

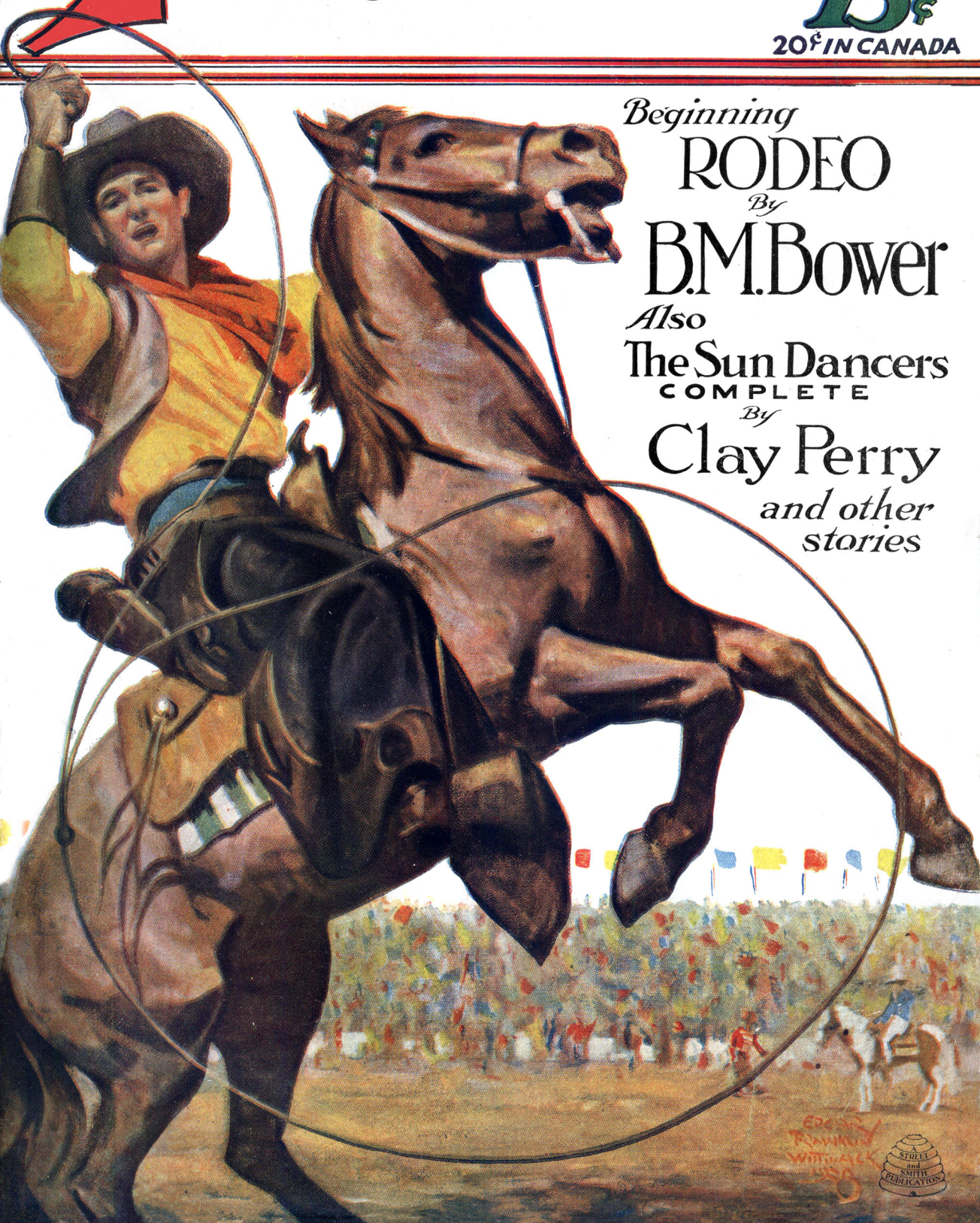
TWICE-A-MONTH

SEPT. 7, 1928

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*By*

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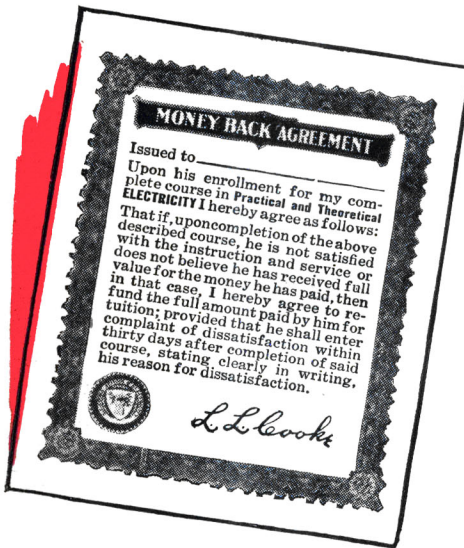
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Volume XCIII

Number 2

# The Popular

TWICE-A-MONTH

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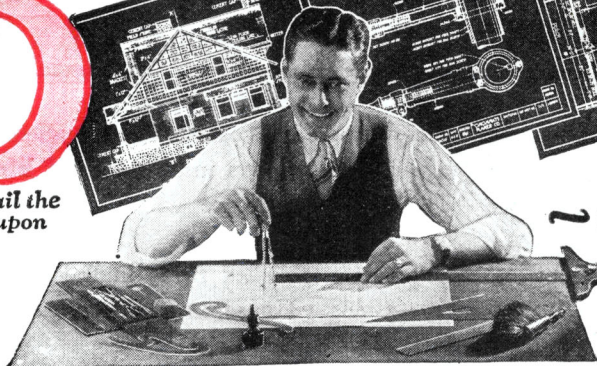
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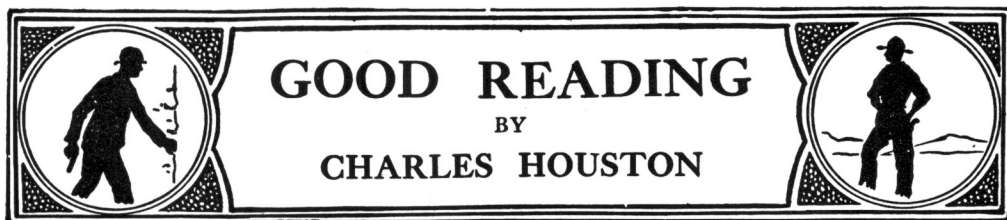
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Jim-twin had two gray horses, with a liking for pie, and he had two guns as well. These he took along with him what time he pinch-hit for his brother, who was laid up and unable to pursue the rustlers who were terrorizing the little Western community into which Jim-twin had come a-riding down.

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## GOOD READING—Continued

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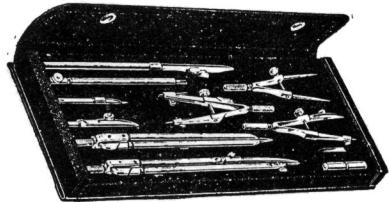
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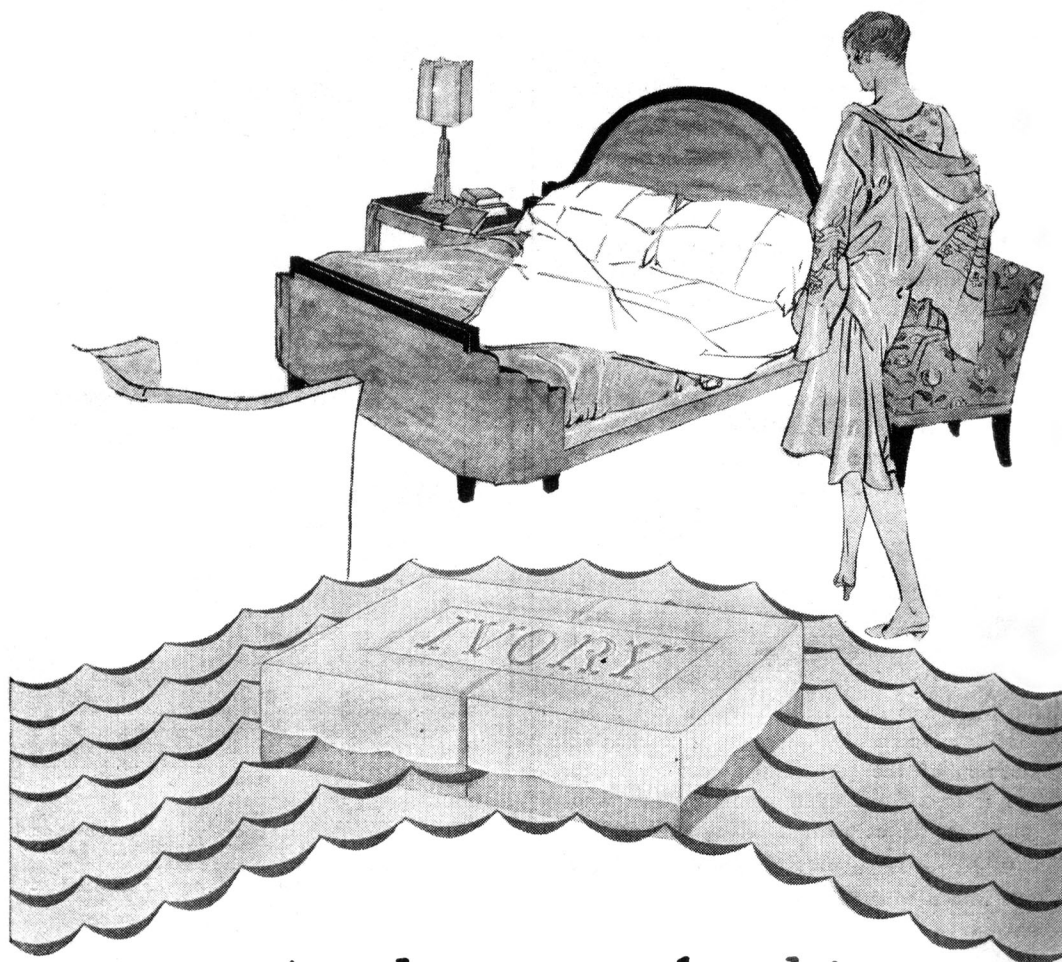
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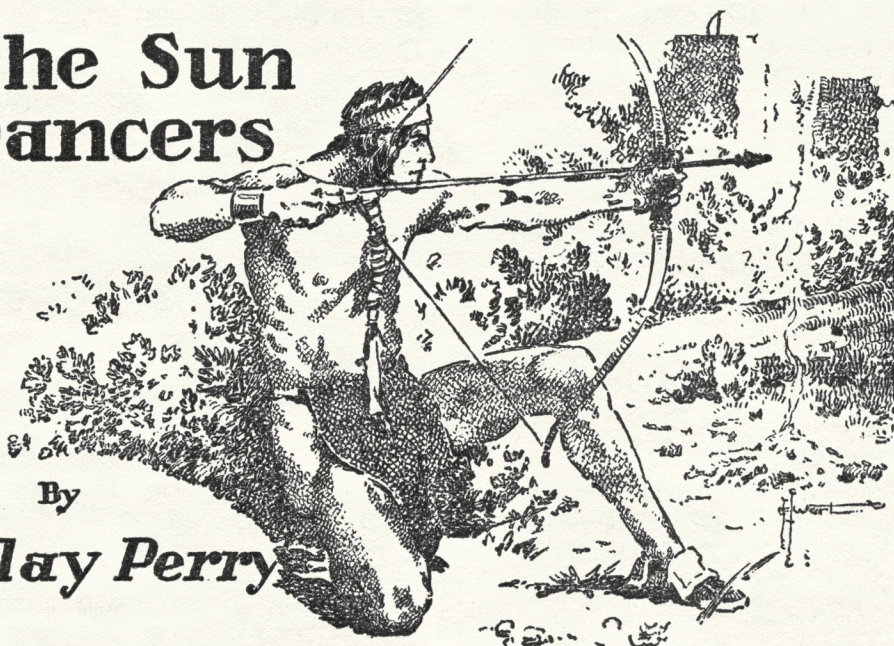
VOL. XCIII

SEPTEMBER 7, 1928

No. 2

## The Sun Dancers

By  
**Clay Perry**



*Author of "The Oxbow Jam," Etc.*

**In which two young people elope and take to the forests, where they join forces with a mysterious Indian missionary against the menace of the unsympathetic, unfeeling world.**

### A COMPLETE NOVEL

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE INDIAN ATTACK.

**C**LINT had found an excellent piece of ash for making a bow, a limb struck off a live tree by wind or lightning and left hanging in its lower branches long enough to season well. He was deeper in the thicket than he had realized, he discovered, when he turned to go back to the clearing where he had left Anne.

He shivered a little and coughed a little. He was beginning to feel the

chill of the shaded aisles of the woods. Out in the morning sun he had been warm enough, though he wore only a cotton shirt without sleeves, a pair of khaki shorts and sneakers on his bare feet. The tinge of pink on his splendid shoulders and legs, which had the symmetry of carven columns, the legs of a runner, showed where the sun had already begun its work on his body.

His head was uncovered, save by a flaring crown of thick, black, curly hair which emphasized the high forehead, deep eyes, aquiline nose and almost too



angular lines of his jaw. His body spoke of vigorous youth, his face of premature age or of illness. It was ravaged, but the healthy pink tinge had begun to appear there, too, with promise of restoration.

He walked lightly and with the roving eye of one who strove to see everything, as if he loved the forest. Flowers, moss, brown patches of pine needles, patterns of sunlight on the ground, all seemed to delight him. He breathed in the cool, scented air deeply, and his sensitive nostrils quivered to the perfume of pine and spruce and forest mold.

He had reached the thinning edge of the thicket and could see Anne, through the fringe of low brush, seated on the great log in the middle of the clearing, in the full glare of the sun, braving sunburn and freckles. Her face was upturned to the sun, her ruddy gold hair turned to pure gold by the brilliant, warm light which streamed down out of a clear, blue sky.

Anne seemed appropriate to the wild-wood scene, Clint thought—a dreaming dryad, outlined against the dark green of the grove of virgin spruce beyond her, its taller trees rising almost as high as the great gray cliff which closed off the north side of the tiny plateau—a dryad, or a priestess of Arcady, a sacred woman, offering a prayer to Phœbus, fiery god of the sky.

His appreciative, worshiping eyes were drawn suddenly from his divinity by a movement in the brush, at his right. He turned his head and gave a gasp of incredulous astonishment. It soon changed to alarm as he made out a figure, creeping on hands and knees from the edge of the cliff that plunged down into a deep valley at the west, and heading straight toward where the girl sat.

It was a figure of such barbaric appearance that Clint thought, for an instant, he was seeing a ghost. But it was

broad June daylight. It was real, but it was decked in all the trappings of an Indian on parade—leather and beads; fringed and painted jacket or war shirt, heavily overlaid with a blue-and-white-and-red design in beadwork; long, fringed leather trousers; moccasins entirely incrustated with beadwork; and the head tightly covered with something like a sleek, black skullcap, drawn down over the ears, as a final sinister touch to the bizarre costume. Long, muscular, bronzed arms, bare to the shoulders, a hawklike face, dark and set with a fierce expression, left no doubt that it was an Indian.

Clint stood motionless, as much from surprise as from caution. The apparition was so unexpected that had the figure not been moving through the bushes and stirring them, he might have believed it was a vision conjured up out of the storied past, when Mohawk braves threaded these forests, forded the streams, climbed the steep slopes and dropped down, as raiders, into the valleys on the eastern side of the Hoosacs. They made a trail so plain that traces of it are still pointed out to the tourists who motor over the broad highway which has perpetuated the old moccasin track with the name, Mohawk Trail.

The intruder moved swiftly, on hands and knees, seemingly intent on creeping toward Anne, as he screened himself behind the bushes. The screen would let him come opposite the log and the camp fire which smoked behind it.

Clint gripped the ashen limb he bore over his shoulder, but instead of swinging it as a club in his hands he shook his head and laid the cudgel softly down. He crouched like a sprinter on the mark or a linesman ready for the snap of the pigskin oval.

The direction in which the Indian was creeping would bring him within a few feet of Clint, who was now



screened behind a young evergreen. He was all set, and with the natural poise of an athlete, but with his teeth clamped tightly together, his nostrils fairly quivering and his thin face suddenly grim with an aspect of calculated vengeance.

In the clearing, the girl, all unconscious of what was going on fifty feet away from her, leaned back with her hands resting on the log on each side of her, and began to draw in deep, measured breaths of the rare air, her eyes closed against the sun. The latter had risen to be on a level, seemingly, with the lofty, round summit of Greylock, monarch of the jumble of surrounding mountains out of which its bulk seemed to grow, and as well of all the peaks and summits of the whole range. Now she locked her hands behind her head, stretched and yawned and then began to hum a little tune.

At that instant Clint launched himself in a headlong dive, arms outspread, body slanted forward and his toes digging into the earth in short, sharp jabbing strokes, like pistons. The Indian turned his head just in time to see the threat of a catapulting body descending upon him, and turned with his left arm flung up to fend off the attack.

His corded, long arm went out straight, heel of the palm outward—and Clint, even as he ducked under it, and with a flying tackle flung the Indian over, was conscious of something oddly familiar about the gesture—and about the arm.

It was the straight-arm defense of the man with the ball on the gridiron and it had been used with as instinctive and natural a movement as Clint's own crouch and spring. But it failed in its purpose, which was to catch the attacker's chin on the palm, because Clint's head went down too quickly; and the Indian rolled over with a grunt as Clint's weight smashed on his ribs. The two locked in straining, silent combat on the ground.

Clint fought silently because he did not wish Anne to be alarmed. The Indian fought silently—and like a wild cat in everything but sound—because he had to, and because it was his nature to make no outcry. He was a powerful fellow, tall, sinewy, tough, and although the sudden fierceness of the attack put him at a disadvantage, he writhed like an eel and managed to roll over, off his back and onto his side, where he faced Clint for an instant and got that palm heel where he had aimed it, forcing Clint's head back until the latter had to loosen his bone-cracking hug.

Anne sang because the sun made her happy.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TWISTED FOOT.

IT was a wrestling match, science and savagery combined. Not all the science and not all the savagery were on one side. Clint realized very soon that his knowledge of grips and throws was being met by the Indian's and that his fierce aggressiveness was being matched by the dusky fellow's desperate defense. The Indian glided out of a half nelson and flung Clint off with a lunge. But he seemed to stumble or trip as he got on one knee. Clint recovered quickly and flung himself with fresh fierceness upon him. He forced him backward and had the grim satisfaction of seeing the dark face convulse with pain, but an instant later he was again outplayed. The Indian seemed to coil up, then straighten out like a spring released, with a snap that gave him freedom.

Now he had Clint on his back and worked for a strangle hold. His sinewy forearm was against Clint's throat, something like a bar of iron, pressing against his left ear, tighter and tighter. Clint thrust upward with stiff fingers and buried them in the Indian's throat, then pulled the head down close to his own, arched his body from the feet to the shoulders and was on top.



The only sound was the thud and scrape of bodies on the soft ground, the whimper of white flesh against red, the whistle and snort of gasping breath. A partridge, drumming not far away, made more noise than they did.

Again Clint tried for the half nelson, but the Indian slipped away. He got to his feet, expecting the Indian would rise to meet him. Instead, the fellow flung himself from his knees at Clint, locked his arms about the white man's thighs and, with a heave, strove to fling Clint backward. But Clint dived forward and caught the Indian's left foot, kicked his own feet free and locked his knees under his antagonist's chin. He had a toe hold.

He began the terrible, twisting torque of heel and toe which ends many a prolonged match on the canvas when nothing else will do. He felt the Indian lung and thrash and roll, and he got a stinging kick in the cheek; but the Indian could not release himself—and Clint applied more force to the torture of twisting the foot.

The Indian struggled wildly, seeming to lose his head—for he might have got hold of Clint's foot, in similar fashion, and should have done so, in defense, applying torture against torture. Instead he only rolled and rocked violently, blindly—and still without a sound. And then Clint felt something snap, under his hands.

The Indian went limp as a rag, with a suddenness that testified to his absolute defeat.

"My Lord, I've broken his leg, I guess!" cried Clint, breathlessly, and in a whisper. "But what's this?"

The long, loose buckskin had slipped up as Clint raised the foot, and he discovered that the ankle of the Indian's left leg was bandaged tightly with a wide strip of soft deerskin. The leather was wet and had drawn so tight that its edge cut into the flesh, which was puffed out above it.

He extricated himself from his interlocked position and, while the Indian lay motionless, began to examine the ankle. His whole manner changed. His fierceness was replaced by sudden, intent interest. He rolled the trousers leg farther up, slipped off the tight moccasin, heavy with beads, and found that the leather bandage went about the instep, also.

He unwrapped it with swift, deft fingers; his brow crinkled with a frown, his eyes became a darker brown than natural, and as he traveled his finger tips all over the puffy flesh, he exclaimed:

"No wonder he went out! It was a bum ankle to begin with. No bones broken. Looks to me as if it must have been dislocated, and I snapped it back."

He turned the Indian's unconscious form over and looked down into his face. It was lean and very dark, with deep, wide eyes above sharp cheek bones, an ascetic face, though young. The black head covering—a knotted silk kerchief—had come off in the tussle and two braids of straight black hair were revealed, completing the perfect picture of an authentic Indian, in all the habiliments of tradition. There was not a touch of anything smacking of civilization about him. It was quite certain that he was no ghost. The marks of his hard, sinewy fingers were visible on Clint's flesh in several places.

Clint stole a glance through the bushes at Anne and saw that she still sat, obediently, in the sun, having shifted her position a little, but facing away from him. He took a deep breath, brushed his disheveled hair from his eyes with an earth-smudged hand, glanced swiftly about, smiled and muttered something about, "must have dropped from the sky." And then, startled by what seemed a flutter of the Indian's eyelids, he snatched up the deer-skin bandage which was almost four



feet long, turned the Indian on his face and began to bind his wrists together behind him.

He had tied the first knot, when he halted and stared down at a broad metal bracelet that clasped the Indian's right wrist. It was of dull material, like bronze, and it was carved with a design similar to the beadwork on his clothing, parallel lines with a zigzag between. There was blood on it. Clint's hand went reflectively to his ear and came away with blood on it. He grinned.

"That's what did it, eh? And say, I've seen that iron arm before, somewhere! Who the devil are you? Either you or your twin brother—but what in time are you doing all dolled up like a wild one? Doing the fakir act?"

He was muttering to himself as he squatted over his prostrate prisoner. He shook his head more than once, in a preoccupied manner, then finished tying the wrists, pausing several times to finger the bracelet, turning it about until he discovered that it was of one piece, with no hinge to open it, and apparently had been welded right on the arm, to stay.

His interest, however, shifted back to the ankle. He inspected it again.

"He couldn't walk on that foot," he decided. "He had to crawl on his hands and knees. Maybe I did him an injustice thinking he was sneaking up on Anne. Hum! What'll I do with you? Like to drop you over the edge where you seem to have come from and—Hello, what's this? War bag, too."

He picked up a deerskin bag shaped like a pouch, but much larger, pulled it open and looked in, then brought out of it, gingerly, a tightly rolled bundle of black and white and red which unrolled as he handled it and revealed itself, a gorgeous headdress made of leather, feathers, horsehair and bits of red flannel.

"A war bonnet, by Jove! Five coup feathers! And it's a Western type.

Sioux or some plains Indian. What in the name of Godfrey Greylock are you doing here?"

His question was abruptly followed, if not answered, by something that sent him hurriedly to work, completing his job of making his prisoner secure.

It was the sound of shouting voices, far to the east, and a cry from Anne.

Swiftly he rolled the Indian over against a stout sapling, to which he fastened the free ends of the buckskin bandage. He chucked the war bonnet back in the bag, flung it down, picked up his ashen limb and ran out into the clearing.

Anne was running toward him, wrapped in the blanket upon which she had been sitting.

"Clint, did you hear them?" she gasped, her blue eyes as dark as the tall-stemmed violets which decorated the grassy clearing. "Do you think they are after us?"

Before he could answer, she cried out, her eyes growing wider, as she regarded his smudged face and scratched arms, and the blood on his ear and neck.

"What has happened? Did you—meet them, Clint?"

"Oh, I took a little tumble," he declared. "Now, don't you be frightened. Nobody can get up here from that direction without my letting them. Probably it's only a bunch of hikers."

But his strained expression belied his attempt at reassurance.

"You said nobody ever climbed this side, Clint."

"Well, they never did, when I was a hiker," he qualified lamely. "But we're supposed to be in the Adirondacks, anyway. Nobody would dream of looking for us here."

"Unless they found your car, Clint. That's what I've been afraid of, all the time."

"I'll go take a look down over the ledge that hangs above the trail,"



said Clint. "If any one is trying to get up here, all I've got to do, as I told you, is roll a boulder down the dry bed of the brook where we came up and it will sound like a landslide. They're always afraid of 'em, since the face of Greylock slid off and almost buried Fort Massachusetts."

The girl, whose mobile face had been upturned to him every instant and whose expressive eyes had never left his face, clutched at his arm.

"Something has happened, Clint," she insisted. "Please don't try to hide things from me! I'll be more afraid if you do."

"Well—I've just captured an Indian," he blurted out, with a shaky laugh.

"An Indian!"

"Yep. And he looks wild—but the funny part of it is, Anne"—he scratched his head—"I've got a queer feeling that I fought him, some time, somewhere else. I can't make it out. It's uncanny—and he's uncanny, too. I'll show him to you, later. First thing I've got to do is go to the lookout and take a slant down the trail. You go back to the cave." There was an opening in the cliff not far from the log—evidently a cave.

"Clint, what did you do with the Indian?"

"Tied him up. And, anyway, he's out."

As he spoke he edged away from her, evidently more anxious to discover the meaning of the shouting voices than he cared to admit. He strode swiftly off, toward the eastern edge of the plateau.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE POSSE ON TRAIL.

**I**N a thicket of birches and poplars, marking the range of an old forest fire which had flashed up from the valley and swept hungrily through a part of the spruce forest, Clint rediscovered the trail by which he and Anne had

reached their lofty nest. It was, in reality, the rocky rubble of a once sizable stream which had cut down over the brink of a ledge and had leaped, in a succession of waterfalls, over giant stone steps, down, down, a distance of more than one hundred yards, into a gully, where there still flowed a small trickle of drainage water. The gully extended for half a mile eastward, growing deeper and widening out at last upon more level land, broken by benches and ledges, however, and so thickly wooded that it was a tangle.

A shoulder of rock ran above the gully on a level with the plateau, thrust out two hundred feet eastward, ending abruptly in an overhanging ledge of the same gray rock as the cliff which towered on the north side of the airy island on which they were camped. From this verge Clint could look down onto the benchland five hundred feet below.

Screening himself with the thick foliage of the small trees which clung to the sides of the stone spur, he crept on hands and knees to its outer point, and there lay down with his head thrust over, and studied the terrain below him. It was not long before he again caught the sound of voices. Out of that closed depth all sounds rose clearly to his ears. Even the burble of the little stream could be heard.

He waited, to catch a glimpse of the party which seemed to be thrashing its way upward from the bottom land. If they were heading for the plateau, they must pass almost directly beneath where he lay, and they must toil up the deep gully, then climb the steep, slippery bed of the old brook. He could stop them, easily, without revealing his presence to them, merely by rolling a boulder down the rocky stairway.

Half an hour passed, during which time the voices came nearer, but still not near enough for him to distinguish words. There seemed to be three men, perhaps more, and they appeared to be



working their way along each side of the stream, crossing and recrossing it in places where one side offered better trail than the other.

Because of the thick foliage, it was impossible to catch sight of them, at a distance. Clint was about to withdraw, remembering uneasily the unconscious Indian he had tethered to a sapling, when unexpectedly there appeared right below him a man in a slouch hat who evidently had been traveling alone, higher up the side of the benchland. He halted in a little clearing, climbed on a tall stump and seemed to be studying the lay of the land all about him. Finally he shouted to the others, and getting an answering hail, shouted back:

"No use goin' any farther up this way. That Indian didn't come this way, I tell you. He went round into the Hopper. We better go back to town and start over."

Clint gave an involuntary little grunt of relief and satisfaction.

"So, they're after my Indian!" he breathed. "Well, 'Slouch Hat,' you've got the right dope about where he went. He surely must have come up out of the Hopper, although I don't see how he could make it, with one foot out of commission."

There was some wordy objection from the others to whom the slouch-hatted individual had given advice, and Clint listened breathlessly, to try to catch their words. He thought he heard something about "on the trail," and "let 'em work it out." But the man below him, who seemed to be in authority, vigorously vetoed the suggestion and plunged down the benched slope, south-eastward.

There followed some sort of conference, down by the brook, and then what seemed a retreat. Clint rose and went rapidly back toward camp, satisfied that the searching party had given up the chase, in that direction at least, and congratulating himself that he was in

possession of some information with which to confront his captive.

Evidently the Indian was a wanted man. With a word, Clint might have ended the perplexity of the searchers. The idea had occurred to him, but he had discarded it instantly. There were several reasons for this. One was his desire to keep completely secret his residence here in the mountains; the other was the beginning of a feeling of sympathy for the hunted Indian, mingled with admiration for his vigorous defense, in a crippled condition.

He hurried back through the thicket, knowing that Anne would be anxious, and a little anxious himself whether his captive might have revived and made some sound to frighten her.

The moment that Clint stepped into the little clearing he sensed its emptiness. The fire had died down and there was not even a thread of smoke rising. The log, where Anne usually sat or reclined, was bare. He broke into a run, conquering a desire to cry out Anne's name, his eyes caught by a curious change in the blank face of the cliff. The cave mouth was hidden by branches of maple propped against the rock, the blanket which they used as a door, drawn down—and the fireplace was camouflaged, in the same manner, with grass sifted over the ashes. The crotched stakes, used to support the pole that held their kettle, had been pulled out and thrown away or hidden.

He rushed to the cave, hoping, against the deadly clutch of fear at his heart, that this had been Anne's work, as a precaution against possible intrusion of searchers. He called her name when he got inside. His own voice rang hollowly, in echo, for answer.

He snatched a flash light from its place under his pillow and snapped its light into the recesses of the roomy, lofty cavern. It was empty. Anne's blanket lay on her cot; her khaki wilderness outfit was gone.



In a panic he rushed out and ran toward the spot where he had left the Indian, unconscious and bound. His face went white and his blood seemed to turn to ice as he found that his captive had vanished, war bag and all.

## CHAPTER IV.

### FUGITIVES ALL!

CLINT reproached himself bitterly for having stayed so long on lookout, for having left Anne alone and unguarded, for having trusted to the knotted thong to hold that slippery, powerful Indian secure; but while his brain whirled in an agony of alarm, he sought for signs—and for a weapon.

The search revealed to him something that alarmed him even more. The ashen limb he had carried into camp, to make a bow, lay close beside the beech log, and it had been split from end to end—and his short-handled ax, that had been stuck in the log, was gone.

He snatched up the split limb as a cudgel and ran to the spot where he had left the Indian, to search for tracks, to try to read out the story of what had happened in his absence. It took him but a moment to find tracks. A small maple sapling, near the one to which his captive had been tied, had been cut off close to the base with two blows of the sharp ax, and then its sharp end chopped square and the branches trimmed. Deep holes in the earth testified that the Indian must have used it as a crutch to walk with. The holes led him back to the log, where he read another chapter in the swift history that had been made while he was away.

Anne had been there, and Anne had gone away with the Indian, who had swung himself away in long strides, the rude crutch thrusting deep, toward the thick spruces which screened the clearing entirely on the southwest. It was evident that the Indian had been in a tremendous hurry.

Clint's hands shook as he got on his hands and knees to follow the trail through the grass. It was with rising, terrible rage that he trembled now. He gripped his rude cudgel fiercely and dragged it along beside him. The sound of his own pulses seemed to be thundering in his ears. The implication of those tracks, Anne's little footprints beside those of the Indian's, was frightful. The Indian must have surprised her, overpowered her, forced her to go with him into the forest.

He knew now that the dusky fellow was a hunted man. His imagination pictured him a criminal—or perhaps a dangerous lunatic. Why else should he be wearing the elaborate costume which the Indians of the present time wore only for tribal ceremonies, on gala occasions? The beaded, fringed clothing was certainly not suited to traveling in these mountains. Even the most reasonable supposition concerning him was not reassuring—that the Indian belonged to some traveling show that had stopped in town, and he had committed some violent act which made him a fugitive.

Clint recalled the first glimpse he had had of the Indian, creeping on his hands and knees toward Anne, with seeming stealth and vicious purpose.

Anne's name burst from his lips in a sort of groan. He had kept silent, refraining from calling her, because he did not want to warn her captor—for that was how he had come to regard the red man, now.

He shook his head impatiently to banish the curious roaring in his ears, a phenomenon which he blamed entirely upon his agitation. But as he turned his head, momentarily, he became aware that the sound did not come from his pounding heart at all, but from an exterior cause.

It was a continuous, droning roar that came closer. It filled the whole sky and echoes began to rumble from the



distant mountainsides. He turned and looked back—then up, and recognized immediately the source of the sound.

It came from an airplane motor. High in the eastern sky the shining, glittering outline of a biplane showed, heading swiftly down toward the clearing. Its approach seemed ominous. Instinctively Clint diverged for cover. He had come to the edge of the spruce growth and he ducked under an outspreading limb and peered through, watching the swift descent of the plane, which slanted down from a great height, its engine popping as if throttled low.

It looked as if the ship were going to try a landing. Clint involuntarily shook his head. The plateau was too small for even the smallest airplane to land safely. It must either crash against the cliff, into the woods, or taxi over the edge of one of the precipitous depths. Yet the ship sailed lower and lower, and Clint was almost on the point of rushing out to wave a warning, when he saw a figure in the rear cockpit lean out, and with a pair of binoculars sweep the terrain right below, as if seeking closely for something—or somebody.

Was it for the Indian they were seeking with such care and at such danger and expense?

The question sent another shock of alarm through Clint. The fellow must be very much wanted if they would send a plane into these dangerous air pockets, seeking him.

The plane swooped down so close to the cliff and the tops of the trees that Clint gasped, before it straightened out and sailed, circling, south.

Almost instantly it disappeared. It seemed as if it had dropped into the valley, beyond the spruce grove, its engine powerless. Clint could hear no further sound. It was gone as completely and silently as if it had been an apparition. He stood up, peering into the grove, and then bent down, to resume his patient, careful trailing of the

crutch and footmarks. He was creeping forward, his head down, when he heard a call that brought him to his feet in one bound. It was Anne's voice, rising shrill and alarmed, calling him by name.

He whirled, shouting an answer—and saw Anne, running toward him, her arms outstretched, from the west side of the plateau, not far from where he had left the Indian after the fight.

They were soon in each other's arms, clinging to each other, murmuring questions and endearments, confusedly, Clint holding her tightly and searching her face. He found excitement and the expression of anxiety, but her smile, through her tears, quite reassured him.

"Where did you go? Where is the Indian? Did he—"

"We had to hide from the plane," she answered breathlessly. "He heard it, a long way off. *Clint, they are looking for us!*"

"Who? How do you know? You mean—your mother?"

She nodded, in answer to his first and his final question.

"It is in the newspapers. Your Indian told me."

"The Indian?"

Clint almost groaned this. Anne seemed to comprehend the reason for his emotion.

"Oh, you thought that he— Clint! I am so sorry! I—I should have thought of that when I untied him, but I didn't. I only felt sorry for him. He didn't ask me to do it," she hastened on. "I went over to look at him and—and what do you think your wild Indian did? He apologized to me for not rising! And in perfect English. I was so astonished I must have acted like a little ninny. But somehow I wasn't at all afraid of him. I untied his hands and then I went and got him the ax so he could make a crutch for himself. He couldn't walk."

She was so excited that she lost her



breath, and Clint broke in with the question which had been hanging on his lips:

"You say that he told you it is in the newspapers that your mother——"

"——is having the country searched high and low for me—and you, too, of course, Clint. Oh, Clint, promise me that you won't let them take me away! Never, never! I don't want to go back!"

She clung to him. His face became grim. But it softened in a reassuring smile as he kissed her.

"Of course I won't!" he declared fiercely. "So that's why the man in the plane came so low and used glasses!"

"You saw him, then? Do you know who it was?"

"Why, no; I couldn't make him out. He wore a helmet and his hands and the binoculars hid his face."

"I think—I'm sure, Clint—it was Rud Billings. Mother has put *him* on the trail."

"Rud Billings? Rudyard Billings? Why he is the man I ran across in Albany and who warned me not to go to Ampersand, because your mother would be sure to think of that place."

"It was Rudyard you met?" cried Anne. "I thought you said it was Theodore."

"No, I said Rud."

"I misunderstood you, Clint. I thought you said, Thud Billings. He's a prince. He would never tell—but Rud would——"

Her expression left little to the imagination as to her apprehension. Clint seemed puzzled.

"But why should either Rudyard or Theodore want to find you?"

"Because," she whispered, her lips trembling, "it was Rudyard Billings that mother wanted me to marry when I came of age."

"Anne, you never told me anything about that!"

"How could I? We have scarcely had time to talk about anything. Lots

of things I haven't told you, Clint. Life has been too short. Do you realize it has been only one week since—that day—at the hospital?"

"That is true." He smiled tenderly at her. "But I had been in love with you for three years. But look here, Anne; where is my—*our* Indian? Did he—has he gone?"

"Why no; there he is!" She pointed through an aisle in the columned arcade of the forest, at the south, to a bright spot at the farther side where the sun streamed down. Clint saw the erect figure of the Indian, seated on a stump, motionless, head up, his attention seemingly riveted upon something far distant, across the valley, where the Hoosacs rose.

"They are hunting for him, too, Anne," Clint said, in a queer tone. "He is a fugitive."

"Like ourselves," breathed Anne, smiling, then going pale. "I wonder," she added oddly, "if he has done anything worse than we have done!"

Clint turned from contemplation of the striking profile of the Indian, at the end of the dark alley of trees, and looked fixedly into Anne's big eyes.

"Are you sorry—for what we have done?" he asked. "Are you sure you don't wish it hadn't happened?"

"Oh, I am very glad!" she cried. "But there is something else I did not tell you. Clint, I shall not be—of age until June twenty-seventh."

Clint continued to stare at her, his expression questioning.

"You will be eighteen on the twenty-seventh?" he inquired. "But you gave your age as eighteen, at Albany!"

She nodded, and a hint of triumph showed in her face which broke into a sly little smile.

"Of course I did," she said. "Otherwise we couldn't have been married at all—without mother's consent. Silly!"

Clint's face remained grave. He was thinking hard.



"Then that means," he said, at length, "that your mother is determined to find you—*so that she can annul the marriage.*"

## CHAPTER V.

WHITE EAGLE, MISSIONARY.

THOSE men." She gestured toward the east. "They were looking for us, too!"

"No; for our Indian," he replied. "We aren't quite surrounded yet. Unless our Indian——" He hesitated.

"Oh! You are suspicious that he—— I don't think you need to be. Somehow, I feel that we can trust him. You ought to talk to him."

"I intend to. I'm beginning to suffer from my first attack of jealousy. Well, not exactly the first," he amended. "I thought he was interested in you the first time I saw him."

He smiled a little at his own grim joke.

"And when I missed you, on my return, I was almost stampeded. Did you do the camouflage?"

"Our Indian," she replied gayly.

"Hum! He's almost too good to be true. Particularly since I jumped him and laid him out cold, on first meeting."

"But you did him a real service!" Anne exclaimed. "And he is grateful. You snapped his dislocated ankle joint into place, and he has been dragging himself about the woods for two days with that ankle. And without food. He's a missionary, Clint."

"A what?"

"Let him tell you about it."

They went hand in hand down the dim aisle of spruces, so thickly foliaged that the sun could not get through and the ground was a dark-brown carpet.

"A missionary?" Clint repeated mentally. "Too good to be true, is right! Must be something behind this bird. I'll have to be on guard. I'm glad he's a cripple."

The Indian who sat on the stump in the sunshine, with his injured foot propped up, the swollen ankle bared to the warm rays, his crutch beside him and a supple, slender staff of ash between his hands, at which he was scraping with a bit of broken glass, was a quite different being from the crawling, pain-smitten individual Clint had attacked in the bushes, two hours previous.

Clint studied the strong, ascetic face closely as he approached, and again the faint flash of familiarity came to him. Where had he seen that face before? He was sure he had seen it somewhere, and at close quarters and in connection with some struggle. And that circlet on the wrist, which gleamed in the sun, that queer zigzag design, too, seemed to prick his memory more strongly.

Clint and Anne stepped out into the tiny opening which had been left between the spruce grove and the edge of the precipice that dropped off to the southwest. There was a far view of the valley of the Housatonic, closed on one side by the Tagonics and on the other by the Washington Mountain range.

The Indian looked up. He gave Anne a smile and held up the ashen staff—a bow, beautifully shaped and smoothed, to one end of which he had already attached a string of twisted linen. He gave Clint a steady, grave glance out of his deep-set eyes and nodded.

"You have not forgotten how to make a flying tackle," he said. "And you still deserve the name of 'Reckless Reckenger.'"

Clint's eyes went wide, his mouth gaped, and then he snapped his fingers.

"'Iron Arm'!" he exclaimed. "That's where I met you before! On the grid-iron. You played back on the Brown Bears five years ago, didn't you?"

The Indian nodded.

"And you were the only linesman on the Collegiates who ever tackled me for a loss," he grinned. "And I find that



you have not forgotten—anything. You have learned something new. You are a doctor?"

"No," Clint denied. "And I wasn't practicing medicine when I twisted your foot in the toe hold," he added. "I did not know you had a bad ankle. You'd have got me if you had been able to use both your feet. Let's see about that ankle. I studied medicine for three years. Enough to discover that I do not want to be a doctor. Anne tells me that you are a missionary," he finished, as he stepped closer and studied the puffy member with a critical eye.

"No," was the Indian's quiet reply. "I *have* been. Enough to learn that I do not want to be a missionary. At present I am a fugitive from justice. So they call it," he added bitterly. "I have met the fate of many a missionary, but I am not fanatic enough to continue. I am cured. It has been a painful operation, but salutary—very much like the operation you performed on my ankle. They drove me out of the town at the foot of the mountain. Fort Massachusetts is its name, in memory of an ancient defense, erected against the Indians by the early settlers.

"It was an unfortunate place for me to select to try to teach the truth, for the people prefer to believe in tradition. I, White Eagle, the son of Chief Many Horses of the Arapahoes, who learned the ways of white men and studied their civilization, in order that I might become a missionary from my own people to the whites, have found that it is safer in the wilderness than in civilization. Although I became lost in these strange mountains and have been without food for two days, they are better than a jail with a mob surrounding it."

"Jail! On what charge?" inquired Clint, who heard the Indian's diatribe with mingled emotions of curiosity and indignation.

"On the charge of practicing medi-

cine without a license," replied White Eagle, with a harsh laugh. "You had better be careful, if you are not a registered physician. It appears that you are being sought, from the air," he added, with a gesture in the direction in which the airplane had vanished.

"It looks like it," Clint agreed. "And I have just seen and heard members of a searching party or posse that is looking for you," he added. "But for the present the danger to all of us seems to have passed on. Suppose we go back into camp and have something to eat. That ankle needs hot packs on it to reduce the inflammation. It was very thoughtful of you," he added, "to camouflage the camp. I apologize for tackling you so savagely, White Eagle, but your appearance and dress were against you."

"They did not give me time to get out of my ceremonial costume," the Indian explained. "I hold no grudge against you, for you fought fairly. You might have used your club on me."

He got to his feet and got his rude crutch under his arm. The injured foot he supported by doubling the deer-skin band about the leg and knotting the ends to his belt, so that he could use both hands on the crutch. He swung himself along the rough floor of the forest with surprising swiftness, now and then catching hold of a limb of a tree to balance himself, and lifting his whole body by one arm.

"I can't understand how you got up here," Clint remarked, as they entered the clearing. "You came up out of the Hopper, didn't you?" He indicated the deep western valley.

White Eagle nodded. "It was easier to climb than to travel the bottom," he said, "and I wanted to gain the height of that cliff to find where I had wandered to."

Clint busied himself rebuilding the fire, while Anne brought food and cooking utensils from the cave.



"The poor fellow must be starved," she whispered to Clint, as they crouched by the fire, their guest being seated a little distance away on the beech log which served as sun porch, workbench and dining table for the camp. "You did not tell me you had fought him," she reproached him.

"There are many things I haven't told you, Anne. Life has been too short," he bantered. "It was a wrestling match, anyway, and an operation. It's a good thing he was crippled and starved," he finished significantly.

Breakfast was served in tin plates and cups on the log. White Eagle ate sparingly, refusing a second helping with: "Thank you, I have had enough, for the first meal after a fast. It is better to be careful."

Clint talked football. White Eagle caught him up eagerly. He had played the game for many years, beginning as a mere boy at a famous Indian school in the West, finally landing as a half back on a powerful semiprofessional team that toured the country, and against which the Eastern colleges sent an all-star eleven made up of former varsity players. Clint had been a tackle on this team, gaining the nickname of "Reckless" Reckenridge because of his manner of flinging himself into a play at risk of life and limb.

They reviewed that last big game in which White Eagle had been used in a desperate effort to gain ground against the Collegiates, had broken away and was only stopped from a long run by Clint's desperate tackle.

"You almost knocked me out with that iron arm of yours," Clint confessed. "That bracelet of yours is better than a leather gauntlet."

"Usually I wore a gauntlet to cover it," said White Eagle. "I could not take it off. It was placed on my arm when I was fourteen years of age as a token that I had undergone the ordeal of the Sun Dance, which is the highest

religious ceremony of the Arapahoes—and which they have been forbidden to perform, except in modified fashion. To our white governors, all our tribal ceremonies were war dances, and dangerous. Only a few white men understand the significance of such ceremonies as the Sun Dance, the Buffalo Dance, the Ghost Dance of the Sioux—which has also been forbidden, because it commemorates, to the Sioux, the crime which the military committed against them, a massacre in peace times."

His voice had risen to an almost ro-tund strain, as of one accustomed to public speaking. His eyes flashed and his face was quivering with emotion. But suddenly he checked himself.

"But I am cured," he said in a guttural tone. "I shall teach and preach no longer. An Indian missionary to the white race is too great an anomaly. You who send your missionaries to far lands to convert the heathen, do not welcome one who comes from the original possessors of your lands to try to teach you the truth about themselves. I was mistaken. I was misled. You have heard, perhaps, of the great Black Hawk, son of the teacher and writer who is known as Albertus?"

"The man who puts on Indian pageants, dances, ceremonials, among the Boy Scouts?" ejaculated Clint. "Of course I know him. I met him at a Scout leaders' camp in Maine, three years ago. You know him?"

"It was from Black Hawk, a white man adopted into a Sioux tribe and made a chief, that I gained my inspiration to leave my father's wigwam and my people and journey to the East as a missionary. But I was not welcomed as was Black Hawk. I was the wrong color."

He fell silent. But quickly he raised his bowed head and smiled frankly.

"Pardon me for complaining to you, whose hospitality I am enjoying. I re-



spect you," he declared to Clint. "You are a fair fighter. You entertain me at some risk. I am a dangerous guest. I will not impose upon you longer. I will go on my way."

He began to bandage his ankle with the deerskin.

"Wait!" cried Clint. "You can't go now. There is only one way down from here that you could take, and you would run into the party that is looking for you. Your ankle will not be fit to use for many days. And you are no more dangerous to us than we are to you—for we, also, are fugitives from civilization—as *they call it*. Stay with us. Perhaps you can help us. If I had wanted to be rid of you," he added, "I had only to call down to the posse which came near this place."

White Eagle regarded Clint steadily. He extended his hand and gripped Clint's tightly.

"Whatever you wish, I shall do," he said. "I know that you are hiding. You fled for your very lives, did you not?"

## CHAPTER VI.

### BLOODHOUNDS MEET ARROWS.

CLINT looked in astonishment, first at White Eagle, then at Anne, as he heard the final question. He did not know exactly what the Indian meant, but soon he got an inkling. It came from the manner in which White Eagle exposed his injury to the rays of the sun, refusing to have a bandage put on it, or even hot towels.

"The sun will cure it more quickly," he said, when Clint offered to make hot packs. "And you are wise to seek the sun," he added. "If you wish, when my ankle is well, I shall teach you the Sun Dance, modern version. It is very beautiful and it will be significant, particularly, for you."

"How the devil do you know all these things?" demanded Clint uneasily.

"Because I am an Indian and because

I have been in the town recently and have heard men talking and have seen the newspapers. From each I got a little truth, and you have told me more. You have studied medicine, but you are not a doctor; you have been a Scout, you played football, you reveled in out-of-door activity, and then for almost four years you confined yourself to books and a hospital, working almost day and night, consumed by ambition.

"You found your health impaired, you discovered that much that was called high science was false, guesswork, bluff, hokum, bunk. You fell in love with a girl whose health, likewise, was threatened by an artificial life, and who drooped like a wild flower brought into the house, stifled by steam heat, shut off from the sun and the fresh air.

"The newspapers say that you eloped, leaving everything, to hide in the woods. And I find you, seeking from nature, the health that means happiness. Not the idleness and languor of some southern beach but the altitude and invigorating air of the mountains, an isolated, hidden place which you had discovered when you were a student at Williams.

"After four years of studying medicine, you have had the sense and the courage to revert to the very remedies which our medicine men have prescribed for generations—sun baths, plenty of fresh air, active life in the open, careful diet, simple remedies from herbs which they found. You lack only the ease of mind which it was the purpose of the incantations of the medicine men to inspire by ceremonies—and which have been mistakenly interpreted as sorcery. You are uneasy, harassed, hunted. You fear discovery and misunderstanding. Perhaps you fear that you will be torn apart from each other."

If he needed any confirmation of his shrewd conjecture, he had only to look at Anne's face, which, under the spell of his almost eloquent analysis of their situation, spoke plainly of her emotion.



"You have been kind to me," White Eagle went on. "I shall try to help you. It is true that I became lost in these mountains, but that was because I knew nothing of the surrounding country. I am a plains Indian and this land is new to me. But I know how to take care of myself in the woods, how to evade pursuit, even with dogs, how to camouflage a camp so that a dozen airplanes might pass over it and see nothing. I shall make you bows and arrows and we can defend ourselves, silently, against attack, if need be, and kill such game as we need."

"This is a forest reserve and hunting is forbidden—and besides, it is out of season," Clint objected.

"There is no law, anywhere, which can prevent an Indian hunting for food with bow and arrow," proudly declared White Eagle. "It is an ancient heritage, left to us. It is one of the few privileges left to us who were robbed of, or bartered, our birthright."

As he talked White Eagle kept his hands busy, polishing off the bow he had carved out of ash. Laying it aside, he began to whittle an arrow out of a bit of dry white pine he had picked up from kindling Clint had cut for the fire.

He worked with incredible rapidity, finishing an arrow, except for the feathering of the butt, in ten minutes, including a flint head that he lashed and glued on, taken from his war bag which yielded materials evidently designed for just this sort of work. No sooner had he finished one arrow than he began another.

"I'm afraid we won't dare to use even such silent weapons against officers, if they discover our camp," Clint objected, fingering the arrows. "I'd like to shoot one of these, though. I used to be a bug on archery."

"Try one," suggested White Eagle, offering the bow with a smile.

Clint fitted an arrow to the waxed string, drew its butt to his right cheek,

sighted, and the arrow sped swift and straight to a slim spruce, fifty yards away, where it buried its head and hung, quivering.

"Good!" exclaimed White Eagle.

"It is a good bow, true and strong and the arrow is a marvel. I've never shot a better one."

"It is an Arapahoe war arrow. I have made hundreds of them. They will stop deer. Yes, they will stop elk, and, made longer, they killed many buffaloes in the old days, on the grassy plains of Wyoming. They will stop a dog. You would not hesitate to defend yourself if they set dogs on your trail?" he queried.

"Well, I think," replied Clint grimly, "I'd take a chance on trying to stop the man who would do that."

"They put dogs on my trail," said White Eagle quietly.

Clint gave an exclamation of indignant astonishment, then knotted his brow into a scowl of thought.

"And I think, from something I heard down there"—he waved toward the benchland depth he had overlooked from the ledge—"that the men who were after you had dogs with them. It didn't get to me, at the time, for I heard no dogs—but one of the men said something about them 'being on a trail' and 'letting them work it out.' And it was not your trail, but ours, they would have got, down there. However, they were after you," he added, "and their leader said he believed you had gone into the Hopper."

"They were silent, the dogs," White Eagle remarked, scraping away at a shaft, "because they are trained to be silent. They are bloodhounds, imported for the chase of an Indian missionary, wanted on the curious charge of practicing medicine without a license."

"Bloodhounds!" cried Anne. "Oh, how terrible!"

White Eagle looked up with a smile. But his expression changed, suddenly,



freezing into an expression of such watchful apprehension, his gaze going past Anne and toward the thicket which hid the brook-bed trail, that Anne whirled, and Clint turned to look.

Their voices stuck in their throats. Trotting into the clearing, heads down, drooping, long ears hanging low, in indication that the scent they followed was strange to them and not the one they had been sent to find, came two dogs, of the black-and-brown color and size and the rugged physiognomy which marks the bloodhound species, distinctively, from all other breeds.

Swift as a cat and almost as silently, White Eagle slid from the log, crouched behind it, in the same movement snatching the bow from Clint's hands and catching up two arrows he had laid down, one of them just finished.

