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THRILLING ADVENTURES

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SHANGHAI HORROR

A Novelette of War-Torn China

By CAPT. J.

WINCHCOMBE-TAYLOR

A THRILLING
PUBLICATION



RED FLAME OF MUTINY

A Complete Novel of Bloody Revolt

By MAJOR GEORGE F. ELIOT

DON'T BUY RINGS or REBORE IF CAR WASTES OIL and GAS



Miner's Amazing Mineral Discovery Saves Up to 95% of New Ring and Rebores Costs. If Worn Rings and Cylinders Are Wasting Oil and Gas Send Coupon Below for FREE SAMPLE!

SAVES OIL SAVES GAS

Nearly a half-million motorists have used this revolutionary method of cutting oil and gas waste caused by worn rings and cylinders. Savings up to 50% reported. Give your car new power, pep, speed and quiet with this amazing mineral discovered in the Rocky Mountains. Awarded A.T.I. Seal of Approval.

TAKES PLACE OF NEW RINGS AND REBORE!

Quickly placed through spark plug openings and at a fraction of the cost of new rings and rebores, this amazing mineral fills in and plates worn rings and cylinder walls. Ovrhaul gives your motor increased compression. Cuts oil consumption, increases gas mileage, adds new power and speed, with other substantial benefits of new rings and rebores. Ovrhaul has been thoroughly tested and proved by impartial laboratories and great Universities in the United States and abroad. Proved harmless to finest motors.

INSTALLED IN 30 MINUTES!

Ovrhaul works on the mineral plating principle—No special tools needed. No car tie-up. No danger of ruining motor by grinding cylinder walls—works in while you drive, saves you time and money. Gives you months of extra car use. A single application lasts up to 10,000 miles.

SAMPLE FREE!

If your car is wasting oil and gas, before you spend up to \$150.00 for new rings and rebores—send your name and address on the coupon below for a free sample of this amazing mineral which expands up to 30 times when heated, and full details of a real money-making opportunity. Air mail reaches us overnight from the East.

Why Pay Up to \$151.37 for New Rings and Rebores?

Worn rings and cylinders cause your car to be an oil and gas eater—before you spend a lot of money, try Ovrhaul. Give it an opportunity to do for you what it has done for thousands of others. Here are costs of new rings and rebores on a few 1935 models: Chevrolet \$59.00; DeSoto, \$62.50; Dodge, \$59.00; Ford, \$60.00 to \$55.00; Cadillac, \$151.37; Packard, \$112.50.

ENDORSED

By Member of Society Automotive Engineers National Aeronautical Assn. Detroit Soc. of Engineers, Pontiac Engineers Club.

Let us send you L. H. Smith's complete report which shows that the compression of a badly worn 6-cylinder motor was increased 32.4% and brought back to within .99 points of its original new car efficiency. Such facts conclusively prove the sensational merits of Ovrhaul.

MONEY-MAKING TERRITORIES OPEN

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Sales of Ovrhaul have been phenomenal. Hundreds of Salesmen and Distributors in the United States and abroad. The biggest money-maker in years. National magazine, newspaper and radio advertisers carry the message of Ovrhaul to over 18,000,000 car owners. The market has barely been scratched. To wide-awake men we offer opportunity—an opportunity which may never come your way again. A fast selling, repeating article, fully protected by U. S. and foreign patents. Saves motorists millions of dollars. Exclusive territories still open—but you must act quick if you want to get in on this.

Free SAMPLE COUPON

B. L. Mellinger, Pres. (Paste on Postcard and mail)
Ovrhaul Co., C-912, Los Angeles, Calif.

Without cost or obligation, rush me FREE SAMPLE. Also show me your big money-making plan.

Name

Address

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

PHONE, WRITE OR WIRE TODAY!

Let us send you free sample which every salesman is furnished for demonstration. Let us show you, with their permission, ACTUAL earnings of our distributors. Let us show you how you can start in this business NOW—before all territories are assigned. The market is there—we have the product—are you the man? Let's find out. Write, phone or wire today.—B. L. Mellinger, Pres.,

OVRHAUL CO.,
C-912, Los Angeles, Calif.



"You don't have to
TELL IT TO THE MARINES
they KNOW!"



"On active duty with the Fifth Marines in the Nicaraguan jungles, I went to our field hospital with fever. One day a badly injured Marine was flown in...it was my buddy!

...WRITES HARRY E. REECE, FROM THE U. S. VETERANS HOSPITAL AT MEMPHIS, TENN.



"His head had been bashed in by a machete. To save him, surgeons must remove fragments of skull pressing on the brain...a delicate operation anywhere, it was extra tough in a field hospital. I guess they didn't have much hope. Just when they started operating...



**OUT WENT
 THE LIGHTS!**



"Our small portable generator had failed! Hospital corps men rushed through the dark ward, gathered up flashlights some of the men had there, and with the light from fresh DATED 'Eveready' batteries, the surgeon finished his work.

"My buddy returned to duty, is still living and he thanks one *swell* Marine Corps surgeon and *dependable*, dated 'Eveready' batteries. They were the only kind our canteen sold, the only kind that could have taken what we gave 'em.

(Signed) *Harry E. Reece*"



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THRILLING ADVENTURES

Vol. XXV, No. 2

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

April, 1938

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Many Radio Experts Make \$30, \$50, \$75 a Week

Do you want to make more money? Broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, station managers and pay up to \$5,000 a year. Spare time Radio set servicing pays as much as \$200 to \$500 a year—full time servicing jobs pay as much as \$30, \$50, \$75 a week. Many Radio Experts own their own full or part time Radio businesses. Radio manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen, paying up to \$6,000 a year. Radio operators on ships get good pay and see the world. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio, loud speaker systems offer good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises many good jobs soon. Men I trained have good jobs in these branches of Radio.



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\$300 a
Month in
Own Busi-
ness.



"For the last 18 months I have been in business for myself, making between \$200 and \$300 a month. I have N.R.I. to thank for my start in this field." — **ARLIE J. FROHNER**, 224 W. Texas Ave., Goose Creek, Texas.

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Almost every neighborhood needs a good spare time serviceman. The day you enroll I start sending Extra Money Job Sheets showing how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your training I send plans and ideas that made good spare time money for hundreds. I send Special Equipment to conduct experiments, build circuits, get practical experience. I GIVE YOU A COMPLETE, MODERN, PROFESSIONAL, ALL WAVE, ALL PURPOSE RADIO SET. SERVICE INSTRUMENT TO HELP SERVICE SETS QUICKER—SAVE TIME, MAKE MORE MONEY.

Find Out What Radio Offers You

Mail the coupon now for "Rich Rewards in Radio." It's free to any fellow over 16 years old. It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities, also those coming in Television; tells about my Training in Radio and Television; shows you letters from men I trained, telling what they are doing, earning; shows my Money Back Agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a post card—NOW.

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 8D09
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 8D09
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out the spare time and full time opportunities in Radio and explains your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please write Plainly.)

NAME.....AGE.....

ADDRESS.....

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



Over \$1,000
Graduating

"Before completing half the N.R.I. Course I was servicing sets, and I made \$1,000 to \$1,500 before graduating. I am doing Radio service work for myself now."

— **ASHLEY G. ALDRIDGE**, 1238 Shepherd St., Petersburg, Va.



The GLOBE TROTTER



APRIL is the month when most of our real-life adventurers shake off the cloak of winter and get into action! If you have been keeping in touch with such things, you probably realize that most of the big ocean hops are planned or carried through to success in this month.

This time last year Captain Maurice Rossi of France was hanging up the new 5000 metre mark with a speed of 194.2 m.p.h. A squadron of Naval Bombing Planes, 12 U. S. Sea-planes, made a record-breaking hop from California to Hawaii toward the end of last April. New plans for similar undertakings are still in prospect.

Broader Horizons

To those that watch the broader horizons, smoky and flaming with the terrors of war, April has another significance, since we all know that twenty-one years ago this April 6, the United States decided to throw its weight on the side of the Allies in a war designed to end wars. But this has been nothing more than a fond hope, if the trouble in Spain and China is any index of what the immediate future holds.

Another April a year later found hundreds of thousands of khaki-clad men crossing the Atlantic to join British, French and Belgium forces in the Battle of the Somme, for what proved to be their greatest and last adventure.

All of these things combine to make man's conflict against man—whether individual or in armed forces—the high-spot of physical action. Something of the futility of combat

is apparent from time to time, but there is a spiritual quality in man's continued striving which seems to make everything worth-while.

Achievement or chaos, April and the dawn of a new year of action can mean either one. For our globe trotters we naturally hope for the former. There are many new worlds to conquer for pleasant reading enjoyment, and a gala fiction feast is provided for you by the writers we regularly bring to you within these pages.

India's Bloody Year

The **RED FLAME OF MUTINY** in this issue literally set this **GLOBE TROTTER** on fire to ride the out-trails. Here is what Globe Trotter Major Eliot says about this excellent story. By the way, I might mention that, thorough workman that he is, Major George F. Eliot spent a great deal of time in research to give you an authentic and historically accurate picture of the India of that period.

Dear Globe Trotter:

I'm sort of a bug on history—have been ever since I was a kid. And I don't know of any more fascinating or terrible chapter in all history than India's "Red Year"—the year of the Great Mutiny, 1857: the year the native soldiers of the Bengal Army rose against the British "raj," murdered their officers and every other white man, woman and child they could lay hands on, set the wretched old King of Delhi on the throne of the Moguls and—for a time—seemed destined to sweep away every vestige of British power from the Sutlej to Calcutta.

That they failed, in the end—that with all their British arms and training, with the support of so many of the country people, with the overwhelming superiority in numbers, they were still at last overpowered by mere handfuls of British

(Continued on page 110)

Why Trained Accountants Command

[—and how ambitious men are qualifying
by the LaSalle Problem Method]

High Salaries

GET this straight.

By "accountancy" we do not mean "bookkeeping." For accountancy begins where bookkeeping leaves off.

The skilled accountant takes the figures handed him by the bookkeeper, and *analyzes* and *interprets* them.

He knows how much the costs in the various departments should amount to, how they may be lowered.

He knows what profits should be expected from a given enterprise, how they may be increased.

He knows, in a given business, what per cent of one's working capital can safely be tied up in merchandise on hand, what per cent is safe and adequate for sales promotion. And these, by the way, are but two of *scores* of percentage-figures where-with he points the way to successful operation.

He knows the intricacies of government taxation.

He knows how to *survey* the transactions of a business over a given period; how to show in cold, hard figures the progress it has made and where it is going. He knows how to use these findings as a basis for constructive policies.

In short, the trained accountant is the *controlling engineer* of business—one man business cannot do without.

Small wonder that he commands a salary two to ten times as great as that of the bookkeeper. Indeed, as an independent operator (head of his own accounting firm) he may earn as much as the president of the big and influential bank in his community, or the operating manager of a great railroad.

Some Examples

Small wonder that accountancy offers the trained man such fine opportunities—opportunities well illustrated by the success of thousands of

LaSalle accountancy students.* For example—one man was a plumber, 32 years old, with only an eleventh grade education. He became auditor for a large bank with an income 325 per cent larger.

