genial blank stare of the deaf, and then decided what was best to do.

"A career for Marjorie!" he said, the day the subject was broached. "I should say not! Ladies do not work or have careers. They are feminine, play the piano and become good wives and mothers." Horror wrinkled his little face even more. "What would Allan or your mother have said about such a ridiculous idea?"

Heller

Illustrated by
Charles Chickering



"Cards and playing pool are not for nice people," said Grandpa. "We will sing hymns and good music at the piano."

We couldn't answer that, of course, although we had ideas. Dad and Mother had been understanding and full of life, wanting us to follow our own thoughts as much as possible, and helping us when they could. We missed them terribly.

I thought Grandpa's decision was a shame, of course, and tried to console Marjorie. She was talented, and I told her so. But she sniffled into her handkerchief, and glared with tear-filled eyes at the door through which Grandpa had disappeared after giving his ultimatum. She wasn't pretty, what with her tiptilted nose and brown hair; but she was sweet, and her eyes were beautiful—lashes so long they swept her cheeks.

"He's an old dictator," she said vehemently to me. "He's never had any fun or done anything, so he doesn't know how some people have to live. The world's changed, and he's stood still." She looked sadly at me. "You've got to be a lawyer," she finished. "Is that fair? You know you want to study medicine."

"Oh, well!" I tried to shrug her words away, but could feel the sick emptiness in my stomach. "It's just that Grandpa thinks lawyers are important. He saw Lincoln, and Lincoln

was a lawyer; and, well—" My voice trailed into dismal silence.

"Darn him!" Marjorie said bitterly. "Yeah!" I agreed.

Marjorie went back to school the next day, and Grandpa and I lived alone in the old house, except for the cook and housekeeper. Things were about as usual. I went to school, and Grandpa served on the City Council and sang a very bad tenor in the church choir.

AND then Don got his discharge from the Army. He didn't limp very much when he came home, and his laughter was still the same, although it came less often. He was bigger than I remembered; and although he wasn't old enough to vote, he seemed to me very much of a man.

Grandpa treated him that way for a time, too. He asked his advice on matters, and even seemed to consider it, before doing as he intended to do all along. They drank some of Grandpa's hoarded sherry and talked over the war a bit. Grandpa stuck to the Spanish-American and Don to World War Two. Somehow, they never did seem to agree on things.

"Tanks!" Grandpa would snort. "Give me a hundred men on horses,

and I'd lick every tank that dared to face me!"

Which was rather wonderful, considering Grandpa hadn't even been in the Spanish-American War, and for that matter, hadn't been in a saddle since he was a young man.

Don stood the house three weeks before he blew up. He came into my room one afternoon, where I'd sneaked off to bone up on a book about anatomical structure, and exploded violently.

"You know what Grandpa just said?" he asked, and anger had driven all normal good humor from his eyes.

"No, what?" I let the book drop.

"He just decided I wasn't going to be a commercial photographer. He was all for it for a while; then he found out that live models are used. I thought for a minute he'd have a stroke.

"'Nekkid women!' he fairly yelled. 'Nekkid women lallygagging around, corrupting your morals, stretching out on bearskin rugs while you fiddle with a camera. Nosirree, and that's final! You're going to be a—a carpenter.'"

"A carpenter!" I said, forgetting the book entirely. "What in hell is wrong with being a photographer?"

"'Nekkid women!'" Don mocked.

He laid his miniature camera on the bed and sank dejectedly into a chair. Without thinking, he lit a cigarette. If Grandpa had seen him smoke, there would have been fireworks; Grandpa didn't approve of the Devil's weed.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

Don flipped ashes on the rug and rubbed them in with his shoe. "I don't know," he admitted. "As for me, I can walk out tomorrow, even if he is my guardian. But that would just leave you and Marjie in a worse jam; he'd probably tighten up to beat hell. After all, if he doesn't approve of our conduct, he can keep control of the estate until each of us reaches thirty."

I could see myself at thirty, shriveled and old, too weak to hold a scalpel. The thought was terrifying.

"If we could just make him more human," I mused bitterly, "then he might be like Father said he used to be when Father was a boy."

Don began to grin. "That's an idea," he said. "Fact is, I've got one better. If we could just prove he was a smarty when younger, maybe he'd be afraid to talk too much about what we do."

"Sure," I said, and lit a cigarette out of sheer defiance. I didn't like the things, but Grandpa had forbidden them, and that was excuse enough for me. "So what's the better plan you've got?"

"Blackmail!" Don said.

"Huh!" I swallowed smoke and almost choked to death.

"I've got about five hundred bucks," Don said. "You and Marjie must have some. We'll pool our dough and hire a detective agency to trace Grandpa's past. If we can find some red spot in his life, something which would create a minor scandal, he'll have to knuckle under."

"But look, Don," I said, beginning to get scared, "we could be sent to jail. Blackmail's bad."

"Yeah?" Don said cynically. "Well, so's living in a cage and doing tricks for the keeper."

SO we hired the "Eye Findem Detective Agency." The outfit talked jig and produced little. Marjorie came home for the Easter holidays, and we cleaned her of what money she had left from her allowance. After pooling it with Don's and mine, we had plenty — we thought.

The first reports were good—for Grandpa. They told of his philanthropies and his alliances with various lodges. They produced pictures of when he lunched with the Mayor, and even one taken when the President visited the city and Grandpa was the official greeter. But for our purposes, these reports were just a waste of effort.

The "Eye Findem" boys claimed they were doing the best they could; but that after all, tracing a man's past was a plenty tough job. They hinted more dough would put more men on the job.

We kicked out three hundred more, and the Agency began to turn up parts of Grandpa's past. It came up with handfuls of data, tracing Grandpa from Nome to Albuquerque, followed him to China and Australia—found him whiter than a martyr's soul.



Click the camera went again. "Omigosh!" Don said exultantly. "What a shot!"

Weeks went by, and we were no nearer to a solution of our problem than before. We had siphoned dough out for material we couldn't use; and Grandpa went his own cantankerous way, suspecting nothing.

And then our money was gone.

"What'll we do now?" I asked gloomily one night, when the thought of going broke through the fall and winter filling me with dismay.

Don surveyed his feet, and wriggled his toes. Automatically he swung up his camera and snapped a shot of his naked toes. Taking pictures had become so much of a habit with him that he was never without his camera.

"I'm licked," he admitted. "I guess I'm going to rat out on you kids and take that job in New York. It's a dirty deal for you; but I just can't take this any longer. Maybe if I defy the old man, he'll see that it can be done. Maybe he'll be less tough on you, if he thinks you might make a break, too."

"Hooey!" I said dejectedly. "He's got us where he wants us. Not that I'm saying you should stay here, though. You go ahead." I sighed and looked at the Blackstone sagging my bookcase shelves. "Maybe being a lawyer wouldn't be so bad after all."

We could hear Grandpa practicing on the piano downstairs, getting ready for the nightly session. His reedy voice was rumbling "Rock of Ages," and I shivered at the prospect of the thirty minutes of singing which was coming.

Don put on his shoes.

"Look, Willie," he said slowly, "if you want to come to New York with me, that'll be okay. There won't be much money at first; but we'll get by, and you can study at Columbia." He scowled. "Hell, it's not right that you shouldn't be a doctor!"

For one wild moment I almost gave in. Then I thought of Grandpa's dominating Marjorie, and shook my head. It was a tough decision to make, but I couldn't let Marjorie down.

"We've got rights," I said. "After all, the estate is for us; and later, Grandpa will leave us his money. I'm not hanging around because of that; but it would be swell to take my share and start a hospital clinic, if ever I graduated and became a doctor."

Don grinned. "I thought of that too. I could use some money to set up a really nice shop with all the latest equipment. Even Marjie could use her share."

"Okay, then," I said, and pulled the pillow higher under my head, "it boils down to a couple of things: First, we want to break with Grandpa; and secondly, we want the money that will be coming to us. Our problem is the same; how are we going to go about it?"

Don shrugged. "I still think blackmail is the answer," he said.

"All right," I answered, "so there's the solution. The only thing is, he's super-respectable and lily-white; we can't pin a thing on him."

"Nuts!" Don came to his feet. "There isn't a man living who hasn't done something which wouldn't stand airing. If we can find Grandpa's Achilles' heel, then we'll be sitting pretty."

"He aint got no Achilles' heel," I said bitterly and inelegantly.

"Well, if he has, we'll find it," Don vowed, and began to plan.

AND so we started the second phase of our campaign. In four weeks we could have given Charley Chan lessons in shadowing of criminal suspects. Grandpa didn't stir but what Don or myself was trailing behind. We went with him everywhere, into stores, out of them, into clubs and out of them.

We trailed him on solitary walks through the city and the city's parks. We hired cars and followed him on business trips into the country. Don even tailed him on an overnight business trip to another town.

We followed him to his clubs. We heard good speeches, bad speeches and just plain speeches. We stood in the

shadows and watched Grandpa playing the button-shoes gallant to the Ladies' Aid. We even hovered about his office building, scrutinizing every person who entered his office, trying to find somebody who wasn't just quite right in appearance. We wore out shoes and our patience.

Of course, we drew a blank.

And Grandpa thrived.

He softened up a bit, flattered by our solicitous attention. He went on extra walks, just so that one of us could accompany him. He came into our rooms at odd hours and sat and talked on many subjects. He was essentially a decent old man, as we found out again, and as we had always known; but even that didn't sway our determination to put a leash on his control over us.

We still toed the line, when he gave his orders. He was the master of our fates, and the reins never slackened in his grasp. If he thought of dying, to solve our problem, he gave the idea no heed, but ate his three gargantuan meals each day, sang each night, and continued merrily on like the fabulous One-Hoss Shay.

OH, Grandpa was a corker, all right. He had us licked; we had to admit that after a time. If he had any secrets, any purple patches in his past, we hadn't found them—and the Lord knows we tried.

And the guy who said necessity was the mother of invention was talking through his hat. We went over plan after plan, introducing things into conversations in the vain hope that Grandpa might slip and give us something concrete with which to work.

As usual, no results.

Marjorie came home one week-end, and we talked things over with her. She had nothing to offer, and was yelling about our spending her money foolishly. Her allowance was gone, and we knew Grandpa would never let her draw on the next quarter's. I got bored after a while, so went down to have a soda at the corner. Don and Marjorie were still talking when I returned. I didn't listen, but took a book on nerve structure into the library. I heard Don and Marjorie laugh a couple of times, and it kind of made me mad that they could find anything amusing in the situation.

Marjorie left the next day to return to school, and Don told Grandpa that he was leaving to take the job offered him in New York.

Grandpa hit the ceiling. He and Don had a good session of arguing all day. Words flew thick and fast, and for the first time Grandpa came out second best in an argument. Don was definitely leaving to take the job, and that was that.

I sat and shivered in my room. Don sounded like Allan, my father, from

what I could remember. Papa had been slow and easy-going, but his temper had red hair when it was aroused. I heard Grandpa's hand pounding on the library table, and the crash when the lamp finally struck the floor. Grandpa's fiery ultimatum came swinging up the stairs, and then vanished before Don's laughter. After that, there was silence, except for Grandpa's pacing of the library floor.

Don packed the next day. I helped him in every way I could, wondering



what it would be like to stay cooped up in the old house again without my brother and sister for company. Rebellion was growing in me too; and almost did I pack my grips and declare my intention of going along.

Don's train left about midnight, so he and I spent an evening at the movies. Grandpa was sulking at home. He didn't approve of shows, either, but there was little he could do about our going. I felt sorry for Grandpa then; for to me, his life was a strait-laced parody of living, without purpose, without attainment, and especially without amusement.

After the show, which was tedious, Don and I had a beer and then strolled the walks toward home for the last time.

The night was beautiful; autumn had reddened the leaves slightly, and there was a crispness to the air as heady as the odor of rich red wine. We walked without speaking, each intent on hidden thoughts, not knowing what to say in the last few minutes we were together.

"I'll be looking for you, Willie, one of these days," Don said finally. "Grandpa's a good old man in lots of ways, but he's too damn' pure. When you get fed up, drop me a wire, and I'll see to it that there's room for you with me. And that goes for Marjie, too."

"Thanks," I said, and swallowed the lump in my throat. "I'll remember."

We were embarrassed, and suddenly I felt older, as I had the night of graduation from high school.

The front steps echoed hollowly beneath our feet, and the porch was suddenly dreary. The house wasn't lighted, except for a lamp in Grandpa's room. Somehow I was very lonely then for Dad and Mother, who had lived and died in the old house.

"I'd better say good-by to Grandpa," Don said, opening the front door.

I shook my head. "There might be trouble," I argued. "You'd better just skip out without saying anything."

"Grandpa's an old man," Don explained gently. "He might die suddenly, before I could return. I wouldn't like to remember we hadn't shaken hands and said good-by to each other."

"All right," I said skeptically. "You know what you're doing."

We went up the hall stairs and into the left wing of the house. It had been weeks since I had been there: Grandpa had his rooms in the wing and didn't like to be disturbed.

I knocked on Grandpa's door.

"Who is it?" Grandpa asked, after a bit.

"Don and Willie," Don called. "I've come to say good-by."

"Just a minute," Grandpa answered, but I had already opened the door.

Grandpa was standing at the bathroom door, small skinny body toggled out in the white BVD's that he liked to wear. He was like a gnome, white hair tousled, wrinkled face screwed up so that he could see better, for he had laid his glasses aside. He blinked at us, and his left hand wobbled the glass he held, the one in which he parked his teeth every night.

"I said to wait a—" he began. And then a girl's voice interrupted from the connecting door to one side:

"Ducky," she called, and her voice was low and throaty, as sultry as a Bacall look.

"Huh?" Grandpa cocked his head, his deafness not letting him catch the word distinctly.

HOLY HANNAH, this gal was a knock-out! I blinked and heard Don gasp. Blonde hair swayed about her slim shoulders, and black lace panties and brassiere were breathtaking against her creamy-white skin. She stared in growing alarm from Grandpa to us, one hand raised in confusion, the hand holding the whisky glass. The other

hand, the one with the bottle of Scotch, remained where it was, half-exposed toward Grandpa.

"Oh!" she cried, and turned to Grandpa. "What is this? You promised we'd be alone!"

"But—but—" Grandpa sounded like a backfiring motor.

I whistled; I couldn't help it. Man, this was really a slick chick. The single lamp limned the girl in a dim pulse-stirring way; and if Grandpa didn't want her, I was willing to take over. And I had a hunch Don was thinking the same thing.

"Nice going, Grandpa!" I said. "Plenty clever, sliding a dish like this into your room." I shook a finger at him. "Naughty, naughty!"

"Young man, you're impertinent!" Grandpa shouted.

"Ducky!" the girl screamed. "Who are these persons?"

Don stepped forward then, swinging up his camera. He had it loaded with plenty high-speed film, and taking pictures in this light would be a cinch. *Click* went the shutter, and *whirr* another exposure slid into place. *Click* the camera went again.

"Omigosh!" Don said exultantly. "What a shot!"

"Don!" Grandpa shouted, and his face was as red as the girl's nail-polish. "What are you doing with that camera?" He grabbed up the glass which had fallen from his hand.

"Camera!" the blonde dish whooped, and darted toward Grandpa. "Save me, ducky; don't let them take my picture!"

Click went the shutter; *whirr* went another exposure into place.

I STOOD still and goggled. This was like finding a million bucks in a scrap-heap, like being kissed by Hedy Lamarr. Such things didn't happen, couldn't happen, in our sedate house. Grandpa, the Psalm-singing old prude, caught red-handed and underwared, in his secret den of vice, a blonde steamer getting liquored up with him—and both in their scanties!

"Wait'll the Ladies' Aid hears of this," I said, and couldn't keep the gloating from my voice.

"Willie, you *wouldn't* disgrace your own flesh and blood!" Grandpa was having it a bit hard to talk; the blonde was wrapped all around him, soft curves giving where she pressed tight, lipstick smearing his wrinkled cheek.

"*He* wouldn't, but *me*, I've got no scruples, Grandpa," Don said gleefully.

Click went the shutter; *whirr* went another exposure into place.

"Oh, my God!" Grandpa wailed.

"Ducky!" the blonde wren cried. "Think of my reputation."

"Heh, heh, heh!" Don sounded like *Legree* beating an aged slave to death. "Think of *your* reputation, Grandpa!"

"I swear to you—" Grandpa began.

The blonde slapped Grandpa, laying one slim hand squarely across his wrinkled face. In sheer desperation, trying to free himself, he had caught at her, and the lacy black brassiere had ripped from her smooth shoulder.

"You—you beast!" she sputtered in amazed dismay.

Click went the camera for the last time, catching a perfect shot of Grandpa in the throes of drunken passion, glass in one hand and attacking a beautiful blonde with the other.

"Beautiful!" Don whispered, and backed through the door.

I lingered for a moment to watch, and saw the girl tear loose from Grandpa's grasp and dart into the safety of the connecting room. I was grinning, hearing the lock snap tight, when Grandpa spoke.

"Willie," he pleaded, blinking myopically at me, "stop Don and get back those pictures. They can ruin me."

"Yeah!" I said, rolling out the word, savoring it like a hophead with a fresh hypodermic.

I ducked from the room, slamming the door behind me. The last glimpse I had of Grandpa, he was leaning weakly against the bathroom door, his blue eyes staring blankly in growing horror, and his knobby knees shaking.

I ran downstairs and found Don waiting. "Come on," he said urgently. "We'll go down to the lab and develop these things." He kissed the camera.

We made tracks, as the saying goes. We even caught a cab because we were in such haste. The blonde vision still filled my mind, and then a suspicion crossed it.

"You planted that girl," I said. "You did it so you could get pictures."

"Me!" Blank surprise showed on Don's face. "Hell, I'd never think of such a thing." He chuckled in a knowing way I couldn't really understand. "These old boys, they never give up," he finished smugly.

"I guess so," I agreed.

At the lab, Don developed the film and made prints, then enlarged them to nearly a foot square. Whew, were they torrid! Anybody seeing them would know Grandpa was a licentious old devil, hiding behind a mask of virtuous probity. These would blow the top off the legend. Grandpa would be exposed in more ways than one now—and the scandal would probably run him out of town, maybe on a rail.

"This does it," Don announced and rolled the damp prints. "Revenge is ours—the day of dictatorship is over."

"Glory be to Allah!" I said humbly.

Back at the house, Grandpa was waiting. He perched on the edge of a library chair, hair still tousled, fear in his eyes. His glasses glared at us now, and he was fully dressed; but I could imagine the underwear and

knobby knees, and laughter bubbled in my throat. It was going to be fine. I thought, studying to be a surgeon.

"Boys—" Grandpa began.

"Wait a minute, Grandpa," Don said, and unrolled the prints. He propped them along the couch edge. The League of Decency would have burned Grandpa at the stake for what the pictures revealed.

GRANDPA'S eyes bulged, and crimson came to his withered cheeks. He gasped, rocking back and forth on the chair edge.

"I swear to you, boys," he said, "that I never saw that hussy before in my life."

"Sure, sure, Grandpa," Don said soothingly, and clicked his tongue conspiratorially.

"Then you'll give me the proofs and negatives?" Grandpa pleaded.

Don nodded. "I surely will," he agreed. "But first there are going to be a few changes about this place. Marjie will have her career; Willie will study medicine; and I shall have my studio."

"I'll be damned—" Grandpa spluttered.

"You most certainly will," Don said, and unrolled the hottest print of all. "Imagine what a couple of hundred of these snaps mailed around the town would do to you!"

Grandpa imagined, and perspiration beaded his forehead. He moaned, and his hand scrubbed at his white hair. You could see the thoughts tumbling over and over in his brain like squirrels in a running cage.

"All right," he said. "I'm licked. I give up."

"Good!" Don said. "We'll talk over details in the morning, after Willie and I have had time to think." He smiled a bit grimly and indicated the naughty pictures. "We'll leave these here for you to ponder over, just in case you change your mind."

Grandpa was defeated; he did nothing more than nod his head.

"By the way, Grandpa," Don said, as he and I turned to leave the room, "just who is that blonde? Care to introduce us? After all, she's a bit young for you."

Grandpa began swearing in a low, terrible voice.

Don and I went upstairs to my room. We were laughing so hard when we entered that we almost didn't see the blonde. Almost, I said. Now she had her clothes on, but she was still a knockout.

"Hello," Don said, and began to grin. I just goggled, feeling now, in the better light, that I had seen the girl before.

"Hello," she answered. "How did things go?"

"Swell!" Don answered her. "Ducky is properly cowed."

"Hey, what goes on?" I said. "Do you know her?" I scowled. "I thought you said you didn't hire her."

"He didn't, Willie," the blonde said, and the wig came away in her hand. Brown hair tumbled out; and with the wig gone, all of the girl's character changed. Planes altered in her face, and she became another person.

"Marjie!" I whispered.

"Yep!" Marjie said, and now she spoke in her normal voice, the husky assumed voice disappearing. She sighed. "Don, if you had failed me with that camera, if you hadn't showed up exactly as we'd planned, I'd have strangled you."

"Planned?" I said. "When—"

"The last time I was here, Willie," Marjorie explained.

"But why didn't you tell me?" I asked.

Don smiled. "We thought it would look better if you were properly surprised and shocked."

"Think I'll be a good actress?" Marjorie asked, and twirled the blonde wig like a captured enemy's flag.

"Gee whiz!" I blurted.

And then we were laughing, the three of us, doubling up in mirth such as the old house hadn't seen since Dad and Mother were alive.

"Knobby knees!" I whooped.

"Ducky!" Marjorie laughed gleefully.

"Grandpa, how could you?" Don said, tears of laughter ran down his cheeks.

We tried to keep quiet, but didn't have much luck. We didn't want Grandpa breaking in. After a bit we calmed down.

"Boy," Don said, "it'll be a scream. Grandpa has a lot to learn. Imagine his having to take a drink, or chalking a cue for a game of billiards, and then sitting down for a rubber of bridge. We'll make a human of the guy yet. But maybe it'll kill him."

Grandpa opened the door.

We froze.

Grandpa, strangely, was smiling. He held some of the pictures in his thin hands, and knowledge was in his eyes.

"It won't kill me," Grandpa said, and nodded at Marjorie. "Good evening, Marjie," he added. "You make a lovely blonde seductress."

"Look, Grandpa, it was the only—" Don began.

Grandpa nodded. "I realize it now," he said. "I learned a lot tonight, especially about myself. I'm sorry!"

We blinked, not knowing what to say. Grandpa had the edge again.

"You know," he reminisced suddenly, "when I was a kid about Don's age, in Nome, there was a dance-hall cutie named Gold-tooth Gertie who pulled the badger game on me. Well, I'll never forget—"

I began to feel swell inside.

GI Girl-Friend

He didn't tell her he was married . . . A brief comedy.

by ALFRED CAMPBELL

WHEN Lieutenant Johnny hit the beach near Rabat, he certainly wasn't thinking about girls. His whole mind was concentrated on reaching his first objective, a little hut of mud bricks which he hoped would provide good cover. He made it all right, and performed adequately in the action of the day.

Later, stationed for a couple of months in the lovely white city of Rabat, he had time for more frivolous thoughts. Off-duty, he explored the intricate windings of the Medina, where he bought his wife some Moroccan slippers embroidered with gold thread. Then he tried out a café or two, but the wine was too sour for his taste. He window-shopped; he sat in the park; he attended GI shows. He grew bored. And then he met Yvette.

He was walking along the big wide street opposite the park one evening when he first saw her. She seemed young, chic, self-possessed. She had a modest look, not at all the type to provoke long, low whistles. Acting on impulse, he stopped and asked her in stumbling French how to get to the first street whose name he happened to remember. To his delighted surprise, she answered in passable English.

Her voice was pleasant, and he prolonged the conversation. In a few minutes they were sitting on a park bench, chatting. The contact developed into a nightly rendezvous; very proper, of course—oh, very, very proper! They would meet, walk a bit and then sit on a bench and talk. She taught him a little French, and he corrected her slight mispronunciations of difficult English words. All good clean fun.

It was a very innocent friendship, thought Johnny as he sat writing a letter to his wife; but perhaps he'd better not mention it to Molly. Wives were funny that way, especially when it came to French girls. They had an idea that all French girls were on the make. Ridiculous, of course, but that's the way wives were.

Meanwhile, Yvette was charming. She made no demands on him, seemed content to keep their friendship on a casual basis. Once she had asked him if he were married. "Who, me?" he had replied—if you can call that a reply. After that, whenever he

walked with her as far as her door, she allowed him to kiss her good night, a brief kiss such as a brother might give to his sister. She kept the situation very much under control.

Yvette was secretary in an office where apparently she earned enough to pay the rent of her little apartment, buy her food and clothe herself with considerable chic. Johnny never saw the inside of that apartment. He had made one or two tentative verbal passes, hinting that a home-cooked meal would taste mighty good, and she must be a good cook—but nothing came of it. For all her femininity, Yvette had a good head on her shoulders.

Then, after two months of routine jobs in Rabat, Johnny's outfit got orders to move up and join the push on Tunis. Yvette cried when the time came to say good-by, and kissed him with much more than sisterly affection. "You weel return to me?" she sobbed. "You weel surely return?" And what could he say but: "Sure I will, honey. I'll be seeing you."

EIGHTEEN months passed. Lieutenant Johnny moved on through North Africa. When that job was cleaned up, he helped with the Sicilian invasion, and after that he was a long time in Italy. A bullet finally got him through the leg, and he was shipped back to Oran. The hospital routine got him down. He was bored. Then they broke the news to him that he was going to be shipped home. Wow! Back to the States after a couple of years overseas!

They sent him to another hospital, in Casablanca, to wait for a hospital ship. His restlessness grew. So near getting home, every hour of waiting seemed a year. One day one of the medical officers asked him if he'd like to come along on a ride to Rabat. "I've got room in my car for three men," he said, "and if you'd like to come with me, you're welcome."

Of course Johnny accepted. And suddenly, for the first time in more than a year, he thought of Yvette. It would be fun to look her up, show her his campaign ribbons, talk over old times. Gosh, he hadn't talked to a girl, except to the nurses, for a long time. It would be swell to take her out to dinner, to eat a civilian meal with someone not in uniform. . . .

The medical officer parked the car in the very heart of Rabat. As his passengers climbed out, "Hey, Doc," said Johnny, "I just happened to remember, I ought to drop in and see some people I know down the street. Do you mind? I'll meet you back here about five o'clock." The doctor's eyes twinkled. "Is she pretty?" he asked. "Well—" said Johnny in embarrassment, and wandered off.

He went to the office where Yvette used to work. Sure enough, there she was, pounding a typewriter. She looked up as he entered, and her hands dropped to her sides. Then she jumped to her feet. "Johnnee!" she said. That was all, but in that second her eyes had taken in the Purple Heart, the campaign ribbons and his somewhat sunken eyes. "You have been wounded?" she asked tensely.

"Yeah. Not bad, though. How about lunch?" He was trying to be casual, but actually, seeing Yvette after all this time, and on the eve of going home, he realized that she wasn't so pretty after all—and not so young.

From the next office a couple of girls were peeking and whispering. Johnny felt uncomfortable. "You wait in the park," said Yvette, "while I tell M. Le Brun that I must take the afternoon off." He went out and crossed the street. He was wishing that he had passed up the whole thing. There had been a sort of possessive look in her eyes, a calculating, acquisitive look.

WHEN Yvette showed up, she had evidently taken the opportunity of doing a few little things to her face and hair. She took his arm, and they strolled down the sunlit street. "You weel come to the apartment?" she cooed. "I weel cook you a wonderful luncheon. No?"

"No," he said. "Let's go to the restaurant." She showed her disappointment, but acquiesced. When they sat down at a table, he looked across the room and saw Doc and the other two guys. There wasn't anything to do except bring Yvette over to their table and join them. In a way it was a relief; for Doc spoke good French, and the other two certainly tried hard to make conversation.

But every time Yvette mentioned his name, she would turn and give him a warm, affectionate look. Johnny felt himself sweating, as though he were being backed into a corner. He could see that Doc was getting a big kick out of the situation. What the devil would they do after dinner?

But Yvette settled all that. When they had finished their coffee, she made her apologies very prettily to the other three. "You weel excuse us? Johnnee and I have much to talk over." And he found himself following her out of the restaurant, up the street, and finally, up the stairs to her apartment.

Her arms were about his neck, her lips pressed close to his own. She was murmuring little sounds of affection, endearment. Finally he broke loose. "I have to sit down," he said with a flash of inspiration. "You know, I'm just out of the hospital; I get weak once in a while. My leg, you know." She flew to arrange cushions behind his back, brought a stool on which to prop his feet, set a glass of brandy at his elbow, lit him a cigarette.

Then, seated beside him, she proceeded to ask him questions. Was he going back to that "wanderfool" America? He would again be in that fine job he used to tell her about, where he made one thousand dollars every month? Johnny had forgotten some of the tall tales he used to tell her, but she hadn't. What hospital was he in? When would he sail? And a lot more.

At last she said: "You must want to rejoin your friends. That nice doctor told me they were going to the Medina. Why do you not meet them there? But promise that you weel stop for a leetle minute on the way back to Casablanca to say good-by to Yvette." Johnny got up with alacrity, forgetting his invalidism. This was getting off easy! "Sure, sugar, I'll drop in for a minute a little after five. Be seein' you."

Safe outside, he hurried toward the Medina. Whew! He was glad to get away from there! It all went to show, you shouldn't try to renew acquaintances after all that time! For a minute he'd had the impression that Yvette considered him her fiancé or something, just back from the wars. "I'll make sure the Doc's with me when I say good-by," he thought.

He found his friends without too much trouble. They didn't say a word about Yvette, although they looked surprised to see him so soon. Doc's eyes were full of laughter, but he was tactful. They bought a lot of souvenirs and sauntered back to the car. It was just five.

The doctor readily acquiesced when Johnny asked him to stop for a minute in front of Yvette's apartment, so he could say good-by to her. But Johnny was in for the shock of his life. At the curb stood the girl, a suitcase and a small trunk beside her. He jumped out of the car. "What's this?" he asked. "Are you moving?"

The look she gave him was assured, possessive. "No, Johnnee, I am coming weeth you." "To Casablanca?" "Yes, but after that, to America." The doctor, listening, turned away his face to hide the broad grin that spread over it. He could hear Johnny's panic-stricken voice: "But—but Yvette, you couldn't get passage on a hospital ship. And then you'd have to get permission to enter the United States—"

She interrupted him. "Me, I have resigned from the office; I have surrendered the apartment. On the sheep I can work as nurse, *n'est-ce pas?* Or a stewardess! As for entrance into the United States, cannot a brave American officer bring home his wife weeth him? No, I have decided." She appealed to the doctor, "You weel take me to Casablanca weeth you, non?"

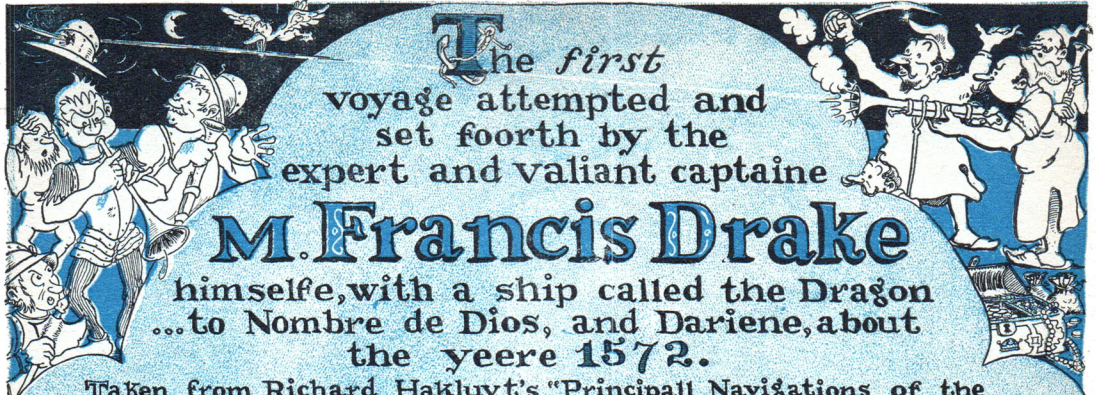
Refusing to see Johnny's appealing look, "Why, of course," he answered heartily, and started stowing her luggage in the back of the car.

THE ride to Casablanca was full of contrasts. Johnny didn't speak all the way, but the doctor and Yvette chattered and joked and seemed to be having lots of fun. Johnny knew he was in for a bad time. How could he get rid of this girl? He was beginning to hate her! How he wished he had never gone back, or even that he had never started this friendship. Too late now; he would have to get rid of her, and there probably would be a big row.

They finally stopped at the hospital, and he got out. Yvette sat still. The other two men thanked the doctor and went inside. Johnny kept shifting from one foot to the other. What was the next move? He would have to find a place for Yvette to stay. Suddenly the doctor burst into roars of laughter, in which the girl joined him. They laughed until the tears ran down their faces, while Johnny stared in amazement. Then the doctor controlled himself, and slapped Johnny on the back. "You can run along now," he said. "We've had our fun. But next time you are on the loose, pick up a girl without a misplaced sense of humor. You see, when you first met Yvette in Rabat, she was trying to be nice to a lonely American soldier. Then, when you left, she practically forgot you.

"I met her six months ago, and we're going to be married tomorrow. She happened to mention your name the other day, and I said you were in the hospital. In the conversation I said something about your wife; you know, I have to read the records of the patients, and she seemed to think it was a dirty trick for you to have pretended you weren't married. So she cooked up this whole scheme to get even with you. . . . Well, so long, young fellow. If you want to come to the wedding tomorrow, we'll be glad to see you."

They drove off. Yvette waved. Johnny didn't wave back. He was relieved, angry, embarrassed and indignant at the same time. "Well," he said to himself, turning toward the hospital entrance, "guess I'd better get some chow. Damn that doctor, anyway!"



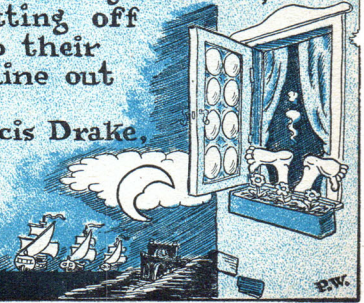
The first
voyage attempted and
set foorth by the
expert and valiant capitaine
M. Francis Drake

himselfe, with a ship called the Dragon
...to Nombre de Dios, and Dariene, about
the yeere 1572.

Taken from Richard Hakluyt's "Principall Navigations of the English Nation," as a caution to those who would undertake Amphibious Operations in the future. Illuminated by Peter Wells, a late amphibian....

There was a certaine English man named Francis Drake, who having intelligence how the towne of Nombre de Dios in Nueva Espanna had but small store of people remaining there, came on a night, and entred the Port with foure Pinnesses, and landed about 150 men, & leaving 70 men with a trumpet, in a Fort which was there, with the other 80 he entred the towne, without doing any harme, till he came to the market place, and there discharged his calivers, & sounded a trumpet very loud, and the other which he had left in the fort answered him after the same maner, with the discharging their calivers and sounding their trumpets: the people hereupon not thinking of any such matter, were put in great feare, and waking out of their sleepe fled all into the mountaines, inquiring one of another what the matter should be remaining as men amazed, not knowing what that uprore was which happened so suddenly in the towne. But 14 or 15 of them joining together with their harquebuzes, went to the market place to know what they were that were in the towne, and in a corner of the market place they did discover the Englishmen, and seeing them to be but fewe, discharged their calivers at those Englishmen: their fortune was such that they killed the Trumpetter, and shot one of the principall men thorow the legge, who seeing himself hurt, retyred to the Fort, where the rest of their company was left: they which were in the Fort sounded their Trumpet, and seeing that they in the towne did not answere them, and hearing the calivers, thought that all they in the towne had bene slaine, and thereupon fled to their Pinnesses: the English capitaine comming to the Fort, and not finding his men which he left there, he and his were in so great feare, that leaving their furniture behind them, and putting off their hose, they swamme, and waded all to their Pinnesses, and so went with their ships againe out of the Port.

Thus this English Capitaine called Francis Drake, departed from Nombre de Dios, & slew onely one man in the towne which was looking out of a windowe to see what the matter was, and of his men had onely his trumpetter slaine.



Snake River Jim



SNAKE RIVER JIM began to laugh. Crinkles of amusement fanned out from his eyes, and his mouth spread with merriment. He flicked the reins over Susie's and Maude's backs, and the caravan wagon creaked gently along the dusty road; but at the sound of his laughter Maude's head swung around, before the horses plodded on.

"Heh!" Snake River Jim said aloud. "Cayenne pepper!"

Not that it had been so funny at sundown, when the Sheriff had appeared beside the medicine-wagon, his eyes as hot as his stomach must have been. He was big and tough and angry, and his order had been short and explicit.

"Sixty minutes," he said. "If you're here one minute after that, you get sixty days."

There hadn't been much talking; one sniff at the Elixir of Life bottle, and Snake River had known where the box of pepper had disappeared. While mixing the last batch of Elixir, a mistake had been made; and when the luckless purchasers of the panacea began to sample their purchases, then hair would really begin to fly.

So Snake River Jim had hit the road again. Canvas banners had been rolled; the wagon's stage side had been lifted and bolted into place; a few minutes later Maude and Susie settled into their harness, and Sweet Springs drifted slowly into the past.

Snake River Jim lit a stogie, the flickering light making his mustache and goatee even whiter. And then he leaned back in the seat, leaving the reins loose, and plotted out his future.

Hempstead was out, for there his educated fingers had been a bit more than lucky two years before in a game of cards. And because of the counterfeiting scrape, he couldn't return to Trailton. The Widow was still in Eagle Roost, and right now, he had no hankering to get married.

He blew smoke at the stars and tried to concentrate. Towns were few and far between, and he had to choose one which had enough people to make his show profitable—preferably, a town where he wasn't known.

Plays Poker

IN ORDER TO SAVE A FRIEND,
AND BECAUSE HIS OPPONENTS
WERE EVEN GREATER SCALAWAGS
THAN HE, OUR WILY
OLD MEDICINE MAN PLAYED
A VERY SPECIAL GAME.

by WILBUR S. PEACOCK



The play began, and it was as though Snake River were reliving his past. He felt the thrill of combat, and his eyes glittered as he watched the deal's progress

He could smell the crisp odors from the wagon at his back, and glass bottles rattled companionably in the wall racks. Wood creaked, and a to-dry axle gritted in a soft whine. The coolness of the night air touched him, and he stretched, yawning. The rattlesnake rattles he used for buttons on his snakeskin vest clicked, and he fingered one absently.

Then he smiled. Rails-end would be a good place. In railroad towns, business had always been good; and now with the Central Pacific building west, Rails-end would have plenty of loose money floating around.

Moreover, young Billy Margraf and his new wife would be there, and he

wanted to check on the boy. Old Jake Margraf and he had been good friends for years, and he owed it to Jake to see if the boy was doing all right.

Of course, there was also the minor consideration of the free meals and lodging he would be forced to accept from Billy as an old friend.

"Git along, Maude! Hi, Susie!" Snake River Jim said, and flicked ashes from his cigar.

IT was Thursday when Snake River Jim pulled into Rails-end. He sat at the end of track, watching the life spilling out over the rolling prairie, and his palms itched at the thought

of what lay ahead. Ribbons of steel snaked across the land, and a work-train spat puffs of smoke at the cloudless sky.

A thousand gandy-dancers worked on the new line, digging, grading, filling the wounded earth with wooden ties and gleaming strips of rail. The clamor of their labor raised harshly in the air, and Snake River Jim sighed softly. Men who worked suffered pain, and men with pain bought his Elixir of Life. Here was a true bonanza.

He flicked the reins, going toward the town half a mile away. Tents bellied and swayed in the light breeze, and there was movement in the street—rough colorful life. Crude frame buildings and adobe huts were there, tight against the tents; for this was a rail town, and like others it might fold overnight, to set up again fifty miles on.

Men stared at the gaudy red and blue and gold paint on the caravan wagon; and Snake River Jim sat erect, his white Stetson gleaming, his newly-brushed goatee and mustache arrogant beneath the slant of his bold nose. He nodded in friendly fashion, sending the horses ever faster.

In town, he slowed, looking for the Marshal. He had learned long before that it was better to find out how things stood before setting up the show. Then he saw a man up ahead, star gleaming on his shirt, as he stood leaning against the pillar of the false-fronted hotel.

Snake River Jim savored the town, for much of his life was lonely, and he liked people. Laughing red-faced Irish walked the street, and queued Chinese padded solemnly about, watching with shoe-button eyes. A few Mexicans, resplendent in silver and flashing needlework, went arrogantly about their business; there were even a few Indians huddled apathetically in their blankets before the Dixie Belle Saloon.

Snake River Jim smiled, looking around. And then as his team came even with the Marshal, he reined in, and his right hand lifted his Stetson,



The four-bit piece fled in and out of Snake River Jim's fingers with an uncanny life.

showing his white shoulder-length hair.

"Marshal," he said genially, "I am Snake River Jim, the purveyor of that incredible panacea, Elixir of Life, good for man or beast."

The Marshal finished cleaning his nails with a pocket knife before looking up. Then he spat thoughtfully.

"We can do without your show, Snake River," he said evenly. "I saw it in Eagle Roost; and seeing as how you walked out on Widow Tanner, who is my friend, I don't feel called on to do you no favors."

Snake River Jim blinked. That a widow's marrying-arm should have so long a reach astounded him. His Stetson still dangled from his hand, and he replaced it precisely.

"That's a hard decision, Marshal," he said. "It isn't really a Christian attitude to take." He smiled, and the smile reached out and encompassed the man. "Of course, if there's a license fee to pay—well—" He let his voice trail away.

He was a handsome man then, old but debonair, and his good humor welled from deep within. His wise eyes laughed, and his hand went toward his wallet. These towns had no fees to pay, as he well knew, but perhaps the gesture might serve for the deed.

The Marshal closed his knife and put it away. "The fee is one thousand dollars," he said slowly; "and at

that, you're getting off easy. You should have married the Widow Tanner."

"Now look here, Marshal—" Snake River Jim began.

"One thousand dollars," the Marshal said coldly, and turned away.

Snake River Jim didn't move. Hostility he had felt before, but never anything like this. The Marshal had a burr under his saddle, for sure. And knowing the complete authority of the man, Snake River knew no Elixir of Life would be sold in Rails-end. For one very good reason—his wallet held less than fifty dollars.

HE had another out, if he wanted to take it, but the risk was too great, particularly in this section of the country. Shrugging, he beckoned to a boy who watched him in excited admiration.

"Two bits, Bub," he said, "to show me where Billy Margraf lives."

"Gee, sure, Mister," the boy said, and swung up to the seat. "Gee, this is swell."

Snake River Jim smiled. Medicine shows were few and far between, and had he yet to see a boy who was not thrilled to be permitted to work around one, helping in the various chores.

"Down that way," the boy said, and pointed at a side road out of town.

Snake River Jim clicked his tongue, and the team leaned into the harness.

The wagon began to move. People stared from the street and walks, and Snake River Jim waved gayly as they passed.

"It's quite a town," he said.

"Yessirree," the boy agreed. "Something's allus happening. Why, only last night, somebody beat up Bill Margraf and robbed him. And of course, there's always fights and shootings going on down at the Dixie Belle."

"Billy was robbed?" Snake River Jim snapped, and the lazy humor had vanished from his eyes. "What happened?"

The boy shrugged. "I don't know," he said. "I just heard he was bush-whacked out on the road, that's all."

"Was he hurt bad?"

"Naw!" the boy said in deep disgust. "He was just pistol-whipped."

Snake River Jim slashed the reins across the horses' rumps. He was silent now for the moment, watching the town pass by. Then the road stretched ahead, empty except for two horsemen, and the town had dropped behind.

The horses' hoofs whirled soft dust back, and the smell of the land was deep and satisfying. Almost could Snake River realize the thing which kept some people rooted in one spot their entire lives. Not that he favored the idea. His home had always been where he hung his hat, and his hat was a roaming creature that liked the



far horizon too well to settle long anywhere.

"There it is, Mister," the boy said, and pointed to the east where a small whitewashed adobe house squatted at the foot of a tall windmill.

"Thanks, Bub." Snake River Jim flipped a quarter into the boy's hand, and slowed the team so the other could slide to the ground.

He waved his hand in a cheerful good-by and then flicked the reins over the horses' backs. A side road cut into the main, and he wheeled the team, the wagon creaking dismally as the wheels fitted into the worn ruts.

There was no laughter in Snake River Jim now. His eyes were hard with thought, and his swooping mustaches seemed to droop. He watched the house, studying the small barn and the chicken-runs and the copse of cherry trees which was behind the house.

There was movement, and he could see that a woman stood in the doorway, watching; and then she was gone in a swirl of skirts, and a moment later a man appeared.

THEN a cry of recognition arose, and Snake River Jim felt the friendliness of the shout touch him. "Snake River, you old fraud!" Billy Margraf yelled, and ran for the wagon.

"Hi, Billy," the showman said, and pulled his team to a stop.

Then the other was in the seat, pounding his back with bone-jolting gladness, and words of greeting were tangled with thought and emotion. But at last came the time for silence; and Snake River Jim leaned back, holding the young man at arms-length, studying him.

"Lord, Billy, how you've grown," he said fondly. "I expect I'd have a bit of trouble licking you now. And married, too!" He shook his head from side to side. "What kind of a girl was loco enough to take a chance with a squirt like you?"

"That one," Margraf said, and nodded toward the front step of the house.

She was beautiful then, with the soft breeze lifting the dark hair, and her eyes laughing at the men. She was slender, with almost a boyish slimmness, and yet her femininity was so definite, so deep, that the showman felt a stab of envy for the man at his side.

And then he saw that she was not beautiful; it was the life in her eyes and features that gave the illusion. Her mouth was a bit too wide; yet that was an asset, for when she smiled, perfect teeth gleamed whitely.

"Your servant, ma'am," Snake River Jim said, and swept his Stetson from his white hair.

He liked her, and it was as though she sensed his appreciation, for she curtsied gracefully.

"I've heard of you, Snake River Jim," she said. "According to Billy, when you walk, the earth trembles."

Young Margraf flushed. "Aw, now, Margie!" he said.

"Come in," the woman invited the showman. "Billy will see to the team."

"Thank you—er, Margie!" Snake River said, and came from the wagon with the lithe grace of a man half his years. "Hurry up," he finished to Margraf. "We've some talking to catch up on."

"A minute," Billy Margraf said cheerfully, and swung the team toward the lot beside the stable.

Snake River Jim followed the woman into the house. It was cool and clean, the red-checked tablecloth the one bright note in the kitchen. A wood range was in one corner, a pot simmering gently near the front. An unpainted cupboard was in another corner, dainty china ranged in neat rows on the shelves.

"The last time I saw Billy," Snake River Jim said, "he owned a warbag for his saddle, and occupied a bunk in the Lazy L bunkhouse.

"It's taken three years for this," Margie said with warm pride. "Billy is a worker."

"My ears are burning," Margraf said at the door. "Who's talking about me?"

"Conceited!" Margie sniffed, and lifted dippers of water for the coffee-pot.

"I didn't unhitch," Margraf said to Snake River Jim. "We can do that after some of this talk."

They laughed together, and their questions came fast and eager. The

girl listened, her slim hands finding cornbread and jelly and placing cups on the table. Her eyes ran from her husband to the old man with the swashbuckling mustaches and goatee, and her liking for them was a tangible thing.

When the coffee was steaming in the cups, when jelly lay in thick crimson layers on the yellow bread, Snake River asked the question which had been bothering him.

"How much did the bushwhackers take, Billy?" he asked.

Margraf went silent, the smile fading from his lips, and his eyes swinging to his wife. The purple bruises at his temple darkened with anger, and coffee tipped from his cup.

"About everything, Snake River," he said harshly. "I'd just sold cattle to the railroad." Anger flamed in his eyes, and he shivered like an unbridled colt first feeling the touch of leather. "I'm getting it back tonight," he finished.

SNAKE RIVER JIM watched the younger man's face a moment, and sickness touched his heart. He'd seen men kill before, and there was in Margraf's face the look of a man who intended to use a gun.

"Tonight?" he asked. "Then you must know who did it."

"Billy!" Margie said sharply, and looked at the old showman. "I've tried to reason with him, but he's stubborn. Maybe you can make him realize there's nothing he can do but bring trouble on himself."

Snake River Jim shrugged and drank deeply of his cup.

"What's the set-up, son?" he said at last.

"It's simple!" Margraf said. "I sold the cattle, and then like a damned fool I showed the money when paying some bills. Dan Reed and Charley Govern saw me with the money. Well, I started out of town and saw a man lying in the road. I got off my horse to take a look, and somebody stepped from behind a bush and pistol-whipped me. When I came to, the money was gone."

"Did you tell the Marshal?"

"Sure!" Margraf sneered. "But he said it happened outside town, and for me to see the Sheriff. But the Sheriff is upstate somewhere."

"What makes you think Reed and Govern did the job?"

"I wasn't clear out; I heard them talking."

"Who are these men?"

"They work for the Belle Union, dealing cards. I went into town this morning, looking for them, but they weren't around. I figure they'll be back tonight."

Snake River Jim glanced at Margie and saw the mute appeal in her eyes. If the man had been anybody else but

Margraf, he would have told him to use a gun. Sometimes the law failed to see things as clearly as individuals. But now, seeing the embittered man across the table from him and the slim vitality of Margie, he knew this wasn't the time for guns.

"I'm about busted," he said. "How much can you rake up?"

"Why?" Billy Margraf's eyes were suddenly puzzled.

Snake River Jim felt amusement crowding him. Margie watched him with shining eyes; and it was as though she understood his sudden thought, and approved.

"Might play some poker," Snake River Jim said thoughtfully. "Been a long time since I sat in a good game."

"Poker?" Billy Margraf said, and his eyes dropped to the showman's long tapering fingers. "Oh, poker!" he finished, and began to grin.

Snake River Jim drew a four-bit piece from his pocket and rolled it in his hands. It fled in and out of his fingers with an uncanny life, and then vanished completely. The showman smiled and brushed his palms.

"Where did it go?" Margie asked.

The showman shrugged. "Who knows?" he said, and produced the coin from the sugar-bowl. "As I was saying, I think I'll play some poker."

"You're going to outcrook them?"

"Let us be charitable," Snake River Jim said, "and say 'outplay' them."

He was laughing then, and his amusement touched the others. Slowly the hardness went from young Margraf's eyes, and his hand went out to touch his wife's.

"How much money do you need?" Margie asked. . . .

Snake River Jim was dishonest; even he admitted that. Larceny was in his blood. For a decade his nimble fingers had worked wonders with cards and dice from La Ciudad de los Angeles to the thriving metropolis of New York. There were better card-men, as he also admitted, but none who had more fun at cheating.

It wasn't that he profited too greatly in his work; it was the thrill of bucking heads with hard-boiled gamblers which had appealed to him. And when at last his cleverness had waned enough so that he could no longer practice his art, he had reluctantly entered another trade, that of selling the fabulous Elixir of Life, compounded, for the benefit of credulous listeners, from rare snake-oils and herbs. With his flair for the melodramatic and the testimony of pleased customers, almost had he come to believe himself a messiah of modern medicine, and peace had surrounded his last years. It was only now and then that nostalgic yearnings for the more dangerous manner of living disturbed his mind.

And so now, standing at the swinging doors of the Belle Union, a great pad of bills jammed into his pocket, he felt twenty years slip from his shoulders, and the light of battle came to his eyes.

The town was awake, alive with people. Far down the street, the Dixie Belle and the Three Deuces Saloon threw shards of light into the night from wide windows; and the sound of a piano came dim yet clear. Railroaders stared at the mustached man, then hurried on about their nocturnal prowling, uncaring of anybody but themselves.

Snake River Jim drew a deep breath. His Stetson was creamy white and his breeches were only a shade darker. A silk handkerchief had brought a gloss to his handstitched boots, and his shirt was dark beneath his snakeskin vest. His fingers fashioned the swoop of his mustaches into more arrogant lines, and he smoothed his hair before resettling his hat.

Then he brushed through the swinging doors, bright eyes running over the motley crowd, while Billy Margraf entered at his side.

"Ho!" Snake River Jim bellowed. "I'm a ring-tailed snorter, and the drinks are on me."

There was silence, heads turning startledly, smiles breaking at sight of the showman. Snake River strode

toward the bar, and his right hand waved the thick packet of bills.

"Belly up," he invited, "and name your poison."

The bar was a beach and the men a wave that stormed it. Bartenders grew sweaty, and glasses clinked. Men toasted the showman with uplifted glasses, and Snake River Jim laughed, and paid with the gesture of a king scattering largesse. He nursed a glass of warm beer in his left hand, and his eyes smiled over the huge room.

"Do you see them?" he said at last softly to Margraf. "Are they here?"

"At the poker layout," Margraf whispered.

Snake River Jim nodded, and drank his beer, keen eyes studying the two gamblers. He was like a wolf now, circling a baited trap, seeking a way to steal the bait but leave the trap un sprung.

He went toward the poker table, waving genially to the men who still drank his health in free liquor; and no man in the crowd was taller than he. This was his element, and almost did he swagger.

"Gentlemen," he said at the poker table and touched his hat-brim, "I'm looking for a bit of sport."

Dan Reed was the leader of the two, or so Billy Margraf had said, and now he looked up slowly, fingering a deck of cards. His gaze ran almost idly over the showman and then flicked to Billy Margraf.

"Tough luck about last night, Margraf," he said. "Lose much?"

White lines were at Margraf's mouth, but his voice was even. "Thirty-five hundred," he admitted.

"Tough!" Charley Govern said, without moving his thick lips, the word strangely muffled.

Snake River Jim smiled deep within himself. He had met men like these before. Good professional gamblers, yet not too brainy. They would work well together, and their signals would be incredibly subtle. It would take a good man indeed to beat them.

"How about it, gentlemen?" he said, "Care to play a hand or two?"

Dan Reed shrugged. "Why not?" he said complacently. "It's our business. Get new cards, Charley."

Govern stirred in his chair. He was big and lumplike, his fat face creased with concentration. "Sure," he agreed, and went toward the bar.

"How much?" Reed asked. His face was like a ferret's then, nose long and angular, his pale eyes without expression.

"This do?" Snake River Jim said, and laid his pad of money on the table.

A flicker of appreciation came to Dan Reed's eyes. "What stakes?" he asked.

"No limit," said Snake River Jim.



"If you're here one minute after that, you get sixty days."



"I'm a ring-tailed snorter, and the drinks are on me!"

Charley Govern tossed four decks of cards on the table. "No limit?" he said, catching the last words.

"Any objection?" Snake River Jim asked.

Govern grinned, showing yellow teeth. "Make it easy on yourself," he said.

Men were beginning to turn from the bar, and the showman glanced around. "I'd suggest a bit more privacy," he said.

Reed jerked a thumb over his shoulder at a door, and came from his chair. They went from the table and through the door. A single table and half a dozen chairs were in the room.

Snake River Jim selected a chair with its back to the wall, and Billy Margraf chose one at his side. Reed and Govern sat opposite each other, and confidence lay in the set of their shoulders.

"Your money, gentlemen," Snake River prodded gently.

Reed shrugged and pulled bills from his pocket, laying them on the table. Govern placed a few gold-pieces and a handful of bills beside the decks of cards, then broke a new deck and stripped the jokers.

"Stud?" he said.

"Draw. I like a fast game," Snake River Jim said.

"You in, Margraf?" Dan Reed asked.

Billy Margraf shook his head. "Not after last night," he admitted.

Govern shuffled and spread the cards. Reed drew high, and swept the cards in for his deal. They clicked in riffling, sprang apart and nested again. Snake River Jim cut, and Reed began dealing.

"Five-buck ante all right?" Reed said, before the cards were lifted, and the others nodded.

THE play began, and it was as though Snake River were reliving his past. He felt the thrill of combat, and his face went blank of emotion. Only his eyes glittered and were incredibly keen, as he watched the deals progress.

He was a bit rusty, after his long layoff, and it was minutes before he got the pattern of Reed's and Govern's signaling. They were clever, indubitably so, and the average man would have had no chance. But their system was not new; Snake River caught it eventually, and a slow smile curved his mouth.

He played cautiously, risking but little, gradually opening up his betting, until at last he was riding each pot for every dollar his hand was worth. The play seasawed, none winning much at the first. The showman chuckled deep in his throat;

many had been the time he had given a sucker the same build-up.

It was a dull game to watch. This was a business with two of the players, and Snake River Jim felt no urge to hurry. He was enjoying himself too much, feeling the crisp cards in his fingers, watching them fan in hand after hand. He felt the impatience of young Margraf at his side, and chuckled to himself. Youth was always impatient.

He began to lose, not largely, but steadily, and the bills in his lap, which he had made his bank, began to shrink. He watched Reed's small hands second-deal a hand; and when he lifted his cards, a pat straight was there, nine high.

He lost two hundred on the deal, and saw the faint glow of triumph come to Govern's eyes. Then it was his deal, and he shuffled the cards with a dexterity the years could not take completely away. He set the deck, stacking it with unbelievable nicety, and when Govern cut, he recut with a speed so fluid and smooth there seemed to be no extra movement of his fingers as he dealt. When showdown came, a moment later, his hand barely topped Reed's ten full and Govern's flush with a queen full on fours. He recouped eight hundred on his deal.

The play was faster now, and tension was in the group. Billy Margraf watched puzzledly. Snake River Jim was not as good as he thought. Reed and Govern were winning steadily. What pots they lost were larger than the ones they won, but they more than made up for their losses as the minutes slid by.

Billy Margraf tried to catch the showman's eye, but Snake River Jim

gave him no heed. He dealt and almost invariably won, and just as invariably lost on his opponents' deals. Reed and Govern knew now they faced a card man, and they showed their knowledge in their play. Their eyes laughed at Margraf, for it was obvious to them that the young rancher had brought the showman in to recoup the losses of the night before when the robbery had occurred. They played cautiously and cleverly. Once, Govern had been down to his last few bills, and again Reed had staked his last dollars in a pot. And always each had recovered, his stack of money growing again on the table. Never could Snake River Jim completely clean either or both.

Smoke layered in the room, and money piled high before Reed and Govern. And when Reed pulled in a final pot, Snake River Jim stretched tiredly.

"I've had enough," he said amiably. "The way I figure it, you boys have won about twenty-five hundred now. That's enough for the night."

Dan Reed grinned from where he totaled his winnings.

"I'll buy a drink," he said.

"No, thanks," Snake River Jim said, and slipped his depleted pad of money back in his pocket. "Good night, boys."

He shepherded Billy Margraf from the room, turned and smiled back at Govern.

"You're pretty good, son," he said. "That top change is rather nice."

And seeing the consternation in the man's beefy face, he closed the door and went swiftly across the floor. Outside, Margraf drew him into a shadow, and bitterness was in his face.

"What went wrong, Snake River?" he asked. "Lord, if I'd known you were going to lose, I'd never have agreed to your playing."

"Billy," Snake River Jim said reprovingly, "sometimes when you want to win, it's necessary to lose." Good humor was in his voice. "Man, it was nice to slicker those cards around!"

Billy Margraf shook his head. "I don't understand!" he said puzzledly.

"That's all right, Billy," Snake River said, and lifted money from his pocket. He fingered the bills, counting aloud. "Now there's the thirty-five hundred you lost last night, and the hundred you loaned me tonight that I used to buy drinks for the house." He pressed the bills into Margraf's hand. "Now forget the gunplay and get back to Margie."

"Look, Snake River—" Billy Margraf began.

"Git! I'll see you tomorrow and explain. Right now, I've got to see the Marshal."

He turned the younger man with a hand on his arm, and gave him a friendly shove. Margraf went reluct-



antly, looking back, puzzlement still on his face.

Snake River laughed softly, counting the few bills still in his hand. "Two twenty," he said musingly, and thrust the money into his pocket. "Not a bad night."

He went along the street, whistling softly, and only when he saw the woman step from Ganter's General Store did his whistling cease. She was huge, and as he only too well knew, her weight did not make her jolly.

"The Widow!" he whispered to himself, and felt strange terror touch his soul.

He had heard of things like this, how women would chase their men until the poor devils were caught and

hogtied for life. And it was only too obvious that the Widow had followed him to Rails-end.

He ducked into a side-street, almost running now. It was seconds before courage seeped back into his heart. Thirty years before, matrimony hadn't the bad aspects it had now. But now, the thought of any woman controlling his comings and goings—well, the thought was horrifying.

He hesitated. The medicine-wagon was in the lot beside the livery-stable, and there was money here for the taking. Maybe by clever talking, he could stall the Widow off until time to move on again.

Thinking that, he went toward the Marshal's office. He was feeling bet-



"Look, Mathilda," Snake River Jim said placatingly, "it wasn't that I wanted to desert you—"

ter, even optimistic, when he entered the small frame building. "Evening, Marshal," he said cheerily.

The Marshal looked up from his bookwork, scowling. "Talking won't do any good," he said disagreeably.

"I'll make a deal," Snake River Jim said smoothly. "Write me out a license to exhibit as long as I want, and I'll fix it so you have a thousand dollars in your pocket."

"Huh!" The Marshal leaned back in his chair. "What kind of a scheme have you got now?"

"No scheme, just business. Write out the license, and I'll see you collect one thousand dollars. If I'm lying, you can always get the license back."

The officer considered the proposition. Dislike for the showman fought with cupidity in his eyes, and slowly greed won out. His pen made scratching sounds on a sheet of paper, and

then he pushed the newly granted license to the showman.

"Where's the thousand?" he asked.

Snake River Jim was sober, but laughter ran deep and full in his eyes. "Down at the Belle Union—two *hom-bres* by the names of Dan Reed and Charley Govern. They're loaded up with counterfeit money; I know, I just played poker with them. I also know there's a five-hundred-dollar reward for every counterfeiter caught. . . . Go down and pick them up, and there's your one thousand dollars."

He went from the Marshal's office then, not waiting for a reply. The new license crinkled in his hands, and he whistled merrily as he walked. As he had told Billy Margraf, sometimes to win, a man must lose.

He had played poker deliberately with Reed and Govern, knowing he couldn't win in the long run; the odds

were too heavy against him. But his scheme had been a bit better than depending on crooked card-playing.

Using Billy Margraf's money to spend, and using the counterfeit bills he had hoarded for so long a time—in fact, since his scrape with the law at Trailton—as his bankroll for the poker game, Snake River Jim had played cards as never before.

With his lap as his bank, he had won pot after pot; and each time his hands had sorted the good money of Reed's and Govern's and substituted bad. Now the bushwhacking gambler-robbers had almost seven thousand dollars of counterfeit bills in their possession, Billy Margraf had his original thirty-five hundred back, and Snake River Jim had cleared a profit of a little over two hundred dollars.

He grinned, thinking of that. Reed and Govern would have a long time

to think over the last poker game they had played—for the Government was becoming tougher each day over the crooks who played at printing bogus currency.

Snake River Jim laughed aloud, and swung into the lot where his wagon was placed. And then his breath caught in his throat, when a mountainous woman moved out of the shadows.

"You worm, you crook!" Widow Tanner said, and Snake River Jim quailed before the contempt in her voice. "Promising to marry a weak defenseless woman, and then deserting her at the church!"

"Now, look, Mathilda," Snake River Jim said placatingly, "it wasn't that I wanted to desert you—"

She cut him short. "Pack up and get out," she said. "You'll not show in this town."

"But I have a license," Snake River Jim pleaded weakly, keeping out of range of the Widow's massive arms. "The Marshal just gave it to me."

"The Marshal!"

"I paid him a thousand dollars." "The worm, the miserable little worm! And after he promised he'd run you out of town!" Her fat fingers tugged at the top of her corset, and she headed for the main part of town. "Well, I'll just collect that thousand for the heartbreak you gave me."

Snake River Jim blinked. "But what right—" he began.

"By every right!" Mathilda Tanner's voice rumbled back. "He married me, took me, a weak defenseless woman, for his wife. And now he intends to rob me of what should be half mine by rights. *Men!*" she finished bitterly.

Snake River Jim was laughing then, leaning against his wagon, the merriment touching him as else nothing had in days. No wonder the Marshal hated him; no wonder he thought the showman should have married the Widow; no wonder—

Snake River Jim wiped away tears of merriment. . . .

"Hello, Mister," a small boy said from the edge of the lot.

"Hello, Bub," Snake River Jim said. "How'd you like to bring me some pails of water from the pump?" He coughed delicately. "I—er—feel like taking a bath."

"Yessirree!" the boy said, and came running.

Now let me see, Snake River Jim was thinking, I should sell at least a hundred bottles, maybe more. Let's see, that's five gallons of alcohol, six ounces of coloring matter, essence of peppermint, and ten gallons of water. He grinned. And no cayenne pepper this time!

Snake River Jim began to set up his medicine show.

It was time to earn an honest dollar.

A Champ

A FIERCE WHITE LIGHT BEATS ABOUT THE PUGILISTIC THRONE ALSO—AND STRANGE INSECTS GATHER.

by JOEL
REEVE

Illustrated by John McDermott

THE DOLOROUS DECADE came into its last twelvemonth to tunes of the "Beer Barrel Polka" and "South of the Border"—and the child's story motion picture in color, "Wizard of Oz," set the *motif* for Willy Boulder in Hollywood. Being champion, the past year had proven, was living in a goldfish bowl. It was feeding off the fat of an America perking up at long last after the agonizing Recession which the New Deal had not cured; but knowledge that the feeding was done only because the rumble of armament abroad was on the air did not make for dancing in the streets. Willy had begun to think, and it hurt a little. . . .

Willy Boulder had never known "good times." Born in 1915, he had grown up in the days when America struggled against the poison of financial unrest. He had begun at seventeen to fight with his fists in the ring; and now, almost twenty-four, he was the middleweight champion; and this evening, at this gay Hollywood party, he kept thinking morosely:

"What of it?"

Pat Hafey, biting his lips more and more often as they made the extremely silly picture "The Boxer," knew something was wrong. He had tried to think of this venture as a vacation with very good pay. Willy deserved it, he told himself. But he grimaced at the sight of Willy drinking whisky with actors.

But this was a fey land, anyway. Pat, who had fought them all from Leonard to Canzoneri (twice), found it complicated, dizzy. Stars like Alec Rondeau slapped Willy's back and bought him drinks which Willy had never taken before. Georgie Nash, an agent who did their picture business, was always shoving them into the middle of a party where famed "names" stared very politely at Pat's receding blond hair and his slightly smashed

nose, and wondered if he were a new gangster star; and when they found he was not, were rude to him. And most laughable of all, Flo Grey, lately a Broadway clip artiste, was a big shot out here, an overnight sensation in slightly daring but humorous rôles which drew as molasses draws flies in summertime.

Rondeau gave this party, and Florrie came late, making an entrance in a tight white gown glittering with sequins. Other female stars sniffed, but the males prostrated themselves. There was a nice-enough kid named Jim Ewart, and he seemed crazy about Florrie. Rondeau bowed over her hand, his mustache bristling. Ewart was collegiate, Rondeau the old-time *matinée* type. They were two schools of Hollywood, Pat thought shrewdly, coming together over a tart from Broadway, a good-natured babe who had tried once to slip the works to Willy in a bout with Boo Dorengo. Not a crooked gal, at that—it had all been politics, Pat added.

"Deep Purple" was another song of the day, and someone with a deep coloratura—almost—sang it. Florrie Grey came over and said: "Hiya, Pat?"

He said: "Fine, Florrie, and glad to see you making the grade."

"Making it?" She laughed happily. "I'm made, Pat! The little Broadway kid is on top. I want to see Willy."

"He has a girl in Midburgh," Pat said deliberately. "A nice kid. Name of Mary Carson. She's only twenty. Remember her?"

"What a nice, dirty mind you have, Pat!" she said affectionately. "I just want to shake with Willy. He's a champ. I'm a champ, in my own field."

The room was very long and wide, and the windows were open on the generous warmth of California in the springtime. Perfume came from Florrie, from the other women who glittered. A great producer staggered upstairs, drunk as seven bears; a comedian talked music seriously with a character actress who had once been an international siren but who now wore glasses and drew her gray hair severely back from her bony face. Rondeau paused to speak to the woman.

Florrie said: "That joker! . . . I see Willy is taking a drink nowadays."

Willy's round head came out of a Barrymore collar. A knitted scarf was tied loosely at his throat. Willy's

Goes Hollywood

hair was combed long and thick at the edges, for the picture. He would be pretty if he wasn't so freckled and beat-up around the nose, Pat thought resentfully. A hell of a thing, a pretty champion! Yet for it there was plenty of precedent—in old times Sullivan had been a sorry actor and Corbett a good one; in modern times Tunney had made "The Pride of the Marines." And Dempsey had almost killed poor Farmer Lodge in a play on Broadway. But somehow Willy did not fit, not in Pat's eyes; and he growled to Florrie in a moment of revelation: "He drinks, and I wish to hell we were out of here and back on Jacobs Beach!"

SHE laughed and strolled toward Willy, and Pat shrank into his corner and found himself listening to the comedian and the aging former great actress. And what they were saying made sense, he found, about life and mankind. . . .

Willy was feeling his drinks, just a little. He said to Jim Ewart: "Of course I'm no actor. I'm just a ham-and-bean fighter."

Ewart said curiously: "Come on, now. You can't be that modest! You're the champ, aren't you? You must be some good."

Willy made a deprecatory gesture with his almost empty glass. "Sure, Jim. I keep forgetting. Honestly, I do. Then sometimes I can't forget for weeks, like on a tour or something." He scowled, feeling that he did not know Ewart well enough to talk like this. The seething within him was liquor, all right, but it was something else too. He touched the letter in his pocket. He saw the woman coming toward them, and his mood changed instantly.

He said: "Florrie! I've been wanting to see you."

She gave him both her hands. She was dark, and her curves were so pronounced that they called her a new

Mac West. She had a smile of generous proportions. She said: "Hello, Jim Ewart! So you've been talking to the champ? I thought you only went for highbrows. Your old Elis won't like you."

Ewart said with dignity: "That is not funny, Flo."

Willy looked from one to the other, sensing the feeling between them. He said: "Hey! There's enough trouble around. Let's have another spot of this stuff I aint supposed to drink."

Flo said: "The beginning-of-the-end department—"

"Sure," said Willy, his voice a little blurred. "I even said 'aint'—and I stopped saying aint a year ago. . . . I'm a champ. A big shot." He let Ewart pour him a sparing drink, fizzed it with soda. He said: "Do you like being a big shot, Florrie?"

She drew a deep breath. "I love it." Her fine figure filled the eyes of both the young males, and in that second they knew she reveled in the



Willy said: "Florrie! I've been wanting to see you. . . . Do you like being a big shot?"

Hollywood scene, in every ditch and every height and every depth of it.

Ewart said: "I don't."

Rondeau came close. He said, smiling thinly at them: "Eh? Don't like the party, Jim?"

"It's a good party," said Ewart without enthusiasm. "It's the whole damned business I decry."

Rondeau said: "Your contract was renewed—at an advance—and you're young. You can't act—but God is good to you. Why complain?"

Florrie said: "He *can* act, too. Just because your option isn't picked up, Alec, you needn't ride the kid. . . . And I'm going home."

Ewart said: "I'll get your wrap." He bowed to them, a slim youth, a new star on the movie horizon.

Rondeau said bitterly: "You won't marry me—and yet you quarrel with him."

Willy blinked and started to move away, the fuzziness surrounding him again. His head spun, and he knew he should not drink any more. Florrie was saying: "I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man on Broadway! I'd marry a farmer. . . . Funny, I always keep thinking in terms of Broadway, Willy. I didn't do so good, there. Remember Rack Nebo and Boo Dorengo, and how I tried to get you to watch a phony shift of Boo's?"

Willy grinned. "Rack and Boo are in California. Boo's knocking out a lot of bums. They want a title bout."

"You'll have to fight him—in New York," Florrie said shrewdly.

Rondeau said: "My heart is breaking, and they talk fight!"

Willy said: "My girl hates me, and I'll probably retire. I got a nice li'l taxicab business back home. I jus' need a few more dollars—" He braced himself and said seriously: "I think there is going to be a big war. A man I know in New York convinced me. Man named Willkie, big man, smart man. We had this damn Recession—now we are going to get war in Europe."

"We'll never be in it," said Rondeau. "They won't sucker us, like in 1917."

Florrie said: "Were you in that one, Alec?"

The actor said frigidly: "I was too young, of course! And you know it."

Ewart came with the wrap, a white ermine creation which went carelessly around Florrie's gorgeous shoulders. She said: "I heard you were a big hero. . . . Oh, well, good night, Willy. Call me, huh? You're not sore about that old deal with Rack, are you?"

"I beat him, didn't I?" laughed Willy. "I'll see you both." Ewart nodded at him, and he thought how much he had liked the young actor on sight. But he did not care much



"They kept me from your side, my friend," Rondeau said.

for this Rondeau, who had been so nice to him. He could not but respond to Rondeau's pleasantness, but he had a feeling that the actor had an ax to grind. Not that most everyone didn't, he thought cynically. Being a champion had proved that to him, all right.

He touched the edge of the letter in his pocket and told himself that he did not care. Mary had written that she was weary of waiting. She was a girl of temperament, if not temper, he appreciated; but she need not have been so sharp. She had accused him of having a wonderful time in Hollywood, running around with a fast crowd. A picture in a magazine, a night-club shot, had been responsible for that crack. . . .

She had said that winning the championship had proven only that the fight business was a nerve-racking, body-destroying thing, and that he should get out of it immediately and come home to Midburgh and help Happy, her brother, run the taxi company. They could make money enough, now that business was picking up, she had written. He was just stalling, because he loved fighting, hitting people, getting the plaudits of the crowd. She accused him of things which were true—and of things which were not. It was the injustice which made him angry.

And of course the truth hurt, too. Pat asked him to go home, the comedian and the aging actress having departed, taking all good sense with them. But Willy accepted another drink from the smiling Rondeau and stayed.

It was somewhat confusing how much more attractive Rondeau became when Willy had a couple too many drinks. . . . There was a young blonde from Colossal Pictures who held his hand and eyed him roguishly from beneath artificial eyelashes an inch long. He giggled and wondered if it would be fun to pluck them, like the petals of a daisy. . . . *She loves me, she loves me not. . . .* All the clever people left, and the party became a drunken mirage. . . .

Pat Hafey greeted his visitor on the veranda of the seven-room bungalow complete with Jap house-boy which Willy had insisted upon hiring—mainly to return parties given by his new friends. "The Boxer" had long since been finished, but Willy would not go home to Midburgh, nor back to New York, nor anywhere away from Alec Rondeau and the Hollywood gang. Rack Nebo, razor-sharp of profile, a loud dresser even for the movie capital, shook hands and said: "A nice joint you got here, ha? Big-time stuff, Pat! Championship stuff, ha, Pat?"

Pat said tautly: "What will you drink, Rack?"

"I don't take the stuff. I leave that to dumb fighters, ha?" Rack almost laughed.

Pat said: "You're a pretty smart cookie, Rack. You almost beat us when we were coming up. Your boy has been doing good here on the Coast."

"Now you are talking strictly up my alley," said Nebo with satisfaction. He adjusted the creases of his extravagant mauve slacks. "Strictly between you and me, Pat, my Boo is slowed down. I guess you know that, ha? A boxer he was; he almost beat Boulder. Like you say, ha? But he is slowed down."

Pat said grimly: "He is hitting harder. He is kayoing the boys."

"Slow," said Nebo. "But a good boy. A sincere boy."

Pat said: "I might arrange a bout."

NEBO lit a cigarette. Smoke issued from his nostrils. Then he said gently: "You, manager of the champeen, you come to me, you say you might could give us a bout? Is that strictly orthodox, Pat?"

"I'm not asking you. I'm telling you," said Pat stubbornly. "Give us a month to get ready."

Nebo said: "Outdoors. A title bout."

"No," said Pat. "You come in over the limit."

"Ahhh," said Nebo. He inhaled cigarette smoke.

"I'll pay you twenty per cent of our part of the gate," said Pat grimly. "It won't be easy to get Willy. . . . I'll pay you twenty-five per cent—over and above your end."

Nebo said: "For the title."
"No!" Pat's jaw muscles were rigid. They sat staring at each other, for long minutes. Then Nebo arose and carefully blocked his cigarette.
"I un'erstand, you know, Pat. I seen your boy around. I aint sayin' I wouldn't take advantage." Nebo's eyes were wide with innocence. "But it should ought to be for the title."
"Take it or leave it." Pat shrugged.
"It's a big sock of dough for you."
"I take it," smiled Nebo. "It'll serve Willy right." He nodded and went out to the hired car in the driveway. With a hand on the door, he turned and said: "Willy is lucky, he has got such a manager. So long!"

PAT went inside and sat down at a desk. He picked up a pen and wrote painstakingly:

"Dear Sue: God help me if I have done the wrong thing. I just arranged for Willy to fight Boo Dorengo again. Willy is in no shape to fight even a Singer midget. I will make it a non-title bout, sacrificing a big ringside price and paying much to Nebo, who is smarter than any other fight manager, as you will remember, darling.

I wish I were home with you and Sue, Jr., or that you'd change your mind and come out here. I cannot quit Willy now, when he most needs me. I would like to take a club and straighten him out—figuratively and literally. But you know it would do no good. The kid has broken off with Mary Carson, it seems. He runs with a tough crowd. This Alec Rondeau is a jerk, a washed-up actor. Florrie Grey goes everywhere with the three of them, Rondeau, Jim Ewart (a nice kid in love with Florrie, God knows why) and our Willy. You remember Florrie.

I am taking a big chance against Boo—I think Willy will get a shellacking, although he will win, of course, as he always does, with that wallop of his. I hope he gets a beating that will wake him up . . . Love and kisses."

He sealed the letter and put airmail postage on it. He was a lonely man, and next year he would be forty and he wanted more children, a home for Sue and himself to settle in for middle age. Sue was thirty-five—she looked twenty-five. The baby was four and cute as a bug. . . . He could be the happiest of men if only the world would cease rumbling with war rumors and Willy would settle down.

He went to the phone and called Georgie Nash and told him that the challenge of Boo Dorengo for a bout over the weight limit would be accepted—"as a gesture by the champion to the California people who had been so kind to him, and who had evinced

a desire to see Willy fight." The press-agent-talent-agent would see to it that the fanfare was on. Then Pat holed in to await the storm. He privately admitted that he might have made a mistake, but he was grimly satisfied.

It was almost midnight when they came in, Willy and his gang. Florrie and a couple of other well-known gals were on the party; Rondeau, Ewart, four young actors, Georgie Nash, a stout young man with a thin face and clever eyes. Willy held a late edition of the *Times* and wore a slightly silly expression. Rondeau said dramatically: "So the gladiator returns to the arena! Hail the conqueror!" Rondeau was a little drunk.

Pat waited for Willy to object. Florrie Grey said: "I remember when Boo Dorengo tipped Willy on his ear—twice. Rack was my boy friend in those days. What a cheap guy! He used to buy me secondhand furs."

"From an East Side fence," grinned Pat. "Well, Willy, what about it?"

Willy looked down at the paper, then at his friends. He said: "Well, I guess it's all right. I mean, I guess I'll have to put old Boo away again." He braced himself, and Pat saw that he again had been imbibing one over the six. He said: "Couldn't you get anyone tougher than Boo? I'd like to show my California pals a good shindig."

Pat said: "Boo will do all right. He is hitting harder these days."

"He's slowed down to a walk." Willy made an uncertain gesture with his right hand, the hand he had always used to knock them out. "Let's have one more party. Got to train now—and how I'll hate it!"

Florrie came close as they crowded to the little bar indoors. It was cool on the veranda. She said: "Boo is slugging them. Rack is plenty smart. What's the idea, Pat?"

Pat said, "Why don't you turn him loose? You got plenty of boy friends. Why don't you leave Willy alone? He can't stand this gaff out here; he isn't built for this pace."

She stared at him. "Willy's unhappy. You don't know that?"

"He's middle champ," said Pat bluntly. "The public gave him a small fortune for being champion. He owes something to them, to the game."

"That crooked racket!" she said scornfully. "Be your age, Pat Hafey. I know fight business. Nobody owes it anything."

Pat said tightly: "It's thinking like that and acting that way which causes fight business to be rotten. I've been in it twenty-two years. Once I nearly compromised."

He paused, thinking of a day, back in Midburgh, when he had nearly lost everything—Sue, his honor, finally his life. There had been a boy that night, a green kid, who had shown him the

way. That was Willy Boulder. He looked past Florrie's opulent beauty to see Willy tip another glass. He said: "Well, I didn't. I've played it cleaner than most people in business. Willy has never been anything but dead on the level. And if fight business is a racket—what profit to us if we begin playing it dirty?"

The girl said curiously: "Who you trying to convince, Pat, me—or you?"

He said: "Florrie, for some people liquor and careless living is all right. On you, for instance, it does not look so bad; you can handle it. But Willy does everything whole hog. I've got to snap him out of it, Florrie."

