

TEN CENTS

THRILLING ADVENTURES

10¢

MARCH

**KWA AND THE
BEAST MEN**

By PAUL REGARD

FEATURING:

**WINGED
DIAMONDS**

*A Complete
Air-Adventure Novel*

By JACK D'ARCY



HELEN'S DREAMS CAME TRUE

by Tom Wood



What Will You Do With \$3500.00 Cash If I Give it to YOU?

I WILL PAY \$250.00

JUST FOR THE WINNING ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION

I am going to give \$3,500.00 to some deserving man or woman who answers my announcements. You may be the one to get it! But, before I give it to anyone I would like to know what the money will be used wisely. What will you do with this fortune if I give it to you? Just answer this question—tell me in a sentence of 20 words or less what you would do with the \$3,500.00—nothing more to do toward the \$250.00 cash prize! Sounds easy? It is easy! Nothing 'fancy' is needed—just tell me in plain words what you would do with the \$3,500.00.

20 SIMPLE WORDS WIN \$250.00

Nothing more for you to do! Costs nothing to win; nothing to buy; no selling THIS \$250.00 PRIZE GIVEN JUST FOR AN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION

There is no way you can lose. Simply tell me what YOU will do with \$3,500.00 if I answer is \$250.00.

RULES—Only one answer accepted from a family. You must be over 16 years of age and reside within the United States. \$250.00 given for best answer to "What Will You Do With \$3,500.00 If I Give It to You?" Answers must be postmarked not later than April 15, 1933. Judges will consider answer only for practical value of the idea. Construction, spelling and neatness not considered. Duplicate prizes given in case of ties.

YOUR PRIZE COUPON

TOM WOOD, Manager,
H-Q Bldg., Dept. HW-704-C, Cincinnati, Ohio.
If you give me the \$3,500.00 prize, I will use it as follows: (Write your answer plainly in here, in 20 words or less):

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
TOWN _____ STATE _____

Just Sending Answer Qualifies You For Opportunity To WIN \$3,500.00

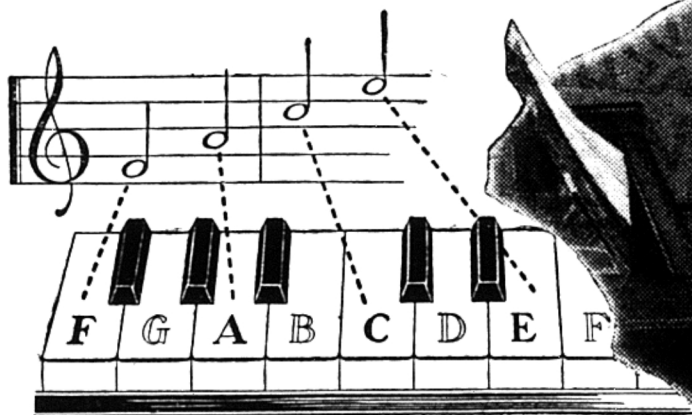
Some say I am wrong. They say that the people who get money from me will spend it foolishly. Now I want to find out. I am going to give away over \$6,000.00. Someone is going to get \$3,500.00 All Cash. If I gave you the \$3,500.00 what would YOU do with it? Tell me in 20 words or less. Just sending an answer qualifies you for the opportunity to win \$3,500.00. Think, NOW, How You Would Spend \$3,500.00! Would you start a business of your own—invest in bonds—pay off a mortgage—buy new furniture and clothes or use the money for education? Think of all the things you could do with \$3,500.00. Plan now—then write your answer—rush it to me at once. Yours may be the winner.

BE Prompt! I Will Send You \$1,000.00 CASH Certificate At Once!

One Thousand Dollars EXTRA if you are prompt and win first prize in final distribution. So don't delay. Write your answer and rush it to me. SEND NO MONEY. BE PROMPT. I will send you \$1,000.00 Cash Certificate AT ONCE.

TOM WOOD, Mgr., Dept. HW-704-C, H-Q Bldg., Cincinnati, O.

Just as EASY as it looks



*to become a popular musician
this delightful, simple as A-B-C way*

STOP cheating yourself out of musical good times. Stop thinking that learning music is nothing but one grinding session of monotonous exercises and harsh-sounding scales after another . . . days, months and years of difficult technique and dry-as-dust theory under the thumb of a private teacher.

Don't let others talk you into believing any such thing. It's ridiculous—absolutely! And we've already proved it to the complete satisfaction of over 600,000 enthusiastic students who have learned to play their favorite instrument right at home—without a teacher.

You're Never in Hot Water

Take a look at the above diagram. Looks easy, doesn't it? Well, it's every bit as simple as it looks. First a note—then a letter. Plenty of clear instructions tell you how each bar is played—lots of diagram pictures, show you how, then you do it yourself and hear it. Everything to make learning a joy. Nothing to make you lose patience. No headaches. In fact, the U. S. School of Music has made the reading and playing of music so downright simple that you don't have to know one note from another to begin.

Play Real Tunes From the Start

Your first thrill comes with your very first lesson. For you are given a piece with a real melody to play by actual notes. Dreamy waltzes,

heart-throbbing ballads, stirring marches, sparkling sonatas, restful etudes follow in short order. No standing still. Progress is rapid. In this way, you become a capable performer months sooner than you could ever expect to the old-fashioned way. Yet, no matter what instrument you select, the cost of learning is the same—just an average cost of only a few cents a day.

Not only that, you receive all the music you need at no extra cost. With every lesson comes a specially selected and graded piece, which is yours to keep, enjoy and play to your heart's content.

Play the "Blues" Away

How can you be content to sit around at party after party and listen to others do all the playing—hear them receive all the compliments—see them showered with admiration, attention, invitations—when your lifelong ambition to become a popular musician is now so easy to realize. Get in the musical "swim" yourself. Watch the singing, happy crowds gather around you as you play the latest syncopation. Experience the personal satisfaction that comes from being able to play "when," "where" and "what" you like

for your own amusement and the entertainment of others.

Don't be afraid to begin your lessons at once. Over 600,000 people learned to play this modern way—and found it as easy as A-B-C. Forget that old-fashioned idea that you need special "talent." Just read the list of instruments in the panel, decide which one you want to play, and the U. S. School will do the rest. And bear in mind, no matter which instrument you choose, the cost in each case will

average the same—just a few cents a day. No matter whether you are a mere beginner or already a good performer, you will be interested in learning about this newly perfected method.

Send for Our Free Book and Demonstration Lesson

Our wonderful illustrated Free Book and our Free Demonstration Lesson explain all about this remarkable method. They prove just how anyone can learn to play his favorite instrument by note in almost no time and for just a fraction of what old, slow methods cost. The booklet will also tell you all about the amazing new *Automatic Finger Control*.

Read the list of instruments to the left, decide which you want to play, and the U. S. School of Music will do the rest. Act NOW. Clip and mail this coupon today, and the fascinating Free Book and Free Demonstration Lesson will be sent to you at once. No obligation. Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit. U. S. School of Music, 2943 Brunswick Bldg., New York City.

Thirty-fifth year (Established 1898)

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC
2943 Brunswick Bldg., N. Y. City.

Please send me your free book, "How You Can Master Music in Your Own Home," with inspiring message by Dr. Frank Crane, Free Demonstration Lesson and particulars of your easy payment plan. I am interested in the following course:

Have you
.....Instrument?

Name

Address

City..... State.....

Pick Your Instrument

Piano	Violin
Organ	Clarinet
Ukulele	Flute
Cornet	Saxophone
Trombone	Harp
Piccolo	Mandolin
Guitar	'Cello
Hawaiian Steel Guitar	
Sight Singing	
Piano Accordion	
Italian and German	
Accordion	
Voice and Speech Culture	
Harmony and	
Composition	
Drums and Traps	
Automatic Finger Control	
Banjo (Plectrum,	
5-Strings or Tenor)	
Juniors' Piano Course	

THRILLING ADVENTURES

Vol. V, No. 1

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

March, 1933

COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

- WINGED DIAMONDS Jack D'Arcy 8
*Startling Air Adventures in a Tense Drama of Famous
Sky Fighters and International Smugglers*

COMPLETE NOVELETTE

- KWA AND THE BEAST MEN Paul Regard 66
*Another Exciting Jungle Story in Which Kwa Faces
New Perils in the Devil Bush*

THRILLING SHORT STORIES

- NORTH FROM ETAH Capt. Ross McCutcheon 45
An Elemental Struggle Between Man and Beast
KILLER'S CAMP Donald Barr Chidsey 53
Ruthless Bandits Raid a Mississippi Steamboat
STEEL FISTS Wallace R. Bamber 85
Steeper Packed A Mighty Wallop!
BRINGING IN THE SHIP Wayne Rogers 105
The Captain Grinned at Wilson's Hobby—But . . .
THE BACK OF BALUCHISTAN Rex Sherrick 115
A Strange Tryst Leads to Unexpected Danger

THREE-PART SERIAL

- THE CRIMSON BLIGHT (Part III) Arthur J. Burks 92
*Conclude This Thrilling Pseudo-Scientific Novel of the
Threat of the Cro-Magnon to Civilization*

THRILLING FEATURES

- FAMOUS SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE Illustration 64
Col. T. E. Lawrence, General Chang and Others
THE GLOBE TROTTER A Department 126
Where Readers, Writers and the Editor Meet

Published monthly by METROPOLITAN MAGAZINES, INC., 570 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.
M. A. Goldsmith, President; N. L. Pines, Treasurer. Copyright, 1933, by Metropolitan Magazines,
Inc. Yearly, \$1.20; single copies, \$.10; Foreign and Canadian, postage extra. Entered as second
class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., on Oct. 16, 1931, under Act of March 3, 1879.

Manuscripts should be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelope and are submitted at the author's risk.

Read our companion magazines: Thrilling Detective and Thrilling Love.

I'll Send My First Lesson **FREE**



**Here's
Proof**

It Shows How Easy it is
to Learn at Home
to fill a
BIG PAY
Radio Job



Made \$10,000 More In Radio

"I can safely say that I have made \$10,000 more in Radio than I would have made if I had continued at my old job."

VICTOR L. OSGOOD,
St. Cloud Ave.,
West Orange, N. J.



Jumped from \$35 to \$100 a week

"Before I entered Radio I was making \$35 a week. I earned \$100 in one week servicing and selling Radios. I owe my success to N. R. I. You started me off on the right foot."

J. A. VAUGHN,
Grand Radio & App. Co.,
8107 S. Grand Blvd.,
St. Louis, Mo.



\$500 extra in 6 months

"In looking over my records I find I made \$500 in my spare time in six months. My best week brought me \$107. I have only one regret regarding your course—I should have taken it long ago."

HOYT MOORE,
B. R. 3, Box 919,
Indianapolis, Ind.

Clip the coupon and mail it. I'm so sure I can train you at home in your spare time for a big pay job in Radio that I'll send you my first lesson free. Examine it, read it, see how clear and easy it is to understand. Then you will know why many men with less than a grammar school education and no technical experience have become Radio Experts and are earning two to three times their former pay as a result of my training.

Many Radio Experts Make \$50 to \$100 a Week

In about ten years the Radio Industry has grown from \$2,000,000 to hundreds of millions of dollars. Over 300,000 jobs have been created by this growth, and thousands more will be created by its continued development. Many men and young men with the right training—the kind of training I give you in the N. R. I. course—have stepped into Radio at two and three times their former salaries.

Get Ready Now for Jobs Like These

Broadcasting stations use engineers, operators, station managers, and pay up to \$5,000 a year. Manufacturers continually employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, service men, buyers, for jobs paying up to \$6,000 a year. Radio Operators on ships enjoy life, see the world, with board and lodging free, and get good pay besides. Dealers and jobbers employ service men, salesmen, buyers, managers, and pay up to \$100 a week. My book tells you about these and many other kinds of interesting Radio jobs.

Many Make \$5, \$10, \$15 a Week Extra in Spare Time Almost at Once

The day you enroll with me I send you instructions which you should master quickly for doing 28 Radio jobs common in most every neighborhood, for spare-time money. Throughout your course I send you information for servicing popular makes of sets! I give you the plans and ideas that have made \$200 to \$1,000 a year for N. R. I. men in their spare time. My course is famous as the course that pays for itself!

Television, Short Wave, Talking Movies —Money Back Agreement Included

Special training in Talking Movies, Television, and Home Television experiments. Short Wave Radio, Radio's use in Aviation, Servicing and Merchandising Sets, Broadcasting, Commercial and Ship Stations are included. I am so sure that N. R. I. can train you satisfactorily that I will agree in writing to refund every penny of your tuition if you are not satisfied with my Lesson and Instruction Service upon completion.

You Don't Risk a Penny

Mail the coupon now. In addition to the sample lesson, I send my book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." It tells you where the good jobs are in Radio, what they pay; tells you about my course, what others who have taken it are doing and making. This offer is free to all residents of the United States and Canada over 15 years old. Find out what Radio offers you without the slightest obligation. ACT NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. 3CH7, Washington, D. C.



SPECIAL Radio Equipment for Broad Practical Experience Given Without Extra Charge

My Course is not all theory. I'll show you how to use my special Radio Equipment for conducting experiments and building circuits which illustrate important principles used in such well known sets as Westinghouse, General Electric, Philco, R. C. A., Victor, Majestic, and others. You work out with your own hands many of the things you read in our lesson books. This 50-50 method of training makes learning at home easy, interesting, fascinating, intensely practical.

You learn how sets work, why they work, how to make them work when they are out of order. Training like this shows up in your pay envelope—when you graduate you have had training and experience—you're not simply looking for a job where you can get experience.



With N. R. I. equipment, you learn to build and thoroughly understand set testing equipment—you can use N. R. I. equipment in your spare time service work for extra money.

I have doubled
and tripled the
salaries of many.
Find out about
this tested way
to **BIGGER
PAY**



FILL OUT AND MAIL
THIS COUPON **TODAY**

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. 3CH7
Washington, D. C.

I want to take advantage of your offer. Send me your Free Sample Lesson and your book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." I understand this request does not obligate me.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

"R"

The Famous Course That Pays For Itself

NEW WAY *to* WASH CARS



**GYRO
Works
By
Water
Pressure**

The Gyro Brush harnesses the terrific power of water pressure. Water from an ordinary garden hose runs through the handle of the Gyro, and revolves the center brush at a speed of more than 1,000 revolutions per minute. This powerful revolving brush INSTANTLY removes all dirt, mud and the dreaded "traffic film." It cleans cars SPOTLESSLY CLEAN. Yet it is guaranteed never to mar or scratch the finest surface. Can be used on any finish—Duco, lacquer, etc. Soft, velvety outside brush prevents the water from splashing or dripping, and acts as a chamois and cleaner in one. Gyro not only washes, cleans and polishes, but it prolongs and beautifies the car finish as well.

WASHES-CLEANS-POLISHES *in one operation!*

NOW—A NEW WAY TO WASH CARS. Gyro Turbine Brush—the sensational new invention—*actually makes car washing a pleasure!* Saves time, labor and money. Eliminates chamois, soap, and spray. No more scrubbing and heaving. No more messy, bothersome, hard labor. Gyro cleans cars without hard physical effort in less than 15 minutes easy, pleasant work.

No wonder agents are finding this new device a whirlwind seller. Autoists, garages, gas stations, auto laundries, fleet owners, service stations, etc., buy on sight. More than ever auto owners are saving money and washing their own cars—that's why Gyro agents are steadily increasing their profits.

A Tremendous Market!

Not only does Gyro wash cars quicker, easier and better, but it is just as convenient for washing down outside walls, windows, screens, porches, etc. Sells to home owners everywhere. Housewives find Gyro an invaluable aid. Strong, binding guarantee of satisfaction protects customers and agents.

AGENTS!

Here's a real seller. Profits assured by unique demonstration features and scientific selling plans. Exceptionally large earnings reported by agents everywhere. Big profit margin on every sale. Only 10 brushes a day will net you \$17.50—\$105.00 clear profit for a six-day week. Desirable territories still open.

Write or wire for full details of this splendid money-making opportunity. Full facts and attractive proposition FREE. For fast action mail the coupon below.

**GYRO BRUSH CO., Dept. H-60,
Bloomfield, N. J.**

Rush special proposition and complete details of your money making opportunity FREE. Also reserve territory for me.

Name

P. O. Address.....

Town..... State.....

**100% PROFIT
for
YOU!**

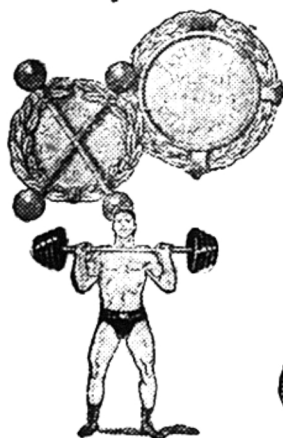
Canadian Agents write to Gyro Brush Co., of Canada, 110 Dundas St., London, Ont., Canada

*** JOE MILLER ***

AMERICA'S STRONGEST MAN

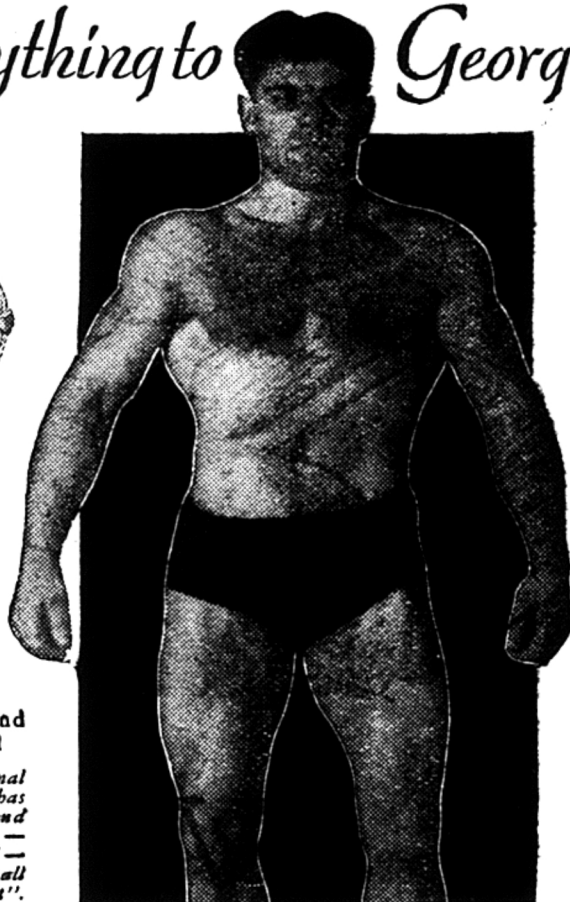
IN THE 165 POUND CLASS, SAYS

"I owe everything to George F. Jowett"



JOE MILLER
Is the Strongest 165-Pound
Weight-Lifter in the World

Joe Miller holds many national records on the Olympic lifts. He has "jerked" over 290 pounds and "cleaned" over 300! He says: "George F. Jowett is my ideal — in fact, it is to him that I owe all my strength and development!"



GEORGE F. JOWETT
Holds more Strength Records
than any other Man!

George F. Jowett is responsible for such famous weight lifters as Joe Miller, D. Bachtell, Art Levan, Larry Campbell, Bob Mitchell and A. Sundberg — they are all his pupils and many of them won great honors at the Olympic Games!

What I Did For Him I Can Do For YOU!

I EXPECT still greater things of Joe Miller... one of the greatest weight-lifters I have ever trained, and Joe is only one of thousands who have come to me for instruction and have taken my course in physical training.

When I see men like Art Levan, Joe Miller, D. Bachtell, Bob Mitchell and others excel in weight lifting contests whenever they compete, it makes me feel mighty proud!

Proud to think that there are more than 10,000 men who have taken my course in physical training in the last four years. Many of the strong men "phenomenons" were boys who came to me as weaklings... and what I have done for them I can surely do for you!

I know you feel the urge for a strong man's body and I want to tell you right now that I can give you mighty muscles too... arms that will ripple with steel bands... a back with powerful blades that will give you a K.O. punch... a barrel chest and legs that will be columns of power for speed and endurance! A physique that men will respect and women admire.

So sure am I that I can do all that I say, that I make this unqualified guarantee... the guarantee that no strong man has ever before DARED to make...

**"I will add 3 INCHES TO YOUR CHEST
2 INCHES TO YOUR BICEPS
... or it won't cost you one penny...
even the postage you have spent will be refunded!"**

Signed GEORGE F. JOWETT

While my full course only costs a few cents a day, I want you to try one of my test courses first...

**Send for "Moulding a Mighty Arm"
A Complete Course for only 25c**

It will be a revelation to you. You can't make a mistake. The guaranty of the strongest armed man in the world stands behind this course. I give you all the secrets of strength illustrated and explained as you like them. In 30 days you can get an unbreakable grip of steel and a Herculean arm.

Try any one of my test courses listed in the coupon at 25c. Or, try all six of them for only \$1.00.

**MAIL YOUR ORDER NOW AND I
WILL INCLUDE A FREE COPY OF
"NERVES OF STEEL, MUSCLES LIKE IRON."**

It is a priceless book to the strength fan and muscle builder. Full of pictures of marvelous bodied men who tell you decisively how you can build symmetry and strength the equal of their own. Reach out... Grasp This Special Offer.

**FREE BOOK WITH PHOTOS
OF FAMOUS STRONG MEN**

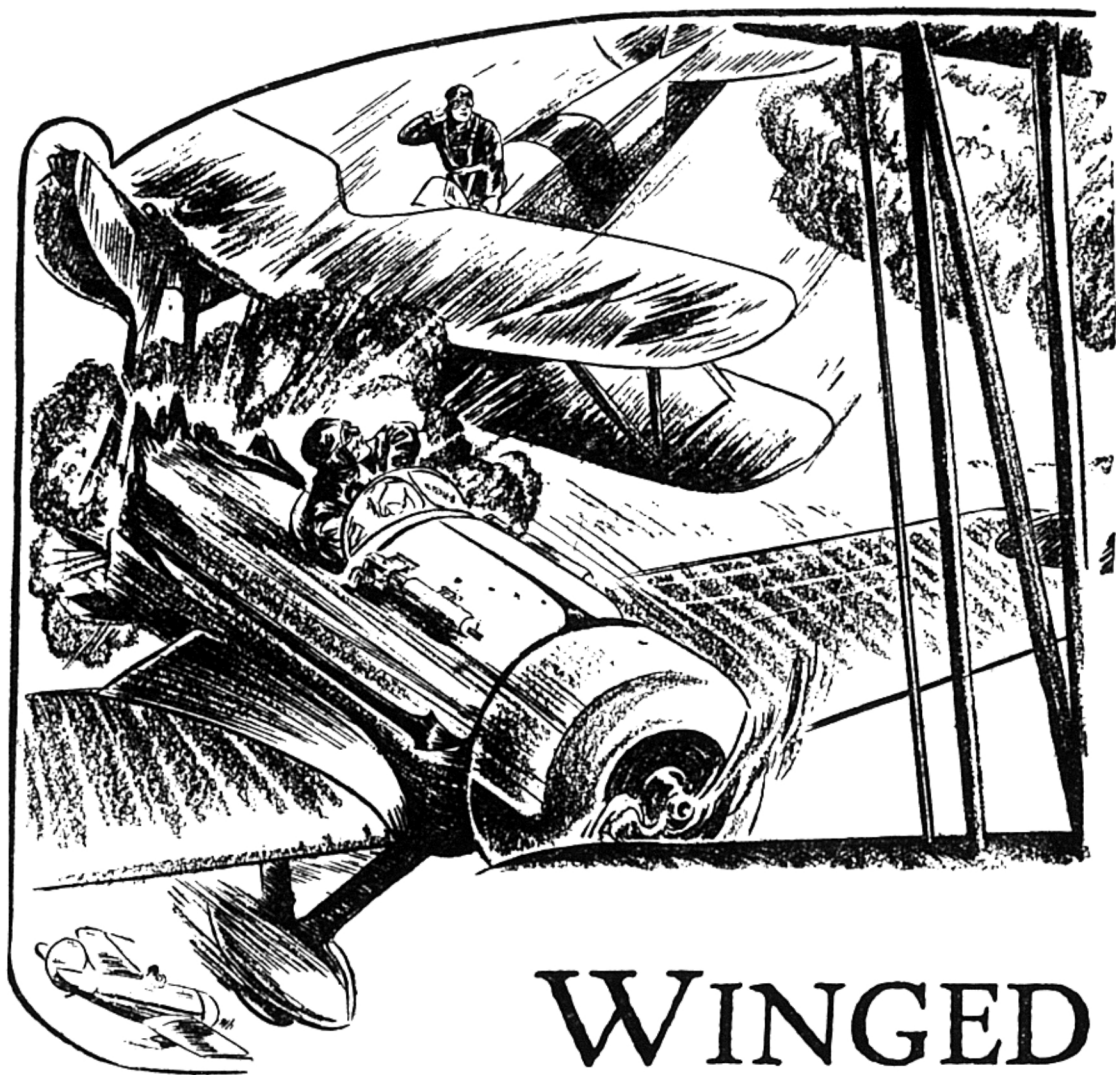


**JOWETT INSTITUTE
OF PHYSICAL CULTURE**
Dept. 88Qb 423 Poplar St.
Scranton, Pa.

George F. Jowett: Your proposition looks good to me. Send, by return mail, prepaid, the courses checked below for which I am enclosing...

- ☐ Moulding a Mighty Arm. 25c
- ☐ Moulding a Mighty Back. 25c
- ☐ Moulding a Mighty Grip. 25c
- ☐ Moulding a Mighty Chest. 25c
- ☐ Moulding Mighty Legs. 25c
- ☐ Strong Man Stunt Made Easy 25c
- ☐ All 6 Books for \$1.00.

Name _____
Address _____



WINGED

PROLOGUE

MURDER stalked brazenly across the morning sky. Death stared, unwinking, into the bland eye of the autumnal sun which had witnessed the charge of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse since the beginning of time.

Gigantic bats hurled themselves across the sky, spitting flame and steel from the roaring bodies. Driving propellers slashed at the air, and from between their fast moving

A Complete Book-

By JACK

Author of "The Sacred Scimitar,"

blades, machine-guns chanted a threnody of doom.

Hastings thrust the stick down all the way, and fell like a plummet on the tail of the Fokker below. His finger tensed about the trigger of the Lewis. The magazine chattered around on its post, and an evenly

Startling Air Adventures in a Breath-Taking Drama



DIAMONDS

Length Novel

D'ARCY

"Danger Island," etc.

spaced line of tracers ripped the atmosphere.

Still he went down. The wind whistled in the struts like a banshee's wail. Desperately the Fokker maneuvered to get out of the path of the Nemesis which was intent on sending him to hell.

Frantically the German essayed

an Immelman, but all too late.

The tracers suddenly found his vulnerable spot. Half a dozen of them traveled in a straight line between the Spad's prop blades and the Fokker's gas tank. A thin blue flame crawled ominously along the latter's cowl. Then the blue evolved to a flaming crimson. The Fokker's pilot half rose in his seat.

Two hundred feet away Hastings could see the thin mirthless smile on his face as he brought his hand to his forehead in his last earthly

of Famous Sky Fighters and International Smugglers

salute. Hastings touched his own helmet in response.

The Fokker's left wing crumpled. The ship spun crazily, then like a mad thing, it shot toward the earth, somersaulting madly wrapped in evil yellow flames which formed the funeral pyre of her gallant pilot.

Hastings sighed, pulled back the stick and zoomed again into the battle which was still raging above him.

Two German ships were engaging a pair of Spads of his own flight. Thus far the struggle seemed even, but even as Hastings roared upward to the fray, one of the Fokker's detached itself from the quartette and charged down to meet him.

FOR a single flashing second their gun barrels were dead on. Hastings' finger constricted on the trigger at precisely the same moment that a Spandau's bullets ripped viciously through his own struts.

He was aware of a sudden burning sensation in his shoulder. Blood ran crazily down his tunic. The Fokker passed beneath him with less than six feet to spare. Hastings, ignoring the biting pain in his shoulder, continued up, held his stick back all the way and completed an inside loop, intending to come down on the far arc upon his attacker's tail.

But as he came down in the strategic position to deliver the coup, he saw that already a ship of his own squadron was engaging the enemy. A second glance revealed that it was Firbank and also that the American pilot was having none the best of the battle.

Hastings shrugged. There was little love lost between Firbank and himself. But, whatever their personal differences, each respected the courage and flying ability of the other. But, despite these things, it

was difficult for Hastings to overlook, to ignore, the bitterness he nurtured against Firbank.

Even as he thrust the stick forward and went to the other's rescue, the face of the little girl in Ruen flitted through his mind. The episode of the drunken brawl in Saint Omer when he had paid the price of Firbank's sins, came to him, and the half hundred other reasons why the pair of them harbored such a burning hate against each other occurred to him, as he stared at Firbank's cold mocking face through the blur which his whirring prop blades made in the line of vision.

As his own Spad approached, Firbank adroitly whisked himself out of line of the Fokker's fire, and shot upward towards the advancing Hastings. Then, as he saw the other, the expression on his face changed. He waved his hand in signal, and as he passed Hastings' ship, cut his motor.

Hastings, obeying the other's gesture, cut his own motor and strained his ears to hear the words which Firbank shouted at him.

"Lay off this guy! He's mine. Personally!"

That was all. Firbank's motor leaped to life again and once more he was off to add another fallen crate to his already impressive list.

HASTINGS was aware of a sudden anger at the other. After all, he had no great desire to assist Firbank, but the other was by no means having the battle all his own way. Hastings' eyes swept the sky. The Fokker was pouring a hail of lead down upon Firbank's Spad.

Then, for two reasons—and which was the stronger he never knew—Hastings jammed down on the rudder bar and dived toward the enemy ship. First, no matter what Firbank said, he needed aid. Second, the fact of his coming to the rescue

would annoy Firbank, and annoying Firbank was meat and drink to Hastings.

His eyes were glued to the ring-sights as he swept forward. His gun was trained dead on the cowl of the Fokker. The German ship's nose was turned to the side, an impossible firing position. Yet as he swept on, Hastings was suddenly conscious of the fact that a stream of bullets was whistling over his head.

In his amazement, he permitted his grip on the stick to relax a little. The Spad hit a pocket and lurched crazily. Hastings turned his head and glanced over his shoulder to see where the fire was coming from. Then he froze with a flaming wrath which seemed to consume his entire being.

For, behind him, winging down, was the ship of Firbank. Her pilot sat grim faced, eyes blazing, in his seat. His hand was about the trigger guard of his stripped Lewis. With a violent gesture he waved Hastings away. Then another burst of fire screamed through Hastings' struts.

IT had been Firbank who was shooting at him! Firbank, who had ordered him away, was enforcing his orders with fire! Firbank firing on a comrade in the air! Firbank committing murder. Treason! Hastings' shocked, numbed brain refused to function any further. He was conscious of nothing save a mad overwhelming desire to seize Firbank in his hands and strangle him, to strike him, to make him cry out with pain. To—

Firbank's Spad whirled past him with roaring motor and shrieking prop. The pilot shouted something obscene and inarticulate as he passed. At last he had the range. Despite the stabbing flashes from the black muzzle of the Spandau, Fir-

bank charged down to meet the foe.

The Lewis spoke loudly and truly. In the Fokker, a man suddenly released the stick. He slumped over in his seat, blood streaming down his face. Out of control, his ship spun crazily like a drunken bird. Then, with her pilot dead in his seat, the Fokker shot downward toward its last landing place.

A CRIMSON Very light seared the sky before Hastings' gaze. Automatically, he obeyed its signal without being aware of any conscious thought, save his terrible hatred, his overwhelming bitterness against Firbank. Mechanically, he took his place in the flight as in obedience to the F. C.'s signal. The squadron scooted for home. On the tarmac Firbank climbed down from his ship and faced Hastings defiantly.

Hastings' eyes flamed. "You dirty murderer," he said thickly. "You might have killed me up there. You turned your gun on me."

"So what?" Firbank's tone was insolent, but his indifferent manner was belied by the yellow hate in his gaze. "So what? Of course I turned my gun on you. I don't like you, Hastings. You're an interfering righteous fool. I told you to keep out. It was none of your business. I needed that guy to lift my record to the top of the squadron. I told you lay off. It was my life, not yours."

"Not entirely," said Hastings. "Your life belongs to your country now. Not yourself."

Firbank laughed. "My country?" he mocked. "You're a prig, Hastings. You'll always be a prig. That's why I hate you."

Hastings tossed off his tunic. "There's no use in wasting words," he said significantly.

Firbank nodded in agreement. His own tunic fell to the ground. The

two men faced each other and that which gleamed from their eyes was not pleasant to behold.

Hastings took a step forward, when suddenly they were interrupted by a tremendous shout from the direction of the mess. Some one raced toward them delirious with excitement.

"Say, lay off you guys. The armistice! The armistice has been signed. The fighting's over."

Hastings hesitated for a moment, just long enough to hear Firbank cry out emotionally.

"Armistice, hell! They can sign papers, Hastings, but there's only one thing that'll ever cause an armistice between us."

He rushed on his enemy. Hastings knew perfectly what he meant.

"You're right," he shouted. "And that is death. Yours or mine."

They threw themselves at each other, and as the struggle between the nations of the world ceased, that between these two hard, strong men was born, and destined to live long after the armistice of the powers had been forgotten.

CHAPTER I

Enemies Meet Again

HALF a dozen figures walked slowly across the isolated vastness of the veldt toward the copper semi-circle of the setting sun. Five of them were tall and black, while the sixth was a white man.

Evidently, the last was weary. His step was slow and his shoulders were bent, yet his stride showed a dogged resolve as he plodded forward in the direction of the score of wooden houses which marked the trading village of Nebali.

The barren surface of the plain over which the little caravan marched

gave no indication of the tremendous wealth which lay beneath, of the king's ransom in precious stones that the brown, arid earth concealed so well.

Yet, less than three miles to the south was Kimberly, where a billion dollars worth of diamonds lie beneath the earth, waiting for the Joel syndicate to thrust them out upon a greedy, eager world.

THE white man with the bent shoulders stopped at a point where the ramshackle buildings of Nebali ran in a parallel line, and stared down on what appeared to be the principal street.

Another glance enabled him to pick out what apparently was the hostelry of the town. He uttered a sharp command in dialect to the natives, who carried his baggage to the rear of the building. Then he sighed, wiped his forehead and strode across the rickety porch into the house.

Settling the matter of accommodations with the clerk, he left the desk abruptly and made off in the direction from which issued the sound of tinkling glass and loud masculine laughter.

He leaned unnoticed against the bar and said to the bartender, in a distinct American accent: "Scotch."

The bartender reared on the best British bibulous traditions, added gratuitously, "And soda?"

"No. Just scotch."

The bartender raised his eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders, then turned to obey this eccentric customer's order.

A moment later, the weary looking man at the bar lifted the glass of warm spirits to his lips and tossed down the liquor in a single gulp, then he turned and surveyed the room.

His eyes were keen and wary as they swept the faces of the half

dozen traders who were gathered here. His bronzed face, despite the fatigue that was stamped upon it, branded him as a man of purpose, as a man who had lived in the four corners of the globe and had learned to deal with the men he had met there.

At last, his roving eyes stopped in their travels and came to rest upon the features of a slim dark figure who sat alone at a table near the single window which the stuffy room boasted. A thin, grim smile broke the gravity of his face as he studied the physiognomy of the man he had travelled five thousand miles to meet.

THEN, with characteristic abruptness, he left his second drink and strode across the room. This time the weariness had gone from his gait. His shoulders were no longer bent, and the bored jaded look in his eye was replaced by an excited gleam. With a casualness which could have been born only of deliberation, he dropped into a vacant chair opposite his quarry.

The original occupant of the table stared at him coldly.

"I prefer to drink alone, thank you," he said coldly.

His visitor chuckled.

"The same old exclusive Firbank," he remarked to the window. "How are you?"

Firbank's eyes narrowed. He leaned across the table, his gaze searching the other's face. A puzzled frown wrinkled his brow. Then the frown vanished. Recognition dawned. But he mastered his surprise.

"So," he said in a quiet conversational tone. "It's you, Hastings?"

"Yes," said the other. "It's Hastings. I've come five thousand miles to do you a favor, Firbank."

Firbank grunted and his expression showed an unmistakable cynicism.

"Yeah?" he said flatly. "Well, what's it all about?"

"Lay off, Firbank."

"What?"

"I've come five thousand miles to tell you to lay off. That's all."

Firbank's expression remained unchanged, but there was an imperceptible flicker in his eyes as he asked: "Lay off what?"

"Lay off those diamonds. You've smuggled enough into the States already to net you a fortune. There's still time for you to get out whole."

Firbank stared at him. His expression indicated that he partially understood, yet there was a vague haze of bewilderment about him. He poured himself a stiff shot of gin, replaced the bottle on the table.

"Come clean, Hastings," he said. "Let's have the whole story first. I know what you mean when you say diamonds. But I want to know what affair it is of yours, and where you heard about it."

Hastings smiled quietly.

"Firbank," he said. "We've never liked each other. However, despite that, I admire certain qualities you possess. You're a fighter and you've got guts. For the sake of the old days we spent in hell, you're entitled to the truth and an even break. Look here. This ought to explain a lot."

HE thrust his hand into his pocket and withdrew something glittering and metallic in his hand. Firbank caught a swift glimpse of it before the other restored it to his pocket. Their eyes met and held for a minute, then Firbank threw back his head and roared with laughter, that contained other less pleasant qualities than mirth.

Hastings sat quiet and tolerant until Firbank had completed his outburst.

Firbank ceased laughing abruptly.

He took another swig of gin, waiving the formality of the glass this time. Then, as he spoke there was a bitter contempt in his tone.

"I should have guessed it," he said. "After all, there really is only one profession for an interfering busybody like you. So you're in the government service, eh? You ought to go far in that racket, Hastings. You're an ideal dick. But—" The mocking note in his voice abruptly evolved to a hard ominous threatening quality. "But you won't get very far if you don't keep clear of me. Savvy? You say you've come five thousand miles to do me the favor of tellin' me to lay off. All right, I'll return the favor, Hastings. I'm warning you to lay off—to lay off me. If you don't—"

Hastings' face never lost its mild bantering expression, but his eyes had grown hard; his voice matched the other's.

"Listen, Firbank," he said again. "Let me state a few facts. The Joel Syndicate is not mining their diamonds this year. There's a depression and they're laying off till the demand catches up with the supply."

"You're telling me," said Firbank in a tone which indicated that this information was already his.

HASTINGS ignored the interruption. "In the meantime," he went on, "you are, in some manner, managing to smuggle diamonds out of those mines. Also, in some manner, you are smuggling them to South America. I happen to know the name of the country. From there you run them into the States. I am representing both the United States government, and, unofficially, the Joel Syndicate. I'm here to stop you. But first, I'm shooting square enough with you to give you a warning."

Firbank rose. He kicked his chair

back with a clatter. A suppressed anger shone in his eyes.

He said: "Thank you. I appreciate your warning. In return I shall give you one. Keep away from me. In fact, don't stay in Nebali tonight. If you do you shall die."

Hastings drew a deep inhalation from his cigarette.

"So," he said. "You hate me that much, eh?"

Firbank nodded. "Yes," he said quietly. "I hate you that much. But I'm being fair enough to warn you. It was probably written at the beginning of time that we should be enemies. That one of us must perish, one survive. All right, that's all I have to say. Good night."

Hastings rose punctiliously and bowed as the man who had just threatened his life walked from the room, leaving him alone with a gin bottle to which he took immediate recourse.

CHAPTER II

Barney

THE African night came down with tropical suddenness. Larry Hastings lay restlessly under the netting that enveloped his bed. Insects buzzed angrily on the outside, and despite his weariness, Hastings wooed sleep in vain.

At his side with his fingers resting lightly upon it, lay a .38 that in the past had extricated him from a number of situations. A frown marred his brow and his mind reviewed the threat that Firbank had delivered to him a few hours back.

Deliberately he analyzed his own emotions. He was certainly not afraid. No. He had gazed into the empty eyes of death too often to know fear. That was not it. Yet, he realized that Firbank was no ordinary man. He possessed courage

and brains, which is a bad combination to buck up against in any profession.

He knew further, that Firbank was no idle braggart. He was close mouthed and when he spoke he usually meant precisely what he said. Hastings knew that the death threat he had received from the enemy was not mere bluff, was not calculated to scare him off.

Firbank had said that if he stayed in Nebali that night he would die. Firbank undoubtedly had meant just that.

So Hastings lay in the sleepless dark and awaited the moment when Firbank would attempt to make good his threat.

Suddenly, every muscle in his body tensed. Every nerve throbbed alertly. The pale light of the moon, which showed on the far wall of the little room, was suddenly obscured by a dark shadow. Hastings did not move, but his eyes were rivetted to the spot on the wall where the shadow moved slowly across the thin path of light.

His hand opened, then closed on the butt of the .38. He turned his head slowly from the shadow and gazed steadily at the open window. Above the sill there appeared the top of an assegai. It gleamed sinisterly in the moonlight. It rose higher, and now Hastings saw the shaft, clutched in a black, steady hand.

WITH the lithe grace of a panther, a dark figure leaped across the sill. The waning light revealed a superb body, ebony and muscular, standing in the room. The assegai was grasped firmly in his hand, and its point was aimed directly at Hastings' heart.

Hastings sat up abruptly. His .38 jabbed its muzzle into the netting that surrounded him. He spoke

softly, yet there was an unmistakable note of command in his tone.

"Stand where you are. Don't move. I have you covered!"

Hastings never knew whether or not the native understood him. The intruder gave utterance to an alarmed phrase in some esoteric jargon. His hand shook slightly. Then, apparently deciding to stake all on a last desperate endeavor to accomplish his mission, he sprang like a tiger upon the white man.

His spring was so consummately graceful, so miraculously swift, that, despite the circumstances, Hastings was taken by surprise. His finger pulled the trigger of the revolver. The muzzle jerked to one side. The assegai whistled through the air. Hastings' head dropped six inches, and the gleaming spear hurtled through that half foot and buried itself in the wall. Then, before the white man could recover, the native was upon him.

