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Also:

WORLD OF DOOM

A Novelette of the Futur

By RAY CUMMINGS

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We are looking for Smart People

Yes—we are looking for smart people. We want smart people everywhere to help us advertise our business and distribute our products. We are going to award **several thousands of dollars in big cash prizes** to people everywhere. Prizes will be awarded to those who win in the prize distribution we will tell you about when we hear from you. See how many faces you can find.

Tell us in the coupon below and we will tell you how to win. Here's a lot of cash for some one Would you like to have it? I am going to pay $5,000.00 in big cash prizes to advertise our business quickly. Someone, maybe you, will receive new Buick Sedan and $1,250.00 cash extra for promptness or if you win 1st prize and prefer all cash you get $2,250.00 **Answer quick.**

SEND ONLY THE COUPON BELOW AND WE WILL TELL YOU HOW TO..

Win $2,250.00

or Buick Sedan and $1,250.00 Cash!

Surely you would like to have this magnificent prize. Think what you could do with all this money. It would come in pretty handy right now, wouldn't it? **Then fill in the coupon below** and we will tell you how you can win **$2,250.00.**

We want people everywhere to know us and to share in this great distribution of money Besides the first grand prize, $2,250.00 including promptness, there are 100 other big cash prizes. The second grand prize is $750.00 cash. third grand cash prize is $600.00 cash and many others Duplicate prizes paid in case of ties. Thousands of dollars more in Special Cash Rewards which we will tell you all about when we get your answer **This is your opportunity. Answer today.**

Send No Money — Just Mail Coupon

Study this interesting picture and see how many of the faces hidden in the tree, clouds, etc., you can find. Some look straight at you, some are upside down—others are sidewise. It is not as easy as some people may think, but don't give up—keep looking and you may find them. **Mark them and send to me quick with the coupon** and I will tell you how to win first prize so you will receive the Buick Sedan and $1,250.00 cash extra for promptness.

Many people have received big cash prizes. **Some have received several thousand dollars.** Names furnished on request. Now is your chance to win a big cash prize. **Answer today and see for yourself.** Oh Boy! What you could do with $2,250.00 all cash at one time. I will be glad to pay it to you if you are adjudged the winner

Hurry—mark the faces you find, send your answer quick We will tell you how to win the $2,250.00 prize.

SEND ANSWER QUICK

Remember, **send not one penny** with your answer—all you do now is to find as many faces as you can, and mail the coupon. We will answer you right away and tell you how you can win.

For PROMPTNESS $1,250.00 EXTRA

Send answer quick and we will tell you how to get $1,250.00 extra cash for promptness

The money to pay every prize is on deposit in a **big strong Des Moines bank.** Three prominent Des Moines business men will see that the prizes are awarded honestly and promptly. Get your share of $5,000.00 in cash prizes, besides thousands of dollars in Special Cash Rewards. Over 100 prizes in all. Hurry! Just mark the faces you find and send with coupon right away Some one wins—maybe you. Send your answer and see for yourself. **Don't Delay! . . . Mail your answer today.**

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DEPT 1108 I found _____ faces.

My Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

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■ Try my course! I am so sure of what I can do that I make the unconditional agreement above.

MANY OF MY PUPILS NOW HOLD STRENGTH RECORDS!

■ Besides the thousands of men for whom I have developed bodies that spell *strength* in every sinew, there are many pupils who are the outstanding strength athletes of the world. To win any world's record is a big order, yet my pupils have done it many times. Wouldn't YOU like to hold a world's record? Think of the admiration of your friends as you take your first local prize, next a national, and finally Olympic and World Honors!

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THRILLING ADVENTURES

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Where Readers, Writers and the Editor Meet

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REDUCE YOUR WAIST 3 INCHES IN 10 DAYS

. . . or it won’t cost you a penny!

■ Because we have done this for thousands of others...because *we know* we can do as much for you...we dare to make this unconditional offer!

■ You will appear much 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 IS THE MASSAGE-LIKE ACTION THAT DOES IT!

■ Now there is an easy way to reduce without exercise, diet or drugs. The Weil Health Belt exerts a massage-like action that removes fat with every move you make.

■ It supports the sagging muscles of the abdomen and quickly gives you an erect, athletic carriage. 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. You will be more than delighted with the great improvement in your appearance.

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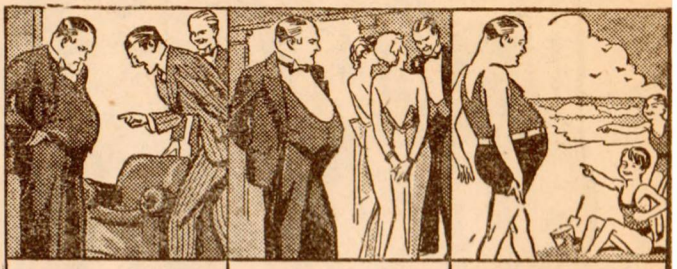
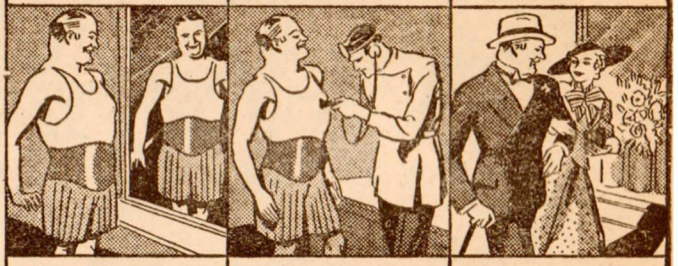


“I suddenly realized that I had become a fat man”. The boys kidded me about my big “paunch”.

At parties I learned that I had become a “wall flower”. Nobody wanted to dance with me.

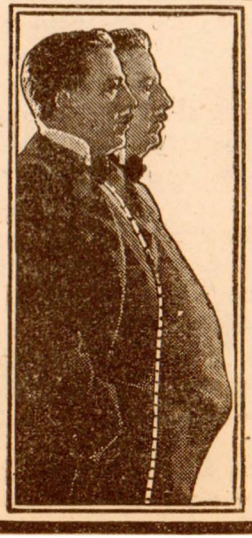
In a bathing suit ... I was immense. The day I heard some children laugh at me I decided to get a Weil Belt.



What a change! I looked 3 inches slimmer at once and soon I had actually taken EIGHT INCHES off my waist . . . and 20 pounds off my weight!

It seemed to support the abdominal walls and keep the digestive organs in place . . . and best of all, I became acceptable for insurance!

I have a new feeling of energy and pep . . . work better, eat better, play better . . . I didn’t realize how much I was missing!



DON’T WAIT . . . FAT IS DANGEROUS!

Fat is not only unbecoming, but it also endangers your health. Insurance companies know the danger of fat accummulations. The best medical authorities warn against obesity, so don’t wait any longer.

■ *Remember this*...either you take off 3 inches of fat in 10 days or it won’t cost one penny! Even the postage you pay to return the package will be refunded!

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Address _____

City _____ *State* _____

Use coupon or send name and address on penny postcard

$64.00 CLEARED IN ONE DAY

by H.B.CROSS

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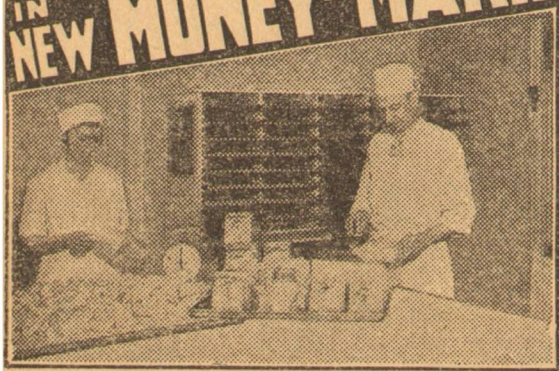

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NO EXPENSIVE EQUIPMENT

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$64 PROFIT IN ONE DAY!

Here is Proof! H. B. Cross sells 830 bags for school picnic, sells 175 bags to sub-agents and dealers in ONE DAY! The goods were prepared by himself and wife, with assistance of one woman whom he paid $3.50. Receipts, $93.50. Expenses, $28.73. Profit, $64.77. Mr. Cross writes, "I have had some mighty good repeat business!"

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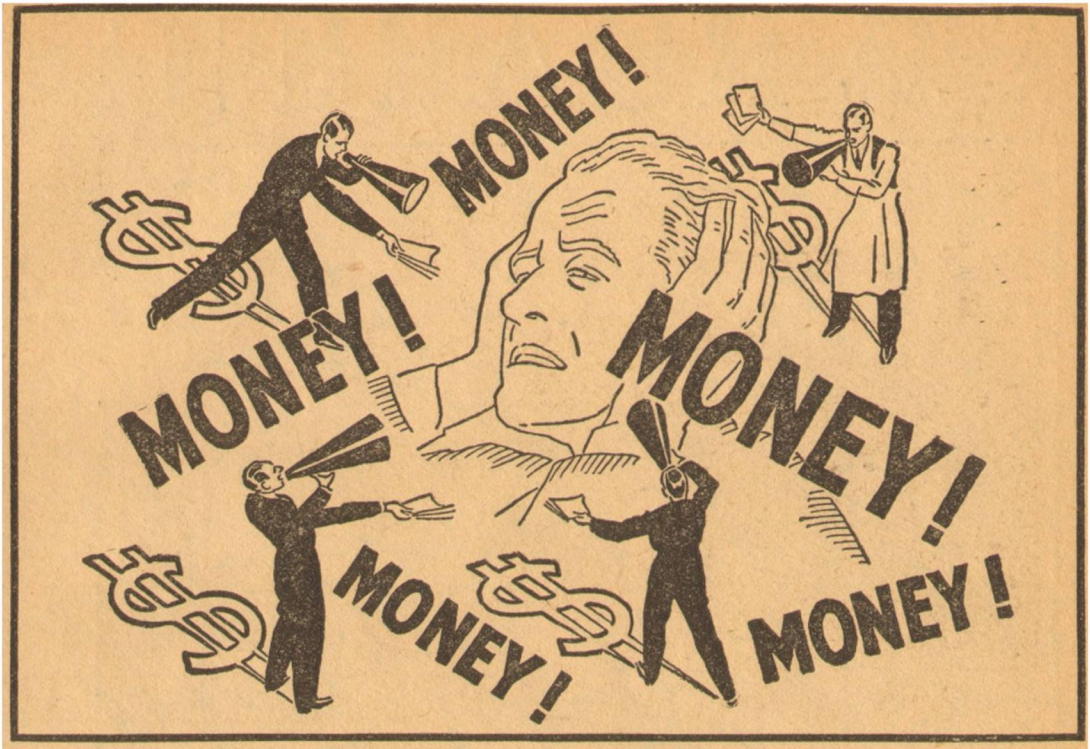

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An American Soldier of Fortune Plunges into the

Her slim hand snaked out and grabbed

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CHAPTER I

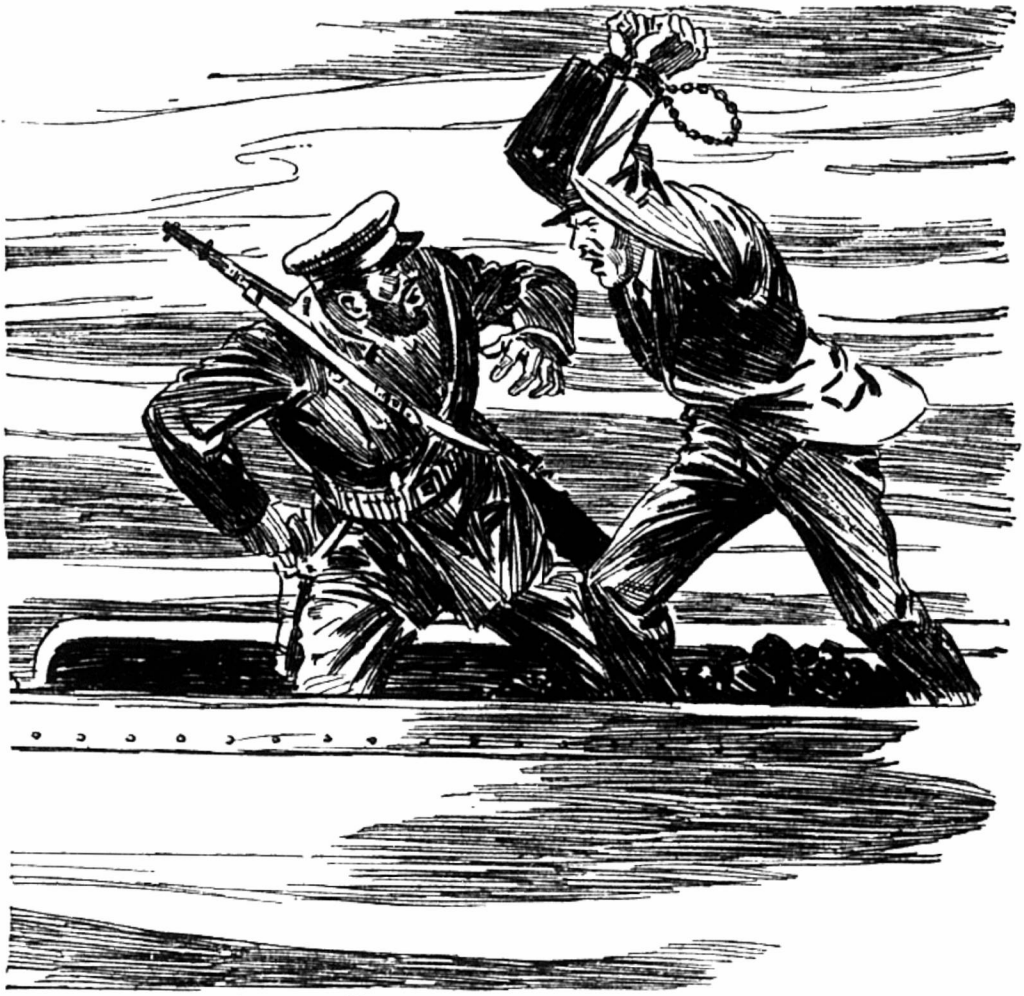
Soldier of Fortune

FRANK DUGAN stole his way through the darkness that brooded over the street of the Sleeping Dragon. His eyes searched the shadows intently; his fingers gripped tightly the automatic in the side pocket of his coat.

The silence was ominous, made all the more so by the weird sounds that came from various other parts of Mukden, where Japan was mopping

At the Coronation of Pu-Yi, All Watched with

Midst of International Intrigue and Furious Battle!



the weapon from the struggling man

the Dragon

By ARTHUR J. BURKS

Author of "Bare Fists," etc.

up on suspected enemies. Now and again Dugan heard the spanging report of rifles through the darkness, and the thin answering scream of men whose bodies met the leaden slugs of death.

His face was very grim. Japan, under cover of darkness, could shoot with impunity, blaming the blackness of the night if her slayings destroyed someone whose death might become an "international incident."

Dugan moved on swiftly. It was ten o'clock at night and he had been

Bated Breath—For What World-Shaking Horror?

Frank Dugan

over an hour reaching this dismal street where he was to meet Sung Sing, leader of the *hung hu tze*. Ahead, he saw a red Chinese lantern hanging above a long black blotch which he realized was an open doorway. It was the signal that was to guide the tall soldier of fortune to the meeting place where he was to find the Chinese leader.

Dugan was known throughout the Far East as an intrepid adventurer; and Sung Sing had sent one of his trusted aides to engage the American to take part in a dangerous mission. Dugan had accepted; and the five thousand dollars he had been paid in advance was in a money belt around his waist now. The exact nature of the mission he was to learn from Sung Sing, when he met him in Mukden.

Dugan reached the open door of the house of the red lantern. He peered in and discovered that beyond was thick darkness. There was no sound, nothing to indicate a living presence. He drew out his gun, hesitated for an instant and then stepped silently ahead through the door. He had taken a few steps forward when he paused, as his foot touched something soft on the floor. Carefully he drew a tiny flashlight from his pocket.

The white disc of light gleamed upon a dead man. It was a Chinese. Bayonets had ripped his body to shreds.

Dugan's heart hammered with excitement. This, he realized, explained why there was no one at the designated secret meeting place. Evidently the rendezvous had been discovered by the Japanese. Whether Sung Sing and his followers had been captured or had escaped was a question that he could not attempt to answer.

He swung around as he heard a slight sound behind him. The light in his hand gleamed upon a yellow face in which dark eyes glittered malignantly, upon an upraised hand. A knife swished through the air—and as it did so Dugan leaped to one side. The hand that held the automatic flashed down, caught the Japanese a hard blow on the head with the heavy barrel.

Dugan did not dare fire the gun. There was no way of telling how many others might have entered the street of the Sleeping Dragon with the Japanese. The man dropped to the floor of the room as the automatic crashed down again.

DUGAN turned the beam of light on the still figure. He was sure that this man had followed him; it was possible there were others who knew that he was in Mukden. But he had come here to meet Sung Sing—that he make some contact with the leader of the *hung hu tze* was vital.

Swiftly Dugan left the house. He hurried back toward the far end of the street, moving as silently as possible through the darkness. Then, abruptly, he paused and ducked back into the shadows as he heard the patter of running feet.

He waited tensely, his automatic ready. An instant later a tall figure

loomed against the lighter grey that was the entrance to the dismal street. Dugan uttered a startled exclamation as he realized it was a white man who approached.

The new arrival drew closer and Dugan stepped out of the shadows.

"Wait!" he said sharply.

The man came to a slithering stop as he recognized an American voice.

"Who are you?" he panted.

"Frank Dugan. You?"

"John Hogarth." The voice was that of an Englishman. "We'd better get out of here. The Japanese were after me."

"Why?" asked Dugan tersely.

"I'm Lewis Paine's secretary. The Japanese suspected Mr. Paine of selling arms and ammunition to the Chinese. He is—he was the head of a big munitions company."

"They got him, then?" demanded Dugan.

"Yes, broke into his house tonight. Shot him and ripped the place to pieces with bayonets. It was horrible—ghastly! I managed to escape with Paine's daughter before she actually knew what had happened." The customary reticences among strangers were forgotten in this situation of terror, where all white men became allies. Instinctively, the two men trusted each other.

"WHERE is she now?"

"Hidden on the outskirts of the town. But we'll have to get away from here as soon as possible." Hogarth peered at Dugan. "What are you doing here?"

"Ever hear of Sung Sing?" asked Dugan.

"Of course." Hogarth listened for a moment—there was no sound of pursuit. "One hears whispers of his being a man of destiny who hopes to reestablish the old Empire in China."

"Well, I came here to meet him," said Dugan. "When I reached the

Sung Sing

place, I found no one there but a dead Chinaman."

"And now what?" asked Hogarth.

"I've got to try and find Sung Sing," said Dugan quietly. He thought rapidly for a moment. "Meanwhile, you had better get the girl. I'll meet you two miles below Yamato Station, toward Hsin Min."

"Right." Hogarth swung around and soon disappeared.

Dugan stood for an instant watching and listening. Far in the distance, the sound of rifle fire continued. He advanced slowly toward the intersecting street. Just as he reached it, his foot struck a block of wood and he tripped, falling forward on his face.

The fall saved his life, for a rifle whanged from somewhere across the street. He saw the flame of it, heard the bullet thud into the wall of a building behind him.

He was up on his feet, running, in not more than a second. He plunged back down the dark length of the Street of the Sleeping Dragon. It was useless to try and find some further trace of Sung Sing now. The Japanese were too hot on Dugan's trail.

The Chinese leader's orders had

Ellen Paine

been for Dugan to attend the coronation of Pu Yi at Hsinking without fail, there to await further orders if he were unable to contact Sung Sing in Mukden! The tone of the communication had left no doubt as to the importance.

Dugan had to get to Hsinking, and perhaps, at the same time, he might be able to assist John Hogarth in getting the girl a place of comparative safety. He dashed on, then slowed his pace as he glided silently in among the shadows at the far end of the street.

CHAPTER II

Pursuit

A BUGLE blared behind him. Dugan grinned and increased his pace. The Japanese, who occupied Mukden as a military unit, in their war against China, were tipping their hands that they were after him. They had no intention of allowing him to live to report their activities. Moreover, his connection with Sung Sing had undoubtedly been brought to their attention.

Then a strange sound came from directly ahead.

It was the eerie, plaintive wailing of a Chinese flute. Instantly Dugan's memory revived tales he had heard, of how certain Chinese could communicate messages by means of the flute of five notes. No foreigner could understand how, and but few Chinese, for to learn the code one must be an expert in the Chinese classics. Dugan didn't understand why, but there it was. Some day, for the fun of it, he meant to find out. He supposed that the Book of Changes held some sort of key to the plaintive sounds of the musical instrument.

THAT the flute was indeed a signal was proved the next instant when another flute answered, over to the left. The flutists might be potential friends to him, but Dugan couldn't be sure of that. It was very possible that Sung Sing might have some such method of communicating with his agents, secure in the knowledge that the Japanese wouldn't understand. But the Yank had no way of verifying his guess. The players might well be Manchukuoans, loyal to Japan.

He dashed on, hearing the pursuit gather behind him, get under way. He spared a second for thought of Hogarth, wondering if the Britisher would get through.

The bugle was answered from dead ahead, then from the left, then from the right, proof to Dugan that he was being hemmed in. He gritted his teeth, went forward. But now he carried his automatic in his hand, its muzzle to the fore. Sudden rain splashed in his face.

The bugle shrilled nearer.

There came the sound of heavy feet, soldiers' feet, he knew, slogging through the mud. Commands in the Japanese tongue rang through the night. He could hear frightened words from the interior of the black huts among which he passed. The natives in this strife-torn district

must by now have forgotten how to sleep.

He veered to the left to miss contacting what he guessed by the sound to be a Japanese patrol. Then he darted back on his original bearing.

There was a high white house to his left. He remembered that the Consul-General had pointed it out to him just after his arrival. It was the home of the late Chang Tso-lin, now unoccupied, directly south of Yamato Station.

A light glowed at the gate of the house's compound for a moment, then blinked out, drenched by the rain.

Dugan bore more to the right. At a dead run he crossed a broad thoroughfare, now absolutely deserted, though usually crowded with rickshas, droskies, bull carts and automobiles—and vanished again among the shacks. But a hail of bullets hammered at him just as he disappeared. Had he had ten paces further to go they surely would have got him.

Shrieks rose from the shacks on either side of the path he had left. He wondered how many innocent Chinese the bullets had accounted for—those shacks were paper-thin.

HE increased his stride. He was breathing easily, felt queerly light and eager. He was tempted to turn back, try conclusions with the patrols. But reason decided against such a foolhardy proceeding, urged him ahead.

A bugle blared almost in his face as he rounded a corner and ran squarely into four men. They were Japanese, by the shape and size of them, and he caught the vagrant gleam of light on cold steel. With sullen bayonets they waited to receive him, but Dugan knew his bayonet stuff. He had taught it during the Great War. He didn't even pause.

John Hogarth

He hurled himself forward.

A bayonet lunged at him. The attacker made no sound, save that which his heavy feet drew from the mud. The weapon was aimed at Dugan's throat. He shot his right hand across his own body, striking its palm against the steel blade, deflecting the aim so that the savage point slipped past his left side. The impetus of the attacker carried him directly against Dugan, who struck twice with savage surety, with the muzzle of the automatic, to make sure.

Each blow crashed home with telling force to the skull of his attacker.

The Japanese went down.

Dugan whirled. The other two Japanese were attacking from either side. Ten paces away the bugler was fleeing, blowing his bugle frantically as he ran, calling for help.

Dugan stopped suddenly.

THE two Japanese, estimating his forward speed instinctively, had aimed to catch him as he passed between them. Dugan could have shot them then as they stood, but the spanking bark of the automatic would have revealed his position in the darkness. The men almost drove

their bayonets into each other, but realized their blunder in time and halted the reflex motions.

Then they realized nothing whatever, for the pistol butt struck twice again—and struck with all the force at Dugan's command. The Japanese fell against each other, their deflected bayonets driven deeply into the mud. As they crashed forward, the two rifles quivered upright on the tips.

Dugan considered for a brief moment. Then he quickly slung the two rifles over his shoulder, so that they were behind him, and only their weight was against him.

The shouts of the pursuers were now very close.

Dugan grinned to himself. He knew well that what he had just done would be an excellent excuse in any international chancery to explain his death, despite his American papers. But he didn't plan to lose sleep over that. He must get on. Putting the rifles into position, he took up the trail again.

HOUSES were scarcer now, proof that he was approaching the edge of the city. Once out in the open, the Japanese would have an excellent opportunity of downing him with bullets. But he had to take that risk. He didn't hesitate.

Dugan was enjoying himself hugely. He had at least an equal chance with his pursuers. They were so many he could hear them without trouble, and the sounds they couldn't help making drowned out from their ears any he might have made.

The set-up, to a born adventurer, was perfect. Endless excitement was certain.

He ran out into the open, zigzagging. Pursuit was still among the houses. Then he stumbled, fell headlong.

He rolled into a deep gully. Its bottom, when he reached it finally, was a seething, raging torrent. Water was up to his hips when he struggled to his feet, dripping, cursing ruefully.

DUGAN considered for a moment. The Japanese, when they reached this spot, would believe he had managed somehow to float downstream. Instead, therefore, he turned and sloshed his way upstream, walking swiftly, keeping within the edge of the stream to hide his footprints. He must inspect the rifles and his automatic, he realized, dry them at the first opportunity. But now the important thing was to get clear away.

He rounded a bend in the gully just as the Japanese reached the place where he had gone in. They stopped, stared intently about. Dugan almost held his breath as he stood with water swirling about his hips, keeping motionless so as not to betray his whereabouts.

Sing-song commands rattled out. The Japanese started downstream. Dugan waited silently to see if anyone had been ordered upstream on the off chance he had gone that way; his keen eyes watched the skyline for the first warning shape of his enemies.

Five minutes passed and they did not appear. Their shouts had almost died away with distance — downstream.

He waded across the stream, the swirling water rushing to his armpits in the center and almost sucking him under. With difficulty he clambered out on the opposite bank, soaked to the skin, with water cascading from his clothes and sloshing about in his shoes.

Then, satisfied that he was safe for the time being at least, he started forward, bearing to his right to contact the Peking-Mukden line.

He was aided in this by the lights

of a train pulling into Yamato Station from the direction of Hsin Min. All he had to do was keep going straight ahead. The lights of the station were a beacon to show him approximately where he would strike the tracks.

But never once did he grow careless. His eyes were keenly alert to everything against the sky, his ears keen for every sound.

At the end of an exhausting hour he reached the railroad embankment. Panting, he flung himself down. Finally he heard furtive sounds, mere shreds of voices.

One was the voice of a man, the other that of a girl!

CHAPTER III

High Speed

"HOGARTH!" hissed Dugan guardedly. His automatic was to the fore, ready to spit bullets—if it would fire after its immersion—at the slightest suspicious movement from those voices he heard.

Someone gasped.

"Dugan?"

"Yes," said Dugan with relief, recognizing the voice of the Englishman. "This way!"

Two people approached him while he watched warily. A man's spare figure, taller than that of Dugan himself, appeared first through the rainy murk. A hand came out, grasped that of Dugan. Hogarth exclaimed at the cold touch of the automatic. The second figure, slipping and sliding in the mud, materialized like an apparition beside Hogarth.

The Englishman spoke meaningly.

"This is Ellen Paine, Dugan. I'm making myself responsible for her to her father until we can rejoin him. I've told her that we may not contact him again this side of Peking. Ellen knows that he simply could not get back to her, that he trusts me implicitly."

DUGAN recognized the warning in Hogarth's tones. The Britisher had not told the girl of her father's brutal slaying. Dugan swore under his breath. His own way would have been to tell her at once and get a harsh duty over with. But perhaps this was best.

The girl would be buoyed up by anticipation if she did not know the truth—anticipation that she would soon rejoin her father.

Dugan considered her white face, the brown curls showing under the light cap she wore. He wasn't sure, but he diagnosed her as twenty-two years of age. He put his automatic into his belt to take her hand. It was warm to his touch in spite of the rain.

"I'm a little afraid," she smiled wanly, but her tone was steady, "that Mr. Hogarth isn't telling me the truth. Something inside me tells me that dad has been hurt. There have been whispers against him, stories that he sides with Russia, against Japan. But I'm believing because Mr. Hogarth wants me to believe, and because I have to if I'm to remain sane."

Dugan grunted.

"We'll have to keep moving," he said shortly, "toward Hsin Min. If we travel at top speed we should make it before morning and get a train out."

He had instantly resolved to get the girl into China proper before going on with his work. To see her safely out of this became a wordless agreement between Hogarth and himself.

Dugan led the way at a rapid walk. On the tracks they stepped briskly along toward Hsin Min, feeling in the dark for the ties. The girl did

Men with bayonets strode grimly

not complain, but her breathing was labored within the first half hour.

Dugan hardened his heart to sympathy. If she were allowed to rest, or if the little expedition slowed down to accomodate her, their chances would be nullified. They might all be killed, or be discovered far from any cover when day broke over Manchukuo. And the girl understood, for she offered no protest. Steadily she walked, head high, between Hogarth and Dugan.

After an hour had passed, her small hand clutched forward at the American's sleeve. She was making a game fight. Dugan swore that he hadn't thought to offer her the aid of his hand. But he had had so many things to think about. He spoke tersely over his shoulder to Hogarth.

"Got any money?"

"About a thousand pounds, I should say."

"Good. Bribery is often effective in the Orient."

THEY had definitely dropped Mukden behind them, but Hsin Min, just as dangerous, still seemed far away as the moon. They seemed to be making almost no progress at all, though they were traveling as rapidly with the girl as they would have been able to travel without her.

Dugan found he couldn't blame her for their seeming snail-like pace. But he lengthened his stride a little, nevertheless.

Her hand tightened on his sleeve, her only hint that she had discovered his increase in pace.

"I say, Dugan," protested Hogarth, "can't we slow down a bit? The young woman, you know."

"They're after me, and probably you, too, by now," said Dugan brutally. "We can't waste time. She'll have to stand up under it."

"But maybe she won't be able to."

"Then we'll take turns carrying

her, Hogarth. We've got to travel."

"Don't worry about me," said the girl spiritedly. "I can keep up as long as you can."

There was high courage, determination, in her voice. Something clutched at Dugan's heart as he caught that note. This girl was a thoroughbred. And as hour succeeded hour he allowed himself to think tall thoughts—of the sort of a woman who would tie up with a man who went to the ends of the earth to stick his nose into deadly dangers. And somehow his picture of such a woman fitted the girl who clung to his sleeve and fought her way over the ties.

IT must have been close to four o'clock in the morning when they made out the river between Mukden and Hsin Min, and walked unhesitatingly out onto the trestle. Now they were excellent targets for marksmen—and the Japanese would certainly be guarding this bridge. But they could never cross the river otherwise.

It must be done!

Dugan could scarcely believe it when they reached the other side safely. Then, as one, they swung down to the right and crouched under the embankment, as voices came to them through the murk. Japanese patrols were coming toward the bridge!

Five minutes more on the trestle and they would certainly have been challenged. Dugan let his breath out explosively, then caught and held it when the girl's hand clasped his arm convulsively. He patted the hand, then raged at himself for the display of sympathy.

The Japanese patrol slogged past. Dugan finally whispered the word to continue.

They kept below the embankment until they reached the first houses in the large city of Hsin Min. From

There was the glint of a knife

ahead there drifted back to them the clamor of whistles and shrill, protesting bells of locomotives.

Dugan began to shape the plan in his mind. With money, the thing could be worked.

They skirted the main part of the town through which the railroad passed, and came out beyond the station. Then Dugan drew his two companions close.

"We've got to get out and get through to Shanhaikwan, Hogarth," he said. "We might wait here forever for a train. I've got a hunch. That train, on the main track, is headed for China. We'll get to it somehow, uncouple the locomotive and tender, then take possession of the locomotive. We'll highball out. If we get caught—well, we'll have to risk it. And there's the chance, too, we might meet another train. What do you think?"

"A train pulls into Manchukuo from China about two hours from now," objected Hogarth promptly, "unless the Japanese have drastically changed the schedules, which doesn't seem likely on account of disputes over the railroad. We're bound to meet that train, even if we get away with your plan. It won't do us any good!"

"BUT it will at least put us a big distance on our way," Dugan brushed aside the thought of danger. "The only way they can stop us is by pursuit, or by blowing up the track ahead of us. When we meet the other train, we'll start the locomotive backing up, jump off, and proceed from there the best way we know how. Let's go!"

The girl did not demur, nor did Hogarth protest further.

Dugan again led the way, keeping the train between themselves and the lights beyond the station. They reached the train, followed along its length toward the locomotive. Behind the tender, Dugan fiddled noiselessly with the coupling for a moment, came back to whisper to Hogarth:

"All set. Be ready for anything. When we start out, there'll be hell to pay!"

THE Britisher chuckled. The girl gasped. Dugan's eyes were glowing with excitement in the darkness—which hadn't yet lifted or been free of the endless downpouring of rain. They stood under the cab. Beyond the areaway the Chinese engineer and fireman were standing in the cab door, looking back as though awaiting signals.

Dugan went into the caboose with a leap. He had taken Hogarth's automatic, and now two muzzles pushed hard against the backs of the Chinese. He spoke softly to them in Mandarin.

"Turn around slowly, my friends," he hissed. "And if you make a noise, I'll kill both of you instantly."

The men froze. They hesitated for a heartbreaking moment, and Dugan, knowing the usual Oriental indifference to death, was afraid that one or both of them might cry out a warning. He hastened to add a word to which every Chinese reacted as fish to tasty bait:

"Cumshaw!"

The word meant, in effect, bribery, and told the men that there was money in it for them if they obeyed orders without question. Slowly they turned. Their bland yellow faces stared into the eyes of Dugan, looked from him to Hogarth and the girl.

If they were surprised or taken aback, there was no way of telling by their expressions.

"One thousand gold dollars to each of you if you get us to Shanhaikwan," said Dugan. "You're already uncoupled. All you have to do is start going."

The Chinese exchanged glances, which still held no meaning for Dugan, but must have indicated something to them. Hogarth, since both of Dugan's hands were occupied, showed them some money in his hands. They moved quickly then, taking their places in the cab.

The cab's wheels squealed as the throttle was opened and the engine sought for traction under the spinning of her huge drivers. The locomotive began to move, gathered headway. Shouts came from behind them. Bullets began to hammer into the cab.

The Chinese knew they were taking chances, but they didn't even look around. On a thousand gold dollars a Chinese coolie could be a potentate for the rest of his life, and his family could live in comparative luxury.

These two would figure out later how to get their families into China proper.

The locomotive gathered speed. Dugan looked back. Another locomotive was being switched onto the main line. Then Hsin Min was lost in the murk behind them. The cab was rolling and rocking from side to side as the speed increased to terrific proportions.

DUGAN led the girl into the tender. He took off his coat and made a seat for her on the coal, out of the fireman's way. Hogarth stood watch in the cab, with one of the automatics in his right hand.

The locomotive seemed literally to jump ahead. Dugan, looking out of the cab, first on one side, then the other, watched for signs of obstructions ahead. But nothing met his gaze except a wall of rain, and the smooth track stretching before them.

It was five in the morning. Their speed was now suicidal, but Frank Dugan grinned contentedly.

CHAPTER IV

Capture

SATISFIED at the moment that everything was running smoothly, Dugan dropped back and spoke frankly to Hogarth.

"All right, Hogarth, dish the dirt. Frankly, I'm a soldier of fortune engaged by Sung Sing on a special mission. I'm not going to give you the details of that mission, for I won't know all about them myself until I finally reach my boss. But I do know that it is vital for me to be present at the coronation of Pu Yi. How long have you been out here?"

"Five years," said Hogarth.

"Then you know a lot of what's going on. Spill it!"

"Well, Manchukuo is a hotbed of trouble. If there is a war in the offing, it will start here, surely. Everything is for it, nothing against it, and military Japan wants war. She doesn't care much with whom. Now, the whole world knows that Pu Yi is soon to be crowned Emperor of Manchukuo."

"No doubt of that," said Dugan. "Go on."

"Almost anything may happen at that ceremony," said Hogarth. "I mean at the ceremony of coronation. Japan is guarding the Emperor as though he were their own ruler, and he may be just that. They're taking every conceivable precaution against assassination."

"Why?"

"The answer seems fairly obvious, doesn't it? They don't want him killed."

"Is there a chance an attempt will be made?" Dugan knew that there was such a chance, was more than half certain that was why Sung Sing

wanted him at the coronation, but he wanted to learn all he could from Hogarth.

"There's always that possibility when a government changes," the Englishman said. "Japan is taking no chances."

"Well, who would wish to kill him?"

"The Chinese, for one thing. They deposed him in 1912 because they didn't want the Empire any longer, and they aren't fooled now. If he becomes Emperor of Manchukuo, and Japan decides to step into China and take over, China will be right back where she was in 1912. With a Manchu Emperor. Pu Yi has plenty of enemies."

"But if China killed him, Japan would make drastic reprisals."

Hogarth paused for a moment in thought.

"You're overlooking something," he said with a warning glance at the engineer and fireman. "One can't tell coolie from *tuchun* these days. Even this cab may have ears that comprehend English. If China assassinates Pu Yi, you may rest assured that China will not shoulder the blame."

Hogarth left it there for Dugan to draw his own conclusions. Dugan's mind raced over the possibilities.

"THEN, Russia is watching every move Japan makes with anxious eyes," went on Hogarth. "If Japan establishes her empire, her next step may be one of aggression in Siberia. If Pu Yi dies, that will be delayed. There'll be an uprising to put down, which will make for delays that will give Russia time to prepare. China will be against Russia, too, and may thwart that attempt if possible."

"Why?"

"China no more wishes to bend her neck under the Russian yoke than the yoke of Japan. If Russia finds an excuse to move in, China will become one of the Soviet Republics; a province at a time, perhaps, but inevitably the result will be the Russianizing of all China. White Russian exiles in China would not care for that, for most of them would face certain execution."

"So far, so good. Any reason why White Russians might wish to assassinate Pu Yi?"

"Yes. Fanatics might pretend to be Soviet Russians, do the assassination, and force Japan into a war with Russia — all this in the hope that Japan would win and a new Czar set up over all the Russians under Japanese guidance."

"SUPPOSE," Dugan said slowly, "that Japan for all her desire to make Pu Yi emperor, should herself conspire behind the scenes to assassinate him in such a way as to lay the blame on China, in order to have an excuse to advance into the Middle Kingdom; or on Russia in order to spread the other way toward Vladivostok; or in order, in some way, to force war with the United States?"

"All I can say to that," said Hogarth, "is that Japan vigorously denied all evil intentions toward China, even while they were bombarding Chapei and advancing inside the wall at Shanhaikwan and Jehol. One never knows what they'll do."

Dugan was silent for a moment. He knew that in the turbulent maelstrom which hung over the Far East the name of Sung Sing was whispered, by those who understood the chaotic conditions, as "man of destiny." There was Manchu blood in his veins, and he dreamed of reestablishing the old Empire. Sung Sing would be sure that Pu Yi was not assassinated.

Dugan turned to enter the tender to see how the girl was getting along. As though his turning had been a signal, a frightful scream came from her lips. Hogarth in-

stantly covered the engineer and fireman again. Dugan leaped past him to the tender.

A huge Chinese was just coming down over the coal, leaping toward the girl. His right hand, lifted high, held a knife with a curved blade. His face in the murk was ghastly.

Dugan took in the tableau instantly, knew how it had happened. This man had somehow noted what had happened back at Hsin Min and had grabbed the tender as it pulled out.

He was a big man, palpably a native of Manchuria, where they grow them big. He had watched his opportunity and now was prepared to strike a blow for Japan—and the Empire of Manchukuo. He had planned to slay the girl, get past her to the cab, then get the two men. Only her turning, her frightened scream, had tripped the would-be killer up.

Dugan's automatic spat flame and bullets. The lead ripped and tore at the brawny bare chest of the Chinese. The man's mouth went ludicrously open. His knife clattered into the coal, which slid back and forth in a strange black ferment with the wild motion of the tender. The Chinese fell on his face and slid down in a huddled heap, almost at the feet of the girl.

DUGAN jumped past the dead man to the top of the coal heap, looking back to see whether there were any more unauthorized guests. But there were none—and but for a stroke of luck, the whole passenger list might now have been dead.

Dugan came back.

"Look the other way!" he snapped at the girl.

She turned the other way, covering her face with her hands. Dugan dragged the body of the Chinese into the cab, dumped it out, watched it strike the steps and bounce into the gloom. He rubbed his hands on his handkerchief, returned to the girl.

She was standing against the swaying side of the tender, below the pile of coal, looking very sick. As Dugan stared at her, she swayed toward him. His arms encompassed her. She sagged against him, her face against his wet shirt.

WELL, he scarcely blamed her for fainting. His own heart had gone numb for a split second when he had seen that monster come over the coal. But his hand had worked automatically, and his bullets had sped true to their mark as his finger had worked the trigger without command from his numbed brain.

He placed the girl back on the coat. The rain in her face would revive her. It was the best he could do. He returned to the cab.

A series of explosions sounded from outside. Engineer and fireman turned as though they had been shot. The engineer began to chatter excitedly. His hand moved to the throttle. Dugan had difficulty understanding him. But he got it, with the help of Hogarth.

"Rockets under the wheels," the Britisher said. "Signals to slow down, to prepare to stop."

"Tell 'em to keep moving!"

"But there may be a barricade around a bend ahead which will wreck us. These fellows seem to expect something of the kind."

Dugan shrugged. It would do them no good should the engine pile up somewhere.

It began to slow down. And now he found himself afraid that it wouldn't slow down in time. It was going into a curve at frightful speed, but the engineer applied the brakes, sanding the tracks to help the wheels to grip and hold. It was slowing. The rocking from side to side was decreasing.

The headlight bored into the

gloom but a short distance. A pile of ties loomed up ahead, squarely across the tracks. But not a soul moved nearby, unless there were hidden men beyond it. Now indeed there was nothing to do but stop—and back up from a palpable trap. But one must stop forward speed before one could back up; and while one was stopped, if only for a second, almost anything might happen.

The cowcatcher halted within twenty feet of the barricade.

"Reverse!" yelled Dugan, then bethought himself of the Chinese word and shouted that. The drivers spun backward — but it was too late.

From both sides of the track nondescript men, all looking like coolies, engulfed the locomotive and tender. The engineer and fireman sat in their places, looks of resignation on their yellow faces, as the men surrounded the cab. Dugan, peering out, could make out several Japanese among the attackers—and several white men he set down as White Russians, with the light of fanaticism in their eyes. The girl, providentially, stayed behind.

Suddenly the engineer and fireman, each from his own side of the cab, leaped for exits.

They dropped to the ground, and even Dugan turned a little sick as bayonets leaped forth and the two men died even before they could offer explanations.

MEN poured into the cab. Hogarth and Dugan backed against the tender, automatics ready, each resolved to save one bullet for the girl. One of the first men in spoke in English:

"Sung Sing counsels submission to arrest. Developments later!"

Sung Sing himself, whose picture Dugan had once seen, was not in evidence.

CHAPTER V

White Russians

DUGAN'S heart was in his mouth. Couldn't the attackers see that he and Hogarth were protecting something, hiding something from view? He knew how Chinese mobs treated women—and his weapons and Hogarth's had already been snatched from them. They could do nothing to protect her, except give their lives in a hopeless struggle.

As yet nobody had looked into the tender. Dugan didn't know whether this was due to carelessness on the part of the attackers, or their belief that only the two men were involved. Or it might be that the agents of Sung Sing, who must be everywhere among these people, were maneuvering the mass of attackers to keep them from seeing the girl.

Still Dugan held his breath. The end for her might well be horrible, if Chinese history repeated itself and she were taken.

It didn't happen.

Instead, irons and handcuffs were brought forth and the two men were securely bound—and hurled into the tender. Dugan managed a look at the spot where he had last seen Ellen Paine.

She was nowhere to be seen!

Had the enemy crept over the coal as the first man had done and spirited her away? Had she tried to escape over the rear of the tender? The latter contingency, he knew instantly, was impossible, for the train was surrounded and had been from the beginning. She couldn't have got away without being seen; and even if this were admitted possible, she couldn't remain long at large in this soldier-and-bandit-filled countryside.

This attack was, ostensibly, by Chinese bandits. But Dugan saw so many Japanese faces beyond the light furnished by the open furnace door that he knew Japanese were in command, and that many White Russians were fanatically following their lead.

And then he saw where the girl had gone. She had used intelligence. A pile of clothing in the lower left-hand corner of the tender was suspiciously thicker than it had last been. The girl had simply crawled under it, folded herself into a ball, and was awaiting developments.

Hogarth and Dugan exchanged swift warning glances. They did not again look toward the pile of rags and cast-off garments.

A Japanese came forward. He was dressed as a Chinese, but there were innumerable things which gave him away when he spoke, in halting English, to Dugan. He seemed to be in command, which argued a certain cleverness, was trying to pass as a Chinese, yet when he addressed the American his speech sounded with a polite, hissing intake of breath which none but a Japanese ever used—a fact known the world over.

THIS hissing intake of breath meant:

"That my humble breath may not blow upon you," and was the acme of politeness. Dugan knew the Japanese would have spoken thus to an enemy awaiting the services of the firing squad.

"It is with great disparagement," said the Japanese, bowing low, "that we loyal followers of His Majesty Pu Yi, must subvise with you, to the end that you will honor us-selves by returning under guard to Hsin Min. There the military court of our great protector, Dai Nippon, may pass upon your case.

"You will, of course, be treated with most kindness, but if there is a break for liberty there may be resultant a destructive forcing of firing, to the end that the honorable ones may die instant of bullets. The honorable ones carry with them the hopes of this humble Manchukuoan that they will be able to acquit themselves with honor in advance of execution by firing squad."

DUGAN grinned. He found it easy to grin at this bumptious fool, who for all his stupidity, represented a people who knew what they wanted and went after it, perfectly willing to give their lives to attain their end.

The Japanese now backed off and looked over his followers. Dugan studied him, noted how the false queue was twisted into the black hair of the man's head — and that the queue was red! It was so utterly silly, but life and death rode with the jest.

The Japanese signaled to two men. Dugan's eyes narrowed as he looked at their blazing eyes. They were big, stalwart men, both bearing the scars of many battles. White Russians. That they had seen plenty of military service was evidenced by the way they carried themselves.

"These gentlemen will see you back to Hsin Min," said the Japanese, again drawing in his breath, hissing like a snake. "There will be two men to run the locomotive." In rattling Russian, he gave orders to take Hogarth and Dugan back to Hsin Min. There they were to be turned over to the military commander for investigation.

Dugan studied the huge Russians. One of them had a beard which covered his throat. The other was clean shaven. Both were armed with pistols, and had Chinese knives in their belts.

Two Chinese settled into the places recently occupied by the ill-

fated natives who would never have a chance to live in luxury on their thousand gold dollars. One look at them and Dugan knew they could not be bribed — certainly not while the Japanese were within sight and hearing. All seemed utterly under the thumb of their Japanese commander. The crowd gave ground as the Japanese signaled the locomotive to start backing.

The wheels spun. The engine got under way. Dugan and Hogarth stepped back and, as if by common consent, to forestall the Russians from doing the same thing, sat down with their backs almost against the pile of stuff under which the girl was hiding. Their chains clanked as they settled down.

The Russians stood over them, speaking together for a moment. Then the man with the beard deliberately kicked Dugan in the side, a terrific wallop. The other Russian did likewise for Hogarth. Both men were spilled on their sides by the blows. Then the Russians did what it had not seemed to occur to the Japanese to do—went through their pockets thoroughly.

THEIR guards exclaimed with delight at the amount of money they unearthed from the two prisoners. Then, as a matter of course, they fell into an argument as to its proper disposition. Dugan, on the point of expostulating that the money was his and Hogarth's personal property, and that these men would be in serious trouble if they took it, closed his mouth instead. Better not let them know that he understood any Russian.