She said: "Even if you get his brains knocked out. . . . Still, I know what you are getting at, and I can't say as I blame you. The boy is unhappy."

Georgie Nash came in and began talking about the publicity they were getting. He was very happy, but Pat could not share his enthusiasm. Willy was jitterbugging with one of the blonde girls—and not making a graceful job of it, at that. Florrie went in and took over.

THE month had passed with amazing swiftness. Sweating labor for two weeks had brought Willy Boulder to ringside in fair shape. There was a good crowd, but not as great a crowd as a real title bout would have drawn. Rack Nebo grinned across the ring, and Georgie Nash ran blubbering to Willy's corner and babbled in Pat's ears: "We've been double-crossed! The scales were fixed! Nebo claims Dorengo made the weight. He got the newspapers and weighed him on three different scales. He only weighs one-fifty-eight."

Pat said: "The California Commission won't stand for that."

"I know," wailed Georgie. "But he is under the limit. If he wins by a kayo, don't you see how lousy that'll be? It will spoil our deal."

Willy interrupted hastily: "You go away, Georgie. This is our business. You know from nothing about fights. Go away." Georgie went away.

Pat said: "He's right, of course. It'd be a hell of a cheese title if he kayo'd you, and him at fifty-eight."

"Sure," said Willy. "It would be a hell of a thing if he kayo'd me, period. Be your age, Pat. Old Boo can't kayo me. He can't lick one side of me." He mitted the ringsiders. He knew them all, Hollywood's elite. Prizefighters were always fashionable in Hollywood; this year there was a run on them; and Willy being more personable than most, he was having a tremendous vogue. Florrie Grey and her crowd had a box nestling close to the outdoor ring. Alec Rondeau was sober, for a change, and smug.

Ewart looked worried, as did Florrie. Willy carried nothing extra



around his middle—he was too young and healthy for that. But he was paler of skin than usual. Boo Dorengo sat quietly, watching Willy give the motion-picture stars the big glad hand. Boo's knotty, serious face was contemptuous. Boo's brown, hard body was loose as ashes. Rack Nebo stroked his fighter's greased hair and smiled thinly at Pat.

The referee called them out. He was a little nervous, handling a world's champion (in several States, this being 1939), and his voice shook. Rack Nebo said quickly: "Can my boy hit with one hand free, like this?" He grabbed Willy and pushed him backward. The unexpectedness of the attack struck a spark, and Willy lunged, growling.

Pat separated them. Boo was smiling, shaking his head. Rack remained serious, expostulating politely to the referee. Pat said: "Keep it cool, Willy. That was to get you riled. And look out for Boo's right. He is not a boxer these days. He is a hitter. You should outbox him with ease."

On the ropes, Willy poised, awaiting the bell. There had been no telegram from Mary Carson. For the first time in years she had sent him no message before he entered the ring. It had been a talisman, he felt now. When the messages had come, he had received them as a matter of course. He reproached himself. What had

Sue always said? "You never miss the water till the well runs dry." Well, he missed the water now.

Up in the hills, training, it had come in upon him. While he was partying with the gay people, he had never let it get him down. It had harassed him, but with the aid of Florrie and Rondeau and the others, he had thrown it off. But in the woody stillness of the mountain nights the slenderness of Mary Carson, the coolness and naturalness of her had returned in visions to haunt him.

Yes, he missed it now. There was Boo Dorengo, an old foe, a serious, clever boxer, an experienced fox, a wise head in the ring. Boo had knocked him down and almost had kept him down on another day, before Willy was champ. Now Boo was older and should not be dangerous—but like McTigue in his ring dotage, like McLarnin as a welterweight, Boo had developed a real knockout blow, they said.

THE bell sounded like a gong in a foreign land. The hard, heavy ball of unhappiness settled in Willy's belly. He came from his corner, his hands high, ready to meet the wheeling speed of old Boo.

But Dorengo did not speed. He walked, flat-footed. Tentatively, Willy stepped around, shooting out his

left fist. The glove landed, but Boo slipped the punches, letting them slide off with little damage. There was new cartilage over Boo's eyes, but he kept bobbing and coming closer. Willy threw the right to keep him away.

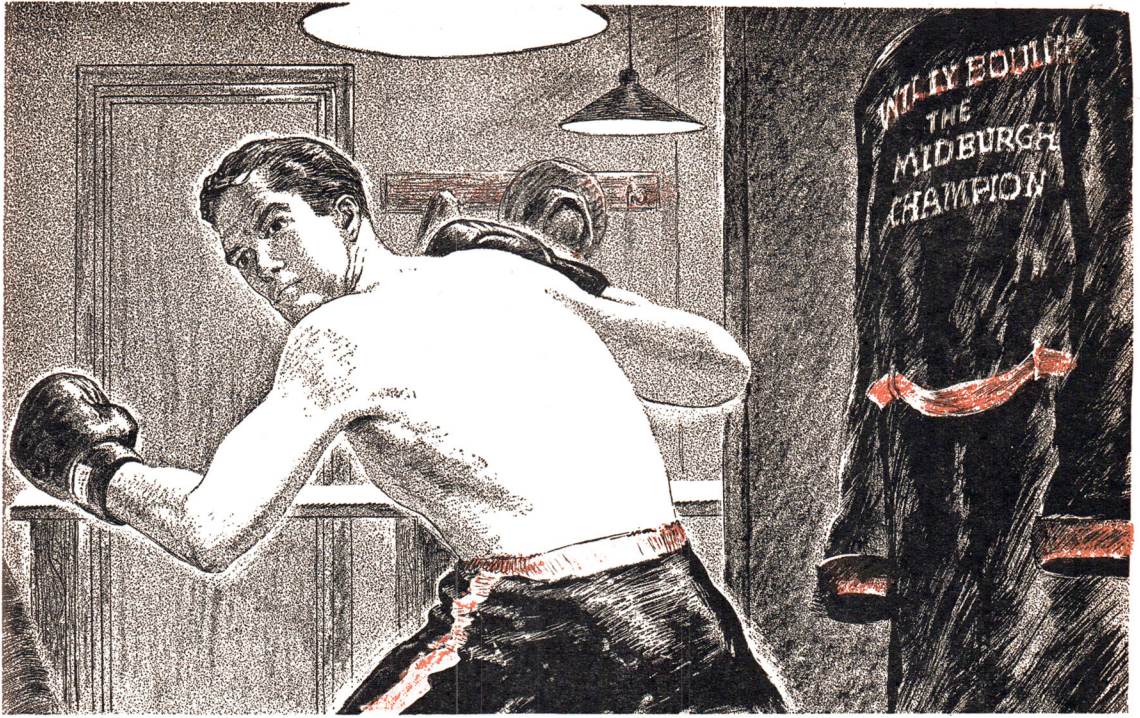
Boo blocked the right. His left hand sang in a short hook. His own right was inside, clubbing, once, twice, three times, like Joe Louis against Schmeling that second time, deadly, serious blows.

They drove Willy to the ropes. He half-turned, his mouth opening, the rubber piece bouncing on the floor. Rack Nebo's slim hands moved as Boo looked for instructions, motioning Boo to go in and finish it. Willy saw the gesture as he fish-mouthed along the ropes. Rack was signing him off. . . .

He paused. Boo was as careful as an artisan working over a piece of cabinet work. His punches lanced, cutting, stunning. Willy took enough of them. He gasped again, feeling the terrific power Boo had developed since their last meeting. He tried to fight back.

He was down, going slowly, not dropping prone, but suffering with it. He put his gloves on the floor and took the count from a white-faced Pat. It got to "seven" before he felt the strength he should have had at

"I swear I never thought he'd knock you out, kid. But you were in



lousy shape. Maybe you are in lousy shape now," Pat said, his voice low.

"four." He arose, and there was Boo, flat-footed, calm, ready.

There had never been any better punches. With a cinch target, Boo could set himself, call his shots. He sent them home—good honest blows, knocking Willy's head first to left, then to right. He circled, not swiftly, not slowly, but like a competent workman, slicing Willy's face, opening a gash over his eye. The Hollywood people screamed as gore splashed upon the new white canvas of the ring in the ball park.

The bell came. Willy put a hand on the top rope, solemnly looked about to locate his corner, then wobbled toward Pat. He sat down as though led was in his trunks' seat—and his soul. Pat wished for Kid Atkins, the colored boy who had helped in so many of Willy's fights, but Kid was boxing in Canada. The sponge did not seem to do much for Willy. Pat gave him the salts.

Willy said dreamily: "Ol' Boo sure can hit—" He seemed scarcely interested.

Pat said: "Box him. Move around. He's slow. Box him!"

"Sure," said Willy dully. "I'll get started."

He went out for the second round. The patch over his eye was a target. Boo hit it with a long left. Blood marred Willy's vision. He got close

and grunted, punching. He hit Boo on the jaw and stepped around, looking for a second opening. The blow was solid.

Boo used a one-two, very sharp and hurtful. Willy, amazed, threw another right; it also landed on the jaw.

Boo laughed and came in. Willy's heart sank within him. He chucked a left, a right and a left. Boo rolled with them, still grinning an awful grin as he poured the leather to Willy's middle.

Willy set his jaw and punched, disdaining to run. He drew blood from Boo's nose; but the game, tan veteran licked his lip, came in again. Now the entire fight mob was on its feet. The two heads came together; the guns of the fighters unlimbered, and Pat screamed hoarsely: "No, Willy, no! Get away from him, Willy!"

NEBO swallowed his gum. His nervous hands beat the air in rhythm with Boo's. His fighter lashed out with a straight right to the button.

Willy scarcely felt that one, but his arms were suddenly leaden. He tried to get them up high, but it was an awful task. He saw Boo coming, and he knew he had to protect himself, because Boo had become the hardest hitter Willy had ever faced. He knew vaguely that Boo had developed a new style, fighting off the flat of his

feet instead of off his toes, and that this had made of him a dangerous puncher; but Willy did not know what to do about it now except to try to get his hands up—that awful job, getting his hands up. . . .

A left hook racked him over into Boo's right. The right sent him into the ropes and for a moment he hung there, like an article in the Monday wash, draped inelegantly upon the hempen strand. The referee hesitated. . . .

Boo's right was already going to the mark. It arose from his hip, with all of Boo's splendidly conditioned body behind it. The punch snapped into Willy's jaw and separated him from the ropes with violence. He spun around, seemed to jump forward. He fell upon his face and knew no more.

No person in the arena was on his or her seat when the count ended. Pat Hafee, pale as a ghost, was in the ring at "ten." Rack Nebo, throwing his arms around his fighter, was screaming to the heavens: "I'm weigh-in' him right now, ha? A hundred forty-five he won't weigh, right now. I won't be gyped out of our title, ha?"

Pat paused as the second he had hired pillowed Willy's unconscious head, dribbling water on the pale brow. He said distinctly, so that many could hear; "Don't blow your top, Rack. We'll never claim a title after Boo kayoed Willy."

The thin man spun, peering. His shrill voice died in his throat. He said, "Ha?" He came close, his eyes feverish. He whispered: "You—you won't claim, ha? My Boo is champ?" "To me, he is," said Pat steadily. "And to Willy. And if you don't give us a re-match, that's your business too."

He turned away and knelt beside his boy. Willy opened his eyes, shook his head. He said: "What time is it?" "It's later than you think," Pat said sadly. "I made a mistake, Willy."

"You made a mistake?" Willy sat up, both gloves spread to balance him. His eyes crossed, then slowly returned to normal. "No, Pat. I made a mistake. It's all mahoola, see? Don't worry about it. I don't care!"

That was the worst blow of all. Willy did not care.

NOR would he leave Hollywood, Pat found. Alec Rondeau, his contract un-renewed, was "resting" before getting another chance in pictures. More and more this slick-haired matinée idol became Willy's constant companion. Florrie, young Ewart, the others had early calls and much work to do. Rondeau had time on his hands.

Boo Dorengo was in New York, capitalizing on the somewhat spurious title he had won from Willy. Pat did not resent this phase of the business. He went home to Sue and played with Sue Junior and thought hard about things. Kid Atkins and other fighters in his stable were making him a good living. He had a reputation as a clever, honest manager and his future was assured.

But he returned to Hollywood. It was Willy he loved. Pat had nursed the green kid from preliminary days, through the rackets, up to the title. He could not bear to see Willy slide down the greased skids, and Sue understood and approved, although she regretted his absences from home.

He had been back in Hollywood a week, watching the scene with brooding eyes, when Rondeau approached him. The actor sat on the veranda where Rack Nebo had once spoken of a bout and said: "You don't approve of me, Hafey. But I can do you a favor."

Pat surveyed his visitor. There were bags under Rondeau's eyes and he never could look a man in the face. The weakness was apparent in him since his contract had not been picked up. Florrie Grey had very definitely shelved him and was going around with eight other men and Jim Ewart. Pat said: "Do I want you to do me a favor?"

"Willy has been asking for acting jobs," said Rondeau. He smirked when Pat winced. "That would be his finish, eh?"

Pat said: "Before I ruin what is left of your beauty and throw you the hell out of here, what is your proposition and how much will it cost?"

Rondeau's hands shook a little. He said: "Well—for a thousand dollars I can get Nebo to let Dorengo come back for another bout."

Pat said: "You can get what? . . . Why, you couldn't make Rack Nebo take a five for a single."

"You think not?" Rondeau lit a cigarette from the butt of his last one. "Will you give me the thousand if I succeed?"

"With pleasure," said Pat wearily. "Now get the hell out of here."

The actor arose and registered disdain, taking his departure, but there was involuntary trepidation in the performance, Pat thought with satisfaction.

Willy came in late that night. His face was blurred, the lines no longer portraying fine physical condition and a tranquil soul. He said: "You know what? I almost got hired for a picture. Just a small part, of course. It'd be a sketch if I turned out to be an actor after all, huh, Pat?"

"Yeah," said Pat casually. "Meantime, this Mex middleweight, José Huerta, would like a bout. He's a big drawing-card here."

Willy scowled. "The training gets me—the thought of it. And—well, maybe Boo did something to me. I'm not keen, Pat."

"Keen?" Pat repeated. "What does that mean? I don't savy this Hollywood chatter, pal. You get keen when you train."

Willy said: "I mean I don't know if I want to fight any more." His chin assumed some of the old stubbornness, and a warning bell jangled in Pat's head. If Willy got thick about it, the task would be impossible.

Pat said carelessly: "Well, I got to go home soon. Thought you'd like to make another fight to pay my expenses here. Kid and the others need me, you know."

Willy said: "I'll pay you—out of my bank balance."

"You haven't any," said Pat apologetically. "You are overdrawn, in fact. Your income from now on is from the taxi business. Mary sent me a statement."

The young man turned pale, staring at his manager. He said: "The—the taxi business?"

"To which, in the past year, you have contributed exactly nothing," Pat said coolly.

Willy said: "Why, I started that to help Happy. He and Mary can have it! Why—I can't be dependent on that!"

"There's this bout with Huerta," said Pat. "It would help."

"Make it!" snapped Willy. "I'll start training tomorrow. I won't be

dependent on people—on people who don't even care enough about me to drop me a postcard."

Pat said expressionlessly: "When I was home, Mary mentioned she had not heard from her last letter to you."

"That was when she threw me. . . . Oh, never mind," said Willy crossly. He was not deeply angry, he was like a petulant child, Pat thought sadly.

The telephone rang, and Willy flung out to answer it. Pat filled a pipe and puffed. He heard Willy say, "Florrie? Yeah, it's me. . . . No, I can't go on a house-party. I'm training again. . . . Yeah, for Huerta. . . . Well, I thought I ought to give my public a break—and Pat too, you know—"

Pat winced. Willy even gave it a typical Hollywood voice, these days, through and down the nose. Making excuses why he should go in training instead of attending a drunken house-party! He bit hard on the pipe stem, determining to fight to break up this mode of living, and even then knew his impotence.

THE Huerta fight was tough, close and very, nearly tragic. Pat saw Willy's right slip by the guard of the wild-eyed, eager Mexican and land on the brown chin of the invader. That was it, but Willy had caught a shell-lacking until the punch landed.

Nevertheless, Willy had trained. Somehow the Hollywood gang had deserted him, none of them calling except Rondeau. Florrie and the others had been busy.

The day after the Huerta affair, the telephone rang in Willy's house, and it was long distance. Rack Nebo's raspy voice came through: "I see your bum is fighting again—the bum."

Pat said: "How are you, Rack?"

Rack said: "In the chips, ha? And I am strickly a dope, but if you want us, you can have a return. Ha?"

Pat kept his voice steady. "That's decent, Rack. Out here?"

"The ball park, yop. I know your bum won't come East," Rack said sympathetically. "Make arrangements; I'll sign."

Pat hung up. He leaned back in the chair and stared at the blank wall for five minutes without moving.

Willy came in at midnight. He was restless, walking about the living-room of the bungalow. He put on the new recording of "Deep Purple," the Number 3 hit of the day. When the melancholy strains had ended, he said: "Florrie and Jim and the crowd went to Palm Springs. You gonna run home awhile?"

Pat said: "Nebo called. You want to fight Boo again?"

Willy paused in his tramping to and fro. His eyes began to burn a little beneath his thick brows. He said: "Now wait. That aint kosher.

They don't figure to fight me this year again."

Pat said: "We never beefed on their claiming the title. Rack wants to do right by us."

"No," Willy asserted. "Not Rack Nebo. He's got larceny and you know it. There's more than that to it."

Pat said deliberately: "Maybe he wants a soft touch."

Willy flushed and the light in his eyes grew brighter. "Maybe he does. But I still don't get it. It's phony, Pat."

"You don't want it?" Pat pointedly did not look at Willy.

There was a long pause. Then Willy said: "I suppose this is it. I suppose I must make up my mind. They offered me a part in Florrie's next show today. A good little part."

Pat said nothing. He regarded his fingernails. "Deep Purple" began to replay itself the third time. Willy nervously shut it off. Willy said: "A fighter or an actor! Why can't I be like other people, just normal, ordinary?"

Pat shrugged. "You made that decision in 1932, in Midburgh, kid. You got a draw in the fight, remember?"

Willy said: "Florrie got me the part. She—she's a great girl. She's had her ups and downs, but now she is on top and I like her."

"You don't have to sell me," Pat shrugged. "Florrie Grey works at her trade."

The phone rang again. Pat answered. The blurred accents of Alec Rondeau said: "You owe me a grand, Hafey."

"Yeah?" said Pat guardedly.

"I just talked to Rack. You can put it on the line tomorrow," said the actor. "Don't worry, Hafey, I know my stuff."

"Okay," said Pat. He hung up. He looked at Willy and said: "You'd have to train harder to meet Boo and hope to last. I don't know—maybe you should be an actor. Maybe you are through. But I'd hate to leave the business with the title in Dorengo's hands—without making one try to get it."

WILLY worked the switch and put the machine onto the radio. A man sang "Three Little Fishes." It was as silly as Hollywood in general, Pat thought wearily, wondering if he was fighting hard enough. The phone jangled again and his nerves leaped. Willy answered this time.

Florrie's voice was clear enough to Pat. She said: "I just called to tell you congratulations on winning last night."

Willy said, "Oh, thanks—" Then his voice picked up conviction. "Yes, I guess I'm on the road back. I'm

fighting Dorengo here next month." His nonchalance was an indication that he would have made a good actor, Pat thought.

Pat sighed with relief. He got up and went to his bedroom and wrote a long letter to Sue. He slept that night, for the first time in weeks, without waking and tossing.

And in the morning he had Willy up into the mountains.

THE training did not go well, of course. It was the week before the bout was scheduled that Kid Atkins walked in, ivory teeth gleaming, brown skin glowing with health. Pat said: "Hey! You are supposed to be fighting for the Canadian championship this week!"

The colored welter star said: "Who picked me up when I couldn't get no fights, huh, Mist' Pat?"

Pat said: "But it was a big bout, Kid. I figured on you winning!"

The woolly head shook sideways. "You should 'a' knowed betteh, Mist' Pat. Willy done started me to eatin' regular. Why, you knows real good Willy can't train widout me. Looky what happened he lost to Boo befo'."

Pat said: "You should fly back to Canada at once." But he knew it was no use, that Faithful was the name for the Kid.

It was curious the way Willy took the return of the prodigal. He followed the colored boy all over, pathetically grateful to him for passing up the important Canadian bout just to help in the training. He had been in Hollywood so long, Pat thought bitterly, that the quality of friendship had become foreign to him; Willy Boulder, who had always been friendly as a puppy. Pat stood upon the hillside and cursed the town, over and over, putting upon it the curse of his Celtic ancestors. . . .

In the ring Kid Atkins slapped Willy dizzy in an outburst of speed. Jenks, the light-heavy, belted Willy from post to post. Willy's timing was bad, his temperament docile and morose.

Of the Hollywood bunch, however, only Rondeau tried to get in to see him, and Pat stopped the actor. The first time Rondeau was drunk, which was a good excuse. The second time it was late at night and Willy was asleep. The third time Rondeau was sober, it was mid-afternoon and the actor tried to pay for an admission.

Pat caught sight of him and stopped the sale. He said, "Can't you get it through your head you're not wanted up here?"

Rondeau blustered: "Willy wants to see me. I am his pal."

"You are nobody's pal," said Pat. "I gave you your cut. Now scram."

Rondeau said in his lordly manner: "I demand to see Willy. I have a mat-

ter of some import to discuss with him."

"Go stick your head in the Pacific twice and pull it out once," Pat advised. He had not hit a man with his fist in years but the impulse was on him now. He made a threatening step and the tall, handsome ex-movie star ran to his hired car.

Still, it was not good. Willy was not happy, he was not training well. He listened to the radio. The Yankees won the World Series four games to nothing; France refused to lay down her arms before Hitler's threats; the Finnish fleet mobilized in fear of Russia; Roosevelt urged Russia not to murder the Finns; suddenly the full fact of the war, still not at its furious height, was borne home on them all. Segregated in the training-camp they were aware of the thunder of Mars' dogs and they were silent many an evening, thoughtful of the future. The Japanese were methodically killing the Chinese; Colonel Lindbergh advocated selling only "defensive arms" to belligerents, whatever they were, and people began to glance askance at America's one-time boy hero.

AND then it was the eve of the fight and Willy was sitting in a room in the hotel, with only Pat as his audience. He looked fit, except that he was taller, it seemed, and maybe thinner than Pat had ever seen him at fight time. There was a wire from Sue. Pat read the loving message and Willy's eyes were damp.

Willy said: "But no word from Mary Carson. Just from her brother. The taxi business needs more capital. . . . Midburgh seems far behind."

"Behind? It's my home," said Pat sharply. "My baby's there."

Willy shook his head. "I'll never go back. You know—I was trying for a second screen part before I fought Dorengo before. Nash almost gave it away. I stopped him; I didn't want you to know."

Pat said: "Why don't you go back and see Mary?"

"What for?" Willy brooded, elbows on knees. "She threw me down, Pat. She wasn't satisfied for me to be a boxer. I never knew her when I was anything else, but she hated boxing as a business."

"So you're getting out of it—to be an actor! And not for Mary," Pat observed. "It is not very sensible."

Willy said: "Nothing's sensible. War isn't sensible, but there's several going on, all over the world."

The clock told Pat it was time to go. He put Willy's trunks and shoes into a bag, gathered his own paraphernalia. He said, "Well, here we start to get that title back."

"Uh-huh," said Willy dully. They went down and got a taxicab and rode

out to the ball park. There was a great turnout. Nebo had put the title on the line, shrewdly figuring Willy was short on actual fights and therefore sharpness. The screen colony was out in full regalia, rooting for Willy. In the dressing-room under the stands Pat made Willy strip early and put him into his trunks and shoes. Kid Atkins peeled off his shirt.

Willy said: "What's the idea?"

At the door Alec Rondeau's voice cried loudly: "Willy, my friend! Let me in!"

Willy wrenched open the door. Rondeau, blinking through reddened eyes, said sonorously: "They kept me from your side, my friend. All of them. Yonder oaf was the worst, your alleged manager. Willy, this Dorengo is ferocious—he is in top form."

PAT went past Willy and took Rondeau by the elbow. Kid Atkins opened the door. Pat threw the actor into the hall.

"Willy, don't do it," Pat warned. Willy was coming forward, angered.

The Kid slipped on a pair of gloves behind Willy's back. Pat held a pair out to the irate boxer. Pat said, "Put them on and box the Kid."

Willy said: "Are you nuts?"

"Yo' needs it, Willy," murmured the Kid. "Yo're stale."

"If you go in there the way you are, you'll be killed," Pat urged. "Rondeau has some hold on Nebo. Rondeau got a thousand dollars from me to arrange this fight—and was able to do it. Does that impress you?"

Willy scowled. "Alec? He don't know anything about boxing."

"He knew Rack. He knows something about condition. He got us this bout," Pat shot at him. "Put on those gloves. Move around. Get up a sweat."

As though hypnotized, Willy donned the mitts. Kid walked around, snorting, jabbing, gently prodding him to action. He began to move a little.

Pat said: "Florrie kept the others away. She and Jim Ewart gave you a chance to train. I begged them to do it. Only this Rondeau came around. I had him looked up. He used to handle a couple of ham-and-beaners. He knows his way around. I figure he was in on that weighing-in deal which let Boo come in under the middle limit last time. I knew you couldn't whip him quick last time. I swear I never thought he'd knock you out, kid. But you were in lousy shape. Maybe you are in lousy shape now. You're mentally far from good." Pat paused, wiping sweat from his brow.

Willy was sweating, too. Kid Atkins was roughing up his haircomb. The Kid was faster than Willy, being ten pounds lighter. They shuffled on the dressing-room floor and Pat began

to talk again, his voice low. He said: "I fought some champs in my time, kid. I fought Leonard, Goodrich, Kansas. I fought Canzoneri twice. I never beat one of them. I got draws, I fought them good, kid. But I never could win. You won the title once. Massera was a good man. You beat him."

The sweat ran down Willy's smooth back, between his shoulder blades. Pat spoke sharply, "Maybe Boo is better now. He has got that punch and he is smart. You got to make a showing, Willy. Not like last time. You got to get out there and fight! We came all this long way, from nothing. Are you going to whine and toss it away because your love-life went lousy on you?"

Willy said, "Don't say that! Not even you, Pat!" He swung about.

Outside, a boy called: "You're on, Willy—and good luck!"

Kid Atkins held out the gloves and Pat cut them off. Then he cut off the pair on Willy's hands. Without words the three, who had done this so often, formed a group. The robe over Willy's shoulders proclaimed his name and in large letters beneath, THE MIDBURGH CHAMPION.

In the ring Dorengo was all grins, unchanging, his tough face bland. Rack Nebo, who never directly addressed a fighter, said condolingly, "Your boy is thin, ha, Pat? Not so good. Well, we won't hurt him too much, ha?"

The referee was a more experienced man. "Never mind the Hippodrome," he said; "we're here to fight. Now boys, you know the rules."

Pat did not listen. He saw Florrie Grey in her box, with Jim Ewart's serious face next to hers and the hangers-on about them. They were greater stars than ever, they had done a picture together which was a riot at the box office. Rondeau was in the box, but seemed apart from the pair, his sardonic profile cold and threatening. Pat shrugged his shoulders, trying to throw off depression. The arbiter said, "Shake hands now and come out fighting. . . ."

Rack said: "Here goes nothing again."

Pat said nothing in response. He took the robe and ducked between the ropes. Willy's brooding eyes went past him, down to Florrie Grey's box. The curvaceous woman mitted him. Ewart held up two fingers, V-shaped.

Kid Atkins was muttering a strange little prayer. The bell rang and Willy went out there and he moved very quickly, but without authority, Pat saw in dismay. He boxed, but it was a matter of going through familiar motions. And Boo Dorengo, knowing this, ducked and came on, flat-footed but graceful, right hand cocked for the murderous work.

At two minutes of the first Pat gave Willy the signal to move it up. The round head bobbed; Willy's left became a trip-hammer flicking light ones to Boo's skull. Dorengo snuffed and hooked his right for the body.

It was one of Boo's new thunder-wallops and it went home. Willy wheeled half around under the force of the punch. Instinctively he tied up Boo's arms in close, but Dorengo jerked and plunged to get away and the referee came in and broke them.

Instantly the long Dorengo left curled, knocking Willy sideways. The right slid underneath in a blow which would have ended it without further effort. Willy rolled with it at the last possible instant, his eyes glassy. Pat howled: "Get away! Box him!"

Willy automatically obeyed, showing the left in there. He got it into Boo's eye, stopping him dead. The bell sounded.

Willy's legs were rubbery, but his eyes were sane and he knew his corner. He sat heavily on the stool and said, "He still can punch."

"You got to box him," Pat fretted. "He's duck soup for a long left. Walk around him and make him box."

Willy said nothing. He looked down at Florrie Grey and she was leaning to catch his eye. Pat saw her make the gesture, urging Willy on. Ewart was also concerned. Rondeau seemed pleased about something.

There had been that moment during the last fight when Rondeau had looked smug, Pat remembered. Both sides of the Hollywood picture were gathered in the one box, as so often happens in that town, Pat imagined. The whistle sounded and he got down, after admonishing Willy again, "Box him!"

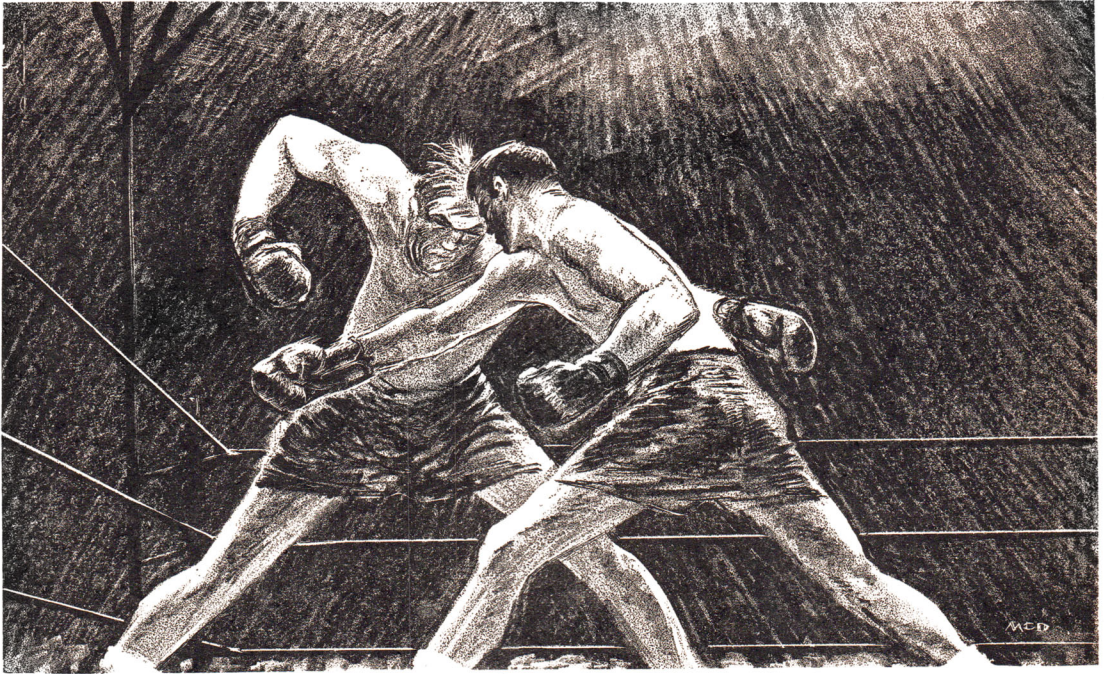
Dorengo came fast across the ring, Nebo's thin face thrust itself over the apron and his hands fluttered. Dorengo bulled and snorted, whipping his big punches home. Willy took two in mid-section and backed away. Nebo was shouting for a knockout.

Willy's heels came down. Pat shouted: "No! On your toes! Box!"

Dorengo threw a left to the head. Willy unwound his right.

BOTH blows landed; both men staggered. Willy stepped back, but only to gain impetus. Still flat-footed, he came forward again. He chopped a short right to the jaw, a punch he almost never used. Dorengo bled.

Fire flashing from his eyes, Boo gamely accepted the challenge. He chunked his left in there. Willy caught it on the nose and the claret ran. Willy nailed an inside right to Boo's eyes. There was red on their bodies, on the floor. The referee knelt, trying to see what went on as they locked head and head in ring



Their fists were like triphammers. . . . They were like a two-headed monster destroying itself.

center. Gloves whirled too swift for his eye to follow.

They stayed there. Human flesh couldn't stand it. Their fists were like triphammers, flailing each other. Welts rose on their bodies. They were like a two-headed monster destroying itself. They did not flinch, they did not give a step, either of them, in that second round. They brought every spectator to his feet, left men breathless with the chunking thunder of the blows they dealt. They were two strong men locked in a death struggle. . . .

Then a brown fist dropped, came up, a brown body lunged with everything behind it, a glove went home to the point of a chin.

Willy stepped away. Boo fell. He fell forward, almost into Willy's arms. His face was taut, jaw set, but his eyes were glassy as two marbles. He hit the canvas and Willy walked on stiff legs to a corner far away. Turning, Willy seized the ropes, bracing himself, staring down at Florrie Grey and her party. Blood ran from a dozen cuts on his face.

Dorengo did not stir. The count went: "Nine . . . ten . . . out." Dorengo did not move. Rack Nebo came, pale-faced, speechless for once, to pick him up. Willy said through loose teeth, "He'll live. I killed a man once . . . but he wasn't strong like Boo. . . . I had to do it this time because Boo is so good. . . . All

this time I never let out all the way because I was scared of killing a man again." Then Pat had him, smothering him with the robe, saying nothing, but efficiently cutting off the voice which was close to hysteria. In his corner Willy stood, staring, silent now, until Boo awoke and moved and even smiled, brave battler that he was.

Then they were in the dressing room and now Pat threw open the door to those who came with praise. Florrie Grey held Willy's hand, saying: "Pat was right. You could do it, if we gave you a chance. . . . We stayed away from the camp, we tried to leave you alone. Jim and I wanted to see you, too. We're getting married tomorrow, Willy."

THERE was a commotion at the door. Rondeau came through, belowering. His eyes were bloodshot, he looked as though he had been drunk for a week. He screamed: "I've been double-crossed! I arranged the fight and look what they did to me." He was, Pat saw then, beaten. Someone had rumped him, and there was a bruise on his profile.

Pat said, "So Nebo threw you out. You told him Willy was out of shape and nervous. You told him to go in and nail Willy quick because he was dull and did not want to fight. And, you dirty dog, you kept mailing clippings to Mary Carson, telling of Willy's alleged high life. You had a

columnist slip the dirt into a little, cheap paper and you sent them to Mary!"

Willy said in a terrible voice: "How long have you known this, Pat?"

"Only today," Pat said grimly. "Sue got it from Mary and wrote me about it. This joker has been trying to cross us all the way. He bet on Dorengo, of course, whatever money he had."

Willy said: "Why, you—"

He took a step, but Pat quickly blocked him.

Pat said: "Please! This is on me." He slipped on one of the gloves they had used for the warming-up before the bout. He did not want to hurt his knuckles. He hit Rondeau right on the button. It was a very nice punch, he thought critically, and Kid Atkins got the door open just in time to let the actor slide into the hall. The Kid closed the door, his face split in a white-toothed grin.

Florrie said: "Pat, will you give me away tomorrow? Jim wants Willy for best man and we are all going to fly to Yuma—and even Rack Nebo is going along. Are you game?"

Willy said quickly, "We'll go. Then we can keep right on—from Yuma. We can get connections for—home."

"Yeah," said Pat. The world seemed peaceful all of a sudden. That magical word—it meant more than championships, he decided comfortably—home!

Bongo



Bear's

An off-season caretaker at a lumber-camp has a lonesome job—until the bears gang up on him and force him to go fishing for their benefit.

IN the misty dawn-light the bear looked gigantic. He was clawing over the empty cans on the camp dump, growling and whining peevishly. Bears are very conversational and talk to themselves continually. This one had recently emerged from his winter den; he was starving.

Staring at him through the window, Bob Valley felt a hollow feeling inside, for Bob was no longer a fighting man. He was lame in one leg because of a falling tree; a breaking log jam had crippled his left arm, and a deep scar ran from his graying hair to his upper lip to show where a flying limb had laid open his face. Of the man he had been, little now remained but a stout heart.

No longer fit for heavy work, Bob had been left as watchman at the lumber camp on Swampy Lake, and he had taken up his quarters in the office building. His nearest neighbor lived twenty miles away as the crow flies, but the actual road was much longer, and a poor one at that.

He reached for his only firearm, then laid it down again. "Lot of help it'd be takin' a shot at him with a measly .22—only make him mad!"

He picked up his ax and felt its edge with his thumb. "Sharp enough, anyway. If he sticks his nose in here I'll whack it off for him. But I'd liefer he'd go away and not bother me."

The bear was in no hurry; he continued to root about in the dump for an hour, while Bob watched him with growing impatience. Then he ambled over to the office, sat up on his haunches and swayed his body from side to side, rumbling in his throat.

Bob addressed him sternly through the window. "See here, Bongo—if that's your name—I need to go out and get me a pail of water for break-

fast, so you just mosey on about your business, eh?"

Bongo replied by coming over to the window and rearing up until his head and shoulders blocked out the light. He stuck out his long upper lip and snorted loudly.

Bob took a firm grip on his ax and said warningly: "Make a pass at this window and I'll have a paw off you! See here, you damn' bum, if I give you a chunk of sowbelly, will you beat it?"

"Woolf."

"All right." Bob hacked off a chunk of salt pork, opened the door a crack and tossed it out.

Bongo went over, sniffed at it suspiciously, snatched it up in his mouth and padded off into the bush.

Bob wiped his damp forehead and took a deep breath. "Guess I'd best hustle out and fill the pail before he decides to come back for more."

He limped quickly down to the lake, carrying his ax in the crook of his crippled arm and his pail in the other hand. He got back safely and sat down to consider his position.

"He's hungry and he might take a notion to break in, lookin' for grub. Best make everythin' tight. Why didn't I have sense enough to make 'em give me a real gun? Wonder how long this is goin' to keep on? No sense worryin' until I have to, though. Meantime, I best get movin'."

With frequent pauses for reconnaissance, and keeping his ax always



Lullaby

by JOHN
BEAMES



Doodlebug

within reach, he reinforced all the doors in camp with heavy wooden bars. The windows were too small for a bear to enter by. He paid particular attention to the storehouse, and converted the office into a small fortress.

"Well, I don't think he can break in now," Bob said at last. "But how in hell do I get out—if he takes a notion to hang around? I don't like bears, anyway!"

Bongo was back at dusk, grunting and whimpering among the buildings. He stuck his head in at Bob's window and roared. Then he went and battered on the door until it bent under his blows.

"If I took a crack at him with the ax and didn't get him first time," reflected Bob, "it'd only make him mad, and I don't want no bears with sore heads around me. Maybe I don't like bears. Be damned if I'm goin' to set up with him all night, neither. . . . Go on away, you dirty bum, and leave me sleep!"

He dozed fitfully, wakened every now and then by another thump on the door or uproar at the window. Finally he rose and cut off another piece of salt pork.

"I know I'm a damn' fool—only bring him back for more—but I got to get some sleep. Here, you fuzzy-bellied garbage-can, you, take that and get to hell out of here!"

Bongo took the meat and made off. Bob fell asleep, and waked to find it broad daylight again.

"Now what do I do?" he mused. "If I tin-can it out of here just on account of a bear, they'll laugh at me. But the sowbelly won't hold out long this way, and they won't be sendin' up any more until next month. Why was I fool enough to take a job like this? Guess all I can do is catch me some fish."

He closed up the shanty carefully, took his ax and fishing-pole, and set off for the dam a quarter mile away.

A boggy path followed the lake shore, with water on one hand and an impenetrable thicket of alder, spruce and willow on the other.

He went warily, his ears cocked for any rustle in the bush, but the silence of the Northland brooded over everything, and he came out on the clearing by the dam without seeing or hearing anything alarming.



"See here, you bums, I aint feedin' no more! There won't be a fish left in the lake!"

Here, where deep water lay close inshore, there were always swarms of jackfish and pickerel to be found, ranging in weight from one to ten pounds, and nearly always ravenous.

Where the water was only a few inches deep lay the little fish, up to six inches long and no thicker than a lead pencil. Beyond that was a belt where half-pounders could lie. They were perpetually nosing in on the smaller fish—for jackfish are voracious cannibals—while behind them the big ones ranged up and down. These would make rushes into the shallows, find themselves aground, and flap and struggle back to deeper water.

Bob's equipment was a spoonbait, a wire leader, a stout line and a willow pole, for there is no finesse in fishing for the Northern jack.

He flung the spoon far out, and his first cast brought a silver streak flashing up from the clear depths. He gave a powerful jerk, and a two-pounder was thrashing and wriggling at his feet. In fifteen minutes he had nine, most of them too small to take the big spoon and merely hooked through the lip.

Then a majestic ten-pounder circled cautiously into view. The smaller fish scattered hurriedly, and Bob swung the spoon out and dropped it accurately over the big fellow's nose. He let it sink for a moment before pulling in.

The big fish followed, making up his mind. Then with a rush and a leap he took the bait. Bob braced his feet and tugged, and the lashing, fighting water-tiger came ashore.

The spoon was far down his gullet, and Bob knew better than to poke his

finger in among those serried rows of teeth sharper than a surgeon's scalpel. With his knife he cut into the gills until he could draw the spoon through and detach it from the wire leader.

He finished the operation and sat back on his heels to draw his breath. He looked up to find himself staring straight into the eyes of Bongo the bear. His ax was out of reach; he was defenseless. With some vague idea of protecting himself, he caught the fish up by the tail.

"Woof!" Bongo's big blunt claws closed on it in a flash, and he whirled and dashed off into the bush. Bob felt slightly faint and sat down helplessly.

Then a grin spread slowly across his battered face. "Well, blast you, if it's fish you want, I can save my sowbelly. Plenty of jackfish in this here lake, anyhow. I'll take a couple of these home to eat, and you can come back for the rest any time you want."

There followed twenty-four hours of unbroken solitude.

"Hope I seen the last of him," mused Bob. "I don't want no bears in mine, no time. But I suppose the bum'll be back soon's he gets hungry."

So it was! Bongo was snuffling and grumbling around camp in the early morning.

"All right, all right," Bob called to him. "I'll go down and catch you some fish soon's I get my breakfast eat."

But by the time he had his tackle ready, Bongo had vanished. However, Bob set out for the dam, keeping a sharp lookout. He found he could not cast with his ax on his arm, and so laid it down. He was busy tossing the spoon out and watching it twinkle back toward him, when a loud "woof" announced Bongo's arrival.

Bob's startled, "Hey!" brought the bear up short, and he squatted back on his haunches, his ears cocked and his pointed upper lip sticking out.

"You hold your horses," admonished Bob, "and I'll have a fish for you right away."

Bongo dropped on all fours with a threatening growl. By a desperate inspiration, Bob pulled a match from his pocket, whipped it with a practised motion along the leg of his overalls, and thrust the flaming head under the brute's nose.

Bongo shot backward with a squeal, and began to massage his singed snout with both paws, groaning and whimpering.

"Now, will you have a little patience?" asked Bob. "Breakfast comin' up right away."

Fortunately, a little one-pounder took the bait at his next cast. Bob's quick jerk flicked him clear of the water, but he fell off just as he reached shore. Bongo scooped him up with a paw and started eating.

The fish began to bite steadily until there were a dozen lying on the beach. Bob picked out a nice three-pounder for himself.

"You can have the rest," he told Bongo, "and don't come botherin' me for a while."

Bongo did not show up next day or on the day following.

"It's funny," mused Bob, "but damned if I aint gettin' lonesome for the bum; he's some company, anyway. I'll go down to the dam and see if he's there; he'd ought to be gettin' hungry by now."

He thought he heard something moving in the bush as he went along, but the leaves formed a green wall impervious to sight. Nor did anything move around the dam, though he noticed that the ground had been clawed over and that not a scrap remained of the several fish he had left there.

His first fish was a fine four-pounder. He jerked the hook from the savage jaws with a practised turn of the wrist and tossed the body behind him. A furry body shot out of the bushes and pounced on it.

"Huh, so there you are, eh? What the—"

For the beast he was staring at was not Bongo, but a very ancient she-bear. The fur hung in ragged patches from her lean body, her fangs were yellow with age, and one eye was white with cataract. She had a long hairless neck and very big ears. She snarled at him, one paw planted on the fish.

"You're gettin' into this pretty cheap, aint you?" commented Bob. "You look like a flop to me, too. Yes sir, Mrs. Floppy, if you'll take my advice you'll mosey along out of here before Bongo sees you. By golly, here he comes now!"

The big bear burst into a tempest of roars at sight of Mrs. Floppy, but she held her ground obstinately, displaying every decaying tooth in her head. Bongo was daunted. He put his head down and snorted angrily, then turned on Bob with a grumbling whine.

"Don't you come near me," warned Bob, "or I'll give you another match to sniff. Set down now, till I catch you a fish."

Bongo seemed to understand, and stood watching the water intently as Bob cast, swaying from side to side and whimpering with impatience. He snatched the first fish off the hook, and turned to Mrs. Floppy with a derisive snort.

It took Bob an hour to get what he considered a sufficient quantity of fish, and he was tired with standing on his lame leg. "That's all you're gettin' today," he said. "And, say, don't give out no more invites to your friends—I aint goin' to run no free lunch-counter for a crowd of bums!"

But when morning dawned Bongo was begging Bob to come out, and he fell in behind as the man went down to the dam. "Nothin' doin'," said Bob. "You go on ahead. G'wan, it's safer that way." Bongo grumbled but obeyed.

Mrs. Floppy was waiting for them, and she and Bongo exchanged snarls until she retreated. Bongo's paw nailed the first fish ashore, and Mrs. Floppy roared with rage and hunger. However, she waited for the next, a little one, and swallowed it in an instant.

Bob, busy casting, suddenly became aware that she was creeping up on him. He kicked backward with his lame leg. She fled, curled herself up in a ball, and rubbed her sore nose with a paw, crying like a spanked child.

"Sorry to do that," said Bob, "but you got to stay back. Now, just quit your bawlin' and I'll get you another."

He got another for her and then one for Bongo. He was trying for a big one he had caught glimpses of, far out, when he heard a slight noise behind him. Sure that Mrs. Floppy was back at her tricks, he whirled, intending to let her have it hard.

He gasped. Crouched at his heels, ears laid flat, one gleaming fang tip showing, was a thin yearling bear, evidently very frightened and desperately hungry.

Bongo, having gulped down his own fish, roared with fury, charged, and cuffed the little bear head over heels. Squealing like a pig, the youngster scampered off.

"You big bully, you," said Bob severely. "Make another pass at that little feller and I'll fix you!"

Bongo sat up on his haunches, paws hanging and ears cocked, and grinned at him.

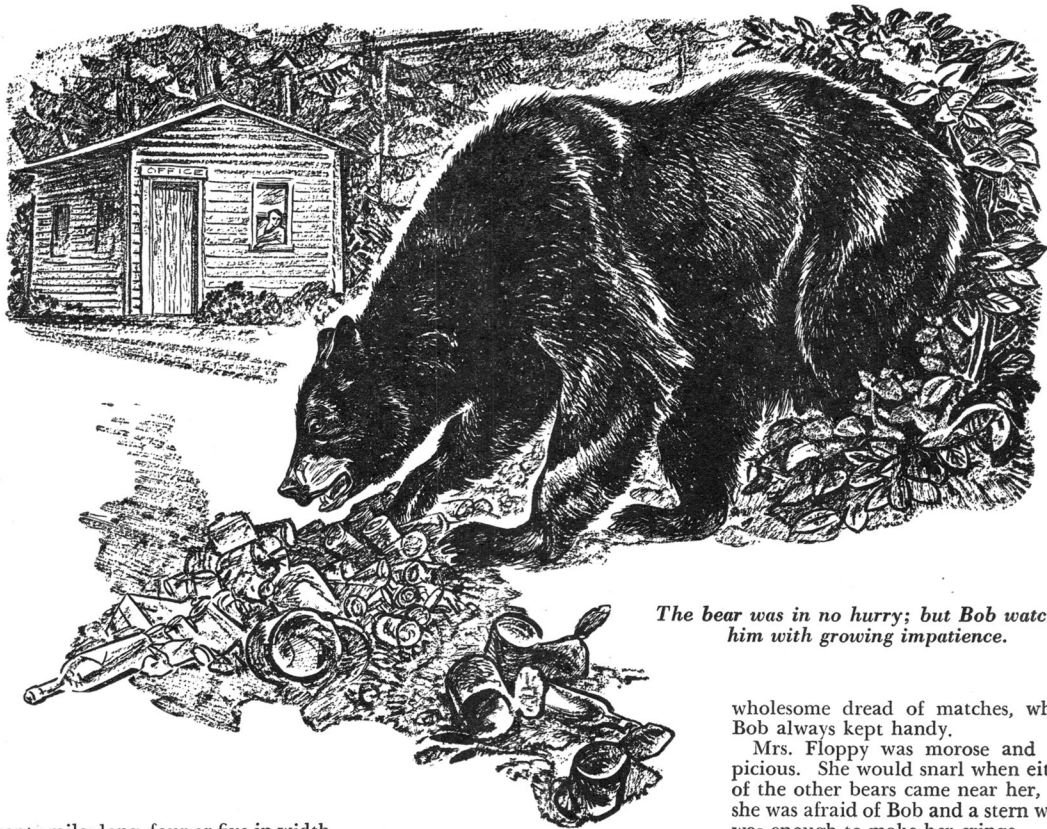
"Old clown!" Bob laughed. "All right, I'll feed you, but the little doodlebug has to get his too."

He pulled a match from his pocket and offered it to the bear. Bongo promptly put both paws over his nose and whimpered.

BOB went back to his fishing. As soon as the others were fed, he picked out a fish and tossed it into the bushes, where he could hear Doodlebug whining sorrowfully.

He addressed all three. "See here, you bums, enough is plenty. Get me, I aint feedin' no more! You get all the bears in Saskatchewan lined up here, and first thing you know there won't be a single fish left in the whole damn' lake. What'll you do then, eh?"

Whether they took his admonition to heart or not, no more bears showed up. And fortunately the supply of fish held out, though sometimes Bob was hard put to it to catch enough to feed his uninvited pets. The lake was some



The bear was in no hurry; but Bob watched him with growing impatience.

twenty miles long, four or five in width and a hundred feet deep in places. Nobody but an occasional Indian ever fished there, and the water teemed with jackfish and pickerel.

The whole thing had come about so naturally that full realization came to Bob as a shock. They were all busy eating, one day, and he was sitting looking at them, when he exclaimed suddenly, "Here I aint even brung my ax with me, and you aint no tame bears! Beats hell, don't it?" He paused, overcome with wonder.

"Well, seein' as it is the way it is," he resumed after a pause, "I'm goin' to make some rules and regulations and you got to mind 'em. First of all, no sneakin' up on me from behind. That goes special for you, Mrs. Floppy; I'll kick you on the snoot any time you try it."

She flinched at the tone of his voice. He shook his finger at the big bear. "And you, Bongo, no fightin', understand me? You're a dirty big bully, and if you make one more pass at Doodlebug I'll make you eat hot matches. Get me?"

Bongo sat up, scratched his belly with one paw, waved the other in the air, and rolled his head from side to side.

"All right, you can make me laugh," grinned Bob. "But clownin' is one

thing—and bullyin' is somethin' different. You better mind what I tell you."

Doodlebug finished eating, and began solemnly to turn head over heels in a circle. It was his one trick and way of showing off. Unless Bob applauded he became morose and fretful, and would hold his paw over his nose and whimper.

Bob clapped his hands. "Atta boy, that's fine!"

Then he concluded: "There's just one more thing—none of you aint to hang around camp. You might take a notion to bust in and chew up the stores. I'm hired here just to keep you from doin' that, and so if I see you around I'm goin' to whale the tar out of you. I'll meet you down here by the dam—and I don't want to see you no place else!"

HE proceeded to enforce his new rules strictly. It was a discordant trio he dealt with. Bongo was good-natured and perpetually clowning, but he always insisted on having the first fish, and would stand beside Bob until it was caught. He disliked Mrs. Floppy, and would clout Doodlebug whenever the cub came within reach. He would occasionally assume a threatening attitude toward Bob, but had a

wholesome dread of matches, which Bob always kept handy.

Mrs. Floppy was morose and suspicious. She would snarl when either of the other bears came near her, but she was afraid of Bob and a stern word was enough to make her cringe.

In a way, Doodlebug was the most dangerous because he was affectionate and anxious to play. As he weighed between two hundred and three hundred pounds and could hit like a pile-driver, Bob had to watch him continually and kept a stick to tap him on the nose with when he became boisterous. Bob had long ago given up carrying his ax. Doodlebug hated Bongo, but he ignored Mrs. Floppy.

As they got over their spring hunger, all became easier to handle. Doodlebug grew like a weed and Bongo began to resemble a barrel. Even Mrs. Floppy lost her lean and woebegone appearance and her temper improved accordingly.

Bob said to them, "You aint folks, but you're a hell of a lot *like* folks. If you could talk I wouldn't know but what you was people. Anyway, if you wasn't around I'd be too damn' lonesome to live."

One day the supply teamster came up with groceries for the watchmen at the different camps. He dropped off Bob's supply, and went on up the lake to Camp Nine, returning by evening to spend the night.

"Say, old Jimmy Taylor's near bug-house with bears up at Nine," he said. "There's a couple around what pesters the life out of him. He wants some-



By a desperate inspiration, Bob thrust a flaming match under the brute's nose. Bongo shot backward with a squeal.

body come up and shoot 'em for him. You got any bears around?"

"No," said Bob hastily. "I aint seen hide nor hair of one sence spring. There was one then, but I scared hell out of him. Nobody don't need come here lookin' for bears to shoot."

When the team pulled out, he hurried down to the dam. "Now, you listen to me," he said. "That rule about not hangin' around camp goes double from now on. I don't want to have you shot, so the next bear I see around is goin' to be out of luck."

Thereafter when a bear entered the clearing around the camp buildings, he would shout threateningly and throw chunks of wood. He would usually find Bongo or Doodlebug waiting for him at the edge of the clearing in the morning, but at all other times they kept out of sight.

The supply team came up again in late August.

"How's old Jimmy makin' out with his bears?" inquired Bob.

"Oh, they don't bother him no more now that the blueberries is ripe."

"Oh, that's it, eh? I was wonderin'."

"Wonderin' what?"

"What bears done around this time. I aint seen no sign of a one."

"Nor you aint liable to, not down around this here muskeg anyway. The bears'll all be up on the high ground where the berries is."

Instead of going down to the dam in the morning, Bob went painfully up into the hills with his lopsided gait. Here the timber was more scattered and the blueberries grew in great purple patches.

As he went he called, "Here, Bongo! Oh, Mrs. Floppy! Anywheres around, Doodlebug?"

The sun was hot and he was getting very tired—when he came to a little depression where blueberries grew in profusion. Something black and furry was busy among them.

Bob gave a glad shout, "You, Doodlebug, where the devil you been the last week? I been lonesome—and scared somethin' happened to you!"

Doodlebug came ambling over, stood up on his hindlegs, snorted affectionately and took a slap at Bob.

"Hey, now, you behave," chided Bob. "Gettin' independent as a hog on ice, aint you? Don't want no more fish, eh? Come on now, don't you want a nice fish? Come on and talk to me! You didn't ought to leave a friend like that."

He moved off in the direction of the lake, and Doodlebug followed until his eye was caught by a rich patch of blueberries, and he turned to stuff his mouth with berries, sticks and leaves.

"Ungrateful little bum, that's what you are," said Bob sadly. "Well, when you do want some more fish, come on down to the dam. I can't go ramblin' all over the country after you—my leg won't stand up to it."

FOR a time Bob saw little of his friends. Sometimes one or the other would decide upon a meal of fish, and then he would find them waiting for him at the dam. He would hasten to catch fish, and talk to them with the feverish eagerness of a very lonely man.

The first severe frost stripped the blueberry bushes overnight. Bears love blueberries, but do not care so much for the little cranberries that make a crimson carpet for the autumn woods. Once more the trio began to show up regularly at the dam.

By this time Bongo was almost shapeless with fat, and lethargic in his movements. He would clown in a languid way and go to sleep over a half-eaten fish. Mrs. Floppy had grown quite bulky too and was almost good-natured. She ate without enthusiasm.

Doodlebug had put so much energy into growing that there was not very much fat on his ribs and his appetite was still excellent. He was getting to be a sizable bear, and sometimes ventured to show his teeth at Bongo, but the big bear was too lazy to pay any attention to him now.

Bob gave them fatherly advice. "Now look-a-here, babes, it's around time you begun to think of dennin' up for the winter. Aint no more berries, and when the lake commences to freeze it's goin' to be hard to fish. There just aint goin' to be anythin' for you to eat. How about it?"

Bongo half-opened one eye, and Mrs. Floppy twitched her shoulders. Doodlebug looked up from the fish he was chewing and snuffled.

"And here's another thing," continued Bob. "Right away they'll commence openin' the camp for the winter. There'll be dizzy boobs around with guns. If you're denned up safe they won't bother you, but if you're moseyin' around some yap's goin' to take a shot at you sure as hell! Now

you just take my advice: crawl in some hole and pull the hole in after you. Then you'll be safe."

Bongo appeared to consider the advice sound, for he was not at the dam one frosty October morning, and Bob saw no more of him. Then Mrs. Floppy disappeared. But Doodlebug still met him every morning.

Bob grew worried and pleaded with him to find a den before the lumbering-crews returned to the woods.

"Well, if you won't make a den for yourself," he said one day, "I'll dig one for you! A lazy little bum, you are."

Loading himself with pick and shovel, he coaxed his pet to follow him up into the hills. He chose a steep slope and began to dig under the roots of an old stump.

"This here's a good dry spot," he explained. "You wouldn't find a dry bed down in the muskeg. You'd ought to be comfortable here. Come on, take a look at it. Does that suit you?"

Doodlebug sniffed at the hole for a minute or two, then lost interest and began to scratch.

"Well, if you're that damn' choosy," exclaimed Bob, "why don't you go dig a hole for yourself? I'll learn you how. See, you dig right in under like this, and you'll be snug and comfortable as a bug in a rug."

Doodlebug looked bored, got up and rambled away. Bob dropped his shovel in disgust.

"Hell of a lot of use me diggin' a den for him if he don't want it! Anyway I can't dig, I'm all tuckered out already. Be damned if I know what's goin' to happen him."

The weather turned sharply colder: it froze every night and the lake was rimmed with ice in the morning. It was hard to get fish, but Doodlebug still expected to be fed.

Bob spoke to him in a grave tone one morning. "I tell you what's goin' to happen you one day: either you'll get shot or somebody'll put you in a cage. I'd take you in the shack, but you couldn't stay there after the boys come up. You'd land up in a cage and you wouldn't like that one bit. You'd have a hell of a time in a cage, I'm tellin' you. Babe, you got me near heart-broke, you're that damn' stupid! Why don't you listen?"

Doodlebug sat up and whimpered for fish.

IN a week or so the crews would be coming up to the woods, and Bob puzzled anxiously over the situation.

"There's just only one thing to do," he decided at last, "I'll make a cage myself and coax him into it. Then I'll tell the boys he's my bear, and make 'em leave him be. He'll go to sleep, and when spring comes I'll turn him loose in the woods again. I hate to put him in a cage, but if that's the only way to save his life—"

He fell asleep on that resolve, and woke to find a light snow falling and the ground covered half an inch deep.

"Wonder how he'll like this," thought Bob. "Bet he don't. I'll go see how he is." But Doodlebug was not at the dam, nor did he reply when Bob called him.

"Now where is he at? Did he finally have sense enough to den up? I got to find out. Suppose I got to tramp all over hell's creation, lookin' for him."

He limped up into the hills, to the place where he had tried to dig a den, but Doodlebug was not there. He was standing looking helplessly about when he heard two rifle-shots farther back in the hills.

"Bet somebody got him!" Bob groaned. "If I find the man what

done it—" He hobbled along until his leg gave out and he had to sit down.

He had to drag himself back to camp, and all night long he was haunted by visions of Doodlebug going trustingly up to some hunter—to be cold-bloodedly shot down. "I just got to go and look for him," Bob said to himself.

Taking a staff to help him along, he went out at dawn. He went slowly in the direction whence the shots had come. Some distance back in the hills he found tracks of a man and then of a deer. The man had apparently missed, for the tracks showed where the deer had suddenly given a tremendous bound and dashed away.

Bob sat down and wiped his brow. "Well, that guy didn't get him, anyway! Guess he's denned up safe, but I wish I knew where. Anyway, I got to get back to camp now."

He took a more direct line homeward, and found his way blocked by a narrow but deep ravine. He followed it lakeward in hopes of finding an easier crossing. He came to a clump of small spruce growing close together. Their branches had held up the snow, and he saw a small patch of raw earth among the roots.

"Bead, if there ain't a hole there," he said. "I wonder—"

He let himself cautiously down the slope. There was a surprisingly small hole, so well hidden that only by accident would anyone be likely to stumble on it. He got down on his hands and knees and peered inside.

Doodlebug, settling himself for his winter sleep, growled a drowsy protest.

Bob drew back hastily. The worried lines on his brow smoothed themselves out, and he smiled with tears in his eyes.

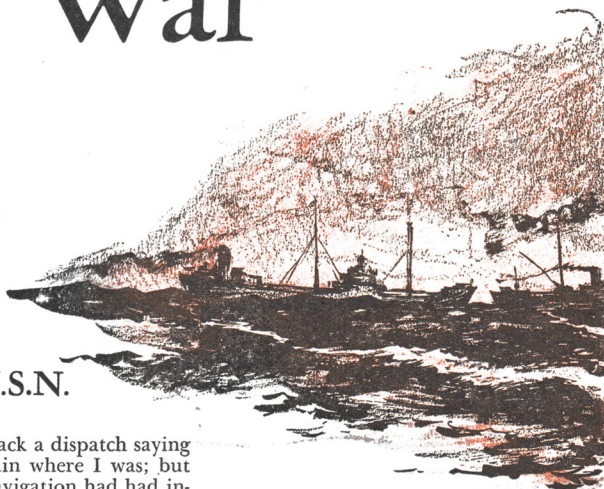
"Sleep sound, babe!" he murmured.



Doodlebug, settling himself for his winter sleep, growled a drowsy protest. "Sleep sound, babe!" murmured Bob.

The Trigger Fights Her War

SHE WAS ONLY THREE YEARS OLD WHEN SHE DIED; BUT IN THAT TIME SHE SANK OR DAMAGED THIRTY-EIGHT JAP SHIPS AND EARNED COUNTLESS DECORATIONS FOR THE OFFICERS AND MEN WHO SERVED IN HER, AS WELL AS THE COVETED PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION AND NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION FOR HERSELF. HER GALLANT STORY IS HERE TOLD BY AN OFFICER WHO SERVED ABOARD HER UNTIL THAT LAST PATROL THAT BROUGHT HER TO THE VALHALLA OF SHIPS, BEARING WITH HER THE SOULS OF EIGHTY-SEVEN LOYAL SAILORS.



by Lt. Comdr. Edward L. Beach, U.S.N.

MY story begins on January 11, 1942. Two and a half years out of the Naval Academy, and fresh out of Submarine School, I reported to Mare Island Navy Yard for "duty in connection with fitting out U.S.S. *Trigger* (SS-237), and on board when commissioned."

Before presenting myself at the office of the Commandant, I drove down to the submarine outfitting docks, looking for my future home. There she was, all right, a great black conning-tower sticking up over the edge of the dock, with a huge white number, "237," painted on her side. A swarm of dusty nondescript-looking men were buzzing around her; and wood scaffolding, welding lines, hoses, temporary ventilation lines, and a lot of other miscellaneous gear hung haphazardly, apparently uselessly, all about.

"There's my new home," I mused. "Wonder if I'm looking at my coffin." She certainly wasn't impressive, beautiful, or anything at all to me but an ugly chunk of steel. "No life, no spirit, no character," I thought, as I turned to go away. I remembered my old "four-piper" destroyer, which I had left three months before, after two years of steaming up and down and across the Atlantic on "Neutrality Patrol." She was old—launched within a week of the day I was born—and ungainly; but she was a lovely thing to me. I knew and loved every part of her. I'd cursed at her, slaved for her, and stolen for her; and when orders arrived for me to report to submarine

school, I'd sent back a dispatch saying I wished to remain where I was; but the Bureau of Navigation had had insufficient applications for Submarine School and had decided to "draft" a few. One of the draftees was Beach, and here I was.

As I turned my back on Number 237, little did I know that two and a half of the most crowded and thrilling years of my life were to be spent with her! I was to forget my devotion to my first love, and completely submerge myself in the new. She was to become the ruler of my life, the most beautiful and responsive creature I had ever known; a hard, exacting mistress, but loyal, generous and courageous. All ships have souls—and all sailors know it; but it takes a while to learn to commune with it. It took me a long time, for *Trigger* had to find her own soul too; but in the end she was my ship, and nobody else's.

I never became her skipper, but spent nearly a year as her "exec," and when at last I left her, I was the last "plank owner" left—that is, except Wilson, the colored mess attendant who worked up to be Officer's Cook First Class, while I went from "George" to executive officer. Having three times failed to cajole Wilson into taking a transfer and a much-needed rest, I finally booted him off ahead of me, with the remark that nobody was going to be able to say he'd been aboard longer than I. Five hours after I left, good old sure-footed, slow-moving, competent Wilson was back aboard; and he is the only man alive

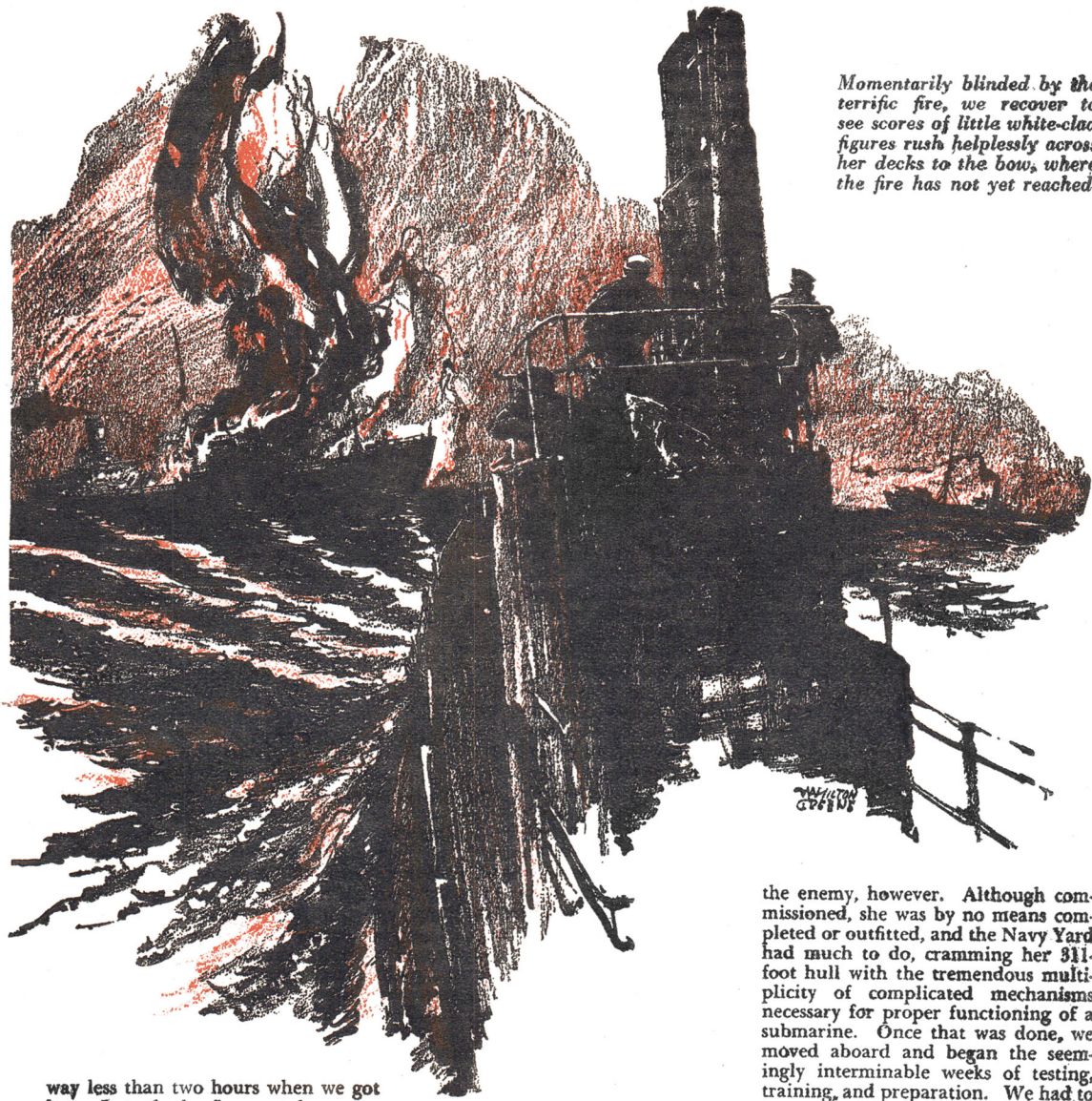
who can say he served with her from her birth to just before she died. . . .

Yes, I lost my queen. We had together sent twenty-six Jap ships to the bottom, and severely damaged ten others. We had heard countless angry depth charges, had heard shells scream overhead or drop in the water alongside, had prayed together and sung together. We had spit in the face of the dragon, thumbed our noses at his roarings and bellowings, and laughed mercilessly as the dark waters inexorably closed over his wails.

Yes, we had had our moments. Under four commanding officers, she had swept to the pinnacle of success in our so-called "silent service." Under the most brilliant of them all, "Dusty" Dornin, we had recklessly rampaged all over the far western Pacific, sunk fourteen ships, some in the shadow of their own dark land, one within a mile of one of his conveniently lighted lighthouses. Under the merry "Pigboat" Benson, we had slipped four torpedoes into Japan's biggest and newest carrier—on her maiden trial trip, too—and sent her back awash on the end of a towline twenty miles to Yokosuka, where she was built.

No, we didn't lie on the bottom of Tokyo Bay till they launched her, waiting thirty days for a chance to give her the old business—take a look at a chart of Tokyo Bay some day and you'll see why—but she'd been under

STORIES of FACT and EXPERIENCE



Momentarily blinded by the terrific fire, we recover to see scores of little white-clad figures rush helplessly across her decks to the bow, where the fire has not yet reached.

way less than two hours when we got her. It took the Japs nearly a year to get her back in action. That was when we had only one carrier, the *doughty Enterprise*.

The toughest patrol of all was under Fritz Harlfinger, just before I was detached. Fritz was a pugnacious little Dutchman, so short he had to stand on tiptoe to look through the periscope. We took the most terrific slugging any of us had ever received, but the good ship brought us through safely, and a few weeks later, in spite of damage sustained, sank five more Jap ships by way of revenge.

When the *Trigger* sailed through the Golden Gate for the last time, she proudly waved thirty-six miniature Jap flags, a Presidential Unit Citation

pennant, and a homemade blue pennant with a large numeral *One* on it, signifying that at the time, according to our count, she was Number *One* ranking submarine in tonnage, total number of ships sunk, or any way you cared to count it. You bet we were proud, and cocky too! At the top of the fully extended periscope fluttered a rather weather-beaten brassière, as she gayly sailed back to the war, and her final resting-place.

On January 30, 1942, we commissioned Submarine Number 237, and the *Trigger* from that moment was a member of the United States Fleet. Weeks and months of hard work remained ahead of her before she met

the enemy, however. Although commissioned, she was by no means completed or outfitted, and the Navy Yard had much to do, cramming her 311-foot hull with the tremendous multiplicity of complicated mechanisms necessary for proper functioning of a submarine. Once that was done, we moved aboard and began the seemingly interminable weeks of testing, training, and preparation. We had to learn our ship, every part of her, because once we had taken her away into the war zone, our lives and hers were indissolubly interconnected.

So the weeks and months dragged by; and it wasn't until May that we finally turned her bow westward and headed for Pearl Harbor. She probably had a soul already, but we were too new to each other, too much taken up with the details of living, to appreciate it.

No one who saw it will ever forget the awful vista of Pearl Harbor. Although we'd been prepared for it, the sight of four of our great battleships lying crushed into the mud of the bottom of the harbor sent cold shivers up and down our spines. That day

I first sensed a more purposeful note in the gentle throb of the *Trigger's* Diesels, but she was only a neophyte, just joining up, and almost apologetically nosed her way into her berth at the Submarine Base.

Next day she was at sea again, bound for Midway to join a group of boats on station off that island. Things were tense in Pearl, and "strategic planning" was in an uproar—though it seemed to know fairly well what it was doing. So we went, and things were pretty boring for a while until about the first of June when the radio suddenly became of consuming interest. Avidly we read each short tense dispatch, sucking every drop of news from it, trying to read between the lines and guess at what was going on. The Jap fleet was coming—that we knew; and maybe, *maybe*, we'd get a shot at it!

OUR chance came suddenly. A dispatch addressed for action *Trigger* said: "MAIN JAP LANDING EFFORT EXPECTED ON JUNE SIXTH X CLOSE MIDWAY AND PATROL SUBMERGED TWO MILES OFFSHORE BEARING ZERO SIX ZERO." All night long we raced through the darkness, and shortly before dawn sighted the lights off Midway, dead ahead. With just an hour to go before daylight would force us to submerge, we had to cut the eastern reef quite close, much too close for comfort; and suddenly, catastrophically, with a rending, horrible, shattering smash, *Trigger* ran head on into a submerged stone wall! Her bow shot skyward as she bent agonizingly in the middle, and straightened herself with a scream of pain. Her sturdy hull twanged like a wash boiler rolling down a rocky slope, as she crashed and pounded to a stop.

When all forward movement had ceased, we hurriedly took soundings. Plenty of water aft, but only six feet or so under our bow, with zero feet a few yards ahead, where the malevolent coral mass alternately glistened in the starlit blackness and gurgled as a wave washed over it. Apparently this reef had very steep sides—that was a break; maybe we could get her off. Frantically we backed emergency—no luck. We were much too firmly aground. Only one thing to do—lighten ship; and this task we feverishly began. Also we sent a message to "ComSubsPac" telling him of our trouble, and one to Midway itself, asking for help.

And then came dawn, the day the Japs were to land; and here poor *Trigger* lay, bruised, battered and *hors de combat*. A fine situation to be caught in, all right; and we expected to see the enemy fleet any minute!

As it grew light, a pint-sized tug steamed out of the channel from Midway lagoon, approached us, put a haw-

ser on our stern, and nonchalantly began to pull. We backed with everything we had—no luck. We didn't budge. Then, to our dismay, the hawser broke. Surely this must be the end!

But no! As the tug maneuvers to get the remains of the hawser to us again, suddenly one of the lookouts shouts "She's moving!" Incredulously we look over the bow at the reef; and possibly—can't be sure, but maybe—a very slight movement is discernible. No time to figure this out. She moves; that's enough! "All back emergency! Maneuvering, make maximum power!" The four faithful Diesels roar. Clouds of smoke and steam pour out of the exhaust trunks. The reduction gears whine in a rising crescendo, and the propellers bite into the water, throwing a boiling flood of white foam over our nearly submerged stern. Does she move? Oh, God, let her move! Line up your eye with the bow and the reef, to catch the slightest change! She trembles, she shakes! *Maneuvering, burn her up if you have to, but give her everything you've got!* The water foams along her sides and up past her bow. Her stern is now completely submerged. She feels alive! She quivers with the torrent of her unleashed power! Watch the reef! Her screw current is washing all around it, bubbling and splashing. Does she move? The current momentarily washes over part of the slimy green-and-brown wall. She *must* move! Watch the reef—is that a slight change? Is all this just a mockery of the senses, or—yes! Yes! She moves! She bounces once, and is off the reef! She is free! Thank God! Oh, thank God!

This was the second time I sensed a quick, live spirit in the *Trigger*. It seemed as though she responded just a little more when the chips were down.



With the first conquest so easily accomplished, Trigger had become of age.

It wasn't until night that we found out the Japs had been thoroughly beaten the day before, and what was left of their fleet had been in headlong flight all the time.

Trigger Becomes of Age

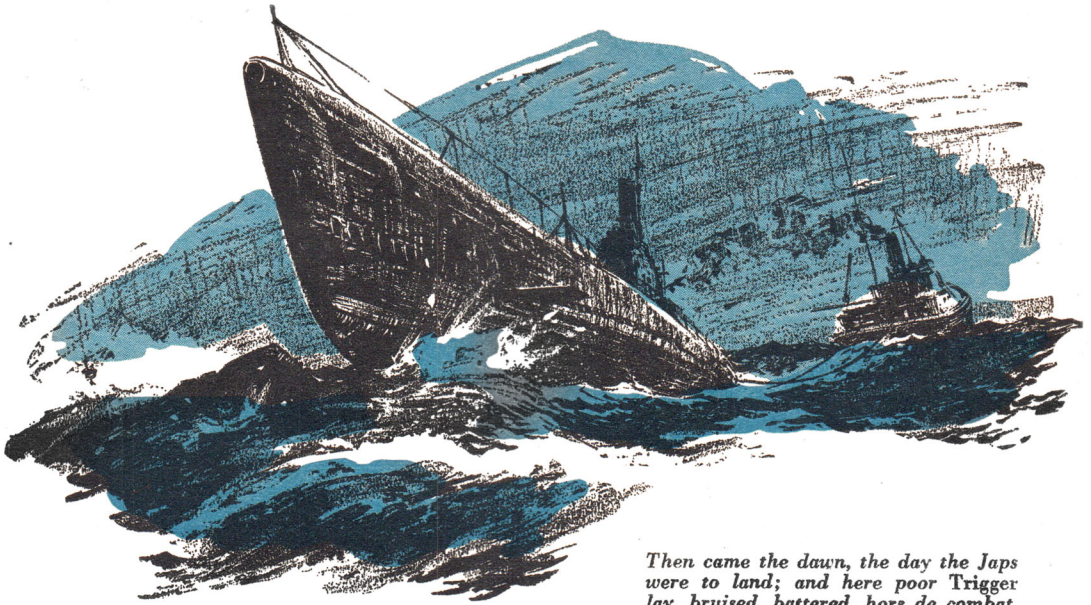
YOU see, it took the *Trigger* a long time to develop her personality. Full realization of her growth came much more gradually than one would guess, from this disjointed account. I felt the impact of her rowdy, brawling fierce spirit a third and fourth time and after that it was as if we had always been together. In a way, I suppose, I became a sort of slave to her rather terrifying presence, but she gave me far more than she received.

The third time I felt a quality of ego in what, according to those who never knew a ship, was only an inanimate mass of steel, was when I watched her first ship sink, and heard her snarl.

We were cruising off the eastern coast of Kyushu, the southernmost island of Japan, one dark night, and shortly after 0100 we sighted a large black shadow, blacker than the night, which should not have been there. A few true bearings also indicated that the shadow moved, and we knew it for what it was, a cloud of smoke from the funnel of a ship. So we commenced to close this unwary fellow, went to battle stations, and soon made out the silhouette of a moderate-sized freighter. Stealthily we paralleled him, clocking his speed, estimating his course, his size and draft, and guessing how far away he would be able to see us. Though he was darkened, we could see him at about four thousand yards range plainly, in the early morning starlight. He was steaming along steadily, puffing out a fair-sized cloud of dense black smoke, with not so much as a hint of a zigzag, or of having sighted us.

Here was one of the reasons for American supremacy over the Jap whenever they met. Undeniably, our low black hull was harder to see than the lofty-sided merchantman; but nevertheless he was so plainly visible that his inability to see us was then, and continued to be, astounding. Having satisfied ourselves that we had the target's speed and course correct, we drew up ahead, turned *Trigger's* bow toward him, and ghosted in, presenting at all times the minimum possible silhouette.

He sees nothing, steams blindly and confidently along. Closer and closer we draw. *Make ready the bow tubes!* If he does see us, he sees only the formless mass of a ship end on, while we see him broadside. Estimated range, fifteen hundred yards. Track, 90 starboard. Gyro angle 5 left. Stand by! He's coming on—coming on— *Fire one!* One, two, three, four,



Then came the dawn, the day the Japs were to land; and here poor Trigger lay, bruised, battered, hors de combat.

five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. *Fire two!*

Two white streaks leave the bow, and diverging slightly, arrow for the point ahead of the freighter where our calculations say he will be at the instant the torpedoes get there. This is the longest minute in the world. Depending on the range, of course, the torpedoes must travel about a minute through the water before they reach a target; and during that minute a target making fifteen knots goes five hundred yards, or a quarter of a nautical mile. Few ships are as long as 150 yards.