A HAND that appeared to be wrought of steel gripped the wrist that held the revolver. Another hand sought his throat. Summoning every ounce of his strength, Hastings threw his head back and grasped the black man's arm. For a long moment, they struggled there, silently, desperately, almost motionless.

Hastings was breathing hard. Sweat poured down his brow. He realized that never before in his life had he matched his strength against anything as powerful as this man. Unless he could find some device in his mind to overcome his adversary, his life was at stake.

The black man jerked his wrist painfully in an effort to force him to release the revolver. Hastings gritted his teeth and held on.

Then, as the black relaxed for a moment, seeking another grip, he swung his left hand with all his

strength. The black saw it coming in time to jerk his head backwards. Instead of landing on the point of the jaw for which it had been headed, the blow flailed against the native's chest.

For an infinitesimal fraction of a second, the intruder was off balance. Hastings ripped the impeding mosquito netting aside with his free hand, and pushing the other back, rose to his feet.

The black rose too. His right hand shot out, and with a swift gesture, he plucked the still quivering assegai from its place on the wall.

He drew it back beyond his shoulder. His lips parted, revealing perfect white teeth which grinned like a death's head as he held his weapon in readiness for the kill. Desperately, Hastings essayed to jerk his right hand free. He twisted and squirmed and his heart gave a great bound as he felt the other's grip slacken. His revolver came free!

BUT then, in the most minute fraction of time, his heart sank again. Already the spear was coming forward. By the time he could swing the muzzle of his gun toward the other, before he could press the trigger, that murderous assegai would already be ripping the life from his heart.

He stared straight ahead. This then, was the end. This, then, was—

A staccato reverberation filled the room. An acrid biting stench bit Hastings' nostrils. He stood still, like a man in a trance and watched the superb, vital figure of the black drop to the floor—an inert, prostrate hulk.

Blood ran crazily over the floor. Hastings blinked his eyes. His mind remained in the daze of a man who has just witnessed a miracle. As indeed he had!

Something white appeared over the edge of the window sill, and an unmistakable middle west accent came to Hastings' bewildered ears.

"Sorry to interfere, old chap. But I sort of thought you might need some help."

HASTINGS shook his head and blinked. Then before he spoke he flicked his cigarette lighter to life and lit the oil lamp in the corner of the room. That done he turned to regard the second uninvited guest that he had had that night.

Standing opposite him, with the bloody black corpse between them, stood a tall red-haired man. His face was unshaven and his clothes had been worn without laundry aid for a long, long, time. Yet, despite these superficial defects, his face was honest, and in his eyes shone a faint indomitable light which challenged life to do its damndest.

Hastings crossed the room and extended his hand.

"Thanks," he said. "I suppose you saved my life. Though I'd like to know how you happened along at such an opportune time."

The stranger shook his hand.

"I saw that nigger skulking under your window. So I thought I'd take a looksee to make sure everything was all right. It wasn't."

Hastings grinned. He was beginning to like this red-haired vagabond for other than the most obvious reason.

"My name's Hastings," he said. "Just arrived today."

"They call me Barney," said the other. "I've been here too long. Missed too many boats. Well, I'll be seeing you."

He turned and made his way toward the window and would have leaped across the sill, had not Hastings laid a restraining hand upon his arm.

"Wait a minute," he said. "Take it easy. I can't let you go off like this."

Barney turned and surveyed him, a peculiar wistful smile on his lips. As he spoke there was a tinge of bitterness in his voice.

"Why not?" he asked. "No one ever wanted me to stick around before. That is, for a long, long time anyway. I'm just Barney, the drunken beach comber from Idaho. What can you want with me?"

IT was then that Hastings, well versed in the study of men, played the hunch which had suddenly, unreasonably come to him. He recognized that this man, apparently reduced by drink and dissipation, was horribly lonely, ostracized by the white men of the settlement. If that was indeed the case Barney might prove an ally.

"I want you," he said gravely. "I want you as an aid and a friend."

Barney stared at him, bewildered.

"Yes," went on Hastings. "A man tried to kill me tonight. A man named Firbank."

Barney started. "Firbank?"

"Yes. He told me a few hours ago that if I stayed here tonight, I should die. I might have, if it hadn't been for you."

Barney apparently did not hear these last words. He stood with a puzzled frown on his brow. Then he muttered more to himself than Hastings.

"Firbank. Well, I guess he doesn't let much stand in his way."

"Listen," said Hastings impulsively. "You're an American? Aren't you?"

Ruefully, Barney surveyed his tattered clothes.

"Well," he said with a trace of bitterness in his voice. "I was once."

"Then why not be one again?"

The beach comber shrugged. "How?

I'm too far gone. I'm broke, with no chance of ever getting hold of enough money to break clear of this damned continent. White men don't trust me. Hell, there's nothing left for me."

"There is," said Hastings. "There's plenty left. And I trust you."

"You? You hardly know me."

"Maybe," admitted Hastings. "But, nevertheless, I trust you, and I'll prove it to you by telling you something. You just saved my life, and perhaps I can return the favor. Now listen."

Barney stood staring at him in wonder as Hastings revealed his identity, as he told him of the gigantic diamond smuggling scheme that Firbank and his associates were participating.

"So you see," he concluded. "That's the situation. Firbank gets these stones to Porturo, from there he smuggles them into the States. God knows how he gets them out of Africa. Every ship has been watched for months. But he does it. And I'm here to find out why and then to stop him."

BARNEY smiled faintly. "You want to know how he gets these stones out of Africa? Then listen."

He stood still with a warning finger cocked in the air. For a moment, Hastings heard nothing save the weird nocturnal sounds of the jungle. Then there crashed against his eardrums a staccato familiar sound. His eyes met Barney's, and stark amazement was reflected in his gaze.

"Good God," he exclaimed. "A plane!"

Barney nodded. Yet Hastings' bewilderment was not abated.

"You mean he flies from here to Porturo? Impossible!"

Again Barney shrugged. "Per-

haps," he said. "But he does it. *That* much I know."

"Do you know anything more?"

Barney regarded him through shrewd eyes. "Perhaps."

"Then will you tell me?"

The beach comber shuffled uneasily on the bare wooden floor. For a moment his eyes gleamed, then a shadow passed over them. He spoke softly, quietly, not at all in the manner of a man who was fashioning his destiny.

"It means death in Nebali to talk about Firbank or his comrades. However, I have so little to gain in life that I am willing to accept that death. I'll tell you what little I know if you'll take me out of this hell with you when you go. I'll pledge myself to fight at your side, to give you the aid you've asked for if you'll pledge yourself to see that I get home. Perhaps, in this way, I can regain a self respect which left me years ago."

Hastings stretched forth his hand and grasped the other's arm.

"It's a bargain," he said heartily. "From now on we're allies, Barney. Between us we'll lick this gang, and their defeat shall mark your comeback."

So there, as the African sun hurled its first rays over the edge of the veldt, the pact was born. There in that little ugly room with a bloody black corpse at their feet, two men vowed alliance and friendship, and the eyes of Barney, the beach comber, glowed with a new hope and ambition.

CHAPTER III

The Stolen Plane

THE two men made their way across the scrub of the veldt more in the manner of animals than men. Carefully they con-

cealed themselves behind the low bushes, and from time to time cast anxious glances about them to make sure that they remained unobserved.

Once Hastings rose to his full height to grant a moment's respite to his aching muscles. He mopped his brow with a damp handkerchief.

"How much further?" he asked.

"About a half mile now," answered Barney. "Have you any idea what we're going to do when we get there?"

Hastings shrugged. "Take full advantage of our opportunities," he replied. "And if we get none, we'll simply observe what we can. I'm almost as anxious to learn as to act."

He bent over once more and the pair of them continued their arduous journey over the baking African plain.

AT last Hastings heard Barney announce their destination.

"Careful. Keep under cover. There it is. Look."

Hastings' eyes followed his guide's outstretched arm, then they widened with surprise.

For, below him, laid out on the flattest part of the veldt, was a perfectly outfitted flying field. Half a dozen huge hangars stood squat and ugly in the yellow sunlight. On the natural tarmac six gleaming planes, their props idling slowly met his astounded gaze. Behind this scene were a number of oil tanks. Khaki clad men bustled to and fro. Natives bore heavy loads from hangar to ship.

Hastings transferred his gaze to Barney. The latter smiled quietly at his companion's amazement.

"I told you," he said. "You wanted to know how they got the diamonds to Porturo. That's how. They fly it."

"But—but," gasped Hastings. "It's a three thousand mile hop to Por-

turo. They'd need the best pilots in the world to make that trip regularly."

"They've got the best pilots in the world," said Barney grimly. "Why Firbank—"

HASTINGS was struck by a sudden daring idea.

"Wait a minute," he said. "Do you know when they're taking off on the next hop?"

"This morning. I told you that. They should leave any minute now. Why?"

"Why?" repeated Hastings and his eyes shone with excitement. "Because with luck, we'll go with them."

It was Barney's turn to register surprise. Hastings explained swiftly before the other could formulate the myriad questions which rose to his lips.

"You see," he said, "we can kill two birds with one stone. If we can join them, we can find out exactly where they cache their loot in Porturo—something I don't know now. Further, it's the fastest method of getting out of Africa. If we trek to the coast and wait for a boat we'll lose a precious fortnight."

"But how? How can we—?"

Hastings silenced him with a gesture. The blood surged through his veins as he gazed out at the trim aircraft that glittered like immaculate birds in the noonday sun. Already their pilots were clambering into the offices.

An arm waved itself out of the cockpit of the first plane. Natives pulled away the chocks. With a sudden roar the motor leaped to life, and the ship taxied dizzily over the veldt. Hastings grasped Barney's arm excitedly.

"They're taking off in order," he whispered hoarsely. "Wait until they've all gone except the last ship.

Then we'll dash out, overpower her crew and take the ship ourselves. Even if there is a wireless here, the natives won't be able to use it to warn them."

"But they'll see us from the other ships. They'll—"

"No they won't," said Hastings. "Look!"

He pointed to the west, where already the first plane, which had hopped off, was disappearing into a low cloud which draped itself about the peak of a scrubby hill.

"See that. Once in that mist they won't see us at all. They'll be too busy looking out for the ships in front. Steady now."

Whatever Barney's opinion as to the reckless, foolhardiness of their venture may have been, he said nothing. Hastings waited in a tense silence, his eyes glued to the waiting ships. One by one he watched them slowly move forward, thrust their noses into the sky, and like eagles happy to be once more headed toward the blue infinity above, eagerly take off into space.

Five of them had gone. The fifth was already thrusting her quivering body into the misty low cloud to the west. The sixth ship still stood on the tarmac. Her prop revved swiftly as her pilot opened up the throttle.

FOR a single second Hastings turned his head and glanced at his newly-made ally. Their eyes met, and what Hastings saw in Barney's face gave him encouragement.

"Now," said Hastings. "Come on."

He whipped his .38 from his pocket and raced madly from his cover toward the waiting plane some hundred yards away. Running steadily at his side came Barney. In his hand he held the slim automatic which Hastings had presented to him that morning.

A native mechanic gave vent to a shout of alarm as the charge was observed. The ship was suddenly throttled down and two white men sprang from the office. A revolver gleamed in the hand of one of them and a whistling shot rang ominously over Hastings' head.

HIS own finger tensed on the trigger, and without slackening his pace, he fired. Barney's automatic cracked twice at his side. One of the white men fell to his knees. The other turned and shouted commands to the terrified natives. For a moment the latter stood hesitant, indecisive.

Hastings noted this fact, and swiftly sent half a dozen steel slugs howling over their heads. The natives hesitated no longer. With shouts of alarm they broke ranks and fled across the veldt.

By now the two allies were almost on the tarmac. Hastings heard the snarled curse of the remaining white man. With his .38 trained on the latter's heart, Hastings cried out:

"Throw up your hands. You haven't a chance."

But Firbank's henchman was not inclined to yield so easily. In a single, swift, flashing gesture he whipped a heavy .45 from its holster. A reverberating report rent the air, but at precisely the same moment, two other sharp cracks sounded also. Hastings' .38 threw its lethal message at the foe, and the automatic of Barney unleashed a slug which buried itself in the throat of the man who had fired at them.

Breathless, the pair of them reached the ship. Hastings leaped into the office.

"Pull those chocks away," he yelled to Barney. "We've got to hurry or we'll lose the others."

Barney, with the facility of a man who had performed the job a thousand times before, pulled the blocks from beneath the wheels. Hastings opened the throttle wide and revved the motor. The ship was already in motion as Barney climbed in behind him.

The Bellanca rocked crazily as she taxied over the floor of the veldt. Without even glancing at the gauge, Hastings could tell by the feel of her that she was loaded down with gasoline. He estimated that he would have to run the full length of the natural field before she would take off with so much tonnage crammed into the small capacity of the ship.

Her full load made her difficult to handle, and Hastings, who had not touched the stick of a ship in almost a year, was compelled to exercise every ounce of his skill and tax his memory no little as she took off. The Bellanca slowly gathered speed. Once she thrust her nose into the air, then like an eccentric bird who preferred the earth, she bumped down again.

An uneven jagged field of rock was about a hundred yards ahead of them. Deliberately, Hastings measured the distance with his eye, then gradually he brought the stick back. The Bellanca's nose lifted tentatively, and for a moment Hastings held his breath. If she failed to take off now, a crash into the rocks ahead was inevitable.

HE pulled the stick back further. Her prop went up abruptly, a whirling arc in the center of the sun. Hastings was aware of a smooth, easy motion, as the undercarriage left the earth. He breathed a sigh of relief and cast his eyes about the sky in search of the ships of Firbank.

For a moment the cloud enveloped

them, then they came out into a brilliant sunlit sky. Barney leaned over and put his mouth to Hastings' ear.

"There they are! Over there!"

Hastings' gaze followed the direction of the other's outstretched arm. There, far to the west, were the black silhouettes of three ships. Like graceful eagles they ripped through the atmosphere, pounding their way toward a secret destination.

CHAPTER IV

Flight Over Atlantic

HASTINGS gained a little distance on them, then decided that he could best conceal the fact of his identity by remaining where he was. He throttled down to a steady hundred miles an hour, and with his eyes riveted to the planes in front, settled down to a long, long grind.

The sun touched the end of the horizon. Overhead the sky was clear, purpled with the dusk. Below lay an infinite expanse of the ocean. Save for the five ships which hurtled madly through space there was no sign of any living thing.

Hastings, wearied by the flight which had lasted almost twelve hours now, sighed heavily and shifted to a more comfortable position. A glance at the altimeter showed him that they were on an even keel at fifteen thousand feet. He estimated that they had traveled over eleven hundred miles. That would mean probably twenty more hours before he trailed Firbank to his ultimate destination.

He still hung behind the other ships. Thus far they had paid no attention to him. Evidently they had no suspicion that the last plane

of their flight had been hijacked by the enemy at the take-off.

Barney had found food and a thermos of hot coffee in the rear cockpit. They had eaten hastily, and now for the first time Hastings realized that with no sleep the night before his thirty-hour vigil at the stick was going to prove a tougher job than he had thought at first.

He was heartily wishing that he could have an hour's nap, when Barney's voice shouted into his ear from behind.

"Want me to take the stick for a while?"

Hastings turned and regarded his companion with raised eyebrows. The fact that this beach comber, who chance had sent him, would be able to fly a plane was so remote a chance that he had not even thought of it.

"Sure," he yelled back. "Can you handle her?"

It seemed to him that something leaped to life in Barney's eyes for a moment, something vivid and fine, but in another second it had vanished, and Barney said: "Yeah. I've handled 'em before. You need a rest. I can take her."

CAUTIOUSLY they changed places in the Bellanca. For the first few minutes after Barney took the stick, Hastings watched him anxiously. He wanted to make certain that the beach comber was expert enough to handle the plane on this precarious journey. But what he saw in the next three minutes completely reassured him and set him to wondering.

No sooner had Barney taken the stick than the nose of the ship struck an air pocket. The prop dived suddenly. Barney jammed down on the rudder bar and jerked back the stick, but as he did so, a gust of wind hit her tail, knocking it sideways and up.

The prop sank down further, whirled madly for a moment, then the weight of the engine dropped the nose down further. Before Hastings could shout a word of advice, the ship was vertical, the tail revolving like a dervish. She roared her way down toward the water in a devastating spin.

FOR a fleeting moment, death grinned over their shoulders. Hastings half rose in his seat and was violently thrown back.

"Right rudder and hold the stick neutral," he shouted and his heart sank as he realized that it was impossible for Barney to hear him against the pounding of the motor, against the shrieking of the wind in their ears.

Then, with a sensation of relieved amazement, Hastings realized that it was unnecessary for Barney to hear. The beach comber was handling the plunging ship with all the nonchalance, all the skill of an expert.

He sat stern and implacable in the pilot's seat. His foot was jammed down with all his weight on it upon the right rudder bar. His hand, strong and immobile, held the stick firmly in neutral. Crazy the ship plunged down to the sea. Closer and closer came the white-topped waves which might even yet prove the last landing field of the Bellanca.

A thousand feet above the pounding ocean, she came out of it. Her nose came slowly up as she leveled off. Once again her prop blades slashed at the air on a dead level with the sinking sun. Hastings breathed a sigh of relief. The expression on Barney's face did not change. He looked like a man to whom a maneuver out of a spin was all part of the day's work.

Up ahead of them Hastings saw the other's circle about in the air,

apparently waiting to see that the Bellanca was all right. Hastings thrust his arms from the side of the cockpit and waved them an okay signal, then he leaned forward and shouted in Barney's ear.

"That was damned good flying. Where did you learn?"

Barney cut the motor for a moment.

His voice sounded strained and queer in the short silence.

"Where did anyone learn to fly like that?"

The motor roared to life again, leaving Hastings to ponder his comrade's remark. At last he realized that Barney could have meant nothing else than the Western Front. Hastings racked his memory, but could recall nothing that would give him a clue to Barney's identity.

The night came down, and the Bellanca continued her flight across the Atlantic on the trail of the diamond-carrying planes of Firbank, the master flyer.

AND when another dawn crowned the eastern sky, the sound of roaring engines still reverberated through the air. Barney and Hastings ate a skimpy breakfast and managed a conversation by the expedient of hitting the ceiling and cutting the motor.

"Gad," said Hastings over a ham sandwich. "This is some journey, Barney. If those birds up front there make this trip regularly, they are the best pilots in the world."

"They are," said Barney soberly. "Besides Firbank, there's Somers, Roche and Glendale. Perhaps you know the rep they had in the war."

"Do I?" Hastings stared at him in amazement. "Say, they were the nerviest bunch on the front. But how in hell did Firbank get those chaps in with him?"

Barney shrugged. "Money, I suppose. There's little a man won't do for that. Especially a brave man."

Hastings eyed him keenly. "Would you?" he asked.

Barney shrugged again, but did not answer.

Hastings finished the sandwich and cogitated over the information which he had just received. If these men were those Barney had mentioned this was going to be a tough job. Firbank certainly had surrounded himself with the best when he had procured them.

Hastings turned to Barney with a grin.

"Say," he said. "With those fellows you mentioned it seems almost like old times. It's a wonder Renault himself isn't up here."

"Maybe he is," said Barney.

Hastings stared at him in utter amazement. A question framed itself on his lips, but before he could speak Barney opened up the throttle and the loud roar of the motor rendered further conversation impossible. But the look of astonishment on Hastings' face remained there for a long time.

FOR Renault was almost a legend. He had been a member of the French Escadrille. He had more ships to his credit than any other two war pilots combined. Beyond all doubt he was the most gallant, the most skilful man that had ever brought down a Fokker. And now Barney had said—

There were but two possible interpretations of the beach comber's words, and Hastings found either of them equally unbelievable.

Below them the unchanging ocean passed behind. Above a blue sky unfolded itself with unvarying monotony. Ahead four other planes forged through the air. The engine sang a steady song of power. Now

Hastings had the stick. In the rear cockpit Barney's snore was lost in the booming of the pistons.

Suddenly Hastings' eyes narrowed beneath his goggles. His heart bounded. For straight ahead, just beyond the other ships of Firbank's fleet, something jagged and dark reared itself over the horizon.

CHAPTER V

Porturo

LAND! They were there at last. Hastings glanced at the gas gauge and nodded his head in silent corroboration of his own thoughts. He estimated that two hundred more miles of flying would bring them to the secret place where Firbank had his American base.

Grimly he ran his hand over the Lewis gun before him. It was quite probable that when he turned tail and started to fly back to the capital of Porturo, Firbank would become suspicious, would try to stop him.

He jerked back the trigger of the machine-gun. The magazine rotated with the click. Hastings appeared satisfied. He cut the motor for a moment, and leaning over, shook the slumbering figure of Barney. The latter looked up at him with blinking eyes.

"Listen," yelled Hastings. "I suppose you know how to use that little toy back there." He indicated a second Lewis mounted on a swivel in the rear cockpit.

Barney nodded. "Do you think I'll have to?"

"Probably. I am merely going to see where they land. Then I'm turning tail and heading like hell to La Paz. From there I'll phone Washington. Once I know where Firbank's base in Porturo is it'll simplify things. But when he sees that we don't land with the others

he'll suspect something's screwy. We'll probably have a battle on our hands."

"All right," said Barney quietly. "I'm with you."

HASTINGS nodded with satisfaction. Despite his recent acquaintance with his new ally he already had a great deal of confidence in the man that he had found on the ragged edge of Africa.

The sun, as far distant as it had always been, stared at them on a dead level. The sky was still infinite. But the ocean, which had seemed as boundless as the sky, suddenly became a material finite thing. Its boundary became evident. There, ten thousand feet below them, lay the shore. The waves, which had roamed half way round the world, threw themselves viciously upon the jagged rocks, broke in hissing spume, then retreated again.

The Bellanca, tired and weary, at last found herself flying over solid earth.

But Hastings, grim and tense at the stick, knew that ease and rest had not yet come to them. He realized full well that within the hour he would be fighting for his life in the air, pitted against four of the finest flyers that the Western Front had ever known. He, allied to a wreck of a beach comber, struggling for domination over Firbank, Somers, Roche, Glendale. Bitterly he wondered how such fine fighters could ever have dedicated their lives to the crooked enterprise which had been born in the fertile brain of Firbank.

He glanced below. Although his altimeter still registered eleven thousand, jagged mountain peaks thrust themselves up less than a thousand feet below him. It was rocky, hilly country that they were flying over, and as his eyes ran over the map

which was pinned to the instrument board, he calculated that they were by now crossing over the Porturo border.

Then he heard Barney's voice in his ear, saw Barney's arm outstretched in gesture.

"Look. They're going down. They're landing!"

Hastings' keen eyes stared ahead. For a moment he could see nothing in the late afternoon mist which draped itself around the plateau. Then gradually he made out the four black specks of the planes ahead.

Already two of them were dipping down to meet the mountain. And even as he looked the other pair dove suddenly. And now for the first time since he had started the perilous journey Hastings desired to catch up with the other.

He held the stick stiff and steady. A firm hand opened the throttle all the way. For the first time the Bellanca was asked to give all she had. With a roaring engine that threatened to tear the cowlings apart, with a whirling prop that formed an invisible arc in the face of the setting sun, she gave it.

THE indicator showed the engine speed mount from an even hundred to a hundred and fifty-two in less than a single minute. Like a frantic, mad thing the Bellanca hurled herself through space, carrying two grim-faced men in her cockpits.

In the rear, Barney, fully realizing what was in store for them, ran practised hands over the Lewis. He rotated the magazine, then pulling back the cocking handle, fired a single shot to insure the working of the gun.

Had Hastings heard he might well have been amazed at his ally's expertness, for to fire a single shot on a Lewis is not the work of a tyro.

But the powerful chant of the pistons drowned out all other sound.

Hastings thrust the stick forward. The nose dropped down, and the Bellanca plunged toward the earth. Of a sudden the mists of the upper air had vanished. A cool semitropical evening enveloped them.

Below, Hastings saw a landing field fashioned by nature out of solid rock. As they continued their plunge, he made out the figures of two ships already settled on the rocky floor. One ship was in the very act of landing, while the other had almost touched the ground.

AS they roared through space, almost at the end of their journey, Hastings could see the Lilliputian figures of men standing on the landing field, staring up at the Bellanca. One of them waved in a congratulatory, friendly gesture to the last ship of the flight as she came down as if to make a safe landing after the perilous passage which had concluded so successfully for them all.

Hastings leveled off at a scant two hundred feet. He wanted to get a good look at this place, so that he would recognize it again from the air. Keeping his left hand on the stick, he took a pencil from his pocket with the right and marked a jerky cross on his map at the spot where he calculated Firbank's landing place was located.

"Stick to that gun. I'm going to run like hell in a minute. Give it to them when they come after us."

Barney nodded to show that he understood. Hastings pounded rapidly over the heads of the men below, over the tops of the planes which had guided him on the long journey across the Atlantic.

He was low enough to recognize the men on the tarmac now. Firbank gazed up with a startled expression on his face. Roche opened his mouth,

but his shout of alarm never came to Hastings' ears. Then, as the Bellanca swept across the sky over the heads, making no attempt to land, all the figures below raced madly to the cockpits of the ships they had just climbed out of.

For an instant Hastings cut the motor.

"Okay," he yelled into the furious wind that slammed into his face. "Now, Barney. We're off."

From that moment on, for the next twenty minutes, Hastings was three thousand miles away spiritually. He was back zooming across flaming red skies. Back over a war-torn terrain fighting for his very life. His memory stirred to life and all the stunts, all the aerial acrobatics he had ever known came back to him.

Even as he turned the ship in the opposite direction to fly to La Paz, he wasted no time on a straight banking turn. Instinctively, without thought, he jammed down on the rudder bar, jerked the stick and the Bellanca hurled itself into a frantic Immelmann, and came out headed in the opposite direction with higher altitude and no loss of speed.

THEN, with a muttered prayer that the gas would hold out until he hit the field at Queno, he opened her up wide and scuttled for his life across the sky. He didn't look behind. He knew well enough what was going on back there, but he gave his whole attention to the ship. The Bellanca was undergoing a terrific strain after the solid thirty-hour journey she had made.

But without looking he knew that by now, those four planes which a moment before had rested so placidly on the ground, had taken to the air again, and, like avenging eagles, were pounding through the air hot on his trail.

He had noted that two of the other ships were Lockheeds, capable of knocking out at least ten miles an hour more than the Bellanca. Well, his only chance was to keep going and hope that the lowering night would help effect his escape.

He was suddenly aware of a strange, yet vaguely familiar vibration in the ship. He cocked his head and listened so intently that his ears began to ring. Then he recognized the alien sound.

A Lewis gun was rattling in the cockpit. For the first time since he had swept across the field Hastings turned his head. Barney was kneeling on the floor of the office. His cheek lay flat on the stock of the gun. His finger had tightened about the trigger, and a long string of tracers ate their way through the air to the center of four thundering planes which were fast gaining on the straining Bellanca.

CHAPTER VI

The Fight In the Air

HASTINGS shot a swift glance at his speedometer. Despite the fact that the throttle was still wide open, she was only making ninety air miles. He shrugged and a thrill ran through his body as he realized that flight was no longer the answer. He must stop and fight.

Something whizzed through the struts. His heart picked up a beat as the steel sang its old familiar song about his head, and in that moment, fourteen years dropped from Larry Hastings' life, and he was reincarnated for fifteen minutes, back on the Western Front of France.

He pulled back the stick and zoomed, seeking altitude that would keep the enemy off his tail. Up went the Bellanca. In the rear Bar-

ney's gun ceased its chatter for a moment. Hastings threw his head back and shot a swift glance at his pursuers. They were about two hundred yards behind and slightly lower.

HE yelled an unheard warning to Barney, thanked the gods that his safety belt was fastened, pushed the stick forward all the way and came down over the tops of the other ships in a devastating inside loop.

And as he came out of it his eyes were glued to the ring sights on the thick barrel of the Lewis. He pulled the trigger with his right hand. Through the whirring prop blades, the machine-gun spewed its message of death.

Taken by surprise the quartette of ships below broke ranks. One of them glided slowly toward the earth, apparently disabled. Hastings grinned. That was one less, anyway.

He came out of the loop and dived after the nearest ship, seeking the advantageous position over its tail. Over his head chattered a vicious barrage, as Barney swung his gun on its swivel and poured lead into the ship below.

As he came down, Hastings recognized the pilot of the Curtiss as Roche, and in his heart he hoped that the latter had lost the skill and cunning which had made him the terror of the Imperial German Air Force fourteen years ago. But his hope was doomed to disappointment.

Even as the Bellanca came into position over Roche's tail, prepared to deliver the *coup de grace*, Roche swung into one of those desperate, daring maneuvers, which had once won for him a Congressional Medal.

With flame and steel pouring down upon him from the Bellanca, he jerked back his stick. The Curtiss quivered under the strain, but responded. Like a lazy turtle, she

turned over. She started to zoom, then as Roche refused to level off, she hung almost vertically in a whip-stall. For a full three seconds she was motionless, pendant there in the air.

From above, Hastings, stick down, continued his charge, the pair of weapons in the Bellanca shrieking their threnody down upon the other pilot. But Roche hung on grimly, until the ring sight of his Vickers circled the onrushing ship.

For an infinitesimal fraction of a second the two planes faced each other dead on. Then and only then did Roche return the Bellanca's fire. For a devastating moment time stood still. The two ships hurtled lead and hate directly at each other. Hastings fought off the momentary fear which assailed his heart, and grimly held the stick down hard.

He saw the thin line of his own tracers surround Roche like a swarm of ghostly flies. The air about him was deluged with steel death, while from behind a stabbing staccato file of bullets left Barney's gun and blended with his own.

THEN, in another second, it was over. Roche began to slip down out of his stall. Hastings, unable to come out of his dive at that terrific speed, plunged past him like a meteor, missing a collision by less than six inches.

In the instant of passing, Hastings noted a dull red stain on Roche's tunic, yet the pilot of the Curtiss flashed his old devil-may-care smile at his enemy. Despite the exigent circumstances, Hastings felt a little tug at his heart. He had not seen that smile for fourteen years, and then it was the smile of a comrade, not of a foe.

But he had little time for sentiment. Already the other ships had recovered from their surprise, and,

as he leveled off and looked up, he saw Firbank and Somers, charging upon him like winged Nemesis from Heaven.

Swiftly he leveled off. Firbank swept across his tail, unleashing a hail of death as he did so. Behind him came Somers barrel-rolling all over the sky, his Vickers spitting venomous, murderous steel from its ominous muzzle.

Hastings zoomed. A strut cracked at his side and the wing teetered perilously. By now darkness was coming down, and Hastings decided to try to run for it again. He had no chance against a trio as expert as these aerial maniacs who opposed him. Firbank and Somers, carried down by their wild charge, would take a minute or so to return to the attack. In the meantime, perhaps the Bellanca could make good its escape in the night.

He opened her up wide again and headed her north. Then something roared over his head, as Roche zoomed back to the battle. Hastings turned and pointed upward to Barney. If the beach comber could take care of Roche, while Hastings made the getaway, they yet had a fighting chance.

IN the rear office, Barney drew a bead on the Curtiss and pressed the trigger. A dull click was the only response. Swiftly he rotated the magazine. It clicked round on its post, offering no resistance. It was empty. Barney cast a frantic look around the floor of the cockpit, but there was no other magazine there.

Roche buzzed around them like a wasp of hades unleashing a wicked burst each time his synchronized muzzle came into line with the panting Bellanca. Hastings, missing the staccato rattle of Barney's gun, turned his. Barney indicated by

pantomime that he had no more ammunition.

Hastings groaned, bent his head, and, giving her all the gun she had, ran a final desperate gauntlet of Roche's fire. He could not see the other two ships now. They were below in the darkness. If he could only shake Roche off his tail there was a good chance of escape. Then, as he realized the impotency of Barney's weapon, he also realized that the chance was a pretty slim one.

But he had reckoned without the resourcefulness of his comrade. In a sudden plunging lunge, the Curtiss swooped down on the Bellanca's tail. The ring sights encircled the breasts of both men. Roche, with a grin of triumph, thrust his finger beneath the trigger guard and prepared for the kill.

HASTINGS, oblivious to the death which would rip the vitality from his body in a split second, held the stick steady and sent the Bellanca rushing like a rock through the darkness. In another instant lead would deluge them both, steel would tear through their flesh like water through a sieve.

It was then, in that single fraction of a second, when life hung in the balance, that Barney had an inspiration.

While Roche's hand touched the trigger, Barney, with a swift, desperate gesture, whipped the magazine from his idle gun. He drew back his arm, and, with all his strength, hurled it through the air. Then he waited with bated breath to see if it would find its mark.

It did.

The black circular metal clanged squarely into the center of Roche's whirling propeller. The shrieking grate of metal upon metal sounded above the roar of the motors. Roche's

prop blades snapped as if they had been made of papier mache. The nose of the Curtiss dropped down. The Vickers fired a frantic burst earthward.

A heavy, inert mass, the Curtiss dropped, its engine roaring impotently, its pilot sitting grim-faced and straight behind the stick as he crashed downward to a certain death. Hastings glanced over his shoulder and saw death reaching out to take Roche.

Then, as the stricken Curtiss dropped from sight he caught his last glimpse of the reckless boy he had known in France. Roche's face was deathly pale, yet as he plunged to that awful mangled death, his hand was held rigid at his temple in salute to his conquerors. Silently, gravely, Hastings and Barney lifted their hands in an answering gesture.

For a steady hour Hastings careened his crate ever northward. He was flying by dead reckoning alone, but if his calculations were right he should pick up the air beacon of the small landing field at Queno at any moment now. Anxiously he scanned the star-studded dome of heaven before him; more anxiously surveyed the instrument board at his knees. The needle of the gasoline gauge on the dash was vibrating perilously on the zero mark. Fuel enough for another five minutes and then a forced landing in the—

A SHOUT from Barney in the rear cockpit snapped his eyes from the instrument board. Hastings scanned the far horizon, then his heart leaped. Two points to starboard a faint pencil of light flared dimly in the heavens, then was gone. It came again at regular five-second intervals.

Hastings grunted with satisfaction and ruddered sharply to the right. Three minutes later, after twice cir-

cling the isolated flying field, he brought the ship down to a perfect three-point landing.

Stiff-limbed, he crawled out of the cockpit, with Barney hard on his heels.

"Stick by the ship, son," he called out cheerily. "I'll send a couple of grease monkeys out to give the old crate the once over. Soon as we get serviced, we'll pull out of here for La Paz. No more than a two-hour run from here."

"After a non-stop hop across the big drink, that's nothing," grinned Barney.

HE fished a crumpled cigarette from his coat pocket and lit up as Hastings strode swiftly across the uneven tarmac for the field manager's office. Two minutes later a service truck rumbled out onto the field and pulled up beside the Bellanca.

With critical eyes, Barney oversaw the refueling; meticulously with the ground mechanics he went over every stay and strut of the ship. Save for an occasional bolt and turn-buckle that needed adjustment, she was in perfect flying condition.

The servicing completed to his satisfaction and the truck returned to its garage, Barney lit another cigarette and began to pace the side of the ship. He was constitutionally too placid to worry about the future and too preoccupied with the present to think of the dangers of the past twenty-four hours. What he wanted then more than anything else was a feather bed and a good night's sleep.

The cigarette burned down to a glowing stub in his fingers. He flicked it away from him in a ruby arc, then turned back to the cockpit. A light footstep sounded behind him. Barney turned, expecting to see Hastings, but instead, something

heavy, glinting and metallic collided violently with his skull.

Blind instinct alone impelled him forward to grapple with his unknown assailant. He fell into a clinch, blind-eyed, jelly-kneed—but he hung on desperately. There were two foes who assailed him—the ruthless attacker with the Stilson wrench and the nauseating dizziness that swept over him in sickening waves.

Barney instinctively lowered his chin and dug in with his fingers. Something hard clipped him alongside of the jaw; a sledge hammer descended upon his head. He felt himself sinking, sinking into black oblivion.

Then the smothering burden was off him. A fierce cry rang in his ears. Barney staggered wildly for a moment, brushed a hand across blood-dimmed eyes. Vaguely he saw Hastings charge into the fray, and with an exultant cry on his lips he plunged forward again.

BUT in the short-lived battle, Hastings needed no aid. The acid fire in his eyes gave added strength to the steel muscles of his arms. His iron fists were two irresistible battering rams. He stepped in close to Barney's attacker. His left shot out, scored heavily on the other's heart. Then, with perfect timing, he crossed his right to the jaw. The man plunged forward as if felled with an ax, the wrench flying wildly from his nerveless fingers.

Hastings stood over him for a moment, then turned to Barney, who was applying a handkerchief to the base of his skull.

"What's it all about?" he demanded.

Barney shrugged. "All I know is that he jumped me and went to work on me with a Stilson," he drawled. "Nice people in this berg."

"A Stilson?" echoed Hastings.

"Yeah—it's there on the ground."

Hastings thought rapidly for a moment. Why should a man, for no apparent reason, attack Barney? And with a Stilson? Then the solution came to him. Swiftly he knelt down on one knee and with deft fingers went through the pockets of the unconscious man.

He straightened up a moment later and there was a crumpled slip of paper in his fingers.

Barney struck a match and in the flickering light read the following cryptic message:

XN5724. Cripple at all costs.

Barney whistled in surprise.

"The number of the crate we're flying," he said slowly.

"Right," agreed Hastings. "This guy here was going to go to work on the old bus with a monkey-wrench."

He looked for a long appreciative moment at his ally. "You're a real guy, Barney. Thanks."

"Forget it. You did more damage to that mug with your fists than he did to me with the wrench."

HASTINGS grinned, then got down to the serious business in hand. "Crate serviced?" he snapped.

"Rarin' to go."

"Good! Climb aboard." He flung a glance at the watch strapped around his wrist. "I have an appointment with his Excellency, the President of Porturo as soon as we can get there."

"Who do you think sicked that guy on us?" asked Barney as they climbed into the Bellanca.

"Think!" scorned Hastings. "I know! Firbank. By wireless, of course. He's not going to be so easy to handle, Barney. Wise lad, Firbank. And Lord, how he hates my guts!"

CHAPTER VII

President Hernandez

THE Bellanca performed like a bird on the two-hour run down the coast to La Paz. It was just a little after nine when Hastings brought the crate to earth again at the capital's airport. He saw the stout ship safely under lock and key, then commandeering an ancient, rickety cab, he and Barney headed for the center of the city.

They checked in some twenty minutes later at the Hotel Madrid and while Barney applied iodine and bandages to his cracked skull, Hastings got busy on the long-distance telephone wires.

It took an impatient twenty minutes for him to get through his call to Washington and but three minutes to make his report. His chief at the other end had some important information to impart. Hastings listened intently, made vocal assent, but mentally elaborated a lot of reservations.

He knew from the bitter experience of the past few days that the proposition he was up against was not one that could be handled from Washington.

The situation was one that demanded action—the swift, compelling action of open conflict. Full well he realized that Firbank would not be influenced by any law on the statute books. The only code he knew was one of force.

Hastings received the last of his instructions and hung up. Swiftly he turned to Barney.

"Listen, son," he began. "Grab yourself some chow and make yourself comfortable. Better stick close to the hotel. For lots of reasons." He picked up his hat and started for the door. "And it wouldn't be a bad idea to keep a gun handy," he

flung back over his shoulder as the portal banged behind him.

With a swift stride and a wary eye, Hastings threaded his way through the crowded lobby of the Hotel Madrid. His ears were assailed by a mongrel jargon in fifty tongues. Strange and alien odors twitched at his nose.

He was surprised at the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the couples who milled about the lobby, but despite the spice and color of the scene he was interested in only one person. He half expected at any moment to be confronted by Firbank.

But that pleasure was denied him then. He was just a little disappointed when he climbed into a hack before the door of the hotel. Leaning back against the dusty cushions, a smoldering cigarette between his fingers, he surveyed the situation to date. So far in the hostilities, he had come off far better than he had any right to expect.

To a great extent, Barney was responsible for that. He was duly grateful and mentally he decided that he would see that the one time beach comber was taken care of.

HIS decrepit cab rattled to a stumbling halt some few minutes later. Hastings climbed out of the rickety interior, slipped a handful of loose change to his driver, and paused for a moment on the sidewalk to survey the resplendent exterior of the presidential mansion. It was a long, low, rambling building, faced with white sandstone. A quartette of marble columns flanked the ornate entrance doorway. From a score of windows the soft glow of shaded lamps fought with the pale moonlight outside. Hastings sighed romantically. There was something about these South American Republics with their comic revolutions, their strutting

generals—their music and women, that got him.

With a thin piping whistle on his lips, he walked rapidly up the long, flag stoned driveway to the broad doorway. Hardly had his fingers touched the large brass knocker when the door was opened to him.

A liveried footman bowed deferentially to him from the threshold.

"Hastings is the name," snapped the S. S. man.

"*Si, Señor.* This way. His Excellency awaits you."

Hastings followed him across a resplendent hall to a large mahogany door at the far end. The footman knocked discreetly.

"Come!" called a voice from the interior beyond.

THE servant opened the door, stepped aside and Hastings stepped into the room beyond. A small, dapper gentleman with luminous black eyes and arrogant mustache, rose from a deep leather chair before a large desk in the center of the room.

"Señor Hastings, I believe?"

"Yes, your Excellency."

The President approached him with hand extended. Hastings appraised him swiftly as he gripped the white fingers in his own, then concentrated his attention on the vision of loveliness that trailed across the room after His Excellency.

President Hernandez noted his rapt gaze and smiled.

"My daughter, Dolores, Señor. The greatest treasure of all Porturo."

"I'm inclined to agree with you," smiled back Hastings.

The girl blushed becomingly and smiled. She answered the compliment in perfect English.

"One does not expect such pretty speeches from you men of the United States," she mocked.

"I can only say in my behalf that I am seldom there," answered Hastings.

Señor Hernandez turned to his daughter and patted her affectionately on the hand.

"Business, my dear. Will you wait for us in the library?"

The girl nodded, and, flashing a provocative smile at Hastings, left the room. When the portal had closed behind her, Hernandez sank into his chair again and indicated the one opposite him for Hastings. He lit up a long, slim panatella and placing his finger tips together in a characteristic gesture, looked inquiringly at his visitor.

