

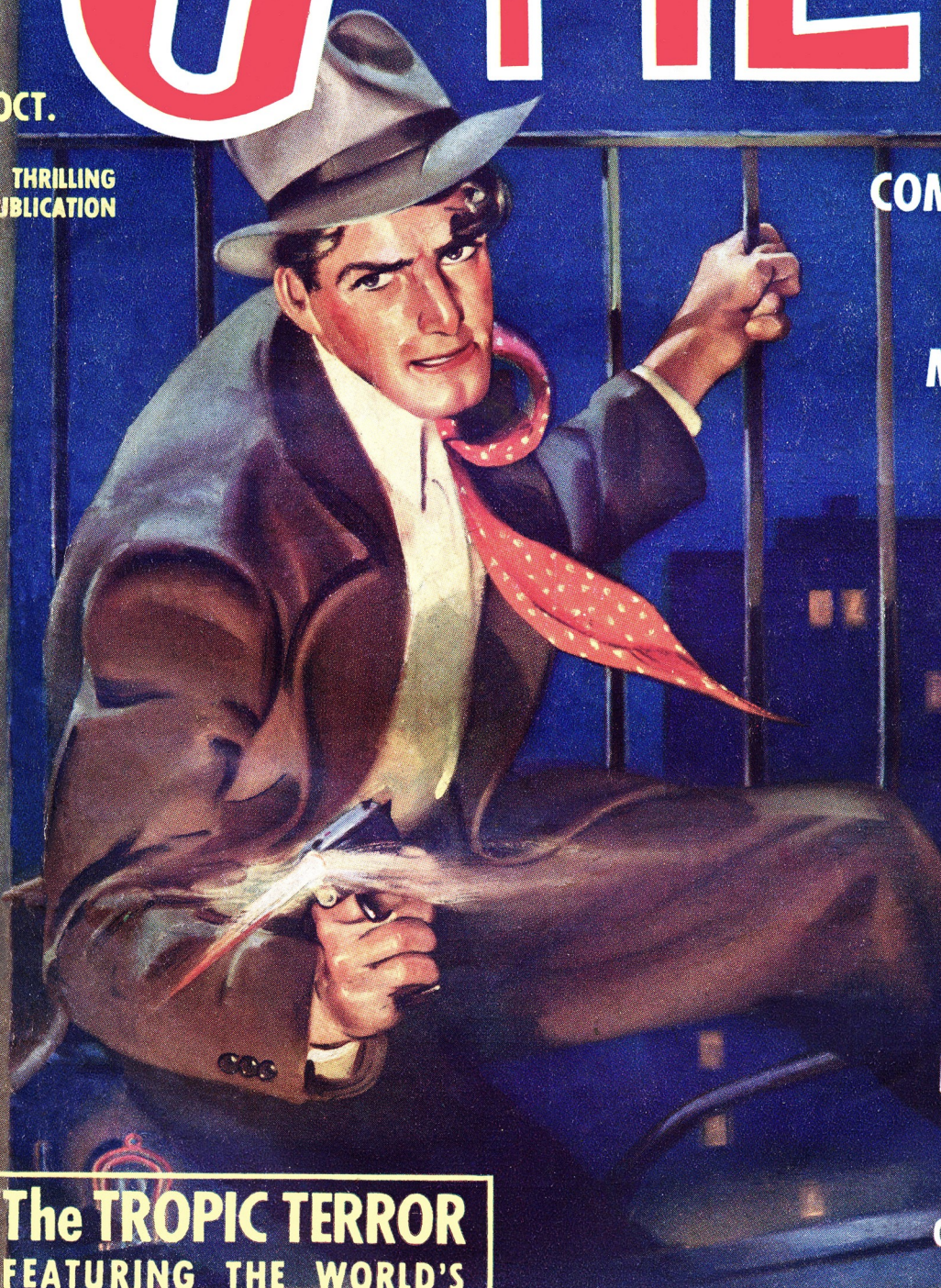
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THE FEDERALS IN ACTION

G-MEN

OCT.

A THRILLING PUBLICATION



COMMISSIONER
EDWARD
P.
MULROONEY
says
GIVE
YOUTH
A
CHANCE

DOOM
DEALERS
EXPOSING
THE
GUN-RUNNING
RACKET

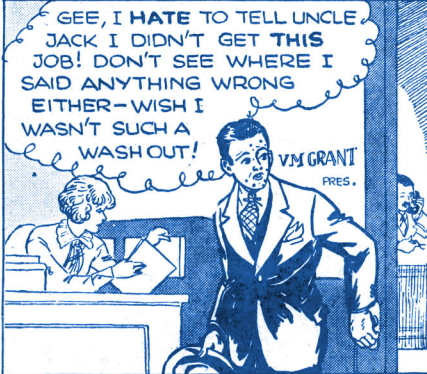
By AN
EX-GANGSTER

The TROPIC TERROR
FEATURING THE WORLD'S
GREATEST MAN-HUNTERS IN
A FULL BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

WISH I KNEW WHY THEY ALL TURN ME DOWN

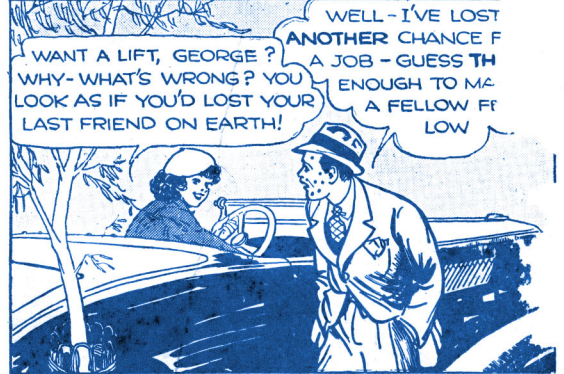


A PIMPLY
SKIN CAN
SPOIL
ANY BOY'S
CHANCES
FOR A
JOB



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

V.M. GRANT
PRES.



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

WELL - I'VE LOST ANOTHER CHANCE FOR A JOB - GUESS THERE'S NOT ENOUGH TO MAKE A FELLOW FEEL LOW

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

THANKS! FOR THE COMPLIMENT!

WONDER IF SHE'S RIGHT?



LATER

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

THANK YOU SIR - I'LL BE HERE ALL RIGHT

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

SAY, PEG - HERE'S REAL NEWS! I GOT THE JOB. SURE THING! WHAT? OH, QUIT THE KIDDING - NO, I'M NOT VICE-PRESIDENT YET, BUT I'VE GOT SWELL PROSPECTS!

PUBLIC
PHONE



Don't let Adolescent Pimples keep YOU from getting a start

FIRST IMPRESSIONS are important, and—a pimply skin is a real drawback to any boy or girl seeking a job.

But pimples are very apt to occur after the start of adolescence—from about 13 to 25. At this time, important glands develop and final growth takes place. The entire system is disturbed. The skin gets oversensitive. Waste poisons in the blood irritate this sensitive skin and cause unsightly pimples to break out.

Fleischmann's Yeast clears these skin irritants out of the blood. Then, the pimples go! Eat 3 cakes a day, one before meals—plain, or in a little water—until skin clears. Start today!



—clears the skin
by clearing skin irritants
out of the blood

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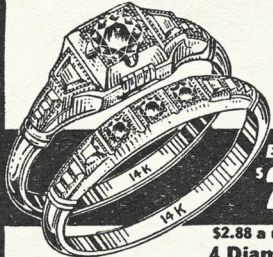
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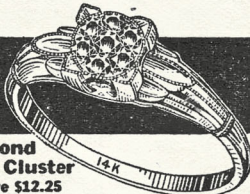


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less than
6c a day

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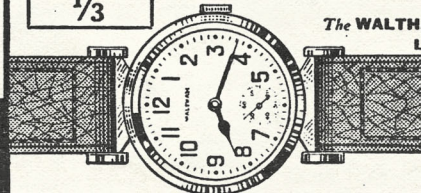
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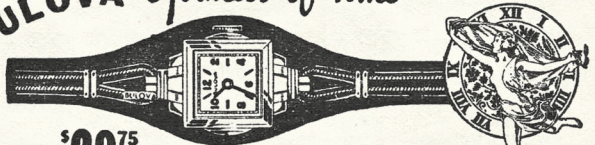
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UP TO
1/3**



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Vol. V, No. 1

October, 1936

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HOW A FREE LESSON STARTED BILL ON THE WAY TO A GOOD RADIO JOB

I HAVEN'T HAD A RAISE IN YEARS -- GUESS I NEVER WILL -- I'M READY TO GIVE UP

BUCK UP, BILL, WHY NOT TRY AN INDUSTRY THAT'S GROWING -- WHERE THERE'S MORE OPPORTUNITY

MARY'S RIGHT -- I'M NOT GETTING ANYWHERE. I OUGHT TO TRY A NEW FIELD TO MAKE MORE MONEY

LOOK AT THIS -- RADIO IS CERTAINLY GROWING FAST -- AND THE NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE SAYS THEY TRAIN MEN FOR RADIO RIGHT AT HOME IN SPARE TIME

I DON'T THINK I COULD LEARN RADIO THAT WAY -- BUT THEY'LL SEND ME A SAMPLE LESSON FREE. GUESS I'LL MAIL THE COUPON AND LOOK INTO THIS

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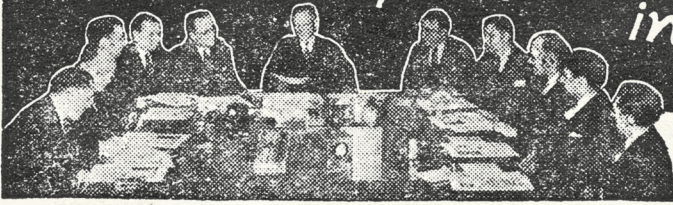
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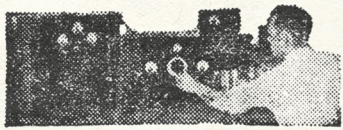
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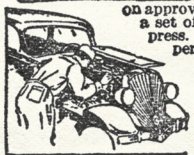
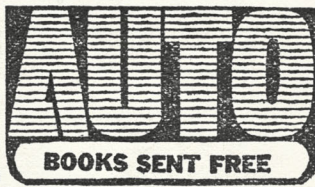
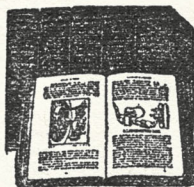
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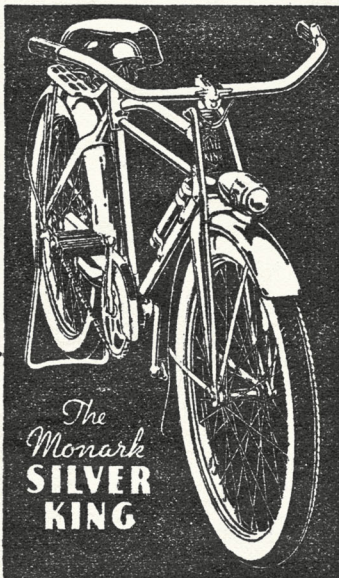
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Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little watery blisters form, and the skin cracks and peels. After a while, the itching becomes intense, and you feel as though you would like to scratch off all the skin.

BEWARE OF IT SPREADING

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

Get rid of this disease as quickly as possible, because it is very contagious, and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

Most people who have Athlete's Foot have tried all kinds of remedies to cure without success. Ordinary germicides,

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They flung themselves

CHAPTER I

Morning, Noon, and Night

JUAN YRIARTE was awakened by the sunlight pouring through the window. He sat up in bed, his heart jerking, his hand convulsively closing on the butt of the pistol at his side.

Dios! He had meant but to lie down and rest for a moment—he had meant to stay awake throughout the night, to watch—

Ah, but the night had passed, the blessed morning was here. He had lived to see another sun, after all. He had been a fool to be afraid, to let them frighten him with their childish threats. The warm sun of his native Puerto Rico gave him fresh courage.

He glanced at his sleeping wife, Maria, at his side; he looked fondly over at the bed in the corner where his two children slept peacefully on.

He was safe. They were all safe. Again he looked at Maria—yes, she

Dan Fowler Challenges the Evil Power of the

By C. K. M.
SCANLON

Author of "American Men-
ace," "Ghost Killer," etc.



upon him (Page 20)

was sleeping soundly. Furtively he reached into his pocket—he was fully dressed, save for his shoes—and took out a crumpled note.

His lip curled in scorn as he read it:

Juan Yriarte, your time has come. You have refused to take the oath of the Sons of Liberty. You have been decreed to be an enemy of the Republic, and you will not live to see another sun. Perish, fool, in your folly.

The Committee of Justice.

Bah! To think that he had been so

frightened—he, Juan Yriarte, mayor of the municipality of San Alonzo. Refused to take the oath of the Sons of Liberty—why, of course he had! He was a Puerto Rican, but he was an American citizen first of all, and proud of it. He had no truck with this silly independence business—independence would be the ruin of the island, as well he knew.

He doubted if the Sons of Liberty had anything to do with such murderous threats, anyway. They were a

Mysterious, Murderous Tyrant of Puerto Rico!

noisy lot, always holding mass meetings and parades and making speeches, but he didn't think there was any harm in them. Just young folks making noise, for the most part. Not murderers. Their *gran jefe*, Hernan Hernandez, was a pompous little fat man who loved display and oratory, but he didn't have the courage to kill anybody. No, no, this Committee of Justice threat was not the work of Hernan Hernandez—

But there had been that affair at Rio Falardo, last week, when two gentlemen of known anti-independence sentiments had been found dead in the main street at dawn, knifed to the heart, with a note "Thus perish all enemies of the Republic—signed, for the Sons of Liberty, The Committee of Justice" pinned to the dead breast of one of them by the knife which had drunk his heart's blood.

And there had been the shooting from ambush of that soldier near Cayey, with three witnesses that a voice had cried from the jungle whence the shot had come—"The Committee of Justice has spoken!"

HE shivered a little. Fear, like a cold uncoiling snake, stirred anew in his bosom. His wife awoke suddenly.

"Juan!" she cried on a note of sharp alarm, then laughed a little sheepishly to see him sitting up there in the sunlight. "Oh, Juan, you are all right—of course, of course. *Madre mia*, what a dream I have had. I thought I saw you dead before me. But Juan, you have not undressed! What is the matter?"

"Nothing, *chiquita*," he answered. "You have slept well?"

"I have slept wretchedly," she answered. "All night I have been tormented by dreams; and by that miserable dog, snuffing and whining about the house. Listen! There he is again!"

A lop-eared mongrel pup came whining into the room from the kitchen at the rear of the house. He snuffled at the floor, ran a few steps, put his muzzle to the floor and whimpered.

"What is the matter with the beast?" wondered Juan Yriarte. "Here, Pedro—come here!"

The dog ran to him, put his forepaws on the side of the bed, licked his master's hand, then ran back to the same spot on the floor and commenced nuzzling and whining as before.

A chill ran through the body of Juan Yriarte.

"He hears or smells something under there," he said to his wife, trying to speak casually. "Let me investigate."

He swung out of the bed, went to the spot where the dog stood, pushed the animal aside, knelt and put his ear to the floor. Nothing—nothing save the scurrying of a mouse or a big beetle underneath the house—that was what the dog heard, of course. But this sound did not die away, it persisted. It was steady—*tick-tick-tick!*

Juan Yriarte felt the hair rising on the back of his neck. He lifted his head, opened his mouth to scream the alarm at his wife—but that scream never left his throat. With a thunderous roar the floor of his home rose beneath him—the world was blotted out in flaming darkness.

When his frightened neighbors dragged him from beneath the ruins of his house, his mouth was still open—as though trying to warn that wife who would never need any warning in this world, those children who had died in that blast of vengeful murder—

Only the dog, preserved by some miracle, lived to crawl to his dead master's side and lick his face, whining the while. He had done his best, poor faithful brute, but master hadn't understood until it was too late.

AT the other end of the island of Puerto Rico, about noon on the same day, a swaggering little man in grey and black uniform of the Insular Police stamped into a grocery store in the town where he was stationed and went straight up to the pale-eyed proprietor.

"Now you listen to me, Jose Pa-

rias!" he snarled. "Last night *this* was thrown through a window of my house, wrapped around a stone. Read it! Read it, carrion! And then tell me what you think of it."

The proprietor read, and what little color there was in his face drained away.

"But I swear to you, I know nothing of this—I swear, Señor Rodríguez! To threaten you with death—this is a terrible thing! Me, I am no murderer—"

"But you are the local chairman of the Sons of Liberty! Don't lie to me, Parias! I know all about your silly meetings, attended by a lot of simple *jibaros* and wet-nosed children, where you spout of independence and think yourself a great man! Threaten to murder me, will you?" His hand moved swiftly; a gun muzzle was jabbed into the storekeeper's stomach. The enraged face of the policeman was within an inch of his own. "I've got a good mind to give you a dose of your own medicine, son of a pig!"

"But, Señor Rodríguez—my good friend—I swear by all the saints, I am innocent! This threat was no work of the Sons of Liberty! Some band of thieves must be using our name! I swear it, *señor!*"

Sweat was rolling down the shopkeeper's forehead, half blinding him.

The policeman hesitated, then holstered his gun.

"Very well," he snapped. "For this time, I let the matter rest. But let me tell you this much, my fine fellow—if so much as a single shot is fired at me, if so much as another stone comes through my window of nights, I will come straight to you and put six bullets into your quivering belly! So see to it that your young men restrain themselves. It will be the worst for you if they do not."

He spun on his heel and strode out of the store.

"Yankee lover!" muttered the proprietor, sinking to a trembling seat on a cracker box. "It might be the better for you if you did not show so much enthusiasm in arresting those young men for trifles."

He watched the policeman crossing the dusty street, swaggering as always.

Through the open front of the store came a distant flicker of sound—such a sound as might have been made by the snapping of a giant twig—

The policeman stumbled, regained his balance, took a step forward with arms suddenly outstretched—and collapsed on his face in the dust.

The storekeeper rushed out to join the crowd that instantly began to collect—someone had already turned the policeman over. He had been shot through the head—see, there was a small bluish hole between his eyes, the back of the head was all soaked with blood where the bullet had torn its way out. A voice said grimly:

"Thus perish all who defy the Sons of Liberty!"

"Who spoke?" demanded the storekeeper in a tone of panic, whirling to survey the crowd. There were uneasy murmurings, dark faces drawn with fear crowded closer; but no one answered him. Only from the wooded hillside above, whence a thin wisp of blue vapor was drifting away on the lazy tropic breeze, came a mocking echo of his cry.

IT was night. A moonless night, yet a night of stars such as only the tropics know.

Beneath the whispering palm fronds of the jungle which had invaded the once prosperous sugar plantation, *El Retiro*, the darkness was a tangible thing, a velvety, palpable murk through which men pushed their way as through a sea of ink.

Yet it was alive with minor sound—the rustling of lizards, the hum of insects, and the soft *pad-pad* of bare feet, of feet in fiber slippers, of leather-shod feet as men hurried along converging paths toward the old sugar warehouse, now overgrown by foliage, hidden in the remorseless jungle. There was soft-voiced speech, too—whispered challenges:

"*Quien viva?*" and ever the same reply:

"*Libertad y independencia!*"

Within the old warehouse, the light of a few flickering lanterns glowed fitfully on a sea of upturned faces— young faces for the most part, young and eager and yet grimly serious. The cause which brought these young men and young women—for there were a few women in the throng—to this secret rendezvous tonight was one in which they believed, heart and soul. So much any keen observer could have deduced; and the young man who leaned against a post near the door was an unusually keen observer.

There was nothing to distinguish this young man from any of a hundred others in that crowd; his suit of unbleached linen, his straw hat, his white shoes were similar to those worn by many young *Puertoriquenos* of the better class. He was perhaps a trifle taller than the average, and there was a drilled set to his shoulders which spoke of military training; yet many of those present had passed through the R. O. T. C. at the University or had served in the National Guard.

No, to discover from outward appearance any difference between this young man and the others who pressed so thickly about him, was impossible. And yet these others seemed to sense a difference; they spoke to him, he replied in Spanish as good as their own; but they did not pause to chatter in friendly fashion, they passed on and others in the ever moving crowd took their places, and passed on in turn. He was in the crowd, part of it—and yet he was not part of it.

Presently, on the platform built of rude lumber at one end of the long building, a man came out and hung up two more lanterns. The buzz of talk hushed at once. The lantern-hanger retired, his place was taken at once by a fiery-eyed youth in a yellow sweater who commenced an impassioned harangue. He spoke of the beauties of freedom, of the right of Puerto Rico to consider herself an independent republic; and then, swiftly, he turned to face a canvas screen which hung across the platform.

"Now comes our *gran jefe*, the noble, the illustrious Hernan Hernandez. He has a word for you. Listen to him well, comrades."

AN expectant hush fell over the dim old warehouse. Every eye was upon the slit which parted the screen at its center. Now the canvas stirred; a short, plump man wearing a sort of semi-uniform—blue shirt, white trousers, a Sam Brown belt, and a fringed crimson sash—came slowly forward to the edge of the platform where he halted and held up one bejeweled hand in a gesture for silence, thrusting the other, Napoleonicly, into the breast of his jacket.

"Hernan!" shrieked the crowd. "Hernan Hernandez!"

Hernan acknowledged their enthusiastic tribute.

"Comrades," he began. "You are here in answer to my call. Our enemies are spreading lies about us. Our name and cause are being blackened by the tongue of calumny. Today in San Alonzo the mayor was murdered, with his wife and children—and those who would destroy us spread the word that the Sons of Liberty had done this dreadful thing!"

The crowd groaned and booed.

"At noon, today, a policeman was shot down in the street of Royas, and for that, they have taken into custody our loyal comrade, Jose Parias, chairman of our committee for that village, and have charged him with the crime!"

A roar of execration rose. Parias was known to most of those present.

The injustice of his arrest enraged them.

"Always they lie about us—always they try to paint us as blood-drenched monsters, slayers of women and children. It must stop! We must stand firm against the wave of vicious, unfounded slander with which the enemies of our cause seek to overwhelm us."

Hernandez paused, and in that pause, the young man in the yellow sweater came to the front of the platform.

He held up his hands for silence. "Jefe, comrades, Sons of Liberty. There is a more pressing matter confronting us. For there is here tonight one who is no comrade of yours or mine—a villainous spy—an agent of our enemies of whom our leader has spoken. What should be the fate of spies, comrades?"

No one answered him. A hush of fear hung over the crowd. They turned instinctively to Hernandez, waiting. But their leader had no time to answer their unspoken call.

The young man in the yellow sweater went on, lashing them with the sharpness of his excited voice.

"A spy," he screamed, "a spy whose lies have defamed us here and in the United States, who has imperiled the cause of liberty, who has brought our comrade, Jose Parias, into the shadow of the gallows! And you hesitate! Are we not men? Are we defenseless? What shall we do with such a reptile? What shall be his fate? How long must we suffer his presence among us?"

"Death to the spy!" screamed a half-hysterical girl in the center of the crowd. And instantly echoed the cry, taken up here and there, growing in force:

"Death! *Muerte al espiá!*" A hundred—two hundred voices took up the keynote.

"But this is a grave charge, Ramon Acinda," Hernandez interjected, his voice scarcely audible above the tumult of the crowd. "Are you sure of what you say?"

The young man in the yellow sweater responded impatiently: "Of course I am sure. Act, Hernandez! Tell them what they must do? They wait only for your word and they will not wait long for that!"

"Yes—yes—of course."

HERNANDEZ seemed almost dazed. His mind told him that Ramon had spoken the truth. But it was a very dreadful truth, one that could not so easily be faced. If only somewhere, within himself, he could draw forth the courage, as one would unsheath a sword—



Fowler

But the hot-blooded Ramon waited no longer. Hernandez' hesitation had not been noticed by the crowd. To them it seemed in fact, as if, after their low-voiced consultation, Hernandez had given Ramon permission to proceed.

"Death!" screamed from every side. The decaying boards of the old warehouse seemed to shake beneath the terrible, unholy echo of the tumult. "Name him! Show us the spy, Ramon! Death!"

The young man who had leaned so nonchalantly against the post was now edging unobtrusively toward the door. Inwardly he was cursing himself—fool that he had been to put through that telephone call that afternoon; he might have known better; the operator had listened in, of course.

It was his one false move, his first carelessness; and it had betrayed him. "Who is he? Point him out to us! Give him to us!" the crowd was baying.

"There he is!" Ramon shrieked.

Instantly those nearby, clawed at the shoulders, the arms, of the young man, who had not yet reached the life-giving door.

His fist shot out; the nearest one

pitched backward against the wall. The young man plunged for the door. But it was too late.

They knew him now—they flung themselves upon him, and a dozen knives glittered evilly in the lantern light. He jerked a snubby automatic from under his coat; it was twisted from his fingers before he could pull the trigger, he was borne to the earthen floor under a press of sweating, struggling bodies—he felt the keen bite of the steel seeking his vitals—again—again—

They had hacked him into a bloody, shapeless mass of horror before the inevitable reaction seized him, sent them recoiling, shaken and suddenly very much afraid, from the dreadful thing which had been a man, full of life and youth, but five short minutes before.

They stood in a little circle, looking down at him.

The youth in the yellow sweater held a lantern forward; and instantly drew it back again. But not before its rays had glittered on a bright piece of metal.

Slowly then, came Hernan Hernandez through a lane which the terrified, quivering crowd opened for him. He bent over and picked up that piece of metal. He held it close to the lantern. He shivered; his fat face was suddenly old and grey, his jewels quivered.

"What is this we have done?" he said in a queer shrill voice. "This man—*Dios!* This man was an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation! A G-man! And his blood is upon our hands!"

A N utter silence fell upon that place of death, a silence broken only by the hiss of quickly indrawn breaths, by the sobbing of a woman in a far corner.

"All of us," said Hernan Hernandez, "all of us here are equally guilty in the eyes of the law. And the G-men will never sleep, no, nor rest until they have brought the slayers of their *compadre* to the gallows."

"You knew who—what he was?" gasped a tall lad who still gripped

in a tremulous hand a crimson-dripping knife.

"I did not know," said Hernan Hernandez. "How should I know?"

"Well, it is done, and we are all in it," snapped Ramon. "For us, now, there is but one hope—the Republic must triumph! Else we are gallows meat, every man and woman in this place."

"Gallows meat," repeated Hernan Hernandez.

On that word of terror they broke—they fled—jamming through the door and out into the tropic night and away along the secret paths on feet lent wings by the fear which followed after.

Only Hernan Hernandez and the youth in the yellow sweater remained beside the body.

"This—this must not be found here" Hernandez whispered.

The youth bent to pick up the awful corpse.

"Gallows meat," said Hernan Hernandez again.

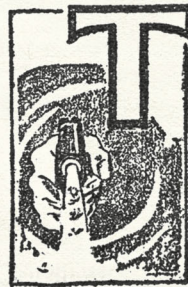
When Ramon had finished his grisly task, he returned to the tangled palmetto jungle surrounding the warehouse. He flitted through the brush like some slim shadow of evil until he came to a small knot of his *compadres* who had been awaiting him.

He spoke to them in low tones.

"Come. There is work to be done. Our *jefe* has been summoned by the *Americanos*. He will have need of us. Arm yourselves and follow me."

CHAPTER II

Midnight



HERE was nothing about the white-walled living room of Jeffrey Leonard's plantation house to remind Hernan Hernandez of the abandoned warehouse's rotting timbers. But the bloody scene that had been played there less than an hour ago was still

achingly vivid in Hernandez' mind. The echo of that many-throated death cry still rang in his ears.

Everything in the warehouse had been shadowy, ominous, fittingly suggestive of violence and terror. Here all was well ordered, tasteful and, except for the insistent booming of Major Borden Heckerman's voice, harmonious.

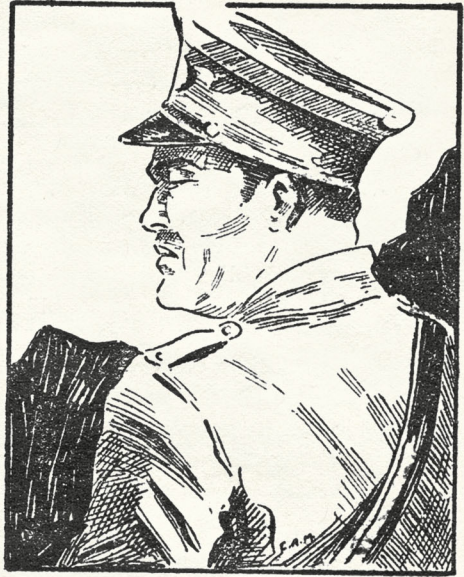
Lennard's sugar plantation was one of the biggest and most successful on the island, and Lennard's influence both here and in Washington was a factor in island politics that could not be ignored.

Hernandez looked from one to the other of the two men and he knew them as enemies—dangerous, powerful enemies whose lives stood for everything that he and his people were struggling to overthrow.

"It's got to stop," Major Heckerman was saying, beating the palm of his hand with a ruddy, clenched fist. "It's got to stop! This is unofficial, mind you—that's why we're here and not down at my office—but I'm warning you that one more overt breach of law and order on the part of your men, and the authorities will ferret out every member of your gang and clap him behind the bars. Those proved to be responsible will be dealt with in all possible severity."

Major Heckerman paused to mop his face. The night was warm and close, and sweat was dripping down his fiery cheeks. The major, a retired officer of the U. S. Army, was a large, solidly-built man whose every gesture and spoken syllable were forcefully suggestive of his military past. He had a big, pugnacious face marked with thick, straight red eyebrows over snapping blue eyes, and by the horizontal gash of his wide, grimly set mouth.

His semi-official position in Puerto Rico included supervising the native police and seeing that law and order was maintained as strictly as possible, a task that recently had been made supremely difficult by the activities of the Sons of Liberty. The day's outbreaks had reduced his nerves to an angry frazzle. His face



Hernandez

was both grim and weary. Slippery devil, this Hernandez. He just sat there and looked sulky and secretive—and was that fear or treachery that flickered every now and again in his eyes?

"One more overt breach," he had said. What would his reaction be, Hernandez wondered uneasily, when the torn and bloody corpse of that G-man was discovered—as it surely would be before long. Perhaps in the morning—

Heckerman gulped down another swallow of his whiskey and soda.

"I'm tired of trying to reason with you, Hernandez. We've tolerated your precious pack of hoodlums so far because you've kept them within bounds. But if I can prove that the Sons of Liberty were actually behind today's killings, or if there's one more act of terrorism on the part of your men, I'm going to hold you directly responsible."

"But, Major—" Hernandez began. It was the first time he had spoken in twenty minutes.

HECKERMAN cut him off indignantly. He was in no mood to listen to a lot of half-baked excuses.

"Your story that your organization was not behind those killings doesn't impress me, Hernandez."

"There are certain people in Puerto Rico, Major," Hernandez said, "who would be very interested in disrupting my work. We have enemies—enemies in high places—who would stop at nothing to see us discredited, outlawed, dispersed."

"That's your lookout," the ex-Army man said, pugnaciously. "I'm not interested in how you do it, but keep your men out of trouble. I guess that's all, isn't it, Lennard?"

The thin man nodded. His scholarly, aristocratic face with its slender, chiseled lines, could be, when he chose, grim and forbidding. His eyes were unfriendly, almost contemptuous, as he looked at Hernandez.

"I'm not interested in getting mixed up with island politics," he said, very slowly. "I never have been. But when your men endanger life and property—well, it just won't do, Hernandez." He was not a loquacious man. The prim pronouncement would be his last word on the subject.

"I will do my best," Hernandez agreed. "But it must be my best—as I see it." His eyes glinted. "And now, if you will forgive me, I—"

A sharp tinkle of breaking glass interrupted him. Lennard's highball glass lay shattered on the floor, and Lennard was gazing with mingled fury and concern past Hernandez' shoulder.

"What is the meaning of this?" His voice was sharp.

Hernandez turned. The double door leading to the veranda had been flung open. Eight men stood there, fiery-eyed, menacing. Two or three of them carried rifles—the others knives and queer-looking, old-fashioned swords. The leader stood with drawn revolver. His face was young, ferocious, and there was a cold, cruel gleam to his eyes. He had on a bright yellow sweater.

"We have come, *Jefe*," he said.

For a moment the tableau held. Then three things happened at once. Lennard leaped to his feet. Hecker-

man's ruddy hand moved toward the army .45 he carried inside the coat of his white suit. And Ramon fired.

Death-spitting flame streaked out from the gun. Heckerman's thin lips jerked apart. Blood welled over the white coat, making a spreading crimson stain just below the breast pocket, and Heckerman sagged to the floor. His outflung hand caught the back of his chair as he fell and it toppled with a little clatter that was somehow more dreadful than the sound of Ramon's gun.

Lennard's dark eyes blazed righteous fury. "You dirty, murderous—"

There was a second report. With widening eyes, Hernandez watched the tall, thin American crumple and fall, his scholar's forehead torn to a bloody mess.

Chaotic confusion gripped Hernandez' brain, paralyzing his responses. Vague protests formed in his mind but never came to his lips. Ramon was mad! What was he doing—

The eight men trooped into the room. "The car is outside, *Jefe*," Ramon said. "It is better that you wait there. We will come when we have finished here."

Hernandez nodded. His feet shuffled lifelessly towards the open doorway. He paused there a moment but did not look back into the room. Then the moonless night swallowed him.

RAMON and his companions wasted no time in words, but moved, swiftly, ruthlessly, as if by previously concerted arrangement, each proceeding to his task with the deadly precision of destructive machinery.

Tables were overturned, furniture smashed to kindling, pongee curtains ripped to tattered shreds in an orgy of brutish, purposeless destruction. And through it all, Jeffrey Lennard lay with his head pillowed on his arm, his face to the floor, as if averted even in death from the ugly sights about.

But somehow death had not come so easily to Heckerman's thick, stubborn body. Feebly he stirred, trying to lift his head.

"Look, Ramon, he moves. The Yankee pig is not yet dead," one of the men with a rifle said.

Savagely Ramon seized the gun from his hand and brought the heavy wooden butt crashing on Heckerman's skull, smashing it cruelly in. Then he snatched up a lighted oil lamp from the one table that was still standing and hurled it down on the floor between the two bodies.

There was a white puff of flame as the oil ignited and spurted in burning jets over the floor. Tongues of fire licked over the lifeless figures, spread eagerly in hellish dance, and leaped to the piled-up debris in the center of the room. Reddish glare washed over the snarling, triumphant faces of the eight Sons of Liberty. Smoke billowed and hung in choking clouds about them.

With shouts and laughter that had a wildly drunken sound, they ran from the room.

"Quickly," Ramon yelled. "The cane fields—the warehouse—all—all must be destroyed. Ashes and destruction—death to the *Americanos!*"

Hernandez, out in the car, heard their shouting, saw the flames leaping heavenward, and watched the starless night glow red as the kindling fire swept over the magnificent plantation of the dead Jeffrey Lennard.

FOURTEEN hours later a portly, grey-haired man was pacing the book-lined office of the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Behind the large mahogany desk sat the director himself, a slight frown wrinkling his brow and a half-worried, half-angry expression in his eyes.

Before him, on the desk, inky black headlines, thick and square and terrible, screamed the story of the latest Puerto Rican outrage—the brutal murder of Major Heckerman and Jeffrey Lennard. A neat sheaf of dispatches reiterated the same facts from various official and semi-official sources. For the last half hour, the stentorian voice of Senator Everard Lennard had been going over those facts, lining them up naked and ex-

PLICIT, and scourging them, partly with the stock phrases of political oratory that came so naturally to his lips, and partly with the simpler, blunter words that his anger and his horror put on his tongue.

Enough of the bodies had been saved from the flames to establish that both men had died, not from the fire, but from bullets. And a tattered emblem found fastened to the outer gate post of the plantation grounds had flauntingly proclaimed the Sons of Liberty as the bloody authors of the deed.

"It's plain enough, isn't it?" the senator demanded. "This situation has been brewing for some time. The last letters I had from my brother were full of this man Hernandez and his rabble. It's time for your department to go into action. You can't sit idly by any longer. A federal official has been killed. My own brother has been murdered. You've got to do something!"

The director's voice was hard and dry. "What do you want me to do?" he asked.

"Get a man down there. Send a dozen if you have to."

"I've had an agent working under cover there for some time," the director told him.

"Well, what's he up to? Why doesn't he stop them?"

"He was killed yesterday."

The statement fell between them, flat and dry. When the senator spoke again, his tone was quiet, almost apologetic.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't know."

The director nodded. "All in the line of duty, Senator. Soldiers don't always die with bugles blowing." There was a faint edge of irony to his voice.

But Senator Lennard's tone of apologetic concern was short-lived. In another minute, he had resumed the assault, badgering, blustering, threatening. It was not a pleasant sight. All the dignity and presence of the man had vanished as he succumbed to the almost childish vindictiveness of his grief. He seemed less

concerned with the loss of his brother than with the affront that the murder put upon his pride in his own eminence.

That the brother of a United States Senator could suffer violent death was in itself intolerable. That the heinous perpetrators of the deed should escape the immediate punishment of the law was unthinkable—a stain upon the honor of the Government. The senator announced his intention of using every means offered by his position and political connections in bringing the criminals to justice. He made several ominous references to taking the matter to the White House, flatly stated his dissatisfaction with the steps so far taken by the Bureau, and hinted darkly at a departmental shake-up, reprisals, and official displeasure.

AT last the director cut in, his voice wearing as thin as his patience.

"What exactly do you expect me to do?"

"Arrest this man Hernandez! Throw his rascally crew behind bars where they belong!" the senator raged.

"If that was possible at this stage of the case, there would be no need for intervention by the F. B. I. To be precise, the evidence against Hernandez and his society wouldn't convict a flea. As a matter of fact, from the reports I have received from the operative who was killed, he could discover nothing that would directly involve Hernandez or any regular members of the Sons of Liberty."

"Well—but—that flag—isn't that proof enough?"

"It wouldn't have been difficult for any private enemy of your brother and Major Heckerman to have counterfeited a white rag with a few crimson markings on it, or to have left it at the scene of the crime in the hope that we would blunder into the hasty conclusion that you are, at this moment, so earnestly putting forth. The F. B. I. doesn't proceed on that kind of evidence, Senator. Too obvious, for one thing. Of course Her-

nandez will be investigated. Thoroughly. You forget the Department has an ax of its own to grind in this matter now. I admit that the case at first glance seems to be childishly simple. But it is my belief that it will turn out to be one of the most intricate and complex that my men have ever undertaken."

The senator nodded brusquely. "Very well. But I'm warning you that I expect definite results—and soon, mind you." The jaw that had been so often the subject of newspaper caricature was belliciously out-thrust.

"If it's any comfort to you, Senator," the director said drily, "I'm assigning my best man to the case."

"One man! What do you expect one man to accomplish? You should send at least twenty. You—One man, indeed!" The senator snorted.

The director's lips moved into something that was like a smile. "I think this particular man will prove more than adequate, Senator. Good afternoon."

After Senator Lennard had departed, the director of the F. B. I. sat scowling down at the case records on his desk. Then with a swift, almost angry motion, he grabbed one of the office telephones.

"Get me Dan Fowler!" he said.