He did speak to them in English after he managed to sit up again. The terrific kick had almost caved in his ribs, and had left a throbbing pain in his side. When he addressed them, the Russians only looked at him blankly. Now they spoke freely, after asking both men by gesture if they understood Russian and receiving headshakes of negation.

"If it is known that our prisoners had this money," said one, "the Japanese will demand that we turn it over. It will buy much that we now lack. I do not wish to turn it over. What, then, are we to do?"

DUGAN listened, his breath held tightly in his throat so as to miss no sound. The locomotive was again rolling and rocking as it gathered speed backward toward Hsin Min. The other Russian considered for a moment.

"If we were to slay these two, little punishment would be meted out to us. We cause Japan no trouble with the United States or England, since they can lay the blame on White Russians. We can say that the two men tried to escape and we were compelled to shoot them. If they ask us about money and papers, we can deny knowledge of any such. When the bodies are found, who is to say who has stripped them of everything of value, since they will be found naked anyhow?"

Dugan dared a quick glance at Hogarth. Hogarth's face was pale, but he bowed his head so that the Russians could not see this palpable give-away of the fact that he understood their words.

"You would suggest then," said the bearded man, "that we kill them?"

"It is obviously the thing to do. I am quite sure that Nakayama Matadori intended we should do something of the sort, else why did he send us instead of Chinese or Japanese?"

"Obviously he did so intend. When shall we do this?"

"As soon as we have decided upon the proper division of this money. Plainly the major portion of it

should belong to me, since I had the idea first."

"But I offered the suggestion which would save us from trouble, and will myself slay the two to earn my share."

"I shall remove that difficulty by myself slaying one of the men, so that you cannot offer such a claim."

Dugan looked at Hogarth, wondering if he dared, after all, say anything to him in English. Then he thought of a lingo which not even a cultured Russian linguist would understand — American slang. But would Hogarth get it? Dugan doubted it, but it was worth a try. He tried:

"If I were to crack down on you with a flock of hooey in Yankee slang, would you get me and come back with the right answers?"

The Russians looked at Dugan wonderingly. Hogarth cleared his throat.

"Shoot the works, mug," he said. "I'll get your drift. I was in Mr. Paine's business office in New York for five years."

"Then get this straight the first time. These two roosters are planning a bump-off of us truly, Hogarth and Dugan *et al.* I say we beat the buzzards to it. We've got only our dukes, but maybe we can spread 'em enough for throat clutching.

"I'll take the bimbo with the big growth of parsley. You take the other gorilla. Jump hard and fast and give 'em the works. Then we'll scramble the hash of the yellow-bellies in the cab."

"What's the tip-off on when the show starts?"

"We're passing through some burg now. We'll spring our stuff when we're going good again."

"Okay, fella. We'll have to lean against their heat to keep 'em from scragging us."

"I know. Say, what's that spinach-sprouting buzzard looking at?"

Now the eyes of both Russians were on a spot somewhere between Hogarth and Dugan. Those eyes were bulging so that they could have been snapped off with a thumb, as though they had been marbles. Dugan and Hogarth looked in the direction indicated by their set glances.

Right between the two prisoners a tiny well-shod foot, with mud on the sole, had slipped from under the pile of rags. The Russians had seen the shoe and the barest fraction of a well-turned ankle.

Dugan and Hogarth laughed as though at a signal, and looked at their guards.

The Russians were rising to their feet.

Dugan and Hogarth tensed themselves.

"Now!" said Dugan. "We dare not miss! Up we come!"

The two Russians paused as the prisoners came to their feet as one man. Both prisoners lunged together, their hands extended, and as far apart as their handcuffs would permit. Their hands were like talons. Dugan lost sight of Hogarth, but his own hands went to the throat of the bearded man—and his body pressed hard against the man's undrawn weapons.

Behind them the girl scrambled out of the pile of rags.

CHAPTER VI

Sung Sing

DUGAN and Hogarth both knew that they must make an end swiftly, for the Chinese engineer and fireman, hearing the rumpus, the rattling of their chains and the noise made by the Russians, would come to investigate. They had split seconds in which to do the desperate

thing they knew they must, to save their lives.

Dugan struck like a thunderbolt. His hands went to their appointed objective with a surety which long practice, plus desperation, made inevitable. His side went against the Russian's weapon, against the pistol in the man's belt on the right leg. The victim who did not seem to know what hands were for as fighting tools, spent precious time clawing for his weapon, while Dugan squeezed mercilessly against his throat.

Ellen Paine swung past Dugan. Her slim hands snaked out, as the Yank could see from the tail of his eye, and grabbed the pistol. Then she vanished behind him.

The Russian was a powerful brute, and he had no wish to be killed. Now he clawed for his knives, while threshing all about the place, making so much noise that Dugan expected the Chinese to arrive at any moment. And Hogarth was having plenty of trouble, too.

Dugan, as the Russian began to weaken, heard a solid thump behind him, and a faint sigh. Then the falling of a body, and the breath rattling harshly through a constricted throat.

The thumping sounds he deduced to be caused by Hogarth, down on the floor of the tender, banging the head of his adversary against the solid wood.

THE locomotive rolled and rocked on. Still the Chinese engineer and fireman hadn't come to the rescue of their Russian friends. It was strange, unlooked for.

The bearded Russian's eyes were rolling in a contorted face. His body twisted, writhed and heaved. But desperation seemed to have given Dugan the strength of two average men. He merely tightened his strangling grip on the throat of the Russian, and waited for the man to die.

Then a hand was placed on Dugan's shoulder and Hogarth's voice spoke in his ear. He was amazed at the Britisher's coolness.

"Never," said Hogarth, "try to choke a bearded Russian by getting his beard inside your hands. It won't work. You have to get your hands under the beard!"

IN any other circumstances, the thing would have been absurd. But Dugan, in his eagerness to get his man, *had* squeezed his beard against his throat—and the beard was thick and bushy.

"Here," said Hogarth, "let me show you."

And amid clanking of chains, Hogarth pulled the reluctant Dugan back from his man and dropped down to take his place. The Russian was limp. Dugan glanced to his left. The second Russian sprawled supine on the floor of the tender, sightless eyes staring into the growing dawn, body rolling with the movement of the cab.

Dugan shivered a little. The whole thing was rather awful, but there was one consolation in the slaying. If they had not killed, they themselves would have been slain, and Ellen Paine would go through hell, to die, or wish for death, in the end.

Hogarth rose from the floor. The second Russian was now quiet, motionless also save for the movement lent to his limp body by the rolling of the tender.

Now Dugan remembered the two Chinese and whirled to look into the cab. The men stood in the opening between cab and tender, looking in. They had made no move to come to the assistance of the Russians. The reason was not far to find. Ellen Paine, a look of determination on her face beneath a mask of grime and coal dust, was covering the Chi-

nese with the weapon she had snatched from the bearded Russian. She was holding it in both hands.

Dugan looked hard at the two Chinese, whose bland faces were so noncommittal.

"Well?" he said. "How about it? Do you wish to go the way of your Russian friends?"

One of the Chinese shrugged and answered in English.

"No thanks, if you don't mind—though we could have downed both of you before the lady got that pistol. I am an agent of Sung Sing. This other man is — I don't know what, except that he doesn't understand English. I shall take you both to Sung Sing. He dwells some *li* from the right-of-way, between here and Hsin Min!"

Dugan was suspicious, though the man's excellent English did much to dispel his doubt.

"You come in too handy, my friend," he rejoined, his eyes narrowed. "I can't see how you happen to be right on hand when needed. I don't believe too much in coincidence."

"No, perhaps not," said the Chinese, "but *managed* coincidence is something different."

"Yes? Well, tell me how you do happen to be here."

"IT'S very simple. Last night Sung Sing was in Mukden to contact a man from the United States named Dugan. The gentleman escaped a Japanese trap. I presume it is either yourself or your friend. Sung Sing, who happens to be my honorable master, therefore signaled to his agents in Mukden by use of the five-note flute, telling of your escape, stating that you would surely travel toward Hsin Min, and perhaps manage somehow to get out to China proper.

"His message was passed on from town to town, from native hut to native hut, by the five-note flute—and his agents merely rallied to the signals. They filtered into every so-called Manchukuoan group which might come in contact with you along the line to Shanhaikwan, especially if you were captured. Simple, isn't it?"

Dugan grinned ruefully.

"Yeah, very simple, maybe—to a Chinese. To me it sounds blamed complicated."

The Chinese smiled.

"THERE are no secrets in China," he said. "We can send messages faster than they can be sent in English over telegraph or telephone lines and rendered into Chinese dialects. Anyway, here we are. Now I'll find out how my friend here feels about us, and about Sung Sing. My own name is Lao Fu."

Lao Fu turned to his comrade, chattered to him in sing-song Mandarin so rapid that Dugan scarcely gathered more than that Lao Fu was asking the man where he stood in this case. The second Chinese began to tremble. His lips quivered and he licked them with a suddenly dry tongue. Lao Fu's face hardened.

"If I were to throw him off the locomotive now, at this speed," he said to Dugan, "we would never need worry further about him. I estimate that we are making something like seventy miles an hour."

Dugan shook his head. He preferred to accomplish his ends without bloodshed, whenever possible.

"No," he said, "slow down and dump him. A long walk may do him good."

"It would be simpler to strangle him with his queue," said Lao Fu harshly. "Then he wouldn't be able to carry tales."

Dugan shook his head. Lao Fu shrugged, stepped into his place and closed the throttle. The locomotive started to slow down. Ellen Paine

still held her pistol pointed at the trembling Chinese.

At Lao Fu's command, now, the man stood in the door of the cab. The locomotive had slowed to half its usual speed, then to a quarter. Lao Fu suddenly put his foot into the back of the coolie and pushed. The man plunged out of the cab with a scream on his lips. Lao Fu grinned at Dugan.

"I obeyed you almost to the letter," he said. "But it came to me that even if the man did carry tales, he would carry them less rapidly if he had one or two broken legs!"

Lao Fu seemed entirely unconscious of the heartlessness of what he had done. He merely stepped back and opened his throttle wide again.

Dugan spoke to Ellen Paine.

"You might sit in the cab," he said. "It's warmer there, and—"

He nodded his head toward the two still Russians. They were not nice to look at. She shuddered, then smiled tremulously. At her request, Dugan gave her his handkerchief and she began to wipe the smut off her face. She took a seat in the cab and he watched her helplessly.

How would all this result for her? Would she end by falling into the hands of enemies? Dugan's jaws set tightly. He wouldn't allow it to happen. Suddenly he realized that if anything happened to her, life would never be the same to him—even though he knew in his heart that he probably would never see her again after this affair was definitely finished.

THE locomotive was traveling again at what appeared to be about seventy miles an hour. Hogarth had taken keys from the pockets of the Russians, and both Dugan and himself were free again. They had retrieved their money, too. They heaved great sighs of relief. Death had been very close—and Dugan was conscious of the fact that but for the girl, they might well have been killed.

For how was he to know, as a certainty, that Lao Fu had told him the exact truth? How was he to know that the man whom Lao Fu had kicked off might not be the Sung Sing agent, if indeed there were any such, and Lao Fu himself a wily agent of Japan?

DUGAN turned to the girl and moved forward to thank her.

"You've plenty of courage," he said quietly.

She looked up at him. She didn't smile.

"I didn't realize what I was doing," she said. "I just found myself doing it, as though I were obeying orders from someone else."

"It still was courage. And I'm dreadfully sorry that we're going back into Manchukuo — and afraid, for you."

Her face set.

"I'm not afraid," she said. "I know, in spite of Hogarth's white lie, that my father is dead. If he is, then I want to do everything I possibly can to punish and injure whoever killed him."

She might as well have it.

"Yes," said Dugan grimly, "he's dead—murdered. You'll have to depend on Hogarth and me. Need I say that we'll stand by you as long as we are able?"

"I know that, my friend," she retorted, though her eyes filled with tears when Dugan so quietly confirmed her fears by admitting his knowledge of her father's death. "Maybe some day I can thank you adequately for what you've done. Now, the least I can do is to cause you as little trouble as possible. If I'm too much of a burden, drop me somewhere and I'll manage to make out somehow."

That was all between them, in words; yet as he shook his head, Dugan felt that something far more important had been said — without words.

The locomotive stopped just as dawn was breaking. Lao Fu waited until they were off, then opened the throttle halfway and allowed the locomotive, carrying its dead, to go on its way.

For two hours they marched at right angles to the right-of-way. Then they stopped at a hut in a town that seemed to be deserted, a town which had plainly been ravished by the might of Japan, and knocked on the door. It opened to disclose a handsome Chinese — and Sung Sing bowed, smiling, to his visitors.

CHAPTER VII

Cross Country Chase

SUNG SING thrust out his hand to Dugan, even as he stepped aside to allow his visitors to enter. He lifted his voice and an elderly Chinese woman came in, to whom he barked words in rapid Fukienese. The woman smiled at Ellen Paine and Dugan knew that the girl would be taken care of in a motherly fashion. She smiled at him as she followed the *amah* into an adjoining room.

"You're Dugan," said Sung Sing. It was a statement, not a question.

"Yes."

"And these two will be Hogarth and Ellen Paine."

"Yes."

"We've plenty to do, Dugan." Sung Sing motioned both men to chairs. "We'll talk while we eat. I got a signal an hour ago that you were coming and *chow mein,* cooked as only my Number One Boy can cook it, will be along shortly. We'll be lucky, however, if we can stay to eat it. In a hollow, back of the town, I have a score of Mongolian ponies, the fleetest I could find, together with my outriders. We'll be traveling soon—"

"Where to?" interrupted Dugan.

SUNG SING looked at Hogarth thoughtfully. There was a question his eyes. It came to Dugan that after all, he knew nothing about either Hogarth or Ellen Paine. The man might be a secret agent of some sort, and the woman might not be Ellen Paine.

But Dugan would have sworn for the girl. He felt he simply couldn't be wrong about her, that if she were other than she seemed to be, he would know it. And if she were all right, she wouldn't be with a man who wasn't. That made Hogarth okay. Besides, Dugan had already told Hogarth that he himself was working with Sung Sing.

"John Hogarth's all right," Dugan said. "Are you sure, for that matter, that you know me?"

"Of course. You have been identified by the man whom I sent to engage your services. He was watching when you arrived. Besides, I've seen your picture, as I know you've seen mine."

Dugan and Sung Sing moved away, out of earshot of Hogarth.

"Sorry I failed to contact you in the Street of the Sleeping Dragon," said Dugan. "What happened?"

"We were discovered by the Japanese," stated Sung Sing. "Unfortunately, one of my men was killed, but we managed to get away." A fanatical light gleamed for an instant in the eyes of the leader of the *hung hu tze.* "What does one man or thousands matter, if we can eventually bring back the old Empire to China. That is the dream of my

heart, Dugan—a dream that must be realized!"

"And my mission is what?" demanded the soldier of fortune.

"To guard and protect Pu Yi. To be sure that he is crowned Emperor of Manchukuo two weeks hence. I have sent for you because I know that you are clever and fearless. As a White Russian you can remain close to Pu Yi at the coronation, and guard him from death."

"But why do you think I will be able to do more than your own men?" asked Dugan.

"Japan suspects all Chinese of wanting Pu Yi assassinated. He has many enemies among the people of my race who do not desire the return of the old and honorable Empire. But my esteemed ancestors were of Manchu blood—and with my wealth and organization I shall bring back the Empire."

Dugan felt that Sung Sing was clinging to a fantastic dream, and yet the American adventurer was willing to do everything in his power to insure its success. It might be that in so doing he could serve a double purpose, for if Pu Yi lived it might prevent a war that in time would involve Dugan's own country.

HE was a soldier of fortune because he loved the danger, the zest, of conflict. That he had often battled for lost causes did not matter, nor did the pay he received for his services. It was the adventure of it all that was the breath of life to Frank Dugan.

"Pu Yi will be guarded to the best of my ability," he said. "But what about him now?"

"There is little danger until the day of the coronation," stated Sung Sing. "We are sure that those who plot against Pu Yi's life desire to make his death spectacular—something which may prove a cause for war. And remember, Pu Yi has not been made Emperor of Manchukuo yet!"

"He will be," said Dugan quietly, but firmly.

Both men smiled their mutual understanding.

SERVANTS came in with food. Sung Sing motioned the men to chairs as Ellen Paine entered, looking much refreshed. Sung Sing bowed to her with old-fashioned Chinese courtesy, his hands reaching for his sleeves as though he had forgotten that he was wearing Occidental clothing and not the huge cuffed gown of his people.

"Miss Paine, of course," he said, "will be sent safely out of Manchuria. With my organization, that will be simple. I can have her in Peking within a week, and she won't be in danger once. She may get into trouble here with us, for the Japanese are close on my trail, secret as I have tried to keep it."

Ellen Paine tossed her head. There were spots of bright color in her cheeks.

"I'm not going to China until my father has been avenged, until his murderers have been punished. I'm going with you!"

Sung Sing's face hardened.

"It is no work for a woman," he said brusquely.

Dugan knew that Sung Sing spoke the truth, that he could get the girl into China proper, as he had said he could. He wondered why he hesitated.

"It will be safe to send her out, with only Hogarth to accompany her?" he temporized.

"It will be safe," said Sung Sing. "I trust my men implicitly, and there will be such a small body of them, traveling at night, that they can pass unnoticed. The only trouble is that they will travel in a direct line, avoiding all railroads and trails, and

we won't be able to get word to them until they've reached Peking. You won't mind that, Hogarth?"

Hogarth shook his head. But he didn't commit himself further than he had already by his silence. He was watching Ellen Paine, and waiting to see what decision should be reached regarding her.

Dugan, desirous of finding out how matters stood with both of them, spoke brusquely.

"I don't see why, since she knows what she's facing, Miss Paine can't stay with us."

The girl's face suddenly flamed with anger.

"I'm going to Hsinking," she said. "If I can't travel with you, then I'll go on my own. I won't be ordered around by anyone."

Dugan grinned.

"What would you say to that, Sung Sing?" he asked.

"If the matter were entirely in my hands," said the Chinese grimly, "knowing the situation as I do, I would send the young lady out of Manchuria by force, if she refused to go otherwise."

"That's the only way I'll go!" she snapped.

STILL Hogarth offered no objections and Dugan understood the man's feelings. He would be pleased to have the girl's companionship on the trip overland to China, but he wouldn't remain in Manchuria—when there was a way out offered him—merely to be with her and share her dangers.

"I'll go to Peking," said Hogarth.

Ellen Paine looked at him contemptuously, which was unfair. Sung Sing considered a moment.

"I'm afraid you can't, Hogarth," he said flatly. "I was only going to send an expedition to Peking on Miss Paine's account. If she refuses to go, and Dugan decides that she may remain with us, then you'll have to stay, too. I can't really spare any men." Hogarth's face was white, but he took it very well.

The party had been eating as they talked, wolfing their food, following the lead of Sung Sing. Now they pushed back their chairs. The *amah* already stood in the doorway, a bundle of belongings in her hand, looking away toward Hsin Min. She was ready to vanish. It was time for all to go. Suddenly she turned to Sung Sing.

"MEN come, master," she cried. "Many men on horses. Soldier men."

The party moved swiftly. Sung Sing led the way out of the place by a rear exit, and, twisting and turning among the deserted shacks, they headed in what Dugan guessed to be the general direction of Hsinking.

"They'll find the remains of food on the table, Sung Sing," he muttered. "They'll count plates and know what's up."

Sung Sing shook his head.

"The *amah* will look after that. When the enemy arrives the house will look as though it hadn't been occupied for weeks—like the others here."

"Which reminds me," said Dugan, "what has happened here? There doesn't seem to be a living soul in the place."

"There isn't, except us," snapped Sung Sing. "They were wiped out by the Japanese. The erstwhile inhabitants of this place are buried in the gully where our horses are waiting."

His statement put an effective damper on the party. They increased their stride as though by common consent. They came at length to the edge of a gully, looked down. Men and ponies, the wiry, long-maned ponies of Mongolia, were waiting for them. The faces of the white mem-

bers of the party went whiter still when they saw what else was to be seen in that gully.

Graves, all of them practically new —scores and hundreds of them. Dugan wondered if the inhabitants hadn't been herded into this gully and shot down without mercy. He put the question to Sung Sing.

"Exactly that," said Sung Sing shortly. "Because they were supposed to be harboring men inimical to the Japanese. Some of my own relatives are in those graves!"

THE party mounted, silent in the midst of the mounds which were so significant a reminder of what might happen to them. Sung Sing took command. Dugan offered no protest. Ellen Paine was ordered to the head of the column which was forming with amazing speed. Hogarth followed her. Sung Sing signaled to Dugan, and the two rode side by side at the column's rear. The party started swiftly up the draw.

"If it had been only ourselves," said Sung Sing, "we'd have traveled on foot, keeping to cover. The girl makes the cavalcade necessary."

"But," protested Dugan, "the column was already in readiness. You were going to travel this way before Miss Paine refused to go into China."

Sung Sing grinned tightly.

"Yes," he said. "I knew she wouldn't go. I spent some time in American colleges, where I learned that American women can't be driven. I did try, though I knew it was a waste of time."

The column, at the head of which Ellen Paine rode with the ease of a born horsewoman, was galloping swiftly up the canyon. Their pace was amazingly deceptive, until one looked down to discover that the fleet ponies ran with their stomachs close against the ground, their heads thrust forward, their manes flying—and that the ground was literally a blur in passing. Dugan looked back. The graves were vanishing around a bend in the gully.

Ahead of Dugan, to the accompaniment of the spanking of a rifle, a pony suddenly went down as though its legs had been knocked from under it. The Chinese rider plunged to the ground ahead of the animal and sprawled out, his head twisted under him at a sickening angle.

Ellen Paine didn't look back; hadn't, mercifully, heard the rifle or seen what it had done.

Dugan and Sung Sing hurdled the dead horse and rider, sped on. Dugan still carried the two rifles, which he had managed to dry aboard the train, which by now must have delivered the White Russians in Hsin Min. He unslung one rifle, passed it to Sung Sing. Each weapon carried only the shells now in the chamber.

Mounted men appeared on the rim of the valley behind them, then plunged down to begin the grueling chase. Dugan refused grimly to waste bullets at the distance. The column sped madly on. The Yank nodded approvingly when Hogarth suddenly placed himself directly behind Ellen Paine. His body would stop any bullet coming from the rear intended for her.

Dugan looked back again.

The pursuers were spreading out, kneeing their animals into top speed.

CHAPTER VIII

Getaway Route

"THEY'LL never catch us now, except perhaps with an occasional bullet," said Sung Sing. "My men are all members of the *hung hu tze*, or Red Beards, as you know. It is the bandit outfit from whose leadership the mighty Chang

Tso-lin rose to world fame. The Japanese hate them like poison and they bend the knee to none, save myself."

"Do they want the old Empire to be reestablished?" asked Dugan as he rode.

"A wise leader does not reveal his plans to everyone," said Sung Sing cryptically. "I do not believe in even my own men knowing too much."

"You're right in that." Dugan leaned forward to urge his pony to just a little more speed. The little animal answered with alacrity, carrying his rider's weight as though it were nothing. Up ahead, Ellen Paine had thrown aside her cap, and her hair flew backward in the sun. Dugan could fancy the light of excitement in her eyes.

Again he looked back.

The Japanese, on the rims of the gully, on the gully floor, were firing as they pursued. He heard the snapping of bullets past his ears, like the striking of a drumhead with a small hammer. He saw spurts of dust kicked up by bullets which went too wide and too low.

Another rider went down, but this time his pony ran on. The man rolled to his back as Dugan rode past him. A bullet had struck him in the back of the skull, had come out in the middle of his face. Dugan was glad that Ellen Paine hadn't seen that. It made even the Yank, accustomed to all sorts of sights of violence, a little sick—and filled him with renewed anger at the pursuers.

THE gully curved. There was a ravine branching off. Four or five of the column disappeared into that gully, and Dugan was amazed, as he went past it the next moment, to discover that the five men had vanished completely.

He turned and looked his surprise at Sung Sing, who grinned.

"The *hung hu tze,*" he said, "know every nook and cranny of this land. The Japanese can't catch them. My men could go into that curving ravine for two minutes and even I couldn't find them. Their very tracks will be rubbed out behind them."

"But we may need all our men," said Dugan.

"They'll be on hand when we need them," said Sung Sing enigmatically.

BULLETS were coming faster now. Dugan looked back once more. The Japanese were gaining. He paused, whirled his pony, flung rifle to shoulder, drew swift bead on the foremost of the pursuers, and pressed the trigger with the expert rifleman's care.

The rifle whanged. A distant man toppled from his pony, sprawled in the dirt. The riderless animal circled back into the pursuing forces. Bullets from the Japanese increased in volume.

Dugan looked back to the front, and gasped in consternation. Ellen Paine had vanished from the column's head as though she had been miraculously erased. One minute and she had been there, hair flying in the wind. Now she was gone.

Dugan started to drag his pony to a halt.

Sung Sing snapped at him.

"She's all right. Can't you see that Hogarth is missing, too? I ordered it. They've gone into another ravine. If you hadn't been busy shooting, you'd have seen the ravine."

"But they may go after her. This time maybe your *hung hu tze* won't be able to protect her."

"The pursuers," said Sung Sing, "are after us. They're not interested in a mere munitions manufacturer's daughter or his secretary. Later they might be, but now we're of first importance. They'll keep on our trail."

Dugan noticed that three or four more of the natives had disappeared

with Ellen and Hogarth. He looked back to see the pursuers pass the mouth of the ravine without even glancing aside. The Japanese had much to learn of warfare in Manchuria, especially this queer game of hide and seek in which the *hung hu tze* were so adept.

Dugan realized suddenly that he had the cooperation of perhaps the best organization to be found at that moment in Manchukuo, an organization better than anything Japan had yet got together. No wonder the children of Dai Nippon were so intent on wiping out "bandits." For as long as the *hung hu tze* rode the soil of Manchuria, Japan would not have conquered the Three Eastern Provinces.

There was much about Sung Sing that Dugan didn't know. There would always be much, for no Occidental, however friendly, ever knew all there was to know about any Chinese.

Next time men branched off from the column, it happened when, for a brief moment, they had dropped the Japanese from sight behind them. The *hung hu tze* looked back at Sung Sing for a signal, got it, turned into a ravine, and were gone from sight by the time Sung Sing and Dugan had breasted the ravine.

Now the column was reduced to a mere half dozen men.

BUT the Japanese, seeing only the rear guard, could not know that the column didn't reach on ahead, as numerous as before, around the curves of the canyon. Sung Sing and his men had selected their getaway route with care and cleverness. Dugan could imagine the savage frustration of the pursuers when they should discover the ruse.

And then, all at once, Sung Sing and Dugan rode alone—and the Chinaman was looking at Dugan strangely.

"Now we take to the open," he said. "I'm a rotten shot. Suppose I merely carry this other rifle and hand it to you when it is necessary. And listen, my friend, pray that your pony doesn't step into a hole and break his leg—for I have much to do yet for China and could not turn my pony over to you. I would be compelled to make my escape without you."

"I'll get along all right." Dugan smiled slightly.

Sung Sing laughed.

"That being understood, here we go," he said.

HE whirled his pony to the right, putting the animal at the wall of the ravine. The Japanese saw the break. Bullets whined all about them. The ponies scrambled up, scarcely breathing hard as yet.

They were now out on a level plain. Dugan looked back. Atmospheric conditions were such that the pursuers looked very close—until he tried to make out details of their dress or outlines, when he realized that they were barely within possible range—but coming on as before.

The Japanese brandished their weapons. They thought that the two had deliberately broken away to throw off pursuit. They fired furiously, fired without taking aim, apparently. The two Mongolian ponies bent to their tasks. Sung Sing and Dugan rode with their bodies close along the necks of their animals.

Dugan glanced back along his pony's rump. As far as the eye could see—though they were less than a minute from the ravine they had left—the whole land seemed to be one level plain. Even the gully had been lost to view.

Sung Sing laughed.

"Nature is a magician out here, Dugan," he said. "And we'll make these Japanese look silly before we've finished, if your horse or mine

doesn't break a leg, or a bullet doesn't get us."

THE Japanese must have begun to understand something of this, too, as though Sung Sing's words had been wafted back to them on the breeze of their flight. Now bullets began coming low, obviously aimed at the legs of the ponies. Dugan held his breath, fully expecting one animal or the other to fall.

Now and again he paused, whirled on a dime, flung his rifle to his shoulder, pressed the trigger—and always when he did this, the leading pursuer toppled from his pony and sprawled on the soil of Manchukuo. Dugan aimed for the men; it wasn't their ponies' fault that they were being used in a relentless chase with murder and mutilation at the end of it.

Gradually, because they held to a straight line, and were not loaded down with equipment as were the Japanese, Sung Sing and Dugan drew away from their pursuers. The Chinaman was eagerly scanning the way ahead.

"In five minutes we'll lose them entirely," he said.

And in about that length of time Dugan gasped, looking down into a canyon to his left. They had approached the place from the canyon's very starting point. Sung Sing slid his pony down the incline. Dugan followed. The pursuers were lost behind them.

Their race continued around a turn to the right, another to the left, then a sharp turn that led away to the left again, to follow which was to take them far to the left of the line of pursuit. Then Sung Sing slowed to a trot, which continued for almost an hour.

By this time the two little ponies were wet with sweat, panting. They had been ridden for what, to them, must have seemed like an eternity.

A turn to the right again—and the sounds of a five-note flute broke on their ears. Sung Sing listened, turned to Dugan.

"You'll be pleased to know," he said, "that Hogarth took it on himself to make a dash for China, all alone."

"Will he make it?"

Sung Sing shook his head.

"He's probably dead by now," he said. "In any case he won't live until sunset. There are other *hung hu tze* in this land, who don't work for Sung Sing."

They turned right into a sort of amphitheater filled with houses. About the houses were all the ponies and all the men who had separated from them along their line of flight. And standing at the door of one of the houses was Ellen Paine.

"Until tonight," said Sung Sing, dismounting. "Then we push on to my headquarters in Hsinking."

CHAPTER IX

Coronation

THE rest of the journey to Hsinking was made without molestation. The *hung hu tze* knew exactly what to do after they had shed their pursuers. The trip was continued by fairly easy stages.

They approached the place after dark; and when the city's lights were seen, Sung Sing gave low-voiced commands—and the land swallowed up the *hung hu tze*. Sung Sing, Dugan and Ellen Paine went on afoot, the Chinese in advance.

He led the way in by a circuitous route, but one which he plainly knew very well. Silence, deep and impenetrable, hung over Hsinking as though the city were waiting for something to happen. An alley, nar-

row, highwalled and odorous, swallowed them. Sung Sing moved without sound. Finally he put his hand back, took that of Ellen Paine, and led them into the cavernous mouth of a black doorway. Steps led down —down without end.

Their feet touched level again. Lights flashed on after Sung Sing had closed a door.

They were in a vast room, with small doors giving off from it, which might have been a throne room. Rich rugs lay on the floor, priceless scrolls on the walls; everywhere were teakwood stands and tables, screens of lacquer, vessels of bronze and porcelain. Ellen Paine gasped.

Sung Sing smiled tightly.

"Here is our home until we find out what is what," he said. "*Amah* Ling!"

As he called a door opened—and the *amah* they had left in the nameless village where they had first met, entered. Dugan's mouth hung open.

"When a Chinese is loyal," said Sung Sing, "he, or she, is loyal to the uttermost. I knew she would be here. Now, we've plenty of work to do."

"You think something may happen right away?" Dugan queried.

"One of my most trusted men has gone out to see if he can find out what is due to happen at the ceremony of coronation."

AFTER Dugan and Sung Sing had eaten with Ellen Paine, the leader of the *hung hu tze* was informed that his spy had returned. The Chinese hastened out of the room. Dugan and the girl talked lightly and casually until he returned.

"An attempt against Pu Yi's life will surely be made," Sung Sing said. "It is unavoidable. So far I haven't found out the details. My man could get no definite lead. You will have to get busy at once, Dugan."

"Of course," said Dugan.

"Good! Now, for plans for the coronation. You would be instantly recognized. You have made quite a name for yourself throughout the Far East as a daring adventurer. I am arranging papers for you. You will attend the coronation, getting as close as possible, as a Russian officer in full uniform. There will be so many of them there that another will scarcely be noticed."

Dugan nodded in silent agreement, his mind already busy planning ahead.

AND so it happened that, on a certain fateful morning, when the streets of Hsinking were brilliant with flags and streamers, above all of which soared the new flag of Manchukuo; when the streets and the rooftops were packed with scores, hundreds and thousands of people, Dugan went out among the crowd as a Russian officer serving with the Manchukuoans.

He was determined to keep as close as possible, during all the ceremony, to the person of the prospective Emperor. He knew, for he himself had made arrangements, that Sung Sing's men were scattered all through the crowd—with orders to handle expeditiously and surely anyone who even spoke ill against the Emperor.

For if this coronation failed, and China could be blamed, the hordes of Dai Nippon would pour into China from Shanhaikwan and Jehol, rolling over the Great Wall as though it had never existed at all.

But as slow, ceremonious step followed slow, ceremonious step, beginning with the side of the Emperor-Designate from his palace to the place of the ceremony's initiation, and nothing untoward happened, Dugan began to hope that nothing would occur.

He hadn't seen Sung Sing for hours, nor any Chinese face that he

recognized. Ellen Paine had been left in the underground room. The Yank was entirely on his own. He fully expected at any time to feel the authoritative tapping of a hand on his shoulder, but it did not come.

THE ceremony wore its way along. The first part of it was a queer mixture of ancient ritual and modernity—and Pu Yi wore the uniform of a high Manchukuoan official.

But the last part of it, in which Pu Yi must commune with the spirits of his ancestors who had first come out of this land, in order that they might guide him, alone and at a distance from all others, was what Dugan feared most.

It was to take place in a great open space in the center of which was a circular altar, fashioned after the Altar of Heaven in Peking. There Pu Yi's predecessors on the throne of China had gone up alone to commune with the spirits of their royal ancestors.

About this circular altar, which was large enough to have accommodated a battalion at countermarch, were thousands upon thousands of people. Dugan, standing at the edge of the crowd knew that, thinly dispersed among them, were scores of Sung Sing's agents. There was left a vast empty circle between the rim of this mass formation and the altar onto which the Emperor must step to face the heavens.

The Yank knew much of the ancient pageantry, the ceremonious adulation that went into all this, even pruned down as it was by modernity. He knew that when His Majesty advanced to the altar not an eye would be upon him, that every knee would be bent to the ground, every eye cast down.

And it came to him in a flash that here was where it would happen! Here the blood of this last of the royal Manchus might well stain the marble slabs of the high altar.

Now came a murmur of sound. Then a hush.

Into the circle, garbed in the robes of his great rank, the gorgeous yellow gown with the golden, five-toed dragons on front and back, came a serious, plain-looking young man, his hair cut in the Occidental manner, and wearing horn-rimmed spectacles.

His retainers dropped behind him at the edge of the circle, falling to their knees, though they omitted the *ko'to* because he had expressly prohibited it. The young man went forward alone, his face lifted as though he wished to harken to the spirits he had to come to confer with, as though he wished his fine olive cheeks to feel the caress of the bright heaven-sent sun.

A profound silence held sway in all the vast gathering.

Dugan seemed to have his head bowed, but he was looking sharply toward Pu Yi. He knew that, all around the circle, were minions of Sung Sing who also watched while seeming to do abject homage. Sung Sing himself must be watching from somewhere, taking his life in his hands, as Dugan was doing, to do so.

PU Yi reached the first of the nine steps. Dugan's eyes narrowed. When Pu Yi, whose reign-name was to be Kang Teh, reached the broad flat top of the altar, Dugan knew that he would stand out as the best target a rifleman or pistol shot could ask for.

Dugan's heart almost stopped beating, for something had come to him. If any man now moved to attack the Emperor, the Japanese could not fire upon that one without endangering the lives of hundreds. As though the vast concourse had suddenly realized that, there was a stirring and sighing among them.

How could anyone race forward to

stop an attacker—for it was expressly forbidden, on pain of death, for anyone to approach His Majesty in this, his most dramatic hour.

Pu Yi stood on the altar. He lifted his face to the Heavens—and two things happened, so suddenly that for seconds the vast concourse of souls did not realize what was transpiring.

But Dugan had missed nothing. He was racing toward Pu Yi, running as he had never run before. And racing with him, converging on the figure of Pu Yi, ran a man who might have been of any nationality. When the sun struck his face in one, he might have been American or English or Russian. In another light he might have been Japanese or Chinese, or Korean—and he was racing toward Pu Yi with a knife held high in his right hand.

DUGAN had to increase his speed to heart-bursting proportions to reach his objective in time. He marveled at the fact that Pu Yi, who must have heard the killer's shouts behind him, did not even turn or change his attitude of prayer or communion. Pu Yi had always been protected. Apparently he expected someone still to look after him, depended on it, took it for granted. He had never had reason to be afraid.

Dugan and the assassin, who kept shouting, "Down with all tyrants!" as he brandished his weapon, reached the steps at the same time. To have cut across toward the man would have been to lose him, so Dugan ran straight for Pu Yi, who was still apparently unconscious of anything untoward happening.

Dugan hurled himself at the attacker just as the man went into a tremendous leap, his knife aimed at the back of the sovereign. Dugan caught the wrist of the knife hand. The impetus of his charge carried them out of reach of the Emperor. Dugan turned his back to the knife man, flipped him over his shoulder with a tremendous heave.

The man's head came in violent contact with the marble top of the altar—and Dugan did not need to look at him again.

Silence, deeper even than before, hung over all. Dugan, as though coming out of a daze, looked about him. Pu Yi had not even glanced his way. The ceremony hadn't even been interrupted. A vast composite sigh went up from the gathered throng.

Dugan, on tiptoe, cap in hand, walked off the altar and back to his place. No one seemed to have looked up. Then he felt the tapping on his shoulder, and heard words preceded by hissing intakes of breath:

"You will please to come quietly. There are many dead men to explain, my American friend."

His arrest passed unnoticed, though he looked around for a friendly face—and saw Sung Sing's. The Chinese, looking at him over his shoulder, was edging his way quickly, almost at a run, out of the crowd.

CHAPTER X

Diplomacy

NOT one friend came forward for the grim-faced Dugan as the American faced the military tribunal composed of "Manchukuoans." He was tried for murder—and the charges but made the hopelessness of the farce all the more apparent and ironical.

He was tried under the name of Nikifor Nicholaivitch for the "murder of Frank Dugan, American, and Martin Hogarth, English," and of robbing them of a sum of money equal to six thousand pounds.

"But I am Dugan. Hogarth escaped to China," he kept telling them.

He could see the amused mockery in the eyes of the court-martial members as they listened to his words. The president told him, in English:

"Hogarth did not escape. His headless body was found two days out of Hsinking, on the route by which you were known to have entered the city."

"I saved the life of your Emperor."

"Your claim is foolish. None saw you do it. There are many who state that Nakayama Matadori did it. For the act, he is to be decorated."

THE calm inevitability of the whole thing infuriated Dugan. He knew exactly what was going to happen. He had been marked for the slaughter. Finally came the sentence, grim with finality:

"To be shot to death by musketry twenty-four hours hence!"

And it was only then, while he waited in a Hsinking prison the execution of sentence, that he was visited by one of his enemies—a man who hissed as he talked.

"If," said that one, with an oily smile, "you tell us exactly why you are in Manchukuo, it may be possible to secure imperial clemency."

Dugan shook his head.

"You've marked me for killing," he said. "Do your worst. If I squealed, who's to know I ever told you anything or received a promise of clemency from you? I'll take with me any secrets I may have."

"Who in truth is Sung Sing? Where is he? Where is Ellen Paine?"

"I know nothing of either," said Dugan, his heart hammering with pleased excitement as these questions proved that his allies were still alive, uncaptured. Surely Sung Sing must know what was happening to him, would do something about it. The Yank only hoped that Ellen Paine wouldn't endanger her life by trying to see him in prison.

The questioner went away after a last warning.

"You will have one more chance to answer, Dugan," he said.

Dugan grinned.

"The name," he said, bowing low, and hissing as the Japanese had done, "is Nikifor Nicholaivitch—have you forgotten?"

The Japanese didn't even have the grace to be concerned at his tongue's betrayal of his knowledge that an American citizen had been condemned to death.

"One warning," he repeated.

"Yes? When do I get it?"

"Just before you are shot to death. If your answer is no, then you will die."

"And if I squeal, I'll still die. Nothing doing."

Then he was alone. He didn't pace the floor. He still believed that, somehow, Sung Sing would find a way out. He hadn't a chance to break away by himself, unaided. There was nothing to do but await developments.

When night came he slept, and did not dream. Even if there had been no hope he still would have slept, unworried. One died no more harshly by dying unafraid.

NEAR daybreak they came for him, "Manchukuoans" in uniform, with rifles in hands. Those rifles, he realized, were probably the ones which would hurl leaden death into his body.

They took him forth. He took his place among the soldiers, still in the uniform of a Russian officer. The march began, out of the jail, to the place of execution.

The sun was rising, spilling its brilliance over Manchukuo. Dugan marched without faltering. The expressions on the faces of his guards

were wooden, as though they had no interest in what was happening —and Dugan's mind raced ahead to what must transpire unless Providence intervened.

THEY would line up. He would be turned to face them, offered the blindfold which he would refuse. Then he would be asked the question again, in a low voice, and would refuse to answer.

The officer in command of the squad would draw his sword, lift it high, and speak the Japanese equivalent of words used by American firing squads:

"Squad, LOAD!"

"Make ready!"

"At the heart take aim!"

"Fire!"

He glanced down at his left breast, where a white piece of cloth had been pinned to his uniform, over the heart, to serve as an aiming point. He grinned tightly.

They reached the grounds of execution. It was surrounded by people, save only on the side toward which the deadly bullets would travel.

Dugan looked around as the grim preparations went forward.

If Sung Sing were to attack here in force, many lives would be lost, the lives of the innocent. Yet what weapons could be used to save him from execution? He looked for the face of Ellen Paine and was relieved that he could not see it.

Far down a street he saw a long automobile racing to the scene—probably filled with high officials to witness his slaying. The firing squad would wait for them. Dugan became impatient to make an end. It wasn't easy to wait to be shot.

A man came forward, hissed as he asked a question:

"Will you tell?"

Dugan shook his head, grinned, asked for a cigarette—was refused.

The questioner stepped aside, out of line of fire. The siren of the approaching car screamed. Nobody looked toward it. The officer in command of the firing squad drew his sword, commanded:

"Squad, LOAD!"

Bolts rattled as shells were levered into chambers.

"Make ready!"

Left feet of the soldiers shot forward, taking the stance for offhand firing. Their brown hands gripped the stocks of their weapons tightly. Their right fingers were on the triggers, already tensing.

"At the heart—"

Calmly Dugan faced the squad as the rifles rose to their shoulders. It was too late now for any intervention. Everything seemed a blur, was wiped away. Even if Sung Sing covered the squad now with a hail of lead, enough bullets would still be loosed to destroy Dugan. He faced the squad without flinching.

"—take aim!"

Now the slightest tensing of a trigger finger would slay him. He braced himself subconsciously to withstand the shock of eight bullets smashing into his body.

But there came an interruption before the officer could give the command to fire. The long car smashed right ahead of the rifles, came to a stop.

On the car doors were golden, five-toed dragons, signal of the imperial Manchu house.

THE men who climbed out of the car were a determined crew. There was only one face which Dugan recognized—that of Sung Sing, and he wouldn't have been sure of that had he not lived with Sung Sing for several days. For the Chinese leader and his men were garbed in the traditional garments of *hung hu tze*, even to the false red beards which from time immemorial the Red Beards of Kirin had worn because

they believed they frightened their enemies.

The *hung hu tze* were thoroughly disguised.

As they piled out, their sudden stop ahead of the firing squad disconcerting the executioners, the short machine-guns they carried were plainly in evidence. Dugan, with a start, recognized a dozen Tommy guns, more mete for the streets of Chicago than Hsinking. He grinned inwardly at this evidence of Sung Sing's "foreign" learning—and wondered where the man had got the guns.

"Hurry, Dugan," said Sung Sing. "You can't hold Japanese very long. Grab the car. Make for the palace. Stop for nothing. We'll hold these people as long as we can."

Dugan hesitated.

"And you'll be shot down," he said finally. "I won't go a step without you. I'll take the wheel. They'll fire on us, but we've a chance to get away if they don't think to blast at the tires."

Sung Sing grinned a little, barked something to his men.

DUGAN slid behind the wheel. The feel of it in his hands was intoxicating. He felt, suddenly, as though he had come back from the dead. He saw Japanese crowding in from the mob which had come prepared to witness the execution. *Hung hu tze,* the muzzles of their rifles menacing the firing squad, backed to the car, stepped onto the running board.

"All set!" snapped Sung Sing, vaulting in beside Dugan.

Dugan took a desperate chance in order to demoralize further the slow-thinking, paralyzed Japanese. He meshed gears. The long car roared with power, turned directly into the ranks of the Japanese. One soldier was flung aside by the radiator. The car gained speed. The *hung hu tze* held their fire. Dugan shifted to second, to high—and the car roared along the streets of Hsinking.

Now the Japanese were firing. Dugan drove with his head bent low over the wheel. Two *hung hu tze* flung aside their Tommies and fell to the street, riddled with lead. Bullets came in through the back of the car, smashing the windshield. Wind ranted and raved through the broken space as the car reached sixty miles an hour.

ALL along the way riflemen cracked down on them, disregarding the imperial dragons on the car's doors. They must have known that His Majesty was not in the car.

A bullet struck the steering wheel, biting a huge piece out of it. Blood spurted from Dugan's hand where a sliver had all but gone through the palm. Sung Sing laughed with him.

"Too bad you have to lose some men, for me," Dugan said to Sung Sing.

The Chinese elevated his eyebrows.

"Not at all. I shall pay their families some money and they'll be happy the rest of their lives. I promised that to my men, when I asked them to help me against the firing squad, and each one of them openly expressed the wish to die in the venture in order that his family be provided for! Death to a Chinese is like taking a walk to a foreigner!"

This accented, to Dugan, the vast gulf between Occidental and Oriental.

At the gates of the palace they left the bullet-riddled car. There were but four men, *hung hu tze,* left of Sung Sing's original crew. These swung the muzzles of their guns on the palace guards.

As the group raced up the steps, with Japanese rifles aimed at them, but triggers held because a single bullet here would dye the steps of the sacrosanct palace with blood of friend and enemy alike, Dugan saw

a smallish man at the top, wearing hornrimmed spectacles. It was Pu Yi, whose life he had saved, and Pu Yi was smiling.

They gathered around the sovereign, whose mild eyes were a little excited—and the rifle butts of the chagrined Japanese were lowered regretfully to the palace steps.

Dugan saluted the Emperor as though he had been an American general. Pu Yi spoke, in excellent English.

"We have enjoyed the excitement," he said. "We are happy that our plans succeeded."

"But for Your Majesty to take a hand in the liberation of a spy!" the Yank grinned. "The Japanese will never forgive you!"

Pu Yi smiled faintly.

"We have little power," he said. "But this has been done in public, and our honorable protectors will hesitate to destroy their own sovereign in Manchukuo. The political value of our sovereignty is greater than the lives of many Japanese, who will grant us this whim—and upbraid us unmercifully in private—for the sake of appearances. And we owe you something for saving our life at the coronation. Is there something you wish of us?"

"YES, sire," said Dugan instantly, remembering his mission in Manchukuo, "to be attached to the Imperial Staff as an observer until everything has been peaceably settled in Manchukuo."

Pu Yi nodded his head gravely.

"It shall be done," he said, "though we fear thwarting on every side. However, we assure the honorable American of this: that his life will be saved. And now, Dugan *hsien sheng*, deign to enter the palace after us, where one waits to have words with the American gentleman.