"I think you have news for me, Señor," he began.

Hastings hitched up his chair closer to the table and slowly lit a cigarette before answering.

"Yes, your Excellency, I have. Quite a bit of news. Important news."

HERNANDEZ nodded his head and indicated for the other to continue.

Hastings martialed his thoughts and began. "As you know, your Excellency, our Government has been bothered a great deal in the past six months over the activities of a very clever and astute smuggling ring. Diamonds. From the fields of Nabali to Porturo to America. Unfortunately, they are using your republic for a base."

Hernandez exhaled a thin cloud of blue smoke and pursed his thin lips together.

"I understand—perfectly, Señor. I have had quite a bit of correspondence on the matter with your State Department. There is a treaty now between our two great republics, up for ratification."

"Exactly," answered Hastings. "And I am here to tell you that it

is to the advantage of both our countries that that treaty is put into force immediately. I have uncovered the master hand behind this smuggling ring. Unfortunately he is an American and as clever as he is unscrupulous. The medium they use for their operations, is the air. This master smuggler, Firbank by name, is an ex-war ace. His force of attack and defense is concentrated in a fleet of a dozen high-powered airplanes."

"And your Government does not think our republic capable of handling the situation?" asked Hernandez ironically.

Hastings spread his hand deprecatorily.

"Don't misunderstand me, your Excellency. The Republic of Porturo is a sovereign state. My Government is simply willing to send a squadron of planes here to clean out this nest of smugglers. They will operate under your command."

Hernandez puffed silently on his cigar for a moment while he considered the proposition. Hastings watched his face anxiously. If the President of Porturo agreed to the treaty that would allow the United States the right of direct action on foreign soil, his mission was over.

IF, on the other hand, Hernandez, for some political reason or other, refused to co-operate, his struggle was just beginning. His anxiety was dispelled a moment later when Hernandez looked up with a smile.

"It's a bargain, Señor Hastings. I will be frank with you. The good will of the United States means a great deal to Porturo. I will see that the treaty is ratified immediately. Come to me—"

His Excellency never finished the sentence. A high, shrill feminine scream cut through his words like a knife. Hastings catapulted out of

his chair as if operated by a spring. Hernandez jumped to his feet and started for the door. There was no need to say who had emitted that scream. Hastings knew as well as Hernandez that it had come from Dolores.

The door flew open before their attack. With surprising agility for a man of his age, his Excellency barged across the hall to the door of the library opposite. As he ran he slipped a pearl-handled revolver from his hip. Hastings saw the glint of the weapon, but trusted to his two fists.

Shoulder to shoulder they careened into the library. Instantly Hastings made out the figure of Dolores, struggling frantically with an assailant who tried to drag her toward the open French windows.

The President's gun was useless, he knew. His Excellency wouldn't dare fire for fear of hitting his daughter. Hastings did not hesitate. He flung himself at the girl's assailant. His right fist described a short, jabbing arc. It landed flush on the point of the kidnaper's jaw. Soundlessly he fell.

THE President ran across the room and took his daughter in his arms. His eyes looked down at the body on the floor and he gave a gasp of amazement.

"Mendoza," he said. "One of my most trusted men. Good God, Dolores, what happened?"

The girl, pale, but self-possessed, answered in a low, husky voice:

"He threatened me. Told me that if I did not come with him quietly he would kill me. I refused, and he tried to drag me out with him."

Hastings nodded his head. "Firbank's arm reaches far, your Excellency," he remarked. "Beyond your doors into your holdehold. He is a dangerous man. Let us con-

clude these treaty arrangements as soon as possible."

Hernandez stood dramatically, his arms still about his daughter.

"No, Señor," he said. "If this Firbank is so dangerous, I refuse to negotiate further until my daughter is safe. You must fly her across the border at once. Then return and we shall conclude the treaty."

For a moment Hastings was on the verge of remonstrating. However, he realized the futility of trying to move the emotional Latin at this moment. It was best to capitulate, then return and finish up the business. After all, he could make the border in less than an hour. Once having made up his mind, it was characteristic of him that he wasted no time in futile words.

"Very well," he said. "Have a plane ready for me. I'll be ready to leave within the hour."

Hernandez nodded. "I shall have two planes," he said. "She must take baggage and servants as befits her station. I shall also have another pilot to take the second plane."

"Don't bother about that," said Hastings. "I'll bring another pilot myself. But hurry. I'll get my man while you're arranging things here."

He bowed and left the apartment.

CHAPTER VIII

Capture

IT WAS almost midnight when two ships which comprised exactly half of the Porturo air force, zoomed into the night air above the capital and headed toward the border. Behind Hastings in the cockpit sat the daughter of the President of the Republic. While some three hundred feet behind in another ship, piloted by Barney, was her retinue and baggage.

Hastings, fighting the sleep from his eyes, cursed the abortive attempt of the kidnapers. If it had not been for that he would be curled up in a warm bed now, awaiting the papers from Washington that would spell doom for Firbank's outfit. But now he had almost two more hours of flying before him before the negotiations could be continued.

They had covered some thirty miles uneventfully when Hastings became suddenly aware that Barney's ship had dropped behind. He slowed down slightly and achieved a sweeping bank, doubling back to see what was wrong.

In another moment he saw the second ship gleaming white beneath the light of the moon. Then, as he looked again, he saw something which sent his hand to the trigger of the Vickers gun before him.

Barney's ship lurched violently. Something black and bulky appeared at the side of the pilot's seat. Then, that something moved out into space. It dropped like a plummet and disappeared into the darkness below.

HASTINGS gave her the gun. The Curtiss raced through the air toward the other ship. He touched the switch of the searchlight at his side. The white beam of light thrust aside the darkness and shone on the prop of Barney's plane.

Then Hastings gave vent to a gasp of apprehensive amazement. For the pilot behind the stick of the second ship was not Barney. In an instant Hastings recognized the man as one of the servants who had formed part of Dolores' retinue. But now he looked less like a servant than anything else in the world.

He was staring, grim-faced at the American. His right hand was on the stock of a machine-gun which pointed directly at Dolores' heart. With his left he waved an unmistak-

able gesture ordering Hastings to land.

For a moment the American hesitated. A red rage enveloped him. The bundle that had been so unceremoniously tossed over the side of the crate a moment ago must have been Barney. Barney hurled to certain death by the murdering dog who now sat in his rightful seat.

Again the man in the pilot's place made a downward sweep of his arm. Hastings' finger tightened on the trigger of his gun. Then he cast a swift glance at the girl at his side. Evidently she realized the situation. She sat perfectly still, saying no word, but her lips were pressed tightly together and her face was pale.

Hastings realized that no matter what his personal feelings, no matter how strong his desire to avenge Barney, he had no right to risk the life of the President's daughter. He nodded his head toward the other ship, to signify that he would obey.

Then, the thought ran through his head—how to make a landing here? In the pitch black of this mountainous country to go down was impossible without a beacon. But before he could even guess at the answer, it came of itself.

His plane was suddenly flooded with light from below. A white flashing beam encircled him. The other ship zoomed slightly, then came down on his tail, the black barrel of the machine-gun keeping both Dolores and himself in the center of its ring sights.

HASTINGS shrugged his shoulders imperceptibly, then thrust the stick forward and headed down toward the earth. Despite the glare of the searchlights he made a perfect landing. A moment later the plane that Barney had flown rolled along on the earth beside him. Hastings

clambered down from the cockpit and whispered a reassuring word to Dolores as he helped her alight.

"Keep your nerve. We're not done yet."

She flashed him a brave smile, but had not time to reply. For three khaki-clad men were bearing down upon them, flashlights held in their hands. Hastings stiffened as he heard the familiar voice of his arch enemy.

"Well," said Firbank mockingly, "I've got you at last, eh, Hastings? Well, I've got a lot of scores to settle. You've killed Roche, you know. One of my best men. You'll pay with your life for that."

Hastings met his eyes without flinching. "Yes," he said evenly. "and your man has killed Barney, Firbank. You'll pay with your life for that."

Firbank grunted. He turned to Somers. "Bring them both inside," he said.

HASTINGS and the girl were escorted toward a large wooden shack that stood at the end of the field. Once there, Dolores was taken to another room, while Hastings was left confronting three of the men he had fought with in the greatest struggle humanity has ever known.

"You're a fool, Firbank," he said quietly. "You can't get away with this."

Firbank laughed harshly. "No? Why not?"

"You can't beat the world. You can't beat Uncle Sam."

Somers raised his eyebrows.

"Uncle Sam?"

"Yes," said Hastings. "I know you can outfly those tin pilots of Hernandez. But tonight we concluded a treaty which will permit the United States to send a squadron down here. It'll be signed in the morning."

The grin remained on Firbank's face. "Signed by whom?" he asked.

Hastings stared at him. There was something in the other's manner that indicated no matter what turn fortune might take, there was still an ace up Firbank's sleeve.

"Why," said Hastings, "signed by Hernandez, of course."

Firbank's smile grew broader.

"His signature's no good."

"Why? He's the ruler of Porturo, isn't he?"

Firbank laughed aloud. Somers and Glendale chuckled aloud.

"He won't be in the morning, that's a cinch."

Hastings lit a cigarette and assumed an ease that he was far from feeling.

"What the hell are you talking about, Firbank?" he asked. "Have you gone crazy?"

Firbank's ironic jocular air left him abruptly. He turned on Hastings and all his old-time hate for his adversary showed in his face as he spoke.

"No, Hastings," he said with a bitter venom in his voice. "I haven't gone crazy. My brain's functioning very clearly, clearly enough to frustrate your plans and then plot your death. I happen to know about the treaty which you're planning to arrange with Porturo and the United States. I happen to know that you're trying to get an American squadron down here to wipe us out—and I've taken the only possible means to stop it."

HASTINGS did not feel as calm as he looked, there was a veiled triumph in the other's manner.

"What have you done?" he asked with an attempt at casualness.

Firbank grinned broadly. "I've started a revolution," he said. "In the morning Hernandez will be deposed and the new ruler will decline

to sign the treaty which you have so conveniently arranged."

Hastings met his eye blandly, but within his heart leaped. So this was it. Firbank, realizing that all was lost once that treaty was signed, had simply resolved to change the identity of the signer.

"But," said Hastings, "of course, I don't know how strong your rebel force is, Firbank. But it seems to me that Hernandez's soldiers are a pretty good lot, and there's quite a few thousand of them, too."

"Maybe. But we've got four planes. We've got four good pilots. Hernandez has about the same number of planes. His pilots are so lousy that there's not a man of us who couldn't wipe 'em off the sky single-handed. And this is going to be dominated by air control. We'll bomb the cities until they capitulate. We'll probably avoid any meeting of the infantry. But we'll bring 'em to terms in the air."

"Very pretty," mused Hastings. "Now, after murdering Barney and God knows who else, you're planning to conduct your slaughter on a wholesale plan, eh?"

"That'll be enough out of you," snapped Firbank. "Tomorrow I'll open things up in Porturo. In the meantime, I'll let old Hernandez know that I've got his daughter, that should prevent his pulling any fast ones until we occupy the capital tomorrow."

IN reply to Firbank's gesture two Indians moved upon Hastings and escorted him from the room. He was marched down a long line to ramshackle huts, which, he reflected, probably housed Firbank's army. Then at last they stopped before one of them. The door was unlocked, and Hastings roughly thrown into the darkness of the shack.

Heavily he fell against the wall,

muttering a curse at his captors. Then, of a sudden, he heard something rustle in the room. Instinctively his hand sought his gun, but came in contact with an empty holster.

"Who's there?" he said tensely.

He heard the sound of a long-drawn sigh, then a feminine voice said: "Thank heaven, it is you, Señor Hastings. I was afraid. What are they going to do with us?"

Hastings struck a match. Its eerie light cast a small shadowy light, making the darkness outside its circle seem even more ebon than before. He groped in another pocket and produced a small piece of candle, lighted it, then faced the girl.

"I don't know exactly what they're going to do with us," he said. "But I'm pretty sure that it won't be pleasant. However, all we can do is to keep a stiff upper lip and take it as it comes."

She nodded, and despite the pounding of her pulse, courage shone from her eyes.

"They must have corrupted the whole palace," she said. "That traitor who threw your friend from the plane, he was my servant for years."

HASTINGS nodded quietly, but his heart burned with bitterness as he thought of the death of the red-headed beach comber who had stood by him so steadfastly.

On the far side of the cabin Dolores, exhausted by the events of the day, lay uncomfortably on the floor, fast asleep. The flickering candle light made grotesque shadows on her beautiful, delicate face. Hastings, watching her, sighed wearily. He, too, was very tired, very, very tired.

His eyes closed against his own volition, and in another moment he was snoring softly.

The door of the shack was sud-

denly flung open. The cool sunlight of early morning streamed through the doorway. Hastings sat up and opened his eyes as an armed Indian came over the threshold and deposited a pitcher of wine and two plates of food on the floor. Then, without a word, he turned and was gone.

Gently Hastings shook Dolores' shoulder. For a moment she stared at him, bewildered, while she oriented herself to these strange surroundings. Then, remembering, she smiled at him.

"Well, at least they're feeding us," he said with forced cheerfulness. "And we both had a good long sleep."

She smiled at him, grateful for his optimistic manner. They squatted on the floor and prepared to partake of their meagre repast.

CHAPTER IX

Barney Returns

HASTINGS' hand, which was conveying a piece of bread to his mouth, stopped suddenly in midair. Dolores paused in the act of lifting the pitcher.

The faint scratching on the panels of the wall came again. The pair of them inside exchanged significant glances. Then, slowly, silently, Hastings made his way toward the wall where the sound came from. He put his face up against the wood and whispered huskily: "Who's there?"

The words that came back to him from the other side of the wall sent his heart to bounding. The blood rushed through his veins and a new hope bloomed within him.

"It's Barney," said the muffled voice. "Hang on for a minute and I'll get you out of there."

Hastings left the wall and walked

back to Dolores with a radiant light in his eyes.

"It's Barney," he said. "I don't know how he's done it. I don't know how it is that he still lives. However, he's going to get us out of here. Stand by, and be ready to run."

SHE nodded and smiled up at him and in the next instant a number of things happened with such rapidity that Hastings never was able to put them in chronological order.

A shot sounded outside the cabin. The lock on the door was suddenly shattered, and the door itself flew open. Another shot roared, and an Indian with a rifle fell into the dust outside. Barney, red-headed and excited, thrust his flaming mane through the doorway.

"Quick!" he yelled. "Both of you. Come on!"

Without hesitation, Hastings seized Dolores by the arm, then together they raced from the cabin, following Barney's fast moving red thatch, which led them through the line of shacks toward the flying field.

As they ran, Hastings could hear the shouts of alarm which were ringing through the camp. Indians were thrusting their heads from doorways to learn the cause of the disturbance. It would be a matter of moments, reflected Hastings, before Firbank himself would appear to take the situation in hand.

Whither Barney was leading them he had not the slightest idea. However, he had implicit faith in his lieutenant by now. Still holding the girl's arm, he plunged over the rocky ground, keeping Barney's red head in front of him as a beacon light.

Then, as he glanced up, he saw what was Barney's destination some two hundred yards ahead. On the tarmac of Firbank's improvised fly-

ing field was a ship, gleaming there in the morning sun. Two mechanics stood at her side. Apparently, she had just been serviced.

Without slackening speed, Barney leaped to the tarmac. Hastings saw the leveled revolver in his hand. He saw his mouth open as he barked an order to the Indian. He saw the Indian reach from his hip. He saw the spurt of flame from Barney's weapon, and the Indian fell prostrate on the tarmac. His companion fled for dear life.

By now the entire camp was thoroughly aroused. In the distance Hastings heard the roaring voice of Firbank shouting orders to his men. Near the waiting ship, the earth kicked up as half a dozen bullets ate into it. Glancing over his shoulder, Hastings saw a score of armed men racing toward them.

Barney wasted no time. He sprang into the cockpit and revved the motor.

"Okay," he yelled over his shoulder. "Hop in!"

HASTINGS lifted the girl and swung her into the observer's office. Then he clambered in himself. Behind them the charge of Firbank's men was rapidly developing into a barrage. Bullets whizzed all about them. Dolores shrank up against Hastings' shoulder, as Barney gave her the gun and sent the ship taxiing over the rocky ground.

The ship, a powerful Lockheed, lifted itself from the mundane tarmac and assumed her rightful position in the heavens. Barney held the stick back all the way, zooming until they were out of range of the flying bullets from the guns of the group below.

Even in that perilous moment, the flyer in Hastings was moved to admiration with the skill and ease with which Barney was handling the

plane. Graceful she zoomed at what appeared to be a perilous angle, then at the precise moment that she threatened to hang in a whipstall, Barney leveled her out, and set her flying on an even keel just beyond the range of a rifle bullet.

Hastings leaned forward and shouted to him.

"Better go like hell. They'll be after us in a moment."

Barney grinned over his shoulder. "I picked this crate out deliberately. It's the fastest one they've got. And they know it, too. They won't chase us this time."

"Good. But hit it for La Paz as fast as you can. The only thing that can stop Firbank now is a phone message to Washington."

Barney nodded, opened the throttle wide and devoted himself to the business of flying.

Despite the fact that these two men had known each other for less than a week, already a strong bond of trust and comradeship had sprung up between them. Hastings was eager to know how it was that his partner had escaped the death to which he had been tossed the night before. Barney was equally anxious to hear what Firbank's latest scheme was. But as each realized that this was no time for questions, they were silent as Barney's deft hands guided the big ship at top speed toward the capital of Porturo, the capital that was destined to fall into the hands of the rebels that day, unless aid could be sent for.

BARNEY was right. Firbank did not pursue. Perhaps, Hastings reflected bitterly, the reason was that by now his plans were so perfect that he had nothing to lose. He was in that mood when the white stone buildings of La Paz thrust their heads over the eastern horizon.

Less than twenty minutes after

landing, the trio of them were entering the executive palace of Porturo. Hernandez stared at them blankly as he saw them return with his daughter.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed. "You've saved her. I had a warning early this morning from Señor Firbank that he was holding her hostage, that he would occupy the capital with rebel troops today."

"He may still do that, if we don't hurry," said Hastings. "Where's the telephone? We must get Washington. A squadron of flyers is the only thing that'll stop him now."

Hernandez indicated the instrument with a wave of his hand, and then stepped over to embrace his daughter. Hastings picked up the receiver, gave a hasty order to the operator and waited. A few seconds later a voice trickled dire news into his ears.

"Sorry, Señor. But I cannot get a connection. I believe that all the wires leading out of the city have been destroyed."

HASTINGS hung up. He relayed the news grimly to the others.

"Well," he said, "I guess that sews things up. We should have thought of that, Barney. No wonder Firbank wasn't particularly worried when we made our getaway. He's safe enough now."

Hernandez turned frantically upon Hastings.

"But, Señor, what does this mean? Must we, who have the superior troops, who have the better guns, must we surrender to your renegade countryman and that unruly mob of Indians?"

Hastings shrugged.

"They have four of the best fighting pilots that ever handled a stick," he said gravely. "Man for man, I doubt that there are four others in the world as good. We, two"—he

indicated Barney—"might be able to stop two of them. It's a toss-up. But the two men in your air force, Excellency—well, it would be murder to send them up. And as long as Firbank controls the air, as long as he bombs your civilian population and your army, I don't see how you can hold him off."

CHAPTER X

War Birds Battle

FOR a moment a tense silence gripped the room. Hernandez, with his arms about his daughter, stared blankly into space. Hastings, with an air of defeat still sat at the telephone table. Barney stared silently through the window, a queer wondering, abstract look in his eyes.

Suddenly through the open window there came the familiar roar of an airplane motor. Hernandez started.

"They're here," he cried. "Oh, God, what shall we do?"

The door of the room opened discreetly and a tall saturnine individual entered. In his hand he bore a piece of paper. He bowed before his President.

"The plane which just flew over the city dropped this," he announced, and withdrew.

Hernandez took the paper and looked at it. Then slowly in a flat monotone, he read it aloud.

Hernandez:

You will surrender the city within twenty minutes, or we shall bomb the palace. We shall reduce the city to ruin.

FIRBANK.

Then for the first time Barney spoke.

"You know," he said in a quiet

conversational tone, more in the manner of a man discussing the weather than making a decision of life and death. "You know Firbank tried to kill me when he had his man throw me from that plane. He slugged me from behind and simply tossed me out. Fortunately I came to in time to open up my chute and land safely. But still I didn't like it."

They all stared at him. Hernandez blinked and his expression clearly indicated that he thought this man who could talk so casually, so irrelevantly, at such a time, completely mad. But Hastings knew that something pertinent lay behind this apparently meaningless digression.

"What do you mean, Barney?" he asked.

BARNEY turned to him. "Well," he said quietly, "I'm sore at Firbank. Let's go up and get them."

Hastings met his eyes for a moment; they held.

"Barney," he said at last, "you're a rotten fraud. You're not going up because you're sore at Firbank. You're going because it's the only decent thing to do, but you're afraid of appearing sentimental."

Barney blushed, then grinned. "Call it what you like. Shall we go?"

Hastings rose and extended his hand.

"Yes," he said, "we'll go. It's ten to one against us, but at least we'll go out fighting Firbank all the way. Come on."

Hernandez, overcome with Latin emotion, threw his arms about Hastings.

"God bless you, Señor," he exclaimed fervently. "I'll have my own two pilots get ready at once."

As they reached the door, Dolores stood before them.

"I wish success," she said quietly, "to two very brave men."

She leaned forward and kissed them both. In silence, the two Americans made their way toward the flying field.

Four fighting ships stood on the tarmac of the field. Shiny new Lewis guns which had never been used save in practice thrust black barrels from the cockpits. Untried motors pounded beneath spotless cowlings.

Hastings glanced at his watch. He estimated that the twenty minutes of grace which Firbank had granted was almost up. He stared up at the sky. There already, tiny gray spots in the east were the four ships of the enemy's squadron, preparing to descend like hawks upon the town.

Barney came over from the side of his Curtiss. He thrust out his hand.

"Well, Hastings," he said, and there was a queer break in his voice. "We'll say good-by, just in case. You're the finest guy I ever knew."

Hastings took the other hand and gripped it firmly.

"Thanks, Barney," he said. "And that goes double. These are going to be tough babies to handle. If we come out of it alive, we're the greatest fliers in the world."

BARNEY nodded, then abruptly walked away and clambered into the office of the Curtis. A moment later Hastings followed suit. There was a roar and a splutter as the two brave lads of Porturo took off their Handleys. Hastings sat in his own cockpit and watched them.

It was sheer murder to send these untried pilots up there to grapple with Firbank, Somers and the others. They would be ripped to pieces in no time. Then, he reflected that his own chances were none too bright. True enough, he would be on even terms with any one of them, but four—

He shook his head and glanced over at Barney. It occurred to him to wonder how good Barney was. Of course, he had seemed fair enough thus far, but as a fighting pilot, how skilled, how experienced was he?

He had no time to conclude his conjectures. For Barney's Curtiss was already scuttling across the field, zooming to join the Handleys which were already winging out to meet the enemy. With a gesture of his arm Hastings waved to the mechanics.

The chocks were pulled away. He opened her up and like a frightened bird she scuttled down the field. Gently he nosed her up. Her prop swung at the impeding atmosphere as though resentful of the presence of the element which sustained it.

So there, through the blue sky which mantled the semi-tropical city of La Paz, four desperate hawks hurtled through the atmosphere to give battle to four avid eagles that slowly approached on the eastern horizon. Now the Curtisses and Handleys flew accurately in box-like formation.

HASTINGS glanced at his altimeter. The indicator there showed seven thousand feet. In the distance he could see that the enemy was hovering almost twice as high. He waved a hand from the cockpit and pulled back his stick. The other three followed suit.

He was almost at the ceiling when he flattened out again. The others came out of the zoom with him and continued their charge on a level keel. By now the ships of Firbank were less than half a mile away.

Suddenly, the approaching planes spread out in a semi-circle. Hastings glanced toward Barney to give him a signal, but the red-haired pilot was evidently used to this style of fighting. Already he was veering out

to meet the Lockheed which approached from the south end of the line.

Hastings half banked and flew to meet the ship on the other end, leaving the two centre planes to the Porturo officers.

Then, abruptly, the tranquility of the morning sky was shattered. Tracers ripped through the air. The roaring of eight engines was enhanced by the murderous chatter of the machine-guns. Hastings saw that his adversary was Somers.

He squinted through his ring sights, and at the moment when the Lockheed's cowling was centered, he pressed the trigger. But even as he did so, the cowling disappeared. He glanced up to see Somers swing in a Vrille turn, higher than he had been before. Then the Lockheed banked suddenly, and shot toward the Curtiss' tail.

It was Hastings' turn to maneuver out of danger. He jammed the stick forward all the way and dived. Like a leech Somers stuck to him and followed him down. Lead and steel burned through his struts and the wind sang a horrible screeching song in his ears.

Then he jerked the stick back once more. The nose of the Curtiss came up. She hung for a moment in a stall, and as she did so Hastings pressed the trigger of the shiny Lewis desperately.

STEEL flew past itself in the air as the two ships unleashed their lethal hail at each other. Then, as he levelled her a little she climbed, while Somers carried on by his charge plunged down past him.

Momentarily removed from danger, he flattened out completely, then zoomed once more. Above him the battle raged. Like maddened eagles spitting venom, the ships reeled all over the sky hurling lead and hate

from the sizzling barrels of their guns. One of the Porturo lads flashed past him, his face white and drawn, his eyes hard beneath their goggles. Something hurtled down less than ten feet from his cockpit. His eyes followed it hastily. The falling ship burst into a frightful yellow flame. In her cockpit, the second of Porturo's air force, half rose in his seat and essayed a salute. Then a threnody of lead from above ate into the doomed ship, as she plunged down to her last landing.

For a moment Hastings had felt himself out of it. As he returned from his dive, the enemy had seemed to pay but scant attention to him. But now, with an icy realization, he saw that a pair of Firbank's ships were almost upon him. Somers had come up again, and the plane which had crashed the Porturo Handley had come to his aid.

Desperately he jerked back the stick and attempted for altitude above the danger zone. But even as he did so, a brace of machine-guns rattled out a wicked obligato song to the roar of his straining motor.

IN one flashing second Hastings delved into the innermost recesses of his mind in search of a ground school trick which would get him out of his predicament. But his own intelligence told him that he was done. Frantically he brought the ship around in a wide bank, unleashing a burst from the Lewis as he did so. But, like leeches the foemen's ships struck to his tail.

A belt of tracers whistled through his struts. His shoulder ached beneath the dried blood of his tunic. He caught his breath sharply and fought with his nerves for control. He was done and he knew it; and he prayed that he might die like a soldier. He was done. And only a miracle could save him.

Then the miracle happened.

A Curtiss roared through the air from nowhere, its Lewis blazing a rattling threnody upon the Lockheeds. It was Barney. Even in that moment before Hastings saw the familiar figure of its pilot, he knew that such mad flying could only be accomplished by one man. Like a maniac Barney hurled lead all over the air. His hands were never more deft upon the controls as he maneuvered his pounding ship through every stunt in the books and half a dozen that weren't.

Hastings shot down five hundred feet then zoomed back into the fray, his Lewis spraying the sky as he came. Below him he saw two more ships dropping like plummets toward the earth. One of them was a Handley. Its wing had crumpled and a sinister blue flame crawled along its cowlings. Her pilot lay slumped over the stick, oblivious to the crash that was to come.

The second was one of Firbank's ships, already it was a crimson blazing thing, its own funeral pyre as it sank to earth. That left, he reflected, Firbank, Somers, Glendale against himself and Barney. He glanced below again and his heart gave a sudden leap.

FOR some reason Barney had shot earthward. The three remaining ships of the rebels instead of pursuing him, had turned and were now charging up to meet Hastings. Hastings silently committed his soul to the Gods as he turned to meet them.

Machine-gun fire from three angles ripped through the body of his plane. He saw a little group of holes appear in his wing. Frantically, using every piece of knowledge he possessed, calling upon all his courage, he fought for his life as he not fought for fourteen long

years. He fought the man that he hated and that hated him instead of an abstract common enemy.

But he was doomed by the odds and he knew it. Then, like a madman from hell, something tore up from the earth. Something relentless and terrible that would not be denied. Hastings, who had already decided that he was about to shake hands with the reaper at last, watched in amazement as Barney tore into the three ships that beset him.

Never, had such flying been witnessed. Never in history had it ever been done. From the side Barney's Curtiss plunged at Glendale's ship. As he came he delivered a sizzling broadside into the cowlings, then when he was so close that it seemed a collision was imminent, he dived underneath Glendale and came up again on the side of Somers. At precisely that moment, Glendale's ship plunged down. Had Barney's maneuver taken an instant longer the pair of them would have crashed.

Hastings fought on while Barney engaged Somers with a skill and dexterity that were unequalled. Hastings, barrel-rolling madly to come over on Firbank's tail, knew in that moment that there was but one man in all the world who could fly like Barney was flying then. Now, at last he understood that reference of a week ago. He knew what Barney had meant when he had said that perhaps Renault was here. He was indeed. For Renault was Barney. He had to be.

THEN his cogitations were banished by a sudden icy fear that settled over his heart. For now Firbank had faked a dive, and instead come up suddenly and settled over Hastings' tail. Now he was in a strategic position for the kill.

This, then, was the end. Hastings sat and waited for it. But he had

reckoned without Barney, the madman of the air. Twenty feet away, Barney was in the same position over Somers' ship as Firbanks was over Hastings.

Barney's Lewis roared forth a short staccato burst. Hastings saw Somers half rise in his seat, then fall forward over the stick. The plane, out of control, teetered crazily.

Barney banked around, and without waiting a moment rushed to the rescue.

But even as he came Hastings knew he was too late. Already the tracers from Firbank's gun were buzzing about him. In another few seconds he would find the range. From the angle at which Barney was approaching it was impossible for him to do any damage without wasting valuable time getting into position.

Hastings glanced back over his shoulder, scarcely daring to hope that two miracles would occur in the same hour. But they did. There was but one single thing that Barney could do to save his comrade. One daring, crazy act which would spell the red-headed pilot's own doom. And without hesitating a moment, he did it.

STRAIGHT ahead the Curtiss roared, never deviating one inch from its course. Head-on roaring into the Lockheed, Firbank looked up, an expression of alarm on his face. Wondering if this flying fool pounding toward him would do the only possible thing that could stop him. And with the bewildered look still remaining in his eyes Barney did it.

The roaring blade of the Curtiss' prop crashed into the side of the Lockheed. A tremendous explosion ripped the air drowning the sound of the motors. The two ships collided at tremendous speed. Steel

and wood crumpled under the terrific strain to which they were subjected.

Hastings zoomed out of danger and with mixed emotions surveyed the devastating scene beneath him. Vicious yellow flame gripped the superstructure of the machines. Amid the awful wreckage, through the clouds of oily smoke, Hastings dimly made out the figure of Barney standing gallantly in the cockpit, his right hand raised proudly at the salute. For a fleeting second it seemed that the two planes hung there, pendant and immobile.

Then there was a deafening roar. They dropped like plummets. Hastings saw a dark figure emerge from the wreckage. It dropped sickently. A parachute opened.

Hastings thrust the stick forward and followed the flaming coffins down to earth. A moment later he landed in a wheat field. He sprang from the cockpit and raced madly toward the huddled mass of twisted steel that lay some fifty yards away. As he raced a man landed near-by tugging at a parachute cord.

Hastings came up in time to see Barney, lying covered with blood underneath his parachute. From the twisted flaming crate that had been the flag plane of Firbank's army, a gory blackened figure crawled out of the fiery hell.

HASTINGS bent down and cut the cords of the chute that held Barney. The red-headed figure grinned weakly up at him.

Firbank, clear of the flame, now lifted himself on his elbow with a terrific effort.

"I'm dying Hastings," he said. "I guess you win. But you never would have without that lunatic to help you. My God, but that man can fly. Where the hell did he learn?

The only man I ever saw who could fly like that was—"

"Renault," said Hastings. "And today you saw him again, Firbank. This is Renault. A man who had sunk into the gutter, redeeming himself. Proving once again that he's the greatest flyer in the world."

"God," said Firbank again. "I should have known. Here, will you shake, Lieutenant?"

It cost the dying man a tremendous effort, but he rolled over on his side and extended his hand to Barney. Barney smiled weakly and took it.

"Sure, I'll shake," he said.

Firbank's hand suddenly went limp in Barney's grip, and the smuggler fell back upon the ground, a tranquil smile on his lips for the first time in years. An in that moment it seemed to Hastings that his hatred of Firbank was a weak and pitiful thing.

Death levels all things and if a man dies gallantly, it atones for everything.

HE picked up the wounded figure of Barney and carried him swiftly toward his plane.

"Well, old man," he said. "You sure came back this afternoon. As soon as we get back to La Paz, I'll phone the chief at Washington. And I'll see that you get all the credit for this. You did a fine thing today."

Barney smiled wistfully.

"You did a finer thing," he said quietly. "You gave me the chance to come back. Without that—"

Hastings tucked him in the rear cockpit, and a moment later the bullet-scarred ship nosed its way back to La Paz bearing two men who had wrested brilliant victories, one from his arch enemy, and the other from life, itself.

NORTH FROM ETAH



A Stirring Story of Elemental Struggle Between Man and Beast on the Great Greenland Ice Cap

By CAPTAIN ROSS McCUTCHEON

Author of "High Line," "Black Wings of the North," etc.

TOILING, plodding, through an almost impenetrable hell of rising frosty mist and fine whisking snow particles, Scotty MacAllan urged his footsore and muscle weary dog team onward across the great Greenland Ice Cap. Underneath that vast cap of solid ice, thousands of feet deep and millions of years old, lay the land—a whole continent of it.

But Scotty MacAllan saw no land, hadn't seen any for days and nights of steady sledging. The boundless

expanse of the Great Ice Cap which was his highway, was an empty, barren waste devoid of life or sound. And its outer limits were lost to vision in the fast falling white dusk of the Arctic day. Yet somewhere in that boundless land of perpetual mystery beyond, further toward the Polar Star, another man lay waiting, waiting in the shelter of Greenland's eternal snows for Scotty MacAllan to reach and rescue him.

Hundreds of wretched miles stretched out behind him to the base

of Etah from which he started; weary, hard-won miles that he had conquered despite the howling Arctic blizzard that had deterred all others from accompanying him.

"Fool!" said Captain Igar Thorkild, in charge of the expedition's base and wireless station at Etah, when Scotty flung his advice aside and plunged into the teeth of the most vicious norther that ever blew off the Ice Cap. "Fool! And a damn fool! You'll never make it. Fridjoff's got grub enough to last the winter. He can throw up a shelter by utilizing the wreckage of his plane. We can get him out safely in the spring."

"That's six months away, Scotty," the lone American of the expedition had answered. "And that's a long time in any land. It's a lot more than that up there—and alone to boot. Good God! he'll go nuts, crazy as a loon. I'm sledging out to get him. What's more, I'll be back—long before spring."

THAT was long nights and days behind now. Scotty MacAllan had been certain and confident then. He wasn't so confident now, neither was he so certain, but he plunged on. Fridjoff would have done as much for him, he knew. He owed it to his friend to go on as long and as far as his failing strength and supplies would carry him. Fridjoff expected that.

That's why he had tapped out the message he did with the last bit of juice left in his batteries, before they finally failed and went entirely dead, thus isolating him completely from the world of civilized beings with only a wrecked plane and memories of better things for company during the long winter night.

Right now Scotty stumbled along in back of his sledge, footsore, muscle weary and gaunt from arduous

travel, but he struggled blindly on into the lung searing veil of floating frost, so thick and heavy that even the dogs up ahead of the sledge were vague and indistinct. Any other Arctic traveler fired by a lesser urge than that which goaded Scotty on would have stopped, made camp and rested until the ice mist lifted.

But not Scotty MacAllan, and although it was near the hour of midnight, the rising mist was oddly luminous. The frozen particles glistened like diamond dust in the pale starlight seeping through from the Polar sky above. He pushed on with dogged perseverance.

But the fatigue was telling on him, physically and mentally. The continuous numbing cold, the eternal silence and grilling toil rasped on his iron nerves already wire-taut and tense, until the most prosaic matters and events took on a fantastic tinge. The weird and eerie rising ice mist was the last straw. For weary hour after hour he had been in a trance. The intense loneliness of the silent, sombre Arctic trail had affected his mind. He yanked nervously at the drawstrings of his parka, exposed his face that he might be able to breathe better.

IT seemed that he was suffocating inside the furred hood. And every so often he coiled his long whip-lash back over his head and snapped it forward diabolically, letting the stinging rawhide tip bite deep into the flanks of his big, straining lead dog, Magar. The dog took it, took it without objection for frigid mile after mile. But the last time he didn't.

Magar whirled with the sting of the lash and jumped at the dog behind him. Instantly the whole team was plunged into a furious tangle of leaping, slashing bodies, flashing heinous teeth.

Scotty snapped out of his trance, plunged into the middle of the howling, yipping pack, swinging the butt of his whip right and left. He grabbed Magar by the scuff of the neck, pounded him with the butt of the whip until he released his hold on his mate. Then he hurled him bodily far out to one side in a pile of drifted snow, and got busy untangling the others in the short intermission he knew would intervene before the lead dog could get straightened out and come back to the pack for another attack.

SCOTTY swung viciously, whipped his lash devilishly, kicked with his feet and swung with his mittened fists. The frantic effort caused the perspiration to break from his pores. His exposed face froze in the wind, but he didn't notice it. The dogs had to be beaten into submission, and beaten quickly, or he was lost—lost in the middle of the great Ice Cap with no hope of rescue or no means of retreat.

Of course, he should never have lashed Magar like he had. He knew it the instant the big lead dog whirled and attacked his mate behind. But the devilish ice mist was the cause. It peopled the icy desert with fantastic shapes and shadows. Or rather, it seemed that way. In reality these weird figures were only the creation of his fatigued brain. The ice mist gave them a stage on which to perform. Scotty realized this the instant the big lead dog whirled to attack his mate.

Magar shook himself, whirled on his feet again, stood back for an instant and glared at Scotty. His white fangs were exposed diabolically. His head was lowered and his open jaws slavered.

Then he seemed to get set, his lupine eyes flashed, and he leaped—leaped for Scotty's throat just the

instant he managed to get the other dogs apart and quiet. Scotty heard the menacing low-throated growl and whirled on his *mukluded* feet just in time to get his arm up in front of his face and ward off Magar's wide-open jaws.

But the jaws closed on his forearm. He felt the sharp teeth slither through the soft flesh, then they seemed to crunch as they encountered the bone. Panic almost took him and he let out an explosive gasp, but instantly he regained control of himself. Dog bites in frigid climes were not to be feared. Rabies germs couldn't live in temperatures of sixty below.

He backed away from the pack of dogs, backed slowly and carefully, allowed Magar to retain his grip without any effort to shake him off, though the wound was beginning to throb and he saw black specks floating before his eyes. If he had wrenched Magar loose from his arm in view of the now settled pack, the sight and scent of fresh blood flowing from the wound would set the dogs' nerves to tingling, and Magar's resultant yipping growls would incite them into mutiny again.

THUS handicapped with only one arm free, Scotty knew that it would be the end. A few short minutes and nothing would be left of him except his bones. He shuddered and his teeth chattered in the whining cold, but he backed slowly, further and further away from the other sledge dogs, while the vicious Magar growled low in his throat and shook his leonine head in eager effort to strip the flesh from the bone.

"I know it," he mumbled to himself as he backed off. "It's the damn Arctic fever. It got me and got me bad. I knew better than lash the dog like that. But it's the fever I say, the fever, yes—the fever."

He mumbled on like a lunatic, and the froth foamed from his mouth and froze on his bearded chin. But finally he got behind a jagged hummock of ice. The rest of the dog team were out of sight now. He shook the heavy fur mitten off his powerful right hand, then he clenched his iron fingers around Magar's gullet.

They slowly constricted and at the same time he blew in the savage lead dog's nostrils.

The dog's eyes filmed over slowly, then they grew bloodshot and the powerful jaws began to relax. Scotty shook and trembled as he stood there and applied the steady pressure through his fingers to the dog's neck. The perspiration poured out faster and his cheek which had frozen when he removed his *parka* went numb and senseless.

THEN a cold chill coursed up his spine and he felt moisture inside his *kamicks*. Sudden realization dawned on him. That moisture, that sudden chill, would spell his doom more certainly than the savage dogs—unless he did something about it right away.

He gave a sudden wrench. Magar's jaws relaxed and the fangs broke from the flesh. He hurled the brute from him and immediately began to lash at him with the whip, not hitting him, but snapping the tip right in front of his nose when he stood erect again and lowered his muzzle for another charge.

The lead dog growled low in his furry throat and pawed the snow nervously with his heavy pads. Once he appeared to prepare to leap. But Scotty slung the lash viciously. It caught the dog right between the eyes and he halted in his charge.

Magar was whipped. He knew it. The man standing over him was his master. The very expression in his

eyes seemed to speak those words. Or was he only simulating?

"Up! *Huk-huk!*" Scotty clicked, and pointed with the butt of his whip toward the other dogs still in the traces.

Magar cowed, slung over with his ears flattened down and green eyes moving furtively, until he joined the others. Scotty then snapped him in harness. But already Scotty's movements were becoming leaden, heavy. He moved like an automaton, stiffly. The *kamicks* wet with sweat were beginning to freeze solid on his body.

A few more minutes' exposure in the whisking wind that was sweeping across the cap where the temperature was sixty below would freeze him solid. The necessity for speed goaded him on. He moved frantically, tore the lashings from the sleigh and got at the silk tent he carried. In a few seconds he had it erected.

Then from a furry bundle tied with *babiche* thongs he hurriedly unrolled a spare suit of heavy woolens and snatched another suit of native *kamicks* from the sleigh.

THEN he dashed inside the tent shelter and stripped the wet with sweat clothes from his body. The tent broke the force of the wind but the air was intensely cold, and the sweat froze in little globules as he rubbed it frantically in eager effort to dry his body before piling into the dry clothes.