CHAPTER III

To Commit a Murder

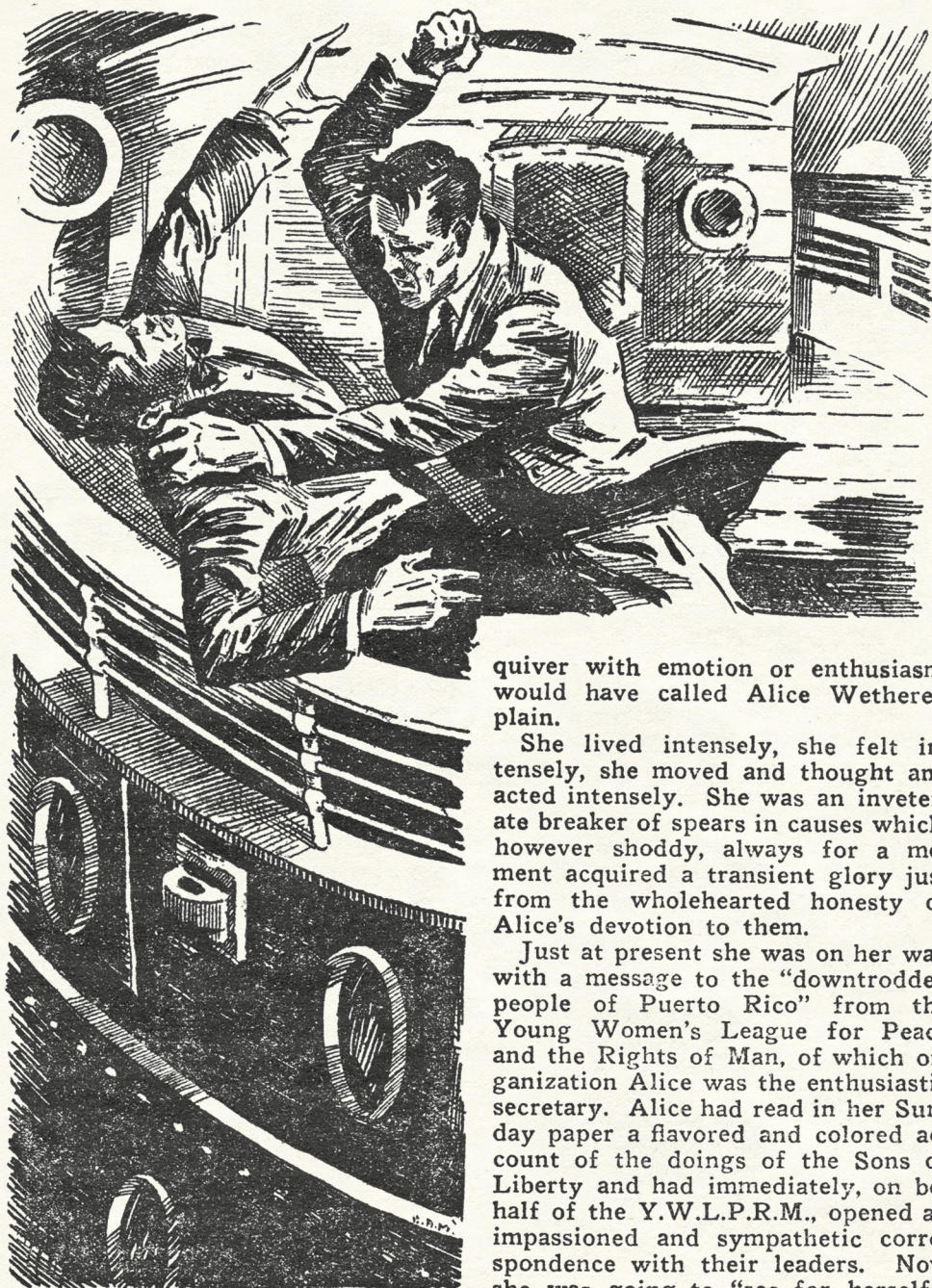


ABOARD the steamship *Borinquen*, plowing through warming seas en route from New York to Puerto Rico, there were a hundred-odd first cabin passengers—tourists, honeymoon couples, business people, newspaper folk—the usual run, with a few queer ones mixed in. But that was as usual, too, as her busy purser would have told you.

For instance, there was little Alice Wetherell, in an inside room on **C**

deck, busy trying to shake the wrinkles out of her only evening gown so as to make a presentable appearance at the captain's dinner. "Plain little thing," the purser had said of her to

his assistant. But that was because the big hat she'd worn aboard had prevented him from seeing her eyes. No one who looked into those enormous lakes of soft brown, ever a-



Fowler felt his knees buckling. (Page 28)

quiver with emotion or enthusiasm, would have called Alice Wetherell plain.

She lived intensely, she felt intensely, she moved and thought and acted intensely. She was an inveterate breaker of spears in causes which, however shoddy, always for a moment acquired a transient glory just from the wholehearted honesty of Alice's devotion to them.

Just at present she was on her way with a message to the "downtrodden people of Puerto Rico" from the Young Women's League for Peace and the Rights of Man, of which organization Alice was the enthusiastic secretary. Alice had read in her Sunday paper a flavored and colored account of the doings of the Sons of Liberty and had immediately, on behalf of the Y.W.L.P.R.M., opened an impassioned and sympathetic correspondence with their leaders. Now she was going to "see for herself," she was aglow with crusading ardor.

But that, for Alice, was normality.

Then there was Paul Tyson, the novelist, in a much better room on A deck. He was going to Puerto Rico to get local color for a tropical yarn. He was a thin, quick-moving fellow with a cynical twist to his mouth.

"Not a real human emotion in him," the purser said. "I've seen his sort before. Everybody he meets is just a character in a story to him."

And there was Victor Tokewood, who occupied "A" Suite, the ship's best quarters, and who, on this last evening out of San Juan, might have been seen hurrying past the smoking room where Paul Tyson sat over his last pre-prandial Daiquiri, headed for the radio room with a sheaf of messages in his hand.

"Big shot, that fellow," the purser had remarked. "Politician of some sort. Favors this independence idea, always spouting about peace and liberty and things like that; has lots of money, and a big drag in Washington, too. But he's harmless, and the best-natured fellow you ever saw. Always ready for any sort of game the cruise director wants to get up."

Indeed, one had only to look at Victor Tokewood's large and rather swarthy features, or to listen to his cheerful bellowing voice, to realize that the big man was the type who would go through his appointed years being called "the life of the party."

BUT there was one person on the passenger list that the purser couldn't make out.

"It's that tall young fellow in the outside room, for'd on B deck," he would say. "He's supposed to be a scientist—what you call an ethnologist, studies ancient civilizations and the origin of races and all that. Going to Puerto Rico for the Smithsonian Institute to study aboriginal remains. Only—he doesn't look much like a scientist to me. He's too tall and brown and husky looking—something like a cross between a top sergeant of the Marines and a Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman."

In this the purser, long an observer of the human parade, was shrewder than he knew. The man who appeared on the passenger list of the *Borinquen* as John Daniels was—as Alice Wetherell slipped her evening dress over her slim shoulders, as Paul Tyson finished his cocktail with appreciation and rose at the summons of the dinner-gong, as Victor Tokewood handed the radio operator a five dollar bill in addition to the price of his messages—struggling in his own comfortable room with a refractory black tie, and grinning wryly to himself as he thought of another dinner beside the enthusiastic Alice.

"It's a good thing," he was reflecting, "that the Lord provided me with big ears, or that dame would have one of 'em talked off by now. But it's all in the day's work. I've a hunch she's going to be useful in Puerto Rico."

Special Agent Daniel Fowler of the Federal Bureau of Investigation gave a last tug at his smart white dinner jacket, surveyed his rugged face in the mirror, muttered something to the effect that he "looked like a hell of a scientist"—and headed for the dining saloon.

They were at table together—Alice Wetherell, Tyson, Tokewood and Dan Fowler—four people traveling alone. Tonight, as always, the effusive Alice dominated the conversation. Tyson was apparently content to listen, to observe, to prod occasionally with a remark here, a lifted eyebrow there. Tokewood was jolly enough, but seemed to have his mind elsewhere than on the table conversation.

Fowler, as always, was anxious for Alice to tell as much as she would of her plans, of her connections and correspondence with the Sons of Liberty. Never once did he mention the ugly word "murder"; if Alice had ever heard that the Sons of Liberty had been involved in such bloody business, she gave no sign of it.

It was, in fact, Tyson who mentioned the word over the coffee cups.

There had come a pause in the con-

versation, which Tyson felt it incumbent upon himself to fill.

"It is curious," he remarked, glancing round the bright salon, "how rarely one hears of a murder being committed on an ocean liner—and yet it is the safest of all places for such an act."

"Why?" asked Fowler instantly.

"Because of the facility with which the body may be disposed of," replied Tyson. "That, after all, is a murderer's chief difficulty. I who have written many murder stories find it so in even imaginary crimes. To kill—that is easy enough. But to dispose of the body is the major task which confronts the criminal who would cover up his traces. Now on a ship, what's easier than to select a lonely moment on deck, kill your man and pitch his body over the side? There are no witnesses. It is a thousand to one shot that the body will never be seen again.

"If your victim is traveling alone, it is a very good chance that his absence will not even be noticed until some time the next day. Yet—save in novels—how often does one hear of such a crime?"

"One hears often enough of persons missing—'must have fallen overboard,' is the story," Fowler remarked. "I wonder—" There was a strange gleam in his grey eyes.

Alice Wetherell shuddered. "Must we talk about murder?" she asked plaintively.

"Of course not, if it distresses you, Miss Wetherell," said the heavy voice of Tokewood, whom Fowler would have sworn was deep in a brown study and oblivious to a word that was being said. "After all, it is something quite foreign to the lives of any of us. I'll wager that not a person at this table has ever come into first-hand contact with a murderer. Right?"

His gaze seemed to rest longest on Fowler's face as he glanced round the table. Everyone nodded.

Tokewood pushed back his chair.

"Well I'm for a turn round the deck, and then early to bed. I must

be ashore in the morning as soon as the gangplank is up. It's been very pleasant knowing all of you—and by the way, Daniels, give my regards to Professor Uhrig on your return to Washington, will you? You know him, of course. Michael Uhrig."

"It will be a pleasure," Fowler said gravely. "Goodby and good luck."

"But I'm going to see something of you in Puerto Rico, am I not, Mr. Tokewood?" put in Alice Wetherell, her eyes wide with anxiety. "You were such an inspiration to me on this voyage—your ideas were so wonderful, your sympathy so—so—"

"Thrilling," put in Tyson softly, one of his trained eyebrows arched.

"Thank you, Miss Wetherell. Of course we'll be seeing each other. Our work in Puerto Rico lies along the same lines. *Hasta la vista*, as you will soon learn to say!" He was gone, swinging easily along amongst the crowded tables, threading his way toward the exit.

"Insufferable poseur," muttered Tyson, with the first real feeling he had shown in any words Fowler had heard him utter. Dan was the only one who did hear—the words were pitched too low for Alice to catch.

Alice had turned to Fowler. She was talking animatedly.

"I wish you could come to see things from my point of view, Mr. Daniels. I am really quite discouraged with you!" She smiled brightly, playfully.

"Well, I'm not promising to become a convert to the cause of peace and light," chuckled Fowler. "But suppose we discuss it further in the smoking room—over another cup of coffee and liqueur?"

"Delightful," agreed Alice, rising. "You'll join us, of course, Mr. Tyson?" It was an obvious afterthought.

"No, thanks," scowled the novelist; and the glance he gave Fowler was suddenly pregnant with malice.

Now that was odd.

But Fowler had no time for speculation on the reasons for Tyson's annoyance. He had reasons of his

own for cultivating Miss Wetherell, unamusing as the task might be.

"I'll meet you in the smoking room in ten minutes," Alice said, as they moved away from the table. "I've got to run by my room for a wrap; we might want to take a turn on deck later."

"I'll just take a preliminary one while I'm waiting," Fowler nodded. "This sea air is splendid."

He glanced back, saw Tyson's hard bright gaze following him. Now what was the matter with that fellow?

Fowler's brisk pace took him twice around the promenade deck; on his second tour, glancing through the smoking room windows, he saw that Alice hadn't yet appeared. He strolled back to the deserted stern of the ship, stood looking down into the creamy wake. It stretched away northward, toward New York, toward the good old States.

Turmoil of white water, beaten up by the ship's powerful screw, turmoil such as that into which he was going now, with hardly a single clew to guide him. A special agent had been murdered, his body found in a lonely ravine. There was nothing to indicate who had done the thing. The double murder and burning at the Lennard plantation seemed to be the work of the Sons of Liberty. But was it? All was confusion and evil—a wretched, blood-cursed puzzle. And the chief was counting on him to solve it. So Dan Fowler was going to Puerto Rico, and he would not return until justice had been satisfied.

He leaned on the rail, thinking of these things, so absorbed in his thoughts, in fact, that he failed to hear a stealthy step behind him. Yet instinct, or perhaps the swish of a descending blow, warned him just a thousandth of a second before the blow crashed down on his unprotected head. He started to turn; the blow instead of falling with skull-crushing precision, glanced off the side of his skull. The lights of the ship winked and staggered before his eyes; he felt his knees giving way beneath him; he felt the thrust of a hand that sought to fling him headlong over the rail

into the churning sea. But he clung desperately to the rail, locking one arm about it as he sagged downward, fighting to regain command of his wavering senses, of his muscles. He could not—he felt consciousness leaving him . . .

WHEN Dan Fowler opened his eyes, someone was propping up his head and shoulders; he felt the bite of brandy on his tongue, became aware of the neck of a pocket flask clicking against his teeth. He swallowed a gulp of the fiery liquid, coughed, tried to sit up.

"Take it easy, old man," said the voice of Victor Tokewood.

Feet were running across the deck. "What's happened? What's wrong?" Paul Tyson's staccato accents.

The click of high heels was followed by a little scream of terror from Alice Wetherell.

Was the whole passenger list gathering here?

Fowler tried again to sit up, and this time successfully. His hand rose to his throbbing head, came away sticky with blood.

Alice was on her knees by his side, ineffectually trying to wipe away the blood with a wisp of lace handkerchief, giving vent to little bleats of pity the while.

"Better get the ship's doctor," said Tyson.

"What's going on here?" Curt, official tones these. A white uniform loomed beyond a pile of deck chairs—the purser.

Fowler's brain was clearing fast. He wanted no official investigation, no publicity, no police inquiry at San Juan.

"I tripped over something and fell and cut my head," he said quickly. "I'll be all right. A little sticking plaster will fix me up."

Aided by Tokewood and the purser, he managed to stagger to his feet.

"That's a nasty cut, Mr. Daniels," the purser said in a dry voice. "Where did your head strike?"

"Don't know. Somewhere here—too dark to tell," replied Fowler.

"Clumsy of me. Sorry to upset everybody so. I'll be getting along to my room."

"I'll see you there, and then get the doctor," the purser said. He still sounded suspicious.

Half an hour later, bandaged of head and still somewhat shaken of body, but alert of mind, Dan Fowler sat side by side with Alice Wetherell in two deck chairs placed against the rail at the very spot where he had been assaulted. The chairs faced forward, so that no one could approach unseen; the moon, hidden by clouds in the earlier evening, now rode in a clearing sky, illumining the speeding ship with silvery light.

"Lucky for me I didn't slip through the rail and go overboard," Fowler remarked, and Alice shivered.

"Don't talk like that," she begged. "It reminds me of what Mr. Tyson said at dinner about shipboard being an easy place to commit a m-murder. Why must men hurt and kill each other, Mr. Daniels? Why must they always seek to solve their problems by destroying each other—by the use of force?"

"That's a pretty big question for a simple scientist," Fowler answered. "You don't believe in force, then? Ever?"

"It's never really necessary," Alice answered firmly. "There's always a better way; men just take the easiest path. It comes natural to them to use force, so they use it. In a woman's world, there would be no such bloody, horrible things."

FOWLER shook his head. "Perhaps not, yet I'm afraid I'm just a man when it comes to that question," he said. "By the way, I haven't thanked you for coming to my assistance tonight. Or Mr. Tokewood, either. He was helping me up when I came to."

"Yes, he was supporting you in his arms when I came out of the tea-room door looking for you. I didn't see you till I got to that pillar." She pointed. The "pillar" to which she referred was a square shelter containing a ladder which gave access to the

sun deck, which extended aft about half-way over the poop where the two now sat.

"And Mr. Tyson was just ahead of you?" asked Fowler with every appearance of careless curiosity.

"Not exactly ahead of me. He was over on that side of the ship when I first saw him," said Alice, pointing to starboard, "moving toward you."

"Well, you were all very kind and I'm grateful," Fowler said. "I think I'd better put this aching head on a pillow now. See you tomorrow?"

"Yes, indeed," agreed Alice.

But there was no sleep for Fowler yet. When the music of the dance orchestra in the ballroom had ceased, when the last lingering toper had left the smoking room, Dan Fowler came back to the stern of the ship. He was wearing a dark lounge suit now, less conspicuous at night; there was a loaded gun under his left armpit, and a flashlight in his right hand.

He went first to the ladder leading to the sun deck inside its shelter of steel. The flashlight played over the door of this shelter. There were no fingerprints on the handle of it.

Gingerly he tried it; it was not locked, it swung back at his touch with a loud metallic squeak from the hinges. He closed it again, nodding grimly. No one had approached that way to strike that murderous blow; he would have heard the sound. But perhaps the door had been open then, and had been closed later on during the evening?

He flogged his memory—had it been closed when he passed it on his way to the stern, just before he had been attacked? He was almost sure it had been. Then had the would-be murderer fled by this route to the obscurity and safety of the unlighted sun deck? He flashed his torch-ray up the almost vertical ladder; it had been freshly varnished, probably that very day, and there was on its polished steps no trace of footmarks. The surfaces were as smooth and clean and shiny as though they had never been used. Fowler set one foot on the lowest step. The mark was plainly visible.

His jaw grew tighter. He had talked with both Tyson and Tokewood; one had come aft along the starboard side of the deck, the other along the port side. And Alice had emerged from the tea-room door, which gave directly on the poop about twenty feet forward of the ladder to the sun deck.

Not one of them had seen anyone else in the vicinity; yet the would-be murderer, whoever he was, had not fled by the ladder, and if he had gone along the deck in either direction he would inevitably have been seen by Alice, not to mention one or the other of the two men. There was a bright light in the bulkhead just over the tea-room door.

HE knew that he had not lain there unconscious more than a minute; he had glanced at his watch as he passed the smoking room, looking for Alice. He had stood at the rail perhaps three or four minutes before he was struck, and his watch, when he recovered sufficiently to look at it, showed six minutes elapsed time.

There had been no opportunity for his assailant to escape unseen before the others arrived.

Then the blow had been struck either by Tyson, by Tokewood, or by Alice herself. Attempting to flee, the criminal had observed one of both of the others approaching and had then pretended to be just arriving, to be aiding Fowler.

Fowler remembered Tyson's remarks about murder being easy on board ship; he remembered the fellow's queer animosity for both Tokewood and himself. And it came to him suddenly that both he and Tokewood had spoken of taking a turn on deck, that both were tall, broad-shouldered, and would look much alike in dim light when seen from behind; and that both had been wearing white dinner jackets and dark trousers.

The weapon? It had gone overboard, of course. But people didn't carry about with them such heavy instruments as the one with which Fowler had been struck down. He

used his flashlight again. There was a reel of fire-hose attached to the ladder-housing; above it was a metal clasp which once had held a heavy steel spanner. But no more; the spanner was missing, the place where it had rested clearly outlined in the white paint.

As for the spanner itself, it unquestionably lay in the ooze, at the bottom of the sea, many miles astern.

Fowler wasted no further thought on it; his brow was furrowed by quite another query.

Someone had tried to kill him that night—either as John Daniels, or as Tokewood, or in his own proper person.

Which?

CHAPTER IV

The Entering Wedge



SAN JUAN'S old city prison is not a pleasant place. Grim and forbidding, the ancient Spanish structure rises from a street near the waterfront, and its aspect is such as might well make malefactors shudder.

On the night following the arrival of the *Borinquen* in the port of San Juan, clouds obscured the moon; the narrow streets were dark between the circles of illumination from the arc-lights. A little after midnight, Dan Fowler stood in the recess of a doorway near the city prison, watching as well as he could, and listening with all his ears.

He had made certain arrangements, and now, very soon, he would find out whether they would be successful. Of course certain local authorities were aware of his presence and character; but equally of course, he had not gone near the Governor's palace or to the Headquarters of the Insular Police. A rendezvous had been prearranged in a quiet house in the residential section known as Condado; and there he had talked at some length with a harassed Puerto Rican

gentleman who had arrived in a closed car, and who was a senior detective officer of the I. P.

"A blank wall—that's the answer," was Fowler's terse summing up of the situation. "It's a case in which I don't know where to start. I've got to have an entering wedge."

"A wedge, *señor*?"

"Precisely. These people—these Sons of Liberty—they have a leader, this Hernan Hernandez of whom you speak."

"He has been questioned many times, *señor*; no later than this morning, for example. There is no result, and we have nothing for which to arrest him. There is no proof."

"Just so. And of course he has this secret headquarters—but you don't know where it is. And he has an organization, but you can't find out the details of it. And he holds these meetings, and makes speeches about liberty and justice, but you can't find fault with that. I've got to get to that headquarters of his, Captain."

"If you do, you won't live long afterward, *Señor Fowler*."

"That is a chance I must take. He's creating a situation here which may result in armed violence and cause the death of a lot of honest soldiers and marines to restore order, unless he's stopped. Nobody can rule a possession of the United States by terrorism and get away with it."

Fowler's jaw clamped tight on the last syllable.

The Puerto Rican police officer nodded.

"Excellent, *señor*. But we have been doing our best, and—" He shrugged eloquently.

"Of course you have. It's not that I think I'm any smarter than you gentlemen who are right here on the ground and know the local conditions; but maybe if I try a different method, one that friend Hernandez won't be expecting, I may have better luck. Now here's my idea. You still have this storekeeper, José Parias, in jail?"

"Yes—but we've no evidence to hold him. We're convinced he knows more than he is telling of the murder

of Guardia Rodriguez; but when we get him before a magistrate we won't be able to present a case."

"He doesn't know that, does he? He'll be pretty well scared by now?"

"The white-livered *perro* is shaking in his cell."

"Excellent, Captain Trevino. Here is what I wish you would do for me . . ."

THAT had been in the afternoon. Now, in the black darkness, Dan Fowler stood waiting for the fruition of his little scheme.

From the direction of the jail, from a high spot on the frowning wall, came a slight scratching sound, then a faint snap. Fowler grinned nervously. If nothing slipped, now—

Because he knew exactly where to look, he was able a moment later to make out something moving—a dark form descending the face of the wall; a man, in fact, sliding down a rope. He marked the exact moment when the man hit the sidewalk. Fowler had darted to the corner now, stood there peering around, invisible himself in the gloom. The man hesitated, then the dark blob of shadow began to inch cautiously toward the opposite corner.

Through the night from that corner there ripped a sudden stern challenge:

"*Alto! Quien viva?*"

And then, still in sharp Spanish:

"Halt there, you rascal! I see you! Halt, or I fire!"

Booted feet hammered on the pavement; the man at the foot of the wall whirled and fled toward Fowler. Fowler ran across the street and jumped into a small open car which stood there. The whine of the starter was blending in the hum of the motor as the fugitive dashed round the corner of the jail. Behind him pistols cracked loudly — bullets spattered against stone walls.

"Kill the son of a dog, Pedro!" yelled a furious voice.

"We'll put him where he won't give us any more trouble," yelled another. The hammering of footsteps came closer.

The fugitive darted across the street, rounded the rear of the car.

"Señor!" came his pleading voice at Fowler's very elbow. "Help me, for the love of heaven. They'll murder me!" He was crawling into the car as he spoke.

"Drive on, señor, and all the saints will bless you! Save a poor innocent man from death—"

Fowler threw the car into gear, let out the clutch. The car leaped ahead, rounded the next corner followed by a hail of pistol bullets, and gathered speed up the sloping street toward the plaza.

"What's the matter back there?" Fowler asked with well simulated curiosity. The man beside him cowered lower, gibbering and muttering, wholly overcome by terror.

A POLICEMAN came running across the Plaza as Fowler turned right along the street leading toward Condado and Santurce. Fowler pretended not to see him; indeed he had all he could do, even at this late hour, to guide the car through the narrow street, dodging around other late-traveling vehicles, gaining speed with every turn of the wheels. The shots and outcries died away; the car emerged on to the broad avenue beyond the congested part of the city and sped eastward.

A policeman was strolling along in front of the Capitol.

Everything had gone nicely so far. Fowler had hoped this fugitive would seek his help without his offering it, though he had been prepared to do so if necessary; and he had reacted as anticipated. The greatest worry had been for fear he would stop and surrender when challenged by the police. Well, he hadn't. Now for the next act in the comedy.

"There's a policeman," said Fowler in his precise, excellent Spanish. "Hadh't we better stop and report to him how you were attacked?"

The fugitive gripped his arm with a clawlike hand.

"For the love of heaven, no, señor," he wailed. "I dare not! No—no—"

Fowler had started to slow down;

the policeman was staring at the car curiously. Fowler stepped on it and sped away. But when he spoke to the man again it was in a tone harsh with angry inquiry:

"It is the police you are fleeing from then, you rascal?"

"Sí, señor." Very humbly.

"What crime have you committed?"

"None, señor—I am an innocent man, I swear it! They locked me up in their foul prison, they beat me, they would have brought false witnesses to swear against me—"

"Do you mean to say," interrupted Fowler, "that you were escaping from the city jail when I picked you up?" His tone of furious incredulity was admirable.

"I—I—yes, I was—but I was innocent! Señor, I will be frank with you. I am of the Sons of Liberty. My comrades of the order helped me to escape tonight, they slipped me a file and a rope by bribing a guard; they are my true friends. They will reward you well, señor, if you—*Dios!*"

The wail of a pursuing siren rose high and weird and shrill from behind. Looking back, Fowler saw the lights of a speeding car sweeping along the avenue. He switched off his lights, swung into a side street.

"Now look at the mess I'm in!" he snapped. "Listen, fellow; I'm going to turn back to town and give you up. I'm not going to get into any jam with the police."

Parias, in his terror, turned suddenly threatening:

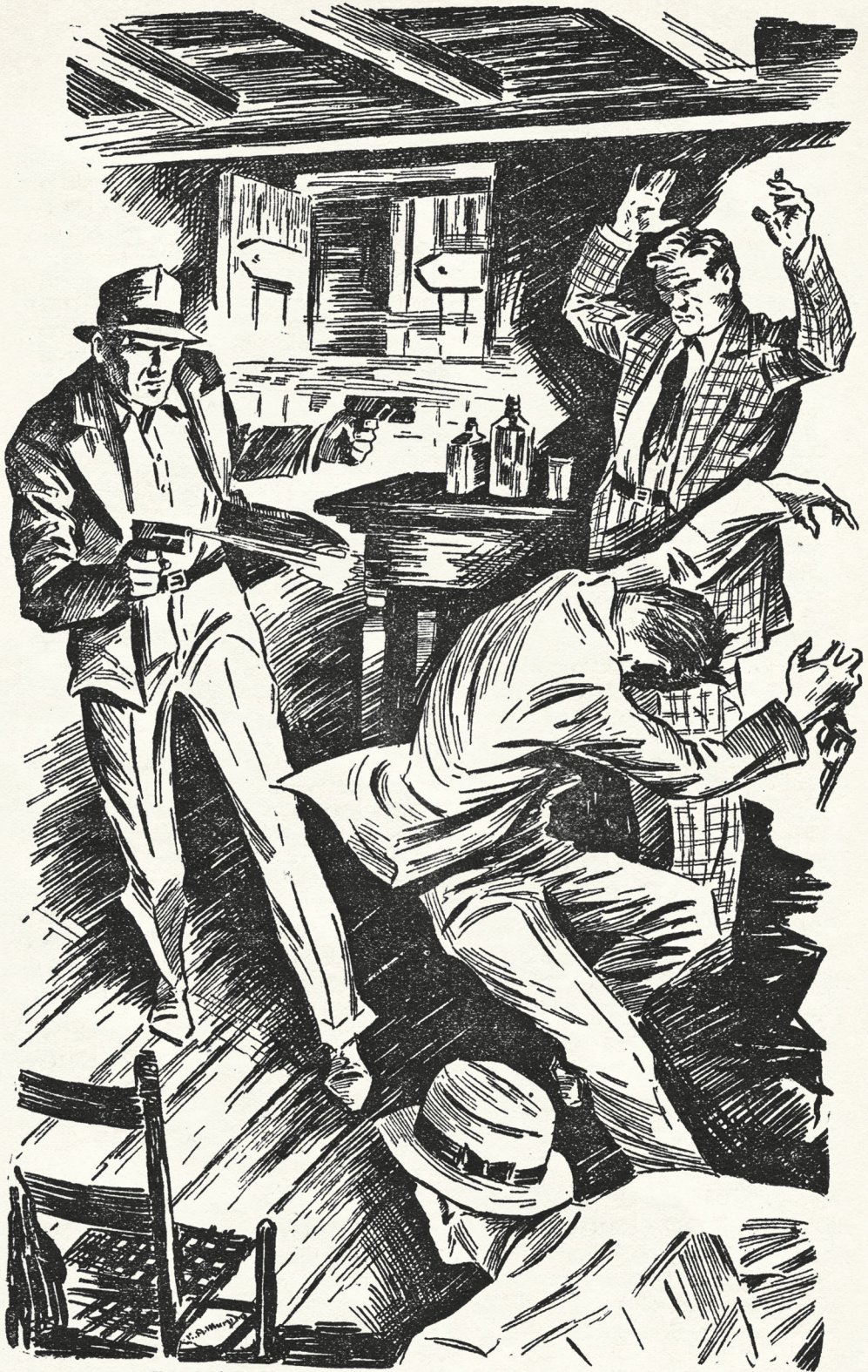
"Do that, señor," he retorted, "and I will tell them that it was all arranged, that you were waiting for me. You will be in jail for many years! Murder—that is the charge against me. Helping a murderer to escape is a serious matter, let me assure you!"

Fowler swore angrily.

"Damn you! What am I to do? They may have the number of this car—they will be able to get my name from the people from whom I hired it!"

From bluster Parias shifted to wheedling:

"Take me to safety, señor. As I



Fowler's bullet swung the man half around. (Page 44)

said, I am of the Sons of Liberty. If I can reach a certain place I will be safe. Take me there, *señor*, and you also will be safe—and well rewarded."

"No! I'm turning back—"

"Think, *señor*! You will never be able to prove your innocence. For you, now, there is no safety save in flight from Puerto Rico. This the Sons of Liberty can secure for you, and you will not go empty handed. Do not take me back to my death, and yourself to prison, *señor*! I am an innocent man—"

After some more of this, meanwhile twisting and turning through the suburban streets, Fowler allowed himself to be persuaded that his one hope was to fall in with Parias' plans.

"We must hurry," said Parias. "We must get through the next town before the alarm has been spread by telephone. Then we shall be all right."

Fowler hurried—though he knew well enough that there would be no rural alarms. He pretended to become more and more frightened and upset.

"Where are you taking me?" he demanded.

"To a place of safety," Parias answered.

The car sped on through the tropic night, along a narrow but smooth road, between rows of palm trees. They sped through a sleeping town, with scarce a light showing; they turned, at Parias' direction, up a narrower road which wound perilously in and out, threading its way through the conical hills. The smells, the darkness of the jungle closed presently upon that road; the going became rougher and rougher.

Now they began to descend; far ahead Fowler saw the twinkle of starlight on the waters of a lagoon. He made out dark masses on either hand, overgrown by jungle; then a light, another light—a town. The jungle opened; he was bumping over a cobbled street.

"Left at the next turning," Parias instructed. "You will see an alleyway between two houses. Pull in

there." He gestured quickly, eagerly.

"What is the name of this town?" Fowler asked.

"Granada. But it will be better that you do not ask too many questions. Let me do the talking, I will explain everything. You will see; I am among my own people now. This is the place."

Self-assurance had certainly returned to Jose Parias. Forgotten was the fear of death which had shaken him from head to toe, back in San Juan. Fowler turned the car into the indicated alleyway, stopped beside a dark blotch in a white wall—a blotch that dissolved into a dimly lighted rectangle as someone within opened the door.

"Who is there?" came a sharp demand.

"Parias—Jose Parias; with a friend who has rescued him from death."

"Parias! But—no matter. We cannot stand here talking. Come in, quickly. And bring your friend. The *gran jefe* will want to speak to you."

THERE was a sinister undercurrent in the tone of this doorkeeper which Fowler did not like. However he had asked for whatever trouble might await him here.

He got out of the car and followed Parias into the house. The door was promptly slammed behind him, and beneath the dim rays of a dusty lamp he faced the doorkeeper, a swarthy man with enormous mustachios, clad in dirty pink pajamas, barefooted and somehow menacing of aspect, though his words were peaceful enough.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Jose Parias," he said softly.

"It is certainly a pleasure to me to be out of that stinking prison, and I am grateful to my comrades who have rescued me," Parias retorted.

The mustachioed one scowled at Fowler; in him, apparently, the usual Latin courtesy was lacking.

"Follow me," he snapped, and led the way through a narrow passage, across an open, tiled patio, and into a room furnished only with a wooden bench and a lamp which sputtered in a wall bracket. There were doors in

three walls of this cubicle; the fourth was pierced by a window heavily grated with rusted iron.

"Wait. I will inform the *jefe* that you have arrived," he said, and went back across the patio, still grumbling discontentedly.

Fowler started to speak, but Parias motioned him to silence.

"Something amiss here," he whispered. "Walls have ears in this place. Better to say nothing."

Silence ensued; a silence broken only by the hum of mosquitoes gathering to the feast. Fowler walked to the open door leading to the patio and looked out. His mind was busy. It had all been too easy, this entry of his into what he could not doubt was the headquarters of Hernan Hernandez, grand chief of the Sons of Liberty. Had Parias tricked him, read his purpose—instead of his deceiving Parias as he had thought? No—unless the man was the most consummate actor alive. No—yet now—

Above his head was a gallery which ran all the way around the second story, overlooking the patio. He heard stealthy footsteps moving along its wooden flooring; a doorlatch clicked, and there came to him the clear tones of a woman's voice, speaking English:

"Who is it?" It was the voice of Alice Wetherell.

A low murmur was the answer; a chair or bed creaked, high heels clicked on the boards, passed overhead, receded, following the shuffle of the same stealthy footbeat as before.

Fowler fought back the impulse to dart up the stairway in the corner of the patio and see where Alice was going. He regretted now that he had not adhered to his original plan of trailing the girl from the steamer; she had certainly made contact with the Sons of Liberty. But how had they dared bring her here? A five-year-old child could have perceived that Alice was the talkative sort of young female who could not be trusted to keep her mouth shut about anything as "thrilling" as a visit to the secret headquarters of a political agitation group.

HE glanced back into the room. Parias sat on the bench leaning against the wall, asleep.

And the door in the farther wall of the room was open perhaps a foot. A slender hand came through, beckoning to Fowler. A woman's hand.

Fowler could not understand how Alice had gotten there so quickly, but he moved on silent feet to obey that summons, ready for anything. Parias never moved as Fowler eased through the door; it closed softly behind him. He was aware of a heavy odor of perfume, of soft breathing in the utter darkness close beside him.

"Alice—" he began, but the whisper interrupted fiercely.

"No talk now. I will take you to Alice, come." Fingers tugged at his sleeve. This woman was not Alice; she spoke Spanish too well.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"*No importe*. I am here to help you. Come quickly—before it is too late," came the impatient reply. He heard a little foot stamp on the earthen floor. Grinning in the darkness, he permitted himself to be led along.

Where he was going he did not know, but his instinct, rarely at fault, told him that this woman, whoever she was, was in some way doublecrossing Hernan Hernandez; which ought to be all to the good from Fowler's point of view.

"Careful. Here we descend," the whisper warned. He was led down a creaking wooden stairway, still in utter darkness, and along a passage where the air was damp and muggy.

"Now we go up again—" Stairs to climb, this time; stairs of stone, or cement. Silently they ascended.

"Shhh." Very faintly they could hear the hum of voices, but could not distinguish words. The whisper sank until it was a mere breath of sound at his ear.

"You are armed?"

"Yes."

"There is a door here; I will put your hand on the latch. Open it, cross the room before you, pass through a curtained doorway into another room. There you will find your pale-cheeked wench. Take her and go.

The main door to the street will be directly at your left, and it is unguarded. You will have but to threaten Hernandez with your gun. He is with her, but he is a coward; he will not dare oppose you. Your car is still in the alley. Get into it, go back to San Juan, and forget you ever saw or heard of Granada. Do you understand?"

"Yes—but who are you? Why are you doing this?"

"My business!" The whisper was fierce again.

There was a deadly determination in that whisper which gave Fowler an inward shiver. Then he felt his hand guided to an iron latch.

"Now go on—and never let that fool of a girl come back to this place. Take her home where she belongs. Go!"

STILL Fowler hesitated, playing for time, trying to determine what he ought to do.

"But, *señorita!* To whom do I owe such a debt of gratitude—"

"You owe me nothing, fool! Chiquita does what she does for her own sake, not for Yankee pigs." Fowler felt something prick his neck. "Go now, or I drive this home!" hissed the whisper on a note of grim resolve.

Fowler knew she meant it.

He opened the door and stepped into a room illumined only by what light filtered through close-drawn curtains opposite. He felt rather than heard the door by which he had come swing to behind him.

The voices were plainly audible now. The first he heard was Alice Wetherell's broken schoolgirl Spanish:

"I've been cruelly deceived! All this talk of guns and wholesale murder—oh, let me go! Let me go! I want to go home!"

"You came here of your own free will, *señorita,*" said an oily male voice. "We had no way to tell that you were not in sympathy with our plans. We hoped you might bring us funds, and we hoped that your association with us would bring us a certain, shall we say, prestige in the eyes

of the world which would better our moral position. As to our more practical arrangements, I thought you would sympathize with them; but since you do not, it obviously becomes impossible that you should be permitted to depart and prattle in your artless way concerning matters beyond your comprehension."

"You—you mean I am a prisoner?" quavered Alice.

"Oh, but no, *señorita.* Not at all a prisoner. An honored guest—who should be more highly honored in the house of Hernan Hernandez than the lady who is his affianced wife?"

"Your wife? But—but— Ohhhh—"

"Certainly, my little butterfly of springtime. Have I not said I loved you from the first? Have I not poured out the riches of my devotion at your little feet? Hernan Hernandez is yours, my dove. Yours forever!"

"I don't want to marry you—" wailed Alice piteously.

"But you must, light of my soul. It is either that—or something we won't even think of. Once you are Señora Hernandez, you will not speak of things you ought not to talk about. You cannot testify in a court of law against me. In fact, under the Spanish laws of the good old days, which still prevail in this island, you cannot do much of anything that I, as your husband, object to. And, moreover, you are so beautiful—ah, Alicita—"

"No! No! Keep your hands off me—"

And at that Fowler, deciding he wasn't going to learn any more by listening, stepped quickly forward through the curtains, gun steady at his hip.

"*Arriba los manos, Hernandez!*" he snapped.

HERNANDEZ' little pudgy hands fairly flew above his head. His fat brown face was all a-quiver, his bulging eyes seemed about to start from his head. He looked like anything but the leader of a conspiracy, this frightened little man in rumpled white ducks and a yellow polo shirt.

"Stand back there in the corner—"

face the wall," Fowler ordered. "Don't move or you'll get a bullet in the back."

Alice squealed.

"Shut up!" barked Fowler.

The girl, fully dressed in a tailored pongee suit and smart little walking shoes, was standing exactly in the middle of the floor. Her great eyes were alight as they fixed themselves on Fowler's face.

"Alice," he said, "do exactly as I tell you. Go to that door—the big one—and open it. Don't make any more noise than you can help. See if anyone is outside."

"*Señor, señor*, for the love of mercy—" Hernandez began.

"You shut up, too, or I'll bat you over the head with this gun," Fowler snarled. Alice was moving toward the door when there came a whine of brakes outside, the unmistakable sound of a car door slamming, voices and heavy footfalls on concrete steps. Then a sharp clatter from the knocker.

"Back through the curtains, Alice. Behind me," Fowler directed.

No use trying that door now; there might be half a dozen men out there.

The knocker clattered again; someone spoke impatiently. Fowler backed into the curtained doorway.

"Alice, go to the little door in the wall opposite my back," he said in a low voice. "See if it is locked."

There came a rattle. "No, it's open," Alice reported.

"Has it got a bolt? On the far side?"

"Yes."

Hernandez turned around, suddenly—at the same moment the big door was thrown open and three men with guns in their hands burst into the room. Fowler fired a shot into the lamp, plunging the place into darkness, and flung himself across the inner room for the open door, pushing Alice through it ahead of him.

He slammed it shut, drove home the bolt, grabbed Alice by one arm and raced with her down the stairs, along the musty passageway, and, with his flashlight showing the way, up the wooden stairs into the room next the cubicle where he and Parias had been

bidden to wait but a few moments before.

The passage still echoed with the thunderous hammering and kicking of his pursuers on the door. If only they hadn't thought to block his way in the patio—he might gain the car. He tore open the door into the waiting room.

Parias still sat on the bench, his head fallen forward on his breast.

Fowler grabbed him by the shoulder—he must help, now, he must bluff the way past that doorkeeper.

"Parias—Parias, get up!"

Then Parias' head slewed to one side at a drunken angle, and Fowler saw that all the front of the man's coat was flooded with a dark crimson outpouring. Parias slid off the bench, slumped to the floor. His throat gaped—a vast red cavern—it had been slit from ear to ear—

ALICE swayed—Fowler grabbed her, slung her over his shoulder like a sack of meal and ran across the patio for the side exit—there were a dozen arched openings—which one? This one? No—a storeroom piled with sacks of foodstuffs. The next? No—a sleeping place with half a dozen cots.

Somebody ran out from the other side and began squibbing off an automatic pistol; bullets chipped the plaster, ricocheted screaming from the tiled pavement, whistled about Fowler's ears.

The next door led into the narrow hall he remembered. From a stool beneath the dim lamp, the pink-clothed, fat figure of the doorkeeper rose suddenly; in his hands was a double-barreled shotgun.

"*Alto!*" he commanded crisply. "Or I blow you in two!"

The muzzles of that gun gaped like cannons' mouths, pointed straight at Fowler's stomach—and he was burdened with the dead weight of the unconscious girl.

"Quick, you fool—don't stand there gaping!" he cried. "The police have just broken in—they've killed Hernandez—get that door open and run for your life. They're killing everyone they meet. Hear that shooting?"

His voice made so much noise in that confined space that the door-tender could not hear the frantic shouts from behind.

"Stop him! Stop the Yankee dog!"

He hesitated, wavered, turned toward the door—and his turning was accelerated by the terrific impact of a .45 bullet smashing through his right shoulder. He dropped his gun and went to his knees, screaming. Fowler kicked him out of the way, tore open the door and plunged out into the alleyway. His car was still there. He tossed Alice into the seat, scrambled over her, dropped beneath the wheel, and stepped on the starter.

