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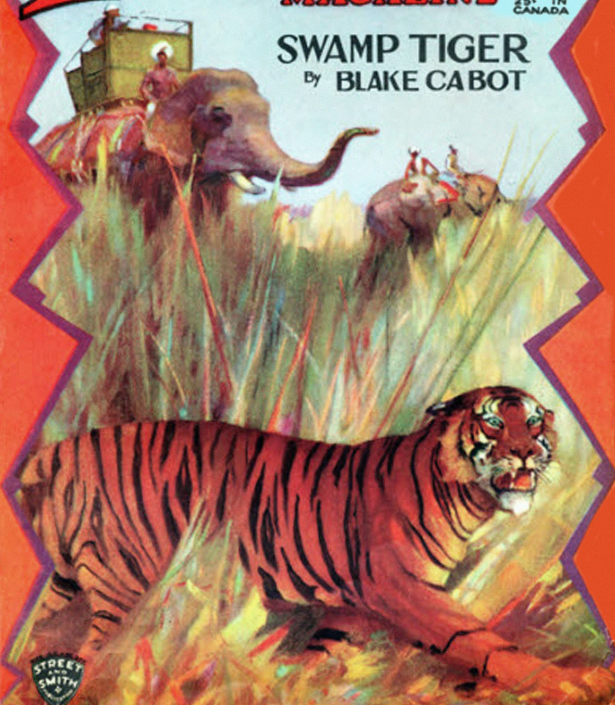
SECOND NOV. NUMBER 1930

The Popular★ MAGAZINE

20¢
25¢ IN CANADA

SWAMP TIGER

By BLAKE CABOT



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Volume CI

Number 5

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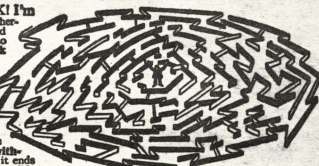
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By MARY FRANCES DONER

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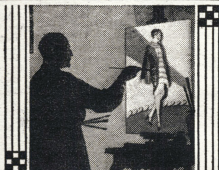
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Internal Baths End Years of Bad Health

Brooklyn man says he "Feels like a new man now"....

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Leopold Aul



By LEOPOLD AUL

IMAGINE what a thrilling thing it is when a man who has been sinking deeper and deeper into the quicksands of ill health—finds himself suddenly restored to happiness, vitality and vigor as if by an act of providence!

Imagine how a man feels when he realizes that at last he can say "goodbye" to headaches, biliousness and mental sluggishness that have been sapping his energy for years!

Even now it seems too wonderful to be true. And yet, the whole thing came about through a lucky accident—this marvelous experience that changed me from a failing, half-alive victim of self-poisoning into one of the healthiest-looking humans you ever saw!

It happened this way: One day when I was feeling especially bad—with a wretched headache and nervous as a cat—I met an old friend of mine. He noticed how fagged out I looked and how rapidly I was aging.

"Why don't you take internal baths?" he suggested. "They did wonders for me. You're probably suffering from intestinal poisoning and don't realize it."

What Is an Internal Bath?

"What is an internal bath?" I asked. "Some sort of an enema?" "Not at all," he replied. "It is entirely different from anything else."

"Your colon (large intestine) is just like any other waste pipe. While it apparently keeps functioning all



Cross section of an iron pipe almost choked with rust deposits. The human colon (large intestine) is subject to the same kind of clogging.

right, the inner walls gradually become caked with deposit, just like a rusty water pipe. Germs and slow poisons breed in this hardened waste matter and filter right into the blood stream, causing all kinds of symptoms that you might never dream of tracing to your colon.

"Even certain eye troubles and loss of hair are often aggravated this way—to say nothing of headaches, constipation, fatigue and dozens of other aches and ills."

How It Works

"Internal baths bring results so quickly that most people are astonished. By means of the J. B. L. Cascade, five quarts of pure, warm water treated with a marvelous cleansing tonic—are sent gently whirling through the entire length of the five foot colon! Poisons, headachy and nerve-upsetting waste matter are completely washed off and floated free!

"Fifteen minutes later your colon is thoroughly clean. A new feeling of vigor and well-being sweeps over you. Your head is clearer—your brain keener—your entire outlook on life is changed. . . . Try it—and see for yourself!"

Naturally I lost no time in securing my J. B. L. Cascade. It was a turning point in my life. Simple as the whole thing was, it actually made a new man out of me. At night I sleep like a child. I rise in the morning bubbling over with pep and energy. My only regret is that I did not learn of J. B. L. Internal Baths long ago!

Get This FREE Book

Find out about J. B. L. Internal Baths—the amazing natural way to health and happiness. Simply fill in and mail the attached Coupon, asking for a copy of a book entitled "Why We Should Bathe Internally." This interesting booklet is absolutely Free. It will open your eyes to many surprising truths and facts you probably never dreamed of before. You owe it to yourself to investigate this marvelous, health-restoring discovery. It may change your whole life. No obligation. Be sure to Mail Today.

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The Lonely Heart

By MARY FRANCES DONER

"Rose stood in the chill dusk with brilliant early stars rocking in the windy heavens, waiting."

In this fashion begins a story which has in it all the elements that make for the best of good reading—suspense, romance, intrigue, adventure. For Rose was waiting to see David Marsh pass by—David, whose coming to the little town had caused such a fluttering of the local doves. To Rose, it seemed as if a star had fallen down into the darkness of her lonely heart, and David were that particularly bright star.

Here is no usual story of the city man and the small-town girl, though Heaven knows that the Midwest town where Rose lived, and whither David had come from sophisticated Harvard, was small indeed. As a matter of fact, there is nothing of the usual in the entire unfolding of the tragedy of a lonely heart which the author so deftly portrays. It is a strangely moving, deeply felt, tender love story that brings quick tears to the eyes of the most hardened reader, and yet at the end there is the sort of true happiness that comes only after suffering.

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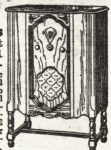
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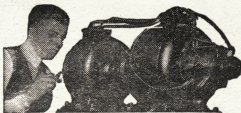
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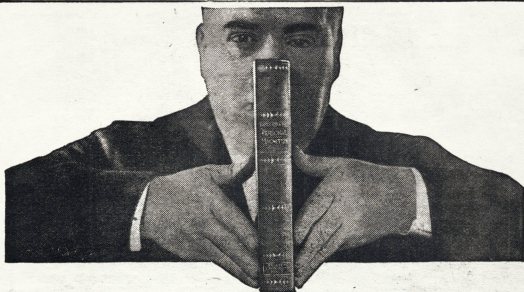
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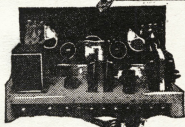
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A Chat With You

WE'VE discovered a good stunt.

Other people have discovered it, too; but that doesn't matter. Maybe you haven't. Things looked black the other day. You know—weather, bills, and so on. This problem and that problem—just like yours. Thinking about everything brought about a sort of mental confusion, and so we sat down and wore out a sort of ledger page. The problems stated on one side, and all the possible solutions on the other. You'd be surprised how it clears the air for you!

* * * *

THEN we got to thinking that there ought to be another column on a more general scale, and so we wrote down a lot of things about life of which we disapproved, and on the other side a lot of things we liked. That cleared the air, too. What is more, it cheered us up remarkably.

We found that the "like" column grew longer than its mate. Starting out with liking various people, kinds of food, sleep, different sports, certain stories, periodicals, places, seasons, animals, and so on, we began putting down other things less tangible but, you may be sure, just as valuable.

IT was peculiarly novel and pleasant to write down that we like twilight better than any other time of the day; that we like the feel of a paddle, the look of a book, the October sky, mountain cabins, fireplaces, the moon when it's large and orange colored, the smell of a country schoolroom, the tang of salt air, sand dunes, the strains of a string quartet, the sizzle of bacon, music on the water, camping alone, cheery windows lighted at night, the first puff from a pipe, railroad stations, peep frogs and crickets at nightfall, and white church spires.

* * * *

IF you get going on the things you like, you can't stop; you don't even want to stop. We like the sound of presses, the smell of printer's ink, the hum of traffic on Fifth Avenue, country brooks and pine trees, skyscrapers and ferryboats, cellos, flutes, and violins, atlases and geography books, coffee and chessboards, apple pie à la mode and the click of a typewriter.

Other people may not get any special enjoyment out of these things—may not even be able to see why we like them. It's hard to explain. That's half the fun of writing them down. Try it.



The LEGION

By LIEUT. SEYMOUR G. POND,
Air Corps, R. F. C.

CHAPTER I.

STEPSONS OF SPAIN.

THE shrill blast of a bugle resounded down the blazing Moroccan air, the regimental call of the Spanish Foreign Legion to assembly. Hundreds of *legionarios*, shuffling through the sand, hurried to quarters among the ranks of their comrades.

Though the August sun had barely nudged over the horizon, the thermometer was already above a hundred ten degrees—such was the heat of Rio de Oro. From between the tent flaps, drooping lifelessly in the silent air, hastened many Spanish officers. One and all, these men stared anxiously into the east—an endless march of dunes.

A gold-brown dust cloud was moving

along the far horizon. The trumpeter from his tower had been the first to see and report it. Slowly at first, then more rapidly, dark objects bobbed through the moving cloud. The desert hordes of Djicheur, Moor and Bedouin were coming in to Rio de Oro for summer conference. It was the fifteenth day of August, the day when all the roving bands of the great desert under the leadership of "El Corsario," the vandal, assembled with the officers of old Spain. On that day of days did they decide on the mutual ruling of those untamed Moroccan lands.

It meant peace, of a kind, or war, before the sun would set in scarlet and blood across the high Atlas Mountains. If peace, it represented a generous chantage from the rich coffers of Spain.



of MAÑANA

Guns, Burros and Stout Hearts—That Is Spain's Legion of Tomorrow!

But peace, in Morocco, my friends, is a misleading word, a misnomer. As we recognize the word there is no such condition in any part of Morocco—for long. Peace with the Djicheur means to Spain that he shall reduce his number of raids from, let us generously say, ten raids a month down to four, and, with the express promise that he shall not make war on, nor take into custody, babies, children, women, and, theoretically, civilian men.

Some of the better stamp of *kaid*s, *sheikhs*, and *cherifs* keep their promises.

It was with a wild thunder of hoof-beats and flying sand that the galloping bands of desert tribes swept into the Legion outpost of Ait Ahmed. At their head, on a coal-black stallion, rode the massive figure of El Corsario, the

vandal, as he had become known to the Legion. Without visible weapons he led his men. His flowing *djeelaba* of glistening blue silk rippled out over the steaming flanks of his beautiful mount. Immediately behind him, in scarlet robes, followed his *kaid*s, *sheikhs*, *cherifs*, and under-chieftains. Thrust high over their heads they waved their flashing scimitars, while close upon their heels the thundering hordes of desert mongrels followed, firing their muskets in savage salutation as they entered the Legion outpost.

"*Presentan las armas!*" shouted the *sargento* to his men as El Corsario and his officers passed in galloping review before them.

As one man those long rows of muskets jerked to present arms. The desert

leaders momentarily steadied their scimitars above their heads in a wild, brandishing acknowledgment.

"Heart of a scorpion!" hissed the sergeant to his *legionarios*. "He doesn't rate a salute!"

The men in silence held their jaws grimly. One didn't speak to a *sargento* in the Legion frequently, even when spoken to, such was the discipline. With savage screams and maniacal shouts the desert tribesmen clattered on into the Legion square. There, El Corsario swung from his horse. Met by a dozen Spanish officers and aid-de-camps he and his desert chiefs were ushered into a massive tent over which rippled the crimson-and-gold banner of old Spain, while the Legion band boomed out, "La Marcha Real."

Richard Kent, an American serving in the *Legión Español*, stood beside the conference table of his *comandante*. Tensely he waited with his brother officers of the Legion. This chief of the Djicheurs, was he crazy, plumb loco? "I tell you it's extortion!" blazed *Comandante* Cordoba fiercely.

The face of El Corsario was immobile, and of the tint of marble.

"And I," answered the desert chieftain resentfully, "can only repeat to you, once more and for the last time, my terms for peace with Spain in Rio de Oro. Twenty thousand duros, five hundred camels, and fifty of my young *cherifs* to be allowed to take military training in machine gunnery and small cannon for six months at your Mejjat post."

The words fell like hammer blows against steel in that strained quiet of the headquarters tent. Outside, a growing breeze was flinging the sand swishingly against the canvas and dusting it across the floor boards. For a few taut seconds the Legion commander stared analytically, incredulously, at the great Djicheur leader. There was returned no leniency, no retracting from those

beady black eyes that burned beneath that tightly wound blue turban of the Djicheur. The *comandante* was a man of few words. He recognized unfair barter from fair.

"Then, you make a treaty with Death!" he flared.

The sharp eyes of El Corsario narrowed to tiny slits of flame. Hatred radiated from his bronzed Moslem face. His hands clenched suddenly.

"And you, witty one!" he barked savagely, "have slapped Death in the mouth! My Silent Ones will answer you that insult!"

The *comandante* leaped to his feet hotly.

"*Bastante!* Out of my sight, you infection of a jackal! Your Silent Ones—your treacherous ones—will keep watch with the dead! Look to your bloody scimitars. Red steel and machine guns you understand. Very well! You shall have them!"

El Corsario hunched his spacious *djeelaba* over his right shoulder with a deliberative, angry gesture and spun on his heel toward the tent opening. At the flaps he hesitated, faced about menacingly, a bestial scowl on his face.

"Perhaps, *mi amigo*," taunted the big Djicheur sarcastically, "it will interest you to know that there are two caravans, at the moment, en route from the ruby mines at Targa el Mayat to your post. They must pass through my desert trails—if they can!" With a wide, bowing leer the desert warrior bent low to the Legion commander in mock courtesy.

The *comandante*, although his face blanched as pale as milk, and his body tensed rigid, also bent low in grand answering gesture.

"They will pass your lines, Corsario!" he boomed fiercely.

In loud shufflings the group of *kaid*s, *sheikhs*, and *cherifs* drew their long, sweeping *djeelabas* around them and pushed through the tent flaps to the

outer air. With grim silence the Djicheur leaders climbed to their waiting horses. In a moment El Corsario was leading his wild packs back toward the heat-wavering sand dunes that stretched eastward into infinity. Eight of the young *cherifs* riding behind their leader held their scimitars pointed toward the earth and his Satanic Majesty—the symbolizing signal to the tribesmen that their truce had not been accepted and that war was to follow.

Without yelling, but in foreboding thunder the hundreds of horsemen rode off into that fated August day, their hoofbeats roaring out a wild tattoo against the sultry morning air. The *legionarios* did not return their glinting blue carbines to present arms. There was a peculiar feeling of tenseness in the atmosphere as the sun blazoned along those hundreds of Legion rifle barrels.

As the great rolling sand cloud settled and melted to view across the trackless sea of desert, the sharp peal of the snare drums and the shrill chant of the fifers called the *legionarios* to quarters to prepare for the red carnage that every soldier knew would follow. Within the headquarters tent *Comandante* Cordoba stared with anxious, furrowed brow from one to the other of his Legion officers.

"Corsario!" he blazed vengefully. "Carrión! That's what he should be named. He who makes war on women and children. Two caravans, eh?" he murmured the last thoughtfully, his eyes gazing out the tent flaps and on into the heat-riven Sahara.

Had El Corsario been bluffing, or were there really two caravans putting out from Targa el Mayat? Somehow there was conviction in the demeanor of the desert vandal. Cordoba turned to Lieutenant Kent, an officer on whom he had learned he could depend, an officer with nearly five years of Legion experience, who not only understood the

Arabic language like a Djicheur, but also the mental workings of those shrewd, jackallike tribesmen.

"Listen, *mi teniente*," inquired the Legion commander, "didn't we have some sort of a communication last month from our Tombeaux base that two caravans were about to put out from Targa el Mayat?"

"Yes, sir. We did. They were to have left the twentieth of July. The operators of the American ruby mines, with their families traveling to the coast."

"*Valgame Dios!*" groaned Cordoba. "Then El Corsario is right. They've started late." Viciously he jabbed his thumbs under his Sam Browne belt. "This looks bad. Bad!" He roved his eyes over his officers analytically. "Listen, my men, the civilians of the region look to us of the Legion for protection. We must not fail them. We've got to get forces to Toum Agoug at once. The caravans will likely reach that settlement before El Corsario and his wild hyenas can intercept them."

He flung about to Kent.

"These desert voyagers are your countrymen. You know well the Toum Agoug sector. I'm going to designate your company the searching party to skirmish for them. Take radio and keep in touch with headquarters troop so we can give you protection should you need it. Your job will be to locate these two caravans—and to bring them safely in—while the Legion pummels Corsario and his bloody gypsies."

Kent's jaws snapped to with a sharp click. He drew his six feet two of Arizona fighting brawn to attention. The wild lights of battle gleamed from his steel-gray eyes.

"*Si, señor!* As you wish it!"

"Wait!" commanded Cordoba. "Better take *two* companies. Those caravans from the mines nearly always transport jewels. Corsario knows this. He will send a hundred men, at least,

to reconnoiter for them. Any preferences?"

"Yes! Give me *Teniente* Rivas and his outfit. We understand each other."

"Rivas it is. You in charge. Start at once. Circle south of Isbouia to the main caravan trails. When you intercept the civil party bring them under our protection at the old parapets in Toun Agoug because you will soon be outnumbered by Corsario. Pronto!"

The *comandante* thrust a bronzed palm toward Kent.

"Buena suerte!"

"Good luck to you, also, sir!" answered Kent earnestly.

On the barracks square Kent strode toward the khaki lines of his own company drawn up, waiting for him. A raucous series of growls and curses issued from the ranks. Fists were flailing over a huddled form on the parade ground. Kent stared angrily. Hadn't they enough trouble in the air without rioting from within the company? Hot blood leaped to his brain. A rough voice rose from the churning fisticuffs.

"A *legionario* complaining of the heat! Ho! A stormy laugh, that one!"

It was "Butchy," his Russian sergeant, a cruel, heartless soldier. He drove his toe into the sides of Anderson, a tall Englishman.

"Get up, nameless one!" he spat. "You're not sick!"

Kent, in two strides, reached the group. He had seen too much of Butchy's brutality of late. It would have to be brought to a stop. Roughly, he grabbed his noncom by the shoulder and flung him backward, though disciplining a noncommissioned officer before his men was the one thing that Kent heartily detested. Usually, it was bad for morale.

"*Basta!*" he barked in Spanish, the language of the Legion. "Strike one of my men again and I'll give you fifteen days in the prison camps."

Butchy's face turned first white,

with amazed anger, then flushed scarlet with a growing hatred for his company officer.

"The good Samaritan, eh?" he growled venomously. "The big, big, big *Yanqui*, with the big, big heart, eh? I was only disciplining this nameless dog. In the French Foreign Legion we——"

"Shut up, Butchy!" snapped Kent. "Before I lose my temper. That's where you ought to be now—back in the French Legion on a *sou* a day. You're running wild with decent treatment here!"

He pushed the sergeant to one side and bent over the prostrate form of the Englishman, his eyes bloodshot and glassy, cheeks white.

"Heat, eh? Brain fever!" A rising dislike for his sergeant boiled within Kent. "Take him——"

There came a wild scuffling behind Kent. Two figures toppled heavily across his back. He was forced to his knees with the impact. A bayonet fell with a dull thud in the soft sands beside him. Kent lunged to his feet tossing the *legionarios* from his back. Salazar, his Spanish corporal, was struggling with the sergeant. A mumble of mad voices rippled down the ranks.

"*Silencio!*" shouted Kent.

"*El sargento*—he tried to knife you, señor—I——"

"It's a lie!" snapped Butchy.

Wild growls of denial from the ranks. Kent picked up the fallen bayonet and returned it to Butchy. Then he turned to Salazar. Quietly and firmly he commanded:

"Take charge of the company, Salazar. You'll get your sergeant's stripes later.

"As for you, you yellow-bellied jackal——" he flared at Butchy. "From now on you're a private. I'll take care of your case when we get back. I've no time for the likes of you

now. We need every man behind a bayonet and—we march!”

“I’ll kill you—you——” ground Butchy under his breath.

“Not if you live to be a thousand!” laughed Kent mirthlessly. “I could shoot you, and justifiably, but forget it! Keep your bayonet for the Djicheur, you’ll need it, and put your mind toward redeeming yourself.”

Wide of eyes the *legionarios* stared. Name of a name! The sergeant had insulted an officer of the Legion before his men! He had assaulted him! Then he had threatened his life! That was a day to remember! What patience these Americanos possessed! A German, or a Frenchman would have shot the dog on the spot. Kent ordered the sick man removed to the hospital, then he turned to Salazar, his newly made sergeant.

“Equip the company for five days’ march! Full packs for every man, rations, and ammunition. Twenty machine guns, and four field pieces. Double canteens of water, and the water lorry.” He hesitated a moment. “If there’s any time left before I return, drop the men to their stomachs for five minutes’ rest. We march thirty kilometers toward Toum Agoug before the stars set to-night. The seventh company goes with us. There’s plenty trouble ahead. *Vaya!*”

“*Si, señor!*”

Teniente Richard Kent then hustled off to requisition his own personal marching equipment, his radio, desert compass, flashlight, pistol and ammunition, saber, and emergency pack.

CHAPTER II.

THE DJICHEUR.

WHEN the stars gleamed through the clear African skies that night two companies of marching feet resounded against the gaunt canyon walls of the Atlas Mountains. Thirty kilo-

meters they had marched that day, the shrill chant of the fifers, and the rumble of the snare drummers, driving them forward to those black shadows of the desolate ranges that blotted out the stars ahead.

Off beyond, and below that range, on the morrow, would stretch more blazing sun and glaring sand—sand and sun, sun and sand, that was Legion life—and somewhere across its lonely wastes lay in hiding El Corsario and his desert jackals questing the blood of innocents. The little Spanish *borricos*, or donkeys, their long, shaggy ears flopping wearily, shuffled dazedly beside the marching ranks of the soldiers, their heavy packs of canteens, rations, ammunition, and machine guns, crunching and squeaking on their leather thongs.

The fifers and drummers ceased their driving tunes. They had reached the land of the enemy. Silence was imperative. Toward the peak of a hill some six hundred feet in height the *legionarios* climbed the stony slopes.

Kent and Rivas, their sabers clanking, their .45 holsters slapping their thighs, picked the trail for their faithfuls behind them. Rivas pointed down the desolate valley. A few lights from a tiny Moorish *ksar*, or settlement, blinked sleepily starward.

“The lights of Toum Agoug!”

“Yes, *compadre*,” answered Kent. “And I wonder just how far the other side await our playmates?”

“Who can say? We’ll meet them soon enough, *por ciertamente!*”

“Sooner, if we had horses,” answered Kent as they climbed the rough slopes. “I wonder why Mother Spain does not use horses in the Legion?”

“They are a double expense. One must carry food for them; there is nothing for them in the desert. And perhaps we should be too comfortable. That would not do, you know, for a soldier.”

"*Si, compadre.* The French Legion do not have horses either. They use a few mules. And we have our own loyal little *borricos*; and what is so untiring and patient as a Spanish donkey?"

"Donkey!" mused Rivas. "I think we are all donkeys in the *Legión Extranjero, eh, amigo?*"

"Hm-m-m. *Si, compadre—*"

For a moment Kent wondered. What had brought Rivas into the Legion? With the strange tact of all *legionarios*, however, he had refrained from asking that one forbidden question, of the inner life of a *legionario*. In the *Legión Español* what was past—was past. Yesterdays did not matter—except to forget. To-morrow, *mañana*, was what counted. To live to fight. To die fighting like a man and a true *legionario*, these were the codes dear to the heart of the Legion. What mattered the past out there under Africa's silent nights where all human life was cemented together against one common enemy—the vandal Djicheur? At the peak of the hill the little band of almost two hundred soldiers circled the pinnacle. Kent surveyed the surrounding countryside. To Rivas he said:

"This is well, amigo, don't you think?"

"*Si, teniente.*"

Kent wheeled about, put up his hand in signal to his men.

"*Com-pañ-ia pa-ra!*" he shouted the hoarse command.

The men came to a weary, shuffling halt. Rivas commanded his own company in like manner.

"Unpack!" ordered Kent. "We camp here for the night. Salazar, post the sentries to all sides of the hill. We sleep in a circle around the peak. *Borricos*, and rations in the center. Machine guns set up for action. Not a stitch of clothing off. Rifles in your hands while you sleep. Ammunition belts around you. Cold soup for sup-

per. We want no telltale fires lighted. Break off!"

In a few moments the *borricos* had been unpacked and were nibbling at the few stray stubs of *drinn* grass that jutted from between the rocks. Sentries took their posts. Tin pans rattled indistinctly here and there as the thick soup and hard bread was passed among them. Voices mumbled into the clear, crisp air. From little knots here and there the tiny red glows of cigarette ends glimmered through the groups while the sharp odor of crude tobacco smoke drifted down the wind.

As night settled down in stark silence, the cold, penetrating and bitter, encompassed the men. Not a more piercing chill in the world attacks human life than that of the desert cold over the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. The men shifted uneasily, uncomfortably in their troubled sleep and huddled closer together for the warmth of their tired bodies.

For a long time Kent sat in quiet reflection, his poncho drawn tightly around his shoulders, puffing at his battered old brier pipe. He clutched its hot bowl almost desperately in his fist a moment. If one could only forget—if one could only escape one's thoughts—escape oneself! Suddenly the stubbled plains of his old American Southwest drifted dreamily before his eyes. He saw the home hacienda of his father's down on the Mexican border.

There had been a girl, a romance. Soft border night with the stars all aglow—different than these lonely African ones, where nightly one cried out to shut off those piercing stars that glared unceasingly, metallically down with never a cloud to break the awful monotony.

The girl had given him that fine brier pipe. He had had a rival. Sharp words started over personal rights and infringements of those rights. There

followed a ribald fight in the house of the young woman. It all happened during a garden party.

Kent had been obstreperous. One thing led to another until he had found disfavor from the one person in the world whom he loved but who did not love him in return. His father was a stern taskmaster. Anita had censured him as a boor and a rowdy. Later she scorned him. It was too much for him to bear.

In the fire of the moment, the impulsiveness of youth—for Kent had yet to see his twenty-seventh birthday—he had put them all behind him and taken a working passage on a small Spanish freighter out of Corpus Christi. He had not asked where she was bound. It did not matter. He liked the Latin races, he had picked up Spanish on the border, and with a resourceful disposition awaited the decree of Fate.

This decree he accepted three weeks later on the ancient quay in Cadiz, Spain. At that moment he was broke. While at his wit's ends he found himself staring at a poster of the Spanish Foreign Legion. Acting, as always, on impulse, he signed—for five years. Before the end of his first, however, he had risen from a private to a sergeant, and, during the siege of Abdel Krim in 1925 he had rescued his wounded *Comandante* Cordoba, then a captain, under fire. For this consideration he had been made a lieutenant.

Kent laughed grimly. Back home in Tucson he had been ostracized because of a fist fight! Here, day by day, he stared Dame Death between the eyes, and a fist fight was something that scarcely commanded passing notice. Life was strange, he thought, when relatively compared. Rivas stirred uneasily beside him. Kent drew his comrade's poncho over his shoulders, covering his brother officer better.

Before him, on the crest of the hill, he saw the huge form of Butchy star-

ing moodily across the camp, his heavy back cutting off the stars. He, too, was still awake, thinking. Brooding, was the better word for it, Kent figured.

Kent did not know when he had fallen asleep, nor how long he had slept when he was roughly awakened by a sudden tugging at his shoulder.

"*Teniente! Ten-ien-te!*" an excited anxious voice was calling in his ear.

"*Si, si!*" answered Kent, staggering to his knees. "What is it?" He faced a lone sentry bending over him, his rifle shadowing through the gloom.

"There are flames beyond Tourn Agoug, sir!"

"Flames? Tourn Agoug? *Que hora es?* What is the hour?"

"A little after two, sir."

Leaping to his feet Kent grabbed his binoculars from his chin straps and stared into the east. Yes! One didn't need binoculars to see those lurid white-and-scarlet tongues licking toward the stars off there in the desert. A chill raced down his spine.

For a breathless second he pondered, running his right hand over his chin. Then he bent low over Rivas and shook him gently, quickly.

"*Compadre!* Up! There's trouble on the trail!"

Rivas raised to elbow posture.

Kent lifted Rivas's binoculars to his companion's eyes and pointed beyond the blinking lights of Tourn Agoug.

"See for yourself!"

Kent then flung about to his sentry.

"How long has this been going on?"

"Just broke out, sir—this moment."

Rivas jumped to his feet, now, fully awake, excited. His binoculars still pressed to his eyes he clutched Kent sharply by the arm.

"Ricardo! It's beyond the *ksar*. On the caravan trails!"

"Yes, that's the trouble. It looks black for the caravans. Black!"

"*Si, amigo, si!*"

The many *legionarios* hearing the

sharp voices of their officers were shaking themselves from their slumber.

"How far do you figure it, Ricardo?"

"About five kilometers." He hesitated thoughtfully. "An hour's march. The men have had six hours' sleep."

"Si," answered Rivas. "Not enough after thirty kilometers of heavy marching."

"It will have to be enough," stated Kent doggedly. "We must hit the trail." To his *legionarios* Kent shouted: "*Despierto! Awake! A las armas! To arms! We march!*"

In wild scrambling the weary *legionarios* tumbled from their blankets and staggered to their feet, wiping the stubborn slumber from their red-rimmed eyes.

"Fix bayonets!" commanded Kent. "Ready for quick march! A flagon of rum apiece."

Tin cups rattled. The rum was poured out and gulped down to revive the men and put fire into their blood. Lips smacked. Suddenly, from the northern end of the camp came wild howls of dismay. Kent leaped hotly to his feet. What was wrong now?

"*Las ametralladoras!* The machine guns!"

Kent stamped vigorously among the shadows of his men.

"*Silencio!*" he growled. "What's the trouble?"

"Our machine guns!" gasped the breathless one, a sentry. "Six of them, señor, are missing—have been pillaged while we slept!"

"*De veras!*" spat Kent vitreously. "And where were my sentries, asleep, too?"

One and all the sentries crowded about Kent.

"I saw nothing, señor, but darkness makes——"

"All was silent, *teniente,*" from another. "I watched——"

"Blood of my life!" groaned Kent helplessly. "Have I soldiers here—or

children!" He glared at his nonplused men. "Don't stand there like sun-dazed lizards. To the trail! Perhaps a court-martial would help you to keep a better watch! Pack up!"

For a moment Kent studied anxiously. It was not the first time in his desert experiences that those "Silent Ones" had slipped into his circles with the quietness of death itself and removed things, including life, from their very midsts.

It was usually rifles and ammunition, but machine guns! Evidently they were closer to El Corsario's Silent Ones than they had realized. For a grim second Kent's eyes rested on the sullen back of Butchy. That ne'er-do-well shifted away uneasily as though Kent's vision had penetrated his comforts.

"Come here, rat!" blazed Kent with an almost madman's growl. The *legionarios* around him started. The Americano was hot. It was time to keep moving. Slowly the ex-sergeant drew up toward Kent. Even in that starry gloom Kent recognized Butchy's face was pale. The Russian's face was not one to pale easily.

"*Oiga!* You yellow vermin!" blazed Kent threateningly. "If I ever find out that you've had anything to do with these missing guns, words of a *Yanqui*, I'll see you hanged in the barracks square!"

"I know nothing about——" snarled Butchy in a low growl.

"Shut up!" rasped Kent. "And watch yourself! Just one false move out of you and I'll have you where even the Djicheur won't recognize you."

CHAPTER III.

BAYONET AND SCIMITAR.

THE remaining machine guns were knocked down and lashed onto the patient backs of the little *borricos*. Marching packs were reshifted on the backs of the men.

"*Adelante!*" commanded Kent. "Forward! Quick step!"

Scrambling over boulders, slipping, sliding down the shadowy hill, the *legionarios*, with their *borricos*, hurriedly felt their way through the darkness to the *drinn*-spotted plains below them. For the first time in many months the men were glad to be cold. Burdened with their numerous *bandoleras* of cartridges, and heavy packs, they puffed and perspired on the fast rout march. The *borricos*, overladen, picked their way as best as their instincts could tell them, yet they brought down constant showers of rock and pebbles after the men. As the leaping fires of Toun Agoug rose closer before them Kent roused his men to fighting pitch.

"We'll be going into action in a few minutes, men!" he yelled hoarsely over his shoulder as he ran. "I want you all to stick together. We'll be among the dunes beyond Toun Agoug. You know how easy it is to get lost in the dark. That means capture by the Djicheur—torture! Keep your eyes on your officers and your noncoms and give these bloody desert rats everything you've got!"

A lusty murmur of assent went up in throaty yells from the men. Action! They caught the word to their fighting hearts. It was meat and drink to the *legionarios* by night or by day to fight their common foe, the Djicheur of old Morocco. Too, they had seen their Americano leader rush over the crimson Saharan dunes before. They knew Kent was able to carry them to victory if any living soldier could.

Their *teniente* flared up now and then, lost his temper, but the causes were many, and they had come to know that Kent had a heart and looked after their comforts. Gladly would they follow him into the very jaws of hell, if circumstance demanded. His reckless daring brought admiration to their souls.

Putting the rocky plains behind them the men entered a narrow gorge. The tramp of their hurrying feet and the rapid clatter of the donkeys resounded in warning challenge against the stony walls of the ravine. Panting lungs breathed deep on the moist night air with its sharp, sagelike pungence of the *drinn* grass, while the odors of the frothing donkeys stiffened the nostrils.

As suddenly as if a curtain had been drawn, then, the gorge fell away to their rear and the great, starry bowl of the heavens spread before them. A rolling wave of warmer air off the desert met them. Sand dunes, like an endless, heaving sea, yet silent, spread before them—the Sahara, endless and soulless—the home of the *legionario*.

A few hundred yards beyond them leaped and crackled those livid flames of disaster. Rising, falling, and rising again to the stars they danced and flared into the lonely night. Kent halted his men breathlessly. In husky voice he commanded:

"To your stomachs! Down!"

As one, the men fell exhaustedly to their faces on the sand.

"Get your breath for a minute." To his sergeant he called: "Salazar!"

Softly, then, the two men climbed to the peak of a near-by dune. As they reached its summit, their feet sinking knee-deep through the soft sands, they simultaneously gasped. The dark, lumbering shadow of a camel swept down the opposite slope of the dune and away for the scene of the fire.

"A Djicheur scout!" spat Kent. "We're discovered!"

"*Si, mi teniente.*"

Salazar jerked his rifle to his shoulder to fire. Kent pushed it down quickly.

"No! A shot will bring them on our heels before the scout can notify them. We've little enough time to get into action as it is." Viciously he jabbed his binoculars to his eyes again and studied the scene.

Hundreds of horsemen riding at top speed were circling the crackling flames. While they rode, some fired their long muskets. Kent shuddered. Perhaps it was torture. They of the *Legión Español* understood Djicheur torture. Many a *legionario*, escaped from those wild tribal scenes of ghastliness, had brought back terrible truths. Beyond the fires Kent saw shadowy groups—the Djicheur women that always followed their men into battle to pass along the ammunition. For a grim second he studied the fires. Then he distinguished the wheels and seats of burning motor cars.

"The caravans! They've captured them, all right. We're late, comrade! Quick!"

Bending low, staggering through the soft sands, the two *legionarios* sped back to their company.

Kent shouted to his men. "Up! Load rifles! Fix bayonets, and secure them well!" He crowded close to his faithfuls, grabbed Rivas by the arm. "Listen, brave ones!" he counseled hoarsely. "El Corsario has already intercepted the caravans. We attack now! But take care you do not shoot the civilian travelers. Rivas, you take the north flank, I'll take the south. We'll try to surround them, and get on the other side of their camp. Get your machine guns into action at once. *Bien! We go! Adelante!*"

With wild screams of battle the dark shadows of the *legionarios* swept off into the night. Here and there the men jerked their stoical little *borricos* around and feverishly unlashed their packs of machine guns and ammunition. Within a few moments those ominous, three-cornered machine-gun tripods were jutting from the high peaks of those shadowy sand dunes. Then, down one slope and up the other, still nearer the flaming holocaust, the machine guns pressed toward El Corsario's bloody night marauders. Rallying his men, his Legion

saber flashing against the dancing lights of the fires, Kent circled the very fringes of the churning Djicheurs.

Confusion suddenly gripped the riding horsemen as a lone white figure on a camel rushed swayingly among them. The Legion! They were coming! Quickly the riders spread out and off into the dark shadows of the dunes. The desert women pulled their black robes around them and scrambled to their feet. From Rivas's dunes to the northward there crackled the sharp *rata-tac-tac-tac* of a machine gun going into action. A white wave of Djicheur robes suddenly rose seemingly from nowhere, and yet from everywhere, over those sand hills not fifty feet from Kent and his plunging, fighting men.

"Charge!" he shrieked, his saber high over his head, his pistol in his left hand held straight before him.

Machine guns jibbered out their deathly chant from the sand hills behind them.

"*Viva España! Viva! Viva! Viva!*" the battle cries of spirit swelled the air.

"*Ul-ul Ul-Allah il-Allah! Allah ak-bar! Il-il-Allah!*" the scream of kill howled from the dry throats of the Djicheurs.

Legionarios threw Coston flares. Hissingly the arc-white lights spluttered black night into flaring day. This the Djicheur hated. He worked better like the wolf, by the dark of night. In metallic clash Djicheur scimitar and Legion bayonet rattled into one another. Kent saw Berecci, their little Italian corporal, fairly jerked off his feet on the long point of a scarlet scimitar, thrust by a great Moor towering twice his size. Immediately behind him, however, Oscar, a big Dane, ripped the Moor wide open with his bayonet. Kent's blood curdled. With his .45 he fired time and time again into those white *djeelaba'd* robes that rose like a flood before him.

The enemies closed. It was body to

body now, *cuerpo á cuerpo*. A lumbering Djicheur, his face lighted in a bestial, jackalllike grimace from the flares of the fire, rushed over Kent. He jerked up his saber, plunged. In the eerie light of a dying Coston flare he caught the glint of a curved-steel scimitar sweeping over his head, heard its deathly swish in the dark. He dodged, plunged with his saber again. Forms were closing around him. A scream of terror. Throaty gurgles. A weighty Arab, his camel's-hair robe wet with sweat, sank heavily over Kent, who staggered to his knees with the weight.

Rifle bullets shrieked past Kent's ears and whined into the sands around him. Wrenching his saber clear he wiped the scarlet blade on the robe of his attacker and once more leaped to his feet just in time to parry a blow from a Legion bayonet held in the hands of a short, thickset Bedouin. White teeth curled back against a shadowy, bronzed face, and with a curse from Allah, the Bedouin toppled backward.

Behind him Kent heard their Legion machine guns clattering away. To his left he saw whole lines of Djicheurs double in their tracks as the streams of machine-gun lead shrieked into their midsts. Some clutched their stomachs and shot headlong, others silently flung their scimitars or muskets over their heads and toppled in jerking heaps to relinquish their lifeless forms to Mommnet.

"*A mi la Legión!*" the scream of terror, the last desperate distress call of the Legion, pierced the night behind Kent. Like an icy chill it ran down his spine.

He flung about. Holmes, a brave little Englishman, and Salazar doubled over their machine-gun tripod while a lumbering Djicheur violently plunged his scimitar again and again through the quivering body of Holmes. Red lights dancing before his eyes, Kent yanked up his .45, steadied himself, and then

fired again and again. The ghostly robed Djicheur lurched heavily forward and curled atop the silent form he had just been torturing. A bullet whistled searingly through Kent's right ear lobe and whined off into the east—the east! Like a surge of fire through his realization that lone shot was telegraphed to Kent's mind. His body went stiff. Warm, wet blood trickled down his cheek and off his chin. That shot had come from behind his back!

Treachery!

Kent whirled around, stared into that dense darkness behind. Numerous figures darted through the gloom. No time! Clutching the sweat-slippery handle of his saber once more he forced his weary body over the next row of soft dunes. Here and there among the hills, he noted shadowy lumps of human bodies resting silently. The screams of the wounded and the dying sounded on all sides.

"*Ul-ul Allah-Akbar! Ul Ul-ul—*"

"*Viva España! Viva! Viva—*"

On and on through that scarlet night the crash of machine guns and desultory fire of musket hammered out the death knell. Shoving fresh clips into his .45, swinging his saber over his head in rally to his men, Kent slithered down dune after dune and up new slopes into the very heart of the Djicheur camp. Enemark, the Swede, and Ligné, the Frenchman, drew up behind him with a machine gun.

"*Para! Halt!*" shouted Kent. "Hold it where you are! Open fire there!"

Rata-tac-taca-tac-taca-tac. The last onslaught of Djicheur muskets crackled about them. Fully two dozen horsemen circled them to the south—not fifty feet away.

They were now but a short distance from the burning automobiles. The place was as bright as day. The firing from the *legionarios* was more infrequent now, Kent dully realized. Ahead he saw a mesa of sand level for some

distance. Seven automobiles burned on the sandy plain. Dry *drinn* grass was stacked near by, waiting to be piled on the fires to keep them burning. A number of mouse-colored tents were being folded frantically up and dragged away. The Djicheur was fleeing, put to rout.

As Kent stared at the fleeing Djicheur from tired, bloodshot eyes a sudden feeling of awe and fearful apprehension swept over him. He realized through his aching mind that the night was fast becoming all silent around him. Why? That boded evil. He whirled about.

Enemark and Ligné lay, broken heaps on the ground beside their machine gun. As if in ill omen, then, a hissing red rocket coming from the direction of Rivas's company shot searingly skyward. Its scarlet tail flared across the heavens in warning—the last hopeless signal of distress.

In soft, plushy drops the bits of burning red chemical splashed onto the sands around Kent and sputtered like water on a hot griddle. Rivas! Kent's heart went out to his comrade. Had his company been wiped out?

There came the sandy rush of hoofbeats at Kent's back. Riding up from the rear swept a half dozen charging Arabian horses, while in front of him, ran three charging Djicheurs, brandishing their scimitars over wild, turbaned heads. He was cornered. It was the end! Kent realized his dark moment.

"*Adelante!* Forward!" he shouted to his men.

Silence! A silence as deep as the grave. Frantically, Kent stared out behind him. Not a single *legionario* was there to come to his aid! Alone! Face to face with the enemy! Surrounded, overwhelmed! With desperation-impelled feet he swerved back and fell atop their nearest machine gun, spun it around on its tripod until it faced those three wild Djicheurs racing down on foot to beribbon him. *Rata-ta-tac-*

taca-taca-tac—— If the gun would only continue, not jam! The barrel was white hot.

What living thing, animal or man, could charge into that spouting nozzle of death, the machine gun? Nothing! Screams on screams of savage, revenge-defeated terror split the air. Then, scrambling around on his trembling knees, he took aim on those riding horsemen flying past him in the night. *Rata-taca-tac-tac*——

As the lights of the caravan fires brightened the dunes around him, Kent suddenly grappled the trips on his guns—held them—ceased firing.

Something stuck in his throat. He sank lower to his knees and trembled with anger and apprehension from head to foot. He took aim again, hesitated, aimed, then stopped. Wide of eye he stared, not wishing to believe the sight that met his eyes. Icy perspiration burst out over his body, trickled down his chest and spine. Before him, not a dozen feet away, two black horses reared to a standstill. On the leading one Kent recognized the menacing face of El Corsario—but behind him! Behind him on the horse, was the lurching, pale figure of a white girl!

Her long blond hair was completely disheveled and streamed out over the frothing coat of the spirited animal. Behind the first horse was a second, atop that frightened animal was another white girl. The remaining horsemen had sped off into the dark shadows of the night. El Corsario raised his carbine to shoot Kent. Then he saw the ominous blue glint of the Legion machine gun. His arms hesitated. He had had experience with those "death hoses" before. Frantic, Kent could not shoot for fear of hitting the girl. El Corsario came to a sliding halt nearer Kent. Kent plunged ahead another few feet with his machine gun.

"You Moslem murderer!" he shouted fiercely in Arabic. "Making war on

women and civilians. You coward! *Comitadchi!* You desert rat! Let the girl go before I drill you to ribbons!"

A brutal, mocking laugh cut the night. Desperately, Kent stared into the blue muzzle of the great Djicheur's carbine.

"*El Yanquí*, eh? The big Yankee would fire on El Corsario, eh? Very well! Fire, infidel! Fire!" he taunted.

With a raucous laugh the desert vandal plunged his steel spurs into the sides of his spirited horse. With a wild bel-
low the animal shot ahead.

"Oh, oh!" screamed the girl hysterically. "Do something! Do something!"

Trembling with consternation, Kent held his machine gun, fingered his trips, his limbs rigid over the tripod, while beads of perspiration poured out over his body. He was helpless.

"You'll pay for this! You lousy jackal!" screamed Kent. "Word of a *Yanquí!* If it costs me my life I'll thrust this saber through your dirty heart!"

"Word of a *Yanquí!* Word of the big Yankee!" barked El Corsario mockingly, and lunged off into that black sea of sand and stars that melted on and on into infinity.

The second horseman, a tremendous fellow in the flowing blue robes of a *sheikh*, spurted past Kent, tossed a lumpy bundle toward him. It rolled to a stop near Kent's feet. A bestial laugh followed.

"A gift from Allah!"

A cloud of sand showered over Kent as the second horseman plunged after Corsario. With sinking heart he stared after those bulking shadows that galloped into the dense blackness of the Sahara. Silence! For a moment Kent seemed not to notice that bundle. All he could see were those blue eyes filled with tears, illuminated against the wild firelight, and the silken blond hair flowing helplessly back over the dark body of the horse. That sight, he knew,

would haunt him for the remainder of his days.

Bitterness surging through his soul, Kent looked about. Not a moving thing met his gaze. All around him, in the last sputtering lights of the Coston flares and the caravan fires, lay lumping white-robed and khaki forms—quiet, silent forms. Was he all alone with the dead? Keeping watch with the dead? Gruesome chills engulfed him. Had he been of an emotional nature he would have sobbed.

They of the Legion had destroyed that band of Corsario's, thrown death into its heart, and ribald confusion into those few remaining. The Legion had been victorious in battle, but had suffered a killing defeat in loss of numbers, and in achievement. Kent was heartsick. In a day the desert corsair would gather several hundred more of his wandering tribes around him and continue his vandalisms and reprisals. Exhausted, body aching, his mind a mental brain fire, Kent dazedly picked up the queer parcel beside him. There in the strange silence of the dead he examined the curious leather lashings. It was wrapped in goatskin and about ten by fourteen inches in diameter. What could it contain?

CHAPTER IV.

SHIFTING SANDS.

KENT turned the goatskin bundle around in his hands and ripped off the tough thongs. The stiff, dried skin flipped outward, flat. Before him tumbled a soft roll of cloth. The texture was damp to Kent's touch. He drew his flashlight from out his pocket and snapped on the switch. The tiny beam swept over the strange parcel. The khaki tunic of a lieutenant of the *Legión Extranjera!*

The damp stains were crimson—crimson with the lifeblood of a comrade. Through the left breast was a

deep scimitar or saber rip! Underneath the khaki tunic was a smaller object. Kent lifted it to the light. A *gorra*, or cap, of a Legion officer.

"Rivas, *compadre mio!*" he murmured fervently. "They got you, eh?"

With a wild gesture of despair Kent leaped furiously to his feet and swung toward the east and the vandal corsair fleeing with the American girl.

Dazedly, Kent tucked the treasured tunic under his arm and turned to determine the results of the terrible slaughter. Pocket flashlight in hand, he roved up and down the dunes and around their soft slopes. Tenderly he turned over the limp forms of his brave *legionarios*, one after another. In rows and singles lay the winnowed slain. But in more than triple their own number lay the members of Corsario's bloody bands. Everywhere, it seemed, were strewn those ghostly white *djeelabas* of the enemy. Standing on the tall peak of a dune Kent trembled from head to foot with horror.

He recalled the words of *Comandante* Cordoba during the conference: "The dead will keep watch with the dead." How true they were in those gravelike silences about him!

"*Teniente! A mi la Legión! T-en* —" the stricken plea for help, like a whisper from the dead, floated out on Africa's silent night.

Kent flipped about as though a white-hot scimitar point had touched his eardrum. To his left, among the gloomy shadows he saw the dim outline of one of their machine guns. From it a strange form was groping across the sands on its hands and knees. Kent struck off for his comrade.

"Sal-a-zar!" murmured Kent, excitedly. "Then you are not dead?"

"No, amigo, but——"

Dropping to his knees beside his loyal sergeant, Kent lifted his head into his arms. Blood trickled from Salazar's right temple. Grabbing his handker-

chief, Kent held it under his canteen and soaked it with water. Tenderly he bathed the head wound, then bandaged it.

"*Agua! Agua!*" breathed the sergeant.

Lifting his canteen Kent poured a long draft of water down the *legionario's* throat. The stout Spaniard settled back and breathed more comfortably. By the light of his flash Kent inspected the wound. Then he slipped the crude bandage back into place.

"That's a bullet 'crease,'" pronounced Kent encouragingly. "Just knocked you out. The loss of blood has left you weak. Plenty of water and a little rest will soon put you to rights." He lifted his canteen of water to the lips of his mate again. "Drink hearty!" he urged.

Salazar took another deep pull on the canteen. Somewhat revived he staggered to his feet and leaned against his officer.

Together, then, the two men, arm in arm, walked through that Saharan graveyard stark and staring beneath the lonely stars.

Beyond one ridge of sand hills they came across a remnant of the cook's pack. Near it they discovered the cask of company rum. Eagerly they pounced on it, poured the fiery liquid down their aching throats. It gave them new strength and added freshness. Hurrying among the slain, Kent obtained several canteens, emptied them of their contents and filled two of them with rum. He passed one to Salazar, resting on the sand.

The *legionario* took it gratefully. Kent swung the second canteen over his own shoulder and kept an extra canteen of water so that he possessed three in all. Salazar also possessed himself of an additional one, for water was precious.

Sliding down a tall dune they were suddenly startled by a queer swishing

noise through the sand. Kent swept his hand back against his comrade in sharp warning. The two halted breathlessly. Friend, or enemy? Swiftly, a huge shadow lurched swayingly through the gloom. It was a dromedary.

The men breathed once more. Crunching along, the big beast was pulling a huge, robed figure behind it on the end of several lashings. Dashing up to the frightened animal Kent jerked it to a halt. A big Djicheur, whose soul had long since sped into the Mohammedan East, was being dragged along by his feet. Kent untangled the pack trappings and threw the lines over the neck of the dromedary. A lucky find! Taking a firm hand on the lines of his captured prize, Kent and his comrade walked about the scene.

Butchy, Kent noted, was among those missing. Legion prisoners had been taken. One thing worried Kent greatly. It started his mind thinking thoughts repulsive to him. Their radio set was nowhere to be found. It was possible, of course, that the Djicheur had captured that, too, yet it was not probable that he would bother with it. More likely would he be to smash it up there on the spot. The desert tribesmen knew nothing of radio.

"*A mi la Legión! A mi—*" from the westward came that dreaded distress call.

Frozen in their tracks the two listened.

"It's that way!" whispered Salazar. "Toward the mountains."

They dashed toward the sound. In a trice they had reached a gray shadow lumping through the gloom. It was Karl Gadke, a tough-hearted German. One of Rivas's men. The two bent low over their comrade. He was holding the muzzle of his rifle to his brains to blow them out in the event that his captors developed to be Djicheurs—had saved his last cartridge for that express purpose.

POP—2B

"*Compañero!*" murmured Kent anxiously.

"*Si,*" coughed the other hoarsely. "*Qué dolor!* What pain!" The pallid form settled back weakly, in wide-eyed relief.

Kent looked over his wounds carefully. A deep scimitar gash gored the chest and a blue arm rip showed where a Djicheur bullet had seamed its way toward the shoulder. The German had suffered a heavy loss of blood and was weakened with pain. Kent held his canteen of rum to the German's lips.

"Here, Karl. Drink!"

