BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE FOR ADVENTUROUS READING ★ MARCH ★ 25 Cents

THESE UNITED STATES • XV • New Hampshire
Painted by HERBERT MORTON STOOPS

FOUR NOVELETTES:

LADY WITH THE CHECKS *by GEORGES SURDEZ;* **HEIGH-O, THE WILD MISSOURI** *by ARTHUR LAWSON and CHANDLER WHIPPLE;* **MINUTE MAN** *by BILL ERIN;* and **PERLAGUNA** *by DURAND KIEFER*

Many short stories, articles, features

THESE UNITED STATES . . . . XV—NEW HAMPSHIRE

The Hero of Fort Four

I WAS with Captain Phinehas Stevens in 1746 when he, with thirty men, successfully defended Fort No. 4 at Charlestown, New Hampshire, against the continued onslaughts of seven hundred Frenchmen under General Debeline. How far the enemy would have advanced into New Hampshire and Massachusetts had they not been checked here, I cannot compute.

It was spring of that year when Captain Stevens marched into Fort Four with thirty Rangers, finding it inhabited by an old spaniel and a cat. Captain Phinehas Stevens was a tall man, and a soldier of exceptional skill. In his youth he had been taken captive, with his brother, by the St. Francis tribe in Gray Lock's first raid of Father Rale's War. Thus he knew Indian methods well.

On April 4th the enemy appeared. Debeline's forces consisted mainly of trained soldiers, with a few Indian warriors. They set up an ambuscade nearby, but their presence was scented by the fort's loyal spaniel. For five full days Stevens and his thirty Rangers stood firm against the assault that was carried out from all sides. Every stratagem French policy and Indian malice could invent was practiced.

The wind was high, and everything exceedingly dry; and the besiegers set fire to the old fences and also to a log house about forty rods distant, so that for most of the time the fort was entirely surrounded by fire. Fire-arrows were discharged which set parts of the fort ablaze. To overcome this, the Rangers had to dig a tunnel under their own stockade and creep outside with buckets and get water to extinguish the flames. Eleven such trenches were dug, each deep enough to protect a full-grown man.

The fire-arrows failing to accomplish their purpose, the Indians made a fire-cart filled with faggots which were set on fire, and this engine of destruction was rolled toward the timbered structure. A parley was proposed, at which Debeline made excessive demands.

Captain Stevens quietly remarked that inasmuch as he had been sent to defend the fort, it would not be consistent with his orders to give it up unless he was better satisfied that the Frenchman was able to perform what he had threatened.

"Well," said the General, "go into the fort and see whether your men dare fight on more."

Inside, a vote was taken, and to a man they agreed to stand it out as long as they had life. The battle continued.

The next day the besiegers asked for a cessation of arms for two hours. Two Indians came with a flag of truce, asking to buy provisions, in return for their decision to go away and fight no more. To this our Captain made a shrewd answer: he would not sell them provisions for money, but he would supply them with five bushels of corn for each captive turned in by General Debeline. This reply so astonished the Frenchman, that within two hours he and his forces withdrew and were heard of no more.

So ended the five-day battle. Many of the besiegers were slain, while the besieged suffered no loss in killed, and but two were wounded. The news of the defense was rushed to Boston. Sir Charles Knowles of the British Navy, then in Boston, presented Captain Stevens with "an elegant sword" and in consideration of Sir Charles' generosity, his name was subsequently bestowed upon the settlement, which today is known as Charlestown.

Readers' Comment

The Wrong Street

ALWAYS I have found BLUE BOOK superior in quality of its stories. In the January issue there were few stories of even ordinary character—most of them were far above the average. Ahmad Kamal did a fine job on that story of the Greeks of Tarpon Springs. As I live but thirty miles from there it was more than usually interesting to me.

The New Orleans story by Wilbur Peacock was well done, but I suggest that he use some other street name than Tchoupitoulas, for that street, although following the Mississippi for miles, never ends on that stream.

—George Parke.

About the Moose

I HAVE read your magazine for many years, and generally turn to the stories of "Fact and Experience" first. The story a few months ago about the *Dace* and *Darter*, subs, their attack on the Japs and the loss of his sub by McClintock was especially interesting, because McClintock comes from here and we all know him.

In the January issue, 1948, there is a story by M. A. Ransome, "Bull the Moose." For Mr. Ransome's information, all moose on Isle Royale were not trapped nor intended to be—only enough removed to relieve the overbrowsing, which was as high as fourteen feet above the ground.

Isle Royale is now a national park, taken over by the Federal Government recently and since the transfer of the moose.

—Chas. E. Begole.

We've Made Others

WHO was it said: "I don't make many mistakes; but when I do it's usually a humdinger!"?

For ten years or more I've read BLUE BOOK cover to cover—nary a blunder have I found. Comes now the February issue—and horrors! You place Oscar Schisgall's fine story in the right country, with the right characters, including Uncle Sam's Forest Rangers. But do you put the Pine Tree Shield boys in the National Forests (U. S. Department of Agriculture) where they belong? No! You headline National Parks (U. S. Department of Interior). There's a big difference, you know. Fortunately, the story itself isn't seriously affected.

The way I look at it, you're entitled to at least one boner in ten years.

—Bill Bergoffen.

(The worst of it is, we knew better. Ignorance is in some measure pardonable, for no one can know everything. But carelessness makes red the editorial face.)

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March, 1948 — Vol. 86, No. 5

Four Novelettes

Nine Short Stories

Stories of Fact and Experience

Special Features

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

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My Most Unforgettable

I—ACTION IN THE ARCTIC

by James G. Harrington

"SAY, Mr. Schurig, what is that? A flock of sea gulls?" The Mate, one of the best I've ever sailed with, peers through the glasses. The flock of "sea gulls" is a swarm of Junkers-88 torpedo planes, coming in in beautiful formation. A deadly silence reigns over the plodding merchantmen, for the planes are well out of range of our three-inchers and 20-mm.'s.

So this is what raised havoc with the last Murmansk convoy! This is why the British Navy insisted upon an escort of forty naval vessels for our forty merchantmen! Heavy destroyers, the cruiser *Scylla*, corvettes, ack-ack ships, submarines—and the *Avenger*, our lovely little aircraft-carrier with her twenty-odd Hurricanes aboard. To us on the bridge of the *John Penn* this array of warcraft seemed impregnable yesterday—

In they come, seemingly slowly—but Lord, how swiftly! Fifty torpedo planes, with fifty times two torpedoes—and it takes only one to blast us to atoms! One pilot seems to have his mind set on the *John Penn*, and swoops in on our starboard side, twenty feet above the sea, his machine-guns blazing. The boys back aft have his number, however; 20-mm. shells are literally streaming into his engines and fuselage. Red flame leaps from his starboard engine, and with one final salute from his machine-gun, he plunges into the sea.

The gunners aft are jubilant. They have plucked a Nazi on the wing; but wait—when one gets that close, his mission has been accomplished. His torpedoes are somewhere out there speeding toward us.

There goes the *Empire Stevenson!* Good God, what a sight! A torpedo must have hit her munitions hatch. A sheet of flame leaps half a mile into the sky. Parts of the hull, superstructure, and fragments of what had once been living men, are blown in all directions. A huge white-hot side-plate, catapulted a quarter of a mile, narrowly misses the gang on our

War Experience

THE Seamen's Church Institute of New York recently offered prizes for a short narrative of "My Most Unforgettable War Experience." The judges, Lilian Gilkes, Frank Laskier and your editor, were not unanimous; for different readers give more weight to the importance of the episode described or to its unusual character, or to the quality of the writing. First prize was given to "Action in the Arctic," by James G. Harrington; second prize was awarded to "The Decision," by Gunnar Nilsson; and third prize to "The Captain in the Green Hat," by Francis W. Keyser. An Honorable Mention was given to "Our Ships Were Dark Shadows" by Horace Bryan. BLUE BOOK is privileged to present these stories to you, along with two others which also seem of special interest.

fo'c'stle head, and with a vicious hiss drops into the sea. The four ships astern of the *Stevenson* have been hit also, and are sinking very fast. Their survivors are over the side in the lifeboats, and the destroyers and corvettes are racing in to pick them up before another wave of planes comes over.

EACH explosion, particularly the *Stevenson's*, has sent violent tremors through the entire length of the *Penn*. The Second must be having a devil of a time below. Picking up the engine-room phone, I let him know that all is well on deck, but that a lot of the boys astern of us have been catching hell. Suddenly a particularly violent shock hits the *Penn*. Knocked off my feet, I drop the phone, but quickly recover it and ask the Second if all is well below.

"Yes, we're all right down here, Jim, but what hit us? Get the Old Man on the phone, will you?"

Calling the Skipper to the phone, I head out toward the wing of the bridge, when the deck beneath us leaps a foot, and solid green water cascades over the entire midship section. Those of us on the bridge are engulfed and buried beneath icy water. Huge pieces of steel crash around us. Another violent explosion hurls us to the deck again, and hard upon it, great clouds of steam billow into the wheelhouse and bridge wings. The second torpedo has smashed into the engine-room, blowing up the boilers. The "general alarm" sounds briefly, then dies; the lights flicker out, and so do the lives of the Second and Texas and Steve.

Rushing from the bridge, we make for the boats. Back aft and up forward they are already releasing the rafts. We have only one boat on the port side, the other having been smashed off the Orkneys. Filling her up, we lower away, then rush for the starboard boats. Here an act of heroism occurs that is commonplace in the Merchant Marine, but rarely re-

lated. The Mate, in spite of 375 pounds of T.N.T. blasting in the engine-room, in spite of the clouds of steam pouring from every opening, and oblivious to the fact that the old *Penn* is sinking beneath our feet, descends calmly into the Stygian blackness below to see if, through some miracle, any life has been spared among the crew. And what is more —he insists upon going alone. We stand by the hatch where we can dash for the boat if she takes the final plunge.

THE relentless Polar seas surge endlessly and unimpeded over the half-submerged after-well deck. Our cargo of tanks, Boston bombers and cased munitions are tossed about as though they were so many pieces of dunnage. A huge roller smashes in the port bulwarks, shatters a cased Curtis P-40, and picking up a bomber in its wake, hurls itself over the starboard bulwarks.

The end can't be long in coming now. A sudden blast of gunfire right overhead shatters the unnatural quiet. Young Frank Delorey, sighting a Ju-88 heading home, has slipped up into the gun turret unobserved, and has given him one last blast. For scaring us out of our wits we threaten to leave him aboard. We have quite enough on our hands at present without taking on any more 88's. This is sixteen-year-old Frank's first trip, but he has taken to seafaring like a duck to water, and he has never been happier than he is in his gun turret, behind a 20-mm., with a tin hat on his head.

After what seems hours Mr. Schurig returns to the deck, covered with fuel oil from head to foot. Threading his way through the shattered engine-room, aided by a flashlight, he had climbed down to the level of the rising flood. All below was a shambles. The only human trace he saw was the shattered arm of one of the watch. They must have died instantly from the concussion, or might have been trapped by the flood under the lower gratings.

We all take to the boats now. I jump in with the Old Man, the Chief, and Sparks. The Mate and the rest leap into the Second Mate's lifeboat, which has rounded the stern and come up on the weather side. Hardly have we shoved off when the *John Penn* gives one last convulsive shudder, and slides slowly beneath the sea. Fighting valiantly, she had refused to die until all her remaining boys had pulled away.

The Old Man is just about all in. Sitting in the bow, dazed by the furious action of the last hours, the sinking of his second ship, the loss of his men, he seems paralyzed. One of the naval gunners is leaning over the gunwale, working on the damaged rudder. Another, Ensign by name, has leaped over the side and is trying to place the rudder pintles into the gudgeons. Just as I reach them, young Ensign throws into the sea what appears to be a perfectly good glove. This seems almost too much to bear, for my hands are stiff with cold. But this is no time for argument. (Ensign later told me that he himself had picked up the glove as it drifted by, and had tried to put it on to protect his own freezing fingers, only to discover that the mangled hand of its former owner was still in possession.) Pulling Ensign into the boat, we throw the rudder overboard – the steering-oar will serve just as well.

Guiding the lifeboat into the seas, I have a good opportunity to survey the appalling scene surrounding us. Flaming ships, slowly sinking ships, burning lifeboats and rafts, lifejackets supporting horribly burned and broken corpses. Off the port bow a Nazi torpedo plane drifts. Two of her crew beckon to us to pick them up. But we are some distance away, and two more men would swamp us. However, the boys agree that we can at least tow them on the lifeline, so we head in their direction. Before we can reach them, however, their plane throws her tail into the air, hurling them into the sea. Passing the spot a few minute later, we can find no trace of them. Lashed to the wing of the plane is another German —dead, a huge hole in his neck. He could not have been more than seventeen or eighteen years old. A fair-haired, rather fine-looking kid.

A big British destroyer is now heading for us. Urging the boys to bend their backs, we head for her, but she turns about a quarter-mile from us, going full speed ahead. She probably has 'pinged" a sub. A CPO on her fo'c'stle head waves us in the general direction of the convoy. Great blobs of viscous fuel oil now dangle from the blades as the oars are lifted from the sea. Debris from the sunken freighters smashes into our sides. In addition, overloaded as we are, each drop into the troughs spills gallons of icy oil-covered water over the gunwales. Sitting on the thwarts, the men are buried in the sticky fluid to their knees.

AFT on the gunwales, sweat rolls into my eyes, cold though it is, for the steering-oar now weighs a ton, and it becomes increasingly difficult to keep the boat from falling into the troughs broadside to the sea. Three bodies float down to windward. One, a headless seaman, with outstretched arms, washes gently with each swell against the shoulder of a German airman, the lower half of whose body has been torn away by a shell. The third is another seaman, his arms and legs blown off. A flock of gulls follows this gruesome procession of mangled humanity, tearing at the seared and bloody flesh.

We look away, only to sight a Blohm & Voss reconnaissance plane, flying very low. It can't be more than fifty feet above the surface. Idling along on two of his four engines, he is a vicious-looking bird of prey. The same thought occurs to all of us simultaneously—he is going to riddle the lifeboats! He is very close now—so close that we can easily distinguish three of the crew, gazing intently at us from the bow port.

The men have ceased rowing except for alternating port and starboard strokes to keep the boat out of the trough. What is the use breaking one's back when in a few minutes we will be, like the lads far astern, food for the scavenging gulls? Save for the sloshing of water in the bottom, the slap of the sea against our bow, there is no other sound. The plane is about one hundred yards ahead, and we stare straight into four machine-gun ports. The crew points to us, their faces expressionless. Why in hell don't they get the filthy job over with? She is broad on our beam, fifty feet off and up All four of her engines are now turning, and five of her guns are trained on the boat, but she still holds her fire. For the love of heaven! She is now well astern, and yet no shot has been fired. A German in her after-turret actually smiles and waves to us. Tension relaxes, and the men bend to the oars. We head again into the seas. . . . Thanks, boys, maybe we'll be able to do the same for you some day!

WE are now miserably cold in our soaked clothing—nearly exhausted. The eyes of Walter Flannelly, at stroke oar, are popping from fatigue, when, thank God, we sight a big British Tribal destroyer heading for us. What a beautiful heart-warming sight she is, and how she cleaves the ocean! All trace of weariness disappears. We row for her as though no effort were required. In a few seconds we are tied up alongside, and twenty-six survivors have climbed from the lifeboat onto the sturdy deck of H.M.S. *Eskimo*. As luck would have it, she had also picked up the Mate's boat, and we learn from him that the rest of the crew is aboard the *Scylla*.

We are soon racing at top speed—thirty-five knots—for the convoy. The *Eskimo* had been detailed to pick up survivors of the morning's holocaust, and we are the last to be sighted. If there are any more out there—well —maybe they will be able to reach Bear Island or Spitsbergen's North Cape.

A RECENT PLAY, "COMMAND DECISION," EMPHASIZED THE TERRIFIC RESPONSIBILITY OF AN AIRFORCE OFFICER. THIS STORY TELLS OF A HEARTBREAKING DECISION SOMETIMES REQUIRED OF A SHIP'S CAPTAIN.

by GUNNAR NILSSON

The Decision

IN the chain of events which makes up our lives, countless individuals come and go; good ones, bad ones and those insignificant ones who don't matter because they aren't good or bad enough to count, or because they are just too harmless to be remembered.

One of the most outstanding of these who passed in review in my life, and helped shape the events which set the course and added color and excitement to my voyage through life, was the shipmaster on the *Townsville*, C. G. Henderson.

On this particular voyage of the *Townsville*, during the Battle of Britain, Henderson was in his early fifties. A well-built and well-mannered man, soft-spoken and fair, he was respected and liked by those who sailed under his command. There was nothing of the high-hat and pompous attitude about him which one so often finds with other captains of the sea, especially in the British Merchant Navy. On Henderson's ship, officers and men ate the same food, and the men were exempt from working the extra eight hours a week, the field days, which other British seamen were subject to. Even my pal, the Cockney, a squawker and sea-lawyer from way back, admitted he was tops.

Yes, Captain Henderson stood well up to the measurements of a hero such as the merchant seamen dream about.

"Blimey," said the Cockney as we lugged our gear down to the forecastle. "I just cawn't believe it. A prince, 'e is. H'i 'ope there ain't nothing phony about it, I do. Blimey, 'tis too good to be true, 'tis."

But there was nothing phony about it. . . . We left Halifax on a foggy fall morning with the rest of the convoy; and after having maneuvered into position in the starboard coffin corner, the chief mate reassured the curious Cockney there were no field days.

And the days went by, with exceptionally good weather for this time of year. The feeling of uneasiness which prevailed the first few days as we looked toward the two escorting corvettes and the endless, bounding sea on our starboard flank, gave way to a feeling of complacency. The crew went on with their work, laughing and joking as if there were peace on earth and good will among men. It was no time to be light-hearted in a sea infested with enemy submarines, but the monotony of the unbroken succession of watches made us feel content. Between watches we rested, played cards or read a book; while the convoy headed eastward, through days of sunshine, storm or rain and through cold, black nights.

THE standby on the middle watch roused us.

"'Tis three-thirty in the morning. Time to get up an' relieve us. There's tea in the kettle."

We got up, sleepy and slow. The tea warmed us and took the sleepiness away.

"Oooh," yawned the Cockney, as he stretched his short, skinny legs under the table. "'Tis the noint' day out. Noine days an' all's well. 'Tis cold, though—*brrr!*"

As I was not in a talking mood so early in the morning, I hastily gulped down my tea and went out on deck. The chill of the black, dismal night stung my nostrils as I fumbled toward the railing. There, looking down into the phosphorescent gleam in the water as the *Townsville* plowed its way, my eyes got used to the darkness, and I could distinguish the contours of the ship. It must have been close to eight bells, because I could hear the Cockney stagger out on deck, cursing the darkness, the war and "the 'ole blarsted civilization."

"Cheerio, Cockney," I said, as I walked away toward the 'midship. "I'm going up to relieve the lad at the wheel."

"O.K., Swede, ol' bloke. Cheerio!"

Henderson was up there; and old MacTavish, the chief mate, kidded him about being up so early.

"Got that old feeling, MacTavish," the Captain answered unsmilingly, while watching the dark, ominous sea,

lighted sometimes by whitecaps when the waves broke, and the caps glittered in the light from the moon which had just come out from behind forbidding clouds.

"Feel all right meself, Cap'n," said MacTavish. "Never can tell, though. These Jerries are unpredictable. Aye, 'twould be a shame if they got us now, when we're more'n a thousand miles from 'ome."

He had hardly finished speaking when a gigantic flame shot up toward the sky from the ship ahead of us, followed immediately by a thunderous explosion.

"Hard to port, m'lad! Hard to port!" called Henderson, and as I worked frantically to swing her over, the other four ships ahead of us were struck by the unseen monsters.

"The Jerries are here," said Henderson grimly. "A whole pack of them. I knew that feeling couldn't be wrong."

The *Townsville* almost collided with a ship in the line on our port side before Henderson gave the order to bring the wheel hard to starboard. While we zigzagged back, there were more explosions, now in the middle of the convoy. Way out toward the horizon were heard the heavy detonations of depth bombs and knells of gunfire. The two escorts were attacked by the pack. As the depth bombs went off, throwing cascades of phosphorescent water around the scene of the fight, we could see the two corvettes explode before our eyes.

"We are without protection," said Henderson. "We have to make it on our own now. Our speed is superior to the subs'. We've got a chance if we can zigzag out of here."

AS we zigzagged back toward the flaming wrecks on our starboard side, we closed in on the survivors in the water. The closer we came, the louder we heard the agonized cries for help from the wounded, desperately fighting for their lives in the ice-cold water. Any second I expected to hear the Captain's voice calling the engine-room and telling them to stop the ship so we could pick up those closest to us. At less than a cable's-length away, he called out:

"Hard to port, m'lad!" Then he called the engine-room.

"Full speed ahead! Give 'er everything you've got!"

It was evident he aimed to leave the struggling men to the inevitable. He was in complete authority to do so, and there seemed to be no thought in his mind but to save the *Townsville* and—I thought—himself.

The second mate came rushing up the ladder. His face shone white in the moonlight.

"All 'ands on deck, sir," he reported in great excitement. "And the men are standing by to lower the starboard boat."

"We're going full speed ahead, Mister, and we're not stopping unless we're hit."

The young mate was out of words, but the hitherto silent MacTavish said, condemningly:

"You're making a mistake, sir."

Henderson didn't answer him. He called to me:

"Hard starboard, m'lad!"

MacTavish continued after Henderson sent the second mate away with orders for the men to stand by at their stations. The sea was calm and quiet in the moonlight—the burning ships and the dying seamen were behind us, far behind, as MacTavish said:

"You call yourself a seaman, sir, and you made no effort to save those poor devils! You are not the man I thought you were. You are not the man at all."

Captain Henderson retorted:

"As a ship's captain, it is my sole duty to bring my ship into port. Every ship that arrives in England is a nail in the German coffin. We can't afford to lose more ships than we've lost already. We've a war to win, MacTavish. Those men in the water knew it when they signed on, and they were willing to risk their lives."

"So are we willing to risk ours to save 'em, sir," interrupted MacTavish tartly.

"Our cargo is too valuable to risk, MacTavish." And he added hotly: "There's ships in this convoy designated to pick up the survivors. Furthermore, I'm still in command. What I say goes."

"Indeed it does, sir. You're also—"

"Come on, MacTavish, what are you trying to tell me?"

"When we dock in England, if with God's help we get there, I'll tell you. Until then you're my captain and an officer, so I can't tell you what I think of you. But, by God—" He walked over to the side of the bridge and spat down in the dark ocean. He walked back slowly, painstakingly.

Both remained silent for the next half-hour while we kept zigzagging ahead. Then the Cockney came up to relieve me at the helm.

"Well, Swede, ol' bloke," he said, bitterly and loud. "We were all set to lower the boat an' save 'em—"

"Silence on the bridge!" thundered Henderson.

The Cockney said no more; but where he stood, with a weak light from the compass shining on his thin face, the sneering smile which twisted his homely features spoke better than words. . . .

When human beings lose their ideals, their minds are a turmoil of shattered, disappointed thoughts. To us, the sailors of the *Townsville*, the disappointment in our captain was as shocking and bereaving as the anguish we had felt over the dying seamen. Gloom settled over the *Townsville*. The days of jokes and laughter were gone, and the men spoke to each other in hushed voices. To Henderson, no one spoke. MacTavish refused to enter the mess hall when the Captain was there; and the younger officers would have done the same thing had they dared.

Among the men in the forecastle he was referred to as a coward.

"Bloomin' well ain't got no guts, 'e ain't, if ye'll pardon me for talkin' like a Yank," said the Cockney; and we agreed.

The only change in Henderson was that he became silent; he stopped talking when he didn't get any answer, but remained as fair and polite as ever. In fact, he seemed to respect the way we felt about him, which infuriated us still more.

WE were close to home. MacTavish had told us the night before that he expected to see land at daybreak. The old Scotsman hummed "Rolling Home" softly when the sun arose behind the rocks of Cornwall. He trained his binoculars on the coastline.

Then a shadow of disgust darkened his face. He turned around to me and grabbed the helm.

"Swede," he said, "will you please go down and wake up the – the –"

He had a hard time spitting out the word that had been on his tongue since that unforgettable night. It came, however, forced out and leaving a frown of vehemence on his wrinkled face:

"The coward!"

"O.K., Mate," I answered, with a smile of sympathy to show that I knew how he felt.

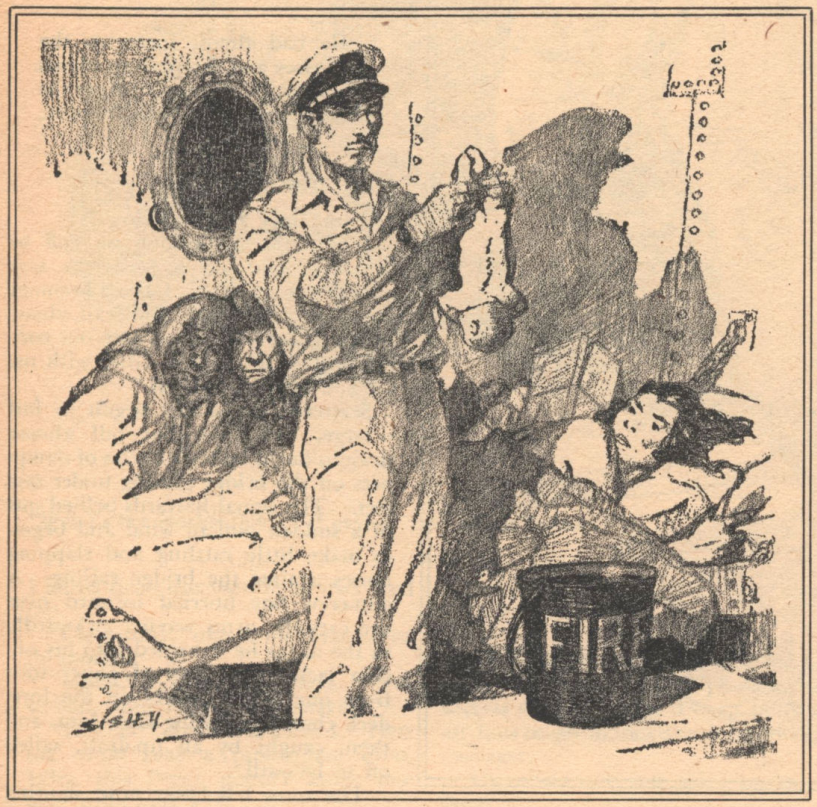
I wanted to say in fury and hatred and despair every name that was a synonym of coward, but I felt MacTavish might not approve. After all, they were officers, MacTavish and the Captain.

I went down slowly, very slowly, and when I finally stood before the cabin door, I took a deep breath and opened the door.

The rising sun shone in through the open porthole, across the narrow cabin, toward the Captain, asleep in his bunk. The Old Man's shirt was open, and there was something glittering around his neck and on his hairy chest.

I entered the cabin to see what it was. As I bent over him with wide-open, unbelieving eyes, I looked in reverence at a medal. There, in the rays of the morning sun, shone in indescribable glory – *the Victoria Cross!* And I knew then that it took a man of courage to make so difficult a decision.

I Suddenly Become a Father



A weird episode during the rescue of Dutch women and children from an attack by Indonesian fanatics.

by COMMANDER S. M. RIIS

ALL through the black, sweltering tropical night we were embarking crying women and children on board the *Winchester Victory*. This was in January, 1946. We were anchored a few miles off the shore of Java. Blinking lights on shore indicated the location of the once-prosperous Dutch trading town Semerang.

This town had been for the previous four years a Japanese concentration camp for some fifteen thousand Dutch women and children, gathered together from an area of over ten thousand square miles of the sprawling Dutch East Indies colonial empire, in the Southeast Pacific.

The night before our arrival, six thousand women and children had been massacred—in cold blood—by the natives, armed by the Japs and led by the Moscow-trained "native liquidators."

As the embarkation proceeded, the British cruiser H.M.S. *Norfolk*, lying shoreward from our position, was firing salvoes on shore. The thunderous reverberations of the gunfire added no little to the general confusion and the excitement. Fires broke out on shore, sending flames and sparks skyward, as some of the shells exploded among the native forces, massed for another attack upon the defenseless women and children huddled around the waterfront and near the docks.

My main troubles, during this hasty embarkation of some two thousand women and children—screaming nerve-racked humanity—were to get them safely off the barges and settled on board in quarters primarily designed for wartime transportation.

Suddenly during all this pandemonium two little girls came running up to me, crying. . . . I gathered that their mother was dying in Number Three hold.

We had no doctor on board. It had been understood that the Dutch officials would supply one, but as yet he had not shown up.

When I reached the bunk-side of the dying woman, I soon realized that she was about to give birth to another child. Never having assisted at a birth before, I endeavored to enlist the aid of some women standing near by and crying. None would help. Apparently all were too worn out and terrified. . . .

I ordered that the stretcher be brought down. By the time the stretcher-bearers reached us, fighting their way through the confused masses on deck, the child was born—with no other assistance than the hapless mother's and mine. Then the mother, through tears of pain on her haggard face, said in a weak voice in pidgin English: "Be a good father to the baby. She is not to blame." I nodded in agreement, and squeezed her hand.

I knew that these unfortunate Dutch women and children had been separated from their husbands and fathers for over three years. The Japs had sent all the men prisoners to another concentration camp somewhere in Borneo.

After some of the older women had partially washed the infant in a fire-bucket of cold water, I looked the baby over. It was a girl. She had European features with slightly slant eyes and a yellow skin. I thought perhaps another Mata Hari was born.

Though faintly breathing, the newborn was apparently unconscious. Fearing that the little one would die, I baptized her on the spot, and on the spur of the moment named her—Genevieve Winchester Victory.

An hour later, when the Dutch doctor came on board, he reported that both the child and mother were doing well. I then asked if I could be supplied with information regarding the family of the child, for ship's records.

In due time an elderly Dutch Army captain came on board and handed me the family record. The family name was Riis. To say the least, I was dumbfounded, for my family name is also Riis. So I signed the birth certificate to *Genevieve Winchester Victory Riis.*

The Captain *in the* Green

He had almost forgotten the torpedoes and the roaring planes overhead, but he never forgot the Captain and his crowing rooster.

IT was six o'clock in the morning watch when our convoy steamed through the Strait of Bonifacio and set course for Marseilles. With my pea-jacket buttoned up tightly against the bitter nip of the mistral, I stood on the bridge looking back over the straight line of our wake. High up against the black hills of Corsica a snow-squall was breaking—snow falling like a blanket of cold whiteness, and blotting out for a moment the colder blackness of the mountainside. The sky hung low and black, with patches of dirty scud flying swiftly with the wind. Off to the north, vivid flashes of lightning cut sharply through the black. Then thunder beyond, deep and growling, noise without movement.

From early fall until late winter we had been shuttling troops and equipment from one Mediterranean port to another. From the time we had left our anchorage at Lynnhaven Roads and stuck our nose out of Chesapeake Bay, it had been a trip of continual bad weather. Twelve ships with their steering-gear rooms flooded in the heavy quartering sea had put back to port. Lifeboats on the weather side were smashed and carried away, leaving the empty davits standing useless and alone. The Navy signalman reported five men in the convoy washed overboard. In Leghorn, for twelve straight days the rain poured steadily down out of a black sky. Strong southerly winds off Cap Piombino nearly drove us ashore from our anchorage in the outer harbor. In Augusta it rained. In Naples it rained.

The limits of the snow-squall were clearly defined as it moved down over the mountain and advanced slowly over the water toward our convoy. The air was calm now, with patches of nervous little ripples running over the water, as if fearful of the approaching storm. The British Commodore left the wheelhouse and raised his glasses toward the receding shoreline. A small freighter that had put out from the island was setting her course in a diagonal line that was gradually bringing her nearer our convoy.

"Hm, she's a little fellow."

When it's still a long way off to breakfast, and men's spirits are sagging under gray skies, talking becomes an effort. We both knew all about the freighter—she was to join our convoy and go on to Marseilles with us.

"Yes," I said, "she is."

Scattered snowflakes began to fall—large, wet gobs that fell almost straight down and left circles of dampness on the bridge grating under our feet. The signal halyards bellied out in a sudden puff of wind and began to make little rattling and slapping noises against the bridge railing. A gun-crew boy hurried forward over the catwalk, arms waving awkwardly in the air as he struggled into his oilskin jacket. A scrap of paper torn from one of the trucks on the foredeck chased fluttering after him, and then, caught by an up-draft, sailed off tc leeward.

The snow fell faster now, slanting with the wind. Bearded white pennants appeared clinging to the underside of the smokestack guys. The bow and stern were hidden behind a curtain of swirling whiteness. The Captain appeared, climbing up the starboard ladder to the bridge deck. Unhurriedly he made his way to the starboard wing, and using one finger with fastidious delicacy, he depressed the top of the smoke-grimed canvas dodger and peered into the falling snow. The three of us stood in silence. There was no sound except the creaking of the deck grating in the wheelhouse as the man at the wheel shifted his feet, and an occasional blast from the other ships in the convoy.

THE squall was soon over. With the slackening of the wind, the air grew lighter. A few scattered flakes were left hovering uncertainly in the air, as the squall moved on away and to the westward. Clear blue patches of sky began to appear overhead. Off to the east, bright rays from the sun were breaking through the clouds and slanting downward. The water

Hat

by FRANCIS W. KEYSER, Chief Mate

that had been dull gray was now a deep, rich purple, against which the foam curling back from the bows was etched in glittering white plumes.

"The old man's hanging out his wash." The Captain smiled, looking off to starboard. The freighter that had been setting her course to join us had come in close during the squall, and was now steaming along directly on our beam. She was a small, dirty coaster, with paint peeling from her smokestack, and great red-brown patches of rust on her hull. In the warmth of the sun now pouring down, we watched her captain string a clothesline between two stanchions on the deck outside his cabin, and begin hanging up clothes from a bucket on the deck He was a big, pot-bellied man, dressed in undershirt and dirty white duck trousers, and wearing on his head a bright green hat shaped like a flower pot. There was a world of contentment in his every gesture as he slapped about the deck in his huge bare feet. Lashed to the bulkhead outside his cabin were several wooden cages. From one of the cages came the long crow of a rooster to greet the rising sun.

"Hot coffee." The Commodore laughed, and rubbed his hands together as pots and pans rattled down in the galley, and the odor of fresh breakfast coffee floated up to the bridge. "Come, boy. Come, boy," he shouted at me exuberantly, laughing for no reason at all. And for no reason at all, I laughed back at him. The Captain strolled over from the wing of the bridge and the three of us stood there talking and laughing, while the warm sun poured down, and water from the melting snow ran in a bright stream down the scuppers.

I have almost forgotten the torpedoes, the subs, the roar of planes overhead; but I'll never forget the captain in the green hat hanging out his wash, the warmth of the sun, the smell of fresh coffee, and the crow of a rooster coming over the water to give a small lift to the failing spirits of man.

"Heaven Alone Could Work This Wonder"

The phenomenal rescue of a man overboard in a North Atlantic gale.

by CAPTAIN I. F. WOOD

I RECEIVED my master's license the day after Christmas, 1944. A few days later, the Alcoa Steamship Company called me to come to the office. At Pier K, Weehawken, New Jersey, the port captain pointed out the window toward a Liberty ship, the *John F. Myers*. "There she is," he said, "Go aboard and relieve Captain Harris."

The next morning I took the *Myers* down the river, through the Narrows, out past Sandy Hook and on to Norfolk to load for Marseilles.

On the day of the convoy conference at the Norfolk Naval Station, I was told that my ship was to be the commodore ship for the passage. That night, the Commodore, Commander Stevenson, and his staff came aboard. The next morning at daylight the convoy moved out through historic Hampton Roads.

I had heard that relationships between Navy commodores and merchant-marine captains were not always congenial. To me, it was an honor to have the convoy commodore

aboard, and I was determined to make the passage a pleasant one.

We had fair to moderate weather the first four days. On the fifth day a howling northwest gale had overtaken the convoy. The North Atlantic is notorious for these fierce and devastating storms. By night we were making heavy weather.

Commodore Stevenson and I sat in my cabin reading and talking, as was our custom in the evening. Although we made no reference to the weather, there was dual concern, and neither of us made any move to retire.

ABOUT three A.M. we both left my cabin and went to the navigating bridge to take a few turns in the fresh air and to observe weather conditions and relative positions of the ships in the convoy. The seas were heavy and crashing aboard at regular intervals, some slapping across the boat-deck, sending clouds of spindrift over the flying bridge. The wind was howling and shrieking through the rigging.

Suddenly the Commodore and I heard from off our starboard side what sounded like a voice yelling: "Help! Help! *Help!*" I could not even imagine a voice carrying above that howling wind, or a life surviving in that heavily churned sea. Sometimes ships laboring in a heavy sea will creak and groan in their straining. These sounds are not far different, actually, from the human voice.

I grabbed a life-ring and threw it over the side, as far as I could sling it. The light on the buoy was visible as it passed our stern. As I considered the mathematical chance of a man, if that was a man, reaching the buoy, my heart sank within me.

Commander Stevenson through his walkie-talkie radio called *"Bug,"* the code name for the destroyer at the head of the convoy, and asked: *"Have you lost a man overboard?"* The immediate answer was, *"No."* For a few minutes we stood wondering. What could that apparent voice have been? Suddenly the walkie-talkie came in: *"Bug calling Roger. Bug calling Roger."* The communication officer answered. The commander of the lead destroyer said that a boatswain's mate had been washed over the side. He asked the Commodore to contact the destroyer astern and tell him to take until ten A.M. to search for the man. The message was relayed and acknowledged.

Neither Commander Stevenson nor I could feel any consolation in these developments and we were depressed, for we never expected to hear again that boy with the good pair of lungs. We were remorseful because we had not released the two life-rafts on the starboard side.

It is a strange phenomenon, in a war involving millions of lives, that one life, and that of a man unknown to me, should create such inexplicable, enigmatic concern. . . .

At breakfast that morning, the Commodore gave me a memorandum of damage done during the night. Sixteen lifeboats and six life-rafts had been lost overboard. Ten lifeboats and four life-rafts had been badly damaged.

At about nine A.M. the destroyer astern called: *"Roach to Roger. Roach to Roger. Have found boatswain's mate off Bug Found him on raft off one of the ships. He is none the worse except a bit chilled."*

When I returned to an American port, I received an envelope with the following letters:

8 March 45

Dear "Kamerad"

Enclosed is the letter from the man you heaved a life-ring to, and my reply. Thought you would be interested to see them.

Hope we get together again soon.

Sincerely,
(S) Stevenson

U.S.S. Ericsson
FPO New York, N. Y.
February 27, 1945

Comdr. F. T. Stevenson, USNR
S.S. Atenas
Dear Sir:

I am the boatswain's mate who was washed overboard by the heavy seas from the U.S.S. Ericsson *on the morning of January 25, 1945.*

There has been no opportunity for me to thank you for what you did that morning, as your hearing my calling and passing the word was the direct cause of the U.S.S. Bangor *finding me and picking me up.*

I wish to express my gratitude to you and your officers and men who aided you in effecting my rescue.

Respectfully yours,
John Nealing, BM1/C

At Sea
2 March 1945

Dear Nealing:

Thanks for your kind note delivered to me at sea. Am sending a copy of it to Irby F. Wood, Master of the ship, and I know he will be pleased to have it.

Our life-rafts did not have a bridge release, or you would have had one. Seas were coming aboard, and it was dangerous to get aft to release one. Although we heard you clearly, we knew no one had any chance in that water, and felt we had lost a friend.

The master and I were both depressed mentally on account of the tragedy, and were relieved when word came that you had been rescued.

It surely was a miracle, and for the fact you were saved, you should be ever grateful to Almighty God.

Sincerely,
F. T. Stevenson

A sailor-writer whose work has before appeared in these pages tells of his deep feeling when he first saw a lighted ship after years of wartime darkness.

by HORACE BRYAN

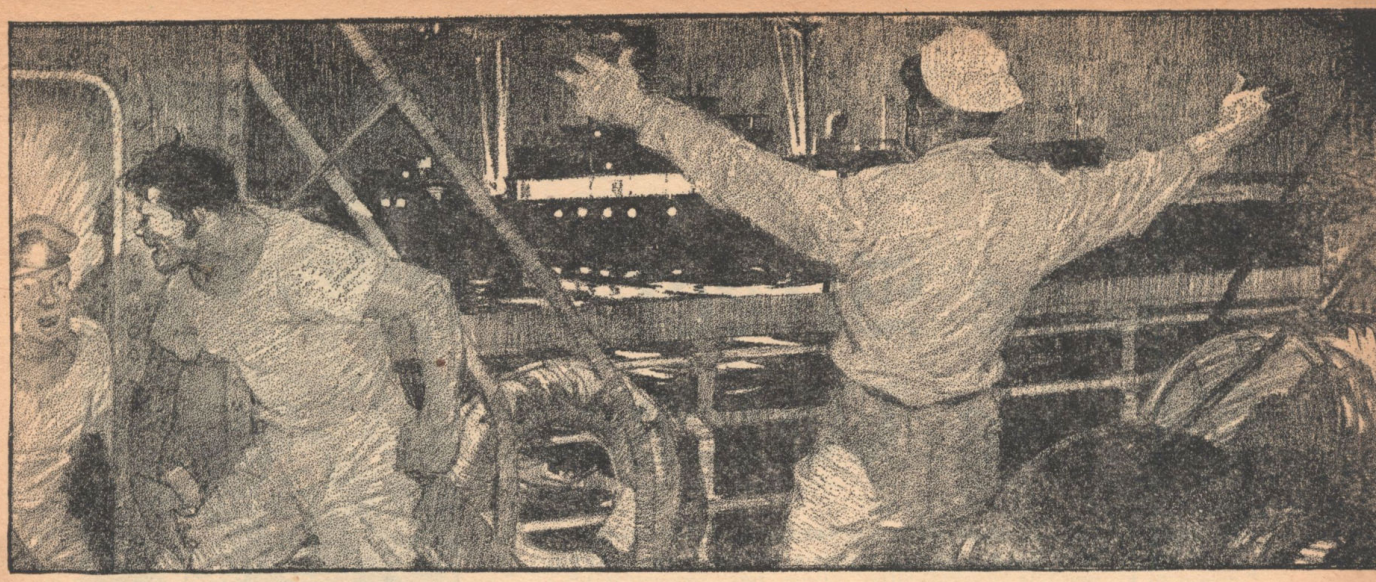
Our

OUR ships were dark shadows moving through the waters. In fog and rain, in mist and foam of a storm-churned sea, in the darkness of low-clouded skies, our ships with their gray, darkened wartime hulls plowed through the seas like ghosts. Sometimes they went alone, "routed independently"—remember, Mac? And sometimes they moved in great packs, "rendezvous with convoy."

Blackout was the order—complete blackout. Running-lights were out, ports bolted, alleyways and vents curtained—even tiny compass lights were closely guarded.

Light had been caught aiding the enemy, and had been branded a traitor.

But inside the ghostly gray hulls there was life and light. The crews of the merchantmen lived there; we worked and played and ate and slept there. We did not tote a big club like a battleship; in our job, secrecy and darkness were our friends. We sneaked our ships along shorelines under the shadows of the land; we utilized bays and inlets for retreats when pursued; we slipped prayerfully past the wrecks which marked the graveyards. We gathered at rendezvous and proceeded in great convoys across the Atlantic and Pacific, then scattered to a thousand destinations from the Arctic to the broad tropical belt of the earth. Nearly two thousand merchant ships left their hulls and gear, and their cargo and crews, to mark the war-lanes of the many seas.



Ships Were Dark Shadows

We were the first to feel the foe's long arm. Even before Pearl Harbor seven merchant ships had already gone down. And we were soon to learn the full meaning of war. During 1942 we suffered the most ruthless sea attacks in history, mainly within our own waters. All during the war we were on the exposed lines of supply, which the enemy tried so desperately to break. When we were ready to launch our counter-attacks, we were at the beachheads with the men and goods. We knew torpedoes and bombs, V-2's and suicide planes, shell of surface raiders and shore batteries, mines and collisions.

We knew what it meant to go overboard in Arctic waters, in the shark- and barracuda-infested waters of the South, or in oil-covered waters surrounding a flaming tanker. We knew what it meant to be cast away in a tiny lifeboat upon that great desert, the sea, without food and water. We knew what waiting meant—waiting for the bombers to return, waiting for the subs to strike again. Ours was a life of waiting—waiting for the steel bulkheads to cave in and admit the sea.

But our most common memory, the most unforgettable experience of the men who sailed the ships during the war, was the memory of the blackout. The blackout set the tone and pace of our lives.

Light, good friendly warm light, was a traitor. There must be no light! This blackout, with the limitations it imposed upon us, was symbolic of the darkness which curtained the world. But somewhere between the simple dousing of lights and the symbolism of the poet, there was a colorless color known as black. To produce black, we bolted and curtained every crack and crevice. The inside of our ships became steel-walled hells in the tropics. In the North we became just another iceberg drifting through the never-ending gray nights.

In this blackness we navigated our ships and stood our watches, climbed the ladders and rigged the gear. It was always midnight for the sailor—that dark in-between when murder and death go marching.

But the blackout, aside from the hazards and the hardships it caused aboard, also produced another hazard which was almost as great as that of torpedoes and bombs. This was the hazard of collisions. The sharp bow of a friendly ship, plowing through the darkness, could destroy you as quickly and completely as the enemy's most deadly weapon.

REMEMBER, Mac, how we used to hit the bunk "standing up"—everything on, and a lifejacket for a pillow? Bunk lights would be cut out and the port cracked for a little fresh air. Then, as you lay there listening to the pounding of the engines, you always wondered: "Is the man on the lookout station awake? Will he spot those shadowy forms which come out of the night, in time to avoid collision?"

But there were some lights we could not black out—the stars and the moon, the big, yellow friendly moon. The moon was a traitor too; subs went hunting in the moonlight. They lay far back from the sea-lanes, their periscopes trained toward the moon. The silhouette of a darkened ship could be seen for many miles.

Complete darkness, fog, rain and windstorms have always been the sailor's enemies, because they increase the danger of shipwreck and collision. But they often became allies during the war. They were a shield against enemy attacks. We liked a moderately dark night best—enough light to avoid collisions, but no moon.

Then the lights went on again—remember, Mac? Lights on in the fo'c'stle, with open ports and fresh air; lights in the alleys with doors ajar and no blackout curtains. No more staggering down dark ways, up dark ladders, over pad eyes and turnbuckles and cargo on darkened decks. No more long tiresome watches on the lookout—no fear of the gray ghosts with razorlike bows which come out of the night. The ships were again lighted, living creatures—with red and green sidelights, white range light aflame, ports blinking their welcome.

The first lighted ship we met, down off the Carolina coast, brought home to us the realization, more than anything else, that the war was over. It was a strange sight, after all those years of blackout. We raced out on deck and greeted her with shouts—lights—*lights!* And we stood on deck and stared after her until she passed from sight. Lights.... lights.... Yes, the lights were on again—on the ships at sea; and all over the world!

The Street Of the Wicked

FRANÇOIS VILLON—A GREAT POET, A GREAT LOVER AND A GREAT RASCAL—HERE SHOWS HIMSELF ALSO A CLEVER AND DARING ANTAGONIST.

by WILBUR S. PEACOCK

SHE was Gypsy. She was Romany, and she was woman; and her eyes were so blue that they were almost black. Her breasts were round and firm, and the clean sweet lines of her body drew glances like iron filings swirling toward a lodestone. Her name was Velvet now, although she had another; and she it was whose name and beauty came to breath-taking life in the swinging ballads of François Villon.

Once, she had followed the rolling plains and hills of France. Once, she had danced before great glowing fires, night stars a twinkling curtain overhead. Now she moved in liquid grace before the poet-rogue and others of the thieves' guild known as the *Coquille;* and a thousand men would come to knife at the slightest beckoning of her finger.

"By the gods," Bagot said from where he sat behind the table, "there is a woman fit for any man." He glanced at François Villon. "You're a lucky dog," he added.

Villon stretched lazily, hawk nose even stronger in his smile. His teeth were white against the tan of his face, and in the cast of his head was a free-booting swagger that would never die.

"Have I claimed differently?" he asked, and watched Velvet dance with fiery grace the reckless Love Dance of the Gypsies.

He relaxed on the bench, a glass of Burgundy in his right hand, feeling the tiny hammer of a pulse at his throat. Always did his wandering heart come back to this slim girl; always did she lie in his thoughts, for she was counterpoint to the melody of his life, and he knew that they belonged together.

There was abandon in her grace, the careless passion of a woman rousing to the forces within her. Music came from a lute held by a crippled beggar, and she herself was more music than the notes flicking from the singing strings.

She laughed at Villon, raven-dark hair swirling, soft breasts cupped in a halter of tawny gold cloth, her crimson skirt petal-wheeling about in scalloped swirls. Her eyes laughed, and her teeth were white, and again Villon understood why men caught their breath in wonder at sight of her.

And then the dance was at its peak; the music ceased, and she flung herself in the poet-rogue's lap, laughing and reaching for the wine.

Applause came, deep and thundering, and never was a more motley audience gathered for a Gypsy revel. For this was the hall of the *Coquille,* deep beneath the streets of Paris, spreading until the walls were shadows, air a bit noisome from the sewers which ran nearby.

THESE were the truands, the mosskeneers, the crimps, all of the flotsam of Paris' criminal sea. Here they came to pay duty to Bagot; here they came to exchange news and lies and roaring jokes. For this was the headquarters of the Thieves' Guild, and here gigantic Bagot ruled by weight of mind and fist.

"I danced for you, François," Velvet said, and kissed him squarely on the lips, while applause broke still louder, beat of hand on hand, stomp of feet on floor, voices roaring for another dance.

"No more!" Bagot bellowed into the wash of sound. "Saint Michael, let her rest!"

Slowly silence came, the muttered silence which was sound in itself, men turning back to talk and food, beggars beginning again to strap limbs away from sight; crimps talking secretly, planning the forays of the coming night.

François Villon kissed the smoothness of Velvet's soft shoulder, liking the subtle perfume of her skin. He was aware that men watched, but he gave no heed.

"Dance like that for me, Velvet," Bagot said past a mouthful of tender pork, "and I shall give you the world."

"Ha!" Villon laughed, to Velvet. "Listen to the braggart."

She laughed softly against his ear, and he held her close. Even Bagot smiled, still eating, reaching for an ale bottle with a huge hand. There was a comradeship in these three, for each had helped the other, and the friendship went deeper than either would admit. Good times, and bad, these three had been together, and each had gained from the other.

"I am content," Velvet said.

"And why shouldn't you be?" Villon asked mockingly. "You have

money and friends and a full life. And some day soon the King will realize my greatness and call me to his Court. Then shall you be a lady in rich clothes, shaming the other ladies with the beauty of yourself."

VELVET blushed before the words, and swung from his lap to sit on the table's edge. Strangely, her eyes were not laughing now, for in them lay a prescience which none but the Romany possesses. She looked at this man she loved, this rogue who was also a poet. And though she did not voice the foreknowledge which stirred uneasily in her heart, she knew François Villon would never reach the estate which was his by right of genius.

Villon caught the tenor of her thoughts, so closely were their senses attuned. And almost did anger come to his voice.

"More of your Gypsy clairvoyance?" he asked.

She smiled mockingly, eyes laughing into his. "When I am a lady of the Court, then shall I tell you what I thought."

Villon shook his dark head in mild annoyance, reaching for the wine again. He drank, liking the dryness of the wine. And when the glass was empty, he laid it aside, stretching lazily.

"There are mummers at the theater tonight; shall we go?" he asked.

He waited for the answer, turning his head lazily to watch the man who hurried toward the table. He caught the sound of his name, and keenness came to his eyes. This was Poutrel, one of the those who served as lookout on the streets above.

"Here, Poutrel," he called, and the man hastened his pace.

"They look for you, Villon," Poutrel said, breathing hard. "I waited until they were past, and then I hurried here."

"Who looks for me?"

"The men of Roger de Gaillon. They are searching for you, and I heard them say to others, to pass the word along to you that you are to come to the home of de Gaillon immediately."

"What does that rumble-gut want!" Bagot said harshly. "What can the Minister of the Treasury want with François?"

François Villon grinned, but his eyes were hard and sharp. "I'm to be given a vast reward," he said wryly to Bagot, then stared at Poutrel. "Was that all that was said?"

Poutrel nodded, fox face shiny with perspiration. "Just that de Gaillon is waiting for your company, and to attend him at once."

"No!" Velvet said then; and looking up, Villon saw that her face was strangely white.

"And why not?" he asked. "There is no King's warrant out for me."

But still she shook her head, and her hand was soft on his arm. "Do

Villon breathed deeply of the rich air. This was Paris, hub of the universe, beyond which

not go," she said. "I have a feeling that this is trouble."

He laughed at her worry, already rising from his stool. "It is but a few minutes of walking to de Gaillon's home," he said. "Perhaps he wants me to play and sing for some party."

Bagot spat judiciously at a racing roach. "Velvet is right, François," he said deliberately "This de Gaillon is not to be trusted; I've heard stories about him that I do not like. He is scheming."

"Bah!" Villon balanced on widespread legs, hands on his hips. "You talk like children. Is this the first time I have been summoned by one of the Court? Have you any reasons for your talk? No! Then I shall see what Sire de Gaillon has in mind."

Bagot stretched luxuriously, reaching out to retrieve the belted sword he had laid aside. "I go along," he said, and his voice brooked no argument. "Two men are always better than one."

The poet-rogue laughed aloud, shaking his head in mocking sympathy. "You treat me like a child," he said; "but come along."

HE kissed Velvet, and went across the great room toward the secret entrance from which Poutrel had come.

"Take care," Velvet called after him; and although she did not know why, she shivered as she watched him go.

But Villon ignored the words. He went along the passage, followed by the gigantic Bagot; and together, they trod the damp floor, then climbed the ladder which led to outside.

They were in a small shop, clothing and rugs scattered in colorful profusion. This was Bagot's shop, for the city thought of him as a dunce-headed shopkeeper, not knowing his real life.

A clerk gave but a furtive glance to their passing, then returned to his weary unbaling of new rugs. Villon and Bagot said nothing, but thrust past the goods and emerged onto the Paris street, bright sunshine slashing at their heads.

They walked together, Villon tall and lithe Bagot gross at his side. A few people looked, but most hurried about their business. A fat monk waddled past, telling his beads; and farther on, a merchant haggled loudly with a prospective customer. Pilgrims, grimly pious, plodded wearily to the tomb of St. Genevieve. Horsemen thundered by, clearing a path for a scarlet-robed Justice on his way to the Palais.

Villon breathed deeply of the rich air. This was Paris, hub of the universe, beyond which there was nothing

there was nothing for him.

for him. Here had he been born, and here he would die; and between these events the devil's laughter in him would come to full flood.

He swung to the left at the Rue St. Charles, seeing ahead the great town house of Roger de Gaillon. Guards resplendent in their uniforms of crimson and yellow paced before the great gate. Smoke plumed from the four chimneys, and bedding hung from the windows to dry and air.

Bagot paced at the poet's side, saying nothing now, his little eyes slitted and watchful. Below ground, he was the master; but above, he was only another *Coquillard* who could die as easily as another man if crimes were ever proved against him.

He smiled, though, at Villon's profile. This man was like a son to him, vain and glorious and cock-proud that he was. Dimly he understood some of the greatness of Villon, and because he could read and write but painfully, he admired the poet's uncanny skill with words and quill. Too, he owed Villon much—his life at times, his purse at others, and a spiritual debt which could never be repaid. And so he went doggedly along, bold sword at his hip, ready for any eventuality.

"Ho, guard," Villon said at last, stopping before the de Gaillon gates, "you will tell your master I am here."

The guard glowered past his cross-lowered pike, his beard a splendid thing above his starched and ruffled collar.

"Go away, pipsqueak," he said harshly. "My master sees no beggars today."

BAGOT reached out and caught the guard. Muscles lumped beneath his skin, as he dangled the suddenly-cursing man a foot above the ground.

"Inform your master that Master François Villon is here," he ordered roughly, and half-threw the guard through the gate.

"No!" Villon said to the second guard, and his sword was half-drawn from its sheath. The second guard subsided, watching grimly.

The first guard scrambled into balance, his features beet-red—then disappeared, his voice calling loudly for the master-at-arms of the household. Minutes passed, long minutes in which Bagot glared at the second guard, as though measuring him for an attack.

Then footsteps sounded, and the first guard was back, a gray-haired man dressed in the de Gaillon livery at his side.

"This way, messieurs," the man said. "I am Grisele, secretary to Sire de Gaillon."

François Villon nodded in reply and stepped past the guards, winking mockingly at them both. There was a tension within him; for despite his brave words, he understood too well how a man's fate could change in one short day because of the Court's intrigues. He had been in and out of favor too many times not to realize he walked a narrow path, with disaster reaching from either side.

But nothing of his thoughts appeared on his keen features. This might have been a social call, for the swagger was in his legs and shoulders. His eyes roved about the great hall, liking the paintings and fine tapestries and delicate carvings. Wealth was here, wealth such as Villon would have relished at any time. De Gaillon was powerful; he had the ear of the King, and so he lived according to his high estate.

"Ah, Master Villon," a dry voice rustled from the far side of a great room into which the hall debouched. "I have been expecting you."

François Villon swung his gaze about, peering through the dimness at the man before the great fireplace. De Gaillon was in a house robe, feet thrust in skin slippers. His skull was like a vulture's, veined and scaly, his narrow face thrust predatorily forward. He drywashed leathery hands, saying no more, as the poet-rogue approached.

"I came as soon as I heard the request," Villon said, and made a leg. "How can I be of service to you, Sire?"

Grisele chuckled throatily at his side, then subsided at de Gaillon's silent scrutiny. He drifted away, dropping into a heavy chair.

"Master Villon," Roger de Gaillon said, "I have heard many tales of you, not the least of which is that you are a member of the *Coquille*."

Villon's left eyebrow came up inquiringly. He shrugged. "Tongues will wag,' he admitted wryly; "but always whether in truth, I cannot say."

De Gaillon sucked idly at his lower lip, sly eyes measuring the mettle of the other. His smile was thin and vaguely evil, and Villon sensed then that this was not a social call.

"I will accept the stories as the truth, Master Poet," de Gaillon said mockingly. "I shall accept them as the truth, and as a consequence you shall do a task for me."

VILLON stiffened, reading the soft threat behind the words. At his back, Bagot caught a slow breath, and his great hand slid imperceptibly toward the blade at his hip.

"You speak in riddles, Sire," Villon said cautiously.

"This is no riddle, rest assured," said de Gaillon. "There is in Paris at this moment a man named Gervais —Jehan Gervais. He is a dog, a traitor to me." Cold rage lifted veins on his forehead. "Twenty years had he taken my notes and been my secretary. And now he is a thief, and must be brought back from hiding."

"Hiding?" Villon inquired.

"Yes, hiding. A week ago he vanished, and now he must be brought to bay. Where he is, I do not know. You, through the efforts of the *Coquille*, will discover this man for me."

"And then?" Villon prompted; and a prescience told him what the final outcome of the search would be.

"You will recover a document which he holds." Roger de Gaillon smiled then, brutally. eyes slitted in cold anger. "And then," he finished, "you will slay Jehan Gervais with a sword thrust."

François Villon swallowed deeply. This was no jest; there was in this shrunken man a driving brooding earnestness which precluded such a possibility. De Gaillon meant for Gervais to die, and he had chosen

Villon as his messenger of death. Villon felt the tightening of nerves already wire-taut.

"Murder him?" he asked.

"If you wish to call it that. It matters not. I want only that the document be returned."

"And the document?" Villon asked. "How will I know it?"

"It bears my seal and signature, and has to do with Treasury business. You will bring that to me the moment it is recovered."

"No!" Bagot said harshly. "François is no truand; do your own killings."

"Who is this fellow?" de Gaillon asked.

"A friend," Villon answered, and his hand stilled Bagot. "But what if I decline to accept this task?"

Roger de Gaillon laughed through a mouth devoid of teeth, his gums wet and shining. "You will not refuse, Master Villon," he said. "And you will not fail. Need I remind you that I am of the Court, that I have the confidence of Charles, and that—" His voice trailed away.

"But why ask *me?*" Villon said desperately.

"It does not matter." De Gaillon brushed his hands lightly. "You have until Tuesday morning to bring the document back to me. If not by then, I assure you a King's warrant will be issued. Master Poet, have you ever seen a man boiled alive in fiery oil?"

François Villon shivered unconsciously. He had seen such things, and the thought of such happening to him clamped fingers about his heart. He could feel the cold perspiration along his spine, and he lifted his chin to ease his breathing.

"But, Sire—" he began, and the Minister of the Treasury cut him short.

"No words," he said, "no argument. Find me Jehan Gervais, and bring back that document. Fail, and your life is forfeit. Good day, messieurs."

He turned away and was gone, slipping through a side door, leaving Villon and Bagot to be guided outside again by Grisele. The secretary was laughing softly to himself as he led the way.

"Ho, guard," Villon said, stopping before the de

"I STILL think you are a fool, François," Velvet said bitterly. "Go to d'Estoutville and inform him what threats have been made. You are friends; and as the Provost of Police, surely he can aid you."

François Villon shifted tensely at the window. He could see her reflection in the Venetian glass, and he wished again, for the hundredth time, he had listened to her warning two days before. Now it was too late; in a few minutes he and Bagot would leave for the hiding-place of Jehan Gervais, which the spies of the *Coquille* had located without too much difficulty.

"It's dark enough," Bagot said from where he leaned against the door. "If we must go, then let us leave at once." He scowled. "But I make you a promise: de Gaillon shall not live long to enjoy his triumph over you."

Villon whirled, black anger in his eyes. "Enough of this murder talk. Saint Michael! Give me peace!"

Then slow laughter came to his eyes, and he smiled at Velvet and Bagot.

"I'm sorry," he said. "It is just that I do not like this task."

Velvet came from the couch, lifting a dark cloak and slipping it about the poet-rogue's shoulders. Gently her fingers touched the lean hardness of his face.

"I shall wait for you, François," she said. "Hurry, but take no chances."

He kissed her, holding her tightly for a moment, then moved toward the door, a slim sword at his hip, and a poniard at his waist. He was hard and dangerous then, caught up in the problem of the moment.

"An hour, maybe two," he said. "Wait for us."

Bagot opened the door, and they went through, turning in the street to wave good-by. Then the door was closed, and they were alone, the first chill of night making them draw their their cloaks still tighter about their shoulders.

"This way," Bagot said. "Gervais hides on the Street of the Wicked, the home of Sebastian."

"I know the place," Villon agreed shortly, and set the pace.

They hurried, hugging the shadows, darting down cross alleys and slipping across the short rattling bridges. Few people were on the

Gaillon gates, "you will tell your master I am here."

streets, for Paris was asleep, candles and lanterns without flame now, nightcaps drawn tightly about tired heads.

A few taverns still roared with life, as they did day or night; and to one side University students banged noisily upon a doxie house, calling for admittance. A drunkard lay where he had fallen, mouth gaping at the rising moon, his purse slit, his shoes already stolen. Three blocks away, the chant of the Watch came from where it made its rounds.

But Villon had little thought for the city now. He had a task to perform, and it must be done. Scamp he was, and scamp he always would be, and he valued his neck as much as any man. The document must be returned to de Gaillon, if only that a King's warrant be not served in the morning.

They crossed a final bridge and turned into the black tunnel of a street so narrow a man could stride across it from roof to roof. This was the Street of the Wicked, a name given in ironic jest, for here lived those with criminal records such that they were trusted neither by the *Coquille* nor by the King's men. Here, the spies had reported, Jehan Gervais was in hiding; and here would he be found this night.

BAGOT paused at the corner of a house and incredibly disappeared into the cover of straggly weeds and tall grass. Villon dropped to his side, lifting his head only enough to peer about, to see if silent watchers lurked in hiding.

"I shall go in," Villon whispered. "You wait for me. If there is trouble, I shall call out. If not, do not move until I return."

"All right," Bagot said softly. "But hurry. And strike deep and true; for if it becomes known you work with de Gaillon, even the *Coquille* must pass a sentence of death on you."

François Villon smiled into the darkness. "Rest easy," he said; and lifting his body on hands and toes, he went forward toward the house.

In shadow he drew himself up, feeling for the shutters of the first window. But they were too tight. He slipped along the wall, fumbling for the second window, and a soft chuckle came to his throat when he found one shutter slightly loose.

He pried it open, using a flat strip of iron; and when it was free, drew himself up by sheer strength of arms and shoulders and dropped inside. Closing the shutter, he waited, nerves extended like tendrils, feeling for the life within the house.

He heard snoring and went its way. Wood creaked faintly beneath his feet, and he hugged the walls where the flooring was more solid. His questing hand found the outline of a door, and he listened to the rumble of snoring behind it, satisfied that he had found his man.

HIS fingers tugged at the leather string; the latch lifted softly inside, the door swinging open silently. Light lay in the room, coming from a small night lantern at one side, disclosing everything. On a bed a man twisted in his sleep as though instinctively aware of the intrusion.

Villon took two light steps forward, his sword whispering free in his right hand, his left reaching out to cover the sleeper's mouth. Then he called the man awake; and almost did he laugh at the blinking panic growing in Gervais' eyes.

"No outcry," Villon said, and he pricked a soft throat with his sword-tip. "No sound other than a low voice."

"Villon!" Gervais said at last, and his gaze slid along the shining blade. "For the love of God, Villon, I've done no harm to you!"

"Enough!" the poet-rogue said softly. "I want no trouble. I want only the paper signed by Roger de Gaillon." His tone shifted subtly, and suddenly it was bleakly dangerous. "Do not play the fool, Gervais."

"But I have no—" Gervais went rigid, a fine worm of blood creeping down the side of his throat. "Mercy, Villon, in the name of the Almighty."

"The document," Villon said flatly. "At once."

He backed away, permitting the man to rise, and the hatred in Gervais' face was like a blow to him. The sword did not waver, holding the man in thrall; and when at last Gervais moved toward the side of the room, it followed his back.

Gervais knelt, hands fumbling at a board in the floor. Wood squeaked,

"The paper; I'll take it now," de Gaillon said. His gaze roved over the dying man. "He'll be dead in a moment."

and then the plank was free, and the man's hand went in, coming out at last with a roll of paper.

Villon took the paper with his free hand, backing to the window and permitting the paper to unroll. He saw the heavy black seal and de Gaillon's signature, and he thrust the paper beneath his belt.

"You want it for yourself?" Gervais asked thinly. "Or do you work for de Gaillon?"

"Shut up!" Villon said, and came again toward the kneeling man. "I have another order, also."

He saw the fear come to Gervais then, saw it and felt sickness in his heart. Men he had killed, but always in fair battle. Never could he strike down another in cold blood.

"Get up," he said coldly.

Gervais rose, pressing back against the wall, mouth working with sheer terror.

"A fortune," he cried aloud, "a fortune for us both. De Gaillon will pay, pay us handsomely. We shall share it, the two of us!"

THE sword came out daintily, hovering an inch from Gervais' breast. The man went silent, horrifiedly watching the licking point. One stroke, one thrust, and only Villon would be alive in the room.

"You will say nothing of this to anyone," Villon said. "Further, you will leave Paris within the hour. If you stay, or if a word comes back to me, then shall I hunt you out."

He spun about then, and was gone, slamming the door behind, rushing for the window. The shutter jarred loudly on the outside of the house, and then he dropped through, seeing Bagot come to meet him.

"I have it," he said.

They ran, ran like twisting shadows through the night; and not until they were a mile away did they stop to breathe and rest in the brightness of a tavern's window.

"You slew him?" Bagot said regretfully, and Villon shook his head.

"He lives," he said shortly, and drew the sheet of foolscap from his belt, spreading it in the light spilling from the window. He read slowly, squinting at the words and figures.

"What is it?" Bagot asked. "What paper can be so important that de Gaillon must go to lengths such as this to have it returned?"

François Villon felt blind anger begin to rise. A tremor came to his wide shoulders, and his mouth was grim and thin. Thief he was, and moskeneer, almost a truand, but always a Frenchman. Never had treason crossed his mind in any way, and now he held the proof of a traitor's dealings in his hands.

He handed the document to Bagot, who scowled at it, puzzling out the words laboriously.

"He is a thief, a renegade," Villon said viciously. "Saint Michael! No wonder he wanted this paper back! There is enough proof of his double-dealing with the King's treasury to bury him in prison for life."

Bagot shook his head. "I see nothing but figures and words," he admitted. "What do they mean?"

"Two rows of figures," Villon said simply. "One is the row of costs claimed for certain items, and the second the dishonest profit which came to him from each dealing. The first row is official, the second jotted down, with explanations written in beside each number. De Gaillon would have slain a dozen men to have this returned."

Bagot frowned. "And you have to return this to him?" he asked.

"Of course." Then Villon began to smile, a mischief devil dancing in his eyes. "By the gods, *no!*" he said. "Gervais must have been using this paper to force money from de Gaillon. It's a whip that the Minister can't ignore."

Bagot nodded, eagerness in his face. "Now we collect," he observed happily.

"No!" Mockery lay in the twist of Villon's mouth. "Not in the way that you think. We collect, but in another manner." He frowned in thought for a moment. "I think," he finished, "that Roger de Gaillon is about to resign his Ministership, first giving a large portion of his fortune to the King for charity. Next, he will retire from the Court. And thirdly, I shall keep this letter hidden, making certain he will understand it will reach the King if anything unfortunate should happen to me."

He began to laugh, softly, the irony of the situation appealing to the dark merriment which was his soul. Roger de Gaillon had but shifted power from one man to another, the only difference lying in what he must pay for his safety. Such events as this, such wonderful twists of life such as this, made existence for Villon an exciting thing.

"Come," he said to Bagot, and swung off down the street.

He took another way back to Velvet's home, a shorter way and better lighted. Bagot dogged his side, deep rumbling chuckles coming from him as he thought of Villon's plan. This was the thing he liked about the poet-rogue, the ability to turn any situation to his advantage. This was something he himself could not always do, for his strength lay in his sword and shoulders; and so he the more keenly relished that which Villon planned.

Only once did regret touch the few words he spoke, and that was when he said. "Once, only once, am I close to the King's treasury – and there is no way that I can enter!"

And then he laughed aloud, and Villon smiled in complete understanding.

They came to the street on which Velvet lived. The moon was full-risen now, the street deserted of all but prowling half-wild dogs. Villon took the two short steps to Velvet's door, hammered with his fist, then lifted the latch and entered.

"Ha!" he said to the back-turned chair before the fireplace. "The deed is done, the *coup* is mine—and Roger de Gaillon shall this night regret the threats he made to me of boiling oil." He clapped his hands for emphasis, seeing the lazy shadow stirring as Velvet turned in the chair.

And then cold terror struck at him. For it was not Velvet who turned about and faced him; it was Grisele, de Gaillon's secretary; and there was mockery in his face the faintest trace of a triumphant giggle in his reedy voice.

"You count *coup* much too soon, Master Villon," Grisele said. "My master regrets little, particularly now."

"Where's Velvet – where is she?" Villon's hand was at his sword, and he knew the answer before it came.

"She is, shall we say, a guest of my master," Grisele said gently. "And that she will remain until a certain paper reaches my master's hand."

BAGOT roared in rage; and before Villon could interfere, he was across the room, jerking Grisele aloft and pinning him to the wall a foot above the floor. Steel whispered on leather, and his blade came free, threatening Grisele, draining blood from the man's face.

"Where is she?" Bagot said savagely. "Quick, before drop your vitals on the floor!"

There was fright in the man's face, fright and a fine contempt. But his voice was even and unhurried.

"Touch me, and she dies," he said; and when the blad hesitated, he finished: "Place me back on the floor, gently."

Bagot released his hold, turning his head toward Villon for some command. But the poet-rogue said nothing, shock gone from his face now, his eyes cold and watchful.

Grisele came to his feet, brushing dust from his clothing. "My master recognized what your plans might be," he said, "and had the girl taken as hostage. She will not be harmed unless you are foolish. Take the paper to him, and she will be freed."

"What proof have I of that?" Villon asked

"You are not in a position to demand proof." He smiled. "She is in a secret place where, I do not know. My master is in hiding too; you will find him at the House of the Lions on the Rue Madeleine. I would advise your hurrying."

"De Gaillon in hiding?" François Villon asked. "Why?"

"D'Estoutville is looking for him," Grisele admitted. "Hence his need for the paper, which he must destroy. With the paper gone, he can meet any charge." His voice grew suddenly hard. "Unless that paper is destroyed, the girl will die. As for you, dog," he finished to Bagot, as a knife ripped free in his hand, "for touching me, you die now."

HE drove his blow with an uncanny speed, bringing it in low and then sweeping upward. Almost Bagot was caught, his sword lowered. But great as he was, his speed was twice as great, and so the knife barely touched his blouse—and then his own sword licked out with dreadful speed.

Grisele died, the smile still on his lips, Bagot's blade spitting him like a fowl, emerging redly from his back. He coughed, his hand striking again like a snake fanging in a death convulsion. Then he toppled sidewise, the sword pulling free, dripping crimson.

"A good stroke," Bagot said aloud. "A good stroke."

François Villon stared blankly at the body. Grisele meant nothing to him personally; the man had died fairly, taking a stroke for one he missed. Villon's problem went past Grisele.

There was but one answer, of course. The incriminating document must be returned to Roger de Gaillon. Velvet must be freed. There would still be danger, great danger, for de Gaillon would know that Villon had

read the paper. He would know that Villon must be removed.

That, of course, meant running. Villon would have to escape Paris, would have to dodge and duck Roger de Gaillon's hired mercenaries. It would mean exile at the very least. He would be lucky to escape death.

That meant nothing; Velvet was his whole concern. He swung toward the door, resolve in his frantic mind.

"Get rid of the body," he said to Bagot. "When that is done, come to the House of the Lions on Rue Madeleine."

He went through the door, running the moment his feet touched the street. Vaguely he had the impression that some man had turned to stare from down the street, but he gave no heed, driving himself to a running pace he could keep for minutes on end.

The minutes passed, and he stopped to breathe himself like a laden horse. Perspiration beaded his face, and the rage in his mind was white and pulsing. He must play out the game by the rules laid down; that he knew. But once Velvet was free, then other rules could be substituted; and in that, with a sword pommel in his fist, no man could match him, least of all Roger de Gaillon.

HE came to Rue Madeleine, going slower now, not wanting to draw the attention of the private Watch which patrolled the area. Houses were dark and shuttered, sleeping until morning, and Villon passed the first few, searching for the one which had the great bronze lions at either side of the front gate.

When he came to it, he paused a moment, searching his wits for some plan, some line of action to follow. Futility touched him when he realized there was nothing he could do but accept defeat. Shrugging, he thrust the gate open and went toward the house.

The lion knocker rattled beneath his fist; and when the door came open, he stood silent, de Gaillon's sword-point at his breast, the shriveled Minister blinking past the glow of an upheld lantern.

"Master Villon," Roger de Gaillon said quietly. "Come in; I've been expecting you."

He backed into the hall with quick short steps, and Villon followed, nerves tightly drawn now, eyes keen and alert. He swung the door shut and went past de Gaillon, leading the way toward a far door through which light streamed brightly.

"Where is the girl?" Villon said then, and he could feel the trembling of his legs.

"The paper!" Roger de Gaillon said, licking his lips. "Where is the paper?"

They stared at each other, and their hatred was as raw and shining naked as the sword in the Minister's fist. One quick glance Villon had given the other occupant of the room, as he entered, and then he swung his head toward de Gaillon. The third man was Guy Montfort, a minor official of the Court, huddled back in the great arms of a far chair, the owner of this house where de Gaillon had taken refuge.

"I have the paper," Villon admitted. "But first produce the girl."

De Gaillon came forward, the sword a wicked splinter of steel in his hand. There was murder on his face then, for he had caught sight of the paper at the poet-rogue's waist.

"No!" Guy Montfort cried in brief panic. "For the love of God, Roger, you promised there would be no killing."

Villon didn't move, intent on the sword threatening to strike at any moment. He tensed, ready for fast and violent movement.

"Shut up!" snapped Roger de Gaillon; and once more he addressed Villon. "The paper!" he said and extended his free hand. "I will have it now."

The interruption came from behind the Minister. At first there was the blade, sliding into the light; then the swordsman stepped into sight, face hard and emotionless, bold eyes surveying the scene. Then his sword thrust out, driving de Gaillon's aside, then touched point at the Minister's back.

"You are under arrest on a King's warrant," D'Estoutville said quietly. "Do not resist."

De Gaillon gasped, then slowly loosed his hold, the sword clattering at his feet. His face was livid with rage as he turned to the intruder.

Villon felt the quiet sigh of his breath in his throat. Astonishment lay in his eyes, and the Provost must have seen the unspoken question.

"I followed you, François," he said, then swung his voice to de Gaillon. "If you must work with such men as Villon," he finished, "then you must be more secret. All Paris knows you talked with him, two days back."

Roger de Gaillon said nothing. He was older then than his actual age, his body shrunken like a wind-seared apple. Only his eyes were alive, questing about for a line of escape.

Guy Montfort was silent also. Except for a first cry of panic at D'Estoutville's entrance, he had made no sound, shrinking back in his chair in a pathetic attempt to remain inconspicuous. D'Estoutville glanced at him, his voice cutting and scornful.

"You are not under arrest, Montfort," he said. "But you will present yourself at my offices at ten o'clock tomorrow, when a searching will be made of this man. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sire," Guy Montfort said fearfully.

The Provost came about his prisoner, urging him back into the hall. De Gaillon went stumblingly, all will gone. Villon followed, ranging up to D'Estoutville's side. Guy Montfort did not move from where he sat, terror still in his eyes.

They went along the hall; and at the door, hand on the latch, Roger de Gaillon turned to speak.

"Get along," the Provost ordered. "There will be talking later." He glanced at Villon. "I know not what your doings with this man are, François," he said. "But they have brought you trouble, unless you talk."

Villon smiled. "I shall talk," he said grimly. "But first, there is a girl—"

"*No!*" Roger de Gaillon cried at the open door. "*Gervais, no!*"

There was a grunt of exertion from the darkness outside; and then, flickering through the light, flashing from the night, came a winging knife.

IT slashed by de Gaillon, barely missing; and in the instant of surprise, Villon could not move. He saw the knife, and there was no instinct to throw himself aside.

But in that flashing second, D'Estoutville moved. His hand lashed out, thrusting Villon aside, and before he could recover his own balance, the winging blade caught him, its shining hand's length burying deep in his wide chest.

There was a roar of rage outside, Bagot's bull voice swearing in terrible brutal anger. Then Gervais' voice cried out in agony. After that there was no sound.

François Villon caught D'Estoutville as he fell, leaping to his side and cradling him in strong arms. The Provost's sword clattered from his hand, and Villon knew instinctively the man would never rise again.

"The paper," de Gaillon said. "I'll take it now." His gaze roved over the dying man contemptuously. "He will be dead in a moment."

François Villon felt the first tug of a thought then. He nursed it cautiously, not wanting to let its febrile life still again. He caught it fully, and his head lifted to face Guy Montfort.

"What did you see when you came into the hall?" he asked.

"The Provost dying, and the two of you standing there," Montfort answered.

"Both my blades are at my belt."

"Yes!"

"Roger de Gaillon stabbed the Provost to death in an attempt to escape."

"You're crazy—you're insane!" de Gaillon's voice raged in sudden blind-

ing anger. "I never touched the man. It was Gervais."

"There is no Gervais," Villon said then, and his hawk face was hard and intent.

"He lies outside."

"No one lies outside. Ask Bagot."

THE giant shook his head, not understanding, but backing the poet-rogue's words.

"There is no one outside," he said. "I came to the door and saw exactly what is here: Villon with dagger and sword at his side, the Provost lying on the floor with de Gaillon's dagger in his chest."

"You lie, you all lie!" de Gaillon cried. "You're plotting my death. D'Estoutville will confirm my words."

Villon glanced at the Provost, and he shook his head. "This man will be dead before witnesses can arrive," he said. "And all of us will swear you murdered him." His eyes roved contemplatively over the cowering Guy Montfort. "Even Montfort will swear to that, won't you?"

Guy Montfort licked slack lips, eyes swinging from man to man. The terror grew bolder in his eyes, and at last he nodded weakly, as Villon had known he would.

"I shall tell of what I saw," he said.

"But this is fantastic," de Gaillon said. "You can't do this to me!"

"Maybe," Villon said shortly, and bent again over the Provost.

This was the moment, the ticklish moment on which everything hinged. If he failed, no matter what happened to de Gaillon, Velvet would die. He knew that unless de Gaillon gave orders to the contrary, his men would kill the girl. This had to work; he had no other choice.

"D'Estoutville," he said, "can you hear me?"

The Provost blinked death blankness from his eyes, staring at the bending face.

"I—hear you," he said weakly.

"You are dying—you know that," Villon said. "Roger de Gaillon will die for your murder unless you aid him now." Villon saw the eyes begin to glaze again, and his voice lifted. "Clear de Gaillon of your death," he finished. "As a Christian and a gentleman, do not let an innocent man die for something he did not do."

"My prisoner," D'Estoutville mumbled. "Take him in."

Villon's hands gave life to the man. "Sign a statement," he said. "Name your killer. For the love of heaven, as my friend, do that final thing."

It was a brutal thing to do, but it must be done. Villon could see no other way. And when at last D'Estoutville's head dipped a bit in answer, he came to his feet, swinging about to Montfort.

"Writing materials, quickly," he snapped, then plunged down the hall and into the lighted room, at Montfort's wordless gesture.

A moment later he was back, quill and ink in one hand, foolscap in the other. He squatted, lifting the Provost into a sitting position, spreading the paper on the floor and thrusting the inked quill into fingers barely able to move.

"*Jehan Gervais knifed me,*" he dictated, and watched the man scribble the line and add his name. The sprawling words crossed the entire page.

The quill fell away, and D'Estoutville sagged inertly. "Take my prisoner in," he said faintly.

And then he was dead, held erect still by Villon's arms. "*Requiescat in pace,*" Villon whispered, and gently lowered the body to the floor.

He caught up the foolscap, folding it and tucking it into his belt. His eyes were hard, obsidian hard, as they stared at Roger de Gaillon.

"I want the girl, de Gaillon," he said, "and so I shall bargain with you."

De Gaillon lifted his gaze from the dead man on the floor.

"What bargain?" he asked.

"Send Bagot for her, with a note to your men. When she returns, I shall give you both the evidence you want so desperately, and the statement D'Estoutville just signed. After that, both of us go our ways."

Roger de Gaillon shook his head. "This is a trick," he countered. "How do I know you will keep your word?"

"Because I give it," François Villon said then.

"You swear?" de Gaillon asked.

"I swear," Villon said.

Three minutes later Bagot disappeared into the night to find Velvet and effect her release.

AN hour passed before Bagot returned. Villon waited at the door; and when he saw the lithe figure of the girl at the giant's side, he sighed deeply, feeling tension leave his mind. He held her tightly for a moment, seeing the utter belief in her eyes, then turned to face Roger de Gaillon.

"The evidence, the statement!" de Gaillon said eagerly. "Villon, you swore you'd give them to me, once the girl was released unharmed."

François Villon stared somberly at the body of D'Estoutville, then lifted his gaze to Guy Montfort farther down the hall. His voice was quiet, held with deep control, despite the turmoil of his thoughts.

"Summon the Watch," he ordered, "and tell your story."

"You swore a holy oath!" Roger de Gaillon was almost screaming now, predatory assurance gone, perspiration coursing the wrinkles of his face.