So we watched our two white streaks of bubbles. "Torpedoes running all right, looks good!" Suddenly we are galvanized into action. If those torpedoes hit, on our present course we would run right into the target! If they miss, he'd be sure to see us passing so close under his stern, and make a follow-up shot immeasurably more difficult by radical maneuvers, to say the least. Besides, he just might happen to have a well-trained armed guard aboard.

Left Full Rudder! All Ahead Full! Trigger's bow commences to swing left as she gathers speed. The ship is just crossing in front of the torpedo wakes now. Will they get there, or will he skin by? All hands on the Trigger's bridge watch tensely. This is it. Let's go. . . . What's wrong with those torpedoes?

Wham! - - - Wham! Two hits! Two perfectly beautiful geysers of water rise alongside the freighter's bow. Almost immediately he slows

down, his bow sinks deep into the water, his stern rises. Lights flash on and off about the decks. A cloud of smoke and escaping steam envelops his bridge and center section. Some hardy soul unlimbers a gun on his stern and shoots about wildly. Too bad for him he didn't keep a better watch and get that gun going three minutes ago!

Trigger slid past his now stopped and crazily canted stern at a distance of about two hundred yards, and that's when I heard her snarl. All right, it was just the rumble of the hydraulic plant, or the echo of the Diesel exhaust returning from the hull alongside—so say you land-lovers. I know better. She snarled a message of hatred for all things Japanese, and a warning that this was but the beginning.

WE circled slowly about half a mile away, waiting for our victim to sink, debating the advisability of hitting him again. Morning twilight imperceptibly began to seep in from the east, softening the darkness into a musty, unhealthy greenishness, tinged with the dampness of the unhappy sea. Two lifeboats were in the water, long oars sticking out in every conceivable direction, the round black heads of their crews bobbing jerkily back and forth as they frantically plied their oars—and caught innumerable crabs.

They were ludicrous and pathetic, but we felt no pity. Why shouldn't we sink the two boats and make sure there was no one to tell the tale? Only twenty miles from land, these

fellows would probably cause trouble for us when they get ashore. Besides, well we knew what had happened to certain of our people who had got into the clutches of the Jap! But of course, we couldn't, for only savages murder the helpless who have fallen into their hands.

So we circled; and our target, still barely under way, also circled, bow now at the water's edge. The end, obviously, was near. Suddenly a cry: "He's going!" Slowly at first, irresistibly, then more quickly, his bow plunged down and his stern swooped into the air, until he was straight up and down in the water, his long dusty stack flat on the greedy splashing sea. The old-fashioned counter stern, crude square rudder, and massive propeller, still slowly revolving, hung high above us, dripping and gleaming. Loud rumblings and crashing noises—his cargo tearing loose from its stowage and falling through his forward bulkheads—came loudly to us on the bridge of the *Trigger*, as we stared.

He dipped a little lower; the stack disappeared, and the great steel fabric began to swing back and forth, about ten degrees from the vertical. Then, as though in the grip of some playful gargantuan monster, the hull commenced to lurch, and twice spun completely around, accompanied by squeaks and groans of tortured steel and a bewildered cacophony of internal crashings and bangings. Still lower he sank, till only his propeller and after deckhouse were out of water. At this juncture some shred of lost dignity returned, the lurches ceased,

the stern remained momentarily poised about fifty feet in the air, and then quietly, without fuss, slipped swiftly beneath the sea.

Just as the stern disappeared, we heard a loud explosion and felt a heavy shock through the water. Evidently his boilers had finally exploded. The water boiled a bit as the tip of the wreck went down; and then, as if to eradicate all signs of the tragedy, hurled itself from all directions upon the cavity suddenly formed in its midst. It met itself in the middle of the whirlpool, and having overdone itself in its enthusiasm, unavoidably bunched up, forming an idiotic topknot surmounted by a little plume of smoke, to mark the grave.

WITH the first conquest so easily accomplished, *Trigger* had become of age, but she still had a lot to learn. Dawn was approaching, so we dived, surfacing next night even closer to the shore, hoping for another contact. We got one almost immediately. "Object bearing 080!"—from a lookout. We look, and there against the gloomy hills flanking the Bungo Suido, we see a peculiar white V. No radar in these early days.

"What is it? Can you make it out?"
"No sir. It looks mighty funny, though!" The V gets bigger.

"What in the Sam Hill—"

The explanation, when it hits, is blinding. "My God!"

"Clear the bridge!" "Dive—dive!" The diving alarm sounds. "All ahead emergency. Two hundred feet! Rig for depth charge! Rig for silent running!" Down we go, but with maddening slowness. *Trigger*, in common with her sisters, always "hangs" on a dive at about thirty-five feet. Full dive on everything, making emergency speed, we can do no more.

We can hear it now. A throbbing-throbbing noise coming from outside the hull, steadily and rapidly increasing in volume: thum, thum, thum, thum, thum, THUM, THUM, THUM! Only one thing it can be! Pray we can get under! Shut all watertight doors and bulkhead flappers; secure all unnecessary and not absolutely essential machinery. "What's the depth now?" "Thirty-six feet." Will she ever break through? All hands are out of their bunks, all officers in the control-room, startled by this unexpected dive.

"What is it? What is it?" Then they hear this horrible drumming noise, THUM, THUM, THUM, THUM, look at the depth gauges, and fall silent.

Forty feet. She's going through at last. Fifty feet. We're under! And not a split second too soon, for the drumming at that moment increases to an unbearable pitch, resounding through *Trigger's* thick hull till all other noise is drowned out, and think-

ing is frozen in the hypnotic rhythm—rises to an incredible, screaming, maddening horror of sound that stops the heart-beat—then abruptly drops in tone, continues loud, but evidently diminishing now.

We look at each other and smile weakly. *Click* . . . WHAM! *Swish! click, WHAM! Swish! click—WHAM—WHAM—WHAM! Swish, swish, swish!* We knew that was coming. This little evening is just started. These are the first Japanese depth charges we have heard, but we knew what they'd sound like. First the click, as the detonator fires. Then the force of the explosion hits you, and afterward you hear a prolonged swishing of water through your superstructure. The length of time between the "click" and the "WHAM" is a rough measure of the distance of the depth charge. If the click and explosion come close together, he's getting warm. If they come almost simultaneously, he's hot.

Trigger was strong and ruggedly built, but the shock of the exploding depth charges shook her sturdy hull as though it were made of light sheet metal. The noise was as though a giant were swinging a thousand-pound sledgehammer time after time against her side. We inside were flung about by each succeeding shock, until we hit upon the idea of not leaning heavily upon any piece of gear secured to the ship. With each charge the whole hull whipped, the great steel frames bent, and piping, ventilation lines and other internal gear set up a strong sympathetic vibration, till we thought they would fall off the bulkheads and overhead.

We had something new—light bulbs separated from the overhead light fixtures by two-inch pieces of insulated wire; hence few bulbs were broken. But they danced around crazily. Broken bits of cork and dust flew through the air and carpeted the deck. With ventilation and air conditioning secured, the temperature shot up to 120 degrees, and all hands began to shed clothes; the uniform became sandals and skivvy-shorts, with towels or rags flung around our necks.

Leveling off at sixty feet, finding we had successfully withstood the initial salvo of depth-charges, "He can't get away with this!" we said. "We have tubes full of fish. We can play rough too!" So began one of the war's strange battles. Since he had only moonlight, the enemy destroyer could not probably see our periscope, but it was light enough to see him through it.

Battle stations! We'll fix this bastard! He has contact on us by sound. We'll have to wait him out, wait till he lines himself up for a shot. Up periscope. Bearing 045. Angle on the bow 5 starboard. Oh, oh! He's starting a run. Pass astern this time,

but close. No chance to shoot. Here he comes! Hang on! *Click—WHAM swish-swish-swish, click—WHAM—swish, WHAM, WHAM, WHAM—swish, swish, swish swish swish swish!* *Trigger* shivers and reels from the pounding, but all still seems well. Check through the boat! Report all damage. Now is the time to find out if, indeed, she is "well and truly built." One area in the after end of the forward engine-room seems to be the center of shock effect. When you stand there on the deck plates, each explosion throws you a foot into the air. A weak spot? Hope not, but we'll soon find out!

Back in the conning tower. Bearing 285, range 1500, angle on the bow zero. Here he comes! Still no shot. Down periscope! Coming right overhead this time. The fast *thum-thum-thum* of his screws is the same as before. Here it is! WHAM—WHAM—WHAM—WHAM—WHAM—WHAM! Really close that time! Locker doors burst open to strew their contents on the decks running with human perspiration. One man gets sick and vomits into a slop bucket, but the bucket overturns, and the slop gets all over its sides, and on the deck. Someone throws a rag on the mess on deck, leaves it. A valve wheel flies off a gauge in the conning-tower, bounces twice on the deck plates, ringing fantastically loud in the silence between charges, then drops into the periscope well, ringing as it caroms off the steel sides of the well, until it splashes into the bilge water at the bottom.

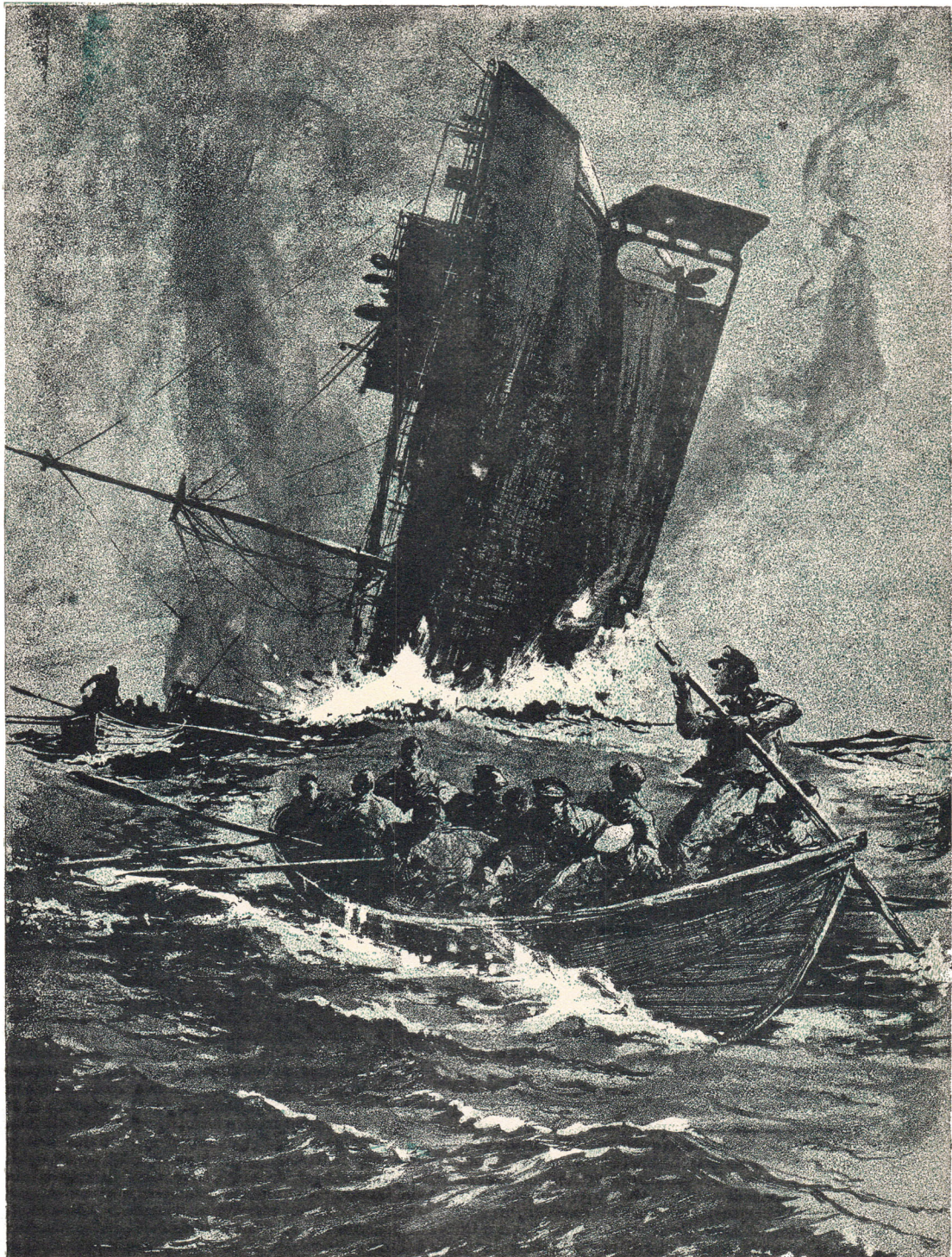
A HORSE whisper more like a cry from below: "Pump-room's flooding!" We stare at each other, aghast. "How bad?" Two men dive down the pump-room hatch. It must not be too bad—water hasn't welled out of that hatch yet. It never does. "Grease fitting in Negative Tank flood-valve operating gear carried away, sir. We put a plug in it. Not much water's come in." The speaker is covered with grease, sweat and salt water. He glares indignantly. Somebody got excited down below, panicked. Evidently not this guy. "Very well," says the skipper.

"Screws slowing down bearing 070," says the sound man.

"Up periscope! Yes, he's turning. Bearing, mark!—065. Angle on the bow 90 port. Range, two thousand. As soon as he swings toward us, we'll swing toward him, let him have a whole salvo, set shallow, down the throat! Bearing, mark—025. Angle on the bow 30 port. He's swinging toward. Right full rudder, port ahead full. Steady on 165. . . . All ahead one-third. Where is he, sound? Keep the sound bearing coming!"

"010, screws speeding up. Shifting to short scale!"

"Stand by forward! I see him! Bearing 007½, range 1200, angle on



Suddenly a cry: "He's going!" Slowly at first, irresistibly, then more quickly, his bow plunged down and his stern swooped into the air, until he was straight up and down in the water, his long stack flat on the greedy splashing sea.

the bow 5 port. Here he comes again. Bearing 007. Bearing 006½. Gyro angles 1 right. Stand by—006—5½. Fire one! Fire two! Fire three! Fire four!”

“Forward room reports all torpedoes fired, sir. Torpedoes running on zero zero zero, sir. Merging with targets screws.” We listen—and listen—and listen. Twenty seconds. Thirty seconds. Any time now! Thirty-five seconds. Forty seconds. We look around unbelievably. Forty-five seconds. Oh, God! We’ve missed! We’ve missed!

“He’s seen the torpedoes! He’s turning away! We’ve spoiled this run, anyway! Here’s a 60 starboard angle on the bow. Chance for another shot! Bearing 006. Stand by forward! Bearing 010. Gyro 40 right. Stand by—Fire five! Fire six!” But we hear no explosions.

“Take her deep, boys. We’re dry forward now, and there’s nothing else to do.” Down we go to 275 feet, and prepare for a beating.

We got it, too; but after a while the Jap went away, and a little later, so did we. No doubt he enthusiastically reported destruction of one U. S. submarine—for a night or two later Tokyo Rose said she regretted to inform all American submarines that one of their number had recently fallen victim to a destroyer of the Imperial Japanese Navy. And then she played a recording of “Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep!”

Trigger Gets a Carrier

TIME passed, and *Trigger* was a veteran. Her lean snout had explored the waters of the Pacific from the Equator to the Aleutians, and had sunk enemy ships wherever she went. We had also accumulated our share of depth charges—though none the equal, for chills and thrills, of our first “working over.”

Then one fine day in June we were once again off Tokyo. An alert officer of the deck at the periscope sighted a mast on the horizon, and the familiar musical note, “*Bong, bong, bong, bong,*” started our hearts beating faster and our blood racing, as we dashed to our battle stations.

A few swift observations, and the voice of the skipper: “Men, this is the jackpot. We’ve got the biggest aircraft carrier I’ve ever seen up here, plus two destroyers. We’re going to shoot our whole wad at the carrier.”

Men’s jaws slack for a moment, mouths open. This is Big League stuff, all right.

A determined silence answers the Captain’s announcement.

We maneuver for a shot. This boy is coming like hell, and no fooling! Twenty-one knots, we clock him! One destroyer on either bow, the whole

trio zigzagging radically. They’ve heard of our subs, it seems.

We twist first one way, then the other, as the carrier presents alternately starboard and port angles on the bow. Evidently we lie on his base course. What a break!

“Up, periscope. Bearing, mark—350. Range, mark! Down periscope. Range 6100, angle on the bow 5 starboard. How long till he gets here? What’s the distance to the track? Control, 63 feet. Rig for depth charge, rig for silent running. Right full rudder. New course 060.”

“He’ll be here in eight and a half minutes. Zigged three minutes ago, at thirteen minutes. Another zig due about three minutes from now, at nineteen minutes, probably to his right. Distance to the track, five hundred yards. Depth and speed, Captain?”

“Set all torpedoes depth twenty feet. Spread them two degrees. What’s the time now?”

“Seventeen and a half minutes.”

“We’ll wait a minute. Sound, what does he hear?”

“Three-five-one, sound.”

“That checks, Captain. Better take a look around. The starboard screen is coming right for us.”

“Up periscope! There he is—mark—353! Range—mark—4700! Looking around. . . . Bearing—mark! 337—screen, down periscope! Angle on the bow 7½ starboard. Near screen angle on the bow zero. He will pass overhead. Sound, keep bearings coming

on light high-speed screws bearing 337!”

“High speed screws, 337, sir. 337—337—336½—336½—336—336—335—330—320—I’ve lost him, sir. He’s all around the dial!”

The familiar *thum—thum—thum* sweeps unknowingly overhead. We heave a big sigh of relief. He’s out of the way for a minute.

“NEVER mind him now! Sound, pick up heavy screws bearing about 358.”

“Heavy screws 001, sir—002—003.”

“It’s a zig to his left! Up periscope. Bearing mark—005! Range mark! Down periscope, 2200. Angle on the bow 30 starboard. The son of a gun has zigged the wrong way, but it’s better for us, at that. Right full rudder. Port ahead full! Give me a course for a straight bow shot! Make ready bow tubes! Match gyros forward!”

“One-two-five, Captain, but we can’t make it. Better shoot him on 090 with a right 20 gyro.”

“Steady on 090! All ahead one-third. How much time have I got?”

“Not any, sir. Torpedo run 1100 yards. Range about 1600, gyros 15 right, increasing. Shoot any time.”

“Up periscope. Bearing, mark—355! Set! Fire one! . . . Fire two! . . . Fire three! . . . Fire four! . . . Fire five! . . . Fire six! All ahead two-thirds.”

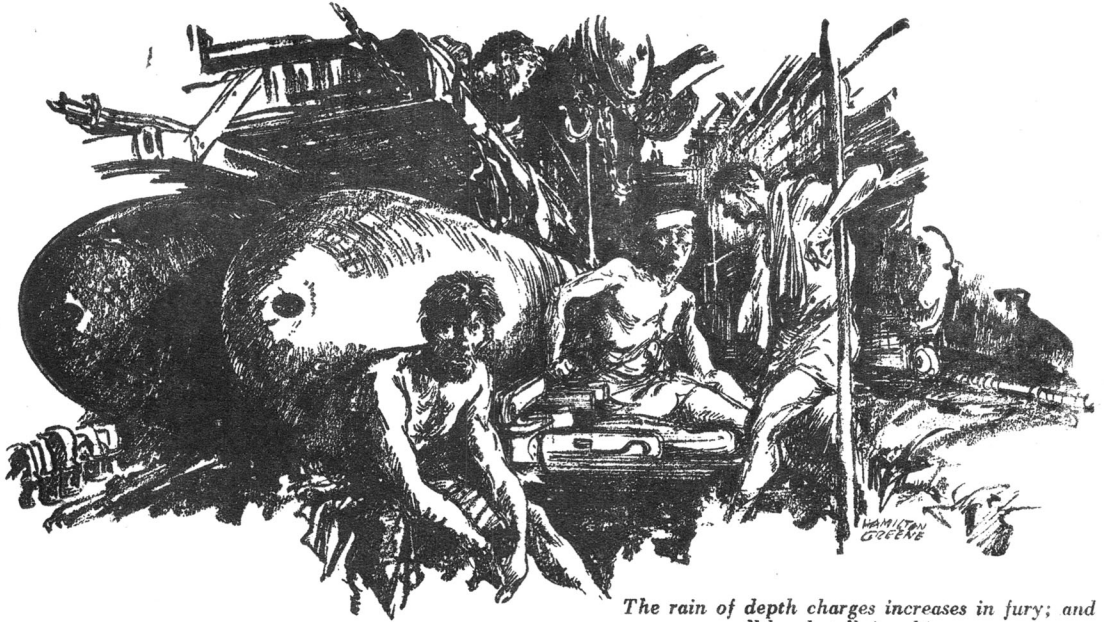
Since each torpedo is slightly heavier than the water which takes its place when fired, the sudden loss of six of them makes *Trigger* light forward. The increase in speed comes too late, and inexorably she rises. . . . WHANG! WHANG! WHANG! WHANG! Four beautiful solid hits. The carrier’s screws stop. He lists and drifts, helpless. We have time to notice that he is a brand-new carrier, has no planes visible, and is of a huge new type not yet seen in action. Little men dressed in white run madly about his decks. His guns shoot wildly in all directions.

We spin the periscope around for a look at the destroyers. Oh, oh! Here they come, and pul-enty mad! *Take her down!*

“All ahead full! Flood negative!” The planes are already at full dive—and still she rises. We are up to fifty-six feet when finally we start back down. Back to sixty feet, and now we can plainly hear that malignant *thum, thum, thum, thum* again. Down she plunges, frantically seeking the protection that only the depths can give. *Thum, thum, thum, thum—WHAM! — WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM!* and so on for forty-seven consecutive bull’s-eyes, no clicks at all! It seems inconceivable that a machine, made of man, can withstand such a vicious pound-



The temperature soars. You simply sweat. The humidity is exactly one hundred per cent.



The rain of depth charges increases in fury; and all hands talk in whispers.

ing. The air inside the *Trigger* is filled with fine particles of paint, cork and dust. Ventilation lines and pipelines vibrate themselves out of sight, and fill the confined spaces with the discordant hum of a hundred ill-matched tuning-forks. Everyone is knocked down, clutches gropingly at tables, ladders, pipes or anything to help regain his feet. A big section of cork is bounced off the hull and lands on the deck alongside the auxiliary-man; as he stoops to pick it up and drop it in a trash-can, he is knocked to his hands and knees, and the trash bucket spills all over the cork. The lights go out, but the emergency lights give an adequate illumination. The heavy steel pressure bulkheads squeeze inward with each blow, and spring out again. The deck plates and gratings throughout the ship jump from their places and clatter around, adding missile hazard to our troubles. The whole hull rings and shudders, whips and shakes itself, bounces sidewise, up and down.

Two hundred feet, and still the agony continues; the rain of depth charges, if anything, increases in fury. How can man, made of soft flesh and not steel, stand up under such merciless excruciating pounding? But stand it we do, with dry lips and nervous eyes. *Trigger*, stand by us now! Give us your spirit, if you never gave before! The strength of your body stands between us and nothingness. Give us life, we beseech you!

We are scared, but fear leaves our brains clear, our bodies quick and

sure. As usual, the temperature soars, 120 degrees or better. We reach three hundred feet, and we are heavy. Forward torpedo-room bilges are full of water taken in when we fired the torpedoes. Stern-tube packing leaks at this depth, and motor-room bilges are filling up. Pump-room and engine-rooms are taking water more slowly through tortured sea-valves and fittings. Besides that, the compression of the hull due to the great depth decreases our buoyant volume. We are heavy by about three or four tons, and we dare not pump, because it would make too much noise, especially bucking sea pressure at this depth.

THE depth charges cease, but we can hear the angry screws buzzing around overhead. Maybe they've temporarily lost us. If we can keep silent, creep away, we have a chance of evading. But we sink slowly, though we run with a fifteen-degree up-angle. We dare not increase speed over the silent speed, and thus increase our chances of being heard. Absolute silence. The auxiliaryman and trim manifold man have their tools laid on the deck instead of in their usual racks.

Some men take off their shoes. The bucket brigade bails water silently from the motor-room bilges and silently pours it into the after torpedo-room bilges. All hands talk in whispers. The bow and stern planes and steering have been put into hand operation instead of hydraulic; and brawny sailors sweat profusely as they turn the

huge wheels. They must be relieved every five minutes, for they gasp for breath in the foul air.

We've been breathing this same air since early morning, and now it is night again. Eighty-five men use up a lot of oxygen, much more even than usual when doing hard physical work. We test the atmosphere—21½ per cent carbon dioxide. Three per cent is the danger line—can knock you out. Four per cent will kill you, if you can't get out of it. So we spread CO₂ absorbent, and release oxygen from our oxygen bottles. That helps. But the heat—nothing can be done about that. You simply sweat, and eat salt tablets. Your clothes and shoes are soaked. The decks and bulkheads are slippery, and literally alive with water. The humidity is exactly one hundred per cent. But you don't notice it.

Slowly *Trigger* sinks. Down, down, far below her safe tested depth. *Trigger*, if you are worthy of your heritage, if you can keep the faith of those who built you—who will never know—and of those who place their lives in yours—and who will know, if only for an instant—keep it now! We have faith in you, else we'd not subject you to this test. Vindicate that faith, we pray you!

Far, far below where she was designed to go, *Trigger* struggled on. Sinking slowly, her hull creaking and groaning at the unaccustomed strain, her decks bulging in the center, light partition doors unable to close because of the distortion caused by the terrific compression, she finally brought us to

the point where it was safe to speed up a little, enough to stop her descent, and so we crept away, finally surfacing to complete our escape.

It wasn't until over a year later that our carrier was spotted and photographed by a reconnaissance plane. We set him back a long time, at a critical period. Too bad he didn't sink, but the effect on the Japs of seeing that half-sunken wreck come back on the end of a towline after his brave departure the day before must have been considerable and significant.

She Knocks off a Convoy

TRIGGER made her name with a rush. She began her career as a night fighter, and it was on the surface at night, retaining the initiative with speed and mobility, that her rapier-like thrusts wrought the greatest damage upon the enemy. In her ensuing four patrols she sank a total of nineteen ships and damaged four. Six times, single-handed, she engaged enemy convoys far outmatching her in escort vessels. Twice she all but obliterated whole Jap convoys. Three times she sank only part of the convoy. One time she bit off more than she could chew, and took the most horrible beating of her career.

But to return to my story. As a result of the carrier episode and the damage received, *Trigger* was sent to the Navy Yard for overhaul and repairs, and it was not till two months later that she once more faced the foe. By this time I was the only officer left of the original commissioning gang, the rest having been detached; and *Trigger* and I understood each other pretty well, though frequently she surprised me.

How hard it is to try to catch the spirit and color of times gone by! As I sit in the captain's stateroom of another submarine—my own, and yet not so much my own as *Trigger* was—thinking back to those eight merry bachelors in her wardroom, my pen lies forgotten in my fingers, and I daydream.

We are submerged off Formosa, patrolling where our calculations indicate should be a Jap shipping-lane. For two days we have been here, and nary a sign of ships have we seen. Maybe we've guessed wrong. . . . But not this time, for at about 1600 of the second day, smoke is sighted. A convoy, running for Japan!

Battle stations submerged! We start the approach. This time, however, we are not lucky, for we are so far off the base course of the ships that we are forced to watch helplessly while they steam by well out of range. But we take a good look; six ships in two columns; in the near column three big fat tankers, the leader a new modern ten-thousand-tonner—in the far



column three average-size freighters. What a plum! Never mind the plane we see buzzing about the convoy. These birds are our meat! We secure from battle stations, but follow at maximum sustained submerged speed, keeping our quarry in sight as long as possible, waiting for dark.

With the last rays of setting sun, we are on the surface, all ahead full on four engines, running down the track after the vanished convoy. No power to spare on a battery charge. Give it all to the screws. Put the dinky engines on the battery. You can't get anywhere by halves in this business. We still have a fair amount of "can" left anyhow.

The chase is tense and thrilling. We have an estimate of target course and speed, but if he's smart, he'll change radically at dark. Our game is to dash up and regain contact quickly, before he gets very far from his original track. If we miss him, we suspect he'll have turned to his left, but that's just a guess, and cuts down our chances to fifty per cent. Best bet is to go like hell, which we do.

It pays off, too; for this particular son of heaven didn't even bother to change course. We pick him up dead ahead, right on his old track—and he's stopped zigzagging! This is murder!

And so it proves. We draw up on the starboard bow of the convoy, out of sight, then turn toward and stealthily creep in. Three tankers in the near column—that's why we picked it; the biggest one is the leader, and slowly he lumbers into our sights. Angle on the bow, starboard 75. Range fifteen hundred yards. Bearing 335. Target speed checks perfectly, at seven knots. Surely this big Nippon Maru class tanker can do better than seven knots. The Japs have tied him down with a bunch of slow boys—too bad for him! On he comes, filling our binoculars with his huge heavily laden bulk. Looks good—looks perfect! We plan to fire three "fish" at the first tanker, three at the second, then spin on our tail and shoot four at the third one. They won't know what hit them!

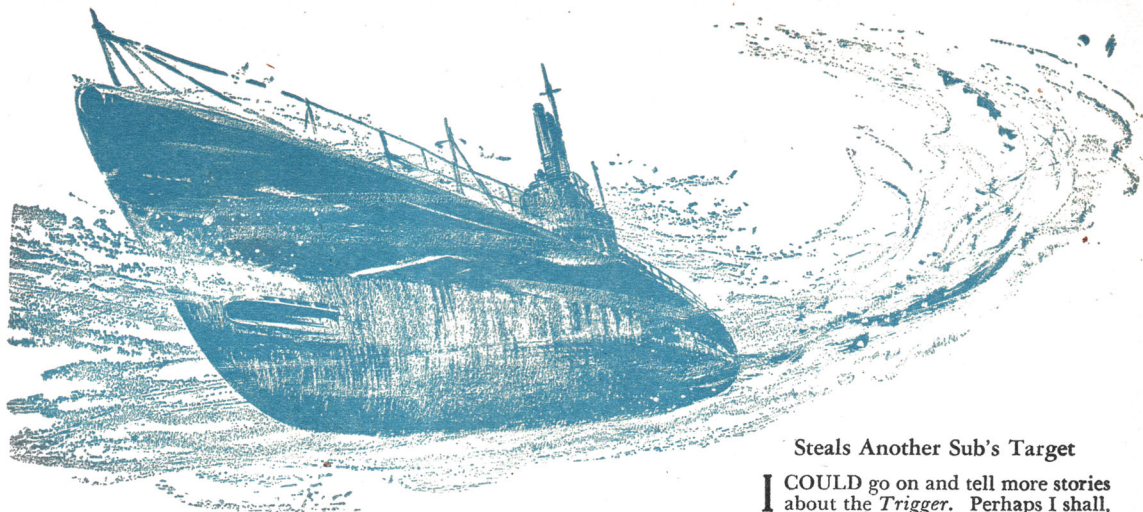
Stand by forward. He's coming on. Bearing—mark! We're keeping the sights on him now—a few more degrees. . . . Come on—come on. . . . Fire One! . . . Fire Two! . . . Fire Three! . . . Check Fire! Shifting targets—second ship. Bearing—mark—set. . . . Fire Four . . . Fire Five . . . Fire Six!

Left full rudder! All ahead full! Stand by aft!

Trigger leaps ahead, swings steadily left. She has nearly 180 degrees to swing, and it takes a long time. She is, in fact, only halfway around, broadside to broadside with the leading tanker, range about one thousand yards heading in opposite directions, when suddenly, cataclysmically, the darkness of the night is thunderously shattered with light! A sheet of brilliant white flame shoots a thousand feet into the air! The leading tanker must have had a load of aviation gasoline, for he has burst into incandescence!

Momentarily blinded by the terrific fire, we recover to see the whole scene as bright as day. On the deck of the doomed tanker, scores of little white-clad figures rush helplessly across her decks to the bow, where the first has not yet reached. It must be awfully hot over there! We shift our eyes to the second tanker, and see a torpedo hit with a flash of flame right amidships. A fire starts, but he steers around the brilliantly blazing pyre of his leader, and continues on his course. The second ship in the far column is hit with a soundless catastrophe. He folds up in the middle like a big V and starts down. Evidently he caught a torpedo which missed the first or second tanker. We had figured on that, hoped it would happen. Three ships hit, two down for sure, in the first salvo!

IN the meantime, obviously, the Japs can see *Trigger's* black hull too, and their ready guns begin to bark. A few shells scream overhead, but not very close. They are probably too excited to settle down, and we ignore them, intent on getting our stern-tube salvo off. But the third tanker pulls a joker and sheers out of line directly toward us. By this time we are running directly away from him, and he is coming, bows on, seven hundred yards away. We are still increasing speed, but so is he, and he's gaining on us with his initial advantage of speed. A gun on his fore-castle opens up, and this time the shells do whistle fairly close. One or two drop alongside, not too close yet, but no doubt he'll improve.



Maybe he thinks he has the drop on us; he cannot know that we have the drop on him too. We could dive, but *Trigger* is stubborn. Stand by aft! Continuous aim. Angle on the bow, zero. Range seven hundred yards. We're starting to hold our own now, as we pick up speed. Fire *Seven!* . . . Nothing happens. Fire *Eight!* . . . Nothing. We must hit him! Check everything carefully. It must be the tumultuous wash of our straining screws throwing the torpedoes off. Fire *Nine!* . . . Still nothing. We are in the soup. One torpedo left aft. It has to be good. He is coming much too close with his shells now. Give him one more, then dive! Fire *Ten!* "Clear the Bridge!" "Honk-honk!" goes the diving alarm. "Dive! Dive! Take her down!"

Down we plunge, listening for that fearful crack which tells us he's found our pressure hull with a five-inch shell before we could get her under. We pass forty feet and breathe easier. Startlingly a voice squeaks over the welcome gurgle of water and the drumming of *Trigger's* superstructure: "Where's the Captain?"

No answer. We look about. "Did anybody see him get off the bridge when we dived?"

No answer. Fear lays an icy hand over us. Just then a stream of furious curses shocks our ears and warms our hearts. There is the Captain, inside the periscope well, supporting himself on the edges by his elbows, struggling to climb back out, cursing a blue streak. He has reason to cuss, too, for the quartermaster has his big feet firmly planted on the skipper's hands, and is calmly and nonchalantly lowering the periscope! End of tableau.

About this time, as we pass seventy-five feet, a good loud *whang* reverber-

ates through the water. We had almost forgotten the target in this new and novel emergency, but get back to business quickly. "Target's screws have stopped!" This from the sound man. "Breaking-up noises."

"Control! Sixty feet!" The order snaps out, and feverishly we get *Trigger* back to periscope depth, put up the scope and take a look. Wonder of wonders! What a rabbit's foot! There floats the stern of the tanker, straight up and down! So we surface, hoping to catch one of the two remaining ships with our last few torpedoes.

We find one. We track him. He as usual doesn't see us, or so we think, until he opens fire with both his deck guns. While we think over this development, another ship—the only other ship—opens fire from behind us. Then, as shells from both parties whistle overhead, we realize the truth. They are shooting at each other. We are still undetected; so we make four separate attacks on this bird, use up all six of our remaining torpedoes, and get only two hits. Finally we are forced to leave him, sinking slowly by the bow. That rabbit's foot is unpredictable as hell!

We find the last ship, too, but we can't hurt him. So we turn *Trigger's* bow to Pearl Harbor and shove off. As we go, we pass close by our first tanker, by this time nearly consumed, his steel hulk red-hot from end to end. In the distance another fire flares up and bursts into brilliant flame, almost as big a fire as the first one. We take a look there too, and find, to our delight, the second tanker stopped, abandoned, and ablaze from bow to stern. We verify her complete destruction also, and depart at last.

Score for the night's work, three big tankers sunk, one freighter sunk, one freighter probably sunk. Total, five out of six, and a very unhappy good evening to you, Tojo!

Steals Another Sub's Target

I COULD go on and tell more stories about the *Trigger*. Perhaps I shall, for there is much to tell. She was a roaring, brawling, rollicking ship, and she loved the sound of her torpedoes going off. There was the night she and two sister subs took on a seventeen-ship convoy, with the result that there were but nine ships next morning. This was quite a story, for none of the other submarines knew of the presence of the *Trigger*, and *Trigger* actually and unwittingly stole two fat targets right out from under the nose of one of her sisters.

It was a night in November. We had penetrated the Nanpo Shoto the night before, and had been hurrying along on the surface all day long, diving twice for inquisitive Jap planes, hoping to get across to the Nansei Shoto and through that chain of islands in short order, en route to our area. We were about 130 miles south of the Bungo Suido—of unpleasant memories—as dusk fell, and with it a pleasant surprise.

Radar contact! The clarion call from the radar man brings us all to the alert. "Big convoy, sir! Five or ten ships, maybe more. Radar interference too, sir."

The last complicates matters. We've been expecting to run into Jap radar-equipped escorts for quite a while, and apparently we've got one this time. This is going to take some doing, all right, and we ought to get quite a lot of fun out of it. In the first place, we figure, our radar is probably better than his. In the second place, our small silhouette is harder for a radar to detect than that of a freighter or destroyer. So our tactics are to keep just barely within our radar's range of detection, and we hope that by so doing we'll be outside of his radar range. Once again we commence tracking and plotting. Our scheme works pretty well, and soon we have his course and speed down cold. We would like to start in from the port flank of the convoy

now, but cannot, because that triple-damned radar escort is in our way. Laboriously we work our way across the bow of the zigzagging convoy—we have counted by this time seventeen ships on our radar screen, though we cannot see them at all in the dark—and prepare to start in from their starboard flank. No soap! The five times sincerely damned radar escort has crossed to the starboard side too!

Cussing heartily, we work around to the port side again, hoping the escort's movements were more coincidental than premeditated, and that he is as yet not aware of *Trigger's* presence. Once on that side the mystery appears explained, because we now find two radar-equipped vessels, one on each side of the convoy. However, this chap on the port side evidently doesn't know his job, and has allowed himself to get way out of position, well out on the port bow of the convoy.

OKAY, chum! You slipped up that time! Here we go! *Trigger's* four murmuring Diesels lift their voices in a devouring roar. She swings sharply right under the influence of a hard-over rudder, and races for the leading ship of the convoy. Make ready all tubes! Angle on the bow 45 port. Range 3800. The port escort is still unsuspectingly maintaining his station well outside of us. Is he due for a jolt, not to mention this fat Bonzo dead ahead! Wonder what Jap escort commanders do when their convoy gets shot out from under them? Commit hara-kiri? Or join honorable convoy in Davy Jones' locker by stepping over honorable side?

All tubes ready, sir! Range three thousand. Angle on the bow 60 port. We can see them clearly from the bridge, now. Formless, cloudy masses, a little darker than the dark sky. As we watch them narrowly, they suddenly seem to lengthen a trifle. Zig away! We must shoot right away! All ahead one-third! The roar of the Diesels drops to a mutter. Stand by forward! Range twenty-four hundred, now. Angle on the bow 90 port. Fire One! . . . Fire Two!

The ship lurches and quivers each time a torpedo is fired. Four white streaks bubble out toward the convoy, and a large dark shape moves unknowingly and inexorably to meet them. Though we've seen it time and again, this moment is always the most thrillingly portentous one of all. It is the climax of training, of study, of material preparation, and of tremendous, sustained, perilous effort. The lure of the jumping trout, the thrill of the hunt, stalking the wild deer in his native habitat, or even hunting down the mighty king of beasts—can hold no new and unknown thrill for those of us who have watched our torpedoes

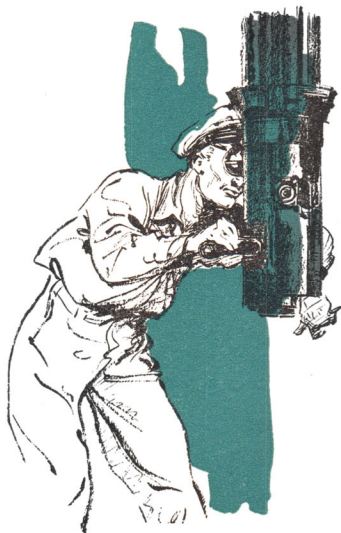
as they and their huge target approach each other, and finally merge together.

The seconds are hours, the minutes days. Target and torpedo wakes are together now. The first torpedo must have missed. Count ten for the second. . . . WHAM! . . . WHAM! Two flashes of yellow light stun the secret darkness. Two clouds of smoke and spume rise from alongside our target. Swiftly she rolls over, men appearing magically like ants all about, climbing down her sides, crawling over her bottom, instinctively postponing their inevitable doom.

In the meantime all is confusion in the rest of the convoy. Our other two torpedoes, missing the ship they were aimed at, have struck home in some unfortunate vessels beyond him. We hear the explosions and see the flashes—rather to be expected, too, because of the tightly packed crowd of ships. But other than a high cloud of smoke, we have no positive proof of damage in more than one more.

Just at this moment, with *Trigger* wheeling madly about under right full rudder and all ahead flank speed, three shapes detach themselves from the milling mass of freighters and tankers and head for us, bows on. We knew it was too good to last! One or two escorts and fifteen ships? Nothing doing. More probably some of those fifteen are also destroyers or escorts. Most assuredly these three sharp bows heading our way don't belong to freighters.

A quick decision, regretfully made, for it leaves the rest of the convoy free to scatter and escape unhindered. *Take her down!*



"Something peculiar. Can't see anything. Funny-shaped cloud. Wow! It's a destroyer!"

Down we go, and just in time; for we are passing one hundred feet when the first depth charges go off. There are propellers churning all about us, depth charges exploding close aboard, shaking *Trigger's* solid ribs and pounding her tough hide, while we grit our teeth at three hundred feet and take our licking. Damn them! Damn them! Damn them!

SUDDENLY the depth charges cease, and we hear three sets of screws leave us rapidly. Well! A break! Maybe we'll get some more of those bastards! *Fifty-five feet!* Let's go, control! Let's get up there!

Up we come to fifty-five feet, take a good look around through the periscope. All clear. "*Surface! Ready on four engines! All ahead flank! Course 160T.*"

High pressure air whistles into *Trigger's* tanks. Maneuvering room answers the flank-speed bell by giving the motors all the battery has to offer. The screws bite into the water. Engine-rooms get "Stand by" on all engines. *Trigger* is making ten knots when she hits the surface. As soon as the conning-tower hatch pops out of water, we are on the bridge.

Open the main induction! We are answered by the clank of the induction valve, and instantly the starting song of the engines. Four clouds of blue-white smoke pour from *Trigger's* exhaust pipes, and are whipped away by the wind. We are up to thirteen knots by this time, and mingled with the whistle of the wind, the splashing rush of the waves, and the deep bass of the Diesels, we hear the screaming of the low-pressure blower down in the pump-room, completing the job of emptying the main ballast tanks, which was started submerged by the high pressure air.

A jumble of discordant noises—but to us they were *Trigger's* eager battle cry.

Without slackening of our speed through the water, the Diesels are connected to the motors and the battery taken off. *Trigger* continues to accelerate, and two minutes after surfacing, she is making eighteen knots. As her tanks go dry, she increases speed to twenty knots, angrily burying her snout in the waves as she hurries heedlessly through them and over them.

We pick course 160°T, because that was the base course of the convoy. Before we dived, our impression was that the Japs had scattered, but common sense indicates that they'll probably try to continue in the same general direction.

Sure enough, one hour later we find a lone merchantman. In a hurry now, *Trigger* gives him scant shrift. We bore in and fire immediately. One hit, but he's a tough customer, and that's not enough for him. He opens

up with two deck guns, tries futilely to stay on *Trigger's* low dark form.

Furious now, *Trigger* rushes past him, turns on her heel, and comes charging back. She really bores in this time! To hell with his guns—he's all over the ocean with them! In we go, till his side looms as big and broad as a barn. WHAM! . . . WHAM! That finishes him, and he goes down like a rock.

Course 160°T once more, and we run for another hour, pick up another ship, a tanker this time. Once again we hardly alter course. He steams across our bow at a thousand yards range, and is greeted with three crashing torpedo hits, sinking so fast that as we, without changing a thing, pass across where his stern used to be, all we see is his tall stack sticking out of the water, slightly canted forward, smoke still pouring out of the top of it, for all the world as though nothing had happened.

We looked around for more ships; but dawn broke, and none were in sight, so we dived and took a rest. The sequel to the story was not told till later, when patrol reports were submitted. The second radar-equipped escort, which we had so neatly avoided in our initial attack, was our good friend the U.S.S. *Seahorse*, herself the nemesis of many Japs, who was even then in the process of drawing a bead on the same chap we'd sunk!

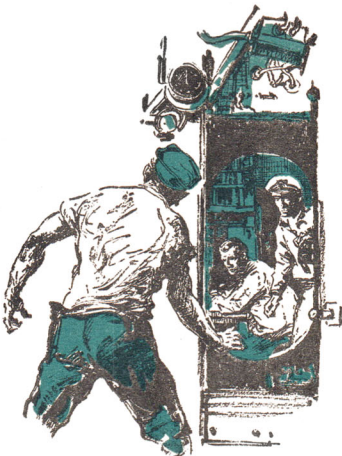
That *Seahorse* was somewhat disturbed at our intrusion on a convoy she'd tracked for nearly twenty-four hours, as compared to our four hours, is putting it mildly. But she kindly verified the sinking of two ships plus the probable sinking of a third, from our attack, then went on to sink three more herself. In the meantime another U.S. sub, having trailed the convoy for two days, finally caught up and knocked off one for herself. Total, eight sunk, nine left, probably all escorts.

Wonder what that escort commander told Tojo?

She Gets a Beating

IT wasn't all gravy, however. *Trigger* came in for her share of close shaves, and was more than once reported sunk by the enemy. The worst beating of her career—and one of the most severe experienced by any sub in our Navy—took place in April, 1944, off the Haha Jima Retto in the Marianas. We picked up a convoy about four hours before dawn, tracked it a bit, and prepared to "pull the *Trigger*" on it, as we had several times before on similar occasions.

Radar indicated many ships. While we were yet twenty thousand yards ahead of the main body, we detected two radar-equipped escorts, patrolling ten thousand to fifteen thousand yards



"Grease fitting carried away, sir.
Not much water's come in."

ahead of the convoy. "What a stupid place to patrol," we thought. "This will be a cinch." So we dived under the escorts, and passed safely (we thought) through the outer screen of the convoy. We later realized we had been detected and the whole convoy alerted.

Returning to periscope depth, we are preparing to surface when more escorts are detected. Down we go again, passing under a second, feverishly ping-pong screen. Five destroyers or more in that one, and they're not merely carrying on a routine search! They're hunting, and finally one of them gets what he calls a "probable contact." He and one of his friends turn around and follow us, still a little doubtful, but oh, so right!

It is only a moderately bright night, so we dare leave the periscope up for lengthy intervals, confident it cannot be seen. For long periods we stare at those two chaps astern, zigzagging back and forth in their cautious search plan, slowly but surely tracking us down. We feel like the hare in a hare-and-hounds game, and it's not funny. Inexorably the finger has been put upon us. We're going to catch it, no matter what happens—and so far we haven't even seen the enemy convoy!

Gone are ideas of making a night surface attack. We'll be lucky even to get in a submerged shot, before the beating lying in wait for us catches up to us. Resignedly we stand by to take it—when, finally, the main body heaves into sight.

My God! The ejaculation is awed and involuntary. We see through the periscope four columns of ships, five or more ships in each column. Tankers, freighters, transports and auxiliaries, all steaming toward Saipan. And closely spaced around the mass

of merchant vessels is yet a third ring of at least ten, probably more, escorts.

No time to surface and send a message—even if we could, with those bounds on our trail. No time even to prepare a message. No time for anything except shoot, and hope we're able to shoot before they drop.

On their present course the fleet of ships will pass about two thousand yards ahead of us. The port flank group of escort vessels will pass almost exactly over us, one after the other. We may get a shot, if conditions don't change. Everything commences to move pretty fast, now.

Make ready all tubes! We'll get some fish in the water, anyhow. A big tanker moves up into position, will soon line himself up for a shot at his broadside from our bow tubes. Behind him is a solid phalanx of ships. If the torpedoes run straight, or run at all, we can't miss. We plan to fire all six bow tubes, swing and fire all four stern tubes, and then take her down fast. Too bad, but we won't be able to sit around to verify sinkings. We figure we'll be fortunate to distinguish our torpedo hits from the unholy barrage of depth charges sure to follow.

No one says a word unnecessarily. Stealthily, silently, but quivering in every nerve, *Trigger* creeps into firing position. One minute to go, just about. We swing the periscope aft for a quick look. Dismay is on the sweat-studded face of the captain.

"He's signaling to the convoy," he mutters. "They must have us pretty well spotted by now. . . . He's sending 'Baker,' the word 'Baker' over and over." That's International Code for "I am about to discharge explosives."

Someone who recently read *Horatio Hornblower* murmurs: "For what we are about to receive, O Lord, we give thanks." But it's not funny.

Our tanker should be about in the spot, now. Stand by forward! *Trigger's* periscope turns back to give the firing bearings. She's as tense as a tightly drawn bowstring. She's going to catch it, but she's going to dish it out, too.

BUT the periscope can see nothing. Helplessly it turns back and forth in high power. "Something peculiar here. Can't see anything. . . . Mighty funny-shaped cloud there—looks like a ship—" The periscope is flipped into low power, which gives greater field with less magnification.

"Wow! It's a destroyer! He's trying to ram! He's just barely missed us—within twenty-five yards! He's firing a machine-gun through his bridge windows! They're dropping depth charges!"

Quick as a flash, the thought: "How long does it take a depth charge to sink to fifty feet?"

"He's by, now! There's the tanker! Bearing, mark! All ahead full! Take her down! Fire *One!* Rig for depth charge and silent running! Fire *Two!* . . . Fire *Three!* . . . Fire *Four!* Secure the tubes!"

The air-pressure inside *Trigger* suddenly increases as the negative tank is vented, thus giving the boat quick negative buoyancy, and down she goes. Four torpedoes are all we fire, for we don't want depth charges going off and possibly smashing in a warhead lying unprotected, in a torpedo tube with the outer door open.

But no depth charges go off, in spite of the fact that a whole gang of Japs were seen frantically working at the depth-charge racks of the destroyer. In retrospect, we suspect he was caught a little by surprise too, and either his release gear jammed, or he still had his depth charges secured for sea. At any rate, the first explosions we hear are the beautiful, wonderful noise of four solid torpedo hits—two, according to the time interval, probably in the tanker, and two in one or two ships in the next column over.

FOR a moment we hear only the thrashing of many screws, in particular the set belonging to the little man who sent "Baker" by light. We are at three hundred feet, but he comes in as if he could see us, and drops twenty-five absolute beauties on us. How *Trigger* manages to hold together we'll never know. Her heavy steel sides buckle in and out, her cork insulation breaks off in great chunks and flies about. Lockers are again shaken open and the contents spewed forth all over everything. Ventilation lines and other piping familiarly commence to vibrate themselves almost out of sight. Light sheet-metal seams and fastenings pop loose. With every succeeding shock, gauges all over the ship jiggle violently across their dials, and several needles knock themselves off against their pegs. In spite of careful and thoughtful shock mounting, instruments are shattered, and electric circuits thrown out of order.

During the height of the depth-charge barrage, the forward auxiliary distribution board circuit-breaker emits a shower of sparks and a sudden crackling "*Phf-f-ft.*" The electrician's mate standing by hastily opens the "depth charge 'lock-in' switch"—and throws the circuit-breaker out. All lights in the forward part of the ship go out, but the emergency lights, turned on at "Rig for depth charge," and various hand lanterns strategically located, furnish sufficient illumination for essential operations. Electrician's mates in the forward repair party quickly and silently turn to, working to locate and eliminate the trouble in the near darkness amid the shattering noises of the depth charges, the con-

vulsive whipping of *Trigger's* hull, and the bouncing around of all machinery. In a matter of minutes it is spotted, the offending water-soaked gear disconnected, and the forward board thrown back in. The lights come on again, and we feel a little better.

Finally the barrage is over, and we listen while five more escorts detach themselves from the convoy and come back to look for us, signaled, no doubt, by the chap who had so vigorously counterattacked us. No more depth charges, for a while, and we think that perhaps we're going to get away with just a little beating. Hopes begin to rise, but no such luck!

The six Japs form a ring around us, and keep contact, moving with us so as always to keep us in the center. No matter which way we go, which way we turn, they keep up with us. Every half-hour or so one breaks off and makes a run, dropping only a few charges each time—*chug, chug, chug, CHUG, CHUG, CHUG, CHUG—WHAM, WHAM! WHAM!* Now and then they vary their routine, and make a "dry run," as if to say: "We know you're there, old boy. Might as well surface and get it over with." But *Trigger* sticks it out, long past dawn, past noon, until late afternoon.

We had dived at a little after midnight. Seventeen hours later we are still creeping along under continual harassment by our pursuers. All bilges are full of water to the danger limits. We have been bailing from the motor-room to the after torpedo-room for twelve hours, keeping the water out of the motors and reduction gears. The temperature has risen to the fantastic level of 135 degrees throughout the ship. Two or three men are near collapse from combination of nervous strain, lack of sufficient oxygen, and loss of salt from their systems—though we all eat handfuls of salt tablets. We perspire profusely, and our clothes are absolutely drenched, our socks soggy and our shoes or sandals wet. In an attempt to lessen the nuisance of constantly wiping the sweat out of their eyes or off their bodies, many men knot rags around their foreheads or drape them over their shoulders and around the necks.

The atmosphere is laden with moisture, which condenses everywhere. Bulkheads and vertical surfaces are simply beaded with water, perpetually running in sudden little rivulets to the deck. Our green linoleum decks are themselves a quarter of an inch deep in water already, and the constant moving about by men in greasy, soggy shoes has churned it up into a disgusting, slimy, muddy ooze, through which we shuffle, oblivious of anything but the awful nearness of those menacing propellers overhead, the labor of breathing the foul air, and the

terrific concussions of the unrelenting depth charges.

Three hundred feet below the surface, where the water is black and always cold, and the sea-pressure compresses the hull with a force of 150 pounds per square inch, sustaining a total "squeeze" of about three hundred million pounds, *Trigger* fights for her life. Her sleek black hull, now tortured and strained, is heavier than the water it displaces by many thousands of pounds. This condition is due to loss of buoyancy caused by the compression of her hull and to the fact that her seams have been leaking steadily under the pounding she has been taking—and the pumps simply cannot be run, for the noise, they would make would immediately betray her exact position.

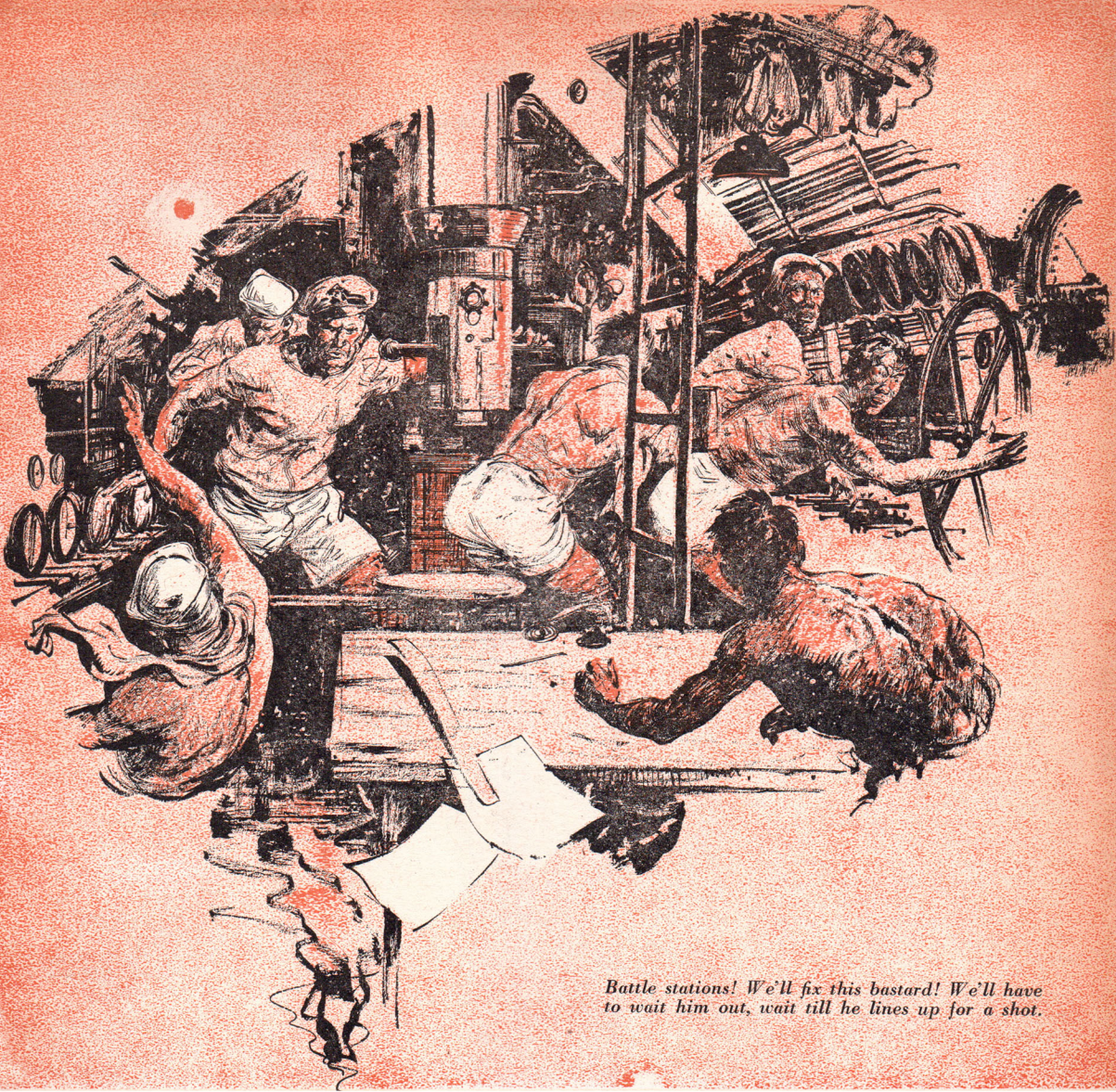
With bow and stern planes at the full "rise" position, and herself at a ten-degree up-angle, *Trigger* struggles to keep from sinking any deeper. Gradually, as the water inside increases and she becomes heavier, she is forced to assume more and more of an up-angle.

THE fact that the water at three hundred feet is colder than at the surface is a help, because it is therefore denser, and hence gives *Trigger* more buoyancy—but we've used up this "velvet" long ago. This difference in surface and deep-water temperatures should also hinder the Japs' sound-detection apparatus; but so far as we can discern, it hasn't bothered them.

We are in the center of a large ring, composed of six Jap anti-submarine vessels. Each one patrols a certain sector of the ring, and takes his turn at making a run on us. While one makes his run, the other five maintain sound contact with us, and the two vessels adjacent to him take care of his sector. No matter which way we go, the deadly circle moves with us. We try to go through the gap in the circle left by the destroyer making the current attack, but that move apparently has been foreseen; for we are invariably blocked by not one, but two sets of screws.

We wonder why the six escorts, or five of them, anyway, do not make a single coordinated attack on us. They have us so well "boxed in" that such an attack ought really to be a lulu! The thought grows that possibly they expect us to surface and surrender, finally. If they keep up these tactics, and don't sink us with a particularly lucky depth charge, eventually we will run out of oxygen or battery power, and be forced to surface.

But we lay our plans for that contingency. *Trigger* will never surrender. We'll come up in the darkest hour of the night, at full speed, all hands at gun stations, and twenty torpedoes will be ready. It will be mighty



Battle stations! We'll fix this bastard! We'll have to wait him out, wait till he lines up for a shot.

dangerous for anything short of a full-fledged destroyer to get in our way.

The decision is made to surface at about 2100 tonight, after sunset and evening twilight are over, and before moonrise. Our battery and oxygen would probably last us another twenty-four hours, but then we'd *have* to come up. This way, at least, we still can dive and hide, and if we can only get up for two hours or so, we'll be almost completely recovered, battery more than two-thirds recharged, and ready for anything.

Such are the plans and arguments that pass through our minds that long and horrible day. Late that afternoon, however, fortune once more smiles our way. We realize that we have ap-

proached the southern edge of the circle, that the Japs have apparently temporarily lost contact, perhaps grown a bit careless, and that no depth-charge runs have been made for some time.

WE'VE tried it before, but here goes again. We head for the biggest gap in the circle, and slowly increase speed as much as we dare—which isn't much. We listen with bated breath, hardly daring to breathe, plotting in those malevolent screws, trying to identify the bird who is supposed to cover the sector we've chosen for our escape route.

Here he comes! One set of screw noises slowly gets louder, and commences to draw ahead. We shudder

as he gains bearing on us. Surely he'll pick us up, because he'll be practically right on top of us! But (another smile from the blindfolded gal), all at once he stops drawing ahead. Now, as we cluster around the sound gear, we watch that telltale bearing pointer move aft, ever aft, till finally he passes across our stern! A suppressed, guarded cheer breaks out from the desperate men in the conning-tower. We have broken through! . . .

There is nothing to compare with the fresh cool sweetness of the pure night air. It overpowers one with its vitality, reaches deep down inside of one and sweeps away every remaining vestige of tiredness, fear, or unhappiness. It is frank, pure, undiluted joy.

THREE weeks later, by way of revenge for the terrific beating she'd taken, *Trigger* sank four freighters and one escort out of a convoy of five escorts. With one torpedo remaining aboard, she chased the remaining freighter and four escorts, snapping at their heels like a dog herding sheep, till finally, for fear of grounding herself, she desisted. But she had the pleasure of knowing that all five ships had run hard aground, as verified by another submarine.

Returning to Pearl Harbor, *Trigger* was adjudged so badly damaged as to require a six-week overhaul in a Navy Yard, instead of the customary two-week refit. I was at that time, May 22, 1944, detached from my duties as Executive Officer of the *Trigger*, and ordered to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to place the U.S.S. *Tirante* into commission as Executive Officer. And so ends my story of the *Trigger*.

Epilogue

How hard it is to write what remains! In due time *Tirante* appeared off the coast of Japan, and I was happy to see, one day, a dispatch ordering *Trigger* to join us and operate with us. On the appointed night for the rendezvous, we called her by radio: "*Trigger* from *Tirante* . . . *Trigger* from *Tirante* . . . S 237 from S 420 . . . S 237 from S 420!" No answer.

There never was any answer, though we called all night long for three nights. With your surface ships, there are always survivors, messages, maybe a bit of wreckage. They always operate together, so there is always someone who can later tell the tale of what happened. With submarines, there is just the deep unfathomable silence—the all-encompassing nothingness of death.

As I sit in the skipper's cabin of my submarine, I can visualize the sudden unexpected catastrophe. Maybe a Kamikaze plane. Maybe a depth charge—a bull's-eye, after four hundred odd misses. Maybe, and most probably, a torpedo or mine.

In some compartment they have a split second to realize that *Trigger's* stout side has been breached. The first notification may have been the siren screech of the collision alarm; she may have been dogged down tightly throughout—but to little avail. Instantaneously the angry water has taken possession. The shock has startled everyone in other compartments, but before they have a chance to formulate their fears or suppositions, the worst is obvious.

Almost immediately she upends. Everything loose or not tightly secured cascades down to the bottom, against what used to be a vertical bulkhead. Some men have hung on where they were, but most are struggling around in the indescribable confusion at the

We called her by radio . . . There never was any answer, though we called all night long for three nights . . . just the deep unfathomable silence . . . There is a banner our eyes will never see, deep under the ceaseless waves, buried forever in some lonesome corner of the ocean floor. Those of us who lost a friend in the war know what I mean. It is there. It is gallantly streaming. We shall always see it.



bottom of the compartment. Instinctively all eyes turn to the depth gauges, or sea-pressure gauges, which are the same thing, in compartments other than control-room or conning-tower.

They watch as they begin their crazy spin. Slowly at first, then faster and faster, the needles race around. The shallow-depth gauges soon travel past their limits, finally jam against their stops on the second go around. The deep-depth gauges and sea-pressure gauges soon reach the limits of their travel. Nothing can be heard except the rush of water, the groaning and creaking of *Trigger's* dying body, and their own pounding pulses.

Down, down, down she goes—to who knows what depth, before finally the brave ribs give way, the steel shell collapses, and *Trigger's* gallant spirit ascends to the Valhalla of ships, bearing with her the souls of some eighty-seven loyal sailors.

Trigger, you will never be forgotten, as long as there is a United States Navy or a United States Submarine Force. As much as any man who gave his life for his country, you gave your life for yours. You were only three years old when you died; but in that time you sank or damaged thirty-eight Jap ships and earned countless decorations for the officers and men who served in you, as well as the coveted Presidential Unit Citation and Navy Unit commendation for yourself. Some day there will be another *Trigger*, to carry on in our Navy the tradition of the first one, to have permanently enshrined within her the Presidential Unit Citation and Navy Unit commendation plaques which belong to you. Guiding the hand that swings the bottle of champagne against the bow of your namesake will be the spirit of the old *Trigger*, the souls of the men who died with you, and the hearts of those they left behind.

YES, I lost my queen. She sailed west on patrol, and the silence that ensued told its own story. Many of the men in *Tirante* came from the old *Trigger*, and we were joined together in our grief. The Japs well know the fury of *Tirante's* patrols, and if it will make them any happier, every one of her victims was dedicated to "the old boat." How do you like that, Tojo?

The sight of our flag flying in the breeze and the sound of a band playing our national anthem have never failed to bring a lump to my throat and a proud feeling of "belonging." Now, however, there is an added emotion, for there is a banner our eyes will never see, deep under the ceaseless waves, buried forever in some lonesome corner of the ocean floor. Those of us who have lost a friend in the war know what I mean. It is there. It is gallantly streaming. We shall always see it.

BLUE BOOK is glad to receive letters from you, our readers, telling us what you are thinking about—about your own experiences or problems; or your opinions on national or international affairs.

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What Do You Think?

A Readers' Forum

The World Balances Accounts

I THINK that the world balances accounts with those who do as much giving-away as they do getting. Coming home from the war did not hold all the joy for me that it did for many. The months flat on my back in Army, General and Veterans' hospitals and finally coming out as a total and permanent disability, had all left me very bitter with my lot. I really envied my buddies who lay under the little white crosses. After a year of this, while on a short tour to the Vets' hospital, I met a chaplain who had served with Allenby with the English Army in World War I, and then had served through this war with Patton's Seventh and Third Armies, W. W. II, and had been wounded three times. I spent quite a number of profitable hours with him. He was the kind of a buddy that one could really get close to. He did not preach any selfish, partisan gospel, but he did teach me to make myself useful to myself and to my fellow-man. I became eager to try out his philosophies.

As a former merchandise man and store operator, ideas for window displays, advertising campaigns, etc., would flash through my mind. I would sit down and write the ideas to local merchants. I also sent one idea to my former employers in New York, and they adopted the idea for their entire chain, and wrote me a fine letter of thanks. I was surprised how many ideas were accepted and put into practice—and the thanks I have received has indeed been gratifying. Local merchants and public officials call regularly for a little chat—and often for any suggestions I might have regarding problems.

Along with this idea I never forget to write little notes of thank-you to public servants for efficient services I receive. The same has applied to the postman on our route. A little note, thanking the postmaster for a special service our postman did for me has brought me numerous little special attentions to my mail and especially to any Government allotments.

These are only a very few of the many little opportunities that make life very interesting, and entirely remove the spirit of uselessness and frustration that I felt when I came home. My life is more interesting and gratifying than it would have been had I not lost my capabilities for "getting" merely.

After a year of thinking this way and following it as a hobby, here is how I come to feel about it. I have a modest disability pension from Uncle Sam for life, to insure a living; so why should I worry about driving a sharp bargain with the world for extra ideas and impulses that come to me? And why should I pine my life away because I am not able to get out and get? I am a part of my times, doing what I can to make life interesting for others and rewarded by having an interesting life for myself. I find, added to that, my friends multiply and good things come from all directions. I think the world balances accounts for *Giving*.
R. H. C.

Give Them a Chance

ARE we going to be reminded of the very thing we are trying most to forget, every time we step outside for the rest of our lives?"

The speaker was a young lieutenant, one of many who have come home from overseas minus legs, arms and other pieces of vital machinery.

As office manager for an orthopedic appliance firm, where such boys are being fitted with artificial legs, arms and braces, I hear similar plaintive questions many times a week. Since I lost a leg myself several years ago, I now seem to them a veteran in the perplexing ordeal they are facing.

It grieves me to have to tell them that unfortunately no one has so far seen fit to foster much-needed rehabilitation courses upon a rude and thoughtless public in this respect. It is not only uncomfortable and embarrassing, but downright tiresome and exasperating to be stopped by strangers on the streets, buses, trains, in churches, shows and stores with such questions as—"Where did you lose your leg?" "Is it true that they go on hurting after they are amputated?" "God, bless you, did you get the German that did it?" "Did it happen in the Army or the Navy?"

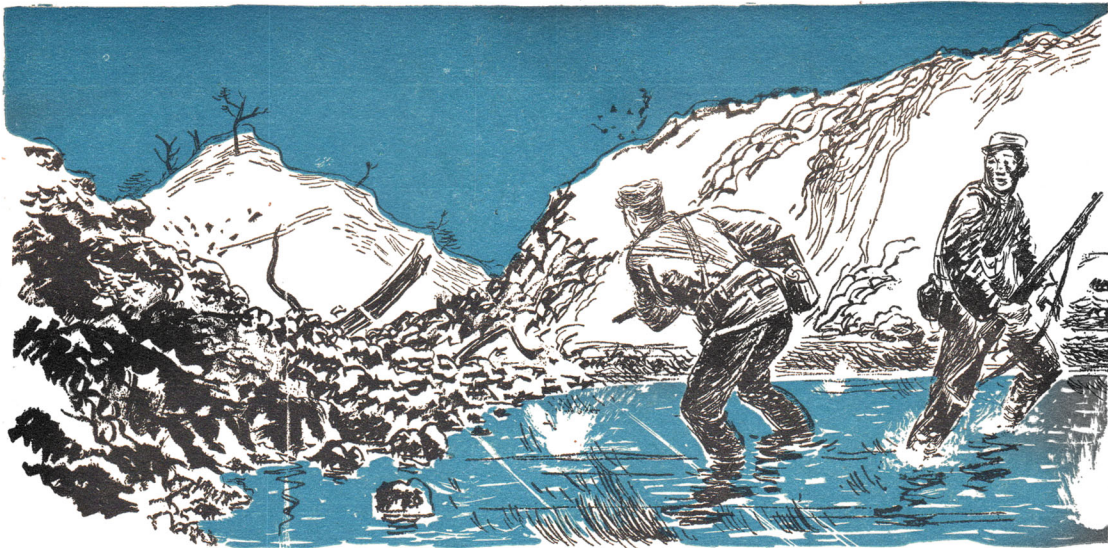
"Oh, you poor dear, is there anything I can do?" "Is Uncle Sam taking good care of you?" "What a pity, and you so young and strong yet, too." No matter how sincerely well-meant such questions and would-be sympathy are extended, they have the inescapable, wearing-down effect of frustration and bewilderment on the receiver.

No intelligent person likes to be singled out as being conspicuously different—a freak to be pitied. We all share the inherent human desire to be normal; and losing a leg or an arm in itself doesn't make one feel any less so than losing a tooth or becoming bald. All that is essentially human and fine and great in a man is still there. Nor should the wearing of an artificial limb excite any more sentimentality or curiosity than an artificial set of uppers or lowers.

Since I can offer no means of escape from the attitude of an inquisitive and simpering world all I can do is to endeavor to give them the benefit of my own personal experience: How after those five bewildering years I suddenly realized, contrary to general opinion, that instead of making me less capable of carrying on a useful, active life, losing that limb had actually awakened in me a new alertness, a finer appreciation of life, and a better understanding of my fellow-beings and the world in which I lived. In slowing me down physically, it had forced me to rely on and develop my latent mental powers to a greater keenness. Most important of all, though, as time passed and I became more aware of these deepening qualities, there came to me a permanent feeling of exhilaration in the knowledge that I have been capable of meeting such a challenge.

Being suddenly deprived of a vital piece of human machinery is something like a trial by fire—a survival of the fittest process—that weeds out the weak and gives added strength and courage to the strong. The disabled service men of this war need look no further than their late Commander-in-Chief for proof of that. Just as he conquered such a handicap and rose to the most eminent position in the world, so will many of these disabled boys of today become our greatest leaders of tomorrow. But they don't want pity—all they want is man's God-given right to live a normal, useful life.

E. A. D.



An OSS mission to smash Jap-held railroads deep in the interior of China has to handle ignorance and intrigue as well as an able enemy.

OPERATION

DO you fellows want to wait a few weeks and parachute in, or would you rather walk three hundred miles to your target area?"

An eagle colonel, chief of the OSS mission to China, addressed this question to a small group of OSS officers at Kunming in April 1945. They were all veterans of the European theater—members of the already legendary "Jedburghs" who had parachuted into occupied Europe to organize the underground forces in advance of the Allied armies. That mission successfully completed, and with General Eisenhower's forces smashing through to meet the Russians, Major General William J. Donovan, director of the Office of Strategic Services, had offered his best operators an opportunity to take a crack at the Japs.

Anxious to get the war over with, most of the Jeds had volunteered to take up the fight on the other side of the world. Before they were finished, more than one of them remembered his exciting days with the Maquis in France as fairly simple compared with the overwhelming difficulties and frustrations of operating deep in the unknown heart of China. "Dormouse Mission" was to be one of these. . . .

It wasn't a hard decision for Captain Ray Moore (of Plainfield, New Jersey) and the other OSS veterans to make. Only three weeks in China, they were already tired of sitting around head-

quarters while their mission was being planned. They were eager for action—eager to get the war over with and get back to the States, where they so recently had spent a tantalizingly short twelve weeks. If walking in would get them going sooner, then walking it would be.

In less than a minute they had agreed among themselves. It was unanimous. "We'll try going overland, sir. That seems to be the quickest way to get there."

Several days later, on April 21st, four anxious and bewildered Americans, with a Chinese interpreter, stood waiting on a dirty train platform just outside Kunming. Their last days at headquarters had been hectic. Maps were studied; experts gave them a briefing on the tactics of Jap garrisons, about the unorganized Chinese resistance forces, and about Chinese etiquette (which they gathered was more important than anything else); they listened to Chinese-English records which taught them a few Chinese phrases; their equipment was issued and they were off—to what they hadn't the slightest idea. And had they known what the next 132 days would bring, their spirits would hardly have been as high as they were on that spring morning.

Leader of "Dormouse" was acting Major Benton McDonald Austin, of Savannah, Georgia. Second in command was Captain Raymond E. Moore,

of Plainfield, New Jersey. The other two Americans were Air Corps 1st Lt. Dave Olds, of Terrell, Texas and 1st Sgt. Vincent Rocca, acting lieutenant and radioman from New York City. The Chinese interpreter was known as "Casey" Wang.

Twenty-three-year-old Moore had left Georgetown University to enlist as a private in 1942. Commissioned through OCS, he became a paratrooper and later an OSS Jedburgh. With Sgt. Rocca, he had jumped twice into occupied France. The first time into Brittany in mid-June of 1944; and with that mission completed after the Allied breakthrough at St. Lo, he had volunteered again and jumped into the Belfort Gap area. Here the Maquis he was with did yeoman work in harassing the retreating Germans and blasting the communications. Arriving back in the States in November 1944, he barely had had time to marry his home-town sweetheart, before he found himself flying with top priority across the Atlantic on his way to India in early February. From India he flew over the hump to Kunming, and now he was away again on a startling adventure which was to win him the Silver Star and afford him additional adventures such as came to few Americans in World War II. . . .

What lay ahead of "Dormouse Mission" in the vast stretches of occupied China they didn't know, but the importance of their own objective had



DORMOUSE

by Lt. Com. Richard Kelly, U.S.N.R.

been made abundantly clear to them by Headquarters. The Japs in Southeast Asia had suffered a crushing defeat from British and American forces. Now they were pulling back into China through a heavily garrisoned corridor. Moore and his fellow "mice" were to penetrate into this Jap-dominated area, organize, arm and train Chinese guerrillas, and lead them in attacks on Jap garrisons, supply-dumps and communications. Their top-priority target was the main Jap line of retreat—the road and railroad between Hengyang and Kweilin.

The five-week trip to their zone of operations by primitive railroad train, truck, coolie train and on foot was a weird, fascinating and trying experience for the amazed Americans. Ancient China and her ancient ways was revealed to them for the first time in all its strange Oriental manners. As Captain Moore recalls that trip, it surely ranks among the most extraordinary ever taken by United States Army personnel on their way to battle.

"COOLIES loaded our supplies in one car, and we rode in another. Sick Chinese soldiers jammed into every available space, including hundreds who rode the rods underneath the train. It was one of China's best, and made all of forty miles an hour down a steep grade, and an even ten at all other times. It took us ten hours to go a hundred miles to Chanic, where

we transferred to U.S. Army trucks, which delivered us to Kweiyang after a grueling forty-eight-hour trip. Here we discovered we were to move forward to Chihkiang, an advance OSS outpost with some Chinese troops who were on the way to the front. Half the drivers were American soldiers, the other half Chinese. We made sure that we were all in American-driven trucks.

"The Chinese troops, ragged, sickly and ill-equipped, ranged from old men of sixty to boys of twelve. They were packed thirty-two to a truck, and a half-dozen to each trailer. In our army eighteen was the limit for such trucks and none in the trailer. It was the most God-awful trip I have ever taken. We rode steadily except for a couple of brief stops for two days and a night over a rough, rocky, dirty road that circled over huge mountains. There was a horseshoe curve every few hundred yards, and a drop of several hundred feet at the side of the road, to make matters more interesting. Pretty soon the poor Chinese troops began to get sick. They vomited all over the truck and then over each other—they really were miserable.

"About two A.M. the first night, three of the trucks, including mine, fell behind. The lead truck of our group slid around a muddy curve, and the trailer carrying six Chinese turned over. By the time I got to the wreck, the six Chinese were lying alone and

moaning by the side of the road where they had been thrown. They were a bloody mess. All had huge gashes and bruises. One man's eye was spilling over his cheek; another's mouth was split in half, and a third seemed to have a fractured skull. Another American officer and I fixed them up as best we could in the darkness; and as we were finishing, a Chinese colonel came up and bawled them out for getting hurt—as if they could help it! We then put them in a truck and sent them off to an American hospital that was said to be about ten miles away.

"ABOUT five A.M. another truck skidded over a fifteen-foot embankment, killing one Chinese and smashing a number of the others. Major Austin was fortunately near the accident and helped out the best he could with improvised splints and medicines. All the next day we kept going steadily, and finally reached Chihkiang early in the evening. As we pulled into the Army Supply base, an incident happened which gave me an insight into Chinese character that I was to see manifested many times. One of our trucks smashed into a civilian truck, which shouldn't have been in the convoy route, and wrecked it. The merchant's wares were strewn all over the road. The Chinese soldiers got the greatest kick out of this, and roared with laughter to see someone who was worse off than themselves.

"We reached the OSS Headquarters at Chihkiang the next morning, and were happy to find it a pretty nice setup in a former German mission compound. Here we were scheduled to spend a few days getting our final equipment in shape and to await OSS Navy Lieutenant Jack Matthai, who had spent the previous four months covering our general area of operations. We were all anxious to see him to get some idea of what we were up against.

"THE second night there had a familiar touch to it. Everyone was turned out of his sack because of an air-raid alarm. We stood around in an open area waiting for the eggs to start falling, but for some reason the Jap planes didn't get through, and nothing happened. It did, however, make us realize that there were some Japs around, and we received further proof the next morning when a hurry call came in from some Chinese troops who were having a tough time with the Japs and were desperately in need of 75-mm. shells. Several of us were rushed out to prepare the drop, which was unfortunately held up for two days because of the weather. On the third day we made it all right, and dropped the chutes on a large field surrounded by hundreds of Chinese soldiers. We saw no sign of Japs, and were not molested by Jap aircraft.

"We were sitting around that night sipping some rice wine and wondering how long it would take us to beat Japan, when Rocca came in and said: 'There's some Chink outside who speaks like an American.'

"I told him to bring the fellow in, and it turned out to be Matthai. He was some sight. He was wearing a filthy old Chinese winter uniform, which was heavily padded and looked like an old quilt. On his head was a tan Chinese army summer cap, and an old pair of light Chinese slippers completed his costume. Nothing else! He was all alone save for a little Chinese interpreter who had been his principal companion for four months. During all this time he had received no supplies and had had no communication with his OSS base except an occasional runner who carried his intelligence reports.

"We were tremendously glad to see him, but were shaken by his looks. He was thin and thoroughly worn out, which was why he had been ordered back to base. We told him about the progress of the war in Europe, President Roosevelt's death, and a number of other things that had happened since he 'went out into the blue,' as they called it in China.