The *legionario* drank, and eagerly. Deftly, then, aided by Salazar, Kent bandaged their third, and last survivor, and got him to his feet. Through some freak of luck four of their stanch little *borricos* had escaped injury. With an almost human desire for companionship the shaggy little animals had wandered up to their masters. Salazar took them in leash. Kent heaved a deep, choking sigh. From those two full companies of the *Legión Española*, that had set out the previous day from Ait Ahmed, only three were living—uncaptured!

From two companies totalling some hundred and seventy men, and thirty men in the machine-gun groups—three accountable! Desperate with stabbing thoughts, Kent sat atop a tall sand dune. He turned to Salazar.

"That means Corsario took seventy-six prisoners, amigo. That's too many!"

There was a significant silence among the three men. Each knew what the other was thinking. Seventy-six *legionarios* could not have very well been captured unless they had wanted to be, or, unless they had unwittingly been led into a trap. Things just didn't go that way in the Legion. Desertions, as in the French Legion, were numerous enough, yet these seldom occurred under fire. There were ugly thoughts, and thoughts unwelcome to the minds of the three.

Capture by the Djicheur, or Moor, meant a fate far worse than death, through the most heinous tortures ever devised in the satanic mind of man. Most of the *legionarios*, whether of the Spanish or French Legions, preferred to die by their own hands quickly and efficiently. It was for this reason that they retained their last cartridge for themselves on the Sahara.

For this reason, as well, it was almost unknown for the Djicheur to take large numbers of prisoners. When this occurred there was always some significance attached to it. Kent was seriously troubled over the point. He turned toward Salazar, who shifted uneasily.

"What do you make of the mystery, *sargento*?" Kent inquired.

"Who knows?" stated the Spaniard with a philosophic shrug of his shoulders. "Strange things can happen on the Sahara in the pitch dark of night."

"And have," acknowledged Kent, "but this one—this one mocks my wits." He shook himself nervously, a dank nausea overwhelming him there among the slumbering dead. "Come!"

The men stood wonderingly to their feet and looked toward Kent for his decision as to their next moves. With the captured dromedary Kent believed he might be able to overtake El Corsario, or at least maintain trace of his whereabouts and simultaneously learn something of his lost comrades so that he might later be able to acquaint the Legion of matters. If he only had radio! Then he could let his *comandante* know the points of his arrival and departure. One came to depend on those light-fast electrical messengers of radio across the trackless miles and it did not add to one's confidence nor efficiency when they were taken from one. Somehow he must get information back to his post.

A chill raced down his spine as he thought of those American girls. He

must do something quick and certain if he would aid them. Word must be sent back to Ait Ahmed so that reinforcements could be sent and the chase continued. He turned to his two faithfuls.

"Salazar, you must hurry back to the post. You two. See Gadke to the hospital. Ride two of the *borricos*. Then get to *Comandante* Cordoba and tell him what has happened. Tell him also that I have gone on a course into the south-east to keep the trail on El Corsario so that he will not escape. I will mark the——"

"*Por-Dios!*" exclaimed Salazar desperately. "Surely you are not going alone into that ant nest of the Djicheur? It will mean your death!" He placed his hand affectionately on the shoulder of his *teniente*. "There have been too many already."

Kent was thinking back on the words of his admired *comandante*. To his *sargento* he reminded:

"We of the *Legión Extranjera* have a trust to fulfill with civilians. They look to us for protection. We are soldiers. We are here in Africa to fight—to die fighting, if necessary, but never to consider our own worthless skins when we should risk them in a worthy cause for others. Our only hope for capturing the American girls, locating our lost comrades, and bringing that desert *lizard*, Corsario, to Legion justice, is to cut off his escape. To do that we must not lose his trail. Once lost it will be like looking for rowboats on the Atlantic. Who knows what course he may take on the morrow? I go—on the bloody trail of El Corsario."

He struck his right hand out to his *legionarios*, with his left hauled around the nose of his providentially found dromedary.

"Buena suerte. Good luck, my brave ones! Tell the *comandante* that I will take a course toward the oasis of El Ougadir. It is most likely that Corsario

will try to reach that, as his next objective, so that he may fill his water bags."

He unrolled Rivas's scarlet tunic from under his arm. With grim jaw he added:

"Tell the *comandante* also that I will mark my trail with bits of this khaki tunic from our brave departed *Teniente* Rivas. I will pick Djicheur spears from the dead, and will set those spear points on the tops of the tallest sand dunes as I make my trail. *Bien*. Let us hurry. *Adios*."

"*Adios!*" rejoiced both the *legionarios* faithfully. "*Y vaya usted con Dios, también!*"

There, on the wide Sahara, in the strange silences of the dead, the *legionarios* parted. Swinging atop his dromedary, Kent shuffled through the sands to the center of the battlefield. There he gathered a dozen or more spears from the gory objects that jutted staringly skyward from the sand.

He lashed the wooden staffs to his shaggy animal, and with a fighting bitterness in his heart swung past the last dying embers of the burning caravan. As he rode, strange, troubled visions danced and wavered through his mind. The flowing blond hair, and the blue eyes of the American girl haunted his waking and dreaming hours. Thus it was that *Teniente* Kent of the *Legión Extranjero Español* nodded sleepily along on his swaying dromedary, on and on into the southeast behind the trail of the desert vandal, *El Corsario*.

CHAPTER V.

OASIS.

DAWN, flaming and foreboding, was shooting her red arrows into the sky when Richard Kent next opened his red-rimmed eyes to the new day. Aches and pains drove through his body jerking and snapping on the back of his lurching dromedary. His right ear lobe, caked with dried blood, throbbed and

burned. Anxiously, he stared at the sands ahead of his plodding animal. The many tracks of marching feet, camels, and horses, had churned up the desert's floor into the southeast.

He wondered how long he had slept, or dozed, in that stuporous state, riding like a dead man across the sandy wastes. As a huge dune rose before him he urged his animal, snarling and growling against his command, and lazily hoping to skirt the tall hill, straight up the soft embankment. At its summit of some two hundred feet he halted and stiffly dismounted. Disdainfully sniffing the air high above Kent's head, the dromedary waited, chewing its cud, nose into the wind.

Dropping to his knees on the sands, Kent inspected the tracks. It was not easy to discern the exact delineations of those footprints in that sand, flourlike in its softness and gold-tan in color, but he was sure of one thing, and that was that shoes and not Djicheur sandals had made those prints. Legion shoes! Had the Djicheur, after all, taken his *legionarios* prisoners? Reaching up to the sides of his dromedary he snatched one of the long spears, some seven or eight feet in length. Then ripping off a piece of Rivas's tunic, he placed the crimson strip on the dune's peak as his first marker on his unknown trek.

He reached for his binoculars, but as he did so he realized that they were not hanging on his neck. During the engagement, or during the wild ride of the night, he had lost them. He cursed. Making a sunshade with his hands he peered with straining eyes into the southeast.

A splendid vista was commanded from the peak. As far as he could see stretched the seemingly unending sea of sand and sun, sun and sand, with not a tree, not a blade of grass to break the lonely monotony of the place. More desolate, more silent than the ocean was that scene.

An overwhelming loneliness mingled with sadness surged through Kent's heart as he stared into the burning wind and then swung toward his ancient-looking dromedary.

Swinging atop his desert transport, he swayed on and on into the blazing southeast. Through the long hours of that August day he prodded his animal farther, farther into the fated east. Every ten kilometers or so he would set a marker with its tragic strip of Legion cloth, or a strip and a button. The last spear he saved with Rivas's *gorra* for his final marker.

At times he felt he would never be able to continue life under that blazing torch of the Sahara sun. Its rays were scorching through his own *gorra* and into his blistering skull like an acetylene torch. The back of his neck, although covered with a *corbata* dropped from his *gorra*, felt as though it were exposed to the open door of a powerful blast furnace.

When he felt himself swooning with unconsciousness he would take a sip of rum, or a bit of water, or chew on some of his Legion emergency rations. Then he would once more be able to distinguish that red rim of the desert that danced and wavered crazily before him into phantom mirages of green palms and water holes. Should his dromedary succumb suddenly, he realized it would mean his death out there on that barren sea before help would reach him. Such was the life of a *legionario*.

How he survived that day Kent could never have explained. He knew, though, that he never wanted to see another its equal. This one had been seared into his memory in letters of white heat. When the blinding red ball of the desert sun sank slowly in the fiery west, Kent rode, more a scorched skeleton than a living man. He knew that it had been an excessive Saharan day, with the thermometer hovering somewhere in the

neighborhood of a hundred and forty degrees.

After sunset one might expect a violent sirocco, or sand storm. Like the thunder showers of America following a scorching summer's day, followed the siroccos in the wake of those summer Saharan days when the sun rose with what was termed "violent rise" in Africa. The sirocco, however, left no cooling effect afterward; it was just wind, and sand, and more wind, and then, more and more heat with never a cloud to sweep the sky.

They were as dangerous and dreaded on the desert as the tornado of other parts of the world, and often buried whole caravans and even villages with the quantity and weight of their falling sand clouds. Kent, his brain and body tortured with a million aches and pains, urged his weary dromedary to the heights of another dune and again stared into the distant enemy east.

His glazed eyeballs danced and jerked as though being drawn by heated wires. He shaded his eyes, rolled his lids higher, felt the creases in his forehead draw back, and stared. Then he laughed a dry, hacking laugh. Green trees in the offing! White and gray objects—Djicheur tents. A tiny wreath of yellow smoke curling skyward. An oasis! Leaning against the rough, shaggy coat of his dromedary, Kent cackled out mocking chuckles.

"See it there! An oasis! Cool, fresh water rippling in the sunlight—deep and clear. Like *hell*! It's a mirage! A mirage, I tell you! The Sahara!"

Then he checked himself. Was he going mad? Talking to his dromedary! Could he believe his eyes, though? One never could on the Sahara. How could one trust a weary mind, and glassy, sun-swollen eyeballs? Swaying weakly against that shaggy brown back, Kent stared at his pocket compass. Southeast. Direction was right. Before him the sands were still cut and churned

where the Djicheur had traced his mad-cap flight. Were his eyes telling him right after all?

He would have to take a chance that the vision that he witnessed was an oasis. In a few moments darkness would be stealing upon him, for there was no twilight in those torrid, tropic lands. With what seemed to Kent his last ounce of strength, he drew out his last spear from the side of his dromedary's lashings. With a violent jab he plunged Rivas's *gorra*, the last bit of his marking cloth, down over the end of the spear handle.

Turning his back to the west and his dune, he swung atop his desert transport and urged his swishing animal down the powdery sides of the massive dune. Down the hollows and up and over more dunes he reeled and rocked across those golden billows of sand like a lost ship on a lost sea. From time to time he stared almost fearfully at that line of thin, gray wisp that curled skyward. Was it really smoke? It was black now. He thought he could make out something faint and shadowy, like a line of palms, waving faintly along the horizon.

With the sinking of the blazing sun a sudden relief came to the air. The killing blast of those white-hot rays was gone. Gathering his wits, Kent thought. He had been in transit nearly fifteen hours. He had put the Passes Hills behind him. He should be, by his dead reckoning, somewhere in the general vicinity of El Ougadir, if he had held his course correctly, if he hadn't dozed in that heat while his dromedary made queer courses, and if his animal had made the speed he figured. That must be the oasis! That smoke! He could be positive now!

El Corsario had, doubtless, reached the oasis. If so, it meant that Kent would soon be entering the most hazardous lair of the most notorious of all desert brigands.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAMP OF DJICHEUR.

ONCE more the stars had come out and the cooler, moist atmosphere of a Saharan night had settled over Africa's shifting sands when Richard Kent shuffled his staggering dromedary around the tall dunes that reared their desolate heads protectingly near the water hole of El Ougadir. Tiny blazes of camp fires curled skyward here and there from among the palms. Kent was already within a mile of the oasis and well knew that El Corsario would have his sentries posted at all corners of his outpost for the night. Extreme caution would be compulsory if he were to achieve anything.

Dismounting, apprehension throbbing through his body, Kent forced his great, awkward dromedary to its knees, and, willingly enough did the big animal sink to rest. Then Kent himself fell to his stomach for a few minutes' ease. The sands were still scorching from the heat of the long summer's day.

For several moments he rested thus, taking short drafts from his water and rum canteens. He dared not remain long thus, however, for fear that his great weariness should overwhelm him and plunge him into a slumber as deep as a drunken stupor—which assuredly, there on the wild Sahara, would mean a rude awakening.

Rising stiffly to his knees, he peered over the top of his dune toward the enemy encampment. There was no mistaking those oasis activities, it was the stronghold of the great corsair. For how long, who could say, but there was no doubt in Kent's mind but that the American girls were there and that his captured *legionario* comrades were also somewhere within its confines. The thoughts of his comrades, their possible torturings, and of the terrible outcome that might be the fate of the women, drove Kent to fevered action.

Suddenly his heart seemed to turn to chilled stone. Wide of eye he stared into that dreaded east. Then he sank hopelessly to his face into the hot sands. He wanted to cry out with the disappointment. His brain whirled with feverish lights and queer dancings of light and shadow. There in the skies above him tumbled an immense, seething cloud of gold-tan texture.

The sirocco!

"*Bendito sea Dios!*" groaned Kent dejectedly. "Am I to be buried alive?"

The sands of the desert seemed suddenly to have been transported to the heavens above in an awesome, hurtling vortex. From out the east and across the shadowy billows of that fathomless sea rolled a great, tan-white wave—a wave of driving, whistling sand backed by a torrential wind whose velocity knew no limits. With the speed of light it raced toward Kent. He bent low behind the protecting slope of his dune, drew his *corbata* tightly over his eyes and neck to protect them.

Shrieking, whining howl! The compelling drive of sand, tons on tons of it, hurling horizontally down the wind like spume across gale-driven sea. It obscured the light and plunged the desert into instant blackness. Steadily, like the constant rush of a great waterfall, those sands of doom hurled their age-old swishing fury into the farther west, driving, driving, whistling; shrieking, swishing, swishing—

Kent clenched his teeth and bent his body bracingly against the giant sirocco. The terrifying, ominous roar of that rushing sand was like the scream of death in his ears. His dromedary, Kent noted, had remained on its exhausted knees, having swung its back to the driving sand and tucked its long, brown nose under its forelegs.

Kent wriggled upward. It was difficult, for he was already half buried in the weight of the sands that covered him, and staggered toward his faithful

animal. Kicking it roughly in the stomach, he forced it to its feet—the stupid, stubborn dromedary would naturally remain there and make no effort to save its life in the sirocco. Snarling and endeavoring to bite Kent, the huge animal staggered to its feet, throwing the weight of sand from its back and immediately sank into another hollow.

For a moment there came a slight lull in the timbre of the gale. Kent wriggled around and struggled to his knees, throwing the ponderous load from his back and shoulders. Lifting his *gorra* and *corbata* from his eyes, he stared a second into those tumbling clouds of the murky east. The sand drove into his eyeballs like a hundred pricking pin points, stinging and sharp. Before him, where there had been his dune towering some two hundred feet toward the stars, the billows had been reduced to a white, frothy level. In seconds this had taken place. That first onslaught of the bursting sand storm had passed and the sirocco had settled into a more constant fury. The desert now, was like a floor, the sand sweeping across it like black smoke on a burning prairie. There was something inhuman, maddening, in that terrifying, never-ceasing swish like falling water, penetrating, eating through the clothing and into the very body of man.

Constantly leaping to his feet to keep from being buried alive with the falling sands, then dropping again to his side, his back to the storm, Kent waited for the first killing wave of the sirocco to spend itself. His neck, face, eyelids, arms, and hands, smarted and stung where the sand had eaten into his already burning skin. In the sultry oppressiveness of the storm-laden air, Kent could barely breathe, and those fighting breaths obtained were filled with the fine dust of the sirocco. Choking, fighting for his life, he swung about once more and looked for his dromedary.

Kent knew not where to look for him. He was some place in the sands below. For the dromedary it was the end. Perhaps months later, perhaps years, perhaps in a few weeks, or, perhaps never at all, his skeleton of bleached white bones would be uncovered by another infuriated sirocco, which constantly rearranged and moved the topography of Africa's Sahara.

Battling against the storm, Kent kept constantly changing his position. As he did so his brain worked desperately. Were all the fates against him? Was it not enough to have lost his own entire company, that of his comrade Rivas's, and to have suffered defeat? Now the storm gods of the desert had to throw up tremendous barriers for him to struggle against. Kent's heart halted in its beatings for the moment. His markers! They were, of course, by now, hurled to the four unknown corners of the Sahara, and buried. The Legion would have no clew of his tracks to follow.

He tried standing to his feet. He held his own for a moment. Then a powerful blast of wind bent him staggeringly to his knees. He could not determine the velocity of the sirocco, of course, but he knew that it was well over a hundred miles an hour.

If he could only make the secluding walls of the palms that encircled the El Ougadir oasis! It wasn't far, but in such a violent sirocco it might as well have been at Timbuktu. Dazedly he studied out his fate. He might struggle across on his knees, wriggle on his stomach, walk at odd moments, and make that fringe of palms by sheer herculean plunges.

No telling how many hours the storm might last. Sometimes they spent themselves in a couple of hours and then again, at times they raged for several days; as a general rule, however, they seemed to follow the rising and setting of the sun. He told himself that he must make the one last terrific struggle

to gain the oasis. If he was buried, lost in the attempt, he at least would be dying with his boots on.

Alone and lonely, somehow Kent fought his way into the teeth of the raging sirocco until the lashing fronds of El Ougadir's date palms roared out over his head. His mouth was half filled with sand, his eyes nearly blinded, the knee pads worn from his breeches, and his hands and kneecaps raw, when he sank exhaustedly within that rim of the oasis where the palms thundered their age-old Saharan moaning.

He could see the high ramparts of the abandoned Legion *blockhaus*, so nicknamed by the German *legionarios*, that reared its crumbling, sun-bleached walls and high turrets from the lone hill of El Ougadir. Many years back it had been an active outpost, but, with the interim of years, the active outposts had been moved farther to the north and civilization as the Djicheur had become more tamed. Since those earlier years, the blockhouse, so rich in desert history and stained with the crimson blood of brave *legionarios* and battling Djicheurs, had become the lonely haunt of lizards languoring in the sweltering sun, of misdirected caravans, and of the roving gypsy tribes, with now and again a band of marching *legionarios* picketing their rifles along its silent and deserted embrasures.

Kent dropped quietly into a deep sand hole beside the dried-up river bed that wound through the oasis. In secret he waited tensely, listening, peering into that opaque blackness before him. Although the sand whistled through the air over his head and cut shriekingly into the trunks of the trees around him, the place was a paradise of a haven to Kent compared to the open desert.

Of one thing he was quite calmly certain, the sentries would have returned to the camp and out of the sirocco. El Corsario would know, that night of howling nights, of sirocco of siroccos,

no one could live out on that tossing sea of sand and death.

There would be no troublesome companies of the *Legión Español* to overtake or surprise him. He was safe in that abandoned blockhouse which he had commandeered. And, had not the too altruistic Legion been vanquished? A momentary contentment settled over Kent. He realized that he had undergone a very narrow escape with Dame Death.

But, while the sirocco had nearly brought him to an untimely end, at the same time it *had* been a blessing in disguise, for had it not allowed him to reach his present spot—almost within the very tent walls of the great corsair—undiscovered. At least the fates had been kind enough to have allowed him to get within a mile of the oasis before the storm broke.

A new hope pounded through Kent's fire-hot veins. Happily these new thoughts settled over him. Grimly, he laughed. He had stolen a march on El Corsario! The fighting tactics of the Djicheur of old Morocco were to move against the Christian in mysterious, barefooted silence, under the cover of night, during the excessive heat of the seasons, and picking the very worst of those violently hot summer days when the Anglo-Saxon *legionario*, the Latin, or the soldier of northern blood could not bear up under its terrific heat that sometimes mounted to an unbelievable temperature of a hundred fifty to a hundred sixty degrees! The Djicheur could move under these conditions.

Bien, gritted Kent. He would fight them with their own tactics. He would show El Corsario's "Silent Ones," as the great corsair had termed his tribesmen, that he could "talk" to them in their own language. Thus would the Silent Ones be able to understand its working. Only, he would have to be very careful—very, very care—

With a sudden, fearsome start that

shot first icy, then fiery darts of pain through his being, Kent sprang upward. He had been asleep! His body ached as though it had been beaten to a pulp by a hundred of the heaviest sledge hammers.

How he had slept! A deathlike stupor! But something had touched him. He ran his fingers over his right ear lobe, the ear lobe that had been pierced with a bullet and that had been caked with dried blood. It was moist to his touch, the blood seemed to have gone; the ear was not bleeding. What was it? He had felt a strange something moving at his ear. Strange, that! Had he been discovered?

Was he already surrounded, before he had even had a look into Corsario's inner lair? His body rigid with fear and apprehension, waiting each second for some fated hand of Death to reach out for him through the gloom, Kent stared through the wild night and listened, listened with straining, almost bursting eardrums, waited through the tense, silent seconds that seemed centuries to endure.

The thunderous roar of the sirocco lashing the fronds of the palms above his head. Nothing else. Still, Kent felt that strange, inexplicable intuition telling him that there was some form of life, and of danger, lurking near at hand, watching him, waiting its moment to spring out at him, to snuff out his life.

In those few seconds Kent had years of age added to his life. He cursed and reviled himself for his lack of vigilance, for falling asleep right at the door of opportunity and, on the very threshold of death.

He knew that a number of hours had elapsed. He wondered how many. Suddenly he stiffened. Cold sweat broke out over his tortured body. With wide eyes he tried to pierce the gloom before him. Yes! A low-huddled shadow was creeping slowly through the

darkness toward him. He saw it clearly now, just a few feet above the top of the ridge of his hideout. Closer, closer it was creeping toward him.

Definitely, Kent reached for his pistol. Simultaneously he realized, almost before it was too late, that it would be a mistake to fire a shot into the night. It would announce to all of Corsario's band that trouble was at hand. He slipped his heavy gun into its holster and grabbed his saber. Quietly, he withdrew it from its scabbard. Then the shadow moved quickly.

Kent sank back with a pent-up sigh. A dog! He could see the four legs now, standing atop the ridge. The animal was staring down at him with extended neck. Then he padded down the slope of the sandy hole toward Kent, came close, commenced licking his cheek.

For a second Kent wondered whether he ought not kill the animal. He might betray his presence there. He wondered whether the dog did not have a master near at hand. It seemed good to meet some form of life. Kent stroked the shaggy back. Dogs were scarce in the region, tame ones even more so. It was quite evident that the animal was not a cur. He appeared to be some species of Airedale. The shoulder and leg muscles were trembling, quivering, Kent saw. Evidently he had had some sort of fright, or had been running a long distance. In companionable burrowings the dog settled beside Kent and nestled its moist nose into his palm. After this, thought Kent, how can I run a saber through his friendly heart?

After several moments of continued silence, Kent became assured that the dog had been out foraging alone. He had been licking Kent's wounded ear. He was grateful that the animal had awakened him. In his condition of extreme weariness, who knew but that he might have slept right on into the bright

daylight when he would immediately have been discovered. He glanced at his watch; it was slightly after four o'clock. *Zape!* He had slept from, at the least, since eight the previous evening! It seemed incredible, but such had been the intensity of his weariness. How much he had needed that rest, and yet, how he had wasted precious time!

Quietly, Kent took a deep draw on his water canteen, drained it. He had one left. He wished to dispose of his first canteen so that he wouldn't be burdened with it. Pushing it under several clumps of jububier bushes he buried it deep in the sand. Standing to his feet he stared off into the gloom. A number of lights blinked here and there through the oasis, even at that hour of the morning. Although the place seemed utterly deserted, Kent realized that he could not be too bold. Corsario was still living in a state of war. There was bound to be a sharply defined feeling of tenseness and apprehension among the tribesmen and sleep would therefore be lighter than usual.

The heavy odors of camel dung and living things came down on the wings of the storm. One could smell those Djicheur encampments for miles away on the desert when the wind was right. Softly, Kent pushed to his feet and off among the palms, holding his stout-handled saber in his right hand, his pistol in readiness in its holster. His body tense, his breath coming in short, heavy gasps, Kent set out to reconnoiter the camp and to discover what he, as one man, might be able to do toward furthering the cause of his *Legión*, and of the American girls he expected were still held prisoners off there by El Corsario. The dog, who by now had apparently become a devoted pal of Kent's, trailed faithfully close at his heels. That, he liked.

Skirting cautiously among the trunks of the palms at the edge of the great

water hole, Kent made firm in his mind of the general directions around the place. To the southward he saw a dozen or more large oil torches flaring horizontally out into the wild night wind. One thought leaped through his mind at their sight: prisoners!

The Djicheur always maintained torches over his stockaded prison camps at night. This was not the first time that Kent had slipped unawares into a Djicheur stronghold; there was that time back in 1925 when Abdul Krim stormed the parapets at Toun Agoug—but that is another story. Kent peered into the black night. Were his comrades there?

He hastened ahead, stubbed his toe painfully against a palm stump or root. He lurched forward, almost fell, recovered, and winced with pain. Steadying himself at the wall of a small *gourbi*, or native hut, he hesitated a moment in silence, listening. There might be a sentry within those mud walls! Stealthily he crept around its rough surfaces and peered within. Emptiness! That was good. He then dropped over a dirt ledge that marked the bank of the water hole and slithered across on his stomach to a row of low Djicheur tents after the style used by the Bedouin. At the far end of that row a single torch illuminated the rude trail, the savage hovels of camel's hair, in gruesome light and shadow.

Several hundred yards farther up the trail, he noted, was the gray loom of the abandoned blockhouse. There, doubtless, was where the desert chieftain would be in hiding, he figured. But those tents! He wanted to examine them. Came a dull snarl behind him! Kent flung about angrily—his dog. He slapped the animal sharply across the nose. Silence. As quietly, then, as a lizard, he wriggled across on his stomach to the first tent and waited, listening. Came heavy breathing from within. The yellow beams of the torch-

lights glimmered sickly down the age-old paths of the oasis. Slowly, tensely, Kent lifted the camel's-hair cloth at the base of the Djicheur tent wall, lifted it and peered under.

For several minutes he stared in breathless silence. As his eyes became accustomed to the light he distinguished four occupants, two Djicheur men and two Djicheur women, sleeping. Two long curved scimitars rested on blankets near their feet. Softly reaching in, Kent slipped them, one after another, through the sand to the outside of the tent. Burrowing in the sand he quietly pawed dirt over them and buried them from view. Cold perspiration poured out over his body as he worked. One false move, one misdirected motion that should cause the slightest sound, he knew, would mean his end.

Slipping along, then, to the next tent, he proceeded with the same tactics. There were six huge warriors sleeping in the next one and these seemed more uneasy and sleepless than those with the women. It was with the keenest apprehension that Kent managed to withdraw those deathly blades from the Djicheur sleeping quarters—blades that had drawn the blood of his comrades. Another stealthy burying of those long, steel weapons below the sands and Kent was slipping, hand over hand, with the stealth of a desperation-driven wolf and the keenness of a bloodhound, on to his next tent. If he could only get to that torchlighted stockade where he was sure he would find his comrades, then he might be able to develop a wily plan he had circling through the back of his brain.

Those *legionarios* of his, those stout-hearted little captains from hell, were somewhere within those shadowy realms of the oasis, he felt sure. It was not altogether the desire to capture the weapons, however, that drove Kent on and on, from tent to tent, on that stubborn mission of his. It was

the innocent lives of those American girls and the search for something that—he lifted the mouse-colored flap of the next Djicheur tent with delicate, trembling fingers.

This one was nearer, so much nearer, to that glaring yellow torchlight. Kent's heart pounded within him like a great Chaamba tom-tom. Had he seen aright? He had! *It* was there! That which he had been hoping to find. The radio!

Three compact metal boxes strew the sand against the pale, yellow gleams of the torchlights. Set up, ready for use. Before it, on the sands, however, sat a towering Djicheur. His turbaned head was bent low over his knees, his arms, hands around his ankles, sleeping. His musket rested across his feet where it had apparently fallen in his slumbers.

A wave of exhilarated hope flashed through Kent's body, gladdened his heart. *Zape!* If he could only get command of that outfit! If he could just get his fingers onto that wireless key! Only a few seconds were all that would be needed to send out his position!

Fired with expectancy, Kent dropped the tent wall for a moment to conjure his thoughts. It was a set that worked with very little noise. If he could dispose of that sleeping sentry in some manner he should be able to use it without waking any one. Aided by the wail of the booming sirocco, and the rush of sand, it was hardly believable that he would be heard.

Anxiously, he stared off into the hollow of the oasis, and beyond to the many torches that crackled and sputtered in the moaning storm. Through those dark, lashing palm fronds Kent caught a sight that brought him to stark rigidity in his tracks. Numberless figures hunched over in the gloom, sitting on the slopes of that stockaded area. *Legionarios!* With straining eyeballs Kent watched the ground over those desolate slopes. Yes, now and then one would move! Backs to the storm they

hunched. Around the hills, then, he made out a high, picketed fence. A regular Djicheur prison stockade!

Kent's heart beat wildly. For a moment he was torn between two thoughts, two problems. Should he first go over there into that hollow of the oasis and endeavor to free his comrade *legionarios*, or, should he try to recover the radio and send a message? Inasmuch as he was already on the spot with the radio, and that there was danger in moving from the place and awakening the sentry in so doing, he decided to make a fight for the radio.

Taking a fresh grip on the hilt of his saber, Kent slowly dug his knees into the sands beside the Djicheur tent and lifted once more the camel's-hair tent wall. Waiting for a loud and fresh wail of the sirocco, he then stealthily pushed bodily and boldly through and into the interior of the Djicheur hovel. With a quick, deft stroke he swept the Arab musket clear of the fellow's feet. The Djicheur, startled, lifted his head from his knees, drowsily. Simultaneously, Kent had leaped to his feet.

The Djicheur's eyes suddenly widened, he stiffened, his lips drew back into a snarl. At that second Kent's Legion saber, with agile swiftness, flashed through the gloom. There came a burst of crimson blood at the throat of the dazed desert brigand. With a muffled gurgle the huge form toppled to one side. Kent, in one lightninglike bound, leaped atop it, smothered the form in the loose folds of the fellow's *djeelaba* so that there would be no further sound.

In a thrice Kent had slipped across to the radio, dropped back the cover that encompassed the sending key, thrown the tiny switch, and was feverishly tapping out the Legion call letters in dots and dashes. Listening with a desperate fervor, he sought to reach his Ait Ahmed post, and between times catch the first warning note of any ap-

proaching danger outside the tent that might lead to his discovery. Then his face lighted with a great joy.

He pressed the ear phones closely down over his ears and held them tighter to the sides of his temples. His heart throbbed and pounded deep down within him as he listened. Through that lonely African night then, there came the strange, plaintive tunes of the wireless waves, of dots and dashes. Excitedly Kent leaned over toward the muscular Airedale before him.

"*Coraje!*" he whispered earnestly. "We have them, old fellow!"

It was too good to be true. He had gotten through! He had obtained his O. K. to proceed sending. Those never-sleeping *legionarios* at Ait Ahmed were on the job—they were always on the job! Through the thunderous boom of the storm, sweat poring out over his tired body, Kent bore down on his delicate key with the rapid message:

COMANDANTE CORDOBA,

L. E. Post 87,

Ait Ahmed.

This is Kent at El Ougadir oasis. El Corsario is here with captured caravan party and over seventy-five Legion prisoners. Rush help as—

Suddenly Kent's fingers stiffened on the wireless key. He stared toward his dog that had sprung to his feet. Had he seen the tent wall behind Kent move? The Airedale, lips drawn back over his teeth, was slithering across the sands on his stomach toward a definite spot of the tent wall. As quick as a tiger Kent grabbed his saber, whirled for the tent wall and thrust his head outside.

A long, dark shadow met his eyes. The shadow was just lifting the tent wall to Kent's extreme left, at the spot he had just abandoned. A long Djicheur musket barrel was just easing under that thin sheet of camel's hair. There came a sudden flash of bright steel in the dark. Kent had leaped.

Crash! The Djicheur, startled,

pulled the trigger of his rifle. Kent would have given anything to have prevented that lone shot, but it was too late now.

Again and again Kent drove his saber through the struggling Djicheur that had striven to take his life. The desert gypsy lurched forward to Kent, who caught him in his arms and eased him quietly to the sand. Then, with sweat-slippery hands, he dragged his attacker quickly within the tent.

That done, he waited in breathless silence for further trouble that he expected. No movement, no noises, except for the roar of the storm. Reaching out, Kent patted the head of his dog affectionately. It had been a close call, too close for comfort, and he well realized that the animal had saved his life.

There was no doubt in Kent's mind, however, that the shot must have been heard by some in that Djicheur stronghold. He would have to be on his guard more than ever now. Bending low over the still form of his tribal marauder, he slipped the scimitar cord from his neck and lifted the long blade clear.

Picking up the fellow's musket, he wrapped it in his bournouse and tucked it under his arm. Then he hustled out the tent. Once outside he buried the rifle and scimitar at the rear of the tent, in the same manner as he had done with the others.

In perplexity Kent hesitated a moment to gather his wits. Beyond the line of palms down in the hollow, those torches continued their lurid flarings. He must hasten there and see if he had been correct in his surmise that his Legion *compañeros* were in that region of the oasis. Slipping along on his hands and knees, he peered over a dirt ledge of some six feet height and looked down. Darkness. He slid his heels over the ridge and dropped.

He landed, and on the instant was

thrown to his feet. Pandemonium heaved around him. He felt life on all sides. Two crushing pressures rolled his sides. The whole earth seemed a churn, moving. There was a peculiar, animal smell around him. His hand flung out, caught at something warm and shaggy. Camels! Dromedaries! He had unwittingly dropped onto a nest of them.

Struggling to his feet he pushed and shoved them about until he was once more in a clearing. Disturbed and startled, the animals rushed this way and that, snarling and shoving. Kent's dog yelped several times. Kent cursed. Leaping behind a palm trunk he flattened himself in the shadows and waited, listening for any further signs of unwanted life.

Would he ever get clear of that death hole, he asked himself. Would he ever be able to do anything that would aid the freedom of the caravan party and his comrades? The outlook appeared black. Well, at least, he had gotten most of his message off to his *comandante*; he was never more grateful for anything in his life.

That had been one real break of good fortune. All was not lost yet. Perhaps—easing along the lower embankment he reached the region of the burning torches. Resting for a second behind a high *jubier* bush, he stared out and studied the spot that he thought imprisoned his Legion comrades.

A stake fence some twelve feet in height met his gaze. On its corners and along its upper ledges flared the torches. As he moved nearer he could distinguish the pale khaki of the Legion uniforms. His *legionarios*! His lost comrades! None other. His heart went out to those brave fighters within that stockade—awaiting the hour when the roaring sirocco should pass and the Djichear corsair could proceed with his torture pastimes. Could he ever reach that fence undetected? Where were the sen-

tries? No one was in sight. Was it possible that they had merely left their prisoners there, unguarded, locked in, during the storm?

Suddenly a shadow emerged at the northern end of the stockade. Kent jerked to rigidity. A sentry? Yes! His back to the storm, his white *djeelaba* robe whipping out around him, black carbine over his shoulder, he looked slowly through the dark about him. In a moment he had disappeared on his patrol, lost in the shadows. Kent counted the minutes that the fellow had been gone before he returned to view. It had been approximately two minutes. When he turned again into the shadows Kent told himself that he must try to gain the stockade gate. How was he to do it?

If he darted toward those stockade walls full in the light he might be seen from other sources. Would he have time to do any work before the sentry returned again? He believed he would reduce hazard by crawling along on his stomach. Slipping down, Kent commenced rapidly wriggling, like the Silent Ones, across the sands toward that great entryway leading to his comrades. His faithful dog crouched knowingly along beside him. Body taut with nervous tension, Kent reached the wicket gate and flattened himself at its base waiting for the sentry to pass.

As the dark shadow circled the corners and then passed from view, Kent slipped his hands upward and felt over the heavy lashings that held the great gate. True to Djichear custom, it had been securely bound with numberless leather thongs. Drawing out his saber, Kent slashed as quietly as possible through the tight wrappings. There came a giving of the wall, the gate fell away slightly. Once more Kent dropped to his knees and waited. At the next turning of the sentry he pushed the great wicket gate slowly back and—wriggled through!

Within he stared around him. There was his gang! Dozens of them! In low, helpless and hopeless positions and groups they slept in the storm. Gladness radiated Kent's being as he realized he was going to be able to free these brave hearts under those lonely skies. Hope gleamed ahead. The sirocco howled and screamed in eerie, louder wail over head. Night of a night, thought Kent. What would happen to them? Crawling along he slipped up to the nearest *legionario*. It was Emerson, a tough little Canadian, known in the outfit as "El Canuk."

Shoving a hand quietly over the Canadian's mouth, Kent held it there while his companion raised upward in startled movement to a sitting posture. Wide of eye, the *legionario* peered through the wild night. Then he drew back as though he had seen a ghost, a queer, incredible phantom! Catching his breath in a sharp sibilant, he then leaned forward and gazed deeply into Kent's face.

"*Teniente!*" he breathed in unbelievable astonishment. "You, a prisoner, too?"

Kent shook his head negatively.

"No! *Silencio!* I'm going to try to get you all out of here; but quiet! Our freedom depends on it. Help me gather together the others."

In rapt and awesome incredulity the face of the *legionario* lighted with sudden understanding. Kent bent over him and whispered.

"*Vaya! Pronto!* Rouse the others. Hurry!"

"Si."

As stealthily as desperate wild cats, Kent and Emerson wriggled among their fighting comrades and softly pressed them together in a shadowy corner of the stockade. One by one those grim fighters gripped hands with their beloved officer and leader, and their rescuer. Their devotion and new hope brought a thick lump in Kent's throat.

If there were any braver, or more loyal fighting men in the world then Kent wanted to have them shown him. He doubted that there could be.

CHAPTER VII.

ESCAPE.

IN a few words he told them of the scimitars and rifles buried in the sands at the rear of the Djicheur tents. They were to get them as covertly as possible and steal along after him into the great blockhouse, where El Corsario was certain to be holding the caravan party and making his headquarters. There, they would do everything possible to rescue the civilian party and then, if possible, get dromedaries and escape into the Sahara. After that they would work their way back to Toum Agoug. En route they would hope to meet up with some scouting parties.

"*Bueno!*" whispered Kent as he looked around the band of his tough hearts assembled beside him. "Now, on your bellies. I've seen one sentry at the northern end. We've got to get him, muzzle him. No noise! Not a sound. Smother the sentry. Then on to the Djicheur tents."

The *legionarios* nodded grimly. Like Saharan lizards, in single file, they wormed their way along through the sands of the stockade, then softly out the narrow opening of the prison gate. Close along the outer walls of the prison camp on and on toward the unsuspecting sentry they moved. At the northern corner of the wall the *legionarios* waited.

The soft padding of bare, Djicheur feet in sand reached nearer. The *legionarios* tensed for their spring. Suddenly the white-robed figure, a towering Djicheur nothing under seven feet in height, his flowing *djeelaba* whipping out in the wind before him, staggered backward and stared, white of face.

In stark terror he glared at that strange apparition that crawled along the fence pickets at his feet. The horror on his face might have been fear of the *legionario*, or it might have been from fear of the punishment that would be meted out to him by El Corsario when it had been discovered that his prisoners had escaped.

As he staggered backward he flung his musket high above his head and tried to bring it down in some sort of defense. He was too slow for the six strong-armed *legionarios* that leaped through the dark for his sun-bronzed, muscular throat.

Fired with hatred, and thirsting for revenge, those tough-hearted ones thundered to the ground with their white-robed Djicheur. Hands clapped like vises over the sun-parched lips that struggled to scream for help. In soft thumpings, deep grunts and groans, all muffled in the roar of the howling sirocco, the group of fighting *legionarios* silenced their hated enemy quickly and as quickly dispatched his soul to Allah.

The job done, the *legionarios* stood to their feet. Quietly Kent waved his arm over his head in signal for the men to follow him toward the buried weapons. Up the sand ridges and around the hollow containing the dromedaries he led his silent-footed ones toward the Djicheur hovels. Pointing to the hollow he whispered:

"Down there are dromedaries. When we finish our job that's where we'll get transportation."

For a moment he hesitated on the ridge holding his men beside him. For the sake of secrecy Kent figured that it would be wisest for him to try to approach the great blockhouse alone, or with one man.

"Listen, brave ones," he counseled. "El Canuk and myself will go to reconnoiter Corsario's blockhouse. Close in, in silence, on these Djicheur tents. Secure the weapons. Dispose of the

Djicheurs in those tents. Give Canuk and myself time to get to the blockhouse, and inside, before you go to work on these slumbering Djicheurs, too, otherwise we may all be trapped. *Bien. We go!*"

The *legionarios* nodded. Kent took the heavy scimitar held by Rodriguez, a tall Basque, that had been captured from the stockade sentry, and passed it to Emerson. Then he beckoned the Canadian to follow him.

"You know the entrance to the blockhouse?" questioned Kent.

"*Si, señor.*"

"*Bueno!*—Lead the way."

As Kent slipped past his *legionarios* they gripped his hands, his shoulder, or his arm, to wish him luck. In a moment the shadows had separated them. Fired with fresh enthusiasm, Kent strode vigorously through the wind-torn shadows of that desolate outpost with his comrade. As they hurried quietly through the hollow containing the dromedaries, Kent recognized that there was a large group of them. To Emerson he whispered:

"There are many in Corsario's band now?"

"*Si, amigo.* Many! Too many! There were more than three hundred strange tribesmen waiting for Corsario at the oasis when we were herded in here last night. It is said that Corsario has sent messengers all through the Atlas and the Sahara for the tribesmen to join him on a great war against the Spanish. He thinks himself a second Abdul Krim, *teniente*, and that this war will be even larger and more successful than was the last uprising. When they have whipped the Spanish—when—then they plan to sweep on into French Morocco and French Algeria and wipe up the French Légion. Several hundred more tribesmen are expected by dawn, or before, but the sirocco will delay—"

A series of shadows darted across

their path. The two men leaped back and flattened against the palm trunks. A half a dozen or more wild Arab dogs streaked past them, startled in the night. Again proceeding along, the two comrades reached the wide hill on which stood the great abandoned blockhouse, wind-swept and open to the stars. To the eastward Kent noted faint streaks of crimson tinting the skies. Soon full daylight would be upon them.

As Kent looked toward the eastern fringes of the shadowy oasis a trembling went through his body. Dotting the sand in gray and black indistinct shadows, seemingly hundreds on hundreds of those low, Djicheur tents marked the early-morning sands of the camp. The sirocco was fast dying to a normal wind. With the rising of the sun it was probable that the desert would emerge windless and silent. Then there would come pouring in from all points of the compass, the gypsy, blood-seeking tribes to swell El Corsario's murderous ranks. Speed meant the freedom and safety of all. Kent felt a strong pressure gripping his arm. Emerson was attracting his attention to a row of *jubier* bushes that defined the trail leading to the blockhouse.

"*Ahi!*" he whispered hoarsely. "There is the only protected entrance to Corsario's stronghold."

Kent nodded. Silently he took the lead up the crude path. A mud wall some eight feet high met them at the end of the trail. A strong metal gate blocked their further passage. Kent examined it closely. It was securely fastened from the inside. He leaned over Emerson.

"*Venga!* We must climb the wall. Boost me over."

In quick, deft movements Kent wormed over the wall, hung on his stomach on the ledge, and pulled his comrade up after him.

Together, on the opposite side, they slid to the soft sands. Skirting the

walls of the blockhouse they reached the rear of the place. A dirt floor revealed an open kitchen. Several large iron pots were steaming over two fires built on the sand. Some one was walking within the second back room of the old Legion garrison. Breakfast was being prepared. Kent pushed his comrade down, low to the ground. On their hands and knees, desert style, they crept toward those sounding footsteps that moved around the pots and pans.

Around the corners of that crumbling wall Kent bent low like a crouched lynx waiting to spring at his prey. Two bronzed bare legs stepped down from the inner floor of the kitchen to the sands. Like a whiplash Kent's strong arms sped out and grappled those bony, Djicheur feet. Dull thud! The cook crashed to the floor. In quick *legionario* thrust, Emerson plunged the Djicheur scimitar into that startled, battling bournouse. There was not a gasp, not a gurgle, so sudden and so positive had been the charge. Together the two *legionarios* drew the cook outward from the kitchen and pushed him through the sand and around the corners of the blockhouse out of sight.

Returning, the two men, their faithful dog between them, hastened through the rear room and on into the great rambling blockhouse. An expansive eating room, then a series of smaller rooms in which there were caravan lashings, thongs, rifles, and bandoliers of ammunition, and camel trappings. With an agile reach Emerson bent over, grabbed a high-powered Mauser rifle, a belt of ammunition, and stepped in hurriedly behind Kent. Down a long, silent corridor the two moved, fully expecting to be pounced upon from some unseen angle at any moment.

The dog, Kent saw, had now taken the lead and was standing at the entrance of a high doorway over which hung a long tapestry, swaying in the dying gusts of the mad sirocco. The

Airedale stared up at Kent with wistful, pleading eyes, as if to say, won't you look in here? Kent trusted the animal's senses. On tiptoes, anxiously, he reached the entryway, drew back the tapestry hanging and peered inside. His face paled as he stared within. There were at least a dozen Djicheur women sleeping in a circle on a camel's-hair mat on the floor. In the center of that circle lay two white girls. Kent instantly recognized the blond hair of the captured American girl.

Kent thought hard and fast. It was strange, those girls there, safe. Even though Kent knew that the desert tribesmen were not particularly desirous of white women, that they were so carefully kept, was odd. There was only one answer to the enigma: ransom!

How could he ever attract the attention of those two white girls and get them out of the room without disturbing the others. It didn't seem humanly possible, yet Kent told himself that it would have to be done in some way. He whispered into Emerson's ear:

"Stay here! Guard the door!"

Emerson nodded. Kent, his saber held in his hand with a viselike grip, tiptoed with catlike steps across the floor. It was the one most crucial moment of his life, and well did he realize it. All—everything—depended on not waking any of those half-witted Djicheur women. Perspiring with apprehension, Kent crept around the sleeping tribal women. Within the circle he bent over the blond-haired American girl, pressed his fingers gently to her lips. Then he pressed harder.

With a sharp start the girl rose to her knees, fear and horror written on her face, but she did not cry out. As she stared from that pretty face as white as a linen sheet she sank over, then crumpled to the floor in a dead faint. Kent steadied her, tried to prevent her from dropping with a noisy thump. That was bad.

POP—3B

Reaching over he then proceeded to rouse the second American girl. A thin, sibilated intake of breath, half a gurgle, half a thin scream, pierced the air. She scrambled to her knees and lurched back with quaking tremors, staring at the *legionario* as though she were looking into the face of a dead one. With wild, hysterical shufflings the Djicheur women were astir. A sharp shriek cut through the room from one of the Djicheur women on seeing Kent and his Legion uniform. One and all the women were scrambling to their frantic feet.

In one desperate leap Kent bent over, gathered the blond-haired girl into his arms and staggered backward. To the second American girl he yelled:

"Quick! For your life! Follow me!"

Bounding for the entryway, Kent reeled out of the room while a dozen angry hands, strong and clawing, ripped into the girl he was carrying, jerked at his clothing, and pulled the clothing from the limp body of the young woman in an effort to prevent her release. Screams and inhuman bestial howls clattered down the air.

To Emerson he shouted roughly: "Get that other American kid if you can! Beat off these she-wolves! Help me!"

"Back! You scum! Back!" howled Emerson as he ripped into the Djicheur women with threatening scimitar.

The angry *legionario* stormed through the mob of women and grappled the American girl by the wrists, literally tore her from her captors. The blockhouse, though, was now fairly afire with wild shouts, angry, disturbed slumberers, racing footfalls, and banging doors. Fierce commands were echoing through the halls.

Beating his way to the kitchen door, Kent reached the exit. Once there he saw a dozen or more huge Djicheur warriors tearing up to the rear of the blockhouse. A door crashed open be-

fore him. Bounding into the room, scimitar in hand, plunged a towering figure, a fierce grimace on his face.

El Corsario!

Quick as forked lightning Kent's .45 jerked upward from his hip. His gray eyes snapping fire, his broad, supple shoulders squared before the door behind him, he covered the white figure of El Corsario.

"Move! Just once!" pleaded Kent. "And I'll drill your black heart! You white-bellied rat!"

Corsario staggered backward before that ominous blue barrel and the cold gray eyes that gleamed behind it. Suddenly from either side of the desert chieftain protruded two blued Mauser carbines. White-turbaned heads of Djicheurs loomed above them, bronzed faces staring at Kent threateningly. Straight toward the hearts of the American girl and Kent those deathly weapons pointed. Crouching fearfully beside them, Emerson and the second American girl waited, not daring to move a muscle.

Kent fingered the trigger of his .45. He longed to pull that trigger and send the shell flying on its way that he knew would bring an end to the worst of all the bloody corsairs of the vast Sahara. After his long struggle, Kent had his great prize covered and cornered, yet he feared to fire, just as he had out there on the wide *desierto*. Once more the great Corsario had him balked. To open fire would bring instant death to the innocent civilians beside him, and beyond doubt, to himself. That, Kent knew.

Was all lost after that tortuous battle to reach the side of the doomed civilians? Where were his *legionarios*? As if in answer to his question he heard a number of shots fired somewhere outside the blockhouse. Why didn't those *legionarios* come? A deathly silence fell over the tense group. The atmosphere was as heavy as that super-

charged with electricity before a summer thunderstorm. Faintly then, there came a slight rustle behind Kent. The blond girl at his side suddenly pointed over his shoulder, then she screamed. The chilling, terror-stricken cry shattered the taut air like a hurled bomb-shell. Looking back Kent whirled to face the unseen danger behind him.

CHAPTER VIII.

BUTCHY AGAIN.

INSTINCTIVELY, Kent felt, rather than saw, that he was cornered, trapped. Like a flash he remembered those Djicheurs he had seen approaching from the rear of the blockhouse. He sprang back and ducked—"jump and look afterward"—that was the motto of a *legionario*. As he whirled, Kent came face to face with a tall, lean Djicheur swinging the black butt of a rifle over his skull.

Kent fired. At the same instant the heavy carbine struck his shoulder a cracking blow and slithered down his arm. The crash of Kent's .45 shook the small room. Blue, acrid smoke filled the air. The tall Djicheur gave a savage scream of pain, grabbed his abdomen and crumpled to the floor. Another shadowy carbine flew up. Kent's pistol went flying from his hand. It whirled through the room and struck a table at the far side. Hoarse shouts, the shrill scream of women filled the air.

A dozen forms it seemed to Kent rushed suddenly through that kitchen exit toward him. Djicheur and Bedouin arms swept around him—literally smothered him. Leaping into the air, flailing out with powerful arms, Kent battered into those white *djeelaba* bodies that crushed around him. Chins shot back, bones cracked, and fists thudded against fists. In a moment, however, Kent, his face lacerated, blood trickling from his mouth and eyes, found him-

self unable to move an arm or foot. Groaning for breath, sweat pouring from his aching, fire-hot body, he was flung to the floor. Heavy knees bore down on his chest, he felt his ribs would snap with the strain. His hands and arms were pinned to his sides. It was useless, now, to try to struggle.

Vaguely he saw the two white girls being rushed from the room. The black-robed women were escorting them. His heart went out to them. Would they ever get out alive? Kent wondered. A steel scimitar flashed through the air in a heavy commotion at his right. Emerson was putting up a tough fight. Then Kent saw a crimson stain on that scimitar blade.

Heard Emerson cry out. It was his end. Kent cursed the Djicheur wildly. Strong leather thongs were being passed around his wrists and ankles. The rifle firing outside the blockhouse, he heard, had stopped. All was silent. What had happened? Had his comrades all been captured again? Why didn't they come to his aid?

Hopelessness and anger flaming through his mind, Kent stared up with bleary, bloodshot eyes. El Corsario bent over him, a cynical grimace overspreading his black Moslem eyes that stared at Kent with burning Eastern hatred.