François Villon took a sheet of paper from his belt and flung it to the man, watching him scramble for it on the floor like a starving man after a bread-crust.

"Take it, Sire, and welcome," he said, and drew Velvet closer in the circle of his arm.

De Gaillon spread the single sheet, staring blindly at it, then lifting his gaze to the poet-rogue. "This is the evidence," he cried. "Where is the statement? You swore you'd give me the statement too!"

"And so I did," François Villon said then. "Choose for yourself, Roger de Gaillon, choose imprisonment or the gibbet. Destroy that paper, and you hang for the murder of D'Estoutville—keep it, and you rot in prison."

"I—I don't understand," de Gaillon said.

"Turn the paper," Villon said then in judicial triumph. "Look, de Gaillon, look well! Both evidence and statement are there, de Gaillon, *written on opposite sides of the foolscap.*" Hellish mockery swirled in his bold eyes. "Destroy one, and you destroy the other."

ROGER DE GAILLON came to his feet, maniacal fury building in his face, his thin body trembling with rage.

"You tricked me!" he screamed. "Damn you to all hell, Villon!" he cried. "You tricked me. And you a thief!"

"Aye," Villon admitted, "a thief—but not a traitor. I steal from men, not from a country, my country."

And then he had pulled the door to and was pacing away from the house at Velvet's side, Bagot coming at the rear. He heard the scream of pure rage from within the hall, and somehow the irony of his justice aroused dark amusement in his heart.

"*Take in my prisoner,*" D'Estoutville had exacted a promise, and the promise would be kept.

Roger de Gaillon would suffer; he would writhe in blind terror; but Villon would win. Prison left at least a bit of dismal hope; but the gallows were finality itself. Ah, yes, Roger de Gaillon would sweat, but eventually he would give himself to the law. Nothing could save him from the damning evidence against himself which he would have to give the King's Prosecutor. And, reputation gone, power stripped away, nothing he might say against Villon would carry any weight with the King.

François Villon threw his arms about Velvet and Bagot, and a bright whistle came from his lips, greeting the morning just rising over the slanted rooftops.

"Wine," he said, "and a bit to eat." Together they went down the street.

WHEN they found pin-feathers sprouting from the filly's withers, they knew they had something special — a descendant of Pegasus, no less! Nelson Bond and his Sam McGhee go on from there.

by NELSON BOND

"HORSES win by a nose," began Squaredeal Sam McGhee out of a clear blue sky, "or a neck or a length or a furlong. That's nothin' to get excited about—unless, of course, your mazoo is ridin' on the nag. But when a hayburner wins a race without never settin' foot on the track—*that's* something!"

It was a typical McGhee gambit, cleverly calculated to ensnare my immediate attention and an ultimate "loan," the repayment of which would be as uncertain as the terpsichorean talents of a strip-tease artiste. The old con-and-carney man has a cavalier disregard for the virtues of sobriety, thrift and truth. But his tales always justify the strain to which the listener's credulity is subjected. So I pushed the humidor and decanter to within easy arm's-reach of his chair, countering his foray with an air of amused reserve which long years of experience have taught me serves as a sharper gad to his yarn-spinning than does any amount of eagerness or enthusiasm.

"True," I conceded. "But as to the exact nature of that 'something,' Samuel, I'm a little dubious. Scratches or disqualifications have made winners out of many a plater that hobbled in an hour late. But if you're trying to tell me any track judge ever awarded first place to an entry that made no appearance on the oval—"

"I didn't say that," said Sam. "This horse—"

"—then I can only deplore,"—and I frowned,—"the sorry state to which

A Matter of a Pinion

American sportsmanship has fallen. Race-track officials are supposed to be honest men; if their venality is such that they encourage, or even permit, such abuses—"

"The judges *was* honest men. They didn't know—"

"—then it is high time," I proclaimed, "that the whole situation be exposed. I, for one, won't tolerate—"

"You, for one," exploded Sam violently, "won't shut your yap long enough to leave me get a word in edgewise! Who's tellin' this story—you or me?"

"I was merely trying to point out—" I said.

"Well, don't!" he snapped. "Pointin' ain't polite. An' besides," he appended in magnificent *non sequitur*, "argyments always make me thirsty."

I watched in awed admiration as, glowering, the old rascal poured and unflinchingly downed at a draft a beakerful of straight rye. He licked his lips, nodding appreciatively, and helped himself to a pocketful of cigars, one of which he lighted after first carefully tucking the gnawed-off tip into a slightly frayed trouser cuff.

"Good for the moths," he muttered. Then, almost as an afterthought, "You got good likker an' smokes, even if you ain't got good manners."

"Courtesy," I said coldly, "is a vicious by-product of our effete civilization. I see no sense in showing polite gullibility when a guest tells me a barefaced falsehood. You claimed a race had been won by a horse that never appeared on the track: to be brutally frank, I don't believe you! So—"

"I said nothin' of the sort," disclaimed Sam. "You hear good, but you don't hear accurate. I said this here nag won *without settin' a foot on the track*, which ain't the same thing at all."

"Now," I sniffed, "you're just quibbling. What are you trying to do, Sam; stir up a mare's nest?"

Sam sighed heavily. "I wish I could!" he said. "I wish I *could* stir up a mare's nest!"

THIS guy (began Squaredeal Sam McGhee) looked me up in the cash tent after the last peepshow had sent the yokels home all fever-eyed an' fretful, an' while the concesh stands was packin' their slum to move on to the next village. I was managin' the carney as a favor to a chum whose temporary name was C-158096 on account of a difference of opinion between him an' the State of Ioway on a question of art, him claimin' the Livin' Models in the Gay Paree show was fine statuary an' the John Darms claimin' the show was statutory an' finable.

Anyhow, this character walked in as casual as if he belonged there—which he didn't—an' spoke his piece like I wanted to hear it—which I didn't.

"Mr. McGhee," he began, "do you know what this show lacks?"

"Customers," I said promptly, "cash, class—and an armed guard to keep screwballs like you out of private tents. Will you scram peaceable, or do I have to wrap them oversized ears of yours around your noggin like a coonskin cap?"

He must have been sensitive about his auditory jibsails—as who wouldn't be?—because the rims of them turned pink. But he swallyed the insult an' carried on earnestly.

"A trained horse," he said. "A well-trained horse: *that's* what you need!"

"I could also use," I told him, "a nice big hole in my head. Where did you get the idea *I'm* an equine fancier —an' one crack about 'family resemblance' gets you a face full of knuckles."

"Well," — he squirmed, — "I heard about you and a horse named Egbert—"

"*That* loud-mouthed, double-crossin' scoundrel!"

"And I understand you once managed a centaur—"

"You got a knack for touchin' tender spots," I told him, "that my dentist would envy. Both of them misadventures is episodes I'd be glad to forget. Anyway, each of them nags was the offspring of nightmares. Is this critter of yours a freak, too?"

"She is not!" said my visitor indignantly. "She is a very fine and talented animal, bred of an ancient stock—"

"The hell with her blood-line! The sap runs thickest in them old family trees. What can she *do*?"

"May I show you?" asked the youngster eagerly.

"You'll have to," I told him grimly. "Where *I* come from they don't even believe what Missourians tell them."

"Thanks, Mr. McGhee!" the kid breathed. "You won't be disappointed. I'll be back in a minute."

He galloped out of the tent and a few seconds later there was a *clumpety-clump* of hoofs, the tent-flap lifted, an' back he come leadin' the prettiest filly you ever laid eyes on.

What you could see of her under the checkered plaid blanket, she was all white. But not that dull oystery color —her coat had a sheen like burnished silver, soft an' glowing. An' when a filly's got a glow, she's got a glow!

She was a trifle on the small side: a fraction over fifteen hands, I'd say at a guess. But every inch of her was thoroughbred: A light, lean head, well set on; straight barrel, moderately deep; long, wide hips. If she had any fault, it was that maybe her pectorals was a bit too overdeveloped. But she wasn't fat, y'understand; it was all muscle—power.

BILLY—which it turned out was the kid's name — he watched me all bright-eyed as I give her the double-O.

"Well, Mr. McGhee?" he demanded. "What do you say? How do you like my Peggy?"

"Not bad," I admitted. "But the carney ain't plannin' on runnin' a beauty-contest for horses. What can she do besides look glamorous?"

"Watch!" chortled Billy. An' to his silver beauty, "Peggy, say hello to Mr. McGhee!"

The filly sort of blinked her eyes an' nodded as if to say yes, took a half step forward, crooked one knee in the equine equivalent of a curtsey—an' whinnied!

"There, Mr. McGhee!" cried Billy triumphantly. "Is that wonderful, or isn't it?"

It *was* wonderful, but I wasn't goin' to admit it to him. I was already beginnin' to think in terms of salary per diem, an' behind the eight-ball is where I like the *other* guy, when we start discussin' finances. So I yawned an' shrugged.

"I've seen worse. Can she do anything else?"

Anything else! That horse could do *everything* else! You know me. I been in show business so long my curiosity is got callouses; psychosomatically speakin', I got atrophy of the admiration, marasmus of the miraculous, an' senescence of the sensitivities. In short, I get bored easier than a pine log. But Peggy's routine had me standin' around with my jaw gapin' like a six-ten split on a bowlin'-alley.

She could walk, she could trot, she could pace, she could canter—them's physical stunts that a lot of horses can do. But she could dance, kneel, play dead an' toe straight line along a three-inch plank—which is tricks darn' few

ever learn. An' she could add numbers, spell out words with a set of alphabet blocks, an' pick up objects named by the audience—which made her about three times as intelligent as half my *human* employees!

I took one startled gander at Peggy's bag of tricks an' reached for a contract form with tremblin' hands.

"Billy," I said, "sign here! Peggy is in the show. In fact, I'll build a brand-new show around her—bill her as *Peggy, the Equine Einstein!* Or"—I pondered—"maybe Peggy ain't a romantic-enough name? How about *Gloria,* or *Marvella?* Or *Queenie, the Quadruped Quiz Kid?*"

"I'd prefer Peggy, if you don't mind," said the kid bashfully but firmly. "She's named after her sire. Do I sign here?"

"Right there," I nodded, "an' here's a blotter. We got a fortune in this filly, son—a fortune! Where on earth did you ever find her?"

"Oh—just around," answered Billy vaguely. "You really like her, then?"

"*Like her?* If she had two less legs an' could wear a sweater, I'd *marry* her! But, listen—" A swift suspicion had struck me. "Speakin' of clothes, how come the blanket? That just the New Look, or has she got some physical defect?"

"Oh, no! Nothing like that. She's perfect. See?"

He slipped off the plaid protector. She was silver all over and, as he had said, without blemish. Well, almost, anyway. There was just one small thing—

"What's the matter there?" I asked, pointin' at her withers. "She been burned, or operated on, or something? She looks like she's got scar tissue—or—or gooseflesh."

"Oh, *that!*" shrugged Billy. "Nothing important—a saddle-sore, maybe."

"*That* high?" I snorted. "Nonsense! See here, son, if there's anything wrong with this filly, I want you to tell me *now.* I don't want to tangle butts with the S.P.C.A."

"There's nothing wrong with her, Mr. McGhee," Billy assured me earnestly. "Nothing whatsoever—believe me! And now, if you'll show us our living-quarters—"

So somehow the question got shelved. An', frankly, I was so happy to have signed him an' Peggy that I never give it another thought. Leastwise, not for quite some time. An' so it wasn't till long afterward that I remembered what them puckery-lookin' wrinkles on Peggy's withers reminded me of.

It was the way a turkey's caboose looks after you've just got done pluckin' it. It was—pinfeathers!

SQUAREDEAL SAM sighed, leaned forward, and poured a second tumblerful of whisky to which this time he added, in deference to some dimly recollected social amenity, a gingerly minute squirt of soda.

I stared at him askance, an incredible idea growing in my mind.

"Pinfeathers?" I repeated. "Sam—did you say that filly was named after her sire?"

"That's right. A Greek horse, he was—I found that out later."

"A Greek horse!" I said excitedly. "And this young chap? This Billy? Was *he* a Greek, too?"

"Yeah; I disremember his real name, but Billy Earphones—that's what we called him. On account of them flaps of his looked like the doolallies radio operators wear—you know?"

"Billy Earphones? *Bellerophon!* Good heavens, Sam, you don't mean to say Peggy was the offspring of the fabulous winged horse, Pegasus?"

IT was Sam McGhee's turn to look amazed. "You've heard of a flyin' horse before?" he demanded.

"But of course!" I told him. "Every student and every schoolchild knows the legend of Pegasus. Bellerophon caught him as he drank at the spring Peirene, and together they slew the Chimæra, overcame the Solymi and the Amazons. But all of that is *fable,* Sam—mythology! No one seriously believes a winged horse ever actually lived."

"*I* do," said Sam simply. "An' you would, too, if I hadn't been so greedy."

"Greedy?"

Sam nodded, his eyes mournful. "It wasn't enough I should feature her in a sideshow that was haulin' in the hicks by the hundreds," he said ruefully. "I had to try to make a racehorse out of her—against her wishes."

"A race-horse?"

"A trotter. Me, like a dope—I had to hitch the equine sensation of the century to a two-wheeled go-cart—"

"Sulky?" I interpolated.

"Sulky, hell!" said Sam. "She was downright mad!"...

Peggy was a smash hit (Sam resumed), from the first time that we showed her. There's nothin' the hayseeds like better than a beautiful hunk of horseflesh, an' when Billy put Peggy through her stunts, their eyes popped like blowed bubble gum. We could have sold her a hundred times—only why should we? Joe Louis should maybe sell his right arm?

I looked, I seen, an' I was dumbfloundered.

She mowed 'em down in the Middle West, panicked 'em in the Prairie States, an' dazzled 'em in Dixie. In Virginia they found a few spare inches alongside a highway to put up a plaque celebratin' her visit. It was sandwiched in between a place where Jubal Early made a late raid, an' a muddy spot in the road labeled, *"George Washington Slipped Here!"*

Kentucky made her a colonel, of course, an' in Iowa they named a new hybrid corn after her. Georgia invented the Princess Peggy julep in her honor, an' Michigan matched their ante with a Princess Peggy tulip. All up an' down the United States, Peggy's name was in more mouths than crackerjack at a circus. Billy understated it when he said she was well bred; she was the toast of the nation!

I don't mind admittin' she *made* my little carnival. For the first time in my life, I didn't mind bein' told I was managin' a one-horse outfit. By late spring we stopped usin' red ink for bookkeepin'; by early summer word got around that we was payin' our performers in greenbacks instead of greasepaint; by fall we had our pick of any act in the country, from Ringling tumblers to wingding fumblers.

It was too good to last—and it didn't!

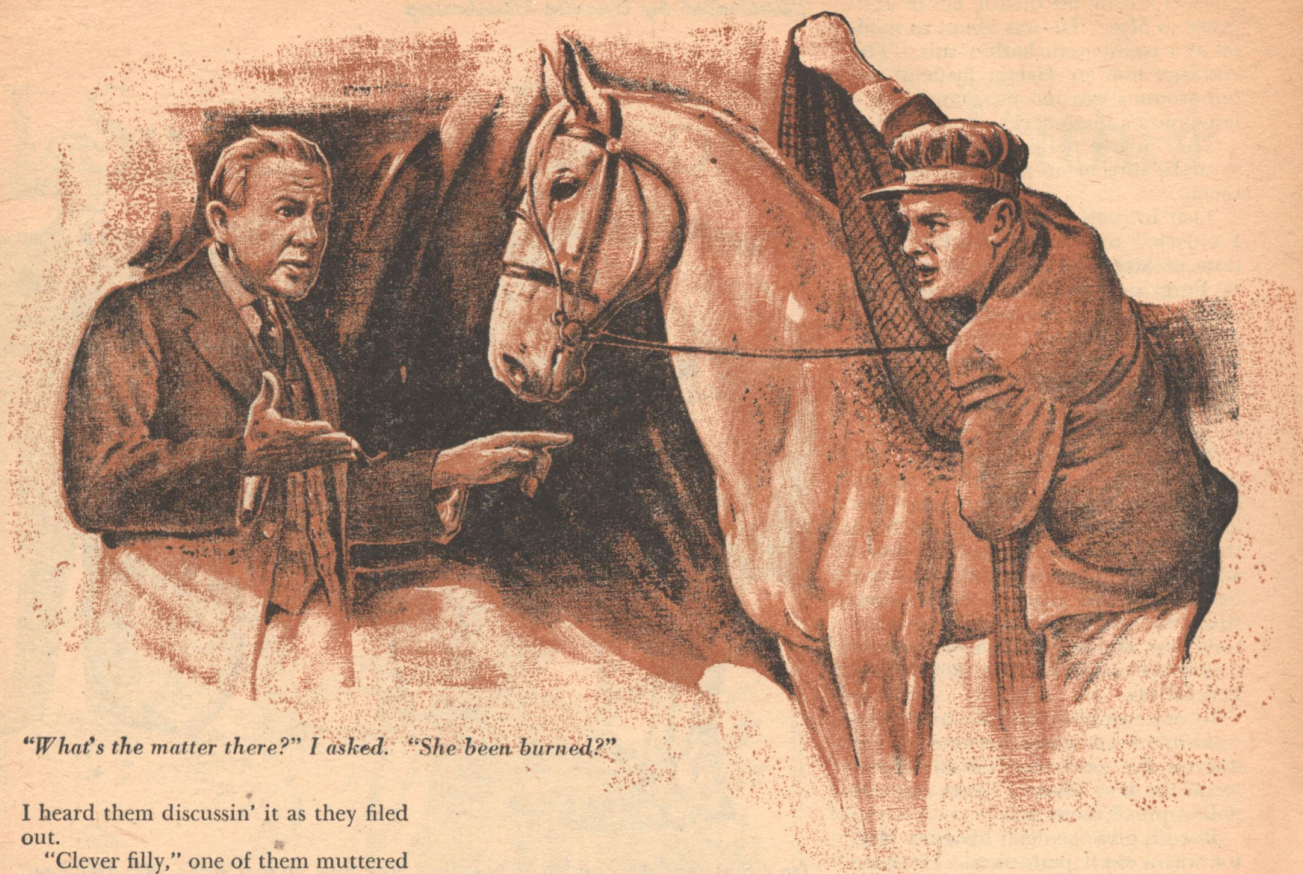
THE horsefly in the ointment (mourned Sam McGhee) was a paint plug from the Pecos which hopped on our bandwagon an' started blowin' the same tune so loud that first thing we knowed we was playin' second fiddle.

("Block that metaphor!" I murmured.

("Thanks," said Sam. "Don't mind if I do"—and poured himself another drink.)

You know how it is when anybody comes up with a new an' good thing? Quicker'n a cat can wink an eye, along comes somebody else with a second-rate imitation about half as good but twice as noisy, an' mops up on the reputation of the real McCoy. The funny part of it is, it's the party of the second part that generally labels hisself the only genuwine original with the big red letters on the box!

Our first intimation that there was an Abyssinian in the lumberyard was when we played a whistle-stop in western Pennsylvania an'—for the first time in months—drawed only half a house at each performance. To make matters worse, the cash customers we did have, didn't appear to like the show.



"What's the matter there?" I asked. "She been burned?"

I heard them discussin' it as they filed out.

"Clever filly," one of them muttered to another.

"Mmm," nodded his friend. "Not so bad. But Hector was smarter."

"You bet!" chimed in a third. "Hector could play a pipe-organ, even. Why, this Peggy doesn't know one note from another!"

I asked Billy about it that night as we were movin' on to the next town.

"Who the heck," I asked, "is Hector?"

"Never heard of him," he answered.

But we *did* hear of him, an' plenty, from then on.

Peggy's graceful waltz left audiences cold in towns that had seen Hector foxtrot, cakewalk, an' cut a rug for the jitterbug fans. They yawned in our faces when she spelled easy words like c-a-t an' d-o-g. Hector, it seems, had picked out the letters for words shouted at random from the crowd. When Peggy did her latest trick – a high dive off a twenty-foot platform into a tank – the spectators simply sneered. It's a sad fact, but some people is forever strainin' the truth. To hear them tell it, this mysterious Hector could dive off a hundred-foot church steeple into a damp handkerchief!

Then the mystery was solved. In desperation I took a half-page ad in *Billboard,* describin' Peggy an' her accomplishments. An' the followin' week in the same sheet we found a full-page spread featurin' "Hector, the Scientific Stallion," with a detailed account of his stunts, his phenomenal success everywhere he'd been booked, an' how to get in touch with his owner-manager.

There was only one thing to do. I done it.

HECTOR'S impresario was a guy named Frank Slye, the first of which he wasn't, an' the second of which he was. In his hotel-room a couple of days later I told him, "It's plumb ridiculous for us to cut each other's throats this-a-way. Now, you refuse to take this horse of yours off the circuit—"

"I most certainly do, McGhee," he said. "Hector is a gold mine—a mother lode!"

"He's a lode, all right," I agreed. "Naturally, *we* have no intention of retirin' Peggy, either. So—"

"So?" he repeated. "What do you suggest?"

"Honest an' open competition," I told him, "instead of this back-bitin' you-ruin-me-an'-I'll-ruin-you business we been carryin' on. Frankly, you've cut our gate about half, in the towns where you've showed first. I imagine that works in reverse, too, don't it?"

"It's true," he acknowledged cagily, "we've found a slight decrease in the box-office receipts in towns where you have previously exhibited Peggy. But if you are suggesting a partnership—"

"I wouldn't go into partnership with Trade an' Mark Smith for all the whiskers at a Dunkard convention. The last time I teamed up with anybody was when me an' another no-good chiseler formed the Cash-an'-Carry Travelin'-bag Company. I woke up one mornin' to discover he'd traveled with the cash and left me carryin' the bag.

"No, Slye—all I suggest is that instead of follyin' each other around an' crabbin' each other's act, we agree to show in the same places simultaneous. That way we can get two admissions out of every sucker. They'll have to see *both* horses to argy it out with their friends which one is better."

"The idea," nodded Slye, "has its merits, the chief one being that a few weeks' comparison between Hector and your filly should put Peggy out to pasture. But if you're foolish enough to take that risk—"

I had my own thoughts on that subject. "I'm game," I said grimly, "if you are."

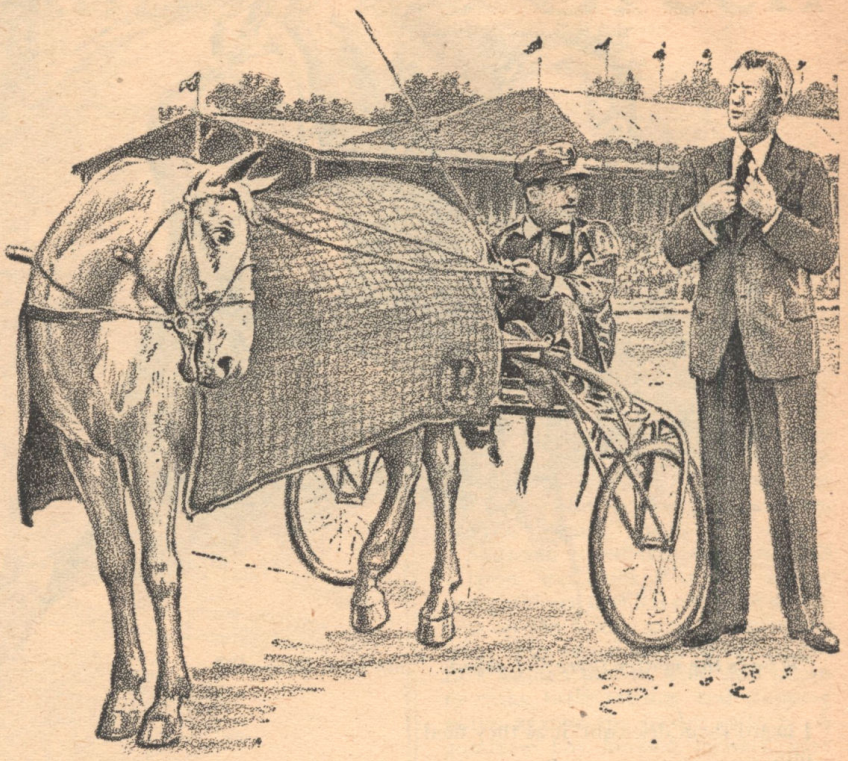
"Then it's a deal. Where do you show next week?"

"At a county fair in upstate New York." I told him the name of the place, an' he nodded.

"We'll be there," he said, "with bells on."

"It's an old-fashioned community," I pointed out to him. "Wear clothes an' you'll be less conspicuous."

Illustrated by Charles Chickering



"Isn't that tender?" said Billy softly. *"It's love at first sight, Mr. McGhee."*

I was wastin' my breath, talkin' reticence to Slye. He was about as modest as a transparent bathin'-suit. The entrance him an' Hector made at the fair-grounds was inconspicuous like a fan-dancer's birthmark.

They arrove deliberately late so as to make sure of an audience to greet them.

That in itself wasn't so bad. What I objected to was the shockin' poor taste of Slye's equipage. In contrast to Peggy's simple little lavender-an'-silver van, with its chaste inscription—*Peggy: The Greatest Horse of the Century!* Hector drove up in a vulgar carmine-an'-gold truck, emblazoned with the uncouth claim—*Hector: The Greatest Horse of All Time!*

To cap the disgustin' climax, a loud-speaker blared forth with a steam-calliope rendition of "Hail, the Conquerin' Hero Comes!" while Slye, from the top of the truck, nodded an' waved an' bowed to the crowd an' tossed out handfuls of tiny paper horseshoes entitlin' the lucky holder to enter Hector's show absolutely free upon presentation of this ticket an' one dollar, plus Federal tax.

It was sickenin'! Me an' Billy wouldn't even stoop for one of the ducats. We paid our full admission-fee at the box office. Tickets cost one dollar, plus Federal tax.

But I'll give the devil his due: Hector was a swell performer. He done just about everything Peggy could do, an' he done it good. He wasn't as graceful as our filly, bein' a bigger-built horse, an' ruggeder. But he was smart as a week-ender's sunburn, an' he was a handsome beast. He was a paint with fine, regular markings: white flanks, sorrel saddle, an' four perfect boots. Also he had just the right face markings to make him *look* intelligent: a high, colorless forehead, an' balanced circles around his eyes that looked almost like specs!

AFTER the show I asked Billy, "Well, kid, is he better than Peggy? Did I stick my neck out?"

"I don't think so, Mr. McGhee," he answered slowly. "He's good. There's no denying that. But there's one important difference. Hector is a plain, ordinary animal that has been carefully coached and trained. While the others watched *him*, I watched Slye—and everything Hector does is in obedience to a set of cleverly concealed gestures.

"Peggy, on the other hand, needs no such orders. I merely *tell* her what to do, and she does it because she knows what I'm saying. She understands words, not actions."

"Remind me," I told him, "to take her to the movies some time. She'd enjoy it. But where does this get us? Can she match, or better, Hector's stunts? That's what counts."

"I think so. After I explain to her the importance of it, I think Peggy will outdo her previous performances."

"She'd better," I warned him, "or we'll all go back on half rations. Speakin' of which—ain't Peggy gained some weight lately?"

Billy looked kind of embarrassed.

"Why, I don't think so, Mr. McGhee. What makes you say so?"

"Candor," I said, "an' the eyes God give me. While I ain't seen her with her blanket off for quite some time, it seems to me like she's lots heftier through the shoulders an' barrel. You're sure she ain't gettin' too fat?"

"Oh, positive!"

"Then there's another thing – that blanket. Hector don't wear one. He gives the public an opportunity to admire his good looks. Peggy's just as attractive—if not more so. Don't you think it might be a good idea to exhibit her in the raw—if you'll pardon the expression?"

"Well, I'd rather—that is, I think maybe it—what I mean is, since she *is* maybe gaining a little weight, Mr. McGhee, it might be a good idea to let her work under wraps. Sweat some of it off—"

"Okay," I shrugged. "She's your horse. As long as she puts on a better show than Hector, that's all that I care about."

"She will," promised Billy earnestly. "Don't worry about that."

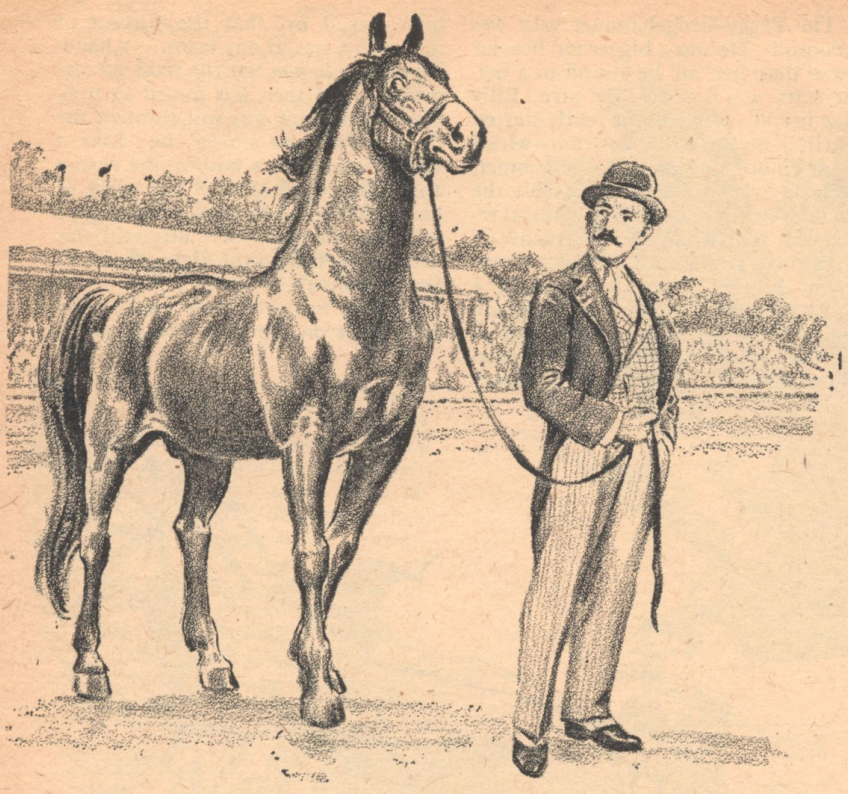
"Why not?" I demanded. "One of us has to!"...

I won't bore you (Sam went on) with the details of that followin' week. Like the vet said to the fox terrier, it's a long tale, but I'll cut it short.

To put it plain an' blunt, my idea worked even better than I had expected. Havin' Hector an' Peggy on the same midway did increase the crowd in both tents. Everybody which seen one perform had to go see the other.

But there was one hitch. Instead of the comparison *provin'* anything, it just complicated matters—for people looked at 'em both, then *still* couldn't decide which was better. So in an effort to win converts, both Slye an' me started addin' new stunts to our respective acts.

ON Monday, for instance, Peggy done her high-dive off a twenty-foot platform. On Tuesday, Hector went off a twenty-five-foot board. The next day Peggy raised it five. Slye wasn't fool enough to try thirty-five, an' I don't blame him. It would have been crazy to risk killin' Hector just to make a bigger splash. But he dived the stallion from the same height into a tank lighted by a layer of flamin' gas.



Not to be outdone, the next night Peggy pulled the same trick, carryin' Billy on her back.

Then there was the spellin' contest. Peggy matched Hector syllable for syllable up to words like "parallelogram" an' "incompatibility," an' held the record for a while with a blindfold spellin' of "hyperconscientiousness." But when the so-called scientific stallion come through with an astoundin' "antidisestablishmentarianism," we give up—mainly because I couldn't afford to buy that many alphabet blocks!

Peggy waltzed an' Hector jigged. Peggy tap-danced; Hector done a buck-an'-wing. Peggy went classical with a toe dance—whereupon Hector obliged with what some ballet addict told me was an ontrayshat an' a paddy sool.

Routine stunts provin' a draw, we started searchin' novelties to capture the public's imagination. We got off to a runnin' start by puttin' Peggy on roller-skates, but Hector bounced right back with a balancin' act on a tremendous ball. Peggy played a round of miniature golf with her foot. Hector proved he wasn't no cripple by kickin' four consecutive field goals from what on an honest-to-goodness football field would have been the thirty-yard line.

By now, we wasn't playin' for peanuts. News of our contest had spread like a dowager's *derriere*, an' show people was all agog. Hollywood had flew talent scouts East to watch the Peggy-Hector battle, an' it was common knowledge that the winner would be offered a contract with fatter figures than a D.A.R. meeting.

That's why Frank Slye's final an' brilliantest brain-child give me one terrible pain in the aspirin-tablet department.

On Friday he flooded the midway with handbills announcin' that the next day Hector would do something no horse had ever done before—he would fly an airplane!

REALLY, it wasn't an airplane; it was one of them helicopters. But the fact remained Hector would ride it alone, with no human accompanyin' him. So Slye had stole a march on us at a critical time. An' didn't he know it! He like to drove us nuts with his new advertisin' campaign—"*See Hector, the Flying Horse!*"—which you couldn't help seein' or hearin' everywhere you went on the fair-grounds.

I wailed to Billy, "But, dammit, kid—Hector can't fly a plane all by hisself! He ain't got no hands to operate the controls! What's the gimmick?"

"Easy," answered Billy in a tone of voice which was far from. "Remote control—that's the answer. They'll work the 'copter from down here. All Hector will do is go for the ride. But it will look good to the public."

"Too darned good! We've got to dream up some stunt to match it or our goose will be cooked.

"Only," I moaned, "*what?* I've run out of ideas. An' Saturday's the last day of the fair. Everything winds up with Hector's flight an' the harness-races. Peggy won't have another chanst to— Hey! Wait a minute!" Inspiration hit me like a ton of bricks. "The harness-races! Billy—can Peggy run?"

"Run?" repeated the kid, puzzled. "Why—why, yes, of course. All horses can run."

"I mean can she run *fast?* Fast enough to maybe win a race?"

Billy said, "Well, now, I don't know about *that*. I clocked her once or twice, just for the fun of it, and she is pretty fast. But as for professional racing—"

"We've got to chance it," I said. "Billy, it's our last hope! Hector's flight is scheduled for the same hour as the sulky-race finals—four o'clock. Our only chance to get more attention than he's gettin' is to have Peggy winnin' the race down *here*, while he's floatin' around up there!"

"Gosh, Mr. McGhee,"—and Billy frowned—"I'm not so sure I'm in favor of that idea. Maybe Peggy won't like it."

"You want a Hollywood contract, don't you?"

"Well, yes, but—"

"Okay! Then let's get on the ball. I'll go have a little chat with the track steward an' you go explain matters to Peggy. If she's as smart a gal as I think she is," I told him, "she'll get a kick out of it. If she's not, she'll just get a kick. Period!"

SO finally come Saturday. I wish I could say Peggy went hook-line-an'-sinker for our project, but to do so would be stretchin' the truth to the breakin'-point. The unfortunate truth is, she didn't like it one little bit!

She particularly didn't like bein' hitched into the harness, an' she hated the little go-cart in which Billy sat. But her very dislike was a good break for us; it made her run all the faster so she could get home off the track an' out of her girdle.

We had some handbills printed, too. "You've heard a lot of loose talk," they said, "about Flying Horses. Don't believe all you hear. Any horse can take a plane ride, with someone else guiding the controls. If you really want to see a flying horse, watch Peggy set a new track record in the big race Saturday afternoon at 2 P.M."

Billy said, "Aren't you anticipating too much, Sam? After all, we have no way of knowing whether or not she'll do what you say."

"Don't be silly," I told him. "*Whatever* Peggy does is a new track record for *her*, ain't it?"

"But that's not the meaning people will take out of it," the kid protested.

"So what?" I retorted. "Is it my fault the average citizen is a dope? Listen, Billy, I don't like to keep harp-

in' on the same subject—but about that blanket Peggy wears. Don't you think it would be a good idea to shed it durin' the races?"

"*No!*" blurted Billy, much too loud. Then, blushin' violently, "I'm sorry. I just meant—no, I'd rather she had it on, if you don't mind."

"*I* don't mind—but will *she*? Every ounce of speed counts. We don't want to cramp her style."

"She'll be all right," promised Billy.

So at last it was two o'clock, an' time for the big event. I won't insult you by explainin' how sulky races are run. You know they got to be run in heats, on account of otherwise the go-carts would be lockin' wheels all the time. After the preliminaries there's semi-finals, then the final event—the contest between the two entries which ain't been eliminated.

IN the first heat a horse named Fiddler run against one named Chippendale. Fiddler was in better tune for racin' than his opponent, so it was good-by Mr. Chippendale.

Bootblack polished off Shady Lady in the next heat, an' in the followin' stanza an oatmill named Canny Win met a plug named Sledgehammer. Canny Win couldn't, so Sledgehammer beat him to a pulp.

Peggy was matched with a hack named Tinker's Choice in the final heat. Tinker's Choice couldn't run worth a damn of the same category. So Peggy won easily an' was one leg up on her road to glory.

Just one tiny detail marred the victory. The track had been dry an' hard before the Peggy and Tinker's Choice match. After it, to the considerable astonishment of everyone there, the oval was pockmarked all the way around with small puddles of water!

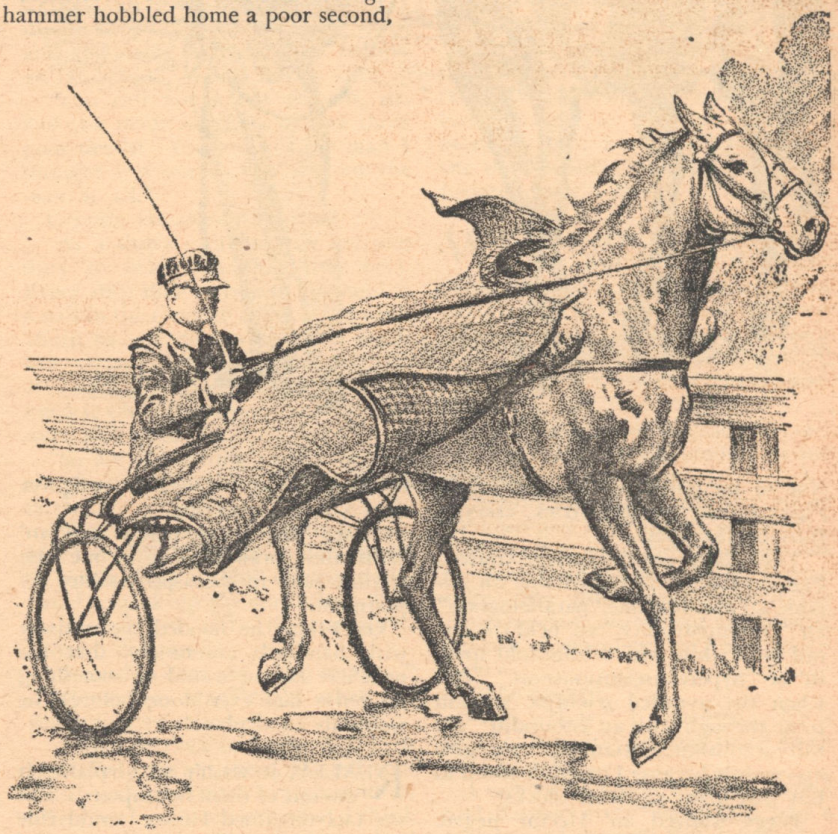
The track officials didn't know what to make of it. They scratched their heads, stared bewilderedly at the cloudless sky, frowned—then decided there was nothin' *they* could do about a situation they didn't understand, so they ruled for the racin' to proceed.

Me, *I* didn't understand it, neither—not then. It wasn't till afterward that I read about this here Pegasus you mentioned a while ago an' learned that he was in cahoots with the Greek water-power interests. Every time he stomped a foot on the ground, a spring bubbled up where he'd leaned his full weight. Apparently Peggy had inherited this soggy trait. . . .

Anyhow, nobody present dreamed of blamin' Peggy, so the semi-finals got goin'.

Fiddler an' Bootblack had a nip-an'-tuck race. For a while it looked like Fiddler would scrape through, but just as they entered the stretch he strained a G-string, an' Bootblack whisked home the winner.

The Peggy-Sledgehammer race was a doozie! He was a bigger an' heavier horse than her, an' he got off to a better start. But at the far turn, Billy give her free rein an' she really started tearin'! She got out in front—which made it tough on poor Sledgehammer, because every time her hoofs hit the turf she struck water! The natural result was that while *she* was racin' on a reasonably fast track, Sledgehammer found himself wallowin' through a sticky morass! What's worse, her sulky-wheels tossed more mud than a meetin' of the United Nations. Sledgehammer hobbled home a poor second, lookin' like a damp 'dobe wall with measles.



All of which set the stage for the final event, the big race of the afternoon, the pay-off match between Peggy an' Bootblack.

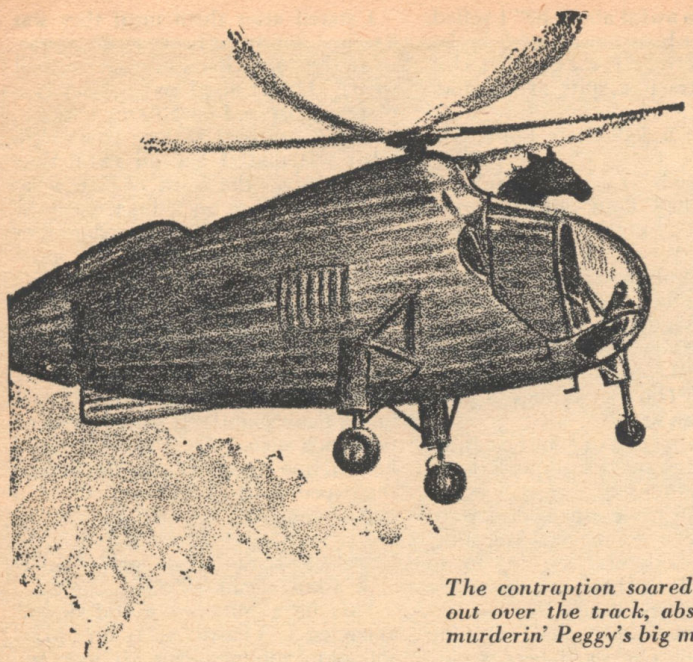
By now, it was just a couple of minutes before four o'clock. So the pay-off moment had come in more than one way. On this track, shortly, Peggy would make her bid for fame an' fortune as a racin' champeen as well as a superhorse in other respects. An' on the midway adjacent, Hector's airplane ride would determine, one way or another, which horse had caught the public fancy most. It was a matter of shiftin' populace, y'understand? If more people drifted *in* to see our horse run than drifted *out* to watch Hector ride, we'd score the psychological victory; if the reverse, contrariwise. An' I was delighted to see, as the seconds ticked by, that the current of movement was in our favor. A handful of people *had* left the track for the midway, but they was forced to positively fight their way out through the throng that was surgin' in. Like I said before, there's nothin' the rustics appreciate more than a fine piece of horseflesh *in action*, so word of Peggy's wins on the track was attractin' far more interest than the flight scheduled for the same time.

Billy an' me, overjoyed, was slappin' each other on the back like a pair of flagellant monks. Which only goes to prove you shouldn't cross your bridges before they're hatched—because Frank Slye had one last trick up his sleeve. Just as Billy was preparin' to take our rig to the startin'-post, a voice rasped over the public-address system:

"*Ladeez and gentlemen! Your attention, please!*"

A HUSH settled over the crowd. I grinned at Billy, expectin' some handsome encomium to Peggy before the race. I stopped smilin' suddenly, however, when the voice went on:

"Before the final race, we have a surprise for you. Now entering the stadium, that all may have an opportunity to see him before his death-defying adventure into the wild blue yonder, is the equine marvel, that paragon of horsy virtue and intelligence—Hector, the Scientific Stallion!"



The contraption soared gently out over the track, absolutely murderin' Peggy's big moment.

The crowd bust into a roar, and so did I—but from different emotions. "Of all the lowdown, back-bitin' tricks! That stinker Slye, chiselin' into our act again—" I howled. But the voice went on:

"Professor Slye, owner and trainer of this magnificent animal, understanding the desire of many to see Hector's earthbound antagonist perform on this track, has requested us to announce that in order that all horse-lovers may view both spectacles, Hector will guide his helicopter over this track, where he will hover in full view of the audience as the final race is being run!"

"What?" I screamed. "But he can't do that! I protest! I'll sue! I'll get an injunction! It's sabotage!"

"Shhh, Mr. McGhee!" shushed Billy. "People are beginning to look at you. Look! He's leading Hector onto the track."

An' he was, too—the dirty rat! The crowd was screamin' its fool head off, an' Slye was smirkin' like a kitten turned loose in a cheese factory.

"Nuts!" I spat. "Don't even let on you see him. I never seen nothin' so disgustin' in all my life!"

"Just the same," mused Billy speculatively, "Hector *is* a fine-looking horse. I wonder if—"

"If what?"

"Oh, nothing. Just—well, nothing. Mr. McGhee. I just said Hector is a fine-looking horse."

"I'm glad one of us thinks so!" I snorted.

"Two of us," corrected Billy.

"If you're includin' me—" I began—

"Not you—Peggy. She agrees with me. See?"

I looked. The fair-haired filly was indeed, actin' like a bobby-soxer who'd snuck into a Crooner's Club. Like everyone else, her gaze was fastened on Handsome Hector. She fidgeted in her harness an' gave a little 'neigh that sounded for all the world like a sigh!

"Isn't that tender?" said Billy softly. "I believe it's love at first sight, Mr. McGhee."

"Tender?" I bawled. "It's lewd, that's what it is! Toss a hood over that amorous female's eyes before she swoons or something! Of all the disgraceful exhibitions—"

"You shouldn't talk that way, Mr. McGhee," said the kid reproachfully. "You should have more respect for love—the finer sentiments—"

"I got respect for three things," I told him. "Top billings, aces in the hole an' seven-year-old whisky. An' I got a *growin'* respect for the Vivisection Society! If Hector don't get out of here soon—"

"He's going," Billy put in. "Yes, there he goes now. Shush, Peggy! It's all right. We'll see him again."

"He's goin'," I repeated. "He's still goin'. An' now he's gone. Good! If I ever see him again, not even Herpicide can save him!"

IT'S gettin' late (continued Squaredeal Sam McGhee) an' I'm gettin' hungry. If you're goin' to take me to dinner I'd better wind this up.

("I said nothing whatsoever," I interjected, "about taking you to—"

("Thanks," said Sam. "I knew you would.")

After Hector left, the track officials wasted some more time discussin' the —to them, an' to me as well at the time — incomprehensible condition of the turf. To say it was *wet* would be like sayin' torture is uncomfortable. It wasn't just wet; it was by now a slippy, sloppy quagmire! You see, Peggy's hoofbeats had created *springs*. Each one had spread, till now the oval was one solid lake of liquid mud. Incidentally, the water is still flowin'. By this time next year, I wouldn't be surprised if they turn that fair-ground track into a reservoir.

Nobody could understand it, but nobody could do nothin' about it, neither. An' the race had to be run. There is an old adage in show business, "The show must go on." Why? Well, in this case, because there was about 30,000 bucks in the track box-office, an' the management didn't want to give back one penny of it!

I had one last word with Billy just before the call come to go to the post. He was busy adjustin' the straps an' braces of Peggy's harness. I said, "If you got any brains in that lovin'-cup cranium of yours, you'll stop monkeyin' with them straps an' take off Peggy's blanket. Have you seen the track?"

"I have," said Billy stiffly, "and there's no need to be so insulting, Mr. McGhee. If I were to speak of your nose the way you speak of my ears—"

"Them ears of yours," I retorted, "is monstrosities which developed purely by accident. It took a good many years an' a lot of bourbon to develop my proboscis to this state of ruby perfection. How about the blanket?"

"Peggy runs," he insisted, "with it on. However, I have loosened the braces so that if it's absolutely necessary—absolutely necessary, mind you! —it can be dropped."

"Well, that's something," I acknowledged. "I hope you won't have to, but from the way that track looks, she may have to get rid of her clothing to *swim* to the finish line! Anyway, good luck, kid!"

For now the bugle had blowed, an' already Bootblack was trudgin' out onto the track.

I was in a sweat for the race to get started. Hector was slated to take off any minute now, an' I knew that if his plane floated out over the track its appearance would detract from the interest in Peggy. But crossin' my fingers an' wishin' did no good. There was the usual dilly-dally at the startin'-post before I finally heard the traditional roar of race-tracks the world over, *"They're off!"*...

An' now comes the part of my story (said Squaredeal Sam), you questioned before I started. Now comes the part you may not want to believe, but you got to believe it—'cause I can *prove* it!

Peggy won that race. Leave us be swift to get you out of suspense. Peggy won that race — *an' she won it without settin' a foot on the track!*

I don't know whether there's another person present that day who realizes it. *I* discovered it only by

accident. I discovered it only because my attention was not diverted by tryin' to watch at one an' the same time a sulky-race an' an airplane ascension —an' because I wondered how in heck it was that while Bootblack was slippin', skiddin' and slidin' around in the soup like a cake of soap in a greased bathtub, Peggy was skimmin' around the course without the slightest effort!

I looked, I seen, an' I was dumbfloundered. The answer was, simply, that Peggy wasn't slippin' because her feet didn't have nothin' to slip on! Of her entire rig, only the sulky-wheels was grazin' terra far-from-firma at all. Every one of her four feet was hoverin' a full six inches above the surface!

How come? Well, you know the answer. I didn't — then. The only thing I could notice out of the ordinary was that beneath her loosened blanket Peggy's sides seemed to be pulsatin'. Quiverin', sort of.

The rest of the audience mustn't have even noticed that. Because like I said, their attention was divided. As the race started, a second roar come from the throng, *"There he goes!"* An' up from the midway, just outside the stadium, rose a helicopter, its rotor blades revolvin' slowly.

Inside it, plainly visible to everyone, stood Hector. The contraption rose about a hundred feet, then soared gently out over the middle of the track, where it hung stock-still in midair, dominatin' the scene an' absolutely murderin' Peggy's big moment.

As I later told the judge when I was arraigned for assault-an'-batterin' Slye, it was the dirtiest trick anyone ever pulled. It killed all chances of *either* horse gettin' that Hollywood contract —even if the catastrophe hadn't happened. Which I'm almost glad it did.

PEGGY won the race. She come home so many lengths in front that they had to falsify the record. It would have looked crooked to report the *real* result. Believe it or not—Peggy passed Bootblack for the second time in her slowin'-down run after she'd crossed the finish line!

But even while winnin' so spectacularly, Peggy got practically no attention. For at the exact split second she crossed the stripe, something happened that even Slye didn't expect. The helicopter carryin' Hector give a sudden dip an' a swoop, then zoomed skyward about five thousand feet in less time than it takes to tell it. An' the voice over the public-address system bawled: "Ladies and gentlemen —a terrible accident! Something has gone wrong with the ground instruments and Hector's plane is out of control!"

"Out of control!" gasped Billy. He had just joined me at our stall off the track. "Gracious, that's awful!"

"What's so awful about it?" I yelled. "Let him get his scientific neck broke, an' see if *I* care! *We'll* get that Hollywood contract in spite of his snide maneuverin'."

"But such a *handsome* horse, Mr. McGhee—"

"Handsome is," I said, "as handsome does. An' he's doin' all right just now. About a hundred miles an hour, I'd guess. What do you say?" I watched happily as Hector became a dinnerplate, then a dime, then a pinhead in the misty blue. "He looks better to me *now* than he ever looked before.... Happy landings, Hector!" I shouted. "Happy landings—a long, long way from here!"

Then I happened to glance at Billy, an' his outsize ears was simply flappin' with indignation.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mr. McGhee," he was storming. "Well, if nobody else is going to do anything to help that poor creature— What do you say, Peggy?"

Peggy turned an' looked at him. Like everyone else she'd been starin' at the disappearin' 'copter. Now she lowered her head—an', so help me, there was tears in her eyes. She whinnied. It was a plaintive, pathetic little sound that meant *yes!*—plain as day.

"Do?" I repeated. "What can anybody do? What can *you* do?"

"Follow him," said Billy stubbornly. "Rescue him. I'll show you. Stand still, Peggy. Let's get these leather doodads off. There! And now your blanket—"

"Follow him! Why, at the rate he's travelin', it would take a jet plane— Holy cow!"

I stopped abruptly, the rest of my words jammed on my bobbin' Adam's apple. For Billy had whipped off the blanket, an' for the first time in months I was seein' Peggy what the French call oh natural. She was as beautiful as before—but with a difference. She didn't have that wrinkly disfigurement on her shoulders any more. The things that had made me think of pinfeathers was gone; in their place was a huge, gorgeous pair of silvery shinin'—*wings!*

I gasped, "Billy! Billy, them—"

"Yes sir," nodded Billy. "They've been growing nicely. She was molting before, you know. That's why we came to you for a job. Well, goodby, Mr. McGhee. See you again one of these days—maybe."

"Again? Maybe? Billy, get off that horse's back! Listen to me! Why didn't you tell me Peggy had— *Billy!*"

I was wastin' my breath. A farewell smile, a press of the knee, an' Peggy sprang up into the air. She flapped those wide, beautiful wings once or twice as if tryin' to get the feel of something she hadn't used for a long time—then soared skyward in a swift, graceful arc.

I stared after them until they was a second dot in the heavens, disappearin' in the same direction as Hector had went. Then I lifted my jaw back into place an' trudged back to my tent....

"An'," Squaredeal Sam concluded, "that was that! I had an awful time explainin' to the track officials what had happened to my winner when the excitement finally died down, an' they got around to awardin' the prize Peggy had won. It ended up with them refusin' to pay an' me bein' investigated by the S.P.C.A. The only reason I'm a free man today is that they couldn't locate no *corpus delicti.*

"So that's why I said I wish I *could* find a mare's nest! It would make us both rich men. An' I think I could find it, too—if you'd care to finance the expedition. Two hundred ought to be enough—"

"TWO hundred dollars? You're asking me for—"

"Maybe a hundred would do it," amended Sam hastily. "It ain't like I was askin' you for a loan. This would be an investment—the best investment you ever made."

"The answer," I told him coldly, "is —no! A loud and emphatic *no,* Samuel. I want no part of your investments. Anyway, I don't believe a word you've told me, and I *particularly* don't believe you have any idea where to begin looking for this mythical winged creature you pretend to have seen."

"There's where you're wrong," said Sam earnestly. "I've got a red-hot clue, reprinted in every newspaper in the country just a couple of months back. Out West, *that's* where they ended up. In the State of Washington, or maybe Oregon."

"They? You mean you believe Billy and Peggy caught up with Hector?"

"Believe it? I *know* it! Not only caught up. Them two equine marvels has set up light housekeepin' together."

"But how do you know? What makes you so certain?"

"How? The Flyin' Saucers — *that's* how!"

"Flying Saucers? Sam, are you crazy? What in the world do *they* have to do with Peggy and Hector?"

Squaredeal Sam smiled pityingly. "You ain't got no imagination at all, have you?" he sighed. "I told you Peggy loved Hector. An' I told you she despised racin'. An' I also told you I believe her an' him has become equine man an' wife—which means, in the natural course of events, raisin' a brood of little ones—"

"But—the Flying Saucers!"

"Hell's howlin' bells!" exploded Sam. "What do you think *you'd* look like if you was the offspring of a magical horse—an' your mother had been frightened by a helicopter?"

The Interrogators

QUESTIONING PRISONERS OF WAR WAS A VERY SPECIAL AND IMPORTANT JOB. HERE ARE REVEALED SOME OF THE METHODS USED, WITHIN THE GENEVA CONVENTION, TO PERSUADE CAPTURED ENEMIES TO TALK.

by IB MELCHIOR

LIEUTENANT WARREN glanced wearily at the luminous dial of his wrist watch—11:05—just one hour since he turned in to get a little much-needed sleep. As he made his way to the black-out tent, he was dimly aware of the battle noises in the not-too-far distance, and automatically identified the crackle of small-arm fire and an occasional burst from a light machine-gun or the *crrump* of an incoming mortar shell. He shook off his fatigue and gathered his wits; he had to be alert, for a new batch of Kraut prisoners had just been brought in, and it was his and his team's job to interrogate the PWs and get every bit of valuable information out of them at once. For Lt. Warren was an IPW —an Interrogator of Prisoners of War.

Warren entered the tent and sat down behind the rough, wooden table. He nodded to Sgt. Murray, who stood at the entrance.

"Bring in the prisoner."

The German PW was led in. He stood stiffly at attention. His gray uniform was torn and dirty, and he looked almost as exhausted as Lt. Warren felt. The Lieutenant fixed the man with a cold stare:

"You are now a prisoner of war," he said in excellent German, "and your treatment here will depend largely upon your conduct and coöperation. Do you understand that?"

"*Jawohl, Herr Hauptmann,*" answered the prisoner, promoting the Lieutenant to a captain, and looking straight out in front of him.

"Your name?"

"Richter, Hans; Unteroffizier."

Lt. Warren glanced at the shoulder straps on the man's uniform. Yes, he was a sergeant as he stated; there was the horseshoe-shaped silver band denoting his rank.

"What unit do you belong to?"

The PW hesitated; he knew as well as the American officer in front of him the importance of knowing what units the enemy had opposing their own.

"Herr Hauptmann—I am allowed only to tell my name, rank and serial number." The PW stood if possible even more erect.

Lt. Warren looked hard at the German; he appeared to be a real soldier—no use trying to bully him into giving information. Again the Lieutenant looked at the uniform's shoulder straps —a thin line of colored tape encircled the edge. The color was black. That meant the man was an army engineer. Lt. Warren knew that each branch of the German Army had its own color like that—white for infantry, red for artillery, orange for Military Police and so on; black was for engineers.

"You have been well trained, soldier," said Lt. Warren. "Who is the commanding officer of your unit?"

"Major Horst von Wetterling," snapped the PW proudly.

Lt. Warren made a slight nod to Sgt. Murray, who stood just inside the tent entrance, and he quickly went out. The Lieutenant then slowly lit a cigarette, spread out the map of the sector in front of him, and lazily studied the PW, who kept standing stiffly at attention. A few minutes passed, and then Sgt. Murray returned and silently handed Lt. Warren a slip of paper.

It read:

O.B. *Major Horst von Wetterling*
Commanding Officer 173rd Engineer Battalion attached to 73rd Infantry Division.
73rd Inf. Div.
Commander: Lt. Gen. Rudolf von Bünau (53)
Composition: 170th, 186th, 213th Inf. Regt. 173 Arty Bn, 173 Rcn Bn, 173 AT Bn, *173 Eng Bn,* 173 Sig Bn.
Home Station: Würzburg—Bavarian personnel.
Previous campaigns: Poland, Saar, France, the Balkans, Southern Russian Front, Crimea and Caucasus.

Lt. Warren smiled. The Order-of-Battle book had been useful again. All this information from one name! And now to use it.

"To what company of the 173rd Engineer Battalion do you belong?" The question sounded like a shot.

The PW started. How did this American officer know his unit? Wonder and incredulity crept, against his will, into his face. He began to stammer something about being in the infantry.

"Stop lying," ordered Lt. Warren. "I know all about you. Your unit of engineers is attached to the 73rd Infantry Division—home station in Würzburg. Now — out with it — your company?"

The PW hesitated only a moment. The American seemed to know everything already; there was little point in denying the answer.

"Second Company, third platoon, Herr Hauptmann."

LIEUT. WARREN thought quickly. He knew the exact organization of a German engineer battalion: about 850 men full strength, a HQ unit, a signal section, two partly motorized companies, one fully motorized company, one motorized bridge column, and a supply unit: and he knew their equipment and their armament to the last detail. The second company was a partly motorized company whose main function usually was mine-laying.

"How long have you been with the 73rd Division?"

"Since Poland, Herr Hauptmann." It checked.

"What was the mission of your platoon?"

The PW didn't answer.

"What was the mission of your platoon?" the Lieutenant repeated.

The PW was sweating, but he stubbornly remained silent.

"Stand at ease," the Lieutenant ordered. "So—you won't coöperate. Of course I'll have to make a note of that on the report accompanying you back. It might influence the way you will be treated."

The PW moved uneasily.

"I'm going to turn you over to Sgt. Goldstein now," said Lt. Warren.

"He is of Polish descent; his parents were killed in the Ghetto of Warsaw. He'll take care of you."

He motioned to Sgt. Murray at the entrance.

The German PW looked frightened. He stared nervously at the sergeant approaching him, and what he saw did not reassure him. Suddenly he turned to Lt. Warren.

"One moment, please, Herr Hauptmann. I—that is my platoon—was to lay a mine-field."

"That's better," said Lt. Warren, pushing the map toward the PW. "Show me where."

The German did—and he described the field pattern and the paths as best he could.

"Your company has nine light machine-guns and one 20-mm. anti-tank gun," said Lt. Warren. "Where are they placed to cover this mine-field?"

The PW looked wonderingly at the American officer—did he know everything? And now he had started to talk, there was nowhere to stop. He showed Lt. Warren the location of the machine-guns.

There were many other questions, about the other units of the division, about gun installations and about troop deployment. The PW sergeant drew symbols on the map to show exact locations, and Lt. Warren mentally translated these foreign signs into American Army map symbols. The interrogation yielded much information which was quickly put into a report ready for dissemination, and the job was done – the IPW had got his information.

Lt. Warren stepped out of the blackout tent. Outside stood the PW he had just interrogated—alone, smoking a cigarette. Lt. Warren went up to him, slapped him on the back and said —this time in English: "Thanks—that was a good job. How about a cup of coffee?" The PW answered, "Okay—suits me," and the two of them wandered off together while the crackle of small-arms fire and machine-guns kept up their infernal racket in the distance.

For this interrogation had taken place in Camp Ritchie in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Maryland, the Intelligence Training Center where the IPWs were trained, and it was still 1943. The "German PW" who so convincingly had played the rôle of a combat-engineer prisoner was one of many linguists who were used in this training program. This was the last maneuver before graduation, the so-called eight-day-problem, where the graduating IPWs were subjected to conditions as near to those they would find in the field as possible. Therefore the loud-speaker system was blaring forth simulated battle noises day and night for eight days, and "prisoners" were brought to the graduating IPWs for interrogation at all hours.

THE IPW teams had an important mission to fulfill on the battlefield. Our Army had realized that there was no better source of fresh tactical information about the enemy units in contact than the newly captured prisoners of war. In order to get this information correctly and quickly, and above all accurately, certain Intelligence officers and enlisted men received special training in prisoner-of-war interrogation. These men were all fluent in at least one of the enemy languages, and Camp Ritchie was their training camp.

Not only IPWs were trained there, but also Intelligence personnel for PI, Photo Intelligence, the difficult art of interpreting aërial photographs correctly. Also CIC, Counter Intelligence Corps personnel, MII, Military Intelligence Interpretation personnel, and OB, Order of Battle personnel, received their training there.

Lt. Warren used OB to good advantage in his training interrogation, and OB deserves a fuller explanation.

Order of Battle intelligence—OB—consists of detailed and carefully evaluated information about the enemy's army organization, strength, disposition and individual units collected by all our Intelligence Agencies. This information after thorough checking and editing by special OB Teams was printed in Order-of-Battle books.

The purpose of these books, which were continuously being kept up to date by republication, was to furnish Intelligence officers with a clear and accurate picture of the enemy army in all its aspects, from the function and composition of small units, to the organization of the High Command. In this book could be found the histories of all enemy units, including names and short biographies of their commanding officers and staff members.

A thorough IPW officer in the field would often augment this OB book with even more detailed and up-to-date information about the units immediately opposite his own sector.

The value of such a book to the IPW cannot be minimized; it served not only as a check on the veracity of statements by PWs, but also as a source where the knowledge of one small fact would be sufficient to release a vast fund of information. For the commander in the field, the book was of tremendous value in facilitating the planning of military operations and helping in judging the enemy's local capabilities.

But by far the largest number of men at Camp Ritchie were being trained as IPWs, German.

The schooling was tough, and it was thorough. First a compact course in the organization of the American Army, the British Army, the French Army, and the Italian Army. Then came careful training in communications, in sabotage, photo intelligence, keeping intelligence records, and in the various other intelligence aspects. Terrain intelligence was not neglected, either. Maps were painstakingly studied and explained, and several times the students would be taken by closed trucks at night to some unknown district and handed a map of the area on which every village, stream, hill or other terrain feature had been given a name in either German, Italian or some other foreign language. It was up to the student to find his way back by studying the nature of the terrain, and comparing it with the map. Asking the local populace did little good for those who tried. It was difficult to make people understand that you didn't really want to go to Salerno or Anzio, but to some little village right there in Maryland!

BUT the real purpose of the course was a thorough knowledge of the German Army, its organization and tactics, its maps and map symbols, and its documents and records of every description. And this the future IPWs learned.

They learned German Army organization directly from the training manuals of the German Army itself until they knew the exact breakdown of every type of unit by heart, including the number of weapons and all other equipment carried. Even such outlandish units as a *"Nachrichtenhelferinneneinsatzabteilung"* (female signal operations battalion), an *"Astronomischer Messzug"* (astronomical survey platoon), and a *"Kraftfahrzeuginstandsetzungsabteilung"* (motor vehicle repair battalion) were studied and remembered.

They learned German Army identification, from the colors of all the various services and arms, and insignia of all the ranks, to the individual emblems of all the specialized jobs in the German Army right down to the special insignia of the apprentice to the non-commissioned officer in charge of shoeing horses.

And they learned German Army abbreviations and German Army map symbols – and the Germans being a thorough race, there were thousands of them, from Army group headquarters to bread-baking platoons, down to the individual bicyclist, who had a special symbol which could be varied to distinguish him as the Number One man or the Number Two man of the squad. Even messenger dogs and carrier pigeons had their own symbols. And they would learn the art of interrogation: all the little tricks and psychological devices which would make an unwilling man talk—break the stubborn prisoner. But always the PWs were to be treated according to the Geneva Convention.

All through the course the student IPW was required to use his knowledge in training interrogations conducted as in the field, and with experienced German-speaking American soldiers acting as prisoners; and at the end of the course the eight-day-problem as already described signified that the IPW was ready for combat interrogation.

THE record of the IPWs' contributions and experiences on the battlefield makes exciting reading. It is not a history of a few spectacular achievements but of a continuously flowing supply of information of the utmost importance to the commander in the field.

Let us examine just one routine periodic report from one of the IPWs in combat in Italy, Leo Handel. This Intelligence officer's summary of the information his team had given to their field commander during a period of five days, during which an American attack was launched, reads like this in its terse, unexciting military language, enlivened only by a few humorous touches of Handel's own:

Activities of 87 Mtn Inf Regt IPW Team from 20 Feb to 25 Feb 1945

The PW interrogation center of the 87 Mountain Infantry was established night 19 Feb at map ref 505152 (vic Vidiciatico). The setup consisted of an interrogation room, sleeping quarters for the interrogators and attached personnel, one cage for incoming and one for outgoing PWs.

The first members of the master-race to take advantage of the facilities provided arrived shaking from cold and recent experiences early morning 20 Feb. They had been captured on the right flank of the regimental sector, and as was determined later, did not know what hit them.

The enemy MLR (main line of resistance) running from Rocca Corneta to Mt. Belvedere was held by the 5 and 6 Co (W and E) of the 1044 Regt, 232 Div and reinforced by elements of the 14 (AT) Co of the 1044 Regt, which had constructed strongpoints and set up specially trained anti-tank squads equipped with AT close combat weapons. The 7 Co, 1044 Regt was W of the 5 Co and the 8 Co, 1044 Regt followed the 6 Co to the West. The 5 and 6 Co had each appr. 80 to 100 men in combat strength on 19 Feb. Both units were virtually wiped out by the first impact of our attack. Most of the men who were not killed were regrouped, however, on our side of the fence. 40 men of the 5 Co and 43 men of the 6 Co were present and accounted for at the 87th PW cage.

All this detailed information had been gathered through interrogations of more than one hundred PWs. Their statements had been checked and double-checked against each other, and when confirmed were speedily reported to the field commander for his disposition. But how do you get a man who is unwilling to talk, to give information of a nature obviously destructive to his own side?

Illustrated by John McDermott

Bud and I raided this shack in the best Dick Tracy *fashion, and to our surprise bagged General Krueger himself.*

Leo Handel had a method — a sort of three-step affair.

If the PW refused to answer his questions, the Intelligence officer would casually take the tag with which every PW was supplied and which stated the place, time and circumstance of his capture. While talking unconcernedly to his assistant in sentences in which the words Russia and Russian were more than abundant, he would carefully print a large *R* on the tag. Soon the PW would prick up his ears and glance nervously at the conspicuous *R*.

"Pardon me, Herr Offizier," he would then usually inquire, "what means that *R*?"

"Oh," Handel would say airily, "it only means that you will be turned over to the Russians to be interned in Russia or Siberia. We have a certain quota for that, you see, and we usually send them our uncoöperative PWs."

The prisoner could not know that this was a purely fabricated tale; he would gulp, and then:

"Pardon me, Herr Offizier, but I would like to talk now."

This was Step No. 1, and worked most of the time. If it failed, Step No. 2 would be carried out. The officer would continue the interrogation, getting nowhere. He would then seemingly get angry and order his sergeant to take the PW and follow him. He would lead them out behind the house. Here he would draw a rectangle about six feet long and two feet broad in the dirt with his boot and hand the PW a spade:

"All right—start digging!"

A few minutes of working on this cheerful excavation and contemplating its probable use, as often as not made the PW quite talkative.

SHOULD it fail—and some were willing to face death—should the trench take real shape and the PW remain silent, the rare Step No. 3 would be put into operation.

Handel would turn to his sergeant and say in German:

"All right, he is almost ready. Go get the leader of that band of Partisans in the wood. They'll take over; they know what to do."

Internment in Russia the PW might be able to face—that was still in the future; many things could happen. Death too might hold no terror. But the prospect of death brought in the manner of the vengeful Partisans was too much to face. The PW would talk!

So Handel got his information, nobody was hurt—and a slit trench was always in demand for other purposes.

The summary goes on:

The large number of PWs made it possible to obtain a clear picture of the situ-

ation. Two circumstances facilitated the compilation of intelligence: (1) A previous interrogation of a PW of the 6 Co, 1044 Regt whose detailed statements proved to be correct. (2) The capture of the CO of the 6 Co, 1044 Regt (Lt. Kaiser), whose coöperation was secured.

This coöperation of Lieut. Kaiser, Commanding Officer of the 6th Co. of the 1044 Regt., was secured mainly because of the clever use of one important little speck of knowledge. Handel knew from his detailed interrogation of the previously captured PW the name of the CO of the 6th Co. When a group of PWs taken in this company's sector included a lieutenant, Handel saw his chance. He walked nonchalantly up to the German officer and said:

"Good morning, Leutnant Kaiser."

The surprise of the young German, and his sudden respect for the American Intelligence, whose knowledge was so complete that they even knew the name and could identify an obscure little second lieutenant of the German army, was so great that refusing coöperation seemed very futile indeed.

Included in the information this officer supplied were the exact locations in the village of Castellucio of three 88-mm. self-propelled guns which for some time had harassed the American positions, taking a heavy toll in casualties and causing the HQ to go completely underground. The locations of these guns were quickly reported to Artillery Fire Direction, and Handel's report reads:

> Among arty targets pointed out by PWs on the first day of attack were a number of enemy installations in Castellucio. PWs reported on Feb 21 that our arty knocked out three 88mm SP guns in Castellucio.
>
> The enemy committed the first tactical reserves at 200400; one platoon of the 1 Co, 232 Rcn Bn was ordered to counter-attack W of Mt Belvedere. The counter-attack was broken up before it got under way.

This enemy counter-attack was broken up with the valuable aid of the IPW officer, who had learned of the plans from PWs whose statements of preparation and activity had been correctly evaluated by the interrogator.

Handel used to bring certain PWs to the forward OPs (Observation Points) of his outfit. From here the enemy-occupied territory lay spread out in front of them, and the PW could actually point out targets and installations on the terrain itself, assuring accuracy and certainty in this manner.

> The first strategic reserves were committed in the early morning hours of Feb 21 when the rifle Cos of the 1 Bn, 741 Regt, 114 Div were thrown in to regain lost ground. The presence of this division in the sector was not previously known. General Clark, who was notified about this new unit identification, ordered that one PW of the unit should be evacuated immediately for strategic interrogation at higher headquarters.

When an officer like Maj. Gen. Mark Clark, Commanding Officer of the Fifth Army, takes a personal interest in a little incident like the capture of one German soldier, that incident is sure to be important. And it was.

The American offensive was geared to combat the resistance of units known to be in opposition. Here suddenly was identification of an entire new enemy division, the commitment of which would certainly necessitate new plans and tactics. So this all-important PW was rushed back for an exhaustive interrogation by a strategic IPW Team.

Meanwhile, Handel set out to confirm the presence of the new division and gather information about its deployment.

> The 3 Co, 741 Regt, 114 Div was committed N of Polla. PWs stated that the 1 Co was E of them, the 2 Co in reserve. The position of the 1 Co was confirmed later by paybooks found on the W slope of Mt Belvedere. PWs of the 1 Co confirmed further that their Co was digging in on the NW slope of Mt Belvedere.

It was while attempting to acquire information about this position on Mount Belvedere that Step No. 3 in Handel's procedure backfired.

The interrogator had just ordered his sergeant to fetch the legendary Partisan leader, to the horror of the dig-

gin, PW, when one of his fellow-interrogators rounded the corner of the building and bore down on the little group.

On his head was an Italian officer's tattered cap; several cartridge belts were slung helter-skelter around his shoulders; a large red scarf was flowing from his neck; and his pockets were bulging with assorted knives and revolvers; in his hand he clutched a huge drawn sword. Obviously the Partisan leader in person!

"Let me at him!" he roared as he charged clumsily toward them.

The sight was too much for Handel —he burst into laughter, and was soon joined by the sergeant and even the fierce "Partisan leader." And the PW was not too dumb to catch on—no information was forthcoming from him. But there were other fish in the net.

The summary contains even more information about the different units of the newly identified 114 Division, and it ends like this:

> 153 PWs were captured by the 87 Mtn Inf between 20 Feb and 25 Feb and interrogated by this IPW Team. A large amount of documents was collected by various agencies and cleared through IPW. Some of them were necessarily outdated, but verified previously obtained intelligence. Among the intelligence obtained from documents were the following important items: (1) Identification and location of a new enemy infantry division. (2) Overlays and detailed plans of mine-fields in the vicinity of Corona. (3) Enemy arty maps indicating predetermined arty targets.

How many American lives were saved by this last little item alone?

What more can you ask than possession of a map showing areas the enemy is zeroed in on and intends to shell?

THE activities of the IPWs were not limited to interrogations alone, however. Their ability to speak the enemy's language, and their psychological knowledge of the enemy's character, were often useful in other ways.

Thus in April, 1945, the Silver Star was won by Captain Ferdinand P. Sperl, Commanding Officer of IPW Team No. 10, attached to XII Corps HQ, for a daring feat.

Captain Sperl had learned through interrogation of several PWs that a German Staff group with highly valuable documents was located behind the enemy lines opposite his sector. He volunteered to effect the capture of this group with the documents intact.

Captain Sperl, exposing himself to the gravest personal danger, made his way through the German lines held by fanatic S.S. troops, and made contact with the German Staff Commander. He succeeded in convincing this officer of the advisability of surrendering his group and the documents to an American task force!

"Let me at him!" he roared as he charged clumsily toward them.

Again Captain Sperl crossed the lines, subjecting himself to possible capture and death, and returned behind the German lines leading a task force which captured the Staff group and the undamaged documents.

QUITE a few of the IPWs were of German and Austrian descent; some of them had even arrived in the United States only a few years prior to the war. Their intimate knowledge of the enemy people and their language was of course of great value, but it was often quite amusing to listen to their heavy Teutonic accents.

One certain master sergeant who hated the Nazis thoroughly had an especially strong accent. Once his team was changed from one unit to another and installed close behind the front. Our sergeant was on his way to the unit's Command Post, when he was challenged by an American sentry.

"Vat do you vant," said the IPW sergeant. "I am an Amerrican sergeant. I am on ze vay to my headkvarters!"

That was enough for the soldier, and the IPW found himself in spite of his heavily accented protests, in the prisoner-of-war enclosure along with a lot of recently taken PWs. They received him as one of theirs, telling him everything he wanted to know; and he used his time to good advantage before he was brought to his own astounded team for interrogation.

I would like to tell about an experience of my own with a case on which I acted as chief interrogator. Although I worked as an agent in the Counter Intelligence, I had taken the complete IPW course in Camp Ritchie, and was well versed in the use of the OB book, which came in very handy in this case.

As CIC, part of our routine duty was to screen all the individuals picked up by the Military Police for various small offenses, and that was what I was doing on the morning of 28 April, 1945, in a little town in Germany called Weiden, aided by another agent, Bud Hock.

One of the prisoners, a travel-violator, was an innocent-looking Rhinelander who claimed to be a deserter from the Wehrmacht. He told us exactly to what units he had belonged and where he had served; but something told us he wasn't speaking the truth; and on a hunch, we detained him. It was then that my IPW training helped out—I remembered the OB book.

It was not difficult to get hold of one, and with it we proceeded to check our prisoner's statements. We had him brought to us again, and with the Order of Battle as a guide began to interrogate him in detail about the units he claimed to have belonged to during the last two years of his army career. It was not long before it became evident that the man was lying.

So we gave him an ultimatum: Tell the truth, or suffer the fate of a spy!

The Rhinelander told the truth and it was a startling story.

He was a Werewolf—a member of the Nazi underground organization which had sworn to fight the Allies to the death! He had come with them from Czechoslovakia, where the Germans had run a Werewolf school directly under Himmler's command. General Krueger, commanding this school, had received an order from Himmler ordering him to move to Germany with his entire school, then numbering over three hundred men, to set up near a little town called Schoensee, and "to stay behind, evade capture and then harass and destroy supplies and U.S. troops in the rear."

This they had done, and were now firmly entrenched *behind* the American lines!

Our prisoner belonged to the HQ unit, and there were three more units whose whereabouts were unknown to him, but who took their orders from the HQ unit by radio. Their equipment of weapons, ammunition and food was plentiful, and the first targets for their activities were even now being selected. Our man was an outside agent, and therefore knew only approximately where the Werewolf HQ was located; they were extremely security-conscious.

With the information received from this extensive interrogation, we requested and got tactical aid from the G-2 of XII Corps, Colonel John H. Claybrook.

On the morning of 30 April, 1945, two companies of infantry soldiers were sent through the woods where the Werewolves' HQ was supposed to be. They saw absolutely no sign of them, and only brought back three German deserters and three civilian forest workers. A very discouraging result.

I interrogated the captives, however, and succeeded in breaking one of the forest workers, who confirmed the existence of the Werewolf HQ unit.

Our two companies had departed, and so with this man as our guide, Bud and I and ten others made a thorough search of a wooded sector of about one thousand square yards pointed out to us as the bivouac area. For two hours we tramped about without seeing anybody, much less any blood-thirsty Werewolves. The search was given up.

But Bud and I continued by ourselves, and our search brought us to a little shack in the forest. We raided this shack in the best *Dick Tracy* fashion, and to our surprise bagged General Krueger himself and four of his staff, all in civilian clothes. We persuaded the General that the game was up, and he agreed to take us to the area where his men were located.

WE were somewhat skeptical when he led us to the exact area we had already searched twice that day. But before an hour was up we had about forty prisoners, heaps of weapons, ammunition and food all of which had been hidden in underground installations so cleverly concealed that we had walked right on top of them without noticing them at all!

The records which we also captured made it possible to annihilate the entire Werewolf organization of over three hundred fanatic and well-trained Nazis. Thus the interrogation of one man made possible the destruction of an entire organization equipped to do untold damage to American troops.

When the war was over and combat Intelligence operations ceased, counter Intelligence was stressed to insure the security of Allied troops and to bring war criminals and Nazi leaders to justice. The IPW Teams were on hand for conversion from combat to counter Intelligence.

The G-2 Section of the XII Corps doing occupation duty in Germany had this to say about that arrangement in its Occupation Report of Operations:

"The results were excellent; much worthwhile information and many leads to ultimate arrests by CIC were furnished."

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the opinion of our General Staff Officers in regard to the achievements and contributions of the IPWs in combat is to quote the citation accompanying the Bronze Star awarded Leo Handel, IPW, 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment.

"During the extensive operations of a regiment of mountain infantrymen against enemy forces fiercely defending their vital positions, Handel performed his vital duty as a member of the IPW Team with such devotion to duty and keen technical knowledge that the high efficiency of his section was maintained at all times. Through his tireless and intelligent efforts the success of the operations was speeded toward the final surrender of the enemy. He many times operated his station well forward in areas undergoing terrifying barrages of enemy artillery and mortar fire; but with tenacity of purpose he remained at his task, and by the tactful use of his superior knowledge and skillful methods of interrogation, he obtained much valuable information about the enemy's disposition and strength. His commendable work in the Intelligence section and personal initiative and bravery are truly typical of the highest traditions of the United States Army."
By Command of Major General HAYS.

This was the IPW.

GONE, BUT ARE THEY FORGOTTEN?

A Quiz

by ED DEMBITZ

IN the never-ending struggle for existence, some animals must fall by the wayside. Here are ten that have become completely extinct; some, thousands or millions of years ago—others, in recent centuries. Can you identify them from the descriptions below?

1. All that remains of this huge and ungainly flightless bird from the island of Mauritius are bones, some drawings by Dutch artists of the Seventeenth Century, and the expression "Extinct as a ——."

2. Probably the largest animal that ever lived upon the land, this four-legged reptile of the Mesozoic Era was over sixty feet long, twelve feet high, and must have weighed forty tons.

3. The last one was killed and eaten by New Zealand natives three centuries ago, but the island still yields eggshells and bones from this flightless feathered bird, the largest of which attained a height of nine feet.

4. The most striking peculiarity of these ferocious "cats" which roamed North America in prehistoric days are the eight-inch upper canine teeth, scimitar-shaped and used as stabbing weapons. Fossil remains are common in California.

5. Wholesale destruction for food by mankind probably caused the extermination of this famous American bird whose flights and roosting in vast flocks so awed observers a century ago. The last specimen died of old age in 1914 at the Cincinnati Zoo.

6. These long-haired relatives of present-day Indian elephants lived at the same time as early Man. Entire skeletons and even flesh have been recovered from frozen tundra, and thousands of the long curved tusks were brought to market in recent years.

7. Birds once had teeth, as is evidenced by skeletons found in Germany (Nineteenth Century) of this well-known species, about the size and appearance of a crow but having some reptilian characteristics.