It may have taken him all of fifteen minutes to make the change, but to Scotty it seemed like hours had past when he finally emerged from the tent in the dry outfit. The old *kamicks* and woolens he had removed were frozen now in a solid wad, and he bundled them hastily onto the sleigh. His cheek where it was frozen on one side felt like a board, but he didn't take time to rub it and

thaw it out. He knew that it would do so later when he pulled the fresh *parka* down tight and cinched the drawstrings.

Magar lowered his head when Scotty came out, and his small green eyes fastened on him and flashed hate light, while a low growl issued from his vibrating throat. Scotty reached for his whip on the sleigh and was just in the act of coiling it back over his head when his eyes took in an unexpected sight. In his hurry to get at the bundle of fresh clothes a sack of *pemmican* had been dislodged from its lashings. The hungry dogs had leaped in at it, and scattered the precious *pemmican* all over the snow. They were gorging themselves on it now.

SCOTTY felt a sudden sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach and his knees trembled and shook together like castanets. That sack of *pemmican* was his entire supply and it had to suffice for the whole trip, and the return. Carefully, zealously, he had guarded it from the start, and only doled it out a piece at a time when the dogs had stopped for their rest periods. Ravenously, like starving wolves, the dogs were tying into it now. Confident hope faded in Scotty's heaving chest.

And guarding the rest of his mates was the lead dog, Magar. His muzzle swept low in a short arc across the snow and his vengeful green eyes were fastened intently on the tall, gaunt figure of Scotty, watching his every movement.

Scotty realized at that instant he had a battle to fight. Not only did he have to beat the dogs away from the *pemmican*, but he knew now that he would have to watch Magar with an eagle eye. The dog held a grudge against him, was only biding opportunity to wreak his vengeance when opportunity afforded.

Scotty shook his head, clenched his bull-dog jaw and whirled the long whip back over his head, snapped it out. The cutting lash nipped Magar right on the point of his sensitive nostrils. The dog shook his head violently, bared white fangs on one side and leaped to the attack. But Scotty met him half way. With a powerful back-handed sweep of his injured left arm he knocked the hundred-pound dog end over end, snarling.

Then wielding the whip with both hands, he shot the long lash writhing and cracking into the *mélée* of Magar's mates ranged in a ring around the sack of *pemmican*. The dogs gave ground, either because they were already cowed, or very probably because they had had their fill of *pemmican* and were no longer savagely hungry.

But Magar wasn't cowed. He darted back viciously, growling and snapping his powerful jaws diabolically. Scotty let him come a few feet toward him, then let him have it, full in the eyes. Magar turned and slunk back, but defiantly.

SCOTTY noticed the stubborn set of slavering jaws, the staring green eyes and the twitching muscles beneath the neck. Yet desperate as his situation was he felt a surge of pity for the big, fine-bodied leader. Only too well he knew that the dog's actions were his own fault. It was that continual flecking on the flanks for no reason that had turned the leader against him. And Scotty knew better than to do it.

In his sane mind he would never have done so. But the extreme fatigue, mental and physical, had brought on an attack of the dreaded Arctic fever. One wasn't responsible for his actions when held gripped in the throes of that dread fever—but responsible or not, one had to

pay the consequences. Scotty knew now that the price of his folly was eternal vigilance.

While the dogs ringed him inside a green-eyed circle, Scotty stooped low over the snow and picked up the scattered bits of *pemmican*, stowed it in another sack and lashed it securely to the sledge.

By all rights he should have stopped and made camp right where he was. But the ice mist rapidly lifting now and the previous commotion and excitement had dispelled all feeling of fatigue from his body and mind, so he decided to push on.

HIS injured arm, where Magar's sharp fangs had pierced it, he had given no attention until now. It was warm and hurt when he touched it and there was a slight swelling. But Scotty hastily daubed it with iodine from his emergency kit and took down the silk tent and lashed it on the sledge.

He was ready to move on again. As far as assuaging his own hunger was concerned he decided not to. Like it had dispelled his fatigue, the excitement likewise had taken away his hunger. He felt fresh and ready for another long trek—which he hoped would be the last before he came to the position on the Ice Cap where Fridjoff had reported he was down.

Scotty pulled the pocket compass from inside his *kamick*, held it in the flat on his palm until the needle steadied, then figured his proper direction; no mean task, for the declination of the needle from true north in that remote area of the great Ice Cap was over 90 degrees.

Finally, he started out again. Magar, in the lead, leaped ahead with the flick of the whip, and Scotty was hard put to catch up with the sled before it left him. But he made it by great effort and hopped on the

runners for a moment of rest while the slaving dogs strained huskily at the traces.

Although the ice mist had lifted, it was very dark. The distant stars and flaring streamers of *aurora borealis* afforded some light. But the still whining wind whipped an icy spindrift into his face as he raced along behind the fast traveling sleigh.

Several hours passed while the dogs and Scotty fought on and finally the sighing wind died down. The frost veil had completely evaporated, and in the great black dome overhead the seven brilliants of Ursa Miner hung glittering like magic lanterns in their slow swing around Polaris.

For nights and days now Scotty had been unable to take any observations and check up on his compass course. The heavy frost veil and cloud packed vault of Arctic sky had prevented that. Now that he had that opportunity he halted his dogs, fumbled in the supplies for his instruments.

WHEN he got them he strode off to one side of the dog team to make his observations. While adjusting the screws of the sextant, his eyes were temporarily distracted from Magar. The sulking, vengeful lead dog took notice of that, and immediately began chewing his traces in two, that he might leave his mates and renew his open feud with Scotty—alone.

Unruffled, unperturbed, Scotty put the sextant to his eyes and took his series of sights, noting the time for each as indicated by his watch. This he jotted down on the notebook he kept attached to the sextant with a bit of string. With his sighting finished, he put the sextant down, and commenced working out the computation.

When he finished his eyes reflected flashing light and his cheeks took on a ruddy glow. He seemed suddenly very alert and active.

"Gosh!" he piped. "I can't believe it."

He went over the computations again, nervous with excitement, while a hectic flush spread over his countenance.

Magar, meanwhile, had chewed the traces almost in two. And while he crunched the straps in heavy jaws his small green eyes held on the tall, gaunt figure of Scotty marking figures with his pencil.

"It's right," Scotty finally beamed. "I've made much better time than I thought. I must've been in a daze for days. But here we are. Fridjoff's bound to be somewhere within five miles of this spot—"

WHAT happened next seemed to happen all at once. There was no beginning, there was no end; everything happened, and simultaneously.

A ripping roar split the bleak stillness of the Arctic night. A series of sharp explosions it seemed to be, that faded and flared up in volume with the periods of the *aurora*. The surface of the great Ice Cap quivered and shook like jelly on a plate.

Magar leaped in fright and snapped the almost rended traces in two. His black jaws were snapping. His mates', too.

Scotty put hands to his ears and whirled. The warm blood of exultation had drained from his snow-burned face and his clear blue eyes went wide apart. Then Magar leaped in his direction. Scotty just had time to regain his whip before the whole wild pack led by the savage lead dog was upon him.

The dinning roar ceased for an instant and the ice stopped quivering, but a dying wind whined dismally

over the hummocks and fine snow sifted into his distended eyes. The low muffled growl of Magar at his feet whipped him into action. His whip butt went right and left and up and down. The repetitious roar recommenced and the ice surface quivered again.

Scotty MacAllan shuddered, and not from the cold. In a swift, grim vision he saw himself being torn to pieces by the savage dogs while the very Ice Cap opened up to receive in perpetuity what was left of his mortal remains—nothing but a few well-cleaned bones.

Yipping, growling and snapping their tense jaws, the wild-eyed dogs leaped in at him. He ran, he stumbled, and all the time his whip made sweeping arcs, but it didn't stay the attack of the mad dogs.

With wild, unseeing eyes he tried to glimpse a means of escape, but none offered.

"God, oh, God!" he groaned in feeble protest and slumped down over the sledge. "I was a damn fool! Thorkild was right."

The dogs made for him, but another series of violent staccato-like explosions rocked the Ice Cap. The dogs whirled with puzzling looks in their green eyes, then they began to run, run as fast as they could with the sleigh dangling and jangling along behind them, each dog in harness trying his eager best to catch up with Magar, who was far in front and running like a hare, free from harness as he was.

SCOTTY McALLAN'S first sensation was that of flying, of swooping through a boundless upper space borne of wings of wind. There was the buoyant lift of speed flight, the natural swing and sway of a fast moving sleigh as it careened unchecked while an icy wind blew upon his cheeks.

Then he became suddenly aware of strangely familiar sounds—the rhythmic hissing and panting of numerous well filled lungs, the crunch and slither of runners upon crusted snow.

He realized finally, half delirious though he was, that he was lying at full length on a sleigh and that his hands clutched tenaciously on the stays. With senses swimming Scotty noted the pale green stars glittering in the clear blue sky and he tried to orient himself—but it was of no use.

Vaguely, indistinctly, yet pungently none the less, he became impressed by the unusual speed. Surely dogs—his dogs—could not travel that fast. No, it must be something else. After a sledge trek filled to overflowing with heart-breaking incidents and at the very threshold of success he had been defeated.

“Oh, well,” he mumbled resignedly, still in the throes of his delirium, “I did my best. Fridjoff will understand—”

Then his head slumped down and all went blank.

When Scotty came to he wasn't on a sleigh. He was laid out prone on a soft bed of furs instead. A square cut familiar face was bending low over his and a loud popping noise blasted in his ears?

“What? What?” Scotty gasped.

Fridjoff smiled broadly and his laughing eyes beamed.

“Boy, that pilotless sledge of yours sure surprised me when those wild-

eyed dogs came running by. I looked but saw no one following, but I rushed out and grabbed the dogs.

“Then I saw you hanging on to the stays of the sledge, half on, half off. You were out cold and I was sure worried, but when I looked you over I saw that it was nothing but pure fatigue, so I let you sleep it off. Meanwhile I got busy with the dog team and pulled my plane loose from the ice.”

Scotty rose up on his elbows, looked at Fridjoff funny like.

“Yeah, sure,” Fridjoff explained. “I know it sounds funny, but that's the truth. I got my engines running again all right, but I didn't have power enough to break the ski runners loose from the ice crust.

“With the dogs pulling and the engines open full blast I managed to do it. But we're all ready to go now. Dogs and supplies all stowed for the return flight. I was just waiting for you to wake up.”

Scotty pulled up on his feet, smiled wanly.

“And I thought that crashing noise I heard was an earthquake. The dogs did, too. But it saved me from being chewed to pieces. They got scared and ran.”

Fridjoff looked at Scotty and laughed.

“Fool's luck,” he said.

“But not a damn fool's,” Scotty replied.

Fridjoff shook his head.

“No, not that bad. Come on, let's get going.”

Watch for More Stories by Captain Ross McCutcheon

KILLER'S CAMP



*An Exciting Story of a Raid on a Mississippi River
Steamboat and a Daring Struggle
With Ruthless Bandits*

By DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

Author of "Glenallan of the Clans," etc.

MURDERING a horseman now and then, tapping an itinerate preacher on the head, even swarming aboard a moored flatboat and violently removing all valuables therefrom—with such jobs Rathead Pete was tolerably familiar. But tackling a craft like the *Croesus* was quite a different matter.

Still, he was boundlessly confident. He knew that the *Croesus* would make a stop at this remote landing to drop a sack of mail and some

packages for Watkins' plantation, several miles back.

He knew, too, that the last thing her crew would expect was an attack from the shore.

The river pirates were bold enough when it came to fighting insignificant groups of travelers they greatly outnumbered; but that they would have the temerity to raid one of the big steamboats was something nobody would anticipate. Rathead, who had a sound sense of military

strategy, knew well the value of surprise.

Somebody whispered: "Here she comes."

Heads jerked up, eyes grew narrow, there was a general tightening of muscles. And around the south bend, her two black stacks spouting flames and smoke like the nostrils of some amphibious dragon, her paddlewheels clacking importantly on either side, her deck lights all aglow, her fiddlers playing, came the grand *Croesus*, Pierce and Shannon's crack New Orleans-to-Memphis flyer, the pride of the lower river.

Rathead Pete grinned softly, glanced around with a nod of approval. He had fourteen men, counting himself—just the right number, he estimated, for a job like this. They knew what they were to do; the business had been carefully planned.

The two men who were to have received the mail and packages at the landing were corpses now somewhere at the bottom of the near-by shallows, and two of Rathead's own men, wearing their caps, were waiting at the landing to dispel any possible suspicions.

All the other cutthroats were concealed in the shrubbery which overhung the muddy shore at this point; but they were conveniently close to the landing place.

THE *Croesus* was to stop for barely a moment, but that moment would suffice. Rathead's men would make her fast before the steamboat crew realized what had happened, and they would keep her fast while the raid was in progress.

Once they were off and away, nobody would dare to follow them into the wilderness of Jefferson County. At least, not that night. And the next day would be too late.

The steamboat's engines were

stopped, and the big white vessel, abruptly silent and ghostlike, drifted toward the landing. Sparks came less exuberantly from her stacks, and the smoke swirled behind in listless fashion. The larboard and starboard lights glittered red and green, jewel-like; and from the saloon windows the swinging oil lamps, bedecked with glass pendants galore, threw long slender javelins of gold dust upon the black satin surface of the water.

"Remember now: not a move till Hang gets that line fast!" And Rathead Pete cocked his pistols.

THE crimson glare of her furnaces, open to the boiler deck, came into view as the steamboat swung about for the landing. The outlaws could see, on the upper decks, the figures of dancers and strollers grotesquely silhouetted, sometimes blurred, sometimes startlingly clear. A full passenger list this trip. Rich pickings.

There was a ringing of bells, a rattle of hawser chains. The engines went into reverse; and the water, which had been whispering confidentially, now began to cough and splutter; the water became very indignant.

A stoker came out on the boiler deck from the furnace room, spat lengthily over the rail, and stared, expressionless, at the dark, fast-approaching shore. The red fire from behind him glowed on his naked shoulders, glistening with sweat. Some men near the planks were hauling a mail sack across the deck. Two other men were holding ropes.

The *Croesus* touched—very gently, sweetly, almost as though she had a tender feeling for this remote dock. The mail sack was dumped ashore. There was a dry grinding sound.

"Hi! don't make that rope fast, you thick-skulled—"

Then Rathead Pete gave the signal.

Aft, on the hurricane deck, a girl and a man were talking quietly. She was a very lovely girl, barely eighteen, slim, all in white. Her little chin was high, proud, and she was looking away from the man just now. She was smiling a trifle, for it was very pleasing to have so handsome a gentleman make love to you on such a night. For Haroldson Saintsbury was, most decidedly, a gentleman. She wouldn't have accepted his proposal if he had been anything else.

"Sally, why do you talk like that? You know there's nothing in the world I wouldn't do for you. Nothing at all!"

SHE liked to listen to such protestations. She had high ideals of chivalry, Southern chivalry; and it made her feel like a heroine in a novel when Haroldson acted like an ancient knight in armor.

She laughed lightly, and, she hoped, heartlessly.

"You say that, yes. Because it's a nice thing to say on a night like this. But if it came to a real test, Haroldson—"

"Sally, I swear to you I—"

Suddenly the air was rent with a series of hideous shrieks, and from nowhere, apparently, sprang a multitude of fast-moving men who swarmed over the *Croesus* like so many rats.

The whole steamboat seemed to shiver from the shock. There were yells, curses, grunts, squeals, and through it all a loud and angry stamping and shuffling of feet. A window was smashed, another window. Somewhere, inside, three shots were fired.

Sally D'Arensbourg clung to her fiancé. "What—what is it, Haroldson?"

"I don't know. Better let me take you to your stateroom."

"No, no! I'm afraid to move away from here. There's something terrible going on!"

"Come—" He put his arm around her gently.

The back door of the smoking room burst open and the bartender staggered out. He was holding both hands over his eyes, and blood was falling in profusion from his head to his white apron. Over and over again he moaned: "Oh, my God! Oh, my God!" He took five or six steps, and then pitched forward crazily on his face and was still.

Behind him, bounding like jungle beasts in close pursuit of prey, came two roughly dressed men. One carried a pistol, the other a short bludgeon. They kicked the fallen bartender, and the man with the bludgeon leaned over and hit him a terrific, a sickening blow on the head.

Sally D'Arensbourg had been tense in Haroldson Saintsbury's arms, but at the sight and sound of this blow she went suddenly limp. He feared that she had fainted. He shook her.

"Are you all right, dear?"

"I—I'm all right."

THE two river pirates seemed about to return to the smoking saloon, when one of them saw the couple in the stern. He whispered something to his companion and they started for the stern. With the confusion and turmoil of the steamboat as background, they loomed huge, menacing. One of them, the one with the pistol, snarled at Haroldson Saintsbury.

"Here, you damn' —! Give me your watch before I blow your guts all over this deck!"

Then he saw something that pleased him more than any watch—the exquisite three-pearl ferroniere suspended by thin gold chains in the

center of Sally D'Arensbourgs' forehead. His dark eyes glittered. He reached for the bauble.

Haroldson Saintsbury, with his one free arm, swung a hard punch to the man's mouth. The man roared with pain and rage. He raised his pistol. But at this moment, the other man, who had stepped behind Haroldson, hit him with his bludgeon. The knight in armor fell to his knees. He tried to get up. He was hit again, and kicked several times in the face. He slipped flat on the deck, and there they kicked him repeatedly.

And still he tried to get up. There was a horrible roaring in his ears, and lights of all colors were swirling around him. Everything went back and forth. His hands would not stay on the deck, but slipped whenever he put any weight on them.

Eventually he managed to get to his feet. He stood swaying, blinking.

The steamboat had become much quieter, but there was a considerable noise of shouting on the shore. Somebody down near the landing planks screamed angrily; there was a pistol shot and a sharp tinkling of glass. Haroldson lurched to the rail, where Sally stood, firm and straight, her chin high.

"Are—are you hurt?"

SHE turned to face him, and her eyes were cold. "Thank you, sir. No, I'm not hurt."

"Sally, what's the matter?" He noticed now that her forehead was bare. "They—they took your pearls," he muttered.

"They did, thanks to your valiant fighting. I had supposed that a Southern gentleman—" She checked herself, biting her lower lip. She slid the engagement ring off her finger. "Yes, they took my pearls, but they left me this, which I don't

want now. Here." She held it out to him.

"But—but, Sally! You can't do that. It isn't fair! How could I fight? They hit me from behind."

"The customary coward's excuse, I suppose."

"Sally, you know that isn't fair." He ran his fingers through his hair, which was sticky and clotted with blood. "You—you must take this ring back, Sally."

"I'll take it back, sir, when you give me my pearls back with it."

"But that's impossible! They've got them." He gestured vaguely toward the dark shore, the forest.

SHE turned. "I'm going to my stateroom. No, please don't try to escort me. Good-by, sir."

"But, Sally—" He held out the ring.

"I told you, sir, that I'd accept that back when you offer me the pearls with it. If you were a man, you'd know what to do. Good-by."

She swept away.

Haroldson Saintsbury leaned against the rail. He was dizzy, weak. He shook himself, glaring at the shore. Sally was gone. This much he knew. He began to realize, too, as he stood there, that Sally was a romantic fool who could never be made to know that the Middle Ages were gone forever. She was a thoughtless, selfish fool, and he hated her!

And he hated the men who had caused all this! He glared furiously at the placid shore, the banked, silent shadows, the black wall of trees and underbrush. Damn her! And damn them, too! A coward, eh? Did *they* think he was a coward, too?

Perhaps he was a bit mad at that moment. Perhaps the blow on the head had resulted in some temporary disarrangement of his brain.

At any rate, weak and battered and

covered with blood though he was, he turned suddenly from the rail. His mouth was drawn tight. His eyes, sharp and dark, were almost shut.

He walked down the hurricane deck to where a group of babbling, hysterical passengers were exchanging experiences, wailing, weeping, spluttering wildly. He walked right through them, making for the steps that led down to the boiler deck.

Sally D'Arensbourg required no more than a five-minute weep on her mother's shoulder, in the privacy of their stateroom, to realize that she had been inexcusably unjust.

"I've been a beast."

"I wouldn't say that, my dear, but you've certainly been a fool. And if Haroldson forgives you it will only be because he's such a fine gentleman."

"He *did* try to fight! He punched one of them in the mouth before the other hit him from behind. He was all over blood."

"Then it's your duty to go to him and ask his pardon, and take care of his wounds."

"I'll go to him now! It's safe out there now. I'll go to him right away!"

SHE quit the stateroom, and her sadly smiling mother, in a flurry of sniffs and white flounces. Haroldson was not on the hurricane deck where she had left him. She peeked timidly into the smoking saloon, but he was not there. She glanced into the Texas house—no sign of him. She looked for him all over the hurricane deck, the promenade deck, even the boiler deck. She went to his stateroom, but it was locked. Panic-stricken, she sought out the captain.

That personage, the center of a throng of pleading, shouting, complaining passengers, himself badly

cut in the face and neck, was impatient, even rude.

"The scoundrels," he kept grumbling. "The low scoundrels! Who'd ever have supposed they'd have the gall to climb right aboard a boat like this?"

BUT what are you going to do about it?" somebody wailed.

"What can I do? Maybe tomorrow morning, at Natchez, we can organize a posse, but those scoundrels will be far off by that time, and there won't be one chance in a thousand of finding them. They know that country like you know your own home, sir. Besides, we're going to be late getting to Natchez. They wrecked the engines, too, in case you didn't know that, and it will be two or three hours before we can move from this spot."

Sally cried: "Mr. Saintsbury went after them! You'll have to do something to bring him back. He'll get killed!"

The captain looked at her curiously. "He certainly will get killed," the captain agreed, "if he was fool enough to chase after that pack. Was he insane, this Saintsbury?"

"I'm speaking, sir, of Mr. Haroldson Saintsbury, of Saintsbury plantation, near Baton Rouge."

"Well, we couldn't go looking for him tonight, miss, if he was President Van Buren himself."

"But—but—" Sally began to weep again, and her lips trembled. "He was my fiancé."

"Then the best thing I can suggest is that you start looking around for somebody else." Softening, the captain led her to the rail and pointed to the mysterious black shore. "See them woods? That's Jefferson County, and the man that goes chasing a gang of river pirates in that country alone, at night, is just as good as dead already. If he

catches up to them they'll kill him, and if he don't he'll probably end up stuck in a swamp somewhere anyway. I hate to seem hard, miss, but I know plenty about these river pirates, and I know something about Jefferson County, too. You better forget about your Mr. Saintsbury, because there's absolutely nothing we can do for him here."

Sally D'Arensbourg walked slowly and thoughtfully back to her state-room.

AT first the trail was easy to follow. There was a well-defined path which led toward the Watkins plantation, and even in the darkness it was not difficult for Haroldson Saintsbury to see where the robbers had turned from this path. They had been at no pains to cover their tracks, strewing the way with bits of clothing, scraps of paper and odd pieces of loot which, examined at leisure, had proved undesirable.

But after a couple of miles of this, Haroldson found himself hopelessly lost. Already he was calling himself an idiot for dashing into the wilderness after a band of armed outlaws who would certainly kill him on sight—if, indeed, he ever did overtake them. Like Sally, he realized that he had been rash. But unlike her, he was not willing to admit this to anybody else. It might be suicide to continue, but he wouldn't turn back. She had called him a coward.

Besides, he told himself, by this time the *Croesus* would be well on her way toward Natchez; and in the confusion which would follow the raid one man would not be missed.

There was no path now. He was pushing his way through a tangle of grass, weeds, shrubs, creepers and dangling Spanish moss, wet with mist, that caressed his face like the loathsome fingers of a malevolent,

unseen jungle ghost. The ground was low, irregular, slimy under his feet. He lost his hat. His face was cut, and his clothes were torn by thorned tree parasites he could not see.

Sometimes there would be a break in the foliage and he would walk across a dim clearing, stepping around stinking little pools of swamp water, slipping on the hummocks, cursing. There was no moon, and these places were dark enough, but they seemed brilliant compared with the black of the forest.

He could see the river mist, in these clearings. It was knee-high, yellowish-white, and it swirled around his legs.

The night was very hot, and perspiration drenched his whole body; it joined with the blood on his face and trickled down his neck, soaking his cravat; it soaked his sleeves, soaked his legs.

ONCE he heard a soft rustle at his feet, on the left, and then a sharp, angry rattling like a cricket. He sprang to the right and ran for some yards until he collided with a tree and was thrown off his feet. He rose, covered with mud, shaking himself. He must guard against nerves, panic. Ordinarily no rattlesnake, even though unseen, would frighten him like that.

A million mosquitoes and gnats pestered him as he walked; their tiny, irritable buzzing, and the squelch of his own footsteps in the sticky mud, were the only sounds he could hear.

Then, ahead, and a little to the left, he saw a light. He approached it cautiously. It came from a small farmhouse. He made a half circuit of the place and crept up to a window of the opposite side. His heart was pounding wildly, and the sweat on his body and face grew very cold,

clammy; for he knew, even before he peered through the window, that he had found the robbers at last.

There were about a dozen of them. Two were lying on the floor, asleep or dead drunk. A third was lying on a bed. The rest were playing cards.

THEY were a frightful looking pack of villains. Most of them apparently had not used a razor for a long time. Their clothes were of every conceivable sort, all torn and muddy. Some wore brown or black slouch hats; others were bare-headed, and one had cocked over his left ear at a rakish angle an exquisite pearl-gray beaver, obviously stolen from some passenger on the *Croesus*.

Haroldson, peering cautiously through the window, could make out the faces only of the hatless ones, for the single lamp in the room hung over the center of the table and threw the faces of the others into deep shadow.

However, he did recognize the tall fellow who had accosted him on the deck and whose mouth he had punched—for this fellow, apparently in the last stages of intoxication, was slumped low in his chair, his head thrown back, his eyes closed, his face raised to the light.

A companion shook him. "Playin', Rathead?"

There was no answer or acknowledgment.

"Let him alone," said another man. "He'll go outside an' take a walk soon an' then come back an' be all right. He al'ays does that. Pass me the jug."

The game was poker, but there were no chips. The river pirates were betting instead with silver dollars and with a motley collection of stolen watches, chains, studs, links, bracelets, bangles, necklaces. There were frequent quarrels about the

value of these articles; but the fact that the loot was so considerable seemed sufficient to prevent a fight.

"Don't let it gravel you," one of the men said, when his neighbor spluttered indignantly about the worth of a bracelet he was betting against two ruby rings. "There's plenty to go 'roun', an' you know it."

"But those damn' things ain't worth—"

"Take another slug o' that corn an' pass it to me an' don't make so much talk!"

PRESENTLY Rathead Pete, as predicted, raised his head, blinking in the light, stared stupidly at the table in front of him where his own pile of money and jewelry was untouched, and rose, knocking his chair over. He swayed. He drew a flask of whisky from his coat pocket and took a deep drink, while the others watched him without a word. Then he made for the front door.

"He'll come back in a little while an' go on playin' like as if nothin' had happened at all," one of the band said. "He al'ays does that."

Haroldson Saintsbury had different ideas on this subject. Quiet as a cat, he crept along the side of the house to the front veranda, where Rathead Pete stood staring at nothing, swaying, his hands in the pockets of his huge sailor's coat.

Haroldson's foot slipped in the mud and there was a tiny splash. The pirate leader, suddenly alert, animal-like, jerked his head up.

"Who's there?" he grunted. He was cunning now—drunk, but cunning. He quit the veranda and walked straight toward the bushes where Haroldson Saintsbury crouched breathless. He drew his pistol and held this in front of him. A few feet away he stopped and grunted again. "Who's there?" Certainly he could not see the raid vic-

tim, but he seemed to sense his presence: the ruffian, like a jungle beast, seemed possessed of an unerring instinct for danger.

HE came a little closer, step by careful step. "Come out o' there or I'll start shootin'," he said.

Haroldson did not stir, did not make a sound.

Rathead started carefully into the bushes. He raised his right hand, with the pistol, to brush away a streamer of Spanish moss that tickled his face as he moved—and it was at this instant that Haroldson Saintsbury rose and punched.

Haroldson hit the fellow squarely on the chin, and Rathead went down backward, his foot slipping as he fell. Haroldson leaped upon him, punching again and again. But the pirate leader was unconscious, stunned by the fall or by the blow, or both. He was breathing deeply. His eyes were open, but it was obvious that he could not see.

Haroldson watched the house. There was no unusual sound there. The poker game, apparently, was proceeding smoothly and nothing was suspected. Haroldson rolled Rathead over in the mud, took his pistol and holster, took his hat and with great difficulty peeled off the heavy sailor's coat.

He donned the hat and coat, pulling the hat far down over his eyes. He strapped the pistol belt around his waist in the same position in which Rathead had worn it. Finding a flash of corn liquor in a coat pocket, he took a drink of this, and then he deliberately spilled some of the stuff on the coat; he desired to smell as much as possible like Rathead Pete.

He was about the same height and build as Rathead, and, like the pirate, was clean-shaven. To be sure, his trousers and shoes were the best that

money could buy in New Orleans; but he counted on the poor light, on the fact that all the men inside would be drunk and unsuspecting anyway, and also on the fact that both trousers and shoes, and particularly the shoes, were so spattered with mud as to be scarcely recognizable.

He took a last look at Rathead. The scoundrel appeared to be sleeping soundly. Still, there was no telling when he might awaken and re-enter the house.

Haroldson hurried up on the veranda, and through the front door, affecting a slight reel as he crossed the threshold.

"Here he is back," somebody said. Most of them scarcely glanced at him. He kept his head down, the broad brim of Rathead's hat pulled well down over his eyes. He righted the chair and took his place at the table.

"In this pot, Rathead?"

HE nodded, and they dealt him cards. He played in three pots, losing a little of Rathead's spoils in each. He kept his head very low, pretending to be too drunk for conversation, and answering questions only with a nod or a shrug; but his eyes were busy on the jewelry all the time. Sally's ferroniere was among other articles piled in front of the robber on his left. It was not staked in any of the first three pots.

For the first few moments Haroldson's greatest fear was that his hands would give him away—his small and ordinarily cleaned and well manicured hands. Of course it was impossible to keep them out of the light. What probably saved him from detection on this score was the fact that the hands had been so smeared with mud and so scratched by spiked creepers that they were no

longer strikingly unlike those of Rathead Pete himself.

"Pass."

"Four dollars."

The man on Haroldson's left pushed in a watch and chain and three small rings. "Raise you twenty."

"That ain't worth twenty-four dollars, Jim Brent."

Brent said hotly: "That is worth twenty-four dollars!"

"No, it ain't."

But Brent drew a horse pistol and laid it on the table beside him, at Haroldson's elbow. "Is it worth twenty-four dollars?" he asked.

There was a considerable silence. Then the man who had opened the pot shrugged his shoulders. "All right. It is, then."

Now, Haroldson had nothing but a pair of fours, but he went into the pot anyway, paying cash in order to avoid discussion. Somebody on his right raised. The original bidder dropped, showing his openers. The man on Haroldson's left, Brent, stayed in with several pieces of jewelry—among them Sally D'Arensborg's ferroniere. Haroldson stayed.

"Cards?"

Brent drew two. Haroldson shrugged and waved to the next man.

"Standin' pat, Rathead?"

HE nodded. The third man drew two cards.

"Check to the pat hand." It was Brent.

Haroldson without hesitation pushed into the center all the cash he had left in front of him—thirty-seven silver dollars. The man on his right dropped. But Brent cogitated, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. Brent glanced sidewise at the man on his right. He said slowly:

"Rathead, I don't guess you're drunk as you want people to believe. I wish you didn't have that hat on,

so's I could see the expression on your face."

Haroldson held his breath. Brent rubbed his chin for some time in silence, and then decided suddenly. He pushed in the money. "Let's see 'em."

HAROLDSON hesitated for the first time. Every eye in the room was upon him. He took a desperate chance. Contemptuously flipping his cards up, as though to show them to all present, he turned them back rapidly and threw them face-down among the discards. He meant to give the impression that he had a full hand. He reached confidently for the assortment of money and valuables that composed the pot.

"Just a minute," said Jim Brent very quietly. "Let me see them cards, Rathead." He picked them up, sorting them out from the others. He smiled knowingly when he had assembled and examined the correct five. "Couple of fours, eh? Tryin' to put that over on me, eh? Give me that pot!"

Again there was a heavy silence, a silence that shrieked. Nobody stirred. Haroldson himself—his hands over the pot, the fingers of his left hand closed upon the three pearls he desired—did not move or speak.

Then the front door flew open, and a hatless, coatless Rathead Pete appeared.

"Grab that man! Kill that man! He's a damn'—"

"Who the hell—"

Haroldson Saintsbury sprang to his feet, snatched Brent's pistol from the table, and fired directly at Rathead Pete. The room was filled with smoke. There was a crash as Rathead collapsed on the floor, his mouth open, his eyes popping half out of his head.

Haroldson picked up the chair be-

hind him and, with one mighty lift, smashed it against the hanging lamp. A loud crash of glass—then utter darkness.

He jumped for the door, bending low. Somebody got in his way. He struck out wildly with both fists. Somebody fired, and there was more smoke, choking smoke.

At the dimly-outlined doorway he stumbled over the body of Rathead Pete and went sprawling full-length upon the veranda. There was a shot behind him, and a bullet ripped an angry groove of splinters in the floor at his side. He rolled instantly—rolled off the veranda, down the three steps, into a tangled mass of weeds and grass. He rose, and, crouching, ran into the nearest bank of shadow.

He still had one pistol left, Rathead's pistol. He held this in his right hand as he ran, with his left hand he took the three-pearl ferroniere from his mouth, into which he had popped it at the moment of smashing the light out, in order to have both hands free for the fight.

Of his general direction he was certain, for he had marked the position of the house well and remembered the angle from which he had approached it. There was no path, and he fell in the mud again and again; but always he recovered himself and ran on—and on.

HE could hear them shouting behind him. They could not see him in the darkness, of course, but they could hear him. He did not dare to stop and hide. That would throw them off the trail for a short time, because of the silence; but sooner or later they would find him. And he had only one shot to fire now.

A little earlier, in this same wilderness, he had been able to push his way, feeling with his hands. It had been hard enough then. It was

ten times worse now, since he did not dare to pause for anything. Madly, blindly, he ran full-tilt into unseen trees. He was bruised and battered and cut—but he kept running.

He threw away Rathead's slouch hat and peeled off Rathead's coat and his own fashionable tailcoat, as he ran. These articles might assist the pursuers, if they found them, but he must chance that. He was horribly hot, and as wet as though he had been swimming in his clothes.

UNEXPECTEDLY, he came upon the path between the boat landing and Watkins' plantation. For an instant he hesitated. His first thought was to run up to the plantation and seek protection there, but he did not know how far away the place was, while he *did* know that the river was near at hand.

Even so, he might have made for the plantation had he not heard, at this moment, a shouting and crashing of underbrush in that direction. They were heading him off. He turned and ran for the river.

Had they cut him off from the river too? They knew this country well.

Somebody was very close behind him—at least three men. He could hear them panting as they ran. He did not turn his head. Probably they could hear him but could not see him: if they could see him they would shoot.

Then the broad expanse of Father Mississippi swept into view—flat, chocolate colored, unenthusiastic—the turgid, sullen river moving reluctantly down to the sea.

Haroldson heard, very near, the toot of a steam whistle. He rounded a curve in the path—and almost shouted with joy at the sight of the *Croesus*.

The steamboat was seventy-five or a hundred yards from shore, and

just beginning to move away from the scene of her violation. Black smoke swirled sluggishly from her two tall stacks, and there was a half-hearted spouting of sparks. Protesting paddlewheels began to shove at the still, peevish water. The whistle was blown again, feebly, to test the pressure.

A MAN sprang out of the shadows near the boat landing, pistol in hand. Haroldson recognized him as one of the pirates. Behind Haroldson came a shout.

"Catch him, Buck! That's him!"

The man fired. Haroldson never even heard the bullet, but there was a scream of pain behind him; evidently Buck had shot one of his own companions. He was reloading as Haroldson came upon him, but he dropped the powder case and clubbed the pistol, swinging a blow for Haroldson's head. Haroldson, with Rathead's pistol, shot him through the abdomen. He doubled up with a jerk, and pitched forward on his face.

"Croesus, ahoy! Help! Help!"

Then he dove into the river. He swam under water as far as he could, and when he came up he filled his lungs with air, took a stroke or two, and went under again. It wasn't difficult, staying under the surface; his clothes were so heavy that they held him down. But he had been running hard and had very little breath left; he was gasping, almost exhausted.

When he came up the second time he heard two shots behind him, and a tiny spear of water sprang into being not more than four inches from his face—and then disappeared. He went under the surface again, swimming desperately.

His face under water most of the time, he missed the steamboat entirely, and swam around under her

stern. On the far side, where the deck sloped down low enough for him to grab it, he stopped swimming and for a minute or two remained motionless, gasping, hanging to the boat with what little strength he had left. Then, slowly, laboriously, he pulled himself up to the boiler deck.

There was nobody on that side of the boat. Passengers and boatmen were lining the opposite rail, pointing toward the shore, talking or shouting in excited voices. They had not seen him swim under the stern. They were looking for him, or for the men on the shore.

All unnoticed, he climbed the larboard steps to the promenade deck, then to the hurricane deck. There, in the stern, standing alone and gazing with open mouth and wide eyes at the boat landing, was Sally. He lurched toward her. He held out to her the muddy, dripping ferroniere.

"Your—your pearls, Miss D'Arensbourg."

SHE turned—and almost swooned at the sight of him. The wonder was that she recognized him at all, covered as he was with mud and blood and black slime. But she went to him, put her arms around his neck, and all unheeding of the fact that she was ruining her costly French frock, crushed herself against him, weeping, laughing with joy.

"Haroldson! Haroldson! Oh, I've been such a fool!"

He gave a wry smile. *"No worse fool than I've been."*

"And you're alive!"

"Mostly." He called her attention to the ferroniere in his hand. *"This is yours,"* he reminded her. *"Do you want the ring with it?"*

"I want you!"

And it is a matter of record—of marriage record in the archives of the Cathedral of St. Louis in New Orleans—that she got him.

**COLONEL
T.E. LAWRENCE
"THE
UNCROWNED
KING OF
ARABIA"**

**BROUGHT
TOGETHER
THE DIS-
GRUNTLED**

**TRIBES OF ARABIA IN A UNIFIED CAMPAIGN
AGAINST TURKISH OPPRESSORS AND AS LEADER
OF THE BEDOUIN ARMIES HELPED FREE ARABIA.
HE PUT TWO KINGS AND A
SULTAN ON THEIR THRONES.**

**DURING THE WORLD WAR
HE DID MORE DAMAGE TO
ENEMY LINES OF COMMUNICATION
AND TOOK MORE
PRISONERS SINGLE-
HANDED THAN ANY
OTHER INDIVIDUAL.**

HIS FOLLOWERS

**BELIEVED THAT HIS WAS A
CHARMED LIFE. ONCE, A BRIGAND OVER-
POWERED HIM AND GRABBED HIS REVOLVER. HE
PRESSED IT TO THE CAPTIVE'S HEAD, AND PULLED
THE TRIGGER, BUT IT DID NOT GO OFF. THIS WAS
DUE TO THE SAFETY CATCH, BUT THE BANDIT
ATTRIBUTED IT TO LAWRENCE'S SUPERNATURAL
POWERS.**

**ANOTHER
TIME, LAWRENCE'S
CAMEL WAS SHOT
UNDER HIM AND
SEVEN BULLETS
PASSED THROUGH
HIS ROBE,
BUT HE WAS
NOT INJURED.**

Famous SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE



**WHEN ONLY 12 YEARS OLD
ADMIRAL DAVID FARRAGUT
WAS IN COMMAND OF A
SHIP IN THE U.S. NAVY**

**DUE TO THE FACT THAT
YOUNG DAVID FARRAGUT
DISPLAYED SUCH UNUSUAL
ABILITY AS A SEAMAN
FOR HIS AGE, HE WAS
MADE PRIZE MASTER
OF THE SHIP
BARCLAY
IN 1813**



ADMIRAL FARRAGUT

This is the Original Illustrated Adventure

AVIATION'S FIRST SOLDIER OF FORTUNE ~

BERT HALL, WHO HAS BEEN KNOWN IN CHINA AS GENERAL CHANG SINCE 1929, IS STYLED AVIATION'S FIRST ADVENTURER-FLYER.

HALL IS ONE OF THE ONLY TWO SURVIVORS OF THE ORIGINAL SEVEN WHO FORMED THE FAMOUS LAFAYETTE ESCADRILLE WHICH HE HELPED ORGANIZE SOON AFTER JOINING THE FRENCH FLYING CORPS IN 1914.

BEFORE THE WORLD WAR HE WAS THE ENTIRE "TURKISH AIR FORCE" AT \$100 A DAY. LATER, HE DRIFTED OVER TO THE BULGARIAN SIDE WHEN THE TURKS CUT HIS PAY. HE HAS SHOT DOWN 108 PLANES AND HAS BEEN WOUNDED 34 TIMES.



YOU MAY BE SHAVING WITH THE GERMAN IMPERIAL FLEET ~

AT SCAPA FLOW, THE GERMANS HAVE BEEN SALVAGING THE HULKS OF WHAT WERE ONCE THE GREATEST DREADNAUGHTS OF THE SEA AND SELLING THEM TO SAFETY RAZOR MANUFACTURERS ALL OVER THE WORLD.

RICHARD THE LION

HEARTED, DURING THE THIRD CRUSADE, WITH ONLY SIX MOUNTED MEN AS HIS FORCE, CAPTURED JAFFA (IN CYPRUS) ROUTING 3000 GREEK SOLDIERS.



THE ARABIAN DESERT IS NOT LOCATED IN ARABIA-IT IS IN EGYPT.

Feature—the First to Appear in Any Magazine

Another Thrilling Story of Breathless Adventure in the

KWA and the Beast Men

A Complete Novelette

By PAUL REGARD

*Author of "Kwa of the Jungle,"
"Kwa, King of Ophir," etc.*



CHAPTER I

Horn and Hoof

WHEN Kwa followed the leopard into the clearing and found the strange monster standing there his first instinct was to turn and run. Here was something that he didn't want to see, something that sent a chill of horror through his veins.