The wind was blowing from the east, the direction from which the hounds had appeared. A short length of leather dragging from the collar of the foremost dog spoke of a broken leash.

The wind had prevented them getting the live scent of the trio in the clearing and both dogs were approaching entirely on the ground scent, following the path Clint had taken to and from the lookout. The very preoccupation and silence of the dogs seemed ominous. They were businesslike in their tracking, intent on following that strange, new trail to its end. And when they reached the end—what?

Clint could not guess, though he tried to remember and to sort out conflicting tales he had heard of the nature of bloodhounds. The best he could do to reassure himself was to recall that their action depended almost entirely upon their training. And bloodhounds, trained to track men—usually convicts in the South—were trained to savagery, the leash alone saving the cornered fugitive from being torn to pieces by the dogs. This pair had broken loose from

their master, no doubt one of the men in the party Clint had observed below.

All this flashed through his mind as he stood, for an instant, transfixed. He turned to locate the ax, his only weapon—and as he did so he saw White Eagle, with the bow drawn—and before he could turn again, the arrow left the bow and Clint saw the leading dog leap aside, fall, paw the ground and gnaw desperately with snarling jaws at the shaft which showed in his side—then slowly relax, and with a final struggle lie still.

Anne screamed and flung herself in Clint's arms.

The second dog halted, stiffened, looking up with a fling of his wrinkled, masklike head. The bow twanged again. The arrow buried itself in his throat and he went down, pawing frantically, uttering terrible snarls.

Clint held Anne tightly, so that she could not see. His face went white, but he could not tear his eyes from the death agony of the second bloodhound, transfixed right through the throat and neck by an arrow with a cutting flint tip which must have torn jugular or windpipe as it passed.

Within another few moments the second dog lay still. White Eagle rose from his knees.

"It is done," he remarked, in a deep tone. "Do not feel too badly. If they had reached me—they would have finished us all."

## CHAPTER VII.

### A TEMPTING DREAM.

ANNE collapsed in Clint's arms. He carried her into the cave and laid her on a cot. She revived soon, but clung to him wildly, sobbing with hysteria. He comforted her as best he could, but he was too shaken, himself, to be calm.

"Anne, this is terrible," he said. "I did not think I would be subjecting you to such dangers when I brought you here. I ought to take you home."



This was enough to divert Anne's emotion.

"No, no!" she cried. "I shall be all right. It was so sudden and unexpected—and White Eagle's eyes! They frightened me. That came first, then the poor dog——"

"Um!" grunted Clint. "It is a good thing he had the arrows made."

"Oh, I know it. I am a little ninny. I'll be all right—if you only won't suggest, again, taking me home. I *won't* leave you! I'm going to stay with you here until the twenty-seventh, anyhow. Then they can't do anything. I'll be of age. We can be married all over again, if we have to. It's only ten days. I'm not afraid—really. It was only—the shock of the bloodhounds, White Eagle's fierce eyes and then the arrows——"

She shuddered, but she smiled, too. The worst of her nervous collapse was over.

"We've got to get rid of those dogs!" he exclaimed. "The men who had them will be looking for them."

"Go and help White Eagle," she bade him, moving so that she would be in the sunlight which now streamed in the entrance to the cave.

But White Eagle, working fast, had done the job already. When Clint went out the carcasses of the two dead bloodhounds had vanished and White Eagle came swinging rapidly back on his crutch from the Hopper ledge.

"Yes, they are at the bottom of the cliff," he said, in answer to Clint's question. "And if they find them, they will think that they were right when they guessed that White Eagle was in the Hopper. Now I shall make more arrows. Blunt-headed arrows which will stun and stop a man without killing him. He will never know what struck him."

"I don't know as I'd blame you for making some more war arrows," said Clint. "If I were in your place I think I'd shoot to kill. I was born in the South," he added meaningly.

"It was an accident that the dogs got away," White Eagle said, with a little smile. "But all the same, it is not good to be hunted by dogs."

"I do not understand," said Clint, "why they should resort to such tactics to try to capture you, White Eagle."

"I have not told you all," White Eagle replied. "It is not merely because I cured a sick boy whom the doctors were allowing to die, that they want me. It is because the boys listened to my truths and reproached their elders. It maddened them against me. The mob accused me of being blasphemous because I denied that their god was the only god."

"That was, at first, an excuse; then it became a principle, a mob's cry. They were already full of hatred against me. The authorities, pushed for action, could think of nothing better than the charge of illegal medical practice, but would have brought other charges, under the old blue laws, I believe, had they managed to arrest me."

"There is a law against blasphemy in Massachusetts!" exclaimed Clint.

"But I was not blasphemous," denied White Eagle vigorously. "I worship the Great Spirit. I made the mistake of suggesting that my deity, in some ways, was superior to theirs—the same teachings which their missionaries carry to us and to the Oriental countries, to Africa and the islands of the sea, concerning their religious beliefs. It was a mistake, because I am an Indian. Had I been an East Indian, perhaps I might have founded a new sect," he finished, with a smile. "But I ought to have gone to Boston, not to Fort Massachusetts. There I could have had the use, perhaps, of a Buddhist temple for my preaching, had I desired it. Is not the world strange?"

"It's cockeyed," agreed Clint fervently. "But there's no use trying to knock it into a cocked hat, White Eagle."



"I tell you that I am cured of being a reformer," White Eagle said, "as you are cured of being a physician. There is nothing left for me to do but to return to my own people and live as they do. Among them I am the son of a chief who has won his coup feathers. I can become a big man—in a small tribe. But what will you do, my friend?"

The swift and pointed question made Clint blink.

"I don't know," he replied frankly.

"Build your health," advised White Eagle. "Drink in the strength of the sun. Then decide. You are young, much younger than I am. Hold fast to your happiness. Defend it. Conquer your enemies and life will seem different. You are brave as you are reckless, but you are also reckless, remember, impulsive and impatient."

"I know it," Clint confessed, "and I'm afraid I've let Anne in for a tough time. Under the law I can be treated as a criminal, although we were legally married—that is, so far as I knew at the time. It is only the acts of others which might force strict application of the law. In that airplane which swooped down over us was, I think, a man who would stop at nothing to have me arrested and to take Anne from me.

"But for you, White Eagle, he might have discovered that some one was camping in this place, and come or sent detectives to investigate. He may come again, either in the air or up the mountain. I am in the dark—but I know that safety lies in remaining hidden, here in the mountains. I dare not go out until the twenty-seventh of this month, for fear of arrest on a technical charge, which would leave Anne unprotected. Her mother had planned to marry her to a man fifteen years older than she is, a wealthy but unprincipled idler, who would ruin her life. When you said that we had fled for our lives, you spoke the truth, either by divination or guess——"

"I spoke figuratively," White Eagle interrupted, "meaning that you fled because you wished to live your own lives and to have health and happiness."

"You spoke a mouthful," declared Clint. "And I'm listening to every word you say now, with both ears. I wish I could help you as much as you have already helped me, by what you have done and said. I have an idea," he went on, new enthusiasm bubbling up in his voice. "I think it could be carried out and it would be a knockout. An Indian theater in New York City!"

"An Indian theater?" echoed White Eagle. "Ah, but that would cost a fortune, my friend. I have considered it, myself. It is one of the dreams I have had—and my friend Chief Black Hawk."

"Well, we'll dream of it some more," declared Clint, his dark eyes glowing. "I can see immense possibilities in it. I would like to talk it over with you and Black Hawk, some time. I'll agree to furnish the fortune," he added, chuckling. And then, more soberly: "Not my wife's fortune; don't mistake me. I've got a little of my own, down South, waiting for me. Anne would like to help, though. She dances splendidly."

"I could see that she did, when she walked," said White Eagle. "It is a tempting dream. But this is dream-land," he smiled, waving his hand.

"With a nightmare now and then to give it variety," muttered Clint. "I suppose the posse will be looking for the dogs, and I'm wondering whether I hadn't better go to the lookout and keep watch. If they come back this way they might stumble onto the pass that climbs up here."

White Eagle nodded. "Meantime," he said, "I'll add to our arsenal. I heard a partridge drumming, not far away. Would you like to try a bird shaft?"

"Perhaps, later. The first thing is to make you a shelter. I think you like



the view from the southwest corner where you were when Anne took me to you."

"It is, also, a good lookout," White Eagle answered. "But you need not trouble yourself. I can use an ax."

"You can do better with a knife and glass and feathers, for the present," Clint suggested meaningly. "I should like to have a bow like yours."

"It is yours. I will make myself another," responded White Eagle quickly.

"Thank you. But you go sit down and rest that ankle," Clint ordered, with the brusque habit of a doctor.

He went to the cave and found Anne sleeping in the sun. He was glad of that. It saved him the necessity of getting her consent to leave her while he reconnoitered again from the lofty ledge above the benchland.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN INVASION REPELLED.

HE had no more than got into the brush which screened the ledge, than he heard loud whistling and calls. The dogs were being sought and men were returning up the gulch of the brook, noisily and with much cursing. It was evident that there was a quarrel in progress among them. It was also evident that the posse had given up all idea of finding White Eagle in this vicinity and were reckless how much noise they made. Clint lay hidden, waiting impatiently for them to come closer, so that he could hear what they said if not see them. It was clear to him, as he looked out across miles of savage, heavily wooded mountain land, that the posse must have been drawn to this spot quite by accident, for there were many thousands of acres of wilderness, stretching away to the north and east, with no habitations save down in the narrow valley.

Beyond Greylock rose the long ridge of Mount Williams. Beyond it was an-

other valley, and beyond that the Hoosacs joined the Green Mountains. Except for a faint hiking trail, marked by a mountain-climbing club which used it perhaps once a year, there was nothing, for many miles along the ridges, to indicate that these mountains rose out of country that had been settled for two hundred years. But in the valley were factory chimneys, church spires and gleaming bit of metaled highway.

Clint told himself for the hundredth time that he had wisely chosen his retreat. Only an army of searchers could hope to find him after days of combing the mountains, and perhaps not then. The dogs, however, had been a real menace. Clint had no doubt that they had struck the trail up which he and Anne had climbed and which he had traversed three times, to pack in all their outfit and supplies.

Hidden in a dense thicket, at the end of a wood road which wandered off the main road, was the car in which he and Anne had driven from New York to Albany, then over the Taconics into these mountains, and through the little settlement of Fort Massachusetts into the woods. He had stripped it of everything he could carry, caching the cushions, tools, the battery, the spark plugs and the number plates in a dry crevice under a rock ledge, at some distance from the car and taking the cover of the distributor head with him, so that the car could not be started if it were broken open by searchers or vandals. Woodchoppers would be the only men likely to go near it, and from signs that he found, Clint had decided that no cutting had been done in the locality for years.

It was true that White Eagle was a dangerous man to have as a guest. But the dogs and posse were no more dangerous than the plane that had seemed to dive straight for their refuge, as if the occupants suspected they would find some one on that little plateau. White



Eagle's quick ear and swift action in camouflaging the camp and hiding Anne and himself in the woods, had prevented sure discovery. Besides, Clint had formed a tremendous liking for the Indian and he was enthused beyond measure with the new-born idea he had expressed to White Eagle—of an Indian theater.

What a wealth of folklore, dances, music, drama and color lay untouched, waiting for the right hands to give them life in dramatic presentation! White Eagle, with the assistance of his friend, Black Hawk, known as the greatest living white authority on Indian lore and craft, would be a wonderful combination. Clint grinned as he thought what Anne would say when he laid the idea before her.

But he frowned, suddenly, as a bass voice erupted, close beneath him, in a violent tirade.

"I'm goin' to follow up this gully, I don't care what you say, sheriff. Those dogs are the only trackers in this whole country and they're worth a fortune to me. Besides, I don't dare leave 'em runnin' loose in the woods. They'll kill somebody, sure as sin. They never was off the leash before, on a man hunt, since I had 'em down in Florida, and I told you what happened to the poor ducky they run down."

The voice that answered Clint identified as that of the man in the slouch hat whom he had seen earlier in the day.

"It's none of my funeral," he said, "and nobody would mourn much if the dogs did catch that redskin. It would end all the fuss that has made my life mis'able for three days."

"Yeah, but suppose they run down that pair of love birds which is supposed to be hidin' somewheres in here? That would raise a fuss that would last longer'n three days, sheriff."

"Hell, they ain't in miles of here!" snorted the one addressed as "sheriff," "How'd they git in here? That snifty

fool of a Billings, with his plane, makes me tired. He might's well hunt for a needle in a straw stack."

"My dogs would find a needle in a straw stack if they got on the scent," was the reply, in an uneasy tone.

"You had no business lettin' the kid take the leashes," came the angry response in this statement. "I told you to hang onto 'em yourself."

"Well, I'm hangin' onto the trail through this gully, anyhow," declared the man of the lost dogs.

Clint shifted uneasily, trying to catch a glimpse of the speakers. The foliage hid them, save for a passing shadow, now and then, as they continued their climb up the gully, pounding the lower edge of the rock shoulder and heading up the steep, deep brook bed.

Clint's blood boiled and then ran cold as he pondered the significance of what he had heard. But for White Eagle's arrival in their camp at the time he had come, Anne might have been surprised by the dogs and torn to pieces, while Clint himself was away on some expedition in the woods, as he had been this morning, seeking wood for a bow.

"Here's dog tracks!" shouted a treble voice far up the gully, a boy's voice, excited and shrill.

Clint got to his feet and turned to hasten back off the ledge to the spot where the ancient brook bed plunged down steeply, and where he planned his defensive demonstration.

"Hell, them is probably fox tracks or wild cats!" the sheriff's voice demurred. "The woods is full of 'em."

"Well, whatever it was has scratched loose a lot of stones and went up this way," was the boy's insistent answer.

"Well, we'll go up, kid, if the sheriff don't want to," the other man said.

Clint waited to hear no more. He retreated from the outthrust of rock and ducked into the thicket.

Lying atop the strata of rock which formed the brink of the plunge, and



upon every one of the deep, steps over which the stream had once poured, wearing the steps round in places, gouging deep holes in others, and leaving a mass of rotting débris, were many stones of all sizes, from pebbles to huge boulders that weighed tons. Clint selected several small ones, no bigger than his head, and worn smooth and round. He squatted behind a large boulder and waited for the sounds that would tell him the searchers were toiling up the final stretch of the steep, rocky path.

The southern face of Greylock Mountain is plainly scarred to this day by three long, brown streaks, the marks of landslides, veritable avalanches which plunged down into the valley, buried farms and threatened the village, itself, by damming a torrential stream.

Between these scars and on either side of them, hang masses of rock and earth which may some time let loose, in a storm, and pile down to build higher the heap of tallus at the foot of the steep precipice.

Clinton Reckenridge knew the history of these slides; he had studied the geology of Greylock, while at Williams. He counted on the memory of them in the minds of the inhabitants of the valley to aid him in his defense of the honeymoon solarium he had chosen, and which had now become a threatened hideout. He resolved to defend it at any cost short of bloodshed.

He rolled his first rock over the edge when he heard the sound of a voice floating up the narrow, steep gorge. The boulder bounced from ledge to ledge, knocked fragments loose, dislodged other boulders, and the gorge became a roaring, rattling megaphone. Clint heard a shout of alarm and knew his ruse had worked. He rolled another rock down, another, keeping up a continuous barrage. The shouts continued, receded, vanished.

Clint hurried back to the lookout. Ten minutes passed, then the voices

reached him again, and soon the words of an altercation which gave him grim satisfaction. The sheriff held the stage.

"Damn near got us all killed!" he panted angrily. "Started a slide with your scramblin' up that rocky run. I tell you them dogs couldn't 'a' gone up there or we'd 'a' heard 'em. Why, they ain't nothin' up there except that bare head of rock. Nobody's goin' to try to hide out in a place like that. They couldn't live. If the damn Injun's anywhere he's over in the Hopper. And that's a good place for an Injun, too," he added. "No white man wants to trail in after him there."

Clint could afford to smile. The threatened invasion had been repelled and the last place the sheriff would look for White Eagle would be his present location. Evidently the officer did not know of the clearing under the "bare head of rock," and he was not coöperating closely with Rudyard Billings, who had glimpsed it from the air.

"Dreamland is safe," muttered Clint, as he started back to camp. "And I hope the nightmares are over, for a while at least."

## CHAPTER IX.

### AIR ISLAND CASTAWAYS.

IT seemed like dreamland indeed in the evening, under the stars and the full moon, which sailed high, flooding the mountains with silver. A few filmy clouds painted a feathery shadow above the bright, frosted dome of Greylock's main peak. For the rest, the sky was purple-black, pricked through with gleaming points upon which the moonbeams seemed to play like a lamp set in a window of jewels.

In the clearing, beside the beech log, a tiny camp fire flamed and glowed, the smoke rising into the moonlight like a growing, fairy tree conjured up by an Aladdin who had rubbed a magic lamp. The spruces pricked the sky with their jigsaw line, joining the massive bulk of



the cliff which gleamed silvery at its top and ruddy from fireglow at the bottom, like the face of a giant who had worn his hat down over his forehead.

To east and west loomed vast space which the luminous darkness made illimitable so that the plateau seemed suspended in mid-air. The menacing realities of daytime had vanished. There was the feeling of security, hard won, but sure in the minds of the three who leaned against the log, and there were dreams in the fire for all of them.

Clint thought of White Eagle's sage saying, "Conquer your enemies and life will seem different. Hold fast your happiness. Defend it."

He drank the full joy of that promise fulfilled. "Veritably," he thought, "White Eagle is a teacher." It would be a loss to the world if he were to return to his tribe, defeated and bitter, all his enthusiasm and ambition paralyzed. Clint believed the Indian had misdirected his talents in choosing the platform. He should have turned to the stage to translate his teaching through art.

With his resonant, mobile voice, his magnificent physique and supple grace of movement, revealed even through the awkward necessity of using a crutch, he should make a splendid actor. All the nations of the world had furnished their folklore to the stage of American—save the native race of the continent. Russian dancers, Chinese mimes, African chorists, Welsh singers, to name a few, had been received with open arms and pocketbooks—but there was no Indian theater.

White Eagle dreamed with his white friend—and Anne, between them, shared both their dreams, and built one of her own upon them. As a tiny girl she had taken to æsthetic dancing with almost passionate devotion, but never had been allowed to develop it as she wished. The social whirl which had robbed her of strength, time, almost of

the power to think, and had threatened her health, had deprived her of the opportunity to carry on in her beloved medium of self-expression.

Suddenly White Eagle spoke up, as if divining their thoughts.

"You will be the White Spirit," he said to Clint, "and I the Black Spirit that comes down from Superstition Mountains, to threaten the tribe."

"But where do I come in?" demanded Anne.

"As the central figure of the whole ceremonial. It is of the Sun Dance I am speaking. The actual declaration of the ceremonial is made by a woman who offers herself as a sort of sacrifice to the sun for the time being. You will be the Sacred Woman, a beautiful rôle, dedicated to the sun, giver of life and fertility."

Anne was silent for a moment, then she burst out:

"What a wonderful place this would be for an open-air theater, with that cliff as a back drop, the spruces and the white birch facing each other, the sky for a roof and Greylock as the background of it all!"

"And no audience except the birds unless we could drop them in from airplanes," laughed Clint.

"Oh, you've spoiled the picture!" complained Anne, with a grimace.

"At any rate," said White Eagle eagerly, "we can conduct rehearsals of the stars of our troupe here. As soon as my ankle is well enough—well, before that, we'll begin them. I'll be the orchestra, for the time. I'll teach you the song story, adapted from the original ceremonial. But without the blood torture which was a sort of ultimate sacrifice, made to appease the evil spirits in times of great trouble," he hastened to add.

"No airplanes, bloodhounds or thunderstorms," murmured Anne.

"No thunder to-night, anyway," predicted Clint, with a glance at the sky;



but White Eagle, looking up also, shook his head.

"There's a storm in the southwest," he declared.

It seemed incredible there could be, but within an hour the spruces bent before the assault of a wild southwest wind and the sky was darkened by rolling clouds.

It was a typical mountain storm, full of lightning flashes, peals of thunder, sweeping, driving rain and swirling wind. It drove them to the shelter of the cave, where a fissure in the domelike roof of rock, extending to the outer face of the cliff, formed a natural chimney and allowed a fire to be built in the center of the floor. Anne was badly frightened by the elemental display, but White Eagle declared she was safer in the cave than in any house, and she believed him.

The storm passed over swiftly, the lightning became no more than sheets of light beyond Greylock, the thunder rolled away, muttering, and they were assuring each other that it was all over, when there came a rumble that grew into a roar and the very walls of rock trembled. Anne sprang up and rushed out, crying aloud. Clint followed swiftly, and White Eagle rose and came on the door.

The rumbling continued. The very ground shook under them as if an earthquake were in progress.

"That's queer thunder!" Clint shouted to White Eagle. "No lightning near by."

"It is not thunder," White Eagle sang out, "but an avalanche not far from us. It is passing."

"Yes! It is over at the east of us!" cried Clint. "Another slide off Greylock, from the storm."

They listened breathlessly to the dwindling roar and rumble as of a great wind sweeping through the forest, but knew it was not wind, for the southwester had died down. It lasted for

several minutes, growing fainter and more distant, then all was still, save for the drip of water from the trees.

In the morning Clint awoke early and tried to keep from waking Anne, but her eyes flew open as he got from his cot.

"I'm going with you," she declared.

Presently, with the same thought in mind, they raced to the lookout at the point of the rock shoulder, projecting out above the steep ravine, and with one voice they cried out in amazement as their eyes beheld evidence of the nearness of that cataclysm of nature that had shaken their perch so visibly.

"Well, I guess my handmade rock slide started something!" Clint cried. "And the storm finished the job. There is no trail up or down that ravine now. Nobody can get up here."

"But—how can we get down?" gasped Anne.

The ravine was choked from one frowning cliff to the other by a huge mound of freshly moved earth, rocks, trees and roots. A great section of the steeply sloping bank of the precipice opposite them had slid off and plowed down the ravine, where a part of it had been halted, the fore part breaking off into huge masses and continuing down the mountain.

It had left a steep, newly made wall across the gully, from which dirt and rocks still fell at intervals. The wall rose to a height of two hundred feet or more, from the bottom of the ravine, but failed to reach the rock shoulder where they stood, by as many feet more.

It blocked the way to the plateau, and from it, as well, not only by its bulk and the sheer steepness of its face but by the menace of its insecurity. Clint thought that the whole mass moved a little, a fraction of an inch a minute perhaps, but he could not be sure. At any rate, it would be tempt-



ing fate for a man to set foot on it or to approach it from below.

"We shall have to go down into the Hopper," whispered Anne, wide eyed and white of face. "But, *can* we get down?"

"White Eagle came up," Clint replied with a smile, but he knew that did not answer her question.

White Eagle answered it a few minutes later when he joined them at the lookout.

"We could go down into the Hopper," he said, "if we had three hundred feet of strong rope, for making a ladder."

"Can't we make it from our blankets?" Anne asked.

"Not long enough or strong enough," said White Eagle. "But perhaps this barrier will move. Another storm like last night or even a gentle rain, for a day, would weaken it perhaps."

The truth was that they were marooned on an airy island, huddled against the sheer slope of a mountain peak, an island surrounded by deep gorges on three sides, by a perpendicular cliff on the fourth side, smooth, slippery—and leading they scarcely knew where, upward, if they could have climbed it.

The serious part of it was that their provisions were growing scant. Clint estimated there was hardly four days' supply for the three of them. To be sure, White Eagle, with his bow and arrows, given a wide range and able to travel swiftly, might kill enough small game to eke out their supplies indefinitely, but he was confined now to about an acre of isolated land, which might yield a bird, a rabbit or two—or nothing.

Another ominous discovery was made by White Eagle later in the day. He came back from a round of the plateau he had made on his own initiative, to see if there was some possible way to get down and reported that he had seen the

figures of men, down at the bottom of the Hopper cliff where he had flung the bodies of the bloodhounds. He got Clint alone and told him what he had seen.

"They wore stiff-brimmed hats, such as the State troopers have," he said. "They must have found the dogs. They will be more than ever convinced that White Eagle is a dangerous man to be at large," he added grimly. "And they may spend days searching the Hopper for me. We would risk much if we climbed down there—if it were possible for us to go. I believe that you and I could make it," he declared, "but not a woman unless she were very strong and used to climbing."

"Well, we do not want to go down there now, anyway," was Clint's optimistic comment, "so let them have the Hopper for a hunting ground. We'll hold the fort up here."

White Eagle added his more practical aid to optimism, late that afternoon, when he knocked a busily drumming cock partridge off a log in the spruces, with a bird shaft he had fashioned for his bow.

That night he set rabbit snares in the poplars.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CHASER CHASED.

A RUNAWAY couple, outraged parent, an airplane search by Rudyard Billings, "friend of the family" and "scion of a prominent and wealthy New York family himself," an Indian, wanted as a fugitive from justice, bloodhounds on his trail, an avalanche that thundered down the mountain "almost upon the heels of the sheriff's posse!"

These were the successive sensations which blossomed into black headlines in the local and metropolitan newspapers, chasing off the front pages the current murder trial, the latest divorce scandal, the new war scare in the Balkans. A



small army of imaginative reporters had installed themselves in various strategic points in five towns situated in the valleys which lie at the foot of Greylock, where they kept the wires, regular and special, hot with reams of "copy."

The combination of two chases through that mountain region was well calculated to stir the blood of the bored millions as it was described in the inked paper of the press. Possibilities leaped into the minds of the imaginative reporters, with startling results when printed.

There was the possibility that the Indian might have met and slain the runaway couple or that the bloodhounds, which had broken away from their master, might have met one or all of them and slain them. Another possibility which leaped into headlines and pictures was that the avalanche might have buried one or more.

Photos of Mrs. Fitzhugh Hardinge, mother of the runaway girl, and of Anne Hardinge, of Clinton Reckenridge—Reckless Reckenridge—in football togs and hospital gown, variously labeled as "former gridiron star" and "young medical student," appeared from coast to coast. Rudyard Billings posed, it appeared, every day for a new photo—standing alongside his plane in various heroic attitudes.

But for five days the plane was mysteriously idle. Then it was discovered that the pilot had vanished, and a man was found who said that the flier admitted he was afraid to take such chances as Billings demanded, over that dangerous country—and besides that, the plane was out of commission after a forced landing from the first flight.

Mr. Rudyard Billings was at Williamstown, and he was beginning to enjoy the sudden notoriety he was receiving, as well as other amusements which became possible through the insignificant fact that Mrs. Fitzhugh Hardinge, when she had trusted him and his ar-

dent spirit to direct the search for her daughter, had given him a check representing an amount sufficient to buy a good plane. He had, economically, rented one and had quarreled with the pilot and refused to pay him.

He had chartered a car, now, and cruised the Berkshires, with an occasional jaunt "over the hill" to Albany where life was gayer and more like what he was accustomed to in New York. A blond college widow was often seen with Mr. Billings. He was humorously described in *The Purple Cow* as an X-Williams man, leaving it to the imagination to fit the algebraic symbol of "unknown quantity," without libel suit as a result.

The truth was that the check had gone to Mr. Billings' head. He was a scion of a prominent family—but "once wealthy" would have been more accurate. He really did desire, ardently—or avariciously, to find Anne Hardinge, whom he refused to consider as Mrs. Clinton Reckenridge, for annulment of that marriage was promised—aye, threatened, by Mrs. Fitzhugh Hardinge. But Rudyard relied heavily upon the corps of private detectives he had hired from a big agency, to locate her for him. It was their business, you know. This corps was augmented by five deputy sheriffs, fifteen or more constables and an uncounted number of volunteer busybodies, who guarded all exits from Greylock, quarreled over authority and ways and means, posed for pictures, gave interviews and never ventured up the mountain, after Sheriff Soule of Fort Massachusetts had been chased out by an avalanche—as he described it.

A party of Boy Scouts, trailing in through the Hopper, ignorant of the terrible danger of a "wild Indian at large," found the dead bloodhounds and reported them. Another party of hiking Scouts going to the Summit House on Greylock, from Pittsfield, discovered an abandoned automobile in the woods.



This final coup occurred on the twenty-fifth of June. It was the first actual, material clew to the presence of the elopers in the mountains. A guard was set near the car, on the theory, based on hope, that the owner might return to it and be captured.

Mrs. Fitzhugh Hardinge came to Lenox and became a guest at one of the great villas there. Reached by a reporter, on the phone, and asked concerning a report that she desired to find her daughter in order to annul her marriage, and further asked if it was true that her daughter was almost eighteen, she had replied:

"Of course I shall annul this ridiculous marriage. She is nothing but a child. My daughter *was seventeen this month.*"

The reporter could not see the panic in her face and he did not detect it in her voice. June twenty-fifth! Within three days, her daughter would also be "*eighteen this month.*"

Mrs. Hardinge motored to Williamstown and descended upon Mr. Rudyard Billings, too early in the morning. Mr. Billings had spent some of the money from the check that went to his head for something else which had gone to his head, also. But within half an hour he was stone sober, and, sitting gingerly on the edge of the tonneau seat of Mrs. Hardinge's car, was being borne swiftly to the little mountain village of New Ashford, whither, he learned, two of his precious private detectives had gone "on a clew."

Jasper Flinch, one of these detectives, was a man upon whom Rudyard Billings depended for a desperate last attempt to discover Anne Hardinge before the midnight of June twenty-seventh—for, privately, Mrs. Hardinge had informed Rudyard, that unless he or his private detectives did locate her and fetch her to her mother's arms before that hour, the jig was up.

"And you, personally, will take this

trip with the detectives," Mrs. Hardinge stated.

Rudyard started and seemed to shiver.

"I—I'm not much of a mountaineer," he stammered. "If my pilot hadn't deserted me——"

"As a flyer you are a good sort of worm," Mrs. Hardinge interrupted. "Rud, you are simply no good. If it had not been for the solemn promise I made to poor dear General Fitzhugh Hardinge on his deathbed, that I would unite the Hardinge and Billings families, I wouldn't think of you twice as Anne's husband. What are you shaking so for? Here, you need a drink, I think."

Mrs. Hardinge produced a silver flask from a pocket of the car, and Rudyard's eyes gleamed. After a moment he ceased shivering.

"I will do anything," he promised. "I will even lead the searching party into the mountains."

"If you lead them, it would be with a rope around your neck and a gun at your shoulder blade," snorted Mrs. Hardinge, who was sometimes a very plain-spoken woman. "But you will go with them. I know that. I promise you that, Rud. They've found this whippersnapper's car hidden in the woods and that means Anne is somewhere in the mountains, with him."

"The poor lamb!" mourned Rudyard, with a sort of leer.

"And I don't know as I blame her, too much," mused Mrs. Hardinge, off guard for a moment. "That young Reckenridge is a man. He's the only man who ever defied me and got away with it—if he has. I'm going to look up his record at Williams."

The chauffeur stopped in New Ashford and asked a man, who came out of one of the four houses, where New Ashford was.

"Lafayette, ye're here!" spake the inhabitant.



## CHAPTER XI.

## THE SACRED WOMAN.

FOR six days the three fugitives had remained undisturbed in their lofty hiding place, secure from discovery but unable to find a way of escape from their airy prison. The earthen wall in the ravine remained a barrier. One gentle shower was all the rain that fell and it served only to start off some clods and rocks from the face of the halted landslide, while the main bulk of it seemed to settle more firmly in place.

Clint wanted to make a trial descent of the Hopper cliff, but Anne protested and White Eagle joined her in dissuading him from the attempt.

"When my ankle is strong," White Eagle said, "I will descend and make a day's hunt in the woods. Possibly I can manage to find a farmhouse, and some rope for a ladder. Some way, we will all get down."

His confidence reassured them both. Besides, he had discarded his crutch already and was able, walking on the heel of his injured foot, to get about quite rapidly. He applied heroic and intensive measures to cure the injury—cold-water baths, cooking in the sun, massages, and when he made his regular morning tour of the little hunting grounds, to inspect his snares and try to stalk game for a bow shot, he wore the deerskin bandage to support the ankle.

He had got one more grouse, which he said was the mate to the cock partridge that was his first victim, and his snares had netted two cottontails. Likewise he had found a bed of wild leeks which gave them a delicious fresh vegetable for the beech-log table. A few wild strawberries grew in the grass of the clearing. With these additions to the original supplies Clint had brought up, and by careful rationing, they stretched their food to almost double the four days Clint had estimated it

might last. But they had less than a day's supply left on the evening of June twenty-fifth.

White Eagle had spent much time away from the camp center, either at his own rude wigwam or in the woods, but every evening he spent with his hosts, and always brought something he had made with his busy hands, as a surprise and as evidence he had not been idle.

This evening he astonished and delighted Anne by presenting to her a beautifully fashioned headdress, made of beadwork and partridge feathers and tufts of white rabbit hair, and a necklace made of bits of stone and bone, bored through, polished and colored. The articles were really beautiful.

"A part of your costume for the Sun Dance," he said, and then asked her to let him have an old pair of sneakers she had worn at times. With feathers, leather fringe and his paints he transformed them into moccasins, before her eyes.

"You will have to make up the rest," he told her, "with what materials you have at hand."

Anne's eyes glowed. She thanked him, then rose and went into the cave, with her new trappings.

White Eagle asked Clint to help him bring into camp, from the edge of the woods, a section of hollow log he had cut off squarely with the ax. With ax and with coals from the fire, he enlarged the hollow, then stretched his deerskin war bag tightly over one end, glued some tough paper from a slab of bacon on the other end, and produced a drumstick.

As a final surprise he brought forth an ingenious wooden flute he had made of a length of green poplar, with which he played a few wild, minor melodies, fingering the flute with one hand, while he tapped the drum with the other, in the simple one-two, one-two beat, the first emphasized, the second muted—



which is the basic rhythm of all savage melody.

Clint was about to call to Anne when, suddenly, she appeared in the firelit circle, costumed with a barbaric effect that brought a gasp to Clint's throat and caused White Eagle to nod in approval. She had taken two long, silken scarfs, one of white, one of bright red, draped them about her slim figure so that they contrasted with each other and the fringe dangled at her hips. The men were amazed at the sight.

Recklessly but artistically, she had cut into fringe the bottom of her khaki skirt; and with the fillet of beads and feathers bound about her flowing, ruddy hair, and the trick moccasins on her bare feet, she made a picture of Indian semblance, heightened by the flicker of firelight and the wild music of flute and drum.

She began to dance.

It was the first time Clint had seen Anne dance and he sat spellbound at the grace of her movements, as she improvised steps and gestures and circled about on the trodden grass, just within the fire glow.

Her dance, at first, was simply an expression of happiness, love of life, the exuberance of restored health, and it might have ended with a few moments of whirling, light-footed movement. But White Eagle, as she stopped, in a pose of finality, her slim, round arms held straight toward the sky, her figure raised on tiptoe, ceased playing his popular pipe and began to speak in a sort of chant, the while he continued the *tum-te-tum-te* beat of the log drum:

"You are the Sun Bride,  
Pure and beautiful,  
Chosen by the Council  
As the Sacred Woman.  
You and your husband  
Have taken a vow  
To sacrifice to the sun,  
To be brave and endure,  
In return for the gifts  
That the sun had made you."

Anne smiled, then her face grew serious as White Eagle nodded and resumed his shrill piping.

"You dance the story," he muttered, in a low tone.

Slowly, hesitantly, Anne began improvising again, her head bent and her attitude showing her doubt that she could interpret, in movement, the words of White Eagle's little chant story. But the persistent rhythm of the drum and the lilting, ceaseless whistle of the flute seemed to compel her, and her feet began to catch the rhythm, instinctively.

She danced the dance of dedication as the Sacred Woman of the Sun Dance, solemnly, beautifully—and then sank down before the fire, in finale, with her eyes dreaming into the blaze while the flute and the drum were still.

"To-morrow," said White Eagle slowly, "we shall dance the episode of the ordeal."

"Oh, did I do it at all right?" cried Anne anxiously.

"You danced from your heart and your soul," replied White Eagle gravely, "as the Sacred Woman would do, in her own fashion. It was sincere and beautiful."

Clint could not find anything to say. He had been deeply affected by the little episode. And he was thinking that, to-morrow—or perhaps the next day, would come their ordeal, in earnest.

They must find some way to escape from the plateau or they would starve. Clint did not believe that White Eagle could manage a descent, with his ankle stiffly bandaged. He had made a careful examination of the injury, twice a day, and from his experience with sprains and dislocations, at the hospital, he judged that White Eagle would be unable to bear his weight on the foot unless it were tightly supported.

Clint had secretly resolved to attempt the descent of the cliff, himself the next morning, very early, leaving White Eagle to guard and comfort



Anne, and to tell her that he would try to find a farmhouse and borrow or buy rope sufficient to reach from the top of the cliff to the Hopper bottom. He had not dared tell her of his decision for fear she would refuse to let him go, or, at least, suffer another attack of the nervous hysteria which was her heritage from the artificial life she had led up to a few days ago. He intended to tell White Eagle of his resolution, but had no opportunity to speak with him alone, this night.

White Eagle rose abruptly, rolled the heavy drum into shelter in the mouth of the cave and, bidding them good night, vanished in the darkness of the spruces, toward his solitary lodge at the edge of the spur of cliff which overlooked, to one side, the Hopper, to the other the Housatonic valley.

"White Eagle is tired!" exclaimed Anne. "He must be. He has never left us so early. But it seemed to me he walked more easily, just now."

"I helped him bandage his ankle before supper," Clint said. "It is going to be impossible for him to climb down that precipice to-morrow—or for several days, I am afraid."

"Never mind that! I'm not in a hurry to leave dreamland," said Anne softly. "I'm getting very fond of rabbit and partridge meat."

But Clint knew that the hunting possibilities were about exhausted, since for two nights White Eagle's snares had failed to catch anything. Yes, it was necessary for him to make the try, and to-morrow—for he felt that White Eagle was retiring early, for a purpose, to nurse his strength for some desperate undertaking of his own. He feared the Indian might attempt to clamber down the cliff and fall. If he fell, it would be to sure death on the broken rocks that showed at the bottom of the precipice.

To lose White Eagle, in that manner, would be a tragedy indeed—more ter-

rible, perhaps, than the death of the Indian, himself. It might mean three deaths, two of them from starvation. Not a sight or sound of searchers had reached them for six days. The menace of the avalanche had kept them away only too well. The isolation Clint had wished and worked for seemed to have been accomplished, with a vengeance. They were marooned in mid-air.

Clint extinguished the fire. It was suddenly very dark and lonely. The moon rose late and was not yet above the horizon, and the stars were obscured by clouds. The distant hoot of a locomotive whistle, far down in the southern valley, served only to emphasize the isolation and to make more cruel the irony of it.

Involuntarily, Clint cast his glance in the direction of White Eagle's hidden wigwam, beyond the thick spruces. He caught a cheerful glimmer of fire. Evidently the Indian had not turned in. He must be at work on some trinket, or attending his ankle. Clint said nothing to Anne, for he had a vague fear of causing her uneasiness.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE ORDEAL.

CLINT awoke with a start, in gray dawn, fearing he had overslept the early hour he had planned to utilize for his ordeal. The sky was overcast and threatening as he slipped out, having slept almost fully clad. Anne slumbered soundly, her arm over her forehead, as if she had roused and sought to shut off the dim light that pried at her eyelids. Clint dropped the blanket screen to the cave, got into sneakers and sweater and went swiftly through the spruces toward White Eagle's camp.

A tin pail, which White Eagle had borrowed to heat water for steaming his ankle, hung on a stick over the ashes of the fire, with dark-colored fluid in it. All about the fireplace were strewn



bits of thin bark—a litter that surprised Clint, for the Indian was scrupulously neat about camp, and this caused him to wonder what sort of brew White Eagle had been making.

Clint spoke White Eagle's name in an ordinary tone but got no reply from the low hut. He stepped to the door and called again, and getting no answer, dropped to his hands and knees, a stab of apprehension going through him.

The lodge was empty. The single blanket White Eagle had consented to accept from Clint's store was folded neatly on the mattress of spruce twigs, the gorgeous war bonnet hung from a lodgepole, and some trinkets were spread out on a slab of bark beside the bed.

Somehow the emptiness and silence of the little wigwam seemed ominous, though Clint tried to assure himself that White Eagle must have gone on an early round of his snares. He was a little chagrined that the Indian had got up before him. He had wanted to spring his decision on White Eagle, as a surprise, and put it into execution before the latter could protest or prevent him.

A beaten trail led north, along the verge of the cliff, into the spruces and the thicket beyond, the trap-line trail. Clint followed it, and found evidence that White Eagle had traveled the wet grass not long before.

The trail of fresh footprints ended with startling abruptness—right at the edge of the precipice, near the spot where White Eagle had climbed up and started to crawl into the camp, the place where Clint intended to slip over the edge, and clamber down.

There were plain evidences that something had slid over the grass-grown, overhanging edge of the cliff—a bush with its shoots bent and bruised, freshly scraped earth and loosened stones. Clint knelt and peered down into the misty depths which yawned almost three hundred feet below.

Everything that had occurred last evening fitted together, in Clint's memory, as part of a stealthy plan. The Indian's talk of an ordeal and a dance to celebrate it, his camp fire gleaming late, after his abrupt and early departure from Clint's camp, and then the strewn bark, the dark brew of some mysterious liquor in the pail.

"Well, he has beaten me to it," he muttered, hardly knowing whether to be angry or chagrined—or fearful. "He has gone down into the Hopper. *But is he alive or dead?*"

The misty depths refused an answer. Clint could not see the bottom, and not until the day had grown older would the mist clear, if at all. Rain threatened from the sullen sky, with the promise of a dark, damp day if it did not rain. Doubt and disappointment mingled in Clint's mind as he crouched on hands and knees and stared into the silent, deep pit of the Hopper. He could not chance it now and leave Anne alone. It might easily be her death sentence—if he fell—or even if he made it to the bottom safely, for he feared she would try to follow him.

Twenty feet down from the lip of the cliff a gnarled, late-blooming mountain laurel had found rooting in a crevice of the rock, offering the first of a series of precarious steps down the almost perpendicular descent. Cliff was tempted to scramble down to it and try from there to see the bottom, but he decided that he would be no better off. It was a difficult and puzzling problem.

The laurel thrust out its thick foliage and dainty blooms far enough to hide the slope below from Clint, except for a glimpse of what looked like a trailing vine or a crack in the rock. Perhaps it was only a dark streak caused by water seeping out.

For a long time Clint crouched and considered the situation. His conclusion burst from his lips at last:

"White Eagle is either trying for us



—or for himself alone—or else he is beyond trying.”

Slowly, with bent head, his face grave and lips set, he returned to camp and mechanically began building a fire. Anne surprised him sitting on the log, staring moodily at the fire.

“What is the matter, Clint?” she exclaimed.

“Nothing,” he denied, forcing a smile. “White Eagle has undertaken the ordeal alone.”

“The ordeal?” Then she caught the meaning of his unconsciously figurative expression. “You mean—he has gone down the cliff?”

He nodded.

“Oh! And—is he safe?” she cried.

“Oh, of course,” he asserted quickly. “Why, I could make it myself, easily, and—”

“And that,” Anne burst out, gripping his hands, “is why you got up so early and closed down the blanket, to let me sleep! You—were going to try it—alone!”

“Why I—I went to—to ask White Eagle’s advice,” he stammered, “and found he had gone, himself.”

“Clint, you were going to go down that terrible precipice without my knowing!” Anne insisted, nervously.

“It—it isn’t bad, Anne—after you get started,” he argued feebly.

“Then why are you so worried about White Eagle?” she demanded shrewdly.

“Well, it will be several hours before we’ll know what success he has,” he began. “It is a long way out of the Hopper. He may have to go clear to the New Ashford road to find rope and the—”

“You are afraid he may have fallen,” she interrupted him. “Clint, don’t be foolish about me. Don’t try to hide things. Think. To-morrow will be my birthday, and if you do not believe I am a woman, grown, to-day, you will have to admit it, to-morrow. You think you have married a child.”

“I think I’ve married the most wonderful, beautiful—”

“Yes, I know—and that’s nice of you; but I want to be considered a woman, too, a real wife. Tell me everything!”

“I don’t know anything more,” Clint mumbled miserably, “because I can’t see the bottom. It’s too misty.”

“Oh!”

He had told her everything. Their dreamland had become a castle of doubt.

Anne reacted against the threat of despair in an astonishing manner. She ran into the cave and came out decked with the headdress, moccasins and drapes she had put on for the Sun Dance prelude.

“I am the Sacred Woman,” she announced, with an eloquent gesture, her head held high, her eyes shining. “I am ready for my ordeal. I shall be brave. The sun hides his face from us because we have not been steadfast in faith. I shall dance a prayer to the sun to shine again, to help clear away the mists of doubt and fear. Beat the drum!”

Clint was transfixed with amazement but, wishing to humor her, and believing the exercise of her whim might divert her thoughts from the dark conjectures which gripped him, he got the log drum and began to tap it, lightly, in the rhythmic *tum-te, tum-te, tum-te* beat to which Anne had danced, by the firelight, under White Eagle’s urging.

Anne began a rapid *pas seul*, which gradually evolved into a series of moving tableaux in which she appealed to the clouded sun to burst through the clouds and give them light and cheer, to lift the mists of doubt; and symbolically she appealed also to the Great Spirit to give them strength and endurance to brave the period of uncertainty, to help them and guide them.

Her dance was truly a prayer, solemnly beautiful, but she did not end



it on this note. Beating time with her hands to speed the tempo, she improvised a dance of deliverance, running into the grass to pluck the violets and the waxen-cupped bloodroot with orange eyes which grew there, flung them in air and let them rain down on her head, and her smile burst into laughter as she finished, in a whirl, before her husband, who rose to catch her in his arms.

"There!" she panted. "Now I am happy. And you must be happy, too. Let us eat and drink and be merry. Tomorrow——"

Clint's face paled, but she gave him a roguish smile.

"To-morrow is my birthday," she added.

They ate. But they choked down their frugal breakfast. Lumps rose in their throats. Slowly their smiles faded and they began looking stealthily at each other with questioning eyes, each doubting the other's mood.

Then, suddenly, the sun broke through the clouds in the east and made a mist bow with one end dipping behind the noble head of Greylock, the other dipping down beyond the Hoosacs.

Anne sprang up with a glad cry, and Clint turned his face to the east, too, to watch this age-old glory of sun and mist and mountain, with its mysteriously beautiful promise. They were only recalled from the new dream of hope by a sound behind them which startled them.

White Eagle stood there, his dark face and eyes lighted up with something more than the light of the sun.

"On the trap line?" inquired Clint quickly. "Any luck?"

"No luck on the trap line," replied White Eagle.

Clint flung some bacon in the frying pan. It was the last of their meat. He poured in flapjack batter made from the last cupful of flour. The butter was all gone. Some dry beans, a jar of jam,

soda, salt and a few odds and ends were all that remained of their provisions.

"No luck with the snares," White Eagle said, "but I have feasted on wild strawberries until I can eat little else."

"Where did you find them?" cried Anne. "I thought we had got them all."

"In the Hopper," replied White Eagle quietly.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE WATTAP TRAIL.

CLINT looked incredulous. But his expert eye noted that White Eagle, when he walked, stepped firmly on his feet with no evidence of limping or of pain. It flashed upon him that the wily Indian must have been shamming for several days, to make it appear he was incapacitated for an attempt to descend the cliff. Still, he could hardly believe White Eagle had been able to make the difficult trip down and up again in so short a time. In answer to his question White Eagle smiled.

"Yes, I went down and a little way along the trail which follows the brook. It has been traveled by men and boys since I left it a week ago. But there was no one near, this morning. I followed it for a mile. There are fine trout in the stream. Many berries. Birds. We shall have fresh food and plenty of it. But we must start at once, while the mist hangs and before a wind rises—and before any one comes in," he finished significantly. "It is the only trail out."

"We? You mean—all of us?" ejaculated Clint.

"All of us."

Clint shook his head decidedly.

"Not without ropes. I would not let Anne try it," he said.

"I'll chance it," cried Anne, "if White Eagle says, 'Go.' I am strong and well and I do not need to look down."

White Eagle regarded her with an admiring gaze.

"The woman with courage is stronger



than the brave man," he said. "I say that you can go down without danger of falling."

Clint sprang up angrily.

"White Eagle, you are wrong to encourage her to this desperate thing!" he cried. "You and I can go down—or I can, and get rope and climb up again and lower Anne down the cliff. If it is so easy for you, with your stiff ankle, it will be easier for me."

"It will be easier for all of us to go at once," White Eagle said, smiling. "I am sure, now. I did not wish to rouse false hope. I had made the ladder but could not be certain it would hold. It does."

"A ladder?" cried Clint and Anne, together.

"Yes. I finished it during the night. It took long to make it, for the spruce roots were short and it took many, many of them. All had to be soaked in hot water to make them pliable. It is a ladder of *wattap*, strands of spruce root braided. It is stronger than rope."

"You mean to tell us—that you have made a ladder three hundred feet long out of spruce roots!" cried Clint, staring at the Indian.

"It lacks twenty feet at the top—and at the bottom," White Eagle replied apologetically, "but I think we can finish it out with blankets—or perhaps with canvas strips from your cots. Come, I will show you."

Clint grasped White Eagle's hand, impulsively and with a fierce grip. His face was a picture of apology and eager joy.

"I am sorry I doubted you, White Eagle," he said. "I'll confess that I did." He told him of his own plan and discovery of White Eagle's absence.

"Under the ordeal of anxiety the strong heart flutters," White Eagle commented. "I kept a secret from you, but it was only because this is not the spruce of the West and I was not sure the roots would be strong enough—or

that I could find enough of them lying close to the surface. But the soil is thin and they run far and are long."

"Well, I'll be damned!" exclaimed Clint, with sudden remembrance. "I saw those channels in the soil and thought moles had made them. It was you, pulling up roots!"

They went to the brink of the cliff and at a point some distance from the bent, bruised bush Clint had noticed. They could see plainly enough now the long, slender double strand of the ladder, with rungs of maple thrust through the strands of this natural cordage which the Indians have used for centuries, to lace their birch-bark canoes, their wigwams, and for a dozen other purposes requiring strength like animal sinew. The top of the ladder was fastened to the base of the laurel bush which had obscured Clint's view. It trailed down out of sight below.

To Clint, with Anne's safety in mind, it seemed a slender and precarious line to trust, but White Eagle had tested it twice with his weight, which was greater than Clint's. It was the only way to get down. He gave Anne a swift, side-long glance. She caught it and her head went up.

"Not afraid!" she declared, her dark eyes darker with the emotion of her brave purpose. "White Eagle says it is safe and it is. I shall look up at you, all the time."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### IN THE HOPPER.

BEFORE the sun had got high enough to look down into the Hopper and gather the mists which trailed the tree-tops the three fugitives were safe in the depths, resting after the descent of more than one hundred long steps of a stretching, creaking ladder. White Eagle had gone first, sliding his body down to the laurel, where he aided Clint in bridging the gap for Anne, with the braided canvas, robbed from the cots.



Anne followed. Clint detached the canvas section and slid down to the little ledge. They had flung their clothing and blankets down in bundles into the trees. White Eagle took the canvas section with him to piece out the bottom of the *wattap*. On their backs Clint and White Eagle bore their precious bows and arrows, the latter in quivers of bark.

Danger was not over. Indeed, it loomed ahead, more ominously the farther they went along the trail, they believed.

The footprints of half a dozen boys and of two men appeared in the trail. White Eagle found trail signs and announced the boys were Scouts, who evidently had found the carcasses of the dogs and had buried them, then had guided men to the spot. He led them off the trail, half a mile from the base of the cliff, into a clearing where wild strawberries carpeted the ground, and they feasted while they talked and laid plans for the journey into civilization—and its dangers.

"One of us must be trail leader," White Eagle said. "We shall hold council and choose."

"It had better be me," Clint said quickly. "They've been hunting the Hopper for you. I'll go ahead."

"It had better be me," White Eagle argued. "I have traveled the trail and know the crooks and bends."

"I vote for White Eagle," said Anne.

Clint bowed to the will of the council. But he was troubled at the arrangement. He had an uneasy feeling, as he regarded the trampled trail, a fear that some outraged Bluenose of the hill towns or some nervous gun toter might shoot at sight, meeting an Indian whose arrows were known to have slain the bloodhounds. For himself he did not fear. If he were in the lead he could parley, delay, and give White Eagle the chance to disappear. All he needed was time. Scarce twelve hours re-

mained before the clock of the law would place Anne beyond the reach of an annulment decree.

His plan was a slow journey out, camp for the night on the edge of the Hopper woods, and then, by daylight of the twenty-seventh, the open road, into Williamstown. There they would go direct to the home of a minister who had been college chaplain when Clint was a student. The religious ceremony, Clint felt, would forever banish any danger of an enforced separation from Anne. And Anne wished it.

Their first task—a necessity—was to find food. White Eagle visited the brook while Clint prowled about in the alder thicket near the clearing, and by chance almost stepped on a cock pheasant, running through the crooked mazes toward a swamp. He managed to wound it with an arrow. It was unable to fly and after a wild scramble through muck and bogs he captured and dispatched the big bird.

He flushed a covey of grouse but might as well have whistled for wind as try to knock one down, on the wing. White Eagle, however, hooked a handsome string of mountain trout, which were thick in the brook. This was a land of plenty, compared to the lofty acre they had scoured of its pitiful handful of game. With prodigious appetites they ate fish, pheasant and strawberries, talking in whispers, and hidden in a ledge of rock off the trail, where their fire would not be seen.