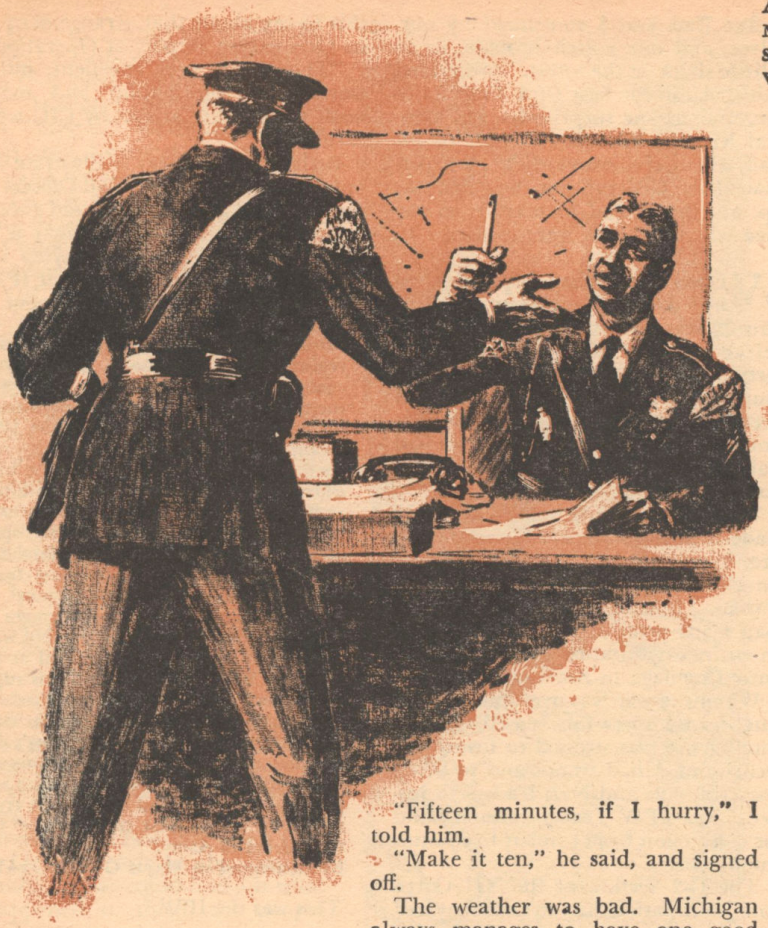
8. Aside from its popularity in crossword puzzles, this bird is famed as the one that carried *Sinbad* to the Valley of Diamonds. In reality flightless and confined to Madagascar, it is also noted for its ten-foot height and twelve-inch-diameter eggs.

9. Ancestors of today's armadillos, these prehistoric shelled American mammals grew to the size of a rhinoceros while retaining their tortoise-like appearance.

10. With wings that were too small for flight, this Northern penguin was an easy prey to men who sought its flesh and eggs for food, its feathers for pillows and beds. The last two live specimens were captured in 1844.

Answers:

1. Dodo
2. Brontosaurus (a dinosaur)
3. Moa
4. Saber-tooth Tiger
5. Passenger Pigeon
6. Woolly Mammoth
7. The Lizard-tailed bird (Archaeopteryx)
8. Elephant Bird or Roc
9. Glyptodon
10. Great Auk or Garefowl



AN OFFICER OF THE STATE POLICE HAS A MIDNIGHT MURDER ON HIS HANDS, AND A SNOWBOUND COUNTRY HOUSE PEOPLED WITH SUSPECTS.

by KARL DETZER

STATE SENATOR FRANK MAXTON talked to the grand jury on Thursday, November 7th. According to the afternoon papers, he implicated several prominent citizens in the dog-racing, branch banking and liquor scandals which were shaking Michigan from the Straits to the Ohio line. After he testified, Maxton drove at once to his farm upstate. There, at five minutes before midnight, he was killed.

At four that afternoon I had been assigned as his bodyguard, and I reached the farm a little after eight. That gave me nearly four hours to head off the murder. I didn't head it off. One paper even hinted that I let it happen, purposely.

Of course, it doesn't matter what they say about me. I'm only a State Police corporal, second in command of Post 21 at Detroit. It matters a lot about the outfit, though. It shouldn't have to take the rap.

That Thursday afternoon at 3:48 I was on routine patrol along Telegraph Road west of Detroit when my radio spoke up.

"Station 21 calling Car 272." It was Sergeant Jennison, post commander. He wanted to know how soon I could get in.

"Fifteen minutes, if I hurry," I told him.

"Make it ten," he said, and signed off.

The weather was bad. Michigan always manages to have one good hard November snowstorm, and we sure were having it. I turned around fast, but it took twelve minutes to reach the post at Seven Mile and Grand River.

The Sergeant said: "You happen to know Senator Maxton?"

I nodded. "By sight. Been reading about him."

The Sergeant grunted: "You're going to know him—plenty."

Maxton had been a State senator eight years. Liked fishing and hunting, fast cars and fast horses. Gave lots of parties at his farm, and never seemed to lack cash. Last time I'd seen him, he'd had a snappy blonde number at the game at Briggs Stadium.

The Sergeant went on: "From what the Commissioner says, if there's anything Maxton didn't tell the grand jury today, it just didn't happen. He'll be star witness in the graft trials."

I asked: "Where do I come in?"

"You're going to keep him alive and hearty for the trials."

"Now, listen, Sarge—" I began, but he cut me off.

"Commissioner's orders. He picked you, by name. Maxton's on his way to his farm right now. It's upstate, near Road 27."

"Alone?"

"In his car, yeah. I don't know who's at the farm. Don't even know if he's got a family. Probably not. Likes the ladies too well. You get into plain clothes." He picked up the telephone and told the Commissioner, up at Lansing: "Corporal Clinton's starting in five minutes."

I changed fast. It didn't take five minutes. But out on the road again, traffic was brutal. I rolled west on U. S. 16, and over near Fowlerville stopped at a coffeepot for a hamburger.

A dozen guys, mostly truck-drivers, were at the counter, eating and listening to the radio. There'd just been a news-flash about Maxton, I gathered, and one guy was betting that the Senator wouldn't live a week. The talk didn't make me too comfortable. Besides, the music was lousy, a recording of "Summertime Sal," that you were hearing everywhere. It didn't fit this kind of winter weather, so I swallowed my coffee hot and went on.

The snow got worse. I passed a V-plow throwing up a cloud on the Red Cedar bridge. At Lansing I turned north on U. S. 27. I'd often patrolled this road and thought I knew every inch of it, but when I got to the county road that turns off toward Maxton's farm, the drifts were so deep I nearly missed it. From there on I had to break track. The farm was off the county road maybe an eighth of a mile. It was a big place, I knew, with barns full of expensive horses and lots of woods for hunting parties. I saw a caretaker's cottage by the main gate, but didn't stop—I might not get started again.

A PORCH light was burning at the main house, and I rang the doorbell, which had a horseshoe above it. A girl opened the door. She was a good-looker, young and thin and dark, with a red dress and a red flower in her hair. She batted her eyes at me.

"Corporal Clinton," I said. "State Police."

"We're expecting you," she told me. "I'm Sylvia Silver."

I must have looked surprised, for she laughed, that same little laugh you hear on the radio. You remember. "Summertime Sal" is Sylvia's big song.

Bodyguard

"I'm a friend of the Senator," she said. "I like horses."

I just said, "Um," and knocked snow off my shoes. The papers had talked about Sylvia and Maxton, but I couldn't remember just what. Maybe she did like horses. It didn't matter. I put down my suitcase, and she said: "The man will carry it up for you. He's upstairs with the Senator now."

IT was a big living-room, like a hunting lodge in the movies, with a balcony around three sides, and a beamed ceiling way up yonder. A stone fireplace filled one end, and there were pictures of men in red coats, mounted on horses. The stair was in the far corner.

Upstairs, somebody was whistling.

"That's the Senator," Sylvia Silver said. "He's always whistling it. My theme song, you know."

I wasn't so slow this time. "Recognized it," I told her. " 'Summertime Sal.' You sure know how to sing it."

She gave me a big smile and said, "I'll sing it for you, some time," and just then somebody started downstairs. "The man for your bag," she said. "Name's Smith. Calls himself the butler."

She seemed to think that funny, and she was right; he didn't look like a butler. He was maybe six feet two and beefy, and wore a plaid Mackinaw shirt and green Soo pants tucked into high boots.

"You the cop?" he asked, pretty unfriendly.

"Corporal Clinton," I answered, and didn't like him either. He had eyes like a dead rockbass, and looked as if he used bourbon when he shaved.

"I'm scared to death," Sylvia Silver said. "Does the poor Senator really need a bodyguard? I hope you've got a gun."

I didn't answer that. Snow was scratching like nails on the windows, and I noticed that the heavy curtains still were open. I pulled them shut. You wouldn't expect anybody to come gunning on such a night, but why take any chances? The servant, butler or whatever he was, reached for my bag, but I'm no cripple. I picked it up myself and followed him.

The six bedrooms all opened on the balcony, and each had its own bath. I found that out later when I looked around. The fellow walked past two closed doors on the north and two open ones on the east. Maxton's room was at the second turn, and the girl's just beyond it. I knew it was hers, for its door was open too, and there were enough bottles on the dresser to start a drugstore. Smith stopped at the fourth door, which made it next Maxton's.

"You're in this one," he said, and immediately the Senator came out. He wore a fancy red flannel shirt and gray slacks, and was tying a hand-painted necktie; a pretty good-looking fellow, I thought—on the sporty side, lean and hard, with a lot of curly gray hair.

"Corporal Clinton reporting," I said.

Senator Maxton shook hands, and said it was nice of me to come, and showed me the room, and said if anything was lacking, to let him know. Nothing was lacking. My suitcase looked sort of shabby in such elegant surroundings, and I set it behind the bed.

"The prosecutor promised me protection," Maxton said. "I suppose you know what this is all about, Corporal."

"All I need know, sir, I'm to bodyguard you."

He went through the motions of straightening a picture of some duck hunters. Over his shoulder he said: "I talked to the grand jury, today, Corporal. Voluntarily, understand." He turned around and began all over on his necktie. "You know, a man in my position gets involved in things against his will. Now, understand, I never took a bribe. Some favors, yes. A lot of wolves down at the capitol always have pockets full of money. They gave me some. A lot. But not for pay. Just for favors. I never promised anything."

He paused. Sylvia Silver had appeared in the doorway.

"You had stopped whistling, darling," she said in her cooing voice, "so I wondered what was up."

He laughed nervously. "Just giving the Corporal a fill-in, darling. So he'll know what to guard against."

She said, "Like that phone call?"

He shrugged. "Oh, yes. Tonight, Corporal. Couple of hours ago. Smith was at the phone as I got home. Somebody said, 'Tell Maxton to say his prayers,' and hung up. Sort of silly."

I said, "You didn't trace it?"

"Oh, no. Might have, but just then the line went out."

"Out?" I said.

"It's nothing. Hard snow or wind, and these country lines always go out. It's really blowing. We'll be lucky if the lights don't go too." He turned impatiently to Sylvia. "Honey, this necktie—"

Before he could finish, a bell rang loudly. I saw a scared shadow cross Maxton's face. "Doorbell again," he said.

We went out to the balcony. I saw Smith, hurrying toward the door, unfasten the top button of his shirt and stick his hand inside. So he carried a shoulder holster, did he? He turned a latch and opened the door a crack. Snow whipped in, and the fireplace puffed smoke.

"Who is it, Smith?" the Senator called.

And Smith hollered back: "It's Joe Flasky."

I knew all about Flasky. Everybody did. He was crooked as a dog's hind leg. He'd made a pile of money during prohibition, then reformed and went into dog-racing, one of those nice little businesses the Senator and the grand jury just had talked about.

"Let him in," Maxton called.

"Him?" I objected. "Tonight?"

MAXTON cut me off short. Said Flasky was his neighbor. Had a hunting camp up the back road, and dropped in often. Smith opened the door wider, and the fellow blew in. Snow looked comical, piled on his derby hat. He was half-pint size, even in a fur overcoat. I remembered, seeing his thin face, that his pals called him "Weasel."

"Give Joe a drink, warm him up," Maxton called, and whispered to me that it'd be better if Flasky didn't know my business. "I'll just call you Mr. Clinton, say you're here to buy a horse."

"Okay," I agreed, hoping the talk would stay off horses. I don't know much about them.

I followed Maxton. He whistled "Summertime Sal" as he ran down the stair. Flasky had his coat off and was warming his hands. "Ain't the

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JAMES ERNST

weather awful!" he said. "Goin' to have to stay all night, Maxton. Car can't turn a wheel."

"Good," Maxton agreed heartily. "Lots of room. Meet Mr. Clinton."

Flasky gave me a short going-over and said to Maxton: "Heard about you on the news. Suppose you show judgment, what you tell the jury—" He glanced at the stairs. "Hi, cutie!" he yelled at Sylvia.

She answered, "Good evening," pretty chilly, I thought, and coming over to me, she said under her breath; "He's poison, that fellow. Watch him."

"Um," I said. They never can quote you on that.

"The Senator should go to bed early," she said to Flasky. "He's had quite an ordeal today and— Well, what's up now?"

WE all turned toward the front door. Someone was working a key in the lock outside. The door opened fast; a man stood there, taking out a key. He had a shotgun over his arm.

"Hello, Fred!" Maxton exclaimed. "You gave us a start."

Sylvia said to me: "It's Fred Tobias, the farmer on the place. Lives over by the gate."

He was an oldish fellow, in galoshes and a jumper suit, and had the eartabs down on his cap. He nodded to Flasky as if he knew him.

"Anybody snooping round here?" he asked. He stamped the snow off his galoshes. "Ten minutes ago I'm at the barns, and the wife hears somebody. She calls her brother, who's stayin' with us; and we go out, and sure's shootin', somebody's cut 'cross-fields from the road. There's tracks under all our windows."

"What kind of tracks?" I asked, thinking he meant a car.

He gave me a sharp look, and Maxton said: "Mr. Clinton's a friend of mine, Fred."

"Human tracks," the farmer answered. "Can't tell if it's a man or woman. Whoever it was, though, lit out this way."

I glanced at Flasky, who understood and talked fast.

"Ain't me, Fred. I ain't around your house. I come other way, truth. Up the old bridle-path. Why'd I want to look in your windows?"

Nobody answered—nobody had the time; for of all things, the doorbell rang again. Busy night for the country, I thought, but that's often the way. Things happen where you least expect them.

"Better keep out of the draft, Senator," I said.

He got the hint and ducked. Smith was still in the kitchen, so I half-opened the door myself. A man, covered with snow, was holding up something I took to be a woman. I opened the door wider, and snow swept in.

Smith shouldered past me.

"Who the hell are you?" he demanded. "Who's this dame?" He yanked the woman away from the man. Her knees buckled, and I caught her. "She's froze," Smith said. "Where you come from?"

Sylvia called: "Quick, let them in!"

The stranger was bareheaded. He said afterward that he'd lost his hat when he got out of his car. The girl couldn't have weighed a hundred pounds. She didn't have on too many clothes for this weather, and they didn't look like very good clothes.

Sylvia said: "Here . . . Poor thing! Get coffee, Smith."

"Who the hell are you?" Smith repeated.

The fellow shook the snow from his head. He was blond and young, maybe twenty-five years, and about five feet nine. His overcoat was turned up around his ears, with snow inside the collar.

"Name's Anderson," he answered. "Salesman. Groceries and food products." His teeth chattered. "Ran my car off the road. Got lost. Have to phone my wife."

"No phone," Smith said.

The salesman looked surprised. "Since when?" he said. "You got a phone."

"Since the storm," Smith answered. "Who's this dame?"

Sylvia had peeled the thin coat from the kid's shoulders and was pulling off her wet shoes. She didn't look very old in the light. Eighteen, maybe.

"How do I know who she is?" the man said sharply. "Found her right here by your door. Says her car's in a drift too. Can believe it, all right—"

"Listen, Mister," the farmer broke in, "was you snoopin' down at the gate?"

"Me? No." The fellow was gulping the whisky Maxton had brought. "Couldn't even find a gate!"

"Somebody was snooping."

"I was." The girl half-opened her eyes. She had a weak little voice. "I—was trying to find—Mr. Maxton—"

THE Senator came in from the dining-room again, this time with coffee. He was intent on Anderson. "What did you say your name was?" he asked.

"Why, Anderson."

"Last time I saw you," the Senator said slowly, "your name was Terry Carsten."

The fellow grinned. "Thanks—glad you know me. Sure, that's my professional name. Terry Carsten the boxer. Still fight some."

"An' what you make o' that, Senator!" Flasky cried. "Terry Carsten! An' me thinkin' him still in jail!"

I remembered him, too. Carsten was a lightweight who'd been mixed up in a hot-tire racket a year or so ago. He was still grinning, a bit proud, I thought, that we'd recognized him.

"I spot you too, Senator," he said. "Not so hard in your case, way the papers been playin' your pictures today."

Maxton was annoyed. He told Smith abruptly to get dry socks and moccasins for both men. "And lay out pajamas," he added. "Mr. Carsten will have to spend the night too. And this poor young lady. Sylvia, honey, you can fix her up—make her comfortable?"

HIS voice trailed off nervously, and Smith growled: "Regular damn' boarding-house!"

"I got one spare bed," the farmer said.

Maxton was quick. "Oh, no, Fred, there's room here. Besides, I want you to stay too."

"Here? All night?" the farmer objected.

"Help with the fires, maybe. Never know what might come up—unseasonable storm like this. You say your wife's brother's with her." It was a lame excuse and Tobias didn't seem too happy. He took a cup of coffee, but kept his shotgun on his arm as he drank. "You can lie down on the billiard-room couch" Maxton said.

"I'll have to tell the wife—"

I left them arguing, and joined Sylvia and the girl. The kid still shivered. She seemed plenty scared, too, but she finally said her name was Ruth Hasty, and she was a reporter for the *Free Press*, working out of Lansing instead of Detroit.

"Reporter?" Sylvia echoed, and her voice chilled.

The girl did not notice. Her office wanted her to interview the Senator, she explained.

"Interview me?" Maxton asked, overhearing. "What about?"

Flasky gave a noisy laugh, and the kid didn't answer for a moment, just stared at Maxton with a funny look on her homely little face. Then she said, half-believing: "Are *you*—the Senator?"

"I am." Maxton smiled. "And you are Miss—"

"Ruth Hasty," the girl said. She took a handkerchief from her pocket and blew her nose. "I've caught a cold." Her voice still was apologetic. She didn't sound like a very big-time reporter to me—too scared and upset. Maxton was studying her just as he had Carsten a minute ago, apparently trying to remember something about her, too. He gave up.

"Miss Hasty should have something substantial to eat," he decided then. "Sylvia, honey, will you see to it?"

"Oh!" the kid cried, starting up. "*You're* Sylvia Silver?"

"That's right, darling," Sylvia answered, all sweetness again, and she told Smith to fix some hot soup and toast.

I sat down, running things over in my mind. Not much had happened. There had been an unexplained phone-call. But it probably was unimportant. Calls always came in, once the papers played a hot story like Maxton's. What might be important were these people. Here, together for the night, we had the glamorous Sylvia Silver, and a half-starved kid who claimed to be a reporter. . . . She might be, of course. Newspaper people were funny sometimes.

And this Joe Flasky—who certainly should be interested in what the grand jury might discover about dog-racing. And this punk who sold groceries, now—but used to be the Terry Carsten that was mixed up in hot tires. And a farmer with a shotgun. And Smith, a surly guy with a gun under his shirt. Not to mention the Senator himself.

I glanced at my wrist-watch—eleven o'clock. I was to report from my car at midnight.

"Eleven," the Senator said, looking at his own watch. . . . "Oh, good, Smith. That will make Miss Hasty feel better, I'm sure."

Smith had brought some hot soup and a plate of toast, but he was no more polite with the kid than he'd been with me. He just shoved the tray at her and demanded: "Where'd you pick up this Carsten fellow, anyhow?"

"Carsten?" she repeated. "Oh, the man who found me?" She tasted the soup. "Why, he told you. Right outside the door. I'd fallen down."

"When'd you leave Lansing?" You could see Smith was trying to trip her, and the Senator broke in smoothly:

"You shouldn't have started north in such weather, Miss Hasty. I'm not worth the trouble. But if you want an interview—"

The girl seemed to be collecting her courage. "I do," she said, "—one about you and Miss Silver."

There was what you call a dead silence.

"What about us?" Sylvia asked sharply.

The kid's eyes settled on the red flower in Sylvia's hair.

"Whether he's really going to marry you," she said.

Joe Flasky cackled, while Maxton scowled. The expression on Sylvia's face was astonishment.

"Well, well," Flasky said, "here we all set, wonderin' what his nibs spills to the jury, an' are we all goin' to do a hitch in State prison, an' this dame comes askin' about his love-life!"

"Shut up, Joe," Maxton barked.

"I'm sorry," the girl said. Her hands were trembling. "But that's what the editor—that's what he wants—to know."

Sylvia stood up, no longer just astonished. She looked like a pretty tiger about to jump. "Listen, dearie," she said, "why don't you get the hell out of here? Go fall in a snowdrift and stay!"

"Shall I quote you?" the kid asked. It was her first sign of spunk. "That kind of talk won't look so good to your public."

"Come, come!" Maxton intervened, "What *is* all this? We'd better go to bed. Do the interview tomorrow." He stood up.

"And who are you?" he demanded. "Who's this dame?"

I saw Maxton lying on his side on the floor. He was dead.

Carsten got up too. "Where *is* the phone?" he asked.

"Didn't I tell you it was out?" Smith answered. Carsten shrugged, and Smith, muttering, followed me upstairs. "Persistent guy, ain't he?" he said.

WE locked the windows in all bedrooms. Shutters were banging, and in Sylvia's room snow had sifted in on the sill.

"She sure is sore at that kid," Smith said. "Can't blame her much."

I didn't press the matter. It was none of my business. What did disturb me was that no bedroom door had a lock. Maxton didn't like locks on bedrooms, Smith explained. He opened the first room at the top of the stairs for Carsten. The Hasty girl would be next, and Flasky next her. Then, as I'd seen earlier, came my room, beside Maxton's, and finally Sylvia's.

We went down and checked the kitchen and Smith's own room, opening off it. Cellar and outside kitchen doors were bolted. We examined the billiard- and dining-rooms. Everything was okay, so far as anyone getting in from outside.

But back in the living-room, you could almost smell trouble. Maxton leaned against the mantel, apparently lost in thought. Smith fixed the night chain on the door.

"Bedtime?" the Senator asked, turning briskly. "How about a little good-night song first, Sylvia?" And I suddenly remembered she had promised me one, earlier.

"Not tonight," she refused sharply. "I don't feel like singing."

"All right, honey," Maxton said, and Sylvia left immediately, saying good night to no one.

As soon as she was out of hearing, the kid said, "Now about my interview, Mr. Maxton?"

He wasn't so polite this time. "I told you not tonight."

She pretended she hadn't heard. "Are you going to marry her?"

"That's none of your business, Miss Hasty," he said.

"Yes, it's my business." She was showing spunk again, and Joe Flasky laughed.

"Like I says, she's got your love-life on the brain, Maxton."

"I told you I'd talk to you tomorrow, Miss Hasty," the Senator repeated. "Meantime, good night."

She climbed the stair slowly. Carsten and Joe Flasky followed. Smith showed them their rooms, and came right down, and the farmer shifted his shotgun and went into the billiard-room.

"Nice, quiet evening," Maxton said. He took the hearth-broom and swept some melted snow into the fireplace, then carefully turned out all but one light. "Nothing to stay awake for, Corporal," he told me, and went upstairs, whistling "Summertime Sal."

Smith asked: "Now what, copper?"

"Good night for me too," I replied.

In my room I put on heavy ski socks and two sweaters, and after five minutes, slipped out to the balcony, carrying my shoes and a blanket. I was easing down to the floor by Maxton's door when the wind gave an extra push, and the one light downstairs flickered and went out. So Maxton had been right—the power line was down now as well as the telephone. I tested the flashlight under the blanket.

My watch said eleven-forty. In twenty minutes I must go out and call the post on my radio. I could have a smoke, then.

I had sat another two or three minutes, when I heard a sound—downstairs. Not the wind, either. This was different. More like the creak of the door from the kitchen.

Carrying my shoes, I felt my way down the stair. The next sound came from the billiard-room, and I heard the farmer ask hoarsely: "Who's there?"

I flashed on my light and ran softly. Smith, fully dressed but in stocking-feet too, stood in the billiard-room doorway. Tobias, facing him, was in red-flannel underwear.

"What you want?" he repeated.

"Somebody's trying the back door," Smith whispered.

We crept to the kitchen. In a moment we heard it, a scraping sound outside. I took the gun from my holster and eased the bolt. There were no tracks in the snow.

Smith whispered again: "Listen."

A broom hung outside the door. It was swinging in the wind against the wall. "That's it," Smith said. He grinned foolishly.

"Oh, for gosh sakes!" Tobias exploded.

"Too bad it wasn't somebody," I said. "Catch him, and end the suspense. But now I'm out this far—" I explained that I was supposed to call my post at midnight.

Tobias was startled.

"Oh, sure, he's a copper in disguise," Smith told him. "A bodyguard." He laughed.

I pulled on my shoes, took a shovel and waded out. Snow was piled high against the car doors. I got one open at last and turned on the radio and waited for the tubes to warm. But they didn't warm. I waited a few more minutes. Then I realized. The battery had been weak, cold must have drained its power. I monkeyed another minute, then gave up. I'd have something to settle with the Sergeant now.

I started back to the house. It was harder going against the wind. I stumbled and half-fell, and that's when I heard Flasky yelling.

He was in his shirt-tail on the back steps, waving his pants.

"Quick!" he screamed. "Quick! Maxton!"

I pushed him aside. Smith and Tobias were not in the kitchen. I raced up the stairs to the balcony. There was a lot of confusion, and all doors except one were open. My flashlight showed a huddle of people in Maxton's door. I went through it.

A candle was burning on the dressing-table and another on the bed table. By their glow I saw Maxton lying on his side on the floor.

Smith and Sylvi stood over him. He was dead. I looked at my watch. It was exactly midnight.

I herded Sylvia and Smith out of the room. She was crying, and he was swearing. Flasky, Tobias and little Miss Hasty were in the doorway. I turned my light on their faces. The kid's hair was flat as a pancake, and she was wrapped in a blanket and looked younger and homelier than ever. Tobias had his shotgun out. Flasky was making little sympathetic clucking sounds.

"Go downstairs, all of you," I said.

Smith objected, but he finally followed the others, and I went back into the room. The bed was unopened, and Maxton wore a wool dressing-gown over his clothes. He'd been shot through the forehead.

On the floor lay a .22-caliber nickel-plated revolver. It could have fallen from his hand. Or someone could have dropped it. I thought of Smith's shoulder holster. An easy-chair with a blanket in it stood beside the bed. Maxton might have been sitting in it. On its arm an ash-tray held two stubs. There'd been time for several cigarettes since he came upstairs. I tried the windows. They were still locked, but the empty wastebasket was upset and one small rug was awry. I touched nothing, even used my handkerchief to fasten the door-latch.

Downstairs Smith had lighted a candle, and was stirring up the fire. I looked down from the balcony: Two women, three men. Someone was missing. I ran around the balcony.

CARSTEN'S door still was shut. He lay covered up in bed with his back to the door, but when I threw the light on him, he sat up.

"Get up," I said. "Dress and come downstairs."

He rolled his feet over to the floor. "What for?" he asked.

"Do as you're told," I said.

He didn't argue. I ran on down, and he followed immediately. Smith had found more candles. But even the light of a dozen isn't enough to see all you need to, when you're talking to six people, one of whom has just done a murder.

I said: "Lay your guns on the table, first."

"But I have no gun," Sylvia protested. "You don't think I—" She covered her face with the sleeve of her dressing-gown, and I noticed the gown, an expensive job with white fur.

"Put your shotgun down, Tobias," I ordered.

"All right, since you're a cop," he said.

Flasky exclaimed: "Cop? Him? Why don't you tell a feller!"

"He's a bodyguard," Smith taunted. "A dead-bodyguard."

I LET it pass. He wasn't so far wrong. "Your gun next," I told him, "from the holster under your left shoulder."

"And what if I don't want to?" he asked.

"Then I'll conclude you don't have it with you now. Maybe you don't. The gun that killed Maxton is up there on the floor."

Smith swore and jerked open his shirt; his holster was empty. "Gun's in my room," he said.

That sounded fishy, but I let it pass, too. I could search his room later. Flasky, dressed now in his pants, brought out a small flat automatic.

"Well, Carse," I prompted.

"Sure, I carry a gun," he admitted, "in my car. Up the road."

"How about you, Miss Hasty?" I asked.

"Me?" She was so excited she let the blanket slip, and I saw she had no dress on.

"Neither lady carries a gun," I said. "Both of you horrified at the very thought. Okay for now. What happened? Smith, you first."

He rubbed his chin. He'd shut the kitchen door after me to keep out the cold, he said, but he was waiting there when he thought he heard a shot. Then he did hear a scream. He ran upstairs, and found Sylvia outside Maxton's door, crying.

"Door was open?"

"Wide."

"Where were you, Tobias?" I asked.

The farmer was excited. "Why, when you go outdoors, I go back to bed. Just had the covers up when I heard the shot. I got up—fast. I—I heard a woman screamin', and I run. There was two, three folks on the

gallery. Don't know who. It was dark."

"Miss Silver?" She didn't reply, and I repeated her name.

"I was in bed, in my own room," she said finally. Flasky grunted, and she paused to look at him. "I heard the shot. I got up and ran, of course. To Frankie's—the Senator's—room. Somebody came out his door as I came out mine. I couldn't see who. I ran in and—fell over him. That's how I got the blood on my robe."

"Let's see the blood once," Flasky said.

"Never mind," I advised. "What were *you* doing, Flasky?"

"Me? Why, mindin' my own business, an' I hear this kind of bang. Awake? Sure. Can I sleep with wind blowin'? I hear this bang, so I go to my door, an' somebody runs past. Wouldn't know now which way. Then this dame hollers inside Maxton's room. I go back for my pants, but 'fore I can get 'em on, Smith here is a-hollerin' to get you. From outside. Whatever you're doin' outside, I'd like to know. Me, I'm innocent as the newborn babe."

"Miss Hasty, what can you add?" I asked.

"I didn't hear the shot," the girl said. She sat up very prim and scared, but being scared now might mean nothing, I realized, for she'd been scared most of the time since she arrived.

"Didn't hear it?" I objected.

"No. It was this creature's yelling woke me." She pointed at Sylvia. "I opened my door, and somebody was running up the stair. I stepped into the balcony, and whoever it was bumped into me."

"Yeah, that was me," Smith broke in. "You can see, copper, I wasn't even upstairs. I bump into her after Sylvia hollers."

"Carsten," I said, "what about it?"

HE looked me in the eye. "Don't try to pin it on me, big boy," he warned. "You're my witness. I was asleep. You woke me."

"How's it happen you're the only one slept through it?" I asked.

"I'm a deep sleeper."

"You wanted to phone your wife pretty bad," I said.

"Yeah, I should have, too. Just been married three weeks. She'll be upset as hell. Felt sure Maxton had a phone. Argued it. Twice. Knew he had one."

"How'd you know? Ever call him?"

He grinned again. "Yeah, I called him," he admitted; "no use tryin' to lie, way things are now. Just a little joke. I was drivin' along, listening to the radio and thinkin' how Maxton lived up here, and wonderin' if he scared easy. Next grocery I was in I used the phone. You'd find it out. My weakness, jokes. Got a name for it."

"So you killed him," Sylvia accused.

"Um," I said.

"Joke was on me, though. Got stuck right outside his door."

His frankness worried me. I made doodle-marks in my notebook. You didn't have to look hard for motives.

Two of these men were in Statewide rackets, or had been. The two others were employees who might have grudges. Miss Hasty was acting some kind of part—clumsily. And Sylvia, of course, always acted a part. Not clumsily. She'd been angry tonight. But it wouldn't be to her interest to have Maxton dead. She was ambitious. She also might be jealous of someone. I took a long chance with her.

"When were you and the Senator to be married?" I asked.

She gave me a long look, and then played Carsten's game. "That will come out eventually, so I will tell you now. We were to be married as soon as he got his divorce. His lawyer was working on it."

Smith grunted. "That's right."

I made another doodle. Divorce. So he had a family. The Sergeant hadn't known it. I asked: "Where's his wife?"

"Toledo," Smith volunteered. "He ain't seen her for fifteen years. They broke over a dame. Not Sylvia."

"Shut up," Sylvia said.

"Oh, he done right by the wife," Smith said. "Stingy with some of us, but he sent the wife seventy-five a month. Every month. Fifty for her, twenty-five for their kid. Seems it was the agreement and he stuck by it. Fifteen years."

Miss Hasty stirred, and Carsten laughed. "What a generous guy!"

Tobias said. "Last racing season, when he goes to Florida, I send the woman the check. Only now, he tells me, th lawyer offers her a couple thousand to settle."

Carsten laughed again. "Two thousand!" He glanced around the expensive room.

I doodled some more. Look for all kinds of motives, hook the motive to the facts. I left Miss Silver temporarily.

"You never will get your interview, Miss Hasty," I said. "Too bad."

"Yes," she answered.

"Or maybe you did get it, after all," I suggested.

"Oh?" She stared at me. "No. You heard him refuse."

"As you went upstairs, yes. But after that?"

"What are you talking about?" Her fingers trembled on the blanket as if she still were cold.

"I'll explain. You drove up north to interview him."

She nodded.

"You came from the *Free Press?*"

"Yes."

"You said the editor told you to ask the Senator about Miss Silver."

"That's right."

"But the editor didn't mention that Maxton had just talked to the grand jury?"

"Yes. . . . I mean, no. He didn't mention that."

"Listen," I said, "I know this much about newspapers. When the crime story of the year breaks, the editors go after it. They know the readers are interested first in what Maxton has squealed to the jury. After that's worn out, they bring in the love stuff. Not the first day, though. Tell the truth. It wasn't an editor sent you to ask Maxton about his marrying Miss Silver."

She stared at me again. "It was my own idea."

"What gave you that idea?"

"Well, he's trying to get a divorce. So I thought—"

"Wait. How did you know that? There's been no divorce mentioned in the papers. Most folks don't even know he was married. Boys downstate don't, or they'd have printed it. How did you know?"

She tightened her grip on the blanket. "I won't answer anything else."

I persisted: "So when you went into his room to see him, it wasn't for a newspaper. It had to do with his divorce. You went to talk to him about it. Or talk him out of it?"

Sylvia leaned forward now. "If I thought that was true—"

"What would you do?" the kid flared. "Of course it's true! My mother slaves all these years, and you come along, singing at him—"

Sylvia exclaimed: "Your mother!"

"Yes, my mother," the girl said defiantly. "She's a good woman, too. He was my father. My name's Maxton, believe it or not." Flasky cackled, but the girl kept right on talking at Sylvia. "I didn't know anything about any grand jury. All I knew was about you. That was enough. Another woman getting her claws in him again! He didn't mean anything to my mother any more. Only, she's sick, poor. What right have you got to walk in and get his money?"

"Yeah," Flasky said, "what right?"

"So you killed him," Sylvia accused.

"I did not. I heard him come upstairs—whistling your silly song. I watched through the crack. When the lights went out, I thought everybody'd gone to bed, so I went around to his room—"

"In that blanket?" Sylvia taunted.

"I was dressed," the kid said. "I was going to tell him who I was. Going to say my mother would never give him a divorce. I saw candlelight, so I didn't knock. I just went in."

"With a gun in your hand?" I asked.

"No. He had the gun. Pointing at the door. He was waiting for somebody. He was scared. I told him I was his daughter, but he tried not to believe me. I made him. Then he wouldn't talk to me—my own father!"

Sylvia interrupted: "You expect us to believe—"

"Shut up," Carsten said. "Give the kid a chance."

"He ordered me out. I told him no off-key radio crooner would get his money. He kept pointing the gun at me. I got panicky and grabbed it. He struggled. It went off. Then I came to my senses and ran to my room."

"Sense enough to jerk off your dress and grab the blanket," I said.

SHE was crying too hard to answer. Everyone was quiet, even Flasky. I was thinking what a screwy business I'm in, anyhow, when Sylvia said: "Well, now it's settled, Joe. What you say we get the hell out of here?"

"No, ma'am," I said; "nobody gets out. Go to your rooms. All except you, Tobias. You stand guard with your shotgun. I'll get the coroner. Miss Hasty can tell him—Miss Maxton, I mean—just how it happened, in self-defense."

That's all there is to it. The police weren't to blame. It was my fault. Mine and Sylvia's. And Senator Maxton's.

Illustrated by John Costigan, N. A.

Tschingel

THE COURAGE AND SAGACITY OF THIS MONGREL WON HER ENDURING FAME IN THE ANNALS OF MOUNTAINEERING.

FROM the terrace of a hotel near Chamonix in the French Alps, on the 24th of July, 1875, some tourists were observing through telescopes a group of climbers working toward the summit of the "Monarch of the Alps," Mt. Blanc.

About the climbers—three men and a woman, roped together at intervals—there was nothing remarkable either in appearance or climbing technique. Preceding them, however, and apparently a member of the party, was an unroped Alpinist unlike any the observers had ever seen climbing at such heights.

This fifth member was an animal, perhaps a chamois. But chamois, as the watchers were aware, are shy creatures which though frequently domesticated do not accompany their masters on perilous mountain ascents. But if it was not a chamois, what was it? It didn't move like a goat. A dog? Emphatically no! No dog had ever scaled the heights this animal was making. No, it could not be a dog.

The climbers reached the summit, rested awhile and began the long descent. Then, as they came into clearer view, the watchers, still at their telescopes, saw to their amazement that the animal was indeed a dog—a medium-sized, reddish-brown dog!

That was seventy-two years ago, but the memory of that dog—a female named "Tschingel," whose like the Alps had never seen and in all probability will never see again—is still alive in Switzerland. Innumerable other dogs, notably the St. Bernards of the high Alps, have distinguished themselves by searching out lost or injured persons and saving their lives. Some have achieved immortality. But the dog of dogs, say the Swiss, was the incomparable Tschingel, the greatest mountain-climbing dog the world has ever known.

Any dog can climb a mountain, if there are paths or if the ascent is not too precipitous. Tschingel was not an ordinary dog. She could make her way over any terrain, no matter how difficult; and perpendicular rock faces and walls of ice seldom gave her more trouble than they gave the experts with whom she climbed. She scaled peaks as human beings do—over any kind of surface, up almost any acclivity. In this respect she was unlike any other dog that has ever lived.

In the course of her Alpine adventures (shared with her owner, guides, and various persons), she climbed the 13,669-foot Jungfrau, known to every American tourist. Among her other conquests were: Monte Rosa (15,217 ft.), the 14,888-foot Lyskamm, known as the "Man Eater," because of its awful toll of death, the Finsteraarhorn (14,026 ft.), the Mönch (13,465 ft.), the Eiger (13,040 ft.) and the Rothstock (12,143 ft.).

One of her most notable achievements was the ascent of La Grande Ruine in the Dauphine Alps, a mysterious peak rising 12,317 feet over the Etançons Glen. It had never been climbed before; and Tschingel's companions on that climb found the official maps of the French Government to be "very incorrect."

In all, she climbed thirty major peaks, making the first ascent of many of them; and made thirty-six glacier crossings, some never made before.

How many Alpinists can boast of such a record? Not many—nor can some of the Swiss guides themselves!

Tschingel, a beagle type mongrel with some spaniel blood, was born in 1865. She had a fine well-marked head with expressive, kindly brown eyes of great beauty.

According to those who knew her, she was wiser than most guides in the ways of the ice, the crevasse, the avalanche and the weather. The guides often used her to spot crevasses. They would send her ahead, and she would

of the High Alps

by BYRON DE PROROK *and* E. P. WELLMAN

sniff out the dangerous spots. If this sounds preposterous, it must be remembered that snow contains air, and seemingly she could gauge the strength of a snow bridge, or its weakness, by the amount of air it contained. However she did it, she proved on many occasions that she possessed the ability to locate hidden danger-points and warn her companions by her actions.

Swiss guides are not a sentimental lot given to hero worship; but in Tschingel they have a real heroine, and to this day when a would-be Alpinist is doubtful of his ability to make the summit of one of the lesser peaks, his guide may say, with kindly sarcasm: "You ought to be able to do it. After all, the female dog Tschingel climbed it, and she went up the other side, which is far more difficult."

ONE man who knew her better than anyone else was her owner, W. A. B. Coolidge, one of the great mountain climbers of all time, for whom a famous peak in the Dauphine Alps was named. In his "Alpine Studies," a book that mountain climbers still regard as a classic, he devotes considerable space to her. Coolidge owned Tschingel from the time she was three until she died at the age of fourteen.

According to Coolidge, when she was a six-months-old puppy, Christian Almer, member of a family whose men had been famous guides for generations, saw her in a village, took a fancy to her and bought her for ten francs. A few days later, while serving as guide for a party, he took her with him on a crossing of Tschingel Pass, an expedition which tested the skill and courage of all the climbers.

That was the young dog's initiation into the dangerous business of Alpine climbing. Describing it in one of his books, H. B. George, a noted English Alpinist who was a member of the party, had this to say:

"Doubtless our canine companion would have been better pleased by a smooth sheet of unbroken snow, over which he could have trotted comfortably." (Curiously, George was under the impression that the dog was a male!) "The constant recurrence of narrow crevasses troubled his philosophy considerably, and once or twice he had to be taken and flung across some chasm rather wider than usual. On the whole, however, his performance was highly meritorious and deserved the recognition it afterward received, when a committee of the whole party unanimously named the dog 'Tschingel' in honor of his being the only dog in the Oberland known to have made a 'glacier pass.'"

That is how Tschingel got her name. That she was an unusual intelligent and responsive dog, her owner soon learned. He did not suspect, though, that in her he had a dog unlike any other ever known—a natural climber that, with practically no training, could make her way up sheer rock faces with the greatest Alpinists of her time, and enjoyed doing it.

A noted climber was once asked why he wanted to climb a certain peak. "Because it is there," he said simply. Coolidge believed that Tschingel, like all great climbers, regarded every peak she saw as a challenge. When she came to one, she showed plainly that she was eager to scale it. Coolidge described her as a regular peak-hunter.

Because Almer regarded her as just another dog, she lived a quiet, uneventful life at his Grindlewald home, where she served as watchdog and became the mother of thirty-four pups. (Her descendants are now listed in the Blue Book of Swiss dogdom.)

In the summer of 1868, when Tschingel was three years old, something occurred that radically altered the course of her life. Coolidge—an eighteen-year-old American who was studying at Oxford—arrived at Grindlewald. He was accompanied by his aunt, Miss Marguerite Brevoort, a mountain-climbing enthusiast who felt that the sport might improve Coolidge's health.

With Almer or Peter Taugwalder, "The Iron Man of the Alps," as his guide and his aunt as a companion, Coolidge began to climb, at first reluctantly but soon with enthusiasm. In those days climbing was not the scientific business it is now; Coolidge's parties made their ascents without such aids as "pitons" (nails to drive in the rock for holds on rock faces), "crampons" (iron plates with sharp points, worn on the shoes), oxygen, collapsible ice-axes, ice clamps and other items now regarded as essentials by Alpinists.

Taugwalder gave him his first lessons, and Almer then took him under his wing. By this time "Bello," one of Tschingel's sons, was old enough to take over Tschingel's duties as protector of the Almer home. One day when Coolidge, unable to make a climb because of bad weather, had an attack of the blues, Almer, who knew that he loved dogs, gave Tschingel to him to cheer him up. He also lent him a copy of George's book, in which the dog's glacier-crossing exploit when a puppy was set down.

Reading that book, Coolidge got the idea of developing the dog's natural aptitude for climbing, and from the start he took her with him on his expeditions. There was little he had to teach her. He saw that she was a born Alpinist, and instinctively was able to do things no other dog had ever attempted. He didn't try to favor her by picking easy peaks; and one of their first ascents together was the 12,038-foot Blümlisalphorn, a severe test even for an expert climber.

Tschingel's short, sturdy legs and powerful nails were amazingly adept at getting a foothold and holding it on almost any surface. Sheer drops apparently had no effect on her. Unroped, she could make her way along the narrowest ledge. Her nerve—her courage—was phenomenal.

TSCHINGEL had her first narrow escape from death on the Blümlisalphorn climb. Her paws, not yet toughened to ice, had been badly cut, and she was in great pain. This caused her to slip on the final slope, and she began to slide toward Oechinnen Lake. Fortunately, one of the porters managed to grab her by the collar and hold onto her as she slid past him.

Coolidge had tried to leave her at a rest hut when he saw her bleeding paws. But she would not be left behind, and limping badly, she went on to the summit. After that experience, Coolidge had some leather shoes made for her. But he could never induce her to wear them.

With experience, Tschingel learned how to take care of herself, and many times in her climbing career she pulled

herself out of bad fixes by quick thinking. Once, becoming separated from the rest of the party which was exploring on extremely dangerous terrain, she found herself cut off from her friends by a wide crevasse. Mounting a peak of ice to get her bearings, the dog barked to attract their attention. Coolidge was horrified when he saw her predicament; the ice beneath her was treacherous, and the crevasse very deep. Tschingel realized her position and resorted to desperate measures. Summoning all her energies, she made a prodigious leap, cleared the crevasse and joined her master, looking contrite for the worry she had caused him.

SHORTLY after Coolidge had become Tschingel's owner, he found she was superior to any guide as a weather prophet. He observed that if a storm was brewing and preparations were under way for an expedition, she would show plainly, by planting herself in some corner and refusing to budge, that she disapproved of the climb. After she had proved herself right several times, Coolidge followed her "advice" in such matters.

Her ability to detect hidden perils was uncanny. In difficult terrain, when scouting ahead of the party (as she usually did except when roped) she never failed to spot weak ice-bridges, loose rock that might come down at any moment, and unsafe ice overhangs. Coming upon such danger-spots, she would turn back and warn the party by frantic whimperings, and she actually "wept" when she felt that her companions were in peril. For this we have Coolidge's word—the word of a great historian and lexicographer of the Alps, and a noted Church of England cleric.

Many Alpine disasters have been caused by a slight sound—a cough, a sliding stone, an exclamation uttered thoughtlessly. Even a whisper has been known to set off an avalanche. In regions where a bark or whine might lead to tragic consequences, Tschingel was silent; in such places she would "freeze" to indicate a danger. She learned early that there were times to "speak," and times to keep her mouth shut!

If a guide had been drinking (guides who drink are barred for life from the "Syndicate of Guides") she sensed it—or perhaps her hound's nose detected it. Which may have explained her curious antipathy to certain guides, whom she simply would not accompany, under any conditions.

She could endure extreme cold. Her short hair was unusually thick and heavy, and she never wore a coat. She did, however, at times, wear snow-goggles.

During the climbing season, brandy and tallow were rubbed into her feet to harden and protect them, and cold cream and vaseline rubbed in her nose, which often peeled from sun- or wind-burn. She got no other special treatments.

It was difficult to persuade Tschingel to cross a glacier late in the day. Experience had taught her that the sun softens the frozen surface-coat formed over the crevasses during the night. Once when Coolidge was making a survey of a crevassed glacier near the Jungfrau, he found himself separated from the dog by an ice-bridge. Disregarding his orders to cross the bridge and join him, Tschingel stood facing him, barking and whining. Coolidge examined the bridge, decided it was safe and started to cross it.

As he reached it, Tschingel leaped upon it, and down it crashed under her weight, carrying her with it into the abyss. Coolidge was horror-stricken. Again and again he called to her. No sound came from the cold green depths.

An hour or so later, while Coolidge was breaking the tragic news to his companions, a very tired Tschingel suddenly appeared on the moraine and made her way slowly to the party—and a wildly enthusiastic reception. By some miracle, she had not been seriously injured in falling, and with her marvelous instinct, she had found a way out of the crevasse. All she had to show for her experience was a badly torn ear.

That was one time when she unquestionably saved Coolidge's life at the risk of her own.

Like her fellow-climbers, Tschingel had to be assisted occasionally. During the passage of the 11,680-foot Monchjoch, the party ran into a deeply crevassed glacier, and all the members had to be let down by rope over the worst spots. In one of his books, Coolidge described Tschingel, being slowly lowered with a rope around her belly, as "much resembling the sheep in the emblem of the Order of the Golden Fleece."

ON the frozen heights, Coolidge and his party often spent the night in a tent. As soon as the tent was up, Coolidge would send Tschingel into it. Once inside, she would curl up on the least uncomfortable spot, one which her master would promptly turn her out of, much to her obvious disgust!

Coolidge could get away with that. But when he tried to use his victim as a pillow (which he frequently did) all would be well until, waking, he would find his companion using *him* as a pillow!

Miss Brevoort never ceased to marvel at Tschingel's gentleness, and she often related an incident which showed how good the dog could be, under trying circumstances. As she told the story, Coolidge, two guides and Tschingel had climbed the 13,721-foot Aletschorn, leaving her behind in Belalp, their usual headquarters. While the climbers were making their way to the top, she went up the near-by Sparrhorn, to watch them.

Knowing she was observing them, Coolidge found her with his glasses. Then, in need of something to attract her attention, he found just what he wanted—Tschingel! Lifting her up with the aid of a guide, he waved her gently to and fro. She took it all in good humor, and with her reddish hair she made an excellent flag, which Miss Brevoort could not have missed if she had tried to. Always, Tschingel was a good dog.

Like her two-footed friends, Tschingel was not free from eccentricities. She understood Swiss-German, and Coolidge and Miss Brevoort (who loved her and whom she adored) soon taught her to understand English. For some reason or other, though, she could make nothing of French.

TO the average dog, chicken is a treat. Tschingel had a strong dislike of it. Even if she were ravenous with hunger, she would not touch it. Again, unlike most dogs, she was very fond of wine, especially red wine; and later when she went to live in England with Coolidge and his aunt, she learned to like weak tea.

Tea had a strange effect on her. After drinking it, she would retire to a corner, sit down and utter piercing howls, just as she did when she listened to music, which she loved.

She enjoyed being made much of, and accepted praise with what a friend once described as amiable coquettishness. The day after her ascent of Mt. Blanc, she was deluged with attention and flattery. People came from far and near to see the dog that had made the formidable climb. Tschingel received her admirers in the salon of Coolidge's hotel, where, stretched out on a sofa, she held court and appeared highly pleased by the fuss made over her.

When she climbed Mt. Blanc, she was in her eleventh year, far past middle age for a dog. The feat amazed and delighted the Swiss. When she returned to Switzerland the following year, 1876, in accordance with railroad rules of that day she was boxed and placed in a baggage car. With Miss Brevoort, she was on her way to Belalp to join Coolidge, who had gone on ahead.

At one of the stations after Geneva Miss Brevoort got out and went to the baggage car to cheer the dog up. She found a porter giving Tschingel food and water. "How kind you are!" she exclaimed. The man smiled. "Who wouldn't be!" he said. "This is the dog that climbed Mt. Blanc last summer."

When Coolidge attempted the Matterhorn from the Italian side, he did not want to risk the life of his beloved Tschingel on a climb of such extraordinary difficulty. He left her behind at Breuil, and to console her, he gave her his shawl to guard.

When the party returned the evening of the following day, after failing to reach the summit, Tschingel was still at her post beside the shawl. She had not left it once in her master's absence. "We found her," Coolidge wrote later, "surrounded by dishes of food which kind people gave her when they found she would not quit the room. The food was untouched, and the room was in perfect order. Her devotion was always to be counted on." Tschingel had character.

IN attempting a *varap* (a perpendicular rock climb), Coolidge would rope her between himself and Miss Brevoort. When ice was encountered, the guide would dig footholds, which Tschingel would use much as the other members of the party did.

On nearing a summit, she would become wildly excited, and when it was reached, she would view the panorama with the same rapt attention as her companions.

Miss Brevoort died in December, 1876, at the Coolidge home in Dorking, England. Tschingel, who was then nearly twelve, was never the same again. She seemed to know that she had suffered an irreparable loss, and from that time on she aged rapidly. She never went to Switzerland again, and two years later she died peacefully in her sleep. She was buried in the garden of the Dorking house, where Coolidge set up a modest monument to her memory.

Perhaps the best reminder of her, though, is her "dress" collar, which has been carefully preserved: a magnificent leather affair loaded with silver plaques and pendants, each one bearing the name of a conquered peak.

It is reasonable to suppose that Tschingel had some shortcomings. If so, no reference to them is to be found in any of the Alpine journals or books in which her feats are recorded. Certain it is that three persons—Miss Brevoort, Coolidge and Almer—thought her a dog *sans reproche*.

How can she be explained? Other dogs were as strong or stronger. Other dogs were, seemingly, fully as courageous and enterprising. Other dogs were possessed of the same extra-sensory powers, and could hear, smell and feel things beyond the perception of humans. But Tschingel had a "spark" that set her apart from other dogs. What it was, no one can say. Tschingel was an enigma.

Today her paw-prints, photographs of her, and plaques bearing her likeness may be seen in many homes and hotels in Switzerland. And readers of "The Oberland and Its Glaciers," by the same George who wrote of her puppyhood exploit, will find a mention of her. In naming the great pioneer conquerors of the Alps—Edward Wymper, Mummery, Professor Tyndall, Michel Croz, Coolidge, and others—George paid his tribute to her in one simple line: *"Miss Tschingel, Honorary Member of the Alpine Club, a mongrel bitch."*

TRADITION demands that Alpine guides have an album in which records of all climbs are meticulously kept, and in which patrons are asked to inscribe something appropriate at the end of an expedition.

The famous Almers, the Almer family of Grindlewald, have carefully preserved all their albums, of which they are exceedingly proud. But they will tell you that the one they prize highest is Christian Almer's. For Christian's claim to fame is two-fold: In the Golden Age of Alpine climbing, he was not only guide and friend of the great Coolidge; he was also the discoverer of Tschingel.

You're the Boss

by HARDEN DE VIEW

I KNOW I am headed for trouble when the timekeeper meets me down by the inspection bench and says that the Superintendent is looking for me. I have been expecting it. Production drops like oak leaves in the fall, ever since I take over the foreman's job in the wheel department of the shop.

I shrug my shoulders and tell the timekeeper: "Okay, I'll go up and see him right away."

I start down the aisle between the big Bullards. I can feel the steel chips crunching under the soles of my shoes as I walk. The machines are pounding and hammering away, and the floor is shaking with the vibration of the wheel production. There is a fine mist of cutting-oil hanging in the air, and the thick black smoke from the headers where the wheel-hubs are forged rolls across the department. I can smell the sharp, stinging odor of scorched metal and burning grease. I am so used to the crashing noise of the presses, trucks, airhoses and crane sirens that the only time I notice it is when it stops.

I dodge around a puddle of cutting-oil that is flowing over from a lathe, and I automatically look for the sweeper without even thinking about it. I sidestep a wheelbarrow piled high with curled blue steel chips, and I start legging it down the aisle.

"Hey, Donaldson!" I slow down, and I hear my name called again over the noise of the shop. "Hey, Donaldson!"

I stop and look around. Slim Kelby, a Bullard operator who thinks he should have had the foreman's job instead of me, is leaning up against his machine, his long legs crossed like bent straws, a grin on his skinny, tight face.

"What's the trouble?" I asks him.

I notice a couple of lathe operators stopping work to watch us, and my dander skyrockets.

"Breakdown." Slim steers his chew from one cheek to the other and carefully spits into the sawdust at the base of his machine.

"I can see you got a breakdown," I snaps, "but—"

"I don't know." Slim Kelby narrows his eyes into a kind of "dare-you" look, and waves his thin hook-like fingers at the Bullard. "Might be the chuck."

I glance at the big, silent machine, and I feel baffled because I don't know much about it, and what makes it worse is that Slim knows I don't know much about a turret lathe. I try to bluff my way through.

"What the hell you waiting for? Get the set-up man on the job, and get the tool-room started. We've lost enough production this week."

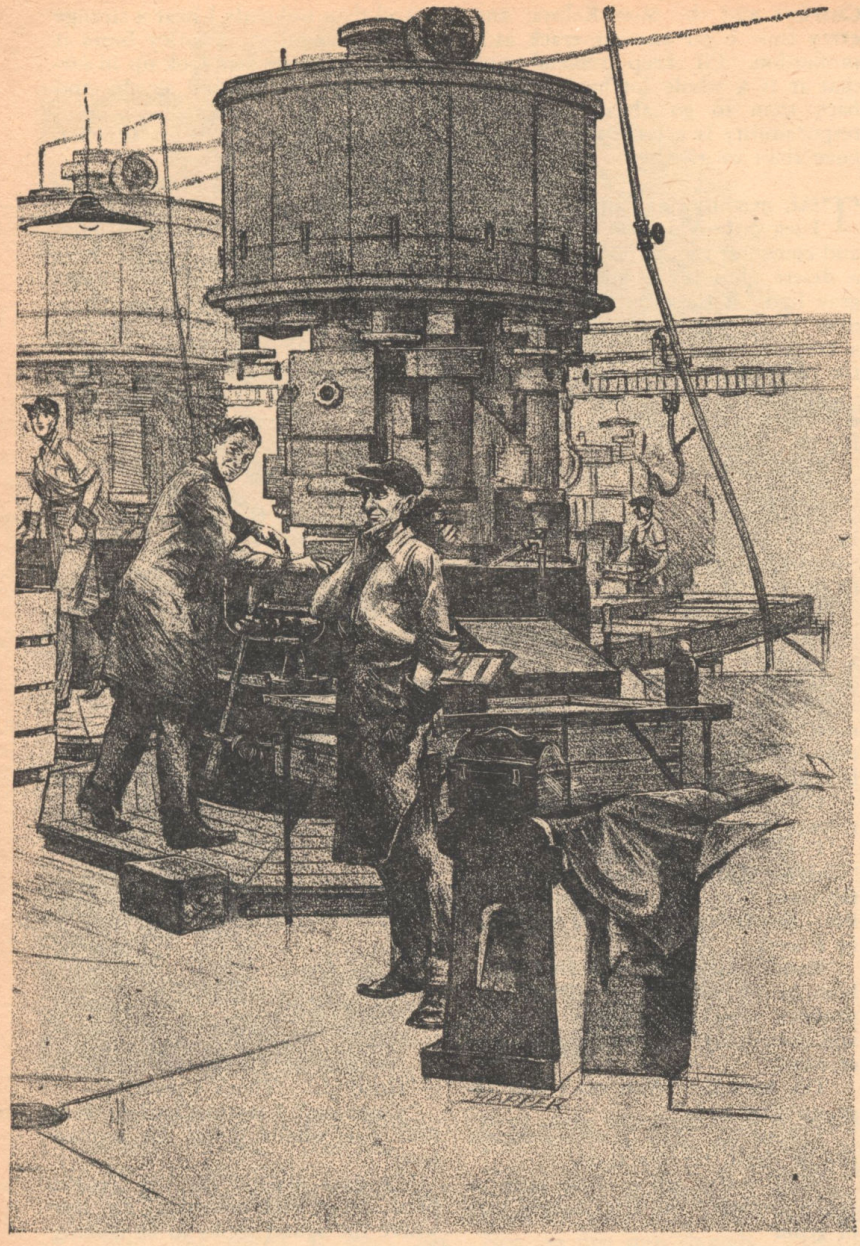
"Okay—you're the boss." There is a suggestion of a dirty laugh in Slim's voice.

I turn around and start down the aisle; and as I turn, I catch Slim winking at the lathe operators, and they are all laughing. I get red clear to the roots of my hair. I would like to start swinging, to tear into them all, but all I can do is grind my teeth and swallow the whole business.

"DONALDSON! Hey, Donaldson!" Old Charley, a Fay operator, stops me. "The Superintendent wants to see you."

"Yeah, Charley." I nod at him. "The knife is in my back, and he wants to give it a couple of turns."

"Buck up, kid." Charley takes a piece of stock out of his lathe and throws it up on the roller conveyor. He comes out from behind his machine and bounces up beside me. Charley is a wizened old guy who



THE MEN WHO RUN THE BIG TURRET LATHES HAVE TO KNOW THEIR JOB; AND THE MAN WHO RUNS THE SHOP HAS TO KNOW BOTH MEN AND MACHINES.

has worked in factories for more years than I am old.

"Charley, they're giving me the business. I've been a foreman for a week now, and Slim Kelby has had a breakdown every day. I'm about ready to toss up all this grief and go back to operating a press."

"The hell you are! You couldn't quit, and you know it." Charley looks at me over the top of his steel-rimmed bifocals.

No. No, I guess I can't. The job means too much to me. Only yesterday I wrote a letter to my older brother Tom, the doctor—professional man, the one my mother liked to talk about so much because he was such a success. I never enjoyed anything so much as when I started the letter by saying: *"Dear Tom, I am a foreman now in charge of one of the biggest production departments—"* and now even that little victory is slipping through my fingers, and I feel myself sliding back into the younger brother, the kid who could never quite do things right.

"Okay, pal." I pat Charley on the shoulder.

"Look, kid!" He puts a hand on my arm to keep me from turning away. "About those breakdowns; if you're holding the cards, there ain't nobody can bluff you out of the game. Am I right?"

"Sure. But where do I draw the cards?" I kind of laugh him away, and go on past the Fay line, turn the corner at the Hamilton nosing press, and duck under the endless conveyor; and I notice that there are a lot of empty hooks, which means low production.

The Superintendent's office is a little board shanty stuck in a clearing among the machines, and I am walking up to it when I see Whitey, the sweeper, brushing the floor slowly and carefully. I go over to him and tell him about the oil on the floor.

"All right, Mr. Donaldson."

Whitey looks at me; his eyes are as bright as glowing charcoal, and they are doing a strange sort of jig. I back away from him. "That nasty machine," he says, and he giggles a high, nervous girlish titter that stabs at my brain. I want to turn and run away from him, but I force myself to leave slowly. He gives me a weird, jittery, unexplainable feeling, as though I should be ashamed of myself for having such feelings for him.

I stop outside the little shanty, take a deep breath, grab the greasy door knob and walk in. Jim Carton, the Superintendent, is talking on the telephone. He is sitting at his old beat-up desk, and he leans far back in his swivel chair. There is one light hanging from a long cord in the center of the little room. Two battered metal filing-cabinets for blueprints and papers stand against one wall. The other pieces of furniture are an extra chair, and a brass spittoon cuddled up against one leg of Jim Carton's desk.

I SHUT the door, and it muffles the shop sounds a little, like putting a lid on a pan of boiling water. Carton swivels around and faces me, and nods while he is still talking into the 'phone. He glares down at the mouthpiece he is holding in his hand, and barks at it like a bulldog snarling at a mouse. He slams the telephone down and sits looking at the top of his desk, and finally he looks up.

"I understand you want to see me." I am trying to keep my voice from breaking.

"Yes, Donaldson. I've got to talk to you." Jim Carton wears his bald head like a badge of honor, and he runs his thick fingers over it now as he looks at me. "Production's been lousy. Yes, lousy. What's the matter, kid, the job too big for you?"

"No sir. It's just that we've had so many breakdowns."

"Well, dammit, a good foreman would see that those breakdowns don't happen. Yes. You're getting paid to produce wheels." His bald head reflects the yellowish glare of the single overhead light, and I watch his head instead of looking into his eyes.

The quitting whistle blows, and all the noise turns off as if somebody has shut off a radio. I stand there in the crashing silence, and I think of old Charley's, *"Nobody can bluff you out of the game if you're holding the cards."*

The Superintendent takes a six-inch metal ruler out of his vest pocket with his short, stubby fingers, and he points it at me and jiggles it up and down.

"That call I just had,"—and Carton tilts his head toward the phone—"that was the front office, and they're plenty hot. We got to get out production. We got to make wheels. We got to get in there ahead of our competitors. This shortage market isn't going to last forever, you know, and the plants that get in there now are the ones that are going to last."

Our plant is a war baby; we have converted from a shell factory to making wheels, and I know that it is touch and go as to whether we will be able to break into the automobile market, or be a memory like a uniform in the closet.

I want to tell the Superintendent that I am not getting coöperation from the men, but I back away from it the way I did from snitching when I was a kid. It was my fight, and I'd just have to face it.

"You got to learn to handle men, Donaldson. Yes." I look up, startled. It is as though he was reading my mind. "You can't give them 'or else' orders. You're supposed to be a signpost, not a traffic cop."

I HAVE my own ideas about how to handle men, but I don't say anything.

"And another thing: If I were you, I'd make it my business to know every one of those jobs better than the guy that operates it."

"Is that all?" I stand up.

"No." Jim Carton looks down at his desk-top as though he is embarrassed. He grinds his teeth together, and then he looks up. "Donaldson, if your department isn't getting production by next week Monday, I'm going to have to put somebody in your place. That's all."

He might just as well have asked for a half-pound of atom-dust—it would have been as easy for me to get. The family would be right in calling me a failure. The job means so much to me, and now it is going because I'm not man enough to produce, and I'll have to face the old Charleys and the Slim Kelbys; and every time I get another crack at a promotion, I'll keep remembering that it is a whole lot harder to go back than to go ahead, and that responsibility is a lot easier never to have than to give up.

THE machines are all quiet when I leave the Superintendent's office and come out on the floor. It is like a desert ghost-town, and the dingy gray light of the afternoon sun falls over everything like spiderwebs on a tree's branches. I can still smell the cutting-oil and the burned metal.

"Well, kid?" The quiet voice startles me. Old Charley has been waiting by the time-clock for me.

"Hello, Charley. What you hanging around for?"

"Oh, I punched out. I been waiting to see how you made out." Something about the old man's friendly interest touched my heart.

"It's okay, Charley," I say.

"Let's go over to Nicky's and have a beer, and you can tell me about it on our way," Charley says.

"He's giving me one more week to make out on the job," I say. And then I tell Charley everything the boss has said to me.

"Oh, well," Charley tries to cheer me up, "you will make out."

"I've got to. I've got to," I say. "Charley, this job means more to me than anything I've ever done in my life. But how? How can I make out in a week?"

"Besides myself, I'll be letting everybody in the plant down. If we don't produce wheels now, we'll be sunk, and everybody will be thrown out of work."

"Oh, hell, kid. You can't take responsibility for—"

"I have to. This contract means life or death for the shop."

"Well, you've got a whole week to prove yourself." Charley laughs, sort of grim.

"Jim Carton says I'm supposed to know every one of the jobs in my department. If that isn't a laugh!" I says.

"He may have something there," Charley chimes in, and I have to admit it hurts a little to have him taking the Superintendent's side.

"But I'm a press operator. I never operated an automatic in my life."

"You've never been a foreman before in your life, either," Charley points out.

We walk down the aisle side by side without saying anything. The lights are all out, and the shop is turning from dirty gray to black as the sun slips down below the overhead windows. My thermos bottle is clacking against the inside of my empty lunch bucket, and that is the only sound as we walk.

And then suddenly I hear a strange singsong crooning. Charley hears it too, because I see him look up in surprise. We turn around slowly, and there is nobody in sight.

"Did you hear it?" I ask Charley. His jaw is hanging open.

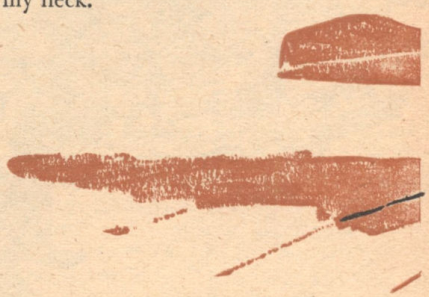
"I was going to ask you the same thing," he says.

The big machines are all around us, and towering over us like trees in a dark forest, and they are throwing long black shadows that seem to move and creep as we watch them.

"Sounds like a woman's voice," I say. We listen carefully, and then I hear the sound again. I begin to distinguish some words as the sounds drift over us and around us, but I can't tell for sure where the words are coming from.

"Sweet baby! Good girl! My little pet! And you, you were a bad boy," says the voice.

We are standing in the middle of a production department of a big automobile wheel plant, and we are listening to the words a mother might use talking to a little baby. The hair is standing up stiff on the back of my neck.



"Good girl. That's a pretty!"

"Come on," I say to Charley, "let's find out what's going on around here."

We duck around the big Toledo press and go back toward the Fay line where the sound seems to be coming from.

AS we approach it, the voice gets louder; suddenly I see a bright, shining pair of eyes staring at us. The eyes are wild, rolling, and I am scared. The fingers of Charley's left hand are digging deep into my arm.

"Hello," I say to the eyes.

"Do you want to see my darlings?" The voice is high, and it sounds like fingernails dragging across a piece of tin.

"I would like to very much," I say, and I step forward.

"These are my darlings." A skinny arm indicates all of the machines around him. "I take care of them every night when they have been good, and they are always good, except"—his voice turns sad and drops off—"sometimes they are naughty."

Illustrated by Arthur Harper

"That call was from the front office; they're plenty hot."

"Hello, Whitey," I say as I recognize the sweeper. I turn to Charley. "This is Clarence White, the sweeper."

Calling him by name seems to have a good effect. His brilliant eyes begin to dim a little, and he starts to shake like he is coming out of a dream, and he looks at me, and his eyes aren't staring any more.

Whitey looks around him, bewildered. "How did I—"

"We were just walking by, and we thought we'd stop and say hello," I head Charley off before he has a chance to say anything. "Come on, let's go." I take Charley's arm, and we walk off.

We walk in silence for some time, with just the *clack-clack* of my lunch bucket keeping time to our steps; and finally, when we get outside the big brick building, I say: "That sweeper, what's the story on him anyway, Charley?"

"Whitey? Clarence White? He was one of the best operators we ever had in the plant. He could operate anything, as long as it was a machine. His kid came to work here, and he was working on a stamping press, and Clarence was so proud that's all he could talk about. The press caught the kid and killed him, and Whitey went completely off base. Jim Carton gave him the sweeping job just to give him something to do."

"He really shouldn't be here in the plant!" I say.

"He's better off here doing something that he thinks is useful instead of sitting home brooding."

"But it's dangerous for him to be around the machinery," I protest.

"Nuts," says Charley. "Let him alone, kid."

"I can't let him wander around in there, I don't care what anybody says." I head back for the plant.

"Aren't you in bad enough as it is? If you fire Whitey, there isn't a guy in the shop will have anything to do with you." He turns and hurries on out the gate, nodding to the blue-uniformed watchman as he goes.

I thread my way in and out of the machines in the darkened department. I listen, but the only sounds are my lunch-bucket rattling and my feet scraping on the cement floor. I stop and listen, raise my head and look around, but everything seems as quiet as a vacuum.

"Whitey," I call, and my voice rolls and bounces and caroms and then fades away into the black shadows. "Clarence! Clarence White!" The sound of my own words seems loud and threatening. I hunch my shoulders and walk forward.

"Pss-st!"

I swing around, startled, and my lunch-bucket slaps my leg with a tinny bang.

"Who's that? Who's there?" My voice shoots into the blackness, and my eyes are mocked by the shadows. "Whitey?"

"Ssh! Please!" A high, quavering voice creeps up around me.

"Whitey! Where are you?" I lower my tone and look around me, and then I see one of the shadows separate itself from the other shadows and drift toward me.

Without saying a word, Whitey punches the switch to start the automatic. The drills start turning.

"Oh," I say with relief. "Hello."

"Hello." The shadow takes shape in front of me, and I see his eyes. "You were calling me?"

"Yeah. Look here, Whitey, you shouldn't be in here after working hours. If the watchman finds you there's no telling what he will do."

"I stay here every night and take care of my babies." He sounded like a child trying to explain something to a dense adult.

And then he hit me with a bombshell. "Of course, these are not really babies at all; these are machines, and they can't understand."

"Whitey—" I say, flabbergasted.

"But they don't let me operate any more, and I like to be around them."

I look at him questioningly, and I say: "But what—" I stop as an idea suddenly breaks on me. "Say! Come here. Can you operate a Bullard?"

He follows me as I lead the way to an automatic. I turn on the overhead light that hangs down in front of the big machine.

I turn to him and say: "Whitey, if you can, I'd like to have you show me how to operate one of these things."

Without saying a word, he leaps up on the board platform in front of the machine and punches the switch to start the automatic. The drills start turning, and cutting-oil spurts from the little tubes beside each drill. He picks up a piece of stock, seats it carefully, trips the machine, and the drills spiral downward, taking a deep bite out of the first hub, and the blue chips curl upward, the drill ascends and the hub jerks to the next drill, and Whitey seats a new piece of stock; and when the drills descend, two hubs are being drilled. Whitey keeps on placing hubs in the machine until eight operations are being done at once, and then the first hub is out and he is gauging it.

"See?" he says as he tosses the first hub up on the still conveyor.

I have been watching him carefully, mentally taking note of everything that he does. I know that it looks far easier than it is.

"Let me try." I climb up beside him and pick up a hub. The weight of it almost bends me double. I seat it in the die and trip the machine, and the drill descends and screeches, and smoke rolls up.

"No! No! No! Oh, *no!*" Whitey cries. He rescues me quickly and shows me where I have made my mistake. I try again and again, but my coördination is all shot, and I ruin stock and tools. I pick up steel and seat it—bend over, straighten up, bend over, straighten up; and sweat is running into my eyes, and my back feels like somebody has been playing my spinal cord like a xylophone with steel mallets. My clothes are soaking wet, and they stick to me like fly-paper. I pick up some stock, and a piece of jagged steel is sticking out and I catch the palm of my hand on it, laying the flesh wide open, and blood mixes with sweat and oil; and finally I see the big turret lathe through a throbbing mist of dull, aching pain, and I become a quivering mass of screaming nerves, and then numbness when I can't feel anything.

ALL this time I am watching Whitey, but he is an operator now, and nothing else exists for him but the machine and the necessity of doing the job right. He gets excited when I make a mistake, but he calms himself by calming me, and I am never sure that he even sees me.

"No. I can't do it, Whitey." I stop, and my breath is coming in quick gasps. "I can't. I can't."

"Yes," Whitey says "But you must talk to the machine. You must sing to it. Look like this." His voice rises, and he starts to croon and his eyes roll wildly. He mutters strangely, and then he turns to me, and I start backing away. "Try it! Try it!" His voice is edgy.

We start in again, but I have stopped now, and my muscles just won't go ahead. My arms shriek with pain as I raise them and I let them fall.

"No, I can't." My backbone has a catch in it that won't let me straighten up. "I quit, Whitey, but thanks anyway." And then I notice that the shop is turning gray. The sun is coming up!

"You had better go home and get some sleep, Whitey," I say.

He climbs down from the machine, and I watch him go away, and I am

trying to think. There is something I should do about him, I know. . . .

On my way home to change clothes before I come back to work I stop and make a long-distance phone call to Tom, the doctor.

I AM late in getting back to work, and when I come into the department the shop is shaking with the noises of production as the presses go *kaa-rump, thump; kaa-rump, thump;* and the air-hoses whistle, and steel screeches against steel. The noise is loud, and I can't get in step with the rhythm of it.

I feel as if every bone in my body has broken, and the jagged edges are grinding together with each step I take. My hands are as tender as fried oysters, and just as puffy.

Jim Carton is pushing his humpty-dumpty body hellity-clink down the aisle, and he is aimed straight for me. He waves a short arm wildly, and I start off to meet him. I have a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach.

"Hey, Donaldson!" I am pulled up short before I get to Carton. It is old Charley, the Fay operator, and he motions me over to him. I keep one eye peeled for the Superintendent as I walked over to Charley's lathe.

"Yeah, Charley?"

"I heard something this morning that I don't believe, but I thought I'd let you know the story that's going around." Charley's voice is grim.

"What story?" I ask him.

"They say you took Whitey off that sweeping job."

"I couldn't let the old guy kill himself," I say.

Charley spit into the sawdust on the floor. "Of all the crumbs!"

"Hey, Donaldson!" Jim Carton catches up to me. "What the hell is coming off here?"

"I, why I—" I sputter like a Model T on a cold morning.

"Breakdown on the line. Production not coming through. Yes. And you standing around chit-chatting." Jim Carton's bald head is shaking and winking like a weak flashlight bulb as he talks.

Breakdown, I think, and my whole stomach seems to rise and knot itself in my chest. "Where?" I ask the Superintendent.

"The Bullards. The Bullards," he says. "The operators just standing around twiddling their thumbs."

"Oh, no!" I say inwardly.

Old Charley is taking it all in, and I know he is not wasting any sympathy on me. The last guy in the shop I could count on, and now he has thrown me over. I follow the Superintendent down the aisle to Slim Kelby's Bullard.

Slim is standing around, chewing the fat, and when he sees me, he grins that skinny tight-lipped grin of his; and if I ever thought of quitting, that grin changes my mind.

"You're on the spot. Your neck is way out," the Superintendent says. I hear his words only dimly without realizing their meaning right away, and then suddenly they drive home.

I get a panicky, fluttery, lost sensation. I hold tight to my nerves and clamp my teeth shut.

"What's the trouble, Slim?" I ask the operator.

"I don't know. She seems to have busted down again," Slim Kelby says.

"Let's see." And with every ounce of self-control that I have I step up on the platform in front of the machine. I am scared to death, because I know how easy it will be for me to pull a boner right there in front of everybody, but the only chance I got is a long shot.

I punch the switch. The drills start to turn, and jets of cutting-oil flow out of the lines; I pick up a rough hub and seat it in the machine.

Kelby's eyes are popping.

Then suddenly I freeze. I can't remember a thing that I have done last night. I am blacking out with fright.

"She's a nice girl." I turn at the words, and I see Whitey standing there in the crowd, and he is talking and crooning, and all the words I have heard him say come rushing into my mind, and then nothing else exists in the world but me and the machine, and as I trip the machine and the drills descend, a happy feeling wells up within me.

I figure I've done enough to call Kelby's bluff; and without risking it any further, I leave the machine running and jump down from the platform and stand in front of him.

"What's *supposed* to be wrong with it?" I ask Slim.

He just shakes his head, and he looks from the Superintendent to me and back again, and I let him sweat for a long minute and then I say:

"It doesn't seem to be centering just right. Needs a few minor adjustments, but you should be able to set it up in a couple of minutes."

"But after this," — I shake my finger under his nose — "don't ever let me hear of you shutting this machine down. If it has to be stopped, the set-up man will do the stopping, understand?"

"O.K., boss," Kelby says. And this time he means it.

"All right, everybody, back to work!" And I shoo them all back to their machines. "Let's hit the ball."

Nobody has laughed at me, and I know they never will again. I can't be bluffed, because I hold the cards.

I turn to Jim Carton. "Okay, Donaldson," he says. "If you ever need me out here on the floor, look me up in my office. But you seem to be doing all right without my help." He hits my elbow a couple of times with the palm of his hand and shoves off.

Up till now, I've been too busy to think, and with things cleared up I begin to shake and tremble, and I am suddenly tired and sick as I look back on it. I just want to lie down somewhere and catch up on lost sleep.

Charley ambles up and grins at me.

"I filled an inside straight, Charley," I say.

"I just saw Whitey." Charley looks a little sheepish. "He told me why you took him off that sweeping job. I understand that when you came back into the shop last night, the two of you worked all night, and you learned to operate."

"Yeah," I say, "he did such a good job of teaching me to operate a Bullard last night I didn't figure I could afford to waste an operator like him."

"YOU learned to operate an automatic in *one* night!"

I don't pay any attention to that. I keep talking about Whitey. "He can't work steady production now, but some day he is going to make a crackerjack of a trouble-shooter. I'm going to use him as a set-up man when he comes back. I'm sending him to my brother for a little help. I called my brother last night—he's a doctor; and I explained about Whitey to him, and he said he'd do what he could."

"In *one night,* you learned to operate!" Charley kept harping on it.

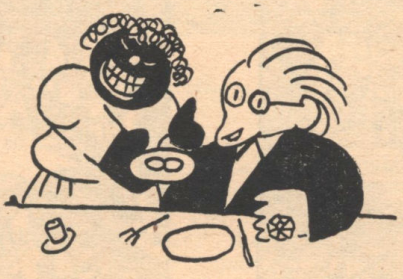
"Charley, it was only one night to you, but it was a whole lifetime to me."

"Okay, kid." Charley taps my elbow with a friendly hand. "If you stick with it, you will make a foreman, but don't get any ideas. I was watching you operate that Bullard, and I'd say you were pretty graceful —for a guy with two left hands."

He rolls down the aisle with that slow, smooth gait of his that keeps time to the steady, pounding, crashing rhythm of production.

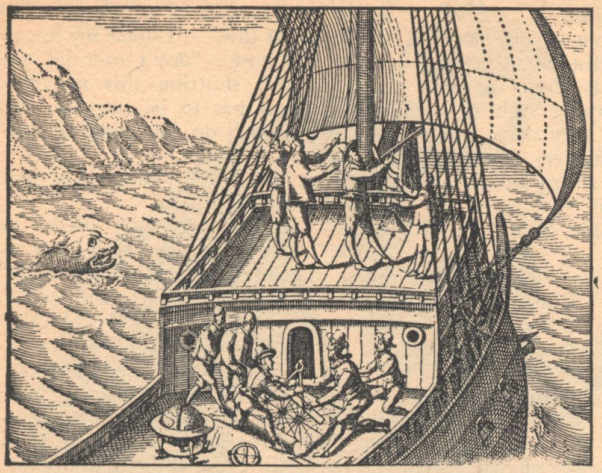
The MAXIMS *of* JAPHETH

by Gelett Burgess



As a business man with a diamond ring on his little finger, or a colored cook with three gold teeth, so is he who boasteth of his good deeds.

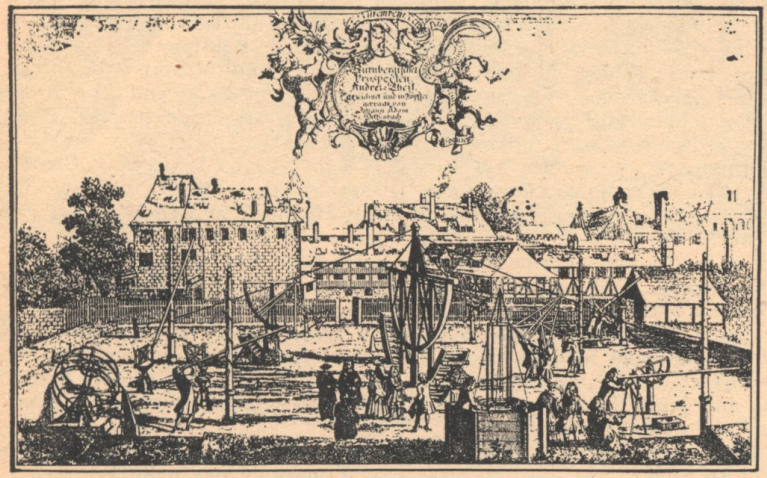
Pathfinders



Observations with the cross-staff at sea, 1615. The navigator obtained the elevation of the sun or a star by holding the longer stick horizontal and the shorter vertical. By moving the vertical part until the object could be seen through the sights at the end, the navigator could read the angle from a calibrated scale on the long stick. Columbus used a cross-staff on his voyages.

Above: Tycho Brahe in his observatory "Uraniborg" at the island of Hven, 1587. By improving instruments and by his precision in fixing positions of planets and stars, the great Danish astronomer paved the way for future discoveries.

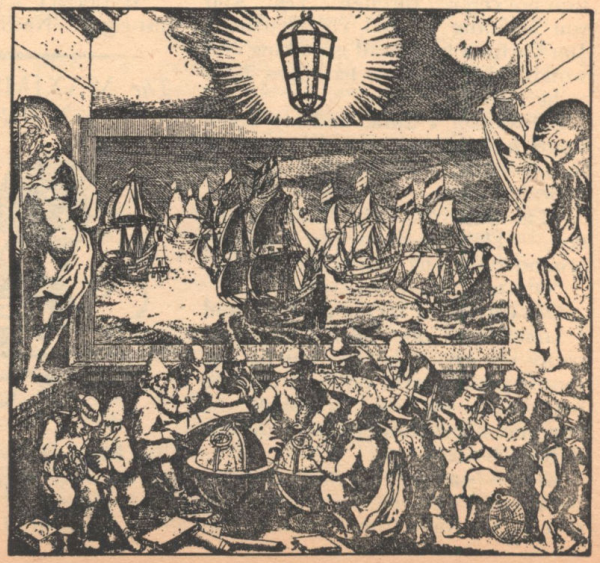
Old prints from Three Lions, Schoenfeld Collection.