"She has been vastly concerned. As the only representative of her country's government in Hsinking, she has done much to stiffen our weak will and persuade us to take the stand we have in preventing this execution—for Dai Nippon argued that our sovereignty was even more important than the life of an American."

DUGAN'S heart hammered with excited pleasure. So Ellen Paine had somehow got past the guards—aided by Sung Sing, of course—to reach the ear of His Majesty. Pu Yi had been able to do little, but that little he had done.

Pu Yi pointed down a long hall.

"She is in a reception room at the end of the hall, waiting," he said as he turned to go through a high door. "When everything is settled, we would like to see you both again!"

Looking back as he strode down the hall, Dugan saw His Majesty standing in the doorway, looking after him. A lonely figure—a man who had had everything, would have everything again, with Japan's help; but one who would doubtless have traded it all for the chance of walking down Fifth Avenue in mufti, without a single head turning in curiosity to look after him.

With a sigh, Dugan—the success of his mission now strictly in his own hands—strode on to meet Ellen.

She was standing all alone in a vast room whose ceiling was upheld by mighty columns around which golden dragons had wrapped themselves. The walls of the room were covered with scrolls showing, in vivid, exhaustive detail, the sufferings of men who went through the tortures of Purgatory; tortures which not any one Chinese could have evolved, but had taken all the genius of China to complete.

Ellen turned, shuddering.

"These give me the horrors," she said by way of greeting. "I've seen them before, but never been able to

become accustomed to them. But how about you?" Her face brightened. "I've taken chances with international peace to help you, and I don't really know anything about you. Don't you think you should tell me?"

He looked at her steadily.

"And whatever I tell you—will it make any difference? Will it keep us from being friends?"

"Why should it?"

Frank Dugan grinned and then sobered instantly.

"I came here at the request of Sung Sing to see that the new Emperor remain alive. I am, in effect, his bodyguard. If I fail I am in disgrace — a nobody — renounced by my own country—merely a soldier of fortune. As long as I succeed—"

ELLEN'S shining eyes showed where her faith lay.

"But why does Sung Sing want nothing to happen to the new Emperor?" she asked.

"Because Sung Sing is of the Manchu blood. He dreams of reestablishing the old Empire. I doubt that he will succeed—and yet I shall continue to guard Pu Yi because I have told Sung Sing I would do so, and because I am loyal to my own country."

Ellen Paine was staring at him, her eyes very wide.

"Then you—" she said. "You, just one man, just one American, are practically charged with keeping the peace of the world! You prevented world war when you thwarted the assassination of His Majesty! If Pu Yi dies a violent death, *any time*, China and Japan will lock horns again—and the whole world will be in the holocaust within six months. If you fail—"

"WHY should I fail?" asked Dugan. "The biggest step was to get here, to reach Hsinking. We made that. We saved His Majesty's life the day of the coronation. Sung Sing is powerful—and he will remain so as long as he rules the *hung hu tze*. As for his dream of bringing back the old Empire," Dugan shrugged his shoulders. "Who can say?"

Ellen Paine's eyes darkened.

"The murderers of my father and the others who were with him," she began. "What about them—"

"Court justice is out of the question," Dugan said, "either for the loss of your father or those who were with him." He started to mention Hogarth's name and then refrained. "So I have merely offered suggestions to Sung Sing. He was in Mukden that night your father was killed, and knows the identities of the murderers."

He lifted his eyes to the scrolls depicting the tortures of Purgatory.

"Sung Sing, a highly educated Chinese, knows exactly how to deal with murderers. By this time tomorrow, our dead will be avenged. Our duty is now with the living."

They clasped hands—and for the moment, at least, there was a deep peace in His Majesty's palace at Hsinking.

Next Month's Novel: Breathless Jungle Adventure in the Impenetrable Sierra Tuscomnia Country of Venezuela — in

WEB *of the* GREEN SPIDER

By CAPTAIN KERRY McROBERTS

—Who wrote "Legion of the Frontier," "The Sultan of Hell," etc.

"HERO OF A DOZEN REVOLUTIONS"
Famous SOLDIERS of FORTUNE
GEN. LEE CHRISTMAS
THE LOUISIANA RAILROAD ENGINEER WHO BECAME KNOWN AS THE "GREAT FIGHTING ADVENTURER." HE AIDED SEVERAL CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES TO GAIN THEIR FREEDOM.
DURING HIS TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF FIGHTING IN SOUTH AMERICAN REVOLTS, HE ESCAPED NINE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS AND WITH A SMALL NUMBER OF DARE-DEVIL FOLLOWERS, WON FAME AS ONE OF THE MOST SPECTACULAR OF FILIBUSTERING ADVENTURERS.
COLONEL ALBERT L. MYERS
STARTING AS A RECRUIT BECAME PRIVATE, CORPORAL, SERGEANT, FIRST SERGEANT, SERGEANT-MAJOR SECOND LIEUTENANT, FIRST LIEUT. CAPTAIN, MAJOR AND THEN COLONEL—ALL WITHIN THE SAME REGIMENT, THE 11TH U.S. INFANTRY
BRIGADIER GENERAL WILLIAM MITCHELL
DURING THE WORLD WAR WAS CALLED "THE FLYING GENERAL" AND WAS THE ONLY AMERICAN GENERAL TO MAKE FLIGHTS OVER THE GERMAN LINES AND BATTLE THE BOCHE.

GENERAL "STONEWALL" JACKSON

—WHOSE GREAT NATURAL BRAVERY, VIGOR AND ACTION GAINED FOR HIM GREAT ADMIRATION FROM THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH, INCLUDING SUCH FLATTERING EDITORIAL COMMENT FROM GREELEY, THE NORTHERN EDITOR, WHO WROTE WHEN THE GENERAL FELL:

"JACKSON'S LOSS IS THE GREATEST YET SUSTAINED BY EITHER PARTY IN THE FALL OF A SINGLE MAN!"

JACKSON EARNED HIS NICKNAME "STONEWALL" WHEN, AS A CONFEDERATE ARMY LEADER, HE "STOOD LIKE A STONE WALL" AGAINST ENEMY ATTACKS, OFTEN TURNING THE TIDE OF BATTLE.

SUBMARINE FIRST USED DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN 1776!

EZRA LEE, SEPT. 1776, OPERATOR OF THE FIRST SUBMARINE USED FOR WAR PURPOSES, AIDED IN THE ROUTING OF THE BRITISH FLEET WHICH HAD BOTTLED UP GEORGE WASHINGTON AND THE AMERICAN ARMY IN NEW YORK.

OPERATING BY HANDS AND FEET HIS ONE-MAN UNDERWATER CRAFT, LEE, CARRYING EXPLOSIVES, STEERED NEAR THE LARGEST VESSEL AND RELEASED ONE OF HIS BOMBS. NOT UNDERSTANDING THIS TYPE OF WARFARE THE BRITISH SHIPS IMMEDIATELY CUT CABLES AND SAILED.

THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS IS BESTOWED UPON PERSONS IN MILITARY SERVICE WHO HAVE SHOWN EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM IN BATTLE OR OPERATION AGAINST THE ENEMY.

THERE HAVE BEEN 6,350 AWARDS OF THIS DECORATION MADE. DURING THE WORLD WAR 16 AWARDS WERE MADE, INCLUDING ONE OAK LEAF CLUSTER.

The Treasures *of* Tartary

Disguised as a Kurd, a Battling Irishman Enters the Mysterious Portals of a Forbidden City and is Hurtled into the Thick of Battle!

A Thrilling Complete Novelette

By ROBERT E. HOWARD

Author of "Mountain Men," "Guns of the Mountain," etc.

CHAPTER I

Key to the Treasure

IT was not mere impulsiveness that sent Kirby O'Donnell into the welter of writhing limbs and whickering blades that loomed so suddenly in the semi-darkness ahead of him. In that dark alley of Forbidden Shahrazar it was no light act to plunge headlong into a nameless brawl; and O'Donnell, for all his Irish love of a fight, was not disposed thoughtlessly to jeopardize his secret mission.

But the glimpse of a scarred, bearded face swept from his mind all thought and emotion save a crimson wave of fury. He acted instinctively.

Full into the midst of the flailing group, half-seen by the light of a distant cresset, O'Donnell leaped, *kindhjal* in hand. He was dimly aware that one man was fighting three or four others, but all his attention was fixed on a single tall gaunt form, dim in the shadows. His long, narrow, curved blade licked venomously at this figure, ploughing through cloth, bringing a yelp as the edge sliced skin. Something crashed down on O'Donnell's head, gun butt or bludgeon, and he reeled, his eyes full of sparks, and closed with someone he could not see.

His groping hand locked on a chain that encircled a bull neck, and with a straining gasp he ripped upward and felt his keen *kindhjal* slice through cloth, skin and belly muscles. An agonized groan burst from his victim's lips, and blood gushed sickeningly over O'Donnell's hand.

Through a blur of clearing sight, the American saw a broad bearded face falling away from him—not the face he had seen before. The next instant he had leaped clear of the dying man, and was slashing at the shadowy forms about him. An instant of flickering steel, and then the figures were running fleetly up the alley. O'Donnell, springing in pursuit, his hot blood lashed to murderous fury, tripped over a writhing

O'Donnell caught the stroke near his own hilt

form and fell headlong. He rose, cursing, and was aware of a man near him, panting heavily. A tall man, with a long curved blade in hand. Three forms lay in the mud of the alley.

"Come, my friend, whoever you are!" the tall man panted in *Turki*. "They have fled, but they will return with others. Let us go!"

O'Donnell made no reply. Temporarily accepting the alliance into which chance had cast him, he followed the tall stranger who ran down the winding alley with the sure foot of familiarity. Silence held them until they emerged from a low dark arch, where a tangle of alleys debouched upon a broad square, vaguely lighted by small fires about which groups of turbaned men squabbled and brewed tea. A reek of unwashed bodies mingled with the odors of horses and camels. None noticed the two men standing in the shadow made by the angle of the mud wall.

O'Donnell looked at the stranger, seeing a tall slim man with thin dark features. Under his *khalat* which was draggled and darkly splashed, showed the silver-heeled boots of a horseman. His turban was awry, and though he had sheathed his scimitar, blood clotted the hilt and the scabbard mouth.

The keen black eyes took in every detail of the American's appearance, but O'Donnell did not flinch. His disguise had stood the test too many times for him to doubt its effectiveness.

The American was somewhat above medium height, leanly built, but with broad shoulders and corded sinews which gave him a strength out of all proportion to his weight. He was a hard-woven mass of wiry muscles and steel string nerves, combining the wolf-trap coordination of a nat-

ural fighter with a berserk fury resulting from an overflowing nervous energy. The *kindhjal* in his girdle and the scimitar at his hip were as much a part of him as his hands.

He wore the Kurdish boots, vest and girdled *khalat* like a man born to them. His keen features, burned to bronze by desert suns, were almost as dark as those of his companion.

"Tell me thy name," requested the other. "I owe my life to thee."

"I am Ali el Ghazi, a Kurd," answered O'Donnell.

No hint of suspicion shadowed the other's countenance. Under the coiffed Arab *kafiyeh* O'Donnell's eyes blazed lambent blue, but blue eyes were not at all unknown among the warriors of the Iranian highlands.

The Turk lightly and swiftly touched the hawk-headed pommel of O'Donnell's scimitar.

"I will not forget," he promised. "I will know thee wherever we meet again. Now it were best we separated and went far from this spot, for men with knives will be seeking me —and thou too, for aiding me." And like a shadow he glided among the camels and bales and was gone.

O'DONNELL stood silently for an instant, one ear cocked back toward the alley, the other absently taking in the sounds of the night. Somewhere a thin wailing voice sang to a twanging native lute. Somewhere else a feline-like burst of profanity marked the progress of a quarrel. O'Donnell breathed deep with contentment, despite the grim Hooded Figure that stalked forever at his shoulder, and the recent rage that still seethed in his veins. This was the real heart of the East, the East which had long ago stolen his heart and led him to wander afar from his own people.

He realized that he still gripped something in his left hand, and he lifted it to the flickering light of a nearby fire. It was a length of gold chain, one of its massy links twisted and broken. From it depended a curious plaque of beaten gold, somewhat larger than a silver dollar, but oval rather than round. There was no ornament, only a boldly carven inscription which O'Donnell, with all his Eastern lore, could not decipher.

He knew that he had torn the chain from the neck of the man he had killed in that black alley, but he had no idea as to its meaning. Slipping it into his broad girdle, he strode across the square, walking with the swagger of a nomadic horseman that was so natural to him.

LEAVING the square he strode down a narrow street, the overhanging balconies of which almost touched one another. It was not late. Merchants in flowing silk robes sat cross-legged before their booths, extolling the quality of their goods—Mosul silk, matchlocks from Herat, edged weapons from India, and seed pearls from Baluchistan, Hawk-like Afghans and weapon-girdled Uzbeks jostled him. Lights streamed through silk-covered windows overhead, and the light silvery laughter of women rose above the noise of barter and dispute.

There was a tingle in the realization that he, Kirby O'Donnell, was the first Westerner ever to set foot in Forbidden Shahrazar, tucked away in a nameless valley not many days' journey from where the Afghan mountains swept down into the steppes of the Turkomans. As a wandering Kurd, traveling with a caravan from Kabul he had come, staking his life against the golden lure of a treasure beyond men's dreams.

In the bazaars and *serais* he had heard a tale: To Shaibar Khan, the Uzbek chief who had made himself master of Shahrazar, the city had given up its ancient secret. The Uzbek had found the treasure hidden there so long ago by Muhammad

Shah, king of Khuwarezm, the Land of the Throne of Gold, when his empire fell before the Mongols.

O'Donnell was in Shahrazar to steal that treasure; and he did not change his plans because of the bearded face he had recognized in the alley—the face of an old and hated enemy. Yar Akbar the Afridi, traitor and murderer.

O'DONNELL turned from the street and entered a narrow arched gate which stood open as if in invitation. A narrow stair went up from a small court to a balcony. This he mounted, guided by the tinkle of a guitar and a plaintive voice singing in *Pushtu*.

He entered a room whose latticed casement overhung the street, and the singer ceased her song to greet him and make half-mocking salaam with a lithe flexing of supple limbs. He replied, and deposited himself on a divan. The furnishings of the room were not elaborate, but they were costly. The garments of the woman who watched interestedly were of silk, her satin vest sewn with seed pearls. Her dark eyes, over the filmy *yasmaq*, were lustrous and expressive, the eyes of a Persian.

"Would my lord have food—and wine?" she inquired; and O'Donnell signified assent with the lordly gesture of a Kurdish swashbuckler who is careful not to seem too courteous to any woman, however famed in intrigue she may be. He had come there not for food and drink, but because he had heard in the bazaars that news of many kinds blew on the winds through the house of Ayisha, where men from far and near came to drink her wine and listen to her songs.

She served him, and, sinking down on cushions near him, watched him eat and drink. O'Donnell's appetite was not feigned. Many lean days had taught him to eat when and where he could. Ayisha seemed to him more like a curious child than an intriguing woman, evincing so much interest over a wandering Kurd, but he knew that she was weighing him carefully behind her guileless stare, as she weighed all men who came into her house.

In that hot-bed of plot and ambitions, the wandering stranger today might be the Amir of Afghanistan or the Shah of Persia tomorrow—or the morrow might see his headless body dangling as a feast for the birds.

"You have a good sword," said she. He involuntarily touched the hilt. It was an Arab blade, long, lean, curved like the crescent moon, with a brass hawk's head for a pommel.

"It has cut many a Turkoman out of the saddle," he boasted, with his mouth full, carrying out his character. Yet it was no empty boast.

"*Hai!*" She believed him and was impressed. She rested her chin on her small fists and gazed up at him, as if his dark, hawk-like face had caught her fancy.

"THE Khan needs swords like yours," she said.

"The Khan has many swords," he retorted, gulping wine loudly.

"No more than he will need if Orkhan Bahadur comes against him," she prophesied.

"I have heard of this Orkhan," he replied. And so he had; who in Central Asia had not heard of the daring and valorous Turkoman chief who defied the power of Moscow and had cut to pieces a Russian expedition sent to subdue him? "In the bazaars they say the Khan fears him."

That was a blind venture. Men did not speak of Shaibar Khan's fears openly.

Ayisha laughed. "Who does the Khan fear? Once the Amir sent troops to take Shahrazar, and those who lived were glad to flee! Yet if

any man lives who could storm the city, Orkhan Bahadur is that man. Only tonight the Uzbeks were hunting his spies through the alleys."

O'Donnell remembered the Turkish accent of the stranger he had unwittingly aided. It was quite possible that the man was a Turkoman spy.

As he pondered this, Ayisha's sharp eyes discovered the broken end of the gold chain dangling from his girdle, and with a gurgle of delight she snatched it forth before he could stop her. Then with a squeal she dropped it as if it were hot, and prostrated herself in wriggling abasement among the cushions.

He scowled and picked up the trinket.

"Woman, what are you about?" he demanded.

"Your pardon, lord!" She clasped her hands, but her fear seemed more feigned than real; her eyes sparkled. "I did not know it was *the* token. *Aie*, you have been making game of me—asking me things none could know better than yourself. Which of the Twelve are you?"

"You babble as bees hum!" He scowled, dangling the pendant before her eyes. "You speak as one of knowledge, when, by Allah, you know not the meaning of this thing."

"NAY, but I do!" she protested. "I have seen such emblems before on the breasts of the *emirs* of the Inner Chamber. I know that it is a *talsmin* greater than the seal of the Amir, and the wearer comes and goes at will in or out of the Shining Palace."

"But why, wench, why?" he growled impatiently.

"Nay, I will whisper what you know so well," she answered, kneeling beside him. Her breath came soft as the sighing of the distant night wind. "It is the symbol of a Guardian of the Treasure!"

She fell away from him laughing. "Have I not spoken truly?"

He did not at once reply. His brain was dizzy, the blood pounding madly in his veins.

"Say nothing of this," he said at last, rising. "Your life upon it." And casting her a handful of coins at random, he hurried down the stair and into the street. He realized that his departure was too abrupt, but he was too dizzy, with the realization of what had fallen into his hands, for an entirely placid course of action.

The treasure! In his hand he held what well might be the key to it—at least a key into the palace, to gain entrance into which he had racked his brain in vain ever since coming to Shahrazar. His visit to Ayisha had borne fruit beyond his wildest dreams.

CHAPTER II

The Unholy Plan

DOUBTLESS in Muhammad Shah's day the Shining Palace deserved its name; even now it preserved some of its former splendor. It was separated from the rest of the city by a thick wall, and at the great gate there always stood a guard of Uzbeks with Lee-Enfield rifles, and girdles bristling with knives and pistols.

Shaibar Khan had an almost superstitious terror of accidental gunfire, and would allow only edged weapons to be brought into the palace. But his warriors were armed with the best rifles that could be smuggled into the Hills.

There was a limit to O'Donnell's audacity. There might be men on guard at the main gates who knew by sight all the *emirs* of the symbol. He made his way to a small side gate, through a loop-hole in which, at his imperious call, there peered a black man with the wizened features of a mute. O'Donnell had fastened the

broken links together and the chain now looped his corded neck. He indicated the plaque which rested on the silk of his *khalat;* and with a deep salaam, the black man opened the gate.

O'Donnell drew a deep breath. He was in the heart of the lion's lair now, and he dared not hesitate or pause to deliberate. He found himself in a garden which gave on to an open court surrounded by arches supported on marble pillars. He crossed the court, meeting no one. On the opposite side a grim-looking Uzbek, leaning on a spear, scanned him narrowly but said nothing. O'Donnell's skin crawled as he strode past the somber warrior, but the man merely stared curiously at the gold oval gleaming against the Kurdish vest.

O'Donnell found himself in a corridor whose walls were decorated by a gold frieze, and he went boldly on, seeing only soft-footed slaves who took no heed of him. As he passed into another corridor, broader and hung with velvet tapestries, his heart leaped into his mouth.

IT was a tall slender man in long fur-trimmed robes and a silk turban who glided from an arched doorway and halted him. The man had the pale oval face of a Persian, with a black pointed beard, and dark shadowed eyes. As with the others his gaze sought first the *talsmin* on O'Donnell's breast—the token, undoubtedly, of a servitor beyond suspicion.

"Come with me!" snapped the Persian. "I have work for you." And vouchsafing no further enlightenment, he stalked down the corridor as if expecting O'Donnell to follow without question; which, indeed, the American did, believing that such would have been the action of the genuine Guardian of the Treasure. He knew this Persian was Ahmed Pasha, Shaibar Khan's vizir; he had seen him riding along the streets with the royal house troops.

The Persian led the way into a small domed chamber, without windows, the walls hung with thick tapestries. A small bronze lamp lighted it dimly. Ahmed Pasha drew aside the hangings, directly behind a heap of cushions, and disclosed a hidden alcove.

"STAND there with drawn sword," he directed. Then he hesitated. "Can you speak or understand any Frankish tongue?" he demanded. The false Kurd shook his head.

"Good!" snapped Ahmed Pasha. "You are here to watch, not to listen. Our lord does not trust the man he is to meet here—alone. You are stationed behind the spot where this man will sit. Watch him like a hawk. If he makes a move against the Khan, cleave his skull. If harm comes to our prince, you shall be flayed alive." He paused, glared an instant, then snarled:

"And hide that emblem, fool! Shall the whole world know you are an *emir* of the Treasure?"

"Hearkening and obedience, *ya khawand,*" mumbled O'Donnell, thrusting the symbol inside his garments. Ahmed jerked the tapestries together, and left the chamber. O'Donnell glanced through a tiny opening, waiting for the soft pad of the vizir's steps to fade away before he should glide out and take up again his hunt for the treasure.

But before he could move, there was a low mutter of voices, and two men entered the chamber from opposite sides. One bowed low and did not venture to seat himself until the other had deposited his fat body on the cushions, and indicated permission.

O'Donnell knew that he looked on Shaibar Khan, once the terror of the Kirghiz steppes, and now lord of

Shahrazar. The Uzbek had the broad powerful build of his race, but his thick limbs were soft from easy living. His eyes held some of their old restless fire, but the muscles of his face seemed flabby, and his features were lined and purpled with debauchery. And there seemed something else—a worried, haunted look, strange in that son of reckless nomads. O'Donnell wondered if the possession of the treasure was weighing on his mind.

The other man was slender, dark, his garments plain beside the gorgeous ermine-trimmed *kaftan*, pearl-sewn girdle and green, emerald-crested turban of the Khan.

This stranger plunged at once into conversation, low-voiced but animated and urgent. He did most of the talking, while Shaibar Khan listened, occasionally interjecting a question, or a grunt of gratification. The Khan's weary eyes began to blaze, and his pudgy hands knotted as if they gripped again the hilt of the blade which had carved his way to power.

And Kirby O'Donnell forgot to curse the luck which held him prisoner while precious time drifted by. Both men spoke a tongue the American had not heard in years—a European language. And scanning closely the slim dark stranger, O'Donnell admitted himself baffled. If the man were, as he suspected, a European disguised as an Oriental, then O'Donnell knew he had met his equal in masquerade.

FOR it was European politics he talked, European politics that lay behind the intrigues of the East. He spoke of war and conquest, and vast hordes rolling down the Khyber Pass into India; to complete the overthrow, said the dark slender man, of a rule outworn.

He promised power and honors to Shaibar Khan, and O'Donnell, listening, realized that the Uzbek was but a pawn in his game, no less than those others he mentioned. The Khan, narrow of vision, saw only a mountain kingdom for himself, reaching down into the plains of Persia and India, and backed by European guns—not realizing those same guns could just as easily overwhelm him when the time was ripe.

But O'Donnell, with his western wisdom, read behind the dark stranger's words, and recognized there a plan of imperial dimensions, and the plot of a European power to seize half of Asia. And the first move in that game was to be the gathering of warriors by Shaibar Khan. How? With the treasure of Khuwarezm! With it he could buy all the swords of Central Asia.

SO the dark man talked and the Uzbek listened like an old wolf who harks to the trampling of the musk oxen in the snow. O'Donnell listened, his blood freezing as the dark man casually spoke of invasions and massacres; and as the plot progressed and became more plain in detail, more monstrous and ruthless in conception, he trembled with a mad urge to leap from his cover and slash and hack both these bloody devils into pieces with the scimitar that quivered in his nervous grasp. Only a sense of self-preservation stayed him from this madness; and presently Shaibar Khan concluded the audience and left the chamber, followed by the dark stranger. O'Donnell saw this one smile furtively, like a man who has victory in his grasp.

O'Donnell started to draw aside the curtain, when Ahmed Pasha came padding into the chamber. It occurred to the American that it would be better to let the vizir find him at his post. But before Ahmed could speak, or draw aside the curtain, there sounded a rapid pattering of bare feet in the corridor outside, and

a man burst into the room, wild eyed and panting. At the sight of him a red mist wavered across O'Donnell's sight. It was Yar Akbar!

CHAPTER III

Wolf Pack

THE Afridi fell on his knees before Ahmed Pasha. His garments were tattered; blood seeped from a broken tooth and clotted his straggly beard.

"Oh, master," he panted, "the dog has escaped!"

"Escaped!" The vizir rose to his full height, his face convulsed with passion. O'Donnell thought that he would strike down the Afridi, but his arm quivered, fell by his side.

"Speak!" The Persian's voice was dangerous as the hiss of a cobra.

"We hedged him in a dark alley," Yar Akbar babbled. "He fought like *Shaitan*. Then others came to his aid—a whole nest of Turkomans, we thought, but mayhap it was but one man. He too was a devil! He slashed my side—see the blood! For hours since we have hunted them, but found no trace. *He* is over the wall and gone!" In his agitation Yar Akbar plucked at a chain about his neck; from it depended an oval like that held by O'Donnell. The American realized that Yar Akbar, too, was an *emir* of the Treasure. The Afridi's eyes burned like a wolf's in the gloom, and his voice sank.

"He who wounded me slew Othman," he whispered fearfully, "and despoiled him of the *talsmin!*"

"Dog!" The vizir's blow knocked the Afridi sprawling. Ahmed Pasha was livid. "Call the other *emirs* of the Inner Chamber, swiftly!"

Yar Akbar hastened into the corridor, and Ahmed Pasha called:

"Ohe! you who hide behind the hangings—come forth!" There was no reply, and pale with sudden suspicion, Ahmed drew a curved dagger and with a pantherish spring tore the tapestry aside. The alcove was empty.

As he glared in bewilderment, Yar Akbar ushered into the chamber as unsavory a troop of ruffians as a man might meet, even in the Hills: Uzbeks, Afghans, Gilzais, Pathans, scarred with crime and old in wickedness. Ahmed Pasha counted them swiftly. With Yar Akbar there were eleven.

"Eleven," he muttered. "And dead Othman makes twelve. All these men are known to you, Yar Akbar?"

"My head on it!" swore the Afridi. "These be all true men."

Ahmed clutched his beard.

"Then, by God, the One True God," he groaned, "that Kurd I set to guard the Khan was a spy and a traitor." And at that moment a shriek and a clash of steel re-echoed through the palace.

WHEN O'Donnell heard Yar Akbar gasping out his tale to the vizir, he knew the game was up. He did not believe that the alcove was a blind niche in the wall; and, running swift and practiced hands over the panels, he found and pressed a hidden catch. An instant before Ahmed Pasha tore aside the tapestry, the American wriggled his lean body through the opening and found himself in a dimly lighted chamber on the other side of the wall. A black slave dozed on his haunches, unmindful of the blade that hovered over his ebony neck, as O'Connell glided across the room and through a curtained doorway.

He found himself back in the corridor into which one door of the audience chamber opened, and crouching among the curtains, he saw Yar Akbar come up the hallway with his villainous crew. He saw, too, that they had come up a marble stair at the end of the hall.

His heart leaped. In that direction,

undoubtedly, lay the treasure—now supposedly unguarded. As soon as the *emirs* vanished into the audience chamber where the vizir waited, O'Donnell ran swiftly and recklessly down the corridor.

But even as he reached the stairs, a man sitting on them sprang up, brandishing a *tulwar*. A black slave, evidently left there with definite orders, for the sight of the symbol on O'Donnell's breast did not halt him. O'Donnell took a desperate chance, gambling his speed against the cry that rose in the thick black throat.

He lost. His scimitar licked through the massive neck and the Soudani rolled down the stairs, spurting blood. But his yell had rung to the roof.

And at that yell the *emirs* of the gold came headlong out of the audience chamber, giving tongue like a pack of wolves. They did not need Ahmed's infuriated shriek of recognition and command. They were men picked for celerity of action as well as courage, and it seemed to O'Donnell that they were upon him before the negro's death yell had ceased to echo.

HE met the first attacker, a hairy Pathan, with a long lunge that sent his scimitar point through the thick throat even as the man's broad *tulwar* went up for a stroke. Then a tall Uzbek swung his heavy blade like a butcher's cleaver. No time to parry; O'Donnell caught the stroke near his own hilt, and his knees bent under the impact.

But the next instant the *kindhjal* in his left hand ripped through the Uzbek's entrails, and with a powerful heave of his whole body, O'Donnell hurled the dying man against those behind him, bearing them back with him. Then O'Donnell wheeled and ran, his eyes blazing defiance of the death that whickered at his back.

Ahead of him another stair led up. O'Donnell reached it one long bound ahead of his pursuers, gained the steps and wheeled, all in one motion, slashing down at the heads of the pack that came clamoring after him.

SHAIBAR KHAN'S broad pale face peered up at the mêlée from the curtains of an archway, and O'Donnell was grateful to the Khan's obsessional fear that had barred firearms from the palace. Otherwise, he would already have been shot down like a dog. He himself had no gun; the pistol with which he had started the adventure had slipped from its holster somewhere on that long journey, and lay lost among the snows of the Himalayas.

No matter; he had never yet met his match with cold steel. But no blade could long have held off the ever increasing horde that swarmed up the stair at him.

He had the advantage of position, and they could not crowd past him on the narrow stair; their very numbers hindered them. His flesh crawled with the fear that others would come down the stair and take him from behind, but none came. He retreated slowly, plying his dripping blades with berserk frenzy. A steady stream of taunts and curses flowed from his lips, but even in his fury he spoke in the tongues of the East, and not one of his assailants realized that the madman who opposed them was anything but a Kurd.

He was bleeding from a dozen flesh cuts, when he reached the head of the stairs which ended in an open trap. Simultaneously the wolves below him came clambering up to drag him down. One gripped his knees, another was hewing madly at his head. The others howled below them, unable to get at their prey.

O'Donnell stooped beneath the sweep of a *tulwar* and his scimitar split the skull of the wielder. His

kindhjal he drove through the breast of the man who clung to his knees, and kicking the clinging body away from him, he reeled up through the trap. With frantic energy, he gripped the heavy iron-bound door and slammed it down, falling across it in semi-collapse.

THE splintering of wood beneath him warned him and he rolled clear just as a steel point crunched up through the door and quivered in the starlight. He found and shot the bolt, and then lay prostrate, panting for breath. How long the heavy wood would resist the attacks from below he did not know.

He was on a flat-topped roof, the highest part of the palace. Rising, he stumbled over to the nearest parapet, and looked down, on to lower roofs. He saw no way to get down. He was trapped.

It was the darkness just before dawn. He was on a higher level than the walls or any of the other houses in Shahrazar. He could dimly make out the sheer of the great cliffs which flanked the valley in which Shahrazar stood, and he saw the starlight's pale glimmer on the slim river which trickled past the massive walls. The valley ran southeast and northwest.

And suddenly the wind, whispering down from the north, brought a burst of crackling reports. Shots? He stared northwestward, toward where, he knew, the valley pitched upward, narrowing to a sheer gut, and a mud-walled village dominated the pass. He saw a dull red glow against the sky. Again came reverberations.

Somewhere in the streets below sounded a frantic clatter of flying hoofs that halted before the palace gate. There was silence then, in which O'Donnell heard the splintering blows on the trap door, and the heavy breathing of the men who struck them. Then suddenly they ceased as if the attackers had dropped dead; utter silence attended a shrilling voice, indistinct through distance and muffling walls. A wild clamor burst forth in the streets below; men shouted, women screamed.

No more blows fell on the trap. Instead there were noises below—the rattle of arms, tramp of men, and a voice that held a note of hysteria shouting orders.

O'Donnell heard the clatter of galloping horses, and saw torches moving through the streets, toward the northwestern gate. In the darkness up the valley he saw orange jets of flame and heard the unmistakable reports of firearms.

Shrugging his shoulders, he sat down in an angle of the parapet, his scimitar across his knees. And there weary Nature asserted itself, and in spite of the clamor below him, and the riot in his blood, he slept.

CHAPTER IV

Furious Battle!

HE did not sleep long, for dawn was just stealing whitely over the mountains when he awoke. Rifles were cracking all around, and crouching at the parapet, he saw the reason. Shahrazar was beseiged by warriors in sheepskin coats and fur *kalpaks*. Herds of their horses grazed just beyond rifle fire, and the warriors themselves were firing from every rock and tree. Numbers of them were squirming along the half dry river bed, among the willows, sniping at the men on the walls, who gave back their fire.

The Turkomans of Orkhan Bahadur! That blaze in the darkness told of the fate of the village that guarded the pass. Turks seldom made night raids; but Orkhan was nothing if not original.

The Uzbeks manned the walls, and O'Donnell believed he could make out the bulky shape and crested tur-

ban of Shaibar Khan among a cluster of peacock-clad nobles. And as he gazed at the turmoil in the streets below, the belief grew that every available Uzbek in the city was on the walls. This was no mere raid; it was a tribal war of extermination.

O'DONNELL'S Irish audacity rose like heady wine in his veins, and he tore aside the splintered door and gazed down the stairs. The bodies still lay on the steps, stiff and unseeing. No living human met his gaze as he stole down the stairs, scimitar in hand. He gained the broad corridor, and still he saw no one. He hurried down the stair whereon he had slain the black slave, and reached a broad chamber with a single tapestried door.

There was the sudden crash of a musket; a spurt of flame stabbed at him. The ball whined past him and he covered the space with a long leap, grappled a snarling, biting figure behind the tapestry and dragged it into the open. It was Ahmed Pasha.

"Accursed one!" The vizir fought like a mad dog. "I guessed you would come skulking here—Allah's curse on the *hashish* that has made my hand unsteady—"

His dagger girded through O'Donnell's garments, drawing blood. Under his silks the Persian's muscles were like taut wires. Employing his superior weight, the American hurled himself hard against the other, driving the vizir's head back against the stone wall with a stunning crack. As the Persian relaxed with a groan, O'Donnell's left hand wrenched from his grasp and lurched upward, and the keen *kindhjal* encountered flesh and bone

The American lifted the still twitching corpse and thrust it behind the tapestry, hiding it as best he could. A bunch of keys at the dead man's girdle caught his attention, and they were in his hand as he approached the curtained door.

The heavy teakwood portal, bound in arabesqued copper, would have resisted any onslaught short of artillery. A moment's fumbling with the massive keys, and O'Donnell found the right one. He passed into a narrow corridor dimly lighted by some obscure means. The walls were of marble, the floor of mosaics. It ended at what seemed to be a blank carven wall, until O'Donnell saw a thin crack in the marble.

Through carelessness or haste, the secret door had been left partly open. O'Donnell heard no sound, and was inclined to believe that Ahmed Pasha had remained to guard the treasure alone. He gave the vizir credit for wit and courage.

O'Donnell pulled open the door—a wide block of marble revolving on a pivot—and halted short, a low cry escaping his lips. He had come full upon the treasure of Khuwarezm, and the sight stunned him!

THE dim light must have come through hidden interstices in the colored dome of the circular chamber in which he stood. It illumined a shining pyramidal heap upon a dais in the center of the floor, a platform that was a great round slab of pure jade. And on that jade gleamed tokens of wealth beyond the dreams of madness. The foundations of the pile consisted of blocks of virgin gold and upon them lay, rising to a pinnacle of blazing splendor, ingots of hammered silver, ornaments of golden enamel, wedges of jade, pearls of incredible perfection, inlaid ivory, diamonds that dazzled the sight, rubies like clotted blood, emeralds like drops of green fire, pulsing sapphires—O'Donnell's senses refused to accept the wonder of what he saw. Here, indeed, was wealth sufficient to buy every sword in Asia. A sudden sound brought him

about. Someone was coming down the corridor outside, someone who labored for breath and ran staggeringly. A quick glance around, and O'Donnell slipped behind the rich gilt-worked arras which masked the walls. A niche where, perhaps, had stood an idol in the old pagan days, admitted his lean body, and he gazed through a slit cut in the velvet.

IT was Shaibar Khan who came into the chamber. The Khan's garments were torn and splashed darkly. He stared at his treasure with haunted eyes, and he groaned. Then he called for Ahmed Pasha.

One man came, but it was not the vizir who lay dead in the outer corridor. It was Yar Akbar, crouching like a great grey wolf, beard bristling in his perpetual snarl.

"Why was the treasure left unguarded?" demanded Shaibar Khan petulantly. "Where is Ahmed Pasha?"

"He sent us on the wall," answered Yar Akbar, hunching his shoulders in servile abasement. "He said he would guard the treasure himself."

"No matter!" Shaibar Khan was shaking like a man with an ague. "We are lost. The people have risen against me and opened the gates to that devil Orkhan Bahadur. His Turkomans are cutting down my Uzbeks in the streets. But he shall not have the treasure. See ye that golden bar that juts from the wall, like a sword hilt from the scabbard? I have but to pull that, and the treasure falls into the subterranean river which runs below this palace, to be lost forever to the sight of men. Yar Akbar, I give you a last command—pull that bar!"

Yar Akbar moaned and wrung his beard, but his eyes were red as a wolf's, and he turned his ear continually toward the outer door.

"Nay, lord, ask of me anything but that!"

"Then I will do it!" Shaibar Khan moved toward the bar, reached out his hand to grasp it. With a snarl of a wild beast, Yar Akbar sprang on his back, grunting as he struck. O'Donnell saw the point of the Khyber knife spring out of Shaibar Khan's silk-clad breast, as the Uzbek chief threw wide his arms, cried out chokingly, and tumbled forward to the floor. Yar Akbar spurned the dying body with a vicious foot.

"Fool!" he croaked. "I will buy my life from Orkhan Bahadur. Aye, this treasure shall gain me much honor with him, now the other *emirs* are dead—"

He halted, crouching and glaring, the reddened knife quivering in his hairy fist. O'Donnell had swept aside the tapestry and stepped into the open. "Y'Allah!" ejaculated the Afridi. "The dog-Kurd!"

"LOOK more closely, Yar Akbar," answered O'Donnell grimly, throwing back his *kafiyeh* and speaking in English. "Do you not remember the Gorge of Izz ed din and the scout trapped there by your treachery? One man escaped, you dog of the Khyber."

Slowly a red flame grew in Yar Akbar's eyes.

"El Shirkuh!" he muttered, giving O'Donnell his Afghan name—the Mountain Lion. Then, with a howl that rang to the domed roof, he launched himself through the air, his three-foot knife gleaming.

O'Donnell did not move his feet. A supple twist of his torso avoided the thrust, and the furiously driven knife hissed between left arm and body, tearing his *khalat*. At the same instant O'Donnell's left forearm bent up and under the lunging arm that guided the knife. Yar Akbar screamed, spat on the *kindhjal's* narrow blade. Unable to halt his headlong rush, he caromed bodily against O'Donnell, bearing him down.

They struck the floor together, and

Yar Akbar, with a foot of trenchant steel in his vitals, yet reared up, caught O'Donnell's hair in a fierce grasp, gasped a curse, lifted his knife—and then his wild beast vitality failed him, and with a convulsive shudder he rolled clear and lay still in a spreading pool of blood.

O'Donnell rose and stared down at the bodies upon the floor, then at the glittering heap on the jade slab. His soul yearned to it with the fierce yearning that had haunted him for years. Dared he take the desperate chance of hiding it under the very noses of the invading Turkomans? If he could, he might escape, to return later, and bear it away. He had taken more desperate chances before.

ACROSS his mental vision flashed a picture of a slim dark stranger who spoke a European tongue. It was lure of the treasure which had led Orkhan Bahadur out of his steppes; and the treasure in his hands would be as dangerous as it was in the hands of Shaibar Khan. The Power represented by the dark stranger could deal with the Turkoman as easily as with the Uzbek.

No; one Oriental adventurer with that treasure was as dangerous to the peace of Asia as another. He dared not run the risk of Orkhan Bahadur finding that pile of gleaming wealth—sweat suddenly broke out on O'Donnell's body as he realized, for once in his life, a driving power mightier than his own desire. The helpless millions of India were in his mind as, cursing sickly, he gripped the gold bar and heaved it!

With a grinding boom something gave way, the jade slab moved, turned, tilted and disappeared, and with it vanished, in a final iridescent burst of dazzling splendor, the treasure of Khuwarezm. Far below came a sullen splash, and the sound of waters roaring in the darkness; then silence, and where a black hole had gaped there showed a circular slab of the same substance as the rest of the floor.

O'DONNELL hurried from the chamber. He did not wish to be found where the Turkomans might connect him with the vanishing of the treasure they had battled to win. Let them think, if they would, that Shaibar Khan and Yar Akbar had disposed of it somehow, and slain one another. As he emerged from the palace into an outer court, lean warriors in sheepskin *kaftans* and high fur caps were swarming in. Cartridge belts crossed on their breasts, and *yataghans* hung at their girdles. One of them lifted a rifle and took deliberate aim at O'Donnell.

Then it was struck aside, and a voice shouted:

"By Allah, it is my friend Ali el Ghazi!" There strode forward a tall man whose *kalpak* was of white lambskin, and whose *kaftan* was trimmed with ermine. O'Donnell recognized the man he had aided in the alley.

"I am Orkhan Bahadur!" exclaimed the chief with a ringing laugh. "Put up your sword, friend; Shahrazar is mine! The heads of the Uzbeks are heaped in the market square! When I fled from their swords last night, they little guessed my warriors awaited my coming in the mountains beyond the pass! Now I am prince of Shahrazar, and thou art my cup-companion. Ask what thou wilt, yea, even a share of the treasure of Khuwarezm—when we find it."

"When you find it!" O'Donnell mentally echoed, sheathing his scimitar with a Kurdish swagger. The American was something of a fatalist. He had come out of this adventure with his life at least, and the rest was in the hands of Allah.

"Alhamdolillah!" said O'Donnell, joining arms with his new cup-companion.

The Whirlwind's *Private* War

The Whirlwind was charging back at them from another direction

El Torbellino Makes Swords Resound as He Valiantly Faces a Ruthless Horde of Vandal Pirates!

By JOHNSTON McCULLEY

Author of "Alias the Whirlwind," "The Mark of Zorro," etc.

THUNDERING hoofs spurned the dusty highway as the mule, with ears back and stomach to the ground, rushed down the last slope toward the little *pueblo* of San Diego de Alcala late that summer afternoon.

In the plaza, the gentlefolk were taking the air after their *siesta;* shopkeepers were busy; and men

drank wine and diced in the inn conducted by one Lazaga. The troopers sprawled on benches in the shade in front of the barracks building at the *presidio* and listened to burly Sergeant Juan Cassara boast.

"The times are dull," said Sergeant Juan Cassara. "Even this pest of a highwayman who calls himself El Torbellino, the Whirlwind, has not been doing anything of late. No doubt he has taken his activities elsewhere, having heard something of my record, and knowing that I now am in command here, due to the absence of our officer—"

Sergeant Juan Cassara ceased speaking, sat erect, and with a gnarled hand shaded his eyes against the slanting rays of the setting sun.

"What, in the name of the saints—" he began.

DOWN the dusty highway thundered the mule, sweat glistening on his hide. A native was riding him bareback. It was a tired and angry mule, and as he passed the *presidio* in a cloud of dust he was commencing to wabble.

"Somebody in need of a man of physic," Sergeant Juan Cassara said. "Or, mayhap, in need of one of the *frailes* of the mission to mutter prayers for the dying. As I was saying—"

But he ceased speaking again to watch the native on the mule. For he was not riding toward the chapel where *Fray* Felipe was in charge, the good *fray* being adept at healing both broken bodies and broken souls. The mule was directed toward Lazaga's inn, and he skidded to a thankful stop before it in a shower of dust and sand and gravel, causing some of the dainty *señoritas* to forget the ogling *caballeros* for a moment and indulge in squeaks and swoons.

"Dolt of a native cur!" Cassara swore, lumbering to his feet. "He should be whipped soundly for frightening quiet folk so. Manuel, hurry down to the inn and learn the cause of this mad ride. If you do not like the native's looks or words, fetch him here for questioning. It has been days since I have laid a whip across a bronze back, and lack of exercise softens me."

Manuel, the trooper designated, strode away, his mind dwelling on the fact that he would have a chance for a mug of wine at the inn, where his credit was good until payment day for the soldiery.

The big sergeant began boasting again, meanwhile watching the scene below. He saw a *caballero* swing to saddle and gallop madly up the hill.

"Something stirs," Cassara said. "Carlos, prepare my horse. Stand by, you others, for there may be imperative orders."

Cassara drew himself up and saluted respectfully with a wave of the hand as the *caballero*, young and proud scion of a prominent family, brought his horse to a stop.

"Sergeant! Don Pedro Vallejo has been slain, and his coachman also, and jewels taken, and the *Señorita* Carlotta, Don Pedro's fair daughter, stolen and carried away."

"What is this?" Cassara howled. "Trumpeter, blow! Sound the assembly call! Saddle up, men!" He faced the *caballero* again. "And you, kind *señor*, please to tell me more."

"A NATIVE servant brought the word. Don Pedro was starting for San Diego de Alcala from his *hacienda*, his daughter intending to pay a visit here. The carriage was waylaid in a gorge near Don Pedro's place, almost twenty miles out."

"Waylaid? By whom?" Cassara roared.

"By this El Torbellino! By the Whirlwind, the native says."

"And how about this native?" Cassara asked.

"He is a worker in the fields. He was riding his mule to the *hacienda*, and heard the outcries and saw what happened. El Torbellino shot a pistol at him, but the ball missed. He rode wildly, and El Torbellino pursued for a short distance, then turned back."

"And carried away the *señorita?*"

"Picked her up and put her before him on his saddle, and rode into the hills, the native relates. He thinks that the *señorita* had swooned."

The troopers were rushing about, saddling their mounts and getting their weapons from the armory, and one brought Sergeant Cassara's horse to him. He swung to saddle.

"Follow me to the inn," he howled at his men. He rode off swiftly, with the *caballero* beside him.

There was quite a crowd in front of the inn when they arrived. The native, his eyes bulging with fear, was gulping at a mug of wine which had been given him. He gasped out the story again for Cassara's ears.

"This must be avenged!" the *caballero* cried. "This El Torbellino must be hunted down and slain like a mad wolf. Every able-bodied man here will ride with the troopers!"

A cheer greeted the speech. Every young and wild *caballero* in town hailed the chance at a man hunt. Others, older and far from being *caballeros*, remembered the heavy rewards offered for the Whirlwind's capture, and rushed for horses also.

IT was almost dusk when they swept from the town, heavily armed, with Sergeant Juan Cassara at their head: the troopers, the young gentlemen making a lark of it, the others who hoped to share in a reward! None was left behind except old men and those with no stomach for fighting.

Somebody sought the native, to glean more horrible details of the deed, but he could not be found. The mule was wandering around the corner of the plaza, and he was turned into the public corral.

In the doorway of the inn stood one Pedro Garzo, general roustabout, looking along the highway where the cavalcade had disappeared. There was a puzzled expression on Pedro Garzo's face. He wondered what all this meant.

For he knew that El Torbellino, the Whirlwind, had not slain Don Pedro and kidnaped Don Pedro's daughter. He knew it very well—for Pedro Garzo himself was the Whirlwind.