Somebody was running through the hall as the car began to move. A bullet smashed the windshield; another thudded into the back of the seat. Fowler drove the car straight ahead; there was no time to back; he'd have to hope the alley wouldn't prove a cul-de-sac. The car jolted and bumped over ruts, lurched into a narrow lane, gained speed as it swung into the cobbled street which led to the San Juan road.

Five minutes later Fowler was able to draw in his first free breath.

He was climbing the hill, the jungle was ahead, he was clear of Granada.

TWO hours later, in his apartment in San Juan, Fowler sat talking to Alice Wetherell.

She had told him how she had been met at the dock by a committee of the Sons of Liberty and had insisted on being taken to Hernan Hernandez. How Hernandez had at first seemed to think she was bringing him funds and other aid from her organization at home.

"I was left alone in a room on the second floor. Somebody was arriving—I heard an automobile stop and start. Then I thought I heard someone outside the door, but I wasn't sure. After a little, Hernandez came back, and his whole manner had changed. He seemed to be almost a different person. He laughed at me, he tried—ugh—to make love to me. And he told me he was going to marry me. He went away. It got dark; I tried to

get out of the room, but the door was locked. Then Hernandez came back and talked to me through the door. He was terrible. I can hear his voice right now if I close my eyes. He was planning to bring in a lot of guns, he said, to start a rebellion. As the first move, he was perfecting a plot to murder every American in Puerto Rico—"

"What!"

"That's what he said—as soon as the guns arrive. He seemed to think that I would be pleased—that I would approve of what he was planning to do. He seemed to assume that I was in love with him. Then he went away; and it got dark; and after a long while an old woman came for me and took me to his room; and then you came, just as I was taxing him with his terrible plans."

"I don't quite see where Chiquita fits in, muttered Fowler. "Unless she's in love with Hernandez—jealous of me. Funny about a woman in love. She'll tear down everything he is striving to build rather than lose him. Women are terrible people, Alice."

"Why, Mr. Daniels! I don't think that's very nice!" The brown eyes were wide with reproach.

He rose, stepped to the door and opened it. The nurse recommended by Captain Trevino was sitting outside.

"Miss Wetherell will stay in her room until I return, or until Captain Trevino directs otherwise," he said. "You understand, nurse?"

"Sí, señor," said the capable looking nurse, rising with a crackle of starched linen.

"Am I arrested?" demanded Alice. "Who are you, anyway, Mr. Daniels?"

"Don't bother your head about me," Fowler bade her. "No, you're not under arrest. But it won't be safe for you to go out. They'll be looking for you—they'll kill you to shut your mouth. Come here to the window."

She obeyed. On the street corner below, a grey-clad policeman lounged, pistol butt peeping from the holster on his hip. Farther along the street, two more policemen sat in a roadster.

"There are two more at the back of the house, Alice," said Fowler. "You

see, the authorities are taking all precautions for your safety. If they think such precautions necessary, you will surely realize that you must cooperate with them and stay inside where you're safe."

ALICE shuddered. "Oh, yes. Oh, yes," she said hastily. "I'll do just as you say, Mr. Daniels."

"Maybe," Fowler couldn't help saying, "you begin to see, now, that policemen with big guns on their hips may be of some use in the world."

Alice sank into a chair and began to cry.

Fowler said to the nurse:

"See that Miss Wetherell has anything she requires—food, reading matter, cigarettes—"

He went into another room where Trevino was waiting for him.

"I've been checking up on Granada," the police captain told him. "It's a place, frankly, we hadn't been paying much attention to. We have two men stationed there; I haven't called on them for any report, because I don't trust either of them overmuch. Granada used to be quite a town in the Spanish days; it's on a lagoon which is an arm of the sea, and had a considerable shipping trade.

"There used to be some wealthy families there—you may have seen the old ruins of their houses on the outskirts, all overgrown with jungle now. The place is half in ruins; only the central part of the town is still inhabited. I've heard lately of various suspected persons being seen there, but thought little of it—until now.

"I'd suggest that we get together thirty or forty men in cars, raid the town and go through every house with a fine-tooth comb. We'll smoke those rats out of their nest before they make any more trouble."

"You mustn't do that yet," Fowler said. "In the first place, you wouldn't catch anybody there for a few days; Hernandez'll be terrified because of Miss Wetherell's escape, he won't know how much she will talk. Gradually, however, if nothing happens, if there is no extraordinary police ac-



The blow was effective. (Page 51)

tivity around Granada, Hernandez and his crowd will be lulled into a sense of false security; they'll resume their old habits. There are two new angles to the situation—one is this report of arms to be obtained. The other is this alleged plot to murder all Americans."

"I don't place much stock in the latter," the police captain said. "As for gun-running, it's been going on for some time. There's a Frenchman in Martinique or Guadeloupe who's been doing quite a business in Chauchard automatic rifles—a type discarded by the French army after the World War but still a dangerous little gun. The trouble is, from Hernandez' point of view, that he hasn't enough money to buy many of the guns."

"If he told Miss Wetherell the truth, he must have gotten some funds very recently," Fowler said. "I realize I'm perhaps putting too much credence in the boastings of an enamored braggart. But if he was lying, there is no immediate danger; and if he wasn't, it's all important that we don't disturb the present setup until we know all their plans and are ready to clean up the whole organization. It's too grave a danger to take any chances."

BUT why don't we seize Hernandez—we can charge him with the forcible detention of Miss Wetherell—get him a couple of years, anyway? I know my own people, Mr. Fowler. Without their leader, any organization of Puerto Ricans will fall to pieces."

"Just so," said Fowler. "Without their leader. I don't think Hernandez is the real leader of the Sons of Liberty."

"But—everybody knows—"

"The man hasn't a spark of leadership in him. Platform eloquence he may have; but he is only a figurehead. There is someone behind him. The fat little coward who shivered and shook at the sight of a gun is no leader of a band of secret conspirators planning wholesale murder and armed rebellion. He couldn't be. The thing is not humanly possible. He is just the spellbinder for a real leader as yet

unknown to us. There's another point.

"If we arrest Hernandez, and leave this real leader at large, we have given warning, we have provided him with a fresh issue with which to arouse the indignation and the fears of his followers—and we have accomplished nothing."

"*Dios!* Señor Fowler, if what you say be true—"

"I am convinced that it is true. I've studied all the reports available in Washington; as I see it, Hernandez founded the Sons of Liberty as an independence movement, a harmless enough affair largely to feed his own vanity, his love of applause. But somebody has seen more sinister, far-reaching possibilities; somebody has muscled in, started a campaign of terrorism and murder, means to carry it on to unguessable ends. Hernandez is now in the grip of forces he cannot control."

"The Puerto Rican people do not believe in murder, Señor Fowler. They will never support such a villainous conspiracy. Already all the better elements are being alienated from Hernandez and his party."

"Captain Trevino," said Fowler, "many years ago, at the time of the great Sepoy Mutiny in India, an old native officer was asked how it happened that so many soldiers who had served the British faithfully for years could suddenly be induced to turn against their allegiance. He answered: 'Sahib, in the beginning there is one knave and nine fools. The knave commits the fools by some act of violence and then tells them that it is too late to draw back.'

"If any plan of wholesale murder of Americans was in fact carried out, it would be too late to draw back. Every Puerto Rican would be included in the wave of popular fury that would sweep the United States. And I venture to think that many who had not taken any part in the crimes would rise to defend, as they saw it, their country from the terrible vengeance which would fall upon the islanders."

"This leader—if I could but get my two hands upon his filthy throat!"

breathed Trevino, his olive face paling to a chalky grey as he considered the dreadful possibilities conjured up by Fowler's words. "But," he added, "what would be the motive of such a man, Señor Fowler? He must be able to foresee the result of his actions, even though his dupes do not. What could he hope to gain by bringing about military occupation, fire and sword sweeping through our peaceful island? By bringing death to himself and his followers?"

DAN looked grim. There was a puzzled expression in his eyes; he shook his head.

"You can be sure he is not planning to be at hand when the hour of vengeance arrives," Fowler answered. "As for his motive, that remains to be seen. Now we've work to do. First, about these gun-runners. You have definite information about them?"

"The Customs Agency operatives have been working on that matter," Trevino answered. "They have one or two undercover men on the job, cooperating with my detectives. I can get you a full report this afternoon."

"I'll be glad to have it. Another thing—you'll remember I asked that inquiries be made about two Americans who came down on the boat with me—Paul Tyson and Victor Tokewood?"

"Yes. Tyson has disappeared. He sent his baggage to the Condado Hotel, but he himself never arrived there. My operative who was supposed to pick him up at the hotel waited in vain. Tokewood has gone to Ponce to attend a meeting of stockholders of a sugar company in which he is interested. He does not seem to have engaged in any extraordinary or suspicious activities."

Fowler nodded.

"Thanks, Captain," said he. "I'd like you to locate Tyson if you can, but don't let him know he's being watched. I've cabled my headquarters in Washington to check up on his activities in the States."

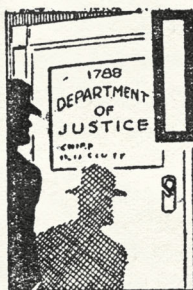
When Trevino had left, Fowler opened his bag and took out certain paraphernalia.

"I can't do as good a job as the laboratory boys," he reflected, "but I'll try my best. I wouldn't want Tyson to know me when he sees me next—as he did last night."

For the leader of the three men who burst so unceremoniously into the house of Hernan Hernandez in Granada had been—Paul Tyson!

CHAPTER V

El Pozal de Sangre



IN a little space of hard-packed earthen floor cleared between crowded tables she danced—danced while the smoke hung thick beneath the low rafters, while dirty hands clutched at her swaying form, while fifty men yelled acclaim and beat upon the tables with glasses and tableware.

She danced a dance of blood and war—a fierce, whirling dance such as once the *sans-culottes* of Paris might have danced to the savage strains of the Carmagnole. Her scarlet sash swirled about her slender body, a blaze of color against her dull blue uniform of a lieutenant of the Cadets of Liberty. Her little booted feet stamped, jingling their bright silver spurs; her dark eyes flashed, her lovely, mutinous mouth smiled proudly as with a final stamp of both feet she brought her dance to an end—and the motley company there in the dim lamplit taproom of *El Pozal de Sangre* cheered her to the echo.

"Chiquita!" they roared. "*Viva Chiquita—viva la Chiquita Roja!*"

The little red one—less literally, the red sweetheart. Thus they called her, though she had been born Ines Rolderon.

The red sweetheart—proof enough, that significant name, of her standing in this city of Granada.

"*Mas!*" they demanded. "*Otra mas!*"

But she shook her head, tawny curls dancing in the lamplight, and slapping down upon those curls at a jaunty angle her crimson-banded

uniform cap, she moved off the floor, which was instantly invaded by a mob of sweating dancers as the three-man orchestra swung into the brassy measures of what they fondly thought was a waltz.

Threading her way through the tables, with a quick word here, a smile there, a trooper's curse for detaining hands, a trooper's fist blow for those who persisted, she came to a halt at last beside a small wall-side table at which a young man sat alone before an untouched glass of *aguardiente*.

"You are alone tonight, Pablo?" she asked softly, aware of the jealous eyes which followed her.

Sullenly the young man nodded.

"Alone, yes," he muttered. "Am I to make merry while you dance with the lecherous eyes of this rabble upon you, with their claws reaching out to defile you with a touch? *Cristo!* Am I then of iron, woman?"

She dropped into the chair opposite him, smiling a little, her eyes on his.

"You play your part well, my Pablo," she murmured in a voice so low that he scarcely heard it. "Pablo Guimares," she continued on a little note of muted scorn. "A revolutionist from Nicaragua who speaks Spanish like a Castilian—or rather like an American who has learned very, very well our tongue in his youth, yes? These pigs, what do they know?" She jerked her head slightly. "But me, I have been in Nicaragua. I know, my Pablo, that you never learned your oh so excellent Spanish at the knee of any Nicaraguan mother."

"I was educated in Spain, Chiquita," the young man answered, aware of a drop of sweat rolling down his forehead.

IT was hot in *El Pozal de Sangre*—insufferably hot, and stuffy with the fumes of bad wine and worse cigarettes.

"Do not play with me!" hissed Chiquita, her eyes flashing with a new light as she leaned a little closer to him. "I have but to raise my voice, fool. I have but to cry—'*Oija!* Here sits a pig of a Yankee spy'—and you are a dead man. Do you know that, my

clever *Pablo*—or whatever your name is?"

"I think Chiquita, that you had one too many glasses of champagne when you dined with Hernan Hernandez tonight," her companion said steadily.

She grinned at him, a grin which had in it something feline and something oddly maternal.

"You are perhaps jealous, my Pablo?" she mocked. "Be at ease. The excellent Hernandez I know quite well how to handle. I can read him like a book—*gracias a Dios*, better than he can read me."

"What do you mean?"

"All in good time. Why do you watch that man by the door?" The question snapped like the flick of a whip lash.

"He interests me," was the calm reply.

The man by the door was very drunk. He sat at a table with two short-skirted entertainers, for whom he was buying the sweet sparkling wine which the thrifty proprietor of *El Pozal de Sangre* sold for champagne when the customer was sufficiently drunk not to know the difference. He was a burly, broad-shouldered fellow with a roaring bull voice, a round expressionless face, which grew redder with each drink, a cruel sword-slash of a mouth above a jutting jaw, and eyes so deeply sunk in bony sockets that they seemed to be lurking in the depths of twin caverns.

His wrinkled but obviously expensive English tweeds and his bad Spanish marked him for a foreigner, and foreigners were not overpopular in Granada these hectic days; yet he seemed quite at his ease, this drunken roisterer. One of the girls whispered in his ear. He slapped her, open-handed; she rolled to the floor, screaming, then bounded up, snatching a glittering stiletto from some hidden sheath.

The man caught her wrist in his beefy paw, twisted. A shriek of agony echoed through the room; the knife fell to the floor, the girl dropped on her knees beside it, moaning over her wrenched arm.

The man, who had risen to his feet, stood glaring at her for a moment, then, as the proprietor bustled up with protests both vocal and gesticulatory, he hauled out of his hip pocket a bulging wallet, threw a couple of banknotes at the landlord, a couple more at the girl, turned on his heel and lurched out of the inn into the soft tropic night.

From the shadows to the left of the doorway two men rose swiftly and followed him; dark, sinister figures which the darkness swallowed instantly.

Dan Fowler—alias Pablo Guimares, Nicaraguan exile—rose also and headed for the door.

"Wait!" breathed *la Chiquita Roja*, one hand on his arm. "Wait till I tell you—"

But he put her hand aside, moved on. Eyes were staring, watching—there would be a dozen of Hernandez' spies in that place.

Chiquita shrugged to her ears, laughed—and went to dance with a fat, perspiring *señor* in wilted white linen who would tell Hernandez everything she said to him.

But she laughed more than she talked, whirling the fat gentleman ruthlessly until he was glad to sit down and too out of breath to notice with what furtive intensity Chiquita kept her eye on the door, through which Fowler had gone out.

CHAPTER VI

For One's Country



GRANADA'S night life centered about a certain square bearing the flamboyant name of *Plaza de la Independencia*. Here were lights and movement, and a certain surface gayety.

But once the Plaza was left behind, there was little of light or movement in the narrow, close-walled side streets of the ancient pueblo.

No guitar-strumming caballeros played beneath flower-hung balco-

nies; no sound of music or laughter came from behind the tightly closed doors and shuttered windows which hid the households of Granada from prying eyes and ears. There was fear in the little city; fear that stalked abroad in the night while the citizens lay trembling behind their bolts and bars.

Murder walked by night in Granada.

So the streets were dark, silent, lifeless save for an occasional furtive shadow slipping close along a wall, dodging the occasional patches of white, hard moonlight.

As Dan Fowler was doing now, following swiftly on the trail of two other shadows a hundred feet ahead of him, who in turn were following a man about whose progress, in that city of fear, there was a sort of arrogant splendor.

For he strode down the middle of the narrow street, swaggering and bold as any mercenary in a conquered city.

The trailing shadows dodged across the street; the two who went first, the third who followed so stealthily behind.

A high wall threw the end of the block into a deep gloom which was all the murkier after the sharp glare of the moonlight. Fowler, hurrying a little, closed the distance between himself and the men ahead.

If this was the break he had been waiting for, he didn't mean to miss it. The big man was not as drunk as he acted; this had all the earmarks of a planned assignation. These other two, Fowler did not know. But he did know he was tired of failure, and failure was the sum total, the net result of three days spent in Granada. Three days—and nothing to show for it. Nothing but rumor, guesses, conjecture—

The two men ahead were quickening their steps, yet making no sound. They were almost up with their quarry, as nearly as Fowler could make out. To his ears came a sudden word:

"Señor!"

The big man halted, turned: a low

rumble of inquiry issued from his throat.

"Make no sound, *señor*—unless the *señor* wishes a bullet through his belly!"

That whispered hiss of menace was shockingly audible in the narrow street.

"Why, you—"

"Be still! Or I pull this trigger!"

The snarl of protest died away at the sharp warning.

He stood there like a baited bull, seething with anger but not daring to lift his voice.

"This way, *señor*. Come with us," came that sibilant whisper again; and again, by some trick of the acoustics of that place, the hovering Fowler heard and understood.

So it was a stickup—not a camouflaged meeting. Fowler remembered the fat wallet. Of course.

HE could not have been said to have had a flash of inspiration; it was simply that he had trained his mind to swift reaction to emergencies, to mental processes of a speed which seemed miraculous at times to his associates. That mind now seized upon the one outstanding possibility of the situation—earning of the big man's confidence by rescuing him from the footpads.

He broke into a run. But fast as his mind had worked, it had not been quite fast enough.

He saw the shadows of the others moving, close to the wall. Then there came the creak of a hinge, a low mutter, the slam of a heavy door. A bolt clicked home just as the silently running Fowler reached the door.

It was set flush with the wall, like most doors of the Spanish-styled city; save for a single grilled wicket, neither it nor the wall of the house to which it gave access offered any opening, any other means of entrance.

Through the wicket Fowler heard a scuffle, a low curse in French—that would be the big man—then another door slammed somewhere, and there was silence.

Already jingling in Fowler's hand were the delicate skeleton keys which

were part of the regular equipment of special agents. This lock, fortunately, was a more or less modern one, not the heavy, rusty monstrosities of ancient Spanish architecture. Fifteen seconds of breathless work—then the wards yielded, the bolt slid back.

Fowler pushed the door cautiously open just far enough to permit him to slide through into the utter darkness of the interior.

Leaving the door at that angle, he stood still, listening.

He heard nothing. Straight ahead he could see a low star or two twinkling beneath an arch which must lead to a sort of patio. There would be, he knew, doors opening into the interior of the house on either hand. He had only his ears to trust; he thought that the second slam had been to the left. He slid his shoulder holster a little forward, then began to feel his way along the left hand wall of the wide vaulted passage in which he stood.

He came to a recess; his groping fingers found a handle which turned readily in his grasp.

A line of yellow light was visible as he pushed the door open; a vertical line, a door slightly ajar. Low voices came to his ear—the rumble of the big fellow, the high-pitched, rather excited reply of one of the others.

"—reckon with Hernandez," the big man was warning.

"Damn Hernandez! Search him, Leon. And then—"

The pause was eloquent. As eloquent as Leon's quick exclamation:

"*Dios!* The window curtain stirs—who has opened the door?"

Fowler charged straight through into the lighted room, gun in hand.

"The first man that moves, dies," rang his sharp warning.

His gun covered two men in dark clothes, two swarthy men who whirled, snarling, to face him.

A PISTOL cracked—Fowler felt a bullet tug at his sleeve as he squeezed trigger, firing for the other's shoulder. The heavy bullet spun the man half around; his gun fell from paralyzed fingers. His companion,

whose gun was stuck in his belt, suddenly remembered the ancient proverb about discretion and valor, and dived for a window.

"Shoot him down!" roared the big man, who stood against the wall with his arms half raised. He came suddenly, furiously, to life; sprang after the fleeing man, a long blade flashing in his hand. He had had that knife in his sleeve—

The wounded man grabbed at the knife arm with his unhurt hand.

Tigerlike, the big man swept the knife around in a flashing arc; the blade buried itself in the other's breast.

"That'll do for you!" he snarled. There was a crash of glass as the second man flung himself headlong through the window.

The big man ripped his reeking blade from the breast of his victim, and leaped in reckless pursuit; Fowler heard the hammer of receding running feet in the patio, then silence—silence broken only by the raucous gasps with which the man on the floor was choking out his last few agonizing breaths of life.

"Curse the luck!" muttered Fowler, awed for once—and he saw the eyes of the dying man open suddenly at the sound of the English words.

"You—who are you?"

The words came faintly. English! Fowler dropped on one knee, fear clutching suddenly at his heart.

"You—American?"

No time for subterfuge now. This man was dying.

"Yes," said Fowler. "Anything I can do—"

The other struggled up on one elbow—he lifted his head a little, so that his eyes, already glazing with the film of death, were fixed with terrible intensity on Fowler's.

"American — if you love — your country—" His words came feebly, dragged from his throat by the power of an indomitable spirit. "Get that man — danger — gun-runner — bringing arms—rebellion—La Playa—tonight. I'm Blake—special agent—Customs—tell them I—did—best—"

There was a rattle in his throat—

bloody foam surged from his parted lips. He fell back, quivered, and was clay. Blake, special agent of the Customs Service of the United States was dead in the line of duty.

Above his body, Dan Fowler bowed his head in bitter remorse.

"If I'd known—God! What a mess!" he muttered. Poor Blake—under cover here in Granada, not daring to try to communicate with his superiors, following this gun-runner, staking all at last on this desperate cast; and paying with his life.

Grimly Fowler swore that he should not have died in vain.

With swift hands Fowler searched the body of the dead agent, found nothing.

As he rose to his feet, there came a sudden clamor in the passage: the tramp of feet, the rattle of weapons, and the big man's booming voice:

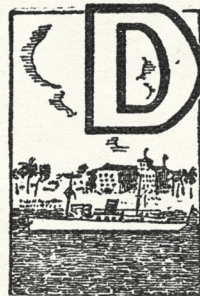
"This way! This way, señores!"

The risk of remaining was too great; Fowler darted to the broken window, swung through into the patio, ran to the low wall at the rear and was up and over.

The dark street swallowed him. One American had died for his country that night—but another still lived amid the shadows of that city of menace.

CHAPTER VII

The Gun-Runners



DAN FOWLER was well disguised. No one would know him; of that he was certain. His skin was stained a dark brown; certain cunning injections of paraffin had so altered the contours of his nose and cheeks as to give him

an entirely new face and even to change the shape of his eyes. Those grey eyes were his greatest danger; they did not blend well with the rest of his makeup. But that could not be helped.

As he waited, crouching in the

shrubbery across the street from the house where Blake had died, he mentally checked over those who might recognize him here in Granada. There was Hernandez; but he'd been too frightened to observe closely. There was the fat doorkeeper—he was wounded, not likely to be at large, and besides had not gotten a good look at Fowler in clear light. There was Paul Tyson, the man of mystery, who had seen Fowler many times under various conditions—and there was Chiquita, who was certainly suspicious, but didn't seem to connect Pablo Guimares with the man she had guided through the underground passage. Tyson was his chief danger. Tyson—where did Tyson fit into this picture? Where was he now? Was he the—

Men were coming out of the house of death. The big man first, strutting and cursing in French and Spanish. It was his use of French expletives which had first attracted Fowler's attention to him; that, and the fact that he seemed so swaggeringly sure of himself among these people. A French gun-runner from Martinique? Perhaps—

"Be off with you," he was barking at his three companions, Puerto Ricans apparently, whose weapons still glittered in their hands. "Beat it before the police wake up to the fact that something is happening. I'll take care of myself, don't worry. We don't want to be caught around here—with that stuff inside."

The three made off; the big fellow watched them go, then headed in the opposite direction. Again a shadow followed—Fowler wasn't going to lose him this night.

Fowler soon realized that the man was steering for the part of town where the house of Hernandez was situated. Fowler had already reconnoitered that place, but had been able to see no signs of life within. The big man turned a corner—Fowler thought it was the same block in which was the Hernandez house. He came up to the corner, peered round. The block was empty; no one in sight.

He hesitated—maybe the fellow had perceived that he was being followed,

and had ducked into a doorway to watch.

Something hard jabbed Fowler in the middle of the back. A grim voice said:

"Stand still, *mon ami*. Why you follow Jean Desjardins, eh?"

HE had gone right around this corner house and taken Fowler from the rear.

"I just wanted to know if you caught that fellow you were chasing?" said Fowler cheerfully.

"Oh! It's you, eh? You came to the rescue ver' queeck, ver' handy, *m'sieu?*" The gun muzzle came away from Fowler's back as Fowler turned around. "You are from—"

"I've been told that walls have ears in this town," said Fowler in answer to the rising inflection.

"Ver' true. I see you are discreet. Well, now I go to talk to that sniveling fat cur, Hernandez. You weel accompany me? But of course. Hal hal I must move queeck, me. For alas, I did not catch that wounded fellow. He lose me een the dark; I must meet three of these peegs that call themselves—'ow you say—Sons of Libertee and come back, but I find only one dead spy on floor. So I go to Hernandez, and you go also."

There was a grim finality in this last which Fowler understood. This Frenchman was still a trifle suspicious; he was no Parias, to be kidded along with a glib story. Fowler could either shoot it out with him here and now or venture once more into the house of Hernandez. He grinned.

"Let's go," said he; and fell into step at the side of the huge Desjardins.

There was little caution in the way the latter stamped up the steps and hammered with the knocker on Hernandez' door. A shuffling step became audible within; an old woman opened the door a crack, a chain clanking taut as she did so.

"Go away," said she. "There is no one at home."

"Tell Hernan Hernandez that I am here—I, Jean Desjardins! I must see

him at once," boomed the Frenchman, in bad but understandable Spanish.

"*Vaya, ladrones!*" The door commenced to close.

Desjardins shoved one big foot into the crack of the door, shot an arm through the opening this secured and grabbed the hag by her withered throat, shaking her as a terrier might shake a rat.

"Go, blast you, and tell Hernandez what I said—and open this door before I kick it down!" He released her. She collapsed on the floor, mumbling and sputtering. A voice behind her said:

"Open the door, woman!"

It was a strange, flat voice. Fowler had never heard it before.

The crone staggered to her feet and loosed the chain; Desjardins strode into the room, ushering Fowler ahead of him.

In a chair in one corner, beneath the single lamp which illumined the place, Hernan Hernandez sat staring at the two with unwinking gaze.

"Good evening, Desjardins. What is the meaning of this disgraceful uproar at my door? Do you want the whole town here?" he demanded in that flat tone—so utterly unlike the oily, rather high-pitched voice with which Fowler had associated him.

"I want to know why I am trailed by American customs officers, held up, assaulted in the streets of a town you are supposed to control, Hernandez?" blustered Desjardins.

HERNANDEZ pointed to Fowler, who was discreetly remaining in the shadows near the door. The crone had disappeared.

"Who is this man?" he demanded.

"A friend who rescued me just in the nick of time. Don't you know him? I took him for one of your men."

"I do not know him," said Hernandez.

"Then he must come from—"

"Enough," interrupted Hernandez. "No names. There are evil presences everywhere in Granada tonight. Everywhere. We must be cautious, Desjardins. Very, very cautious. You

have your money?" he asked.

"I have it; and I am ready to commence landing the—"

"Be more discreet, you fool!" The words, spoken in that new even-toned voice of Hernandez, were more emphatic than a shouted command.

Desjardins stopped, gaping.

"The arrangements have been made. You have been apprised of them. Go then and do your part without more talk," Hernandez continued.

Fowler could not believe his ears. This man, so calm and sure of himself, dominating the brutal Desjardins, coolly directing him what to do—could this be the coward who had shrunk from the mere sight of a weapon?

"And this fellow?" Desjardins asked.

Hernandez did not answer for a moment; his eyes, no longer prominent, but half-hidden beneath drooping lids, surveyed Fowler.

"He will remain here. I have a use for him. Go, Desjardins."

Obediently the big Frenchman turned toward the door.

"In an hour, then. At the Playa," he said, and went out. Fowler could see no gain in following him; he would be suspicious at once. While by remaining here there might be much to gain. In an hour—at the Playa—those words rang in Fowler's mind. But an hour was a long time.

"I am waiting, Senor Hernandez," he said softly.

"Eh? Waiting?" Hernandez got slowly to his feet. "Who are you?" he demanded. "Why are you here?"

"I came with Desjardins. I would have gone with him to La Playa, save that you said you had use for me. I await your orders, *Jefe*."

"This is very strange," muttered Hernandez, trying to peer into Fowler's face. Fowler had very carefully been disguising his voice all the time he had been in Granada—had he slipped? Had Hernandez recognized—

Rat-tat-tat!

The knocker again. Hernandez made a gesture which Fowler, rightly or wrongly, interpreted as an order to

open. He did so—and as once before in that room, Paul Tyson burst in, sweating and out of breath. As once before, also, he had a gun in his hand.

"Hernandez!" he snarled. "I will have no more of this! You know what I want! And if I do not get it, by the living saints I will shoot you down here and now! You have five seconds! one—two—"

He had not seen Fowler, who had stepped back behind the opening door, leaving Hernandez to face the new arrival.

THE Puerto Rican screamed like a frightened woman, backing away with hands uplifted.

"You are wrong, wrong!" he blubbered. "How many times must I tell you? What you seek is not here! The American *señor* took—"

"You lie, Hernandez! I know it is not so! Three—four—"

Madness was in his eyes—his finger was tightening on the trigger when Fowler with a swift flip of his hand knocked up the muzzle of the gun. It exploded, the bullet thumping harmlessly into the ceiling; amid a little shower of plaster Fowler wrenched the weapon from Tyson's grip, shoved the slender novelist staggering half way across the room.

Tyson recovered his balance, spun around, snarling.

"A bodyguard, eh? You think yourself safe, Hernandez! But we shall see! I will return with those who will make you answer me!"

Before Fowler could stop him he had plunged through the open door and was racing around the corner. A moment later to Fowler's ears came the roar of a receding motor.

"Whew!" he said. "A firebrand, that one, *Señor Hernandez*. What grievance has he against you?"

"It does not matter," said Hernandez, steadying himself by leaning on the back of a chair. Sweat was streaming down his face. "He is—but no matter, no matter. I am alone here tonight. *Dios!* Does all the world know of it?"

"Alone?" said Fowler. "That does not seem right, for the *gran jefe* of

the Sons of Liberty. It is dangerous."

"Do I not know that, imbecile?" snapped Hernandez testily. "Is it not what I have said? But he must have the men at La Playa—every man—No, no, that is wrong. That is wrong. Forget it, my friend. You—you had better go."

Fowler made a swift decision. In an hour—at La Playa—so Desjardins had spoken. It was a rendezvous, then.

"I should be remiss in my duty if I left you, *Jefe*," he answered. "This is not right. Whoever has so advised you is not your friend. The *gran jefe* of the *Hijos de Libertad*, alone, exposed to the attacks of madmen such as he who has just left? Never. I will not permit it. I will accompany you to La Playa, *Señor Jefe*, and guard you from all those jealous ones who ever lie in wait for a great man."

"It is true, it is true what you say," muttered Hernandez. "Very well, let us go. But no—" he paused and stared at Fowler. "No. I am not sure—"

"We must hurry, *Jefe*. And you cannot go alone. That man with the gun might be waiting on the road. Perhaps he guesses where you are going."

"True, true. You are my friend. I am glad you came tonight. You are a true Son of Liberty. Come then. Come. I have a car behind the house—a very fine car! They gave it to me in Mayaguez, my true comrades. Even the children gave their pennies to buy the grand chief of the Sons of Liberty a car befitting his position." He was fairly jabbering now, as though trying to drown out some thought, or rather as a man might talk who was trying to drown out with his spoken words the still small voice of conscience.

THEY crossed the patio, silent and deserted in the moonlight.

Over there was the room where Parias had died—a knife had slit his throat—why? That was another mystery—

Above was the room where Alice had been confined; and there— Was

it fancy—or did Fowler see a shadow move swiftly along the dark gallery? Not the old woman—she could not stir her ancient bones so fast. Hell—it was this moonlight, playing him tricks. It was nothing.

Hernandez plunged into a dark archway, took a turn, came out into a small, walled yard, where stood a big touring car, glittering like a circus wagon.

"The gate," commanded Hernandez pompously. Fowler unbarred and opened a double gate; Hernandez had already settled himself in the tonneau. Evidently Fowler was supposed to play chauffeur. He drove the car out into the rutted lane which he so well remembered, and went back to close the gate.

As he did so, he noticed another, much smaller car in a corner of the yard. He wondered whom it belonged to—the wounded doorkeeper, perhaps. He swung one half of the gate shut, was closing the other half when something like a streak of silvery moonlight flashed past his shoulder. There was a thud—

A long straight knife stuck quivering in the wood of the gate.

It had missed Fowler's throat by a matter of inches.

The dark windows of the upper story of the house frowned down on Fowler, impenetrable, silent. Nothing moved there. Yet from one of those windows that deadly weapon had come. Was it attempted murder, or merely warning? Fowler slammed shut the gate, saying nothing to the unnoticing Hernandez, got in behind the wheel and drove away in the moonlight. He took the turn toward the hill road that led to San Juan, having no idea where La Playa might be. Hernandez offered no protest, so he judged that he was right.

As he plunged into the jungle, he looked back. Hernandez was slumped down in the back seat, muttering to himself. Farther back, down at the edge of the town, Fowler thought he saw the lights of a car moving out along the road—but they disappeared as he looked. The jungle surrounded him. He felt uneasy, felt as though

the evil forces of which Hernandez had spoken were all about him. But he drove on. Suddenly a hand tapped him on the shoulder.

"What is your name, *amigo*?" Hernandez asked.

"Pablo Guimares," Fowler told him.

"Where are you from?"

"Nicaragua. I was one of Sandino's men."

"Ah. Sandino. A fellow after my own heart," said Hernandez pompously.

Fowler smothered a grin. The fire-eating Sandino would not have endorsed that sentiment.

"And you are here—why?"

"I am anywhere that I can cause trouble to the accursed *Yanquis*, they who hounded the gallant General Sandino to his grave," Fowler replied.

"I see. I see. Well, *amigo*, you have come to the right men if you are seeking to avenge yourself on the *Yanquis*. Hernan Hernandez will show you the way to feed fat any grudge you may have against that tribe of tyrants. Soon—very soon—you shall see how truly I have spoken."

THE car rounded a curve, labored up a steeper incline. Ahead, the lights picked up the figure of a man who staggered along as though drunk or sick—or injured. As they came closer, Fowler saw that one arm hung in a crude sling, which was darkly stained.

"Do not stop," commanded Hernandez, jittery immediately. "It may be a trap."

But Fowler already had his foot upon the brake. The car jolted to a stop beside the injured man.

Fowler could see him now only as a dark stationary blur in the gloom.

He got out, went over to him.

"Hi, *compañero*," said he. "Hurt yourself?"

"It is nothing, *señor*," the man answered politely.

"Want a lift?"

"Thank you, no, *señor*. I am not going far." Something told Fowler the man was lying—some stiffness in the tone, some tensivity of attitude.

Had he recognized the car? Or— Then suddenly Fowler knew why instinct had bade him stop.

"You are a customs agent," he said in a low voice. "I call on you for assistance." He repeated a phrase which was a certain measure of identification. He heard the man suck in his breath sharply.

"Let me help you," Fowler said aloud. "I am sure you must be badly hurt."

"Leave him, and drive on! I am in a hurry!" called Hernandez.

Fowler was urging the other toward the car; the man showed a tendency to hang back.

"We cannot be burdened with an injured peon tonight!" Hernandez insisted. "Time is running fast, you idiot! We must be going!"

Fowler was boosting the still reluctant wayfarer into the car. He knew who the fellow was now; he was the man whom Fowler had wounded, the man called Leon whom Desjardins had pursued in vain out of the house in which Blake had been murdered. And Fowler had let Desjardins, murderer, walk away from him—that a greater good might be served.

"Get in, Leon," said Fowler in a low voice. "Don't hang back. We're after Desjardins."

"What are you saying there?" cried Hernandez.

"I am asking him how he hurt his arm. He'll have to get to a doctor," Fowler answered. "It's pretty bad."

"There are no doctors where we are going," Hernandez grumbled as the car started again. Under cover of the motor's purr Fowler whispered to his companion:

"Something going on at a place called La Playa. Within half an hour. Guns being landed, I think. Wherever we turn off this road, I'll let you out. You go on to the next town—it can't be more than a mile—and telephone Captain Trevino in San Juan. Tell him to rush men in fast cars. Understand?"

"*Perfectamente, señor.*"

"Can you make it?"

"Yes. I am not badly hurt; a flesh wound, no more. I will do what you

say—but just who are you, *señor?*"

"Department of Justice. We are playing a dangerous game, tonight, Leon."

"Depend on me, *señor*. I will not fail you."

"You know where La Playa is?"

L EON'S white teeth flashed in a quick grin.

"I have been watching it these last three days. I ought to."

"All right. If things go too fast, I'll try to hold them up somehow, till Trevino arrives with the cops."

"Well, idiot!" shrieked Hernandez from the back seat. "Slow down! Don't you know the road to La—to where you're going?"

Fowler saw a narrow road to the left; he jammed on his brake, swung the car in a cloud of dust and slewed into this new road. He stopped.

"Our friend gets out here," he said.

Leon jumped to the ground.

"Thanks for the lift," he called, and started plodding down the road toward San Juan. Fowler, disregarding Hernandez' babble of annoyance, drove on.

That was a nightmare journey. The road had been paved with blocks of stone once, in the old Spanish times, probably. Now it was a mere forest track, soft sand alternating with bits of the stone paving, with treacherous holes and broken surfaces which Fowler marveled did not destroy his tires at a touch. Then again the jungle opened; there were stars overhead, and on either hand the stark sand dunes of the coast gleaming white under the moon.

A man stepped out in front of the car, waving a flashlight; other men, one or two armed with rifles, appeared as Fowler brought the car to a stop. A hoarse clamor of greeting went up as they recognized Hernandez.

"*Jefe! Viva el Jefe!*"

"Turn the car around and wait here for me," Hernandez ordered, getting out. He added something in an undertone to one of the riflemen, who at once walked over to the car and climbed in beside Fowler. Hernandez was getting suspicious.

"Everything is ready, *señor jefe*," said somebody, and Hernandez moved away, surrounded by a little group of his followers.

"Got a cigarette, *compadre*?" asked Fowler of the guard, when he had turned the car in obedience to Hernandez' order.

The only answer was a surly grunt.

Fowler shrugged, fished in his own pockets, found a broken cigarette and a match, lit it. By the tiny flare he caught a glimpse of his companion's face; it was not reassuring. Thick negroid lips, a lowering brow, a jaw traversed by a jagged knife-scar—a tough hombre, Fowler decided.

"Well, think I'll get out and stretch my legs a bit," he observed, and opened the car door.

"Stay where you are," growled the rifleman. "The *jefe* said he doesn't want you snooping around."

"No fooling?" murmured Fowler—and crossed his left hand in one terrific drive which landed squarely on the other's chin.

The man jerked back against the cushions; Fowler grabbed the rifle from his nerveless hands, threw it out of the car, flicked his Colt from under his arm and cracked the groggy guard smartly behind the ear.

Then he dragged the unconscious man out into the road, bound him hand and foot with his own belt and with straps from the baggage carrier, gagged him with a sleeve torn from his khaki shirt and dragged him a little distance off amongst the dunes.

NOW Fowler was possessed of an excellent Springfield rifle and a belt of ammunition.

Leaving the car where it was, he started off the way Hernandez had gone. In his ears was the song of the surf; he knew the beach—*playa* is the Spanish word for beach—could not be far away. Almost immediately he came in sight of the sea. The lights of a ship, not far off shore, shone like low-hanging stars; closer at hand, lanterns and flashlights winked along the beach; there were a hundred men there at the very least, Fowler thought. He could see them

in the moonlight, could see also two heavily laden boats moving in through the gentle surf.

A cheer arose from the waiting men.

"*Viva el jefe! Viva la independencia!*"

As the cheer died away, Fowler heard—or thought he heard—the purr of an approaching motor. It could not be the police already; there had not been time. He strained his ears, trying to dissociate the sound from the swish of the waves, the exciting clatter of the men. He could not. Perhaps his ears had deceived him. Yet he'd remembered that he'd thought a car had set out from Granada on his trail; he remembered the car he had seen in the yard of Hernandez' house; he remembered the knife—murder attempt or warning—which had flickered past his ear as he closed the gate.

He realized that he was in plain sight—that the moon showed his shadow black against the white sand. To his left was a dune covered with straggly dry underbrush; it commanded the beach. He moved that way, his feet sinking in the sand as he plowed along. He began to ascend the dune.

There was a sound as of a low raucous cough. A bullet whispered to him of death as it nicked the brim of his hat. He staggered, fell flat in the sand; the brush hid him now. He lay still, using his ears for all they were worth.