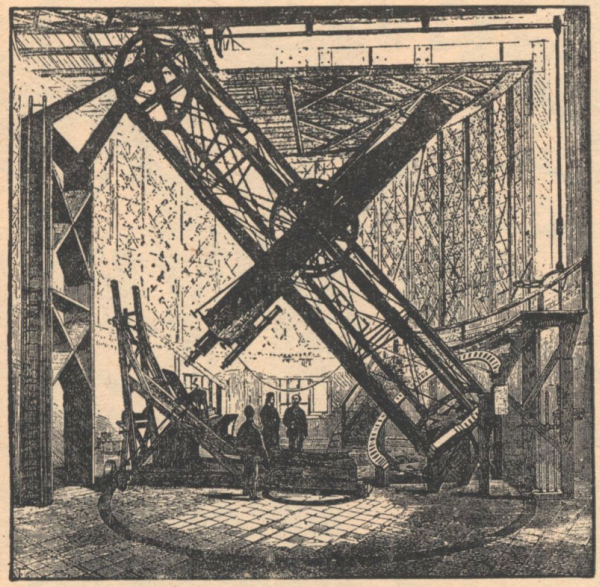
Above: the astronomer Regiomontanus erected an observatory at Nuremberg, the first in Europe, in 1472. While in ancient Babylonia and Egypt temples and towers were used for the study of the heavenly bodies, no record exists of any observatory earlier than about 300 B.C., when Ptolemy Soter founded one in Alexandria.

Below: The astronomer Plancius instructing sailors for navigation at Amsterdam, 1590. Pupils are studying the globe, atlas and geometrical instruments as well as astrolabes and sextants; Plancius is showing the deviation of the compass.

Below: Nautical school at Amsterdam, 1615. The security of shipping was highly improved by the seafarer schools of Holland. The pupils in the scene are to be seen handling from left to right: astrolabe, celestial globe, terrestrial globe, charts, and cross-staff.



to the Sky

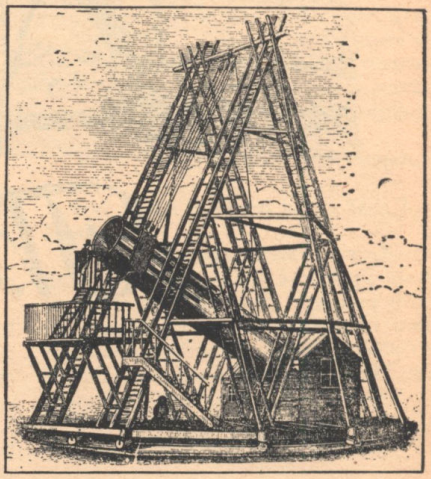


Above: The great equatorial telescope at Greenwich observatory, 1862—the official point from which longitude is reckoned. Sir Christopher Wren chose the site and designed the first buildings, for which Charles II in 1675 had granted £500. Controlled by the British Admiralty, the observatory staff has made almost daily photographs of the sun since 1873.

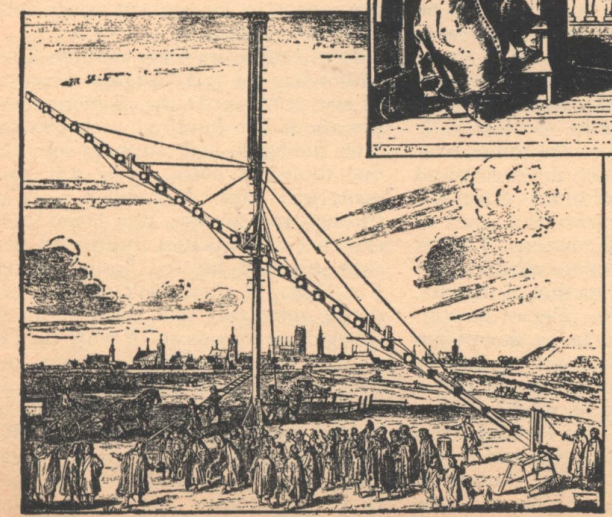
Amerigo Vespucci observes the Southern Cross—after an engraving by Stradanus in 1522. From the letters of Vespucci we learn that he landed on the coast of South America in 1497 and 1499, and had the opportunity to observe the Southern Cross as depicted here.

At right: Johannes Hevelius and his wife observing the stars, 1670.

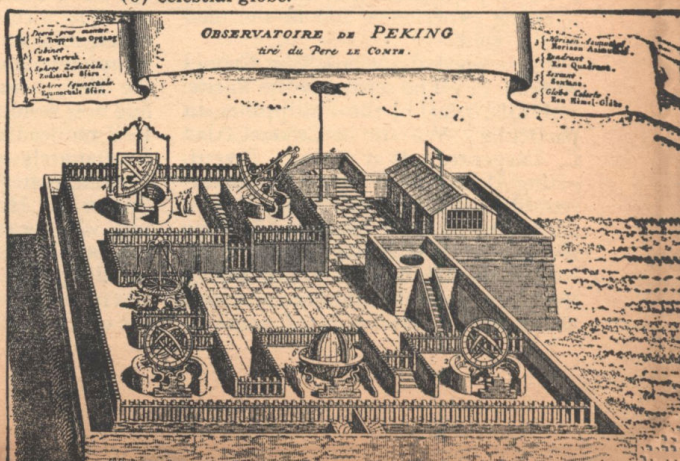
Below: The 150-foot telescope of Hevelius at Danzig, 1670. Until the invention of the reflecting telescope in 1661 the proportions of the astronomical telescopes grew longer and longer. Thus the Huygens Brothers built telescopes having focal lengths of 123, 170, and 210 feet respectively.



Above: In 1789, at Slough, Herschel erected his great telescope, with a 48-inch mirror and a focal length of 40 feet. With his powerful reflecting telescopes, Sir William penetrated farther into the distances beyond our solar system, covering the whole of the heavens several times.



Below: Observatory at Peking, China, 18th Century: (a) entrance staircase, (b) laboratory, (1) zodiac sphere, (2) equinoctial sphere, (3) azimuth circle, (4) quadrant, (5) sextant, (6) celestial globe.



The Case of the

THE WAR CRIMES INVESTIGATION SOLVES A TRAGIC MYSTERY IN THE PHILIPPINES—AND BRINGS A CRIMINAL TO JUSTICE.

A LOT has been written lately about War Crimes trials. It makes interesting reading, but I have looked in vain for stories on how the evidence is gathered. I was a War Crimes investigator, and in our outfit there was never any question that the most interesting experiences fell to the men in the field.

Just a word about how War Crimes worked. . . . The setting is the Pacific —Manila, pearl of the Philippines, in particular. We are in Colonel Alva C. Carpenter's War Crimes Investigating Detachment in the Headquarters of General MacArthur's United States Army Forces, Pacific. The time is June of 1945. We stand on the roof of the Headquarters building in the bright morning sunshine and look about us. A few hundred yards to the west, sparkling and blue, is famous Manila Bay. It is filled with sunken and half-sunken hulks. Somebody probably knows exactly how many there are. I counted over a hundred as we came in.

We turn our eyes to the south, over the Pasig River which flows east and west just a couple of blocks down the street, and we see acres and acres of completely smashed houses. That is the Ermita and Malate district, the fine new residential section of the city. It is reduced now to piles of mortar. Immediately about us is downtown Manila, gutted by fire and wrecked by dynamite. Here and there are buildings which can still be used. If they can be, they are. This Headquarters building is one. The Avenue Hotel, where we mess, is another, though we eat on the top floor, and the building leans over so far we can never fully enjoy our meals.

In our office are filing cabinets filled with what we call "original reports" of war crimes. At the moment there are about five hundred such reports; later the figure will climb far over the one thousand mark. The way they come in is this: As combat units go through the country, they come upon evidence of atrocities, mutilated persons, piles of burned bodies, things like that. If they don't see this evidence, somebody tells them about it. They draw up reports of what they've seen or heard, and where it was, and they send these reports up through channels. The reports come at last to the Intelligence Section of GHQ. Intelligence takes one look, bucks them over to us, and into our files they go. There are many other

Chinese Consuls

by ALF C. WATSON

sources, of course. Outraged citizens complain directly to Headquarters. Our investigating teams are always on the lookout. They pick up a dozen new crimes while working on one. An investigating team consists of two officers and a Filipino civilian, who doubles as interpreter, reporter, typist and guide. Transportation is provided by the GHQ motor pool. Each team gets a jeep and a driver.

Major Ed Fulcher, of Atlanta, Georgia, our Executive Officer, calls a team over and says: "Here's your new case, boys. Find every living eyewitness. Interview enough other witnesses so you know you have the straight dope on what happened. Take sworn statements from all of them, so if they die or disappear, we'll still have their testimony. Pick up and bring in every piece of evidence that could be of any use to us. Take photographs of everything that can be reconstructed in no other way. And above all, try to find out who did it. If you can't find out the person, then try to fix the unit. If you can't fix the unit, try to learn where they were billeted."

So out they go into battered, sunbathed Manila, into their jeep and away they drive. It is getting hot by this time in the morning, and before they check in again at five P.M. it will be hotter.

THE case *we* began that morning was of unusual interest. The report said that in early 1942 Dr. Clarence Kuangson Young, Chinese Consul General of the Philippine Islands, Mr. K. Y. Mok, Chinese Consul of Manila, and six other male Chinese, the staff of the Manila Consulate, were taken into custody by the Japanese. Shortly thereafter they mysteriously vanished, and they were never seen again. The Chinese Government was interested, Dr. Young having been a personal friend and protégé of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Colonel Carpenter had directed that one of our most experienced teams be assigned. We had been chosen—Lieutenants Black of California and Watson of Michigan. We were pleased with this tacit recognition of our past efforts, and we liked this new case. It promised to be interesting. It was.

We headed first for Chinatown. There was a Chinese Chamber of Commerce in there somewhere. It should be a good starting-point. Chinatown in Manila is large. The streets are narrow, the houses bring-

ing up abruptly against the sidewalks. There were swarms of children. Street vendors displayed innumerable small articles. Writers characterize such places as "mystic," "Oriental." It was that, but only, I suspect, to our Western eyes and because we were not used to it. To the residents there, it was probably we who were "mystic."

The Commerce building turned out to be an unimposing two-story structure. On the second floor we met "Chan," a slender Chinese of forty. He wore glasses and carried the imposing title of Executive Vice-President. His title seemed a laugh in view of the threadbare condition of his surroundings, but later we changed our minds. His office had seen better days; but we came to know that the Chinese businesses in that poverty-stricken-appearing section were rich and powerful. Manila's Chinatown had been a key spot in the stream of world commerce. It would be again. Trading corporations were everywhere. The Chinese banks had resources in every country in the world. When Chan said he was an Executive Vice-President, he meant what he said, for his duties were many and important. But today he just listened to us politely.

Yes, he said, he had been well acquainted with Dr. Young, Mr. Mok and the others. Their fate was a mat ter of deep concern to the Chinese community. If we could find out what had happened to them, the people would be very grateful.

He knew the first part of the story. In January, 1942, the month after Pearl Harbor, the Japs had poured into Manila. Those had been terrible days, with planes streaking overhead, bombs and shells exploding in the streets, and the ever-present roar of conflict from nearby Bataan. Life was confused and precarious. In those first days the Japs arrested hundreds of civilians. Prisoners were to be seen everywhere, marching, or being driven in crowded trucks, through the streets. Everyone was afraid. No one knew what might happen from one moment to the next. Among the first to be arrested were the eight men we sought. They were routed out of their homes and taken to Villamor Hall at the University of the Philippines. Many other Chinese were taken there. Most of them were ultimately released, but the Consuls never were. Chan got us the names and addresses of several of these releasees, and from the files in his office he produced a group picture in which were six of our eight men.

George Dee Sakiat, thirty-five, short, stocky, smart and good-humored, was typical of the people to whom Chan sent us. He was on the Board of Directors of the China Banking Corporation, and was owner of several flourishing businesses. He had been taken to Villamor for being a member of an

Tavera's mind was a steel trap of memories, impressions.

organization of Chinese businessmen called "The Philippine Chinese Anti-Japanese Association." There were many men in the Association, he told us. Some of them had tried to avoid imprisonment by flight or concealment. The Japs stopped that by seizing members of their families and holding them as hostages. In a short time most of the members were in custody. At Villamor they were questioned endlessly, day after day. At first, George said, he had been placed on the floor above the Consuls. Then later on he was moved to a tiny room directly across a corridor from Dr. Young. No food, clothes or beds were provided by the Japs, but the families of those imprisoned were allowed to supply them. Everyone slept on the floor on mats, when mats finally arrived. They were all closely guarded, and were allowed only a fifteen-minute walk in the yard every third day.

Were they otherwise mistreated, we asked. He could not say they were, but he remembered one day when Dr. Young had returned from a meeting with the Commandant. He had been white and shaken. The Commandant had tried to get him to issue a proclamation allying the Manila Chinese with the Japs, and starting a pool of money to assist the Japanese war effort. What had happened? Nothing then, said Dee Sakiat, but Dr. Young had been sure that something would, sooner or later. Dr. Young had adopted a stoical attitude. He would not do as they wished. That much was sure.

It is amazing how many people over there found themselves in positions where they had to make a choice between torture and death, or doing something they thought was wrong. And amazing too, how many chose the former and stuck to it. Our work kept showing us man at his best, a creature of beliefs and principles, often ready to die for those principles. The Japs, of course, filled in the other side of the picture. They were invariably devils. Probably that was inevitable in view of the ruthless, criminal nature of their aims. Perhaps it need not always be so.

We ran through the rest of the people on Chan's list. They all told the same story, and from them we got a clear picture of the lives of the Consuls at Villamor Hall. Custody had been close. There had been a great deal of questioning. But there had been no violence, and but minor violations of the laws of war. From them, too, we learned about the wives. You'd think we would have thought of wives. But we hadn't yet. We'd started out looking for men—now we began looking for women.

There were five wives and one set of parents in the Manila area. Mrs. Young had gone to the United States. Two of our men had not been married. We started with Mrs. Mok, wife of the Manila Consul. She was a handsome Chinese woman of around forty years. She had Manchu blood in her veins, and a heart big enough to go with it. She was the mother of two children. The eldest had contracted tuberculosis; on his account she was living at the Chinese General Hospital in the north part of Manila. From her we got the next step.

She had been one of those who brought food, clothing and sleeping-mats to Villamor Hall. The Japs had let her talk to her husband only once and but for five minutes then, but she had learned when the men were allowed out for exercise, and on those occasions she was usually present, standing outside an iron fence and watching through the paling. She had never seen any violence, but the Japs who guarded the men did so with fixed bayonets. Then, on March 28th,

after nearly twelve weeks at Villamor Hall, the Consuls had been transferred to Fort Santiago in the Intramuros. She and most of the other wives had seen them there several times. They were kept in cells which surrounded a hollow sun-baked square. The cells were small; it was dreadfully hot. They slept on mats on the floor, and they had no conveniences, but they were alive, well and trying to be cheerful, when last she saw them. That was on the 16th day of April, 1942. She had gone to Santiago with Mrs. Young. There was no warning of anything wrong. The guards stood near as always, and would not let the women get close to their husbands, but she had managed to smile at Mr. Mok several times, and he had smiled back.

Mrs. Young returned to the prison the next day, Mrs. Mok told us. The men were gone. After much hardship, an audience had been gained with Colonel Seiichi Ohta, Chief of the Japanese Kempei Tai (secret police) in Manila, and Commandant of Fort Santiago. Ohta said the men had been moved to another place. He claimed he could not reveal where without permission from Tokyo. He had promised to attempt to get the permission, and had said he would notify the families of the Consuls as soon as it was granted. Neither Mrs. Young or Mrs. Mok ever saw the men again.

WE looked up the other wives. They were scattered about the city. Mrs. Yao and Mrs. Siao lived together with relatives in a little house in west Manila. The long three years seemed to have broken their spirits. They were quiet and resigned. Saddest of all was pretty, thirty-four-year-old Mrs. Loo. She lived in Chinatown at a place close to where we had originally entered it. There were two lovely children, a girl about four and a boy around six. She was trying to support them by working in a store. She was still very much in love with her husband, and had not given up hope that he was still alive. We played with the children, took them for a ride in our jeep. We felt pretty bad when we left Mrs. Loo. We had children of our own, and those two kids needed their father.

Madam Wang was the wife of James Wang, son of Mr. C. T. Wang, former Chinese Ambassador to the United States. Educated in a French mission school in China, she had come to the Philippines and married James Wang just a few weeks before the Japs arrived. Now for three years she had stayed hidden away in an inconspicuous house on the outskirts of Manila. Wife or widow at twenty-four, she was one of the most beautiful women I ever saw, and she had the character of a saint.

In a hole-in-a-wall a block from Headquarters, we found the mother and father of the youngest member of the Consulate party, Sing Siu Young. There were several brothers and sisters, but Sing Siu had been the family's pride. He was handsome and brilliant. He had brought great honor to his people by securing a position of so much importance. His mother, a wrinkled little old lady of sixty-five, gave us his picture and rocked back and forth in bitter grief. His father, withered and old at seventy, had grown ill with worry over the fate of his son. He was helpless in bed when first we came. Only his eyes showed his sorrow. He never recovered his health, and he died before the conclusion of the case. . . .

It is strange how close are people everywhere, how nearly alike, in all the really important things in life. Here were these Chinese parents. They spoke no English. Their lives had been as different from ours as could ever be. Yet when they looked at us and told us of Sing Siu, we could as well have been their children as sons of American parents.

They were poor at the moment, terribly poor. The Chinese have a fine custom of serving refreshments to every caller. We lived a never-to-be-forgotten moment on the afternoon of our first visit, when the children came carrying tiny cups and saucers. They bowed low and gracefully and handed them to us. In the cups was hot water. No explanation was necessary. We knew it was all they had.

As in every war-crimes case we ever worked on, we were getting angry by this time, *very* angry. But you can't solve crimes with your heart; only with your head. All these people corroborated Mrs. Mok's story, but they added nothing.

The Intramuros, the famous ancient walled city of Manila, had been the scene of some of the most vicious fighting of the entire war. Here the Jap defenders of Manila, cornered, had holed up and fought to the last man. A whole city in itself it had been—apartment-houses, stores, shops, all dominated by grim Fort Santiago and surrounded by a massive stone wall. We had never been inside, but we had heard a great deal about it. The Japs had turned every structure into a fort, and taking it had been an exercise in engineering. The place had received a terrific pounding. Great holes had been blown through the walls. The area was off limits and under heavy guard. Japs were still coming up out of tunnels, a source of danger to everyone in the vicinity. We had to get special permission to go in, and we did—there might be a lead in there somewhere. We did not stay long. There was nothing there, nothing but complete and utter destruction.

So there it stood. On April 16, 1942, our men were alive and well—since then, nothing. For half a day we racked our brains. Then we started looking for surviving inmates of Fort Santiago. From George Dee Sakiat we learned of a young Filipino whom George had heard had seen the Consuls at Santiago. His name was Peter De Longa, and George thought he was either attending or teaching a secretarial school. We made a round of those places, and found him in a day and a half.

PETER DE LONGA was a clean-cut youngster, highly intelligent. Yes, he said, he had spent three months in Santiago. His crime was helping in the publication of an underground newspaper. He smiled at us. He was guilty, he was proud to say. Our men had been in cells right across the square from him for several weeks, but he had been released before the 16th of April, and he was afraid he could be of little help to us. We asked if he knew of any others now alive who were in Santiago when he was. He told us of three men who might still be alive. He knew the district where one had lived. He had lost track of the other two; but one of them, he said, had been a very prominent man. If *he* was still alive, he would remember things and could help us with details better than anyone else. He was Joaquin Pardo de Tavera, former Chief of the Philippine F.B.I.

We lost no time on this lead. At Malacanan Palace we learned about Tavera. He was alive, and he *was* prominent. The Government wanted him to come back to work, but he was getting on in years, had undergone months of torture, and he was not yet up to it. He lived in a house belonging to his sister. One of those huge, stately old houses amid trees and surrounded by a wall, standing back from the Bay out Dewey Boulevard.

Joaquin Tavera was one of those unforgettable characters, a slender little man with close-cropped gray hair and snapping black eyes. He was polished, gracious and filled with a burning energy. He had taken over the Bureau around 1925 and had built it into a smooth-working organization. He had made frequent trips to the United States to study the latest methods of crime detection and Bureau management. That was his work, his life. He loved it, and was eager to get back to it. But, he grinned, the old body wouldn't carry him back yet. His story was surprising in that anyone could have lived through what he had. He was one of the first picked up by the Japs in January, 1942. They had questioned him every day for weeks, trying to pry from him the vast stores of information they knew he possessed. There had been beatings

uncountable. Finally he had got away.

He knew Dr. Young and Mr. Mok very well, he said. He had been friendly with both before the war, had met them often at public functions, banquets, balls and the like. He had seen them at Fort Santiago. With them had been six other Chinese men. We showed him photographs of the other six. The faces of some of them seemed familiar to him, but he would positively identify only Dr. Young and Mr. Mok.

THEN came the first break in the case. "What happened to the Chinese," Tavera wanted to know, "after they were taken out of Santiago?" Had he seen them leave the fort, we asked eagerly. Yes, he replied, and he remembered it well because of the manner of their going.

Shortly after noon on a sunny day in the spring of 1942, Tavera told us, he had watched through a slit in his cell door while the eight Chinese were brought from their cells and placed in a line just a few feet in front of him. Jap guards had come around behind the line and carefully tied the hands of each man with cord or wire. Then the Chinese had been faced to the right and marched out of the square. A few minutes after they disappeared, just time enough for them to have reached the street through exits in that direction, he had heard the starting of truck motors—two, he believed. The men never returned to the fort, and he never saw them again.

Tavera's mind was a steel trap of memories, impressions. We had noticed that while we were getting acquainted; and we felt that here was a man whose words we could trust, whose very impressions we would do well to follow. What month in the spring of 1942 had that been, we asked. He smiled. "I couldn't tell you that for sure," he said. "Too many things happened both before and afterward. But I would guess it was sometime in April, somewhere around the middle of April."

We thanked him and took our leave. I often think of him and wish him well. He has earned a long life and a continued useful one. His mind will be of plenty of use—if his broken body can ever mend.

We ran out the other leads given us by De Longa and Tavera; but we could not find anyone. Dead they were, or scattered to the four winds.

At last we were back in the office, scratching our heads, up against a blank wall. We put in the better part of a day mentally twisting and turning. Where to go next, what to try, whom to see? It was no use. We were stopped. If the men *were* in those trucks in broad daylight, somebody in Manila must have seen them as they drove along. But where was that someone?

Finally we got around to concentrating on the trucks themselves. Tavera's recollection had been that the trucks had started north, toward the Pasig River. . . . North. . . . Well, there were bridges over the river. If they crossed one of those bridges, they'd be in downtown Manila, and if they *kept* going north—our minds roved over what lay to the north. Then we had an inspiration. Sometime, somewhere in Chinatown, someone had mentioned a huge Chinese cemetery at the north edge of Manila. We'd been told that hundreds of Chinese had been taken out there and killed by the Japanese. We reached for our caps. . . .

We took the long ride up Rizal Avenue with its rows of curious-looking stores and its ever-intriguing brown-skinned crowds. There was always something exciting about Rizal. It looked like a foreign country, but gave us a feeling that we were among friends. A country different from our own, yet somehow close to us.

The Chinese cemetery was a huge place, and a strange place. Though we hadn't known it a week before, it lay right across the street from Mrs. Mok's Hospital. The south half was treeless and barren—the part, we later learned, where persons too poor to pay for burial were placed, a potter's field. In the center, a quarter of a mile in from the main road, was a cluster of buildings, the administration buildings. The whole thing was now fallen into disrepair, for apparently no work had been done during the occupation, but once it had been beautiful. Around the administration buildings were the sepulchers of the rich and influential. Here were monuments, buildings, brightly painted, colorful with dragons and grinning lions. It was like nothing we had ever imagined. Here and there as we drove in a solitary laborer worked in a desultory fashion. It would take more men than we saw to make the cemetery what it had been.

At the offices we asked for the manager. A dark-eyed young girl went for him, returning with a wiry old gentleman of about seventy. His face was lined with wrinkles, but his eyes showed courage and joy of life. He was Alphonse Giotanse, manager of the cemetery. We introduced ourselves. We were from General MacArthur's Headquarters. We were investigating crimes committed by the Japanese against the Chinese in Manila. We had heard that hundreds had been brought out here and killed. Was that true?

"Yes," sighed Giotanse, with a faraway look in his eyes, "that was true, too true." How long had he been manager of this cemetery? He thought awhile, then said with a wry little smile: "About twenty-five years." Was he here all through the Japanese occupation? He was, he said, though not much work was done during those years.

We asked if he had ever heard of a Chinese gentleman by the name of Young, Dr. Clarence Kuangson Young. Yes, he said, he had known Dr. Young. *Known* him? Where had he met him? Dr. Young, said Giotanse, was a great man among the Chinese in Manila. He had been Consul General of the Philippines. On several big Chinese holidays, Dr. Young had come out to the cemetery and made speeches. Were they good speeches, we asked. Yes, they were wonderful speeches. Everybody loved and respected Dr. Young. Then he said with pride: "I, Alphonse Giotanse, have shaken his hand." Had he known this gentleman here? We handed him a photograph of Mr. Mok. Yes, that was the Consul of Manila. He used to come to the cemetery with Dr. Young.

"When did you last see Dr. Young?" we asked. Quick as a flash he replied: "On the day he died." I seemed to grow older at that moment—old and tired. I guess my mind jumped back to Mrs. Loo and her two children. "Where did he die?" we asked. The reply, given quietly but firmly was: "Right here in my cemetery." "How do you know?" we asked incredulously. "Because I saw him," said Giotanse. "From the roof of this very building, I saw them kill him."

WE worked late that night and all the next morning with Giotanse, coming out at last with a sworn statement in which appeared the following passages:

Q: Will you relate the events which took place the last time you saw Dr. Young?

A: I had just returned to the cemetery from my noontime meal. My son-in-law came running to say the Japanese were bringing Dr. Young in a truck. I was shocked. I knew they would bring someone because they had caused a grave to be dug. When the Japanese were ready to kill, they would come to the cemetery in the morning and have the workmen dig. We could tell from the size of the grave how many would die. Then in the afternoon they would bring the people and kill them.

Q: How did your son-in-law know that the Japanese were bringing Dr. Young?

A: He saw as they passed the first gate, the one which is locked.

Q: When your son-in-law brought this news, what did you do?

A: I could not believe it was Dr. Young, so I ran to the roof of this building to a place where I could see.

Q: What did you see?

Illustrated by John McDermott

A workman was holding a large bone, a thigh bone. They stared at it in horrified fascination.

A: Two autos were coming up the road toward the office. Behind came two big trucks. The trucks were filled with people.

Q: What happened next?

A: They passed very near this building. Then they turned off and drove across the field where the poor are buried.

Q: Could you see the occupants of the autos and trucks?

A: Yes. Very plain.

Q: Who were in the autos?

A: The autos had Japanese officers and two men in black.

Q: And who were in the trucks?

A: The first truck was filled with Japanese soldiers. Dr. Young stood in front in the second truck. He had on a white suit, and his hands were behind. He held up his head. I could see him. I know. I am not mistaken. Mr. Mok was with him, and six other men in white clothes. I think they were Chinese too.

Q: Did you recognize any of the other six men?

A: No. I watched most Dr. Young and Mr. Mok.

Q: Were there any Japanese soldiers with Dr. Young in the second truck?

A: There were a few; I think three or four.

Q: Did you recognize any of the Japanese in the autos or in the trucks?

A: I did not.

Q: What happened then?

A: I am much afraid, but I stayed where I was.

Q: Why were you afraid?

A: The Japanese never let us see. They always drive the people away with guards.

Q: What happened next?

A: The trucks and cars stopped, and all got out. The Japanese brought Dr. Young and the Chinese men before the grave. Then they knelt them down. They faced the grave, and their hands were still behind. Then two men in black walked up and down and made motions. I think they were Japanese priests.

Q: What happened then?

A: Then an officer stood at the end of the grave. He raised his sword. At the back of each Chinese man stood one Japanese soldier with bayonet fixed. The officer let down his sword, and shots rang out.

Q: How many shots?

A: I do not know. Many shots. Each soldier shot I think the one in front. The Chinese men fell forward. Some fell into the grave. The others rolled and kicked on the edge.

Q: What happened then?

A: The soldiers stabbed those who kicked and pushed them into the grave. Then they covered up the grave with loose dirt, and went and brought Filipinos to finish.

Q: Just how far were you away from all this?

A: About three hundred meters.

Q: How clearly could you see it?

A: I saw well. My eyes are good, and there is nothing between.

Q: Are the men still in that same grave?

A: They have not been moved.

Q: Can you take us to the exact spot where they are buried?

A: Yes. I marked the grave the next day, with a small wooden marker, but in a few days it was gone.

Q: Do you still know the exact spot?

A: Yes. I will take you there.

Q: Where is the son-in-law who brought the news?

A: He left the cemetery after a few months. He was later killed by the Japanese.

Q: Do you know of anyone else who saw these things?

A: I know no one else.

Q: Is there no one still around who was working in the cemetery then?

A: My friend José Bayan may have seen. He was working here then.

Q: Where is he now? Does he still work here?

A: He still works here. He lives here in this cemetery.

Q: You say José Bayan is your friend. Have you never talked to him about the death of Dr. Young?

A: We have never spoken of this. It is very dangerous.

SO three years had gone by, and Giotanse had said nothing, not even to José Bayan. It might be true. Black and I had never had cause to be that careful, but it might be true. We looked up Bayan. He was a giant Filipino, the biggest I ever saw. But he was gentle, very gentle. He had fixed up a home in an empty tomb. He lived there with his family. He confirmed Giotanse's story in every particular. He had seen it all, he said, from behind a tombstone just four hundred meters away. No, he had never mentioned it to Alphonse. Such killings went on all the time; it was death to talk about them. He placed the murders in April of 1942. Could he show us where the bodies were? He could, he said. We followed him out through the short grass to the very spot Giotanse had indicated. We looked back from there at the tombstone. He'd had a clear view. If, of course, he had had one at all.

We went back into Chinatown and talked it over with Chan. He was excited, as was every Chinese who heard the news. We decided we'd have to dig. We couldn't leave it where it was. Chan said the Chamber of Commerce would furnish the diggers if we could get permission to dig. We got the permission. He did "more" than his promise. He got the diggers all right, but he also announced in the Chinese newspapers the fact of the exhumation, its time and its place.

At eight A.M. on the morning of June 14th we arrived with the five wives to find a crowd of three hundred people assembled. Excavation had already begun, and the trench was by then knee-deep. Wooden benches had been placed along the edge of the hole, and on these the wives were expected to sit. Parasols were handy for their protection from the sun. It was the weirdest scene I can remember. All those people, most of them Chinese, part of them Filipino, the blazing sun that got hotter by the moment, the wives on the benches, the parasols, the trench growing muddy and watery, the wives staring down into it, the half-naked diggers, sweat sparkling on their brown skins. José Bayan in the foreground, bringing up huge shovelfuls of loam with a powerful, rhythmic swing.

We were on the spot. Suppose they were the wrong people. But Bayan went right on digging, and there was something about the way he did it that seemed to dispel any doubts that he knew what he was doing. Anyway, the whole thing had suddenly got too big for us. At least it had got out of our control. Chan stood on the bank, giving orders, shouting encouragement, soothing the wives. Yes, the Chamber of Commerce had the right man for their Executive Vice-President. Chan can play on my team in any game, at any time!

Suddenly a cry went up. The crowd surged in around the excavation, a movement that nearly precipitated me into the hole, papers and all. A workman, standing knee-deep in muddy brown water, was holding high above his head a large bone, a thigh bone. He immediately sloshed over to the benches and held it up before the eyes of the wives. They stared at it in horrified fascination. This was no good, of course. Nobody could identify a bone, not a thigh bone, anyway. But there was nothing we could do about it. The U.S.A. was far away, and we had become but witnesses to a scene typically, powerfully Eastern. Chan was the high priest of this affair, and he wasn't doing too bad a job of it, either, if they would just keep on finding bones. They did.

All up and down the trench, now shoulder-deep, there was activity now. Fingers appeared, shin bones, rib bones, then a skull, then another. Each went instantly off to the ladies. One thought she recognized her husband's head from the shape of the forehead and jaw. But she wasn't sure, of course.

Then they struck pay dirt. Up came two pairs of spectacles. They were washed off in the muddy water and taken to the group on the benches. A hush fell over the crowd as the women stared at them intently, fearfully. Then there was a broken sob, a flood of tears. Mrs. Yao had recognized one pair. She had helped buy them years ago. They had been in her home for a long, long time. They had belonged to her husband.

We stayed around until an automatic pencil, three pairs of shoes, some silk underwear one woman had given her husband for Christmas, two belt-buckles and a toothbrush had been identified. Then we took the ladies away, across the street to Mrs. Mok's Hospital. There, through the long afternoon, they sat in silent grief.

The digging continued. By four o'clock we had recovered seven complete skeletons. Only the skull of the eighth was missing. It was unearthed in the early hours of the following morning. We brought the women back. There had been some attempt to keep the bones of each skeleton separate and together. It had been only partially successful. The bones had been washed and dried in the sun. There was a pile of personal belongings from which came articles furnishing positive identification of all eight men.

Chan surprised us again. Sitting by the piles of bones, were eight new boxes. The families, Chan said, would want the remains. They would be cremated, placed in vases and kept, Chinese style. So began the grisly task of sorting the bones. Each wife silently picked out those she thought were her husband's and placed them in her box. One wondered how human beings could live through such a calamity, but they did. No one cried. It was just a grim, silent selection of bones. Afterward, when all had been done for the dead that could to be done, we knew there would be tears enough, heartbreak unbearable. But now, in public and with work to be done, there was silence and a pitiful dignity. At last the selections were made, the eight boxes were filled. The Detachment wanted pictures, pictures of anything that could not be reproduced in words. So we photographed the wives with the boxes.

TWO weeks later the Vice-President of the China Banking Corporation gave a dinner. Its purpose was to honor Mrs. Mok, who was leaving for America, and to show our Detachment the gratitude of the Manila Chinese. It was held in the bombed-out remnant of what had once been the finest Chinese eating-house in Manila. The dinner was delicious and most of the friends we had made were there—Chan, George Dee Sakiat, and many others. It was not a gay affair; neither was it a particularly sad one. It too had dignity. Mrs. Mok sat between Black and myself, and took care of us. She served us herself, told us what to eat, how to eat it, what it was. She was a woman to remember.

The war ended, and a thorough sifting of the conquered yellow horde turned up a name we had heard before, Colonel Seiichi Ohta. He had a trial. The Chinese had none. Our Prosecution Section re-created before a Military Commission the story told here. War Crimes hanged him by the neck until he was dead. It was the very least we could do.

The author of "The Mask of Noh" gives us a very short drama of his native New Mexico.

by WILLIAM BRANDON

Something for the Bride

IN the plaza of Santa Ana de la Servilleta on this New Mexico June night, a couple of bums sat on the Major Bridger monument and discussed the old cathedral clock which, brightly lighted, hung in the night above them like an electric moon. They watched with considerable interest as the clock struck ten and two little people stepped out of a door under the clock-face at each sound of the hammer.

Some hundred and ten years before, a Santa Fe trader wintering in the Rio Grande settlement of Santa Ana had fashioned a stroke for the village clock in the form of two painted wooden figurines representing a Grandee and his lady, who came forth hand in hand at each sound of the bell telling the hours.

Through the summer dust-storms and winter snows this ancient couple never failed in their appearances, and in fact, that particular part of the clock mechanism had never needed repair in the memory of the oldest generation.

The two bums appeared fascinated by this contrivance, and long after ten o'clock had passed and the Grandee and his lady had retired to await the half-hour, they remained engrossed in a study of the clock and the tall church tower in which it was placed. The two hoboes themselves attracted the attention of divers citizens hurrying homeward, doubtless, through the empty plaza, and were eventually remarked by the constable, Tony Mondrexas, who approached them and engaged them in conversation.

"There ain't nothing for you 'boes in this town," Tony said. "Get on your way."

"Good evening, Tony," one of the bums replied with civility. This was an old man, Tony perceived, spare and white-haired and with gleaming eyes that Tony later described as being smoking mean, and very old, at least half the age of God. "We were speaking of the clock," the old man continued, in a voice like a dead leaf on the wind. "I was recounting the local superstition to the effect that when proclaiming the hour of a funeral, the couple up there bow, and that they dance a little at the time of a wedding. My friend scoffs. Will you bear me out?"

Tony opened his mouth. He pushed back his hat and then took it off altogether and put it on again. He said: "How do you know my name, Grandpop? You ain't been through here before, or I'd of remembered you."

"The story is noted in current guidebooks," the old man said to his companion, an extremely dirty fat man wearing a ragged red shirt, "as everyone knows. But I suppose no one in Santa Ana has ever really believed it, except perhaps, now and then, a rare individual of more than ordinary learning and wisdom."

Tony turned on the fat man and said: "Who the hell is this old guy?" In spite of himself he grinned; Tony was a genial cop. "Are the both of you out of some nuthouse?"

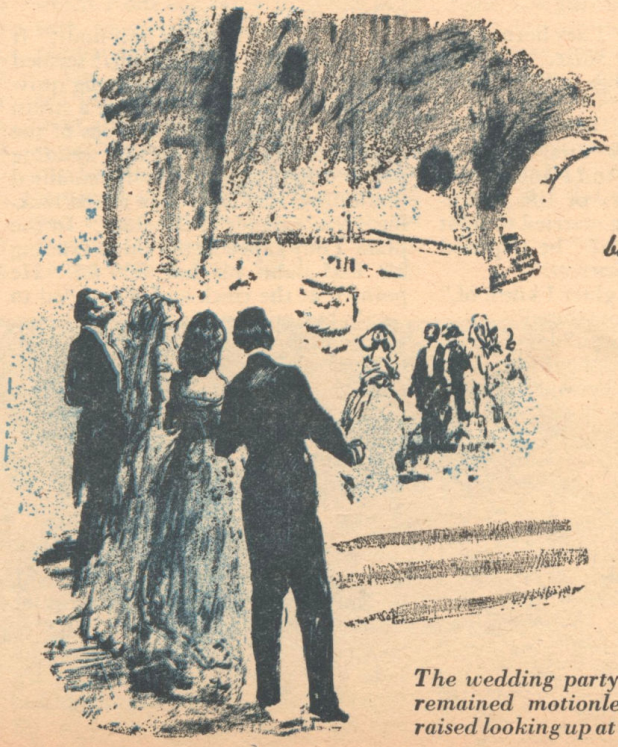
"Such general skepticism is the sickness of our age," the old man pronounced sadly in his soft voice.

"Look, *viejo*," Tony said, "I'm still the law, and I can run you in. I'm talking to you."

The old man said in a kindly way: "You always were a good enough lad, Tony, but a little of a jackass. But I want you to answer some questions for me. What can you tell me of the Charlesville family hereabouts?"

"I ain't here to tell you anything about anybody," Tony said. "Maybe we better go down to the hoosegow instead, and find out who you are. You got me interested."

He put his hand on the old man's arm—and the old man lifted it off as he would a beetle. The touch of his



Illustrated by John Fulton

The wedding party came together and remained motionless, and faces were raised looking up at the clock in wonder.

fingers seemed to Tony cold and spectral; the plaza was dark and silent; Tony felt himself disturbed by uneasy feelings he could not name.

"Attend me," the old man said in a gentle voice. "Do you remember Mr. Charlesville, Tony?"

"I guess I do," Tony said. "He was an old crackpot when I was a little kid. He was a prospector. He run away and left his family to go prospecting in Africa or Alaska or some place a long time ago. He was nuts."

"Indeed," the old bum said. He smiled. "And Mr. Charlesville's abandoned family?"

TONY shrugged. "They been starving to death ever since. The old woman done washings until finally she kicked in."

"Sordid tale," the old man murmured, addressing the dirty fat man, who said nothing. "And I understand one of the daughters of this unfortunate family is being married tonight in the cathedral chapel?" he inquired of Tony. "That is correct?"

"She's the only daughter I know of," Tony said. "You know them?"

"She would be a granddaughter of old Mr. Charlesville, then?"

"She would. And her old man was another one of the same stripe."

"He is dead?"

"Killed himself with a whisky-bottle. Why not? He was raised like a coyote."

"I'm interested in this granddaughter, Tony. She is an attractive girl?"

"Why, she's a good-looking enough little monkey, but she's all of a piece with the whole family. What can you expect? She was raised in a shack acrost the river. Wore flour-sacking dresses when she was a little kid. It's kind of a shame. Folks say she's getting married because the guy got her in trouble."

"Too bad," the old man said. "A wedding should be a happy scene, even attended by jubilant omens."

"Hers ain't."

"A cheap back-door affair, an inauspicious beginning," the old man murmured. "Not good. Can you tell me the time, Tony? My eyes are poor."

"I expect it's time I was taking you down to the bum-room to sleep it off," Tony said amiably. He glanced up at the clock. "It's about ten-thirty." He heard running steps, and saw the dirty fat man scuttling away across the plaza, carrying a little suitcase. "Hey!" Tony shouted. "Just a minute, you!"

The fat man disappeared down an alley. Tony swore and ran after him. He was gone for several minutes, and returned by himself.

"I told you guys I wanted to talk to you," he said to the old man. He had lost his good humor. "Now you and me will take a walk to the hoosegow."

"I am at your service," the old man replied with dignity. He got up from his seat on the toe of Major Bridger's moccasin.

"I don't like bums roaming around town all night," Tony said in a loud voice. "I don't like 'em running away from me, either. It's my guess you've broke out of a booby-hatch, and I'll have to send you back. Come on with me."

"But one moment, Tony. Isn't the chapel door opening? The wedding must be over."

"All right, so the happy couple's coming out. Let's go."

The clock struck the half-hour. It had a deep bell-like tone that seemed to echo over the plaza and hang quivering in the still night air like a strain of distant music. On the steps of the chapel the shadows of the wedding party came together and remained motionless, and faces were raised looking up in wonder at the clock. In the plaza Tony gaped at the clock, craning his neck, and his hat fell off. He pointed at the clock and attempted to speak, but said nothing.

The Grandee and his lady had not withdrawn into the clock-base after telling the time, as they should have done, but were dancing round and round in a little circle. There was something solemn in the demeanor of the two tiny figures as they whirled about, but it was obvious, nevertheless, that they were enjoying themselves. The music was faint and far-off, and barely audible on the ground.

Tony watched for a full minute, until the clock's electric light suddenly went out, and the Grandee and his lady disappeared like a snap of the fingers. Tony shook his head, and swallowed, and looked around for the old man. The old man was gone. Tony found that he was shivering. He heard excited voices among the wedding-party, and ran toward them.

IN Griego Alley, behind the cathedral, the two bums met and made their way to Jicarilla Street, which runs parallel to the railroad. The fat man was limping.

He said: "I banged meself on a saint. I shouldn't of done it."

"You are the world's premier steeplejack, Barnaby," the old man said, "when sober."

"I got too much belly these days," the fat man wheezed. "And let's don't forget the pay-off, Pop."

The old man sighed. He said, "Wait here," and crossed the street to the Jicarilla Liquor Store, and took off his hat and wrapped it around his hand and smashed the liquor store's plate-glass window. He picked out an armload of bottles of whisky, making his selection with care, and returned to the fat man.

The fat man opened his suitcase and took out a battered phonograph and put it on the sidewalk. He then proceeded to fill the suitcase with the whisky.

The old man bent over the phonograph to examine the record on the turntable. "Under the Double Eagle," he observed. "Not too appropriate."

"I had to bust them dolls loose to wire them on," the fat man said. "I left 'em laying there."

"They won't mind," the old man said.

The fat man closed the suitcase and hoisted it in both hands and swung it up to his shoulder. He had left one bottle out to carry in his hand. The old man put the phonograph under his arm. They went around the corner and opened the bottle and had a leisurely drink, and another to keep the first one company, and a third to settle the fight, and then shuffled away into the shadows of the railroad yard.

Emergency Operator: *(Number Unknown)*

CALL THIS A GHOST-STORY IF YOU LIKE; CALL ELAINE'S MINK COAT A VERY MODERN SYMBOL FOR A HALO. ANYHOW, WE THINK YOU WILL NOT SOON FORGET THIS BRIEF EPISODE, FOR IT IS A TALE SUCH AS THE POET WILLIAM BLAKE MIGHT WRITE IF HE WERE LIVING TODAY, AMONG THE MEN AND WOMEN OF OUR PRESENT WORLD.

by EDWARD L. McKENNA

THERE always has been plenty of trouble in Pennsylvania—flood and fire, strikes, mine disasters, massacres, and battles, and rebellions. There have always been stout-hearted people in Pennsylvania too, to gaze undaunted at the leering face of Death, and steadfastly to love their State which is so dangerous, but so beautiful.

This happened, up in the flood country, not so long ago. They have a lot of rivers in Pennsylvania, rivers with disarmingly pretty names—blue Juniata, bright Alfarata, the Schuylkill, the Delaware, and—and the Susquehanna, and the Allegheny, and the Monongahela. Those last are the two. They have a tryst with each other, a rendezvous, in the spring of the year. They wait all winter long, the sullen Monongahela, and the Allegheny, swollen and jaundiced, biding its time. It is February, it is March, it is middle March, and the people of the river towns look up hopefully or stoically at the leaden skies.

Then it begins to rain.

Now, in one of these towns it doesn't matter which one, there was a brick building, and in it there were ten women and four men. It was right in the path of the rising water, and it wasn't quite safe. They knew that. Everybody else on that street had left or was leaving. They were not leaving. They were not getting out—not yet. The water was high enough; so was the wind, and it was pouring rain. The rivers had left their banks, and were doing what they love to do: fighting it out in the streets. Débris was beginning to float past, crates, boxes, the furniture that once was part of some home. Timbers would give the building a rough nudge, full of innuendo.

Those four men would look down, and spit, and swear, and joke with each other as they hustled about their jobs, busy as a prize-fighter's seconds between rounds. They had seen it all before: blizzards, sleet-storms, rushing waters, tangle snarls of wire, broken poles, miles and miles of broken or fallen poles. The girls were not looking down, but straight ahead. "Number, please?" they were saying. "Number, please." None of them was showing as much excitement as if she were on her way to her wedding, or even her first ball. Their voices were calm and serene, and confident. "Here's your party," they said.

In came a woman, or say, rather a girl; she wasn't a day over twenty-three or twenty-four. She was wearing a mink coat that must have cost several thousand dollars. Up to the switchboards she went, and stood there, unperturbed as a statue.

She had not long to wait. The Chief Operator was showing those girls just what it was that got her her job. She was taking her turn, yes, and more than her turn, at the switchboards. She went over to the girl; they looked at each other.

"I am an operator," the girl said, as one might say: I am a Delt or a Deke; I am Yale '29, or Harvard '37, or a Mason, or a Knight of Columbus. "I'm from the Parkersville Exchange. In the neighborhood. Came over to help out."

"Work a big board?" said the Chief Operator.

"WHAT kind of board?" asked the girl. It wasn't insolence. It was competence. She threw her mink coat anywhere, as a boxer drops his robe. Down she sat. The bulbs flashed and winked on the glowing board. "Operator," she said. "Operator," and began to shift the plugs, her hands, her plump arms like fluid steel. "Here's your party," she said.

The Chief Operator watched her; then she went back to the rest-room, returning in a moment. "Go back and put these on," she said. "I'll attend to your board." They were the sedate Miss Harkins' own stockings — Miss Harkins', who had never bobbed her hair, thinking it unladylike.

The girl gave her a wide smile. "Oh! Thank you," she said. She came back in a few minutes, shoeless, and in Miss Harkins' stockings, and began to work the switchboard smoothly, flawlessly, and with the grace of a swan.

The Chief Operator looked down at her with a singing heart—Cecilia Harkins, an old battle-ax of fifty-two, and an old fire-horse also. Came to work for the Telephone Company when she was sixteen! The kids were scared to death of her, though no girl had to be frightened of her, ever, provided the girl were decent and capable and self-respecting. That's what they were, but still they were frightened of Miss Harkins.

She nodded, and patted the new girl's arm, then started going up and down the line, as an Archbishop used to do during a battle. "You all right? You O.K.? You want to go to the rest-room?" she'd say. "No. No," they'd say. "Come on. It's your turn. Come on. Get up." She was a rough old baby.

Presently she was sitting next to the new girl. Women take one look at each other, and see things a man wouldn't see in a week, or ever. The girl was neat, scrubbed-looking, as if she had just stepped out of a shower, or a beauty parlor. She was short, and chubby, and plain. She wore no wedding ring. Then why the mink coat, why the dress that must have cost ninety or a hundred dollars, and say twenty for the ruined shoes? All this puzzled the aggressively virtuous Miss Harkins.

"Number, please?" said Miss Harkins. "—You are a good operator. . . . Number, please. . . . Mountain 247. Thank you. . . . Parkersville?"

"Number, please?" said the new girl. "Parkersville, yes. Name is Carberry —Hillsdale 3430; thank you—Elaine Carberry. . . . They do not answer, now. . . . No, sir, that section is all right, no trouble there. I will keep ringing them. . . . Here's your party."

Miss Harkins beamed at her. "I will relieve you, now," she said. "Go on, get up. Any time I couldn't do two girls' work—t'ch."

Miss Carberry shrugged. "I'm all right," she said. "This is my day off. It's the funniest thing in the world. Your day off, lots of times you wouldn't mind working. I feel just like it today."

"Yes," said Miss Harkins. "That's a funny thing. I haven't worked a board in years. Number, please?"

Miss Carberry got a cheese sandwich and a cup of lukewarm coffee, and sauntered over to greet two other girls who were resting: they were working eight hours on and three off. Before Miss Carberry came, it had been eight on and two off. That's why Miss Harkins was so glad to see her. It was just like Blucher's Legions at Waterloo.

"Hello," said Miss Carberry. "What a tough assignment! Me with my day off, too. Wouldn't it be like that!"

"This your day off?" said one.

"Yes, honey. This is my day off. Always like that. I tell you one thing, though. Might get the Medal for this. This is a tough one, this is. They might pass out the Medal for this one —can't always sometimes tell. Might. Company gave a Medal to everybody deserves one, good-by dividends!" She laughed. She had a fine, high, carrying laugh, and a lovely voice, but they all have such beautiful voices.

"You from Parkersville?" said the other girl.

"That's right."

"How'd you get all the way over here?"

"Oh, I got a ride most of the way. I got an aunt, over in Mount Pleasant. So, I got over there, and then it started to rain, and what can you do when it rains? So I came over."

"Trouble in Parkersville too, I guess."

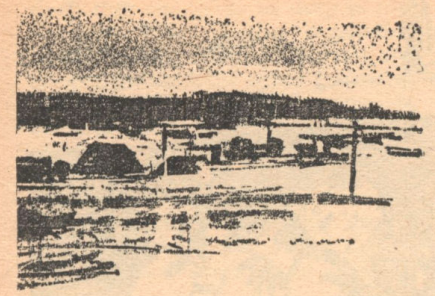
Miss Carberry gave her a level look. "I wouldn't be surprised," she said. "They got trouble all over this region. Only one thing to do, when you got trouble. Say a little prayer, and then spit on your hands and go to it. God will take care of you. He always does. Even the tramps, even the no-goods. You don't even have to believe in Him. He helps you anyhow. . . . Listen. I remember, when I was a little punk kid, only nineteen. I was night operator, the only night operator, in a little town near Tyrone. Up on the third floor; the Exchange was on the third floor. No lights down below, no other people in the building, nothing. Was I scared! Then, then I would say to myself: You are like the Guardian Angel, who watches over people when they are asleep. You see what I mean? God will take care of you."

She glanced down and saw a tiny diamond ring on one girl's hand. "Oh," she said, and her voice was soft. "You got a boy-friend. Me, I never had a boy-friend, never in my life. I'm just not the type, I guess. I don't know, but—but if I was a fellow, I wouldn't want a wife who was any quitter. It's too tough a job. Maybe you got a chance tonight, to make the boy-friend proud of you. It's going to be no picnic tonight. . . . My aunt, my aunt over in Mount Pleasant—she's an old, old lady. I says to her: 'You think I am going to sit here?' She said: 'You go on, Elaine. Go on, go over, help them out.'. . . Well—can't make no money, sitting here. . . . They ought to give us at least supper money for this, don't you think? That cheese, a hungry rat wouldn't eat."

"Come on. Let's go," they said.

The river, or the rivers, were only fooling that time. There was a million dollars' worth of damage, and a few people killed, but everybody's got to go some time; the actuaries have that all figured out, so why worry about it? The waters receded at last, with a last contemptuous little wiggle, like *Carmen* in the first act. They have time, they have plenty of time; they'll be back next year, or some other year.

It was over. It was all over. Miss Carberry put on her mink coat and her ruined shoes over Miss Harkins' stockings. "So long, kids," she said, and



Illustrated by Raymond Thayer

waved her hand. "So long. So long, Elaine," they said. "Don't forget to come back," they said.

"Just a minute, Miss Carberry," Miss Harkins said, and drew her aside. "I am sending in a report about you, to the Parkersville Exchange." Boadicea couldn't have said it any better.

"Oh, don't bother. What does it amount to? You know what they tell you when you start in, when you are just a little—just a little greenhorn. They tell you: Nobody makes you do the hard thing, in this business. You make yourself do it, because you want to be like everybody else. Not like a heel. Not like a—a coward. You learn from a good example. That's how I learned. I learned from a boss, a good deal like you."

Miss Harkins flushed. "You were a big help, Elaine," she said. "Not just the way you worked the board. . . . You will be Chief Operator some day. I know the qualities. You were good for the morale of the girls—of some of the girls."

Miss Carberry looked at Miss Harkins; she could give you quite a look. "What's the matter with the morale of these girls?" she said. "What's the matter with any of them? There's nothing the matter with any of us."

Miss Harkins let that go. "What is your address, in Parkersville?" she said.

Miss Carberry seemed to hesitate. "The Hotel Edgemere," she said.

Miss Harkins didn't like that at all. She had never been in Parkersville, had never heard of the Hotel Edgemere, but that, and the rich fur coat, and the expensive clothes, and no wedding ring, and the girl, a little on the independent side, and not a great deal of education, either—

"You can make your way home all right?" said Miss Harkins.

Miss Carberry laughed. "I got here all right, didn't I? It will be easier, getting back—"

"What is the name of the Chief Operator, at Parkersville?" asked Miss Harkins.

"Her name is Snow—Miss Esther Snow. . . . Ah, don't bother. Don't bother about it. It's not worth it."

"I certainly will bother."

"Suit yourself. Well. I'll be seeing you." She raised her voice. "So long, kids. So long," she called, and waved her hand again, and was gone.

After a twenty-hour sleep, Miss Harkins called the Parkersville Exchange. Miss Snow wasn't on duty, they told her. The Assistant Supervisor was there; could she be helpful? "Yes, please—Miss Curran? I am inquiring about one of your girls. A Miss Elaine Carberry."

"Elaine Carberry?" said the Assistant Supervisor. "We have no Elaine Carberry."

Ah-ha, thought Miss Harkins; I had my doubts about this.

"I have been with this exchange only a short time. Perhaps Miss Snow would know. Shall I have her call you?"

"Yes, please."

The call came, a little later.

"I understand you are inquiring about Elaine Carberry?" said Miss Snow, of Parkersville.

"Yes. I believe she is one of your girls?"

"She was one of our girls. One of our best girls."

"She is—she is no longer with the Exchange?"

"Oh. . . . Elaine is dead. She died in the flu epidemic. Didn't you know that?"

"I—there must be—"

"She worked up to the day before she died. She was not really one of our girls then. She was a P.B.X. operator. She was night operator of the Private Branch Exchange at the old Hotel Edgemere."

"The—the Edgemere, you say?"

"Yes. . . . We were puzzled about that board. The Edgemere was—well, its reputation wasn't too good. Then I thought of Elaine. Elaine was a saint, really she was. And she was quite plain, too, a little short, plump girl. She was awfully religious. She'd always say a little prayer, before she started to work—I don't mean at all that she was tiresome about it, or made a big fuss about it. She was always laughing, always jolly. She'd tell us more stories about the Edgemere!

"She'd say: 'You ought to see the cheap fur coats on them. Before I'd wear a coat like that,' she'd say. The poor kid—I really mean that. She was poor, poor as she could be. Never had a fur coat in her life." She paused. "May I ask why you are inquiring about her?" said Miss Snow.

There was another pause. "I think, perhaps, I knew her," said Miss Harkins. "I thank you, Miss Snow."

She sat there for a moment, and shivered; then she straightened her high, slim shoulders. It is not easy to frighten them. It is a good thing for us all that they are so brave.

KINGDOM OF ADVENTURE

....Man after man, group after group, expedition after expedition trying, struggling, failing, and returning to try and struggle again: all these are not merely scenes from an exciting melodrama of hazard and derring-do, but part of a profound experience of the human spirit and the human heart.

The men in this book climbed because they needed to climb; because that was the way they were made. Lifting their eyes to their mountain, they saw more than rock and ice and snow and the immense blue emptiness of the sky. They saw, too, a great challenge to their own qualities *as men;* a chance to conquer their own weakness, ignorance, and fear; a struggle to match achievement to aspiration and reality to dream. Over and above everything else, the fight for Everest has been an act of faith and affirmation. That the high road is the good road. That man is never so much a man as when he is striving for what is beyond his grasp. That the game is worth the candle and the victory worth the fight.

That men will some day reach the summit of the world means little. That they should want to reach it and try to reach it means everything. Meanwhile, there is something better than victory—something that should make us almost thankful that the goal has not been reached. For, until the day when it is climbed, Everest is more than the highest mountain. It is one of the great unfinished adventures of mankind.

(From: "Kingdom of Adventure: Everest," by James Ramsey Ullman. Copyright 1947, William Sloane Associates.)

THE FIRST STEAMBOAT UP THE MISSOURI HAD TO FIGHT NOT ONLY AN UNTAMED RIVER AND HOSTILE INDIANS, BUT THE KEELBOAT MEN WHO FEARED THIS NOVEL COMPETITION.

Heigh-O, the

FOREWORD

I loved a girl, her name was Nancy,
Heigh-o, that rolling river.
She would not have me for her lover,
I am bound for the wild Miz-zou-ry.

RIVERMEN on the Missouri looked with scorn upon those who had only navigated the placid Mississippi. It took a man with hair on his chest to pilot a boat up the Missouri. It wrecked nearly 450 steamboats during the years when boats were numerous on the river, though in 1858, the banner year of steamboating on the stream, there were somewhat less than a hundred boats in service. . . .

From the end of the Eighteenth Century, the number of people heading west up the Missouri steadily increased. . . . Owners not infrequently paid for their boats in a season or two, and sometimes in a single trip. And as the boom in steamboating mounted, the size and luxury of the boats increased until steamboats on the Missouri could match anything floating on the Mississippi. . . .

Most of the accidents to boats happened at the bends of the river, and many of these bends have historical names—some of them referring to these very accidents. . . . The most dangerous bends, where snags accumulated, were Augusta Bend, Brickhouse Bend, Malta Bend, Osage Chute, Bonhomme Bend (in which many a magnificent steamboat was wrecked). That was a wicked river.

—*"The Missouri," by Stanley Vestal. (Copyright, 1945, by Walter Stanley Campbell, and reprinted by permission of Rinehart & Co., Inc., Publishers.)*

Two of Matthew Daicey's men rowed him across the Missouri to the muddy north bank, where the windows of the little town of St. Charles glowed faintly in the dusk. There, they refused to go farther with him, and he did not urge them. He had come prepared for a trap, armed with a brace of dueling pistols in the waistband of his leather trousers, and two throwing knives, one concealed; but despite the armament, Daicey felt decidedly uneasy when he left his men at the dark edge of the river and walked alone toward the glittering lights of the town. He headed for the St. Charles Tavern.

Here in St. Charles, he realized, might come the end of everything for which he had slaved so hard these past few years. In the West of the 1820's, St. Charles was the beginning and the end of all things. Here ended civilization, for the boatmen bound up the turbulent, treacherous river. Up the river were only two or three small settlements; beyond were only the scattered forts of the traders, and the Indians—the Rees and the Omahas, the Sioux and the Mandans and the rest. . . .

Though the doorway of the tavern was of average height, Matt Daicey had to duck his head to keep from knocking his peaked cap askew. Once inside, squinting his eyes against the smoke and the glare, he failed to locate the man for whom he was searching. A nervous waiter came over to him.

"Thees way, Meester Daicey!"

Daicey followed him across the public room, which was filled with carousing men. There were Frenchmen here, *voyageurs* down from the mountains. There were a few half-breeds and a knot of rivermen. An English tourist looked on it all with interested blue eyes. Though the sun had hardly set, most of the men were well on the way to drunkenness; many of them would sleep it off and get drunk again before midnight. The men of the Missouri were men who played hard.

Wild Missouri

by ARTHUR LAWSON
and CHANDLER WHIPPLE

Behind the tavern was a beer garden, and it was here that the waiter led Daicey. After the smoke and the smell of sweating men, the fresh damp air here was a relief to him. Here the lights burn low, but in the exact center of the garden, sitting at a round table, Daicey spotted the man for whom he had been looking. A dark-haired girl of not more than eighteen or twenty sat with him, and Daicey saw that she was beautiful.

He stopped by the table and tipped his cap.

"Evening, ma'mselle," he said. He looked at the man without expression. "You wanted to see me, Sebois?"

"Sit down," Henri Sebois said. Sebois was much older than Daicey, gray as granite, with terrifically broad shoulders developed by years of poling up the rivers and carrying furs through the mountains. There was nothing soft about Henri Sebois.

Apparently he was unarmed—but half a dozen of his men lolled about the garden, pretending to concentrate on their drinks.

"My daughter Susanne," Sebois said. She smiled tentatively at Daicey. The young man tipped his hat again. Sebois added: "He's the damn' fool I was telling you about, Susanne."

Somewhere Matt Daicey had heard of Sebois' motherless daughter, not long out of school, but he had not known she was so beautiful. He felt his cheeks go red, and he was grateful for the dimness of the light here. Sebois was baiting him.

He waited through a long, agonizing minute for the trader to speak again. Through it all the girl stared straight at him, looking him over intently and frankly.

"He doesn't look like a damn' fool to me, Papa," she said finally.

There was something oddly tantalizing about the way the girl said "damn," as if she were trying to reprimand her father for using the word in the presence of a lady, while trying to show Daicey at the same time that she could curse if she wished to. Daicey, who still had not accepted her father's invitation to sit down, bowed.

"Thank you, ma'mselle," he said.

Henri Sebois tapped his whisky mug on the table, as if presiding at a committee meeting that was getting out of hand.

"You can't lick me, Daicey," he said. "If you want to run your damned steamboat up the river this far, I'll allow it. But you go no farther."

DAICEY had a habit of leaning forward and balancing his weight on his toes when fighting. It made him look even taller than he was.

"I'm going up to the Yellowstone," he said quietly.

"The Missouri is mine!" Sebois roared. "The Yellowstone is mine. The Rocky Mountains are mine. You're staying out. Now—sit down, and we'll drink to it!"

But Matt Daicey stood motionless. Sebois was more than half right. He had been on the river a long time, and he had earned his lucrative trade with the Indians by hard work and daring. Who was this young whippersnapper to challenge him? Other men had tried before, and some of them were dead. Perhaps the Indians had killed them, perhaps not; no one could be certain.

But wasn't there a shade of worry behind that roar, more than a man of Sebois' power should feel? Henri Sebois must know that the times were changing. He could not have missed the significance of Major Long's steamboat expedition up the Missouri a short time before. It was true that the Major had gotten only as far as Fort Missouri, near the bluffs where Lewis and Clark had held their coun-

cil with the Indians, and that only one of his four boats was able to make it that far; but the mark of steamboats had been left upon the river that Henri Sebois called his own. And a military expedition meant more posts and more traders. Perhaps that was what worried him most of all; perhaps he sensed that he was fighting the inevitable.

Susanne Sebois moved a small hand to the glass of wine she had been drinking.

"If Mr. Daicey's steamboat is so wonderful, Papa," she said, "why don't you hire him to carry your trade goods to the fort?"

Old Sebois' face clouded. "It's nothing but a kettle on a raft," he growled. "And the old Missouri's a man's river. It's a river for keelboats and muscle. There'll never be a steamboat made that'll get up to the Yellowstone. Daicey had to be poled the last two miles to get this far."

IT was true: in coming only those few miles from St. Louis, the engine had already broken down—and the mouth of the Yellowstone was still twelve hundred miles away. That fact embarrassed Daicey deeply, but it did not discourage him He could not afford to be discouraged: three years of toil and every cent he owned was tied up in his steamboat. He had to believe that in spite of sandbars, treacherous logs and changing channel, his boat could beat the wild and rolling river.

"I know the river," he said, as much to himself as to Sebois, "as well as a man can know it. Maybe you've forgotten that for two years I shoved a pole on your keelboats, Sebois."

"Forgotten it!" shouted Sebois. "How could I? Blast it, for two years I pay a man good wages, and then he tries to knife me in the back. That's your damned gratitude, Daicey."

So that troubled him too. Any man who had worked for Sebois was supposed to knuckle under to his wishes. But Daicey saw that the eyes of Susanne Sebois were upon him again, and there was a half-smile on her full lips.

"Papa," she said sweetly, "Mr. Daicey earned his pay, didn't he? Isn't that all you expect of a—a roustabout who works for you?"

Matt Daicey flushed; but Henri Sebois was furious. He half rose from his seat. It was hard to tell at whom his fury was directed.

"Damn it—" he began. Then he sat down. Quite calmly and coldly, he said: "Daicey, I'm leaving tomorrow morning with four keelboats. I'm going to keep the Missouri trade. If you try to follow, it'll be war."

"I won't follow," Daicey said. He waited a moment. Triumph showed

in the older man's face, but Daicey thought that there was disappointment in the look Susanne Sebois gave him.

"You'll do the following," he added. "I'll be so far ahead of you, Sebois, that you won't even smell my smoke." He bowed to the girl. "Good evening, Miss Susanne."

WHEN Matt Daicey came back into the taproom from the beer garden, he was surprised to find the English tourist waiting for him. The Englishman's face was very red. Whether this was from too much drink or was natural with him, Daicey could not tell.

"Oh, I say, Captain," he greeted Daicey, "Basil Fowler, at your service. The lads have been talking of your most daring enterprise, and it occurred to me that if your passenger list is not yet filled, I should like to go up the river with you. It would be quite a feather in my cap, I assure you."

Not ten years before, Matt Daicey had shipped out as a cabin boy under Lawrence to fight the English. He still had a very poor opinion of Englishmen; but after the tenseness of his meeting with Sebois, this tourist was decidedly refreshing.

He laughed openly.

"Mister," he said, "*you* are the passenger list. And if you're carrying as much luggage as most Englishmen, you're the freight shipment too." Then, more soberly, he added: "It's not going to be any Sunday outing, Mister. There's Injuns up that river, and they're mean Injuns. There's Henri Sebois, who claims he owns the river and will fight to keep it. There's driftwood and floating rocks and sawyers that can rip the bottom out. And quicksands and a channel that's here today and some place else tomorrow. And if our boilers don't blow up at least three times on the way, it will be because we've run out of wood and are poling the boat. But if you still want to come along—*The Queen of the West* leaves tomorrow morning at dawn."

He had spoken loudly enough so that everyone in the taproom could hear him, and he was aware by the sudden hush that all were listening.

"You wanted to see me, Sebois?" Matt Daicey asked.

Basil Fowler put out his hand, and Daicey took it. He was surprised at the strength in the man's grip and the steadiness of the pale blue eyes. Here in the hangout of his enemy, it seemed as if he had found a friend.

"I'll be there, Captain," the Englishman was saying.

After their first surprise at Daicey's announcement that he would defy Henri Sebois, the men gathered in the room began to settle back.

"You better take an oar, Duke," one of them yelled at Basil Fowler.

The rest of them roared, and the carousing was off to a fresh start. It was a good time to leave, Matt Daicey knew, and he did so. Outside he waited a moment while his eyes became accustomed to the dark, then started on his way. Though he could not see them he soon knew by the sounds that at least two of Sebois' men were following him. They stayed in the darker shadows as he picked his way through the muddy road to the landing.

Where the water glistened in the starlight, he thought at first that he had lost his way. For there was no sign of his boatmen! Nor, after looking up and down, could he find anyone else here around the waterfront. Ordinarily there would have been any number of boatmen ready to give him a lift; tonight there was not even a skiff that he might steal. All the boatmen had disappeared except for a group clustered around one of the long flatboats anchored in midstream.

Those were the vessels with which Henri Sebois expected to beat Daicey up the river. On the deck of one of them a party was in progress. Men were singing bawdy songs. A keg of whisky had been broached. A girl was squealing excitedly.

This sort of thing was contrary to the usual behavior of Henri Sebois' crews the night before departing for the North. They generally managed to get pretty drunk, but always on their own. Tonight Henri Sebois seemed to be encouraging it. Bitterly, Daicey understood the reason why. Old Henri had not wasted a moment before starting the war he had promised. He had bought up Daicey's boatmen, or frightened them off, or lured them onto that keelboat. Probably he had even got most of Daicey's crew off the steamboat, which was docked at the far side of the river with a broken-down engine. He had neatly arranged matters so that if Daicey were going to get across the river at all he would have to swim it —nearly a mile of treacherous snag-infested swirling water.

MATT DAICEY headed upstream. Here there was only a narrow strip of beach between water and the high bluff, and because of that, the men whom Sebois had sent to follow him had to drop farther and farther behind to keep from being seen. That was one reason he had gone upstream: he did not want to be surprised by the men trailing him while he was naked and helpless. The other reason was that he knew the swift current would carry him some distance while he swam, and he wanted to end up on the far side as close to his steamboat as possible.

He went on until he came to a spot where a huge tree had been washed ashore during the high water. Here, behind the tree, he stopped, drew one of his dueling pistols and cocked it.

The men were approaching cautiously, following the deep prints of Daicey's boots in the soft earth; they did not even suspect he was there until he challenged them. He held his pistol where the starlight would glint on the barrel.

"Evening, boys," he said.

THE men's eyes were white in the night. They kept their hands before them, fingers splayed.

"That you, Daicey?" one of them asked.

"That's right," Daicey answered.

The man who had spoken sighed. "Thank God it's you. Reckernized your voice," he said unconvincingly. "Was goin' fishin'—afraid you was one of these river robbers."

"*I'm* fishing up here," Daicey told him. "Suppose you try the fishing downstream. Suppose you walk right along the edge of the river, where you can hear the fish when they jump."

"Good idea," the man said. "Hope we didn't disturb you."

"Not at all," Daicey assured him.

They turned away to retrace their steps, keeping close to the water where Daicey could see them. They walked gingerly in the muck, and as they did so Matt Daicey put his guns in the bole of the big tree and started to undress. He worked fast, knowing that as soon as those men got out of effective pistol range, they would probably climb the bluff and try to come down on him from the rear.

He had just finished undressing when the men broke into a run and quickly disappeared. As he had expected, they had waited to make their break until they were too far away to make a target. Shivering, Daicey dropped the pistols into his boots. He tied his pants legs together at the bottom and stuffed the boots into the legs. Then he tied the top together with his suspenders and wrapped the whole in his buckskin shirt. He made a little raft of brush from the fallen tree, put his bundle upon it, and went into the river. When the water was waist-deep, he kicked his feet free from the mucky river bottom and began to swim.

The water was cold and the current far swifter than it had been when he had crossed in the late afternoon. Once he was out in the channel, the unpredictable Missouri seized him and swept him rapidly downstream. In spite of his powerful strokes, he could make little headway toward the far shore; he was little more than another bit of the varied flotsam of the river.

BUT perhaps the river saved his life. Swept around once so he faced the shore he had just left, he saw a flash of light from the top of the bluff that looked like gunfire. Sebois' men had got up there, all right, but they were too late. That one bullet, if there was a bullet, did not even strike the water near him, and after that he was too far away for them to try again.

Once free of that danger, however, he saw that he was rapidly heading into another. He was being swept close in toward Henri Sebois' keelboats. There seemed to be no way to avoid coming within the ring of light thrown by the flambeaux on the upstream boat. He redoubled his efforts, but the current swept him on. He thought of letting his raft go, striking out with both arms; then he thought of the two dueling pistols in his boots. They were the only ones he had, and now if ever he could not afford to lose them. Besides, it was already too late.

The party was in full swing on the deck. Daicey could see them plainly now. His own two men were there, hanging onto the whisky barrel, stamping their feet and singing one of those wild *voyageur* songs. A bearded boatman sawed on his fiddle, and in a small clear space in the center of the deck, just before the cabin, a girl was dancing a fandango she had picked up in one of the Spanish settlements; a young riverman was her partner. For a moment Daicey stared at the girl, who was lovely and dark, whose lithe limbs gleamed barely when she kicked up her brightly colored skirt during the dance.

He was drifting quietly now, hoping thus he might pass unnoticed by the drunken revelers. As he drifted, watching, his legs came against something which halted him briefly in the water. He groped around and found that it was the anchor rope for the first of Sebois' big keelboats, the one on which the party was being held.

Daicey thought briefly of his men, lured or frightened away by Henri Sebois. He thought of the two men back there on the bluff who, whatever Sebois' orders may have been, would have killed him if they had had the chance. With the pleasure of anticipation, Daicey fondled that line.

The knife he carried concealed was still in the holster that lay along his spine. He went under water to draw it, so that no chance flash of light could betray him. Cautiously he poked his nose above the surface, keeping his face behind his brush raft. These men on the keelboat were too drunk, or too busy perhaps, to think of his raft as anything but a bit of flotsam; but this close to the boat, his face would be immediately recognized if anyone happened to look at him. So he took a quick breath, then went under again and went to work with the knife on the heavy rope.

It took two trips down before the cable parted; then the current took charge of the keelboat. The bow of the boat began to swing off. Yet the first movement was so gradual that, coming as it did in the most exciting part of the girl's fandango, apparently no one aboard realized that anything had happened.

Emboldened by his success, Daicey took another chance. Among the cluster of small boats tied alongside the larger vessel, he spotted a dugout canoe. He hauled himself in close to the side of the keelboat, slipped along toward the canoe, pushing his bundle before him. When he reached the dugout, he lifted his bundle over the bulwark and then he cut the painter of the canoe. Still he had not been discovered. With the light line in his teeth, he started again for the south shore.

This time, with both arms free, he was able to fight his way past the channel where the water flowed so swiftly. He had covered perhaps twenty yards when he heard shouts behind him. He looked back. The keelboat had swung against the one that was anchored next downstream of it, at last awakening the celebrators to their predicament.

While they milled around in wild, drunken confusion, Daicey climbed into the dugout and picked up the paddle. He did not look around again to see if he had been discovered. Kneeling on the bottom, he bent the paddle.

Behind him the men were yelling, and the girl screamed. From the shore the bull-like voice of Henri Sebois added to the din.

THERE was only one man aboard *The Queen of the West* when Matt Daicey tied up the dugout and climbed over the bull-rail. This was Gus Gevaert, the engineer. Gus had a fire burning in a small forge and was dismally pounding a piece of hot metal on an anvil. With the bundle of clothing under his arm, still in his dripping underwear, Daicey stopped at the engine-room on the way to his cabin. Gus eyed him dubiously.

"Everybody off partying," he said. "Everybody but me. Even the boss. What happened, Captain? You git drunk and fall overboard?"

"Not exactly," Daicey answered. "How you making out, Gus?"

Daicey had never liked this gloomy engineer, nor did he fully trust him. But Gevaert had been the only man in St. Louis who was able to handle the job and willing to take it. In those days when steamboats were individually hand made, engineers were in great demand and could pick and choose their jobs. Nobody but Gus Gevaert was willing to take this risky trip up to the wilderness. Daicey had had to hire him.

GEVAERT held up a piece of metal on which he had been working. "This here is a wrist-pin," he said. "When I get it fixed, I can put this engine together again. But that won't do us no damn' good, because the firemen quit. I can't fire this boiler single-handed."

He dropped the bit of iron in the forge and pulled on the bellows a couple of times. A cold anger swept through Daicey.

"You fix the engine, Gus," he said, "and I'll take care of the firing."

Gus pulled again on the bellows. The coals were a bright red. The metal was changing color.

"See Sebois?" he asked.

Daicey did not like being questioned. He shrugged his broad shoulders and thought of Susanne Sebois. His pulse gave a queer little kick.

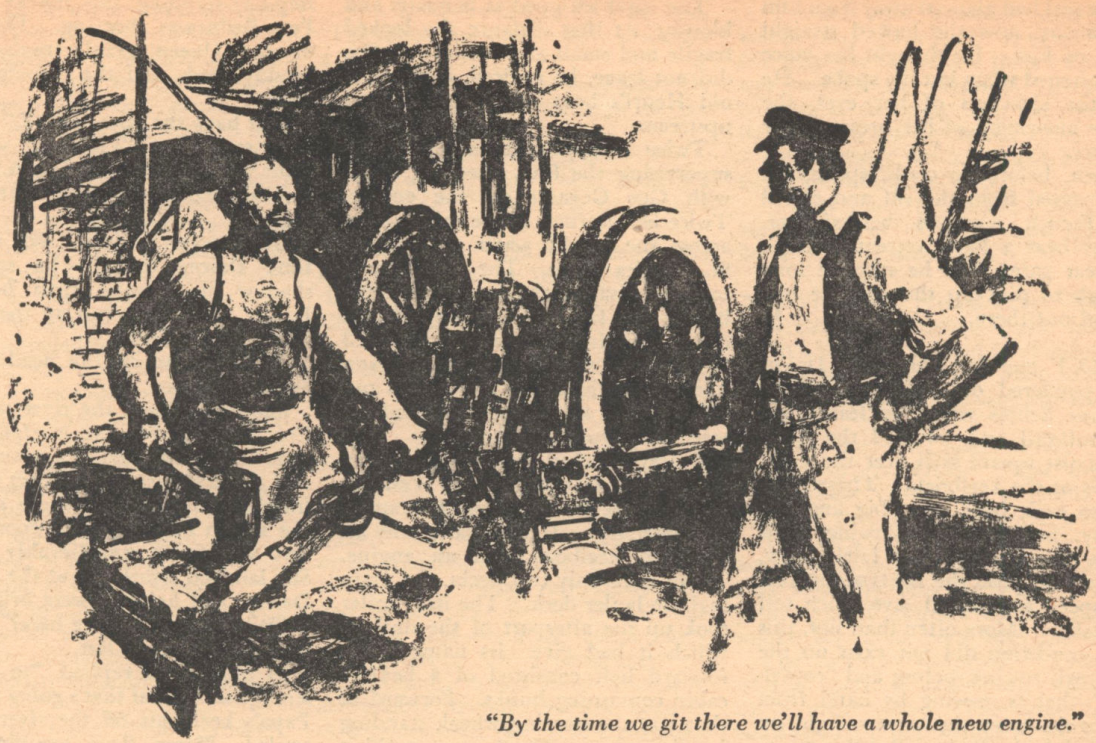
"You can just concentrate on the engine," he told Gus. "Sebois is a past number on this river."

He swung away as Gevaert lifted the ruby-red bar from the forge and set it on the anvil. Gevaert went back to his hammering, glowering gloomily. Daicey stopped a moment by the bull-rail, with the sound of the anvil ringing behind him. Gevaert grunted as he hammered, as if talking to himself in some foreign tongue.

Across the river the big keelboat had come to a halt. Apparently it had smashed up against the second boat and dragged its anchor. Even in the darkness Daicey could see that all four boats were tangled up, and that many of the smaller boats had been smashed. Old Henri had come to put things in order. His bull voice dominated everything.

Daicey smiled as he climbed the ladder to the boiler deck. He had not come up the Missouri to make trouble: there was room on the river for both of them. But if it was war Henri Sebois wanted, by God he would get it!

Matt Daicey did not go to bed at all that night. He put on dry clothes. Then he loaded the brass swivel gun at the bow of *The Queen of the West.*



"By the time we git there we'll have a whole new engine."

He had two other light brass guns on four-wheel carriages, which he ran up against the starboard rail and pointed toward St. Charles. He did not load these, because he did not know who would get to them first. As in the shell game so popular with the river tinhorns, he wanted to be sure of where the prize would be found. After checking the loads and the priming of his dueling pistols, he was ready to go to work.

First of all, he went ashore and searched the squalid dives in the French settlement on the south side of the river. He found nobody but a few drunken St. Louis teamsters. Then he came back aboard, told Gus Gevaert about the swivel gun, and told him to shoot up anybody who tried to board *The Queen of the West.* Wishing he could have left almost anyone else in charge, Matt Daicey got into the dugout canoe and crossed the river again in search of his crew. He took a course well below the keelboats which Henri Sebois was trying to get ready for the trip upriver tomorrow, and landed downstream from town.

He found two of his men drunkenly unconscious on the beach, but left them there while he searched the nearest tavern for more. There was none here, but in the next place he found one man, Pete Bedu, who was still more or less conscious. Matt dragged him outside while the proprietor howled for payment of the bill. When the tavernkeeper followed, Daicey knocked him cold with one blow of his fist.

He threw his man over his shoulder and carried him down to where the other two lay prone in the muck. He took a big chance here, playing on his knowledge of men. He handed one of his precious pistols to Bedu, the most sober of the three.

"Keep these boys here," he said. By trusting this man instead of bawling him out, he hoped to gain a friend. "Remember there's only one shot in that pistol, Pete. Don't use it unless you have to."

HE felt better about this than he had about leaving Gevaert with the swivel gun; he went back into town to hunt up the rest of his crew. He had gathered up half a dozen of them, dragged them down to the beach and put them under Pete Bedu's care, before he dared the headquarters tavern of old Henri Sebois. This time he entered through a gate in the hedge, to come into the tavern *via* the beer garden.

Presumably because of the trouble down at the river, the place was deserted. Still, Daicey's good luck thus far only served to make him nervous and apprehensive. He prowled about the hedge and searched the shadows. He looked under all the tables. One more man was added to his collection here. Daicey did not recognize him, but the man was strong, even though drunk, and the steamboater reckoned he would make a good hand.

Daicey cached this man outside the gate, then came back to look for more. He was working up his nerve to enter the barroom itself, where he could hear the Englishman still marveling at the native scene, when a voice directly above him stopped him. He glanced up, his heart running away.

There, only a few feet above him, leaning with elbows on the windowsill, was Susanne Sebois. She was now dressed in a white nightgown with a bit of lace over the curves of her breast. And she was laughing at him.

"Did you lose something?" she asked.

"Only my crew," he answered in a whisper. Then his voice rose angrily. "I wasn't looking for a fight, Miss Sebois; but if your father wants it, he'll get it."

The girl laughed again. "You're very brave," she mocked, and her eyes were bright. "But maybe Papa was right, Mr. Daicey. Maybe you are a fool. I could scream—if I wanted to—and you'd never get out of this garden alive to fight him."

That was probably true. The citizens of the town would not trouble themselves to take sides in a battle between himself and old Henri—but this beautiful girl could turn them all against him.

"I'm waiting, ma'mselle," he said coolly, "—waiting for your scream."

She opened her mouth very wide, and her eyes sparkled; but she did not scream. Instead she said: "Even a fool deserves a chance—especially a handsome fool. Papa's coming up from the river now. I can see him over the hedge. He has a dozen men with him, and they're all armed."

The girl had glanced away from him a moment; now she looked straight down on him. He thought her voice had softened when last she spoke. He saw the clearness of her eyes, the gentle movement of her breast under the lace.

Then, before he could speak, she disappeared from the sill and closed the French windows behind her. Daicey beat a hasty retreat through the rear gate. But he stopped long enough to pick up the man he had cached out there.