"Hah-hah! My early-morning caller! Word of a Yankee, eh? The American unbeliever would keep his promise, eh? You, a *giaour*, would outwit El Corsario, eh?"

"Yes!" spat Kent vengefully.

"*Para!*" shouted Corsario menacingly. "I do not make war on women, nor old men—as you shall see if I decide to spare your *infidel* life—but, on your puffy-chested *legionarios* of Spain. I and my Silent Ones will bring you of the Legion to your knees. That means war and war means time and money. Of time, Allah sends plenty, also prisoners. Prisoners, some of them bring

ransom. The Americans of the rich ruby mines will pay plenty to El Corsario to regain their wives and sweet-hearts, I think, no?"

"Not a cent!" barked Kent. "The Legion will return them yet. Have no fear!"

"Fear?" laughed Corsario. "Of the infidel *legionario*? Hah-hah!" For a brief moment the great desert corsair stared down at Kent thoughtfully. "You braved the sirocco, eh? By the spirit of Mohammed, you *are* a fearless one—for an infidel!"

As though that ended all, Corsario swung to his sentries, gave rough commands in Arabic. Bending over him several of the Djicheurs picked up Kent by his arms and legs and swept through the door with him toward the front of the house and dank, dark corridors. As Kent was carried out Corsario flung after him:

"Now, we shall see how brave you are!"

Through the kitchen room, around to the left of the blockhouse walls and down a crumbling stairway Kent was jostled and jolted, his shoulders frequently striking the corners of the rough walls with paining crashes. On and on through what seemed an interminable length of those dank, underground corridors he was carried until they came to a heavy iron door. Here the leader pushed back the huge gate and the little band entered. A yellow torchlight threw its sickly rays around the rude room. Between the flapping *djeelabas* that carried him, Kent saw numberless Legion machine guns standing on the dirt floor.

In the center of the room was a table some ten feet in length, a great table which, in former times, had probably served officers of the *Legión Española*, but now worm-eaten and crumbled with age, its massive legs juttied almost angularly into the soft, dirt floor of the abandoned blockhouse.

With a hard thump the Djicheurs dropped Kent onto a packing case at one side of the room. Then they jerked him up to sitting posture and leaned him against the wall. Then Kent stared—stared again as though he couldn't trust his eyes for the sight he saw.

Sitting cross-legged atop a machine-gun tripod was—Butchy!

"Butchy! You!" gasped Kent incredulously.

From the evil sneer on the sergeant's face Kent realized the black treachery that had been working within their own ranks back there in Ait Ahmed. In a flood of memory the events swept before his startled mind. Those machine guns stolen from their camp that night at Toun Agoug! The bullet fired behind his back over the parapets when they had fought the Djicheur that scarlet night. The missing radio, how it had been discovered all set up!

"You do not seem happy to meet your old *sargento*, amigo," barked Butchy ironically. "Justice at last."

CHAPTER IX.

THE RENEGADE.

THE great iron door swung back and in entered the massive figure of El Corsario. There was steely glint in his black eyes as he overheard the words.

"Justice!" rasped Kent in desperation. "Justice, eh? Why you—you traitorous snake! You carrion!"

"*Hijo de perro!*" snarled Butchy. "You won't get away with *that!*"

The Russian, short, heavy-set and powerful, drove like an arrow across the shadowy room for Kent. Fairly shaking with rage he swung out with his hairy fists. With crashes they resounded against Kent's jaws and cheeks. Kent felt the hot blood surging through his veins, his teeth rattled, and white, hot lights danced before his eyes. He

struggled wildly to get to his feet, to defend himself.

"You swine! You coward! Hit a man when he's tied, eh? That's your stamp! A brave jackal! Heart of a louse!"

In maddened frenzy Butchy's hand dropped toward his hip where hung his .45.

"I'll get you for——"

"*Mouharrem!*" thundered a booming voice. "Stop!"

Kent lifted his throbbing head. The huge figure of El Corsario loomed menacingly toward Butchy from across the room. His arms folded across his barrellike chest and white robes, he glared at the sergeant angrily.

"Is this the way you carry out my orders?" he demanded. "*Zevale igh-tiar!* Idiot!"

Butchy stepped back slowly, sullenly. Deprived of his revenge, he was afire with hatred. Corsario, with a grandiloquent sweep of his arm, waved the remainder of the warriors from the room. The door creaked to almost silently and left the three men alone in the underground room of the desolate blockhouse. El Corsario, his curved scimitar clanking metallically at his side, walked up to Kent. Drawing up his broad blade he ripped loose the thongs that held Kent's hands. There was an easy confidence in his muscular movements.

The great corsair had not commanded hundreds of tribesmen and wild, obstreperous characters for years not to understand human nature. He leaned back casually against the shadowy walls and surveyed his prisoner.

"If you have the understanding of a camel," he said in a low, cool voice, "you will see that you are helpless to kick against the scimitars of an army. If you will use your infidel brains and your Yankee wit, you may yet save your foolish life. From now on—for the rest of your days—you shall be my prisoner! That is, you may, if the

privilege should you choose. Or, you may choose—death! I have, not time to barter with fools. If you will aid *Sahib Butchy* to instruct my men in machine gunnery I will grant you your freedom. Further, I see you have courage. I will make you a *cherif*, a leader among my famous hard-hitting desert jackals."

Corsario hunched his *djeelaba* over his shoulder angularly and twisted the glowing end of a cigarette between quiet, composed fingers.

"You will have the admiration of El Corsario! The freedom of the great Sahara! A splendid Arabian horse to ride—with time, and good behavior! In time you may even become a great desert chieftain like—El Corsario! Instead of a Nameless One, a hireling of Spain!"

With shrewd, analytical eyes the great Djicheur was studying the face of the prisoner before him. He stood erect and tall. Moving back from the wall he crossed his arms again over his massive chest and waited for his answer. He was becoming impatient.

"*Mash-Allah!*" he barked savagely. "Choose! Will you, or will you *not* become one of my trusted men? Yes, or no?"

The blood raced through Kent's brain. If he accepted Corsario's offer would he have a chance to escape? To rescue the American women? He ground his teeth bewilderedly. Little by little he was regaining his breath, his composure. His body throbbed with a thousand aches, yet he seemed not to know them, so heavy was the pressure of his mental problems. As he stared at Butchy, savage hatred leaped through his veins. He, a *teniente* of the *Legión Española*, to become one of Butchy's class—a traitor, a desert vandal! An enemy of the Legion! The dead faces of his comrades floated before his tired vision. Rivas—Ligné—they seemed to challenge him. It would doubtless mean torture if

he refused; he knew he could depend on that.

"Speak, infidel!" snapped Corsario viciously, angered at Kent's slowness to reply.

"The word of a *Yanquí*," answered Kent coldly. "Never changes! I have given my word of honor to Spain. I am a *legionario*. Before I become one of your bloody pack of women-torturers, and robbing vandals, I will die on the rack! Before I become a yellow-bellied traitor like this poison-hearted snake, Butchy, I would die a hundred deaths. Go your foul limit! But, by the word of a *Yanquí*, I swear you will pay!"

"You are a fool, infidel! You are hardly in a position to threaten Corsario! Fools go to the tortures as you have perhaps guessed. You have chosen! I have no time for fools!" Angrily the great corsair swung toward Butchy. "Call the—"

A khaki figure, ankles bound, hurtled through the shadows. Straight for the feet of the desert chieftain leaped Kent. As fast, Corsario had whipped out his flashing scimitar. With a snarl, Butchy jerked up his .45. Corsario crashed down on the upflinging hand of Butchy with his broad blade. *Crash!* Blue smoke filled the room. Hot lead whistled past Kent's brain. The action caught his breath. Corsario had saved his life! The pistol fell to the dirt. The three men converged toward it in a struggling knot.

Writhing in his ankle bonds, Kent toppled to his knees and fell across the fallen .45, jerked over it with his hands, clutched it. In an agile roll he staggered to his knees on the dirt floor of the cellar room. In a desperation-riven jerk he swept the heavy pistol over Butchy and Corsario.

"You Djicheur imbecile!" growled Butchy to Corsario. "What do you mean? What have you done?"

Trembling with stark apprehension, Kent wriggled backward from his tor-

mentors. Slowly his two enemies eased toward him.

"Back! You loco hyenas!" blazed Kent warningly. "Or I'll blast your souls to hell!"

The two held their steps, glaring, watching for a second's opportunity to spring forward at Kent's throat.

"Blood of my life!" he flamed breathlessly. "Torture, is it? By the word of a *Yanqui*, now we shall *see*!" He shook himself muscularly, like an imprisoned dog suddenly released from its leash, and worked his aching shoulder back and forth to prevent it going stiff. "Pick up those lashings!" he commanded. Then, to Corsario, he ordered: "Bind that two-legged beast with the soul of a *lisárd*, beside you, and bind him fast and tight!" He swept his captured Legion .45 over the pair. "One false move and I'll speed both your souls to Allah, or wherever you desert vermin go. Now choose!" he spat mockingly.

The desert leader bound Butchy, and bound him well, while Kent stood over them, his .45 resting lightly on its trigger over his delicate finger.

"If you think you'll get away with this, wise one!" blazed Butchy. "You've got another think coming. This will cost you *your* life, all right! As soon as a few of the tribesmen arrive! Hah-hah!" he sneered derisively. "The wise *Yanqui*, eh?"

"Shut up! You yellow snake!" snapped Kent. "Another word out of you and you'll go east right now!"

Came a heavy pounding at the door. Kent hobbled up behind Corsario, prodded the huge figure in the ribs with the heavy muzzle of his pistol, forced him to sit atop the long table in the center of the room.

"Now listen, you!" he commanded roughly. "There's death waiting impatiently for you right here at your Moslem elbow. Just one pull on this small trigger and—death to Corsario! And

there'll be a cartridge left for me! You are, no fool, Corsario. Do as I command—until you think you have a chance to outwit me!"

Kent could see the bronzed neck muscles of the towering Djicheur working in pent-up anger, the hot blood pounding through his empurpling cheeks, and neck veins distended. The door flung back. In rushed two bulking Djicheurs: Kent stood well covered behind the wide-robed corsair.

"Tell them," spat Kent vitreously, "to leave their firearms inside the door and to bring in the American women!"

Once more he jabbed the hard muzzle of his .45 remindingly against Corsario's ribs. In terse Arabic, El Corsario gave the commands. The two sentries in flustered bewilderment rested their carbines against the wall near the door and bowed from the room. As soon as they had gone, Kent hobbled backward toward the firearms and with his left hand carried them to a spot of hiding behind the packing case. With the sharpness of a caged wolf the great Djicheur watched his captor.

Footsteps were sounding down the long corridor. Women's plaintive voices came to Kent's weary ears, made his taut muscles even tauter with anxiety for their safety. In a second the door swung back, and the two American girls, their faces as pale as white marble, swayed weakly into the room.

"Stand to one side there!" spoke Kent with cool voice.

The women, with trembling fright, hurried to one side of the doorway. Kent moved closer to Corsario.

"Now send *one* of your Silent Ones to bring in a goodly bunch of leather lashings. The other will bring five of my *legionarios*!"

Kent saw Corsario stiffen. Well he knew that those lashings were to be used on himself. He hesitated stubbornly. Viciously, Kent jabbed the massive figure in the ribs again.

"Don't be a fool!" he whispered. "Or remember, it's death!"

Slowly, sullenly, the commands were given. The two sentries, their faces staring perplexedly, disappeared into the dark exit. When they had left, Kent turned toward Corsario.

"Those tall, fine-looking ones, they are thy brothers?"

"Sons!" rasped Corsario. "With the talents and courage that an infidel could never understand!"

Kent nodded and smiled a grim, philosophic smile. Then he looked away thoughtfully. His wily mind was working like a compressed-air trip hammer.

"Listen, you of royal desert blood! When your first son returns you will tell him this: That you have made me your *cherif*, and your personal aid. That there will soon be a great battle with the *Legión Español*. And mark this well, O father of talented ones, that, in the event you are not available, that he, and all the other *sheikhs* will take orders from me! If——"

A babble of raucous voices and growls rattled down the corridors. The door pushed back and five husky *legionarios*, tightly bound, were pushed rudely into the dark shadows of the room. On sight of the khaki-clad *legionarios*, Corsario's body seemed to wilt, his great frame to sag with utter hopelessness. Corsario's elder son was the first of the two to return.

"Speak to your son! Give him the orders!" commanded Kent.

"Never!" growled Corsario. Sullen and obstinate he sat on the great table facing the doorway, with Kent behind him.

The *sheikh* looked at his father searchingly, his scimitar clanking at his side, awaiting command from his father and chief.

"Speak!" barked Kent viciously. "Before I——"

With the speed of light, the huge form of Corsario drove backward from

the smooth surface of the wide table. Kent fired. The heavy crash of the .45 vibrated like a cannon shot through the underground room. Corsario staggered back, his face white with fear and purple with Moslem hatred. He reached desperately for his paining thigh.

"Next time I fire higher!" warned Kent. "And nearer the heart!"

At the same instant, however, there was a flash of steel through that darkened room. The *sheikh*, and son of Corsario, had sprang with a wicked lunge at Kent. Leaping back, Kent covered that obstreperous youth before he could get into dangerous action. Holding them rigidly before him, Kent called out to the American girls:

"One of you girls! Come over here! Quick!"

The blond one responded, breathless, and frightened, but nonetheless active.

"Pick up that scimitar—that knife—there, please."

The girl stooped over, recovered the scimitar.

"Now get behind me. Cut those leather lashings around my ankles. Be fast!"

Working with straining fingers, the girl soon cut through the leather thongs that held Kent's feet. She stood to her feet.

"Now hurry over there to those *legionarios* and cut their lashings, all of them, just as fast as you can!"

In a moment, while Kent covered the two Djicheurs, the girl had freed the *legionarios*. Their hollow, gaunt faces, however, showed Kent only too well that they were suffering with hunger and thirst. They scrambled hurriedly about and faced Kent.

"In that far corner," indicated Kent, "are two rifles. Get them! You, Winston, and Francisco, cover these two Djicheurs, and watch them like falcons. They are no ordinary prisoners. They will leap at you in a flash if you relax a muscle."

"*Si, teniente!*"

The *legionarios* obtained the carbines and were covering the two desert vandals. Frantically Kent foraged over the room, keeping one wary eye on his two prisoners. No thongs long enough were visible. He called to his *legionarios*.

"Let's have a couple of your leather belts, there. Quick!"

The belts were withdrawn from pants and handed across. Kent tossed them to Winston.

"Bind that young *sheikh's* wrists and ankles. Make it fast, *por Dios!* Another *sheikh* will be here any second!"

Working feverishly the lanky Australian bound Corsario's son hand and foot.

"Now get him behind that packing case out of sight!" commanded Kent. "Quick!"

Grunting and struggling, the *legionarios* pushed their prisoner into the dirt corner as ordered. Desperate, Kent stared around him. What could he do? Corsario's second son was coming. He could hear the footfalls down the hallway now. To Corsario he said:

"Now back up onto that table. Face the door! And another false move out of you like that last one, and I'll drill you right through the heart! Word of a *Yanqui!* This time it will mean your death!"

Corsario, face as pale as milk, slunk limpingly across to the table top and sat down on it. As he walked to his post behind Corsario, Kent called to his comrades:

"Now each man of you get off there into that dark corner. Cross your hands as though you were still bound. Face the wall. Not a move out of you unless I call. Get those two rifles over there, too, against the wall, out of sight some place."

In speedy, quiet shuffle the *legionarios* darted into the corner as directed and were almost lost to view among

the shadows. Kent covered himself just behind Corsario as the great door opened and the younger son of Corsario stepped into the room, a bunch of leather thongs hung across his arm.

"Speak!" whispered Kent gruffly. "Speak, before I dispatch your soul to Allah, and my Nameless Ones send your son along with you!"

Slowly the great desert chieftain spoke:

"My son, I am ill." There was a strange, almost pitiful timbre to the voice. "I have made this brave one a *cherif* of the Djicheurs. He will do our every bidding. There will soon be a battle with the Legion. Should anything happen that you cannot obtain orders from me, then you will carry out his commands."

The heavy form of Corsario drooped with shame and sorrow.

"That is all," whispered Kent. "Send him away. Tell him to report in a half hour."

The order was repeated. The young *sheikh* stared bewilderedly across the room to where the Legion prisoners faced the wall, apparently bound, then he gazed back at the two women who now sat on the dirt floor watching the curious drama being enacted there before them. The tall *sheikh* dropped his thongs to the ground. Then, with a wide, courteous salaam to his father, bowed from the room.

The Djicheur's footfalls echoed down the corridor as Kent barked to his comrades:

"Fast, my brave ones! Get those leather lashings. Bind this chief." Kent backed off, still covering Corsario. The great desert leader, however, seemed to have lost all his strength, all his usual virile spirit. With drooped shoulders and limply hanging arms, he accepted the lashings that were drawing his arms to the tightness of steel bands, as though he were a child being punished. His white hair hung di-

sheveled over his thick eyebrows, and his eyes stared dreamily away as he seemed to dream visions in another land. Kent jerked his big Australian *legionario* by the elbow and pointed to Corsario.

"Search him!" he commanded.

Speedily the *legionario* threw back the great *djeelaba* robe, its interior lined with shimmering blue silk. With rapid-moving hands he explored all around the body of the great Djicheur *kaid*, through the spacious pockets and about the belt. Reaching onto a heavy-braided scimitar cord, he drew up its end. A round, heavy chamois bag was suspended at its base. The trooper jerked the cord free and tossed the bag to Kent. Opening it he ran his fingers down inside the soft chamois skin. His fingers slipped through dozens of smoothly polished red stones.

"Rubies! Big as hen's eggs! A fortune here! Loot from the caravans, eh, big boy?"

Deftly, Kent thrust the heavy sack inside his tunic. In a moment the *legionarios* had bound the lengthy form of the desert leader until he could not move hand, arm, leg, or foot. Carefully, then, Kent had the same, and even more efficient job done with Corsario's elder son. He next turned to the women. It was reaching, he realized, high noon. Time was drawing short. The long files of the Legion forces under Cordoba, he figured, must be winding their way closer to El Ougadir and those ominous tribal masses that seethed ever larger, ever stronger, over the fringes of that grim Saharan oasis.

Their enemies bound, Kent jabbed his .45 into its holster. His loyal five looked toward him for their next move. Kent pointed to the corner of the block-house room.

"Get that other Djicheur, the son of Corsario out. Also Corsario, he goes with us."

For a moment Kent thought of

Butchy. He would leave him there for the time being. No time for the likes of him now. Better say nothing about him, for the *legionarios*, once discovering him, might tear him to ribbons. They were already dragging out Corsario's son.

"*Nombre del diablo!*" howled one with a wild shout. "Day of the *Legión!*"

Butchy had been uncovered. Angered shouts, vicious bootings, and shrieking scufflings came from the far corner. On their new find the *legionarios* had utterly forgotten about their object to get the *sheikh*. They had discovered their most-hated enemy, Butch—Butchy, who had led them into a V-cornered trap that had enabled the Djicheur to corner them and take them prisoners—a trap that had meant death for many and nearly been the death of all of them. In three more seconds their crazed blows would have brought sudden end to that deceiver's life. Kent rushed among them, tossed them aside.

"Not now, my brave ones. This rat will come later. I must turn him over to Commandant Cordoba. He will look well hanging in the Legion square at Ait Ahmed! Punishment for such treachery should be made a public example! Hurry! Get Corsario and his son. We go to the roof!" He flung about to the others. "*Bien!* We go!"

The face of Corsario, Kent noted, had paled on hearing of the punishment to be meted out to Butchy. To the desert vandal Kent stated:

"For you, strange one, thy fate will not be so harsh. You have shown me that you have something of the white man's heart. Word of a *Yanqui*, I have other plans for you!"

Corsario stared bewilderedly. The words somehow seemed to cheer the shaken and dejected face of the desert chieftain. The crowd started out the wide doorway. To the American girls, Kent said:

"Stay close with us. Winston, fall

those girls in right behind the prisoners, and, if you value your life, don't let either of them out of your sight for the barest second!"

"*Si, mi teniente!*"

Kent hesitated a moment.

"What happened out there in the oasis?" demanded Kent. "Why didn't you come to my rescue? You were all captured again?"

"*Si, mi teniente.* A swarm, fully a hundred of those pariah dogs rushed us with carbines. We hadn't reached any firearms. We hadn't a chance. We lost three men, killed four. We were helpless to fight back. The rest of us were beaten and herded back into the prison stockade. We were to be tortured this morning."

"Who were killed?" asked Kent anxiously.

"Verde, Paquito and Rodriguez. Shot when they tried to get through to you."

Kent nodded. Fierce lights of battle danced before his eyes. Things had looked so bright—perhaps that was the trouble, they were too bright.

As they wound their way up the dark corridor Kent worked his mind thoughtfully. A dark shadow was following along after the blond girl, the Airedale! Kent had almost forgotten about him. He wondered if the dog did not belong to the girl, it followed so closely onto her heels.

The first thing that he must do, Kent told himself, was to get the girls into a safe corner. Next, to make positive that Corsario and his son were secure prisoners some place near his hand. If humanly possible, he must set about to free the rest of his *legionario* comrades somewhere out there in the oasis. His eyes roved over the hulking shadows of the machine guns behind him. He must get those up to the roof in some way. He must!

Above all, he must get his men and himself to that roof, its stout embrasures, and the tall watch towers so that

they might remain in command of their present situation. It was a momentous problem; still, Kent figured that they had a fighting chance for their lives.

His .45 in hand, Kent led the way through those underground corridors and up toward an entryway leading, apparently, to the roof. They avoided the rear of the rambling place and pushed up that set of crumbling stairs before them.

Each moment that passed Kent expected to come face to face with trouble. Stealthily, fearfully, he stared through the great rooms of the ancient blockhouse as they passed them. Empty. The place seemed now utterly deserted. Strange, that!

As they gained the upper regions bright tropic light met their eyes. Winding, winding, that age-old staircase led them out into the sun-glaring heavens. The spacious roof spread before them. Then Kent's ears went stiff with tense apprehension. He heard the wild and thunderous boom of the desert tom-toms. The bestial carryings-on of the Djicheur and Bedouin torturers!

So! That was why the blockhouse had been so deserted, eh? Every one, every Djicheur and his children had assembled for the great fiesta. The momentous torture hour had arrived! The *legionarios*, grunting and sweating, pushed their heavy prisoners out onto the roof. Breathless and staring, the American girls followed after Kent and Winston. Exploring all parts of the cement roof now littered with sand from the giant sirocco, Kent found nothing but loneliness. The tall framework of the iron watch tower reared its rusted bones skyward like a grimacing skeleton. All was clear. The morning air was now silent and windless. The sirocco had passed.

"*Vengan!* Come!" he shouted to his comrades.

Darting about the roof, the *legionarios* reconnoitered every watch turret

and parapet. At its four corners were four inclosed "pill boxes" or cement sentry boxes. Kent waved his pistol toward those.

"Put the girls in one, and the prisoners in another," he ordered.

The *legionarios* placed Corsario and his son separately in each of the southern turrets and the girls in the northern end, as that would be the most free from shell fire, it was probable, in the event of trouble—trouble which Kent fully anticipated. The dark-haired American girl was weeping bitterly within the protected turret. Kent strode to the walls and peered in.

"Bear up!" he encouraged in kindly voice. "I think the worst is over. We're going to get you out of here, somehow. Just hold tight for a little while—and we'll get you out." He swung about to his men. To Dormé he called:

"Here, René! In here with you! Into this turret with these women. Your one job will be to protect them. Guard them with your life. Let no disaster come to them, over your dead body!"

"No, señor! Nothing shall!" The *legionario* ducked into the sentry box and thrust his rifle up before him.

To his four remaining *legionarios*, Kent called:

"Quick! Down to the cellar. Bring up a machine gun apiece and all the ammunition you can carry. I'll hold guard here with Dormé until you get back."

The four rushed through the door and clattered back down the stairs. Kent then hastened across the roof and, like a desperation-impelled monkey, scrambled up the iron watch tower. Reaching its wind-swept heights he stared across the swaying tops of the green date palms below.

The mad boom of the tom-toms and the maniacal shriek of the Djicheur voices was reaching into a low, rever-

berating thunder now. With the wild chants and the blood-crazed howls, cold chills leaped through Kent's being. The Djicheurs were at their torturings. There was no other answer.

Great fires were crackling skyward. Lumping, struggling objects jutted strangely from the sands at the far edge of the oasis. Horsemen raced by and tossed spears toward those abject, queerly working lumps that studded the sands. In other spots the black, red, and motley colored robed women of the warriors danced about the victims before them in the sand.

Hot irons—brandishing scimitars—plunges—screams of pain—howls of bestial delight. Driven to a frenzy bordering on madness, Kent stared at the sight in horror.

How could he ever rescue his doomed comrades? Kent asked himself that question over and over again. With a prayer on his lips he started down the high tower. He must try! Swerving around the watch tower to its front he gazed off across the wide expanse of that lonely Sahara, northward. Would he see anything? He had hoped.

With straining eyes he gazed. The sun was again beating down on his skull fit to blister it. Sweat trickled down his back and wet the wrists of his tunic. Not a sign of the main body of the Legion met his gaze. Hadn't they received his message? Surely they had. What had happened?

From the southeast he saw long, shadowy lines of brown dust clouds rising along the horizons, growing larger, ever larger in growing rows. The desert Djicheur, the Moor, and the Bedouin, were marching in to El Ougadir to come to the aid of their renowned chieftain, El Corsario.

Kent studied the terrain all about the environs of the blockhouse. As far as he could see were seething bands of the desert tribesmen racing, dancing, marching in wild chant to the tribal tor-

turings and shriekings for the blood of Christians. The call to war against Spain, against the Legion. As Kent watched those mobs seething around the fort he realized that they were completely surrounded!

His heart heavy with the awful truth, Kent dropped back down to the broad expanse of the roof. What could they do? How could they ever clear that oasis? It didn't appear as though they ever could. The problem seemed utterly insurmountable. They were trapped! If the Legion didn't come— Well, it would mean their end. Desperate, Kent worked his mind to a frenzy. He must, somehow, try to get that radio set! The roof door suddenly swept back. His *legionarios* appeared with a machine gun each, four, and several belts of ammunition. Stolen Legion machine guns! The sight of those blued steel weapons brought new hope and fresh courage to Kent.

"Oley!" he shouted to his men. "Set 'em up! Spread 'em out on the roof!"

The guns were arranged in a "V" pointed toward the roof door. Ammunition belts were run through and entered into their feeds.

"Thanks to Butchy! The rat!" gritted Kent. "We have our own machine guns and—ammunition."

The *legionarios* nodded grimly, their tired faces seamed with tough lines of weariness. Kent swung on them thoughtfully.

"Listen, amigos! Beat it down to that rear kitchen room of the blockhouse and gather together all the *djeelaba* robes and bournouses that you can find; also turbans. Bring them up here. All you can carry. Get those from the Silent Ones that are silent. Pronto!"

In a few moments, more than a dozen *djeelabas* and other motley robes had been carried up and piled onto the roof. Kent tossed them around to his comrades.

"Get into these!" he commanded.

The men hurriedly slipped into them. "Just a little Legion game!" laughed Kent acridly. "A shake of the dice with death. Perhaps it will work, *quién sabe*, perhaps not! At the least these machine guns will give this desert scum something to think of! Blood of my life!"

The men nodded interestedly, waiting. Kent turned to Winston.

"I've a difficult mission for you, *compañero!*"

"*Bien!*" replied the tough-hearted soldier. "Name it!"

"We've got to try to recover our radio set," stated Kent. "It's down there in that row of Djicheur tents—the third one up from the end. Butchy, in his treachery, brought it here. Come! I'll show you which one it is," he motioned Winston to the edge of the parapets on the roof, leaned out. "Over there, just—"

Their words were cut off by footfalls coming up the stairs. Kent rushed toward the door, looked down the staircase. It was Corsario's younger son returning. Turning to his men, Kent ordered:

"Shove those machine guns into the parapets facing the northern desert. Cover your bodies well with these *djeelabas* and turbans. Be prepared to swing into action and toward the roof door, should I call. You, Winston, cover the door from behind with that last machine gun."

"*Si, señor.*"

In a moment the door swung back on the roof. The tall *sheikh* and younger son of Corsario stepped out onto the spacious roof, now blistering in the heat of the noonday African sun.

"There are orders, *sahib?*" he questioned coolly.

The eyes of the young *sheikh* swept around the roof. The three Legion "Djicheurs" in their white *djeelabas* were facing guardedly off in the north-

ern Sahara, waiting for the "enemy Legion." It made an impressive Moslem sight for the *sheikh*. To every outward indication all was well.

"Your father," stated Kent calmly, "is now quite indisposed and taking his siesta for the next half hour. He wishes me to tell you that you are to bring the captured Legion radio set here to him on the roof at once."

The *sheikh* bowed gracefully, turned to go.

Kent held up his hand signally.

"There is one other order. This one must be carried out immediately. All of the prisoners, the *legionarios*, must also be brought here for questioning."

The face of the young *sheikh* paled to deathly white.

"But that, *sahib*, is—impossible. Our tribesmen and our tribeswomen are at the tortures. The fiesta is on. The warring tribes that have come to our aid must have full honors done them! In addition, many of the *legionario* dogs have already been dispatched to their heathen gods."

Kent's blood chilled.

"Name of Mohammed!" he rasped. "Can you not carry out your father's own orders? Are you such a Weak One, such an Untalented One, and such a Yellow-bellied One, that you cannot do thy great and illustrious father's bidding? Listen, You of No Talent! These *legionario* dogs as you call them *must* be brought here for questioning. They may possess Legion information of great value to us in our battle against the Legion forces of Spain. Will you, or will you not do your father's bidding?"

The face of the young *sheikh* paled. He had never known what it was to disobey the iron-bound orders issued by his father. He salaamed low.

"I will do my best, *sahib*!"

"*Mash-Allah*! It is well. I will inform your father that he has a daring and obedient son."

The *sheikh* slipped quietly from the roof and down the stairs.

Kent turned, relieved, to Winston. He hoped that the radio would be brought, that some of his comrades might be recovered. They could, literally, do no more than hope. To his men Kent said:

"Listen, brave ones. This little game can't continue long. Something's bound to snap here, and damned soon. We've got to prepare for the worst. Winston, you go up into that watch tower. Keep us constantly advised of what is happening around us and on the desert. Tell us the very first second you see any trace of the Legion coming from the north. Hear?"

"*Si, mi teniente.*"

Of his other men Kent asked:

"How many machine guns are left in the cellar?"

"Six," answered Paddy, a little Slav, quickly.

"You three hustle below and get them up here just as fast as you can. We will need them. Also gather in every round of ammunition that you can lay hands on. Too, if you can find some in that lousy kitchen, bring drinking water."

"*Si, teniente.*"

With a wild scrambling the three men tore down the stairs for the lower realms of the blockhouse.

A matter of a half hour or so later ten Legion machine guns had been arrayed within those jagged blockhouse battlements that overlooked the desert oasis of El Ougadir. The husky *legionarios*, now in their long, flowing *djeelabas*, while enacting their strange drama on that desert stage of death and privation, waited through tense moments for—come what may! And, in the hopes that they might again clasp the stalwart hands of their comrades before the Saharan sun should set on that crimson day.

Anxiously, Kent made a survey of

all the weapons and fighting equipment that the men had deposited in a pile on the roof. He ran his fingers over a bronzed and bristled chin studiously.

"Ten machine guns. Approximately ten thousand rounds of ammunition. Eight rifles with bayonets. Four scimitars. Two pistols. A small quantity of rifle ammunition. Very little pistol ammunition. Still, a mighty good haul. With headwork we can give these desert hyenas something serious to think about!"

Kent himself still had two *bandoleras* of pistol cartridges slung over his shoulder. Like all the officers of the *Legión Español*, he carried only a *šaber* and pistol and for that pistol plenty of ammunition.

There came a wild shout from the watch tower.

"Down," yelled Winston. "They come!"

"You mean the Legion?" fairly screamed Kent.

"No, *teniente*. Our prisoners! *Qué vea!* They are so few!"

"How many?" yelled Kent.

There was a momentary silence. The hearts of those *legionarios* marooned on that desolate roof oozed blood while they waited for their answer.

"I am counting them," announced the lookout man. "They come through the palms. Twenty, my Brave Ones! Twenty of our comrades led by the white-robed devils. Twenty and no more!"

It was unbelievable. Yet, Kent realized, even that number was fortunate. From the seventy-six captured, and eliminating the few that had died with Kent, it meant that over forty had gone to the torture hours of the bloody Djicheur—had met a fate worse than death—a slow, living hell. It was unbearable to think on. What would become of them? A long quiet hush fell over those courageous *legionarios* that waited through the hellish moments on

that sun-blazed roof of doom. They waited until the shuffle of heavy Legion boots resounded from the long stairway leading from the lower confines of the ancient blockhouse.

"Up!" encouraged Kent. "Pull yourselves together, my tough hearts, my Nameless Heroes! Let us show no weakness before these desert hyenas!"

There was a sharp rustle among the men. One and all they fell back into their parapet pits and faced out over their machine guns.

Drawing their white *djeelaba* robes tightly around them, they faced off into the desert far below. Then slowly, through the doorway, filed those khaki-clad *soldados* of the *Legión Español*. More dead than alive did they look. One by one they marched in and swayed across the sun-glaring roof of the blockhouse.

Eighteen, nineteen—twenty! Kent counted them tragically. Winston was right. Blood was dripping from the nose, ears, and mouths of some. Apparently a few had been literally yanked from the hands of the torturers. A barefooted Djicheur runner, massive and bronzed, dropped the three radio cases to the floor of the roof and stared about the battlements curiously. Kent, with eager eyes, stared down at the undamaged set. The sight of that emergency military equipment was meat and drink to his eyes.

In strange bewilderment the various *legionarios* took in the sight before their eyes. In rough Arabic, Kent ordered the men to one side. He had to play his little Legion game with Dame Death and the Djicheurs. Stubbornly the men glowered at Kent. Was he to develop into a traitor as well? They would believe anything now. The tall *sheikh* stood before Kent.

"*Allah-illah-el-illah-Allah!*" blazed Kent. "And where are the other prisoners? The rest of these infidel soldiers?" His gray American eyes pierced

into the face of the Moslem like chilled steel.

"It is too late, effendi. They are beyond recovery. They would be of no value to you for gaining information. *Shweeia! Shweeia!* Even now they are with their heathen gods."

"It is well, then," answered Kent in slow Arabic, choking a sob deep in his soul. His brain was pounding in fiery booms. "Our brave tribesmen, they are ready to go into battle?" he demanded coldly.

"Yes, effendi."

"We have plenty of weapons and ammunition?"

"Yes, plenty."

"What is the strength of our bands at the moment?"

"Fully a thousand warriors. More are pouring in from the south constantly."

The number staggered Kent. He gripped himself.

"That is well. Now listen well to the commands of thy illustrious father. You will take command of the tribesmen. The men shall be divided into three groups. One shall move east, the other west, and the last north. As soon as you have made the proper arrangements you will command your men and move off. Is all clear?"

"Yes, sahib, and these prisoners?"

"Your father and I will take care of the prisoners. We wish to question them here at our leisure. Be off to your work. There is no time to be lost in idle talk."

The great iron door closed behind the white form of the *sheikh*. Peculiar doubts assailed Kent's mind. Was the *sheikh* convinced, thoroughly? Kent wondered. Barely had the door swung to than there came a hoarse shout from the watch tower.

"*La Legión! They come! They come!* Many miles away—far in the north!"

A ripped shout of excitement burst

from the throats of the five. The new arrivals stared in hollow-eyed astonishment at the "Djicheur-robed" *legionarios* around them. What was this queer game? Who was friend, who foe? Were they free? Or, were they merely being tortured a bit more in this, their latest dreaming?

"Off with these arm and ankle lashings!" commanded Kent. With grim admiration he stared from one to the other of his recaptured *legionarios*. "Don't stand there staring at me as though I were a living ghost! I'm not another Butchy, amigos! It's true! You're free—for the time being! *Bravo!*" he bellowed exultantly.

"But it's sure wonderful to see you men again! Pull yourselves together now, my men. I don't know how long we'll be breathing the same air with these wolf dogs of this cursed place, but for the moment we are here together, free. It may be our last grand and glorious stand against our hated enemy, the Djicheur—but, *viva! España!* We are here! Let's give 'em hell while we last!"

Little by little the men recognized their freedom and slowly their eyes took on a new and blessed light, a light akin to that of an innocent man doomed to death and just removed from the scaffold of the dead to which he had been wrongly assigned. In kindly surveillance, Kent moved among his men and encouraged them, unloosening lashings and examining their wounds. Came another shout from the watch tower.

"*Teniente!*"

"Yes!" shouted Kent. "Speak!"

"The Djicheur! Dozens of them are rushing the blockhouse stairs."

"Quick!" yelled Kent to his men. "All of you! Get into those *djeelabas* there on that pile. Fix those turbans around your heads."

The men leaped to the task. They were four short.

"You four!" ordered Kent. "Into those sentry boxes there at the wings of the roof!"

The four remaining dashed off to the corners and disappeared around the walls of the sentry boxes that held the American women, Corsario, and his son. To the others Kent commanded:

"Get around those machine guns. Push them into the embrasures. Kneel down behind them. Pull your *djeelabas* well around you. Be ready for anything should I call! But don't make a false move unless I call. I've got to try to bluff this thing through once more."

The clatter of many footsteps rushed up the stairway. Kent went to the door, braced his broad shoulders against the big iron door and stared down, a nonchalant, malevolent smile on his weather-seamed face.

"*Quim var?* Who comes?" he shouted sharply.

The young *sheikh* and son of Corsario pushed through the opening of the door and on, onto the roof. Questioningly, he glanced about the roof. Behind him squeezed his brother *sheikh*. Obviously they were looking for the Legion prisoners. They were nowhere to be seen. Had the Yankee *cherif* disposed of them by black magic? Where were they? In each of the embrasures, bent over a rifle or a machine gun obviously was a Djicheur. The *legionarios*. Where were they?

"What sort of a scene is this?" commanded Kent roughly. "What do you mean, blundering in here like a pack of half-starved jackals? Take your Unmannered Ones and get out of here!"

The *sheikh* held up his hand warningly a moment.

"My warriors demand that you return the *legionarios* to them so that they may continue the tortures until the battle with the Legion commences. They had not completed their fiesta, *effendi*, when the heathen swine were taken from

them. If thou, and my father have finished with the examinations——"

Kent's mind was working like a trip hammer.

"Thy father will notify thee when it pleases him, not before!" answered Kent stormily.

"I would have that word with my father, now!" parried the young *sheikh*. There was sharp impatience in his voice. "I and my brother officers wish to confirm his orders and his wishes. It is not that I do not trust thee, *sahib*, but my comrades here demand it. If we——"

Kent glared ruefully toward the young *sheikh*. In vitreous Arabic he blazed:

"Listen, thou of no talent! Thy father's orders were that he must not be disturbed. Did he not tell thee so with his own lips? As to the *legionarios*, thou wilt hear of them in due time. They will be kept in the block-house until after the battle. There is no time now."

"But, *sahib*! These men demand it! They will not be appeased! Further, heretofore our bands have never been divided into three. We always attack in a massed body. We like it not to have our forces divided. This is new. This plan of three arms instead of one. We wish to have a few words with my father!"

"*Dort naldi!*" spat Kent viciously. "Out with you! You crazy jackals! You have heard your father's orders that you take commands from my lips. There they are! Are not three arms stronger than one? Thinkest thou that thou knowest more than the gray years of thy illustrious father? Out with you! Hasten to do his bidding before you and thy brother *sheikhs* draw down his wrath and he plunge you all to Allah on the points of scimitars!"

Slowly, stubbornly, the young *sheikhs* backed toward the doorway. As they moved back, however, Kent felt a

freezing, icy chill race down his spine. Felt hot darts leap through his veins. Corsario's son, he noted, was staring with wide, astonished eyes at the feet of one of his white-robed "Djicheurs" of the Legion that bent over a machine gun in one of the embrasures. Roughly Kent pushed the *sheikh* through the doorway and with an angry growl dropped the heavy iron bar that held the metal door in place.

Then flinging about in his tracks Kent stared at the spot where the *sheikh* had been gazing. For a scant second the blood seemed to leave Kent's heart. The wind had moved two sets of "Djicheur" robes far above their puttees and exposed the khaki legs of the *legionarios*. The *sheikh* knew, now, that the men behind those guns were *legionarios*! The game was up.

Striding across the heat-riven roof, he hurried to the watch tower and climbed its rust-scaly sides to the turret. His shoulder ached and throbbed tortuously as he climbed. It was swelling badly and Kent saw that it was going to give him trouble.

In the top of the turret, with his big Australian *legionario*, Kent peered off into the heat-waving horizons around the oasis. From that high watch tower overlooking the desert to all points of the compass they could watch the directions of the desert bands on their attacks against the Legion. Through their radio they would have to try to inform the arriving Legion of the directional movements of the enemy.

Some six or seven miles to the northward a long, snakelike line of khaki wound across the Sahara for the lone outpost of El Ougadir. But immediately around the walls of that crumbling blockhouse seethed hundreds on hundreds of infuriated Djicheur and Moorish tribesmen, their blood lusting for the lives of those marooned *legionarios* atop the blockhouse walls.

POP-4B

Could they ever hold out until the main Legion forces arrived? It was a question. The *sheikhs* and their tribesmen could be expected to commence a storm on the fort at any moment. It would be impossible for them to hold out against those vast hordes that seethed around the walls if they once broke through to the roof. To Winston, Kent said:

"We fight now! It's to the death! Keep a sharp lookout and report everything."

"O. K., sir."

Kent then dropped down the tower and dashed among his *legionarios*.

"Off with those Moslem *djeelabas*, my tough fighters. Get ready for action! There'll be red hell to pay here in a few seconds. What do you say, men, that we give these black-hearted jackals a few rounds of Legion fire, just for our comrades out there on the Djicheur torture racks? That we take two for one before we batten this place down for our last stand. What say?"

"Yeah! *Viva! Viva España!*" they shouted.

"*Bueno!*" answered Kent. "Push those machine guns up to the doorway. We'll have callers soon. You can depend on it. Throw the bar on that door. Stand by!"

Atkinson, a little red-headed Irishman, threw the bar.

"Wide open!" commanded Kent. He was kneeling behind a machine gun.

The Irishman threw the door open, wide. Almost simultaneously there came the padding rush of sandaled feet up the stairway. Wild shouts, angry and threatening bellowed up the corridors.

"Give it to 'em!" blazed Kent.

Rata-taca-tac-tac-tac-taca-taca-taca.

The blued guns of death roared out. Hot lead and rifle balls whistled up the stairway and past the heads of the *legionarios*. Fierce screams and howls filled the air down the darkened hall-

way. Burst after burst of those deathly streams of hurling lead sprayed along the crumbling walls, while plaster crackled along the steps and chunks of cement rolled down among the dying and wounded. Arabic curses and wild commands of battle rang through those ancient walls of the blockhouse, once more the scene of red carnage. Suddenly, from below, the firing ceased.

"*Basta!*" shouted Kent. "Enough for just now. We've got to watch our ammunition!" He leaped to the doorway and peered furtively down the stairway.

The steps were stacked high with white robes and fallen forms of the Djicheurs. A lone rifle ball whined past Kent's face as he stared. He ducked back.

"Enough! We've accounted for half a dozen *sheikhs* and *cherifs*, and better than two to one for our *legionarios* out there in the oasis."

Leaping to the door he forced it closed and swung the heavy iron bar down into place. There were heavy "dogs" at top and bottom for securing the door against attack, as there were in all the garrisons of the *Legión Español*. He dropped down the top one. Atkinson worked up the bottom one.

"That's better," said Kent. "Now secure everything. Get one machine gun down here to guard the doorway. The others in the embrasures. Watch every round of ammunition, you men, because we'll need every bullet before this wild watch is over. Don't fire a shot until I give the command."

The *legionarios* hurried their guns back into the embrasures along the high-walled parapets. Leaping down behind them they arranged their ammunition handily and went over the breech blocks and feeding pawls to make sure that all was well. Kent yanked the radio set around before him, tossed back its cover and released the sending key.

With tense fingers he commenced calling his station. Off there ahead of the blockhouse, among those rolling sand dunes, he knew one of their *legionarios* would be riding a small *borrico*, with ear phones attached to his ears, on the alert. He shoved the portable phones over his own ears and commenced tapping the key.

*Comandante Cordoba,
Legion Regiment 87,
En Marcha.*

Over and over Kent sent out the call. Then he listened intently. Slowly at first, then more rapidly came the acknowledgment. With fast-beating heart Kent rushed out the message:

This is Kent at El Ougadir oasis. We are marooned on roof of blockhouse with twenty-five *Legionarios* and two American girls. Rush help. Corsario has band a thousand strong. Main body is attacking you from southwestward. Advise deploying your men to southward on first attack.

In a few moments Kent heard the wireless singing shrill tunes in his ears.

Proceeding with all possible haste. We are ready for attack. Our forces equal to Corsario's. Try to hold out until we can get there in a few hours. Try to give me information of Djicheur movements when you can.

CORDOBA.

Kent signed off and slammed down the cover over the set. As he did so there came a hoarse shout from the watch tower.

"*Cuidado!* Look out!" warned the lookout man. "The Djicheur is climbing the south wall with ladders and scimitars!"

"*Verdad?*" yelled Kent in answer.

On the same instant there came a deep rumble at the door leading to the roof. Another! The great bar groaned under the impact. Paddy, the little Slav, tensed to rigidity on his machine-gun tripod seat before the door and steadied his sharp, beady eyes down the barrel

sights. Kent swung to his other *legionarios*.

"Be ready to bring those guns into action in case they break down that door!" he warned.

The men nodded acknowledgment and faced around with their guns. The door bulged, creaked, groaned, and sagged, but did not open. After a short time of concerted pounding the racket stopped.

"Well, that's over!" barked Kent. "They won't try that again!"

Suddenly two white-robed objects loomed over the jagged battlements at the southern walls. Scarcely thinking, instinctively, Kent raised his .45 and fired. Two blue carbines pushed stealthily over those edges of the parapets. Kent's pistol shot cut the quiet air over the blockhouse roof. Instantly one of those lumping white objects dropped from view over the ledge. Orange fire spat from the muzzle of the second white-robed figure. Hot lead screamed past Kent's ears. There was a howl of pain from somewhere behind. A Legion rifle spat, off at Kent's left. The white fingers of the second Djicheur vanished suddenly from the roof ledges.

Anxiously Kent rushed to the walls and peered over, examining them. A wide ledge ran around the southern extension about twelve feet below the roof. The first ledge could be reached by going hand over hand from the crude windows that jutted from the second floor.

Above that, the next ledge had to be reached by ladders. The northern side of the blockhouse was impossible to scale, unless one had long ladders. The Djicheur, however, already had two long ones at the southern walls. If he could keep a steady stream of his warriors pouring over those ladders to the roof, Kent knew that it would not be long until they should run out of ammunition.

After that, outnumbered a hundred to one, for hand-to-hand fighting, they would not stand a chance. It would mean their end. Or, if the Djicheur poured his men faster over those walls than his gunners could stem it would be equally bad.

"*Le Corsaire! Le Corsaire!*" angry French and Arabic voices shouted toward the roof of the garrison.

So! They wanted El Corsario, now, eh? Mob crazy, thought Kent. They do not know what they want! Fickle and with doubts. They believed their leader a traitor to them, now. If Corsario had stepped into their midst at that moment he would have been greeted with a volley of Mauser bullets. Kent peered slightly over the walls to get a glimpse of what was going on below. Rifle balls whistled to all sides of him. He leaped back hastily. *Dios!* If that seething mob ever got started up those walls! It would only be a question of minutes with his few *legionarios*!

"*Abajo!*" yelled the lookout man again. "Watch the southern parapets again! The Djicheur brings more ladders! More men!"

Kent leaped back among his men.

"Get these guns more to the center of the roof. Hold your fire until you are positive of hitting a Djicheur. It's our only hope with our small supply of ammunition, to hold out until the Legion gets here!"

The men brought their machine guns into play, mainly on the southern battlements. Suddenly, like a rising tide of white, those Djicheur robes commenced pouring over the walls. Kent rallied his men and gave them the order to fire at their own discretion. The loyal machine guns rattled out their death to the Silent Ones that pressed ever constantly over those southern parapets of the ancient fort.

Kent watched his stack of ammunition dwindle to a puny level. And still those white-robed hordes continued to

boil over the sun-bleached and glaring parapets. From the watch tower there came another shrill call from the Australian.

"A band of two or three hundred Djicheur have crept around the north-east dunes and are lying in secret wait to surprise the Legion!"

"Bien," acknowledged Kent and leaped for his radio key. That was an old game of the desert tribesmen, attract the Legion to the foreground and then sneak up on the backs of the marching troops after they had passed. Thus were they pressed into a trap from which there was no escape. Thus, however, did Kent toss back the cover of his radio set and inform his regimental commander of the movements of the Djicheur.

All around Kent lead and rifle balls flew. The Djicheur would reach the white walls of the parapets, fire a few shots. Then would come the *rata-taca-taca-tac-taca* of Legion machine guns, and the desert brigands would drop from view behind those gaunt walls.

From all around Kent came the howls and screams of the wounded and the dying, his comrades, and the Djicheur. Atkinson, hollow-eyed and exhausted, toppled over his gun tripod, a bullet through his cheek. Kent jerked the machine gun clear. Leaping atop the tripod he jammed in its last belt of precious ammunition. Dazedly he saw those bronzed, bestial faces slipping over the battlements toward him. He held down his gun trips.

Leaping along the cement the Mauser mowed down the Djicheur. A shot, piercing and torturing, drove into Kent's right shoulder, already throbbing with pain.

Each dragging moment was more and more hand to hand, now, along those jagged, sun-scorched parapets. That, Kent and each of his *legionarios* tragically realized, spelled the end. In numbers they stood not a chance against

those overwhelming hordes. Kent counted fourteen of his men propped stiffly against the blue sky that glared through the embrasures—fourteen silent heroes who had stemmed the tide of the Djicheur! Their eyes stared glazedly across the vast Sahara and beyond.

Below them, the ever-increasing shell fire of the approaching Legion lifted its wild battle staccato into the searing air. Those Legion rifles across the distant dunes crackled louder and louder while scimitars and Djicheur Mausers rushed over the golden sands—the dunes of El Ougadir once more running crimson with the blood of *legionario* and Djicheur.

Through what seemed interminable hours, those loyal machine guns continued their desultory clatter, continued a sham that could not last for long in a vain endeavor to make the Djicheur believe that those few imprisoned *legionarios* possessed ample ammunition.

Suddenly through that maze of groans and wild battle cries Kent heard the sharp blast of a bugle. It was near at hand! The regimental call to attack! The Legion was storming the block-house hill? Simultaneously there came a dry, hacking yell from the turreted watch tower.

"*La Legión, mis compañeros!*" the sun-parched lips of the Australian screamed down the startling news. "*La Legión! They come!*"

Kent waved a weary acknowledgment. Around him he stared at silent ammunitionless machine guns, their smoke-seared muzzles dropped toward the floor of their roof. The last belt of cartridges was near his foot. He grabbed it, shoved it into the feed paws of the nearest Mauser. *Rata-taca-tac-tac-taca* it sounded——

Kent laughed harshly, hysterically. "The Legion, eh? They come? Just a moment too late!"

René Dormé had left his sentry box that protected the women now and was

fighting hand to hand over the parapets with a huge Moor that towered twice his size and weight. Kent swung the nose of his machine gun around almost listlessly. *Rata-taca-tac-tac-taca-taca*. The big Moor toppled. A dozen more swept over the walls.

"*A mi! La Legión! A—*" the desperate plea of the wounded and dying *legionarios* groaned pitifully out on the smoke-filled air. Still the Djicheur swept over the southern parapets.

Those white robes seemed endless in their pourings. Bartolomé, and Valentino, also Winston, who had now come down from his watch tower to add to the last few of their weakening forces, rushed the band of Djicheurs—it was their last stand! Eleven strong they were, that brave little band of the Legion, eyes bloodshot, and bodies wracked with pain and exhaustion.