A long minute dragged past—another—then he heard a cautious step, crunching in the sand, the faint crackle of brush. His finger slid inside the trigger guard of the rifle; his thumb operated the safety catch. Very, very carefully, he turned his head. He saw a man standing some fifty yards away, a man in dark clothes, wearing a cap. Just so had Tyson been attired when he had burst into the house of Hernandez. But that bullet had been fired from a silenced weapon; and Tyson had been armed only with a .38 automatic, which cannot be used with a silencer.

The moonlight threw the black

shadow of the would-be slayer across the sand like a finger of menace pointing straight at Fowler. Fowler could not see what sort of weapon the man held—it was something long-snouted—that would be the silencer—but whether carbine or single-shot pistol, he could not make out.

THEN there moved behind the other another figure, a slender, darting figure carrying something which glittered bright as the moon's rays caught it—a knife.

Inch by inch Fowler pushed his rifle around, brought it to his shoulder. Over the sights he saw the breast of the hesitant figure—a mere contraction of his finger, and the fellow was cold meat.

In a calm voice Fowler spoke.

"Look behind you, you fool!"

The man spun round just as that darting menace sprang. The two came together with a snarl, a flash of steel; they locked there in a whirl of battle for an instant, then fell apart.

The man with the gun struck at his crouching assailant—a woman's cry of pain echoed through the dunes. The knife flew in a flickering arc to lie upon the sand ten feet away.

"Good," said Fowler. "Now drop that gun, you! Drop it or I'll drill your heart with a bullet!"

He heard another cheer from the beach; the boats were coming ashore. "Come toward me. Both of you. Slowly."

The knife-wielder had collapsed in a pitiful heap on the sand and was rocking back and forth, moaning, nursing the wrist that the gun muzzle had struck. The other, still erect, dropped his gun and obeyed Fowler's order. He knew that he was a target that could not be missed. But as he moved, the crouching figure suddenly launched itself at his ankles, wrapping both arms about them. He stumbled and fell headlong.

"No, no!" came a woman's cry. "Do not go—he will kill you—I did not know—I thought—I thought—"

Then Fowler knew her. Chiquita!

The man rolled over twice again, gained the shelter of a clump of

brush, disappeared from Fowler's sight. Chiquita got to her feet, in her hands the gun the man had dropped.

"Shoot, pig of the police!" she invited. "Shoot a woman! It is all you are fit for."

She began backing away, her weapon—it appeared to be a Winchester carbine—ready to fire at the first sign of movement. Beyond her Fowler caught a glimpse of a running, crouching figure. She was covering the retreat of the man she had just sought to kill—

Well, there was no time to figure out the answer to *that*.

Fowler could neither start in pursuit, since Chiquita would certainly shoot him if he showed himself, nor could he shoot a woman down.

They vanished among the dunes; they were gone. Fowler made sure of that, then he started the ascent of the dune on whose slope he lay.

WHEN he reached the top, the beach lay before and below him. It was a scene of activity and exultation. The two boats had been dragged up through the surf, and men were tossing cases out of them, cases which were being ripped open with eager hands. Already a man was brandishing a squat wicked looking weapon which even at that distance Fowler recognized as a Chauchard automatic rifle.

"*Muerte a los Yanquis!*" the man shrieked, dancing up and down the beach, waving the gun over his head.

"I have here the death of a hundred of the pigs! *Muerte a los Yanquis!*"

The boats were heavily laden with cases. There were at least two hundred of the deadly things there, Fowler estimated, with plenty of little boxes of ammunition. If once those guns were distributed over the island, in the hands of the men who knew how to use them—

Fowler hardened his heart. He took careful aim at the prancing one, held his breath, squeezed the trigger.

The echoing *crrrr-anngggg* of the Springfield brought every movement on that beach to a sudden abrupt stop, as though the operator of a marion-

ette show had ceased all at once to pull the strings.

Every movement, that is, save the staggering fall of the dancer, who kicked a couple of times in the sand and then lay still.

"Tried to get him in the leg. Too high, I'm afraid," thought Fowler as he pumped the bolt of the Springfield.

"Everybody stand still!" he shouted in Spanish. "You are all under arrest."

"The police!" yelled someone. "We are betrayed!"

Fowler saw the fat figure of Hernan Hernandez suddenly galvanize into motion, running toward one of the beached boats.

He fired a shot that plunked solidly into the boat just ahead of the runner.

"Halt, Hernandez!" he yelled.

Hernandez slid to a stop in the sand. A deep voice boomed:

"Cowardly pigs! There can't be many of them! Grab those guns, follow me!" The huge figure of Desjardins loomed amongst the crowd, a Chauchard in his hands—it was chattering, spitting death—bullets zipped through the brush all around Fowler.

"Follow me!" bellowed Desjardins again, and charged for the dune. Several other of the braver souls came after him, yelling like fiends.

This time there was no mercy in Fowler's eye, in his heart. Desjardins had slain a brave Federal officer in the discharge of his duty. The avenging bullets from Fowler's rifle struck him fair in the chest, the impact flinging him back into the sand—a corpse before he struck the ground.

HIS followers came on, still yelling—Fowler fired again, again.

Another man down. They stopped. Fowler jammed a fresh clip into the Springfield, but there was no need. The rest of the men were scattering in flight, up and down the beach, save for a few, Desjardins' sailors doubtless, who were laboring to get a boat afloat.

Fowler fired into the boat; the sailors desisted. He fired two quick

shots in each direction down the beach, throwing up little spurts of sand ahead of the leaders of the flight; he yelled his command to halt.

As he reloaded again, he saw that a good many of the men had obeyed him. Others were sneaking off into the dunes; some of them had Chauchards.

"This way!" called a voice hidden among the dunes.

"This way! We'll get the cops—take 'em from behind."

A steady voice, a calm voice, the voice of a leader—and an oddly familiar voice to Fowler. Yet at that distance he couldn't identify it with certainty.

It was a dangerous voice, too—for if they had the wit to obey it, he was done for. He couldn't face all ways at once. He had checked them, delayed them—but he couldn't hold them forever, one man against a hundred.

He had avenged Blake—but Young's murderer was still at large.

He had cornered Hernandez—who was shivering and shaking in the midst of a group of terrified Sons of Liberty—but the man behind Hernandez, the sinister plotter who would bathe a whole island in blood, he had not even identified.

If he died now, on this sand dune, he died with his work but half done.

And it came to him, as he lay there, that the voice which had spoken from the dark shadows along the beach might well be the voice of the man he sought.

He judged that about twenty obeyed that voice, had vanished into the dunes. He scooped himself out a circular depression in the sand, a sort of rifle pit where he might lie, covering the approaches to the dune from every direction. His one hope was now that the police might come in time—

A Chauchard woke to life behind him, from somewhere near the spot he had left the car. Its bullets zipped over the top of his little parapet; one flung sand into his eyes—

Another began firing more to the right, where the voice had spoken.

Picking out the flashes, Fowler fired twice in that direction. The Chauchard ceased abruptly. There was silence for a moment.

"On the beach there!" came the voice again. "When we open fire, rush that dune—from all directions at once! There's only one man there!"

THIS was the end. If they obeyed, they had him. But not, Fowler swore grimly to himself, without paying a price. *Brratt-tat-tat* went the Chauchards, two of them.

The men on the beach were moving, charging—Fowler picked one off, then another. A Chauchard ripped into action at the very foot of the dune. The air was full of bullets; had it not been that the men operating those guns were unused to their weapons, not yet trained in the irresistible tendency of a Chauchard muzzle to kick up, Fowler would have been riddled like a sieve. As it was, most of the bullets were going over his head. He saw a shadow flit across a moonlit space, fired—saw the man go sprawling, a clumsy Chauchard falling from his hand.

"Nice snapshot in this light," he muttered.

Two more Chauchards tore the night with their thunder—

"It won't be long now! Here they come—"

A dozen men burst suddenly into sight, racing along the path from the direction of the car. The clatter of automatic fire echoed madly over the moonlit sea. Fowler had drawn a bead on the leader, when suddenly he realized that these men wore the grey uniforms of the Insular Police!

That was no Chauchard the leader was firing, as he halted, knelt and swept the beach with bullets—its voice was the ringing staccato of a light Browning—

"Surrender! Surrender, you dogs!"

The Sons of Liberty were scattering, fading away.

"The police! Flee for your lives!" Some of the sailors had launched about and were pulling desperately for the steamer, from which came the *clank-clank* of a laboring engine. Far to

seaward, a trail of sparks ascended into the sky, burst into high-hanging white flame. A rocket—the Coast Guard cutter from San Juan, Fowler guessed.

Hernandez had disappeared. He must be in the boat—he hadn't had time to get out of sight in either direction along the beach. Fowler went racing down the slope of the dune, reckless now of flying bullets. He was heading for the spot where he had last heard that calm, commanding voice. He must get that man!

He raced through the line of advancing police, shouting to Captain Trevino, who was leading them; even so, one of them fired at him and missed him by a hair. He stumbled, fell in the loose sand, was up and on, a couple of policemen following him at Trevino's order in reply to his frantic shout—

But he was ahead, well ahead, running with laboring steps, and suddenly he saw a shadow that moved in the deeper shadow beneath a straight bank of sand.

A shadow that moved—a man that fled—

Fowler hurled his rifle like a spear, heard it strike flesh, saw the man go down with a grunt. Fowler flung himself upon the struggling form; a fist smashed into his face, he felt the blood spurt—the man tore loose, leaped to his feet. Fowler was up and after him again.

THE lights of a car flashed full in his face, half blinding him.

"*Alto!*" roared somebody. Then another voice cut in: "Get that man! That is the man who shot me in Granada! Get him!"

The shadow slipped away and was gone as half a dozen newly arrived policemen closed about Fowler. He struggled with them, shouting:

"After that fellow running there—" But they held him fast, snapped handcuffs on his wrists. Leon stood before him, panting, grinning with triumph despite his wounded arm.

"This's a bird who'll look well in a cell!" he cried. "This is one of Desjardins' little pets!"

Trevino and his two men came shoving through the ring of cops.

"What's all this? Take those handcuffs off, you fools!"

It was too late.

They were rounding up scattered members of the Sons of Liberty all along the beach and through the dunes. But Hernandez was gone, and worse than that, the other man was gone. Moreover, when they came to check the half-emptied cases with the guns captured in the hands of fugitives or picked up on the beach, they were forced to the conclusion that those who had won to freedom had taken at least thirty Chauchards with them, and considerable ammunition.

Great was Leon's astonishment at learning that Fowler was not only a Government agent, but the chauffeur of Hernan Hernandez who had picked him up on the road and sent him for help. Great was his discomfiture at having balked an important capture.

"The ship, too—she'll get away," he muttered, watching from the top of the dune where Fowler had fought his fight.

It seemed likely. The cutter was still well off shore, and the gun-runner was already almost out of sight to the eastward.

"She's fast," said Leon. "We know her, that ship of Desjardins. She can leave that cutter easily in a stern chase. Not much of a bag. A few guns, forty-odd badly scared fools—"

"Not much of a bag, no," said Fowler. "But we'll get a better one. Don't worry."

"Here comes a car down the trail," called a policeman sentry.

"Out of sight, every one of you," ordered Trevino, who was in plain clothes. "Don't let a uniform show. Señor Fowler and I will meet this fellow, whoever he is."

The car came to a stop, perforce, behind the police cars, which were slewed across the trail behind Hernandez' big bus.

One man sat behind the wheel; a man in dark clothes, wearing a cap. He started to get out, when Fowler loomed suddenly at his side.

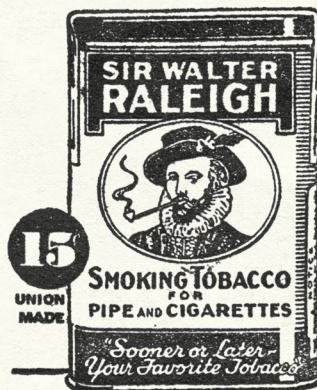
"Hello, Tyson!" said he, for an in-

LO—THE POOR INDIAN!

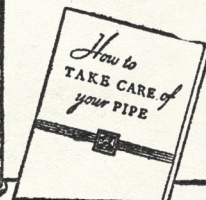


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stant forgetting about his disguise.

"Damn you!" yelled Tyson—and hurled himself at Fowler's throat with the swift viciousness of a striking cobra. Fowler lost his balance and went over backward in the sand; Tyson was on top of him, kicking, punching—but only for an instant. Then Fowler's wiry arms flung the fellow off; Trevino pounced on him, dragged him to his feet.

FOWLER got up, swearing ruefully.

"Who are you, *señor*, and what are you doing here?" Trevino asked sternly.

"I am Paul Tyson, an American citizen, and what I am doing here is my own business," the novelist snapped back.

"It is also my business, *señor*. I am Captain Trevino, of the Detective Department, Insular Police," Trevino told him.

"A police officer! Thank God!" Was Tyson's astonished delight a thought overdone? "Then you'll help me—I've got to find Hernan Hernandez. I've been trailing him, damn him—he's got away from me—but I'll get him when he doesn't have a hired killer like this—"

He stopped. "If you're a police officer," he went on in more dubious tones, "how does it happen that you're here with Hernandez' bodyguard?" Then as the uniformed men came crowding around—all those who weren't guarding the prisoners—Tyson shook his head.

"There's something wrong here," he said. "I'm going to San Juan and tell my story to the governor."

"You are indeed going to San Juan, *señor*—with us," said Trevino, seeing that Fowler was taking no part in the conversation.

"You mean that I'm under arrest? I warn you—"

"You are detained for questioning, *señor*," said Trevino, catching Fowler's slight nod.

"This will cost you your position!" flashed Tyson. But he offered no resistance when they searched him for arms. A .38 caliber automatic pistol

was found in his hip pocket, loaded but showing no signs of having been fired recently.

"Why were you carrying this gun? Why were you looking for Hernandez?" Trevino demanded.

Stubbornly Tyson shook his head.

"I do not trust you. I will tell you nothing. But the governor, when he hears my story, will take steps. Be assured of that. I am not without influence at Washington. I am Paul Tyson, not some peon that you can kick around." He was good and sore, and within him burned bright a flame—Of hatred? Of some other emotion equally strong? Fowler could not tell.

Was he the man who had tried to shoot Fowler in the moonlight on the side of the dune? Fowler did not think so—he seemed shorter—yet moonlight is a trick thing, and he was certainly dressed the same.

Was he the sinister intelligence behind Hernandez? Possibly.

IT would be a smart trick to come back, this way—yet in that case one would expect the man to have a plausible story thought up to account for his actions, instead of swelling up and refusing to talk, prating about the governor.

"Captain," said Tyson at that moment, "I'm acting like an ass. I can see that you're a police officer, as you say. I'll tell you what's wrong. I'm insane with worry about a young lady—a Miss Alice Wetherell."

"Ah!" said Trevino.

"Ah!" thought the listening Fowler.

"This young woman is a fool!" Tyson went on. "Her head is full of nonsense about peace and brotherly love and all that—she belongs to some society of half-baked female brains back home—and she's come down here to show her sympathy with your Sons of Liberty."

"She went to Hernandez' house in Granada. I made inquiries; I found out something of Hernandez' reputation with women. I trailed the girl, hired a couple of men in San Juan to help me; we got to Hernandez' place, went in the door, and there she was

with Hernandez—but just as we came in somebody shot the light out, and the girl disappeared in the darkness.

"A lot of Hernandez' crowd came rushing in; my men fled, and I had a hell of a time getting out of the place alive. I went back to San Juan, hoping she might show up, afraid to complain to the police lest it cause her to be shown violence. But I couldn't rest, I couldn't sleep. I went back to Hernandez' house tonight, found him as I thought alone.

"I might have rescued the girl then, but that man there attacked and disarmed me. Again I started for San Juan, determined this time to go to the governor. But the farther I got away from the house, the worse I felt. I had another gun in the car.

"I decided to turn back—when all your police cars went roaring past me, I didn't know they were police cars then; I merely thought there was trouble of some sort, which might involve Alice—Miss Wetherell. So I followed."

"I see," said Trevino. "And just what is your interest in this young *señorita*?"

"I love her!" Tyson actually struck a pose.

"I see, I see. Well, Mr. Tyson, of course the Insular Police will do everything they can to unravel this mystery for you. This man here, we have already questioned and will answer further. I will still have to ask you to go to San Juan under escort, but it will be, I think, merely a temporary inconvenience."

He had caught Fowler's quick shake of the head; he did not enlighten Tyson as to Alice Wetherell's whereabouts.

As for Fowler, he was doing some more thinking.

Tyson was a thought too glib to suit him. He had done just what Fowler was wondering about—he had suddenly produced a story to account for his presence in that deserted spot.

Maybe he did want Alice; maybe Alice knew more than she had told. She had queer ideas, that girl—and suddenly Fowler realized that all the time he was talking to her he had the

impression she was holding something back.

Was it something about Tyson? About Tyson's connection with this mob?

Trevino sent Tyson off in his own car, accompanied by a sergeant; as the car drew out of hearing, Fowler touched Trevino's arm.

"Send the prisoners back to town with your men; crowd 'em in, leave one car here. You stay. I want help, but not too much help. And tell your men not to stray up the slope of that dune, or on the flat place beyond."

"Understood, Señor Fowler."

CHAPTER VIII

Chiquita



WHEN the cars had gone, all but Trevino's high-powered roadster — Hernandez' huge one had proved very useful for carrying prisoners—Fowler led the way carefully to the spot where the knife of Chiquita still lay,

shining in the moonlight.

He had a definite thought in mind — Chiquita had come in a car. She must have. There was no other way of getting here from Granada so quickly, if indeed she had been, as he suspected, the one who threw that other knife at him across Hernandez' courtyard.

But she had not left in a car. Had she done so, she would have met the police on the rutted trail from which there was no turn-off as far as Fowler had been able to observe. Then either her car was still here hidden somewhere about, or whoever had brought her had turned back at once. In which case he might have regained the main road and returned to Granada before the police from San Juan came to the road junction.

If that were so, Chiquita was still afoot somewhere in these dunes, in high-heeled slippers—he marked the dainty footprints — ill-adapted for walking. As to the man whom she

had first tried to kill and then to save—perhaps he was Tyson. Perhaps he was somebody else. But Fowler had a very definite feeling that he was the man whose commanding voice had spoken from the dunes, giving orders to the Sons of Liberty.

"We'll follow these little prints, Trevino," he suggested. "The girl that made 'em is worth questioning. But be careful; last time I saw her she had a Winchester with a silencer on the muzzle, and she'll shoot without warning, if I'm not very much mistaken.

"A snake, that, not a girl," grumbled Trevino. "*Adelante.*"

They found the prints easy enough to follow, at first. They crossed the trail, led into a deep depression between high dunes. A man's footsteps went with them for a while; then turned off toward the beach.

"Here they stopped and talked," said Fowler. "See how the sand is trampled; then here the woman went on alone. No use following the man. I think I know where he went and what he did. But if we find the woman, perhaps she will have contrived to rejoin him. Careful. It's dark ahead there under that bluff."

Weapons ready, the two followed the trail of Chiquita. It plunged into the shadow of the bluff, going straight ahead over harder sand. They came to a cleft in the bluff. The trail turned into the cleft. It was very dark in there—dark and silent as a grave.

Fowler never hesitated. In he went, and Trevino followed.

Instantly they were in utter darkness. Above they could see moonlight silvering the edges of the cleft, twenty feet above their heads; but down in the bottom of that narrow gully they could not see their hands before their faces. When they had gone perhaps a hundred steps, Fowler risked a quick snap of his flashlight. Instantly he halted.

THE sandy floor of the gully showed no trace of footprints. He turned around, his flashlight playing on the sand.

"Here it is—here it stops," he said,

pointing to the imprint of the little slippers, five feet behind Trevino.

Trevino looked up at the towering, almost perpendicular walls of hard sand and red sandstone.

"This little lady must be equipped with wings," he remarked.



It was an eerie thing—that trail which stopped so abruptly, between those high walls. There was no returning footstep. Chiquita had come this far—and simply vanished.

"Well, she didn't go down, she didn't go back, she didn't go ahead and she didn't go through those perfectly solid walls. Therefore she went up," said the logical Fowler. "But not, I think, on wings."

"You mean—a ladder? Then where is it?"

"It must have been drawn up from above." Fowler's eyes searched the moonlit brink of the wall, looking for ladder marks. Was that something moving up there? It was—a shadow on the farther wall, the shadow of a running man!

"Back!" he snapped at Trevino. "Get out of this—run for the beach."

There came an earthshaking thump, and directly in their path the wall of sand leaned outward and collapsed, filling the gully almost to the top with loose sand and detritus. The faint acrid smell of high explosive floated down to Fowler's nostrils. Trevino was trying to climb the treacherous slope, floundering in the dust of the explosion. He fell, rose again, made another effort and slid helplessly down.

Faint laughter came from above.

"We're trapped, Trevino—no getting out that way," Fowler said. "Let's go ahead, the way we were going. There may be an exit."

Again that high laughter seemed to mock his words.

He was running, now, with Trevino laboring along behind.

There would be a way out—there must be a way out—if only it wasn't blocked before they got there. The sand under foot was growing softer. It was hard going. Fowler's foot sank suddenly; he jerked it free, plunged on another step, felt a twisting drag beneath his feet, stuck fast.

"Back Trevino! Jump back—quicksand!" he barked.

"I can't—I'm stuck fast—*Dios*, we are done for!"

Fowler, unable to free his feet from the treacherous sand which already was swirling and sucking about his ankles, turned his head. He could see the pale blur that was Trevino's face; he flashed his light back, saw that Trevino was hopelessly entrapped, like himself.

"The devils! The cunning, cunning devils—" breathed Trevino.

He ceased to struggle; so did Fowler. Movement only hastened the inevitable end. The horrible sucking of the sand was as though some subterranean monster was drawing them down into its maw. Fowler's ankles were submerged. The sand was creeping up his calves.

SOON it would reach his knees, his thighs, his waist, his shoulders, his neck, his mouth—and then in a little while there would be only a tiny whirl of sand to show where he had gone, and it would be all over.

He flashed his light around the silent, mocking walls of the gully—solid looking walls, only a foot or so away—he could brush them with his fingertips, but there was nothing he could get hold of.

Laughter again, above. Tinkling laughter. A woman's laughter. He saw again the moving shadow, a slender shadow that leaned over the edge of the gully.

Chiquita was enjoying the show. Fowler switched off his light, but not until one last upward flash had shown him how here the gully's lip overhung the chasm. A little trickle of sand

and pebbles came pelting down the wall, spattering Fowler's upturned face.

Chiquita laughed again.

Fowler lifted the rifle to which he still clung, aimed at the outjutting portion of the cliff, underneath the overhang, and fired five well spaced shots as rapidly as he could work the bolt.

Chiquita's laugh ended in a scream of terror.

There came a slithering sound, a cascade of sand slammed down into the gully, then—the avalanche! Luckily the overhang had not been directly above Fowler, but a few feet farther along. As it was, he was instantly buried to the waist—not in quicksand but in dry, hard, pebble-mixed sand of the walls.

He leaned forward, jabbed his rifle into the fallen sand as deep as he could, took hold with both hands and heaved. His body came up and out; kicking and scrambling, he worked himself clear, lay full length on the loose but for the moment sufficient support of the fallen sand.

Ahead of him, somewhere in the car, Chiquita was moaning.

He tugged the rifle clear; turning, he extended its muzzle to Trevino, dragged him out of the quicksand to safety.

"Don't try to stand up. Crawl. Distribute your weight. This stuff will mix with the quicksand soon enough; it won't support us long. We've got to get to firmer ground. Crawl. On your belly."

Fowler suited action to the word; he snaked his way along, Trevino following, sand in their eyes, their ears, their hair, down their necks, everywhere; but joy in their hearts, the joy that only those snatched from the grip of a dreadful death can know.

A fiery claw raked across his face; blows hammered viciously on his head and shoulders; a weight fell upon him, thrusting him down.

He struggled to his knees, hitting out with his right fist. It plunged into empty air, throwing him off balance; with a snarling wail such as a lost soul might emit on the brink of

hell Chiquita came at him again, clawing, hitting, shoving.

BENEATH him the loose sand settled and quaked; he felt himself sinking, fought on, fought to break the mad girl's desperate grip upon his left arm and neck. She had locked her arms about him, resolved to bear him down with her to destruction.

Something brushed his shoulder; a hand—then he felt the solid shock of a blow, not on his own body but on Chiquita's. The breath went out of her in a long, shuddering gasp. Fowler struggled forward a few feet, dragging the girl with him, felt hard sand again beneath his feet, and stood up, Trevino by his side.

"Thanks, *compadre*," said Fowler devoutly.

"It was nothing—compared to your quickness of wit back there in that hell hole," said Trevino.

Fowler grinned shakily, though Trevino could not see him.

"It just came to me that with Chiquita's weight on that overhang, which was already loosening a little, five spaced bullets might bring it down. And it might make us a bridge to safety."

"It did," said Trevino. "What shall we do with the she-devil?"

"Bring her along. We'll find a way out of this somehow; then we'll ask the young lady a few questions," Fowler said.

Carrying the girl between them, they went on unsteadily down the gully, stopping frequently to rest; for they were all but spent with their exertions. After a while the gully began to narrow, and slope upward.

Twenty minutes later they crawled out on the sparse grass of the open hillside, well back from the sea, and sat down and panted, while the silvery moonlight bathed them in its radiance and the white, unconscious face of Chiquita, still twisted with hate and murder lust, stared up at them from the ground where they had dropped her.

"It's a fine night, *amigo*," remarked Trevino, shaking sand from his hair

and drawing in a deep breath of fresh sea air.

"You're telling me?" grinned Fowler.

CHAPTER IX

Death Sentence



OUR men were gathered about a table covered with a threadbare green cloth in the dirty cabin of the little steamer *Etoile du Soir*, lying without lights in a deserted cove on the western coast.

At the head of the table sat Hernan Hernandez; opposite him was the mate of the ship, now acting skipper, a Guadeloupe mulatto with gold earrings and evil, bloodshot little eyes; there was a hot-eyed youth in a yellow jersey, and a thin stoop-shouldered man with ink-stained fingers and the general air of an office drudge, belied somewhat by a cruel slit of a mouth and a hard jaw.

It was he who was speaking.

"We are not here to lament over past disasters, *Jefe*. Our plans have failed, and I respectfully submit that we must make new plans."

"Plans, bah!" said the mate. "I spit upon your plans. Me, I take this ship back to Martinique. I want no more of your plans. My captain killed, eight of my best men dead or prisoners—that is the result of your so splendid plans. Trapped by a lot of island cops! Fine planners, you Sons of Liberty! Liberty—hah!"

He spat scornfully on the floor.

"Let us not be hasty," begged Hernandez. "After all, Señor Mate, you have been paid for your cargo, and you have yet on board a number of automatic rifles, some ammunition and explosives, which are the rightful property of the Republic of Puerto Rico."

"I spit also on your accursed, pinchbeck Republic!" announced the mate truculently. "As for this payment of which you speak, if any

money was handed over it was in Jean Desjardins' pocket when they shot him dead back there on that beach which you told us was safe and secret. Doubtless it is at this moment being divided up in the back room of the San Juan police station."

"The guns are ours," blustered Hernandez.

"Try and get them!" snapped the mate. "I know a man in Venezuela who will pay me well for them. And never mind glaring at me like that, you in the yellow shirt. I have but to raise my voice, and my crew will toss the three of you over the side to the sharks; though what the sharks have ever done to me that I should feed them such putrescence would be a question to lie heavy on my conscience."

"We also will pay you for the guns—again," said Hernandez.

"Ah, that is different," the mate replied, his eyes glittering. "Now you are speaking a language I understand."

"But there will be a small delay—we must make certain arrangements."

"My unfortunate deafness overcomes me again," murmured the mate. "I cannot hear what the estimable *Señor Jefe* is saying. Sad, is it not, that I should be so afflicted? My ears are attuned, alas, only to the jingle of gold or the rustle of honest Yankee bank-notes."

"**Y**OU will have your money, never fear," Hernandez assured him. "We might even arrange an earnest payment, as assurance that our treasury is not exhausted."

He glanced at the thin man, who nodded and produced a small packet of bills from his pocket.

"Five hundred dollars," he remarked, shoving them across the table to the mate, whose dirty fingers closed on them greedily.

"That is better, that is better," said he. "I begin to feel—ah—cooperative. What next, *señores*?"

"I think, with all respect, *Señor Jefe*," the thin man remarked, "that we ought to examine into the causes of our failures before we proceed

with further operations. Perhaps there is some factor which ought to be—shall I say eliminated?"

"A throat to be cut, eh?" chuckled the mate. "Why so damned squeamish? Out with it, out with it. Now that I see real money in hand, I'm with you in any little pleasantries of that sort!"

"Let me recapitulate," pursued the thin man, ticking off points on his fingers one by one. "Our ill luck dates from the arrival in the port of San Juan of the steamship *Borinquen* on her last voyage from New York. First, she brings the *Señorita Alice Wetherell*, on whose coöperation we had placed high hopes. Second, shortly after her arrival, Jose Parias is released from prison by persons unknown to us, and brings a mysterious *Americano* to your house in Granada, who runs off with Miss Wetherell, upsetting your plans with regard to her.

"Third, though this mysterious *Americano* thereupon disappears and we can find no trace of him, an equally mysterious Nicaraguan calling himself Pabló Guimares shows up in Granada, aids Jean Desjardins to escape from Customs detectives, and is brought by him to your house. Note the similarity of method. Fourth, this mysterious Nicaraguan drives you to the rendezvous at La Playa, and is left by you under guard of Pedro Perez, whom we all know to be loyal and who is now in prison. Perez is armed with one of the Springfield rifles we obtained from that National Guard armory last month.

"Fifth, while on the way to La Playa this person picks up a stranger with one arm in a sling, who was, I suggest, the Customs Officer Leon Lomira, now known to us to be so injured, holds a whispered conversation with him and lets him out of the car at the road-junction. Sixth, a mysterious unknown man armed with a high-powered rifle breaks up our landing plan and holds our men in check until the arrival of the police.

"Seventh, the police arrive in great force in just about the time it would

have taken the wounded man to walk on to the next village where there is a telephone, and for them to have thereafter driven from San Juan to La Playa. I suggest to you, *Señor Jefe*, that this mysterious *Americano* and this also mysterious Nicaraguan are in fact one and the same person, and that that person is an American secret agent. Also that he arrived on the *Borinquen*. Also that he must be eliminated before we proceed further."

THERE was a tense moment of silence.

"He shall be! I shall make it my sacred task!" proclaimed the youth in the yellow jersey.

"Be still, Ramon," bade Hernandez. "Your *jefe* must investigate this matter from all angles. Has the passenger list of the *Borinquen* been studied?"

"It has. Eliminations have been made. Of course there arrived on that ship one well known to us—"

"Enough," interrupted Hernandez with a quick glance at the listening mate.

"Quite so. But I may say that our attention was presently concentrated on a certain individual; a person whose present whereabouts in Puerto Rico cannot be determined. He is an *Americano*; young, with the look of a man of action; yet he professed to be a scientist, an ethnologist, employed by the Smithsonian Institute to come to Puerto Rico to study the aboriginal remains of the ancient *Borinquenos*. His name is John Daniels. This man has vanished.

"We have, as you know, an extensive organization in this island; we can discover no trace of the scientific *Señor Daniels* being anywhere engaged in his researches. I suggest the possibility that this person may be the secret agent who has caused us so much trouble."

"I agree with you—as a possibility. We must locate this Daniels." Hernandez gave a decisive little nod of his round head.

"Before he locates you," put in the mate.

"Precisely."

The mate got up and went to the open port.

"I thought I heard the dip of a muffled oar out there—but I see nothing," he muttered. "You have watchers ashore?"

"In plenty. It is all jungle there; no roads, no nearby villages. Have no fear," Hernandez said. The mate shrugged and sat down again, refilling the glass before him with rum from a half empty bottle.

"Probably a shark looking for Puerto Rican meat," he observed cheerfully.

"But this terrible news," Hernandez went on. "This American agent—he must be one of the dreaded F. B. I.!"

"I think we have every reason to suppose that he is," said the thin man significantly.

"Bah!" said the yellow-jerseyed youth. "Who cares? Me, I think this F. B. I. is a joke. Perhaps they can catch the thick-headed American gangsters, but let them come to Puerto Rico with their childish tricks, their little boxes of powder, their cameras and their microscopes. We shall answer them with hot lead and cold steel, as we did that—"

"Ramon! Cease your babbling!" implored Hernandez. "I find this no joke. If you are right, Antonio, the fellow has invaded our most secret councils, and escaped unscathed. He has come twice to my house in different guises. He may appear again in a third. He may be near, he may be far. He may even know now what we are doing, what we are saying—"

"Nonsense, *Jefe*. We are quite safe here," interrupted Antonio.

BUT Hernandez was pale with mounting terror.

"All our plans—even the great plan—may be known to him. Listen, Antonio—*Señorita Wetherell* knows much. And the *Señorita Wetherell* was carried off by this man of mystery."

"*Dios!*" exclaimed Antonio. "This I did not know. Does she know of the great plan?"

"I fear so."

"Then—"

"Wait." The color was coming back to Hernandez' face; his eyes were more prominent, his voice sank to a level tone.

"Yes, wait," whispered Ramon to Antonio. "Now comes to our *jefe* again the Hour of Power. I have prayed for this. Wait—and listen. He will resolve our difficulties."

After a moment Hernandez began to speak in steady, measured tones.

"If I were an American secret agent, seeking to destroy the Sons of Liberty, what would I do? Let us first see what I already know. I know that guns have been landed; that other guns are perhaps somewhere nearby on a ship from Martinique; that Hernan Hernandez escaped on that ship; that I have in hand certain prisoners, who can tell me very little that I need to know; that Hernan Hernandez is the leader of a secret organization of whose purposes I am not fully aware, but which is inimical to the American régime in Puerto Rico; I may guess something of the purposes for which he requires these guns.

"What further must I find out? Obviously the details of his plans, the sources of his funds, the personnel of his organization, at least the key man. What is my object? To capture Hernandez, yes, but more than that, to destroy his organization, discredit it, render it powerless to do further injury to my masters. I had an opportunity to arrest Hernandez which I did not take advantage of. Therefore I am playing a waiting game.

"Suppose now, as I cast about for my next move, I hear that Hernan Hernandez is to address a large number of his followers—of his armed followers, the Cadets of Liberty. Will I bring police and perhaps the military and attempt to seize them all? No, no. I am playing a waiting game, I said. I have had enough of the useless arrest of underlings.

"I will go to that meeting, in disguise. I will listen to the words of Hernan Hernandez. Perhaps I will get some further clue which will en-

able me to strike a blow that will destroy his forces. I will be very cautious, very discreet—"

"Did I not tell you the Hour of Power has come? I know the signs, me," muttered Ramon.

"And so I come to the meeting. But alas, Hernan Hernandez has anticipated my arrival. He has keen eyes on the watch for me. He seizes me, and I disappear forever. Before further steps can be taken by my superiors—before they are really aware that I have fallen into the hands of the clever Hernandez—he is ready to strike, unhampered by my activities."

THE eyes of Hernandez, which had all but closed during this recital, popped suddenly wide open.

"Thus we will cope with this scoundrel spy!" he said firmly. "We shall offer him a bait he cannot resist. He will come—and then when we have extracted from him all the information we require—"

"That will be my task," muttered hot-eyed Ramon.

"—we shall feed him to the sharks of which our friend the mate speaks with such eloquence," concluded Hernandez. "It but remains to consider details."

"Name of the stomach of a little blue pig!" swore the wondering mate. "This is man's talk. Never have I seen such a change—I fear I have been much deceived in you, Señor Hernandez!"

Hernandez ignored him.

"The first question to be settled, Antonio, is the probable course of action of this agent when he hears of our secret military assembly. He will come to the lure—but in what guise? Not as the Nicaraguan, whose face is but too well known to some of us. He may decide—yes, that is what I would do. He will have perceived that for Señor Daniels the scientist not to be seen about the island will be a suspicious circumstance! And one who searches for aboriginal remains has a good excuse for being in the most out of the way places.

"He will come—I am convinced of it—as the naturalist. Innocently

prowling about. Yes, yes. There is a danger in that, for him—but I do not think it is a danger he has as yet perceived. No move has been made which would so indicate. Ha—we have him!”

“There can be no doubt of it,” nodded Ramon. “I shall begin with the lighted splinters thrust beneath the toenails, and progress from there by easy stages.”

“Now do I, Hernan Hernandez,” said the leader, “sentence this meddlesome spy to death for high treason against the Republic of Puerto Rico—after examination into his villainies. *Viva la Republica!*”

“*Viva la Republica!*” echoed the others—even the mate.

Nobody heard a faint sound that the echo of that shout masked—a sound such as might have been made by the bare feet of a man dropping into a boat beneath that open port.

CHAPTER X

Into the Jaws of Death



CHIQUITA came to herself in utter darkness. She was lying on a smooth hard surface. The air was stuffy with the odor of burning brimstone—it was insufferably hot.

Cold fear gripped her instantly, instinctively. Where was she? What had happened? She flogged her aching brain, trying to remember.

The last clear recollection she had was of leaning over the edge of that gully carved out in the sand by some spring freshet, mocking that pig Guimares, the false Nicaraguan, and his companion, Trevino, captain of police, trapped in the treacherous quicksand which she, Chiquita, had long ago discovered by dint of almost being caught in it herself.

Then the solid earth had given way beneath her—she remembered falling down, down into darkness—remembered fighting with all the fury of a

trapped wildcat—remembered a blow—and after that the night.

True, she had some faint remembrance of awaking to pain—pain such as she suffered now, pain of aching, bruised body and throbbing head—suffocation in the folds of some awful thing she could not throw off—jolting and jarring—and voices that were far away, voices which came to her muffled and yet charged with a nameless menace.

That was all. Where was she now? She sat up. She moved her arms and legs. Pain almost blinded her as she twisted her head from side to side. She felt about her—still that smooth surface. *Dios!*

A scarlet eye was watching her from the blackness just ahead. She screamed—once, again. The red eye continued to observe her.

It was round, unwinking, about the size of a silver peso. And red—red as blood!

A smell of brimstone grew stronger. The heat, too, was stifling. It came to Chiquita with terrible suddenness that she was dead, and in hell. Why else this heat? The sulphurous smell? The red eye? The darkness and the silence?

Abruptly the silence was broken. A shriek of inhuman agony rang and echoed through that place of terror. Chiquita bounded to her feet, started to run. She smashed into a wall with stunning force, fell backward; picked herself up. Again that awful scream!

It died away into a silence more terrible, more menacing than any sound could be. This endured for perhaps five minutes, while Chiquita stood there not daring to move. Then, setting her teeth, she took a step toward the red eye. Another. It vanished.

“Mother of God, have mercy!” prayed the wretched, trembling girl.

For answer there came, at her left, a faint squeaking noise. She turned as though it had been a pistol shot.

O Dios! what was *that*?

SOMETHING faintly luminous, surrounded by greenish fire, appeared hanging in the blackness about level with her eyes—

A face! It was a human face—yet no human face ever looked like this one—glowing with that ghastly light. It was the face of Pablo Guimares, whom she had last seen struggling in the deadly grip of the quicksand into which she, Chiquita, had lured him to his death.

She fell upon her knees, teeth chattering, her whole body shaking with dreadful spasms of fear.

"Forgive!" she pleaded. "Forgive me, Pablo Guimares! Help me, Virgin Mother—for now I know indeed that I have been condemned to hell. Let me not burn forever, O Most Merciful—"

"Be silent, murderess!"

The voice of Pablo Guimares, speaking in sepulchral tones, as from the tomb, yet sounding half-strangled, as though he had sand in his throat.

Chiquita threw herself face forward on the floor, yammering with terror; she tried to crawl on her stomach toward this awful vision which she could no longer see. Broken words, appeals for mercy, promises, lies poured from her lips.

"Be silent, I said! Lie not in the presence of your victim!"

Chiquita was silent. Only the sound of her quick breathing could now be heard in that place.

"Now confess! And as you hope for mercy, tell the truth!"

Mercy! O joyous word! O word of hope!

Chiquita began again to speak.

"I have sinned. I am indeed a murderess, as who should know better than Pablo Guimares? But what I did, I did for love—and that love was put in my heart by the powers of light or darkness, but not by me. Therefore I myself am not to blame. Blame my love—or the Power which sent it to rule my life, who am when all is said only a woman."

"That is better," said the terrible voice. "Continue. Your words are heard."

"I knew you, Pablo Guimares, when first I saw you in *El Pozal de Sangre*, knew you for the man who came to the house of Hernandez with traitorous dog Jose Parias. Knew you for

the man whom I guided through the cellar passage that you might take away *la Americana*. I thought you were her lover, come to seek her. Perhaps you were, though now I do not think so. She was dangerous, that silly fool. He did not think so—but she would have ruined all.

"When I saw you again disguised so that you might well have deceived any but a woman who had stood at your side and whispered in your ear in darkness, a woman who does not think but only feels—when I saw you thus, I had premonition of disaster. When you came again to the house of Hernandez, I resolved that you must die; for through you, I was certain, grave danger threatened him whom I love."