NEXT morning, Matthew Daicey pondered on his meeting with Susanne Sebois while he leaned on the bull-rail and watched the boatmen hoist square sails over the deckhouses of the keelboats. These sails, one to each boat, were big and unwieldy; but with a following wind where the current was fairly slow, they would push the boats along at a fair speed and would save much toil and labor. More often than not, this ideal condition did not exist on the Missouri: rowing, poling and "cordelling"—that is, towing by hand from the banks—were the way you got up the river by keelboat. But this morning the wind was perfect, and the sails were very much needed, because most of the Sebois men were lying around the decks unable to do even the slightest work.

It would take three or four days to put these crews back into fighting trim; but this, Daicey knew, was but a minor worry to Henri Sebois. He had succeeded in getting under way first, and he had left Matthew Daicey behind at the landing without steam in the boilers, and with only half enough men to handle his boat properly. Furthermore, these men were in just as bad condition as were Sebois', and the work they had to do was more skilled.

Yet it was with a distinct feeling of relief that Daicey watched the heavily laden boats get under way. Last night he had almost been caught by old Henri, who was now steering the leading keelboat up the Missouri. Someone must have told Sebois that his rival was up there in the beer garden, and he wondered who it could have been. Now, at least, there was a fair chance that he himself could get under way without further molestation; and once up the river, he was willing to match his wits and his boat against Sebois'.

Across the river, a girl was waving a handkerchief at Henri Sebois. Daicey found himself gripping the rail and staring intently. It was Susanne Sebois. It seemed a little unreal this morning that she had helped him against her father last night; he could not understand just why she warned him.

The wind whipped at her skirt and blouse. At that distance she looked fragile and small and feminine. She did not leave, he noticed, even when old Henri's boat rounded the bend upstream.

Twice Daicey went back to work, supervising the fires, checking again with Gus Gevaert on the engine. Twice he returned to the rail to stare across the bright water toward the St. Charles shore. The girl seemed to have disappeared from the riverbank, but he saw the Englishman come down from the tavern, followed by three men, all carrying luggage. Later he noticed that a boat had put off and was slowly being rowed toward *The Queen of the West.*

Daicey checked everything aboard his boat. *The Queen of the West* was quite unlike the fancy river steamers of a later day. It was really only an oversized keelboat with an engine. There were only two decks, the main and the boiler deck. The iron boiler took up the afterpart of the deck to which it had given its name. The forward half consisted of a boxlike cabin containing bunks. Forward of that was the steering wheel, standing in the open. There was nothing fancy to it at all.

LONG sweeps and poles were stowed along the bull-rail, to be used if the machinery broke down or the steering wheel failed to work. A stubby mast to which a sail could be bent when the wind was right pointed straight up from the deckhouse. Because nobody believed this rickety sidewheeler would ever get to the Yellowstone, there was very little freight aboard. But every available inch was stacked with cordwood.

Pete Bedu was stoking the fires, sweating like a horse and driving two other sleepy men. He grinned at Daicey. Gus Gevaert was watching the steam gauge.

"We'll make out this time," he told Daicey gloomily.

"Good. There's a passenger coming."

"We better turn her over a couple of times before we cast off," Gevaert said as if he had not heard Daicey. "Want to be sure the pipes are all clean."

"Give her a try then," Daicey told him.

Slowly Gus opened the valve. The boat creaked, and the engine groaned. Daicey found himself sweating from excitement. He heard the Englishman's rowboat touching *The Queen of the West,* and the thud of luggage being thrown up onto the deck.

"Open her up a little more, Gus," he ordered.

Steam hissed through the cylinder. The connecting rod shuddered. The heavy wooden wheels began to turn, *slap-slap-slapping* the mucky water. Pete Bedu was cheering. The prow of the *Queen* gently nudged the muddy bank, and the mooring lines sagged.

"I'll have the boys cast off," Daicey said excitedly. "I'll ring when I want you to back off. Damn it, Gus, we'll show old Sebois our wake before night."

Gus Gevaert nodded. For the first time Daicey thought he saw the shadow of a smile cross his lips. Daicey wheeled to run up the ladder to the boiler deck.

As he did so, he ran head-on into Susanne Sebois!

She had crossed the river with the Englishman. For the briefest bit of time she was in Daicey's arms, warm and soft and very much alive; and the fragrance of her even there amongst the stench of steam and wood-smoke was something unbelievably lovely. She laughed lightly up at the startled Daicey, and her eyes were bright.

"What are you doing here?" Daicey managed to say at last.

"I came," she replied, "to see this strange steamboat that's going to drive Papa's keelboats off the river." She smiled. "Since Papa wouldn't look at it, somebody had to."

"Are you sure," he said, releasing her, "that old Henri didn't send you here? Aren't you here to help him?"

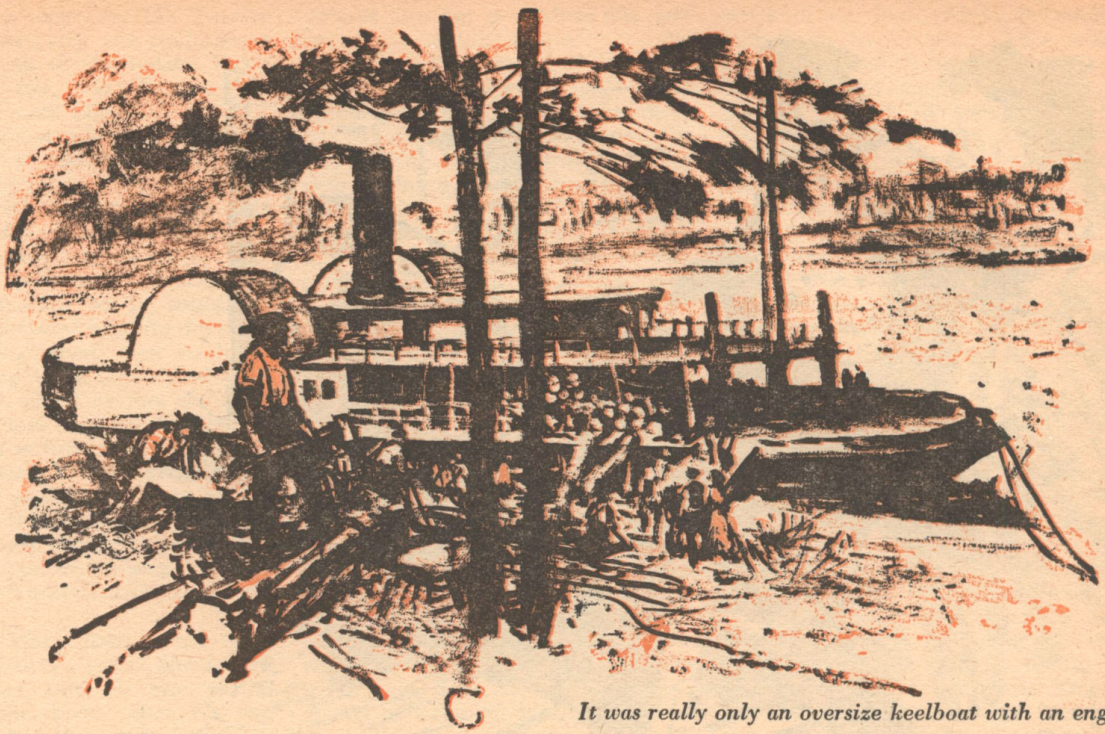
"Perhaps." She laughed at Daicey. "But I help whom I please, Mr. Daicey. You ought to know that by now. I wouldn't be the daughter of Henri Sebois if I didn't." She said this last with pride.

He had no chance to answer, for at just that moment the *Queen's* engine shuddered violently. The paddlewheels spun. There was a harsh clanking sound, followed by a terrific crashing. Gus Gevaert shouted something that Daicey did not hear clearly over the noise.

Without even stopping to think, he shoved the girl out of the engine-room. As he did so, steam hissed fiercely and the piston shot out of the cylinder. It bounced off a stack of cordwood, scattering it all over the deck, ricocheted through the engine-room wall, then smashed through the bull-rail and dropped into the river.

The wrist-pin that Gus Gevaert had fixed last night had broken again. If Daicey had not moved as fast as he had, both he and the girl would have been killed.

MATTHEW DAICEY did a strange thing then. While Gus Gevaert struggled with the main valve to shut off the steam that was filling the engine-room, Daicey went out onto the deck, picked up old Henri Sebois' daughter and carried her from the boat. He did not say a word until he got her ashore and set her down.



It was really only an oversize keelboat with an engine.

He was shuddering so violently from the after-effects of the near tragedy that his words were jerky and harsh.

"That wasn't an accident, ma'mselle," he said. "Your father did that. I don't know how—but he did. Now go away and stay away."

The girl's full red lips tightened. She had changed from laughter to surprise, now to anger. She stood very straight.

"Now you're being a fool again, Mr. Daicey," she said. "Papa's five miles up the river. I don't doubt he'd have blown up your engine if he could. But he didn't."

Daicey flushed. Unconsciously he had come very near to blaming Susanne Sebois for the trouble, as if her presence alone could have caused the wrist-pin to break. He realized now the foolishness of that attitude, and her anger reminded him that even if she were wrong about her father, she herself was probably quite innocent.

He realized, too, that he had been holding her by the shoulders, and that his hands ached. He must have hurt her, though she had never once winced. Daicey let go of her now and stepped a pace away from her. He bowed from the waist.

"I'm sorry I was so rough with you, ma'mselle," he said. "I was a bit too hasty. If you're ready to go back to St. Charles I'll be glad to send you over in my boat." He added wryly, "I'm sure you've seen enough of this strange steamboat."

The girl could be haughty as well as angry. Her dark eyes never left his.

"I have my own boat," she said. Her eyes were smoky. Strangely, it seemed to Daicey as if she had the air of someone who was planning a *coup*. "I'm sorry about that explosion. I hope it won't take you too long to fix the engine."

"It won't," he assured her. "May I show you to your boat?"

"Thank you."

SHE took his arm, and together, quite formally, they started up the landing stage. Daicey had just put his foot on the planks when he stopped. His entire crew was waiting for him, standing sullenly behind the bull-rail or crowding over the inboard end of the stage. Pete Bedu was wiping his face with a red bandanna, and Gus Gevaert, as usual, was scowling gloomily. The English passenger, Basil Fowler, looked on with great interest. It seemed that he never found anything dull.

"What's the matter?" Daicey asked.

The eyes of his crew were shifty. Pete Bedu said: "I ain't one of them, Captain."

"They're all quittin', Matt," Gus Gevaert said. It was the first time he had ever called Daicey by his first name. It annoyed Daicey. "I tried to talk 'em into stayin'. But they think the whole damn' caboodle is goin' to blow them to kingdom come."

Matt Daicey stepped ahead two stiff paces. There he stopped for a moment, surveyed his crew. Then he went ahead two more paces. He was now only a few yards from the bull-rail.

"This steamboat is leaving as soon as we can fish the piston up from the river bottom," he said. "We'll pole it up to the Yellowstone if we have to. We'll drag it with ropes—or row it. But we'll get there—and ahead of Sebois. But if any of you want to quit, just step up and I'll pay you off."

The men hesitated. Daicey had started so earnestly and ended so mildly they did not know quite what to do. Then one of them, a big, tough, bearded *voyageur* known as "Beaver" Michaud, stepped out from the group.

"Me—" He pointed to his chest. "These stimship is ha'nted. I don't work on her." He smiled and held out his hand. "The money?"

"The pay!" Daicey corrected him.

Daicey swung a fist. It came up like a stroke of lightning, like the off hindhoof of the meanest mule in Missouri. It struck the beefy Beaver Michaud on the jaw, yet it hardly staggered him. But Daicey followed it up quickly with a left to Michaud's stomach. The big man staggered then, and collapsed among his companions.

Daicey did not stop there. He stepped off the landing stage and onto the deck and waded in, slashing at one man after another. And he was no longer alone. He saw Pete Bedu grab a piece of cordwood and start to work, knocking down the men who had been his firing crew. As he knocked a man cold, he dragged him away and came back for more.

Suddenly even Basil Fowler stopped being just an amused spectator. He seized a short piece of chain he had

Daicey kicked him out of the engine-room—then threw him overboard.

found on the deck and swung it above his head. Shouting something about Trafalgar and Napoleon, he plowed into the French boatmen. But Gus Gevaert, the sour-faced engineer, beat a hurried retreat to his shattered engine-room.

It was Susanne Sebois, though, who made the decisive stroke that put an end to the mutiny. How she had got past him Matt Daicey never knew; nor had he any idea how long she had been shouting before, in a momentary lull, he finally heard her. She was up above on the boiler deck, behind one of the small brass cannon.

"I'll blow every damn' one of you to Hades!" she was shouting.

She looked as if she meant it, and probably she did. A breeze whipped at her dark hair, and her eyes were alight with the love of battle. She was a true daughter of Henri Sebois.

Matt Daicey knew that the cannon was not loaded. He had shotted up only the swivel gun. Just the same, backed by Susanne Sebois, it served its purpose. The few men still able to lift their fists gave up the battle. Basil Fowler climbed the ladder and took over the gun. Daicey herded everyone up onto the boiler deck, where the Englishman could keep them covered.

"That cannon," Daicey told them, "is full of nails and scrap iron. You boys signed on to go up to the Yellowstone on *The Queen of the West*—and damn it, you're going."

"That," said Susanne Sebois primly, "is fine language to use in the presence of a lady."

Daicey stared at her for a second, then laughed; and the girl's laugh was a good thing too. He led her to the ladder. She went down first, and he followed. As he handed her into her boat, he said: "It seems you're one ahead of me again, ma'mselle."

The girl's dark eyes were sober. "Not really," she said. "Because—I want to see you reach the Yellowstone."

"Why, thanks," he said, puzzled.

"It would be a good thing for Papa if you did," she added quickly, as if that explained everything.

"I'll get there," Daicey assured her. "I'll bring you back a chunk of stone from the Rocky Mountains."

She looked up at him, her mouth pursing a little as if she were thinking of kissing him. Then she held out her hand. He took it, finding it strong and vibrant, though small. Her smile was a brilliant flash.

MATT DAICEY had to dive for the piston that had gone overboard. When he found it, deep in the muck, he attached a line to it. Gus Gevaert rigged an outboard boom with a block and fall, and after considerable pulling, they got the heavy piece of machinery aboard. By now it was late in the afternoon, but Daicey made ready to cast off the lines.

In all his trouble, there was at least one bright spot. Basil Fowler had turned out to be really useful. It seemed that he would be much more than just a passenger on this trip. Pete Bedu had remained loyal, too. And Beaver Michaud, who had initiated the mutiny, asked permission to speak with the captain. Daicey asked Fowler to send down the huge boatman.

"Nobody ever knock' me down before," Michaud said when they met. "You have anyt'ing you want me do—I do it."

Daicey put out his hand. He trusted the man now; there was no deceit in a man of Michaud's character. "Pete Bedu's heading up the engine-room," he told him. "You take the deck gang."

Michaud's big fist returned Daicey's pressure. Then, in a crude fashion, he saluted.

"Aye-aye—sir!" he said.

The big man's action was so unexpected and ludicrous that Daicey almost laughed aloud. He wondered where Michaud had got the saluting notion, but this was no time to inquire. Most of the crew was still

mutinous. It would be dangerous to stay tied up near town overnight. Daicey was determined to anchor in the middle of the river, as far upstream as he could get by nightfall. He himself would sleep in the yawl, so that nobody could desert without swimming — and that, he knew, was the last thing in the world that one of his men would try. These rivermen hated the water.

The landing stage was pulled in and the lines cast off. On the boiler deck by the wheel, Daicey organized the crew. Bedu's men took the starboard and Michaud's the larboard. They rigged up the sweeps and went to work. Two men at the bow heaved against the long poles.

Slowly *The Queen of the West* backed off. Daicey shouted his orders. The bow swung out and pointed upstream. Very slowly the heavy boat began to move.

Daicey had some bunting in his cabin with which he had intended decorating the *Queen* for her gala leavetaking. There would have been the shrill of whistles, the cheering of men, a drink all around. But he had no heart for it now. Even the wind, which might have helped him as it had helped Sebois, had died down. The river was slick and calm.

It was a mighty sorry start for *The Queen of the West's* maiden voyage up the Missouri—a steamboat that had to be rowed!

Daicey thought of old Henri Sebois, up the river having the laugh on him. Involuntarily he glanced toward the St. Charles bluffs. But there was no girl there in the warm evening light, waving good-by to him.

The Englishman was beside him.

"Mind taking the wheel, Duke?" Daicey asked.

"Not at all," the Englishman answered. Apparently he did not object to being called "Duke." Every Englishman was called that if his clothes were good—and "Limey" if they were ragged.

"Thanks," Daicey said. "I'm going below. I'm going to rebuild that engine myself."

GUS GEVAERT was making a new wrist-pin. Daicey assisted him by working the bellows on the forge. That chant of the man at the sweeps, the ring of the anvil, the ruby glow of the hot coals almost put him to sleep. He had not been in bed all the night before, and was close to exhaustion. He lighted up a black stogie to keep him awake, and he took a good stiff drink of the whisky he had intended using for trade. At that time, unlike twenty years and more later, nobody thought it wrong to swap whisky for furs, or even to arm the Indians with the latest rifles. It was considered a legitimate way of doing business: in return for the beaver, otter, deer, raccoon, muskrat, wolf and badger skins and buffalo robes that you wanted, you gave the Indians whisky which they wanted, and guns which they needed for hunting. That way everybody felt satisfied.

"By the time we git there," Gus Gevaert was saying, "we'll likely have a whole new engine."

In his dreamy state Daicey had been thinking of Susanne Sebois, thinking of her as she had been for that brief moment in his arms, and wondering why she had not come down to wave good-by to him as she had to her father. It could not have been maidenly modesty, Daicey thought; Susanne was not that kind of a girl. She could be a lady when she wanted to, but there was about her a refreshing directness that left no room for false modesty, a directness that sprang, he supposed, from the kind of upbringing she would have had in the frontier towns with Henri Sebois as a father. It was a quality Matt Daicey had not often seen in the women of his acquaintance, and he thought it admirable.

HE stared momentarily at Gus Gevaert, trying to comprehend what Gus was telling him.

"The way I figure it," the engineer said, "was that there must've been a flaw in that piece of iron—something inside I didn't see. I know I didn't open up on the steam too fast. Besides, the pressure was kinda low."

"Kinda low," Daicey repeated. He stood up to stretch and walked to the rail to look at the river. Ahead the sky was deep red, streaked with yellow and gray. Behind was only grayness, and beyond that, out of sight, was St. Charles. The men were chanting as they worked at the sweeps, making but little advance on their way up the twelve hundred miles of rolling river. The motionless paddlewheels in their boxes swished through the red-tinted water. Daicey went back to where Gevaert was hammering on the anvil.

"I'd like to look at that other wrist-pin," he said. "Maybe we could find out what made it break."

"Must be around here somewhere," Gevaert told him.

Daicey lit a lantern and set to searching for the broken pin. He went over the deck very carefully, then searched the bins of metal that they had brought along in case they had to make more spare parts.

"Maybe it went overboard," Gevaert suggested.

"It probably did," Daicey said. "It probably was thrown overboard."

Gevaert let the hammer lie on the anvil. He was gripping the handle too rigidly, and the muscles over his cheekbones hardened as he glanced up through bushy brows at Daicey.

"What do you mean by that, Captain?" he asked.

"I'll tell you what I mean," Daicey said quietly. "Somebody's been spying on us. We've got to find out who it is. Last night somebody signaled Sebois that I'd crossed the river. I figure the same person wrecked that wrist-pin. He must have been hanging around this boat and went to work on the pin when nobody else was looking. Maybe you were up there with the swivel gun, at the time."

"I hadn't thought of that." Gevaert's voice was raspy.

"Probably somebody in the pay of Sebois," Daicey said. "When I catch him, I'm going to kill him." He went to the rail again, his back to Gevaert. "We'll be dropping anchor pretty soon, Gus. Keep your eyes on the engine tonight. If anybody acts suspicious, let me know."

Gevaert put his piece of metal into the fire. "I'll have this engine running by dawn, Captain," he said.

"You're a good engineer," Daicey told him.

Wearily he climbed the ladder. The Englishman was still at the wheel. He seemed oddly at home there, and furthermore he seemed to be enjoying this very much. "Bully," he said. "Bully."

"I'm lying down for a spell," Daicey said. "We've got to watch out for Gevaert. He's working for Sebois. Keep an eye on the yawl boat too; otherwise I'll have to sleep in it."

"By Jove!" The passenger's pale blue eyes were round. "And right down there in our own engine-room?"

Daicey felt a surge of warmth toward this Englishman. Already he had a personal interest in *The Queen of the West*. By the time they reached the Yellowstone, Daicey hoped every man on board would think of the boat as "our own."

"Gus won't do anything for a couple of days, Duke," he said. "Now—I'm going to bed. We'll drop the anchor in about an hour."

BUT Matt Daicey did not awaken in time to drop the anchor, as he had intended; the Duke must have taken care of that. When he did wake up, it was to the throbbing of the boat and the cheering of the men. The light was a pale gray, and it took Daicey several seconds to realize that Michaud was already giving orders to his deck crew to pull up the anchor. The Duke yelled down at Gus Gevaert that everything was in hand. Gus said they had enough steam. The Duke gave the whistle one toot, and Daicey jumped out of his bunk, and in his underwear ran to the wheel. The big paddlewheels were already churning. The Duke was triumphant.

"Worked through the entire bloody night," he said, "—Gevaert hammering, me filing. The blahsted engine's all shipshape."

Daicey grinned. "I'll get dressed and take over," he said. "You're the one who needs the rest now."

The Duke clicked his heels and saluted smartly. "Aye-aye, sir," he said.

Daicey gasped, then laughed outright. "Where the devil did you pick that up?" he asked.

"Royal Navy. Naturally." The Duke grinned. "Been trying to drive a bit of discipline into these jokers you call a crew. Makes them hop a little faster, you know."

Daicey remembered how awkwardly Michaud had saluted yesterday, and how astonished he had been at the behavior of the big boatman. It seemed a trifle silly, trying to teach these rough *voyageurs* the etiquette of the Royal Navy. But even Daicey had to admit that it had helped a bit. Already Beaver Michaud had his men working like a trained outfit. Pete Bedu's boys were heaving cordwood into the fire swiftly and smoothly.

He wondered again about Basil Fowler. Had the Englishman been an officer in the Royal Navy? Cashiered, perhaps, for some minor offense? Or had he simply given it up to become a free-lance wanderer? Daicey suspected that he could know the Duke half a lifetime and not learn the answer; but in any case, he had to admit now that Basil Fowler was a good man to have around.

IN the next few days even the dour engineer seemed to take on a little of the spirit engendered by the Englishman. He did not salute, since he considered himself an officer and above such things; but he did keep a much more careful eye on the boat's machinery. Each night they tied up at sunset, since it was too dangerous to run the snag-infested river in the dark. And each night Gus Gevaert took down his engine to examine the parts that received the most wear. Instead of waiting for something to break, he rebuilt worn parts, or made spares to have on hand when needed. Daicey began to wonder if he had not been too hasty in coming to the conclusion that Gevaert was in the pay of Sebois. . . .

The name which the Hidatsa Indians had given to the Missouri was *Anati,* which means "navigable stream full of dirt." Matt Daicey, as *The Queen of the West* made her way slowly up the river, had occasion to doubt only the "navigable" part of that phrase. The fact that he had been up the river by keelboat only the year before was of little help to him, for the spring floods had changed the channel in half a dozen places within the first hundred miles. There were islands where there had been none before, and sandbars where there had been islands. Despite all his watchfulness and care, Daicey himself ran the steamboat aground on one of these. Unable to get clear by backing, he was forced to take a chance on stoving in the bottom of the *Queen.* The towrope was made fast to a stout oak tree on the rear bank, then given a turn around the capstan on the foredeck. The toughest men in the crew lined up to port and starboard with their long iron-shod poles. And with Pete Bedu manning the capstan, Daicey ordered Gus Gevaert to put on all possible steam.

The Queen of the West shuddered, as if breaking her back. Then, slowly, she began to move. Matt Daicey stood grimly at the wheel, in his mind a vision of the steamboat's keel being ripped loose from stem to stern.

But she made it. In a matter of moments the *Queen* was floating free. What was more, when Daicey went over the side later to investigate, he found that no damage had been done to the keel. The bar had been low, and the sand soft.

With nothing more disastrous than this, they passed the mouth of the Kaw, where Kansas City now stands. Beyond here the river takes a northwesterly course, and beyond here too, the character of the land itself began to change. To the right were the familiar woodlands, lake-dotted, and the prairies into which even then the plowman had begun to cut his furrows; but to the left, to the horizon and beyond, stretched a strange new land: the Great Plains, mile after endless mile of tall grass, shimmering in the late spring sun or waving slowly in the breeze.

"Amazing," said Basil Fowler the first day he looked upon it; and the second day he added: "Like the ruddy sea."

Then, after days of dodging more sandbars as well as floating logs and the more dangerous sawyers—the dead trees which had got anchored to the bottom of the river by their roots or branches, and now surged down with the current, then up—after coming safely past all these obstacles, the day for which they had all been waiting came. The man at the wheel let out a shout and yanked on the whistle lanyard.

"Keelboats—dead ahead!" he yelled.

Somewhere well below the mouth of the Platt, they had at last come within sight of Henri Sebois.

Men who had been sleeping on the deck rushed to the bull-rail. Gus Gevaert called for more steam. Pete Bedu began heaving cordwood into the firebox two chunks at a time, while Gus himself fetched a pailful of spoiled salt pork to throw in at the psychological moment. Matthew Daicey loaded the swivel gun and the two cannon with saluting charges. The Duke took over the wheel.

Magnificently *The Queen of the West* waddled up the sluggish river. Ahead, the keelboat men hastily added sweep power to that of their ungainly square sails. But still the steamboat gained steadily.

By midafternoon *The Queen of the West* had pulled up alongside the hindmost of the keelboats. An hour later it came abreast the leader. Matt Daicey spotted old Henri Sebois at the steering oar.

The paddlewheels of the steamboat stirred up the muddy Missouri as it passed, rocking the keelboat. Henri Sebois did not move. He stood at his oar as if made out of granite, looking neither to port nor starboard. He was refusing to acknowledge the presence of a steamboat on his river.

BUT such a refusal could not make the *Queen* disappear. Gevaert threw the salt pork into the firebox. The steam pressure increased, and a great cloud of black smoke jutted from the stack. The Duke hung on the whistle lanyard. Matt Daicey shot off all three cannon at the same time. And as he listened to their satisfying roar, he was convinced that he had won the race. He still had nearly a thousand miles to go, but from now on any man in his right senses must admit that soon the steamboat would take over the Missouri, putting the keelboats out of business. Any man, that is, except Henri Sebois. . . .

That night when they tied up there was a pint of whisky served to every man in the crew. Gloomy old Gus Gevaert led the singing. He drank many a toast to his engines, toasts in which everyone joined. They were all very proud of themselves.

Next morning they were slow in getting started. They had used up their deck-load of wood. Pete Bedu's men were busily heaving cordwood out of the hold, where cargo would have been carried if anyone back in St. Louis had believed a steamboat could make the trip, when a sudden uproar displaced the lazy sounds of the morning. Half asleep, holding a mug of coffee in his hand, Matthew Daicey went over to the rail of the boiler deck.

"For God's sake, what's happened now?" he roared down.

Pete Bedu was leaning over an open hatchway, lifting out something that looked like a bundle of cloth. Daicey looked at it sharply. Then, with a violent shock, he recognized it for what it was.

It was no wonder that Susanne Sebois had not been on the bank to

wave Matt Daicey good-by as he left St. Charles. Susanne had already been stowed away aboard *The Queen of the West.* She had slipped aboard and got into the hold while Daicey was diving for that piston.

Now, of course, she was wearing the same skirt and blouse in which she had been dressed when he last saw her. Yet dirty and rumpled as she was, she still looked very lovely. And, Matt Daicey thought oddly, she did not look at all hungry, as a stowaway should look.

Beside him, the Englishman said: "By Jupiter, Captain—how bizarre!"

Daicey looked coldly at the Duke. Basil Fowler was not very good at simulation.

"You've been feeding her, damn you!" Daicey swore.

Standing on the deck now, Susanne fought herself free of Pete Bedu. She looked up at the deck above and waved gayly at Daicey. Daicey glowered back and spilled his coffee.

"Good morning, Captain," she said. She smiled. "You see, I like even the hold of your steamship."

Daicey was too furious to speak. He whirled and dragged the Duke into the deckhouse. He took the smaller man by the shirtfront and shook him.

"We've got to get rid of her," Daicey said through his teeth. "It's up to you. You've got to take her back to St. Charles."

But Susanne Sebois had run up the ladder and was at the doorway.

"I won't go," she said defiantly. "I wanted to stow away until you could not send me back. And you can't now."

Daicey released the Duke, turned and looked at her. Then he laughed harshly.

"I don't have to," he said. "I'll wait until your father comes along and turn you over to him. We passed him yesterday, you know."

The girl straightened her shoulders, lifted her breast. Her dark eyes flashed, and there was pride in them. Even in his anger, Matt Daicey knew that she had never looked more beautiful.

"What you don't know is that *he* passed *you* last night," she said. "You were all having a toast to your engine. Mr. Fowler brought me something to eat. He'd just seen Papa pass."

DAICEY glanced savagely at the Duke.

Flushing, Basil Fowler nodded.

"Didn't want to trouble you with the knowledge, you know," he mumbled. "Knew you'd catch him again soon."

"All right," Daicey snapped. "I'll take you along till we catch up to that old goat. Then—be damned to both of you."

He strode from the cabin to the wheel. The entire crew, seemingly, had gathered around and was staring stupidly up at him. Very briefly and forcibly, Matthew Daicey discussed their ancestors with them. The men scattered to their work, a few of them grinning when their backs were turned. The anchor came up. The whistle tooted savagely. The paddlewheels began to splash.

ON that day, for the first time since they left St. Charles, the engine broke down. The head blew off the cylinder, knocking a big hole in the deck and smashing into some baled calico in the hold. It proved to be a two-day job fixing it, with Matt Daicey and Gus Gevaert working in shifts.

Yet even while this was being done, the boat was not anchored. Pete Bedu and Beaver Michaud kept their men at work all through the daylight hours. Where the water was shallow along the bank, they slowly poled *The Queen of the West* upstream. Two men, each with a pole, would start at the bow of the boat, plant the pole in the sand, then slowly walk to the stern, one on the starboard and one on the larboard side. Always there were six men poling on either side at once, with two more who had just reached the stern running forward over the boiler deck to take their places again at the bow. Thus the men walked the steamboat toward the Yellowstone, virtually inching forward where the current was swift; and at night they dropped on the deck exhausted.

Though Daicey tried to ignore Susanne, he could not help seeing her constantly at work during those two days. She carried no pole, of course, but she seemed to have a faculty for being everywhere where she was most needed. She cooked a good stew for the hungry men, from a deer the Duke had shot on a sandbar. She kept them constantly supplied with hot coffee. The fact of her presence alone soon had them singing the songs of the *voyageurs* at their work.

At last the cracked cylinder head was re-welded. New bolts were forged and the threads cut. When the bolts were finished, the two men cut a new gasket from a piece of buffalo hide. Gevaert punched holes in it, and they reassembled the engine. Then, carefully, they tightened down the cylinder head.

It was while driving the old bolts from the cylinder head that Daicey had noticed something strange about one of them. He did not stop to study it there. He dropped it in a pocket, furtively, as if he were stealing something.

Pete Bedu had kept up steam. *The Queen of the West* was ready to go. Unfortunately, however, the sun was now close to the horizon—and only a fool or a madman would attempt to run the Missouri at night.

Perhaps Matthew Daicey at the moment was a little bit of both. He was determined to pass Sebois at once, at all costs, and to leave Susanne Sebois with her father. He told himself that it was because she was like a hex aboard *The Queen of the West,* that the very fact of her appearance had twice resulted in trouble, but as for a truly logical explanation of his reasons, he had none.

But once Daicey had decided to chance a night's run on the river, there was no lack of logic in his preparations. He dropped the landing stage so it hung over the water like a boom, and stationed two old rivermen upon it. These men had been up the Missouri many a time on Henri Sebois' keelboats, and they could be trusted to keep a sharp lookout. Behind them on the bow were two more men armed with boathooks, with which they would try to fend off floating logs. He kept one man with him at the wheel, and another stayed with Gevaert by the valve. Then he called for steam.

THE rickety engine seemed to be outdoing itself tonight, as they moved slowly up the river once more. Gus had reported that they had only twelve hours' more fuel, but Daicey was not troubled on that score. There were many good stretches of forest along here. Come morning, they would anchor and wood up again.

The moon, lopsided but nearly full, had come up behind them and to starboard. It would be on the river all night. For a change, luck was running with Daicey, not against him.

Bone-weary as he was, Daicey was almost happy. Then he felt the bit of metal heavy in his pocket, and his old suspicions came back to him. Because he wanted nobody to see him examine it, he took over the wheel and sent the man who was helping him down to the engine-room for a can of coffee. In the bright moonlight he studied the broken bolt. He had been right. Part of the break was new—but part was old. It looked as if it had been cut halfway through before being assembled as part of the engine.

There was a faint rustling sound behind him. Closing his fist over the metal, he turned swiftly. He found himself looking down into the wide dark eyes of Susanne Sebois. She was still wearing the blouse with the square, low neck of the times, and she had let down her black hair so that it hung below her shoulders.

"I couldn't help seeing you," she said. "The moonlight is so bright. Here."

Susanne moved closer to Daicey. "Perhaps you understand now," she said.

She handed him a cylindrical chunk of iron. He looked at her in puzzlement, not recognizing it.

"It was in the hold," she explained. "When I was stowed away, Gus Gevaert kicked it down a hatchway. Later on, he came down to look for it. But I had it by then."

It was one half of the broken wrist-pin that had delayed them at St. Charles, and had very nearly cost the lives of these two when it parted. It too had been cut, in the same manner as the broken bolt that Daicey still gripped so tightly in his right hand.

Susanne looked up at him as if waiting for him to speak. But already the boatman he had sent for the coffee was climbing the ladder. Daicey turned the wheel over to him, stepped to the boiler-deck rail. Still silent, he watched the dark water swirling past. Susanne had followed and now stood close to him, upwind of him, so that the breeze caused her lustrous hair to caress his arm. As if trying to ignore her, he gulped down the hot coffee.

"The river," she said. "It's beautiful in the moonlight. I think it's not just gold that makes men like you and Papa want to follow it—to follow it and fight it!"

Acutely aware of her presence as he was, Daicey hardly knew that she was speaking.

"Where's the Duke?" he asked suddenly.

"Watching Gevaert," Susanne told him.

Daicey had made up his mind. He turned, strode stiffly into his cabin. He unwrapped his dueling pistols and loaded them with fresh powder and ball. Then he saw that Susanne Sebois had followed him. She stood in the doorway, saying nothing, but her face was pale and frightened.

"It's between him and me," Daicey said, his voice surprisingly quiet. "I had the proof without that wrist-pin. If he had to, he'd blow up the *Queen* to stop us."

Gently, he put the girl aside and went down the ladder.

HIS pistols were in the waistband of his trousers, and they were what Gevaert saw first. His eyes widened. He had been sitting in a rawhide-bottomed chair where he could watch the steady pulsing of the engine. The Duke sat facing him, and a game of checkers was between them. The Duke alone showed no surprise: he had been expecting this.

"She's running like a dream," the engineer said swiftly, trying to cover up his terror. His glance shuttled from Daicey's face to the pistols, back to Daicey's narrowed eyes. "Listen to her, Captain. We've licked the last of our trouble."

"Get up," said Daicey coldly.

Gevaert had to use his hands and arms to push himself up from the chair, because his knees no longer had any strength in them. He stood shaken and weak, looking wildly around for something with which to protect himself.

Daicey asked: "Can you swim, Gus?"

"God, no!" Gevaert cried.

"Then we'll give you a chunk of cordwood to hang onto," Daicey said. "It's not far to shore. But it'll be a right smart walk back to St. Louis."

"You can't do that," Gevaert said, his voice breaking. "There's Indians. I'd starve to death. They'd scalp me."

"There aren't any Indians down this part of the river," Daicey corrected him. "And if you starve to death, it won't worry me any. You'd have blown us all to hell if you'd had the chance. Now get moving."

Then Gevaert saw Susanne Sebois behind Daicey. The sight gave him courage; he straightened truculently.

"You make me walk," he said, "and you'll have to answer to Sebois."

Daicey was done with words. He went up to the man, and Gevaert cringed back against a bulkhead. He reached for a chunk of scrap-iron, but Daicey knocked it from his hand.

The engineer was swearing and sobbing at once. Daicey slapped him hard in the face, knocking his head askew, then kicked him out of the engine-room. At the bull-rail Gevaert hung on, screaming. Daicey let him bellow for a time, then hauled him off the rail and threw him overboard. He tossed a couple of pieces of cordwood after him.

Gevaert came up between the two logs, spitting and coughing and clawing for something to support him. He almost went under again before his hand closed over a piece of the cordwood. It was enough to support him. Daicey watched him until he swirled away in the wake of the boat; then he went back to the steering wheel. Susanne Sebois followed him.

There was a strong smell of woodsmoke up here, Daicey noticed, that could not have come from the stack. The thought flickered across his mind that somewhere the prairie must be ablaze. But that was a common occurrence and did not trouble him. Here was Susanne beside him, her piquant face pointed into the wind. The breeze whipped at her hair and clothing.

"Thank you," she said softly, "for giving him a chance. If you had killed him, I'd have had to blame Papa; already Papa's done too much."

Daicey looked into her dark eyes. There was moonglow in them, and the moon was soft on her white shoulders.

"I don't understand you," he said, and his voice sounded husky. "Your father's fighting me, in every way he can. But you— Or am I just a plain fool?"

"A little," she said. Her eyes sparkled. "A little, but not much. I've told you why, but I don't think you understand. Perhaps you will—after you get to the Yellowstone."

The wheelman coughed. "If you'll take over for a second, Captain," he suggested, "I'll fetch some more coffee."

"Why, uh, thanks," Daicey said.

There was clear stretch ahead of them, where the current seemed to follow a straight course in midstream.

One of the men on the landing stage was throwing the lead-line to test the depth of the water. For a moment or two, *The Queen of the West* could steer herself.

Susanne Sebois was the daughter of Daicey's worst enemy, but that had little meaning now. She was also a woman, a lovely woman, and they were alone here under the moonlight in this suddenly magic l place. Daicey lifted a hand to her shoulder.

But even doing so, he could not fail to see ahead of him, up the river. His hand tightened, then he let it fall. For up there smoke had built a gray-black cloud against the stars. Below it flames snapped brightly.

It was no ordinary prairie fire. It was a wooded island burning, and both banks of the river were ablaze. It was a fire that had been deliberately set. This was the first timber they had come upon in the past two days, and they had only enough fuel to last until dawn.

Susanne Sebois half turned then, following Daicey's gaze. She looked back at him, into his eyes, saying nothing. She knew what he was thinking. And the magical moment had gone.

Daicey shouted for Beaver Michaud.

"Wet down the decks!" he bellowed. "Wet down everything. We're going to run through that fire tonight."

"Aye-aye, sir," Michaud answered from somewhere below.

Daicey did not smile. The Duke's discipline was not funny any more. Nothing was funny on this trip to the Yellowstone. It was all pure hell.

THEY dropped wooden buckets over the side and hauled them aboard. Starting at the top, they soaked everything but the boiler fire itself. They poured buckets of water on themselves and rigged masks of wet cloth to keep the smoke from their lungs. Daicey, at the wheel, saw Susanne Sebois standing by the deckhouse with a sopping blanket and a washtub of water. She had dumped a pail of water on herself, so the thin goods of her blouse and skirt, clung to her lovely figure. With a red bandanna over her mouth, and her dark hair tied up tightly in a handkerchief she looked strange and unreal, as did everything else in this nightmare. Below, the Duke kept his eyes on the engine while Pete Bedu lined up his men, half to fight the fire, half to keep the blaze up under the boiler.

Now they were in it, with flames on both sides of them, and flames ahead. The men at the bull-rail kept on hauling up water. Daicey, with his hat low over his eyes, stared into the inferno. Smoke and flame were so thick he could hardly see. He guided *The Queen of the West* half by instinct, half by looking for the hottest part of the fire o either side and drawing a middle course.

Blazing embers rained down all over the deck. On the roof of the deckhouse, a man was sweeping them off with a wet broom. Susanne Sebois was keeping the area around Daicey clear, slapping at the flame with her wet blanket. One red-hot piece of wood landed on Daicey's shoulder, burning him, but before he himself could knock it off, she extinguished it with a pail of water on his back, already steaming with the heat.

As he had never prayed before, Daicey was praying now that the engine would not break down. He prayed in cadence with the steady *throb-throb-throb* that he could feel in the deck, and he leaned into the wheel as if by his actual strength he could hold the engine together.

The bandanna over his mouth was drying out. The smoke had just begun to bite acridly at his throat when Susanne Sebois, as if reading his mind, untied the mask and threw on a new wet one while he held his breath. An instant later she threw a fresh bucket of water on him, and ran to the rail to hoist up some more.

Then, suddenly, the fire to the starboard moved farther away. They had passed the island. Daicey felt his way toward the center of the river. There the air was cooler, though both banks were still ablaze. There the men could rest a little while *The Queen of the West* plowed on up the Missouri. After a while, it was possible to distinguish between moonlight and fireglow.

At last they passed the main blaze, to come into almost barren prairie country where there was only grass to burn. Here Daicey signaled Fowler to ease up on the steam. Then he called for an assembly of his men. In the past half hour, he had for the first time come to realize the odds he faced. Perhaps he had known it before and refused to admit it even to himself: now he did.

The men came to the foredeck and lined up there facing him, their faces black, their clothing burned. Susanne Sebois stood with her back against the deckhouse, behind Daicey. Her skirt had been ripped almost to the waist and showed a white streak of slender thigh. From her nose up, her face was black, but the wet bandanna had kept her mouth and chin clean. She looked grotesque, but she stood very proudly.

"Go inside," Daicey ordered her.

"I'm part of your crew," she said. "You've got to let me be part of your crew, now."

"Go inside!" he said more sharply.

The girl looked defiantly at him for a moment, seeming about to speak. Then, abruptly, she turned away. Daicey stepped up to the break of the deck, where he could look down on his men. They were all there, including Basil Fowler, who had left for a moment his self-appointed job at the engine. Odd, Daicey thought with a feeling of warmth, how this experience had changed the Englishman. There was very little left to remind you of his observer airs back in the tavern at St. Charles. He might have been on the river all his life.

Looking down at the once mutinous crew that these past days had welded together into a fighting company, thinking what he had to say to them, Daicey's throat was tight.

"What we've just been through," he told them, "is only a sample. Sebois will do everything he can to stop us. And we're out of firewood. We might have to pole the *Queen* for a hundred miles. It's going to be plain hell." He waited a second. The men were moving about nervously. "But we can float back to St. Charles and start over again. Or we can float back and quit."

"The devil with that!" the Duke cut in. "I'm bound for the Yellowstone. Give me a pole, Captain."

The men began to roar. Beaver Michaud's voice rose above the sound of their voices.

"First man look downstream, he answer to me," said Michaud. "Even the Captain, sir, by God."

The roar rose louder. Matthew Daicey had to turn away because there were tears in his eyes.

EVERY day was hot now, and endless. Sometimes when a breath of air stirred they would rig a sail. On occasion they found dry wood where the spring floods had piled it on a sandbar. They pulled aboard every snag they could and chopped it up for fuel. So there were days when they sailed and days when they poled, and days when everyone lolled on the deck while a few hours' supply of firewood did the work for them. They even tried firing the boiler with buffalo chips, but the poor steam pressure engendered by this fuel hardly kept up with the current of the river.

They did not have to run through fire again, but more than once they came to what formerly had been a fine stand of cottonwood timber, since burned flat by Sebois. These groves, usually in some watered hollow, were always combed carefully for serviceable wood. The great trunks that had not burned through could be cut and stacked on deck. When they got a load of this, Daicey would travel all night and through the day until it was burned up or another grove sighted. The snags and shoals which made steaming upriver at night so dangerous no longer gave him pause:

danger was something that Daicey and his men no longer knew.

Thanks to Basil Fowler, the engine gave them no further trouble. It seemed that once the Englishman had set his mind to a task, he always did that task well. One evening, as they stood beside each other at the wheel, Daicey took occasion to thank him for what he had done.

"Quite all right," said the Englishman, obviously embarrassed. "Must keep from getting bored, you know. Thinking of the day when you'll have a fleet of these beasts waddling up the river."

"If that time comes," Daicey told him, "I hope you'll be skipper of the finest of them."

"Precisely what I had in mind, of course," the Duke assured him. "I must say I find this river fascinating. Beats the sea in many ways. Trickier. Gives me new life."

And that, Daicey was keenly aware, was where the Englishman wished this soul-baring conversation to end. So he did not pursue it further.

IN this fashion they came at last to the mouth of the Platte, the traditional boundary between the frontier and the wilderness. Above here, fuel would be more scarce than ever; only hostile Indians would be in greater supply. The lookout spotted a herd of buffalo as they poled up to the Platte, so Daicey called a halt to send out a hunting party. Thus far there had been game in abundance, from deer and bear down to turkeys, pigeons and wild ducks, almost for the asking; but from here on the country was more open, and even game might not be so plentiful.

Brooding, Daicey watched Susanne Sebois carrying one of the Duke's sporting rifles and talking cheerfully to the Englishman as they hiked out toward the buffalo. That fire downriver had put a wall between the girl and Daicey. In a sense it was a wall of his own building, but he could not tear it down. He could not even be sure he wanted to, for old Henri Sebois was now his implacable enemy. And after the day he had ordered her away, after she had helped all through the fire, Susanne showed no disposition to be friendly. As much as it was possible aboard *The Queen of the West,* she seemed to avoid him.

Long ago Susanne's clothes and shoes had gone to pieces. She was barefooted now, dressed in cut-down breeches and shirt from the Duke's capacious luggage. In spite of this outrageous costume, she was lovelier than ever. And she had obviously earned the respect of the crew, who treated her like a smaller and younger member of their own group.

After they had gone, Matt Daicey stripped off his buckskins and dived overboard. He had a good swim and lay in the sun a while. It was the first time he had really relaxed since he had left St. Charles. When the hunting party returned with the best part of half a dozen buffalo, he was feeling like a new man.

Best of all was the news that Susanne Sebois brought. She reported to Daicey, very matter-of-factly and precisely, that she had found a fine stand of cottonwood just a short distance up the Platte. Timber, of course, that her father had failed to burn because it was not situated on the main stream. Delighted as he was, Daicey was a little irritated because Susanne had made the report. Why must it always be she? Why not the Duke or another of the party, all of whom obviously had seen the timber?

They cut that wood day and night, floating it down the Platte to the Missouri, where they hauled it aboard *The Queen of the West.* They filled the hold with cordwood, stacked it high on the decks. They piled it on the boiler deck too, until the boat was so heavily loaded they dared not put on another stick.

At the Platte they also picked up two bits of news along with the meat and the wood. A deserter from Sebois' outfit, a man who had had enough of poling and rowing and cordelling, came down the river-bank while they were working to beg some of the buffalo steak. They fed him, and he informed Daicey that when the *Queen* dropped anchor at the Platte, old Henri was only one day ahead. He also told them that the Sioux upstream had sent down word that they would let no one pass their village.

Daicey could not be certain that Sebois himself had not sent the man down to cause what trouble he could, so he gave the fellow all the meat he could carry and sent him packing. As for the word regarding the Indians, he was not surprised. A few years before, the Sioux had been friendly; but soon they had discovered that they were not the most favored among the Indians. Having little but buffalo hides to offer in trade, they saw the white men going farther up the river where the take was richer and more varied. This meant that their traditional enemies, the tribes up the river, were being supplied with more guns and powder and shot than they. Quite naturally they objected.

Pete Bedu built up the fire. When the Duke had a full head of steam, they plowed north again, with a sail rigged to help then along. At the moment, Daicey was not too troubled over the Sioux. With his three brass cannon, he thought he could keep them at a distance. With steam he could outspeed their canoes. Nor was he now afraid of Sebois. There was nobody aboard to wreck the engine, and he had loaded enough wood to take them well past the keelboats.

To celebrate their good fortune, Daicey broached the keg again. Without his having ordered it, the men drank in shifts, singing as they drank. At the wheel, Daicey felt the satisfying throb of the engine and the faint smell of wood smoke drifted past him. This time, it was a fine, exhilarating odor because it came from his stack, not from the fires Sebois had set.

Susanne Sebois was below somewhere—with the Duke, most likely, learning how to be an engineer. Daicey gripped the wheel and stared straight ahead. Something of the fine savor of this moment had been lost.

THERE at the big bend, the bluff was high to starboard. To the left, a long bar thrust itself out into the river, its tip stacked with snags. Beyond the bar the lodges of the Sioux village looked like tiny mounds, with wisps of smoke curling up from the center of each. Yet the whole scene appeared to be absent of life. There were no warriors anywhere.

When *The Queen of the West* rounded the bend and drew into the main channel below the high bluff, Matt Daicey realized immediately what was afoot. Four keelboats were anchored midstream, close together, two abreast. They were downstream from the bluff far enough to be out of arrow-range. The big square sails were furled, and the men on the decks were all under cover.

Daicey called for half speed. The steamboat shuddered as the Duke turned the steam valve. Twice Daicey tugged on the whistle, and the sharp toots were echoed back from the bluff.

Almost instantly, heads appeared up above, Indians staring down in open astonishment. Strange tales had come to them, but never before had they seen anything like this. From the village naked children and women popped suddenly from their lodges. Preceded by yapping dogs, they rushed to the shore to gaze on this queer canoe that moved without oars or poles.

Drifting up behind the keelboats, Daicey called for an even slower engine. He did not want to throw out an anchor, for that might spoil the illusion that the *Queen* was alive. He gave forth with a fierce blast of his whistle, sending the brown-skinned women and children tearing back to their village. The scrawny Indian dogs went yipping off across the prairie. The warriors above ducked their heads.

Idling along, Daicey pulled up beside the keelboats. He had saved half a keg of salt pork for this meeting, to blacken his smoke. He had

dreamed of it often since the keelboats sneaked past him in the night. But strangely, this moment he had enjoyed so much in those dreams now seemed flat and empty. He could see that the tough, bearded men on the keelboat were terrified. Only old Sebois himself had any apparent fight left in him. He stood at the sweep of his keelboat and glared defiantly at Matthew Daicey. He would do not less and he could do no more: this time he could not deny the presence of *The Queen of the West.*

Daicey signaled for the Duke merely to hold way against the current. They were alongside the keelboat on which Sebois stood now, nosing it on the starboard side of the *Queen's* bow. Old Henri filled his chest with air. His oxlike shoulders were square and his wide white mustache bristled. Daicey grinned down at him.

"It's been a long push," he said. "I'll see you at the Yellowstone."

He lifted his hand to tug the bell for full speed ahead. And then he dropped it. It must have been old Henri's defiant attitude that stopped him.

"If you get there," Sebois growled. "Damn you, Daicey, when the wind changes, we'll sail past these devils and show you our heels again. I don't know how in hell you got this far."

"We carried her—on our backs," Daicey said. "We burned buffalo chips."

BUT Daicey's smile was gone. He could not help seeing that there was something more than pitiful about these keelboat men. The water out here was too deep for poling, and the current too swift for their sweeps. They could not sail past the bluff because the wind was against them. They were truly at the mercy of the Indians who, once this strange steamboat was out of the way, would come down upon them and wipe them out.

It was only what Sebois deserved, Daicey thought. He had tried every trick short of murder he could think of, to stop the steamboat man. Yet, looking down at the keelboat man standing there, hard as flint, sure that his ways were right, all the hate and anger went out of Matthew Daicey.

He turned over the wheel to Beaver Michaud. He stepped down to the main deck. Easily, he vaulted over the bull-rail and onto the deck of the keelboat. He walked slowly up to Henri Sebois.

"Tie on behind, Sebois," Daicey said quietly. "Well give you a tow. It's the only way you can make it."

Old Henri's muscles bunched as if he were about to strike Daicey, but he did not move. He looked about him, saw the unvoiced begging of his frightened men. He spat on the deck.

"I'll be damned if I do," he said. "I'm taking no tow from a kettle on a scow."

Daicey heard someone gasp. He heard hurried bare footsteps on the deck behind him.

Henri Sebois' jaw dropped.

"Don't be a fool, Papa," said Susanne Sebois. "Tie on—or be damned to you."

Slowly, old Henri recovered his composure, lost at the sight of the daughter he had thought safe in St. Charles. He took a step toward Daicey.

"Blast you," he said. "You kidnaped her! I'll kill you with my bare hands."

But Susanne came between them. She was laughing.

"Do you think anyone could kidnap me, Papa?" she asked. "I stowed away." She stopped smiling. "Because somebody had to tell if this queer thing would run. Somebody had to find out if Mr. Daicey was really a fool—or if he could carry your goods to the Yellowstone."

Old Henri Sebois stood stock-still, but Daicey thought that the muscles of his rock-hard jaw were trembling.

SPORT SPURTS

by Harold Helfer

AN anonymous soul sent the St. Paul Baseball Club two ten-dollar bills because he had taken several baseballs that were batted over the fence twenty years before.

* * *

Emmett French once went around the Pinehurst golf-course using only a putter—and made it in 80.

* * *

Six months after Babe Didrikson first got hold of a golf-club, she was out-driving and beating George Albach—Dallas, Tex., pro—her first instructor.

* * *

Louise Brough beat Margaret Osborne for America's women's tennis championship, but they are lifelong friends and after their match they both sat down and cried.

* * *

Dixie Walker, the peepul's cherce on the Brooklyn Dodgers, is such a strategist that he uses different bats against left-handers and right-handers.

* * *

Drivers in the Indianapolis Speedway races don't have to worry about too much tire air-pressure being built up as they whirl around the course because they fill their tires with nitrogen instead of air.

"I found out," Susanne said, her voice rising. "He isn't. And he can. It's time you found out there's a new way to tame the Missouri. Because it's got to be your way too. Now tie on. I want my father alive."

Henri Sebois' face reddened, but he suddenly found his voice.

"Damn you!" he yelled. "Get off my boat. All of you! And throw down your blasted lines."

MATT DAICEY turned away. Someone, probably the Duke, tossed down a line to him, and he clambered back aboard the *Queen.* Then he hurried up the ladder and took the wheel again.

"Get that salt pork ready," he howled to the Duke. "And everybody under cover! We're going to run past that bluff. Man the guns."

The men he had trained as cannoneers ran to their weapons. Steam shot suddenly into the stack as the pressure went up in the boiler. Black smoke began to pour into the sky.

The whistle screamed. Paddlewheels splashed and beat, kicking up a great spray. The four keelboats stretched out behind *The Queen of the West* like ducklings following their mother. On the boiler deck of the steamboat, a girl stood by the man at the wheel. Matt Daicey had not known that she followed him, but Susanne Sebois was there. Her bare feet were braced. Her dark eyes were turned steadily upstream.

One Indian, with more nerve than the others, crept up to the edge of the bluff and let an arrow fly at the terrible creature below. The arrow knifed into the deck and stood there quivering, only a few feet in front of the wheel. A brass cannon roared, its ball plowing up a stretch of the bluff. There were no more arrows.

Susanne moved closer to Matt Daicey. "Perhaps you understand now," she said. "You had a new way, but Papa could not see it. Someone had to find out if it was right and tell him. Because Papa grows old, and some day he would have to have a man run the river for him. A man almost as hard as himself. But not quite, I think, because the times change."

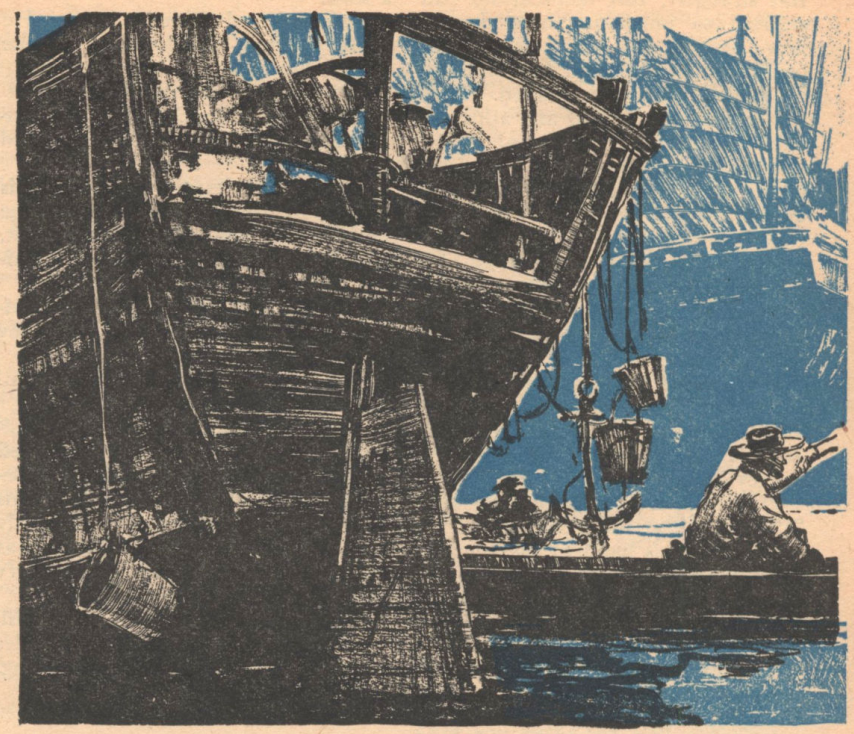
Daicey looked down at her, into dark eyes. He had never quite known before what it was to be happy. For he saw there the answer to all that a man could ask for.

"But it's not quite as simple as that, Susanne," he said, his own voice sounding strange to him.

"Or simpler," she answered. She was smiling, her full lips eager.

His arm slipped about her waist, and he kissed her. Never again would old Henri Sebois stand between his daughter and the new conqueror of the wild Missouri.

AN AMERICAN SHIP CAPTAIN FOUND A CHILLY WELCOME IN THE PROUD CHINA OF A CENTURY AGO — AND GOT HIS CARGO OF TEA AND SILKS AT A PRICE OF PERIL AND DEVIOUS DEALINGS.



FOREIGN

THE dignity of ship's master, with the title of captain, was all very nice. But as Ezra Cooper clambered down into the "fast boat" hired to take him upriver from Whampoa, the port of Canton, to the city itself, and took a seat beside his supercargo and private interpreter Clark, he was rife with suppressed curses. Also, thought of what lay in his pocket lent him dismay and acute anxiety. Should he have accepted the mission, or not? He was off balance for once, confused by the strange scene around.

This was his first China voyage; and getting the *Martha* from her outer anchorage to her berth at Whampoa had been a terrible headache. In this year of 1834 imperial China was no joke, and every move of foreign devils was rigorously circumscribed. Clark inspected the lean, bony, serious features beside him, and smiled.

"You look unhappy, Captain. You are not pleased with your first sight of China?"

Cooper glanced back at his ship, a guard-boat made fast on either quarter to prevent smuggling, and groaned.

"I wish to hell I was out of it! First send word to the agent at Canton; then take a pilot when permission comes, and work upriver past those forts. After a Hong merchant has gone security for us, ship a comprador and an official linguist or interpreter; stop and be inspected and measured by mandarins, pay a huge graft in port charges and duties; finally anchor, leave the ship and go on to Canton alone. On top of all that grief, they say she may lie here for months — months! It's incredible!"

Clark chuckled. "Everyone has to do it; yet the routine is smooth. This is the only spot in China where foreign trade is permitted. It must all be handled through the Hong merchants, so submit gracefully. Except for these go-betweens, absolutely no intercourse with foreign devils is allowed."

"That's what worries me," said Ezra Cooper. "The ship lying there for weeks or months, with those women aboard —"

He checked himself; Clark understood, and nodded. Those two Chinese women, picked up off the coast adrift with some wreckage from a foundered ship, were a source of deadly peril. If a word should get out of their presence aboard, ship and cargo and crew were doomed. Luckily they had cut their hair short, accepted the clothes offered them, and agreed to stay below-decks in daytime. Political refugees of some sort, a young woman and her maid. Ezra Cooper liked her name of T'ai Ho — "Heavenly Harmony" — but he was sour about the danger incurred by her rescue. And with reason. . . .

This upriver trip was a marvelous thing. The boat used paddles; no oars could have got her through, for the river was jammed with junks and boats. Clark named them to Cooper: Huge coasting junks, seagoing craft; salt-corporation junks, revenue boats, floating residences, flower boats, ferry sampans, barbers' boats, vendors of everything imaginable, boats of theatrical performers and fortune-tellers — literally a city afloat.

After two hours of this, Jackass Point came into sight, with the small sector allotted foreigners for residence — boathouses, a paved terrace behind, and flagpoles flying their colors before each "hong" or group of buildings, usually called "factory" by the foreign devils, who could not leave their roof except by special permit. Nor were any women, native or foreign, allowed.

"So this is Canton!" grunted Cooper, looking over the crowded Pearl River at the far-spread native city. He thought of what lay in his coat pocket, looked at the terrace ahead, and shivered. Before the pole carrying the "flowery flag," that of the United States, lay a Chinese body, with the head at some distance.

"The way of the transgressor has no compromise," commented Clark. "Here's your agent coming to meet us, and friends."

COOPER stepped ashore. The feeling of being on another planet departed; here was a grinning yellow man, and behind him honest American faces, hearty handgrips, introductions — Mr. Nye, acting consul; James Talbot, Charles Cushing. Greetings, questions, requests for letters or news, resounded. Most of the ships refused to deliver letters at once, trade being sharply competitive; but Cooper had brought a sack of them. News of Cap'n Howe's death *en route* saddened the men's faces.

DEVIL

BY H. BEDFORD-JONES

The American factory was a three-story building like the rest, several others crowded in behind it. Skippers seldom came to reside here, but at this off-season there was room and to spare; both Cooper and Clark could be accommodated easily. After a few moments of talk and more introductions, he was taken to his room in charge of a servant, one Ling Ting or "Solitary Nail." Presumably Ling spoke English, but to Cooper his jargon was all Greek.

With his baggage Cooper was taken to a room in Suy Hong, behind the front building, and being thus alone, he addressed Ling:

"I want to see a Chinese who works here. His name is Man Ho. I think he is the comprador of the factory here."

The other grinned. "My all same," he said, which meant nothing to Cooper. The latter repeated his request. Ling Ting discharged a volley of balderdash, and Cooper lost his temper. There was a step, and Clark appeared from an adjoining room.

"Hello! Anything wrong here, Captain?"

Cooper explained, and the other laughed. "You don't understand pidgin, or business-talk; it's made up of all languages, and everyone speaks it. Let me warn you that the comprador is the most important person in a factory. Your man was trying to tell you that his name used to be Man Ho, but he changed it, doesn't want it mentioned."

INDEED, the Chinese displayed agitation. Cooper produced the cloth-wrapped packet T'ai Ho had given him aboard ship, told Clark whence it came, and brought out a folded paper on which the Chinese girl had brushed characters in ink.

"She said to give 'em to Man Ho. You tell him, if this is the right man."

Clark sobered, and exchanged rapid talk with Ling. The latter took the letter, uttered a short, astonished cry, then opened the packet. He disclosed the little square cup, stooped and placed it on the floor, and prostrated himself before it.

"What the devil—" began Cooper. Clark checked him.

"Wait. I'll explain later."

Ling rose, holding the tiny cup reverently, and exchanged excited speech with Clark. Presently he extended the cup to Cooper, who took it and slipped it into his pocket, wondering what it was all about. The yellow face had changed. In place of its grin, it now held a grave, earnest expression, and the black eyes searched Cooper intently. Then Ling bowed as though in assent, touched Cooper's pocket, and said:

"Plitty ittle sing. Joss chop. My do plenty good."

Then he turned and went out. Clark closed the door, and wiped sweat from his cheeks.

"That just can't be translated, Mr. Cooper; it's sarcasm, reverence and obedience. Your pretty little cup is divine business written by heaven. He will obey. Now suppose you tell me about it."

Cooper sat on the bed, got his pipe alight, and complied. It was a long tale: how, back home in Newburyport, he got the cup from a man just returned from Canton, who knew nothing about it. How he himself, liking it rarely for its artistry and beauty, had cherished it, had been through various adventures with it. Then the final scene with T'ai Ho, when Heavenly Harmony had given him the note and packet for Man Ho.

Clark's features cleared.

"Now I can explain, partly. That girl aboard the ship was the daughter of a high dignitary known as Ta Yin or Great Man, who in the annual examinations at Peking had won exceptional rank; in consequence of which, the Emperor presented him with this cup. But about a year ago, he was disgraced and executed for some fault. His daughter escaped with her maid attendant. Man Ho was his faithful servant. Now we have the daughter hidden aboard ship, and this comprador Ling is the former Man Ho – you see? She sent him the cup to serve as surety for you, knowing he would recognize it, and gave certain orders, which he will obey. The cup gives you enormous prestige in his eyes. Evidently it is considered your property."

"I'm glad to have it back," Cooper said. "I gave it to T'ai Ho."

"Keep it; may do you good. It's a ceremonial object of some kind. But for God's sake, be careful! Let a word of this get out, and we'll have our heads chopped off."

"I'm not talking," assented Cooper grimly. "This Ling is important, you say?"

"Highly; handles money and business for everyone here, and for the factory treasury too. Now he's your firm friend, and can do practically anything for you."

"Well, I'd like to know what's the inscription on that cup."

"Only a highly educated native can tell you. It's in the clerical writing, same as our Old English. Well, meet you in ten minutes, and we'll go down to tiffin."

Left alone, Cooper put the "plitty ittle sing" on his table and looked at it. The square cup was of bronze, heavily gold-plated; the whole outer surface of the sides was occupied by a deeply incised inscription in Chinese characters. Affection warmed his regard. He lacked superstition; yet the thing did seem a token of good luck; from his first sight of it, he had ardently desired it. Why? For what purpose? He could not say.

"Now you seem to be still serving your former owner, eh?" he chuckled, and tucked the cup from sight in his bag. "Stay there, then; I'm too busy to moon over you."

IT was no trouble fitting himself into the life of the factory, which was not unlike a men's club; the merchants and missionaries around him were congenial and hearty. The English, Dutch, French and American factories flourished; others were mere consular residences. Portugal's trade relations were confined to her colony of Macao, a hundred and twenty miles distant. Old China Street, filled with native shops, divided the foreign quarter, and here stood an extensive structure, the Consoo or Council House of the collective Hong merchants, where meetings were held.

Almost at once business descended full force upon Cooper. He gave two hours a day to learning pidgin English with a teacher. His cargo affairs were handled entirely by his Hong merchant, one Houqua, a man of enormous wealth like them all; but he had to make and receive visits of ceremony, and the services of Clark as translator were required at all times. The business of assembling a return cargo was slow and weighty. Banks were unknown, dealings being transacted in hard cash or on Hong books. At this off season, many of the merchants resided at Macao, for their families were not allowed in Canton.

Cooper discovered, too, that Hong merchants were subject to frequent "squeeze" or graft by their own mandarins and the Hoppo, or Revenue Commissioner. Indeed, graft was considered a normal thing.

A week passed; a second wore along. An upriver boat brought a note from Mr. Brindle, the chief mate, that all was going handily with the *Martha;* yet Cooper presently found a trip to Whampoa imperative, having to decide certain cargo matters. He did not intend to lie at anchor for six months awaiting tea shipments, and so he accepted "chow-chow" or miscellaneous cargo, some silver and bar gold, porcelains and other articles.

Ling, hearing of the trip, chattered volubly about nothing that Cooper could determine, and seemed rather perturbed. One morning he asked if Cooper knew a gold-button or lower-class Mandarin named Li Ssu, or had ever heard of him.

"No," replied Cooper. "But why? Who is he?"

Ling Ting's pidgin English was far beyond his comprehension, and he could only gather that this Li Ssu was a scoundrel of the deepest dye, and that Ling meant to "fixum" in some manner. He forgot all about it, however. Some days later Cooper was discussing a large order of silk piece goods with his agent, when Old Tom, the chief linguist at the factory, summoned him to receive a visit from an official who had come unannounced with a guard of a dozen soldiers and had demanded his presence. Luckily Clark showed up to help in the translation, Old Tom having very little English.

"He says it's a bad business of some sort — this is a mandarin who commands a downriver fort. You seem to be an offender, he says."

Cooper had already mastered the puzzle of Chinese rank, "mandarin" merely being a Portuguese term applied to all public officials, whom the Chinese themselves called *kwun.*

With Clark at his side, he came to the room where sat the official in broidered robes of state, fan clicking — and learned that this was Li Ssu. Mr. Russell, the taipan or factory manager, was here, together with several of the merchants. Everything was formal and official; but until tea was served, no reason for the visit appeared. Li Ssu was a pinch-faced and arrogant person, and presently addressed Cooper at some length. Even before Old Tom could put the words into pidgin English, Clark murmured at Cooper's ear.

"Something has leaked, so think fast. He wants to know why you brought the Heavenly Roof or imperial cup here, and why you have collected chests of bar gold. He wants half the gold for himself, and hinted as much."

Except for the bars to come with his cargo, Cooper knew nothing of any bar gold, and said so emphatically. He ignored the matter of the cup, which he knew to be safely hidden in his bag. The implication that he was smuggling out gold, forbidden by imperial edict, caused a commotion. Mr. Russell spoke up heatedly, and things became warm as the other Americans joined in, while Li Ssu kept his gaze riveted on Cooper.

"*Kaou-tsze* — I announce my departure," he spat out abruptly, then rose and haughtily stalked out, in an obvious huff. Mr. Russell turned anxiously to Cooper.

"See here, old man — is there anything to the charge?"

Cooper smiled. "Of course not. Houqua has promised some bar gold for my cargo, that's all. I've never seen any. I wouldn't even know where to get any, myself. There's some mistake, of course."

A mistake — such was the general opinion, and the matter was dismissed as such. But after dinner that evening, Clark dropped into Cooper's room for a smoke.

"Something fishy about that visit today; nobody savvies it," he said. "Still, he mentioned the cup, and you and I know he meant your cup. Suppose Ling has let out any word about it?"

"I've sent for him, to ask that very thing — here he is now," replied Cooper, as a knock sounded, and Ling entered.

Clark fired rapid questions at him, and the comprador looked extremely flustered, then made a lengthy reply. Clark grunted.

"He denies flatly having talked; but he says much is happening under the surface. Seems mysterious, eh? He says Li Ssu was confidential secretary to Ta Yin — the father of T'ai Ho, you know — and caused his disgrace and execution. So, naturally, we must conclude that Ling is his mortal enemy. It's all mixed up, Captain. I don't fancy it."

LING would say no more, and soon left. His past tie-up with Li Ssu and with T'ai Ho's father pointed to intrigue, and Cooper did not like it. Nor did he particularly like the life here, which was one of luxurious self-indulgence. The white man had only to command, and everything was done for him; he need not turn over a hand — except to pay. A softening existence, and a ruinous one, thought Cooper, whose Yankee independence was strong. He was glad when Mr. Russell, next day, made a suggestion.

The *Martha* was heavy with weed and barnacles, and should be cleaned — which, with cargo difficulties, would keep her here for another two or three months. Cooper's business could be done for him by the comprador and Hong merchant, so why not remove to Macao, and be rid of restrictions? There he could rent a house, live freely and might see something of the country; several other Americans were there, too.

Cooper jumped at the idea, and discussed it with Clark and Ling Ting. The latter volunteered that he had connections in Macao, and could supply Cooper with a house there and with reliable servants for himself and Clark. Cooper assented on the spot. He liked Clark, trusted him implicitly and knew no one with whom he would rather live.

"Of course, you can return here whenever you like," said Clark. "Ling seems almighty eager about it; he's up to tricks, no doubt. These natives use us, remember; we never know what they're thinking or scheming, and what ulterior purposes they have. This feud, as I fancy it is, between Ling and Li Ssu, may be more important than we know. We may be actors in some drama unknown to us, which has sharp and terrible scenes — and I'd gamble that your 'plitty ittle sing' is vitally connected with them. So is her ladyship T'ai Ho."

Cooper remembered Clark's grave, thoughtful words — later.

SO it was settled, and application was made for a permit to visit the ship at Whampoa and go on to Macao — or "leave the country," as it was expressed.

Some days later the permit arrived — and it was brought by Li Ssu, who blandly announced himself as the agent supervising the trip, and that in two days he would bring a "fast boat" for Cooper's use. Cooper took an active dislike to the man's beady eyes, pinched features and utter arrogance. Li Ssu spoke at some length; and Old Tom, the official linguist, seemed greatly disturbed.

"Him mucho foolo," said Old Tom. "Wantchee ask im look-see Heavenly Roof cup."

Cooper's brows lifted; he was conscious of Li Ssu's intent look.

"My no savvy," he replied. "No can do. My no savvy cup."

Almost instantly Li Ssu broke into angry speech, and Cooper had the ridiculous idea that the man understood English perfectly. He remained blank and denied all knowledge of the cup.

Old Tom grunted uneasily. "Him say Ta Yin pidgin, bad chop-fo' you, maybe so lose head."

This was startling. The affairs of Ta Yin, father of T'ai Ho! Still, Cooper affected utter nonchalance and amused ignorance, whereat Li Ssu again made abrupt departure. That evening Cooper conferred at some

Clark murmured at Cooper's ear: "Something has leaked, so think fast. He wants to know why you have brought the imperial cup here, and why you have collected chests of bar gold."

length with Clark, who shook his head gloomily.

"Word has got out about the cup; that's sure; he's damned intent on it. Quicker we get out of here the better; I'm sorry that he's the one taking us, though."

No help for that. Cooper found the whole thing bewildering and disturbing. In his own room, he took out the little cup, lit his pipe, and feasted his eyes on the delicate artistry of the metal. Now, as always, it fascinated and puzzled him.

"Why are you sacred and valuable, and what's your inscription?" he muttered as he puffed. "Must be something exceptional. How the devil did this Li Ssu know about you?"

Ling Ting slid into the room, saw the cup, and bowed profoundly to it. From his sleeve he took a folded red paper covered with Chinese writing.

"You go Whampoa, please you give this chop T'ai Ho. Tellum my fix everything plopah belong gold."

"You fix everything proper about the gold — so you do know something about it!" said Cooper. "You rascal, I wonder if you've fixed me, too! What gold? Speak up, now!"

"Gold belong Ta Yin," said Ling.

"Her father's gold, is that it?"

"Belong him, long time back. Belong T'ai Ho now."

"Hello! You've been getting her some of her dead father's property, eh? And Li Ssu has found out about it—and he wants a good share, I'll be bound!"

"Him Numbah Ten chop," said Ling, implying the worst about the gold-button man. He looked at the cup, and his gaze softened. "Plitty ittle sing. You catchum junk at Whampoa, you give Li Ssu look-see, yes? Not befo'."

"Hm! When I reach my ship, show him the cup — is that what you want?"

LING assented emphatically. "Not befo'."

"And not before. All right, if you insist. But why?"

The other beamed. "My fixum plenty good, you see! This my pidgin."

Clark came in. Cooper had him repeat the message, to be sure he had it right.

"Correct," said Clark. "It's his business and not yours, he says. On reaching the ship and not before, show the cup to Li Ssu; no reason given. Trust him; he's crazy like a fox, this fellow. He's been getting Ta Yin's gold for his daughter too, and the blame's on you—the secret has slipped out. Maybe he's going to smuggle it downriver in your boat. Well, I'd say to do as he asks and see what happens."

Cooper agreed, not too enthusiastically, however....

When the "fast boat" arrived, under command of Li Ssu, it straightway became clear that the idea of gold being smuggled out was absurd. The departure was leisurely, and first a prolonged customs examination took place. Cooper, carrying the cup in his pocket, was not disturbed, but everything that went into the boat was checked off on the itemized list that accompanied the permit.

Li Ssu pretended no affability; he was strictly business. To reach the *Martha* and go on to Macao would take four or five days. The boat had a dozen paddlers, and a large comfortable cabin with two couches for beds and a table for meals. During the examination, Cooper noticed a boat lingering offshore — a large Government boat painted black and red. Later, he saw that it followed them at a distance when at last they got away, amid beating of gongs and exploding firecrackers to secure a journey safe from water-devils.

IT was noon when they got off, and a slower trip than the usual two-hour journey to Whampoa was predicted; this was the Chinese New Year season; the river was crowded with boats; and parades of all sorts were going on. So, once off, Cooper presently went down to the cabin. He was getting his personal effects arranged when he heard a step and looked around to see Li Ssu, who stood silent, watching him.

"Get out of here, you scoundrel!" snapped Cooper irritably. To his utter amazement, the other smiled thinly and uttered a single word that had the effect of a bomb.

"No."

Cooper stared, thunderstruck; the man did understand English — and spoke it! Those crafty pinched features, those cruel eyes, hinted danger, menace, hatred. Here was no chattering Cantonese, but a person from a higher *milieu*, composed and alertly disdainful. No slanted eyes either, but hard, brilliant, intelligent.

"You speak English?" blurted Cooper, stunned by the thing.

"Yes." Li Ssu opened his robe, and tapped the long pistols that hung at his belt. His voice was cold, precise, the words heavily accented but quite clear. "Cup; half the gold—at least three chests. Quick!"

With an effort, Cooper pulled himself together.

"I don't know what it's all about. I have no gold."

Li Ssu snarled. Anger leaped in his face; arrogance puffed him up; he blew out his breath shoved his head forward, and spat out four words.

"Foreign devil, you lie!"

Cooper lost his head; he whirled, with a blow that knocked Li Ssu back against the bulkhead. Recovering, the man stood with hands outspread, motionless.

"Get out of here," ordered Cooper.

"Maybe I kill you quick." Li Ssu spoke slowly. "Heavenly Roof cup —"

"Get out!"

Turning, the man departed, making no move toward his weapons.

Furious with himself, Cooper sat down, got out his pipe and filled it.

"Ezry Cooper, I'm ashamed of you!" he muttered. "Letting that fellow prod you till you act like a brawling drunk in a barroom!"

Puffing at his pipe, he relapsed into gloomy thought. There could be no double of that cup — Heavenly Roof, the Emperor theoretically being a roof over his people — given to Ta Yin, recognized both by his daughter and by Ling Ting. No, there was no mistake. The mystery about the gold was cleared up, too. Cooper took the cup from his pocket and thrust it deep into his bag. This, having been well searched, would probably be ignored now.

Clark came in. Cooper told him of the amazing talk and of his own action.

"Good Lord! You've certainly run into something!" said the other. "He's on deck now, acting as though nothing had happened. Yet we're completely at his mercy; that gold button on his cap gives him command, you know. I believe that man's the key to the whole enigma! You sit tight. Let me see what I can get out of him."

Cooper assented. Clark was not forceful, but his command of Chinese, his quick intelligence and pleasant personality, pointed to the wisdom of the suggestion.

"Do what you can, then. We know Ling was somehow getting his dead master's gold for T'ai Ho — but where is it? I'm all at sea."

"I think your best course might be to chuck the bloody cup overboard," Clark said, in departing.

COOPER merely grunted; not likely! His life at sea had been hard, devoid of beauty, bitterly practical. He cherished this odd bit of gold-plated bronze; now that it had assumed such astonishing importance, he clung to it. Used in sacrifice by the Emperor, they said; the Emperor meant nothing to him, nor the rite, but the cup itself had a personality, and he liked it rarely.

Apparently the thing had now got him into bad trouble; this had happened before, and in each case the cup seemed to have a connection with the solution of the difficulty. Mere superstition, of course; yet Cooper, like most men, fully intended to make the most of his luck.

His pipe finished, he sighed and went on deck, taking the seat beneath the awning. Clark clung like a burr

to Li Ssu, who was on the forward deck; they seemed to be deep in conversation. The floating population of the Pearl River was all around, and Cooper watched the scene, fascinated by sight of these crowded thousands, a sea of humanity in motion. Progress was very slow; they would not reach Whampoa until five or later.

At the Fragrant Hill fort, Li Ssu hurried ashore to get his permit "chopped," and Clark joined Cooper aft. He lit a cheroot and chuckled softly.

"We're getting somewhere. When I hinted that I might help him at a price, he talked. He does speak English of a kind, and understands it well. He's suspicious, and alive with greed, swollen with hatred of foreign devils. His father was one – an East India Company man—and his mother Chinese."

"Oh, a half-caste, eh? That explains much," said Cooper.

"Well, he's convinced that you have the gold, a lot of it, and he's on to you like a leech, Captain. He's wild to get that cup, too. So make up your mind to the worst. May have to give up the cup to get clear of him."

Cooper swore disgustedly. "Think I'd better show him the cup at all?"

"Absolutely. Don't fail. Ling Ting wants it done for some reason, and it may be important. Don't ask me why. These Chinks have their own way of working."

Cooper nodded; he trusted Clark rather than his argument. The gold – T'ai Ho's gold – and Ling and Li Ssu were all tangled up in his mind. "My fixum," Ling had said, but this did not impress him particularly.

When Li Ssu returned aboard, Clark went to join him. Cooper remained on deck for a space; once more he saw the red-and-black Government boat hanging about, but thought little of it, taking for granted that it belonged to Li Ssu. Progress was still amazingly slow, the water being solidly packed with boats.

At length Cooper went down to the cabin again. He spread out his papers on the table, getting the cargo lists ready for Mr. Brindle. He was absorbed in this when two of the crew came in. To his complete surprise, he suddenly found them on either side of him. He started to rise, but each man grasped one of his arms and held it firmly on the table; he was helpless almost before he knew it.

Then he saw Li Ssu walk in, smiling thinly. He relaxed and sat silent. The gold-button man came close, looked down at him, and spoke.

"Very brave, fight with hands, yes!"

So saying, he reached out and struck Cooper twice across the face—superficial blows that scarcely hurt, but evidently gave him vast satisfaction. He stepped back, lifted his voice, and another of the crew came hurriedly. This man, at a few words from Li Ssu, approached Cooper and frisked him, putting everything from his pockets on the table, even opening his tobacco pouch and dumping out the contents.

What he was seeking was plain enough to Cooper, who congratulated himself on being rid of the little cup, and offered no resistance. Indeed, he could not, being gripped fast.

Perceiving the search useless, Li Ssu waved the man away and came close.

"WHEN one seeks a song, there is no pleasure in perfumes," he said. "You talk. Where is cup?"

"Where you can't find it," Cooper said calmly.

"Maybe." The half-caste, watching him, produced a knife—a small, slim blade the length of a finger. It was nothing horrendous, but it looked deadly. He spoke softly, gently, fingering the blade.

"My make cut, little cut. You like fo' see eyes fall out, maybe? Hwa Ke eyes—Flowery Flag eyes—all same other men. Two cut each eye."

Involuntarily, Cooper tried to draw away, and Li Ssu smiled again, then leaned forward and reached out. Ezra Cooper wrenched his head back sharply; the third man grasped his hair and held him immobile. He felt the sharp point touch his cheek—but it did not approach his eye. It drew downward, an the skin parted. A warm drop of blood started forth. Li Ssu straightened up.

"Where cup?"

"It—it's aboard the ship," Cooper said thickly. "My ship."

"Your ship?" The other laughed scornfully. "No good your ship; China ship now, maybe. Li Ssu say you takeum gold bars, plenty soldier takeum ship. You no good."