Rifle butts crashed over Djicheur turbans, scimitars flashed from the hands of both *legionario* and Djicheur. Kent, with his last few remaining pistol cartridges, accounted for several of those rushing desert warriors. For a grim second, standing over the dead, Kent flung a look around him.

Nine had emerged from that last awful hand-to-hand slaughter, alive. For a scant second the roof was clear. A lull in the battle. They were giving those bloody Djicheurs something to think about, that was certain. But Kent's body seemed to sag as he looked about him.

Their every last round of ammunition was gone!

A few more moments and they would all be cut down before a fresh onslaught of scimitars above those bronzed faces that would sweep over the southern embrazures. Cornered, desperate, Kent sought escape. They must try to make a break through the door, and to the sands below, to reach their Legion lines.

"Come!" shouted Kent with parched throat.

Beckoning to his sweaty, exhausted comrades, Kent dashed for the stone sentry boxes and grabbed the American girls by the arms.

"Out of it! Quick! With me!" To Winston, he yelled: "Try to get Cor-saria out of that other sentry box."

One of the *legionarios* drew the bars of the great iron door. Kent, the American girls behind him, his empty .45 pushed out before him, plunged for the stairway. Then he staggered back. A mob was rushing up that stairway. Thus would they go! Then Kent's eyes seemed to bulge from their sockets. He stared again incredulously. It couldn't be?

He was face to face with *Comandante Cordoba*!

The Legion commander was leaping up the crumbling steps two at a time, his pistol thrust out before him from a chin strip. Beside him rushed Salazar, his long Legion bayonet gleaming from the muzzle of his rifle. On sight of Kent the raiding party drew back staggeringly on the stairs.

"*A mi la Legión!*" gasped Kent breathlessly. He lurched weakly against the chest of his commanding officer. The regimental leader caught his weary lieutenant in his arms, held him.

Kent realized dazedly that the thunder of rifle and artillery fire had ceased. A strange quiet gripped the fort. Together, then, the little band pushed back up onto the roof. Stretcher bearers hurried here and there attending the wounded and carrying them down to the medical crews.

On the roof Kent sank to his knees. The *comandante* pressed a flagon of rum to his lieutenant's lips and called to the hospital attendant to look after his shattered shoulder and swollen ear lobe.

"You saved our lives, my life!" praised Kent.

"No, señor! You had already saved yourselves, but even if I had, then we

would only be square. Didn't you save mine that wild night in Toum Agoug?" The *comandante* raised Kent to sitting posture. "You're completely exhausted from the strain, but, *no importa*, we'll have you bettered very shortly now."

Kent stared around the rooftop. It did not seem right that there were no more Djicheurs pouring over those white and tan, sun-bleached ramparts.

"We have had a glorious victory!" enthused the *comandante* through a face begrimed with powder burns and red bruises. "Thanks to your well-directed information we deployed our troops around the enemy and literally raked him in when he attacked. When La Oficina Real in Madrid hears of this you'll be stepped up to a *capitán* at least."

Kent's eyes seemed to be seeing things far away. It was all too good to be true.

"You—you mean, that it's all over? That we have really beaten the Djicheur?"

"Beaten him? *Por Dios!* Amigo, there are no more Djicheurs!" Cordoba swept his arm off toward the south. "Over there, only a handful of Djicheurs are melting into the farther south. The Saharan villages and the traveling caravans will not be troubled with Djicheurs for many months to come, my Brave One."

Kent staggered to his feet, feeling better after several drafts of rum and the cheering news from the Legion commander. From his left hand there came a wild scuffling, excited shouts.

"*Viva! Viva!* What a find!" It was Salazar talking. "Look! The *teniente* has been keeping back good news. *Mira!*"

The crowd looked. The silent form of El Corsario, huge, haggard, and shamefaced, was brought into their midst. The American girls, now recognizing their actual security, took their first look at a real desert *kaid*. One

and all the group crowded around the bound form of the great desert vandal, El Corsario. Kent looked down at his old enemy with kindly eyes, then he turned toward Cordoba.

"I have one favor to ask of you, *mi comandante*," urged Kent.

"You have but to name it, Ricardo," assured the Legion commander.

"That El Corsario, and his surviving son, be given two good Tamsouk camels, with ample food and water, and their—freedom!"

A startled gasp went up among the *legionarios*. That was the unheard-of.

"For two sound reasons," urged Kent, seeing the hesitancy on the face of Cordoba. "First, he has spared the lives of the American civilians. The men he set free on horses that he actually gave them and sent them back to the mines. The American girls he took good care of. Secondly, he saved my life to-day in the cellar of this blockhouse, when Butchy shot off a .45 under my chin, aimed at me."

In a few words Kent explained the deception of Butchy and of how he had led his unwitting comrades into the trap that had cost many their lives and, nearly, all victory.

"As to Butchy, you will find him at the moment," explained Kent, "in the cellar room, bound. The first turn to the right!"

There was a rush of *legionario* boots down the stairs. For a moment the Legion commander stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"That is a large request, *teniente*. Yet, I understand how you may feel. One thing is certain, he can do little harm now. His bands are all dispersed, annihilated. There is nothing for him to organize."

The *comandante* shrugged his shoulders, Latin style. "You say that he set free the American miners and that he did not harm the American women, *mi teniente?*"

"*Verdad!* Just so! He was holding the women for ransom. The stolen jewels he turned over to me," lied Kent, to plead Corsario's case. "He has many of the rudiments of a *caballero*, señor!"

"*My bien*, then. As you wish it. You may give him his freedom. It will set a good example to other desert *kaid*s, will show them that their lives will be spared by Spain, when they show mercy to civilians."

Kent turned to Corsario whom the *legionarios* were unbinding. The huge corsair stumbled to his feet. Kent requested the rum flagon and gave the great Djicheur a hefty drink.

"Word of a *Yanqui*," stated Kent quietly. "You and your son may leave in peace. My *legionarios* will furnish you with water, food and a strong Tam-souk camel. Let this be a lesson to you, to never again demand extortion from the *Legión Español*."

El Corsario flung Kent a grateful glance. With cool, deliberative voice, he answered:

"I see that the word of a *Yanqui* is the word of honor! This news shall I spread among the tribes of the Sahara, for Corsario will have some ripe years yet. May Allah bring his blessings upon you!"

With this short speech the great desert chieftain and his son, now freed, made low *salaam* to the officers before them and swept through the roof exit to the desert realms below.

IT was sunset by the time all the wounded had been taken care of, and the great forces of the *Legión Español* once more ready to start the long, but victorious trek northward over the high Atlas Mountains to their post at Ait Ahmed in Rio de Oro. A small band of murmuring *legionarios* stood before the great shell-riddled doors of the ancient blockhouse.

Richard Kent whirled a khaki-clad

individual around in his tracks before that wide-eyed group of soldiers. With a few vicious strokes he jerked the Legion buttons and the sergeant stripes from the *legionario* tunic, dishonored on the body of Butchy, the traitor. A deathly silence gripped the watching group.

"You have nothing on me!" snarled Butchy the bold. "You can prove nothing."

"That's the best part of it, traitorous one!" blazed Kent infuriatedly. "I don't need to prove anything! You've proven enough against your rotten, slimy soul, to be shot by the Legion each morning at sunrise for the next twenty years—and could I perform a miracle and accomplish just that, I would! However, you'll look well hanging in the Legion square at Ait Ahmed."

Kent whirled the hated figure around again, and made sure that there were no insignia of the *Legión Español* anywhere on his person. Then to his men commanded roughly:

"Take him! Pronto! Out of my sight! Onto that burro."

The *legionarios* roughly prodded Butchy onto the shaggy back of the waiting animal and swept off into their ranks with him. Kent, weary and haggard, turned about and headed down those great files of khaki that suddenly seemed to spread before him. There were two lines, he vaguely realized, trim and straight. He saw his *comandante* backing off in lively stride, his saber flashing in the evening sun over his head. His bloodshot eyes seemed and seemed not to see these things. He heard the sharp voice of the Legion commander ring down those loyal khaki lines like the snap of a whiplash:

"*Presenten las armas!*"

Then, against those long scarlet rays of the sinking Saharan sun he saw the long rows of Legion carbines snap to attention, to present arms! Dazedly he

saw those blue barrels emblazoned like burnished fire before his eyes. A lump rushed to Kent's throat, stuck there. On both sides of him were his loyal, tough-hearted *legionarios*. They were presenting arms—to him! Snapping his back to wavering, weary attention, Kent brought his right hand up to his Legion cap, while a hot, gladsome mist floated before his eyes.

With strange, light-moving feet Kent walked along those khaki lines and beneath the floating scarlet-and-gold banners of old Spain toward the rear of the long lines of *legionarios*. There came a shrill blast from the trumpeter. Slowly, those long lines commenced their easy trek northward toward the gaunt mountains of old Morocco, that loomed in the farther west.

At the rear of those slow-wending lines Lieutenant Kent rather awkwardly pushed a blond-haired, blue-eyed American girl with hollow cheeks, onto the back of a great, shaggy brown camel. After her he thrust a heavy chamois bag of tinkling rubies. The girl fastened it securely around the neck of her desert transport. *Comandante* Cordoba was assisting the second girl to his waiting, lumbering mount. Kent then crawled wearily up onto the broad back beside the girl, for live camels were scarce after that holocaust in El Ougadir. Exhaustedly Kent lurched down onto that great shaggy back.

"You poor, dear, brave boy!" whispered the girl. "How tired you are! Yet, I do not believe you have a charmed life!"

Kent noted, beside them on the ground, a tiny, shaggy animal of the same color as the camel—a loyal-hearted Airedale that had done his part in the great régime of things—a "faithful" that Kent later learned belonged to the young woman beside him.

As their camel swayed gently along Kent gazed fondly at the weary, yet dauntless little animal, then, dreamily

stared out across the vast reaches of the southern Sahara toward a golden dust cloud that marked the exit of El Corsario and his son deeper into their desert lands. Kent looked across toward his admired *comandante*.

"*Verdad, amigo*, it is a strange world out here in Africa. Is it not?" inquired Kent musingly.

"*Si*," answered Cordoba with conviction. "But what brings these thoughts, *mi teniente*?"

"I was just thinking," replied Kent slowly, "how curious it is that a man with no education, and with his home among sand dunes, like El Corsario, but with a white soul, is found—like a high-bred mastiff—among a flock of black-hearted wolf-jacks of the desert."

"*Quién sabe, amigo*, as to that. Perhaps our opinions would differ there."

The camels were swaying regularly along now. The last flaming rays of the Saharan sun in scarlet and gold wavered across the skies like great tongues of fire. The girl had been talking. What was she saying? Kent, his body throbbing with the heat and the pain, his mind a queer, tortured maze of strange visions of memory, listened:

"My father will repay you," she was saying. "He is wealthy. He is one of the owners of the ruby mines at Targa el Mayat."

"There are some things," replied Kent quietly, "that are worth more than any financial reward." He gazed across those wavering, marching lines of khaki and banners flying over them. "Such as for instance, the loyalty of one's comrades, their respect and faith in you. An opportunity to save a pal's life. A chance to reward an honorable person, and"—Kent looked straight into those limpid blue pools of eyes of the American girl—"perhaps I ask too much, when I ask for all of these, but in addition, I would greatly treasure your friendship."

"Friendship," she mused. "You have had that, from the very first night I saw you out there in the lights of that burning caravan, with pain written across your face when you realized you could do nothing to rescue me as I was carried off by the Djicheur." She slipped a firm, smooth hand into the bronzed and weary one of Kent's. Kent accepted it gratefully, gladly.

"Then," answered Kent dreamily. "That is all that matters. Life, time, and I hope a mellowing friendship, will take care of the rest!"

The girl was silent.

"Your name?" inquired Kent.

"Doris Bennett."

"I like that. It's pretty. Mine's Richard Kent."

"That, I like even better," she slowly said.

As the two young people stared off into that dazzling sunset of sapphire and flame and across the waving banners of old Spain, a new promise seemed to open to them. A promise of happy days to come, days free from suffering, and filled with a radiant happiness such as only youth can know. Thus did those long lines of tramping feet, wearily, yet happily wind their long trek across the burnished sands of Morocco toward Ait Ahmed—the home of the victorious legions of old Spain.

**More Gripping Stories by Lieutenant Pond Will Be Seen
in Future Issues.**



AIR—HOT AND OTHERWISE

EVER since the building of the Capitol in Washington there has been difficulty in properly heating and ventilating the immense structure. Whether this is because there are so many inside rooms in it, or because the statesmen indulge in so much hot air in the House and Senate chambers, nobody has yet had the wisdom or the courage to say.

David Lynn, superintendent of the Capitol Building and grounds, believes that after many experiments he at last has installed the best system available; and in support of his contention this much may be said: "Whereas the present plan to make the temperature of the structure suit the comfort of the people in it, the system in the good old days," was to advise the people to suit their clothing to the temperature. The way the dear public was once treated is told in the "Documentary History of the Capitol," in which occurs this passage concerning the situation in 1859:

"One difficulty to contend with in heating and ventilation of both legislative halls, arises from the difference in the clothing of the audience in the gallery and the senators and members on the floor.

"The rooms are intended for the use of Congress; senators and members spending many hours in them require the temperature which they would choose in their private homes. They sit without hats or overcoats. The audience in the galleries is composed of persons who come in, after a brisk walk, coated, bonneted, and shawled to resist an out-of-door winter temperature and sitting for only from a few minutes to an hour or two in the galleries, retain all these wrappings and complain that they find the galleries, kept at seventy degrees, intolerably warm.

"For this there is no remedy except when entering the galleries, to take off the overcoats, cloaks, and shawls fitted for the temperature of the outer air."

SWAMP TIGER

By BLAKE CABOT



Vagra, the Hunted and Feared, Finds a Friend in the
Jungle Savannas.

THE deep roar of a tiger echoed through the forest. A swarm of brown monkeys set up a frenzied chattering, and rushed away from the mango trees upon which they had been feeding, leaving behind them a sway-

ing sea of branches. Vagra, who had been dozing through the long afternoon of this sultry day, was disturbed from his sleep by the sudden commotion. The roar came again, this time faintly. His shoulders reared up and his head

strained in the direction from which the sound had come.

This rumbling call from his own kind sent a rippling shiver along Vagra's back. His tawny, black-striped body grew tense and his strong tail lashed fitfully back and forth. A grumble of slow rage reverberated in his throat. Only a few days before he had heard that call, and then, as now, his back had tingled with a strange anger. Vagra was lord of the glade in which he now stood. Never before had an interloper sent his voice into its confines. There would be a fight some day and then Vagra would be alone again.

The tall, cool *nurkul* grass in which Vagra had been lying swayed to its tops, twelve feet above, as he padded softly toward open ground. The ground was marshy; here and there lay shallow pools of water, over treacherous mud. Vagra had learned where it was safe to place his feet. In a minute he came out to the edge of the grass where it bordered on a long pool of greenish water. On one side of the pool were tall trees, their branches overhanging the water. They reared up from a tangled jungle of thorny bushes and creepers. Behind them lay the twilight darkness of the Indian forest. Everywhere else the pool was shut in by the reedy *nurkul*, interspersed here and there with clumps of canebrake.

Vagra leaned over the edge of the pool and lapped noisily until his thirst was quenched. Even now an occasional rumble came from his half opened mouth. He stretched himself so that his white, furred chest scraped along the damp ground. Then his anger was suddenly driven into the background by a new and pressing sensation. Vagra was hungry.

Half hidden in the grass lay what had once been a full grown deer. That had been three days ago, before Vagra struck him down. Now there were white bones and little more. Carrion

had eaten what Vagra left for them. Vagra pawed tentatively at the remains, then, with a shake of his head, veered off sharply, back through the reeds from which he had come.

The reeds swayed again, for some two hundred yards, until Vagra's massive body emerged into the open once more. He paused for a moment, turning his greenish eyes toward the far end of this *savanna*, in which his marsh was situated. For half a mile it stretched between the tangled mass of trees and jungle lying all around. Vagra looked back in a fleeting glance toward the reeds and then broke in a noiseless trot for the forest opposite him. In a moment he had disappeared. A peacock flew screaming harshly from the forest where Vagra had entered. After that there was again silence.

He made his way sinuously through the forest until a thin infiltration of light lessened the gloom about him. His pace slackened to a slow, gliding crawl that carried him to the edge of the wood. Now he could see before him a large expanse of gently undulating hills covered with short, yellowish grass. An occasional tree broke the monotony of the grasslands. These were the first rise toward the great Garo Hills that stretched eastward into the province of Assam.

Vagra pricked up his ears as a faint sound was borne down to him on the wind. Slowly he turned his head upwind and his eyes, their pupils narrowed to catch the last light of the day, finally fastened upon a herd of sambar deer grazing close to the forest, a quarter of a mile away. He slipped back into the cover and crept along until his ears once more warned him of the proximity of the herd.

His pace now dropped to a crawl as his body flattened out nearly to the ground. The pads on the bottom of his feet carried him along soundlessly. A pause and his head peered forth through

a heavy thorn bush. Only his head could be seen; the rest of his body melted into an indistinguishable mass of tawny color that blended with the underbrush behind him.

The sambar were still upwind and now scarcely twenty yards away. Vagra slid through and beyond the bush, moving slowly, flattened out but ready for instant action. He headed for a buck with great pronged antlers who as yet had no inkling of the beast that was stalking him. But suddenly the sambar's head flew up from the grass and he stood trembling with nostrils distended. The wind, which had played him false, at last brought him the scent of his enemy.

He gave a little cry and shot off toward the forest. At the same instant Vagra, with a thunderous roar, sprang forward, his body doubling with the drive from his powerful legs. The sambar had made his start too late; Vagra was to make his kill. He was beside his prey in four leaps. A paw leaped forward, the pads that had been so soft now contracted to solid bunches of muscle, his claws protruding like gleaming fangs of steel. The blow reached out and then slashed downward, deep into the heaving throat of the deer. The jugular vein, which had been pulsating violently, spurted a thick stream of crimson blood. As the sambar stumbled to his knees Vagra dealt him a terrific blow on his neck, which mercifully put an end to his agony.

Vagra, with the deadly efficiency of the tiger, had made his kill. It had lasted only a few seconds. The dead buck lay before him, still pumping a thinning stream of blood, as so many others before had done, that Vagra might no longer feel the gnawing of hunger in his stomach. He killed only for food, having outgrown the rapacity of his cubhood and never having tasted the flesh of man.

In a short time he had torn away and

devoured a hind quarter of the deer, the four-inch fangs in the front of his mouth ripping out hunks of warm flesh that were barely touched by his cutting teeth before being swallowed. Then Vagra, satiated for the moment, sank his fangs into the fore shoulder of the beast and growling contentedly set off for his swamp lying far distant in the forest. The carcass of his prey dragged limply past his straining shoulder, and yet lightly for all its four hundred pounds. Vagra would have food for three more days.

The sun was still hot on the next afternoon when Vagra awoke and stretched luxuriously. A drink from the pool passed pleasantly down his hot throat. He yawned until his jaws seemed about to be sundered and then ambled over toward a tamarind tree at the edge of the marsh. As he walked a stange, liquid warbling came from his mouth, incongruous in this immense beast—the twitter of a tiger when he is at peace with the world, the sound that makes the Garos of the hills say that the lord of the jungle carries a bird in his throat.

This tamarind was like the others that grew about the pool, except that, high from the ground, beginning twelve feet up, was a mass of deep scratches torn deep into the bark to the living wood beneath. Vagra reared up on his hind legs to his full height and embraced the tree with his forearms. He rested there for a moment and then, digging his unsheathed claws into the bark, raked them downward in long, even strokes that left scars like those already there. As he did so a pleasant shiver swept from the roots of his claws through his forearms to his shoulders. He repeated the operation until his nails were clean and sharp. Then he dropped lightly to all fours and ambled over to the small clearing where he had left his kill the night before.

Perched on the sambar's haunch were two vultures, their bald necks

stretched down as they plucked at the dead flesh. Their heads shot up at Vagra's approach but they made no move. He growled angrily and made a little leap forward. The ugly birds took to their wings and flopped awkwardly to a near-by tree, not yet willing to forsake their feast.

Vagra worried at the shoulder of the buck, laid bare the flesh, and gulped down great mouthfuls of meat. One of the vultures came back and stuck its head into the hole in the sambar's side which it had gouged while Vagra was still sleeping. The tiger growled again but kept on eating. The vulture grew bolder and ate voraciously until his head was scarcely six inches from Vagra's whiskered jowls.

The bird's breath stank from rotted flesh. A tiger's scent is weak, but this reeking smell burned in Vagra's nostrils. Lifting his head from the carcass he swung forward his paw in a sweeping arc. The vulture jumped into the air, but too late. There was a strangled scream and then a sodden thud as its body was dashed violently to the ground. It flopped about convulsively before collapsing into a sprawled mass of feathers. Vagra, who had forgotten the incident as soon as his paw struck the struggling body, went on eating.

As he ate there came a violent rustling in the trees above him, accompanied by a burst of shrill chattering. A swarm of *langur* monkeys, their silver-gray bodies swinging effortlessly from branch to branch, came into view. Vagra lifted his head and glanced toward them tolerantly. He plucked out a rib from the sambar's side, slashed off the meat and then licked the bone clean with his rasp-like tongue. The *langurs* caught sight of him and dashed back frantically into the forest. There was a short silence before curiosity and greed for the rich mangoes brought them back, gibbering raucously to keep up their courage.

The boldest of the lot, Muni, swung

to the tamarind over Vagra's head. His black face, fringed with long, white hair, peered down. Vagra growled benevolently and shook his head. Yelling with sudden fright, Muni fell over backward and curled his tail around the branch below where he swung to and fro, cursing noisily. Then he swung to the next tree and vanished into the gloom. Vagra licked his chops and yawned.

He walked heavily to the foot of a mango tree at the edge of his pool. There in the cool shade he sprawled out at full length. His paws stretched nearly to the water; his back curved slightly into the creepers at the edge of the jungle. A few minutes and he was asleep. The *langurs* returned, this time quietly, to their interrupted meal.

Vagra slept on through the hot afternoon, slept until gradually the blazing sun sank behind the forest and long shadows crept darkly over the glade and pool. As he lay there breathing deeply, his eyes closed, the only creature to which the tiger falls prey emerged from the blackness of the forest.

Some eight feet above Vagra's head a thick, bare branch jutted out over the water. There was no wind, yet this branch seemed to move for a moment and then was still. It moved again and again was still. In a few minutes something dropped down from the branch and waved back and forth. A pair of lidless, glassy eyes placed on the flat top of a scaly head stared down brightly at Vagra. A long body as thick as a man's thigh scraped almost imperceptibly over the bark of the mango tree.

Sarpan, the twenty-foot python, loosened the grip of his tail about the trunk of the tree and edged forward, his head still waving, but now nearer to Vagra.

Although Vagra still slept, the grim advance of the python was not unobserved. High above the limb over which Sarpan's scales were scraping, Muni sat staring in an agony of terror. In one of his hands was clutched a half

eaten mango. His eyes were fixed on the waving head of Sarpan. His limbs were too heavy with fear to take him from the scene and for the moment his throat was tight with fear.

Sarpan lowered himself another six inches. His progress was halted, for Vagra now stirred uneasily. A pause and then the gliding advance was taken up again. Then suddenly a scream of pure anguish burst from Muni's throat. The scream had not yet died away when Vagra sprang to his feet with one bound and turned his eyes to the tree above. In the partial darkness his eyes made out the upreared head of Sarpan and the sharply curved neck drawn back to strike.

Sarpan struck but his hammerlike head fell short of Vagra's leaping body. A claw-tipped paw shot out, striking with terrific force behind the python's head and nearly severing it. Sarpan's body uncoiled from the branch and dropped to the foot of the tree. Like a steel spring it coiled and uncoiled, whipped out convulsively, cutting down the underbrush and thudding against the mud that bordered the pool. In the violence of the upheaval the mangled head was snapped off and hurled far out into the water. The contortions of the now headless body became gradually less violent until at last they died down to a feeble twitching.

Vagra had been standing by, crouched down and growling fiercely. As he slowly relaxed, a fresh disturbance came to spoil the peace of his evening nap. With Sarpan lying dead among the creepers, strength had suddenly rushed back into Muni's trembling body. The flow of renewed vigor was so unexpected that he lost his balance and plunged down helplessly through the branches. He landed, half stunned, square on Vagra's broad back. Instinctively he reached out his arms, found them wrapped around something solid, which happened to be Vagra's neck, and

tightened them in a grip that nothing could dislodge.

With a startled bellow Vagra jumped six feet into the air, spun around, and made for the *nurkul* at a gallop. Ten minutes later he began to grow weary of the pace and returned to the pool. The thing which had fastened itself to his shoulders and neck was troublesome but not painful.

Muni's fright was so completely beyond anything that he had ever experienced before that he welcomed the momentary security of his furry perch. Furthermore, there was a certain exhilaration about the dizzy pace that Vagra had set which was equally beyond the scope of any previous experience.

Panting heavily, Vagra crouched down on his haunches. Muni scampered to the ground and skipped with somewhat frantic agility to the protection of a good-sized tree trunk. He stood behind it, poised for quick action if necessary, with only his head showing. Vagra turned puzzled eyes toward Muni's white-whiskered face. It was the scream of a *langur* that had waked him to a peril from which he had barely escaped.

He stretched himself out on his belly, his head resting drowsily on his forepaws, and continued his examination. Muni stepped from behind his tree and made a few steps tentatively forward. A liquid twittering came from Vagra's throat, then was interrupted while he licked contentedly along the side of his paw and rubbed it over his ears and muzzle. Encouraged, Muni came slowly forward until he was only a few feet from Vagra's head.

He stopped there, his head cocked on one side. In his gentle eyes there was little but curiosity and a faint gleam of mischief. They eyed each other. Vagra got lazily to his feet and stood with his flank toward the monkey. Muni hopped straight up and down in excitement, then suddenly darted forward and

leaped in the air to Vagra's back. There he took a firm hold of each of Vagra's pointed ears in his small hands, curled his long, black tail so that it pressed in a dark line across Vagra's white chest and chirped softly to himself. Vagra arched his back and went amiably off at a slow gallop into the jungle.

When, some hours later, Vagra returned to the pool and once more set his teeth in the flesh of the sambar, Muni slipped from his back and scampered away through the trees. But at noon the next day he returned, yelling angrily at the swarm of *langurs* which pursued him. They had caught the scent of tiger in Muni and were driving him, half in fear of a new, mysterious manifestation that bewildered them, from their midst. And so Muni was returning to the one friend that still was left to him in the jungle.

As he scrambled recklessly from the tree and scuttled over to Vagra, his pursuers halted in alarm. Their alarm turned to blind terror when Vagra rushed toward them emitting cavernous roars. After that Muni perched on a little hillock and waited patiently, amusing himself by twisting his face into curious grimaces and making occasional forays into the underbrush. He had just returned from one of these trips, bearing a bit of bright leaf which had caught his eye, when a booming roar was borne across the marsh from the jungle beyond. He sprang back into the cover, dropping his leaf. Vagra felt the familiar, rippling shudder along his spine and threw back his head in an answering growl of thick rage.

It was once more dusk before Muni had the courage to come out of the jungle and approach his friend. Vagra was just wakening from a heavy sleep. He eyed Muni's sidling approach with complete good nature, heaved to his feet and presented his shoulder. Muni clambered swiftly on and they set off through the reeds.

Now the event which shortly succeeded this peaceful departure was to be the most important one in Vagra's life. Things might have been very different had he not wandered into the particular part of the jungle that evening, and had he not been carrying Muni on his back.

With the last light of the day turning to shadow, Vagra came upon a break in the trees made by a wide path that had been cut through to lessen the danger from forest fires. It offered a pleasant relief from the thick cover through which he had been making his way, and so he turned and followed its course.

Then suddenly, unexpectedly, he saw fifty feet in front of him that which he had never seen before—a man. The man, a Garo hillsman returning to his village, which was still three miles away, saw Vagra at the same moment, for Vagra had uttered a low growl. He stood still as death, his hand clutching futilely at the short bladed *dao* in his waist cloth.

For the first time in his life Vagra felt fear, felt blood pounding queerly in his throat. The fear grew when Dhan, that was the man's name, in attempting to dash backward along the path tripped over a root and fell. That move probably saved his life. Vagra saw the tall body of the man disappear into a flat sticklike thing that lay in a small heap. And the heap rose up and became tall again. Afraid, puzzled, he turned and dashed into the jungle, leaving Dhan to flee, white-faced, toward his village at top speed.

It was nearly a week later that a cavalcade of five elephants, bearing *pads* and howdahs, drew near the little village to which Dhan had brought his strange tale of the tiger who bore a monkey on his back—a tiger, he said, twenty feet long, and a snow-white monkey with a black face. The tale had been believed in this terror-stricken village, as such tales are in India, and the terror had heightened.

In one of the howdahs, borne by a scarred old she-elephant, sat Gerald Tudor, who had come up from Dacca for a tiger hunt in the Garo Hills. A strange fact about this village had perplexed him ever since they had come in sight of it. There were no people about, no children playing around the houses as there usually are in these hamlets. And as they came nearer, and the thudding of the elephants' feet was borne over to the houses, there arose an unearthly din of clattering pans and yelling voices.

"What in God's name is all that for, Shaidullah?" Tudor shouted to his shikari, who was riding on the elephant next to him.

Shaidullah smiled, for he was above the superstitions of these simple hill folk. "They seek to frighten off the tiger, sahib, about which I have told you. They hear sounds but dare not look out from their houses. This striped devil has carried off a hundred of their people in this past month."

"Make it quick, then, and let them know that we are here. They must be nearly out of their minds from fear of the cursed beast."

Shaidullah's mahout slapped his elephant with the goad that he carried in his right hand. The animal lowered himself, groaning, to his knee. Shaidullah, having climbed out of the howdah, slid down the elephant's knee and hastened to the nearest house. When he had finally made his voice apparent above the clamor that still arose on all sides, a shrinking figure came to the door. Shortly afterward the noise died away, and more people emerged from their houses.

"I have come," said Shaidullah, "with a sahib to destroy the devil who has been taking your children and men. Do you have news?"

The Garo's face lost its haunted look. He at once broke into excited speech that was pathetic in its eagerness and

relief. "The *geedur* has been seen only recently," he said. And he told the story that Dhan had poured from trembling lips. Shaidullah listened, keeping from his face the pity and partial incredulity that he felt.

When the tale was finished he walked back to his master and related what he had heard. "They talk of a twenty-foot tiger, who bears a monkey astride his shoulders, sahib. He has been seen in the forest, not far from here. And they say that three children have been carried off and eaten in the last five days. They are so frightened, thinking that the monkey must be Hanuman himself, god of the monkeys, who has trained this *bagh* to bear him through the jungle." He laughed. "But it will be a good hunt."

"What the devil does all that rigma-role mean, Shaidullah?" Tudor asked irritably, his lean face drawn into a perplexed frown.

"*Kya jane*, sahib (who knows)?" The shikari shrugged his shoulders. "A lie perhaps. But the tiger has been seen, we can count on that. And they will guide us to the spot."

Tudor's eyes, startlingly blue against the deep tan of his skin, gleamed with excitement. He passed the tips of his slim fingers nervously across his chin. "It's a wonderful story to bring back, isn't it?" he exclaimed. "And he must be a devilish big brute." He directed a few words of command to his mahout and then turned again to Shaidullah. "We must get something to eat and turn in for the night. We'll need steady nerves to-morrow."

The next day, shortly after tiffin, the elephants started off for the jungle. Tudor's sun helmet gleamed brightly over his eager face. One hand rested on the edge of the howdah, the other was clenched around the barrel of his rifle. The villagers came outside of the stockade and watched wistfully, with a despairing prayer in their eyes, until

the dark-gray beasts with their swaying howdahs had disappeared among the trees.

The sun was still high when Vagra left the cool protection of his *nyrkul* swamp for the hot atmosphere of the glade beyond. Now and then Muni slipped from his shoulder and ran along beside him on all fours before clambering back on again. Once he sprang too far, and Vagra waited patiently until the slight pressure on his back told him that Muni was safe again.

It was an undeniable urge that had made Vagra quit his marsh, one that he could no longer resist. The roar, now familiar and enraging to him, had sounded this noon nearer than ever before. As he trotted along, an intermittent rumble seemed ever closer, until a faint scent, which he had almost forgotten, came vaguely to his nostrils. He paused, one foot off the ground, and then went forward at a faster pace.

He broke into the jungle, now growling deep in his throat. Muni began to fidget and look unhappy. Vagra interrupted his angry snarling with an encouraging twitter before hurrying through a mass of thorns choked with twining creepers. He came to a small clearing.

On the other side of this open space stood a tiger of proportions that overshadowed Vagra's. Vagra's hair bristled into a fluffy ridge from neck to tail when he saw what this interloper was gouging at with his fangs. This was Vagra's second encounter with man, but now he had no fear.

The tiger, his muzzle stained red, looked up from the half-devoured body of a child. Vagra answered his throaty growl with a low snarl of sheer fury. His tail stiffened to the stripe at its end, then lashed from side to side as his back arched slightly at his shoulders. Muni ran screaming to the nearest tree and rushed up its trunk to a high branch.

On his face was an expression of agonized fear nearly as frantic as that day when he had seen Sarpan stalking Vagra.

The two animals stood looking each other full in the eyes, each snarling viciously. Then, as though at a signal, they rushed madly forward, fangs bared. As they met Vagra lashed out toward the other's throat. His claws ripped into thick hide but missed the pulsing artery at which he had aimed. He felt the cruel pain of teeth meeting in his shoulder and wrenched violently away. A patch of bright crimson stained his leg.

They drew back and again rushed forward. This time they met head to head, fangs meeting fangs. They reared up to their hind legs, and their chests met. All the time Vagra strove to bury his fangs in his enemy's throat, but at each slash he found only fur; not once did he get to the flesh beneath. As they stood there straining and uttering deep roars of pain and rage, their unsheathed claws raked each other on back and sides.

Then, with a lightning spring, Vagra leaped to one side and brought his paw with all the strength in his powerfully muscled shoulder across his adversary's back. It had force enough to break the spine of a bison. It broke the tiger's back sharply just above his hind legs. His hind quarters collapsed grotesquely, but still he dragged himself on with his weakening forelegs.

The struggle could last but little longer. Vagra attacked from the side. Evading the faltering blow that tried to ward him off, he sank his teeth deep into the beast's throat. He kept them there until the body beneath his grew limp and dead. Then he shook himself and sank wearily to the grass, his tongue lolling out.

Chattering shrill excitement, Muni came down from his tree and ran hesitantly over to his friend. Vagra's eyes

brightened through their weariness, and he stretched out a soft paw. Muni rubbed his tiny hand over it curiously before retreating a few feet to jump up and down on his hind legs, still voicing his excitement. An ingratiating pur from Vagra's throat brought him back.

When he was completely rested Vagra got to his feet, fixed his teeth in the dead beast's shoulder and dragged him slowly toward his marsh. It was a grinding task. He ached in every inch of his body when he at last arrived at the swamp, the slain tiger still dragging from his mouth. Once there he kept on out to a place where the mud was soft and deep below the shallow water. Vagra kept to a long hummock of firm ground, the body trailing beside him in the greenish water. He left his burden half submerged, and went back to the shade of the tamarind that bore the marks of his claws.

Secure from the sun, he and Muni sat side by side, watching quietly until the tawny, black-striped body of the man eater had been sucked down into the muck, watching until the water closed completely over it.

The peace that should have been his, now that the interloper in his domain had been destroyed, was never granted to Vagra. At the moment when he was ready to sleep off his weariness and pain, the shrill trumpeting of an elephant broke into the still air. And very faintly he could hear a heavy tread coming through the reeds, from the direction of the *savanna*.

He had heard wild elephants before, though never in his marsh. But this was different. The tread was too measured, there was too little trumpeting. This was something which made him growl unhappily. Muni jumped to his shoulder, moaning in a frightened way.

They took cover in the high grass where Vagra crouched down very still. The sound came nearer. He penetrated

deeper into the reeds, as much as possible away from the approaching enemy. Then rose high into the air the sharp scream of an elephant when it scents a tiger. And above that came to Vagra's ears a new sound. The mahouts were screaming and yelling in their attempt to keep their beasts in order.

Vagra padded through the *nurkul*, toward the glade. Directly in front of him an elephant trumpeted. He could see the grass waving violently and started to retreat back to the pool. Again he was halted. The line of elephants had cut him off. There was only one course left. He made for the end of the glade, escaping through the open part of the half circle that the hunters had formed around him. As he broke into a gallop, the elephants came hard on his heels. He reached the open with a scant fifty yards between him and his pursuers.

When Tudor, who was on the leading elephant, caught sight of Vagra with Muni clinging desperately to his shoulder he yelled to Shaidullah who was close behind, "There's the filthy brute, by God, monkey and all. His muzzle's still a bloody mess. He's eaten——"

The final word was drowned out by the report of his gun. His elephant lurched as he fired, sending the shot high.

Vagra stopped dead at the report, frozen in his tracks by the horribly unexpected sound. There was a squeal of pain and something slipped convulsively from his back. He looked down and saw Muni, his eyes opened wide in a piteous appeal, his long, black tail straightened out in a manner pathetically unlike that in which it had been flaunted through the forest. The eyes dimmed, and then lost all vestige of life. Muni lay limply still.

Tudor, working his hands with grim haste, had slipped another cartridge into the chamber of his rifle. Bracing himself against the swaying of the howdah

he took quick aim. When Vagra's striped neck stood above the ivory bead of his front sight, his finger contracted.

There was another explosion and Vagra felt a burning pain in his shoulder. Overwhelmed with pain and bewilderment he might have fled. But Muni, the only creature toward whom he had felt affection since cubhood, the only friend he had ever known, lay dead. The outstretched silvery body still lay before him. And the elephant bearing in its howdah the creature that meant only misery to Vagra was nearly upon him.

His chest burning with red fury, he sprang toward the elephant and met his rush with a leap that carried him ten feet into the air, straight to the elephant's head. At this move the other beasts turned and rushed from the scene. Vagra dug his claws into the she-elephant's trunk, fastened the claws of his forepaws deep into her ears, struggling to pull himself on top of her. She trumpeted and rocked from side to side in pain but held her ground.

The mahout beat Vagra over the head with his goad. Still Vagra clung tenaciously to his position. Tudor had all he could do to keep from being pitched out of the howdah. His set face was white, his eyes staring. At any moment the girths might break and he would be thrown helplessly to the ground where he might be trampled to death by the maddened beast.

The elephant could bear the agony no longer. She made off at a gallop, straight for the trunk of a tamarind. If she was successful she could rub off or crush her tormenter before he slashed her head to pieces. The mahout threw himself to the ground, willing to risk immediate death rather than what might follow.

Vagra suddenly felt a stunning impact against his back. Then with a

crash the tamarind broke off at its base. The elephant staggered blindly forward, found its footing give way without warning and was precipitated into a ravine with almost perpendicular banks fifteen feet deep. Tudor was shot from the howdah over Vagra's head. He lay unconscious, his blond hair falling over his forehead, in the dried grass at the bottom of the ravine.

In the midst of a screaming flood of roars and screeches, Vagra staggered to his feet and sprang out of the way of the elephant's flailing feet. He took a short run and shot into the air toward the edge of the ravine. The claws of his hind feet bit into the clay, sending down a shower of rattling stones. A short struggle and he was on his feet and into the jungle.

When he got to the *savanna* it was deserted except for the mahout who was rubbing his injured limbs, and the limp, silvery body lying clear against the fresh brilliance of the grass. The mahout yelled in terror, but Vagra passed by him.

Very gently he took Muni's body in his mouth, careful that his fangs held him only lightly. The mahout watched them, spellbound, and wondered if his master, too, had strangely escaped with his life—and why. He couldn't know that sudden despair had made Vagra quit the struggle, leaving behind him the motionless body of Tudor, to return to Muni. His lips moving soundlessly, he watched until they reached the shadow of the trees.

There Vagra stopped and turned his gaze across the glade toward the *nurkul* marsh where there could never again be any peace for him. He slipped quietly through a clump of bright green fern and disappeared into the twilight of the forest. A kite, flying in sweeping circles high overhead, screamed shrilly. There was no answer.

Watch for More Stories by Blake Cabot.

BREAD on the WATER

By Raymond Leslie Goldman

Ben Lowenstein Comes Back in a New Rib-tickler.

GLANCING through the pages of the trade magazine, Ben Lowenstein, of the Lowenstein Skirt & Blouse Co., suddenly came upon and stared at an unpleasant caption:

THE SAM WEINBERG COMPANY IN
UNIQUE OFFERING

The sight of the name of his hated competitor, in sizable type on the social page, was in itself enough to spoil his day for him; but the item beneath it completed the work of destruction:

Here is good news that will interest all W. W. buyers. The Sam Weinberg Company—The House of Values—widely known for its high-class line of women's and misses' skirts and blouses, announces that it will hold a wonderful Fashion Show on the evening of March 10th at Federman's Hall. The entire line of Weinberg's Supreme Skirts and Blouses will be displayed on TWENTY BEAUTIFUL LIVE MODELS. Out-of-town buyers are urged to prepare their schedules so as to be in New York on that date. Refreshments will be served and a good time will be had by all. See advertisement on page 6.

Ben was reading this for the third time, following the lines with a shaking forefinger, when his friend, Sidney Solomon, entered the office.

"Well, Ben," Sidney sang out to Ben's bent back, "it's lunch time."

Ben swung around in his swivel chair. "Phooee!" he returned sourly. "How could anybody think about eating!"

"I don't know what you mean by that," Sidney replied, puzzled. "When it comes lunch time, you think about eating, ain't it?"

"Not when you just got through reading something like this," said Ben, holding up the magazine.



Sidney's face was a living question mark, especially his nose.

"Still I couldn't understand. That's a paper I read all the time, and I eat anyhow."

"It ain't the paper which does it," Ben explained. "It's what it says about Sam Weinberg. Read it, Sidney."

Sidney read, and, having finished, looked up with a long shrug.

"This ain't nothing new to me, Ben. Everybody is talking about it already. Only yesterday I met on the street Sol Levinson, and even he mentioned it."

"Aii!" Ben groaned. "Sol Levinson

of the Apex Sports Apparel Shops? This is terrible! Here I been thinking how I could get his wonderful account, Sidney, and now you turn around and tell me how he is talking about Weinberg's fashion show. It's like you are sticking knives in me, Sidney."

"I am sorry I am like sticking knives in you, Ben," said Sidney coolly. "But when you practic'ly ask me, y'understand, I tell you, and that's all there is to it."

"Am I blaming you, Sidney? You don't got to go to work and look so insulted, like I called you something. All I know is this: according to what this paper says, Weinberg is giving a fashion show on beautiful live models yet. And according to what you say, even Sol Levinson is talking about it. I could put two and two together when I see it. It means how Weinberg is out after all the big accounts."

"Sure he is. He is in business, ain't he? So nacherly he goes out after the big accounts. He is spending out big, also, Ben, for advertising. For this season alone, y'understand, he puts out a six-thousand-dollar appropillation for advertising. Mark Summerfield, the advertising man, handles it for him. Three thousand for the ads in the papers, with the extra write-ups, which Summerfield gets for him free!—and at least three thousand for the fashion show."

"Six thousand!" Ben gasped.

"Sure. But if it gets him wonderful accounts, like Sol Levinson, Ben, ain't it worth it? A fashion show," he added earnestly, "is a wonderful way to get business. In the first place, it shows off the line like nothing else could do it. A piece of merchandise looks different on a show table and on a beautiful girl. Ain't it?"

"Well, sure. Blouses and skirts is made for girls, not for show tables. So—"

"And besides," Sidney went on, "you

got there all the big buyers, giving a look. Then you serve maybe ice cream and cake, or coffee and sandwiches, and it ends up like a wonderful party, with all the buyers in a good humor and ready to give out big orders. Don't you see how it goes?"

"I see how it goes all right. But listen once till I tell you how it stands with me."

Forthwith, into Sidney's sympathetic ear, he poured a lengthy resumé of his troubles. In preparation for a promising season, he had completed a line of skirts and blouses which, in number of styles and expense of production, outdid any previous seasonal effort. To finance this extensive manufacture, he had borrowed money to the very limit of his resources.

"So what could I do, Sidney? I couldn't go to Mark Summerfield and tell him he should put over for me expensive things like fashion shows and so forth, when I ain't got the money to do it and couldn't borrow it even. And if I don't do it, I wouldn't get orders for my wonderful line this season, and when my notes comes due, I would be rooned. And that's the way I got it."

Sidney's tongue tapped the roof of his mouth.

"If that's the way you got it, Ben, then I feel sorry for you from the bottom of my heart."

"Well," Ben returned, "you could go ahead and be sorry, Sidney, because that's the way I got it. Only one hope I got. This season I got a line which you couldn't equal it nowhere else. Some numbers I got is such knock-outs, y'understand, which only a genius like my designer, Irving Newman, could turn it out at all. And that's my hope."

"I see," said Sidney. "But have you got enough hope to come with me by the L. and K. restaurant for something to eat, Ben? Because I am getting hungry."

Ben shook his head. "With the excitement I got already, I would only eat something very light. I'll go down by the Dairy Lunch."

Ben ate alone, therefore, in the Dairy Lunch, confining his dietary efforts to two liverwurst sandwiches with Russian rye, some coleslaw, a dill pickle in garlic, a thick slice of cheese cake, and two cups of coffee. When he returned to his office, heavy spiritually and intestinally, he found awaiting him none other than Irving Newman, his designer. Irving's state of excitement was so manifest that Ben sensed calamity before he heard about it.

"Nu!" he cried. "What's the matter?"

"Enough!" returned the designer with a grim flourish of the hand. "I just heard something which, if you hear it, Mr. Lowenstein, it will make you drop over!"

Ben sank quickly into his chair as if as a precaution against falling any farther than necessary.

"What do you mean, Irving? Tell me quick, before I drop over without hearing it even!"

Irving strode furiously up and down the office, grinding his teeth and shaking a fist at an invisible foe who seemed to be hovering somewhere on the ceiling.

"Is he a thief!" he shouted. "Is he a low-life! Bloodsucker! Crook!"

"Who?" Ben queried weakly. "For God's sakes, Irving, who is it like that?"

Irving stopped his frantic pacing.

"Weinberg!" he declared. "Sam Weinberg! Just to-day I heard about it! My best numbers, Mr. Lowenstein! The styles I stayed up at nights to get inspiration for them! That blouse style, No. 463-M! That wonderful model, No. 756-B! Three skirt leaders—even No. 214-K in pearl-gray and aqua-blue!"

"Ach Gott!" Ben gasped. "You don't mean to told me——"

"Stolen!" affirmed Irving. "All our best and most original styles! Weinberg has got them all in his line this season, the very i-den-tickle numbers! How he got them, I don't know. My drawings I keep locked up in the safe like they was jools, Mr. Lowenstein! From the workroom here they must have leaked out."

Ben held his whirling head between tightly pressed palms. For a moment he sat there, a study in utter despair. When Irving renewed his pacing, hurling imprecations at the inoffensive ceiling, Ben said wearily:

"Please, Irving, if you got no more to tell me, get out now and leave me think. It's a terrible thing, but you can't get nowhere by busting up this here office. Also, on the way out, please tell Miss Josephs she should bring me in a glass bicarb'nate soda. It's like I ett rocks for lunch."

The dosage served to clear somewhat both his chest and his brain. In the light of Newman's tidings, Weinberg's impending fashion show took on an even graver aspect. Ben realized that he must meet not only warm competition, but duplicity of the rankest sort.

It was not the first time the unscrupulous Weinberg had managed to appropriate the choicest style creations of the high-salaried Newman. But this time the plagiarism threatened sheer disaster. The more or less official "opening" of the spring season was to be on Monday, March 10th; over the preceding week-end the buyers would congregate in New York from all parts of the country.

A majority of them would, in all probability, attend the fashion show which Weinberg would hold on the evening of March 10th. And this meant that Weinberg would be the first to reveal to the trade the very line of merchandise upon which Ben had pinned his highest hopes.

"It's terrible!" Ben pondered miser-

ably. "Something is got to be done, or this time Weinberg would positively roon me!"

It was one matter to decide that something must be done, and another matter to determine what that something should be. After an hour of almost painful consideration, he reached a conclusion which was in itself simple enough, but which existing conditions made exceedingly complex.

His first move was to visit Sidney Soloman, whose cloak-and-suit establishment was on a lower floor of the same building.

"Sidney," he declared, after informing the other of the nefarious theft perpetrated by Weinberg, "what I got to do is give a fashion show before Weinberg gives one. I ain't got the money; I am borrowed up at the bank; but I got to give it anyhow."

Sidney shook his head dolefully.

"A good chance you got, Ben! In the first place, if you couldn't borrow money from the bank, you couldn't borrow no place; because nobody but the bank has got any money to loan out at the beginning of the season. In the second place, you couldn't put over a thing like that by yourself; you would have to have a feller like Mark Summerfield to arrange it up and advertise it and so forth. And you know as well as I do, Ben, how Mark Summerfield is strictly cash in advance. And in the third place, even if you got the money, and you got Summerfield also, even then it wouldn't do you no good. Because, Ben, you would got to give your show before Weinberg gives his, ain't it? And Weinberg is giving his on the tenth March. It's only on the eighth and ninth that the buyers would come to town at all."

"Then what's the matter with the eighth and ninth?"

Sidney gave a short laugh. "What's the matter with it? They ain't nothing the matter with it, I assure you.

But where would you give such a show, excepting at Federman's Hall? There they got a fine stage and lots of seats; and any place else, with everything just as good, would take a millionaire, Ben, to handle it. And you couldn't get a day or night at Federman's Hall until the end of March at the earliest. I know; because Federman hisself told me how he is booked up solid."

Ben listened to this death knell of his hopes and wiped cool perspiration from his face.

"Then I am a goner, Sidney?"

"Well, things ain't eggzackly wonderful with you," Sidney agreed.

When Ben returned that evening to his apartment in the De Luxe, he was as void of hope as Madam Godiva was of skirts and blouses. Disaster had tackled him hard, and now, having thrown him, sat firmly astride his back. What delightful visions had possessed his mind when, three months ago, he and the artistic Irving Newman had planned the spring line of Lowenstein merchandise!

With what joy had he inspected the fruits of Irving's genius! With what confidence had he gone ahead with production! And now—everything wiped away with one fell stroke! The luscious account of Sol Levinson for the prosperous Apex Shops; the favorable notice of the big buyers from the great open spaces; all about to be herded into the camp of the enemy.

Shortly after he and his wife, Clara, had left the dinner table, they received a visit from Ben's widowed sister, Sarah Rabiner. Sarah floated in on a flood of tears.

"Such troubles!" was her shrill greeting. "Morton lost his job!"

Even before she elaborated upon this simple declaration, Ben realized its gravity. Morton was Sarah's only son, and her sole support. Ben was her nearest and most prosperous relative. He knew that, although this was not the

end of a perfect day, it was a perfect end to this kind of a day.

"Such a grand job it was!" Sarah went on, wringing her hands in a sort of ecstasy of grief. "You know, Ben, he was by Stein & Stein, the theatrical producers. Sixty dollars a week he was getting, and doing wonderful work for them, which they was pleased and told him so. And now——"

"Then what did they fire him for?" asked Ben.

Sarah bristled. "They didn't fire him! Why do you say they fired my Morton, Ben? What happened was the firm went busted, Ben."

"Oh!" said Ben. "Still I don't see what you want I should do about it, Sarah. It's too bad; it's terrible even; but all I can see is how Morton should go get him another job right away."

"Yo! It's easy to talk, Ben. But are jobs like that laying around in the street, Ben? All week he tries to get him another job. But everybody says, nothing till next fall. Till next fall, Ben! By that time we would be dead in our graves from starvation already!"

"It's terrible!" put in Clara, on the verge of tears. "Such a grand boy, too! So handsome! A hard worker, always so good to his mamma! He——"

"Wait, Clara!" Ben snapped. "You talk like he was dead already! Sarah, what was Morton doing by that firm he was with?"