Another was a drug clerk at \$30 a week. Now he heads his own very successful accounting firm with an income many times as large.

A woman bookkeeper—buried in details of a small job—is now auditor of an apartment hotel, and her salary mounted in proportion to her work.

A credit manager—earning \$200 a month—moved up quickly to \$3000, to \$5000, and then to a highly profitable accounting business of his own which netted better than \$10,000 a year.

And What It Means to You

Why let the other fellow walk away with the better job, when right in your own home you may equip yourself for a splendid future in this profitable profession?

Are you really *determined* to get ahead? If so, you can start at once to acquire—by the LaSalle Problem Method—a thorough understanding of Higher Accountancy, master its fundamental principles, become expert in the practical application of those principles—this without losing an hour from work or a dollar of pay.

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you may personally need—and without any extra expense to you.

If you are dissatisfied with your present equipment—if you recognize the opportunities that lie ahead of you through home-study training—you will do well to send at once for full particulars. The coupon will bring them to you without any obligation, also details of LaSalle's convenient payment plan.

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☐ Higher Accountancy:

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Name

Present Position

Address

*Names available on request.

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...America's Smartest Magazine...

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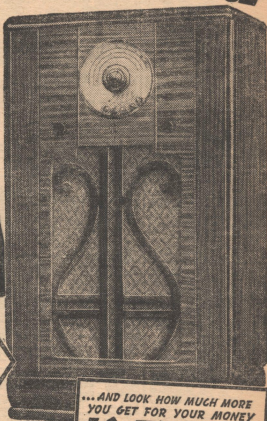
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**WHO ASPIRE ABOVE WAGES
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of present common cost of method it replaces, as a standard guaranteed saving. In many cases, the cost has run as low as TWO PER CENT of what the cost often reached formerly. There is a size suitable for small concerns, as well as large. Costs less than 2½ cents daily per unit used annually. Purchases depend on size of business. Initial purchases have run as high as 27 units in one delivery. Every satisfied customer means foundation laid for regular resale. Large firms which trials made in home or branch offices, then install as Standard thru-out. For example, leading automotive concern reported \$12,000 return on \$187.50 investment.

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MONTH • •**

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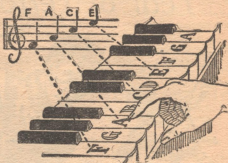
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RED FLAME

*A Novel of
India's
Year of Terror*



He leveled his pistol at the

CHAPTER I

The Mutiny at Sillaur

IT was India's Red Year—1857. With the dawn, the hot wind had commenced to blow. The Devil's Wind, men called it, which bore on its sultry breath the fumes of mutiny, and murder, and madness from Calcutta to Peshawar in that terrible year.

The sepoys of the Bengal Army had risen in revolt, slaughtering their British officers, proclaiming at Delhi the ancient Mogul Empire and the end of the British "raj." All India was likely to burst into flame at any moment. Havelock with scarcely a thousand men marched to the relief of Cawnpore. Henry Lawrence was besieged in the Residency at Lucknow. Neill at Allahabad with a handful of Sikhs and Englishmen guarded the line of communications to the sea and held

Lieutenant Ed Scott Flings a Fighting Man's

OF MUTINY

By MAJOR
GEORGE F.
ELIOT

*Author of "Arms for
Ethiopia," "Tropic
Terror," etc.*



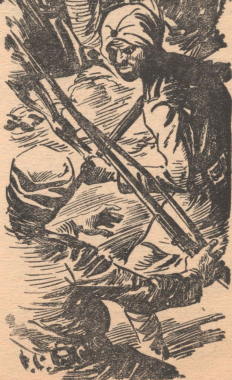
nearest man and pulled the trigger

down the heaving surface of volcanic revolt by sheer courage and the terror of his name.

Lieutenant Edward Scott, of the Guides Cavalry, riding westward along the dusty road with Jemadar Sher Singh, his second in command, at his side, and seventeen booted and spurred Sikh troopers at his back, laughed aloud for joy as the sun gleamed on the red walls of the still distant fort of Sillaur, and the wind bore to his ears the sullen thump of the reveille gun.

"The fort's still ours, Sher Singh!" he cried, turning his tough and elastic slim body with the easy grace of a born horseman. His lean, hard-jawed face, burned to a deep mahogany by long exposure to sun and wind, was scarred across one cheek by the slash of a Mohmand tulwar.

The native officer, a fine looking, wiry Sikh in the red turban and



Challenge into the Teeth of Revolution!

khaki uniform of the Regiment of Firozpur, grinned in his black beard. "It is good hearing that gun, Lieutenant Sahib!" he agreed.

"Yes. We are in time, and Colonel Neill will be pleased. Had the garrison mutinied already and seized the fort—"

Scott ended that reflection with a shrug.

They hadn't. But if they had, he wondered what he would have done. For his orders were very clear and left him little room for discretion. The cold, measured tones of Colonel Neill, two days' ride back at Allahabad, seemed yet to ring in Scott's ears:

"You will allow nothing to turn you aside from the accomplishment of this mission, Lieutenant Scott. You have no right to allow yourself any human feeling, whether of pity, of fear, of self-preservation, until you have done that which you are sent to do. You have served five years on the frontier. I need say no more."

G RIM orders. And for what? A child's trinket—a wedge-shaped piece of gold perhaps two inches long, engraved and decorated by some long dead goldsmith. This was the object which Scott and half a troop of horse had been sent to reclaim from the possession of the child daughter of Commandant Reynolds of Sillaur and bring back safe to Allahabad. Or, failing that, to destroy it. Taking toys from children was not Edward Scott's idea of war. Yet Neill had been tremendously in earnest, for that trinket was one of two keys to the fabulous treasure of Bajji Rao, which, dominated by the grim fort, tain.

Suddenly Scott straightened in his saddle. One of the troopers who rode as advance guard had turned his horse, was galloping back along the road, little spurts of dust rising behind him.

"A covered doolie on the road, Sahib! Attacked by a mob of budmashes."

Scott, reaching the high ground

where the other Sikh waited with carbine advanced, saw a curtained litter ahead on the road, surrounded by some dozen armed men. He caught the flicker of steel, heard the echo of savage cries.

It might be none of his affair, but the road must be cleared. Up went his sword in signaling gesture. The troop broke into a gallop, spreading into column of fours. Over the rise they swept, and down the slope on the farther side.

The gang about the litter scattered like partridges into the fields on either side of the road, diving into standing crops and brushwood gilded with the rays of the rising sun.

All save one.

A fakir, plump, filthy and truculent, stood out in the middle of the highway brandishing an iron-ringed staff above his greasy turban. Out of the mass of matted hair which concealed his face, two great yellow eyes glared savagely. He screamed Hindustani curses on the interfering Sahib and his "Sikh jackals."

Scott rode straight at him. But two of the fakir's companions, rushing back, grabbed the fakir by the arms and dragged him beyond the roadside ditch, plunging into a thicket scarlet with the flowers of the dakh-tree.

"Let them go!" called Scott to the Sikhs who would have pursued. He had an uneasy idea that he'd seen that fakir before.

The doolie stood alone on the road, save for three or four trembling servants who fell on their knees in the dust as Scott reined up beside them. He had only time to see that the litter was richly ornamented and curtained with brocade when the curtains were swept open with a rush. Within, a woman half crouched upon billowing cushions.

For an instant Scott had an impression of a beautiful panther crouched to spring—then her eyelids drooped, her taut muscles relaxed, and she smiled. Scott got the full and startling benefit of that smile, for astonishingly enough, she was unveiled.

Her skin, of the beautiful ivory tint sometimes seen amongst high-caste Hindu ladies, was suffused with the crimson of angry excitement. One slender hand gripped the jeweled haft of a bared dagger. Her eyes, great pools of dark fire, ignored the crowding, staring sowars and fixed themselves on Scott's face; her slender body, whose perfections of curve and symmetry were enhanced rather than hidden by the diaphanous fabric of her costume, lifted itself on one arm; jewels flashing as she moved.

"I thank you, Sahib!" she said in the cultured Hindi of her class. "These robbers grow bold, now that the firm hand of your Raj is relaxing."

Scott felt that there was a taunt in her tone, though the words themselves were courteous enough. He noted that none of her servants seemed injured; none had drawn a weapon, though all were armed.

Something queer here. But he remembered Neill's order. No knight errantry. The road was clear. Sillaur was in sight. His duty was plain.

"What is your name, Sahib, and where are you going?" he demanded curtly.

"My name is Laksmi," she answered in her clear voice. "I am the daughter of the Raja of Chatrapur, who is sending me to the fort of Sillaur for safety. My Father will be most grateful to you, Sahib."

"Laksmi! By the beard of Ranjit, well-named!" Scott heard Sher Singh chuckle—and he could well agree. Laksmi, the Hindu goddess of love and beauty!

But he had no time for love and beauty. The Raja of Chatrapur was known to be loyal. Scott would offer the lady what protection he could. That was all.

"Very well!" he snapped out. "Bid your servants take up the litter and push on. I will escort you to the town. You will be quite safe there."

"Oh, very safe, I think!" she answered. Her laugh rang clear as the tinkle of the golden bangles on her white arms.

"Ride by my side," she added, still laughing. "Perhaps I shall find many things to say to you."

But Scott touched his horse with a spur and rode on for Sillaur.

"Now by the holy Khalsa!" swore Jemadar Sher Singh. "If a woman with such heaven-sent beauty looked into my eyes like that, I think I had ridden a little while at least beside her, Sahib!"

Scott laughed. "Not when you ride on a mission for Neill Sahib. Did you note that fakir, Sher Singh? I have an idea I've seen him somewhere."

"He was of the Gosain sect, I think," the jemadar answered. "A filthy breed."

"Too many of those fakirs are leading gangs of thieves about the country. Wish we had time to run the fellow down, growled Scott. "But—we're turning aside for nothing. Nothing!"

They were approaching the town, which, dominated by the grim fort, was not walled like so many Indian cities but spread in straggling fashion over the grassy plain at the foot of the hill on which the fort stood.

The road wound up the steep hillside to the gate of the fort flanked by several bungalows—the residence of the English officers and officials. To one side, near the fort, lay in serried rows the huts of the sepoy "lines," with small stone buildings—storehouses, magazine, and the like, close at hand. Beyond was the native town.

JUST as Scott reached the low wall round the first bungalow, a cry from one of the troopers reached him.

"The lady has fainted, Sahib! She is ill!"

Scott halted, and the bearers came trudging up with the doolie, the curtains of which were still open. Its beautiful occupant lay back upon her cushions, eyes closed, head rolling from side to side with the motion of the litter.

"Carry her in there—wait!" Scott turned his horse into the driveway

and rode up to the bungalow's veranda.

A girl stepped out through the open door, a slender and quick-moving girl, whose blond hair, ruffled by the hot wind, made an odd contrast to a skin well tanned by the Indian sun. She wore riding breeches, white shirt and boots—a costume which, in the reign of good Queen Victoria, was in its way as complete a tribute to independence of spirit in an Englishwoman as was the absence of a veil to that of the Hindu lady in the litter.