Cooper began to think so himself. In the men's grip he was helpless. He could have cursed China and everything in it – but he was not given to cursing. One slim chance offered, and he grasped it.

"Aboard my ship," he said. "You want the Heavenly Roof cup—yes. When we reach my ship. Eh?"

Li Ssu drew back, a gleam in his beady eyes.

"Plenty good. You keep eye fo' this time. At ship, yes."

He had understood perfectly; the knife disappeared. He addressed his men. They wrenched Cooper to his feet, brought his wrists together and pinioned them with a thin silk cord pulled so tight that it sank into the skin. It was firmly knotted. The men drew away and Cooper sat down again.

"You strong foreign devil." Li Ssu touched the gold button in his cap, sign of his official position. "China more strong. You captain, my gold button; my eat you up plenty quick. Celestial Dynasty rules over ten thousand nations; respect and obey!"

Cooper shrewdly judged that this patter was meant for the ears of the men, who no doubt all understood pidgin English. These now departed to the deck, and Li Ssu followed. The American was left to his own reflections, which were not pleasant. That silk cord, biting more deeply at any movement, effectually held him captive with its acute pain.

Illustrated by Cleveland Woodward

Cooper lost his head; with a blow he knocked Li Ssu back.

"When one seeks a song, there is no pleasure in perfumes," he said. "Where is cup?"

Despite pleasant relations, Chinese did hold the whip-hand over foreigners, and Li Ssu knew this perfectly well. He wanted the Heavenly Roof cup, and he wanted the gold, which was pure fantasy, so far as the American was concerned. In sheer exasperation, Cooper was swearing under his breath when Clark came into the cabin.

"Here, cut me loose, blast it!"

To Cooper's fury, the other dissented.

"Not so fast, Captain. He thinks I'm with him and against you, but he has a pistol in each hand and is waiting to see what I do; he sent me down here. That devil is exultant and sure of himself. I'll free you quick enough when it's safe; meantime, let's use our heads a bit."

Cooper swore roundly, but he knew Clark was right.

"Well, get those papers off the table; cargo manifests for Mr. Brindle. I promised to give him the cup when we reach the ship. Once there, I'll teach the rascal what's what!"

"I'm afraid not," Clark said gloomily. "The men of the crew are armed. Li Ssu has told them to take charge of the ship when we reach it. A linguist will be there to translate, and your men will obey. Why did he tie you up?"

With an effort, Cooper calmed down sufficiently to recount the interview, and Clark frowned.

"Looks bad, Captain. At a pinch, we can get your men to show fight—"

"That's no solution. I can't lose the cargo and start a small war; it would be folly. You must remember those two women are aboard; Li Ssu must not find them. And he's convinced the cup is on the ship. He may be satisfied to take it and clear out—"

Clark brightened. "That's right! We can get a first-chop mandarin in to take him down a few pegs, too! Yes, submit and gain time."

"All right. I put the cup in my bag—right-hand side. You get it. And in my pocket is a letter to T'ai Ho which Ling gave me for her—the man who searched me missed it; he was after the cup. Inside coat pocket — that's right."

Clark located the paper, and then the cup, which he pocketed.

"Deliver the letter when able," went on Cooper. "As soon as we're aboard ship, get the cup into the main cabin—put it on the chart table. Ling said show it to him; we'll have to hand it over."

"My notion is that Ling Ting is up to something," Clark said thoughtfully, "so I still say to play his game. We know that Li Ssu is the heavy villain, which may mean a lot, and there's no telling what may happen."

"Poppycock!" sniffed Cooper. Still, he quieted Clark had a good head. Better to temporize, even lose the cup, than start big trouble. A high official would quickly put Li Ssu in his place. Nor could the two women be endangered.

"I'll attend to the cup and letter," said Clark. "Then it's capitulation?"

"For the present, yes. If the cup will satisfy him."

"Then I'll play up to him and try to keep things calm. We're getting along, so I'd better run. See you later."

Clark departed.

TIME dragged on. Cooper was in agony with his swollen, empurpled hands; he left his chair and went to the window, but could see little. Capitulation, yes; he had to submit. How did the half-caste know so much, about the gold, even? Was it by intention? The thought was startling, but he dismissed it with a shrug. Memory of T'ai Ho came to him; her features had something of the aristocratic grace and elegance so instinct in the cup.

The river-mouth widened, the boats were gone, the speed had quickened. The Whampoa anchorage lay ahead. Men came into the cabin and began removing the luggage. Two of them stood by Cooper; he loomed long and lank, scowling angrily at them. He was not naturally submissive and capitulation came hard. His mind was running on the possibility of calling to Mr. Brindle and his men, and teaching these insolent natives a lesson, when Clark came down with a hasty word

"We're almost alongside, Captain; the sun's going down. Here's our friend."

Li Ssu appeared and waved him out; the men all left except the two standing by Cooper. Li Ssu came up close to them.

"You stop here," he said, and returned on deck.

Cooper swore, and that was all he could do. He relaxed and waited. Ignorant of the language, in a small boat and unable to make appeal, he had no recourse except to keep quiet and see what happened. He was out of his depth and liked it not.

A shrill medley of voices resounded from the deck above; the boat slowed and came to a stop. Thought of being so helpless here, with his own ship and crew alongside, was maddening in the extreme. From the little window, Cooper saw the red-and-black Government boat at a distance, apparently heading past, oars dripping gold in the sunset. Feet stamped the decks, voices resounded, and Mr Brindle was uttering hearty oaths. Then Clark shouted, evidently for Cooper's benefit:

"Everybody obey, please! Easy now, Mr. Brindle—do as they want."

ALL commotion subsided. Presently Cooper was prodded by his guards. He emerged on deck to find the boat lying alongside the *Martha*; her gangway was out and Li Ssu stood at its head, with Clark. As Cooper mounted, he perceived that the crew and mates were all up forward. He set foot on his own deck once more, and his spirits lifted. Li Ssu had grouped his men there near the after companionway. Clark moved hastily and vanished below.

Cooper paused and looked forward. Mr. Brindle called to him:

"Anything wrong, sir?"

"No," he replied, with Li Ssu beside him, watching and listening. "Just keep the men quiet, Mr. Brindle. Don't interfere."

Stark folly, he thought to himself, feeling Li Ssu's touch and starting down to the cabins. There was the one chance to get action, and he had passed it up. He looked out across the water and saw the Government boat; another and smaller craft was now with her; he vaguely wondered why. Then he was down in the passage. Li Ssu was on the ladder, several of his men following. "My fixum," Ling had said; but he had fixed nothing. This arrogant half-breed, this low-class official with his gold button, was cock of the walk.

He led the way into the main cabin, hoping that the Chinese women would not pop out into sight—and then halted. Li Ssu and several of his men came crowding in; the half-breed halted and caught his breath. Clark had done his work. There on the chart table, in full sight, stood the tiny square cup.

Li Ssu stared at it, went up and touched it; now his pinched features were beaming with delight. Cooper glanced out the window, catching movement, and was surprised to see the red-and-black Government boat, with the smaller craft, close by and heading straight for the ship; then, before anyone could speak, there came sharp and deadly intervention. Two of Li Ssu's men came crowding in past the others, one of them calling out something which flung the others into consternation. Then the two went at Li Ssu and laid hold of him.

The half-caste moved with reptilian swiftness, baring his pistols, surprise and rage leaping in his face. The two men gripped him, and all three burst into vehement movement, with a flash of knives. It happened swiftly; a burst of voices leaped forth in shrill confusion and wild alarm; a pistol exploded, filling the cabin with choking fumes. The Chinese scattered and fled, and Cooper saw Li Ssu, pistol in hand, sink to the deck with knives plunging into him. One of his assailants had been shot; the other knifed him repeatedly.

Up above, the Government boat and its fellow had come alongside, and men poured up the gangway ladder. After them, more leisurely, mounted a splendidly attired figure, whose red button and peacock feather told that he was a mandarin of the highest rank, while the unicorn broidered on his robes announced that he was one of the highest military chiefs of the empire.

WITH prompt efficiency, his men rounded up scattered survivors of Li Ssu's party and sent them down to the Government boat as prisoners. The mandarin himself looked about, was joined by a linguist, and descended to the cabin. There he looked blandly upon the bloody scene, stirred the body of Li Ssu with his foot, and turned to Cooper. He shook hands with himself in greeting, ordered the linguist to free Cooper's hands, and paid no heed to the entry of Mr. Brindle, Mr. Tucker, and Clark. The latter forestalled the linguist in translating.

"He says that he regrets your plight, Captain, and that you have witnessed the ineffable justice of the Celestial Dynasty, upon a scoundrel unfit to live. My notion is that our friend Ling tipped him off and arranged everything."

Cooper bowed awkwardly to the mandarin, who stepped to the table and picked up the square cup and examined it attentively. Then he extended it to Cooper, who took it.

"Him say plitty ittle sing," said the linguist. "You keep, good luck joss."

"Thank him, Clark," said Cooper.

The mandarin, however, stayed not for thanks but took himself off, in stately dignity. Cooper found Mr. Brindle beside him, gripping his hand excitedly.

"What's happened, sir? What's it all about?" demanded the mate.

"Easy on my hand, blast you!" grunted Cooper. "What's happened? I guess we've sat in on the end of an involved bit of Chinese intrigue; tell you later. Clark, did you see the girl, T'ai Ho?"

"No, sir, they're gone."

"Gone? What the devil—"

"That's right, sir," put in Mr. Brindle. "Those women disappeared a couple days ago; must have gone at night. I suppose a boat slipped up and took 'em aboard. We found nothing in their cabin except this paper." He held out a scrap of paper bearing Chinese characters. At a gesture from Cooper, Clark took it and glanced over it. He looked up, chuckling.

"What'd I tell you, Captain? That fellow Ling certainly kept his word and fixed everything proper! This is from T'ai Ho. She says they'll meet you at Macao, and that several chests of bar gold await you there, with her compliments and thanks. That's all. I'd better run up and see if our fast boat is going with us."

He hurried to the ladder and disappeared. Cooper pocketed the cup and turned to Mr. Brindle.

"I have to go over some business with you and get off for Macao, looks like. I'm going to spend a while there while the ship's being cleaned. An hour or so here, then we'll get off. How's everything?"

"All right, sir—or was till you showed up," said the bewildered mate. Feet clattered, and Clark appeared quickly.

"The boat's waiting!" he exclaimed. "That mandarin has put a fresh crew aboard and says we'll have no further trouble. That letter Ling gave you for T'ai Ho must have been all a blind, eh?"

"Apparently." Cooper rubbed his tingling hands together. "Better get out those cargo lists and we'll settle our business with Mr. Brindle, then get off after supper."

MORE of the crew appeared; the cabin became a very busy place. Ezra Cooper borrowed some tobacco and stuffed his pipe. His bony, imperturbable features were serious and solemn as ever; but as he touched the weight in his pocket, his heart sang.

"Plitty ittle sing!" he thought. "Good name for you, all right. Bar gold waiting for me in Macao—and T'ai Ho. Hm! Ling certainly did fix things up. Guess I'd better get to work on my pidgin English—four days to Macao from here, plenty time to learn a lot. Maybe I'll be able to learn what that inscription is on the cup."

Whether his anticipations were exclusively occupied with inscriptions, however, might be a matter of some doubt.

The

A lot of human nature—and of raccoon nature—shines brightly in this brief story.

Illustrated by

Altamont Fur Farms,
Altamont, Idaho.

DEAR SIR: I read your ad in the outdoor magazine where you sell coons for people to raise and get rich, and wish to state if you have a big coon about 30 lbs. with a mean disposition and extra smart, I want him. If part of his left foot is missing, would take that one. It is not to raise for fur, the one I am thinking of was pretty old and the hide scarred up from fighting dogs. I do not wish to make money as in your ad, but will state what I need this coon for so as you will know what kind to send.

Four years ago there was something stealing eggs from me, and chickens, for which I set a trap and after catching several hens caught the fingers of a big coon who got away. I think this is what made him have such a bad disposition later. At that time I did not think no more about it like anybody would, but next winter began losing chickens and eggs and etc right and left and could not trap what it was. I thought a fox, a bobcat or coon being generly easy caught, and a coyote not so bold. Whatever it was throwed the traps and sprung them like a coyote or sometimes a fox will do, and finely got so bad I had to pen up my chickens, and a job to feed them because they used to come to the house and get fed and this saved me a number of steps every day.

Whatever it was could whip my dog, and did, which was more like a coyote or bobcat, before I could get there with the gun to help him. There was coon tracks of a 3 footed coon, but a coon will blunder into traps like a bear as you know, being in the business, so did not think it was a coon.

That spring I had some turkeys and lost a setting hen with all eggs under her 100 yards from the house. Killed the turkey and carried her off, a big hen. I had 2 more turkeys setting and knew would have to get this robber or lose them too, but I lost them too. No matter how careful I set the traps, he smelled them out and throwed same, all kinds of sets, and will now admit I thought it was maybe not an animal at all but a man or worse, and was nervous to think of it outside at night.

Next spring I bought 2 turkey hens which set in bad weather, and in a skift of snow I saw tracks of this 3 footed coon where he had throwed my traps. A coon is generly not so smart about traps as you know in your business. I made every kind of a set, bait and scent and runways and blind sets and campfire sets, and the old rooster set where you stake out a rooster and ring him around with traps, that never fails but it did and I lost the rooster.

I wore myself out hunting every night with a light and gun and the dog to tree the coon, and we treed other coons and porcupines and 2 bobcats, but this coon was able to whip dog and would not tree anyhow, and after he worked over the dog a couple times the dog would not tangle with him any more, but follow along yelling for help and I would run through the brush and etc but never caught up, and often got bruised running into things and trees and falling down, and the up-shot was I lost both turkeys and their clutches of eggs. It still agervates me to think about it.

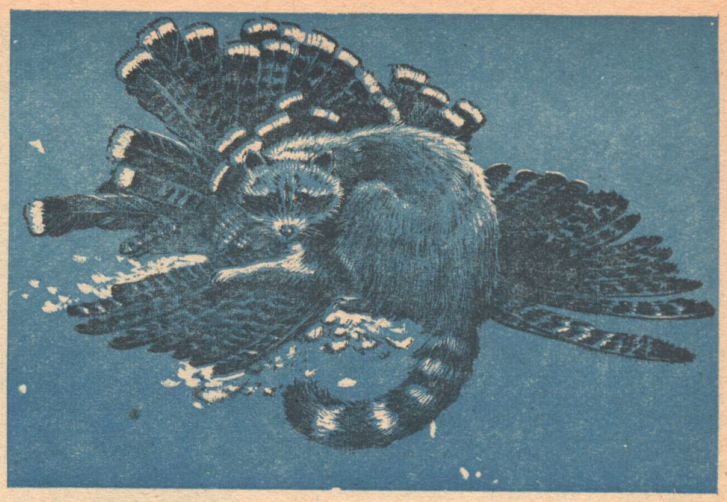
WILL state I was not turning the place over to no coon and let him run it no matter how smart, without putting up a fight, and went out every night hunting him in all kinds of weather. In summer he stopped coming in and I got some rest at night which I needed while harvesting and etc, and thought about what I would do if he came back next fall.

When the apples ripened I found the 3 footed track all around the house like he was daring me and the dog to

Bandit

by OWEN CAMERON

Charles Chickering



come after him, and some nights the dog took on so I got up at midnight and went out in my drawers with the gun and light, and every night before turning in would make a round after him but it was just like before. I bought 5 turkeys at Christmas and ate one from a neighbor who had a hound dog who came over New Years, but the coon whipped his dog. Next week came back with his brother-in-law and another dog and we went out and tried again, and they caught up with the coon, which got away, and his brother-in-law's hound cut up pretty bad. They swore it was no coon but a big bobcat, and when I showed them the 3 footed track got mad and we have not spoke since.

THE dog and me went out every night rain or shine. My dog got so he would not fool with any other coon or porcupines or anything else, but would circle till he picked up the track we wanted and then holler for me. The coon led us through the creek bottom and the worse kind of brush and poison oak and once a yellow-jacket's nest like it was on purpose, which I believe he did.

When I finely got to bed nights I would dream of the coon and the dog likewise, by the way he whined and twitched. All day I would try to figure out ways of trapping him. On account of how turkeys hide their nest I only located 2, but because of keeping the coon pretty busy he only got 3, which I saved one hen who brought off 7 poults whicl. was encurging.

That was a year ago this spring. Last summer the coon left me alone as usual and being busy with planting, haying and etc would not had time to fool with him anyhow, though I do not see how he could know this, and likely was only off after frogs while the water was low. All summer I tried to figure ways to catch him in order to raise turkeys and asked around of all my neighbors for advise, and one I never liked anyhow showed me how to poison an egg with a vetrinary needle, which I did not think it would work with so smart a coon, and another wanted me to build a deadfall.

The 3 footed coon came back last fall like always, and me and the dog went after him every night again, and it was the same. He would give us a run for our money, and then when he was tired shake the dog, though I expect the excersise was good for us the way you lay around in winter, though at the time did not see it that way. In February the turkeys begun to lay except one the coon got before she had a chance. The first nest I found. I poisoned an egg, and was much surprised when it fooled him, and he died. The dog found him dead, the biggest coon I ever saw. I skinned him out and stuffed him, and except for bulges looks natural, but not the same thing as when he was alive.

SO you see why I wish to buy a coon and what kind. I could send the stuffed one if you will try to see if you have one that size and all except for the bulges, but the main thing is one too smart to get caught, as I do not seem to know what to do with myself nights since I got out of the habit of the radio or visiting neighbors, or the dog either, which whines and coaxes till I take the light and gun for a turn around the place but only for the walk, as you might say, and no pleasure in it for either of us. The congress should pass a law about poison. If you will send a coon as described would pay what you ask and thankful. I could always buy a turkey or 2 for setting in the spring if I did not save any the year before.

Yours truly,
Chas. P. Moon.

A STORY OF PARIS TOLD BY A FRENCH POLICE OFFICER ON A LITTLE AFRICAN RIVER STEAMER COMES STRANGELY BACK TO THREATENING LIFE IN NEW YORK.

Lady *with*

A GOOD eight years before I was born, a Levantine gentleman in Paris was short the price of his steamship passage to the United States. I heard about the gentleman and his personal method of raising funds some twenty-eight years later, on a lagoon steamer in West Africa. Twelve years after that, I was invited for dinner at a mansion in the New Jersey hills. And perhaps sixteen hours after that dinner, in my own apartment in Brooklyn, I looked into the muzzle of an automatic pistol.

That appears very complicated and disconnected. As a matter of fact, it was quite simple cause and effect. It was something else that happened about a month ago which disappointed me and made me really bitter about the whole business. . . .

So far as I am concerned, it started aboard the small lagoon steamer *Adjame*, at the port of Dabou, Ivory Coast. Dabou was not much of a place—two or three trading factories, four or five bungalows for Europeans, a couple of dozen native huts; aside from that, considerable vegetation simmering in the moist heat of the tropics.

I had boarded the ship that morning at the eastern end of the Grand Lahou Canal, which connects two lagoons and sounds very important but is hardly twenty feet wide at most, and practicable only for native canoes and small, small boats. The *Adjame* was very small herself, with a little dining-room, salon and narrow cabins. But it was very comfortable and clean, and the food was wonderful. I had retired for the night, and I was smoking in the upper berth, in the dark. In the dark—because at Dabou, clouds of gnats blanket any light inside a minute. They don't bite; they don't sting; they just gather. Discovering that light also means heat, they light on one's perspiring skin in layers, and seek to die in your mouth, nostrils and eyes.

The ship was taking on cargo, casks of palm oil, bags of kernels, produce of various sorts. On the little wharf, on the decks, people were shouting; booted and naked feet trampled; machinery puffed and creaked. The place smelled of acrid oil, fresh slime and decayed leafage.

Native porters stopped at the door, which was held open by a brass hook, and dropped pieces of baggage in my cabin. A man followed, tipped them. He did not switch on the light, so I could not see what he looked like, save that he was tall and rather beefy. From his voice, I knew he was French; and from both voice and movements, I guessed him to be middle-aged or beyond. He sank on the settee, grunted, and stripped to his underwear rapidly, then slid into the lower berth.

For a few moments, he stirred around uneasily. The night was very hot, the forest intercepting whatever air was moving. And the noise continued. Finally he lighted a pipe—I could tell that by the strong smell—then reached out for a bag. There was the sound of a drawn cork, the click of glass on glass. Then he spoke.

"Say, up there, care for a drink?"

"Certainly. Thanks."

There was some more fumbling and clicking; then a hand lifted to my level, outlined in the lighter patch of the open door. It was holding a big tumbler, which I took. We exchanged good wishes courteously, and I took the first swallow. It was neat cognac, a whole glass of it. This chap did not go in for small doses, obviously.

"Fine stuff," I remarked—as one more or less has to.

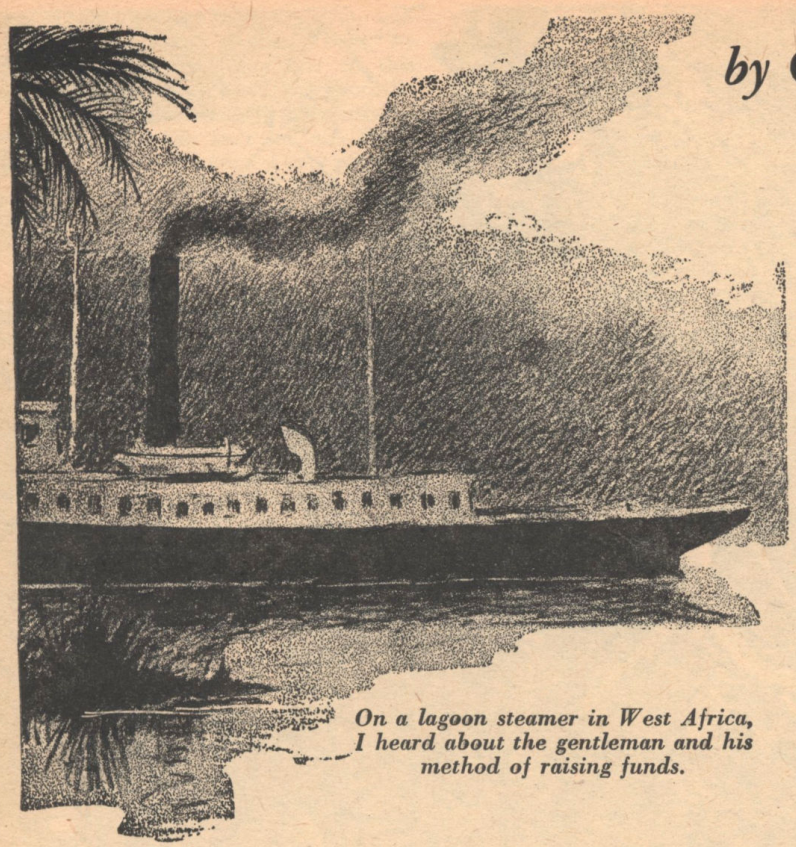
"Not bad, eh?" He named a brand and a year. There was a pause; I heard him refill his glass. I coughed on my drink. "You're quite young, aren't you?" the man resumed. At the time I thought that a serious accusation, but I gave him my age. He asked: "What do you do out here?"

I told him. He asked a lot of questions. I understood later that this man could not help asking questions. It was more or less his business. And he had a queer way of snorting faintly, as if with satisfaction, as if his suspicions were confirmed, that turned out also to be professional.

"And what do *you* do?" I asked in my turn.

My examination, probably carried out automatically, had consumed some time. The ship had swung away from the wharf; the engine was turning over steadily. There was the rustle of water outside, like thick silk tearing fast, and there were all those busy, comforting sounds of a vessel under way. I was feeling that cognac, and growing curious.

"Commissioner of Police," he replied. "Been up the river on a judiciary commission. Some chap blew



On a lagoon steamer in West Africa, I heard about the gentleman and his method of raising funds.

the Checks

by GEORGES SURDEZ

Illustrated by Maurice Bower

out his brains a couple of weeks ago, and as there is some mix-up as to his estate and stuff like that, his family cabled that inquiries be made. So they sent me from Bingerville. The thing happened on a mahogany concession — nothing unusual. Business was not so good; he'd rowed with his partner, and he got bad news from his wife, or rather about his wife. Too much booze, and a minute of depression. You know."

"Who was it?" I asked.

He told me. I had known the man; I had visited his place.

"He was pretty jittery," I said. "Been out four years without leave."

"Must have been jittery." The man below chuckled: "His partner told me about it. The local administrator had checked on the servants already. The chap arose in the middle of the night, roused his boy to prepare a bath, shaved, washed, put on his best clothes, white pants, tuxedo, dress shirt and collar. Then he sat in an easy chair, held a shotgun under his chin and used a walking-stick to work the trigger!

"He was English, you see, and very formal. The other chap tells me that the detonation woke him up; and after he had lighted the lamp—which our friend had carefully blown out—he thought he was going nuts. You see, he could only see his partner's feet at first, and they were in dress shoes, you know, patent leather. And he wondered what the fool was doing, at three in the morning, in a forest bungalow, with dress shoes on!"

"That's a funny one!"

"Oh, one gets used to it. I remember one chap, a deputy to the Chambers, who hanged himself before a full-length mirror, wearing a naval officer's uniform, complete to peaked cap. And he had served in the line infantry, not in the Navy."

"Where did that happen?"

"In Paris. I started with the Paris police, you see, thirty years ago. I could put in for my pension."

He was silent for long minutes after that. I had drained my tumbler and tucked it in where it would not fall. I was half-asleep when he scratched a match to relight his pipe.

"Awake? Care for a drink?"

"Certainly. Thanks."

I lowered the tumbler, which was returned full.

"You say you've lived in America?" he resumed. "Well, I went there myself—must be nearly thirty years ago. My chiefs sent me because I speak English fairly well. Liked it very much. Might have stayed there, but I had just married, and decided to play it safe. The police is a good career. Doesn't pay much, but you're protected. I didn't even think I'd make the upper ranks, either." He stopped to swallow. "I went in connection with the Constantin Rangoulis case." He waited a few seconds, then asked: "Doesn't mean anything to you?"

"No."

"It would if you were ten years older. I'll bet your parents would know at once."

"Big case?"

"Sensational, *une cause célèbre.* Rangoulis was a tall, very handsome fellow, perhaps thirty-three or -four years old. He'd been born in Asia Minor, but he had lived most of his life in Egypt and in Italy. Wonderful linguist, as many of those chaps are—spoke eight or nine languages very fluently—but couldn't write ten words correctly in any of them.

"He'd been everything, from dishwasher to business agent—in reality, no real profession, a tinkerer. He had been in trouble at various times, nothing very bad. He had come to Paris to make his fortune, and because of his good looks and assurance, women of a certain age, lonely, were his natural prey. But there was competition to be reckoned with in Paris. And winning the affection of a woman needs a preliminary outlay—you can't ask her to foot the bills right off the reel, can you?

"Rangoulis had a run of bad luck, and went broke; his clothing became shabby. It's a vicious circle; one cannot borrow large sums of money if one looks seedy; one looks seedy if one has no money. Good feminine prospects are not approached on the street, while wearing rags, but in expensive hotels. So, Rangoulis started to work his way up again, almost from the beginning. He found a lady who worked in a *couturier's* establishment. She was forty-odd, almost fifty, and not what you'd call well-rounded or fresh of complexion.

"But what would you do? He went to live in her small flat, on a poor street. He told her that he had good

"He found a treasure—rich, gullible, young."

business prospects, if he looked prosperous. She outfitted him, and he frequented the luxury hotels again. At one time he had been a sutler, or an interpreter, with the British Army in some colony. He used the name of Captain Michel Ranglan—it was much easier in those days, when passports were not needed save for Russia and Turkey.

"Well, he found a treasure, the ideal provider. She was very rich, very gullible and—unhoped-for advantage—very young. Seventeen, not quite eighteen. She was visiting Europe with her parents—Americans, you understand. Naturally, she wished for excitement, romance. Rangoulis—his photographs are there to prove it—was a strapping, bronzed, handsome man. . . . She was a fool, you say?"

But I had not said anything. The cognac had lulled me into a good state for listening: his voice seemed to float to me out of nowhere; yet his words were recording themselves somewhere in my brain as if they were being cut on a wax record.

"A fool, eh?" he grunted. "That's soon said. People say that about very rich young girls who fall for charlatans, fakes and fortune-hunters. What people forget is that they are not only rich, but they are little girls without experience. If a rake, a man who has had a hundred affairs, starts in pursuit, what chance have they, those girls? They are amateurs, novices, pitted against professionals. It's like pitting a lad who's never held a cue against a billiards champion. Or it's like putting a three-weeks-old mouse

against a three-year-old tomcat. Do you not agree?"

"Exactly."

"He was careful to avoid her people. And before long, she was so involved that there wasn't much to do about it. Remember, she believed him to be a British Army captain, with medals, waiting for an inheritance. Like all really great men, in any line, that chap knew his weakness. When he wrote her, he copied whole lines out of English novels—it must have been work to cull the sentences to apply to exactly what he wished to say. But he knew that his own use of English, his grammar, his spelling, would be surprising to her.

"With others, he had played only for money. But with her, he played for big stakes—marriage, an assured situation, an income for life. It may very well happen that he loved her. In any event, while she was in France, she never knew that he was on the ragged edge, that he had to plead and coax with his old 'protectress' for twenty francs to take the girl into a fashionable pastry shop for cakes and tea. She did not know that the address to which she mailed her notes was a fake, that he tipped the janitress of a handsome building to hold mail for him.

"He could not marry her in France. The laws there were too rigid, called for complete identification. But he knew that in America, young though she was, a marriage could be managed without parental signatures. Knowing such details was part of his business—you could have awakened him out of a sound sleep any given night and asked him: 'What are the penalties for deceit in marriage in Iceland'—and he could have given you the right answers. Ah, he was thorough and knew his limitations.

"He knew also that her family was important enough to fear the publicity of a scandal in America. That even if the marriage were not quite legal, there would be no open trouble—and later there would be a sizable settlement in cash.

"The girl accompanied her parents home, of course. And he did not do the simple thing, so fearful was he of spoiling his game, by asking her for his passage money. In a way, he underestimated his charm for her, as you will see, and thought that she would drop him if she found out he was not a British officer but a penniless adventurer.

"He remained in Paris. And he set out to gather funds needed for the passage—and for a few days of luxurious living. He made little memo's in a notebook, listing fare, tips, hotel—even the cost of marriage licenses in the different States. This was his big chance; he must not muff it.

"In a way, his efforts, which we traced later during the investigation, were touching, pathetic. His mature girl friend did not have savings sufficient to cover what he wanted. Even with decent clothing and that faked good address, he could not quite make it. Once, within a rather small sum of the figure he had set as a minimum, he grew impatient and tried to rush matters by gambling. He lost all he had, and had to start anew.

"Months passed. He took a step forward, slid back two. He pawned good clothing to get a stake for another try at betting. He lost, of course. Perhaps his nervousness affected his technique, or perhaps his greed and his impatience showed and alarmed his chosen targets. All he could glean from fascinated women was a gold coin here, and a fifty-franc bill there. You know, perhaps he was really in love, for he certainly fumbled his affairs clumsily during those bitter months."

HE ceased speaking; I thought he had gone to sleep, and was dropping off myself when he resumed and startled me awake.

". . . probably in a hotel lobby, a lady no longer young, no longer very beautiful, but evidently prosperous. Her professional name was Héloise de Berouvel; her real name was Clara Leseau. She had one very rich and semi-official protector, and a couple of assistant-protectors, much poorer. But she had been serious, thrifty; she had acquired money and valuable jewelry. Whether she considered Rangoulis a gigolo or a prospect was never quite clear.

"But he killed her one fine night, with a butcher knife he had bought for the purpose. When one thinks of his size, his strength, one wonders that he did not strangle her, neatly, bloodlessly, by hand or with a length of rope.

"With others, he had played only for money. But with her, he played for big stakes —marriage, an assured situation. This was his big chance; he must not muff it."

"He had noted where she kept her cash and jewelry. He forced a drawer. Then something horrible occurred—

"You will ask me: Horrible, more horrible than killing that woman with a butcher knife? Yes, for if that killing was grisly enough, it had been done on purpose—it was, shall we say, logical? Possibly, Rangoulis had not even known that the victim's middle-aged maid slept in a room of the apartment, instead of in the servants' quarters under the tiles. The maid heard him moving about, came out in her nightshirt to investigate.

"Rangoulis saw her in the mirror of the dressing-table he was searching for more stuff. She backed away toward her own room, shocked into silence. He followed her, having picked up his tool. She had seen his face; she could identify him. What could he do? He leaped upon her, struck her several times, and she collapsed to the floor. Dead.

"It must have been like a nightmare for him. As the woman fell, he heard a scream. There was a little girl, seven or eight years old, in the bed—the maid's daughter. There was a lighted lamp, and she had seen his face; she could describe him, recognize him. She was old enough to see clearly and to talk clearly. In any case, she was screaming, and his nerves were tense. What could he do? He leaped forward, struck. He killed that child.

"In the eyes of an ordinary man, that made him several times worse than if he had perpetrated only the first murder. He was not worse—he was merely an assassin.

"After that, did he have the good sense to run out at once? No. He tried to set the stage to throw suspicion on someone else. That is always a bad mistake. Because, once the police realize that the stage has been set, everything becomes a clue. Just as a complicated alibi, once broken down, becomes an accusation and a proof of guilt. After that, it was routine stuff. He was so nervous that he babbled incoherent stories to his elderly flame. He lost his head and abandoned her, fled Paris. He stopped in a seaport, had to wait for a steamer —a clever man would have made a schedule of sailings, eh?—and as he could not bear to be alone and was in no condition to 'work,' he went to see

girls. He presented them, or sold them, whether you take his version or theirs, with items of jewelry that were described in police circulars.

"He was picked up very soon.

"Of course, he denied everything stubbornly, told yarn after yarn. But we crowded him into a confession step by step. We found his mailing address; we found his collection of letters. And we found the motivation, the immediate motivation, for the crime. There was a letter from the unfortunate young girl in America. She confessed that she had been more or less engaged to be married before she had met the handsome captain, to a family friend, a very wealthy young man. Her parents were beginning to suspect the reason for her present reluctance. He must come to her at once.

"We also found close to a hundred love-letters, extremely passionate and frank. Of course, her name became known to a number of people, the policeman working on the case, the examining magistrate. It is certain that reporters must have learned it. But the authorities in charge asked that nothing harmful to the 'mystery fiancée' be mentioned in the press, that no clue be given the public.

"Today, secrecy would be impossible. But the press at that time was not the cold instrument it has become, did not sate popular curiosity, did not cater to unhealthy things. Do you know, it is cheering to think that a large group of Frenchmen tacitly protected the honor and happiness of a young woman who had done nothing save yield too easily to the emotions and impulses of her sex and age. The criminal, advised by his lawyer, kept his mouth shut about her. Even during the sensational trial, her name was not mentioned.

"What is not generally known, however, is that the French police had to concern itself with her later. Our agents in America had questioned her privately, as delicately as possible to cause no scandal, no gossip. Then what happens? She writes to the killer's lawyer, suggesting that he organize an escape for Rangoulis! She encloses a letter to be slipped to him, proclaiming her love for him, despite all he had done, with some surprising references to the past and some even more surprising hints for the bright future. She would meet him anywhere he took shelter!

"THE lawyer was in a tight spot. There was professional secrecy, true. But here was a gentleman more concerned for her safety than she was herself. He felt that if he merely returned the check with a curt refusal, she might approach some shabby character or other, achieve nothing and leave herself open to endless blackmail. I don't know quite how it was worked out between lawyer, judges, police. But I was sent to America, to interview the girl's father.

"A man from the Consulate came with me to his office, and he told me later it had been his worst experience in a long career—and consular officials get to handle some queer cases. The old gentleman had learned, naturally, of his daughter's friendship with Rangoulis. But he did not realize how far that friendship had taken her. The letter to the lawyer, the check—which she had tricked him into giving for another purpose—stunned him. He did not believe us, at first, and wanted to punch us. Then a doctor had to be sent for.

"That was only a beginning. The police do not go in for unsolicited benevolence; so to justify my trip and expenses, I had orders to interview the girl and ask routine questions connected with the case. This took place at the family home. It was amazing. She was as cool and offhand as can be. She was really something too—tall, slender, a magnificent body and ravishing face. She had been spoiled, obviously, and did not have the least understanding of the situation.

"You might have thought that her parents, myself, the French Republic, were engaged in a conspiracy to annoy her and separate her from her lover. She asked me how much money would be needed to clear him, how much compensation the relatives of the victims expected. She treated her people like doddering old fools, and me like a lackey. I got angry and told her in French (which her parents did not understand well) that unless she changed her attitude and took advice, I would be forced to permit official action through the Consulate about her attempt to bribe jailers.

"Her family sent her somewhere for a while, supposedly for her health. Some three years later, I read in a newspaper that she had married, probably the rich and handsome fiancé. And just as in the fairy tales, she probably lived happy ever after.

"Rangoulis was sentenced to death. I saw the end, on a nasty, foggy morning, outside the prison's gates. I hand this to him—if I ever have to die publicly, I hope I perform as well. He'd become pretty thin, and the preliminary haircut did not improve his appearance. But he walked firmly, half-smiling, as if absent-minded."

The engine chugged down below, bells tinkled. The man in the lower berth grunted and sighed. A match scratched and flared. The strong smoke of his pipe rose. He was silent for a moment, then went on: "I've seen a lot of executions, both guillotine and shooting—"

He talked on; anecdote followed anecdote.

When I awoke, it was daylight. I was alone in the cabin, but the baggage was still there. The man had had the thoughtfulness to remove the empty tumbler from the corner near my pillow. I dressed, went to the dining-room and had breakfast. We were tied up at the dock, in Abidjan. Everyone of the passengers had gone ashore for a walk. I finished my meal and did the same. I ran into an acquaintance who asked me to stay over the week-end. I did, sending for my bag.

So I never knowingly saw the man's face, never really knew even his name. He went on with the boat to Bingerville. I intended to look him up, thank him for the drink and the stories. But the colonies are the colonies. Other things happened; I forgot. He remains but a bulky, slow-moving shape in the obscurity, a voice and a hand holding up a tumbler.

In the course of time I left the Ivory Coast; and Dabou, the clouds of gnats, the deep, slow voice in the darkness, merged into a vague mass of memories.

YEARS passed—ten, eleven, twelve. In the course of my work, while doing research on the France of 1870-1900, I came across a number of references to the Rangoulis case. One book contained an almost complete record of the trial. I knew that the name of the man on the lower bunk must be somewhere among the long list of witnesses, but although he had appeared to talk carelessly, he must have been instinctively careful, for I could not positively identify him. He had told me the truth, however, for although there were frequent mentions of *la jeune fille Américaine,* no clue was given as to her name or residence.

Then, one night, I went to a Brooklyn Athletic club to see amateur boxing bouts. My host sat at my right; and on my left was a man of twenty-eight or thirty, very big and muscular, handsome in a blond boyish way, who unconsciously blocked and punched as he watched the fights. He sported a tin ear and sundry old scars; and during a lull, I asked him if he was a fighter. He laughed.

"No, a broker. The marks? Football." He grunted and sighed. "I'm crazy about those little guys. Pound for pound, fellow, they hold more scrap and pep than the big ones."

"Just looks that way," I protested.

"Well, name a heavyweight with the aggressiveness and rush of Terry McGovern—"

"Dempsey, when he was hot. John L. Sullivan—"

"Corbett took care of him."

The process is familiar; we had to continue our conversation after the bouts, at the bar. We had both seen

"The maid came out to investigate. . . . She had seen his face; she could identify him. What could he do?"

Dempsey knock out Carpentier and Firpo. He told me where and when and how he had played football. We had a few drinks. He called me by my first name, and I called him Ted. He asked me about myself, and I told him, copiously. At one point, he leaned a big hand on my shoulder, his eyes full of affection and hope.

"You talk French? Say, did you ever hear of a guy named Maurice—well, Maurice—Magré?"

"Sure," I assured him.

"No kidding?" Ted considered me with admiration. "I thought she'd made that name up." He grew skeptical. "Who's he? Can you tell me what he does?"

"Writes. French writer. Good, in his way. I've seen historical sketches, essays. His books have a sort of a mystic twist. There's a fair one about a tiger and his mysterious soul—"

"That's it. You mean you actually read him?"

"A good many people have, you know."

"Eh—" He paused as he glanced at the clock, compared it with his wristwatch, to announce solemnly: "This is Tuesday." He brooded about that for a moment. "Are you doing anything tomorrow night?"

"Nothing in particular, no."

"Will you come with me and have dinner with some swell people? I know the daughters. The old lady is crazy about French stuff. Last week, she was hot about this Maurice Magré. Looked like she thought us a lot of dummies for not knowing all about him. She talked a lot about that tiger story, and about a book about prophets—"

"'The Illuminated,' or initiated?"

"That's it. You've got to come."

I THOUGHT he'd forget all about it, doubted he would even remember my name. But he was on the phone at three o'clock the next afternoon, and he asked me to pick him up at his office at five. He gave me a Wall Street address. I took the subway. I was due for my first start. Ted was not merely an employee; he had his name on the glass panels, and you could have used his office for a billiard parlor. Shining wood, thick rugs, oil paintings, thermos bottles on the desk, and so on.

We walked to the ferry and crossed the river. A big car was waiting for him. We rolled off.

"Say," Ted started with a shade of embarrassment, "I better tell you something: The old dame is sort of stuck-up, because she writes things for some bughouse mystic society. I told her I happened to mention her name, and that you said you'd like to meet her. Okay?"

"Okay. By the way, what's her name?"

"Mrs. Smithway."

"First name?"

"Marjorie."

"I am very interested in her writings, and want to meet her."

"And if you can trip her up, all the better. She's just a pain. Noble ancestry, you know, on her side, both French and English blood. Intellectual. And she's got the kid—the one I like—sold on holding out for intellect. Now, you know about this guy she gushes over—"

"And I'm an example of what it does to you?"

"Quit kidding."

We reached our destination, a mansion set back in a sort of private park. I was introduced to a lot of people and handed a drink. By a butler, without exaggeration! I was somehow uneasy. While I am not at all impressed by money, the obvious evidence of a lot of it makes me wistful. Fortunately, I was not the only man present who did not wear a dinner jacket. I met my host, Mr. Smithway, tall and dignified, who bore a vague resemblance to the late President Harding. I bent over the smooth hand of my hostess, also tall, also dignified, who looked like a cinema duchess. She must have been a very spirited and handsome woman in her day; and some coals glowed among her ashes.

The preliminaries were normal; there was the usual mob effect, teeth glittering in acknowledgment of your name, and handshakes of varying pressures. Ted watched over me; and before long, I knew that the people around me were really very simple, friendly folks.

The dinner table was lighted with candles. But Mrs. Smithway had been around and knew her stuff: there was enough light. It is true that Louis XIV dined by candlelight, but by the light of hundreds of candles, *a giorno*. I like to see what is on my plate—possibly because of some places I have had occasion to eat in; and I detest to peck at food lurking in anonymous dark blotches in a dim, flickering light suitable to a robbers' cave.

Nobody needed to tell me they had a French cook. Even the concessions to American tastes were carefully handled. The food was worth the trip. Prohibition was dying, but still alive. But there was a row of glasses before me. I resisted the temptation to play chimes on them with a knife-handle. I meant to prove worthy of Ted's trust. Until I became accustomed to the *ambiance*, I played the part of a good-natured, smiling mute. Most of the conversation might as well have been carried on in Hindustani, for all I understood. I didn't know anything about anyone, anything about the activities.

After dinner Ted parked me beside Mrs. Smithway, left me after recommending me highly. I started the conversation in French, which the lady spoke very correctly, with little accent, but very carefully, as if she were chipping precious stones into shape. Things started to warm up a bit when I mentioned that I was reading up on the Gay Nineties in Paris.

Mrs. Smithway had an enormous amount of valuable information; she had lived in France for months at a time; she remembered prices, the interior decorations of famous hotels and restaurants, things about horse cabs and buses, coaches, coachmen, scandals, race meets. I shamelessly shared her nostalgic regrets for an era I had never known, the days before the French had taken to bustling in business like all other people.

OTHERS joined us after a while, attracted by her laughter. She loved to talk about the Paris she had known, and in the soft light seemed twenty—well, fifteen—years younger. The French were so unforeseen, in the past, such gentlemen—truly it had been like living in a Dumas novel. She mentioned duels between famous men, officially for politics, privately for the same old reason. All in the know knew; the populace never got a hint.

Without thinking twice, I launched into the story of Rangoulis and his American sweetheart, to illustrate the discretion of the press. I made the easy comparisons, pointed out that in modern days there would have been *montage* photos on the front pages of the tabloids. It turned out that one of the gentlemen present, a fine white-haired chap, had been remotely connected with a sensational local murder, simply because one of the victims had been employed in his home for some time. That had been more than ten years ago, but he was still very bitter about the intrusion into his private life, not so much by policemen as by reporters.

"I happened to be in the clear," he proclaimed, "and all it really brought me was some heavy-handed kidding at my golf-club. But suppose they had been able to dig up scandal? My reputation would have been ruined. It would not have affected my business, no. But I would have been dropped from a number of activities I enjoy. Because, say what you like, if one is mixed up in a scandalous case, people pretend to understand and condone, but you understand—"

"Yes, that's right," I nodded. "Suppose that woman's name had been printed; it would have been quite impossible for her to marry and remain in the same community. No matter what a man is willing to accept privately, for his sake and that of his

children, he cannot let it be known that he was second choice to a murderer in the intimacy and heart of a woman."

The white-haired gentleman chuckled harshly.

"And imagine having someone you know guillotined—"

"Eh," I protested, "practically all of the French nobility counts ancestors who met the guillotine."

"That's different," he countered, illogically. . . .

I slept late the next morning. I had returned at four-thirty, tired out, stuffed with food and dizzy from drink. Someone, not Ted, had driven me to the ferry, and I had had a dreary trek home. I did not know whether I had made the impression on Mrs. Smithway that he had intended me to make. Somehow we had lost track of each other after that prolonged chat. Mr. Smithway had shaken my hand warmly and asked

"Don't go," she said, rising. The mad old lady was pointing a pistol! "You'll sign the check," she said.

me to drop in any time. Mrs. Smithway, I seemed to remember, had been rather chilly and short. It must be remembered that the man in the lower berth was many years in the past, and that I had no reason then to establish connections. . . .

There was a steady rapping on my door. Not too light, not too discreet. There was a push-bell downstairs, but it never worked. Which had its good and its bad sides. I looked at the clock. It was fifteen minutes past one. I got up slowly, put on a bathrobe. I was not in the least alarmed. I thought it was the janitor wishing to borrow a half-dollar. I lived in that kind of place.

I opened the door—and came face to face with Mrs. Smithway!

"Good morning, madame," I said.

She looked at me, as I tried to smooth hair on the sides of my head. She did not smile; she did not reply. In the daylight, the wrinkles and blotches showed mercilessly. The face was old, but the tall silhouette was trim, shapely in a tailored suit.

"Let me in," she snapped at last.

"I beg your pardon—I am still half-asleep. Come in—sit down. May I mix you a drink while I dress—to drink while—"

"Don't bother," she said scornfully. "I shall not stay long."

"Look, can I make you some coffee—five minutes and—"

She sat down by my work-table in the big easy-chair. She did not cross her legs, but kept them bunched under her as if ready to pounce. I do not know much about women, but I could see that this one was in a tense state. Her slender gloved hands, folded on her handbag, quivered; the long, stringy muscles in her aristocratic old neck pulsated, and her upper lip twitched steadily, each time baring a tooth, which was probably false.

"It won't take me five minutes to dress, and I'll feel better—"

"Stay here."

"Very well, madame. Cigarette? . . . . Then may I smoke?"

"You are very polite, aren't you?" She looked at me, at my slippers, at the room. Item by item disgusted her more and more, that was evident. She didn't like me, my slippers, my apartment. "I understand," she said coldly, "that you'd do anything to get out of this."

"Out of what?"

She did things with her chin and her lips to indicate. I was still tired, and my temper was beginning to slip. There was nothing wrong with the place save cigarette-stubs and maybe too many books piled here and there. I didn't want to get out of it, I wanted to stay in it, and never go to New Jersey any more!

"I don't understand why you are angry with me, madame. If I did or said anything out of the way, I don't remember it."

"You made yourself very clear," she replied. "I decided to spare you any further maneuvering to settle what must be settled." She opened her handbag with those trembling old fingers, fussed a second, produced a white envelope from which she extracted a long slip of blue paper. "That's absolutely all for the present. In two months, I can add five thousand more. And that must be the end. I've decided not to submit—"

She pushed the paper at me. It was a check, a certified check, made out in my name, complete with middle initial. I wondered how she had found that out! The amount was for fifteen thousand dollars. Fifteen thousand dollars!

"Fifteen thousand dollars," I said aloud.

"And five thousand more in two months. That is all I can possibly give you. And I warn you that if you approach my husband, he is old-fashioned, courageous. The scandal will kill him, but he won't submit. He's an American. He doesn't attend church, but he is deeply religious—"

"I congratulate him," I said.

"I mean he would not tolerate blackmail. It would be a principle with him not to obey. He'd have you arrested." Her face twisted; tears glistened in her eyes. "Come, twenty thousand must be a sum to you."

"Well, it's a living," I replied. But humor was wasted.

"So, you accept, you will be satisfied with it?"

"Very satisfied, madame. However, I don't understand anything about all this. Why should you give me twenty thousand dollars—"

"The check is certified."

"I see damn' well it is! But I'd like to know why you are giving it to me."

"If you do your part, we'll find some motive, in case anyone ever finds out." She forced herself to smile although her eyes flashed fury and scorn. "I suppose I should thank you for the quiet way in which you went about it." Her shoulders heaved. "When Ted telephoned me that he was bringing you, that you wanted to meet me, I never thought it was for—for this. I must say you handled the whole thing in a very delicate fashion. It was clever to take the time to meet one of our friends and have him introduce you. A direct call might have attracted notice—"

I felt like telling her the truth, asking her to telephone Ted and confirm the fact that I had not known her name until I was in the car headed for her home. But two objections arose: The first that she would believe it another clever trick on my part, the second a rather quixotic reluctance to get the poor fellow into trouble. I had seen, the preceding evening, that Mrs. Smithway held quite a grip on her daughters, both the married one and the single one. She would be merciless to Ted if she found out he had caused her to make such a fool of herself.

"I am sixty, almost," she resumed, "and you should pity me."

"I may seem very dense, but you must tell me precisely what you think I know about you that's worth—this—"

"I suppose it's part of it to make me put it into words—to make me realize—"

"Either tell me or take your check and get out!" I cried. My head was throbbing; I missed my coffee.

"Please, please don't shout!" She winced. She added in a whisper: "I admit I wrote that letter to his lawyer."

"Whose lawyer?" I challenged.

"His lawyer. Rangoulis' lawyer."

IT was out. I understood at once to whom I was speaking. Everything fell into place. Of course, there were so many ways it connected. Her visits in Paris in the Nineties. Her present situation. The handsome and once young husband. I was speechless for a moment, my mind struggling feverishly to understand, not what had happened but how it had happened. I had gone to West Africa because my knowledge of French qualified me for the position. Years later, my knowledge of French had caused Ted to invite me to meet this nervous woman who doted on everything French. But the man whose face I had never seen, the stranger on the lagoon steamer—it was enough to make one believe in Nemesis and such stuff!

"The other things he would forgive, but writing that man after I knew who he was, what he had done—"

"Rangoulis has been dead almost forty years," I said.

"I know." She covered her face with one hand, daintily, and shed tears. "And I have hated him for many, many years. I was young; I was insane. How could I have known what murder was!"

"You were old enough to sign a check."

And I looked over at the blue slip with a very strange feeling. The same hand had signed that check that had signed the check mailed to the assassin's lawyer. I sighed. Twenty thousand dollars meant then over half a million francs! Invested, it meant practically a life income in North Africa or some small town in France.

All I had to do was to endorse it and deposit it. It was not exactly a temptation, because I knew all along that I would not take it, but it afforded some seconds of pleasant daydreaming. It was safe; this woman would not wish to stir things up again. It would not be dishonest, technically, because I had not planned for it; it was offered me. It would deprive no one of anything. It was simply a deduction from her bank balance, a juggling of figures—and it would be an easy life for me.

But in my rule-of-thumb fashion, I was honest—honest and superstitious: I hadn't earned that money, it would be unlucky. Furthermore, in the recesses of my mind, fear lurked: there might be a slip, and I might end behind bars.

I watched myself with admiration as I handed back the check.

"There has been a misunderstanding from first to last, madame. I give you my word of honor, which is as good as that of the gentlemen you knew in the Gay Nineties, that I happened to tell that story by accident, that this is all a crazy, stupid coincidence." I hoped she realized that this dialogue was worthy of a period play at L'Ambigu. "And I apologize for having unknowingly caused you the dreadful hours you must have lived before making up your mind to come here."

She laid the check on the table again, with a sort of soft obstinacy. I had a foolish thought: How many times could I turn down fifteen thousand bucks before breaking? With five thousand more to come!

"It's certified," she insisted. "You must accept."

"Take it back to your bank. I'm certain they have a method for decertifying checks."

She waited a long moment.

"It's not enough?" she resumed. "Perhaps I can sell something. You see, I cannot draw out too much; someone at the bank might notice and perhaps inform my husband. I can save a little more, but you must give me more time.

"Would you mind if I made myself some coffee?" I asked. I rose and went to the kitchen. She followed me, picking up the check as she came. I offered her a chair, and started to boil water in a pan; I made the coffee.

"You'll take the check, won't you?"

"But Madame Smithway,"—I shifted to French, thinking I would be more eloquent—"my dear Madame Smithway! The moment I sign that, I become a blackmailer." In French, blackmailer is *maître chanteur*, "master singer," so it doesn't sound so sinister. "There has never been a master singer in my family." I smiled. "Forgers, swindlers, yes, and one tolerably capable burglar—"

She refused to relax and smile, and kept to English.

"You must take it."

"A thousand regrets — or fifteen thousand regrets, no."

"Don't you see, I can't draw an easy breath unless you do? I want you to have that check, so that you will not dare talk—so I'll know that if you talk, I can have you put in prison."

"Then, *I* couldn't draw an easy breath." I poured boiling water on the coffee. Just the odor braced me up. I became brave as two lions. "Go away and don't worry. I won't talk."

"You may get—well, drunk—"

"I don't talk when I am inebriated, Madame. I—I paw." I had a cup of hot coffee in my hand. She refused to accept it and I drank, scalding. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll put on trousers."

"Don't go," she said, rising.

I looked from her face to her right hand, and carefully put my empty cup in the sink. The mad old lady was pointing a pistol at me! Not a remarkably large pistol, a thirty-two. Whether by chance or because she had read crime stories, she held it low, aimed not at my head but at my middle, a wider and far less mobile target. I looked away from it, saw the trees in the yard, the familiar brick walls of the houses opposite.

And into my mind came an unrelated scene, a shabby room with mud-hued walls, a military surgeon bending over a man laid on a table. "Perforation of the intestines," a voice said, crisply: "Not much chance. We'll do what we can. Next!"

"YOU'LL sign the check," she said.

"I can sign it, keep it until you go, burn it—" I began.

"But it's recorded in your name until something is done about it. I must have it that you took money from me. A large sum of money." She moistened her faded lips with her tongue. "I don't want to live in fear. And I might as well tell you that if you take it to my husband, I'll be—I'll use this revolver."

"Pistol, Mrs. Smithway."

My eyes were good; I could see that the safety-catch was off. I had seen, with my own eyes, a man disarm another. I had read such scenes; I had even written them. And this was not a burly man, but a frail old woman. I could probably dodge the first shot, and knock the weapon from her hand. But if I didn't—

We looked at each other. There was no sound, save the twittering of sparrows in the yards. No, there was another sound, soft, whispering—water boiling in the big pan. I had forgotten to turn off the gas. I backed a foot or so toward the window beside the stove. I knew I could squat suddenly, catch the handle of the pan and swing it toward her. Madame Smithway would be drenched with boiling water. The movement of my hand would automatically draw the muzzle of the pistol—I had seen that demonstrated. Her bullet would hit the wall against which my right shoulder now rested.

I knew I could do it. But I could not bring myself to harm this poor old fool permanently. Moreover, help would have to be called; she was in

my apartment, and there was that check, recorded at her bank. I would be smeared. And disfiguring a matron with boiling water would not look so good. *And* I would have to explain the cause of the row; her husband would be hurt, as hurt as her father had been. Illogically, while I would not accept fifteen thousand dollars to shut up, I would not have spoken for double that amount.

"You will sign?"

"Let's go back to the front room, madame. I have no pen."

"I have." And she did have. I saw that she had laid a fountain pen near the check on the little serving-table. She was twitching her lips, breathing hard. A single squeeze on the trigger, and I was due for several weeks in a hospital, at the very least. And again, there would be an investigation.

"I'll sign, madame."

I stepped forward, not too fast, and she backed away to the door opening into the hall, without lowering the pistol. I picked up the pen, unscrewed the cap, tested the point.

Then something altogether unexpected happened. Something came to my help. I was bending to sign, looking at her a last time, pleadingly, when I saw her expression change. It cannot be described exactly. Her eyes grew alarmed; her lips parted; she whispered:

"Oh, my goodness—"

Her left hand, tucking the pocketbook between elbow and hip, descended and clutched at the skirt. Then the right hand, holding the gun, lowered instinctively in its turn. All I had to do was take a long step, grasp her wrist and hold the gun muzzle to the floor.

"Let me have it, madame. If you fire, we'll have six or seven people here inside three minutes. I can hear the janitor on the stairway, now."

I took the gun and slipped on the safety.

"Oh, my goodness—" she repeated. I looked down and saw some flesh-colored stuff curling around her ankles. Undoubtedly, she had dressed carelessly, hastily, in her agitated state. Offering me blackmail money, holding a pistol, threatening me with death, had not embarrassed her. But the loss of her panties at the critical moment caused her to blush and stammer. She stooped and gathered her garment, stepping out of its circling folds.

I left her in the kitchen, carrying away the gun and the check. Back in the front room, I unloaded the weapon, keeping the shells as souvenirs. I discovered I was perspiring.

MADAME SMITHWAY joined me five or six minutes later. She had been weeping again, and had tried to cover up with powder and rouge. She resembled a blurred decalcomania.

I talked to her sternly. I told her to use common sense, to believe that I would not make trouble, would not talk to anyone. She finally accepted my statement, and that led to a sobbing fit. I gave her coffee and poured her a neat drink of whisky. Then she infuriated me with a typical, snobbish remark: "I detest rye. Have you brandy?" I supplied her with brandy, and was disgusted with myself when I heard my voice apologizing for the brand and year.

She recovered marvelously, smoked cigarettes, crossed her legs. She said charming things, told me my little place was attractive and Bohemian. Then, with the persistence of a hungry she-cat, she offered me the check again!

"Not because of fear, you understand," she said in her crisp French, "but in friendship, to permit you to write what you want—"

"I'm doing that already, madame."

Time was passing; I was getting hungry. A brilliant thought occurred to me: "Madame Smithway, I have a suggestion to make. I am not indifferent to money. And while I cannot take money for not talking in the future, which is blackmail, I could take it as a reward for discretion in the past. You have many years to live. Live them in peace, so far as I am concerned. By the time you go, I shall be getting quite old. Money will be welcome. Suppose we agree that you leave me in your will what you would give me now. You would then be at ease in mind, aware that I would not jeopardize such an important sum."

"But it will look queer," she protested. "My children—"

"Your children will not bother over such a small sum. And you have your intellectual pursuits. I can be said to have translated for you, done research. It will be quite plausible."

She reflected a while, then nodded.

"That is a good idea! You have my promise."

She adjusted her make-up a last time, rose. She offered me her hand, which I kissed. At the door, slipping on her gloves, she looked up at me, her eyes swimming with tears, her lips trembling.

"You have been very kind to a foolish old woman," she declared. "Couldn't we"—she hesitated—"could we not kiss, like good friends?"

It was many years too late, but nevertheless we did kiss like good friends. The door closed; her high heels hammered down the flights, dwindled, ended. The whole house uttered its familiar grunting sigh as the downstairs door shut.

I went to the kitchen and made enormous sandwiches, drank coffee. I found myself unconsciously wiping my lips, my cheek. And I realized why I had been doing this: I had kissed a hand that had held a killer's fist, I had felt lips that had kissed the assassin's lips. I was ashamed: that had been forty years ago. And I had believed I had immense tolerance and complete forgiveness. But when you knew, the blood shed by a murderer tainted all things, forever.

Then I had a spell of vain regrets: Fifteen thousand bucks, five more—coward that I was, sap, make-believe honest man, sucker, fool . . . and I lined up the shells from the automatic, and looked at them. Well, there had been nothing dainty about that gun—no lady's trinket, but a tool for a capable workman.

My day was ruined; I didn't feel like doing anything, let alone work.

At three o'clock, the telephone rang. It was Mrs. Smithway. She told me she was at her lawyer's, and that the little contract we had discussed was attended to. I thanked her. My depression vanished; was I not an heir?

FOR twenty years, I lived in hope. As I had predicted to Mrs. Smithway, I grew older, and no richer. She did not get any younger herself. She wrote me letters or cards five or six times a year—about herself, her children, her articles in that obscure paper. I was invited to her home for dinner about once a year; and about once a year I would take her to lunch in Manhattan. They were expensive lunches, too, as one does not take to a diner a lady who has known the best that Old Paris had to offer.

She died several months ago, just short of eighty.

I waited and watched the newspapers for notices. By now, I have ascertained that there is nothing for me, nothing save a Dresden porcelain trinket and a few books. I wouldn't care if I had asked her, but she offered and insisted. I am stunned when I think that she cheated from the start, that the telephone call supposedly from her lawyer's office was a trick. I feel twenty thousand dollars poorer.

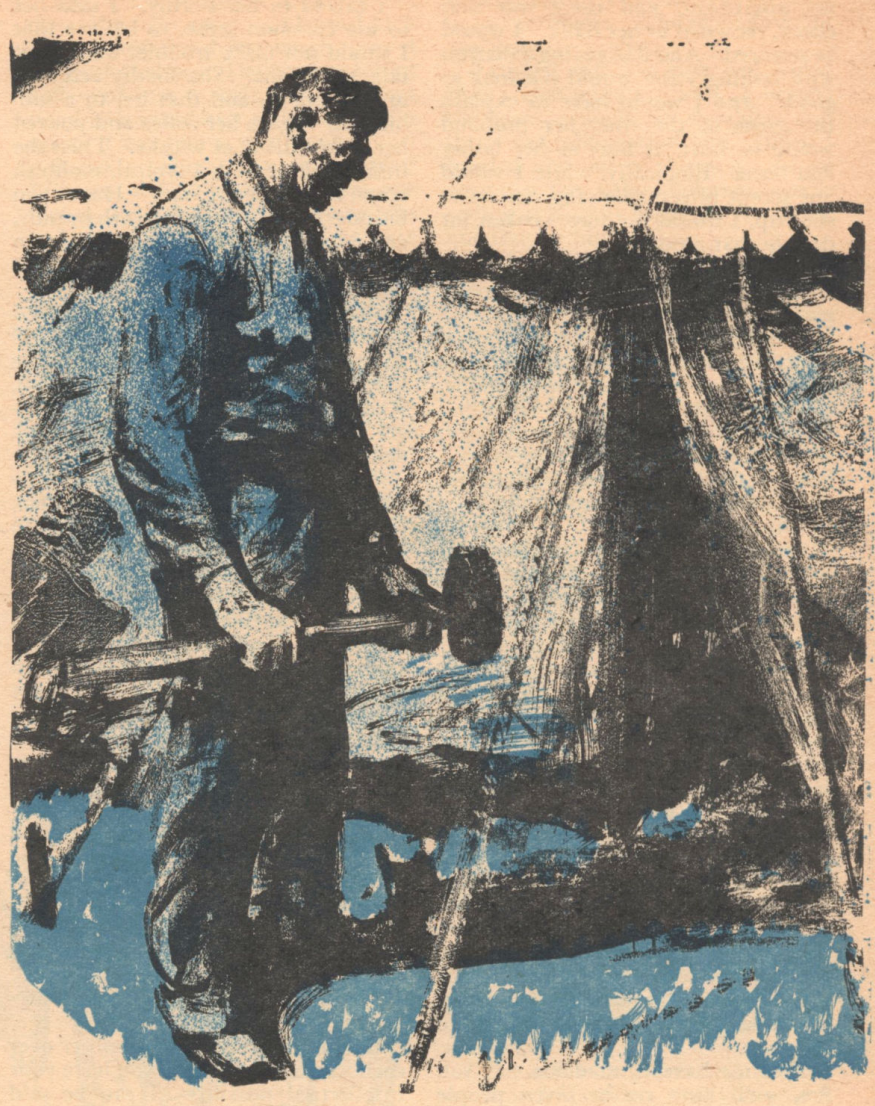
Of course, I can smile and say: what do you expect? She was warped, dishonest. She loved a sinister phony, and even as a murderer she loved him. She lacked a sense of shame and ordinary decency. She fooled that poor Mr. Smithway all his life—he preceded her to the grave by four years.

But what I find hardest to bear is that, following a normal process, she has become a sainted memory to those who knew her. Ted, for instance, who says: "She was a grand old dame, you know. They don't grow her sort any more, you bet—refined, kind, proud, cultured—a real lady."

I find small consolation in repeating to myself mentally: "Yeah, yeah! Rangoulis, Rangoulis!"

They made an ideal couple, those two: A murderer and a crook.

THE TENT-SHOW PEOPLE WERE PUTTING ON A BENEFIT PERFORMANCE —WHEN MURDER MADE ITS TRAGIC INTERRUPTION.



GEEKS ARE

OUTSIDE Tampa on the West Coast of Florida there was a sluggish river and an encampment where the carneys stayed, parking their trailers about a central community building, spending the winter months refurbishing the worn old acts, playing gin rummy, drinking, telling lies, very like other folk. It was not an unattractive place, and daytimes the sun was warm. On its edge the Duke brought his two elaborate trailers and settled for a stay.

Eck Eckstrom drove the trailer which held the platform for his spiel and sale—a stoutish young man from the State of Maine; and sometimes Eck wanted to drink with him, but the Duke preferred to drink alone or in the company of his betters, and he seldom got out to be with his peers these days. For a man only forty, he led a limited life, he supposed; but he could not help his preference for his own company.

He said to Eck: "Batten down the hatches and go to town. You must crave womankind. All men, excepting only myself, have a hankering for females."

Eck said: "'Tain't true and yuh know it. Thought I'd have a snort."

"Go to a local bistro and make merry. You never wassail, Eckstrom. You merely tipple. Bad for you," Duke admonished. Past Eckstrom, out the door of the oversized de luxe trailer which was his home, he could see Daniel the Giant. Daniel was headed his way, and there was purposeful determination upon his large bland face. Duke sighed. He had heard about the Alligator Boy's distress.

Eckstrom drifted away, his plump behind wagging. Daniel, who was really seven feet eleven inches high, and could be built up over eight feet with platform soles, stuck his nice face in at the door and said: "You decent, Duke? I gotta talk to you."

"Come, my friend. Sample the Scotch." Daniel was his peer, at least, Duke thought. He was amiable; he was kindly; he was thoughtful. He was the big brother of all carneys.

Daniel poured a small drink, nodded, held it in his huge hand. "The Alligator Boy is a good geek. You know his wife—Hairy Mary, the Ape Girl. She ain't well, neither. We want you to handle the front end."

Duke said: "I'll contribute cash. I am resting. I am weary." He made it sound pathetic, in the mellow voice which he used in selling "The Home Lawyer" from the platform of the small trailer.

Daniel said: "Now, Duke! I thought you'd sell some books. Give the difference to the fund."

Duke said, "Please, Daniel!"

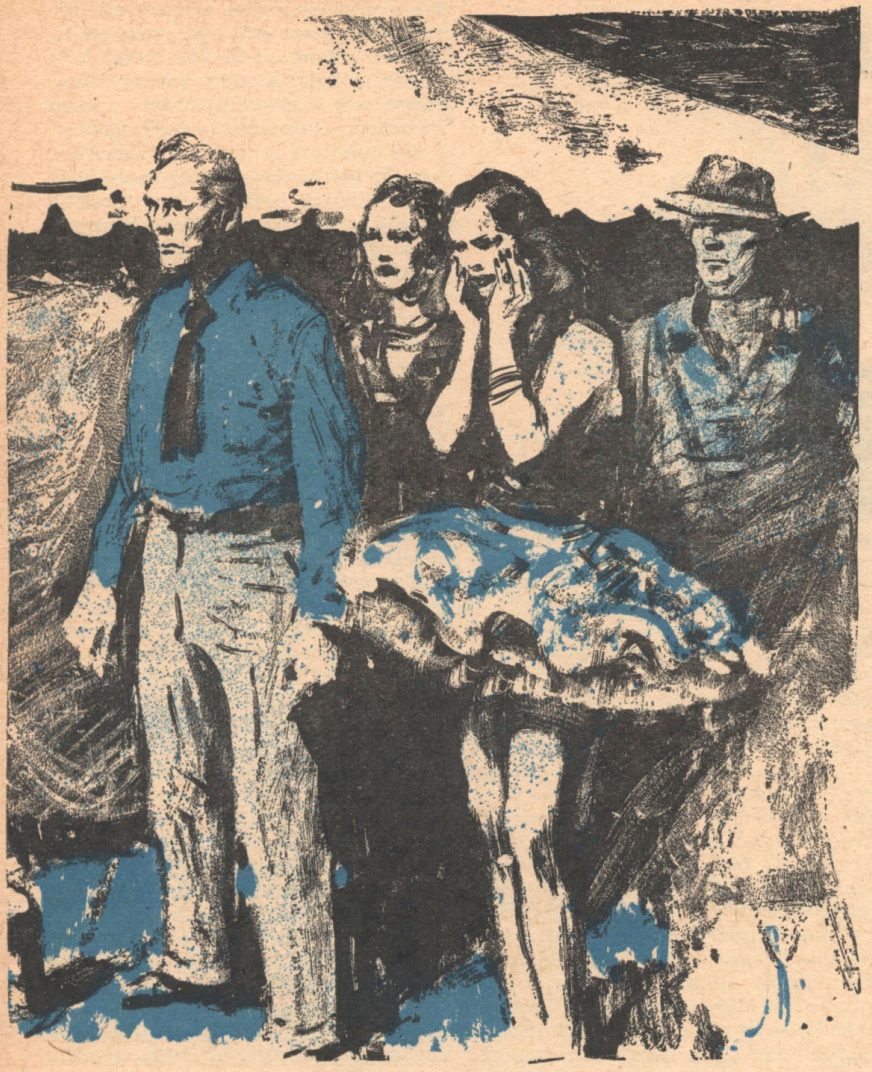
"We got Eva," said Daniel inexorably. Eva was his wife, a buxom young miss. Through the open door Duke could see her walking toward the community hall with Spud Burr. They were holding hands—Spud, and Eva, the Giant's wife. They were laughing. Spud was a bally man, a slick young character, a born leader who, it was prophesied, would one day own his own show. The Giant said: "We got Spud to bally, Joan Bird to hootchy-kootch; the Snake Woman, you know her—"

Duke raised manicured fingernails and surveyed them sadly. "Spare me the details, my friend. You have me. Who am I, to refuse to join the other geeks in a kindness to a fellow-geek?"

"Aw, Duke," said Daniel awkwardly. "I'm a geek, sure. Alligator Boy and his wife are geeks. But not you, not Eva, nor Joan, nor Spud. . . . Geeks are freaks, you know."

"I am thinking now in terms of the soul," the Duke explained. "Aren't

There was a sudden scream. "Daniel! Oh, the blood—the blood!"



LIKE THAT

by JOEL REEVE

"Women," spat Duke. "The hell with them!" He carefully did not think of the woman who had spoiled all others for him. He took another drink.

Eckstrom grumbled: "All this here trouble for an ol' carney! You and me don't belong to these here folk, Duke."

Eckstrom was a natural "no" man. Duke ignored him. The trailer looked fine, the little one which housed both Eckstrom and the layout which was Duke's rostrum. They drove to Tampa —Eckstrom hated Tampa too, he said— a small, quaint town, but not like New England.

The tent which they had was not new. Duke's blue trailer really did dress the show, and he was glad he had assented. He talked to the performers, and they wanted him to make a pitch before the show to help Spud bally up a crowd for the oleo. Eva and Joan would vamp from the front, and then the show would go on inside, maybe two-three shows, if they could get enough Clems and Judys—fifty cents, and everything going to the 'Gator Boy and his Hairy Mary. It was a typical, generous, whole-hearted carney gesture, Duke knew.

But they were quarreling like monkeys in a barrel. Spud Burr had taken charge of getting up the tent, and everyone was screaming one thing and another, and the weary canvasbacks were bored with the whole procedure. Morely, the India-rubber Man, kept insisting the tent was faced the wrong way; Dolores the Snake Woman patently sneered; Eckstrom sat on the rear of the little trailer and dropped terse criticism of everyone.

Duke paused, and Eckstrom drawled: "Ye see? Them's carneys. Allus bickerin' an' fightin'. Look at that Burr. Swelled head. Look at them clothes."

Daniel lumbered up, and they all wheeled, appealing to him. He blinked over their heads, helpless, and said: "Well, Spud, mebbe they're right. I dunno. Mebbe you oughter move it."

Spud had held back. He had a maul in his hands. He was a husky young man. His face flushed a deep red; his eyes burned. He said: "Then damn you, you big geek! Come and do it yourself!"

Eva was near Duke's trailer. He saw her eyes, the sudden protest in them. She did not move. Eckstrom got down off the trailer, as though expecting trouble, his eyes gleaming.

we all equal, all very alike, all people with the carney? Geeks—that's good enough to describe us—people set apart."

Daniel said: "Aw, you're too deep for me, Duke. We just got to help the Alligator Boy—he's always been a right geek."

Eva went into the hall with Spud. Eck Eckstrom strolled behind them. He had a knife in his hand, and was whittling and whistling as he went. That was State of Maine for you, Duke thought. . . . He nodded at something Daniel said, and went back to his Scotch. He was beginning to feel it warm and strong inside him. He was going back into his non-dreaming, his suspended-animation stage, a great place for a man like an old Army mule, he reflected without bitterness— no pride of ancestry and no hope of posterity.

Daniel had trouble with leave-taking, being good and simple, but he finally got away. His wife Eva was in the community hall with young Spud, laughing. Eva had soft white arms and was a quick-moving girl, an ex-dancer. Spud talked carney from the corner of his mouth, and was handsome in a tough way.

Dolores said, "I know you don't like women, but I'm not one, really. I'm a geek."

Daniel's voice boomed softly: "Aw, now, Spud, it's jest that most are ag'in' you. Majority rules, don't it?"

Spud said: "You put me in charge of this yourself, you dumb geek. Now you come around and try to boss me, you—" His gaze slipped off the giant and caught Eva's. He swallowed hard. He turned, maul in hand. He said to the roustabouts: "Turn it around. Let's get to it. Dammit, this is for charity."

Eva came running. She grabbed Daniel's hand and cried: "Daniel's so good-natured, nobody could be mad at Daniel, could they? He's too good-natured, that's all."

Daniel said: "Aw, honey, I reckon I'm dumb too, like Spud says."

Eckstrom said: "Huh! If that was me, I'd make Spud eat them words. That ol' Daniel! How good-natured kin yuh get?"

Duke said: "The woman loves the big fellow. Illuminating, very!"

"She don't. She's after Spud," said Eckstrom happily. "I watched them. Woof!" His eyes were sly, prying at Duke. He knew Duke was fond of Daniel. Eckstrom loved to cut people where it hurt a lot. He was not a nice person, but he took good care of Duke's trailers, Duke reminded himself.

Daniel had picked up a maul and was using it, driving stakes with no apparent effort. His muscles were good; he was merely a big man, bigger than others, and possibly a little slower mentally.

Duke said: "You are a strange Down Easter, my friend. You speak with the forked tongue. You do not approve of Daniel?"

"None of 'em are any good. Bunch o' freaks," said Eckstrom with self-satisfaction. "You'll be sorry. You see."

"Eck, you are a dream boy," said Duke. "Now will you fix the trailers?"

"Spud an' Eva carryin' on!" Eckstrom looked virtuous. "Don't see me carryin' on with none of them women."

"You'd have to lose some weight. And dress with just a wee bit more snap," Duke told him. "You're a bit on the dowdy side, Eck. And plump. Women like lean, well-dressed men." He made a sour face and entered the tent. Eckstrom was always hectoring him for a raise, so that he could dress better and drink more whisky. Eckstrom was a queer one, but a good mechanic, Duke told himself again.

Dolores was a tired old character, but the best snake-charmer in the business. She was in the back of the tent, cooing at her charges. Spud Burr was leaning on a maul-handle, scowling. Duke went up to him and said: "Looks as though you should be a bit more circumspect, Spud old boy."

Burr said: "I know, Duke. Lost my dopey skull a minute."

"You could also be more careful," Duke said meaningly, searching Spud's face with sharp eyes.

The young man's head jerked, his fists hardened about the maul-handle. He said in a low, harsh voice: "If you mean—Eva—it ain't so. She's on the level. It's just fun. Daniel—well, he ain't got fun in him. Me and Eva, we got laughs."

"It is not what you have," Duke persisted. "It's what people think."

"People? Like that scummy jerk works fer you? He leers at me. . . . Oh, it's all right, Duke—who cares? He ain't carney, anyhow. But, Duke, I wouldn't want you to think wrong of Eva."

Duke said: "Think it over, Spud." It was none of his business, but he liked Spud. He also liked Daniel, and although he could never bring himself to admit it, he thought kindly of the bovine and comely Eva.

He went to his trailer, shaking his head. He had floodlights of his own, and he fussed with them, trying for a good mix with enough blue without lessening the brilliance. The tent did not look shabby, now, in the blue of his lights.

The people began moving in heightened tempo, and now they no longer looked shabby, weary, middle-aged. They were show business; that was it, Duke thought. They managed a veneer which they wore in the blue light as they would magic cloaks, a shiny veneer just a bit ga, a bit naughty —the aura of show business which so becomes its many children.

WELL, Duke could recognize it. In another life he had been a bit of a ham himself. He had hypnotized his share of juries.

He mounted the platform of his trailer. He arranged his maps, a series of colorful scenes depicting people in the act of committing crimes of various sorts. Local yokels were getting from their cars and coming over, attracted by the lights and the canvas tent.

There were enough to make a spiel, and he looked for Eckstrom. He was

using the New Englander for a shill, but he did not show just then, and that made Duke angry. But his voice was mellifluous as ever, booming out to the slowly gathering crowd: "Now, folks, this is not a show. The show comes later, in that tent, a fine charity show which you can attend and know you are helping a sick worthy. . . . No, what I have to say is not entertainment, contains no tricks nor shenanigans. This, indeed, may be termed a lecture." He smiled at them, holding them through the dreaded word which can break up a bally in a moment. "Lecture," he added firmly. "A lecture on the subject: 'How to Avoid Paying a Lawyer Too Much Money for Doing Nothing.' "

HE laid into it, watching the crowd from the corners of his eyes. He spoke easily, once he had them, employing understatement, treating them as though they were almost his equals. . . . The books were out of sight, piled under the counter. They were entitled "The Home Lawyer"—cost to Duke, due to much reprinting, thirty cents—selling price two dollars—a book defining the law, explaining the law, advising people to stay away from lawyers until dire need arose.

Duke said: "Lawyers are fine for guilty folk. That is their real function, to defend people who have committed crimes. Why, I once knew an honorable lawyer, a decent, straightforward man. Of course he was very poor—died in the almshouse."

They were ready. Eckstrom came panting up with his sweaty money, waving it, to buy the first "Home Lawyer." Duke saw that Spud Burr, in plaid trousers and a hound's-tooth hip-length jacket, was already on the bally stand. Duke brought out the books and sold them like hot cakes. Lawyers hated Duke for that book, but that was okay, because Duke hated lawyers.

Spud Burr gave a sign, and the little band began just as people finished buying Duke's book. The people, softened up by Duke's pitch, went willingly and happily to listen to the wonders described by the young ballyhooer.

Duke riffled the money he had taken in, deducted his thirty-cent cost and figured a nice sum for the Alligator Boy. He went back to the tent and walked to the rear. The show was about ready to go on. Eckstrom wandered in, mouth agape at the dishabille of Dolores and Eva, who were changing into costume. Duke angrily shoved the New Englander out, and Spud came quickly from the front. Daniel and Eva were sitting side by side—just sitting—on a couple of wardrobe trunks.

Morely, the India-rubber Man, and Joan Bird, the kootch-dancer, entered. Spud snapped: "Dammit, you're late again, and drunk at that."

Morely said with great dignity: "Go on, you bum. I'm no drunker than you were last night when you made that big chop at you-know-who."

Spud said: "You can't put on a show this way. You sots—both of you!"

Morely could stretch his arms as if they were rubber bands. He put one out and encircled the waist of the girl. "You, sir," he said, "are speaking of the woman I love!"

Spud said: "It's a good match—a couple of stew bums." He wheeled and went over to Eva and Daniel, and spoke to them quietly for a moment. Eva looked almost pretty, staring up at Spud, and with qualms Duke remembered the words of Eckstrom.

Daniel said in his strong voice: "Better get the show goin'. What if they did have a couple of drinks?"

"So you're on their side," Spud snapped.

Dolores, a dark lady nearing middle age, winked at Duke. She said: "Anybody seen Dickens? He got away again."

They all froze. Dickens was a rattler, a real one, with fangs. He had been with Dolores a long time, but he was notoriously short-tempered. Dolores bent, picked the snake from the sawdust. She said: "There he is. . . . Guess the mob's in and the show can start, huh?"

Spud snapped out of it. He turned away from Daniel and mounted the steps of the rude platform. He addressed the crowd, and the show was on.

They gave three fast performances to capacity houses. They took in enough money to defray all the hospital expenses of the Alligator Boy. Duke counted the gate and made a packet of that money and his own contribution, and gave it to Spud. He said: "You've run the thing tonight. Why don't you take it over and make a speech and give it to them?"

Spud said: "Ekey okey, Duke. I guess it went all right in spite of the jerks around here."

The canvasbacks were all for striking the tent and going off to their beer. Eckstrom was fiddling around the trailer, and Duke knew he had to go. He looked upon the carneys with fondness; they had quarreled, but they had labored and produced that sweetest of all things, charity.

They bustled now, acrimony put aside. The trailer lamps gave them light enough. Duke strolled toward the parked roadster which hauled the smaller trailer.

The lights went out. Duke blinked, started for the trailer tailgate. He hated to have his paraphernalia go wrong. He tripped and almost fell, going to one knee. He groped, coming to his feet.

It took a couple of minutes, with much feminine screaming and tittering, but Eckstrom appeared in the glow at last, fiddling with a wire, biting his pendulous lower lip. The wire was shiny, where the insulation was off. Eckstrom produced tape, and shrugging, went to work on the wire.

There was silence now, as though the sudden darkening had laid a cloud

"There it is," said O'Brien: "Fingerprints, opportunity, motive."

over the party of people from the carnival. The lights flared and went too white. Eckstrom adjusted them.

Daniel came from behind the tent, bearing a maul. Eckstrom brought the lights back to blue. Daniel picked the maul up and stared at it in the full glare of the lamps.

There was a wild, sudden scream. "*Daniel!* What is it, Daniel! Oh, the blood—the *blood!*"

Someone said sharply: "Where's Spud?"