"Well, for one thing he got up the dance ensembles——"

"Oh! He designed ladies' underwear. I didn't know he——"

"What are you talking about, Ben?" cried Sarah. "Did I say anything about ladies' underwear? I said he got up the dance ensembles for the Stein & Stein musical shows. Also, he stage directed a little, and——"

"You know what wonderful talent Morton has got," interposed Clara. "I remember even when he was little, he used to write nice verses and songs and

so forth. Also, he can sing and dance, and he is handsome like in the movies."

"Is he handsome!" said Sarah, clasp- ing her hands and raising her face to the ceiling. "He is beautiful, Clara, ain't it? All the girls is so crazy about him, I always think——"

"Shush!" Ben cried impatiently. "Would you two women please for a favor go in the other room and talk like that? I got a hard day to-day, and I don't feel like listening to such *schmoos*. If he is so handsome which all the girls want him, let him go to work and marry a rich girl, and he won't need a job. And anyways, what do you want I should do about it?"

"I thought you could give him a job from now till next fall, Ben," Sarah told him tearfully. "After all, he is your own sister's child; he is your own flesh and blood. Ain't blood thicker than water, Ben?"

"You bet it's thicker!" Ben snorted. "I should give him a job yet! What are you talking about, Sarah? Am I in the skirt-and-blouse business or not, Sarah? Can I give him a job he should sing and dance and look beautiful in the shipping department? Or should he teach me dance ensembles? You talk crazy!"

This preluded an hour of violent argument, in which Sarah and Clara stood shoulder to shoulder against Ben. Morton, it appeared, was an all-around genius. His business ability was second only to his artistic gifts. He was as efficient as though he were not as handsome as a movie star.

But this evening, all argument, all sisterly and wifely pressure, were lost upon Ben. He was, for once in his life, adamant in matters of flesh and blood. He had plenty of valid arguments himself. He was on the precipice that beetles financial ruin.

"No! No! No!" he shouted. "Shut up and get out of here! I got enough without this! You are driving me

meschuga with it! I said I couldn't give Morton a job, and I mean what I said! And that's the end!"

Sarah departed as she had arrived—the flood of her tears bore her in, a lachrymal ebb tide carried her away. Clara—Morton being her favorite nephew—valiantly carried on a verbal barrage until Ben was in bed with the pillow wrapped across his ears.

"Such a day!" he groaned as he sank into the slumber of sheer exhaustion. "I would be better off if I didn't wake up at all to-morrow!"

He did awake, however, to a clear, crisp February morning, with yesterday's memories bitter on his tongue. Nor had Clara forgotten. Ben left his home with Clara's renewed recriminations ringing in his ears and stabbing his conscience. Flesh and blood! He wouldn't even help his own flesh and blood!

"What could I do?" he asked himself later as he sat in his office. "Morton is a grand boy all right, but what good would he do me here? When I am nilly rooned, is that a time to hire anybody, even a relation?"

At eleven o'clock he received a visit from Dave Raskopf, treasurer of the United Kishnev Brotherhood, Lodge No. 1, of which Ben was president. Mr. Raskopf fitted perfectly into the atmosphere and mood of the office. He was weightily lugubrious.

"I tell you, Ben," he said sadly, "things is in a terrible shape. The U. K. B. Charities Fund is practicly wiped out. It's enough we could just meet the expenses for the old folks' home and the orphan asylum. But for the Mitzvah Milk Station, Ben, we ain't got a nickel. On the fifteenth March we are supposed to get started with the station, and begin to give out milk and ice to the needy. Could we do it, Ben, without money? I ask you."

"Ai!" Ben groaned. "Now I got to worry also about milk and ice!"

"You are president of the lodge, Ben!" Raskopf reminded reprovingly. "Then you are also president of the United Charities, ain't it? If you and me don't worry about it, who would? Could we let sweet babies die in the gutter? Have you got a heart in you, Ben, or a stone?"

"Stop!" Ben pleaded. "Do you want I should bust down and cry here? Did I say I ain't sorry for them poor children like that? All I ask is you should leave me think a minute."

Raskopf fell silent, and Ben walked to the window, staring out at the wall of the building across the street. After five minutes of deep concentration, he turned suddenly to his somewhat discouraged visitor.

"What you better do, Dave, is to call up a big meeting for next Sunday night. Be sure you get all the board of directors and as many members as you could get. Then we'll see what we could do about it. If babies need milk, they got to get milk. Also ice."

Raskopf rose and gripped Ben's plump hand.

"Ben, you got a heart as big as a watermelon!"

"Forget it, Dave. Charity is charity."

"Also," Ben told himself a while later, "charity begins at home. Morton is my own sister's child. My own flesh and blood. I got to do what is right by them, no matter what."

He telephoned to Clara.

"Dolling," he said, "please for a favor don't be mad at me no more. I changed my mind about what I said last night. Call up for me Sarah, and tell her she should send Morton around here right away to-day. I'll find something for him to do, and pay him sixty dollars a week."

"Ben," Clara replied joyfully, "I knew your heart would melt! Just for that to-night I would make special for you for dinner some fine *rinderbrust*!"

"Never mind that, Clara," he re-

turned. "Maybe babies would get milk and ice, and Morton would get a job, but myself I am in no condition for *rinderbrust*."

Whatever alarm Treasurer Raskopf sounded, the members of the U. K. B. responded nobly to a noble cause. Of course, there were a few came under the misapprehension that there would be some sort of gratuitous entertainment; but most of them realized, however vaguely, that some grave situation had arisen which needed their instant attention.

Not one of the board of directors was absent. Sam Weinberg, Ben's bitter personal and commercial foe, but a co-worker in the affairs of the brotherhood; Morry Jacobson, flowers and feathers; Mark Summerfield, the advertising man; Phil Strauss, of the Elite Catering Co.; Sol Levinson, of the Apex Stores; Ike Federman, real estate; Aaron Weil, wholesale poultry. And besides these leaders, at least fifty lesser lights among the membership were in attendance.

After they had assembled in the spacious room on the second floor, Treasurer Raskopf took the floor, and with moving eloquence explained the sad circumstances which prompted this meeting. When he finished, the room was staccato with clucking tongues. Poor orphans! Poor babies! No milk! No ice! *Schlemazel!*

Then Ben rose and spoke as president. Ben was, ordinarily, no orator. But to-night he seemed inspired. If Raskopf set his hearers' tongues to tapping, Ben brought real tears to their eyes. He painted so vivid a picture of milkless and iceless babies that the walls seemed to echo their infantile wails of agony.

"I tell you," he pursued earnestly, "something is got to be done about it. Like Brother Raskopf told you, on the fifteenth March the Mitzvah Milk Station gets started for the summer. By

that time we got to have five thousand dollars cash in the fund to do it. If we don't do it, and even one little innocent baby dies without milk and ice, then all I got to say is it would be terrible! So what I am going to do now is to ask for suggestions from anybody which they got something they could suggest."

Suggestions were forthcoming, but, for the most part, they were impractical. For example, Mendel Rabinowitz—who, by the way, represented a live-stock company—proposed that they buy a dozen cows.

"In that way," he concluded, "you would not alone get milk this summer, but every summer as long as the cows lived. And a good cow lives a long time."

"You maybe got good intentions," overruled the president, "but the idea is *meschuga*. In the first place, if you keep a dozen cows in a little store on Hester Street, like the milk station is, then all I got to say is, you are a wonder, Rabinowitz. Even so, it would solve up only one half of the problem. Because maybe you sell cows which give out not only milk, but ice also, but myself I never heard of it. Who else has got ideas to give?"

"How about a charity bazaar?" asked Morry Jacobson, rising to the occasion. "The last bazaar we give made enough to pay off the mortgage on this building. Is that a idea?"

"Morry," Ben replied, "that's a wonderful idea. Still, it won't do. You can't expect to give one bazaar after another, and still get people to come to it. People get sick of bazaars the same as anything else. F'r instance, my own wife bought enough stuff at the last bazaar so we still trip over it in our apartment. That's the way it goes with everybody else. Before we give another bazaar we got to wait till everybody throws away what they bought at the last one. What we want this time is

something diff'rent. But what you said, Morry, gives me a wonderful idea. Why couldn't we give a fine entertainment with music, singing, and dancing? Aha! Listen yet! Right away when I think about it, I am getting excited!"

Indeed, his face was flushed and eager, and he denied eloquence no helpful gesticulation. A musical production would be a novelty. Tickets could be sold for five dollars each, and it would be no trick at all to dispose of one thousand tickets among the six hundred members of the Brotherhood.

"We could raise five thousand dollars easy! And if everybody here helps whichever way he could, then the expense would be practic'ly nothing. For the actors, ain't we got enough fine sons and daughters to do it? Myself, I think that Brother Jacobson's idea is wonderful."

All faces turned to smile appreciatively at Brother Jacobson, who grinned modestly beneath his stubby mustache. It was evident from the general comment and applause that the suggestion was favorably received; but a formal vote made it a matter of record. The secretary wrote into the minutes: "Brother Jacobson makes a motion a musical entertainment should be given by the lodge. President Lowenstein seconds. Motion carried."

"Now!" shouted the president. "We got to make up final arrangements here. So far, all we know is now we would give a entertainment. But putting on such a fine thing takes somebody to run it, and somebody has got to volunteer to do it. This is a busy season for everybody in business. So whoever does it has got to make big sacrifices. Ain't it?"

He paused and looked down from his height on the platform. Whereas, a moment ago, every face was lifted directly to his own, now he saw only three-quarter profiles. The room was a hubbub of nervously shifting feet.

"So who wants to nominate himself for chairman of the musical entertainment?" Ben inquired. "Brother Sam Weinberg, how would you like to do it?"

For a long moment there was silence. Fifty pairs of eyes saw Weinberg stiffen in his chair, while a dull flush mounted to his face. He glared at Ben malevolently. In his mind were the thoughts that came to every one who knew of the deadly rivalry between the houses of Weinberg and Lowenstein. Why did Ben single him out for this dubious honor? He should take charge of a charity affair at the opening of the spring season! It would mean neglecting his own business to the advantage of his competitors and enemies! Weinberg's lips curled. A fine chance Ben had of tricking him like that! He would just turn the tables on Ben! He rose to his feet.

"I guess I ought to be honored by the honor you would like me to get," he told Ben, "but I am sorry to say how I got to refuse it at this time. There is somebody right here who ain't nilly as busy as I am, who could give their time to it better than I could. It seems to me, Lowenstein, that if you could get tears down your cheeks talking about the babies without milk and ice, y'understand, then you could make a few sacrifices also. So right now I openly nominate you, Lowenstein, for chairman of the musical entertainment!"

They who sat nearest the platform saw that tiny beads of perspiration glistened on Ben's forehead and upper lip, and that a strange fire burned in his eye. They saw him draw a deep, quivering breath before he made his reply.

"So!" he exclaimed grimly. "Brother Weinberg nominates me for the chairman! He don't want it hisself because it means too much sacrifices from his business to give to them helpless babies and orphans! Well, all I got to

say is this: I am happy to say that I have got a heart in me instead of a rock. When starving babies needs me, I couldn't think about myself. Therefore, y'understand, I not alone except the nomination which Brother Weinberg nominated, but also I second the nomination. And, besides being the chairman and doing all the work, I right now this minute want to buy the first hundred tickets for five hundred dollars! Now what do you think about that?"

They showed him what they thought about it. The room rang with shouts and cheers and applause of hand and foot until the crystal chandeliers swayed. Ben held up a hand and pleaded for silence.

"Brothers of the U. K. B.," he shouted, "listen once: hollering is all right and I appreciate it from the bottom of my heart how you are acting, but we still got work to do. I couldn't do it all myself, even if I wanted to do it. In the first place, would every man here which he has got a son or a daughter or some young relation like that, please see how they would take a part in this entertainment?"

The chandeliers swayed again with their affirmative replies.

"So far, so good. Now another thing. We got to give this here entertainment as soon as possible. A good time to give it is on a Sunday night. Like Brother Jacobson says, it's Sunday night which it is most convenience for everybody. Brother Jacobson, about how long do you think it would take us to get everything ready, with rehearsing and so forth? About four weeks?"

"I think four weeks would be all right," replied Brother Jacobson.

"Well, then," Ben went on hurriedly, "suppose we say four weeks from tonight? Brother Fishbein"—he turned to the secretary—"what date would that come on?"

Brother Fishbein counted on his

fingers. "That would be the ninth of March."

"So! Brother Fishbein makes a motion we would make the date for the entertainment on Sunday, the ninth of March. Who seconds it? Brother Goldstein seconds it. All in favor please holler, 'Aye.' Motion is carried!"

"Now the next problem we got is where to give it at. Since we would sell a thousand tickets, and got only one performance, then we got to have a place big enough to sit a thousand people. I want to say right here that besides being chairman and buying tickets, I am also willing to furnish out from my own pocket a professional stage director to direct this here entertainment the way it's got to be!"

More cheers, which Ben silenced quickly.

"Hollering is all right, but what I need here is coöperation. I couldn't do everything myself. We got to get a place to give the entertainment at—Brother Federman, here is a chance you could show how big your heart is."

Federman was on his feet, the light of sweet charity shining on his round, rosy face.

"By golly!" he cried; "nothing could give me greater pleasure, y'understand, I should donate the use of Federman's Hall for the poor starving babies and orphans. But in that case, we couldn't have the entertainment until late in March, because, so help me, until late in March every day and night the hall is taken by somebody!"

"Late in March!" Ben echoed in consternation. "But we got to have the money before the fifteenth, when the milk station begins! No! Like Brother Fishbein says, it's got to be on March 9th!"

At the rear of the room a tall, thin man rose to his feet and demanded recognition.

"Brother Wetzel!" pointed Ben. "You got the floor!"

"I only want to say," Brother Wetzel declared aggressively, "how I am willing to make sacrifice also; just like anybody else. I am the feller which he has got Federman's Hall hired up for March 9th. I got it for my daughter, Milly, which we are giving her a coming-out dance for a début. Now if it's a question which is more importance, my daughter coming out in a début or a lot of starving orphans and babies, then all I got to say is, my wife should raise a rumpus about persponing the dance a few weeks!"

"Is that a wonderful spirit!" cried Ben. "Brother Wetzel is willing to give up his date so Brother Federman could donate his hall on March 9th! If you think that ain't sacrifice, then you never had a wife and daughter who would have something to say when they heard about it. But you could tell your Milly, Brother Wetzel, how I would give her a nice part in the entertainment. That would make her feel good and satisfy your wife also."

Brother Wetzel seated himself amid cheers.

"Now we are getting along here," beamed the delighted president and chairman. "Brother Wetzel makes a motion we use Federman's Hall for the entertainment. Motion seconded by Brother Federman, who donates the hall. Donation accepted with appreciation, and the motion is carried. Write it down in the minutes, Brother Fishbein."

An hour later the meeting was adjourned. Long after the room was emptied of its human occupants, Charity, Benevolence, and Philanthropy hovered about, shaking hands and patting each other on the back. For they had reason to feel that honor had been paid them, and they had done a good evening's work.

Brother Summerfield had, somehow, been elected publicity manager. He would see to it that the entertainment

would be given the widest possible publicity, through the newspapers, the trade journals, and circulars to be prepared and printed at his own expense. He would also furnish the tickets and programs, and the entire organization of his advertising agency would be at the disposal of the entertainment committee. Phil Strauss, of the Elite Catering Co., promised to furnish ice cream, cakes, and sandwiches to be served after the conclusion of the performance.

"I tell you, Sidney," Ben remarked to his friend as the two walked together to the subway, "the way everybody responded was wonderful."

"Sure," Sidney replied. "But just the same, Ben, you are the only sucker. Everybody else makes this donation or that donation, and that's all. But you, Ben, got to do all the work. You let Sam Weinberg trap you into it! Right now, when you ought to give every minute to your business, you take up something like this! Don't you know it would use up nilly all your time for the next four weeks?"

"That is something I couldn't help, Sidney," Ben returned. "Somebody is got to do it. When babies need milk, they need milk, and that's all there is to it. If you don't do good in this world, then you suffer for it. But if you do good, then you get rewarded. You know what the Book says, Sidney: If you throw bread in the water, you get it back pretty quick. And if this is milk and ice instead of bread, it's the same thing."

It was rather fortunate, after all, that Ben had given employment to his talented nephew, Morton Rabiner. Morton's knowledge of theatrical production, his ability as composer, writer, vocalist, and dancer, were not of much use in the manufacture and sale of skirts and blouses; but to the chairman of the entertainment committee he was certainly the knock of opportunity.

On Monday morning, Ben and Mor-

ton held a long conference. Morton was delighted with his new and more congenial assignment.

"I'm glad you are glad," said Ben. "It gives you something to do for your salary besides just hanging around here and keeping the women's minds off of their work. You are too good-looking, Morton, for a busy place where women is supposed to be working. I don't see why a heart-buster like you don't find for hisself a fine, rich girl and get married and settled down."

Morton flashed a set of dentifrice-advertisement teeth.

"I'm still looking, Uncle Ben."

"Well, the sooner you do it, the better off everybody would be. And now we got to get to work right away on the entertainment. How do we begin it, Morton?"

"The first thing is to get our talent together. Have try-outs. Select the principals and chorus. Then, when I see what I've got to work on, I'll write the show and start rehearsals. You leave it all to me."

"I'll leave most of it to you," Ben replied, "but not all. We got to work together on this."

Indeed, Ben proved during the ensuing weeks that he was no slacker. He did not shift the burden of responsibility to his nephew's shoulders. If the chairmanship entailed the sacrifice of his attention to his business, he seemed willing to make that sacrifice.

"I tell you," Sidney Solomon remonstrated whenever he managed to catch a glimpse of his furiously busy friend, "I tell you, Ben, you are acting like a fool. You ain't hardly in your office no more! You are letting your business go to the dawgs!"

"Can I help it?" Ben replied. "You don't know how much work you got to do to make up a grand entertainment like this would be. Last week it was picking out the cast. Nilly a hundred girls we had to listen to them sing and

watch them dance. One gets picked for the leading lady; some gets picked for other parts; and the rest goes into the chorus."

"A fine thing!" said Sidney gloomily. "More trouble for you, Ben. You pick one for leading lady, y'understand, and the papas of the others gets jealous with you!"

"I know," Ben agreed. "That's why I wouldn't let Morton do the picking alone by hisself. I had to be careful who got picked. But now it's all done and everything is fine and everybody is satisfied. Like Morton said, it was strickly on the merit basis. Well, I got to hurry away now, Sidney. I got to go see Summerfield about some more publicity. Did you see already the publicity in the trade papers and so forth? It's wonderful how Summerfield could do it!"

Ten days before the performance, every one of the thousand tickets had been sold. With Treasurer Raskopf deposited five thousand dollars for the Mitzvah Milk and Ice Fund. Now Ben was able to turn over the reins to Morton's capable hands, and his business establishment knew him once more.

George Nussholz, buyer of women's wear for the Emporium, Davenport, Iowa, arrived in New York City Friday morning, accompanied by the assistant buyer, Harry Getzburg, and registered at the Astor Hotel. Their arrival was duly noted in the newspapers of Friday evening and Saturday morning. On Saturday afternoon, the hotel mail clerk handed Nussholz a letter. It read as follows:

DEAR MR. NUSSHOLZ: Inclosed please find with my compliments two tickets worth five dollars (\$5.00) each a ticket for good seats for the wonderful Mitzvah Milk and Ice Fund Entertainment given by the United Kishnev Brotherhood Lodge No. 1. This will cost you positively nothing, and the entertainment will be something wonderful with A HUNDRED BEAUTIFUL GIRLS, singing, dancing, and acting. Afterward it would be served

fine refreshments free of charge and maybe dancing if the seats could be cleaned away in time. I guess you read all about this entertainment in the trade papers, so you will be anxious to get there, especially since it won't cost you a cent. Come and meet all your friends there! With best regards,

Yours truly,

BEN LOWENSTEIN,
Lowenstein Skirt & Blouse Co.

Nussholz examined the tickets and noted the date, Sunday evening, March 9th. The big theaters, he remembered, were closed in New York on Sundays. He and his assistant decided to use the tickets.

Accordingly, they presented themselves at Federman's Hall the following evening, five minutes before the rise of the curtain, and were ushered to seats in the fourth row, center. Here, they found themselves among friends. They recognized their immediate neighbors in the first six or seven rows as fellow buyers from various sections of the country. "Why, there's Charlie Cohn, of the Grand Leader, Seattle! Hello, Charlie! How do, Rosenheim! When did you get in New York? Yesterday morning? We got in Friday. How's business in Toledo?"

It was all very pleasant, jovial, and noisy, waiting for the entertainment to start. Joe Shreiber's Orchestra—donated by Brother Joe Schreiber—was already performing in the name of charity; but against the din of a thousand greeting, laughing, gossiping, shouting voices, the music could not be heard. There would be plenty of music later on; now was the time for comment.

"Hello, Mrs. Rebman! Umm—what a stunning dress you got on! Is it new?"

"Say, Lollie, did you see Hannah Lederer yet to-night? She's got on that new di'mond lavooeler her husband give her for a twentieth annivers'ry."

"I see how that Levinson girl is leading lady to-night. I hear she's very good with singing and dancing."

The programs, long single slips of paper, were read with great interest:

THE UNITED KISHNEV BROTHERHOOD

Lodge No. 1

Presents

"Señorita Rose"

A Musical Extravaganza with
GERTRUDE LEVINSON

and

MORTON RABINER

and

An All-star Cast, Including
Ninety-six Beautiful Girls!

Words and Music

By

Morton Rabiner

Staged By Morton Rabiner

The lowering of the lights in the auditorium was the signal for silence and attention. Now Shreiber's Orchestra was heard playing the closing chords of a fifteen-minute overture. A crash of cymbals, a roll of drums, a last long blast of trumpets. The walls shivered with applause. Then the orchestra began anew and slowly the curtain rose.

The first, and only, scene of this extravaganza was, the program explained, "A Garden In Spain." It is quite likely that Morton's Hispanic inspiration rose from the fact that Brother Julius Levy, of the Eastern Storage Co., happened to have one stage set in the warehouse—"A Garden In Spain." At least, it was decided that it represented a garden in Spain; though actually it was designed to portray a patio in Los Angeles.

The backdrop was a somewhat cracked and faded ocean, which, no doubt, inspired Morton's colorful number, "For I Am a Spanish Sailor." Morton, as *Don Pizzani*, was indeed a Spanish sailor; in fact, until just before the fall of the final curtain, he was thought to be a Spanish pirate. Fortunately, he wasn't a pirate at all, but one of the king's most trusted prohibi-

tion-enforcement officers; a captain, no less!

The reason for his disguise was that he must not only deceive one thousand spectators who had donated five dollars each to the Mitzvah Milk and Ice Fund, but also *Señorita Rose*—Gertrude Levinson—who loved him from the moment she laid dark eyes upon him in the opening chorus, but couldn't marry him until, during the closing chorus, she discovered that he was not a pirate.

As pirate or captain, Morton was a dashing, handsome, heart-fluttering hero. As for Gertrude, she was as lovely, as dainty, as beautiful a señorita as ever danced behind the footlights. Even Mrs. Elkus, whose daughter was in the chorus—Mr. Elkus was in the iron business—could not help admitting that. And Mr. and Mrs. Sol Levinson, in the eleventh row, were fairly swooning with pride.

It was a most appreciative, enthusiastic audience. Each effort was greeted with a burst of approval that threatened the very foundations of Federman's Hall. But when the curtain fell on the closing scene, discreetly screening the realistic embrace of *Don Pizzani* and *Señorita Rose*—then did the auditorium rock with stamping feet and clashing palms, and even cheers and whistles!

The entire cast took seven bows, the principals took five, Gertrude and Morton appeared a dozen times, holding hands, bowing, blowing kisses, dropping curtsies. There seemed to be no appeasing the delighted crowd.

Then Morton ran back into the wings and fairly dragged out one who had not hitherto appeared either among the audience or on the stage. It was Ben Lowenstein.

"Speech! Speech!" every one shouted. And Ben modestly complied.

"Ladies and gentlemen: This is positively one of the most happy moments I ever had in my life. Happier even.

To-night was what you could call a wonderful success from every angle, because we got the money we needed for the poor babies' milk and ice, and everybody got a grand time in the bargain. Ain't it? Wait! Don't holler till I get finished here! It ain't me who should get the hollers for it anyhow, because the ones who should get the credit for it is these beautiful young people which they done it all so wonderful. Especially, Morton Rabiner, which he wrote the show and made it a wonderful success.

"Now, wait! Still I ain't finished. I want to say here how I got two surprises for you. I am going to tell you one surprise, and I am going to show you the other one. The entertainment ain't finished yet, and when I get through telling you one of the surprises, we will go on with the rest of the entertainment.

"But first I want to make a announcement which I am positive everybody will be happy to hear it. Listen now: In behalf from my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Sol Levinson, and in behalf also from my sister, Mrs. Rabiner, I make the announcement of the marriage engagement of Miss Gertrude Levinson and Mr. Morton Rabiner—*sholem malechem!*

"Wait! Wait! Please wait! Afterwards comes the congratulations! Everybody keep in the seats! The rest of the entertainment will now commence!"

Again the lights were lowered; again the curtain rose. For a moment the Spanish garden was deserted; but for a moment only. Miss Gertrude Levinson, still blushing prettily, tripped lightly from the wings and stood again at the center of the stage. When the renewed applause died down, she recited the following epic:

"We've done our best to please you all,
Who kindly came to Federman's Hall.
We thank you for your kind applause,
And that is certainly no apple sauce.

But now will come the biggest treat
 For any one who has a seat.
 A fashion show for all to see—
 An extra added attraction free.
 You'll see the very latest style,
 That has all others beat a mile.
 These styles you'll see in the high-class
 houses—
 The newest and finest skirts and blouses.
 Sizes from forty-four to fourteen,
 And offered this spring by Ben Lowenstein."

"Ben Lowenstein" was the cue word.
 As she uttered it, the first of ninety-six
 beautiful girls walked upon the stage.
 She wore a blouse and skirt most be-
 comingly; and in her hand she carried
 a small, red-lettered placard:

BLOUSE No. 463-M.
 SKIRT No. 214-K.

Shortly before noon the following
 day, Sidney Soloman managed to find
 Ben alone in his office.

"By golly, Ben," he declared, "I been
 trying to see you all morning."

"I'm sorry, Sidney," Ben replied. "I
 been so terrible busy I couldn't give you
 any time. All morning the buyers been
 coming in—thank God!—to give a look
 at my line and place orders."

"I got news for you!" Sidney ex-
 claimed. "I heard how Sam Weinberg
 is going around saying how he would
 positively sue you or something for
 what you done last night. He is nilly
 crazy."

"If he thinks I am worried about him
 suing me," Ben answered calmly, "then
 he is entirely crazy. Could he sue me
 because for four weeks I practicly give
 up my business and give all my time
 to charity?"

For a while Sidney was silent, strok-

ing his lean chin reflectively. At last he
 spoke:

"Now I begin to see it!"

"You begin to see what, Sidney?"

"I ought to give you a apology, Ben.
 In the beginning I called you a sucker
 you should do so much instead you at-
 tend to your business. Now I see it.
 For one thing, you get your nephew
 married up with Sol Levinson's daugh-
 ter. Not alone is Morton fixed for life,
 y'understand, but now you are practicly
 flesh-and-blood with Sol Levinson. And
 that means you would get his skirt-and-
 blouse account for all the national Apex
 Shops."

"Sure," Ben nodded. "I got a won-
 derful opening order from him only this
 morning."

"Furthermore," went on Sidney,
 "you managed to give a fashion show
 and show your line to the buyers before
 Weinberg could do it. And for all the
 wonderful advertising by Summerfield,
 and for Federman's Hall, and music,
 and such refreshments, and everything,
 all it cost you was five hundred dollars
 for tickets to give out to buyers! By
 golly, Ben—"

Ben drew himself up with dignity.

"Wait, Sidney! I give that five hun-
 dred dollars to charity! What I done
 was all for charity. You could prove it
 when you know how the fund has got
 five thousand dollars for the Mitzvah
 Milk Station. The way you talk you
 should be ashamed! Didn't I throw
 bread on the water, Sidney? Can I
 help it if I got it back already? It says
 in the Book: Throw your bread on the
 water. It don't say you can't first tie
 a string to it, does it?"

Further business adventures of Ben and Sidney will be heard from soon.

ANOTHER SANTA CLAUS MYTH

WHO can feel surprised that children believe in Santa Claus when so many
 adults believe they can beat the stock market?

POP—6B



The WEREWOLF'S HELMET

By EDGAR L. COOPER

In Six Parts—Part III.

THE STORY SO FAR:

DONALD KINCAID, wealthy young Texan who served with the Italian forces during the War, receives a letter from the Marchesa della Serravalle, asking him to make a trip to Italy and bring with him an Austrian helmet which was given him as a souvenir by one Captain Stendahl when the latter was dying. A girl, whose name Don later learns is

Stephanie Gräetz, and members of a gang, attempt to steal the helmet, and fail. Don sets out for New York with Bob Gaines, his Indian-Negro servant. Attempts are made on their lives, and after escaping from a gangster attack in New York. Don is mystified by the appearance of a friend of the Marchesa's, one Spinelli, in the plot.

Back Numbers Are Easily Procured

CHAPTER VI (Continued).

SPINELLI.

THE insistent ringing of the telephone awoke Don Kincaid. He sat up in bed, scowling, scratching the back of his neck. Picked up the phone off the stand by his bed, yawned, and grunted a surly, "All right?"

"Mr. Kincaid?"

"Yes. Who is it?"

"This is Spinelli speaking," came a guarded voice. "I'm at the hotel. And if it is convenient, I'd like to come up and see you, at once."

"Oh! All right, Spinelli. Come on up. Ninth floor, suite C."

"Yes, I know. Thank you. Good-by."

"Heavens, what a night!" Don muttered. Then raised his voice in a "Hey, Bob!"

The Indian-Negro appeared in the corridor doorway, his eyes bloodshot from want of sleep, but grimly alert. Bob Gaines had spent a bad night, and showed it. He wore a dressing gown, and both hands were in its pockets.

"Feel all right this a. m.?" grinned Don.

"Yes, sir," said Bob Gaines.

"I'm expecting a caller," said Don. "Just keep your eye to the keyhole, over there, and your ears open. If this Spinelli hombre isn't all he should be, you stand by with your gat ready. Savvy? And come when I signal."

Bob Gaines nodded, and slid into the service passage, softly closing its door as a knock sounded on the corridor door. Don thrust his pistol in the waistband of his pajamas, drew his robe over it, and, keeping his body behind the jamb of the door, abruptly opened it.

"Spinelli?"

"Yes, sir."

"Walk in and have a seat."

He was a big man, Signor Spinelli; a grossly fat man. His blue-shaven jowls hung like hog hams over his collar, and

his stomach wobbled like a sausage balloon when he walked. His eyes were large and dark, his lips thick, his nose like a turnip. And his thick black mustache was like a Sicilian *camorrista's*. He carefully placed his Borsolino hat upon the table, removed a heavy overcoat—disclosing a Fascisti insignia in his waistcoat lapel—and eased his elephantine bulk into a chair.

"Well, sir, it's been quite an adventure, hasn't it?"

His voice was a deep chuckle and his olive face a mass of wrinkles as he crossed his pudgy legs and lit a thick black cigar, having first offered one to Kincaid, who declined it. His eyes flitted all around the room when he spoke, but never at the person he was addressing.

"Quite an adventure is correct," said Don dryly. "And I believe I owe you a standing vote of thanks for some timely aid you gave me, also my man, last night. At least I presume that you are responsible."

"That is so," said Spinelli. "I regret that my boys did not pick you up sooner yesterday afternoon after your arrival. I received a message from the Marchesa della Serravalle, and being rather familiar with things here in N'York, I had an idea there might be some trouble. I am sorry that I was unable to foresee quite all—and prevent it."

"That's all in the game," shrugged Don, watching his visitor narrowly. "I suppose you also know that while I was away last night, my room was ransacked very efficiently. Even the mattresses were cut open."

"I didn't know," said Spinelli, hands on his knees, and gazing earnestly at the radiator. "But I am not surprised. I trust that nothing was stolen, Mr. Kincaid."

"No, there wasn't. And neither I or my man received injuries in the attempts made upon us. But I suppose

your agents have informed you about that."

Spinelli nodded. "Yes. One helped you to escape from the roost of the Lazzaroni; others—ah—attended to a gangster called Jacopo, who was reputed to be clever with a knife. There are many ways of learning things, Mr. Kincaid. Yes, sir."

Don smoked for a moment in silence. He had learned about the ransacking of his hotel suite, and the strangely thwarted attack upon Bob Gaines, when he returned after his escape from the hunchback's house. Bob had started to the hotel, after leaving Don in front of the Globe Theater, and was almost at his destination when a sudden commotion directly behind him took place.

A closed car crawled down the avenue, and some twenty feet in his rear a couple of automatics were thrust through its doors and spat steady streams of fire. Their target was a skulking pedestrian who was stealthily inching up behind the Indian-Negro, and the lethal slugs did not miss.

The man pitched to the sidewalk with a cry cut short by a mouthful of blood; men shouted and women screamed, the car zoomed ahead and raced swiftly away and round a corner. And the dead victim, police discovered, was an Italian who carried a gat in an armpit holster, and an eight-inch knife up his sleeve. Minions of law and order put the slaying down to a gang feud, and let it go at that. Bob Gaines hadn't attached any menace to himself in the occurrence, but Don Kincaid had. Jacopo was mentioned by Hunchback.

"Suppose you lay all your cards on the table, Mr. Spinelli," Don said at last in a quiet voice. "I advise perfect frankness on your part—in this matter. The marchesa said you were to be trusted."

"Ah, yes," beamed the Italian, his eyes fixed on the ceiling. "Yes, of course. You desire to ask questions?

Bene. I will answer them to any—er—reasonable extent."

"Very well," said Kincaid shortly. "Just how much are you in the know about this affair? Do you savvy the Stendahl helmet's contents?"

Spinelli barely hesitated. "To a degree," he replied cautiously. "It is my business to know things, Mr. Kincaid. For I am Angelo Spinelli. I have many eyes and ears—yes, sir. And to do a service for the charming Lady of Seravalle is quite an honor."

"You haven't answered my question," repeated Don.

"Ah, yes. About the contents of the helmet," said Spinelli, smiling understandingly at the radio. "It contained directions purporting to point one to the location of a valued article, I believe. A certain cup, or chalice, to be explicit. So I was informed."

"Informed by whom?" demanded Don. "The marchesa?"

"These things become known," said Spinelli vaguely. "There has been much talk, Mr. Kincaid—much too much talk. Many people know."

"Who is that damned hunchback who had me on the carpet last night?" Don clipped out suddenly. "The one with the withered legs and frog eyes?"

Spinelli chuckled again.

"A very dangerous person," he said. "He is called 'Gibboso,' but his real name is Ungarelli, I believe. And he is a ringleader of a very sinister and most *secretly* secret society called the Lazzaroni. That means lepers, you know—and their wits, guns, or knives can be bought or hired for any adventure or deed, just so the pay is sufficient. The organization is very strongly webbed over all Europe, and is not to be sneered at here in America. Its underground reaches all over the world. They were the men who caused you trouble last night.

Don Kincaid was thinking swiftly and clearly. "And Stephanie Grätz?"

he asked. "There was also a man's name mentioned last night, with hers, in the Lepers' roost—I don't think of it right now——"

"Von Ermöli," nodded Spinelli, looking carefully at the waste-paper basket. "An Austrian baron, I believe. He and the lady appear to be very intimate. There seems to be little doubt but that they are behind the Lazzaroni in the matter of the chalice. The Lepers work for pay—Von Ermöli, Gräetz *et Cie.* are paying. Yes, sir."

"I see," said Don slowly. "But who are they?"

"That I cannot answer," shrugged Spinelli. "And I have tried hard to find out. Time will bring it to light, I suppose."

"Then who is the man who styles himself Monsieur Duchenin?"

Spinelli's half-closed eyes widened, and for one startled moment he stared straight at Kincaid. "I know not that name," he said, puzzled. "Now, perhaps you can tell me something."

Don recounted his meeting with the bearded stranger, and left out nothing. But it was obvious that Signor Spinelli knew nothing whatever about Duchenin. Neither, reflected Don, did the hunchback Gibbosio, nor Stephanie Gräetz. The mysterious man of the dining car was indeed a mystery, and the hidden card in the deck.

"I must look into this," muttered Signor Spinelli. "Yes, sir."

"One more question," said Don. "Who is Tramonti?"

Spinelli started slightly, slid another split-second's look at Don, then his black eyes became opaque, and his fat face blank.

"I have heard that name in Italy," he said disarmingly. "But I'm unacquainted with any one who bears it, either personally or by hearsay. Where does it come in, Mr. Kincaid?"

"Possibly not at all," Don said carelessly. "The girl, Stephanie Gräetz,

mentioned it somehow, I believe. I am merely trying to tie up a lot of loose ends, and thought maybe this one belonged."

That Spinelli was lying about the name Tramonti, he well knew; his answer had been evasive. And Don remembered that the hunchback had thrown the name in his, Don's, face the previous night, coupling it with the marchesa's. No matter about that, now—it could keep. But he wouldn't forget it; there was a darky in the woodpile there, sure as shooting.

"I suppose you know," remarked Spinelli, chuckling anew and changing the subject, "that the Lazzaroni will put you on a spot for last night's job, Mr. Kincaid. Of the three men you shot, two are dead and the other dying. You are to be commended upon your accuracy, yes, sir. It is a pity that you didn't kill Gibbosio when you had the chance."

"I had no chance," said Don. "His gunmen kept me busy—that fellow called Chopper, and his pal, and the knife-slinging polenta hound."

"Ziccardini, yes," purred Spinelli. "A Neapolitan, and a bad one. He is the one fatally shot. Chopper and Moro are dead, bumped, finish. Like that."

"Hmmm." Don scratched his head.

"Is there likely to be trouble with the police—for me, I mean? To be arrested now would be damned inconvenient."

"I think not," said Spinelli. "Tomorrow, at one fifteen, noon, you sail on the *Cesare Battisti*. Police will hardly be brought into this—not after the timely demise of Jacopo last night. That will set the Lazzaroni to thinking. It is a matter of twenty-four hours until your steamer sails."

Signor Spinelli smoked a moment in silence, staring at the telephone, then said gently: "If you still care to sail."

"What do you mean?" asked Don sharply.

"This. The Lady Serravalle has authorized me to take over the delivery of the—ah—papers, if you wish it," said Spinelli. "To assume full responsibility from New York on. She quite understands the seriousness of her request to you, in the light of recent events. You may cable her for confirmation of this, should you wish to—ah—get out from under."

"No—thanks," said Don curtly. "I don't use reverse gears. I'll occupy my reservations on the *Battisti* as scheduled—barring accidents." This last he said grimly, a crooked smile on his face.

"Quite so," replied the unperturbed Spinelli. "I did not expect an answer otherwise. Now," he said more briskly, "may I make a suggestion, Mr. Kincaid?"

"*Bene*. A very trusted man of mine waits downstairs, and outside is a comfortable car with an excellent chauffeur. I understand that you must see to the visa of your passports, getting luggage to the pier, et cetera. New York is going to be decidedly dangerous for you the next twenty-four hours, my friend, and I want to do my best to see that no—ah—unseemly accidents occur. My suggestion is this. Guido Malespini, downstairs, is a head lieutenant of mine, one to be thoroughly trusted, and can keep always in touch with me. It will be far better if you use the car and driver I mentioned, and take Guido as a—er—"

"Bodyguard?" asked Don, smiling thinly.

"Something like that. You do not know the Lazzaroni, Mr. Kincaid. That you have drawn first blood and checkmated them so far must not lessen your caution regarding them. If I am able to cover you with some measure of protection, I must ask your cooperation. Yes, sir."

"Very well," said Don, after a moment's thought. "And—thanks."

"*Niente, niente*," said Spinelli, wav-

ing his fat hands depreciatingly and heaving up to his feet. "You are a brave man, Mr. Kincaid—I wish you all the success in the world. The Lady Serravalle is indeed fortunate in having such an able and loyal friend. Give my very best wishes to her, *per piacere*. Yes, sir."

"Thanks again—and I will," replied Don carelessly. "I think you had better have Signor Malespini up here before you leave," he added, "so there will be no misunderstandings."

"I was coming to that," said Spinelli. "May I use your phone?"

The maroon-colored limousine purred southward out of Central Park and threaded through the traffic toward downtown New York, its tires singing on the wet pavement. Don Kincaid, leaning back in a corner of the tonneau, looked with uninterested eyes through the veil of tobacco smoke clouding his face out at the rows of houses and apartment hotels flashing past. He glanced at his wrist watch. The hands read twelve minutes past four, afternoon.

Signor Spinelli's men had been all he professed. The driver of the maroon car was a slim, alert Italian, who handled the bus dexterously and easily; Guido Malespini was a dapper, pleasant, suave-faced gunman, whose smile displayed much dental gold, and smut-black eyes seemed to look everywhere at once. He occupied the rear seat with Kincaid; Bob Gaines, hands in his overcoat pockets, sat beside the driver. A bit ahead of the limousine a sedan bowed along, carrying three men; fifty yards behind, a second car slid down the street, carrying four men. Spinelli didn't believe in doing things by halves.

Don Kincaid smiled slightly as he thought of this. The day had been uneventful. Directly after lunch he had gone with Guido and his wary gorillas to the steamship offices, the Italian con-

sulate, to a store or two. His reservations were in his pocket, the passports visaed, steamer trunks at the pier. Everything was in readiness for him to go aboard at noon to-morrow.

And, he reflected grimly, he had been able to tie up several loose ends of the Barbarossa puzzle; the whole affair was beginning to take some semblance of form under his cold arrangement of facts. Gina Strozzi, Tramonti and Co., apparently working hand and glove with the Italian Fascisti, were after Red-beard's chalice.

Stephanie Gräetz, Von Ermöli *et Cie*, including that sinister and far-flung secret organization called "the Lepers," was the second cog in the machination. And the mysterious Duchenin was the third. All opposing each other, and at least two of them direly dangerous.

The marchesa's crowd were something of a dark horse. Don was no fool, despite some rather peculiar actions of his. Gina Strozzi had taken it for granted that Don would deliver the helmet, or what it contained, to her intact. Or—had she? Might not even now she be taking precautions to see that the secret of the chalice *was* delivered to her?

Certainly she wouldn't expect Don to travel half across the world to bring her the tin hat sight-unseen! With Kincaid in possession of the secret, what was to prevent him from securing the chalice in person? The helmet had been given to him by Karl Stendahl, *loup-garou*. How did the Lady Serravalle know that he, Don, wouldn't keep the chalice, or return it to the House of Furstenberg, its rightful owners?

He chuckled to himself. No, Gina Strozzi wasn't such a trusting fool as that. Perhaps she believed that Don didn't know the value of the chalice, or might possibly believe that he would deliver it blindly to her on account of old associations, yet she would watch and take precautions.

And once in Italy, Don would be powerless to do otherwise than accede to her demands, for her family and influence was powerful in the Land of the Boot. That would be her line of thought.

And he, Donald Fitzalan Kincaid, held the golden key to the secret, the high ace in the hole, of the whole fantastic affair. Strozzi expected him to give her the key without question; Stephanie Gräetz and Monsieur Duchenin apparently believed likewise. So did Spinelli. Don laughed shortly, flipped away his cigarette, stretched his legs.

A green taxicab, turning against the light at Madison Avenue, ran full tilt and broadside into the maroon limousine, skewering it over against the curb, hurling him to the floor in a shower of broken glass. For ten seconds Don Kincaid huddled perfectly still, a bit dazed and shaken by the unexpected suddenness of the deliberately timed collision.

Klaxons rasped and horns roared; voices were raised angrily; a crowd quickly gathered. Don pulled himself upright and climbed out of the half-overturned car into the crowd, his green eyes stabbing at one and another of the group around him. Guido Malespini, a bloody handkerchief held to his face, was talking tersely to a policeman.

The chauffeur and Bob Gaines, both apparently unhurt, stood near by, their gaze fixed upon the two occupants of the green cab, who were expostulating loudly and railing at its driver, a hard-faced, broken-nosed mug who acted half drunk or dazed. And the trio stood covered, and knew it, by Spinelli's guns. The trailing car behind the limousine had come up and quickly disgorged its occupants.

The taxi driver claimed it was an accident; his presumable fares berated him for careless driving and drunkenness; Guido and Don Kincaid held their

tongues. The two men in the cab, blustery customers both, tried to cover their uneasiness by loud talk. One wore horn-rimmed glasses and a soft hat pulled low over his face. The other was soft and portly, and looked like a soap salesman. There was no doubt but that the collision had been arranged, and for some purpose that had missed fire. But Guido Malespini and his Fascists settled their difficulties outside of a police station.

A few routine questions by a policeman, then Don entered the tailing sedan and was rapidly driven to his hotel. Guido accompanied him as far as the curb entrance, stating grimly that "the boys would take care of those guns." The presence of that covering car had probably saved both their lives, as well as Bob Gaines' and the driver's.

The Lepers were not asleep, Don thought dryly—not by a damned sight.

Accompanied by Bob, Don went up to his suite, stopping at the desk long enough to get his wallet, and a letter that had been left for him. He unlocked the door, walked in, and switched on the lights, for the afternoon was dark under a sky the color of raw oysters.

Relocking the corridor door, he glanced around keenly, then, with the Indian-Negro, began a careful search of the suite. They had been absent almost four hours.

Drawing-room, bedroom, corridor, and valet's room drew blanks; the windows were apparently untampered with. Nothing seemed to have been disturbed. Don switched on the radio, tuned in a local station, went to his bedroom, and undressed. He mixed a drink, put on a bath robe, and started to the bathroom, whistling between his teeth.

The door was closed, and he shoved it open carelessly. Then he stopped so suddenly, jerking taut and erect, that an invisible rope seemed to have lassoed him in his tracks. For as long as one could count fifteen he stood on the

threshold, motionless and staring, his green eyes narrowed slits, his mouth a crooked gash.

"Oh, Bob!" he called grimly. "Front and center, on the double."

The Indian-Negro appeared at his side like a shadow, and, at Don's gesture, peered into the bathroom. He caught his breath sharply.

"My Gawd!" he muttered. "Now who done *that*!"

A man lay on his back in the bathtub, his head lolling against one end, his feet spraddled out in the other. A well-dressed fellow of some twenty-eight years, clad in a gray suit and topcoat, very black of hair and eyes. A gray hat lay on the white stool near by. The face beneath the carefully combed black hair was hideous—swollen, purple, and mottled. It was stamped with such an expression of fear and pain that both Don Kincaid and Bob Gaines felt their hair rise.

He was quite dead, of course. And a deeply bitten circle around his neck shouted mutely that he had been garroted.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RED STILETTO.

DON leaned forward and examined the man closely. An Italian, evidently, and he had died most painfully. The cord used was not in sight, nor did a later, minute search disclose it. Don closed the door, put Bob Gaines on watch outside, and systematically went through the fellow's clothes.

A pocketknife, two dollars and fifty-seven cents in loose change, a stub of a pencil, a handkerchief, and a small bunch of skeleton keys came to light. Not a mark of identification about him anywhere. But from his right sleeve, strapped there in a cleverly concealed spring, came forth a long, slim knife, needle-tipped and razor-edged.

And the haft of the stiletto was painted dark red.

Presently Don called Bob Gaines. They carried the fellow out of the bathroom and placed him in a bedroom clothes closet, his overcoat buttoned tightly about his body, his hat pulled over his eyes. Locking the door, Don swallowed another drink, lit a fag, then had Bob Gaines swab out the bathtub.

While the Indian-Negro was doing this, Don stood at the window, staring out and down at the panorama of Gotham fast darkening in the mists of late evening. Once he raised the window and leaned out a moment, sharply scanning the pavements beneath.

Bathed, shaved and dressed, he sat at the table and drew out the wallet from his pocket. In doing so the letter that had been left at the desk downstairs came with it, and Don looked at it curiously. It had been forgotten in the business upstairs. The handwriting on the envelope, addressed to him in an unfamiliar scrawl, was without a clue, save that it bore hotel insignia, and he ripped open the jacket. A single sheet of stationery was within, and upon it the dashed-off words:

Will you accept \$100,000.00—American dollars—for the emperor's flagon? No? Attend you, M. Kincaid! Can one make a kettle drum from the skin of a little, little mouse? Can even a foolhardy *Yanqui* achieve the impossible? I ask you. Twenty thousand pounds may not mean much to you, *mein freund*—but yet it is better than crape and silver handles. D.

P. S. You had a visitor this afternoon while you were away. I'm rather certain you still have him—and his red stiletto. Treat him considerably.

Don Kincaid slowly read, then re-read, the note. M. Duchenin was in the way of becoming a jester, he thought dryly. Ten lines containing an offer, a warning, and a grim joke upon death. No doubt Duchenin himself, or one of his cohorts, had done in the Italian with a thuggee's cord while he was prowling in Don's room, or else had killed him elsewhere and brought the body in.

However, that was unlikely. It was

more to the point that a member of the Lazzaroni, as well as agents of M. Duchenin, could gain access to Suite 9C at will. That wasn't a pleasant thought, not a bit.

The telephone shrilled, and he answered. It was Signor Spinelli, after polite queries as to the afternoon's accident at Madison Avenue, spoke matter-of-factly. "A hotel room is not the most exciting in N'York to spend one's time, Mr. Kincaid," he said, "but it is at least fairly safe. I would suggest most strongly that you and your man remain indoors to-night."

"Thanks. Were any of you boys at the hotel this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir. Two were downstairs, in the foyer—not above. Why?"

"I just wondered," said Don carelessly. "You think it unsafe to go out?"

"Very," repeated Spinelli earnestly. "The boys—ah—located a Tommie gun in a suitcase in the green cab, Mr. Kincaid. But for a blunder of the driver in getting too previous, a nasty mess might have happened. Certain parties seem to be very anxious that you don't leave our great city. Yes, sir, they do."

Spinelli chuckled hoarsely, then became matter-of-fact. "Take your dinner and breakfast in your suite. Call for Waiter 202 at Room Service"—and Spinelli described the man minutely. "He's O. K. And if you need me any time during the night"—he gave Don a phone number. "And Mr. Kincaid," he finished seriously, "keep an eye out for the wild card in the deck, our friend M. Duchenin."

"You turned up anything on him?" Don asked quickly.

"No," said Spinelli heavily. "And I don't like it. G'bye."

Supper finished, Don sat in the drawing room with Bob Gaines, smoking a cigarette thoughtfully. The window shades were drawn, the door locked, and a towel draped over the keyhole. The suite was in darkness save the drawing room, and it was but dimly

lighted. The radio speaker jangled forth a throttled-down musical chain program. The Indian-Negro was engrossed in the day's paper, and Don Kincaid was perusing the registered letter received the afternoon before, a letter whose heading was, "Questions and Answers Department, American Information Bureau, Washington, D. C." And it consisted of two closely typewritten pages of official paper.

Don Kincaid read it carefully, reflectively. For in it was set out, at length, all that the world knew of the Barbarossa chalice.

A precious relic dating from somewhere about 1150, fashioned by Lombardi artisans from virgin gold, delicately carved and thickly ornamented with many precious stones. Exactly two feet in height, and twenty-three inches in circumference it was, its base the skull of Cleph, a vicious Lombard king who fell beneath Carolingian arms in the conquest. This grisly base had two famous blood rubies as eyes, and perfect pearls as teeth—the collection and selection of the latter taking many years—and the base rested on four horn feet leafed with gold called "griffin's claws."

The chalice proper was an astounding work of art. It bore two curved, carved handles, a top in the shape of a wild boar's head, and on two sides double eagles in bold relief holding Frederick First's coat of arms. This coat of arms was a rearing charger, helmeted and caprisoned, bearing a mailed knight with defiant naked sword in one hand, shield in the other. Both horse's head and knight's head were crowned by flaring eagles and plumed crests, another black *adler* spread its wings on the shield, still others front and fore on the charger's armorial trapings.