Scott lifted his hand to the visor of his forage cap.

"Good morning!" said he. "I'm Lieutenant Scott of the Guides. This native lady in the litter was attacked by thieves on the road. I've got to ride on to the fort. Can you have someone look after her? She seems to be ill."

"Of course," she said, and lifted her voice. "Ayah!"

There was no response.

"Ann! Ann! What is it? Who's there?" A thick-set, pompous officer in a scarlet patrol-jacket and Wellington trousers stamped out of the house. "What's all this? Who are you, sir?" he demanded sharply.

Scott stiffened in his saddle, saluting the insignia of a major's rank on the other's collar.

"Lieutenant Scott, sir, on special duty from Colonel Neill at Allahabad. Are you Major Reynolds?"

"Yes, of course." Some of the red faded from his puffed-out cheeks. He came forward, holding out his hand.

Scott dismounted and took it, one eye on the girl.

So this was the "child," Ann Reynolds.

"You bring news, Mr. Scott?" demanded the major.

"I am on a special mission, sir. Colonel Neill bids me say—"

The reverberant report of a musket-shot from the direction of the sepoy lines cut him short.

"What's that?" demanded Reynolds loudly. "Here, sais! My horse!"

"None of the servants seem to be on hand this morning, Father," the girl said quietly.

No servants—a bad sign. Scott's instinct for treachery and trouble, born of years on the frontier, stirred.

THERE came another shot—and another!

"Jemadar!" said Scott sharply, as Reynolds stood irresolute.

"Sahib!" came the smart reply.

"Have two troopers scout toward the sepoy lines. If there is any *hala* going on there, have them report instantly."

Sher Singh snapped an order, and two Sikhs rode off.

"What do you mean, sir? What can be going on? Are you trying to imply that my men may be mutinous? Preposterous! I know every man in my command! They are faithful to death!"

Thus Major Reynolds, speaking with the tongue and from the soul of a thousand officers of the Bengal Army in that red year of 1857, officers who would not believe that the soldiers they had led through so many hardships and dangers could turn on the officers who trusted them; officers who swore that whatever other regiments might do, *their* men would be true to their salt. Believed—and swore—and trusted—and paid with their lives for their blind faith!

Not so Scott, reared in the hard school of the Punjab, the school of Nicholson and Edwardes and John Lawrence. While Reynolds dashed at a lumbering run for the stables to get a horse, Scott swung to the girl.

A child, Neill had said. But children grew up.

"Are you Ann Reynolds?" he asked bluntly.

"Why—yes!"

"No time to argue! Have you got—" his voice fell so low that even the troopers could not overhear—"a sort of lucky piece that you found at Bithur? A gold wedge with grooves in it?"

"Yes!"

Her blue eyes were very wide with utter astonishment.

From the lines came a crackle of half a dozen shots. And a high-pitched, wicked yell—borne on the wings of the Devil's Wind.

Major Reynolds dashed past the veranda, mounted, hatless, but determined.

"I'll soon quiet them!" he roared as he galloped by.

"Give it to me, please!" said Scott to Ann Reynolds.

"I will not!" she said sharply. "It's mine! My good luck—"

"It is required by the Government of India, Miss Reynolds," said Scott trying to be patient in the face of this feminine wistfulness.

"But it's upstairs—"

"Then get it! Quick!"

"I'll do nothing of the sort! What right—"

There was a clatter of hoofs. One of the Sikh scouts jerked his horse to a sliding halt.

"The redcoat soors are pouring out of their lines, Sahib! They are firing on all the sahib-log!"

A frontier oath ripped from Scott's lips, and the girl winced. He might waste precious minutes getting the trinket now, in which case the sepoys would overrun the station.

He thought only of his mission; but was not the suppression of this mutiny the one sure way of carrying it out?

Scott made up his mind. He must deal with the mutiny first. That he *could* deal with it, he never doubted for an instant. Such was the sublime self-confidence of men trained by a Nicholson or commanded by a Neill.

Hesitation and delay were fatal errors in handling Asiatics.

"Column of twos on the road!" yelled Scott to his troop.

His hand closed on the girl's shoulder.

"No more time to argue!" he snapped. "Get that gold thing, you understand? Ride with it to the fort and stay there till you hear from me."

The girl gasped, a dark red surged



Ed Scott

up under her tan. Scott swung to saddle unheeding, no more doubting that she would obey than that he could put down this mutiny with seventeen sowars.

The litter blocked the driveway; the occupant seemed still unconscious. Scott edged his horse past it, flinging a curt order to the bearers to get it out of sight and lie low.

He did not see the lady Laksmi stir and look after him with mocking eyes.

"TROOP!" he roared. "Return swords! Unsling carbines! Forward!"

With his Sikhs at his horse's tail, he clattered away along the road, up the slope and through the thick grove of tamarinds which screened the sepoy lines from his present view.

The first sight that met his astonished gaze as he reached the farther edge of the grove was that of the redcoated sepoys falling in on their parade ground between the lines and the fort. The firing had ceased.

The men were forming up in the usual double-rank formation, under their native officers.

Some twenty paces in front of them, Major Reynolds sat his horse, another British officer beside him, their swords drawn.

To the right of the line, two small Eurasian drummers were lustily rolling assembly.

CHAPTER II

Laksmi's Treachery

"FALL in there! Fall in! Dress by the right!" Major Reynolds bellowed. "Ri' — drass!" cried a subadar, or native captain.

The long line of high bell-topped shakoes turned as the men instantly obeyed.

Discipline had prevailed. Or had it?

"Follow me at the walk. Ready for anything," said Scott to his jemadar, and cantered up to Reynolds' side.

"Mutiny, eh?" grunted that officer as he saw Scott. "Look at that! Perfect discipline! Some little row in the lines, that's all. My appearance quieted them at once. They are my men, sir. *My men.*"

Scott ran his eye along the two company fronts. He did not like what he saw. There were scowling faces, open cartridge pouches, half the bayonets fixed—and a general air of waiting. He saw the men's eyes following the subadar who had commanded Right Dress.

So he was the leader, was he? Scott's hand dropped to his holster and quietly unbuttoned its flap. Inside was a heavy "Deane and Adams" revolver, such as were just coming into use on the frontier.

"Unfix those bayonets!" roared the major, noticing the bare steel. "See to it, subadar!"

The subadar passed on the order. One or two of the men started to obey, uneasily noting the advancing Sikhs.

A scream, shrill and high and horrible, rang out suddenly from the lines. Through the narrow interval between the two companies came running a woman, skirts flying, arms upraised, hands dark and dripping with blood.

"Major Reynolds! Major Reynolds! They've killed my husband! My Tim! Look at his blood! Oh, the murderin' black hounds!"

"Who is she?" asked Scott sharply.

"Wife of the English quarter-master sergeant," Reynolds choked out.

Scott turned in his saddle, signaled to his slowly advancing troop. The jemadar spread his arms. Right and left the Sikhs cantered into a long line abreast.

As though at a low-voiced command, there was a sudden stir in the sepoy ranks, a ripple as if the Devil's Wind blew through a field of red corn. All the men who had not fixed their bayonets now did so with a wicked slither and click of steel.

"Stop that! Unfix bayonets!" bawled Reynolds, standing up in his stirrups and shaking his sword at the troops.

Not a man moved to obey.

"Better ride for the fort, sir," the other officer, a cadaverous looking captain, advised. "They're out of hand."

The woman, a Eurasian to judge from her dusky complexion, stopped halfway across the parade ground, turned and began screaming curses at the sepoys. A native officer, the subadar Scott had marked down, cut at her with his sword.

The ranks swayed—in another second they would have broken into a charging mass of screaming blood-mad devils. But the ringing *crack* of a pistol stayed them as the crack of a trainer's whip stays a crouching lion. The native officer plunged forward and lay on his face, twitching, his sword flying from his dead fingers.

Scott, smoking revolver in hand, rode right in front of the still bawling, helpless Reynolds. "Sir," he cried, as had Neill at Benares, "I assume command!"

His voice rang across that parade ground.

"Eighty-eighth! Pile arms!"

So tremendous, even in the very moment of mutiny, was the moral force of one white man who knew his own mind and meant to have his way, that the ranks stood fast. They did not pile their arms; but they

did not break. They stood and wavered.

But hesitation was not what Scott wanted. He did not even hear the blustering protests of Major Reynolds. His Sikhs were moving forward at a walk, had reached the edge of the parade ground.

"Troop—halt!" came his order, loud and clear and charged with deadly menace. "Advance—carbines! Ready! Present!"

Seventeen hammers clicked back; seventeen carbines snapped to seventeen khaki shoulders; seventeen grim, bearded Sikhs waited the order to fire—seventeen against a hundred and seventy armed sepoy.

Every man in those sepoy ranks must have known that they had only to fire a single volley and charge with the bayonet to sweep the handful of Sikhs and the white officers away. But there was no one to give the order, not one of the native officers dared to lift his voice. The example of the subadar had been enough. Each sepoy felt that one of those carbines was aimed directly at him.

"Jemadar, shoot down the first man who hesitates!" ordered Scott crisply, and turned once more toward the redcoated ranks.

"Eighty—eighth!" crackled his command. "Pile—arms!"

THE red ranks rippled, bayoneted muskets swung forward, there was a crash and clatter of steel. The front of the two companies was suddenly fringed with the pyramidal stacks of muskets.

The Eighty-eighth had piled arms. "By God, sir—" It was Major Reynolds, whose shame in that moment was more than he could bear. At his elbow the thin captain talked to him, urging him to be still.

"The senior native officer will take command and march the men back to their lines," ordered Scott.

He had won. He had disarmed the garrison of Sillaur. But it had been tough and go. He wiped away the sweat that was streaming down his

face, watching the weaponless sepoy form fours to march away as though they had never known any thought save obedience to orders.

"You have disgraced me, sir!" gasped Major Reynolds. "My regiment—my men—"

"Wait! Stop!" shrieked a voice in Hindustani. "Turn back, sons of Siva! Fight for your rights! Kill the white dogs! For the faith! For the faith!"

The shrieks grew louder. A running, bounding, howling, whirling figure dashed past the left of the sepoy line, brandishing a clattering staff with which he struck right and left at the sepoy within his reach.

It was the fakir!

Answering yells of "For the faith!" rose high. The sepoy ranks broke instantly. A hundred hands were snatching at the stacks of muskets. It was as though the fakir's coming had shattered the White Man's spell. There was but one thing to do. No time for slinging carbines and drawing swords.

"Charge!" roared Scott, and rode straight at the fakir, firing.

But the fakir seemed to have little stomach for doing his own fighting. He ran behind a group of sepoy, one of whom lifted musket to shoulder. The Sikhs galloped into the confused crowd of sepoy, striking right and left with carbine butts. The fakir kept on screaming, dashing here and there among the scattering, yelling sepoy.