Duke, suddenly ill, wished devoutly for his whisky bottle. Daniel looked at the maul, and a single drop of something dripped from it.

Daniel said: "Spud—he's back there, all right. But I didn't do it. I never did. I found this thing aside him. He was just layin' there—funnylike. Scared me, it did."

Duke dreaded it. He held himself in at the middle. But he had to go back of the tent. He had to go back and see what was left of Spud Burr. He had liked Spud, and he did not like this. But he had to go, for he saw clearly the trouble ahead.

Spud lay on his face. Someone had struck him alongside the head with the maul. The sport coat looked awful, there in the dust, with blood all over one shoulder.

Eckstrom chortled in Duke's ear: "Done tol' you, didn't I? The big guy takes a long time, but when he ketches on, he's pizen."

"Shut up," snapped Duke.

Eckstrom said uncertainly: "Ugh. Cain't bear to look at corpuses. 'Scuse me, boss. I'm goin'—be—sick."

Illustrated by John Fulton

"It's true, like Eckstrom said—she was back there with Spud,"

THERE was a little detective, no bigger than a boy, and his name was O'Brien. He sat in Duke's trailer over at the trailer camp and had a couple of Scotches. He had shrewd eyes, and although he was a policeman, he seemed to Duke to possess a modicum of intelligence. O'Brien said: "Look, Duke, this case is a natural. Eckstrom puts the dead guy with Eva, the wife of the giant. They'd been rangdoodlin' around—"

"No," Duke heard himself say. He hated this, detested being interrogated. He wanted nothing to do with policemen. But he could not stand by, on the other hand, and know Daniel was in dire danger of being indicted for murder.

"Your own chauffeur," O'Brien insisted. He had a monkey face, and small, clawlike hands. He smoked Tampa-made cigars too big for him. "Eckstrom put them there: Burr and the woman. So the big guy walks around back—there's been rhubarb before; he sees them together. His mind clicks, his lawyer will say; he sees red; he boffs the guy."

Duke said: "*Actis non facit reum, nisi mens sit rea.*"

"The hell you say!" O'Brien looked interested. "Ain't been in church in so long I forgot my Latin."

"Daniel did not kill Spud Burr," said Duke. "I cannot prove this, but I know it to be true, and I cannot permit him to be railroaded."

"You got a license to practice in Florida?" O'Brien asked genially.

Duke sat straight on the lounge which by night was a bed, and poured Scotch. "I am not a lawyer."

"Mebbe not, but you've been one," said O'Brien.

Duke said carefully: "I am not engaged in the practice of law."

"I heard you the first time. I get it," said the detective. "You're with the carney. I know who you are, Duke. But your giant is a dead pigeon."

Duke said: "I'll see you in hell, too."

"Lookit things this way," said O'Brien patiently. "We got nothin' except this big guy with the maul in his hands, all over prints. We got what Eckstrom tells us, which is true. Now, down here we ain't so backwoodsy as you think. We got cameras; we take careful pictures. Daniel was behind the tent; the woman, his wife Eva, had left and was walkin' around to the front. The lights went out—"

"Yes, the lights," said Duke. He sat up straighter. "Everyone had an alibi except Daniel. . . . Strange. Morely fought with Spud over the show, over being drunk. Everyone fought with Spud that day. It was not the poor lad's lucky day, was it?"

"It's the woman," said O'Brien. "Fundamentally, the woman. *Cherchez la femme.* See, I got foreign talk too!"

Duke said: "Someone monkeyed with those lights, do you think?"

"*You* think so," countered O'Brien. "Someone monkeyed with your lights—then stuck out a foot and tripped you, remember? Then rushed around and killed Spud Burr. Then handed the maul to Daniel, who is dumb

Joan Bird said bluntly. "That's why she ain't talkin'."

enough to take it and hang onto it. I heard you give out that stuff—to the Mayor, to the Sheriff, to the Chief. I'm just a sergeant, Duke."

"Daniel did not kill him."

"I'm a cop. You don't like cops. You've been with the carneys so long you got carney hate for a cop," said O'Brien matter-of-factly. "But you got brains, and I'm a man respects brains. If you find out anything about the killer, lemme know pronto."

Duke said: "Then you *don't* think you already have the murderer?"

O'Brien stuck the half-smoked cigar into his mouth. It was still too big for his face. He said: "You work it out, Duke. Like I say, I'm just a cop."

Outside, Eckstrom sat opposite the trailer where Eva mourned and Joan Bird stayed to help. Morely walked around slowly, disjointing himself and stretching his limbs to amazing lengths from sheer nervousness. Dolores left her beloved snakes and walked with Morely. The carneys were restless and unhappy.

O'Brien went on: "Did you know Dolores was once stuck on Daniel? He never knew it, but she was."

"You learn everything, don't you?"

O'Brien said: "I try. This Daniel, he is a lovable guy—to women."

Duke said: "Daniel is not guilty. He did not kill Burr. He is not your killer type, that is all."

"But there it is," said O'Brien: "Fingerprints, opportunity, motive! Look, I got to go, but I'll be around, see?"

He padded out, trailing cigar-smoke.

Duke arose. He went outdoors to the smaller trailer, and let down the tailgate which was his bally platform. Eckstrom heaved up, puffing a little.

Duke said: "That broken wire—I want it."

"Threw it away," said Eckstrom. "Fixed it already. I ain't sloppy, y' know. I'm the neat type."

Duke said: "Eek, that wire was cut. Someone cut it."

"The insulation was frayed," said Eckstrom dubiously. " 'Course Dan'el could 'a' cut it—"

Duke said sharply: "Daniel didn't kill Spud."

Eckstrom said nothing, and Duke walked slowly away. He went to the trailer where Eva and Joan Bird sat close by each other. Duke sat down and waited, but Eva didn't look up. It was Joan Bird who finally said: "You got anything, Duke?"

"No. And if you have, you'd better spill it, because Daniel's in a bad spot," Duke said. "The Johns think they got him in a bum beef, and they think they got him cold. He will put his keester in that hot squat as sure as—" He broke off, aware that he was using carney talk, which he detested.

"It's true, like Eckstrom said—she was back there with Spud," Joan Bird said bluntly. "That's why she ain't talkin'."

Eva's head came up; her reddened eyes stared at Duke. "It wasn't like that. I ain't ashamed of anything I did with Spud. But could I make outsiders see that?"

"Daniel would've seen it," Joan Bird said softly.

"That's why—that's why!" wailed Eva, and Duke had to shush her. He stayed awhile, soothing the women, then left and walked around the trailer park, thinking hard.

He passed his own trailer and saw Dolores, the snake-charmer, within. The aversion to womankind was strong in him, but she was middle-aged, past her prime, and she was a good fellow. He went inside and poured Scotch for her.

SHE said: "I know you don't like women, but I'm not one, really, you catch. I'm a geek."

He said: "It's all right, Dolores. What did you want?"

She said: "You're trying to square the beef for the giant. You're not a real carney, but you been throwing curves at that copper. That's pretty old, all right, and I wanted to tell you."

He thought of cigarettes red with lipstick, of messed glasses, of napkins stained with the rouge. He closed his eyes. Dolores wore lipstick almost purple. It nauseated him.

Dolores said: "You must have been kicked good, one time. . . . Well, I know you're trying to square it with the Johns about Daniel. I'll give you one little tip. Did you know Joan Bird was sweet on him before she picked up with Morely?"

"And what about yourself?" Duke asked softly. "You loved him?"

She put down the drink, paling. She had been very attractive once, and she was not as old as she seemed now, Duke realized. She said: "Daniel is a normal geek. Figure that out; you're traveling with geeks, and a big guy like that is a normal geek—"

"And you're a normal geek," said Duke.

Spud said: "Eva's on the level. It's just fun. . . . I wouldn't want you to think wrong of me."

She said: "All right. I'll go. Damn you." She put down the drink and walked out of the trailer with some dignity.

Duke sat in the gathering dark. He thought hard. He thought around in a circle and came back to the inexplicable behavior of his precious lighting system.

A phrase uttered by Eckstrom swam into his ken. He got up and found a flashlight. It was pretty dark. He walked briskly across the square and toward the trash-heap.

It was a pretty big trash-heap, but there was a bundle of stuff wrapped in a newspaper. That would be Eckstrom, the neat man.

The wire was in the package. Good old Eck, Duke thought, had saved the day with his systematized, methodical methods. Duke put the rest of the junk back and coiled the wire, putting it into his breast pocket. There was only about a foot of it.

He went back to his own trailer. He turned on a strong lamp. The hunk of wire had been cut with sharp pliers at each end. One end was that which had failed over in Tampa. The other was a new cut made by Eckstrom when he repaired the job. The point seemed to be to find the end which had failed in time for a murder.

The lights in the trailer went out. Duke was so stunned that he sat quiescent for a moment, the piece of wire in his hands. The going on and off of lights, the pattern slowly forming in his mind, the patness of this sudden darkening of the trailer, formed a hypnotic mass which moved in upon him.

Then he heard distinctly the breathing of an invader. He swung, trying to get his knees from under the table. It was too close where he sat; he needed room. He was a sedentary man who avoided strenuous exercise. He was slight in stature, and was not muscular. He was not, he thought, a particularly brave man.

But now, with someone intruding upon his privacy, with someone entering his trailer to attack him, the fierce rage of the housekeeper who has been trespassed upon rose in him.

Someone was slugging at him, and he was forced to accept a blow on the head before he could get away from the table, which was bolted to the floor and wall. He was stunned into dumbness. The assailant crowded him.

He remembered an old barroom trick, pronged his fingers and punched them at the man's face. He sought the eyes, half-succeeded. He clenched his fist and drove it into darkness.

By chance he met the bone of a chin. He got loose of the table as his opponent staggered back. He jabbed again, then butted as the man charged him. The door was open, and Duke thought he saw someone outside.

He opened his mouth to yell. A kick in the belly lifted him right off the floor, and the yell never was born. He sat down on the floor of the trailer and held his stomach. The man tried to kick him in the face.

Rolling, he clutched a shoe. He twisted and turned. He threw the man backward. He crawled to his knees, aware that he was fighting for his life. A vagrant beam of light from somewhere on the lot fell across the floor of the trailer.

The shadowy figure muttered and pounced. Then for a moment the beam of light was gone, the door of the trailer blackened. Then the light came back inside, and Duke knew he was alone.

Duke was very sick for a moment. He took his time about rising, fighting the nausea all the way. His shaking hand found the Scotch intact at long last, and he drank straight from the bottle.

Restored but little, he managed to crawl out of the trailer. He put his hand out, bracing himself, staring at the Florida night sky. The stars seemed near. He faced them for a moment, tears of pain coursing down his cheeks. He faced it—he too had seen the thing on the floor which was gone now, which the intruder had taken.

It was the piece of wire. The killer suddenly knew he had to have it. Duke had stirred up the right clue.

He tried to walk, and was very weak and wished for the strong arm of Daniel now. But there was no one, not even Spud. He had to get around and find the killer. He had to do it, because Daniel did not think guilty thoughts. He moved among the trailers, silent, invisible in his dark habiliments.

He came past his own small trailer. Along the edge of the stream there was some brush. The water burbled merrily. There was a form bending over a small fire.

He launched himself without thinking, for to pause was to invite reluctance. He was bushed, but he had to try, this one time. He landed atop the figure and pinned it to the fire, listening—with a savage satisfaction he had not known was in him—to the cries of his victim. The man bucked like a steer; then Duke was flying like a leaf in the wind, thrown ignominiously.

He came doggedly back, and a foot swung at him, catching him in the side and knocking him over again. Duke said, "Damn you!" and from his back he launched both feet in a kick which stood his man off for a moment.

HE tried to follow it in. A heavy fist caught him. He went down and lay there, and now he was groggy and finished. He thought: "So this is it. Now he's got to finish me, because I know him. And I can't move. I just must stay here and be murdered. This is it—"

There was a small patter of feet. There was a leaping figure, tiny, apelike, a blackjack swinging almost delicately, a figure on the ground.

Duke muttered: "That I should be grateful to a cop!"

O'Brien said: "That's all right. So this is your man, huh? I don't buy him so good. He was in sight of too many people all the time."

"He fooled you with the timing," Duke said. "Can't you see it? He did it beforehand. As soon as Eva walked away from Spud, this one hit him with the maul. Then he went back and jammed the lights. Daniel, always slow, walked right into the set-up, picked up the maul and was tagged it."

"I still don't buy," said O'Brien. He touched Eckstrom with his toe. The stout man rolled on the ground, came up with teeth bared. He saw O'Brien weighing the limber blackjack and was still.

Duke found the wire, took it from the kindling which had not burned enough. He said: "This is the gimmick. He cut it with the same cutters. You said you had those cameras—"

"We got that photomicography," said O'Brien proudly. "I don't understand it, but it'll tell us if he did it with the same cutters." He went close to Eckstrom and through his pockets. He took out a paper matchstub. He said: "If I should buy this guy—which I ain't, yet—I got a match. It was under Spud Burr's body. If it should fit this paper, now, our cameras would know it. But what motive?"

Duke said: "Is that Eva and Joan?" The women came timidly closer. He called: "Look. This John is a right guy, see? Come on over."

Joan Bird said bitterly: "He'll throw us in the clink as material witnesses."

"No," Duke insisted. "Come on. We've got Eckstrom. He killed Spud."

Eva screamed once. Joan Bird was holding her when Duke got to them. They carried her nearer the trailer where the light could shine on her. She wailed: "Yes. Now I know. . . . He was always after me, always staring, always following me. In town, everywhere, there he would be, staring. Eckstrom, staring. —Not like Spud. Different. Like a Peeping Tom."

He thought: "Now he's got to finish me, because I know him."

Duke said: "He was behind the tent when you were with Spud there?"

She hesitated. She looked at Duke, at O'Brien. Then she looked at the heavy sullen features of Eckstrom. She said: "I saw him. Spud had warned me about him. He said Eckstrom was after me. I guess he was."

"Strongest motive in the world," Duke said suavely to O'Brien. "Jealousy. Spud and Eva were good friends —that was all. Eckstrom was after Eva. He saw Spud as his rival. Eckstrom is not over-bright. He is neat and methodical, but not too intelligent."

Eva said: "Spud told me—he knew Eckstrom was after me, but he said that Daniel would find it out, and that would be bad. He said Daniel was slow, but he always caught on sooner or later, and that's why we told Daniel everything we ever did, Spud and me."

Joan said: "Y'see, when Spud got his'n, she was scared Daniel *had* turned up with somethin' in his craw about them, and Spud had laughed or somethin'. Daniel could 'a' killed him for that. Daniel ain't so dumb as people think."

Duke said: "Look, don't worry now, will you? The hunk of wire and your testimony will hang this Eckstrom very neatly. Tomorrow Daniel will be back. Just don't worry." He wanted to get away from them, from the women. They wept.

"Gee, Duke," Eva said, "you're so smart. . . . I'm so glad you're with it. Duke, you make us feel like carneys ain't so bad after all."

They were packing Eckstrom into the car before he realized what she had said. He looked at the sullen, now thoroughly debased features of his former driver and turned away. O'Brien was whistling.

Eva had referred to him as one of them—as a carney.

He should have been insulted. Then he remembered that it had all started over a charity show, from the goodness of their hearts. It made him feel very strange, as he had not felt in many bitter years—good, sort of. He too, then, was a normal geek!

There was a patter of feet, a figure on the ground. O'Brien said: "So this is your man, huh?"

Minute Man

A DEVASTATING PUNCH HAD TO SERVE IN PLACE OF SKILL AT THE START OF HIS CAREER; BUT SOON HIS QUICK VICTORIES LED SPORTS-WRITERS TO CALL HIM THE MINUTE MAN. . . . A SPIRITED NOVELETTE BY AN ANNOUNCER WHO HAS REPORTED MANY FIGHTS.

by BILL ERIN

But as Billy had the right cocked, as the champion was helpless under his gloves, as the crowd went berserk, something happened — and Billy didn't let it go.

"HEY, KID," MARCHIE YELLED. The kid, who appeared about nineteen, turned quickly and regarded us suspiciously.

"Hey, kid!" Marchie said again. "How much you weigh?"

The kid just stood there for a moment, his back against the stadium wall, looking at us. His face was lean and hungry-looking, his brown hair unkempt. "About one-fifty," he said finally in a what's-it-to-you-tone.

"You wanta fight?" Marchie asked.

The kid crouched almost imperceptibly, and his lips tightened. There wasn't fear in his eyes — it was more like defiance; but there wasn't any confidence, either.

"He means a fight in the ring." I indicated the stadium. "The bum I was supposed to handle hasn't shown; and Marchie, here, needs somebody to go four rounds."

The kid straightened, and I could see he was a lean five-ten. The defiance in his face was replaced by puzzlement.

"Twenty-five bucks," said Marchie. "Twenty-five bucks, out of which you pay two-fifty equipment costs, and five to Pop, here, for handling you."

I'm known as Pop, of course. Any time a man gets old in sports, he gets known as Pop. Every sports circle has its Pop, and I was it for Din City.

The money brought a gleam to the kid's face, and I could tell the lean and hungry look didn't come from practice but circumstances.

"For twenty-five bucks," said the kid, taking a hitch in his pants, "I'll go four rounds with Joe Louis."

"Okay, Pop," said Marchie, "he's yours; and you're the next fight." Marchie disappeared back into the stadium. That was Marchie! What happened to the kid, now, he didn't care at all. He had his prelim set, and now there were more important things to worry about — such as checking the money at the gate.

I hustled the kid down to the crowded dressing-room, where Rod Derkin, the semi-finalist of the evening, was already peeling his clothes.

I showed the kid a locker and helped him undress. While he shed his clothes, I tried to find out something about him.

"Ever fight before?" I asked.

"Depends on how you mean," he answered.

"You know how I mean," I said, "— in the ring."

"Nope," said the kid.

"Ever do any boxing?"

"In the back yard."

"Well, this is the front yard," I said. "People will watch you here, but don't let it scare you."

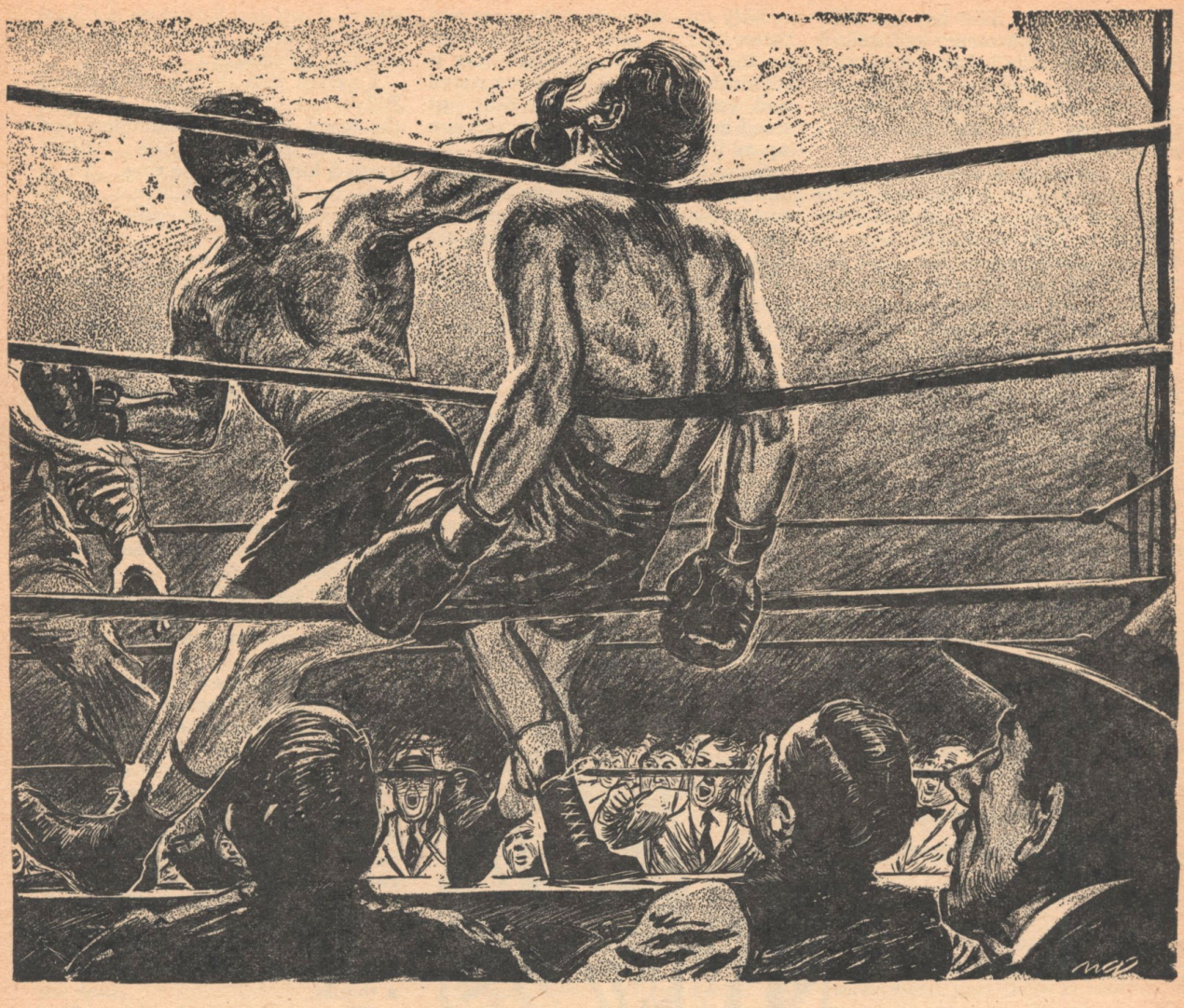
"I won't," he said.

I was getting him into his trunks and an old pair of boxing shoes, a half-size too big. The door opened, and the local Commissioner came in with Doc Masterson.

"Where's this kid that Marchie was talking about?" asked the Commissioner.

"Here," I said.

"I don't like this kind of thing," said the Commissioner. "Marchie's always pulling something like this."



"The pug didn't show," I answered.

"Then the fight ought to be called," said the Commissioner. "O. K., Doc, look him over."

Doc Masterson, a pretty nice guy and a good doctor, came over to the kid. Doc gave him a quick once-over, pounded his chest, looked in his eyes, in his mouth.

"Ever have any heart trouble or rheumatic fever?" he asked the kid.

"Nope," said the kid, watching me put the gloves on.

DOC listened to his heart with the stethoscope, and then had the kid do five or six quick dips. He listened again, and nodded.

"This boy's all right," he said to the Commissioner.

"All right," said the Commissioner as Doc got the kid's name on his certificate. "But I'm going to talk to Marchie. One of these last-minute kids gets killed or hurt bad, and I'm on the spot." They went out.

Derkin got interested enough to snort through his misshapen nose. "You ever fight before?" The kid shook his head negatively, and Derkin snorted again. "That Marchie!" he said.

Sammy Maxon, Marchie's chief hustler, stuck his head in the door and yelled: "Okay, Pop, bring on the sheep." I swore at his disappearing head, threw an old robe around the kid's shoulders and took him out.

"This guy you're fighting," I said, "is green too. But he's had a couple fights, and some instruction. You keep your left foot forward and your chin behind your shoulder, you know?"

The kid looked at me with his brown eyes, and there was no fright there. "I saw Barney Ross fight once," he said. "I'll be all right."

I groaned to myself, and agreed mentally with the Commissioner and Derkin — that Marchie! But I patted the kid on the back and took him up to his corner. The stadium was only about half filled this early, which meant about three thousand people; but there was plenty of noise. The kid blinked under the bright lights.

He looked across at his opponent nervously pawing in his corner, and his lips tightened the way they had when we asked him if he wanted a fight.

"By the way," I said, "I didn't get your name."

"William Munson," he said, and then he grinned at me, and I suddenly liked him a lot. "Billy — to you, Pop."

"All right, Billy," I said, patting his back again. "You go in there and do your best. Keep your chin down and your guard up, but don't be afraid to mix it."

The bell rang, and I took the stool out from under him. My heart sank when I saw him adopt a phony stance that he must have thought looked professional. He went half dancing and half shuffling out to meet his opponent, and I knew he'd get slaughtered, even though the youngster he was fighting was green.

This boy took a couple of tentative stabs with his left hand, and Billy jumped around awkwardly. Then

the roof fell in. This boy got Billy squared away to a corner and stalked him in. Then he led with a left and crossed with a right. He came in close and hit Billy with a right and left to the body, and Billy didn't know what to do about it.

The boy danced away and looked puzzled and then decided that Billy was a soft touch, so he waded in. He smashed a right to Billy's nose, and blood spattered across the ring. He slugged left and right to the body, and then left and right to the face. Billy's face was a bloody mess, and I hoped he'd have sense enough to sit down on the canvas and collect his twenty-five dollars the easy way.

The crowd was yelling, and the boy sensed the kill. He cocked his right and let Billy have it on the button. Billy sank slowly to the canvas and shook his head as the referee came over to count. Billy shook the cobwebs out at about five, and was up by six, the darned fool!

The boy came bouncing across the ring to finish the fight, and didn't see what I noticed immediately. Billy, on his feet, wasn't in his phony stance. His feet were spread, and he walked flat-footed to meet the boy. Billy's gloves were cocked on either side, and his bloody face was set in a determined

Illustrated by John McDermott

"Okay," said Marchie, and then repeated it. "Okay! But you're gonna pay for that!"

mask. He didn't know how to box, but he had been hurt, and now he was ready to fight.

That tense, excited feeling crept up into the pit of my stomach, and I crouched to watch, feeling the way I always do when Louis starts to stalk some hapless opponent.

The boy threw a straight left to Billy's face, and it spattered blood across the ring in a fine spray, but Billy didn't even stop. He swayed slightly to the right, his stance open and facing the boy, and his right hand looped around in a big, fast arc. The boy saw it coming, all right, and got his biceps in the way, but it landed with so much force that it knocked him halfway across the ring. He looked startled and went into a crouch, giving ground before Billy's steady advance.

Billy got him against the ropes and threw the right again. It landed high on the boy's head but nearly tore it off his shoulders. The boy was scared and went into a shell, but Billy just stood in front of him and opened him up as if he were a ready oyster.

Smack! Slug! Crack! *Splat!* Billy just shifted his weight from one foot to the other and threw those lefts and rights in that fast, overhand arc that everybody knows so well now. They had every pound of his weight behind them, and they beat the boy's guard open. I was afraid they were going to break his arms.

BILLY'S left caught the boy high on the head again and smacked him against the ropes. His right caught him in the mouth, and the boy's mouthpiece went sailing into the spectators. Billy's left finished the fight then, although the right may have already done the job. The left hit so hard that the boy left his feet and half arched onto the ropes. He came sliding down and landed on the floor in an inert heap. The referee's count was just a formality.

I rushed into the ring and wiped Billy's face with a towel. I draped the towel around his shoulders and threw the robe around him. Then I hustled him out of the ring. As we went up the aisle—different people yelling at Billy as he passed—I put the question to him.

"Where did you learn to fight?"

I felt his shoulders shrug under the robe. "Where does anyone learn to fight?" he asked. "It's self-defense."

"Not like that, it isn't," I said. "Like that, it's murder."

I got Billy in the dressing-room and started to take off his gloves. "Look, kid," I said, "remember this: Don't sign anything tonight."

He looked at me in a puzzled way. "What?"

"Don't sign anything!" I was talking low, so none of Marchie's stooges could hear me.

"I don't get it," said the kid.

"You don't have to get it," I said; "you just remember it. I'll explain later."

I had the gloves off and got a hot towel to work on the cuts. The door opened, and Marchie came in. With him was Johnny Pearl. Johnny is a sort of stooge of Marchie's who manages a few fighters. He manages them the way Marchie says he should, and Marchie sees that they get some nice purses. They had one of those form contracts with them.

"Kid," said Marchie, holding out a check for twenty-two fifty, "you surprised me. Congratulations!"

Billy took the check and mumbled a thanks.

"You got a future in this racket," continued Marchie. "All you need is a smart manager, and you'll be making plenty of money."

Billy looked up and got interested. I slipped behind Marchie and shook my head negatively at Billy. He caught the signal and glummed up.

"THIS is Johnny Pearl," said Marchie; "one of the best managers in the Midwest. I wanted to get you in the hands of a good man, so I brought him in. How about it, Johnny? You see him fight?"

"Sure thing, kid," echoed Johnny, "you got a future. Here,"—he held the contract up—"sign this, and I'll have you knocking down big dough in no time."

Billy shook his head.

"You don't wanta fight?" asked Marchie.

"Sure," said Billy, "I want to do anything that I can make some money at."

"Well," said Johnny, shoving the contract at him, "that's what I'm talking about."

Billy shook his head again and said a surprising thing. "I already got a manager."

Marchie and Johnny were studies of fish out of water, their mouths hanging open. "You got a manager?" asked Marchie.

"Sure," said Billy. "Pop over there is going to manage me."

Slowly Marchie's face turned red. He turned to me, and there was pure malevolence in his face. "I thought you were working for me?" he asked.

I was as stunned as Marchie, but I liked the kid, and I never had liked Marchie even if he did throw a lot of handler's fees my way. Marchie was too cold-blooded for my money. "Billy, here, just hired me," I said.

"You got a license?" asked Marchie.

Fortunately I did have one, because Marchie could have made it hard for me if I didn't. "Sure," I said. "I used to handle a kid now and then."

"I'll give you a hundred bucks right now for his contract," said Marchie, "and we'll forget this happened."

AT that time a hundred dollars looked big to me—but they don't print the kind of money that would have made me sell Billy down the river right then. And anyway, Billy was just giving Marchie a ride, of course. I didn't have a contract to sell.

"Sorry, Marchie," I said; "it was Billy's idea. I don't feel like selling out."

"You cheap, broken-down pug!" said Marchie to me. "I take you in here and throw you a couple fins a night, and this is what you do. Get outa here!"

"Hey," said Billy, his lips tightening up, "where's your manners?"

"You too!" said Marchie, turning on Billy. "I pick you up out o' the street, and now you act like you're a champ. You'll pla, hell getting a fight around here, you two tramps! I'll make you come crawling to me with that contract."

Billy slid off the table he was sitting on and faced Marchie, standing flat on his feet. I saw it coming and tried to stop it.

"Billy!" I yelled. "Don't do it!" But the right hand was already arcing through the air and smacked against Marchie's face with a sound as if you slapped a bundle of wet clothes against the wall. It knocked Marchie right back against the door, and I thought for a minute the hinges weren't going to stand the strain. But they did, and Marchie slid slowly to the floor, a little trickle of blood running out of the corner of his mouth.

"You fool!" I said to Billy. "You might break a hand that way."

Johnny Pearl was over holding Marchie's head, and slowly Marchie's eyes came into focus. He got up shakily and glared at us, ignoring the little trickle of blood.

"Okay," said Marchie, and then repeated it. "Okay! But you're gonna pay for that." He and Johnny left.

I sent Billy in for a shower, and thought things over while I packed up a few duds that I kept at the stadium. I wasn't worried about Marchie not giving us a match. Somewhere, wherever men gathered to see blood spilled, and that was wherever there were men, we'd get fights. What worried me was whether or not Billy meant what he said, or whether he was just needling Marchie. Because if he didn't really want to fight, I was losing some money for nothing.

We got out of the stadium before I asked Billy. We didn't even wait to see how Derkin was coming along, although I learned later that he won. He was a bum, but a good test-horse. He'd butcher any young kid on the way up that didn't have it.

"Kid," I said to Billy once we were outside, "do you want to fight?"

"Can I make some money?" asked Billy.

"Yes," I said, "I think you can make some money. You got heart, and you can hit."

"Then I want to fight," said Billy.

"What do you want money so badly for?"

"To eat," he answered soberly. He had a mature mind for a kid. "I want enough money so I can always eat without worrying about what the food costs. I haven't had a decent meal in over a week." He pulled Marchie's check out of his pocket and looked at it with sparkling eyes. "Let's go somewhere and get a big meal."

"You owe me five of that," I said grumpily, thinking of this hungry kid coming off the floor to knock out his man.

"I owe you half of it," Billy said. "From now on, you get half of everything I make—okay?"

"You mean that about me handling you?"

"Sure, if you want to."

"Well, I'm just a broken-down old fighter that had sense enough to quit before his brains got addled."

"Just see that I quit before mine get that way," the kid said, and he grinned at me as if that check he had was worth a grand. I always got a bang out of it when Billy was happy; that's why it hurt so much when Jo sank the hook into him and twisted it.

"We'll sign some papers in the morning," said Billy. "Right now, let's eat."

We never did sign any papers, but how that kid stowed away the food that night! I finally got scared he'd bust open, and called a halt. The bill was over three dollars, and that was a lot where we did our eating. I found out he was sleeping in flophouses or the park, so I put him on the davenport in my little apartment, and we kept that arrangement until we got into the big money.

The next morning the phone rang, and I had a suspicion who it was before I answered. Sure enough, it was Marchie.

"Hello, you bum!" he said, but his voice was jovial.

"Hello, Marchie," I answered cautiously.

"No hard feelings about last night?"

"Not me," I said. "I wasn't the one that got hit."

"Okay," said Marchie. "I was sore because I think the kid's got prospects, and thought I could build him. You know how that is."

I knew how it was, and was glad the kid had made the dodge out of his clutches, although I had spent half the night wondering if I'd make a good manager for a kid like Billy, and trying to figure how I'd bring him along.

"Look," said Marchie, "how about a prelim next Tuesday?"

"No, thanks," I said.

"What?"

"I said: no, thanks. The kid's no fighter yet."

"He did all right last night."

"Sure, but put up a good fighter, and Billy'd never get to hit him."

"Oh," said Marchie, and there was disappointment in his voice. I knew, despite Marchie's jovial tone this morning, that Billy and I had a bitter enemy.

"I'll give you a buzz when we're ready," I said.

"Okay," said Marchie shortly. "Do that."

I HUNG up and turned around, to find the kid regarding me. "You don't think I'm really a fighter?" he asked.

"You're not a polished fighter," I said. "You won't be for a while. You got one of the hardest punches I ever saw. But you don't know anything about the ring. I'm gonna take a month to show you what ticks—then you'll never get cut up the way you did last night. That's a handsome face; we'll take care of it and get a movie contract when you're champ."

Billy grinned. "Pop, maybe you're right," he said; "but I was just thinking of an easy twenty-five bucks."

"Don't worry," I said, "it wouldn't be easy this time—Marchie'd see to that. You work hard and do what I say, and a year from now you won't even sign your name for twenty-five bucks.". . .

My program called for a month of hard training. I had been quite a

boxer in my time, but I never could hit my way out of a paper bag. That's why nobody was ever afraid of me, and when I got where I wasn't so fast, I had quit the ring. But I couldn't get it out of my system, and hung around as a trainer, once in a while managing some ham-and-beaner for awhile.

Never having had a punch, I knew how valuable it was, and was careful not to take any of Billy's away. I let him keep that wide-open stance of his with the gloves cocked. It was unorthodox, but with him it was a natural—and how he could hit out of it!

I TAUGHT him how to weave and move around a little, watching for punches, sliding by them, riding with them, picking them off in the air with his gloves. He wasn't a short puncher, and I figured the only way to beat him was to get inside and punish him in the body with the infighting, tire him out and take the steam out of his punch. So I taught him how to tie up a man in close so he couldn't hit and the referee would have to break it up. But I wasn't worried too much. It would take the best in the game to keep working inside all during a fight without getting tagged at least once; and once was all a puncher like Billy needed. I figured by the time he started fighting the best, he would have enough experience and savvy to take care of himself.

I had trouble at the gym. Even with the heavy soft gloves on, Billy had a knockout punch. He hit too hard for the other kids at the gym. I had a hard time getting anyone to spar with him, and couldn't afford to hire anyone. It got so I put on the gloves myself and sparred a little now and then. But I was too old to give him much competition. So I had to let Billy work out his punching on the heavy bag and get him to go easy in the ring.

I got him in A-1 shape, but he still gained weight on me. He ate like a horse, and in a month all my money was gone and I knew we had to start fighting. I figured Billy was ready for the ham-and-bean circuit, anyway.

He had turned into a middleweight on me, weighing-in between 158 and 160 all the time, and I thought we'd have to hurry to knock off the middleweight crown before he turned into a light-heavy—I was that confident. And strictly on boxing form, I was right. But I wasn't considering all the forms, particularly the form of a certain blonde.

I called Marchie and told him we were ready.

"Oh," he said, "you're still around, huh?"

I knew better than that. I was willing to bet Marchie knew we had been working hard.

"I can give you a four-rounder," he said.

I was glad to get off so easy. I didn't want the kid in more than prelims for a few fights. "Okay," I agreed, "we'll take that. Twenty-five bucks still looks good to us. We'll bring our own equipment."

"Check," said Marchie. "Tuesday night then, third go."

"Who're we fighting?"

"Rod Derkin," said Marchie.

"Derkin?" I yelled. "What's he doing, fighting a prelim?"

"He has to eat too," said Marchie in a smug voice; and I knew, then, that he had been waiting for me to call.

"Wait a minute," I said. "Derkin doesn't fight for twenty-five bucks."

"I take care of my boys," said Marchie. "See you Tuesday night." He hung up.

I thought that over. Derkin was a crafty fighter, and Marchie was hoping he'd ruin my boy. I recalled Derkin's style, and then thought over how Billy had come along in the last month. I decided that Marchie didn't know just how good my boy was, and smiled to myself. Derkin would never get the chance to cut him up.

I called Potsy Hilton, a square sports-writer I knew, and told him I had a new kid that was fighting Tuesday night.

"Listen, Potsy," I said: "Marchie's got a grudge against us. He's throwing Derkin against this boy of mine in a prelim. Be there to see it, will you? And let Marchie know you'll be watching for dirty work—it's just possible he may try to stack the ref against us."

Potsy agreed readily. He didn't like Marchie's tactics, and had claimed in print once or twice that Marchie ruined a lot of good young fighters just to pour a little ready money into his own pocket. I felt better after talking to Potsy—he'd fix it so Marchie wouldn't dare pull anything.

WE came into the ring that night with a very poor crowd in the stadium. Most of the fans arrived in time for the semi- and the main event, and left when those were over. They didn't know that as far as Marchie and the sports-writers and I were concerned, this was the main event.

I had gone over to watch Derkin's wrapping job and see the gloves put on, but Rod just snorted at me and didn't say anything else. I felt sorry for him. He wasn't a bad pug—a little cruel, but otherwise all right. Here he thought he had a set-up, and didn't know that I had given Billy orders to cave the roof in early so there would be no chance for foul play.

Rod came shuffling out slowly at the bell, and Billy's wide-open flat-footed stance made him a little cautious. He wanted to figure it before rushing in, because he had heard that Billy was a puncher.

Rod shuffled around and tried a tentative left, followed by another. Billy let both of them slip past his head so expertly that I felt proud. It was going to take a good man to hit him; he had learned his lessons well.

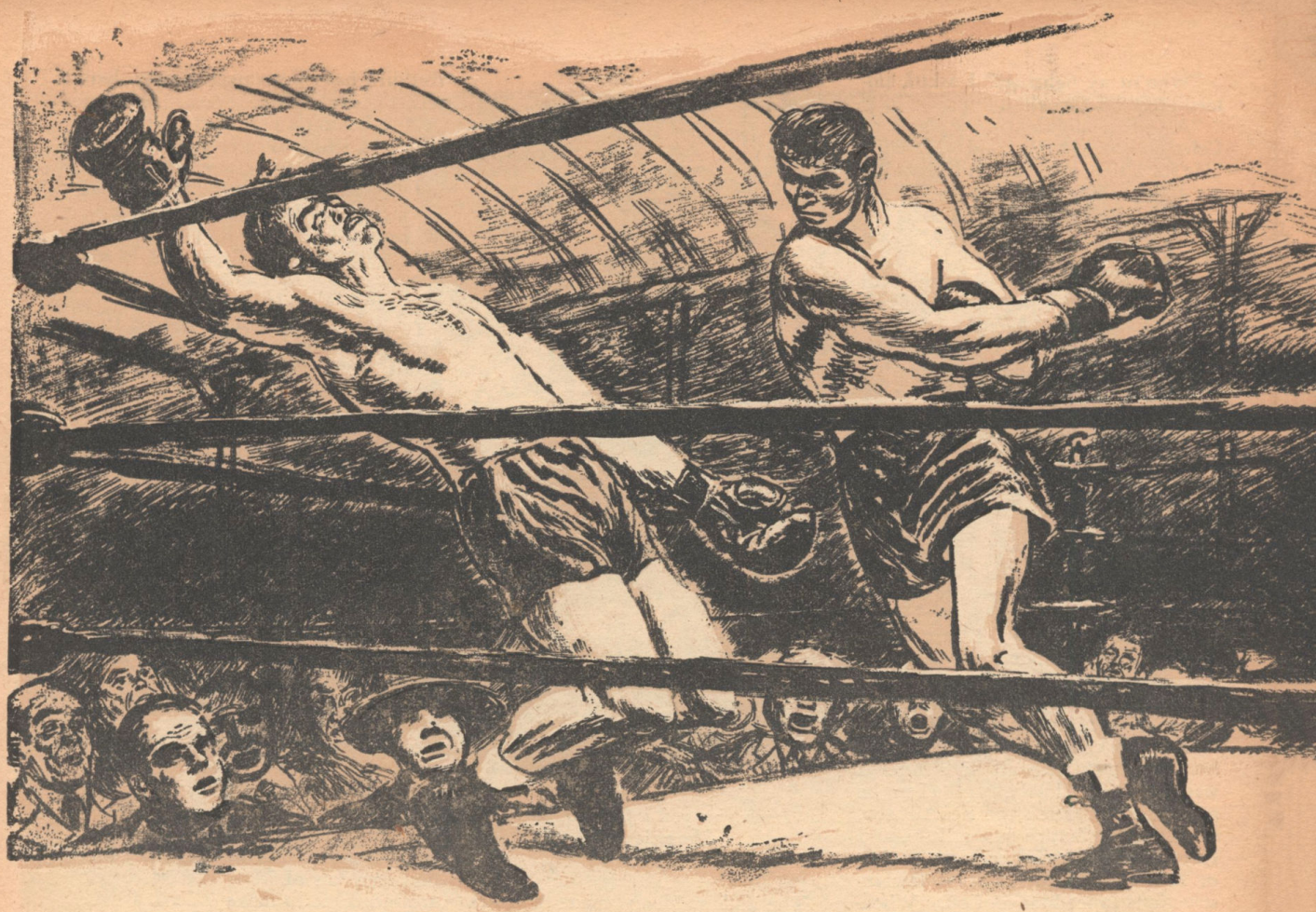
Rod tried another light left and then stepped in with a hard right. Billy picked it off in the air with his left glove, stepped outside it, and then that right of his went over in a dazzling arc. *Smack!* The stadium was pretty quiet, and you could hear it hit from one corner to the other; then pandemonium broke loose.

ROD'S legs went rubbery; he half stumbled and was half propelled back against the ropes. He straightened there and tried to concentrate, blood dripping down off his chin. But there was fear in his eyes, and it was so real it scared me. I was to get used to that fear in the eyes of Billy's opponents when they felt his power the first time. But seeing it in Rod's eyes that night, it frightened me, because I realized then how terrific my Billy was.

Rod went into a crouch and tried to slide away down the ropes, but Billy stalked him. As I had seen in his first fight, he had the killer instinct, and now he smelled blood. He got Rod in the corner, and Rod realized he would have to fight his way out. He tried to get in close, but Billy stepped back and let him have a left that knocked him back into the corner. Then Billy, following my instructions, went for the body. He let Rod have a one-two-three that doubled him over, and I think if Billy had let Rod fall, the fight would have been over then. But the kid straightened Rod with a right, propped him up with the left, and while I screamed at the referee to stop it, hit him so savagely to the head with the right that I saw a fan leap to his seat, yelling, his tie and collar torn off in his hand. I saw Potsy look at me and his face was white and strained.

Rod fell to the floor like a tipped-over sack of meal and never moved. Doc Masterson hustled into the ring, and I took Billy away so he wouldn't look at Rod. The fight had gone out of his eyes, and I thought he was looking a little sorry.

Marchie came into the dressing-room, and his face was white too. He knew I had a boy that people would pay big money to see.



The kid hit him so savagely that Rod fell like a tipped-over sack of meal.

"How about the main event next week?" he asked.

"Are you crazy?" I returned. "He's not ready for a main event."

"He's not fighting anything else around here," said Marchie, and I knew he meant it this time.

"What's the matter with you?" I asked.

"I'm not putting him in with anything that can't take care of itself," said Marchie. "And it's not the fighters I'm worried about. One killing here, and the city fathers will start screaming to close me up. Get it?"

I got it, and I was scared again. You know how it is when you realize you're on the verge of something great. You don't want to muff it. I knew then that I had one of the greatest fighters I'd ever seen, and I've seen some good ones; and I was afraid. The only man like him I could think of, who was still fighting, was Joe Louis; and I thanked my stars they were in a different division.

"I'll call you in the morning," I said. Marchie left, and I took the gloves off Billy. He sat there, looking queerly at the hands that had just wrought such terrible destruction, and didn't speak for a full minute.

"What did he mean?" Billy finally asked quietly.

"You're too good for the ham-and-beaners," I said cheerily; "that's all. But I'm afraid to rush you ahead too fast."

"We make more money in the main event, don't we?"

"Sure."

"Then we'll fight main event."

"Suppose you meet some wise guy that cuts you to ribbons?"

"So what?" Billy shrugged. "Either I murder someone or they murder me—that's what the fans are paying for. I'll take care of myself."

"Okay, Billy," I said. "I'll call Marchie in the morning."

Billy went to the shower, and Potsy Hilton came in. His face was still white.

"How'd you like him?" I asked, trying to be cheerful, but Potsy wasn't having any.

"I was just over in Rod Derkin's dressing-room," said Potsy; "he hasn't come to, yet."

I could feel the blood draining down out of my head as my face got cool. "Is he—"

"No, I don't think so," said Potsy. "But it's a good thing he's got a hard head. Masterson says it's a concussion, and they're taking him over to the hospital to keep him quiet. I think Derkin's fighting days are over."

"Well," I said, not looking Potsy in the eye, "Rod should have quit, anyway."

"Maybe," said Potsy. He caught my eye. "Pop," he said, "your boy didn't have to throw that last one."

"I know," I said. "The kid's one of those things—a killer. . . . You know?"

"I know," said Potsy Hilton, and his eye strayed meditatively to the far wall.

"You think I ought to take it out of him?" I asked.

"Depends on what you want," said Potsy.

"It isn't what I want," I said; "it's what the kid wants."

"What does he want?"

"Money!"

"Then don't take the killer out of him."

DIN CITY'S only morning paper made as much play of Billy's quick K.O. over Rod Derkin as they did of the main event. It mentioned that Marchie was promising Billy in a main event the next week.

I called Marchie. "We'll take that main event," I said.

"Good," said Marchie, "I've got your opponent all signed up—I was looking for someone to fight him."

"Who're we fighting?" I asked, immediately on the alert.

"A Cuban middle, by the name of Ceferino Santiago," said Marchie. "He's a fast boxer, and will probably try to outpoint your boy."

"Never heard of him," I said.

"He's got a good record," said Marchie.

I went into the kid's bedroom with a little worry nagging at my mind. At this stage a good boxer might outpoint Billy, maybe. Ten rounds is a long time for any boxer to go without getting hit, and one hit was all Billy needed. But I knew I could trust Marchie to get the best man available. I knew Marchie's type of mind, and it was vindictive. He would never forgive me for snatching away this prize, and he would never forgive Billy for giving him a taste of that deadly punch. But on the other hand, Marchie wouldn't let it interfere with his making money.

I found a couple of fast lightweights at the gym, and had Billy box them all week. The only way I could get the kids to spar with him was by agreeing that it was for Billy's defensive work, and that he wouldn't hit them back with all his steam. I watched Billy closely, and when he got hit, I could see the lips tighten, the shoulders hunch just a little, and I stopped the sparring on some pretext or another and gave Billy a few instructions to let him cool off. Whenever he got in the ring, he wanted to fight.

I was worried when we went to the stadium that night. The papers had been giving the Cuban quite a build-up, and he had some good men on his record. Billy was very happy and full of grins, as usual. But I knew he'd be the killer again, once the bell sounded. He liked to have me turn him loose on the heavy bag. He tore into it, and slugged savagely until he was gasping for breath. I didn't have to drive him into condition; he liked the feel of a well-fed, well-trained body.

THE stadium wasn't filled to capacity for the fight, since neither boy had a local following; but there was a good bloodthirsty crowd on hand.

This Cuban was fast, all right. He came out at the bell and was around Billy twice before the kid was set to fight. He tagged Billy with some light lefts, and the crowd got interested. Billy stalked him, not swinging a blow. The Cuban danced away, stabbed and danced, stabbed and danced, always on his toes. I saw Billy's lips tighten and his shoulders hunch, and my hands were gripping the ringside so tightly they hurt for two days afterward. I was more tense and expectant than anyone else in the stadium. I knew my Billy.

"I can give you a four-rounder," Marchie said.

The kid suddenly made a quick step and had the Cuban stuck in a corner. The chocolate-colored boy stabbed lightly and slipped down the ropes to get away. There was a fast, blurring arc as Billy's body bent forward with his right, and the following deadly sound of leather meeting flesh. The Cuban, caught off balance, did a complete somersault in the air before he hit the canvas on his face and stayed there.

There was a loud, prolonged obbligato from the fans in tribute to the deadly suddenness of the spectacular knockout. I was in the ring as the light was dying from Billy's eyes, and got a robe over him, got him turned away from the Cuban as the referee raised the kid's hand. The Cuban was sitting up in a dazed fashion as we left the ring.

That's when Jo stuck her pretty, deadly face into the picture. It was to Billy what Billy's right had been to the Cuban—just as sudden and just as conclusive. She was sitting on the aisle as we went to the dressing-room; and even I, who should have known better, thought this was merely a coincidence.

She put out a well-manicured hand and took hold of Billy's arm. She smiled up at him, and you have to admit she had lots of what it takes for a girl to get along in the world. Blonde, pretty and deadly. And she couldn't have been over twenty, herself.

"I'm having a post-fight party," she said. "I'd like to have you there."

I started to step between them, having seen this sort of thing before, and having no use for it; but I got a look at Billy's face and it stopped me. Billy was a kid from the streets, which means nobody ever cared much about him, and nobody ever gave him a break. He had seen girls like this, from a distance, and maybe dreamed about them just the way Cinderella dreamed about a prince. Here he was, face to face with a pretty and polished party-girl. His face looked as if he had slugged himself with one of his own rights; he was knocked out.

BILLY gulped; he struggled to speak, and finally he said: "I'd be glad to."

"Lexington Apartment House down here on Broadway and 17th," said the girl. "My name is Jo Stanton, Apartment 15A." Then she saw my glowering face in the background. "Bring your chaperon." She smiled at me to take the sting out, but I just growled and shoved Billy along toward the dressing-room.

We didn't talk about it until after Billy's shower. Being a main eventer, he had a dressing-room to himself. Billy dressed in his only suit, one that had seen lots of wear, and he tugged around on it to make it look a little better.

"Gee," he said, "this doesn't look so good to go to a place like that, does it? I'll have to get a new suit tomorrow."

"You going?" I asked.

"Sure," he said. Then he grinned. "You coming—chaperon?"

"You're damn' right I am," I said. I meant it. I was going to be there to see that he didn't drink, and that he was home early—I was going to chaperon with a vengeance. I had seen these parties before: A lot of bored people trying to make believe life was a big joke, and getting drunk to prove it.

"Billy," I said, "it's all right for you to go to these parties—it's what you start doing after a while that counts. You start taking a drink or two; you get some female on your brain—it gets to be more fun going to parties than fighting. It ain't good, Billy."

Billy frowned down at his hands, as he had a habit of doing, and tried to frame what he was going to say. "Pop," he said, "I'm just a kid—I know that. But there were times when I had a hard time eating. You know the story. But I listened to people like Jo—like *her*—talking, and I learned to talk the way I should. I watched them dress fancy and eat big, and that's what I want in life.

I want money like they've got. That's why I fight. I've wanted to hit out against the world and tear it apart more than once. And when I get in the ring I get a chance—and when I'm hitting that heavy bag, I'm hitting back at life, and I love it."

He was quiet and a little ashamed after the speech. But it explained a lot to me.

"Okay, kid," I said, "we'll go to the parties. But just remember there's a lot more to life than that. And you're a long way from the top, too."

He grinned and playfully slapped me on the shoulder with his open palm. His coördination, timing and balance were so perfectly blended to put his weight behind any blow he struck that he knocked me halfway across the room.

"Cut it out, you bum," I growled, "or I'll give you a lesson."

Grinning amiably, we set out to the party—and Billy was just like a kid going to his first; which was, indeed, the case.

JO STANTON met us at the door, and my dislike for her type kept getting mixed up with a liking for her, personally. It rang a warning bell in my head.

She was prettier than she had been at ringside, and was dressed in a low-cut evening dress that exposed every bit of her body while covering it up according to law. All the girls were that way. I was used to these high-class females, but could see Billy's face getting red as he wanted to look but felt he shouldn't.

She took Billy by one arm and myself by the other and toured this big apartment, which I gathered was all hers. We met all kinds of people. Most of them were interested in meeting Billy, and he made a good impression. He could talk better than most pugs, and he was a good-looking kid, not yet marked up.

We rounded into a little nook, at which there was a bar, and who did we run into but Marchie! Good old Marchie, dressed in evening clothes, cool drink in his hand, half-sneer on his face.

"You know each other, I'm sure," said Jo.

"Check," said Marchie. "Pop's an old friend of mine."

"Well," said Jo, "imagine that! Perhaps you two would like to talk over old times." She let go of my arm, and holding on to Billy's, steered him right through the room and away from me. I started after them, but Marchie stopped me.

"I want to talk to you, Pop," said Marchie.

"Make it short," I growled, looking anxiously at the doorway where Jo and Billy had disappeared.

"How much?" asked Marchie.

"How much?" I echoed. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"The kid's contract," said Marchie, and everything made sense.

"Knock it off," I said. "The contract's not for sale." And then it occurred to me, strangely enough, that Billy and I had never signed those papers. We were just running a partnership based on understanding and liking. But I had seen those partnerships break up before under the pressure of success. Then I shrugged a mental shoulder, and decided that the day Billy and I couldn't get along, Marchie could have him.

"Pop," said Marchie slowly, "I and a couple of men I know are willing to give you fifty thousand dollars for the kid, just as he stands today."

"As he stands today," I said caustically, "he's the greatest fight prospect in the nation."

"I'll agree," said Marchie. "But it'll take you a long time to earn fifty thousand dollars clear, with a middleweight. You can do a lot with fifty grand—buy your own gym, live the rest of your life the easy way."

"I like my life," I said.

"And," continued Marchie, "on the other hand, there's always the chance that something will happen, that the kid'll never make the grade."

"Like what?"

"Oh," said Marchie, studying his glass intently, "like him falling for some girl—say Jo Stanton, and taking his lumps."

"I get it," I said. "You fixed this."

"I'm just speaking hypothetically, Pop," said Marchie.

"What the hell ever that means," I retorted, not being too high on I.Q. "But don't let it worry you—Billy and I'll get along."

I LEFT Marchie standing there and went after Billy. I was worried about him. I'd felt that Marchie had something to do with Jo latching on to the kid, and the conversation I had just finished more or less confirmed it.

I knew why Marchie was after the kid's contract. Billy was a middleweight now, but he had about an inch to grow and thirty pounds to put on. Another year, and I'd have to fight him light-heavy, and from there he might be able to muster enough weight for the heavy ranks. Louis was getting old. I hoped that Louis would retire before Billy ever turned into a heavy. I didn't want to see those two meet.

I found Billy just in time. He and Jo were talking to a dark, slick-haired dude with those enticing mustaches you see in the movies—one step up from a pencil-line. Just as I saw them, Billy's lips tightened and his shoulders hunched a little. This dude had a possessive arm around Jo's waist, and he was speaking to Billy as I got within range.

"You make your living with your muscles. You must develop quite a few, including some in your head, old boy."

I grabbed Billy by the arm, and it was tense. "Time to go home, kid," I said and I steered him around. "Thanks a lot," I waved to Jo. She was watching us with an enigmatic smile on her face, and didn't seem to mind the guy's arm around her waist at all. I could see that it bothered Billy.

I got Billy out in the street, and he couldn't hold it back any longer. He started at one end of the Don Juan's family tree and cursed it down branch by branch until he got to the roots, and then he told what he'd like to do to them.

"Take it easy, kid" I said when he had finished.

He was quiet a moment, and when he spoke again he was almost crying. "That's what I mean, Pop," he said. "I want to hit guys like that. But I can't. They'd put me in jail for life if I went around hitting all the guys like that. They got everything I haven't, and I can't figure out why they should have it and I shouldn't. And then you put me in the ring where I can turn loose."

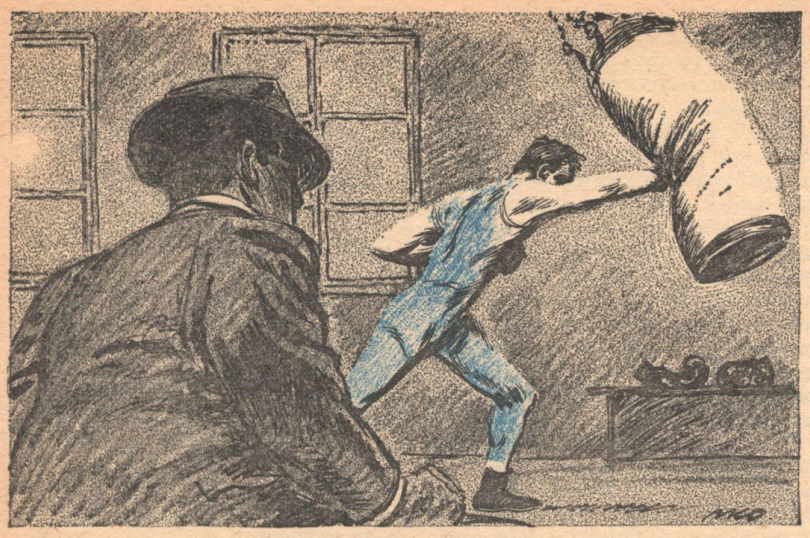
"Look, kid," I said, "that life isn't for you. Forget about it."

Billy wrenched his arm away from me and turned to face me, there in the street. His eyes were blazing at me, and he spoke low, harsh and hard.

"Why isn't it for me? Why can't I have a girl like Jo Stanton? Why can't I have plenty to eat and fourteen suits to wear? You bet that life's for me, and I'm going to live it. I'm going to live with people like that, and I'm going to show you that I can stay in training. I'll make a million bucks and then I'll retire—like Tunney did. Then I'll have a wife like—like Jo Stanton, and never have to worry again. I'll— I'll—" Then his voice broke. He gazed across my head for a moment, as if seeing that day, and then he turned and walked slowly up the street with me at his side.

"Pop," he said quietly, "I'm having lunch with Jo tomorrow."

SO that's how the thing started. And Billy was as good as his word. He lived with me in the little apartment, but he hobnobbed with society. He went to big parties, and he took Jo Stanton everywhere. He fell head over heels in love with that party-girl, and I couldn't figure her. She had that polish, that smiling surface that nothing could penetrate. She was always polite but never warm;



I watched him weave and smash until I couldn't stand it.

you figured it must be an act, and she was a terrific actress.

I couldn't object, because she wasn't bad for Billy. He trained for her and fought for her. He was fighting the world for what she represented, and he became more savage than ever. He never broke training, never took a drink, and she never objected because he came home on time. Sometimes there was lipstick on his shirt-collar, but I made believe I didn't see it.

Billy wouldn't put money in the bank. He spent it on clothes and on Jo. He insisted there was lots more coming. It was the day after Billy's first main event, when he laid out the Cuban, that Potsy hung Billy's monicker on him. I picked up the paper, thumbed to the sports page, and there it was. The subheadline said: "Din City Minute Man Goes Course in Par." Potsy pointed out in the story that all three of Billy's professional fights had been won in less than one minute. The Cuban had lasted fifty-eight seconds.

SO Billy became known as Minute Man Munson; sports-writers tagged him with it, the way they tagged Joe Louis with the title Brown Bomber. When the bell rang and one of his fights opened, the crowd stood and roared as he stalked his man. And for three more fights Billy didn't disappoint the Din City fans. He tagged his man early and beat a steady tattoo until his opponent was a senseless heap on the canvas. Where one blow would have done the job, Billy struck five. Not since the Manassa Mauler came roaring out of nowhere had such a killer been seen in the ring. And I knew that the kid was burning himself up; that something was consuming him from within that would break him if he didn't conquer it. But I didn't know what to do.

I took Billy to Chicago then, and they matched him with what was supposed to be a rough, tough middleweight. He bounced out of his corner and rushed in to slug it out with Billy. They met like two roaring express trains in a head-on collision. That fight lasted exactly twenty-seven seconds. I had a good look at the pug's face when Billy landed his first blow, and the same old terror was there as he realized the punching power he was up against.

Billy met two more men in Chicago, the best they could dig up, and the result was the same; Minute Man Munson was still shooting the course in par.

Nine straight fights, and all knockouts in less than a minute. Billy was famous from coast to coast. But the honeymoon couldn't last, and I knew it. Up to now no one had known Billy; and the men he fought, in addition to being second-raters, had mixed with him. From now on he would meet nothing but good men who would be more conservative than a Maine Republican.

We laid around Chicago then while Pat Kelly, the Chicago promoter, tried to get us a good fight. Needless to say, there was a big gate in the offing if Kelly could get the right man. But nobody wanted any part of Minute Man Munson.

Jo had followed Billy to Chicago and was living there, with Billy seeing her just about every night. I was worried, and suggested mildly to Billy that perhaps we had better train away from distractions. He laughed at me and asked me if he ever broke training because of Jo. I had to admit that she was a lot more sensible about it than most girls. But I kept worrying.

Jo didn't act like a girl in love. She took it casually when she couldn't see Billy, and she gave him up early evenings. I knew a girl like her didn't go home and go to bed that early, but I knew that Billy thought she did.

I watched Jo carefully when I was with them, and tried to penetrate that smiling surface. Just a couple of times, when Billy wasn't looking at her, it seemed to me that she let her guard drop, and that something akin to concern and longing came into her pretty eyes. But that wasn't what I was looking for, and it only made me mad and worried me more.

Then came what I had been dreading. Pat Kelly called, and he was obviously excited.

"Listen," he said, "I've got your boy in the big time!"

"That's what I'm afraid of," I said, and I meant it. I was afraid Billy was moving up too fast.

"Afraid of?" Pat Kelly half yelled. "Listen, you got the hardest-hitting fighter under the heavyweights. I can't keep on matching him with bums."

"All right," I said, "don't burst a boiler. Just who've you got — the champion?"

KELLY laughed gleefully. "Maybe you think I'm kidding," he said. "I ain't got the champ, but I got the next-best thing. I got Tommy Gantry!" Tommy Gantry was the Number One middleweight challenger, and had been dogging the cagey old champ for a long time.

"Get this," continued Kelly: "I talked to Emil Clemmons, the champ's manager, you know, and he has agreed to fight the winner here a month later. I'm putting both fights in Comiskey Park!" Kelly was like a kid at Christmas, and I couldn't blame him. This was quite a feather for him to sport.

"I'll talk to Billy and let you know," I said.

"Let me know?" Kelly shrieked. "Listen, you gotta do it. Some guys go years without a chance like this—you can't pass it up!"

"I don't know whether we're ready for Gantry," I said.

"You ain't ready for nobody else!" Kelly was getting hoarse. "You want to keep knocking over bums in sixty seconds? The fans know your boy can hit now—they wanta see him meet someone really good. Gantry and the champ are the only two good boys in the division right now."

"I'll let you know," I said, and I hung up. The phone was ringing in ten seconds.

"Listen," said Kelly, tears in his voice, "I gotta know today. I wanta

set this thing before somebody gets cold feet. You can't back out on me. I gotta know today. I'm in a—"

"I'll let you know tonight," I said, and I hung up again.

Tommy Gantry, and then, if Billy made it past the challenger, a shot at the title. That's how fast Billy had skyrocketed to fame. It's always that way with a puncher. A boxer has to make his name slowly, year by year, climb the ladder the hard way, take his chance with bum decisions. But the puncher is what the crowd wants to see, and there is no argument about the decision after a K.O.

I talked to Billy that night. Kelly had been hounding me all day, but I wanted to make up my own mind before I talked to the kid. I finally decided that if his mental attitude was right, he could beat anyone at his weight.

"Kelly called me today," I opened.

"A fight?" Billy asked, and his eyes took on a predatory gleam.

"He wants us to take on Tommy Gantry!"

"So?"

"So Gantry's the Number One challenger."

"Can he be hit?"

"Anybody can be hit—if you go at it right."

"Then let's fight him."

I frowned at my shoes. They were clean and shiny, like Billy's record up to now.

"Kelly says he's got a commitment from the champ to fight the winner here a month later—and Kelly's putting both of the fights in Comiskey Park."

The gleam in Billy's eyes heightened. "That means big money," he said.

"That's right," I agreed. "But I wonder if you're ready."

"That's your department," said Billy. He never argued with my decisions, and I knew he'd abide by what I said and never beef.

"You want these fights?"

"Sure. I got plans, and they include big money!"

I picked up the phone and called Kelly.

TOMMY GANTRY was a good boy, and I worked Billy hard. I tried to find some sparring partners who would stand up to him, but when I turned him loose, he beat them so unmercifully that they wouldn't take it. No man alive could stand up to his punching—if he could hit them. I was afraid of the day we met the man Billy couldn't hit. The kid was no boxer.

I heard from Gantry's camp that he was working for the fight as he had never worked before. He studied pictures of Billy's style, studied the range of his punches, studied his unorthodox manner. I knew how Gantry was going to work, how he'd have to work against Billy. He'd have to work in and out. Stay away and pepper Billy, and then get inside Billy's punch and hammer him hard in the in-fighting. Take the steam out of his punch and soften him up for the later rounds; Gantry would have to sap away Billy's deadly coordination in the early rounds.

I made Billy condition for a long fight. The day he got tired in the ring he would be through, because he had nothing but the greatest punch ever seen at that weight.

Jo was ringside for the fight, and Billy smiled confidently at her. She waved nonchalantly and gave me the big smile.

"This guy'll box you dizzy, Billy," I said. I was repeating what I had hammered into him ever since we signed for the fight.

"Don't let it bother you, and don't lose your head. He'll keep pecking away, trying to wear you down, but save your strength, wait for him to slip and then let him have it."

Billy's lips set, and his shoulders hunched a little as if he were already feeling the smack of his gloves on Gantry's face.

I SNAKED the stool through the ropes as the bell rang. Billy stalked out flat-footed, as he always did, and Tommy Gantry came out on his toes.

For a full minute Gantry didn't come close to Billy, and gradually the expectant roar of the crowd, looking for another Minute Man performance, died down. A couple of boos arose. The referee said something to Gantry, and suddenly Tommy darted inside, put his head against Billy's chest, and punished Billy in the body. The crowd yelled, and Billy tied him up as I had taught him.

Gantry got back outside and peppered away with some long-range lefts. Then he picked off Billy's right and came inside again. Billy tried to hit him two or three times, but Gantry made him look bad. And when the round ended, I was cursing myself for bringing the kid along too fast. It looked as if Gantry could keep this up all night.

The second round was the first all over again, and Billy couldn't catch Gantry in one place long enough to do any good. Going into the third, Billy's face was red from the peppering he had taken, although the skin wasn't broken. His body had red blotches on it where Gantry had staked out his target. But Billy wasn't breathing hard, and I knew the kid was still dangerous.

Gantry was getting confident now. Billy and I saw it at the same time. It was about thirty seconds into the third round, and Gantry stopped moving for long enough to throw a long right and left into Billy's face. Billy backed up, surprised, and the crowd thought he was hurt. They roared out in crescendo the way sports fans do, and they started yelling for more action.

Billy had been pent-up for three rounds, and when Gantry did that I began to feel better; at the same time I felt sorry for America's Number One middleweight challenger—for he had been fighting a lousy fight from the spectator's standpoint, but a beautiful technical job, and in a way, it was a shame to see him throw it away like that.

Gantry stayed outside, then came inside with a few body blows, brought a light one up to Billy's chin, and then went back outside. He stopped out there and threw another long one-two. Billy was waiting for it, and before the second half of the combination landed, Billy's deadly coördination smashed home a right to the bridge of Gantry's nose.

Gantry went back halfway across the ring on his heels, blood streaming from his nostrils, and bounced off the ropes to fall on his hands and knees.

Gantry took the count of nine and came back up, but he was no longer the neat, dancing, confident fighter. He was scared, and he didn't want to be hit like that again. He backed away fast, but Billy was stalking him. Billy slowed him up along the ropes with a hard left, and then hit him three times in the body.

Gantry went into his own corner and tried to cover up, but Billy was the same savage madman that had carved his way to the top of the middleweight heap. He weaved from side to side as he stood in front of Gantry and hit every exposed spot. He beat Gantry's guard away from his face and hammered home each blow with a soggy *splat* that couldn't be heard two rows away because Comiskey Park was full of screaming people, standing on their seats and turning the place into bedlam.

GANTRY was out on his feet, but Billy wouldn't let him fall as he hammered home the killing blows. The towel came sailing in from Gantry's corner, and the referee leaped to Billy, wrapping his arms around the kid and pulling him away so Gantry could fall.

I was in the ring immediately, as usual, and I could see the insane look in Billy's eyes. I took him back to the dressing-room, and I was a weary old man. What Billy had inside him was not good—it was winning for him now, but it would lose for him later, in a different kind of fight we all have to face. And I didn't know what to do about it.

WE were lucky to get the champion. A champion is usually pretty cagey about whom he fights. Many times, especially if he's a bum who fell into the title, he'll dodge the good boys. But K.O. Collins, middleweight champion of the world, was no bum. And in addition to that, he was lured by the one thing any fighter will go for: a big gate! That was his one reason for dodging Tommy Gantry—he'd be laying his title out for a small gate. But Billy had the drawing-power; and Emil Clemmons, Collins' manager, knew that Comiskey Park would be full for the fight.

Emil had promised a championship fight to the winner, but I was afraid he'd back out when he saw Billy's power; both he and the champ were at ringside for the Gantry fight. But the morning after Billy put Gantry away, I got a call from the Commissioner, and I got Billy out of bed to sign the papers before Emil changed his mind.

We had to give the champion 33½ per cent of the gate and be satisfied with 12½ per cent for our share, but you couldn't expect a champion to lay his title on the line for nothing. We signed the papers, and we both came out of there feeling like a million dollars. Eight months after Marchie and I took him out of the street that night, Billy was signed for a championship go! That's a rise as startling as Billy's punch.

Looking back at it, I think Collins figured he might as well get to Billy while he was still green. He had seen Gantry make a monkey out of him for two rounds, and was planning to do the same for a longer time. And Collins had a lot more punch than Gantry. We were to find that out.

But right then we were very happy. "Pop," said Billy, and his eyes were glowing, "when I beat Collins, I'm going to marry Jo."

The happiness left me like wind leaving a pricked balloon. *"When"* he did it, as if he didn't have a worry in the world! And marry Jo—something I hated to see. Jo was all right—she hadn't bothered Billy's training, but I don't like anyone that never lets any emotion show. I was married once, to a swell girl; and as far as I'm concerned a woman has to hit some rocks in life, just like a man, before she knows what happiness is. Loyalty comes from hardship and understanding, not from having a lot of money.

"Have you asked her yet?" I asked him.

"Not yet," said Billy. "Tell you what, let's go ask her right now—come on."

"What do you want me along for? Go ahead, ask her."

"You're my manager; I may need help from my corner. Come on, Pop, I know what the answer will be. Let's go over to her apartment right now."

Billy started the little car we had purchased. Since I was already in it, I had to go where he drove it. I sat sourly until we got there, mad about the whole thing. I liked the kid; I hated to see him go wrong. I wanted him to meet a girl who would take that burning hate out of his soul, the hatred that he turned loose on the punching-bag and on the men he fought. Win fights? I'd rather lose every fight that we had than to see the kid getting burned up inside that way.

We pulled up in front of the apartment-house where she lived, and again I tried to get out of it. "You don't want me around when you propose, kid."

"I'll just say: 'Honey, when I'm champ we'll get married.' Then I'll kiss her, and then you can kiss her. How about that?"

He took me by the arm and dragged me inside, into the elevator. I'd never seen him so happy before in the long months I'd known him, so I went along.

We got to her door, and it was standing open a crack. Billy whispered to me: "She must be up. Let's surprise her."

He opened the door, and we walked into a hallway with one of those carpets that come up around your ankles. Billy strode across to the living-room and rounded the corner into a sumptuously furnished place that was only about half as big as the Versailles palace.

I WAS right behind Billy and bumped into him, he stopped so suddenly. I peered over his shoulder, and wished I hadn't.

From where we were you could see right across the living-room into Jo's bedroom. She was standing at the foot of her large, rumpled bed in a negligee she might as well have forgotten to wear. Standing in the doorway, leaning easily against the door-jamb, a smirk on his face, was the dude with the mustache I remembered seeing the first night we met Jo. They looked just like two people caught in the middle of a lovers' quarrel—a sort of surly look on their faces.

Then Jo saw Billy, and for once that polished veneer wasn't there. Her hand covered her mouth and her eyes widened as she realized the situation.

The dude saw her reaction and turned to see who was causing the commotion. When he saw Billy, his smirk turned to a sneer.

"Well, well, the gladiator."

"Jo," said Billy, his voice like I'd never heard it. "What is this?" It sounded like a silly question. The dude was dressed, but it still looked pretty plain to me.

"Billy," said Jo, "I can explain."

"Naturally," said the dude, lounging toward Billy. "Who can't? I take it that you are now the Queen's favorite?"

"Shut up," said Billy.

"Oh, no, really, old boy. There's no need being that way. After all, this is one girl you can't lay out in sixty seconds, and I can give you some very good pointers on her technique."

"Shut up!" Billy said hoarsely, while Jo and I watched the tableau without being able to move.

THE dude kept lazily moving toward Billy, hands in his pockets. "You'll find it necessary to shave twice a day," he was saying, "—a great inconvenience, and I'm not sure she's worth it."

I saw Billy's lips tighten and his shoulders hunch. "Billy, *don't!*" I yelled, and leaped for him. But I was too late. His right came over in that blurring arc I knew so well and the dude sailed halfway across the room, crashing into a coffee-table and going to the floor amid its splinters. He was out cold.

Billy went over to him and stood looking down at him. There was insanity in his eyes, and I knew he was hoping the dude would get up—but the guy was listening to the birds and wouldn't come around for five minutes.

Jo was standing in the doorway looking like a wonderful advertisement for a burlesque show, except that she was registering tragedy instead of glamour.

"Billy," she said real low, "may I explain now?"

Billy turned on his heel and left the apartment. She started after him, but I blocked the way.

"Pop," she said, grabbing me by the lapels, tears and urgency in her voice, "I *can* explain!"

"Naturally," I said, in imitation of the dude, "—who can't?" I roughly knocked her hands off my lapels and followed Billy.

We went down to the car in silence. Billy drove through the traffic, and in a few minutes I saw that we were headed for the gym. I thought it might be automatic, that he wasn't thinking, so I protested.

"We don't want a work-out today," I said.

"I know what I'm doing," he answered. I looked at him then, and hell was in his eyes. That flame was burning inside him, and I knew he wanted to hit out against the world for always kicking him.

We parked outside the gym, and Billy spoke softly to me. "Pop," he said, "you're the only one in this world that ever treated me decently. I should have taken your advice. The golden life isn't for me—I'm a misfit, wherever I am. I hate poverty, and I don't understand what makes rich people tick. I made a mistake—I'm admitting it to you right now. And from now on, let's not talk about it."

"Whatever you want, kid," I said.

Billy nodded his head and got out of the car. In some ways he was very mature for one just turning twenty; but like most kids he didn't really know what life was all about.

I followed him into the gym, and we just nodded when some of the boys yelled congratulations at us. I stood silently by while he got into his togs. I helped him on with his gloves and watched him walk over to one of the heavy bags. I didn't want him to work the day after a fight, but I didn't try to stop him.

He started in on that bag, and his eyes blazed as he hammered away at it. I knew he would rather have had human flesh standing there, but flesh wouldn't have lasted as long as he wanted to go. I sat on a bench and watched him weave and smash until I couldn't stand it any longer. I saw the sweat running down his back; I heard him panting, his breath coming harder and harder as he tried to tear that bag apart. And then I knew what the Bible meant when it said the Lord had struggled with the devil. That's what Billy Munson was doing now.

I went into the small office the gym manager, Smiley Johnson, has, and struck up a desultory conversation with him. He must have known something was wrong, because he steered away from talking about Billy But every time that the conversation lagged, we could hear the vicious crack and smack of Billy's gloves on the heavy bag.

ONCE it stopped, and I hurried to the door. Billy had both gloves on the rope that suspends the bag and was holding himself up, his head between his arms. His sides were heaving in and out. I waited for him to get his breath, figuring he would go back to the locker-room. But when Billy finally straightened up, he went back to work on the bag. I went in to talk to Smiley some more, sick at heart.

The steady pounding stopped again sometime later, and I waited to hear it resume. When it didn't, I took another look, and Billy wasn't at the bag. He was in the locker-room, propped against his locker, sitting on the bench in front of it, still getting his breath in painful gulps.

"She's fixed you so you can't even hit an old man," I scoffed.

Billy's handsome young face was sweaty and drawn; his eyes had lost their fire and were dull. He was staring at the wall, but he wasn't seeing anything.

I took his gloves off and made him take a shower. I drove the car back to the apartment and put Billy to bed. He slept like a little baby after a good cry.

THAT month of training for the championship fight was a nightmare. A couple of times I was on the verge of calling it off. If I could have drummed up a good excuse, I would have. But I couldn't call the Commissioner and tell him that my boy had been disappointed in love and didn't want to fight next month. It sounded silly when you put it in words, but it was very real and very serious.

Billy couldn't put the gloves on for the first week. His hands were swollen and tender, and his wrists sore from the terrific work-out on the heavy bag.

I had him do road work, but he didn't get much out of it. His body was in condition anyway; it was his mind that was fouled up. He had lost his desire—he no longer had a reason for winning.

I put Billy in the ring with sparring partners that a month ago he could have scared with a single look. They waltzed around him and belted him as if he were a punching-bag. Not once did I see the tightened lips that I had come to recognize as a warning signal.

Billy tried. He tried because I wanted him to and he was hanging on to me like a hurt one-man dog. He felt I was the only thing in life he could count on. But the harder he tried, the worse he got. His timing was gone. That perfect coördination of eye, mind and muscle that makes the great athlete was gone.

I didn't mention Jo to him, and he didn't mention her to me, although I was getting to the stage where I thought maybe that was the only thing that would ever bring him around.

Jo, on her side, didn't try to get in touch with him. She was apparently taking the whole thing like the lady she tried to be.

Billy weighed in for the fight at a low 155, and the sports-writers ballyhooed that he was trimmed down for the fight of his life. Nuts. He was in worse condition than the night Marchie and I took him off the street to fight the preliminary. At 155, it meant he was giving nearly ten pounds to the champion.

The night before the fight I gave up and talked to him like a Dutch uncle. Nothing could be worse than the way he was.

"Look, kid," I said, "I'll give it to you straight: The only thing that makes you a great fighter is that you can hit a moving target more surely, quickly and harder than anyone I've ever seen. Outside of that, you're a bum. You'll get murdered. And this month you couldn't hit the broad side of a barn if you were inside."

He sat on the edge of his bed and dumbly agreed with me.

"Kid," I continued, "you haven't seen as much of this world as I have. You fell for a glamour girl and let yourself go to pieces when she turned out to be a cheap tramp. Don't you understand that she isn't worth that? There are girls left in the world who are what you expected her to be. Find one of them."

This drew a spark. He looked up at me. "Leave Jo out of this."

"What do you mean, leave Jo out of this? She's it. She's responsible for all this. How can I leave her out of it? She's a bum, and she's turned a good fighter into one."

"Pop," said the kid, and there was some spark in his eye, "leave her out of this!"

NOTHING could have stopped me then. If getting him mad was what it took, then I'd get him mad. "I won't leave that tramp out of this," I said. "You could have made a better deal than that for ten dollars at any one of a number of places I know about. You could have got a slut that was honest about it."

The kid's lips tightened, and his shoulders hunched.

"And then you let this fluffy-pants ruin you for a fighter," I went on. "A fighter? Huh! She's made a dough-ball out of you."

His right came blurring through the air, but I had been watching him and I knew him better than anyone he'd ever fought. Besides, I used to be a boxer, remember? I moved just enough so I could feel the wind of it whistle past my face.

"Look at that," I scoffed. "She's fixed you so you can't even hit an old man; that's what she has done to you."

He stalked me, his eyes blazing with the old fire.

"You read stories when you were a kid about some lousy woman tearing a man down, and you laughed at them. How does it feel?"

He tried with a left and a right, and I got away from both of them, but he had me in a corner. I knew what Derkin, Gantry and the rest felt like with those eyes on them and that dynamite ready to explode.

"You'll grow up some day," I continued just as relentlessly as he had poured it on in the ring, "and know a tramp from a lady, but you still think—"

The world exploded in bright lights, pinwheels and stars. Gradually the room faded back into focus, and I was on the floor. The kid was holding my head and crying like a hurt baby. Real, genuine tears were streaming down his face, and he kept repeating: "I'm sorry, Pop! I'm sorry, Pop."

Somebody was knocking on the door, and I sat up. I wiped the blood off my chin and yelled: "Go away, everything's all right." The pounding stopped, and in a moment I could hear footsteps walking away down the hall.

The kid looked at me through the tears that were gathered in his eyes—and that's all he was, just a kid that had been hungry all his life and that had suddenly been made famous. Just turning twenty, and he'd had more stuff thrown in his teeth than most men all their life.

"I'm sorry, Pop," said the kid again.

"It's my fault, kid," I said. I'm not much on emotion, and I never had a kid of my own, but I patted him on the back, kind of clumsily.

"I shouldn't have done it, kid," I said. "But I hate to see you this way."

"I know," he said, and he examined his hands the way he had a habit of doing. I knew, then, that I had fired him up for a minute, but I had just made matters worse in the long run.

Neither one of us slept much that night, and the next morning my jaw was so sore I could hardly eat breakfast. I couldn't remember ever being hit that hard before, and I've been hit by experts. It was like running into an express train.

I took the kid out for a long drive along the lake shore to get some fresh air in the morning, and in the afternoon I made him lie down and rest. He hadn't slept much the night before and fell asleep for a while as I sat looking moodily out the window.

THERE were lots of people lining the runway when we went into the dressing-room and they gave the kid a big cheer. The park was nearly sold out, as the writers were looking for a short, bloody battle. It was the biggest gate there since back in 1935, when Joe Louis salted away King Levinsky before the crowd had even settled. The writers had warned that it was just possible this fight might end as fast, and the fight fans were on hand early.

The champ wasn't quite the boxer Gantry had been, but he knew his way around, and had a terrific punch himself. The experts figured he'd have to get to the kid before Billy landed one of those pieces of dynamite. The way the kid was, I knew he wouldn't land anything. But all I could do was hope.

A lot of people figured the kid had just been built up for a big championship gate, and so there was money on the champ. But the sports-writers weren't fooled, and they said plainly that the kid was the hardest punching middleweight in history. So the two were even money when they went into the ring.