THE voice responded coldly: "Fairly stated, O suppliant for mercy. Proceed."

"Therefore it was that I threw a knife at you from the window, and it was the fault of the moonlight and not of my arm that the steel did not find your throat. Therefore also I followed you in the little car."

"Continue."

"I hid the car after a while, and went to La Playa by a secret way, which included the letting down of a rope ladder into a gully you know of. I saw that all seemed well upon the beach; then I went to see where Hernandez had left his car. For not seeing you upon the beach I knew that I must discover what you were doing. I saw you, as I thought, standing alone in the moonlight. I had another knife—and I crept up behind you, to strike.

"But as I struck, your voice cried out a warning from the dune, and the man who was there turned, but I was so blinded that not until he had flung me from him did I realize that he was—my lover!"

"Be careful, woman."

"Yes, my lover. You know perhaps that he is one of your countrymen? You think it odd that he should love a Puerto Rican cabaret dancer? Yet it is so—it is so, Pablo Guimares, who once called yourself a Nicaraguan, but

who, or so I think, was not a Nicaraguan nor any sort of Latin, but an American secret service agent! You are dead and Chiquita is dead and damned too—but she is not a fool.”

That was talking, Chiquita! A little more and perhaps—

“Then you know how he and I fled from that place. And he ordered me to leave him, to go and wait by the ladder. He gave me a hand grenade to cover his retreat if things went badly, for the premonition of disaster was on him then. I went, and I waited. But he did not come. Instead, you came—you and Trevino, captain of police, whom I know well by sight. I saw his face in the glow of your flashlight, and I saw yours. And I thought of the quicksand; so I ran and buried the hand grenade in the shaky sand at the edge of the bluff where the gully begins; I pulled the pin and trapped you there. You went on—into the quicksand.”

“Now I think you are lying, Chiquita. For you might have hurled down the grenade upon us and killed us both in surer fashion.”

“No. I thought of that. But I might have missed one of you in that narrow place; the body of one would have shielded the other from the flying fragments. Moreover I wanted to laugh while you died. I wanted you to know whose hand had struck you down.”

“But why? Why did you hate Pablo Guimares so?”

She did not hesitate. “Because it was in my mind that you had slain my lover. He had not come, though I had waited; and had he lived, he would have come. Therefore I knew he was dead.”

“Or prisoner?”

“No. He would not be taken alive. I thought that you had slain him. I still think so. You and the accursed police between you, for which reason I included Trevino in my revenge. Now I have confessed my crime. I have told all. But you know that. You know—for about you are Powers which have whispered to you the things that only spirits know, in hell.”

“One thing they have not whis-

pered, one thing you have not told. Speak quickly, woman! What is the name of this lover of yours?”

There was an instant of silence. Then very slowly Chiquita spoke:

“That name I will never speak. Though I be damned to the fiery pit for all eternity, I will not betray my lover.”

“So be it, then.”

The face vanished. Chiquita was alone in the sulphur-tainted darkness, save for the fiery eye which watched her once more, unwinking, menacing.

TWENTY feet away from her, in what seemed like another world—a world of light and sunshine streaming through Venetian blinds—Dan Fowler was laughing softly as he washed luminous paint from his face in the bathroom of his apartment

“Just dumb luck,” said he to Trevino, “that I happened to take a place which had once been occupied by an amateur photographer who was so enthusiastic about his hobby that he had a soundproofed dark room built in. It only shows you can make use of anything in the cop business if you just wait long enough. Anything on earth will come in handy—in time.”

“I think,” said Trevino, leaning against the tiled wall of the bathroom, “that a great deal depends on the alert mind that sees the opportunity for turning these things to advantage.”

“Thanks,” grinned Fowler, mopping his face dry. “Well, we got a good deal; we’ve filled in some blank spaces in our picture. But we still don’t know who this son of a cockroach is. I got one shock—I thought maybe the gal was stuck on Hernandez. Now it appears it’s some renegade Yank—Tyson, perhaps. Or a man we have not yet identified in connection with this case. One thing worries me.”

“What is that, *amigo*?”

“She seemed so sure that he was dead. That he would have fled by the route she had prepared, if he were not. I don’t want that man dead, if I can help it. I want him alive. I want him alive—and talking. I want to know the inside machinery of this

damnable business; I want to know who killed Pariás—"

"Maybe the girl knows that," cut in Trevino.

"Yes, perhaps. Also I want to round up the rest of those Chauchards, I want to catch that French gun-runner, and I want to expose this whole affair so completely and so thoroughly that the good honest people of this island, the vast majority of your fellow citizens, will make damned sure that they never have anything to do with, or show any sympathy for criminals operating under the cloak of 'patriots'."

A muted buzzer in the wall whirred.

It was the telephone, and only one person in all Puerto Rico knew the number: Lieutenant Alvarado, Trevino's second in command.

Trevino answered.

"Yes—yes—all right, hold him, I'll be there at once." He turned to Fowler.

"A man named Antonio Rivas has just come into police headquarters," he reported. "He's a clerk in one of the government departments. He says he has information about a secret meeting of the Sons of Liberty."

"I'll go with you," said Fowler. "Let Chiquita wait in the dark till we get back. We may have more questions for her."

ANTONIO RIVAS was thin, stoop-shouldered, tight-lipped. He spread his ink-stained fingers in a gesture of deprecation as he bowed very low to Trevino, in the latter's private office. He could not, of course, be expected to know that Fowler was in the next room, listening by means of a microphone to the whole conversation.

"Captain Trevino, Lieutenant Alvarado—*señores*, I come with news, because I am afraid. I have been a member of this society, the Sons of Liberty. I admit it. I thought they were for freedom, for independence, but by legal means, by petition and voting, not by violence. I have spoken my mind, and now I am threatened; now I am no longer welcome at their meetings. So I ask protection—for which

I can give you an item of information that may prove useful."

"Go on," growled Trevino. He did not like this man; no honest cop loves a stool pigeon however useful such a man may prove.

"The *gran jefe*, Hernan Hernandez, has called a secret meeting of the military branch of the society, the so-called Cadets of Liberty. It is to be held at the old *Rancho Cortina*, on the east coast, two days hence, at eight o'clock in the evening. Hernan Hernandez, it is whispered, will himself address those chosen young men. There is also a rumor that many of them have new guns, and that groups are to be formed for the purpose of instructing them in the use of these weapons."

"Is that all?"

"It is all that I have heard, *señores*," said Rivas very humbly, with eyes cast down.

"It sounds like a mare's nest to me. Just another rumor," said Trevino.

"We're wasting time, captain," was Alvarado's verdict.

"All right. We'll investigate. But you needn't think you're going to get any reward, fellow."

"I ask no reward, *Señor* captain. Only that I may keep my position with the government, and be protected from my late associates. That is not much to ask," muttered Rivas.

"Very well. Go back to your work, and stay off the streets at night. If we want you again we'll let you know. Don't worry. You're not important enough to be a target."

Rivas bowed himself out. He didn't permit his grin of triumph to lift the corners of that cruel mouth until he had put three blocks between himself and police headquarters.

"Is that all?" says the captain," he muttered then, "and all the time the bloodhound eye of him glittering with the lust to be on the trail. 'Mare's nest'—and he could hardly sit still in his chair till I got out of the office, so anxious was he to be off to tell his Yankee pal, the traitorous swine. 'Wasting our time,' says that unlicked cub of a lieutenant, and a man with half an eye could see that he was itch-

ing to be digging into that 'mare's nest' of the captain's.

"Oh ho, my fine Yankee secret agent—your friend Captain Trevino has a splendid budget of news for you. I hope soon to make you welcome at the *Rancho Cortina*! It will be the jaws of death into which you will walk so gaily!"

AT that moment Fowler was saying to Trevino:

"This sounds like the real thing, captain. It checks with your reports of unusual activity in the region where this ranch is located. The Cadets of Liberty are the dangerous part of the organization. But most important of all is to hear Hernandez' talk, to find out their plans, to forestall them. And to lay hands on the man back of Hernandez, who will surely be there."

"How many *guardias* will you require?" Trevino asked.

"Not one. You haven't a single policeman who is not known as such to a good many people. For even one to be recognized would be too much. I go alone."

"Alone? But your face is known, and I do not doubt, is suspected by others than Chiquita. Certainly by Hernan Hernandez."

"I will alter my face. I will restore it to its original contours," grinned Fowler. "Neither Chiquita nor Hernandez got a good look at me that first day."

"But Tyson knows you well. And if Tyson is in this thing—"

"True. You have questioned Tyson thoroughly?"

"Yes. He sticks to his story about being in love with Señorita Wetherell."

"Then, if he thought her in danger here, if he were truly in love with her, he ought to welcome a chance to get her safely out of the island; to accompany her home to New York. It is an opportunity no lover would miss. Am I not right, Trevino?"

Trevino twirled the tip of his little black mustache.

"As one not without experience in such matters, I may say that you are

one hundred per cent right, my very clever friend!" he pronounced.

"Then here is what we shall do," said Fowler. "We'll bring Alice down here for questioning. We'll release Tyson from the detention quarters just in time to pass the open door of your office and hear you browbeating Alice properly. The girl will be in tears, I'll guarantee that. She weeps at the drop of a hat. What will Tyson do if he's sincere?"

"He'll storm in and do the heavy protector act. Well and good. I see by the sailing list over there that the *San Jacinto* pulls out for New York this very evening. You will say to the fuming Tyson: 'It will be better for you to leave on the *San Jacinto*.' What will happen?"

"The true lover will cry: 'What, and leave this fair lady in the hands of brutal cops? Neverrrrrr!'" chuckled Trevino.

"Whereupon Alice will set up a wail: 'I wanna go home!'" Fowler observed. "I already know she does want to go home. Very badly indeed. You will allow yourself to be persuaded; you will permit Tyson and the girl to think that by his insistence Tyson has rescued the lady fair. They will go aboard the *San Jacinto*, but not together.

"You will permit them to make their arrangements for sailing, collect their baggage, and so on, but separately and under escort. I don't want Tyson to have a chance to talk to Alice alone until the ship has sailed."

TREVINO shook his head a little. "Why not?" he asked.

"To see that Alice doesn't slop over and tell Tyson all about her detention at my apartment, about her questioning by me. If Tyson is a bad egg, that might be fatal. Now if he sails with her, we're rid of a damned interfering nuisance, and we know he is not the man we are looking for. That man would not leave the island at present for fifty women.

"If he doesn't sail, if he doesn't conform to the pattern we've outlined, then we'll know there's something wrong about the gentleman,

that he has lied about his great devotion to Alice, and we'll govern ourselves accordingly."

"I take my hat off to you, Señor Fowler," said Trevino, admiration glowing in his eyes. "You are a master of our trade, and I sit humbly at your feet."

"Don't make me blush," chuckled Fowler. "Now then, as soon as we have settled the *San Jacinto* matter, I'll start making my arrangements to go to the *Rancho Cortina*."

"We were discussing the question of your disguise," said Trevino.

"You'll remember," answered Fowler thoughtfully, "that I came to this island as a scientist, an ethnologist. That is good enough excuse to take me into strange and out-of-the-way places. And I think it will be as well that Scientist Daniels should appear here and there. Many people aboard that ship knew of him; the news will spread; and if he simply vanishes it will be thought odd. It is as John Daniels, scientist, that I will visit the eastern part of your delightful island, Captain."

CHAPTER XI

Ways That Are Dark



LICE WETHERELL sank on her berth, safe in her room on the steamship *San Jacinto*, and emitted a sigh of relief compounded with some other emotion.

She was leaving Puerto Rico—forever, she told herself fiercely. She thought of the plump and oily Hernandez, and shuddered. She thought of the grim, efficient Daniels, and her brow was furrowed. There was a man she didn't understand. She thought of truculent Captain of Detectives Trevino with a tremor of pure fright. He had been so stern, he had spoken of prison—But Paul Tyson had been magnificent! How he had stormed and threatened; how gallantly he had

stood by her! She should be grateful to him all her life—only—

Alice Wetherell was in some respects rather feather brained, nevertheless she was a woman, and a woman who had not been unattractive to the opposite sex for several years. She knew when incense was being burned at her shrine. And she knew that it was not her gratitude which Paul Tyson sought—or so she thought.

But she just couldn't be properly romantic about the fiery little novelist. When she was over her shudders she'd laugh at him. She knew she would.

"You're an ungrateful little wretch, Alice," she told herself. But he was so funny—with his mannerisms, his poses, his clichés.

She tried to think of him otherwise, and found her thoughts wandering. Her cheeks grew warm. She stood up, looked at herself in the mirror.

"Alice Wetherell, you're blushing!" she whispered. "Why?"

But in her heart she knew why.

She had thought—but she hadn't been a fool. Moonlight romance on a tropic sea, a kiss, a little laughter—and all forgotten with the first sight of land. She would forget, too—only some still deep voice warned her that she wouldn't.

There came a knock at her door. Tyson, of course; she had caught a glimpse of him in the crowd round the window of the purser's office.

"Come in!" she called.

The door opened.

The man of whom she had been thinking when she blushed stepped quickly inside and closed the door behind him.

"Victor!" She gasped, her great eyes widening, her hands flying to her breast.

Victor Tokewood wasted no words. He took her in his arms and kissed her on the lips. After a moment of maidenly resistance she threw her arms about his neck and kissed him back.

"Victor! I thought you had forgotten," she murmured against his breast.

THEN she stood off from him in alarm.

"But Victor—what has happened to you? Those dirty clothes—those awful shoes—and you haven't shaved for days. Tell me quickly, Victor."

"No time for talk," said Tokewood. "You must trust me, Alice. You have been cruelly, wickedly deceived. I meant to prevent it, but I was not quick enough. I had to get out of San Juan, out into the hills. I am risking my life to come here now. So I must come disguised. Alice, I need you here. I need the inspiration of your presence, of your love. Will you trust me—and come with me? Now?"

"But—but Victor—"

"The cause of liberty, of the freedom of the people, is not dead, Alice. We have the same ideals. We work to the same ends. The Sons of Liberty are not really the tools of that murderer Hernandez. Only a few of them whom he has misled. They have been the victims of organized slander. They, too, need you. The cause of freedom needs you. And I need you. Will you come, Alice?"

Alice's eyes shone like stars. To neither appeal could she remain indifferent.

"Yes," she breathed. "I am ready—whenever you say, Victor."

"Now — at once — before anyone comes looking for you. The police may send to make sure you are on board at the last minute." He whipped a ragged shawl from under his arm, threw it over her head. It concealed her smart traveling suit.

"This way," he said, ushering her out into the passage, aft a little way to a door, down a ladder and yet another ladder. She stumbled along ahead of him like one in a dream, her baggage forgotten, everything forgotten except the miracle that had come to pass.

At the foot of the second ladder a cargo port stood open. Stevedores were hustling the last few hand trucks of freight aboard the ship. No one paid any attention to the ragged peon and his shawled woman as they squeezed past the stevedores and set foot upon the dock.

They reached the end of the dock. "Wait there one minute," ordered Victor, pushing her gently into a dark corner next to the baggage master's office. "I have a car out in the yard. Speak to no one, dear."

He vanished into the night. Alice huddled in her corner, happy and frightened and excited.

The thought of Tyson weighed suddenly on Alice's mind. What would he think of her? She had clutched her handbag, containing all her money, as she left her stateroom. Now she took from it a pencil, scribbled hastily on a card:

Good-by — and thank you for all you've done.

A porter was passing. Alice hailed him.

"Take this aboard the steamer; give it to Mr. Tyson," she ordered.

"Verree good, *señorita*," he said, and hurried away down the dock.

A moment later a rattletrap Ford lurched out of the gloom across the yard, rolled up close to the yawning entrance of the dock.

"Quick, Alice!" called Victor Tokewood's voice. Alice ran lightfooted and lighthearted, to swing into the seat at his side. The ancient motor roared as the car backed, turned and plunged ahead. It swung left at the yard gate and was lost in the evening traffic.

PERHAPS an hour later a haggard, narrow-eyed young man sat in a grass-roofed hut buried deep in a jungle, well down in the southeastern part of the island. Before him, on a rude bench, was a medley of instruments; wires ran overhead, and outside a gasoline motor purred in the tropic night. The hut was a radio station.

The young man wore earphones; his fingers were flying over the keyboard of a battered typewriter.

Presently the crackling in his earphones ceased. He stopped typing and looked over the message he had just received—a meaningless jumble of words and figures. He pulled it out of the machine, reached for a black book.

"There is not much time," he muttered. "Everything is nearing the appointed moment."

He rose and went to the door of the hut. He stood there for some moments, listening. But evidently he did not hear what he was listening for. He shook his head worriedly.

"He is too long away," he said to himself. "He is needed here. Hernandez will make a mess of things as usual unless he is controlled. It is sickening to have to work with such instruments—but the work must go on. It must not be bungled—and it shall not be. Only I wish *he* would come."

He went back to his seat and fell to work with pencil and code book, breaking down the message he had received.

With the ease of long practice he arranged and rearranged the symbols; in half an hour he had finished. Decoded, the message read:

Arrangement nearing completion.
All in readiness here. Strike at soonest possible moment. Last 5000 today.

The operator smiled thinly. "He will be pleased to learn this. Now he must come. He must. He must have this message without delay. Yet I cannot leave here. There is no one I can send. What can be keeping him?"

He glanced anxiously at his wrist watch.

"Due three hours ago—and not here yet!"

He tapped the edge of the table impatiently, cursing under his breath. A moment later he jumped from his chair and ran to the door. Yes, this time it was true. He could hear the distant beat of a motor. He turned a switch; his gas engine died. The sound of the approaching car became clearer. He nodded with satisfaction.

"At last," he said; and for the first time that day he smiled.

He went back inside, picked up the message he had just decoded and three or four other earlier ones. He checked them carefully against a file list; he was a methodical man. Then he heard the car come to a stop just outside. Someone whistled low and clear.

The operator turned off his lights and ran out into the night. A few steps brought him to the car.

"Here are the messages—the last is the most important," he said to the man behind the wheel, whose outline could but faintly be seen. Yet the operator's respectful tone indicated that he recognized his superior.

The ray of a tiny flashlight swept a circle of light over the flimsy sheet.

The man in the car read the message through twice. Then nodded.

"Good," he said. "Very good." He was silent a moment. "By the way," he went on, "I ought to warn you. We have good reason to believe that there is an American secret agent snooping around the island. He probably will not come within miles of this place, but he may.

"So be vigilant and careful. The next day or so will be the time of peril. And if you see an American who calls himself Daniels, and who professes to be an ethnologist—or a Nicaraguan going under the name of Pablo Guimares and says he was one of Sandino's men—shoot first and ask questions afterward."

"I'll watch out for him," the operator promised. He drew back. The car moved off into the night.

CHAPTER XII

One Knave and Sixty Fools



THE side road was all but hidden by underbrush; it had not been in regular use for many years, and those who drove by it daily on the paved *carretera* which the *Americanos* had built had long since forgotten, if ever they knew, the existence of this road which once had been rutted by cart wheels and trampled by the hoofs of horses and yoke-oxen in the days when the *Rancho Cortina* had been one of the most flourishing coffee plantations in the West Indies.

Successive hurricanes had destroyed the plantation, broken the owners.

Now the *Rancho Cortina* had gone back to the jungle, as had so many others of its kind.

Yet had a traveler, on this hot sunny afternoon, chanced upon the old road and turned into it, he would not have gone far—as one peon was even now discovering. He had proceeded but a hundred yards from the main highway when three men wearing the blue uniforms of the Cadets of Liberty sprang suddenly from the jungle to confront him there in the sun-speckled semi-darkness, pistols leveled.

"Who are you and where are you going?"

"*Libertad y independencia*," replied the barefooted peon, coming to an abrupt halt.

"What do you seek here?"

"I bear a message for Hernan Hernandez."

"From whom?"

"From the Señor Oviedo, who keeps the inn at San Felipe."

"What is this message?"

"It is to say, that he who is awaited is even now at the inn, eating his *comida*."

"Pass on quickly. Your message is expected."

Half an hour dragged by. Then came a barefoot boy, running, out of breath.

"*Quien viva?*"

"*Libertad y independencia*."

"What do you want?"

"Message for Hernan Hernandez."

"What is it?"

"From Señor Oviedo, at San Felipe. He who is awaited has left the inn and is coming this way, afoot. He appears to be in no hurry, but was seen examining a map."

"Pass on, in haste. Your message is expected."

As the boy sped on, he could hear the sinister *ker-lunk* of pistol slides as cartridges were pumped into waiting chambers.

Another twenty minutes. Then—

"*Quien viva?*"

A tall, grim-faced peon in khaki denim overalls and worn shoes.

"*Libertad y independencia*."

"What do you want?"

"Message for *el gran jefe*, Hernan Hernandez."

"What, another? Who is it from?"

"From Señor Oviedo, innkeeper at San Felipe. The accursed *Yanqui* has turned back; he is at the inn again, talking to four police *guardias* in a car which has just arrived from the direction of Cayey."

"*Carramba!* Pass on, quickly! Your message is not expected, but by the beard of San Felipe himself, it must reach the *jefe* without delay. Comrades, we had best retire farther back lest these *guardias* come this way."

The peasant hurried along the overgrown road.

WHEN he was beyond the hearing of the outpost, he permitted himself a chuckle. Had that ass of an innkeeper really thought that Dan Fowler wouldn't notice his agitation, his overdone politeness, his despatch of messengers? What simpler than to fathom his purpose or to exchange clothes with a workman on a passing truck, who was but too happy to make the swap?

Well, he was past the first outpost. But that was not everything. Presently there would be someone sent to the inn; the device would be discovered, there would be a search for a man in khaki denim.

Fowler hurried along the path, came to a clearing where a number of men in the uniform of the Cadets of Liberty stood about. He did not enter this clearing, but observed it from the edge of the jungle. There were some ruined buildings beyond, with men continually going in and out the doors.

A fiery-eyed youth was going from group to group of the waiting men—there were some three hundred of them, Fowler estimated—selecting a man here, a man there, and sending them toward one of the smaller buildings, a tumbledown affair of stone with a ponderous door which stood partly open. Into this building they went; it was the only building from which no one was coming out.

Fowler resolved to make a circuit through the jungle and come up be-

hind it. Easier said than done. Progress through that tangled mass of vines and trees and undergrowth was all but impossible. Insects of every noxious sort buzzed about his head, stung his face and neck and arms and hands until he was half crazy from the pain. He kept doggedly on, crawling where he had to, walking where he might, climbing over fallen trees, plowing through thorny patches at the cost of countless lacerations, sweating from every pore in the damp heat. It was a thoroughly miserable Dan Fowler who finally wormed his way back to the jungle's edge and found the lichen-covered stone wall of the building he had marked directly before him.

The windows, as in so many old Spanish buildings, were barred. Nor could he see any door on this side. There remained the roof.

The jungle grew close up all around the building, except in front; and a tangle of vines made the climb easy for a man of Fowler's agility. He gained the flat roof—his shoes he tied about his neck by the laces, both for easier climbing and greater silence—and tiptoed across to look down into what had once been a tiny patio, surrounded on two sides by the building, on the other two by a wall of cement which was still high and sturdy.

IN this patio were collected about sixty men, young fellows for the most part, all wearing the Cadets of Liberty uniform. Many had scraps of gold or scarlet braid on collar and sleeve. All were armed in one way or another; with holstered pistols, with rifles or carbines. Belts of ammunition were much in evidence. In one corner of the courtyard, guarded by four riflemen, was a jagged heap of some sort, covered by a tarpaulin.

Fowler had found a little grilled opening in the parapet of the roof through which he could observe and listen without much danger of being spotted.

These sixty men, he decided, were the picked lot—the chosen leaders. They had not been brought here for nothing.

They were waiting.

A stir beneath the arched colonnade which ran along the inner face of the ell of the building at Fowler's left. A man appeared there—the same hot-eyed youth whom Fowler had seen picking and choosing amongst the mob outside.

"Comrades!" he cried. "Our *gran jefe* comes! Attention!"

The sixty stiffened to the military posture. Fat little Hernan Hernandez appeared beneath the archway. They cheered him loudly. Up went one pudgy hand for silence.

"Soldiers of the Republic," said Hernandez quietly, "I come to bring you good news. The hour is at hand for which you have long been waiting. Tomorrow night the blow falls—and the *Yanqui* yoke is lifted forever from the neck of Puerto Rico, which has borne it too long, and too patiently. Tomorrow night we shall be free! Tomorrow night the Republic is born!"

How they yelled and danced and howled then—it was five long minutes before they could be sufficiently calmed to hear what else Hernandez had to say to them.

"I have brought you good news, as I said. I bring you also great honor. You have been chosen as the leaders of the revolution. You will each be given men to command, weapons in the use of which you will be instructed, and orders to execute in the name of the Republic of Puerto Rico!"

Again the cheering. Again Hernandez went on:

"Tomorrow night each of you in his allotted sector of this island will go forth and kill every *Yanqui* in this island! Burn the plantations, the houses, despoil the fields of every foreigner!"

And now there was no cheering, save from a few throats.

White faces, brown faces were frozen into horrified immobility; eyes widened with fear and horror; mouths dropped open—a groan ran from man to man.

"No!" shouted someone, braver than the others. "That is murder! We do not launch our new nation with the

stain of blood upon its escutcheon!"

Crack! The hot-eyed young man lowered his carbine from his shoulder as the dissenter sank lifeless to earth.

"Thus is the fate of the traitor!" spoke Hernandez. "You have set your hands to the plow; you cannot turn back."

THEY did not answer him. They stood there, frozen, wooden.

"Remember," said the even voice of Hernandez, "that every man of you attended another meeting, many miles from this place, a short time ago. At that meeting a secret agent of the Federal Government was murdered by a dozen knives. Whose knives I do not know—but you—and you—and you—" his fingers stabbed out at the crowd, here and there—"you know. And you know that in the eyes of *Yanqui* law, every one of you is equally guilty, and ripe for the gallows! I will tell you something else—there is even now in Puerto Rico an agent of the Federal Government, come to examine into that crime and track down the participants. Will you wait like sheep for the butcher's ax? Will you wait till the police come to drag you off to prison and death?"

Now they wavered. Now there was a murmur, a rising murmur—

"Will you wait till you stand on the trap, the noose about your neck, the black hood shutting out your last glimpse of God's blessed light and the priest whispering in your ear the prayer for the dying?"

"No! No!" cried several.

"Or will you strike for your rights, your freedom, and die, if die you must, arms in hand, face to the foe?"

"Yes! Yes!" More voices to that cry.

He was winning them. Fowler could only wait. If there was an opportunity here he meant to make the most of it. But he would not throw his life away uselessly.

"What about the soldiers at San Juan and Cayey?" yelled somebody.

"Your work will be done before any word can get to the soldiers. Many of the officers will be among your victims. All has been planned. All will

be over in the course of a single hour. Ask yourself, then, what Puerto Rican soldiers will do? Will they defend their country or take up arms against her with none to lead them, with nothing left to fight for? They will join us! They will make the Republic secure!"

"*Viva la Republica!*" called the hot-eyed youth.

Perhaps half the young men in that courtyard raised an answering shout.

"I see," said Hernandez sadly, "that some of you are still not fully convinced. Perhaps you fear the vengeance of the *Yanquis*. Perhaps you fear that soldiers will come in thousands to destroy you. Is that your thought?"

IT was. You could read it in a score of faces.

"Then listen to the voice of a young lady who has come all the way from New York to bring a message to the Sons of Liberty from the American people. Not from the tyrants at Washington, but from the people who are the State, the people who themselves once fought for freedom and independence, who threw off a tyrant's yoke and struck down his minions. Señorita Wetherell, secretary of the League for Peace and the Rights of Man!"

He turned, extended a hand. To Fowler's horror, Alice Wetherell came slowly forward and stood by his side.

"My friends! My brothers!" she said in a clear high voice.

A cheer went up.

"You want to be free, do you not? Yes, I know it. Be of good cheer, you shall have your freedom. There are those at home who will never permit you to be coerced with arms. Take up the torch of liberty, hold it high. All men are brothers—who are we to say that you shall not go your way in peace?"

Thus spoke Alice—and a yell of fierce joy rose from sixty throats. They believed her—she was so utterly sincere. There crept out from her to each heart in that crowd the reassurance that she spoke the truth. Perhaps she thought she did, he reflected.

But did she, could she know that these men were planning wholesale murder?

She went on talking of the beauties of freedom and peace—while Fowler thought, thought—

In a flash it came to him. He understood. He had the answer. Yes—yes. Everything checked. It must be so. But how to make use of his knowledge?

He could shoot Hernandez dead where he stood; but that would serve no purpose save to arouse a passion for revenge; and the man behind Hernandez, the other man, would still remain.

Yet if Fowler were right—and right he must be—that other man must at this moment be close at hand. Perhaps in the room behind Hernandez.

He began crawling swiftly along the roof on hands and knees, while below Alice still talked, the youths still cheered her.

He had hoped for a trap door, but there was none.

He peered cautiously over the parapet in front of the building. In the clearing the Cadets of Liberty were drilling under a few minor officers.

They came swinging toward the building.

"Squads right about—ho!"

As they turned, presenting their backs, Fowler lifted his body over the edge of the parapet, hung by his hands and let go. He hit the ground with a thud, fell over backward, picked himself up and darted into the open door of the building. No one had shouted. No one had seen him.

He moved across a dark hall; ahead was a glimmer of light—a ragged opening, from which the door, frame and all, had been torn. There was a room beyond, and beyond that another open door leading to the colonnade where Alice Wetherell still stood beside Hernan Hernandez.

Next to the door was a window, well screened by vines; and at that window, facing outward, watching through the vines which hid him from

the view of the sixty, stood a man in a white linen suit and a panama hat. As Fowler hesitated, the man spoke in a low voice, as though to himself: "Excellent," he said. "It goes well."

He spoke in English, perfect English.

Fowler lifted his gun, drew a bead on the back of the man's head. This was not assassination; it was an execution, that hundreds of lives might be saved. But before he could press the trigger, there came a shout from outside.

It was the voice of the hot-eyed youth, who could no longer restrain the fires that burned within his soul.

"And here," he shouted, "are your weapons, compadres! Machine-guns which will kill a hundred men like flies! Tear off that canvas, sentries! Give the officers of the Republic their new guns! Guns that will kill! Kill!"

"Kill! Kill!" echoed a shout of bloodthirsty joy. They were carried away by the sight of the guns, by the eloquence of Hernandez, by the fear of the gallows and by the pleading of Alice Wetherell.

Step by step Dan Fowler crept across that room. He had changed his mind. He had thought of a better way. He lifted himself, poised, marked the spot just behind the ear where he would strike.

The heavy barrel of his automatic swept round in a short, chopping blow. The man at the window collapsed upon the floor, eased down by Fowler's hands.

Instantly, high above the shouts of "Kill! Death to the Yankees!" rose shrill and terrible a woman's scream.

"No!" Alice Wetherell was crying then. "No—no—no! You shall not kill! You must not touch those guns—must not kill with them!"

A snarl of astonishment and alarm arose from the crowd. Some of them already had Chauchards in their hands; others were snatching them from the sentries who were passing them but.

"Drop the guns!" shrieked Alice. "What have I done?"

A FEW of them obeyed her. She stood at the edge of the colonnade, arms outstretched, hair flying in breeze, pleading with them:

"No killing! Be free if you will, but no murder! No guns!"

Hernandez recovered from his astonishment then, and grabbed for her. The crowd in the courtyard was milling madly round and round.

Fowler stepped out on the porch, wearing the white coat, the Panama hat of the man he had just struck down.

"Silence!" he roared. "Silence!"

Silence fell on that patio as though Fowler's cry had clamped tight every jaw.

It was a silence through which Fowler walked straight up to Hernan Hernandez, shrinking now, cowering away from the stern vengeance he saw in Fowler's grey eyes.

"Hernan Hernandez," said Fowler in loud official tones, "I arrest you in the name of the law for treason against the United States, for murder, for inciting to riot and for smuggling arms into a territory of the United States. Hold out your hands."

Two pudgy hands wavered toward him obediently. Fowler snapped glittering cuffs in place on the wrists of the *gran jefe* of the Sons of Liberty.

A wail of terror ran across the courtyard. Never did it enter the mind of a single one of those young men that this *Americano* was alone. They could picture cars full of police, and perhaps soldiers, outside; they expected at any instant to see the archway fill with khaki helmets and glittering bayonets.

"Every one of you will lay your weapons on the ground," Fowler commanded. He was obeyed—instantly, abjectly—by all save the hot-eyed youth, Ramon.

"To hell with you!" screamed the fanatic, and snapped up his pistol and fired. Fowler felt the wind of the bullet—his own gun spoke, waist-high, and Ramon went down.

But the damage was done; the shots, the defiant cry of Ramon, had broken the spell. Snarling, like trapped wolves, they turned at bay; those

sixty youths surged forward, grabbing up their guns again; surged forward, firing and yelling:

"Death! Death to the Yankees! Let us die fighting, then, as our *Jefe* bade us!"

Fowler grabbed the transfixed Alice and shoved her through the door into the room behind. He kicked Hernandez sprawling after her; turned himself in the doorway to fire three shots which felled the three foremost assailants, then slammed the rickety door shut in their faces. Bullets whizzed through the window as Fowler threw a rusty iron bolt into place. The next instant the door shook under a furious assault. It would not hold long—Fowler looked about to see what had become of the man he had stunned, the man whose coat and hat he wore now.

The fellow was gone!

OUTSIDE rose a sudden furious yell. The thick walls had muffled the shots, but somebody had run out that way and was rallying the main body to the rescue.

They would be swarming in through that front door in another minute. A dark doorway yawned to the left. Fowler shoved a gun into Hernandez's back.

"March!" he ordered. "Go ahead of him, Alice."

Like a girl moving in a nightmare, Alice Wetherell obeyed.

In that dark room was a ladder which led upward. It could only lead to the roof; Fowler realized that must be a trapdoor which he had overlooked, perhaps not clearly visible from above.

"Go there and open the door, Alice! Quick!" The girl scrambled up the ladder; Fowler heard the creak of rusty iron, heard Alice sobbing as she struggled with it. One of the cadets from the courtyard came plunging through the window; Fowler shot him down. Light streamed from above; Alice was lifting the trap.

"Up you go, Hernandez, or you're carrion!"

Hernandez was past doing anything but slavishly obeying this terrible man. He climbed, and Fowler

climbed after him and closed the trap just as a score of uniformed men came pouring into the outer room, as more of those from the courtyard, gathering courage, plunged through the window, as the door to the portico gave way with a splintering crash.

They were safe on the roof, for a moment—and Fowler realized that it would, indeed, be several moments before that crowd of madmen below had figured out what had become of them. His hand was wet—he lifted it automatically—stared at a crimson stain. Blood? Was he hurt, then? No. The blood was on the edge of the trapdoor, where he had climbed out—and there was a trail of spattered blood drops across the roof.

Then he knew what had become of the man who had stood at the window.

Not realizing how quickly the situation would be reversed, he had fled by the roof—fled whither? Fowler ran across the roof, following the bloody trail; it led him to the parapet, on the far side of the building, near the spot where he himself had climbed up. An iron hook was fastened here; from it, down outside the wall of the building, dangled a rope ladder. And beyond was the friendly shelter of the jungle.

"He had that ladder ready—perhaps hidden here somewhere, perhaps down below—always his line of retreat was open," Fowler thought. "Here, Alice—this way!" he called.

HERNANDEZ was coming toward him, Alice close behind. Fowler ran his hand over Hernandez' shaking body, found the gun he knew was there, gave it to Alice.

"I'm sending you down first," he said. "Then Hernandez. He'll be able to use his hands well enough without taking those cuffs off. While I'm coming down is the moment of danger. If he calls out, or tries to run—put a bullet in his fat stomach. Will you do it, Alice?"

The brown eyes sparkled with a light Fowler had never seen in them before. Almost they had a quality of hardness.

"You're right, I will!" said Alice Wetherell.

From below rose the shrieks and yells of a veritable bedlam. Men were rushing hither and thither, aimlessly searching over and over for their prey; shouts and shots arose—leaderless, the Cadets of Liberty were bent only on blind vengeance.

"The roof!" screamed a sudden voice. "The ladder—here—"

Alice was down, Hernandez descending. Descending slowly—would the fat fool never make it?

Fowler stood ready, his gun trained on the trapdoor. But if they were once seen, he knew there was little hope. He could not escape three hundred men in that jungle. Mystery was his one chance—

Hernandez was on the ground. Fowler lifted the hook, pulled it forward until it clung only to the edge of the coping. His weight would hold it there for a moment—he hoped. He swung himself over just as the trapdoor trembled and began to rise; grasping the ropes of the ladder, he let himself slide swiftly down. A jerk tore the hook free.

"Into the jungle with you!" he ordered.

"Get going, murderer!" rasped Alice, prodding the wretched Hernandez with her gun, awkwardly but grimly.

They plunged into the jungle, dragging the rope ladder with them.

After going a few yards, the leafy screen closed in behind them—they had not been seen—they were, for the moment, safe. Fowler hid the rope ladder in a clump of bushes; then they started again, Fowler now in the lead to clear the way, followed by Hernandez, Alice bringing up the rear.

Fowler found it easy enough to follow the trail taken by the fugitive.

Broken ferns, trampled brush, a footprint here, a shred of cloth on a thorn there—the fellow was certainly making tracks.

"Thinks all is lost—thinks I had the battalion of the Sixty-fifth Infantry from Cayey at my back, at least, or I'd never have dared bust in there like that," Fowler chuckled.

Presently he realized that he was following something resembling a path. The going became easier. The path led straight on, dipping into damp valleys, rising to jungle-crowned crests. On and on.

AFTER an hour, there being neither sight nor sound of pursuit, Fowler had pity on the game but staggering Alice and called a rest.

The girl sank down on the path and sobbed. Hernandez stood looking at his manacled hands, head hanging, saying nothing.

"Well, Hernandez—trail's end for you," said Fowler. "I'll shoot you dead before I'll allow you to be recaptured, if your people catch up with us."

"I do not understand, *señor*. I do not understand," whispered Hernandez. "The last month—it all seems like a bad dream. *Señor*, I never planned all this killing, these murders. It was not Hernan Hernandez who plotted to bathe his homeland in blood.

"Yet I have done these things. I have done them all; I know it, and I do not understand why. I must have been possessed by an evil spirit."

"You were," said Fowler quietly.

Hernandez lifted his head: terror was in his eyes.

"Then that spirit may be upon us, even now!" he wailed. "Man cannot flee from devils! There is no escape!"

"On the contrary, Hernandez," answered Fowler, "the devil is at this moment fleeing from us. He is a human devil, and he can be slain. You know him well. He is—"

"Ah!" Comprehension dawned in Hernandez' eyes now. "Ah! Is it so, *señor*? Yes. I see it must be. I must tell you how it was—I must see if I can make you understand."

He paused. A shudder of revulsion seemed to sweep through his fat little body.

"Always, *señor*, I have been intelligent. I am good at planning things. In me there has been a great wish to be a leader. And in me, too, was another wish—a deep, fierce wish to liberate my people. Not because the

Americanos are bad rulers, *señor*, or stupid ones—but because a people should be free, should be its own.

"I dreamed about that, *señor*—about myself leading my people to freedom. And sometimes in my dreams, I would do horrible, hideous, bloody things in that cause. I seemed to have secret inner thoughts, murderous and ugly, deep down inside me — thoughts that somehow I could not believe were really mine. I thanked Heaven that I was a weak man, *señor*, timid and afraid, for had I been brave and daring, I might have been ruled by these dreadful things that were inside me."

FOWLER nodded. "There is a devil in the subconscious minds of most of us. But our conscious sets up a censor that keeps the vileness, the murder instinct in stern check."

"That is it, *señor*. That is exactly it." Hernandez was excited now and eager. "Then came this man. He talked to me. After our first conversations I was in a stupor for a long time. He had some terrible effect on me. It was his eyes—there was something in his eyes— Then after that whenever he was near, it would be as if I was plunged into the realm of dreams. It was those old, accursed dreams of mine—only now they were real. I was actually doing those loathsome, horrible things. I could no longer control myself."

"The devil!" Fowler muttered. "The rotten devil. He came in on you, took over your organization — took you over—upset the censor of your conscious — released the subconscious, brutal urges within you."

"At first it was only when I was with him, talking to him, looking into his eyes. But then, afterwards, he did not have to be before me. Sometimes I could not even see him—but I could feel him near. It was always when he was near that the thing happened to me.

"But even before that, *señor*— There was a young man named Ramon Acinda among my people—he had some friends—six or seven of them. I thought at first that they were merely young hotbloods, rash, intemper-

ate. But that Ramon—he was a devil. It was he who incited my people to kill the American agent; it was he who stayed and burned on that terrible night. I think now, *señor*, that Ramon and his cutthroats were in the pay of that other one.

They came before him—they came to turn the Sons of Liberty into a murderous rabble—to involve them so far in devilry that there was no turning back. It has all been some evil dream, *señor*—never did I think—”

Fowler had a clear picture now. First the innocent, misguided but high-minded formation of the Sons of Liberty. Then the unscrupulous devil, the other man, who had quickly sensed the possibility of using the organization for his own despicable ends. He had sent his killers to carry out the preliminary dirty work, and then, when the time was ripe, he himself had come, had established his villainous empire over the mind of the pathetic trembling Hernandez, and had today attempted to unleash the holocaust.