Scott tried for a clear shot at him, but his horse reared at the thrust of a sepoy bayonet, and the ball flew wide. Another bayonet stabbed at Scott from the left: a couple of muskets roared almost in his ear. He leveled his pistol at the nearest man and pulled trigger. Another musket roared, and Scott's horse staggered and went to its knees.

Scott managed to swing out of the saddle just as the beast collapsed. Desperately he cocked his unwieldy pistol once more. As he did so, with a howl of triumph a big sepoy

havildar bounded at him, leveled bayonet thrusting for the stomach. Scott knew, even as his pistol covered the man, that his bullet would not be quick enough to stop that deadly thrust.

A black whirlwind thundered past just as the point drove forward. The sepoy screamed once, then his face dissolved in a flood of spurt-ing crimson. A bloody blade swung up and down and a second sepoy, who was dodging round to take Scott from behind, tumbled over—cloven from shoulder to breastbone.

FROM his black horse Jemadar Sher Singh grinned through his beard, down at Scott.

"It is good fighting, Sahib!" cried he. "The dogs run!"

"For the faith!" shrieked the fakir, lashing with his clattering staff at the fleeing sepoys. But they could not face those Sikh blades. Most of the troopers had slung carbines and got out their heavy tulwars. Only around the fakir were a few sepoys rallying.

Scott snatched up the musket of one of the fallen men and rushed at the fakir, reckless of odds. The swinging staff clashed on the bayonet, breaking it short off. But with a vicious thrust of his right arm Scott brought the butt around. The fakir ducked. The iron-shod toe of the stock smashed home on his turbaned head, and he went down with a choking scream.

"Shabash, Sahib!" approved Sher Singh, galloping past in hot pursuit of a flying sepoy.

Panting, Scott looked about him. The sepoys had scattered in flight. The fall of the fakir had extinguished the last spark of fight in them. The troopers were riding hither and thither, cutting down the mutineers, whose one thought now was to escape the laughing, bearded horsemen from the North and the red blades which slashed so wickedly.

Most of the stacks of the muskets had been overturned and pulled apart. A hundred or more, Scott thought, must be missing—in the

hands of sepoys who had already escaped.

"Rally!" he roared. "Rally, the Regiment of Ferozpur!"

Sher Singh took up the cry, a naik (corporal) who heard, repeated it. Reluctantly the troopers turned back from the joyous slaughter, one by one, and rode toward Sher Singh's upraised sword. Only one was missing, shot from his saddle by a sepoy musket-ball. His riderless horse was caught and brought to Scott, who mounted and rode to where Major Reynolds sat and stared in bitter silence at the wreck of all his hope and pride.

"I would advise that you get your people into the fort, sir," said Scott. Some of the sepoys got away with their arms, and there will be trouble yet. How many Europeans have you?"

Reynolds made no answer. He was crushed.

The captain, who had joined in the Sikh charge bravely enough, rode up in time to hear Scott's question.

"Eight," said he. "Civilians, except the major and myself. There are about twenty women and children. We've cannon, and plenty of ammunition and food in the fort, but we'll be short of men to defend the circuit of the walls, small as the place is."

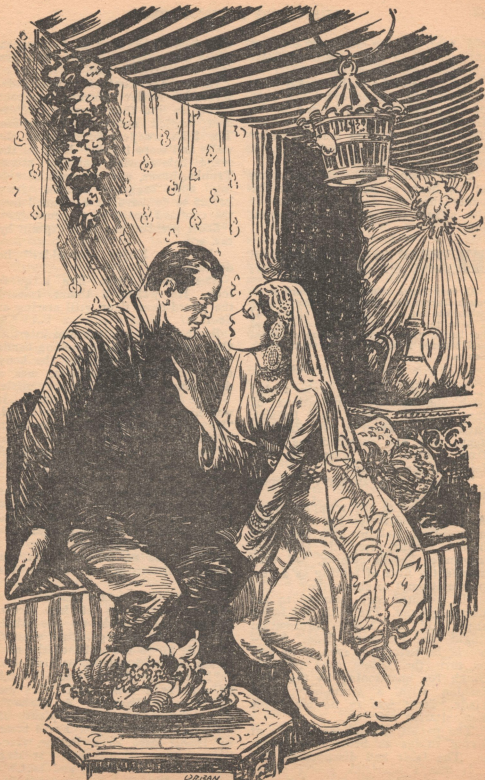
"You'll certainly be besieged. Those sepoys will scatter over the country and have the whole district up about your ears. Fetter get moving," was Scott's advice.

The captain's eyes were widening, staring at something beyond Scott's shoulder. Scott turned. A column of dark smoke was climbing up into the coppery sky, twisted by the faint but persistent wind.

"Those devils have fired the major's bungalow!" cried the captain.

"Help collect the arms, jemadar!" Scott shouted, and drove home his spurs.

Long before he reached the bungalow, he knew that the fire had claimed the flimsy structure for its own. Flames were bursting from every window, roaring up through



"O, I like you," said Laksmi

the roof, licking in long crimson tongues round the veranda as Scott galloped into the driveway.

No one was in sight nearby. He saw no slinking sepoys. The roar of the consuming fire, fanned by the Devil's Wind, was the only sound. The doolie lay in the driveway near the house, abandoned and empty. A bit of paper fluttered there.

Scott dismounted, fear clutching at his heart as he reached for the paper that was fastened to one of the silken cushions by a jeweled pin.

HE READ the flowing Hindustani script, and cursed as he read:

O very brave sahib whose sword is so much sharper than his wits! O very young sahib who has so much to learn of women! I have taken the yellow-haired one and her bauble away. Come seek me at Jhansi and perhaps I will give you your heart's desire.

Laksmi.

To Jhansi! Scott's brain reeled with the terrible implications of that mocking note. This Laksmi, then, was an agent of the Rani, an agent who had snatched the prize from Scott's very grasp. He had failed in his mission!

"Damn women, anyway!" he muttered savagely.

He glanced at the trampled lawn. A hundred horsemen had made that mess. Had Laksmi and the fakir been in league, after all? Had they known of Scott's coming, had they started the fires of mutiny as a desperate attempt to check him?

He mounted and returned to the parade ground. The fakir had fallen there. If he lived, information might be extracted from him—*would* be extracted, even if he had to turn the fellow over to Sher Singh for questioning in the Sikh fashion with a white-hot sword blade. Scott was in no mood for humanitarian niceties.

The parade ground was empty of living things as Scott rode across it. The fakir had disappeared.

It was a heartsick young officer who rode up to the gate of Sillaur Fort a few moments later. The gate

was jammed with pitiful refugees, white and native, crowding into the fort, frantic with fear.

Inside, the confusion was indescribable. Native servants ran about trying to find their masters. White men bawled contradictory orders. The Sikh troopers had manned the walls and were looking down on the scene below with haughty scorn. Trunks, boxes, and all sorts of riding and baggage animals from horses to donkeys were jammed into the confined space of the courtyard.

Scott grabbed the thin captain by the arm.

"Where's Major Reynolds?" he demanded.

The captain gave him a queer look. He jerked a thumb toward the guard-room door, still staring at Scott.

Scott peered into the dim interior. On a wooden bench, quite alone, hands crossed on his breast, lay the body of Major Reynolds. There was a dark round hole in his right temple.

"The old regiment, you know. It was his life," the captain muttered. "He knew every man personally. When they turned on him—"

"He took the easiest way out," Scott growled. "When every man's needed here!"

"Not very sportin' of him," the captain agreed. "But—oh, well, you Irregulars can't be expected to understand how we of the Bengal Line feel about our regiments."

Scott made no retort. There was enough bitterness already in his heart.

"Orders, Lieutenant Sahib?"

Sher Singh was at his elbow. Swiftly, Scott made up his mind. To Jhansi he must go. But he could not ride up to the walls of the mutinous city with a troop at his heels.

"I ride to Jhansi, Sher Singh," he said in a low voice. "Get me therefore a disguise. A Pathan's dress would do—there are plenty of Pathans with grey eyes. I will come to Jhansi gate as a Pathan free-booter from Rohilkhand, seeking service with the queen, and loot."

"And what of me, Lieutenant Sahib?"

"You stay here, with the troop, and help to hold this fort, which certainly will be attacked before many hours."

Sher Singh shook his turbaned head.

"Not so," he said firmly. "With a troop you cannot go to Jhansi, that is true. But two men are better than one. If you go, Lieutenant Sahib, Sher Singh goes also. The naiks can handle the men, and Captain Keene commands here."

"But—"

Passionately the native officer interrupted:

"Could I face Colonel Neill Sahib and say that I let you ride to your death alone? Nay. We will die, Sahib, that is very certain. But we die together. It is so written, Sahib."

"So be it, then!" Scott's hand shot out, the jemadar's clasp met it firmly.

CHAPTER III

The Queen of Hell



ROWS of trees in the gloomy, dust-blown little garden outside the east gate of Jhansi. The Devil's Wind blew through their scanty foliage, with an evil rustling as of unclean spirits. Beyond stretched the cheerless plain, with its black basalt rocks and a grim temple or two. Overhead towered the crenelated battlements of the city wall.

A tall Pathan and an equally tall native officer in scarlet stood beside the three rows of trees, listening to the excited babble of two bazaar loafers who were reliving a scene which their souls evidently relished.

"Ai, Lords, it was a great killing," chattered one. "Here are the very trees—observe the marks!"

He pointed a dirty finger.

The Pathan and his companion saw that the bark of the trees was much hacked and scarred at different levels. Below these marks the bark was much darker, as though stained.

In the first row of trees the cuts were five feet or more from the ground—about the height of a man's neck. In the third row, the marks were a few inches lower. The center row was scarred only some two or three feet up, the height of the choppings varying considerably.

"They opened their gates, the English fools, when the Rani had promised them their lives," the budmash went on, grinning with betel-stained lips over discolored teeth. "Ha! Who keeps faith with infidels? We bound their hands as they came out and led them to this place, and here we tied them to these trees. The men in front, the women behind, the children in the center. A row for each. It was the Rani's wish that the women might see their husbands and children die before their own turn came!"

He spat on the dusty ground.

"That was a sweet vengeance. A woman's vengeance!" said his companion.

The Pathan nodded. He seemed unwilling or unable to comment.

"Tell us more," said the native officer gently, hitching his sword hilt a trifle forward.

"What more is there to tell? Swordsmen came—sowars of the Fourteenth Irregular Horse, and some of the Rani's guard. They went down the lines in order. Thereafter, we left the bodies for a few days, that all men might see our queen's vengeance. Then we threw them into a ditch and the vultures had them. It was a great killing."

It is probable that the budmash never knew how near he was to death in that moment. He was saved by the coming of several armed men from the gate-guard, who had strolled over to listen, and to inspect the newcomers.

"You have ridden far, brothers?" asked one.

"From the north," replied the native officer.

"You have a look of a rascally Sikh about you," said another guard, one who wore part of a sepoy uniform.

"What does that matter?" retorted Sher Singh, grinning. "We come, my friend Kurram Khan and myself, in search of honorable service—infidel throats to cut—and perhaps a little loot, eh?"