"Jack was in no shape to give us much briefing that night, but next day we picked his brains for every bit of information he could give us. Next to



"We were extremely glad to see him, but shaken by his looks."

his bedraggled appearance, the thing about him that startled us the most was the fact that he had lived so long with the Chinese and as a Chinese that he had forgotten how to eat with a fork.

"As for the success of our mission, Jack had considerable doubts. He warned us that we would have to fight our way through the Jap lines to reach our area—a fact which didn't set too well with us. We had hoped to save the fighting until we organized, trained and equipped our guerrilla force, but now it looked as if we would have it tough from the start. It seemed that the Japs in our particular area had never been bothered, and our entry would be the first time that any aggressive force had ever challenged their complete mastery of the region.

"Jack figured that they wouldn't take it lying down, and that we could expect immediate and all-out counter-measures. He also gave us a lot of very interesting dope on the type of Chinese we would meet: etiquette, type of targets, ambushes, equipment, living conditions and other data which was invaluable, because all of us were absolutely green as to how to operate in China. It was beginning to look as if our experience in Europe

wouldn't help very much against the Japs.

"Thanks to Jack's tips we revised our ideas pretty radically, and decided to go in with just our personal gear and radios, and get our heavy equipment in a supply drop after we got set up inside. We also decided to wear civilian clothes while traveling, so as to attract as little attention as possible. Security seemed to be unheard of, and Jap agents were known to be all over. We bought rice-bowls, chopsticks, wash-bowls, bamboo baskets and poles for our coolies, and plenty of rice and tea. Next we packed all our supplies and arranged to have them dropped in when we sent the word.

"Before we left for the field, Col. Smith, the OSS chief at Chihkiang, made a couple of changes in our team. He substituted Capt. Ev. Allen of New York City, who had been with us in France, for Lt. Dave Olds, who was assigned to air-dropping duties. He also gave us a young Burmese interpreter and radioman whose name we simplified to 'Chicago.' As a final bit of preparation, he arranged for us to spend a few days in the field with an American Major Kamp, who was serving as OSS liaison with a Chinese army headquarters. Here we had our first taste of setting up camp and living Chinese style. It gave us a slight inkling of what lay ahead when we would reach our destination, which was some two hundred miles farther inside the enemy lines.

"By Thursday, May 17, our coolie trains were all set, and we took off shortly after noon. Captain Clark Hanna's OSS team 'Elephant' was going part way with us. They were to operate in the next area to ours. Altogether we had forty-four coolies and thirty-three Chinese soldiers under a Chinese major as a military escort.

"GETTING the coolies started was quite a procedure. Each carried a long pole on his shoulders to which was hung two baskets, each of which weighed approximately forty pounds. They all tried to get the lightest loads, for which I couldn't blame them. Then we had a bit of a labor dispute when they demanded one thousand CN a day, instead of the usual five hundred (about one hundred cents American), but that too was finally settled, and we started off across some rough high hills.

"It was hot, and the coolies didn't like it. Several times we had to fire a few rounds over their heads when they refused to keep going. This always did the trick. One fellow nearly died, and the coolie straw boss left him along the side of the trail and impressed a farmer who was working in a nearby rice-paddy. This farmer merely turned to his wife,

passed her his pick and left with the load. I often wondered whether he ever got back.

"We made only thirty li, about 10 miles, that first day, but did better each of the next two, covering fifty and sixty li respectively. Our mode of travel was surprisingly like an American unit going through enemy country. The trail was nothing but a three-foot-wide dike that wound around and through the rice-paddies which covered the landscape. Well up ahead would be several civilians, who acted as spies to warn us if there were any Japs or bandits ahead. Next came a few Chinese soldiers who acted as advance scouts. Then farther back would be a squad of Chinese soldiers, followed by our coolie train; and a few soldiers would bring up the rear.

"Our column, which was of necessity in single file, stretched out over a mile, and several Americans kept up forward and maintained contact with the main party every quarter-hour over our walkie-talkies. Very frequently we would hear scattered rifle-shots. At first this gave us quite a scare, because the Chinese major never told us what was going on; and to us, shots meant enemy. Whenever this happened, the whole column would stop; the Chinese soldiers would go tearing off, and we would be left waiting uncomfortably for the outcome. Fortunately, it never amounted to anything more than that some Chinese soldier thought he saw something and just naturally let go at it.

"About a half a dozen times we were forced to detour because the spies up ahead reported Japs in a small town which we had intended to pass through, or we would have to circle around a hill which had Jap pill-boxes on it. We had a good deal of money with us, and that too made us feel uneasy, because we knew we would make a wonderful catch for the bandits—who, we had been told were very numerous along our line of march. We finally decided that we would have to trust our Chinese major to get us through, because his job was to deliver us safely to a Chinese Army headquarters near Wukang, and he would lose plenty of face if anything happened to us.

"By the third day we had no food left but rice, which can be pretty monotonous for Americans. Our coolies were also in pretty bad shape. The Chinese officers tried to impress some more farmers, but they ran away, and the soldier fired after them without any effect. One of our coolies dropped his load and ran off across a paddy, and two of the guards thought it was a great joke, but they sobered up quickly when they had to carry the abandoned load themselves.

"Sunday evening we reached another Chinese Army unit at Huaynan.

We enjoyed the cleanliness and food, but the respite was short-lived, for we were again under way at dawn the next morning. An ominous message came in from base advising us that a large Japanese force was advancing on Sining, and another force was headed for Wukang, where we were due to arrive the next day. From there we were scheduled to go to Sining. It looked as if we were in for some trouble.

"There was a strange feeling in the air as we approached Wukang late Monday afternoon. The city had a bamboo fence all around it, and only one entrance. Most of the civilians had been evacuated several days before; the streets were deserted; everything was heavily guarded by Chinese troops, and there was a ghostlike calm-before-the-storm feeling.

"The chief magistrate received us very cordially and put us up in fine quarters. The ranking Chinese Army officer warned us that we would not be able to push forward for some time, as the situation around Sining was very unsettled. This was bad news, as he was to supply us with a new military escort to take us to General Wang, with whom we were scheduled to operate, and we couldn't go forward without it.

"We were delayed there a week, which time we utilized to purchase some more supplies and to get in some more stuff from base, including money and some very welcome mail which was flown in by an L5. Just before we left, the magistrate invited us to an elaborate *Gambei** party which he threw in our honor. None of us had ever seen anything like it. We arrived at the magistrate's quarters about four P.M., having dressed in sun-tans for

the occasion. First we were offered Chinese cigarettes and glasses of hot water. Next we were led to the dining-room, where a long table was covered with a red tablecloth. Name cards were at each place.

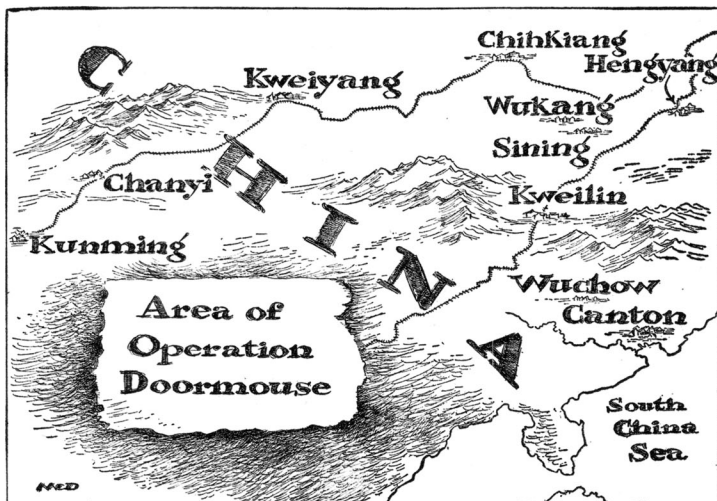
"Everything started off very formally, with speeches, 'Gambeis,' 'Ding How's'* and toasts all around. After that the food started coming in, and just kept coming. There were eleven separate courses, and wine throughout. First there was a soup of squids, bamboo and mushrooms. Then without any let-up a succession of rice-bowls with fish-balls, beef, chicken, a pudding of chicken, egg and fish; duck; horse chestnuts with soup; mushrooms and pork; pork alone; bean cakes; three kinds of greens, and finally rice. It all tasted delicious.

"ON May 30th we set out again with some better coolies and a really smart-looking escort of regular Chinese Army troops. It was terribly hot, and we had to take fifteen-minute breaks every hour. The second night was spent in the tiny village of Whachow, where we stayed at a guerrilla headquarters. Late next afternoon as we entered the town of Hui Lungshi, a squad of soldiers in front of the magistrate's house snapped to attention, which was the beginning of a reception none of us will ever forget. They led us through the streets, and the whole population had turned out in their finest to greet us.

"All the shops and houses were flying flags which said, 'Welcome Americans,' 'Welcome Allies' and similar slogans. Everyone had a huge armful of firecrackers, which they fired off as we passed. It was sensational

**Gambei*—"Drink it up!"

**Ding How*—"Very good!"





Wang was heavily guarded by Chinese troops, and there was a ghostlike calm-before-the-storm feeling."

and made us feel like great big heroes, with the crackers going off all around us. At one point in the parade, two thousand schoolchildren, all sobic and span, stood at attention and cheered as we walked past. When we arrived at our quarters, huge crowds stood around staring at us, as many of them had never seen an American or even a white man before.

"The next day Hanna's team separated from us, as they were to join up with a General Chiang in a different area, and we expected to arrive at the headquarters of our General Wang the same day. This reduced our American contingent to three, for the previous day Rocca and Allen had been left behind at a guerrilla compound because both had a bad fever and were too sick to push on. Neither had been well for more than a week before. We left our interpreter Casey Wong with them to look after their needs until they were able to join us.

"Several hours after Hanna left us, we met a frantic messenger from General Wang. Chicago finally got his story, and informed us that he was General Wang's adjutant, and had been sent to stop us because they were fighting Japs around Wang's headquarters at Luisan. Austin and I were pretty disgusted with all these delays, and told Chicago to tell him that we were going ahead anyway. At this, the adjutant became terribly alarmed and expressively dragged his finger across his throat. We thought he was worried about us, but Chicago explained he was just showing what the General would do to him if we did not stop as had been requested.

"Our escorting Chinese major also remonstrated with us, saying that General Wang would probably cut off his head if he took us forward without getting an O.K.; so we disgustedly pitched camp in an old Buddhist temple, the cleanest place we could find, and decided to wait at least one day before moving forward. It was a great disgrace for Chinese to stay in the temple, because only the very poorest people who had no other place would ever dream of using it for shelter. This didn't bother us at all, and as long as it didn't seem to bother the monks, we made ourselves right at home with Buddha.

"The next morning we announced that we were pushing on, regardless of whether anyone else liked it or not. It was nearly ten o'clock before we were under way, and the frightened Chinese major ran ahead to inspect the city to see if the Japs were still there. He came back to report that a large number had been there the previous night, but that only a few were still around in the morning, and these had left by the time he got there. On the way we met a small well-guarded coolie train escorting General

Wang's fifth wife and his sixth son. She was riding in style in an elaborate sedan chair, from which she stepped to meet us. The youngster, who was only four years old, bowed like a trooper, and sang the Chinese national anthem for us.

"Late that afternoon we met General Wang at his headquarters, which was all decorated with slogans to greet us. The General proved to be an impressive character. He was a handsome, round-faced, middle-aged Chinese gentleman of slightly less than medium height with close-cropped graying hair and model teeth. He greeted us with a low bow which was both humble and yet lordly. He wore a simple tan uniform, unadorned except for the two stars which were his insignia of rank.

"We were given fine quarters, and at meal-times there were seemingly endless toasts and '*gambeis*' on all sides. We took out a map and gave them the news of the world and the progress of the war, which was very interesting to the General and his staff. When I showed the General a picture of President Truman in an old American magazine, he held it out in his left hand and saluted. It was impressive, and done with all sincerity.

"Mac (Major Austin), the General, Chicago and I had a number of conferences on getting our mission under way. The General seemed very agreeable, and we began to have high hopes of getting into action soon. The first step seemed to be to get our supplies, and a day or two after our arrival we managed to locate a suitable dropping field. That same night at dinner, however, one of the General's soldiers came in and announced that a large force of Japs was coming our way. The Chinese officers told us that we would have to leave immediately after we finished eating, as the Japs were looking for Wang and for us. We couldn't quite get that 'after eating' business, but that was the way it was, and a half-hour after dinner we all moved out. The Nips were only a couple of miles away when we moved.

"Our new place was a beautiful mountain retreat located in a secluded valley with sheer tree-covered cliffs rising up on three sides of it. The place was a natural for defense, and the General had about 150 efficient-looking guards around it, so for the first time since we left headquarters we really felt secure. As we turned in that first night, however, we heard a rumor that another force of Japs was nearby, and that didn't help our sleeping.

"OUR apartment here was unbelievable—a long, high, cool veranda looking over a mountain stream, beach chairs on the veranda, modern furni-

ture, stained pine walls and squared brick floors.

"First thing, we sent a message to Rocca and Allen, telling them to get up here, and had the General send sedan chairs for them. The soldiers never got through, however, and reported back that there were three thousand Japs between us and them. This made us feel pretty bad, but there wasn't a darned thing we could do about it.

"The first phase of our mission, which Mac immediately organized with the help of the General, was the establishment of an intelligence network. We enlisted a large number of reliable Chinese civilians, gave them training in what we wanted to know on Jap troop movements and likely targets, and sent them out. We soon began getting some really good dope on the Japs, and received word from base that the Air Corps was having some good hunting as a result of our tips, particularly against trains and truck convoys.

"Once we had our Intelligence phase working properly, we turned our attention to the organization and training of our own guerrilla force of troops and *saboteurs*. We located a likely drop-field, and immediately radioed base to send in the necessary supplies, which we had prepared before we left Chihkiang. We received word that we could expect our first drop on June 19. The General cooperated in producing fifty picked men, who impressed us as being the best of his troops, and we immediately started a rigorous training schedule on weapons and all types of demolitions. The Chinese were attentive and pretty good students, particularly on the explosives, for which they had seemingly no fear. The bigger the noise, the better they seemed to like it.

"Another daily activity which interfered no end with our sleep was a daily weather report which base asked us to send in for the Air Corps. This got one of us up every morning before five A.M., and if the evening before had involved considerable toasting, as it frequently did, it was pretty rough. About this time we received word from base that both Rocca and Allen had been evacuated back to a U.S. Army field hospital, and would be lost to the team indefinitely, so we asked them to send some replacements. It was now very clear to us that two officers and one Chinese radio operator could not handle this job properly.

"The night before the drop I could hardly sleep. The General had provided five hundred troops to guard the drop-field, as there were Japs all around us, and it was very possible that the planes would attract their attention. We were out there at five A.M. and set up our panels and oil flares. Nothing happened for four

hours, and then two C 47's flew overhead, only to ignore us completely. By noon everyone was very disgusted, and both Mac and I were much embarrassed when we decided to call in the guards and return to the compound. We had just reached there, however, when a Chinese soldier ran in to tell us planes were overhead.

"We raced out to set up the panels, and sent men up to the hills to light fires. It looked for a while as if they had missed us again, but then a big beautiful C 47 broke out of the clouds just over our heads and began to spill out red 'chutes. The Chinese went mad as the stuff began to pour down. By sheer luck no one was hit. A lot of the stuff got soaked from landing in the rice-paddies, but we were all happier than we had been at any time since we left for the field. Mac and I received about forty letters apiece, the majority from our wives, and in addition two cartons of Bourbon whiskey, plenty of cigarettes, PX supplies and American food. The Chinese had certainly been treating us royally, but this contact with home meant more to us than all the hero worship and hospitality in China.

"WITH the addition of the extra supplies we were able to step up the tempo of our training, and it was encouraging to see how our soldiers were improving. Whenever we had firing practice, I would give a pack of American cigarettes for the best score, and that really had those Chinese in there pitching. Our interpreter, Casey Wong, returned several days after the drop and reported that he had been pinned down by Japanese mortars on his way back, and had been generally held up by the Japs in trying to reach us. Another valued addition to our team was a Mr. Chu, a highly educated Chinese of fifty-one, who had studied for eight years in the United States at Indiana and Columbia universities, and traveled widely in Europe. We nicknamed him 'Tank' for obvious reasons, and his knowledge of Chinese and their ways as well as his understanding of our language and ideas made him quite an asset to 'Dormouse.'

"So much of the equipment we received on the first drop had been spoiled or expended on the training that we needed more supplies for our projected operations, so we radioed for a second drop, which came through on June 29th. This drop came off all right, but it had its note of tragedy. To guard against spoilage of the equipment in the rice-paddies, I had special squads prepared to dig out every container as it fell.

"Every chute dropped nicely except two, which broke loose from their containers. One of these with a case of ammo dropped right into a group

that I had sent down into the paddy to dig out a container. I rushed down and saw one young soldier lying in a muddy hole. I ran back to get our medical kit, but when I returned, his companions had pulled him out and left him lying on one side. Then I could see that the case had taken off the top part of his head. It almost made me sick to see the casual way the Chinese took the death of that boy. Their attitude was 'His own fault—forget it.'

"On June 29th we received orders from Major John Summers at headquarters to take immediate action. The Chinese Army was making a major drive toward Kweilin, and our orders were to get in behind the Japs and harass their rear. We were more than a little dubious about the capabilities of our men, who had had less than ten days instructions on their new weapons, but headquarters wanted immediate action, and we did too; so we gave every man a final day's training on his weapon, and made arrangements to move into the tactical zone next day.

BY now our force consisted of 130 of our own partly trained men, fifty of the General's own personal guards, and ourselves. Mac and I gave a careful briefing to our five best agents, who were to keep well ahead of us and give us the dope on the Japs, and the most likely locations for the road ambushes. After the agents, we planned to have a company of the General's troops with their old German weapons from the last war to divert suspicion that we were anything but an ordinary Chinese bandit force. Our particular objective was to block the roads going out of Jap occupied Sining, and possibly to knock off some small Jap garrisons or convoys.

"Our trip toward Sining was uneventful, although there was sporadic firing all around us most of the time, and we frequently had to change our trail to avoid Jap pillboxes. All the towns we passed through were deserted. The Japs had the peasants terrified, and most of them had taken to the hills. Many of the villages had been burned to the ground, and everything the people owned had been destroyed.

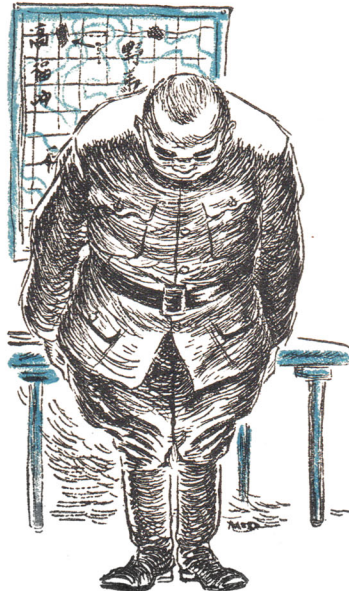
"In addition to the nearness of the enemy and the expectation of our first real action, the march was very interesting in many other ways. Twice we stopped in small Chinese drug-stores to eat lunch. They were a far cry from Liggett's and Walgreen's. The principal medicines on display were snake-skins, bark, dried grasses and herbs. I remember feeling I would have to be pretty desperate before trying any of them.

"The second night we stayed in a lovely house which a clan had built for their dead ancestors. Here we

learned a great deal about Chinese religious customs. No one lives in these houses, which are much nicer than the houses the people build for themselves. They are exclusively for the dead to live in. Every so often the people come to the house and burn imitation money and paper men—a ritual that is believed to supply the departed with cash and servants. Sometimes they even build a fine house and then burn it down, so that the dead can have it. While we were there, a servant came in and rang a gong. This gong-ringing is supposed to wake up the dead so that they will guard the living, and also to show the dead that the living are thinking of them.

"On the fourth of July we sallied forth from the mountains to strike a blow for freedom, and occupied the road we had been ordered to cut by headquarters. There wasn't a sign of a Jap—the natives told us the road was never used by them.

"We set up ambushes on three other roads, and still no Japs. Mac was pretty disgusted, and decided that if the Japs wouldn't come to us, he would go down into Sining and attack them there. We had word that there was a garrison of 120 Japs southwest of Sining, and they were to be our first target. Headquarters had promised us fighter support from the 14th Air Force for our attack, which was scheduled for the ninth. That was a big relief, as we would never have had a chance if we attempted it alone with our small force.



"General Wang greeted us with a humble and yet lordly bow."

"To our surprise, however, the General's troops attacked this garrison on the sixth, or at least he called it an attack. His troops lined up on one hill and started firing at the Japs on the next hill. It was really comic, and completely ineffectual. He lost twenty men and accomplished nothing.

"We received a message that headquarters would drop us supplies and three additional men on the seventh, so we delayed our battle a few days to receive this drop. We waited all day on the seventh without success. I was operating the radio for ground-to-plane communication. Late in the afternoon I was startled to hear an American voice on the same frequency and very close by inquire who and where we were. I told him that we were waiting for a drop. He said that he was too, and asked if he could be of any assistance. I replied, 'No, thanks,' to which he said, 'Roger, good luck, I'll be seeing you, kid!'

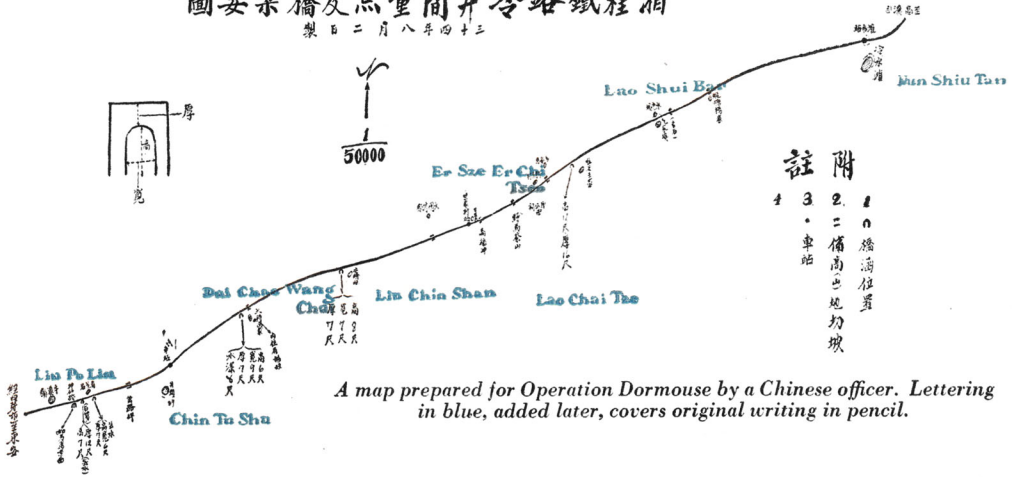
IT wasn't until later that I realized I had been talking to an American-speaking Jap who was trying to find out where we were. Fortunately, I hadn't told him our location, but it worried us that he was obviously very close, and we certainly didn't relish that remark about his seeing us soon!

"The drop came off successfully on the ninth, however, and we received three very welcome additions to team 'Dormouse.' They were Lt. Jack Matthai of Baltimore, Md., whom we had met on the way in, and who was now all fixed up after a restful leave in India; Lt. Jimmy Fine of Monongahela, Pennsylvania, who had done a lot of work in Burma and Siam; and Sgt., Acting Lt., Tom Tracey, another radioman from Jersey City. We were mighty glad to have these fellows with us. In addition to his knowledge of China gained on his previous mission, Matthai was an expert demolitions man. Fine was a rugged, experienced behind-the-lines operator, and Tracey gave us a badly needed crack radioman, for 'Chicago' was not too sharp at it. Now we really felt that with—or better still, without—the General, 'Dormouse' could really get going.

"Mac spent the next two days making a personal reconnaissance of Sining and the two nearby towns he had thought of attacking. He came back very discouraged, and decided to call the whole thing off. Sining had been plastered by the Air Force, and was a mass of rubble guarded by thirty Japs, including coolies. The other two towns had about five hundred Japs, and he knew that we would be butchered in attempting to attack them with our little force. They were both on flat empty plains which we would have to cross before coming to grips with the enemy. We decided

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A map prepared for Operation Dormouse by a Chinese officer. Lettering in blue, added later, covers original writing in pencil.

to get back to our original area and start hitting our original target, the key Jap road and railroad. Base approved our proposal, and we took off the next morning.

"One of our agents succeeded in sneaking into a Jap sleeping quarters and stealing a sergeant's complete uniform, including his flag, identification, pictures, money and papers. This gave us an idea, and immediately Mac and Jack prepared a number of small but highly effective time bombs, which they gave to twenty of our agents to plant in Jap quarters. This was right up their alley. They all hated the Japs intensely, and nothing we had proposed pleased them quite so much as this idea of blowing up the Japs while they slept. It was quite difficult to get an accurate check on the number of times they were successful, because naturally they didn't stick around to see the results! But we did receive quite a few indirect reports that they were doing their job well.

"When we reached our old headquarters at Luisan, we found ourselves hip-deep in Oriental intrigue. We had been receiving intimations for a long time that our General Wang and General Chiang, a neighboring war lord, who had Captain Hanna's team with him, were feuding. Now we met a delegation from Chiang's headquarters who told us that Wang had been ordered to turn over his troops to Chiang, and that we were also to proceed immediately to join Chiang's forces. We said nuts to this, and the emissaries were very much surprised. Our taking a stand for Wang gave us much better leverage with him, and we began to feel that at long last we could get going. What we didn't know at that time was that Wang was waging a regular civil war with Chiang, and vice versa; subsequently it developed that both seemed far more

interested in eliminating each other than in fighting the Japs. Because we could produce supply drops of new weapons and ammunition, we were the most highly prized pawns in their little game. . . .

"Our chief agent came in with some really hot information on Jap truck parks, and gave us the necessary briefing on our first railroad sabotage job. This we knew would be a ticklish operation, as the Japs had the line heavily guarded with pillboxes and small garrisons every few hundred yards. The railroad couldn't be approached by anyone at any time, and at night heavily armed Jap patrols were active over its entire length. A white man couldn't move around in this area without causing all kinds of comment, which we knew would immediately get to the Japs, and so we had to depend entirely on our agents for information on the target and the Jap defenses. Because of the night patrols, we decided to make our attack in the daylight, when we hoped the Nips would all be in their pillboxes and not expecting any activity.

"Our target was two stretches of rails around two small curves on either side of a small railroad station which was a Jap stronghold. We hoped that the curves would conceal our demolition parties from the main Jap force. Our plan was to rendezvous about a mile from the target. Our main party, under Mac, would attack the Jap position at the railroad station, while Jim Fine and myself were to lead the two demolition parties to our respective targets and blow the tracks. Each demolition party consisted of one coolie to carry the charges, four guards with rifles, a guide and the American officer in charge. Our charges consisted of special OSS magnetized cases, which we loaded with plastic explosive and fastened together with primer cord for simultaneous explosion. We

planned to destroy twenty rails apiece for a total of eighteen hundred feet of track, which we figured would knock out the railroad for some time.

"We planned to attack at five A.M. on the 28th, but as we started to move out just before dawn, the General advised us that heavy Jap patrols were scouring the area, and so we decided to postpone the assault until eleven. We all moved out together early in the morning, and after a stiff two-hour hike reached a small village a couple of miles from the railroad station. This was to be our rendezvous point after the blow.

"Shortly afterward Jim and I broke off from the main group and headed for our targets. My little party made pretty good time, and about ten-fifteen I reached a tiny village, where I was suddenly surrounded by about a hundred armed men. I was pretty scared, for I couldn't tell whether they were Japs or Chinese, but then I spied their leader on a big white horse. He was an old pal of the General's whom I had met before. The whole thing was straightened out in a few minutes, but it made me plenty mad to see that many men hanging around so close to where we were about to make an attack. There was nothing I could do about it, so I just told him to make his men be quiet, and kept going.

"In another half-hour I found myself on a little hill overlooking the railroad. There were seven Japs a few hundred yards down the track on my left, and no sound at all from the direction of the station where most of their troops were supposed to be. By five minutes to eleven I was busy laying my charges, and at eleven-ten we blew the whole business.

"After the blast I ran up onto the track to inspect our work. Nine hundred feet of track were destroyed. There had been no Jap firing, so I immediately lit out back for our ren-



devious. Shortly after twelve, I heard Jim's blow, and immediately afterwards mortars, machine-guns, rockets and rifle-fire broke out as if a major battle was taking place. It died down after a bit, and I figured that the Japs had been knocked out. It was nearly three o'clock when Mac, Jack, Jim and the rest of our men returned and gave me the news on the attack. The rails had been blown as planned; but the attack had not gone off as expected, and Jim in particular was lucky to have come back alive.

GOING back I got the whole story from the others. Mac and Jack had been unable to get the General to attack the Japs at the railroad station. Finally, after both Jim and I had blown, they did manage to get a few of our men close to the main Jap position and knocked off a few Japs. After the second blast, the Japs opened up with mortar, rifle and machine-guns, to which a few of our men replied with effective machine-gun and bazooka fire. The bulk of the General's troops, nearly five hundred of them, took up positions a good five hundred yards from the enemy and popped away merrily at them, though they were so far from the Nips that it would have been mere luck if any of their bullets hit an enemy.

"All this screw-up, plus his own troubles, got Jim and his party into plenty of confusion. His guide turned out to be a most unreliable character. First he led them close to the railroad station under an impression that they wanted to knock off the Japs who were garrisoned there. Then he led them to within two hundred yards of a Jap pillbox, which he thought it would be nice for Jim to assault with

"There was no time to work my way on my belly; the Japs were throwing everything but grenades at us."

his one coolie and four Chinese riflemen. After that Jim dug up a new guide, who led him to a small village five hundred yards from the track. Here the civilians, who didn't want the track blown because they feared reprisals, told him the village was full of Jap agents. His men checked this report, found it false, and Jim went out and blew his section of the track, destroying nine hundred feet, as I had done.

"Immediately after his blow, the attacking party under Mac opened up on the Japs, and the General's troops strung out on the hills to the rear began to shoot wildly. The Japs responded, and Jim found himself caught in the cross-fire. This was too much for his men, and all seven of them took off across a rice-paddy and left him. After ten minutes he managed to get them back under control and started for the rendezvous point by a 'shortcut' which his new guide suggested. This shortcut led them right back to the thoroughly aroused Japanese pillbox, and Jim had to retrace his steps still under heavy mixed Chinese and Japanese fire. Finally, after a dangerous two-mile run, they reached the comparative safety of a small village where the Japs couldn't reach them and the Chinese couldn't see them. A short time later he met up with a very disgusted Mac, and the whole party returned to our rendezvous point, where they picked me up and we all headed back to our camp.

"That night we sent out agents who nearly broke our hearts when they

came back a day later with the news that the Nips had the railroad back in operation. It seems that in their retreat they were picking up the rails from farther south in order to deny their use to the Chinese, and had used three hundred coolies and these rails to get the track back into operation. It was very discouraging after all our effort, because we had figured we would stop the railroad for a couple of weeks. While Jack began working out a plan to block the railroad in such a way that they couldn't repair it quickly, we sent out a number of small demolition parties to blow a few rails apiece. Our idea was to keep blowing it every night until the Japs ran out of rails.

THREE of the five teams reported back that they had been successful, and two of them were lucky enough to trap a train between their breaks. We advised the Air Force, and it gave them a perfect target.

"About this time we received a very interesting message from Headquarters. They told us that the Japs were training suicide groups of fifty men each to seek out and assassinate all Americans working with Chinese guerrillas. We knew damn well the Japs knew we were in the neighborhood. They already had a price of five hundred thousand CN on our heads, but this was only a thousand dollars in American money.

"To add to our troubles, a real battle broke out between General Wang's troops and General Chiang. Several of our men were killed, and we raised hell with the General and managed to get the fighting stopped. We threatened to take all our weapons away and leave him if there was any

more of this fighting. He knew we meant business. Since we had 150 of our own men, we were practically independent of the General, anyway.

Our men brought in a Chinese traitor on August 1st. He admitted to working for the Japs, and had a lot of suspicious papers on him. We couldn't get much information out of him, but naturally suspected that he was spying on us. They put him under heavy guard, and we asked headquarters what we should do with him.

The next day a company of our men went out and attacked a small Japanese garrison along the railroad. They killed seven Japs and brought back one prisoner. He refused to walk and made the Chinese carry him. While we were interrogating him, he asked us for a cigarette. 'Tank' then told us that he had heard that the Japs had dragged five American prisoners through a nearby city's streets by means of a wire fastened through their noses. We didn't give the Jap the cigarette.

On August 3rd we received another supply drop with the necessary explosives for the big demolition job that Jack Matthai was planning. He planned to blow a big mass of dirt down onto the railroad track at a spot where it was cut through a hill. A civil engineer in civilian life, this demolition work was right up his alley. He figured to blow some three hundred tons of dirt and stone onto the track, estimating that to repair it the Japs would have to hire enough coolies to make three hundred thousand trips with baskets of soil. Since it was a narrow place, not many coolies would be able to work at one time, which meant that if he were successful, it should take the Japs a long time to get the railroad back in operation.

He prepared a lot of booby traps with time pencils and trip-wires to delay the repair work. These he filled with old razor blades, iron, glass, rocks and all sorts of dirty stuff to make the Japs like us.

This operation was planned to be our big effort against the railroad. Jack rehearsed his demolition party and prepared his charges, while Mac and I went to work planning the tactical supporting operation. To do the job, Jack needed first to blow a number of specially shaped small charges that would blow down the hillside. The plan was for him to make his approach and blow these first charges without being detected by the Japs, who were heavily entrenched all around the proposed cut. Once his presence was known to the Japs, it was to be up to two parties of our men, one under Mac and the other under me, to keep the Japs so busy that they would not be able to knock off Jim and Jack while they prepared and blew the main charges.

"I was to take three squads of our men with two machine-guns and pin down two hundred Japs who were dug in on a hill to the left of the cut on the far side of the track. They had mortars, machine-guns and rifles, and their commanding position gave them direct observation and field of fire on the demolition party.

"Meanwhile Mac with two squads was to take up position on the right flank to stop any threat from two hundred or more Japs who were located down the track to the right. Jim Fine and Jack Matthai were to lead the demolition party of ten men with two rifle squads as a covering party.

"The place we planned to blow was right near where I had blown the tracks before, and we rendezvoused about ten o'clock in the same little village we had previously used for that purpose. Here we completed our final plans, and about noon all three parties split up and began their cautious approach. We had just got started when I began to hear scattered firing up ahead and to my right, from the direction taken by Mac's group and the demolition party. It sounded as if they were going in shooting, which wouldn't be too good for the success of the operation.

"Fortunately my group, which was nearest to the largest Jap concentration, managed to escape observation in our approach. I was able to set up our two light machine-guns about twenty yards apart on the down slope of a small hill on our side of the track about midway between the strong Jap

position on the opposite hill and the cut which was Jack's target. My machine-guns were approximately two hundred yards from the Jap dugouts.

"I HAD the two gun-crews dig in, and then I crept down the hill with Captain Tong Dei and the three rifle squads with two bazooka teams, planning to put them in a position on another smaller hill about a hundred yards nearer to the Japs. We had just managed to get behind this little hill and start working the men around to the front, when the first blast of the small charges went off. All during the hour that it took us to crawl into position. The situation looked desperate but not heavy firing from the direction of Mac's position on our right flank, and Jim Fine's position on a hill on the Japanese side of the railroad just above where Jack and the demolition party were presumably laying their charges.

"With the first blast, however, things really opened up, and my group came under immediate and very heavy mortar fire. Tong Dei's men were powerless to return the fire because they were pinned down and could not get around the hill to where they could bring their own weapons against the Japs, who were firing down on them from a higher and well-protected position. The situation looked desperate to me, not only for Tong Dei's men, with whom I was pinned down too, but for Matthai and his demolition party. Unless I could relieve the pressure of those Japs on Matthai,

Illustrated by John McDermott



"The grenade thief was just leaving the room when Chicago jumped on him."

he would never succeed in laying the big charges on which everything depended. Had I known at the time that all ten of Matthai's demolition men and coolies with one exception had run away when the Japs opened up in earnest after the first small blast, I would have been even more worried about him.

"Nothing could be accomplished where we were, so I gave Tong Dei orders through 'Tank' to start working his men around to the front of the hill to where they could return the Jap fire. My intention was to run back up to our machine-gun positions and get them into action. They seemed our only hope to cut down the murderous Jap fire, which was causing us many casualties and probably raising hell with Jack and Jim Fine's crew.

"I started up the hill toward our machine-gun positions. It would have been less exposed to have crept around the back of the hill and worked my way up on my belly the way we had come down, but there was no time, and I just scooted up there in sort of a half-crouch, with fifty-one-year-old 'Tank' following. It was about a hundred-yard uphill run and the Japs were throwing everything but grenades at us; but we made it, and in a few seconds I had those two machine-guns singing.

"Their fire immediately changed the complexion of our little battle. The Jap fire slacked perceptibly. The heat was taken off Tong Dei's men, and I was glad to see them show the guts to creep around to the front of that hill in plain view of the Japs and start opening up with all weapons, including bazookas. The pressure on Matthai also eased up, but the mortars began to search for our machine-guns. After nearly ten minutes, during which we knocked off a half-dozen Japs and kept the rest pretty well down, I heard a mortar-burst right in back of me and heard a scream from my other gun-crew. I turned around and saw the gun had been knocked out.

"BEFORE I could do anything about it, the earth was shaken by the most terrific blast I'd ever heard. I looked over toward the cut, and it seemed as though the earth were heading skyward. All I could see was a great filthy black umbrella-shaped cloud that must have been a hundred feet high. When the dirt and rocks fell, a great swirl of dust hung over the area. Jack had planned originally to have four blows, two small and two large. Our orders were to hold until ten minutes after the fourth blow. What we didn't know at the moment was that Jack had decided to do the whole job in two blasts. We waited for the third blast, firing all the time, and then Mac came up on the walkie-talkie and said: 'If you don't hear

anything in the next ten minutes, pull out!'

"For those ten minutes I just sat there knocking off little black heads that popped up from the opposite trenches. Those searching mortars seemed to get closer and closer. I sent a messenger down to tell Tong Dei to start pulling out. The messenger never reached him; but before I could get down there myself, I could see the men starting to pull back around the hill and head back up the same route we had used in making our approach. The difference this time was that the Japs could see us, and we lost two more men to mortar fire. This made a total of five from my squads, as Tong Dei had lost two while pinned down on the hill, and one of my machine-gunners had got it when our other gun was knocked out. (The surviving Chinese roared with laughter about their comrades who had been killed!)

"We beat it back to the village rendezvous, and there I was delighted to see Mac, Jim and Jack—the latter two covered from head to foot with dirt from the blast.

"Their part in the operation was extremely interesting. Mac had got into his flanking position without too much trouble, and was waiting for the blast when Fine's two rifle squads drew the heavy attention of the Japs. The first blast brought down so much Jap fire (while we were also pinned down and before our machine-guns opened up) that Matthai's people dropped their baskets and ran off. Jack and one coolie, ignoring the Jap fire, gathered up the baskets, poured the four hundred pounds of explosive in the holes blown by the shaped charges, then fused the charges, tamped the holes, set it off and took cover in a little depression forty yards from the cut.

"The big blast covered Jack with dirt; but undismayed by the Jap fire, he coolly returned to the scene to spread around his prized booby traps and time-bombs that would foil eager Jap repair gangs. Finally satisfied, he signaled to Jim Fine, who was busily engaged in a shooting match on the opposite hill. Both parties then took off for the village rendezvous.

"The blow was a complete success—even better than our best hopes. Jack estimated that they had dumped four hundred and fifty tons of dirt and rock on that cut, and that it would take at least two weeks to clear the line. In the meantime, the regular Chinese Army was drawing nearer, and the Japs would be denied their vital railway just when they needed it the most.

"We were all dead tired when we got back to our camp that night. The whole march had covered twenty-seven miles; and though we were exhausted, we were a happy bunch. Dormouse had accomplished its main objective.

"The next day was August 12th, and we spent the morning getting ready to move to another area. This zone was sure to be too hot for future operations, and we were completely fed up with General Wang's trickery. It was around noon, and I had just finished paying off the coolies, when I heard a shout from Tom Tracey, who had just deciphered the first of three messages he had received from base. What a wonderful message it was! 'Summers to Dormouse: The following message received from Kunming quote The war has been announced over. Take all precautions to safeguard American lives and property. More details later.'

"THE next message told us to be ready for an immediate evacuation whenever headquarters gave the word. It's hard to describe the emotions of our small group of Americans hundreds of miles from anywhere when we received this news that it was all over. More than anything else, it meant going home to love and peace and all the things we had been longing for and dreaming about night and day. Surprisingly enough, we did very little celebrating. From that minute on, all of us were mentally at home, and we began to hate every minute that kept us from being there.

"Because we feared that as soon as the Chinese learned the good news, our weapons and ammunition would disappear for future use in the civil war, we decided to tell the Chinese nothing about the peace. That night we had a diversion at our compound that kept all of them occupied otherwise. Chicago surprised another Chinese stealing a grenade from his room. The fellow had taken the pin out of the grenade, and was just leaving the room with it when Chicago jumped on him. We held quite an inquisition on the fellow, during which little Chicago beat him unmercifully, but we couldn't get him to admit that he was working for the Japs. What he intended to do with the grenade was also hard to tell, but it would have probably wiped us all out if he had tossed it into our mess. The chap had passes to two nearby Jap-occupied cities, so we felt certain there was something crooked about him. Mac turned him over to the Chinese officers, who condemned him to death and shot him.

"We moved back to our old headquarters at Luisan on the 15th, and just after our arrival heard the news that we had been hanging over the radio to get for the past three days: 'The war has been declared officially over.' That night an ex-prisoner of the Japs told us that ever since Dormouse had arrived in the area, Jap garrisons all around had been reinforced, and that the Japs were in deadly fear of our automatic weapons and bazookas. Just our being in the

area had hindered their operations and kept them to their posts. It was good to hear, even though the war was over. I must add that when we heard it was all ended, we were a little disappointed, because for the last two weeks we had felt that we were really organized and had all sorts of big plans to harass the Japs in our new area.

"To guard against our ammo being stolen, we decided to have the Chinese shoot it off. What followed was the most amazing and dangerous experience I have ever had. The soldiers just went wild, and I will never know why we weren't all killed in the mad confusion. We planned to turn over the weapons to the first regular Chinese Army unit we met. General Wang's men were heartbroken at the thought of not getting our supplies, particularly when we told them we were going to give them to General Chiang, their hated rival. The last we heard of Wang was when someone told us that he had caught three of Chiang's spies and had them buried alive upside down. He was in disgrace with the Chungking Government, and I suppose still operating as a war lord.

"**WE** fretted away a week, waiting for word to move out, and closing out all details of our work. Two supply drops were received during this time, and then came the orders to proceed to Major Kamp's headquarters outside of Hengyang. The Japs still occupied the city and refused to surrender. We started out with our coolie train, but ran into some more fighting on the roads up ahead, which delayed us for several more days.

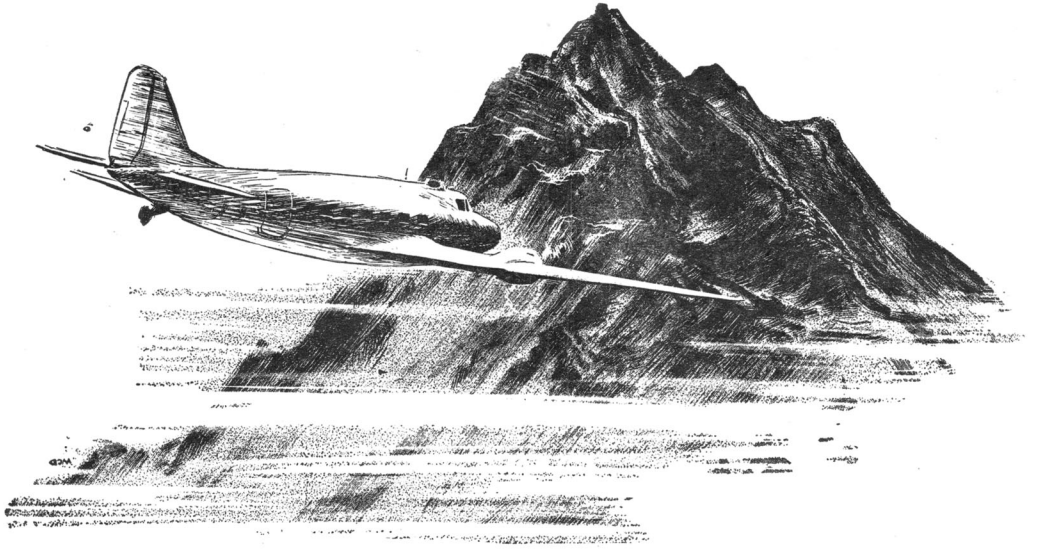
"The war was already over for more than two weeks, and yet here it was still going on! The radio gave us some interesting news one night. They reported that the Chinese had finally cleared the dirt from the railroad we had blown and got a train through on August 25th. Though it hadn't troubled the Japs as much as we had hoped it would, this news proved that Jack was right, to the very day, when he said it would take two weeks to repair his masterpiece.

"We finally reached Hengyang on September 4th, passing hundreds of fully armed and insolent Japs on the way. There we met Captain Hanna and Team Elephant. We hung around for a couple of days, then went out to the airfield where I caught a plane that took me back to Chihkiang. A week later I was on my way to India, and reached home in October."

The exploits of Team Dormouse were well remembered by the United States Army. Captain Moore, Lt. Matthai and Lt. Fine each received the Silver Star. Sgt. Tracey received the Bronze Star, and Captain Austin, the team leader, a well-deserved Legion of Merit.



Next month comes the exciting true story of Lt. Col. James Kellis, who with five other OSS men successfully penetrated the Evros area of Greece in the face of eleven enemy divisions, organized Greek guerrillas, blew up numerous bridges and finally led his men in the liberation of the entire area, killing or capturing six thousand Germans.



At Ten Forty-Six

A brief story by the distinguished author of
"Drums in the Dawn" and "Hauling West"

by JOHN T. MCINTYRE

SPENCER had looked at the clock in his office shortly before this; then he had called the airport to ask what news there was of the plane from the West Coast.

At that time the circle was not marked on his desk top. He was sure of that. But after he'd put the telephone down, it was there. Spencer was not imaginative; most people who knew him would agree to that. Since the end of the war the pressure on his department had increased greatly. He noticed his nerves were not what they should be. Each successive day grew more difficult; and in the silence of his office he'd walk up and down, struggling with the problems that seemed to steal out of a darkness and approach his mind. His face was becoming hollow and drawn; other officials in the building began to speak of it.

However, on the morning of that particular day, things had seemed brighter. His wife was returning from a visit to relatives in California. She was always helpful to him in times of stress; to have her where she could

be spoken to seemed to quicken and encourage him.

One hour had passed since he'd called the airport. He paused in his work and penciled some calculations on a pad. Paula had, at that time, been in the air twenty hours. She must now be approaching the eastern range of hills. In a few hours more she'd step from the plane and he'd be there to meet her. She'd be with him again. He smiled; his fingers drummed lightly on the desk top; and it was then he noticed the circle once more. He wondered how it got there. It was perfectly formed; and now as he examined it he saw that at its exact center there was a dot. A small, colorless fact; and yet it seemed at once to make a place for itself in his memory.

Spencer knew he needed rest; a long period of quiet. A lying in the sun; hours and hours of silence, with Paula near him; with her quiet hand guiding things and his knowing that anxiety could not touch him.

But now he sat slacker in his chair; when he tried to think, grotesques bobbed across his mind; he heard au-

thoritative voices talking of precision, of space, of materials. There was the measured doddering of elderly law-makers, and the hectoring of special groups. Documents fluttered before him, demanding, denying, accusing. After a time his eyes again fixed themselves on the circle. It had an empty accuracy, and yet there was in it a protestation of significance that made him uneasy. He searched for the meaning of this; and it was then that he saw the thing had a new difference.

Inside the circle there was a diagonal line beginning at the center and ending at the rim. He brooded over this. Then he closed his eyes; despair drew bleakly about him. That he, a person with a really precise mind, should sit at a time of great need, fumbling with trivialities! He grasped at what familiar elements of determination remained in his mind. And then, with sudden relief, he again thought of Paula.

He called the airport once more. Could they give him any information on the eastbound Sacramento plane that should arrive in an hour or so?

There seemed a hesitancy at the other end of the wire. As he waited, unformed words crowded into his mind; there was an impulse to cry out, to demand. He was struggling with this when the reply came. There was some failure in contact. They were sorry. There'd been a report at 10:46, but nothing since. They were calling places the plane should have passed. At any moment there might be something more.

THE situation, they told him, meant very little. They would, as always, continue checking. There was a good deal of rain and fog; but another half hour, they were sure, would bring good news.

When Spencer put down the telephone he noticed his hand was shaking. His breath was short, and there was a tightening in his chest. His thought was that he shouldn't excite himself; for he knew his nerves had lately been disturbed by the strain put upon them. And it was then he noticed the third change in the circle on his desk top. There was a second line inside the ring. Like the first, it radiated from the center toward the upper left; and it touched the rim of the circle at a place a little distance from the other. As he looked at the thing a sudden impulse came to deny it was there. He gestured it away with a shaking hand; he laughed—and the sound was queer and choking. But, as he denied, the thing became more fixed in his mind. He saw the marks on the desk as a clock dial; the two lines were like hands; the shorter one was pointing well past where the ten would be; the longer one barely past nine. If the thing were a clock it would be telling him the morning had reached the moment of 10:46!

His jaw hung; his eyes stared. He remembered the words of the man who'd answered from the airport. The plane had last been spoken to at 10:46. They had been unable to contact it afterward. The newspapers had said there was rain and fog in that region. In frozen horror, Spencer imagined a bleak mountainside lifting in the thick mist; he saw a fated plane roaring sightlessly into it! A crash! Jets of fire!

He reached for the telephone; but his hand could not close on it. There'd been a time in his life when he'd prayed at such a moment; but he'd been years out of the way of that. He sat, sagging in his chair; there was but slight motion in his mind. And at the core of this were the words: "Paula is dead"—repeated and repeated.

Minutes passed; the greater part of an hour. Then he knew Jean was there—his daughter. How he knew he didn't understand, for he neither saw nor heard her. But later he felt her hand on his arm; and now came her clear, reassuring voice. He was doing very well, she said. He'd been in a kind of sleep when she'd come in; and she knew at once he'd been overworking. He really should be at home and in bed. She dropped a tiny tablet into some water and gave it to him. It cleared his head; then she helped him into a more comfortable position in his chair.

She'd had his letter telling that her mother was returning. And she'd asked for a few days' leave. She wanted to be with him when he went to the airport; she couldn't bear thinking of her mother arriving and she not there waiting for her. Her voice soothed Spencer, for she had her mother's quiet confidence. She was a splendid, tall girl who wore her nurse's uniform with ease, and who had the air of one who'd hold her head well up while things were happening. And, now, as she talked, she looked at her watch and saw that time had gone well into the first half hour after noon.

"The plane should be in very soon," she said. "I'll ask about it."

SHE reached for the telephone; Spencer held up a shaking hand to prevent her. His eyes went feverishly to the spot on the desk where the moment of Paula's death had been marked. But he only saw Jean's gloves; she'd thrown them there when she came in. And then, partly covered by them, he caught the gleam of gold.

Jean smiled and there was pleasure in her eyes.

"My cross!" she said. "Don't you remember?"

She'd written him about it from Naples. There'd been fever in that city when she'd been there; among the patients she'd nursed in the tent hospital was a woman who, before her death had given her the emblem.

"The legend is, it once belonged to Francis of Assisi," Jean told him. "I was bidden to carry it with me always. And I always do." She smiled at him in the way that was so like her mother—"It keeps me from harm."

She took it up. It was small, and of heavy antique gold. But Spencer was not looking at it; his eyes were on the spot where it had rested, where he'd seen the circle. And the circle was no longer there! He was pointing and trying to speak when there came the buzzing of the telephone. Jean took it up.

"Yes?" she said. And then, her voice slightly lifting: "Darling, to think we weren't there to meet you! But we will be. I have a car at the door. Please be comfortable for ten minutes. But first, Father wants to speak to you."

He spoke to Paula, his voice shaking. Paula replied quietly, as always. Yes, there had been some trouble. She remembered that one of the pilots had mentioned 10:46. At any rate, it had been about that time. She knew the plane's people felt they'd have to land; but the fog was thick and it was known the region below was ragged and heavily timbered. So they did what they could to the mechanism, and managed to make the next airport, where they changed planes.

Spencer was pointing at the spot on his desk top when he put down the telephone. Paula had said 10:46, and the dial that had been there had pointed it out to the minute. He told Jean what he'd seen on his desk; but she listened quietly and kissed him on the cheek when he'd finished.

"It was the light," she said. "And the changes came as that changed. Also," she told him, "you were a good deal wrought up and maybe a little alarmed." She helped him on with his coat. "And if that doesn't explain it we'll have to give the credit to good St. Francis. For, as you may have heard,"—she smiled,—"he often fixes little things like that."

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The Son of Julius

THE finest house in Berenice—not so very fine, at that—stood on the sands above the harbor, looking out to sea: the Red Sea, blistering hot in this mid-summer. Behind the town the desert mountains reached back to mid-Egypt. The caravan trail came from Coptos on the Nile here to Berenice, the route of all commerce between Egypt and the Far East. Here in the shallow harbor of Berenice ships were crowded, awaiting the July change of monsoon. Then for six months the winds would blow eastward, the merchant traders coursing before it to far India, whence they would return when the monsoon changed again and blew westward for another six months.

The house was stocked with luxuries for the boy, his tutors and his guards, who stayed here waiting for the ships to move. The tutor Rhodon was a pleasant, amiable weakling of forty-five, a Greek; the soldiers who guarded the house had small respect for him. These soldiers were Romans, men who had served Marc Antony; and they were blindly devoted to the boy. He was seventeen; he had passed the ceremonies of manhood, and had been crowned as co-ruler of Egypt with his mother Cleopatra; but to these hardened legionaries, he was "the boy." When they saw him pass, they stiffly saluted, and the murmured Roman words came to their lips:

"Son of the god!"

For Julius Caesar had been deified and was worshiped as a god. This boy was like him in every way. He was, in fact Caesar, the son of Julius Caesar, though he was usually known by the affectionate diminutive of the name, *Cæsarion*.

Yet, though *Cæsarion* was son of the divine Julius, and King of Egypt, with many another shadowy title, it was the tutor Rhodon who was nominally in command here. Cleopatra and Antony were in Alexandria, besieged by the vindictive and ambitious Octavian; in desperation Cleopatra had sent her son here, with immense treasures, to join the fleet for India, and to seek refuge in Hindustan, where there were no ambitious Romans. They had come. The ships were ready, with the treasure on board—but until the monsoon broke, could not move. . . .

"We never spoke of this in Alexandria, so I don't understand it very



Caesar

These Sphinx Emerald stories are a veritable Outline of History. Here the tragic young Cæsarion dominates the scene.

by H. Bedford-Jones



well," said Cæsarion. He and Rhodon sat in the patio of the house, nominally reading Homer. "You say that Octavian is the nephew and the son of my father?"

"Your father adopted him in the Roman fashion, yes," said Rhodon, "but acknowledged you as his son before he died. So Antony is dead! Poor Antony—he was a noble fellow in his day."

A courier had come that morning with the dread news from Alexandria.

"Will Octavian harm my mother?" Cæsarion asked. "She always said he was a vicious beast. They called him 'the Executioner' in Rome."

"No, he'll not harm her; she's perfectly safe." Rhodon stretched leisurely. "He's not a bad sort, really. He's Cæsar now, of course."

"But I'm Cæsar!"

"Yes. And you're King of Egypt; but Octavian has Egypt, and you haven't. We'll make up for that in India. I have letters from your mother to all the princes there, if you decide to go there."

"It?" Cæsarion looked keenly at the Greek, who smiled.

"Yes. It's for you to say, of course. We'll know by the next courier what's taken place in Alexandria."

"I'm going down to the shore and think. I want to be alone," said Cæsarion.

He rose and left the palace, bidding the guards stay where they were. Trudging through the hot sand, he went down to the beach, where the tide was out, and sat by the water, looking out at the listless ships.

Indeed he was like his father, finely carved of features, hard-limbed, driven by a fierce will and resolution; yet at the moment he was bewildered by destiny. He knew that he was the dream of his mother's life. For him Cleopatra had plundered Egypt, had gathered this fleet, had made certain that by her defiance of the conquering Octavian he might safely get away to the Far East, with followers and treasure fitting to a king.

But now—this news about Antony's death was grave. It would be days ere the monsoon broke, and days

"Have you a letter for me?" the lad asked. "No," replied Chandra Ghose. "Only a message—of three words: Trust no one!"

might count heavily. Nor was Cæsarion at all sure that flight was his wisest course. He did not know fear. Assuredly he had no fear of Octavian, the money-lender's son who had wormed his way into the family of Cæsar by marriage and by adoption, a cold, cheaply conniving rascal, and a coward. Such a man could not hurt the son of the divine Julius. According to the philosophers, a man was the only person who could harm himself; no other could.

So, thought Cæsarion, it was odd that Rhodon seemed to think Octavian a great and splendid person. Rhodon, whom his mother trusted, ought to know the truth. With a sigh, Cæsarion stirred, took from his girdle a gem that flashed with pale green fire in the sunlight, and holding it in his palm, began to study it.

The gem was an emerald that Cleopatra had given to him when he was made co-ruler of Egypt with her. Some said it was from the ancient crown jewels. There was no other like it in the world. It was a natural cabochon, of second-rate shape and color. Poor heroic, foolish Antony had said it was accursed; but Cleopatra had loved it, and so did Cæsarion. But not for itself, nor for the thing in it.

Amazingly, when one gazed into the great gem through an enlarging glass, a shape appeared in it, clear-cut and distinct. The flaws and bubbles contained in this, as in all emeralds, came together at one point and assumed the exact shape of the Sphinx. Cæsarion had heard there were two identical Sphinxes, one by the Pyramids, and another, almost forgotten, in the desert hills east of the Nile, near the petrified forest. This bit of beryl was a freak of nature—but it had also something more, something that fascinated him and gripped him in steely hands. It had a power.

HE stared at the stone now, as always, with a fearful and complete absorption. It stirred him out of himself; it awakened strange, wonderful things within him, caught at his imagination like a blast of clarion trumpets. Antony had cursed it furiously. A priest had said that it held the magic of the gods. His mother had called it most beautiful, as in fact it was. But to Cæsar's son it was magnificent and splendid beyond words. It awed him, enthralled him, brought majestic thoughts and fantasies to his mind. It spoke to him of the great father he had never known in the flesh—the man who was now worshiped as a god.

In sheer sober fact, this Sphinx emits hypnotic power, which was never erald had been famed in history for twice alike. It stripped the beholder of poses and drew from him the secrets of his inmost being, whether

noble, glorious, base or cowardly. It called to the surface the real person, the character at bottom. To the son of Cæsar, it whispered of grandeur and authority and command, shaming him bitterly for being the fugitive that he now was. . . .

When he had gazed into the great green stone for a lengthy while, he tucked it away and rose, and returned to the hilltop house. When he came back to the courtyard, where his tutor sat writing, there was a glory in his face that made the guards stare after him, astonished.

"Rhodon!" His voice held a bite—it was the voice of Julius. He sat and caressed the cat which had joined him. It was an enormous sacred cat such as was worshiped at Bubastis in Lower Egypt, and had been given him there as they passed through. The animal had some affection for him.

"Tell me something: My mother—Antony—all of them hate and fear Octavian terribly. They said Egypt was not safe for me, that he would pursue me to the world's end, that only in India could I find refuge, that he means to kill me because I am the real Cæsar, son of Julius. Now that we're far from Alexandria, ready to depart for India with the ships—I ask you, are these things true?"

Rhodon, troubled by this appeal, fingered his chin thoughtfully. He was an honest fellow in his own way.

"Well, Cæsar, at least they thought them true," he responded. "Antony fought this man for the world—and lost. Until he began to grow old and dull, he had every talent and gift and ability, and the greatest luck in everything. Your mother had the one thing he lacked—something which most men lack; and that is loyalty. In her eyes Octavian was what they called him in Rome—the Executioner, who slew everyone in his road to power. He was a real friend to Cæsar, who adopted him in return. Your mother saw him only as a rascal, a cheap and merciless cheat from the gutter. She told the truth, as she saw it. . . . I'm trying to be quite honest, you see."

"Then try harder," snapped Cæsarion. "I know what they said and thought. I'm asking now what you yourself think, regardless of prejudice? Do you hold this man Octavian to be a scoundrel?"

Rhodon smiled uneasily. "No scoundrel is such, Cæsar, entirely. The vilest gutter-rat may show charity or kindness. The noblest prince may be guilty of the lowest deeds at times. This man has great luck, great ambition, and a certain hard ability. You, as the true heir of Julius, stand in his way; a dangerous place indeed. However, since you're thinking about such matters, show me your mind. What do you yourself think about him?"

"I'll tell you," said Cæsarion, a flash in his eye. "Octavian has won his way to the top in Rome. He has mastered Antony and my mother; he has Egypt. A man can't get to such position by being a fool or a coward or a rascal. He must have character, strength, nobility of a sort. Luck alone can't make or break a man."

"True, yes," murmured Rhodon. Perhaps he was conscious of his own weakness as compared with the vibrant energy of this young man.

"And am I, Cæsar, to run away from the shadow of this false Cæsar?" Scorn and anger blazed in the words. "Did my father, Julius, earn his fame by running and hiding his head like an ostrich? I've no ambition to fight him, of course—I've nothing with which to fight him, and no reason for it either. If I thought he'd grant me some small place of my own where I could live and study in peace, I'd take it gladly."

RHODON looked startled. "Careful, my son! Octavian has no loyalty to anything, I warn you! No loyalty to the gods, to family ties, to anything at all!"

"And can you tell me such a man rules the world? I don't believe it. Such a thing is in itself a contradiction," snapped Cæsarion.

Rhodon gave him an uneasy glance. "I wish you'd stop playing with that accursed emerald," he grunted. "I agree with Antony that the stone has a devil in it."

Cæsarion's features softened. "I agree with my mother that it has a high nobility in it that neither you nor Antony could ever comprehend," he said with flat finality. . . . "No word yet from the ship captains about sailing?"

"We can't sail till the monsoon breaks."

"Even if we want to sail! I'm not sure that I'm sailing, Rhodon. You may yet learn to your surprise that your pupil has Cæsar's will, no less than his name," said Cæsarion abruptly, and turned into the house. Rhodon looked after him with eyes of fear. This young fellow had a mind of his own, certainly, and might kick over the traces. . . .

Next morning came, with never a wisp of cloud to break the heat-filled coppery sky. Cæsarion and a number of the guards took to the water, shark-knives at their waists, and swam out to the ships among them; but the water itself was warm and lifeless, and the sport palled on them. They came ashore, slipped into cool garments; and then, hearing the shouts of arrival, turned to the town, where a caravan was just coming in from Coptos, on the Nile below Thebes. Such caravans arrived almost every day with goods and lading for the ships.



When these hardened legionaries saw him pass they saluted, and the words came to their lips: "Son of the god!"

In the marketplace of the hot, sun-smitten little town, they found it. With the horses and asses and men there was one camel—a strange beast of burden, almost unknown as yet in Egypt; and everyone was gathered to stare at him. The rider was a tall, one-eyed, dark man. He smiled when Cæsarion came up to stare curiously at the camel, and spoke in very good Greek.

"So, young sir, you stare at the strange beast? Well, they're common in other lands; and the Romans, I hear, mean to put them to work in Egypt. Ugly, eh?"

"Hideous," agreed Cæsarion; "yet somehow attractive, like ugly men."
"Quite true." The one eye peered sharply. "Perhaps you can tell me where to find in this town a certain party to whom I have an errand. I have goods to go aboard the ships

yonder, before I return to Coptos, and also have a letter to deliver to one Rhodon, a Greek. It is a letter from some person at court—the former court."

Cæsarion turned and met the one sparkling, glinting eye. His own eyes were very bright and quick. He pointed to the villa on the hill above town.

"That's his house, for the moment. He's my tutor."

"Oh! Indeed!" The dark man's tone changed. Astonishment came into his one eye.

"A negligent tutor, to let his pupil wander about the place thus," he said, in his voice a subtle play of meaning. "Sir, my name is Chandra Ghose. I am a trader of Alexandria, though I was born in farther India." His voice dropped almost to a whisper. "Should I salute you as do the Egyptians, with both palms down?"

Cæsarion met the one firm, glinting eye. He caught the allusion instantly. Only a Pharaoh was saluted in that fashion—and he himself was a Pharaoh, the last Pharaoh of Egypt. He gathered that this Indian was a friend.

"You certainly should not," he replied, laughing a little. A slight stutter crept into his words. It came only at excited moments, an inheritance from his long-dead father. "It would make people stare. Have you a letter for me also?" the lad asked.

"No," replied Chandra Ghose. "Only a message—a little one of three words: *Trust no one*. A woman gave me the message, and repeated the two last words—*no one!*"

Cæsarion met the one glinting eye and nodded.

"Thank you," he said. "I'll take you to Rhodon, if you like."

The Hindu joined him.
"Careless guards, careless tutor," he said, low-voiced.

"What need to be careful?"



Illustrated by Maurice Bower

"I'll tell you. When first I came to Alexandria, a year or more ago, I fell in with a retired Roman soldier. He was an old fellow who had served with Julius Cæsar in Gaul, wherever that is, and had been invalided. Well, we went to a ceremony not many months ago. We saw the crowning of young Cæsarion. This old fellow—his name was Aulus something—nearly had a fit. He gripped my arm and panted. He had known Julius intimately, he told me, and then pointed to the new ruler. 'That is no 'boy yonder,' said he; 'it is the divine Julius himself, in person!' The story might interest you."

The story not only interested Cæsarion; it delighted him beyond measure; it complimented and excited him, as did any intimate little story about the famed father he had never known.

He took the arm of the tall brown man and pressed it.

"Thank you, thank you," he said. "I am pleased, of course! Tell me—a courier came yesterday with the sad news about Antony. Tell me—"

He paused as though unable to form the question.

Chandra Ghose nodded. "I was still at Alexandria when it happened, then took a fast boat upriver to join my caravan at Coptos. Yes, he is dead. Why do you call it sad to die? In my country, we know that death is an easy thing; it is birth which is hard. Of course, no one likes to die; but after all, it is a natural, an inevitable thing, a kind thing like Karma."

"What is that? I never heard of it."

"Some call it Fate, though we know it to be far more than fate—not a blind thing, but one of old purpose," said

the Hindu. "The will of the gods, which is never blind or meaningless. Destiny were a better word."

"Oh, I understand that, of course!" exclaimed Cæsarion. "A kind thing, you say?"

"Precisely, young sir. The Autocrat"—this was the title by which Antony had been known in Egypt—"is dead, and far better so. Is it not better to die at the height of fame, like the Greek hero Achilles, than to live on through old age in shame? Die, face the judgment of the gods, face the future in the other world—why, that's a little thing! A brave thing, perhaps, yet a little thing to us folk of India."

While thus talking, they had come to the house occupied by Rhodon. Cæsarion halted.

"Wait, before we go in," he said. "I started to ask you about the queen. She gave you that message?"

"No, it came through one of her faithful women," said Chandra Ghose.



This news about Antony's death was grave. . . . Nor was Cæsarion at all sure that flight was his wisest course.

He hesitated, then went on: "I understand that she departed by her own choice, rather than face the shame which Octavian destined for her."

"Departed?" Cæsarion had turned quickly. "Departed? Oh, surely—" The dark man nodded. "It is hard to be born; it is easy to die," he repeated.

For one moment Cæsarion stood as though paralyzed; then he came to life,

and beckoned one of the guards, who approached.

"Take this man to Rhodon," he ordered, then turned and strode away into the house.

It was the bitterest moment of his life. The little queen, his mother, was dead. She had gone, after assuring his safety and future. Those ships in harbor held what treasures of Egypt she could gather for him—everything

for him. The little laughing queen whom everyone loved, was gone—gone into the darkness.

He locked himself in his room. The cat Ptah came and sat at his door, unblinking, but no one sought to disturb him. The unexpected sharp news from Alexandria left everyone stupefied. The impossible had happened: Cleopatra the queen, last of the Ptolemy line, was dead.



Rhodon, at first stunned, quickly recovered and kept Chandra Ghose in talk, kept him for the noon meal, kept him afterward, rather drawn to him. A peculiar fellow, this Rhodon, and not a forceful man. He had won many prizes at school, had taken up tutoring, and because of his command of the ancient Greek tongue had been given the post of tutor to Caesarion. He had known the queen very well.

"I think," Chandra Ghose told him, "you'll have a visit from a fellow named Aurone. I don't know if he's a Greek or not, but I fancy he's a rascal; he has a bad reputation. He was with our caravan, and was hearti-

ly inquisitive about everyone here at Berenice, asking me if it were true that Caesar's son were here, and so forth. He smells in my nostrils, and I warn you to be careful."

"May the gods repay your kindness!" said Rhodon. "Do you sail with the ships?"

"Certainly not," replied the Hindu. "I put my goods aboard, check everything with my supercargo, and in three days shall return to Coptos, where my boat awaits me for Alexandria. What is that little tiger I saw when I arrived?"

"A cat. These Egyptians worship certain cats at a place called Bubastis.

This one is of the sacred breed, and was presented to my pupil there. The animal is furred, and suffers here from the heat."

Chandra Ghose pressed for information about the cat-worship. Rhodon could not give it; he knew almost nothing of the Egyptians or their involved religion. No Greek did. Alexandria, its rulers, its general population, all were pure Greek. The city was cut off from Egypt and had few contacts with the land it ruled, . . .

Late in the afternoon, when the siesta hour had passed, Aurone came to the house and asked for Rhodon. He was confident, assured, rather sly,



Rhodon rode like a madman. He knew that emissaries of Octavian must even now be seeking him.

"He bears letters but will not deliver them without our signatures. Are you able to come and see him?"

"Able? I'm a man, not a child," said Cæsarion calmly. "Letters from whom?"

"The fellow won't say. Chandra Ghose warned me against him; we must have a care. It may be some trick. He may be an assassin, or a spy sent to discover your whereabouts."

Cæsarion smiled scornfully. "Poor Rhodon: you look flushed and ill, and no wonder. Don't you think I'm capable of dealing with any Roman agent or assassin? So the trader from India warned you? Good. I like that dark man. He rings true; his one eye has an honest spark of flame in it. Come along, and we'll see this Cilician. Who could be sending us letters, if she is gone?"

Rhodon was startled by the change in the speaker. The boy had become a man; grief had worked a hardening change in him. His voice had firmed and deepened, his manner had become imperious. At the door he stooped and touched the cat Pthah, who rubbed head against his leg.

"Too hot for you here," he said. "I know it. You're another reason."

"Reason?" Rhodon caught at the word. "For what?"

"For what I intend to see you about in the morning, when we've slept over this news. Come along."

Cæsarion led the way back to the patio. Rhodon followed, wondering at the change in him. Aurone was sprawled in a chair, lazily. He glanced up at their approach, looking at Cæsarion with quick sly gaze.

Cæsarion halted. "You are the messenger?" His voice almost cracked. "Do you want a whip over your back to teach you respect, fellow?"

Aurone sprang up and made respectful salute.

"Now hand over the letters, if you bear any," snapped Cæsarion. "You shall have your receipt if I choose to give it."

Aurone, looking like a whipped dog, humbly saluted and produced a small scroll. Cæsarion took it, saw that it was addressed to himself and Rhodon, and broke the seal that tied it. He opened it and glanced at the Greek writing, looked again, and read it through. Then he handed it to Rhodon and gave his attention to the messenger.

"Where did you get the epistle? Speak fully."

Aurone cringed. "Lord, at the Lochias palace. I was taken there. I saw the letter written. The general sealed it—"

and frankly stated that he was no Greek but a Cilician. Rhodon disliked and distrusted him at sight.

"What business do you have with me?" he demanded.

"Lord, I need your signature and that of Lord Cæsar to a receipt," Aurone responded, with a wink. "It was suspected that you were here. I was sent to give you certain epistles. The receipt must bear your two signatures. The letters are to you both."

Rhodon was startled. Letters? More letters? Did bad news have no end?

"Who sent you?" he inquired.

"My lord, I was not paid to talk, but to deliver the letters, which will

speak for themselves. In fact, I saw them written and signed."

"Wait here," said Rhodon. They were in the cool courtyard. "I'll go and find my pupil."

On the way, he found and girded on his sword, a leaf-shaped Egyptian weapon. He was no swordsman, but anyone could use this cruelly efficient blade. He saw Pthah at the door of Cæsarion, tail curled about feet, and knocked.

Cæsarion opened the door. He was pale; his usually bright and burning eyes were dull and swollen.

"There is a caller, a fellow named Aurone, a Cilician," said Rhodon.

"What general?"

"I do not know. He had the red cloak of a Roman general. They called him Octavian."

Cæsarion exchanged a glance with Rhodon. Octavian, or Cæsar, would naturally be dwelling in the Lochias palace, that ancient regal palace of the Ptolemies.

Cæsarion called a guard, and pointed to Aurone.

"Take this man to a scribe. When he gets his receipt written, bring him back and we will put our seals to it."

AURONE was led away. Rhodon, having read the letter, turned to Cæsarion, his flushed features excited. He did look ill; fever, perhaps.

"It's from Cæsar, yes," he exclaimed. "Yet I can't believe it."

"He calls me Cæsar!" broke out Cæsarion. "Did you note that? Return in safety, and I can have my heritage—my heritage! It's a safe-conduct, Rhodon! It promises everything I want!"

"Promises are cheap," murmured Rhodon. "Don't believe him. Rather, credit the last message that came: *Trust no one*. That way lies safety."

"Safety! Caution! Prudence! Security! By the gods, who wants to live a life of security!" burst forth Cæsarion with impetuous force, passion in his face. "Well enough for you—you're a Greek. I'm a Roman, the son of Julius Cæsar! Security? Hell take it! Life isn't won by cowards who seek only security—it must be won by overcoming obstacles! It's no end in itself. My mother's dead. I'm my own master now, with my own life to live. I obeyed her. Now I obey my own heart."

"Sleep on it," weakly advised the Greek.

"Right. We'll do that. I want nothing to eat, anyway—I'm off for a walk, then to bed and seek what counsel the gods will send. . . . Oh, here's our man."

Aurone was brought in with his receipt. Rhodon and Cæsarion applied their seals to it, and the messenger departed.

So did Cæsarion, with the "little tiger" stalking after him, tail a-twitch. He went to the lonely shore and sat there through the twilight, with the cat in his arms—the only thing that loved him now. He sat until the far sea darkened, and the stars twinkled above, and lights sprang in the town; then he rose and went striding up toward the lights and came to where animals and bales of goods stood about campfires while men ate. He looked for the one-eyed man and found him, and came and sat beside him.

"When," he asked, "do you return to Alexandria? Or do you return?"

"Yes. I have a boat waiting at Coptos," said Chandra Ghose. "I leave

here in three days. Because of the desert heat, we leave at sunset and travel at night."

"Leave tomorrow night instead. I and my guards go with you. Name any price you desire. It can be done; so do it. We'll need horses."

Chandra Ghose sat motionless. "I have an agent; I can leave things to him, yes. It can be done," he said slowly. "But this letter-carrier saw you only this afternoon. Now you suddenly decide to change plans and go back. I distrust that man; I distrust your wisdom."

"Do you refuse?"

"No. Ask me the same thing in the morning, and I'll agree. In sleep the gods give counsel."

Cæsarion understood. The man was a true friend; he wanted only to be certain.

"Thank you." He stood up. "I shall come to you in the morning. You speak truth."

He turned away and went to the house on the high sands. He spoke with one of the guards; Rhodon, he learned, was shaking with fever and shock. He got a lighted lamp, went to his own room, and lighted the larger lamp there. The cat Ptah came in after him and curled up in a chair.

Cæsarion sat at the table. He got out the queer emerald with the Sphinx-figure inside it, and placed it under the lamp to catch the full glow of light. From a chest he took a doubly convex glass which enlarged objects, and began to study the emerald through this. He saw, not a little stone he could hold in his palm, but a huge expanse of shimmering green spaces, and his breath began to come faster as he looked.

No hint here of grief. They were dead—his mother and the Autocrat both—but of this nothing came into his brain. An easy thing, death, the Hindu trader had said. In the green depths gathered other senses, waking very different thoughts in him, appealing to different phases of him. He was the son of the divine Julius. Octavian, if made aware that he sought nothing except his heritage from that Julius, could not refuse it; had not the man promised him safe-conduct?

The shameful sense of flight, of hiding, completely left him. In its stead came the grateful idea of dealing with the greatest man in the world, Octavian. This was his right. He was not destined to treat with little people, with lesser men. The son of Cæsar must meet with Cæsar himself, face to face, as with an equal. There lay justice for one who sought only equity and his Roman heritage. Octavian undoubtedly realized this himself, and in consequence had promised him safety if he returned. The greatest man on earth could not be a cheap and petty rascal!

Thus spake the stone, the glinting depths of beryl, as though the Sphinx within it had found tongue. Cæsarion had never felt the power so firmly, so surely; the rush of thoughts swept over him and roused him out of himself. He leaped up and went to Rhodon's room, close by. He saw Rhodon reading by a night lamp, and went to him.

"Not asleep? Feeling better? Good. Do you want to return with me to Alexandria?"

Rhodon laid aside the scroll. "I cannot, my son. My old fever has come back. I'm frightfully weak tonight. Have you decided to go back, despite everything?"

"Because of everything," Cæsarion spoke crisply, decisively, yet calmly. "I know now that my mind will be the same tomorrow, Rhodon."

"I can't prevent you or forbid you."

"No. That safe-conduct from Octavian changes all our plans. I'll go to him and see what he has to say. I'll claim my heritage from him. With my little mother dead, I'm the sole King of Egypt. He can have Egypt. I want no more than some little quiet corner of the world, and recognition by Rome as Cæsar's son."

"It's not a great thing to ask," Rhodon said. "Yet is it wise? Think of this tonight, my son. Here you have escape assured, immense treasures, a clear future—"

"And shame," said Cæsarion, smiling. "A heavy burden to bear! No. I am Cæsar, I shall act as Cæsar would have acted in my place. Besides, think of Ptah! The poor cat suffers here in this hamlet at the world's edge. I shall take him and leave him at Bubastis, where the Nile tempers the heat."

Rhodon made a helpless gesture.

"She is dead; Antony is dead—does anything matter now?"

"Cheer up! Guard the treasure. If I don't return, take of it what you like, and go whither you like. I leave tomorrow evening with Chandra Ghose. See you tomorrow," said Cæsarion cheerfully. "And I'll leave you a gift, old friend. You may not like it, yet it will serve to remind you of me, and of my mother. Good night."

FEVER came back on Rhodon full force that night, and with morning he was tossing in delirium. With the following morning it had passed, leaving him clear-headed but quite weak. In the afternoon the captain of the guards came to him, anxiously.

"Lord, I cannot keep it from you," he said. "Cæsarion took Plancus and Caius with him, ordered the rest of us to remain here with you, and departed with that one-eyed trader, the other night. He took the cat with him also."

"Then it cannot be helped," said Rhodon. "But he had a letter from Octavian, promising him safety."

The soldier spat. "A promise from the Executioner is a bag of empty wind. We can still mount and ride after them, if you order it."

"He is Cæsar, and King of Egypt," said Rhodon. "Let the gods who caused this happening look to their own work."

Two days later Rhodon was up and around, when one of the guards reported that he had just seen in the village the Cilician, Aurone, who had brought the letters. He summoned the captain to go with him, girt on his sword, and they went into the town. Sure enough, they came upon Aurone at the tavern, deep in wine. Rhodon bared the leaf-shaped sword, and the fellow shrank from him in fear.

"Spare me, lord, spare me!" he cried. "I have repented the ill I did—"

"What ill? Name it." Rhodon spoke coldly. "Was that letter false?"

"I know not," replied Aurone, trembling and spilling his wine. "The Roman general who paid me to bring it—he ordered me to wait here; if the letter brought the boy to him, I would receive double pay. He is—he is sending soldiers—"

Rhodon drew back his sword for the thrust, then checked himself.

"Vile dog that you are," he said, sheathing the weapon, "your death would not undo it. I leave you to the gods and your own sorry conscience."

He beckoned the captain, went out, and covered his face. But the captain, who was a veteran of Cæsar's 37th Legion, stepped quickly back into the tavern, and presently returned, wiping his sword. He, at least, indulged no scruples.

OCTAVIAN sending soldiers here? Fear seized the tutor at this information. He went home sweating. They gave him a little packet Cæsarion had left for him. In his own room, Rhodon unwrapped it, and the Sphinx emerald fell into his hand. He looked at it a long while; he was afraid to die. At last he rose, trembling, filled a purse with money, stole out of the house, went into the town and secured a horse.