II

LIGHTS gleamed in the houses and the soft dusk deepened rapidly to night. In from the sea came a cool breeze. Stars burned in a cloudless sky.

A boat swept in across the bay and grated on the pebbly beach. From a clump of brush, a man hurried to meet it. Other men jumped out, splashed ashore, and pulled the boat high. There were nine of them.

"It is well," the watcher reported. "The decoy worked. The native did his work. The troopers, and every able-bodied man in the *pueblo*, have ridden twenty miles for nothing. Before they can return—"

"Let us waste no time," one of the others growled.

They started through the brush, guided by the one who had been waiting, going toward the distant town.

"Where is the ship?"

"Just outside the bay. She will put in to pick us up at dawn."

On they went, their manner furtive. Through a patch of moonlight they darted swiftly, and the moonlight glinted from weapons they carried. They were big men, fierce men, wearing sashes in which knives and pistols were thrust, with handker-

chiefs wrapped around their heads, and big rings in their ears. They were pirates.

Some weeks before, they had looted San Juan Capistrano, and had sailed away. There was no ship in the vicinity to pursue. Now they were back, farther south. The troopers had been decoyed away, and the town's fighting men with them. San Diego de Alcala was at their mercy.

Not far from a corner of the plaza, they stopped in a jumble of brush and rocks. The leader spoke:

"Stand together. Let no man get away alone. Surprise will wreck them. Loot the richer houses, and get wine-skins at the inn. We brought the big boat. There will be room in it for all we take."

Forward they went again, the nine who had come from the sea and the one who had awaited them. They slipped through the shadows and approached the plaza. It was a scene of peace. Musical instruments were tinkling, soft voices were calling.

"Do not all be found at once with empty pistols," the leader warned. "Use the cutlass. Strike down a couple for effect. And do not loot the chapel or attack a *fray*, since it brings ill luck."

Then there was a bedlam of shouts that startled the town. Into the plaza the pirates poured, howling, brandishing their weapons, making known their identity.

Natives scurried before them. Two luckless ones were caught, and blood-wet blades answered their dying screams. Doors everywhere were slammed and bolted.

"PIRATES!" cried Lazaga, at the inn. "My money chest!"

"Your daughter, Juanita," Pedro Garzo reminded him.

"Juanita! Hide at once!" her father cried. "Ah, if only the troopers were here!"

Pedro Garzo guessed that the troopers had been decoyed away purposely. The pirates would work their will on the town. If fired upon, they would only become the more infuriated and ruthless.

White-faced, Lazaga rushed Juanita back into the *patio*, and bade her hide in a storeroom at the end. The innkeeper rushed on to get his money box.

He took one small bag of gold from it, and put the box in a safe hiding place in the *patio* well.

SHRIEKS and cries were coming from every part of the town now. The pirates were bellowing and laughing. Sounds told that they had smashed in the door of a house. A pistol shot cracked through the night.

From the first house, having taken what they wished, they went to a second, to batter at the door. A pistol flamed in a window, and one of the pirates howled curses as he clutched at a wounded arm.

"Use the torch here!" their leader shouted.

Inside, they had swift vengeance. Women screamed. An old man died fighting in a corner. A strong box was rifled, and jewels and gold taken. Rich hangings were torn from the windows and walls, and a torch tossed among them. Smoke billowed up, flames ran around the room.

The pirates went on. People were fleeing from the houses now, seeking sanctuary in the darkness away from the town. It was death to remain and make resistance. Dainty women were rushed to safety. Valuables were left behind. Natives were running from their huts, knowing the pirates might slay them for the sport of it.

The burning house made the plaza as light as day. The blood-thirsty crew went on, looting at their leisure, making bales of what they took. The leader howled his orders. And

finally they swept around the plaza and to the inn.

Lazaga was waiting for them alone. His daughter was in hiding. Pedro Garzo, the man-of-all-work, evidently had run away. Alone and white of face, Lazaga waited in the kitchen door.

"Ho, landlord!" the pirate leader barked. "Serve us your very best wine!"

THEY sprawled on the benches, their loot beside them. Lazaga hurried forward with a wine-skin and mugs.

"'Tis watery stuff," one roared. "If he drinks such himself, his blood must be thin."

"That is a thing easily decided," another said, getting to his feet and drawing his cutlass.

"Mercy, *señores!*" Lazaga cried. "I am but a poor old man. That wine is the best I have for sale."

"And have you any gold?" the leader asked.

"This one small pouch, *señor*. I just brought it from my sleeping place."

"One small pouch, and you the owner of an inn?"

"The tax gatherer was here but yesterday, *señores*. And recently I made heavy purchases of provisions for cash. This is all I have left. These are lean times, *señores*."

"I think you are lying," the leader said. "However, fetch more wine!"

Lazaga hurried to the kitchen, and returned with another wine-skin.

"This bag of gold is not enough," the leader told him.

"But it is all—"

"Perhaps you may remember where there is more, were we to toast your toes."

"Mercy, *señor!*"

Two grasped him, held him, compelled him to stretch on a bench. Another wrenched off Lazaga's boots. Still another hurried to the fireplace, and returned with a flaming bit of wood.

"Toast his toes!" the leader cried. "Make him remember where he has hidden his gold."

Lazaga screamed as the flame touched the sole of his foot. The pirate on guard at the door turned and laughed. Those in the room roared.

"Broil him well!" the leader shouted. "It is a sweet song he sings."

"For the love of the saints, *señores*—" Lazaga begged.

The landlord screeched again. Once more the pirate crew laughed. Then a pistol barked, and a ball crashed against the adobe wall.

THEY whirled, astounded, weapons coming up. In the kitchen door stood *Señorita* Juanita Yazaga, a smoking and empty weapon in her hand. Her shot had missed.

"Juanita—" Lazaga cried. "Run!"

"Let my father go!" the girl ordered. Her face was white, but she stood bravely beside the door.

"Ha! A dainty young one!" the leader said.

"There is perhaps room in the boat?" another asked.

"Ample room. A pretty one, to take to our captain. He will give us double shares of the loot."

One dashed toward her. The girl screamed and turned to flee. But she tripped, fell, and the man was at her. He grasped her arm and swung her clear of the floor. He held her against his chest, carried her back across the room as she kicked and tried to fight, and sat her upon a table.

"*Señores*—" Lazaga begged.

"This is the gold you had hidden, eh?" the leader asked. "We drink to you, *señorita*, with your father's wine. Tomorrow, all of us will bow before you. We'll sprawl and let you wipe your dainty feet upon our

bodies—for you will be our captain's lady."

Juanita's face grew white again. She realized to what her fear for her father had brought her. She knew she should have remained in hiding, but her father's screams had induced her to appear. It had been useless, and she was in desperate danger herself now.

The pirates were surrounding the table, wine mugs lifted high as they toasted her.

"The captain's lady!" the leader cried. And they drank.

She screeched at them like a mad woman, kicked at them, and they laughed raucously at her efforts. The leader spoke again:

"Enough! Bind her arms behind her back. As for this keeper of the inn—"

"Spare my father!" the girl cried.

"Bind him, and leave him on the floor," the leader said. "He is harmless. Let us be gone."

"Is there not more room in the boat?" one asked.

"More room, but not more women. They have scampered into the brush like rabbits, dolt! Even the bronze native wenches."

"It does not seem we have done enough here," another suggested. "They will not remember our visit."

"Use the torch on a few more of the houses. Burn the shops. But do it quickly."

FOUR rushed out, roaring aloud to frighten any of the citizenry who might have returned to the plaza. Other fires were started. The black smoke poured toward the sky and the flames sprang up as the adobe buildings were gutted.

The leader called again. The crew picked up their loot. One tossed the girl over his shoulder, like a bag of meal. Lazaga, moaning because of lusty kicks he had received in his ribs, and with the agony of Juanita's fate, was left behind, bound, stretched on the floor.

As they reached the door, they recoiled. Walking toward them was a silvery-haired *fray*, a robed Franciscan. Reflections from the leaping flames flashed across his stern face. He lifted an arm in a gesture for them to stop.

"Murderers and thieves!" he cried. "Release that girl! Do not add this to your other sins."

"One side!" a pirate cried—and struck him.

Old *Fray* Felipe crumpled senseless from the force of the blow. The pirate leader whirled furiously upon the other.

"You struck a *fray*, you fool! That is ill luck."

III

OUT of the darkness came a pistol ball. It thudded home in the breast of one of the crew. The pirate sprawled on the ground, staining it with his blood.

"He's done," the leader snarled. "Pick up his loot. Come! Get out of the light of the fire. They can pick us off here."

Two pistols were discharged, the marksmen aiming into the distant dark from whence the shot had come. The pirates rushed toward the corner of the plaza. They had nothing to fear, they judged, once they were out of the light zone caused by the burning houses. No one would have courage to follow and attack.

But there was a tumult on the other side of the burning buildings.

"El Torbellino! El Torbellino!" some voice roared.

The pirates whirled to see what was happening. Through the billows of smoke streaked with flame plunged a huge black horse. Mounted on him was a man who wore a black cloak and had a mask over his face. Straight at the pirates he rode.

"Shoot him down!" the leader bellowed.

Pistols exploded, but the big black came on, the rider bent low in his saddle. He did not fire in return. They saw that he held a blade, a long sword which flashed in the light of the fire.

THEN the horse was upon them. They scattered, dropping their loot. More pistols exploded, but the Whirlwind miraculously rode unscathed. Then he was past them and in the darkness—and behind were two men on the ground, run through, their life blood ebbing away.

The leader swore. He began bellowing orders. His men worked frantically to recharge their pistols. But they had no time. The Whirlwind was charging back at them from another direction. They scattered again. Their cutlasses were out, but his long sword parried the blows. He flashed past, swerving his black horse an instant—and two more wounded men were stretched on the ground.

"Into the inn!" the pirate leader cried.

Four of their party had been slain by this demon who rode the black horse; one had been killed by the shot from the dark; and another was wounded. Half of the ten were dead and one unable to do much fighting.

"Is one man to wreck us?" the leader cried. "Kill him, if he comes again! Into the inn!"

They abandoned their loot, but carried Juanita Lazaga as they retreated. Into the inn they rushed, slammed the heavy door and dropped the bar into place. Lazaga was still moaning and twisting about on the floor.

"If he comes again, pick him off!" the leader cried. "Let us get him alive, if we can. There are things I would do to him."

"What manner of man is he?" another asked.

The little *señorita* replied: "He is El Torbellino, the highway man."

"Then he is of our kidney. Why does he attack us? To get our loot?"

She did not reply to that. At the open window, one of the pirates gave a cry of alarm. The Whirlwind was coming back. The big black charged through the smoke again, straight at the inn.

Pistols were discharged, but the horse came on. The firearms were none too good, and the smoke and uncertain light of the flames served to make the target poor.

Now the Whirlwind used his own pistol, and a ball whistled through the window, narrowly missing the leader's head.

Then he was gone again. They heard the pounding of his horse's hoofs as he retreated. And then there was naught but silence, save for the crackling of the flames in the burning buildings.

THE pirates filled the wine mugs and drank deeply. The loss of their loot angered them more than the loss of their comrades. They unbound Lazaga and bade him get them cold meat, and one went with him to the kitchen.

"Play no tricks, landlord, or we harm the girl!" the pirate leader warned.

Lazaga brought in half of a cold roast mutton, and they cut off chunks of it with their knives. Wolfing down the food, gulping wine also, they meanwhile watched through the window. But they heard nothing of the Whirlwind.

"When we are ready, we go through the kitchen," the leader said. "We go into the coulée, and follow it to the shore."

"Spare my daughter," Lazaga moaned again.

One of them silenced him with a backhanded blow. Cautiously, the leader unbarred and opened the front

door. He saw nothing of their enemy, saw no human being at all.

"Two of you get some of the loot," he said.

The men rushed out, picked up some of the bundles, and hurried safely back into the inn. They waited a moment, and made another trip. Nobody bothered them.

The door was closed and barred again. The wounded man was given a small bundle to carry. Another was appointed to carry the girl. The remainder of the loot was distributed among the others. Four sound men and an injured one—and only one against them, as far as they knew!

"If this madman attacks again, he must be shot," the leader muttered repeatedly. "Is he to make fools of us all? Cut at his horse as he passes. Unsaddle the rogue and get him to the ground. We'll take him aboard the ship, for torture."

Lazaga was groaning, and one of the pirates kicked him. Juanita began fighting, but they quickly subdued her. They picked up the girl and the bundles of loot, and went into the kitchen of the inn. Leaving the building by the rear door, they went over rough ground toward the lip of the coulée, keeping to the shadows as much as possible.

THERE was no attack, no pursuit. The Whirlwind was not seen. On the pirates went, cursing as they stumbled over stones at the dark bottom of the gulch. And presently they emerged and started for the edge of the water, where they had left their boat.

The ground sloped to the bay, and was dotted with rocks and clumps of brush. Off to one side was a grove of stunted trees. Then, from the darkness of the shadows, there came a charging black horse.

"El Torbellino! El Torbellino!" the rider roared.

Dashing furiously through the shadows and patches of moonlight, he made an elusive target. A pistol barked, and the ball missed. The horse swerved as another fired. Blades were out and loot was tossed to the ground, and the *señorita* also, as the pirates made ready to finish this business.

The horse was swerved again to avoid the *señorita*, as she scrambled to her feet and tried to get away, stumbling and lurching because her hands were tied behind her back. This sudden swerve caused the pirate leader to miss his shot. And then the Whirlwind was upon them.

THE moonlight flashed from the blades the pirates held, flashed also from that of the Whirlwind, and then the latter flashed no more, for it was stained. One pirate reeled aside, to sprawl lifeless as that blade found his heart. Another slashed furiously, to find his cutlass torn from his grasp, to have a single glimpse of a sword darting at him like the tongue of a serpent before life departed from him.

Three remained—the leader, one other whole, and the one injured. The big black horse charged away into the shadows again, and a pistol barked. The ball brushed the Whirlwind's hat from his head. He turned and rode back furiously, his sword held high above his head.

"El Torbellino! El Torbellino!" he cried, the words ringing like a battle cry.

Now he skidded his horse to a stop, and a robber came at him from either side. The Whirlwind slashed at one so that he retreated a step, brought his sword over to disarm the other and run him through. They were adept at rough fighting, these pirates; but the Whirlwind had skill at fence, and his thinking was much quicker, and he held the advantage also of fighting from a saddle.

"Foul scum!" he roared.

The pirate leader made a last attempt. The Whirlwind played with him a moment, glancing at the wounded man, who was crouching beside a rock and trying to recharge a pistol. Off guard an instant, the Whirlwind felt the breath of a cutlass slash as it narrowly missed his arm. His horse reared back, then sprang forward under the rider's urging, and the blade of the Whirlwind darted home.

"NOW, *señor*—" He wheeled the horse to make for the last man, the one who had been wounded in the shoulder by the shot from a house early in the night.

A woman's scream came to him. He saw that the wounded pirate had seized the *señorita*, and now was holding her before him.

"Back, *señor!*" the pirate cried. "Allow me to go, or the *señorita* dies!"

And the Whirlwind saw that he was holding the muzzle of his pistol against Juanita Lazaga's head.

"This is the end for you, scum!" the Whirlwind cried.

"Then the *señorita* dies also, *señor*."

The Whirlwind laughed.

"What care I for her? Is she anything to me, this *señorita* behind whose skirts you hide? My object tonight is to slay pirates. Why do you not make a try at me, scum? Why do you not shoot your pistol, and send a ball tearing through my heart?"

"Return from whence you came," the pirate called. "Allow me to go my way. You have slain my mates."

"Where can you go, *Señor* Pirate? While you were at the inn, I smashed the bottom of your boat. You have a wounded shoulder, and could not oar it were it not smashed. Do you prefer that I run you through, *señor*, or keep you for the soldiery to hang?"

The pirate, clutching the struggling and screaming girl, started to withdraw into the darkness at the edge of the grove. The Whirlwind urged his horse forward again.

"I warn you, *señor*—" the pirate called.

"Get him, El Torbellino!" Juanita Lazaga shouted. "Do not fear for me."

She began twisting, squirming, kicking with renewed vigor. She wrenched the man's wounded shoulder, and he cried out with the pain. She kicked at his shins, so that he reeled aside. And then, finding her opportunity, she sank her tiny teeth into his wrist.

The pirate dropped the pistol, and his hands slipped to the *señorita's* throat. But he had no chance to tighten his grip. The Whirlwind was upon him; the blade was darting again; and the pirate gave his last scream on earth. He fell to that same earth, to twitch a few times and then be still.

And the Whirlwind put blade in scabbard, jumped his horse forward once more, reached down and swept the *señorita* off her feet and into his left arm. Swiftly he rode back to the inn.

A FEW men had crept from the shadows. Lazaga was at the door, lamenting. The big black stopped before him.

"Here is your daughter, *señor*," the Whirlwind said.

"May the saints be praised!"

"The pirates are dead," the Whirlwind shouted into the night. "Come from hiding and fight the fire. Send men to bring back the pirates' loot, that it may be returned to its owners."

Somebody touched him on the leg, and he looked down into the face of old *Fray* Felipe.

"Though you have slain, my son, I thank you," the old *fray* said. Then

he turned swiftly away, nor once looked at the Whirlwind's head, acting as though he feared he might recognize him and have to answer questions later.

The big black was spurred again. Around behind the inn he rushed. In the darkness there, the Whirlwind dismounted, and left the horse, and entered the kitchen to pass through it and come to the big room.

"Wine, *señor,*" he said to Lazaga, as he stood in the shadows at the end of the fireplace. "It has been a busy evening."

"Let me serve you, *Señor* El Torbellino," Juanita said. Her bonds had been removed and color was returning to her white face.

Her father nodded agreement, and she got a mug of the finest wine and carried it to him, curtseying low as she offered it. The Whirlwind bowed and accepted, and turned his back so he could lift his mask and drink.

"It is good wine," he said, as he returned the mug.

"I must thank you, *señor*—"

"Say nothing! It was a rare privilege to serve you."

"My own folly caused me to be captured."

"You but ran to the assistance of your father. That were a natural thing to do. And now, I must leave your gracious hospitality. It is time for me to be elsewhere."

Thundering hoofs! Wild cries! In from the highway swept Sergeant Juan Cassara and his troopers, and the *caballeros* and men of San Diego de Alcala were with them.

IV

INTO the night the cavalcade had ridden, along the dusty highway, to turn into a side road after a time, where the going was slower, and make for the scene of the tragedy.

But, some twelve miles from San Diego de Alcala, they met a carriage rolling toward the town. In the carriage was Don Juan Sandoval, a man of parts, starting a trip of business to San Juan Capistrano.

He heard their wild tale, and laughed.

"'Tis a falsehood!" he cried. "I left the *hacienda* of Don Pedro but a short time ago. I dined with him and his charming daughter. There has been no trouble. It is a mistake —else a trick of some sort."

SERGEANT JUAN CASSARA swore. The men began muttering. They remembered that the native who had ridden the mule was a total stranger to them.

"A trick—" Cassara began. Then he shouted, pointed.

All turned to look. Far away, a red glow tinged the sky. It grew in volume.

"The town is afire," somebody shouted.

"To horse!" Cassara bellowed. "Follow me!"

Back toward the town they rode, not sparing their mounts. Mile after mile they covered, some dropping behind as the pace began telling. Over the last hill they swept, to see the leaping flames and the billows of black smoke rolling up against the moon.

Then it became a race, with an infuriated sergeant leading the way, a sergeant who feared that he had erred in being led away. To the inn they dashed, some to spring from their saddles, the sergeant shouting a demand for a meaning to this, the stragglers galloping across the plaza and joining the others as rapidly as possible.

Men barked the news at the sergeant. In the midst of their howls he caught one word: El Torbellino.

"So that rogue hath done this!" Cassara cried. He happened to glance through the open door of the inn.

"He is there! El Torbellino is in the inn! Capture him!" he shrieked.

There was no time for explanations, no time for Lazaga and his daughter, or any of the others, to tell what El Torbellino had done, how he had punished the rogues from the sea. *Fray* Felipe tried to speak, but none would listen. The Whirlwind dashed through the kitchen and into the night, caught his horse and vaulted to saddle, and was away in a cloud of flying dust and sand.

They pursued, but their horses were jaded after their long run. Back to them floated the mocking laugh of the Whirlwind. At a safe distance, he stopped his horse, knowing that the troopers were returning to help fight the flames.

He rode back, down into the coulée behind the inn, and stripped the gear from his horse, to hide it among the rocks. He slapped the big black on his rump, and the animal trotted away, to go to the pasture where he belonged. He was Lazaga's, this big black, and men thought he could not be ridden. Only the Whirlwind had made friends with him and taught him to obey a master's commands.

And now the Whirlwind stripped off his cloak and mask, and his weapons, and hid them safely among the rocks also. And it was Pedro Garzo, man-of-all-work at the inn, who slipped through the shadows and got to the plaza, to mingle with the others as they sought to stop the progress of the flames.

A little later, he was at the inn again.

"SO you ran, eh?" Lazaga stormed at him. "A brave *señor*, you!"

"I do not like pirates," Pedro Garzo said.

"You ran like a craven. You hid with the others in the dark. You did nothing to protect me, or my property, or my daughter."

"Others ran also," Pedro Garzo said.

"That has nothing to do with you. Get wine for these brave troopers. Let us all drink a toast to that rogue, El Torbellino, who, for some strange reason, was of service to us tonight. Even you may drink this once, craven one!"

But Pedro Garzo managed to evade drinking. A gentleman does not drink a toast to himself.

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The Trail of the

The Breath-Taking True Experience Story of An Intrepid Adventurer Balked by Grim Treachery!

By LIEUT. JONATHAN DALY

CHAPTER I

The Chinese Officer

I FIRST ran across the trail in a hospital, two months after leaving the Grand Chaco behind me. As souvenirs of that continual war I had collected two bullet-holes and a case of malaria, and I was certainly in no condition to go racing off to China the way I did.

The doctors told me so and my friends threw up their hands in horror, but that didn't deter me. The urge was too strong. I felt that if I didn't go, I'd be eaten up by the gnawing determination to find the red diamonds of Kubla Khan.

I had come across an original manuscript of Marco Polo's. The man that lent it to me did not know its value. And even when I told him, he laughed at me. I had plenty of money and I didn't need his help, but even so, I had him lined up for a cut in the event of success.

Most copies of Marco Polo's Travels leave out a great deal. They have to because it is difficult to decipher, and even more difficult to translate. But, for my own amusement, I had been working on it for almost a month, while laid up.

Halfway through the volume I read a paragraph about a chest of fabulous red stones which glittered "like the sun through red stained quartz." Stones which would cut even metal. At first I thought he meant rubies. Then, on further description, I understood that he could mean diamonds and only diamonds. Red diamonds.

and skips car; write details and
BB 45 N. Y.
DO assist eye and ear, pri
pital. A 638 Times Downtown.
EXPEDITION requires services of fifteen young men. Must be proficient in use of rifle and automatic pistol, or other arms. Doctor's certificate of health required. Must be able to ride. Duration — four months to a year. Nominal pay and share. Expedition accredited. Address Daly. B82.
HAIRDRESSER—Excellent position
B 238 Times.
JUNIOR EXECUTIVE, active man not

The advertisement which started it all. An answer to it uncovered Lieutenant Jonathan Daly—and the remarkable story he tells here

The things were worth millions! Many millions!

My appetite for the unusual was whetted by that paragraph. I made a note of it for later reference, and it was a good thing that I did. Otherwise I might never have connected it with another, later, item.

Further on in the book, the famous traveler stated that the beliefs of the Asiatics were scarcely understandable to Western minds. He

A Fateful Expedition into the Depths of China

Red Diamonds

Truth is Stranger Than Fiction!

I fired between my pony's ears at a man who blocked the way

to Unearth a Fabulous Fortune of Ancient Days!

stated further that his host, the Emperor of Asia, Kubla Khan, had requested that a chest of glittering red stones be buried with him to light his way to heaven and to serve as offerings to the gods.

Marco Polo, in his painstaking way, had covered years in the writing of his book. The two remarks were far apart in inscription—months, perhaps.

Suddenly I saw the light. I sat up straight in bed, gripping the tattered pages in both hands, shivering with excitement. I was wholly unconscious of my weakened condition, wholly forgetful of the Chaco. I saw only one thing. A chest of red diamonds buried in the grave of Kubla Khan!

I threw the covers back and yelled for my clothes. If Kubla Khan's grave were still intact, it meant that a fortune in rare stones had lain untouched for centuries! And I meant to be the first man there, whether I was sick or well.

AN hour later I was in a telegraph station writing a cable to Jim Lange in China. I used a code book that five of us carried. Jim Lange and the other three had been with me in South America, and we had promised when we separated that when anything good turned up, we would let the one nearest to the scene know. As luck would have it, Jim Lange was in Peiping.

I had no qualms about setting the whole thing down baldly. No one else would ever know what I wrote. Besides, the code was so condensed that the entire message, including the address, only took eight words.

I told Jim to get a caravan of camels together and to assemble a company of soldiers, and I knew that he would.

Bolstered by excitement, I flew across the continent and sailed from Seattle. Eighteen days later, I was in Kobe, Japan, negotiating a passage on a tub of rust across the Yellow Sea. Five days after that, I was in the Gulf of Campechi, watching the squat concrete forts loom up on the horizon. That evening, I stood outside the railway station at Taku, awaiting the doubtful arrival of a train to Peiping, China.

A COLD bitter wind was sweeping down from the Gobi, hundreds of miles to the north. Curls of yellow dust swooped around the station's brick corners. Beggars tugged at the skirt of my trench coat, whining for pennies. Soldiers lounged against their baggage, stoically waiting for the train.

I asked the station agent, a wizened Chinese, when the train would come.

"Right away," he said glibly. "Maybe tomorrow morning. Maybe next month. Bandits bad near Tientsin." That was all I could get out of him.

If you've ever been in that hole they call Taku, you'll understand what I was up against. I was racked with excitement. In spite of the wind I was sweating. And in spite of the sweat I felt that someone was pouring ice water down my spine. Malaria leaves you that way.

There were no hotels. The station was so filthy that a man couldn't find a place to lie down, but even so, at midnight, I was so tired that I was almost ready to flop in the middle of the platform, coolies and beggars notwithstanding.

It was then that the young Chinese officer in the grey overcoat approached me. It was dark and I couldn't see his face. But by the light from the station window he could see that I was an American.

He asked me if I wanted to go to a hotel. He said that he had just received word from up-country that the train would not be there until

late the next afternoon. He looked at me more closely.

"Whassa matter? You blong sick?"

"I'm all right," I said. "Where's your hotel?"

I let him lead me across the tracks toward a cluster of lights which appeared to be the main part of the ten-house town. When we were a hundred yards away from the station, I could see him only by the green light of a switch.

Then he whirled on me. His stature seemed to double. His hand darted out and caught at my trench coat. I should have been prepared for that, but I was not. Weak and cold and tired, it took me an instant to collect my wits. And that instant was enough for him. His right hand snapped toward my shirt pockets. Something thin and flat and square came away with a rending of cloth.

His left fist smashed me in the mouth, and I staggered back, trying to keep my balance, tripping over the ties. The whole thing took place in a split second. Then he was running, a vague, flitting shadow in the night.

I DROPPED to my knees and clawed at the side pockets in my artillery boots. Two .25 automatics were there. I jerked both of them out and emptied them as fast as I could pull the triggers.

But I knew I hadn't hit him. I knew he'd gotten away and that there was little use in following. I knew also that I'd meet him some other place.

Crouching in the dark, I felt of my pockets to see what was gone. I searched slowly at first. Then faster. Then frantically. My code book! He had gotten it!

The wind was cold on my teeth. I was swearing in four languages. In a few minutes I heard running feet and saw the sweep of lanterns coming toward me.

I emptied the two automatics at the fleeing man

The French colonial troops were swarming down from their barracks, called out by the fourteen shots I had fired. I didn't want to meet the French, and I had been a fool for firing at all.

Another sound clashed with the voices and pounding boots. The train was whistling through the yards down the track on which I stood. I ran toward it. An officer with a flashlight howled at me to stop, but I kept on. The engine clattered past me. Then a car. The train slowed for the station, and I swung aboard.

In a compartment I reloaded the

guns and shoved them into my boot pockets. I drew up my coat collar and slumped down in the seat. If they saw me through the windows, they didn't come in. They knew that it was useless to search that train, and, besides, the railway is touchy about foreign troops. I sent a porter out after my luggage before we pulled out.

At dawn I was watching my rickscha boy negotiate the traffic through the great north gate of Peiping.

CHAPTER II

The Dead Priest

MY space is limited here. I can only cover the high points. Accordingly, then, I must pick up the thread of narrative five days after my arrival in the red-walled, dust-carpeted Peiping.

Jim Lange was at the Hotel du Nord. The du Pekin and the Wagon-Lit were preferable, perhaps, but they were too much in evidence. And in the Orient one can never tell who watches.

Jim Lange was about forty, but he looked like a youngster. His hair was grey around his temples, giving the only clue to his age. He was eternally smiling, ever polite, always the Continental gentleman—and he was faster on the draw than any other man I have ever known.

He was upset by the theft of my code book, because it coincided with the theft of my cablegram from his own room. It was evident that someone had guessed our mission and was determined either to stop us or to get there first.

It was quite possible that the man who had looted Jim's room and the one who rifled my pockets were one and the same. I favored that idea. Just how anyone could have gotten wind of the thing was beyond me.

But our expedition was suddenly common knowledge. The fact amazed us not a little, and it amazes me even yet. News travels fast in the Orient. There is something like an underground telegraph which carries its tidings far. Peiping, of all the Oriental cities, is probably the worst in that respect.

FIVE days, then, after my arrival at the du Nord, I was surprised to receive a card from the blue-gowned bellboy. There was nothing on the linen rectangle but a number. That was all. Just "1."

I nodded to bring the caller up. There was nothing else to do. This mysterious number was certainly there on a mission of importance.

In a few seconds, "1" was standing in the hallway, rapping on my door with the handle of his cane. He was a thin, small man with a smooth, unmoving face. He was young, but he looked older than he was. Only his eyes, blue and twinkling, gave him away.

He came in and sat down, but he did not speak until I had poured out a Scotch and soda for him. Holding this before him, he lifted it.

"To your expedition," he said, smiling.

I slapped my glass down on the table and stared at him.

"Don't be alarmed," said "1," sipping his drink. "I'm not after Kubla Khan's grave, and I don't indulge in coffin robbing. If you are surprised that I know of your mission, let it suffice to say that everyone in Peiping knows."

If everyone in Peiping knew—I should have called the thing off. I should have quit hands down. But I guess I'm too bull-headed for that.

Studying him further, I leaned forward.

"You're British Intelligence. That right?"

"Right-ho," said "1."

"Then what business of yours is my expedition?"

He laughed, evidently pleased with his role.

"Don't be alarmed, Daly." He pulled a pile of identification papers out of his pocket and spread them out like a hand of cards before my eyes.

"All right," I said. "I guessed it."

"My business with you is prompted by a desire to be of help. And also —well, one must have a little something in return for service."

"You mean," said I, "that you want me to bribe you?"

"I beg your pardon, Daly, but the British Intelligence does not accept bribes."

"Sorry."

"Quite all right, old chap. Quite. The matter I had in mind was of a rather secret nature, but your reputation with the British has always been of the highest."

"Always." I smiled.

"For that reason, I'm giving you help because I want help. Do we understand each other?" When I had nodded, he continued. "We want information from the other side of the Wall. Not very much. Just enough to keep us informed of the movements of the Mikado's troops above Jehol. It is a rather simple task, but, unfortunately, the last three men we sent up there have failed to return.

"YOU are a good blind, that's all," continued "1." "I would like to send an Intelligence officer with you. He will guide you across the country, and he will help you if you should happen to cross the paths of any war lords up there. He would have complete authority to grant you anything the British have to offer. He would do his own work on the side, and you need never bother with it."

"All right," I said. "Send him over to the hotel tonight with credentials. We are leaving rather early in the morning. All our camels are in line and we have about thirty fighting men who are to meet us outside the city. It's agreed."

He left, then, and it was the last I ever saw of him.

AT three o'clock, Jim came in and I told him what had happened. But he didn't seem to be listening to me. His blue eyes were restless, and he kept staring out into the alley below our window as though he wished I'd hurry up and finish what I had to say so that he could get his word in.

"I was up to the Hall of Classics this afternoon," Jim merely said, when I had finished.

Something in the way he said it told me that he had found a clue. The Hall of Classics is not a hall at all, but a large courtyard filled with obelisks or something of that sort on which the sayings of Confucious have been written.

"I found an old Chinaman," continued Jim.

"He was in there studying to get a higher clerk rating."

Jim always liked to do the dramatic thing and so he left his remarks hanging in mid-air while he poured and downed a drink to wash the Peiping dust out of his throat.

"This old Chinaman was wise," continued Jim. "And for no reason at all, he turned around to me and told me that the chart I sought would be found in the Lama temple."

"It's a trap," I stated.

"No. I don't know why, but it isn't. This whole town knows what we're up to and the old fellow was just fishing for a good-sized tip, which I gave him."

"You're crazy," I snapped. "That's the only sure way they could get us!"

"Keep calm," replied Jim, unruffled. "I've been in the country longer than you have and I speak the lingo. I know a straight Chinee when I see him, and this old boy

was one. He was a clerk and they can't afford to lie. One fib and their heads go off."

"One slip and our heads disappear, too," I said.

"Admitted," agreed Jim Lange. "But it's worth the chance. After all, our leads are pretty sparse."

"They are that. All right, as long as you say so, I'll go over to the Lama temple with you and—say! The Lama temple is closed and has been closed for the last three years. Am I right?"

He nodded, knowingly. "That's the point. We'll have to scale the wall and get in somehow. But if I were you, I'd stay here. It's liable to be—"

"Forget it! I'm as well as you are." Which, of course, was a lie.

AT five o'clock we left the hotel and took rickshas down toward the Forbidden City and Coal Hill. Under any other conditions, I would have drawn the line. But the red diamonds were blazing magnets which drew us into incredible complications. They robbed us of our caution and stilled whatever misgivings we might have felt. We were ready to do anything to gain the possession of those stones.

Anything!

The Lama temple was grey and foreboding through the dusk. The grimy walls were frowning and rough and the gates were barred shut, nailed by the order of authorities. Too much evil and unrest had exuded from this place before it had been closed. Too many mysteries had surrounded it. And it was whispered that strange rites were still conducted behind those bars—that there were secret tunnels underneath the walls, entered from the grave mounds on Coal Hill.

We stopped before the gates. Venders tried to catch our eyes, but they would not come close to us—would not approach those high, dull gates before which we stood. I thought I caught a furtive movement in the shadows across the street, but I was not sure. Besides, my nerves were jumpy.

If this were a trap, we would have to fight out of it with lead. And in that case Peiping would be too hot for us. But I was amazed at the certainty of knowledge which was suddenly seeping through me. I seemed to know that this was the place our quest should start.

And then Jim was pulling at my sleeve and we were hidden in a jog of the wall, pressing back against the grey stone, waiting. No one came after us. The sounds on the street were the same. Assured, I dug my fingers into the crevices of the wall and started up. Jim helped me by shoving on my bootsoles.

At the top, I did not linger. A man makes a plain silhouette even against a black sky. I threw myself over like a pole-vaulter. I seemed to fall for a hundred feet. But when my boots jarred against the stone, I knew it had been fifteen at the most. Jim thudded down beside me and we stood there in the blackness, peering through the darkness of the courtyard.

THE silence was tense. This place, supposed to be deserted, was filled with moving shadows. Perhaps they were caused by the waving of trees in the wind, but however that might be, my heart was pounding with a dull, throbbing beat. Death waited there across the yard. I could feel it.

We walked forward on cat feet, watching every movement. My boots sounded like cannon shots across the stone. Ahead of us something which was neither wind nor shadow moved.

I sprinted ahead. The movement was quick. Soft footfalls hurried away. I dived off in pursuit. Jim

was behind me, starting off in another direction, but I was so intent on my quarry that I did not notice. If this were a Lama priest, then, perhaps, I could persuade him to divulge the information I craved. If it were another—perhaps the soldier of Taku—then I had a score to settle. The big butt of a .45 was solid against my palm.

JIM was lost in the maze of buildings. My lungs felt like hot coals in my chest. The man I followed suddenly turned and stood calmly waiting for me. I could not see his face, nor more than the outline of his body, but I sensed a smile on his lips.

I slacked my pace, juggled the gun and came nearer.

"Whassa matter?" squeaked my quarry. "You allasamee *loco*, huh?"

I stopped. The muzzle of my gun traveled down. I felt that this must be a priest. Then suddenly I remembered the voice. It was that of the soldier of Taku!

I jumped aside. But he did not shoot. Instead, he whirled and ran toward a blank wall.

"Stop!" I shouted.

But he kept on. I threw the gun up waist high and sent a snapped shot after him. The report rolled through the courtyard like mighty thunder.

The flash of powder had blinded me for an instant. When I could see again, I sprinted forward.

Where the blank wall had been there was a ray of light. Then it was gone! The courtyard, bound in by solid stone, was empty save for myself!

I gasped. Approaching the wall I felt of the rock. There were no holes which might betray a hidden door. Nothing but blank stone. My soldier friend had been swallowed up!

Then I heard Jim yelling for me and I went back It was a long way, and I was surprised that I had run so far. But I found Jim.

He was standing over a bundle of something, looking down at it.

"We were a little too late," he said, simply.

I looked at the bundle. It was a man—a dead man. A Lama priest whose robes were drenched with warm blood and whose hands were stretched out in front of him, clutching at unyielding stone. From his back protruded the handle of a knife —a bayonet.

"Too late," Jim repeated. "If we had been here a little sooner, we might have—"

"Wait," I said. "This was a trap. But they expected that only you would come. Two was one too many for them. They thought to put you out of the way so that they could deal with me alone—and they know that I'm not in exactly top-notch physical condition. That man I chased was waiting for you."

Jim nodded and then kneeled down beside the corpse. Gingerly he rolled the thing over on its back. The greasy yellow robes were wet and sticky. I saw something shiny in the priest's left hand. In an instant I had recovered it.

"A Buddha," I said. "He died with his idol."

Jim nodded again and took the thing from me. It was small, exquisitely carved, from ivory stained brown by countless ages. Jim handed it back. But I was shaking with exhaustion and excitement. I dropped it to the stone.

THERE was a dull pop. I stared down at it. "Why—why, my God, Jim, the thing's hollow!"

He scooped it up once more and felt of the base. He shoved his fingernails into every conceivable crevice, into the creases which outlined the fingers and the toes, into the eyes and nose and mouth. But

the image was still smiling, still fat, still intact. In his anxiety, Jim crushed it between his thumb and index finger.

Abruptly, the bottom dropped out of it and—across the flagged yard rolled a thing which was as bright as blood, as brilliant as flame. A red diamond!

CHAPTER III

The Death of a Spy

AT the hotel we went immediately to our room. The Buddha in my pocket felt as though it weighed a thousand pounds —every pound white hot. When I entered the room I was so busy with my own speculations that it took me two or three seconds to realize that another man was there.

He was thin, short, pink-cheeked. He was young, and from his clothes and expression one would have judged him to be a casual tourist. I had scarcely taken in his build and expression when I saw something else. A thin line of red across the side of his throat.

He got up off the bed and set down his glass.

"Oh, hullo there. You're Daly, aren't you?"

"Yes," I nodded. "And you're—?"

"The man Number One sent." He reached into his coat pocket and brought out a packet of papers, from which he extracted a note.

"This," said the note, "is Greg McDonald. He will help you." It was signed with the numeral one.

I shoved out my hand and he took it. His eyes were level and coolly appraising, for all his young smile. I glanced over his other papers and then introduced him to Jim.

It was Jim who noticed the blood on the floor.

"Where the devil did that come from?" he demanded.

The visitor glanced at it and shrugged. Then he pointed at my hands which were stained red. He grinned.

"I might do well to ask you chaps about it also."

"A dead priest," I said.

"A dead spy," replied Greg McDonald. He went over to the window, threw it wide open and stepped back, pointing down at the cobblestoned alley.

We were only about five feet from the ground and I swung through and dropped beside the huddled form. The man had landed on his face and the sight was not pleasant. The skin was yellow, the eyes black. The man wore a grey overcoat and carried a small saber. I had a feeling that it was my soldier from Taku.

GREG McDONALD, leaning from the window, shrugged again when I looked up.

"He was here, hiding when I came," he explained. "He tackled me and scratched me with his nails. Sorry, but I had to kill him, and after he fell out the window, I was darned if I'd lift him back through again. You know how it is."

I climbed back.

"This means we'll have to get out of the city, tonight. If we wait until tomorrow, the authorities will get on to it."

"Oh," said McDonald, "you needn't hurry. I'm sure I can straighten it out with the powers that be."

"No," I demurred, "we can't risk that. We've found the clue we wanted." I took the Buddha out of my pocket and threw it on the bed. Then I pulled the red diamond out of my pocket and let it blaze in the light.

"My heavens!" cried McDonald, jostled out of his British calm. "You —you—where did you get that?"

"That would be telling," said Jim, softly.

"But—" stammered McDonald, "I—I never saw anything so beautiful as that thing. You mean to tell me you know where there are others?"

"Perhaps," said Jim. "And I agree with John. We've got to get out of here tonight. There's no time for delay. Somebody else is on this trail. They killed the priest and searched him. And they missed the Buddha in their rush. We found it. And—" he stopped, staring at the back of the small, grinning idol.

Jim scooped it up, devouring it with his eyes. Then he sighed and looked up at the ceiling as though he prayed.

"Not only a red diamond," he murmured. "Not only a red diamond, but also a chart." He passed it to me. "See that series of lines on the back? That one is the Great Wall. You can guess at the others."

I forgot about McDonald. I forgot about the dead man outside the window. I forgot everything except the grave of Kubla Khan. Except the chest of stones which would have lit the Emperor's path to heaven.

The red diamonds were waiting for us. Up across the wall, across the plains, through the lines of warring armies, across mountains. In my palm, the Buddha smiled.

CHAPTER IV

The Stolen Buddha

OUR camels were waiting for us outside the Hataman Gate. The North Gate was, of course, the obvious point of departure, but I felt that we would stand a better chance of getting away unobserved if we used the Hataman, which was but three or four blocks from the du Nord Hotel.

The number of our beasts was great. Twenty of them. But the very number excused us from secrecy. Ostensibly we were a trading expedition moving north toward the Gobi.

My horse was a Mongolian pony and I think the breed deserves some slight mention. His nose was a sledgehammer and his eyes, small and evil, were hidden under a gigantic cowlick. His entire body was covered with long hair. He came almost to my shoulder, but my weight was nothing to him.

A month before he had been utterly untamed, but now he was fairly docile. He would only bite when your back was turned.

The saddle was of Cossack design. Two crosstrees in tandem with a leather pillow buckled down between them. The strap across the pillow is the secret of a Cossack's ability to ride standing up. He hooks his toes through the belt and the possibility of falling off is slight.

WE swung out toward Nankuo, a long line of grunting, grumbling beasts and sleepy men. The soldiers fell in on either side of us, carrying their guns in every conceivable position. They were late of several bandit armies and their weapons were everything from Manlichers to Springfields. We had nothing heavier or faster than a rifle, but with thirty-two men, we felt fairly safe from attack.

That was a mistake. A man who sells his services to the highest bidder feels no qualms about changing flags on short notice—especially when the side he first chose is losing.

Everything went smoothly for the first three days. We crossed the Wall through Nankuo Pass and struck out ahead. But on the evening of the fourth day, just after we had made camp in a slight depression of ground, I scented trouble.

Two sentries stood just on the rim of camp. They were talking in a loud sing-song and they held their rifles at port. I watched them. They

seemed to become more angry with each passing moment. Suddenly one of them struck out with a rifle butt and felled the other. The victim bounced to his feet, bayonet shimmering wickedly.

I JUMPED UP and started to run toward them. A hand restrained me. It was Jim Lange. I stopped and turned angrily, trying to shake him off.

"Don't approach them," said Jim. "That's an old ruse. They want to get you near them and then, while you're separating them, they'll turn on you and pick your pockets."

A moment later they stood back from each other and shot nervous glances in my direction. They looked sheepish. Presently they resumed their posts without a word.

That night I performed an operation in my tent. I took an indelible pencil and traced the map of the Buddha on my thigh. Then I took a jackknife and scratched the marks until they bled. It hurt like the very devil, but I knew that it was necessary. I knew also that I risked infection.

After I had finished I took a ten percent solution of iodine and smeared the square. It completely hid the lines. I knew that a little alcohol would remove the iodine so that I could read the map. It was the only thing I could do.

After that I scraped the original off the Buddha, put it back in the accustomed pocket and went to sleep. During the night I thought I heard a furtive movement in my tent, but I paid it little heed. I would have been wide awake had anyone come within three feet of my cot.

In the morning, the Buddha was gone!

But I had the map. I still have it and I will always have it until they blow taps over my six square feet of real estate. But the map is only in symbols. I alone know the meaning of the lines, know which is north, know just what the scale is. Twice, since I left China, I have been attacked. But I do not think it will happen again. It takes more than fire to bring out the scale, the orientation, and the proper lettering.

I didn't tell Jim and McDonald about it. They had enough to worry about. But I did tell them to watch the two sentries. For three days, nothing else happened. And then we reached the pass in the mountains.

CHAPTER V

Precipice of Death

ON referring to my somewhat bedraggled diary, I find that we sighted the pass at about four in the afternoon. McDonald identified it for us. He seemed to know his way through this country. He told me that it had an L twist in the middle and that tallied with my chart.

He also told me that he thought it would be better if he took a side trip that he had in mind. He didn't say what he wanted to do. Some Japanese soldiers were quartered about fifteen miles away and I expected that McDonald would gather some information there. He was very nervous as he dressed, and I didn't blame him. It isn't the pleasantest thing in the world to have to walk into a Jap encampment after dark.

He put on a brown dye and a wiry-haired wig and donned a red-tabbed, mustard-colored uniform. Then he turned his saddle blanket over and I saw that the insignia of a Jap regiment was embroidered on the reverse side.

He wanted to know where he could pick us up if he lived to tell the tale and I informed him that we would probably push right on through that night.

Young McDonald was plainly aghast.

"But, Daly! I say, old chap, but you know something might happen in there. It's bad, very bad. Some of the trail goes along the side of a precipice and the drop is better than a thousand feet in one place. You might lose several of your camels. I strictly would not advise it."

I SHOOK my head. "If anyone wants to ambush us, this is the place for it. They'd have to make an open order charge on the plain. This is the last pass we go through. And I don't want the sun up there showing us up as targets. Get it?"

"You mean you'd rather be attacked in the dark?" gasped McDonald.

"Why not? Only sound will tell them that we're coming and the precipice won't make any difference. They'll think twice—whoever they are—before they go rough-and-tumble along a five foot ledge. It will all be volley fire and that isn't so effective."

"Why, you speak as though you really thought you would be ambushed," said McDonald.

"I think we will be. Some of these soldiers aren't shooting square with us." I jerked my thumb at a grizzled Tartar sergeant. "Among others, I think he's against us. That would be very bad—a mutiny in the pass. But at night—well, you see, they'll think of their own hides, too.

"And another thing. Men have been hanging around our fires who do not belong to us. They thought I did not see them, but I did."

Greg McDonald sighed, threw a foot into his stirrup and went up. The Mongol pony snorted and sidestepped quickly. McDonald, a perfect Japanese officer, raised his hand to us in salute, drove home the spurs and became a dwindling swirl of dust across the plain.

We camped there, resting and waiting for the moonlight I knew would come. We made camels' dung fires and boiled water for tea. The Mongolians in the party added butter to their steaming cups. I tried it and found it good.

The moon came up, twice as big as it should have been. At first it looked like a fire over the horizon's rim and then it was with us, making the plain fill itself with shadows. The pass looked like a gunsight ahead of us. At the first glimmer we started to move off.