Only two things Fowler could not be sure of—the identity of the master mind, and the hidden purpose behind his acts. But he was close now, terribly close.

Hernandez shuddered and began muttering prayers to half the calendar of saints that he might be forgiven.

“Never mind praying. Time to march now. The devil is still ahead of us,” said Fowler. “Can you go some more, Alice?”

The girl got up.

“I can go plenty,” she remarked, “if the end of the trail brings us to the man who planned this thing.”

“It will,” said Fowler. “See that heel mark? He’s going fast, heading for somewhere definite. This path didn’t just chance here. It’s been hacked out with a machete through this jungle for a purpose. Look here—and there—see the marks where the blade cut through those tough vines? It was done a month or more ago, I’d say. Wherever this path leads, we’ll find the man we’re looking for. Or some trace of him. Let’s go.”

FOR another hour they plodded onward; then a distant, rhythmic sound came faintly to Fowler’s ears. He held up his hand for a halt.

“Hear that, Alice?”

“Yes,” said the girl. “It sounds like a car.”

“It’s not moving,” Fowler said after a minute. “But it’s an engine of some sort, all right. We’d better be cautious. Hernandez, if you try to give any alarm, it’ll be your last try for anything on this earth.”

“I will be silent, *señor*. Until my time comes to speak,” Hernandez whispered hoarsely.

“You’d better,” muttered Alice, her fingers tightening on their unfamiliar burden.

The path began to ascend a long gentle slope. The jungle opened a little; they could see patches of sky, see farther through the green wall about them. The throbbing sound grew and grew. At last it seemed very close at hand. And mingled with it was a faint crackling.

“A radio station!” said Fowler. “Somebody’s sending a message!”

He had to fight his impulse to break into a run. Easy was the word; there might be more than one man here. Now he caught sight of a grass roof, sheltered by high palm trees among whose foliage, no doubt, the aerials were concealed. There was a clearing here; now he could see the whole hut, and a car standing beside it. No one was in sight.

“Stay here, Alice. Don’t let this man trick you.”

Fowler dashed suddenly forward, full speed across the clearing. He charged through the door of the hut.

“Hands up!” he yelled at the sole occupant, a narrow-eyed young man who whirled and grabbed for the gun on the bench beside his key—just too late. Fowler’s bullet smashed into his chest, knocked him backward off his stool.

He lay on the floor, gasping out his life. Hate flamed in his eyes.

“You won’t live long—to enjoy—” He spat out blood and died.

Fowler sprang to the key, twisting dials, adjusting—

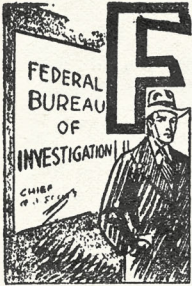
Then he began hammering out a group of four letters, over and over—the call of the United States Naval Radio Station at San Juan. It seemed an age before they answered.

Urgent message from Special Agent Fowler, F. B. I.: Am at secret radio station approximately five miles N. E. of Rancho Cortina. Notify police headquarters and Commanding Officer, Henry Barracks, Cayey. Require immediate assistance. Troops should also be sent to *Rancho Cortina* to round up Cadets of Liberty there, armed with machine-guns. Have captured Hernan Hernandez, but—

"That will be quite enough, I think," said a grim voice at the door. "Drop that key and stand up—or die here and now!"

CHAPTER XIII

The Last Stroke



FOWLER drew himself slowly erect. Victor Tokewood stood in the doorway, a gun held at hip level, covering Fowler steadily. There was dried blood on the right side of his face from the blow Fowler had struck him—the drip of that blood had betrayed his flight.

"Hello, Tokewood," Fowler said in easy tones.

"I was warned," said Tokewood, "that Government men were dangerous. Little did I know *how* dangerous."

"You have nearly, if not entirely, wrecked a plan which has cost me six months of hard work and constant effort. Your Bureau will miss you, I'm afraid."

Fowler smiled.

"Perhaps," he admitted. He was wondering how much chance he would have if he grabbed for his gun, where it lay alongside the sending key. It was but two feet from his right hand.

"I'm afraid," he said, "that I bungled the whole business rather badly. Do you know that I thought all along

that Tyson was the—er—man higher up, so to speak!"

"That gabbing idiot!" snapped Tokewood, looking outraged. "Be careful, or you'll make me lose my very high respect for you."

"Ah well, one has to go slowly in these matters and examine every possibility," Fowler said.

He heard the faint rustle of a dry palm frond outside—perhaps beneath a cautiously advancing foot.

Tokewood, either because his ears were not attuned to catching such sounds above the clamor of the gas engine, or because he was intent on savoring his revenge to the full, did not appear to hear anything.

"If my plan is wrecked" he said, between clenched teeth, "as I fear it is—I shall at least have the pleasure of knowing that the man who wrecked it did not live to boast of his achievement."

"It was a foolish plan anyway," shrugged Fowler. He must play for time, time—"Something to do with sugar, wasn't it?"

Tokewood's cheeks grew pink. He bowed slightly. "Touché," he murmured. "But not such a foolish plan as you think. Yes, as you might have eventually discovered for yourself, I am the owner of several Cuban sugar plantations. Under dummy names, of course. Recently I was able to establish a partial corner by secret purchases of Cuban raw sugar stock. These I stored temporarily until a rise in the refiners' market should come about."

"And unfortunately," Fowler murmured, "the price dropped. Your corner, I take it, was not established on out-and-out cash terms. You had to sell at a profit or—be wiped out. The normal price difference between the Cuban market and what American buyers would pay was not enough. So—"

"So I did an unusual thing—instead of selling out at what I could get, I set about completing my corner. It took, as you will admit, a very definite courage. Puerto Rico sugar, tax-free because of its status as a United States possession, was the disastrous

competitor for Cuban sugar. You see?

SOMETHING had to be done to ruin the Puerto Rican crop—and quickly. I ran across this Sons of Liberty proposition. It offered an estimable cover-up for any unfortunate acts of violence that might result in the destruction of the large, American-owned sugar plantations on the island.

"Furthermore it would create such internal havoc that the larger refineries would rather pay a few cents more for Cuban sugar than risk the uncertainties of the Puerto Rican market. And one can never tell how these things are going to turn out. The Sons of Liberty was a rather harebrained institution but it was just possible that through its activities, Puerto Rican independence might be brought about. In which case, Puerto Rico would no longer be a possession. Puerto Rican sugar would no longer be tax-free. As a dangerous competitor for my own Cuban plantations, it would no longer exist.

"You see, young man, I couldn't lose either way. At the very least Puerto Rico would have been so thoroughly burned and pillaged and turned inside out as to raise the price of sugar sufficiently to cover my corner of the market. If the long-term gamble, eventual independence, should work out, my Cuban plantations would be protected—and I think I might have counted on personally becoming a very considerable power on *this* island. For you see, I have become the Sons of Liberty.

"If my methods have seemed brutal and over-elaborate, I can only remind you that there was a matter of millions of dollars involved. Sugar is not gold—but a sugar empire, my dear young man, is a gigantic proposition." Tokewood smiled.

A shadow moved behind him. Fowler's eyes narrowed.

"It will be a pleasure to see you on the gallows, Tokewood. Unless you're so raving mad with your crazy ambitions that they'll slap you into a nut-house."

"Why, you—" Fowler's taunt had

brought a black cloud of insane rage over Tokewood's face. He lunged forward. The shadow moved in behind him.

There was a mild thump—Tokewood staggered, sagged in the middle, swayed against the doorpost—behind him, white-faced, eyes blazing, appeared the slim form of Alice Wetherell, clutching a smoking gun which she had just fired with the muzzle jammed into Tokewood's body. Tokewood tried to lift his own sagging weapon; Fowler was on him, wrenched it from his hand.

It was Tokewood's last effort. He flopped face downward on the floor.

"Is he—dead?" breathed Alice.

Fowler bent over him. He shook a doubtful head. "Dead or dying," he said. "Thanks, Alice."

ALICE collapsed on a wooden seat by the door and buried her face in her hands, her gun falling at her feet. Fowler left her a moment while he went outside to see what had happened to Hernandez. He saw the little man coming toward him, trudging wearily—

"He is dead?" he asked in dull tones.

"Yes," nodded Fowler.

"It is well. I told the *señorita* to go—we saw it all—I bade her shoot to kill and take no chances—I, Hernan Hernandez, gave the order—that the man of blood should die."

"It was well done, Hernandez. He deserved such an end. He was no friend of your people."

It was some time before Alice was able to talk again; she had to let the reaction run its course. Fowler made her as comfortable as he could, brought her water from a tank behind the house, talked to her—and at last she lifted her head and faced him.

"I have killed a man," she said simply.

"You have killed a devil," Fowler answered, and in cool steady words he described to her just what Victor Tokewood had been planning to do.

"Oh!" breathed Alice. "To think that—that he kissed me! That I thought I loved him! The monster!"

"We've scotched the snake," said Fowler. "Forget him. Now—if we can get this car started—we'd better be going away from here. We can put Tokewood in the back seat—alone."

Fowler got the motor going. "All set," he said.

Alice dabbed at her cheeks with a tiny powder-puff.

"I wonder," she whispered, "if Paul—will be still in San Juan? I—I'm just beginning to realize that I never appreciated him as I ought."

Fowler laughed. "You're feeling better, aren't you?" he suggested.

Alice nodded.

"I won't get over this—for a long time, but I'm feeling better," she said. "I'm ashamed to think what a little fool I've been. You were right—there are times when force, even guns are necessary for dealing with certain horrors that walk this earth in human form. You were so right. But—will you tell me how he did it? How he made Señor Hernandez here, act as he did?"

"He was an accomplished hypnotist, that's how," Fowler answered.

"He had established full control over Hernandez. Whenever he was present, he could put Hernandez under his spell in a second. And he was very magnetic and persuasive. Particularly"—he smiled—"with women. He fooled poor Chiquita pretty thoroughly—and you see how completely you were duped. He was a remarkable man. It's almost a pity that greed made such a monster out of him. But he paid for what he did—"

"Yes. He paid," said Alice. "It was Tokewood who attacked you that night on the boat, then?"

Dan nodded. "He must have been suspicious of me from the first."

The thin, high, distant wail of a siren put a period to her remark.

"They're coming," said Fowler. "Let's go to meet them."

He shot a side glance at Alice.

"What'll you bet me," he asked gently, "that Paul Tyson won't be in the first police car out of San Juan?"

Alice blushed—and then she turned away her head while Hernandez and Fowler loaded into the tonneau the body of Victor Tokewood, who had died that a thousand men might live.

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PROBAK JUNIOR

G-SMOKE

A Smart Laboratory Fed Shows Gangdom a New Trick or Two!

By
**ROBERT
SIDNEY BOWEN**

Author of "Vulture's Masquerade,"
"Proof Indigo," etc.



ONE hand absently toying with a paper weight, the other jammed deep in his jacket pocket, T. T. Tracey, chief of the Boston division, of the Department of Justice, stared long and hard at the thin-faced, clear-eyed young man seated on the opposite side of the desk. Presently, he grunted and shoved the paper weight away with an impetuous gesture.

"I don't get the picture at all, Griffin," he said gruffly. "Just how does the Washington office figure that a man from the chemical lab is going to help me nail the Krauss gang?"

"They don't, sir," the other replied with a smile. "But I do. And the big chief has enough confidence in me to let me try it anyway."

Tracey growled under his breath.

"But why not tell me your plan of action?" he snapped. "After all I am head of the Boston Division!"

"True, sir," young Griffin replied evenly. "But, it's not a question of that. See here, sir, for some time you have suspected a leak right here in the Boston office. Right?"

"Right!"

"And you know that the Krauss kidnaping gang is holing up here in Boston. But you don't know where. Right?"

Tracey gritted his teeth.

"Right!" he said between them,

"Oke, Mikel!"

The gun butt slashed down.

"And the leak in your office has been contacting them steadily. Right?"

"Dammit, yes! So what?"

"Simply that I have prevailed upon the big chief to permit me to try and stop the leak, and hole out the surviving members of the Krauss gang. I think I can do it. I simply want an okay on everything I do from you, sir."

TRACEY sighed, let his eyes wander over to the telegram in code from the Washington office. It stated simply that one Duan Griggin would arrive that morning, and that he (Tracey) was to give Griffin complete cooperation in the matter of wiping up the surviving members of the famous Krauss gang.

No one wanted that to come to pass more than Tracey. But why the hell send some young squirt who had been spending all of his time in the chem lab in Washington? Granted, he might be a shark at his work. But that wasn't saying that he'd be a whiz against a machine-gun-shooting gang that would squeeze triggers at the drop of the hat. Nor was it any guarantee that he'd plug up the leak.

The Boston chief cursed under his breath as he thought of the last. There was a leak in the Boston office. Of that he was positive. But which one of the six operators and four office clerks, he had under him? He had not the slightest idea. After awhile he made a sign of complete resignation.

"All right, Griffin," he grunted. "You've got my okay for everything you do. What's the first item?"

"The file of evidence against the Krauss gang, sir."

"Huh? What—what are you going to do with it?"

"I'm going to take it to Washington tonight, sir."

Tracey choked over the words.

"To Washington?" he yelled. Are you mad? You take that file out of here, and you won't live to see Washington. Some of the Krauss crowd will be as close to you as your under-shirt. Bah! Unthinkable."

"On the contrary, sir, quite logical. That file is the best bait I could possibly use. It will lead me direct to the Krauss hideout. Let's see. It's three-thirty, now. I should reach the South Station about quarter of four. Say ten minutes of, to make sure. You borrow one of the police prowl cars, and park on the station side of Atlantic Avenue at four o'clock. Wait there for me. In case I don't show up, answer every emergency call that comes in over the car's radio. But I'll be there."

With the quiet air of one who has been chatting about things of no particular account, young Griffin rose from his chair, picked up the file of valuable Krauss evidence and put it in his plain brown suitcase. Feeling like a man who is watching his right arm being amputated, Tracey stared at him with clouded eyes. For a second he was tempted to order Griffin to put the file back on the desk, but the thought of the code telegram from Washington stopped him.

"Don't worry, sir," Griffin said from the half opened door of the office. "Nothing's going to happen to this Krauss evidence."

Tracey groaned, and clenched his fists helplessly. The dummy had practically shouted his mission to all the world. As the door closed shut, Tracey let go another groan and sank back in his chair.

"A chemist!" he spat out. "What I need is a strong arm, and they send me a chemist!"

While Tracey cursed helplessly in his office, young Griffin, grinning to himself, strode out to the street and hailed a passing cab. Grinning, but with his right hand sunk in his topcoat pocket palming the butt of an automatic and his keen eyes flicking this way and that. And as he climbed into the taxi, and told the driver to take him to the South Station, he did not miss the somberly dressed man lounging against the building-wall on the opposite side of the street. The instant Griffin's taxi moved away, the man came to life and walked quickly over to a blue-trim sedan.

STILL grinning to himself, Griffin settled back in the cushions in a position that permitted him to keep glancing out the rear window. The blue-trim sedan trailed all the way to the station, its driver making no effort to keep up close. At the station, Griffin paid off his cab, grabbed up his suitcase and walked rapidly over to the check room.

In due time, the clerk took his bag, punched a check and handed it to him. The young G-man moved back a step or two, held the check up as though studying it closely and fingered the right lapel of his topcoat. Then with a careless movement he shoved the check in his pocket, and went over to the lunchroom. In the mirror back of the serving counter he saw the somberly dressed man saunter in and over to the beer bar. Griffin's heart leaped and he breathed an inward prayer of satisfaction.

After a sandwich and a cup of coffee he went out onto Atlantic Avenue and walked along as though he didn't have a care in the world. He was just half a block from State Street, when it happened. The blue-trim sedan whizzed into the curb. Two men leaped from it and closed in on him so smoothly that the other pedestrians hardly noticed anything out of the ordinary. Griffin, expecting something like that, made no attempt to go for his gun. It was just as well that he didn't.

The man to his right jabbed something blunt and hard against his side.

"Down the next alley, stupe!" said a grating voice. "Be funny and you'll be smeared right here and now."

Griffin, careful to keep his hands in sight, nodded.

"Okay," he said. "But what do you want?"

"That's our worry!" snarled the man and jerked his head to one side. "Right! Down you go."

Face expressionless, but heart pumping hard and a faint sensation of clammy uneasiness rippling through him, Griffin turned sharply into the alley, letting the other two lead him clear to the end and then over behind a deserted warehouse.

There, one of them shoved him against the wall, while the other went through his pockets with practised hands. It took the man about half a minute. He stepped back with a grunt of triumph and held up a parcel checkroom check he had taken from Griffin's inside jacket pocket. He smirked at the youth.

"Tipped off to all about you, mug!" he growled. "Sent up here special, weren't you? Well, putting the stuff in the suitcase and sticking it away in a public checkroom didn't fool us a bit. Thought we wouldn't figure you to do anything as simple as that, eh? Well that's where you lose. Oke, Mike. Don't kill the guy, but he's got to sleep awhile."

That was the one bit of Griffin's plan of action that he couldn't make sure of ahead of time. And so as he saw the gun butt slashing down, he tried to dodge the blow so that it would not inflict serious injury. He felt the gun butt rasp down the side of his head. And then he felt nothing. An ocean of darkness swept up and engulfed him, and he went sailing off into a limitless void.

ONE whole hour had passed when he again opened his eyes. The hands of his watch told him that. Head throbbing with pain, he grimly forced himself onto his feet, and dived back through the alley to the street. Swinging left, he raced at top speed back to the South Station. A tiny gurgle of joy slid off his lips as he caught sight of a police prowler parked on the Atlantic Avenue side, with Tracey behind the wheel.

The head of the Boston Division gave him a startled, searching look as he rushed up.

"Any important calls, sir?" he gasped, tumbling into the seat.

"None!" the other snapped. "Nothing but stolen car reports, and a couple of drunken brawls. But your head! What—"

"I'm all right!" Griffin replied grimly, and fixed his eyes on the dash speaker. Then as though to himself: "We'll just have to sit here and wait. Dammit, I know it will work!"

Tracey swung around at him.

"What will work?" he barked. "Confound it, Griffin, what have you done with those files?"

The young G-man made no reply. He kept staring hard at the dash speaker, as though the very intensity of his look would drag words from it. And weirdly enough, the harsh voice of a police broadcaster suddenly blasted out of the speaker.

"Cars Twenty and Thirty-one! Cars Twenty, and Thirty-one! Go to Twelve-sixteen, Tremont. Twelve-sixteen, Tremont. Emergency! Several tenants found asphyxiated. Use caution. That is all."

Young Griffin whirled and grabbed Tracey's arm.

"I think that's the call, sir!" he cried. "Get going. Twelve-sixteen, Tremont. Go like the devil!"

The head of the Boston Division hesitated a fraction of a second, then decided not to ask the questions quivering on the tip of his tongue. With a smothered curse, he slammed in the gear lever, thumped down on the gas pedal, and set the car ripping away from the curb. It was just three miles to Twelve-sixteen Tremont, and despite the traffic, Tracey made it in just three minutes flat.

As he whirled into the curb and leaped out, two other police cars came screeching up. The officers jumped out, started for Tracey but stopped short as the G-man flashed his badge. At that moment, a patrolman came lumbering out of the ancient, red brick building. He saluted a sergeant.

"Top floor, Sarge," he said. "Four fellas. Guess they wanted to commit suicide or something. All of them is out cold, but they ain't dead. The lady on the floor below smelled something funny and went up for a look. She passed out, but her kid daughter came after me. She—"

Young Griffin didn't wait to hear the rest. He bolted past the cop and went up the steps and through the front door. And as he did, a gun barked and ripped a sliver of wood from the door jamb about two inches to the left of his head. In a flash he went down on one knee and jerked

his gun out. A wild-eyed madman came hurtling down the stairs. His gun barked again. Griffin heard Tracey curse right behind him, then the Boston head fired two quick shots.

THE wild-eyed man seemed to sail out over the stairs. His body described a perfect arc, and came crashing down to a heap on the hall floor. Griffin straightened up, turned to Tracey to thank him for the quick shooting, but his chief wasn't looking at him. Tracey was looking down at the dead man.

"Wilson!" he grated. "Records clerk for me since March. He tried to drill us both!"

"It checks!" Griffin shouted and started up the stairs. "This is the place we want!"

Without waiting for any questions from Tracey, the young G-man raced up to the top floor and dived through an open door. He skidded to a halt and smiled grimly down at four men stretched out limp on the floor. On the double bed against the far wall was a plain brown suitcase that had been ripped open. Some clothing it contained was strewn about helter-skelter.

"What the hell? There's Krauss, himself. And Luigi his trigger man! And Curioni, and Tuxon! Good Lord, the men we've been hunting for weeks!"

Tracey stopped short, drew a hand across his forehead, then shot Griffin a piercing look.

"How the hell did you know they were holed up here?" he demanded.

The young G-man smiled, and shook his head.

"I didn't, sir," he said. "That's why I had to sort of smoke them out."

"Huh? You— Isn't that your suitcase, there?"

"Yes, sir. But not the one you saw in your office. I checked this one this morning when I got off the Washington train. It's the mate to the one I brought to your office."

Tracey scowled.

"What? Begin at the beginning, Griffin."

"My lab work has been to try and

find an invisible and more or less odorless gas to take the place of the tear stuff we've been using," Griffin said. "I clicked on it and suggested to the big chief I try it out. I'd been following the Krauss case, and it looked perfect for a test."

GRIFFIN paused and nodded at the suitcase.

"I rigged up a few flat cylinders of gas that would be released once the suitcase was opened," he said. "I checked it at the South Station, and took the other to your office. Then I took that down and checked it and went for a walk. As I walked, I tore up the second check and tossed it away bit by bit. I was jumped on and the first parcel check taken from me. The check for the *wrong* suitcase! I knew that once the gas was released it would raise merry hell. So all I had to do was listen for the police broadcast. We got it and here we are. The bird you killed must have been in some other room when they opened the case. Incidentally,

in five or six hours they'll be perfectly healthy again. So will any of the other tenants who got a whiff. It's more of a sleeping gas than anything else."

Tracey blinked, shook his head slowly, then suddenly straightened up.

"You tore up the other check!" he yelled. "Then that Krauss file is in a public checkroom—and we haven't got the receipt!"

Griffin stopped him with a gesture, reached up and turned back the right lapel of his topcoat. Hidden behind it was a tiny thumbnail camera.

"Doped out this little gadget in the lab, too, sir," he said. "Before I destroyed the second check, I snapped a picture of it. It will be clear enough to see the number, and with your credentials, well I don't think we'll have any trouble."

Tracey swallowed hard, blew air through his teeth.

"I'll be damned, I'll be damned!" he repeated. "One chemist—and he's worth more than a dozen of us!"

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FIT GEM AND EVER-READY RAZORS

Commissioner EDWARD P. says, "GIVE YOUTH A

World Chaos Has Jinxed the Young—Lend

THE present alarming increase in the number and unusual magnitude of crimes of violence dates back to the concluding years of the World War. At that time, crime began its headline march across the front pages of our newspapers. Slowly the realization was forced upon us that we were engaged in a war more vicious, more devastating, and more destructive than the war among nations.

And the victim of this war was

those of eighteen years or younger.

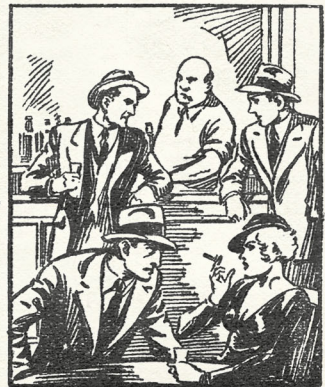
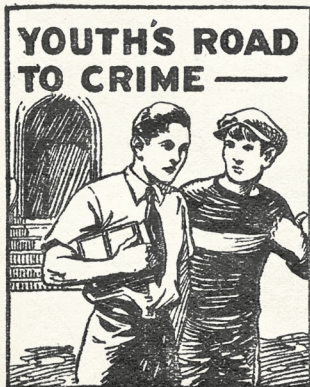
What is the reason for youth's puzzling and heartbreaking tendency to find a life of crime attractive? First, we explained it by blaming it on the unsettled conditions that the war produced. But this theory was found to be gravely erroneous—for the average age of lawbreakers has lowered annually.

Today's youth enjoys advantages of care and direction which were denied the youth of past decades.

From a speech by Commissioner Mulrooney made before the 1936 New York Herald Tribune Round Table Conference on "Crime and Youth Today," organized and directed by Mrs. Ogden Reid and Mrs. William Brown Meloney.

youth. Youth paid, and is continuing to pay. Observe the constantly lowering age of the present-day type of youthful criminal—in 1935 those of nineteen years were followed by

State and society were not blind to the desperate situation of the young in the world chaos that blazed about them. Steps were taken. Extraordinary provisions were made for



MULROONEY CHANCE!"

Them a Helping Hand!

the maladjusted child; bars of justice were established whose special jurisdiction was over lawbreakers of adolescent years; the field of mental hygiene has been kept abreast of modern scientific developments.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE

Crime conferences—Federal, state, and municipal—have been held. The Congress and the various state legislatures continue to amend penal laws and codes of criminal procedure—and many of these measures are excellent in dealing with the developed career criminal.

Yet with it all, the prison population continues to increase, and the daily lineup continues the same sordid picture, except that—every day almost—the average age of the prisoners hits a new low.

Youth today is more enlightened, more sophisticated than at any other period. Discussions of the most delicate matters come glibly to its tongue. Stage, screen, and literature have conspired to place the young on a thoroughly conversant footing with many



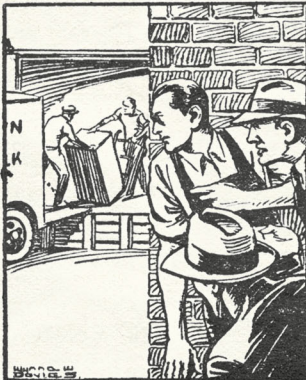
Edward P. Mulrooney

subjects heretofore considered only suitable for presentation to their elders.

There is not much left to the imagination of the youth of today. On the screen, the radio, and by journalistic photography, the most intricate technical details of a crime or scandal are revealed. Political scandals, corruption in high places, the open cynicism shown for the processes of law and order by organized racketeers—all these have been laid bare time and time again for youth and all the world to see.

SOURCES OF DELINQUENCY

It is little wonder, then, that with its aura of easy success, quick and staggering returns, and of glamorous



excitement, a life of crime appears to the misguided boy to be the easiest way.

Delinquency in the young must be attacked at the source—for it is from the ranks of the juvenile delinquent that the career criminal is recruited.

Society and state must see that it is both cheaper and more efficient to prevent the developing of delinquency in the young than it is to arrest, prosecute, house, feed and endeavor to rehabilitate the hardened criminal.

The causes of delinquency are no longer shrouded in ignorance. Authorities recognize that the delinquent finds in his infractions of law and order an expression for his natural instinct for action, excitement, and adventure.

YOUTHFUL AMBITIONS UNDERSTOOD

Replace the shoddy idol with the wholesome one. Let youth understand who are its friends and to whom it may turn for sympathy and enlightened guidance. Do not expect the young to respond warmly to rigid discipline, to regimentation which hampers the expression of his individuality. Youth wants to learn. But it detests becoming a machine in the processes of instruction.

The school cannot accomplish the job unaided. Youth organizations possess great potential powers for molding character and are one of the great forces for the prevention of delinquency. Clubs for older boys are a splendid aid, but particularly in the congested areas, organizations of this type are lamentably few in number.

A police department, properly directed—and this has been proved, particularly by the New York Police Department—possesses facilities and opportunity to aid in the prevention of delinquency.

THE COP ON THE BEAT

It is part of the policeman's routine duty to aid and direct the young and the aged. He is usually observing

and inquisitive, and by far and large knows more about the activities of the neighborhood boy than the church or school, and more often than the parent.

Further, he is more anxious to keep the boy out of serious trouble than he is to exercise his powers of arrest. His experience has long since taught him that the answer to the crime problem is not the endless routine of arrest, incarceration, etc., repeated *ad infinitum*—but the attempt to keep the boy out of the hands of the police, the courts, and the jail.

The state cannot by the exercise of all its functions counteract the absence of religious and parental control in the guidance of youth.

Chief Justice Frederick Crane of the N. Y. State Court of Appeals made this clear when he said: "There has been too much emphasis upon the results which can be accomplished by the law alone."

HELP THE LAW!

Unless something can be done to make our people conscious that the crime problem of today is a problem of youth, and that they, individually and collectively, must make a contribution and be continuously interested, no substantial gain can be made in eradicating or minimizing the problem.

My opportunities have been ample to observe the mechanics of law enforcement agencies in their efforts to remedy crime conditions. The mere routine of law, arrest, and correction is not enough. When the law has been called into play, the criminal has already been made.

Become familiar with problems of law and order, support measures to extend the social work done by the schools, to increase recreational facilities for the young, to promote parent education and any other similar movement which will prevent crime.

Get back of the organization of a crime prevention bureau as an integral part of the police department.

Help youth! Give it a chance to help itself! That's really all it needs!

Public Enemies



By Clayton Maxwell

JOHN PAUL CHASE

A Regular G-Men Feature

JOHN PAUL CHASE WAS A TYPICAL AMERICAN YOUTH WHO VIEWED THE RECORDS OF NOTORIOUS GANGSTERS WITH ADMIRATION. IT WAS NOT LONG BEFORE HE WAS ASSOCIATING WITH THEM --- RUNNING THEIR ERRANDS AND ACTING AS THEIR GO-BETWEEN. HIS PARTICULAR PAL WAS BABY FACE NELSON!

CHASE WAS BORN IN CALIFORNIA IN 1901. HE WENT TO SCHOOL UNTIL THE FIFTH GRADE, THEN WORKED AT VARIOUS ODD JOBS. HIS JOBS RAN FROM RANCH BOY AND FISH HATCHERY MAN TO CHAUFFEUR FOR A RENO GAMBLER.

IN 1926 CHASE LOST A LEGITIMATE JOB AND WENT TO SAN FRANCISCO.

HERE HE LINED HIMSELF UP WITH A LOCAL BOOT LEGGER. THIS STUFF GOES TO BILL DURKIN, JOHN --- AND WHILE YOU'RE THERE, SEE IF YOU CAN INTEREST HIM IN SOME SCOTCH! JUST GOT IN A SHIPMENT!



THEN IN 1932 CHASE MET A 'JIMMY BURNETT' ALSO IN THE RUM-RUNNING GAME --- AND THRILLED TO BURNETT'S TALENTS OF CRIME!

I'M KNOWN AS JIMMY BURNETT HERE, --- BUT, SAY CHASE --- I LIKE YOU --- I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING, EVER HEAR OF BABY FACE NELSON? WELL, THAT'S ME!



CHASE AND BABY FACE NELSON BOTH WORKED AS GUARDS FOR A BIG LIQUOR RING, SMUGGLING SHIPMENTS ALONG THE COAST INTO SAN FRANCISCO

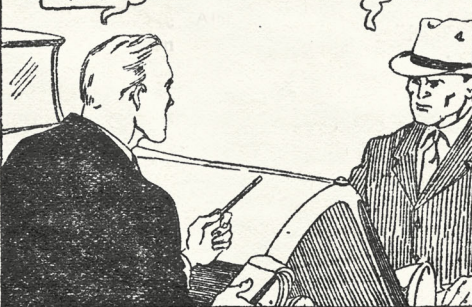


...THEN THEY SENT ME TO JOLIET --- BUT I GOT OUT AND THEY WONT GET ME AGAIN!

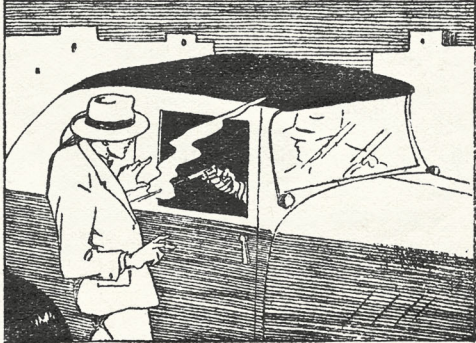
WHEN BABY FACE NELSON DEEMED IT SAFE TO HEAD BACK EAST AGAIN, NELSON NEEDED A RESPECTABLE APPEARING PERSON TO ACT AS HIS "FRONT," OR BUSINESS AGENT. HE SELECTED CHASE FOR THE JOB, INSTRUCTING HIM TO BUY A FAST CAR

IT'S GOT THE SPEED! I'LL GUARANTEE THAT!

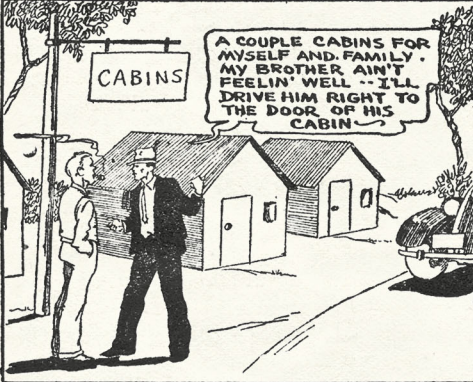
OKAY, I'LL PAY CASH!



CHASE ACCOMPANIED NELSON TO A HIDE-OUT IN MINNEAPOLIS: --- WHERE CHASE RECEIVED HIS FIRST INSTRUCTIONS IN BIG TIME CRIME. SOON NELSON WAS ACCUSED OF THE MURDER OF THEODORE KIDDER, A CITIZEN OF MINNEAPOLIS



BEFORE DAWN THE NEXT MORNING BABY FACE, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE AND BABY, FLED FROM MINNEAPOLIS. CHASE ALSO WENT ALONG. NEWSPAPER HEADLINES SCREAMED THE NAME OF NELSON. CHASE WAS OVERLOOKED. IT WAS CHASE WHO, IN THEIR FLIGHT ACROSS THE CONTINENT, MADE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THEIR HALTS AT TOURIST CAMPS



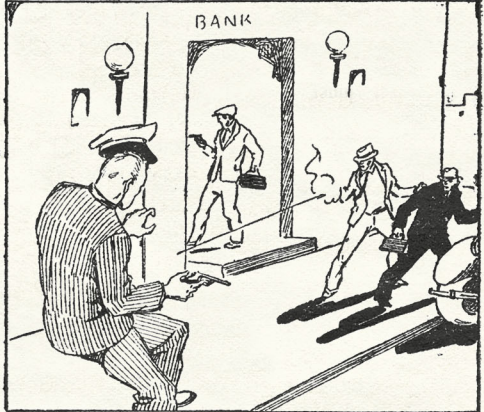
SAFE IN THE WEST AGAIN, NELSON, WITH CHASE AS HIS ASSISTANT, RENEWED HIS CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES. AN IMPORTANT WITNESS IN A CRIMINAL CASE DISAPPEARED. NELSON HAD MURDERED HIM --- CHASE HELPED HIM DISPOSE OF THE BODY --- THEN DROVE THE CAR TO SAN FRANCISCO AND SOLD IT.



CHASE AND NELSON NOW SEPARATED, BUT MET AGAIN IN CHICAGO. G-MEN WERE NOW HOT ON THE TRAIL OF DILLINGER --- SO ALL THE MEMBERS OF HIS MOB WERE FORCED TO LAY LOW. NELSON AND DILLINGER HAD JUST ESCAPED FROM THE 'LITTLE BOHEMIA' ROADHOUSE FRACAS, SO CHASE ACTED AS THEIR GO-BETWEEN, DELIVERING MESSAGES, PURCHASING ARMS AND ARRANGING FOR MEETING PLACES



AND NOW CHASE'S AMBITION WAS REALIZED. HE WAS ALLOWED TO TAKE AN ACTIVE PART IN THE ROBBERY OF THE MERCHANTS NATIONAL BANK AT SOUTH BEND, INDIANA. THERE WAS SHOOTING DURING THE ROBBERY AND A POLICEMAN WAS KILLED.

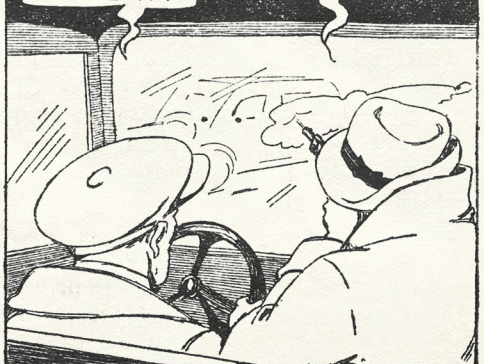


THEN G-MEN SHOT DILLINGER. BACK TO THE PACIFIC COAST CHASE AND NELSON FLED, CHASE AGAIN MAKING ARRANGEMENTS WHILE BABY FACE STAYED IN HIDING. BUT THE COAST WAS ALIVE WITH G-MEN --- THE CRIMINALS TURNED BACK EAST. FOR MONTHS A SPECIAL AGENT HAD BEEN STATIONED AT A LAKE RESORT NEAR CHICAGO ON THE TIP THAT NELSON HAD ONCE STOPPED THERE --- THEN ONE DAY THE AGENT SAW A CAR MOVING ABOUT THE RESORT TOWN IN WHICH HE RECOGNIZED NELSON

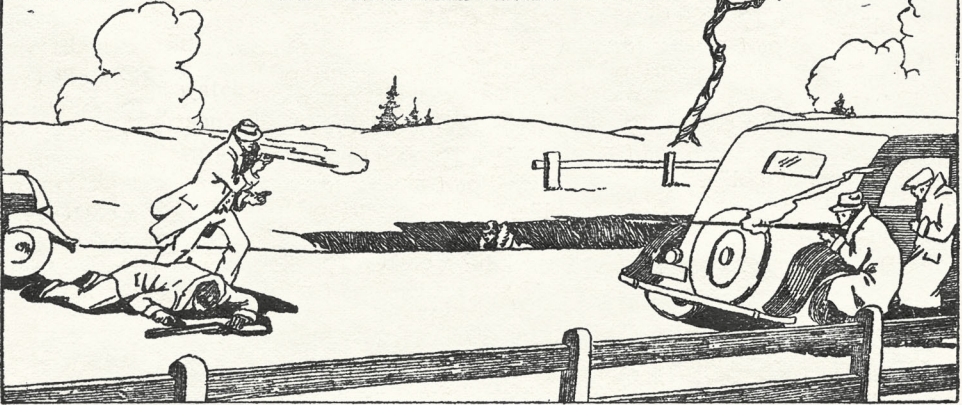


AS USUAL, CHASE WAS IN THE CAR WITH NELSON. AS THE G-MEN PASSED IN A CAR, NELSON BECAME FRIGHTENED AND ORDERED CHASE TO FIRE ON THEM. CHASE CUT LOOSE WITH AN AUTOMATIC RIFLE THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

THAT GUY LOOKED AT ME -- MAYBE HE'S A FEDERAL! LET 'EM HAVE IT!



IN THE FIRING THE OUTLAWS' CAR WAS DAMAGED. NOW ANOTHER CAR CONTAINING FEDERAL AGENTS COWLEY AND HOLLIS, DREW UP BEHIND THE BANDITS. CHASE AND NELSON OPENED FIRE. HOLLIS WOUNDED NELSON. CHASE SHOT COWLEY DOWN. THEN NELSON GRABBED A MACHINE-GUN AND KILLED AGENT HOLLIS. DURING THE BATTLE, MRS. NELSON LAY COWERING IN A DITCH.



THE BANDITS ESCAPED IN THE FEDERALS' CAR / NELSON DIED THAT NIGHT. MRS. NELSON AND CHASE HID HIS NAKED, BLOODY BODY IN A CULVERT NEAR A CEMETARY

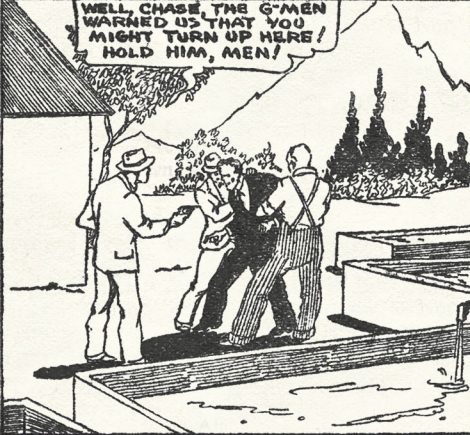


NOW JOHN PAUL CHASE WAS ON HIS OWN. HE GOT A JOB DRIVING A CAR TO SEATTLE. BUT G-MEN WERE CLOSE BEHIND HIM. NONE OF HIS OLD PALS WOULD SHIELD HIM--- G-MEN WERE WATCHING ALL HIS FORMER HAUNTS. IN BUTTE WAS \$2,000 HE HAD SENT TO A FRIEND TO LAY AWAY FOR HIM. HE SOUGHT OUT THIS FRIEND

GET OUT OF TOWN!
KEEP MOVING!
THE G-MEN KNOW ABOUT THAT MONEY--- THEY'RE WATCHING THAT SAFE-DEPOSIT BOX!