And the whole, including the coats of arms and double eagles, was a perfection of delicate carver's art—a bewildering succession of engraving,

molding, minute filigree work. Gothic crestings and foliage mingled with coronals of vine leaves, and the whole was thickly studded with rare precious stones—diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, turquoise, onyx. Two black opals, living flames shot through with greens and blues and yellows, were perhaps the most valuable stones in the chalice.

Its monetary value had been variously placed at from five hundred thousand dollars to seven hundred thousand dollars, and that apart from the priceless historical value. For it was one of the very few bona-fide relics from ancient days. And it had come temporarily into possession of the Furstenberg family tree after Barbarossa's defeat at Legnano, then permanently after Frederick's death by drowning in Cilicia in 1190. The Furstenbergs were close blood kin of Redbeard, the Eagle of Thuringia.

And the name by which the chalice was known in museums and among connoisseurs was the *Kaiserbecher*. Some time in 1918, during the late World War, it had mysteriously disappeared from its residence at Schloss Reiffenstein in the Ortleralp, and no trace had ever been found of it. Count Lothar von Furstenberg, then custodian of the chalice, had died in 1923 after five years' fruitless search.

An inexplicable mystery surrounded the fatal goblet, which mountain legend and superstition credited with having evil power. Its history was one of war and bloodshed, and folk whispered that its gruesome base was haunted by the malicious spirit of Cleph. It would reappear, so legend ran, in that spooky ruined castle of Thuringia when the Redbeard at last broke his chains and rose up once more to lead Gothic arms in battle.

Don Kincaid folded the letter, put it in his pocket. It would be a hot joke, he thought wryly, if Karl Stendahl, the *laup-garou* of Europe, were playing a jest upon the world at large.

Those papers in the helmet might be phony, the prank of a mad trickster, who had invented the whole tale out of a haywire imagination. Still, the *Kaiserbecher* of Redbeard was gone, and several people believed the helmet's secret enough to go any lengths to secure it.

"That lad in the closet is not the first to be killed on account of it," he finished grimly. "Or likely the last."

Snapping out of his reflections with a jerk, he looked at his watch. Twenty minutes after nine. The night went slow, up there in suite 9C. "You'd better pipe down and grab some kip," he told Bob Gaines. "I'll call you at one thirty, and you can have the 'lobster trick' till dawn."

After the Indian-Negro had gone, Don smoked a while in silence, his thoughts shuttling clearly and concisely. He walked to the window, let up the shade and stared down at the blurred city. A half mist, half fog lay heavy over Manhattan, and a chill wind was blowing. The smudged lights battled impotently with the murk, blinking bravely and staining the sky a ghostly yellow, their wavering reflections patterning the icy, black pavement. A fine night for trickery and treachery and murder, Don reflected. An ideal night for lots of things.

The sharp peal of the telephone whipped him around. He pulled down the window shade, switched off the radio, took up the receiver.

"Hello? This is Kincaid. Why, good evening, dear enemy! It's nice to hear your so-charming voice on the telephone again——"

The left corner of Don's mouth twitched, and his eyes were coldly alert. Stephanie Gräetz was on the wire, and her voice came low, husky and hurried. Nor did she beat about the bush in coming straight to the point.

"Listen, Mr. Kincaid! Don't interrupt, please! If you are a sensible person you will remain at the hotel to-

night, and not go out on the streets or to a theater. Understand?"

"Perfectly, sister. Is our mutual friend, Gibboso, on the prod? I'm sorry I had to use extreme measures last night—with him and his gorillas—but I don't like to be shanghaied and care less about being knocked off in some filthy slum to please—er—a lady, and a gent called Von Ermoli."

He heard her catch her breath sharply.

"That is untrue——" she began hotly. Then, very low: "You are still determined, in spite of *everything*, to go ahead with this madness, American?"

"Quite determined. In spite of hell and high water, Stephanie. But tell me—why mustn't I roam the streets of Gotham this March eve? Are the green taxis still running contrary to red signal lights?"

"I don't understand"—slowly. "But please attend to my words. It is not the joke I speak, Mr. Kincaid—believe me it isn't."

"I know," said Don grimly. "But if I sit indoors and twiddle my thumbs, won't you talk to me a while? I rather like you, after a fashion, Stephanie Gräetz. Despite your fondness for guns and knives and queer people. How about lunching with me to-morrow?"

"Good-bye, Mr. Kincaid. I—I am sorry."

Before he could reply he heard the sharp click of the prong being depressed. Stephanie Gräetz was gone.

Don rubbed his lean jaw a moment thoughtfully, then mixed a stiff highball and drank it, smoking a cigarette at the same time. At eleven o'clock he switched off the radio, turned out the light in the drawing room, and left the suite in darkness save for the faint glow of a bulb in the bathroom. Until one thirty he sat quietly in his chair, now and then burning fags, his feet on the table and a revolver at his elbow. At one thirty-one he got up and quietly roused Bob Gaines. His hitch had been

dully uneventful. And at fifteen minutes to two he was asleep.

He awoke instantly, every faculty alert and his eyes wide, at a gripping squeeze on his shoulder. Bob Gaines, bending above him, whispered sibilantly: "There's somebody at the hall door."

Don got up noiselessly, stuck his bare feet in soft slippers, picked up the automatic laying on the bed table. The radiolite hands of his watch lacked exactly three minutes of three o'clock. Stepping silently as shadows, he and the Indian-Negro slid across the drawing room and took positions on each side of the corridor door. Not a whisper of sound had marked their arrival, for both knew the location of every bit of furniture in the room.

Don's eyes, fixed upon the diamond-shaped glass knob, glowed like a cat's in the dark. The knob was *turning*. Inch by inch, it twisted backward and forward—there came the almost inaudible click of a key being tried in the lock. Kincaid, his eyes close to the hole, waited until the knob came to rest in its normal position, then in one flashing move twisted it to the right and flung the door inward.

A man catapulted through headlong, wildly out of balance, and Don Kincaid felled him with a single chopping blow of his clubbed gun.

Bob Gaines had darted into the corridor like a glancing snake, his pistol ready, but saw only the flashing shadow of a second man darting around a bend in the corridor toward the elevators. When he reached the bend there was no one in sight along the dim-lit stretch. The fellow was likely a lookout, and possibly had a room at the hotel. Cursing under his breath, the Indian-Negro went quickly back to 9C.

Don surveyed the groggy, blinking rat who sat on the bedroom floor and rubbed the back of his neck. His ferret-like face was twisted in a grimace of pain, and his beady eyes slid about the

room with animal furtiveness. Hollow-cheeked, sharp-featured, gash-lipped, he looked up at Don and Bob Gaines with a sneering leer. In one hand Don held a squat gat with a silencer on its muzzle, and a long-bladed, razor-sharp knife he had taken from the gangster before he came to. And the haft of the knife was painted red.

"Whatsa big idea?" snarled "Rat-face." "Rappin' me over the neck and yankin' me in here? This a stickup?"

"Innocent child!" murmured Don unpleasantly. He tossed gun and blade on the bed, brushed his hands, turned to the glowering gangster with his face swiftly flint-hard. "Close the door, Bob," he said shortly.

"Now, you!" he addressed the rat, "who sent you here?" And his words dropped out, one by one, like steel pellets.

"Find out!" spat the gunman with an oath.

"I'm going to find out," said Don sulkily, "and you'll be a little damaged in the finding. 'What's your name, who sent you here, and why?'"

"I'm tellin' you nawthin', see?" snarled Rat-face. "Go chase yer tail."

Tiny red lights moved in Don Kincaid's eyes, his face was flint-hard above its clean-clipped jaw. "All right," he said quietly.

Ten minutes later a slobbering, terror-stricken gangster had blurted out everything he knew and some things he didn't. There are tricks learned in the wilds, and along the Mexican border, that Cypriano the Fox, stage tailor and killer for Hunchback Gibboso, knew not of. His mission had been to kill both Don and his servant—a mission one "Chee-Chee," the mysteriously strangled fellow reposing in the closet—had failed to do that afternoon. And the Lepers were a bit perturbed about the failure of Chee-Chee to report. Also more perturbed about the fiasco of the green cab. So on and so forth.

Don heard him out, lit a cigarette,

glanced at his watch. Then he nodded to Bob Gaines, turned off the light, and walked to the window. The Indian-Negro had shoved the limp-kneed rat into the bathroom. Bob carried a heavy blued-steel .45 in his hand. He carefully closed the door—there came a dull smack. Cypriano pitched forward headlong, and sprawled on the floor unconscious.

"That's that," said Don Kincaid grimly. "Now we'll remove the evidence."

They moved the bodies of Chee-Chee and the unconscious Cypriano out of the window, onto the roof terrace where they would not be discovered immediately.

CHAPTER VIII.

EN ROUTE.

A LIGHT-TAN limousine shuttled swiftly through New York's late-morning traffic toward the Transatlantica-Italiana's pier on Forty-seventh Street. Guido Malespini and the chauffeur sat on the front seat; Don Kincaid and Signor Spinelli faced Bob Gaines and a third Italian in the tonneau. As on the day previous, a car crawled ahead of the limousine, and one behind, but both kept nearer this morning, and were full of armed men.

Kincaid, his gray-felt hat pulled low over his forehead, and the collar of his overcoat turned up about his chin, swept the sidewalks and street corners with narrowed wary eyes. The cowhide box containing the helmet, roped and locked, reposed between his legs, and Bob Gaines's knees touched his. Now and then a queer little grin would edge Don's lips, only quickly to disappear as his gaze scanned anew the slaty sky, the clammy fog, the indistinct pedestrians and flashing traffic. Things had come off like the doctor ordered, last night, he thought grimly.

Spinelli had called in person for Don that morning, as per a phone arrangement, and several of his guns were in

evidence when Don descended to the lobby, settled his account, and took the leather box from the vault. The house detective and two assistants accompanied him to the waiting car; waved him a formal farewell. And now he was bowling through devious streets and by zigzag course, en route to the pier. The driver of the tan car was taking no chances that morning by going a direct route from the hotel to Forty-seventh Street.

It was almost noon, and the *Battisti* sailed at one thirty. And if the weather didn't change for the better, it promised to be rough sailing in more ways than one. Don bent to hear better something Spinelli was saying.

Plok! A tinkle of falling glass, a sharp *thuck* close to his ear, and a sliver of wood struck his face. Don ducked swiftly, but not before a zippy whine hissed above his head and he felt a queer jerk at his gray hat. The second bullet, continuing its course, splintered the dark woodwork of the opposite car door. A gun with a Maxim silencer, of course; one that made no more noise than the pop of a champagne cork. There had been absolutely no sounds of it down in the street.

That happened just after crossing Forty-fifth Street. Rows of business houses with rooms above the ground floor lined both sides of the thoroughfare, and Malespini, crouched low in his seat, pointed a rigid arm to the left and shouted something to the driver of the car behind. Three men leaped from it and darted toward the front of a five-story building. The shots had been fired from the second floor, Guido gestured savagely.

The driver, sounding his horn stridently, put on a burst of speed and the car leaped ahead. The four men on the back seats raised up again, looking grimly at each other. Don Kincaid picked up his soft hat from the seat beside him, and very speculatively regarded a neat round hole through its

crown. He plucked out a tuft of tawny hair from the inside of the hat, looked at it thoughtfully, then ran bronzed fingers over his scalp. A bullet, fired out of some window across the street from a silenced weapon, could never be traced.

"Not bad shooting," he remarked impersonally. "But he forgot to hold low when shooting from above—luckily. Still, it was close enough."

"Closer'n that, Mr. Don," said Bob Gaines between his teeth. "Yessir, closer'n that."

The heavy Spinelli grunted and then mopped his fat face with a huge handkerchief; the Italian seated opposite him said nothing, his dark features blank. Don Kincaid leaned across toward Bob Gaines and lowered his voice a trifle.

"Reckon we'll never get to catch any more fish out of Wild Plum Lake?" he asked, with a hard grin.

"I doubt it," said Bob Gaines bleakly. We're a long ways from home, and gittin' further, Mister Don. Way yonder further."

The tan limousine drew up at the street entrance of the Transatlantica pier, and unloaded all its passengers save the chauffeur. Bob Gaines kept fast hold of the cowhide box in his left hand, his right thrust in the side pocket of his overcoat. A bustling dock steward took charge of suitcases and bags, and vanished into the electric-lit murk of the great pier shed. The Italians in the two other cars, at a sign from Malespini, melted into the crowd which resembled a swarming beehive, their dark eyes watchful. Guido and his side kick kept close to Don Kincaid and Spinelli, fists in their pockets.

Don took a last look around before joining the stream of people going into the pier. Little flurries of snow were sifting down in the mist, which seemed to be lightening, and the wind off North River was cold. His hawk eyes spotted a number of Italian-looking people in

the pier shed—men lounging casually near stacks of baggage, men talking in little casual groups, men strolling casually by. None stared openly at Spinelli's party, yet Don Kincaid and his companions were the focal point of these united maneuverings. That was patent. Smiling a little, his every sense on tiptoe, he pushed his way to a wicket and had his reservations checked. The olive-cheeked, black-mustached dignitary in charge nodded, smiled. "Suite B, B Deck. Mr. Kincaid and man. New York to Genoa via Gibraltar. Quite correct. *Bon voyage, sir.*"

Don pocketed his papers, and pushed his way through the vortex of humanity to the other side of the pier, where through a yawning doorway the black cliff and parallel lines of rivet heads of the *Cesare Battisti's* huge hull bulked. He didn't have to bother about his luggage, for all of it was labeled "Wanted" and a room steward had charge. He and Bob Gaines, with Signor Spinelli, Guido Malespini and the gunman called Braccio, walked toward the gangway platform. The presence of so many "black-shirt" guardians seemed to have discouraged any last-minute attempts of the Lazzaroni upon Kincaid, for the gunmen hung around the flanks of the embarking party like wolves.

Don, walking just ahead of Bob Gaines, stepped up the gangway toward the liner's deck. A steward with his reservation slips was in front of him, while a sleek young Italian of Spinelli's, smoking a cigarette, leaned idly against the ship's rail. Don was almost ready to step aboard when a low cry from the Indian-Negro stung him to an abrupt halt—the next watch tick Bob Gaines grabbed his shoulder and literally hurled him backward into the fat bulk of Signor Spinelli.

Something flashed downward a few inches in front of Don's nose, and smashed with a loud impact on the gangway. A score of eyes darted upward to the decks above—grunts, low oaths,

exclamations followed. A ship's officer came running.

For a short second Don looked at the thing that had fallen. It was a huge clay flowerpot, with some sort of red plant in its *débris*, that had tumbled from one of the decks overhead. And one significant thing he noted. The pot contained no earth, but had been packed with sand and gravel, thus forming a missile that would have crushed his head like an eggshell.

"Thanks, Bob," said Don quietly. "Narrow margin again. My respect for certain persons is hourly increasing."

With a hard smile and a careless shrug he stepped aboard the big liner, waved away the gesturing officer's questions with a light word, and followed the steward along two promenades and stairways to his room. The Italian who had lounged by the rail was gone, he observed; a muttered "C deck!" from Guido had sent him racing. Well, whoever had shoved off the pot had timed his stroke well—but for the alertness of Bob Gaines he, Don Kincaid, would have been a casualty.

When the steward had gone Don locked the door and shot the brass bolt. He, Bob Gaines and Guido Malespini made a fine-tooth-comb inspection of suite B, from its comfortable parlor to its two bedrooms and bath. Nothing out of the ordinary there.

Don pulled down the varnished shutters over the portholes, stowed his luggage out of the way until it could be unpacked, snugged the flat automatic scabbarded against his midriff into position, and took the .45 gat from his coat pocket.

"Well, sir, here you are aboard," said Spinelli with a wheezy chuckle. "It's been sort of a narrow squeak a time or so, but we made it. I hope you have as good luck on the voyage."

"I'll be watching," said Don levelly. "And thanks—for everything."

"Don't mention it," said Spinelli,

lighting a black cigar. "It has been a pleasure to meet and serve you, Mr. Kincaid. I trust you'll remember me well to her *excellenza*, the marchesa?"

"Right," nodded Don. "You're going ashore now?"

"Yes, sir. And if you're ever in New York, look me up. Good-by."

"So long, Spinelli. Give my regards to Gibbosco & Co."

They shook hands. Don, eyeing the fat Italian Spinelli saw a tinge of regret, almost sorrow, creep into his black, expressionless eyes. A momentary expression of pity and sympathy for the American, strangely. The next instant it was gone, and with it Signor Spinelli. Guido, a minute later, knocked on the door and reappeared.

"Braccio and Civettini are unable to find the man who threw the pot," he said rapidly. "But he was on C deck, and people say he was dark-faced, wore a cap, and had a big scar on his chin. Watch for that fellow, signor."

"Thanks," grinned Don. "My friend Baroffio the Knife," he said to Bob Gaines, when Guido had gone. "We're to have a pleasant traveling companion, it seems. This voyage promises to be interesting. Yes, sir."

Carrying the cowhide box, Don made his way to the purser's office, the Indian-Negro at his heels. He saw from the tail of his eye the Italian, Civettini, the youth who had stood at the rail when he went up the gangway, leave his vantage point on the promenade deck, toss away his cigarette and casually saunter behind them. Don smiled thinly. Spinelli might have gone ashore, but all of his henchmen hadn't. Which might mean most anything.

Don entered the purser's office, a scene of busy activity. The force was juggling passenger lists and account books, calling numbers and names back and forth. The purser himself, a sal-low, dark man with a thin face and eyes like an oyster, glanced at Don irritably, then curiously as he tendered

the hide box, locked and bound, to be placed in the ship's strong box, a steel vault under the office.

"What is in this, *signor*?" he asked sharply.

"A vase," replied Don shortly. "And a valuable one. I might add that several attempts have been made to steal it the past week. Also, my friend, I might add that it is destined for the Marchesa della Serravalle."

The purser's sallow face softened ingratiatingly. He took the box reverently, and carefully wrote out a receipt. "Certainly, sir," he said graciously. "It will be safe here, quite safe," he finished pompously. "There will be no theft of it perpetrated aboard the *Cesare Battisti*—rest assured of that."

"If it is stolen from the strong box," said Don meaningly, "somebody's neck will tumble. The Lady Serravalle will—"

"I know, signor," nodded the purser. "Have no qualms as to its safety. The Grail itself would not be guarded more closely."

Don left the office, smiling to himself at the potency of Gina Strozzi's name, walked back to B deck's rail and looked down upon the pier sheds, the gangways up which people were coming, and down which other streams were going. Men and women were laughing, talking, milling about; several Italians still stood casually among the crowd on the wharf. One by the guard rail looked up at him, caught his eye, shook hands with himself with a grin. Don nodded.

Soon he would leave all this behind—New York, Spinelli, Gibboso's Lepers. But he wouldn't leave all of them, for Baroffio was apparently aboard, and had proved himself no mean opponent. Curiously Don wondered about Stephanie Gräetz. Just why had she called him on the phone last night, with her warning? What were her relations with Von Ernöli, that man with the cold, hawklike, aristocratic face? Was

he her fiancé, or friend? And what were their relations with the hunchback and his ruffians? Employer and employee? Or else—

A corner of Don's mouth twitched. Gibboso's sinister picture was clean cut in his mind that morning—that deformed, dwarfish fellow with the weazen, deathmask face and hooked nose, whose sunken eyes looked like a toad's set in a skull. That hypnotic hunchback who dragged his withered legs at a surprising speed and ease with crutches, who was as cold-blooded as a shark. It seemed to Don, that moment, as if those basilisk eyes were boring into his back; so much so that he turned and scanned the white cabin fronts, the length of promenade deck, sharply. But the Leper was not in sight, of course. Don decided he was a bit jumpy.

"Two narrow shaves inside a half hour are giving me nerves," he grinned to himself. "Guess I need a damned stiff drink."

But before he could put this motion into effect a face coming up the gangplank held his gaze frozen. A face whose lines all seemed to blend in the V-motif of a Satan, ornamented by a carefully trimmed Vandyke beard and housing deep-set black eyes beneath shaggy brows. A monocle gleamed in one, and a brown fedora hat brim was pulled low over a high forehead.

M. Duchenin, knifelike, tallish and with a noticeable hunch in his left shoulder, also was voyaging aboard the *Battisti* that murky March morning. And behind him, carrying two bags, came a pygmyish fellow who moved with the gliding, steely ease of a stalking snake and had East India written all over his swart, vicious face. Don decided that M. Duchenin's valet was not exactly prepossessing—he looked like a renegade Afghan hillman or a Pathan jackal.

Don watched them until they disappeared beneath the side of the deck

below. This journey, he reflected dryly, was certainly not labeled to be a dull one. Not for him, from all indications. With Baroffio and M. Duchenin aboard—all the plot lacked now was Gräetz. But she, likely, was remaining in New York with her friend, Herr von Ermöli!

Don Kincaid swore under his breath. He felt suddenly, and unaccountably, out of humor, and he knew not what about.

From somewhere sounded the faint note of a bugle, then a steward's voice at a distance requesting all visitors to go ashore. A tug tooted raucously; another answered. The huge bulk of the *Battisti* throbbed to the deep, stertorous bellow of her whistle. People began running excitedly about on the pier. Lines were being slacked off, and stevedores, a swarm of busy ants, were tugging at the gangway platforms.

Don stood at the rail before his cabin, which was outside and well aft on the port side of B deck. He had donned a plaid cap in place of his bullet-scarred hat, and a khaki trench coat in lieu of his overcoat. The deck was alive with passengers and their friends, shaking hands, embracing, crying in a last hurried departure. Several worried people were chasing about after baggage, and anxious stewards were on the lookout for unintentional stowaways. The last gangway disappeared, and the Italian Civettini, stepping from it, stopped on the pier edge, looked up at Don, saluted carelessly, then thumped away his bag and disappeared in the shed.

Five minutes passed; six.

The *Battisti's* whistle roared again, and Don felt the vague tremor of the engines beneath. The pier sheds, the concrete landing, the waving, shouting people, were slowly moving backward, and a ribbon of gray oily water appeared below the port rails. Somewhere an orchestra was playing "Old Man River."

"Well, Bob," said Don Kincaid,

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"we're off. If you want to swim back you'd better start now, old son."

"Spect maybe I'll wish I had before I see Gawd's solid ground again," grinned the Indian-Negro. "It's a long way cross this ocean."

"You said a mouthful," agreed Don. "I'm going to have a squint at our fellow travelers. See you directly."

Don slowly traversed the promenade deck, circling to starboard, then descended to the deck below. Nothing there. He went up to C deck, walked briskly around it, fore and aft, port and starboard, without better luck. There was no sign of Baroffio or Monsieur Duchenin anywhere. He squinted in smoking rooms and sun parlor, then walked to the purser's office and asked to see the passenger list.

Carefully he scanned the large-lined sheets of heavy ledger paper, but there was no name like Baroffio, or Stephanie Gräetz, or Von Ermöli listed. Perhaps the Knife had gone ashore after all—maybe his tilting the heavy pot onto the gangway had been a last, desperate gesture. Don shook his head slightly, smiled. No—that was not Baroffio's style, to quit a chase that had led him half across America.

Don handed back the passenger list with a nod of thanks, and left. Monsieur Duchenin and valet were registered as occupying outside B deck cabins No. 134-6, starboard, fore. Monsieur Adalbert Duchenin, of London.

Kincaid slowly ambled back toward his cabin, keenly scrutinizing faces en route. The *Cesare Battisti* was gliding down the bay, and the tugs had tooted their last salutes and cast off. The tip of Manhattan Island with its skyscrapers, the Statue of Liberty, fell astern, smudged and vague in the misty fog. Hoarse whistles crept over the water; deep bells and sirens sounded incessantly. From Quarantine and the Lower Bay clouds were rolling up low on the water. Dusk would come early that March night.

Smoking reflectively, hands deep in his coat pockets, Don looked out across the bleak, windy vista with narrowed eyes. That he was being followed, and his every move watched, he was certain. Trouble might be expected to break from any quarter, at any time. But his spirits were at the top of the thermometer, nevertheless. The end of this voyage promised to be the solution of the Karl Stendahl mystery, and Don felt as confident of the helmet's safety—in the ship's strong-box—as he did of the Bank of England. The next eight days promised to be plenty interesting. It was a long way to Genoa.

"This will make a rare tale to tell the Strozzi," he grinned, flicking his cigarette over the rail. "Wonder what she's doing right now!"

Perhaps it was as well he did not know.

Don returned to his stateroom, picking up Bob Gaines en route to help him unpack. On the floor of the drawing-room, just inside the door, his eyes fell upon a blank white envelope. Don picked it up. The envelope was sealed, and he ripped it open, extracting a sheet of white note paper folded once.

Without comment he read the two written lines in the middle of the page:

You can leave this ship in the pilot's boat. Take friendly advice and do so.

There was no signature. The writing, in blue ink, was of a vigorous, distinctive feminine hand. There was no need of signature for Don Kincaid to know who penned the missive. But had she thrust it there in person, or had a messenger aboard to deliver it for her?

A rather fascinating enigma was Stephanie Gräetz, he reflected. A beautiful, provocative young woman, an intriguing factor in a ruthless scheme which stopped at nothing. Once she had warned him in Harristown, Texas, again by phone in New York, and now by note aboard the *Battisti*.

But why? Twice certainly she had

attempted to kill him, or at least been a party to the attempt. And it didn't stand to reason that she was ignorant of the attentions of Gibboso's Lepers and the Italian called Baroffio.

Don pocketed the note, which smelled faintly of some strange perfume, and rang for his room steward. The man, a blond Italian whose face was scarred with pox pits and whose hair and mustache looked oilily bleached, appeared at once. He spoke understandable, if broken, English, and was servilely obsequious.

"What's your name, steward?" Don asked pleasantly.

"Giuseppe, sir. Giuseppe Pagliuola."

"Never mind the last jawbreaker. Now listen carefully, Giuseppe. If any one aboard attempts to bribe you, in any shape or fashion, to spy upon me or try any monkey business, come to me and I'll outbid 'em. That a bargain?"

"Yes, sir," nodded Giuseppe shamelessly.

"All right. And from now on your name to me is Joe. Savvy?"

"Yes, sir." The steward grinned.

"But remember," said Don, his voice suddenly chill. "Any slipping up or double crossing on your part is going to be damned unfortunate, friend Joe. Just that—for you. I have reason to suspect certain persons will try to cross your palm with lire. If they do, report it to me, and keep your eyes open. You won't lose by it."

"Yes, sir," nodded Giuseppe solemnly. He slid a glance from Don to Bob Gaines, licked his lips, let his features become wooden. "Anything else, sir?"

"Yes," said Don. "Bring me a bottle of Martel Five-star cognac and a siphon of seltzer water. I know we haven't shoved outside the twelve-mile limit, but—can do?"

"Yes, sir," replied Joe imperturbably. "Right away, sir."

Don grinned at Bob Gaines after the door closed upon the steward, and the

two began unpacking. The short afternoon wore away, and the dim shore line of New Jersey disappeared in the swift striding darkness. Off in the middle distance Ambrose Light sent a golden finger of radiance stabbing over the black, gray-shrouded water. The *Battisti* dropped her pilot off the Hook, and the small boat with a hunting cabin forward slid away from the ocean greyhound's black hull. Nothing but blue water extended from there to Gibraltar, and the *Cesare Battisti* thrust her nose dead east into it, moving with cautious rolls and swells.

Dinner that night was uneventful for Don. He was assigned a table by the dining-saloon steward, and ate well from *apéritif* to *demi-tasse*. Afterward he took a turn around the deck, despite the rising wind and thickening mist, and noted with a faint smile that the wind-dows of starboard cabins Nos. 134-6 were smudged with light, but curtained, closed and shuttered.

Not once, in dining saloon, smoking room or on deck, had he caught sight of Monsieur Duchenin or Baroffio the Knife. Nor of Stephanie Grætz.

He returned to his suite, and for ten minutes was busy. Three hours later he opened the deck door, walked to the rail, and leaned against a stanchion, apparently absorbed in the dull reflections of lighted ports on a sea black as onyx far beneath him. America was hull-down long since, and the salt night wind blew whippingly.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ARMED TRUCE.

THE Statue of Liberty was three days behind, and the *Cesare Battiste* had settled down, after a fashion, into the routine of her eastbound trip. So far it hadn't been an ideal voyage, not by a long shot, for the weather was cold and rainy, the sea rough, the clouds slaty and lowering. It wasn't overbad for March.

But on the fourth morning it did get so. Dawn brought a full Atlantic gale down from its maw that seriously troubled even the hardiest and most experienced sea legs, and drove the majority of passengers to their berths, blanched of face, blurry of eye and greenish-blue of lip.

Don Kincaid, finishing his breakfast in an almost deserted dining room, took his trench coat from a hook in the hall outside the saloon, turned its collar up to his ears, pulled his cap down to his eyes, and went on deck. A seasoned traveler, he was not troubled with nausea. The gale meant nothing to him one way or another.

The same could not be said of Bob Gaines. The Indian-Negro had gone down for the count when the *Battisti* began to pitch and nose-dive and twist, and was curled up like a dying animal in his berth, his coppery face the color of lead. Don grinned at the recollection as he shoved along the promenade deck, fists in his coat pockets and head lowered to the blast of wind and whipping spray. The room steward was looking after Bob.

It was queer, Don cogitated, that his enemies aboard hadn't made their presence known by unpleasant attentions. To the moment he had not been molested in the slightest. He had taken his place in the life aboard that luxurious floating hotel, filled with people of assorted nationalities, and was a familiar figure in the saloons, recreation hall, and smoking room, on deck and in the music room.

In his lean, hard-bitten fashion he was immensely attractive to most of the feminine contingent; to them he was more romantic and intriguing than if he'd been finely bred, and he looked capable of doing anything he might want to do. Those aboard the *Battisti* didn't miss that "certain something" about him—that hint of capability in any emergency, that hint of thorough readiness to cope with anything at any

time. He patently owned a tough stomach and possessed a thick wallet, wore no rings on his fingers or under his eyes, and was certainly vastly interesting.

And being a man's man, the male population of the smoking room took up with him immediately.

On the first morning out of New York he had run across Monsieur Duchenin. Don had just left the wireless office on the boat deck, after filing a marconigram to Gina Strozzi, when he met the Vandyked, monocled gentleman ascending the steps, apparently bent upon a similar mission to "Sparks." Both had smiled simultaneously.

"Good morning," Don said maliciously. "Not waiting to present me with a silk-cord necktie, I hope?"

"No," replied Monsieur Duchenin coolly. "You are far too interesting as an opponent, my dear young friend. May I congratulate such unique cleverness?"

"Thanks," Don nodded a bit soberly. "And mine to you, by the way."

"Don't mention it," said Monsieur Duchenin. "Some time perhaps, Mr. Kincaid, it would be well if you and I had a talk. No hurry. My stateroom is 134-B."

"I know," grinned Don. "Just as you know mine is suite B-B."

"So then," bowed Monsieur Duchenin, raising his hat. "Until later, monsieur. Good day."

Kincaid grinned. "Can one make a drum from the skin of a field mouse?" he called over his shoulder.

"No more than one will live out his allotted span if he attempts to ride tigers," retorted Monsieur Duchenin. With an inscrutable glance at the American, he disappeared toward the radio cabin.

Don was thinking of that as he stared over the steep slopes of angry gray water, their crests white-fanged. Balancing himself to the pitch and roll of the boat, and pondering upon that encoun-

ter, and the subsequent conversation with Vandyke the second day aboard.

They had met, quite casually, in the smoking room that afternoon, and the place happened to be deserted save for the bar steward.

"Mr. Kincaid," said Duchenin without preliminary, "if you were a sensible young man, you and I could do business, and quickly. I shall speak frankly, *mein freund*. Are you willing to lay a few cards on the table, or not?"

Don Kincaid studied the hawkish, monocled face a long moment through a fog of tobacco smoke, then nodded shortly. "All right, I'll gamble a little."

"Very well." Monsieur Duchenin took a swallow from his glass of Rossi. "First, just what is your pound of flesh in this affair, Mr. Kincaid? Is it percentage, a split, or cold monetary transaction?"

"You mean what do I expect to get out of the marchesa for delivering Karl Stendahl's helmet to her?"

"Exactly. I do not quite figure you as a romantic, philanthropic fool, Herr Kincaid."

Anger rose in Don's eyes, and he said coldly: "You, as well as the rest, seem to ignore the fact that Stendahl gave *me* the helmet. If all this tosh about the Barbarossa chalice were true, and didn't turn out to be pure moonshine, the fact still remains that the flagon was stolen by a notorious crook. What makes you suppose that if I knew its hiding place, I wouldn't turn it over to its rightful owners?"

"Several things," replied Monsieur Duchenin slowly. "One is that Count Lothar von Furstenberg, the rightful owner, is dead. His son was killed in Galicia during the War. So far as I know, there is no direct Furstenberg to turn the chalice over to. And another reason," he said more slowly, "is, Mr. Kincaid, even if it were possible, you would never be allowed to do such a quixotic thing."

"The hell I wouldn't!" said Don calmy. "And who'd prevent me?"

"Again several things. This leprous secret society called the Lazzaroni—Mademoiselle Gräetz *et Cie*—*par exemple*. I think you understand to what lengths they will go to prevent your delivering the information to Lady Serravallo, or any one else. And she, Mr. Kincaid, is a second reason you would not be allowed to make any rightful restitution of the cup—especially not north of the Brenner."

"No? Why north of the Brenner, especially?"

"Because there lies what is left of Austrian Tyrol after the jackals in Paris finished with her carcass," said Monsieur Duchenin. "Milady Serravallo stands hand in glove with a man in Chigi Palace, Rome, and has power behind her. She would doubtless turn the chalice over to the Italian government—for an enormous price!—in return for aid given her in obtaining it. She and her friend, the Count Arnulfo Tramonti, stand to make a great many lire if they succeed."

"Who," asked Don, "is Tramonti?"

"One of the cleverest and most unscrupulous scoundrels in Europe. Your present employer, Mr. Kincaid, presuming that you intend delivering the helmet's secret to the lady. The Lazzaroni, et al, are opposing you. Also"—Vandyke bowed and drained his glass—"also myself, *mein freund*."

"Then you are a Leper?" Don asked quietly.

"Hardly." And Monsieur Duchenin laughed unpleasantly. "I am the third angle in the problem. Except to you, the unknown quantity. And I desire, very much indeed, that golden, jeweled cup. *Ja wohl*, yes. Attend, *mein herr*, and let me paint a picture."

Monsieur Duchenin leaned forward, his inky eyes burning.

"Picture gems under a golden boar's head lid that would stir the pulses of an Indian rajah; emeralds of apple

green, sapphires as blue as the Gulf of Sorrento beneath a summer sun, diamonds as coldly flashing as glacial ice. Rubies red as pigeon blood, opals black as Nero's eyes! Priceless jewels, a solid coruscating mass of them, all against the soft, glowing background of yellow gold! Don't you see it?"

Monsieur Duchenin's voice had grown hoarse, his hands were clenched, and his eyes blazed like twin volcanoes. "Mr. Kincaid," he said low-voiced, "have you any idea of how much money that chalice is worth?"

Don smiled thinly at the ash tipped end of his cigarette and replied deliberately: "Yes. Half a million dollars—probably a bit more."

"Ah!" breathed Monsieur Duchenin. He shut his eyes, suddenly opened them wide. "And you, you alone, American, know its hiding place. Yes."

Don smiled tantalizingly. "Your one-hundred-thousand-dollar offer fell a bit short of the target, didn't it?" he said pleasantly. "Changing the subject slightly, would you mind telling me why you garroted that thug in my hotel room?"

"Eh?" said Monsieur Duchenin absently. Then, "Oh, yes. You speak of the Leper you discovered in the bathtub. He was in danger of interfering with my plans by unwise meddling. So he was removed."

"Just like that, eh?" said Don. "Know what he was doing in my room?"

"Of course"—a bit impatiently. "So, Mr. Kincaid, you won't do business over the counter with me, eh? Well, I'm sorry."

"Where's Stephanie Gräetz?" asked Don suddenly.

Monsieur Duchenin smiled frostily. "Cooking up trouble for you, likely. A clever woman, she. I'm one of the few people who know just how clever she is." He pushed back his chair, lit a long pale-green cigar.

"You're quite determined to carry on

and deliver the message of the *loup-garou* to her excellency, the *mar-chesa*?" he demanded.

"That'll be for you to discover, Monsieur X, the unknown," said Don.

"As you wish. Truly it is said that Allah darkens the eyes of men who are destined to destruction," he quoted impersonally. "Again, I state that I am sorry."

"Thanks." Don grinned insolently. "Yet nothing ever beat a try but a flop."

He got up, looked Monsieur Duchenin straight in the eye, and said evenly: "I'd like to know if you've any designs upon me with your silk rope. Just in case, you understand. For, frankly, I rather enjoy your entertaining company."

The Vandyked man laughed shortly. "As you say," he replied meaningly, "that will be for you to find out, Monsieur Kincaid. I, also, find your companionship quite interesting. We need not be unfriendly."

He bowed politely, glanced sidewise at Don, and left the smoking room.

And now, on the fourth morning, Donald Kincaid walked the gale-swept decks of the *Battisti*, eyes blinking from the lash of spume, lazily alert despite the quietness of the voyage so far. He did not discount Duchenin lightly, for he knew that the Monsieur X in the game was an opponent to be warily respected. Don had seen him several times since; on deck, in dining and smoking rooms; they had exchanged conversation without mentioning the chalice.

But what of Stufa Baroffio? If the Leper was aboard, he had certainly kept well concealed. Yet, coldly thinking, of what import would it be for any one to attack him, Don, in midocean?

The helmet was in the purser's care, and Don had given instructions that it be delivered to Gina Strozzi in case anything happened to him. Still, it was no use in relaxing his vigilance or lowering

his guard. Perhaps that was just what they expected him to do.

He made his way to C deck, and began a slow tour of it, stopping now and then at the rail to squint out across the wild and gloomy Atlantic. It was a menacing picture, with the huge marching walls of gray water, bearded with white and twenty feet from trough to crest, sweeping down upon the liner with battering, smashing fury.

The sky was dark and bleak with sable clouds, themselves tattered and torn by the gale that swept them along, and stinging squalls of rain whipped the decks, driven by a steadily rising wind. Spray and spindrift dashed along the promenades and against the cabins like white steam, salty and ruinous to clothing, but Don Kincaid didn't seem to care.

He made his way on toward the bows, which now reared until they seemed to scrape the scudding clouds, then plunged to bury themselves deep in a gray-green valley. The slippery wet deck slanted first this way, then that, against the saw-toothed horizon. Expert sea legs were necessary to navigate at all, and Don chuckled as twice he was unbalanced and thrown off his feet. As he was picking himself up the second time another figure appeared at the forward turn of the promenade deck; the slender figure of a girl in a dark-blue raincoat and a snug-fitting helmet. And she clung to the rail with one hand, to her hat with the other. Spindrift whipped about her in feathery tendrils.

"Well!" muttered Don Kincaid, and his heart picked up a little voltage. "So my dear enemy is aboard after all. I must pay my respects."

Stephanie Gräetz started down the deck, not yet seeing him, and the deck began to rise. With the wind behind her, she advanced like she was climbing a mountain. Then the angle of the deck was suddenly reversed; the bows went up and the stern went down.

Don, clinging to the long, white wall

of a cabin, saw her start toward him at a run down the glistening hill of the deck—in a second she was running uncontrollably, the wind pushing her savagely. She was trying to reach the rail, but the deck was tilted so that she barged along the cabin walls, clutching frantically at any purchase, her face flushed, eyes bright, red mouth curved in a laugh.

Don, his back braced against the corridor wall, opened his arms to catch her and cushion the shock of her interrupted runaway. But when she was almost in reach the deck tilted the other direction, and she lurched to the left and away from him toward the rail.

She struck her shoulder against a stanchion, caromed off, spun about twice in a swirl of blue raincoat, cloche hat and slim legs, and would have fallen heavily if Don had not caught her by the left hand and spun her in the reverse direction, then caught her about the waist with his right arm, so that her back was against his chest and the back of her head just under his chin. For a moment she remained so in that smother of wind and spray, laughing and breathing heavily, then with a lithe twist freed herself and looked at her rescuer.

"You!" she exclaimed with widened violet eyes, then crinkled her nose and laughed lightly. "*Lieber Gott*, but this is *drôle*! How we meet again, signor!"

"It has its compensations, this storm," grinned Don.

"Yes? And why?"

"Because everybody's holed up in their berths, and this promised to be a draggy day. You and I can have the ship to ourselves. Fine."

"So?" She looked at him quizzically. "Do you forget that we are enemies, *M'sieu' le Americain*?"

"There are such things as armistices, aren't there? Suppose we declare one, to-day, Lady Dick Turpin, and seal the compact with a—er—something hot to drink below? You're wet as a well-digger, and so'm I."

For a moment she regarded him steadily, her violet eyes unfathomable under their silky black lashes. Don returned her gaze unblinkingly, his own eyes dwelling shamelessly upon the wisps of red-gold hair, the piquant oval beauty of her wind-whipped face, the flawless curve of neck and chin. The girl flushed a little, bit her lower lip with small, white teeth, smiled uncertainly.

"You are a barbarian, a *sauvage*!" she exclaimed. "I am sure I should not do as you say but—yes—I'm going to!"

Don grinned at the malice in her eyes. "I'm sure I shouldn't do it, either," he said with mock concern, "for you're devilishly beautiful and just about as dangerous as a purring leopardess. But Nimrod's my middle name."

His grin became wicked as he touched her arm. "Speaking of names," he added, "what is yours aboard the lugger? I don't want to embarrass you by making mistakes out of school, milady."

She laughed frankly.

"Perhaps I should let you find out. Yet—you so gallantly saved me from a bad fall, and I'll tell you. I am Made-moiselle Sophie Haller of Roodt, Luxembourg—on the purser's book."

"Thanks," said Don. "I feared I had left you in New York. You—and the Honorable von Ermöli—along with Gibboso & Co."

"Please!" she said quickly, her face sobering instantly. "Let us not speak of these things this day, monsieur. It is unwise, as well as unsafe."

"Just one thing," cut in Don hurriedly. "Is my friend Baroffo aboard? He almost crowned me with a flower pot, you know."

The girl laughed shortly, a bitter, mirthless sound. "I tried my best to warn you, Mr. Kincaid," she said coolly. "Both by telephone and letter. And please believe that my efforts were not without risk to myself. I can say nothing further to your questions."

"You won't tell me who Ermöli is, or what he is to you?"

"No," she retorted, flushing. "That is none of your affair."

"Oh, all right," he said cheerfully. "I'll watch and find out."

"So?" She studied him gravely a short moment. "I wonder if you suspect how minutely *you* have been watched, Kincaid? Or are now?"

"I have an idea," replied Don dryly. "Do you know where the helmet is?"

"Of course. Just as I know what you ate for dinner last evening."

"The hell——" Don looked blankly at her a minute. "Don't try to spooof me, sister. That's slapping it on a bit thick, you know."

"Indeed? Shall I tell you what you ate at the purser's table, where your chair is?"

Mockingly she did so, and correctly, from soup to *défilé-tasse*. Don stared at her narrowly, hands deep in his coat pockets. "But you were not there?" he objected. "You have kept out of sight up until now!"

"That is true"—serenely. "But I shall do so no longer. Let us speak of other things, M'sieu' Kincaid of Texas."

They had traversed the weather side of the boat while talking, gone up a companionway and entered the aft lounge. A steward brought them two steaming *rum chauds*, over which they conversed as gayly and inconsequently as any ordinary carefree voyagers aboard the *Battisti*. But the girl would not give Don the slightest inkling about herself, and adroitly parried every tricky question he asked. And she, in turn, cannily sought for openings in his cautious armor of reticence about his mission.

"Tell me," she asked at last, with a mocking quirk of her mouth—"tell me, are you really going to deliver the helmet to Serravalle?"

"Yes," said Don promptly. "Bar-ri-er—accidents, I certainly am."

She shook her head in mock sadness, and watched a curling smoke ring from her cigarette shred and break. "Your

faith in that lady," she said with a tantalizing smile, "is touching."

Don grinned amiably across at her. "Can you better her offer?" he shrugged.

For a long minute they looked at each other in silence, their faces suddenly serious. A deeper wash of color stained Sophie Haller's face as she crushed out the ash of her cigarette in a tray filled with the remains of many other cigarettes.

"I'm afraid not, m'sieu'," she replied coldly.

Don took a box of vestas—matches made of wax—from his pocket, and carefully placed three to one side of the table.

"Those, milady," he said impersonally, "represent you, and Von Ermöli, and the Lazzaroni. And these three—Serravalle, Tramonti *et Cie*. And this one match—Monsieur X, a lone wolf. And this one match—yours truly—in the center. Fate is dealing the cards in this foursome, and I hold the high trump, so far. When all the cards are dealt, and the show-down comes, Stephanie Gräetz or Sophie Haller or whatever your name isn't, somebody's going to be left holding a busted flush."

The girl leaned forward, her breath coming a bit fast, her eyes stabbing into Don's like leaping rapiers.

"Why have you not placed your vesta beside the marchesa's?" she asked a little breathlessly.

"I'm not showing my cards," said Don, giving her a hard grin. "Not any more than you are showing yours. But you, Gina Strozzi, and Monsieur X of London all know that I hold the ace of trumps."

"Monsieur X?" repeated the girl quickly. "And he is, Mr. Kincaid——"

Don laughed. "Speaking of the devil——" he said half to himself. "Allow me to present the gentleman in person. This is good!"

He turned in his seat and hailed Monsieur Duchenin, who had just entered

the lounge and was staring about absently and polishing his monocle. The Vandyked man caught Don's eye, nodded briskly, shot a keen glance at his companion, then walked over to the wall table, showing his teeth in a swordfish smile.

"Join us, won't you, monsieur?" invited Kincaid. "Mademoiselle Haller, of Luxemburg, allow me. Monsieur Duchenin, of London." Smiling wickedly, he sat back down, motioning to an empty chair. Duchenin bowed, murmured a polite acknowledgment, and took the seat, quite urbane and unperturbed.

"Thank you, no," he said in reply to Don's invitation to drink. "I do not use alcohol this early in the day." He glanced at his watch. "But I will be glad to join you for morning broth. It is time for it, I notice."

Don frankly studied the faces of his table companions, a mocking light in his level eyes. Monsieur Duchenin conversed easily and lightly, his mien a picture of Old World courtesy; Stephanie Gräetz's face was impassive, her eyes a wary study. But beneath her outward poise one sensed her mind was working at breakneck speed, boiling about this fresh angle in the game. Not once was the object of their presence aboard ship mentioned in the course of conversation.

"I observe that you both are hardy mariners," smiled Monsieur Duchenin. "Seeing the steward there with the broth reminds me—I don't fancy he will be very busy with hungry passengers to-day."

"I don't mind the storm," said Sophie Haller. "I rather love it, in fact."

The stewards were on tour with their mid-morning trays, serving broth and biscuits. One slid over to Don's table and presented his tray to Monsieur Duchenin; a look, one swift, lightning glance, passed between them. Monsieur Duchenin handed a cup to the girl, another to Don, took one himself.

"To our better acquaintance," he said, raising his cup.

Don chuckled as he sipped the broth, bit into a biscuit. This was a situation to his liking. Both old Vandyke and the girl were like coiled fencers under their calm exteriors—he'd bet they were sitting on needles and pins. Don yawned behind his hand, lit a second cigarette that didn't taste so good, somehow. That damned soup had upset his stomach, seemed like. Maybe something in it didn't agree with the hot rum punch. Anyhow, the boat seemed to be riding a great deal rougher—

His eyes, roving around the lounge, suddenly fixed upon a brass porthole rim. For the space of perhaps two seconds he looked full into another pair of eyes peering through the aperture; two basilisk eyes fixed upon him in a deadly, inscrutable stare. Cold, hard, implacable they were, and venomous as a snake's. They registered him a brief moment, and were gone.

He had not seen anything of the face below the hooked nose, because of the porthole rim. But those eyes were the eyes of Gibboso the Leper—they could belong to nobody else.

Quite unexpectedly Don Kincaid excused himself, with a nod of apology, and walked quickly from the lounge. But the deck outside was deserted, and he stood regarding it with an uneasy feeling. If that had been the hunchback he had made a lightning get-away. Don steadied himself against the wall of the cabin as his stomach turned end for end. For a moment he thought he was going to retch; then, walking a bit uncertainly, he turned and made his way below.

Monsieur Duchenin and Sophie Haller conversed a little while longer, then the girl excused herself on the plea of having letters to write. She had not noticed the face in the window, nor had Duchenin, but she had noted the abrupt departure of Kincaid, and wondered quite a bit about his failure to

return. Monsieur Duchenin, with a warm and very polite smile, saw her go, waited a minute longer, then departed.

Once around the corner of the deck house, his careless gait quickened. He strode forward briskly and made his way to B deck. With sly glances at the cabin faces, he passed without hesitation to Suite B. No one was in sight as he turned into the alley containing this suite, paused at the door, listened, tried the handle.

The door was locked, of course. Monsieur Duchenin smiled, took a queer sort of key from a pocket and inserted it into the keyhole. Twelve seconds later he entered the cabin, flung a swift look about, then quietly locked the door.

The cabin parlor was empty, and Monsieur Duchenin went straight to the first bedroom. Don Kincaid, fully dressed, sprawled upon the bed, his face pale and beads of sweat on lips and forehead. Sick, perhaps; very certainly asleep. The Vandyked visitor gave him one attentive look, then peered into the second cabin. Bob Gaines, muttering incoherently and more than half unconscious, was hors de combat.

Monsieur Duchenin smiled slightly, turned back to Kincaid's cabin.

In it were two suitcases and a steamer trunk. Duchenin went through the luggage very systematically. With scrupulous care he disarranged nothing, replacing everything just as he found it. Then very expertly he searched the cabin, the drawing-room, bath. Looked in every nook and cranny, in impossible places. Shook his head in exasperation, stared with a frown at the outstretched figure of Kincaid a moment, then stepped over to him.

Slowly, yet deftly, he pulled Don's clothes off, carefully going over each article. He examined his shoes closely, the lining of his coat and topcoat. Examined more closely Don's hair. Stared speculatively at the red scratch along Don's side and furrow across his arm; at the elliptical cicatrice on his left

breast. He regarded the daubs of monkey blood dotting Kincaid's legs, the slivers of skin rubbed here and there, then sat down, lit a cigarette, and cursed softly. "Uncle of Satan!"

"Appears to have quite a case of eczema," continued Monsieur Duchenin aloud to himself. "Also, *mein freund*, you are either mighty wise or mighty foolish. I suspect that you have left the papers, for the present, in the most obvious hiding place—inside the Stendahl helmet. We shall see."

He left the cabin and regained his own just as the first luncheon call was sounding. The pigmyish East Indian attended him, moving about like a dark shadow. "Does the sahib have success?" he asked softly, in Lahore tongue.

"Presently," nodded Duchenin in like language. "Yes, presently. Even the fleetest horse cannot escape its own tail, Bamjee."

He laughed a little, and was preparing to depart for the dining saloon when there came a tap at his door. The deck steward, the one who had carried the broth, stepped furtively in and closed it behind him.

Monsieur Duchenin nodded and drew out his wallet. He took out five hundred-lire notes, and tendered them to the Italian. The steward bowed greedily. "I trust the signor is satisfied with my services?" he said suavely.

"Quite," replied Monsieur Duchenin, visualizing the unconscious figure of Don Kincaid. "*Grazie*. I may need you again some time, Paolo."

"At your command, signor."

Monsieur Duchenin waited until the fellow had departed, then adjusted his cravat and scrutinized his reflection in the mirror before going to the dining room. He seemed rather pleased with himself. Picking a tiny white tablet from his vest pocket he placed it carefully in a small stoppered bottle.

"One little pill—and such a little one!" he mused. "One wouldn't think

it could make a big man sleep like the dead for some six hours. Yet that's what it will do. Yes. I fear my friend Herr Kincaid will have a slight headache late this afternoon."

He turned to the watchful Bamjee.