An hour's rest and White Eagle strung up his bow and shouldered one of the packs, and Clint followed suit. They got back to the trail and strung out as White Eagle had suggested, Clint twenty paces behind the Indian, Anne ten paces behind Clint, so that only one might be seen at a time from ahead.

The element of possible surprise in the thick woods kept Clint strung at high pitch. So eager and anxious was he for White Eagle's safety that he kept



shortening the distance between them, to keep him in sight. And White Eagle, turning, would signal him to drop back. The trail was narrow and followed all the bends of the brook, which gave them the only far views they could get, through its wider places.

Drooping branches closed down above them, the steep slopes of the mountains poured down on each side, with now and then a small stream flowing in, adding its grist to the Hopper. The trail was crowded almost into the main stream when it came to the small mountain that sprawled across the Hopper, forcing the brook in a half circle, eastward.

For three hours they went slowly but steadily on, with no sight or sound save those of the woods. Gradually the beauty and quiet of the June forest lulled their senses and quieted their fears. The valley widened, the trail grew broader.

"Are you tired?" Clint inquired of Anne, dropping back to where she trudged.

"Not a bit. Let me carry something."

"Carry that," he chuckled, kissing her.

Then suddenly he whirled and crouched to peer under the branches, ahead in the direction of some sound he had heard.

"What is it?" Anne whispered at his ear.

"Probably the brook," he replied. "But I'm going ahead now. You wait until I am around that bend before you follow."

He hurried now. Something pricked his senses with a threat. He did not know what it was warned him. He had taken but a few paces when his ears were shocked by a loud report, a shot. He leaped forward, around a bend, and saw White Eagle staggering back, an arrow on his bow.

The Indian cast a backward glance,

saw Clint and waved a gesture of warning, even as he stumbled and fell to the ground, clutching at his left arm with his other hand. Clint choked a cry that rose to his lips, and went down on one knee behind a hemlock bough which drooped low.

He drew a long, flint-tipped war arrow from his quiver and fitted it to the bowstring, but dropped it on second thought and chose one of the heavy-headed, blunt arrows, tipped with hardwood, charred in fire—a "man stopper," as White Eagle had called it.

A gray-clad figure plunged through the alders ahead and emerged in Clint's view, an automatic held ahead of him, menacingly.

From far down the trail came a voice. Clint recognized it, with a leap of grim joy in his pulses.

"What didja hit, Jasper?" it inquired in slurred accents. "Didja wing a grouse?"

"I winged a wild Indian," harshly replied the other. "He was tryin' to pull somethin'. A bow and arrow! Well, you murderin' snake!"

He stood directly over White Eagle now, scowling down at the Indian who seemed badly hurt and unable to rise, but who was now fumbling fiercely at his bow, as he half lay on the ground. Jasper aimed the automatic, cursing.

Clint launched his heavy arrow for the head of the threatening gunman. It struck with a thud and dropped to the ground. Jasper Flinch, detective, sagged at the knees, his gun dropped from his hand and he went down with a grunt on his face. Something had struck him a terrific blow in the temple.

A minute later Rudyard Billings staggered out of the brush which almost blocked the trail at this point, and stared open mouthed and stupidly into the narrowed eyes of a man in soiled, rough clothes, who held a bow and arrow in his hands and whom, at first, he failed to recognize. It was when Clint spoke



that Rudyard knew him, and knew a sort of fear that he had never felt in his life before.

"Take this and tie that murdering friend of yours up, with his hands behind him," Clint said, in a tone that struck a sobering chill to Rudyard Billings and warned him to obey implicitly and swiftly, as Clint tossed a strip of strong canvas to him.

## CHAPTER XV.

### MARCH!

CLINT gave immediate attention to White Eagle. The Indian's left arm and side were covered with blood. The arm hung limp. White Eagle said that it was numb. He could not lift it. Clint turned to call to Anne and found her standing directly behind him, and looking as if she were about to faint.

"Get some water in the tea pail, Anne," Clint ordered her brusquely. "Take a good drink and bring the rest to me. I'll need a lot."

Rud Billings looked up at the mention of Anne's name, got to his feet, made an elaborate bow and advanced. He swayed unsteadily, his face wore a flabby, foolish smile.

"Allow me!" he suggested, trying to take the tea pail from Anne.

"Hands off!" Clint snapped. He could see Billings' condition plainly.

Billings had fortified himself for the ordeal of trailing into the Hopper, with fiery cider brandy which Jasper Flinch had procured from a native of the cider-apple region where he had been passing his time. It made him insensible to all caution, and almost contemptuous of danger. He made another bow with a mocking grimace at Clint and a confidential leer at Anne.

"'Sall right," he declared. "Rest of my men will be along directly. No use you gettin' high hat, Reckinridge. The jig's up. Got a whole army of men lookin' for you."

White Eagle muttered something to Clint. Clint, in one bound, reached Billings, striking out hard at his pasty face. As Billings toppled and fell, Clint swept up the automatic Flinch had dropped and stood over the prostrate Rudyard. The latter raised himself dazedly on his elbow and felt of the spot where Clint's fist had landed, under his eye. It was puffing up and tender.

"The first of your men who comes up this trail will stop a bullet," Clint declared in a tone that penetrated Rud's mask of courage. "You'd better sing out and warn them."

"There—there's nobody else," stammered Billings. "Only spoofin', you know. Take a joke a little easier, can't you?"

"This is no time for spoofing, Billings. If you really want to carry water, use your hat to give your gunman a shower. He needs refreshment."

Anne brought a pail of water and Clint washed White Eagle's arm. He found that the bullet had struck the point of the elbow, grazing the bone, then had plowed up the arm, scoring the long triceps muscles and emerging at the shoulder.

Apparently Flinch had fired point-blank at White Eagle's chest as the Indian faced down the trail. His bent bow arm had saved him. It was an ugly but not serious wound. The numbness of the arm came from the bullet blow on the capitellum or funny bone. Clint applied tourniquets below the entering wound and where the bullet had left the flesh, placed the arm in a sling and offered White Eagle his hand to help him to his feet.

During the whole proceeding White Eagle had been silent, never taking his eyes from the form of Jasper Flinch, his gaze speaking volumes. He started toward the detective as if his sole thought was to get his hands on the man who had shot him. At the first step on his right foot he crumpled to his knees.



"It is my ankle again," he said. "I must have twisted it when I fell."

He began crawling on his hands and knees toward Flinch. Billings, coming from the brook, with a hatful of water, recoiled as White Eagle looked up at him and with a gesture, warned him to stand back. The Indian seized the detective's thick hair and twisted his head about for a look at the face. A long, narrow-eyed glance and he let the head drop, with a grunt of satisfaction.

"I wish to remember that face," he explained to Clint. "It is the face of a man with no mercy or fairness. He is from the city, a hired killer. I was drawing on a partridge when his bullet struck me at close quarters. I had not even seen him."

"Who is your fine friend?" Clint demanded of Billings.

"An officer of the law," was Rud's meaning reply.

Clint rolled Flinch over, threw open his coat and in a vest pocket found the token of his authority. It was no more than a private detective's badge. The man had no more license to carry or fire a gun than any citizen.

"An officer of a private army of which you are the general, Mr. Billings," Clint commented. "By the way, let me have your gun."

Billings produced, sheepishly, a shining, pearl-handled revolver, and Clint, with a grin, handed it to Anne.

"Mr. Billings makes you a wedding present," he drawled. "How did you get here?" he demanded of Rud.

Billings, somewhat sobered and almost entirely cowed, it appeared, told how he and Flinch had hired a flivver at New Ashford, driven up the Hopper road to the brook, left the car at the bridge and trailed in.

"How far from here?"

"Miles."

"It can't be many," Clint decided, then turned to Anne and White Eagle. "Shall we camp here or go on? Can

you travel with a crutch again, White Eagle?"

"I will stay here while you go on," White Eagle said. "With me there is too much danger for you. Let me stay with him." He pointed to Flinch.

Clint's scalp prickled. He shook his head. He sensed a reversion to savagery in White Eagle, an implacable determination for revenge on the man who had ambushed him. Clint dared not leave him. Besides, his wound needed better care than Clint could give it here in the woods.

"We all go—or stay," Clint declared.

He went to seek a sapling for White Eagle's crutch.

It took two hats full of cold water to revive Jasper Flinch. He came to himself, groaning, sick and dazed, a lump the size of an egg on his temple. Rage succeeded his sickness, however, when he found himself trussed up and helpless. He began to curse, regardless of Anne. White Eagle waved her to step back, squatted before the raving Flinch and stared silently into his eyes.

In a moment Flinch's curses faltered, his eyes shifted as the stern, savage face thrust itself close to his and piercing glances bored into his. His lips worked but no sound came, save a gurgle in his throat. What message the Indian managed to convey to him to affect him so powerfully, was a mystery, but it quieted Flinch from that moment.

Rud Billings, having been set in motion, continued, almost automatically, to carry water. He was parched with thirst. Clint, when he returned from the thicket, trimming a crotched sapling, found Flinch white and frightened looking, under the inexorable eyes of his crippled victim. He was like a man hypnotized.

"You will go along with us, Flinch," Clint said. "And make no effort to escape or to harm us. Unless you agree I shall leave you here with the Indian."

Flinch's teeth chattered as he prom-



ised to be a model prisoner. But Rud Billings was a different problem. On his trips to the brook he had repeatedly refortified himself from a flask and had become defiant.

"I'm authorized to take Anne to her mother," he blustered. "I came in here to get her. You might as well be decent about it, Reckenridge. No good trying to smash the law with fists or bullets—or arrows. You're wanted as the abductor of a minor."

Although his words sent a flash of alarm as well as anger through Clint, he gave no answer save an order to move, and when Rud refused, jabbed him in the ribs with the automatic.

"Well, all right," Rud snarled. "It's your own funeral. I'll give you over to the sheriff at New Ashford. And there may be Federal charges besides."

"One more word," Clint exploded, "and I'll arrange so that you won't be able to utter the next one! March!"

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE MOTHER.

THE distance proved much shorter than the "miles" Rud had indicated. Just at dusk the cavalcade emerged at a wooden bridge where the flivver was parked. A barbed-wire fence had to be negotiated. Flinch and Billings got down and rolled under, but White Eagle could not do it easily, and Clint discarded his pack and laid the automatic in the grass to help him and Anne.

A cry from White Eagle warned him. He turned, fumbling for the gun, and saw the pair across the fence in flight toward the car, which was behind a clump of bushes, headed out. The detective had his hands free and was helping Billings along. They leaped a ditch and stumbled up the bridge approach. Clint abandoned the futile search for the gun, which seemed to have slid away, vaulted the barbed wire and started in pursuit.

At the road Flinch turned. He seemed to divine that Clint was upon him, and had no weapon. He was a big man, powerfully built, and he had courage. This was his principal if not his only virtue. Clint came on, full speed, leaping the ditch at one bound, and dashed full tilt up the bank. Flinch swung a wicked uppercut at his unguarded chin. Clint ducked it as he had ducked White Eagle's straight arm, instinctively, and clamped his arms about Flinch's thighs as he lunged forward. The detective went backward with a thud into the road.

Rud was already in the flivver, jamming down the starter. The motor sputtered, snorted, shook and died. Clint tore loose from Flinch, bounded down the road, caught a top brace as the flivver lurched forward, dragged himself onto the running board and got his hands on Rud. In a moment Rud went rolling into muddy ditch water, and Clint, at the wheel, backed the car toward the bridge.

Jasper Flinch, dazed again, but purposeful, stood sturdily in the road as the flivver approached. Clint swerved it and struck him, knocked him off his feet again. Anne was under the fence and White Eagle, using his crutch as a vaulting pole, came over the top and across the ditch behind her.

Clint swung both doors open, got Anne's hand and half lifted her in beside him while White Eagle made for the rear door. Flinch appeared on that side, and White Eagle swung his maple bludgeon so that it whistled through the air. Flinch ducked only a fraction of a second ahead of a cracked skull. He ran around and got hold of Clint's arm, as White Eagle got into the back seat.

"You can't take that car!" he snarled.

White Eagle rapped his knuckles with the butt of his crutch and the flivver lurched forward.

"Hey!" called Rud, as it flashed past him.



"It's miles to the State road," called Clint. "Walk it!"

"I had been wondering," he said to Anne, with a chuckle, "how I'd manage to get the whole crowd into the flivver and get rid of them when I wanted to. The problem solved itself. Hang on! Hold everything!"

The road, except through the swamp stretch near the brook, was in fair condition, though narrow, and they whizzed through the avenue of brush at full speed, fortunately meeting no one. A six-mile run of the dirt road ended abruptly at a gate, closed with a single rail. The headlights picked it up too late. The car crashed through, snapping the rail in two, cracking both lenses, and plunged out onto the macadam of the State highway.

For two miles the flivver whizzed along the smooth surface, northward, until, rounding a bend and at a corner, Clint braked down hard as he saw a State trooper in the road, his motor cycle lying near by. He was signaling for a stop.

"Well, where are you heading for in such a hurry—with cracked lamps?" demanded the officer, coming close to peer into the car.

Clint cast a glance back at White Eagle. The Indian had wrapped himself to the nose in an old robe he had found in the bottom of the car.

"Well," said Clint slowly, "I'm rushing a sick man to the isolation hospital. Smallpox—I think."

"Get out of here!" yelled the trooper, springing back as if he had been shot. He was so startled he did not even get the number of the plates.

At eight o'clock the flivver wheeled up to the side door of an old-fashioned house on an elm-shaded side street of the pretty college town. A maid came to the door as Clint blew the horn.

"Tell the padre I've cut classes and want him to help me save my credits,"

Clint said to her. "It's Reckless—in a heck of a hurry."

The maid, a middle-aged woman, was accustomed to wild and cryptic messages like this. She sniffed but went in with her news. Clint got out and met the Reverend Dr. Henry Thorn in the tiny hall. The gray-haired, kindly old minister, seasoned to all sorts and conditions of appeals as chaplain and adviser extraordinary to hosts of youths, in and out of trouble, recognized Clint as a former favorite, though Reckenridge had not been a pious professor of formal faith. Clint plunged immediately into an explanation. Padre Thorn listened, judged, believed, sympathized and welcomed.

"Yes, I know all about you—and your Indian," he said. "And I know he's a fugitive. A persecuted missionary, rather. I consider it is my Christian duty to harbor him, just as I would hope for mercy if I were a missionary in a pagan country and sought protection from a priest of their faith. Bring him in—and your wife, too. Tryphenia! Take care of this poor, tired girl. In the spare room. Fetch plenty of towels and clean clothes and put them in the bathroom."

Within a short half hour Clint, stripped to his underclothing, was busy in the bathroom with a set of surgical instruments which Doctor Thorn had borrowed from the college physician next door—"For an experiment one of my boys has to perform," he had explained. Doctor Thorn drove the flivver down a side street and parked it casually in the shadow of an elm.

Tryphenia toiled with pins and needle, taking in, as best she could, a beautiful white-silk dress which had been Mrs. Thorn's—her wedding dress. It was to be Anne's wedding dress.

At twelve fifteen o'clock the morning of June twenty-seventh Mrs. Fitzhugh Hardinge, in her spite at the Greylock



hotel, which could be seen from Doctor Thorn's back windows, sat listening, with an expression of mingled disgust and despair, to a wild tale as told by Rudyard Billings—an unbelievable story of an Indian attack, an assault on his person by a savage white man armed with bow and arrow—and with rude, hard fists; a story of seeing Anne, dressed like a savage, and seemingly under the domination of the uncouth Reckenridge, and of his enforced five-mile walk when his hired car was stolen from him.

The telephone tinkled in its Watteau doll inclosure. Rudyard answered it.

"Yes? No; Mrs. Hardinge is indisposed."

"Give me that phone!"

"I beg pardon. It is——"

"This is Anne, mother. Do you know what day this is?"

"Find where they are?" whispered Rudyard at her ear.

Mrs. Hardinge's face was quivering, but her hand, which swept Rudyard away, was firm.

"Anne, my dear, come to me and all will be forgiven. Rudyard is here, waiting——"

"I don't want to see Rudyard."

"——waiting to be told what a despicable, contemptible coward he is," Mrs. Hardinge continued, in a somewhat louder tone than seemed necessary, over the phone. "Anne, if you are not already married, by a minister——"

"We have just been, mother. At twelve one o'clock, exactly. We got the time by radio and we're sure it is correct, too. But do you know what day it is?"

*There are times when words fail. There are some stories you cannot talk about and give a good idea of their superiority. We feel that way about "The Red Eagles of the Tyrol," by Edgar L. Cooper, opening the September 20th issue. Instead of talking, we want to leap and shout out our enthusiasm.. Turn to the Chat for more information on this story.*

"Oh, it's your birthday, I suppose, Anne. Only eighteen—and married!"

"And you were only sixteen, remember—and married."

"Rudyard is going, Anne. He is gone. Bring your *man* with you."

Mrs. Fitzhugh Hardinge had discovered that Clinton Reckenridge was one of the "Roanoke Reckenridges." It would be nice, she thought, to be able to speak of her daughter's husband as a "real Southern aristocrat." But, just now, she seemed to be fond of the word, "*man*." General Fitzhugh Hardinge had been quite a man—when he married her.

"——and so, we are going to have a second wedding trip, to Wyoming," Anne was explaining to her mother, an hour later, "to visit an Indian gentleman of the Arapahoes. A genuine, native American aristocrat, with all the culture of centuries behind him. The son of a chief. And when we come back, we shall expect you to have all arrangements made for the première at the Indian theater. You'll attend to it, mother, won't you?"

"Nobody in New York ever thought of sponsoring such a unique thing," murmured Mrs. Hardinge to herself. "Oh, yes, Anne, I suppose I'll have to," she said, aloud. "I suppose I'm lucky you didn't marry an Indian."

"Not at all," cried Anne, "because I am to be adopted as White Eagle's sister when we get to the Wind River Reservation, so that I can act authentically as the Sacred Woman in the Sun Dance."

Mrs. Hardinge threw up her hands. Clint opened his arms.



# High Adventure *at* Teikell



By  
**Captain Ralph R. Guthrie**

*Author of "The Avalanche," Etc.*

You wouldn't think that a lonely telegraph station, manned by a single soldier, in an Alaskan outpost, would be much of a place for adventure. After you read this story, however, you will think so—in fact you'll *know* so.

## A COMPLETE STORY

THE military telegraph station of Teikell is two stories in height, of stripped pine logs, painted white where they project at the corners. The sashes and doors are spotlessly white, the roof a brilliant, light red. Grouped gracefully around the main buildings are a commodious garage, a food cache on stilts and a line of sixteen dog houses facing the flagpole. Sitting on its plot of green, or buff grass—dependent on the season—the banner snapping at its halyards in the foreground, the picture is enchanting.

Here the United States government, through its signal corps, has picked up the gauntlet of a challenging Alaskan wilderness—has done it most impudently, too. For the telegraph station,

though sixty-five miles from the nearest white settlement, is manned by a single soldier, rank of private first class, specialist second class.

Teikell is approached by a series of short curves in the Richardson Highway linking Valdez with Fairbanks. The road shoots in and out, up and down, following the Teikell River. This is wide, shallow, turbulent as a cataract, ice cold and exceedingly noisy. It turns sharply away from the road before it reaches the station, and passes behind into the shadow of a mountain into whose wooded side it cuts like an emery wheel. The name, in Siwash, means "no fish," and there are neither salmon, trout nor grayling in its silt-laden tide.



Tourist automobiles thunder by it now on the road to Fairbanks, and Tessie from New York and Tillie from Oklahoma breathe signs of ecstasy, sensing the romance as well as the loneliness in this one-man outpost. If they chance to stop for a drink of water or a meal fresh from the tin, they sigh more than once. Private Wilbur H. Dillon is handsome, well bred and generally the sort of young man to induce sighs. During the two short months of the tourist season he meets many fair visitors who act as though they would gladly pursue the acquaintanceship, but they can't because they have whirlwind schedules that must be adhered to as rigorously as he must follow those laid down by his chief operator at Seattle.

During the remainder of the year he is alone, landlocked and sometimes homesick. Reveille and retreat solemnly conducted in frozen desolation, the clicking key carrying fur quotations and grub orders, a few dusty books and a painted picture of a girl on the dresser!

Such a girl!

Never again will a creature of such transcendental loveliness pass over that trail or find refreshment in his cabin. A face symmetrically oval, hair of wondrous, wavy gold, skin like new ivory and teeth even and pearly between softly curved lips inclined to pout. All of these, and yet her eyes, large and of malachite blue, are the dominating feature. They are not babyish. None the less, they are appealing and wistfully sympathetic, with a hint of petulance and self-determination. Eyes of the modern girl coming out of her teens into womanhood.

In the fall of 1926, the signal corps happened to have two men stationed at Teikell, both privates—Dillon and Monty Smith. The latter had been on the job for years and was senior in charge. Dillon, with nineteen months in the arctic, had reported at the end

of his sophomore year in college. They were more or less congenial to each other and it wasn't so lonesome, for there was more time to fish and hunt. Smith, an expert lineman, was brawny, active and a bit masterful; a first-class soldier, but had a reputation, earned elsewhere, of being somewhat hard boiled.

From the first the two got along splendidly. Neither was lazy, careless or incompetent. Both, in fact, did their work with pride. They always would have gotten along, too, if a certain thing hadn't happened in that same autumn of 1926 to upset things, and cause the older soldier to apply for a transfer. He said Dillon was "lovesick" and hard to manage. It occurred while Smith was miles away "shooting trouble" on the tripod telegraph line and living out of his grub pack.

One morning Dillon received a message from his superior at Valdez. It said:

DILLON, Teikell: Make necessary arrangements secure witnesses marriage your station to-morrow afternoon. Tourist party Henry Milligan, wife, daughter Millicent meeting Roger Carson with preacher coming south from Fairbanks. Expedite coremony time for Milligan family catch boat returning from Seward two days. Open can of rice and expend old shoes on next survey.

PRIESTLEY.

A great thrill ran up and down Dillon's spine as he studied the mission as outlined. There wasn't much for him to do to help the good work along. The witness problem was simplicity itself. He could act as one and the mother, or the chauffeur, as the other. A little wedding breakfast of caribou steak and rich, brown gravy, with a can of apricots or stewed prunes as desert, and coffee and cigarettes.

He arose from his desk with a bound and rushed to the pantry. There was plenty to eat there, such as it was—mostly in cans. He thought he might open the banquet with canned soup.



Then he could serve a little canned fruit salad with mayonnaise in quartermaster dishes a quarter of an inch thick.

He wrote this down and was vastly pleased with himself. It would be a de luxe breakfast, ably served as in the best hotels. Did he have any tea? Yes, he had a can of the stuff. He made a note on his menu slip then that he was to ask the guests, immediately the salad was on the table, if they preferred tea or coffee.

"If somebody says 'coffee,'" he noted, "I am to lead back with, 'Will you have it now or with your dessert?'"

It sounded complicated and he wondered if he would do it right.

"Then comes a butter chip with a little cold salmon in it while the steak is frying. Then the steak served with hot bread, canned beans, canned corn, canned tomatoes, canned sweet potatoes. Gravy made out of canned milk. Last course: canned apricots, canned hulled nuts, canned candy, cigarettes. Well, the cigarettes, bread and steak wouldn't come out of cans anyway. Not much to kick about there!"

He returned to the key and called the Fairbanks operator with an idle question or two concerning the groom, Roger Carson.

"Kind of a pill," gossiped Fairbanks cheerfully. "Left here yesterday with the local preacher hell bent for matrimony. Bet the bride is as ugly as a baby sea gull with the pip, but she's got scads of money in her sock or the old boy wouldn't sign up. He owns half the placer holdings along the Yukon. My girl says he's roped in old Milligan for so much cash on phony investments that the old boy has been slipping Carson I O Us for three years to keep from losing the principal. You know how it is, everybody knows everybody's business up here. My female Nemesis says Carson is holding back some good news until he gets the girl cinched, making Milligan cash in

Millicent, for more time. I don't believe all that, but I'll bet the girl's no bargain."

"Can't be much, at that!" agreed Dillon, but was sorry to be disillusioned about the bride. He wanted her to be beautiful and blushing, or not eat up his good canned provender. He turned his attention to the Valdez operator.

"How about the bride?" he asked.

"Haven't seen her yet," the answer snapped back. "Boat not due until tomorrow morning. Won't see her then. Automobile will be waiting at pier. Good night."

"GN," responded Dillon, telescoping the two letters into one in sheer pique.

He lighted his kerosene lamps, threw a couple of short logs in the stove and prepared to spend the evening studying. He had no end of good books supplied by the thoughtful war department. There were excellent ones: "Bee Culture," "Higher Medicine," "Social Conditions in British Honduras," "Chiroprody," "The Iota Subscript," "Charcoal Burning," "Elimination of Tree Borers," "Municipal Government in Siam."

Lots of good books. You couldn't go wrong by studying any of them. If you kept on and finished, you would be versed in all branches of engineering, doctoring, farming and orcharding. You would be an economist, a financier, a theologian, a lawyer and a horse doctor combined, but you couldn't find, in all of the myriads of books on the far-flung Alaskan telegraph system, a single one analogous to problems liable to come up in those latitudes. Not one.

Dillon selected a volume in the dark, using the reach-and-grab method, and soon was immersed in the science of teaching tricks to circus elephants.

There came from the highway the purr of a motor. In another instant a great glare of light swept the foggy windowpanes and a horn hooted twice. He was not interested and so did not stir. Soon



an automobile door clanged and there was stamping on the porch.

"Come in!" he bawled, marking his place on the page with his finger.

In bustled the Reverend Peter Ivanovitch, in full beard and priestly robes, followed by a self-appreciative-looking individual with weather-tanned face, but form presentably housed in what was instantly recognizable as the most approved wedding gear. The first padre of the nuptial mobilization evidently had arrived.

"Hello!" exclaimed Carson genially. "This is Dillon, ain't it? Meet the padre. Picked him up at Fairbanks. I suppose you know all about it. Girl coming up to-morrow."

"I was talking about you with Fairbanks half an hour ago," declared the soldier grimly. "Squat, and I'll bunch together a little chow. I'll have a dinner out in two shakes."

The conversation became three-cornered and was conducted with frontier geniality and frankness. Carson drew out a short stub of a pipe and began to fill the place with strong fumes of State's prison twist. Mingled with this was the odor of frying ham and boiling coffee.

"Got a nice wife coming up?" inquired Dillon, stirring the potatoes. He didn't care—he was only asking.

"I think she is," replied Carson. "Don't know her very well, though, since she has grown up. Her dad and I just fixed it up between ourselves."

"The devil you did!"

"Yes. She's close to eighteen. Old man kind of worried about her on account of her getting wild with the rest of the young folks nowadays. She's as pretty as a picture. Lots of spunk, too."

Dillon was studying the man, even as he flopped the mass of fried spuds in the pan without losing a slice. He was thinking that a girl who was used to riches, who was pretty and possessed

of lots of spunk, might react violently when she saw what she was destined to marry. He had met many well-to-do sour doughs since coming to Alaska and found most of them intelligent, honorable and the best of companions. None of them, however, had been real successes like this one. Carson had the look of a coyote dressed up. He had not shaved recently.

The meal laid out, Father Ivanovitch and the groom-to-be assaulted their food with the post-hibernation appetite of bears. Conversation died and Dillon, puffing at his cigarette, called Fairbanks, and they proceeded to chat about his guests with the candor of a pair of Chinese laundrymen frankly discussing a badly torn shirt in the presence of its owner.

"The groom is here with a Russian priest. Haven't got the low-down on the girl yet. Carson says she's a twin-six with stream lines and everything, but I guess that's cosmoline." He glanced casually toward the famished guests as the distant station asked a pertinent question:

"Don't like him at all," he replied through the medium of a supple wrist. "If I was the youngster I'd be frightened to death. Gosh, these women will marry anything, though. I'm surprised at a chicken from the 'outside' taking on a goof. What have you heard?"

Fairbanks replied he had heard that Carson had divorced a squaw up on the Kobuk.

"Oh, the poor kid!" commiserated Dillon. "Just the same, he says she's a wild one and that may be true. There's a Siwash on the trap line somewhere. I wonder what she'll say, though, when she sees a priest of the Greek church. Wonder what her dad and mam will say, too. Milligan don't sound Greek orthodox to me. GN."

"GN," said Fairbanks.

"Quite a bit of business over the line



this summer," explained Dillon as he cleared away the table.

"The whole Yukon is all puffed about the wedding," declared Carson unctuously, correctly guessing that the conversation had been about him. "Some girl! I'm going to meet 'em up the road a piece to-morrow afternoon and escort the bride back. Haven't shaved for a week, getting ready for this meeting. I've got these flapper girls from the States figured out to a dot. They are strong for the cave-man stuff. I'm going to give this one the grand rush and pick her right out of the automobile and kiss her about steen times before she realizes what it's all about. She's going to fall for the whiskers. When I crush her in my arms, she's going to think she's in a flapper's heaven, and don't you forget it!"

"My gosh, you're not going to get married in those whiskers, are you?" demanded the soldier in astonishment.

"No. I'm not that big a nut," replied Carson. "I shave every week when I'm home. When we get back here, I'll knock 'em off in the kitchen and step out just as bland and smiling as you please. The Spanish moss is just my little surprise for her. You might call it a concession to flaming youth."

Dillon looked thoughtful, but said no more. He was trying to think of a girl of his acquaintance who ever had acted as though she really liked whiskers and manhandling. But then he had been away from flaming youth for some time.

The following morning was dull and uninteresting for the soldier, who was obsessed with a feeling that it would be much better if Monty Smith were back from his line work. He was ready to admit that a frontier wedding might be too classy for one of his years and inexperience. Carson, he was sure, was going to bungle something and, if he did, Smith could be depended upon to

say just the right thing to the fainting bride to enlist her coöperation in getting the pestiferous ceremony over with.

He was in hopes his senior would test in from the line, but nothing so fortunate happened.

As the hours of the forenoon dragged, Carson became positively a nuisance. The soldier working in his garden was interrupted dozens of times by the nervous bridegroom. First it was to call the Valdez operator and find out the exact time of departure of the wedding party. The boat wasn't in. He called three times. At last it arrived. The party was not seen by the telegraphers at the Valdez station, but they had been advised that Milligan, wife and daughter went through town like "a streak of wind" at nine o'clock.

After this information was delivered, Carson kept annoying Dillon by inquiries as to the time he should start so as to meet them five or ten miles out. He was so excited that every time he was told he promptly forgot, which was just as well, for Dillon guessed each time and his answers were never twice the same.

Finally, at one o'clock, the soldier started them off and hurried into the kitchen to prepare the feast. This called for intense concentration and infinite pains. For that reason, time slipped by on silent pinions. When he thought to look at his watch, on account of the Copper Center schedule, he was astonished to find that it was four thirty.

"Great guns!" thought Dillon. "They should have been here two hours ago. What in heck can be keeping them? I wonder if the fool collided with the Milligans on a curve!" He finished Copper Center with a few choice titbits of trail gossip and then it was five. He was alarmed, but the only summer transportation ever available at the station was a horse, and Smith had that.

While he was turning the matter over in his mind, wondering what he could



do in case the occupants of both cars were all dead, there came the rapid thrumming of a motor on the highway and the rasp of a cheap horn. It turned out to be Carson and the priest returning. The former looked as if he had fallen into a thicket of devil clubs. There were several deep scratches on his face where it was without hirsute protection. The priest visibly was on the verge of acute nervous disorders. Carson, the bridegroom, spoke:

"Here, take this man into the house!" he yelled, throwing open the door of his car.

"What's happened?" demanded Dillon, hurrying over to them.

"Get in!" commanded Carson. "You know this country, don't you, fella? The girl's gone! She ran right out of my arms, crazylike, and went over the hills. We yelled at her, but she wouldn't come back."

"Where are her parents?"

"They stayed on the ground. Mrs. Milligan is all upset. Her dad and the chauffeur are still searching, but neither of them knows those hills."

"Wait a minute," said Dillon, "I hear my sounder."

"Fine business," telegraphed Dillon. "Take station and meet schedules until I get back. Tell you later." Then he was climbing into his blouse, and with practiced hand collecting canned food. This into his pack, and he was out of the door, barely missing a crash with the priest who was coming in.

"Put on a dinner for two," he commanded Father Ivanvovitch. "My bunkie is coming in, half starved."

Carson was fuming with impatience, but the delay couldn't be helped. It is no light offense to abandon without proper formalities one of Uncle Sam's remote telegraph stations.

The car as driven by Carson made tremendous speed over the highway, which was then far from being in the excellent condition it is now. Twenty

minutes later, with horn croaking fiercely, they shot out of a canyon into a thickly wooded valley between two mountain ranges. Here stood a large, blue touring car, and near it in gloomy silence were grouped Mr. Milligan, his wife and the chauffeur. After four hours they had reassembled after a futile and back-breaking search for the vanished bride.

Carson glumly introduced Dillon, who was greeted by the haughty Milligans with the patronizing confidence with which Americans habitually look to their armed forces in case of dire emergency.

"I am sure Millicent is watching us at this moment and will show up presently," declared Mr. Milligan cheerfully.

"I am sure she will," echoed Mrs. Milligan, as any great lady would speak of family troubles before servants. Dillon looked at her with twinkling eyes.

"In that case, Mrs. Milligan," he declared, "maybe it would be the best policy for us all to sit down and wait."

"For the love of Pete!" then burst out Milligan. "Let's do something. We must make a clean breast of it, Elizabeth. The girl is mad enough to keep on going in a straight line until she reaches Siberia."

"I'll go after her," declared Dillon, assuming charge of the situation. "She can't get far in these mountains."

"She'll find her way back to the car when darkness comes," assured the mother. "Millicent is afraid of the dark."

"No, she won't. At least not on that account," retorted the soldier. "It never gets really dark in Alaska. But it does get cold after sundown. The chauffeur and you, Mrs. Milligan, had better go on to the station and then the chauffeur can come back and wait for us."

This procedure seemed practicable. Mr. Milligan, a heavy set, snappy-look-



ing business man with the well-known financial face, said nothing to the contrary. When the car rolled off, the three men remaining sat down to a hurried lunch under the pines.

Dillon said little, but by listening carefully learned that Carson had indeed essayed cave-man tactics with the girl. Evidently she had been a lifelong admirer of the man she had come so far north to marry, and had come willingly enough. But she had not seen him since the time when, as an eight-year-old child, she had ridden on his knee and eaten bonbons from his hand during the one summer he had spent in the States in the past thirty years. With a most idealistic picture of Carson and life in the arctics then, she had come to Alaska to meet her fate.

When they arrived at Valdez, however, her father thought he discerned symptoms of regret and indecision on the part of Millicent. She had left the town that morning in a blue funk, the depression growing with every mile. The great peaks and frowning glaciers, the turbulent glacial streams that threatened to take them all over dizzy precipices, the loneliness, the awful monotony, appeared to contribute to her dismay and apprehension that she was making a mistake.

Then, suddenly shooting around a curve, came a small black car, and from this a grim, hairy-faced elderly man projected himself hilariously toward her. With the fury of a madwoman she had defended herself against his greetings. Then she had appealed to her parents—and had been mildly chided. Right there, her father asserted, her mind seemed to slip. With a wild moan, she turned in her tracks and darted away into the forest at break-neck speed.

The meal hastily swallowed, Dillon took the party off into the woods in the general direction followed by the girl. A mile from the road he left Milligan,

after instructing him to shout the girl's name every five minutes. At the end of another mile, he dropped Carson also. He assigned himself to freelancing the neighborhood in the gathering dusk.

It turned out to be an arduous as well as a hopeless task. The valley down which Miss Milligan had plunged, forked three miles from the road and spread out into flat, pine-covered tundra. As he fought his way through thickets of scrub timber, he wondered what the little bride was wearing when she ran away and what she would do now that the temperature was getting lower by the hour.

Sometimes he shouted her name. The mountains threw his voice back at him, multiplied a hundredfold. Once he heard Carson doing the same thing. Then he had an impulse to go back and thrash him soundly for inviting him in on a job which for decency's sake he must work at all night long.

The sun was high the next morning when Private Dillon, footsore and infinitely weary, dragged his way back to the road. The automobile already was there with Mrs. Milligan. The refinement of her dress and bearing had somehow vanished. To-day she was a haggard, elderly woman with begging eyes and stringy hair.

"Are there bears hereabouts?" she demanded tensely, as the three gathered around her for a conference, with nothing much to confer about.

"Yes. Lots of them," declared Dillon, brightening up. "I saw three an hour ago."

Mrs. Milligan groaned.

"They have eaten her long ago," she declared. "Millicent wasn't afraid of them at all. Poor, dear Millicent, who was such a trusting child!" So soon, and she was speaking of her daughter in the past tense.

"The bears won't hurt Millicent if Millicent don't hurt the bears," retorted



Dillon, a bit crabbed after his long and futile hunt for the delinquent.

"But what could have happened to her?" insisted Mrs. Milligan.

"She's lost, that's what she is," declared her husband. He had stood in one spot and yelled at the top of his voice for hours.

"But she'll die!"

"I doubt it," assured Carson. "You sees, Mrs. Milligan, it is pretty hard to die up here in the summertime. There are the berries and fish. You can scoop fish out of the shallow streams with your hands. The girl will be all right if she stays lost a month, providing she——"

"What?"

"She doesn't freeze to death."

That was something even Dillon had not thought much about. He began to think about it now.

"It is September sixteenth," he said significantly. "Last year Thompson's Pass closed on the fifteenth with ten feet of snow. The temperature stood thirty in the hole for six weeks. We are on the verge of winter."

Suddenly Mrs. Milligan began to sob, almost in hysterics.

"My poor darling! She will never come out of this alive. I know she won't. Oh, where is she? Where is she? Do something!" She began to hammer on the steel door of the automobile with her fists.

"It looks to me," Milligan said then, turning his gaze directly on the soldier, "that you must take charge."

Dillon knew why he wanted that. It was because the occasion called for action, and action demanded a thorough knowledge of the ground. The financier, with his back to the wall, was reorganizing the company. Nevertheless, it was what Dillon desired above all things.

"O. K.," Dillon acknowledged, in the language of the wire. "I'm in charge. You, Mr. Milligan, will take Mrs. Mil-

ligan over Thompson's Pass to Valdez. Leave her there temporarily and hurry back with all the seasoned hunters and trappers you can pick up. Knut Knutson, on the wharf, will tell you how. You've got to race with the snow now, so shake a leg.

"Carson," he said turning to the groom, "you and the priest had better shove on to Fairbanks."

Carson looked blank.

"I guess the soldier is right," acquiesced Milligan. "If the girl is lost now, she is lost until I get back with the posse. Twenty-four hours at the most."

"But I would feel like a malemute!"

"Come!" admonished the business man crisply. "Dillon is in temporary charge of the operations. None of us can do any good because we don't know these mountains. Besides, I think he has the theory that if we leave, the girl will come out of hiding, rather than go through another cold night."

"Exactly," declared Dillon. "In other words, we'll stop hunting and start trapping. I intend to put up a good meal in a sack and tie it to the limb of a tree. Then I'll leave, too. Along about evening I shall return and if the food is gone, I will leave a sleeping bag and a note giving her directions so she can find the telegraph station. Ten chances to one we will have her caged by the time the party returns.

"By the way!" he exclaimed suddenly, staring intently at the northern horizon. "It is beginning to cloud up."

Following his gaze they saw that he was right. There was a fleecy nimbus clinging along the sides of the distant mountains. Clouds form while you look at them in Alaska, but they often mean business just the same. Milligan knew what Thompson's Pass was like, for he had crossed over it the day before. The Valdez chauffeur added a word of warning.

"We'll have to make it snappy, or we



won't get back," he declared. "Any time now there may be twenty feet of soft snow on the mountains. Then, unless we have a cold snap on the heels of it, even a dog team can't navigate."

Nevertheless, all hated to leave the soldier alone on the job even for one day. It seemed, as Mrs. Milligan put it, inhuman toward Millicent. At last they drove off, leaving Carson chewing at the end of his glove, the picture of discontent.

"Look here," he said angrily; "you're virtually ordered me off the premises, old buck. I don't know whether I like it or not."

"It is the only way," replied Dillon coolly. "You know yourself we haven't got a chink's chance unless the girl decides to give herself up. She may do that, all right, with you here. But what I'm afraid of is that she will put it off until it is a thought too late. If a blizzard catches her up on one of these peaks, it's her finish, even if the whole world was here organized for a rescue party. They couldn't get up and she couldn't get down. I, myself, intend to get out later in the day. I think she is watching us right now from up near the timber line somewhere. So long!"

"I guess you're right," acceded Carson at last. "I might as well drive clear to Fairbanks while I'm at it. I have some important business there anyway. The marriage can wait, though I hate it. She was some pippin of a girl."

He left and the soldier patrolled the road for an hour or more, shouting information, to the effect that the search had been called off, up into a blank and unresponsive firmament.

When he thought he had done enough propaganda work for one day, he took up the business of laying out his "trap."

First he set out a coffeepot full of water and a package of coffee beside it. Then he laid the materials for a camp fire, even to the box of matches beside the kindling. At last he hung to a limb,

out of the reach of bears, a bag containing a loaf of bread and a can of sausages. He whistled as he worked, tired as he was. The job intrigued him immensely.

Just as he turned to go, he had an afterthought and dropped a package of cigarettes near the kindling. Still whistling, he shouldered the rest of the provisions and plodded homeward without once looking back.

By the time he arrived at the telegraph shanty, clouds were hanging low over the summit of Thompson's Pass, but he was too weary to pay much attention to what might be going on there. Smith was waiting for him with the coffeepot at full boil.

There was much to discuss with him before he wrapped himself in the quilts for a night's slumber. They were almost perfect friends.

"I got the mail at Willow Creek," Smith burst out as Dillon entered. He was sitting at the instrument table toying with the key, his energetic, handsome face flushed with outdoor exercise.

"Zat so? Anything startling?"

"No. Except a letter from my girl. But I got my trapper's license."

"You did, eh? Well, you stay off my trap line. I've got it baited for Roger Carson's bride."

Then he told Smith the story as he drank a tin cup full of hot strong coffee. After that he went to bed.

He was awakened, as he had previously directed, at five o'clock the next morning. Smith had breakfast ready and laid out. To Dillon's surprise two bedding rolls and two emergency trail food packs were beside them on the floor.

"Just see what kind old headquarters at Valdez gives to me last p. m., by way of cable to Seward, land line to Fairbanks and so down our skookum telegraph to little boy Monty," he chuckled. "Big storm at Thompson's



Pass and Papa and Mamma Milligan with party of scouts can't return to hunt for fair daughter. Line is down up there and I'm to patrol it for a couple of weeks. Fine job! Meanwhile our business will go to the devil while you must go it alone in search of the gal. Old Man Milligan wants it that way and so it is. He offers me five hundred dollars to get the line up, so he can hear what's going on, and direct pursuit. Never mentioned our handsome Dillon once, so I take it that he don't intend to offer you a reward. Only intends to shoot you in case you don't deliver 'Madcap Millicent' on the hoof. Three cheers for the discerning capitalist!"

"I get what I trap," glumly countered Dillon. "How's the weather?"

"Temperature getting shivery. Freezing, I guess, but no snow, though it's a hurricane around the summit, Carson has passed Paxton, I hear from the wires. He is trying to make it to Fairbanks and back before Donnelly Dome closes. Snowing on the dome, too. My guess is you've got the field all to yourself."

"Unless we can get some Indians from Tonsina! Chief Alexander, if I could reach him, would start a party in a minute."

"He would, but you can't reach him without a runner. And the only runner present is working for a bonus. Anyway, it would take weeks."

"I suppose so."

The two soldiers, heavily laden, were out on the highway, Smith leading his pack horse. In low tones they discussed expedients to be employed in case one or the other failed to come back. Other soldiers in Alaska had sauntered forth just as well prepared for eventualities and never returned.

After a while they came to the place where Dillon had left the food. A fire was now smoldering there and all about were remnants where somebody had en-

joyed a hearty meal. Whoever it was had not lingered, judging from the fact that only two cigarette stubs were visible. The package itself was missing.

"It's the girl!" exclaimed Smith triumphantly, examining one of the butts. "I see the marks of a cigarette holder on the fags. Now what?"

"I'm going to fix a bed for her and pretend to go back. Then I'll double and hide somewhere and watch."

"That ought to get her. Good luck! I'll be back as soon as I can. Keep her until I return—if she's worth looking at."

"So long!" said Dillon. "Don't take any chances!"

He replenished the fire and gathered a vast quantity of springy pine bows to make a bed for the fair wanderer. He made some more coffee, too, and went back down the road toward the station, whistling loudly.

A mile passed and he glanced back. It occurred to him then that the girl, if she did not want to be found, and it was apparent she did not, naturally was nested high on a mountainside overlooking the road. From this vantage point she could observe his movements for miles. So he kept going.

When he thought he had traveled far enough to suit his purpose, he rested an hour to smoke and ruminate. Very cautiously he took the trail back toward his trap. The final mile he was as silent as a shadow and walked entirely under cover of the trees. As he approached he made a detour into the woods and so emerged at last at the very spot where he had so nicely made the bed. It was gone! The bed together with all the food and the matches. Carson's bride evidently was not above "sleeping out" in the wilderness. He began to feel a strange and sympathetic interest in this girl he had never seen, whose determination not to be married to the man she did not like seemed to be as hard as iron.



He sat beside the embers and began to ponder again. Usually when one sets a snare for a creature he has some idea as to the habits, inclinations and idiosyncrasies of his quarry. The successful trapper is he who can tell you off-hand what almost any kind of an animal indigenous to those parts will do under given circumstances. He diagnosed the situation very carefully.

Here was a young woman of intelligence probably equal to his own. She knew now that he was trying to lure her to her capture, and evidently she had made up her mind to circumvent his crude contrivances until she could catch a ride with some party of belated tourists.

She did not know that both passes were closed. She did not know that Carson was marooned in Fairbanks and her parents in Valdez. She was not afraid to take the punishment of staying indefinitely in the wilds. Probably at this time she had not been greatly discommoded by the temperature. Most girls making their first trip to Alaska wear too many and too warm clothes, anyway. At this moment she had food for at least three days and a warm bed. Nevertheless, to a girl delicately reared, such hardships must be appalling.

Dillon tried to figure her out by her parents. Mrs. Milligan, he believed, was the kind of woman who would have surrendered when she saw she was beaten and then made life miserable for the unlucky husband ever after. Her father, on the other hand, had a gambler's face. Why not? He had acted like a gambler, hadn't he? He had been caught in a tight place and anted his only daughter, perhaps in compliance with some ancient promise. The girl's own complicity he discounted.

Millicent probably thought it was her filial duty to be the pawn in the game. When she saw what she was plighted to, she still did not care to turn to her father and beg him to break his prom-

ise. No. She took the responsibility all on her own shoulders and ran away. Therefore, he decided, Millicent was a bit like her father and he must envision the latter when he made plans to catch the girl.

Deliberately he drew a notebook from his pocket and wrote a note addressed to her. He told just what had happened to the rest of the party, begged her to meet him the following noon, warning her of the impending cold weather. He fastened this to the trunk of a tree with the blade of his jackknife and went home.

The next day at noon he returned and the knife was gone, but the note remained tied to a twig with a strip of lace. There was bold, backhand writing on it which said:

DEAR PRIVATE DILLON, United States Army: Forgive me for taking your jackknife. I am now a full-fledged cavewoman, armed to the teeth. Also I think you are a fine gilt-edged liar.

MILLICENT MILLIGAN.

"Damn it!" sighed Private Dillon. "My buckhorn-handled knife."

He then went home to see if he could get any news off the wire. He found all stations "dead" but Hagard, the nearest to the north.

"Where have you been?" snapped Hagard. "I've been trying to talk to you all day. Wire to Fairbanks is down, and I'm as lonesome as Hades."

"I'm not so lonesome," responded Dillon. "I'm trapping for a bride."

"What? Whose?"

"Don't worry. Not mine. Roger Carson's."

"Better cut that triangle stuff. I've heard of your heroic efforts, though. What luck?"

"None. She is hidden in the woods. I got a note to her, and she answered. I'm baiting with food and clothing, but she robs the trap like a wolverene and writes me a sassy note."



"I get you! But it's cold up here. Thirty minus this a. m. If you don't get her pretty soon, she'll freeze. You'd better make it snappy."

When he made his next trip down the road, he was prepared to stay until he had some results. He began by constructing a lean-to of pine branches as a base of operations. A light snow, the first of the season, had fallen during the night.

The little thermometer he had thoughtfully slipped into a pocket in his parka registered twelve below, but the snowing had stopped—a bad omen. It would be still colder later, from all appearances.

It did get colder.

He built a roaring fire and shouted up at the stony face of the mountain until his voice was hoarse. At six p. m. powdered snow began to come and the blizzard was upon him. He kept the fire going brightly all night, but with despair in his heart. A pot of coffee bubbled beside it, always ready. He smoked countless cigarettes.

Dawn came late with the cloud ceiling low and threatening. There was a horrible popping in the air. Drifts were accumulating on the road and the great peaks were a swirling chaos. It must be frightfully cold up there so many hundreds of feet above the road.

Dillon had a good imagination and he began to conjure up heart-squeezing pictures of the tender young girl, preferring starvation and freezing to a life of unhappiness in wedlock. He felt so sorry for her that he almost wept. Still, however, the hours wore by in chill desolation amid wild winds and scurrying bombardments of sleety snow particles.

The day following, the low temperature persisted, but the sky had cleared. Dillon ventured off the road and even essayed to climb the mountainside. He shouted continuously. The net result

of a whole day spent floundering about in the drifts were a pair of frost-bitten fingers and a growing conviction that he would never find the girl alive.

"Even if I do locate her now," he groaned time and time again, "I will not be able to get down to the road in all this loose snow. She's a dead girl, but I guess I couldn't have done anything better than I've done. She's too smart to be trapped."

He determined to give up the venture the next day, but when daylight burst on the wilderness he hadn't the heart to do it. Instead, he continued with more zeal than before. That night he patched up his lean-to with greater care, utilizing the drifts, making up his mind doggedly never to abandon the search so long as there was the faintest hope of success.

So the days passed. He suffered considerably, this soldier. It was so cold that he could sleep only in patches. The food became exhausted. Even his coffee ran out. Still he kept on, blindly indignant at Fate, which made him the loser in what he considered the biggest adventure of his life.

There comes a time at last when even the stoutest heart must acknowledge defeat. Gazing up at the pitiless pyramid of snow which represented the mountain, Dillon realized with bitterness that not even a ptarmigan could have remained there all this time and kept life in its body. When there is low temperature and heavy snowfall, the goats and sheep venture down into the valleys. Not an arctic fox, snowshoe rabbit or porcupine can exist anywhere on the exposed slopes because there is neither food nor shelter there.

Two weeks had now passed, and during this time Dillon had subsisted on scant rations, augmented from time to time when he managed to shoot a grouse or a porcupine along the river bank. Undernourishment and overexertion had combined to sap his strength. Ex-



posure to wet and cold had added its depleting quota to the list of hardships.

Gaunt and haggard and discouraged, he picked up what equipment he felt able to carry and took the road on snowshoes for home.

He staggered into his own yard at four in the afternoon and was surprised to find smoke pouring out of his chimney. This was nothing unusual, because trappers and Indians sometimes came that way and, finding nobody at home, set up housekeeping, as they will in all frontier countries. But when he entered the house, he was further astonished to see his best uniform, encompassing a strange, petite figure, bending over his desk and laboring at his key.

The figure started violently at his entry, and at once he was cognizant of a wistful, startled face, all hair and eyes.

"Holy mackerel!" he gasped. "It's the bride!"

She got up slowly and her great blue eyes mirrored a look that mothered him.

"You poor sap," she cooed. "Where the blankety heck have you been all this time? Somebody has been clicking this machine for days and I can't get any sense out of them."

The soldier swayed in his tracks and shut his eyes.

"I guess I must be going off my nut," he murmured. "Bad dreams!"

"I like that, Mr. Tactless!" She had a soft arm about his body, drawing him toward the one comfortable rocker. "There! Now, in one lash of a rabbit's tail I'll pour some hot coffee into you. I'm not so bad. It's your dinged old uniform that doesn't fit. You'll like me when I'm dressed up."

"How long have you been here?" Dillon demanded over his coffee.

"Ever so long," she replied indifferently. "In fact, the day after I got your note, I came down like a sneak off my hill of observation, leaving you yelling into space. I wanted to know for

sure that there wasn't any rough-shod sour dough with hair on his face waiting for me. Well, you weren't in evidence, so I preempted and have been here ever since, hoping you would turn up. Do you notice that I've swept the place? Some of your pet cobwebs have disappeared."

"There weren't any cobwebs," declared Dillon. "Cobs don't web in these latitudes. Why don't you want to marry that oil can?"

"Oh, I guess he's all right. Only he tried to sweep me off my feet. Sweeping distinctly is a feminine function, or used to be. Outside of that he looked and acted like a triumphant gladiator. I liked him as he was when I was a kid, because he was fatherly. Now I've changed, or he has. It took one glance to tell me as plain as plain could be that my childhood ambition to be the consort of this particular Alaskan millionaire was the same kind of bunk as your notions about cobwebs. It was my own fault up to a certain point, and dad's from there on for not taking me across his paternal knee."