SO CHASE KEPT MOVING--- AS LONG AS HIS MONEY LASTED. FINALLY, BROKE, HE SOUGHT EMPLOYMENT AT THE CALIFORNIA STATE FISH HATCHERY AT MOUNT SHASTA, WHERE HE HAD WORKED YEARS BEFORE.



WELL, CHASE, THE G-MEN WARNED US THAT YOU MIGHT TURN UP HERE! HOLD HIM, MEN!

AND JOHN PAUL CHASE, WHO HAD BEGUN HIS CAREER AS A MERE ERRAND BOY FOR BABY FACE NELSON, WAS SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT ON ALCATRAZ ISLAND FOR THE SLAYING OF FEDERAL AGENT COWLEY



NEXT MONTH--- ANOTHER THRILLING G-MEN ADVENTURE IN PICTURES

GUILTY as HELL



As an electric torch snapped into brilliance, his revolver jerked up, blazing

**The Lightning Wit of a G-Man Crime-Smasher Sweeps
into Play Against a Snatcher's Mob!**

By COL. WILLIAM T. COWIN

Former Assistant United States Attorney

Author of "Missing Witness," "Broken Glass," etc.

DUNSTAN, Federal district attorney, paused for a moment in his summation. His eyes rested on the brutal face of the prisoner. Then he turned to the jury.

"Gentlemen," he said, "the defense contends that the prisoner, Avery, is

a victim of circumstances. This, in the face of the fact that the State has proved him a fourth offender. This in the face of the fact that he was caught red-handed by the arresting officers. Unless he is exterminated, society is in peril."

From a Law-Officer's Case-Book

Avery's heavy hand gripped the edge of the table. His lips contorted in an ugly snarl. Dunstan paused, glanced down at the scribbled notes on the table.

"Now, gentlemen," he continued, "we shall take up the matter of the prisoner's alibi. The State—"

He broke off as a court attendant tapped him apologetically on the shoulder. Dunstan frowned at the interruption. He took the note the attendant handed him, read it hastily. A shadow crawled into his blue eyes. His hand gripped the rail of the jury box, and it seemed that he would have fallen save for that support. His voice was low and husky as he turned to the bench.

"Your Honor," he said haltingly, "may it please the Court, I move for a ten-minute adjournment. Something pressing and urgent has arisen."

The judge regarded Dunstan's drawn face with concern. Then he slowly nodded his head.

"Motion granted," he ruled. "The Court is adjourned. It will reconvene in ten minutes."

Avery's counsel was on his feet again. "Exception," he barked.

Avery, the prisoner, smiled and said nothing.

Dunstan turned on his heel and walked rapidly through the courtroom. As he reached the door a pleasant voice hailed him.

"What's wrong? You look as if you had lost a client."

Dunstan wheeled.

"Gravesend," he said, relief in his voice. "Thank God you're here! You're the man I want. Come with me."

Dick Gravesend accompanied the lawyer to the counsellors' rooms on the floor above. Dunstan slammed the door behind him and sank into a chair. He seemed to have grown ten years older in the past five minutes. Gravesend stared at him, puzzled.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

DUNSTAN did not answer. Instead he held out a small oblong of white paper upon which some words were scribbled. Gravesend took

it from the lawyer's nerveless fingers. His eyes grew hard as he read the sinister words on the paper.

Dunstan:

We have your daughter. We took her ten minutes ago. If the jury brings in a guilty verdict against Avery, she will die. When Avery is released, she shall go free.

Gravesend's eyes narrowed. Slowly he folded the paper and put it in his pocket. He uttered one word, and concentrated bitterness was in his voice. "Mallard," he said.

Dunstan nodded. "Undoubtedly Mallard, the head of the gang of which Avery is a member. And he's got Dorothy."

Gravesend crossed the room and placed a fraternal hand upon the lawyer's shoulder.

"Don't worry," he said. "We'll get her all right. Get a three-day adjournment on the Avery case to give us a chance to get going."

Dunstan shook his head. When he spoke it was with an effort.

"No," he said slowly, "I'm going down and finish this case, Gravesend. I've got a duty to perform and I'll do it. That case is going to the jury this afternoon, and I'm going to move heaven and earth to get a conviction."

For a long moment Gravesend said nothing. He knew that the man would not be swerved from his purpose.

"All right," said the G-man quietly. "Go ahead. And I promise you to move heaven and earth to find Dorothy before the jury brings in the verdict."

Dunstan nodded wearily. "I know you will," he said. "The messenger boy who brought the note is downstairs. I told the attendant to hold him. Go to it, Dick, and good luck."

Less than ten minutes later, Dick Gravesend was speeding uptown in a taxicab. The messenger's description fitted Mallard loosely, as it might have fitted a thousand other men. But the one important point Gravesend's questioning had brought out was that the man who had sent the note had paused to send a telegram from the same office. It was on this piece of information that Gravesend was staking

everything. The taxi came to a stop.

He dismissed the cab before the Western Union office. A moment later he was questioning the clerk.

"Let me see all the wires that have been sent since two o'clock," he said, laying his Government badge on the counter.

Swiftly, he ran through the sheaf of yellow papers. From these he finally selected one which read:

Mr. Manny Laval,
c/o General Delivery,
Manton, N. Y.

Arrive with shipment about six
o'clock. Prepare for us.

There was no signature. Gravesend glanced down at his wrist watch. By now Dunstan would be in the middle of his summation. It was doubtful that the jury would remain out over night.

He had five or six hours in which to find the girl. Five or six hours before the jury reached a verdict. He raced from the office and sprang into another cab. Twenty minutes later he arrived at Grand Central Station.

IN less than an hour he stood on the platform of the railroad station at Manton. There was little there. Back of the depot stood a hay and grain store. Three houses formed a ragged street, then came a larger building which bore the Legend: Grey's General Store. Beneath that sign a smaller one: Post Office.

Gravesend strode across the street. A moment later he confronted a bearded patriarch within the store.

"Did you receive a wire for a Manny Laval this afternoon?"

The grey-beard nodded, and the G-man snapped hastily:

"Where does this Laval live?"

"I don't know that. He was just driving through here, I guess. I never seen him before. He sort of expected that wire. He stopped off special for it."

Gravesend frowned. "Did he buy anything here?"

"Nope. Bought nothing. Just took his wire and drove off."

Gravesend nodded. "Well," he

said, "I want to hire a car. Got anything you can let me have?"

"That Ford outside—"

Gravesend laid some money on the counter. "I'll have it back at midnight," he said grimly. He glanced out the window. The long line of telephone poles strung alongside the road caught his eye. He turned again to the rustic.

"Those wires run all along here?"

"On every road," the storekeeper said. "Nearly everyone has a phone along here."

"Where's the operator?"

"She sets in the back of the store there. Through that door."

Gravesend swung around on his heel. He walked through the door. There he showed his badge to the girl at the switchboard and spoke to her in a low, earnest voice. After that he returned to the store.

"Got a pair of rubber gloves?"

"Sure."

"Let me have 'em. Let me have a pair of pliers, too."

He paid for his purchases, then went outside to examine the Ford he had hired. There was a screen door leading to the store. Through its mesh Gravesend could see and hear everything that went on within.

He seated himself in the Ford and waited. With death hovering over the daughter of Dunstan it was hard to sit here and do nothing. But there was no other way. His keen grey eyes scrutinized every person who entered the store. His alert ear listened for very word of conversation.

Dusk was lowering when a mud-bespattered sedan drove up and a man alighted and entered the store. Gravesend's heart picked up a beat as he watched. The man was dressed in a well tailored suit. A diamond ring sparkled on his finger. He gave the storekeeper an order for a bill of goods. Gravesend noted that his orders consisted principally of canned goods.

To pay for his purchases he drew a thick roll of bills from his pocket. The G-man, peering through the screen door, noted that the bill on the outside of the thick roll was one

of a hundred-dollar denomination. That decided him. This was no farmer! Farmers didn't dress like that, didn't wear diamonds when out on a shopping tour; didn't carry a few odd thousand around casually in their trouser pockets.

Gravesend waited until the other's red tail lights were some two hundred yards up the road, then he stepped on the starter. The Ford moved ahead.

FOR some eight miles along the dark country roads, Gravesend followed the flickering red rear lights before him. Then, of a sudden, the coupé veered sharply to the right. The crimson lights vanished in the darkness.

Cautiously Gravesend proceeded. At the point where the leading car had turned off was a narrow dirt road which disappeared into the thick foliage of the countryside.

Gravesend stopped the Ford abruptly. He clambered out from behind the wheel. In the thin light of the moon he glanced once more at his wrist watch. Time was fleeting, and every instant that ticked past brought Dorothy Dunstan closer to her death.

Overhead the singing telephone wires stretched from pole to pole. Gravesend pulled on his rubber gloves. Swiftly he climbed to the top of the pole. In another instant he was back on the ground. He tossed the gloves into the car, then parked it hard by the side of the road. Then he turned into the dirt road and ran swiftly, silently along rutted tracks.

He came to an abrupt halt as he rounded a bend in the road. Oblong frames of light met his eyes, as he stared at an old farmhouse set upon a knoll. The coupé he had followed was parked before the house.

Within a scant twenty yards of the house, he stopped and listened intently. Save for the clicking of a thousand crickets he heard nothing. He tensed his muscles preparatory to moving forward once more. Then with the suddenness of a peal of thunder he heard a footfall behind him.

The underbrush crackled sharply. He wheeled about swiftly, to see a

lumbering figure upon him, a figure black against the blackness of the night.

A faint click reached his ears, then his face was flooded with light as an electric torch snapped into brilliance. Gravesend's hand dropped to his hip pocket. In an instant his revolver jerked up, blazing.

The flashlight was extinguished abruptly. A yelp of pain ripped through the night. Then, before Gravesend could fire again, a viselike hand gripped his wrist.

The G-man swung his left with all his strength. He heard the thug grunt with pain as his grip on his throat relaxed. He gave his right wrist a terrific jerk. His gun hand wrenched free. In an instant he brought up the automatic, rammed its cold, hard muzzle against the other's chest.

"Stand back," he panted. "Put up your hands!"

He heard a curse as the gangster released him. Dimly he saw the huge figure of the other in the darkness. The heavy hamlike hands of the thug arose.

Then, as if by a miracle, the darkness vanished.

Gravesend and his prisoner stood in sharp silhouette against a circle of brilliant light. Blinking, Gravesend turned. He made out a little group that stood on the porch, from where a powerful gasoline lamp blazed.

A voice, heavy with authority, spoke. "Take that guy's gun, Dane. Bring him up here." Gravesend recognized the speaker. Mallard!

Dane lurched forward. His big hand snatched the weapon from Gravesend's nerveless fingers. The muzzle of the automatic pressed hard against its owner's back.

"Get going," said a heavy voice.

Gravesend marched toward the porch.

MALLARD regarded him with cold, suspicious eyes as one of his henchmen flickered dexterous fingers through Gravesend's pockets. Dane still held the automatic against the G-man's back.

The man who had searched him

straightened up. He held out something which gleamed in the light. Mallard's little eyes grew colder as he regarded the badge.

"A Fed, eh? That means we're getting out of here. Pronto. Get the cars ready. Get the girl, too."

The group on the porch dispersed. Dane remained where he was, holding the automatic on his prisoner. A few moments later three heavy sedans rolled up before the house. From within, Gravesend heard Mallard's voice.

"All right. Bring up the girl."

Gravesend's eyes desperately essayed to telegraph a silent message of reassurance as Dorothy Dunstan came upon the porch between two of Mallard's henchmen. A faint expression of relief flickered across her pale face as she saw him. Yet they exchanged no word.

"Get in those cars," snapped Mallard. "Put the Fed and the girl in with me. I'll lead the way. Don't stop for anything."

Gravesend was escorted to the lead car. Unceremoniously he was thrust inside the sedan. The girl sat on his right. Dane, on the far side of the seat, held the automatic so that it covered both of them. The headlights split the darkness as the three cars traveled swiftly toward the main highway.

Gravesend saw the headlight of the other car as the sedan turned onto the highway. Behind it a little group of men stood about the telephone pole. Then, as they heard the roar of the cavalcade from the dirt road, a voice hailed the men in the oncoming cars.

Gravesend's heart pounded up against his breast. He recognized that voice. It was Harlow, divisional chief of the United States Bureau of Investigation.

Mallard's voice sounded hard and dry as he snarled to the chauffeur. "Keep going! Stop for nobody!"

Gravesend saw the metallic glint of steel as the gangster drew his revolver. He could hear Dane's nervous inhalation as the headlights of the sedan revealed four cars pulled along the side of the road.

Now Mallard's sedan was almost level with the men on foot. Again Harlow's voice ripped out. Mallard's snarl of defiance was audible above the roaring of the motor.

"Damn them!" he growled. "Let 'em have it, Dane!"

His own revolver leaped to the open window. His finger pressed down on the trigger. A burning thread of steel ate its way into the men upon the road. Then, from the rear, Gravesend heard the staccato rattle of a Thompson gun as Mallard's men picked up the cue from their leader.

A bullet from the man in the road smashed up against the window on Dane's side. Glass shards flew through the interior of the car. A sliver bit deeply into Dane's cheek. He snarled an oath and turned toward the window, gun in hand, seeking vengeance upon the men who had fired that shot.

And that movement was the break for which Gravesend had been waiting. The G-man's hands darted out. One seized the girl's arm roughly and forced her down to the floor of the car. The other clenched into a hard, knotted fist and sped to the point of Dane's jaw.

THE gangster slumped in his seat. Gravesend leaned forward and snatched the automatic from his hand.

By now the battle had reached raging proportions. The men on the road had rallied at the instant Mallard's shot opened the fight. A machine-gun rattled ominously. Bullets hammered savagely up against the side of the racing cars as they ran the gauntlet of the Government guns.

Gravesend jerked up his automatic and leveled it at the driver's head.

"Stop the car," he ordered. "Pull over to the side of the road or I'll blow your head off."

The man felt the cold steel against the back of his neck. But he had courage. Desperately he jerked the wheel to one side, caroming Gravesend against the side of the car. In that instant Mallard leaned over the seat and, clubbing his gun, brought it crashing down upon the G-man's head.

Gravesend was aware of the girl's anguished scream as consciousness fled from him.

Back in the city, it was three minutes to ten when Judge Arthur convened the court. The jury had reported that it had reached a verdict. The press sat eagerly, waiting to flash the news. Avery, brought in from the Tombs, moved restively in his seat.

But as the jury filed into the room, Dunstan was far more anxious than his prisoner. His face was grey and a terrible weariness was in his eyes. He heard the clerk rise and face the jury. He heard the judge's monotone, adjuring Avery to stand up. Then dimly he heard the clerk's voice.

"And gentlemen of the jury, have you reached a verdict?"

The foreman nodded his head. "We have."

"And how have you found? Guilty or not guilty?"

There was a deathly hush in that room. The reporters sat with poised pencils. Dunstan stared unseeingly at the jury. Then, into that hush the foreman spoke.

"We find the defendant—guilty!"

Dunstan fell back into his chair. He did not hear the formal motion of the defense lawyer. His head was in a daze and an ache was in his heart. And then, from the rear of the room, he heard a familiar voice utter a single word:

"Father!"

The lawyer jerked his head around and the next moment his daughter threw herself into his arms.

The judge adjourned the court, but Dunstan was not aware of it. In fact he was aware of nothing until some fifteen minutes later when he, Dorothy and Gravesend gathered in his offices.

"SO you see," Gravesend was explaining, "once I had the man at the store spotted, it wasn't so hard.

There were six party lines running out of the switchboard there. I had the girl call Harlow immediately. She told him to come to Manton as soon as possible."

"I understand that," said Dunstan. "But even in Manton, how could they find you?"

"Those six party wires all ran along different roads. Now on a party wire each phone along the same road is hooked onto the same connection. I told the operator that if I hadn't returned when Harlow got there to ring each one of the six phones that was at the extreme end of the wire. Now do you get it?"

"You see, I was to cut the wire along the road I traveled. That meant that the phone at the end of that wire would be out of order. By ringing each of the six lines, the girl could tell that the one whose end phone didn't work was the one whose road I traveled."

"I see that," said Dunstan, "but what was Harlow to do then?"

"There's a searchlight on Harlow's car," said Gravesend. "With that playing on the overhead wire as they came along the road it was simple for him to see where the break was. He was to stop at that point and investigate. It meant that I had left the main road there. It would have been simple for him to find us then even if we hadn't run into him in Mallard's car."

Dorothy shuddered. "I thought we were done when Mallard hit you on the head," she said.

Gravesend grinned. "I'm harder to get rid of than that," he said. "A bullet got the chauffeur just after that and the car ran into the ditch. As soon as Harlow brought me to, I rushed Dorothy back here in one of his cars."

Dunstan thrust out his hand. "I can only say thanks," he said. "You'll have to guess what's in my heart."

Next Month: CONFSSIONAL—

Another Exciting Crime Story by COL. WILLIAM T. COWIN

Former Assistant United States Attorney

PACKED WITH ACTION!



Gun-firing

The DOOM

A Sensational True Story

BY AN EX-RACKETEER AND

FRANKIE

—who wrote "Hot Heaps,"

WHEN the celebrated Mark Mantell went the way of all flesh, the underworld lost the best gunsmith that ever doctored a gun. Where he is, or where he went to, the underworld doesn't know. What they do know, though, is that he had a run-in with Uncle Sammy's G-men. But them babies are like daisies; by that I mean they never tell!

I was Mark's pal in the old days, before he ever got into the big-time



sugar. We went to the same reform school together. When we completed our courses we still stuck. Even as a kid, Mark was a wizard with rods. I remember well how the old-time gunmen used to come to Mark and ask him to put their hardware in order. When he said that a smoke-pole was oke, brother, you could bet your bottom dollar that it was!

Well, Mark and I drifted into different paths. I had rackets that were out of his line. But we still remained



The G-boys busted the door

A Foolproof Set-Up Can Only

DEALERS

of the Gun-Running Racket

FORMER PUBLIC ENEMY

LEWIS

"Passing the Queer," etc.



He led the way

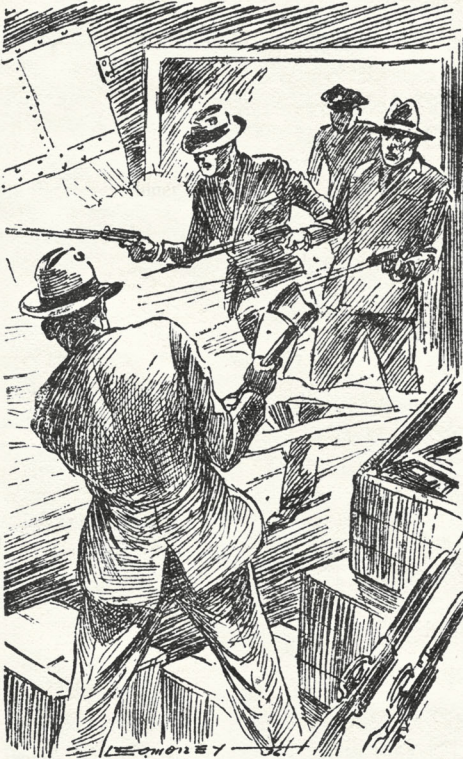
illegitimate work than the former.

I dropped in to see Mark one day in his little shop. As soon as I put a little pressure on the door, a bell

started to tinkle. I walked in just as Mark was coming from the rear of his shop.

His hands were full of grease, and he had his sleeves rolled up. I knew that he was tickled silly to see me. He often remarked that I was the only mug in the bunch that ever understood him.

"C'mon, Frankie, let's go in the back of the shop. We can talk better there." Mark led the way through a door to a little room in the rear. This



down just in the nick of time



room was without windows and was lighted by a single bulb suspended from the ceiling. All around me there were typewriters and hunting rifles in various stages of repair. In racks on the wall was the finest assortment of tools that I ever had seen.

"Pretty nice layout you got here, palsy." I slapped Mark on the back.

"Yeah, not bad at all, Frankie. I'm buildin' up a nice trade."

"Gee, Mark," I answered, "I never thought you'd make a successful

Be as Smart as the Mobster Behind It

workin' man! You're a smart guy!"

Mark looked at me with a sort of pitying look. Then without a word he went over to the wall and leaned against it. I was nearly floored with surprise by what followed.

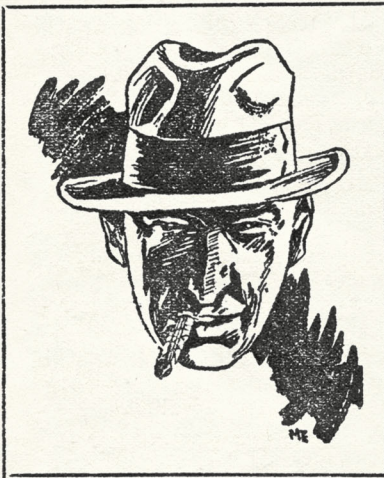
A section of the wall swung away, but it swung so silently that it was almost uncanny. A damp breeze came out of the place where the wall had been. Mark snapped me to my senses, saying:

"I'll put a sign on the front door that I'm out for lunch. Then I'll

and I heard the hum of a high speed motor. This whole business gave me a creepy feeling around the gills.

Then a square patch of light appeared and I saw a door. But it was camouflaged so cleverly that it appeared to be part of a solid wall.

The room into which Mark led the way was a huge affair that I knew was some kind of workshop. It was brilliantly lighted. On one side of the room were lathes and tool-making machines of every description. There were fifteen or twenty workmen in



Frankie Lewis

FRANKIE LEWIS SAYS:

"Some wise guys think that playing hide and seek with the law is the best way to get their hooks on quick money. But I'm telling you that guys who figure that way generally get—handcuffs on their hooks!"

show yuh if Mark Mantell is gonna be a millionaire or a mucker."

MARK led the way down a flight of rickety wooden stairs that creaked and in general acted like they were going to fall to pieces any minute. The whole joint was filled with a musty odor that told me we were not far from the river. I asked Mark what the idea of the cache was.

"Keep your shirt on, Frankie," he said. "You'll know in a couple of minutes."

Mark stopped, whistled three times in a funny sort of way. For a second or two nothing happened. Then, from a place high up in the wall, a pink bulb winked on and off two or three times. Mark whistled again

the place. A man in a tan smock seemed to be the one in charge. Mark gave him a curt nod and then turned to me.

"Well, kid, what do you think of this layout?"

"It looks like the works to me," I answered. "But what the devil is the why and wherefore?"

"Frankie, you're the only one of the guys that I know from the big town that's ever seen this place. I showed it to you because I like you." Then he gave me the in and out of the thing.

From what Mark was telling me I gathered that this was one time where old Uncle Sam was aiding and abetting crime. Mark, as I told you before, was a gunsmith of the first

water. He knew guns from A to Z, and when the Government let it be known that they were selling machine-guns that were left over from the war, Mark got a lot of bright ideas.

The Government had rendered the guns unserviceable and was selling them as trophies for the measly sum of seven boffoes. Mark had found out a way to fix them up. He made a fortune out of selling them to the underworld.

"But that's only a drop in the bucket, Toots," he informed me.

He showed me around the place. I got a gander at the machines and found out what they were all used for.

"See this lathe?" Mark pointed to a machine that held a gun barrel in its steel jaws. "That's what's known as a turret lathe. I use that to true up the barrels of the machine-guns."

He took my arm again and led me to another monster machine that held an oblong piece of steel in the jaws of a vise that was part of the machine. He pressed a button. Slowly the machine came to life; then faster and faster it rumbled back and forth over the oblong piece of steel.

Each time the machine went over the piece of steel it left tiny shavings. Mark explained to me that in some of the guns the breech blocks were ruined.

"If the blocks and the breech are on the nut," he explained, "the shells can't run into the gun." He pointed again to the machine. "That little piece of steel will soon be a new machine-gun breech. But c'mon. There's plenty more to show you."

IN another room that didn't have any machinery in it, I got another surprise. This place was like the gun room of an armory. Against the wall, neatly stacked in racks, were rows and rows of machine-guns. Mark explained that some models were air-cooled and some cooled by water. He also gave me a talk on the technical points of the gun racket.

"You got enough guns here," I told him, "to outfit an army."

He turned to me with a half smile,

half leer. "You guessed it, palsy," he said. "That's just what I'm gonna do—outfit an army!"

I thought that Mark was trying to give me a rib. He seemed to read my thoughts.

"That's on the level, Frankie."

It seems as though there was a revolution brewing in one of these banana-belt republics. I mean the sort of little nation where a guy is the president today, and vulture food tomorrow. Mark didn't tell me how or when he had made his connections. But he told me that the rebels had given him a contract for seventy-five machine-guns and thousands of rounds of ammunition.

"Think of it, Frankie. Machine-guns that cost damn near a grand and have never been used can be bought for about a fin apiece. Down in Central America, they pay as high as a grand or more. All I have to do is to put them in shape. That don't cost a lot. Then they load 'em aboard a rusty old tub, and old Mark Mantell gets a lot of velvet."

"Yeah, the scheme's a million per cent," I answered. "But that's fooling with the G-men, ain't it?"

"Say," he remarked with a disgusted air, "are you another one of those bellyachers that think those bozos are good!" I shrugged my shoulders.

"Did you ever hear the Alcatraz lullaby?" I asked him.

"What d'you mean?" Mark questioned. With a laugh I started to hum:

"Ashes to ashes and dust to dust,
Show me a racket that the G-men
can't bust."

We both laughed at that. "But they'll never get their paws on this baby," he said. "I'm gonna make my pile and quit. And I ain't gonna quit with my boots on." With this prophecy, he led the way back upstairs.

I left Mark with my head swimming. We guys thought that we were big potatoes. Compared to Mark we were a bunch of penny grabbers. That was the last time I ever laid eyes on Mark Mantell. But I got the

story from a few guys here and there, and from what I myself know, it's the McCoy.

It seems that Mark had a hell of a lot of what it takes. I mean he had a flair for big things. He had supplied the rebels with the machine-guns for the revolution. For that piece of business he got a swell piece of coin. Then he got himself jammed up with a mob of bank robbers.

In a small town in the Middle West, a mob armed with machine-guns raided a bank, killed a teller and escaped with about ten grand in cash. The sheriff of the burg was a hard-riding, hard-shooting officer. It seems that he winged one of the mobsters that were carrying one of the machine-guns. The mug dropped the rod and it was picked up after the stickup. The G-men were put on the case.

THE gun was sent to Washington. When the G-men learned that the gun was one that was supposedly put out of commission they put two and two together and figured that some red-hot in the underworld had found a way to put them back in shape.

The rub was that they couldn't rap the mug that had sold them in the first place. He was covered. Mark had bought the guns from the Government. While an inquiry got started, the G-men did things in their own way.

It was a long time, though, before they put the finger on Mark Mantell as the man that had the clearing house for the guns. Their hunt took them all over the land. A gun would turn up in Frisco; the next time the G-men found another, it would be in New York. They were getting no place fast.

One of the G-men that was hot at disguise was ordered to pose as an underworld man that had just done a stretch in the Federal pogy. He looked the part to perfection. He mingled with mobsters that were most likely to use a chopper. As the underworld rats are a cagey bunch, it took him a long time to get where he wanted.

Finally he let it be known that he was in the market for a machine-gun. He explained that he didn't want a Thompson or any other portable machine-gun. He wanted a war-time Browning.

This go-between introduced the G-man to one of Mark Mantell's men. He told him what was what. Somehow or other the mob found out that this pseudo-gangster was really a Federal bull. They thought that the go-between was trying to put the finger on them. He got patted in the puss with a spade.

Mark Mantell was riding high, wide, and handsome. There was another revolution coming off in Honduras and Mark had got an order for the artillery. He figured that the G-heat just wasn't what the papers said it was. He was like Old Man River—he just kept rolling along.

He was ready to ship the load of guns when the G-men closed in on two of his men. Mark postponed the shipment, lay low, and waited to see if the mugs were going to spill the beans. I guess that he had a bad few months while he was waiting for the trial of his henchmen.

Finally the trial was over. The mugs took a stiff jolt in the pen. But they held to the code and never opened their yaps. Mark then shipped the load of machine-guns. And once more, the G-men took up a cold trail.

Over the grapevine it was rumored that Mark was going in for the biggest thing in his career. He was going to supply the rods for a bunch of patriots—but only on one condition.

When I heard I laughed till the tears damn near rolled down the back of my neck. Mark Mantell, the kid from the slums, wanted to be the president of some spiggoty nation! That was his price for running the guns. As I remember it now, that guy always had liked to read about Garibaldi and Simon Bolivar. I guess that he must have gone rat-traps reading about them.

The guy that was in the driver's seat of the two-by-four republic was

what the history mugs call a tyrant. Mantell told them that he was a man of justice. Yeah! He wanted to free them from the yoke. He was the man that they needed for head man.

While all this was going on the G-men were still on the job. The trail was getting warm. Mugs were being pinched right and left. G-men circulated in the underworld gathering information here and there. They sifted the info and, like all roads lead to Rome, all leads pointed to Mark Mantell.

It was just before the guns were due to be loaded on the tramp steamer that the G-boys gave Mantell the works.

He was in the machine shop of the joint, supervising the final shipment, when the G-men started to batter their way in. If the ammunition that Mark had, hadn't been cased up ready for shipment the story might have had another ending.

The G-men were hammering at the door; pandemonium reigned within the gun-runner's den. I guess Mark saw his dream of empire crashing around his ears. The G-boys busted

the door down in the nick of time. A mug was bending over one of the guns frantically trying to feed a beltful of bullets to a machine-gun; another man stood with an ax in his hand. He had used it to smash one of the ammunition boxes.

BEFORE the mugs had a chance, the G-men got to them. When the smoke of battle had cleared, three of the mugs were stiffs. But in the heat of the fight the big boy had flown the coop. Mark Mantell was not to be found.

It is said that there was another secret passage that was known only to Mark himself. Yes—in the underworld, it's every man for himself; and the G-men take the hindmost! They usually do, at that.

No one ever saw Mantell after that. He, like his racket, became a thing of the past. I thought to myself that it was a good thing that I never tied in with him. I hummed to myself a snatch of the Alcatraz Blues:

"Ashes to ashes and dust to dust,
If the mob don't get you—the G-men
must."

●
IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

MURDER MERCHANTS

Exposing the Drug Racket

By **FRANKIE LEWIS**

Ex-Racketeer and Former Public Enemy

College Humor

15
CENTS

THE BEST COMEDY IN AMERICA

FICTION • SATIRE • CARTOONS

ON SALE EVERYWHERE!

The Black Chamber

How to Solve Secret Ciphers Told by a
World Famous Cryptographer

By M. K. DIRIGO

IN the past few months we have devoted ourselves exclusively to the subject of **VOWEL SPOTTING**. We have demonstrated with cryptograms prepared at random how simple it was to spot those letters which had been substituted for vowels, and others for consonants, and although this did not disclose the exact identity of the vowel or consonant, it did give enough of a clue to successfully decode the enciphered messages.

Now we are ready to determine more definitely the letter itself. Letters fall into various classes and have their own peculiar characteristics.

You know, for example, that the letter E is by far the most frequently used letter in our language, so that if in a given cipher, say that the letter X has been used more than any other letter, you at once suspect that X was substituted for E. That is the characteristic of the letter E—its high frequency.

Besides frequencies, letters may also be spotted by their consistent occurrence in certain positions in words. You would not, for example, look for the letter Q at the end of a word. Words do not end in Q.

LETTERS ARE LIKE PEOPLE

Most of us know that the letter I occurs very frequently in the antepenultimate position, that is, third from the end. This is due to the great number of words ending in three-letter suffixes beginning with I, as: INE, ISE, ITE, IVE, IZE, ISH, IAN, ION, IES, ING, IST, etc. So that if the letter R, for example, appears very often in this position in several words of a cryptogram, you would suspect it of being I.

In this respect letters are very much like people. Different people make their homes in different places. If you desired to locate an Eskimo you would probably look for one in Alaska, and although you might also find other classes there, yet the Eskimos would predominate. In the same way, although you know many words having various letters in the antepenultimate position, yet the letter I predominates.

Similarly, some letters appear together more than others. The combination TH, for instance, is the highest frequency digram. That is to say, that TH appears with much higher frequency than any other

sequence of two letters you can think of.

And so on, you will find that different letters or combinations of letters have their own individual characteristics. These may be determined by their general frequency; frequency of digrams; of reversed digrams; of vowel digrams; of occurrence as initial letter; of final letter; of initial and final digrams; of prefixes and suffixes, etc.

A WORD OF ADVICE

In the next few issues we will publish these various frequency tables and will also point out the important characteristics of all the letters in the alphabet. In order to have all the information on **FREQUENCIES** in compact form, also for the benefit of newcomers to the **BLACK CHAMBER**, who missed the January instalment, we will repeat the **GENERAL FREQUENCY TABLE**.

Now, one word of advice before we begin with the **TABLES**.

Do not expect that all cryptograms will respond to these various frequencies all the time. It is a comparatively simple matter to construct a cryptogram with deceiving letter frequencies. You might, for example, write a message in code and employ one of the low frequency letters as G or B or K to such a great extent that it might confuse with the high frequency letters. This would tend to "fool" the solver.

But this can only be done just to a certain extent and no further. Especially is this true in short messages. But remember that even though it is possible for a clever constructor to deceive you with a few letter frequencies, yet it is impossible to carry this deception to all the letter characteristics.

LIPOGRAMS

The rules of the language must be observed. Vowels and consonants must appear at certain intervals and letters must follow along in a progressively characteristic manner. For example, you cannot start a word with **THR** and continue with **S** or **G** or **X**. The next letter **MUST** be a vowel. So that natural word construction always checkmates the efforts of the tricky encoder.

However, it is possible to write a long

CRYPTOGRAM No. 17

ZKDW ZRUGV PDB EH SURQRXQFHG
 TXLFNHU DQG VKRUWHU EB DGGLQJ
 VBOODEOHV WR WKHP?

Does that question mark "tip off" the first word?
 Solve the cryptogram and TRY to answer the conundrum.

CRYPTOGRAM No. 18

UFYR GQ RFYR UFGAF LM KYL UGQFCQ
 RM FYTC WCR LM KYL UMSJB UGQF
 RM JMQC?

Again a question mark! And again a conundrum.

TRY THOSE TWO NEW ONES—AND MAIL IN YOUR SOLUTION!

message omitting entirely the use of certain high frequency letters as E or T or S or any other. Such constructions are called **LIPOGRAMS**.

An important observation of word construction is that most words begin with consonants. By actual count, there are over five times as many words beginning with consonants as with vowels. That is the reason why vowels appear so frequently in second position, since the initial consonant is usually followed by a vowel.

And now for the tables:

GENERAL FREQUENCY TABLE

HIGH FREQUENCY—	E T A O N I S H R
MEDIUM "	—D L U C F M P Y W
LOW "	—G B V K J X Q Z

The **VOWELS**, A E I O U Y represent about 40% of a given text; the **HIGH FREQUENCY CONSONANTS** T N S H R, about 35%; and the **LOW FREQUENCY CONSONANTS**, V K J Q X Z less than 2%. The nine high-frequency letters make up about 70% of any English text.

FREQUENCY OF INITIAL LETTERS:
 T A O S H I W C B P F D M R E
 Y N L U G V K J Q Z X

FREQUENCY OF FINAL LETTERS:
 E S T D N R O Y F L G H M W K
 P A C X B U I J Q V Z

DIGRAPHS:
 TH, ER, ON, AN, RE, HE, IN, ED,
 ND, HA.

TRIGRAPHS:
 THE, AND, THA, ENT, ION, TIO,
 FOR, NDE, HAS, NCE.

REVERSED DIGRAMS:
 ER, TI, ES, EN, OR, ET, AT, ED,
 OF, AR, IS.

VOWEL DIGRAMS:
 EA, OU, IO, EE, EI, OO, IE, IA

INITIAL DIGRAMS:

RE, CO, PR, BE, IN, DE, PE, BU,
 MA.

FINAL DIGRAMS:

ED, ON, NG, ER, NT, ES, RE, AL,
 LY

FINAL TRIGRAMS:

ING, ION, ERS, ENT, TED, ESS,
 RED, NCE.

FREQUENCY OF DOUBLE LETTERS:

EE, OO, FF, LL, SS, TT, MM

WORD FREQUENCIES

The late Professor Godfrey Dewey, internationally recognized as the Dean of cryptographers, analyzed all the words in a book containing over 100,000 words, with the following result:

There were 10,161 **DIFFERENT** words;
 10 words were used 26,677 times;
 100 words were used 54,303 times;
 1000 words were used 78,336 times.

The ten words most used were, in their order of frequency:

THE, OF, AND, TO, A, IN, THAT,
 IT, IS, I.

FREQUENCY OF DOUBLE LETTER ENDINGS:

LL, EE, SS, DD, RR, NN, OO, GG.

FREQUENCY OF SPOKEN WORDS:

Telephone companies have made an exhaustive study and analysis of words used in telephone conversations and have published a list of fifty words most used. Following is part of this list in order of frequency:

I, YOU, THE, A, ON, TO, THAT,
 IT, IS, AND, GET, WILL, OF, IN.

Notice that this includes all the ten words appearing as highest frequency in Prof. Dewey's list.

FREQUENCY LISTS IN GENERAL

In addition to making use of these

various tables for solutions in general, there are still other frequency tables which offer even more definite information, i. e., identifying letters by their occurrence in different word lengths and in different indexes of pattern words.

For example, suppose you were trying to decode the word GGLRG. That is a five-letter word under index 125. Referring to this index you find that E is the ONLY letter in this entire pattern which will substitute for the three Gs.

In the same word length you will find that E NEVER appears as an initial in indexes 25 or 45. The letter O is the ONLY repeated letter in index 124 of six-letter words. And so you will find that letters have SPECIAL characteristics according to the length of the word.

All these tables will be published in this department under their different word lengths.

SOLUTIONS

The solution to cryptogram No. 14 appeared last month. The second part of the solution, however, was not given, which called for the name of a famous G-MAN hidden in the message. Most of the readers solved the cryptogram, but were baffled by the second part. Yet it was very simple. All you had to do was to arrange the substituted letters taken from the solution, in alphabetical order, and superimpose above it the respective substituted letters of the cryptogram. The answer would then stare you in the face. Here it is:

D A N F O W L E R B C G H I
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N

J K M P Q S T U V X Y Z
O P Q R S T U V W Z Y X

Cryptogram No. 15 showed a very good response. The solution, which was very easy on account of the two and three-letter words, follows:

MAKE ONE WORD OUT OF THE TWO WORDS "NEW DOOR" WITHOUT ADDING OR SUBTRACTING ANY LETTERS.

The answer to this is of course "ONE WORD."

Cryptogram No. 16 offered very little resistance. The solution, which also called for a hidden City in the United States, follows:

WHEN IT WAS TIME FOR THE MEETING TO BE CALLED ALL ASSEMBLED IN THE HALL.

The City is Dallas, as italicized.

LIST OF CORRECT SOLVERS

CRYPTOGRAM NUMBERS EIGHT AND NINE
K. S., Chicago, Ill.; P. S. MacArthur, Cleveland, Ohio; Adam Janis, New York City; Isidor Flack, Bronx, New York; Richard M. Smith, Tallahassee, Florida; Steve Slahor, Trascow, Penna.; Y. M., Reyna, Syracuse, N. Y.; Albert Easingwood, Clinton, N. Y.; Harry Reynolds, Woodside, L. I., N. Y.

LIST OF FOUR-LETTER PATTERN WORDS

INDEX 13 (Continued)

First and Third Letters Alike

DADE	EMEW	GAGL	ITIS	LULE
DADO	EREB	GAGS	IVIN	—
DADS	EVEA	GIGD	IXIA	—
DEDO	EVEN	GIGE	IYIM	—
DI DL	EVER	GIGL	—	—
DI DO	EVES	GIGS	—	—
DUDE	EVET	GOGL	JEJU	—
DUDS	EWER	GUGS	—	—
—	EWES	—	—	—
—	EYED	—	—	—
EBED	EYER	HAHR	KAKI	—
EBEH	EYES	—	KIKU	—
EBER	EYET	—	KUKA	—
EBEZ	EZEL	IBID	KYKE	—
EDEN	EZEM	IBIS	—	—
EDER	EZER	IDIC	LALO	—
EDES	—	IFIL	LELY	—
ECER	—	IMID	LILE	—
EKED	FIFE	IMIN	LILT	—
EKER	—	INIA	LILY	—
ELEA	—	IPIL	LOLA	—
EMER	GAGD	IRID	LOLD	—
EMEU	GAGE	IRIS	LULD	—

Martin J. Moore, Brooklyn, New York; H. W. C., Guthrie, Oklahoma; Hazel Culliton, Rochester, N. Y.; A. D. Tartaglia, M. & M. T. Co., U.S.A.; O. D. Williamson, Chicago, Ill.; Joseph Eule, Newark, N. J.; Rudolph Jarosh, Cleveland, Ohio; Bernard P. Wohlfart, Newark, N. J.; G. D. Hicks, Erwin, Tenn.; Michael Coe, New Haven, Conn.; Howard Spencer, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Joe Francisco, Chicago, Illinois.