He rode like a madman along the caravan road to Coptos and the Nile.

He reached Coptos, a haggard wreck, and took passage on a boat bound downstream for Alexandria. He let his beard grow, took another name, kept to himself. The good river air banished his illness. He tried to get news of Cæsarion, but could learn nothing at all. In fact, he was almost afraid to ask. He knew that emissaries of Octavian must even now be seeking him.

At Alexandria he was astounded by the flood of propaganda going around, spread by the Romans. Calumny of every sort was being heaped upon Cleopatra and upon Antony. The good,

the virtuous, the noble Octavian was the hope of Egypt, the savior of the world; Augustus, they were already calling him.

Rhodon lingered not. Under his new name he got passage with a caravan bound for Syria. It was leaving on the morrow. And then, as he walked down the great Canopus Avenue that bisected the city like a sword, he came face to face with Chandra Ghose.

Despite the beard, the entire disguise, the one-eyed Hindu knew him instantly, and crooked a finger.

"Come along to my bazaar. There's a huge reward offered for you. With me you're safe."

Rhodon obeyed in miserable terror; his nerves were cracking up. Chandra Ghose sat with him in the cool rear room of the bazaar, dimly lit, and food and wine were brought. They ate and drank; upon Rhodon's lips trembled the one question which had no answer. The Hindu nodded.

"Yes. I know. I witnessed everything. I'll tell you about it."

This is what he told:

Upon reaching Alexandria, Cæsarion made no secret of his presence but went straight to the Lochias Palace and demanded audience with Octavian. There was a delay, and finally he was led to the audience hall. Upon the throne at the far end sat a man pallid and spotted of skin, a man who shunned sunlight and cold water alike. He kept his guards close.

A murmur passed through the ranks of soldiers and officers as Cæsarion walked toward the throne on the dais, where he himself had sat as King of Egypt. For he held his head high; his eyes were bright and sparkling; there was a slight confident smile upon his lips, and many of those present had intimately known another like him.

"The divine Julius himself!" went the awed whisper.

Octavian also had known that other. As he watched the approaching figure, his cold eyes became touched with fear and his cheeks grew more sallow. He must have known that this was a moment when anything might happen; one word from the boy, and half these Romans would draw sword for him in hysteric ecstasy.

Cæsarion halted at the edge of the dais and threw up a hand in salute. There was something gayly boyish about his looks, his words.

"*Ave, Cæsar!*" he cried. "I, who am also Cæsar, salute you! I have come to accept your promised protection, and to claim my heritage from the divine Julius my father!"

A stillness had settled upon the hall; in it was distinctly heard the uneven, sniffing breath of Octavian as the Roman tried to make reply, and could not. With an effort, his chill voice at last managed slow words.

"It—it is dangerous for two Cæsars to be in the world at the same time."

The cold eyes, the cold voice, seemed to shock Cæsarion with disillusion. In this instant he must have seen the whole truth. His shoulders squared, his features changed and hardened. He looked at the sallow, pimply man before him. Scorn and contempt glittered in his bright eyes, and bitter understanding.

Octavian, fearing a word too many, crooked a shaky finger at the guards.

"Quickly! Do it now—quickly!" he croaked—and they obeyed him.

THIS was the tale Chandra Ghose told. Rhodon put his pallid face in his hands, and his shoulders shook as broken words came to his lips. Then he gulped wine and tried to pull himself together.

"Let me—let me show you something." He made a pitiful effort to change the subject and tugged at his girdle. "He left it for me—his mother had given it to him. Look."

He brought out the emerald and tumbled it on the table. The one eye of Chandra Ghose swooped upon it. A look, a swift examination. . . .

"By the thunderbolt of Indra!" exclaimed the trader in awe. "This is a wonder of the world! It will make you wealthy—I can give you a huge sum for it—"

Rhodon shivered.

"Be quiet," he said. "I am going to hide myself in Syria. What good is money to me? This is a memory of those whom I loved and served. I do not like it, but I shall cherish it while I live. And when I come to die, perhaps I shall return to Egypt with it."

His words died away. He took back the emerald, wrapped it in its cloth, and put it into his girdle again. He gulped more wine. The tension was broken now, and he began to speak of Cæsarion's death. A frightful thing, he said, a sad thing.

"Don't be absurd," struck in Chandra Ghose, almost in contempt. His voice firm and echoed in the little room. "Nothing of the sort. The boy would have lived amid wars and tumults; he would have suffered spiritually. Our plans are human and fallible: those of Karma have a hidden purpose, one wiser than we realize."

He paused briefly, sipped his wine, then continued in words that Rhodon was to carry with him into Syria and obscurity:

"A sad tale, at first glance. Yet in reality it is one of those things we cannot explain, which work for good in a way we cannot see. There lies the truth."

In later days Rhodon wrote down all these things; but the Romans got wind of the manuscript and destroyed it. So they thought, at least; yet a copy survived.

A fumbled ball can be fatal—or a springboard to victory.

by JAMES HOPPER

Illustrated by John McDermott

WE had been attending the alumni dinner that takes place every year on the eve of the Big Game. The official party was about over, but a few of us had adjourned to a smaller room, around a table bearing gleaming glasses; we were determined to carry the celebration a little farther.

But Ned Haviland was dissatisfied. "None of us have ever played football, have we?" he remarked, looking us over, as one by one we shook our heads sadly and admitted we hadn't played football. "We've got to have a football man," he decided briskly. "We've got to have a hero. I'm going out to hunt up a hero."

He vanished, weaving in and out of the throng now flowing toward the check-room for their hats and their coats, and returned with a big quiet man with grizzled temples and nice brown eyes, and a little gold football on his watch fob. "Here we are," Ned, called out proudly. "Meet Jim Sterling, Varsity fullback of the team of—"

But he had forgotten the date. "Of what year, Jim?" he asked.

Jim Sterling, in answer, gave us a date that staggered us slightly. It sounded a bit like something out of Roman history. But we seated him among us cordially.

"Tell us all about it, old man," Ned rattled away. "Tell us what football was like in those days. Tell us how you made the team and everything."

Jim Sterling sat there pensive a moment. Then he smiled a little smile. "All right," he said stoutly, "I'll do that, I'll tell you how I made the team and everything."

His ambition to make the team, he told us, had taken root in him long before he came to college. It had come to him when still a small boy in the university town, watching scores being chalked up on the bulletin-board of the *Tribune*. Once he had seen a part of a game through a knot-hole. The players had seemed to him godlike giants with head piercing the clouds, and in that moment, he had made up his mind to be a godlike giant with head piercing the clouds. By the time he reached college and stood on the field the first day of practice, the thing had become a real fixation.

He remembered very well his first day on the football field. There was no freshman rule then; a freshman could make the Varsity—if he could.

This did not mean that a Freshman was treated with any particular respect. The football manager had given him no jersey, only a canvas jacket that was cold and clammy and raspy on his skin. His pants were too short and his shoes were too big. "So were my feet," he now told us gently. He halted a moment considering this statement. "Maybe this had a little to do with what happened," he added.

Training a team for its games was a simple matter then, he further told us. Out of the throng of yearning candidates upon the field, the Varsity captain, every afternoon, picked eleven whom he deemed the best eleven, and these became, for the afternoon, the first eleven. The captain of the second eleven then chose him another eleven, and these became the second eleven. The first eleven and the second eleven were then hurled at each other for an hour, for two hours—till the coming of merciful dusk. Meanwhile those who had not been chosen knelt along the sidelines, waiting hungrily. They seldom waited in vain. Sooner or later, out of the murderous welter on the field, someone came out limping and one of the he-who-waits-also-serves got his chance.

On his very first day, this bit of luck came to Sterling. The second eleven fullback went out with a cracked ankle, and the captain of the second eleven, coming over toward the sideline, said to Sterling, "Get in there!" and Sterling took over as fullback of the second eleven. He didn't know the signals, but the quarterback whispered, "Inside left tackle," and Sterling made a dive inside left tackle.

"I don't know what was the matter with me," he said to us now. "I didn't have any legs; my legs were just a series of explosions. I went through that hole like a firecracker, and made a touchdown."

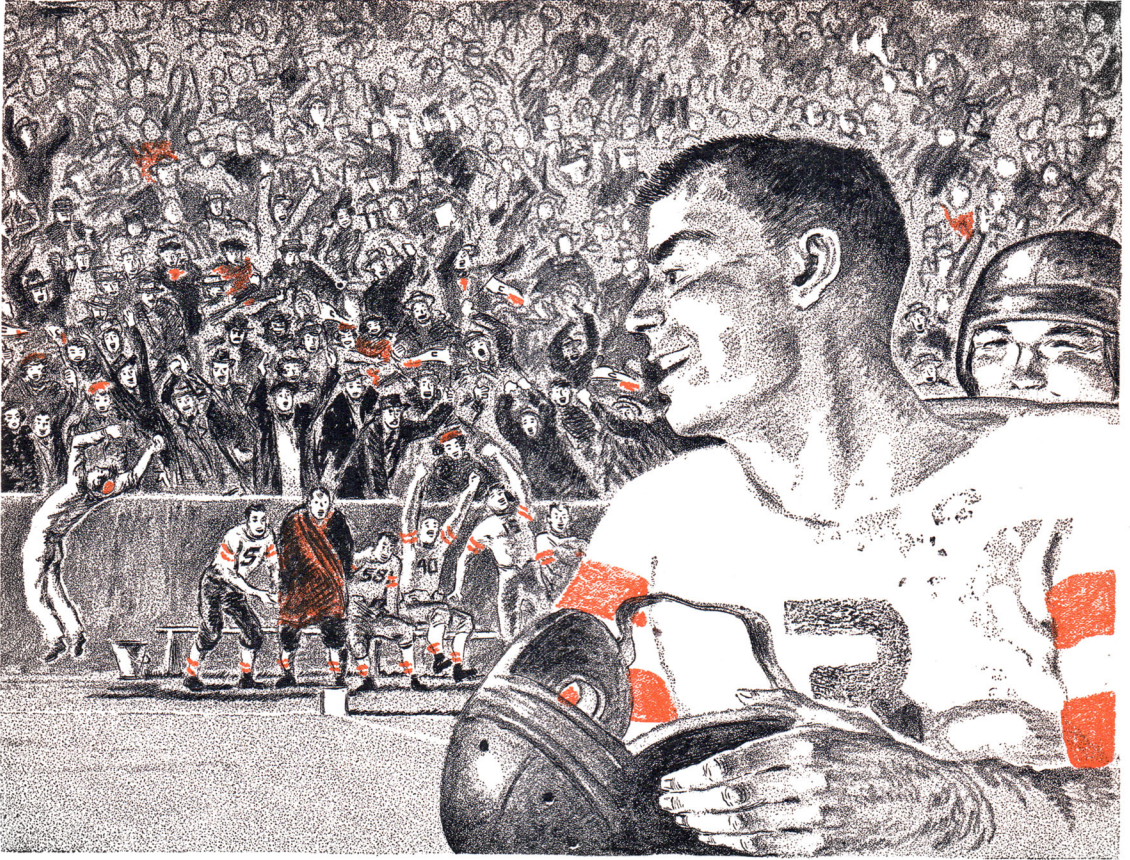
FOR several days after that debut Sterling lived with reverent amazement and high hope in his heart. But he now made a mistake. Finding himself with a pain in his right knee one morning, he hid himself, in his inexperience, to the physical director of the gymnasium. The P.D. was a prudent man; he told Sterling to stay off the football field for two weeks, and this Sterling docilely did, in his modesty talking to no one about it. That was the mistake; he should have talked about it with the captain of the second eleven. The captain of



OUT

the second eleven, noting Sterling's absence, was putting it down as an insolent disdain of authority, and a monstrous show of freshie big-head.

So, when Sterling reported back for duty at the end of the two weeks, he spent the afternoon kneeling on the sideline. And the next afternoon, and the next, and the next and the next. Every afternoon he slipped on his cold canvas jacket, his too-short moleskin breeches, his oversize cleated clodhoppers. He equipped himself for the fray, and there'd be no fray—not for him. From the sideline he watched the two elevens heavily smash each other, in that Darwinian process which day after day eliminated the weak of body and lame of soul, and finally left some eleven veterans, completely pickled in violence, as the Varsity for the Big Game. Now and then a warrior succumbed and the



"I stood there in the great noise. I'm going to make a touchdown!" I decided.

OF DISASTER

captain of the second eleven came toward the sideline. His eyes traveled down the line of waiting men. As they came to Sterling, they jumped him with a little flicker. "Brown!" the captain cried, or "Smith!" And never "Sterling!"

And every evening, as Sterling called on Sally Lee (he could stay only a little while, because he must go to bed early, to be fit tomorrow), and she asked breathlessly, her big eyes opened wide, "Did you get a chance today?" he would have to shake his head.

"Not today," he would say.

They had liked each other in grammar school, they had liked each other still better in high school, they liked each other tremendously now; in fact, they were in love. He loved her graceful body and gracious soul; he loved her and she loved him.

"Did you get a chance today?" she asked, every evening, and every evening he said "Not today."

He was still saying "Not today," on the last one of the season. The captain of the second eleven had never relented.

"Well," he said to us now, "a year is a year, and a first year is a first year. When my second year came around, I was on the field the very first day, more determined than ever!"

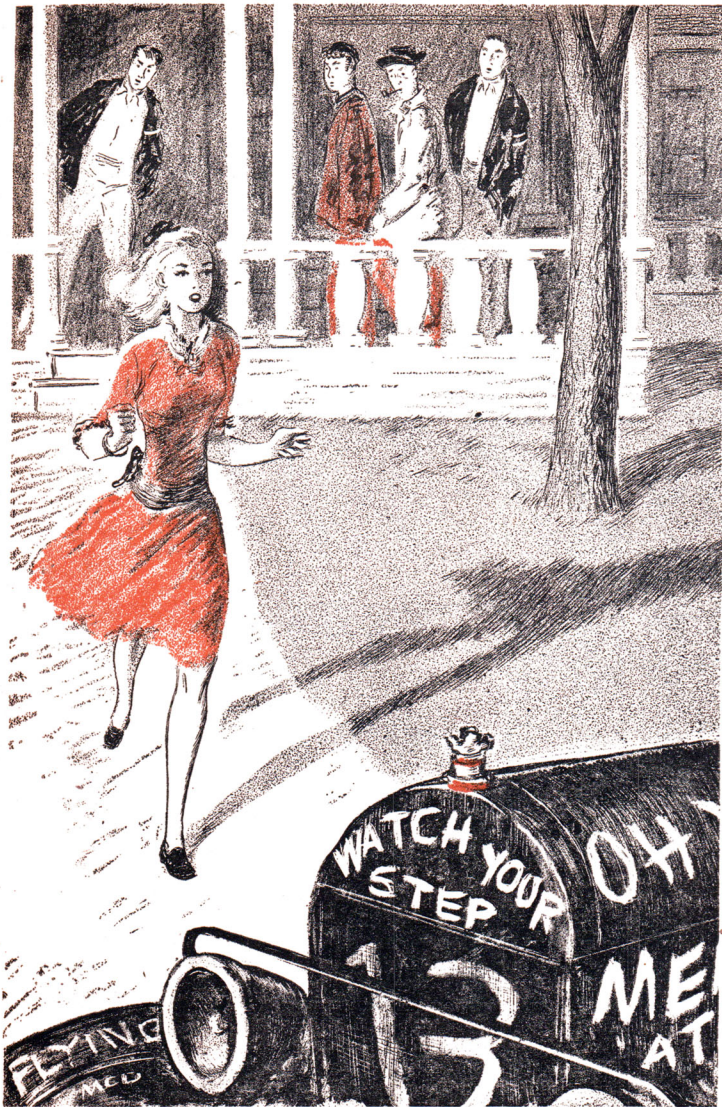
NEARLY every afternoon, when the elevens were picked, he was chosen fullback of the second eleven.

He was almost the regular fullback of the second eleven. This was no sinecure. The second eleven was a sacrificial body, a sort of cannon-fodder for the first eleven's experiments in malice and fury. The coach that year was of the inspirational

school: He stood behind the struggling elevens and filled the air with great cries. "Hard! Har-ard! Har-ar-ar-ard!" he screamed as if in agony. "Low! Lo-ow-ow! Lo-ow-ow-ow!" he shrieked as if in the torments of hell. His unceasing clamor whipped-up lagging ferocities; the field, every afternoon, was a furnace and a bedlam, and Jim Sterling was being forged into something hard and lean and mean. He butted; he charged; he slashed—while Sally Lee, who had taken to watching the practice from the bleachers, shivered with love and horror.

But he did not make the team. He had become so firmly established as the Old Reliable on the second eleven (also called the Scrubs) that it occurred to no one to move him up to the Varsity.

He now entered his third year, his ambition stronger than ever in his



"I yelled: 'Sally Lee, come with me quick!'"

breast, and conditions now seemed to have swung in his favor. The Varsity fullback had graduated and Sterling seemed to be the man who naturally should step into his shoes.

But a few days after the beginning of the season a new man appeared upon the field. He had on a brand-new suit that fitted so well that it looked as though made by a tailor. "We'll call him Paul Vanderstone," Sterling said to us now, "though that's not the real name. He was rather on the gilded side, and he had played fullback at the rather snooty military academy where he had prepped.

"At first I gave him little heed," Sterling went on. "Between a prep

fullback, and the hard-boil I had become, I fancied there was lots of space. But soon I found myself heeding, all right! Every day or so, as practice started, I would find Paul Vanderstone in that fullback berth I thought I had earned.

"I was a good boy, though," he went on. "I simply worked harder and kept my mouth shut."

But even with his mouth shut, he still had eyes, and it did seem as if the coach was sedulously grooming the newcomer for that place at fullback which Sterling had begun to think his own.

Then some of his friends about college, less innocent than he, began

forcing on him copies of the near-by city's newspapers. You learned from the more frivolous columns of these papers that the coach had been taken up by the near-by city's Society. He was to be seen at the opera, at hops and cotillions. He was to be seen at those places with Miss Florence Vanderstone, "glamorous sub-deb," or "glittering young heiress." Miss Florence Vanderstone happened to be Paul Vanderstone's sister.

Sterling kept pushing the papers out of the way. He lowered his head and worked still harder.

But it did little good. When the Big Game came, he was not on the team, and Sally Lee cried. From the bench he saw friend Paul flattened out thrice by the Reds, for the three touchdowns which gave them the game.

"But," he said to us now, "there must be something sort of obstinate about me. Even as I sat on the bench watching this—and it wasn't a smooth bench, it had splinters in it—my mind already was on the next year, my last year. Next year, by God, I would make that team!"

IN this frame of mind he started his last season, for his last chance. There was a new coach, a thoughtful man who seemed to prize Sterling, and his long faithfulness, and his dependability.

But also, it soon appeared, there was Jones. Herbert Jones was his real name. He was a rather mild-looking young fellow, but on the field he would become Locomotive Jones—that's what the bleachers were soon calling him. He weighed two hundred and ten, had legs like barrels made of India rubber, and when he hammered a line, you could see that line shockingly crack, open and sliver.

All through this his last season Sterling found himself fighting against something within himself. This was a suspicion that whispered to him that maybe he—Jim—wasn't a locomotive. Against this suspicion, even Sally Lee's tender loyalty could do little. "But, Jim," she would say, her big eyes soft and troubled, "he doesn't tackle as you do!" And, "But, Jim, he hasn't your head, dear!" But never was she saying: "You're a better locomotive, darling!"

Therefore when the Big Game arrived, the last one for him, for the fourth time he found himself sitting on the bench. All through the first half, from the bench he watched Locomotive Jones cracking the Red line till a touchdown had been scored. Still from the bench in the second half he watched the Reds resurge to a touchdown of their own, then Locomotive Jones re-crack them and re-subdue them for another touchdown which had all the signs of settling the

contest for good. And now there were just five minutes left of play, and Sterling was sadly thinking: "In five minutes it will be all over, and I'll leave college without ever having made the team!"—when suddenly he made it. Locomotive Jones, a heroic figure now worn down to near uselessness, was being walked off the field, and the coach, standing before Sterling, was saying: "Get in there, Sterling." After four years of black obstinate effort, in the last five minutes of his gridiron career Sterling had made the team!

He was looking at us now, silently. He shook himself. "Well," he said, "I won't try to tell you how I felt as I ran out to take my place on the team. Here I had been on the point of leaving college and plunging into real life with a sense of failure; now I was going to do so heartened by a block C and with a little gold football to hang on my tummy. Gratitude toward the coach filled my soul as I ran to my place. 'I'm going to do something for him,' I promised myself. Then as I reached my position, I saw that the stands were all up, greeting me, and gratitude filled me for them too, 'I'm going to do something for them,' I promised myself.

"I stood there in the great noise. 'I'm going to make a touchdown!' I decided.

"The Reds had the ball on their own five-yard line, and were preparing to kick out of danger. I ran back. They booted it; it soared away up in the air. I got under it and received it.

"Then—well, the same sort of thing can happen at a tea. You're sitting there balancing a cup of tea, and suddenly you know you're going to drop it—and then you do drop it. The ball was in my arms, and suddenly I knew that I was going to drop it. I knew it so well that, thinking it over later, it did seem to me that I should have been able to do something about it. But I didn't. In a sort of hideously leisurely way the ball began to roll along my right arm toward my elbow; it reached the elbow and popped up into the air. Out of the air one of the Reds snatched it and ran with it to a touchdown which, converted a few moments later, tied the score just as the final gun sounded."

WE sat looking at him, a bit stupefied. Somebody laughed, then choked it. Then we saw that he did not consider his story ended, that he was going on with it.

"I won't tell you how I felt as, the game irrevocably ended, I drifted back to the dressing-rooms with my mates—my five-minute mates," he resumed. "Then I was sitting ntmb on a bench, pulling off my equipment piece by piece. The room was free of the usual chattering and horseplay;

there was a great quiet, and everyone was painstakingly keeping his eyes from falling on me. If I'd had a gun, I would have blown my brains out, I suppose.

"But I had no gun, and after a while a sense of self-preservation began to stir in me. I said to myself: 'I've got to draw a lesson out of this. I've got to pull out of it some kind of rule that will save me from ever falling into such a hole again.'

"I set my mind to a searching for the desirable rule. I didn't have to search very long. Most obviously the rule to be drawn out of this afternoon's debacle was 'Hold on to the ball!'

"Hold on to the ball! Hold on to every fine thing you've got! Hang on to every beautiful gracious thing the Fates have given you!

"I was in the shower now, absent-mindedly freezing myself, scalding myself, half-drowning myself as I pondered this rule which henceforth was to direct my life, when suddenly a cold fear hit my solar plexus. . . . Sally!

"How much holding on had I been doing there of late? What with my obsession over making the team, practically none at all!

"I lit out of that shower without taking the trouble to turn it off, and I threw on my clothes without taking the trouble to dry my skin. I jumped into my cut-down Ford, and roared up to the sprawling house on the hill. Sally Lee had just returned from the game, and already the veranda was beginning to fill up. She came running toward me, and I could see she was going to weep. But I yelled: 'Sally

Lee, come with me quick!' and lifted her up into the Ford.

"The County Clerk's office was closed when we got there—which I should have expected, since this was on Saturday, and on Saturdays the offices closed at noon. Then when I had got into a telephone booth and rang him up at his home, I met another set-back. He wouldn't come down. 'Good God, man,' he roared. 'I'm off to celebrate! There's been a football game, you know!'

"I said meekly that I knew there had been a football game, and still more humbly begged him to come down anyhow, and finally he came down and opened up his office, and got Sally Lee and me our license, and clutching it we drove on to the Little-Church-of-the-Ivy—where, this time, I didn't fumble."

Jim Sterling now looked us over one by one, and when he spoke again it was with a quiet eagerness. "I'll tell you what I'd like to do," he said. "I'd like to have you all to dinner at my place in a few days. I want to show you how a pretty girl you marry can grow into the most deeply charming woman in the world. And I want you to see Annabelle, with the curly hair, and Rollie, who spins tops, and Myrtle with her dolls, and Jim Junior, who precociously practices kicking goals in the yard. You probably won't see Micky because he's too young to come to the table. But you'll see clearly why I don't give a hoot if I did drop a ball empty years ago!"

He was silent quite a while, looking down at the floor. "At least," he added, "not much of a hoot."

The Case of the 20 Detectives

A QUIZ by JACK LUZZATTO

PEOPLE are devouring detective stories as never before. Literally millions of magazines and pocket-size books pour out the adventure of America's (and the world's) favorite sleuths. Even the casual reader of crime fiction should recognize many of his friends here. Pair each detective with his creator, by transferring the alphabet letter to the author's name, as in the case of *Sherlock Holmes* and Doyle, given for an example.

(Note: There are hundreds of detectives in print; no intention to slight any is given here. Space and whimsey determined the choices. Incidentally,

there are at least three BLUE BOOK sleuths represented here.) Start shadowing them!

DETECTIVES

AUTHORS

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Father Brown | 1. A. Conan Doyle (f) |
| b. Slim Callaghan | 2. Rex Stout |
| c. Humphrey Campbell | 3. Richard Lockridge |
| d. Sergeant Cuff | 4. G. K. Chesterton |
| e. C. Auguste Dupin | 5. John Rhode |
| f. Sherlock Holmes | 6. Dorothy L. Sayers |
| g. Monsieur Lecq | 7. Georges Simenon |
| h. Maigret | 8. Geoffrey Homes |
| i. Phillip Marlowe | 9. Emile Gaboriau |
| j. Perry Mason | 10. Edgar Allan Poe |
| k. Asey Mayo | 11. Peter Cheyney |
| l. Jerry Mooney | 12. Wilkie Collins |
| m. Mr. and Mrs. North | 13. Dashiell Hammett |
| n. Hercule Poirot | 14. Raymond Chandler |
| o. Dr. Priestley | 15. Erle Stanley Gardner |
| p. Sam Spade | 16. Phoebe Atwood Taylor |
| q. Madame Storey | 17. Kerry O'Neil |
| r. Philo Vance | 18. Agatha Christie |
| s. Lord Peter Wimsey | 19. Hulbert Footner |
| t. Nero Wolfe | 20. S. S. Van Dine |

Answers:
 2-c; 3-m; 4-a; 5-o; 6-s; 7-h; 8-c;
 9-e; 10-e; 11-b; 12-d; 13-p; 14-f; 15-j;
 16-k; 17-i; 18-n; 19-q; 20-t.

How Long Indeed!

I WAS stationed in London for some time during my overseas service with the Eighth Air Force. During this time I managed to make many friendships with English people who appreciated my interest and open curiosity toward their way of life.

As a civilian, I'd always been fond of children. The London kids, most of whom had never had any of the normal childhood fun and recreation, —by American standards,—really took my heart by storm.

One day I arranged through the Red Cross to play "Papa" for a day to two little orphans, bright-eyed girls of six and eleven, respectively. So the three of us really painted the town—Mime, Tussaud's famous wax-works, the Regent Park Zoo, the cinema and of course lots and lots of that horrible stuff the English called ice cream, in wartime.

Tired but happy after a day's enjoyment, we were walking down Oxford Street holding hands and recounting the many pleasures of that afternoon. Walking toward us was a pair of Yanks. By their well-pressed uniforms and general air of greenness, I could tell that my fellow-GI's had only been in England a short time.

One soldier glanced at me, goggled, looked again and grabbed his buddy's sleeve. They both stared very hard at me and the two young ladies holding my hands.

The first soldier approached me, looked at the children again and then asked me: "Say, soldier—just *how* long have you been over here?"

S. R.

Speed Demon

IT was in November, 1941, in Norfolk, Va. I had been assigned to the new aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. *Hornet*.

I was ashore this night, standing by the road leading to Suffolk. I had a good time in mind and my thumb was up and pointing in the direction it lay.

An hour went by before a car finally came to a screeching halt fifty yards down the road. I kicked my numb feet after it and in a minute stumbled in and slammed the door, only to have my head nearly snapped off as we took out like something from a gun.

I unswallowed my tongue and took a look at the driver. It was dark, but from what I could see of him in the glow of the dash he looked like just another of the elder members of the local "Spitandwhittle Club" hurrying home to get the chores done.

I ventured a word: "S'matter, Pop, you late for chow?"

"Nope, just don't like to waste time, son," replied my grizzled benefactor as he whipped around a truck so fast

and so close that my hair twanged straight up like steel wire.

He shoved the accelerator down and added, "I wouldn't think a sailor would mind a little speed."

"Yeah, but listen, Grandpa, don't you think you're a little old to be careening around like a flying tiger?" I protested feebly. "Supposing your heart gives out?"

He chuckled (a bit fiendishly, I thought). "Don't you worry, lad; I'll get you there in one piece."

The rest of the trip was a sweaty nightmare; we zigged and zagged, zoomed and swished. A dozen times I said good-by to my mother—but we made it and I have to admit I've never

My Most Amusing Experience

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seen anyone who could twist a wheel the way that fellow did. I crawled out, shaken to the marrow.

I told him: "Pappy, you better ship in the Navy and take up flying; you're a natural." With that, I shoved off.

The following Monday back aboard ship, I was sent to the captain's cabin to check the fuses for his lights.

A Marine orderly took me into the passageway off the cabin where the fuse-box was located and I went to work.

A curtained door to the captain's main room was beside the box and not having seen him in the short time since I was assigned aboard, curiosity got the best of me and I peeked. What I saw nearly caused me to short-circuit the whole ship:

Seated at a desk was the skipper, the same little old guy that had scared me to Suffolk, a guy later to become known to everyone—as Admiral Marc Mitscher. . . . I laughed and laughed.

B. H. W.

You Are So Funnee, Sir

DURING the early days of the Leyte invasion, I was slogging through the mud of a back road near Tacloban, enjoying the strange sights, sounds and smells of the island like a typical tourist. The day was terrifically hot, so I'd removed my shirt for comfort and was carrying it over my belt. The sun felt good on my chest.

Down the road toward me came two tiny Filipino youngsters, a little brown boy and girl not over two feet tall and probably about five years old. They were holding hands and plowing slowly along through mud that reached to their knees. An older boy walked behind them.

The babies both wore shirtwaists—but no pants. I hadn't yet got used to seeing pantsless Filipino kids, so I grinned and said: "Hi, there!"

The kids started laughing. They pointed to me and then turned to the boy in back of them, chattering excitedly in Tagalog. He too grinned.

"Do you speak English?" I asked him.

"Yes sir," he answered.

"Tell me, what are the kids laughing at?"

"I am sorree, sir," he answered. "You weel not mind them, for sure. They do not see an American soldier before. They say, 'How funnee! The beeg man does not wear the shirt!'"

Later, I learned that Filipino kids may go without pants, but a man must wear a shirt even if he has nothing but rags to put on.

A. F. Nader

"Here's That Fool!"

WHILE teaching ballooning in World War I, I landed one day with a cadet near Camp Wheeler, a remount station, in Georgia. German-American boys who manned the station came running to us as we were dismounting the balloon. A sergeant said: "Ten years ago I saw a lot of these things in my home city." As that was the year of the James Gordon Bennett International race, in which I had been a participant, I guessed that city was Berlin. He said it was.

"One of the Americans burst right after the start," he said. He couldn't remember the name, and I told him it was a fellow named Forbes. After a moment he said that another American landed in the North Sea. I told him I thought the name was Arnold. He remembered then.

"I'm Arnold," I added.

He stared at me, then cupped his hands about his mouth: "Hey, you guys! Here's that damned fool I was telling you about."

Nason H. Arnold

Pat Pending— Detectivator!

Undismayed by the gizmos and complicated gimmicks of his rivals, Pat produces a simple but none the less marvelous invention that saves life and limb in the Case of the Black Market Nylons.

by NELSON BOND

SOME old sawyer with a flair toward dramatic understatement once made with a *craque sage* to the effect that, "Into each life some rain must fall."

That, brother, can be said again—and through a megaphone over a loud-speaker system!—so far as yours truly is concerned. Existence for me has been one long, continuous drizzle, punctuated by occasional typhoons, tempests and hurricanes. So if you should happen to hear, from time to time, that one Donald Mallory is a drip, you know why. His life is a series of one damp thing after another.

Of course every cloud has its lining—and if my particular blanket of cumulo-nimbus is not sterling, it is at least a fair silver plate. I like the slightly wacky city that I live in, with reservations—though of course you can't often get reservations in Washington; and I'm still *naïf* enough to be fascinated with my job of acting as assistant to an Assistant Chief Clerk's assistant in the United States Patent Office—a post which provides plenty of chuckles at the folly of mankind, as samples of the alleged *genus homo sapiens* amble in to register such incredibilities as automatic nose-wipers, perfume-impregnated underwear, and self-inflating life-vests.

And too, of late I've developed a new and more-than-casual interest in the certain young lady—Joyce Carter by name—who operates the Misspelled Letter and Wrong Number Department from her mahogany throne outside my office. Something out of this world, Joyce: About so tall, a figure

like *mmm*, and eyes that—oh, skip it! Rather warm weather we're having, no? Or is it just me?

But what I started to say is—things always get involved, even things that start out simply. Anyone else—you or you or you, or even your wife's dimwit brother—could meet and chat with an F.B.I. man without getting all mired up in a maze of mayhem, massacre and corpus delictis. Maybe you could. But not Mrs. Mallory's little boy. I can get in more jams than a bottle of Certo.

This G-man—his name was Winthrop—had dropped into my office to check some routine fact in the records, and stuck around awhile to shoot the breeze. We were discussing the Senators, and had just about decided the foul-ball batting percentage of those at Griffith Stadium is lower than that of the team on Capitol Hill, when Joyce peeked in at us.

"Pat's here, Mr. Mallory," she announced.

"Pending?" I said. "Oh, fine, fine. Ask him to come in, will you, Joyce?"

She nodded and disappeared; my visitor stared at me in some bewilderment. "Pat *who*?" he demanded curiously.

"Pat Pending," I grinned, "the greatest inventor of all time—and one of the nicest guys. Surely you've seen his name on some of his gadgets? This,



Illustrated by Stuart Hay

for instance." I up-ended the typewriter on my desk and revealed the inscription: *Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.—Pat Pending.* "He invented the bacular clock, the invisibelt, the transmatt—not to mention such commonplaces as the airplane and the automobile—"

"I believe," said my visitor a bit nervously, "I had better be running along. I just remembered, I'm supposed to see my tailor about a strait jacket—I mean sport jacket."

"Not on your life!" I protested. "You've got to meet him. Ah, here he is now! The map of Ireland that walks like a man!"

FOR in the doorway, his air-cooled fencers shining like a picket fence in a buck-toothed grin that split his Erin-go-brachycephalic puss from ear to ear, ruddy thatch bristling with suppressed excitement, was none other than the great Patrick Pending himself.

"Pat," I said, "I want you to know Mr. Winthrop, one of Uncle Sam's legal eagles. Winthrop, Mr. Pending."

"Meetchal!" gulped Pat, bruising the G-man's hand in one of the hairy Smithfields he dangles at the ends of his arms. Then: "Golly, Mr. Mallory, I didn't know you were busy or I wouldn't have come barging in like this."

"What!" I said. "No new invention?"

"No," said Pat. "I just dropped by to say hello and give Miss Joyce a little present for helping us with that predictograph mix-up a few weeks ago."

"Then what," I demanded, "is that package you're toting around in your coat pocket?"

"Huh?" Pat looked startled. "Oh, gosh! That's the present! I forgot to give it to her. 'Scuse me!"

He bolted from the room, and Winthrop chuckled.

"Quite a character, eh? You almost had me going for a few minutes there, Mallory. I thought you were serious about his being a great inventor. Though I must say his name, and the peculiar way you identified him—"

"Don't sell Pat short, Winthrop," I urged soberly. "He has his little idiosyncrasies, I'll grant. But when it comes to pure unadulterated gray matter, he can give Einstein odds of 3.1416-to-1 and beat him as easy as pi."

"Oh, Pat," I interrupted myself as he returned from the outer office sans package, "I've just been bragging about some of your inventions to Mr. Winthrop, here. Are you *sure* you haven't got something new to show us?"

Pat shook his head ruefully.

"I'm afraid not, Mr. Mallory. That is—well, I *have*, but— No, I guess not."

"Make up your mind," I told him. "You do or you don't; which is it?"

"Well, I *do*," said Pat in some confusion, "but I *don't*. I mean, I'm working on something marvaceously novular but it's not quite finished yet—"

"Mar-whatishly *which*?" interjected Winthrop, his eyes saucering abruptly.

I made no effort to clarify. It's impossible to make common mortals understand that Pat Pending speaks proper English until he gets excited, or tries to explain one of his own "in-ventulations." Then he works out on the mother tongue as if it were a mother-in-law.

"Have you got a working model with you?" I asked Pat. "How about letting us see it?"

"Very well," he agreed. "If you really want to. But I'm not satisfied with it yet."

And he dragged from his pocket a smallish object you've seen a thousand times in military exhibitions, Grade B Westerns, and hock-shop windows.

"There it is," he said without his usual glow of flamboyant pride. "I call it my automutic pistol."

I stared at the thing in disappointed amazement. It looked just like any automatic you've ever seen except for the presence of a peculiarly shaped

hood or shield at the end of the barrel. Winthrop picked it up, balanced it in capable fingers, inspected it briefly, then emitted a muffled snort.

"Congratulations, Mr. Pending," he jeered dryly. "You seem to have designed a most ingenious little instrument here. However, when you apply for patents I'm afraid you may have a bit of trouble with a few upstarts named Remington and Colt. Not to mention Smith, Wesson, Browning, Garand—"

"Oh, my gracious!" cried Pat. "You don't understand. I didn't say *automatic*. I said *automutic*. *Mute*—as in *permute*, *transmute*—"

"Or *deaf-mute*!" I broke in, suddenly getting it. "I see, Pat! This is a silencer that will work on an automatic pistol? There's never been a satisfactory one, you know!"

"Well, not exactly—" began Pat. But he didn't get a chance to set me straight, for at that instant the door burst open and an ecstatic wisp of femininity flew across the room to drape itself around Pending's startled neck.

"Pat!" caroled Joyce. "Why, Patrick Pending, you old *darling*! Let me give you—mmm-mmm! There!"

Pat turned crimson, and I turned green, and Winthrop said hopefully: "Where does the line form?" Joyce disentangled herself from the embarrassed inventor, pirouetted a few steps to the center of the floor, and lifted her skirt to her knees.

"Aren't they *beautiful*?" she chorled.

"Perfect!" said Winthrop hungrily. "Look, baby, I'm a married man, but if you're not dated for dinner—"

"Shuddup!" I snarled. "Stop slaver-ing, you wolf in cop's clothing! And you, Joyce—behave yourself! You're a big girl now. What are you trying to do: undermine the morale of the United States Government? That's treason!"

"If this be treason," mumbled someone, "make the most of it."

I WHIRLED and glared at my two companions. "Who said that?" I demanded savagely.

"Patrick Henry," said Winthrop. "I'm sorry, Mr. Mallory," said Joyce apologetically. "But it isn't every day a girl is given three pairs of nylons. I guess it went to my head."

"That's not what you put on display," I reminded her firmly. "Now please get back to your desk and—"

"Er—excuse me a moment, Mallory?" Winthrop interrupted. "Miss Carter, did you say *nylons*?"

"That's right. And gorgeous, too. See?"

"Joyce!" I roared. "Would you mind telling me"—Winthrop shifted his gaze to Pat with an obvious effort—"where you got them,

Winthrop had dropped into my office to check some routine fact, and stuck around awhile to shoot the breeze.



Mr. Pending? I'd like to get some for my wife."

"Not at all," said Pat. "It was a little shop a few blocks from here. I'll show you, if you want."

"Will you? I'd better get them before the stock is exhausted. They generally sell out pretty fast. That is, if I have enough money with me—" Winthrop groped dubiously for his wallet, then nodded. "Yes, thank goodness! I've got five dollars. Bess would kill me if she heard I'd found some nylons and couldn't buy them—"

"Five dollars?" repeated Pending. "Golly, you'd better let me lend you some money, Mr. Winthrop. I'd be glad to, honest."

WINTHROP waved a hand. "Thanks a lot, but that won't be necessary. Well, Mallory—I'll push along, if you don't mind. Enjoyed talking with you."

"But, Mr. Winthrop,"—Pat looked worried, confused, and a trifle embarrassed—"five dollars won't buy you even *one* pair. I'd rather not talk about it in front of Miss Joyce, but the price is— What's the matter? Why are you all looking at me so strangely?"

I said curtly: "Nice going, chum! And I thought you were a good American!"

Joyce said: "So *that's* it? Thanks, Mr. Pending, but if it's all the same to you, I don't want your gift. I'm not in the habit of buying or wearing black-market clothes."

"Black market!" exclaimed Pending starkly. "You mean these stockings are contraband and illegal?"

"You didn't know?" I sniffed. "Of course not! Gosh, I never bought any nylons before. I *thought* six-fifty a pair was pretty high, but—"

"Six-fifty a pair!" gasped Joyce. "Great shades of Jesse James! The ceiling on nylons is under two dollars!"

"It is?" moaned Pat. "Oh, golly, I had no idea. Believe me—"

"I *do* believe you," spoke up the G-man suddenly. "I think you were an innocent victim of the black-market bandits, Pat. One of the *few* innocent victims, unhappily. Say! How would you like to get even with those rascals, and at the same time do your Government a service?"

"Sure!" said Pat promptly. "Anything you say."

"Good!" Winthrop smiled. "Our organization has been working closely with the O.P.A. on this problem since it was proved that the black-market traffic is nationwide. I've been looking for a lead on the racket for months, and this is the hottest tip so far."

"How so, Winthrop?" I asked. "Because we've unearthed a careless retailer who sells to people he doesn't know personally," explained the G-man. "Pat's unsupported testimony wouldn't stand up in court—but if we

can tempt the vendor to sell to one of us again, in the presence of witnesses—"

"He may crack when convicted," I said, "and tell the names of his suppliers! Right?"

"Right!" nodded Winthrop. "Which," interposed Joyce, "is my cue to wriggle into the act. Obviously, Pat can't play a return engagement. How about a woman buyer to provide a change of scenery?"

Winthrop frowned. "Good idea, Miss Carter. But are you sure you want to? It may be dangerous. These people play for keeps."

Joyce smiled impishly. "That sells me. Can you give me five minutes to put on my glamour? You can't expect a gal to face the powder until she's powdered her face."

THUS it was that some time later we stood before a small shop on Never-mind-which Street, briefing our plan of campaign.

"Now, remember, Joyce," advised Winthrop, "first try to pay by check. If that doesn't work, pay cash, but ask for a sales-receipt."

"And if he won't give me one?" "Our case will be a bit weaker, but still strong enough. The main idea is to make it as airtight as possible. Pat, you wait here. We'll be out in a few minutes with our shields—"



"Pat!" caroled Joyce. "Why, Patrick Pending, you old darling!"

"Or on our southern exposures," I added. "Stand where you can catch us on the first bounce, Patrick."

The place was one of those prissy little shoppes with a proprietor to match. He minced over to greet us as we entered, one obsequious smirk from his patent-leather hair to his patent-leather boots.

"Yes, miss?" he breathed, rinsing his hands like a *Lady Macbeth* in trousers. "Have you"—Joyce muted her query to just the proper pitch—"have you any nylons left?"

"Nylons, miss?" "Yes." Joyce succeeded in looking magnificently furtive. "A friend of mine told me. . . That is, I thought—"

The proprietor smiled and made up the powderpuff he used for a mind.

"I understand, miss. What size?" "Eight and a half."

"And how many?" "Three pairs?" "Certainly. That will be nineteen-fifty, please."

Joyce fumbled through the mare's nest in her bag and faltered, "This is awkward. I—I seem to have spent all my cash. Would it be possible for me to give you a check? I mean, of course I can identify myself, and—"

Dapper Dan's eyebrows and shoulders lifted in an expression of pained reproach.



"Quit stalling!" I blazed. "You had nylons five minutes ago." "I'm sure," said the shop-owner loftily, "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"I'm terribly sorry, miss. I'm sure your credit is beyond question, but under the circumstances—"

I made my move, as we had planned. I pulled out my wallet and peeled off a twenty lend-leased from the office petty cash.

"Permit me, my dear?" I offered gallantly.

"Why, that's so sweet of you, Donald! Thanks so much. But only as a loan. I insist on that."

"Nonsense, my sweet. It's a pleasure to—"

"No, no! Only as a loan. But—" Joyce sighed prettily at the proprietor—"I'm so terribly forgetful! Let me have a sales-slip, will you, please? I don't want to forget how much I borrowed."

Our quarry eked out a cagey, ingratiating smile.

"That won't be necessary, miss. I'm certain the gentleman can remember—if he wants to. Now, let me see—I believe you said size eight and a half? Excuse me."

HE swished away and disappeared behind a counter at the rear of the shop. We glanced at each other. Winthrop nodded his satisfaction. "Okay," he muttered. "Everything's going fine."

Which just goes to prove how quickly a situation can change. For at that instant the door opened, a man and a woman entered, and an offensively familiar voice boomed: "Hi, there, Mallory! How's the big-shot writer with the pint-sized brain?"

I cast one startled glance at the newcomers, and groaned. I couldn't remember the character's name—having a memory that happily blanks out on unpleasant subjects—but I had run afoul of him a few months before, when he and a crank called "the Professor" had claimed authorship of one of Pat's inventions: a super-gimmick called the gizmo. A loud-mouthed and bombastic yokel, this arrival. As I say, I seldom forget a name, but in his case I was glad to make an exception.

However, this was no time to indulge in personal controversies. My only interest was in making him pipe down, and to that end I started wig-wagging like a dervish in a bee-pasture. But Stupid flowed cheerfully on:

"This here's my wife Opal. Me and her just got the knot tied and come to Washington on a honeymoon. Planned to look you up— Say! Got ticks in your trousers?"

"Ixnay, ixnay!" I gave him out of the side of my mouth. "Aylay offay the axcray! And ansracy, umpchay!"

He stared at me dumbly; *i.e.*, naturally.

"What gives, bub? Don't you speak English? And what are you doing on the loose at this time of day, anyhow?"

By this time the proprietor had returned, bearing a plainly wrapped package, and was watching us curiously. To the anonymous groom I said: "Well, nice to have run into you. If you're ever down around the Potomac River, be sure to drop in. So long!"

"You Government guys sure have snap jobs," blatted my blabbermouth hoodoo. "Hey, where's Pat Pending? Have you two been catching any criminals lately? I read about—"

"Sorry! Got to run along now," I tried to drown him out. "Joyce, got your package?"

"In just a minute," said Joyce. "I believe it's ready now. Thanks ever so much, Mr.—"

"Package?" repeated the shoppe foppe. "Package, miss? I'm afraid I don't understand."

I whirled swiftly. The package had disappeared, and the proprietor was smirking at us with an arch mixture of incomprehension, suspicion and cunning.

"My nylons!" wailed Joyce. "Where are they?"

"Nylons, miss?" simpered Dapper Dan. "Gracious! I have no nylons for sale. Haven't had any for months."

"Quit stalling!" I blazed. "You had nylons five minutes ago. I paid you twenty bucks for three pairs!"

"You paid me? Oh, I'm dreadfully sorry, sir, but you must be mistaken. Here's a twenty-dollar bill on the counter. Is it yours, by any chance?"

"It's mine, all right," I said, snatching it up, "but not by chance. You just laid it there. . . . Well, Winthrop? How about it? Are you going to pinch this geranium?"

"I'm afraid not, Mallory," said Winthrop slowly. "Thanks to your friend's helpful intervention, we can't prove a thing on him. But I hope he understands, by now, that's he's playing with fire."

"I'm sure," said the shop-owner loftily, "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"Okay." Winthrop shrugged. "So you're as innocent as a lamb. But be careful you don't end up in a stew. Well, kids—we're wasting our time. Let's get out of here."

MY pal the beans-spiller gaped at us as we filed toward the door. "What's the trouble, Mallory?" he yammered. "Did I say something wrong?"

Joyce grabbed my arm just in time. And I hadn't raised it to throw him a farewell kiss.

Back at my office, Winthrop said: "It's too bad. A few more seconds,

and we would have had the evidence we went for. But there's no use crying over spilt milk; we'll simply have to approach the problem some other way, that's all."

"Why couldn't you arrest him?" asked Joyce. "We *know* he had the nylons."

"Mere possession of nylon hose is not a criminal offense. He could have claimed he was offering them to us at ceiling price—and since no money had actually changed hands, we couldn't prove otherwise."

"Anyway," suggested Pat, "you undoubtedly scared him. That may do some good."

WINTHROP nodded. "If nothing else, it will make him contact his suppliers to report the incident. That's the angle I'm going to work on now. I'm going back to my office, get some help, and keep an eye on our pretty-boy friend."

"How about us?" I asked. "How can we help?"

"Just sit tight. If I need you, I'll holler."

He left, looking doleful, and we settled down to the Quiet Life looking the ditto, doubled and redoubled, vulnerable. I sighed: "Well, that seems to be that. Crime does not pay—except Joyce, who ends up with three pairs of Ebony Bazaar flimsies for her troubles."

"Troubles, you call them?" said Joyce, gazing at her nylon-clads with critical appreciation. "Well, every man to his own opinion. Mr. Winthrop seemed to think—"

"Never mind what Mr. Winthrop thought. He ought to wash his mind out with soap. Haven't you got some work to do?"

Joyce nodded. "Yes. If you want me, I'll be in the outer office, filing."

"Applications?"

"My fingernails. They look *terrible*. By-by!"

And she departed, smiling sweetly. I sighed and shrugged at Pat. "See? No doubt about who's boss here. One word from me, and she does as she pleases. Well, carrot-top, now that we're alone at last, how about telling me more about your new invention?"

"My automatic, you mean? Well, there's not much to tell. Mr. Mallory—except that it's a brand-new and revolutionary idea."

"Based on," I demanded, "what principle?"

"On the principle," said Pat earnestly, "that we humans are going to destroy ourselves if we don't stop making war, and fighting, and killing each other. The way I see it, there's only one way to put an end to such maniacular murdering. That is for someone to inventulate a weapon—"

"Oh, now, wait a minute!" I interrupted him. "I hope you're not going

to give me that old argument about 'the weapon that makes war too horrible?' Listen, chum—men have been singing that tune for thousands of years, and it doesn't work out.

"Ug, the caveman, thought he had discovered that strife-ending horror when he learned how to bind a stone head in a cleft stick—but one of his neighbors tucked *his* pebble in a sling-shot, and bashed in Ug's vainglorious noggin.

"The guys who dreamed up the longbow, gunpowder, tanks, poison gas, were all humanitarians at heart—and in a repulsive sort of way. They thought they had invented things that would make war too horrible. For their foes, of course. So what? So now we've reached the atomic bomb stage—and if we don't get giddy and blow Mamma Earth and ourselves into the next galaxy, the odds are ten, six, and two that the next war will wind up with something that makes the A-bomb look like a cap pistol.

"No, Pat. I'm with you on most of your delirium dreams, but this time you're barking up the wrong tremens. I think you'd better junk this latest brain-papoose and work on something useful—like an invisible penny to be used in out-of-order weighing machines."

"You *still* don't understand, Mr. Mallory," Pending persisted. "Everything you say is true, but my automatic doesn't act like you think. You see—"

I didn't see and didn't get a chance to. For at that moment the office door opened and Joyce marched in, both hands high above her head. Behind her stalked a tall black-browed guy with a jaw like a blue-steel beartrap. My nervous system jumped like a nudist on an anthill, and I bawled:

"Look out, Pat! It's a hold-up!"

I grabbed for the bronze paper-weight on my desk, then felt sillier than ever before in my life. For the visitor stared at me—then laughed! And Joyce said wittingly: "Mr. Mallory, will you please stop playing cops-and-robbers? This is Mr. Karse, of the Office of Price Administration. He came to see us about that black-market outlet we discovered."

I said weakly: "But—but your hands? I thought you were being—"

"Oh, *that!*" sniffed Joyce. "My nail polish. It isn't dry yet. Mr. Karse—Mr. Mallory—Mr. Pending."

AFTER we acknowledged introductions, the newcomer got right down to brass tacks.

"Since you three started us off on this investigation, how would you like to be in on the climax?"

"You mean," gasped Joyce, "you've already traced down the suppliers?"

"Nothing else," nodded Karse. "We waste no time once we get started.

We've learned the location of the black-market warehouse, and I'm on my way there now to seize it."

"All alone?" I asked.

"Unless you want to go with me," Karse grinned. I hoped he was laughing with me, not at me. "There's nothing to be afraid of. We have every reason to believe the loft is unguarded at this time of day."

"In that case," I said, "why not? There's nothing I like more than a nice, thrilling adventure—especially when it's safe. Lead on, Macduff!"

"The name's Karse," said the O.P.A. man. "We'll use my car. Oh, by the way—just in case we *should* run into any trouble—are any of you folks armed?"

I answered: "Pat's got a new type of automatic he's been experimenting with. Show him, Pat."

Pat said, "Oh, really, Mr. Mallory. It's only a crude model—"

"Is it loaded, Mr. Pending?"

"Well, yes, but—"

"Better let me handle it, then," proposed Karse, slipping it into his pocket.

"I imagine I'm the only one who has a legal right to carry firearms; right? Okay! All set?"

"Like an eight-day clock," I said.

Karse chuckled. "Meaning all ready to strike?"

"Meaning," said Joyce, "slightly run down. Am I right, Mr. Mallory?"

I love that girl—sometimes.

THE warehouse was pretty much what you might expect: a dingy, sinister-looking dump in a section of town the four-legged rats had deserted some years back when their two-legged brethren took over.

As Karse had predicted, the loft was untenanted. We parked, snooped and listened for a couple minutes, but the deserted village was a thriving metropolis compared with this part of town. All we could hear was the slow hardening of my arteries and the wind whistling through Pat's teeth. At last Karse said: "Okay. Coast's clear, I guess. Let's go in."

We went to the door; Karse tried several keys in the lock and hit the jackpot on the third try. We opened the door and found ourselves in a huge, vaulted room piled to the rafters with crates and packing-cases as far as the eye could see.

"You mean," moaned Joyce, "all these are *nylons*? And to think of the hours that I've wasted, standing in lines—"

"Not all nylons," said Karse. "Some are rayons, and a few are real silk. But most of them are—"

"That's funny!" I said abruptly.

"Eh? What's funny, Mallory?"

"How you should know so much about it. Have you been here before?"

"Why, now that you mention it"—Karse grinned easily, and that jaw was

like a blue-steel beartrap—"yes, I have. In fact, I own the joint!

"Stand still!" he added sharply. "Don't try any funny stuff, any of you. This thing in my hand's not a water pistol!"

He was right. So far as I was concerned, it was an electric refrigerator. It looked that big, and it froze me solid.

Pat said: "Then you're not with the O.P.A. That was just an act?"

"Correct, smart boy!" acknowledged Karse. "Move to the head of the class. Or better still, wait till I call teacher's pet who rattled on you. . . . Archie!"

There was a scuttling in the wainscoting, and out scampered none other than our friend the perfumed proprietor.

"Yes, Blacky? You got them? *Hah!*" He waved a lethal pinky in front of my nose. I would have taken a nip at it, except that I was afraid of getting a mouthful of Nail-Wite. "See what comes of meddling in affairs that don't concern you? Who's in hot water now?"

"Tea-bags," I told him, "boiled lobsters and you—as soon as Winthrop hears about this. You pulled a boner, Archie, when you ran to Blacky for help. You were liable for fine and a reprimand before; now you're eligible for room and board at Uncle Sammy's Leavenworth hostelry."

"Only," said Karse smoothly, "Winthrop's not going to hear about it, chum. I didn't invite you here to play ring-around-a-rosy."

"No," said Joyce coolly. "Then just why *did* you bring us here, Mr. Karse?"

"You'll find out, baby. I hope you like riding? As soon as the trucks get back from delivering a load, you're all going for a nice little trip. A one-way trip." He grinned mirthlessly. "Meanwhile— Archie!"

"Yes, Blacky?"

"Were you ever a Boy Scout?"

"We-e-ell, no—" hesitated Archie.

"Wrong league," I suggested. "Maybe he belonged to the Girl Reserves?"

"Shut up, chum," ordered Blacky. "What I meant, Archie, is—can you tie knots? Or would you rather hold the gun on these turkeys while I truss them up?"

ARCHIE said: "Oh, no, I can do it. Only"—he stared around him helplessly—"I don't see any rope."

"Use stockings, lame-brain. Help yourself out of one of those open crates. No, not those nylons. Use rayons. No use wasting too much dough on our guests." Blacky eyed us moodily. "I hope you're all going to behave yourselves while Archie gift-wraps you? I'm a very nervous guy. I don't want my finger to twitch on this trigger."

Neither did we. We all stood very, very still.

We stood very still until Archie had tied our hands; then we lay equally still as he hobbled our ankles. When the job was finished, Karse inspected it, nodded and said: "Swell! You check their pockets to make sure they had no knives, fingernail files, or anything like that?"

Archie displayed his findings, including the cigarette lighter I had hoped against hope he would overlook.

"How about the babe's bag?" asked Karse, picking it up. Then, angrily: "What's this, stupid? A mirror! Anyone ever tell you mirrors were made of glass?"

He hurled the tiny oblong across the room, shattering it into a million tinkling fragments against the wall. With it crashed my last fond dream of escape.

"Okay," decided the racketeer. "I guess it'll be safe to leave them now. Let's go out back. That sounds like one of the trucks coming in." To us he said: "Don't fret too much, kiddies. We won't be gone long."

They moved away. Somewhere a heavy door clanged at the rear of the warehouse. I started tugging at my bonds, but I might as well have tried to tear down the Great Pyramid with my bare hands. Did you ever try to tear a stocking? It just can't be done, that's all. Their strength lies in their sheerness. The harder I pulled, the tighter drew the knots.

Joyce and Pat had apparently had the same experience, for we all stopped puffing and grunting about the same time. Pat wheezed: "It—it's no use, Mr. Mallory. It can't be done, I guess."

"Well, we've got to do *something*," I said. "I'm not going to give up without a struggle. Joyce, can you roll over toward me? Perhaps I can gnaw those things off."

"Not enough time, Don," she said. "We've got to work fast or not at all. A nail, or something—" She stopped, then repeated wonderingly: "A nail—" "You call yourself an inventor, Pat," I pleaded. "Well, get smart! Invent something!"

"Wait a minute, Don!" interrupted Joyce eagerly. "I think I've got an idea. It may work or it may not, but—my bag over there. Can you reach it?" "I think so. But what—"

"I'll explain later. Just try. And hurry! The tiny bottle in there. Get it out."

By making like an inchworm I reached the pocketbook and succeeded in worrying it open. I fumbled around and located the little vial she wanted. It didn't make sense. I said: "This?"

Next month Nelson Bond will give us "The Enchanted Pencil," a fantasy in his inimitable best vein.

What do you want me to do—break it? It's too small; it wouldn't cut a—"

"No! For heaven's sake, don't break it! See if you can get it open. Then pour some of the contents on Pat's bonds. It's a slim chance, but our only one."

I stared at her as if she had suddenly grown another head. But if she was off her whack, Pat had caught the contagion too. He gasped: "Oh, but of course! Why didn't I think of that? Hurry, Mr. Mallory! Time is vitally important!"

Mine not to reason why; mine but to do or— What am I saying! I did as they told me.

WHEN we heard the door open, Pat said hurriedly: "Remember, don't move until he's right on top of us. In this dim light he'll never notice we're not tied."

We nodded and Joyce whispered: "You and Don take care of Karse. I think I can handle Archie."

But we didn't have Archie to worry about. Karse was alone and ghoulishly cheerful about the whole thing.

"Well, folks," he said, stopping before us, "you ready to go? The parade starts in a few minutes."

Joyce and Pat said nothing. I groaned dismally, as we had planned. Karse lifted an eyebrow.

"What's the matter with him? Acid indigestion?"

I complained: "These knots—they're stopping my circulation. My hands are numb."

"Don't let it fret you," consoled the racketeer. "You won't feel any pain—in a little while! Let's see—"

And he leaned over me.

"Okay, Pat!" I bawled—and grabbed for Karse as if he were a Hollywood starlet. "Get his gun!"

Everything went round and round for a few minutes—meaning mostly me. Karse had more knees than a centipede, and he knew how to use them to advantage. He socked me once with his fist and twice with a barn door concealed somewhere on his person. But I held on like a summer cold till I heard Pat yell: "Got it! All right, Karse—turn around with your hands up!"

Karse snarled out a word you usually see written only on fences, slugged me once more with an old bronze chandelier, and climbed to his feet. But I'll give the guy E for effort. He wasn't through trying yet. As he swung, his hand went to his pocket and came out with another gun—the one he had so casually "borrowed" from Pat. He turned this squarely on Joyce.

"Pretty clever Joes, aren't you?" he ground out. "Well, I'm smart, too. See where this thing's pointing? One move from either of you, and the girl gets it!"

"Don't shoot, Pat!" I shouted. "He means it!"

"Damn' right I mean it! Now, I'm leaving here—see? And if anyone tries to stop me—"

"Just a minute!" said Pat abruptly. "You're *not* leaving, Karse. Throw down that gun and give yourself up, or so help me, I'll shoot!"

"That's up to you," challenged the black-marketeer. "You get me! I get your girl-friend. If that's the way you want it—"

"Go ahead, Pat!" snapped Joyce icily. "Call his bluff! He wouldn't dare—"

"You're both crazy!" I cried. "Let him go, Pat! He can't escape the Feds. He—"

"Drop that gun!" repeated Pending sternly. "I'm counting three, then shooting. *One—two—*"

"Hit the deck, Joyce!" I yelled, as the blast of man-made thunder suddenly rocked the warehouse. Desperately I hurled myself at her, knocking her sidewise and down, swiveling as I fell to see if Karse were leveling his automatic for a second try.

And then—the surprise package!

Karse was still on his feet—but not for long. There was a queer, strained expression on his face; a look of dazed stupefaction, of sleepiness! Even as I gaped, stricken with bewilderment, his lips parted in a tremendous yawn—and he pitched forward to fall flat on his face, fast asleep!

I cried: "You got him, Pat!"

"He got himself," said Pat. "Gosh, Mr. Mallory, it worked! It worked better than I thought it would."

"But Joyce! Did he—"

"*He,*" snapped an irate voice, somewhere south of my border, "didn't hurt me a bit. But would you mind getting off my midriff, Donald Mallory, till I snap my vertebrae back into place?"

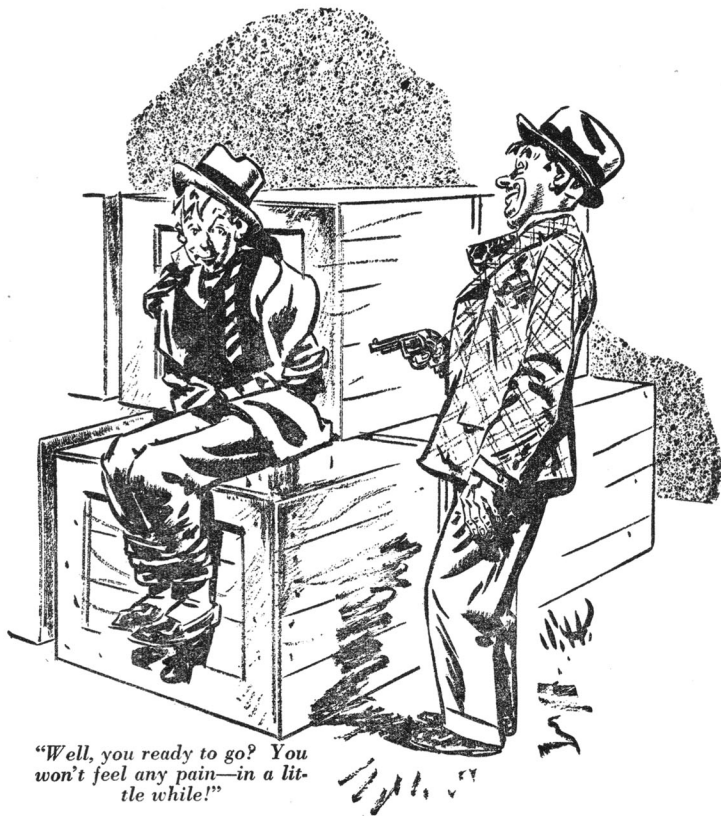
Then a lot of things happened at once. The door opened at the rear of the warehouse as Karse's gangsters came busting in to investigate the commotion, and at the same time the front door opened to admit a carload of extremely capable-looking gents headed by our pal Winthrop. For a few minutes it looked and sounded like the Fourth of July in that loft—but you know the result if you read the newspapers. The ones the G-men didn't carry away in handcuffs, they simply carried away, period.

Sic transit that segment of the jet market. . . .

Later, Winthrop said: "You did a nice job, kids. I'm sorry we were so late. We got there as fast as we could, but the man who tailed Archie had to contact us, you see—"

"Think nothing of it," I said. "Like it says in the almanac, 'Better late than never.' But how about Karse?"

"Still sleeping it off," reported the G-man wonderingly. "Pat, that gas



you used must be potent stuff. Our boys have been studying your automatic—"

"Automatic," corrected Pending. "*Mute*—as in *render speechless*. Yes, I told you I wasn't quite satisfied, yet, with my invention. It works, but I still haven't an estabularized proportionation of the essencious gasification. That will have to be studied before I patent it."

"But I thought you'd cooked up a new type of silencer," I said. "How come?"

"I never said so. I said it was a weapon to end killing," explained Pat earnestly. "You see, Mr. Mallory, if the man who pulls the trigger releases a gas that puts him to sleep, obviously no one is going to get hurt!"

I STARED at him and groaned. That's Pat Pending for you. Brilliant as a soap bubble—and with just about as much common-sense.

"Great idea, pal!" I said. "Just try to sell it to the War Department, though. They'll have you in the loony bin before you can say *dementia praxox!* But never mind your future. What I want to know is—how the hell did we succeed in freeing ourselves while Karse was out of the warehouse? I was there, I saw it happen, I was

part of it—but I *still* don't understand what happened, or why."

Pat grinned at Joyce. "Go ahead," he said. "It was your idea."

Joyce said ruefully. "My good memory, you mean. If you'd ruined as many dresses as I have—Donald, you know what was in that little bottle, of course?"

"Sure," I said. "Nail-polish remover. But—"

"Exactly. Nail-polish remover— which contains a stuff called acetone."

"So?"

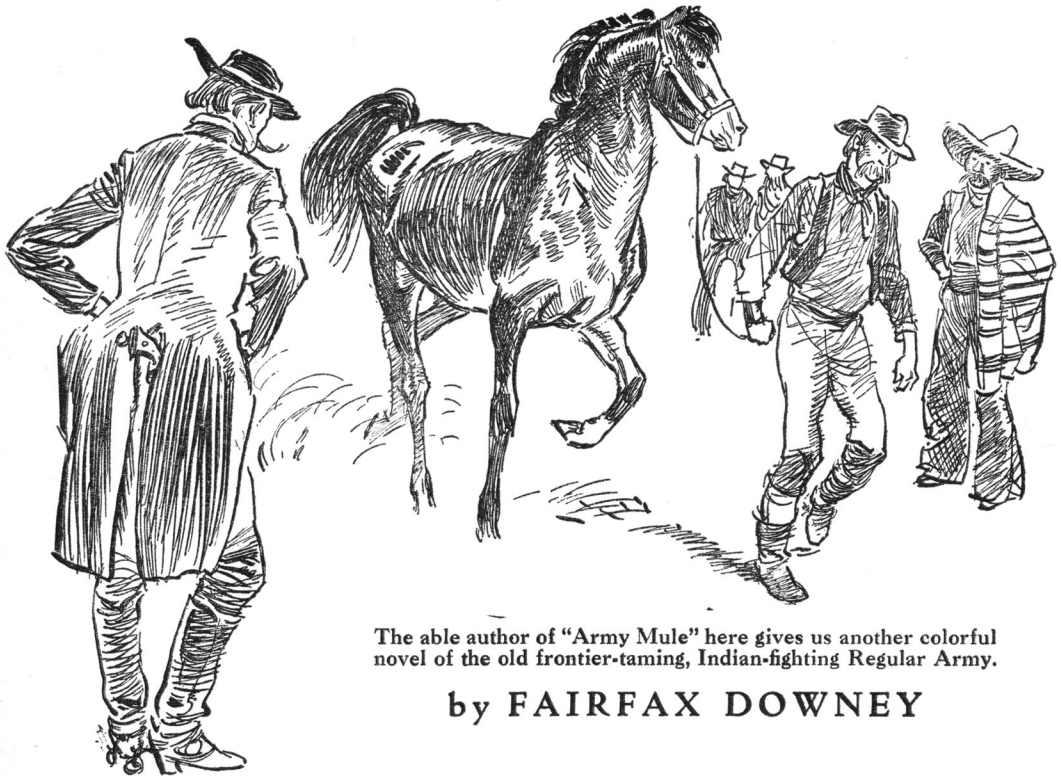
"So," she continued, "fortunately for us, Blacky Karse was a cheapskate. He used rayons, instead of nylons, to tie us up. Rayon is a synthetic containing acetate—and as every woman knows who ever made the mistake of trying to clean a spot of nail-polish from an acetate rayon dress, and found herself rubbing a hole in the cloth!—acetone eats acetates!"

"Then that's why the polish remover melted those bonds off our wrists and ankles?"

"Exactly! And"—Joyce grinned slyly—"maybe there's a moral in that for Blacky Karse, too."

"Meaning," asked Winthrop, "crime does not pay?"

"Meaning," said Joyce, "he who acetates is lost!"



The able author of "Army Mule" here gives us another colorful novel of the old frontier-taming, Indian-fighting Regular Army.

by FAIRFAX DOWNEY

CHAPTER ONE

WATER CALL



HE was black as night, except for his near foreleg with its "stocking" of gleaming white, so short it might almost be called a sock. He stood a trifle over fifteen hands high, and his conformation was good though a trifle short-coupled. But the feature of the horse that caught and held an observer's eye was his crest.

Crest was the word for that neck proudly arched and head held high. His eyes were alight with spirit and intelligence. His ears, pricked up alertly, were small and set rather close together. Had his mane been roached, his crest would have been the very image of the horses' heads the ancient Greeks sculptured, or of the black night of a chess set. Somehow you could not picture him as ever crestfallen.

The horse, led by a lanky loose-jointed man through the single street of a frontier town to be watered in the stream beyond, stepped springily and tossed his head. Men turned to look at him.

It was curious that he should attract any attention. In the Texas Panhandle in 1870 only extraordinary horses drew more than a passing glance. Thousands of wild horses still roamed the plains. Blooded stock whirled the Concord coaches over the stage routes, and fine animals were to be found in many emigrant trains. A fiery palomino stallion, newly roped in a wild-horse hunt, or a sleek Kentucky thoroughbred might win admiring scrutiny,

but certainly not a small black gelding. Perhaps it was the horse's bearing and his air of lively interest in his surroundings and the people along the street which caused them in turn to notice him.

And it was evident that the lanky man leading the black meant him to be noticed; his air of unconcern was a shade too elaborate. After he had walked the length of the street he appeared to recollect some pressing errand at the store at the other end. Swinging himself onto the horse's back, he trotted back to the store, slid off and entered, while his mount stood patiently. The lanky man then emerged and rode back toward the stream. In the course of this performance he had succeeded in demonstrating that the black horse possessed not only a steady walk, an even trot, and a swinging canter, but a fast running-walk and a smooth single-foot which made his rider seem to be comfortably seated on an air cushion. Here was a horse with five gaits.

A watching cowboy grinned at the show staged by the lanky man.

"Yankee hoss-trader," he drawled, and turned away. But that impromptu horse-show had not been put on in vain. When man and horse had passed, two spectators followed—a grizzled, gray-bearded Major of cavalry and a stout, swarthy man, part Mexican, part Indian, to judge by his features. Twice the latter's beady black eyes had gleamed while he watched the horse: Once in admiration of the smooth single-footed gait, and again—and brighter—at the sight of the horse's one white leg.

The Major, quicker on his feet, reached the quarry first. Content to bide his time and put in the last bid, the prosperous-looking half-breed waited and covertly observed from a distance. The Army man strode to where the black horse was being watered and ran appraising eyes expertly over the animal. In the traditional manner he opened the bargaining.

Cavalry Mount

"Fair little nag you've got there," he said. "Has some faults and defects, I see, but not a bad horse, all in all. Morgan blood."

"Yep," the owner confirmed. "He's a Morgan hoss; lot of Morgan in him. You can't miss it."

"You're right," the Major agreed. Always had it amazed him how remarkably and faithfully the traits of the original Morgan sire had been passed on to his descendants. That little bay stallion, no more than fourteen hands high and weighing less than a thousand pounds, had been named Justin Morgan after the singing-master who owned him. On a Vermont farm he had hauled logs and plowed until his speed was discovered. Then he won so many races, both running and trotting, with prizes ranging from a gallon of rum to a purse of money, that he made himself and his owner famous. For more than twenty years he was kept at stud.

"Yes, you're right," the Major repeated. "It's a strong strain. Justin Morgan was foaled about 1789, I think, and after I don't know how many generations you can still tell his get. Bays, browns, chestnuts, and blacks, they've all got small, close-set ears like this fellow here and they hold their heads high and their eyes are fine. They've most of 'em got the endurance and courage and gentleness their sire Justin had."

"So they hev," the lanky man confirmed. "Naow all that ever got passed down in *my* fam'ly is this here long nose that tu'ns red come the fust cold spell."

"These horses make corking good cavalry mounts," the Major mused aloud, paying no attention to the other. "Our regular cavalry rode Morgans and Morgan-thoroughbreds in the Mexican War. So did those of us who were lucky enough to get 'em in the Civil War. General Sherman rode a Morgan. Mine—and a grand little horse he was—was killed under me in the Wilderness."

"Back home in Vermont," the lanky man observed, "there's a statue to the Morgan hoss. Haint nary a Gen'ral atop him, neither—just the hoss. It's like you say, Major: Any man that owns a Morgan hoss has a valu'ble piece of proputt'y."

The cavalryman bit his lip. He suddenly realized that he, the buyer, had been giving a sales-talk and bidding up an animal he wished to acquire. Well, it was too late now.

"Sell him?" he asked abruptly.

"Might," the Vermonter conceded. "Haint anxious to, though. I'm a-movin' my fam'ly to Californi-ay. Need the hoss, and he reminds us of home."

"Horses are cheap in this country," the officer said gruffly. "I'll look this fellow over."

He patted the Morgan's smooth forehead. With deft fingers he parted lips wet from drinking and scanned the firm even teeth. "Four-year-old," he remarked. Carefully he ran practiced hands down the length of legs from knee or hock to fetlocks. He needed only to tap a leg, and the black politely raised that foot for the hoof to be examined. "Mind walking and trotting him up and down a bit?" he requested.

The Morgan's owner put the horse through his paces; his action was rhythmic and at the end his breathing was deep and steady.

"Passed," the Major declared approvingly. "I'll buy him for the Army." He named a sum.

The Vermonter only grinned and shook his head.

"Can't bargain with you," the officer said shortly. "That's the top price the Army lets me pay. It's twice what I'm giving for Plains mustangs. Better take it—horses hereabouts are cheap and plentiful, and buyers are apt to be scarce."

The horse's owner glanced pointedly toward the waiting half-breed. The man was richly dressed. Silver buttons glistened on his jacket.

Following the look, the officer snorted. "Think you've got a buyer in that *hombre*? That buzzard's a Comanchero."

"What's that?"

"A Comanchero is a fellow that trades with the Comanche Indians. Sells 'em firearms and whisky, like as not. Then they come whooping down on emigrants like you folks, and lift your scalps."

"Got money, haint he?"

"I don't doubt it." Abruptly the Major turned to go, dusting his hands. Looking down at them, he saw a black stain on the palm with which he had felt the off foreleg of the black horse, wet from his having waded into the stream to drink.

"Say! You've dyed this animal's hide!" he accused.

"A MITE, MEBBE," the Vermonter slyly admitted. "But no harm. He's sound, like you seen. All I done was black three of his legs a tetch."

The Major stared.

"Why, for the love of Heaven, did you do that?"

"Waal, Major, seein' as haow you won't be a-tellin' no one, this's why: I missed a couple of fust-rate chances to sell this hoss 'count of the crazy notion some folks daown this way hev. They got it all *pre*-served in a poem; I've heard it enough to l'arn it. Goes like this:

One white foot, buy him.

Two white feet, try him.

Three white feet, deny him.

But if he's a hoss with four white feet,

Hang him up for the crows to eat.

"Rats!" the Major snorted again. "So he's really got four white stockings and not just one, has he? Well, that won't bother me; I'll still buy him. You can find me in town if you don't sell him to that reptile over there. Hope for the horse's sake you don't!"

The cavalryman briefly laid a caressing hand on the black horse's withers and walked rapidly away.

The swarthy man strolled over.

"Señor," he greeted, "be with God."

"Haow be *you*?" the Vermonter responded.

"In good health," the other replied. "I am named José Piedad Tafoya and I am a trader." He commenced the formula. "This animal appears to have some admirable qualities, though he is not without a full measure of faults. Are you inclined to dispose of him?"

"Might. Sell or swap?"

"I have taken a mild and altogether unreasonable fancy to this horse. In my camp are two fine harness-mules which I think you have seen. Foolish though it is, I will trade two mules for this one horse."

"Them two mewels!" The Vermonter, surprised by this handsome offer, recovered rapidly. "Waal, I'll be a loser—but call it a swap."

He thrust the black's tie-ropo into the half-breed's hand. "He's yourn."

The Comanchero smiled an oily smile.

"The trade is made," he confirmed. "He will bring me luck—and I need it sorely—this black horse with one white leg. You, señor, doubtless are not aware that a *caballo* marked as is this one brings good fortune."

"Waal, I've heard tell."

"It is true. There is an old saying among my people which proclaims it. It runs thus:

*If you have a horse with four white legs,
Keep him not a day.*

*If you have a horse with three white legs,
Send him far away.*

*If you have a horse with two white legs,
Sell him to a friend.*

*If you have a horse with one white leg,
Keep him to the end.*

"Si, it speaks true. But you need not believe it. In any event, the horse now is mine."

The lanky New Englander smothered a grin.

"So he be, Mister. He's yourn, white leg and all. Naow let's go git them mewels of mine."

The Morgan horse gave no sign of being aware of a change of ownership. Already in his young life he had changed hands half a dozen times. His initial training had been excellent. His treatment and care on the whole had been good. Men who had owned him had recognized his value as a piece of property, yet as no more than that—not as a warm-blooded creature with spirit and emotions and affection.

A horse (some horses more than others, just as with human beings) has the need of receiving and bestowing affection. Such was this scion of the celebrated Justin Morgan. Seldom had he known affection or been able to return it. Once, back North, there had been a boy and a girl in an orchard by the roadside. They had fed him apples, petted him, made much of him. He had rubbed his soft muzzle against their cheeks and had never forgotten; with all children he was especially gentle.

But the black horse was not long in deciding that he did not care at all for this new master.

The Comanchero had broken camp and moved out that same morning. In Tafoya's outfit were two Conestoga wagons, drawn by mule-teams, and a herd of about twenty mustangs, driven by two *vaqueros*. The stout owner elected to ride his new purchase. They cinched a heavy Mexican saddle tight on the Morgan and forced a cruel spade bit into his mouth. Up on his back the Comanchero heaved his not inconsiderable bulk. He would permit only the single-foot gait. When the horse tried to rest himself by a change of gait, he felt the wrench of the bit and the raking of sharp-roweled spurs.

The train pushed on hard and fast, bound to make a safe camp that night for a trading rendezvous early the next morning with a band of Comanches. The Morgan was weary and sweat-streaked, but he carried on, his head still up. Once they forded a river. They splashed through several stream-beds.

Now Señor José Pieda Tafoya was well known to the Comanches and to their cousins the Kiowas—well and favorably known to most of the tribesmen with refuges and hunting-grounds in and around the Staked Plain of Texas. Since he illicitly traded them goods they craved—guns and firewater—he could count on being welcome and reasonably safe in their country. Therefore the fate that befell him when his wagons, along toward evening, dipped down into the arroyo chosen as a camping-site could truly be termed pure mischance—indeed the acme of ill fortune.

A party of Southern Cheyennes, raiding far south of their usual haunts, swooped down on the train. In a few minutes *vaqueros* and teamsters had been shot or clubbed

to death, the herd and the mule-teams stampeded. A bullet knocked the swarthy Tafoya out of his saddle. He hit the ground with a thud, one hand still convulsively clutching the reins. Even amid that wild whooping and yelling, the well-trained black horse stood still beside his fallen rider.