"I see."

"What was his idea in bringing a Russian priest?"

"Probably he was the only one coming this way."

"Do they tie a knot in your wedding garments or rub your noses together?"

"No. It really is a very beautiful ceremony. Also, when you are married you are supposed to stay that way."

"Gosh! Everything jake, but the final provision. What are you going to do with me?"

"You ask me a lot of funny questions and I'm too weak to answer," groaned the soldier. "You oughtn't to be here," he continued lamely, hardly knowing what to say.

"One more mouth to feed, or what?"

"Conventions."

"Shucks! How is your reputation going to suffer?"



"It won't. At least to any great extent. I can't turn you out in forty-six below, can I? It is your good name I'm thinking of."

"Good granthers! Do you have to report this to the Associated Newspapers?"

"Not me! But your parents will know of it sooner or later."

"They won't bat an eye. This little period of inactivity on my part is like an oasis in a stormy sea to them."

She looked very beautiful and appealing sitting there with his new uniform hanging in loose folds from her shoulders. Nevertheless, Dillon groaned.

"Your dad and mother don't care much for soldiers. They will look for the worst and act accordingly. If you tell them I am a gentleman as well as a soldier they will sniff scornfully and suspect your veracity."

The girl began to laugh, light-heartedly, joyously, a laugh that was good to hear though disquieting, in so far as it produced a distinct cardiac reaction. The soldier laughed with her, though not knowing what it was about.

"It amuses me the way you look at things," said Millicent at last, when in control of her mirth. "You evidently have an idea that my parents will try to conventionalize everything by asking you to marry me."

"I hadn't thought of it," said Dillon. "But they might, at that."

"Would that be such hardship? Lots of nice boys like you have gone out of their way to angle for a bid to be my escort to the altar. Papa may be financially entangled but he's still a rich man."

Dillon said nothing. He was thinking, though, that life would not be at all dull at Teikell with Millicent Milligan.

Somehow the question of matrimony reasserted itself again and again during the ensuing days. There was a very natural reason for this. Millicent had

come to Alaska to be a bride. Just what childish romanticism, or practical business consideration motivated her offer to become the wife of Roger Carson, the soldier never would know, perhaps. He suspected that she had come to meet Carson with an open mind, had been disappointed in his actions and appearance. Did she become panicky then, or did she just run away in accordance with a previously thought out plan to save herself and at the same time relieve her father of a possible charge of nonfulfillment of agreement?

Inside of five days Dillon had been reduced to the status of a goddess worshiper, and the situation was rapidly approaching its end, though neither suspected it.

In other words, Dillon was in love; and over in Valdez, across the Chugach, Mr. and Mrs. Milligan were getting together a long and powerful string of dogs to convey a rescue party to Teikell. Dillon was in love, and Millicent was forming the habit of looking long and dreamily at him with her dimpled pearl of a chin resting on white arms. And Smith, the lineman, having completed his labors, was reporting to the parents that he was still unable to raise Dillon, but that he had heard a Morse key in his test set and that it seemed to be operated by a girl.

"Do you think, Millicent," Dillon asked once, "if you really loved a man, you could love him so hard that you wouldn't care whether you were married by a Russian or an Episcopalian, for instance?"

"You're not talking to me," replied Millicent. "I'm not that way. It's got to be regular and with all the frills, or not at all. If I'm married, I want to be awfully sure the knot will stick. I'm like a rock on having a preacher of my own faith, or something near to it. Otherwise, I'm going to be known from now on as the Milligan spinster."

The conversation that night was in-



interrupted by a chorus of malemute howls. Three teams came blundering in over the drifts from Little Tonsina Creek. There were ten Indians, men and women, in the party. They came into the house, bringing in cold air with their parkas, and the soldier met each one of his visitors with the grave courtesy of the frontier.

"How come?" demanded one old woman, nodding toward the girl. "Catch'um klutch?"

"No klutch," replied Dillon calmly. "Just girl sit down by me here week or so mebbeso."

The squaw looked at Millicent approvingly, nodding her head.

"All the same," she declared, "she make good klutch, only mebbeso she no chew mukluks."

"Mebbeso she not do," acquiesced Dillon. "Howso she hell-fire good bean cook catch'um tin can, savvy."

"Hello!" said Millicent. "Are you two scandalous old gossips taking my name in vain?"

"Just passing the time of day, as they say out here. I was telling Bear Tail Charlie's woman how good you can cook out of a can. Maybe you wouldn't mind helping me lay out a feed. That is what they want."

While a copious pot of sheep stew was boiling, the soldier learned more of the visit of the Indians and was vastly pleased thereby. One of their number, a swarthy little man with a deal of trinkets on his person, was a medicine man or shaman. He had his full regalia in the sled, it seemed. From Gulkana was coming another sled with Miss Tana Mutik and Tenas Mike Togof to be married. The shaman explained that as all parties were poor, it had been decided the wedding feast should be at the expense of the government "where sojer make string talk."

"How soon?" inquired Dillon.

"Any time," declared the shaman. "We begin feast now."

"Here's luck," he explained to Millicent. "A wedding is in the offing—or else they are giving me some string talk. Let me find out."

He went over to his table and invoked the attention of the military operator at Gulkana which was now back in operation.

"Have Tana Mutik and Tenas Mike left there yet to get married?" he asked. The answer came back instantly:

"Tenas Mike and Tena were married a week ago up here by the witch doctor and have gone to Rapids Roadhouse on their wedding trip. Why?"

"Nothing. I just wanted to straighten something out in my mind." He slapped at the key switch and turned to the shaman.

"You pretty good-sized liar," he told that dusky gentleman. "Tenas and Tana already married."

"I know," replied the medicine man indifferently. "Me make wah-wah, very fine, all set. Now we eat potlatch here." He grinned engagingly as he spoke.

"Wait a minute!" cried Millicent abruptly at this point. "Do you mean to tell me we are not going to have a wedding here to-night?"

"That's what he says," said Dillon.

"Well, I wanted to see them do it."

"I'm afraid that's impossible. All of these people are married."

"But some of them will go through the ceremony to accommodate us since we've made a big stew for them, won't they?"

"I'll see," he told her. "But it is pretty hard to get an idea like that through an Indian's head."

"Then they don't get any stew!" declared the girl, stamping her foot. "Tell them that."

He told them, and a great argument ensued. None of the squaws, having gone through the ordeal once, cared to repeat. They would wait, they said, until after the meal before they would discuss it further.



The shaman, however, was hungry. He had been swinging on the pole of his sled for forty-odd miles. He went out to his sled and brought in a copper kettle, a drum and a hide rattle box. These he laid out on the floor, protesting he was ready to begin whenever a willing bride and groom could be found. He wanted everybody to understand that the feed wasn't being held up on his account.

Dillon was in despair when he said to the girl:

"I'll tell you—this isn't going to be binding, you know—how would you like to be a principal with me?"

"There isn't any law against it? I'd love to. It would be thrilling."

"It's all right," he assured her. "The shaman will perform his usual rite, but when he's through—well, we're Christians and it don't count."

"Is it very savage?"

"Not very. Just do what he tells you to do. No papers to sign, no record at all. A lot of gibberish and then everybody eats until they fall over. It is fun, all right."

"I'm game."

"See here, shaman," he said to the medicine man. "This young woman she be my klutch, savvy? Say when you're ready."

There were a few moments of busy preparation. First the drum was beaten to drive away the Mahonie and other spirits. After these unwanted guests had been properly exorcised, the rattle box was drawn upon to bring in the good spirits. The natives, sitting around in a circle on the floor, began to sing, or rather to chant and slap their knees. This continued for half an hour.

At last the shaman seemed satisfied that all was propitious for the nuptials. He made a sign and two squaws led Millicent to the center of the circle and two bucks escorted Dillon to a place opposite her. Between them the medicine man placed the copper kettle in which

he had inserted a shovel full of hot coals from the cookstove. Into the coals he threw various herbal offertories which gave off a rather pleasant odor. One he said was for health, another for prosperity, another for children—he dropped twelve little pellets into the kettle here—and at last one for long life. The last was a handful of dried weeds.

The Indians sat stolidly around.

The shaman waved his grimy hands over the kettle in a song full of supplication, and then, suddenly, the ceremony took a different turn. Very much like a Christian preacher intoning a marriage service, he began to talk. He approached the girl and, taking her by the arm, led her rather forcibly to the young man and made him take her hand. He was saying:

"You take hand so! You man, and you wife. Medicine man say you no fight or quarrel over furs or who skins caribou and beaver. Klutch, you belong your man. You sit down beside him. You make happy talk all time, savvy? You man, you treat um klutch very good. You make happy talk all time, savvy? Medicine man say you sit down, man and klutch and make happy talk until big sleep he come. But just so, when big sleep he take you home, you still man and klutch so long as mountains stan' and sun go round. And you sit down and make happy talk all time come."

The singing began again. The shaman took some of the powdered residue of his sacrifice and solemnly scattered it about the room, on each of the guests, finally in the hair of the bride and groom.

"Now," he concluded. "Mebbeso, we eat!"

The potlatch was in progress, right merrily, with all hands dipping at the stew, when there came an ungodly racket at the front door. Then it burst open and in came Mr. Milligan, Mrs. Milligan, Lineman Smith and about



twenty hunters and trappers from Valdez.

"Millicent!" screeched the mother hysterically. "Tell me you're all right. This soldier hasn't harmed you, has he?"

"What was the big idea?" crisply cut in Mr. Milligan with a twinkle in his eye. "Did you think we were going to make you take a husband whether or no?"

"For Heaven's sake," exclaimed Millicent. "Join this circle of joy and take a seat. I've been having the time of my life."

"I'm glad you have!" snorted her mother. "We found the snow in the pass frozen solid, so you are going back with us to-morrow. I've been about worried sick."

Dillon, aided by Smith, his bunkie of many long arctic nights, was serving bowls of steaming stew. It was all over, he thought, his heart heavy and cold as pig iron, wondering why it was his fate to be punished in such a cruel fashion.

The new guests and the old were bantering one another and making jests about the laggardness of the cooks. Millicent, occupying a chair between her parents, looked slightly thoughtful and downcast—a golden girl with a face no healthy man could easily allow to pass out of his memory.

Dillon thought he had never seen anything so beautiful in his life—the dimpled chin, the ivory face that never really needed a touch of powder and the cheeks abloom with superabundant life, the flash of her even teeth in their coral setting.

Amid the din of clashing aluminum tableware against thick government china, she was talking, and he could see that her mother was none too pleased with what she was saying. Evidently she was telling her parents of the impromptu wedding, adding no doubt that it didn't mean anything—only a lark to

add one more experience to the many she had had in her short lifetime.

It didn't mean anything? Nevertheless, he thought, it marked a high point in his life. The mockery of it was poignant, but he had stood a few brief minutes and held this thoroughbred girl's hand in his and heard mystic words uttered that, if they had meant anything, would have made him the happiest mortal under the northern lights. He could see though that the girl was just as pleased that none of it was real.

The men from Valdez and vicinity all knew the soldier, knew his manliness and sterling worth, and were profuse in their congratulations.

Mr. Milligan was sitting beside Dillon on the floor, still carrying his bowl of stew.

"Young man," he began hesitatingly, "I understand from my daughter that you come from some of the finest people in Seattle. It develops that your father, Andrew P. Dillon, was the Andy Dillon who was partner of mine in the Bitter Creek project thirty years ago. That was before I got hooked up in the oil business. How long have you got yet to serve?"

"A year and a half," replied Dillon. "I guess you are 'Spooky' Milligan whom dad speaks of so often. Gosh, this is a coincidence!"

"The coincidence has only begun," replied Milligan gravely. "The main part of it is that Millicent and I both seem to like you. In fact, she has indicated that I should do something to partly repay you for the trouble she has caused you."

"I don't want any pay," retorted Dillon coldly. Millicent's gratitude somehow touched a raw nerve.

"May I ask why?"

"Because," said the soldier glumly, "I had orders from Valdez to do what I did. An order from Valdez is my law." He didn't want to say what it



was in his heart to say, namely that the past two weeks were his high adventure and the happiest moments of his life.

"Anyway, I'll see your dad about it," declared the other confidently. "The U. S. army isn't going to put a corner on a young man who can keep his head in an emergency like this. In a year and a half from now I shall see that Millicent invites you to our house for a whole month. She will be out of school then. I will undertake to see that she is on the job."

Dillon said nothing because there was nothing to say. He was beginning to feel intensely sorry for himself and not a little angry at the girl.

"I think we had better call it a day," he said finally. "I will put the Indians in the stable, but your party can sleep here near the stove. There are beds for you and yourself. Miss Milligan has her own room."

A few minutes later he had so disposed. The Milligans, parents and daughter, retired, the girl still babbling about her "delightful experience" and not even giving the soldier, who had provided some of it, a passing look. This made Dillon so disgusted that he took his sleeping bag out to the hay-mow and slept with the Indians.

The morning dawned bright with slowly rising temperature. The sun rising tardily at nine thirty bowed lazily along the mountaintop, setting asparkle the frost draperies on the pines and birches. Twoscore malemutes, thirsting for the trail, thrashed around on their chain leashes and howled unto the heavens. Doors banged, men shouted, women laughed at their work of packing. Breakfast was over and the pot-latch-hunting natives were heading north for Tonsina and another victim. The Milligan party was about to start south over Thompson's Pass to catch the Sunday boat from Seward.

The dogs, dragging their mushers, thrust their noses into the collars of their harnesses along the towline. They yelped and whined and howled alternately. Bedding and the food supply were thrown into the long cradlelike sleds covered with tarpaulins and lashed fast with many turns of rope. The scene was picturesque, animating, and would be possible nowhere else.

Dillon scarcely caught a glimpse of Millicent, although her parents were much in evidence. They embraced and patronized him. He was a fine, up-standing young man, and daughter was exceedingly grateful. They hoped he would drop them and her a line whenever he was lonesome, and they would make it a point to answer.

They were sitting crosswise on their sled and he was standing somewhat apart, utterly dejected. Millicent at last came out of the house, walking slowly toward the party, scarcely heeding him. Suddenly, however, she glanced his way, paused, smiled an apologetic smile at her parents and came over. He did not really get a good look at her face until she took his hand, and then he noticed with a sudden cold contraction of the heart that her eyes were brimming with tears.

"Good-by," he murmured automatically, his voice oddly unmanageable.

"Good-by!" returned Millicent, with a catch at her throat. "This has been a great adventure, hasn't it? Are you going to forget it—and me?"

"No," he said, breathing with difficulty, his little world crashing about his ears. He dreaded the moment when she would let go of his hand.

"How long?" she pleaded.

"As long as the mountains stand and the sun goes round," he answered, unconsciously quoting the medicine man. "That means—forever."

Millicent's fingers gently confirmed their grip. He thought as she swayed toward him that she was going to kiss



him, but she only whispered. But in that whisper was a hint of the iron will that had made her prefer death in a wilderness to marrying a man she did not love.

"I am your wife," she declared fervently. "Yours! What I said about savage marriages, I didn't mean. God was in that ceremony and the medicine man was His agent on earth."

"Yes."

"And when I am through school, you will come for me, dear?"

"I will."

"And we will sit down and make happy talk all time to come. Kiss me now and may the Great Spirit bless you

and watch over you until we meet again."

And he did kiss her. Quite gracefully, considering that he was still in a stupid daze and that the malemutes were all howling to go and that Mrs. Milligan was calling to her daughter to hurry so they could take full advantage of the light.

Light!

The whole world just then was bursting with it and some of it must have penetrated as far as the practical heart of Mr. Milligan, for he patted his daughter's hand and whispered a promise in her ear as she joined him on the sled.

*Watch for more of Captain Guthrie's stories.*



### A CLEVER DISTINCTION

FRANK HOGAN, charming Irishman, Washington wit, and the man who defended Doheny when the oil magnate was prosecuted by the Federal government, was a guest at a Gridiron Club dinner where he met a garrulous and long-legged fellow from the far South. The long-legged person inserted a detaining thumb in the top buttonhole of Hogan's white waistcoat, transfixed him with a hypnotic glance, and plunged into a vivid recital of how and why he and his friends were opposed to Al Smith on the religious issue.

Hogan held up a warning hand.

"My dear sir," he said in sweet and winning tones, "I'm a Catholic myself, and I think I'd better tell you so before you get any deeper into your singularly interesting discourse and denunciation."

The individual with the lengthy legs was momentarily checked but not disheartened.

He brandished a deprecatory forefinger.

"But," he adroitly ventured, "your name's Hogan, isn't it?"

"That's right," Hogan agreed.

"And you're Irish, aren't you?"

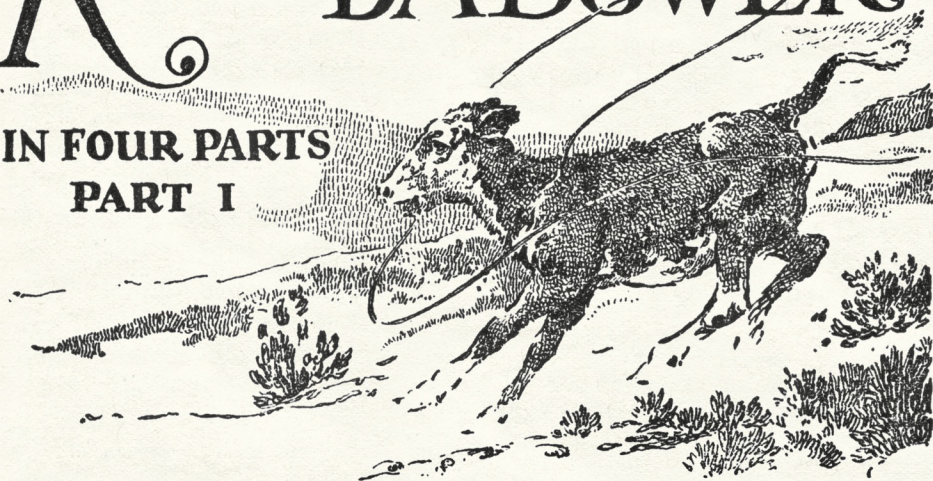
"I am."

"Oh, well," the fellow declared, smiling brightly and tightening his thumbhold on the Hogan waistcoat, "that makes it all right. You're an Irish Catholic. The ones I was talking about are those Roman Catholics!"



# RODEO BY B.M. BOWER

## IN FOUR PARTS PART I



*Author of "The Truth"*

**Haven't you often chatted with friends about the future, wondering all that? In this absorbing story, the cow-punchers of the Flying U, If you are an old reader of this magazine, you will be especially the Little Doctor, Pink, Mig, Weary, Andy and the rest; and even if you**

### CHAPTER I.

#### REUNION!

**T**WO days before the Fourth of July a small procession of three automobiles lifted a ribbon of fine gray dust from the road that wound eastward along the edge of the Bear Paw foothills. Far back toward Dry Lake the haze was still slowly settling to earth when the last car passed through the high gate of the Flying U fence and a small, slight man got out and pulled the gate shut, hooked the chain around the post and into a link worn smooth with much use, and climbed back beside the driver.

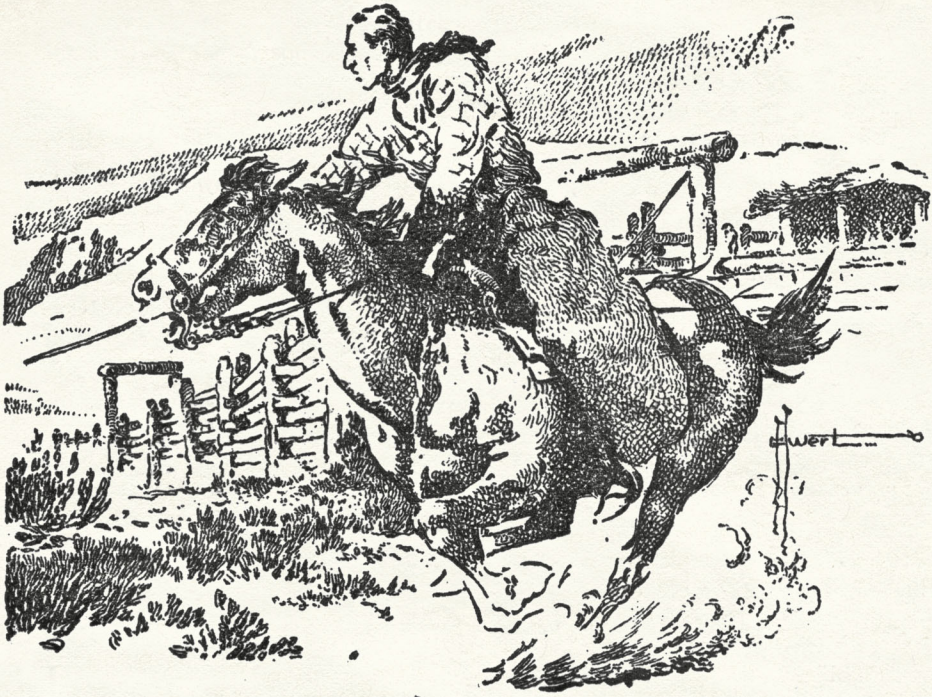
"Same identical chain, hooked the same way as when I came through here years ago," he observed pensively to his

companion. "Don't it seem like yesterday we hit out for California, 'Weary'?"

"It sure does when I look at these hills," Weary replied. "I miss a few chucks in the road, though. They been doing some work on it lately, looks like. We'll be in sight of the coulee in a minute."

Even as he spoke the lead car, a long, low-slung roadster of a famous foreign make, slid up to the very brow of the hill and stopped with a sudden flash of the warning red light seen rather dimly through its coating of dust. The driver, capped and goggled and otherwise bearing the earmarks of a tourist de luxe, twisted his slim body so that he faced to the rear, though his gauntleted hand pointed down into the valley.





*Trapper," "Haywire," Etc.*

what you'd all be doing in ten or twenty years, how you'd look, and after years of separation from the old ranch, return for a reunion. delighted to meet again those favorite characters—Chip, the Old Man, are meeting them for the first time, your enjoyment will be just as keen.

"Say, boys, they've built a red barn!" he cried in the tragic voice of one unexpectedly confronted with the worst that can befall. "Can you feature it? A red barn, and it's trimmed in white like a million other barns in a dozen States!" He sank down into the seat again, shaking his head mournfully. "They might as well put up a windmill and a silo and finish the job!"

Heads craned out of the following limousine. The driver flapped a hand forward in the gesture of dismissal.

"Hey, cut the agony scene and drive on, Mig! Or else pull outa the road to do your wailing, and let me past."

"What's wrong?" Weary shouted from the rear car. "Mig stalled in that tin toy of his? Lemme past, Andy, and I'll give him a tow."

But even while he was speaking the yellow roadster slid on down the steep hill, took the narrow Hogsback Trail like a darting lizard and swept at a reckless speed down the last slope and across the creek on a bridge that like the red barn was a late improvement, leaving the two cars to bore through the thick curtain of dust at their leisure.

As he passed through the big gate he remembered so well, the driver slowed and came to a stand before the bunk house where he had slept through many a bitter night when he was only a poor cowboy working for the Flying U.

As he pulled off his brown goggles and gazed reminiscently at the squat log building, the brown limousine and the blue coach that had trailed him from Dry Lake slid up and stopped with a



squeal of brakes which brought a tall man to the door of the white house on the knoll beyond the cabin. Through a window beside him an old man looked out with the peering intentness of one whose sight is failing.

"Here come the boys, Dell!" the man in the doorway called over his shoulder and came hurrying down the porch steps. "Hey, you fellows, what're you stopping down there for? Drive on up here. That you in the band wagon, Mig? Hello, Andy! Hello, Weary and 'Pink'—everybody, hello!"

"Hello yourself!" Pink, the little fellow with dimples and eyes of a childlike candor, called exuberantly. "We're running ahead of our schedule, 'Chip'—and that's more than you could expect with these bum cars and drivers."

"The quicker the better. Say, you're sure riding good stock these days, boys. Beats plugging along on a cayuse, don't it?" Chip went from car to car, shaking hands and flinging personal gibes at them, affection turning them to compliments by the very look and tone of him.

"Get out and come in, all of you. J. G.'s been watching the road ever since we got your letter saying you could come. I don't see how you got down the hill without him spotting you. Rosemary, Dell will want to murder you if you didn't bring those two kids of yours along."

"Oh, they're here—asleep on cushions in the back of the car." Mrs. Andy Green turned to glance in where they lay. "It's a pretty long trip for little tads like them, and I hate to wake them up. Drive over there and park in the shade, can't you, daddy? They ought to sleep another hour or two. We needn't take out the grips yet. We stopped in Dry Lake and cleaned up," she explained to Chip as they went up to the porch. "The same old hotel—it hasn't changed a chair. Even the same paper on the wall! But we didn't see a soul we knew."

"No, the hotel has changed hands since you left. Here's Dell—come on in, all of you."

Eagerly, yet with a certain gravity hidden beneath the talk and laughter, they went trooping into the big living room of the Flying U ranch house where they had gone booted and spurred more times than they could remember. Eyes shining with something more than welcome, something of gratitude and a secret understanding, the "Little Doctor" greeted them with a special significance in her warm handclasp.

It was because she had called them that they had dropped everything and come. She had told them that J. G., their beloved "Old Man" whose querulous but kindly rule had held them together on the ranch with a bond stronger than the blood tie, was failing with every day that passed. He had lost interest in life and would sit for hours brooding silently upon the past scarcely hearing when they tried to rouse him to the present. Sometimes he would talk of the old days, though not often; frequently he would ask about various members of the "Happy Family."

Wouldn't they try and come to spend the Fourth at the old ranch, with a real old-time reunion? Seeing them might pull J. G. back into life before he slipped too far out and away from them. There was no organic reason, she wrote, why he should not live for several years yet. His rheumatism troubled him a great deal, but aside from that his health should be much better than it was. He was letting go on life. It might be his last Fourth of July, she had stated frankly. It would be unless they could get hold of him somehow and pull him back.

So here they were, trying not to seem conscious of her appeal; trying not to betray the shock they felt at the change in the old man sitting there by the window in a wheel chair, a soft robe thrown



across his knees on this hot midsummer day.

Shrunk, stooped through sheer lack of energy, he sat there staring at them with that remote look in his lusterless eyes which comes when the soul is beginning to loosen its hold upon the body. His handclasp lacked the old sturdy grip of the fingers; his voice was flat, expressionless, tired. He had the habit of repeating words vaguely and of asking the same question twice or even oftener, forgetting that it had been answered. Yet there were moments when he rallied and was the Old Man they remembered, probing their activities with something approaching real interest. These moments they clung to, sought to prolong.

"They tell me you're a movin'-pitcher man now," he said accusingly to Andy Green, who was at that minute selecting a monogrammed cigarette from the "Native Son's" silver case. "That so? And they say Mig-uell here is an actor, and Pink, too. Somebody was tellin' me Pink, here, puts on dresses and plays a woman's part in the movies. What's the straight of the story? Any truth in it?"

"I'm afraid so, J. G. Pink doubles for Minna Waska in all her stunt stuff and a lot of her straight drama. She's that Indian princess that stars in Westerns. Pink's about two thirds of Minna Waska. The girl in the close-ups and love scenes is a Polack girl with a pair of wonderful eyes that get over big on the screen. It takes 'em both to be Minna Waska, so I guess you could say Pink plays a woman's part, all right."

The Old Man grunted and eyed Pink dubiously.

"Any rider in Hollywood'd be tickled at the chance to do my work and draw down the salary I'm getting," Pink defended himself, coloring a little under the look of disapproval. "There's plenty can ride as well as I can, and if they get fifty a week they

consider themselves lucky. They're all too big to double for a girl, though. I get five hundred a week—that's why I double for Minna Waska."

"What's doublin'?" demanded J. G. pettishly, having failed to grasp it all.

They explained to him again what doubling meant. They told him all about how the Native Son had suddenly found himself a favorite with the screen public because of his slim grace in the saddle and his face that photographed so well, so that now he was playing leads under his screen name of Luis Mendoza, with a salary of fifteen hundred a week and the prospect of getting twice that much when his present contract expired. They related their successes—how Andy was making good as a director of Westerns, and how Weary owned a fine lot of horses which he rented to different studios. Weary was making all the money he could spend and remain sober, he declared with that sunny smile they remembered so well, that had carved deep lines around his eyes.

"Looks like the Flyin' U is prospering, too," he added, swinging the subject away from himself as was his habit. "Mig almost took a fit and fell off the bluff up here when he got sight of that red barn you've got now. He was looking for the silo that oughta go with it."

"Well, we've been thinking of putting in a silo," Chip confessed somewhat guiltily. "We're raising nothing but blooded stock now, and a silo would certainly cut down the cost of winter feeding. You can't turn a thousand-dollar cow out on the range to rustle through the winter, you know. Nor thoroughbred horses, either. We're running everything under fence and we need better shelter than we did in the old days. So we had to have a big barn," he finished in whimsical apology, looking at Miguel.

"You didn't have to paint it red," the Native Son retorted. "From the top



of the hill this location could be duplicated in Iowa or Indiana or any one of a dozen States. You've killed the old range atmosphere, Chip. A two-story red barn is about as Western as a high-board fence—and as picturesque. And you're an artist, too! And the Little Doctor here—I can't seem to get that red barn in the picture at all."

Her sudden laughter halted his whimsical, half-earnest diatribe.

"Even artists have to eat and wear clothes," she reminded him. "One could starve in picturesque, thoroughly Western atmosphere, but we prefer to adapt ourselves to changing conditions and go on living, just as you boys have done. Big red barns are an economic necessity, these days. Perhaps not red—but it's a good warm color that holds up well in all weathers. We're like Pink; we do it because there's more money in it than trying to patch up old sheds and letting our stock freeze."

"You're as bad as the 'Kid,'" Chip grinned ruefully. "He thinks we ought to turn this blooded stock loose in the Bad Lands so we'd have to run a round-up outfit same as we used to. Called me a hayseed the other day, the young whelp!"

"Oh, yeah—where's the Kid?" Weary pulled his pitying glance away from the Old Man. "I was going to ask about him. Big as you are, Chip, I'll bet!"

"Bigger," Chip answered laconically. "A good inch taller; weighs about what I did when I was riding every day——" He broke off abruptly, glancing involuntarily toward the Little Doctor.

"He's home, ain't he?"

"Oh, yes—got home a week ago. Rode horseback up from Laramie where we've had him in school. Crazy about horses, but——"

"But what?" Pink boldly inquired. "He ain't the kind that can't stick on a horse, is he? That don't seem possible, the way he started out when he

was a little tad. It oughta run in the blood. Don't it?"

"I don't know," Chip confessed with manifest reluctance. "He likes horses and he's got no use for cars—you can hardly get him into one. He's got three good saddle horses and he seems to spend most of his time fooling around with them. He sets a horse like a rider. I don't know how he'd perform on a real salty bronc."

"I hope," the Little Doctor spoke up, "he has more sense than to try performing on one. The time for that has gone by. Our boy is going to be a doctor."

"Yeah?" Weary started as if some one had given him a blow on the back. The Old Man gave a snort of dissent, and Pink sent a quick, inquiring look toward Andy Green.

"She means," Chip explained dryly, "that she wants him to be a doctor, since he won't take any interest in the ranch. We don't know what he thinks about it, though. We don't," he added queerly, "know what he thinks about anything, much. He's taken possession of those weaning sheds and corral down in the lower pasture, and he keeps his horses down there every summer and rides around in the hills a lot. We don't see much of him, to tell you the truth."

"I want him to keep in the open air as much as possible during the summer," his mother spoke up quickly. "Claude is a very quiet, studious boy, and he is growing so fast that he needs all the fresh air and sunshine he can get. I did want him to go to some good college in the East, but he chose Laramie University—because it's nearer home, I suppose; and it's a very good school, we find. We're all very proud of Claude, and his father is just pretending he doesn't know that we're to have a young M. D. in the family one of these days."

"That'll be fine," Weary observed with a lukewarm interest. "I never used to think the Kid would ever be



anything but a real old cow-puncher. That's the way he started out, and I'd 'a' thought he'd keep it up. It kinda surprises me to hear he's taken to studying medicine."

"Well, of course he hasn't, yet," his mother admitted. "He has to lay the foundation first. And he does love horses as well as he ever did. I think he must spend most of his time in the saddle during the summers, making up for being indoors all winter."

"Funny he don't take to ranching," Pink remarked doubtfully. "You'd think——"

"Oh, he'll fool with a rope—he's pretty good at spinning a loop. But he sure ain't cut out for a rancher," Chip told them. "I don't believe he's been inside the new barn since he came back."

"Old pioneer stock," the Old Man suddenly broke into the discussion. "Take to it all right if it was like it used to be. Open range and the wagons startin' out by the middle uh May—he'd make a better wagon boss than his father ever did—give 'im a chance! Soon as this dang leg uh mine lets up, I'm goin' to hunt me a new range and run cattle like they oughta be run. I'll take the Kid and Cal's boy and make range hands outa them. Him a doctor, aye? That's all you know! He's got the legs of a rider and the eyes of a roper—and if he ain't a cowhand it's because there ain't nothin' but tame milk cows left in the country. Him a doctor! Hunh!"

"Why don't you boys walk down in the pasture and see if he's there?" the Little Doctor hastily inquired. "He's anxious to see you boys—he hasn't forgotten the good times we all used to have on the ranch when he was a little fellow, and I know he made it a point to hurry home from school just because he knew you were coming."

"Yeah, let's go hunt him up," Weary agreed with alacrity, understanding perfectly well that the Little Doctor wanted

to keep the Old Man from getting himself worked up over the vanished days of open range and round-ups.

They went off to find the Kid, therefore; though their eagerness was a shade dimmed by the description they had just listened to. The Kid a studious youth, going to be a doctor! Somehow they were disappointed, though they could not have told why.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE COW-PUNCHING KID.

DOWN in the lower pasture on a level stretch above the corral that stood against the creek bank, the Kid wheeled his clean-limbed sorrel, backed him over a line gouged in the meadow sod, shook out his loop, hung a small rope between his teeth and glanced toward the corral. A boy of twelve had just turned out a Hereford bull calf and was fastening the gate against others. As he swung his horse to chase the animal down past the waiting rider, he pulled a watch from his pocket, squinted at it, looked at the calf, picked a white flag from beneath his thigh, held it aloft for a second, dipped it suddenly and shouted: "Go!"

The sorrel leaped forward, the rope circling over the rider's head. A quick drumming of hoofbeats as they surged up alongside the running calf, and the loop shot out and over the animal's head as the Kid jumped off and ran forward. The sorrel settled back, holding the rope taut, and the Kid seized the fighting victim, flipped it dexterously on its side, grabbed and bound together a hind foot and the forefeet with the rope he jerked from between his teeth, gave a twist and a yank, and rose, flinging up both hands in signal that he had finished. Whereupon the boy on the little bay cow pony dropped the flag which he had been holding aloft, stared fixedly at the watch in his left hand and shouted in a high, clear treble that carried across to the



Happy Family concealed by the willows along the creek as they neared the spot:

"Kid *Ben-nett*! *Ti-ime*, for-tee-sev'n an' one fifth *seckunds*!"

"Aw, you're all wet, boy!" the roper disgustedly protested, looking up from freeing the young bull. "Where do you get that stuff? If I didn't make it in thirty flat, I'm a dry farmer! You had your darned flag nailed to the mast after I signaled. Forty-seven my eye! And what's the idea of whittling it down to fifths? Go get an alarm clock, boy. It'd beat that crazy stop watch, anyhow."

"Say, who's doin' this judgin' anyhow?" Boy demanded hotly. "You're penalized ten seconds, Kid Bennett, for gettin' over the foul line before the critter crossed the deadline!"

"Oh, go soak! I was a good six inches back of the line!" Kid suddenly laughed and flung out both arms, shooing the bull off down the flat. "I told you to hold me strictly down to the rules, boy, but that don't mean you've got to disqualify me every time we come out here. And you needn't call time on me from the minute I saddle up, either! I made that in thirty flat, and I know it."

"Well, s'posin' you did? You want me to go swellin' your head every time you made a good throw? You got to get used to strict judgin'. I betcha Weary or Pink or any of the boys that's comin' can beat your time so far, Kid. You're good, but you ain't good enough yet. You just think you are."

"Well, give a fellow some show, anyway. Thirty flat is pretty good—especially when you ran in a bigger calf on me this time and never said a word. That baby weighs close to four hundred, and I'd bet money on it. He's one of the new bunch dad just got. You can't fool me, Boy. He was a son of a gun to lay down!"

"Well, for the cryin' out loud! What'd yuh want? One that'll lay

down and stick his feet together and beller for you to come an' tie 'im? All them others is got so they'll do it, almost, you've throwed an' tied 'em so much. You want 'em big an' tough, Kid. You said the only way to get good is to throw big ones, so contest calves will feel like throwin' a tame cat!"

"Well, that's all right, too," the Kid began temporizingly, when voices from the willows halted him. He swung that way, his face a mask of guarded resentment. An observant person would have seen the sensitive hurt in his eyes when laughter mingled with the words that came to him in fragments of sentences.

"—five hundred dollars for that calf," Chip was saying. "—break a leg—darn kids haven't any sense—"

"—comes natural—" another voice broke in. And then, distinct, unforgivable, patronizing, it seemed to the Kid, came that platitude: "Boys will be boys."

The Kid's lips set in a straight line. He sent a glance toward Boy, who was hastily untying his handkerchief flag from the stick. Boy looked scared, as if he had been caught in mischief. The Kid thrust a toe in the stirrup and swung into the saddle. He was riding away, straight-backed and angry, when Chip's voice stopped him.

"Hey, wait a minute! The boys are here and they want to say hello."

Kid gave the reins a twitch and the sorrel swung in toward the willows, from which the Happy Family came walking with eager steps. The Kid stared frankly, forgetting his resentment in the shock of this meeting.

Well as he remembered those idols of his childhood, Pink and Weary, Andy Green and the Native Son, he scarcely recognized them now. Like centaurs of the range they had ridden through his worshipful memory; the best riders in the world, he loyally believed; the best ropers, the best shots, the finest friends. Heroes all, drifting out of his life be-



fore he had learned that after all they were human and, being human, they were subject to changes if they were to adapt themselves to new environments.

The Kid remembered them Stetsoned, booted and spurred, riding recklessly across the prairies, their careless laughter keeping time with the quick staccato of hoofbeats. While he had not taken the trouble to apply a bit of logic to the matter, it seemed reasonable to suppose that they would return very much as he had last seen them. They did not. The Native Son wore gray-plaid knickers and woolly golf stockings and low tan shoes. His coat was a soft gray and his modish cap was gray. Any country club would recognize him as one of their own kind, but to the Kid he was as alien as a Hindu in that meadow.

Andy Green and Pink and Weary wore gray whipcord breeches, leather puttees and panamas. Even their faces were unfamiliar, though Pink's dimples woke memories of bunk-house laughter long ago. Which one of the four, he wondered, had suggested that boys would be boys? Did they think he was merely playing, down there in the heat of afternoon? They and their Hollywood get-up!

"Say, you'll be a fair-sized man when you grow up," Weary greeted him facetiously as he reached up a hand to the Kid sitting there immobile on Stardust, looking down at them with a baffling reserve in his smoky-gray eyes.

"Yes, I suppose I shall," the Kid agreed unsmilingly as he shook hands. His old idol, Weary, wearing putts!

"Trying to be a re'l ol' cow-puncher, still," Andy Green observed lightly, hiding a great tenderness that welled up in his heart as he took the gloved hand of the Kid who had snuggled against him in the saddle, many a time, and lisped grave prophecies of the wonderful things he would do when he was a man.

"Oh, no—just exercising the horse a

little, is all. Real cow-punchers are a thing of the past. It's all out of date to talk of punching cows, Andy."

"It sure is with this registered stock," Chip grimly agreed. "Pretty expensive stuff to bust on a rope, Kid. You'll have to find something cheaper than these bulls to practice on."

"Where?" The Kid gave his dad a slow, level look, and leaned to shake hands with Pink and the Native Son. "I'm certainly glad to see you-all," he said. But he did not look glad, and what he felt would never be put into words—the heartachy disappointment, the sense of loss and of bafflement. It was with a distinct feeling of relief that he saw them turn toward Boy, hovering near with the reins tight on his little bay cow pony, as if he were all ready to wheel and make a dash across the meadow.

"This is Cal's boy," Chip announced in the casual tone one usually adopts in introducing children to their grown-ups. "They've got a ranch up above Meeker's. Say, you wouldn't know old Cal! He's as big one way as he is the other—weighs over two hundred. But he's got a nice wife and bunch of kids. Boy's the oldest. Cal and his wife couldn't agree on a name for him, so they call him Boy."

"My name's Calvin Claude," Boy announced with bashful abruptness, and immediately his ears turned a deep red framed with his tow-colored hair.

"That's not according to your mother," Chip said teasingly. "You've heard a lot about Weary and Pink and Andy and Mig. Your dad used to punch cows with them before he got too fat to ride. If you're going home pretty soon, Boy, tell your dad the boys are here—got here sooner than we expected them. He may want to drive down after supper."

"All right. I'm goin' now." His round eyes still staring frankly at the four, Boy reined his horse away, ham-



mered him on the ribs with his run-down heels and rode off.

"I think I'll ride over with him," the Kid announced suddenly, breaking a somewhat awkward pause. "I have an errand over that way. If I'm not back by supper time, dad, tell mother not to wait. I'll see you later, all of you. I'm surely glad to have met you again." Two fingers went up and tilted his gray Stetson a half inch downward as he wheeled and galloped after Boy, while the five stood there watching him go.

"Oughta have a camera on that," Andy muttered mechanically, though that is probably not what he was thinking.

"Say, if I could high-hat 'em like that, I could pull down ten thousand a week!" the Native Son murmured enviously.

Further than that they made no comment as they turned to walk back up the creek to the house. But Chip was chewing a corner of his lip in the way he did when he was bottling his fury, and the faces of the four looked as they did when they stood contemplating a blowout ten miles from the nearest service station.

"The Kid's been off to college, you say?" Andy ventured, after a silent five minutes.

"Yes, two years. We wanted to put him in Berkeley or Stanford, but he balked and wouldn't go anywhere but Laramie. He's something of a problem," Chip confessed. "Dell wants him to be an M. D.—I don't know how that's going to pan out, though. Fact is, we can't seem to get a line on him; what he thinks or wants. Except that he's crazy about horses and guns, we don't know much about him."

"He's a dead ringer for you, Chip, when I first saw you," Weary said bluntly. "Taller, maybe, and his eyes are different. Better looking by a whole lot, but shut up inside of himself the way you used to be. Seems to me you

ought to get together somehow. You've got things in common—horses and saddles and ropes and spurs—lots of things."

"Theoretically, yes. But when a kid goes off to school you seem to lose all track of him. I didn't even know he could throw and tie a critter, till he did it just now. He never let on to me that he ever wanted to try." Chip stopped to roll a cigarette. "Acted sore because we caught him at it. He's a queer make-up, somehow."

"Wish we'd got there half a minute sooner," Weary observed. "I guess they were just playing contest, but still he must 'a' made his catch all right. That critter sure picked himself up like he'd been tied down and didn't like it. Looks to me, Chip, like he's got the earmarks all right. Why don't yuh feel him out, kinda? The Old Man may be right. In fact, I think he is. The Kid has got the look——"

"What good would it do if he had?" Chip cut in sharply. "If it was twenty years ago—but it's now, remember. I don't want the Kid to have the old fever in his blood; not when there's nothing to work it out on. If we had open range and were running ten or twenty thousand head of cattle like we used to do—sure, I'd make a real hand of the Kid. Good as any of us, Weary. The Kid's got the stuff in him, but the less it's cultivated the better off he is. I don't know whether he realizes it or not. I hope not. He hates the ranch as it is, so I hope he takes the notion to be a doctor, as Dell wants him to be."

"It's a damn shame," sighed Weary. "We oughta be in off round-up now, for the Fourth—with the wagons camped on Birch Creek or maybe here at the ranch, and a bunch of broncs in the corral and a dance on in Dry Lake schoolhouse——"

"Say, I wish you'd shut up," Pink entreated almost tearfully. "I had a hunch this visit back here was going to



call up old times till I'll be a year getting over it. Say, I'd give five years of my life to be back on round-up with the same old string of horses—Casey and Frog and old Fritz——”

“Who's callin' up things now?” Andy shut him off. “Can't yuh let well enough alone? I been trying all day to forget how it'd feel to be ridin' into camp in a high lope, hungry as a wolf, and smellin' those blueberry pies old Patsy used to make——”

“Say, I'd give all I've got to be standing night guard again, with a cool breeze whispering through the grass and the stars all sprinkled over the sky—— Say what you will, there's nothing to compare with it!” The Native Son flicked ash from his cigarette and stared wistfully at the familiar line of hills.

“It sure is a crime the way the country has settled up,” Andy lamented. “I never realized that the old range is a thing of the past, till I got to driving up this way. It ain't the same country to me.”

“You're dead right, it's changed,” Chip gloomily agreed. “But while I think of it, boys, don't talk about it before the Old Man if you can help it. He gets all stirred up over it, and he can't stand it. We try to keep his mind as quiet as we can—though he does sometimes forget times are changed, and talks as if he could run cattle like he used to. I don't know what he thinks of your city clothes—I saw him eying you kinda funny. But I suppose there's too many movie cowboys as it is.”

“That's right,” Pink attested somewhat sourly. “Fellows that never saw a round-up in their lives—aw, hell! We've got so we class ridin' boots and Stetsons with grease paint; we keep 'em for the camera. The world has changed a lot, Chip, and it ain't changed for the better, either. An old cowhand has got no show at all to be himself, these days. He's either got to crawl off and die somewhere or join the parade and get

as close to the band wagon as he can, and look as if he liked it!”

“And that explains the red barn you fellows objected to.” Chip turned aside from the trail and led them toward its wide-spreading doors. “Come on inside and I'll show you some real aristocrats among cows. Not much like the hard-boiled old range cows we used to tail up at the water holes, with the snow drifted on their backs even with their hip bones! But I'm making money, and that's what keeps you fellows in the movies.”

So they drifted away from the Kid and the polite snub he had given them. They did not refer to him again that afternoon, though they had talked of him a good deal on the way from California, and had lived over every cute little baby way and every boyish prank he had perpetrated while they were still at the Flying U. How he had nearly drowned Silver, and how he had ridden off with a bag of doughnuts and jelly and prunes and lost himself in the Bad Lands, trying to find the round-up and help the boys. How he had been kidnapped and had escaped and let Silver carry him home—things which the Kid had forgotten long ago, very likely.

But they remembered, and they had felt the old proprietary affection for him welling up in their hearts as they recalled the things he had done, the things he had said, aping them and their somewhat tumultuous ways when he was so small he had to hunt a rock to stand on when he mounted his horse.

And here he was, polite and impersonal and aloof, looking as they had hoped he would look but with something lacking in his make-up evidently, though they only felt that vaguely in the cool rebuff he had given them. At heart he was of the old West; he must be, to fool around roping calves for pastime—and they felt certain the Little Doctor would not have enjoyed the fleeting glimpse they had got of him in action



—but without a word he had shut them out as if they were strangers. Swell headed from going to college, they decided privately, and tried to dismiss him as one more disappointment they must accept in their home-coming.

### CHAPTER III.

#### CHAMPION OF THE WEST.

**S**LIM" and "Happy Jack," grown heavy and plodding in their years of service, came jouncing home from the upper meadow in an old Ford with flapping front fenders, two irrigating shovels rattling in the back of the car. Their raucous welcome to the four from Hollywood was distinctly audible to the Kid where he sat on a flat place in the rock rim of the coulee, glooming down at the ranch and trying to swallow his disappointment in his four idols of the past.

Slim and Happy were not awed by the resplendence of the visitors, it appeared; their pungent taunts concerning the Native Son's striped socks and knee pants floated up the hill, followed by Miguel's instant attack upon the ancient vehicle they drove.

"First time in your lives you ever topped a rough one," he cried derisively, "and you have to hobble your stirrups even now to stay with it more than a couple of jumps!"

The Kid grinned in spite of himself, for Happy and Slim had always been notoriously poor riders. He watched the group go off down to the old mess house together, all talking at once and laughing for no apparent reason, and his eyes followed them meditatively, a longing to be one of them growing stronger and stronger within him. He had expected to be a part of that hilarious reunion. Until he had seen them walking across the meadow toward him and had sensed an alien quality that went deeper than the difference in their appearance, he had counted the days to

their coming. And they had been like utter strangers when he saw them; youth is always slow to adapt itself to the change of years.

But now, as he sat staring absently down upon the roof that sheltered them as it had done before he was born, an ache of homesickness gripped the Kid by his throat. They were down there in the mess house—Weary, Pink, Andy Green and the Native Son—just as they used to be when he was a little tad and begged his mother to let him eat with the boys, because he was going to be a cow-puncher when he got big enough.

They were there in the same big room with the stove and kitchen things in one end and the long table in the other; the same stove, the same table, almost the same dishes. They'd be glad that nothing had changed; nothing except old Patsy who was dead, his place filled now by another old round-up cook, old Bob Simms. Bob knew the boys, too. They'd be glad the old mess house hadn't changed much. Didn't the Kid know? He who had held that room close in his affections, a secret shrine wherein he had worshiped the memory of his beloved Happy Family.

Well, the old bunch was together again—most of them, anyway. Now and then a burst of laughter floated up to him—Slim's great bellow that was so seldom heard nowadays; Andy Green's high, rocking "*Hoo-hoo-hoo!*" that could set the echoes laughing across the creek against the farther coulee wall.

The Kid's eyes softened. After all, they were the same old boys, by the sound of them. Maybe he had been too quick to judge. Knickers and putts—what if they had permitted themselves to slip into city ways and city dress? He remembered somewhat guiltily a pair of plus-fours packed away in his own trunk, and that he even went so far as to wear them upon occasion.

The Kid got up and went to where Stardust stood patiently waiting, reins



dropped to the ground, and rode over to where the trail dropped down through a wide gap in the rim rock, following it down across the Hogsback, down the steeper slope below to the creek. He was in a hurry now. He wanted to get in on the fun in the mess house. It seemed as though he had not seen the boys at all; those strange men who walked out of the willows had not counted. In the mess house, sitting around the long table, eating and talking and smoking, it would seem more like old times.

Cal had come some time during the Kid's long absence. The boys were sitting around the table just as the Kid had expected them to be doing; smoking and talking of old times. The horses they had ridden, the long drives, this mischance and that adventure—they scarcely noticed his entrance, so engrossed were they in reminiscence.

The Kid, finding himself a perch on a high box back in the corner, listened and looked on and tried to close his mind against a certain disquieting conviction that was growing within him. They were boasting of the old skill, magnifying old exploits—"telling it scarey," in their own phraseology—and they were belittling the present and sneering at the riders of to-day.

"I tell you, Chip, they don't *grow* 'em no more!" Andy Green declared vehemently, bringing his fist down hard on the table—a gesture he had learned at the studios, no doubt. "These young squirts that have sprung up and claim to be riders are *pitiful*, to an old cowhand! You take it in pictures, for instance. The camera does most of the stunt stuff—all that ain't done by old hands like Pink and some others. These young contest sheiks—why, the poor saps don't know a bronc from a polo pony!"

"Yeah, take these contests they put on all over the country nowadays!" Pink chimed in. "Paid performers

crow-hopping around on old benches that ain't got a real buck jump in 'em and never had. Saps pay their money and go and gawp, and think they're seeing the real West! It makes you sick. There *ain't* any real West no more!"

The Kid, over in his corner, got up and lounged forward, hands in pockets as if he didn't care, but with a light in his eyes that said the slight had struck home.

"How is it, then, that the record for roping and tying has been lowered on you old-timers by the young squirts of to-day?" he drawled. "Bulldogging, too. The saps that go and gawp will give you the laugh if your time runs over twenty seconds. And have you ever seen Chile Bean do his stuff or Invalid, or Heel Do?" He paused to give them a chance if they wanted it.

"I'm one of the young squirts you're talking about," he went on. "You fellows were top hole—nobody knows that better than I do. But when you say there is no more West, you're dead wrong. You ought to take your heads out of the nose bag and look around, before you give us the razzberry. There is a West, and it's just as real as it used to be, even though it's different. There are real riders and ropers and bulldoggers, too—under twenty-five years of age."

There was a moment of that dead silence which is a contradiction and a reproach.

"If there's any of the real West left, I sure as hell would like to see it!" said Pink, taking up the challenge.

"I can show you some, if you care to take the time."

"As for the riding and roping," Andy began, in the tone of one who would presently put the Kid in his place, "they don't tie down the kinda critters we used to. A calf is some different from a three-year-old steer. And horses don't buck the way they used to."

"Don't they, though! Some time



when you feel particularly lucky, go hunt up any of the horses I've named, or any one of a dozen others."

"You're speaking out of turn, Kid." Chip gave him a fatherly look of reproof. "What you know about riding and roping you could write on a dime. This bunch has spent more hours in the saddle than you have lived. Do you think none of us ever saw a contest?"

"We're going to have a chance next month," the Native Son observed in his negligently good-natured tone. "I'm due to go to Chicago on location when they hold their big rodeo there. Andy's going to direct the contest scenes, and maybe," he added dryly, "we can work it so Pink and Weary can go along. That'll give us all a chance to see some real pretty riding!"