Animals he could understand and men he could understand. But the thing that stood before him now was neither. He recognized it at once. This was a Beast Man. Every now and then the Beast Men made their way into the Devil Bush—that great jungle that covered all this part of Equatorial Africa. And, as for that, the Devil Bush had come by its name honestly.

This was haunted jungle. It killed.

There were creatures in it that killed white men and black. Few had ever penetrated to the heart of it and lived to tell about it afterward.

That was why it was called the Devil Bush. It was fetish, gree-gree, taboo.

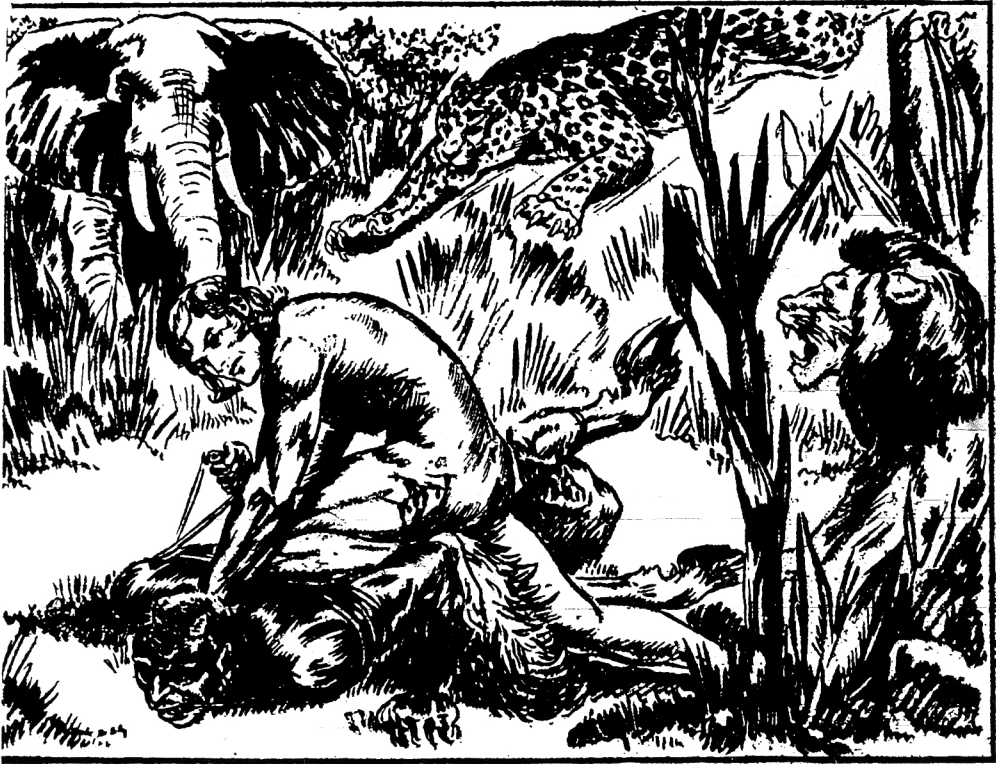
Kwa felt a gust of anger, and this drove away his fear.

The leopard had lured him here by a lie. The leopard had come to him with the story of a man lost in the woods.

This was no man.

The Beast Man stood about six feet tall, bulking huge. There was nothing about him to suggest the big ape—the chimpanzee or the gorilla. Head, neck and shoulders—shining black—these suggested the goat or the bull rather than the ape. On the top of the low-browed head was a tangled thatch of wool through

Devil Bush in Which Kwa Faces New and Exciting Perils



which emerged a pair of knob-like horns.

The head was low and thrust forward. There were widest eyes, gray, staring and wild. The arms and body were magnificent. They were like a statue of Hercules in oily black marble.

But with an inner shiver Kwa let his eyes flick down. There was mud-caked wool on the thighs. The shanks were like those of an uncurried horse. The feet were cleft, enormous, split and splayed like those of a moose.

"Ho!" said Kwa. But he was ready to jump.

KWA himself stood there naked and white. He'd been disporting himself with hippos and elephants in a clear green river far over on the other side of the Devil Bush when

the leopard had found him. He didn't even have his knife with him. He'd left the knife where he'd dropped it somewhere along the bank of the river. He hadn't even stopped to twist about him the girdle of vines he usually wore.

Since his return to Africa from his grandfather's home in Florida he'd let his hair grow. It hung now about his shoulders tawny and long. And there was a down on his face, almost as if he'd been actually a member of that Furry Tribe, the Not Yet Men, the Mu, who had reared him.

But his body gleamed smooth and white.

"Ho!" he said again. "I am Kwa, Kwa of the Jungle!"

And now, for the first time, he was aware that others of his animal friends had followed him here.

It was as if that declaration of his had been taken up by a thousand voices. But all of them together made no more sound than a breeze.

"Yea, this is Kwa! Kwa the Golden One! Kwa of the Jungle!"

THE stir of the breeze was like a vocal chorus, yet it would have been unintelligible and all but inaudible to ordinary ears. Not to the ears of Kwa. This was the sort of speech to which he'd listened ever since he could remember.

Sun-time, the heat of the day, he'd lain in cool shadows and listened to birds and beasts, all manner of things, talking as if in their sleep. A radio that was never silent—elephant whispers running the length and breadth of Africa, the twitter of birds and the minute notes of squirrels and monkeys no bigger than a gorilla's thumb.

But—mostly silence. In what the White World called silence, you could hear more voices and get more information than at any other time. It was a silence, so Kwa had learned, like that of the ether through which uncounted broadcasting stations send their unending programs.

At least some of the elephants must have followed him from the river. Bush-deer and buffalo, troops of *mboyo*—the shy wolf-dogs of the deeper jungles; leopards, of course.

He might have known that the leopard who had lured him here was tricking him. The only interest that a leopard could have had in a man—a real man—lost in the woods would be to kill him.

Leopards hated men—all men. And, often enough, Kwa had suspected that leopards had extended this hatred to include himself—he who drew no clear frontier between the peoples who were "men" and they that were "animals."

Leopards, unlike the other jungle

tribes, appeared to be jealous of men. Leopards were brave. No animal was braver. But there was also always something ghostly about them—running after strange gods.

"A Beast Man!" came the chorus from the jungle. "Kwa! Kwa! Be on your guard! Kwa, Kwa, he will try to kill you!"

This was in the universal language of the jungle, which was almost a manner of thought rather than any articulate speech. It was a means of communication that all animals used, on and off, even when, as many of them did, they possessed a tribal speech of their own. It was the ancient speech, one that Kwa had used instinctively ever since his earliest childhood. But, since then, he'd learned most of the jungle calls as well.

Everywhere, to declare yourself, state who you were and stand your ground, was in the nature of a challenge.

From the Man Beast there came a long-sustained and rumbling breath. It was something that at first Kwa couldn't understand except that this was an answer to his challenge.

Kwa, with every nerve and sinew on the trigger, flicked a look about him. He was amazed by the number of leopards he saw about him. Leopards were glinting everywhere in the foreground — running, belly-flat; pausing to stare; sliding and slinking. They gave an impression that the jungle-glade was surrounded by the coil of an enormous black and yellow snake—never still—with a hundred heads.

RECOLLECTION and some further measure of understanding came to Kwa. Of all the animals of the jungle the leopards were the only ones who'd ever been reported to have been on terms of intimacy with the Beast Men.

The Sapadi—meaning, “the Cloven Footed”—as all the Negroes of the Guinea Coast call the Beast Men. Time was when the Negroes had talked to the Utangani, the White Men, about the existence of Sapadi in Africa’s great Equatorial forests. But the White Men had laughed, and so the Negroes no longer talked about the Sapadi except among themselves.

The Utangani were like that. They laughed at everything they couldn’t see or understand—animals and men and trees that were *aniemba*, possessed by a spirit; the *mbuiri*, the ghosts of animals or men who roamed about in the dusk and dark; the power of the *ougangas*, the witch-doctors—not all of them, but some—to trap the souls of things, of men included, and keep them imprisoned in a box.

Kwa laughed at nothing he couldn’t understand. The world was filled with such things—both the Great White World, which was his by inheritance through his parents; and the Great Black World, the world of the Devil Bush to which he’d been born and in which he’d been reared.

THERE came a momentary diversion.

A *ncheri*, a little bush-deer, no larger than a slight Italian greyhound, had leaped a fallen, moss-covered tree, and stood there in the clearing. Evidently it had been taken by panic and it stood there quivering, its soft eyes bright with alarm. At sight of it that revolving wheel of leopards had instantly stopped. But even quicker than the pause and hover of the leopards was the action of the Beast Men.

Maybe this was his final answer to that challenge of Kwa’s—also a warning to those other jungle tribesmen he saw assembling. One of his great arms as if uncoiled and struck.

It was a movement faster, almost, than that of the jungle-eyes that followed him. On the instant, it seemed, he’d broken the *ncheri*’s neck. He’d brought its throat to his mouth. He stood there drawing at the little creature’s blood.

From where he stood Kwa sprang. “Hah!” he grunted.

And he’d struck the Cloven Footed with his fist.

CHAPTER II

Blood Call

IT WAS a blow that might have felled a man—a jab, something of an uppercut—with all the force of that plunging rush behind it. But the Sapadi was merely shaken. It was surprise that had shaken him as much as the blow. He was a Beast Man, hence something of a god—god of the leopards. This white whelp of the Utangani had struck him.

The Sapadi was about to get another shock.

He’d dropped the body of the dead and bleeding deer to the ground between his splayed and cloven feet.

The smell of blood and the spectacle of the raw red wound was too much for one of the leopards. In an instant, it had flashed in and seized the prey, had started off with it. Without delay, two other leopards came in. They were there with the flashing speed of hungry snakes.

There was a whine and the beginning of a fight.

Kwa was in the midst of the tangle at once, striking with his bare hands right and left.

Now Kwa heard something that the Sapadi said—and understood it, although it was in an inverted form of thought, like the secret language of some murderous lodge.

“Strike him! Tear him!”

Kwa saw a quick change in the leopards.

One of the brutes he seized by the neck and flung aside. At another that had dared face him with a yawning mouth he aimed a chopping blow that quelled it on the instant.

These were murderous moments—a scent of blood in the air from the slaughtered deer, a voice commanding the leopards to kill him. It was as if, suddenly, here in the Devil Bush, the Devil himself had appeared. There flashed through Kwa's mind even now old stories that he'd heard—long night, in the great Fire Cave of the Mu, when the people of the Furry Tribe sat about their sacred fire and the jungle tribes, from mice to elephants, from birds to pythons, gathered in the shadows to watch the mystery of fire and hear the stories of the world.

In all of these stories, the Devil came and came again—as wolf, as snake, as man.

Kwa backed from the bloody wreck of the little deer. He'd kicked the last leopard away. His eyes were on the Beast Man, ready for attack, ready for flight. He'd have little enough chance, he knew, unarmed against an enemy like this.

THERE were a hundred voices screaming warning. Then, from a corner of his eye, he saw an elephant plunge into the clearing from the green screen of the jungle. That was Golef, a young elephant bull, with whom he'd struck up a close friendship.

"Golef!" Kwa called. "No killing!"

"He would kill you from behind," came Golef's whisper.

Just as the Beast Man rushed at him, head down, Kwa sprang aside. He saw what had happened. He understood now those cries of warning. One of the largest leopards—an old

man-eater, as Kwa could tell at a glance—had been creeping up on him from behind.

Golef, the elephant, had not only seen the danger in time. He'd acted on it. With a sweep of his trunk, he'd tripped the leopard and brushed it aside.

The leopard joined the others. They were bunched, but restless—circling among themselves. The eyes of all of them were on the Beast Man, then on Kwa. It was as if they were appraising two gods. One they would elect, one they would kill.

"Ho," cried Kwa. "I'm a Man!"

This wasn't a beast. Like most jungle speech it was merely the statement of a truth. But the truth conveyed the challenge.

From branch and ground-bush and from the green maze beyond the clearing—from all directions, from above and all around, it seemed—the voices were telling Kwa to be careful, to save himself, that this was a Sapadi who faced him, and that Sapadis were killers.

"Even as the Utangani!" came a rasping breath, and Kwa knew that he was hearing again the voice of the Beast Man.

Once more Kwa had a glint of fear. But the fear was not for himself precisely. It was fear that the situation would get out of hand. There was that taint of blood in the air. There'd been that revolt of the leopards. He knew that now should the situation escape from his hands he would be doubly lost. His life would not only forfeit but his hope—the hope that had become the purpose of his life—to restore the Great Truce among animals and men.

The leopards were whining a chorus to that statement of the Sapadi.

"Even as the Utangani! The Utangani kill!"

The Sapadi rushed him.

The rush of the Sapadi was like nothing that Kwa had ever seen before—swift, silent. It was like the charge of three animals in one. The hands and arms were snakes. The open mouth had become the mouth of a fighting leopard.

Kwa, jungle-trained, crouched and went far to one side.

As he did so, there was a roaring whisper that reached his brain.

"Kwa! Kwa! We'll fight for you!"

These were the elephants and buffalo who spoke.

There came another rush of speech, mingled with it, but as clear as the voice of horns in an orchestra.

"Kwa! Kwa! We'll fight for you!"

NOW Kwa could scarcely believe the evidence of his brain. This last offer had reached him in the voices of lions; and lions were almost as rare in the Devil Bush as men themselves were.

Yet there were the lions—a dozen or more. Males, all of them. Kwa, with a rush of gratitude, knew that now, at any rate, the leopards would be held in check. Leopards were brave; they were cunning; they possessed, perhaps, certain forms of evil magic which lions either ignored or disdained. But in the presence of a lion no leopard dared assert itself.

All this, like the breaking up of light in a prism—instantaneous.

The Sapadi had rushed. Kwa had dodged. The voices had reached him.

Kwa found time to stand straight and raise both arms.

"No, no!" he shouted. "I am Kwa! Kwa fights! Kwa will slay this thing!"

He could imagine the sort of slaughter that might begin should he himself be slain. The jungle now surrounding this fated battle-ground was packed with life. Grass-eaters and blood-drinkers were there together, birds and squirrels and

snakes. An old man gorilla stood with his knuckles on the fallen tree and back of him were other gorillas. They stared at the leopards, stared at the lions. But it was at Kwa they stared the oftenest. On him the present truce depended.

There should be no killing in Kwa's presence. There should be no killing within sound of his voice. But Kwa himself could kill. Kwa came from the terrible race that killed even when it was without hunger.

Kwa and the Sapadi were advancing again. There was a great silence.

The Sapadi snorted and breathed with a rasping sound.

"I am Bele," he said; "god of the blood-drinkers. I am thirsty again. Tonight I and my brethren will drink the blood of this young white goat."

CHAPTER III

Noose and Claw

THERE'D come a sort of chorus to that statement of the Sapadi's. It came from the direction of the slinking, watchful leopards.

"Yo, yo! He is god of the blood-drinkers!"

But a lion coughed, and the sound struck silence even to the sort of silent speech that was running about.

Kwa thought. He thought in English. To him English had always been, in some sort, a sacred language. This, he never could forget, had been the language that the unknown golden-haired woman had used, his mother, she who had passed her life on to him.

Sometimes English sentences formed in his brain, even here in the depths of the Devil Bush, and it would curiously seem as if it was his mother—her "mbuiri," her soul—that whispered to him.

"Use your brain! Look up!"

He looked up. And now, just as the Beast Man of the cloven feet made another lightning dash in his direction he jumped into the air instead of to one side, and seized the loop of a swinging rubber vine. Almost too late. The Sapadi had struck at him with clutching fingers and scored such a scratch down one of Kwa's legs as a leopard might have made.

"He runs away," the leopards whined.

And Bele, the so-called god of the blood-drinkers, braked his charge and pivoted on his horned feet. With him, at any rate, there could be no side-stepping. Nor could he climb. Both of which thoughts came to Kwa in that swinging moment.

BUT he had no intention of running away, and those who knew him best divined that this was so.

"Ho," roared Bele. "He joins the other umkago!"

The "umkago" were a tribe of small red-headed monkeys. They were there in force, swarming overhead. The Beast Man had meant this as a taunt, and the leopards were ready to take it up. Monkeys and apes had always been a favorite food for leopards, perhaps because they were so much like the children of men; then, dogs, because these were the friends of man; then man himself.

But the lions also had taken to serpentineing about, and in the sudden silence caused by their movement the forest tribes heard Kwa shrill out something in the very language of the umkago, the red-headed monkey pilgrims.

Then: "Wah!" Kwa shouted in the universal speech. "Wah! I am brother to them all!"

He stood in his loop of vine and started it to swing. For the first

time now since he'd first stood in the presence of the Beast Man he began to feel an assurance of victory.

The feeling made him laugh aloud. It made him shout a song.

"Wah!" he laughed. "Come catch me, Bele. Come catch Kwa. Bele drinks the blood of a little deer. Bele now talks of drinking the blood of a Man!"

This was the turn of the tree-dwellers—birds and ribbon-snakes, monkeys and squirrels. Some of the squirrels were so small that they might have been taken for mice if it wasn't for their silken, never-quiet tails.

"Wah!" they chorused. "Kwa is the brother of us all! Come catch us, Bele! Come catch Kwa!"

Bele, at a momentary loss, charged over toward the leopards. They cowered at his approach and looked their reverence. Bele charged back—huge and black, shining—if not a god at least a devil to most of these other animals. Half man. Perhaps with the mbuiri of a man at his command to help him with his evil magic.

The buffalo showed signs of stampede. They rolled their eyes and snorted at those cleft feet of his—feet almost like their own. Golef, the young elephant-bull, Kwa's particular friend, threw out his barn-door ears and extended his trunk in a rigid slant—it was a fighting stance—but it took all his nerve and all his memory of his talks with Kwa to maintain it.

ONLY the lions and the old gorilla stood firm and apparently at ease, as if there was some ancient, settled wisdom back of them that couldn't be shaken even by a devil.

"Ho," Kwa suddenly shouted. "I am Kwa—Kwa the Golden—and my mother came from the Golden West!"

The meaning of this was obscure to all who heard it—except to Golef, perhaps; but none who heard Kwa could believe other than that the battle was but now begun.

Down from the heights of the trees where the red-headed monkeys ran there came a length of tie-tie vine—soft and supple, strong as copper wire. There seemed to be no end of it. It was with vine like this that the big-game hunters of the Gaboon used to weave their elephant and buffalo-nets, back in the days before the White Man came to exchange powder and rum for slaves.

"Ho! Tie-tie vine!" Kwa chanted. "With tie-tie vine my mother's people conquered the Golden West!"

SUDDENLY, Bele, who'd again come to the side of the snaking leopards, caught one of them up in his powerful hands. There was a squirming spasm as the leopard let out a snarling scream of protest.

"Kill!" shrilled the Beast Man.

He'd turned and with one of those lightning-swift charges of his had hurled the leopard to where Kwa had been standing out of reach.

It was as if he'd hurled a living buzz-saw. The leopard caught and clung—cursing heaven and earth in the leopard tribal speech.

But Kwa was no longer there. Kwa had leaped. He'd landed on the ground. He hadn't lost a moment. He was coiling his tie-tie vine. Then there followed something that struck all those who saw it as a bit of beautiful and terrible magic.

A treble breath—a shrill whine swept the jungle.

While the lightning-footed but slower witted Sapadi, Bele the Beast Man of the Cloven Feet, still gazed up to where he'd hurled his living missile, Kwa dashed in close, and as if lashed him with his slender vine.

It looked like suicide to those who

watched him. But instantly their keen eyes saw that a noose had fallen over Bele's head and shoulders. Bele reacted to this as swiftly as if the vine had been red-hot iron. He jerked around and plunged at Kwa. As he did so, Kwa stepped aside and made another lashing movement at his feet.

Kwa gave a double-handed jerk and Bele fell.

Now, instead of retreating, as Kwa's friends hoped and expected, Kwa flung himself flat on Bele and started to throw loop after loop about his head and shoulders—four—five—while Bele in his confusion heaved and struggled like a harpooned whale.

All would have gone well for Kwa just then if it hadn't been for the leopard swinging on the vine just overhead.

Physically, the leopard could not have been more easy in the position in which it now found itself than if it had been safe in its own home den. But here was a chance to ease the ache in its pride—to rid itself of a little of its stored-up venom. It didn't dare attack openly either of these two fighting gods on the ground, but it could fall. Fall it did—or pretended to; swinging under, dropping, turning in the air.

One of its hooked and scimitared paws caught in Kwa's bright mane and held.

CHAPTER IV

Keepers of the Peace

KWA, struggling with all he had of both brain and muscle to bring his battle to a close, felt that dragging rake of pointed talons across his scalp, the swift suffocation of the leopard's fur as the big cat let its full weight down upon him.

In spite of himself, or to save his

life, Kwa flung up a hand to shake himself free.

Swift as the reflex was, one of the lions had been swifter. It had reached the group on the ground with a single spring, it had struck with a massive paw. The leopard rolled.

It didn't rise again.

Almost as swift as the lion—he might have been as swift if it hadn't been for some order Kwa had given—Golef, the elephant, planted one of his feet on the leopard's head.

He held it there while the spotted fur quivered to a stillness. Then Golef raised his trunk and screamed.

"Ho!" was what he said. "While Kwa is occupied, the lions and we shall see that peace is kept!"

Swift moments, all of these. Things happening all at once. Life in the jungle like a river, flowing slowly, day after day, night after night, then taking some mighty jump into a cataract of action.

For Kwa, a brush with death, just now when the leopard clawed his head. Bele gouging with his own mouth of a fighting leopard had got a strand of the tie-tie in his mouth and snapped it. A hand and arms came free.

WITH his free hand he clapped a blow at the side of Kwa's head that staggered him—a curious blow, not with the fist, but with the hand half-open and the fingers rigid, a leopard blow.

The Beast Man fought like a leopard and with the strength of a bull.

Kwa, wavering, caught the hot blast of Bele's breath—breath smelling of blood and carrion. Kwa saw Bele's yellow fangs within an inch of his face.

Kwa flung his strength and concentrated purpose on that free hand of Bele's and forced it around. It was like trying to twist a live

branch, big as his thigh, from a mulberry tree.

Bele heaved and was on top of him. But Kwa had brought the free arm of Bele with him. Little by little, he was dragging the arm into the position where he wanted it to go.

MEANTIME Bele had worked his other hand partly free, and his fingers were merciless as they prodded and tore wherever they could reach Kwa's body. Kwa felt as if bush-pigs were tearing him up alive.

But he wouldn't let go of Bele's arm. He had the arm now against Bele's back and was pressing it up. The great hand of the Beast Man was now almost between his shoulder blades, and there Kwa held it—held it even when Bele once more surged and rolled.

Now Kwa came up and was no longer underneath. He gulped the air. He filled his eyes with one wide glance of all that lay about him. After all, he was Kwa, and Kwa had friends. For these friends he was fighting now. The thought somehow nerved him for the final effort, when he gave a sudden heave and knew that he had dislocated Bele's shoulder.

He didn't pause to rest on that much of a triumph.

Bele, with a dislocated shoulder, could still be as dangerous and as deadly as a gored rhino, as a wounded lion. That also was part of the jungle law—never to stop simply because of pain, simply because you thought you might be beaten. Pain—that was merely the whip of the invisible master, to each man and beast his own "mbuiri," forcing him to go on until the mbuiri, the soul or the ghost, itself skips out.

In his own heart Kwa said, "God bless the umkago!" The little red-

headed monkeys had thrown down enough tie-tie vine to tether six elephants.

Kwa noosed the dislocated arm and threw the same loop for a dozen turns about Bele's throat.

He noosed the second hand, then cast a hitch about one of Bele's hocks and drew the two together. This wasn't for the sake of torture. This was all for the sake of absolute mastery, absolute security.

Kwa got to his feet. There was a tremor in his knees. He was streaming with blood. He felt befouled. He raised his face and shook out his name of tawny hair. He felt as if he'd been scalped. He felt as if he had a nest of hot coals in his thighs—there where Bele had prodded and torn at his flesh.

But all this would pass.

"Wah!" he cried. "You see me? I am Kwa."

THERE was a singing in the air. It was made up of a hundred—or a hundred thousand—voices. For there has never been a census of the jungle-world. There has never been even an attempt to chart the zones and the countries of jungle thought and speech, of common understandings.

The answer came:

"Wah! We see thee, brother! Thou art Kwa!"

That was the general run of the chorus, and there may have been even the voices of insects in it as well as the voices of birds and elephants, of lizards, snakes and pigs.

Kwa bent a knee and took a slow step, bringing his foot flat down to the trampled earth.

"There lies Bele," Kwa said; "bound and mastered."

The warm breeze of a thousand or ten thousand breaths repeated the affirmation.

Kwa took two steps, thinking

deeply, inviting his mbuiri to express itself.

"Shall I kill him?" Kwa asked; but those who heard him knew that the question was not for them. There was a great silence. "Killing him would do no good," said Kwa. "We shall doctor him and let him go."

BELE himself meditated this strangest part of his adventure when he found himself free. It was early night. It was the night of a new moon—always a night of some solemnity in Black Africa—for animals as well as men.

The thing that impressed Bele most was that he'd been turned out free and sound on a new-moon night. The new moon must have had something to do with it. This moon liked him. It was his moon.

As a matter of fact, the strange white Thing he had fought had been worse hurt than he himself had been hurt. The Kwa Thing. Kwa, who spoke the speech of the Bush, This was no Utangani whelp. Nor yet was it an "Ovengua"—one of those powerful spirits that roam the Devil Bush. For an Ovengua would never have allowed itself to be taken in so simply by a leopard.

He'd said it. Kwa was a white g-at who happened to have taken on the shape of a man and who'd picked up something of Utangani—White man—magic.

But, in any case, white. Moon color. His blood would make strong medicine. He'd almost had it.

"O Moon!" said Bele in his thought.

And he didn't know it—it wouldn't have made any difference even if he had—but when he said this he was joining his voice to a chorus that went all up and down the coasts of West Africa this night—and far back into forests and grasslands, up dim rivers, out across the Kalahari desert

where half-starved Bushmen also stared at the silver crescent and said, "O Moon!"

"O Moon!" said Bele. "Help me make to thee this White Sacrifice!"

CHAPTER V

The Gree-Gree Cave

BELE, the Cloven Footed, traveled smoothly and swiftly through the darkening jungle of the Devil Bush. A few leopards had caught up with him shortly after Kwa and his friends had turned him loose. But these Bele had driven away. He felt that a virtue had gone out of him by having been beaten and bound.

It wasn't good for a Bush god to allow himself to be seen by his followers when his virtue was departed.

Especially when these followers were leopards. Leopards were keen; they knew too much. Leopards had risen to a point where they were no longer afraid of fire. Leopards even had ideas of fetish. For example, leopards would often take the skull of a victim and put it up in a tree. When you asked them why they did this, they'd simply grin.

In spite of those great horned feet of his, Bele traveled as silently as any leopard could have traveled. As a matter of fact, he often ran with leopards. All the Beast Men did. The Beast Men. The Sapadi.

And they let the leopards do their killing for them, which the leopards were glad to do.

This reminded Bele of past banquets, and he began to take close notice of the air. It wasn't long before he scented something that whetted his already sharpened appetite.

"Niaray!"

The niaray were a bush-buffalo almost as dainty as certain of the deer.

And shortly, Bele, silent as a shadow, had the herd located. In less than a minute he'd made his kill—a month-old calf that had been sleeping close up against its mother's flank. Before the mother herself had discovered what had happened he was on his way again, taking the calf along. He was getting his virtue back. Neither he nor the calf had made a sound.

He sated himself as he traveled, then cast the drained body aside. The blood of a calf was sweet. It was nourishing. But there was no medicine in it.

There were many creatures in the Bush whose blood was medicine. Man came first, of course; and of men the whiter they were the stronger the medicine. But, after man, lions and the big apes—both troublesome and hard to kill. But there were those who believed that leopards, after all, were even better.

And, strangely enough, leopards were the standby of the Sapadi Lodge—a secret that not even the shrewdest leopard had ever learned. For the Sapadi were the gods of the leopards. And gods—so ran the old wisdom of Black Africa—of men as well as beasts—always fed on those who worshiped them.

Bele, in the dark, had pressed on through queer passages and ascending trails to a place somewhere on the steamy flanks of Sango Lobango—that huge and ragged, snow and jungle covered mountain of the Devil Bush whose native name meant the Father of Lies.

IT might have been called that for a number of reasons. Sometimes it had been seen from some point, perhaps ninety or a hundred miles away—the fingers of its snow-peaks pointing to the sky. Yet no explorer had ever been able to find it. Or, if he

had, he'd never, at any rate, returned.

First the Devil Bush, that vast and haunted jungle into which no West Coast native nor jungle Black could be bribed to go. Then, the broken flanks of Sango Lobango himself—a chaos of pits and flinty needles, craters and caverns, hot streams and cold, all jungle clotted, as if in a stupendous hot-house, almost on up to the point where the snows began.

But all as simple as a village street to Bele.

He found a crooked corridor—jet dark to ordinary eyes—but where he saw plainly enough everything he might have cared to see. The floor of the corridor was a tepid stream that ran a smooth carpet of water over tilted slate. The jungle closed this in with a solidity like that of solid rock. There was, in fact, no telling, so far as appearances went, where the jungle left off and the solid rock began.

For the river flowed from a jungle-smothered cave in the face of a cliff.

THIS was the entrance to the Gree-Gree Cave of the Beast Men. It was known to them as such. Yet they'd come to it but recently. And none of those who had now assembled there had ever seen it before. For the Sapadi hadn't used this particular Lodge Room for nearly a thousand years. They were like that. They appeared. They disappeared. They knew in ways that they never sought to question things that they couldn't understand.

Bele ran lightly in spite of his great weight. He came into a large chamber where there was a natural fire-pit, perhaps twenty feet in diameter and deep as a desert well.

This filled the place with a red glow which, once the eyes were accustomed to it, served the purpose of

sight as well as sunlight might have done.

About the edge of the fire-pit were set a row of skulls—all sorts, human and nearly human, the skulls of lions and elephants. The warm air of the place had the smell partly of an unclean butcher-shop.

Bele drew this air into his lungs a number of times as if gratefully, and exhaled it with a snorting sound.

THERE were snorts and loud breathing in shadowy corners, and then soft clattering of hornshod feet as from here and there, the black shapes of other Sapadi began to appear. Some were young and some were old.

There was one who was very old, and he spoke first.

"Two of the Spotted Believers came," he said, in the snorting, mooring, tribal speech of the Sapadi Lodge. "They told us you were thrown and bound."

"Where are they?" Bele asked.

"We took their blood and threw them into the fire-pit."

"You did well."

"They lied?"

"You see me here."

"But the white sacrifice I do not see."

"He was surrounded by half the killers of Africa. He speaks their speech."

"Yet white?"

"White as a fish."

"His medicine must be strong. I need it."

"I'll get it for you."

"You said that when you left."

"I'll get it."

"When?"

"Tonight. Now. I know where he sleeps. I hurt him badly. To bring him to you unspoiled I'll now take others with me."

And Bele began to look about him at the other members of the

Lodge. They shifted about a little, their cloven feet scraping the stone of the floor. None of these others were as large and powerful as Bele was himself. Yet nearly so.

Even the old Sapadi, Bele's father, who'd frightened creatures of the Bush now for upward of a century, had a look of twisted power about him, like a gnarled tree.

The old Sapadi had two fresh leopard skins twisted about him which yielded a scent of fur and blood, and these he sniffed from time to time as medicine.

"Choose," the old man snorted.

And Bele began to choose those who would accompany him.

CHAPTER VI

"Ovengua"

THERE had always been, perhaps, more reason than white people might concede, for some of those strange beliefs that lived and held and proved themselves in this part of Black Africa. Take that belief in the "Ovengua," for example—the one to which Bele, the Beast Man, had referred in his own mind when thinking of Kwa.

The "Ovengua" were terrible, shadowy creatures—spirits, they were believed to be—that roamed the jungle at night, killing men and eating them, or sending them back to their villages at last crazy and frightfully disfigured.

There were witnesses enough to tell of having seen such things and escaped. They told these stories at night as they sat about the village fires and smoked and drank.

Africa liked to talk all night, or drum and dance. Perhaps there was some ancient wisdom in this, as well.

Bele and his Sapadi companions were like "Ovengua" now as they threaded their way through the black

and steaming lark of the Sango Lobango bush. How could they see in the dark? How could any of the night prowlers of the Devil Bush see in the dark? The dark wasn't dark to them. It was just another sort of light. It was a light by which they could see many things better than by sunlight. There were many things they could see in what the White Man calls the dark that would have been invisible by daylight—things that floated, things that crawled, other things that stood and peered.

The Night Side of Nature. Another world. A world that ordinary men dimly remember, perhaps, such times they're in the brush at night, when they look at the slim new moon, when they tell their ghost stories.

Bele had selected only the toughest and boldest of the Sapadi for this enterprise of his.

After the fight in the clearing where he'd been thrown and bound, one of the elephants had picked him up—at Kwa's request—and carried him off through the jungle to the southern slopes of Sango Lobango. While half the beasts of Africa, it seemed, trailed along to see the finish of the day. Kwa had ridden another elephant, where, for a time, an old gorilla had ridden at his side.

THIS man's medicine must be very strong.

And there, at the same warm medicine pool, Kwa himself had reset the dislocated shoulder. The pain of that was so great that Bele would have bitten Kwa just then, but gorillas and elephants had held him.

The shoulder had been laved in the warm waters of the pool. The pain had gone.

Kwa and a few of his companions were to pass the night at this same pool, where Kwa would soak his

wounds. Bele had heard Kwa say that by morning the wounds would be as good as healed.

Not even if they had been Oven-gua, in fact as well as in the seeming, could Bele and his Sapadi band have been more silent, more cunning in the ways of darkness.

Wherever they passed they left, it seemed, a trail of silence and of an even greater darkness about them. There would be a great chorus of frogs and crickets—a surf of sound with regular waves; and across these waves every now and then a whoop or a whistle, a whine or a laugh, a bark or a clatter of beaks, that were like the traffic sounds of some invisible harbor.

Then, a sudden silence at the passing of the Sapadi—a silence that lingered—a silence that seemed, somehow, devoted to serious thinking.

Only the leopards kept the Sapadi company on their silent march. And even the leopards kept their distance—ghosting far out on the flanks like the Devil's own hunting dogs.

KWA slept without fire or cover. He lay at the side of the jungle-pool that came down warm and medicinal from one of the ten thousand live craters of old Sango Lobango. Even Sango Lobango had its virtues, and not the least of these was that few insects loved the breath of it. The ants and the mosquitoes never came here, nor the gnats and buffalo flies. Anyway, since his return to Africa, Kwa had recalled all the things he'd ever learned while living with the Mu—there in the hidden Valley of the Mu, which Sango Lobango surrounded with its castellated cliffs. There was truce with many of the insects as there was with many of the beasts.

Some day, Kwa dreamed, he might try to explain these things to those

who didn't understand. But, so far, there was too much that he didn't understand himself.

While he slept, his animal friends came and went.

They all had their appointments. There was an unceasing business of the jungle. And the difference between the business of the Utangani and the business of the Bush was this:

If you neglected your business in the White World you stood to lose some money. If you neglected your business in the World of the Bush you stood to lose your life.

TALL Golef, the young elephant bull, who'd rocked through half the night, dreaming yet awake, not far from where Kwa lay, now led his herd off into the night on elephant business and a company of Tinga-Tinga—the great black swamp buffalo almost as powerful as elephants—as if casually drifted near.

But scarcely had this happened than a yearling of the buffalo herd set up a help-cry and at the same time a leopard-cry. It seemed impossible, but there it was—two leopards simultaneously had jumped to the yearling's back practically there in the middle of the herd.

The buffalo bulls closed round. The leopards were doomed.

Kwa was instantly awake to the alarm among the buffalo, but he had no more idea of rousing himself on this account than a city dweller would think of leaving his bed and running to help each time the firemen pass. Even half asleep, moreover, he followed perfectly all that passed—he was listening to that radio of the buffalos. He knew it when the bulls closed in and were about to kill the leopards.

Out of the dark, like a velvet, suffocating cloud, something had fallen

upon him — checking his breath, checking all movement.

It was the scent that told him what had happened—the scent that came with his last gasp of breath—a scent that was charnel, blood-tainted, hot.

About throat and arms and legs and over his face there was a swift, enclosing pressure like the coils of a gigantic snake.

But these coils, he knew, were of Sapadi hands.

All this swift, silent, with the noiseless speed of a dream.

He was far away when his breath came back. He'd been choked so nearly dead that he'd had to keep his mbuiri and his body together by sheer will-power—the sort of will-power that won't desert some men even when they're unconscious, standing beside them like a faithful dog.

Kwa never had been able to see in the dark as well as some of his jungle friends, but he could see well enough, after a fashion.

Six, seven of the Beast Men, possibly more.

HE'D said that it wouldn't do any good to kill Bele—back there today when he'd had Bele in his power. He'd made the declaration after the thought-dance. He wondered. This was Bele's answer.

They swept him along—half-carrying him at times, forcing him to run. But carried or afoot, he felt the clutch of one great hand in his hair and he knew that this was Bele's hand.

They'd come through a rocky corridor into a dimly lighted cave—a cave that smelled of slaughter-house and stable.

And here Bele shouted: "Lo, I bring you blood of the Moon Colored."

CHAPTER VII

The Fire Pit

HE was king of the blood-drinkers—Kwa remembered Bele's vaunt. And there came to Kwa a memory of the spectacle when Bele had broken the little ncheri's neck, then stood there where all could see with that leopard mouth of his clamped to the victim's throat.

The thought and the memory ran like an overtone to what he saw, heard, scented.

He'd been brought—he didn't have to be told—to the secret place of the Beast Men. Not in the knowledge of any living thing—not in all the age-old annals of the Mu—was there any record of one who'd ever entered such a place as a captive and escaped alive. The secrets of the Sapadi were as the secrets of Death itself.

There was a slippering clack of horny hoofs on stone. Dimly, then more clearly, he saw the gathering of the Sapadi Clan. The Beast Men. No young. No women. Just men. No, neither animals nor men. Beast Men! There were forms of an ancient black magic in the world to make a carved idol shudder. So he'd been told—by the old men of the Furry Tribe, by old gorillas and elephants, by the old chimpanzee woman who'd cared for him once before when he'd lain wounded in the Devil Bush.

He would have none of this black magic. He wouldn't contribute to it even by his death. Not if he could help it.

An old Beast Man was peering into his face, fingering his throat.

At the same instant that Kwa felt an overwhelming spasm of reaction he also felt a slight loosening of that grip in his hair.

He screamed. He struck right and

left. The old Sapadi in front of him he bowled over completely.

There was a power in the human voice—puny compared to a hundred other voices of the Bush; yet powerful. So his jungle friends had told him. Always something about a human voice to make the non-humans pause and reflect. Always a possibility of magic in it.

At that sudden scream of Kwa's a touch of panic must have caught the Beast Men. Just for an instant they were weak as water. But in that instant Kwa was out of their suffocating mob.

The walls of the cave took up his cry and magnified it. Kwa himself may have been caught in a gust of panic.

He ran. He was like a dead leaf caught up by a hurricane. The Fire-Pit opened just in front of him. He flung himself into the air in a flying leap.

HE almost shriveled and dropped. He'd seen that happen to birds when they carelessly crossed some open vent in the Valley of the Mu.

But he was over.

He stumbled into a row of skulls. He came up armed. He didn't know what with, but there was a bone cudgel in his hand. The swift thought came to him that here was some earlier victim of the Beast Men now offering him aid, ready to exact the toll of vengeance after many years.

There was no time for consecutive thought. Just flashes—flashes of sight, judgment, action.

The Sapadi were now adding to that clamor he'd set up by that scream of his. For the moment it was as if the cavern had become a trap in which a hundred maddened cattle milled—snorts and bellows, a drum of cloven hoofs, the walls of

the place sending all this back magnified.

A black shadow of a giant rushed toward Kwa and Kwa, with that jumping perception of his, read his intent before the enemy closed in. This hadn't been a direct attack. The Beast Man was trying to get between him and the Fire-Pit.

That was it.

They wanted to preserve him alive.

KWA feinted at a scurry to escape, then turned and nailed the black monster with his bone club. The Beast Man lost his balance, turned and clutched. For a moment his hand was scraping Kwa's arm—trying to save himself, trying to take Kwa along.

Kwa struck again—twice—and twice again.

He saw the Beast Man stagger, bellow, topple—

Even while this was happening, there were others pressing in along the edge of the pit. There was a screech from the other side, piercing the general tumult with a broken shaft of sound. And that—Kwa somehow knew—was the voice of the old man who had fingered his throat.

Again he heard that inverted form of speech, the meaning of which rocked into his mind.

"Don't spill his blood! Fend him from the pit!"

He'd keep the pit at his back—Kwa resolved. Better a plunge into fire than to have a Minotaur at your throat. His back was so close to the great well of fire that he could feel the scorching waves of its heat pulse up his back, lift his hair.

But he clubbed at a pair of hands that reached for him along the stone at his feet. He shifted aside. Perhaps, if he could round the pit, he might risk a dash for the corridor by which he'd entered this place.

Still with his bone club in his right hand he reached for a buffalo skull with his left and flung this backhanded at those who pressed along the rim.

He saw one go, clutching—then a double scream. One Sapadi had dragged another over the rim.

A lull, sometimes, is a warning as much as a shout. He crouched a little and turned. He was just in time to see a black mass hurtle in his direction. One of the Sapadi had attempted to duplicate that initial leap of his.

He fell far short.

The gaping abyss of the Fire Pit was like the open mouth of some prehistoric serpent.

How many Sapadi were there? Where was Bele?

Kwa stumbled on a skull and fell. He fell on the skull and rolled. For a flaring second it seemed as if he were doomed to a plunge into that bottomless pool of flame whether he wanted to or not. But feet, legs, thighs—these writhed to save themselves and save him, their master, with them.

And he curled round, with the curl of a scorched snake, just as two more enormous human paws slid toward his feet along the floor. And now, at least one of those questions in his brain was answered.

HERE was Bele. These were the hands of Bele reaching toward him. That was Bele's face raised in the faint outer zone of light that shivered up from the pit.

Bele's voice reached him.