Through glazing eyes the swarthy man stared at the legs of the black horse he had bought for good luck. Dimly but unmistakably he perceived a startling alteration. Not simply one leg but all *four*—the dye washed out by the water through which they had passed—were *white!*

The Comanchero's last conscious thought was a line from the verse he had quoted that very morning:

*If you have a horse with four white legs,
Keep him not a day.*

Now the howls of the Cheyennes, plundering the wagons and riding to round up the scattered herd, grew too much for the Morgan horse to bear. He jerked loose the reins from a slackening hand, tossed his head, and galloped madly away, black mane and tail streaming.

CHAPTER TWO

5. GALLOP

MARCH



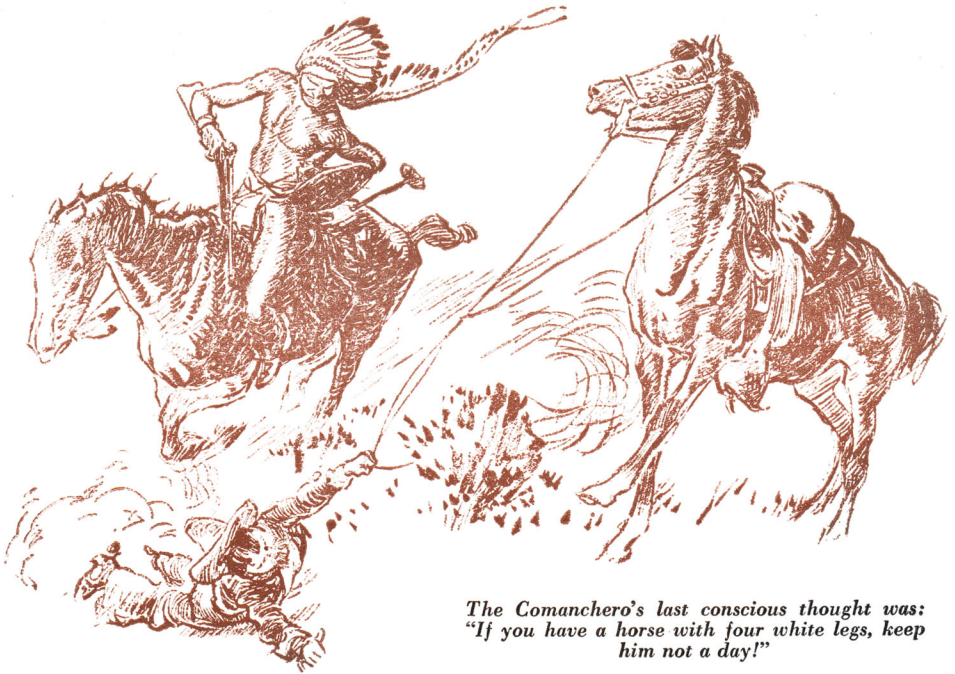
FAST and furious was the black horse's gallop. There was panic and even delirium in his flight from the wild tumult back in the arroyo. The strange terrifying smell of blood stung his flaring nostrils, and his ears still rang with fierce war-whoops and the screams of dying men.

His hoofs drummed a rapid tattoo on the prairie. Through it he heard the beat of other hoofs, as the Cheyenne raiders raced in pursuit of the horses of the scattered herd. Like all fugitives, the Morgan was certain that he was the special quarry of every pursuer. Indeed, two red warriors with lariats coiled for a throw did converge on him. They could have cut him off and roped him easily, but they were diverted by a fleeing pinto, its red hide marked with broad patches of white hair. Dearest to the savage heart were such gaudy "painted" ponies as this one. Without an instant's hesitation the Cheyennes sped off after him, abandoning the Morgan, only a dull and unspectacular black.

But the coal-black horse did not realize he was being allowed to escape. In a frenzy he tried to redouble his speed. He snorted in terror and his eyes rolled wildly as he thundered on at headlong pace. A tenderfoot horse from the East, he had not yet learned the lessons of the prairie. . . . At full gallop he stepped in a prairie-dog hole.

At that pace, nine times out of ten he would have broken a leg. This time was the merciful tenth. The black hurtled forward, whirled head over heels in a half somersault. He lit with a crash square on his back. The high pommel of the heavy Mexican saddle partly broke his fall, but his weight crushed the saddle's wooden frame as if it were matchwood. Its girth burst as he slid ten feet ahead and lay inert, all his wind knocked out of him.

He lay still, but not for long. Gasping and groaning, he struggled to his feet. Something held his head low—it was the loop of the reins, fallen over his head and pinned to the ground by his own forefeet resting on them. Dazed and still frightened, the horse jerked up his head to win free. The throat-latch—its leather was cracked—broke, and the bridle slid down over his ears. Out of his mouth dropped the cruel spade bit.



*The Comanchero's last conscious thought was:
"If you have a horse with four white legs, keep
him not a day!"*

In ecstasy, in exultation, the black horse shook his head and all his sturdy body. So must prisoners feel when irons which have manacled them are struck from their limbs. Now he bore no mark of his bondage to man save for his horseshoes, and of them he was not conscious. Neighing in triumph, the black horse again bounded across the prairie.

But he was sore and bruised and weary from galloping. He heard no further sound of pursuit. Soon he slowed to a trot, then to a walk. At length he halted and, ears pricked forward, fine eyes shining, gazed all about him.

On all sides stretched the Texas prairie, bright with yellow, purple, blue and scarlet flowers—sunflowers, buttercups, field violets, marigolds, poppies. Nowhere was there any sign of man or his habitations. In that vast expanse was the air of freedom; and the Morgan horse breathed deep.

A breeze stirring his mane, he made a handsome picture standing there immobile like the statue of his forebear, Justin. Bright-hued butterflies flitted around him. A flock of wild turkeys took wing, and the sun glistened on their plumage as on burnished steel. In the distance the horse saw a herd of deer climbing up through the chaparral from the stream-bed where they had drunk.

He trotted in that direction and slaked his thirst also at the stream. Contentedly he began grazing on the luscious prairie grass. Having eaten his fill, he lay down and rolled in sheer delight.

Dusk shaded slowly into night; a hush fell on the prairie and the calm and cool of a spring night. Here were peace and ease and freedom.

Suddenly the black horse was achingly lonely. . . .

It was into the Staked Plain—*El Llano Estacado*, in the Spanish tongue—that the lonesome Morgan ranged in search of company. Its broad expanse of hundreds of miles, rich with buffalo grass and well watered by lakes and streams, once had been a wild-horse paradise where mustangs roamed by the thousands and tens of thousands.

Their myriads were descendants of the war-horses the Conquistadors had brought from Spain to the New

World; of steeds escaped or strayed from armored columns of Cortez and Coronado, from pack-trains and from settlements; of horses stolen by the Indians in raids on ranch or hacienda or on the emigrant-trains bound for California—horses lost in turn by the red men in stampedes or storms. These wild horses, interbreeding, mingled the blood of Spanish sires and Arab Barbs with that of English and American thoroughbred strains. There was also Morgan blood, like the black horse's, in some of the mustangs.

The black would have encountered immense herds on this stamping-ground a little more than a score of years ago. Now he searched for long weary hours and found not one of his kind.

Wild-horse herds had grown scarce by 1857 and now in 1870 were fewer still, so rapidly had their numbers been depleted by capture or slaughter. Continually white men and red rounded them up for mounts or killed them off for meat or for wolf-bait or simply as pests which trampled crops or enticed away tame stock, horses and mules, to their wild free life.

BUT ON THE THIRD DAY the black Morgan was successful in his quest. Topping a rise in the rolling prairie, he beheld a herd of more than fifty horses in a draw below. The bright sunlight made their sleek hides iridescent. He saw golden bays and bays with black manes and tails—orange and saffron duns—sorrels and red sorrels—grays and blacks like himself—dove-colored palominos and parti-colored pintos.

He neighed joyously and trotted toward them.

One of the herd stalked out to meet him.

Deeper black than the Morgan, his hide was like jet. Nowhere on him was there a white hair. His mane and tail were sable plumes. He was a tall horse, well over seventeen hands—to the Morgan he looked gigantic—but beautifully proportioned. As he advanced majestically, he seemed to be marching to the rhythm of barbaric music: blaring of trumpets and crashing cymbals and throbbing kettledrums.

The Morgan, lost in admiration, halted to watch the stately approach. Relief from accumulated loneliness welled up in him. He nickered a greeting as plaintive and appealing as it was joyful.

But now he began to sense menace in the bearing of the oncoming black stallion—the wide-dilated nostrils, the eyes seeming to flash fire, the wrathful thud of his hoofs. This was the master of the herd. He would welcome no stranger except perhaps a mare as a new addition to his harem. Any others ventured this close to his domain at their peril.

THE GREEN HORSE FROM THE EAST, caution forgotten in his loneliness, was suddenly aware of his danger. He whirled and ran for his life.

He was swift like his forebear, but the black stallion overtook him as if he had spread a pair of mighty sable wings and swooped down like a huge hawk. He thundered up alongside. Like the dart of a hawk's beak too was the swift thrust of the stallion's head toward the neck of the horse he towered over. Sharp teeth bit as powerful jaws clamped shut.

Only the thickness of his mane saved the Morgan. The stallion, getting his mouth full of it, was not able to bite on down deep into the flesh of the neck. He jerked a clump of the mane out by its roots and squealed with frustrated rage. Shouldering hard against his victim, his head poised to dart again.

With a shudder of terror, the little black swung away. Agile on his feet, he doubled back like a jackrabbit. He had gained ten yards before his enemy could check and swing around.

It was a brief and futile respite. Now the snorting stallion was upon him again. Once more the fugitive turned and doubled. But this time the other was ready for that trick and countered it by a turn almost as sharp. His teeth scored a bloody groove along the Morgan's withers.

The little gelding was tiring. He knew he could not last much longer against such furious strength. Soon he would be down, struck by those sharp hoofs, pounded and trampled until he moved no more. The black stallion was a killer.

But abruptly the big horse drew off and galloped away. The chase had taken the master far from his herd. In his absence some other stallion, lurking about for just such an opportunity, might run off his mares. Or young stallions he himself had driven out, once they had grown from colts into possible rivals, might slip back to cut out a few fillies for consorts.

The big black's anxiety for his mares was the Morgan's salvation, and he fled from that place until exhaustion slowed his pace. With heaving flanks, legs spread, at last he halted. Around him, disconsolate and alone, the prairie spread limitless.

Occasionally the black sighted small groups of wild horses, outcasts from the herds. Lonely though he was, he never attempted to discover whether they would let him join them. Too fresh in his mind was the dreadful memory of the sable stallion.

Once he beheld a brown moving mass which was a herd of buffalo, and trotted closer to investigate. Surprisingly the big bull leader led in the herd in flight from the single, unriden horse. Often had the herd been hunted and harried by men mounted on such animals as this black creature. Best avoid their presence! The old bison and his kind were one angle of a triangle of death: At one corner he and his, at the second the wild horse, at the third the Indian. All three were doomed. When the Spaniards brought their chargers to the New World, the Indians gained a splendid means to hunt the buffalo which they formerly had been obliged to stalk on foot. First fate overtook the wild horse. Not much longer would it spare the bison. Last to fall would be the

red man, dependent on the other two. And of all their fates the white man was the chief instrument.

The Morgan found no company in any of the living things abounding on the plains. Pronghorn antelope, swift and shy, fled from him like the buffalo. Birds of the air—ducks, geese, quail, roadrunners—were solace only in that they lent life and movement to vast stillness. No more than that were the spry jackrabbits and the prairie dogs which sat up on their hindquarters and barked impudently from the edges of their holes at the wandering horse that once had come a cropper by stepping in one of those burrows.

The howling of coyotes broke the deathly quiet of the long nights, but the Morgan hated their dismal yelping and their red-gleaming eyes dotting the encircling darkness. He recognized them for what they were—a gathering of hopeful, hungry ghouls, waiting for death or some crippling accident to overtake him. Their howling seemed more sinister to him even than the whirring of coiled rattlesnakes, which were only warning him not to tread on them.

For the horse the prairie lost its charm and became harsh and stark. Poignantly he longed for green pastures, for the dark warm safety of a stable. Just to be tethered to a wagon-wheel would be enough! He found himself missing the feel of a halter or a bridle, even of a saddle on his back and the grip of a rider's legs on his barrel. How pleasant and reassuring a human voice would sound!

Not for the Morgan horse was the call of the wild; he had spent too long a time in man's service.

It was his longing for man that spurred him to travel steadily through and away from the Staked Plain toward distant wooded hills. At length he reached them and climbed into them. Trees closed about him protectingly, and he lost the sense of utter solitude he had known in the prairie. Yet his loneliness drove him onward. . . . Since none would seek him, he must seek.

BUT HE WAS SOUGHT, or more exactly, awaited.

Yellow-green eyes were watching the solitary Morgan horse pushing steadily up the trail toward a mesa. They peered from the stout branch of a tree beside that trail. There, on not a few previous occasions, the mountain-lion had successfully lay in wait for his prey.

The great tawny beast, eight feet in length, blended in with the leaves and their shadows cast by the sinking sun. This was early for him to hunt, but a ravenous hunger was gnawing fiercely at his belly. As he crouched on the limb, his long tail several times gently lashed his flanks, then froze into the rigidity of the rest of his body. His powerful muscles were gathered but not yet tense—nor would they be until the instant they were needed.

Unsuspecting, the wind at his back, the Morgan horse climbed the trail. He would not journey much farther but would bed down for the night on the mesa. He felt no premonition. Indians and the black stallion were far behind him. In the hills he had encountered not even coyotes. There were no mountain-lions, no cougars, in the experience of this horse from the East.

Had any human being watched him as he climbed toward that crouching death, pity and an impulse to save him would have filled the watcher's heart, stirred by man's hate for the beast of prey and love for the beast of burden. But here was no human witness.

On came the black Morgan; when he was ten feet from the tree, the big cat, mad with hunger, could not prevent a twitching of his whiskers and a slight tremor of the tip of his tail. Yet with iron restraint he let the horse approach closely and actually pass beneath the limb where he was poised.

At last—and too late—the horse caught that feral scent; with a desperate lunge he sprang forward. But the mountain-lion had pounced.

14. FIGHT ON FOOT



PETER SHANNON's father had been a captain of Union cavalry under Buford and Pleasanton in the Civil War. Growing up through that conflict, the youngster had desperately wished that every year would add two or three to his age so that he could ride off to war with his dashing sire. The best he had been able to manage was self-administered but intensive training in equitation and cavalry tactics on a fat and indignant pony.

Yet his yearning and his effort had proved not altogether in vain. When the high tide of the Confederacy had flowed north to Gettysburg, the home-guard company of Peter's home town in Pennsylvania, mobilizing, had detailed him, only a lad of nine, as a dispatch-rider. After the war his father had taken him on long rides, the indolent pony replaced by a small, lively horse. Together they had fought over the battles of the war, especially its cavalry engagements. The father had in his son a veteran's heart's desire: an eager and fascinated audience. And Peter had in his father a boy's heart's desire: an older man who forgot his age and treated him as a comrade—who made the pretended seem dramatically real and the past come alive.

"Remember this, Pete," his father would impressively declare. "Cavalry has to have mobility. That means it's got to be able to go places fast and be in shape when it gets there to fight or scout. Now what makes a cavalryman mobile?"

"His horse, sir," Peter answered promptly.

"Right. And that's why I've taught you to take care of your mount. What happens to you if he gets a saddle-sore or goes lame from a stone inside a hoof you neglected to inspect?"

"Disciplinary action, sir," replied Peter. He wasn't quite sure what that was, but it didn't sound pleasant.

Together they marched and maneuvered and charged an imaginary foe. John Shannon, enjoying it as much as the boy, taught him tactics as he once had taught his troop. While the two breathed their horses after a gallop, the father would observe:

"There's nothing like a smashing cavalry charge or a sweep around the enemy's flank. But get this into your head, my boy: Most of the time in the cavalry you turn over your mounts to the horse-holders, unsling your carbine and fight on foot. Sure, just like the infantry. And you make your firepower count. That's the lesson we Yank cavalrymen finally learned. After we learned that, Jeb Stuart and the rest of the Rebel cavalry didn't find it so easy to ride over us."

Once they had ridden down to Gettysburg and retraced the ebb and flow of the tide of battle. Leading their horses through the great battlefield-cemetery, Peter remembered his father's deep voice reciting the last of President Lincoln's address.

"It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to the cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—"

Over on the Little Round Top a bugler began sounding Taps.

"Stand to horse," Peter's father commanded quietly, and they remained at attention with heads bowed until



At full gallop, he stepped into a prairie-dog hole.

the plaintively beautiful call had faded to a close. Peter would remember that too, and the glisten of moisture in the corners of his father's eyes.

Now Peter was sixteen and ready for college. He wanted to go to West Point or enlist in the Army. "And whose fault is that?" his mother tartly had asked his father. The former captain of cavalry had laughed but ruled firmly against a martial career. There was, he declared, no future nowadays in the Army. Congress had cut it down to little more than a skeleton force, forgotten and neglected. Peter was scheduled to go to Yale, though not yet a while. Sixteen, his father insisted, was too young for college. Best hold the boy out for a year—not just to loaf but with something to do. Why not send him down to his Uncle Jim's ranch in Texas? He could ride and drive a team. He was handy with animals, and Jim, who had Government contracts for cattle and corn, would find him useful, not just a boarder.

Peter's gray eyes flashed. He ran a hand excitedly through his sandy hair. He had a warm engaging grin and it lit up his face now. He did know and love horses, and riding the Texas range as a cowboy was an appealing prospect. It was the next thing to joining the cavalry.

"When do I leave, Pop?" Peter demanded.

But his mother strenuously objected. Texas, so far away, had been one of the Rebel States. Much of it was still wild frontier country, and she had read of troubles there with the Indians. It was much too dangerous.

Peter's father replied that most of the Indian-fighting was in the West with the Sioux. William Tecumseh Sherman himself, General of the Army, had only recently stated that reports of Indian troubles in Texas were greatly exaggerated, said John Shannon.

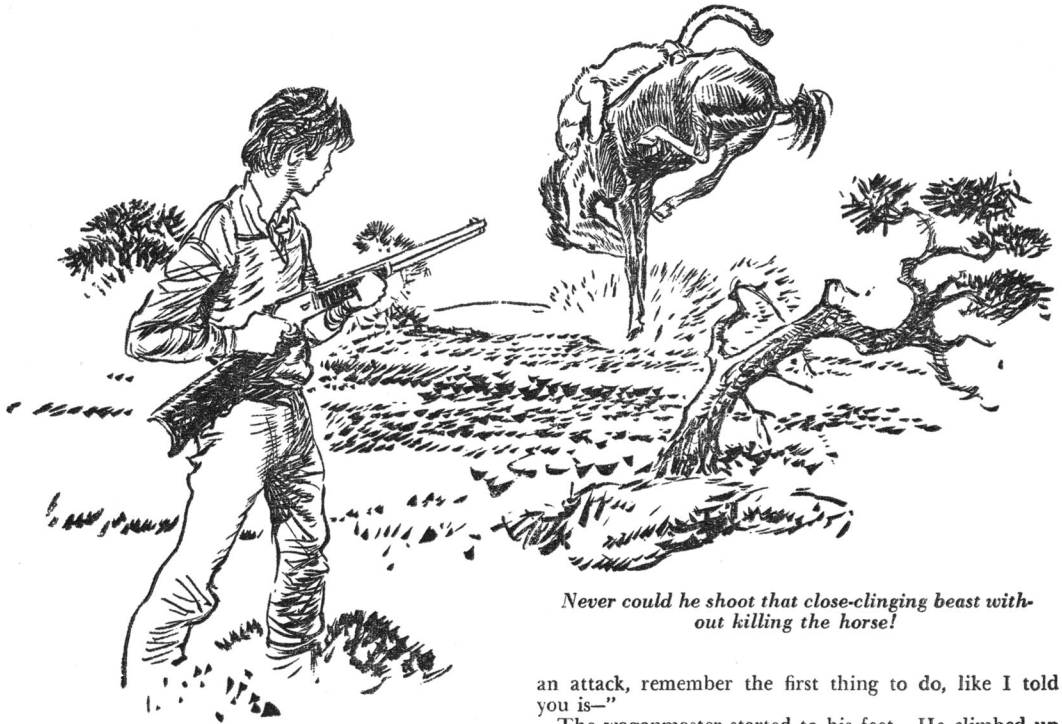
"Besides," he continued, speaking earnestly to his wife, "you must remember that Pete and I have lived through a great war from 1861 to 1865. It left its mark on both of us, though he was pretty young at the time: On me because I fought through it; on him because he wasn't old enough to. To get it out of his system he needs the kind of active life he'll find in Texas."

Peter nodded, his gray eyes serious. The Old Man could be a pretty understanding fellow sometimes.

Peter's mother sighed, then smiled and said: "Perhaps you're right. Men are restless creatures, and ever since the war the two of you *have* been difficult."

REINS HANDLED DEFTLY, Peter Shannon guided his four-mule team. His wagon was the leading one in a train of ten hauling corn and other supplies from the rail-head at Weatherford, Texas, to Fort Griffin. His Uncle Jim Long, the wagonmaster, rode on the seat at his side.

"Not sure I ought to have let you come along, young man," Jim Long remarked. "There's been all too many



Never could he shoot that close-clinging beast without killing the horse!

white men killed and scalped around here. Folks back East say it's safe. They don't know the Injuns in these parts."

He told Peter tales of the Kiowas and the Comanches: How the deadly Kiowas probably had killed more whites, man for man, than any other western tribe. How the even fiercer Comanches, the finest horsemen of the plains, had fought Spaniards and Mexicans for two centuries and still barred great areas of the Southwest to American settlement. Mighty bowmen were the Comanches—they could drive a shaft through a buffalo—and they were lancers unsurpassed by any of the crack cavalry regiments of Europe. But the Indians used those weapons only when they were short of ammunition for their modern repeating rifles, bartered with renegade traders for stolen horses.

"Those Injuns sure have helped fill the boot cemeteries—that's where men who died with their boots on get buried—and plenty of lonely graves along the trail," the wagonmaster continued. "There's one along here somewhere of a cowboy the Comanches caught. . . . There—see yonder?"

Peter leaned from his seat to read the epitaph crudely scrawled on a headboard:

*He was young and brave and fair,
But the Indians raised his hair.*

"Don't mean to skeer you, young Peter," his uncle declared. "I'm just warning you you've got to be on the lookout in this country. Reckon we're safe enough; there's Army posts here and there, and the soldiers patrol and do the best they can keeping the Injuns on reservations. If we should get jumped, you've got a rifle, and your pa taught you how to shoot. Just keep on shooting, too. Don't give up ever. The Injuns don't believe in what we call the rules of civilized warfare. In cases of

an attack, remember the first thing to do, like I told you is—"

The wagonmaster started to his feet. He climbed up on the seat of the wagon and with all the strength of his lungs bawled:

"Corral!"

Peter swung his team off the road to the right, urging them into a trot, as he had been trained to do. The other teamsters, shouting at their mules, closed up on him and followed as he circled around. When Peter had closed the circle on the rear wagon, every teamster obeyed the wagonmaster's signal and turned his team sharply inward into the circle's center, pulled up and set his brakes. The wagon-train was corraled. Wagoners jumped down to fill in the gaps between the white-covered "prairie schooners," building breastworks of sacks of grain.

That task would never be finished. The mass of Kiowas and Comanches, charging down on them, shooting as they came, gave no time.

IN THE WILD CONFUSION of that sudden onset Peter's mind was numbed. He knew that he dragged his rifle out of the leather boot fastened beside the wagon seat and emptied its magazine at the oncoming riders. He heard Uncle Jim's heavy Sharps banging. But amid the firing, the whooping, the shrill yipping, and the thunder of hoofs, only one fantastic sound really penetrated his consciousness—the discordant blasts of a cavalry trumpet summoning the red horsemen to drive home their charge.

Two chiefs, gorgeous in war bonnets, charged into the circle. Each killed his man, counting coup, and rode through. After them a wave of horsemen surged against the corral. Still more Indians, dismounted, ran up and joined in the fray. A third and a fourth teamster went down under the fury of that first assault. Dimly seen through the smoke and dust, men fought hand-to-hand.

Then the Indians suddenly drew off and commenced galloping around the corral, yelping and pouring in a hot fire with Spencer carbines, breech-loading rifles, pistols, along with a hail of arrows.

From under the wagons, firing through wheels, the wagoners fought back. Red riders slipped from their ponies and were swallowed by the dust. But the fire from the corral was slackening. One dozen against one hundred and fifty. . . . There could be only one result.

Peter heard his uncle's voice calling to him. It sounded hoarse and weak.

"Tell your mother—sorry I let you come. If they break in again—run for the timber."

The voice fell silent. Peter, busy loading and firing his Winchester, did not realize that his uncle had died and that he was lucky to be dead rather than to have suffered a crippling wound. One of the charred bodies, later found in the wreckage of the wagon train, told the story—the teamster had been alive when the Indians chained him to a wagon-wheel and lit a fire around him.

Skies were darkening. A big storm was gathering. In haste to finish, to kill and plunder, the circle of savage horsemen contracted and closed in. Again sounded the raucous trumpet-blasts like a hunting-horn proclaiming the kill. Warriors leaped from their ponies and rushed the wagons. They streamed through the gaps, cut the mules loose from their harness, slit open corn sacks. The seven white men still on their feet made a break for the woods, two miles away.

Outside the shelter of the wagon corral and on the open prairie, Peter Shannon experienced a feeling of defenselessness that verged on sheer panic. He and the other six survivors were so few in the face of the scores of yelping braves now mounting to gallop in pursuit. And the shelter of the woods seemed hopelessly distant.

"Fight on foot." His father's words kept echoing in his mind. "After we learned that lesson, the Rebels didn't find it as easy to ride over us!"

Nor did the Indians. Furiously they charged down on the little knot of white men, only to break off the charge in the face of the fire of seven repeating rifles. But more joined in the assault. The teamsters, jumping to their feet and running toward the woods at every respite, gained less and less ground before they were forced to drop prone and start shooting again.

Peter was firing wildly. He knew it, but could not help it. Each time the charge drove in closer. . . .

British troops long wore their traditional scarlet uniform "for the terrible look of it"—because of the terror that fierce hue inspired in the foe. And here the flashing, savage color in the tide of these Indian charges struck similar dismay. Strips of red calico decked the streaming manes and tails of the galloping war ponies. The copper bodies of their riders were streaked and dotted vividly with war paint—vermilion torsos, blue owls on white-daubed chests, limbs striped with scarlet. On they came with yellow shields and couched lances and leveled carbines spurting crimson.

Peter saw a chieftain bearing down on him, glaring visage painted around the eyes with black lines which gave him the appearance of a sinister, half-human raccoon. The boy's hastily fired shots missed the chief but brought down the rearing pony. Even in that desperate moment, Peter felt a twinge of pity for the horse.

Indian fire grew heavier, deadlier. The teamsters lacked any cover. In their next rush for the timber, two slumped to the ground and lay still. They were dead or as good as dead. Their comrades dared not stop.

Still one long mile stretched interminably between them and the woods. Covering its bitter extent, grimly fighting off their pursuers, three more of the surviving five were hit. The wounded men struggled on.

Somehow they reached the edge of the woods. Gasping, they plunged in, each man for himself. None spared time to observe that their savage pursuers had turned back, no longer able to resist taking part in the looting of the wagons and the scalping and further mutilation of their fallen enemies.

Peter, unwounded but dazed and exhausted, stumbled on in among the trees. Their deep shadows began to envelop him. Gratefully he groped deeper. The deeper he went, the harder for those yipping devils back there to find him!

The storm burst; rain in torrents, rain that was almost a deluge, came flooding down.

CHAPTER FOUR

TO HORSE



THE tree limb from which the mountain-lion sprang was not high above the trail. For two reasons he had purposefully selected a lower branch. His pounce must be swift and sure, allowing his victim no time to lunge out from beneath. And with a large animal like a horse or a steer his method of slaughter was not to crush his prey to earth by his weight. Such a fall might break the yellow slayer's grip and permit escape.

Even as it was, the sturdy legs of the black horse almost buckled under the impact of the great cat and the fearful shock of his attack, as he lit squarely on the Morgan's back. The hooked claws of his forepaws fastened themselves in the horse's withers. Slaving jaws, surer than the stallion's, bit down through mane and champed till they met through quivering flesh. Hind claws dug in and clutched.

Two sounds rent the stillness of the gathering dusk and reverberated over the mesa: The Morgan's scream of mortal terror and the mountain-lion's half-smothered roar of blood-lust, foreboding the kill.

Then commenced a ride of death.

To the mountain-lion, it was not new. Often enough had he ridden it before, and always had it ended in the same satisfying climax: the dire feasting on his mount. For the black the experience was as strange as it was frightful. Yet instinctively he reacted just as must the first wild horse pounced upon by a cougar.

He bucked with all his might, bucked for his life. Thus, they say, American horses first learned how to buck—with a mountain-lion on their backs.

The Morgan, gentle of disposition, had never before done more than kick up his heels. Now he bucked and pitched like an unbroken mustang, like a chronic outlaw, kept for rodeos. One very brief pause had been sufficient to show him why he dare not stop bucking for an instant. The lion loosed the gripping claws of one hindleg, drew it forward and raked it bloodily backward across the ribs just above the belly. The black knew that if the enemy on his back were given half a chance, those cruel hind claws, powered by the mighty haunch muscles, would dig in deep and disembowel him.

He buck-jumped up the trail and out on to the mesa to give himself more room to shake off that dreadful incubus. He twisted and turned and swapped ends. But the big cat, growling and rumbling savagely in his throat, clung more tightly.

His stout heart, the endurance bred into him, carried the Morgan horse on. He bucked harder. Once he thought of trying to roll on the lion, but something made him aware that, once down, he would be finished.

The lion's weight and his own strenuous exertions began to tell on him now. He was weakening, too, from loss of blood and the agony inflicted by teeth and claws. His feline foe, jolted and jarred though he was, sensed the approaching end. The rumbling in his throat softened almost into a purr. . . .

To be lost in a dark woods at night under pouring rain is an unenviable experience, and the camping lore Peter Shannon's father had taught him served him little now. Except for his rifle he lacked all the equipment on which he was accustomed to depend. Ax, poncho, food, frying-pan—all were stowed in the wagons back on the prairie. An old hand would have improvised and made himself tolerably comfortable. The young fellow from the East was too utterly weary, still too apprehensive of pursuit, to do more than stumble ahead, a hand outstretched to keep him from colliding with trees.

It seemed impossible for it to rain so hard. Leafy branches were apparently no impediment to the drenching downpour. Soaked, miserable, Peter drove himself on. He came to the point where it took an effort of will to force one soggy, squelching boot ahead of the other.

Wet as he was, it seemed ridiculous for him to mind cold water running down his neck, but he did mind. Nor was this any time to start feeling hungry, he told himself. There was nothing he could do about it. It just made more trouble to have your stomach clamoring.

Incessantly, in sheets, the rain flooded down. Peter repeatedly fell over tree-roots. He took the falls on his right side, right hand outthrust into the clammy soil. Always he managed to remember that he must save his rifle and keep its muzzle from being clogged with mud.

All night he groped on, resting only a little now and then by leaning against a tree to listen for the Indians who must surely be on his trail. Through the beat of the rain and the whistling wind he could hear nothing; yet his imagination supplied all that his ears listened for vainly. Only when a cold, gray, still rainy day dawned did he find shelter of a sort under a fallen tree, partly upheld by branches; here he sank into an exhausted and troubled sleep.

He woke, forced himself to his feet and pushed on. Without any idea of where he was going, he only knew that he could not stay where he was, to starve.

Late in the afternoon he found some berries which were edible; at least they did not make him sick. He found also a stream, better for drinking than the muddy rain pools. The rain slackened at last and ceased. The trees were thinning now, and he was climbing. Perhaps before dusk he could reach a vantage-point which would give him a view of the surrounding country.

The light began to fade. Peter had reconciled himself to another fear-haunted, lonely night when he heard two sounds such as might have echoed through nightmares—a scream of terror and a blood-curdling roar.

"Get out of here quick! Don't be a fool," Peter told himself. But he seemed unable to take his own wise counsel. He levered one of his precious four remaining cartridges from his Winchester's magazine into the chamber, and ran toward the sounds.

Snorts and throaty growls and pounding hoofs guided him to the mesa top, where the Morgan horse was making his fight for life.

At first Peter saw only a black horse, bucking and pitching in such frenzied action as he had never witnessed. He watched, astounded. Then he caught sight of the rider, clinging like a huge yellow leech. He saw the mountain-lion's head buried almost to the flattened, rounded ears in the mane of his victim, the tail switching, the fastened claws with blood streaming from their grip. He half raised his rifle, then lowered it. Never could he shoot that close-clinging beast without hitting the horse!

Peter's heart was torn with pity. Perhaps a shot in the air would scare the lion off. Again his brain warned him: A shot might well divert to him the fury of the lion, balked of his prey. And very likely it would draw the attention of any Indians in the vicinity.

Hesitant, he might have watched the drama to its end in helpless fascination. But the black horse had seen him. Here was man, long-sought through weary, lone-

some days—man, his friend and protector—man, who would save him in this moment of deadly peril!

The black galloped straight toward Peter.

An almost overwhelming impulse to turn and run back into the woods seized the boy. An eight-foot mountain-lion, blood-crazed with the imminence of a kill, was being carried toward him at full speed. No man could calmly await such an apparition. Only one who loved horses would have held his ground—and not many such!

But Peter had caught the frantic, beseeching look in the Morgan's wildly rolling eyes. He stood his ground, rifle ready.

The cougar, eyes and nose buried deep in mane, had not yet sensed the presence of a human on the scene. But he instantly was aware that the jolting buck-jumps had given way to a gallop. This was his chance. He drew up one hindleg for the fatal disemboweling stroke.

It was never delivered. A bullet, then another, thudded into his tawny body. Caution forgotten, Peter fired with the muzzle almost against the beast's hide. He loaded, and fired again until the magazine was empty. Snarling and screeching, the big cat relaxed his grip and slumped to the ground. On his back, he clawed convulsively and spat at his enemy. Peter, shaking with rage and fear, clubbed his rifle and battered the flat skull until the malevolent yellow-green eyes glazed and the twitching body was still.

The boy straightened up unsteadily. He dropped his rifle barrel, the stock splintered from it.

Night was falling. He moved toward the dark bulk of the black horse. Faltering, uncertainly, but irresistibly drawn, the horse moved toward him. This was his rescuer, company in his loneliness! Memories of a boy who once had fed him apples by the roadside came over him—a boy like this one.

The black horse stood quiet while his forehead was stroked. He pressed his muzzle against the friendly shoulder. When Peter twisted a hand in the mane and led him back toward the stream to bathe his wounds, the black horse followed gladly.

Between them passed the strong, heart-warming current felt when two meet who all their lives will be fast friends.

CHAPTER FIVE

STABLE CALL



HE trumpeter of the guard sounded Stable Call. Its notes floated softly across the parade-ground of the frontier Army post and set the familiar words to jingling in the minds of the troopers who heard the call.

*Come, get to the stable
As fast as you're able,
Water your horses and give 'em some corn.
For if you don't do it,
The Colonel will know it
And then you will rue it, as sure as you're born.*

The trumpeter of the guard, an ex-lieutenant of Confederate cavalry named Elliot, told himself that the tone of his high G was not all it should be, though as a matter of fact it was clear and bell-like.

Old Taylor the guardhouse dog, a mournful mongrel with a strong bloodhound strain, gazed up at the trumpeter sadly in seeming agreement. High G's hurt his ears. He howled.

Private "Peruna" Simmons, the perennial prisoner, was marched out to perform post fatigue duties. Old Taylor, his confidant and companion, followed him.



Along red ranks signal mirrors flashed in the sun as the Indians mustered for the attack.

Troop horses, from the bays of "A" Troop to the blacks of "K," recognized the call and stamped and nickered in anticipation.

Troopers, turning out of barracks to march to stable, grumbled that they had been fools when they joined the cavalry to be chambermaids to a lot of plugs. Later, doing dismounted drill, they would grouse that it was damned doughboy work and they hadn't listed in the cavalry for such.

First Sergeant Samuel Smith, a Major of Illinois Volunteers in the Civil War, and the other top sergeants, took the reports of platoon sergeants. From barrack walls echoed "— Platoon, present or accounted for" in an astonishing variety of accents: Yankee twangs and Southern drawls; the brogue of Sergeant Rourke, the guttural German of Sergeant Schmidt, and the rolled French R's of Sergeant Pinchon. Of such was the United States Army in the 1870's.

Captain Bone, Lieutenant Hatton, and all other troop and platoon commanders emerged from their quarters and strode toward the stables. In other regiments it might be possible to catch some extra sleep and let a junior officer or the sergeants take stables. But not in the Fourth Cavalry. There you would "rue it, as sure as you're born."

In one set of the married quarters, Sally Ann Lindsay, fourteen, pushed back from the breakfast-table and announced that she was going to stand stables this morning. She would, her mother told her, do nothing of the sort—not after the language she had picked up there last time! Captain, Brevet Major Lindsay, arranged his adjutant's aiguillette, buckled on his saber and hurried out to report to the Commanding Officer.

It was only six o'clock, but Colonel, Brevet Major General Randall Slidell Mackenzie, commanding the Fourth Cavalry, had taken his stand where he could scan the parade-ground. If anything failed to happen that should happen or if anything happened that should not happen, those responsible would promptly discover the truth of the trumpet call's line: "The Colonel will know it."

But nothing untoward occurred. Horses were watered and fed and groomed carefully under the watchful super-

vision of troop officers and noncommissioned officers. A *click-click-click* sounded along the picket lines as brushes were knocked against currycombs to remove dust rubbed from sleek hides.

Yet something unusual was taking place. At Number One Post the sentry had halted two early visitors—a boy and a black horse. The boy's clothes were ragged. He was haggard and limping. It seemed odd that he was not riding but only walking beside the horse whose mane he was clutching. Jagged, half-healed scars on the horse's back might be the explanation.

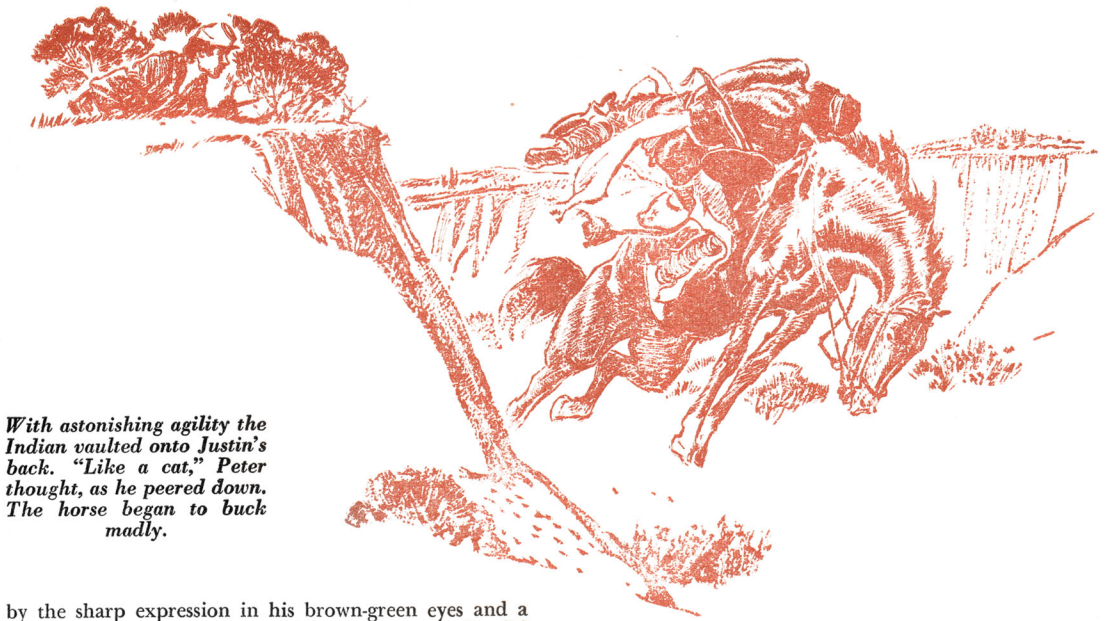
Peter Shannon was too weary to remember how he had found his way out of the hills—even how many days he and the horse had wandered. For the most part he had wisely let the Morgan lead him. To that reliance, he was certain, he owed his life. Never once had the horse attempted to run away. He had seemed as desperately eager for Peter's companionship as the boy was for his, and the black was plainly grateful for Peter's care of the wounds. Footsore though he was, the boy never had tried to mount on the scarred back.

Both of them had been on their last legs when they heard the trumpet call. As they reached the Army post to which it had guided them, both, the boy and the horse, experienced a strong sensation which was more than relief at finding human habitation. They seemed to have come to a place where they belonged.

But obviously that emotion was not shared by the corporal of the guard who had come at the sentry's call. . . .

"Well, what's wanted, Number One?"

Corporal Rick had just begun a quiet nap in the guardhouse and was annoyed at being disturbed. He was fairly tall and his uniform fitted well. His hair, deep auburn under the black campaign hat set at a jaunty angle, was a shade most women envied. A rakish type of good looks was undeniably his but they were marred



With astonishing agility the Indian vaulted onto Justin's back. "Like a cat," Peter thought, as he peered down. The horse began to buck madly.

by the sharp expression in his brown-green eyes and a habitual twist at the corners of his small mouth. He did not wait for an answer to his own question but snapped: "A couple of tramps, eh? Trying to bum some hand-outs off the U. S. Army! Well, nothing doing. We don't eat none too well ourselves."

Peter started to speak, but the other shut him off.

"Never mind the hard-luck story—heard it before. And if you're trying to sell the Army that nag—"

Peter, firing up, shouted at him: "I'd never sell this horse!"

"Not for much, you won't," Rick retorted. "Move on, you and the crowbait."

The sentry started to protest, "Aw, Corp," but desisted, knowing it would only earn him a tongue-lashing. Peter's pride would not let him make an appeal. He turned the Morgan and they moved off. Farther along they might find a hospitable ranch.

"Hold on there," another voice called, its accent faintly Southern.

The trumpeter of the guard had walked up unobserved. Like Rick, he was tall and handsome—but debonaire rather than swaggering. His hair was raven-black. In his dark eyes was a restless, searching look. Above the broad, point-down corporal's chevrons on his blue sleeves was the hunting-horn insignia which indicated he was a trumpeter, an assignment also signified by two narrow yellow stripes along his breeches, lighter blue than his blouse. Over his left shoulder was slung his brightly-polished trumpet.

"Hold on," he called again to the departing pair. "Rick, give the lad a chance. You never even took the trouble to question him."

"Mind your own business, Elliot," Rick snapped. "You're wearing no more stripes than me. I'm corporal of the guard and I know my duties."

"You are," the trumpeter conceded placatingly. "But both the boy there and the horse look like they've had a tough time. Reckon they might have information that'd interest Headquarters?"

"Rats!" the other snarled. "Just tramps." The corners of his mouth took on a more sneering twist. He knew the trumpeter once had worn and still loved the Confederate gray—that, having been a Rebel officer, he was disqualified from holding a commission in the United

States Army and must serve in the ranks. Rick was well aware how to irritate this man he both envied and disliked.

"You're due at the guardhouse, Corporal-Trumpeter," he said. "Little Boy Blue, go blow your horn."

Elliot flushed darkly. "Meet me back of the picket lines when we're off duty, Rick," he suggested, "and I'll drum a few more nursery rhymes into you." He turned his back on his opponent, went over to Peter and began questioning him rapidly and quietly. In a few moments he was facing the corporal of the guard again.

"Rick, this young fellow was one of the few that escaped from the wagon-train massacre. The General will want to talk to him. You'd better notify the officer of the guard or I will."

Rick glared and swung away.

"Come along, young fellow. What's your name? Shannon? You look as if you could use some grub," Elliot said.

"My horse—" Peter began.

"I'll take care of him," the trumpeter assured him. "Think of your horse first, do you, young Shannon? I declare, you'd make a right good cavalryman!"

FED, WASHED, HIS RAGS exchanged for fatigue clothes lent him by Elliot, Peter followed the officer of the guard to Headquarters. He was actually to meet General Mackenzie of whom his father had talked so often! During the last months of the war John Shannon had served in the cavalry division commanded by the General. Mackenzie's dashing leadership and striking personality had made him his troop commander's hero. Peter could picture his father's eyes shining now and hear him holding forth on General "Mac."

"Graduated Number One in his class at West Point, my boy. That takes doing. In the war he won four brevets for gallantry and was wounded I don't know how often. At Second Bull Run he was shot through the shoulders. Soon as he could sit up he wrote his mother: 'I am wounded in the back but I was not running away.' At Petersburg he was right up in the line directing fire, and two fingers of the hand he was pointing with were shot off. He led a charge at Winchester down on the Reb batteries, carrying his hat up on the point of his

saber. Shell cut his horse in two. General Mac looked up from the ground where he was tying up his bleeding leg with a handkerchief and said, "That's what you call dismounting without the numbers."

"I tell you, Peter, the man was incredible. He was hit in the foot and then in the leg at Cedar Creek. One horse was killed under him. A round shot bowled him off his second mount and stunned him. When he came to, he couldn't use his arms—temporarily paralyzed. He ordered himself lifted back into the saddle and resumed command.

"Believe me, you soldiered under General Mac! Everybody was scared not to. He was a strict disciplinarian, like his father before him. His father, who was a commander in the Navy, hanged three men for mutiny on his brig and one of 'em was the son of the Secretary of War. Some of the men General Mac disciplined vowed they'd shoot him in the back during the next battle. Then they'd see him out in front leading a charge and they'd cheer their lungs out for him, and follow anywhere he led. You've got to have discipline—without it an army's just a mob. And what's a youngster without discipline, Pete?"

"A brat, sir," Peter had answered, grinning.

"Right. There's a long chance you might run into Mackenzie. He's stationed somewhere in Texas, where you're going. If you do, he won't remember me—but present my respects."

Peter straightened his shoulders. Now he was being ushered into the presence of his father's hero!

The two stars of Mackenzie's brevet rank gleamed on his shoulder-straps but glowed no brighter than his eyes, which seemed to burn into Peter. In the cast of his countenance was some of the dourness of his Scotch forebears. The habit of command had compressed his mouth under its dragoon's mustache, and there were lines graven by pain from old wounds and rheumatism. Yet strong in him was a sense of loyalty, of justice and of generosity. Evidence of those traits often lightened his stern look.

Peter stood at attention in front of the General's desk and said as his father had taught him: "Sir, Peter Shannon reports to the Commanding Officer."

Mackenzie smiled. "You've been in the Army? No, you're too young."

"My father was, though, sir. A captain of cavalry—he served under the General at Five Forks and Appomattox, and told me to present his respects."

Mackenzie knit his brow for an instant and said: "Yes, John Shannon. I remember him well: A very able officer—one of my best troop commanders."

Warm with pride at the praise of his father, Peter was able to give a graphic account of the massacre of the wagoners, though the memory of it still sent shivers up and down his spine. The General put many questions. He must find and punish the guilty Indians. The Fourth Cavalry had not reached the scene until the next morning when all the tracks nearby had been washed out by the heavy rain.

Finally the General declared: "Your uncle's dead—and you are lucky to be alive. I'll see to sending you back home to your family."

"Please, sir, I don't want to go," Peter protested. "I'd like to join the Regiment and serve against the Indians that killed Uncle Jim."

"You're too young," Mackenzie ruled, "though I might enlist you as a trumpeter. But not without your parents' consent."

"I think they'll consent now, sir. I'll write at once."

"Very well. Meanwhile I'll attach you for rations as a civilian employee. You might be able to help us spot some of those raiders, if they're back on the reservation."

"Thanks a lot, sir. I'll do all I can. But there's one more thing: There's my horse, the one I found and brought in—or he brought me in."

"If you join up, young Shannon, you'll have to dispose of him. Only officers are entitled to private mounts. Maybe you could ship him home."

"We'd kind of like to stick together, sir."

Mackenzie's dour look softened. "I understand. Well, I tell you, Shannon, if he's sound, you can sell him to the Government, and I'll assign him to your troop. What is he? A black? To 'K' Troop then." The General smiled. "I'm talking as if you both were already in the Fourth."

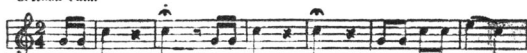
So they were—in Peter's imagination. As in a rosy dream coming true, he saw himself in Army blue, the crossed sabers of the cavalry on his jaunty forage-cap, yellow stripes down his breeches. He was astride the Morgan horse. Indian bullets were whistling by, and the black curveted and pranced a little but in defiance, not fear. Peter controlled him easily, reins in his left hand, trumpet at the carry in his right. The entire Fourth Cavalry in column of squadrons, sabers drawn, rose in stirrups as General Mackenzie turned and commanded: "Trumpeter, sound the charge!"

Nobody could day-dream with impunity in Mackenzie's presence. What the General actually said, breaking through Peter's martial imaginings, was a gruff, "That's all."

Peter jumped—and took his departure hastily.

CHAPTER SIX

BEHIND CALL.



AFTER several weeks on the sick list to recover from his wounds, the black Morgan was examined and passed as sound by the veterinary and duly bought as a remount by the United States Government. He was neatly shod by a blacksmith. Then he was turned into the corral of "K," the black-horse troop.

He merged into what might be called a miniature Black Sea where tossing heads, waving tails and constantly shifting, glossy bodies produced the effect of waves rolling over an expanse of dark ocean. Adjoining corrals of other troops—not all twelve troops of the Fourth Cavalry were now stationed at the post—showed further color separation. There were two troops of bays, dark and light; two of sorrels, one of chestnuts, and one of grays including a number of white horses, called grays in the Army. The mounted band and the regimental trumpeters also rode grays in conformance with an ancient custom for cavalry musicians.

This system of color separation improved the appearance of an outfit and aided in its identification at a distance; also it made easier the cutting out of horses, mixed in a herd. Only in one case was the color scheme ruined. Luckless Headquarters Troop had been forced to take all the leftovers and odd shags. In consequence it was a hodgepodge of roans, piebalds or pintos, buckskins, and claybanks which, being duns with black-striped legs, a black streak down their backs, and black manes and tails, reminded one somewhat of zebras. They were all good horses, but Headquarters Troop suffered from a sense of inferiority and a nickname of "The Brindles."

The descendant of Justin Morgan had joined a crack troop when he was loosed among those horses all of his own color. The members of "K" Troop, mounted on their black steeds, considered themselves, as black-horse troops often do, altogether the most dashing and formidable outfit in the Regiment. And the horses carried themselves as if they completely concurred.

But the newcomer was at once shown that, although his hide was the right hue, he did not yet belong. It was exactly like a new boy arriving for his first day at school.

The old horses trotted up to look him over critically and skeptically. Some of them, like members of the student council appointed to welcome freshmen, cordially rubbed noses with him. Others, holding aloof until this ceremony was past, pranced over with obvious intent. This new fellow had best be put in his place!

One of them bit at the Morgan's ears. Another aimed a kick at his ribs. A third charged down on him, scuffing up dust. Other troop horses stood around to watch.

The Morgan had run for his life from the black stallion on the *Llano Estacado*. But he was taking nothing from such as these. Snorting and squealing, he whirled on his attackers. More agile than they, he avoided most of their kicks and bites. In the first few minutes he managed three sharp nips in return and landed with a resounding whack of hoofs on one opponent. Twice he dodged the horse that liked to charge; the third time he countered with a charge of his own. He plunged into the other, took him off balance, hit him hard with a sturdy shoulder and bowled him over, rolling him in the dust.

The jamboree ended only when the stable guard came shouting into the corral and broke it up. The Morgan had proved himself and was accepted. Only the equine bully who had done the charging showed a disposition to quarrel on; he was quelled by a heavy black named Big Bill, who was the First Sergeant's horse and lived up to it by acting as one having authority, though at times he relaxed and played the clown. Big Bill had been taught tricks in his younger days, and to the immense discomfiture of his dignified rider, he would sometimes sit down on his haunches, like a dog or a cat, to rest.

Some of the other Sergeants' mounts—Old Lead, Bird-shy, and the mare Suzette—made friends with the new black.

All the goings-on in the corral had been watched from a corner of the fence with interest and amusement by Major Lindsay, the Adjutant, an experienced and devoted horseman. He had enjoyed the little drama of the Morgan's arrival. Now the dust settled, he scrutinized the new horse more closely.

First-rate cavalry mount, he adjudged. Must be the animal brought in by the young fellow who got away from that wagon-train massacre. Morgan horse, by the look of him. "Doubt if there's even been a cross there," he mused. "Wouldn't mind owning that little black myself. Reminds me of General Sherman's Rienzi—a three- or four-year-old Morgan gelding, too, when I knew him in the war. Coal black, with white feet like this one. But Rienzi's taller—about sixteen hands."

THROUGH MAJOR LINDSAY'S HEAD ran some lines of the stirring poem on Sheridan's ride to rally Union troops routed at Cedar Creek. Thomas Buchanan Read had written it only a few days after the battle:

*Be it said, in letters both bold and bright:
Here is the steed that saved the day
By carrying Sheridan into the fight,
From Winchester—twenty miles away!*

"Fine cavalryman, Phil Sheridan," the Major mused. "Commands the Department of the West, and we'll be seeing him down here one of these days. His name is recorded in history as one of our best Generals in the War of the Rebellion. Yet I'll bet that seventy or eighty years from now a good many people will remember his name chiefly from that poem—about him and his horse."

"And this black Morgan here in the corral is the image of Rienzi—except for size—right down to the white feet. Let me think, though. Rienzi had three white stockings. This fellow has four. *Cuatralbo*, as the Mexicans say.

"Why, I've seen this horse before! I'll swear that's the black Morgan I bargained for with that Vermonter when I was out buying remounts! Old Tafoya, the Comanchero, got him. This youngster who's joining up as a

trumpeter brought that horse in. Must have stolen him from Tafoya. Not that I care what's rustled off that old buzzard, but he probably can prove ownership in this case, and there's bound to be trouble if he spots this horse, bought and branded 'U.S.' That young recruit isn't as innocent as he looks! . . . Farrier!" the Major shouted.

A soldier emerged from the stable. "Yes sir, Major," he answered.

"Find that recruit who just came into your troop and have him report to me at my quarters at once."

PETER SHANNON STILL FOUND it hard to realize he was actually enlisted in the United States Cavalry. He could guess at the arguments his father had used to persuade his mother. Concentration on school would have been difficult after what had happened to Uncle Jim—after all he had gone through himself. "Get it out of your system," John Shannon had written. "I'll give you a year or two. Then I'm buying you out and sending you off to college. And no argument." There had been an added proviso that Peter was to work in some studying.

Peter's present errand, however, convinced him that he had undoubtedly joined up. He had been ordered to draw uniform and equipment at the quartermaster warehouse and was now engaged in signing for a miscellany of articles worth more money than he had ever had.

Across the counter Quartermaster Sergeant Connors, gray and wizened, confronted him with the suspicious air habitual to quartermaster sergeants, bank tellers, and the like. But there was a twinkle in his one remaining eye. The other had been lost in battle—in the Civil War, said Sergeant Connors, but in reality it had been in the Mexican War at Buena Vista.

"By the name of yez, Recruit Shannon, there's Irish blood in ye," observed the old veteran. "'Tis gin'rally acknowledged that the Irish are the best soldiers in the U. S. Army. Such bein' the case, I'll not be issuin' yez the ould and worn equipment I was plannin' to git off me shelves, but only the best of iv'rythin'."

"Thank you, sir," Peter responded politely.

"Niver say 'sor' to a noncommissioned officer," the other corrected. "Now watch what I give yez and what ye'll be owin' Uncle Sam for."

Peter stared in utmost fascination while arms, clothing, and equipment were heaped before him. In a practiced singsong, interspersed with illuminating asides, Sergeant Connors enumerated:

"Wan carbine, Springfield, Model of 1869, breech-loader, single-shot, caliber .45. (And a foine little wanshot gun it is, though officers and min who kin buy Henry and Remington rep'atin' rifles does so, and the hostile Injuns does likewise from rapscallion traders, bliss thim!) . . . Wan sling, carbine. . . . Wan revolver, Colt, Army Model, caliber .44, compl't with holster. (Six shots, six Injuns—if aimed with care and fired whin too clod to the varmints for comfort). . . . Wan saber, scabbard, and belt. (Ye could stick the enemy quicker and further away with the ould lance!). . . . Wan trumpet, with yellow worsted to be braided for sling. (The deadliest weepion of thim all, Recruit Shannon, and niver let me catch yez practicin' on it anywheres in me hearin'!)"

The heaps on the counter grew higher and broader. The excellent saddle invented by General McClellan and numerous other horse equipment; saddle-blanket, nose-bag, heavy leather halter, iron picket-pin with long lariat, two horseshoes with extra nails, currycomb, horsebrush. Personal equipment, such as a pair of gray woolen blankets, canteen, haversack, tin coffee-cup.

Peter passed from a state of fascination to one of dismay. "With all that stuff on me and on my horse, how'll I ever get into the saddle, Sergeant?" Peter begged, worried. "We hoist yez aboard with a derrick, me boy," Connors declared. "There ye sit, fortified before and foreinst by

goods and accoutrymints. Jist don't iver git off and expict to git on ag'in unless the derrick's handy."

Items of uniform followed: Stable frock of white cotton. Boots and spurs. Campaign-hat and forage-cap. Jacket of dark blue and breeches of lighter blue, with reinforced seat—an advantage pointed out by Sergeant Connors with a grin and the remark:

"Ye'll be glad of that. 'Twas said of the First Iowa after hard service in the late war that they niver would run from the enemy nor from a lady. And why not, yez ask? Sure, and they had no sates in their britches!"

The Sergeant shoved over the uniform with additional advice. "Have thim clothes altered to fit yez by the company tailor. He'll be the soldier ye see tryin' to mount his horse from the off side.

"And by-the-by, ye'll sign for your horse too. Niver be forgettin' that if he or any of the rist of this stuff is missin' not in line of duty, Private Shannon, P., pays for it. Whin ye draw jist sixteen dollars a month, figure out some toime how long it'll take ye to settle for a lost horse prancin' acrost the payroll to the chune of \$132.50."

With which sage counsel, Quartermaster Sergeant Connors waved him away. Peter had just picked up the first load to carry to barracks, when an orderly called from the doorway:

"Shannon there? All right—report to Major Lindsay at his quarters. You better make it on the double, rookie."

Peter, hurrying to the Adjutant's quarters, was confronted by a girl leaning on the gate of the picket fence inclosing the small yard. His glance was brief and casual but big hazel eyes, a saucy nose with freckles on it, and glossy brown hair braided into two fat pigtails registered on his consciousness. She did not move but smiled up at him. Her teeth were small and very white.

"Hello, boy," she greeted him.

Boy! The nerve of her! Despite long thin legs like a colt's, she couldn't be more than twelve. Well, give her fourteen at the most. "Boy" from her—and to a Regular cavalryman! Of course Peter had not yet had a chance to get into his uniform, but the snip ought to be able to see! He'd put her in her place—he'd fix her!

"Hello yourself, brat," he snapped back.

SHE DIDN'T SEEM TO MIND in the least. Peter was surprised into asking why she didn't object to being called a brat.

"I am a brat, an Army brat," she avowed. "All Army children are called brats, and I guess we really are—sort of." She smiled again, and Peter could not help noticing that when she did, her nose wrinkled a little and became even saucier. "Mother says I've never been taken in hand enough. When I was younger, Mother was sick quite a bit, and most of the time the only nurse I had was a soldier—Pop's dog-robber."

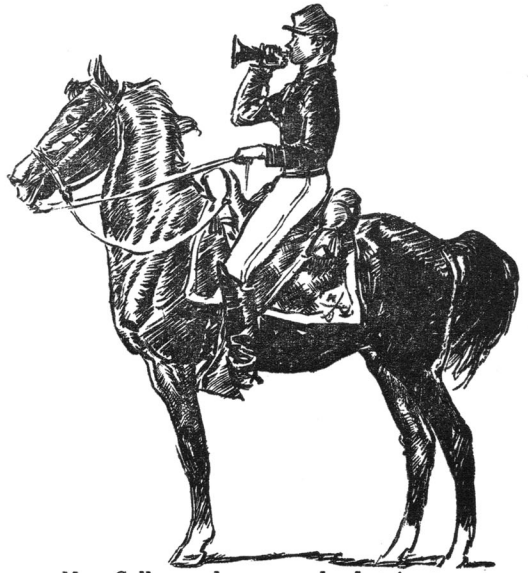
"Dog-robber?"

"My father's striker—his soldier orderly. You are ignorant, aren't you?" She flashed that smile at him again.

"I—"

"Lots of the time I was tethered to the post flagpole with a lariat, or picketed just like a horse, to keep me from straying. But I broke loose. I never did care for hanging around quarters. I like it down at the stables or at the mule-skinner's lines, but Mother says I pick up bad language there. Say, you ought to've heard me once when Pop came home from a long campaign! I was just a youngster then, and he'd been gone so long I didn't remember him. You see, he came in late one night, and when I woke up next morning and went into Mother's room, there Pop was, and I thought he was just some strange man. I began pounding him with my fists and hollering, 'You blankety-blank-blank! Get out of my mother's bed!'"

Peter, unable to resist laughing, now tried again to break in, but vainly. The girl was wound up.



Mess Call was always popular but far too often disillusioning

"Pop is going to give me a derringer," she announced. "He says I'm old enough now to carry one and use it in an emergency. Mother's had one for years. Once when Pop and a small escort were bringing her and me in an Army ambulance through bad Indian country—"

Peter succeeded in stemming the flow. "Listen, what's-your-name," he interrupted. "I've—"

"Sally Ann," the girl supplied. "Just let me tell you this first; this is what Pop told Mother then: He said, 'If the Indians jump us, and I'm hit, you'll know what to do. You've got your derringer. Remember the squaws are crueller than the bucks. Don't let 'em get the baby, or you, alive!' And that's true, boy. If you knew Indians—"

Peter's outburst was indignant enough to gain him the floor. "I kind of think I do!" he flared. "A while ago I was a teamster in a wagon-train that—"

"Oh!" cried Sally Ann. "Were you in that? Tell me all about it!"

She proved to be a good listener and a flattering one. Peter admitted to himself that she was a rather likable kid after all. He went on to tell her about himself—how he had enlisted and was to be a trumpeter in Troop "K."

"The best darn' troop in the whole regiment," Sally Ann enthusiastically acclaimed. Then she spied yellow worsted strands protruding from one of Peter's pockets.

"That's for your trumpet sling," she identified it, pointing. "Let me braid it for you. You probably don't know how, and goodness knows I've had practice enough on these pigtails."

Sally Ann braided, while Peter held ends. Such was the tableau beheld by Major Lindsay when he stepped out on his porch. Abruptly Peter snapped to attention, saluted and said:

"Sir, Private Shannon, 'K' Troop, reports to the Adjutant as ordered."

"My orders were, 'Report at once.' That was a good half-hour ago. Is there any reason for the delay?" demanded the officer coldly.

"Well—no, sir, none," Peter answered.

"The deuce there isn't!" Sally Ann exclaimed. "Pop, I was the delay."

"That doesn't justify it in the least," her father ruled sternly.

"Oh, come on, Pop! He's only a rookie," Sally Ann pleaded.

Peter drew himself up even straighter. Angrily and loftily he addressed the girl.

"I may be only a recruit," he declaimed, "but I am the son of a soldier who taught me—or tried to teach me—obedience to orders." He faced toward her father and repeated: "Sir, I have no excuse."

Major Lindsay shooed the suppressed and discomfited Sally Ann indoors.

"Now, Shannon," he said, "I've heard the story you told the General about that horse you brought into the post and sold to the Government. I will not at this time question your assertion that you found him out on the range. Let it stand that the horse was strayed, not stolen.

"But I happen to remember that black Morgan well and I know his owner. The horse must be returned to him immediately."

Peter relaxed from his rigid attention. He stretched out one hand in an imploring gesture, and his mouth worked in mute protest, though he spoke no word. What good would any word do? The horse he had saved, the horse that had led him out of the wilderness, was beyond his control now—sold to the Government, and inevitably to be returned to his rightful owner.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MUSICAL



NO report of the raid by the Southern Cheyennes which gave the black Morgan his freedom ever had reached Headquarters of the Fourth Cavalry. Such affairs were commonplace in the Texas Panhandle. Army garrisons, few and widely scattered, were far too occupied to concern themselves with the killing of a few men by Indians—particularly if the victims were Mexicans—or with the running off of a horse-herd or other plundering. If Mackenzie had had word, he would undoubtedly have remarked: "So the Cheyennes knocked off old José Pieda Tafoya, did they? Good for them. Saves me trouble. I always meant to hang the old devil first chance I got."

But the Indians on the reservations knew of the raid. The Comanches and the Kiowas were angry at the Cheyennes for trespassing on their territory and for cutting off such a useful source of arms and firewater as Tafoya. They were forced to deal with other Comancheros—Caddo Jim, a Caddo Indian, and the like—and these boosted their barter rates. However, the Indians naturally told nothing of the story of Señor Tafoya's bad luck. Let soldiers continue to believe that Tafoya was alive and active. It would divert their attention from other traders in arms.

Major Lindsay, reporting his positive knowledge of the ownership of the Morgan horse to General Mackenzie, emphasized the embarrassment to the Army which a claim by the rightful owner would cause.

"You're right, Lindsay," the commanding officer concurred. "If I ever catch Tafoya, and have the scrap more of evidence against him I need, he must have no countercharge that might save his neck. He must not be able to say the U. S. Army stole a horse of his. Where is the old scoundrel now?"

"We don't know, sir. Haven't heard of him for some time. He must be lying low."

"And up to something," Mackenzie added. "But don't hold the idea that young Shannon rustled the horse. His father served under me in the war, and I'll vouch for the boy."

"Very well, sir. What disposition is to be made of the horse?"

"Return him—without my compliments—to Tafoya, but make no special effort to find the man. That bad penny will turn up. Meanwhile—well, keep quiet about the whole business and let the horse do troop duty. He might get killed in our next Indian fight. I'd say that would be better for him than being turned back to Tafoya."

The Adjutant nodded grimly. "It certainly would, sir, from all I've heard of the way Tafoya treats horses."

THE MORGAN HORSE neighed and trotted to the corral fence when he sighted his master. It was almost more than Peter could bear. No matter how prized, how loved a possession, it becomes more precious still when about to be lost.

Peter gulped back a lump in his throat. He entered the corral and flung an arm around the arched neck, rubbing the hollow between the bones of the lower jaw and laying his face against the velvet muzzle. The horse snorted softly and wrinkled his nose affectionately against the boy's check.

Peter thought: "They're going to take him away from me, and I don't even know his name!"

So this was a Morgan horse. That was what Major Lindsay had said, and now Peter recognized characteristics he had failed to notice. His father had talked a good deal about Morgans, his regiment having once been brigaded with the First Vermont Cavalry.

"It was one of the finest marching and fighting regiments in the war," John Shannon had told him, "and a lot of the credit for that was due to its mounts being almost all Morgans.

"Grand horses, Morgans," Peter's father mused. "Since this nation was young, they've hauled logs, stoneboats, plows and barges. They've won races. They've taken doctors to their patients, and families to church. We've fought our wars from their backs. They're helping to win the West now.

"And they're all of the great line founded by a little bay stallion. Some say he was sired by the blooded steed of a Tory colonel, stolen—when tied outside a tavern—by three American soldiers in our Revolution. Whatever his blood, Justin Morgan must have been a remarkable horse, to leave the descendants he has."

Peter stroked the black's small, wide-set ears. He said to himself: "I'll call my horse that—Justin, after his forefather. Justin—it's a good name. Isn't it, old fellow?" He stood back at arm's-length and regarded the black. The horse gazed back at him out of dark, expressive eyes and tossed his head.

"Justin it is, then," Peter decided; and half-aloud, he told himself: "Dad always wanted a Morgan, but never did get one. Now here I have one of my own." He loved this horse more than he had his first pony—more even than the horse he'd left at home. They'd been through so much together!

Suddenly he emerged from his daydream and remembered that he didn't own the Morgan. Someone else did, and the Army was going to give him back to that owner as soon as he could be found.

Peter turned abruptly and hurried out of the corral. He could not quite wink away the moisture in his eyes. The sun glistened on it and betrayed him to Corporal Rick who was walking by. That auburn-haired trooper planted himself in Peter's path, arms akimbo on his hips, a sneer curling the corners of his small mouth.

"Weep no more, my lady," he sang tauntingly.

Crimson with mortification and rage, Peter glared at him, fists clenching. For a few moments he was unable to speak. Then some advice of his father's came back to him: "Don't ever lose your temper, son, if you can help it, even if you're about to get into a scrap. You'll put up a better fight if you've got some sort of control over yourself."

So he managed to speak in fairly even tones. "You've got stripes on your sleeves, Corporal. Maybe I'm only a rookie, but I know the regs. about striking a noncom. Now if you—"

"—If I took off my shirt with the chevrons on it?" Hay Rick finished for him. "Why, certainly—happy to oblige! Always do anyway, before I spank children."

He was unbuttoning his shirt when a soft Southern voice sounded behind him. "Reckon you forgot, Hay, you had a previous engagement with me down by the picket line," Corporal-Trumpeter Elliot reminded him.

"Little Boy Blue again," Rick drawled. "I'll get around to you soon as I've slapped some discipline into this infant."

"No, Hay," Elliot answered, stepping in front of him. "I can't wait. I'm one of these fiery, headstrong Southerners you hear about."

"The kind we just got done licking the daylight out of?"

"Yes, that kind. But I don't seem to remember it so well. Now if you would be kind enough to refresh my memory, Corporal—"

"Happy to oblige, Corporal. Come on—"

Peter pushed in between the two, both a head taller than he. Hands against chests, he shoved them back.

"What's the matter with you two?" he yelled furiously. "It's my fight!"

"Nobody's fight," said a new voice.

Tall First Sergeant Smith was standing over them. He looked stern, but there was a trace of a grin on his bearded face. "Nobody's fight, bantam," he told Peter. "Not yours, not anybody's. Elliot, Rick, get back to quarters. There'll be no fighting in this troop. Save it for the Indians!"

EVERY BOY, EVERY YOUNG MAN, should have an older man—or several of them—to whom he can look up, a man or men he trusts and respects and admires almost to the point of worship, someone he can follow and pattern himself after and count upon in time of trouble. This idol may or may not be his father. If it fails to be, that is one of the quiet tragedies of life.

Peter's father measured up and held his place in the boy's heart. But he was far away. Fortunately there were others to supplement him, and John Shannon himself would have been glad that it was so, for he wisely knew his son's need. And these older men of his son's choice were men his father would have chosen for him.

It was not Mackenzie. To Peter, Mackenzie was one to be followed loyally, to be greatly respected; but he was remote and regarded with awe not unmingled with dread—a Jehovah of the Thunders. Nor was it Captain Bone or Lieutenant Hatton of Troop "K," fine officers and likable personalities though they were. On pedestals of his veneration Peter placed First Sergeant Samuel Smith, the ex-Major of Volunteers, and Corporal-Trumpeter Lance Elliot, the former Captain of Confederate cavalry.

Sergeant Smith—six feet four inches tall, and bearded—was a martial figure; yet the look of a scholar clung to him. Indeed he had been a college professor, a fine and inspiring teacher. Four bloody years in the Civil War had finished that career for him. Too restless to return to quiet civilian pursuits, like many another veteran, he had followed the only alternative he found possible: reenlistment in the Army. In spite of his excellent record as a squadron commander, he could obtain no commission. Congress had drastically reduced the Army, and there were many applicants for every vacancy. In the Fourth Cavalry every officer above the rank of second lieutenant was a Civil War veteran; the "shavetails" generally were young West Pointers.

As the top sergeant was a man out of his rightful niche, so was Corporal Elliot a man out of his time. The son of a wealthy planter, he had belonged to the chivalry of the

Old South where medieval knighthood had flowered again briefly, only to fade forever. Young Elliot had fought two duels. Wearing as a favor the scarf of his lady fair, he had mounted steed, couched lance and ridden in ring tilts. Rather than dispel the dream, the war had caused it to glow brighter. Elliot had ridden singing into battle, saber flashing, a captain on the staff of that dashing cavalier, J. E. B. Stuart. With peace had come his family's ruin and a disillusionment with life so bitter it was almost desperate. It put him into a Yankee uniform, making a mere trumpeter of him. But at least he still had a horse between his legs, and a sword at his side. And if the Comanches were no red knights so far as obedience to the precepts of chivalry was concerned, they were among the finest horsemen in the world, and not unworthy foemen.

Where Smith and Elliot led, young Peter Shannon followed. They taught him the lore of that gallant arm, the cavalry, and told him tales of the old Dragoons who once had held these same Texan marches against the Indians.

Elliot sang the *Dragon Song* for Peter, accompanying himself on the banjo which Joe Sweeney, *Jeb Stuart's* banjo-player, had taught him to strum.

*Oh, the dragoon bold he knows no care,
As he rides along with his uncropped hair;
He spends no thought on the evil star
That sends him away to the border war.*

*His form in the saddle he lightly throws
And on the moonlight scout he goes,
And merrily trolls some old-time song
As over the trail he bounds along.*

*Oh, blithe is the life a soldier leads
When a lawless freedom marks his deeds,
And gay his path o'er the wildwood sod
Where a white man's foot hath never trod.*

*Then cheer, boys, cheer for the girls afar,
We'll all go home at the close of the war,
And sadly tanned by a Southern sun,
We'll spin long yarns of the deeds we've done.*

Peter's mentors taught him pride in his own regiment. The First Dragoons had become the First Cavalry ("once commanded by Robert E. Lee," Elliot informed him, his eyes shining) and in 1861 the First had furnished cadre to form the Fourth, which had made a valiant record throughout the Civil War, participating in seventy-six actions—gallant charges and long sweeping raids.

But Peter could never banish the worry that kept gnawing at him. He had his heart's desire in being a cavalryman, yet a cavalryman was not a cavalryman without a mount, and he stood to lose his at any moment. Of course, they would assign him some nag or other when his present horse was returned to his owner. But his devotion and dependence belonged to the black Morgan, Justin; without him even a career under the crossed sabers of the cavalry seemed without savor. Never, with Justin gone, could he, like the dragoon bold, ride away to the border war and "know no care."

SALLY ANN LINDSAY found Peter at the corral where he spent much of his off-duty time with the horse he expected to see but little longer. She surveyed him critically and completely, from head to foot—the forage cap cocked a little to the right, the trim cavalry jacket, blue breeches stuffed into black boots, spurs glinting at their heels. Her big brown eyes lit with frank approbation.

"Hi, soldier," she greeted him.

Peter grinned. "Promoted me, haven't you? It was 'boy' last time."

The girl gave him an answering smile. "Listen," she began a bit breathlessly. "I'm not supposed to be down here. I've been ordered to keep away from stables. If I'm caught, somebody will take a pair of issue hairbrushes



"Swing her like you love her. Promenade!"

and beat the long roll on my little— Excuse me, but I forget sometimes to be ladylike."

Sally Ann blushed a little under the freckles, then hurried on: "The other day I butted in when you were reporting, and you got kind of mad at me—and I can't say I blame you."

"Aw, that's all right. Forget it." Peter was a little embarrassed. When the girl looked at him appealingly like that, he felt sort of stirred up inside.

"So I found out what all the shooting was about," she bubbled on. "I pumped Pop—and maybe I don't know how! 'He is no more than clay in my fair hands.' (That's something I read in a novel.) Well, the fuss was about your mount, wasn't it? And I bet it's this black gelding with four white feet right here."

Justin, head over the top rail, had been gazing at the pair throughout the conversation, with no attention whatever paid to him. He looked a little miffed.

At Peter's nod of confirmation, Sally Ann flung her arms around the black's neck. "Oh," she exclaimed, "isn't he a *darling!* No wonder you feel the way you do about him."

Peter's heart felt warm and his eyes were a little misty. "Know who he belonged to?" the girl cried, jerking her face out of the horse's thick mane. "A dirty old Comanchero named José Pieda Tafoya. He sells guns to the Indians to kill our troops and gets 'em liquored up on squirrel whisky."

"Squirrel whisky?"

"Sure. Makes 'em want to go out and climb a tree. Red lightning—rotgut stuff. Well, sir, some Cheyennes caught Tafoya, the old buzzard, t'other day. So cheer up, Private Shannon; it looks as if you'll stay mounted. The Cheyennes scalped old Tafoya proper."

"Scalped him!"

"You bet. Pop just got the story from Caddo Jim, another Indian trader. It sounds straight. Caddo Jim wouldn't have any reason to lie."

In his joy Peter grasped both the girl's hands in his. Then he flushed and dropped them hastily.

Said Sally Ann, her cheeks a little red, too: "Drop in at our kitchen some aft'. Ma Simmons, she's our cook and a spike at 'B' Troop—"

"'Spike?'" Peter repeated, puzzled.

"One of the troop laundresses," the girl sniffed. "My, you *are* ignorant! Ma Simmons makes grand cookies. Well, I've got to get out of here. 'By!' She waved and ran.

Cookies! Humph! She was only a child after all. He turned to hug the black horse at the fence—his horse now!

CHAPTER EIGHT

DRILL CALL



HE trouble with this Army is—"

First Sergeant Smith muttered the first line of the soldier's traditional and eternal plaint. Innumerable soldiers have chanted it countless times since the first army was formed. Of the ancient character of the rite, the former professor bending over his table in the orderly-room of "K" Troop was well aware. He also knew that those who wore the three-stripes-and-diamond chevron of his grade were supposed to be above soldiers' grouches. Nor was he ignorant that one of the troubles with the Army, most frequently mentioned by the rank and file, was first sergeants. Nevertheless, as he made out his fatigue details for the day, he went on:

"The trouble with this Army," he repeated and finished, "is too much shovel and too little carbine."

He was right, and the shovel he referred to was not employed for digging trenches but ditches. All manner of nonmilitary tasks were heaped on the garrisons of the frontier posts, so that there was never time in their waking hours for the necessary training and scouting and patrolling of Indians frequently on the warpath. The Army dug ditches and wells and built barracks because Congress allotted it no funds for civilian help. Hostile Indian tribes were not a national menace. After the Civil War—as had happened before and would again in the history of the United States—the Army was conveniently forgotten and neglected. So in the Southwest and West settlers were shot and lanced and hacked to death by red raiders, women were dragged off into miserable captivity, and the brains of babies were dashed out against walls of burning cabins, for not enough troops were available to protect them all. And when soldiers, veterans or recruits insufficiently trained fell in obscure prairie skirmishes, serving their country, that country seemed seldom to notice or to care.

Peter Shannon was luckier than most recruits. He was a good horseman before he enlisted. In the average cavalry regiment there was no time for instruction in equitation. Unhappy rookies, who had never ridden before, had to climb aboard a rough-gaited steed and trot off on a thirty-mile Indian chase, learning to ride en route. There was little or no opportunity for target practice because of the constant fatigue details.

But the Fourth Cavalry was exceptional. Mackenzie cut fatigues to a minimum and drove officers and enlisted men hard, demanding drill and strict discipline. All of the hardships and even less of the few comforts and the little recreation in the lot of a border command—such was the rule in the Fourth. Some men broke under the strain and deserted. The rest developed a stoical endurance and a fierce pride that they were tough enough to take it. Out of these Mackenzie forged the tempered steel weapon that was his regiment.

Peter's own training in the profession of arms wore him every day to the point of sheer exhaustion. Sergeant Smith first turned him and a group of other recruits over to the saber instructor, Sergeant Pinchon, a fiery little Frenchman with mustache and goatee, who closely resembled Napoleon III. He would have been called Master of the Sword in the old Dragoons, and he deserved that title. But when he appeared before his recruit detachment, his aspect as a *beau sabreur* was marred by two beautiful black eyes.

He brought his recruits to attention and glared at them out of his empurpled orbs.

"So, *mes enfants*, I come to teach you the saber," he snapped. "Will you give me the attention? But no, I respond for you. Instead you will be wondering who have presented the sergeant with the shiners. So first I tell you and be finish with it.

"There has been war in Europe. *La belle France* has by miserable chance been vanquished by Prussians. It happen there is some of that people in this regiment. In our band is a species of cow who is called Sergeant Seidlitz. As I pass his barrack he take his horn and to insult me he play at me *Die Wacht am Rhein*. Bah!

"I demand, *mes enfants*, shall I, a man of spirit, then remain tranquil? *Jamais!* I halt, I face him. I chant at him our song so splendid, *La Marseillaise*. And what does he do, that one? He only blows more. I sing louder. He then emits that music so miserable with *force majeure*.

"*Hélas!* The horn it is more powerful than the voice. I am drown out. It is time to attack. Having not my saber at my side, I kick him where he not like it. He strike me in the eyes, where you see. I seize his horn; with it I strike him on the head. Is it the little horn like the trumpet? But no! Happily it is the big horn—the tuba. Sergeant Seidlitz he is now in hospital.