When we had gained the entrance of the pass, I went ahead on the scout. McDonald had not told me wrong. Less than a thousand yards from the mouth, the bed of a river started to drop away like a falling bomb. At half a mile, the cut was merely a deep black hole. The path went up because our way and the river's course parted at the L.

We started moving the camels through, and their grunted protests must have reached far. The ponies' hoofs struck fire from the flinty debris which cluttered the trail. Above us the moon filled half the gorge with light. We were in the lighted half.

A QUARTER of a mile before we got to the L, Jim worked his way up beside me.

"I don't like this a bit," he said. "They can sit over there and snipe us off. I wish we'd thought about it before."

"Too late now. Whoever it is that's messing into our business would hardly pass up such a chance as this. Even if he's just one man, he wouldn't find it hard to muster a company of loose soldiers. They'd do it for the loot alone."

I spurred ahead of the caravan. Jim dropped far behind it, urging the stragglers. That move saved our lives.

The first bullet came just as I rounded the L. It smacked stone

above my head and went whining on down the trail into the thick of the camels. Instead of drawing up, I dug in my rowels. The pony leaped ahead. At my right I could see the dark abyss. I did not know what lay ahead.

I did not know the exact plan, but before long I understood. In fact, within the next ten seconds.

Stone grumbled high up on our wall. A vague, sighing sound, doubling, tripling into crescendo until it threatened to blast me out of my already precarious saddle.

They had started an avalanche above us. Tons of rock crashed and roared down the hillside. Camels bawled. Men screamed. Bedlam broke loose behind me. I drew in and flung myself down behind my horse. There was nothing I could do. I did not know whether or not Jim was still alive and the anxiety of it made me a little sick. But I gripped the .45 and watched for another rifle flame.

LOOKING back, I saw a camel teetering near the edge. A soldier had hold of his halter, tugging at it. The shower of rocks thickened. For an instant I could see nothing for dust. Then I saw the camel start to fall. His hind quarters went first. He scrambled to regain his footing. The soldier fought to free himself of the rein. The camel rocked back. Darkness and the sound of hammering rocks swallowed them and their screams.

A gun flared yellow-white ahead. I shot straight into the blaze. A man pitched out from the cover and fell, turning over and over through a thousand feet. A .45 slug takes them that way.

The avalanche quieted to a fitful rumble. The moon was higher now and I could see that the trail, wonder of wonders, was still intact. Most of the debris had bounced off an overhang, but not high enough to miss men and camels.

I did not care so badly about the camels. They were becoming excess baggage. They had served their purpose as a blind. And after the traitorous tricks the men had pulled, I could not feel too badly about them. But where was Jim?

AT last I saw him. Running low, leading his terrified pony, he sprinted across the cleared zone and came up to me.

"They're all gone!" he cried.

I knew it before he told me, but the utterance of the knowledge gave me a far worse shock than the witnessing of it had.

"Get on and ride!" I yelled. "They're all around us!"

We could have been clearly seen in the moonlight. But we were going fast along that precarious ledge and we were a difficult target to hit. The thunder of hoofs drowned the sounds of shots behind us. Once I caught the splinter of a bullet against rock above me. They were shooting at us, then.

Someone stood on the trail before us. Without checking our pace, I yanked out the .45 and held it ready. I saw a rifle whip up to the level of my eyes. I fired between my pony's ears. A shadow tumbled through space, glittering when the moon struck the rifle.

Headlong down the trail we plunged, with death whispering in our ears and with death tugging at us from below. The trail leveled out under us and led away to a plateau. We were far out on the plain before we stopped. I sat with my head on my chest, breathing harder than my horse.

Jim came up and threw himself off his mount.

"Pretty tough," he said. I nodded. "Do you suppose they'll hit us again?" he asked.

I knew he merely wanted to be reassured. But I felt all gone inside.

"Sure they will. They did that just to get rid of our equipment and our armed forces. Now, they'll be able to take us without much of a fight. All we can do is to push on hard and get there before they do."

"But what about McDonald?"

"I guess he'll get along. We can't do anything for him now. Let's ride."

Jim mounted and we rode.

When dawn came we were near our destination; and when the light was good enough I took a pair of field glasses and went to a high point of land to study the plateau we had just quitted.

Everything was yellow. The mountains were craggy and harsh even in the distance, and the wind moaned through the cleft in which I lay. Never before have I seen such desolate, utterly wasted country.

FAR to the east I could see a horseman coming. Behind him, about two miles, I could see a swirl of dust which soon became a racing cavalry troop. But the troop could not see their quarry as I could.

I studied the man in the lead. At last I made out a set of red tabs and a yellow face. I knew then that it was McDonald. His eyes were set and his mouth was tight. He was riding for his life, from the looks of things.

In a few minutes he swung down into a gulch and ran along the hard rock bottom, losing his trail. When the cavalry came to the place, they galloped onward in a straight line.

Going down, I told Jim to saddle up once more. I buckled my own cinch and we rode out to the end of the gully and found McDonald. He looked about done in.

"They found out who I was," he wheezed, tiredly. "You can't fool those little devils. They were going to skin me alive, but I got away."

Somehow, that remark about skinning him alive grated on me. I carried a tattooed chart on my leg; and for the first time it occurred to me that to get that chart, a man would have to rip off my hide.

CHAPTER VI

The Human Sacrifice

I'M sorry I cannot set down the exact formation of the land about the burial temple of Kubla Khan. If I did that, I am afraid that a topographical study of the ground would reveal the exact location. But I can tell you how it looked.

We found it with ridiculous ease, setting at the far end of a big gully. Why Kubla Khan had wanted to be buried in such a place, I did not know. I was not well enough acquainted with his history. But I believe that, in that day, the bodies of rulers were extremely valuable. So much so, in fact, that armies invaded territories to exhume and steal the coffins of kings. For one king to possess the body of another was much like possessing his scepter.

Accordingly, Kubla Khan had so decreed, I suppose, that his grave would never be molested. He had caused himself to be buried in the most hidden part of his kingdom. And a man as great as Kubla Khan could be sure that his wishes would be carried out even after death.

I had expected a pagoda of some sort, but instead we found that the hut had a flat roof. It was all of stone, and the men who built it had been certain that their work would endure for centuries.

But they did not build the entire tomb above the ground. Most of it lies far below. I doubt if it would even be noticed from an airplane, for it is the color of the terrain—yellow.

I'm afraid that the sight of the

place made me a little crazy. I jumped off my horse and raced pell-mell for the low, open door, pulling at the flashlight which hung from my belt. Jim called to me to wait, but I dashed on ahead, completely disregarding him. The thought of red diamonds—a chest of red diamonds—was too much for me.

Ahead of me there might lie an ambush. Ahead there might be age-old traps. I'm not especially a dare-devil, but I didn't seem to care. I plunged through the opening and shot on my light.

I HAD expected to see a room, perhaps a crypt, but all I saw was a black tunnel stretching into the bowels of the earth. My feet carried me down, but I felt as though I floated in mid-air.

The place was odorous with age and as I went down the passage I could hear the ceaseless drip of water ahead of me. The walls became damp, covered with a green slime. I traveled far. There were two tunnels there, and at the fork I hesitated long enough to realize that Jim had not followed me. But I supposed that he would be along as soon as he had hidden the horses.

Taking the right branch I found that I was once more going down. Steps had been cut into the stone and the descent was easy, though steep. Abruptly I found myself on the threshold of a large room.

My flashlight played over the walls and then came to rest on the portion farthest away from me. Chills raced up and down my back as I saw that sight. The thing was too utterly real, too terrible, too gruesome.

It was an idol, a war god, squatting on massive stone haunches, watching me out of glittering red eyes. He looked as though he were about to speak. His jaw was loose, as though it could be moved. Before him lay a platform of stone, with grooves running diagonally down its sides.

I knew what that was. I had seen blocks like that in the Naya country, in Ankor Vat, in the South Pacific. It was a sacrificial altar and the grooves were made for the hot, running blood of human victims.

At last I tore my eyes away from the war god. A passage lay to the idol's left and I took it, continuing to travel down. How far this lies below the surface, I have no way of knowing. It would require a better civil engineer than I am to determine its twisting depth.

The darkness seemed to thicken. Silence reigned. The clanking of my boot heels on stone seemed a desecration of the tomb. Then another, larger room opened before me. Its ceiling was high, almost beyond the range of my flashlight. The floor was level and moss grown.

In the center of the stones sat a rectangle of stone. I knew then that I had found the tomb of Kubla Khan, lost to the world for centuries!

PERHAPS the crypt had at one time been decorated with crossed swords, a shield, spears. But these were only piles of black rust now. Nothing was left but the imperishable stone.

With trembling hands I tore at the head blocks. They came away with surprising ease. I threw them aside. I dislodged the slabs, unconscious that I ripped the nails from my fingers. But I did not have far to go.

A coffin had lain there at one time, but it was gone. The body of a mighty Emperor had been there, but dust had claimed it back. Save for a few bands of copper and a golden ring, the vault was empty!

At first I thought that the red diamonds might lie beneath the crypt, but the floor was obviously undisturbed. It was solid rock. I searched

along the walls, looking for a niche, but there was none.

I stopped in the center of the room, staring at the vault, completely baffled. This, certainly, was going to be more than a one-man job. I thought that I had better find McDonald and Jim. Suiting action to thought, I sprinted up the ramp toward the room of the war god.

It is difficult to write about what I found there. Even the thought of it still makes me feel sick and weary. I remember that I stood for some minutes, unable to take my eyes from the gruesome spectacle.

Jim Lange lay there. On the sacrificial altar. His throat had been cut; his shirt was tattered and soggy where the killer had plunged a savage knife innumerable times. The blood ran down the grooves to the floor and collected there in black puddles.

I had no idea how it had happened. Perhaps the Japs had been there, waiting for us. Perhaps the tomb had guards, after all these centuries. Perhaps—well, there was no use speculating about it. Jim Lange was dead on a sacrificial block and all the deduction in the world could not bring him back to life.

I GUESS I went a little crazy then. I don't know what I said. I only know that I dragged Jim's body from that terrible bed and that I found the red diamonds!

They were concealed in the altar. Any slight movement of the top caused the entire surface to raise up as though on springs. My flashlight hammered into a cauldron of red, glowing diamonds.

I laid Jim Lange on the floor and crossed his arms over his chest. Then I went back to the altar and ran my hands through the glittering wealth. I was stunned, out on my feet. But the diamonds did not seem to represent money or any of the things that a man can buy. They had meant the death of Jim Lange.

I scooped up a double handful and threw them from me. They scattered out like seeds, rolling drops of red along the floor. Some of them were sticky where the blood had leaked through the cracks.

Everything must have gone blank at that point, for I remember nothing more until I got outside. McDonald was standing by the horses.

CHAPTER VII

Before the War God

BRACING myself against the stone doorway, I stared at him. The sight of his familiar face jerked me out of a period a thousand years old and brought me back to the twentieth century. He steadied me. "What's happened?" he asked.

"Jim is dead," I said as calmly as possible.

"Dead? But—but how can he be dead? He left me just a moment ago."

"He's dead, all right," I repeated, dully. "And I found the diamonds. Do you want to see them?"

His eyes lit up. He walked quickly toward me, past me and down the tunnel. I pointed the way for him with my flashlight and walked slowly after him. He took the right-hand bend and then stopped. I threw my flash on the war god and he gasped.

"They're over there in the altar," I said almost without interest. "They must have been set there as a sacrifice to their god."

McDonald did not seem to notice Jim. Somehow, the lack of interest in the body of my friend enraged me. It was like a blow, somehow. I might have argued that McDonald was used to such things, but I was almost past the point of reason.

McDonald knelt quickly beside the altar and ran his fingers through the

glittering mass. He seemed to be talking to himself—or perhaps talking to the diamonds. He looked up at me—and in that instant I was jerked out of my lethargy by the sudden knowledge that McDonald was utterly mad!

"They're mine," he drooled. His face was no longer boyish. It was hard and old and vicious.

"Snap out of it!" I shouted. "We're two white men alone in this confounded country. We'll never get out alive unless we stick together! For God's sake, man, don't look at me that way!"

"They're mine," he said and then he repeated it over and over with the monotonous intonation of a chant. Behind him the war god's red eyes were glowing coals. There was a similarity between the two. The droop of the mouth—McDonald turned his back on me and stared into the mass of brilliance.

And then the war god spoke! The jaw moved and the eyes seemed to increase their fire.

"They're his! Go before you die!"

I STEPPED backward. I could feel the hair raise on the back of my neck. I was stripped of every civilized vestige in that instant. I was a savage standing before a powerful, ancient god. And the god's word was law!

But the trick was not destined to work. My flashlight sagged and, in sagging, caught and held a blue glimmer of steel in McDonald's hand. I shot my fingers to the automatics in my boot tops, but I was not quick enough. Flame lanced out from McDonald's waistline. The slug caught me in the left side, just under the heart. But I was conscious of no pain. Only a terrifying numbness.

My fingers found the automatic butts. I straightened. The flashlight rolled along the floor, forgotten, but it did its work well. It rested the icy beam square on McDonald's twisted face, blinding him.

I did not know that he was blinded, then, though I know it now. I only knew that I had found the killer. Firing with a slow, deliberate speed, I blotted out his face. Left gun, right gun, left gun, right gun. I suppose it would be called murder, but he was the man who had killed Jim.

McDonald sagged, dead at the first shot. Limply he sprawled across the grooves, pouring his own life's stream into them. Above him the war god's eyes were thin and brittle. Left gun, right gun. The dead body leaped and quivered under the impact of slugs.

Then my magazines were empty and the click of the empty chambers was my signal to crumple. But even after I fell flat on my face, I managed to inch forward to make sure that McDonald was dead. I can remember how his face looked to this day.

After that everything was blurred. I must have bandaged the hole in my side, though I do not remember doing so. I must have dragged myself out to a pony and somehow I must have mounted. Later I found three diamonds in my pockets. That surprises me, because I could hardly have realized that I would need their wealth back in civilization.

One scene will always be with me. I wake at night to find that it hovers above my face. The scene of that room, drowned in powder smoke, with the war god's red eyes glaring through the curling haze!

WHAT I knew instinctively then, I know for certain now. McDonald was Jim's murderer.

McDonald was not McDonald at all, but some renegade. In some way he had caught word of Jim's activities in hiring troops and buying camels. He had evidently followed Jim

back to his hotel and had then rifled the room, finding and taking the code message.

Knowing that he had to have a key, he found out who I was—probably in Jim's correspondence—and then came down to Taku to wait for my arrival. When I came, he had no great difficulty in picking me out. Americans are few at that port and one can spot a tourist.

This renegade had disguised himself as a Chinese officer. He had attacked me solely for the purpose of getting the code key which he knew I must carry. Why he did not take Jim's I don't know. Maybe Jim kept his in a safer place than I did.

But my main reason for knowing it was "McDonald," came from the fact that the Chinese officer struck me with a fist. Chinese never use their fists.

McDonald was also the old Chinaman at the Hall of Classics. He wanted Jim to go to the Lama temple because he thought that Jim would go alone and that he could be killed there. Evidently, "McDonald" had but very little money. He had obviously contracted with the Lama priest to obtain the Buddha.

Unable to pay for it in cash, "McDonald" killed the priest and then tried to find the Buddha. But the statue in the priest's hand was not easily seen and we had come upon "McDonald" as he started to look for it. He made his getaway through a passage which I could not find.

WHEN we got back to the hotel, "McDonald" was waiting for us. He had found the real British agent there, had killed him, and had thrown the body out of the window, after dressing it in the Chinese uniform and coloring the face. Of course, the renegade had taken the officer's papers. The scar on "McDonald's" throat had been made by my bullet earlier in the evening.

Then, "McDonald" left us just before the attack. Wanting us to believe that he was a real agent, he dressed himself as a Japanese officer. He had stolen the Buddha, discovered that the map had been erased from it. He knew, therefore, that he had to kill us to get it, and he did not want to fight fairly. Hence, the ambush by which he rid himself of his agents among our men that he could no longer use.

But, unfortunately for "McDonald," he had run across a patrol of Japanese cavalry and had had to ride for his life.

He had killed Jim while I was below ground, and he had intended to kill me just as soon as he was led to the red diamonds. He tried to scare me out by making the idol talk —a ventriloquist's trick—but, failing that, he had had to shoot me.

Well, no matter now. My only regret is for the real McDonald. We left him, unknowing, cursing him, stabbed to death in a filthy alley of Peiping.

I ARRIVED at a port of the Yellow Sea with the aid of two peasants. I don't know how they kept me alive during the trip, but they did, and I paid them well for it. I stayed there in a hospital, getting well.

At first the British were hostile. They tried to hang the murder of the real McDonald upon me; and I could not send them to the temple of Kubla Khan. I wanted to go back there myself. They compromised by sending me out of the country.

It's all patched up now, and I can go back. Perhaps Number "1" had something to do with it.

Most of the money I received for the three red diamonds has been spent, now. I shall go back this year, winter though it is. But this time I am not trusting Chinese soldiers. I have already recruited a company of fighting Americans!

World

Captured by Mysterious Denizens of an Asteroid, Ralph Owens and Jack Clark Are Pitted Against the Mighty Power of Weird Forces of Destruction!

A Novelette of the Future

By RAY CUMMINGS

Author of "The Girl in the Golden Atom," etc.

CHAPTER I

"The Earth Is Menaced!"

"I SENT for you, Jack," Professor Owen said, "because I think that the earth is menaced."

Jack Clark, reporter of the *American Press,* started across the professor's dim, shadowy library. Owen was leaning forward in his chair intently, his thin face drawn.

"What do you mean by that?" Clark demanded.

"I mean a menace from space. I think that—last night—weird beings from another world landed upon earth. I have a statement to make

of Doom

The little tentacle arms flailed; the bent and useless little legs kicked against Clark in abject terror

to the press—scientific facts to back it."

The aged Professor Owen's voice became solemn, and more grim than ever.

"This attack—if it should come, Jack, it could devastate the earth."

It sent a shiver through Clark to hear a calm, precise man of science make such a statement. Weird beings from another planet attacking the earth! He shuddered at the gruesome thought.

It was midnight—the night of August 10th. Clark had received an urgent summons to Professor Owen's home on a mountain-top in New Hampshire. He had come by plane—the professor's private landing field was beside the house, lighted with floodlights now. And nearby was the dome of his private astronomical observatory.

"I don't understand—" Clark began.

Ralph Owen, the professor's son, spoke earnestly.

"We'll explain quickly enough. This asteroid thing—"

Young Owen and Clark had been good friends in college. Owen was

plainly under stress now, grim as his father.

"I'll explain it to him, Ralph," the professor interjected.

He turned to Clark. "You know, Jack, that some three months ago an incoming asteroid was discovered, out near the orbit of Jupiter?"

"Yes, I know that."

"A dark little world. It has, we think, a diameter of about two hundred miles—a circumference of some six hundred. It's been coming in toward our sun, on an elliptical orbit like a comet. It probably will round the sun, like a comet, and go out again."

"And it's passing the earth now," Clark nodded. "I've read all about that."

"Exactly," the professor agreed. "It's too small to affect us in any way—and it's moving too swiftly for the earth to draw it to us. Tonight, it is some five hundred thousand miles away, at about its closest point. That's pretty close, astronomically speaking. Only about twice the distance of our moon."

"Ever seen it?" Ralph Owen asked Clark.

"No. But I read that, to the naked eye—"

"Come here, I'll show you."

THEY stood at the French windows. To one side of the dark and silent grove of trees, a big patch of purple-velvet, star-strewn sky was visible. The stars were clear and sparkling, here at this altitude.

"Out there," young Owen indicated, "midway from the top of that left-hand tree to the zenith—"

Clark could hardly be sure that he identified it. Certainly it looked harmless enough—a little pin-point of blazing light—just one of the myriad of smaller stars. But they were all blazing suns, thousands of light-years away, and this asteroid was very small and very close. Dark and cold—like our earth, and Venus and Mars and the moon. No light of its own. Shining only by reflected sunlight.

They sat down again.

"The public isn't very interested, of course," the professor continued. "But, Jack, that little world has an atmosphere. Air envelopes it, like our earth. The surface can't be seen because the clouds hang too thickly."

"Until tonight, Father," young Owen said—and Clark heard a strained hush to his voice.

"Yes, until tonight," the professor repeated heavily. "I was at my telescope. It's small, compared to the big observatories, but adequate for this job."

CLARK knew about the professor's telescope. It was of a new type, an electro-telescope. Small of lens, it yet had remarkable power. Its electronic current sent from its barrel a narrow jet of violet radiance into the sky. That small violet beam was visible now, slanting upward from the observatory dome toward the asteroid. Clark had noticed it a moment ago when they were at the window.

"As I was at my telescope tonight," the professor said, "there suddenly was a rift in the clouds around this asteroid. I saw down to the surface. I saw small metallic mountains—but there was vegetation growing. Signs of water. Ice melting, because now the little world has come into our sun's warmth. It is warming up from what must have been a devastating cold. I saw all the necessities of human life—"

"And life itself," young Owen exclaimed. "Things moving—"

"Just a brief glimpse," the professor added, "and then the clouds closed in again. But I saw what I think is human life."

Interesting! But what could be

A leafy python wrapped around him, squeezing, writhing like a living antagonist

so frightening in this? It seemed that Owen interpreted Clark's thoughts, for he said:

"Frightening, Jack, because last night Father thought he saw something approaching our earth. I mean really close—just above our atmosphere. Fifty miles away, maybe. A tiny, swift-moving blob. It crossed the field of the telescope so fast that he barely saw it—and he could never pick it up again. But it could have been an interplanetary vehicle."

Owen's words were tumbling over one another with a swift vehemence.

"Something coming down from the direction of this asteroid, to land upon our earth. It could have been that. And last night there was a small news item in the papers—naturally, you probably didn't notice it. A farmer and his family near here were all found dead. Little burned black patches on them—as though they had been struck by lightning.

"As a matter of fact, there was an electrical storm near dawn. But that probably was just a coincidence. They were all indoors, and the house wasn't struck. And Father thinks—"

"I think," the professor said slowly "that I actually did see an interplanetary vehicle about to land on the earth. The beginning of an attack from this asteroid. Weird beings—God knows what they can be like—things intelligent—perhaps more intelligent than we are—perhaps not even in human form."

IT turned Clark cold. He was a big fellow, this Jack Clark, blond as a Viking, afraid of no man. But things inhuman—a quiet man of science saying things like this! The shadowed library here suddenly, to his startled imagination, lurked with menace. These opened French windows—that shadow over there by the piano—

He felt a cold sweat starting from every pore. He shook himself to free his mind of those crazy thoughts.

"But look here—" he objected.

He got no further. Vague fears leaped suddenly into realized ones. The silent house rang with a woman's scream of terror.

Clark and his two companions leaped to their feet.

"Good Lord, that's Annie, our cook!" young Owen ejaculated.

THE two young men found Annie in the kitchen. The young negress lay sprawled on the floor, dead. Unquestionably dead. But killed—how? Not stabbed, or shot. There was no wound upon her. No sign of violence.

"Look!" Owen yelled suddenly. "Look, here on her arm!"

Stark terror was in his voice. The white sleeve of the girl's waist was ripped; and blackened, charred! The flesh of her arm had a little burned spot—like one who has been struck by lightning. Clark's mind swept back—that farmer and his family—they had been found dead like this, last night.

The menace from the asteroid! Weird beings, perhaps not even in human form. They must be here—now!

They had been bending down over the dead girl. Clark sprang to his feet.

"These—confounded things from space—here? They must have been here, Ralph. Just a minute ago."

And suddenly they thought of Professor Owen. The old man hadn't followed them in their rush here. It was a hot night. The kitchen door and windows were open; the serene starlit night brooded outside. Clark started toward the door, then turned.

"Got to get back to your father," he jerked.

They ran. On the floor of the shadowed living room, the blackened body of Professor Owen lay there crumpled. Dead!

Clark's brain whirled. These enemies—were they invisible? There was nothing here. The room with its opened French windows seemed empty. But was it?

Owen stood stricken, gazing down at his father, forgetful of everything in the face of this terrible, unexpected tragedy. Clark shook him.

"Got to do something, Ralph. Death here—to us also."

The living must fight, not stand helplessly mourning the dead. Owen suddenly snapped out of his trance, his pale face contorted, his dark eyes blazing with the desire for vengeance. Both he and Clark were unarmed. On the table was a heavy bookend and Clark seized it for a weapon. Owen, still confused, stood with clenched fists.

Was there a rustling in the room? Clark thought so. No, it was outside the French window. He ran to the window, leaped upon the window box, and with a bound landed outside on the grass. Owen was directly behind him.

Nothing out here. In the starlight, with the dark shadowed grove of trees close at hand, they stood peering.

Nothing here?

THEN Clark saw the accursed things. With a chill running like ice through his veins, he stood stiffened, gripping his companion—both of them staring, wordlessly, almost paralyzed with disbelief.

Under the trees, things were moving. The patterns of starlight showed them, upright brown things, with legs short and squat. Travesties of humans, with heads, and waving arms. Things some four feet tall. The eyes of them showed as moving green points of fire in the darkness.

"Why—why—look—" Owen muttered.

Close at hand there was a rustle. In the starlight of the open lawn, not ten feet away, one of the squat brown things stood upon its jointed legs, its multiple arms waving like tentacles. Insect? Human? The shell-like jointed body was garbed with clothes. Weapons dangled from a belt.

The thing stood with a single eye gleaming balefully from its travesty of a face. And then it leaped forward upon the two men!

CHAPTER II

Forty Million Miles

CLARK flung the bookend, but it went wide of its mark. The attacking brown shape struck against him. It was light in weight and he hardly staggered. But brown tentacle arms enveloped him. A huge pincer gripped his shoulder; it cut through his leather jacket, squeezing, pinching his flesh.

A leering face, with a wide, slit-like mouth in a gaping crescent, stared up from the height of his chest. The goggling round single eye gleamed with a green phosphorescence.

Instant impressions. Clark struck with his fist into the gruesome face. His fist sank deep as it cracked like an eggshell. He felt, on his fist and wrist and part way up his forearm, a horrible gluey, sticky ooze. The thing screamed—an eerie cry, half animal, half human. Its gripping pincer loosened; the enveloping tentacles fell away so that Clark jerked his fist from the ooze and staggered back, free of it. The wounded thing sank to the ground, writhing.

But others were here. A ring of them now, surging forward, closing in. The stench of the broken thing

at Clark's feet was nauseating. At a little distance, on the ground, he saw Owen rolling with a brown cluster of the things upon him, a mass of tangled bodies and threshing tentacles. One of the brown shells crushed under the weight of Owen's heaving body. Owen was a small fellow, but he was lithe as a cat. He was fighting like a cat now.

The ring around Clark was closing in. It seemed, in the dim starlight, to be a ring of phosphorescent eyes. He saw waving weapons; scientific devices, undoubtedly. But none of them were being used.

Thoughts are instant things. The impression came to Clark in that second while he stood there panting, glaring at his antagonists, that these strange beings wanted to capture him alive. Then a tiny bolt flashed, like an updarting, inverted flash of lightning. It spat high, went up through the tree branches. A warning bolt, to show him what could be done.

The brown things around him were standing inactive now. But Owen, on the ground, was still fighting. He shouted:

"Jack! They're flimsy. Smash them! I can—" His voice went off into a gurgle. Clark swung and leaped toward the struggling group.

"Stop it, Ralph! Don't fight—they'll kill—"

WITH a rustling surge, the brown things came at him. They swarmed over him. His flailing fists cracked them in a tumult of horror. He waded through the broken, oozing bodies, flung them off, but others came. Fearless things. The death of one had no effect upon the others. The starlit grove rang with their blood-curdling screams.

Then it seemed that from the pincer-hand of one of them, a metal cylinder was squirting fumes into Clark's face. The smell was heavy, sickeningly sweet. He held his breath. He caught the cylinder, ripped it away, and crashed it through the face of the thing which had been wielding it.

But he had breathed the drug fumes. His legs and arms suddenly felt heavy. His head was roaring; he felt his body bathed in a sudden outpouring of sweat. He was still fighting—but abruptly it seemed like a dream. He saw Owen's inert body being carried away under the trees by a staggering group of the brown creatures.

WAS this the end? As though in a nightmare, Clark tried to keep on fighting, despite his fading senses. Then the starlit vision of the tentacles around him deepened into blackness. He felt himself falling. The roaring in his head grew into a great torrent of sound, enveloping all the world. Then it, too, faded, as all his senses slid away into a black and soundless abyss of unconsciousness.

* * * * *

Clark recovered his senses to find himself lying on a metal grid-floor. Owen was sitting beside him, bending over him.

"Oh—you're all right now. Thank God for that!"

"Yes. All right. I guess so." With returning strength, he struggled to sit up. "Where—where are we?"

They were on a space-flyer, quite evidently. In a small and dark, cell-like room. Neither of them was greatly injured. They had been drugged and now it was wearing off.

They were alone in the room. A few pieces of strangely fashioned furniture were here. There was a metal door-slide but it was locked; Owen had already investigated that. In one wall, opposite the door, was an oval bull's-eye pane. Brilliant starlight was streaming in. It was the only light in the room.

"We're in space," Owen muttered. "Heading for that confounded asteroid. Come here, I'll show you." He gestured toward the window.

Dizzily Clark gained his feet. He was horribly weak, his head still heavy and whirling.

"I was knocked out, like you," Owen tried to reconstruct events. "But I came to—Lord, it seems hours ago. A day maybe. Nobody has been here. But we're moving through space, all right."

The room was vibrationless. There was no sense of moving, but a distant hum and throb were audible. The vehicle's mechanisms were in operation.

The sight from the window was amazing. Freed of earth's hampering atmosphere, the stars shone with an amazing blue-white brilliance, against a firmament dead-black. Illimitable distance stretched here. Black infinity of space, star-filled. The stars were everywhere—overhead, and to the sides, and underneath.

"I figure we must be near the stern of this ship," Owen said. "The sun must be forward. We're heading toward it. You can't see it from here. I figure that's the earth there."

He pointed.

THE earth! Of course it was. A reddish-silver disc, level with the window. Clark had his wits now, and he was puzzled. The earth, off there, was visually no more than the size of our moon. And there was the moon itself, a tiny light-point, hanging near the earth-disc.

"But, good Lord!" Clark expostulated, "how did we get so far away, just while we've been unconscious? For the earth to be that small, we must have gone a great many million miles. The asteroid was only half a million. Where the devil are we heading? Where is the asteroid?"

"Darned if I know," Owen scowled. "But I can guess. Say, aren't you pretty hungry?"

Thinking of it, Clark was. And thirsty. And very strangely weak.

"My guess is that the drug we breathed threw us into catalepsy," Owen said. "Suspended animation, out of which we've just recovered today."

"Today?" Clark gasped.

"Sure. Today. I think we've been unconscious a week of earth time. Maybe longer."

IT was true. The asteroid had been passing the earth the night they were abducted. It was only five hundred thousand miles away, but by the laws of celestial mechanics, every instant its velocity was accelerating. The space vehicle was chasing after it now, and taking days to catch it. Already the vehicle had crossed the orbit of Venus, and was well in toward the orbit of Mercury.

The two men had been at the window perhaps five minutes when there was a noise behind them. They swung, tense, alert, to see the door-slide moving. In the dim aperture, a squat brown thing stood peering. With an outstretched tentacle-arm holding the partly opened door-slide, it gazed in at the two prisoners. And they stared back at it.

Clark saw it suddenly not as an insect, but as a human. A travesty of a man. Jointed legs, short and bent; with a garment of grey fabric draped across the hips and up over the shoulders. Four tentacle arms. A body, with bulging chest. A neck, thin and spindly, supporting a round head. A face, with a single eye over the nose, and a slit of mouth beneath. And flapping ears at the sides.

But still it seemed human. The voice mumbled words in a strange tongue. It was harsh and guttural;

but there was intelligence in the sound.

Then the man—Clark could think of it as a man now—came slowly into the room. One of his hands—not a pincer on this arm, but flexible fingers—fumbled at his belt.

Clark said tensely:

"If you understand English—don't try to kill us. We don't want to fight."

The English words evidently were unintelligible. But the hand came from the belt and proffered a small cylinder of red-brown polished metal.

And Clark relaxed.

"Good Lord, Ralph," he said, "I guess it's something to eat or drink."

He took the cylinder, shook it; a liquid swished inside. At the door now, others of the little brown-shelled men were standing. They held weapons in their hands—small projectors of metal. But they were all smiling, the slits of mouth upturned into the mockery of a grin. And the one in the room made a gesture of drinking.

"Thanks," said Clark. He put the open end of the cylinder to his mouth, and drank a heavy sweetish liquid. But it was refreshing, queerly strengthening. Almost at once the weakness he had felt left him; his normal strength came quickly back. An elixir.

A cylinder of it was given Owen. Then food was brought.

A DAY passed—then another. Days of accustomed earth time, to be measured now only by hunger intervals, and times when Jack and Ralph went to sleep. Except when one of their captors brought food, the men were left alone. Two mattresses were given them to lie on—fabric coverings stuffed with something soft, redolent as incense. And the shining round disc of the earth dwindled steadily in visual size.

Another meal. They tried to calculate how far they might be from earth now. Forty million miles, perhaps. They were discussing it when abruptly the silent interior of the vehicle sounded with voices and the scratching tread of men.

The door-slide opened. The man who had been bringing in their food and drink signed for them to come out. They were accustomed to his gestures now, and followed him docilely along a narrow vaulted metal corridor into a larger room which was in the bow of the vessel.

A GROUP of the weird-looking little men was here. Through every contact with their captors now, the two young prisoners were increasingly aware of the little brown creatures' human aspect, for all their weird appearance. And an ironical thought struck Clark so forcibly now that he laughed aloud.

"Heavens, Ralph—we look as queer to them as they look to us!"

It was true enough. The group here in this long narrow apartment—it seemed the control-room of the vessel—crowded forward to see the huge, strange earthmen. They plucked at them, felt their strange solidity of bone and muscle, meanwhile jabbering with guttural rapidity. And their stares were composed of awe and fear. Truly, to them these strange giants were things to be afraid of, and to watch closely.

Clark saw that he and his companion were certainly being carefully watched. Several of the men, with projector weapons held alert, were always close beside the captives. Beyond that, after the first few moments, the earthmen were ignored.

Brilliant light was streaming in one of the left-hand windows. Gigantic sun now. Huge ball, leaping and crawling with color. The flames of the corona—monstrous tongues of fire—licked outward into space. And

the asteroid was here, close in advance of the ship's bow.

It showed as a titanic half-moon, dark on one side, painted with sunlight on the other. Huge, unreal, it stretched half across the visual firmament. Even to the naked eye now, its heavy dark cloud masses were visible.

Hours passed. A meal of the strange food to which they were growing accustomed was served the prisoners. Swiftly the asteroid grew in visual size. Presently it stretched and blocked all the forward hemisphere of space. Its clouds held solid. Then the clouds and all the starry heavens swung in an arc, as the vessel altered its course. To Clark came a new viewpoint.

The tumbling vapor-masses of the asteroid's atmosphere were under the space-ship now. The ship was dropping down into the clouds. Then it was in them. A solid grey fog, luminous with radiating sunlight, enveloped all the bull's-eye windows.

There followed an hour's descent, with the men at the controls watchfully regarding their banks of dials and indicators. An air of excitement now was upon all the little men. Soon they would land, triumphantly bringing home the captive giants whom undoubtedly they had been sent to earth to secure.

JACK'S mind swept back to that night in Professor Owen's mountain-top home. It seemed so long ago. He realized now that this vehicle had been attracted by the violet beam of the telescope, whose penetrating radiance had streamed into space. And the floodlights of the landing field had brilliantly illumined the house and its vicinity.

The bull's-eye windows in the floor of the room here had suddenly brightened. The ship had come down through the clouds, into a grey, flat twilight.

The new world! It lay spread beneath them, weird, strange, bizarre beyond anything they had ever imagined.

CHAPTER III

The Brain in the Chair

FORGETFUL for the moment of their own situation, Clark and Owen peered down through the aperture at their feet. The ship was descending from what seemed now an altitude of no more than twenty thousand feet. Overhead, the sky was sullen with dark, misty clouds.

Below, the surface of this little world was visible—a tumbled region of grey-black mountains.

Desolate vista! Bleak naked crags. Spires and pinnacles of shining metallic rock, some of them smooth and burnished, gleaming with a dull sheen in the twilight.

The vehicle dropped lower. The convexity of the little world was clearly apparent. The horizon was close; the sharp curvature obvious. To one side, where a bank of little mountains rose in serrated ranks, what seemed water was visible.

It was a painfully barren landscape. And where were its people? None were visible here. Then Clark saw that the tumbled and scarred surface was pitted with cavernous openings. A honeycomb of grottoes, in which, undoubtedly, the people lived.

And then he saw things moving—blobs on the rocks.

A succession of new details. The two earthmen could hardly encompass them, so strange was it all, so swiftly changing as the space-ship dropped down. Against the horizon, to the right, a red glare showed, and rising smoke. A volcano? Now vegetation was apparent. Vines, low on the rocks. Little patches of soil, lying like water in the rock-hollows;

and in the soil, small, stunted trees, blue-white.

And then Clark saw that the vines were crawling on the rocks. Vegetation, swiftly growing with visible movement!

The twilight was fading. It was evidently late afternoon, in this little world with a day of only three earth hours. The night came swiftly; the scene plunged into sudden darkness. Weird world!

FROM the windows where now they could see only vague spots of moving light, the fascinated spectators were presently plucked by their captors. The ship was preparing to land. Clark and Owen were shoved back into the dim windowless corridor. Beside them stood their four little guards. Flimsy humans. Flimsy as huge insects.

"I could smash all of them with a blow," Owen murmured.

"But don't try it," Clark warned. "We can't kill every one on the ship. And everyone on the asteroid. What's more, we couldn't navigate the ship —even if we had control of it."

There was a thump as the vessel landed; grinding sounds as the heavy windows and door-slides were opened.

Air of the new world! Heavy air —heavy with strange smells. The guards shoved the two prisoners forward. Out of the ship. Down an incline.

To the pair it was a phantasmagoria of weird flickering lights—shadowed rocks—crowds of the small insect-men plucking at them, pushing them forward, staring awed at these giant beings from another world. And a chaos of sounds. Jabbering voices; cries of command; the scratching of insect-like feet.

They stumbled forward. A rocky ground was underfoot. Then they were in a cave—a tunnel, descending. It was dimly lighted with spots of blue light placed at intervals along its ceiling. The jabbering voices echoed with a muffled roar.

"Queer that the gravity is almost like the earth," Owen said suddenly.

They felt almost normal. A little lighter, but not much. The density of this small asteroid was amazing. Of what metal the rock might have been, no one will ever say. But undoubtedly, it had an immense atomic weight.

The underground corridor broadened. As they passed a branch corridor, a group of the brown-shelled men, brandishing metallic fan-shaped swords, herded all the crowd into the diverging tunnel. There remained only the two captives and a dozen of their guards. Diffused light showed ahead—a dim radiance, blue-white.

They emerged at last into a fairly large underground apartment. It was queerly blue—the radiating blue light which came from a hidden source; a padded blue floor; walls and ceiling draped with blue fabrics. At first the two men could see very little. The blue radiance, though not intense, strangely dazzled them. They moved forward, shoved by their captors, who prodded them with the projector weapons.

THE apartment seemed empty, queerly silent. The jabber of the men had ceased; and the padded floor muffled their scratching tread. The room was some fifty feet long. At its end, on the floor, a few strangely fashioned chairs were placed. Beyond them was a raised platform—a padded dais some three feet high.

No one here? Clark's eyes were becoming more accustomed to the blue radiance now. With a sudden pounding of his heart, he saw a small, wide, padded armchair on the dais. In it, sitting motionless, was a man of this weird world. A man?

Clark's reason had to call the thing a man. Ruler of the asteroid? It seemed so.

The little insect-men, to whose gruesome aspect they had in a measure grown accustomed, shoved their captives to the foot of the dais. The earthmen they had been sent to get. They stood silent, expectant, as they brought the earth-giants for their ruler's inspection.

And Clark and Owen, with pounding hearts, stared at the man in the chair. He was just about level with them as they stood on the floor before the dais.

Owen gasped out a startled oath. Clark murmured an aside.

"Easy! Don't make a move. If we frighten them, they can kill us in a second."

The man in the chair had a head of perhaps twice normal earth size. A single-eyed face, with a slit of mouth. A spindly neck, upon which the huge head wabbled. His body was small as a five-year-old earth child—the bulging brown chest clothed and hung with metal ornaments like a profusion of medals, to dignify his high office.

He sat wobbling in the chair, his four tentacle arms gripping the chair sides to steady himself. His small jointed legs hung down, not touching the floor.

A MAN almost all head. And now as Clark stared, he saw that the huge hairless skull was transparent. Not bone. Not even a shell. A head of bloated membrane, bloated by the brain inside it. Transparent membrane. The huge brain within lay visible—palpitating, twisting like a tangle of worms.

The single eye was regarding the prisoners steadily. To Clark the silence became insupportable. He burst out impulsively:

"Do you speak? What do you want of us?"

In the hush, his voice burst out like a bomb. It startled the ruler in the chair. And the guards beside Clark leaped, seized him with their pincers. Their weapons came up, leveled at his head; and then as, for a tense moment, he did not move, the guards relaxed.

Owen expelled a long breath.

"Gosh, you tell me to be careful, Jack!" he murmured. "Don't do a think like that again. That head up there—"

THE Master Brain! A gigantic intellect dominating this little world. Undoubtedly, it was that.

Then this ruler spoke softly in his own language to his men. One of them leaped lightly to the platform. And now Clark saw, on a rack up there, a row of what seemed to be large test-tubes. There were ten, with wires connecting them. The light shone on them as the guard carefully lifted them and hung them like a necklace around the spindly neck of the ruler in the chair. The connecting wires looped and fastened them; the tubes in front dangled on his bulging chest.

The light from over the dais shone more clearly on the test tubes now. Clark saw that they were filled with a grey, palpitating substance. Living brain tissue! Brain of this ruler which his bloated head could not contain, nurtured in the test-tubes!

A wire was placed now around his bloated, quivering forehead. The brains in the tubes were connected with the brain in his head, so that now he might use all his mentality in dealing with these strange prisoners.

Suddenly Clark saw that other wires from the necklace of brain tubes were tossed by the guards over the dais-front. A guard below picked them up. Two wires. A looped electrode was at the end of

each. And the guards were about to fasten them to the foreheads of the prisoners.

Owen winced. He muttered an oath of protest. But he was seized, menaced. He stood, belligerent, gazing wild-eyed at his tormentors.

Clark's senses whirled. Was this some weird form of electrocution? He felt the electrode touch his forehead. His whole instinct was to cast it off. To fight—to go down fighting.

But that was sure death. This might be something else. He stood stiff and tense, watching the wire fastened now around Owen's head. The young man was panting, his face pale, his fists clenched.

The electrode was cold on Clark's forehead. It snapped together with a click. The guard stood away.

The Brain in the chair had a hand on a switch lever. And slowly he pulled it.

CHAPTER IV

The Attack on the Cave

CLARK felt a sudden reeling of his senses. Every muscle in his body was taut, braced against the shock. On earth, in the electric chair, the condemned criminal doubtless is taut like that as he waits for the shock of dying.

But Clark felt only a wave of dizziness. The vision of the dais and the weird ruler in the chair reeled before him, but he was not dead. Not even harmed. He saw Owen standing, still wild-eyed—and then on his face, when he found he was still alive, an expression of wonderment and great relief.

A minute passed while neither of the prisoners dared move. Clark was aware of the hum of a current, vague, as though it were not audible to his ears, but sounding in his head. Everything was vague; and abruptly he was conscious that his thoughts were wandering. Dulled.

He fought to think clearly. But it seemed as though this current were sapping his mind, draining it, so that he was blunted, passively quiescent, almost stripped of his ability to think.

This current, draining his mind! Taking, from the brains of him and Owen, thoughts and stored knowledge and transferring them to the vast storehouse of the brains in the test tubes and in the bloated head of the ruler in the chair.

WHAT is the evanescent thing which we call a thought? A vibration? Electrical? Perhaps it is that. No human intellect on earth ever has been able to fathom the nature of a thought.

But here, now, upon this weird asteroid world, human knowledge was brought into the realm of science. Controlled. Transferred over wires, through tubes, and manipulated by what other strange mechanisms no one will ever know.

The ruler had moved the switch again. The current was off now—or at least altered to a lower intensity. And out of the silence the ruler's low, guttural voice was saying:

"I—have it now. Your—strange language."

English! It came from his wide slit of mouth haltingly, with a queer accent. For his physical vocal equipment was different from that of the earthmen, inadequate correctly to pronounce the words—but the words themselves were correct.

Clark gasped.

"You can talk to us!" he said unbelievingly.

"Yes. Talk to you now. Your knowledge—added to mine."

He passed a hand across the bulging membrane of his forehead. There was a surge of movement within his head; and in the test tubes around his neck, the brain tissue was writhing.

"Your knowledge—confusing to me at first," he said slowly, "I will —have it sorted in a moment."

There fell a silence. Strange necromancy of science. But Clark now had accepted it as a weird actuality.

The instinct of life, of personal safety, is strong in every human. His thoughts swept into questions of how he and Owen might escape out of this. If only they could get control of that space-flyer; if only—

But his brain was still connected with the brain of the ruler. He had forgotten that. The ruler's mouth was upturned now in a monstrous ironic smile.

"But you cannot escape," he said.

"What do you want of us?" Owen burst out. "We never harmed you."

"I wanted—your language. I have it now. And the knowledge of the things in your strange world."

His voice droned on. He talked slowly, carefully, as though his purpose were not so much to inform his prisoners, as to practice for himself the use of these queer English words.

"I am about to conquer your earth," he said. "I can realize now how easy it will be. My expedition is ready, waiting my command. Survival of the fittest. I notice you have a phrase like that. Your people must die to make room for mine."

HIS slow recital was horrible in its calmness. Quietly he explained.

The asteroid—a wanderer in space throughout all the known history of its inhabitants—was heading now for the sun. It was rapidly warming. Soon it would be fiercely hot. And the barrenness of it was changing.

Heated by sunlight, vegetation here which for centuries had been dormant in the cold, was springing into life. Amazing life. Menacing! The little brown-shelled people were fighting it now. And other things were springing into life. Things formerly microscopic were hideous now with gigantic size. Most of the asteroid already was overrun with them.

THE little world was doomed. Fertile through ages past with frozen dormant life, it all was springing now into lush growth and movement under the unaccustomed heat of the approaching sun! A tiny world, loaded with hideous microscopic life ready now to overwhelm it.

And the internal fires of the asteroid — through past ages just enough to support this human life against the frigidity of outer space —were spreading now. Inflammable gases were expanding under pressure in caverns far underground. At any moment they might ignite and burst forth.

Doomed little world indeed! And so the earth had been selected for an exodus of these asteroid people. A conquest of earth—the survival of the fittest.

Clark stood amazed, listening. But under the flow of words, his thoughts were clear. An expedition of space-flyers, ready to start now for earth! It must be stopped. He and Owen must escape, get out of this. That space-flyer in which they had arrived—if only they could seize it!

Wild, hopeless plans! But they were better than none; and in them Clark presently seemed to see a rationality. A course of action, desperate, but at least possible of success. He asked, when presently the ruler paused:

"Where are these space-flyers which you say are ready to leave?"

"They are quite—near here. You would call it—on earth—a mile."

"The one we came in," Clark persisted, "is closer than that?"

"No. It has been moved to join

the others. I will take you there soon—everything is ready."

"And your idea," Owen exclaimed, "is to devastate our earth?"

The ruler nodded calmly. "Of course. Your people must die," he said, "so that mine may live."