"Loot! Little loot you will get here. Loot! 'Tis all you north-bred receivers think of. Go ask the Rani how she deals with looters."

Sher Singh shrugged.

"Let us go then," he suggested. "I doubt if good swords are so plentiful here in Jhansi—" he sneered and curled the end of his mustache as his bold eyes surveyed the gate-guards from head to foot—"that the Rani can afford to turn away men who have slain more infidels than you sons of shame ever set eyes on. Come along, Kurram Khan. We'll lay our swords and our hearts at the Rani's pretty feet."

"Ho! Ho. Hear the northern cockerels crow!" laughed the ex-sepoy harshly. "Wait till you have seen her, our Rani. She goes all in mail and can handle a sword with any swaggering Punjabi that ever strutted."

But they offered no opposition as the two newcomers strolled through the gate, and found themselves in the bazaars of Jhansi, with a narrow street sloping upward before them to the dark citadel which stood on a sheer pinnacle of rock.

To the left, a still narrower street lined with the small booths of chaffering merchants and crowded with people, afforded access to the gate of the Rani's palace. The palace itself was built partly of marble, partly of the black basalt of the region, and was almost as gloomy and forbidding in appearance as the fort.

"The palace first, Sahib?" asked Sher Singh.

Kurram Khan, Scott corrected. "Right—the palace."

He stopped abruptly, and Sher Singh shot him a quick glance of inquiry.

"Over there—in the perfume seller's booth. Isn't that the fakir we saw at Sillaur?" Kurram Khan murmured.

A swift-moving shadow vanished from beneath the perfume seller's awning as both men glanced that way.

"Did he see you?" asked Sher Singh.

"I'm not sure. I thought I caught the glint of those yellow eyes. Let's get a little closer to the palace. We've got to get some idea of the lay-out before we can make plans."

They strode on, swaggering as only men of the North can swagger in a southland bazaar. They were ready for anything. Their horses they had left at a village outside the gate, paying a peasant well to feed and care for them.

THE palace gate stood open. Men were passing in and out—sepoy officers of the revolted regiments who once had garrisoned the city, palace officials in gorgeous robes, Hindu notables and Mohammedan dignitaries scowling fiercely at each other, humble townsfolk with some petition to present to Her Highness, swordsmen of the palace guard.

"Easy enough to get in. But to find the missy-baba and get out?" Sher Singh shrugged his shoulders. "We can but try."

"There he is!" shrieked a voice which Scott remembered.

A dozen of the palace guards, led by a redcoated sepoy officer plunged out of the gate and closed suddenly around Scott. A dozen hands gripped him, disarmed him, held him fast. From the gallery over the gate the fakir leaned, pointing one plump arm, his face muffled to the eyes in the folds of a ragged cloak.

"Bring to me the English spy!" he screamed triumphantly.

"Nay. He goes to the Rani. It is an order!" the officer cried.

Escape was hopeless. Scott saw that at a glance.

Sher Singh saw it, too. He drew back as though a loathsome serpent had suddenly appeared before him.

"English spy!" he cried in Hindustani, and whipped out his sword. "By the sacred name of Allah! I have been betrayed! Dog!"

He rushed at Scott, but by this time the guards were between. They held him back, struggling and cursing and howling that he would have the blood of the infidel who had abused his confidence and made him an accomplice of such villainy.

"Nay, brother, perhaps you may have your will of him when the Rani has had her little talk with the fellow," the officer said. "That is, if anything is left. Come along, you."

A couple of bayonets prodded Scott. Musket-butts thrust the foaming, raging Sher Singh back. The guards dragged Scott through the gate of the palace, while all around him a growing mob howled loudly for his blood.

Scott's principal sensation was an abiding shame that he had been taken so suddenly, so completely by surprise. Of course, Sher Singh had played his part well and was still free. And Sher Singh would be faithful unto death. That was something.

The guards led him across a courtyard, through an inner gate and so into another courtyard empty save for a spraying fountain and a few trees shading green walks. From this courtyard a door opened into a long narrow corridor, at the end of which a flight of stone steps led upward to the upper floor of the palace. At the top of the stairs a chamberlain stepped forward, spoke to the officer, then threw open a door.

Scott was hustled forward, shoved through, and the door was closed behind him.

He was alone in a long, low-ceiled room, hung with tapestries and furnished with low, cushioned divans, tabourets bearing dishes of fruit and sweetmeats, curiously carved chairs and benches. Rugs covered the floor; wide windows, curtained with silver and rose brocade, admitted the afternoon sun. The curtains rustled in the wind.

Astonished beyond measure at finding himself free, alone and apparently unrestrained, Scott was grimly suspicious of a trap of some sort. He moved cautiously toward

the open window; but it gave upon a high-walled courtyard. No way of escape there.

From behind the curtain a woman stepped out and salaamed with exaggerated courtesy. In rose-colored muslin which billowed about her slender form in a sort of swirling cloud under the gentle fingering of the wind, this woman salaamed, and laughed gayly into Scott's startled face.

"**L**AKSMI!" Scott spoke her name before he realized that his surprise had made itself vocal.

"Aye, Laksmi!" the girl, for she seemed little more, replied. "Are you astonished, O very young and impulsive Sahib?"

"Where is Miss Reynolds?" demanded Scott at once. "What have you done with her?"

"She is quite safe, for the present. But I am not complimented, Sahib. You see me—and your first words are of another woman. Am I not beautiful?" She spun in a gay pirouette. The muslin draperies, of that ethereal thinness which only Indian weavers seem to know how to achieve, clung and whirled about her lovely body.

Scott caught his breath.

"Yes, Sahib. You are beautiful—too beautiful for a soldier to look at and keep his head," he admitted. "But—"

"But you have your duty to think of!" concluded Laksmi, coming suddenly very close to him with little running steps so that he was all too aware of the intoxicating perfume which hung about her. "Must you always think of duty? Can you not think of *me* for a little while?"

She laid a slender ivory hand, glittering with jewels and a great signet ring, upon his arm.

"I don't understand!" said Scott doggedly. "I'm taken prisoner by the Rani's guards. I'm brought to this place—and I find *you*. What's the answer, Laksmi?"

"O, I like you!" said Laksmi. "Truly you are a man in a thousand! You have no conceit. Come here. Sit by my side, and I will

tell you anything you want to know."

She pulled him down upon a divan, sitting very close beside him.

"Your coming," she began, "was known from the moment you approached the gates. The Rani is well served by her agents."

"Of whom the fakir with the yellow eyes is one?" Scott suggested.

LAKSMI stiffened suddenly. Her dark eyes flashed—perhaps with anger, perhaps with a hint of fear.

"The fakir with the yellow eyes!" she repeated slowly.

"It was he who caused me to be seized."

"So!" Laksmi stared at Scott a moment before going on. "Well, if he did, he only precipitated an action already arranged for. You were followed from the gate. But never mind the fakir. I want you to consider the state of affairs here in Jhansi, where the queen has come into her own again. You have heard of our Rani?"

"Yes," said Scott tersely, thinking of the three rows of trees, but suppressing comment.

"She was foully treated by the late Viceroy, Lord Dalhousie," continued Laksmi, a thin snarl coming into her tone at the mention of that name. "When her husband, the Raja Baba Gangadhar Rao, died a few years ago, she was left a widow—and childless. But the law of our fathers has from time immemorial given a royal widow in such circumstances the right to adopt a son to succeed to the throne, to bear the name of her husband's house and serve the departed king as a son at his funeral ceremonies.

"Lord Dalhousie refused to acknowledge this sacred custom. He declared that the state of Jhansi, in the absence of an heir of the blood, reverted to the British raj. Not only did he wickedly cheat the queen of all that should have been hers, but by denying her adopted son the succession, he made him no son at all, according to our law, for a son who cannot succeed to the place and property of his father is

not a son in the sight of heaven.

"Thus, by sending the body of the king to the flames with no son's hand to light the pyre, your accursed Lord Dalhousie condemned the soul of Baba Gangadhar Rao to the fires of hell—where it must burn and shrivel till the wrong be righted and a new son, a lawful son, shall make atonement before the altars of the Gods and shall reign in his father's place upon the musnud of Jhansi!"

While Laksmi had been talking, her excitement had risen. Her cheeks became flushed, her words poured swiftly from between her lovely lips. As she spoke the last sentence, she leaped to her feet and stood before Scott like an outraged goddess, eyes flashing, hand outstretched with pointing finger as though in this British officer she saw the living embodiment of the government which had, as she considered, so woefully wronged the Rani.

In that moment understanding came to Scott in one white-hot flash.

He rose and bowed.

"Salaam," said he ironically, "to you, Laksmi Bai, Rani of Jhansi!"

The woman stood quite still for an instant, then the room rang with her sudden laughter.

"Did I not say you are a man in a thousand? It is so. I am the queen."

"With the blood of innocents hardly dry upon your lovely hands!" flashed Scott, gripped by an anger he could not restrain. "Well, what do you want of me? Have you invented some new torture? I can show you better sport. Stand me in a corner of yonder courtyard with my back against the wall and a sword in my hand, and see how many of your gallants I can take to hell with me!"

For answer, Laksmi flung her arms suddenly round Scott's neck and kissed him on the lips.

"Spoken like a true warrior!" she cried, drawing back a little. "I knew the man you were from the first moment I saw you on the road beyond Sillaur. There is no death for

you in Jhansi, but life and honor and power! Listen—and learn of the mighty place which the high gods that watch the destiny of gallant soldiers have reserved for you!”

Her perfumed body, her loveliness, her kiss were alike intoxicating. Yet Scott kept his head sufficiently to recognize some hidden purpose behind her words. She wanted something. Women, he told himself grimly, always wanted something, and the lovelier they are the more they want. Discipline braced Lieutenant Scott of the Punjab Frontier Force.

“Steady, the Buffs!” said he to himself. “We’ll come to the point of all this in a minute.”

EVEN as this warning trumpet sounded in his soul, Laksmi was drawing him down beside her on the divan once more.

“You came here, Lieutenant Scott Sahib,” she said softly, “seeking a key. Ah, yes—” at Scott’s quick glance of surprise, “I know your name and all about you. Some of your base-born spies are not above serving two masters and drawing double pay. I, too, seek that key—and it is lawfully mine.”

She paused. Scott’s heart gave a little bound. She hadn’t yet obtained it!

“There is yet a third person who desires it,” the Rani went on. “His Highness Dhandu Panth, the Nana Sahib, who now has been proclaimed Peishwa of the Mahrattas, who was once my promised husband and may be so again.” There was a faint sneer in her voice. “If he obtained it, he would use it for his own ends. I would have no further control over his actions. I will not have it so. I have other purposes. I will restore the empire, seat myself on the throne of my fathers—beside Dhandu Panth if heaven wills it, alone if so it is decreed.”

Her eyes flashed. Looking at her, Scott knew that Neill had spoken the truth when he named this woman the most dangerous enemy of the British power in all India. Ambition, revenge, hatred drove her on

relentlessly, for good or ill. “It was the Nana Sahib who contrived to delay the mutiny at Sillaur until he could get there in person to obtain the key,” the Rani continued. “The Sirkar sent you to forestall him. I went to Sillaur to thwart both Nana and Sirkar. And—I won.”