"*C'est tout—so much for that. Attention!* Draw saber! *En garde!*"

He drilled them to a frazzle. He made them perform the *moulinet*—swinging the saber in a windmill-like arc to supple the wrist—until Peter was certain his arm was about to drop off. He taught them parries but insisted vehemently on offensive rather than defensive action. Each skillful attack, he told them, is at the same time a parry. And he pounded into them that they must use the point, not the edge.

"*La pointe, toujours la pointe!*" he cried. "For why? It arrive first—long before the blow with the edge—when you make the charge. You say it arrives not before a bullet from the revolver? Bah! Ten thousand times bah!"

EYES FLASHING (AT THE RECRUIT who had mentioned a revolver), drawn saber thrust out to the right, the little sergeant looked to Peter like a composite of all the swash-buckling swordsmen in all the romances he had ever read. Pinchon's legs were bowed as if gripping a horse he was about to ride into the fray. He fired the imaginations of his pupils, for the day of crashing cavalry charges was not yet done. The Civil War had abounded in them, and the recent Franco-Prussian War had seen such terrific cavalry combats as the Battles of Vionville and Mars le Tour. Sergeant Pinchon flung forward his weapon into the position of charge saber.

"The saber—*l'arme blanche!*" he exclaimed, his face alight. "Without it the cavalry is like the body without the soul. It is the saber, and the hope some day to flesh it in the foe, that sustains us. Let our sabers drink deep in many a fight. Nevaire let them rust in their scabbards, or glory is lost forever. Ah, that desire so ferocious to close headlong with the enemy! It is the desire of the cavalryman of all ages. It is the desire which the saber, and the saber alone, can satisfy!"

Peter and the other recruits, catching some of his enthusiasm, waited, breathing harder. But the sergeant fell silent—then stirred like a man awakening from a dream.

He sighed and regarded the awkward squad—their sabers clutched like carving-knives—with infinite disgust.

"Return saber," he commanded. "Into the scabbard, not the trouser-leg, stupid! For today, *assez*. Dismiss."

OTHER INSTRUCTORS NATURALLY favored the weapons they taught and discounted the saber. Sergeant Hanks, a tall Tennessean, addressed Peter and the rest with gravity on the subject of his specialty.

"Sure the saber's handy when you're out of ammunition. And you can toast hardtack on it over a campfire, if Pinchon aint lookin'. Revolver's good enough as a popgun. But it's the carbine you really knock 'em over with.

"This here Springfield's a good gun; be better if 'twas a magazine rifle, but repeaters aint issued. You can go buy one if you got the money—but you likely aint, or you wouldn't be in the Army. Anyways, thank yore stars 'taint a muzzle-loader like we had in the war. Caused trouble, them guns did, when a soldier got a mite rattled in action. After Gettysburg they picked up thousands of muzzle-loaders with from three to ten loads—cartridge and ball—rammed home in the barrel. One of 'em had twenty-three loads in. Know what'd happen to a feller that fired one o' them? She'd blow up kersmack in his face. He'd never have to do no more shavin'. He wouldn't have no more whiskers and, so fur as that goes, no more face!

"That's what'll happen to you ree-cruits if you stopper up the muzzle of this here carbine with a greased rag to keep out the rain, or if you let it git full o' sand.

"Recollect you got only one shot at a time with this carbine. Make it good. Don't never pull your trigger; squeeze it! And take yore time. Don't matter if a bunch of Injuns is gallopin' down on you, whoopin' and yellin'. Line up yore sights on one of 'em's chest. Squeeze off yore shot, and that's taps for one Injun and likely the charge, too. They won't keep comin' ag'in' good, steady shootin'.

"What's that y'say? Aint a revolver better at close quarters? Why let 'em git *thar*? I'm going to l'arn you to shoot this here carbine prone, sittin', kneelin', standin' and from off a hoss—so nobody gits to close quarters like you call 'em—and t'ell with yore popguns!"

Corporal Rick instructed the recruit squad in the revolver. Disliking him heartily though he did, Peter had to admit the fellow knew his subject. As Pinchon and Hanks had extolled their favorite arm, so Rick praised his. Undeniably the .44-caliber Army model Colt was an admirable weapon. Even cocked by hand (double action would not be introduced until 1877), it could put six heavy slugs of lead into a mark with incredible speed. Peter, hefting his, knew he held the power of life and death in his palm.

He felt Rick's hard gaze on him. "You, Shannon," the noncom barked. "You pointed that gun at me! Don't matter whether it's empty or not, I'm reporting you for it. That'll teach the lot of you never to point a gun at anybody you don't mean to shoot."

His small mouth curved in a malicious smile. "Well," he added, "maybe there is somebody you'd like to shoot. Better not try, though."

He spun his Colt by the trigger-guard like a gunman. Then he whirled and with seeming casualness fired six times at the mark, a small square of paper fastened to a cactus. Five bullet-holes appeared, grouped close to the target's center.

"There you are," Rick boasted. "At fifty yards too. I'll do my best with you dumb rookies, but none of you'll ever be able to hit anything smaller than a horse at over twenty-five yards.

"Just the same, the Colt's your best bet. No Injun's going to wait around for you to pot him with a carbine. And when a Comanche brave comes riding down on you

with a long lance, what good's your saber? Pull your six-shooter, and throw some lead into the redskin's belly!"

The revolver-advocate recruit was emboldened to speak up with: "That's what I've been a-sayin' right along." "Shut up," Rick ordered. "What do you know about it? You prob'ly haven't got the guts to shoot a man, red or white. Neither has Shannon. But he's beginning to think he'd kind of like to, aren't you, Shannon?"

Peter returned the corporal's shrewd and insinuating wink with a narrowed look and said nothing. But that was exactly what he had been thinking. And it was an unpleasant, disturbing thought that you might come to hate a man enough to want to kill him. He would have no compunctions about killing Indians. They were the enemy, and he had already fought them for his life that day at the wagon train. But to feel murderous toward a fellow-soldier, no matter how much he taunted you—that was not right, that would not do.

Peter stopped gritting his teeth. He managed to grin at Corporal Rick. That, the other had not expected; for a moment his too-handsome face was a picture of disappointment. Peter grinned again, more broadly.

IN ANY EVENT, Peter was left no time for brooding or for a private feud. Drillmasters put him through long hot hours of dismounted and mounted drill, of guard and outpost duty. Peter's quick ear soon learned to recognize the many trumpet calls, but he still was not taught to play the instrument which Quartermaster Sergeant Connors called "the deadliest weepin iv thim all." Later Corporal-Trumpeter Elliot would instruct him. First he must become the trooper, then the trumpeter.

Best of all was the instruction given by First Sergeant Smith. That born teacher took particular pains with Peter, well above the average recruit in intelligence and education. Smith tied all the other instruction together for him, showing how each weapon had its place, how a cavalryman must be able to handle all three competently. Also he coached the young trooper on the academic studies which Peter had promised his father to keep up.

Horses were the special love of the top sergeant, as they were Peter's. Already well taught by his father, Peter found he had still much to learn of horsemanship and the lore of horses from big, bearded Sam Smith.

He would never forget the day when he first rode his horse Justin. The veterinary had marked the black Morgan "duty," the claw scars being healed. Very gently Peter blanketed and saddled him and stood to horse.

"Now," Sergeant Smith ordered, "tell him you're going to get up on his back. Yes, I mean it," he added, for Peter had hesitated. It hardly seemed military to talk to your horse, though he often had privately. "Horses understand," the sergeant insisted, "and this fellow needs to know what you're going to do. I've seen horses that had been jumped by a mountain-lion, that never could be ridden again—they bucked off the best riders; and you can't blame 'em, after what they'd been through."

Peter spoke in Justin's ear. Then he quietly gathered the reins and set foot in stirrup.

Smith said: "Sit down in the saddle lightly, but grip tight with your knees. There may be fireworks and a balloon ascension. . . . All right! Mount."

Peter obeyed. As the horse felt his weight, he trembled violently and his eyes rolled; a dreadful memory flooded back into his brain. He began to gather himself and arch his back for running buck-jumps. It was touch and go.

Peter sat still and easily in the saddle. He spoke: "It's me. It's all right, old fellow." He rubbed Justin's neck. Gradually the trembling ceased. The rider moved his mount off at a slow walk.

Sergeant Smith sighed with relief. "That decides it," he said. "I was afraid we had an outlaw. Instead we've got a cavalry mount—and a fine one."

The sergeant saw to it that Peter taught Justin to respond both to the reins laid against his neck and to the pressure of his rider's legs. The time would come when Peter would want to be able to loop the reins over an arm and have his hands free for arms or trumpet.

"You probably never knew when you struggled with your Latin—with Cæsar's *Commentaries*," the ex-professor observed, "that old Julius C. was a fine horseman and was especially renowned for the feats he performed on a bridle-wise horse.

"Always remember this: In training a horse, don't use only the fear of punishment, but reward him whenever he does well. Even the dry, precise drill manual waxes human when it speaks of the cavalryman's horse: it tells the trooper to 'make much of him.' But that's a passage I don't think I need to recommend to you with this Morgan of yours."

The older man had not failed to sense the current of affection running between the boy and the black horse. The average trooper was fond of his mount, but this seemed an even stronger tie than usual. For an instant the sergeant's eyes took on a sad expression. Too often had he seen such close companionships of frontier service broken by an Indian bullet that dropped a troop horse or emptied his saddle.

"One thing more, young Shannon," his preceptor went on. "You must master yourself before you can master a horse. Another of the ancients you may have toiled over in school, old Xenophon—"

Peter interposed. "I know. The general who led his army of ten thousand Greeks through the enemy and down to the sea."

"The same. And he did not write only the *Anabasis* but excellent works on horses and cavalry. Listen to this." The sergeant drew out his notebook and flipped its pages. "Xenophon wrote this about 400 B. C., but horses and men who understand them have not changed.

"Never to lose one's temper with the horse is a good precept and an excellent habit," he read. "'To lose one's temper is unreasonable and makes one do things one can afterward only regret. When a horse shows fright of some object and refuses to go near it, one must make him feel that he has nothing to fear, and the more especially so if the horse be a high-couraged one. The rider will do well himself to walk up to such object and touch it, subsequently to lead the horse up to it. Those riders who force the horse by the use of the whip will only increase his terror, for he will imagine that the pain he feels is inflicted upon him by the object that frightens him.'"

As First Sergeant Smith finished speaking, a trumpet call, sharp and insistent, sounded.

"Boots and Saddles," Peter identified it.

Ordinarily the call was a summons to mounted drill or some other mounted formation. But none was scheduled at this hour; this time it meant action.

CHAPTER NINE

BOOTS AND SADDLES



NE acted more or less automatically, doing all the things one had to do almost without thinking—but doing them well and forgetting no details. Peter began to realize it as he obeyed the trumpeted summons of *Boots and Saddles*. That was the reason for the hot hours of drill, all the monotonous repetition, the fussy insistence of drillmasters on everything being done just so. In time it made a soldier of you.

That was training, and the end of training was battle—and now battle lay ahead. Peter, saddling up Justin, could not doubt it, from the snatches of talk he heard along the picket line.

"Comanches are out again. . . . Raided a ranch and ran off a lot of stock. . . . Chief Quanah? Sounds like him. . . . Hear General Mac says he's goin' to run 'em down this time if the regiment has to ride over the en-tire State o' Texas. . . . Get that, you rookies? Better bring along some pillows to put in your pants."

Peter grinned and made fast his cinch strap. The black Morgan turned his head and looked at him questioningly out of his large lustrous eyes.

"Yes," his rider softly answered the look, "we're off, and it's the real thing, I think. We're going into action."

He led out, took his place in the line of file-closers of his troop and stood to horse. Captain Bone, a newly-attached lieutenant named Carter, and the first sergeant made a rapid but thorough inspection. "Prepare to mount," came the troop commander's voice. "Mount."

As one man, the troopers thrust upward in stirrups, swung right legs over cantles and settled in their saddles.

Eight troops of the Fourth Cavalry formed to march: A, B, D, F, G, H, K, and L. Yonder two companies of the Eleventh Infantry dressed ranks. Peter gazed over at them with none of the traditional contempt of mounted for foot troops. His father's stories had taught him to respect infantry, and Sergeant Smith had declared that Indians would rather tackle cavalry, horse against horse, than charge a rock-firm company of doughboys.

There milled a score of Tonkawa scouts, good trailers, mortal foes of the Comanches. Packed and ready, the wagon-train waited, and with it a herd of pack-mules to be used when the going became too rough for wheels.

A trumpet sounded "Fours right," and "K" Troop moved into column and across the parade-ground to its place in the blue array. Over toward Officers' Row a small figure in a gingham dress was waving good-by so vigorously that her pigtails bobbed up and down. Peter, being in ranks, naturally ignored her; besides, she undoubtedly was waving to the regiment, not to him.

Sally Ann looked excited, didn't she? Well, you couldn't blame the sprig. It must be thrilling for a girl to watch troops march off on a campaign. Peter had to acknowledge to himself that his own blood was tingling.

Beat of hundreds of hoofs and the creak of saddle-leather; the vital warmth of a trusted mount, gripped by his knees; pressure of the strap of his carbine-sling over his shoulder and the reassuring tug of saber and revolver on his belt; guidons, half red, half white, flaunting their forked tails in the breeze; a long column of cavalry flowing on steadily and he, Peter Shannon, a part of it—his dream, long dreamed, now come true!

They marched on steadily. Twice, quicksand streams with steep banks and no regular fords delayed the column, but not for long. Spirits were high. Now and again a troop raised a song that was a favorite of the regiment:

*"Come home, John.
Don't stay long.
Come home soon
To your own Chick-a-biddy."*

Halt, bivouac, sleep, break camp, march on. So it went. Still the "Tonk" scouts up ahead struck no Comanche trail. The column marched past huge herds of buffalo and risked the sound of shots to kill a few for fresh meat. At length Mackenzie, to speed the pursuit, established a supply camp, corralled the wagons and left the two infantry companies as a guard. The cavalry pushed on with pack-mules loaded with rations and ammunition.

Lance Elliot dropped by Peter's side. "Aren't we ever going to strike their trail?" the latter asked him.

"We'll find them—or they'll find us," answered the former Confederate. "I hear this is a band of Quohada

Comanches under Quanah, and Quanah Parker is always ready for a fight."

"Quanah Parker? Why, that name's half white!"

"So's its owner," Elliot declared. And as they rode on together, the trumpeter told the dramatic story of Cynthia Ann Parker.

"SHE WAS A PRETTY LITTLE THING, they say," he related in his Southern voice; "blue eyes and cornsilk-yellow hair. She was only a young girl when it happened—back in the '30's it was, I reckon. Her father, a Texas settler, with a few other men and their women and children, held a strong stockade called Parker's Fort on one of the forks of the Brazos. Along came a party of Comanches and Kio was one day with a flag of truce, saying they were friendly and wanted to make a treaty. Parker was rash enough to believe 'em, and let 'em in.

"You can guess what happened. The Indians massacred all the men and some of the women and children. They tied up Cynthia Ann and other survivors, beat them, and stamped on them in a scalp dance, waving the bloody trophies they had just taken. A chief named Nacoma claimed Cynthia Ann as his captive. The Texas authorities later did their best to find and ransom her, but she'd vanished without a trace.

"A good twenty years later, a captain of Texas Rangers met a Comanche chieftain on the plains hereabouts. They fought—single combat—a fight to the finish." Elliot's eyes glowed as he spoke. "The chief drove an arrow into the Ranger's horse. His next arrow very nearly got the rider. The Ranger couldn't fire. It was all he could do to sit his horse, rearing and plunging as it was, wild with pain. At last the captain got his revolver into action. He hit the Comanche three times, once in the right arm and twice through the body. But that Indian wasn't doing any surrendering. His last act before a final bullet finished him off was a vicious thrust at his enemy with a lance, gripped in his unwounded left hand.

"More Rangers came up. They galloped after, and caught, the chief's squaw—who had been close to escaping. Yes, it was Cynthia Ann Parker."

Peter said: "She sure must have been glad to get back to her own people again."

"No, it was too late; it had been too long. She had borne the chief three children. She'd gone the whole way, and turned Indian. All the rest of her life she had to be watched carefully to prevent her going back to her tribe. One of her sons was Quanah. He became chief in his father's place—as crafty and daring as old Nacoma, and as valiant. That's Quanah Parker."

"The fellow we're scouting for now," Peter said.

"Or who's scouting for us," Elliot amended. He straightened in his saddle, and there was a gleam in his eyes again. "Some day I hope to meet him personally."

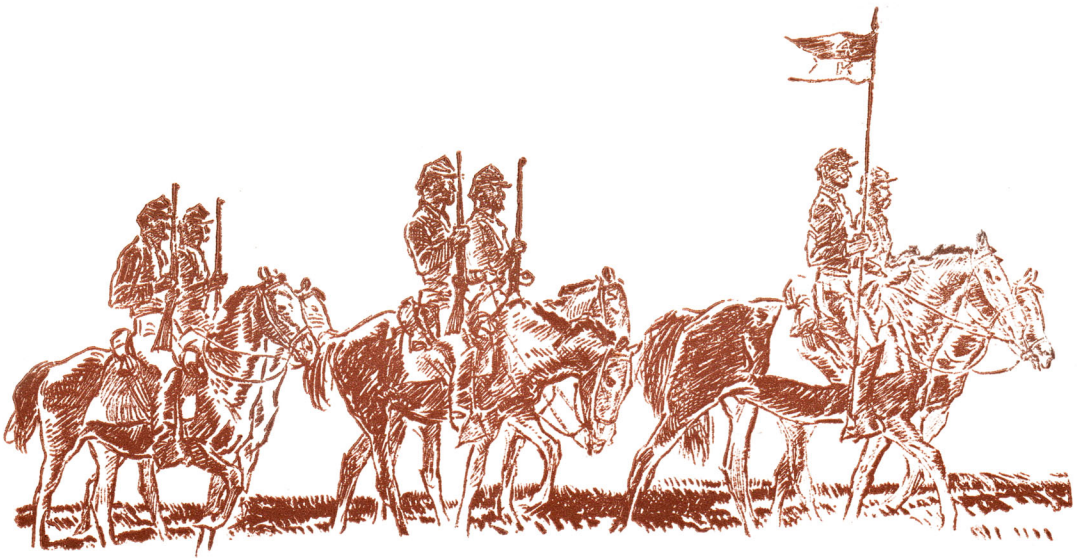
Peter thought: "Knights must have looked like that when they threw down the gauntlet and challenged somebody to mortal combat!"

Upraised hands forward in the column signaled a halt. Orders came to go into bivouac.

A stream flowed along one side of the camp-site chosen. Bluffs rose abruptly on the other. They would furnish protection in case a norther blew up. But this was a pocket valley—Cañon Blanco it was called. As one squadron followed another into it, to camp, it was crowded with men and horses. First Sergeant Sam Smith kept gazing about him; Peter saw the veteran frown and slightly shake his head.

Word was passed that fires could be lighted. It meant hot food for the tired troopers and warmth against the chill of the night. But again Sergeant Smith shook his head in foreboding.

"See to your lariats when you stake out your horses," he ordered the troop. "If I find a man whose picket-pin isn't driven in deep, he's going to regret it."



Peter pounded the iron pin down into the ground and tethered his mount to it securely. Not that Justin was likely to stray; if he did, he would return at his master's whistle. But orders were orders. . . .

Midnight—and black as ink. Here and there the embers of a campfire glowed faintly. The camp was quiet except for men snoring in their blankets and the *champ-click* of horses grazing at the end of their lariats.

THEN THE COMANCHES struck, riding in through the masking foothills. Whooping, yelling, clanging bells and dragging dried buffalo robes, they came—making a terrifying, unearthly din. Dazed troopers wrenched themselves out of heavy sleep, groped for their weapons. Carbines spurted red and banged, as the rear squadron went into action.

"Get to your horses!" The voices of the officers and noncoms were hoarse and urgent. They knew the purpose of the racket the attacking Indians were making—it was a stampede. Running off all the horses of the Fourth would leave it in a desperate situation; it might easily mean disaster.

The disciplined regiment steadied. Troopers ran to obey the shouted commands. But the horses and mules—six hundred of them—were snorting and plunging about in terror, straining with all their strength at the lariats that held them. They groaned and trembled pitifully in a frenzy of fright. Now lariats binding them began to snap like pistol shots. Iron picket-pins, wrenched loose, hurtled through the air, more deadly missiles than any of the Indian bullets whistling by. Men grabbed for the dragging lines. Some were forced to release them, as tugging animals dashed away, and skin was rope-burned from the palms of hands. Others held on and were hauled under the lashing heels of panic-stricken brutes.

Commands still carried over the tumult: "Every man to his lariat!" . . . "Stand by your horses!"

It was Justin's four white stockings that guided Peter to him. The Morgan, as terrorized as the rest, was making frantic efforts to break away. Peter, risking the hoofs of the rearing horse, hauled on the line, hand over hand. Justin jerked back with all his might. His master clung on, talking soothingly. Gradually the familiar, well-loved voice exerted its spell. At length Justin, sweating and shaking, stood still and let himself be saddled.

Peter, climbing up on his horse's back, knew the relief a cavalryman feels at being once more mounted. Other

troopers also had succeeded in recovering animals. Squads of horsemen were being organized for pursuit down the cañon, while dismounted men were pushing up the ridge as skirmishers. Peter, unable to find anyone to ask for orders, helped other men catch and saddle their mounts. He was thus engaged when he heard his name called.

"You, Shannon!"

Peter recognized Corporal Rick's harsh tones. From the Morgan's back he looked down at the shadowy figure approaching. Rick was limping; apparently he had lost his mount.

"Report to Sergeant Smith up on the ridge, Shannon," he ordered.

"Right, Corporal." Peter gathered his reins.

"No, you don't, rookie. Not mounted—dismounted! Give me that plug of yours. Lost mine. My squad's detailed for the chase."

Peter stared down at the other's insolent face, clearer under the graying light.

Rick snapped: "Get down off that horse, and be quick about it!"

It was, Peter realized, "the lawful order of a noncommissioned officer, given in performance of his duties." Without a word he dismounted and handed over Justin's reins. Unslinging his carbine, he hurried on up the ridge.

Apparently the Comanches did not care to tackle the parties deployed along the ridge, but had slipped away with the approach of dawn. However, to play safe, the position was held a little longer.

A German-American corporal, who had been in charge of one of the outposts overrun in the savages' first onslaught, began telling his story in broken English.

"I was lying down, ven a shot I hear. I shoomp up. I dry grab my bicket-pin but de horses roosh py. Next ding I know Injuns dey ride all ofer me. I raise mein carbine to mein preast. Der piggest Injun I shoot. He stager, he fall, almost—and he deesappear in dark."

Peter laughed with the rest but his heart was not in it. He was worried. Finally, to his relief, his detachment was marched back to camp. It still was a scene of havoc—horses and lines in a frightful tangle and equipment strewn about everywhere.

Score a surprise and partial triumph for the Comanches. Seventy of the regiment's best horses and mules were gone. Mackenzie had lost a fine gray pacer; other officers lamented valuable charges. Peter, reflecting how lucky he had been to hold on to Justin, hurried in search of Rick



and the horse. He found only the former, talking to a trooper named Gregg. Rick was dusty and disgruntled. "I'll take my horse now, Corporal," Peter said curtly.

"Take him and be hanged," Rick growled. "How you ever rode him I don't know. That black devil bucked me off—me, who was riding when you was still on a hobby-horse in the nursery! He tossed me!"

Peter tried to smother a grin. Rick saw it and flushed with anger.

"Funny, aint it? Well, go laugh with your bucking broncho—if you can find him."

Peter's face went white. "What do you mean? Where is he?" he demanded.

"How do I know? After he piled me, he lit out. Probably joined all the rest of our missing nags. 'Smatter? Think I ought to've run after him?"

Trooper Gregg interposed. "Look here, Corp. Kind of hard on the lad, aint you?"

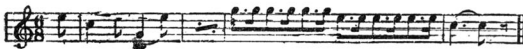
The look in Peter's eyes had sent Rick's hand to his revolver butt. But Peter only turned and walked away.

"Tough to lose a hoss you're fond of," Gregg said. "Guess you just don't feel it, Rick. Now if it was a gal of yours was swiped, you sure would be riled. Wonder where the lad's gone to? Wouldn't be fool enough to go wandering off in Comanche country, lookin' for that hoss, would he?"

"Might," Rick answered indifferently.

CHAPTER TEN

18. RALLY



PETER had been gripped by two powerful emotions—one was a deep affection for the lost Morgan, above and beyond the duty of a cavalryman toward his horse; the other was a burning hate for Rick. The first had proved stronger. Find Justin he must; Rick could be dealt with sometime later.

He strode blindly through the camp. The few who noted his haste assumed he was an orderly carrying a field message. Still unnoticed—outposts were being called in preparatory to a march—he hurried out of

the cañon and was soon hidden in the draws and arroyos cutting the plain.

Gradually he began to think more rationally. In what direction had Justin run after he bucked Rick off? Peter had no idea. He halted and made himself consider how futile it was to scour the country on foot in search of a runaway horse. Almost had he decided to return, when he caught sight of a trail of hoofmarks—shod hoofs.

He took it up eagerly. It might be any cavalry horse—or even a Comanche pony, some of which were shod. But it could be his horse. That was enough. Peter took up the trail.

Four miles, five miles, and more, he put behind him. He grew hot and tired. It began to dawn on him that he would be turned in as a deserter. He was "absent from his post of duty in the face of the enemy." Under the Articles of War, the penalty for that was death. But he had an explanation for his absence, hadn't he? . . . Yes, and there seldom if ever was a deserter who hadn't. Courts-martial were inclined to be highly skeptical of deserters' stories.

Nevertheless, dogged and unwavering, Peter followed the horse's trail.

How foolhardy he was to wander alone through Comanche country still had not occurred to him. Nor did it until, as he was about to enter a draw, he suddenly perceived a feathered head and a copper-colored body streaked with war paint.

Peter drew back hastily and took cover. Fortunately the Indian, being fully occupied, had not observed him. Peter, scouting up to the rim, discovered that the draw was blind as he gazed downward through a cleft between rocks. Then he saw what was engaging the warrior's attention:

In the closed end of the draw a black horse with four white feet was cornered. It was Justin.

Peter pulled his carbine from its sling pocket, poked it slowly through the cleft, then reluctantly withdrew it. He could not risk a shot at the Indian, with the horse in the line of fire as he now was. He could only watch and wait.

The black Morgan was lathered and dust-covered but still saddled and bridled. Clearly he did not like this red man's closing in on him. Yet he was cornered and he knew it. Naturally docile, he let his bridle be grasped.

But the next action he would not brook. With astonishing speed and agility the Indian had vaulted on to his back. . . . "Like a cat," Peter thought, as he peered down.

"Like a cat." The similarity must have struck the horse no less forcibly. Again an onrush of fearful memories of that ride by the spitting, clawing mountain-lion came sweeping back. No beloved voice soothed him as when his master had first mounted him. He heard only hoarse, guttural cries and felt a quirt cut viciously into his belly.

Justin jumped, whirled and began to buck madly. He bunched those white feet and dashed across the draw in great, soaring leaps. He came down stiff-legged in bone-jarring landings. He twisted and "sunfished."

Peter barely kept himself from cheering. This, he chuckled to himself, was what must have happened to Rick. But this time Justin had a different rider—a Comanche, a born horseman. The Morgan redoubled his efforts. Still the brave stuck on. He had broken many a wild mustang, riding bareback with only a rope surcingle.

Yet this was a lion-scarred horse. Justin became a blazing black streak of furious action. It was too much for the Comanche. He was catapulted off and hit the prairie with a thud.

In an instant he had bounded to his feet. A good horse was a coveted possession of a warrior, but an outlaw like this was good only for horsemeat. The Comanche unslung his bow, whipped an arrow from his quiver and notched it. Circling around Justin to reach a vantage-point for his shot, he drew his bowstring taut.

There was very little time. Peter, carbine shoved through the cleft again, realized that. Even so, Sergeant Hanks' drawled instructions kept beating into his consciousness, controlling his actions.

"Take yore time, son. Hurry, an' y' shore will miss! Line up yore targit in yore sights. Git yore front sight squar' in that thar V-notch of the rear sight and balance yore bullseye on top the front 'un. Suck in yore breath some—not too much, though—an' hold it. Take up the play in yore trigger an' squeeze, never pull it, and afore y' know it—"

Bang! The carbine crashed before Peter knew it was going off. That was how Sergeant Hanks said it ought to be. And what he said would happen to a live target if you had held on steady was happening down there in the draw.

The Comanche had dropped his bow. On his broad coppery back appeared a red splotch, just below the left shoulder blade. His knees folded and he fell forward on his face and lay still.

Quickly Peter reloaded, as the sergeant had taught him. That shot would bring any Indians in the vicinity, and there were likely to be plenty. Knowing he must corral Justin and get out of there, he ran down to the mouth of the draw.

JUST AS HE REACHED IT, the Morgan horse tore past him with a thunder of hoofs.

"Justin!" his master shouted despairingly after him. He gave the shrill whistle the horse knew so well. But the galloping black never hesitated in his headlong flight.

Private Shannon, Troop "K", Fourth U. S. Cavalry, stood still, his carbine in the crook of his arm. He was only a recruit, but he was well aware of the grim outlook for a dismounted trooper far from his outfit in strange and hostile territory. If thirst didn't get you, the Comanches or the Kiowas would.

His eyes scanned the prairie. Oddly, the dust-cloud marking the Morgan's flight had not decreased with distance. On the contrary, it was growing; and silhouetted against it was a black shape trotting back toward him!

A glimpse of the master he loved as he raced by; the sound of the whistle he was trained to answer—these had been enough for the faithful and intelligent animal, once their import, delayed by his panicky impulse to escape, had reached his brain. These and all they meant to him had drawn him back.

A DETACHMENT FROM "G" and "K" Troops, ordered on a scout that morning, had ridden only a few miles when they sighted a dozen Comanches running off some of the Fourth's stampeded mounts. Their luck was good—suspectingly so, they realized shortly. Riding hard, they pursued until they were halted by a long narrow arroyo barring their advance. Only a few of the horses could be made to leap the gap. The bulk of the detachment swung to the right to ride around.

Lieutenant Carter, a sergeant, and four men galloped on after the Indians who vanished into a second ravine two miles farther along. No sooner had the pursuing cavalymen entered than they reined in to a sudden halt. They had been led into an ambushade. The ridge beyond was swarming with Comanche horsemen. Whooping, they fanned out and rode down on the trapped soldiers.

"Dismount," came Carter's command. Their horses were tired and it seemed best to try to hold off the Indians until the rest of the detachment came up. His men were all veterans and armed with Spencer repeating carbines. Yet as the lieutenant saw more and more warriors gathering on the ridge, the desperate realization came to him that the detachment was not strong enough to fight its way through to him. His only hope was that Mackenzie would hear the firing and ride with the regiment to the rescue.

Sergeant Jenkins called to him, reporting dust to the rear. The detachment was coming up! No—it was only one trooper. He came, riding fast to escape the Comanches closing in on his flank. As the single horseman galloped up, Trooper Gregg identified him.

"Young Shannon out of 'K.' Went looking for a stray horse this morning an'—"

Carter called out before Peter could speak: "Take the horses and fall back toward the ravine. Now, men, deploy and open fire."

Peter rode Justin slowly to the rear with reins of the led horses, linked three and three, over his arms. Over his shoulder he stared back at the Indians mustering for the attack as they had that bloody day at the wagon-train. But here was savage might and barbaric splendor far surpassing that other occasion. Even the ponies, especially the whites, duns, and claybanks, gleamed with war paint. Along the red ranks signal mirrors flashed in the sun. Chiefs acting as standard-bearers held aloft scalp-poles from which swung trophies of long, flowing hair. Squaws, watching from a butte, shrieked in shrill encouragement of the warriors' charge.

Peter, getting the horses under cover in the arroyo, heard the steady firing of Carter's men which checked that charge. Now the troopers came back on the run. Almost at the mouth of the arroyo they turned and dropped prone.

"Now, men," Lieutenant Carter shouted. "Unlock your magazines, bunch your shots, pump it into 'em and make a dash for your lives! It's all we can do!"

A ringing fusillade. Into the ravine the troopers came tumbling, the right hand of one dripping blood. They flung themselves into their saddles, and Carter waved them forward. From their last fierce volley the Comanches had recoiled, but they would soon be in hot pursuit.

Peter heard the officer calling to him as they galloped: "Aren't you a trumpeter? Where's your trumpet?" Peter called back that he was not yet trained. Carter groaned: "If you could only sound Rally now!"

On came the Comanches in full cry. How weary the troop horses were! They could not last much longer. However, many of the Indians' ponies were tired too, and the pursuit strung out. But steadily and inexorably it gained and in its van, closing in at a thundering pace, rode a tall, powerful chief on a racing pony as coal-black as the Morgan.

Lieutenant Carter and Peter would never be able to forget the spectacle he presented. His magnificent war bonnet of eagle feathers streamed out behind him. Black war paint smeared the broad, fierce face beneath it, combining with a look of bloodthirsty joy to give it an utterly diabolical aspect. Sun glinted on the chief's brass earrings, on his necklace of bear's claws and on the silver ornaments of his black's bridle. Over his head he brandished a six-shooter.

"Quanah! Quanah Parker!" Carter cried.

The great war chief of the Quohada Comanches swung his pony toward the left. Over there a trooper, his mount faltering badly in its stride, was dropping back. The trooper was Gregg.

"Lieutenant, my horse is giving out!" he yelled.

Carter swung his charger over to attempt to cover him. Both he and Peter fired their revolvers at Quanah, but missed as the wily Indian zigzagged. He rode up on the doomed trooper's other side, masking their fire. Gregg was vainly tugging at his own holstered Colt when Quanah's weapon flamed at the back of his head and he toppled from his saddle, dead before he hit the ground.

Who would be the next victim? It seemed certain that the fleeing cavalymen would be picked off one by one.

But Quanah and his band had turned and were riding off; for over a rise Lieutenant Boehm and a detachment of scouts came galloping.

"All right, Carter, let's push 'em now," he shouted. "Mackenzie and the whole regiment are right behind us."

Push them they did, but Quanah and his tribesmen melted away. After them marched the Fourth—and caught never a glimpse of its elusive quarry. The Comanches, doubling back on their own trail, fooled even the Tonk scouts. Persistently Mackenzie drove on. Toward a plateau the long column of horses and mules climbed steadily, the ascent growing ever steeper, until at length it was topped.

Peter stiffened in his saddle. The Morgan horse's well-shaped ears pricked forward in simultaneous recognition. They had emerged on to the *Llano Estacado*—the Staked Plain—where first they had met. Treeless, lifeless it stretched away before them, apparently as limitless as the ocean.

REACHING THAT HIGH TABLELAND, the Fourth seemed to have ridden out of summer into winter. A bitter wind blew, prelude to a Texas norther. Without gloves or overcoats, the cavalymen, from Mackenzie to the newest recruit, shivered as the gusts penetrated thin uniforms. Yet on they marched, and now the glow of excitement warmed them. They had struck the trail, a broad trail, the trail of the whole Comanche village.

The Fourth took up a trot, then a gallop. Now moving figures showed against the skyline—warriors, hundreds of them, massing to defend their women and children and give them time to escape with the pony herd. Here was the crisis of the campaign.

Commands came fast: *Close up. . . . Column of fours. . . . Count off. . . . Serve out extra ammunition and fill blouse pockets. . . . Pack-mules into herd formation under guard of a squadron. . . . Mounted skirmishers to the front and flanks.*

All these the regiment executed while still moving forward. Peter gathered Justin under him, felt for his saber-hilt, listened for trumpets sounding the charge.

And then a norther struck—darkness and biting wind, rain and snow and whipping sleet, all rising to the fury of a gale. It was now or never, all or nothing.

The order that would have sent the Fourth charging down on the Comanche through the storm never was given. Men and horses were worn and weary. The supply-base was a hundred miles away. Once troops were committed to a mêlée in that blackness, organization and control would vanish. Yet at stake was a brilliant, crushing victory, and there was not an officer or trooper in the regiment who did not expect the hard-driving Mackenzie to take the gamble.

Mackenzie, dismounting and assembling his regiment in the blackness to weather the norther, let the Comanches go. His was the dreadful responsibility of command. No officer worthy of his commission lightly commits men to battle and death. Mackenzie had weighed the risk, counted the cost. . . . There would be another time.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TRUMPET



HERE were gaps in the ranks, wounded in the wagons, and troopers on foot, when the Fourth marched back to its station. It was no consolation that there would be mourning in the lodges of the Comanches. Quanah and his red warriors had struck and escaped. That amounted to defeat for the blue column, and it had been close to disaster that night in the cañon. Fortunes of war, said the Fourth, and charged the fruitless campaign against experience. Tired men and horses, worn and thin, set about recuperating "in addition to their other duties," as is the Army phrase.

The old routine of drill and fatigue recommenced its relentless rotation. To Peter, it was welcome relief when his friend Lance Elliot told him after dismissal from a Retreat formation:

"Top Sergeant says start you tooting tomorrow, Pete. Drawn your trumpet? All right. Got plenty of wind? That's all you'll need then, but— Oh, yes, your trumpet cord. I'll be teaching you 'Sling trumpet,' 'Secure trumpet,' and the rest of the manual."

"Will I really need a sling right away?" Peter asked. "Yellow worsted for it was issued me, but—"

"It's not yet braided and you don't know how? Neither do I. Get the saddle to do it, or one of the laundresses on Soapsuds Row."

"Well, it's already—"

"I see." Elliot smiled his slow smile. "Then march yourself right up to see the young lady, make your manners and get that cord. That's an order."

Reluctantly and slowly, Peter fetched his trumpet and walked toward the Lindsay quarters. It was just as well to see only so much of little girls. Give them any encouragement and they would be under foot all the time. And even though they were little more than babies, people started teasing you about them, ridiculous as that was. In exasperation Peter asked himself: "Why did I ever let the brat get hold of that cord?"

Knocking at the Lindsays' kitchen door, Peter sniffed one of the most delectable odors that had ever entered his nostrils. Ma Simmons, the stout, genial troop laundress who also cooked for the Lindsay family, told him to come in as she shoved a second pan of cookies into the oven. She had a caller—a grizzled old soldier whose eyes were watery but twinkling and whose nose bloomed red as the rose. Peter recognized him as Private

"Peruna" Simmons, the perennial prisoner, known as "Persimmons" for short.

"You know Simmons here," Ma said to Peter, waving toward her visitor. "No relation to me nor ever like to be. 'Tis out of the guardhouse he is, for a wonder—but not for long. Soon as he steps up to the pay table and gets what money is left after fines, he'll be down at the post trader's spending it for whisky. And 'tis back in the clink he'll be next morning. And him an educated man, more's the pity!"

"Down with drink! Never again, say I," Persimmons vowed jovially. "Anyway, pay-day is long overdue."

*"They say some disaster
Befell the paymaster."*

And he winked at Peter.

"And what will you be after doing in the meantime?" Ma scolded. "You'll be buying that tonic on tick! The only difference between them patent tonics and likker is the label. 'Tis the Demon in disguise!"

"Ah, that tonic! Good for man or beast!" The old soldier sighed. "It cures every ill from colic to corns. But I suspect it was an overdose of it put me in the guardhouse. I'm forswearing it—it made me miss that Comanche chase."

Except that it prevented him from riding off on a campaign with his troop, the guardhouse wasn't a bad place, the veteran informed Peter. A man could shed responsibilities there. There he had the sympathetic companionship of old Taylor, the guardhouse dog. Once a prisoner was released and returned to duty, old Taylor would have nothing to do with him.

"That neglect of his used to hurt my feelings," Persimmons confessed. "Then I realized that he, a dumb animal, was faithfully and wholeheartedly following the Scriptural injunction to visit the sick and those in affliction and them that have been cast into prison. The dog, young Shannon, is indeed man's best friend. Where else can man find such loyalty, such understanding? Not, I warrant you, in women."

Ma Simmons was just rising in wrath, when Sally Ann burst into the kitchen. She stopped short upon seeing Peter.

"Oh, it's you," she said curtly. "Never took the trouble to let me know how Justin was, did you? I should think you might have known I'd be worried about him. I finally had to go down and see for myself. That was a hard campaign, and the poor dear looks simply awful. You take good care of him or—"

"Say! You don't have to tell me to take care of my own horse. That's my business," Peter flashed.

"You bet it's your business. 'And if you don't do it, the Colonel will know it! Oh, I s'pose you came around for some cookies. Mrs. Simmons, please give this soldier some cookies. I promised him some once."

PETER GLARED AT HER. "I wouldn't eat any of your old cookies if I was starving!" he swore. He was lying like a trooper and he knew it. The difficulty was that he felt as if he *were* starving. After a long diet of bacon, beans, and hardtack, the appetizing aroma of the cookies was almost more than he could endure.

"Don't eat any, then!" Sally Ann snapped.

"Now, boys and girls—" Ma Simmons began to plead, but the girl broke in furiously:

"Well, if you didn't come for cookies, what *are* you here for, then? I know very well it isn't to see me."

"'Hell,'" murmured Persimmons softly, "'hath no fury like a woman scorned.'"

"I came after my trumpet cord," Peter answered coldly. "Sorry I ever bothered you with it."

"Oh!" Sally Ann whisked out of the kitchen and was back with the cord in two seconds. She looked for all the world as if she were about to throw it at its owner.

Private Simmons rose to his feet. The sodden old soldier had vanished and the gentleman of the old school he once had been stood in his place.

"Sally Ann Lindsay," he ordered with quiet authority, "finish the task you accepted. Attach the cord to the trumpet." He took the instrument from Peter and handed it to her. Fuming, the Major's daughter obeyed. She fastened the triple-braided cord neatly to the rings and extended the trumpet toward Peter. Sullenly he accepted it.

"Your manners, sir," Persimmons reminded.

"Sorry," Peter reddened. "Thank you very much," he told the braider frostily and formally. Hastily he slung the trumpet so that it hung at his left side.

Sally Ann stamped a small foot. She walked straight up to the boy, put her arms around him to sweep the cord over his head, and reslung the trumpet correctly. In the moment she stood there close to him, Peter stared fascinated into brown eyes smoldering with resentment toward him. Her red lips were parted—she was still breathing fast—and under her frilled gingham apron youthful breasts rose and fell. A tendril of soft hair lightly brushed his cheek.

So confused he scarcely knew what he was doing, Peter mumbled his thanks again and stumbled out the door. Why, when that girl got angry, she was actually pretty. And when she stood so close, thought Peter, a strange turmoil rioting within him, she didn't seem like such a little girl!

THE TRUMPET WASN'T EASY. You couldn't simply blow into it because all that then emerged was a futile *whoosh*. You pressed your tongue against the back of your upper teeth and pronounced the syllable *tu*, as you blew. The air thus released made your lips vibrate and the trumpet sound. Corporal-Trumpeter Elliot instructed:

"What you do, Pete, is press the mouthpiece against your lips and go through the motions of spitting into it, inelegant as that may seem. Only you blow instead. Until you toughen up your lip muscles, you'll not accomplish much. To sound higher notes, press the mouthpiece tighter against your lips. Now try it."

Peter managed a few discordant squawks. "Gosh," he sighed, "where did you ever learn, Lance?"

"When I rode with Jeb Stuart," declared his friend, eyes lighting with the memory, "officers in the Confederate cavalry sometimes carried trumpets. Came in handy if your trumpeter was lost or killed. There was music wherever the General went. He had a grand banjo player named Joe Sweeney—the General's personal minstrel, you might call him. Played for dances Saturday nights and hymns on Sunday. When we went raiding, Jeb and his staff would ride singing at the head of the column, Joe twanging away on his banjo, trumpets chiming in. We made the echoes ring, I tell you, with 'Old Joe Hooker,' 'Won't You Come out of the Wilderness' and 'Alabama Gals' and 'Sweet Euellina.' . . .

"'Haec olim meminisse juvabit,' as they taught me at Princeton. 'These things hereafter will be a joy to remember,'" Elliot said. But his eyes had saddened with remembrance of a gallant leader killed in action. . . .

Practice, practice, practice on the trumpet day after day. So it went, though Peter could not see that he was making any progress. Only occasionally could he produce a sound recognizable as a musical note; mostly he emitted squeals, squeaks, grunts, and dismal groans. Elliot was a patient, excellent teacher. He alternated technique with the manual of the trumpet and instructions on a trumpeter's posts and duties.

"As the duties of a trumpeter quite often cause him to become more conspicuous than other members of his company or regiment," Elliot quoted, "he should for this reason always endeavor to maintain a neat and soldierly appearance."

He made Peter learn to sing all the calls before attempting to play them—taught him to remember that drill signals for movements to the right always ran up the scale, if to the left, down. Notes ascended for *Mount*, descended for *Dismount*. Signals for changes of gait were all on the same sound and each imitated the tempo of the gait ordered.

Words set to the notes of calls helped your memory a lot. There was *First Call* and its ironic promise:

*Fall in, ye poor devils, as fast as ye can.
And when ye get tired, I'll rest ye again.*

And *Sick Call*, whose summons was especially well answered at posts where malaria was rife.

*Doctor Jones says, Doctor Jones says,
Come get your quinine, quinine, quinine.
Come get your genuine qui-i-nine.*

That call was even more fully attended when the word got around that the quinine had run out and doses of whisky were being given instead.

There was *Mess Call*, always popular but far too often disillusioning, Army cooks and rations being what they were.

*Soupy, soupy, soup, without a single bean.
Coffee, coffee, coffee, with a bit of cream.
Porky, porky, pork, without a streak of lean.*

Lively, lilting *Reveille*, borrowed from the French Army like so many others of our trumpet calls, was as difficult to blow as it was to obey on cold, dark mornings.

*I can't get 'em up, I can't get 'em up,
I can't get 'em up in the morning.
I can't get 'em up, I can't get 'em up,
I can't get 'em up at all.
The corporal's worse than the private.
The sergeant's worse than the corporal.
The lieutenant's worse than the sergeant,
And the captain's the worst of all.*

Because of the fearful sounds he was making and because, as a result, he had been ordered to practice some distance away from the post, Peter never had any company but his instructor. But one day a visitor arrived: old Taylor, the guardhouse dog, trotted up and sat down at the feet of the novice with an air of solicitude and resignation. Plainly, he had come to stay for the duration of the practice.

Peter demanded: "Say, what does this visitation mean? That I'm such a terrible trumpeter that old Taylor knows they're going to throw me in the guardhouse?"

Elliot laughed. "Not quite that bad! Old Taylor always rallies 'round when he hears a new trumpeter learning. That dog is the soul of sympathy; he hangs around the guardhouse to be solace to prisoners, most of 'em not deserving any. He's here for the same reason. From the sounds he hears he thinks you're suffering. He'll be dogged if he isn't going to suffer with you, no matter how much your horn-tooting hurts his ears."

"Aw, come on, Lancel!"

"You'll see. To him it's just like sitting up with a sick friend. He'll be here every day now till your trumpeting begins to sound human."

And old Taylor, his long bloodhound ears and jowls drooping, a world of pity in his large mournful eyes, never failed to be present for practice.

Surprisingly there came still another visitor: First Sergeant Smith rode out one day when Peter was tooting away alone. He was riding his horse, Big Bill, and leading Justin.

"I want you to begin to practice mounted now," he told Peter. "You must be able to sound calls at a trot or gallop. And your horse must learn to recognize and obey calls. Most of the troop horses can." He swung out of



"Rick, you'd better notify the officer of the guard or I will," Elliot warned.

the saddle. "Now let me hear what you can do, young Shannon. Try *Mess Call*. Most soldiers are able to spot that, no matter how it's played."

"Yes, Sergeant." Peter put his trumpet to his lips and blew one raucous note. Both horses jumped and snorted. Smith grinned and remarked: "As Job once observed of the war-horse, 'Neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.' Try again."

Peter filled his lungs and blew a mighty but utterly anonymous blast.

"At last," said Sam Smith, "I can understand how it happened that day when Joshua commanded his trumpets to sound off, and the walls of Jericho came tumbling down."

"Just a minute, Sergeant," Peter pleaded. "I'll get it this time."

He shut his eyes and blew again. Now the sounds could be identified as a call of some sort, but no one could have been quite sure whether it was *Mess Call* or the *Funeral March*.

When Peter finished and looked up, the First Sergeant had retired to a distance and was holding his ears. But the three animals, the two horses and the dog, were gathered in front of him. Justin was stretching his neck out toward him, a look of concern in his dark eyes for this master of his, who was evidently in great pain. Big Bill sat down on his haunches as if such trumpeting was more than he could take standing up. Old Taylor, his muzzle pointed toward the sky, was howling as if his heart would surely break.

IT WAS LONG BEFORE Peter was able to master double-tonguing with its *tu-ku* and longer still before he could tackle *tu-tu-ku* which is triple-tonguing, the summit of trumpet-playing. It was long before he was allowed to blow any calls at all except in practice. Mackenzie was particular about the trumpeting in the Fourth.

At last came the day when Peter was passed as competent by Sergeant Wills, the Chief Trumpeter. Grown gray in the service, Wills was said to date back to the period when a chief trumpeter was called *Trumpet-Major*. He ordered Peter to have the troop tailor sew the trumpeter's two half-inch yellow stripes along the legs of his breeches, the hunting-horn insignia on the arms of his blouse, and attach the cap ornament, which was a horn with a "K" for his troop, within the instrument's loop. Wills also related traditions of the ancient and honorable art of trumpeting—how the call *Retreat* had originated in

a Thirteenth-Century Crusade—how the melodious night call of *Tattoo* was first used in the Thirty Years' War as a signal to tavernkeepers that it was time to pull their taps to and draw no more wine for roistering troopers.

Until the Civil War, Wills related, the first eight measures of *Tattoo* had been repeated later in the evening, a call ordering lights out in barracks or tents, known simply as *Taps*. Then a musical Union general named Dan Butterfield, bothered by confusion caused among bodies of troops camped close together with one outfit mistaking another's bugle or trumpet calls for its own, composed a distinctive call for his brigade and one for each of its regiments. By blowing the few bars of the new calls before the regular calls, the Butterfield buglers identified them as applying to their own people. And these calls rallied the brigade in battle.

One evening a new tune for *Taps* had come to the General. He called his brigade bugler to his tent and whistled the notes for him to learn. The first night the new call was sounded, buglers all along the line were attracted by the charm of its slow sweet strains, and picked it up. It spread rapidly through the Army and was made official. Like the British *Last Post*, it came to be played also at military funerals as a soldier's farewell.

SERGEANT WILLS SAID: "Shannon, you've done well. You've turned into a pretty fair windjammer. Tonight we'll play *Taps*—four trumpets. I'll bring Kay from Headquarters. Tell Elliot I want him there. You and he will play the echo."

The Texas night was cool and still. A crescent moon rode high through the cloudless, starry skies. The four trumpeters met in front of the guardhouse and blew gently into their instruments, warming them, making soft guttural sounds. Wills and Kay faced in toward the post; Elliot and Peter, back to back with them, outward.

The Chief Trumpeter looked at his watch and raised his trumpet to his lips, the other three following suit. The first two trumpets blew the first phrase in two-part harmony. Elliot and Peter repeated it, also in harmony, before its last note died. Faced away as they were and playing more softly, their tones seemed to echo the others. They sounded the lovely, poignant strains of the call once, then repeated them.

Lights winked out in the barracks windows. Even the soft sounds of the evening were hushed. Peter thinking, "This is beauty, and I'm helping create it," put all his soul into his playing. And the trumpets, sounding as mellow and tender as violins in the vast openness of the surrounding prairie, sang:

*Fades the light
Falls the night.
Moon and stars
In the sky shining bright.
Night is on.
Fare thee well
Till the dawn.*

The last echo died away in a whisper. Peter slowly lowered his trumpet from his lips like someone waking reluctantly from a happy dream. Behind him he heard a soft little sigh and a girl's voice speaking.

"Oh, Peter! That was beautiful!"

He had not known that Sally Ann was back from a long visit he had heard she and her mother had been making North. Of course he would not have seen her, anyway, after that quarrel of theirs in the kitchen. He had been too busy even to think of her—except offhandedly now and then.

"Thanks," he acknowledged her compliment, "but I'll have to admit that three other trumpeters had a little something to do with it too."

He turned to wave toward Wills, Kay, and Elliot—but they, strangely, had vanished.

Sally Ann was saying again: "I never heard it played more wonderfully. You don't know what *Taps* means to an Army girl, Peter. I've heard it ever since I was a baby. Mother used to sing it to me as a lullaby. I don't ever want to live anywhere but on an Army post, where I'll hear *Taps* played every night. You must have worked hard to learn so well. Oh, I knew which was your trumpet and you sounded just as good as the rest. You were playing the second in the echo."

"Right," Peter acknowledged, gratified. "Yes, I have been doing plenty of practicing."

The girl gazed off into the night. "Sometimes *Taps* is sad," she said. "You feel that it's saying farewell to all the good soldiers who are gone." On Sally Ann's eyelashes tears glistened in the moonlight but she winked them away. "But most times it isn't sad," she went on. "It's like—yes, it's like the voice of someone you love dearly saying 'good night.'"

The boy and the girl stood looking into each other's eyes. The spell of the night and the music on them. Peter thought: Did she think that when he was playing that it was "like the voice of someone you love dearly saying 'good night'?" His heart was beating fast.

"Oh!" Sally Ann suddenly exclaimed. The same thought had run through her mind and she was telling herself in burning embarrassment: "He must think I meant him. And the trouble is I did!" She cried again, "Oh, I didn't mean—"

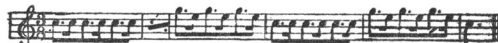
She turned and ran. Then she stopped abruptly, ran back and thrust a paper package into Peter's hands.

"For you," she said, and dashed away.

For a moment Peter stood motionless, in a half-daze. Stirring, he became conscious of the token left him. Slowly he unwrapped it. . . . Cookies!

CHAPTER TWELVE

17. CHARGE



COLONEL BREVET MAJOR GENERAL RONALD S. MACKENZIE sat down to write his report to the Adjutant General, Department of Texas. And Trumpeter Peter Shannon sat down to write a letter to his father. It was October, 1872.

"With the five cavalry companies, in all 7 officers and 215 enlisted men, and *Tonkawa scouts*," began the Fourth's commander, "the march was taken upon *McClellan Creek*—"

"Dear Pop: As an old cavalryman you'll know how I felt," began Peter. "We cornered the Comanches at last, and I was ordered to sound the Charge—"

The veteran leader used precise military language, while the young trooper's pen was dipped as deep in boyish enthusiasm as ink. But the eyes of Mackenzie glowed as brightly as Peter's as they wrote, remembering.

The command had marched out as it had for numerous extended scouts in the past. But having established a supply-camp, it had headed straight for the Staked Plain and toward the several Comanche villages reported there.

Peter felt the current of anticipation that flowed through the column, a strong though unjustified sense of certainty that this time the enemy would not escape. The black Morgan beneath him seemed to share it too. What a splendid trumpeter's mount Justin made! He now knew the calls as well as his master. Plainly Justin understood that a smooth gait would help when calls were being blown, for if he were at a trot and out of ranks when Peter began to sound off, the black horse would shift into his easy singlefoot.

Now Peter was carrying his trumpet slung tight up against his right shoulder-blade, copying Elliot. From now on no calls would be sounded until they went into action. They were approaching enemy country, and brazen notes carried far over the plains. Nor would they be allowed fires any longer, for fear of betrayal by their smoke. On the morning they were cooking their last hot breakfast, Peter took his little sack of coffee beans out of his saddlebags and went in search of the grinder carried in the mess chest.

"TAKE CARE OF THEM BEANS for yuh, son?" Sergeant Hanks offered, as he was passing. To Peter's amazement he opened a slot in the stock of his Sharps carbine, poured the beans in, inserted a small handle in a socket and ground the beans handily into powder.

Hanks grinned broadly at Peter's gaping. "Some of us got these here contraptions fixed up back in the War," he related. "Frequent, ye couldn't find a grinder. Me, I never did take to chawin' coffee beans. I drinks mine and shoots better with it in me.

"Haint no better shootin'-iron than this here one made by old Christian Sharps. That's how-come they called a good shot a 'sharpshooter'—'cause he used a Sharps, not just 'cause he'd got a sharp eye."

First Sergeant Smith, who had walked up, said: "We had another name for Sharps rifles, before the war. Out in Bloody Kansas the anti-slavery men bought a lot of 'em to use on 'converting' the pro-slavery people. A good deal of the money to buy the guns had been raised by Henry Ward Beecher, the famous preacher. It was his sister, you know—Harriet Beecher Stowe—who wrote 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' Never was much doubt where the Beecher family stood on the slavery question. So in Kansas, seeing that the Sharps rifles were spreading the Reverend Mr. B.'s gospel, they were called 'Beecher's Bibles.'"

That breakfast was the last real meal in many hours. On pushed the cavalry column. It struck McClellan Creek, named for a young lieutenant—later the organizing genius and commanding general of the Army of the Potomac—who had run a survey here twenty years before. After marching two miles down the creek, the cavalrymen beheld a tempting spectacle: a wild-grape vineyard, the vines loaded heavily with luscious, thick-clustered bunches. All along the column, mouths were watering. Major Lindsay cast a questioning glance toward the General.

"Let the men dismount and eat all they want," Mackenzie answered. "No telling when they'll eat again. Grapes are good for 'em; shrink their stomachs."

Peter stuffed his mouth full of the tart but tasty fruit, while Justin eagerly nibbled vine leaves. The Fourth feasted fast but not long. An officer walking through the vineyard discovered a trail of grapes and grape-skins leading on from the farther side. Knowing Indians to be inordinately fond of wild grapes, he ran back to report.

Fall in. . . . Mount up. . . . Forward, ho! The commands were brisk and sharp. . . . Traces grew plainer. This trail might lead to an Indian village; one might be hidden yonder in that valley along the creek.

The Fourth took up the trot. Three or four miles they covered at a steady, swinging gait. Along the column blue-clad arms were upflung.

Halt! Close up!

Still some four miles farther on but clear in the bright sunlight of early afternoon a Comanche village—a big one—stood revealed. There must be two hundred and fifty lodges or more there. In the foreground the Indians' pony herd was spread out grazing. And as yet neither herdsman nor the warriors moving among the lodges had seen the poised column of blue.

Mackenzie signaled: *Gallop, ho!*

Men flung suddenly into combat do not think; they simply react. When they go more gradually into battle, approaching it consciously, as the galloping squadrons of the Fourth Cavalry now did, most men shrink back instinctively as from the edge of a precipice. But the shrinking is usually only inward. Souls recoil but bodies advance, driven relentlessly by the will—dreading the road ahead that may have death at the end of it, yet dreading worse a turning back to contempt and dishonor.

To conceal or suppress this inner struggle and turmoil, soldiers resort to various subterfuges or distractions. Some laugh and joke, and the more ribald the jest, the more effective. Some sing or hum a tune. Some—and these are invaluable to any outfit—down for their comrades, diverting others' minds as well as their own from the impending ordeal. Almost all strive to keep their faces expressionless, masking their thoughts. Thus it was with the troopers pounding down on the still-suspecting Comanche village. It takes about twenty minutes to gallop four miles. They had plenty of time—more than many of them wanted—to think.

Peter Shannon thought: "I've been in action before and didn't disgrace myself. I can't flinch this time. You either get hit or you don't. The trick is not to think about yourself." He bent over a little to pat Justin below the withers where the mighty foreleg muscles were flexing rhythmically. Did horses realize they were going into battle? They must, Peter assured himself. He reached back to loosen his trumpet-sling, grasping the instrument in readiness.

In the mind of First Sergeant Smith was a scene picturing Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden kneeling in prayer with his whole army before a great battle—one of history's strikingly memorable moments. Prayer, Sam Smith was telling himself, had its points as a prelude to battle. His lips moved silently.

Sergeant Hanks, riding with the rear set of fours, grinned over at Peter in the file-closers. He looked utterly unconcerned. Old "Peruna" Simmons galloped with the rapt look of one who hopes to find a long-desired release. Corporal Rick rode with his head hunched down between his shoulders. But it was the bearing of Lance Elliot that really fixed Peter's attention.

Elliot, his right hand grasping his trumpet, its bell resting on his thigh, rode to the left and rear of Captain Bone at the head of the troop, like the esquire and herald of a knight plunging into the fray, thought Peter. Such was Elliot, one of those living for and loving the thrill and fierce joy of battle.

But not an officer or trooper, whatever his apprehensions, whatever his sudden brief yearning toward loved ones at home he might never see again, could escape the stirring of pulses which comes to cavalry galloping into action.

AN INDIAN ON A MULE had seen them now; he tore for the village, shouting a warning. Herders tried to rush ponies into camp and mount the warriors, but it was evident they would be cut off by the converging cavalry.

Over the thundering of hoofs Peter half heard an order, confirmed by Captain Bone's arm signal: "Right front into line." Rear fours swung out in an oblique to the right, increased their pace, moved up out of column into line. Peter glimpsed Sergeant Hanks' grin, as the movement brought him up on the right of the troop in line. Then came the sound he had been long expecting: the high, clear notes of Sergeant Wills' trumpet sounding the *Charge*.

"Draw saber!" That was the troop commander's shout. Blades rasped out of scabbards, flashed in the sun. Every troop-horse quivered, knowing that sound. Only Elliot and Shannon had not drawn. Their polished trumpets, catching the sunlight too, were at their



Peter determined he'd "go over the hill" rather than let Justin be turned over to T-foya again.

lips, and together they repeated the call Wills had sounded. Its stirring, staccato summons echoed across the prairie. *Charge!* commanded its brazen tones. Sabers swept outward, their points thrust forward. Men yelled hoarsely, menacingly.

Peter, his sword out now, was seized by a breathless exhilaration. Justin was surging forward, tugging at his reins, hard to hold. His rider felt the glorious driving power under him, and muttered to himself verses from the Scriptures Sam Smith had taught him:

"Hast Thou given the horse his strength? Hast Thou clothed his neck in thunder? . . . He saith among the trumpets, Aha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting."

CHARGING TROOPS THUNDERED down on the big village. From its lodges rifle-fire cracked. Whistling lead and singing arrows began to hum through the oncoming blue ranks. Comanche warriors, making a stand, redoubled their fire.

Something dragged Peter's gaze to the right of the line. Where the set of fours, which had come up from the rear with Sergeant Hanks, had been riding, there suddenly were four empty saddles; three of the fallen troopers were mortally wounded—two shot through the neck, one through the stomach. The fourth had an arrow through his thigh. Steadily, keeping perfect formation, their four riderless mounts galloped on.

Sergeant Hanks? Peter, a catch in his throat, looked again. The Tennessean was still beside the guidon-bearer. Hanks had sheathed or thrown away his saber. Reins on his horse's neck, his carbine was at his shoulder and he was sighting carefully. Plainly the fire that had killed one or more of his men had come from an Indian marksman yonder between two lodges ahead. He was whooping in triumph as he reloaded. Hanks shot once. The Comanche whirled, threw up his hands and collapsed into an inert heap. His sightless eyes stared up at Peter as the troop rode over him. Not a horse stepped on the body.

Fighting through the village tended to break up the troop's alignment, yet it was roughly maintained, and gaps were closed. The four riderless horses on the right of the line still dressed on Sergeant Hanks as if at drill, until an Indian bullet smashed a foreleg of one of them. Left behind, the poor animal hobbled desperately with

all his might, striving to catch up. Peter, his heart torn with pity, wanted to end the wounded creature's misery.

There was no time for deeds of mercy. On the village near the banks of a pool a score or so of Comanche braves had rallied. Captain Bone, Corporal-Trumpeter Elliot, Sergeant Pinchon, and several troopers spurred straight into them. A red circle closed around the Army blue.

Peter at charge saber rode straight for the circle. Justin hurtled ahead at a headlong gallop.

IN CHARGING ENEMY CAVALRY, horsemen against horsemen, a cavalry mount, approaching the shock of battle, usually will lift his head and forefeet as if about to take a fence. When about to hit enemy infantry, he will often gallop straight into a man and bowl him over. This Justin did now, plunging into the red circle. He smashed into one Indian with his left shoulder, then struck a second. Peter thrust downward to the right at a yelping savage grasping for his reins. The blade, caught between the ribs of the falling body, was wrenched out of his hand. He drew and fired his revolver until its hammer clicked on empty cylinders.

Still senselessly snapping his Colt, Peter emerged from his battle haze to stare about him. Indian dead lay around him. More had slid into the pool, crimsoning its water.

Captain Bone's voice broke into his consciousness: "Good work, Shannon. You came in handy, joining our little ruckus here. Sound *Recall* now. Elliot can't manage."

Obediently, Peter turned to stare at Elliot. His friend was holding a bloody handkerchief over his mouth.

"Lance!" he cried in deep concern.

"It's not bad," the wounded man's muffled voice reassured him. "Tomahawk cut across my mouth—reckon I'm done with horn-tooting, though."

Peter started to help dress the wound, but Elliot pushed him away. "Stay with the captain," he ordered. "You're troop trumpeter now."

The Fourth Cavalry's casualties were four killed and several wounded. At least twenty-four Indians had been killed, and there would be more bodies at the bottom of the deep pool and still others carried off. Undoubtedly many of the fugitive warriors were wounded. Some hundred and thirty women and children had been taken prisoner. These hostages, taken back under guard to reservations, probably would act as a magnet drawing Comanche braves back from the warpath to join them. The wounded were carefully treated.

What might have happened had the situation been reversed? Peter reflected. What would have been the fate of—yes, of Sally Ann (might as well admit he was thinking especially of her) if the Comanches had taken her? He shoved a highly unpleasant certainty out of his mind.

Now the lodges were being burned, along with all the Indians' food supplies and all but a few choice buffalo robes. The chief booty, the Comanches' herd of three thousand horses and mules, was herded under guard on the prairie after the Tonkawa scouts, as a reward for their services, had been allowed to take their choice of the finest racing-ponies.

But that night the Comanches returned. Yelling and shooting, they stampeded the herd and ran off with all but fifty of the captured animals. Mounted again, the Comanches, those superb horsemen, once more were a formidable threat.

"That, I'll lay a wager, will be the last time that happens," First Sergeant Smith remarked next morning. "If I know General Mackenzie, we will never again try to hold a herd of captured ponies."

"Why, the General wouldn't turn 'em loose, would he?" Peter asked.

"Not he. He'll have every last one of them shot."

Peter gasped and flung a protecting arm around Justin's neck.

"Shoot horses!" he cried. "Horses that aren't sick and wounded and *have* to be destroyed? All those spirited mustangs and beautiful racing-ponies? General Mac couldn't be cruel like that!"

"War is cruel," said the big bearded man softly. "Nothing that gives the enemy strength can be spared."

"But horses—it's not their fault! We ride them into battle. They don't go of their own accord—because they like it."

"Who knows? It may be that they have the same perverse, the same persistent fondness for war which is—ought to be—the despair of mankind. Remember the verses from the Book of Job that I taught you? The ones about the war-horse?"

*"The glory of his nostrils is terrible.
He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength.
He goeth on to meet the armed men.
He mocketh at fear and is not affrighted;
Neither turneth he back from the sword.
The quiver rattleth against him,
The glittering spear and the shield.
He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage—"*

Peter nodded soberly. He recalled how he had recited later lines from the same passage riding into battle and how this black war-horse of his had snorted and smashed furiously into the Comanches. He rubbed Justin's poll, facing him. Dark, eloquent eyes gazed into his.

A slow grin spread over Peter's tanned face. "Sergeant," he said, "it's crazy but I'd swear this fellow's been remembering the fight yesterday just as we've been and that he's trying to tell me something. Know what I think he's trying to say?"


"What?"

"'Licked 'em this time, didn't we?'"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SOAP STUBS ROW



 TEXAS would equal any State in the Union if only it had plenty of water and good society, an enthusiast had boasted to General Sherman, down to inspect the border posts. "Well," the General of the Army dryly replied, "that's about all they lack in hell!"

The Fourth Cavalry, forced usually while stationed in Texas to resort to its own society, found its own company tolerably good. Between scouts and campaigns it fought the inevitable monotony of garrison life with a variety of diversions. Sprees and hot-and-heavy gambling sessions were regular sequels to the muster every two months for pay. After Uncle Sam's meager stipend had been drunk up and gambled away by some, sent home or salted away by others, calmer pastimes succeeded—minstrel shows and other theatricals, hops, hunting. Mackenzie was liberal with his allowances of passes for hunting trips. He was well aware that they improved marksmanship, scouting, and trailing, and provided fresh meat for the larder, as well as serving as recreation.

Mackenzie himself was an enthusiastic Nimrod. At Fort Sill he had kept a pack of foxhounds and ridden to them with all the ceremony and decorum of the hunting-field, though the usual quarry was no fox but a wildcat. The regiment liked to tell of the time when the hunt after a long chase had run down a semi-wild pig, and how annoyed the General had been. The General also had been extremely put out (the annoyance of a com-

manding officer is always highly amusing to the rank and file when it has no repercussions on them) on the occasion when he had run a coyote miles with his greyhounds on a hot day, and ridden up to find hounds and coyote cooling off in the same pool.

Another favorite regimental yarn was Lieutenant Miller's wild-turkey hunt. That officer, shooting a big gobbler, had bent down in the brush to retrieve it, but when he grasped the bird by the tail, he found its head clamped in the jaws of a mountain-lion. Ensued a terrific tug-of-war. It was the lion that finally gave up and let go. Then there was the tale of the time Sergeant Pinchon had gone buffalo-hunting, armed only with his favorite weapon, the saber. The fiery little Frenchman had delivered a doughty thrust at a young bull, but the animal instead of succumbing had, to the Sergeant's intense discomfiture, simply snorted with indignation and run off with the sword sticking in its hump.

The primary objective of several hunting-parties especially sent out by "K" Troop several days that fall was neither target practice nor recreation, though it furnished both. The troop desired to set a bountiful table for a social affair. It was giving a birthday party, a supper and a hop, for its First Sergeant.

Troop "K" barracks had been cleaned out and decorated. Cooks and extra details of kitchen police were engaged in furious activity. Bustle and excitement reigned in the quarters of the married noncommissioned officers and the laundresses along Soapsuds Row.

AN INVITATION TO THE PARTY had been conveyed to the Commanding Officer and accepted with pleasure. The Adjutant, Major Lindsay, and his wife and daughter, also had been bidden, along with the Squadron Commander and his lady. These, with Captain Bone and Lieutenant Hatton, the troop officers, would be the only guests from Officers' Row, and they would stay only for supper. This was an enlisted men's party, and no officer would wish to cramp it for long by the constraint of his presence.

Shaven, shorn, and uniformed as if for a general inspection, "K" Troop assembled in the festooned room. Outside the barracks the regimental band rendered some of the less-martial selections in its repertory. In swept the fair, with their escorts. Ma Simmons with Persimmons, acting a little genial for his having prescribed a stiff dose of Peruna for himself in honor of the occasion. Other laundresses, most of them with noncom husbands, Sergeant and Madame Pinchon, a tiny, twinkling Frenchwoman who might have caused considerable trouble in the regiment had it not been for her own discretion, and her spouse's formidable skill with the saber. Corporal "Hay" Rick, with a dark flamboyant girl from a neighboring ranch.

Beaming, the guest of honor entered. Sam Smith's high character and fair play had made him popular, though a First Sergeant. This birthday party for him was no attempt to curry favor but a tribute testifying to the honest liking the men of the troop had for him, a liking undiminished by the fact that his duty often compelled him to drive them hard. They cheered him and pushed up to shake his hand in congratulation on his birthday. Peter, thronging up with the rest, was happy in the pleasure of his idol.

"Attention!" somebody shouted. Every trooper stiffened. Mackenzie had entered with Mrs. Lindsay—Mackenzie being a bachelor—on his arm. Major Lindsay, Sally Ann, and other guests followed. "At ease. Rest," the commanding officer ordered, a smile on his sour face. Troopers obediently strove to be at ease and restful as ordered, difficult as it was in that august presence.

Supper was served promptly. Peter and others detailed as waiters staggered in with steaming, savory, platters, heaped-high with smoked buffalo tongues, huge wild

turkeys, venison, bear-meat, quail, and plover—the hunting-parties had done nobly. There was roast pig too, salmon salad, jellies, and coffee and rolls. To cap the climax, the rare and delectable treat of real mince pies would be forthcoming for dessert. Troop "K" and their guests, limited often enough to Army rations and short ones at that, fell on the feast as if famished. Waiters rushed back for more roasts.

"Hi, soldier!" Sally Ann's voice hailed Peter.

Peter stopped at the end of the table he was hastily circling.

Quite often since the last campaign he had dropped in to see her—to tell her how Justin was, of course—but he had meant to avoid her sedulously at this party. Given a chance, the troop would tease him unmercifully. But now she had spoken to him and since it couldn't be helped, Peter stiffly and distantly replied: "Good evening, Miss Lindsay."

The hussy smiled up at him. "Grown formal, haven't you, Pete?" she observed—too loudly. "But do keep it up; I kind of like it. First time in my life I ever was called 'Miss Lindsay.'"

She polished off a large slice of turkey, and spoke again just as Peter was about to escape. "The troop's putting on a real spread, and I can't stop eating!"

"Sally Ann," Mrs. Lindsay reproved her. "Don't keep that young soldier standing there. Let him go get something to eat for himself."

"I was just making my manners and telling him how delicious the supper is," the girl explained.

"Too delicious for you, young lady, I'm afraid," Mrs. Lindsay remarked tartly.

Sally Ann gazed up at Peter and smiled impishly. "Mother means I'm getting to be a big girl now, and I'd better watch my figure. But I don't see anything wrong with it, do you, Pete?" With complacency she regarded her trim form, still girlish but just beginning to round into maturity. Then she looked appealingly at Peter for an answer.

Sally Ann's last remarks had fallen in the midst of a momentary silence. General Mackenzie himself began to roar with laughter. The laughter rose higher. Even those who had not heard the words joined in the hilarity at the sight of Peter's crimsoning face.

ASCANT HALF HOUR after the ceremonious departure of the guests from Officers' Row, Sally Ann was back at "K" Troop's barracks. She peered in a window. Mess tables had been cleared away. Most of the regimental band had disappeared; a few of its members, no longer doubling in brass, were reconstituting themselves dance music. Fiddlers three, a couple of guitarists, and a concertina player were tuning up. With delight Sally Ann saw that Lance Elliot was there with his banjo. She guessed that he would act as caller for the square dances—and as such he had no superior. The scar from the Comanche tomahawk showed livid across his lips; he would blow a trumpet no more. But voice and banjo would not fail him.

Sally Ann surveyed her array a trifle guiltily. Her pig-tails had been unbraided, and her wavy brown hair was flowing free except for a bright red bow at the back of her head. Her skirt was a good three inches longer, a retractable hem having been let down. But guiltiest was her downward glance at the neckline of her flounced red dress. It had not been possible to lower that line from its modest cut, but beneath it the dress was tightly stretched over what appeared to be a precociously ample and astoundingly seductive bosom. Sally Ann had borrowed two of her father's handkerchiefs, balled them up and stuffed them inside her bodice.

A set had formed, and the music struck up "Arkansaw Traveler." Lance's clear, strong voice, pitched to harmonize with the music, gave first call:

"Honor yo' partner. Lady on the left. All join hands and circle to the left."

Troopers bobbed heads and ladies curtsied. Slippers tapped and black Hessian boots thumped the floor. A merry circle whirled around and around to the lively tune. Sally Ann heard a soldier standing against the wall close to the window singing words to it.

*"Oh, his horse went dead, and his mule went lame,
And he lost six cows. What a measly shame!
Then a hurricane came on a summer's day
And blew the house where he lived away."*

*"An earthquake came when this was gone
And swallowed up the land that the house stood on.
Then the tax collector came around,
And charged him up with a hole in the ground."*

Elliot called for a Grand Right and Left and Promenade.

*"Balance home,
Attention all!
All grand right and left
'Round the hall.
When you come to yo' partners,
Promenade all!"*

Laughing, the dancers flung themselves into the figure. They swung from hand to hand and promenaded, some of the couples cake-walking.

SALLY ANN, WATCHING, could stand it no longer. She ran around to the door of the barracks and burst in.

"Sally Ann!" Stern tones halted her. First Sergeant Smith stood in front of her, barring her way.

"Why—good evening, Uncle Sam!"—her private term of endearment for him. "I just dropped in to—"

"I bet your mother doesn't know you were coming back."

"She does too, Uncle Sam. She said I could come back and listen to the music and w—"

"And watch. But don't go near the dancing." Sam Smith grinned at her.

Sally Ann stamped a foot angrily; then kept on tapping it in time to the music. "Look here," she protested. "I'm not picketed on Officers' Row yet. I know very well that when I'm a young lady I'll have to stick to the stuffy old hops the officers give. But enlisted men's parties are much more fun. Let me dance, Uncle Sam!" she wheedled.

The corners of Sergeant Smith's eyes crinkled. "I thought you'd grown up already, Sally Ann," he said. "But since you haven't, maybe it's all right for you to dance."

"Oh, Unc—"

"But first," he insisted, "I'm going to ask you to lend me a handkerchief—or even a couple handkerchiefs."

Blushing brightly, the girl removed the false "fronts" and passed them over. The sergeant himself led her out for the next dance. Lance saw her and sang out, twanging his banjo:

*"Chase dat 'possum, chase dat 'coon,
Chase dat purty gal 'round the room.
Swing Grandmaw, swing Grandpaw,
Swing dat gal from Arkansaw."*

Sally Ann flung herself into the figures with abandon. Peter, dancing opposite Ma Simmons (he had figured this attention would be good for cookie hand-outs all winter), suddenly caught sight of the new arrival. He gasped, forgetting his resentment at the embarrassment she had caused him earlier in the evening. **Gosh**, the girl was pretty with her hair that way! And grown up! She came toward him now on the call: "Turn the opposite lady."

"Hi, Pete," she greeted again. "I'm sorry 'bout talking too much at supper."

"Never mind," he said. "Say, Sally Ann, you look—" The dance parted them before he could finish, but she had seen in his eyes what he meant and she almost hid her scarlet cheeks against Sam Smith's blue blouse when she skipped back to him for the *allemande*. Lance was chanting now:

*"As I was a-goin' down the road,
I met Miss 'Possum and I met Mister Toad,
And every time the toad would sing,
The 'possum cut the pigeon's wing."*

Ringling above the music and stamping feet, his voice was heard calling for another figure: "Dos-à-dos. Four hands 'round. Turn yo' partner. Turn the opposite lady. Swing yo' partner with both hands."

Peter found himself dancing with Sally Ann. Sergeant Smith and Ma Simmons had slipped quietly away and sat down. The fiddles were setting an even more rollicking rhythm, switching to "Green Grow the Rushes, O" and then to "Step to the Music, Johnny." And how they stepped! By this time only young couples had survived, with the exception of Sergeant and Madame Pinchon, whose Gallic grace was the envy of all. Matching them were Corporal Rick, lithe and dashing, as he swung the tawny beauty he partnered, till her skirts swirled high. But most eyes were following Sally Ann and Peter, for there was youth and young love living one of those gorgeous moments which come only in the springtime of life.

*"Boys, go a-runnin' to that pretty little maid.
Swing her like you love her. Promenade!"*

Peter would always remember Sally Ann coming dancing toward him, her hands outstretched. He caught them in his and swung her, swung her just as that call of Lance's had told him to.

Elliot, watching them, grinned broadly and began to tease the young couple with every new tune he struck up. Gayly he sang:

*"I'm Captain Jinks, of the Horse Marines,
I feed my horse on corn and beans,
And sport young ladies in their teens,
Though a captain in the Army.
I teach young ladies how to dance,
How to dance, how to dance,
I teach young ladies how to dance,
For I'm the pet of the Army."*

Next he bantered with "I'm Too Young to Marry, Love." Flushing but loving it, Sally Ann and Peter shook their fists in mock annoyance at the caller and danced every succeeding figure with more joyous abandon—balancing at the corners, "sashaying," grand-rights-and-lefts, and promenades. How could anyone prefer slow round dances such as the waltz, when square dances were such gay fun?

For the last half hour of the party they stopped dancing and sang together, Lance Elliot leading and strumming ringing chords on his banjo. After a number of old favorites, he swept the strings and with a wink at the Major's daughter began to sing:

*"Of all the girls that are so smart
There's none like pretty Sally.
She is the darling of my heart,
And she lives down in our alley."*

The song left Peter gazing soulfully at Sally Ann, and Sally Ann lowering her lashes demurely, then raising them again for a glance out of the corners of her eyes to see if Peter were still looking at her that way, until all the company, noticing this by-play, were nudging one another and smiling.

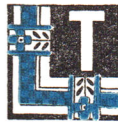
Too soon, it seemed, it was time for the party to break up. Peter offered his escort home to Sally Ann, and it was promptly accepted. Would he, he wondered fervently, have the nerve to kiss her good night? The Lord knew he wanted to! But she was just a child, wasn't she—or was she? She was going on sixteen, and he was nearly eighteen now. Should he?