Primitive reasoning. But to him it seemed natural, quite obvious. His face twisted into a monstrous smile.

"I have the weapons. All in a moment—I can kill a million—of your people. And my people will want your earth—in peace and security. For that, I must kill all of you."

Again Clark realized that his thoughts were open to this antagonist. Up to now, the asteroid ruler had been so interested in his narrative that his mind probably had not yet become aware of Clark's thoughts. But Clark was afraid of that. What might come!

"This wire on my forehead," he said abruptly, "it keeps my mind all confused. Take it off." He flashed Owen a warning glance.

Owen took the hint.

"You've got enough of our knowledge, haven't you?" he asked.

The huge head nodded.

"Yes, I think so." The ruler signed to the guards, and they removed the wires.

"Thanks," Clark smiled. Queer, how much more clearly he could think now! A chance to escape—if he could manage it.

HE saw Owen eyeing him, puzzled, realizing that he had some plan. But the ruler spoke English now, and Clark could do no more than give his companion another significant glance.

"You want to know how I will devastate your earth? My electrical weapons would not do it very quickly—you have perhaps seen our flash guns operate? Not with flash-guns, but with the disease, I will kill you."

Clark was hardly listening. If only he and Owen could be alone here with this ruler. Huge brain—body of a child. Helpless, physically. He did not seem even to have any weapons. If they could seize him—

Clark gestured at the group of guards who stood close at hand, curiously watching the scene. He was trying to think of some plausible reason for the ruler to dismiss them. He said, smiling:

"I'm afraid of your men. They stand so close."

"We will leave here presently," the ruler spoke impatiently. "We—"

HE stopped. He turned his great head as though listening. He had heard something that the earthmen could not hear. And the guards were aware of it. They stirred uneasily. One of them mumbled with fear.

The sound, obviously, was swiftly intensifying. Clark heard it now—a distant commotion. Eerie screams of the asteroid people. Weird rustling and scratching. The hiss of flash-guns.

An attack upon these caverns! A tumult of frenzied strife! It grew rapidly in volume. Approaching—

The ruler in the chair tried to stand upon his little feet. His wide spread of face was contorted with terror. He shouted at the guards. But they, too, were in terror, running—scattering. All in a moment, they had vanished from the cave room.

Clark's chance! This doomed world! It had brought the opportunity he was seeking.

With a bound he was on the dais. The little ruler was wobbling on his feet. Owen followed instantly.

"What's the idea?" he demanded breathlessly.

"Got to get out of here!"

"But we don't know the way!"

"He does," Clark reached down

and seized the ruler's little shoulder. The shell bent inward at his touch.

The ruler screamed. "You hurt me!"

Clark relaxed. "I didn't mean to. Can you walk?"

"Yes. A little. I am not—"

"You know the way out of here?"

"Of course. All these doors. But there is an attack—you hear it? These things accursed—"

"We'll have to break through them."

THE wild commotion was much closer now. It came from the left-hand side of the room, where doors opened into corridor tunnels.

Owen gestured. "We can go the other way. There's a door there, and we—"

He suddenly stopped, staring down the length of the room. Clark followed his gaze. From the dais they could see the full stretch of the empty, blue-lit cave.

At the distant door through which they had entered, a huge blue-white leafy thing came slithering. A growing vine. Its leaves and tendrils spread forward over the room floor. Its growth was amazing. New lengths of it were springing into being every moment. New leaves, new tendrils, reaching, seeking something to grasp.

That way of exit was cut off.

"Can't stay here!" Clark snapped. "That thing will fill the room in a minute!" He reached down. With his left arm he scooped up the little ruler. The great head sagged on the spindly neck. The test tubes clinked together; one of them smashed. The little tentacle arms flailed; the bent and useless little legs kicked against Clark's side. The voice screamed:

"You hurt me!"

Physical pain. It produced an unnatural terror in this being whose body had became useless, with intellect too great for it. He screamed again.

"You hurt me! Put me down!"

"If I do, you'll be killed here," Clark said, grimly, swiftly. "And you've got to show us the way to the space-flyers. I'm trying not to hurt you."

Owen already had leaped from the dais. "Come on!" he shouted. "We'll be trapped here! That cursed vegetation—"

The leafy mass of the invading vine already had spread over half the room floor. Its tendrils were thickening, reaching up toward the ceiling, waving and threshing. The whole farther end of the room was solid with it now.

Through the doors to the left, abruptly, came sprawling figures in screaming combat—the brown-shelled asteroid men, with things double their size attacking them. Clark had only a glimpse of things six feet or more in height—shapeless—not human—indescribable masses of living pulp, blood-red.

The silent blue-lit room suddenly was a chaos of horror, over which Owen was shouting:

"Jack—come on—this way!"

With the struggling brain-man under his arm, Clark leaped from the dais. He and Owen sped from the gruesome turmoil of the cave, through a doorway, and plunged into the dimness of an ascending tunnel.

CHAPTER V

End of a World

THEY ran. There seemed a pursuit behind them, but ahead lay only a dim silence of upward slope. Owen led the way. Clark followed with his squirming captive under his arm. The brain-man was far lighter than an earth-child. Fifteen pounds, perhaps.

Once Clark bent down. "You stop

struggling. I can kill you with a squeeze of my arm. You know that?"

"Yes—I know it."

"And if I let you loose, those things—whatever they are, chasing us—you couldn't escape them."

It silenced his captive. "I want you to direct us to your space-ships," Clark added. "Will you?"

"Yes."

"The end of the tunnel," Owen called. He stopped, and in a moment Clark was beside him. A dark night spread before them—a dim vista of rocky distance. To one side, half a mile away perhaps, there was a confusion of moving spots of light. In the silence came the distant sounds of a turmoil. And then the hissing of flash-guns, and the near horizon of the convex surface was illumined with brief puffs of glare. A combat off there.

"Which way?" Clark demanded.

The head under his arm said:

"Hold me up. Let me see where we are."

Clark held up his captive.

"This way." One of the tentacle arms gestured. "A mile or less, you would call it, from here. But there is vegetation—newly grown—"

CLARK'S eyes, better accustomed to the darkness now, saw trees fairly close at hand. Tall, spindly growth, some fifty feet high. They waved in the night breeze—eerie, ghost-like.

"That way?" he demanded.

"Yes. But that is newly grown—" Terror was in the ruler's voice.

Owen said sharply:

"In the tunnel—things coming."

From the tunnel behind them, weird, oncoming cries were audible. Screams? Not that; for these sounds were indescribable—the cries of things unnameable.

They plunged off. Within a minute they were in the forest. Solid blackness was here, save that on the tree branches there were luminous pods radiating a green phosphorescent glow. The tree trunks were porous—flimsy. They rose high overhead, with thick, entangled branches—a blue-white leafy mass, lurid with the green phosphorescent radiance.

The rocky ground held an earthy soil now. There was an underbrush, thin at first, but within a minute as they ran forward, it grew thicker.

SUDDENLY Owen was shouting: "This confounded vine!" He was ahead of Clark, invisible momentarily with tree trunks between them. Then his voice turned to terror:

"Jack, help! It's—got me!"

The startled Clark crashed into the thick tree trunk. It smashed with his weight, came down, splintered around him. He leaped over it.

"Jack, help!"

He saw Owen struggling in the grip of a huge vine. Leafy python wrapped around him, squeezing him, with a myriad of smaller tendrils writhing to clutch him.

Clark dropped his captive burden. He leaped, dashing into the vegetation—ripping it—kicking, flailing. Unlike the tree, the vine was sinewy. It writhed. Every branch of it which he touched, at once flung tendrils at him. Almost a thinking antagonist.

A minute or two of flailing horror, then Owen was released. The two men kicked themselves free. They saw, near at hand, their captive trying to run, his great head wobbling. In a bound, Clark had seized him. They ran onward.

Eerie passage! From every side now, in the greenish darkness, it seemed that giant tentacles were lashing, trying to grasp these human fugitives. The soft loam underfoot grew sandy, then spongy

and wet as quicksand. A morass here. They sank sometimes knee-deep.

It seemed an eternity as they fought their way forward. Panting now—winded—thrown down by an entangling vine—ripping it apart—gaining their feet again and stumbling on.

Then, abruptly, the ground hardened. The trees thinned. The underbrush and the slashing vines were gone. Ahead of them again the rocky darkness showed, with a red glare. There was smoke off there. A sulphurous smell.

THEY emerged from the gruesome forest; stood on an open rocky expanse, panting, struggling for breath. Behind them in the woods cries resounded, cries of pursuing things from the tunnel. But the two men did not heed what was still behind them. They stood staring at the turmoil ahead. A rocky amphitheatre was here. It was painted red by the distant lurid glare.

The expedition of space-ships ready to depart for the conquest of earth! It had been that, a few hours before. But what a turmoil was here now!

In the bowl-like depression, the lip of which was close at hand, some fifty space-vehicles were racked. Gleaming cylindrical ships, of several sizes and shapes. Decks covered with transparent domes — the armada of the little asteroid. But it was in distress now. Giant vegetation was slithering from the darkness, entangling the ships at the outer edge of the bowl.

It was a chaos of turmoil. Myriad shapeless things, of human size, were everywhere leaping and pouncing. A thousand, perhaps, of the asteroid people were here on the ships and on the ground between them. A thousand individual combats. A wild chaos of screams.

One of the ships rose drunkenly into the air. Its deck, under the transparent pressure dome, was black with the struggling figures. It rose no more than a hundred feet, wavered and crashed back, smashing two other ships in the wreckage. Fire broke out in the litter.

The flames illumined the interior deck of another ship, on which was a huddled group of the little brown-shelled asteroid people. Monstrous blood-red shapes of things inhuman rolled and surged and pounced upon them. Devoured them. Turned, palpitating for other prey.

A tremendous heat was here. Breath of the distant fires, surging now from the ground. Incandescent gases, wafted on the night breeze. Owen was suddenly coughing.

From under Clark's arm, the asteroid's ruler panted:

"The doom—it—has come."

"Things — behind us—" Owen gasped.

Clark barely turned. Shapes of red things, coiled like hoops, were rolling out of the forest.

"This way, Ralph," he panted. "One ship—near here—"

Over the lip of the cauldron, one of the nearer ships seemed momentarily deserted. It was a small vessel, with only thin tendrils of vegetation entangling it. They fought their way to it. A doorway in its side was open. They plunged in.

IT was a ship no more than thirty feet long. The little corridor was illumined. Horrible passage! The walls and grid-floor were splattered. Leprous broken shells of what once had been asteroid people were strewn here, half devoured—and the invading things had gone.

An empty ship! With food tubes! Triumph swept Clark. They came to the control room. It was small, with transparent vizor-panes on three of its sides. The controls

were here. Clark set the asteroid ruler down before them.

"You have all knowledge—you can operate this?" he panted.

"Yes—I can operate it."

"Do it, then! Close the ports. Raise us. Your life—and ours—"

THE ruler's four little tentacle arms reached for the levers. The ports slid closed with a grind. Through the vizor pane Clark saw that the dawn was coming, a swift twilight merging into grey daylight. The three-hour night of the asteroid was over.

Two other ships rose, and crashed. The cauldron was a litter now. The vines were spreading everywhere—a tangle in which the myriad blood-red shapes were lurking. But the turmoil was soundless, shut away from within the little space-ship.

Seconds of apprehension. They seemed an eternity to the breathless Clark and Owen, bending over the bobbing head of the asteroid's ruler as he worked the controls. Would the ship operate? Could it break from the entangling vines? At the window ports, gruesome red shapes were crowding now, thumping futilely against the heavy bull's-eye panels, smearing against the windows in a blurring crimson ooze.

The current hummed. The bow lifted. The little vessel jerked against the hampering vines, then broke free!

Free! They were rising! The glare and the turmoil fell away. Overhead was daylight, and a spread of grey clouds.

Clark breathed again.

"We did it, Ralph! Safe!"

Safe? In the control room behind them, they heard a thump. Clark whirled. Owen stood with hands outstretched before him, gaping with horror. The asteroid ruler turned and sucked in his breath with a gasping whine of fear.

These red things—Clark had seen them only at a distance, caught brief glimpses. But one was here in the control room now. The crimson, gruesome horror was shut up here with them, in this small room. An antagonist. A menace that must be killed, now!

Through a second of stricken fixity Clark stared, bathed in sweat, his blood seeming to run like ice through his veins, a constriction in his chest as though fingers of fear were squeezing his wildly leaping heart.

The thing had come rolling into the control room; a looped crimson thing like a great hoop. At the door it straightened into an oblong, upright shape—a cylindrical rod two feet thick and six or seven feet high—a mass of crimson pulp. It stood palpitating, bouncing, as though to maintain balance. An oozing, pulpy mass of semi-solidity!

A disease germ!

A little rod of red, Clark had once heard such a thing as this called by a learned man of science; and through a microscope he had seen a squirming group of them. Infinitely tiny. Far too small to be seen by the naked eye.

And here was a single one, grown monstrous. The germ of tuberculosis, though of a nature different from earth, doubtless. Disease here—visible, ponderable human disease, insidiously microscopic no longer, grown gigantic, hideous, revolting beyond human conception.

The thing lurched forward, and in an instant they were engulfed in it!

THROUGH a blur of horror, Clark felt his hands ripping the sticky mass apart. It clung, gluey, writhing, wrapping itself around him. Then, all in a moment, he and Owen had strewn it over the room. Sickening, stenching litter here, in the midst of which they stood panting, senses whirling.

But the thing was dead. And Clark was aware that the asteroid ruler had neglected his controls. The ship was lurching.

"Steady us!" Clark gasped. "Never mind this—we're falling! Steady us!"

The brain-man swung back to his task. Clark, bending down, watched for a moment how the controls were operated, asked a few questions.

The ship righted, rose higher. The surface of the asteroid, lighted now by flat grey daylight, lay spread beneath them. Gigantic battle-ground! The rocks were all covered by the leafy, crawling vegetable growth, through which the monstrous disease germs were surging, seeking out the few remaining little humans to be devoured. A single last flashbolt spat from the horizon, as though to mark the end of the struggle.

The ship rose higher. Far to the right, Clark saw the red-yellow fire mounting into the air, with a rolling cloud of dark volcanic ash.

"Jack! Look out!"

Owen's startled, warning voice sounded. Clark swung, and saw that the brain-man had left the controls. He stood against the wall of the room. His bloated head wobbled; his crooked little legs bent and shook under his weight. One of his tentacle arms held a gleaming cylinder which evidently he had snatched from a wall-rack over his head. His single eye gleamed with a baleful phosphorescence.

IRRATIONALITY! Insanity! On the monstrous travesty of the face, Clark saw it plainly. The test tubes of brains around his neck were all smashed now. Within his transparent membrane head, the brain tissue was writhing.

Intellect gone mad! Deranged by the terror of this revolting, pulp-strewn room! His guttural voice rasped.

"You cannot take me prisoner! Alone, I can conquer your world! I am the Master Intellect."

His waving cylinder spat forward. But the flash went high, sizzling against the metal room ceiling. Owen had leaped, and Clark was hardly a second behind him. They struck the bloated membrane head almost together. Mashed it, with the tiny shell-like body, against the wall of the room. The brain-man's voice split with a chilling scream, mingled with a gruesome squash as the head burst and splattered.

The two men picked themselves up. They did not look again at the mashed thing against the wall which a moment before had been a human madman.

AGAIN the rising little space-ship was out of control. Clark sat at the levers. He had watched the asteroid ruler; and watched, also, the control of the other ship as they were nearing the asteroid from earth. The panting Owen bent over him. "Can you work it?"

"Yes. I think so."

A moment of experimentation. Then the ship steadied, rising normally again. The lurid surface of the asteroid was far down now, the heavy cloud masses close overhead. And suddenly there came a rift in the clouds. Fierce, dazzling sunlight struck through. Not the sunlight familiar to earth. This was infinitely hotter. Gigantic sun, so close now!

The sunlight beat in great shafts upon the asteroid's surface. And like the ray of a burning glass, it shriveled the monstrous vegetation. All in a second, upon the distant horizon, titantic jets of inflammable gases were ignited. Huge tongues of red-yellow flame shot forward, tremendous, spreading fiery incandescence.

A rolling, tumbling sea of fire was

down there now. Doomed little world! Gigantic pyre, to mark its end!

Smoke rolled up in vast dark columns. A titantic chimney of heated air was surging up. Like a tiny blob of metal in a furnace blast, the ship was whirled upward, through the tumbling cloud masses, and hurled into space!

ON earth, on the morning of August 11th, there appeared in the newspapers a small item which noted inexplicable deaths of Professor Owen and his negro servant. Ralph Owen, son of the professor, and Jack Clark, of the *American Press*, were missing.

But the item caused very little public comment.

Nor—weeks later—was the public more than mildy interested by the news that the wandering asteroid had rounded the sun, come out again and at last was gone, back into the remote realms of interplanetary space from whence it had come. Harmless wanderer! The few imaginative souls who had been excited over its presence—those days in August—realized now how foolish they had been.

But in November, the entire world was startled. The captain of a Pacific passenger liner, midway from San Francisco to Honolulu, saw something come wavering down from the sky one placid starry night. It was the little space-ship which, during all these weeks, Clark had been struggling to navigate back to earth.

But the captain of the liner did not know that, of course. He stared, amazed, as the small cylindrical thing wavered drunkenly and struck the placid, starlit ocean surface only a few miles away.

The gleaming metal shape sank in a moment. But the captain's glasses disclosed, bobbing on the surface, what seemed to be two swimming figures. He sent a boat and picked them up.

THUS came the end of an adventure which for a time electrified the world. Then the world forgot. The asteroid had done no harm and was gone.

And everyone had his own troubles to worry over.

But to Jack Clark, pondering the amazing fantasy through which he had lived, there often came memory of the doomed little asteroid; of its struggling humans, beset by every adversity of hostile Nature. Survival of the fittest! Thus it had been meant to be. Thus it was!

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TUMBLE BUG

He seized the paper and plopped it squarely onto the hate-twisted face

You'll Roar at the Mirth-Provoking Antics of Calamity and the Dictionary Kid, Jobless Buckaroos

By SAM BRANT

Author of "Death Rides the Badlands," etc.

CALAMITY and the Dictionary Kid reined up under the palo verde tree. They scrutinized the faded sign nailed to the trunk. Two arrows were painted on it, pointing in opposite directions. Under the arrows was crudely lettered:

JUMP CREEK, 5 MILES.
LOS COCHES, 7 MILES.

Calamity pried the black Stetson from his baldish head and whacked it dustily against his chaps.

"Me, I'd choose Jump Creek," he said.

"Why?"

"On account of it's cow country. And we need jobs."

"Jobs?"

The Dictionary Kid halted in mopping his shiny, round face with a corner of his red neckerchief: "We just

resigned two good positions at cow employment, didn't we? With that Scotchman back at the Horned-O?"

Calamity shook his head dolefully.

"Quit? Heck, old MacDuffy fired us! On account of when he told you his sorrel colt needing shoeing, you thought he said shooting."

"I NEVER could understand old MacDuffy's talk. He oughta engaged me as a tutor instead of a plain cow-hand. Anyhow, let's enjoy ourselves and forget about jobs for a spell. I crave some simple restorative to rinse the Horned-O dust outa my system. Mebbe some saloon at Los Coches will cash our checks—"

"Check," corrected Calamity. "Just one. Old Mac hung onto yores to pay for the colt. That's something else you forgot."

"I still think that tight-fisted old Scotchman said shoot," declared the Dictionary Kid. "He would never of got thirty dollars for that colt any other way."

"Well, this ain't no good place to linger in," declared Calamity with an uneasy look at the sky. "It's going to cut loose and rain, *muy pronto*. This here gully will be bank high."

The Kid swung off his horse, dropped the reins, and stretched out on the cool sand.

"Then wake me up when the flood comes along. If we gotta plunge into toil right off again, I aim to restore my tissues first."

The Kid pillowed his head on a boulder, closed his eyes, and was soon gently snoring. But his midday *siesta* was rudely interrupted. He sat up suddenly with a wakening snort and fanned something off his face.

He stared at the big, black beetle he had knocked to the sand. Then he cast a suspicious eye at Calamity, who was leaning against the *palo verde*, contemplating the unlovely scenery with a sad eye.

"Mebbeso you parked this critter on my proboscis," the Kid said suspiciously. "Just to rouse me up."

Calamity shrugged one shoulder in denial.

"I wouldn't have nothing to do with a tumble bug," he declared. "They're plenty unlucky."

"Tumble bug?" The Dictionary Kid picked up a twig and prodded the sprawling insect. "Calamity, I'm plumb astonished at your ignorance of inverted bugology. This ain't a tumble bug. His proper name is *pinacate* beetle."

"I reckon you learnt that when we guided that bug-hunting perfessor down in Mexico that time."

"I learned something else. This here pertickler bug is a valuable direction-finder. Just flip him up in the air and whichever way he heads when he comes down is the way you oughta travel, too. It's an old Mex custom."

"Well, give him a flip then. Time we was movin' along."

The Dictionary Kid gave the clumsy insect a toss with the twig. It performed a neat double somersault and lit in the sand, head-first. It remained there, ostrich-style, its hind legs kicking feebly.

Calamity was rewarding it with solemn attention.

"Gosh, now!" he said finally, just what d'ye make outa that?"

The Kid grinned cheerfully. "Reckon it means we oughta stay right here a spell," he declared. He reclined again, head on the boulder. A few moments and he was snoring peacefully again.

CR-RACK! A pistol shot echoed flatly from the boulders up on the ridge. A bullet thudded into the sand, inches from the Dictionary Kid's head, in the exact spot where the tumble bug had been do-

ing his balancing act. The bug had vanished now. All that remained was a slug furrow in the sand.

Calamity promptly jack-knifed behind the tree. The Dictionary Kid flipped over on his belly with lizard agility, his Colt leveled across the boulder which a split second before had been his pillow.

"Gosh a-mighty!" Calamity's voice was a hoarse whisper. "It sure's lucky that bug wasn't on yore nose then!"

Cr-rack! A second shot clipped leaves from the palo verde. They sifted down on the flattened Kid.

"Somebody must of mistook us for two other fellers," said Calamity. "Look, there he is now! Up among them rocks!"

As he spoke, a rider burst into view, spurring hard, and hitting for the canyon trail that Calamity and the Dictionary Kid had just descended. He was waving a six-shooter in one hand. The other gripped a canvas bag that dangled from his saddle horn. He wore a black Stetson like Calamity's. He was of similar build, tall and slim, with bottleneck shoulders.

The distance was nearly two hundred yards. The Kid coarse-sighted across the boulder and squeezed. The rider stiffened. His left hand left the saddle horn. He gripped the injured member under his gun-arm as he vanished over a rise. The canvas bag fell.

THE Dictionary Kid sprang to his feet, captured the reins, and vaulted to leather. He ascended the ridge at a run.

He came back with the canvas bag. He dropped it to the sand at Calamity's feet. It gave forth a pleasant, metallic clink. The Kid's eyes bulged excitedly.

"There's been a holdup!" he gasped. "Look at the name on that bag!"

The canvas bag was lettered with the name: "Los Coches Bank."

"Mebbeso we'll never have to work no more!" babbled the Kid. "Mebbeso we're millionaires and don't know it!"

Calamity clawed open the drawstrings of the money bag and peered inside. Then he looked up at the Kid, his long face longer than usual.

"There was a holdup, alright enough. But not at no bank."

"What you driving at?"

CALAMITY dipped a hand into the bag and let a handful of the contents filter sadly through his fingers.

"Just iron washers, savvy? That murderous citizen must of held up a hardware store."

Spang! A third shot came from the ridge, farther down. In the same instant a hole ripped through the crown of Calamity's black Stetson. The hat jumped, then tilted down over his left eye. A voice roared down from the ridge:

"Poke 'em up, *hombres!*"

In unison Calamity and the Dictionary Kid stretched their arms above their heads. Then the voice came again, triumphantly:

"C'mon, boys! I got 'em cold! Divvyin' up the loot!"

The Kid twisted in his saddle and saw a rider pause on the ridge, brandishing a saddle carbine. A half dozen others, on sweat-lathered horses, topped the rise and started down toward the *palo verde.*

Calamity's tilted hat shut off his view. "Who-all is it?" he asked.

"A large gent with pop eyes and a longhorn mustache," said the Kid. "He has a star pinned on his vest and he looks plumb irritated about something."

"At a rough guess," groaned Calamity, "I'd say it was the sheriff. I always knowed tumble bugs was unlucky!"

The big man reached them. He

knocked Calamity's hat off with his gun barrel.

"It's our man, boys. Black hat and all. Must of had this other jigger waitin' fer him here!"

One of the grim-faced posse dismounted.

"Good leather, Sheriff! Let's load up the money and head back."

"Head back for where?" asked the Dictionary Kid. "If I ain't inquisitive?"

"Fer Los Coches!" rumbled the sheriff. "An' jail!"

"Jail? Say, this is plumb foolish!" protested Calamity.

"It surer'n blazes is!" The new speaker was a crooked-nosed man with a strangely high-pitched voice. The Kid pricked up his ears. He had heard that voice somewhere before. "The hyena is right!" the crooked-nosed man went on. "They ain't no need to jail neither one o' them! How about it, gents?"

There was a chorus of agreement.

"That *palo verde* looks big enough," decided the man with the crooked nose. "Now, who's got a good, strong rope?"

"Hold on a minute," spoke up the Kid. "We're just a coupla buckaroos outa jobs. Don't tell me you string up men around here for bein' outa jobs!"

THE sheriff growled at the crooked-nosed man.

"Don't go off half-cocked, Badger! I aim to question these *hombres!*"

Badger was evidently anxious that no questions be asked or answered. He flung a borrowed loop over Calamity's shoulders. As he did so, the Kid kicked out with a booted toe. With a shrill yowl of pain, Badger grabbed his newly-damaged nose and stumbled back against his horse. The other man on the ground swore and went for his gun.

Calamity hit him on the jaw, knocking him sprawling.

The sheriff spurred between them.

"Keep yore shirts on, everybody!" he shouted. He swung the saddle gun commandingly. "If there's any shootin' around here, I'll be doin' it!"

The posse subsided sullenly. The sheriff turned to the Kid.

"Now start talkin', you! Talk fast, like you ride!"

"We never rode fast, nowhere," said the Kid. "Take a look-see at our means o' locomotion if you're skeptical."

"HE means our hosses," explained Calamity. "You notice they ain't sweated none, like yores. The *hombre* yo're after fogged past here. We swapped lead with him. He dropped that bag and sort of hurried along."

The rider Calamity had knocked down scrambled to his feet and thrust a hand in the canvas bag. He scooped out a clinking heap of the iron washers.

"Well, I'll be a—!" he began.

"Somebody search this tallish gent," interrupted the sheriff. "Mebbe it's a trick. Mebbe he's got the cash on him."

The man rose from the bag and went through Calamity's pockets. From the vest he produced a folded slip of yellow paper. He handed it up to the sheriff. The sheriff unfolded it and a puzzled frown came to his face.

"A Horned-O pay check," he said, "signed by old MacDuffy."

"Dated when?" Badger snapped.

"Yestiddy!"

The Dictionary Kid grinned.

"Sheriff, it looks like a old-fashioned necktie party has been plumb ruined. Spoiling all Mister Badger's notions of a good time." As he spoke, the Kid's eyes studied the gentleman with the buckled nose. The face, as well as the treble voice, was hauntingly familiar.

The posse was silent for a long

moment. One of the men finally spoke.

"Came almighty near bein' too hasty, looks like," he said in a sheepish manner.

"Whereat did that other jigger head for?" the sheriff asked.

"Up canyon," the Kid told him.

The sheriff turned his horse, then hesitated. A dark screen of rain was veiling the hills now. There was an oppressiveness about the heat that portended a drenching shower over the mesa land.

"Ain't no use," opined the sheriff. "His trail will be gully-washed in five minutes more. Hope you and yore pardner don't bear no harsh notions about our citizens. On account o' what almost took place just now."

"Los Coches must be a mighty moral community," said the Dictionary Kid, "when they crave to string up folks for stealing buggy washers."

"It ain't that," said the sheriff. "Whoever stuck up the bank this morning took real money. Something all-fired funny here."

The Dictionary Kid shot another look at Badger.

"Mebbeso we better dangle along back to Los Coches with you anyhow, Sheriff," he suggested.

"All-fired glad if you would. Better we make tracks outa here before the storm rips down."

"My sentiments, exactly," declared Calamity, getting to his horse and swinging aboard.

NINE men took the back trail for Los Coches where seven had started in pursuit of the black-hatted outlaw. Cutting sheets of rain slashed them, gutting the trail to yellow rivulets of mud. Calamity and the Dictionary Kid rode stirrup to stirrup.

The Kid spoke his vague thoughts concerning the now silent and sullen Badger.

"I shore met up with that jasper with the sprung ol' factory organ somewheres before."

"Me, I was thinkin' the same," nodded Calamity.

The two of them furtively studied Badger. Finally the Kid uttered a pleased ejaculation.

"I got it, Calamity! Lessen I'm mighty bad mistook, Badger is the jasper who held us up when we was comin' outa Mexico that time. With the bug-chasin' perfessor!"

Calamity whacked his thigh.

"By jingo, yuh're right! It's him! Funny I fergot. Bet he felt sort o' put out when he opened them specimen cases he stole, and found they contained nothin' but pickled grasshopper and such. Including tumble—I mean *pinacate* bugs."

THE Kid spurred up alongside the sheriff.

"This here handsome an' amiable Mister Badger a reg'lar member o' your community, Sheriff?" he inquired genially.

"Been in town about a year," the sheriff said. "Funny thing, too. He runs the hardware store."

The Kid whistled.

"Reckon he'll reward us for returnin' these here buggy washers?"

Badger overheard. He rode up, snarling.

"What's all this hocus-pocus about a reward?" he asked nastily.

"Nothin' much," answered the Kid. "Only I'm beginnin' to think about bugs again. You int'rested in bugs, Mister Badger?"

The expression on Badger's face, as he muttered wordlessly and fell back in the column of horsemen, puzzled the sheriff.

By the time the posse reached Los Coches, the sky had cleared and the sun beat down with its usual dazzling brilliance. Los Coches had little to boast of in the way of civic beauty.

But there was a false-fronted build-

ing on a dusty corner that gladdened the eye of the Kid.

"Unless my vision is plumb impaired," he remarked, "that edifice beyond the hitch-rack is a—bar!"

"An' we all shore need a drink," agreed the sheriff. "It makes a feller's clothes dry faster."

Calamity failed to be cheered by the prospect.

"Me, I'm sure hopin' you don't put on no performance like last time we was up to Flagstaff," he told the Kid.

"Fear not," spoke the Dictionary Kid. "Though a good man tarry in a vile place, his heart is immune to the depravities of environment."

"What's that?" asked the sheriff.

"It's a bad sign," Calamity predicted.

"Well, let's light." The sheriff swung off at the hitch-rail. "It's a vile place, just like you say. Badger owns it, along with the hardware store. If there was another o-asis in town, I'd see this one get fly-blowed to hell and back before I went in it."

"Mister Badger ain't one o' your favorites, then?" ventured the Kid.

"He ain't nobody's favorite," the sheriff said.

HE entered the saloon, the posse following.

At the bar, the Kid bellied up to Badger.

"Mister, if I say I'm sorry about prodding your nose, mebbeso you can cash a Horned-O paycheck," he said.

"I can!" Badger spat venomously. "But I won't!"

The sheriff slapped a ten-spot on the bar.

"Forgit yore check, gents. This here town owes you a few drinks."

The Kid's thirst had strangely vanished. He stepped back from the bar.

"On second thoughts," he said quietly, "mebbeso I better abstain right now."

He started for the street. The sheriff elbowed Calamity.

"Yore pardner don't hit me as no owl-hoot troublemaker, like you let on."

"Just wait," Calamity said sadly. "An' make mine rye."

IN something like fifteen minutes, the Dictionary Kid returned. There was a light of elation in his eye. He carried two thin, black metal cases with leather handles.

Badger's eyes went dark at the sight of him. He backed clear of the crowd as the Kid swung the two cases on the bar.

"What's comin' off?" the sheriff wanted to know.

"You ever see these anywheres before?" asked the Kid.

"Nope. What—?"

"I found 'em on a back shelf in Mister Badger's hardware store." Badger was backing toward the door as the Kid spoke. "Yessir, Sheriff, these here specimen cases int'rested me plenty."

Calamity whacked the bar.

"On account of they bein' the bug luggage what was stole from the perfessor down in Mexico!" he exclaimed.

"Exac'ly," said the Kid. "But I reckon they ain't filled with bugs no more. They're too blame heavy."

Badger was at the door now. He ripped out an oath and a hand flashed toward his holster. But out of the corner of his eye, the Dictionary Kid had been watching him. The Kid's hand had strayed, with apparent aimlessness, to a sheet of sticky fly paper at the end of the bar by the window.

He now seized the well-populated, glue-like mess, whirled, leaped, and plopped it squarely onto Badger's hate-twisted face. His other hand knocked Badger's six-gun to the floor just as it roared and thudded a leaden slug into the bar.

Badger spluttered and clawed desperately at his face.

"Thunderation!" roared the sheriff. "What-fer'd you do that?"

"To cover up Mister Badger's physiognomy," grinned the Kid, "before somebody else up and reckernized it. Less I'm plumb wrong, it's good for a thousand dollars reward down on the Border!"

An amazed shout from the men at the bar caused the stunned sheriff to whirl around. Calamity had pried open one of the specimen cases. It no longer contained rare pickled insects. It was stuffed, instead, with a bulging assortment of cash.

"Migosh!" the sheriff blurted. "There she is, the missin' bank money!"

He plunged savagely at Badger then, and ripped the sticky fly paper from the long-suffering Badger countenance.

"I savvy the whole play now!" the lawman victoriously declared. "Yuh was in cahoots with that jigger in the black hat, wasn't yuh, Badger? Then after he pulled the bank job, yuh up an' doublecrossed yore own side-kick. I always had yuh figured thataway, Badger! Yuh gave him the washers and hung onto the real *dinero* yore ownself."

The sheriff then backed Badger, wincing under the threat of the bigger man's fists, into a corner.

"I allus figgered yuh had a owl-hoot record somewheres," he continued. "But this yere young trail-ridin' jasper was too plumb smart fer yuh." He turned to the Dictionary Kid. "Feller, I knowed you and yore pardner was smart soon as I saw that Horned-O paycheck. Old MacDuffy, he don't let many fellers collect a entire month's wages from him, the old buzzard!"

The Dictionary Kid's complacent grin vanished.

"I don't quite foller you, Sheriff," he admitted.

"Yuh don't? Why, that Scotchman ribs his help outa everything that's comin' to 'em, most always. Lucky to git away with their pants! Huh, MacDuffy mighty near hornswoggled me in a hoss trade awhile back. He had a colt he tried to swap me—a spavinned, windbroke, stifled, locoed young hoss with fire in his eye and none in his tail!"

THE Dictionary Kid swallowed hard and grabbed at the bar.

"Didn't happen to be a little sorrel with silver mane and tail, did it?", he asked feebly.

"It shore was! That was the hoss!"

Catching Calamity's eye, the Dictionary Kid made a weak attempt at a grin.

"I plumb told you old MacDuffy said shoot!" he said.

Calamity took a hitch at his gun belt and started out of the saloon. The Dictionary Kid followed.

"Hey!" yipped the sheriff. "Whereat yuh gents a-headin' now? This yere town owes yuh a whoppin' big debt o' gratitude!"

The Dictionary Kid paused in the doorway.

"Yeah, and old MacDuffy owes me thirty bucks!" he said. "I'm goin' to collect that first!"

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YAQUI GOLD

Quest for Treasure and Desperate Struggle Against Savage Foes in the Texas Big Bend!

A Complete Novelette

By WAYNE ROGERS

Author of "The Great God Honi," etc.

When Red felt his gun being

CHAPTER I

The Living Map

"PSSSST! What's that?"

"Red" Dolliver's hand dropped lightly but warningly to his partner's arm, but Jim Benson had already spied the fracas on the sidewalk. His foot clamped down on the brake, and he quickly brought the little car to a shuddering stop beside the curb.

It was midnight; the street was poorly lighted and deserted, in one of El Paso's meanest sections. No time or place to mix in a street brawl, but as they passed the sidewalk both men had noticed the unevenness of the struggle and heard a plaintive, quavering cry for help.

From both sides of the car they leaped and sprinted back toward where three men were pounding and tugging at a whimpering, pleading figure, intent on dragging him into a car that stood at the curb.

"Please! Please! Have mercy, *señores!*" he begged, as he planted his heels against the pavement and covered his head and face as best he could.

"Here—what's the idea?" Jim Benson demanded as he ran up, followed half a step later by his partner.

One glance revealed that the victim of the assault was an old man, and that his assailants were three burly ruffians. Their response to Jim's demand was instantaneous. With a vicious blow one of them knocked the old man to the street and bent over him, while the other two turned to face the intruders.

Red Dolliver's fist lashed out as one of the men turned on him with a guttural curse. The fellow was no mean antagonist, and for a few minutes Red had his hands full. Then his heavy fist connected squarely and the thug staggered back.

Jim, too, was having plenty to do to handle a man who was taller and heavier than he. Out of the corner of his eye he saw that the old man

taken from him, he swung his mighty fist in protest

was lying on his stomach, his shirt ripped off his back, and his assailant kneeling beside him while he held a flashlight close to the prostrate man's skin.

Then the air was full of flying fists and enraged curses. Red's assailant, staggering back, fell headlong over the man kneeling on the sidewalk. As if that were a signal, the two scrambled to their feet and all three rufflans made a bee-line for their car.

The motor was still running, so it was the work of only a few seconds for them to throw the machine into gear and disappear down the street.

The old man, meanwhile, had rolled over and propped himself up on an elbow. Jim knelt beside him and helped to raise him.

"Gracias, señor, gracias," the old man panted, as he struggled to get his breath. "You were just in time."

"Are you badly hurt?" Jim asked. "Want us to take you to a hospital?"

"No hospital, please, *señor;* that is not necessary." The old fellow's voice was vehement with anxiety, and he was hastily stuffing his shirt back into his trousers. "Only get me away from here. Only do not let Buck Morgan get me again!"

"Don't worry, old-timer, those birds won't get another crack at you," Red Dolliver chimed in. "Let's take him up to our dump until we decide what to do with him, Jim."

A GREAT pair, those two partners. Along the length of the Mexican border, throughout the stormy republics of Latin America, and in many a far-flung outpost of civilization, they were well-known—always the two of them. Red Dolliver, mighty of muscle and hard of fist, and Jim Benson, no less hard-boiled than his partner but recognized by

him as the planning genius of their combination.

Between them they helped the old man to his feet and into the roadster. Then Jim drove to the little bungalow only a few blocks away.

In the light of the bungalow living room the old man proved to be a Mexican of the peon class—probably an Indian, Jim decided. His hair was white and his face was incredibly wrinkled, but his eyes sparkled with a fire that his seventy or eighty years had not been able to quench.

That he had been able to put up such a battle against his assailants was a surprise to the partners. But they were due for more of a surprise when he stripped off his ragged shirt and bared his back.

It was covered with tattooing. There were trees, lines running this way and that, queer signs, and here and there figures and words.

"You are surprised, *amigos*, but I will explain," he assured them. "You have saved me from death. I will reward you with more treasure than you will ever be able to use."

"Treasure?" the partners exclaimed as one.

"*Si, señores;* the treasure of the evil Red Curly."

HUNDREDS are the seekers who have searched the lower counties of Texas for Red Curly's treasure. Dozens are the rumors concerning it that pass from mouth to mouth. With the mention of this fabled hoard, the old man had his listeners' attention.

"It was many years ago," he told them, as he lay back in a soft armchair, "twenty years before this century began, when I, Jose Parilla, with three *companeros*, was tunneling into a mountain near El Muerto Spring. We sought a rich gold vein. Out of the south came four riders and twelve loaded burros.

"When we saw them coming we were afraid and hid, but they discovered us. It was Red Curly and his *compadres*, and the mules were loaded with stolen treasure: silver bars, gold coins and rare jewels. A mighty treasure, *amigos*. Into the solid rock they forced us to drill a great hole fifty feet deep.

"When the mighty treasure had been lowered into the hole, we filled it and cemented it over. Then one of Red Curly's men reminded him that they must make a map so that they could find the treasure again. They had no paper; nothing on which to write. Then it was that one of the others whispered to Red Curly and the leader grinned evilly.

"WHEN we had filled the hole within ten feet of the top I learned the meaning of that grin. Standing on top of the hole Red Curly shot down at my *companeros* and killed them. Only I was left alive. With a heavy heart I shoveled the dirt in on my *companeros*. When I finished, the top was smoothed over and made to appear as if the hole had never been there. Then it was my turn. They seized me and stripped off my shirt.

"'A fine parchment!' Red Curly laughed as he slapped my back.

"For two days they kept me tied down while he who had whispered to Red Curly jabbed needles into me. It was hot, *amigos*, and the pain was maddening, but when I moved they kicked me brutally. At last it was finished and Red Curly looked at me with a question in his eye. I knew that he considered whether he should kill me immediately and take my skin.

"But the good God spared me. He sent the Apaches and they killed all but Red Curly and me. As we were being pursued I saw my opportunity and slipped away from him. That is the last I ever saw of Red Curly, but I have heard that he was hanged.

Certainly he never returned for his treasure."

"And it has been lying there all these years!" Jim exclaimed "You never went back for it?"

"No, *amigo*, that treasure is not for me. It is evil money, stained with the blood of my *companeros*. For years I have tried to forget about that which I bear on my back. Men have sought me for it, but until now I have escaped.

"Buck Morgan has sought me before. Tonight he caught me, and if you had not come it would have been my death. For that I am grateful, *amigos*. Though I vowed never to return to that evil spot, I will go back with you so that you may have the treasure before it falls into the hands of other evil ones."

JIM lifted his eyes from the old man's lips and looked at Red Dolliver. In his partner's eyes he saw mirrored an excitement equal to his own. Treasure—buried treasure! The lure of it had them.

"You will take us to this treasure?" Red asked, struggling to suppress the excitement in his voice.

"*Si, señor*, that will I do—but we must act quickly. Buck Morgan already knows somewhat of the treasure. Tonight, as I lay there on the sidewalk, he read more. He will lose no time starting after it. We should go very soon."

"El Muerto Canyon is in the Big Bend," Jim considered. "We can stock up most of our supplies in Alpine. We'll get going the first thing in the morning."

"Okay," Red agreed enthusiastically. "Me—I'm ready to start as soon as I can chuck my duds into the valise."

"Very good, *amigos*, very good," Jose endorsed, as a smile of satisfaction lit up his withered face.

But in his eyes Jim caught a fleeting glimpse of something that was more than satisfaction. Was it triumph? Jim could not be sure, but it clouded his enthusiastic plans with the first hint of uneasiness.

CHAPTER II

Desert Disaster

THE three men had left El Paso in the roadster at dawn. Under its seat and in cleverly contrived compartments were stored tools that would never be employed on an automobile: emergency rations, and certain other articles of which the police might not have approved. The rumble was filled with powder and dynamite, drills, a small and compact radio, and their clothing.

By mid-afternoon they were in the heart of the Big Bend country of Texas, a land of mountains, canyons and mesas, grown over with greasewood, coarse chino grass, Spanish dagger and thorned bush.

It was here that trouble started. The motor of the car wheezed and knocked, then came to a sudden and decisive stop. Upon investigation they found the roadster had been disabled purposely. Someone had put a load of emery in the oil and it had worked its way all through the motor, smashing it up very thoroughly.

Jim was inclined to suspect Jose, but Red disagreed. They said nothing to the old man. They decided to continue on foot. Food and water were essential, likewise picks and spades and a quantity of dynamite.

Carefully they made up the packs, great heavy ones for themselves and a much lighter one for Jose. In a clump of greasewood Jim hid the radio and a few of their more valuable possessions. The rest they had to leave in the stalled car.

All night they trudged on. The first streaks of light were stealing

out of the east when they plodded into a hill-walled canyon and sank down gratefully beside a spring. But they did not get a chance to drink. Abruptly a rifle in the hand of a hidden marksman cracked sharply, the bullet whistling above their heads, driving them away.

WITH Jose in the lead, they darted and twisted their way across the canyon, while leaden messengers of death whistled about their ears.

"Buck Morgan!" Jose shouted fearfully as he ran. "It is Buck Morgan here ahead of us. Come, I know where there is a cave."

"Rotten shots—they never touched us!" Red Dolliver gloated as he dived into an opening in the rocky side of the mesa that was more like a burrow than a cave.

"Never mind, they'll have plenty of chance to practice up," Jim said grimly, as he dropped his heavy pack to the cave floor. "How do you figure we're going to get out of here? They have the place surrounded, and we haven't any too much water left."

Day brought heat—scorching, enervating heat. The glaring sun lit up the canyon with blinding brilliance, yet nowhere were Jim and Red able to see a sign of their besiegers.

"Water's about gone," Red commented, as he shook his nearly empty canteen. "I have a hunch that fellow, whoever he is, is gone. Think I'll take a chance on slipping down to the spring."

Before he was half a dozen feet from the mouth of the cave, Red knew how wrong his guess had been. From two points on the shaded opposite wall of the canyon, little puffs of smoke went up as shots cracked out and bullets sought him. To attempt to escape was suicide, so the partners piled loose rocks at the entrance of the cave and prepared to spend the day there. By turns they slept, but before nightfall they were exhausted from the heat and from lack of water.

Evening came at last, bringing some respite from the heat. As darkness fell they decided to make a break for it.

With nothing but their revolvers and their canteens they crawled from the cave as soon as night was fully descended. Not a sound came from the opposite wall. Slowly and carefully they worked their way down to the spring, with Jose following them. Still not a shot impeded their progress.

"Oh, man—water!" Red gasped as he crawled up to the spring. But as he began to lower his mouth to the inviting surface, he was yanked back quickly.

"No—no!" Jose hissed in his ear. "It is a trap! See, there, on the other bank."

ON the other bank, close to the water, lay the body of a little burro, swollen to twice its size, its blackened tongue protruding horribly from its mouth.

"Poison!" Jose whispered.

Involuntarily Red pushed back from the pool and stared in horror at its inviting water.

"Well, I'm not going back into that trap," he decided at last. "Let's go hunt up these poisoning skunks."

"There is another canyon beyond this one," Jose suggested. "I do not know; perhaps it, too, has a spring. We cannot drink the poison or fight men who stay hidden."

"Jose's right, Red," Jim endorsed. "Take hold of yourself, old-timer. We may have a devil of a long walk ahead of us."

That walk was a nightmare. The sight of the spring had served only to increase their thirst, and the hours stretched on endlessly without a sign of water. Up ahead Jose trudged along, seemingly without fatigue.

Jim began to hate him, to blame him for all their troubles. Then he knew that the heat and thirst were getting him. Red's step, too, was uncertain, and he walked miles without saying a word.

They lost all track of time and distance. Life was just a treadmill of steps, and a torture of thirst. Vaguely Jim was aware that the east was brightening. They trudged on.

Then suddenly Jose came running back to them.

"Help—it comes! Look there, ahead!" he shouted.

Jim looked, but he saw nothing. Not until he had a canteen full of water in his hands did he come back to the world of realities.

"Easy, now, take it easy," a man's voice was cautioning, but even in his semi-delirium Jim was too experienced a hand to gulp the life-saving water.

There were two men beside them, he noticed now; two men and a burro. The older of the two was a fat, heavy-set fellow with a reddish mustache; the younger a gangling chap with loose lips and shifty eyes.

"Lucky thing I met you fellers," the older man was saying. "You're about all in. What you need is a good long *siesta*. My place is just down the next canyon. Reckon you can stick it out that far?"

RUFE GREINER had looked like an angel of deliverance out on the desert, but when Jim and Red faced him across his own table there was something about the man that filled them both with distrust. They had slept all day, they found, and now a hearty meal awaited them.