The Kid was leaving, but he stopped in the doorway and looked back at the speaker.

"If you get in a jam and want a double to ride for you," he said evenly, "look me up, Mig. I'm liable to be there."

"Like thunder you'll be there!" Chip wrathfully exclaimed. "You'll be in school, where you belong!"

But the Kid was walking down the deep-worn path to the stable and probably did not hear him. He was a little ashamed of himself even before he reached his horse; yet he knew that he was speaking the truth—except that fling at the Native Son, of course. They didn't make any better riders than the Native Son, the Kid admitted honestly to himself; or than he had been, before the movies had got him. He hadn't meant that, and he was sorry he had said it. It discounted his other assertions. They would think he was just mouthy and stuck on himself, and let it go at that.

But no real West? The old buffalo hunters and Indian fighters had probably made the same complaint when the Happy Family rode the range. They,

too, had been told that the old West was gone and the country was getting too settled and civilized. They had laughed at the notion, no doubt; but here they were, mourning in their turn the passing of the West. It angered the Kid who loved every mile of it for its bigness, the wide sweep of its prairies, the unconquerable vastness of its mountain ranges, for the heady keenness of its whooping winds.

"They're wrong, dead wrong!" he told himself hotly when he was lying in his camp bed gazing up at the purple sky with its millions of twinkling lights. "There are more fences and more towns and more people, but it isn't tame yet by a long shot! They think it's slowed down, but it's just because they've slowed down themselves. The young fellows don't find it so tame! They don't hit the pace they used to hit. It—oh, heck, it's their youth that's gone, and they don't know it!"

Upon that pathetic thought the Kid meditated long and pityingly. It was a darn shame men had to grow old and soft, so they couldn't ride a bronc or throw a rope the way they used to do. He wished they had his muscle and endurance—he'd take them into country as wild as when the Indians painted their ponies and themselves and rode in breechclouts with feathers in their hair. Why, a little more—just a few more years—and they'd be like his uncle J. G., just sitting in the house, doing nothing but talk about old times!

"Gosh. I hadn't realized it, but the Happy Family's getting old! Too bad—good boys, too, before they lost their stride." Upon that commiserating thought the Kid's heavy-lashed eyelids drooped and stayed down. In the cool starlight he slept with the sound, untroubled slumber of youth.

In the guest room of the white house on the knoll a vastly different point of view was discussed at about that time, when Andy Green had at last felt the



yearning for sleep after a hard day's drive and was making ready for bed. A muttered exclamation when he stubbed his bare toe against a rocker had roused his wife, and some conversation ensued. Part of it concerned the very thing the Kid was thinking about as he fell asleep.

"Has the Kid come back, Andy? Dell felt really put out about his going off that way when he knew we were here and all. Of course she tried to hide it, but she kept making excuses for him—you saw him, didn't you? What's he like?"

Andy gave a grunt that might have meant anything.

"Isn't he—nice?"

"Oh-h—just a darned swell-headed goslin'—looks like Chip used to, quite a lot; something like his mother, too. Thinks he's forgot more than the rest of us ever knew. I don't know where he gets it—if he was my kid I'd sure take a lot of that out of him. Chip's too easy."

"I can't imagine the Kid turning out like that," Rosemary made regretful comment. "He was the dearest boy that——"

"It sure is too bad," Andy agreed. "High hat—that kind of thing. I guess maybe he'll get over it in time, but he sure as the world has got a bad attack of know-it-all now! Why"—he raised his voice indignantly, then dropped it to a mumble when his wife nudged him warningly—"he was even trying to tell us boys we didn't know what real riding and roping is! Can you beat that?"

"No!" Rosemary managed to express a world of incredulity in that one word.

"And that," Andy finished with gloomy finality, "is what a man gets when he sends a kid to college. Takes 'em ten years to get over it."

"What a shame!" yawned Mrs. Andy. "Dell is so proud she'd die before she'd own she's disappointed in Claude——"

"I don't know as she is. Mothers

don't see their kids the way other folks do. Or fathers, either—though I must say Chip don't seem overly keen about him."

"Too bad!" decided Rosemary, much as the Kid had done. "He was such a good boy, I hate to think of him spoiled. But of course you mustn't let on you notice it, Andy. It would hurt Dell terribly if she thought——"

"Oh, I ain't going to tell 'em what I think of him," Andy mumbled sleepily. "Gosh, it's good to get stretched out in a good bed, after some of them hotels we put up at! My old bones ache to-night—we'll take it easier going back. No sense in driving like Billy-be-damu just to get over the road. If Mig wants to step on 'er, he can; I'm goin' to take it easy."

So Andy unconsciously proved the Kid's deductions were in a measure correct, though neither of them was aware of it.

## CHAPTER IV.

### REBELLION.

THE Kid awoke at daylight under the canopied, soft tints of summer sunrise, and lay for a time looking up at the changing hues of the clouds, basking wordlessly in the glory of life. Some of the artist's love of beauty must have come to the Kid from his father, though he had never taken to pencil or brush but contented himself so far with the secret glow of appreciation when sheer perfection such as this morning lay all about him.

But his mind gradually returned to the thoughts of last night and revolved about the deplorable change he saw in the four members of the Happy Family who had come so far and so fast to spend the Fourth at the old ranch, and who had left so much in the past that they couldn't quite focus their eyes upon the present.

The Kid, stretching his long limbs luxuriously under the two blankets that



covered him, thought what a pity it was that the boys couldn't face life as he faced it. No wonder they resented the years that had taken the horses they loved—he supposed they loved the horses they talked about, just as he loved Stardust and Blazes and Sunup. It must be pretty tough, all right, to feel yourself growing old, no longer toughened to the trails, having to leave all the good times behind you for the young fellows to enjoy.

In that mood of sincere sympathy the Kid began this day by determining to do all in his power to show the boys a nice time while they were here. He decided that it was all wrong to think of having a little exhibition of roping and riding. He had expected that the boys would fall in with the idea and take part in the fun, and perhaps give him some good pointers—they who were such experts. But now he saw that it would prove a one-man show, and that they would merely sit back and tolerate him and think he was showing off; and they would tell how they used to do it, and probably they would make him feel like a fool. So he canceled his little wild-West program and set himself the task of finding out what they really would enjoy the most.

By noon he thought he knew. What they enjoyed most, it seemed to him, was sitting around on the porch, talking about horses and round-ups and fights and men, with Chip and the Old Man. Even the women were absorbed in their own interests. Rosemary fussed with her two little tads, as she called them—pretty little things they were, questing like young quail and needing a watchful eye upon them—and talking with the Little Doctor, also about old times.

Nobody needed the Kid, and nobody paid any attention to him. Though he remembered a good many incidents they recalled, they did not seem to include him in any of their reminiscences or to care what he remembered, any more

than if he were ten years old instead of twenty past. In the two hours and more after breakfast that he lingered on the porch, waiting for a chance to show his affectionate understanding and his friendly intentions toward them, not a dozen words were spoken to him directly.

Once Weary asked for a match and turned away when the Kid told him he didn't smoke; and once Rosemary, coming out to get Junior, paused and fixed her pretty brown eyes upon him and asked how he liked college. Not a head turned his way when the Kid said, "All right." Rosemary smiled and plucked her young child by the back of his romper and scooted him into the house, and that was the end of the Kid's conversation with the company that morning. They were all too busy. Memory had carried them back into a time that shut him out as with a high wall.

The Kid enjoyed hearing them talk, but the inaction palled upon him and it looked as though this sort of thing would last all day. He did not know, you see, that they were consciously drawing the Old Man out of his brooding silence, trying to lure him back to an interest in life.

At any rate he grew tired of sitting still and letting his long legs dangle off the porch, so he got to his feet and started unobtrusively for the corral where he had left Stardust saddled when he rode up from his camp in the lower pasture. Chip, brought back to the present by the movement, called after him to leave those young bulls alone or he'd break a leg—meaning, of course, a bull's leg. But no one asked where he was going or suggested that he come back and stay with the bunch; which was not like the Happy Family, as any one who knows them will observe.

The Kid understood, or thought he did. They were sore because he had told them the truth last night. Prob-



ably he had made a fool of himself—he ought to have known they didn't want to be disturbed in their delusions. But he was hurt and disappointed nevertheless and he felt considerably let down after his careful diagnosis of their case and his good resolutions and all.

So he packed an emergency ration of one package of raisins and some hard-tack which he kept in camp for his long rides, changed his saddle to Blazes that needed exercise that day, and rode off into the hills toward the river. Not that he wanted to go off and sulk, but because he was pursuing a somewhat rigid training for himself and his horses, and several hours in the saddle each day, riding through rough country, was a part of his program to toughen his mounts and himself.

He liked the solitude of those long, twisty canyons and the high, windy ridges between. He liked to follow them at random, losing himself in the labyrinth of little gulches for a while, just for the pleasure of working his way out—not always an easy thing to do, though his sense of location was splendidly developed.

It was wilderness unspoiled, in spite of the occasional little ranches nested in deep, shut-in valleys. Sometimes he liked to ride through the small pastures and imagine himself a hermit living there away from the world, but mostly he avoided them and tried to ignore the fact that they were near.

To-day, with the talk of the Happy Family fresh in his mind and with their attitude toward him rankling in his heart, he turned aside from his usual route and burrowed deeper and deeper into the wild, scarcely conscious of the way he took but wanting only to ride and ride and turn back only when he must.

So eventually he awoke to the fact that the day was far spent, and he had not the faintest notion of the way he had come, nor the way he should go. It

had been hunger that gnawed its way to his attention, so now he ate a little, drank from a spring that, unlike other springs in the Bad Lands, happened to be good water, and gave himself to the problem of finding the way home.

Before when he had lost himself purposely it had been sheer pretense and he had always kept a fair record in his mind of the general course he had taken. To-day he had been glooming along, thinking of other things and had lost himself with a vengeance. It was late when he started back, and it was dark before he had found a way out of that canyon.

It was late the next afternoon when he arrived at a ranch and found the place deserted, every one having gone out somewhere to celebrate the Fourth, no doubt. Too bad. The folks were having a picnic party for all the old-timers in the country, and it might be that these ranchers were old acquaintances of Weary and the others.

The Kid went in and borrowed some bread, gathered half a hatful of eggs at the stable, milked a tame cow in the little pasture and feasted beside a camp fire down by the creek. It was not the way he had expected to spend this Fourth of July, and the folks were probably worrying about him, but that did not impair his appetite for bread and milk and hard-boiled eggs.

Blazes, too, was hungry. The Kid decided to let him graze for an hour before he started home, and in the meantime he lay back in the shade of the willows and took a nap, his big hat tilted down over his face.

It was dark when he awoke—indeed, by the stars it was close to midnight. The Kid got up, caught his horse and saddled in haste and started homeward along the rough ranch road that crawled crookedly through the canyons to where it finally debouched into a river trail which the Kid recognized. Even then



he was miles from the Flying U and the dawn wind was creeping over the hills.

The night was grayling to that ghostly translucence that precedes daybreak when the Kid unsaddled Blazes at his own camp and sent him off nickering to join his companions in the meadow. It was hours too early for breakfast. He crawled into his bed, tired and sleepy and considerably crestfallen over his mischance, and immediately he fell away into deep, dreamless slumber.

The midday meal was over when the Kid, whistling a meaningless jazz tune, came sauntering up the path with his hands in his pockets and his big Stetson tilted at a rakish angle over one eyebrow, just to show he didn't care. But he did care. In back of that nonchalant pose he was squirming with apprehension over the reception he would receive. Were they mad, and would they give him the devil? Had they worried, thinking something had happened to him? Parents did worry upon the slightest provocation. The Kid would almost rather they got up on their ear about it.

There they all were, sitting around on the porch, talking and looking almost as if they had not moved from the spot since he left. The Kid's saunter grew a shade more arrogant, trying to hide his dread of the battery of glances that turned upon him in varying degrees of disapproval. But after all he passed the ordeal very well, it seemed to him, though he grew hot inside at the transparent effort to accept his return as a matter of course; something of no moment because he had not been missed.

But his lips did not lose their pucker and his tune did not miss a note until his foot was upon the lowest step of the porch, Pink moving aside to make room for him. He nodded a negligent greeting that included them all, flung a careless sentence after it for good measure and went into the house.

"Claude Bennett, where have you

been since day before yesterday?" the Little Doctor demanded with hard, bright eyes.

"Oh, riding around," the Kid told her smilingly, though a premonitory tightening of his throat shortened the sentence perforce.

"Riding around! You're getting more impossible every day of your life! You——"

"I'll have a talk with this young hound, Dell," Chip's voice behind the Kid interrupted her. "Nothing you can say would hit the spot. If he hasn't any more decency than to pull a stunt like this, he's got to be taught a few things. No boy of mine can insult the best friends I've got on earth——"

"How?" The Kid turned to face the storm he felt was coming. But his mother stepped between the two and with a hand on Chip's shoulder shook her head in a gesture of complete understanding.

"Not now, honey. I want to talk to Claude myself. I've got to. And I don't want you present, my dear. Go back to the boys until I've finished, and then if you have anything you feel you must say, I'll turn Claude over to you. And I won't," she promised him hastily when she saw rebellion in his face, "I won't interfere. But he's my son, too, you know. If we've spoiled him, I'm as much to blame as you and I must have my chance. Go on, before J. G. gets all upset!"

The Kid, thus warned, turned and set his hat upon a chair, smoothed back his heavy brown mane that had one deep wave across the top, and folded his arms.

"Who's going to administer the anæsthetic?" he inquired lightly as the door closed behind his dad.

It needed just that note of levity, perhaps, to stiffen the Little Doctor's determination, and furnish the cue she needed for the most unpleasant speech of her life. And the Kid stood and took



the lash of her eloquence, immobile as a figure in bronze; arms folded, head bent a little so that he looked down into her blazing eyes. But as she talked she saw the soul of him withdraw itself farther and farther from her until his eyes were as cold as ice—which was a strange way the Kid had brought up with him from babyhood. It frightened her a little now; made her feel as if she were upbraiding a man stone deaf.

"Courtesy and consideration, Claude, are indispensable to a doctor, whose whole life is given to serving humanity," she finished a bit desperately. "You can't go on like this, ignoring the common courtesies of life—"

"Just a minute, mother. It might simplify matters for you a little to know that I have no intention of being a doctor."

She drew a long breath, staring up at him blankly for an appreciable moment.

"I know you've been taking that for granted, and I hated to disappoint you so I didn't say anything about it. But seeing I'm the weeds anyway in your estimation and dad's, I may as well give you the complete list of my crimes."

"If you're not going to be a doctor," she managed to say, "why have you gone on for two whole years studying—"

"Knowledge is power," the Kid told her unemotionally. "Nowadays a fellow needs the background of some good school. If he can get it he's that much to the good, no matter what he does later on."

"Well, if background is all you're getting out of it," the Little Doctor said indignantly, "I'll agree with your dad that it's time we took you out of school and put you to work at something. Background is all very well, but it's the foreground that interests us just now, young man."

"Looks to you pretty much of a smear, I suppose," the Kid suggested.

"Very much a smear!"

"All right, if that's the way you feel. I suppose I'm free to think what I please of the foreground. Is that all, mother? Dad's waiting to unburden himself on the subject, you know." The Kid turned and picked up his hat, holding it so that his mother could not see how his hands were shaking.

"Claude Bennett, what in Heaven's name has come over you in the last year or two? Aren't you even sorry you've acted like an insufferable cad?"

The Kid stiffened, his mouth pressed shut in the stubborn look his mother knew of old.

"Can't you say you're sorry? Answer me, Claude!"

"Yes," said the Kid, giving her a sudden stern look, "I am sorry. I'm sorry my mother can condemn me unheard and take it for granted I'm an insufferable cad."

"Unheard? What possible excuse could—"

"Oh, it doesn't matter—now." The Kid turned, found the doorknob with a blind, groping movement of his hand and went out. As he left the house his father joined him and the two walked together down the path, shoulders almost touching as they went, but world apart in spirit.

What passed between them when they reached the privacy of the big barn no one knew, except that Slim, coming from one of the corrals, overheard and reported the end of the conversation. The Kid was speaking rapidly, not very loud but with every word as clear cut and distinct as hammer blows upon an anvil.

"I won't apologize to the boys, and I won't apologize to you or mother. You didn't wait to hear why I stayed away, but formed your own opinion before I showed up. And that's O. K. with me—but I won't apologize."

"You will, if you expect to stay on this ranch!" blazed Chip, his face hard as granite. "It's come to a point where



I'm going to find out who's boss, you or me. I've paid out good money sending you to school—and all it's done so far is to give you the idea you're cock of the walk. Talk about college education! It's knocked all the sense out of you you ever did have. There won't be any more of it, I can tell you that. You march back to the house and tell your mother you're ashamed of yourself and you'll try to be half human from now on!"

"I will not! I'm not ashamed of myself, and I'm not going to lie about it."

"Then pack your belongings and drift!" snapped Chip. "When you're ready to haul in your horns, you can come back; not before."

"Say!" The Kid's face matched Chip's for hardness. "Do you think you could tie me and keep me here, after this? You and mother treat me as if I were about six years old. You fail to realize that I'm grown up!"

"Well," said Chip with much sarcasm, "if the rest of you ever grows to match the size of your head, you can hang your hat on a telephone pole!"

"And yet," retorted the Kid in a tone that stung, "you rave because a head like that wants to do its own thinking!" He turned away to his horse, mounted and stared down at his father, who stared back. For a moment he seemed on the verge of speech; then, with a touch of his spurs, he wheeled the bay horse and went galloping furiously down the pasture trail, weaving in and out among the willow clumps and never once looking back.

## CHAPTER V.

### PARTS UNKNOWN.

THE Happy Family was inclined to make light of the storm. Kids took funny streaks sometimes, they averred, and the only danger lay in taking them too seriously. Chip, whose blood still boiled from the encounter, openly be-

wailed the fact that the Kid was too big to take a licking, which was plainly what he deserved.

Even the Little Doctor for once failed to champion his cause. He was at that difficult age, she declared, when a boy's disposition underwent a change to match his voice, and became uncertain and not to be endured except that one knew it was a temporary affliction. Claude would be all right if he were left alone for a while.

It was with the tacit agreement to leave him alone that they decided to drive over to Cal Emmett's place, all of them, in the two closed cars. Chung, the Chinese cook, would look after J. G. for a couple of hours, and the Kid would have a chance to calm down.

But the Kid had no intention of calming down, in the sense they meant. The Kid was for once doing exactly what his father told him to do, and showing an unwonted zeal in the doing. He was just finishing the packing of his belongings on Sunup when he heard the two cars go laboring up the hill in second gear and guessed where they were going. It suited him very well, because now he would not need to take a roundabout course out of the coulee so as to avoid being seen, as he had intended to do. Furthermore, he could do something before he left which the presence of his father and mother would have made impossible. So he mounted and rode back up to the stables, his two packed horses swinging into the trail behind him and trotting docilely along at Stardust's heels. The Kid turned them into an empty corral and walked up to the house.

"Well, good-by, Uncle J. G.," he said with forced cheerfulness. "I'm pulling out for parts unknown, and I don't know when I'll see you again, so——"

"Parts unknown, aye?" The Old Man looked at him from under his grizzled eyebrows. "That mean you don't know, or that you ain't going to tell?"



The Kid colored and turned his gaze aside.

"That I don't want to tell, I guess. I don't want the folks to know and put up a holler about it." He glanced questioningly into the Old Man's eyes. "I suppose you heard about the row."

"Didn't get the straight of it," grumbled the Old Man. "Don't s'pose they did either, for that matter. What happened?"

"Oh"—the Kid spoke reluctantly—"I got into a nest of blind canyons, down here toward the river, and couldn't get out for about twenty-four hours, is all. Mother and dad had me down for a major break——"

"Hey?"

"They think I stayed away just to be mean, and dad and I can't seem to agree anyway, so I'm pulling out."

"Where to? No reason why you shouldn't tell *me*, is there?" The Old Man's shrewd eyes bored for the truth. "Ashamed to tell, aye?"

"No, it isn't that. But the folks seem to hate the idea of letting me grow up. They want to keep me depending on them for everything, even my opinions. Because I insist on doing my own thinking and planning my own life, they're in a blue funk. They can't or won't follow my mental processes, so they think I must be going straight to the devil. Dad's idea is to keep me out of school and make me work here on the ranch to learn what he calls sense. Mother wants me to be a doctor, and if I won't be a doctor, school is going to spoil me.

"They stand together on one point: If I won't do what they want me to do with my life, they're not going to educate me. I don't know where they get that stuff—well, yes I do, but it's all out of date, choosing your child's career while your child is in the cradle. It's the bunk. People of their intelligence ought to be ashamed to hold such archaic theories.

"Well, the point is, I'm going on and

finish my university course, and I'm going to pay my own way. I meant to go into all this with the folks and tell them my plans, but this row kind of changes things. I'm perfectly willing to look after myself from now on, so I'm going to rustle the money to carry me through till next year."

"Far as the money's concerned——"

"No, I can't let you dig up enough to—no, not a dime, Uncle J. G. I can handle this alone, thanks just the same. That wouldn't get me anywhere in the long run. I'd still be letting some one else carry me when I'm well able to use my own legs. No, I'm going to pay my own way from now on. I can, all right, you know——"

"How?" demanded his uncle, eying him curiously. "Goin' to rob a bank, aye?"

The Kid grinned and sat down on the edge of the table, thrusting his long legs straight out before him and folding his arms in a gesture of standing pat upon his own decision.

"I see I'll have to come clean," he surrounded. "Well, I've inherited some things I never will get out of my blood, I guess. You've got it, dad's got it—call it the Western spirit. That's as good a term as I can think of now. I'm all West, all for the open and horses and all that goes with them. The boys wail because the old days are gone, but they don't realize the new days are not so bad. We've brought out of the old West the same spirit, only we express it in a slightly different way. We still love the open, and we still love horses. It used to be all in the day's work; now it's the one all-American sport we have.

"The boys sneer at our contests and rodeos, but that's sheer prejudice, Uncle J. G. They've let themselves get out of touch with the real West, so they think it doesn't exist. But it does, and it has bred a sport that is worth any man's best efforts." The Kid bent a questioning, wistful gaze upon his uncle.



"I've never talked about it," he said after a hesitating moment, "but I was going to put it up to the boys when they came—till I saw what their reactions are toward us young fellows. Now, of course, I'll have to go it alone. It's a disappointment to me, but on the whole I'd just as soon put it over alone.

"What I'm working on, Uncle J. G., is the organization of a Western contest team of riders and ropers. Fellows that will be under regular athletic training rules that gives them much more speed and endurance than is possible in the haphazard way most of them live now. With a coach, too, that knows the game. Get the idea, Uncle J. G.? One good, clean bunch of real athletes will do more to lift our Western sport up to the level of baseball and football than anything on earth. And it certainly needs to be lifted to where the American public will stand back of it. People love horsemanship, racing and skillful riding. My idea is to combine athletics with our wild-West stunts, make the public see that here is our real American sport—the only one on earth that has grown out of an American industry!

"One good, clean, fast team will convince them and bring others into existence. There'll be leagues, some day, contesting against each other. Riding clubs of the East can take it up—nothing to prevent any good horseman from learning the game—we've kept the East from thinking so, with our chaps and big hats and six-guns mostly! England might take it up, too. More fun than riding to hounds, I should think. Each team would wear its own colors——" He flushed, took a quick breath and went on:

"The way it is now, too many people in the East believe we're all rough and tough out here. We've given ourselves the name of being ignorant, illiterate. It's time we taught the world that a man may be college bred, qualified to hold a place in polite society and still be

able to ride a bucking bronc to a standstill. I—I want to make bronc riding and steer wrestling and roping respected—accepted the world over as an American sport—have the East as well as the West proud of it, loyal to it. I want to put wild-West contests right up alongside polo!"

"Kid-glove contests, aye?" commented the Old Man shrewdly, thereby proving to the boy that he had at least made himself fairly understood.

"Put it that way if you want to. Anyway, that's what I've staked out as my particular ambition, and that's what I'll be working toward from now on. I began it last year, for that matter. Laramie's a good place to start. They've got the background our first contest team will need. You know they call their football team the Cowboys, don't you? Some of the most prominent range men in the West graduated from that university years ago.

"I've got four fellows in training, on the quiet—not letting on what we're aiming at. And that's what I got my three horses for. I rode to Cheyenne last year when I spent vacation down there at Walt Myers' ranch. I—don't ever tell, will you?—I entered as 'Montana Kid,' and won second money in the bucking contest, first in fancy roping, second in the relay—and that's the money I bought Stardust and Blazes with. I knew dad would raise a holler if he knew it, and mother thinks contests are terribly roughneck, so I never said anything.

"This year I've got the best relay string in the West—I'll bet money on that. They're fast, and they're trained to stand at their stations till the saddle's on and I'm up. They won't stampepe like most horses. I trained them last winter, with these boys I told you of. Luckily, the race track is close by the campus so we could get out there whenever the weather was fit and work out our strings. The boys have entered at



Cheyenne this summer, but I couldn't on account of the folks coming on from the coast. If I'd known as much as I know now," he added bitterly, "I'd have stayed away; I'd rate higher with dad and the rest if I hadn't come home at all this summer."

"You been uppity," the Old Man told him bluntly. "Too dog-gone uppity to get along with anybody. You can't blame 'em—much."

"They hit me wrong, first thing. We couldn't seem to get together on anything. I wanted them just as they used to be, I guess—and they didn't want me at all. Oh, well—I've got to be going, Uncle J. G. Point is, I've got a prospect of making a nice little stake before school starts in the fall. I'm sure of winning the relay race, and I think I've a good chance——"

"So you're going to Cheyenne, aye?"

"No." The Kid shook his head regretfully. "It's too late now—I couldn't make it if I flew."

"There ain't any other contest close enough, is there?" The Old Man was studying him with the old keen attention which the Little Doctor would have given much to see in his face.

"Oh, there are some local ones here and there, but I can't afford to chase them up. Chicago's where they'll hang up the big purses this year; a thousand dollars for first money on the bronc riding, and from that on down. I hear they're offering good day money—a hundred dollars and on down, on the relay race." As if the thought of it impelled him to action, the Kid stood up and settled his hat for riding. "Well, good-by, Uncle J. G. Take care of yourself, and don't tell the folks anything I've said, will you?"

"I'm gittin' hard of hearin'," the Old Man told him dryly. "Yuh never told me yet where yuh're goin' or when yuh figure on gittin' back—how yuh fixed for money, aye? Think yuh can live on faith?"

"Oh, I've got a little—enough to see me through, I guess. That Stardust horse of mine won me a race or two this spring, and I hung onto the money; had a hunch the parental ax would fall if I stuck to my plans. Thanks, just the same. You're a good old scout, do you know it? When I get a training ranch you can come and help run it."

"Don't go breakin' your dog-gone neck——" The Old Man's voice broke unexpectedly as the Kid gripped his hand and turned away, and the Kid stumbled in the doorway, his eyes suddenly blurred.

At the top of the hill, just before he rode out of sight, the Kid pulled up and waved his hat high over his head, watching the house far below him. Something white—a newspaper, he guessed—fluttered from the window where the Old Man had been sitting in his wheel chair. The Kid blinked, bit his under lip long and painfully and rode on toward the goal he had fixed for himself, far down the gray miles and into the future that beckoned.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A COWBOY AT HEART.

HELLO, cowboy! Going to take in the rodeo?" The Kid looked up from filling a zinc bucket from the hose at a shiny new service station, nodded into the slant sun rays of late afternoon and glanced back to his work. The bucket filled, he carried it over to where his three horses stood bunched on the gravel parking, lifted and held it while Stardust, flaring his nostrils with eagerness, snuffed at the water and then drank thirstily.

The man who had hailed him from the big car, that had just limped in with a bent spike in its tire, watched him smilingly for a moment and then, as if irresistibly impelled to come closer, climbed from the car and sauntered up.

"My, how I love to watch a horse



drink!" he observed. "You just know it hits the spot when you see the swallows go sliding down. You don't mean to be late for the show, do you, cowboy? I think you'll probably be the first one on the ground."

"Well, I think probably I've been the longest on the road of any one, for that matter." For the first time the Kid turned his attention full upon the man. "How far is it from here to Soldier's Field?"

"From here to Soldier's Field? I don't just—oh, Parks!" he called to the chauffeur. "How far is it from here to Soldier's Field, about?"

"Twenty—about thirty miles, sir, I should say it was." His eyes went curiously to the horses before he returned to the tire trouble that occupied him.

"Thirty miles—I thought it would be about that. Take you about all day tomorrow, won't it, cowboy?"

"Yes," sighed the Kid, "and then some. These slick pavements and the traffic slow us down like the very deuce. It will take the better part of two days, I expect." He turned with the empty bucket to refill it for the next thirsty throat, and the man stood stroking Stardust's sleek neck with the unmistakable look of one who loves horses. As the Kid returned the man gave a little chuckle.

"Do you mind telling me, cowboy, why you didn't say 'slows' and 'best,'" he asked quizzically.

"'Slows' and 'best'?" The Kid stared. "I didn't know that was required of me."

Whereupon the other chuckled again and patted the Kid reassuringly on the arm with his modishly gloved fingers.

"You're all right, cowboy. Where are you from?"

"Montana. Up near the Bear Paws."

"You don't mean to tell me you rode horseback all the way from Montana?"

"No; as a matter of fact, I didn't ride horseback all the way." The Kid

was busy now with Blazes and did not look up. "I woke up one morning in Bismarck in the rain, and had a swift mental picture of the four of us sloshing through the mud all day, so I blew myself to a truck for a couple of hundred miles. Aside from that we trailed through. We've been on the road since the day after the Fourth."

"Sounds funny to me—the language you use. You look like a cowboy, all right, but you don't talk like one." The man's twinkling blue eyes rested thoughtfully upon the Kid's face.

"We have schools out West, and a few of us can read and write," the Kid rebuffed him.

"Now, I didn't mean a thing, cowboy, except that I'm kind of homesick for the lingo, and you don't speak it."

"Oh, well, I *can*," drawled the Kid, and went for another bucket of water.

"Why don't you hire a truck to take you the rest of the way in?" the man suggested when the Kid returned and was watering Sunup. "You're going to have pretty heavy traffic from here on, cowboy. Be too bad if these ponies got hurt after all those miles to get here."

"Yes, but it would be worse if they didn't get their oats every day," the Kid answered laconically. "These ponies are in the pink, because I've grained them three times a day ever since we started. They're my relay string; and this sorrel, Stardust, is the smartest rope horse in the country. A truck would be fine, but it isn't essential. We can make it the last thirty miles, I guess, after coming over a thousand. I don't intend to get into the thickest of the traffic, anyway."

The stranger stood with a hand on Stardust's sweaty shoulder and eyed the Kid's face, tanned and grimed with the dust of the plodding miles.

"Ever been in Chicago, cowboy?" he asked suddenly, watching for a look into the Kid's eyes as he glanced up.

"No, but I can read the signs, I guess.



That's how I got this far," the Kid retorted rather brusquely, and went for more water. The day had been blistering hot and the ponies were thirstier than he had realized.

"All ready, sir," the chauffeur announced at this moment.

"Yes, Parks. Just wait in the car, will you?"

The Kid, coming up with his filled bucket, observed that the smooth, kindly tone carried that note of authority which simply eliminates any thought of disobedience. He had wondered if the man were not some range man luxuriating in civilization for a time, but now he knew better. City bred he was, in spite of his evident love of horses and his professed longing for the range dialect. As Stardust thrust his nose deep into the cool water the Kid lifted his head and met full the steady gaze of the other. It was the suave stranger who first glanced away.

"Reading the signs won't help you much from now on," he said cheerfully. "They'll probably land you in the Loop, and you want to avoid that. If you'll permit me to advise you, you'll keep pretty well to the left, which will bring you out— Wait a minute; I'll draw you a map so you can't go wrong."

Whereupon the man briskly produced a long envelope from an inner pocket, a fountain pen from another and, using the Kid's saddle for a desk, began to sketch streets and boulevards rapidly while he talked.

"You won't need this until you reach the city limits; then you take the first through street running north—forget the name of the confounded thing, but it'll be a main thoroughfare and you can't miss it. Keep on until you cross the river—north branch. Keep right on until you strike Lincoln Avenue and follow that southeast to the junction of Sheridan Road and Clark. Keep straight on—alongside Lincoln Park, that will be; turn to your left, still keep-

ing the park on your left hand to where it turns left the second time. See? Right here you leave the park and keep straight on, up Michigan Avenue. If you take it early in the morning it won't be so bad—just busses, mostly. Follow Michigan right along south—well, a good landmark will be the Central Station, facing you at the terminal of all the sunken tracks running alongside you. Turn to the left in front of the station, across the tracks; then to your right, down past the Field Museum—can't miss it—the stadium will be staring you in the face and there you are!"

"Well, thank you a lot," grinned the Kid. "Thousands of folks have stopped me to satisfy their own curiosity and ask a million questions that didn't concern them, but you're the first to offer any tangible help. I surely appreciate it right now. I've been kind of worried about finding the darned place when I got to it."

"For Heaven's sake, dad," an impatient young woman leaned from the car to call, "I thought you were in such a tearing rush to get back to the office!"

"Yes, just a minute, honey. Finish your book, why don't you?"

The Kid turned and looked that way, and the young woman stared back at him curiously.

"Oh, one of those cowboys," she said, exactly as if he were a black beetle with unusual markings which excited her aloof interest for a moment. "I might have known it was something of that sort."

Her father was hastily scribbling something across the face of the envelope. At her words he looked up at her, glanced at the Kid with a lowered eyelid and grinned as he signed his name and handed the envelope to the Kid.

"I'm a cowboy at heart," he remarked with a note of whimsical apology in his tone. "My family knows it and is afraid I may chuck everything some day, jump on my champing white



charger and go galloping off to the plains with a pistol in each hand and a bowie knife in my teeth. Fact. They watch me like a hawk, don't they, Dulcie? She's watching to see that I don't kidnap one of the ponies and disappear over the horizon right now!" Then he returned to the Kid's affairs, tapping the envelope with his pen. "When you reach the stadium, just hand that note to the first man who seems inclined to block your way. No reason why you should have the expense of boarding your horses outside somewhere—if the quarters aren't ready under the stadium they soon will be, and you tell them you want to keep your horses there. Tell them I said they were to let you pick yourself a place for them. They know me—some of them do. Just——"

"Dad! For Heaven's sake!"

"Just show them this note. Good luck, cowboy! Wish I could change places with you for a while; maybe I'll get in on some of the fun later on. See you at the show—— What's your name, cowboy—just so I can give you a hand when they call it?" As if invisible hands plucked at him, the man edged toward the big car where his daughter's impatience compelled attention.

"Dad, if you aren't in a hurry, I am. I'm to play golf at six, and it's after four now. There'll be cowboys enough to stare at—the place will be flooded with them before long."

"Yes, yes—don't be so tyrannical, my dear. This is the *first* cowboy! Your name?"

"Montana Kid," the first cowboy told him distinctly, raising his voice so that the girl could not fail to hear. "I'm shore proud to meet yo'-all and I'm shore obleeged to yuh fer the map. I'll see yuh right soon ag'in, I reckon."

As if he understood and appreciated the Kid's drawling dialect, the man laughed, patted him on the shoulder and

hurried over to where the girl waited with a little smile of disdain.

The waiting chauffeur pulled open the door, touched his cap with two fingers and climbed in. The man looked back, waved his hand and smiled, and the car slid forward, gathered momentum as it reached smooth pavement and swiftly diminished in size to a shapeless black spot rapidly receding down the road.

The Kid gave Blazes and Sunup another bucket of water apiece, tied the bucket to Sunup's pack rope, picked up Stardust's reins and mounted, the lead rope of the other horses held loosely in his hand, now that they had reached the much-traveled ways where he must keep his small outfit well in hand. The envelope he had thrust into the pocket of his shirt, and he pulled it out now and read the note as he jogged slowly down the highway:

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Please extend what courtesies your rules will permit to this cowboy, who has come a long way and needs rest. Make him at home and see that the ponies have everything they need.

Yours,

J. N. HARLAN.

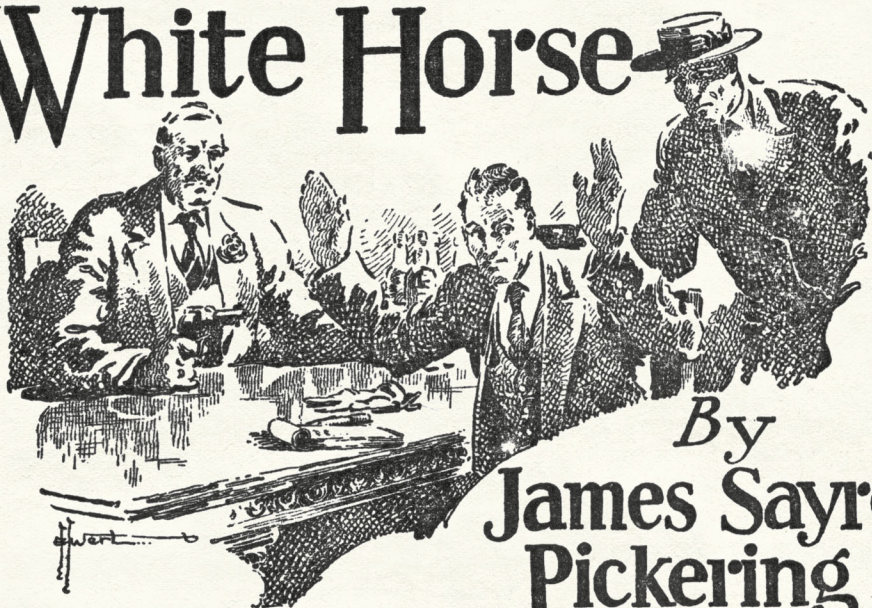
The Kid read the note twice, frowning thoughtfully over the message. Must be pretty important, this J. N. Harlan, to give orders like that. The mayor, maybe—though he seemed too human and friendly for a mayor; somebody away up the list, anyway. In his long journey the Kid had learned to take the idle talk of strangers lightly, but this seemed different. He might not use the note at all, but the map would be a help—or at least he hoped that it would.

"I guess he meant well enough," he mused as he rode. "I've got no use for that sassy jane he had with him, darn her picture! But the old boy's all right. maybe it's lucky I happened along just as his tire went blooey."

*To be continued in the next issue, on the news stands September 20th.*



# White Horse



By  
**James Sayre  
Pickering**

*Author of "The Talisman," Etc.*

**Another corking story of Silas Tipping—this time about the strange happenings that followed the gift of six bottles of good old Scotch.**

## **A COMPLETE STORY**

**S**ILAS TIPPING sat before the table in his office and gazed with a sad, queer smile at a row of six bottles which stood before him. He had just unpacked them from a plain, cardboard carton, which had been labeled expressly to him, and which had come from some source unknown. The bottles purported to contain that particular product of the Land of Oats produced by the White Horse Cellars, and, where the label permitted a view of the contents, it was certainly liquid of a pleasing amber color.

Silas, however, remembering that all was not White Horse which was so labeled, and knowing that the best he might expect in this day and age was some dilute counterfeit of the old, rich, smoky flavor, decided to take no chances. In many such bottles lay dis-

appointment, if not worse. He shook his head with regret.

Silas summoned Henry, who ran his small errands, and the two of them carried the bottles, concealed in their carton, back to the work office and hid them behind the neat piles of stationery in the cupboard. Some of Silas' customers might have drawn conclusions at the sight of all that rack and ruin on his table. Silas planned to hide the stuff until he could get rid of it safely and in private. He would not give it away for the same reasons that he had against drinking it himself, and he did not want to leave it to the tender mercies of messengers and porters. He went back to his office chuckling and recalling the occasion which had been the cause of his acquiring all this contraband.



A month or so before, he had been returning from Southampton on one of his rare trips abroad. Silas traveled infrequently and leisurely, with no set plan either for business or pleasure. The serene and pleasant old gentleman was welcomed as a leader and an expert in his trade in every center of the jewelry world, and, had he been in the mood, might well have been spoiled by the sincere compliments which were poured out upon him by men whose names were as well known and as powerful in their fields as he was in his.

High Holborn greeted him with open arms, gave him tea and dined him, and showed him its rarest treasures. Amsterdam roared a royal Dutch welcome, gave him long, black Javanese cigars and taught him how to drink *heluf-und-heluf*, which is served in a wide-mouthed goblet, filled until the surface tension of the sirupy cordial heaps it high above the edge of the glass, and must be drunk cautiously, while the glass is still on the table. Amsterdam showed him papers of marvelous *mêlées*, blue and cold, each stone perfect and matched with thousands of carats of its fellows. Paris fed him superbly, gave him Napoleon brandy—a thimbleful in a glass holding a quart, lest some of the sacred aroma of this glorious liquor escape—and strewed pearls before him—round globes of iridescence, cascades of pure moonlight and sunset.

And nowhere did he buy one thing. Many notes were taken, however, by shrewd dealers, of his comments and of his expressions of inclination; and, if the truth were known, many carats of diamonds and many a gem pearl was sold on the word that Silas Tipping had seen it and spoken well of it.

Finally, rested and refreshed, full of gifts and pleasant recollections, Silas set sail on the *Tasmania* for New York, his holiday nearly over. He settled himself comfortably into the routine of ship life, doing his stroll on the deck after

each meal, smoking the last of those full-bodied Dutch cigars, playing a little mild bridge in the evenings, and basking in the pleasant airs and bright sunshine through which the *Tasmania* steamed.

He spent most of his time, be it noted, in apparent idleness. Really, he was engaged in that most fascinating and, to him, necessary occupation of observing his fellow men. His ability to read at first sight the essentials of character in a man's face, his need for instant judgment of personal integrity, called for constant practice. He listened, with a pleasant smile, to their talk, his twinkling blue eyes and his kind face ready at each moment to accompany the trend of conversation with a look of pleasure, of interest, of sympathy. He listened, and marveled at how seldom the tongue reveals what is written upon the face.

One of his studies, a sort of comic relief, was Albert Edward Hoskins, the pinched and diminutive cockney who cared for his room. Albert Edward had a pair of faded blue eyes set closely astride a tilted nose. His mouth was half full of sadly neglected teeth, but was curved in an habitual, good-natured grin, of the sort that says, "Well, life 'as' ad rather a lark wiv me, but, bli' me, what of it?"

Albert Edward, with the white jacket of a man weighing two hundred pounds draped around his own hundred and thirty, made beds with the skill of a Pullman porter, swept, dusted, and generally looked after three of the rooms in Silas' corridor. One, Silas had. Next to him was a couple in middle age, who were returning from their first trip abroad; a venture patently looked forward to and saved for and planned upon for years, and just realized. They were in blissful surfeit of the wonders they had seen, and regaled every one whom they could cajole or corner into listening, with tales of the marvels they had beheld.



Silas had been a special favorite of theirs. He liked the couple for their honesty, for their lack of pretense, and for the pleasure they were getting out of this portion, at any rate, of their lives. He listened patiently, with never-failing interest, to their adventures, never interrupting them to cap their tales with a better one of his own, never belittling their triumphs, never appearing bored.

In the room beyond theirs was an elderly English gentleman, with heavy mustaches and a dewlap, who kept entirely to himself, speaking no word to any one save for laconic orders, given only after serious and profound deliberation. This man, steeped in his tight little insularity, was the remote cause of Silas' reception, some weeks later, of the six bottles of White Horse.

Mr. Hemingway missed, one evening just before the *Tasmania* was to dock, the quiet but expensive studs which he was wont to insert each night into the starched bosom of his dress shirt. Albert Edward came to do up Silas' room the next morning with such woe upon his usually cheerful countenance that Silas was driven to ask the reason. Hoskins, urged by that impulse which Silas invariably aroused in most people, poured forth his troubles.

"Mister 'Eminwye, in three o four, sir, 'as lost 'is studs! Pearls, they were, sir, and 'e's mykin' a frightful 'ow-de-do abaht 'em, sir! 'E's all but accused me of tykin' 'em, sir, and 'e's threatened to tyke it up with the purser if I don't find 'em! I 'aven't got them blinkin' studs! I've looked 'igh and low for 'em, sir, and I cahn't find 'em nowhere! I think it's a blinkin' shyme!"

Silas shook his head commiseratingly.

"H'm! Pearl studs, eh? Where they good ones, Hoskins?"

"I couldn't sye, sir. I don't know nothing abaht pearls."

"Well, that's too bad! Is Mr. Hemingway in his room now?"

"'E was just now, sir, unless 'e's myde off to the purser already. I cahn't understand what becyme of 'em, sir. I didn't tyke 'em!"

Silas turned toward the door.

"I think I'll go in and talk to Mr. Hemingway, Hoskins. Maybe I can help him find them."

"Don't go to any bother on my account, sir. I'm most gryteful, an' all that sort of thing, but I shouldn't think of your gettin' mixed up in it. I didn't tyke 'em, an' that's all there is to it!"

"You wait in here till I come back. I won't be long!"

Silas motioned Hoskins to the state-room's only chair, and, going to the door of No. 304, knocked gently upon it. Footsteps sounded from the other side, and the door was flung open, disclosing the sweeping mustaches and sheep's nose of Mr. Hemingway, who looked at Silas as at one who is wearing absolutely the wrong sort of clothes. His eyebrows rose in supercilious inquiry. Silas smiled his warmest, most melting smile.

"Good evening, Mr. Hemingway! I am your neighbor here aboard. My name is Tipping, and I have come to see if I might help you find your studs!"

Mr. Hemingway stood his ground, surprised into immobility by this unexpected introduction. He stared steadily, mystified, and then ejaculated:

"Pahdon?"

Silas, still smiling, walked into the room—gently and courteously, but into the room, nevertheless; and Hemingway, too much the well-bred Englishman actually to force this obvious gentleman from his premises, was constrained to permit him to enter. Once in, Silas turned, still smiling.

"Let me say, Mr. Hemingway, in extenuation of this intrusion, that I am an American, and as impetuous as all American are, to the more reserved view of older civilizations. I have come to assist you, if I can, to find your



pearl studs, and to relieve Hoskins, who I believe is honest, from any blame."

Mr. Hemingway, closing the door, came toward Silas and stood, listening quietly during this speech. He answered with the finely modeled voice and accent of the cultured Oxonian.

"I am sorry that I do not agree with you as to Hoskins' honesty. However, if you can find my studs, I shall be only too happy to acknowledge myself wrong."

Silas was serious. He spoke carefully, thinking.

"Perhaps I can," he said. "I know you have searched, but, nevertheless, I am going to suggest the most obvious place. Are they by chance in one of your soiled evening shirts?"

Hemingway's face became a study. His eyebrows ascended quickly and sharply. He turned with one movement and dove for the trunk beneath his berth. His voice issued thence, slightly muffled:

"By Jove, you know! I believe—yes, by gad! Here they are!"

He emerged, bearing with him a trophy in the form of a limp shirt, its starched bosom embellished with two very fine pearls, still in their places.

"You know, Mr. Tipping, I'm most dreadfully sorry about this! I can't imagine how on earth I came to overlook them! I wouldn't have had this happen for the world, you know! Heavens! When I think how near I was to going to the purser and raising the father and mother of a row! I'm exceedingly grateful to you; really, I am!"

"But how about Hoskins, Mr. Hemingway? I imagine he'll be relieved, too."

"Of course! Of course!" Mr. Hemingway stepped toward the call button. "I'll have him up at once!"

"Hoskins is waiting in my stateroom." Silas repressed a smile as he said this.

Mr. Hemingway stopped with his finger still extended toward the button. He looked at Silas queerly for an instant; but, like most Englishmen, he was a sport.

"Ah—of course! I'll go to him, if I may? Rather a reparation, what?"

Silas, his smile permitted now to appear, led Mr. Hemingway, the shirt still clutched in his hand, into the stateroom. Hoskins rose as they entered and stood, looking more like a perturbed rabbit than anything else, until his eye caught Mr. Hemingway's burden. The strained expression left his face, and his lips broke into a relieved and toothless smile. Mr. Hemingway went directly to the point, waving the shirt to support his statement.

"Steward, a thousand pardons! Most frightfully stupid of me to go off half cocked that way! Mr. Tipping merely opened his mouth on quite the absolute solution of the whole affair! In my soiled shirt! Here they are!"

He flourished the shirt before the beaming face of Hoskins, who bowed and scraped, tickled with relief.

"It's quait all right, sir. Mistakes will 'appen, sir. I'm sorry they got away from you, sir! Thank you, sir!"

This last, to Silas, was much more fervent and meaningful than the usual perfunctory phrase of the British servant. Silas nodded, and Hoskins, with a final obeisance, disappeared into the passageway. Hemingway stood in Silas' door, the shirt dangling from his left hand, and put out his right. He, too, was terribly serious, with the sincerity of the well-bred Englishman who has been saved from breaking one of the tenets of a gentleman.

"I'm awfully grateful to you, old man, believe me, I am! I'd have been in a really frightful predicament if you hadn't stepped in, you know!"

Silas, struggling not to imitate the precious accent of the Englishman, responded easily:



"My dear man, don't think of it. I'm a jeweler, and I know some of the strange things people do with their jewels. It was merely experience, that's all."

Mr. Hemingway, stiffening slightly at the suggestion of "trade" which lay in Silas' reference to himself as a jeweler, bowed again, turned, and took a dignified departure, closing the incident. Or so Silas thought. But when the six bottles of White Horse—so labeled—Scots whisky were disclosed to him in their anonymous package, he had remembered it all, and had surmised that Albert Edward Hoskins was at the bottom of it. A letter placed on his desk later that same day confirmed his belief. Wrote Hoskins, all in one breath:

MR. SILAS TIPPING: Sir, I have sent for your use six of the best you know what I mean I hope theyll come in handy like you cant get it in the States just a remembrance gratefully from yours A. E. HOSKINS.

Silas smiled at the discretion of A. E. Hoskins and tucked the note away in his pocket instead of allowing it to go through to the office files. He plunged into the business of the day and allowed the six bottles and their attendant circumstances to find a place among the other lumber in the storage space of his mind. They were to be brought out of that mental attic with peculiar suddenness.

About four o'clock that same afternoon, George Hibben, who had been waiting on an elderly gentleman whom Silas did not recognize, came into the office of his employer with a worried look on his face. Silas looked up.

"What's the matter, George?"

"Have we any whisky in the place, Mr. Tipping?"

"What?"

"Whisky! Have we any? This old lad I've been waiting on has been taken with a cramp, or something, and asked

if we had a drink. He seems to need it, too!"

Silas got to his feet with alacrity.

"He does, eh? Well! Let's have a look!"

He followed George into one of the three small side offices which were used for more confidential showings in Tipping's, and found there a benevolent, white-haired gentleman sitting, rather doubled up, in one of the small chairs. George stepped over to him and presented Silas hurriedly:

"Mr. Horne, this is Mr. Tipping. How are you feeling now, sir?"

Mr. Horne managed an agonized nod to Silas, and placed a hand on his waist line. He spoke in gasps, and seemed really to suffer.

"Oh! I'm sorry to—cause all—this fuss! I—think a little whisky would set me up!"

He, and George as well, looked inquiringly at Silas. Silas, his mind full of White Horse Cellar, six bottles, A. E. Hoskins, but unwilling to offer such untried contraband to an elderly gentleman with a tender stomach, steeled himself and shook his head.

"I'm sorry—not a drop! I think I can give you something that will relieve you, though, Mr. Horne, until you can see your doctor. George, get that bottle out of the medicine chest. That stuff is terrible to the taste, but it works like a breeze!"

George, all service, ran back for the nauseous bottle. Silas leaned over Mr. Horne, who sat up straighter now and looked up in surprise.

"You haven't any whisky?"

"Why, no. Should I have any?"

"Why, I don't know. I rather thought all offices were fairly well equipped that way."

Silas shook his head, and regarded Mr. Horne more closely. That gentleman, greatly improved, looked at Silas with a strange and suspicious look.

"Not a drop, eh?"



"I'm sorry, Mr. Horne, but I haven't a thing I could give you, except this medicine. That'll be here in a minute."

Mr. Horne, completely recovered, rose hastily and started for the door.

"That's all right!" he said quickly. "Don't bother, please. The spasm is over. I can get a taxi right to the doctor's. Thank you, just the same."

Mr. Horne, lively as a cricket, trotted past Silas, out of the door, and was on the curb, waving his stick at a taxi, as George entered the office with the medicine. He looked inquiringly at Silas.

"Patient discharged!" said Silas briefly, his face serious. "Come in here, George."

He led the way into his office and sat down. George took the chair opposite. Silas rocked back and forth for a moment, and then, suddenly raising his head, questioned George.

"George," he said, still puzzled, "do I look like a toper? Would you take me for a man who kept a bottle in his desk?"

"Well, no. But the man was sick!"

"Yes, but that's no reason he should be surprised when I told him I didn't have any whisky. That's what makes me think."

"Why should it? Lots of men keep a bottle in the office just for that sort of thing. That's common, these days."

"True enough. In that case, he might be disappointed, but he shouldn't be surprised. If he were surprised, that means he was fairly sure I had some. He recovered very quickly, too, when I suggested a more heroic remedy."

"Well, why should he think you had whisky, when you haven't?"

"I don't know, George. Unless he knew that I had."

"Unless he knew you had! Have you any?"

Silas nodded slowly.

"You have? Where?"

"Back in the cupboard. It just came

in this morning." Silas told George, briefly, the circumstances.