That problem was solved for him in advance, as such problems sometimes are. Hardly had the girl finished shyly accepting his offer of escort home, when Peter heard Ma Simmons firmly announce:

"I'm coming, too. 'Tis old enough you are now for a chapyrone, Sally Ann."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Rogues' March



RUMPETER SHANNON, on orders from the Stable Sergeant, was instructing a recruit in grooming a horse, and enjoying it hugely for more reasons than one. His detail as instructor meant that he himself no longer was regarded as a rookie but as a trooper of some seasoning. And in the performance of duty Peter's own mount was being groomed for him, since Justin was being used for demonstration.

Vigorously the recruit, a farm boy, plied currycomb and brush on the sleek flanks. "Put your back into it," Peter nevertheless sternly directed. "Don't get the idea that just because this is a black you don't have to get the dust out of his hide."

The recruit, looking pained, seemed to be about to say something. With all the gruff authority of an old-timer, Peter cut him off. "I'll do the talking, you do the listening. Maybe you have taken care of horses before, but not in the Army. The Army's different, I'm telling you. An officer's likely to walk over here and he might be wearing white gloves and run 'em over this animal. If any dust shows up on 'em, it'll be too bad for you. Guess you never struck anything like that on the farm, did you?"

"No, sir," responded the rookie, brushing away with all his might.

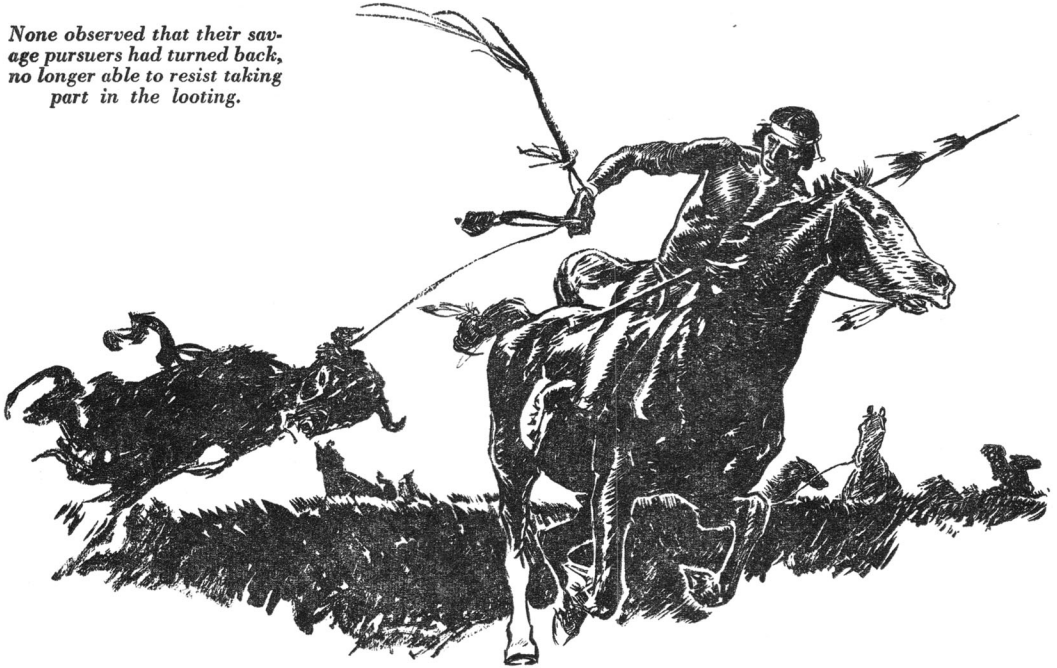
"Don't say 'sir,' except to a commissioned officer," his mentor instructed. "Now get in there with the brush between his jawbones and down under his fetlocks—there's where grooming gets scanted. Brush out his mane and tail. When you've finished that, fetch a bucket of water and sponge those four white stockings clean. Then dry 'em with a clean piece of sack."

Justin was taking obvious pleasure in these ministrations. Though he lacked the means of signifying it that Nature has given the dog and the cat—the wagging tail and the purr—he managed to convey his contentment by standing very still and seeming to nap on his feet. But suddenly he pricked up his ears. A horseman, the new guidon-bearer, was trotting past the picket-line.

It was Lance Elliot, accustoming his mount to the unfurled guidon he was carrying. Peter reflected how ideal an assignment this was for the former trumpeter. More than ever he looked a knight—a "verray parfit gentil knight."

Above him like a pennon flaunted the forked flag: "U. S." in white on its red half, "K" for the troop in red on its lower white half. Its ferrule rested in a socket attached to Elliot's right stirrup. His right hand grasped its lance, as the nine-foot staff was called, terminating in a spearhead gleaming in the sun. Elliot lifted the guidon and practiced dipping it in salute. In that attitude he could have served perfectly as a model for an artist paint-

None observed that their savage pursuers had turned back, no longer able to resist taking part in the looting.



ing a paladin with lance couched, about to ride a course against an adversary in a tournament or charge the foe in some hard-fought fray.

"Crickey!" the recruit exclaimed admiringly. "Lookit there! Reckon they'd ever let me tote a flag like that?" "That's a guidon," Peter snapped. "Call it that. Only the cloth part's a flag. I suppose you'd call what're kept in the C.O.'s quarters and carried on parade, flags, too. They aren't—they're the national and regimental standards. If we were an infantry outfit, they'd be colors."

"Crickey!" the recruit said dolefully. "Kinda confusin', aint it!"

"Not at all. Get on with that grooming." The recruit resumed so strenuously that Justin snorted and sidled away. Peter spoke in a kindlier tone:

"Sure they might let you carry the guidon some day if you soldier well and keep out of the guardhouse and take good care of your mount."

FIRST SERGEANT SMITH, walking up, confirmed: "That's right, especially the last mentioned. Private Shannon, do you know the fifteen points of a good horse?"

"Why—why," the confused instructor hesitated. Was that in the manual? He couldn't remember to save him. He stalled. "Why, Sergeant, this horse has more—lots more—than fifteen good points!"

Justin, Sam Smith could have sworn, looked gratified and flattered. The Top grinned and continued: "Well, Shannon, perhaps you can't be expected to know that answer. It was given a bit before your time; it was stated in the year 1496 by one Wynkyn de Worde. Here it is." He drew out the well-worn notebook and read:

"A good horse sholde have three propytees of a man, three of a woman, three of a foxe, three of a haare, and three of an asse.

"Of a man. Bolde, prowde, hardye.

"Of a woman. Fayre-breasted, faire of heere, and easy to move.

"Of a foxe. A faire taylle, short eers, with a good trotte.

"Of a haare. A grate eye, a dry head, and well renynge.

"Of an asse. A bygge chin, a flat legge, and good hoof."

Peter laughed and said: "That's Justin all over." "Crickey!" again ejaculated the recruit, completely baffled.

"Attention!" called the First Sergeant.

Major Lindsay was striding up to them. Peter began shaking in his boots. "Here," he thought, "comes my girl's old man, prepared to state in no uncertain terms that a certain trooper has been hanging around his daughter too much and he's to keep away even if General Mackenzie is a friend of his father's!"

Major Lindsay ordered Smith: "Sergeant, dismiss that recruit. No, Shannon, you stay. You're concerned in this." Peter's stomach started turning somersaults. "It's about this mount of yours." Peter relaxed slightly. "There's grave danger again that you may lose him." Peter gasped and grew tense. The Adjutant continued:

"It seems those Cheyenne raiders didn't finish off José Pieda Tafoya after all when they jumped his wagon-train. The old scoundrel's alive and kicking and back in business as a Comanchero on a bigger scale than ever. But I'll wager he's not too busy to have an eye out for lost property—for instance, a certain Morgan horse, a black gelding."

Peter felt sick with anxiety.

"Sir," he pleaded, "don't let him take my horse. I've heard about that Tafoya. I know what he'd do to Justin. He'd just about ride him to death, and then turn him out on the range in winter to starve."

"The boy's right, sir," Sam Smith supported him. "If the Major permits it, we'll just spirit this horse off to some hiding-place for a while."

"That would never do, Sergeant. In the first place, I think we'd be caught at it. And anyway, the risk can't be taken. The General wouldn't like it a little bit. The U. S. Army can't be put in any such compromising position."

Peter sank into deep despair. What could he do against official opposition? Well, for one thing he could call on Sally Ann for help. There was nothing she wouldn't do for her beloved Justin. She might manage to change the Major's mind. He'd noticed that the girl had an undeniable talent for twisting her father around her little finger.

But if that resort failed? Then he'd take Justin and "go over the hill!" He knew Mackenzie's orders in regard to deserters: bring 'em back, dead or alive. Even so, determined Peter, setting his teeth, he'd do it, rather than let Justin be turned over to Tafoya again.

Major Lindsay must have seen the suffering in his face. "Hold on there, young Shannon," he interposed. "I don't intend to have your grand little horse here led over to Tafoya's hangout and tied up on his line with the Army's apologies. Tafoya will have to come and get him, and I've got a hunch he never will, and this is why."

The Major lowered his voice. "Don't forget I was present when a settler, California-bound, traded this horse to Tafoya. And Tafoya can't identify him positively now. Why? Because this Morgan has four white-stocking feet, and when that horse-trader passed him over he only had one."

"I don't quite follow the Major," Sergeant Smith said, perplexed.

"There's a silly superstition about a horse with four white feet being no good—or bad luck. That trader had dyed black three of the white stockings. I found it out when I picked up one of his feet, which was wet. But Tafoya got fooled by the trick.

"Yes, I know I recognized the Morgan here again when Shannon brought him off the plain. So may Tafoya. But he lost a horse with one white foot and he can't swear to the animal's having four. If he does, I'll perjure myself with pleasure. So sit tight."

"Thanks an awful lot, sir," said Peter, sighing in the vastness of his relief and patting Justin's neck affectionately.

Neither the Major nor Peter could know that in the midst of the Cheyenne raid the wounded and prostrate Tafoya had gazed upward to perceive plainly that *all* of the black horse's legs—the cheap dye washed out by the water of streams through which they had passed—were now white.

THE POST TRADER'S STORE was divided into three rooms. In the center was the sales- and stockroom, and on either side clubrooms, one for officers, the other for enlisted men. Each boasted no more than a billiard table (the worse for long, hard wear), chairs, a few tattered and ancient newspapers and magazines. Yet they were welcome gathering-places for bored and lonely men. A game of billiards or cards, a drink or so for those had the price or credit, a place to air grouches or spin yarns, escape from cheerless quarters and barracks—all these the rooms gave.

Peter Shannon, on duty as a mounted orderly, rode up to the post trader's, tied Justin to the hitching-bar and knocked at the door of the officers' club. Told to enter, he stepped in, saluted Major Lindsay smartly and handed him a bulky document, sent down from Headquarters for the Adjutant's signature. The Major regarded it with dismay.

"Paperwork, the curse of the Army," he groaned to clubmates. "This survey on seven lost glass inkwells already has eighteen indorsements. . . . Orderly, wait. I'll call you when this is ready to go back. Wait in the enlisted men's clubroom."

"Yes, sir." Peter saluted, faced about and stepped out to cross over. From a window he noticed a stranger, a civilian, staring out at Justin, but paid little attention except to observe as he entered that the curious one was a rancher who was drinking at a table with Corporal

Rick. The latter hardly spared Peter a glance, so engrossed was he in the news the rancher was imparting in a low voice.

"Yes siree, José Piedad Tafoya is back in the trade again and doin' fine. Sure, he got shot and scalped by Cheyennes, and he was pretty near corked—but he come out of it fin'ly. Yup, he's countin' on you again, Rick. Says your news of what's up around the post was always worth payin' for. If it hadn't been for you warnin' him, Mackenzie would've nabbed him long ago. José sent you this." The man covertly slipped Rick a small sack that clinked.

Thus, with paid spies and accomplices, the Comancheros operated. Their money bought soldiers in the various garrisons; at one post there was a captain in their pay. They could well afford to share some of their large profits. Their trade with the Comanches, Kiowas, and other tribes of the Southwest was flourishing. With their goods packed on burros or even in sizable wagon-trains like Tafoya's, they visited hostile tribesmen off the reservation and sold them firearms, ammunition, knives, paint, beads, calico, and whisky in gourds. In their barter they cheated the red men as much as they dared, giving them as little as possible for their buffalo-hides and "jerky" (dried beef in hide sacks), and the horses, mules, and cattle driven off in raids on ranches and settlements. The Comancheros disposed of these stolen animals to other ranchers and townsmen who bought them at a bargain and asked no questions.

PRIVATE CONVERSATION BETWEEN the rancher and Rick was conveniently covered by noise made by a group at the bar. There Private Simmons was holding forth; a recruit had been treating the old soldier to whisky, and he had consumed considerable. He was weaving back and forth and talking loudly and steadily, but every syllable was clear and not a single sibilant slipped.

"There we were, standing general inspection," Peter heard Persimmons narrate to an interested circle. "The word had been passed that any trooper not perfect would spend the next two months doing extra fatigue. Along came the inspecting officer, known throughout the Service as 'Old Gimlet Eye.' Not a thing could he find wrong as he walked along the front of our rank. Sorely disappointed, he circled and snooped to our rear. Now it chanced that I had neglected to polish my spurs thoroughly. Of course Old Gimlet Eye spotted it. Breathing triumphantly down my neck, he barked: 'Trooper, are you aware that your spurs are rusty in back?' Never moving a muscle and staring straight to the front, I replied: 'No, sir. A good soldier never looks behind.' And the old boy never turned me in!"

Amid laughter Persimmons poured himself another drink. His auditors looked uneasily at him, but it was Peter who strode over and took the bottle away. Firmly he pushed the old man out into the air.

"You're drunk, my friend," he said. "Get on back to barracks and sleep it off. You'll not be able to walk past the sentry without getting thrown in the guardhouse. But you can ride; get on my horse here."

"Thanks," Persimmons said thickly.

Peter untied the tie-rope. "Justin," he ordered, "take him back to the stables."

Obediently the horse moved off at a steady walk.

The incident had again attracted the attention of the rancher to Justin. "Say, *that* might be the horse," he declared.

"What horse?" Rick asked carelessly.

"Tafoya lost a horse like that. A black with white feet. A Morgan, too."

"Bah!" Rick scoffed. "We got a dozen like him in the troop—blacks with white markings, and— Wait! That nag was brought in off the Staked Plain by— Look here, tell me about Tafoya's losin' a hoss."

For five minutes they talked excitedly in low tones. Then Rick stood up and smiled with malevolent satisfaction.

"That," he announced, "is something I'm right glad to know about. That hoss belongs to that young rat Shannon and he's dotty over it. Now I've got something that's really goin' to hit him where he lives!"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

GENERAL



BETWEEN Justin and old Taylor, the guardhouse dog, there had sprung up one of those strong horse-and-dog friendships sometimes seen. Except for the Morgan, Taylor's attentions were centered on prisoners and others in special need of comfort and companionship. Frequently the part-bloodhound would trot up, wagging his tail, to pay a call on the horse, and as Justin lowered his head, the two would touch noses in a comradely fashion. Then they would pass the time of day together, and no witness could deny that they were apparently holding a conversation.

Such a visit, being paid early one morning by old Taylor, was interrupted by a trumpet call. Justin's ears pricked up and he tugged at the lariat picketing him. The hound barked. Both recognized the *General*, the call signaling march order. It carried through the bivouac, trumpet after trumpet echoing it, the notes of one overlapping another—like singing a round, thought Trumpeter Shannon, sounding the long, difficult call for Troop "K."

March order was being signaled every morning now, for the Fourth Cavalry was changing station. No outfit on the frontier was allowed to take root. There were frequent shifts to protect the vast territory under the Army's care, as parties of Comanches and Kiowas went on the warpath and Kickapoos and Lippons raided across the border from Mexican hideouts. Except for a few troops on detached service, the whole regiment was being moved, "horse, foot, and dragoons," as the saying went. The main body, now on the march, would be followed by a detachment conveying wives and children of Officers' and Soapsuds Rows, the regimental band, and their severely restricted baggage and household goods.

The good-bys said were not expected to be for long, however. When Peter had dropped in at the Lindsay quarters, Sally Ann had told him:

"We'll be joining you soon at Fort Clark or Griffin or wherever the regiment's being sent. My, but I hate to leave here! Just as you begin to get sort of fond of a post, you have to pull up stakes and move out. I've had lots of fun here—like that last hop of your troop's. But orders are orders, and off we go. A change of station is gen'rally for the worse. Prob'ly we'll have to live in a tent. At best it means an old set of quarters, with a new set of fleas and bedbugs.

"But such is life in the Army. Take good care of Justin, Pete. See you soon. 'By."

She had been as cool and matter-of-fact as that. It was true that the omnipresent chaperon, Ma Simmons, had been sitting there, but Sally Ann might have managed something warmer by way of a soldier's farewell!

Efficiently the veteran Fourth put itself into march order and moved off.

And then it rained.

It rained as if a billion buckets were being emptied from the sky. The trail turned into a canal of mud which grew thicker and more clinging by the moment.

Troop-horses picked their way through it, but the wheels of the wagon-train could not escape its clutch. Down bogged the leading vehicle. Two troops dismounted, grumbling and groaning under their breath. They made fast and stretched two long picket-lines. The teamster yelled and cracked his whip over his team of six sturdy Army mules. Troopers on the lines heaved and cheered. Slowly the wagon was pulled out of the morass onto firmer ground.

One after another, all the wagons of the train took their turn at bogging. Again and again the weary tug-of-war troopers had to help haul out vehicles hub-deep in mud. Every day it rained, and one day the struggling column made only three-quarters of a mile. Mackenzie, never a patient man, was furious at the delay. Yet he could not deny that his regiment was doing its utmost. Its veterans, mud-bound often enough in the Wilderness and other Civil War campaigns, used all the skill and tricks in their repertory. Officers and noncoms never hesitated to dismount in oozing sloughs and put their weight on wheels or ropes alongside enlisted men. Peter noticed only one exception: Corporal Rick took every possible advantage of his two stripes, directing busily but never lending a hand where it could be avoided. The young trumpeter smothered his indignation; he could say nothing.

Still it rained. Uniforms and blankets never were dry. Every man and every article of equipment, excepting carefully protected firearms, was covered with mud. They ate and slept in oozing slime. Trails turned into canals after the first few vehicles of the train traversed them. All the prairie seemed a veritable black sea of mud.

First Sergeant Smith stood beside Trumpeter Shannon while the latter, wet and miserable, blew a *Reveille* whose very notes seemed to shake and shiver.

"God made mud to discourage man from liking war too well," he said, "There's nothing glorious about it when you're marching as to war through mud like this. Unfortunately the Almighty, even in His wisdom, could not have known that man would quickly forget the hardships and horror of warfare and remember only its stirring moments. Sound off again, Trumpeter, while I rouse these poor devils of soldiers out of their blankets."

Now came snow and freezing weather to heighten the ordeal. Wagons froze fast in the quagmires and had to be dug out. Mules striving mightily slipped and fell. Now and then were heard revolver-shots—a poor beast, with broken leg, being destroyed.

PETER, HELPING WHEREVER he could, was struck with an inspiration. He went to Quartermaster Sergeant Connor and begged a breast-strap and a pair of traces.

"For what would yez be needing the likes of these?" Connor demanded.

"I'm going to see a fine lady from Banbury Cross," Peter explained with a grin. "You know, Sergeant—the lady who had rings on her fingers and bells on her toes and made music wherever she went."

Connor shook his head sadly. "Sure, and I've seen it happen before with trumpeters. 'Tis no gun, only a horn they use, but they blow their brains out."

"No, I'm not crazy. I'm going to ride a cock-horse." "A cock-horse, is it? Wait here, me lad, and rist. The march has been too hard on yez! I'll bring the surgeon."

With a look of decided alarm, Sergeant Connor hurried off.

Peter, helping himself to the harness, remembered that he had been as ignorant on the subject as Connor until his father had informed him that a cock-horse was a single leader hitched in front of teams in stagecoach days to manage a steep hill climb or a pull out of mud like the present.

Justin, the breast-strap adjusted on him, seemed to know what was expected of him: hitched on in front of

a mule team, which had been unable to move their badly mired wagon, the black threw his strong chest against the strap. He plunged forward with all the drive of his sturdy legs, straining forward close to the ground. Pulling with skill and all his strength and weight, he tipped the scale for the struggling team. Out from the sucking mud lurched the wagon.

Justin, his white stockings vanished, his hide blacker still with black mud, looked up to receive his master's delighted approval. He also won another's: Major Lindsay had ridden up and observed his success.

"Fine work!" the Adjutant called. "Shannon, if there ever was any doubt about the amount of Morgan blood in that horse of yours, he's ended it now. He takes after his forefather, for sure. The original Justin Morgan could haul heavier logs than any horse in Vermont. His master used to win many a gallon of rum betting on that—and couldn't I use some right now, hot and buttered! Bring your horse along after me. The General's trying to get a wagon unstuck up ahead, and I want him to see how it's done."

EN ROUTE, THEY WERE HALTED by the anxious Sergeant Connor, accompanied by the surgeon.

"There he is, the poor b'y," the Sergeant called. "'Tis clane out of his head he is. See for yourself, sor. He's not ridin', but drivin' his horse and there's no wagon behint. Kapes sayin', he does, he's to ride a cock-horse, whatever that may be—some creature of his dee-lirium, like as not, part-horse and part-rooster."

"Look here, Sergeant," Peter protested, "I—"

Connor broke in: "Nor is that the worst of it. The poor b'y says he's bound for some crossroads to see a foine lady ride on a white horse. He might be m'anin' the Major's daughter."

Peter managed a hurried explanation. Major Lindsay burst out laughing and ordered:

"That's enough, Sergeant. I know what Shannon's doing. Thanks, Doctor, but you're not needed. Trumpeter, come on—you and your cock-horse."

When they found Mackenzie, he had managed to extricate the first mired wagon and was on his way toward a second stalled one. Much pleased with Peter's scheme, he told him to follow with Justin.

The second wagon had not only been stopped by the mud but had several cracked wheel spokes. The cold and weary teamster was struggling to make some spot repairs with wire. Corporal Rick was indolently watching him, leaning on his mount's saddle. He failed to notice the two officers and Peter approaching on the other side of the wagon. As they came up, they heard him snap at the teamster to get a move on—heard the mule-skinner ask for some help—heard Rick sarcastically refuse him.

The mule-skinner, who had opened his mouth to hurl a few sizzling epithets, shut it abruptly. He saw his antagonist suddenly confronted by the enraged commanding officer.

Rick tried to manage the impossible feat of simultaneously jumping to attention while cringing like a guilty cur.

"Sir, I—" he faltered. His voice trailed off, as he stared aghast at the glowering fury in Mackenzie's face. Unable to meet the General's glare, he dropped his eyes. Mackenzie did not answer, but there was thunder in his tones when he spoke.

"Take those chevrons off your arm! I'll make a man of you!"

It took years to win noncommissioned rank in the Old Army. Rick had been proud of his. His face worked as he ripped the stripes from his sleeves.

"Now get down in the mud and wire those wheels," the General ordered. "Shannon, hitch your horse on. Teamster, get up on your seat and take the reins."

Spokes bound up, Justin and the team pulling hard, the wagon emerged handsomely from the mud.

Peter, moving on, caught only the last of the words Rick muttered as he passed back of him.

"Damn you, Shannon! You brought Mackenzie round here. You got me busted. I'll fix you plenty!"

The Fourth reached the Red River at last, but it was full to its bank, the current rapid. One old scow, the only means of ferrying over personnel and baggage, plied back and forth. Unless a further long delay was to be suffered, the horses must be swum across. Mackenzie gave the order: "Have the best horsemen and swimmers lead off. Round up the rest of the animals and drive 'em in riderless, right after the leaders."

Peter was proud when he and Justin were among those selected. Ridden to the bank, the black Morgan was plainly reluctant and nervous as he looked down into the rushing water, yet he responded to gentle urging and his master's will. In he plunged, snorting. Peter clung to the mane on the outstretched neck. Icy water gripped his thighs, as Justin swam across steadily and scrambled up on the opposite bank.

The unriden horses had seemed to understand and be willing, but they had hardly entered the river when panic seized them. They wheeled, rushed back for the shore and stampeded, knocked down and trampled their herders. They ran miles before they were caught and returned. It was three days before they were all ferried over.

Yet once across the river and free of rain and mud, the long march settled to steady and comparatively easy progress. There was hot food again and campfires and grazing for the horses. Men sat around the fires luxuriating in dry clothes. Life, no longer seen through a dismal downpour or drizzle, looked brighter, and they could laugh at incidents of the march which had not drawn even a chuckle when mud was squelching in over boot-tops. There was, for instance, the recently joined young officer who had mixed up his commands ridiculously. Recounting it, Sergeant Hanks added the tale of a green Colonel of Volunteers in the Civil War who carried in one hand slips of paper on which were written the commands for drilling his regiment. All went well until his horse shied and he dropped the slips. Then he had to order the regiment dismissed.

First Sergeant Smith followed with more yarns of the war. "There was once," he said, "a regiment organized in Iowa that was made up entirely of temperance advocates. There was a husky Pennsylvania company whose personnel was all blacksmiths. But the idea that always appealed to me most was the proposal of a fellow named Smith that he recruit a whole regiment of Smiths. Its roll-call would have been worth hearing."

WITH DEFERENCE TO THE OLD-TIMERS, Peter ventured to contribute some lines from a letter an uneducated recruit had asked him to write home for him: "Down here there's wild beasts, captains, centipedes, lieutenants, tarantulas, sergeants, corporals, and rattlesnakes."

"Most cavalrymen like a horse story," Lance Elliot put in, "and this is one of the strangest and most striking ones I ever heard. Happened down where it looks like we might be heading—in Mexico. When Cortez and his Spaniards invaded in Fifteen-Hundred-and-something, it was their war-horses that won many a battle for them. The Aztecs and the other Indian tribes were scared to death of 'em. They'd never seen a horse before—thought they were gods."

"Cortez rode a magnificent big black named Morzillo. But the charger went lame—he'd picked up a splinter in his forefoot. Cortez had to leave him in charge of an Indian chieftain. 'See you take the best of care of him,' the Conquistador growled through his bristling black beard. 'If I find you have not done so when I return—if

my beloved steed is not here where I left him—' Cortez did not have to go into details on what would happen; the Aztecs had seen plenty of evidences of the wrath of the Conquistadores.

"But Cortez never did return. Neither did any other Spaniard come that way, for more than one hundred years. Then two Franciscan friars happened by. On an island in the middle of a lake they found a temple and in it was the statue of a horse, carved out of stone, sitting on his hindquarters. The Indians were worshipping the image as the God of Thunder and Lightning.

"Yes, it was a statue of El Morzillo. This is what had happened. The Indians had stabled the horse in the temple where the best of care could be taken of him. Maidens hung garlands of flowers around his neck and offered him fruit, chickens, and all sorts of fancy food. Well, the black charger died—whether from not getting proper forage or from old age, nobody knows. The Indians, stricken with terror that Cortez would return and take terrible revenge when he found his horse gone, carved and set up a statue of El Morzillo in the dead animal's place.

"If it were still there it would be worth a long trip to see. I declare I always thought there were too many statues of men and not enough of horses. But the monks cast down the image and shattered it as an idol."

Peter, wrapped up in his blankets beside the campfire embers, slept and dreamed. It was a jumbled dream in which the Conquistadores, King Arthur's Knights, and the U. S. Cavalry were fearfully and wonderfully mingled. Peter saw himself being rowed toward an island in a lake by Indians who must be Aztecs, though they looked like Comanches. He sprang from the boat and strode toward a temple, his saber clanking at his side. He wore a steel helmet, breastplate and, surprisingly, a beard as heavy and black as that of Cortez. He would have to start shaving now!

Within the temple stood a splendid black steed. Peter recognized him with joy as Justin. Maidens had groomed him so beautifully that no inspector, no matter how crusty, could have found fault, and they were busy now hanging garlands of flowers all over him. That, of course, was not according to Army regulations, and Peter was about to object when the chief maiden came forward.

Oddly, she didn't look at all Indian. She had wavy brown hair, tied in the back with a bright red bow, laughing brown eyes, and a saucy smile. In fact, she looked exactly like Sally Ann.

"FAIR MAIDEN," PETER addressed her. "A thousand thanks for your care of this, my favorite charger."

The maiden bobbed him a curtsy, which wasn't very Indian either, but which was as cute as they come, and replied:

"Kind sir, it was both my privilege and pleasure to care for this goodly steed of yours. Within my heart"—she placed her hands over it in an appealing gesture—"has sprung up for him such devotion as only his master could surpass."

"He is a grand horse," Peter acknowledged, "but none the less I must reward you for your care of him. What guerdon would you prefer? A necklace of rubies, or a bracelet of virgin gold, thickly encrusted with emeralds?"

The maiden shook her head and cast down her eyes demurely. Apparently she didn't care for jewelry, or maybe her mother wouldn't let her accept such presents from men.

Peter, completely at a loss, stood racking his brain. At that moment Justin gently shook off three maidens and five or six garlands, walked over and whispered in his master's ear.

Listening, Peter blushed right through his beard. "Thanks, Justin," he said. "That is an idea for a reward."

He strode over to the maiden who, awaiting him, never stirred. She turned her face up toward his, closed her eyes, sighed in grateful and blissful anticipation and pursed her lips.

Peter was bending down graciously, even eagerly, when—

Someone was shaking his shoulder roughly. Peter woke to see Sergeant Pinchon bending over him in the half light. With a twinge of alarm he remembered that the sergeant had been in charge of the "K" Troop herd-guard last night.

"Réveillez! Immédiatement!" Pinchon was saying urgently, so urgently that he had reverted to his native tongue. "Hélas, your horse he has disappear!"

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

GENERAL MOUNTING



TILL heavy with sleep, Peter could only keep repeating: "But how could he disappear? Justin never strays."

"No, nevaire," Sergeant Pinchon agreed. "I cannot understand."

"Wait!" Peter was wide awake now. "Who was on your herd-guard?"

"Why you ask? Ça ne fait rien. All old soldier—no recruit."

"Quick, Sergeant! Was Rick on it?"

"Le brigadier ci-devant? The busted one? But yes, Rick was of the guard. But—"

"That's it, then! Rick's had it in for me; he thinks I got him busted. He drove off my horse to get even!"

Peter could see it as plainly as if he had been an actual spectator; Rick circling the herd while his relief was on post—waiting till the other sentry and the sergeant were on the opposite side—pushing in among the black troop-horses and cutting out the white-footed Justin—hazing him away when he tried to rejoin the other horses. Then a vicious lick with a quirt or a knife-jab in the hind-quarters, and the Morgan, hurt and startled, dashing off into the night.

Pinchon was protesting. "No—Rick he is no good, but that he would not do! I have question' him. I—"

Peter cut in vehemently. "You don't know him. Lend me your mount, Sergeant—Justin can't have gone far."

"I have already made searching, riding off from camp."

"Please, Sergeant! For God's sake, let me try. You know how I feel about that horse. I think I know how to trail him."

The Frenchman yielded with the stipulation that Peter be back before the *General* was sounded. In a rush the trumpeter snatched up Justin's saddle-blanket and rode his borrowed mount over to the prisoners' bivouac.

Skeptics always insisted it was a mere fluke, but in the opinion of most of the regiment old Taylor that day proved that his bloodhound strain was authentic and talented. Peter, making him smell Justin's blanket, persuaded the hound to leave the prisoners. Somehow they struck a trail leading away from the place where the herd had grazed. Old Taylor followed its thread through other hoof-prints. Nose to the ground, he lumbered on, plainly enjoying the chase.

Peter, riding close behind the hound and as absorbed in the hunt, paid little more attention to where and how far they were going than did old Taylor. They took no more than passing notice when the trail of Justin merged with that of several horses and that trail in turn into a herd's, interlined with wheel-marks. Almost before they saw it, they had overtaken a wagon-train. A stout, gaudily

dressed horseman, backed by two tough-looking *vaqueros*, barred their path.

"Well, *Señor Soldado*?"

Peter recognized from descriptions that he was being addressed by José Pieda Tafoya himself. Here was the man who once had owned Justin—who must have won him back now, if the trail had not deceived. At a loss what to do, knowing only that he must somehow recover his horse, Peter sat silently on his borrowed mount.

Tafoya repeated his question, insolently, impatiently.

"Somebody ran off my horse," Peter finally got out.

"So? Would you accuse me?"

"I'm not accusing anybody—yet. But I'm going to get my horse back, no matter who's got him."

The Comanchero shrugged. "I am well accustomed to being accused by soldiers. What sort of horse did you lose?"

"A Morgan gelding—black with four white feet."

"So? Well, let your eyes convince you, *Señor Soldado*. My herd yonder is a small one. In it are a few blacks, but none with four white feet! No, no *cuatralbo*."

Peter could scan the horses from where he was. He picked out the blacks. One of them looked rather like Justin, but neither he nor the others had white feet.

Too distressed and excited to remember Major Lindsay's story of the black dye, Peter sat nonplused. It failed to occur to him that Tafoya, having once been taken in by the blackening of white stockings, could turn the trick to his own advantage. Squirming at the trader's contemptuous smile, he turned his mount to leave.

But old Taylor was not to be fooled by such surface trickery as dye. Suddenly he rushed off over to the horse-herd and leaped up clumsily to nose the muzzle of the black that Peter had thought resembled Justin.

"There he is!" Peter shouted exultantly. "Now I know him. That's my horse!"

"By your own words, *Señor Soldado*, you are mistaken," Tafoya remarked suavely. "You said he had white feet."

Peter spoke up hotly: "I see through your trick, Tafoya. That horse is mine. You've dyed his white stockings, but you won't have had time yet to burn over his 'U. S.' brand or his hoofmark."

Now it was Tafoya's turn to fume in silence, unable to make an answer.

"Turn over that horse," Peter ordered. "If you don't, I'll report him stolen to General Mackenzie. He's not far off. I've got an idea you wouldn't care much about meeting him."

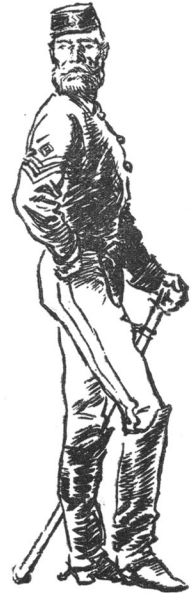
Obviously *Señor Tafoya* would not. He was so little eager to meet the General that he would not risk arguing his perfectly good claim to the Morgan horse.

Yet neither was he knuckling under to this youngster. His air of suavity slid way to unmask a menacing stare. He motioned, and his *vaqueros* rode over to Peter, shoving guns in his ribs, making him raise his hands. Somebody behind clubbed the trooper on the back of the head; he slumped in his saddle—toppled to the ground.

OLD TAYLOR WAS HAPPY NOW. When they whipped him away from Justin and ran him off from the wagon-train, he had been highly indignant; he was not used to such treatment. He had fled yelping. Then he had sat down at a safe distance and watched to see what happened at the train. How fortunate it was he had waited! Now he had a prisoner to befriend.

The prisoner lay bound and gagged in a small brush-covered gulch. The hound had seen the wagon-train men hide him there and take their departure. Promptly old Taylor had crawled in and joined the prisoner.

This was altogether the most satisfactory prisoner old Taylor ever had befriended. Old-timers in the guard-house were apt to weary of his attentions. Sometimes they cuffed him away when he sought to comfort them



Sam Smith's high character and fair play had made him popular, though he was a First Sergeant.

in their confinement. This prisoner did not object even when his face was lovingly licked.

Old Taylor's ministrations finally brought Peter Shannon, heavily stunned by the blow on his head, back to consciousness. After a time he tried to work the gag out of his mouth and free his arms or legs. All his efforts were futile; the Comancheros had tied him up well. Old Taylor observed him sympathetically. The expression in his mournful eyes seemed to convey: "I know a prisoner's lot is a hard one. But I'll stand by you."

And he did. He never moved when twice the rhythmic hoofbeat of Fourth Cavalry patrols, searching for the missing trumpeter, passed close to the gulch. Peter grunted, groaned and kicked at Taylor with his trussed-up legs, doing everything possible to make the dog howl or flush himself from the gulch to reveal it to the patrols.

Maddeningly, old Taylor refused to leave the spot. He stood fast, maintaining a dignified, I-know-better-than-you-do attitude. Often enough old Taylor had seen guards come for prisoners, hale them away from snug repose in the guardhouse and work them hard all day in back-breaking fatigues. The prisoners returned tired and unhappy, and old Taylor felt for them. Let this prisoner have a good rest!

Peter gave up. Worn out, he slept a while, only to wake up and struggle hopelessly against his bonds. Lead-en hours dragged by, and the dread of dying ingloriously, tied up in a hole in the prairie, loomed ever larger. It grew much colder as night fell. Peter moaned through chattering teeth.

Old Taylor, sensing suffering, saw an opportunity to be of service. Besides, he was growing chilly himself. He snuggled closely to the prisoner. But the dog's warm body did not prevent the chills which now shook Peter, alternating with feverishness.

Next morning the hound, grown hungry, emerged from the burrow to hunt. In pursuit of a jack-rabbit, he sighted the Fourth Cavalry's wagon-train. Barking, he led searchers to the gulch and the now-delirious prisoner.

THE FOURTH CAVALRY had ridden back to station after an invasion of Mexico. Mackenzie had made a swift and effective raid to punish the Kickapoo and Lippan Indians whose depredations in the United States had gone unhindered by the Mexicans—had made it under only

verbal orders from General Phil Sheridan, running grave risk—had made it brilliantly without losing a man. Troop “K’s” trumpeter, who had fallen sick while the regiment was en route to Mexico and had been invalided back to the posts, could not be listed as a casualty of the raid.

It was before the day of the Army nurse. The little post hospital, where Peter lay making a fight for his life with pneumonia, furnished only such nursing care as overworked orderlies—Medical Corps men—could give. Meanwhile the constant attendance which the surgeon wanted Peter to have was supplied by men of his troop and the women of the garrison.

Sometimes it was big bearded Sam Smith who sat by the bed, his heart aching as he watched the boy struggle for breath. Sometimes it was Lance Elliot, brooding, gentle and deft. The women of the post took regular turn: Mrs. Lindsay, Ma Simmons, Madame Pinchon. Nor could the youngest of them be kept away. But Sally Ann’s mother would not let the girl’s nursing tours last long or come frequently, despite her protests. Sally Ann, possessing the self-reliance Army girls learned, was a dependable and efficient nurse. But after two hours of watching Peter gasping and raving in delirium, she ran home to fling herself on her bed, racked by uncontrollable sobs that left her exhausted.

The surgeon, meeting Mrs. Lindsay just coming on duty to nurse Peter, told her: “I think the crisis will be today. Whether he gets past it or not is a toss-up.”

“Doctor,” Mrs. Lindsay ventured, “my young daughter has the idea this boy is badly worried about something. Is it possible that something on his mind could hinder his getting well?”

“Possible—yes. It may be his mother’s absence. He keeps calling for her. Most of ‘em do, at any age, when they’re going out,” the surgeon added sadly. “Mrs. Shannon is due tomorrow. I wish she were here now.”

“Sally Ann is a flighty young thing at times and then again she knows what she’s talking about,” her parent persisted. “She insists the boy worries about that horse of his he was looking for when he was knocked on the head.”

“Oh, I doubt that,” the surgeon deprecated. “Well, we’ll hope for the best. Call me whenever I’m needed, please, ma’am.”

Sally Ann thought: “He doesn’t know and he *has* to know. I can tell that from what he’s said, even if he is out of his head. I’ve tried so hard to tell him and he can’t seem to listen or understand.”

Indeed she had tried hard to tell him. She had whispered to him: “Peter, Justin’s here. He’s all right. We got him back. Our patrols found him and Pinchon’s mount, loose on the prairie. The people that hit you must have turned the horses loose when troops got close to ‘em. General Mac couldn’t stop to follow it up—he was riding for Mexico. But we’ve got a good idea who it was. Anyway, Justin’s back. That’s the big thing. That’s what you want to know, isn’t it? Justin’s back. Pet’s dearest, can’t you understand?”

But Peter stared off into space with unseeing gaze.

IT WAS SAM SMITH’S TOUR by the bedside. He sat there, sorely distressed. The young fellow looked to be in bad shape.

The First Sergeant tried to draw a prayer for the sick out of the rich store of his memory, but could remember none. Instead, inappropriate though it was, the former professor found himself repeating the tremendous adoration from Ecclesiastes. Softly, his voice deep and sonorous, he recited:

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them . . . because man goeth to his long home—”

Why, Sergeant Smith wondered, should he speak that passage in the presence of an unconscious, dying boy? Because one still in the days of his youth was coming, untimely, to the end of his span?

Sam Smith looked over to find Peter regarding him out of clear, lucid eyes. At that moment the window opposite the bed was flung open and in it appeared Sally Ann, pulling in beside her eager face the crested head of a black horse.

“Look, Pete,” the girl called. “I told you we got him back!”

“Justin!” Peter cried, and in his voice was all the joy and relief for which anyone—even Sally Ann—could have hoped.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Girl I Left Behind Me



MOUNTED drill was being stepped up. In the Fourth Cavalry that usually meant another campaign, or at least an extended scout. The drill-ground echoed to trumpet signals and shouted commands: “Form fours, trot, march . . . By twos, trot, march!”—the “march” drawn out into the long, ringing “ho” of the mounted service.

Noncom instructors reeled off passages of drill regulations. “At the command: Prepare to fight on foot, all dismounted except Number 4 to whom the others pass their reins. Numbers 1, 2, and 3, having linked horses by tying reins to cheek-pieces and nose-bands of the halters and bridles of the next horses, they face front and hook up their sabers.” Distraught recruits strove to obey only to be barked at: “Naw! Not that way! That’s no good; you act like you got paws. Them’s hands on the end of your arms, rookie. Hey, there! Don’t you savvy English? ‘As you were’ means as you was before the last command was give. C’m on now!”

Trumpeter Shannon, back on duty after a long convalescence furlough, enjoyed it all to the utmost, more especially because he probably would not have many more months with the regiment. His father had refused to allow him to reënlist, insisting that it was time he went to college. The studying he had done under the able tutelage of First Sergeant Smith was highly commendable; it probably would enable him to pass college entrance examinations. As for Peter’s plea that he be allowed to stay in the Army and perhaps win a commission from the ranks some day, John Shannon turned that down firmly.

Galloping Justin after the troop commander, sounding calls clearly and rapidly, Peter envied no man. It seemed to him that there was no detail in the cavalry as dashing as trumpeter unless perhaps it was carrying the guidon. But he held no envy, only admiration for his friend Lance Elliot, racing across the troop front when the guide changed, his guidon flaunting like a gonfalon.

The cavalry! There was no arm in the service to match it. Peter was steeped in its lore by his father’s stories, by Smith’s and Elliot’s, by his own reading of the exploits of cavalry in the Napoleonic and the recent Franco-Prussian wars. If he half-closed his eyes, Troop “A” yonder became hussars, with jaunty jackets called dolmans swinging from left shoulders. Troop “C” turned into dragoons, originally so called because of their short carbines with muzzles shaped like the head of a fire-spouting dragon. “E” Troop over there, its mounts larger than average, could be cuirassiers—heavy cavalry which had taken their name from the leather breastplates they

wore when first organized. With their chest armor and crested helmets, cuirassiers closely resembled ancient Greek warriors! Peter's own troop was transformed by his lively fancy into gallant lancers, wearing the square-topped Polish caps which distinguished that type of cavalry, and carrying pennoned lances. No great stretch of the imagination was required for that transformation. There had been lancers in the U.S. Army as late as the Civil War, and there were crack lancer regiments in the European armies even now, notably the German Uhlans and the Russian Cossacks.

Come to think of it, Peter mused, the Fourth Cavalry was now about to take the field against formidable lancers, the Comanches. A mounted charge by those fierce tribesmen, their lances tipped with captured bayonets or pieces of saber blades, was something you didn't care to face twice, veterans admitted.

Early one afternoon drill was replaced by issuance of ammunition and field-rations. To Peter it was plain enough he would be blowing *Boots and Saddles* next morning for the regiment to boot.

He was mistaken. Orders came to sound the call later that same afternoon. General Mackenzie's impatient temperament seldom brooked any avoidable delay.

The Fourth Cavalry's fine band was formed in the center of the parade-ground. At most frontier posts it had become a cherished tradition to "play away" an outfit marching off on a campaign which might well last a long time and take a toll of casualties. Whether the music was simply fifes and drums or a full brass band, the tune always chosen was "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

Peter had ridden off to that lively air before, but today it seemed for the first time to hold deep and personal meaning for him. Since his return, Sally Ann had been shy, which wasn't at all like her but had made her more alluring than ever. He had tried to tell her what her bringing Justin to the hospital window that day had meant to him. She had insisted on passing it off. "It was a crazy trick," she said. "Believe me, I caught it from the family for doing that!" When he vehemently protested that the sight of her and Justin, framed in the window, was the remedy that really made him well, she had only smiled mysteriously.

Troops formed in their areas and moved into column of fours. Disappointment gripped Peter more bitterly. This early departure had given him no chance to say good-by to Sally Ann. Even a very proper and formal farewell would have been better than none at all.

Now the band was striking up the traditional tune. Its words ran through Peter's head.

*I'm lonesome since I crossed the hill,
And o'er the moor and valley,
Such heavy thoughts my heart do fill,
Since parting with my Sally.*

"Sally." It was almost too pat the way songs kept bringing in that girl's name. Probably it was just for a rhyme: Sally . . . valley . . . alley. But it was a nice name.

Bay and sorrel and chestnut troops were turning into the regimental column. The blacks of "K" Troop were stamping restively.

If only he had a chance to say good-by. Confound this unexpected early start! Now he wouldn't see Sally Ann. She wasn't even on the post—she'd gone riding.

"Forward, ho! Column right, ho!" Captain Bone commanded. Trumpeter Shannon rode to his post to the left and rear of the troop command. As "K" Troop joined the column, General Mackenzie in the van was already approaching the gate where the women of the garrison were waiting.

Out on the prairie there was a flash of white. Peter saw Sally Ann come racing up on her pony. She flung herself out of the saddle and ran to her mother's side. As the staff rode by, Major Lindsay turned out briefly, in

accordance with the privilege granted married men in the regiment, to say a last good-by. He leaned from the saddle to kiss his wife and daughter, then trotted his mount back to its place.

Peter could perceive now that Sally Ann was wearing a new riding-habit of cadet gray. Its long draped skirts made her look at least eighteen. Brass buttons and black and gold braid adorned its close-fitting bodice. A little pillbox cap sat at a cocky angle on brown tresses, tied back with a bow of cavalry yellow. The closer he rode, the more dazzled Peter became.

Now Troop "K" was close to the gate. Sergeant Pinchon, the only married man in its ranks, turned out to bid his wife farewell.

Peter was staring at Sally Ann, his heart in his eyes. In as frank avowal the girl was gazing back, all mystery and shyness gone now. She began beckoning violently. Peter, in a panic, shook his head just as violently.

Captain Bone's voice broke into the pantomime with an unprecedented permission: "You may turn out for a moment, Shannon."

Peter automatically obeyed. He rode Justin over to Sally Ann, dismounted and stood, utterly nonplused.

All "K" Troop was grinning broadly as it rode by, but they were grins of sentimental sympathy for a lovely girl and a fine-looking young soldier, deep in first love and faced with their first real parting.

Sally Ann murmured, "Oh, Pete!" They looked into each other's eyes. It was as if no one else at all were near.

Peter crushed her hands in his. "Sally Ann!" The Army girl, who had seen troops march off and march back with gaps in the ranks, spoke again. "Take good care of Justin—and yourself. You've both of you got to come back."

"Sure we will, Sally Ann." There was a pause of desperate yearning. Peter could only repeat: "Sure we will."

The atmosphere was growing entirely too fervent for Mrs. Lindsay.

"Sally Ann, Peter's troop has passed. He ought to be back at his post," she called.

"Gosh, yes!" Peter, looking after "K"—now far ahead—was dismayed. "Good-by, everybody," he shouted and vaulted into his saddle. Justin, impatient at being left behind, was off like a black streak.

Peter glanced back once. He still could see the little figure in gray frantically waving a handkerchief. The wind wafted last faint strains of band music.

*If ever I should see the day
When Mars shall have resigned me,
Forevermore I'd gladly stay
With the girl I left behind me.*

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

FLOURISH
♩ M 120



NEMY country—but where was the enemy? Here in the *Llano Estacado*, somewhere in the Staked Plain, was the refuge and stronghold of Chief Quanh Parker and his band of Quohada Comanches. Yet though the band comprised hundreds of warriors, with their women and children, and a herd of several thousand ponies, its village could not be found by Mackenzie's scouts.

True, this was a vast area—a hundred thousand square miles—with numerous natural hide-outs, timbered hills and unsuspected valleys, but the range of the various

hostile bands off reservations was limited by good grazing and hunting-grounds. And besides Mackenzie's, two other columns—General Miles' from Fort Dodge and Colonel Davidson with his fine regiment, the Negro Tenth Cavalry—were in the field, harrying Kiowas, Comanches, Arapahoos and Cheyennes, who had gone on the warpath.

Still no success crowned Mackenzie's efforts despite the fact that he was using such first-rate scouts as the half-breed Johnson and Seminole-Negroes, expert trailers. With his usual perseverance, the General established a base camp for eight troops of his own regiment and a detachment from the Eighth Infantry—escort for the wagon-train—and began a thorough scouting of the headwaters of the Brazos, Pecos, and Red Rivers. Between forces ranging over that territory, constant communication was maintained by mounted couriers; in the event the Indians were found, the Fourth could be rapidly concentrated.

Because Peter had one of the best mounts in the outfit, he was frequently assigned to this communication service—a combination of connecting file-and-dispatch rider. It was a detail he welcomed. Rides alone across the plains were adventurous. You were on your own and never knew what might turn up. Also the detail afforded him better opportunity to watch over Justin, since it was necessary always to keep the Morgan horse close at hand for an emergency. Yet even so he once found his lariat cut close to the picket-pin, and again he discovered that someone had partly severed his cinch-strap; it would have broken at a trot or gallop and given him a bad fall when his saddle turned and dropped off.

Peter had not the slightest doubt Rick was responsible, though he had never caught him in the act. Rick was both too smart to be caught and clever enough to make the damage to rope and strap look accidental. Knife marks had not shown, since lariat and strap had been scraped instead of cut. Peter acknowledged he would have been fooled himself if he had not previously made a careful inspection of his equipment.

After mess one evening, Peter, himself unobserved, sighted Rick sauntering over toward where Justin was picketed. Dusk was falling, and Rick could consider himself more or less unnoticed in the constant movement of troopers in and around the bivouac-ground. He moved closer to the horse, speaking soothingly. Justin was wary and backed off as far as his line allowed. This was the soldier he once had bucked off—who later had whipped him away from the horse-herd. Rick continued to come toward him, holding out a hand ingratiatingly.

Peter, slow to wrath, felt anger surging up out of his long-stored hatred. This fellow planned to do his beloved Justin some harm. How he would effect it, whether there was some way he could poison the horse, the trumpeter did not know, but he was absolutely positive that Rick could do and was about to do his horse serious injury.

SWIFTLY AND TRUCULENTLY Peter pushed in between them. Rick, with a guilty start, jumped back.

"Look, you!" Peter hardly recognized the hoarse, threatening tones as his own voice. "You keep away from my horse—and stay away!"

Rick could not squarely meet the younger trooper's eyes, but he spoke up with well-simulated indignation: "What's eatin' you? I was just going to give him a lick of salt."

"Salt nothing! I bet it was arsenic."

"Say, youngster, you'd better button up your lip. This your private charger? Only a troop-horse, aint he? Mebbe he aint even that. I heard where a—rancher had a black Morgan gelding with four white feet stolen off him."

"I guess it's a Comanchero, not a rancher, you're talking about, Rick. That's who hit me over the head and

took my horse. And my horse got away from the herd the night you were on guard. I'll swear there's some kind of a hook-up between you and old Tafoya."

"You lie! Try and prove that—and see what happens to you."

"I'll prove it first chance I get. In the meantime you let my horse alone, or I'll—"

Rick gave vent to a sarcastic laugh. "Or you'll what?" he demanded. "Kind of threatenin', aint you?"

Husky and hardened by his more than two years with the regiment, Peter walked slowly toward the other, doubling his fists.

"Or I'll beat your face in," he answered. "Now or any time."

"Oh, no, you won't." Rick's hand darted down to the butt of his revolver.

"Bluff, Rick," said Peter, moving up closer. "Put up your fists."

Bluff it had been, but shame and the instinct of a cornered gunman suddenly crystallized it into deadly intent. Rick's fingers closed around the butt of his Colt, to whip it from its holster in a long-practiced fast draw.

Peter saw the murderous light in the man's eyes. For an instant he half recoiled. Then his muscles tensed for a jump and a grab at that gun arm, though he knew that any action of his, however swift, would be too late.

Half-drawn, the revolver slid back into the holster. Rick uttered a smothered shriek of anguish. His face contorted; both hands clutched at his rear.

Decidedly Justin did not like that fellow! The horse had taken advantage of opportunity as it presented itself and nipped the man sharply in the buttocks.

Gazing after the retreating Rick, who was holding together the shredded seat of his breeches, Justin emitted a ringing snort of satisfaction.

UNDER A DARK SKY threatening rain, Peter was riding communications between his troop and squadron headquarters when he saw another horseman approaching. At considerable distance he recognized his friend, Corporal Elliot. Elliot was carrying the guidon, cased. Ordinarily, if assigned to carry dispatches, he would have left it at troop headquarters.

The two reined in abreast and greeted each other.

Elliot said: "One of the Seminoles has found a wagon-train trail. Probably doesn't amount to anything. Reckon it must be immigrants. Sure do take their chances coming through Comanche country. But Captain Bone thought the General ought to know about it. Rushed me off in such a hurry I had to bring along the stick. No place to leave it." He swung the guidon in its stirrup socket.

"I'll report to the Cap'n I passed on the way," Peter said.

"Do that, Pete." Lance smiled briefly at him and rode off at a steady gallop.

Peter, riding in the opposite direction, turned in the saddle to gaze after him. He was worried about his friend. In the past days Lance had been more deeply sunken than usual in morose brooding. The prospect of action had not revived him as it usually did. Although his comrade would talk little, Peter thought he understood the reasons for his melancholy. The one-time Confederate cavalryman still mourned a lost leader, a lost cause, a vanished golden age. The South he had loved was gone—that sadness was now become an accustomed ache. But to hear of its fate at the hands of the Carpetbaggers was new and almost unbearable bitterness. Peter half-expected that some day Lance might desert and go home to throw away his life in some desperate, quixotic action.

Still looking back and wondering anxiously how he could help him, Peter saw Lance halt suddenly at the mouth of a draw, saw him turn, beckon urgently. He whirled Justin and urged him into a dead gallop. Be-

fore he could come up, Elliot had disappeared into the draw.

Peter turned in and brought his mount to a sudden stop. He would never forget the tableau staged within the frame of the wall of the draw.

Not far in front of him Lance sat his horse, immobile. Facing Lance, some hundreds of yards down the draw, a Comanche chieftain, resplendent in eagle-feather war-bonnet and brilliant war-paint, sat his pony, equally motionless. Even at that distance Peter recognized the fierce visage, indelibly imprinted in his mind since Trooper Gregg died that day in Cañon Blanco. It was Quanah Parker. The chief carried a small round shield of painted bull's-hide. His right hand grasped a long lance just as Elliot's grasped the guidon. At Quanah's rear was a single mounted warrior.

The two Comanches seemed on the point of flight, expecting the two cavalymen to be followed by more. But when no others appeared, the Indians, reluctant to risk a shot in the back as they ran, did not move.

"Peter," Lance Elliot called back over his shoulder. "Don't shoot. I'm going to keep those two here as long as I can. If I can hold 'em a while, then chase and trail 'em, we can locate the village. When I charge, get out of here and get the word to Mackenzie fast."

"I'm not leaving you, Lance."

"You are." He was stern. "That's an order!"

The Indians watched with eager curiosity that held them in place, while Corporal Elliot lifted the ferrule of the guidon from the stirrup-socket, lowered it to the ground and slipped off the casing. The red and white flag fluttered free. He grasped the guidon lance midway in its nine-foot length—dipped the gleaming metal spearpoint on its end forward, as in executing the guidon salute—gripped the lance firmly with right hand and beneath right arm—laid his reins on his horse's neck for a moment to raise his left hand toward his brow in a strange gesture. That, thought Peter suddenly, was how knights lowered the visors of their helmets before combat.

What he next saw amazed him even more. Quanah was also lowering the point of the long lance he carried.

The cavalryman and the Comanche, lances leveled, spurred their horses toward each other in a headlong charge...

When those few vivid moments flashed back into his mind as they would all his life, Peter was again affected by the strange sentiment that he had witnessed a scene taken straight out of the Fifth Century for reenactment in the Nineteenth. Old Sir Thomas Malory might well have described it in his book of King Arthur and his noble knights of the Round Table. "And they gat their spears and dressed them," he might have written. "Then straightway the Blue Knight and the Red Knight did battle, hurtling together on horseback, coming together as the thunder. Above the clash of arms the herald of the tourney blew his trumpet, loud and shrill."

THE AGONY OF HIS INDECISION that day would long obsess Peter. What should he have done? He had definite orders from Corporal Elliot, his superior. It was his duty to reach General Mackenzie as soon as possible with the vital intelligence that Quanah had been found. Yet how could he desert a friend, his first in the regiment and his best, leaving him to fight it out against odds of two to one?

He started reaching for his carbine. But Lance had ordered him specifically not to shoot. Instead, Peter found himself raising his trumpet to his lips. Its long-carrying tones might bring troops quicker than the report of a carbine. With all the strength of his lungs he sounded the *Flourish* and then *Attention*.

Even as Peter sounded off, the horsemen were drawing together at top speed. Elliot handled the heavy ashen



"Some day people will look on a good soldier as one following an honorable career, worthy of respect."

guidon effortlessly, holding it as unswervingly as the light spear with which he had won ring tilts at home before the war. Its flag whipped out like a banneret borne into battle. Even under that lowering sky its spearpoint gleamed.

And against him galloped Quanah Parker in all his barbaric panoply. How superb his horsemanship was! He rode without reins, his legs guiding his spirited war-pony. Red hands grasped shield and long lance, held as steadily as Elliot's, its point full on his adversary's heart.

Peter was utterly unable to move. Helpless, fascinated, he watched the impact of the charge. He saw the timed skill with which Quanah's shield deflected Elliot's spearpoint so that it sped by his left side—saw the terrible emergence of the Comanche's reddened lance-point under the cavalryman's left shoulder-blade—saw Lance reel out of his saddle.

Justin let his rider see nothing more. The Morgan whirled of his own accord and dashed out of the draw—only in the nick of time. Both Comanches were riding down on the surviving trooper, blazing away with their revolvers. Peter felt his right ear sting sharply; but other shots went wide, and the Indians did not pursue out onto the prairie. . . .

Mackenzie, as soon as he received Peter's report, pushed out scouting parties. But all their careful searching was vain. Rain and rocky ground foiled efforts to pick up the trail of Quanah and his companion. The fact that they had been seen in the vicinity was of high importance, however. The Comanche village Mackenzie was seeking could not be very far away.

Sadly a detail from Troop "K" buried their guidon-bearer. First Sergeant Sam Smith gazed down on the grave. Peter, his face working, stood beside him.

"His time had come," the big man said softly, "and it was a gallant way of going out—one Lance would have chosen."

They were in enemy country. The traditional three volleys could not be fired over the grave, nor could *Taps* be sounded even if Peter had been able to master himself and blow that farewell. There was no chaplain present with the command. The First Sergeant recited some of the burial service from memory: "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die."

Moved by the same impulse, the sergeant and the trumpeter saluted the grave of their comrade.

There was no time to linger. Walking over to remount, Smith's foot struck an object that rang. It was Quanah's steel lance, left on the field of battle. He picked it up and examined it wonderingly.

"Look here," he called. "This is an antique Spanish lance. Once it must have been wielded by some captain or man-at-arms who marched with Cortez in the conquest of the Aztecs. And now, three centuries later, in the hands of a Comanche, heir to part of the Aztec empire, it has slain one of us who come to conquer!"

CHAPTER NINETEEN

TO ARMS



JOSE PIEDA TAFOYA had fallen into Mackenzie's hands at last. The trail of the wagon-train, reported by scouts and supposed to be that of immigrants, proved to be the Comanchero's when a troop followed it up. The General himself, promptly notified, arrived at a gallop. Evidently he considered this capture important, for he made no attempt to conceal his satisfaction.

"Got you at last, Tafoya," Mackenzie snapped. "You devil, you've sold your last gun to Indians to kill soldiers!"

Tafoya shrugged and spoke volubly in Spanish. "Says he can't speak English, sir," Major Lindsay translated. "Claims he's an innocent trader named Perez. Lies, of course. I can identify him myself. This is José Pieda Tafoya all right."

Mackenzie scowled blackly. "I don't doubt it. But get some more who know him. Send for Sergeant Charlton and young Shannon—he saw him recently. I don't want Señor Tafoya to die thinking it was all a case of mistaken identity. Also, Lindsay, get hold of the nearest supply-wagon."

The Sergeant and Peter arrived to identify the trader eagerly and angrily.

The General nodded. "That's good enough. Now, Tafoya, there's just one thing can save your neck. Tell me where Quannah's hide-out is."

Tafoya looked up uncomprehendingly. "*No sabe,*" he said.

"He and his band—probably a good many lodges of the Kiowas, too—are holed up somewhere in this vicinity; I know that. Only yesterday we had a brush with Quannah himself. Sooner or later I'll root 'em out. Is it worth that worthless life of yours to save me time?"

"*No sabe,*" stubbornly insisted Tafoya.

"Last chance. Tell me where those Indians are or I'll hang you higher than Haman."

Not one of the listening cavalymen doubted Mackenzie meant what he said. He would bother with no formal trial. He had all the evidence he required that the death of many a soldier and settler was on the Comanchero's head.

But Tafoya still muttered "*No sabe,*" and there was even insolence in his voice. Hang him? Where? The plains stretched away for miles, with never a tree in sight.

Mackenzie barked orders. The teamster of the wagon sent for unhitched his mules. The wagon tongue, propped up, became an adequate gallows tree. One end of a hemp rope was run through its staple, and several troopers laid hold of it. A noose, made on the other end, was adjusted around Tafoya's squat neck.

Now terror began to show in the back of his eyes, but it was less of this death, which he still doubted the General would carry through, than of another. Tafoya knew with most dire certainty that if he betrayed the hiding-place of the Indians, Quannah would never rest till he caught him and broiled him alive.

"String him up," Mackenzie ordered.

The fat trader's feet left the ground. The knot of the noose cut into the folds of flesh at the back of his neck, and his own weight inexorably tightened it.

Peter, watching, could feel no pity. He laid a hand protectingly on Justin's mane and thought: "Now he'll never get you!"

Tafoya was swinging now. A scream burst from his nearly throttled windpipe.

"*Por Cristo,* let me down! I tell."

"Slack off, men," ordered General Mackenzie.

Tafoya told—and told the truth. Once scouts had verified his information, he was released. Driven by dread of Quannah, the trader fled, never stopping until he reached the Rockies. There he spent the rest of his life, befriended by a man whose cattle he once had stolen. He never dared return to the Staked Plain. . . .

Sergeant Charlton and a scout detachment, following Tafoya's directions, reined in suddenly on the edge of a deep and utterly unsuspected abyss. Before them yawned the cañon of Palo Duro, the most secret and cherished hiding-place of the Kiowas and Comanches. The awed troopers stared down into those dizzy depths where Indians, ponies, and lodge looked like tiny miniatures.

Charlton swung away. He had seen enough. "Gallop, ho," he commanded. They galloped twenty-five miles to report to Mackenzie.

Sunrise, September 27, 1874. The head of the Fourth Cavalry's column halted at the cañon rim where a narrow trail led down into the depths.

General Mackenzie turned to the lieutenant commanding the leading troop. "Mr. Thompson," he ordered quietly, "take your men down and open the fight."

Troop "K's" turn came. Captain Bone dismounted his men. "Follow me," he commanded and, leading his charger, disappeared over the rim. Peter was next. With Justin following, he took a deep breath and stepped forward. It was only a goat track, that trail, narrow and zigzagging. Over its edge was a drop of some seven hundred feet. Peter flattened himself against the cañon wall, clinging to it as his boots slid and slipped. The line of troopers ahead of him wound downward like a long blue snake. Behind him it must be the same, but he could not risk looking back. Justin's nervous snorting rustled the hair on the top of his head. The sure-footed Morgan would not slip—his master was confident of that. Yet if some trooper or horse higher up the trail lost his footing, he would sweep the men and animals in front of him over the edge. Peter's stomach knotted up, and sweat ran down his backbone. And if the Indians caught them here, strung out on this trail—

But the van had reached the bottom before a sentinel warrior discovered them and whooped the alarm—too late. The leading troop deployed and went into action, covering the descent of the remainder of the regiment.

The cañon rang to yells and shouts. Up the gorge boiled Comanches and Kiowas. Volleys blasted them back. Sharpshooters picked off Indian snipers firing from ledges along the cañon walls. Each troop, as it reached the bottom, formed up and mounted. "E" and "K" stretched in line across the cañon floor. General Mackenzie rode out in front of them, and Peter, catching his shout and signal, sounded the *Charge*. Its brazen notes were still echoing as they galloped into the billowing powder-smoke.

They charged down the valley in a running fight, firing from the saddle. Mounted warriors, swarming out of the side ravines to meet them, were swept back by the blue wave. Pushed hard though they were, the red horse-men's retreat was stubborn. While the sun rose blindingly behind them, they turned to fire back at their pursuers.

Past lodge after lodge drove the charge. Squaws and children fled down the gullies. Braves, trying to recover

squealing war-ponies, were ridden over. The Fourth was taking its casualties too, but remarkably few. Peter saw the trumpeter of another troop double over his pommel, shot through the stomach. The old soldier Persimmons took a bullet between the eyes and plunged into the dust; the release he sought was his at last.

Five miles they had charged. Far enough. "Four to the left about. Gallop!" They fought their way back.

Troops behind them had set the snug winter-camp on fire, along with its vast quantities of supplies; robes, kettles, buffalo meat, and flour and sugar issued by the Government to the Indians before they left their reservations for the war-path. Far more crippling to the enemy than their loss of supplies and shelter was the capture of the bulk of their pony herd. Without their mounts, the Indians were almost helpless.

When the Fourth emerged from Palo Duro, it marched away with a moving hollow square in its center. Each side was formed by a troop in column; its front and rear by troops in line. It was a living corral. Within it were captured horses of the Indians—fourteen hundred and fifty of them.

The next morning Peter Shannon heard the grimmest orders of his Army career. General Mackenzie ruled that the captured ponies must be destroyed at once. One troop was detailed to slaughter them; another—"K"—to drag the carcasses together in a heap.

First Sergeant Smith spared a few minutes to talk to Peter, for there was a look of desperation almost on the young trooper's face.

"Trumpeter, we're obeying orders," he declared firmly. "And you'll do your part with the rest of the outfit." The man's look softened. "Don't try to tell me you're any fonder of horses than I am," he went on. "It's heart-breaking duty. We can thank God we won't have to do the shooting . . ."

"Yes, I know, Peter, we share the responsibility. It lies on my soul—the fine horses that have died in mankind's wars. In the Civil War the Union Army, just to replace horse casualties, needed more than five hundred a day!"

"But, Sergeant, we don't have to shoot these horses. We could herd 'em north and turn 'em over to the Remount or ranchers."

"Look here, lad. Have you forgotten already what happened at Cañon Blanco? Before we reached Fort Griffin, which is a good two hundred miles, the Comanches would attack, stampede the herd and run off all their own horses and a bunch of ours.

"The General's order is absolutely justified, tough as it is. Once the Indians find themselves on the prairie without mounts, they won't be able to get back to the reservations fast enough to ask for peace on any terms. Unlimber your lariat, and come on."

Peter stood by, sick and shaking, trying not to watch, while the shots cracked mercilessly. There was a slight consolation in the knowledge that some of the horses had been spared. Troopers who had lost their own mounts, along with Johnson and the other scouts, had been allowed to take their pick. But many a splendid animal was being slaughtered.

"'K' Troop keep well over to the right," the First Sergeant called. "Keep well out of the line of fire or somebody'll get hit."

Obedying, Peter dismounted. He felt sick. He patted Justin and leaned on him, head and arms resting on the saddle.

Off to one side of the milling pony herd, Private Rick grunted with satisfaction. Taking cover behind his own horse, he raised his carbine. His target had obligingly lined itself up for him. There, nice and still, stood Shannon and his nag—just waiting for it.

This was plain bull luck. Rick was about to desert, but he had craved urgently to settle this account before he left. Now the same confusion which would make it easy

for him to slip away and go "over the hill" was masking his revenge for him. It would be the most evident kind of an accident, with all this wild shooting of ponies going on.

At three hundred yards it was a fairly easy shot. The way Shannon's head was drooping over the saddle, Rick figured he could drill him through the skull and the nag through the spine with one shot. "Talk about 'two birds with one stone!'" thought Rick, chuckling to himself.

He sighted carefully. He did not forget his breath hold and his trigger squeeze. *Crack!* His shot merged with the general fusillade. Rick, pausing only to see both man and horse go down in a heap, slipped swiftly away. . . .

Living the hunted, haunted life of a deserter from the United States Army, Rick never learned that his shot had not been the brilliant success he believed. A fairly stiff breeze had been blowing that day, and he had forgotten his windage.

The bullet had missed Peter's skull. He sprang up unharmed.

But the black Morgan horse lay where he had fallen. His four white feet twitched and were still.

CHAPTER TWENTY



PETER SHANNON, chief trumpeter, Troop "K," Fourth U. S. Cavalry, was standing his last retreat. Squadrons in line, the regiment stretched across the parade-ground, a gallant sight. Ranks stood almost immobile except where here and there a troop-horse stamped or tossed his head. The rays of a setting sun burnished brighter the polished instruments of the band and massed trumpeters.

Yonder at the commanding officer's quarters, brilliant-hued silk gleamed. Sergeants were bringing out the national and regimental standards, uncasing them, mounting up. Flanked by color guards, a two-platoon escort riding in front and rear, the standards approached the waiting regiments.

Mackenzie's voice rang out: "Draw sabers! Escort halt." The standards came on until they were fifty paces in front of the General.

"Present sabers!" The long blue ranks were suddenly a field of flashing steel—blades whipped from scabbards and upward in salute. As the sabers rose, the guidons dipped in homage, and Sergeant Willis and his massed trumpeters sounded *To the Standard*.

His trumpet returned to the carry, Peter sat his horse rigidly while the band played "*The Star Spangled Banner*," and the garrison flag fluttered slowly down its staff. As always, there was a catch in his throat and a throbbing in his pulses. Those majestic strains of music, the sight of Old Glory—they made you feel things about your country, things you used just to take for granted. Silently Peter made a vow: "If I ever begin to forget my love for my country and all I owe her," he promised himself, "I'll go to an Army post some evening when they're standing Retreat. I'll take off my civilian hat and hold it against my left breast, and listen to the 'Anthem' and watch the flag come down. And then I'll remember!"

His last *Retreat*. His time was up, his discharge waiting at Headquarters. John Shannon had adamantly refused to allow his son to reenlist. Peter must come home and go to college. Yet how could he leave this fine regiment of his, with all it meant to him. . . . Take off the blue uniform with its cavalry-yellow stripes he wore so proudly. . . . Leave behind the good comrades with whom

he served and the valiant memory of those he had seen die in battle?

The troop rode off the parade-ground to stand stables. Deeply despondent, Peter dismounted. As he led off, he gently stroked his mount's forehead.

"Got to leave you, too," he said softly and sadly. "And I thought that day on the Plain that *you* had left *me*." Justin affectionately nuzzled his master's cheek.

The veterinarian had explained to Peter what had happened that day of the pony-slaughter when the wind of a bullet had fanned his hair, and the black Morgan horse had collapsed and lain as if dead.

"Creasing," the old-timers call it," the vet declared. "It was a trick the wild horse-hunters used. When they were after an especially fine mustang and couldn't run him down and rope him or catch him in any other way, they tried creasing as a last resort. A very carefully placed shot through the upper portion of the neck, just in front of the withers, would sever a nerve and cause temporary paralysis. While the cayuse lay there stunned, the hunters galloped up and roped and double-hobbled him.

"From all I hear, it worked about once out of fifty tries. Cruel trick, creasing—it's killed a good many fine horses.

"Not that I believe anybody was trying to crease your mount, Shannon. Don't figure it was an accident either. Somebody was taking a pot-shot at you. I hear tell a certain trooper in your outfit deserted the same day. And that wasn't what you'd call in highfalutin lingo 'a mere coincidence.'"

Peter had completely agreed. . . . Good riddance, Rick!

Now finishing a last, loving grooming of Justin's sleek black hide, he banged down brush and currycomb in sudden angry resolution.

Leave the Army? Leave his best girl? Sally Ann was an Army girl and always would be, and leaving the Service was just the same as giving her up for good. Leave his horse, this beloved mount of his, to be turned into troop herd? Mouth grimly set, Peter stamped off to the orderly-room.

First Sergeant Sam Smith sat behind his rough table and calmly heard out the rush of eager, vehement words.

"I *won't* go!" Peter avowed. "I'm staying in the Army. If they won't let me re-up in this outfit, I'll change my name and age and enlist in another."

"Steady there, Peter! Look forward a bit. What's ahead of you? A commission maybe? Not for years. Congress is cutting the Army down even further. We never learn. All the senior officers for years will be the Civil War veterans we have now. The shavetails—all there are vacancies for—will come from West Point.

"Want to stay in the ranks all your life? To what end? Some day our people will look on a good soldier as one following an honorable career, as worthy of respect. They don't now. For the trooper who stays in the Service, his destiny is either a lonely grave in the prairie or a cheerless bunk in an Old Soldier's Home.

"Get your education. I've taken you as far as I can. Then come back to the Army if you want to—by way of West Point, or from civil life."

PETER'S STUBBORN DETERMINATION began to ebb. "But—" Sam Smith smiled. "There may be a couple more immediate matters on your mind, making you hate to leave. There's a certain young lady on this post—we will not, of course, bandy a lady's name about—who has just been given a horse of her own by her father: a troop horse bought from the Government; a black horse, by the by, with four white feet."

Peter's eyes lit up. "Sergeant, you mean—"

"Wait! It was told me in confidence that the young lady wanted the horse as a keepsake of a young trooper who used to ride him. She said, I am reliably informed, that though the trooper might never come back just to see *her*, he certainly would come back to see his horse."

Peter Shannon, honorably discharged after serving one enlistment with character "Excellent" in the U. S. Cavalry, stowed his baggage in the Concord wagon that would leave in half an hour for a long night drive to the railroad. General Mackenzie's parting praise and that of his own troop officers and the cordial handclaps of his comrades-in-arms had filled him with a warm glow.

Presenting himself at the Lindsay quarters, he was received by the Adjutant and his wife. Peter was offering his heartfelt thanks for the Major's purchase of Justin, when Sally Ann made her entrance.

She had on a new dress. In its making had collaborated *Godey's Lady's Book*, one of Mr. Butterick's best patterns, skilled seamstress work by Mrs. Lindsay and Ma Simmons, and more of the Major's pay than he liked. Peter could only have reported that it was yellow silk—cavalry yellow—and that there were bows and lace and things here and there. But such inadequate observation mattered not at all, since the dress achieved the desired effect. Sally Ann, with hoopskirts swaying, her brown hair wreathed by a chaplet of marigolds, was undeniably a vision.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Peter in sincerest tribute.

"Sally Ann, the dress seems to be a success," her mother smilingly observed.

Out on the porch in the soft air of a Texan spring, Peter was having a difficult time saying good-by. He was managing it very poorly when the first notes of *Taps* sounded. They were sounding it in harmony and with an echo—that, Peter realized, was Sergeant Wills' send-off for him. Softly Sally Ann sang, as the call was repeated:

*"Love, good-night.
Must you go
When the day
And the night
Need you so?
Though we part,
Ever rest
In my heart."*

That was enough for Peter—as, indeed, it should have been enough for any man. He took the girl in his arms and held her close. Her trim little form was at once firm and yielding. Her face was upturned, as it had been in the dream that time, and her eyes were shining into his.

"Sally Ann," he whispered, "remember how you said that *Taps* was like the voice of someone you love dearly saying good night?"

She nodded. Her fragrance was all about him, as he bent and kissed her, and her lips answered his.

"Oh!" a small voice said breathlessly and tremulously.

"Sally Ann, do you know what that means?" Peter, breathless too but sternly serious, demanded. "It means you'll wait for me."

"It just couldn't mean anything else, Pete."

"They'll say we're still awfully young. They'll say we don't know our own minds and that we'll forget."

"It isn't *they*.' It's you and me, Pete—and I'll wait for you always."

"I'll be back as soon as I can," he promised. "Good-by, Sally Ann."

They kissed again until their young hearts beat with such poignant ecstasy that they had to draw apart. Peter ran down the steps, turned once to wave and was gone in the darkness. . . .

Down in "K" Troop stables, another good-by was said. A trooper's arms were around his horse's sturdy neck, his face buried in the black mane. There were gentle snortings and a sound suspiciously like a suppressed sob.

A comradely slap on a sleek haunch. "By, Justin," in a gruff voice. Steps hurrying out. Then the crack of a driver's whip and the rattle of wagon-wheels.

From the stable came a shrill, yearning neigh. The stable guard halted his pacing and called:

"Don't take it so hard, hoss! He'll be back!"

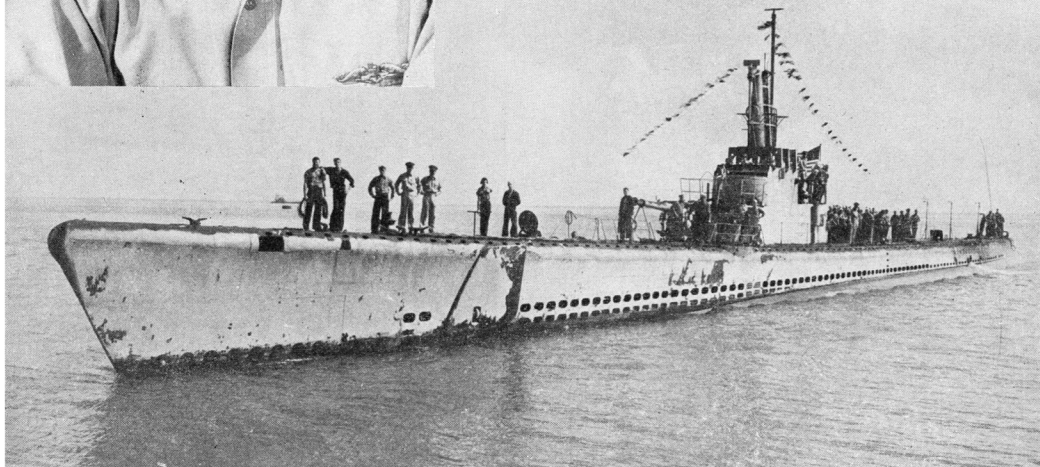
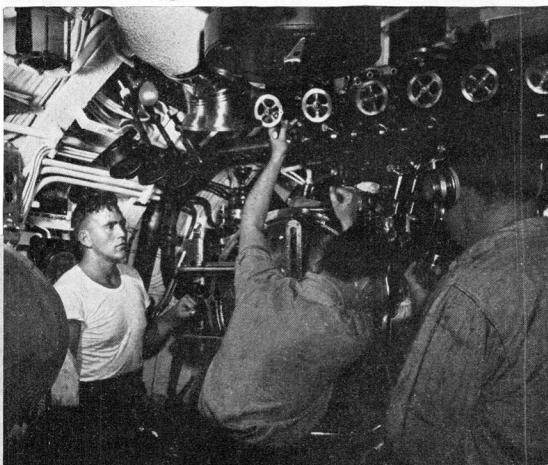
The TRIGGER FIGHTS HER WAR

by Lt. Com. Edward Beach, U.S.N.

SHE was only three years old when she died; but in that time she sank or damaged thirty-eight Jap ships and earned countless decorations for the officers and men who served in her, as well as the coveted Presidential Unit Citation and Navy Unit Commendation for herself. Her gallant story is told (beginning on page 48) by an officer who served aboard her until that last fatal patrol.

At right: Looking aft from forward end of conning tower. . . . Inside the conning tower, making an approach. #2 periscope is up and in use. #1 periscope is housed. Below this picture we see the forward torpedo room as a torpedo is fired. . . . A torpedo head may be seen at far left. It is obviously a practice head, hence painted and dented.

Immediately below is a portrait of Lt. Comdr. Beach. And at the bottom is the Trigger herself, just off Midway island. (Official Navy Photos.)



BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure for MEN, by MEN ★ OCTOBER, 1946



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