"Kwa! Kwa! You saved my life! Now I save yours!"

But Kwa, trained to read the silence back of words, read Bele's thought.

"Moon! Moon! Help me, Moon! I offer you this Moon Colored vow

so soon as we have drained his blood!"

Kwa pulled himself around to his knees and bashed his bone club into Bele's temple. Bele, in a paroxysm, clutched Kwa's arm. The fingers held, even as Kwa, with a gust of dread, felt that Bele's life was gone.

Kwa staggered to his feet. But as he rose, he dragged up the weight of Bele's dying clutch. The clutch tightened. It held like iron.

As he jerked backward, one of his feet slipped over the rim of the pit. Now all that saved him was the grip of the dead Beast Man.

So Bele, dead, had been forced to keep that lying promise of his, after all. Bele had saved his life. But for what?

CHAPTER VIII

New Moon Night

NEW MOON night in the outside world; and in a thousand villages up and down the Guinea Coast of Africa the Black Men were daubing themselves with sacred chalk—white, blue, pink, in designs their fathers had taught them but which no one understood. From moon to moon the chalk lay before the main idol in the greegree house, and thus absorbed the qualities that made it powerful in the spirit world.

Not much drumming on a New Moon Night. A time for silence, fear, meditation, magic dreams.

So in the Bush, among the animals.

Very close to each other, in some respects, were the animals and men of untouched Black Africa. Secretive. Occult. With ways of their own that simply were not "white man fash."

Indifferent to death as few white men are. Cool in the fatal emergency. Perpetually attentive to things unseen.

There'd never been anything in the nature of a truce between the Dinga-Dinga tribe—the swamp buffalo—and the Leopard People. But just as the Head Bull of the buffalo was about to rip the life from the second leopard that had attacked the yearling herder it was as if a question and answer had passed between them.

Leopard may have talked to Buffalo, Buffalo to Leopard—all in that unclocked speed with which so much transpires in the Bush.

The Head Bull backed away with a snort. What he might have said was: "You, a Leopard, follow a thing like Bele! When Bele and his sort have been killing Leopards for a thousand years!"

You don't have to describe the sky to see it. In a glance of an eye you see the thousand herds on the Nyasa plain. Jungle speech was something like that—direct, far-reaching, limpid, meant for truth.

NEW Moon Night, and ever since the first glimmer of the slim crescent could be seen against the green of the sky, the leopards had been assembling more or less, as they always did, in the vicinity of the Fire Pit Lodge of the Beast Men.

No one will ever know how that breeze came up in the airless night. It wasn't the sort of breeze that sways the tree tops. But all through the Devil Bush—the hundreds of square miles of it—the jungle tribes, the furred and the feathered, the scaled and the armor-plated—lifted their heads and said: "The Leopards are talking!"

Old rhinos dozing as solid as rocks under the stars, hippos at pasture in the strong grass fringing the rivers, the wide-awake sentinels of monkey-towns, lesser cats, lions, elephants. All these heard that breeze of a Leopard broadcast.

How such things start, few ever know—another sort of Cosmic Ray, perhaps; blowing down from somewhere out of interstellar space—giving this fresh young world an old idea from a wiser place.

And suddenly the whole Devil Bush began to stir. It was a tradition that the great things of the Bush always happened on a New Moon Night. Sometimes it was one thing, sometimes another—sometimes the beginning of a plague that would sweep the plains, sometimes a great fright out of nowhere as if all around there was a great war raging that none could see nor hear.

But the jungle radio had already broadcast the story of that battle today between Kwa and the Beast Man. Tonight there'd been a broadcast that the Beast Men were in conclave at their ancient lodge on the setting-sun side of Sango Lobango.

Then, this stupendous broadcast that the Leopards were on their way to destroy their old gods, accept the new.

Too late?

Kwa was gone. The Beast Men had taken him. In their Lodge they were about to work that oldest of all magic. The Beast Men would take to themselves the virtues of Kwa—Kwa the Golden—by a sacrifice of blood.

A great torment swept the Devil Bush. Rhinos plunged through the jungle—thudding and tearing their way. Elephants shadowed along the paths they knew. Leopards ran and paid no attention to the wild dogs, the shy bush wolves, the pigs, the apes and the monkeys. High above the bush there was a beating of wings—now and then the harsh cry of raven and heron.

There were creatures afoot or awing that had never been known before to have ventured out in the dark.

But the broadcast had proclaimed it. This would be a night of truce—the night of a Great Truce, such as Kwa had set up once or twice back in the Valley of the Mu. There would be a truce this night for all things except the Beast Men, except for the devils who'd passed themselves off for gods.

The Bush for miles around the entrance to the Fire Pit Lodge was swarming with all the beasts of this part of Africa—and no animal afraid of another—as the leopards drove into the corridor of the shallow river, then into the rock entrance of the forbidden lodge room.

The leopards were like a river that flowed upstream—or more like some enormous serpent, with a thousand heads, glittering as if with green-fire stones as the staring eyes of the wrapt and concentrated cats went by.

Suddenly, there swept over the straining, silent Devil Bush another broadcast; and what it said was:

It is over!

What was over and how? Not a frog sang, not a cricket chirped.

THEN, from far away in all this tremendous silence, there came the chant of what the Black Men called a "cooba iga," meaning, literally, a "wild chicken"—a jungle fowl, the crowing of a cock. And this meant that the sun was coming up.

That, at least, was something. The sun was coming up.

As the leopards swarmed into the cave, all in an instant, it seemed, they were everywhere. For, after all, the Leopards were the only wild Bush people who'd lost their fear of fire. In a way, they themselves were fetish—superior to the ordinary dreads of the jungle folk.

Three of them had swarmed over the old man who was head of the Lodge. The Beast Men fell where they stood. Their power had gone out of them entirely.

And then, at last, the Leopards came to Kwa.

HE'D got the broadcast in some moment of inner silence even here in the cave. He'd known that the Leopards were coming. And, after that, the hand on no dead man could hold him.

He'd swung his bone club.

From beyond the Fire Pit someone had flung a skull that knocked him prostrate. He'd been fighting since.

"Ho," he managed to say, "into the pit with them!"

And the bodies of the Beast Men began to drop—by ones, by twos, by fours—into the purifying flames. For, by this time, other animals were crowding in.

They formed a great circle, and there, in the midst of them, around the edge of the Fire Pit, Kwa danced—solemnly, knees up—calling for some new message from his mbuiri—his heart, his soul.

*Next Month: Another Great Jungle Story of Kwa and
His Animal Friends and Foes—*

KWA AND THE WALKING MOON

By PAUL REGARD

You Can't Afford to Miss This Exciting Story!

STEEL FISTS



John Steever Packed a Mighty Wallop—And Had a Surprising Reason For Fighting, As This Unusual Story Will Tell You

By WALLACE R. BAMBER

Author of "Fly to the Hills," "Black Snows," etc.

JOHN STEEVER entered the fore door of the combined baggage and passenger coach attached to the train on which he was the conductor and glared down the aisle at the motley array of passengers. John Steever was large, but not too large. He weighed a good two hundred and fifty pounds, but didn't look it. His weight was spread so evenly over his massive frame that appearances were somewhat deceiving.

But if his appearance was deceiv-

ing his glare wasn't. John Steever's glare meant something. It meant something to the maculate crowd of passengers who huddled down low in their seats avoiding his gaze.

He strolled slowly down the aisle of the jerking and swaying coach, marking and appraising each individual passenger as he passed. His gray eyes narrowed beneath bushy overhanging brows as he mentally graded each one of his separate fares, small fry mostly, but there were a few lesser coffee planters

from the plateau of Despoblado, high-grade Bolivians with a considerable dash of Castillian blood scattered among the variously colored crowd running from dark chocolate down to the lemon-hued *meztizos*.

John Steever was somewhat of a genius in making quick mental estimates of the financial worth of his fares, and that factor served him in good stead. It helped him to add considerably to the fund he regularly deposited each month in the *Banco Nacional* at Sucre, the northern terminus of the railroad line.

After he had sized up all the passengers inside the car he stepped out on the back platform. There was a single passenger out there, a white man, very small, with a pair of baby-blue eyes that twinkled merrily.

"Howdy, Mr. Conductor," he said, when Steever eyed him. "You don't care if I ride out here, do you? I don't like the assorted smells inside. It's a fine bunch of human fish you carry on this rattler."

Steever stood with his feet apart and stared down at the little man in front of him. The passenger spoke good American English with the fine old country slang added, and the words were music to Steever's ears, used as he was to hearing various adaptations of Bolivian Spanish.

"Yes," Steever replied, after a momentary perusal, "you got it right, brother. But what's your game? I've never seen you on this train before."

THE little man colored slightly and his spare shoulders quivered, but only for an instant.

"Standard Oil, Mister," the little man replied. "I'm searching out hidden pools of gold to add to the store of John D."

The conductor appeared satisfied with the explanation, so went back inside and glared down the aisle

again, then his gaze ranged over each fare individually while a ticket punch and pad of tickets appeared magically in his massive hands. Then stalking imperiously down the aisle, he began the routine collection of fares. The little man on the back platform leaned through the rear door to watch him.

JOHN STEEVER was an artist in his profession. Big, raw-boned, hard-eyed, with a day's growth of red beard on his jutting jaw, he completely subdued the natives solely by his appearance and penetrating stare. Money he took from them, and sometimes he returned the change and sometimes he didn't. To some he gave tickets in return for the *pesos* given him, but others he overlooked completely and quite consciously.

Infrequent travelers on John Steever's train inevitably mouthed protests. They did this time, but one glance from him and their shrill protests paled into stricken silence. Steever had a system all his own and if his icy stare failed him, he shrugged his massive shoulders or bulged the bulky muscles of his steel fists. That was usually enough.

But this time Steever failed in his simple routine. At the far end of the car, next to the baggage coach, were three men in rough Bolivian attire. They sprawled out lazily over the seats and had their well-stuffed knapsacks piled up in the aisle. The men paid their fares without objection, but when Steever kicked at their knapsacks with the toe of his boot and asked for extra fare for them, they objected—strenuously.

"It weighs too much for free baggage," Steever said, and dropped his lower jaw. "You'll have to pay excess on it." The amount he named was unquestionably somewhat higher than usual.

"Fifty pesos!" a thick-set, heavy-

jawed Bolivian who seemed to be the leader of the group, ejaculated in Spanish. "It's too much. We won't pay it."

STEEVER reached his thick arms up toward the whistle-cord while eyeing the objector keenly. The big Bolivian returned the stare eye for eye, glare for glare.

"It's 37 kilos back to Huanchaca. It's 11 back to the last water tank. I'll let you off here if you choose. The walking will be fine," Steever replied with no especial emphasis on his words, but thrust out the upturned palm of his great right hand while his left tightened around the whistle cord.

The little man on the back platform sidled in through the door and tiptoed up the aisle. His oversized Stetson was pulled far down over his forehead and his hands were stuffed in his pockets.

The heavy-jawed Bolivian lowered his gaze and looked around at his companions. They nodded and smiled wanly. He then reached in his pocket and pulled out fifty pesos, which he handed over to the conductor. Steever put it in his pocket and turned back down the aisle to collect the last remaining fare from the little man right close up to him.

"This is not such a bad business," the little man said as he handed Steever his fare.

"I've seen and had better," the conductor replied, putting the money in his pocket and neglecting to punch a ticket.

The swaying and jerking train juttied over the rim of the plateau of Despoblado and commenced winding down the natural gorges on the descent toward Lake Poopo. Steever stepped out on the platform and gave the primitive hand-brake a whirl, set them, to steady and retard

the fast and jerky descent. The little man followed him.

With the brakes once set, Steever and the strange little American sauntered back into the baggage car. The conductor pulled a pipe from his pocket and sat down on a heavy, iron-bound cask while the American took a seat on a tomato crate opposite.

It was hot—hot and dry. Through the side door they had glimpses of the tawny rock wall and boulder-strewn slopes that rimmed the railroad right of way—bare, hideous and forlorn in the brassy glare of a quivering sun. The car trucks swayed and pounded on the rails beneath them, and the exhaust from the puffing locomotive up front was thrown back from the sheer rock walls to hammer in their ears.

"You got plenty of nerve handling those passengers like you do," the little man finally hazarded, after Steever had lit his pipe. "Don't you ever have any trouble with them?"

"Why trouble?" Steever asked and looked surprised.

THE little man shrugged. "Some of them look like pretty tough customers."

Steever straightened his massive shoulders and puffed at his pipe.

"I manage to handle them," he said. "They ain't civilized enough to have any sense."

"That's just the reason," the little man replied. "They're not civilized—they carry knives. By the way," he added with sudden change of thought, "who owns this line, anyway, the English or the Germans?"

"Neither," Steever replied. "A Dutch outfit in Antwerp pulls the strings."

"Umph," retorted the little man, appearing to be surprised. "Is it a paying proposition?"

"If you consider paying 40 per cent

interest on the money invested a good proposition, the answer is yes. The line handles all the freight from the Pacific side, and it owns the emerald fields and almost all other mineral rights along the right of way."

"How's the passenger business?"

Steever counted the stubs on his ticket pad.

"Sixteen fares this trip—that's about the average."

"A fair division," replied the inquisitive stranger. "You take half and give the company the rest, eh?"

"That's about it," said Steever, unconcernedly.

THE door to the passenger compartment opened and the bulky figure of the big Bolivian loomed in the opening. His two companions followed him. Apparently they were surprised to see the little American there with Steever and they hesitated an instant. Finally the leader came through and talked up to Steever.

"We've come in to have further discussion about that extra fare you charged us," the big Bolivian began in Spanish.

Steever looked up and glared at the trio, a hardy, rough-looking lot with menace written in the lines of their swarthy features.

"That is already settled," he said, dousing his pipe. "The compartment yonder is for passengers."

His manner and address was provocative, challenging.

But the big Bolivian smiled. "Pardon, señor," he interrupted. "But may I ask just how much of that fifty pesos goes to the company?"

The atmosphere of the hot baggage compartment was becoming tense, pregnant with evil foreboding. The little American shuffled back in a corner and got behind a bundle of hides.

Steever shook the ashes from his pipe and put it in his pocket, then glared up at the big Bolivian. The big fellow met his gaze without flinching.

"We believe," he went on, "that you keep a certain percentage for yourself. That's right, eh? Well, so be it. But that is such a trifling amount it is ridiculous. Why bother with fifty pesos when you can make fifty thousand much easier?"

Steever pulled himself together quickly and rose slowly to his feet, his red face darkening. Under knotted, bushy brows, his gray eyes glinted.

"Are you trying to kid me?" he roared.

The Bolivian held his gaze and smiled, showing ultra white teeth. "No, señor. Fifty thousand pesos is yours for the taking. Think of it, señor. Fifty *thousand*, not fifty. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

A grim silence settled inside the jolting car. Outside the blating engine exhaust buffeted noisily along the rock cut. The three Bolivians stood tense and expectant and eyed the giant conductor.

"Fifty thousand pesos," the leader repeated. "We have watched you. We saw what you took for yourself. It is good, we said among ourselves. There is a man who will help us collect on our fortune. We admired you. If we have figured right fifty thousand pesos is your share."

"Just what do you mean?" Steever growled, and his massive steel fists clenched unconsciously.

THE big Bolivian kicked the iron-bound cask on which the conductor had been sitting.

"That," he said, "is full of emeralds. It's worth all of one hundred thousand pesos. And it's a cinch. A boat already awaits us on the Rio Pilcomayo. A night and a

day down the river and we are in Paraguay. A half of it will be yours—just for stopping the train here and going along with us. Think of it—fifty thousand pesos! The profits of ten thousand trips in one!”

The Bolivian smiled, confident.

“A boat already awaits me, eh?”

Steever snorted. “Oh, it does—”

He sprang like a jaguar.

His long, heavy muscled arms reached out for the Bolivian’s body when something flashed blue in the sunlight and darted swiftly forward. The Bolivian thrust the pistol muzzle forward and jammed it in Steever’s belly.

“Not so fast,” the bandit sneered, and laughed with his eyes.

His two companions drew long knives. At the mere sight of them the little American behind the pile of hides let out one loud shriek, then collapsed in a heap behind the hides.

“Mario,” the bandit leader called to one of the men with knives. “Quick, up front. Unhook the engine. This man here refuses our offer—he is foolish.”

Looking over the heads of the group in the baggage car, Steevers became aware of another man, a fourth bandit, at work between the cars. A coupling pin clanked and fell apart. One of the bandits leaped to the brakes, the car fell back from the train.

A HUBBUB of anxious voices rose up against the diminishing pound of the engine exhausts. Steever got a glimpse of the fourth bandit as he stalked through the baggage compartment to cover the passengers behind from the doorway.

The big Bolivian covering Steever with the pistol smiled and jibed at him: “You see, you have been foolish. Mario takes the engine far down the track. We have our knapsacks outside there full of bricks.

We throw out the bricks and put in the emeralds.

“Then we leave this car here. As you said, it is some 11 kilos to the last water tank and 37 to Huan-chaca. Maybe you will enjoy the walking, eh?”

STEEVER took in the situation deliberately and nodded, as he backed stiffly away from the revolver. His hands were still up in the air and he swayed slightly and became almost unbalanced as the car rocked to a stop when the hand-brakes were set. “It looks like you were right, señor,” he said. “I didn’t think you could be so fast with your gun hand.”

The bandit leader smiled, in an odd, whimsical way, apparently gratified by the compliment.

“Did you think that it was only your Americano cowboys that can handle a shooting-iron? No, we of the Bolivian *chaco* also have the trick of it—Jesus,” he added in an aside to one of his companions, “tie up that little guinea pig there who burrows among the hides. And Sanchez, you do the same for this gentleman who so gently relieved us of the fifty pesos.”

Jesus came obediently from the doorway and passed between the bandit leader and Steever. The big Bolivian, basking in his vanity, dropped the pistol muzzle to let him pass.

And again Steever leaped, hurdling the surprised Jesus like a bag of salt. The bandit leader’s pistol coughed twice. Jesus screamed and was trampled under foot as Steever snaked his hand across and gripped the bandit leader’s wrist. The big Bolivian did the same. Thus interlocked, they backed across the car through the drifting powder smoke and among the scattered parcels of freight.

"Sanchez," the leader gasped. "Your knife!"

Steever whirled in time to escape the thrust, and a sudden twist of his powerful wrist threw the bandit leader off his feet.

Then madness reigned in that single car hung precipitously among the foothills of the towering Andes. By matching the speed, wit, dexterity of the two bandits Steever managed to keep just ahead of the impending death that mocked him. The big Bolivian was no weakling. The man had a body and torso like willowly steel with the resiliency of India rubber.

Once Steever slipped on his feet and the twisting gun-hand of the Bolivian levered around. The trigger clicked and Steever felt the burning sting of gunpowder on his cheek as the pistol spat again. And there was Sanchez with his ready knife waiting to get in an effective stroke. By dint of powerful and almost superhuman effort the giant Steever managed to keep the body of the bandit leader between himself and the man with the knife.

"Sanchez!" the big Bolivian gurgled imploringly, as Steever got a massive hand up and constricted steel fingers around his throat.

BUT Steever kept up such rapid movement that Sanchez couldn't wield his prowling, deadly knife.

Few words were muttered by either side, mostly they fought in silence, save for the hissing heaves and wheezes of painful burning breaths—and always the whimpering, child-like moan of the strange little American with the oversized Stetson, who cowered among the hides, helpless and hopeless, eyes wide apart in abject horror.

Again and again that biting, striking blade of Sanchez ripped Steever's torso and drew the crimson blood,

but not effectively. For Steever, squirming and dodging, never weakened or gave up. He had striven for a strangle hold on the big Bolivian since the start and his every movement was toward that eventual end.

AND now his huge hand was just about home. His blunt thumb was pressing hard against the superficial nerve ending behind the Bolivian's right ear, and this despite the fact that that thumb was almost bitten through by the gnashing teeth of the bandit leader.

For the twelfth time the three milling men tumbled to the floor and went down in a tangle. And this twelfth time they did not rise up again. The bandit leader's face was a sickly purple. His thick lips writhed and moved in frantic effort, but no sound came forth. Steever's thumb was slowly pressing home.

Sanchez managed to partially evade Steever's downward thrust, he half rose and wiped his sweating brow with a quick flick of his bleeding hand, then he upraised his gleaming knife.

But Steever had been slowly measuring distance. A heavy booted foot upflung and caught the knife wielder on the point of the chin. His teeth rattled and he went hurtling backward. Steever then worked around until he had his knee on the faintly heaving chest of the big Bolivian, and with a sudden wrench he wrested the revolver from the flaccid grasp of the weakened bandit. He struck quickly with the butt—once, twice, three times.

It was the end of the fight.

The little American crawled stupidly from behind his stack of hides and paused, staring at the shambles. Gone was the ruddy glow of his cheeks and the merry twinkle in his eyes as he turned his wild glance up toward the red ruin of a towering

man who leaned back against the car side with his foot resting on the cask of precious emeralds.

"You did it!" the little man said, with reverent awe. "You did it all by yourself."

Steever's uniform was torn in shreds, and crimson streaked him from head to foot. But his gray eyes beneath his bushy overhanging brows glinted with a triumphant light.

THE little American looked, and as he looked he began to laugh in a silly, hysterical way.

"Man," he mouthed between exuberant giggles. "I can't keep my secret any longer. I'm no oil man. I was sent down here to check up on the petty grafting. The Dutch company at Antwerp thought an American could do it better than one of their own kind.

"That's why I'm here. And I've got my report all written out, but"—as he mouthed the words, he took a slip of paper between his hands and tore it to small bits before Steever's eyes—"but, I'm not going to turn it in."

STEEVER regarded him dully, perplexedly.

"Oh, yes," the little man trembled, "I'll turn in a report all right. But it 'ill be a clean bill of health." He bit at his lip to quell its quivering. "But er-er, still I don't see why you did it—tackle all those big bruisers like you did and risk your own life? The nerve! The courage! The will!"

Steever looked down at him closely.

"Why, the damned *choloés*," he answered, "they wanted to rob the company. I won't stand for that! No, sir!"

Watch For These Thrilling Stories of Adventure

BLACK SHADOWS

By Wallace R. Bamber

THE YELLOW CAT

By Jack D'Arcy

TWENTY DOLLAR BILL

By Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson

UNDER WATER

By Ace Williams

WHILE CHAPEL BURNED

By Arthur J. Burks

To Appear Soon in THRILLING ADVENTURES!

Conclude this Thrilling Pseudo-Scientific Serial

The **CRIMSON BLIGHT**

A Three-Part Serial

By **ARTHUR J. BURKS**

Author of "Aztec Gold," "The Black Dragon," etc.

PART THREE

SYNOPSIS

I, Lieutenant Fratzke, stationed at Barahona, met Dr. Shablitz, chief engineer of the Arahona Sugar Estate, to whom mysterious cane-growing powers were attributed. We became friendly. I was astonished by his gigantic intelligence. Odd things began taking place. And finally Shablitz appeared with red mud on his shoes. Nobody could explain this, not even Captain Jackson, our commander.

A native had seemed to be hypnotized into drowning himself, and other strange manifestations had occurred that somehow seemed linked to Shablitz.

And then Shablitz spoke to me of the Cro-Magnon—a race 12,000 years ahead of time in their knowledge of things; they knew the secret of integrating and disintegrating life. The resemblance of Shablitz himself to a picture of a Cro-Magnon was terrifying.

Shablitz secretly made frequent visits to a cave, and I determined to investigate. A red lava came from the mouth of the cave. Soon this lava became a constantly growing stream.

And it was a threat—a ghastly stream of death, for it inundated everything with



which it came in contact. Terrified natives made sacrifices to it. I cabled Washington.

I received my instructions, placing me under a heavy responsibility, and details of help to be provided. Meanwhile wholesale destruction went on and it seemed as if the red stream could never be halted.

It progressed further and further. . . .

It ate the sugar cane greedily—what would it do when this was exhausted? How could this horrible menace be coped with? People fled, martial law was declared.

I asked for a suit of armor that should be water-tight, gas-tight and air-tight, determined to fight the red plague. I was cabled it would be dropped by airplane in 24 hours.

Meanwhile the natives gave up hope. They merely waited for death, 24 hours! I cabled noted scientists. Their learned answers were of no help. There were twenty hours still to wait for my armor when the last of the sugar cane had vanished. And the red peril went on—I found a pilot who took me up in a plane and I watched it spreading death and destruction everywhere. When night fell it stopped; it went no further, but neither did it re-

of the Threat of the Cro-Magnon to Civilization



treat. It was as if asleep. In the morning it would be loosed again, and then—

I went aboard a warship in the bay, the only safe place I could find, and in the morning, when the red dust resumed its hideous purpose of destruction, the armor came. To deliver it without injuring it, the pilot sacrificed his life. I donned the armor, was lowered into a boat, and went ashore.

And now I was in the midst of the red blight, alive—and, determined to see it through, walked boldly to the cave of Dr. Shablitz.

Now Go on with the Story

CHAPTER X

The Mouth of Hell

THE red stuff was as impalpable as mist. It flowed about me like smoke. But already I had been about a minute in the very heart of it and was still alive. The futile, puerile, hopelessly inadequate seeming armor was to be

my salvation then! For the moment, at least.

But I doubted my ability to handle Shablitz. A man capable of loosing such a horror upon the world could laugh at a feeble human being with no more mental and physical stature than I possessed. But, such as I was, I was dedicated to the cause of the people who had some faith in me.

I moved steadily into the cave. I hadn't the slightest idea how far I would have to penetrate it to effect contact with Shablitz. I knew nothing of this cave, but I knew that another marine officer had traveled into Hondo Valle for four days, unrolling seventeen balls of twine by which he guided himself back out of the labyrinth, and this cave was said to connect underground with Hondo Valle.

I might step into a chasm and fall endlessly. I might never find Shab-

litz in the darkness. Once I passed the light area at the mouth of the cave I could not even trace my way to Shablitz by following the red stream, for it could not be seen. Tunnels branched off and I might step into any one of them accidentally and never be found, or find myself again.

BUT I need not have worried on that score.

For perhaps a hundred yards into the cave, and a hundred feet below the level at which I entered it, I came to a lighted area. It is impossible even now to adequately describe what I found there, but being one of those fools who rush in where angels fear to tread, I shall try.

There were no branching tunnels in the huge cathedral-like cavern in which I found myself. It was a mighty grotto, a gigantic room. It was lighted, of all things, electric lights run by a dynamo. Shablitz had spent much time, taken much pains, to make himself comfortable before he loosed his horror.

The room was filled with machinery, whose hum caused the air to vibrate, caused even the cave floor under my feet to shake and tremble. Dead ahead a huge contraption, oddly like a funnel, was fitted into the solid wall of the cave. Its big end seemed firmly fixed to the solid wall, and that end was perhaps twenty feet in diameter.

The small end of the funnel was pointed into the tunnel which I was just quitting, and out of its open mouth, which was some two feet across, poured the red mist-dust-smoke—whatever it was. The stuff flared out and moved into the tunnel, growing in size with every foot it moved ahead.

I stepped out of the red flow with a vast sigh of relief. I was safe for the moment, had time to look

about me through the window-like eyes of the armor which had now soaked me through and through with perspiration until the glass windows were coated as with frost or steam. I rubbed some of it away the better to see my surroundings. To my right, close enough to touch, the red flow went on.

I cast my eyes over the other apparatus in the vast room. One part of it was packed and jammed with paraphernalia, all of which must have been evolved in the brain of Felix Shablitz, for it resembled nothing I had ever seen in any scientific laboratory. There were, of course, the usual things besides—benches, tables, even chairs—and a bed.

But the other stuff—

There was a veritable network of wires atop a table. The network made me think of a porcupine, which is foolish. But the wires were of many sizes, and I could see that some were copper, some steel, some aluminum—and all of them seemed alive, quivering—and all stood upright from that strange table. What made them stand erect, what made them quiver, I did not know.

BUT I hazarded a guess that Shablitz had turned electricity or magnetism to his uses—whatever they were. I got the idea that the red stuff flowed out like an army marching in tune to music; only the red stuff flowed in time with the quivering of those wires.

On another table were truncated globes, flat sides down, so that the table seemed covered with a hundred or so little mounds. The materials of the globes seemed to be as many as there were globes. But I recognized quartz, agate, slate, iron—and I gasped with amazement when I thought sure that one of them was a diamond.

If it were a diamond, it was worth all the money this island could ever produce within the life span of an old man. The other globes I did not recognize. I am no scientist.

Shablitz had his back turned to me. He was bending over the table of the globes, but I felt that he knew I was there, had known from the beginning that I would be there—knew even my thoughts. But he seemed absorbed in what he was doing. My one thought was to stay the march of the red destroyer.

I started toward Shablitz—and was frozen in my place as though a huge vise had clamped down upon me. And Shablitz spoke without looking around.

"Take it easy, Fratzke! I'll have time for you in a moment."

Just like that, as though I had been a child. In his eyes I was less than a child, I suppose. It gave me a horrible shock, but no worse than the feeling of helplessness which came to me when I found myself incapable of moving.

I KNEW then something of the feeling which had possessed McGinnis, who had died in the red stuff at the mouth of the cave, of what had driven that first Haitian into Neiba Bay. It was hypnotism, I suppose, but a new kind: I knew what was happening to me and could do nothing about it.

I waited for what seemed like eons, but could have been no more than five minutes. Then Shablitz turned. I swear his face was as benign as that of a Sunday school teacher. There was no anger in it. It seemed to express somehow a high and mighty purpose, a deathless resolve.

He looked at me steadily.

"You know," he said, "that you live only at my pleasure?"

I tried to answer, but could not.

"I give you permission to speak," he said, like an emperor addressing a footman.

AND with his permission my tongue was unlocked. But my own words sounded like thunder within the confines of my armor. Shablitz, fearing me not at all, approached and put forth his hands.

"There is no use to lift hands against me," he said, "even if you were capable of outwitting me or overcoming me by sheer strength, either of which is a ludicrous supposition—for if anything happens to me nothing can save the world! No hand but mine can stop the deluge of the red dust of life. If my hand fails the world will be wiped clean of all living things, because the red deluge will then ravish unguided—"

He removed the hat of my armor. He helped me to relieve myself of all armor—and the red dust did not attack me.

He offered his hand for me to shake—and I felt silly, futile, asinine, as I refused to touch him. But it made no difference to him, either way. Anger possessed me. I would have lifted my hand to strike in spite of all, but could not. He had given me permission to speak and only my vocal chords obeyed my will.

"You—you—fiend out of hell!" I said huskily. "You have murdered thousands of people already. Will you destroy every human being in the world?"

"Undoubtedly, before I have finished. But it does not weigh upon my conscience, to use a term you understand. To me the race you represent are fit only for food for the red dust. They are less than nothing. To destroy them from the face of the earth is not a sin, but a blessing. Pfah! And some of your women would even have flung them—

selves at me, would have mated with me! There is no woman alive today with whom I would lower myself to mate. When the time comes I shall create my own mate, a woman of my own people, fit to mate and bring forth my children!"

"You people! Praise God, you have no people. You are the only one of your kind in the world."

He almost smiled, pityingly.

"Out there in the red dust," he said, "are thousands, even millions of my people!"

IT was like a blow between the eyes. I asserted something and he denied it with statements that made no sense at all.

"I'll tell you briefly," he said, "for I have no time. When I have finished you will be fed to the red dust. Do you know what it is? I've told you it is the red dust of life. It is more than that. It is the material which was part of this whirling globe when it came from the sun, when its whole surface was a seething, boiling mass, when all mountains were erupting volcanoes.

"Eons and eons it was just that, the red dust of life—but lacking life. Then came the cataclysm which I understand but could never explain for your intellect—and life was struck off, life out of which evolved every living thing. It all began with the red dust. Do you know why nothing you used against the red dust could destroy it?"

"No—but in the end my people will find some way to hold it in check, to save themselves against its ravishing."

Again his strange smile.

"To destroy a thing means to break it into bits. That's to put it roughly, comprehensively. You cannot destroy the red dust, or make it smaller, because its particles are the smallest possible bits to which

anything, animate or inanimate, may be reduced. To divide the atom, to divide the electron—these are slight matters compared to dividing the ultimate particles of the red dust. The red dust cannot be destroyed because it cannot be broken up, divided. Therefore nothing injures or kills it.

"My first experiments with it, when I returned from The Silence, proved it merely that—red dust. But I found myself able, after two years of experimenting — your scientists would have required a thousand years—to endow the red dust with life, to create a cataclysm of my own akin to the first cataclysm which put life on this globe."

I stared at him, unable to grasp the awful immensity of the things he was trying to tell me. He was speaking as simply as he knew, addressing a child, explaining.

"My people," he said, "were the Cro-Magnon. I, at this moment, am the only integrate member of the world's greatest race of people. When I lived before The Silence my people possessed only the secret of disintegration, by burning in the Deep Fires. You understand? By the Deep Fires I mean the fires which, held now in the depths of the earth, are all that remain to prove that all the earth was once a molten mass akin to the mass which now boils and bubbles and squirms in the earth's center. My people knew the secret, then—but the secret of reintegration they did not know."

GOD, I listened with my mouth open, forgetting that even now, as he talked and I listened, people outside were being destroyed by the awful red blight. I could think of no other name for it. I held my breath for further revelations.

"We had our scientists," he went on. "They knew secrets your people

have not yet discovered. They knew how to send one into The Silence whole. But they were human and could be destroyed—and the Neanderthals—as you call them—known to us as *ogurs*, from which 'ogre' is derived—were overrunning the land.

"My people knew we would be destroyed before we could make earth the paradise we planned. So the chiefs held a conference. I was the ruler of a portion of the earth, of which this island is now all that remains above the ocean. I was sent whole into The Silence, and placed in a tomb behind one of our artist's pictures. I was to return to life in twelve thousand years—roll away the stone from my door and enter the world again.

"The rest of my people were disintegrated in the Deep Fires. When I awakened at my appointed time I was to find the secret of reintegration if the world was ready for us. Otherwise I was to return to The Silence for yet other centuries."

WHAT was this he was telling me? An unbelievable, monstrous thing. And yet I found it did not surprise me. I had expected something of the kind. I waited, breathless, for him to go on.

"I rolled back the stone. I went forth. I was dressed in skins. I found a white man prospecting in the jungles. I captured him, brought him here, learned his speech. He was an American. Then I destroyed him, took his clothing—and went forth. I listened to the Haitians as I went to the Main Batey—and learned their tongue. I listened to the Dominicans and made Spanish my own.

"I found that scientists had feebly approached the answer to my problem. I had but to perfect their groping attempts. I made their machines my own. I bettered them—

immeasurably. In a thousand years they would produce nothing as efficient as these of mine which I have builded upon their crude beginnings."

HE was calm about it all, and he was not mad, and I believed every word he said.

"This machine," he said, placing his hand on the funnel-like contraption, "is a combination of principles suggested by your feeble magnets, your dynamos, the puerile machinery by which your best scientists try to create life, and other things which you would never understand. It draws to itself the red dust from the heart of Loma Tina, from the bowels of the earth, endows it with life, and sends it forth to feed!"

Mother of God! what a few words to use to explain that mechanical thing which had the power of the God of Genesis: "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living thing!" And I believed him even then, before all his statements had been proved to my satisfaction.

"What of the people who have been destroyed by the red dust?" Everything I said, or asked, seemed silly, trivial. "Have they gone for good?"

"They had been disintegrated. As red dust they have mingled with red dust. They may be reintegrated when the red dust is reintegrated, but in order that they shall not walk erect as human beings when the reintegration takes place at my will, I have seen fit to disintegrate only their flesh, leaving their skeletons whole, so that never again may they walk upright as men. Even I, whom you know as Felix Shablitz, cannot destroy utterly, or I should have done so."

"You have solved the secret of reintegration?"

"Yes."

"The secret is here, in this room?"

"Yes. I have but to move my hand—to touch, and turn in its place, a certain globe—it is the diamond globe, since it matters nothing to me what you know, because you are powerless—and the red dust of life coalesces, grows together—and becomes living things!"

"And out of the red dust your Cro-Magnon will return to life?"

"They are part of the red dust. Some of the life I shall place upon the earth will be my people; but some will be animals, some will be plants, trees, birds, reptiles."

"And the people you have destroyed? My people?"

"Shall crawl in the dust on their bellies, looking up into the faces of my people as into the Face of their God, because, compared to them, my people are gods!"

AND I thought of a question to ask:

"And the living things which you will create by your process of reintegration?"

"Can they be killed as human beings are killed?"

But I didn't ask for fear of giving away the mad scheme that came to me. I tried to turn my mind away from his to keep him from reading my thoughts. Fortunately, he was so inspired by his own thoughts that he did not catch me mentally napping.

For a plan had come to me. I knew now that when I had asked warships, and planes, to stand by, that I had been inspired; that through me something, perhaps a Higher Power—had intervened to save humanity from destruction.

"What is happening now outside this cave?" I asked, speaking the first desperate words that came to

my mind in order to divert any possible suspicion he might have toward me.

He half smiled, and pointed.

"There," he said, "is my improvement upon your telescope. Through that you can see life crawling on the most distant planet; you can peer through the ooze at the bottom of the deepest sea; you can look directly through rock, steel, iron—or through one of the satellites. You can see anywhere in the island you wish, merely by turning the telescope on its pivot in whatever direction you desire."

As though eager to witness the destruction he was causing, as though in my eagerness to witness his miracles I had forgotten that my race was doomed. I hurried to the telescope, sat down before it and fixed my eyes into the depths of infinity because of the genius beyond genius of Shablitz.

I was interested only in the island, and turned the lens upon it to see what horror had been piled upon horror.

Hours would not suffice in which to tell it.

CHAPTER XI

The Last Lands of Safety

THE one mistake of Shablitz was that he did not instantly destroy me. I give myself no credit for what followed, for I was not myself, Fratzke, but the instrument of Something or Some One who was watching over the destiny of my people. In no other way can I explain how I was saved where others were erased. Certainly old Herman was a thousand times a better man than I; certainly he was more valuable to mankind. Out of all the people in Barahona Province it was sheer coincidence that the

whole thing should have fallen on my shoulders.

And Shablitz must, in some slight measure, have liked me. I can find no other reason why he saved me. Or perhaps he thought me the least significant of mortals, unworthy of attention. The fact remains, however, that he made his mistake in that he did not destroy me.

And in instructing me to seat myself at the telescope he gave me back the use of my arms and legs, and that, too, was a mistake. Perhaps he thought that not even one so lacking in intelligence as myself would be so foolhardy, in the face of all the evidence he had just shown me, as to fight against him. Perhaps he felt I realized that the world's people were doomed, and that by seeming to be friendly with him, by failing to attack him, by accepting defeat as my natural due, I was trying to curry favor and thus save myself at the expense of my fellows.

Whatever the reason, he made his mistake—and all the world had reason to be thankful—and never afterward would believe that it happened as I relate it here.

BUT I looked through the telescope. The stone walls of the cave merely faded out. I didn't look through them, for in the telescope they simply were not there. I even dared to turn the thing on its pivot and looked into the funnel out of which came the red dust.

I gasped and drew back as from the lip of a precipice—for I looked down and down, into the white-hot bowels of the earth. Frightened, I tore my eyes away, whirling the telescope back in order to survey the island of Santo Domingo.

The red dust had now possessed Barahona Province entirely, except for that portion of Barahona Peninsula lying south of the Camino de

los Quemados, and the refugees who had fled before the destroyer were milling in this last heat-ridden place of temporary safety. And the red dust flowed inexorably down upon them.

IN an hour or less Barahona Peninsula would have turned entirely red, and Barahona would be empty of life. Then the red stuff would possess Beatta Island, and Los Frailes—and start southward across the Caribbean! I was sure of it, but what could I do?

My mind was racing, but I tried to keep it turned outward, to make it elusive, though I might be mistaken that Shablitz knew what transpired in my mind. Maybe he thought my intelligence unworthy of notice. That would have been more in keeping with his attitude toward my kind.

But even so, I was curious as to what the world would be, peopled by the wise Cro-Magnon, after they had taken unto themselves all our inventions and had improved on them according to their own mental capacity. I admit that for a time I even thought of allowing the devastation to go through, in order that my curiosity be satisfied.

It was so easy to think as Shablitz thought when you were with him, subject to his influence. Something of the feeling of horror went out of me when I thought of the wholesale destruction of life, and I found I could even regard the total depopulation of the world with benign indifference.

But I came to myself with a shock when I realized whither my thoughts were leading. As a child I had pulled legs off flies to amuse myself and hadn't felt conscious-stricken. But I was no longer a child, save as compared to Shablitz.

The red dust had destroyed the inhabitants of Bani to the east; half-

way, approximately, to Santo Domingo City.

Its northern edge had now passed Restauracion, San Juan and San Jose de Ocoa. Santiago would be destroyed in a matter of hours. And the stuff had already crossed the Haitian Border. Cerco-la-source was desolate, gripped by the river of red. Tumiseau was only a skeleton. Bois Tombe, Mirebelais, Anses-a-pitre, Jacmel, were even now being gutted of all living things.

AND Shablitz, realizing, if he hadn't known before, why warships were lying off the coast of Santo Domingo, turned his attention upon them. And that proved something to me that would perhaps have been apparent to a more intelligent fellow long ere this: that Shablitz couldn't, after all, read minds.

For I had arranged for the warships and airplane carriers to stand by even before I had stepped into that silly armor.

But even though I was satisfied that Shablitz could not read minds I tried to guard my thoughts on the off chance that he could. In any case, I knew myself no match for him mentally or physically. My cue was to make my move when he was so preoccupied that I would be able to accomplish my wild purpose before he could stop me.

He would slay me, but the job would be done. Just a turn of the hand would do it, and I'd make that turn. It would be a glorious way to die, if I succeeded in my task.

Shablitz was directing his red destroyer against the warships with all the masterly air of a great tactician. The red stuff, which had been halted at the shore of Neiba Bay, while spreading out in all other directions, now began to move again—straight out upon the blue waters!

Airplanes were circling over the

stricken land, and their pilots first saw the movements. I watched the pilot who was the first to spot the movement of the dust upon the water. He seemed so close to me that I could read his white lips. He said:

"Mother of Jesus!"