"But why——"

"Why didn't I give—Trader Horne any?"

"Yes."

"Because I didn't want to run a chance of poisoning him. I don't know what's in the stuff. I was perfectly innocent, at first, but when he got over his stomach ache so quickly I began to think that the customers were arriving rather soon after the delivery of the merchandise. I wonder why Mr. Horne wanted our whisky?"

George shrugged his shoulders.

"Just a coincidence, I guess."

Silas sat back.

"Maybe so. We'll regard it as such until we get more requests for a drink. Don't say anything about our—wet goods, George."

George laughed and rose to go back to his work.

"I won't say a word! I wouldn't want it to get around that I'm working in a speak-easy!"

The next morning, as soon as Silas had deposited his hat on its hook, he beckoned to George, who was at his desk, and the two went into Silas' office again. Silas was beaming, and his eyes snapped with excitement. George sat, but Silas paced up and down his office, in a fever of energy.

"Had another customer for a drink last night!"

George sat up suddenly.

"You did!"

"Yep! Just finished supper, home, and sat down in the living room, when the bell rang. Some one asked for me, and I went out. There was a young fellow there who was selling books, or something, and I was just easing him out when he dropped on the floor all in a heap. Fainted, or something. Nobody else was around, and I ran out to the kitchen for a glass of water. I



was all upset and flustered, and I never thought of anything except bringing the poor devil around.

"I hustled back—you know, my place is pretty well carpeted—and just as I got near I saw this chap, in the mirror, halfway up on his elbow, taking a look around. Then it came over me, like a streak of lightning, that he was after whisky, too. I made a noise, and he dropped back into his faint. I gave him the water, as much as I could of it down his collar and all over his clothes. He came to in a hurry, and got up. I was most solicitous, but he got right out. Mumbled that he was all right and sorry and so on. So there you are!"

Silas faced George, who had sat fascinated.

"Well! But what's it all about?"

"Search me! What I get out of it is this: Mr. Horne comes in yesterday, and finds out that we have no whisky in the office. Very well, then, it must be at home. Man No. 2, the book agent, finds out that we probably haven't any at home. They must know that there was some delivered. It looks to me like a bootlegger's plant, and we're mixed up in it. I wonder if Hoskins is doing this on a large scale, and if the government is on his trail? They might well believe that I had bought it, and send these strange people around to spy me out. Lord! If they'd ask me, I'd give it to them! I wouldn't want to get Hoskins in bad, but all the stuff is good for is evidence."

Silas shrugged and sat down.

"I really don't know what to do about it. I suppose the quickest way would be to pour it down the sink and smash the bottles. I think that's what I'll do. Stay a while to-night, George, and we'll destroy the evidence, will you?"

"Sure! It seems a shame to waste all that stuff, though. Don't you suppose it might be good?"

"I wouldn't trust a drop of it. George, I'm telling you, I drink nothing

in this country! There isn't a gallon of liquor in the States that's fit for anything but suicide! Not much. Down the sink it goes, to-night!"

Silas turned to answer his telephone, which had been ringing during his last few words. He lifted the receiver, and a familiar voice struck his ear:

"'Ello! 'Ello! Mr. Tipping? This is 'Oskins, sir! 'Oskins of the *Tasmania*."

"Hello, Hoskins! How are you?"

"Mr. Tipping, 'ave you still got that stuff I sent you?"

"Yes. What of it?"

Silas nodded fiercely over his shoulder to George, who had half risen to go.

"For 'Eaven's sake, sir, if any one awks you for it, give it to 'em, sir! Sye nothing, but just 'and it over! I'm in a terrible pickle! Will you do that, sir?"

"Why should I?"

"Don't awsk me, sir! Just do it, for 'Eaven's sake! I cahn't explyne! Tyke me word for it, sir, it's dyngorous!"

"I was just going to throw it away, Hoskins."

A wail came from the other end: "Ow! Don't do that! Don't touch it! Just give it up to the person 'oo awks for it, sir! Please! I cahn't tell you more! Just do that!"

Silas, about to demand more details, heard the click of the connection being broken, and hung up. He turned to George, mystified and yet with some comprehension in his face. He related the substance of Hoskins' plea.

"There's more in this than meets the eye! I do believe that this is getting beyond us. I'm going to call in a little professional help. I don't know any one in the prohibition office, and I guess it's just as well I don't. But our friend Fogarty will be of aid here."

He lifted the receiver again, and called that number which has thrilled and terrified more people than any



other—Spring 3100. He asked for Fogarty and was put through to him.

"Sergeant, this is Tipping. Will you come up here, and bring along a couple of big fellows with you? I think I can show you some action. Yes—right away! Good boy!"

He hung up and turned again to George, who was quivering with suppressed excitement himself.

"Say! This looks promising! What do you expect?"

"I don't know, George. There seems to be a lot of agitation over my six bottles of White Horse, and where there's so much smoke—Scotch smoke—there must be fire—water! Hah! How was that one?"

George shook his head, deep sadness in his eyes.

"I'll withhold my judgment until after this is over. You need me here in the office right now, and if I told you what I thought of that one, you might give me a D. C. M."

"D. C. M.? What's that?"

"'Don't Come Monday!'"

Silas turned sorrowfully away, his hand before his eyes.

"Ah, well, let it pass—let it pass! I've been mistook in my judgments, like Disko Troop. Seriously, the law will be up here to-day, and will remain until this thing is settled. What is going to happen, I don't know; but the next thirsty man that comes in here is in for some excitement!"

Silas pulled open the drawer of his table and drew from it a long and grim-looking old-style army forty-five-caliber revolver, which, in spite of its antiquated appearance, was oiled and in first-class working order. He broke the gun and spun the cylinder. Five of the six chambers were loaded. He stopped the empty one under the hammer in order to prevent accidental discharge. He looked up at the now-grinning George, and his face was serious.

"You go ahead and laugh. But, just

the same, you look to your own gun; I have a hunch that these things may come in handy. You never can tell, you know."

George nodded, still smiling, and turned to leave the office. Over his shoulder, as he went, he flung a resounding: "Good hunting!"

In spite of his grin, so great was his respect for the hunches of his employer that he went to his own desk and drew, from a small leather holster fastened securely out of sight to the inside of one of the pedestals, a small thirty-two-caliber automatic. This, too, was in good order—cleaned, oiled, and loaded—for although the system of protection in Tipping's was not ostentatious, it was, nevertheless, efficient and thorough. The guns in the office, of which each man had quick access to one, were thoroughly gone over every week by Murph, the doorman, who carried his own on his hip. The positions of Silas' men, when they were working at their desks, were such that it would require a force practically equal in strength to hold up the office successfully; and a group of six men could not have gotten past Murphy, to start with.

Tipping's had never been held up. Silas, on the occasions when he made that statement, always, like a good Christian, tapped forcefully on the walnut edge of his desk. The danger of robbery at the point of a gun is ever present in an establishment which deals in so highly valuable, readily marketable and easily transported a commodity as jewels, and the frequency with which such robberies take place justifies every precaution the jeweler can take. Silas was convinced, by a careful study of the situations in which stores had been robbed, that most dealers invited such disasters. Robberies take place, generally, at three times during the day: early in the morning, when the store is quiet and the stock is being removed from the safes to the show cases; at



noon, when many of the staff are at lunch; and at night, when the stock is being returned to the safes.

In Silas' store, the surest buyer in the world could not gain entrance in the morning until the cases were fully dressed and the men in their places. And not only did this apply to the stock which was displayed for sale, but to the hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of jewels, in every form, which belonged to Silas' customers, and which were in his possession for repairs, alterations, or appraisal. Lunch hours, in Tipping's, went by shifts. Two men left at eleven thirty, and the next two did not go until these returned, no matter whether they ate or went hungry; and the last customer was out and the doors securely locked at night before the transfer of goods from cases to safes was begun.

A jeweler who leaves his office in charge of one or two men at noon is inviting trouble. There were never less than four men in Silas' office at any one time, and these four were situated in widely scattered positions. Furthermore, in order to sound the alarm and call each man to his post in time of danger, without warning the cause of the danger, there was a certain code word, an ordinary word which might occur many times in the course of an ordinary conversation without exciting suspicion, but which, when pronounced in Tipping's, was sufficient to bring every man to his feet with his revolver in his hand. This word was "fifteen." Let a clerk say to the kleptomaniac who has just slipped a brooch into the palm of her glove, "Here is a very nice pin, madame, for fifteen hundred." Let him say this with intent to make himself heard by others besides his customer, and the surprised lady would find herself surrounded by five or six pleasantly smiling gentlemen, each with a hand in his right hip pocket, while the clerk said courteously: "And shall I

send you a bill for the brooch you have selected?"—indicating the evidence inside her glove.

Let a man who seems to be difficult to please, and who finally has much of the stock on the counter before him while the busy clerk is trying to keep mental track of which pieces are out of which trays, brush with his sleeve too carelessly across the top of the table, or lean forward too interestedly across the gem-strewn counter, and the voice of the man waiting on him will say to another clerk, evidently passing by: "Will you bring me the fifteen-grain pearl, Mr. Harris?" This request will bring not only the fifteen-grain pearl, if there happens to be one, but also courteous and intelligent supervision of the gentleman's actions until he shall finally make up his mind as to his purchase or empty-handed departure. The word "fifteen" was always conducive of results in Tipping's.

Fogarty, a small, neatly dressed, vivid Irishman, arrived at Silas' establishment half an hour after Silas called him, and, with the palpable plain-clothes man who accompanied him, took up a position in one of the three small side offices. Silas explained the situation to him, took him back and showed him the six bottles of White Horse, and made him comfortable with cigars. All that day, business went on as usual. No one came in demanding whisky, and there was no occasion for sounding the alarm. Fogarty left after the store had been closed, promising to return the next day and every day until something should happen.

The next morning, at about ten o'clock, Murph admitted a young man who was met by George and who asked to see Mr. Tipping personally. George looked him over, as he had been taught to do by Silas, with a view to guessing just what sort of business might interest him, and decided that this was an engagement ring, a single-stone dia-



mond; and, by the general get-up of the young man, his quiet demeanor, the subdued richness of his clothes, it might be an important one. George, knowing that Silas was at the moment disengaged, ushered the customer into Silas' office and returned to chat with Fogarty.

Silas rose to greet his customer, whom he did not know, and motioned him to a seat. The young man sat down and removed his gloves slowly, looking round him with an appreciation of the richness and taste of the furnishings. Silas waited expectantly. The young man folded his gloves, placed them neatly in the pocket of his coat, and faced Silas.

"Mr. Tipping," he said, "my name is Johnson. I have come on a rather queer errand. I am connected with the office of the director of prohibition enforcement. We have learned there that you have been the involuntary recipient of a small lot of liquor, and we should like very much to obtain that consignment as part of the evidence which we need in running down the gang. Have you still got it?"

Silas had sat up with great interest at Johnson's words, and now he spread his hands out on the table and looked at the young man curiously.

"I may have it," he said, "but before I tell you, will you tell me why your office took such clumsy measures to get it from me? The elderly gentleman with the stomach ache and the fainting book agent were necessary, were they?"

Mr. Johnson smiled.

"Well, Mr. Tipping," he said, "we didn't know you so well at the time. The usual methods were applied at once because we didn't know but that you might—er—dispose of the stuff right away. In the meantime, however, we have had a chance to investigate, and found out that this laying of our cards on the table is best. And now, if you have the liquor here—I don't want to take up too much of your time——"

Silas smiled genially.

"Oh, that's all right, Mr. Johnson! I was most interested in the sudden results that my possession of this Scotch brought forth. I have it, right enough, and I'll be glad to turn it over to you. You won't mind a few witnesses, will you?"

"Are they people from your office?"

"Oh, yes!" Silas lied mildly. "They're all right here!"

"Why, no, I don't mind. In fact, it might be better if there were some one here to see our transaction. I'll give you a proper receipt, of course. And now, if I could have the bottles——"

Silas nodded and pressed the buzzer by the desk. George appeared at once, and Silas asked him to get the liquor and to bring it in. When George had gone, Silas turned again to Johnson.

"Have you any credentials, Mr. Johnson?" he asked. "Just as a matter of form, you know."

Johnson smiled.

"Not a one, Mr. Tipping! You see, I'm on the desk force, and I don't wear a badge or anything like that. But you can call up headquarters, if you like, and they'll give me a clear bill!"

"Oh, well, why bother about it over a few bottles of Scotch? Here they come, now!"

George entered, and stood the six bottles in a row on the table. Johnson, for a man who had been dealing in such contraband by way of business, seemed exceedingly interested. He picked the bottles up, one by one, and examined them. He shook them, listening to the swish and gurgle of their contents. Two of them he set down again on the table a little apart from the other four.

Silas watched him with interest, and when he shook them Silas leaned forward, watching his face intently. He noted the positions in which the bottles were returned to the table, and sat back again, his face a study. He wore a



smile, but it was on the surface. He seemed to be trying to solve a problem, and, at the same time, keep his face from showing it. He reached over slowly and picked up one of the bottles, one of the two that Johnson had set down a little apart from the others. He held it up by the neck and read the label slowly and solemnly, intoning the words in a mournful voice. He shook his head sadly, and turned again toward Johnson, to find that gentleman watching him with narrowed eyes and no trace of his former geniality.

Silas, in setting the bottle down, lost his hold of the neck of it, and it fell, but with a quick sweep of his arm Silas caught it before it reached the floor. He brought it back, smiling, and set it precisely where it had been before.

"Whew!" he cried. "That was a close call! Nearly had some of the evidence all over the floor. Plenty more, though, if one did get broken!"

As he finished speaking, he looked up again at Johnson. The prohibition agent had risen to his feet, and was standing over the table, a look of intense fear and desperate hate on his handsome face. As Silas caught the bottle, he caught himself, forced a smile to his lips, and sank back.

"Thought we'd lost one!" he said, with an effort to make his voice as pleasant as it had been. George, still standing behind him, missed the expression, and thought that his rising had been merely sympathetic effort to help Silas save his office floor. Silas turned and opened his desk drawer, drew out a sheet of paper, and pushed it over toward Johnson. He left the drawer open, though, as if carelessly.

"I'll let you write out the receipt," he said. "You know more about those things than I do."

Johnson complied willingly, and, taking out his pen, he began. He wrote a few words, and then looked up.

"Six bottles?"

"Six?" said Silas loudly. "Lord! No! There were fifteen!"

Johnson had just lowered his head to write again, when he felt, against the back of his neck, the pressure of a steel circle. He stiffened, and raised his head slowly. His eyes came up and gazed directly into the small round hole in the end of the long barrel of Silas' antiquated six-shooter. His hands went involuntarily up to a level with his shoulders, and he sat there, his eyes smoldering, his mouth twisted into a fierce and crooked smile. Fogarty, who had rushed to the door at the sound of the word "fifteen," touched him on the shoulder, breaking the tense silence.

"Up!" said Fogarty.

Johnson rose, never taking his eyes from the unwavering little hole in Silas' gun, held firm in a hand backed by the frostiest blue eyes that he had ever gazed into. Fogarty slid a swift and expert hand down the man's hip and across his breast, diving suddenly beneath the man's armpit and bringing out an automatic so small that it could be hidden in the palm of one's hand, but of a caliber which would do serious damage. This Fogarty pouched, and then, drawing his own gun, he whirled the prisoner around, looking him full in the face. Their recognition was mutual.

"Well! Little Danny Meagher! What's the lay, Danny?"

"Booze!" Danny shrugged. "Nothin' but booze! Can I drop my flippers now, 'Duke,' or will 'Foxy Grandpa,' here, do a drill on me?"

"Let 'em down, Danny!"

Alias Johnson dropped his hands with a sigh of relief. He shook himself into his coat again, and turned to Fogarty.

"Well?"

"Well what?"

"What's next? Gone into the snoop-in' business?"

Fogarty snorted.



"I don't get this lay, but I'd sure like to catch you in a real graft! It'd do me good to book you and make it stick!"

Alias Johnson laughed—an unpleasant, triumphant laugh.

"Try it! I got a mouthpiece hangin' on a wire now, and he'd be tickled to death to take a hooch charge up before twelve good and true! Give it a whirl!"

Fogarty shook his head.

"I'd spring you, first! They'd laugh me out of the station!"

He turned to Silas, who was sitting quietly, listening, his eyes still frosty, his frontier revolver still in his hand. He was about to speak, when Silas interrupted him.

"Listen, sergeant. You evidently know this man. I also gather from your conversation, which is in a language strange to me, but highly interesting, that it would be worse than futile to bring him up before the bar of justice on a bootlegging charge. That is probably true, but listen to Foxy Grandpa once! Have you handcuffs with you?"

Fogarty, puzzled, nodded.

"Sure!"

"Well then," went on Silas, raising his revolver once more until it pointed precisely at Johnson's solar plexus, "put them on him, and hang onto him! Look out!" He thrust forward with the gun as he spoke, for Johnson suddenly had started to whirl, but stopped, frozen by the menace in Silas' voice. Fogarty, grimly now, pulled his manacles from his pocket and snapped one cuff over Johnson's right wrist, twisting the chain until it began to bite into the flesh.

"Ah! Stick around, Danny! You'll get a bit of the hose to-night! Be sure to tell the court you ran into a door! Now what, Mr. Tipping?"

Silas opened the drawer of his table and dropped the ancient weapon into it. He smiled again and, reaching over the

table, picked up from it the two bottles of White Horse which Johnson had set aside, and one of which Silas had nearly dropped. He walked halfway round the table before he spoke again, followed by the wondering eyes of Fogarty, George, the large plain-clothes man, and the bitter glance of Johnson.

"Bring him back to the sink, and Foxy Grandpa will play another of his hunches! Danny seems to yearn for these two bottles above all others. I wonder why?"

The question was put in a mild, dreamy voice, but it brought forth such an explosion of choice and unreiterated profanity from alias Johnson that Fogarty stopped it with a "Be still, pig!" and a nipping twist of his chain. Silas led the way back across the show-room and into the work office. He advanced between two rows of clerks, who stopped work to watch, open mouthed, the strange procession, and stopped before the office washbasin. He turned here and set the bottles carefully on the edge of the sink.

"George," he said, "run and get a corkscrew, and then stand by with the strainer."

George scurried off and returned with a beautiful silver-mounted ram's-horn corkscrew from stock, and, taking the small sieve from the earthenware jar in which stones were washed in alcohol, he stood waiting. Silas, with the air of a prestidigitator who is about to extract miles of paper ribbon from a tall silk hat, opened one of the bottles and began to pour the whisky out into the sink, through the strainer which George held beneath the mouth of the bottle.

The favorite perfume of Scotland gurgled through it to oblivion. An odor of conviviality filled the office. George sniffed and rolled his eyes ecstatically, while Fogarty, his hand firm upon the chain of his nippers, fairly drooled at the mouth. The desks all



about were vacated, their occupants gathering round to share the fragrance and to see the show. Silas, grinning in spite of the tenseness of the situation, poured carefully and slowly, and alias Johnson, his eyes blazing with fury, muttered obscenities under his breath and crowded close, lest Fogarty cut his wrist again. Suddenly, when the bottle was nearly empty, Silas gave a cry, and stopped pouring.

"Whoa! Look!"

George, holding the strainer, shook it gently, rotating it as he did when washing stones, and, as the whisky ran slowly through it, he held it up to the light, peering into it. He gasped and thrust it toward Silas, who was reaching out for it. Silas seized it and bent over it.

"Well! Right at home, aren't they?"

He motioned to Fogarty, who leaned over and looked in turn, and immediately galvanized into action. The strainer was half full of small, beautifully made diamonds.

Silas turned to George.

"What'll they run, George?"

"Twenty-five or thirty to the carat."

George tilted the strainer and shook some of the stones out into the palm of his hand. "Nice, white stuff, too. We pay a hundred and sixty, at least, for that kind of goods. All these bottles got that stuff in 'em? What is it, a trick?"

Silas laughed. "You know as well as I do!" He turned to Fogarty. "Think a nice smuggling case would stand up in court?"

Fogarty, who had immediately snapped the other cuff over alias Johnson's wrist and turned him over to Goliath, his companion, who held the squirming man with no great tenderness, crowded up.

"I'll say so! Say, won't that stuff hurt the diamonds?"

"Not much! Keeps 'em clean. Nothing in the world in a liquid form will make any impression on a diamond.

Don't worry; they're all right. Wait till we assay the rest of this!"

That bottle produced about fifty carats of diamonds. They broke it, finally, with the repair man's hammer, to be sure they had them all. The other, which alias Johnson had selected, gave forth a like amount, which would run from eight to ten thousand dollars per bottle at the market price of the goods they contained in this country. They went through all six of the bottles to make sure, and returned to Silas' office to make ready for departure. Fogarty was beaming, and alias Johnson was a tiger trapped. He raved at moments until Goliath threatened to push his face in, and then maintained a sullen silence.

Fogarty leaned over and patted him on the knee.

"Danny, Danny," he said caressingly, "how I've wanted to get you in just such a box! Many's the time you've thumbed your good-lookin' bugle at me because you had some clever shyster to spring you! And all your little pals, too—what a lot you're goin' to tell me about them all, to-night!"

The sergeant's eyes gleamed. Alias Johnson shifted his eyes to Fogarty for one blazing instant and shook his head.

"Ah, yes, you will, Danny, me boy! Me and five or six others, with bits of rubber hose and good, stout fists! You'll tell us, Danny! We won't hurt you—much!"

Johnson grew a shade whiter and sighed. He shrugged his shoulders and looked from Fogarty to the big detective beside him. His face took on a resigned expression.

"Oh, hell! All right, I'll squeal. But you better keep me locked up until you make all your pinches."

"Longer than that, Danny—longer than that!" Fogarty rose. "We'll be gettin' along, Mr. Tipping. I'll turn these"—he indicated the diamonds, which were wrapped in a small pack-



age—"over to the customs, and they'll fix it up about the reward."

Silas shrugged and rose with his guests.

"All yours, sergeant! I'll be down when they auction that stuff off. High-class brilliants, all of the first water. I can use those goods."

Fogarty grinned until his face was a mass of wrinkles.

"I'm obliged to you, sir! Me 'n' Pat, here, could use a piece o' that!"

He jerked the now-crestfallen Johnson to his feet, and the party moved toward the door. Just as they went out, Johnson, his curiosity getting the better of his plight, turned and, speaking to Fogarty, said, "Who in hell is this old wise guy that spilled the beans?"

Silas, beaming, with George grinning over his shoulder, made a profound bow.

"Foxy Grandpa!" he said. "Drink hearty!"

*Another story by James Sayre Pickering will appear in an early issue.*



### THE DIPLOMAT AND THE SLEUTH

WHEN Dwight Morrow, American ambassador to Mexico, was kept abed by illness, the bookstores of the Mexican capital were ransacked to supply him with detective stories. He could not get enough of the stirring tales of the sleuth in pursuit of his prey.

The ambassador, however, is only one of many prominent men who prefer detective fiction for their mental relaxation. Among them are Chief Justice Taft, J. P. Morgan, Elihu Root, and Charles Evans Hughes. Both Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were avid readers of detective novels. So was the late Doctor Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard University.



### THE TRUE SPORTSMAN'S IDEAL

ON the first page of the program for the annual banquet to the "letter men" of Georgetown University, District of Columbia, the following lines by Sir Henry Newbolt were printed as an expression of the sports ideal of that institution:

To set the cause above renown,  
To love the game beyond the prize;  
To honor, as you strike him down,  
The foe that comes with fearless eyes;  
To count the life of battle good,  
And dear the land that gave you birth,  
And dearer yet the brotherhood  
That binds the brave of all the earth.

That is the true sportsman's ideal, the one which is set up by every American college and university and served by their students. The value of such a standard lies chiefly in its lifelong influence. Newbolt's lines define not only the way to play games at school, but the way to play the greatest game of all, the battle in life, to achieve something worth while and to be something that brings benefits and happiness to others. Successful men who tell the story of their rise to the heights emphasize always the fact that they loved the work by which they prospered, and, loving it, gave it their best thought and effort.



# He Just Dropped In

By  
**Leonard Lupton**



*Author of "He Could Take It," Etc.*

**What happens in this fine story might have happened, or might happen any day. It is not based on fact, and we are taking a sentimental liberty in offering it. But to talk about it any more is to give away the secret!**

## A COMPLETE STORY

**A**N airplane was sufficiently unfamiliar to that part of northern Maine, to cause Bart Ridley to cease work in the soggy field, and raise his gaze to the massed fog banks which were swirling far above his head and completely closing out all view of Applejack Mountain.

"Why dum it all," he said, since he was not one to use outright profanity, "that thar fellow is tryin' to make a landin' on my farm here!"

He turned suddenly and began to run, taking short, awkward steps in the ooze of the field. As he ran, he craned his head around so that he could glance backward and upward. The hum was nearer. It was droning now, like a swarm of bees moving toward the hive.

"Hi, Maw!" called Bart to his wife, feeling the urge to share this great ad-

venture. "Hi, Maw! Come out here! Hustle now! Never mind yer bakin'; one of them fellows with an airship is a-gonna land on the farm! Run, Maw, run!"

Maw ran. Having no children of her own she babied Paw, and although she had her doubts as to whether his excitement were justified or not, she humored him in this instance, too.

Bart had reached the yard by this time, and he was pointing behind him.

"Hear him? Hear him? He sounds like a swarm of bees, he does! He's behind the fog yonder, but hear him—he's comin' down. He's feelin' his way to earth! Golly, Maw, an airship, an' on our farm here, too! I ain't seen one since nigh onto fifteen year ago, when we was down Boston way! Hey! Hey! There he is! Look!"



The silver nose of a cabin plane poked its way out of the fog bank and roared through the gray heavens above them, sweeping on past the dooryard in the direction of the invisible Applejack Mountain.

A slow whistle escaped Bart Ridley, and a look of disappointment crossed his face.

"I—I guess mebbe I was wrong, Maw. He—he ain't comin' down after all. But shucks! We seen him, didn't we?" He smiled, grateful for even that small boon from a none too kind Providence, and then abruptly his face clouded.

"But, Maw!" he said. "Maw! Look! He's headin' plumb for Applejack! If he keeps on that way, he'll nose plumb into it!"

The thought suddenly gave wings to his heels, and regardless of the mud he sped across the ground like a crazy man, waving his arms in frantic signals, and booming his warning with the deep-lunged voice of a foghorn. But to what avail?

He knew himself, in spite of his slight acquaintance with this steel bird from a different world, that his voice could not be heard above the drone of that motor. And yet he ran. Something prompted him on, some last drop of hope that he might be able to avert the catastrophe.

But suddenly he stopped running, and his feet slid a short distance in the slippery ooze of the road he had been following. He turned abruptly and ran back toward the house.

"Hey, Maw! Here he come again! He turned back!"

The aviator had banked his ship and was curving back once more toward the farm. This time there was no mistake. The pilot had selected his landing field, and he tipped the nose of his plane earthward. He dipped, swifter than a swallow, then straightened out, and made a neat three-point landing on the

cropped stubble of Bart Ridley's hayfield.

As he rolled to a stop, Bart Ridley, frenzied with excitement, *clopp-clopped* across the yard toward the field, stumbled over the stone wall and hurried toward the ship. Maw was a poor second.

As he neared it though, something slowed Paw up. The plane was dripping with wet mist, and it glistened dully even in the slight refraction of the light of that gray day. What a different thing this was from the "airship" he had seen down Boston way fifteen years ago. And what about the young man who was sliding out from the angled door of the little cabin?

Paw saw that he was a tall man—a boy almost, it seemed—and that his face was sober beneath his taut helmet. Great goggles were pushed up on that helmet, and it was splotted with oil. So, for that matter, was the flying suit which the aviator wore.

This sign of earthy, commonplace material seemed to reassure Paw. He stepped closer, mentally shaping his little speech of welcome, but as he caught a glimpse of the lean face which was slowly splitting into a grin, Paw forgot his carefully chosen words entirely and grinned back.

"Why, shucks!" he said. "You ain't much more'n a kid!"

The pilot laughed outright.

"Well, maybe you're right, at that," he said. And then his face sobered. "I had to come down," he explained; "the fog was pretty thick. I've been bucking it all morning, but I knew I was getting into mountain country and I thought I'd better get ground under me, before I rammed a hill. You don't mind my waiting——"

"Mind it? Why shucks, son, this is one of the big minutes of my life! I never expected to see another airship, let alone one like this, and then along you come and plop right down on my



farm. We don't have many big minutes up here. We eat good, sleep fine, work hard, trust in God and the almanac, and wonder why some men is fools enough to live in cities."

"I take it that you don't get to town often, then?"

"Son, there ain't no town inside ten mile, and that ain't worth goin' to. I was down Boston way though, once, 'bout fifteen year ago, and I see an airship there, but not like this'n! But, shucks, look at me jabberin' like some heathen idiot! Come along, up to the house and get some dinner. Your airship is all right here. This fog won't be liftin' until nigh sundown!"

"Thanks, I will." The young man drew a long breath, a breath that was like a sigh almost. "It's been a long while since I've sat down to a family dinner," he said. "Gosh! you know, I'd like to put my knees under a table with a red tablecloth just once more!"

Paw laughed. "By golliess, you can! We eat on white oilcloth when they ain't nobody here, but when company comes—which ain't often—Maw gets out the red tablecloth. We bought that when we was down Boston way, nigh onto fifteen——"

At this juncture, Paw caught Maw's eye and recognized the high sign which every married man knows so well. Abruptly he closed his teeth on the last word. He had a feeling of guilt. Here was the first real company to come along in over eight months, and right off the reel he had to go and put his foot in it about Maw's red tablecloth being saved for company. Funny how women was touchy about sech things!

"Oh, mister," he said, to cover his embarrassment, "I want you to meet Maw. She's the best cook this side o' Boston and mebbe the other side, too!"

He dropped his embarrassment immediately, in the pleasure of seeing Maw shake hands with the tall, thin pilot.

"I'm right glad to see you," she said in her soft voice. "It ain't often we can do entertainin' way up here, an' it makes it all the better that you dropped in on us right out of the sky almost, as you might say. Do come right along up to the house and sample some victuals. I'll bet it makes you hungry, flying around like that up there!"

She motioned with her head, indicating the sky, and was aware of an unusual thrill, in the gesture. To be entertaining a man who just dropped in like that, out of the blue—or in this case, the gray!

The stranger grinned again. He had a peculiar, boyish grin. A warm grin that was spontaneous and cheerful and courteous, all at the same time.

They moved slowly across the field, the three of them, and entered the house. Maw went immediately to the oven, and tantalizing odors began to waft through the wide, old-fashioned kitchen. The young man sniffed, hungrily, and once more his face broke into a genial smile.

"It's been a long while," he said, "since I've smelled any cooking as good as that. I never really knew before how hungry I could be."

The old farmer nodded. "Well, I reckon," he said, "there ain't no lad in his right health but what is hungry most all the time. But, shucks, I'm lettin' you stand there like that, when prob'ly you want to tidy up a mite. Come around back with me, son. We keep the basin on a nail outside the door. Let's freshen up a little."

They both moved out of the kitchen, and were soon splashing in the basin. When this task was done they once again returned to where Maw was busily engaged in setting the table. There was no red tablecloth in view.

"You see," she explained, smiling, "it's this way. Like Paw said a while back, we do keep that red tablecloth for company comin'. But, sonny, you're



not like company. You're like one of us. When I put on that red tablecloth, Paw he just natcherally has to change to his Sunday suit, and put on his coat, and keep a fringed napkin on his lap instead o' under his chin. And that ain't comfortable to him. We have to eat and talk liken we had what some folks calls company manners. And I don't hanker after that none. I say, 'Be what you are.' If you're plain, poor, honest folks, why not be like that? Why get out a red tablecloth and make believe you're somethin' that you're not? You see, sonny? I want to make you feel at home. I want to make you feel you're one of us. I don't want you to feel that you're just stiff, cold company, with company manners!"

The boy grinned again. It was a warmer grin even than before, and was accompanied by a deep chuckle.

"I like that line of talk," he said. "It hits me where I live. That's all I want to be—just folks."

They sat down at the well-laden table, and as they ate they talked easily, freely, happily of many and varied things. It was a great experience for the farmer and his wife, and it was a great experience for the boy. They dined as simply, as wholesomely as the pioneers who had carved this land from the wilderness. Just folks.

When the meal was done, and thanks expressed, the boy cast a weather eye at the sky. The fog seemed to be lifting a little. He mentioned this, and then added:

"I'm a little worried about my ship. I think that she bogged down under me in that field. I don't like to leave—a month of his life would just suit me, but I've an engagement that I've simply got to keep!"

He turned and looked directly at Bart Ridley.

"I wonder," he said, "if you've got a horse, perhaps, that could help me get

her headed around, and on harder ground?"

Paw beamed. "*Have* I?" He swelled with justifiable pride. "I've got the finest hoss that was ever foaled in this county! He's a bear cat, he is, when it comes to handlin' a load. Shucks, he'll mosey you out of that muck as easy as I'd snap a toothpick. You just come along up t' the barn with me, son, an' look him over."

The boy smiled again.

"I like horses," he said. "There's something about them that gets me. They're big and strong and quiet—they learn to think a lot of you, but they don't gush all over you, to express their sentiments. I suppose you wouldn't be able to do much farming without him."

"No," said Paw, lifting down the bar on the barn door. "Rightly I ought to have two, but when I seen Old Harry over to the auction, I says to m'self, says I, 'By golliess, Paw, there's a hoss that's worth any two hosses ever foaled!'—and so I brought him home, and he's been worth his price!"

Old Harry heard them coming, and he shuffled his shod feet on the heavy planking of the stall. He rolled his eyes for a moment when he saw the stranger with Paw, and his delicate nostrils expanded; then suddenly he thrust forth his sleek head and nuzzled the boy.

"He likes you, he likes you!" Paw cried, delighted. "It ain't often he sees a stranger, and when he does he generally takes a kick at 'em!"

The boy reached forth an eager hand and stroked the arched neck.

"He's a beautiful horse," he said, "and strong, I'd say. I guess we can get the plane out of the mud, with him pulling!"

"Just you wait until I get a mite o' harness on him, and see!" Paw cried, with swift pride. "He's a bear cat, he is, when it comes to pulling!"

They got the harness on him, and a chain, and moved across the field. Old



Harry shied a little at the sight of the steel bird, but he sensed that in the stranger, and Paw, he had safe company, and allowed himself to be backed so that the chain could be fastened to the axle of the bogged plane.

"I figure that it will be some hours yet before it is safe for me to get away," said the boy, "but I'll feel better about it if I know that my ship is safe on solid ground. I'm certainly obliged to you, for giving me a hand with her like this."

"There's nawthin' that I could do," said Paw truthfully, "that could repay you for droppin' in on Maw and me like this. We like your kind of company!"

He moved around to the head of Old Harry and grasped the halter.

"Come on, boy," he said; "come on now, that's right. Come on! Giddap!"

The great iron-shod hoofs dug in. The bunched muscles along the haunches knotted into hard sinew. The wheels trembled, and the axle seemed to visibly vibrate, on the plane as this force was applied. But the plane did not come out of the bog.

They waited a moment, for a breathing spell, and then Paw urged Old Harry to greater effort.

"Come on now! Come on, boy! Giddap! Giddap! Get along there! So! So! Giddap!"

The muscles taunted. Hoofs slid deeper into mud. The great back suddenly arched, and then with a startling suddenness, the plane moved forward a little, so that its wheels were just barely clear of the bog. The horse, as if realizing that his task was almost done, dropped wearily, and his dropping was so sudden that he slid to his haunches, and then flat on his belly in the mud. Paw was thrown clear of the halter.

"Here! What's this?" he cried. He dropped to his knees beside the horse, but the beast was panting heavily, and seemed lapsing almost into a state of coma.

The boy looked on sudden, tremendous concern in his eyes. He knew what this horse meant to the farmer.

"What is it?" he asked. And then added apologetically: "I—I don't know much about horses."

Paw seemed dazed at the sudden collapse of that mighty strength.

"Good gosh!" he said feebly. "It—it looks like he was dying! I—I never seen a hoss act just that way before. Once up Cedar Creek way, I seen a hoss that went blind from overstrain. The vet called it 'pull-blind,' I reckon. But I never seen a hoss buckle under like that before. He ain't been off'n his feed or nawthin'. I—I——"

The boy's face had lost its smile. It was a grim, tense young face now. A face like granite, with sudden lines cleaved in it sharply, as if a master sculptor had touched its hard surface, graving in lines of set determination.

"We need a veterinary—and in a hurry," he said. "Where is the nearest one?"

The horse was thrashing a little in the mud now. The farmer looked down at the beast dully. Hope had faded from his eyes. He seemed like a man in a trance. Without a horse, he was lost. Strangely, though, he felt no rancor toward the aviator.

"Why, son, there ain't none nearer than Sweetwater Junction. That's the town I mentioned to you some time back. We ain't no way of gettin' there, and he wouldn't come up in this God-forsaken region anyway!"

The boy's tone was cool, level.

"We have a way of getting there," he said softly, "*and he'll come!*"

Paw looked up quickly. "How, son?"

"If we can move Old Harry a little, so that I can get clearance, I can take off. I remember the town. I was low, looking for a landing spot then, when I found I couldn't get above the fog bank. I'll make it. Can we move him?"



Paw moved like a man in a daze. There seemed no disputing the authority, the assurance of the pilot. Somehow, they moved Old Harry. It certainly looked at that moment as if he would never move again under his own power.

But the pilot was not ready to give up hope. He set about his preparations for flying.

"You can't make it, son; you can't lift that plane out of this mud. I don't know much about airships, but I know that you can never get off this field, the way you're stranded there. Why, you can't see nothing when you get up, if you do, either! Don't go takin' foolish chances, just for the sake of me and my old hoss!"

But Paw was wrong about that plane being able to get away. How was he to know, that under worse conditions, in the face of greater risks, that plane had often taken off before? It was a pilot's daily business not to let the elements hinder him in the face of necessity.

With a noble roar, the prop spun with steadily increasing revs, and as the boy worked at his controls, she bucked the remainder of the bog, tore across the field—taxied would hardly describe it—and took to the air.

Maw, hearing the noise of the take-off, ran to the kitchen door. A red-checked dish towel was still in her damp hands.

"Why, Paw, he ain't gone without even saying good-by?"

But Paw did not hear her, did not answer. He was watching a silver streak of light disappear from sight in a fog bank.

He shook his head, slowly, and turned back to Old Harry.

"He'll never make it," he said; "he'll never make it!"

Minutes seemed to drag into hours. Paw's knowledge of aviation could easily be inscribed on the head of pin,

but instinctively he sensed the battle that the pilot was fighting against the elements. He knew nothing of the business of watching and mentally checking the signals of those delicate recording devices, the altimeter and tachometer. But he did sense, inside him, the thrill which the pilot must know, of battling and overcoming the stubborn resistance of fog and rain, and wind. He could only hope that the pilot would come through.

He waited, not sure if he waited in vain, and then at that moment, when hope had almost deserted him, he caught faintly the buzz and drone of the approaching plane. He stood up then, beside his horse, and watched the fog bank, trying to figure just where the streak of silver would penetrate the "wall."

A moment later he saw it, and held his breath as it swooped from the heavens. The pilot was familiar with the field now. A vision of it was engraved on his memory, and he landed neatly, safely, and rolled to a halt. He stepped from the plane and a bewildered excited man followed.

The pilot drew a deep breath.

"All right, doc," he said; "get to work. Remember if you save that horse, you can ride safely back to town behind the dashboard of a buggy, instead of 'riding on a cloud.'"

The veterinary, still dazed, still unaware almost that he was once more back on solid earth, stumbled across the stubble toward the horse.

Paw, strangely enough, seemed more enthused at seeing his young guest back.

"So you made it!" he cried. "You made it! By golly, when I seen you leave I thought you was done for! You—you did a mighty fine thing, boy, a thing that many wouldn't bother doing!"

The pilot waved his hand negligently, as if to say that risking his life for such a simple cause was nothing. He had



learned how to shed praise, during the past few months.

The vet went to work with a will. The sight of the horse seemed to bring him completely to his senses, and as he bent every atom of his professional skill to the job at hand, he marveled inwardly at the force of the personality which had dragged him mentally against his better judgment, into the plane, and then through a sea of fog just to minister to a horse on a stubby hayfield, way up in the woods.

It may have been that the risk had been so great that, in the face of it, he just simply could not let that horse die.

The man and the boy waited humbly, doing his bidding. They brought heavy blankets and other needs as he ordered them, and at last it seemed the battle was over. The veterinary stood up and mopped his brow.

"You'll have to be careful with him," he said, "and watch his feed for a while. But I guess he'll be able to move under his own power, back to the barn, if you let him rest a bit longer."

He turned and looked at the boy.

"What a ride you gave me!" he said. "Now that it's over, I kind of liked it, but hereafter a buggy is good enough for me. I'll tell you, though, that if you hadn't done what you did—if you hadn't taken the long chance, my neighbor here would be out a good horse."

The boy answered simply.

"I considered it my fault," he said. "They've been so fine to me here that I

had to do something." He turned to Paw and to Maw, who had hurried across the fields.

"I want to thank you," he said, "for the best time I've had in a long, long while. I like—just folks! I wish I could stay a while. I wish I could, really, but I'm making a tour, you see, and I've got to be moving on. The fog has lifted pretty well, and I think I better shove along. If I don't, people will begin to get flustered, maybe, and there will be some more headlines—and I don't want that!"

He shook hands warmly, and then moved toward the plane. He opened the door and fumbled inside and then turned to his prop. When he was once more in the cabin, he waved his arm just before closing the door.

"Come again," called Paw. "Come again some time— Hey! Wait a minute! I forgot to ask you your name, sonny. I'll be wantin' to tell folks about you, if any ever come this way!"

The boyish face grinned out at them.

"Lindbergh," he said. "Charles Lindbergh."

And then with a roar he was off, lifting swiftly into the blue that was breaking through the fog bank.

"Lindbergh," said Paw, who had been to Boston fifteen years ago, "Charles Lindbergh. Well, that's a good-sounding name. Do you know, Maw, I wouldn't be surprised if some day that lad become somebody kind of important!"

*Watch for more stories by Leonard Lupton.*

### THRIFTY UNCLE SAM

EXPERTS in the United States treasury department are trying to evolve a method to recover paper pulp from worn-out paper money. It now costs seventeen thousand dollars a year to run the soiled and ragged bills through a macerator and throw the waste away. If the scientists are successful, the government will reap a profit of from fifty thousand to one hundred thousand dollars a year by getting serviceable pulp from the macerator's output.



# 'Face It, M'son!'



By  
**Frederick Niven**

*Author of "The Lonesome Bandit," Etc.*

**When Runt was a little boy his father gave him a noble slogan that carried him through to a Western manhood.**

## **A COMPLETE STORY**

**H**E was born in what is now called Ontario, the part of it that was then named Upper Canada. They used still to call it "the Canadas," you know—Upper and Lower. And beyond, westward, was a wilderness of the sort known as "howling"; and beyond again were the pastures of the buffaloes; while beyond that again few people knew very well what there was, with mountains for the western boundary.

To his mother he was usually "Ginger," and to his father the same, or "M'son." His is a story in three acts; yet it has one sure and certain thread running through, as you shall see.

The first act takes place just after he had left school, and that means, as scholastic matters were then, in such

settlements, that he was but a kid. He was sitting up a little beyond his wonted time because there was "company" in the house. And the elders had become engrossed in swapping ghost stories, and so forgot him. Sleep was in his eyes as he sat on a little stool in an unobtrusive corner, so that the gleaming plates in their racks round that old living room were duplicated to his vision. Yet he could not fall off to sleep for listening.

"Why, bless my heart! Ginger, are you not in bed? Off you go."

That finished it. So he made his small bow, took up his candle in its sconce from the dresser, lit it, and retired, half asleep and all "het up" with these stories the visitors were telling. The way to bed was up a flight of stairs



inside what looked like a big cupboard projecting into the living room. He left the door ajar, by intent. Advancing into that black cavern before and above him, he desired the consolation of the voices behind him. He was afraid of what might confront him when, at the top of the stairs, he came level with the floor of the loft.

He wished he could walk into that loft as into an ordinary room, through a door, upright, instead of climbing into it on a steep, canted flight of stairs. It seemed like putting one's head in a trap for any possible lurking terror, to climb up that way. But he made the grade and got bodily into the loft without being garroted.

Then some one, below, noticed that the door was open, and closed it. Ginger had but a stub of a candle. And he cut short his prayer by his cot—most kids used to pray at their cots in those days—before tumbling in, lest the candle should fail ahead of the prayers. In bed, he did not pinch the light out. He disobeyed the law of the home that ordained candles out on getting into bed. It was, anyhow, guttering down. And his notion was that if he could get to sleep with a candle's light in the loft he might not waken until a new day's light was in it, and so would dodge the queer things of darkness. The idea was on a par, perhaps, with that of the ostrich we hear of hiding its head in the sand when pursued.

He must have slept—for he woke. It was dark. The candle was out, and not even a smell of hot grease was in the loft. Over in a corner was something white. He lay very still, staring at it, and as he stared it seemed to be coming toward him, but did not. He wondered if he was dreaming, and hoped so. He wondered if he was awake, and hoped not. Doubtless he was half awake, half asleep. He got up on an elbow and peered at the thing. It rose up as he peered. It wiggled. He let

out a yell, a bloodcurdling yell, to waken himself if he was asleep, for help if he was awake. And he was assuredly then wide awake, sitting up in his cot, glaring at the white thing.

A chink of light showed in the floor. There were steps on the stairs. Then his father's voice: "What's this all about?" His father's head came up through the floor, his father's shoulders, all his protecting father, with a light.

"Oh!" said Ginger in a tone of relief.

"Oh!" said his father. "What does 'Oh!' mean?"

"I see what it is now," said Ginger. "It's the new white curtain over the long cupboard."

His father sat down on the end of the cot.

"M'son," he said, "when you are scared, face it. Face it, m'son, face it. You ought to have gotten out of bed and approached it, right up to it, and touched it. See?"

"Yes, dad."

"And, you take my word for it, that's the only way. Now, that's a lesson for life. Face it, m'son. All right now?" he added kindly.

"Yes, dad."

"All right." And the father went down through the hole in the floor and disappeared, and the chinks of light went out in the cracks. Ginger lay there meditating on the doctrine that goes to the tune of "Face it, m'son!"—and to that tune fell asleep.

Close onto twenty years later, Ginger was on the Western prairies. As his father had gone west from the old country to "the Canadas," so he went west, the same urge in his blood. And after doing this and that he saw opportunities at the ford called Cree Crossing, and there built a trading post and embarked upon the job of free trader.

The boys at the J. J. Ranch—one of the first in these parts—called him just



"Runt." The French half-breeds of the settlements along the flanks of Cedar Hills called him "Tête Rouge."

Spacious old days were those. Often he could hear his customers coming for hours. The scream of the wheels of the old Red River carts were part of his life. *Ploo-hee! Ploo-hee! Ploo-hee!* Something like that went the sound, far heard.

He got on amicably with his customers—red, half red, and white. With the patrolling redcoats, too, he got on well. They knew he ran no side line of whisky, or alleged whisky, disturbing the peace of these seemingly eternal rolling leagues.

Medicine Meadow was his mail town and his base of supplies. The cook of the J. J. outfit, once when he met him in town, inquired if he were not lonesome "away off there." No, he was not lonesome.

"You don't even have a dog?" asked "Hash."

"No."

"Well, I'd surely be lonesome. Do you suppose," asked Hash, "a person can hold it down indefinitely all alone out there?"

Runt supposed he could and explained that, though days on end went by with no one at the crossing, on other days people passed from dawn to dusk. There were Indians on the way to visit or hunt, and half-breeds, too. And twice a year there would be whole droves of bellowing longhorned cattle at the ford, and the cow-punchers herding them would, maybe, stop all night at his place instead of camping out on the prairie.

"Well," said Hash, unconvinced, "it would be too lonesome for me. I'd go loco leading a life like that. I couldn't stand them days on end without this here human converse, even if a whole crowd did blow in once in a while."

Tête Rouge was to remember that. He was to remember much else, even

as far back as that loft in the old home and its odor of straw and apples.

One day in the spring of '85 he pulled out of Medicine Meadow with a load of supplies for the store and, traveling slow, made his wonted camp for the night. It was chill, and as he crept into his robe he remarked to himself that it was getting old and frayed, with a lot of bald patches on it, and that he could do with a new one.

Suddenly he came wide awake in the first gray light of a new day, but made sure he was still asleep and dreaming. For round him were a dozen giants. He sat up in his robe sack, squeezed his eyes shut, opened them again, and stared once more. Yes, it was true. They were tall, to be sure, these men on horseback surrounding him, each of them all of six feet. But atop of their six feet they had long feathers, or even war bonnets, poking up another foot. There is something in the old biblical phrase: "Terrible as an army with banners." The banners add to the effect. These high feathers, these high war bonnets, gave the wearers an additionally overpowering appearance.

They were painted, too. It was the giants he noted first. But when he looked at their horses he saw that they, also, were dabbed and streaked with colors, and had their tails tied up. That meant warlike business, according to yarns he had heard from men who had seen Indian warfare.

They were looking at him with most masklike faces. He shuffled out of his sack.

"How!" he said.

They said nothing in reply. He drew his trousers from the sack where he kept them warm, pulled them on, slipped on his moccasins, and looked up at the men again. He stood up and stretched; and at that one of the Indians slid lithely from the saddle, strode directly to him, and, extending a palm, felt his heart.

Queer thing to do! He knew a lot



of the Indian sign language, but this was not one of the signs. He knew none of them that required one to touch the person with whom one would converse. This scene, he felt, must have looked like some pompous rooster confronting a perky bantam.

Then the Indian spoke, but not in Cree, which was the only Indian tongue that Runt knew. And as he spoke the ones behind laughed. They even threw back their heads to laugh, the war bonnets bobbing as they did so. Apparently the remark had been of humor or badinage. But Runt did not like the way they laughed, not at all. It did not convey to him that this was a pleasant joke that had been cracked by the man whose left palm was still feeling his heartbeats. It had been derisive rather than genial, and the only likable jests are the genial and human ones. But he gave a grin in response.

They did not seem to like that grin. Their faces went blank again and their eyes looked balefully at him. Then the man confronting him put the point of his index finger on the spot where the heartbeat was most evident and, with his right hand, drew a long knife from a buckskin sheath. Then, looking Runt in the eyes, he remained in that pose, elbow back, knife in hand, ready for a violent forward jab.

At that moment a still, small voice came out of Tête Rouge's past, in the midst of a vision of a loft that smelled of straw and apples. And it said: "Face it, m'son!" He was sore afraid. There's no getting away from that. He was sore afraid, but he knew that to grab that arm would precipitate things. Instead, he put a hand in his pocket and, drawing forth a little sack, took from it a wheat paper and into the paper trickled the dry tobacco dust, lit, blew smoke.

At that the Indians on horseback laughed again, hilariously. It was a pleasanter laugh that time. But though

it gave Runt hope, it seemed to annoy the man before him. Back farther went his elbow, as if preparatory that time, for sure, for the fierce forward thrust, one that would finish all. And little Runt, feeling how very much of a runt he was, put his head back and blew a fine blue feather of smoke in air. Then in Cree he told the giant before him that there was no doubt he was a mighty fine specimen of humanity and had on a very fine war bonnet.

One of the others said something. The giant before him grunted a reply, put his long, lean knife in its sheath, caught up the lines of his horse, and mounted. And then, like a prepared drill, they each, with a very typically Indian motion of their rein hands, wheeled away. A little distance off one looked over his shoulder and evidently made some remark to the others. They glanced round.

Stories he had heard of Indian love of torture came to Runt's mind. He was prepared for anything. But all that came was a laugh. They rode on. They rode away. The tall figures undulated ever so easily left and right in the saddles. They topped the low ridge over him where in place of a gray light there was the rushing primrose of full day. On that ridge, in a common illusion of these rolling plains, they looked more gigantic than ever. Then the ridge was vacant. The last had swayed away down from sight. Grit had had its reward. Runt considered that, had he shown a sign of quailing, that knife would have gone home to the hilt in him. The dust of their going remained as a slight sunlit haze over the coulee top, and then even that, too, was gone.

Runt turned away and went over to the creek and was sick. It had been a strain, but he had faced it.

Yet what on earth did it all mean? He had never had such an experience, or anything approaching it, with the copper-colored people before. What In-



dians were these? He believed that when he spoke Cree to them they had understood, but their own speech was not Cree. He went on his way that day with furrowed brows, wondering what it might all signify. But he could get no nearer an explanation than this, which he spoke aloud:

"Just like dogs on a leash waiting to be let loose. Something held them back. Wonder what it was."

He did not consider, at that moment, that what had held them was just his mettle, the way he had "faced-it-m'son," so to speak. Something else, he thought, had restrained them. They were not quite whetted up, or even his stoic attitude might not have seen him through.

He topped the rise before Cree Crossing and saw the fringe of protected trees on the edge of the bank below, the roily loops of the river a slaty blue. He drew up at his door. The hoof-prints of many horses he saw everywhere. And on the broad trail down to the ford the spring mire showed deep new ruts of Red River carts that had passed since he went to Medicine Meadow. He entered the store.

"Well, by gosh!" he exclaimed.