"You will keep most alert this day—the remainder of it. It may be that some attempt will be made upon my person by the tiger-eyed man in Suite B, B deck. And I do not wish unpleasantness."

"All is understood, sahib. I watch." Bamjee nodded grimly.

It was a coldly alert and somewhat disgruntled Donald Kincaid that appeared on deck the following day. That he had been doped and his rooms searched he well knew, and he was pretty positive that Duchenin was the perpetrator. Still, nothing had been taken, and after all there was no actual proof. Whoever was responsible had made a nice "water haul," that was certain. But the memory of those malignant eyes he had seen at the lounge port-hole pestered him like a loose tooth, and he wore the black barreled Luger snugged firmly against his midriff.

The weather, though still rough and galelike, had quieted considerably in the night, which Don had put in in uneasy slumber. Yet nothing had happened, despite his precautions. Breakfast finished, he walked briskly about the decks, the last ill effects of the white pill gone. And he was trusting no one that day, not any.

There was a marconigram for him from Gina Strozzi, brief and to the point. Don smiled crookedly as he read it:

DONALD F. KINCAID,

S. S. *Cesare Battisti*.

Spies aboard. Be careful every minute. In case of trouble notify Captain Colonna. He will make any arrest on your complaint.

M. DI S.

That wireless message, were it true, gave him a mighty stiff whip hand that

morning, should he care to use it. He had but to speak a word to this Captain Colonna of the *Battisti*, and the ship would be searched from stem to stern for Baroffio the Knife and Gibboso the hunchback. A second word would put Monsieur Duchenin of London or Sophie Haller of Luxemburg in the brig.

Yet, would it? There was no actual proof on any of them, so far on the voyage. And any of them could make countercharges against him, Don Kincaid, that would cause a great deal of embarrassment and delay in clearing up. No matter, however. Don wasn't intending to use this power. The helmet was safely locked up in the purser's charge, and Don wanted to be under no more obligations to Gina Strozzi than could be helped.

He met Monsieur Duchenin soon afterward on deck, their paths crossing.

"Care to join me in a bowl of broth?" Don asked meaningly. "I didn't think much of the flavor of yours, yesterday."

"Naturally not," smiled Vandyke brazenly. "I trust the headache was not overly inconvenient."

"No," said Don. "May I ask what in the hell kind of condiment you used?"

"To be sure. It was threlanium—Speyer's solution." The effrontery of the man was amazing; he made no bones about being guilty. "They are very effective pills, Herr Kincaid."

"So I noticed," Don nodded dryly. "Very. Too bad you had to waste one, Monsieur X. You're good, but not quite good enough."

"Apparently," agreed Duchenin, quite unruffled. "But I almost satisfied myself that you have really placed the papers in the helmet."

"In which case," advised Don mockingly. "you'd better try one of your K. O. drops on the purser."

"It might not be a bad idea," said Monsieur Duchenin. "Could I trouble you for a match, m'sieu'?"

While tendering his box of vestas,

Don's fingers came in contact with the Marconigram which he had thrust in his coat pocket. On the spur of the moment he offered it to Monsieur Duchenin to read.

"What would you do if you had a weapon like that in your arsenal?" he asked pointedly, a curious glint in his keen eyes.

Duchenin read the message, handed it back to Don with his swordfish smile. "I rather think," he replied slowly, "that I'd do just as you are intending doing with it, *mein freund*. Aunt of the Devil, yes!"

Don laughed and passed on, amused. Monsieur Duchenin made no bones about his knavery, at least not with Kincaid. But as Don continued updeck, fists thrust in the pockets of his trench coat and plaid cap slightly aslant, he saw the swart-faced Hindu shadow of Duchenin's slide unobtrusively behind a ventilator.

Don scanned the fellow closely as he walked by, but said nothing. Bamjee's eyes slid in almond-shaped slots toward the American, then became dull and filmed. Don knew those opaque orbs were sliding up and down his back, and he had a ticklish sensation about his throat and under his left shoulder blade.

The day dragged slowly, and toward late afternoon the sky began to lighten a little, the wind to lose its howling tempo. The *Battisti* was plowing out of the storm center, and a ship's officer told Don that they expected to be clear of the disturbance before morning. At dinner that night Don saw Sophie Haller, and afterward they sat in the lounge for coffee and cigarettes.

"To-morrow night we raise Gibraltar," he remarked. "And our play is drawing close to curtain, Lady Turpin. I'm a little bit sorry."

"It is yet many leagues to Italy," the girl answered with a shrug. "Don't let appearances deceive you, Mr. Kincaid.

With the passing of every hour your chances of success grow less, not greater."

"Well," Don said cheerfully, "the party who slipped sleepy drops in my broth yesterday, then later ransacked my quarters, saw his chance of coup considerably lessened. He, or she, was efficient, but out of luck."

Stephanie Gräetz, alias Sophie Haller, looked at him a long moment very curiously. "I did not trick you yesterday, Mr. Kincaid," she said quietly. "But I think you know that. And the monocled Monsieur X of London found nothing of interest?"

"Don't know about that. But he didn't enlighten himself greatly in re the Barbarossa helmet. If he'd knocked out the purser and rooted about the ship's strong box— But that's another thing again."

"I wish," said the girl slowly, "yes, I wish I knew for certain that the thing I seek is truly in the helmet. It seems so futile, so imbecile, for you to die, American."

"That's as may be," retorted Don. "But I appreciate your sympathy. Yes, indeed."

"It pleases you to make the fun," she said coldly. "Is it possible that you do not yet realize the danger of your course?"

"Not very possible. But why fence, you and I? There is an orchestra in the ballroom—a slick floor and good music. Let's dance, drink a bottle of the imprisoned laughter of the peasant girls of France, and forget there was ever such a thing as Stendahl's helmet and a lot of damned intrigue and treachery. What do you say?"

"I say 'yes,'" replied Stephanie quickly, her eyes like bits of turquoise beneath their raven black lashes, her white teeth flashing in a scarlet smile. "I will meet you in half an hour, on the promenade?"

TO BE CONTINUED.

The OLD PAYNE MINE

By General Rafael de Nogales

The Man Who Bears a Charmed Life Escapes Being
Buried Alive.

I WAS in Nevada during the famous Goldfield boom of 1906 and 1907, having just drifted down from Alaska. When I got there my luggage consisted of a toothbrush, a toothpick, and a pair of extra socks. My working capital had dwindled down to half a dollar; but I carried with me a letter of introduction to a noted lawyer and glorious booze fighter by the initials of Mr. K. P. which soon got me back on my feet again, probably because its contents were short but very much to the point. All it said was: "Kid Mendez is one of those fellows who want only a starter; he will do the rest!"

Owing to my facility of adapting myself to new circumstances, I had, after a year's permanence—at the beginning of which I knew practically nothing of quartz mining—become director of several quartz mining companies. This meant that I was now a millionaire on paper. I had ridden the paper storm that had fluttered over the gold boom, and was sitting on top of a pile of it.

Nevertheless, I had not managed to reach the heights of my youthful ambition: I wanted to be president of a full-fledged mining or leasing company of my own. I could easily have started a wildcat company, as so many of the other mining operators were doing. But I was too proud for that. I wanted to get hold of a real mine; but that was about as difficult to find in Nevada in those days as a six-footed hippopotamus on Broadway.

With that purpose in mind I put on my chaps, spurs, and Stetson, mounted Outlaw and hit the trail in the direction of Eureka, which had been a flourishing mining camp in the days of the silver boom. There were plenty of old abandoned mines strewn over the desert which might serve my purpose. I knew some of them because I had visited that district before, during my cow-puncher days in Arizona. We had drifted into it by hazard—"Frenchy," the cook of our outfit, "Lanky" the "killer," and myself. We had set after a bunch of stray cows which were headed for The Needles, near the Colorado Canyon. In those days tenderfeet were sort of scarce around those parts of Nevada. Game, on the other hand, was plentiful.

One day—maybe it was the tenth, maybe the twentieth, after we had started out on our wild-goose chase—while walking our cayuses around an alkali flat, Frenchy straightened up in the saddle and pointed with his knotty fist in the direction of a row of boulders near the foot of a red butte, toward our right. Owing to the glare of the sun I failed to discover what he was pointing at. But Lanky had seen it and, loosening his rope, plunged the spurs into the flanks of his pinto pony and was off like a streak of lightning in the direction of the boulders, with Frenchy close on his heels.

Feeling kind of lonesome I took after them at breakneck speed. It did not take me long to find out what was keep-

ing them bent down over their horses' necks: it was a she-grizzly bear with a couple of cubs, and she was trying to make a get-away by heading at top speed in the direction of the row of boulders. But we got there first.

And while Lanky and Frenchy were holding the "old lady" each by a paw with their ropes, I was trying to maneuver around her so as to drop my noose over her head. But Outlaw, my cayuse, was so plumb scared at the sight of her foaming fangs and glowing eyes that I had to jump off in order to get a bead at the missus. She was a sight for the gods, mad as hell and growling to beat the band.

If one of those ropes had burst and she had taken me in her loving arms, she would have squeezed the life out of me. But somehow or other I managed it with a couple of shots, for she-bears are generally hard to kill, especially when they have cubs and are mad.

Several years had passed since we had pulled off that bear hunt—happily without registering any broken bones—and there I was again riding through those alkali flats and red porphyry hills in quest of something more tangible than a she-bear skin. Unfortunately most of the old mines which I came across had been relocated by professional blanketers or were not worth while bothering with. So I headed due west and, after crossing the Amargosa desert and Death Valley, climbed the Panamint range and entered Inyo County, California, in search of an abandoned silver mine to lease or to take an option on. In those days that was sufficient warrant to issue—and float—a million shares and even to put the suckers into a sweat to get the first lot of its treasury stock.

Finally, after much nosing around, I came upon the old Payne mine. The mine had been abandoned forty years before, during the Comstock boom, because its owners had run beyond the

silver at the eight-hundred-foot level, and hit copper sulphides. It was situated some twenty miles from Darwin, against a barren mountain east of Keeler Lake.

It was by picking up an abandoned silver mine and incorporating it as a copper mine that a senator had apparently made his millions. And why shouldn't I make a few dollars out of the old Payne mine, if not by producing copper, at least by selling treasury stock to a willing and eager market?

As soon as I had my plan straightened out in my mind I started out with Winkelmann, a German assayer, for the mine. Winkelmann was a good assayer but also a sort of a better-class hobo. I had picked him up in a Chinese joint near Keeler, almost starved to death. The poor fellow had left Louisiana for San Francisco as a blind passenger—on an empty freight car—until a heartless conductor kicked him off the train and abandoned him to his fate in the heart of the Mojave desert.

There he had wandered for days, near thirsting to death, until one afternoon he crawled on hands and knees into Johannesburg, south of Death Valley. His hands were lacerated and his lips torn to pieces by the thorns of the cactus trees into which he had sunk his teeth again and again in a mad effort to quench his thirst.

Thence he had proceeded to Keeler in search of work. The terrible tortures which he had undergone had unbalanced his mind. While riding through the desert he would suddenly point at the sun and shout in agony, at the top of his voice—"Don't you dare making faces at me again, you blankety coward!"

After a couple of days we arrived at the mine. It was turned into a heap of ruins. From behind some bony derricks and dilapidated windlasses a couple of slinking coyotes dashed noiselessly into the near-by sagebrushes. The skeleton of a horse lay bleaching in front of the

main shaft, overgrown with scraggy weeds, sinking back into the mountain in an inclined plane.

It looked insecure, so we looked around for a more reassuring one, which would lead us into the bottom of the mine. After some nosing around we came upon a vertical shaft near the old tool house.

It was adequately timbered and a twenty-pound rock we dropped into it proved by its sound that its depth was not less than eight hundred feet. The rock splashed at the bottom, showing that the shaft was flooded. But owing to the dry desert air the timbered walls had been well preserved.

It would have taken us too long to rig up a windlass to lower ourselves by, so we decided to climb down a series of rickety ladders which, nailed to the wooden sides of the shaft, formed an unbroken path more fit for wild cats than for men. In those days my favorite sport was crawling over high ledges on my belly in quest of wild sheep, and Winkelmann was a plodding soul who believed that anything, if done methodically, was bound to turn out right.

We accordingly tied our horses to the tool house, slung our prospecting hammers from our belts and, each with a lighted candle tied to his hat, we started down the shaft. I went in first and was about twenty yards ahead of the assayer. I must have been about one hundred feet below the surface when a creaking sound overhead made my heart jump into my throat.

Before I could climb two rungs I saw with horror how the upper part of the section of the ladder to which I was clinging, detached itself slowly from the wall planking and fell with a thud against the opposite wall, leaving me hanging in mid-air like an acrobat from

a lopsided trapeze, while, my candle having gone out, the dark shaft seemed bottomless below my feet.

Fortunately I did not lose my head, but managed to shout a warning to Winkelmann. Sizing up the situation in a second, he scrambled out of the shaft as fast as he could, and in record time came back from the tool house with a rope, one end of which he tied to a pole outside the shaft, while the other end, with an iron hook attached, he tossed to me. Somehow I managed to grasp the hook with my numbed right while holding to the ladder with my other hand and one leg that I had thrust between two rungs.

In this position I fumbled for what seemed like hours—and were probably seconds—to fasten the rope around my chest and under my armpits, while my left hand was crying to relax its hold on the ladder.

I had barely arranged the rope about me and secured it with the hook, when the fingers of my left hand gave way entirely and I dropped. The rope was slack, and I felt myself flying through the darkness to the flooded bottom of the shaft.

Time slows up in a crisis, and it seemed that I must be ready to hit the bottom and break my neck when, instead, I felt the sudden jerk of the rope under my arms, and stopped sharp in the middle of the air.

Then, with what seemed a tremendous exertion to my ragged muscles, I began to pull myself up slowly, scrambling with my feet along the slippery planking of the shaft wall, until I reached the top, and fainted dead away in the sunlight.

That experience, I believe, is a fine cure for the disease of looking for copper in a silver mine for the purpose of issuing paper.

Watch for another exciting Nogales adventure.





The PEACE of HELL'S KITCHEN

By JOSEPH IVERS LAWRENCE

'Twas a Gr-r-rand Foight!

SEEMS like it all happened in half a minute," John Rooney told his family; "but then again it seemed whole hours before we got goin'. The lieutenant got the hot tip over the wire, and didn't wait for anything. Packed the six of us in a taxi right off, and we made the Larrimore plant without hittin' more'n three high spots on the way. He said he'd follow us up in two minutes, with tear gas an' machine guns, but when we sleued round the corner

next to Larrimore's they were unloading the pay roll from their own car, with a couple o' guards.

"I spotted 'Tige' Lavin right off. Gray spats he had on, an' chamois gloves, an' a cane. A real gen'leman!—just strollin' by. But I no sooner seen 'im than he yanks out two rods and starts firin'. Got one o' the guards, an' a poor guy carryin' two bags.

"Then the six of us charges across the street, all hell a-poppin'—an' then

POP—7B

Tige's gang gets in. Say! And how! Seemed like gunmen popped up out o' the slots in the car tracks. Everybody shootin'—all over the place, when round the corner comes the patrol car, sprayin' cops like a street sprinkler. And then right out o' the windshield of a green taxi comes a burst from a machine gun—one o' them big automatics.

"They got three of us right off, y' know, and then we begun diggin' in. Say! Two-hundred-pound coppers got behind six-inch lamp-posts; I guess some of 'em went down manholes. There was a gunman blazin' away from behind the counter of an orangeade stand, an' a cop got 'im, shootin' from inside a concrete mixer.

"Tige Lavin was in command, hidin' behind the Larrimore steel car, an' I quit firin' for a minute an' slipped round to look for 'im."

"Th' blessed saints preserve us!" groaned John Rooney's mother, her staring eyes reproducing the scene in the narrow parlor of the apartment.

"Goin' round the rear end," John continued, "I seen Tige not ten feet off, an' he seen me! I pulled down me gat an' squeezed 'er—but not a ca'tridge in th' clip. Tige's bullet went through my cap, an' then I tackled 'im—just like football. Tige ain't heavy, but he's wiry. He give me a fight, all right! Believe me, I was gettin' all I wanted, but I got a swipe at 'im with the butt o' me gun.

"That's all!" he sighed, a little breathlessly. "Some cops piled on top of us, to make sure of Tige—an' then Tige's gang sort o' petered out. He was *some* general, that guy! There won't be no more gang without 'im. He'll get life this time, they say."

"And you'll get a medal, John," predicted Ed Ryan gravely. Ed was the husband of John's sister Minnie, and a promising young lawyer, prominent in ward politics.

"A medal, sure," agreed John's

mother, "and he'll be a sergeant, too, if the commissioner knows what he's about."

"A medal, is ut?" growled Grandfather Rooney from his armchair. "An' a sargint, is ut? Arrah, shtir up th' fire a bit, Nora darlin'. It's that cowl I am, it's on th' hob o' the grate I'd be settin'."

It was a gas log that needed stirring, and Minnie Ryan laughed gently as she turned up the flame, while little Grandmother Nora bustled about to get her man a shawl for his poor old knees.

"Don't fret, gran'paw," John said kindly. "We all know the old days were the big days. Sure, I wouldn't be half the cop I am, if I didn't have the blood of Mike Rooney in my veins."

Ed Ryan chuckled, with an indulgent nod to the old man.

"It always did take a he-man to be a New York cop," he conceded, "but to-day you got to admit that crime's getting scientific—highly organized—it's run on a big scale. No sentiment about it! Cold-blooded!—all worked out on paper, like a business. Brains behind it, you know—and it takes brains and real guts to meet it."

"Don't be vulgar, Ed!" protested Minnie, darting a reproving glance at her husband over the tiny vanity mirror and powder compact with which she was engaged at the moment.

Grandfather Rooney fidgeted with his bony knees under the shawl.

"It's real war, these gangsters and racketeers are carrying on," persisted Ed earnestly. "They've got their artillery and infantry, as it were; they've even used airplanes in some places, you know. We're living in big times, and even crime is carried on in a big way."

"Aw, hell!" exploded the grandfather, and his old black pipe fell from a shaking hand.

"Ah, now, Mike, come along wid me!" whispered the little old lady persuasively, gathering him into her frail,

thin arms. "Come, Mike darlin'; 'twas yer bedtime an hour ago."

The old man got slowly to his feet, glaring a challenge to all persons in the family circle, but saw only kindly smiles—patient smiles which did little enough to allay his ill humor.

Drawn insistently toward the door by grandmother, he hobbled out into the long hall of the apartment and allowed himself to be guided to his room by the devoted hands, a soft kiss on his withered cheek going far to soften his mood.

"It'll be near fifty years, Nora," he mumbled softly, as they gained their door, "yit—God love yer, darlin'—it's like yistiddy it seems."

Alderman Kilfoyle's house was on Thirty-third Street, in a quiet residence block untouched by the sinister influence of the powerful gang which had fixed the name of "Hell's Kitchen" on a considerable section of the middle West Side.

There were two ailanthus trees and some flower beds in Alderman Kilfoyle's back yard, and in the smaller area in front of the house were lilacs and syringas, and a low hawthorn hedge.

By the flowering lilac bush Nora Kilfoyle was standing, her face shaming the spring blossoms with its freshness and color. A glorified sunbonnet of blue silk framed the pertly tilted head, matching the eyes, and inside the flaring brim was a garland of tiny pink roses which paled beside the maiden blushes.

"Good day to ye, Miss Kilfoyle," said Patrolman Michael Rooney, with only a sickly sort of a smile.

"Yerself knows there's no need of miscalling me like that, Mike Rooney!" protested the damsel, with an indignant toss of her head. "I'm still Nora to me friends, and always will be, please God!"

"Not," declared the policeman, "if it's Mistress Steele they're goin' to be callin' ye. Fri'nds is fri'nds, but that's another thing entoirely."

"Sure, ye're a jealous, ill-tempered lad, Mike," said the girl, with a flash of the roguish, radiant smile that her friends knew her by. "Is it for love o' me that ye'd have me take up with a red-headed policeman, when I might have a fine gentleman who walks with a gold-headed cane? I'll ask ye that!"

There was a sizzling retort on the tip of Mike's tongue, but he caught it between his teeth as Nora's flippancy gave way to grave concern.

"Oh, Mike," she whispered, "it's awful angry my father is this very minute at Mr. Steele. We're after having a fine supper to-night, for father to introduce Mr. Steele to some of his friends. Oysters an' canvasbacks and champagne—a real stylish spread!—and in three days me father has had no word from Mr. Steele."

"To introjuce yer fy-an-see to his fri'nds, is what ye mean, Nora Kilfoyle! It's not meself will be carin' if yer feyther has no word from that mug in three days more."

"But father's that taken up with Mr. Steele, he'll feel it a great insult to us," said Nora archly. "He's fearful Mr. Steele's at the drink again. He was sayin' if Mr. Steele would leave the strong drink be, he'd be mayor o' New York in his time."

"Th' blessed saints ha' mercy on New York!" Mike breathed fervently. "Well, I'll be on me way, Nora Kilfoyle. I mistrust th' gentleman *is* at the drink ag'in, an' I might cast me eye about for 'im."

"Ye'll have no sort o' trouble with him, Mike!" the girl exclaimed apprehensively, a little quaver in her voice.

"It's me job to keep folks out o' trouble. Have no fear for yer fy-an-see, ma'am, if it's wishful ye are to be the lady o' the mayor o' New York."

Shoulders square, head up, Patrolman Rooney marched down Eighth Avenue, swinging his club with a savage little snap of the cord at every step.

He caught sight of leather-faced Harry Hoskins cruising with his handsome cab, and hailed him.

"Have ye seen 'Gentleman George' Steele th' day, Harry?"

"I 'ave," responded the cabby curtly. "Mr. Steele will tyke no other 'ansom when mine's for 'ire. A gentleman like 'im knows a good whip an' a good 'orse. Though it's little to 'is credit, 'e's at hOscar the Dutchman's plyce right now, drinkin' 'is bloody 'ead orf."

Mike asked no more questions, but hurried along, and presently pushed through the swinging doors of the "family entrance" to Oscar Schmidt's saloon, and found himself in interesting company.

In the oak-paneled back room, with its plate-glass mirrors and marble-topped tables, were five persons known to the police, but not with warm affection or high regard.

Two of them were members and active agents of the Dead Rabbit gang on the East Side: Jake Lozier, a minor chief in the city's toughest clan, and "Greaser Pete," a swarthy giant who first entered the port of New York as a Kanaka sailor.

George Steele, whom Mike Rooney was seeking, sat at a round table, his back to the rear wall, and was flanked by two women of Amazonian build: "Babe" Mullins, a pink-and-white heifer who tipped the scales at fifteen stone, and "Dopey Dora" Kent, a spare but stalwart woman, flabby-faced and dull-eyed—yet showing pathetic traces of a physical grandeur that ruin had not entirely obliterated.

The two women passed a stone *schnapps* bottle back and forth between them, but Steele, the elegant rounder, affected brandy floats. After his habit, he wore a freshly ironed silk topper, set at a rakish angle, a Prince Albert coat with lavender trousers and gray spats, and an Ascot scarf held with a star-sapphire set in brilliants.

"What 't hell do *you* want, Rooney?" challenged Jake Lozier, fishy eyes shifting nervously.

"Th' back o' me hand to yer, Jake!" sneered the patrolman, from a corner of his mouth. "I might take a mug o' lager to lay the dust in me throat, but ye needn't be thinkin' it's con-jaynial company I'm lookin' for in this place.

"An' now," he added gruffly, "be that as it may, what the divil ye doin' here yerself, this side o' Broadway? Hell's Kitchen is no place for a Five Pointer—even when the sun's shinin'."

"Get on yer job, Mike," piped Babe Mullins. "The lousy sheeny's come over to throw a scare into Mr. Steele."

"Shut your trap, Babe!" snapped George Steele, and nonchalantly stroked his pomaded mustaches, but his fingers trembled.

"There's no business for a brass-buttoned crusher here!" Lozier snarled savagely. "Go pound yer beat. Show yer face south o' Houston Street, an' there'll be a dead mick in the gutter."

"Git back to Hester Street where ye belong," ordered Mike, "or bedad, there'll be kosher cat meat scattered round Eight' Avenoo!"

Lozier screwed his mobile countenance into a bulldog grimace and got slowly to his feet. At the same time the gorilla-faced Greaser Pete rose to six feet of solid muscle back of the table.

Gentleman George jerked a short deringer from under his arm and covered the Kanaka as the latter made a movement toward his belt.

Mike Rooney waited for no more. His locust club flashed in the air and cracked on the head of Jake Lozier with the sound of a bat hitting a pumpkin. The East Sider crashed down behind the table, and the baton swung again and thudded on the massive, swarthy jowl of Greaser Pete, stretching him beside his pal. Much of the renown of New York's "finest" was

due to their deftness in matching mere billets of hard wood to shooting irons, even when the gunmen were quick on the draw and the trigger.

"Hit 'em again, Mike!" shrilled Babe Mullins. "Stomp 'em! Mash their dirty mugs for 'em!"

But Mike was engaged in verifying his belief that both men were armed for battle, and he collected four revolvers.

Oscar Schmidt and his waiters were bunched in the narrow passage to the bar, chattering in their panic.

"Sooch a pizness!" groaned the proprietor. "An' I run a respectable blace!"

"A hell of a respectable place!" jeered Dopey Dora. "There's no safe place west of Broadway, now, for a decent woman to go. *You*, Babe, sew up your filthy mouth! Try to be a lady—once!"

"Snuff up another pinch o' coke an' go to hell!" returned the rosy-cheeked Amazon. "George likes me jest as I am—don't you, George?"

But Steele was gravely surveying the casualties of the brief skirmish.

"Why don't you get the wagon, Rooney?" he demanded. "They'll come to, in a minute."

"Sure, *you* got time to git away, Misther Steele," Mike replied. "These fellies will come to, an' they'll go home an' stay there. They'll not be wishful to cross the line ag'in in a month. We're not after mixin' our affairs wit' them o' the East Side.

"An' my advice to yer, Misther Steele," he added solemnly, "is that ye go on home an' sober up, for a change. Truth to tell, I was lookin' for yer. There's dacint folks expectin' ye to supper this very night—an' in a shtate of so-briety."

"*You* 'tend to your own affairs, Rooney. I don't require such personal service from the New York police. You're damned impertinent, my man. I haven't been drunk for a month."

"But ye've been drunk for a week, to me own knowledge. It's a fine upshandin' figger of a man ye are, Misther Steele, but when I see yer extra straight an' extra dignified, then I know ye're hittin' up the brandy an' the absint!"

Schmidt came to Steele in a fever of anxiety.

"T'ree men oudt in front—across der street," he said. "My Svede waiter says dey're from Great Chones Street—berhaps from der Dead Rabbits."

Then "Chink" Kurtz darted in at the side door. He was a little sallow man with long slits for eyes, which got him his nickname when he was a lobbygow—runner for an opium joint in Chinatown. He had migrated to the West Side and risen rapidly in the administrative circles of the Hell's Kitchen gang.

"Hey, George!" he cried familiarly, to Steele, "they's a lot o' Five Pointers comin' over the line; I been gettin' reports. It's your putting up the dough to get 'Slimy' Osterhout sent up th' river. It's you they're after, and your friends ain't so very safe. Better hoof it to Tenth Avenue—Dan Shaw's place. Dan's got a bunch o' blacksmiths for waiters. I've sent out a call for the boys."

"Will ye go now, Misther Steele?" Mike Rooney pleaded anxiously. "Will ye go home an' shtay there?"

"They know I live at the Normandie," said Steele gravely. "Like enough they've got sharpshooters round there—if they're after me. I'll go to Dan Shaw's for a bit."

"Hustle, then!" urged Chink Kurtz. "I got 'Bully Bill's' hack outside."

Mike slipped out into the side street. He was uneasy, and not minded to risk abuscades and a possible battle in the Five Points fashion. He rapped the sidewalk sharply with his club, and a flat musical note sounded above the clatter of hoofs on the avenue with the

resonance and carrying power of well-seasoned locust wood. Its echo had scarcely died away when Officer Tim Lafferty came running from Eighth Avenue, alert for trouble, and he was followed in another minute by Sergeant White who had been on an inspection stroll.

"I'm off post, Sarge," said Mike, "but fer th' love o' Heaven relieve me for the day. Th' Dead Rabbits are hoppin' across Broadway, an' they've set their mark on George Steele. Leave me arrest 'im or take him safe to a hide-out. I give the shtick to Jake Lozier an' Greaser Pete, in Dutch Oscar's. They was there with Gentleman George, an' they'd 'a' got 'im sure in a minute."

"Better you'd 'a' stuffed them plug-uglies with lead—in *self-defense*," growled the sergeant. "Go ahead and arrest George Steele—drunk an' disorderly—resisting an officer—anything."

But just then, as a two-horse hack pulled up at the side door of the saloon, George Steele flashed across the sidewalk and plunged into the darkened interior of the vehicle, valiantly convoyed by Babe Mullins and Dopey Dora.

Little Chink Kurtz came after them, covering the retreat, but before he could get into the hack, with the massive bulk of Miss Mullins blocking the door, a fusillade of pistol shots came from the windows of a tenement across the street and shattered the glass of the carriage.

The women caterwauled like wild cats, and the obese, purple-jowled hackman, Bully Bill Harkness, cursed obscenely in a shrill treble and slashed his bony nags with his whip till they plunged into a wild gallop.

Chink Kurtz leaped for the hack's baggage rack and perched on it, and the nimble Mike Rooney joined him there, gaining a precarious seat as the creaking wheels bounded over the cobblestone pavement.

Sergeant White and Patrolman Lafferty boldly attacked the house where

the ambush was established, blowing their whistles and smiting the sidewalk with their sticks to summon reinforcements. They crashed in the basement door and charged fiercely through halls and tenements, but found deserted rooms. An open skylight showed how the snipers had escaped over the roofs.

The Dead Rabbits from the Five Points district had opened hostilities, but evidently were not yet in sufficient force to venture a skirmish with their West Side gang enemies, or with the police. A general alarm had flashed through the district, however, and White and Lafferty came out of the house to find the street crowded with hoodlums, just as Lieutenant M'Gurk of the precinct station arrived at Dutch Oscar's in a patrol wagon with a squad of bluecoats.

Dan Shaw's Royal Palace on the east side of Tenth Avenue was a spacious beer garden and dance hall, and a popular resort of well-to-do panhandlers, floppers, yeggs, pickpockets, drug peddlers and addicts, with the females of the species, all under the protection and supervision of the Hell's Kitchen gang.

The proprietor, a calm, mild-mannered little man with square shoulders and a bullet head, greeted the hack load or fugitives at the front door of his place, and was outwardly unruffled at the hysteria of the women and the tremulous haste of Gentleman George.

"Chink sent me word," he said quietly, as they all chattered in his face. "Git inside, George—and keep these loud-mouthed mabs from yellin'."

Chink Kurtz hustled Steele and the women through the doors, and Mike Rooney stopped for a word with Shaw.

"It's a nee-farious business, Dan," he muttered dubiously. "Eight' an' Nint' Avenoo has Dead Rabbits hoppin' like fleas on dogs. Th' cops will hold 'em, mebbe. If I git a patrol wagon, I'll run George to the station house an' lock

'im up till he can git off to Saratoga for his healt'."

"He's yellin', George is," Shaw remarked with wild disdain. "But—give 'im credit—he's stuck by the gang. Many a good lad would be up the river now if 'twan't for him; and see the trouble it's brought 'im, along with the Slimy Osterhout case."

Steele and the two women were conducted to the dance hall at the rear—the citadel in times of storm and stress, and they were received sullenly by a few of such denizens of the water front as were wont to venture out in daylight.

Kitty May, a petite blonde, turned up a shapely nose at Babe Mullins.

"Cunnin' little doll-baby, ain't she?"

A longshoreman who had been dancing with Kitty guffawed harshly, and Miss Mullins placed a pudgy thumb to her nose and twiddled her fingers at the pair.

"Thank God I ain't a dried-up peanut!" she said fervently, and added other metaphors as her imagination began to function.

Kitty pertly consigned her to the universal rendezvous for all who are despised, and the nervous George Steele tactfully proposed drinks for the crowd at his expense. Gin was the prevailing order, and some West Siders wanted spirits of camphor added to theirs for an extra kick, while one huge stevedore demanded a dash of benzine.

"Got some good straight alcohol?" Dopey Dora asked a polite brute of a waiter. "All right, give it just a squirt of ether. I'm from uptown; I'm not accustomed to Tenth Avenue manners, and I need a bracer."

"I misdoubt there's any trouble comin' here, Dan," Mike Rooney was saying to the proprietor, out by the bar. "Th' shpalpeens thought to git George aisy-like, but the po-lice has turned 'em back."

Three men came in and draped themselves along the bar.

"Dead Rabbits!" exclaimed the alert Mike, starting forward. "Out wid yer! They's saloons east o' Broadway fer the likes o' yer."

They hung on the bar and leered at him.

"Chase yerself, flatfoot!" said one. "We got a right to drink, ain't we?"

"Youse mugs, do like th' cop says!" growled a giant barkeep, and brought a heavy bungstarter from under the bar.

One of the invaders flashed a revolver from a shoulder holster and shot the bartender through the chest.

Dan Shaw roared a rallying call, and a flying wedge of strong-arm waiters charged from the rear room, but they met a phalanx of the enemy which stormed through the double doors, wielding bludgeons and blackjacks. A boatload of East Siders had landed in an oyster dock on West Street: the Dead Rabbits were hopping in Hell's Kitchen and taking its forces on an unprotected flank.

The New York gangster, like the savage warrior of the jungle, relied on sound and fury to awe an enemy, and the crashing of shattered mirrors and glass bar furnishings answered the first burst of gunfire, followed by piercing shrieks from the women in the back room.

A bartender lay dying among beer pumps and broken glass, and his three comrades in their white coats and aprons vaulted the bar and joined the heavy-weight flying squadron of waiters in their effort to repulse the surprise attack. Mighty fists, hard and horny as hoofs, cracked jawbones. Brass knuckles, slung shots, butcher knives, and pistols came into play in the tumultuous free-for-all, and huskies went down in the sawdust and turned it from dirty yellow to glistening crimson.

A red-headed slasher from Five Points fell with his head lodging grotesquely in a large brass cuspidor, which handily caught the blood from a gash

in his neck, and one of the stalwart waiters "stomped" him there, jumping on his back and neck till the red-haired, gory head was locked in the bent and twisted brass frame of the cuspidor.

Patriotism was a quality not always lacking in the metropolitan thug, but in the heat of battle a Dead Rabbit tore a framed portrait of President Rutherford B. Hayes from the wall above the bar and crashed it on the head of Dan Shaw, who was urging his cohort to a fierce defense. Picture and glass were torn and shattered, and the stoical little proprietor wore the frame like a horse collar, but with his battered bald head bleeding from a dozen cuts, he retreated slowly toward the back room, deliberately aiming his revolver and firing wherever he spotted a proper human target.

Mike Rooney, sole representative of law and order, smote every hostile head that came within reach of his locust stick, and, as a duty, he roared threats and commands in the name of the law, but no one was minded to be bothered about the law in Tenth Avenue at the moment.

George Steele was not in the fray, but he was in the minds of Mike Rooney and Dan Shaw as they backed toward the big room where he was hiding—a politician of some influence and wealth must be guarded—and they were planning the next move as the Dead Rabbits advanced, when a fresh tumult, with crashing glass and rending planks, told them that another squad of the East Side gangsters had stormed the side entrance to the dance hall and battered in the barred doors.

Shaw rallied his waiters and charged to the rear with Mike Rooney, and in an instant they had the foe before them and behind them.

Steele's shining topper was smashed on the floor, and a blow had bruised one of his eyes. He had discharged the futile pocket derringer, and now

guarded himself with a chair held in front of him. His face was white, he looked dazed and uncertain, but still he maintained something of dignity and fought against sheer panic.

Dopey Dora shrieked and cursed impressively; Babe Mullins fought like a warlock. Her pudgy hands were not as soft as they looked, and they carried stunning wallops to the foes that came within reach. Men who came back at her she engaged hand to hand, and then her nails ripped and tore into flesh.

A Five Pointer kicked her in the solar plexus for a knock-out, but, howling and heaving for breath, she grappled him. She got a hold on an ear with her big white teeth, and when the man writhed and jerked himself loose he left the lobe of the ear in her mouth. She spat out the grisly trophy with a mouthful of blood, and as the bewildered thug staggered away, she kicked him in the face and floored him.

"Croak the filthy rat!" yelled a gangster, and a bullet creased the roll of fat which formed a thick shield for Babe's jugular vein.

She reviled the enemy in a vocabulary richer than theirs, and would have charged into a rain of bullets, but Mike Rooney caught and flung her aside, then fired two shots among the feet that milled about the floor in front of him.

Rattling gunfire broke out again in the front saloon, and there was a heavy tramping of feet. The Dead Rabbits in the dance hall swirled about the door and began firing toward the street.

"Th' po-lice!" yelled Mike jubilantly. "M'Gurk an' the ree-serves have came! Sure, it's a grand fight!"

Lieutenant M'Gurk's powerful voice could be heard, demanding surrender, but the Five Pointers jeered and howled him down. They outnumbered the police three to one, and they were handy with guns, shooting from the hip or taking deliberate aim.

"Bully Bill's got his hack round the

corner, if he ain't croaked," whispered Chink Kurtz suddenly, with a wary eye on the shifting battle. "It's your chance to give 'em the slip, George. One of 'em will plug you yet, if this keeps on. I'm surprised you're alive."

"Go!—go now!—fer th' love o' th' Lord!" Mike begged Steele. "Kape on goin'—don't shtop! Bill will drive yer to Harlem. G'wan to McGowan's tavern an' git a light rig to take yer to—to—th' furdur th' better."

"C'mon, George!" cried the battle-scarred and bleeding Babe. "I'm with ye, George."

Now the police clubs were cracking on heads in the saloon with a sort of rhythm, and there were groans and yells as of embattled armies.

Steele, his oiled hair tousled, one eye darkening and closing, reeled in a stupor of bewilderment toward the wrecked side entrance. Babe shoved him through it over the debris, and Dora shambled after them. The alert and efficient Chink Kurtz went, too, to engineer their escape.

Mike heaved a profound sigh of relief, wagged his head, and tenderly rubbed a score of bruises on his limbs and body. Then he gripped his locust in a powerful right hand, jammed his helmet well down to the tops of his ears, and started for the front line of combat.

"Hoo-roo!" he shouted blithely, and plunged into the fray.

Tenth Avenue was quiet as the dusk gathered. In the ruins of Dan Shaw's Royal Palace lay four deceased Dead Rabbits, a bullet-riddled barkeep, and two dead policemen. M'Gurk had a dozen thugs to load into the patrol wagon for a ride to the jug. The evening was coming on peacefully.

The rest of the Five Pointers, defeated by superior tactics and leadership, had faded from the scene, slipping away like foxes, north, south, east, west.

The lieutenant told Mike to go home and rest, and Mike dusted off his uniform, punched out a deep dent in his helmet, and started walking east.

At Eighth Avenue he saw a cop running, and hailed him for information.

"Trouble aplenty," answered the cop. "They say George Steele's in another mess. There's a riot. Eight' Avenner an' Thoity-thoid—"

"Mary-Mother-av-Mercy!" gasped Mike. "Th' dom' fool didn't know enough ter keep on going. Th' black curse be on 'im if he's made trouble fer—"

"The gangs are out," the other cop informed him. "Been comin' 'cross town in street cars an' cabs. Dead Rabbits an' ever'thing—more'n ever! An' the Hell's Kitchen boys are out after 'em—comin' uptown an' downtown. It's gang war. Georgie Steele will be gettin' mashed between 'em."

"Lave off yer gab an' come on!" cried Mike, and started running.

Northward and eastward he ran, the other patrolman panting close behind him. They came to Eighth Avenue and Thirty-third Street, and there was no fighting there, but they heard the din of battle close by. They sprinted eastward and saw the street ahead of them crowded with milling, struggling men, and the air above full of soaring brickbats and sticks.

"Kilfoyle's house it is!" gasped Mike, and got a firm grip on his club.

A moment later he tore into a scrimmage of gang against gang, where the bluecoats were fanning their sticks lustily, one head as good a billet as another.

Nora Kilfoyle's little front garden bloomed no longer; the lilacs were gone, and the yard was like one plowed and harrowed. Hedges and fences were torn away from the house all about the alderman's, and there was not a window left intact in the neighborhood.

Of the police there were reserves from four precinct stations, with their

officers, but in the ranks of the outlaws were partisan contingents from almost every settled ward of the city—some of them giving gory evidence of their allegiance to the Hell's Kitchen thugs, while as many more paid strenuous homage to the men that ruled the East Side from the Battery to Harlem.

Alderman David Kilfoyle came out on the high stoop of his house and addressed the contending armies. It was evidently not the first attempt he had made at conciliation and compromise, for his head was bandaged and his clothing was shredded to rags and fringe.

"Now I tell yer!" he roared hoarsely, "you must stop—in the name of the mayor of New York—in the name of the governor of the State——"

He was cut off in mid-career. A hard-flung egg found the aldermanic nose a tempting mark, and his already rumpled white waistcoat was quickly decorated in a fantastic pattern of yellow and claret color.

"Got 'im on th' conk!" jeered an East Sider in the yard. "Trow out de bloke yer got inside, or we'll move off yer house."

Kilfoyle pressed a kerchief to his nose and gurgled, trying to swear. A rutabaga caught him in the chest and knocked him against the front door, and he fell inside, gladly allowing some one to draw him farther in and slam the door shut.

The green-grocer's stand at the corner of Seventh Avenue had been plundered, for bricks and stones were scarce, and turnips, potatoes, and onions were effective on window glass and human faces, while eggs, in quantity, messed things up generally to the satisfaction of the mob.

Further reinforcements for the East Side barbarians, now advancing from Seventh Avenue, drew the attention of the police to that quarter, and a dozen thugs seized the looked-for opportunity

to make a dash for the Kilfoyle front door.

It was a swift dash, a bold, impulsive stroke, but Mike Rooney and Tim Laferty, his friend, saw the beginning of it, and were on the stoop with the first of the gangsters to reach it, clubbing heads right and left, fighting to guard the door.

The rush of the men at the rear, however, carried those in front like a wave against the door and burst it inward. The two policemen and the Dead Rabbit hoodlums were in Alderman Kilfoyle's house, fighting in the narrow hall, crowded so there was scarcely room to kick or strike a man.

The big walnut newel post was ripped from its base, and the stair rail went with it. The hall stand went to pieces, fragments of its mirror chinking among walking sticks and umbrellas. Men caught up the carved balusters from the broken rail and used them for clubs, as the alderman and half a dozen friends and servants crowded forward from the parlor to repel the invasion.

The defense was half hearted—loud threats and protests more than blows—and the attack swept into the parlor, the thugs hunting and yelling demands for George Steele. A tall glass case with costly bowed front, containing the Kilfoyles' fine collection of stuffed birds and realistic wax flowers, went over with a crash like an explosion. Treasures that did not fall were hurled down. The glass-inclosed ormolu clock was snatched from the marble mantel and smashed on the grate, and the shining brass coal scuttle was used to shatter the huge plate mirror above the mantel.

The women of the house shrieked behind the double doors of the back parlor, and the thugs turned that way, battering the walnut panels, but finding them stout and firm.

Mike and Tim, fighting now to keep on their feet and survive, broke loose and made their way to the back parlor

through the rear hall. The panic-stricken alderman joined them, and the women admitted the three to their refuge through a narrow door which they hurried to barricade again with furniture.

"Ye're here, *then*—more's th' pity!" cried Mike, as he saw George Steele with the women, a white-faced, bruised and battered dandy, shorn of most of his finery.

From the other side of the double doors came the sound of a bulky object rolling on creaking casters.

"Faith! it's Nora's pianner—they'll ram the doors with it!" wailed Mrs. Kilfoyle.

"Be ready, then, ma'am," said Mike. "Tim an' me'll shoot our way to the shtairs, an' ye'll git to th' roof."

"Ye'll save Mr. Steele, Mike Rooney!" cried the alderman's lady.

"George Steele, wull ye do no bit ter save yerself?" demanded Tim Lafferty, staring at the dandy with withering contempt. "Yer dead mother was Oirish, rest 'er sowl! Is ut more dead than alive ye are, on yer feet?"

Steele staggered forward. He breathed hard, and his open eye shifted about like that of a trapped animal.

"The stairs!" he muttered. "The roof! That's it—the roof!"

"He's hurt, Mike—don't ye see?" pleaded bright-eyed, white-faced little Nora. "Have ye no pity, Mike? Sure, if ye're no friend o' mine, Mike Rooney, have ye no duty as an officer o' the law?"

Mike's wide, firm mouth was a hard, straight line; his face was gray, but his eyes gleamed like live coals.

"If it's *you* that's wantin' 'im saved, Nora Kilfoyle!" he exclaimed in a husky, cracked voice.

"He's me father's friend—he's *our* friend!" cried the distracted girl. "They're after 'im, Mike—the Dead Rabbits! You know, Mike! They haven't killed 'im—but they'll take 'im

—to Five Points—th' cellars! They'll get money from his friends—an' then they'll kill 'im slow— Oh! th' black hearts of them, Mike!"

"If it's *you* that's wantin' 'im saved!" Mike repeated.

Mrs. Kilfoyle, hysterical, clinging for support to the arm of a gray-haired housekeeper who moaned and prayed, uttered a scream as the noise in the front room grew louder, more fearful.

The walnut doors creaked and groaned; they bulged, the panels splintered, the locks gave way; then with a sickening crash the heavy rosewood square piano plunged through the barrier, propelled by the eager, chattering, menacing mob.

"It's a chase we'll be havin'," Mike whispered to Nora. "Ye'll shtay here—you an' yer mother, d'ye hear? Ye'll be safer. I'll lead 'em aff."

He caught Steele by the collar of his coat and shoved him roughly through the little door into the hall. The thugs started forward in pursuit, yelling like beasts, those in the rear vaulting over the piano. Tim Lafferty clubbed them back, threatening them with the revolver in his left hand.

Out to the ruined staircase Mike drove his charge, but the mob surged back through the front parlor to head him off.

It was a crisis, and Mike emptied a revolver into the jam that was made by the men from the parlor and those who were pressing into the hall from the street. Every bullet found a billet, and there was pandemonium. Men shrieked in agony, and their comrades howled for revenge.

Bullets thudded into the walls and stairs, and Mike's side and leg were seared by grazing shots, but he lifted and kicked George Steele before him, bundled him up the stairs, booted and heaved the almost helpless man as far as the first landing. Then he halted and stopped a gathering charge with six

more shots, fired from a revolver he had taken from Greaser Pete in Schmidt's place.

There was still an orange glow over the sky line of Jersey City as Mike paused to take breath on the roof of the Kilfoyle house, but the twilight was deepening. The policeman stood with feet braced apart, panting, while he reloaded two empty revolvers. Gentleman George leaned upon a chimney, his shoulders sagging, his head drooping on his breast, but he started and winced at every wild yell from the rioters in the street.

Tim Lafferty joined them there. His right arm hung limp, his faithful nightstick was gone, but as he gained the roof he turned and fired four shots down the skylight to check pursuers.

"M-my God! We're not safe—here!" mumbled Steele. "They'll be coming after us."

"Them words, me bucko," sneered Lafferty, "is like enough th' first truth ye ever shpoke intintionally."

"Come on, Tim," sighed Mike wearily, a little hopelessly. "Eight' Avenoo's th' best for us, if we can make it. Every Hell's Kitchen lad must be our fri'nd this night, if we live to need any."

A head bobbed up from the skylight, and Mike took a shot at it. It dropped out of sight and no other appeared, so they hurried to leave that roof. The next one to the west was six feet lower, and the two policemen jumped down and dragged Steele after them. They went forward and peered over the cornice, and they saw the whole Thirty-third Street block between Seventh and Eighth Avenues crowded with battling gangmen.

Each faction had received reinforcements in mobs of varying numbers, arriving by various routes, and there had been no orderly effort to concentrate either force. Therefore there were group battles, springing up as forces collided, and dying out or merging with

greater conflicts. The initial attempt to "get" Gentleman George had been the spark to light the train of powder, but the majority of the combatants, hastening to a rally of the clans, fought for the joy of fighting, and did not question the cause.

No lamplighters had ventured into the block to light the gas lamps, but rubbish was brought from the houses and there were two bonfires blazing high in the middle of the street.

"Down! down! Tim," whispered Mike, and shoved Steele quickly behind a skylight bulkhead.

Gangsters were pouring out of a hatchway on the next roof, but they did not seem to be searching for the fugitives. They wrenched the hinged top off the hatchway, carried it to the front of the roof, and heaved it over, down onto the heads of the rioters below.

"Hell's Kitcheners!" cried Tim with relief, and hailed some of the men he recognized.

"There's big Babe!" exclaimed Mike. "An' look!—it's Misthress Mullins can pull down any chimley that a bricklayer can put up."

The now disheveled and war-scarred young Amazon attacked a chimney with a short-handled sledge she had brought from below, and the bricks crumbled and tumbled. She bore an armful of the popular missiles to the edge of the roof, and flung them one by one at carefully selected targets. Bullets began rising from the street, but she gave little heed to them except to lean less far out in taking aim.

Chimneys began to totter on adjacent roofs, and there were fierce new war cries of the Dead Rabbits and their allies as they felt the force of the West Siders' brick barrage.

East Siders never submitted tamely or stupidly to superior tactics of an enemy, and within five minutes bricks were falling on the heads of the bom-

bardiers, hurled from roofs on the south side of the street.

"On our way, Tim," said Mike, giving Steele a boost. "If Eight' Avenoo's clear, it's on terry-firmy I'd be shtandin', where a man can walk faster."

They passed through the busy ranks of the brick grenadiers, and crossed three roofs. Then, as they paused to negotiate a higher coping, Tim Lafferty started back and called out a warning.

It was too late. Dark figures rose up and fell upon them. A thug grappled on to Steele and throttled him. Mike jammed his revolver into the man's ribs, but a brick glanced off the side of his helmet and stunned him.

Tim was fighting and yelling, and there was a wild and gallant charge over the roofs by the West Siders, led by Babe Mullins.

A light flared up. A feather bed and a mass of dry rubbish were in flames on the roof where they fought, and there was no more darkness there.

Tim pulled Mike out of the mêlée and stood him on his feet.

"See what yer eyes can see, me lad," he whispered. "Begobs! we're in high sassiety! Th' duchess is here—the Duchess o' Mulberry Bend!"

"It's 'erself, Tim!" Mike agreed, in solemn awe, and was revived.

The duchess was giving orders, in phrases rich with blasphemy and obscene invective. She was a rawboned woman, easily six feet tall, with masculine features and an eye to strike terror to timid spirits. Unlike the notorious Babe Mullins of the West Side, who had an eye and some taste for fashionable dress, the duchess affected rakish, rough attire. She swaggered under a battered old straw hat, ornamented with a bedraggled ostrich feather; her boots were hobnailed, for warfare, and her plaid skirt was short, for ease of action. A man's black coat was belted at the waist, and around her neck was knotted a red bandanna.

The firelight sent little points of flamelike brilliancy to her finger tips, but the jewels she wore were bright brass mitts—thimbles joined in sets, which carried sharp spurs in prolongation of her fingers, and served her as the natural unsheathed claws serve the jungle tiger.

Spotting the Babe across the roofs, she yelled an eloquent challenge, more obscene than any of the men were capable of conceiving; and the husky West Side belle took the challenge without wavering.

There was a close-up skirmish now, with interchange of bricks and bullets, and the casualties were piling up, but the two Amazons moved upon each other with no regard for personal safety. They crouched as they came to close quarters, and seemed to spit and yowl like true feline warriors. Then the duchess sprang and gave the plump vixen the hobnailed boots in the pit of the stomach.

Babe doubled and yelled like a dying panther, but her plump and sinewy arms went round the other's long legs and held them. She sank her strong teeth in the flesh of the taller woman's thigh, and ground them as the bulldog grinds.

The duchess uttered screeches of rage and agony, and squirmed about till she could jab her ten brass talons into the neck and shoulder of her opponent.