“Then the fakir was the Nana’s agent?” cried Scott. “And you have the key, after all?”

The face of the Queen of Jhansi grew dark with sudden anger.

“No,” she answered sharply, answering his last question and ignoring the first. “I have the girl, but not the key. She has balked me, the stubborn wench. Three times have my women searched her to the skin. Yet she had it when we bore her from her father’s house.”

“Why did you not take it *then*?” “Because we wanted no outcry, no immediate pursuit. But during the first march, or while we camped that night, she learned we were from Jhansi. In the morning, when I came to her tent, she was white-faced and silent—and the key was gone. And not a word have I been able to wring from her—yet.”

The queen ground her white teeth to complete the sentence, and for a moment there was silence. Scott’s blood was running cold. Poor Ann Reynolds, she had believed him after all. If only she had also obeyed him. Women were queer.

A white arm slid sinuously about Scott’s neck.

“It is such a man as you that I could love,” purred the Queen of Jhansi softly into his ear. “The day of the Raj is over. Everywhere our armies gather. It needs but an organized effort to make an end of every Englishman in India, save those who are wise enough to go with the tide rather than oppose it. I marry the Nana—perhaps, if that is my fate. But love that fat skin of grease? Bah! Look at me, Edward Scott!”

He looked. It was not hard to look at Laksmi Bai, Rani of Jhansi. Her eyes shone bright, her per-

fumed breath beat quick and hot against his cheek. Through his reeling senses beat a distant sound—the boom of a muted gong.

CHAPTER IV

The West Tower



"NOW that pale stubborn girl—" the Rani was beginning, when she too heard the gong's note, thrice repeated.

She sprang to her feet. "That means the Nana is here. I was to be disturbed for nothing else. I cannot defy him now. He is the Peishwa; I need him."

Quick came her words, her eyes held Scott's fast, boring into his with a piercing gaze as she strove to read his innermost soul.

Suddenly she spoke to him in Marathi instead of the Hindi which they had previously employed.

"He must not find you here. But you are mine, O bravest of warriors? Tell me you are mine!"

The subtle tightening of her mouth, the slight edge of intentness in her tone, warned Scott. He shook his head in feigned perplexity.

"I do not understand you, Laksmi," he answered in Hindi. "What did you—"

There was a stir in the corridor, the clank of arms.

"No matter," she cried in Hindi, also, tugging at his arm. "In here with you. Quick, quick!"

She thrust him through a pair of silken, heavy curtains into a dim alcove lighted only by a small stained-glass window.

"Be very still," she warned. "If you betray me—but there, you will not, having tasted my lips." Her smile was the self-confident smile of a beautiful woman who knows her power.

She dropped the curtains so that they swung together, and moved away across the room. Scott's eye was instantly at the tiny chink left between the draperies.

The next instant the door from the corridor opened with a clatter. An officer in splendid gold-inlaid armor strode in and saluted with drawn sword.

"The Elect of God, the Most Noble and Most Puissant Lord Nana Dhandu Panth, Peishwa of the Empire of Sivaji, Maharaja of Poona and Bithur!" he intoned.

A plump man of middle height, gorgeously arrayed in robes of pink and turquoise and pale green, jewels flashing from every part of his person from his immense turban to his slippers of red morocco, entered the chambers.

The officer, after a deep salaam, went out and closed the door.

"Laksmi, they kept me waiting below!" said the Nana in a tone at once querulous and suspicious. "Why?"

The queen, standing near the window so that the sun shone full on all her overpowering beauty, smiled at him languidly.

"Little men grow great!" she answered. "What outlet has a palace chamberlain for his native insolence, save to keep a greater than he waiting? Nevertheless, I will have him whipped. Ah, my Lord, you stay too long away!"

She caught his hands and held them to her forehead as she half-knelt before him. Remembering her late remarks, Scott paid silent tribute to her histrionic powers.

The Nana's face was now in the full sunlight. It glinted on his great, restless, yellow eyes.

The fakir! And the full tide of memory flowed back into Scott's brain.

He had seen the Nana before, at Cawnpore among a crowd of native notables at a race-meet. He had noticed only the eyes; had not been told who the man was till later, and then had half-forgotten. The name of the Nana Sahib had not then been one of special note.

This was the man who had turned back the Cawnpore sepoys when they were in full march for Delhi, had led them against Wheeler's flimsy entrenchments, and then—

when English valor had hurled them back again and again—had at last, by lying promises, induced the garrison to surrender and betrayed them to their deaths in blood and fire at the Massacre Ghat. Only the women and children had been saved—to lay prisoners in the stifling enclosure of the Bibi-Garh.

Scott looked at the man who had done these things, and his fingers itched to close round that fat throat. Illogical, that feeling; for the Rani of Jhansi had done worse and he had held her in his arms. Yet there he played a game, with what cards were dealt him. And he must still play that game, though its end be death. He waited, listening.

"What have you done with the Englishman?" the Nana demanded suddenly.

"My guards cut his throat down there in the garden half an hour ago," the Rani answered coolly.

"I would have questioned him first," grumbled the Nana. "But I had to get out of those cursed rags before I could let any of your palace people see me. No matter. The girl has spoken?"

"Speak to me in the tongue of our fathers, Dhandu Panth," directed the Rani, switching into Marathi. "Who knows what ears may listen? Nay, the girl has not yet spoken. But I have her safe in the West Tower, and she will speak ere long. Have no fear."

"May Kali blast her!" snarled the Nana, obeying the Rani's injunction as to language. "What are you waiting for, Laksmi? I'd have torn the secret from her with red-hot pincers long ago. Come, let us go and see to it at once."

He grasped her arm, but the Rani pulled away.

"That will not serve," she answered. "She is the stubborn English breed; I know them. They can die with their chins up, looking death in the eye as they did outside my gate yonder. I hate these English women, but by the scepter of Vishnu they are gallant of soul!"

"I hate them, too," snarled the Nana. "I have two hundred of them

prisoners in Cawnpore, and I must decide what to do with them. This English general, Havelock, comes on swiftly. Nothing can stop him. He will be in Cawnpore in three days—and then there will be two hundred clacking tongues to bear witness against me."

"The English—will take Cawnpore? Can you not stop them?" demanded the Rani, flushing either with anger or with shame at this faint-hearted counsel. "You—the Tiger of Brahmavarta?"

"Hush, woman! Do not breathe that word, even here in your own palace!" cried the Nana, his plump face suddenly ashen. "When you and I have both keys, then will be time enough to talk of—that place. Now pay heed. What you do, do swiftly. Force the girl to talk, get the second key, and join me at Cawnpore or Bithur. I go back to Cawnpore tonight. These English women and their brats—"

"Be silent! Do not tell me!" exclaimed the Rani.

THE Nana's eyes seemed to grow larger. Bale-fires glowed in those evil, amber depths.

"They will not talk when Havelock comes to Cawnpore!" he snarled.

To Scott, behind the curtain, every word had come clearly. Horror surged up within him. This fat abomination was planning to massacre the helpless prisoners.

"So?" said the Rani in a low voice.

"Yes. I have decided!" replied the Nana, licking his fat lips.

"Then listen," the Rani said. "What must be, must be. I have a plan."

"A plan?"

"Aye! To open stubborn lips. Take this girl back to Cawnpore with you. I, too, will go. Slay the women before her eyes. Then, offer her the lives of the children to tell you what she has done with the golden key! She cannot refuse. She will not! No English woman could!"

The Nana gaped at her for a sec-

ond, then his eyes flashed with sudden admiration and he seized her hands and kissed them.

"Excellent, O jewel among women!" he cried. "You are indeed a daughter of Sivajo Rao! But you need not go yourself. I will see to this thing."

"I will go, nevertheless," declared the Rani meaningly. "It is a plan which has to do with women, and needs a woman's guiding touch, I will go—with my own escort. You understand me, Dhandu Panth?"

"I think I will never understand you," the Nana grumbled. "Can it be, Laksmi, that you do not trust me with both keys?"

"The gods of our fathers forbid!" replied the Rani with a tinkling little laugh. "How could you think such a thing?"

"Very well," he yielded sullenly. "Have your way."

The Nana turned toward the door. It was the moment for which Scott had been waiting. Grimly he had weighed his chances. He jerked the curtain aside and leaped at the Nana, meaning to kill him and seize the Rani, force his way to freedom with a dagger at her back.

His outstretched hand closed upon the dagger hilt at the Nana's waist. The blade ripped free, rose above the staggering, screaming Nana, drove down with all Scott's vengeful strength straight for the fat throat.

And then Scott's feet flew from under him, he crashed to the floor with a violence that drove the breath from his body. Clear and loud rang the Rani's cry for help. He struggled to rise, catching a glimpse of the Rani still holding in both hands one end of the rug, which she had jerked so powerfully to overthrow him.

He rolled over and bounded to his feet just in time to see the Nana vanishing behind curtains at the far end of the room, to hear the *snick* of a latch. He leaped in pursuit, heedless of the armored officer darting through the main door. He tore the curtains aside; a hidden door of heavy teak and bronze confronted him. Its handle would not turn.

He heard the whistle of a sword blade, dodged instinctively, turning at bay with his back against the door. The edge of the officer's sword struck the wall. Thrown off balance by the force of his blow, the man was not set to meet the attack of Scott, who, rebounding from the door like a rubber ball, dived for the officer's booted legs. Down went the guardsman with a mighty crash of armor.

The Rani was running for the corridor door, but Scott's right hand snaked out and closed about a slender ankle. She sprawled headlong on the very rug she had used with such effect. The breath was driven from her slim body, and she could only lie and pant and glare at Scott with eyes that promised unutterable horrors.

Scott scrambled to his feet, grabbed up the sword. As the officer struggled to rise, he thrust once at the chink between helmet and chain-mail hauberik. The bright blood spurted—the man collapsed. The Englishman leaped across the room, upended the divan upon which he and the Rani had sat so close, and dumped it, cushions and all, upside down upon the panting woman.

BBETTER, perhaps, if he'd passed his blade through her body, but he could not bring himself to that.

"That'll hold you for a while!" he muttered, and stood still, listening for sounds of alarm without. He heard nothing. The Nana had not yet had time to raise the palace.

The Rani lay very still beneath the divan. One foot, one slender hand protruded from under the cushions. Scott caught a bright flash, stooped, tore from one long finger the Rani's signet ring, and was at the door in two strides. Without, the corridor was still and deserted.

He went down the stairs three at a time, found himself in the small courtyard, crossed it at a run and entered the main courtyard unchallenged.

From the dim interior of the pal-

ace behind him rose a muffled and still distant shout. The Nana must have reached help. Scott grabbed at the arm of a passing, swaggering sepoy officer.

"Take me to the West Tower—quickly!" he ordered in peremptory tone.

The sepoy stared at this Pathan who, naked sword in hand, gave such surprising orders.

"Who are you—" he began haughtily, shaking off the contaminating touch of the supposed Moslem.