The exclamation was because he had, till then, been of the opinion that, whatever might be said to the contrary by those who had "no use" for the red men, those of his neighborhood were honest. He had spoken of them as he had found them. He had told stories out of his own experiences as evidence of their probity. Once or twice, even, he had come back from Medicine Meadow to find that various things had been removed from his store, but the taker of these, though he could not write a note to explain, had left lying plain to view on the counter a fair trade in pelts—and then some, that there might be no doubt. And when that is said, a lot is said. For even the "fair" trade with the Indians, as Runt considered to him-

self, gave the trader a very pleasant profit.

But to-day! To-day he came back to a looted store.

*Ploo-hee! Ploo-hee! Ploo-hee!*

The sound of carts broke out, to north, but did not come nearer. Whoever had looted the store had gone on across the river some way and there halted to share the plunder, perhaps. That over, they were off again. The screams died slowly away while Runt set out the stock he had brought with him that trip, loaded the firearms he kept for personal use, and wondered what was afoot in the old Nor'west.

Another illusion gone! It was not safe to leave the store. Half-breeds? Well, the sound of the carts suggested that. But he was friendly with the local half-breeds, though of the private opinion that he preferred red blood undiluted. Treat the Crees white—or red!—and they treated you that way. But half-breeds—

Dang it, he would take the bull by the horns. He would ride over to the half-breed settlement and inquire of friends there if they could elucidate. The police patrol would be looking in on him in a few days, and he might have some clues to give them. So he set off toward the blue haze on the northeastern horizon.

They were great gossips, these breeds. They could tell one news of the whole West, from Lake Athabasca, the borders of the land of the Chippewyans, to the Platte River, the land of the Pawnees, away beyond the country of the Indians who called themselves Dakota, or Lacota, and whom the traders called Sioux. Great gossips.

Perhaps, even then, setting off that day, he was influenced by that far-off talk in the old loft of his boyhood's house. There was the desire to know rather than to sit guessing.

As you ride over toward Cedar Hills from Cree Crossing there begin to be



more trees in the dips. He was riding along by one of these belts of woods, thinking it about time to find a good camp place when, out of a bush, a voice hailed him:

"Tête Rouge!"

He reined in, halted, turned his head. So doing, he did what was the object of that hail. He made himself a steady, instead of a moving, target. And a rifle bullet came, with the crash of the report, and punctured his hat. Whipping his rifle from its sling, he peered along it and shot into the bush. It swayed violently. It bent left and right and was divided in the middle by a body that fell forward through it.

No other shot came to him. Recharging his gun, he rode direct to the place. He dismounted. He turned the man over. Shot through the forehead. Well, Tête Rouge had a name as a crack shot, which, perhaps, had its share in making that little runt respected.

The dead man he knew. He was, in fact, "Big" Lapointe, a half-breed that he had thought to go to first in search of explanation for the wholesale robbery at his trading post and that intimidating encounter with the painted strangers.

Lapointe had apparently been on some lone errand, had camped there for the night and seen Runt coming. His horse, hobbled back in the bush, was, after the excitement of the shooting, nonchalantly tearing long grass and working it into its mouth. Sticks had been gathered for a fire. The half-breed's robe lay there, not unrolled, but as a man leaves it till it is bedtime, to lean against before his supper fire. It was a very fine robe of the sort called silk that one came across once in a blue moon. Doubly precious was the odd buffalo of the silken instead of the woolly hide.

A mighty regrettable incident, this. The very man he was going to, seek-

ing explanation, had done his best to murder him. He was smitten with a sense of helplessness there, in the late day, as he stood, at a loss, staring at the prepared camp. The yelping of coyotes before the twilight gave him a jog, and he hauled the body to the edge of a cut bank, rolled it over, and then, by stamping on the cut bank's overhanging and crumbling edge, sent covering earth down over it.

He turned back again and thought there was nothing for it but to go home—whatever was happening in the land. But he could not sleep there. He turned back a bit to camp. He had time to do that before black night came. Yes, he'd return to his place at Cree Crossing and there await the coming of the redcoat patrol. "Well, Runt, any complaints?" Yes, there would be complaints. The patrol could fill a notebook.

He took the hobbles from the half-breed's horse in mercy to the beast that had now no master to unhobble it on the morrow. The silk robe he kept as the spoils of the victor. It did not occur to him that it might seem to some that maybe he had slain Big Lapointe for the robe. And his own, as you know, was aging, and this one was not only of the rare sort called silk, but new.

As he lay in camp that night, his little cooking fire out because of this growing realization of things being out of joint in the land, he heard a sound as of high blood pressure, a throbbing on and on in his ears. That was, at least, how it seemed to begin with. But soon he realized it was not that. Coming from what direction it was hard to tell. The darkening dome of the night seemed just faintly to pulsate with it. He had seen an Indian dance or two in his time. It was the sound of drums, many drums, of some great dance, on and on.

And faint and far, in the midst of



that pulsing, came, now and then, what was not the distant call of coyotes but human voices, many of them, in one of these hypnotic chants, timed to the drums, rising and falling in a music that seems to have been learned from listening to the wind in the trees. He considered how the human ear—as he was to have further evidence later—has difficulty, unless one is aware of what creates a sound, in deciding where it is, near or far.

But these sounds in the big night, even allowing for that difficulty, gave him the impression not only of coming from far but of being from a very vast gathering, unwontedly large. And when the crescendos of the repetitive chants came to him through the hollow of night out of dark distance, they brought a sense of the terrible—something implacable. There was frenzy in these upward-surging waves chanting on and on to the throb of the drums. It was mysterious and terrifying.

But he got home to Cree Crossing late next afternoon without meeting more than a jack rabbit. And the place was as he had left it. It had not again been entered by any robbers.

"Three sleeps, as the Indians say," he thought, "and the police patrol will be along."

Well, he would sit tight with his loaded guns to hand, and survey any prospective customers through the window before opening the door. For it was in the very air now that something untoward was afoot in these great, rolling spaces.

The door was barred. The window he made fast. He put out his lamp and turned in. And as soon as he was in the dark he began to think of the man he had killed. Often he had seen him, crossing the ford, maybe, with a string of pack ponies, or in Medicine Meadow. And suddenly, as he thought, there came a single shrill whistle outside.

Here's where again he mused on

aural difficulties. A thump of a sound may be something dropped in the next room or a great explosion miles away. And this whistle, what of it? He had heard Big Lapointe, once, when pulling out of Medicine Meadow, turn in his cart to whistle to his dog. It was just one thin, shrill whistle. It came into Runt's head, foolish though it may seem, that the ghost of the half-breed, restless, was abroad, whistling for his dog! Crazy notion. He told himself so. Crazy notion. But again came the whistle. Yes, that's what it was: thin and shrill, betwixt and between the first single spring call of a varied thrush and that of the *siffleur* of the high Western mountains.

"See here," he told himself vigorously, "spirits don't go wandering around whistling for their dogs. It's something, else, though you don't know what it is. You're nervous. Get up, m'son, and face it."

He got up and fumbled for his clothes without lighting the lamp, then crept to the door. There was a sound there, a sound of breathing just outside, it seemed. He laid hold of the bar, swung it over, flung wide the door, and raised his gun. Nothing. Nothing, though he could almost have sworn that something that had been there went off just in the moment before he could see it.

There were no distant tom-toms that night. Only a little, steady wind sighed across the hushed Nor'west. He closed the door and went back to bed with the nervousness diminished because of action. Whatever it was, he had faced it.

Next day he had nothing to do but arrange the goods he had brought over from Medicine Meadow. The trail wound empty out of the southwest. It crested the low, gray-green banks to the north, empty. The rising river twisted along. The clouds passed over. That was all. The empty world rolled



on and night came. Just two sleeps, now, and the patrol would be here.

"To-morrow early he will be here, and I'll report those big Indians all painted up and intimidating, as well as half-breed Lapointe making a try to kill me."

Then he recalled Hash, the cook of the J. J., asking him: "Do you suppose a person can hold it down indefinitely, all alone out there?" He was lonesome. For the first time there he was oppressed by the great space of the big inverted bowl of the sky and the empty ribbon of the old trail to the ford. He wished he had a dog. Horses were not the same company. But it was a sunny, cheerful day, and that helped a bit. The shadow of the trading post, from stretching to west, stretched to east, its round accomplished. Then stretched out very long on the ground, and the dusk rolled toward him. He called to the grazing horses and put them in the corral.

And that night, almost as soon as his light went out again, came the whistle of—well, a whistle like that of the dead Lapointe for his dog. It seemed to be just outside the door, but pitched, as musicians would say, *diminuendo*.

Oh, he couldn't stand this! He couldn't stand it! He had to get up and face it. That was in his very make-up, from away back. He had not truly murdered that half-breed. It had been self-defense. He rebelled against being haunted. He slipped from his bunk, crept to his door, flung it open. He almost fired point-blank at the moment, on opening, but the frontiersman's training not to fire at a sound, not to fire till one can rightly see the target, was strong in him. So he just flung the door wide and was at the ready.

There was only the empty blue night with all its stars. He stepped out. He made the complete round of his trading post. One horse lay asleep in the

corral. Another stood asleep, its head against the bars. And then he saw a coyote, or a wolf perhaps, snoop along the crest close by, a lean figure in the starlight. It sat down on its haunches, a dark silhouette.

He thought about that beast next day. True enough it is that "it is not good for man to be alone." Fancies come into the head that may lead to derangement. Queer behavior it was, he thought, of that beast, all alone. No man is afraid of a coyote, of course. But all alone, and puzzled, and ill at ease, he saw something symbolic in its sneaking around that way. It was as if it was waiting for death! Here, he must cut out this kind of thinking! One more sleep and he would have some one to talk to.

But during that day he evolved a plan. Dusk was the time for carrying it out. He went outside after supper and crossed casually over to the little strip of trees from which he could see his home. The thought persisted that just at each of these openings of his door, to "face it," something had slithered away. Unseen it had gone. But if he lay quiet out there in the brush he might see it, should it come again that night. And the night promised to be clear, cloudless.

He was very cunning about all this. He left the lamp alight indoors, so that, should what haunted him have substance, it would be dark against that glow from the windows. He sat still, hushed, alone with the little winds that passed and stirred the grass. Then he thought that here was a foolish proceeding. He must be crazy to have given way to his fancies enough to be squatted out there. So he was just on the point of rising, casting aside this seeming lunacy, and going back to the house and indoors, when a pathetic whimper passed him.

That was all—just a pathetic whimper out of nothing went past in the in-



folding night. A little sound of trouble. A sound of grief. A sound of anxiety. It made his blood run cold. And then, suddenly, he leaned forward and stared. In the starlight he saw a form rise against his door. And then he heard the whistle, the thin echo of that one high, shrill whistle with which Big Lapointe used to call his dog.

Runt peered and peered. It seemed to him that what was up there at his door was a coyote. No, it was a dog. And it was smelling at the keyhole. As it sniffed in a certain way—a long, anxious, inquiring sniff, nose clamped to the keyhole—the drawing in of the air made that sound.

"Well, what do you know?" Runt asked of himself. "There is nothing like facing things. There is often a very simple solution for a very puzzling mystery."

Evidently, on coming out, he had not rightly closed the door. For next moment it was made indubitably clear that the creature was a dog. The door, with the thrust of the animal's forepaws against it as it stood up on hind legs, fell open. The beast cringed, made ready, apparently, to flee; but it did not, since it was confronted by no one there. Furtively, a step at a time, it went inside, its head moving left and right as it examined the interior.

Runt rose up stiffly, massaged a knotted leg muscle, and crept to the door. He stepped inside and shut it smartly behind him. And there, sitting on the silk buffalo robe, was a lean dog. He knew it, remembered it, though he had never heard its name. It was Big Lapointe's, the late Big Lapointe's. Its eyes questioned him. Its crest rose, but also its tail swayed to and fro. Like him, it seemed, that dog would face it. It was prepared for good or evil.

He settled its doubts by going to his cupboard and filling a bowl with food, which he placed before it. Ravenously the animal ate, then crouched on the

robe again. Runt sank back on a stool and spoke to it. He explained things to it, and it listened with its head going left and right, ever so puzzled, but satisfied with the main tenor of these human sounds. Not knowing its name, thus he addressed it:

"M'son," said he to that dog, "folks are not all they should be. Your master, now; he was all right with you, maybe. Or you were all right with him, for sure. But he went bad, and he *got it*. I take you over, if you care to stop, as a liability. Get that? I take you over as a liability."

It wagged its tail. It seemed to have got that.

"There ain't no sense in you going looking for him, and getting thin hunting around for him or his belongings. You can stay around with that sleeping robe till his smell goes off'n it and there's only mine to it. That all right?" he inquired.

The dog wagged its tail. But its dark eyes were troubled. It opened its long jaw and gave a low bark. Runt understood what that meant about as well as it had understood him.

"Well," he replied, "there you are. I see you're not the sort to jump at my throat when I sleep, so I'm going to bed. And you can sleep, too, on his robe."

He threw himself down, dressed as he was, on his bunk; and the dog, heaving a great sigh, crept back to the robe and camped thereon.

It was the dog's growl that awoke him. He sat up. "Hullo, Runt! You around, Runt? Waken up, Runt!"

He flung off the bunk and stepped to the door, the dog bristling at his heels. He opened the door, and there was not the lone redcoat patrol, a bit early; there were half a dozen redcoats. They looked very businesslike, very much on duty.

A sergeant in charge explained in a few sentences. The half-breeds under



Riel had broken out in rebellion. The Crees were backing them. The thing might be stamped out, or might spread. So far the Blackfeet, off to the southwest, were not joining them as a tribe, but there were parties of Blackfeet young men "honing for trouble," said the sergeant, roaming around ready to slip in and join them, even if their chiefs said no.

"I know it," murmured the listening Runt, thinking he had his dozen giants of a recent wakening on the plains explained then.

"I guess we'll have to billet a few men on you," said the sergeant. "We've got to keep this ford watched."

"Sure," said Runt. "There's the corral, or the stable if you prefer, for your horses, and here's the house."

And then he told his own story.

"That kind of thing," said the sergeant, "is going on all over the country. I guess Big Lapointe was on his way to get you. Didn't expect you to meet him."

He turned and spoke to three of his men. Dismounting, they led their horses to the stable.

"I must be getting on," the sergeant said to Runt. "If you prefer, if you'd feel safer there, you can be ready to ride back with us to Medicine Meadow. Suit yourself. You might be called on to swear in for extra police service there. But here you could help——"

Runt did not bother him to finish. The dog happened then, feeling that all went well, perhaps, to thrust its nose into his palm. He looked down at it. Little did it know that its new master had slain its former one. But this man who had the robe smelling of his lost master smelled good to him. Runt looked down at it and, in a remark to it, answer the sergeant.

"I guess you and I," said he, "will stick on here and face it together, m'son."

And as the sergeant, nodding, rode on with two of the constables, Runt, turning away to prepare accommodation for the three who were to watch the ford, had a sudden vision of that old home back East, the loft that smelled of straw and apples, and his father sitting on the cot end, a candle in hand, giving him advice for life.

*Another story by Frederick Niven will appear in an early issue.*

## THE SEARCH FOR ANCESTORS

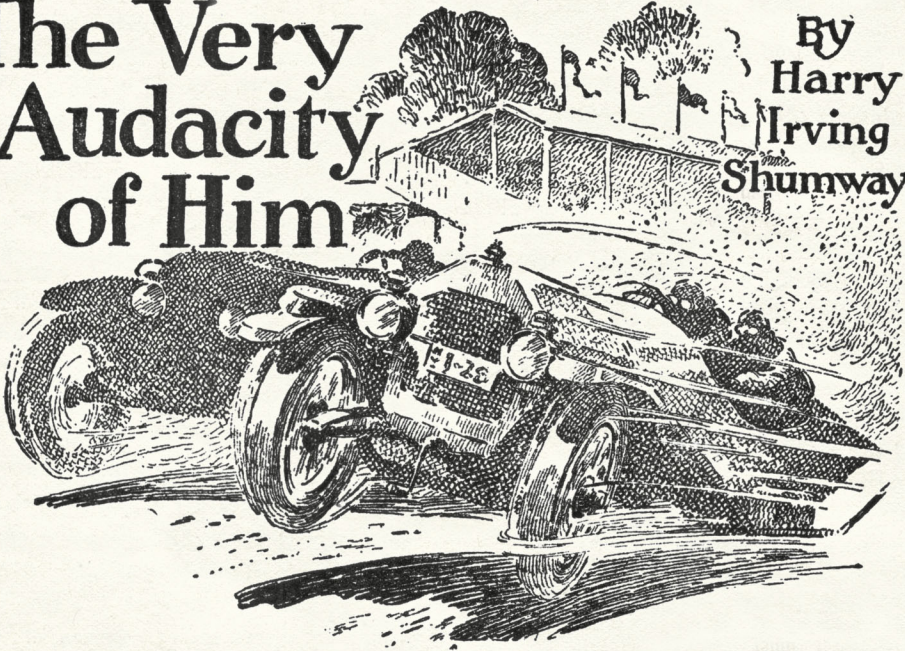
GENEALOGISTS always get what they go after. Lost documents, missing family Bibles, and messed-up historical records mean nothing to their assiduity and industry. Given the name of a living individual, they hurdle every difficulty, high-jump every obstacle and, steeplechasing through a labyrinthine maze of cousins, tombstones, stepparents, epitaphs, in-laws, birth certificates, and marriage licenses, run swiftly to their goal, which is the discovery of the specified and desired ancestor.

For instance, at the last congress of the Daughters of the American Revolution it was reported that during the previous year two thousand three hundred and fifteen "new D. A. R. lines" had been officially established. That is, two thousand three hundred and fifteen Revolutionary soldiers, whom some feminine descendant had not previously used as proof of her right to be a candidate for the D. A. R., had been shown by the genealogists to have living female offspring. And this means that in the twelvemonth at least two thousand three hundred and fifteen women had said to genealogists, professional or amateur: "I want to join the D. A. R. Kindly trace me back to a Revolutionary soldier." And the genealogists delivered the goods each and every time!



# The Very Audacity of Him

By  
Harry  
Irving  
Shumway



**A breezy promoter stirs up a modern race of ancient automobiles.**

## A COMPLETE STORY

**M**R. DUKE BRADSTREET burst upon the town of Carthia in a way which would have rivaled the entrance of any home-coming hero—and every bit of it was accidental. We afterward learned that things had a way of descending from the clouds and perching on his jaunty shoulders.

A crowd of us had gone down to the railroad station with the Carthia Concert Band, an organization of which we Carthians are immensely proud. Zenophon Bain, leader, certainly knows his treble clefs, and if his looks equaled his talent he'd be in one of the big cities. Now he was arguing with the members of his band, his Adam's apple bobbing up and down with his gestures—everything he does is always done to music time—one-two, one-two. The question was, should they or should they not accept an engagement to play in a near-by town?

"I tell you the money is good," he argued. "Didn't they pay us before?"

"Yeah," interrupted Bud Parker. "Six months after—and in installments. And looka the way we done 'Pomp and Circumstance'—the high-water mark of our career. I'm off that gang!"

"Same here," agreed the tuba player, Monson Wetherby. "If we've got to wait so long for our money, I say let them hire a hand organ."

Zenophon looked around dubiously, seeking for a friendly vote. He knew how they felt. Marching in the hot sun for five or six miles and then giving a concert—with the pay doubtful or lingering—wasn't anything to cheer about. Something had to be done. The three forty-two was due in five minutes, tickets had to be bought, if any, and the little sea of faces before him didn't seem to have an island of hope anywhere in it.



"Darn you fellers, anyway," he grumbled. "All you think of is money. You ain't artists——"

The clarinet player blew a derisive scale, up and down, and spoke with the mouthpiece resting on his under lip, like a big cigar. "Artists, your grandmother! Any art you can't collect for you better keep in your parlor under a glass case. Let's cancel it, boys. What d'you say?"

The vote was never to be taken. The three forty-two, for once in its life on time, whistled the great question out of existence. The musicians changed instantly from artists to expectant witnesses of that ever-fascinating drama, "Who's getting off the train to-day?" They hadn't had much of a notion of going, anyway.

The three forty-two shrieked, clanked and sneezed to a stop, the steps of the smoking coach coming to rest immediately in front of the band. And down them debonairly tripped the most resplendent apparition that ever descended upon Carthia's cinder-sprinkled platform.

He was dressed up, that man. A suit of beauteous, riotous plaid on his well-rounded body, spotless shining shoes, gray spatted, on his feet—a derby on his well-groomed head. And the necktie! Bright baby blue! His face was round and ruddy with health; his eyes, blue, and the most alert and living that that small band of Carthians had ever seen. That mustache, now. Nothing like that had ever been seen in those parts before. Pointed and slick. A mustache to make one consider and perhaps envy.

The apparition hesitated, smiled and then seemed to rush upon them, like an electrical something on wings.

"By George!" he snapped pleasantly, breezily. "This is splendid of you. Really splendid. Never thought you'd do it up like this. Knew I'd picked a live town when I bought in here. Who's the leader? Let me shake hands with

you. Congratulations for such a fine band. The name is——"

Zenophon blinked back into those forceful, vivid eyes of blue, and allowed his hand to be pumped up and down as a thing of no vitality, even though electric sparks prickled at it. He found his tongue.

"Zenophon Bain," he mumbled. "I am——"

"Glad to meet you, Captain Bain. Of course you know me. Duke Bradstreet. I've bought the Jupiter Tapioca Works here; suppose you know that already. Well, well. It's certainly grand of you boys to come down here to meet me. Often heard of people being met at the station with a brass hand but never thought it would happen to me. Well, well."

Zenophon gathered his wits. What price leadership?

"I—I guess there's some mistake, Mr. Bradstreet. You see—we came down here to take a train outta here—not to meet anybody, But——"

"Oh," crisply interrupted Mr. Bradstreet, with but a momentary flicker of wonder. Then he laughed jauntily. "I see. My mistake. Well, well. I thought you'd come down to meet me with horns playing and everything."

Zenophon laughed with him uneasily but added no comforting note to a possible embarrassment. He couldn't know it was not needed. Mr. Bradstreet's busy eyes were taking in everything. He nodded, as if to himself, and then buttonholed the gaunt leader of the band.

"See here," he spoke confidentially, "where are you going, anyway, with this band?"

"Well, I—I guess no place. We *were* going to Lincoln Green to play, but these fellers mutinied on me. I guess we ain't goin' any place but home. These fellers have got so they won't play without money and——"

"Don't blame 'em. Don't blame 'em



at all," exclaimed the decisive Mr. Bradstreet. "Now here's a chance to make some. How much will you take to march from here to the Jupiter Tapioca Works, music all the way? Say, wind around that Common once and then right out to the Works. It isn't far, is it?"

"Two thirds of a mile," nodded Zenophon. "Hum, hum. Just march from here, once around the Common and then down Orange Street to the Tapioca Works?"

"Playing good, snappy music all the time," added the stranger. "And loud." Zenophon thought.

"About thirty-five dollars, I guess. There's fifteen of us—and——"

"You're on," snapped Mr. Bradstreet. "We'll start right away. Form your band. I'll march right behind you."

It might be all queer and funny; things were reeling a bit in the leader's brain, but here were three authentic-looking ten-dollar bills and a five, and a gala-bedecked gentleman was inquiring about certain selections. It was funny, yes, but he gathered his wits from somewhere.

"We'll start off with 'The Stars and Stripes Forever,' then blend into 'Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here'—and then how about 'Our Director'?"

"Fine," grinned Mr. Bradstreet. "Let's go!"

Zenophon formed his band without any further deliberation. He'd march this darned gang of mercenary artists until their feet yelled for help, and pay 'em a couple of dollars and make 'em like it! With his mental equilibrium still badly aslant under the influence of this powerful personality in gay attire, he waved his piccolo aloft, a baton in such instances, and away they clumped to the *tap, tap, tap* of the snare drum. Then *thoom, thoom, thoom—boom-boom*, off to the stirring strains of the immortal "Stars and Stripes Forever."

That was the oddest parade that ever graced the main streets of Carthia, outpiquing even the Fourth of July Horribles. Citizens questioned, eyebrows lost under hat brims, mouths agape to unhinging, eyes aghast. The band they knew, but who was this varicolored gentleman, jauntily swinging behind, the sole member of the big parade?

If they expected him to advertise something or other, to pull a sudden trick and unmask the conundrum, they were quite mistaken. He did bow at times, even saluted the Memorial Tablet on the Common, but that was all. With perfect step, he followed the blaring escort, on through throbbing Carthia and away to one end. At the portals of the Jupiter Tapioca Works he left them.

"Thank you, boys," he smiled upon them. "That was great. Of course they'll ask who I am when you get back. Ah—I intended they should. Just tell 'em Mr. J. Duke Bradstreet, the new owner of the Jupiter Tapioca Works, has come to town—and who can tell what will happen after that? Good-by for the present. We'll probably have a lot of business together soon."

And that was how Carthia's great and only promoter came to town. As we learned to know him later, only one thing puzzled: why he didn't lead the band. Because it was the sole function he ever participated in as a follower.

It was on a sunny morning, two days later, that Mr. Valentine Howes looked around at a sound and perceived his clerk holding a card for his inspection. Mr. Howes, of Howes Hardware Company and president of the Carthia chamber of commerce, stared at the card, removed his feet from the small safe and nodded.

"Mr. J. Duke Bradstreet, Jupiter Tapioca Works. Hum. Show him in."

The usually steady-eyed, imperturbable Mr. Howes blinked a moment later; without a doubt he was affected in



the same way the band had been. Perfectly groomed gentlemen, wearing bright baby-blue ties and colored shirts and collars, were rare visitors in his dusty lair.

"Ah, Mr. Howes," greeted Mr. Bradstreet, holding out a hand. "Delighted to know you, delighted. As the president of the chamber of commerce I know you are glad to welcome newcomers to your business center. I'm the new owner of the Jupiter Tapioca Works—bought it sight unseen, too. And now I've got *that* straightened out, I'm anxious to know my new town."

"Sit down, Mr. Bradstreet," said the hardware man. "Glad to know you." He smiled. "I heard about your parade. Guess the folks are talkin' about it still."

Mr. Bradstreet drew up his chair.

"I believe in grabbing opportunities when they show up. That's my code. Why, if I'd have been Noah I'd have started a circus as soon as the rain quit, not dumped all the animals out. Think of it! There was a chance to make old Barnum look foolish and he let it slip right through his fingers. Not me. I'm always looking for openings—and I *never let one stay idle*. No, sir!"

Mr. Howes nodded. The gay-hued visitor drew his chair a little nearer—and bored the others with his eyes.

"Mr. Howes, I want to know my new town. As the leader of Carthia's industrial life, I've come to you first, as you know the assets and liabilities of your municipality as no one else."

Mr. Howes nodded with pleased dignity. This visitor knew values when he saw them, whether onions or stove bolts. He was about to reply with some appropriate remark when Mr. Bradstreet's chair got another hitch forward and a plump, pink hand came down on the hardware dealer's knee.

"I've been around a bit, drove all over the place—and I tell you this town *has*

possibilities. Yes, sir. I know towns. I've studied 'em. And Carthia has hidden treasures." He paused and leaned back in his chair. "It is up to somebody to promote her gifts. Somebody! And"—he smiled, showing a perfect set of dazzling teeth—"I am going to put Carthia on the map. Or better still, *you* and I."

Mr. Howes swelled up a bit. "Seen the new Memorial Tablet for our World War veterans? And the clock factory? And Riverside Park, our recreation center? And the Old Man of the Hill? Hum. Well, have you been out to Micah Budlong's Vehicle Museum? No? Well, that's *something* you haven't seen and—"

"Micah Budlong?" mused Mr. Bradstreet. "Not *the* Micah Budlong, maker of the Budlong Bullet Six?"

"The same," pridefully affirmed Mr. Howes. "He's Carthia's most famous son—although he takes no—er—immediate interest in town affairs. You see, he was born here, in a little farmhouse right near the Vehicle Museum. And when he decided to build a big repository for all kinds of cars, he came back to his birthplace and put up this great six-story building. He's got every brand of automobile ever made, in that place—all but one, anyway—and they're still coming. Mr. Budlong comes here in his private railway car every six months or so—looks over his treasures and goes away again."

"That's interesting," murmured Mr. Bradstreet. "I must go and see it."

"No time like the present. I'm not very busy. If you like, I'll drive you out now. I know the custodian and I can go in any time."

Mr. Howes acted the host with unique enthusiasm for him. There was something—um—static about this vivid newcomer that inspired or something. With one free hand, the other skillfully piloting the careening car, he pointed



out various beauties and noteworthy spots along the route.

"And here we are," he suddenly remarked as the car came around a bend. "There's Micah Budlong's Vehicle Museum. Big enough for a factory."

Mr. Bradstreet's eyes appraised its efficient-looking lines and he nodded his approval.

"Nifty-looking building all right. Can we go in?"

"Sure. Nick Gaines, the custodian, is an old friend of mine. Come on."

The interior of the museum was indeed a sight to gladden the eye of the man interested in motor cars. It seemed, perhaps, a boastful statement to say that some model of every car ever made in America was included, but as Mr. Bradstreet roamed from floor to floor, he began to think it must be true. Old Pope Waverleys, Ramblers, Stoddard-Daytons, Regals, Knoxes—cars that stirred the memories. Finally they stopped before a quaint-looking vehicle, rather stripped of body but undoubtedly a thing that even now seemed pregnant with power.

"That," observed Mr. Howes, "is the pride of Micah Budlong's heart. It is the first Budlong Bullet Six, handmade by Micah himself—and also no hand ever rested on its steering wheel but his. It broke the world's record over twenty years ago—and I guess it could make some of 'em step even now. That's the granddaddy of all the millions of Budlong Bullet Sixes."

"Hum," mused Mr. Bradstreet. "It sure is a rakish-looking thing. Looks more like a baby locomotive than a car. And it was a record breaker, eh?"

Mr. Howes nodded. "Only one car ever beat it. Only one. And Micah never has forgotten it, I guess."

Mr. Bradstreet's eyes held a sort of vacant gleam. Perhaps he had a sixth sense that enabled him to hang fire in mid-air when hidden virilities throbbed beneath the surface of things. He

blinked a little and then said: "Tell me about that—other one."

Mr. Howes was somewhat in his element; it was a happy interval when people wanted to know things and he had them to tell.

"When Micah was breaking the official world's record—he's still credited with it—there was another fellow who lived over in Hatley about ten miles from here, and he had the automobile bug, too. 'Horseless carriages,' they called 'em then. Name was Ric Buzzell. He was a tobacco grower and worth some money. When cars began to frighten horses, Ric was one of the first to transfer—and he had a couple of dandy trotters and a pacer, too. Well, he got in touch with a fellow who was starting to make a car called the Unicorn Underslung, a big brute of a four-cylinder car. As Ric never had anything but the fastest horses, nothing but the fastest car would do. So one day he came home with this big Unicorn Underslung—minus five thousand dollars.

"He began to burn up the road and pay damages for runaway horses and maimed live stock. Always a reckless hellion, I guess Ric pushed that piano pedal way down to the floorboard every time he went out.

"At that time Micah was putting the finishing touches on his first Bullet Six—the one you see here. Well, these two were acquainted anyway, but by and by they began to be a lot better acquainted. They had a few brushes on the sandy roads, and sometimes one passed the other and sometimes vice versa. Ric was a master horse racer and he knew some tricks about road driving that had Micah stopped. To make a long story short, one day they had some words about who owned the better car and the result was a challenge. A fifty-mile road race was agreed upon.

"Ric had money and he was willing to



bet a thousand dollars he'd win. But Micah had just started and cash wasn't any too handy with him. But he had faith in his new car and agreed to give the cash in case he lost or the equivalent in stock in the company which he had just formed."

Mr. Howes pushed his hat on the back of his head and smiled reminiscently at the silent old racer in front of him.

"That was *some* race. When you understand that this funny-looking trap here could do eighty-five miles an hour, you can appreciate the wonder it caused in those old days. The event was held on a Saturday afternoon—and I'll say right here it was the most thrilling thing I ever saw. Five times around a ten-mile course.

"Those cars just tore around, skidded and swayed in the sand. They missed trees and fences by inches. Both of the drivers were wild and speed crazy. It was about even—Stephen up to the last lap; not much choice. And then down they came toward the finish line, just two blurs of dust. We saw something happen about a quarter of a mile away; the big Unicorn seemed to lurch in front of the Bullet. Probably one of Ric's horse-racing tricks. Whatever he did, he won that race, but only by ten feet. Oh, he had a good car, no doubt about that.

"Poor Micah was stunned. He'd gone around telling everybody he had the fastest car in the world. But what stunned him the most was his inability to pay up. One thousand dollars—and he had about a hundred in cash, so he admitted. Everything else was tied up in his little shop.

"I owe you the thousand, Ric,' he stated, fetching up a smile from somewhere. 'But I haven't got it. I tell you what I'll——'

"Then you shouldn't have raced!" snapped Ric.

"I'll pay you in stock. It's worth

ten dollars a share. I'll make over one hundred shares to you.'

"Ric laughed in his face. 'Stock in that thing! Say, I wasn't half trying. I could beat your car any day.'

"'Maybe on this sort of course—the way you drive,' quietly answered Micah. 'But on a straightaway—and you keep off my front wheels—and my little six will stop that hack of yours as if it had hit a stone wall. People are going to *buy* this car. I'm going to make 'em cheap—about a tenth of what that Unicorn of yours cost. And that's why they're going to sell.'

"But Ric wouldn't hear of any stock proposition. He thought Micah's Bullet Six was no good, same as most of us did. It didn't look like much beside the handsome Unicorn. So the upshot of it was, poor Micah had to borrow from everybody to pay Ric his thousand. It hurt him, too. Held back his production, but Micah always paid when he owed anybody."

Mr. Bradstreet seemed impressed.

"One hundred shares of Budlong Motor Car Company stock! Boy, that would be worth a million to-day, the way it has gone up and the extra shares and everything."

"Yes, it would. I guess Ric Buzzell knows it, too, because his tobacco business got a jolt or two just after that—had come bad hail storms that ruined a couple of crops—and while he isn't poor by any means, he's certainly a long way from being rich.

"Funny thing," went on Mr. Howes. "He still has that Unicorn Underslung; pets it as he would a prize horse. Another funny thing, there were only three of them ever made—fellow went broke and Ric's is the only one in existence."

"And Micah Burlong wants it bad—for his collection!" breathed Mr. Bradstreet.

"Bad! Next to that Bullet Six here, he'd rather have the Unicorn that trimmed him in the road race. It was a



beauty and a fine car. He's reserved a place for it here somewhere—but Ric will never sell it to him. He's sore because Micah sent a representative and wouldn't come himself. Said he was sending hirelings and trying to high-hat him. And now he's mad and won't sell him at all."

Mr. Bradstreet was quiet as they left the building, but a keen observer would have deduced he was seething inside. The Bradstreet brain was never idle. He stopped suddenly as they reached Mr. Howes' car, cocked his head on one side like an alert bird and whistled.

"I've got it," he chirped. "Listen, Mr. Howes. I'm a sort of promoter, a promoter of sporting events. While I do keep engaged in business of one kind or another, sports are my main interest. Right here I scent the possibility of a grand sporting event—one that would yank Carthia into the limelight so you could see it from the north pole. What do you think of that?"

Mr. Howes looked a little blank, but nodded as if willing to listen.

"I'll go right to the point," went on Mr. Bradstreet. "I'm going to stage an auto race between Micah Budlong and Ric Buzzell! And in their old cars!"

This was beyond Mr. Howes and he looked it. But there was no stopping the sport promoter.

"Why not? Evidently there is still a spark of rivalry glowing between these two old fellows. Micah Budlong comes here; Ric Buzzell lives ten miles from here. Budlong wants Buzzell's old Unicorn. Buzzell still has it and is probably kicking himself every day that he didn't take that stock. Now, look at the possibilities. Two rivals, two old cars—and Carthia needing the publicity." Mr. Bradstreet beamed like a blazing, self-satisfied sun upon the staggered Mr. Howes. "And I am going to bring this thing off!"

Mr. Howes smiled as they left the museum, but it was a weak smile. This queer dynamo of a man stated the most amazing things in such a convincing way that they seemed plausible. In fact, hardly realizing what he was doing, the hardware man found himself heading for Ric Buzzell's tobacco farm. Also he felt himself being drawn into a pleasing and exciting whirlpool of fairyland under the magic of Mr. Bradstreet's persuasive voice. He fairly tingled with anticipation.

The pair of conspirators found old Ric Buzzell inspecting one of his red-painted tobacco barns. He was a tall, gaunt, cold-eyed Yankee farmer. But cold birds were capable of being warmed up; they were just so much meat to Mr. Bradstreet and he went to work on him.

"Me race that purse-proud high-hatter!" growled the old fellow. "Not by a jugful."

Mr. Bradstreet considered.

"There's a chance for your old car, just a chance. Of course Mr. Budlong feels pretty sure of beating you with his old Bullet Six because——"

Mr. Buzzell's cold eyes blazed.

"Say, who said that? Why, my old Unicorn Underslung is in just as good shape as the day I beat Micah Budlong over twenty years ago—and better. I can beat that old rat trap of his so bad he'll be glad to give it away. Come on out here to my garage. I'll show you a car that's a *real* piece of machinery—and a flyer!"

The two business men followed, Mr. Bradstreet playing on Mr. Buzzell's sensibilities with all the gentle tactics of a brainy hornet. He had him all but frothing at the mouth before they reached the garage. The one-time racer nearly tore the door off the hinges as he threw it back.

"By Heaven, there's a *car*!" he almost screamed. "Old Micah Budlong thinks so, too. He sent one of his



darned lick-spitters to try and buy it off me. That car ain't for sale. No, sir."

Mr. Bradstreet almost purred.

"It's pretty old but it'll probably—Do you suppose it will run?"

"Run?" roared Mr. Buzzell. "Say, I'll bet my last shirt I can give old Budlong a start of a mile in his moldy, mildewed old Bullet and trim the pants off him in a fifty-mile race—same as I did before!"

Which was just what Mr. Bradstreet was waiting for.

"Oh, you will?" he snapped. "Maybe Mr. Budlong will take you up. I'm going to see him right away. That is, if you think your—er—old gargoyle will stand up—"

"Gargoyle!" choked Mr. Buzzell. "Say—say, that's a genuine Unicorn Underslung—the only one in existence. It cost five thousand dollars—and it's the best car in the world yet. You go and see this—this bloated liar and tell him I'll race him for thousands or pitchforks. Good day!"

And Mr. Buzzell slammed the door and stalked away into his tobacco fields.

"Great!" whispered Mr. Bradstreet. "I like 'em peppery like him. They always fall in a few minutes. Now, listen, I'm going to Detroit to-night and I'm leaving you to work out a few details."

Once in the Howes car the plan unfolded.

"We won't be allowed to stage any road race these days. But I noticed an old race track out near my Tapioca Works—"

"Yeah. That's a mile trotting track. Not used much now except for the county fairs—but it has a fine surface and it's banked pretty good."

"Just the thing," beamed Mr. Bradstreet. "Now, if you'll arrange for the use of that track, say on July 4th, I'll get these old gladiators together. Watch me. And, oh, what a boom it'll be for Carthia!"

"But how you goin' to get Micah Budlong, a multimillionaire to—well, I just can't see him coming here to race an old car. I just can't."

Mr. Bradstreet patted his shoulder.

"That is the promoter's chief business. Never mind *how* I'm going to snare him, but take it from me, Mr. Micah Budlong will be here with fire in his eye on July 4th."

And somehow Mr. Howes knew it, too. There was no blue print to look at, but he never felt safer about doing anything in his career than in negotiating for the use of the Carthia Trotting Park on the coming Independence Day. There would be big doings, he smiled as he thought; and he pictured himself somehow, wearing a colored silk sash, a man in the sun. A man with both feet on the ground—but with his head in the clouds. It was a bit exhilarating.

It generally took from two days to a couple of months to see the elusive Mr. Micah Budlong. He wasn't in conference; he just wasn't to be seen until he got darned good and ready to be seen. But the breezy Mr. Bradstreet, if he knew of this reputation, didn't allow it to bother him.

As a matter of fact, it took five minutes after he reached the outer portals of the Budlong sanctum. The following words, scribbled on one of Mr. Bradstreet's cards, got immediate action:

"Representing Mr. Ric Buzzell, Hatley, Massachusetts, relative to one Unicorn Underslung, Model 1906."

"Sit down, Mr. Bradstreet," greeted Mr. Budlong, with a faint smile. He held up the card. "Does this old spitfire want to sell his car at last?"

Mr. Bradstreet somehow managed to inculcate in his warming smile that such was the case. And then he went on to state something quite different after a judicious pause.

"Mr. Buzzell is a very peculiar man."



The last time I saw him he was trying to remove the door of his garage with his bare hands—although there were tools about.”

Mr. Budlong laughed.

“The same old Ric. I can’t imagine him wanting to sell it. But I want it; offered him the original price and it isn’t worth ten dollars for junk. How come he changed his mind?”

Mr. Bradstreet cleared his throat.

“Well, the case isn’t exactly like that, Mr. Budlong. I remember very clearly what Mr. Buzzell said to me, just prior to trying to wreck the garage door, he said: ‘I’ll give that old Budlong a start of a mile in that moldy, mildewed old Bullet Six and trim the pants off him in a fifty-mile race. I’ll race him for thousands or pitchforks.’ That’s just what he said.”

It was a characteristic of Micah Budlong that in face or body he never showed his feelings. Now his keen-blue eyes, hard eyes, glanced straight at the Carthia promoter—for seconds—for a minute. Then the corners of his mouth relaxed and he exploded.

“Well, I’ll be darned!” he laughed.

“Challenging me to a race in that—in that——”

But the picture was too much for him. Mr. Bradstreet had not been quite sure that a great captain of industry was human, but now he knew. His heart jumped back into place when he saw the famous multimillionaire laughing like a boy. That man got up from his chair and went over to a picture on the wall. He motioned for Mr. Bradstreet to join the party.

“There’s the old Bullet Six,” he said.

“That was taken at the finish of a—race I once had with Ric Buzzell. And there’s another shot after I’d broken the world’s record in her. Gosh, how much I thought of that car! Still do.”

“Will it step off eighty-five to-day?” asked his visitor.

Mr. Budlong seemed colder all of a

sudden. “I built that car for all time. It will go just as fast as it ever would. Budlong Bullet Sixes will *always* go their maximum speed—providing you take care of them properly.”

“Mr. Buzzell says his Unicorn is the same old traveler, too.”

“Son, my Bullet could *always* beat any Unicorn ever made. But that race with Ric Buzzell over twenty years ago was *not* a test of cars. It was a—trick that won that race. I never squealed. I paid my bet and it cost me a lot more than the few dollars I paid. At that, it cost Buzzell more than the thousand—about a million. That’s the two things he can’t forgive me for—first, because he fouled me, and second, because if he’d taken the stock I offered him, he’d be a millionaire.”

They went back and sat down at the broad flat-top desk, so neat and clear of papers. Micah Budlong leaned back.

“Now, son, what’s really on your mind? Tell me the whole story.”

“Here it is, Mr. Budlong. I’ve located in Carthia, your old home town. It’s my keenest desire to do something for the town; put it on the map. I went out to your Museum and saw the original Bullet. Mr. Valentine Howes told me about your race with Ric Buzzell and it interested me. And I said to myself: ‘A race between these two men in their old cars would be the most unique sporting event we could have. Everybody for miles around would come to it—and Carthia would become really well known. We’ve got possibilities—and I’m crazy about the town.’”

“Hum,” replied Mr. Budlong.

Mr. Bradstreet swallowed a brief little swallow, but went on:

“Of course, now I see your position—I’ve seen your mammoth factories, and realized your great place in the business world—why, I guess I was a little too bold to suggest such a thing. Allowed my showmanship to run away with me.”



"Hum, hum," grunted the motor king, and lighted a cigar.

"I could see how many thousands would come to Carthia to see that race—flags flying—our hotel filled—and new business locating——"

For once the compression in Mr. Bradstreet died; he just wheezed into silence.

"When was this—this sporting event to take place?" he suddenly inquired.

"Fourth of July, Mr. Budlong."

The motor magnate glanced kindly at his visitor.

"I'll be there. I'll race Ric Buzzell."

Mr. Bradstreet nearly choked—and jumped up. "You—you'll really do it! Excuse me, but I'm—I'm—well, excuse me—you see——"

"Son, I knew what was on your mind right after you started. And you got a little cold in your feet when you found yourself asking this big motor magnate to race an old car in a little two-by-four town. Was that it?"

"Well——"

"The big motor magnate often feels he's living in a mess of blah; nothing very genuine in it. The happiest time of my life was when I was in Carthia, building that first Bullet Six—grabbing a dollar here and a dollar there. I've been back several times—and tried to make friends again, but somehow people I used to know were either offish or trying to sell me something. Darn it, I'm still a boy of Carthia—and I *want* to mix in. I want to be just Mike Budlong and go to the circus and church socials and get all greased up foolin' with my pet baby, the first Bullet. Will I race Ric Buzzell the Fourth of July? Son, you go back and tell that old baboon I'll trim the pants and *shirt* off him—and he can put a supercharger on his old Unicorn if he wants to!"

An observer from the air would have formed the impression that for several weeks previous to the Fourth, Carthia

was a good deal like a big steaming pot, frantically coming to a boil. The effervescent Mr. Bradstreet was here, there and everywhere. What Hoover was to Belgium, Mr. Bradstreet was to Carthia. He draped with bunting as colorful as his own attire. He saw to it that all the newspapers got started right—and once started they began using space by the foot. The great Micah Budlong, racing on a country track, was *news*!

The track itself was manicured to a beautiful finish. Of its kind it was certainly a creditable example. New wooden stands were built all around it, enough to seat one hundred and fifty thousand, and as many more could be packed into the oval. At an average of a dollar fifty per head, it looked as if all expenses would be more than paid.

Whatever pressure might have been brought to bear, in dissuading the famous Mr. Budlong from participating in such a Roman holiday, accomplished no result whatever. He was on hand a week before the event, going over his old Bullet and trying it out on the track. All this was rich, ripe fruit for the newspaper men and movie-reel makers. And it wasn't hard to see that Micah Budlong was enjoying himself quite a lot.

The participants met the day before the Fourth in the office of Mr. Howes.

"Is this race to be for dollars or doughnuts?" inquired Mr. Budlong, looking at his old rival.

Ric Buzzell studied his man.

"The stake was a bit one-sided that time twenty years ago; although I didn't know it at the time. I don't suppose money means anything to you now?"

Mr. Budlong grunted. "I'd rather have that Unicorn of yours than money. It will just round out my collection. I'll bet ten shares of Budlong Motor Company common stock, which are worth five hundred dollars apiece, against your Unicorn. That's five times the stake of our first race—and



you know how many pennies your car is worth in the market."

The fiery Mr. Buzzell considered a moment.

"I'd bet anything—because I'm going to beat you. I clocked you the other day and I know what my car will do. So you're on. My car against ten shares of the stock. That'll build me two new barns."

"Thank you. That will just round out my collection of motor cars," grinned Mr. Budlong. "And I don't mind telling you the space is all ready to receive it in the museum."

Carthia's Trotting Park was to have many thrilling sporting events, but never one that surpassed this one in color and interest. It was perhaps the most photographed event of the year in America's sport history. Two old cars almost gave it the flavor of a medieval tournament.

Micah Budlong had dug up an old suit of overalls. It was plain that he bore not the slightest relation to the great Budlong Motor Car industry—at least, no more than a member of a racing team. He looked decidedly grim and the light of battle was in his eye.

No less belligerent of face was Ric Buzzell. The two oldsters glared at each other over the bodies of their mounts. A rakish thing of rods and gadgets, was the Bullet. Ponderous, big of wheel and powerful, was the Unicorn.

After the band, in resplendent new uniforms and led by a much more important Zenophon Bain, had rendered a few snappy selections, Mr. Bradstreet came out on the track. With him was the official starter. More photographs taken. More preliminary talk. Hands shaken by the rivals. The track cleared—and the motors started. The flag dropped and a double roar of defiance warned the immense crowd a miniature classic was on!

One lap soon convinced anybody with an engineering turn of mind, that it was not to be so much an argument of speed as the ability to stay right side up on the track. The old Unicorn was high of body, in the manner of 1906. The smaller Bullet was low for its vintage; it seemed to take the turns much better than the higher car. Ric Buzzell regretted later that he hadn't put a load of pig iron on the left running board.

Lap after the lap the two veterans tore, the Bullet on the pole. Never once was the valiant little Six threatened seriously. The big bellowing four roared beside it and behind it, but just when it seemed about to creep ahead, a little more gas and the danger was over.

Ten, twenty, thirty miles! It began to be monotonous just watching two relics circle a track with no accidents or anything. Thirty-five, forty. And now for the last ten miles! They were reeling off fifty-five to sixty miles an hour on a mile dirt track—and that is a lot more thrilling than it sounds.

At the forty-seventh mile Micah Budlong and his famous Bullet began to draw away. A gap of ten yards, twenty, fifty—a hundred. The big high car couldn't make the turns and stay up. Sixty-two, sixty-three and sixty-four miles an hour. A real test for old machinery. The Bullet was a known quantity—but whoever built that old Unicorn knew his cotter pins!

The Bullet finished in a burst of dust and glory a good two hundred yards ahead. Micah Budlong and his car were vindicated. Here was a neat bundle of free advertising which had been overlooked. A Budlong Bullet Six, twenty-one years old, traveling fifty miles in less than fifty minutes! That was indeed something for rival car makers to laugh off.

There was no bitterness after it was all over, as might have been expected. Ric wasn't such a bad loser as his fiery temper had indicated. He even grinned



a little after the first keen disappointment was gone.

"I was going to give it to you, anyway," he said. "I'd made up my mind, even if I won, that I'd just as soon see it in your collection, Micah."

"Thank you, Ric," replied Micah. "She'll be right here in Carthia and you can see her any time. It's time these two old-timers should be pensioned."

"Guess you're right."

"And Ric, there's a new Bullet Six on the way to make up for your loss. You'll enjoy it."

"Thanks, Micah."

"Just a moment, gentlemen," boomed Mr. Bradstreet. "Another picture of the two cars and you two drivers. Ah, thank you. Now just one more. The boys want me to pose with you. Already. Fine!"

After the feast, there is always the disagreeable task of washing the dishes. There was a good deal of dishwater swashed about in cleaning up after Carthia's big sporting event. But while the tumult and the shouting died, Mr. Bradstreet was still in his element.

A few days later he relaxed in the office of Mr. Howes, relaxed and beamed like a true son of victory.

"I'll say we put Carthia on the map with a bang," he said. Then, consulting a paper, he went on. "There is no doubt about it, we've sold the town to Micah Budlong. Honest, he's just plain folks, after all; crazy to circulate around the town and mix with every body as if he wasn't anybody in particular. He hates pretense—and—and butlers and palaces like he has to put up with where he lives. Why, he's as happy as a boy in that museum of his. Another thing, he's going to start a big assembling plant here. How's that for a boost for business? Yes, sir, getting Micah Budlong back to his old home

town is going to be a big thing for it. Maybe he'll give us a library."

"We owe a lot to you, Mr. Bradstreet. It was you who saw the possibilities and you who went out to get Mr. Budlong."

Mr. Bradstreet nodded absently. His thirsty soul was already restless for further worlds to subdue.

"Somehow I don't care about a thing after I get it. You fellows have got to carry on after I get things to sputtering. Now, you've got the ammunition, it's up to you to do some fancy gunnery. Me? Hum. I'm thinking about that park. How about calling it the Carthia Bowl? Carthia Stadium? Hum. Of course it isn't a bowl or a stadium, but——"

His busy mind was reaching out for something, and Mr. Howes was torn between terror and admiration. What next?

"Well, what *are* you going to do next?" he asked.

"I dunno. We'll have about one hundred thousand dollars left after the sawdust has been swept away. How about this Tunney feller, now? I wonder if I could get him to box a few rounds for Carthia——"

Mr. Howes wanted to faint or wake up and find himself dreaming, but there was nothing to do but gaze with staring, incredulous eyes at the pink, glowing face above the baby-blue tie. But as ever, Mr. Bradstreet was ready with a plaster of practicality to cover a seeming hole of crazy improbability.

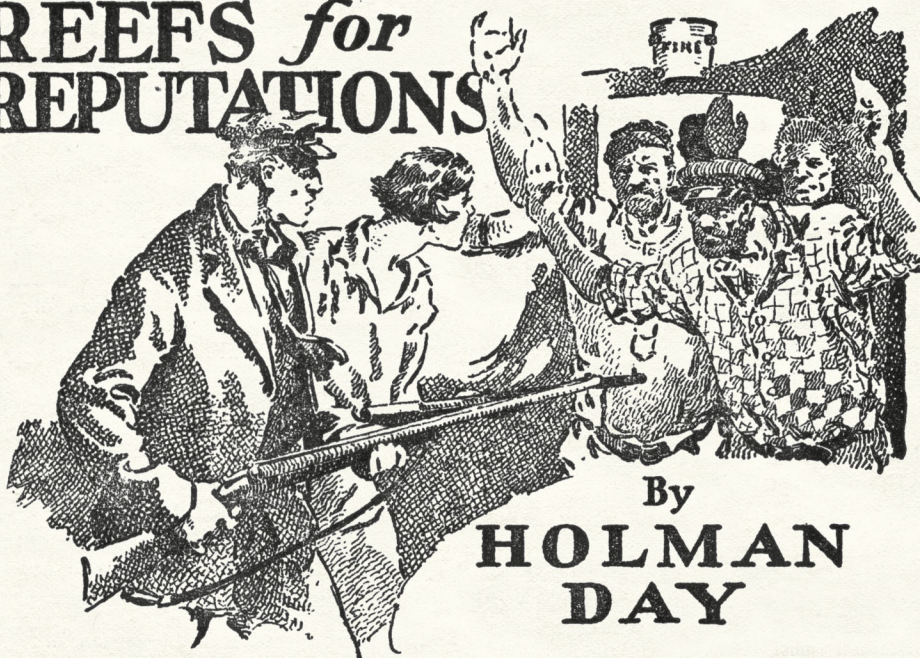
"There's one thing he might do for us. Come and read a piece from Shakespeare. And now if we could only get Jack Dempsey to sing, maybe——"

But this time Mr. Howes swallowed the main part of his cigar. There were limits; his point of saturation had been more than reached, as his coughing and choking seemed to indicate.