He banked away for the flagship, and a minute after he had signaled black smoke poured from a score of funnels and the warships were heading out to sea in a futile attempt to outrun the red destruction.

I heard Shablitz chuckle.

Still, I waited, for I could feel his eyes boring into the back of my head. The red stuff traveled thrice and four times as fast as the rearmost of the warships. It caught the ship before it had fairly cleared Punta Martin Garcia. It turned the sides of the ship the color of blood. It poured over onto the deck.

Sailors scrambled to the superstructure, climbed aloft as far as they could—and the red stuff followed them. The vessel was instantly out of control, a mad warship among its fellows. Fortunately it hadn't the speed to catch them, else it might have brought the others into a series of collisions.

THE red stuff dyed the crosstrees red. Sailors vanished, and their skeletons tumbled down to the deck. The warship, in less time than it takes to tell, was empty of life. It seemed crazy that smoke still poured from her funnels. But she cut a mad, erratic course through the sea.

And then, without any preliminary movement, I whirled and sprang for that diamond globe. At the moment I whirled the surface of Nieba Bay was covered with the red stuff, which extended out into the Caribbean besides, for perhaps a distance of three miles.

A thin cry came from Shablitz.

But I got my hand on the diamond globe and twisted it frantically. It was set into the table, hard and fast. It would only turn in its setting. It turned under my hand.

Shablitz was on me, striving to grasp me by the throat.

But he was too late.

The most utterly indescribable sound ever heard broke instantly over Santo Domingo.

"Fool! Fool!" cried Shablitz. "You have utterly undone the greatest work ever planned for the benefit of this earth!"

He struck at me again and again, but so excited was I, I could scarcely feel his blows, and then he left off fighting me and sprang to the telescope, utterly forgetting me.

I darted for the tunnel leading out. The red dust had vanished from it. No more came out of that funnel contraption.

But that awful sound was in my ears, fetid and unheard of odors were in my nostrils, and in that tunnel I fought as though in a nightmare against things that only come to human being in nightmares.

Had I released upon the world a horror greater than Shablitz had?

WAS payment for my attempt to save the world from destruction to be another kind of destruction which would be even swifter and more ghastly?

I don't know how I managed to reach the cave mouth. To the end of my days the awful passage through the tunnel will be hazy—save in nightmares.

But I reached the open air—and gazed upon an aged world that had become young again—evil, though, and odorous—and gargantuan—and indescribable.

I had turned the diamond globe while the shores of Santo Domingo, save right here at Barahona where

it had started, were still free of the red dust.

And most of the inhabitants of Santo Domingo and Haiti still lived—their faces to the bottomless sea, their backs to the red destroyer.

Only now there was no red destroyer and the people could turn back the way whence they had fled.

But would they?

I couldn't visualize ahead, couldn't see the future—for the present blotted out all thoughts of anything else at all.

CHAPTER XII

Vengeance of Men

SHABLITZ had created in the little island of Haiti and Santo Domingo, a world of monsters, and before my eyes, there in the bright sunlight which so often had filled me with happiness during my time in the Dominican Republic, I looked upon the first, worst, and greatest travesties on life.

For Shablitz had made another mistake. I don't know how the Cro-Magnon's ashes—when, twelve thousand years ago, they had gone into The Silence—had been kept together, that of each individual in its place, so that at the "resurrection" it would be in position to be rehabilitated as an individual, but it must have been managed somehow.

However, Shablitz, by endowing the red dust with life before it became living creatures as we understand living creatures, and are able to see, and feel, and taste them, had made his greatest mistake. For the red dust particles had been allowed to grow by division, like amoeba, and the creatures which were coming into being before my eyes were gigantic things.

The red dust, in the beginning, if reintegrated, might perhaps have

been reintegrated in normal form, normal size, but the bits had grown by division beyond computing, and the life which now was appearing in Santo Domingo was out of all proportion.

I watched areas of the red dust coalesce into creatures. My attention was first attracted to that portion of the bay of Neiba, and the Caribbean just outside, which had been covered by the dust—and where the red dust had been, *things* were visibly forming. I had often heard and read of sea serpents and did not believe in their existence, at least in modern times.

BUT now I saw them. I remembered an illustration I had once seen in an old-fashioned history, as a child—an illustration showing what the ancients thought to be the nature of monsters occupying the deep beyond which vessels had not sailed. That illustration showed a sailing vessel, with all sails set, being lifted from the water by a dragon that was mountain size. The things I saw in Neiba Bay were not that huge, but they were terrific—fearful.

One mighty dragonlike thing suddenly appeared, apparently out of nothing, just inside the reef. It immediately reared up the foremost part of its ugly, scaly length, and fled for the open sea. It tried to go through the channel which allowed the passage of ships, but so huge was it, it was caught in the reefs, and its mighty thrashing—accompanied by an unearthly bellowing—when it got caught, froze the blood.

But even the reef could not hold it. It thrashed its way clear, ripping out portions of the reef as easily as though it had not existed. Then it went on out to sea, the water behind it stained with blood where it had gashed itself.

Its wake was as the wake of some

torpedo ten times as fast and large as any I knew of. A pilot spotted the ghastly thing and dived down with machine-guns chattering. Bullets tore into the brute and its fighting against their pain turned the Caribbean in that area into a maelstrom of bloody spume and froth.

The pilot kept at his task—but I had other things to watch.

There were men—giants of men—men with shaggy hair and huge eyes, trying to save themselves in the waters of the bay. But they could not swim—and other monsters which had been “created” with them, closed in upon them to feed. It was horrible.

But on the land—

Neiba Desert, yesterday and all the days before that since the memory of man a ghastly waste, was now a mighty jungle. But what a jungle! Trees which towered to thrice the height of any trees known to Santo Domingo; trees whose names I could not call because I had never seen them before.

And in among the trees there were sensuous, libidinous ferns. And in the mighty jungle thus created, gigantic men and nightmare beasts screamed and fought and died—and out of it all came a fearsome stench. It was like a charnel house.

I KNEW that even if this horror were not destroyed, that jungle must swiftly die from lack of moisture sufficient to feed the roots of the giants.

I knew that this same thing must be happening all over the island, wherever the red dust had become living things. The jungle in Neiba Desert blotted out my view of Lake Enriquillo, but I knew that the crocodiles in the lake had been succeeded by marine monsters of the most horrible appearance and ferocity—for down all the miles between

the lake and where I stood came the hissing and screaming of the things that had been "created" by the genius of Shablitz.

WHY didn't Shablitz destroy all this by the simple expedient of sending forth his red dust again? The storehouse—the "mother"—had surely not been exhausted. If he did this the new red dust would devour all these travesties, and the genius of Shablitz would discover some way of re-resurrecting his creations in normal size. Why didn't he?

But I didn't think of that just then, or I must have guessed the truth; that I had so damaged his apparatus that some delay must occur while it be repaired—and the nightmare creatures in the tunnel—creatures born of the red dust which had been in the tunnel when I had twisted the diamond globe—had slain Shablitz.

Whatever happened to these travesties of life, the secret of their creation, the secret of the red dust, had died with Shablitz—this time forever.

But for Santo Domingo and Haiti, just now, remained the problem of disposing somehow of Shablitz's "creations."

And such creations!

Creatures which must have roamed the earth when it was young, before man appeared on the scene: multiplied in size beyond belief, monsters which left one gasping one's unbelief, rubbing one's eyes.

And all over Santo Domingo human beings, who had fled before the red destroyer, looked back at the land they had left and saw it peopled by things which they must have felt sure were demons from the deepest pits of hell.

And—did I hint that the Dominicans and Haitians lacked courage?

If I did, I now retract—for men

and women and children turned back, carrying whatever they could find by way of arms—rocks, pistols, swords, guns, anything—and attacked the monsters, and the giants that looked like men, disputing with them for possession of the land that forty-eight hours ago had been humanity's home.

The warships were returning under forced draft, white spume at their cutwaters. Airplanes armed with machine-guns and bombs flew crazily hither and yon over the land, slaying the monsters with bullet and bomb.

The big ships came into Barahona harbor through the gap in the reef made by the vast reptile already referred to, lowering their small boats even as they did so. These small boats were loaded to the gun-wales with armed sailors—sailors carrying Springfields with bayonets fixed.

HUMANITY was going into action to retrieve its own. Color lines were forgotten, and white men were going into battle to regain land for black men and quadroons as eagerly as they would have fought for their own. The catastrophe had made brothers of them all.

And there was another reason why the sailors tried to win their way into the unholy areas before the Dominicans and Haitians should return all the way. There were mountainous, spineless blobs of flesh which might have been human beings—without bones, like jellyfish—in the midst of the bedlam. I knew these were our own who had been eaten by the red dust; but bloated beyond all imagining.

For them the best thing was death—*final* death, and the sailors, once ashore, did not hesitate. They attacked with bayonet and bullet and saber. They spread out in the land

and, aided by *guardia* and gendarmes, began the reclamation of the island from primeval putrescence.

The dead things were drenched with gasoline, sent ashore with the men, and burned where they were slain.

It seemed a superhuman task, but it had to be done. If the dead remained unburied—well, with all that had happened, the island was still the heart of the tropics, and the dead would lie most uneasily in the eye of the blazing sun.

The Dominicans and Haitians were winning back their own. They would have to grow new gardens, plant new fields. But for them that would be easy. Thankfulness at their escape from the ultimate horror filled them, and they fought—and later would work—with songs in their hearts, songs of joy in that they had been spared.

And as for myself?

When satisfied at last that in the end the island would be regained by its people, doom averted from the world, and happiness brought back to a peaceful people, I asked for a squad of marines.

At their head I went back into the cave, and we destroyed the creatures of the tunnel as we advanced.

Carefully, missing no slightest bit of anything, I destroyed the apparatus which Felix Shablitz had made. I was the last man out of the cave, following at the heels of the leather-necks.

Outside at last we sighed with relief—and closed the cave door forever with many charges of dynamite. This time Felix Shablitz—or whatever he had been called in *those* days—whom we had seen beside his machinery, ripped and torn and mangled—went into The Silence forever.

The End

Next Month: Begin an Unusual Serial Novel of Weird Adventure and Mystery in London and the English Countryside—Written as Only the Author of "Legion of the Frontier" Could Write It!

THE PROWLING CREATURE

By CAPTAIN KERRY McROBERTS

Don't Miss It!—A Thrill on Every Page!

Bringing in the Ship



*Ordinary Seaman Wilson Had the Queer Hobby of
Whittling Wood—And the Captain
Grinned, Not Knowing*

By WAYNE ROGERS

Author of "Blood of the Sea," "The Missing Ruby," etc.

BRING me a ship!" roared Captain Caleb Hardy. "Bring me a ship an' we'll talk of my daughter. I'll have no man in my family who can't keep his ship afloat!"

"That isn't fair, Captain Hardy," protested Dan Purdy, the young seaman who aspired to become the old captain's son-in-law. "You know that that doddering old shore skipper who sat on my case didn't know anything about navigating a six-thousand ton steamer with only two hands in a

watch. I hadn't a hand to spare to work the deep-sea lead, and consequently I ran her ashore. If—"

"I don't know anything about that," Hardy cut him short. "I know that you lost your ship and that no sensible owner will take a chance putting a good bottom in your hands. Bring me a ship—but until you do, steer a course clear of my Joan!"

And that closed the stormy interview, but not the subject. For it soon came to Captain Hardy's ears that the course young Purdy chose

to steer was not altogether clear of Joan.

"We'll cure 'em of that," decreed the captain. "Mother, pack Joan's trunk for a six months visit to her Aunt Martha down at Jamaica. Martha's been inviting her for several years, and six months out of Dan Purdy's sight will be just what we need to break up this affair. She'll sail with me on Thursday."

That problem having been solved, Captain Hardy set out for the *Tuckahoe* to supervise her loading and complete his crew so that all would be ready for departure on schedule.

* * *

HARDLY had he reached the vessel when the first applicant presented himself.

"You don't look much like a seafaring man," the captain grumbled, tilting his peaked cap over one ear and scratching his head dubiously. "Ever been to sea before?"

"Occasionally, sir; as a passenger mostly." The candidate's eyes failed to meet the clear, penetrating gaze that shot from under the captain's bushy eyebrows.

"Got himself into trouble—wants to clear out of the country," was Hardy's surmise.

"It isn't much of a job—ordinary seaman aboard this packet," he growled. "It's all work and poor food; and the pay's not much—eight dollars a month. Besides, the grub's shocking here—holystones and coconut shells for the most part, when it isn't the scouring of pig-troughs.

"I've sailed in windjammers, liners and tramps, but I've never struck such a damned workhouse and poverty-stricken brute of a firm as this."

For a moment a sudden gleam shot across the would-be ordinary seaman's face; he raised a hand as if about to grip his chin, but, encountering a thick beard, thought better

of it, and allowed his arm to fall back to his side.

"If they treat you in such a fashion as that I shouldn't think you'd care much what happened to the ship," he remarked politely. "Don't they sometimes offer men money to—well, to sink ships? I thought I heard of it one time or other."

The whole bulk of the captain seemed to swell visibly. Under the rough cloth of his coat his biceps rose as he clenched his hands.

"It 'ud be their own lookout if they did lose their blamed hooker," he growled. "But not through me, mister man, not through me. I'll keep honest, even if I have to eat the sweepings of the galley. Look here, you ain't one o' these rotten lame-duck hunters, are you? Because if you've come down here to sound me, you'd better get ashore before your neck's broke."

THE candidate made haste to deny the harsh suspicion; to a man of discernment it might have seemed that he protested too much.

"Sorry, sir; I was only remembering what I've heard," he repeated. "But I shouldn't like to think that I'd spoiled my chance by saying a word too much. I want to make the voyage with you."

"Let's have a look at you," Hardy growled. "You're big and strong enough, too—but you're soft. You've been too well fed, that's what's the matter with you. It mightn't do you any harm to take a trip with us. I'll think it over, anyway."

"When shall I come down again, sir?" asked the ordinary seaman patiently.

"If you want to come back in three days, when we're signing on, I'll see what can be done," the captain conceded.

The ordinary seaman took himself off, and, as an ordinary seaman, dis-

appeared. But an hour or so later, Mr. Ezra Tilden, owner of the *Tuckahoe*, reseated himself in his office, and stared in front of him with a distant gaze. Except for the lack of a beard and mustache, the owner was not unlike the would-be ordinary seaman.

"It wouldn't do to take the risk of buying Hardy, certainly," cogitated Tilden. "That man's too abominably honest for anything. Anyway, if you want a thing done well, do it yourself. The game has been played before, but it's nearly always been found out, simply because the people who've actually done it have blabbed. There'll be no blabbing in this case, though.

"The ship will insure for a hundred and fifty thousand easily; though she's old, she's as good as ever she was. The insurance people won't ask too many questions, anyway. And that's quite a good idea to ship a lot of raffle and call it valuable goods. If 'Mr. Harrison' wants to insure his venture at its full worth, what's to stop him? I think I can make two hundred thousand out of the ship and that'll see me clear of this trouble, and give me something over, too."

HE sought about in a drawer, and found a large-scale plan of the *Tuckahoe*, which he studied intently. Being a shipowner he knew comparatively little about ship construction, leaving all such details to his managing clerk, who knew the business from A to Z.

"There's sure to be some spot where I can do the work," he said, folding up the plan and placing it in his pocket. "It's too big a chance to let slip; and, after all, what's a couple of months' discomfort when my whole future's at stake?"

Mr. Tilden was meditating a crime—such a crime as makes the blood of

an honest sailorman run cold. He was planning to sink his own ship in mid-ocean, and, by her sinking, realize a modest fortune. As a ship the *Tuckahoe* was practically unsalable: the day of the windjammer was done. She might bring her value as scrap-iron, but Tilden had to pay a hundred thousand dollars within three months or face absolute ruin.

IT was a big gamble, but there was a fair prospect of success. He calculated his potential gains, and a weight seemed to lift itself from his shoulders.

"There's no earthly chance of being found out," he decided.

He touched a bell and his old managing clerk appeared.

"I suppose everything is ready for the *Tuckahoe's* sailing?" began the shipowner. "I mean, you're able to do everything that remains to be done, aren't you?"

"There's nothing to be done that I can't manage, sir," the clerk said deprecatingly.

"That's just as well. I find that I shall have to be away from home for a considerably long time, Jones. I've got the idea of taking a run down to South America. I want a rest, and I don't want to be bothered with letters. You take charge here and do whatever's necessary. I'll be back in two months, or three at the most."

Tilden had a good deal to do and not much time in which to do it, but he set to work methodically. The insuring of the *Tuckahoe* and her cargo was not a lengthy task, but next morning Tilden paid a long visit to a shipbuilding yard. He spent all morning in the shops, and put a number of pertinent questions to the mechanics. When he left he smiled broadly, and the tool manufacturer who attended to his wants later in the day thought him a very affable gentleman.

On the morning of sailing Captain Hardy led a red-eyed young lady to a cabin which had been prepared for her aft with the officers' quarters. Satisfied he returned to the deck to supervise the final preparations for departure.

"Must have brought the family gold plate with him," he mused as he watched James Wilson, newly signed-on ordinary seaman, lifting his bag over the *Tuckahoe's* rail. The great canvas sack had dropped weightily on to the bulwarks and had given out a muffled clang of metal. The new man was certainly unhandy enough to arouse any man's disgust, but by contrast with the rest of the crew that now piled aboard, he looked superior. He was big and square-built; soft-muscled and flabby, maybe, but with the promise of strength.

"He'll be a good man on the hal-yards," went the captain's thought. "He's as good as two of these undersized Scandinavians."

THE ship presently began to boil with the clamor of departure, and the ordinary seaman, with the rest of the crew, turned out to bear a hand. The work was hard and monotonous, consisting in the main of throwing ropes overboard into boats or on to pier-heads, and hauling them back again. But the *Tuckahoe* passed sluggishly down the river.

"She doesn't seem in any hurry to leave port," grunted Captain Hardy to the mate. "One would think she was afraid of what the voyage might bring. She's sluggish, too—notice how she hangs on the hawser?"

The newly joined ordinary seaman, who was coiling a rope down unhandily on the poop, started a little at the words, and scanned the speaker's face attentively.

"Call yourself a sailor?" It was

the mate's voice. "Call that coiling a rope down—ye soldier! The other way, ye fool, and don't get it kinked that way!"

Until the ship anchored off Sandy Hook to await a fair breeze, Wilson had little time to call his own. But it was quite excusable for an ordinary seaman to ask questions bearing on every seafaring subject under the sun, and as the crew had now sobered up, he elicited a considerable amount of information from the various members.

NIGHT fell and the anchor watches were set. Wilson was drawn to keep the watch from midnight until one a. m., and he turned in gladly, aching in every bone in his body. As yet he had not gained much really useful information, save that he knew the holds were securely padlocked, because the cargo was reputed to be of considerable value. It would be impossible to gain access to the ship's bottom in the ordinary way, but he was far from losing hope.

He turned out alertly at midnight, and for a few minutes walked the dark deck briskly. Once he started as a dark form seemed to slip forward, but search revealed nobody and he set it down to his imagination.

After ten minutes were past, he slipped into the forecastle and groped in his bag. No one moved; he returned to the deck with a powerful bull's-eye lamp. He knew already that an officer would not be on watch. He had almost a full hour before him in which to explore.

Aft he saw no possibilities. The cabins were there, and it would be a matter of difficulty for him to do his work unnoticed. He went forward under the forecastle head, and saw a small hatch before the windlass. It was open, but a search

of the forepeak revealed little of promise. When his hour was up, his problem still unsolved, he roused his relief.

"All hands up anchor!" shouted the mate, as the dawn broke gray in the east. "Turn up lively, ye swabs; we'll have a breeze in an hour!"

THE men turned out, and made their way to the fore-castle head. The capstan bars were shipped, the pawls began to clank slowly; the men yawned drearily and wished they had shipped aboard a craft possessing a donkey-engine. They toiled round doggedly, heavily.

"Two hands in the chain-locker!" ordered the mate. "Here, ordinary seaman; get ye down there."

A grinning negro dived down the ladder and beckoned Wilson to follow. Obediently he clattered down to the fore-deck and went under the fore-castle. Just abaft the groaning windlass was an insignificant hatch-way; from it came a dank and musty smell. The negro took a coffee-pot lamp from a locker and lit it; slinging it round his neck by a lanyard, he dropped through the small hatch.

Wilson waited until the dark, muscular hands had quitted the hatch coamings, and followed. The lamp beneath him smoked abominably, its fumes almost choked him; but once the smart had left his eyes he looked carefully around. He was in a small hold, the walls of which were damp and clotted with rust.

Two huge chains from the deck above at his rear; one of them dropped downward link by link; it was wet and smelled of the sea, long tangles of weed were caught in the links. Down he went, until he alighted on the ship's floor. At the orlop deck the cable locker was divided by a wooden bulkhead, the port anchor chain was stowed away

on the other side; but the cavernous place he was descending into was empty, save for a few links of chain already in place.

A quick inspiration came to him; here was the very place for his purpose! He was hardly likely to be disturbed down in this uninviting dungeon.

"Dis is a soft job, chile," the negro chuckled. "Up above dere dey heave an' dey haul, an' dey strain dere muscles. Down here we wait, guidin' de chain soft an' gentle, an' don't do no work wuth speakin' about. You stand ober dere, young feller, an' I'll stan' here. You guides de chain along so"—he illustrated what he meant by laying the descending link square on the dirty floor—"an' it works itself."

The great chain had simply to be flaked down in a criss-cross pattern right across the floor, neatly, in order that it might run out without fouling when next the ship was anchored.

THE negro shifted the light to see that the chain was going smoothly; and the ordinary seaman's eyes fell on a dark patch in the flooring, aft.

"What's that, Sam?"

"Dat's a small lilly hatch fo' de carpenter to see de bilges be all right."

"I've never been down in a ship like this before," Wilson said. "I'd like to know what it's like."

There was a ring in the hatch; he applied his weight to it, and the small square of wood lifted. A musty smell, evil, suggestive of the dead, greeted his nostrils. A space of some four feet separated the wooden floor of the cable locker from the iron skin of the ship. He could see the upright frames stretching away to right and left of the hole; above all he could see the smooth, cement-coated metal of the

hull. He had found the place he sought at last.

As the cable came down, he carefully stowed it so that it cleared the tiny trap-hatch in the floor. All he needed now was time and further opportunity.

It required some strength to keep the flakes of ponderous chain quite clear of the hatch, but he managed to do it somehow, leaving a narrow shaft sufficient to admit his body, between the chain and the after bulkhead.

When the cable was finally stowed, and the topsails had dropped from their gaskets, Wilson went into the forecandle, nominally to cleanse himself of the mud and filth. But, after a hasty glance around, he opened his sea-bag, and took out a weighty parcel, which he concealed under his coat. Under the forecandle head he met Sam.

"I reckon I dropped my knife down there," he said calmly. "I'll just hop down and look for it." And he stowed the weighty parcel in a safe place. Now all was in readiness.

THAT afternoon Wilson caught his first glimpse of Joan Hardy, and his guilty conscience filled him with panic. A girl—this was more than he had bargained for! But gradually he convinced himself that there would be no danger and she would have to take her chance with the rest.

From time to time Captain Hardy had occasion to notice Wilson and congratulated himself on having signed on a good hand; though he grinned at the fellows' queer hobby—whittling pieces of wood to a uniform size. Wilson usually threw the plug-like pieces away when he was through with them, but always, after dark, he retrieved them carefully, and stowed them away down the cable-locker.

It was half-past twelve and a clear night. A steady wind blew from the northwest, and the *Tuckahoe* boomed along with the sound of thunder in her swelling sails. As soon as the watch was relieved the men on deck tramped away to the forecandle or to snug corners under the lee of the for'ard house. The second mate paced backward and forward, a shadowy figure, now glancing aloft, now peering into the binnacle.

WILSON lifted his head from the pillow he had flung down and stared about him. Beyond the tramp-tramp of the lookout on the forecandle and the deep boom of the bellying mainsail, there was scarcely a sound to be heard. Wilson crept to the rear of the windlass and lifted the hatch, slipped down the ladder a couple of steps, and drew the cover over again. Then he lit his bull's-eye lamp, and descended till he stood on the cable.

It was not exactly easy work to worm his way down between the bulkhead and the chain, for the ladder was wet, but Wilson persevered until he stood on the tiny trap-hatch.

Inside five minutes from the time he left the deck he was crouched in one of the compartments caused by the upstanding frames of the ship, which run athwartship. He had brought with him the sacking-wrapped parcel and, setting down the lamp, he carefully unwrapped a beautiful steel ratchet drill and its accompanying supply of steel bits, able to cut through the soft iron of the ship's hull as a knife cuts through cheese.

In the broad part of each frame in a ship is a hole, large enough to admit the body of a man; this is to allow all loose water that might drain into the ship's bottom to run aft to the pumps, there to be sucked up to the deck and so overboard. Wilson examined his new environ-

ment closely, and decided to venture further through the after hole. It would be safer to conduct his operations out of sight completely.

As he started through the hole he froze stock-still. He was sure he had heard hurried steps in that compartment. But a careful scrutiny of the compartment revealed no living thing. He found himself in another chamber, exactly corresponding to the one he had left, save that it had no trap hatch above.

With trembling hands he set his drill and started to work. There was a small pool of water by the keelson, and he utilized this to keep the rotating drill cool.

HE had wrapped the sacking covers round the tool to deaden any sound it might make. *Clack-clack* went the drill; every now and then he moistened the bit, stretched himself as well as he was able, considering the confined space, and then resumed his labors doggedly.

A trickle of water spurted up about the bit; he gave the drill another couple of turns and felt it slip. The water shot upward in a round, steady jet. From his pocket he produced one of the plugs he had made, forced it into the hole, and made all secure with a couple of blows from the butt of the drill.

He went on deck and walked up and down for a little while. Nothing had happened; his absence had not been noticed, and success inspired him to further ventures. Again he descended to his chamber, and the rasp of the drill sounded for another half-hour.

He bored another hole and carefully plugged it. Before the watch came to an end, he had bored four holes.

Twenty such holes as he had bored would more than suffice to sink the ship. In four more nights he had

the requisite twenty bored and safely plugged. The worst of the work was over; and now he had nothing to do but await the most favorable opportunity.

There was no danger attached to the remaining task. A few minutes would do the job when the time was ripe; and meanwhile he began to ask questions about the possibilities of derelicts being found in those waters. Wilson spoke on the subject to the captain.

"You never know when you're going to get one," Hardy assured him. "They don't carry lights—you're into them before you know what's happening. First thing your bottom's ripped out of you and you're sinking."

"What would happen if we hit one, sir?" asked Wilson respectfully.

"We'd feel a bit of a shock, or, on the other hand, we mightn't feel any shock at all. Then we'd begin to sink; and we'd get the boats out in double quick time. Our boats are good ones."

Reassured on this point, Wilson devoted himself to his work, and smiled inwardly.

THE *Tuckahoe* was speeding away merrily before the Trade Winds when Wilson, perched aloft on the main yard, saw an unsightly object on the poop. He gazed again and again; then he sang out loudly to the officer on the bow. It was a derelict—a horrible object, weed-grown and ghastly. There it lurked sinisterly almost under water, with only one jagged stump of a broken mast protruding above the surface of the sea.

"Then I reckon tonight's the night," decided Wilson.

A strange chill of excitement passed through his body. The circumstances were exceptionally favorable

now. A derelict had been sighted; that would be mentioned at the official inquiry. Considering the brisk motion of the vessel none might be expected to feel the shock of her striking another such derelict during the night. The *Tuckahoe* would be reported as having run down a derelict, and sunk, and Lloyd's would be satisfied.

Wilson drew in a deep breath as he descended the scuttle and lighted his lamp. The hour was at hand, and he was steeled to perform his task. The *Tuckahoe* was pitching to the lift of the sea; she was full of strange groanings and creakings down there forward; every beam and stringer seemed to add its screech of protest. It was as if she knew of her impending doom and cried aloud in useless agony.

WILSON crept stolidly downward and stood on the small patch of flooring that alone remained uncovered by the chain. He snatched at the rung which lifted the hatch and pulled strongly, but the cover remained immovable. His light revealed that a link of the chain had worked itself away from under the cumbrous pile and now lay across the edge of the hatch. Until that link was removed he could not lift the wood.

He considered for a moment, and then remembered that in the boat-swain's locker was a heavy crowbar. He went up on deck, secured the implement and returned. The link was firmly wedged, but he levered hard until the piece of steel was hove clear. The hatch was clear at last. He lifted the cover, propped it, as he had propped it many times before, against the chain, and dropped into the ship's bottom.

Nothing was changed here, save that the thunder of the crashing forefoot was more deafening than

ever. So much the better; it would drown the sound of his blows. He crawled through the manhole and played the light on the iron skin. His plugs were all in place.

THE *Tuckahoe* lifted herself impetuously, up and up, her stern sinking deeply. He was flung against the frame and was a trifle confused at the shaking he had received, but he began to work systematically. He tapped each plug with the hammer he had brought, loosening it, until a single blow would suffice to dislodge it completely.

Nervously he tensed as a grating sound seemed to come from behind him. But the lantern's beams revealed only emptiness.

Water began to percolate between wood and iron. He knocked out a plug—then there was a rush behind him, a body pounced upon his bent shoulders, and clutching fingers seized his throat! Wildly Wilson sprang to his feet; frantically he tore at the grasping fingers. Fiercely he hurled the body from him and drew back against the cold skin of the ship, its chill sweat no colder than that which started from his pores.

For a moment in the lantern's light he glimpsed a crouched figure—a wild, heavily whiskered face, a shock of matted hair; dirty, slimy garments—and then it was upon him again. Viciously a fist whipped into his face, throwing him off his balance. Propelling himself back from the iron side of the ship, Wilson threw himself at his attacker. Together they fell in a squirming, struggling, panting heap, rolling and striving to regain their feet.

Crack, crunch. And total darkness, as the lantern was smashed to bits beneath their writhing bodies.

With a supreme effort Wilson got to his feet, stared blindly for a sec-

ond into the pitch blackness, then started to run—anywhere! But that second was his undoing. Two winding arms closed like a vise about his knees, and again he hit the ship's bottom with stunning force.

For a moment his head rolled sideways on the cold metal—until a jet of cold sea water beating into his face brought him to his senses. Dimly he was aware that another jet was spurting against his ankle.

Their struggle had knocked out another—maybe more—of the loosened plugs!

PANIC sent mad strength to his muscles and again Wilson fought—stood up—fell down—rolled—squirmed; on his feet—on his knees—on his back; but always he punched and clawed and kicked and bucked. And always those dreadful blows rained upon him from the darkness. A ghastly, bestial struggle; silent but for the hiss of panting breath and the clatter of their bodies against the metal of the hull; that and the pound of the angry sea booming against the tossing vessel.

Ages seemed to transpire—years of pounding and clawing, falling, and struggling erect. And always the water, sloshing around their feet, rose higher! Then Wilson went down for what he knew was the last time; exhausted muscles could not lift his aching body again. Limply a bleeding hand fell into the bottom of the ship—and touched the head of the hammer he had used to knock out the plugs.

Again new strength pulsed through him. Grasping the hammer he brought it down savagely on his unseen opponent. Again and again! He felt the blows going home on yielding flesh. And then no more blows rained upon him; except for the turmoil of the sea and the splash of the water pouring through the

holes in the ship's bottom, all was still.

The sound of that water stirred Wilson's panic anew. Escape—that was all that mattered. He must get out of that dark death hole!

He dropped the hammer and blindly groped his way along the ship's side, to the frame, along it to the manhole. Through this he crept and rose upright at the foot of the ladder—the door to freedom.

But as he rose his head struck the wooden floor sharply. Dizzy, somewhat stunned, he groped above him; and his blood chilled. The trap was closed! The hatch had fallen and now lay neatly fitted into its place.

Confidently he bent his shoulders under the hatch and heaved. It refused to budge. Wilson gasped—cold fear clutched him. He heaved again, madly this time. Still no result; the hatch was secure.

Slowly, unbelievably, he drew back and inhaled a deep breath, fearfully conscious of the water rising to his knees. Desperately chaining his panic, he strove to think calmly, to understand his position. The chain link must have fallen back on the hatch—it was really nothing; in a few minutes he would win his way out to freedom and safety.

BUT at that moment the ship pitched again and hollowly on the hatch boomed the chain as another whole coil fell over it; and another—until tons of metal lay solidly on the cover.

Wilson screamed aloud, madly. Once more he threw himself upward. He battered on the unyielding wood with clenched fists. Blood poured from his knuckles. He *must* escape—the water was rising fast. This was like being buried alive in a vault—a flooding vault!

Horror stilled his panic and gave him inspiration. Of course, he could

stop this. He must get those plugs—must find them somehow—and stop the holes until he could figure a way out.

Quickly he groped his way to the manhole, through which the water was now flowing steadily. His head and shoulders went through—and blackness descended upon him as his own hammer landed broadside on his skull!

* * *

"You had better come on deck, sir," the second mate reported as he awoke Captain Hardy. "There are queer noises coming from the hold and we seem to be taking water."

In a few moments Hardy was on deck and, with his officers, walked from point to point endeavoring to locate the peculiar noises which intermittently could be heard above the noise of the ship as she cut her way through the waves. An investigation of the cargo holds found them quiet.

YET a dull booming continued to well up from beneath them. And water was pouring into the hold as fast as the pumps could take care of it! All hands were on deck and ready for any emergency. As the puzzled officers reached the chain-locker, the pounding grew more intense. Then silence for a few moments; followed by the steady, rhythmic beat of metal against the ship's side—coming from the bilge.

Hardy quickly ascertained that the carpenter's hatch was covered by anchor chain, and as quickly the crew were set to hauling it out on deck. As the last coils were lifted from the hatch, a seaman pulled up the cover while Hardy, revolver in hand, stood beside the opening, the mate's lantern illuminating the gap.

Splash, splash. Out of the hole came a bloody hand clutching a hammer.

"Give me a hand somebody—haul up on this," commanded a voice from below.

AND the bloody, unconscious body of Ordinary Seaman James Wilson, now stripped of most of his beard, was heaved up to waiting hands—to be followed by a filthy scarecrow in tattered, dripping garments.

"Here is your ship, Captain," the scarecrow said with a grimace of a smile.

"Dan Purdy!" Hardy gasped. "How in hell—"

"If I hadn't stowed away in that bilge so as to get to Jamaica with Joan, this ship would be on her way to the bottom of the sea," Purdy interrupted him. "If you'll go down into the hole where I've been living for nearly two weeks, you'll find twenty nice round holes this scutler drilled into your bottom. Tonight when he started to pull out his plugs I took a hand—no, you needn't rush right down," as Hardy started for the hatch. "Your pumps will take care of it. Luckily I had carved some plugs of my own out of some odds and ends of lumber in the bilge and, after putting this fellow to sleep, I managed to plug up the holes he uncorked."

But surprises were coming thick and fast for Captain Hardy that night. "James Wilson" was returning to a delirious consciousness. And between his ravings and a scrutiny of his now unbearded face, Hardy soon identified his latest ordinary seaman.

* * *

"And so I've brought you a ship," Purdy concluded his explanations in the captain's cabin, as Joan bathed and dressed the wound in his scalp.

Whereupon his nurse beamed delightedly. And Captain Caleb Hardy attempted a gruff "Humph" to cover his willing surrender.

The Back of Baluchistan



A Strange Tryst in Baluchistan Leads to Unexpected Danger and Desperate Conflict

By REX SHERRICK

Author of "Hell's Legion," "Ghost Harbor," etc.

IT was a horrible mess! And Len Herrick, the American, could not help feeling responsible for the whole thing. He paced his room, back and forth, telling himself that he was a fool to think it was all his fault—but fact was fact, and the fact was that he had brought his Russian friends to this place, where they had already been killed, or were staring death in the face hourly!

Herrick drove the death thought from his mind. No! They were not

dead yet—they couldn't be, or the authorities would know it.

Well, supposing they were not dead—what was he going to do about it? He cursed himself for having been a sentimental fool. A year ago, right here in Kelat, capital of the Baluchistan Native States, he had said to his two Russian friends: "Let's meet here again, in exactly one year from today."

Both Ilyich and Stepanov had gladly promised to keep the rendezvous. Adventurers, all of them, the

idea of congregating again at the place where they had first met, was an appealing idea. There'd been no reason for meeting—just a sentimental thing to look forward to through a whole year.

And this was what it had led to! Ilyich, the first to arrive, had been promptly abducted by brigands. The poor fellow had no money, and had no relatives with money. The brigands would surely kill him as soon as they were sure that they could get no money for their captive.

And Stepanov, the second to arrive, was entirely aware of the fate that awaited poor Ilyich. For that reason, Stepanov had set out at once on an attempt to rescue his countryman. And now Stepanov, too, was lost! No word from or about him for days!

That was the situation when Herrick, the third and last of the three friends, arrived on the scene. He could not drive the thought from his mind that Ilyich and Stepanov had come to harm only because they had faithfully kept a sentimental appointment with him—or *tried* to keep it—and it was an appointment which *he*, Len Herrick, had asked them to keep!

HERRICK decided to go to the authorities and tell them that he was going to set out in search of the two Russians. But who were the proper authorities? He didn't want the whole world to know what he was going to do. Only a few—the inner circle—should know that Len Herrick, an American, was going out secretly in an effort to rescue the unfortunate Russians.

Herrick racked his brain. Last year, Stepanov had inadvertently pointed out an official on the street to him, and had called him the Commissar of Police—or whatever it was that the man held as a title. But

Herrick could not think of the name. That man was the right man to see—and Herrick had to know his name, in order to avoid being steered off to some lesser official.

"I got it!" he declared to himself, suddenly.

STAFFORD! Stafford, fortunately, was now in Kelat. He was a Britisher from Quetta, British Baluchistan, and came down to Kelat often on business. Stafford would know. Herrick went to see him.

Stafford was glad to see him.

"But I'm awful sorry, old man, that I can't tell you anything about Ilyich and Stepanov," he said. "They're in for a tough time of it, that's all I can say. It's a bad situation. There seems to be something wrong, too—in more than one way. I mean—well, what I mean is this, that when some bandits were captured, they managed to escape, every last one of them, just before the day set for their execution. Take that for what it's worth. Maybe it's a good tip! But mind you, old man—I'm not saying a word, you understand. And as for the name of the man you want to see—ask for Miribani."

There was some red tape, but Herrick got to Miribani, and recognized him at once as the man who Stepanov had pointed out.

The difficulty is this," declared Miribani,—"Ilyich is an *exiled* Russian. He is therefore a man without a country, and a poor man, too. The bandits made a mistake in choosing him as a victim. As for Stepanov—he went into trouble voluntarily, therefore his government cannot feel itself under obligations to ransom him, if he happened to fall into bad hands. Russia can only demand that we make every effort to insure his safety. Stepanov went out near Washak, to investigate the

demands for Ilyich's ransom. That was almost a week ago, and we haven't heard of him since then."

Another man entered the room. Miribani introduced him as Nassan. Nassan was minister of something or other, but Herrick did not care what. Nassan knew the case, and offered to send fifty or a hundred men in search of the Russians, if Herrick wanted that much help and considered it time to follow up Stepanov with a large force.

"I prefer secrecy to numbers," Herrick said, thanking him. "I'll just go over the maps with you, to get my directions, and go alone. A large force may bring a sudden death to the poor men!"

"As you prefer," declared Nassan. "You know, of course, what dangers you are letting yourself into. Be careful!"

Miribani and Nassan spent much time with Herrick, over maps, drawing lines and making dots and interpolating much information before Herrick pocketed the maps. Miribani left headquarters with Herrick.

"In case I have to communicate with you by private messenger," said Herrick, "can you arrange to have a man at hand for me at the fork in the river, near Washak, on the evening of the eighth? It would be too risky to use the telegraph or telephone, you know."

CERTAINLY, certainly!" agreed Miribani. "Wait—I shall make a note of that."

He scribbled in his notebook for a moment. Then he shook hands with Herrick and turned away to go home.

Herrick continued walking. When Miribani was out of sight, Herrick hurried directly back to headquarters, and saw Nassan privately.

"It just struck me," he said to Nassan, "that after I get out to

Washak, I may find that I'll need more equipment, probably of a different nature than I have. I won't want to be seen going to police headquarters. Can you arrange to have somebody meet me at the edge of the woods just out of Washak—say, about a hundred yards to the east of the road—on the evening of the ninth?"

"Certainly," declared Nassan. "That is a very good idea. I failed to think of it myself. If you should need some camping materials, you wouldn't want to be seen collecting them. I shall have a man there. Give him your orders, and he will secretly deliver whatever you need. It will all come under requisitions from ordinance. I am glad that you are a careful planner!"

Herrick was pleased with the results so far obtained. He walked away from headquarters, and recalling that he had not eaten during the evening, he returned to the cafe. After a full meal he went out in the night air. He wanted to question Stafford, the Britisher, on the native officials.

Stafford, frequenting Quetta—the capital of British Baluchistan, hardly ninety miles north of Kelat—would know the nature of Baluchistan officials well. He would know whether they were of a sort to make promises and then forget them.

And whether Baluchistan authorities really welcomed the assistance of foreigners in a matter such as this, or merely pretended to welcome it, Herrick called at Stafford's address.

STAFFORD was not at home. At this late hour, he could be counted on to return very soon. Herrick waited. As he waited, seated at a window, in the shadows, he saw people come and go along the road. He saw some coming and

going again and again. And among the latter number were four men whose appearance hardly spoke well for them. They were casting furtive glances toward this very house. Herrick kept his eyes on them.

Suddenly, about fifty paces north of the house, two of these men—they had been walking separately, as though they did not know each other—exchanged a signal. Herrick rose at once. He was hardly thirty seconds too late.

Barely reaching the threshold, on his way out, he saw two men steal up behind a third, strike him on the back of the head with a short and somewhat limp club—probably a woolen stocking loaded with small shot—and carry the victim off in the darkness.

Like a flash, Herrick was around the house, cutting the corners of buildings, and after the assailants. He was not sure, but he felt that the manner of walking of the assaulted victim suggested Stafford. He had seen hardly three or four steps of the man; however, they had been the stride of a foreigner, and a tall man, such as Stafford.