"The command of Her Highness, the Rani!" interrupted Scott sternly and thrust the signet under the other's nose.

"To hear is to obey," said the sepoy instantly, his manner changing. "Follow me, friend."

Within the palace the stir of tumult rose a little louder; but they moved away from it across the main courtyard, the sepoy ignoring the noise and Scott trying to act as if he heard nothing. After all, palace brawls must be numerous enough in this mixed gathering of Hindu and Moslem.

Through three guarded gates and as many small courts they passed, the sepoy replying curtly to the challenge of lounging sentries at the last two. A grey tower lifted its battlements at the corner of the third enclosure. Another sentry stood at a grated door in its base.

"**OPEN**," ordered the officer. The sentry shook his head.

"Nay, subadar Sahib. None pass here save—"

"Save with this!" interrupted Scott haughtily, showing the signet.

The sentry stared and saluted. He set his bayoneted musket against the wall and began unbarring the door.

"Hurry!" commanded Scott, for suddenly a bugle sounded, sharp and clear, the imperative staccato notes of the "alarm."

"Wait!" ordered the subadar. "There is something wrong."

Scott snatched up the musket, smashed the butt into the officer's face and with the swing-back of the

same motion ran the sentry through and through. Dropping the weapon, he tore open the door and sprang up the narrow winding stair inside.

It gave upon a landing, where a second sentry had scarce time to get out the first word of his challenge ere Scott's sword ripped through his throat. Behind him was a narrow arched door; in his belt a great iron key. Scott grabbed it, thrust it into the keyhole. It turned a little way and stuck. Scott twisted harder. Still the rusty metal resisted, with the innate devilishness which inanimate objects sometimes display at crucial moments. There were shouts in the courtyard, the hammering of running feet.

Scott seized the sentry's musket, tore off the bayonet, thrust the long triangular blade through the loop of the key, and twisted. There was a snap. The key had broken off short in the lock. A howl of fury rose from below. They had found the subadar and the first sentry.

Reversing the musket, Scott put the muzzle against the keyhole and cocked the weapon, noting that a cap was on the nipple. Pray God it meant the gun was loaded. He pulled the trigger.

A muffled report echoed like thunder in the narrow tower; the recoil staggered Scott. Someone below fired a pistol. The bullet whistled past Scott's ear and thudded into the woodwork. Inside the door a woman screamed.

There was a gaping hole in the lock, but the door seemed firm. Pursuers were coming up the stairs, yelling their rage. Scott drew back and drove one booted foot against the door.

With a splintering crash it flew open. He caught one glimpse of a blond-haired girl who crouched against the farther wall under a grated window. Ann Reynolds! He whirled, caught up the body of the dead sentry and flung it headlong at the crowding guardsmen on the stairs. Dead and living tumbled head over heels amid a chorus of howls.

Scott jumped backward into the

prison room, slamming shut the broken door. Desperately he looked round for something to pile against it. There was nothing save a table and a couple of flimsy chairs. He shoved them into place; they would not hold a minute. Then he ran to the window.

The bronze grating which covered it was more ornamental than strong. Below was still another courtyard, this one bounded on the far side by the city wall which here formed also the outer wall of the palace. In this wall was a small postern, open but guarded by three sepoys who were now looking upward at the tower window, chattering excitedly among themselves. Beyond was the wide plain, and freedom!

Three men seemed nothing to Scott at that moment. A couple of well-directed kicks sent the bronze grille crashing out into the courtyard. He whirled and took hold of the girl.

"Come on!" he panted. "No time to lose. I'll jump, then catch you!"

They were battering at the door outside, getting in each other's way.

"I can't!" wailed Ann, trying to rise.

SCOTT'S ear caught the clink of metal. Cold fear gripped him as he looked. The girl was chained fast, by waist and wrist and ankle—new steel chains that were riveted to rings set solidly in the masonry of wall and floor. Not a ghost of a chance to free her in the half-dozen seconds of grace.

There was but one thing to do, and even as his soul revolted at the thought, stern duty urged him on.

"Where's the gold wedge? Tell me—quick!" he ordered grimly.

"You're—leaving me—here?" the girl choked out, her eyes wide with reproach—and horror.

"I must. It's my duty. Answer my question!" Scott tried to make his groaning voice harsh and imperative.

The girl stared at him, and madness came into her eyes.

"Then I'll tell you!" she cried—and her voice rose into a hysterical

shriek. "I'll tell you! Never fear. I hid it in the thatch of the well house in front of an old ruined temple of Vishnu on the Banda road about ten miles east of here—four trees in a straight row in front. O God! Go! Let me alone! I've suffered enough."

Had the men outside heard? There was a rush at the door; the table went back six inches. Below



in the courtyard the sepoy sentries were yelling for the guard.

"Don't tell 'em you told me unless they try torture! God keep you!" choked out Scott.

Ann did not answer. Dry sobs choked her. With a crash the door gave way altogether. Men tumbled into the room. Scott was on the window sill sword-knot gripped between his teeth.

"Fire!" screamed an officer, but Scott, twisting round, let himself down, hung by his hands a second, and dropped.

As he hit the ground somebody darted at him; he stabbed blindly, felt his blade go home in something that screamed.

He gained his feet amid a crimson shower.

The man he had slain went to his knees. He was a cavalryman, and Scott was thankful, for his pistol was a god-send. Its heavy bullet smote one of the fellow's comrades fairly between the eyes. The third turned and ran back toward the open gate, howling still for the guard. Muskets banged from the tower window as Scott bounded after him in long leaps. Once he struck and missed. Twice—and his point tore the flesh of the sepoy's back. The man doubled and dodged aside; and a pair of great bronze gates near the tower were flung suddenly open with a clang of doom.

A dozen horsemen clattered into the courtyard, saw Scott, rode at him with uplifted tulwars and howls of vengeful fury. He put forth one last despairing effort. He gained the postern—he saw the flat plain stretching out before him—saw the low and distant hills behind which lay the Jumna. But he knew he would never reach those hills.

Retreat cut off, Scott stood at bay. He met the first rush from inside with a grim determination to sell his life as dearly as he could, and his blade had scarcely clashed with that of the leading sowar when with quick parry-and-thrust he had run the fellow through. The man behind stumbled over the body as the leader sank backward gasping out his life. There was an instant's check—and in that instant, Scott heard the unmistakable sliding sound of the hoofs of a suddenly reined-up horse, outside; heard the thud of boots as the rider leaped to earth and hot with despair, whirled to fling himself upon this new assailant, hoping against hope to slay him and seize his horse ere the others could get at him.

"Shabash, Sahib!" shouted the newcomer, rushing forward. "From far off I saw you leap from the window."

It was Sher Singh, grinning with delight at beholding his beloved sahib sound and well. Even as he grinned, he leaped past Scott and met the rush of another sowar with a lunge that opened the man's sword-arm from wrist to elbow.

Again duty spoke stern commands into the ear of Scott's spirit.

"Sher Singh," he panted, "I know where the token is. I must get it. Hold you the gate to the last. Good-by—comrade—"

"Ho! I will hold it, Sahib!" cried Sher Singh, and there was understanding and loyalty in his eyes. "God go with you—ride! Come, you sons of noseless mothers, and see how a warrior of the Khalsa holds a gate!"

Scott was already in the saddle. His eyes were blinded by tears as he galloped away across the plain.

CHAPTER V

Tents of the Foe



THE dark bulk of the ruined temple showed faint but clear in the starlight. Scott, leading his weary horse, plodded up the gentle slope from the road, marking against the sky the gaunt shapes of four tall trees that told him he had found the right place at last.

The road had been hard to follow, especially after the sun had set. Twice, en route, he had lost his way wasting precious hours in finding the road again. The living fear that Ann's words might have been overheard, that his enemies might forestall him, had ridden on his saddle-bow and gibbered in his ear.

He moved on, skirting the ruined foundations, stumbling over the remnants of what had been a paved terrace. A small structure, only a darker shadow in the darkness, loomed suddenly before him. His outstretched hand found cool stone—a well-curb. No suspicious sound came to Scott's ears, though they were ears trained to pick up the click of a matchlock's hammer at fifty yards on a dark Khyber night.

Something rustled beneath his feet. He stooped; his groping fingers closed on straw—fragments of torn thatch. He knew then that he was too late.

The roof was ripped to pieces. Scarcely a square foot of it was intact. The key was gone.

As he stepped down from the curb, he heard a twig snap in the gloom, close at hand. Scott crouched beside the well, eyes probing the darkness about him. A shadow moved. On silent feet Scott stole forward.

He sprang. One arm locked itself about a sinewy neck; his other hand, guided by the faint glint of steel, caught a wrist which was descending. Both men kept their feet for the moment; they swayed

there, locked in that fierce embrace, striving each for one free blow at the other.

Then a pebble rolled beneath Scott's foot. He lost his balance, went down with the other man on top of him. With the breath half driven from his body, he yet contrived to roll over. As he did so, the faint starlight fell full on the face of his antagonist. Just a dull blur, in the midst of which white teeth snarled, but Scott's sight was keen.

"Sher Singh!" he gasped.

"Sahib!"

It was unbelievable, but it was true. This was Sher Singh, the brave, the faithful. The two got to their feet, leaned against each other and laughed for sheer joy.

BUT Scott's joy was short-lived. There was work to be done, a pursuit to be taken up.

"How do you come here, Sher Singh?" he asked when he could speak coherently again.

"By the singular favor of heaven, Sahib," Sher Singh replied. "I held the gate, slaying three. At last men rode round the walls to take me in the rear. Then, the sahib being well away beyond hope of pursuit, I slew one of these and escaped on his horse. Thus it was done. Thereafter, I laid in wait beyond the city.

"I saw a great body of horsemen come out of the city, with elephants and pack animals, and take the Cawnpore road. I kept them in sight and myself from their view. I saw a small body detach themselves and push at speed across country. I followed the detachment. They led me here. Then they rode away. I would have followed still, but I heard the sahib's horse coming from another direction. I thought that it might be one of the soors returning. I waited, hoping that I might have some chance of catching one man and finding out what was going on."

"And so we must follow them, Sher Singh!" broke in Scott excitedly.

"They left the road and rode to the north, Sahib, toward Kalpi."

"Get your horse! There may be a chance yet!" was Scott's eager reply.

As he rode presently at Sher Singh's side, Scott reviewed the situation. There were six horsemen, Sher Singh told him. The Sikh had not dared, in daylight, to get close enough to identify any. All were armed and well mounted. It seemed likely enough that, their purpose accomplished, they were riding toward Kalpi to overtake the Nana's traveling camp.

"It's the Nana himself. I'm convinced of that," Scott summed up after telling Sher Singh all his experiences of the day. "At night, two against six aren't such heavy odds!"

"We can but try, Sahib!" agreed Sher Singh with his reckless laugh. "Yet with regard to that same Nana soor, there is a strange thing to tell. In Jhansi this afternoon I heard one who had come straight from Cawnpore, a Moslem sowar, swear by the ninety-nine names of Allah that he had seen the Nana there, in full darbar, just before he left; and he had ridden hard all the way, being the bearer of a message to the Rani. Now how can this be? How could the Nana be in Cawnpore, and yet be here? Can a man be in two places at once?"