The kid was nervous, which was new for him. Usually he was just anxious to tear into someone. I couldn't stand it in the dressing-room so I let Willie Runyon, who'd be in the corner with me, put the gloves on the kid, and I went over to watch the champ's put on.

I made my way along the edge of the grandstand, the way it was fixed for the fight, to the champ's dressing-room, and ran into something that turned me so sick I didn't care whether school kept or not.

I saw Jo Stanton—very clearly it was she—talking earnestly to my old pal Marchie. I bitterly wondered who Marchie was betting on.

When I brought the kid down the aisle to his corner, the fans gave him as big a hand as they did the champion. His rise was as meteoric as that other great puncher, Joe Louis. Louis, by the way, was at ringside, along with Baer, Dempsey, Tunney, Ross, Canzoneri, McLarnin and a few other assorted pugilistic greats. Everybody wanted to see Billy and make their own estimate of him. They weren't going to be any more disappointed than I was. It would be a very short and bloody fight, all right.

Billy was apathetic in his corner. He looked at the champ, and there wasn't any of the old straining at the leash. He took his instructions from the referee in a dull way; and when the bell rang, he moved out in his old peculiar stance, but the shoulders weren't hunched the way they were when he was really after a kill.

The champ moved around outside him, feeling him out, and Billy moved with him. The crowd was hushed and expectant. Both of these men had a K.O. punch.

The champ was being cautious and Billy didn't care, so there wasn't much action. Then the champ feinted, and Billy took a premature swing which missed a mile. That proved to me he wasn't alert. He'd never have been fooled by that if he'd been sharp.

All of a sudden the champ ducked his head and stepped inside to hammer Billy in the body, the way Gantry had done. But the champ could hit harder than Gantry. Billy tied him up automatically, and the referee broke them. Twice more the champ did that but the round ended without much damage done. The champ was afraid of Billy's deadly punch or the fight would have been over by now, or so I thought.

"OKAY, Billy," I said to him as I sponged him off, "just keep watching him; you'll get an opening."

"Don't worry, Pop," said the kid, "I won't let you down."

"Don't talk," I said gruffly, "save your wind."

The champ was moving a little faster in Round Two. He knew the crowd wanted action, and he was a good champion. He picked off Billy's left with his right and crossed a long left and then moved away fast. The left snapped back Billy's head, but there was no counter-punch. The champ looked disappointed and tried it again, but again there was no re-

turn. Billy just wasn't reacting that fast, and I could see he was upsetting the champ's strategy. The champ wanted to do some counter-punching himself.

The champ came inside again and hammered at the body, and then moved out with his long left. Just before the bell he moved inside and straightened up to slam home a hard one-two to Billy's whiskers, what there was of them. It brought the crowd to their feet.

Billy had swung a few times, and just the swift power of his swing brought a roar from the crowd, but he hadn't come close and both rounds went to the champ.

As he came out for Round Three, the champ was still cautious. I could see he was afraid of getting overconfident, remembering what had happened to Gantry, and it was the only thing that was saving Billy. The kid was wide open for a slaughtering any time the champ wanted to start it, because I knew Billy couldn't get his mind and his body together tonight.

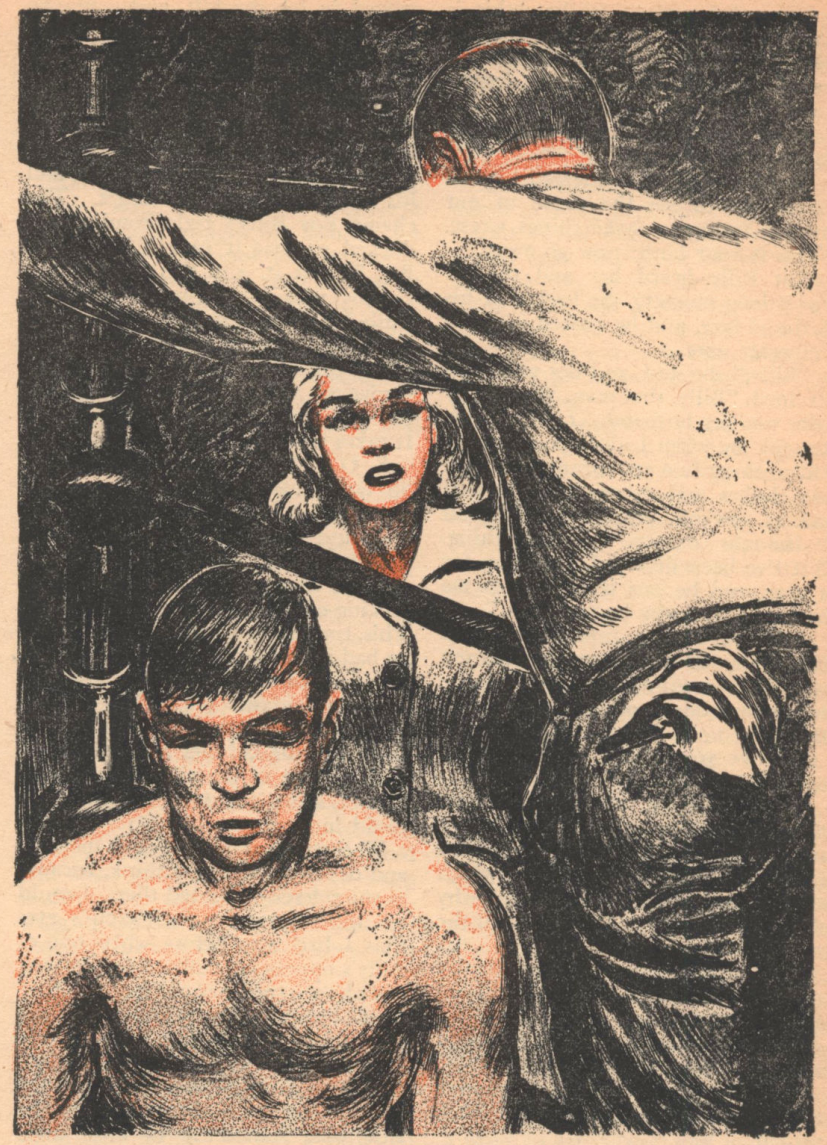
The champ continued his cautious fighting through the third round, scoring points but not hurting Billy, and the crowd was getting impatient. They wanted the blood they had been promised.

EARLY in the fourth the fireworks started, as I knew it was bound to sooner or later. The champ tossed one of those long lefts, and it caught a sleeping Billy a little off balance. The kid stumbled a bit, and the champ pounced in quickly, driving inside with rights and lefts to the face as Billy stumbled back against the ropes. The ball-park vibrated with the crowd's roar, and the champ threw caution to the winds as he followed in. He nailed Billy on the ropes and hammered with right and left.

Billy swung back with right and left, but they were wild, and the champ was under them to pound Billy's body. Billy slipped away into a neutral corner, but the champ was on top of him to rock him with a long right, and the champ drew first blood. The crowd saw the red and screamed a little louder.

Billy tried to tie up the champ, but the cagey old warrior moved away and then charged back in with more punishment. Billy hung on, and the bell rang on pandemonium and a near knockout.

We worked hard on the kid between rounds. I don't know why I tried to patch him up for more punishment, but I kept hoping that the beating would wake him up. But it didn't. He just didn't care. I knew it was only for my sake that he didn't quit, that he kept trying. I almost told him to take the easy way out and forget the whole thing, but it wasn't my creed, and I kept hoping something would happen.



"Go away," I said, angered. "This is your fault; now go away."

The champ started the fifth cautiously. He had eleven rounds yet, and he wasn't making any mistakes. But once he worked an opening and got inside, he started hitting hard again. He pounded Billy in the body, then suddenly switched to the head. Billy went back against the ropes, and he was helpless against the flurry of blows.

K.O. Collins felt he had the fight then, and stood up to slug. He had Billy helpless against the ropes, and he hit him with left and right and left and right, and slowly Billy sagged to the floor. His lip was open again, and there was a new cut over his left eye to add to the flow of blood.

Billy stayed on his hands and knees, and I knew he'd be up at nine. He was, and the referee wiped the resin off Billy's gloves before he let them come back together.

The champ was a little anxious, and Billy managed to clinch, wrapping both arms around Collins and holding on, which gave him a few more seconds to recuperate.

Billy was strong again when they separated, and the champ moved slowly. But once Collins got inside, he again hammered Billy viciously back against the ropes. He measured the kid, and hit with a right that would have ended the fight if the bell hadn't intervened.

I HURRIED to Billy, half dragged him to the corner, and Willie put the stool under hi I swabbed his battered face with the sponge, and saw that he was badly cut over the eye.

"Okay," I said to Willie, "this is enough." I turned to call the ref over and throw in the towel, when I heard a feminine voice calling desperately.

It was Jo, and she was practically in the ring with me.

"Go away," I said, angered beyond endurance to see the cause of our trouble trying to make things worse. "This is your fault; now go away."

But Billy heard her and turned. For a long moment she looked at his battered face, and he looked into her desperate eyes.

"Billy," she said, and her voice was strained, "Billy, that man, Steve Baldwin, was my husband. Listen, Billy, he took me when I was a poor hungry kid working in a restaurant, and gave me clothes and money and married me. I was only seventeen, Billy, and I thought money was everything. But I've been divorced from him for a year, and he was trying to get me back. That's why he was there."

Billy was staring stupidly, trying to take it in, and the buzzer sounded ten seconds. Jo rushed on, tumbling the words over one another, trying to get them in:

"I love you, Bill, that's all that counts—I love you."

That was it, she was a hurt kid, just like Billy. That explained a lot of things to me. The shell she wouldn't let get broken, the manner in which she weighed Billy, and above all, why the dude was in her bedroom and she not excited about it.

The bell rang, and I had to pull the stool out from under Billy and get out of the ring. Billy stood up and looked down at Jo, and they said a lot of things with their eyes.

The champ was coming across the ring, and Billy still had his back turned.

"Kid!" I yelled. "Look out!"

BILLY turned and the champ was on him. Collins hit him with a right and a left, and the kid's legs turned to rubber and my stomach turned to mush. Collins hit him again and again, and the kid went to the floor, his cuts all reopened despite Willie's expert patching.

The referee came over to our corner to count and yelled at me: "Why don't you stop it?" The ref hates to stop a championship match for a TKO unless one man's out on his feet.

"—Four, five," the ref picked up the time-keeper's count, and his arm began to swing. Billy climbed to his hands and knees, and I picked up the towel. But then I got a look into his eyes, and they weren't groggy at all. They were blazing slits, and I gripped the towel so hard I ripped it in two.

Billy got to his feet, and his bloody lips were a compressed line. His shoulders hunched as the champion moved in for the kill, and prayed it wasn't too late. If only it wasn't too late—because the old Billy was back in the ring!

Collins threw a hard, confident right and Billy moved his head to let it slip by. He didn't looked tired or rubbery at all. He moved surely, and his eyes were on his target. The champ saw Billy's right coming and ducked so that it caught him high. But he felt it, and this time it was Collins who hung on for a clinch while he thought it over.

There is nothing so demoralizing as to hit the other guy with everything you've got and see him standing there just as fresh as when the fight started. It takes something out of you.

K. O. Collins moved away now, and he was cautious again. The crowd sensed, somehow, a change in his attitude and their roar grew louder.

Billy walked after him flat-footed, and the champ tried his old tactic of picking off and throwing the long left. This time he got the counter-punch he had been looking for earlier, but it whistled past him so close that he moved away fast. He ducked under a left, and came in close to pound Billy, but the kid met him coming in with a right to the ribs, and I could hear Collins grunt. How that kid could hit!

The champ knew he had met the end of the trail then, I think, because as the referee separated them, I could see the respect in the champ's eyes that I had seen before when one of Billy's opponents realized for the first time how hard he could hit.

As the champ moved away, he wasn't fast enough, and Billy hit him with a left. It knocked Collins into the ropes, and he came off fighting, because he was a champion and the title does something to most men. Collins moved in slugging and almost turned the trick. For just a moment the battle swayed his way as Billy gave a step or two, but the kid was setting up for the kill, and he drove a right to the champ's chin that no man could withstand. The champ went back into the ropes again, and Billy followed him with another right.

The fight was over then, but I knew my Billy, and sure enough, he was the same madman. He wouldn't let the champ go down—he propped Collins up with a stiff left and measured off with a right that would have knocked Collins' head off.

But as Billy had the right cocked, as the champion was helpless under his gloves, as the crowd went berserk, something happened and Billy didn't let it go. Slowly he stepped back—slowly the champion went to the floor in a heap. He fell at Billy's feet and, as the kid stood there looking down at him, much in the manner the ancient Roman gladiators stood over their fallen opponents, two drops of blood slipped off Billy's chin and splattered on the champ's sweaty, gleaming shoulder under the bright lights. They winked up at Billy for a moment and then slithered off the rounded shoulder, leaving little trails.

Billy turned and went to a neutral corner for the count and I was a happy old man, because my kid had won two fights that night. He had won the championship and he had won the fight with himself. Of the two, the championship was the least important.

THAT isn't the end of Billy's story. You probably read how the kid married Jo, and how I was the best man. They're very happy, and Billy is training to meet the light-heavy champ. He's not the same old blazing killer, because he isn't hungry any more and he's learned a few things, but he doesn't have to be that way. He's keen as a razor in the ring and all he has to do is tag them once. He'll get old, he'll slip, and some day he'll take his beating. But don't worry, I'll get him out before he gets his brains addled.

But the good part about this story is that it has a tag line. The tag wasn't written until about a month after the fight. I met my old pal Marchie at a shindig and he offered his best.

"Thanks," I said, looking a gift horse in the mouth.

"I was worried about that boy of yours," he said.

"A lot of people were," I said, noncommittal.

"How about those two kids?" He asked. "Wasn't that the silliest thing you ever heard of?"

"What do you mean?"

"The fight they had – you know, Billy and Jo."

"Oh," I said, not getting four out of two and two.

"They'd be mad at each other yet if I hadn't told Jo I thought she was a stupid little wench."

"Huh?"

"Sure," said Marchie, looking deep into his glass and drinking the same way, "I had to practically shove her up to the ring there between the fifth and the sixth."

"You,"—I was incredulous—"*you* shoved her up to the ring?"

"You don't suppose a woman in love has sense enough to do that herself, do you?"

"But—but why? I thought that you hated the kid."

Marchie shrugged his shoulders. "Hell, let's leave personal feelings out of this. I had twenty-five grand on your kid to win." He nodded to me and walked casually away.

That Marchie!

Ordinances...

instructions & advertisements

of and for the direction of the intended voyage for *Cathay*, compiled ...by the right worshipfull M. Sebastian Cabota Esquier, governour of the mysterie and companie of the Marchants adventurers for the discoverie of Regions, Dominions, Islands and places unknowen, the 9. day of May 1553.

Extracted from Rich. Hakluyt's "Principall Navigations of the English Nation"...Here newly illuminated by Peter Wells, a saylor & late *scourge* of the Sulu Sea...

12 Item,

That no blaspheming of God, or detestable swearing be used in any ship, nor communication of ribaldrie, filthy tales, or ungodly talk to be suffred in the company of any ship, neither dicing, carding, tabling, nor other divelish games to be frequented, whereby ensueth not only povertie to the players, but also strife, variance, brauling, fighting, and oftentimes murther to the utter destruction of the parties, and provoking of Gods most just wrath, and sworde of vengeance. These and all such like pestilences, and contagions of vices, and sinnes to bee eschewed, and the offenders once monished, and not reforming, to bee punished at the discretion of the captaine and master.....

15 Item,

No liquor to be spilt on the balast, nor filthines to be left within boord: the cook room, and all other places to be kept cleane for the better health of the companie...

24 Item

The person so taken, {*from a strange shore*} to be well entertained, used, and apparelled, to be set on land, to the intent that he or she may allure other to draw nigh to shewe the commodities: and if the person taken may be made drunke with your beere, or wine, you shall know the secrets of his heart.

29 Item,

If you shall be invited into any Lords or Rulers house, to dinner, or other parliance, goe in such order of strength, that you may be stronger than they, and be warie of woods and ambushes, and that your weapons be not out of your possessions.

PERLAGUNA

OLD CAP FRAZIER was a queer one. No one could ever figure him out. He looked like an old retired heavyweight, but he lived and talked like a saint. I mean the real thing, not a phony. Plenty of people believed in him as much as I did.

He was supposed to have been a sea-captain in the old sailing-ship days, and a good one, but he'd quit when he was still young—almost forty years ago. Nobody ever knew why, and he'd never say. But I'll always remember the sea-stories he used to tell me when I was a kid.

Ever since I can remember, he lived alone in his pretty little place out at the end of Kualami Drive, right on the shore, where the fishing was good. He lived mostly on fish and rice, like a native, and usually dressed like one too. He'd built the house himself out of concrete block and red tile and native woods, and it was the cleanest, neatest little place you ever saw, with a little patio in the middle, and a fountain in it, and lots of flowers and birds.

Whenever he wasn't fishing, he was always whitewashing the place, or making rattan furniture for it, or carving wonderful designs into the woodwork—queer designs, like nothing you ever saw before, but delicate and beautiful. You'd have thought he was some kind of artist, but he always denied it, and he never sold a thing. He just liked to make things beautiful, he said. It was sort of a habit he'd picked up, living with some people out in the Orient.

He was happy in his little place, I think, although he had the saddest eyes, like people who have never got over something that happened to them a long time ago. Sometimes, when he was talking about the things he believed in, you'd wonder whether he really lived there at all, or only his body.

Toward the last he used to talk a lot about a place called Perlaguna, and a girl there called Meiling. You could see he was still in love with the girl, and she'd never grown any older for him. He said she was beautiful, and kind, and good, and had made him the kind of a man he was. But as he went on about Perlaguna, it began to look as if all the people there were beautiful and kind and good, and I began to wonder. They were just too good to be true; and so was Perlaguna. He wouldn't tell me where it was, even when I asked him. He said he'd taken an oath not to tell.

"I know what you're thinking, Davey," he said once. "And it isn't so. You're thinking I've taken to daydreaming in my old age. You just don't believe there could be any such people as that. It's a shame. It would do you youngsters a lot of good to know that people can really live that way; and if it weren't for my oath, I'd prove it to you. I've been thinking lately that someone ought to know about it before I go. Maybe some day I'll tell you, anyway."

And one day he did. It was a Sunday. We'd been fishing on the rocks all afternoon, and he'd been talking about Perlaguna again. I guess I still had that skeptical look, because after supper, along toward dusk, he limped out into the patio and sat down and said: "Leave the dishes and come on out; I'm going to tell you a story." I came out and lay down on the warm tile, and folded my hands under my head and looked up at the stars, the way I used to when I was a kid.

"I'll begin at the beginning, with the wreck of the *Naiad,*" he said, and it sounded familiar. He always began at the beginning and there was always a shipwreck. I was glad, because I wanted to hear something I could believe in, and you could always believe in his shipwrecks. But this one was different, and after a while I didn't know what to believe.

IT was back in '98 (he said); the *Naiad* was the last of P. Conway & Co.'s handy little barques. The company has long since succumbed to the steam trade, so they'll never know what became of her. I was their second senior master in sail then, Davey; at the age of thirty, mind you. But I wasn't willing to ship in steam, and so I had to go as mate of the *Naiad,* under the senior master.

His name was Elihu Harkness, and a meaner scoundrel never lived. I don't try to disguise my contempt for him from the start. He was a little pop-eyed, scrawny-necked, gray-haired Cockney, with the narrow jaw and jutting teeth of so many of his breed. He boasted continually, and talked through his nose, poking it at you like a speaking-trumpet, as if he expected you to contradict everything he said. He seemed to enjoy r'iling everyone within sound of his voice, and especially me. Having a master for his mate excited him the way an open wound excites flies.

In those days I looked pretty rugged, Davey. It was enough, with a handy knowledge of seamanship, to win me the respect of the crew without having to use much force, which I never liked. Harkness, though, being a little man with a taste for tyranny, tried to make up in profanity and bluster what he lacked in character, reminding me of a little street sparrow noisily picking on a dung-heap. Still, because he was captain, his authority was absolute, and his word was the law.

It was a hard situation, and the weather made it worse. For we were beating up the South China Sea in the northeast monsoon; and the low overcast, frequent mists, head winds and variable currents had all made my accounting of the ship's position from day to day very difficult and uncertain.

THIS was not too bad as long as we were south of Latitude 7°-30′ north, and west of Longitude 113° east. North and east lay a vast area of uncharted dangers which to this day has never been surveyed, and is shown on the charts simply as Dangerous Ground. The Chinese call it the *Bhu Hao Hai,* or No Good Sea. It is nearly three hundred miles long and two hundred wide, and is the graveyard of more ships than anyone has counted. From shipboard it looks like just another expanse of open ocean, but the mists that haunt it hide as treacherous a collection of sunken atolls, coral reefs and submerged pinnacles as you'll find anywhere in the world. I advised Harkness to keep to the open sea to the westward of this graveyard along the coast of Indo-China, but that was enough, in itself, to decide him on the opposite course. Claiming no love for a lee shore, he was going to hold her to an easterly course until we made the Coast of Borneo, and then take her up Palawan Passage with the Bhu Hao Hai on one side and the unsurveyed reefs off the west coast of Palawan on the other.

We made but one landfall, toward sunset, before setting course for the Passage, and I will always believe that

The dramatic story of a strange uncharted Pacific island, and of a modern Paradise Lost. . . . A novelette.

by DURAND KIEFER

Illustrated by Frederick Chapman

it was the coast of Balabac Island and not Borneo, as Harkness thought. But he started beating up it, anyway, standing off and on in the black night and the howling wind.

On the midwatch the barometer began to drop like a crazy thing, and by morning we were fair in the teeth of a bad typhoon. I had her down to her main course by then, and before long we were bucking the mountainous seas under nothing but jib and jigger, hove to on the starboard tack. Even so, it was all the men at the pumps could do to keep up with the seas that kept piling aboard. At last the jib blew away, and then the jigger. Twice we rigged sea-anchors that carried away, and once we set the storm-trysail on the spanker boom, but nothing could stand against the storm. The stout little hooker blew off to leeward under bare poles, wallowing in the wastes of the No Good Sea, at the mercy of wind and wave.

FOR twenty-four hours I had kept the deck with Harkness, although in his funk he kept ordering me out of his sight. By the second midnight, realizing the hopelessness of the situation, I was glad enough to go below and save my strength for the final reckoning.

I was still below when she struck, a little after two A.M. That awful jar, that is the nightmare of every sailor, brought me out of my bunk at a leap, standing. The ship staggered free after the first blow, while I was fighting my way up the companionway to the deck. I arrived, to find Harkness screaming at the top of his lungs and struggling to free himself from the mizzen shrouds that had carried away and pinioned him to the rail.

The whole world was a seething caldron of writhing white water and driving gray mist. There was nothing else. Before I could reach Harkness, the ship struck again, heavily and finally, and heeled to her gunwales. The seas pounded her farther onto the reef, and each blow fractured more of her ribs and stove more of her planking.

Everything that could go overboard then, went. The two boats first, splintering as they went; the deckhouse next; finally the masts, one by one. The crew, swarming up from below, were torn from their handholds and washed into the sea. Only the strongest and the smartest could keep their holds on the wreck. Those that swarmed up the masts, like ants up a grass-stalk, went when the masts went. Within two hours there was only the captain and me left aft, and the carpenter, the cook, and two or three seamen lashed to the forecastle-head.

There was no more reason for us to stay. At the rate the ship was breaking up, there would be nothing left to cling to by morning. But there was no place to go. Nothing but the wild sea surrounded us—unless a blackness in the mist to leeward might be land. It was not likely, as there was thought to be little land in the Bhu Hao Hai; but by straining my ears above the gale, I thought I could make out the faint thunder of distant surf.

It was our only hope, and I decided to abandon ship. Harkness couldn't interfere as long as he was still trapped in the mizzen shrouds, so I hailed the miserable little group on the forecastle-head and signaled them to work their way aft to us if they could. Like mountain-climbers, all lashed together and swinging from hold to hold, they fought their way across the broken decks until they clung with me on the poop. They were all big men, but near the end of their strength.

When we had got the spanker-boom rigged with lifelines and cast free to launch to leeward, I fought my way up to the weather rail to free Harkness. I was met with such a hail of abuse for not attending him earlier that I was tempted to leave him there to the mercy of the sea he claimed to know so well. But in all humanity, I couldn't bring myself to do it. It was a mistake that I've regretted more than any other I've ever made.

Working fast, for every moment aboard was liable to be our last, I chopped away the mizzen shrouds and lowered Harkness down to the men by the spar. With a prayer that it would float us to land before we were all drowned or crushed against the rocks, we launched it into the sea.

I don't remember much after that for a while. After what seemed like a long time, the spar struck something hard in the gray dawn, recoiled and struck again. I felt a terrible pain some place in my half-dead body, and though there was something solid under foot, I couldn't stand on it. A heavy object smashed into me as I struggled for footing in the surf. I grabbed it, and swimming, crawling and clawing, dragged it clear of the water up a slight slope, and fell right to sleep.

When I awoke, it was murky daylight, full of streaming mist and shrieking wind. I lay on a narrow beach of coral sand, backed by a sheer cliff, within a stone's-throw of the surf. Beside me lay the form of Captain Harkness, still within reach of my hand. Up and down the beach the bodies of a dozen or so men lay sprawled out as if they were either dead or asleep.

I tried to get up, but it was too painful. My right leg was broken. I saw that Harkness was breathing, and tried half-heartedly to shake him awake, without success. I called once or twice to the others, but got no response, and lay back to think, digging my fingers into the sand whenever the pain was too much.

I had not the faintest idea where I was. It couldn't be Palawan or Borneo or Balabac, because the ship had been blown away from them by the typhoon. It couldn't be the coast of Indo-China, five hundred miles across the South China Sea, because we couldn't have drifted that far from our course. It was probably an island, somewhere in the Bhu Hao Hai. But what island, and whether it was charted or uncharted, inhabited or uninhabited, I couldn't tell. I hoped that it wasn't inhabited, because the most likely inhabitants would be either the head-hunting Dyaks from Borneo, or the murderous Moros from the Sulu Sea, and there wasn't much to choose between them.

But it didn't really matter much. It wouldn't affect anything but the way I would die. Because if I couldn't move, I was going to starve or die of exposure anyway, and the tropic sun that would follow the storm would just help me along. I supposed the others on the beach, if they weren't dead already, were too far gone to care. I know I was. I fell asleep again.

When I woke up the second time, the afternoon sun was fighting it out with the mists for the command of the beach. The wind had hauled offshore and fallen to a hearty breeze, and the cloud that capped the island had lifted so I could see several hundred more feet of volcanic rock and lava-spill rising above me. Down the beach most of the bodies still lay on the sand, though the carpenter and one of the seamen seemed to be fussing over the cook; and while I watched them, the captain groaned beside me and called for water.

At that instant I heard a footfall on the coral behind me, and swiveled my head around fast. I saw a big man in a *pareo* standing almost atop of me. Five more like him stood a little farther back, in a group.

IT was a strange thing, Davey. I was expecting headhunters or worse on that island, if anybody at all, and I was expecting to die. But the minute I saw those fellows, I knew I wasn't going to; and it wasn't their appearance so much, because they had dark skins and not much clothes, like any other native. It was just the look in their eyes. You could see they were intelligent and kind.

They were all well-built, with white men's features, and just a slight Oriental slant to the eyes. Two of them had light hair; one of them was red-headed; and the others were dark. They wore their hair short, and

O'Byrnne spoke up. "In Perlaguna we think violence is the same as insanity."

were not even armed. They seemed to be more curious than hostile.

The one standing over me was smiling, showing a fine set of teeth.

"Buenas dias. Como esta?" he said.

I was so surprised to hear Spanish that I couldn't remember a word of it to answer. I wanted to tell him my leg was broken, but all I could think of was the words for good and bad.

"Bueno," I said, and blurted in English, "But my leg's broken."

"Ah, so you're English!" said the fellow, in English as good as my own.

Well, I was too dumfounded to think at all then. "I'm an American," I finally stammered. "What in God's name are you?"

The man's smile broadened. "So you don't know where you are," he said. "Well, that's just as well. But don't worry. You'll be taken care of. My name is Tsu Shih O'Byrnne." He held out his hand.

I had to ask him to repeat it twice, and still I couldn't believe it. But I sat up and took his hand and shook it. "I'm Ian Frazier," I told him, "mate of the American barque *Naiad*, wrecked out there last night. This is Captain Harkness, master of the *Naiad*"—pointing to the form beside me. "The others are all that's left of our crew."

Harkness opened his eyes at that, and croaked for water again. The stranger with the Chinese-Irish name and the Spanish-Filipino looks, spoke to his men in Spanish, and one of them offered Harkness water from a jug. The carpenter was hallooing for help down the beach, and the

O'Byrnne fellow sent a couple of his men down there with a stretcher of bamboo and grass-mat that they took from a big two-wheeled cart. Two more brought another stretcher for me, and picked me up easy in spite of my size, and carried me to the cart.

The other survivors were brought up and crowded in beside me. There were only six of us left, in pretty sad condition, out of the whole ship's company of forty-four. Besides the captain and me and the Swede carpenter, whose name was Neilson, there was the colored cook Willie Pomeroy, and two seamen, both Hawaiians, whose names I don't remember. I asked after the others I had seen on the beach, and was told that their bodies would be decently buried there after a while. When I asked were there any others still on the wreck, O'Byrnne just pointed to sea, and I lifted up my head and saw that the wreck had washed from the reef and disappeared. Our rescuers were busy hauling wreckage from the surf for salvage later, and I was glad Harkness was still too weak to notice, because he surely would have had something to say about it that would have got us all off on the wrong foot with these people.

Those six big fellows started pulling the cart down the beach, and they made good time till they came to a narrow stream that rushed out of a gorge in the cliffs and across the beach to the sea. There were a couple of narrow outrigger canoes there decked over to make space for a half-dozen men to lie on, and I wondered how they were ever going to get them up that stream against that current. It was easy. When we were loaded aboard, one of the islanders blew on a big horn he carried, and the canoes started moving up the stream on the end of a long tow-rope that ran up the gorge clear out of sight.

The gorge was cool and dark and noisy with the roaring of water and the whistling of wind, and damp with blowing mist and spray. The walls rose sheer into the mist on both sides, and I began to wonder how anybody could live in such a place. I hadn't seen anything on the island yet that would support a mountain goat, much less a man. But the gorge only got narrower and the current swifter, and the boatmen had all they could do just to keep us from crashing into the sides.

When we finally stopped crawling upstream, the roar of falling water was a din that covered us like shroud. I raised my head, and saw that the boats lay straining at the tow-rope at the foot of a huge lock-gate. The lock took up about half the width of the gorge, and the other half was filled by a big millwheel and a spillway, a good ten feet high.

The lower lock gate swung slowly open, and the boatmen cast off the tow-rope and hauled us into the lock, and the lower gate closed behind us. From the great clanking and grinding of machinery somewhere, it appeared that the power to work the gates came from the millwheel.

CAP FRAZIER stopped and fumbled in his pockets for his pipe. The tile of the patio had got cold, and I got up and moved to the hammock.

"What pulled the tow-rope?" I asked him.

His big bumpy old face clouded up in the flare of his match. "You never used to ask questions like that," he said. "You beginning to doubt my word?"

"No," I told him, "Of course not. I just wanted to know."

"Well," he said, puffing leisurely, "those people had a big windlass they could gear into the millwheel, too. They had that stream fixed so nobody could ever get up it but themselves, and I figured rightly that it was the only way into the interior of that island. I was mighty glad they were so friendly, because you couldn't get out of there, either, unless they wanted you to. It made me wonder. They had the kind of faces you would call civilized, all right—anywhere else. But in a place like this—well, you can't blame me for wondering."

He went on:

I looked up to see the one who called himself O'Byrnne bending over me. With the boats resting in the lock, he had a moment to look around. "It won't be long now," he shouted. "How are you feeling?"

That made me feel better. I nodded and managed a smile. I wanted to ask him a lot of questions now that I was feeling up to it, but the spillway was making too much noise. Harkness was beginning to stir around and moan, and I couldn't help wondering how these people were going to act when he came to and began to boss them around. I wasn't so sure they would keep on being so friendly then.

THE lock had filled; the upper gate swung open. The current was slower above the dam, but the boatmen still had to work hard to paddle us against it. The gorge widened rapidly up here, and the walls fell away into steep slopes with a little scrub on them. The low fog that capped the lower gorge lifted gradually, and the air grew warmer. There were glints of sunshine on the water ahead, and the roar of the spillway had fallen away to a murmur.

I had propped my head on my arms, expecting to see a change of scenery. Suddenly the banks opened up, and we slipped out into warm and blinding sunlight. We were floating on a broad lake or lagoon, all clear turquoise, lying like a jewel in a broad bowl of jade. It was a huge volcanic crater, its inner slopes all covered with tropical growth. A few bright green islands dotted the big inland sea, and the banks lay flat and fertile in some places, with a narrow collar of white beach, and in others they rose sharp toward the summit of the surrounding ridge, several thousand feet high. Here and there a colored sail slanted in the breeze. A crown of clouds rode the ridge, making rainbows on the inner slopes, like soapsuds spilling into a big green cup. After what we'd been through, it looked mighty good.

I trailed my fingers over the side and tasted them. It was a salt-water lagoon. I figured it was about three miles in diameter. I gave the crater a diameter of about five miles, and the island about six.

"What do you call this island?" I asked O'Byrnne, and he said it was Perlaguna. I'd never heard of it. He said it came from two Spanish words meaning pearl and lagoon. I told him it looked more like turquoise to me, and asked him where it was.

"From the ridge, it looks more like a pearl set in jade," he said with a smile. He had hauled a furled sail from a hatch, and his men were busy rigging it on a bamboo mast.

Harkness had come to life and was taking all this in. "Mr. Frazier," he piped, "I'll do the talking from now on. As usual, you're not getting anywhere."

"Mr. Frazier has not tried," said Señor O'Byrnne. "His leg is broken, and he's in pain. How do you feel, Captain Harkness? My name is Tsu Shih O'Byrnne." He was still working on the sail.

"I didn't ask you!" snapped Harkness. "Now what's the position of this place?"

O'Byrnne and his men had spread their sail to the light breeze, and the boat was skimming along like a feather, with its lee outrigger kicking up spray. The other boat was following under sail too.

O'Byrnne sat down at the tiller-ropes, and just laughed. "I thought that ship captains always knew where they were," he said.

"You keep a civil tongue in your head," Harkness said, "or you'll regret you didn't when I get my strength back."

All three of the boatmen looked at the Captain as if he'd kicked them. He stuck his nose out and swore at them through it. I waited for them to toss him overboard. Finally O'Byrnne spoke up. "I ought to tell you," he said, "that in Perlaguna we think violence, except in sport, is the same as insanity, and treat it that way. If you don't want everyone here to think you're crazy, please try to be

decent. Otherwise, you'll be locked up. It's been so long since any of us had to put up with your kind, that we don't know just how to take it."

YOU understand, Davey, that this O'Byrnne didn't talk like you or me. He talked like an Englishman or a college professor, giving Harkness a lecture, but you can't expect me to do it. I don't suppose Harkness could even understand him, but he yelled, "And who the hell are you!" at him, and then told him he must be some small-fry interpreter for his chief, or he wouldn't be sent out on the beach with a handful of roustabouts.

The two crewmen kept staring at Harkness as if he was a mad dog. But O'Byrnne just looked puzzled. "Please, Captain," he said, "I've warned you. My men don't understand English, but they understand anger, and think it's crazy. They'll report you for quarantine unless you quit it."

I rolled over to look at O'Byrnne.

"Are you serious?" I asked him.

"Of course," he said, as if I was crazy, too.

I decided right there that I could learn a lot from those people, and I was willing to try.

"You're the one that's crazy," said Harkness. "A whole island of people as crazy as my mate!"

I'd been waiting a long time for the chance to set the Captain straight on that score, but I decided this wasn't it. By the law of the sea, he was still absolute ruler of his crew until we were legally discharged. Or until he died, of course. I wondered why I'd saved his life twice, knowing that this wasn't the last time I'd wonder.

"Where are you taking us?" I asked O'Byrnne.

"To the Univercity," he said as if it made sense.

I looked at him. "University!" I said. "In the middle of the China Sea! Are you out of your head?"

He just smiled. "It is plainer in Spanish," he said. "Univerciudad, —univer-*city*, that is. Two words put together again. It's hard to explain. You'll see what I mean."

"Crazy!" snorted Harkness again. "A lunatic asylum, I'll wager, stuck off here by some government or other, like a leper colony. I warned you to let me do the talking," he told me.

I propped myself on my elbows and stared hard at the shore, looking for something that looked like a school. I had to admit it sounded crazy, and I began to think that Harkness might be right. Something about the place was certainly queer. These people were too friendly, for one thing, and their talk didn't make much sense, for another. I was kind of ashamed that I'd pretty nearly been taken in by it. I began to look for the usual crummy nipa shacks, rusty tin roofs, and peeling plaster walls that marked settlements in these parts. But I hated to think of lying for weeks with a broken leg in some dark stinking hole with the chickens and hogs scratching around under the floor, and the heat and the dust, and the insects, and nothing but herbs and mumbo-jumbo for medical care.

"I've been thinking of leaving, Meiling," I said.

The two boats were heading for a high point that made out into the lagoon a ways, but I couldn't see any signs of habitation on it. The land beyond fell away into a deep cove or bay.

"Your city's well hidden," I told O'Byrnne.

"Yes," he grinned. "You'll discover our ancestors were wise in many ways."

Their town was around the other side of the point, on gently sloping ground at the head of the bay. At first it looked like a little Spanish town I'd once seen on the Andalusian coast—all gleaming white in a late afternoon sun, with red tile roofs. But as we got closer, I knew I'd never seen anything like it before, except maybe under a glass case at the Paris Exhibition. It was that neat and clean and pretty. The buildings were all the same simple style, laid out on semicircles with spokes running out from a huge sprawling group in the center that looked as if it might be a university, at that.

Even Harkness was staring popeyed, with his mouth hanging open, and all our men were sitting up like statues. I wanted to tell O'Byrnne how pretty his town was, but couldn't

think of any words that wouldn't sound foolish to the men.

They didn't sound foolish when O'Byrnne said them. He said: "The Univercity of Santo Tumaro—isn't it beautiful?" And all I could do was nod.

"I'll be eternally damned!" Harkness said. "These kanakas weren't lying much at that."

THERE was a stream wandering down through the town with a lot of stone bridges over it, and there was a stone pier on the waterfront with a big Chinese junk at it that made me wonder. It was the only ordinary thing about the place, and I figured it was probably used to trade with the mainland, and I was right. But there were no forts or walls or anything else to defend the place, such as you usually find in Spanish colonies out that way.

As we got closer, it looked as if a celebration of some sort was going on. There were a lot of people along the waterfront in bright *pareos,* and a lot of gaudy sails on boats like ours. We grounded gently on a wide beach among the boats, and I looked up to see a big crowd standing along the sea-wall beyond it, staring down at us and laughing and talking. They were all brown-skinned, like our boatmen, and dressed the same, except that the women's *pareos* covered them decently. They were a handsome lot, gay and colorful, and I figured our sailors ought to be happy to see so many pretty women.

O'Byrnne had gathered us together on the sand. Everybody was able to walk now except me. I was on a stretcher again. The islander asked our pardon for a slight delay. "There'll have to be a little reception," he said. "The people expect it. They don't often get to see strangers. I hope you won't mind."

He led us up the wide steps in the sea-wall to an odd bunch that waited there, all decked out like the Spanish Conquistadores. They looked like a painting of Columbus discovering America. But they wore the fancy dress as if they were used to it, and the old man in the middle might have passed for Columbus himself, except for his skin.

O'Byrnne introduced us, one at a time, to this fellow by the name of Jenkins Alvarez. He was their head man, and his title was a mouthful. It was President of the Central Council of Academies. He bowed to each and every one of us, down to the last seaman, and smiled and said in funny English, "Welcome, friend. We hope you like it here"—or something like that. Actually, he talked like a college professor too; and come to find out, he was one. Those people put an awful lot of store by education.

All this time there was orchestra music coming from a shell across the park behind the sea-wall, and it was something I knew and liked, like a Strauss waltz. We followed the old Grand Señor across the park toward the shell, and went in the back and came out on a stage among the musicians, all barefooted, brown-skinned, and half-dressed, like no orchestra you've ever seen or heard of. But they played very well, and from music, too.

In a sort of trance, I was carried through an aisle to the front of the stage, and there was about the whole population of the town, facing us. There must have been several thousand of them, like a big flock of bright tropical birds, roosting on the broad steps that swept in a semicircle up to the portico of a huge building facing the park.

The music stopped, and Señor Alvarez addressed the crowd in Spanish for about one minute. There was a lot of handclapping, and then we were introduced separately, each getting his share of applause. Harkness just stuck out his nose and glared at them with hands on his hips, but it didn't seem to affect their enthusiasm.

The Señor led us from the stage, and the music started again, and the crowd settled down to enjoy it. In the park, he apologized for the delay, and promised that we would all be taken care of right away. We would have our own quarters, he said, and private tutors to teach us Spanish, so that we'd feel at home and make friends. From the manner of his speaking, I thought he meant more than he said, and began to see what was in store for us. I figured the public reception was probably just a part of it, and I think I was right.

Harkness couldn't see any of this, and fairly put his foot through it right away. "There'll be no lolling about and learning Spanish," he said. "A day or two to get our strength back, and we'll thank you for a boat to set us down in the nearest port. My owners will be expecting word from me by then, and I won't keep them waiting."

It seemed impossible to make these people mad. They just seemed to think Harkness was funny. Señor Alvarez laughed. "I'd forgotten how fast you Yankees run," he said. "But you seem to have forgotten Mr. Frazier's injuries, Captain. It'll be a few weeks, at least, before he'll be ready to travel again."

Harkness gave me a sour look. "Mr. Frazier can come along later, if he's a mind to," he said, "Or he can stay here and rot, for all of me. I dare say it strikes me as the right kind of place for him."

The Señor merely raised his eyebrows. "Well," he smiled, "we'll see. We live very leisurely here, and I'm afraid it'll be hard to rush us. Our little trading junk, the *Pohai,* is undergoing some repairs and alterations, and it'll be a while before she's ready for sea. In the meantime, we'll try to make you as comfortable as we can, and we'll get Mr. Frazier to our little hospital right away."

The hospital was on the upper floor of the big colonnaded building facing the park, and like everything else in it, belonged to one of the five academies that sort of educated the people and governed them at the same time. I told you they set a great store by education. Only it was what they called moral education, and the whole town had been run for a century as if the main object in life was learning how to get along with each other, no matter what else they were doing. That's why they called it a Univercity, and that's why they were the kind of people they were.

It was a small hospital but spotlessly white, and seemed to be well equipped for those days. I was turned over to a dark-skinned doctor named Miquel Hein, who said he'd studied in Holland; and to my surprise I was given ether before he set my leg. When I came to, it was dark, and the music in the park had stopped. I was alone in a small white room, under a canopy of mosquito-net. The bed was hard, and the grass pillow harder. My leg was in a cast, and I couldn't move it. It was a long time before I got to sleep again. . . .

The morning was warm and bright. The room was brilliant with sunlight streaming through the window, and smelled of the tropical flowers at the foot of my bed. A chorus of birds were chirping and singing in the park, and my leg hurt hardly at all. I felt as if I were dreaming, and had been ever since I woke up on the beach the day before. I was sure of it when I looked toward the window.

I TOLD you already the island women were pretty. This one was the prettiest thing I'd ever seen. She was young and tall, and had wavy black hair down her back with a big red hibiscus in it. Her *pareo* was red too, with white flowers in it, and she wore it as if she were proud of her figure, which she should have been. You've probably guessed it was Meiling, and you're right. She was looking out the window, so that all I could see of her face was her profile, but it was enough to keep me from making a move for fear of breaking the spell.

She turned, and saw me staring at her, and smiled and came over to me on little carved wooden sandals that clacked on the bare boards as she walked. That's how I could tell she wasn't a dream. But I couldn't speak.

"Good morning," she said in careful English, and told me she was Tsu Shih's sister, and had come to teach me Spanish. She said her English wasn't as good as her brother's. "You must forgive me," she said.

Her smile was as warm and bright as the sunlight on her shoulders, and her teeth were as white as the room. She didn't use paint or powder, and she didn't need it. The flush in her cheeks was plain even under the gold of her skin. I thought she must be about sixteen. She was twenty.

I still couldn't think of anything to say, and wouldn't have trusted my voice if I could.

She had raised the mosquito-net and sat on the edge of my bed. She smelled as sweet as she looked. Her smile, because I was so tongue-tied, had become shy. "Do you mind to learn Spanish?" she asked. "It is what we call basic Spanish and very easy. You will learn quick."

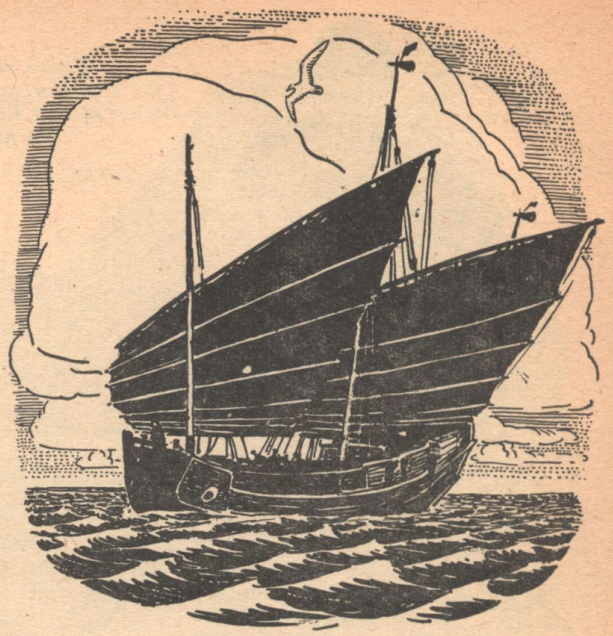
I am no ladies' man, Davey. You can tell by my looks and my solemn ways that I was never cut out for the part. But I managed to stammer something that brightened her smile again, and I didn't say that I'd once known Spanish quite well; or anything else that would take her from me any sooner than need be.

We talked for a while, and she made me repeat everything after her in Spanish. I picked it all up so easily again that she thought I was a lot smarter than I am. But that was all to the good, for I was pleased to have her like me. I asked her where she had learned her English, and she told me that her whole family spoke it. They were the official English translators for the Univercity, just as other families were translators of various other languages.

"So you people must travel a lot, then," I said, surprised, "because your brother told us you don't have foreigners here often."

Meiling laughed. I've told you how often and sweetly she laughed, Davey.

"No," she said. "You are the first visitors in fourteen years. And no one but the crew of the *Pohai* ever goes beyond the island, or ever wants to. But the *Pohai* makes an annual trading voyage every year, and brings back whole cases of books, and we translate every one of them. That is the way we keep up with your culture," she said. "We've been doing the Encyclopædia Britannica for years, and all of Shakespeare, for our theater." She thought Shakespeare was wonderful, and she knew his writings—and Milton, and Wordsworth, and Dickens, like I'll never know them, Davey, though I've been reading them ever since. And she was only a girl—a dark-skinned girl in a *pareo* and sandals.



The Pohai *was roomy and comfortable; but I was heartsick for Perlaguna.*

She brought me my breakfast finally, and it was a man's breakfast, such as you might get here, but everything was raised right there. And when I'd finished it, she continued my education, and I learned a lot that first day, although I'm afraid I was much more interested in my teacher than my lessons. I think she knew it, too, for she blushed often and kept her eyes from mine. I wondered whether all our men had tutors as attractive as she, and thought I could see the shape of our fate, if they had, for it could not be accidental.

I was fumbling for some way of asking her about it without embarrassing us both, when I was saved the trouble. For Tsu Shih came in to visit me, and brought his father and mother and the two younger sisters, whose names were Maureen and Mercedes. Of course, the girls were the other tutors, and they were both, in their way, quite as lovely as their sister. It was easy to see why. Their mother, even in a *pareo,* was like a lovely China doll, her Chinese blood plain in the shape of her eyes and the color of her skin. She smiled a lot but said little, for she was the only one of them who didn't speak English. The Señor, a big brown man with wise eyes, who looked more Spanish than Irish, was clearly proud of them all. I liked them all very much too, but they only made me wonder more about where they came from.

When they were leaving, I begged Meiling to stay, and tell me about it, for my curiosity was like a fever. She said she had to go and tutor the captain, because he was her pupil also, and I told her it would be labor wasted. I could not bear to think of her being alone with the man. She seemed willing enough to stay with me, and sat again on the edge of my bed. She had lost some of her shyness, and her laughing eyes were much on mine. It is a wonder to me now that I remember any of what she told me then.

SHE told me about her family, which was one of the oldest in Perlaguna. The first O'Byrnne was an Irish adventurer with a Spanish colonizing expedition sent out to the Philippines in 1718, and shipwrecked *en route* the following year. The whole shipload, many of them women, made it ashore from the wreck, and found their way to the interior of the island, where they built a miserable little town, a lot different from this one. The small native population was friendly, and in two or three generations had been absorbed by the whites. The islanders had been absorbing everyone who stumbled on the island ever since, although wayfarers had been few and far between. There was a Dutch crew that mutinied and burned their ship in 1774, and an English brig that was wrecked in 1817, and several Chinese fishing junks with crews that were whole families. Meiling's mother was the granddaughter of one of these. She was not pure Chinese, Meiling said, because intermarriage was the rule.

So you see it was pretty clear that my suspicions were right, and we were to be "absorbed," and never leave the island again.

I had been perfectly happy thinking about that, until it occurred to me that we were really prisoners. I didn't like that. I had no family or other ties in the world to make me restless, and I was already getting very

"That's all he was waiting for, and he came out of bed like a cat, knife in his hand."

fond of these people generally, and Meiling in particular, but the idea of being held there against my will was something else again. I was ornery enough to want to fight my way out, the first chance I got, and told Meiling that her people couldn't ever hold me when I got ready to leave. I was an American, I said, and not used to being corraled like a prize stallion for breeding purposes.

She just laughed again. It was like the music of a harp. "But you are wrong!" she said. "You are not prisoners; only guests. You'll see. When you are strong enough, and the time comes for the regular voyage of the *Pohai* to the mainland, you will be free to go, if you wish. But I will be sad," she added quickly, and made me feel like a fool.

I was really in no hurry to leave, and told her so, so that she would not think I didn't like her. But then I thought of Harkness, and I laughed, too. It was plain that we would be held there as long as the excuse of the *Pohai* was good, and that could be months. Harkness would have apoplexy long before that, I told Meiling.

She didn't agree with me, and was sure that she could win him over, so that he would not want to leave at all when the time came.

"You don't know Harkness," I said. "He is bitter to the core, and an ambitious tyrant by nature. Your life of refinement and good will offers nothing to his thirst for power." I did not say, too, that I could not bear the thought of her trying to charm the scoundrel as she had charmed me. But I decided I had to get out of the hospital right away to see that she wasn't alone with him any more than I could help.

It was several days, though, before they would let me go, and although Meiling was with me half of those days, I was far from content as long as she was with Harkness the other half. It helped little that our men came to visit me in a group the second day, for Meiling's sisters as well as two other charmers were with them, and I was upset by the easy familiarity between girls of such gentle natures, and men who were, after all, only common sailors, however good and honest. But it was clear that there was neither class nor color distinction in this place, and I had to admit that they all seemed to be very happy. Certainly the men had nothing but praise for their treatment, and were either unaware of its purpose, or content with it. They left in high spirits, and I resigned them to their fate.

WHEN on the fourth day the doctor gave in to my pleas and let me out on crutches with Meiling, I found Tsu Shih waiting for us in the street with a crude ricksha, which he drew himself. There were no menials in Perlaguna, and the vehicle, like everything of that sort, was borrowed from the Univercity.

I was struck again by the cleanliness of the town. The buildings were kept freshly whitewashed, and the flagstone streets, carrying only pedestrians and a few mule-carts, were washed daily by the frequent rains. Each street had its wide green parkway in the center, with great flowering trees, and many children playing under them. The buildings were in solid blocks and flush with the curb, in the Spanish style. The glassless windows were shuttered, and there was little variation in pattern from block to block. All was of stone, wood, tile and plaster, locally produced, and almost every piece of wood visible was elaborately carved, and finished in its natural color. You would have thought you were among a race of wood-carvers, although this was only partly true. It was just that all these people had learned to love artistry, and would create beauty out of anything at hand in every leisure moment. And they were leisurely. Time as well as nature was kind to them, who had so long and so earnestly cultivated kindness.

The O'Byrnne house faced the park-bordered stream, called the Silverado, and though it was near the outer semicircle of the town, it was only five blocks from the center. It was built around a large paved patio that was bright with flowering plants and gay with the song of caged birds and the laughter of a little fountain. The furniture was mostly rattan, and the fabric almost all native fibers. There was only a little wool, and the only cotton was in their dress. It all had to come from the mainland, and was carefully rationed from the annual cargo of the *Pohai*.

Harkness was at the O'Byrnnes' when I got there. I would have been even more restless if I had known that, and was just as glad I hadn't been told. They told me it was necessary to quarter him there, because he wouldn't live with the rest of the crew; and he wouldn't, or couldn't, learn Spanish. The tolerance of those people knew no bounds.

He had not changed. If anything, he was more insufferable than at sea. When he wasn't bragging or criticizing, he went about with a smug air and an insulting sneer that was maddening. It was plain that he still regarded his hosts as inferior "natives," and even made sly advances to Meiling and her sisters with that attitude. Still they tolerated him, and treated him kindly, confident that there was no limit to what kindness and generosity could accomplish.

Our four sailors, being simpler, had progressed faster. I visited them in their own house, very similar to the O'Byrnnes', where they had been quartered and supplied with everything that a man could wish for, in moderation. It had spoiled them at first, but they had learned that drunkenness always got them tossed by a crowd, in a spirit of fun, into the Silverado, and kept there until they

were thoroughly sobered up. The Captain had once—and only once—suffered this treatment; and I was very sorry to have missed it.

Our men had also learned that the pretty Perlaguna women didn't respond to condescension or crudity, but were as fond of romance as any. It had done so much to promote their desire to conform, that I found them wearing *pareos* with pride, and trying out their Spanish on me with enthusiasm if not skill. Within a few weeks they were all firmly attached to young ladies of their choice, one being Meiling's sister Maureen, and it was perfectly clear by then that if they should stay in Perlaguna much longer, they wouldn't want to leave at all. But it didn't seem to bother them any.

INSIDE a month I was in the same condition myself. I had been living with the O'Byrnnes, where I could keep an eye on Harkness, and was so much in love with Meiling that I ate, moved and slept in a rosy cloud, and cared for nothing else.

We spent most of our time in the patio, or on the grassy bank of the Silverado across the street, in what we were pleased to call improving my Spanish. Actually, I was silent more often than not, content to sit with a swollen heart, and drug myself with the wine of her beauty and the music of her voice while she told me of her people. It was in those days, Davey, that I learned most of what I have told you of that amazing marriage of religion and science that their first priest, Salvador Tumaro, accomplished in the earliest years of their history. It was his firm founding of a science of people rather than of things, that had brought them through decades of moral education to the general love of kindness and orderliness and beauty that made their way of life so pleasant. There never was in the world another people as happy as they were, nor a human society with less conflict or evil.

No other people ever laughed and sang so much at their work, or worked more conscientiously, for this moral education of theirs was really an education of the conscience. They ate well, on the produce of their collective farms and fisheries, which they prepared and served in the Chinese manner. The water of the lagoon was quite cool because of a deep ocean current that entered through some bottomless chasm in it, and oysters were common on their table.

The cool lagoon was ideal for swimming; and men, women and children were much in the water, or on it in their gaudy little boats. They swam in nothing but the loin-cloths they wore under their *pareos,* but it wasn't long before I was swimming that way myself, and with Meiling, too.

In all this time, I had said nothing to her of love; and my reasons, when I look back on it, seem ludicrous, although they were real enough at the time. It was mostly a matter of age, I think. Meiling was so much better educated that at times she seemed too old and too wise for me, while at others, the ten years between us made me think of her as a child who could have no use for such an old roughneck as myself. My injured leg had much to do with this, for it had healed a little shorter than the other, and made me over-conscious of my walk. The result was a confusion of mind and emotions that tormented me much, and prevented me from taking her in my arms as I'd often longed to. I had even taken to thinking vaguely about leaving when the time came, although that only made me more miserable, too.

It was Meiling herself who rescued me from this foolishness. I'll never forget the occasion. We were sitting under an ancient banyan tree on the bank of the Silverado. It was twilight, and the dark crater rim stood bold against its collar of opal cloud. The birds were hushed, and the silent city at rest, but there was no peace in my heart. Our eyes met for a long moment, and Meiling's were soft and bright, like a misty moonrise at sea.

"You're not happy, Ian," she said, and her voice was low and sweet. "Tell me what's troubling you," she urged.

I couldn't find a name for it, and was silent for a long time before I said: "I've been thinking of leaving, Meiling."

Her hand went to her throat, and her eyes were wide. Her grip on my arm was quick and strong. "Oh, no!" she said, "You couldn't, Ian! You couldn't think of leaving me!" There were tears in her eyes then, and fright, and an overwhelming love that was like a wave washing over me. With a little sob, she was in my arms.

The warmth of her body was a fire in my blood, and my bones were melted wax. Her heart was in her lips. It was a long time before I let her go, and then we lay silently smiling at each other on the mossy bank. When we spoke again at last, it was of marriage, for somehow I'd lost all thought of leaving.

CAP FRAZIER'S little patio had grown so dark I could hardly see him from the hammock where I lay. His pipe had gone out, and dropped to the tile, and he didn't bother to pick it up. I could hear his heavy breathing in the dark, and was afraid that he wasn't going to be able to go on, but I couldn't think of anything to say. The heavy silence lasted so long that I'd gotten up to see if he was all right, when he blew his nose noisily and said: "Their marriage customs were peculiar, Davey." He went on:

THE women had to have a permit from the Univercity before they could have any children, because the island would support only a limited population; and they were long on eugenics, too. But marriage, to them, was mainly an arrangement for the protection of children. They worshiped kids, you see, and took parenthood mighty seriously, and there was no such thing as divorce. They had just reversed the ancestor-worship idea; and it was a fine thing, because it kept them always looking forward, instead of back.

But Meiling wouldn't be getting her first child-permit for another year, and I couldn't bring myself to live there in her parents' home with her in the meantime, as we were expected to. So we had to wait, Davey. Neither she nor her family and friends could understand it much, but all I could do was explain that my conscience was a slow and difficult thing.

We were happy, though, Davey—far happier than I can tell. For we had everything to look forward to; and the more I knew Meiling, the more I loved her; and the more I learned about her people, the more I wanted to be like them. Life couldn't have been much brighter in those days, if it hadn't been for Harkness.

For some time now he'd been acting mighty strange. He was a lot more amiable, and even pleasant at times. He never bragged any more, and had very little to say, but went around with a sly grin that I didn't like at all, because it never reached his eyes. They were as cold and calculating as ever.

For a while I was willing to agree with Meiling that maybe he was becoming civilized after all. But then I got to wondering how I could be so stupid, knowing him as I did. It was an awful lot more likely that he was just putting on an act to cover up some dirty work he had afoot, and I began keeping my eyes and ears open to see if I could find out what it was before it was too late.

I stumbled on it indirectly, because of something he said to Meiling. He never missed a chance to make some sly remark about her and me. We were all sitting in the O'Byrnnes' patio one evening, a lot like this, Davey, only it was still light. I was talking to the Señor in Spanish when I saw Harkness lean over Meiling and say something that made her face go red and tears start to her eyes. I heard it, but I won't repeat it, because it still makes me mad to think about it. I was all for getting up and knocking his grinning teeth down his throat; but I didn't because of how those people felt about that kind of

thing. But as soon as they had all turned in that night, I went around to Harkness' room with something like that in mind.

I walked right in without knocking, and found him sitting there at a table, sucking on his teeth, and dribbling a hatful of pearls from one hand to the other. We stared at each other for a minute; and I saw, in a flash, the answer to a lot of things that had been bothering me lately. It made me forget why I'd come there.

"WHERE did you get those?" I asked him.

He told me it was none of my damn' business, and to get out.

"If you stole them, these people will finally put you where you belong," I told him. "Lying, cheating, stealing and killing are about the only things they won't stand for from anyone."

"They were a gift," he said, "from a little brown-skin with long black hair—like yours," and he cackled.

"What are you going to do with them?" I asked him.

He stood up and tried to look like a ship-captain. "Frazier," he said, "you're insubordinate. If you don't watch your step, I'll forget you're supposed to be lost at sea, and take you back for trial."

It was my turn to laugh. "You're not going back," I said, "any more than the rest of us. I'll see to that."

I went right to Meiling's room and got her to come out, and asked her about the pearls. She took me down to the patio again, and told me the whole story. The shallow water of the lagoon was just one big pearl bed, she said. Her people had found the first ones over a hundred years ago, and had learned how to cultivate them not long after, and had been harvesting them ever since. Every family on the island had a share of them, just for ornaments, but no one was supposed to show them until all of us were regular citizens.

"So that's what you trade for all your cloth, and metals, and books, and art!" I said. "I've been wondering. I suppose you have vaults loaded with pearls for the *Pohai's* voyage right now. How do you keep people on the mainland from coming out here in hordes and pirating the place?"

"We have always been very careful how and where they are sold," she smiled. "It is only a few here and there, and now and then, and in such a way that no one can know where they come from."

"Harkness knows," I told her. "If he ever leaves here, none of us can have a moment's peace the rest of our lives."

But she only laughed. "Why should he want to leave?" she asked, "when he can have all he wants if he stays here?"

"You don't know the man," I told her. "What does he care about ornaments? Pearls mean money to him, and money means power, among his own kind. He wouldn't be satisfied with a bucketful, if he thought he might have them all."

But she wouldn't listen to me. That kind of greed was simply beyond her understanding, and I let her go.

It was the same with all the O'Byrnnes the next day. They believed that Harkness meant it when he kept saying that he had no intention of leaving. And even if he did leave, they said, it simply wasn't reasonable that any man would want to harm anything as beautiful as their Univercity. It was unbelievable to me that any grown people could be so naïve.

Even when I went to their quarantine authorities, which were the only police they had, and more like professors, at that, I met the same attitude. They just read me a lecture on the folly of anger, and the futility of force. They had been isolated too long, too, in spite of all their book-learning; and their experience with the lust for power was nil. They believed that their way of life would automatically civilize anyone, in time.

THAT was the end of my happy days in Perlaguna. I couldn't rest for thinking of the island's fate if Harkness should ever leave, and everything pointed to his leaving. I had kept in close touch with our men, hoping they could be some help in handling him, because I knew they hated him as much as I did. But they couldn't think of anything except maiming or killing him, and although a couple of them offered to do it for me, it was out of the question in that place. I suppose it was then, though, that I realized that it must be done sooner or later. My dreams became nightmares of murder, and my waking hours a torture of fear for the future of all I loved most.

Work was no help. All of us, except Harkness, had been contributing our share of labor to the Univercity for some time. But no matter how much I exhausted myself on the lagoon each day with the pearl fishermen, I could not sleep in peace. The work only kept reminding me of the fabulous wealth of the island, defended by nothing but its isolation and the honesty of its people. If it had been possible to get Harkness out in the boats, or anywhere but the safe streets and homes of the town, his death might have occurred accidentally. But he was careful—very, very careful.

In the meantime Neilson, the carpenter, and one of our seamen had married their girls; and Willie Pomeroy and the other seaman were only waiting for theirs to get child-permits, with as much impatience as I. So Harkness was the only one of us who hadn't formed a permanent attachment in Perlaguna, and the reason he gave was revealing. It was because of his devotion to his wife and children back in California, he said, with a sad look that was almost funny to anyone who knew him as well as I did. In eight months at sea with him, I had never once heard him mention any wife or family, although he could talk for days about himself and everything he'd ever done or had. But he knew how strongly the island people felt about marriage and kids, and it gave him the perfect excuse for leaving when the time came.

For reasons of his own he waited, though, until the sailing of the *Pohai* was announced, four months after our arrival, to reveal his desire to return to California to bring back his family. He claimed he couldn't think of spending his old age in Perlaguna without them. But there was now no longer any doubt in my mind of his treacherous intentions; and I was glad, in a way, that the torture of uncertainty was over. I had already decided that there was only one way, in case Harkness left, to save the peace of the island, and that it was entirely up to me. It was a heartbreaking decision, and I did not feel at all up to it, but could only hope that I might be able to do in heat what I could never have done in cold blood.

I could not bear to tell Meiling or her family until the day of sailing. The day before, I took leave of my friends in the pearl fleet, saying that I would return soon, and to the authorities of the Univercity I explained that I had a debt of honor to discharge on the mainland that required my leaving with the *Pohai*. This was, in a sense, true; for I felt my debt to these people was great, and I had no trouble convincing them of my intention to return soon. It was clear that I would be leaving my heart in Perlaguna. I have often wondered, though, whether the learned doctors were not far wiser than either Harkness or I thought, in letting Providence thus work its own justice in a way that they clearly foresaw. It was then that I took their oath of allegiance and secrecy, which I have never broken till this day, Davey.

I CAN'T tell you of my parting from Meiling. You can imagine how I felt. Meiling must have had some intuition of what was to become of us, for she seemed unable to share my confidence that I would be back in a month or two, although she never doubted a moment my love or my intention to return. In token of this,

she made me take her beautiful wedding headdress of fine starched lace encrusted with pearls, that was the work of her mother's hands, and the dearest treasure of her life. I didn't want to, for it represented all of her own and her mother's share of pearls, but her mother insisted too. She felt with Meiling that it was the most sincere gesture of love and trust that they could make, and I was deeply moved.

But with the small fortune in loose pearls that her father had already pressed upon me, for the occasion, it burdened me with a wealth that I had not expected nor could foresee any use for. At the last, my beloved was quite brave, and even cheerful, although I am sure now that she not only feared for my safe return, but suspected my true motive for going. But she said nothing of it, and I laughed off her fears and left her with a long kiss and a promise of a bright future in a few weeks.

Harkness had had no notion that I was leaving with him until he saw me aboard the junk at the last minute. He was surprised into one of his familiar black fits of rage, swearing and stamping about and threatening me with exposure and professional ruin if I showed my face in the world. But he pulled himself together before he was led off as a lunatic, and it only served to put me on my guard against him. I had no more use for my reputation as a seaman, anyway, and was glad enough to see him in his old colors. . . .

The *Pohai* was roomy and comfortable, and the weather fair for the Bhu Hao Hai. The cargo we carried below-decks must have been worth a king's ransom, but it was well buried beneath a clutter of common trade-goods, and never mentioned. If Harkness was aware of it he made a point of not showing it. He watched me, most of the time, with his little shoe-button eyes full of hate, as if he knew what was in my mind, and I was careful not to keep my back turned to him too long. He was unnaturally quiet, after his outburst at the pier, and it made me uneasy.

I didn't sleep well the first night, and woke up once with a start, feeling like my life was hanging by a thread. Both Harkness and I slept with the crew under a large shelter aft, and there was no light. I thought I saw a shadow melt into the darkness; but when I got up and went over to his pallet, he seemed to be asleep. I must have only dreamed he knelt beside me with a knife, for he was too smart to risk violence on the boat, knowing how the crew felt about it. But I didn't get much sleep after that.

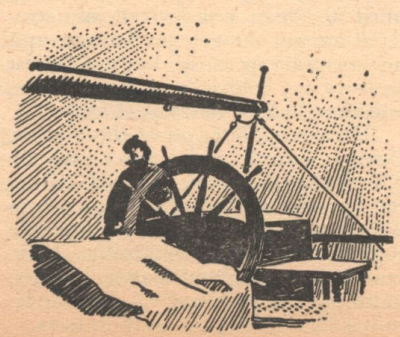
In less than a week we were working up the dirty, stinking Canton River, and would be in the city before dark. Its messy skyline, that I knew well from a half-dozen voyages before, had never looked so ugly. Already I was heartsick for Perlaguna and the peace and decency of the Univercity. I'd almost forgotten how miserable and mean the rest of the world looked beside it.

Harkness was all set up and on edge to get ashore. The sight and smell of his kind had brought out some of his old bravado. He took to bragging to me, like the old days, and seemed in his crude way to be trying to make friends, telling me that he forgave me all my mistakes and wishing me well in the world until we met again in Perlaguna, as if it was a bond between us. But it was only a blind, and I wasn't taken in.

AS soon as he left I followed him ashore, much as I hated the place; after seeing him established in a second-rate hotel near the waterfront, I went on to Wang Lo San's; he was a comprador, and had been one of the finest friends I ever had, ever since the days when I had my own ship. He took me in as warmly as ever, and offered me a bed in his home, and I slept easier that night than I had in a week. I had only had to tell Mr. Wang wh I was there for, to have him offer to have Harkness watched for me. I'll admit I'd counted on that. It was a game the Chinese liked and were good at. I went to sleep smiling over the stupid-looking, tail-wagging China boy that Harkness had probably picked up for a bodyservant already.

Mr. Wang greeted me in the morning with his nice smile, and a full account of everything Harkness had done during the night. He'd lost no time. He already had Wang's man acting as go-between with a gang of waterfront thugs. It was a relief to know I'd figured him right, and I was impatient to have it out with him right away, but Mr. Wang advised me to wait until I had more to go on, and I realized he was right. I couldn't afford to make any mistake about it. I got another good night's sleep, feeling more sure of what I had to do and more confident that I could do it.

The second morning at Wang's brought the whole story of Harkness' arrangements; and they were all, and more, than I had expected. He was not only planning to take the *Pohai's* cargo, but the ship as well. It could only mean that he intended to use the junk to get up through the lock into the lagoon with his thugs, and I had to admit it was smart. With thirty or forty men with rifles, and a couple of old cannon below-decks, he would have the town at his mercy, once he was in the lagoon. I don't think there was a man in Perlaguna who had ever seen a rifle, and the junk's cargo was more than enough to buy him all he needed, and the men to use them.



It was enough to make my blood boil, and that's all I'd been waiting for. But again Mr. Wang was wiser. He had certain useful connections with the Chinese police, he advised, that he thought might be very helpful to me. I didn't doubt it at all, for those things in China are simply a matter of money, and Mr. Wang had plenty of it.

"I'm very sorry," he apologized, "that I can do nothing with the Captain for you, since he is an American citizen. But his employees"—Mr. Wang smiled his nice smile—"I think it might be wise to get them out of your way to avoid any little interruptions while you are visiting the Captain."

I waited with as much patience as I could, eating and drinking with Wang's friends that night until the small hours of the morning. But when the last of the guests had gone, I could wait no longer, and sleep was by then impossible. I was anxious to catch the *Pohai* too, before she sailed, or got wind of the plot against her; and the wine I had drunk added nothing to my good temper. I walked out of the house with a hot head, without a word to Mr. Wang, and took a rickshaw to Harkness' dingy hotel. . . .

CAP FRAZIER stopped and drew a long breath. I could hear him let it out in a sigh from way over in the hammock. He leaned over in his chair then and picked up his pipe from the tiles. The little fountain kept whispering *hush, hush,* in the darkness, and the stars looked far away.

At first I was afraid that Cap wouldn't go on, and then I was afraid he would, because I knew what he was going to say, and I could never believe it. But I didn't say a word, and after a while he said: "That was almost fifty years ago, Davey. I guess it can't hurt anybody now if I tell the rest."

Then he cleared his throat and said: "I didn't have any trouble bribing the night porter to let me into Harkness' room. It was on the second floor, over the river, and at first it was so dark that I couldn't see a thing. The shutters on the river side were closed.

"I struck a match and saw Harkness in the bed with his Adam's apple sticking up in his scrawny neck and his mouth open. He was drunk. I went over and lit the lamp on the table. There was nothing in the room but the bed and the table and one chair and a washstand. But it was crowded. The air was close and stank of the river.

"I went to open the shutters, but they stuck, and the noise woke Harkness up. He closed his mouth and sat up and blinked at me. He wasn't so drunk that he couldn't see who I was, and he was scared. He knew what I was there for. He could see it in my face. He tried to say something, but it was just a croak, and I laughed. He looked pitiful, but he looked funny, too, with nothing but his underwear on, and his eyes popping out of his head. He was sweating.

"I couldn't have touched him like that. I said: 'Get up,' and he said, 'Get out of here, Frazier, before I kill you,' or something like that. It was a bad bluff, and his voice cracked.

"I had to get him out of the bed, and I had to make him mad. I figured his knife was in his clothes on the chair. I took my own out and showed it to him and tossed it into the river.

" 'You're brave, ain't you?' " he said. 'You're fifty pounds heavier and twenty years younger.' But his eyes kept going to his clothes. I started picking them up and throwing them at him, calling him a yellow skunk, and everything else I'd always wanted to call him. His pants caught him right in the face, hard, and I turned my back on him as if I was going for the wash-basin, to throw it.

"THAT'S all he was waiting for; he came out of the bed like a cat, his knife in his hand. I could see the white blur of his underwear in the mirror, and I turned and caught his fist, and drove his knife into his ribs, under his heart. I killed him with his own knife, Davey, and I've never been sorry. He owed me his life twice over, and I was only sorry that I'd ever saved it for him. I've been sorry for that all my life, and I always will be, because it took me from Meiling.

"I was thinking of her as soon as I got out of that stuffy hole, and into the street, and the thought of her was all I needed to forget what I'd done. All I wanted now was to get back to her, and I headed down the waterfront to the *Pohai*. But the junk had gone. She must have got word of the plot and cleared out. I searched the waterfront till daylight for her, and then went back to Mr. Wang's.

"I'd thrown Harkness into the river, but I knew they'd find the body and be looking for me before long, when the American consul heard of it. I told Mr. Wang all about it, but I didn't need to. I should have known he would know all about it, the way he always seemed to know everything. But he didn't know anything about the *Pohai*, and I couldn't tell him, because of my oath.

"I'd never doubted that the junk would still be there, and now I never doubted that she would come back, although I hadn't thought it necessary to arrange it. I thought her men knew that. They knew how much I wanted to return to Perlaguna, but they must have thought I meant to find my own way.

"I thought it would be easy, Davey, for a seaman. I waited as long as I could at Wang's while his men watched the waterfront for the *Pohai*, and combed the town for some pearl merchant or shipping agent that could tell me her movements on the coast. But nobody knew anything about her, and that's when I began to realize how well the islanders covered their tracks.

"I remembered how she was always undergoing 'repairs and alterations' at the island, and realized that she probably never looked the same on any two trips, and even had a different name, and papers, and supercargo each voyage. It began to look pretty hopeless, and I couldn't stay in Canton any longer.

"I said good-by to Mr. Wang with a full heart, and made him take the choicest of my pearls. He had arranged my passage to Manila, from where I hoped to make my way to the western shore of Palawan. From there it was my plan to charter a fisherman that could take me a hundred and fifty miles to sea to the part of the Bhu Hao Hai where my last reckoning of the *Naiad's* position would place the island.

"It sickens me now to think how confidently I undertook that journey, Davey—not only the first time, but a dozen times in the next two years. It was only in the third year of sailing, in foul weather and fair, in chartered schooners, and stinking fishing bancas, among the endless reefs and shoals of the No Good Sea, that I finally lost hope completely. It didn't seem possible that my reckoning could have been so far off; and even when I knew it was hopeless, I kept on searching, until my heart was broken and scattered among those rocks forever, and my last pearl spent—all but my dearest treasure, my beloved's wedding crown, and that I could never part with.

"How can I tell you of those years, Davey? I can't, and I don't need to. Nor of the years that followed, sailing the teeming coasts of the East, from Tsingtao to the Indies, a miserable fugitive hunting one familiar junk, among ten thousand slatternly ones, haunting the pearl-markets for one familiar face among ten million faces.

"It's well that I gave up while I was still sane, and came ashore here to forget. It's well that I could forget for so many years, and may, with God's help, forget again. For how often in those first years do you think Meiling sent the island vessel searching for me while I floundered hopelessly in the Bhu Hao Hai? How close do you think we might have passed in the night when she sailed with the junk herself, unwilling to give up the last fond hope? She loved me, Davey, as only those people knew how to love.

"Or do you still think that no such people could ever exist, and it was all a shipwrecked sailor's delirium, or a *Rip Van Winkle's* long sleep? Well, maybe it's better so, Davey. I'll say no more about it. For I've tried long and hard enough to believe that myself, and there have been times when I succeeded. But still I've gone on dreaming of Perlaguna, and living as they taught me to live, in love and kindness, as Meiling would have me do."

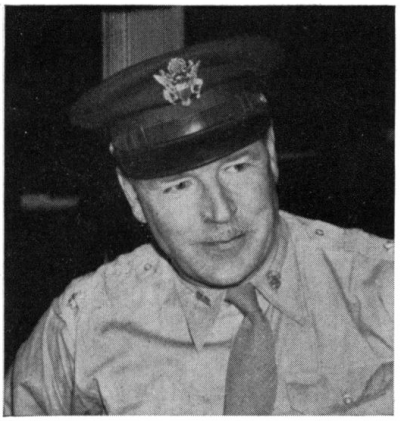
IT was late, and the night dark, but the soft air was still warm, and no breeze stirred the little fountain in the patio. The old man sat with his gnarled fingers over his eyes.

When I finally got up and went to him, I found the tears large on his cheeks. Without a word, I helped him limp to his room, and then walked on home. . . . A few weeks later he died in his sleep, at the age of seventy-eight.

He had never mentioned Perlaguna again, and his eyes in those last weeks were so haunted with sorrow that I couldn't bring myself to mention it either. But I couldn't forget it, or believe that it was a dream, for it explained too perfectly the old man's character as I had known it all those years, and I was more than anxious to believe that it was possible for a whole people to live like that somewhere in this fouled-up world.

I was sure, too, that the Captain would have left something behind in the quaint house that would remove all doubt, but I searched for a long time without finding anything. There was only the house itself, with its close resemblance to his description of the O'Byrnne home, and an old sea-chest under the floor, with nothing in it but his navigation instruments and work-books and a roll of worn-out charts of the South China Sea. After months of patiently deciphering the endless figures in the work-books, I was finally convinced that his story was, after all, just another story, and it was more in idle curiosity than anything else that I brought out his battered sextant-case and jimmied its keyless lock. . . . The delicate little lace headdress, encrusted with pearls, that lay crumpled on the faded green felt, was worth a small fortune.

Who's Who *in this* Issue



Karl Detzer

I WAS born in Indiana in 1891; have been a reporter, photographer, advertising writer, Chicago department-store executive, writer and technical director for several major Hollywood studios.

Served as sergeant, Mexican border campaign, 1916-'17; captain of infantry in France, World War I; colonel, General Staff Corps, in the Pentagon, and also in European, African, Middle East and China-Burma-India theaters in World War II. Was captain, American Division of Criminal Investigation in Europe, 1919. Explored in Hudson's Bay country in 1914, in Baja California peninsula of Mexico, 1935-'36.

I'm a fire buff, and have ridden the red wagons in most large cities and many small ones from New York to Los Angeles. Honorary chief, Leland, (Mich.) fire department, and of Michigan State Police. Published five hundred magazine stories, eight books, fifty pieces in the *Reader's Digest,* of which I am now a Roving Editor. Recently purchased and publish two small Michigan newspapers. Have wife, son, daughter, all of whom can outwrite me. Live on a small lake-shore farm in Northern Michigan.

Over!

Bill Erin

HAD the standard four-year education at the University of Wisconsin. Learned while a frosh that I was no great shakes as an athlete, so did the next-best thing and started broadcasting sports. Went from the University to WOWO in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where, in addition to Purdue, Indiana, and Notre Dame play-by-play, I got in on the great basketball circus of the country: Indiana's State Tournament. Went from there to Springfield, Ohio, as a sports announcer, where the war caught up with me.

Spent a couple years or so winning the war, during which I collected the usual complement of Merchant Marine ribbons, including the Direct Enemy Action bar. Was discharged from the Marine Hospital in San Francisco in February of '45 and went back to radio with the American Broadcasting Company as a staff announcer.

Did play-by-play announcing of the big University football and basketball games around the Bay area in '45, '46 and part of '47. Helped start a new radio station in Springfield, Ohio, last summer and since then have devoted time to writing and fishing. Dorrance & Company is publishing a book of mine sometime in 1948 which has nothing to do with sports.

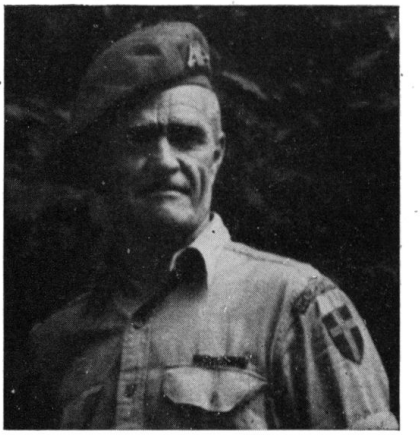
The fighting style of *Billy Munson* in "Minute Man" is copied after that of Omar Crocker, great Wisconsin University fighter—three times NCAA boxing champion. Sports-writers labeled Crocker a "Minute Man" because of the frequency with which he knocked out his opponent in less than one minute of the first round. However, the resemblance between *Billy Munson* and Omar Crocker ends with the fighting style. All characters are fictional and any resemblance, etc. Crocker never turned pro but went into the Army upon his graduation, since he had been an ROTC officer.

Frederick Chapman

THE fact that I am a Californian of English, Irish, French and Dutch descent may account for the restlessness which has beset me for most of my sixty years, and I have managed to wander back to all the countries to which I owe those strains and to some others as well.

Whatever talents I inherited were

Bill Erin



Frederick Chapman

given a boost by a couple of years of anatomy at the Art Students' League in New York; but beyond that I have had no schooling in my craft except for the intangibles which one gains through association with men better than himself—and a passion for accurate observation.

My last real adventure was an ambulance driver with that incredible army, Montgomery's Eighth. To have served with the men of Alamein, the Sangro, Coriano and the Po Valley, was a privilege given to few Americans. To have been invited by a Subahdar Major to a drink of fiery Indian rum under shell- and mortar-fire in an Italian castle; to have had a Gurkha pat one on the back and say, "O.K., Johnny," for having done a job one hoped was at least adequate; to have had a Scottish M.O. with a passion for the music of the pipes, play dirges in one's blacked-out ambulance; to have invited the colonel to share a bottle of port on New Year's Eve in the same old wagon, and to have had his acceptance; to have been presented with a kukri taken from one of a cartload of dead Gurkhas by one of their lieutenants in a downpour at midnight; to have felt one's inadequacy when faced with five dazed and wandering nuns just bombed and shelled out of their abbey—these are a few of the indelible impressions I shall always cherish. The fact that a few of those modest heroes see fit to remember me with occasional letters from the Near East, India or the Western Isles, is flattering to say the least, to one old enough to have been their father, and who might just as well be forgotten. Perhaps the most fitting end to the whole mad business was that our last billet was an insane asylum in Louvain. Were those blank faces any more mad than those upon whom they gazed at mess, in halls that once were theirs?

BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE FOR ADVENTUROUS READING ★ MARCH, 1948

MY MOST UNFORGETTABLE WAR EXPERIENCE

Six prize stories by Men of the Merchant Marine

Nine Short Stories by *KARL DETZER, WILBUR S. PEACOCK, H. BEDFORD-JONES, NELSON BOND, JOEL REEVE* and others