Suddenly Herrick distinguished a team of horses and a wagon on the road branching southwest of the main highway. There was a load of hay on the wagon. He saw the inert victim being dragged aboard the wagon. Like magic, the hay parted at the base, and at the forepart of the load.

THE victim was roped within a few seconds, and pushed through the opening. It seemed as though a kerchief had been first applied to his nose and mouth. Chloroform, doubtlessly, to eliminate noise!

Above and to the rear of Herrick was a lighted window, and now he became aware that, although he was in utter darkness, the angle of illumina-

tion threw his elongated shadow on the ground.

He turned, to see whether he had been detected, whether anybody was sulking in the spaces behind him. He turned just in time to escape the same fate that had befallen the victim on the wagon—and the same weapon, a loaded fullness of cloth.

Herrick dodged the blow swiftly, and in doing so, lowered his head and then brought it up with all his force against the jaw of his unknown assailant. At the same moment, he caught a blow beneath the left shoulder blade—a blow which told him that he had two men to handle.

WITHOUT looking, he kicked out viciously behind him, and at the same time lunged sidewise to escape a possible second blow from behind. His kicking heel had found a kneecap. There was a gasp of pain—an almost inaudible gasp, but it spoke volumes for Herrick.

For it told him that the attackers were equally as anxious to avoid making noise, as he was. The man whom he had butted with his head, was already sinking senselessly to the ground. Herrick straightened himself quickly, but not quickly enough.

The assailant whom he had kicked, had thrown himself off balance in his reaction to the pain—and quite without design his weight had gone forward and sidewise, with Herrick, so that the outlaw fell forward directly on Herrick's shoulders. Enraged, the man dug his claws into Herrick's throat.

The American felt his head being torn from his shoulders by the native's arm-lock, while at his throat he knew that blood was already appearing. His senses dimmed, and began to swim away from him, but with a superhuman effort he grabbed

his assailant by the hair of the head, and bore downward with a venomous tug that instantly broke the powerful lock about his head.

As the native bent backward, he brought up a knee. But Herrick knew his adversary's style, and was prepared for the act. Herrick doubled sideward, shot an elbow around the knee, and applied a lift that the surprised native had failed to anticipate.

In another moment Herrick felt the brigand falling backward swiftly. Here was the opportunity to break open the talons tearing at his throat. Not by pulling and tugging, but by leaping full force forward.

He did. The brigand's head hit earth with a thud, and at the same instant Herrick's weight bore down on him so suddenly and powerfully that there sounded the snap of breaking ribs. Native ribs! The outlaw's fingers opened automatically, in frantic fear. Herrick threw all his power into his right shoulder, in delivering a crushing fist to the brigand's jaw.

IT was over. Len Herrick devoted only moments to examination of his opponents. It was obvious that the second one was breathing with labor because of several broken ribs—while the first, still senseless, slept with a jaw that was broken and dislocated, slanting athwart the right side of the neck.

Herrick looked quickly toward the wagon. It was disappearing down the road, away from town. Obviously these two incapacitated bandits had not been scheduled to leave with the hayload. The American left them where they lay, and now began an odd pursuit.

He knew the work that was cut out for him. He knew that the team of horses had far to go, and with distance before them, they

would be driven very slowly. He knew, also, that in a race of over sixty miles no horse was the equal of a well-conditioned man. And Herrick was in the pink.

ALL through the night, sometimes walking, sometimes jogging along the road, he trailed the load of hay. With daybreak, he put a great distance between himself and his prey, content to follow their movements readily enough through his small but powerful field glass, which he always carried with him—ever since he had covered the embattled area about Shanghai for an English language newspaper in the neutral zone.

There were several stops, and with a change of horses the wagon proceeded on its slow way, avoiding the necessity for resting the team. Herrick made a note of the location where the animals had been changed, and continued his pursuit.

The third twilight of this bizarre performance carried him to a small patch of huts beyond Washak—but not till a stop at Washak had disclosed several army officers laughing and joking with the brigands.

Now, for the first time, Len Herrick felt sure of the job he was up against, and knew the proportions of his undertaking. He knew, moreover, that his first guess had been correct!

Not only was this brigandage, but it was undercover revolt!

It was the evening of the eighth of October, moreover, and he meant to keep his rendezvous at the fork of the river—although he had slept only four hours in three nights. Those hours had been along the roadside, in a spread of trees, when it was already apparent that Washak would be the nearest of probable destinations for his quarry.

Ascertaining through the glass that the terminal, the group of

huts, amounted really to a rebel encampment, Herrick at once set out for the river by following his map. He approached the fork warily, studying the ground carefully.

Although he had confidence in Miribani, he took no unnecessary risks. His confidence was entirely justified. Only one man was at the fork. Herrick got down to business at once. A short conversation informed him that the authorities already suspected an immediate rebel move.

"Prepare a military map," instructed Herrick, "drawing a line of march for one hundred and fifty men from Kelat to Khurmagai. And on the map draw various lines of approach against this East Washak settlement—as though the government plans an attack on East Washak, out of Khurmagai.

"Date it for the night of the ninth, tomorrow night. Send it out by special messenger, and have the messenger caught by the rebels. That will be easy enough! And do it all tonight. Meet me here again tomorrow at this time—no, meet me below here, at the bridge, at four in the afternoon. Have your best automobiles, two of them."

THE next day, from a point of vantage in a tree-top, Herrick observed the feverish preparations of the rebels. The settlement east of Washak soon emptied itself, and almost all available hands were en route toward Khurmagai. Herrick smiled. The rebels were intent on ambushing the Federal forces en route to Khurmagai—forces which were non-existent!

At three he retired to a more discreet distance, and was pleased to see, through his glass, four riders approaching the small copse beside the farther road. Then he departed.

Tobosi, Miribani's emissary at the river fork, was punctual. He, a second driver, and two cars were waiting. Tobosi had important news.

"I have to return before nine," he said. "Nassan has telephoned. He is coming. I must meet him at nine."

WHAT is he coming for?" Herrick wanted to know.

"To cross-examine one Stepanov, who is said to be a spy. I know nothing about it. Usually, my orders come directly from Miribani."

"You know where Stepanov is?" asked Herrick, astounded.

"Yes, of course. He has been under arrest for a week."

"On Nassan's orders—not on Miribani's?"

Tobosi looked questioningly at Herrick, while nodding in the affirmative. He wondered how the American had come to know something so secret that Nassan himself had given orders to keep the news not only from the public but also from other departments of the police and from Miribani himself. He knew that Herrick and Nassan had conversed. Had Nassan told Herrick?

"Go right back to Washak," Herrick spoke heatedly, "phone Miribani, and ask him—at my request—to give you a blanket order to arrest anybody and everybody whom you may reasonably suspect of any wrong-doing whatever! Mention no names, but if Miribani insists on specific information, tell him that you have in mind the arrest of an unexpected guest in Washak! Tell Miribani, moreover, that I wish he'd get out here—secretly—just as fast as he can. By secretly, I mean it to be kept secret *especially* from that same, unexpected guest!"

Tobosi's jaws opened in astonishment. He understood.

"Am I to meet you here again?" he asked.

"Yes—within the hour—and with Stepanov!"

Tobosi protested that he could not do such a thing.

"Oh, yes; you can!" countered Herrick. "Plenty brigands escaped from Kelat, isn't that so? Well, one honest man can 'escape' from Washak. If you prefer, ask Miribani for permission to release a prisoner at my own request—without mentioning the name. The wires are undoubtedly tampered with. To cover up, release one unimportant prisoner—in such a manner that you can later claim that Stepanov escaped. Understand? But you must not return without Stepanov, and when you see him, tell him immediately that you are bringing him to me. Here, give him that." Herrick rapidly tore a piece of paper out of a small notebook and penciled a few words to Stepanov. "He will know!"

The meeting between Stepanov and Herrick, an hour later, was brisk and business-like. Herrick was in a hurry. At once he drew somewhat closer to the copse at the roadside where he was to meet Nassan's man. He smiled on seeing several men serving as outposts, near places where they could conceal themselves immediately on seeing a lone traveler approaching from a distance.

THEN Herrick, by a circuitous route, led the way around Washak and toward the eastern settlement. It was almost deserted, as he could ascertain through the dusk without being discovered.

"Come with me," he said to Stepanov and Tobosi, who knowingly followed—knowingly, because on telephoning Miribani, Tobosi had learned that a new abduction at Kelat had involved a Britisher by the name of Stafford.

NOT only was the settlement barely manned, but the few men there were in a mood of celebration. Even the two or three officers in charge, who had remained behind. They were obviously engaged in drinking to the success of their comrades at Khurmagai.

Leaving the automobiles in charge of the extra driver, out of sight of the settlement, Herrick slid through the descending darkness, followed by Stepanov and Tobosi. Suddenly a motor sounded behind them. They stopped, and hid behind a hut. An automobile whirled by, came to a stop a bit up the road, and a man alighted.

"Nassan!" gasped Tobosi.

Rapidly, Herrick hurried to the house where Nassan had disappeared from view. The three men circled around the rear, and came upon a guard sleeping under the effect of drink. They bound and gagged him. There was an open, and dark window along the side. Herrick boosted himself inside, followed by his helpers. Already the three could hear Nassan's voice storming.

"No troops have been despatched to Khurmagai, I tell you!" shouted Nassan. "It's a ruse! Wouldn't I know if soldiers had been sent to Khurmagai?"

"Maybe you've been discovered," suggested one of the rebel chieftains, "and now they're keeping secrets from you!"

"You talk like an idiot!" stormed Nassan. "All requisition blanks pass through my hands. Nothing can be handed out without my signature. The men in charge of ordinance are my men. If they'd been told to pass out supplies without my knowledge they would have informed me of it at once! Something is wrong, here. We'll have to disregard our schedule and act immediately."

"The men are complaining about

the food, and they want back-pay," an officer reminded him.

THEY will have it in a few days. That's why I had you take the good-for-nothing Russian, Ilyich," there was gloating in Nassan's tone. "We'll put a bullet through his head right now and send him back to Kelat, dead, with a note. The note will read: 'This is what will happen to Stafford if you do not pay inside of three days.'

"Ilyich is a man without a country. Nobody cares. But rather than have Britain descend on Kelat, the government itself will pay the ransom out of the Baluchistan Exchequer—to avoid complications with Britain. The money will be here, I tell you, within three days!"

"How will you get Ilyich's body up to Kelat in time for such action?"

"Through another Russian whom I've been holding for just that purpose," explained Nassan. "He's in Washak. He will accompany the body. The prefecture at Washak will sorrowfully offer this Stepanov man an automobile for transportation. Miribani will see the live Stepanov and the dead Ilyich by midnight. Stepanov is under arrest now, but he'll be told that his arrest was a sad mistake.

"By that method, no risks will be taken in getting the body to Miribani tonight. The body will just have been 'found' by the Washak authorities. See?" He chuckled.

"Then let's hurry," said one of the officers.

Herrick knew what that meant. They were leaving to take Ilyich, put a bullet through his head in cold blood, and thereby finance in part a revolt intended to place the treasonable, treacherous Nassan in power.

Already, the house was emptied of Nassan and the rebel headsmen. Herrick, Tobosi, and Stepanov hur-

ried out through the window, and slunk through the shadows, in pursuit of Nassan and three more men.

The pursued stopped in front of a squat hut that was well guarded—four men guarding it at four corners. Nassan entered. Herrick was nonplussed. How to do battle against so many?

"We'll have to split forces," he whispered, "and let them have it! Shoot to kill. I am going in there—they may mean to kill Ilyich before Stafford's eyes. Stafford must be in there, too."

WITH not a moment to lose, Stepanov boldly strode into plain view of the front guards. Nassan's three companions had already followed their leader into the ramshackle prison. Herrick walked six paces behind Stepanov, and about ten steps to his rear was Tobosi. The first guard challenged Stepanov, who pretended now to be drunk, and staggered toward the second guard. The second came walking toward him.

Suddenly Stepanov lost his drunkenness. Out came a revolver, its butt crashing against the second guard's skull. The advance had been so timed and executed, that both guards had been "sucked" in, in front of the building, thereby being out of view of the corner guards at the rear—and the action had been so planned that at the same moment Stepanov lashed out, Herrick lashed out at the first of the guards.

Tobosi was ready to apply the finishing touch to whichever of the two happened to be least injured. It happened to be Herrick's man, who had had the advantage of a split second's sight of Stepanov drawing a butt on his comrade. Tobosi crashed against the renegade with a revolver butt. Both guards were now out of the way, without an outcry.

But there had been enough physical commotion to lead the rear guards to investigate. They were expecting only a brawl between friends. As a result, their heads walked into the same revolver butts without warning.

"Stay here and keep them all asleep!" Herrick ordered Tobosi, who took his stand over the prostrate forms, ready to strike again at any moving form.

Herrick and Stepanov entered the building. It was illuminated. On their toes they crossed the first room. They heard voices at the rear. Herrick treaded softly into a narrow hallway that was darkened. Suddenly he came face to face with a guard stationed in the interior. The guard had seen him first, and raised an alarm while grabbing up his rifle.

NO time for an attempt to preserve bullets. Herrick's revolver flashed. The guard crumbled to the floor, while the roar of the shot shook the structure.

Stepanov came leaping beside the American. The two hurdled the guard, while Stepanov pumped another bullet into the fallen body—it was unwise to go ahead without making sure that enemies in the rear were completely incapacitated.

Suddenly a door at the end of the hall opened, and two men appeared with drawn guns. Because the hall was dark, and they had been facing illumination within the room, they failed to see Herrick and Stepanov at once, while they themselves stood flooded in light. Herrick and Stepanov blazed away.

Unexpectedly, through the crack at the door-hinges, came a blinding flash and a roar. Herrick felt his coat being torn backwards, at the tail. He heard a gasp behind him. Stepanov obviously had been hit.

There was no time to look back.

With the machine-like precision of an automaton, Herrick fired at the flash behind the crack. He fired again. The second bullet clipped the door near the hinges and swung it partially closed. It was a fortunate accident, for it served to conceal Herrick from the inmates of the room, while he approached the crack with two leaps.

ONE glance showed him a dead officer, and Nassan's back. Nassan was streaking for the rear of the room, and toward another door. Herrick saw Nassan tug at the handle. The door was bolted at the other side. Of course it would be—for Stafford and Ilyich, bound, were in the room!

Herrick threw his weight into the room, at the same time shouting to Nassan to keep his back turned. Nassan obeyed, and his hands, one of which still held a weapon, extended toward the ceiling. He dropped the gun at Herrick's command.

"Free the prisoners!"

Nassan hastened to obey. He unbound Stafford first, and Stafford made a quick job of liberating Ilyich, whose muscles were so cramped that he could hardly move upon finding his limbs free. But quickly enough he got to his feet.

Now there came the sound of firing outside the building. While Stafford, seizing Nassan's weapon, covered the treacherous official, Herrick ran back through the hallway. He reached the end of it in time to see Tobosi backing into the building and bolting the door from the inside. Herrick called to him, and Tobosi came on the run.

"Pick up Stepanov, you and Ilyich," shouted Herrick. "Stafford will take care of Nassan."

And seeing a window, partially concealed from outside observation

ANY PHOTO ENLARGED

Size 8x10 inches or smaller if desired. Same price for full length or bust form, groups, landscapes, pet animals, etc., or enlargements of any part of group picture. Safe return of original photo guaranteed.

47c **SEND NO MONEY** Just mail photo or snapshot (any size) and within a week you will receive your beautiful life-like enlargement, guaranteed fadeless. Pay postman 47c plus postage or send 47c with order and we pay postage. Big 16x20-inch enlargement sent C. O. D. 78c plus postage or send 80c and we pay postage. Take advantage of this amazing offer now. Send your photos today. Specify size wanted.



Standard Art Studios, 908 W. Lake St., Dept. 393-C, Chicago, Ill.

Worn Out Glands

Need a Good Gland Tonic

Science has now found a way of supplying the body with gland secretions which certain glands often fail to produce sufficiently and which are absolutely necessary for building health, strength and vitality. You can have **free proof**. Send for our wonderful **GLAND TONIC—GOLDGLAN**—and

Try It 20 Days—FREE

This successful treatment has brought pep and strength to thousands of run-down, weak men and women. Should quickly do the same for you! **NO LETTER NECESSARY.** Just send this ad with your name and address and 10c for postage and packing. Complete treatment sent at once. **Medical Aid Bureau, 529 S. La Salle St., Chicago, Dept. GA. 225**



FEMININE HYGIENE LADIES!

When **DELAYED** unnaturally or irregular, for fine results use **O. J. O. PERIODIC RELIEF COMPOUND** often will relieve some of the longest and unusual stubborn cases very quickly. A successful proven remedy—use no others. Positively safe, harmless. They are used by doctors. No interference with work. Mail \$2.00. Double Strength; 3 boxes for \$5.00. Postpaid in plain wrapper. Valuable booklet **FREE**.

O. J. O. MEDICAL COMPANY,

227 W. North Avenue, Dept. 221-A, Chicago, Illinois.

LOVE CULTS

A warning to all young girls in the most sensational book of the twentieth century—a **TRUE** story of exotic, unbelievable orgies—a startling expose of get-acquainted clubs and strange and weird love societies—

The Most Daring, Frankest Book Ever Written!

Get the only work which tells the bare facts about woman's love-life, adultery, sex and nature, free love, the badger game, drug cults, Hindu love beliefs, the dance hall menace and the fruit of illicit love—

MY LIFE IN A LOVE CULT

By the High Priestess of Oom

NOW 50c Fourteen big chapters—one hundred pages—size 9 in. by 12 in. Cash, U. S. Stamps or Postal Money Orders accepted.

Mailed in Plain Wrapper
Postage Prepaid.

BETTER PUBLICATIONS, Inc.,

Dept. A-3, 570—7th Ave., New York City.

I enclose 50c. Please rush my copy of **MY LIFE IN A LOVE CULT** to

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

State.....

(No orders filled in Canada. 80c foreign.)

by a projecting eave, he climbed to it and carefully looked out.

"Only half a dozen men," he exclaimed, leaping down. "They've all run to the rear after finding the front door locked. Come quick—the front is free."

Tobosi unbolted the door. As Herrick had observed, the surprised outlaws were operating brainlessly now, in chaos, without a superior in charge. There was nobody to block the way. Tobosi and Ilyich, helping Stepanov, who now recovered from his "crease," ran across the narrow road, while Stafford goaded the captive Nassan into fast motion in the same direction. With wise precaution, Herrick remained behind, bolted the door again from the inside, climbed to the window, and leaped down to the ground.

The disorganized outlaws were undoubtedly cursing their stupidity in concentrating on breaking into the prison-house, at the time that Herrick and his party, in two automobiles, sped into Washak.

Miribani, his mind a blank as to what might be taking place behind the scenes, was waiting.

"Your superior, Miribani," said Herrick, jerking a thumb at Nassan, "is now your prisoner."

He proceeded to explain to the astounded Miribani how the outlaw garrison had been misled to Khurmagai, in order to leave the

OLD MONEY and stamps WANTED



POST YOURSELF! It pays! I paid J. D. Martin, Virginia, \$200 for a single copper cent. Mr. Manning, New York, \$2,500 for one silver dollar. Mrs. G. F. Adams \$740 for a few old coins. I want all kinds of old coins, medals, bills and stamps. I pay big cash premiums.

WILL PAY \$100 FOR DIME 1894 S. Mint; \$50 for 1913 Liberty Head Nickel (not buffalo) and hundreds of other amazing prices for coins. Get in touch with me. Send 4c for Large Illustrated Coin Folder and further particulars. It may mean much profit to you. Write today to

NUMISMATIC COMPANY OF TEXAS

Dept. 209

(Largest Rare Coin Establishment in U. S.)

FORT WORTH, TEXAS

way clear for the rescue of Ilyich and Stafford. And he explained how he had assured himself of Nassan's treachery.

"I had also told Nassan—as I had told you—to have a man meet me at a certain spot. I approached both places carefully. I saw that you had played square. But Nassan—where one decent man should have been, I saw at least four men who were obvious outlaws! On top of all that, Tobosi told me that Step-anov had been a prisoner in Washak all this time—Nassan ordering the imprisonment and keeping it secret from you!

"Nassan has been plotting to seize control of the government; and to finance his revolt, he has been abducting citizens of foreign nations—knowing that to avoid trouble, the treasury of your own government would pay out the ransom demands. Ilyich was taken prisoner for the sole purpose of murdering him, in order to set up an example that would make the government act quickly in paying demands. The outlaws have been complaining about their pay, you see!" Herrick turned to the treacherous Nassan.

"You've been trying to break the back of Baluchistan, old man, by getting its present government to finance its own overthrow! But it's the neck of Nassan that you've broken!"

QUIT TOBACCO

No man or woman can escape the harmful effects of tobacco. Don't try to banish unaided the hold tobacco has upon you. Join the thousands of inveterate tobacco users that have found it easy to quit with the aid of the Keeley Treatment.



KEELEY

Treatment For Tobacco Habit Successful For Over 50 Years

Quickly banishes all craving for tobacco. Write today for Free Book telling how to quickly Free yourself from the tobacco habit and our Money Back Guarantee.

Home of the famous Keeley Treatment for Liquor and Drugs. Booklet Sent on Request. Correspondence Strictly Confidential. **THE KEELEY INSTITUTE** Dent. P. C. Dwight, Illinois

A BABY FOR YOU?

If you are denied the blessing of a baby all your own and yearn for a baby's arms and a baby's smile, do not give up hope. Just write in confidence to Mrs. Mildred Owens, 198 Coates House, Kansas City, Mo., and she will tell you about a simple home method that helped her after being denied 15 yrs. Many others say this has helped bless their lives. Write now and try this wonderful harpin—

3c a Day Buys Amazing Accident and Sickness Policy

This new, amazing Accident and Sickness Policy pays up to — \$100.00 a month for accidental injury or sickness, \$150.00 a month hospital benefit, \$1,000.00 to \$1,500.00 for accidental death, \$100.00 natural death payment and many other liberal benefits. Costs only 3c a day! ALL MONTHLY benefits paid from the FIRST day. A new policy issued by an OLD company that has already paid more than \$150,000.00 in cash benefits. Issued to men and women, in good health, ages 15 to 60, without doctor's examination—no matter what you do nor where you work or live. SEND NO MONEY. Simply send your name, address and AGE with name and relationship of your beneficiary, to Sterling Casualty Insurance Co., Dept. 4103, 221 N. LaSalle St., Chicago, Ill. They will send this policy on 10 days' FREE inspection. This offer is strictly limited, so write them at once.

ACCOUNTING

the profession that pays

Accountants command big income. Thousands needed. About 9,000 Certified Public Accountants in U. S. Many earn \$5,000 to \$20,000. We train you thoroughly at home in your spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous bookkeeping knowledge unnecessary—we prepare you from ground up. Our training is supervised by Wm. B. Castenholz, A.M., C. P. A., assisted by staff of C. P. A.'s. Low cost—easy terms. Write now for valuable 64-page book free, "Accounting, the Profession That Pays."

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

Dept. 3319-H

Chicago, Illinois



THE GLOBE TROTTER



LISTEN, *adventurers*, we've got the best news of the year!

A brand new novel by Lieutenant John Hopper—

Complete in our next issue!

You've read Lieutenant Hopper's stories before—that's why we know you'll be looking forward to this story with big expectations. And it won't let you down.

It's an army story by an army man—

A story of West Pointers by a West Point grad!

International intrigue and high adventure in the Panama Canal Zone—how does that sound?

You'll meet Mr. Zero—a secret service man who saves the Panama Canal from a gang of unscrupulous international cutthroats.

You'll get the low-down on a plot against Uncle Sam—a plot against the greatest engineering feat in the history of the world—a plot against the Panama Canal.

Action!

And how!

There's plenty of it in this story by a pastmaster in the adventure story field. Don't forget—look for **THE PANAMA PLOT** by Lieut. John Hopper!

Then there'll be the first installment of our next great serial—**THE PROWLING CREATURE**. It's by Captain Kerry McRoberts—who wrote our very successful Foreign Legion novel of last month, **LEGION OF THE FRONTIER**.

It's every bit as exciting as that great yarn—and includes an unusual

mystery of London and the English countryside. It'll grip you—and you will hardly be able to wait for each succeeding instalment. It's an adventure serial treat you just can't afford to miss.

And, of course, KWA will be back. Yes, Paul Regard's jungle saga carries on with a new novelette—**KWA AND THE WALKING MOON**. The "walking moon," incidentally, is an elephant. Don't miss this story. It's one of the best Paul Regard has ever written and it's about KWA!

In addition, our usual selection of the best short stories published in any adventure magazine. Our writers take you all over the world—and next month some of your guides will be Wallace R. Bamber, Anatole Feldman, Arthur J. Burks and Perley Poore Sheehan.

John F. Birch, of North Sacramento, Cal., writes as follows: "I am a traveling man—and also like to travel via the pages of your magazine. I really enjoy your thrilling stories."

Others echo Mr. Birch in saying that **THRILLING ADVENTURES** gives them a vivid sense of travel—acquainting them with people and customs in distant climes.

"I have been spending 20 cents and 25 cents a copy for magazines for years—and then I found out about **THRILLING ADVENTURES**, which sells for a dime and beats 'em all." So writes Louis Laurent, of Piper City, Ill.

Tell your friends about **THRILLING ADVENTURES**—perhaps some

WE GUARANTEE
to **REDUCE** your **WAIST**
3 INCHES in **10 DAYS**
...or it won't cost you a penny!

NO DRUGS, DIETS
OR EXERCISES

SUPPORTS FALLEN
ABDOMINAL
MUSCLES

AIDS DIGESTION
AND RELIEVES
CONSTIPATION

THE WEIL REDUCING BELT

will make you appear many inches slimmer at once, and in 10 short days your waistline will actually be 3 inches smaller—three inches of fat gone—or it won't cost you one cent!

It Greatly Improves Your Appearance!

It supports the sagging muscles of the abdomen and quickly gives an erect, athletic carriage. You will be more than delighted with the great improvement in your appearance.

Don't be embarrassed any longer with that "corporation" for in a very short time, only the admiring comments of your friends will remind you that you once had a bulging waistline.

This Famous Reducing Belt will prove a great boon to you, for now you can be your slimmer self without strenuous exercise, diet or drugs!

It Is the Massage-Like Action that Does It!

You will be completely comfortable and entirely unaware that its constant gentle pressure is working constantly while you walk, work or sit... its massage-like action gently but persistently eliminating fat with every move you make.

George Bailey writes: "I reduced my waist 8 inches in seven months." W. T. Anderson writes: "I reduced my weight 50 pounds! Many enthusiastic wearers write that it not only reduces fat but it also supports the abdominal walls and keeps the digestive organs in place—that they are no longer fatigued—and that it greatly increases their endurance and vigor!

Don't Wait—Fat Is Dangerous!

Fat is not only unbecoming, but it also endangers your health. Insurance companies know the danger of fat accumulations. The best medical authorities warn against obesity, so don't wait any longer.

YOU CAN'T LOSE—Send for our 10 day free trial offer. We repeat—either you take off 3 inches of fat in 10 days, or it won't cost you one penny! Even the postage you pay to return the package will be refunded.

SEND FOR FREE 10 DAY TRIAL OFFER

THE WEIL COMPANY, INC.

1033 HILL STREET, NEW HAVEN, CONN.

Gentlemen: Send me FREE, your illustrated folder describing The Weil Belt and full details of your 10 day FREE trial offer.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Use coupon or write your name and address on a penny post card.

FELT LIKE A NEW MAN!

Weil Belt Co., New Haven, Conn.
Gentlemen: Your belt is truly wonderful... its possibilities are innumerable... I feel like a new man!

It caused me to assume a correct posture, thereby putting my stomach in its proper place... in fact I was treated for ulcers that did not exist.

In the three months I have worn your belt, a reduction of 5 inches seems to be permanent.

You may use this letter and my picture. **FRED WOLF**
216 East 45th Street, New York, N.Y.



FRED WOLF

CLYDE R. PRICE



REDUCED 26 POUNDS IN SIX WEEKS!

Gentlemen: Please send me another of your Reducing Belts. I got splendid results from my other one in 6 weeks and reduced my weight 26 lbs. and my waist measure 4½ inches.

My blood pressure is again normal. Circulation is better, and I sleep a lot better. You have my permission to use this letter

Very truly yours,
Pampa, Texas. CLYDE R. PRICE.

Hotter than Coal and no dirt



FITS ALL
FURNACES



FITS ANY
COOK-STOVE



FITS ANY
HEATING-STOVE

The burner
advertised
over world's
largest radio
stations.

Do away forever with the drudgery of wood or coal. The most simple and economical invention on the market is now giving perfect satisfaction to enthusiastic users everywhere. This new invention is a new type of oil burner that takes the place of wood or coal and automatically and silently changes cheap oil into one of the quickest and hottest fires known.

Burns 96% Air—4% Cheap Oil

The International Oil Burner fits in the fire box of any range, stove or furnace. Installed in a few minutes. No noisy motor or complicated parts. 10 year guarantee.

Costs Only a Few Dollars

Heats just as well as a \$400 or \$500 oil burner without electricity or gas. Simply turn one valve and you have all the heat you want. Cleaner and better for heating and cooking. Approved by National Underwriters Laboratories and engineers everywhere. Over 150,000 in use.

30 Days Trial Offer

Try this wonderful burner right in your own home at our risk. Act quickly and get our special low introductory price. Sold under absolute money-back guarantee. Write at once for FREE booklet on home heating and FREE burner offer.

Agents—Dealers—Distributors

Our FREE burner offer starts you in business. Big money to be made. The demand is enormous. We also want spare or full time workers immediately. If \$500 a month and more interests you, write or wire us for our protected territory offer.

—Clip This Coupon—

INTERNATIONAL OIL HEATING CO.
3800-10 Park Ave., St. Louis, Mo., Dept. 532-N
Send your free booklet and free details on home heating for stove ☐ furnace ☐ Also free burner offer.

Name

Address

☐ Check if interested in making money as an international representative with protected territory.



PATENTS

TIME COUNTS IN APPLYING for patents. Send sketch or model for instructions or write for free book, "How to Obtain a Patent" and "Record of Invention" form. No charge for information on how to proceed.

CLARENCE A. O'BRIEN, Registered Patent Attorney
584-A Adams Building Washington, D. C.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Quick Relief, or You Only Pay
When Satisfied

If you suffer from High Blood pressure, dizziness, ringing in the ears, can't sleep at night, feel weak and shaky, bad taste, nervous, if your heart pounds and you fear a paralytic stroke, to demonstrate the value of my successful prescription I will have sent to you postpaid, a regular \$1 treatment on absolutely FREE TRIAL. While it is a non-specific, many cases report remarkably quick relief; often symptoms diminish and quiet normal sleep returns within 3 days. Does not contain any salts, physics, opiates or dope of any kind. Absolutely harmless. You can continue with any treatment you are now taking, as it can not conflict. Perfectly safe with any diet schedule. PAY NOTHING UNLESS GREATLY IMPROVED. Then send me \$1. If not your report cancels the charge. Write to Dr. H. L. Hayes, 13 Coates House, Kansas City, Mo.

Be A Detective

Make Secret Investigations

Earn Big Money. — Work Home or Travel.
Fascinating work. — Experience unnecessary.

DETECTIVE Particulars FREE. Write
GEORGE T. A. WAGNER, 2640 Broadway, N. Y.

of them have not yet made the discovery Mr. Laurent made!

"I have always wanted to visit Africa," writes Miss Estella Lester, of Binghamton, N. Y., "but as I cannot, I find that reading African stories in THRILLING ADVENTURES makes me feel almost as if I were there amidst all the glamour and adventure."

Now—here's a handy way to let us know what you think of our stories. We're printing a coupon—clip it, fill it out and mail it to us today. Come on—we want to hear from each and every one of you adventurers about this issue!

VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITES

Clip this coupon, fill it out and
mail to

THRILLING ADVENTURES
570 7th Ave., New York, N. Y.

THE BEST STORY in this issue is...

2nd

3rd

4th

5th

6th

7th

8th

Remarks about the magazine.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Name

Address

City

State

LATEST GIRL RACKETS EXPOSED!



Here are true stories of gold-diggers—a sensational expose of today's conditions that will astound you—things you never knew before about the women whose motto is: "Never Give a Sucker an Even Break." Get the real inside story on many famous scandals—this book teems with startling facts never before divulged! Fascinating, shocking reading! For the low-down on feminine racketeers, read—

"GIRL RACKETS"

By Virginia Hudson Brightman

This Book Includes an Up-to-Date Dictionary of Broadway Slang Used by Girl Racketeers.

Former Police Reporter in Chicago, New York and Boston. Author of "What Happens to Innocent Girls," "How Girls Go Wrong," etc.

PARTIAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

RACKET IS AS OLD AS HISTORY AND ALWAYS GETS THEM.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOLD-DIGGER—THE BROADWAY BUTTERFLY—GIRLS WHO "NEVER GIVE A SUCKER AN EVEN BREAK."

CHAPTER V

GIRL AUTOMOBILE GYPS—GIRLS WHO ASK FOR A HITCH—WITH STRANGE CONSEQUENCES—AND THE GAMBLING RACKET.

CHAPTER VI

THE NOBILITY RACKET—THE BIGGEST MONEY PRIZES GO TO THE BRAINY TYPES—THE MOST DANGEROUS OF ALL

CHAPTER VII

CREEP JANE'S PROGRESS—WHAT HAPPENS TO THE GIRLS WHOSE RACKETEERING IS AT FIRST CONFINED TO BAGGING FREE MEALS.

CHAPTER VIII

SWINDLING AND BLACKMAIL—SENSATIONAL STORIES OF VULTURES IN HUMAN FORM WHO PREY ON THE EMOTIONS OF INNOCENT VICTIMS.

CHAPTER IX

JUST DOWN FROM COLLEGE—A COLLEGIATE MANNER, AN AIR OF NON-CHALANCE AND PLENTY OF NERVE ARE THE STOCK-IN-TRADE OF CERTAIN UNSCRUPULOUS RACKETEERS.

CHAPTER I
LADIES MUST LIVE—HOW DO THEY GET THAT WAY—AND WHY? THEY EVEN "O" IT IN OLD JAPAN

CHAPTER II
THE VIRGILIAN GIRL RACKET—AN EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF CHASTE AND UNCHASTE GIRLS WHO WORK MEN FOR ALL THEY'RE WORTH.

CHAPTER III
THE LOVE RACKETEERS—THE "MARRY 'EM AND MAKE 'EM PAY"

[CASH, U. S. STAMPS, EXPRESS OR POSTAL MONEY ORDERS ACCEPTED]

A \$2.50 Book for

25c

SPECIAL VALUE

9 ASTONISHING

CHAPTERS

PROFUSELY

ILLUSTRATED

AND AN

UP-TO-DATE

SLANG DICTIONARY

Page Size 9" x 12"

Mailed in Plain Wrapper. Postage Prepaid.

BETTER PUBLICATIONS, Inc.

Dept. TA-3, 570 7th Ave., New York City.

I enclose 25c. Please rush my copy of GIRL RACKETS to

Name

Address

City..... State.....

[No Orders Filled in Canada. 40c Foreign.]

Fight Kidney Acidity Win Back Your Pep

Stop Getting Up Nights—Whip Burning Acidity That Saps Vitality—Make Guaranteed Cystex Test

There is nothing that can make men or women feel more run-down, nervous and lacking in vitality than poor functioning of the thousands of tiny, delicate tubes in the Kidneys.

If poorly functioning Kidneys or Bladder are stealing your Vitality and make it hard for you to keep up with the speed of modern life—if they make you suffer from Getting Up Nights, Leg Pains, Nervousness, Stiffness, Burning, Smarting, Itching, Acidity, Neuralgia or Rheumatic Pains, Lumbago or Circles Under Eyes, don't waste a minute. Try the Doctor's prescription called Cystex (pronounced Siss-tex).

Thousands of men and women are getting back on their feet, sleep like babies, and feel years younger by fighting irritat-

ing acidity and poor Kidney and Bladder functions with this Doctor's prescription called Cystex, specially prepared for these troubles.

This guaranteed medicine starts work in 15 minutes. Acts as a mild, gentle laxative to the Kidneys, helping them clean out poisons, wastes and acids in the blood. Soothes and tones raw, irritated tissues. Be sure to get Cystex, the special laxative for the Kidneys. Ordinary bowel laxatives can't do the work. Cystex is helping millions of sufferers and is guaranteed to fix you up to your satisfaction or money back on return of empty package. Cystex (pronounced Siss-tex) is only 75c at all druggists. Don't suffer from delay, get Cystex today.



The True Story of SEX!



TWO FAMOUS DOCTORS HAVE DARED TO WRITE THIS 640 PAGE BOOK!



The kiss



The proposal



Wedding bells



A mother

DARING SEX FACTS REVEALED

The truth about Love and Sex now frankly and fearlessly told. Plain facts about secret sins told in plain language. Startling—dynamic—honest. No "Beating about the bush"—each fact told straight from the shoulder.

SEX IS NO SIN

Blister tears and years of regret can never wipe out the greatest sin. Is one moment's happiness worth the terrible price to any woman? Ruined homes—lovers separated—married life wrecked—divorce—scandal—sins of the parents inherited by their children—all the horrible results of IGNORANCE of life's most important thing—SEX! Learn the truth about sex—the human body—its functions, ills, remedies. Both parts of this 640 page book, fully illustrated, reduced to \$2.98, formerly \$5.00.

BANISH FEAR AND IGNORANCE!

Never before have the facts of sex, the revelations of sex, the marvels of the human body been discussed so frankly, honestly and fearlessly. Everything you want to know—and should know, is told plainly in simple language, anyone can understand in "THE NEW EUGENICS". No one should be without this valuable book. Learn all about the Male and Female Organs, the Fatal Mistakes of Wives and Husbands etc. Take advantage of the special offer. Mail the coupon at once!

PIONEER PUBLISHING CO.

110 W. 40th St., Dept. 43, New York, N. Y.

This book tells about

Twilight Sleep—Easy Child-birth
Sex Excesses
The Crime of Abortion
Impotence and Sex Weakness
How Babies are Born
Teaching Children Sex
The Dangers of Petting
What Every Man Should Know
Intimate Personal Hygiene
Venereal Diseases
The Sexual Embrace
How To Build Virility
How To Gain Greater Delight
Guide to Love
Birth Control Chart For Married Women
Sex Attraction
Secrets of the Honeymoon
How To Pick a Husband
Dangers of Love Making
The Truth about Masturbation
Joys of Perfect Mating
What To Allow a Lover To Do

Special FREE offer



This outspoken book GIVEN FREE, to all who order "THE NEW EUGENICS" at \$2.98. Learn about the construction and functions of the male and female body! FREE!

Now

\$2.98

formerly sold for \$5.00

free offer included

Note—this book will not be sold to minors

Over 400,000 copies of this daring book sold.

Edition limited

Pioneer Publishing Company,
110 West 40th St.
Dept. 43, New York, N. Y.

Kindly send me "The New Eugenics" in plain wrapper, I will pay the postman \$2.98 (plus postage) on delivery. Also send me FREE of CHARGE, "The Philosophy of Life".

NAME
ADDRESS
AGE
Outside of U. S. — \$3.45 in advance,

clip coupon and mail

640
PAGES
98
FRANK
PICTURES

The Most Sensational "Get-Acquainted" Deal Ever Offered

ALL
11 GENUINE
Fifth Ave.
BEAUTY AIDS

98¢

WOULD COST **\$12.75**
IF BOUGHT AT
REGULAR RETAIL PRICES!

\$12.75 WORTH OF QUALITY COSMETICS FOR 98¢ Plus Postage 11 FULL SIZES—NOT SAMPLES—11 FULL SIZES!



COCONUT OIL SHAMPOO

A rich scalp compound that thoroughly cleans the scalp and imparts a luxuriant, silky softness to your hair.

Price \$1.00



FACE POWDER

A distinct achievement in face powder! Flashes shine, leaves only beauty and attractiveness. Packed in a beautiful gold covered box. Regular \$1.00 size.



CLEANSING CREAM

Your face and neck will be grateful for this soothing, cleansing cream that restores youthfulness and clear complexion. Smooths out wrinkles. \$1 size.



FACIAL ASTRINGENT

A formula from Hollywood's foremost beauty expert invigorates the skin and acts as a tonic. Perfect for makeup and powder base. Regular \$1 size.



VANISHING CREAM

Transforms the face into rich smooth loveliness. Eliminates unsightly blemishes. Your makeup goes on naturally. Beautifully. Regular \$1.00 size.



NAIL POLISH

Direct from Hollywood's master beautician to you. 50¢ bottle.



WAVE SET

The perfect preparation for a gorgeous wave with a lovely natural satin sheen. Regular \$1 bottle.



LIP ROUGE

Lips with vivacity and charm. You must use this fine rouge. Price 50¢.



PARFUMS DE ALIDA

One of the most popular Parfums de Alida. Price \$2.00.

LEAF TOILET WATER

A fascinating blend that radiates an unusual alluring charm. Price \$1.00.

NOT MORE THAN TWO TO A CUSTOMER

SEND NO MONEY!

Just Mail Coupon!

This "get acquainted" offer is so amazing... so sensational... so overwhelming in value... you may find it hard to believe! But it IS true! \$12.75 worth of the famous, nationally advertised Fifth Avenue Beauty Aids for 98¢, plus postage. We make this offer to win new friends. We want you to discover the superfine quality of Fifth Avenue Cosmetics... to experience the smart chic and youthful loveliness they impart!

SEND NO MONEY

Just mail the coupon. Pay postman only 98¢ plus postage when your big thrilling package arrives. You must be delighted or your money will be refunded at once. Accept this sensational offer now... it may never come again!

FIFTH AVENUE BEAUTY PRODUCTS, 3 East 17th St., Dept. 13, New York, N. Y.

Please send me all ELEVEN Fifth Avenue Beauty Aids—full sizes—regular \$12.75 retail value, as described above. I will pay the postman only 98¢ plus postage when the big package arrives. My money is to be refunded if I am not delighted.

Name

Address

City..... State.....

Shade of Face Powder

(Regular orders must enclose \$1.50 with coupon.)