The exhausted Mike's stomach turned at the sight of blood gushing over the brass-armored hands of the harpie, but as he turned his head he saw Gentleman George being dragged away senseless by his assailant. It brought him back to his responsibility, and he gripped his swinging locust stick again and lunged forward with a wallop that broke the gangster's head.

There was hotter fighting now, back toward the Kilfoyle roof, and Tim Lafferty, doing some left-handed sharpshooting, ripped out a battle cry.

"'Tis the po-lice, Mike—at last!" he

shouted. "There's Berger an' White, an' there's a cap'n from th' Fourth Ward."

The police were there, and their sticks were cracking crowns, but they were outnumbered a hundredfold: it was only the authority of brass buttons and blue coats that gave their forlorn comrades a gleam of confidence.

Mike got a grip on the half-dead Steele again, and dragged him along the line of retreat; but he turned back to see how the she-devils fared in their duel, and he saw the bleeding, screaming Babe work one of her thick thumbs into an eye socket of the duchess and force the eyeball out.

A runt of a man dashed out of the Dead Rabbits ranks and aimed a dirk at the Babe's back, and Mike dropped Steele and jerked up his revolver in time to shoot the brute through the head. It was through no love of his for Babe, but she was a West Sider, and the time was past for squeamishness.

Again he gathered up the battered gentleman, jerking him to his feet.

"You!" he roared in the bruised and scarred face, "it's all fer you—this hellish diviltry—ye dhirty louse! ye skunk wid a weasel's heart!"

"Lemme die!" moaned George wretchedly. "It's all over. Lemme die, Rooney."

"Thin, by God, I'll not!" yelled Mike, in a frenzy. "Ye'll live, if I have ter kick an' beat life into ye. Th' divil 'imself would be kickin' ye out o' hell this night."

The demoralized Steele sank to his knees, whimpering, and Mike jerked him up again. Then the Babe herself swooped upon them, caught George in her bloody arms, and flung him across her lacerated shoulder.

"Come, Mike, we'll beat 'em!" she cried. "I done for the duchess! Her eye's out, an' I bashed her face in for 'er."

Her strength and vitality were superhuman. She ran like a lumbering cow, but without wavering, and she took a five-foot jump to a lower roof with her burden on her shoulder.

They were pursued by maddened Dead Rabbits, and Mike walked backward as rear guard, shooting and threatening. He got a bullet through the thick muscle above the knee, and he stumbled and began to hop and limp, but told Babe to keep on.

Tim Lafferty fought his way to them, and the three kept going with their charge, picking out their destination at the end of the block by the lurid light that seemed to pervade the whole neighborhood; and they were constantly protected from the general pursuit that must mean quick death by the battle that raged around them.

That section of the city was all illuminated now: there were bonfires in the avenues, and the streets north and south, and there was the steady, ominous hum of wholesale conflict in the air. Every vassal clan of the Dead Rabbits was represented in the fight, and every slum of the West Side, from Bowling Green to Kingsbridge, had yielded its quota of liegemen.

"Hit it up, Mike!" urged the hurrying Babe. "The place—next the corner—on Eight'. See? They's a fire escape—to go down."

Mike and Tim held the desultory pursuit in check, but their comrades in the battle were being mauled, getting the worst of it.

Mike yelled in horror as he saw a bulky giant lift Sergeant White in his arms and pitch him over the cornice of the roof they were crossing. Then the mob in the street yelled, raucously, ghoulishly—and Mike knew that another policeman's blue coat would pass—a priceless trophy—to the sweetheart of a Five Points gangster.

He turned with wild eyes to speak to Tim, and saw him stretched prone on

the gravel carpet. With a hoarse cry he leaped to him and turned him over, and found a hole in the middle of his pal's forehead.

"Oh, Timmie!" he cried in grief and fury.

"Never yuh mind, Timmie!" shouted Babe. "Come on! We got to save ourselves an' George."

"T' hell with George!" roared Mike, "an' th' flames o' hell on th' head of 'im!"

Yet he went on, after hurling lead from his gun, to pay for Tim's murder. And then he heard a shrill voice behind him.

"Git Rooney!" was what he heard, and he whirled to see the ugly face of Jake Lozier close to his, and caught the whirl of the blackjack as it descended on the side of his helmet.

He went down, blinded, paralyzed, but the Irish in him stood him on his feet again. He staggered forward, paused to balance himself, and strained his eyes to pierce the fog that had fallen on them.

His eyes cleared, and he saw big Babe go floundering down beneath the smashing blackjack; then, staring blankly, he made out that the powerful Jake took up the girl's burden, leaped forward, and went scrambling down the fire escape for which they had hoped and struggled.

Mike clapped his hand over his swimming eyes, and knocked his helmet off. He breathed hard and pulled himself together.

"Fer that!" he cried, to the vapors around him, "I'll save George Steele!—save 'im if 'tis only fer shpite!"

"Yet," he added, still dazed, "'twas Nora wanted 'im saved—th' neefarious whelp an' blayguard!"

A strapping, swarthy ruffian flashed past him. It was the Kanaka sailor, Greaser Pete, and he made for the fire escape of the Eighth Avenue building and followed Lozier.

They were the two men Mike had clubbed in the afternoon, and vaguely he began to wonder if he were dead, and meeting his enemies in purgatory.

Teetering, trying to steady himself, he felt for loose cartridges in his pocket; and when he found some he awkwardly crammed them into the empty cylinders of his guns. Then, stumbling and reeling, he made for the fire escape.

There was black darkness at the bottom of the fire escape, and a drop of six feet into the narrow back yard of a loft building. Mike fell into filthy mud, bruising his knees, but he scrambled up and groped frantically in the gloom, seeking, finding nothing.

Slipping in soggy rubbish and slime, stumbling over unseen obstructions, he gained the back door of the building and fell against it, blundering down three slippery steps.

Three sharp explosions came from inside, and bullets fanned his face and sprinkled it with shattered glass.

He shook and kicked the locked door, then held a revolver to the lock and fired two bullets through it, unmindful of consequences. It gave way suddenly, and he pitched into a cellar, with a foot of stagnant, stinking water splashing round his feet.

A flash in the blackness, and a bullet clipped off the top of his left ear. He cursed like a strong man in a fury, and began shooting in the dark, swinging a revolver in each hand.

His fire was returned. Flashes blinded him from different points in the place. His foes were moving, closing in on him, uttering no sounds; closing in and firing fast, with the certainty of getting him. At every beam of fire he expected a slug in his head or heart, but he went forward, walking into the trap, with both guns blazing.

Rats squealed and splashed in the water; one hurtled against his leg and seemed as large as a terrier.

Hot lead scorched his ribs under the left arm, and he staggered and dropped on one knee. His guns were empty, and he stuffed them into pockets and got out another one of the captured weapons, resuming his fire.

Then it seemed that the enemy's shots were coming slower. Was there but one man firing? A screech followed close on one of his shots, and something splashed heavily in the filthy, mud-laden water.

Mike waited, breathless, fearfully hopeful. A long silence was broken by a feeble groan.

"George Steele, is it you?" he whispered hoarsely.

"I'm dying—drowning," moaned the sufferer.

"Ye lie—damn yer sowl!" yelled Mike heartily. "Th' likes o' you don't die."

He moved, splashed forward, and there was no gunfire. Following the groans, he got to Steele and raised him from a sickening bath of muck, and together they fell over a body lying in the flood.

"God send there's another like that one!" muttered Mike fervently, floundering in slime and dragging Steele toward the front of the cellar.

He could hear shooting and yelling in the streets, and suddenly, far off, sounded a volley of rifle fire, then another and another. There was war in the streets of New York—no mere shindy for one poor cop to settle with his nightstick.

He groped and splashed, struggled with the helpless man he held by the collar, and at last found steps leading out of the water and to a floor above. A little light came in through dirty windows, and he made out moving figures in the avenue and heard sharp, clear voices of authority.

On a hunch, his heart swelling with hope, he battered open a door and tumbled out into the cool, pure air of the night. And he saw men in uniforms

with rifles on their shoulders, and knew that terror had come to an end.

"Halt! Who is there?" cried a soldier, darting toward him.

"I—I was once a cop, please God," said Mike brokenly.

"Neither the commissioner nor your own mother would know you now, but I can see traces of a uniform. Get to your station house, officer, and go to sleep. Three regiments of the national guard are taking care of the city."

Breathing prayers of thanksgiving, Mike displayed his burden, and a soldier helped him to lead and carry the man up Thirty-third Street to the Kilfoyles' ruined house. He would hear nothing of hospitals, for he had to deliver Steele to that house, and nowhere else.

The alderman came out, a sick man, white and drawn from a night of horror, and Mike cast Gentleman George at his feet.

"I'm askin' no receipt fer the package, Misther Kilfoyle," he said, "but ye'll please ter say I done me duty—by th' law an fer th' sacred bonds o' fri'ndship."

There was a little birdlike cry from inside the door, and Nora Kilfoyle darted out like a golden-haired sprite and flung her arms about the neck of the grimy effigy of Mike Rooney.

"Mike! Mike!" she cried. "Mike, darlin', is it livin' ye are, my dear? Oh, Micky, it's a thousand deaths I've died this night—for love o' you, an' the black fear in me heart for what I'd done. 'Twas me own true boy I sent out to his death, thinks I—for a crazy girl's wild folly."

"Is it an angel from heaven ye are?" gasped Mike.

"Have yer senses left ye entirely, Nora child?" cried the alderman in consternation. "What talk are ye makin' to this red-headed cop, Mike Rooney?—an' with poor George Steele lyin' at yer feet?"

"Bad cess to George Steele, th' shpalpeen!" replied Nora. "It's me own red-headed boy I'm holdin'—me own man—and none can take 'im from me."

"Is it dreamin' ye are Mike?" whispered Grandmother Rooney, as her man stirred and muttered softly in the darkness of their chamber.

"Divil a wink o' sleep have I slep' so far, Nora darlin'," the old man answered. "It's thinkin' I am, me dear. Sad thoughts I've been havin'—of little Timmy Lafferty, rest 'is sowl!—and of poor old Joe White. But me own conscience has given me no pain."

"Then go to sleep, Mike," she said a little sternly.

"There was no goold midals in them days," he murmured dreamily. "No midals nor fine pieces in th' papers. Do ye mind, Nora, 'twas more'n a year after the Dead Rabbit riots that I got me promotion?"

"But I got *my* promotion that very night," said the old lady with a little chuckle. "Thank the good Lord I married a good man and an honest cop; I could always look me neighbors in the face. Now, will ye stop worritin' about medals an' promotions, Mike Rooney, an' go to sleep?"

Watch for more stories by Joseph Ivers Lawrence.



THESE HARD-WORKED WOMEN!

WHEN a group of Washington society women recently undertook a campaign to raise funds for a certain charity organization, the fact was announced with the fanfare of trumpets and the booming of big guns which the expert press agent knows so well how to let loose. In this instance the press agent was a clever woman who proclaimed in impressive headlines that the "industrious social worker" in charge of the campaign was a "society leader" famous in three world capitals.

Then came the press agent's tribulation. To keep the publicity going, she had to telephone every day to the combination "industrious social worker" and "society leader" to ask for a conference on developments in the whizz-bang campaign for the Big Money. The third day she put in a call at nine o'clock in the morning, whereupon a female's voice with a heavy French accent answered:

"Madame's never up at this hour. I can't disturb her."

The press agent called again at eleven, and the same heavy French accent, now tinged with boredom, informed her.

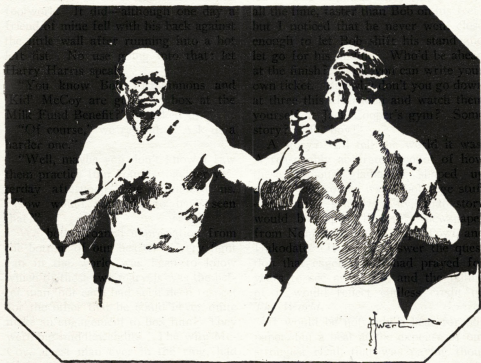
"Madame's having her bath. I can't disturb her."

A one-o'clock inquiry brought the French-accented retort: "Madame is having lunch. I can't disturb her." Two hours later the voice, now emphatically bored, answered: "Madame is devoting her daily hour to writing her memoirs. I can't disturb her." And a five-o'clock call elicited this response in a tone that had changed from boredom to something that sounded like downright hostility: "Madame is playing bridge. I can't disturb her."

"Well, for Pete's sake!" exploded the press agent. "You *will* disturb her, or I'll know the reason why! Kindly"—here the publicist's voice indicated a frank antagonism—"kindly say to your disturbed mistress that her disturbed press agent is raising a disturbance because you have refused all day to disturb her!"

Swapping Punches With BOB FITZSIMMONS

By
WILLIAM HEMMINGWAY



A Solar Plexus Blow Meant a Cracked Head on the Cement—
Fitz Thought It Was a Big Joke!

HARRY HARRIS had the prettiest left drive that ever grew on a fighting man. Everybody who knows anything about the game knows that. He also had an eye for a news story as keen as the eye of a managing editor. With those two qualities,

excellent in themselves, Harry got me into one of the worst jams I ever!—but let us look at the facts in the order of their appearance.

Harry and Big Duff and I were enjoying our morning work-out with gloves and medicine ball on the roof of

the Hotel Stirling, twelve stories above West Fifty-sixth Street. The edge of the roof was defended by a cute little brick coping, two feet high. There was no peril while we tossed the medicine ball; but if, while boxing, one of us happened to back into it or to be knocked against it, over we'd go, with nothing but the gentle airs of morning to prevent quick arrival on the pavement, one hundred and fifty feet below.

We had a theory that this danger would make us most careful with our footwork. It did—although one day a friend of mine fell with his back against the little wall after running into a hot left fist. No use going into that: let Harry Harris speak.

"You know Bob Fitzsimmons and 'Kid' McCoy are going to box at the Milk Fund Benefit?" he asked us.

"Of course," we replied. "Ask us a harder one."

"Well, maybe you don't know I saw them practice four rounds together yesterday afternoon," he tantalized us. "How would you like to have seen that?"

We both groaned appreciation from the bottom of our hearts. Every fight fan in the world was keen to know which of these two marvels was the better man, but each had such deep respect for the other that he could never quite make an engagement to box him. They were big middleweights. The wily McCoy, slyest man ever in the ring, had beaten such good men as Australian Dan Creedon, big Jim Daly and Plaacke, the two-hundred-and-thirty-pound champion of Holland, and had narrowly missed knocking out Tom Sharkey with his famous corkscrew punch; while Fitz had knocked out Gus Ruhlin, the Akron Giant, the burly Sharkey and even the marvelous Corbett, master of the manly art.

"How did the two compare, Harry?" we begged to know. "Did the Kid jolt one of those corkscrews against Bob's

jaw? Did Fitz coax McCoy's guard up high and crash one on his solar plexus? Did——"

"Oh, one at a time," Harry laughed. "The big boys were simply rehearsing their act for the Milk Fund show. You don't suppose they'd cut loose with all they had, do you?"

"Well, which one made the pace?" we asked together.

"McCoy, of course," said Harry. "Fitz always makes the other fellow lead. The Kid was away out in front all the time, faster than Bob on his feet; but I noticed that he never went close enough to let Bob shift his stand and let go for his middle. Who'd be ahead at the finish? Well, you can write your own ticket. But why don't you go down at three this afternoon and watch them yourself at Jack Cooper's gym? Some story? Oh, boy!"

A story? I'd tell the world it was. A reasonably accurate account of how these famous gladiators shaped up against each other was front-page stuff—and then some! Why, that story would be copied by every newspaper from Nome, Alaska, to Cape Town and Hakodate. It would answer the question that eager critics had prayed for years to see answered, and the telling of it would reflect endless credit on *The World*.

It would be not only a beat for our paper, but a beat at the expense of our strongest rival, that was paying thousands of dollars to put on the match. After a hasty shower and the quickest dressing on record, I got the managing editor on the telephone. He caught fire at the first word.

"You're sure you can get in to see them?" he asked.

"Just as sure as I'm alive," I chortled. "We can't have a photographer, of course. Better send up Willie Wilson, our artist with the camera eye. Let him just saunter into Jack Cooper's gymnasium and look around. Warn

him on his life not to recognize me and not to make one stroke of a pencil! He'll get lots of good action stuff, and if he overlooks anything, I'll give him the details down at the office."

"Sounds O. K.," said Colonel van Hamm. "Tell young Mr. Harris and your friend Duff to keep mum. You can have all the space you want on the story. I'll schedule it for four columns—have more if you need it. Good luck to you!"

At luncheon I entertained Duff and Harry Harris with agreeable tales of the awful fate that overtook any one who let an exclusive story leak. The best thing they could do was to dash into a dark cave somewhere and stay there till morning. They laughed at first, but after a while they began to see what a tremendously important thing it was to secure the biggest news beat of the day, and they promised to be dumb and watch their steps. Yet even then I was worried; for I knew that big news was like woman's wit as Mr. Shakespeare described it—close the door upon it, and it would fly out at the window. Well, all we could do was to watch and pray.

At a quarter to three I strolled through West Forty-seventh Street and up the stairs into Jack Cooper's gymnasium. An earnest little group of middle-aged merchants were toiling with the medicine ball, trying to melt some of the extra fat off their too prosperous pink faces and bulging waists. Two young actors were boxing in a corner of the gym, but their scowls were fiercer than their blows. Near by a heavy tragedian was pushing up a fifty-pound bar bell by way of preparing himself to play Spartacus. Jack Cooper himself was here and there, watching all the work, and giving each pupil a few words of advice when he needed it.

At five minutes of three a tall, pink-cheeked, red-headed man walked into the gym. He had the widest shoulders

in New York and the thickest wads of muscle under them you can imagine. The knees of his long, slender legs approached each other, yet his gait was brisk in spite of the awkward handicap. As he came nearer, his blue eyes lighted up, he smiled as an overgrown boy might smile, and thrust out his big-knuckled right hand, covered with freckles big as ginger-snaps and plentiful as the spots on a thrush's egg.

"'Ello, there!" he greeted me heartily. "What're you doing 'ere?"

"Just looking around," I replied. "Seems like a nice gym. Might work here sometime."

"Aoh, yes," honest Bob responded, suspecting nothing. "'Tis a good gym; nice baths, too."

Fitz was innocent as a ten-year-old child about everything outside of the ropes and posts of the ring. In there, facing an antagonist, he was as deep as Machiavelli and dangerous as dynamite; but in the outer world he believed everything he was told and asked few questions.

Presently he came out of the locker room dressed in a sleeveless white shirt, much cut out at the neck and arms, a pair of old blue trunks, short, rolled-down white wool socks, and a pair of soft-soled, heelless fighting shoes laced with white buckskin thongs.

Picking up the handles of the nearest chest-weight machine, he began to raise and lower the iron disks with broad, effortless sweeps of his long and freckled arms. Curious thing—you can tell the professional athlete by the smooth, well-timed movements he makes, so different from the difficult labor of the amateur.

When Fitz turned his back to the machine and began to shoot out his hands as if striking blows, his fists doubled, he instinctively snugged his chin within the protection of his massive shoulders, and his eyes peered keenly ahead, as if to watch the movements of an alert

enemy. Eternal vigilance is the price of championship quite as much as it is the price of liberty. It becomes a habit.

After ten minutes of this work, Fitz sauntered over to where a brown leather ball, tightly inflated, hung from a low, round platform. He stepped up to it carefully, measured his distance, and hit it with a swift poke of his left fist. The ball flew as if shot out of a gun, and rebounded as fast, but Fitz's fist met it accurately and shot it forward again. Then with right and left in turn he kept it whizzing through the air, faster than eyes could follow, the smacks of the leather against the dry wood rattling like rapid machine-gun fire.

I stepped behind him and watched the play of his fists and shoulders. The muscles of his upper back and chest were thick as the armor belt of a warship, but springy as pure rubber. His shoulders and arms, while long, were proportionately thick. The whole combination formed the machine he used to destroy his opponents. He had all the force of a heavyweight, carried on light and spindly legs.

If the legs had been in due proportion to his arms and body, he would have been a giant. That queer disproportion made him the oddest freak in the ring—a middleweight who hit a more terrible blow than any other man since Sullivan. It was overwhelming, crushing, to watch that hitting machine at play.

Perched on a stool near the wall was Willie Wilson, his keen eyes peering through his glasses, fascinated by the sight of the great puncher at his sport, yet with his clipped, formal brown beard and serious air giving the impression of a mild theological student who had wandered in by mistake and could not find the way out. But where was Kid McCoy? It was long after three o'clock now, and the irresponsible Kid neither appeared nor sent word that he was

coming. Later we learned that he had gone out with a friend to try a new car and forgotten all about his boxing engagement. Hard luck for my story! But I had no time to mourn.

"'Ere!" Fitzsimmons called to me, letting his arms fall idle. "I'm going to play 'andball. You come on!"

"But, Fitz—" I began, when he interrupted.

"Oh, you play 'andball," he said. "I 'ear you're good. Go on in and strip and 'urry back. I mustn't stop work and get chilled."

There was nothing else to do; so I came out presently in trunks and soft-soled shoes, and we walked into the four-walled handball court. It was fifteen feet wide, fifteen feet high, and thirty feet deep, and the floor was of hard concrete. Hard concrete, smooth, dark, and shiny, waiting there to crack the skull of any poor chump who might fall on it. A chill from that wicked floor crept up my legs as I marched in, pretending to look gay. What was going to happen flashed through my mind—Fitz had no other partner than me, and after handball he would of course want to box.

The fearsome thing about boxing with Fitzsimmons was the deadly certainty with which he was bound to smash you on the solar plexus. This is a ganglion, or nest, of nerves in what is called the pit of the stomach. When it is struck, if the abdominal muscles over it are relaxed, the shock paralyzes the victim from head to foot.

A surgeon operating near it covers the plexus with a thick mass of cotton; for if he should so much as brush it ever so lightly with his little finger, the shock will kill the patient, even though he is under the protective influence of ether. I should have been much happier boxing with Fitzsimmons if I hadn't known about his habit of always striking this deadly spot. I knew too much about the man.

When Fitz was a tall, rawboned lad of fifteen, apprentice to his brother at the blacksmith trade in the village of Timaru, New Zealand, he competed for a prize Bible offered by the superintendent of the Sunday-school to the pupil who could recite the greatest number of verses from the New Testament. Bob had a phenomenal memory, and recited more than one hundred verses without one fault; but the superintendent prompted his own son to go stumbling through an equal number, and gave him the prize Bible.

As the boy came smiling down the aisle, Fitz cried, "'Ere; that's mine!" grabbed the Bible, and pushed the boy away. The superintendent, powerful and portly, ran to help his son. Fitz instinctively swung up his left fist so that it sank into the portly midriff just under the loop of the gold watch chain, and the superintendent gasped and sank like a torpedoed ship. Bob fled with his hard-earned Bible, and went to that Sunday-school no more; though for many months thereafter he hid in the bush near by, with his prayer book and hymnal, and devoutly followed the Sunday services.

That was his discovery of the devastating power of the solar plexus, though he had never heard the name of the tender spot. Through all his ring career he made it his pet and kept it secret. By the old-fashioned method of trial and error he learned that if his enemy guessed the blow was coming in time to fend it off or even to flex the abdominal muscles over the plexus, he could not hurt him. But keep him thinking of guarding his head, so that his front wall was left loose and relaxed, and the smash on the plexus ended everything.

And Fitz was so ingenious in leading his victim up to the sacrifice! Against Peter Maher, champion of Ireland, on the Texas border, he made a whirl of passes at the head, and in the midst

of them sank his left fist deep in Peter's plexus. Fighting Gus Ruhlin, the Akron Giant, in Madison Square Garden, he staggered around the ring, pretending to be exhausted by Gus's punches, and, just as the big fellow was gayly getting ready the finishing wallop—the torpedo! They carried Gus to his corner, still helpless, after the fatal count of ten.

Fitz put it over with fair words on Tom Sharkey at Coney Island. "Eh, Tom!" he laughed. "Eh, Tom! I'm goin' to tap your jaw!" And as simple Tom guarded high, Fitz slid his right foot forward and unleashed the fatal left swing full on the deadly mark.

Clever as Champion Corbett was, the ungainly Fitz, under heavy punishment, played for his head round after round. Charley White and Billy Delaney, knowing the old fox well, begged Jim to keep away.

"He hasn't a punch left in him," Jim laughed. "He's tapping my jaw like an old woman slapping a child. He's through." That was exactly the frame of mind crafty Fitz wanted to set up in Corbett—then bang on the plexus!

And this was the magician I must box. I wished myself far, far away.

What kind of a head would they put on the story of my accident? Would I rate a spread? Probably would, if the injuries were serious enough. I hoped Jack Slaght or Elisha Kelly would write it—fellows who knew the game. Yet while there was life there was hope. I would be crafty with Bob Fitzsimmons. I would go about with him, be cunning, let him win the game of handball, soften his hard heart. Then maybe he wouldn't do unto me as he had done to so many others.

Charley Seymour's description came to mind: "I don't know how Fitz does it; but he fools around and fools around, and, all of a sudden—one wallop, and it's all off!"

That was first-class reporting, but it

had an ugly sound to one who was going to receive that one wallop. So, by way of beginning the heart-softening process, I purposely lost the first hand, which we played for service.

"Thought you were a good 'andball man!" Fitz chuckled as he walked up to the ace line, ready to serve.

"Every man's good till he meets a better player," I propitiated the red-headed destroyer. Moreover, while I made a great fuss in running around to meet the ball, I took pains to lob it up so that he could get to it and kill it. In that way he scored three aces before I angled a high dropper in the back left corner which happened to fall where Casey himself could not have returned it, and so Fitz's hand was out.

It was no trick at all to pick up a couple of aces on my serve, for the great fighter was not a first-class ball player; but I was careful to lose out after scoring those two points. While Fitz served and was rolling up four or five aces more, cruel memory presented to me a series of moving pictures of what Fitzsimmons had done to friends of mine who had dared to box with him.

There was Kempster, the first amateur he met in America. Fitz, just off the ship in which he had stoked his way from Australia, had permission to box in the Olympic Club, San Francisco. Professor Watson asked Kempster to give the stranger a little practice, and Kemp, a tall and excellent amateur—one of the best in the club—went on with him. He hit the red-headed fellow wherever he chose, not hard, but just enough to show he was there, and he was laughing up his sleeve at the awkward moves of the foreigner; when suddenly a cannon ball, which came from somewhere he could not see, smote Kempster on the solar plexus, slammed him against the wall and sat him on the floor—out, with his eyes open.

"What's—that—for?" he protested

as soon as he could gasp out the question.

"Aoh! That's my little joke!" cried Fitzsimmons, laughing heartily as he lifted up Kemp with care. "Congratulate me. I'm getting ready to fight Australian Billy McCarthy at this club next week. I'll 'it 'im as sure as I 'it you."

And there was the experience of my friend Bob Edgren, two-hundred-and-twelve-pound amateur, fresh from college, where he had made the hammer-throwing record for the Pacific coast. Bob had drawn a lot of fine sketches of Fitz in action—he does fighters better than any other artist—and he was going to write a pleasant article to go with his pictures.

"'Ere, now," Fitz told him; "I know you're a great boxer. You come on with me now, and you can write that up, too."

Honest Edgren suspected no harm, so he obliged. And when Fitz had neatly dropped Bob against the wall, he laughed with all the innocent merriment of a glad child.

"Ho! Ho!" he chuckled. "You ought to see your face when I soaked you—looked so surprisedlike. Best joke I ever saw. Ho! Ho!"

And this was the genial joker I knew was going to lead me to the slaughter. Not that a knock-out more or less would amount to so much—but oh, my head crashing that flinty concrete floor! As these pleasant thoughts flitted through my mind, I must have forgotten about my plan to lose our game of handball; for I was roused from my painful day-dreams of destruction by hearing Fitzsimmons exclaim: "Twenty-one to twenty. No 'arm done. I'll beat you next time."

"Thanks for a nice game!" I exclaimed, impulsively shaking hands and at the same moment skipping away. "I'm for the showers as fast as I can go."

'Aoh, no; you're not," Fitz insisted. "You're going to box with me."

"Nonsense," I laughed at him. "I might hurt your hands on my head."

"Nonsense nothing!" he replied. "You're elected. Put on the gloves!"

Mechanically I picked them up and slipped my hands into them. There was no hope of escape. At such a moment the senses are unusually acute. I noticed that there was not a mark on my gloves, while the gloves on Fitzsimmons's hands were smeared with blotches of dark, rusty red. That was it: his were the gory gloves of the executioner, mine the unstained gloves of the victim.

I had need of all the wise counsel Mike used to give us in the club boxing room, especially of this choice bit: "When you're going to box a fellow, act gallus, whether you feel gallus or not." In other words, make the antagonist think you are gay as a lark, even though you feel like a lump of lead. Therefore—

"Keep your solar plexus well covered, now," I warned Fitz. "I don't want to take advantage—"

"If you can 'it me there, I'll give you a box of cigars," he said very seriously. He could not see anything to joke about in a reflection on his skill in self-defense. His art was as sacred to him as music is sacred to Paderewski or money to Mr. Morgan.

"Of course, I'm not going to 'urt you, if that's what you're thinking about," he added, with uncanny instinct reading my mind. I was astonished that he could tell what I was thinking about—that is, I was astonished until I remembered he was in the ring now, and once in the ring this boyish-minded man became a master of tact, cunning, mind-reading and influencing. There was something hypnotic about him.

We shook hands, stepped aside and backward, and stood on guard. Fitz's arms swayed before him, loose as the

limbs of a weeping willow, the snaky muscles rippling and the ginger-snap freckles dancing. His mouth was set in a grim line that indicated determination, but there was a mischievous smile in his blue eyes that warned me to beware of some practical joke he was hatching. How small his head looked, with its bald top and red side that set low between his gigantic shoulders!

I noticed that his neck, which had always seemed rather thin, spread wide at the base and was really unusually thick and strong. His waist and hips were lacking—"no more hips than a teacup," as Charley White said. His ridiculous grapevine legs, it appeared, could hardly bear the weight of his great body as he sprawled forward with shuffling steps, as uncouth a figure as the straw woodman in the "Wizard of Oz."

Yet, with a kind of awkward cleverness, Fitz managed to be well within hitting range whenever he wished to be. Everybody that ever fought Fitzsimmons had hit him, and even this amateur in a friendly practice bout—so called—was no exception to the rule. I stepped in quickly, shot a straight left to the jaw, and was just about to step aside, when bang! came his right fist in a counter blow fair on my short ribs.

His fist had not moved six inches, but I could feel the floating ribs buckle in under its weight. I had a sharp "stitch" in my side, and it was hard to catch breath. I gasped, skipped out of distance, and sparred from afar. The only safe place from which to shoot at Fitz was the other side of a ten-acre lot.

At first I had thought him easy, but there was his ready counter blow waiting to catch me as I came in against it, thus doubling its force. This man was no Tom Sharkey, hurling a flock of random punches in the hope they'd land somewhere. This man was a sharp-shooter, who never fired except when he had a clear certainty of his mark.

I circled about the court, now darting in toward Fitz, now rapidly side-stepping as soon as I had let go a jab at his head or his ribs. Twice I shot for the solar plexus—that tract shaped like a capital A, which lies just below the heart and above the stomach—but all I hit was Fitz's stout arm guarding it. His plexus and his box of cigars were quite safe. No matter what I tried, he seemed to have thought of it one-tenth of a second before and spoiled it for me. It looked as if he had silently willed me to do just as he wished. After some four or five minutes of this, he called time, and we rested together in a corner.

"You're a real fine hypnotist, Fitz," I complimented him.

"Oo—me?" he snorted indignantly. "I'm no 'ypnotist!"

"Oh, yes, you are," I assured him. "You wish me to hit a certain blow so that you can block and counter it; force me to leave an opening so you can crack me——"

"Aoh, that ain't 'ypnotism," Fitz exclaimed; "that's soience!"

No use trying to explain to him that his "science" was really applied hypnotism, especially when he was so touchy about it and had his two fists with him. And lurking always in the back of his mind was that little joke he was bound to put over when it would come as a complete surprise. And there was the cold, hard concrete floor, waiting.

"Come on, now," he called, stepping out to the center; "we've got to tend to business!"

And once more I followed him, throwing an occasional left at his iron jaw and rarely, very rarely, following with a right on the other side. This happened twice, and the ease with which I did it made me wary. He was leading me into a trap.

Every one who boxed Fitz hit him, began to feel gay about it, and then—

the torpedo went off. I watched with redoubled anxiety. As we drew nearer to each other I saw his blue eyes turn to the color of ice and his right foot creep forward as his left fist drew back. Instantly I was away on the other side of the handball court, poised for a step to either side.

"'Ere!" he cried. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going far and I'm going suddenly to a good, safe place, Fitz," I replied, with a grin. "I saw you look at Jim Corbett like that at Carson City, just before you outed him; and I'm going while the going's good."

"Aoh, no," he said sadly. "I'm not goin' to 'urt you. Come on, now!"

But, though I came on and sparred, I refused to let myself be lulled into false security. Perhaps the old fox did not know that his eyes betrayed his purpose whenever he began to calculate the chances of slipping home his favorite knock-out blow; but I never lost sight of them, and when that icy gleam appeared I fled. He thought it was funny, and haw-hawed heartily as I skipped away, and after enjoying the comedy long enough he called time on this second round of four minutes.

I was glad to rest, for breathing was becoming difficult, and the usually strong legs were getting a trifle wobbly. It was not the physical exertion that tired me, for I thought nothing of boxing thirty or forty minutes every day with Big Duff, who outweighed Fitz by twenty-five pounds: it was the mental and nervous strain of trying to keep up with a champion.

I was like the expert English golfer who explained the other day why he did so poorly against Bobby Jones by saying: "He was so sure of himself and played every shot so perfectly that I was completely dithered." And I was so dithered that Fitz let me rest two full minutes before he called, "Time, and wind-up!"

The Machiavelli of the ring was so intent on his joke now that the malicious gleam of his eyes lit up the handball court like a searchlight. I continued to go through the motions of boxing with him, but that was about all I did. Whenever his right foot began to creep forward, I jumped in and clinched so that he could not complete his famous "shift" and rip up the fatal left hook on the plexus. Fitz knew why I did this, and he laughed and laughed, while I hung on for life.

"Aoh!" he yelled, "he's bitin' me, Mister Referee! Drag 'im off, won't you?"

We'd break the clinch, spar again, and repeat the performance as he made ready to "shift" and shoot the K. O. Perhaps he knew how worried I was and really got more fun out of torturing me by anticipation than he would have got from letting go the awful punch. Of course, I could have stopped the bout at any moment and politely asked him not to put me out; but that sort of thing is simply not done in our best pugilistic circles. It hurts less to go out than to beg off. At all events, when I was ready to drop from exhaustion Fitz yelled "Time!" shook hands with me, and laughed for a full minute.

I have never flattered myself that I

escaped through skill or agility or any effort of my own; for between the man who fights for a living and the amateur who spends his time and money on the game for fun and health there is a difference as wide and deep as the sea.

Do you doubt it? See what is going on all around us. Every year several football stars, encouraged by the praise of friends who are carried away by partisan spirit, try their fortunes in the ring, intending to become champions and live happy forever after.

Few of them last long enough to become fair second-raters. No; the amateur may be a good lad, often is; but he's no champion or near-champion. He lives in a different world, where he really doesn't know what all the shootin' is about.

Old Fitz fought in the ring until he was long past fifty. He was the hardest hitter for his weight in the history of the game, as all experts agreed. He lost the championship to Jim Jeffries, who outweighed him forty-eight pounds. Jeff told me that Fitz's blows hurt him more than the blows of any other man. In an effort to win back his title Fitz fought Jeffries until his hands crumpled under the force of his punches. No man since his day has learned his sure-fire smash on the solar plexus.

Another fight article by William Hemmingway will appear in the next issue.



ANNIVERSARIES

WHENEVER a wedding anniversary comes around, a lot of argument usually results among the guests about the names allotted to these occasions. Here, for all time, is the correct dope:

First year, paper; second, calico; third, muslin; fourth, silk; fifth, wood; sixth, iron; seventh, copper; eighth, bronze; ninth, pottery; tenth, tin; fifteenth, crystal; twentieth, china; twenty-fifth, silver; thirtieth, pearl; thirty-fifth, coral; fortieth, ruby; forty-fifth, sapphire; fiftieth, gold; fifty-fifth, emerald; sixtieth, diamond; seventy-fifth, diamond.

NEW PLACES *and* NEW FRIENDS



By JAMES WORTH

I AM sympathetically interested in your problems. I am here to help those who wish to uproot themselves and strike out for new places and new ways of making a living—invalids who would like to learn about healthier climes; vacationists, tourists, and travelers who are perplexed about routes, rates, and time; campers, hunters, trappers, and hardy souls who want to seek adventure.

Your letters of inquiry will be welcomed and answered at once. When possible, I shall also be glad to put you in touch with other readers who can supply added information. I will help you, too, through correspondence, to make friends with readers of the same sex. Your letters will be for-

warded direct when you so desire; otherwise they will be answered here.

To obtain information about new places, or to make new friends, write James Worth, care of the POPULAR MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York. A self-addressed, stamped envelope will bring a prompt reply.



OVER THE BORDER

Touring Conditions in Old Mexico

DEAR MR. WORTH: Reading the statistics, the other day, on the export of automobiles to Mexico, I've begun to wonder what they do with them all unless there are some good roads. An auto has to run on a road, and if Mexico has no good roads there can't be any use for autos, can there? Conclusion:

Mexico must have some good roads. And if this is the case, why not step on the self-starter and do a little touring in a new environment?

I have toured all over these United States and Canada, and am looking for new worlds to conquer. My car isn't amphibian, so the Atlantic and Pacific stopped me. Can I turn my balloon tires toward the Rio Grande and find roads across it? Any information which you can give me will be greatly appreciated. ROBERT M., Fort Worth, Texas.

The Mexican government has given its attention recently to roads, in consequence of the apparent value of the auto. A comprehensive program of road building has been undertaken. It comprises 7,125 miles of main highways and 13,000 miles of branch lines and calls for an expenditure of nearly \$40,000,000 in six years.

We would advise Robert M. to avoid tropical Mexico during the period from May through October. This is the rainy season, and although the rain in Mexico isn't salt, he would find some of the same kind of trouble which he complains of in regard to our eastern and western oceans.

One of our enthusiastic correspondents who lives in Ciudad de Valles (in plain American, City of Valleys) writes us that the national highway south from Laredo on the Texas border has reached his town. Valles is in the southeast part of the province of San Luis Potosí, well down in the tropics, that is.

He says this road is now in use, except in the rainy season, and that many tourists have come part way, several as far south as Valles. It is a three-day drive south of the United States border.

His description is alluring enough; but, as we don't want to have the lives of any of our readers on our conscience, we will condense what he says, and you can write to him for further information:

As the highway is built, other improvements are made. The land is cleared of brush and trees, then fenced and crops grown.

Magnificent views are opened up of mountains, valley, and plain. Fruits and flowers galore abound nearly all the year. Just now the *ca-ca-la-su-chil* has its fragrant white-and-pink blossoms, and the scarlet buginvillea looks at a distance like an immense bouquet.

The views alone, in this part of Mexico, will bring hundreds of tourists this fall and winter. Provision is now being made to care for them: hotels, restaurants, tourist camps. There are hunting, fishing, and swimming all winter long.

I pioneered in California many years ago, and the same opportunities are here in this part of Mexico. Hydroelectric power can be developed, land irrigated, oil wells driven, furniture produced from native trees, sugar cane grown—and for the highbrows, archaeological research and tropical botany. Mexico is a wonderful country, and regardless of what you expect here, you will be surprised.

We have had little news from those who have actually had personal experience touring in Mexico and would welcome letters from any such. If Robert M., or any of our readers, wishes to write this correspondent he may do so, inclosing five one-cent United States stamps for return postage. Address Doctor C. A. B., care of this department.



BIG-GAME HUNTING

In the Colorado Rockies

DEAR MR. WORTH: Once every year I get out the trusty old shooting irons and trek out to the wilderness for some real sport. This fall I'm planning a big-game hunting trip in the Colorado Rockies, as I've been informed that this part of the world offers many inducements to the disciple of the gun. Can you tell me what wild animals are found in Colorado and which of these are not protected under the game laws of the State? In what districts are these found?

What sort of an outfit is needed by one hunting big game, and should it be bought before going to Colorado? What time of the year is best for big game? What is the cost of a hunting license? Where is such a license obtained? Is it necessary to go away from the railroad and get into the

wilds in order to hunt big game? I seem to be asking a lot of questions, but will be most grateful for this information.

BILL D., Kansas City, Missouri.

Bill has picked a splendid State for his fall expedition, for bears, deer, elk, mountain sheep, antelope, beavers, buffalo, mountain lions, lynx, foxes, bobcats, coyotes, and wolves are all found in the Colorado Rockies. Of these, bears, lions, lynx, foxes, coyotes, and wolves are not protected under the game laws of the State.

These animals are found in the remote mountain districts far from civilization, especially in Middle Park, South Park, North Park, the Gunnison country, and the southwestern part of the State.

For big-game hunting a man wants regular outing clothes, heavy underwear, laced mountain boots, standard big-game rifle, and small pistol. He will also need dogs, horses, and a complete camp outfit, including sleeping bags. In some instances it is wise to procure the services of a guide, who will furnish the horses, dogs, and camp outfit. It will not be necessary for Bill to purchase his outfit before going West, for Denver stores carry a complete line. In fact, guns, clothing, and mountain boots can be bought to better advantage there than elsewhere.

The best time for hunting bear is from May 10th to June 20th and from September 15th to October 20th. For mountain lions and bobcats, the season starts January 12th and ends March 15th. Snowshoes are required for trips at this time.

A nonresident big-game license costs twenty-five dollars a year. It may be obtained at any county clerk's office in the State, at the game warden's office, Capitol Building, Denver, and at all sporting-goods dealers in Denver.

Bill will find it absolutely necessary to go away from the railroads and out into the wilds in order to hunt big game.

There is no game close to the towns or settlements.

And now, before we dismiss this subject of hunting, we have a word to say to the wives of our sportsmen. While your husbands are away on their annual hunting trips, wouldn't you like to do a little corresponding with the wives of other hunters?

Mrs. D. C. B., of Nevis, Minnesota, tells us that she would welcome letters. Her husband is a trapper and real woodsman, and she is accustomed to the yowl of the coyote.

Mrs. William R., Alturas, California, is another trapper's wife who would like correspondents.

Letters sent to these two hunters' wives in care of this department will be forwarded promptly.



AROUND THE SEVEN SEAS

Correspondents from Ireland to Cathay

DEAR MR. WORTH: I notice that you offer to give information about places, near and far, and the routes that take one around the world and back. Now, I'd like nothing better than to travel and see strange lands; but, unfortunately, I'm an invalid and can only take trips in my imagination or by reading about the experiences of others.

I'm wondering, however, if you couldn't put me in touch with some of POPULAR'S readers who live in other countries? Perhaps some of them would not mind exchanging letters with a stay-at-home. It would certainly mean a great deal to me, for it would bring the spice of adventure into my quiet and secluded life.

CARL R., Boston, Massachusetts.

Indeed we can give Carl R. some addresses of people who live in far-away places, who will be glad to correspond with him. The desire to receive letters is universal, whether a man lives in India, Africa, or Australia.

If Carl R. is interested in Central America, Don Jose B., of Honduras, can give him a great deal of information about that part of the world.

W. G. C., Fort Delhi, India, can tell him about life in the Far East.

T. Collins, Deepcut Camp, Hants, England, has something to say about the British empire, while Russel C., of Victoria, Australia, can satisfy Carl R.'s curiosity about that commonwealth.

Hawaii is always a fascinating place to read about, and W. Neil D., Schofield Barracks, Honolulu, is a willing author.

For color and romance China is hard to beat, and so we'd advise Carl R. to inscribe a letter at once to Private H. G., United States Marines, Shanghai, China.

And if he has any questions to ask about the Emerald Isle, he'd better get in touch by letter with Gunner Jack E., Fort Dunree, Londonderry, North Ireland.

We think that will do for a start. No doubt there are other readers who feel as Carl R. does about the lure of far places. If so, we'd advise them to fill up their fountain pens and get busy. Letters to any of the above correspondents, sent in care of this department, will be forwarded.



FOREST RANGER

And How One Qualifies for the Position

DEAR MR. WORTH: I'm an honest-to-goodness outdoor man and am tired of working in the city. A job as ranger in one of Uncle Sam's national forests would hit me just about right, and I'm wondering whether you can tell me how one goes about getting such a position.

What age men are eligible? What education is necessary? What is the salary of a ranger? Does he have to furnish his own saddle horses? Is it necessary to pass an examination to qualify for a ranger job? As you can see from this array of queries I'd like all the facts you can give me. And I'd surely appreciate it very much if you could put me in touch with a forest ranger now in the service.

ROGER F.

Akron, Ohio.

To be eligible for appointment as a Forest Ranger the applicant must be

certified by the Civil Service Commission, after passing a competitive examination. Such examinations are held only in the States in which there are national forests, as under the law the Forest Ranger position must be filled whenever practicable, by selection from qualified citizens of the State in which the work lies.

The Ranger examination which is held in October is thoroughly practical and requires field training and experience together with some knowledge of the rudiments of forestry. Only able-bodied male citizens of the United States, between the ages of twenty and thirty-five years of age, are admitted to the examination. These age limits do not apply, however, to men having preference because of military or naval service.

While the equivalent of graduation from a four-year high-school course is ordinarily necessary if a man is to attain a passing mark in the educational and mental tests given in the Ranger examination, the required knowledge which a man must have to answer the practical questions in the examination comes mostly from actual experience in the woods and on the range.

The salaries now paid in the Ranger position are one thousand six hundred and twenty dollars per year for assistant Rangers and from one thousand eight hundred dollars to two thousand dollars for Rangers in responsible charge of Ranger districts, according to the volume of business and other things involving the many difficulties of administration.

We can understand Roger F.'s desire to correspond with a Forest Ranger and are glad that we have the name and address of one to pass on to him. If he will write to F. X. D., Peola, Washington, we'll forward his letter. This is a good chance for other readers who are interested in Forest Ranger service to get firsthand facts.

Two Weeks From Now

In the First December Issue—Out November 7th

THE coming number will be remarkable for its wide variety, in addition to the extra-good quality of the stories. The West, the Caribbean, north Africa, the Italian Tyrol, the Pacific, the South, and two great metropolitan cities will form the scenic background for the stories you will read. And you will be able to select according to your taste, for there will be tales of the Foreign Legion, of humor, of smashing adventure, of the ring, of the sea, the outdoors, and the underworld.

"The Promenade," by Captain Leighton H. Blood, is one of the most stimulating short stories we have ever read. You will take Captain Tricot, of the Foreign Legion, to your heart, as we did, for he is a character as unique as he is lovable. Tricot may become a regular personality in these pages if his creator, Captain Blood, makes good his promise.

"The Plucked Brand," by John D. Swain, is a choice bit of humorous writing. An up-to-date bootlegger buys a sleepy newspaper that has been in the habit of featuring squash matches instead of the big fight news of the day. And things happen! Plenty of them!

John Randolph Phillips, who is going fishing these days in the rivers of Virginia, has written a moving story about a coward. "The Key of Courage" will stir you deeply.

Steuart M. Emery, in "The Breaker of Bars," goes to the underworld for

an extraordinary story of criminal life. It is a novelette, daring in its conception, and interesting especially for the new racket theory it exposes.

General Rafael de Nogales will again be prominently present with a fact story of the Caribbean, where he once came so close to death that its icy breath seemed just over his shoulder. Look for "Caribbean Wrath."

William Hemmingway will tell you of the time when he took *his* life in his hands, "Matching Punches with Jim Corbett." Hemmingway, one of New York's finest reporters, is writing a series of these reminiscences, and we hope you are following them with interest. He has already told of his awesome moments with Sharkey and Fitzsimmons. The one to follow the Corbett article will deal with his crowning experience—face to face with John L. Sullivan!

How do you like "The Werewolf's Helmet"? Don't you think, as we do, that Edgar L. Cooper is a born writer? Don't you agree with us that this serial is truly dynamic?

Charles Willard Diffin, a newcomer to THE POPULAR, will contribute a short novelette to the next issue, called "Men from Space." It is a dramatic tale of a strange craft that appeared out of nowhere to menace the world. Charged with mystery, air action, and emotion, it will appear particularly to those who like the unusual story.

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Stories that hit only the high spots. Adventure of the swiftest kind—air, sea, West, mystery, wherever men do and dare.

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Clean sentiment, enthralling mystery, dramatic and thrilling adventure, make it a magazine which appeals to every one who enjoys a real good love story.

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Clean, wholesome fiction, vigorously written by America's best writers of adventure, business, and the great outdoors.

REAL LOVE MAGAZINE - Twice a month, 20 cents the copy - Subscription Price, \$4.00
A magazine of intense interest to every female reader—really a mirror in which people's lives are reflected. Actual experiences.

SPORT STORY MAGAZINE - Twice a month, 15 cents the copy - Subscription Price, \$3.00
Published in the interest of all that is keen, exciting, and wholesome in sport. It represents youth and stands for all those things that youth is interested in.

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In Top-Notch you will find the very thrills of life itself—the kind of stories that depict men as they really are—stories with a punch.

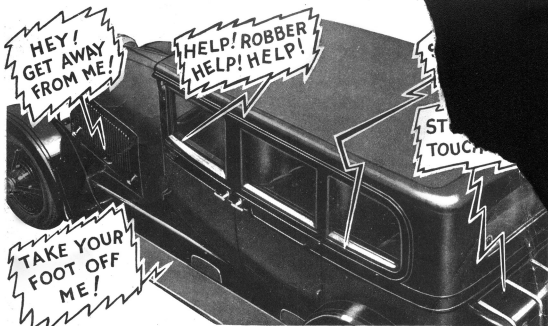
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Now in this amazing new way, every car can be protected from theft for 24 full hours a day. In the garage or parked on the street, if any thief so much as pulls at your spare tire or touches his foot to your running board

ZOWIE! A riot of noise starts instantly! And your car never shuts up till the thief leaves. And listen to this. Even if the thief is wise to what's up, you alone place the secret control button anywhere you want it around the car. The thief can't possibly find it. If he wastes time looking for it—Bingo! He's caught and on his way to jail! This astonishing invention guards your spare-tire, head-lights and spot-lights as well as the car itself.

Installed In 10 Minutes—Costs Nothing To Operate

The inventor has asked the U. S. Government to protect his patent rights on this revolutionary discovery. Because of its uncanny powers and to distinguish it from everything else on earth this queer discovery is now

called "Devil Dog." Among its amazing features is the fact that it can be installed by anyone in 10 minutes or less. There is absolutely no cost for operation. It will last as long as the car. Fits any car from Ford to Rolls Royce without adjustment or fusing.



A Mere Handful

Note the tiny size of this amazing invention in the above picture. The switch, wire and sealed tube containing the "activator" is all there is to it. The entire cost is scarcely more than an ordinary radio tube! Test it! Mail the coupon today.

For introductory purposes a special 5-day test offer is now being made. If you are interested in learning about the most astonishing invention since the radio first came in, use the coupon at once. If your present income is less than \$50 a week, the profit possibilities as our agent may astonish you. The coupon brings details of all offers. Mail it now.

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Get Cash instead of Sympathy.

If you met with an accident in your home, on the street, or road, in the field, or on your job—will your income continue? Remember, few escape without accident—and none of us can tell what tomorrow holds for us. While you are reading this warning, somewhere some ghastly tragedy is taking its toll of human life or limb, some flood or fire, some automobile or train disaster. Protect yourself now.

Get Cash instead of Sympathy.

If you suddenly became ill—would your income stop? What if you contracted lobar pneumonia, appendicitis operation, or any of the many common ills which are covered in this strong policy, wouldn't you rest easier and convalesce more quickly if you knew that this old line company stood ready to help lift from your shoulders, distressing financial burdens in case of a personal tragedy? Protect yourself now.

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