"Your Mexican is out hobnobbing with the cook," Greiner explained Jose's absence. "All right, boys, pitch in and fill up."

They did, stopping only long enough to answer their host's probing questions about their experiences.

"So you're a mining engineer, eh?" he said to Jim. "Then I'm in luck. I'm doing a bit of mining here myself. Got onto one of the old Spanish workings. We take out some mighty good ore now and then. Trouble is, we can't seem to locate the main vein. I can't afford to bring experts way out here. Maybe you'd have a look at the workings for me tomorrow, eh?"

"Sure thing," Jim agreed readily. "Mighty glad to help you if I can."

GREINER puzzled him, however. The big man seemed cordial enough, yet beneath his show of friendliness Jim sensed something else. It was as if he and Red were mice being played with by a sleek, fat cat—a cat with claws ready at any moment to be unsheathed.

Yet Greiner was genuinely concerned about his mine; that was apparent. Little by little he let drop bits of information about it.

Greiner's canyon, it seemed, had once been inhabited by a tribe of Yaquis, who had long since been driven over the nearby border into Mexico. They had been working a gold mine of amazing richness, a mine which the Spaniards had tried to locate, with evidently only partial success.

That night Jim Benson lay awake long after Red's snores proved that he was dead to the world. Jim could not be so easily satisfied as Red. There were things about this layout that puzzled him.

What had become of Jose? It was curious that the Mexican had made no attempt to communicate with them during the evening. Jim could not altogether forget the light of triumph that had gleamed momentarily in the old man's eyes when he knew they would undertake the trip for the treasure.

Perhaps, as Red sometimes dis-

gustedly told him, Jim was an old woman for worrying about things, but still—

At last he fell asleep.

It was not the sun that woke Jim the next morning, but a frantic bellowing and screaming. Hopping out of bed, he looked out of the window of their upper story room and down into a clearing in which two full-grown steers were battling ferociously. Right in their path sprawled a three-quarters naked brown youngster of perhaps five or six years.

Helplessly his mother screamed and danced at a safe distance from the flying hoofs. Then like a flash Jose appeared from nowhere and darted between the infuriated animals, snatched up the tyke and scrambled back to safety.

It was a heroic thing, but what impressed Jim most strongly was the expression of horrified terror that contorted Jose's face when he saw the youngster's danger. It was as if his whole world teetered on the brink of oblivion.

NOW he was stroking the tot tenderly and crooning to him Spanish and Mexican endearments. The mother, too, had overcome her panic. Assured that her offspring was safe, she promptly cuffed and smacked him soundly, then threw her arms around Jose's neck.

"*Padre—padre mia!*" she cried, as tears rolled down her cheeks. "If it had not been for you—"

Jim Benson sat back on the bed as Jose and his entourage passed out of sight around the building. *Padre* —father. Yet Jose claimed he had not been in this country for many years.

Again Jim remembered the stalled roadster and the suspicion of Jose that had flashed across his mind at that time.

What did it all mean?

CHAPTER III

The Living Dead

IN THE full morning sunlight Rufe Greiner was not quite the man of the night before. Now there was a bloated bagginess to his face that Jim had not previously noticed, and the lines of furtive cunning around his eyes and his mouth were more pronounced.

He hovered over the table as Jim and Red ate their breakfast, obviously excited and anxious to get at the work of the day.

"We will go right down to the mine," he suggested as soon as Jim emptied his coffee cup.

As they stepped out of the building, Jim got his first clear view of the Greiner property. The dwelling was a rough, two-story building, with several nondescript little shacks grouped behind it. Some two hundred feet away was the mine shaft, and close by the mill with its young mountain of tailings spreading out behind it.

Perhaps twenty feet on the other side of the shaft stood another building. It was long and low, flat-roofed. Looked as if it might have been a mess-shack if the mine were working a large staff. There were windows only at the front end, and these were closed with heavy, barred shutters. The door, too, was stoutly barred.

A curious looking building, but somehow Jim felt that it was in keeping with the rest of the layout. There was something wrong about the place; he could sense it all about him. For one thing, there seemed to be nobody else on the premises but Greiner.

Jose and the woman with the youngster had disappeared, and there had been no further sign of the fellow who had been with Greiner out on the desert.

"Here we go," Greiner exclaimed

eagerly as they reached the shaft. "Perhaps you will go down first, Mr. Benson. And now you, Mr. Dolliver."

After they had reached the lower level Greiner's own bulk blotted the light out of the shaft as he made his way laboriously down to them.

THAT mine was a revelation to Jim Benson. In a few minutes he was convinced that Greiner actually had located one of the old Spanish workings. Stout pillars of ore supported the roof, but once they made their way into the newer sections he was amazed and shocked at the shoddiness of the timbering.

Timber was at a premium in this country, so Greiner used it as sparingly as possible. Jim could readily understand why, as he complained, he was troubled by cave-ins and slides. It was a wonder he had not had a greater catastrophe.

"There is the layout," the mine owner said, as they finished their inspection. "There are other drifts here that have been worked out entirely. But somewhere down here there is a vein that is so rich that the gold can be dug out with a chisel. It's your job to find that vein. That's what I've got you here for."

Greiner's voice had been changing, until it ended in a snarl. Jim had seen no gun on him, yet suddenly a revolver appeared in each of his hands as he backed away from them. In the same instant Jim felt his own weapon snatched from its holster.

Red, too, felt his gun being taken from him and swung his mighty fist in protest. He might better have saved the energy. He got only the barrel of a revolver across the top of his head for his pains and fell unconscious to the floor.

Greiner was not alone now. Two other huskies were ranged at his side: the long, gangling fellow Jim had seen before—and another fellow whose face was oddly familiar.

"It's up to you to find that vein," Greiner informed Jim. "The quicker you do the better it'll be for you. And you're staying here till you do —get that? When that *hombre* comes out of it, tell him that's just a sample of what he'll get if he tries to start trouble."

Then, to the fellow whose face Jim was striving to place, "Come on, Buck; we've wasted too much time already. Get the men on the job."

Buck—Buck Morgan! In a flash Jim placed the fellow. This was the thug with whom he had traded blows that night on the street in El Paso! This was Buck Morgan!

WHILE Jim worked over the unconscious Red, Rufe Greiner and his assistants made their way back to the shaft. Red's eyes were just opening when a new noise filled the tunnels of the old mine—the scrape and shuffle of feet as men started climbing down the ladder and making their way through the workings.

Without a word they filed by, a procession of wraiths, of scarecrows. Gaunt and ragged, their eyes dull and unseeing, they shuffled mechanically to their stations. Soon the place was filled with the noise of drills, of shovels scooping up ore, and of feet trudging with loaded sacks to the bottom of the shaft.

Apparently there was no boss over these automatons, no slave-driver to keep them at their tasks. Yet they worked steadily, almost feverishly.

"Looks like a lot of ghosts," Red muttered, "but they sure can work. What kind of a hell is this we've fallen into?"

"Dunno, old-timer, but I'm going to find out mighty quick," Jim assured him, as he strode over to one of the workers.

It was not until he grabbed a shovel and started to work beside

one of the toilers that he could get an answer from them. Then the fellow he was helping looked at him without interest.

"There's no time to talk," he said in a weary, lifeless monotone. "Two new men means that the quota goes up."

"The quota? You mean you have to produce a certain amount per man? How do they know who isn't doing his share? Who are these people anyway? Why do you fellows let them get away with this sort of thing?"

JIM had many other questions, but as he gazed into the pale, apathetic face of the poor drudge beside him, the answers to some of them came to him unspoken. Ragged, unshorn, dirty, wasted and sick, these poor devils were broken in health and in spirit. If they ever had any resistance, it was beaten and starved out of them.

When the day's quota of ore fell short they did not eat. Under the guns of the husky guards they were helpless, and resistance was out of the question.

"Once or twice a newcomer tried to start trouble," the shoveler droned on in his monotone. "Once we refused to come up the shaft. They sent down gas. Terrible stuff that burned our eyes and made us choke. We had to come up. Next day we had to send up fifty percent more than usual. Same the day after that."

A mile of lost souls, of men who had vanished from the face of the earth. Tricked to this place, and imprisoned here to toil their lives away.

"I've been here nearly two years," the wasted fellow remarked listlessly. "Some of them have been here nearly five. They don't last much longer than that—even the best of them."

Five years of living hell! That would be his fate and Red's unless they managed their escape very soon, Jim realized. Once they became enmeshed in this deadly routine, all hope and strength would be ground out of them.

"Wait till we get out of here!" Red vowed hotly. "Wait till I get my hands on that fellow Greiner!"

Two days later Red admitted the uselessness of resistance. Whenever the poor slaves came up out of the shaft for meals, they were met and shepherded by husky guards armed with clubs and revolvers. To attempt resistance meant a blow over the head—in emergency a bullet.

For most of them, all thought of resistance was a thing of the past. Like poor blind human moles, they toiled underground most of the day and then scurried for their bunkhouses when they came up out of the shaft. So long had they been in semi-darkness that the light of day tortured their eyes and blinded them, rendered them helpless.

THE long low house proved to be a combination bunkhouse and mess hall. Around the walls the bunks were built. In the center was a long table on which the nauseous meals were served. The place was filthy and stagnant, improperly ventilated and dimly lighted by weak lamps.

It was a pesthole for the twenty men now cooped up in it, but escape from it was out of the question. Its sturdy walls and heavily barred windows made it a veritable jail.

On the third day Greiner sought out his new recruits.

"Had any success yet?" he asked interestedly, as if he were no other than a regular mine owner interrogating his superintendent. "Come now—you mustn't take it that way," as he saw the bleak look on Jim's face and the hot rage rising in Red Dolliver. "I had to have expert advice, you know, and how else could

I get it? I heard of you, Benson, so I decided to get you."

"Then Jose's yarn was all a cock-and-bull story, eh?" Jim snapped.

"Jose is a good actor," Greiner chuckled satisfiedly, "but I trained him in that yarn. We'll have to use it again when we need recruits."

"Not if I get my hands around his throat, you won't," Red growled. "I've got a little argument to settle with him."

"Now, now, you mustn't be too hard on Jose," Greiner soothed, mockingly. "He had no choice. You see, he's quite wild about his grandson. I held the brat here and—well, Jose knew what would happen to the kid if he failed."

"You dirty devil!" Red Dolliver threw caution to the winds and leaped for Greiner's throat, but before he could lay a finger on the fat fiend two of his bullies were in action. Red's fists were helpless against their heavy clubs.

"FOOLS!" Greiner spat contemptuously. "I'm giving you a chance to get out of here. Find that main vein for me and you can go. If you don't you'll stay here until you sweat and cough your lousy lives away. Get that? I want action. I'll give you two weeks to produce results. If you ain't located the stuff for me by then my boys will take a hand and speed you up."

His "boys" were like human wolves, slavering and grinning at the prospect of being able to try out their tortures on these new victims. Two weeks of grace Greiner had given them, Jim considered. Two weeks to effect a way out of this death trap—or to die in it.

For long hours, while Red slaved to do the work of two men, Jim wandered through the musty tunnels and drifts of the old mine. Nowhere could he find traces of gold in worthwhile quantities, much less the bonanza that Greiner was seeking. The mine was pretty well worked out. And nowhere could he find a possible avenue of escape.

With special care he studied those places where cave-ins had put a stop to the work. In each case the accident seemed perfectly natural. The timbering was so sloppily erected that he wondered how it held at all. In each of these cave-ins tons of debris blocked the tunnel so that it would have taken months of work to clear it away. Escape through one of these was out of the question.

IT was not until the beginning of the second week that he found the slightest encouragement. Then he was in a far distant part of the mine, so far removed from the workers that he could not even hear the sound of their picks and drills. All was still in this old tunnel, the air musty and dead and the dust of ages on the floor.

Jim had followed it to its end, a worked-out face of rock, and was about to turn away disappointed when a slight noise came to his ears. It sounded like the muffled tinkle of a pick against rock. Could it be an echo from the distant workers? He strained his ears but no sound of their labor came to him.

Again, faintly, came that muffled clink! It seemed to come from beneath him. On his hands and knees Jim went over the floor of that tunnel inch by inch, sneezing and coughing as the dust he raised threatened to suffocate him. After an hour of searching his pick tapped against a part of the floor that gave a hollow echo.

Eagerly he went to work on it, scooping away the dust, prying with his pick, until, close against the wall, he uncovered a slab nearly three feet square. When he wrenched it out of place he peered down into a black hole that smelled like a musty

old tomb. Notches were chipped into the rock for steps, and Jim soon found himself in another gallery of the old mine, a lower level, extending far beyond the upper tunnels Greiner was working.

More clearly now he could hear the distant clink of a pick.

With his light extinguished Jim groped his way stealthily along the old tunnel. Gradually the sound of the pick became louder. At last, far down the tunnel, he saw a brown-skinned man, naked to the waist, picking away at the face of the rock. The ore broke off easily and it fell heavily to the floor. Even from that distance Jim knew that it was high grade.

Had he stumbled onto Greiner's bonanza? And was there another way out of the mine down this tunnel? There was no opportunity now to investigate. He would have to come back at night, when this brown-skinned fellow was not at work. But how to get back into the mine after Greiner's slaves were locked up for the night?

CHAPTER IV

Light In the Dark

WHEN Red Dolliver climbed out of the shaft that night a pick handle was held securely by his belt beneath his shirt and trousers, while the head stretched its length down one trouser leg. Jim Benson's shirt and trousers covered the wooden handle of a shovel, while against his belly reposed the iron scoop.

"It's our one chance to get out of this place," Red agreed when he had heard of the new-found tunnel. "If we sink a hole in the floor in the back of the bunkhouse we won't have more than twenty feet to go to reach the shaft."

Carefully Jim explained their plan to their fellow prisoners, after their jail had been locked up for the night. Here and there hope beamed momentarily in a haggard face, but for the most part these men had forgotten how to hope. By night they were too tired to wield a pick or shovel in what they were convinced would be only another abortive bid for freedom.

"All right; we'll handle this ourselves," Jim told them finally, "but there is not to be a word said about what we're doing. One word to Greiner or his thugs and I'll have the life of the squealer!"

EVEN this threat was taken apathetically. Fortunately for Jim's plan, Greiner and his assistants seldom came into the bunkhouse, and then never to the rear of the noisome place. By carefully packing the displaced dirt against the walls and under the bunks much of it could be hidden from view.

Jim marked off the digging space and went at it, but it was Red Dolliver's great strength that did most of the work. For three nights they worked steadily, sinking a hole nearly ten feet deep and then burrowing a tunnel across the intervening distance between it and the mine shaft. It was almost morning of the third night when Jim's pick broke through into the shaft. Carefully he stopped up the hole it had made.

That day was the most trying of their captivity. Not until they were sure that none of Greiner's men would be in the mine or around the shaft did they dare break through the thin barrier that still stood between them and the shaft.

It was the work of only a few minutes to smash it down, but from that moment on they would have to move fast, they knew. In the morning the hole in the shaft would probably be discovered. That gave them only the night hours in which to make their escape.

"It will be better if you fellows stay right here," Jim advised their fellow captives. "You haven't the strength to tackle the desert. If we get through we'll be back with plenty of men to free you."

Carrying only a canteen of water and armed with the pick and shovel handles, Jim and Red climbed through the aperture and into the shaft. Not until they were at the bottom did they light their lamps. Carefully Jim led the way to the hidden tunnel entrance, then down into the lower working.

ALL was now silent in the lower tunnel but they made their way along it cautiously and quietly nevertheless. For a moment they paused at the spot where the brown-skinned man had been at work, and Jim raised his lamp to the rock surface.

"Almost free gold!" he whispered in awe, as he fingered the rich stuff. "There are millions of dollars here!"

"Yeah, but me, I'm more interested in getting out of this hole," said Red Dolliver. All the treasure fever had left him.

Shortly beyond this point the tunnel widened and opened into a rocky cavern replete with a full assortment of stalagmites and stalactites. A short distance beyond another opening indicated where the tunnel continued.

Before the partners had a chance to cross the cavern, however, their progress was surprisingly interrupted. Noiselessly a brown-skinned fellow leaped upon Red's back, and in another moment Jim was wrestling with two others.

The fight was fast and furious, broken only by grunts from the brown-skinned battlers and a yelp of pain as Jim's pick handle crashed down on a black-haired skull. Red, unable to use his weapon, was locked in a wrestling embrace, precariously holding his balance as he and his agile foe teetered about the cavern.

Jim's opponent now had hold of the pick handle, too, and it was useless as a weapon. The fellow was lithe and muscular and Jim had all he could do to keep the brown, searching fingers away from his throat. Gambling everything on a bit of strategy, he suddenly released his grip on the handle and put all his strength into a vicious uppercut.

It connected cleanly and the brown-skinned battler was lifted off his feet before he fell to the floor in a heap. By this time Red and his twisting, squirming opponent had lost their balance. Backward over a stalagmite they plunged. A low groan escaped Red's lips, but his fingers were tightly clenched in his opponent's throat and he did not relinquish his hold until the fellow was limp.

But when he tried to stand up he could not; his ankle had been broken or sprained on that treacherous stalagmite.

"OF all the luck!" he cursed quietly. "There's nothing for it but for you to go on alone, Jim. It's a cinch I can't go wandering around the desert with this ankle."

"What will you do?" Jim demanded.

"I'll get myself back to the bunkhouse before these fellows' playmates come looking for them." Dolliver regarded the prostrate men with interest. "Indians all right," he pronounced. "Apaches, maybe—though they look mighty like Yaquis to me. If you can tell me what Yaquis are doing roaming around on this side of the border?"

"That's just another conundrum to add to our collection," Jim told him, "but if I can get out of here and get help we'll find the answers to all of them. Are you sure you can get back to the bunkhouse?"

"Don't worry about me, feller. Get

going while you have the chance."

Silently they shook hands with a grip that meant more than words. Then Jim crossed the cavern and disappeared down the tunnel. Endless it seemed, winding on and on into the ground.

Then, at last, he felt a slight stirring of air. The entrance must be close ahead.

It was. Jim came upon it suddenly, and immediately he sensed the familiarity of the place. There were the rocks he and Red had wheeled into place. There was the spot from which he had traded shots with the gunman across the canyon.

This was El Muerto Canyon! Down below there was the spring and as Jim watched an antelope bent over the water and slaked its thirst. When the animal had had sufficient it ambled off down the canyon without the slightest ill effects.

Jim rubbed his eyes unbelievingly. So old Jose had deliberately brought them there to the mouth of this cave so that he could take a rest to break the trip back to the mine. And he had deliberately led them around in a circle for weary hours until Greiner had appeared to take them in charge. Even the poisoned spring had been an artistic touch furnished for their benefit, to discourage any attempt to escape.

WITH his canteen slung over his shoulder and his pick handle clutched grimly Jim set out on that weary march across the desert to the stalled roadster. That was as far as he intended to go. Once he reached the car he would be able to deal himself a new hand in this game. Then he would return to Red and face the music with him.

It was dawn before Jim trudged wearily up to the auto. So far as he could see nothing in the car had been touched, nor had their belongings in the greasewood thicket been disturbed. Lifting the cushion from the seat, he inserted his hand into a compartment behind the back-rest and drew out a flat automatic and several clips of cartridges.

Then he climbed into the rumble, after clearing out the supplies it contained, and pried loose the forward footboards. From a compartment revealed beneath these he dragged three wooden boxes, one long and narrow, the other two flat and square. With straps and cords from the luggage he tied these boxes together and fastened them packwise on his back. Then he was ready.

With a grim smile on his face Jim Benson turned back the way he had come.

CHAPTER V

The Drink of Death

IT WAS mid-afternoon before Jim returned to El Muerto Canyon and made his way carefully to the little cave entrance. Nowhere in the canyon was there a sign of life, but as he cautiously made his way through the long tunnel he had the unmistakable feeling that others had passed through it recently.

So it was no surprise to him when he heard sounds up the tunnel. Quickly he extinguished his light and groped his way slowly in the dark. That was necessary for only a short way. Soon he spied a light up ahead of him, and the sounds were becoming plainer.

As he approached the end of the tunnel, where it debouched into the cavern, he crawled on his hands and knees—then stopped amazed as he came to the point from which he could see into the fantastic place. Now it was filled with humans more weird than the fantastic ornaments which decorated it.

On a throne-like natural platform

at one side stood a wild-looking figure, his brown body streaked with black and white paint, his head covered with a hideous mask from which a wild crest of shaggy hair waved and tossed. Beside him were two more creatures who looked as if they had stepped from the nether regions, and grouped in a swaying circle were at least two dozen Indians, naked except for breechclouts and the paint with which they were daubed.

Jim Benson had seen the Yaquis in their ceremonial paint; now there was no doubt in his mind that he was looking at a band of the fierce warriors from the south. They were painted for the hysterical war dance and already were worked up to fever pitch.

AS he watched they broke again into their barbaric rhythm, leaping and yelling, the cave curiously amplifying and muffling the sound at the same time. From behind his mask the leader's fierce eyes gleamed wickedly as the light from the sputtering torches flashed on them. Then he held up his right arm for silence.

"Bring them in!" he commanded regally when quiet was restored.

Immediately his two bemasked satellites sprang to do his bidding and returned from the other side of the cavern with the bound forms of Buck Morgan and his gangling, loose-lipped companion. Stark fear had transformed them.

The appearance of the captives threw the leader—Jim recognized him as a dread Yaqui medicine man—into a frenzy, and he danced with such fury that it did not seem possible his aged limbs would sustain him any longer. Suddenly he pirouetted and stopped short.

"For long years I have kept the faith and guarded the treasure of our forefathers," he orated to his followers. "You have gone to other lands, but always I have stayed here beside our ancient heritage, to protect it from the greedy hands of the white man."

Jim Benson knew that voice. There before him stood Jose, the man whose tattooed back had led him and Red into all this trouble.

"I have worked for the white man; I have suffered indignities at his hands; my body bears the marks of his greedy scheming. I have not complained, because my place was here beside the walls of gold. When those walls were in danger I have protected them.

"But now the white men know our secret and the treasure of our people is no longer safe! They thirst for the Yaqui gold! Let them drink!"

From a little fire that smoldered near the platform he took a metal cup and advanced toward the prisoners. In a twinkling he held the cup to Buck Morgan's tortured lips and forced its contents down the captive's throat. Morgan screamed horribly and strained every muscle, but his captors held him fast until his body sank limply to the ground.

"Gold—molten gold!" Jim whispered to himself as he identified the terrible drink that was even then being held up to the clenched jaws of the other prisoner.

THE Indians were all staring fascinatedly at the ghastly drama being enacted there before them, and Jim took advantage of their preoccupation to crawl warily into the cavern and, keeping to the wall and using the stalagmites for cover, make his way slowly toward the other tunnel.

"That is the only way to stop the mouth of the white man once he discovers the Yaquis' gold!" Jose screamed. Again the Indians, now completely reverted to savagery, were weaving and swaying in their bestial dance. "There are other white men who know the Yaquis' se-

cret. None must live to spread the story!"

That meant death for Red Dolliver and all those poor slaves up in the bunkhouse, Jim knew. He must get to them and warn them, must organize them for some sort of defense.

Little more than a dozen feet lay between him and the tunnel mouth when Jose's wild yell brought the dancers up short.

"Now to the others!" he screamed as he leaped from his perch and took the lead in a serpentine course toward the tunnel.

The Indians were too close for Jim to attempt a dash for the tunnel mouth himself. All he could do was throw himself flat on the ground behind a barrel-like stalagmite and lie there motionless until the last yelling dancer had disappeared into the tunnel.

Fortunately for him he raised his head cautiously to be sure there were no others on guard. Half a dozen feet away squatted one of Jose's assistants in his full regalia. Jim did not dare to risk a shot. With a leap he brought the automatic crashing down on the fellow's skull.

THEN he crept to the tunnel mouth and listened. As soon as he deemed it safe he entered the black hole himself, feeling his way as best he could, while the howls of the Indians became fainter and more muffled ahead of him.

At last he reached the end of the tunnel and scrambled up the rock into the working above. The mine was deserted, except for the sprawled bodies of three of Greiner's assistants, and Jim raced toward the shaft without interruption.

He was still twenty-five feet away when a dull boom sounded in the shaft and a wall of air heavy with dust and the acrid smell of burned powder came rushing to meet him. Jose had blown up the tunnel leading from the mine shaft to the bunkhouse and his prisoners were now safely penned in their trap.

That explosion ruined Jim's plan. Now he could not get to Red and help him defend the bunkhouse. Desperately he cast about for a way to help his partner—and thought of the dead Indian back at the tunnel mouth. Instantly he was on his way, racing back through the deserted workings to the hidden tunnel.

CHAPTER VI

Yaqui Madness

NO FOOD had been served in the bunkhouse all day and neither Greiner nor his assistants had come near the building. The shots and strange noises outside their prison interested only Red Dolliver. The colony of living dead men just sat on their bunks and waited they knew not for what.

Red could not understand the strange yells and shots, but he knew that something unusual was afoot. With threats and cuffs he bullied the human moles into some semblance of activity. Under his direction they broke up the bunks to provide themselves with clubs.

By late afternoon Red could stand the mystery no longer. With a club he smashed away at one of the barred windows until he knocked loose a plank from the shutter and was able to see what was going on outside.

Greiner's house and the shacks behind it were deserted. Nowhere was there a sign of life about the place, but before long there was plenty of activity. Suddenly the mine shaft began to spew forth an amazing stream of painted savages. Leading the pack came the fantastically garbed medicine man.

Red counted thirty of them, armed with clubs, knives and revolvers

they had taken from Greiner's men. In a swarm they descended on the bunkhouse and threw back the outside bar on the door.

"Ready now!" he cautioned his pitiful group of defenders.

RED, armed with a stout club, took his place nearest the door. The moment it was pushed in his club went into action, crashing down on Indian skulls right and left. Howls of pain were his reward, and the mob gave way, dragging back with it two who had been knocked unconscious.

"Victory number one," he encouraged the trembling ragamuffins behind him. "Now stand back away from that door. They know what to expect and will not be so anxious to walk in for more."

Twice more the Yaquis tried to carry the door by storm, but the rain of blows which met them in the narrow opening was too much for them. Outside Jose was exhorting them to renewed efforts and the howls of the war dance came in terrifyingly to the panicky defenders.

Then Jose resorted to fire. Helpless to defend the back of the building, the imprisoned men had to listen to the preparations as kindling was piled against the wall and the flames started to leap up to the roof. Gradually the heat made the rear of the building untenable, and the flames were spreading rapidly toward the front.

"Nothing to do but make a rush for it," Red Dolliver grated, as he eyed the oncoming flames. "Better than frying here."

Grimly he watched the raging furnace. The heat in the building was already terrific. It was only a matter of a few minutes now before they would have to charge out into that mob of howling savages.

Too wary to chance further contact with those head-splitting clubs, Jose's tribesmen were content to circle the doorway at a safe distance. It would be only a matter of seconds before their victims must come out, and they knew it.

Now that death was staring him in the face Red found that he could regard it dispassionately. Too bad to go out like this at the hands of a lot of savages with whom he really had no argument. Jim would bring help sooner or later, but by that time there would be nothing left but corpses to tell the story.

The flesh on the back of his neck was baking; he could smell the cloth of his shirt scorching. The miserable crowd huddled around him began to whine plaintively.

"Okay, you fellows," he said grimly. "Let's— Wait a minute! What kind of deviltry is that?"

"THAT" was a commotion that had started at the mouth of the mine shaft. Out of it popped a hideous, leering mask—but beneath the mask was a white man. All the paint with which he was daubed could not entirely cover his white skin.

Now the fellow was out of the shaft and was squatting on the ground, contorting himself in a weird sort of dance while behind him he was busily dragging something heavy and shiny out of the shaft. Red Dolliver's eyes threatened to pop out of his head.

"He's a white man!" Jose screamed in his rage. "Don't let him fool you! He has killed Lone Horse and stolen his vestments!"

With his revolver spitting bullets a big buck led the charge and the mob turned as one man to sweep that fantastic figure away from the shaft head. But Jose was not the only one who had read that strange performance correctly.

His club swinging in a deadly circle around his head, and a wild rebel yell heralding his approach, Red Dolliver charged out of the bunk-

house, covered the twenty feet to the shaft in a split second, and flung himself on the ground beside the white Indian.

"And what in hell are you doing here, I'd like to know?" he demanded as he began feeding a belt of ammunition into the machine-gun Jim Benson had just managed to rig up.

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat! came the deadly hammering, and a roaring, hissing stream of lead swept the blood-mad Yaquis irresistibly before it.

That deadly fire blasted the Yaquis away like leaves before a hurricane. In a few minutes nothing remained of Jose's tribesmen but a dozen lifeless bodies and a few racing figures rapidly disappearing down the canyon.

"LOOKS as if you were getting kinda warm," Jim observed as he pulled the mask over his head and watched the flaming roof of the bunkhouse go tumbling down in a shower of sparks. "What do you think—have we cleaned up things satisfactorily?"

Red did not know whether or not things were really all cleaned up. He was keenly interested in the whereabouts of one Rufe Greiner, and there were a few things he wanted to discuss with Jose also.

But that was not to be. As they were patching up several wounded Yaquis and looking for others the sound of sobbing brought them to the rear of Greiner's house. There a woebegone youngster sat contemplating a gruesome spectacle.

Greiner and Jose, now without his mask, lay clutched in a death grip. Jose's knife was deep in the heart of the fat man, but Greiner's heavy fingers were closed relentlessly around the old man's throat. Jose was on top, and the sun beat down on the map tattooed on his naked back.

"Poor devil," Jim pitied him; "he was a pretty good Injun at that. We'll use some of this Yaqui gold to send this little tyke off to school."

"Righto!" Red agreed promptly,

"And the rest of it—" Jim hesitated. "Well, I don't hanker much for mucking around underground here any more than we have to—but we could get out enough of the stuff to outfit us properly for that proposition down in Bolivia—"

Red Dolliver's eyes filmed dreamily; became pools that mirrored longingly the call of the far places. Then a grin spread over his face from ear to ear.

"Put it there!" he demanded as he thrust out his big paw.

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The Black Pearl

A slug spewed out, spinning the man around like a tenpin

Murder and Theft Stalk the Decks of the "Banda Lu" in this Gripping Yarn of Pulse-Stirring Adventure on the High Seas

By CAPT. KERRY McROBERTS

Author of "Legion of the Frontier," "The Sultan of Hell," etc.

CAPTAIN JIM ANDERSON, master of the little South Seas trading schooner *Banda Lu*, received the order when he put in at Batavia. Along with it came a money transfer drawn on a San Francisco bank for the amount of $5,000, payable, if and when, the order was executed. He showed it to his mate, a much older man with greyish hair and leathern face.

"See," Captain Anderson said, his keen blue eyes sparkling, his thin, firm lips rippling in a smile. "It's enough to bring us out of the red, if we can find the pearl to match it."

The mate turned, spat over the rail, shifted his cud of tobacco from one jaw to the other.

"*If* we can find it!" he replied, seemingly unenthused. "It's a large order. It's so long ago since we got

that pearl I've forgotten its size and color. Besides, that 'Frisco outfit must think we can find a needle in a haystack. Black pearls are hard to match—"

The young captain smiled again. Taking a small package from his pocket, he lifted the cover deftly, fingered a small black pellet, slightly opalescent.

"But they've made it easy," he answered, holding the object in such a manner that the mate could examine it closely.

The mate narrowed his eyes, squinted. Grunting acquiescence, he walked away.

An hour later the *Banda Lu* turned her prow from Batavia, headed for the lesser known pearling beds of the Flores Sea.

Bull Olund, renegade, beachcomber, and a first-class example of tropic scum of the last degree, but now, by the grace of the devil, cook on the little schooner *Banda Lu*, stepped softly across the sodden deck in the darkness.

A vague shape loomed before him, slightly darker than the blackness mantling the fo'c's'le. The shape moved with a gentle heave and grace, swaying with the movement of the solid deck, totally unaware of the approaching footsteps aft.

BULL OLUND moved closer, his huge muscled arms dangling at his hips. His gnarled hands were clenched, talon-like, ready. The dark figure seemed to swirl. Olund leaped at the same instant, his tense hands groping forward.

The outthrust fingers encountered what they sought. Something soft, yielding. They clenched vise-like about the throbbing throat of the fallen *kanaka* beneath him.

The town of Lombolen, across the bay, was black as the intervening waters themselves, though here and there flickering yellow lights braved the humid gloom. Above the lazy yellow lights the dim rolling crest of the mountain range behind the town could be distinguished. And over all a million staring, cold-eyed stars blinked brightly as they watched Bull Olund at his task. But the stars did not talk. Neither did the blackness of the night.

THE air was hot, heavy and sodden. Bull Olund cursed the forced sweat that trickled down his hairy arms, thence to the struggling *kanaka* boy's neck, making his grip much less secure and certain. The confounded heat! Once this last thing was done, he intended to leave the tropic climes, never to set foot off temperate soil again.

He had chosen the very bows of the schooner for his job—the point furthest away from the cabin below. He thought of the captain and mate.

"Haw!" he gloated throatily. "It'd take a devil of a racket to wake them dopes!" His teeth flashed in an evil grin. "Thought they fooled me with that fake set-up, eh? Lyin', of course, to put me off the track. Thought they had kept it secret, and when I caught them with it, caught them cold, they said it was a fake. That the real thing was coming later. It's just a gag. I know it. *Pfft!* I'll show them. I'm no fool."

The trembling body beneath him gave a sudden violent quiver, then went limp and flaccid like a suddenly thawed deck swab.

For a moment Bull's talon-like grip held about the distended throat. Then he lifted himself and stepped softly to the narrow peak of the deck, dragging the limp body behind him. In the darkness he could only feel his way, and even that none too well. He stumbled over the taut bight of anchor cable and swallowed a profane oath.

Feeling about in the darkness be-

yond the chain, his hands came finally in contact with a length of manila rope, loose coiled on top of a heavy iron gear, part of a dismantled winch which was no longer used. He grinned as his finger touched the teeth. The gear was heavy. The rope just long enough!

Quickly, he tied the line under the *kanaka* boy's shoulder, making sure that it wouldn't slip. He had to work swiftly and surely. Fastening the other end of the line about the gear wheel, he silently lifted it, grinning malevolently, to shove it over the low bulwarks of the bow. He then lowered it away until it reached the water a full fathom below, leaning over the side and peering into the blackness to make sure.

He smiled again when the gear splashed on the surface; then, feeling along the line behind him, he nodded approvingly. The heavy iron gear sank beneath the surface and the line grew taut underneath the dead *kanaka's* shoulders.

He let it slip through his hands slowly. The sinking gear dragged the body forward toward the side; it caught momentarily in the angle between the deck and the low bulwarks. Bull stooped, giving a forceful shove that dislodged it and carried it well over the side. There was another slight splash. He heaved a sigh of relief and rubbed his wet hands on his drill trousers.

"THAT'S done," he whispered hoarsely. "It went off like clockwork. All according to the program I made up. The next thing—well, I'll wait until I hit 'Frisco for that. The lousy liars!"

He gloated throatily, then stepped swiftly aft. Before the hatchway leading to the cabin he paused a moment, staring once more into the unrelieved shadows of Lombolen across the dark and eerie bay.

The soft, plaintive throbbing of a twanging guitar wafted across the blackness. He was sick of that continual thrumming, too. But only a single yellow light showed against the background of the night. Bull spat toward the town.

"When that crew is so soused they can't walk, they'll bring 'em back in the dingys." He turned his head. "As for me, I'll take 'Frisco."

HE stepped toward the bow bulwarks. Leaning over, he peered outboard toward the bows. He swayed as the little schooner rolled slowly with an oily heave of the sea. He felt a slight jerk as the bow lifted up against the short drift of anchor chain they had let go in the shallow bay. Then, tearing his eyes from the dim bows and turning back, he ejaculated:

"He's blamed well out of the way. Now for the next act."

Feeling his way with his hand on the side bulkhead, he glided noiselessly toward the cabin. Then, taking a match from his trousers pocket, he ignited it against his coarse thumbnail. It cast a pale, flickering beam ahead of him. Objects flashed into view.

To his left, the open galley door —his own sanctum. He grinned grimly. Over there behind the stove, on a rack behind the galley pipe, the cabin broom—the skipper's own special pride. He had made it himself; a bamboo handle, thick dun-colored brush of coconut fiber laced with raw hemp. The shadow of the stove pipe moved over it as the match burned low in Olund's hand.

"They won't wake up," he mumbled. "They got enough to keep them under for a long time yet."

He chuckled confidently. They weren't the only ones on the *Banda Lu* who could think up clever schemes. They thought they were smart, eh? Trying to fool him because they caught him looking at

the thing the night they left Larantua, just after they had bought it from the native Moro diver. Saying it was a fake, eh?

They laughed, too, when telling him the story of the pearl. How a rich banker in San Francisco had bought the first one and presented it to his wife. Now he was having the earth scoured for its mate. The lady wanted a pair of earrings, and one was no good without another to match it. The gem broker had sent a specially prepared artificial gem, a replica of the original, so Captain Anderson wouldn't have so much trouble finding a pearl that matched.

What a foolish tale! Bull Olund thought. What an obvious lie. It had been concocted just for him. They had been too open about it, too friendly. They went out of their way to explain it all. It was fishy from the beginning.

Boldly pushing open the door to the officers' cabin, he stepped softly in. The tiny beam of his flickering match disclosed two men on opposite sides of a small table, asleep, heads resting upon folded arms.

NEAR their elbows were two heavy enamel-ware coffee cups in their chipped saucers. One of them was tipped over. A whiskey bottle, still almost full, stood upright, farther away. Holding his breath, Bull Olund surveyed them. They were breathing heavily. He coughed.

The men did not move.

"Captain Anderson! Mr. Hildegaard!" he called.

Still they did not move.

"It's still there, by God!" Bull stepped closer, greedily eyed a long tubular object on the table. Then he snatched the small tube of bamboo from the table, hiding it instantly inside his shirt.

He had it! His huge body trembled perceptibly. The low flaming match scorched his fingers. He held back an oath, turned toward the door again.

Feeling his way forward again through the blackness, he paused in the passage next to the galley. Then, taking the bamboo tube from his shirt, he twisted the plug from it and pulled from inside a small bit of wadded *kapok*. His fingers trembled visibly and his thick lips quivered uncontrollably as he separated the matted fiber. Something solid touched his finger tips. He thrilled to the velvet touch of the object as it rolled in the palm of his hand.

"MINE! Mine!" he gloated. "All mine!"

From his pocket he took a watch case. It was nothing but a shell, the works absent; now it was going to come in handy. With his thumbnail he opened the back of it. Then, with the *kapok*, he carefully wadded the object he had taken from the bamboo tube. It was a good hiding place, most unlikely of suspicion.

Stepping across the passage and entering the galley, he lit another match, then swiftly burrowed his hand into the bucket of coral sand under the stove. From his cache there he took two brown pellets of raw opium, stuff that he had got from Huey Ling's at Makassar. He dropped these into the pot of still warm coffee simmering on the back of the stove. Taking up a heavy cup, he dipped it into the coffee pot and splashed the contents on the galley deck. He tipped the cup on its side and laid it on the edge of the puddle. Then he deliberately laid himself down in an awkward sprawling heap over the coffee cup, in the midst of the slop on the floor.

A sharp blow in the ribs awakened him some hours later. But Bull Olund made no sound, made no move other than that of his simulated heavy breathing.

He was kicked again.

"Get up, you drunken scum!"

The toe of the mate's boot was no less hard than the voice that accompanied it. Still Bull Olund lay limp and apparently unconscious, neither batting an eye nor moving a muscle. By the pink of his eyelids he knew it was day. They would be hauling up the anchor soon to get under way for Makassar. The other *kanakas* would be back from their spree on the beach at Lombolen. The water would be aboard—and the captain and the mate would have lost.

He heard the mate's footfalls as he returned to the cabin. Heard him speak to the captain.

"That lousy beachcomber we took on as a cook! He's flat as a rag on the galley deck. Doped, too."

Bull Olund heard the patter of two pairs of boots on the schooner's deck. He had to be doubly careful now, careful to give not a sign of his consciousness. He heard their quick breaths, their hectic chatter, and pictured the tall, clean-shaven young captain bending over him to study his exhalations. He gulped purposely in heavy, heaving gasps, simulating the effect of too much opium.

"I'll be blamed!" the skipper's voice.

A tense hand seized his shoulder and shook him hard.

"Olund! Get up!"

IT was the mate's voice, much rougher than usual.

"See that cup there, Skipper, spilled over. It was in the coffee all right. He probably got the dregs."

There was a rattle on the stove.

"Yep," the mate drawled. "There's a couple half dissolved pills still in the pot. Some devil—"

"Let me see," the captain snapped. "You're right, Mate," after a moment. "The poor devil got it heavier than we did. Well, let him lie there. As soon as we get under way, send a couple of *kanakas* down and have him brought up on deck."

They walked away and left him alone.

OLUND chuckled inwardly. They didn't suspect him. He had done his job well, following old Huey Ling's directions about the opium to the letter. Putting just enough of it in the officers' coffee to render them senseless until he had accomplished his purpose. Yet not enough to prevent their lifting anchor in the morning and getting under way. The whiskey they had poured in their coffee had killed any unusual odor, any peculiar taste that the opium might have imparted.

Suddenly a thought struck him as he lay there in the growing light. Funny, neither of them had made mention of the article that had been stolen. Now why—

Bull shrugged.

They were playing smart again. They knew it must be on the ship some place and were simply carrying on as though nothing had happened.

The mate's stentorian bellow wafted down from forward. The *kanakas* on the deck began to chatter excitedly. Bull Olund could visualize what was going on, even though he saw nothing. When he finally heard the slap-slap run of water against the sides, and felt the deck beneath him heel and slant gently, then hum with vibrant life, he knew the *Banda Lu* had taken the wind in her spread of canvas and was heading out on her last leg to Batavia.

Minutes afterward he heard footsteps again coming down. He relaxed purposely, waiting, going limp and flaccid as a wilted plant.

"Carry him on deck." It was the captain's sharp, precise voice.

Hands tugged at his shoulders and

knees. When he felt himself being lifted, he folded up spinelessly, letting his head drop back as if it were tied with a string. Up he went, eyes still closed, mouth open and gasping heavy breaths.

"Put him down there!" The captain's voice was crisper now. "Douse him with water!"

Bull Olund thought quickly. The captain and mate had come out of their daze an hour before. Even if he had been given a heavier dose, it was about time he was beginning to come out of it. A dash of water should hasten his recovery. The drench of water came when he wasn't expecting it, nearly strangling him. The salt was raw in his throat. He quivered slightly, moved his head perceptibly in a rolling movement.

"Give him another!"

Olund took it flush in the face. He groaned, slightly opening one eye, saw the captain and the mate standing nearby regarding him keenly. Both men still looked somewhat haggard. He groaned again, opened the other eye, turned on his side and drew up his knees. He had seen Chinese in the opium dens of Batavia do the same thing when coming out of the hop.

The mate chuckled dryly.

"HA! Pretty good, eh, Skipper? Shoot it up, Olund. Get it out of your stomach. Must have been something you ate that poisoned you. Nothing to worry about."

Bull Olund, simulating desperate illness and nausea, heard them turn and walk away.

For a half hour or more he lay prone on the deck, the hot tropical sun beating down unmercifully on his back. Infrequently one of the crew would come and dash a bucket of sea water over his head, then patter on again.

Then the sun got so hot that he had to move or be roasted alive. Dragging himself over to the cabin rise he sat up and leaned against it, his leonine head flopping down on his barrel chest. One of the crew had set down a bucket of water. Lukewarm as it was, he gulped it down greedily in copious drafts. Then he went back to his place and hung his head over the low bulwarks.

THE *Banda Lu* had already beaten past the heads of Lombolen Bay and was straightened out on her northwesterly course which would take her to Makassar. With the wind that was now bellying the sails, it wouldn't take long to make the passage. Bull Olund was glad of that. This cursed play-acting was beginning to pall on him.

When they dropped anchor at Makassar, he would thank the captain for the job, bid him good-by and make his departure. At Makassar he could ship on another schooner for Manila, and from Manila he could take a steamer for the States. Then good old San Francisco and a new start—a couple of years, and he could make the $5,000 grow to $50,000. He knew plenty of ways to do that.

He had planned it all well—to perfection, in fact. The captain and the mate weren't so smart as they thought they were. He wondered if they would say anything about the loss when they got to Makassar. Their actions seemed peculiar on that point.

He settled himself more comfortably against the cabin rise. He was hungry, hungry as a wolf; but he dared not eat. People coming out of opium dazes had no appetites for long hours afterward. He'd make up plenty for the food he'd missed, though, when he got to Makassar.

Vaguely, sitting there in the dazzling sunlight, he wondered about

the *kanaka* he had put over the bows the night before. Nobody had mentioned yet that the boy was missing. Had the captain and mate told the crew some story about the missing boy, purposely, as a part of their game?

Hours he spent thus, with the infinite patience of a man who feels he has done his job well and can afford to wait.

Twice the young captain passed him, bending his tall frame slightly to peer down, his keen blue eyes reflecting an inquisitive light. The mate paused before him once, just when the broiling sun was directly overhead. He glared at Bull, his black eyes snapping.

"'Bout time you're gettin' on that galley job, scum! Snap outa your hop!"

Bull returned the burning stare with a weakly reproachful look.

IN the middle of the afternoon Bull dragged himself upright, and was surprised to find that he really was in a weakened condition. He had to steady himself with a hand on the grip rail, as he felt his way down to the hatch.

Reaching the galley, he flopped on a case for a moment. Gradually he felt his strength returning, and taking the broom—the captain's special broom—he began the daily clean-up. When he finished the gallery he staggered to the cabin. The captain was lying on the port side of the swinging table, reading a magazine.

"Come here a moment, Olund," he said. "There's something I want to tell you."

What now, Bull wondered. Certainly there could be nothing that would harm him. He must remember to simulate signs of very recent acute physical distress. He swayed on his feet dizzily, blinked his eyes and wet his lips with his tongue.

Getting up, the captain went to his locker and took out a bottle of whiskey. Two glasses were already on the table.

"Mr. Hildegaard, the mate, already knows what I am about to tell you," Captain Anderson began, filling the glasses. "As you are the only other white man aboard, I think you should know, too. Maybe you can help."

BULL OLUND felt the hot blood course through his veins, His nerves tingled. He steadied himself.

"Yes, sir. I'll be glad to do what I can," he said politely.

Captain Anderson raised his glass with a nod to Olund to do the same. Both swallowed their portions.

"Something happened down there at Lombolen, Olund. You weren't the only one to be drugged, you know."

Olund started, simulating surprise.

"Drugged? Why—er, I thought you said it was something I ate—"

The captain smiled.

"Drugged, yes. All three of us. But that's not what I was getting at. When we came to this morning the black pearl, the artificial one, was gone. Some one stole it while we were unconscious."

"Gone! Stolen?" Olund repeated, comprehension, bold and acute, showing in his blinking eyes. "They drugged us so that—"

He broke off abruptly, fearing he was putting it on too thick. Then with his hand still gripping the table, he swayed dizzily.

"But who?" he mumbled weakly.

"The *kanaka* boy we kept on watch has disappeared. That's the only clue. You've got to help us. I want you to go up topsides and play sick. It seems certain that the missing *kanaka* took the pearl. The others may know something about it. Keep your ears open even if you are still groggy.

"The artificial pearl is worth a

hundred dollars; besides, I have to return it with the draft to Makassar in order to get my money. You've been in these parts long enough to understand that *kanaka* lingo. You get the pearl back and there's twenty-five dollars in it as a reward."

Bull Olund tensed his fists slowly. The veins in his neck distended. His voice raged with indignation.

"If I could find the dirty scum who doped us! But say, Captain, if the missing fellow stole the pearl, why don't you turn back to Lombolen?"