James Watts, Seven Pleasant Avenue, Houlton, Maine; J. P. Hayden, New York City; Norman Frewin, Brooklyn, New York; Mrs. G. W. Hunt, St. Paul, Minn.; Alexander Prejsnar, New Bedford, Mass.; Joseph H. Ross, South Berwick, Maine; E. H. Gruber, The News, 220 East 42nd Street, New York City; Walter Raynes, Rutland, Vermont; A. S. Bratcher, Murray, Kentucky; Robert P. Biggs, Memphis, Tenn.

Harold Sherman, Newburgh, N. Y.; A. Powell, Troy, New York; Robert Christian, Meriden, Conn.; Ralph B. McEwen, New Bedford, Mass.; Harry J. Stain, Dearborn, Michigan; W. S. Kearns, Jr., Woodhaven, L. I., N. Y.; William Shaffer, Union Village, Woonsocket, R. I.; E. Robert Haag, Louisville, Ky.

Paul A. Napier, Washington, D. C.; Jerome Hager, New York City; John Hannan, Newburgh, N. Y.; Ted Kulinski, Chicago, Ill.; Elton M. Weatherbee, Worcester, Mass.; Number 1299, San Francisco, California.

CRYPTOGRAM NUMBERS TEN AND ELEVEN:

F. A. Ametrano, U.S.S. Holland, P.M. San Diego, California.

(Concluded on page 123)

Hogan Learns Not to Frame a Phony

DEATH ALIBI

By DONALD BAYNE HOBART

Author of "Hunchback House," "Clue of the Leather Noose," etc.



SPADES" HOGAN made his way toward the washroom at the end of the Pullman. Last call for dinner had just sounded and the car was empty. As he reached the washroom door, he spied a slender, dark-haired man in his shirt sleeves reaching for a towel as he stood in front of one of the basins.

Hogan snatched an automatic from his shoulder holster. Before the man could turn, Hogan brought its butt crashing down. The man crumpled, dropped to the floor.

"Wise guy, huh?" snarled Hogan. "Figured I wouldn't spot a G-man even when he was tailing me."

For an instant Spades Hogan, big-shot racketeer, glared down at the unconscious form. He had recognized Sam Wilson when the G-man had taken the chair across from him in the parlor car. Ever since the train had left Grand Central, Hogan had been sure that Wilson was keeping him under observation—and it worried him, made him nervous. Things had been growing too hot for Hogan, and he had decided to get away from New York for awhile. The big town was giving him the jitters.

He was sure that Wilson had the lowdown on the Decker snatch. Hogan's boys had been careless on that job. Someone had spotted them tossing the old millionaire's body on the lawn of his residence after collecting the ransom money. Hogan was positive Wilson had connected him with the kidnaping and was tailing him on that account. His first sight of the G-

man had thrown him into a panic. "Maybe he ain't talked yet," murmured Hogan. "So I better get rid of him."

The gangster slipped on a pair of thin grey gloves. Then he opened the nearest window. The cold air blew in against his face as the train tore through the night. He sputtered as the wind blew the train soot into his face.

Hastily he picked up the limp form of the G-man. He thrust Wilson out through the window, feet first. The body hurtled down the embankment.

Hogan hurriedly closed the window. He was trembling—they burned guys for killing a Fed. He glanced in the mirror above the basins and saw that his face was black from the soot. He removed his gloves and washed quickly. As he finished drying his face and hands on a clean towel, he glanced about the washroom. Wilson's ticket was lying on the floor; evidently it had dropped out of his pocket when he fell. Hogan thrust it into his pocket. They wouldn't look for Wilson right away if they found his ticket at his seat.

With a grin Hogan started for the door. He glanced back, cursed as he spied Wilson's coat hanging on a hook beside one of the basins. He returned to get it, then changed his mind as a grey-haired, thick-set man entered. The man sat down on one of the seats at the end of the washroom-smoker. He stuck a black cigar in his mouth.

"We're certainly making good time," he remarked. "Going far?"

Hogan hesitated only a second. He decided there was nothing to be gained by being surly. The heavy-set man might suspect that there was something wrong. The thought made him

nervous. He could still see Wilson's body hurtling through the air.

"Chicago," Hogan said in answer to the other man's question.

"It's a great city." The heavy-set man was fumbling through his pockets. "My home town. Fred Patterson is my name; maybe you've heard of me?"

"No, can't say I have." Hogan started toward the door.

"Just a minute," called Patterson.

Hogan whirled stiffly, alert but cautious.

"Yeah, what?" he snapped.

"Got a match?"

"Oh, sure," Hogan handed the other man a pack of matches. "Keep 'em."

"Thanks," said Patterson as the gangster went out the door.

Hogan found the Pullman still empty. Wilson's soft hat and overcoat were in the rack above his chair. Hogan drew the G-man's ticket from his pocket and stuck it in the back of Wilson's chair.

A moment later Hogan was apparently engrossed in a magazine. Gradually the other passengers returned from the dining car. The head conductor appeared, followed by the conductor who collected the tickets. Hogan listened as the two men paused at the seat across the aisle.

"Seat seven," said the Pullman conductor, glancing at the strip of paper stuck in the window. "Here's his ticket, but I don't see his Pullman reservation."

"He's probably in the washroom," remarked the other conductor. "Better pick up both tickets on the way back."

Hogan waited tensely as the two men went on along the aisle. It seemed to the gang leader that they wasted hours collecting the rest of the tickets; yet he dreaded the moment when they reached the washroom. He was sure they would find Wilson's coat and suspect that something was wrong. Why hadn't he thought of the Pullman reservation, too? That was probably in the G-man's coat.

Patterson appeared from the washroom. He paused and said something to the Pullman conductor. The train

official appeared surprised. Patterson was staring in the direction of Hogan, and the conductor turned and glanced back through the car.

As Hogan watched anxiously, the two men said a few more words and then the Pullman conductor left the car and Patterson went to his chair and seated himself. A few moments later the train came to a grinding stop at a station. It started again quickly and was once more speeding along.

Both conductors appeared. The Pullman conductor was holding a yellow telegraph blank in his hand. He went to Patterson and said something in a low tone. The thick-set man rose quickly to his feet and started back along the aisle toward Hogan.

The gangster clutched the automatic in the shoulder holster. That telegram could only mean one thing. Wilson's body had been discovered. They suspected him, Hogan was sure of that.

The three men glanced at him casually as they passed and went on along the aisle. They hadn't spotted him after all. He refused to turn and watch them. It was just his imagination, he had been jittery ever since he got on the train.

"All right, Hogan," said a low voice behind him. "Take your hand off that gun—I've got you covered."

Hogan glanced over his shoulder. Patterson was standing close behind him, and the thick-set man had his hand in his coat pocket.

"What's the idea?" demanded Hogan.

"We want to talk to you," said Patterson. "Come out in the vestibule."

Hogan got to his feet. He moved out into the vestibule with Patterson close behind him. The two conductors were also there.

"I'm a Government man," announced Patterson. "You're under arrest for the murder of Sam Wilson."

"Prove it," snapped Hogan.

"All right. You followed Wilson into the washroom, hit him with your gun, threw his body out of the window. The body was found along the track. There's dirt on the window sill, proving it was opened. You've got the same

(Concluded on page 128)

THE SCORPION'S STING



His fingers closed on thin air and he hurtled down into the black pit

Richard Wong, Chinese Man-Hunter, Faces Terrifying Death as He Pits Himself Against an Ingenious Opium Smuggling Ring and a Diabolical Killer!

By LEE FREDERICKS

Author of "Third Heaven," "Last Shakedown," etc.

RICHARD WONG seated himself beside his chief's desk at U. S. Secret Service Headquarters Number Two and pulled his cigarette case from his pocket. The local chief, Charles Durbano, looked up and then placed his papers down on the desk. For a moment there was silence; then Durbano spoke.

"What's the report?" he asked Wong.

Wong yawned and deliberately applied a match to his perfumed Turkish cigarette.

"Ying Mee Sze was murdered this morning," he said.

"So what?" Durbano countered impatiently.

"The Homicide Department of the City Police believe that the death was accidental. They think he was bitten by a poisonous insect. But I am sure he was murdered."

"Hand your information over to the Homicide Squad, if you think it'll do any good. We aren't interested in murder."

Wong puffed his cigarette.

"Possibly you will be interested when I tell you Sze was our connecting link with the recent opium smugglers," he said soberly. "I don't know how much is found out by the enemy camp, but I am certain they know we are on their trail, and so killed Ying Mee Sze."

Durbano bit at his cigar ferociously, then picked up the telephone. In a few seconds he was in touch with Police Headquarters.

"About that case in Chinatown this morning?" he barked. "What happened?"

His head drooped as it usually did when he was thinking. Durbano listened to the voice on the other end of the wire. When it ceased, he said, "Thanks," and hung up. He turned to Richard.

"You must have been using some of that poppy juice yourself," he remarked disgustedly. "Your man was killed by the bite of some poisonous insect which arrived in a shipment of Chinese drugs. The insect was found and killed."

WONG took another puff and blinked at the news, then his brow cleared.

"What kind of insect?" he asked.

"I don't see what that matters now. The man's dead."

"But it matters to me," Wong replied earnestly. "I have reason to believe the insect was a scorpion. Correct?"

"Right," Durbano agreed. "But I don't see what that has to do with—"

"No, of course, you don't," Wong interrupted with a smile. "But then you are not an Oriental. You see," he explained as he saw the frown on his superior's face, "My people are simple in their actions where you look

for them to be complex. Every crime committed by a Chinese has its mark of distinction. And this is no exception."

"I wish you'd stop talking in riddles and speak out," Durbano snorted. "What's this mixed-up business of scorpions, insects and opium? Sounds like a pipe dream to me."

"The answer is a simple one," Wong said seriously. "The detectives thought they killed an insect, but it was dead already. It was left there as a warning to Sze's associates in the band of smugglers—and also as a threat to me."

Wong drew a handkerchief out of his pocket and placed it on the desk.

"If you will have this analyzed," he said, "I think you will find traces of gum opium on it. I obtained this by wiping the shelf in the rear of Ying Mee Sze's premises."

Durbano took the handkerchief.

"Supposing you're right," he objected. "Sze was an apothecary and had a right to have a small quantity of gum opium about his premises."

"Yes, a small quantity," was Wong's answer. "But the analysis will show whether or not this was legal or smuggled opium. The German-processed legal opium is far different from the Yunnan product. If it proves to be Yunnan opium, it's smuggled."

"Get me a list of those hop joints," Durbano ordered. "I'll close 'em up."

"I am afraid that won't accomplish much," Wong reminded him. "The ring that imports this contraband to New York is large enough to open smoke parlors faster than you can close them. It is an easy matter for them to notify their clientele of a change in address, while it would take us months to uncover the new places. If we let them rest secure, we may close in on the big fellows."

"And in the meantime create new hopheads," Durbano frowned. "The idea doesn't go over so big with me. Besides, it may take a year for you to get the goods, and Washington is howling for results now."

Wong thought for a minute, care-
(Continued on page 114)



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(Continued from page 112)
fully tamped his cigarette out and rose to his feet.

"I think forty-eight hours will bring me close enough to our quarry that we may safely close in on the whole gang. If you need me in a hurry I can be located through Wo Hop's Palace of Gilded Chance." With his unhurried but rapid walk he was gone.

From Durbano's he went directly to Wo Hop's. The Chinese are inveterate gamblers, and Wong knew that somewhere in the place he would come in contact with the solution to the riddle—if he was able to discern it.

He greeted several of his countrymen on the way up the three flights of stairs that led to the club. The place was as crowded as he had ever seen it.

Slant-eyed Orientals were chancing their wagers, their businesses, and even their families in their frantic efforts to gain riches enough that they might go back to their native land and live in luxury for the rest of their lives.

WONG paid the engrossed gamblers no more than a passing glance. He strode directly over to Wo Hop, the proprietor.

"The dragon rests in deep sleep," he said by way of greeting.

Wo Hop looked up from the stack of chips.

"The eyes of the eagle are bright," he replied. "The dragon stirs to protect her own." His glance traveled past Wong to where a fat-faced Oriental had suddenly transferred his interest from the play to Wong.

"The scorpion's sting need not be fatal—if combatted by a man made wise in the ways of medicine," Wong said blandly. "The eagle finds that man was wise in dreams but not in medicine."

Wo Hop's eyes crinkled in appreciation. "The dragon is but a stupid earthbound creature to the all-seeing eyes of the eagle. He had best beware or his dreams will be rudely shattered."

Wong spoke warning. "Even now

the eagle plans to shatter those dreams until they be no more. When the dragon gives dreams to the children of the eagle, it is time for the eagle to prepare for battle."

"*Ai hilo.* So be it," Wo Hop agreed. "Dragon's dreams are not for eagles, and the eagle must protect its own."

Wong nodded his satisfaction. "And the scorpion shall sting no more," he said with a tone of finality.

"One need not leave the room to find the sting of poison," Wo Hop murmured. "The very air drips venom."

Wong bowed politely. He had the information he wanted, and his man was fingered. Surreptitiously he studied the fat-faced Oriental who had been so interested in his arrival. The man was new to Chinatown—from San Francisco, so gossip ran—but Wong thought it more likely that he was a case for the immigration authorities.

He was a tall man, evidently from North China. His rolls of fat spoke plainly of the high living to which he was accustomed, and yet he had no legitimate business. He was Wong's man.

To throw off suspicion Wong left soon after his conversation with Wo Hop. The Son of the Sun Café was directly across the street from the entrance to the Palace of Gilded Chance, and Wong sat in the café over a cup of tea, to await the fat Chinese's departure from Wo Hop's.

He waited nearly an hour before his patience was rewarded. Wong bent over his tea in case his man should look across the street. His quarry looked up and down, and then stepped out in a brisk stride up Mott Street.

When Wong was sure his man was well on his way, he jumped up from his table, flung down a coin and left. At the corner of Mott and Pell Streets he saw the fat Chinese get into a taxi. Wong grabbed the next cab and ordered it to follow the cab ahead.

Over Allen Street the two cabs traveled, and then east on Grand Street until they were within a few blocks of the river. The cab in front

pulled up suddenly, and Wong's vehicle went sliding past, but not too fast for Wong to get the number of the house the Chinese were entering.

QUICKLY Richard ordered his cabby to turn the first corner. Once around it where he couldn't be seen, Wong halted him and hopped out. He put the fare in the man's hand and ran back to the corner. The Chinese was disappearing into the doorway.

Wong pulled his gun and approached the house cautiously. He peered inside the tenement door before entering, but no trap was apparent.

With catlike footsteps he crept down the hall. Somewhere at the end of the passage he heard a door slam. He tried to keep the old floorboards from giving out their telltale creaks. These old-law tenements did funny things when you least expected them.

He arrived at the last door without mishap and stooped to the keyhole. In the room he could discern a light. Voices drifted through the door, one hoarse and guttural—either German or Scandinavian in its accent—the other Chinese in its inflection.

The German voice was raised in argument.

"So-o vat?" it demanded belligerently. "I take all der risks and you pay me next to noddings. Today they search mine boat like der fine teeth comb. Der schweat stand out on me for fear they find somdings. I vant more money or I pring no more ob der goots."

The Oriental laughed, a short harsh, metallic sound.

"Possibly you forget the matter of my drowned countrymen," he purred. "The family of Ling Po will not feel kindly toward an alien smuggler who tied their uncle in a sack and dropped him overboard. Would you make it necessary for me to tell them?"

The silence in the room was so heavy that Wong could almost feel it through the door. For a moment he thought there would be a fight, then
(Continued on page 116)

"I have REDUCED MY WAIST 8 INCHES WITH THE WEIL BELT"

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<p>"I suddenly realized that I had become a fat man". The boys kidded me about my big "paunch".</p>	<p>At parties I learned that I had become a "wall flower". Nobody wanted to dance with me.</p>	<p>In a bathing suit... I was immanse. The day I heard some children laugh at me I decided to get a Weil Belt.</p>
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(Continued from page 115)

the German exhaled breath sharply. "All right," he said in resigned tones. "Have der men by der tunnel just at nine o'clock."

"You are wise," the other voice murmured. "We will—"

Wong heard no further. Something hard pressed the small of his back. A voice behind him ordered:

"Stand to your feet, and lift your hands heavenward. Gun and all," it continued sharply as Wong sought to conceal his weapon in the palm of his hand. "Also keep your fingers away from the trigger or I will be compelled to kill you."

"To pull the trigger of your gun would bring the power of the government on your head," Wong tried a bluff. "My companions await the sound of the first shot."

"The sting of the scorpion makes no noise," his captor said grimly. "I would advise thee to hold thy tongue." For emphasis he shoved his gun into Wong's back again.

Richard followed orders and reached upward. There was no mistaking his captor's purposeful tone.

"That is better," he was reassured. "Now will you be so good as to tap three times on that door?"

Wong had no course but to obey. He tapped as instructed. For a moment all was silent inside the room and then a voice called, "Who wishes audience with the scorpion?"

"The keeper of the outer gate," Wong's captor replied.

Slowly the door swung open a crack, and Wong knew he was well looked over before it swung wide enough for them to enter. Wong was shoved into the room. Inside was the fat man he had seen at Wo Hop's.

WONG bowed with truly Oriental courtesy.

"I have the somewhat doubtful honor of meeting the Scorpion," he said with a smile that showed his teeth, "perhaps as Ying Mee Sze also met him."

The Chinese looked at him and smiled with his lips, a cold foreboding grimace.

"That, O son of the eagle, depends on your amiability to our agreement."

Wong's answering smile was that of a fox. "Then, there is an agreement?"

"It is possible," the other said. "It has been known for a jackal to mate with a wolf."

Wong bowed even lower. "Thank you for your courtesy, O son of jackals, but this wolf deals alone and when he must hunt in pack, he prefers to hunt with eagles."

The insult was obvious. The fat Chinese bared his lips over his teeth until he did indeed resemble the jackal.

"That, O man of brash tongue, shall cost you your life," he sneered mockingly.

Again Wong bowed serenely.

"The jackal is bold when he hunts in company with others." He took out one of his cigarettes and calmly lit it.

The smuggler's face turned livid green.

"Thy tongue is swollen for so small a man," he grated.

He cast a glance at his two confederates to see if they thought he was losing caste by the exchange of remarks. Wong could see the man struggling mentally to regain the advantage.

Suddenly the man turned to his followers.

"Put the dog in the pit where he belongs," he ordered. "We have work to do tonight." He spat at Wong. "I'll take care of you later."

The German grabbed Wong from behind while the two Chinese pulled the rug up from the floor. Wong watched them without show of resistance until he saw the outlines of a trapdoor.

As the Chinese pulled it up, he realized they must be planning to do away with him or imprison him in some subterranean vault or mouldy cellar.

His chances were better now. Carefully he estimated the distance between himself and the Scorpion.

Wong had been in tight jams be-

fore and he knew how to act without hesitation. Before the German suspected that he would try anything, Wong had wrenched himself free and hurled his full force at the Scorpion's legs. The Chinese grabbed wildly at the air, but didn't have a hope of keeping his balance.

Both men swirled to the floor in a mass of arms and legs, each seeking a hold that would put his antagonist out of the way. Wong was past master of *jiu jitsu* but it looked as though he had met his match for once.

He tried the devil's hand grip, grabbing the smuggler by the wrist and elbow, but when he exerted pressure he found that his opponent had countered by twisting his arm with pressure.

Wong's searching fingers flew to the smuggler's throat and he put the cross neck hold on with all his might. The Scorpion gasped as the hold cut off his wind. He flopped about the floor in a desperate attempt to gain his freedom, but Wong held his grip.

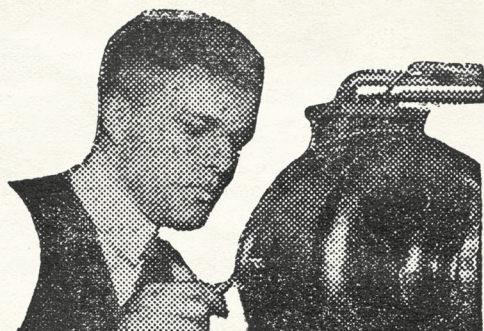
In the triumph of the moment Wong had completely forgotten the other men in the room. A sudden blow on the side of his head recalled them forcibly.

He tried to roll over so that the smuggler would catch the shock of the next blow, but he was too late. The club descended again. This time with such force that his hold was broken.

That was all the Scorpion needed. In a split second he had brought his knees up, throwing Wong from his body. He followed with a half roll of his body that sent Wong flat on his back, dazed and almost unconscious.

THROUGH the haze of pain Wong saw the German raise his boot and aim a kick at his ribs. Weakly but desperately Wong put out his arm and clung to the leg. He caught it raised for the blow. The German cursed luridly as Wong's weight tripped him and he stumbled to the floor.

Over and over they rolled, Wong
(Continued on page 118)



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(Continued from page 117)
 trying to protect himself, and the German seeking to free his leg so that he could finish what he had started. Wong felt his body balance on the edge of the pit that yawned where the two men had opened the trapdoor.

He clutched the German's coat, felt his weight swing over the rim. The coat ripped. With a hoarse moan Wong toppled over the side and down into the darkness below.

He threw out his hands, futilely trying to catch hold of something, anything. But his fingers closed on thin air. Down he hurtled until it seemed the pit was bottomless. Then he landed with a terrific thuck in soft oozy mud.

The jar of the landing brought him to sharply. Painfully he climbed to his knees and felt his way around his dark prison. Up above him he heard a sharp laugh, and then immediately the shaft of light was blotted out, leaving him in complete darkness. The smuggling gang had gotten him after all.

Mechanically he started to heave the ripped pocket, torn from the German's coat, onto the floor. A hard metallic substance in the cloth caught his attention. He explored it with his fingers and felt the object to be some sort of little box. He shoved it into his pocket for further examination—if he ever saw light again.

He had difficulty in regaining his feet in the slimy ooze, but he gradually worked his way over to a wall and steadied himself against it.

Standing up straightened out his thoughts as well as his physical being. He realized the floor of the prison was wet and slimy with ooze and water, but the walls were only damp. He verified his observation, feeling the wall from the floor up.

For about six inches from the ground it was wet. Then, as if an invisible line shut off the water, the wetness ceased and it became merely slightly moist.

Absent-mindedly Wong pulled his cigarettes from his pocket, and considered this discovery. As he opened

the case he recalled that his cigarettes were too wet for use. He uttered a few choice words of his own as he dumped out the sodden mass of tobacco, and continued his tour of inspection.

Slowly he groped along the wall, feeling each nook and crevice to discover where the water came in. At the end of half an hour he made the complete round of the walls without finding any opening.

Suddenly he realized that the water on the floor had deepened. Like a flash he knew where the water was coming from. The tide was rising.

He dropped to his knees and explored along the floor. He knew where he was now—evidently in one of the old abandoned slave chambers, relics of pre-Civil War days in New York.

Now it was clear to him how the smugglers got their opium into the city. This chamber evidently connected with the river under some dock. The smugglers could without risk drop the opium overside to a waiting rowboat under the pier, and from there shoot it through some old passage into a place several blocks from the river.

But that didn't help him now. The passage to his prison chamber had evidently been walled off in more recent years, so that it was closed off from the main tunnel. He didn't have a ghost of a chance to escape above. He'd have to find some way to get through the wall of brick and mortar.

AS he worked along the wall again he felt anxiously for a place where the water came in. On this second round his hand suddenly hit something cold and metallic. His features relaxed into a serene smile. He had come across an old slave manacle, rusted and thrown open on the floor.

Now, if he could find where the water seeped in, the open end of the manacle would make a tool with which he could pry out stones and mortar. It would also serve as an effective weapon if the smugglers returned and found him still there.

Finally satisfied that he had found

the place of the main seepage, he pried at the mortar around the stones. It was stiff, but years of dampness had taken the life out of the mixture. Hardly daring to hope, he attacked the joints where the mortar cemented the stones together.

He whistled softly through his teeth as small pieces of the stuff fell out. He remembered the words of the German that he had overheard before he was captured: "Meet me by der tunnel oudt at nine o'clock."

It had been past five when he was shoved into the pit. If he worked fast and had luck, the smugglers would find a surprise waiting for them at nine o'clock.

After the first hour time ceased to be for Wong. The work went slowly, and he felt his tool wearing down in his hands. Once, while he was working, the trap above was slipped open.

Quickly he dropped into the muck. His captors, evidently satisfied that he was unconscious, slammed the door shut again. After that he pursued his tedious labors without interruption.

It seemed an eternity before the first rock came loose, but his initial success spurred him on. Once he made a space in the wall, he could get leverage to pry more easily. One after another he worked the rocks in the wall loose.

Finally he felt the breath of dank air waft over his face like a breath from heaven. He was through, and the current of air proved that the passage on the other side led out into the open somewhere.

Wong worked like a fiend. By the time the hole was large enough for him to stick his head through, he was breathing in short gasping sobs. At last he could crawl through with snakelike wriggings into the passage.

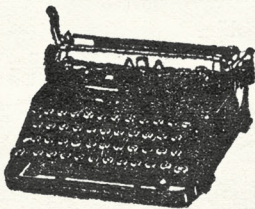
He wet his finger and held it up to see from which direction the air current was coming. The right side of his finger was cold and chill—that way lay the open and freedom. Swiftly he swung to the right and started off on a jog trot.

He thought of his cigarette lighter. Maybe it wasn't too damp to light.

(Continued on page 120)

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(Continued from page 119)

It wouldn't be much of a torch, but any light would help in this inky blackness. His fingers pushed aside the metal box he had taken from the German's torn pocket and pulled out his lighter.

After several unsuccessful tries the lighter finally sputtered into flame. Eagerly Wong opened the little metal box and looked at its contents in the flickering light.

His brow furrowed in a frown, and his hand went instinctively toward his empty cigarette case as he looked over the four little pellets set in grooves in the little box.

He picked one pellet out gingerly and examined it. It was shaped something like a small caliber bullet, and at one end it had a tiny sharp piece of steel.

After a second's consideration he shoved the thing back into its groove, snapped the box shut, and slipped it into its pocket. He knew now where the Scorpion got its sting.

VOICES! Suddenly Wong heard them coming from the direction over which he had come. He had to get out quickly or be trapped like a mole in its underground tunnel.

He took firm hold on the manacle. It was his only weapon, and he intended to make it count before they got him.

He rushed along the passage toward the breeze. He wanted to get away and bring men to make his arrests before the criminals took fright at the discovery of his escape. As he rounded an abrupt turn he saw a patch of bluish light ahead.

Night had come while he was imprisoned. Nine o'clock must be near. Wong realized that if he was going to do any capturing, it would have to be done now—by himself.

A shadow at the end of the tunnel warned him that the entrance was guarded. Quickly he rushed back where the tunnel made its abrupt turn. It was the only point from which he could launch a surprise attack.

For a second the oncoming voices

ceased. Wong held his breath, hoping that they hadn't discovered the hole through which he had made his departure from the prison chamber.

He was reassured as the talk resumed with no tone of excitement, and the sound came quickly nearer to him. Wong raised his manacle in air, and waited tensely for them to turn the corner.

Crash! He brought the manacle down on the head of the first man. "Lieber Gott," and a form thudded to the ground like a fallen ox.

Again he raised his weapon. The Chinese smuggler saw the motion and tried to duck—but too late. The manacle descended with a commanding crunch on the top of his skull.

In the first flush and excitement of his victory Wong raised the weapon again, but he had no need. The enemy remained felled.

From the first man's expression Wong knew he had been the German, but the second man, the Chinese? Was he the Scorpion, as Wong hoped, or merely the other man?

Wong turned his form over, passed the small lighter flame before it, and gave a soft sigh of disappointment. It was the other Chinese, the Scorpion's helper.

He had no choice but to leave the unconscious men and hope that they wouldn't recover before he had finished his task. He saw the shadow at the end of the tunnel stir. It was time he went after the guard.

On hurried catfeet he ran to the end of the tunnel and peered out. The shadow had gone, but about five feet from the tunnel sitting serenely in a rowboat was the Scorpion himself.

Wong had been right in figuring that the passage would come out at the river. But it didn't look as if it would do him much good. The Scorpion had spotted him almost as soon as Wong had recognized him.

The Scorpion raised his gun. Wong dove into the water. He never heard the explosion. He was well under the surface and headed toward the boat by the time the gun went off.

(Continued on page 124)

FEDERAL FLASHES

NEXT month, G-MEN features the sensational story of Dan Fowler's latest and greatest case, as set forth in the complete book-length novel, **BLOODY GOLD**.

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10-36 If already a member, check here

LETTERS FROM READERS

Here are excerpts from some readers' letters recently received:

G-MEN is one of the best magazines on the market. Among my favorite authors are Col. William T. Cowin, Edward Churchill and Frankie Lewis.—Geo. De Berry, Quitman, Miss.

Your stories and articles are all fine and I look forward to each succeeding issue eagerly.—Roy Russell, Winnipeg, Man., Can.

I am glad to become a member of your club because for the past 18 years, as constable and working for detective agencies, I have fought for good government and law enforcement.—O. P. Taylor, Cleveland, O.

I think Dan Fowler beats them all!—Robert C. King, Cranks, Ky.

Your magazine is the best I have ever read.—Eugene Biet, Denver, Colo.

The inscription upon your membership card tends to instill in one a genuine desire to uphold the law.—John Egan, Bronx, N. Y.

Among thousands of other letters recently received, those from the following were especially interesting:

John Giunta, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Jake G. Rios, Stanton, Cal.; Charlie Workman, Montreal, Que.; Walter Lanigan, Jersey City, N. J.; John H. Marks, Tupelo, Miss.; James Elkins, Canton, O.; William B. Bowman, Haddon Heights, N. J.; Kenneth Dale, Mifflinburg, Pa.; Earl De Young, Clinton, S. C.; Allen Teel, Wind Gap, Pa.; Don Blake, Painesville, O.; Eugene Kirby, Kansas City; Fred Frazier, Kingsport, Tenn., and Eli Leleic, Cleveland, O.

Thanks to all! Everybody—remember, I'd like to get a letter a month from each of you, packed with ideas, suggestions and comments. They help us in planning future issues of YOUR magazine—G-MEN!

—THE EDITOR.

THE BLACK CHAMBER

(Concluded from page 108)

CRYPTOGRAMS NUMBERS TWELVE AND THIRTEEN

Alex Prespnar, New Bedford, Mass.; William S. Kearns, Jr., Woodhaven, L. I., N. Y.; Mike Maslak, P. O. Box 414, Johnson City, New York; George Pope, Philadelphia, Pa.; Hazel Culliton, Rochester, New York; F. A. Ametrano, San Diego, California; Jesse A. Allen, Morristown, Pa.; Marshall Sayer, Medicine Lake, Montana.

CRYPTOGRAM NUMBER FOURTEEN

Jim Douglas, Lamar, Mo.; W. S. Kearns, Jr., Woodhaven, L. I., N. Y.; James Watts, Houlton, Maine; Ethel M. Masters, Portland, Maine.

CONVENTION OF PUZZLERS

The National Puzzlers' League and the American Cryptogram Association are having their annual convention in Boston, Mass., over Labor Day week-end, Sept. 5-7, at the Parker House. Foremost puzzlers and cryptographers of the United States and Canada are joining in a three day puzzle-istic jamboree.

Anyone who is interested in puzzles of any sort, and in cryptography, is invited. An elaborate program is being given by the Yankee Puzzlers, New England branch of the national organization. For full particulars write Everett M. Smith, Chairman of Committee, Box 205, Astor Station, Boston.

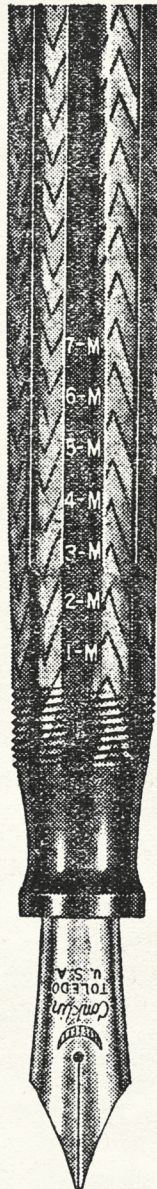
NOTE TO SOLVERS

Mail in your correct solutions of cryptograms 17 and 18, in this issue, to M. K. Dirigo, care of G-MEN, 22 West 48th St., New York City. A prize contest for cryptography fans will be announced shortly.

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THE SCORPION'S STING

(Continued from page 120)

Swimming under water he kept one hand out in front of him. He was making an heroic attempt to reach the boat without exposing himself as a target.

His fingers blunted against the keel. He felt the side of the boat, then shot his arm out and made a clutch for the gunwale. He caught it and gave a hearty yank that brought his body half out of water. He heard a surprised imprecation as the boat rocked, and a resounding splash as the fat Chinese was tipped into the river.

Wong had him before he could put up a fight. He encircled his neck, brought his head out of water, and let him have it with the manacle. He trolled the limp body of the Scorpion to the entrance of the tunnel and placed it alongside the other two men. The German was coming to, but another tap on the skull put him to sleep again.

THEN Wong went back for the boat. He hoped to find evidence there. It was drifting, but he caught it and climbed aboard. Hastily he looked it over for the cargo it should contain. But the boat was empty and there were no loose boards or compartments which could conceal anything.

Wong reached again for his vanished cigarettes, his brow wrinkled, and he let the air hiss softly through his teeth. He knew he might have seized the men too soon—before they had received their shipment. And in that case he could never get a conviction.

As he picked up the oars, he noticed a piece of string tied to a brace in the stern and trailing into the water. His brow smoothed, his eyes brightened.

The Scorpion and his men might be clever, but this was too old a trick to fool him. He seized the string and pulled on it. The first tug convinced him that he was right—the string was weighted.

(Continued on page 126)

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- A Tunnel Across the English Channel?
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- Outwitting the Plant Smugglers.
- Fishing for Oil.
- Poison Ivy and Its Treatment.
- Fame and Fortune from Sandwiches.
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- Song Birds for Food.
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22x4.75-20	2.60	.90	
22x4.00-19	2.25	1.05	
22x4.00-20	2.25	1.05	
22x4.25-17	2.90	1.10	
22x4.25-18	2.95	1.10	
22x4.25-19	2.95	1.10	
30x4.25-20	2.95	1.10	
31x4.25-21	2.75	1.10	
4.50-17	3.25	1.15	
22x4.50-18	2.35	1.15	
22x4.50-19	2.35	1.15	
4.00-17	3.40	1.15	
30x4.00-18	4.00	1.15	
31x4.00-19	4.00	1.15	
32x4.00-20	3.45	1.25	
32x4.00-21	2.65	1.25	
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32x4	2.95	.85	30x5	3.65	1.85
32x4	2.95	.85	32x5	3.75	1.45
32x4 1/2	3.35	1.15	32x5 1/2	3.95	1.55

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34x6	4.25	2.05			
36x6	5.95	2.75			
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32x4.00-20	4.45	1.95	32x4.00-20	5.95	2.65
32x4.00-20	5.95	2.65	32x4.00-20	6.45	2.65

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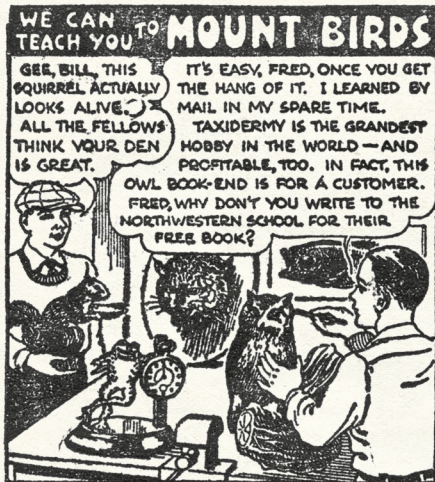
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(Continued from page 124)

Bit by bit he pulled it up, gently but firmly. He didn't want to run any chance of loosening its load. Finally he caught the glint of metal under water, scooped his hand down and seized the package.

There they were—at least a hundred one ounce tins of best grade Yunnan opium. Wong hauled them overside and put them in the bottom of the boat. He didn't even feel tired now.

Back in the tunnel he found his men still out. One by one he hefted them into the boat. The Chinese helper had been badly cut by the manacle and would require medical attention. The German was breathing heavily but regularly, and the Scorpion himself seemed to be having a peaceful little nap.

Slowly he rowed up river until he saw the lights of the harbor police station. He gave his men in charge and hurried to the telephone. In a few minutes he had Durbano at Headquarters.

“Your opium smuggling gang is at the foot of Market Slip,” he told his chief. “I got them with enough opium to supply the addicts in New York for six months. Would you come—”

His request was superfluous. Durbano was already on his way. He turned to the precinct captain.

“I'd call Police Headquarters, if I were you,” he drawled. “Tell them to send a man from the Homicide Squad. I think I have a little charge of murder against one of the prisoners.”

He reached for his cigarette case, then remembered. “A cig, please.”

He tapped it carefully and lit it as the captain questioned him.

“Murder?” the officer seemed puzzled. “I frisked the three of them, and all I got for it was nothing more dangerous than an air gun. What they wanted with that is beyond me.”

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"Is the Scorpion awake?" Wong asked.

"The which?"

"I'm sorry," Wong apologized. "The fat one, I mean."

"Yeah, he's come to," the captain told him. "He's the mug we got the gun from."

"Good," Wong puffed with satisfaction. "Bring him in."

IN a few minutes the prisoners were herded in. Before Wong could speak, the sound of a siren outside interrupted proceedings. Durbano came in with the homicide men at his heels.

"This," said Wong after he had garnered another smoke, "is the sting of the scorpion." He took one of the pellets from the little metal box and exhibited it.

As Durbano looked it over, he reminded him: "I said Ying Mee Sze was murdered, and now I'll prove I meant it."

He picked the air gun up from the desk and cocked it. "The officer has said the gun is harmless, but I think there should be a law against them."

He went on, holding the gun in one hand, the pellet in the other.

"This pellet is a rubber bullet. It contains a hypodermic needle loaded with scorpion venom. I searched Ying Mee Sze's premises for some such diabolic machine, but I didn't find it, because its inventor was more than diabolically clever.

"When this bullet strikes the victim, it injects its poison—then explodes, throwing itself several yards away and destroying evidence of its presence!"

He loaded the bullet into the gun.

"If one of you gentlemen will get me something soft to fire into," Wong told the police, "I will demonstrate."

One of the officers started out of the room for the shield to fire into, when the Scorpion unexpectedly leaped to the desk, and grabbed up the loaded gun. Before anyone could move, he pointed its muzzle toward himself, gave a horrible hissing laugh and pulled the trigger.

For a moment even Wong was

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spellbound, and the police stood aghast. They saw the features of the Scorpion freeze into a horrible mask of sardonic amusement. Then suddenly the expression was wiped off as if the slate were cleaned, and the man toppled to the floor.

"His god calls him to join his family," Wong murmured softly. "When the scorpion is cornered, the insect turns its tail on itself and commits suicide. He has lived up to his name."

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DEATH ALIBI

(Concluded from page 110)

type of dirt on your collar—but that's merely incidental."

"Yeah, what have you got on me?" demanded Hogan. "I didn't do it."

"You were in the washroom before, and you must have found Wilson's railroad ticket there and planted it at his seat," stated Patterson. "It wasn't there before. The conductor didn't touch it. Wilson's prints aren't on the ticket—he was wearing gloves when he bought it—I was with him. Even if there are other prints—you placed that ticket there, Hogan." The G-man smiled. "And if those fingerprints match the ones on that pack of matches you gave me, then heaven help you, Hogan."

"Damn you—" Hogan screamed in sudden hysteria. He grabbed for his gun. Had it drawn as Patterson fired. The bullet caught Hogan in the chest. He dropped to the floor of the vestibule.

"If he hadn't been guilty he wouldn't have put up a fight," remarked the G-man. "But what I don't understand is why he killed Wilson in the first place. We didn't have a thing on him. Wilson and I were both surprised when we spotted him on the train. We weren't interested in him—we were on our way to Chicago on another case!"

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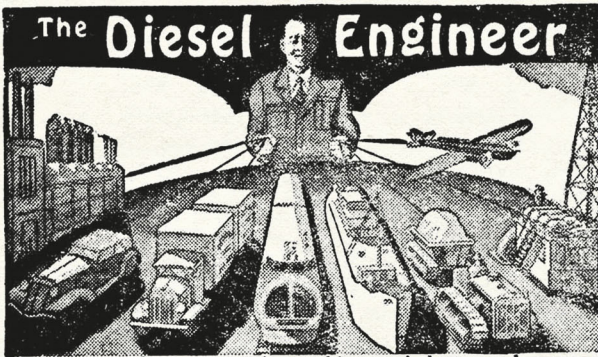
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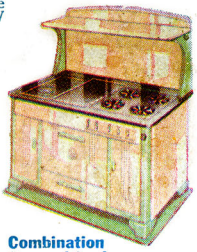
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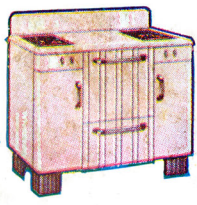
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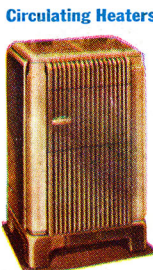
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