*More of Mr. Shumway's work will appear in the future.*



# REEFS *for* REPUTATIONS



By  
**HOLMAN  
DAY**

*Author of "After the Verdict," Etc.*

Old Walz, ship owner, didn't exactly live in a real glass house, but he threw stones nevertheless. And young Captain Bailey, discredited skipper, was the victim. But Bailey fought—and who wouldn't, with a stanch girl like Bessie?

## A COMPLETE STORY

**T**HE four-master *Gertrude Rollins*, outbound from the Penobscot, "light" without cargo, was piled up on Tinic Ledges. She was later rattled into matchwood by battering surges. Then young Jeff Bailey, her captain, went to trial in the admiralty court, charged with barratry.

According to the belief of insurance underwriters, certain traffickers in old schooners were putting over dirty deals, making money out of insurance instead of running risks of losing their money in these days when freights are down and charters few. Not all owners could buy insurance. The good characters of captains were considered, rather than values of bottoms.

Insurance was placed on the *Gertrude Rollins* because Captain Jeff had passed muster with the underwriters, as to dependable honesty.

After the wreck, though it really did look like a barratry job, that same worthy character stood the master in good stead in admiralty court. At any rate, he was given the benefit of the doubt, his past record having no flaws. He was acquitted.

Then Jeff went home to Sebasco Harbor, taking passage on the packet *Bessie and Dora*. It was a leisurely trip because the packet threaded all the guts and poked up to the head of every reach where there was a landing to serve a general store—for Ansel Walz, owner



of the packet, thriftily combed every possibility for custom.

Old Doane Twigg, who captained the packet, was just as thrifty in keeping down expenses; it was said he would stir a breeze with a palm-leaf fan to save starting the gasoline kicker in making a harbor.

As soon as the packet had crawled free of the wharfs and had cleared the anchored shipping in Portland Harbor, Cap'n Twigg tucked in a fresh chew of fine-cut and screwed up a peculiar expression, surveying Jeff Bailey who had sprawled on the lazaret hatch, smoking his pipe.

"Waal, young feller, you had a close squeak, what?"

"Only got pretty wet, swimming from the wreck into Tinic Cove."

"I don't mean gitting wet in the Atlantic Ocean. Mean gitting jugged in Atlanty prison!"

Young Bailey snapped up straight on the hatch.

"And whadda ye mean, close squeak? Blast it, I came through that trial O. K. —clean as a holystoned quarter-deck! Nobody believed what those mates and men of the *Gertrude* said against me."

"Liars?"

"Of course!"

"'Cording to the paper reports you didn't talk out in court and say so."

"The court knows liars, all right! And my reputation couldn't be lied away. 'Twasn't my fault, that pile-up. It was my watch below, after I had given course for clear sailing across the gulf o' Maine."

"Yeah! So, your understrappers had took pay for piling her up, hey?"

"I'm making no talk about the thing, not to anybody! Understand? It would be guesswork more or less. It would be going back to wade through a mud puddle after I've jumped over, with clean heels. Now shift the subject to something sensible. What's new and fresh for gossip at Sebasco?"

**POP—9A**

Cap'n Twigg had been snubbed. Like an irritated old cat he dabbed with his claws unsheathed.

"The freshest and liveliest gossip seems to be about your case with Bessie Walz."

Captain Bailey's tan was suffused with angry red.

"Lay off gossip bringing in her name."

"I'm buoying channel for ye, that's about all," Twigg declared stoutly. "Anse says he'd 'bout made up his mind, anyway, you shouldn't never have Bessie. Now he bangs down his fist on the counter where he spreads out the newspaper that printed the trial report. Says he'll be cussed if he ever lets ye have Bessie. Says your repytation has been smutched. Says nobody can make good after such has happened. Specially a sea cap'n! His own repytation has never been smutched, he says——"

"I'm telling you to lay off!" yelled Jeff.

"Waiting first, hows'ever to git the facts!" commented Twigg with acid. He persevered aggravatingly: "It's too bad, though, you've got smutched in your repytation. 'Cause Cap'n Jim Burd is doing a lot o' sly guzzling 'board the *Orion*, and some other little bird will be twittering in Anse's ear mighty soon, I'm thinking."

The reference was to the skipper of a tugboat which had been secured by Ansel Walz cheap at the auction of a craft libeled by the United States marshal of the district.

Cap'n Twigg pursued:

"Anse might never let ye have Bessie but he might think diff'runt 'bout the *Orion* if your repytation as a skipper hadn't been smutched so bad."

Jeff barked a curse.

Mollifying, Cap'n Twigg complimented:

"You're smart's a dogvanè in a smoky sou'wester, Jeff. The *Orion* would make a good lay for ye——"



Young Bailey leaped off the hatch and menacingly pointed his pipestem.

"You yip again about a smutched reputation and I'll cuff your chops!" He stumped forward.

Twigg stuffed in more fine cut and began a sullen silence which he preserved till the end of the zigzag trip to Sebasco.

Captain Bailey leaped from packet rail to wharf and marched straight into Ansel Walz's general store which flanked the dock. Mr. Walz was emerging from his box of an office. He greeted the caller with gingerly stiffness and was passing on.

"I'd like a word with you, sir," said Captain Jeff.

The trader tapped a pad of paper with pencil.

"No time to give ye, young man. Gotta check up on my packet cargo."

Bailey walked along beside Walz toward the little schooner.

"You've read the newspaper reports, I take it, of my trial?"

"I keep posted, young man, on everything."

"Then you must know how I came out clean."

"You came *out*, yes, or else you wouldn't be here in Sebasco. But your reputation as a skipper has been smutched. Careful concerns ain't giving vessels over to a captain who has lost one—whether by carelessness or what else, I ain't saying. As to the other kind of concerns who are raising the devil with insurance companies right now—well, one close squeak ought to be a good warning to you."

"By thunder, Walz, you've got no right to call it a close squeak when an innocent man goes free!" roared Jeff.

"I'll call it as it suits me," stated Walz, plainly hostile, "being a man whose reputation has never been smutched, neither afloat when I was shipmaster nor now ashore where I'm doing business."

Mentioning his business, he surveyed with prideful satisfaction the packet, his store, his fish house and then made closer inspection of a tug anchored in the harbor. He growled:

"I didn't know the *Orion* was in. Why in thunder ain't Cap'n Jim tied up at his dock?"

A salty bystander "clumped" his rubber boots two paces nearer Walz. In a wheezy whisper he said:

"Guess I can tip you off to why, Mister Walz. Jim is good and drunk, and so's the engineer, and so's the fireman, cook and the deck hand."

Cap'n Twigg was on the wharf, edging the end of the gangplank aboard the packet. He overheard and winked at Jeff. "Aha! The little bird has twittered."

The owner of the tug leaped into a dory, fastened the painter of another dory to the stern cleat and rowed off toward the *Orion*, splattering water with hasty oars.

There was quite a gathering of men on the wharf by the time Ansel Walz reached the tug. He yanked open the door of the dining saloon located on the main deck under the pilot house. After the sound of loud shouting, Walz issued, dragging Captain Burd, shaking him, slamming him about, cuffing him back into some measure of sobriety. Burd was stolidly taking punishment with the manner of one who knew he deserved it.

Finally the owner heaved the soggy form into one of the dories.

Then he dragged out the other culprits, one by one, bashed them with the flat of his hand and pushed them over the rail to join the captain.

Standing in the alley, leaning above the laden dory, Walz shook his fists and declared his principles.

"I hate rum and rummies worser'n I hate rattlesnakes and their p'ison. You know it, down there! Everybody knows it. And I know you've been offshore



mixing in with them rum hellions who are trying to smuggle their lick against the Constitution of the United States of America. Using my boat to do it! Making free with me who has never had a smutch on his reputation! One of ye down there untangle himself and row ashore. Keep off my premises and out o' my sight from now on."

The deck hand managed to pull himself onto a seat in the dory. He kept missing the Atlantic Ocean with his oar blades and fell backward several times. But he did make the dory crawl toward the wharf.

A brindle cat came from the doorway of the saloon, slipping on the brass sheathing of the coaming.

"Even the cat's drunk, hey?" clamored Walz.

He grabbed the squalling animal and heaved it in the direction of the dory. The cat fell short and began to swim.

It was a job of complete riddance.

Walz dusted his hands and made a tour of inspection. He came into sight several times and smashed a bottle over the rail, cursing rum and the doings of rum.

"Waal, Cap'n Jim," drawled Twigg when Burd came teetering up the wharf, leading his men, "as ye might say, your resernation has been assepted."

"Old Walz can go to hell and pitch redhot hoss shoes!" was the captain's irate permission granted to an ex-employer. "Me and the boys have been offered a lay where we can make real money."

"I can guess what doin, Cap'n Jim."

Burd bumped rudely into Twigg and slouched away, swearing.

A pretty girl came hurrying down the wharf, her fair curls wind ruffled.

In rapturous greeting she put out both her hands and Captain Bailey took them in cordial grasp. Their eyes swapped agreement on the best way to handle a situation which had become

the common property of the village. Jeff bent down and kissed her inviting lips.

"The old peekaboos may as well know that the war is on," he murmured, "providing your father is going to make it a war."

"That's the talk, big boy," she commented sotto voce. "I don't believe I could love a quitter."

Her manner and her physique suggested as much even if she had failed to put it in words.

She was sturdy, tanned, capable, resolute. Her bare arms revealed strength.

"Jeff, he has been awful toward you in the past—he's going to be worse now. He's bound I'm going to marry 'Porgy' Hopkins. Phew!"

Bailey made up a face, too.

Jason Hopkins had cleaned up a lot of money by rendering porgies into oil at his plant, but constant association with that plant had not made him particularly desirable as a companion when he was to windward.

"Let's elope, Bessie," the lover warmly suggested.

"No, that's only the sneak way. My father needs a proper come-uppance for the general good of his soul. He has bossed and bellowed till everybody hates him. I'm sorry to have my father stand that way in his own village. He'll have a terribly lonely old age if he's left to go on as he's going. Jeff, dear, my love for you is all mixed in with my hankering to make my father wake up and change his ways. You can be my main help. Will you be?"

"I sure will, sweetheart. What's the big plan?"

"I haven't any plan," she confessed ruefully. "Let's talk it over."

He looked across his shoulder and noted that men were shuffling slowly toward the pair, anxious to catch some words of the subdued conversation. He put his arm around her waist and escorted her up the wharf. "We may as



well advertise the new partnership," he remarked in dry tones. "It will start the thing off quicker."

"A chap after my own heart!" She blessed him with her gaze.

Dislodging his cud and heaving it far, Cap'n Twigg remarked:

"I've seen some sassy pufformances in Sebasco, but for cast-iron cheek that there knocks the head out o' the scuttle-butt."

"Considering how Anse is now wowed up over that rum business, as soon as he comes ashore and hears the latest he'll kill Jeff Bailey," was a bystander's declaration, heartily agreed to by all present.

A half hour later Jeff offered himself for the predicted slaughter.

Observed by many, he walked intrepidly into Walz's store and asked for the command of the *Orion*.

For some moments the owner worked his jaws as if they were the framework of a bellows with which he was trying to pump air into himself in order to belch speech of reply.

Bailey walked closer, his manner hinting that he was willing to allow Walz's fists to declare in lieu of a tongue that would not operate.

"If it's all that trouble to say no, Mr. Walz, you needn't overdo. Reckon I get you."

"The *Orion* be damned! You know cussed well you can't have a boat o' mine. But you've been hugging my girl in public, making a show for all the old gawpers and——"

"That's enough on that line, sir! Keep your voice down. Folks are listening. I love Bessie very much—honorably and respectfully. I'm not dodging behind any corner to make love to her."

"By the horn-gilled Nicodemus, you shan't have her—you know you can never have her! You're smutched, I tell ye! I'm giving her to Jase Hopkins. He's clean."

"He doesn't smell that way—but never mind. I was intending to pay you due respect by asking you for Bessie, man style." He put up his broad palm, remonstrating against her father's profane refusal to listen. "You and I can't come alongside very well in this gale and rough sea. So we'll wait till calmer weather, sir."

He marched out of the store, giving no heed to the crowd on the platform in front of the door.

A rising wind was whipping white-caps out in the bay. A man called Jeff's attention to the riot of waters. "Looks like a mess o' weather is blowing up, cap!"

"Sure does look like it," agreed the captain.

The man revealed plainly enough that he hankered to refer to other stormy prospects, but Jeff pulled down his cap and strode away.

The rain came that night, drenching the heels of the gale.

The clerk who helped Walz to shutter the windows of the store ventured to say:

"Too bad, Squire Walz, you had to let the tug's crew go. There's like to be good pickings offshore in the way of towage. Some of the little fellows must 'a' been caught foul, this storm coming up so unexpected."

Walz slammed and locked the store door.

"Don't you let any worry about my business keep you awake to-night, Jeth. If the tug is called on to go out to-morrow, she's a-going out, and I'll be in the pilot house, handling her."

Jeth, hunching against the driving rain, headed for the tavern, in order to smoke a pipe in the company of the loafers in the foreroom before going home and to bed.

Captain Burd and his discredited associates were at the tavern, transients after their ejection from their home on the *Orion*.



"Is your lord high gull still heading up and down?" queried the ex-master sourly.

It was a taunt, and the loyal servitor bristled. He felt a quick impulse to "cheek" this sneering traitor. Jeth was willing to go far in order to show Burd what was what. He even proceeded to pledge Ansel Walz definitely to bold action, and he boasted:

"He's going to head out to-morrow—straight out and pick up towage—not beholden to nobody."

"Izzat so!" scoffed the captain. "Look here, 'Man Friday,' old Walz has forgot all he ever knew about boat handling—and he never handled a tug, anyway."

"And how about an engineer?" derided the expert who had been deposed.

Jeth waggled a flattened hand, making light of the problem.

"Oh, there's Ben Wiggin to call on. He knows ingins." He was naming the engineer at the local granite quarry.

The ex-officer of the tugboat hooted hilarity.

"Couldn't wish northin' worse for old 'Woof' Walz! 'Stationary Ben' won't know enough to git out o' the way of the cylinder heads when they bust off. That he won't!"

"Oh, say! *He* won't go out, old Ramrod won't," declared Burd.

"I tell you he's *going*," stated Jeth decisively, vaunting the enterprise of his employer, thinking at the moment only of rubbing it in, careless of the morrow.

Burd jeered with harsh laughter. Malignity was creased in his expression.

"He can't go to any place where I'll be better suited by his going." He cocked his eyebrow, sweeping his gaze across the faces of the loafers. "There are web-footed tigers offshore these days. All is, I'm hoping and praying he'll git ahold of the tail of one of 'em and won't darst to leggo!"

Before dawn the gale ~~had~~ galloped inland off the sea. But the morning light on the surge-heaped reefs of Sebasco headland showed that a wild sea had been running.

Mr. Walz, halting on the platform in front of his store, gazed out on the watery tumult and chewed on sour oaths. He had been hearing about his clerk's boasts.

Jeth came into the doorway, sweeping out litter, smiling pleasantly when he greeted the master.

"Gam-dig, ye, I'm nigh of a mind to wipe off that grin with the flat o' my hand!" raged Walz. "Whadda yah mean, toasting your shins in the tavern last night, blabbing to Jim Burd and the rest of 'em, putting me into the hole o' going out to-day into that hell-whoopus o' sea?"

"I was putting it up to Burd and the others as how you ain't beholden," stammered the clerk. "I cheeked 'em."

"You blasted rooster, by reason of you flapping your wings and crowing, I've been stopped by a dozen men on the way from my house and banged on the back and ste'boyed into going out to show Jim Burd what's what. If I wasn't such a stand-by for Sebasco and needed so much here, I'd think they was all trying to git rid o' me."

"It ain't that—no, sir," protested the clerk. "They're all proud o' ye. They all want to see Jim's nose put out o' joint."

"If I don't go, after all their talk, I'll be hooted for a coward all the rest o' my days," Walz lamented. "I know how the old tongue wallopers perform in this town. There's Jim Burd and his gang loafing down there on the wharf right now. Now I've *got* to go!"

"Waal," comforted Jeth, "there's this much to say about the *Orion*—she's able. And you're like to come acrost some good pickings in towage. Little fellers must have lost hamper while riding it out."



Walz scrubbed upper lip with his forefinger.

"If I couldn't look at it that way, I'd take you by the heels and finish this job o' sweeping out with you. And I'm hearing you've been picking out my new crew for me, too." The rasp in the remark was like the sound of a file on rough metal.

"Waal, I had to cheek the engineer, too, and I picked on Ben because he sounded reasonable, the quarry crew being laid off just now."

"As for me, I'm a mind to tie you onto my tugboat for a front bumper. Blast it, I can't git out o' going out to-day, not if I'm going to hold my head up in this place." He tossed his arms over the aforesaid head and went into the store.

Having been partly encouraged in his towage suggestion, Jeth ventured farther. He called in at the door:

"Squire Walz, you might overlook things a little speck for the time being and git aholt o' young Cap Bailey as a helper."

Walz grabbed a bolt of cloth from the counter and heaved it with excellent aim. The missile banged Jeth across the face and knocked him flat on his back on the platform.

The episode effectually eliminated Captain Bailey from consideration in the emergency.

However, Captain Jeff was in on all the village talk about Owner Walz's projected adventure. He went to the Waltz home and called Bessie out. She came running at the call.

He reported and calmed her apprehensions as best he was able.

"There's a big sea running but it's only an old sea after the blow, and the regular afternoon sou'wester will knock it down a lot. I'd tell him to wait but I reckon he won't pay much attention to my advice, considering how matters stand."

"And he never listens to me, either.

Nothing bad can happen to him, can there, Jeff?"

"I'm pretty sure he'll be all right. Ben used to handle the marine engine of the quarry tug. He's taking his firemen from the quarry. Old Twigg is going along, too. He can spell your dad in steering besides acting as deck hand and cook. Your father sure knows how to keep down expenses," he suggested dryly.

So, in midforenoon the *Orion* set forth. She was watched by a throng until she had smashed her way through the surges, rounding the headland into the open sea.

"He'll be taking what offers," said Captain Burd to his mates, "and if he don't grab aholt of the tail of a tiger, I miss my guess."

"Some of the booze crowd will be sure you're still aboard, Cap'n Jim. P'raps Walz won't guess at cargo," was the opinion of the engineer. "It'll be funny, what, when the bump comes!"

"It'll sure be funny," agreed Burd.

However, swinging low in the canyon troughs and lifting high on the crests of giant waves, Owner Walz saw nothing funny in the spectacle of a tern schooner, lying broadside and buffeted.

Her sails were sagging in a discouraged manner, marking the fact that top hamper had given way under the strain of the gale. In fact, the main topmast had broken at the trees and was dangling, swinging helplessly as the surges rolled the hull.

Riding the wheel, using weight and muscle to keep the tug from possible broaching while she quartered to reach the schooner, Owner Walz ordered Twigg to make out the name of the craft if possible.

Through the glass, catching the stern when it lifted sluggishly, Mate Twigg made her name as the *Daniel P. Drake*, and so reported, adding:

"She's a Bluenoser, boss. Lumber,



'cording to what I see of the deck load. Reckon she'll thrash off what's left o' her gear if she don't take a tow."

Mr. Walz reckoned likewise, in full agreement, blew two long, two short on the *Orion's* whistle, and aimed determinedly at his quarry.

The schooner ran up her jack as signal for a tow.

"This ain't going to be no ball-o'-twine business, and away we go!" confided the owner to his mate. "In this sea we're apt to part hawser mighty sudden. So I'm perposing to take her line, let her run the resks of costs, saving our hawser."

"That's sense and honest saving," said the equally thrifty Twigg.

Walz gave the engineer one bell and the *Orion* circled the crippled schooner at a low speed while an understanding was swapped through megaphones.

The schooner wanted to be towed to Gloucester.

The tug doggedly refused to take the job, and made a price for a tow to Sebasco harbor where repairs could be made. In the back of his head Mr. Walz was figuring on profits to be turned by him on ship chandlery.

The schooner had never heard of Sebasco and expressed profane objection to being penned up in a coast doghole.

The tug swallowed civic pride roused by the insult to its hailing port, and agreed to tow as far as Portland.

The other accepted the compromise.

Then tug and tern wrangled about which should furnish a hawser. The tug won on that point because the Walz meanness was a stubborn thing.

It was a prolonged process, getting a heave line across the *Orion*; maneuvering in that tumultuous sea was ticklish business, and the fashion in which the cautious owner handled the tug to avoid collision damage caused the craft to take on the air of a bucking broncho, wildly skittish, exasperatingly offish.

The schooner's skipper was viciously

profane, very much up to date in cuss-words.

Mr. Walz, long ashore from the sea, had lost much of his mariner facility in swearing.

Out of his feeling of disadvantage in this respect was sprouting a thorny sense of hostility. Failing in language, he wanted to twist the nose or peel the hide off this offensive stranger, and resolved to do so before he got through with him.

"Them Bluenosers is userly mild and soople," he said. "The peppersass that's in this critter, I don't understand it."

"He couldn't talk no brasher even if he was a rum pirate, boss," replied Twigg. "But he's lumber, all right enough."

"Oh, *he's* lumber," insisted Mr. Walz, not permitting principle or misgivings to keep him from earning the liberal towage fee on which he had won his point.

Eventually a heave line was caught on board the tug. The *Orion* had been handled so as to forge a bit ahead of the schooner.

The line was overhanded as fast as possible by the tug's limited crew and the hawser crawled out through the tern's forward chocks.

To ease up on the strain, Owner Walz gave one bell and the engine stopped.

When the hawser had been made fast to the tug's bitts aft, the schooner was gathering headway too rapidly.

"Drop them sails!" roared Walz.

But upflung hands aboard the schooner signaled that the running rigging was too much tangled for sails to be handled.

During a few wild minutes the tern towed the tug. Then, having no pledge of a rebate for this job, the tern endeavored to come astern by maneuvering.

Disaster occurred during that clumsy sortie. The tautened hawser was lifted high and when the tern shifted helm to



come into the wind and halt progress if possible, the great rope swept across the upper works of the *Orion*.

First the two boats in davits went by the board, smashed beyond repair. Then the stack took punishment. The stays on one side were snapped and the big funnel flapped down and was saved from going overboard by the remaining stays.

Warned by the crashing noises aft, Walz and Twigg dove out of the pilot house, escaping before the structure was mowed flat by the hawser.

In hysteria of fright and anger Walz recovered power of speech, also memory of the proper language to use at sea in emergencies. After indulging his fury, he made declaration. "Portland tow be damned! I'm going to tow you into Sebasco where you'll settle for damage, else be libeled."

"I'm a-warning you it won't be too big an outset for me if I chop my hawser. And how the hell be you going to tow anything—mussed up like you be?"

"Don't you worry none about your being towed." Mr. Walz had noted the hailing port of *Daniel P. Drake* and addressed his client with more surety of identification. "And if you chop your hawser I'll git word to Portland to the coast guard cutter and have you yanked in there for libeling where the United States marshal is all handy."

"Guess me and you better not git into too much of a fight over this thing. I don't admit all responsibility for what happened in this seaway, but I reckon we can settle O. K. if you'll keep your yap away from the coast guarders."

"I ain't of a mind to mix this thing up too much if you'll show seamanlike sense," admitted Mr. Walz. "Now slack away on your hawser and gimme offing till I can titriate ship."

By means of block and tackle the stack was lifted back into position and restayed.

The emergency tiller was rigged on its post aft and made manageable by tackle.

The dent in a visible blue line of coast marked sufficiently well the location of Sebasco Harbor, and no guidance was required of the disabled compass.

Therefore, in the late afternoon, the *Orion* came into port with the tow, and tug dropped alongside tern in sociable fasion when the schooner's killick had been dropped.

Walz scrambled aboard the schooner, not for sociability but for settlement.

In the master's cabin, however, Captain McCue—so he introduced himself—made overtures toward sociability. He scruffed the tissue paper from a long-necked bottle.

"Nothing like a nice drink to smooth things!" he averred.

"I don't drink liquor," was the stiff statement from the guest. "And that much ain't the half of it, sir! I hate rummies and their p'ison stuff so much I'd like to stand over 'em in hell and ladle brimstone soup into their gullets."

Captain McCue surveyed the gaunt form and sour visage with disfavor, looking over his shoulder while he replaced the bottle in a locker.

"You look like that would be your notion of running a boarding house to suit you. Seeing as how you expect to be in Tophet, prob'ly the devil will give you the job you've spoke of."

Trader Walz controlled his desire to retort fittingly. He remembered that he carried ship chandlery in stock. He mentioned that fact, offering to quote prices on canvas and cordage.

"Well, I've got to refit here so as to sail, and I'll have you send the stuff on board."

Trader Walz pursed his mouth.

"You'll have to show me ship's papers, bills o' lading, clearance and consignee, prove who owners are, and so forth. And before I put any stuff aboard."



"Me and *Drake* is good for all we contrack," grunted Captain McCue. "We'll settle in cash."

"Then show me the color o' your money."

The captain scowled at Walz and made no move.

"Else northin' so much as a hunk o' marlin yarn comes aboard," insisted the trader with asperity.

Captain McCue hesitated, pondered, studied this intractable purveyor. He said at last:

"You ain't letting pleasure stand ahead of business, never, no time, no-how, so I figger in your case."

"Glad to see you've got a head for figgers." Then Walz pinched his lips.

Captain McCue gazed at him keenly.

"Jedging you by what you've said about liquor, I can also see what would be a pleasure for you. But I reckon you ain't going to let coast guardsers combobble the business betwixt us two. That's a word to the wise."

"I've said my say about liquor and we won't let the subjick come up again," retorted Mr. Walz loftily. "We'll stick right to the business betwixt us."

Captain McCue glowered at this hypocrite but did not give vent to his emotions.

He pulled a small oak box out of a locker and opened it with a key dredged from his trousers pocket. With something of a sleight-of-hand pass, he took out a packet, held it between his palms and disclosed the ends of bank notes of impressive denomination.

But when the captain replaced the packet, Mr. Walz managed to perceive that the bills were cut in halves.

It had been in his heart to demand a cash advance on supplies. In the interests of caution he changed his mind suddenly.

He had a coast dweller's full knowledge about the system followed by booze ships. Goods were delivered over the rail only to the man who brought cor-

responding halves of the paper cash matching the serial numbers of the bills.

As he had previously insisted in his agreement with Twigg, so now he insisted in communion with himself—the schooner was lumber! How could anybody, even conscience, accuse a man who performed without actual knowledge of facts?

"Cap'n McCue, sir, my reputation has never been smutched. Understand?"

"I understand, all right. From clew to earring, I git ye! You bet I understand."

"I don't relish the tone o' your voice, but no matter. You and me has got to get along together all suavable, as you might say."

The captain grunted grouchily, but he nodded his agreement.

"I'm taking it you're in a hurry. So I'll put gear aboard before night. The sea will be down by to-morrow. We'll keep getting along together. I'll help you in your hurry. That is to say, I'll tow you offshore while you're patching hamper. I reckon"—he hesitated, drawled, rolled up his eyes and gazed at the carlings above his head—"as how you've mislaid a part o' your cash. Somebody will prob'ly be showing neighborly kindness by bringing it to you offshore, knowing you're on the way."

Captain McCue, still sullen, nodded.

"Having neighborly kindness of my own, I'll tow you till he comes along," promised Walz affably.

He stamped up the companionway, leaving Captain McCue making queer sounds in his throat.

Back on the tug, the owner ordered Twigg and the others to keep the *Orion* tied up to the schooner. Then he hailed a passing Hampton boat on its way to his fish house with a fare of groundfish. Aboard this craft he was ferried to the wharf.

When he landed he loftily held his gaze away from Captain Burd and his



mates who were at the end of the wharf, surveying the schooner with absorbed interest.

A little later they turned their attention to the loading of a scow at the landing close to Walz's storehouse. The trader superintended the stowing of tackle and canvas and other articles of gear.

Burd growled: "If you try to tell *me* he ain't knowing to it as how he has towed in a booze runner and is refitting her, it'll only be hooting into the bung-hole of a empty scuttlebutt. It's settled into criminal conspiracy, if there ever was a case of it!"

"That's what it is," agreed the engineer. He laid his palm against a sore spot on his jaw. "Gor-whelting us with fists and tongue, a-preaching ag'inst booze, busting the bottles passed to us from the *Daniel P. Drake* because we give her lift in a calm, and now in he comes towing the whole cargo and nussin' a sick vessel like 'twas a baby on his knee. He's due to git *his*!"

"Don't you worry. He'll git it!" promised Captain Burd, with ferocity. "Didn't I pray and perdict he'd catch a tiger by the tail? Didn't I say he couldn't let go? Mates, you come along with me. I'm going into the telefoam booth in the pust office. You stand outside and keep listeners fended from laying 'longside."

Captain Jeff, standing on a ledgy knoll and surveying the *Orion's* protégé with more or less clarity of understanding, felt disquiet.

To be sure, he was seriously at odds with Ansel Walz. But the young man did not relish the idea of Bessie's father being entangled in a liquor conspiracy. Captain Jeff, out of his knowledge of crafts and conditions offshore, was not for a minute fooled by that deckload of lumber on the tern schooner. She must have something heavier than lumber in her hold, he decided, riding as low as she did.

Then Jeff saw Captain Burd swagger into the post office ahead of his gang; Burd was carrying the manner of one who was enjoying the first flush of a dawning triumph.

Jeff strolled down from the knoll and sauntered past the post office; the open door afforded him full view of Burd in the telephone booth, the mates posted to make sure that eavesdroppers did not hear.

Jeff guessed well enough what this attempt at secrecy meant.

He swung about and strolled on his return, halting when Captain Burd came out of the booth and hailed.

"I know how rotten you're standing with old Walz, cap," vouchsafed Burd in the young man's ear. "That's why I'm tipping *you* off—and only you special. I want you to get all the ginger out of an all-fired spicy thing. Have ye seen what kind of a mouse the old cat has brought in?"

"I sure have, Cap Burd." Jeff winked, and nudged Burd's ribs with a suggestive elbow.

"I see I don't have to say northin' much to a wise one," snickered the other. "And I don't believe for one second that old Walz is fooled, either. And that makes it all the better to have the old hypocrite get *his*. Listen! I've jest been telefoaming to the coast guarders." The boaster beamed.

Jeff did pretty well in mustering a grin of his own.

"Looks like he'll be trapped."

"Sure he'll be trapped. Everybody saw him tow in a booze boat. Guarders will ketch him refitting her, all in snucks with her pirates. He brags as how his repytation ain't never been smutched." Captain Burd shuffled his feet in a bit of a jib and cackled laughter. "Oh, well! It's a long lane that don't have no mudholes."

The young man concurred as amiably as possible and departed.

He went to the home of his widowed



mother, ate a hearty supper of cods' heads and peacefully smoked his pipe till after dark.

Then he made an errand to the Walz store. The merchant was in his box of an office, adding figures and was evidently settled for some time to this agreeable job, so Jeff decided, remembering the size of the cargo carried out to the schooner on the scow.

He hurried home and secured a couple of shotguns and plenty of shells from his duck-hunting outfit. Then he dodged over to the Walz house and called Bessie out.

Crisply he stated the situation.

"This isn't much like asking a girl to go to a social party. But thank goodness, Bessie, you've got plenty of grit. I reckon we'll make a good team for this special job and will do just as well in everything else when we're hitched together for life."

She kissed him, and that was reply and pledge sufficient.

She hurried into the house, and came forth with a cap set rakishly on her curls, buttoning her reefer.

They trotted down to the beach below the wharfs and appropriated a dory from a huddle of crafts pulled high on the sand. Jeff slid the boat into the water, they embarked and he rowed out to the tug which was still tied up to the schooner, like officer handcuffed to prisoner. Cautiously the two boarded the *Orion* and the dory dropped astern, anchored by the killick which the young man had fastened to a long scope of bow rope.

Mr. Twigg and his mates were idling in the saloon. Jeff and the girl entered and surveyed the *Orion's* crew. Each of the invaders had a gun slung from shoulder by a strap.

Jeff went about affairs briskly.

"I am taking command of this tug, men."

"Who says so besides you?" demanded Mr. Twigg impertinently.

"I say so," declared the daughter of Ansel Walz.

"It's got to be by word o' your father."

She slipped the gun strap from her shoulder and selected two shells from the stock that sagged in her reefer pocket. As she pushed them into the barrels she stated, hazarding a guess for purposes of intimidation:

"One is birdshot, the other is buck. Which kind I use on you men will depend on how you act. Captain Bailey, I tell you, is in command." She held the gun at hip, ready for use.

"And I'm ordering steam up," admonished the captain. "Also, rig more bumpers between tug and tern and get heavier warp aboard the tow—bow, stern and breastlines."

He left the girl on guard, trotted along the alley on the main deck, boarded the schooner and ran aft; in the house he came upon Captain McCue settled to an enjoyable evening with his first mate, bottle and glasses on the table between them.

With sudden perturbation Captain McCue eyed the shotgun slung on the intruder's shoulder.

"You're going to be towed to sea, sir. At once! Shorten cable and be ready to break out your anchor as soon as we have steam up."

"What kind of orders are you handing out to *me*, you damnation hijacker?"

"I'm the master of the *Orion*, sir. This is friendly service, not hijacking. The coast guard has been tipped off by an enemy of Ansel Walz."

"Huh! I'm gitting only your word for that."

Jeff unslung his gun.

"You'll be getting a legful of shot instead of a mouthful of good advice unless you send your mate forward with orders. Let me tell you something else! Ansel Walz's daughter is aboard that tug. She has authority to make settlement with you for what's owed



to her father. You can't pay us if you stay here and the coast guard gets you. It's mutual protection, as it stands, and you see it for yourself, of course."

Captain McCue narrowed his eyes and reflected. The stubbornness slowly departed from his visage and a queer smile succeeded.

"I'm taking your word," acknowledged McCue. "Go for'ards, Mister Beath, and rout all hands."

The mate obeyed.

"Have a snifter?" invited the host, pushing forward the bottle.

"Excuse me, sir. Too much ticklish work ahead. I'll be readier to touch glasses with you after the settlement."

"Oh, aye!" was the other's singsong agreement. The corners of his mouth wriggled. "After the settlement!"

Jeff ran back aboard the tug.

Bessie called down to him from the cabin deck where she was patrolling.

"I almost had to pepper that fool of a Twigg. He found a fish horn and was getting ready to squawk it. It's a good thing our whistle was mowed off. Else he'd have had scurrying out here."

From the darkness aft came Twigg's lament. "I tell ye, there's something fishy in all this!"

"But you needn't feel called on to blow a fish horn about it," snapped Jeff. "Miss Bessie has a full understanding with her father, and you lay off meddling."

He leaned over the open hatchway of the engine room and called down. "How's steam coming, chief?"

"Fine and dandy, sir. Less'n five minutes will fetch it to pressure."

The promise was a bit too enthusiastic, though Ben had started with a glowing bed of banked coal and fifty pounds of head.

However, about ten minutes later the *Orion* steamed out, fast grappled to her convoy.

Over the rail Captain McCue addressed the *Orion's* skipper:

"You're boosting me over the twelve mile limick, of course."

"That's what, sir!"

Then Jeff nimbly leaped from rail to rail. He drew the schooner's skipper away from the man at the tern's wheel.

"About that settlement, sir! How are you fixed for cash money?"

"I might as well talk turkey about what I'm carrying for hold cargo."

"You might as well. I'm a coaster skipper and know my bottled beans."

"You know the usual cash system, do you?"

"Sure thing? Paper money halves to be matched."

"Well, there ain't any of mine matched, as yet!"

"I didn't for a minute think there had been, reckoning on the scant free-board you're showing."

"So, as I look at it, you'll have to wait and ketch me laying to for you off here—say about a week from to-day. I'll be back and riding light by that time. I say, that's how I look at it."

"Then you're looking cross-eyed."

Captain McCue's wrath got away from him.

"That's putting the hornet on me, as how my word ain't good."

"I'd probably trust you in everything from stud poker to hoss swapping," returned Captain Jeff sturdily. "But in the game you're chasing, not by a damn sight, mister!"

Captain McCue assumed the mien of a surly bulldog and growled like one.

"I ain't got cash. So you'll take my word. If not, what are you going to do about it?"

The collector, remembering the suppressed grin when settlement had been mentioned, was ready for such a stand-off.

Giving his man no time to tense his muscles, he grabbed McCue, gave him the bum's rush across the deck to the companionway, kept clutch on the captive and rolled down the steps with him.



When they went through the hatchway, Jeff shouted:

"Jump aboard here, Bess! Follow me below! Shoot anybody who gets in your way!"

After the tumble down the companionway he continued to hold the upper hand and was serenely satisfied when the thrashing captive rapped his own head against a stanchion and relaxed, partly stunned.

Jeff heard Bessie's voice on the quarter-deck, saying a mouthful to the amazed helmsman. She was warning him not to give an alarm. The sleepers forward had not come tumbling out.

Bailey similarly warned McCue when the captain recovered his wits and came waveringly to his feet.

"This is merely in the way of our settlement, sir. When it's made, you can go all free with your stuff either to Tophet or Glo'ster."

Bailey had taken advantage of the moment when McCue was prostrate and the attacker had pulled a gun from the captain's hip pocket.

Jeff made no menace with his weapons. Merely and mildly he suggested:

"It'll be more sociable, sir, if you come aboard the *Orion* with us. And I'm asking you to bring along your cash, such as it is."

McCue looked up the companionway along the shaft of lamplight to where it impinged on the glinting barrels of the shotgun in Bessie's resolute hands.

"I ain't taking no chances on a gun with a fussed-up girl behind it," he muttered.

He secured from a locker the small oak box, tucked it under his arm and marched up the companionway ahead of Captain Jeff.

The first mate was now on the quarter-deck.

"Any troub', Cap'n McCue?" It was solicitous inquiry, elicited by the ominous spectacle furnished by two guards with shotguns.

"Everything is A-1 and shipshape, Mr. Beath. Have three red lanterns rigged and run up to the fore truck." He went on and the three boarded the *Orion* and took seats in the saloon.

"I take it, sir, you're setting a signal for parties who may be coming up the coast, bringing what'll make real money out of what you've got in that box," remarked Jeff.

"I'm overdue a day or so and gents may be in enough of a hurry so they'll come along farther'n usual," explained McCue grudgingly. He opened the box and began to snip narrow slips from sheets of court plaster. "There's a lady present and I ain't a-goin' to say what I think of that rough-and-tumble stuff you put over on me. I'm trying to keep all my mind on how you have pulled me free of the coast guardsers, if you're telling the truth." From under scowling brows he darted a sharp glance at the young man. "Between men o' the sea, did you pass me cable without kinks?"

"Absolutely without kinks, sir. I caught Captain Jim Burd telephoning to Portland, and he told me what he had done because he thought I was carrying a grudge against Ansel Walz."

"Are you?" queried Captain McCue hopefully.

"I really ought to be, sir. Walz has refused to let me marry this young lady, his daughter."

Captain McCue took off his cap and bowed to her.

"I can't think of a better reason why you ought to carry a grudge. I'm seeing into this thing a little mite better, young feller. You're doing a pretty good turn for him and for me and for yourself, all round, hey?"

"I'll confess I'm not specially interested in saving a booze cargo. But Mr. Walz is awfully afraid of smutched reputations. And it wouldn't be pleasant for his daughter to have him sent to Atlanta."



The two men smiled at Bessie and she answered in kind.

"I don't think you need any advice about getting your line aboard the gent mentioned," said Captain McCue. "You go ahead and anchor him where he'll stay put. And for general help and to set the killick solider, kindly tell him from me that it was my plan to take my men and tie up his crew, drop down with the help o' the tide and offshore night breeze, leaving him to go to blazes by the handiest downhill road. Begging your pardon, young lady, I didn't relish your father's general style."

But Bessie undutifully giggled.

"Most of his neighbors in Sebasco feel the same way, sir, I'm sorry to admit," she answered demurely. "But Jeff and I hope to be able to change his manners very much."

She rose and set her gun in a corner of the cabin and returned unarmed to her chair. Jeff followed suit. Captain McCue surveyed their acts with much favor.

"Now let's git down to figgers," he suggested amiably. "I'm thinking we won't be doing no great amount of wrassling from now on, about damages, prices or anything else."

So they made figures on the basis of an excellent understanding.

Later that night a long, lank but capacious speed yacht came up the sea with hissing prow, did business with Captain McCue and the lacking halves of bank bills were pasted on with strips of the court plaster.

Captain McCue, safely beyond the deadline of Yankee jurisdiction, was requested by the yacht's commander to jockey in that locality, taking time to repair rigging. The tern's commander would be relieved of that rest of his cargo the next night, it was promised.

*Holman Day is a regular contributor to this magazine. Watch for more of his stories.*

He came on board the tug while men were casting off the lines. He shook hands with the young folks. He whispered:

"Would a case of champagne be any help in making the wedding merry?"

"Guess I'd better not risk it, sir," explained Jeff. "The coast-guard cutter probably will be in harbor by the time we get back. I'll have to show a clean ship."

The cutter *was* there when the tug slowly plowed in at dawn.

But the *Orion* was again doing her stolid and honest duty; Jeff in the early light had picked up a coal-laden schooner, bringing fuel to the Sebasco granite quarry.

There was much palaver, of course, but Captain Jeff Bailey's bland innocence showed not a ripple.

The cutter commander put to sea, leaving behind him a bitter arraignment of liars who blithered over a telephone line.

Ansel Walz had his solemn session with his daughter and with Captain Bailey in the *Orion's* saloon, behind a bolted door.

When Walz went back to his store and locked a small packet in his safe, he was so utterly a different figure of a man that Jeth gaped at his employer and mumbled remarks to the store cat.

A bit later Jeff and Bessie walked up the wharf arm in arm.

Ansel Walz came to the door of his store, where all observers could see him, and flapped a cordial greeting to the young couple with his hand. For a clincher he called:

"Come over to dinner, Jeffie, and bring your mother."

And that gave Sebasco plenty to talk about until the news of the date of the wedding came out.



## A Chat With You

THE Tyrolean Alps—one of the most beautiful regions in the entire world! The immense snowy peaks rise everywhere, piling up, crag on crag, summit on summit, until you grow dizzy with the splendor of the scene. Ancient feudal castles are perched on the steep mountainsides. Just imagine one of those at dawn, or sunset. An Alpine sun reddening the silvery crests and hovering clouds so that they glow in all the vivid colors of the celestial palette. And that inspiring spectacle reflected in a lake. In the blue waters of a crystal lake! A painting—a masterpiece. How laboriously men must strive to represent even partially that which Nature creates with no effort!

\* \* \* \*

YOU gaze around in rapture. Far below you, hidden in a valley, is a tiny Old World village, its white church spire shining in the morning light like one of those glass things you put on top of a Christmas tree. Down in that hamlet are cobbled streets, winding streets, old inns that invite one to their cozy corners, quaint overhanging houses and oddly dressed people.

The Tyrol is a part of the world that has been very little affected by modern progress. That is, until lately. The war changed things. Contentment, in spite of the majestic peacefulness of the scenery, reigns there no more. The natives of the soil speak one tongue and are of one blood, while their new rulers speak another tongue and are of another blood.

ALL through history, that has been one of the most unfortunate results of war. When new territory is acquired, the losers must give up their former nationality and adjust themselves to the laws and customs, sometimes even the speech, of their conquerors. Consequently—discontent, the seed of drama. It is against such a background of sheer pictorial grandeur and modern international troubles that the story of "The Red Eagles of the Tyrol," by Edgar L. Cooper, is cast. Mr. Cooper knows his ground; he has been there and studied conditions. We will tell you more about him when his novel is published. Just now we want to talk about the story itself.

\* \* \* \*

IN that novel are two things that are the most difficult elements to combine in fiction—a rattling fine adventure, and a romance that sweeps the reader off his feet. We were swept off ours. The author has done that—perfectly.

The tale deals with the reckless adventure of a young American ex-soldier, now a soldier of fortune, who finds himself in two serious predicaments—one his love for a brave and lovely baroness, the other his entanglement in the seething intrigues of a Tyrolean uprising. But no description of the colorful and dramatic background, or of the characters, can give you a real idea of the amazing power and beauty of Mr. Cooper's novel. It will get you, grip you, hold you and thrill you, as it did us. It is too long to run in one issue, and so will appear as a two-part novel; but each part is good and long—and there are only two weeks between them.



LET us look now at the announcement that follows this Chat. You will surely like Stewart Robertson's entertaining story about a shrewd little jockey. Philip Ransom's novelette tells of an eerie adventure in the depths of enigmatic Africa. There is the second installment of B. M. Bower's "Rodeo," too, the serial about the Happy Family of the Flying U—their reunion after years of separation. George B. Walker, Frederick Niven and others help to

round out a remarkable number of THE POPULAR.

We are trying to make each copy better than the last. To do that, it is necessary to understand what you like to read. As those of you who have written in know from our replies, we welcome and consider your ideas of those qualities that help to make THE POPULAR your magazine. Write more.

And remember—week after next the September 20th POPULAR will be on the stands. Have your copy reserved!

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# THE POPULAR

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*In the Next Issue, September 20, 1928*

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The Red Eagles of the Tyrol      EDGAR L. COOPER

In Two Parts—Part I

Able Mable Breezes In

STEWART ROBERTSON

The Leopard of the Evil One

PHILIP RANSOM

A Complete Novelette

Nine and Up

GEORGE B. WALKER

Coal Oil—Beverage!

FREDERICK NIVEN

Rodeo

B. M. BOWER

In Four Parts—Part II

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THE EDITOR

And Other First-rate Stories

POP—9A





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## Ten Years Ago To-day—

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# OVER THE TOP

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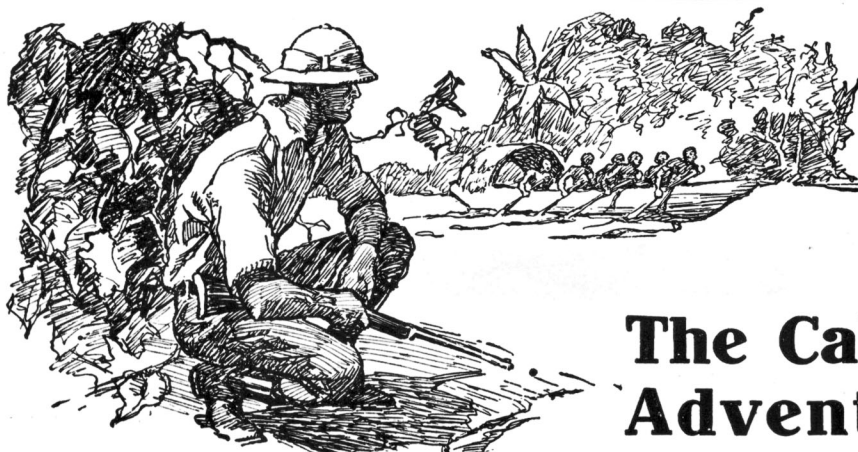
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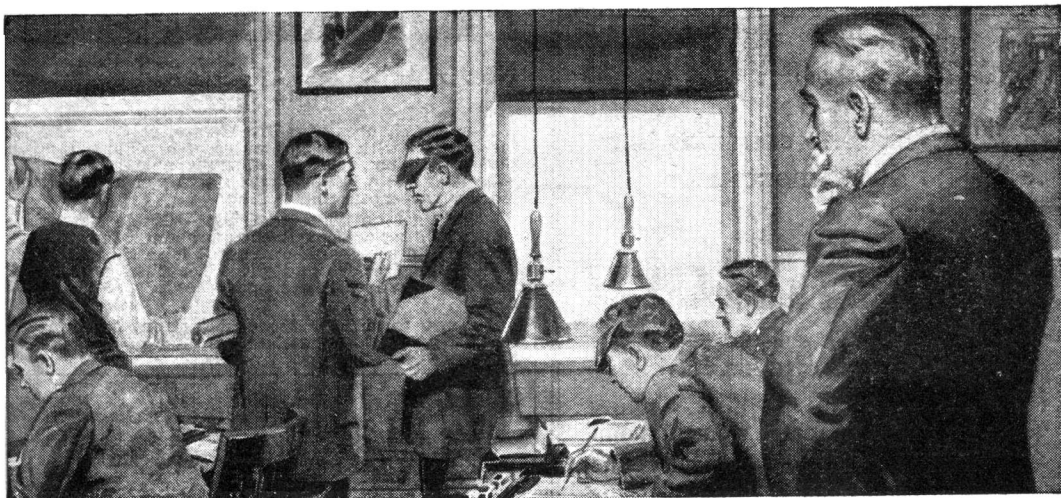
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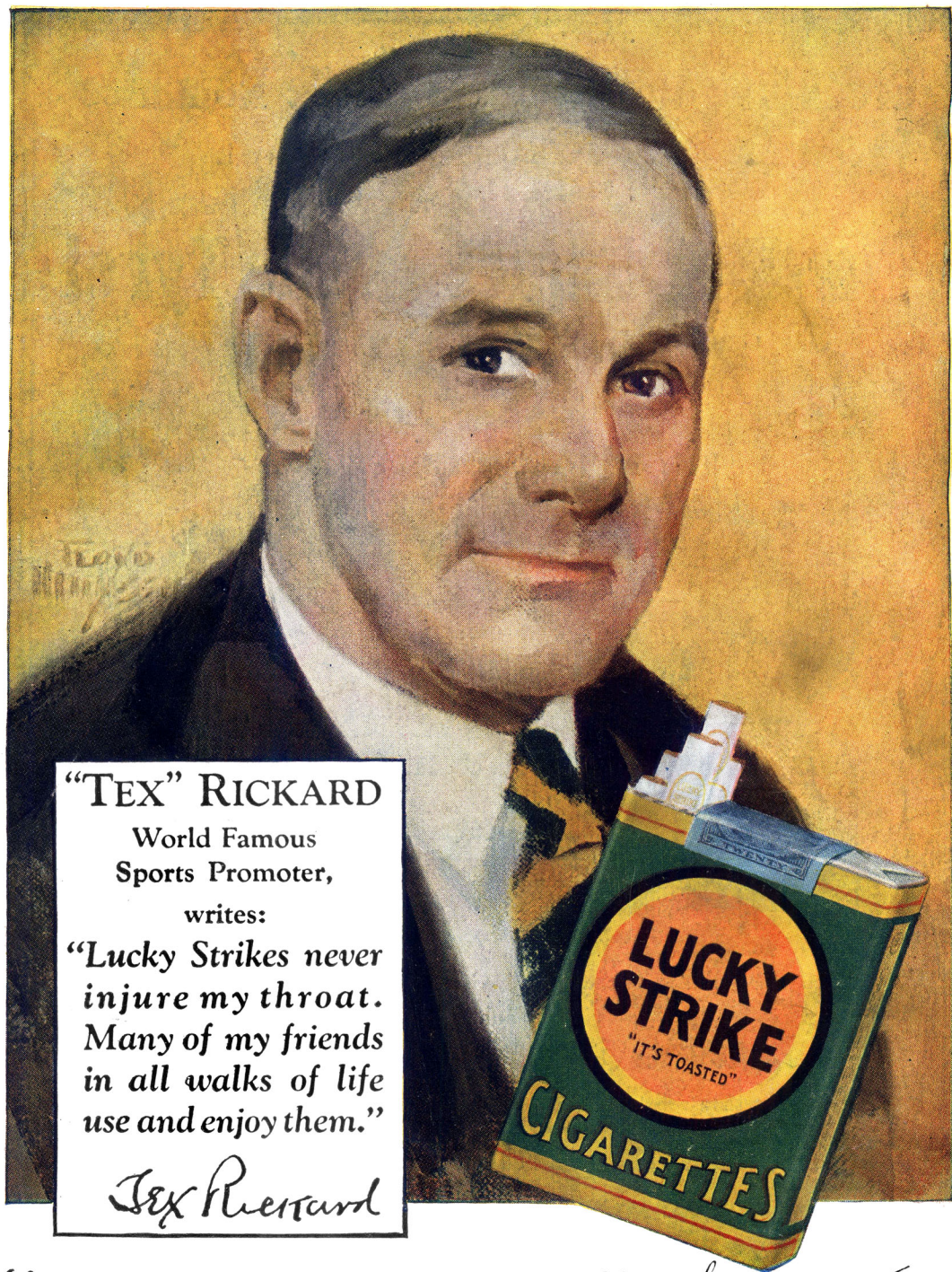
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