SMILING, the captain shook his head.

"No," he said. "I don't want to waste that much time, now. The schooner with the Moro diver and the real pearl will be in at Makassar when we get there. I must meet him on time. Have some arrangements with the bank, you know. Well, get on the job now, Olund. Keep your ears open."

Olund turned away. He was jubilant. The captain didn't suspect!

"Just leave my broom on the table there, Olund," the captain called. "I want to do a little cleaning here, myself."

Grinning broadly, Olund turned back and handed it to him. With high elation he crawled out on the deck and dragged himself wearily forward, where he took a position that enabled him to seem to be watching and listening to the *kanakas*.

Inwardly he laughed at the young captain, the simple fool with the childish blue eyes. He was still trying to pull the wool over him. A fake black pearl worth a hundred dollars! Did Anderson actually believe him such an utter fool?

He pressed his hand against the watch case in his pocket and grinned grimly to himself. He had done his part perfectly. Right where he was sitting now was where the iron gear had been. And right ahead of him near the hawse hole was where the *kanaka* boy had caught when the heavy gear was dragging him down to the bottom—to remain for all time.

Tomorrow he would be in Makassar. The world would be rosy then. But now he must appear weak, exhausted. Thinking, planning, Olund fell asleep.

* * * * *

The *Banda Lu* worked slowly in toward the wharf at Makassar. Captain Anderson was at the wheel, his blue eyes held straight ahead. The stern-visaged mate was down at the engine, ready to kick out the clutch when the captain shouted.

Bull Olund chuckled to himself. Another minute or two and the schooner would be eased into the wharf and secured. In a few minutes he himself would leave here forever. With the uttered hope, of course, that the lost pearl would show up in time.

CAPTAIN ANDERSON shouted. The engine gears clashed, running free. The brown boy standing in the bows shot a swift looping line ashore. The *Banda Lu* eased in to crunch against the piling.

Smudged with grime and oil-streaked, with sweat pouring from his brows, the mate came up, wiping his hands on a bit of waste, with the captain's broom under his arm. The brush was smudged, too.

Captain Anderson locked the wheel and went forward. Bull Olund, smiling confidently, approached him with outthrust hand.

"Captain," he said genially, "I thank you for signing me on when I needed some money. I'm grateful, but darn sorry about that pearl. If I hear of it, I'll send you word."

Captain Anderson's keen blue eyes flashed, fastened on Olund's. The mate sauntered over, a chew of to-

bacco making a big lump on one cheek. The captain's broom was in his hand.

"Good-by, Mr. Hildegaard," Bull said.

"Good-by, Olund."

He turned away, his heart pounding tempestuously. He was thrilled to the innermost core by his final success. It showed on his heavy features. It showed in his striding carriage as he walked.

"Mr. Olund!"

THE words came very softly, very gentle in tone, from the young captain's lips. But there was a strange note in that softness. For an instant the impulse to leap and run almost overcome Bull, but he stifled it. Nothing could be wrong now. He turned back with an ingratiating smile.

The smile froze on his lips!

The mate leaned lazily upon the broom. But the captain had his hand on something that made Olund's eyes pop—a heavy .45. The muzzle was pointed straight at him.

Bull blinked, flushed, forced a harsh, grating laugh.

"What's the idea?" he stammered.

Captain Anderson smiled. But there was no humor in the smile.

"You're not leaving us yet, Olund. I just wanted to see what you would do. Everything worked fine, eh? You drugged us, stole the fake pearl, murdered one of the crew—and thought you were getting away with it, eh?"

The grim muzzle of the .45 never wavered.

The blood drained from Bull's face, leaving it pallid and sickly in hue. For the first time his nimble brain refused to function. He stammered, sputtered.

"Me? I—I steal a fake pearl—murder—"

The captain's eyes did not leave him.

"Come, now, Olund. Why not prove out a man just once? Of course you killed that brown boy. Who else did?"

It was a bluff, Bull figured. He regained instant control of his faculties. They had tried to third degree him. The fools!

"Why, you crazy fools! That *kanaka* who drugged us stole the pearl, swam to shore, and—"

A harsh, sardonic laugh crackled from the mate's throat. The captain interrupted.

"You say he swam away, Olund? How could he when you weighted him down with an iron gear wheel, to say nothing of strangling him to death beforehand? You see, Olund, you're not so smart. The best of plans—"

The mate snapped in brutally:

"Your line fouled the anchor chain, you fool! His body came up when we hauled in the anchor."

RAGING torments of hell tore at Olund's brain now. He recalled, in a flash, how it must have happened. He had lowered the gear over the side gently. When the body caught he had given it an extra heave. The gear slid down one side of the chain, the body down the other. The length of manila had fouled under water. When the anchor came up—

Fate had tricked him.

"Give me that pearl you stole," Captain Anderson said evenly.

Bull Olund's dreams and hopes tumbled in utter chaos about him, but he wasn't one to cringe and ask for succor. He ripped the watch case from his pocket, thumbed it open, showed them the stolen pearl in the wad of *kapok*. Then, instantly he clamped it shut again.

"Like blazes I will," he screeched hysterically. He swung up his arm, hurled the watch far out into the muddy stream. "There's your lousy

(Concluded on page 155)

The GLOBE-TROTTER

SO 1934 goes rolling down the corridors of time—and here we are with the first Globe Trotters get-together for 1935!

At this time of year most folks sit back a bit and take stock, try to figure where they are at and how things are coming along. But it's sure a he-man job trying to keep track of where the wandering members of the grand and and glorious tribe of foot-loose adventurers are, at any old time.

Some of them are parked down near

the South Pole, under command of Admiral Byrd. Some of them are roaming around in the heart of the South American jungles, searching for Fawcett—and for adventure as well.

Some of them have utilized 1934 to reach incredible heights in the stratosphere; others have gone to the other extreme and penetrated to perilous depths in the sea.

By air, sea and land, they have been making adventure history—and they say it's nothing at all to what they're going to do in 1935. So get set for plenty of action!

Every-Day Fellers

What's that, from over there in the corner? Those are all professional adventurers, you say, and they get the chances that never come to us every-day fellers?

Well, maybe so, brother—but let me tell you that professionalism will never have a monopoly on adventuring. That's the fascination of the thing.

It's every bit as likely to flop down in my lap or yours as in the next fellow's.

Couple months ago a steamer picked up two lads on a crude raft somewhere out in the middle of the Pacific. They'd stowed away until they thought they were near enough to where they wanted to go, and then cut loose on their impoverished raft. Plenty of adventure to that, all right—and they weren't professionals, either, not so that you could notice it.

New Year Adventure

New Year's Day ought to be the adventurers' special holiday. It's like going up to the top of the hill to see what's on the other side. Here

we are, up at the top, with a whole year full of days stretched out before us.

What sort of adventures will they hold? Who knows? But the pulse of every true adventurer must beat a litle faster when he speculates on what new thrills 1935 will hold for him.

Well, here's to you, Globe Trotters, and to a new year chock full of the sort of adventures you've been dream-

(Continued on page 148)

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(Continued from page 146)

ing about! May 1935 be that "big year" for all of you!

Great Prospects

For our part, 1935 ought to be *some* year. We've already mapped out a line-up of yarns that will keep you on the edge of your seats. First of all, in this issue, is a knock-out of a complete novel, BLOOD OF THE DRAGON, by Arthur J. Burks.

And there's an adventurer who can spin a yarn! You all remember his last complete novel, DRUMS OF EBONY. And what a response that brought. We've learned plenty about

voodoo and zombies since we published that yarn. Plenty pro and plenty con.

Some folks just won't take any stock in that sort of thing, but others. . . . The most significant part of it is that the fellows who have traveled the most, who have barked their shins on the rough places the world over, are not the sceptical ones.

Leatherneck Testimony

The fellow who sits at home is much more likely to say, "That's too tall for me to swallow!" The gent who has been there probably knows of plenty incidents even stranger than those he reads. And once in a while one of those fellows gets riled up enough to sit down and tell us about it.

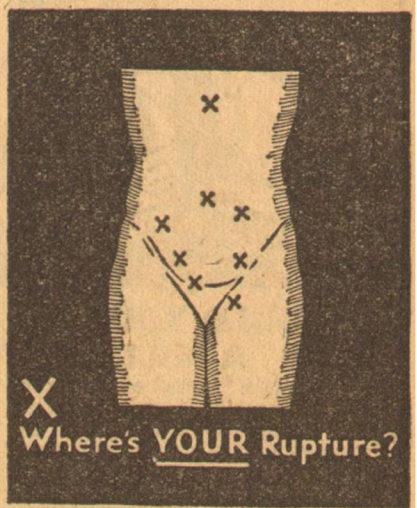
When it comes to first-hand dope on Haiti and the Dominican Republic, you can't do much better than to corner one of the U. S. Marines who spent years down there. Here's a Leatherneck gunnery sergeant who is all primed on the zombie subject:

Dear Globe Trotter:

American Marines have, until quite re-

(Continued on page 150)

don't Worry about Rupture



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C. E. BROOKS, Inventor

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(Continued from page 148)

cently, occupied Haiti for some nineteen years. Never have I seen one who served there, either with our own forces or with the Garde d'Haiti, express disbelief in zombies or other voodoo manifestations. Neither has any one of them professed to possess the slightest understanding of the practice. With their own eyes they have seen incredible things happen, and they have accepted the results at face value, without endeavoring to connect them with mysterious and esoteric causes.

At present there is serving with me a sergeant who recently returned from Haiti. For six years he had been a lieutenant in the Garde d'Haiti (it was a practice of the Marine Corps to "lend" to the Haitian Government officers and enlisted men to complete the commissioned personnel of the native constabulary).

He brought back with him a set of drums. These he keeps in his apartment, and he is willing to swear on a mountain of Bibles that on certain nights these drums can be heard throbbing with all the weird, chill-provoking realism of their former days.

He is a rational man, and as such has searched for some scientific explanation, such as sympathetic vibration, atmospheric conditions tightening the drum-heads, etc. But no suitable solution has been found. And yet those drums do actually make sounds.

Another example is that of a Marine captain, the author of a recent book on Haiti. A curse was put on him by a Haitian, but a friendly native priest fashioned a counter-charm that vitiated the power of the first. All went well until the second *ouanga* was stolen from the Marine officer.

Almost immediately he suffered from an attack of hayfever, which in itself appears to be no great evil or misfortune; in fact it seems almost ridiculously impotent. But while driving his car, the captain had a violent attack of sneezing, lost control of his machine, drove off the road and was so seriously injured that it is more than likely his career in the service is finished.

Coincidence? Possibly; but so many instances have occurred with sufficient frequency as to make a logically-minded man require a more tangible and satisfactory explanation. I believe that those who are familiar with Haiti will never complain that Lieutenant Burks' story, "Drums of Ebony," strains credulity.

Chalemagne, the bandit chief mentioned in the story, was killed by two Marines (one of whom is now a captain in the service, the other dead) and ten gendarmes. He was secretly buried by the authorities to prevent the very thing Lieutenant Burks describes. I mention this, not to prove an inaccuracy in the story, but to bring out the point that even the authorities are re-

(Continued on page 152)

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Sex appeal and sex satisfaction are the *most powerful forces* in your life. To remain in ignorance is to remain in danger of lifelong suffering. It is the purpose of this great book to show sex-ignorant men and women how to enjoy safely the thrilling experiences that are their birthright. It not only tells you how to *attract the opposite sex*, but also how to *hold the love of your mate* throughout a *blissful married life.*

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SEX IS NO LONGER a mysterious sin, mentioned only in the conversational gutters — it is the most powerful force in the world and can be made the most beautiful. Thanks to this bravely written book, it is no longer necessary to pay the awful price for one moment of bliss. Science now lights the path to knowledge and lifelong sex happiness.

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Are you an *awkard novice* in the art of love-making or a master of its difficult technique? The art of love-making takes *skill* and *knowledge*. The sexual embrace as practiced by those ignorant of its true scientific importance is crude, awkward and *often terrifying* to more sensitive natures. Normal sex-suited people are torn apart because they lack the knowledge that makes for a happy sex life!

Sex Facts for Men and Women

- Twilight Sleep—Easy Childbirth
- Sex Excesses
- The Crime of Abortion
- Impotence and Sex Weakness
- Secrets of the Honeymoon
- Teaching Children Sex
- The Dangers of Petting
- What Every Man Should Know
- The Truth about Masturbation
- Venereal Diseases
- The Sexual Embrace
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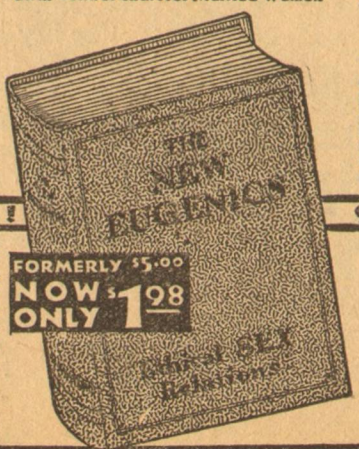

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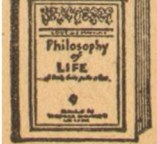

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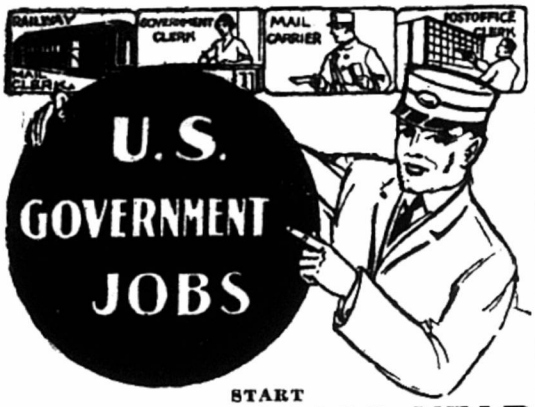

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(Continued from page 150)

luctant to dismiss such things with a shrug of their collective shoulders.

The killing of Charlemagne has furnished material for many a saga of heroism. Two Marine enlisted men, as officers in the Gendarmerie d'Haiti, had tried for months to apprehend the elusive bandit and his followers. They baited traps, which he eluded; they sent out a native spy who pretended he was a *caco*. He gathered a band about him and offered service to Charlemagne, to no avail.

The spy even staged a real attack on a garrisoned town, and his men, who believed they were following a genuine *caco* chief, waged a bitter battle. Still Charlemagne was suspicious and questioned the spy's sincerity.

Frustrated at every turn, the two Marines, discovering the general whereabouts of Charlemagne, blackened their faces and with ten trustworthy natives dressed in *caco* rags, ventured forth to destroy the great menace of Haiti. One after another, they passed Charlemagne's outposts, penetrating deep into hostile country.

It was long after midnight when they reached the headquarters of the bandit. He was surrounded by a bodyguard of more than a hundred men. Ten to one were the odds against the tiny force that had set out to capture the outlaw.

One of the Marines saw their quarry standing beside a campfire, peering out into the darkness, attempting to identify the newcomers. In a flash the Marine's pistol was in his hand and he had fired across the flames into the heart of the bandit chief.

There was a stubborn fight before the bodyguard was routed. The victors re-

(Continued on page 153)

LIST OF MEMBERS

The Globe Trotters' Club

(Continued from Last Month)

Jack E. Smith, 402 N. Van Buren, Kirkwood, Mo.
Chas. Davis, 617 W. Main, Enid, Okla.
Bill Campbell, Jr., 816 Albany St., Apt. 3B, Pueblo, Colo.
Fred. Drawhorn, c/o Sailor's Hall, Providence, R. I.
Dave L. Newell, 725 E. Remington, Graham, Tex.
Edward W. Usakowski, 626 Barbey St., Brooklyn, N. Y.
Joseph F. Korkin, 14 River St., Schenectady, N. Y.
George Birdsall, Ship Oswego, Albany, N. Y.
Earl Hicks, Box 112, Dora, Ala.
Chester Stumpp, Peddie School, Hightstown, N. J.
John J. Zabel, 917 No. Milwaukee St., Milwaukee, Wisc.
Howard A. Browne, West Ave. and Wheat Rd., Vineland, N. J.
William I. Schroeder, 1125 Saxby Ave., Freeport, Ill.
George Baldwin, 402 Wood St., Middletown, Pa.
Nellie Boyd, 7 Boyd Ave., East Providence, R. I.
Emmett Speegle, 658 Dorthy, San Jose, Calif.
Dr. E. J. Boyce, R. D. No. 3, Ballston Spa, N. Y.
Harold R. Schreiber, 19 Clyde St., Gloversville, N. Y.
Stephan Lautenbach, 464 Norton St., New Haven, Conn.
Quintin A. Amot, 3720 14th Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.
Warrall Decker, 2515 Ocean View, Los Angeles, Calif.
Harry M. Raub, Jr., 102 N. Vermont Ave., Atlantic City, N. J.
Eugene Heflin, Box 1271 Britton, Okla.
J. K. Young, R.F.D. No. 2, Box 101, Paragould, Ark.
Thos. Camp, Magazine, Ark.

(Continued from page 152)

pulsed several attacks, and when daylight came, they picked up the dead body and fought and hammered their way some nine miles to safety. Both Marines received Congressional Medals of Honor (navy) for that night's work.

Although Charlemagne's body was publicly displayed, there is many a Haitian who is firmly convinced that the great *caco* leader is not dead. He is further convinced that when the time is propitious and Charlemagne wills it so, the chieftain will rise up and lead his people in their revolt against the white oppressors.

Frank H. Rentfrow,
Gunnery Sergeant, U. S. Marines.

Adventure Aplenty

And that, if you ask Ye Olde Globe Trotter, is adventure aplenty for any man. If that's the sort of action they feed 'em on in the Marine Corps, no wonder Bro. Burks can turn out action yarns!

He was there and got plenty of it at first hand.

First-hand dope is no doubt the best equipment a writer of adventure stories can have. That's why we pride ourselves on the caliber of our writers and the authenticity of their yarns. They were there, and they know what they're talking about.

But wait a minute—we seem to have hit a snag! How about this fellow Cummings, who contributes that fine novelette, WORLD OF DOOM, to this issue? Was he there? Is that why he knows?

A fair enough question. So we served it up to Ray Cummings; and here's his answer:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I must apologize for the fact that I was not personally upon the asteroid at the time the thrilling events recorded in "World of Doom" occurred. But I did visit the mysterious invading world some three weeks previously, when it was still beyond the orbit of Jupiter. I made the trip especially for the gathering of data out of which to build the story. So I can assure you that "World of Doom" is authentic in every way.

You once asked me how I happened to embark upon the writing of this "crazy scientific fiction." That question has often been asked me by fans, who sometimes are kind enough to answer it themselves by suggesting that I must be a dope fiend—and other pleasantries. I have never before answered the question, but I will now.

Once I was a very earnest young busi-

(Continued on page 154)

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STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., required by the Act of March 3, 1933, of Thrilling Adventures, published monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1934.

State of New York }
County of New York } ss.

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared H. L. Herbert, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the business manager of THRILLING ADVENTURES and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication, for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of March 8, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are: Publisher, Metropolitan Magazines, Inc., 570 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Editor, J. S. Williams, 570 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Managing Editor, none; Business Manager, H. L. Herbert.

2. That the owner is: Metropolitan Magazines, Inc., 570 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; N. L. Pines, 570 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; M. A. Goldsmith, 570 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: none.

4. That the two paragraphs next above giving the names of owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustees or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustees is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statement embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders, who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the said stock, bonds or other securities than as so stated by him.

H. L. HERBERT.

Sworn and subscribed to before me this 28th day of September, 1934. Adrea Goldberg, Notary Public. N. Y. Co. Clks No. 416. Reg. No. 6 G 587. Commission expires March 30, 1936.

(Continued from page 153)

nessman. I think I was about to become the advertising manager of an industrial concern of national fame. But unfortunately for me—and for my readers, also, no doubt—I took a subway ride. I recall it vividly. I had, of course, no idea that I was on the threshold of momentous misfortune.

I recall that on that subway ride I sat idly staring at the advertisements over the seats across from me. And my attention was caught and held by an ad of the

Quaker Oats Company. It showed the portly figure of a Quaker gentleman in a three-cornered hat. He held in his hand a package of Quaker Oats, on which was a picture of the same gentleman holding a similar package. And on that package I could distinguish a still smaller Quaker holding still another tiny package.

I stared spellbound. I began to wonder if, by going closer to the ad, I would see a fourth smaller Quaker? And a fifth? If I had a microscope—and the printing were mathematically perfect—how many could I see?

An infinite number! Quaker Oats, down into an infinity of smallness!

I went home, seized pencil and paper. I had never before written a word of fiction; but my first chapter sounded so good to me that I resigned in lordly fashion from the aforesaid company of national fame. They told me I was crazy—as of course I am. A case indeed of, "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

But I was blissfully ignorant. I wrote with complete confidence that story which afterward was known as "The Girl in the Golden Atom." I think in its plot, construction and handling, that I broke every known rule of fiction writing. For instance, my hero throughout the entire story was known only as the Very Young Man. When the book was in proof, a harassed proofreader telephoned me, demanding to know "what the blinkity blink is the name of this hero guy?" And I told him I didn't know, except that he was the Very Young Man, and to let him and me alone, because I didn't want to be bothered.

So through magazines, newspapers and books, to this day, my first hero remains just the Very Young Man.

Ray Cummings.

What You Can Do

That gives us an interesting insight

(Continued on page 156)

THE BLACK PEARL

(Concluded from page 145)

pearl. Dive for it!" Captain Anderson and the mate laughed.

"Still, you don't believe us, eh?" the captain said. "You still think we're fools? Show him, Mate. Show him he's crazy as a loon."

The mate lifted the broom from the deck. Slipping off a small section of the bamboo handle, he reached in with his finger and pulled out a wad of fluffy *kapok*. From this, as the captain pressed the gun into Olund's ribs, he extricated something round and velvety, ebon-like. The real pearl!

"Yes," the captain said. "You drugged, you stole, you murdered for a mere bauble, when the real pearl hung in the rack on your galley shelf, inside this little pet broom of mine. Now you'll hang for your folly. The fake was really a fake, you see. You made a mistake —a very bad mistake."

Bull Olund swayed on his feet. His knees sagged. But not for long. With a bellow of infuriated rage he leaped, hands outflung toward the young captain's throat.

The .45 flashed. A slug spewed out, turning Olund about like a ten-pin. Quick as lightning the young captain reversed the gun, bringing the butt down in a swift, sweeping arc to crash with a dull thump on top of Bull's head. Olund sagged down, falling limp to the deck.

"Put him in irons, Mate," Captain Anderson directed calmly. "We'll hold him for the authorities. Tie a bandage around the wound in his arm so he won't bleed to death."

"Aye, sir," the mate said.

Across the turbid waters of the estuary of Makassar a light breeze blew warmly—a breeze that spoke of easy passage to the States.

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(Continued from page 154)

into how writers are made! For most of us that Quaker Oats sign, through all these years, has probably been just a Quaker Oats sign. Which shows that we can't all be writers.

But we can all be readers. And we can all be adventurers—through the columns of THRILLING ADVENTURES if in no more active capacity. And we can all tie up with a great gang of world-wide adventurers; we can all be Globe Trotters.

If you haven't lined up with the *Globe Trotters Club* yet, its about time you did. We've got a handsome membership card here in the office all ready to be filled in with your name and sent to you just as soon as you fill in the application coupon you will find on another page, and send it in to us together with a stamped and self-addressed envelope.

That's all the expense there is to it—three cents. No dues or initiation fee. Not another penny. As soon as we hear from you, we'll add your name to the membership roll—and you'll be in with a live-wire bunch of horizon hoppers.

Better clip that coupon today!

The Kind They Are

What sort of gents are these Globe Trotters? Well, just as fine a bunch as you'd want to meet—and just as interesting. In all walks of life you'll find them, and in most every out-of-the-way corner. For example:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am twenty-four years of age and have been an adventurer since I was fifteen. I have been in that time captain of two schooners, dredgeboat mate, deep-sea diver, and tinhorn explorer. I am now outfitting my little twenty-two-foot skip-jack to go around the world, looking for sunken treasures.

Capt. Belton R. Rey, Jr.
Baltimore, Md.

Next comes one of the younger Globe Trotters, who seems to have a fairly exciting occupation:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am only seventeen years old, but I have traveled all over the U. S., Mexico, and Canada. I have been in Alaska, Labrador and France, and I've spent some time in South America.

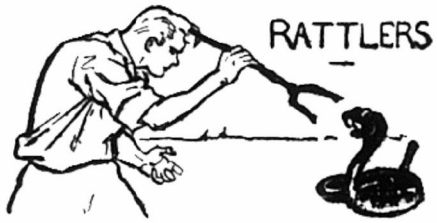
At present I capture rattlers for a local doctor, and get my share of excitement out of that.

Lawrence Kissler.
Great Falls, Montana.

And here's a jack-of-all-trades, if ever there was one:

Dear Globe Trotter:

In my roving career as a bugler, band director, actor, show and theatre manager, soldier, deputy sheriff, captain of police reserves, investigator, chief of detective



agency, inspector, bond salesman, owner and announcer of a broadcasting station, director and manager of a radio orchestra, political spell-binder, promoter, manager of a chain store, radio engineer, and enumerator for the Department of Commerce, I have been in many out of the way places and on strange trails.

Now I am prosaically settled down here, where I was born, and officiating as secretary of the Fenton City Band. Maybe some day the trails will call again and I will be off on adventure's highway.

Frey W. Dobbs.
Fenton, Michigan.

Want to know anything about Gibraltar? Here's a Globe Trotter who can tell you all about it:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am familiar with Gibraltar and will be glad to answer any questions the Globe Trotters may ask me about it. I was stationed there with the British army. Also, I'll be glad to answer questions concerning my own country, Scotland.

Andrew Thomson.
151 Victoria Road,
Dundee Angus, Scotland.

Any Loose Treasures?

Members of the Globe Trotters have asked for information of various sorts—and we hear that some of them have received very satisfactory replies from fellow members.

Now here's a fellow who has the treasure hunting fever—and seems to have it bad. Maybe someone can tip him off to a few new ones to investigate.

Dear Globe Trotter:

I date my wanderlust from 1898, when I joined the First Territorial Regiment of

U. S. Volunteers, at Phoenix, Arizona, which was followed by another hitch in a bunch that went to the Philippines.

About twenty years ago I began to look for lost mines and buried treasures. And, believe you me, I sure have had some very interesting trips!

I am just three days returned from a six thousand mile tour through Oregon and Washington, taken for the purpose of checking up on various stories I have heard about lost mines in those states.

I have at my command all the best radio finders it is possible to secure; also have at various times tried out over a hundred of these so-called doodle-bugs, spiritualist and spook stick locators—all without anyone of them being able to deliver the goods as represented.

I have become hard-boiled, and now make the spook-stick locator dig the hole.

I am making a tour soon along the southern Border, from California to Florida, and then up the coast to New York City. If any of the boys can give me information concerning something along the route worth investigating, I sure will appreciate it. E. A. Logsdon.

322 E. First St.,
Long Beach, California.

Well, Bro. Logsdon ought to run across plenty of lost mines along the Mexican Border—and then when he gets down around New Orleans way there is the Lafitte treasure—or they say there is, anyway. Sounds like an interesting trip!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

First of all, this month, comes a Globe Trotter who wants to practice up a bit with his singing — and he couldn't find a much better song than this on which to do it.

Dear Globe Trotter:

I wonder if you could give me the words to the song "As the Caissons Go Rolling Along"? Thanks a lot.

Newark, N. J. Joseph Sexton, Jr.

Answer:

Sure can, Joseph. And by the way, that is called "The Caisson Song"; it is the Field Artillery "hymn." Here you are:

Over hill, over dale,
As we hit the dusty trail
And the caissons go rolling along;

In and out, hear them shout,
Counter-march and right about
And the caissons go rolling along.

(Continued on page 158)

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It's GREAT to have the zest for fullest enjoyment of living! Don't feel or act old before your time! Life's richest gifts. Health, Success, Love, Popularity come to MEN and WOMEN who are PHYSICALLY and MENTALLY Fit. If you are RUN-DOWN, "under par" and lack fullest abundance of your normal powers; if discouraged or lack of joyful interest in LIFE—then try PRINCESS ANNE STIMULATORS. Astonished users report great benefits! For Men and Women of all ages. Results positively guaranteed or money refunded! Designed for powerful, wholesome stimulation, yet absolutely safe, harmless, containing nothing habit-forming. Price: Regular $2.00 (C. O. D. $2.15). Special Formula, containing a gland ingredient, designed to quickly tone up weak organs, $3.00. PRINCESS ANNE CO., Dept. TF13, Baltimore, Md. [(C) P. A. Co. 1934]

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TIRE USERS by the thousands all over the U. S. A. vouch for the LONG, HARD SERVICE, under severest road conditions of our standard brand Tires reconstructed by the ORIGINAL SECRET YORK PROCESS. OUR 18 YEARS IN BUSINESS makes it possible to offer tires at LOWEST PRICES in history with 12 month guarantee.

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Size	Rim	Tires	Tubes
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28x4.50-20		2.25	0.85
28x4.50-21		2.40	0.85
29x4.75-19		2.45	0.95
29x4.75-20		2.50	0.95
29x5.00-19		2.65	1.05
30x5.00-20		2.65	1.05
28x5.25-18		2.95	1.15
29x5.25-19		2.95	1.15
30x5.25-20		2.95	1.15
31x5.25-21		3.25	1.15
28x5.50-18		3.35	1.15
29x5.50-19		3.35	1.15
30x6.00-18		3.40	1.15
31x6.00-19		3.40	1.15
32x6.00-20		3.45	1.25
33x6.00-21		3.65	1.25
32x6.50-20		3.75	1.35

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Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
30x3	$2.25	$0.65	32x4½	3.35	1.15
30x3½	2.35	0.75	33x4½	3.45	1.15
31x4	2.95	0.85	34x4½	3.45	1.15
32x4	2.95	0.85	30x5	3.65	1.35
33x4	2.95	0.85	33x5	3.75	1.45
34x4	3.25	0.85	35x5	3.95	1.55

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Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
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32x6 (8)	7.95	2.75	36x8	12.40	4.95
32x6 (10)	8.95	2.75	40x8	18.95	4.95

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SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT with each tire ordered. ($4.00 deposit on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C.O.D. Deduct 5 per cent if cash is sent in full with order. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW — GUARANTEED. Tires failing to give 12 months' service replaced at half price. ORDER NOW!

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When delayed don't be discouraged or alarmed! You can now depend on our new S. P. Periodic Relief Compound (Double xx Strength) powerful. **Acts Quickly.** Often relieves hard suppressed irregularities discouraging long overdue abnormal delays. Generally relieved very quickly.

SEND NO MONEY: Just pay postman when delivered or you can safely send money saving small P.O. collection charges.

GUARANTEED: We guarantee satisfaction with this full order or refund your money. Highly recommended and used by thousands of women for relief. Mrs. N. R. writes—Missed period for 2 months—Relieved delay in 3 days. Mrs. A. K. says—S. P. Compound never failed her. Send $2.00 for box double xx strength. Three for $5.00. Triple xxx strength $5.00. Trial size 25c. Don't delay, send order. Free booklet. "What a Married Woman Should Know."

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SPECIAL: ALL FOR $1.00

PARIS IMPORT CO.

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(Continued from page 157)

Then it's hi! hi! hee!
In the field artillery,
  Shout out your numbers loud and strong—
Where'er you go,
You will always know
  That the caissons are rolling along;
    (Keep them rolling!)
  And the caissons go rolling along.

In the storm, in the night,
Action left or action right,
  And the caissons go rolling along;
Limber front, limber rear,
Prepare to mount your cannoneer,
  And the caissons go rolling along.

West Coast Prospecting

Dear Globe Trotter:

I have just finished my latest copy of THRILLING ADVENTURES, and I sure enjoyed Captain Hoyt's story of his adventures on Easter Island.

Here's a question I would like to have answered; how are the chances for a fellow to prospect for gold down in Bolivia, or are Bolivia and Paraguay still at war? If they are, maybe a fellow could join up with those tough nuts and show them how to run! Harry Corbin.

Steffenville, Mo.

Answer:

Not so good, Harry, on the chances of making a go at gold prospecting in Bolivia. The country is still at war, but, aside from that, it isn't the best place in the world to have a shot at prospecting. Most of the mining on the western coast of South America is in the hands of big corporations, outfits owned and operated by foreign capital. They have concessions covering about everything worth while. That doesn't leave much for the free-lance prospector. And, by the way, don't go kidding that Bolivia-Paraguay set-to. It's no comic opera war—not by a long shot. Nasty fighting under miserable climatic conditions; lots of disease and plenty of killing—that's what you'd find if you managed to get mixed up with that war. Better stay out of Bolivia for a while.

Down the Mississippi

Going over the past couple issues of this question box it sort of looks as if Ye Olde Globe Trotter is a great little cold water slinger. You gents come up hopefully with your ambitious schemes, and I shoot 'em full of

holes. That's why I'm glad this next letter came in. It gives me a chance to say, "Go to it!" for a change:

Dear Globe Trotter:

My partner and I have read a lot about shanty-boating down the Mississippi and that strikes us as an experience we oughtn't to pass up. We can scrape together a couple hundred dollars and have all the time we want on our hands.

Maybe you can give us some dope about it. Would, say two hundred or two hundred and fifty dollars be enough to get us outfitted and to carry us down to New Orleans? So far as we can make out we wouldn't have to know anything about navigation or anything like that. Is there any particular training we'd need?

Is this shanty-boating just a wild idea and only for fiction stories, or is it practical? If this thing will work, we plan to go on from New Orleans to Corpus Christi, Texas, where we have friends.

Hartley Jennings.

Jefferson, Ohio.

Answer:

Shanty-boating down the Mississippi from St. Louis to New Orleans, eh? Ye Olde Globe Trotter is almost tempted to try to horn in on that trip, Hartley; only the boat you will want won't have room for me. All you'll need is a boat with a bunk on each side of the hull. Aside from the bunks the most important things to watch for in selecting your boat are a good dry hull and a watertight roof. If you get a boat all right in those respects you're all set.

Shanty-boats cost pretty much what you want to pay for them, but in these times you should be able to pick up one that will be adequate for your purpose for under a hundred dollars—fifty dollars if you look sharp. Along the shore in St. Louis is the best place to search, especially around Eads Bridge neighborhood.

Aside from the cost of your boat your expenses will be governed by your own tastes. You'll need a stove of some sort on board to cook your meals—a wood burner is best. You'll need a good ax, some stout rope. The oars, or sweep, will come with the boat. Your two hundred dollars should be more than enough—unless you gents intend to dine on caviar.

You don't have to know a thing about navigation, beyond being able

(Concluded on page 160)

Send Coupon for Free Book

Tells all about **Taxidermy**, and how you can learn at **home** to mount life-like **Birds, Animals, Game-Heads, Fish.** Save your valuable trophies. Decorate your home and den. Learn genuine **Chrome Tanning** for harness and sole leather, buckskin and fine furs. Mount **Common** specimens, squirrels, rabbits, owls, even frogs, into marvelous craft-work groups, both useful and humorous. Wild-game not necessary. A marvelous hobby, great fun and fascination.

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With each order we receive for the above book, we will ship Free of charge, post-paid, One complete copy of our new book, Memories of a Cold Seat on a Frosty Morning. A laugh in every line. Limited Offer Write today and get your copies of these marvelous books, now, without delay.

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Secret Service Operator No. 38 is on the job! Running down dangerous Counterfeit Gang. Telltale finger prints in murdered girl's room.

Free *The Confidential Report Operator No. 38 made to his chief. Write for it.*

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YOU can become a Finger Print Expert at home, in your spare time, at small cost. Write for confidential full report and details. Literature will NOT be sent to boys under 17 years of age.

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LADIES END PAIN AND DELAY NOW. Don't be nervous or alarmed when nature fails. Get a married woman's dependable secret. I positively guarantee my successful "Special Relief Compound" ACTS QUICKER THAN ORDINARY PILLS OR TABLETS. Compounded of vegetable ingredients, used by physicians and nurses more than 25 years because of reputed power to relieve pain and induce flow. Relieves many abnormal delays quickly without pain or inconvenience. Wonderful testimonials from happy women everywhere. Mrs. W.: "I was delayed for nine weeks. Had a natural flow in 3 days." Mrs. C.: "I was about six weeks past, in 5 days I was O. K." Mrs. U.: "Delayed three weeks. Menses started on 4th day. Simple as A.B.C. to take." Don't experiment or suffer unnecessarily. Send for this proven remedy today. FAST SERVICE. Regular package, $2.00. Special Formula No. 2 for longer standing conditions, $3.00. Private information from a married woman with order. Literature FREE. MARTHA BEASLEY, Box 22, Northwestern Station, Dept. 182, Detroit, Michigan.

TILLIE and GUS—Latest Stuff
Also TILLIE and MAC

Maggie and Jiggs, Dumb Dora, Boss and Bubbles, Peaches and Browning, French Stenographer, A Bachelor's Dream, A Model's Life, Adam and Eve, Kip and Alice, Harold Teen and Lilliums, Toots and Casper, The Gumps, Winnie Winkle, Gus and Gussie, Barney Google and Spark Plug, Boob McNutt and Pearl, Tillie the Toiler, Cave-man Love, Chorus Girl Love, Turkish Love, Apache Love, Old Maid's Love, Papa Love, Sailors on Shore, What Tom Saw Through the Keyhole, When Hubby Comes Home, What the Window Washer Saw, Mabel and the Iceman, A Turkish Harem, Mexican Love, and 80 Snappy French Girl Poses. 16 French Lovers' Pictures, French Men and Women in artistic Love Poses. Also Hula-Hula Dancing Girl. All the above will be sent you prepaid for only $1.00.

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THRILLING ADVENTURES.
570 Seventh Ave.,
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I wish to be enrolled as a member of the *Globe Trotters Club.* I am interested in adventure and will endeavor to answer all questions asked me by other members regarding the places with which I am familiar.

.....
(Print name plainly)

Address .....

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

My hobbies are.....

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To obtain a membership card, enclose 1-35 a self-addressed stamped envelope

(Concluded from page 159)

to row your boat out of the way of steamers. Aside from that, there isn't much to do but cast off and drift. In a few days you will learn the tricks of the river, controlling the direction of your boat, tying up at night, etc.

There are a few bad spots in the river you'll have to watch, but you can get the dope on these by inquiring ahead a day or so each time you go ashore. The shanty-boaters are a great tribe. You'll like 'em; but be careful about taking up with river rats—and don't flash your roll!

No, sir, Hartley, there's nothing fictiony about shanty-boating. It's a great game and a fine way to see Old Man River. Good luck to you!

Next Month's Issue

Ye Olde Globe Trotter is all excited about the great stories that are coming in the next—the February—issue of this magazine. And you'll share my enthusiasm when you read them.

Next month's number will get off to a flying start with Captain Kerry McRoberts' unusual book-length novel—

WEB OF THE GREEN SPIDER

a yarn of intrigue, peril and adventure in colorful climes which packs a mighty punch!

And then there'll be a pulse-stiring novelette of the foreign legion—

BORN TO FIGHT

by Bob Du Soe.

The short stories will include smashing yarns by such writers as Jacland Marmur and Paul Ernst. And then—

A pirate story without a peer!

WE FLEW THE JOLLY ROGER

by Henry Morgan Krech, a startling true experience story taken from the diary of Krech's ancestor, who served with Henry Morgan! This true story is replete with amazing blood-curdling events!

You'll thrill to every line of it—as I did! *Adios!*

—THE GLOBE TROTTER.

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Into a trunk, under the bed or anywhere. Lots of fun fooling teacher, policeman or friends.

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a little instrument, fits in the mouth out of sight, used with above for Bird Calls etc. Anyone can use it. **Never fails. A 16-page course on Ventriloquism and the Ventrilo. All for 10c Postpaid.**
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25c 50c $1.00

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The HOW and WHY of electricity fully told in simple language that any boy can understand. Scores of plans and instructions for making—dry batteries, dynamos, electric motors, telegraph apparatus, telephones, electric lights, electric door bells, alarms, electric engine, rheostat, mail box alarm, electro-magnets, automatic incandescent flash, electric shocking machine, wireless telegraph apparatus, induction coil, arc light, current reverser, etc., etc. Tells all about electric wiring, static electricity, magnets and magnetism, conductors and insulators, electrostatic induction, electroscope, electrophorus, condensers, Leyden jar dynamic electricity, the voltaic cell, electromagnets, electrolysis, electro-plating, electrotyping, how to build a radio for a few cents, etc. 64 pages. 100 illustrations. **10c. postpaid. JOHNSON SMITH & CO., Dept. 612, RACINE, WIS.**

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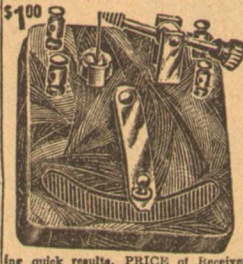

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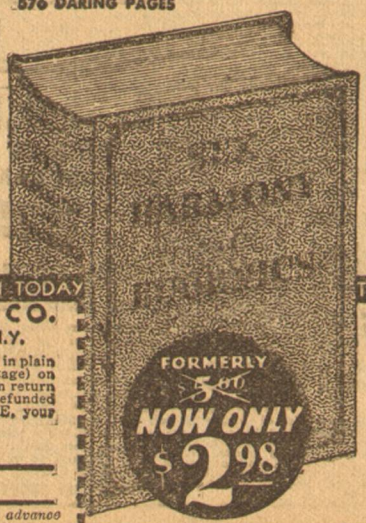

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ALL FIVE WAVE BANDS

Only Midwest covers a tuning range of 9 to 2400 meters (33 Megacycles to 125 KC.)—enabling you to easily and successfully tune in foreign stations up to 12,000 miles away with crystal-clear, loud-speaker reception.

All 5 Wave Bands enable you to enjoy today's finest High Fidelity American programs. In addition, you get Canadian, police, amateur, commercial, airplane and ship broadcasts and derive new delight and new excitement from unequalled world-wide broadcasts . . . England, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Russia, Australia, etc. Send today for money-saving facts!

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Increasing costs are sure to result in higher radio prices soon. Buy before the big advance...NOW... while you can take advantage of Midwest's sensational values...no middlemen's profits to pay. You can order your High Fidelity radio from the new Midwest catalog with as much certainty of satisfaction as if you were to select it in our great radio laboratories. You save 30% to 50% when you buy this popular way... you get 30 days FREE trial...**as little as $5.00** down puts a Midwest radio in your home. Satisfaction guaranteed or money back. Write for new FREE catalog.

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NEW STYLE CONSOLES

The Midwest 36-page 1935 catalog pictures a complete line of beautiful, artistic deluxe consoles and chassis, in four colors. Write for new FREE catalog today!

Midwest Long-Range sets are priced as low as $27.50

50 ADVANCED 1935 FEATURES...

...and 16 tubes make this Super High Fidelity Radio today's most powerful long distance receiver. Its many exclusive features include: Micro-Tenuator . . . Fidel-A-Stat . . . Separate Audio Generator . . . Ceramic Coil Forms, etc.

FEATURES OF NEW MIDWEST DIAL

This dial takes the guesswork out of tuning. Now Midwest guarantees that inexperienced persons can secure good foreign reception. Send for FREE miniature of actual rotating dial — which clearly shows the advantages of these sensational features.

1. **Dial calibrated in Kilocycles, Megacycles and Meters;**
2. **Call letters of American Broadcast Stations printed on dial and illuminated;**
3. **Slow-Fast, Smooth-Action Tuning;**
4. **Station Group Locator;**
5. **Simplified Tuning Guide Lights;**
6. **Automatic Select-O-Band Indicator;**
7. **Illuminated Pointer Indicator;**
8. **Silent Shadow Tuning — Improvement on Meter Tuning;**
9. **Centralized Tuning.**

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I'll FILL your POCKETBOOK

and Give You a Brand New Ford Tudor Sedan for producing

HERE'S a Wonderful Chance to Step into a Good-Paying Tea and Coffee Route Right in Your Own Locality. No experience Needed—I'll Give You What Little Training Necessary—No Red Tape—Earnings Start at Once.

LOOK AT THESE UNUSUAL EARNINGS

If you have been working for a boss and your pay has been limited; if you are weary of pinching and striving to exist, here's an opportunity to change all this. With my route plan you can stop time-clock punching forever. Here's what some others have already done. Chester Clay, N. Mex., made $10.00 in two hours. Howard B. Ziegler, Pa., made $21.60 in a day and $103.32 in a week. Lambert Wilson, Mich., made $79.00 in one week. Ray Chapman, Mo., cleared $73.50 in a week. These exceptional earnings show the remarkable possibilities of my route plan.

SPECIAL OPENINGS FOR WOMEN

I have a wonderful opportunity for women on local Tea and Coffee Routes. Earnings run up to $5.00 a day just in spare time. The work is light and pleasant and the profits exceptionally big. Housewives, school teachers, office workers, factory workers—all find my new and novel plans for spare-time work highly profitable. If you have other work to do just start in spare-time. Mrs. C. R. Luoma, W. Va., averaged $40.00 a week for a year on one of these routes. Mrs. Preston Portwood, Ga., quit a $10.00 a week department store job and cleared $7.50 the first afternoon. These unusual earnings show what big money women can make. I now have an even better plan to offer you. Send me your name today.

PERMANENT FOOD ROUTES PAY UP TO $60.00 A WEEK

I'll start you in a big-paying business of your own—you don't risk anything. Sounds astonishing! It is a revelation to men and women in immediate need of cash. This is a public announcement of a time-tried and thoroughly proven plan for quick relief from your money worries. I need more people to operate local Tea and Coffee Routes at once. These routes pay up to $60.00 a week. Even spare-time Route Owners make up to $5.00 a day. I back you up and take the risk.

IMMEDIATE EARNINGS

It's your job to distribute the goods and collect the cash. You keep a big share of it for yourself. You don't have to wait—profits start pouring in immediately. I place "Ready Made" plans for success in your hands just as soon as you join me. I have spent years and a fortune in cash for these things I give you free of extra cost. With my plans you pocket all the profit. You don't divide up with anyone.

HOUSEHOLD SUPPLIES PAY BEST

Look around—you will see men making big weekly incomes from laundry routes, dairy routes or bakery routes. My route plans are still better. I manufacture nearly 300 fine food products and necessities used daily in almost every home—things people must buy to live. I furnish you wonderful new route plans, and fine premiums for your customers. Your earnings are big right from the start. Think of having relief from money worries with the thrill of seeing your business grow bigger every week.

FORD CARS GIVEN

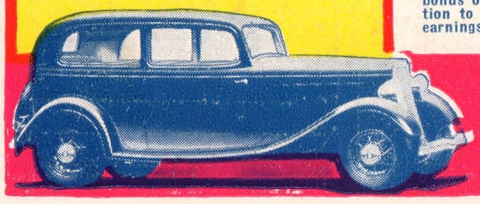
I back up my Route Owners to bring them unheard-of earnings. I even give Ford Tudor Sedans — free of extra cost—as a bonus to my producers. This is in addition to the regular big daily cash profits. Send name today for big booklet crammed full of facts. You will be amazed at my liberal offer.

SEND NO MONEY YOU RISK NOTHING

I want to hear from you at once so I can lay all the facts before you, then you can be the judge. You may be just the person I am looking for. You don't risk a cent. If you need cash don't miss this opportunity. It might not appear again. Right now while it is before you, put name on coupon or penny postcard—mail—rush today.

Send no money

I give brand new Ford Tudor Sedans to my producers. Not a prize or a raffle—but an extra bonus or reward in addition to your regular cash earnings.



ALBERT MILLS, President
7402 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, O.

Rush me free facts on your Route Plan, telling how I can start earning up to $60.00 a week at once. I understand there is no obligation on my part. You are to send me your plans and complete facts, and I am to be the judge.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

(Please Print or Write Plainly)