Scott was puzzled. He rode for some moments in silence. Finally:

"I have heard," he said, "that sometimes rajahs who are given to intrigue or wanderings have some member of their family who resembles them make their public appearances, where there is not much chance of close scrutiny."

They rode together through the warm night, intent on gaining the Kalpi road, the great road which ran northeast from Jhansi, crossed the Jumma at Kalpi by a bridge of boats and led on across the Doab to Cawnpore on the banks of Ganges.

Steering by the stars, hour after hour they plodded on, sometimes at the trot, usually at the walk. And there was still no sign of the Nana's camp.

They came to Kalpi, with its walls and frowning citadel. The gates were open, a sleepy sepoy sentry saluted at the sight of the Rani's signet.

Yes, the Nana's traveling camp had passed, he said. "Perhaps three hours ago. They had gone over the bridge and straight on. There had been at least two hundred horse-men, and three elephants, with curtained howdahs. No, he had seen nothing of a smaller party. Had any of the retinue said where they were going to pass the night? No. But the horses seemed very weary.

"Our horses are weary too," muttered Sher Singh.

But they rode ahead, through the sleeping town. Their hoofs drummed over the planks of the floating bridge across the Jumna.

"I suppose your small party has rejoined the main body by this time, if their horses were up to it," Scott conjectured.

"Unless they have lingered by the wayside, Sahib," Sher Singh answered uncertainly.

"Nothing to do but keep on," was Scott's decision.

A mile, two miles they plodded onward. Then—the eastern sky was grey, and dawn comes swiftly in India—they halted in a small grove of trees surrounding the inevitable temple. On the farther slope of the shallow valley, were scattered white blotches that must be the Nana's tents!

"No time to waste, Sher Singh," Scott said at once. "Have you a dagger?"

"Two, Sahib. One for you, one for me. We go into the camp?"

"At once. Before it gets too light."

Whereupon Sher Singh laughed and called upon God to witness that this was a morning of much promise.

On his stomach Scott wriggled across the open space between jungle and the nearest tents. Once he lay very still while a yawning sentry, musket on shoulder, tramped wearily past. Then, fairly between two small tents, from both of which

issued lusty snores, he paused while Sher Singh wriggled up alongside him.

"The Nana—where do you think he'll be?" Scott whispered.

"In the center of the camp, in the largest tent," opined the Sikh.

Fortunately, the sides of the tent were looped up to admit of the free passage of air, and by creeping along beneath the ropes they were able to judge from the snores and heavy breathing which compartments of the interior were the most fully occupied. They came presently to a room in which a small butter-lamp burned behind red glass.

Inside, rugs were spread over the ground, and on one of these, lying across an inner, looped back doorway, a man in sepoy uniform slept the heavy sleep of utter exhaustion.

"The Nana," said Scott with swift conviction, "will be inside, beyond that flap."

SHER SINGH'S teeth clicked on his dagger blade.

"I will clear your way, Sahib," he hissed between teeth clenched on steel. "That slumbering soor will wake in hell."

Scott stretched out a hand to check him; but as he did so, Scott saw that he wore a cavalry jacket, with the brass number "2" in plain view on the collar. The 2nd Native Cavalry had been foremost in treachery and massacre at Cawnpore. Scott drew back his hand; Sher Singh crawled on.

In utter silence the Sikh reached the sleeper's side. His hand went up, drove down. There was a gurgling sound, the sentry's body gave a convulsive wriggle and was still. The way was clear.

Scott crawled into the tent, moved crouching across to the open flap and looked within. Another butter-lamp burned dimly here inside a greenish globe. Its rays fell on the loose lips and yellowish double-chain of a plump man who rested on a couch of cushions.

"That's the Nana. Stand guard

here, Sher Singh, while I speak with him."

The Sikh grinned and nodded. He had already laid out the sepoy so that he looked just as before.

Scott walked over to the couch. Temptation was hot within him; he had but to drive home his dagger, and Cawnpore would be avenged. But duty held him still. He closed one hand over the open mouth of the sleeper; with the other he laid his dagger point against the fat throat. He shook the man's head gently. The eyes opened, reflecting the faint lamp-light.

"Be still, Dhandu Panth!" ordered Scott. "Be still and listen, if you would live!"

The terrified man nodded with all the fawning eagerness of the trapped cur.

"The key!" Scott demanded. "Give it up or I drive the knife home!"

"The key?" repeated the other in a trembling whisper. "Wh-what key?"

"The golden key you took from the well-house at the temple of Vishnu tonight!" Scott answered sternly.

"I know nothing of any key," was the answer. "May my tongue wither. May jackals defile my Father's grave if I lie!"

SCOTT pressed the knife point inward. A thin trickle of blood ran down the fat, throbbing throat; the victim tried to pull away, scratching himself badly in the process.

"Hsst!"

It was Sher Singh, at the flap.

"Horsemen coming this way!" he warned.

A sentry shouted a challenge, was answered. The camp began to stir. Voices sounded here and there. A camel bawled.

Escape was cut off.

"Down behind the couch, Sher Singh!" snapped Scott. "Now, Dhandu Panth—" as he himself crouched beside the Sikh, concealed by the couch and its draperies from anyone who might enter, "if you speak one word of warning, two knives drive on that instant into

your fat carcass! We'll deal with you when this alarm has passed."

He got himself out of sight no more than in time. An inner flap of the tent was jerked aside. Through the open, booted and spurred and covered with the dust of the road, strode the Rani of Jhansi. Behind her the lamplight glittered on blades and polished mail. She had not come unescorted!

"Ho, Dhandu Panth!" she cried on a note of triumph. "I have the key! My key! Now we shall—" She stopped short, staring at the man on the couch.

"Hajjur Rao!" she said in a different tone. "What are you doing here? Where is the Nana?"

Hajjur Rao! Then this was not the Nana. And the Rani had the key!

Scott, watching her through the tiny space beneath a fat neck and a pillow, pressed his knife point a little closer against the back of his prisoner. Hajjur answered the Rani's question in a whining, uneven tone:

"The Nana has ridden for Cawnpore with a small escort, an hour since," he said. "I came here, bearing news that the British are very near the city. My cousin left me to take his place here and hurried on to see what can be done."

"Then up! Let us also push on!" the Rani exclaimed, turning to the half-dozen armed officers who crowded behind her. "To horse, all of you! Strike the camp! We march for Cawnpore!"

She went out, still calling orders.

"Will you let me go now, Sahib?" whined Hajjur Rao.

"Wait." Another thought had come to Scott. "The English girl, here in the camp, must be released. Get up and take us to her. And at the first hint of treachery, you die."

Hajjur Rao got to his feet immediately. Pulling on a robe and slippers, he led the way out of the tent, Scott close at one side, Sher Singh at the other.

The morning light was not yet strong enough to see very far. All round them the rousing camp stirred and boiled. Servants and sepoy

made way respectfully for the fat figure with two close attendants, waddling toward a small, guarded tent not far from the Nana's great pavilion.

"Send that sentry for three horses. Quick!" Scott ordered. He had no hope of finding the Rani now; but at least he might get away with Ann, and take up the trail again with fresh horses.

Hajjur Rao gave the order, and the sentry slouched off to obey. With a word of caution to Sher Singh, Scott stuck his head inside the small tent. Ann Reynolds sat there on a charpoy, her head in her hands. He spoke her name; the girl lifted her head sharply.

"Get ready for a quick move," Scott told her. "No! No excitement! Take it easy."

The soldier was returning, followed by two saises leading the horses.

"Mount!" Scott ordered Ann and Sher Singh. "Now, Hajjur Rao!"

The Nana's cousin turned toward him, eyes bulging with terror—and Scott's fist lashed out. Hajjur Rao went down in a heap. The sepoy lifted his musket, but from the saddle Sher Singh drove his dagger into his face. The man staggered back, screaming; the saises fled.

Scott leaped to saddle.

"Ride!" he barked and drove home his spurs.

The horses plunged forward, the astonished and busy camp servants scattering from their path.

They got clear of the camp. Behind, yells rose; a shot or two thumped in the dawn. But all was confusion, and men were asking each other what was wrong; there was no leader to direct a pursuit.

Ann Reynolds was swaying in her saddle. Not yet had her dazed mind comprehended the fact that she was rescued.

"I'm so tired!" she wailed. "So tired—"

"Here's the grove," Scott said to Sher Singh, as they came up to the trees. "They're not pursuing us; probably don't even know which way we've gone. We'll get the other

horses. I'm sorry you're tired, Miss Reynolds. It is a long road yet to Cawnpore."

CHAPTER VI

Justice of the Sirkar



WITHIN a great hall in the city of Cawnpore, Dhanu Panth, the Nana Sahib, sat in full durbar and boasted of the fate that would eventually befall his enemies.

He was quite drunk and getting drunker, and his loose mouth drooled into the cups of wine which the courtesans kept pressing upon their lord.

Before the dais on which the Nana and his women sprawled, the hall was full of armed men, men who talked uneasily in little groups or cursed with equal venom the British who were advancing so relentlessly upon the doomed city and the poltroonery of their leader who had promised so much and failed so utterly.

The Hindus cursed beneath their breaths, for the Nana was not only a king but a Brahman. The curses of the Moslems rose free and loud. Loudest of all were the high words of the officers of the 2nd Native Cavalry, Moslems to a man, who seemed of the opinion that the Nana had let them down shamefully. But in his drunken glory the Nana paid no heed to the mutterings of this storm at the very steps of the Throne.

"Aye, you say well, Azimulla!" he shouted at one of his advisers, who had stooped to whisper in his ear. "What should I have done at Delhi? I, a Brahman, to make obeisance to a blind old pig of a Mohammedan?"

Azimulla, himself a Moslem, shrank back in horror at this reference to the Moghul Emperor, the last of the House of Timur. A murmur ran through the hall. Darker grew the faces of the Mohammedan officers amongst the crowd.

From the shadows at the rear of

the hall, Edward Scott saw—and heard. He wore the full uniform—scarlet jacket, breeches, high boots, gold-laced turban and sword-belt—of a *ressaidar* of the 2nd Cavalry. Its original owner had had the misfortune to meet Scott and Sher Singh on the road. He had also provided that determined young man with a much fresher horse. His body, with a sword-thrust through the heart, was now growing cold in the roadside ditch.

Using short-cuts indicated by friendly peasants, Scott had had no difficulty in getting ahead of the Rani and Hajjur Rao, whose heavy column could not move rapidly on the bad road. The Rani, bold as she was, did not dare leave the protection of Hajjur Rao's horsemen and push on at speed for Cawnpore. The British were too near, the situation too uncertain—and too much depended on her safe arrival at Cawnpore with the prize she had won.

Scott, leaving Ann under charge of Sher Singh at a small deserted village near the city, had come on alone into Cawnpore to spy out the situation. He knew he had little chance of getting the Nana's key—which would serve the purposes of Government equally as well as the Rani's. But he must leave no stone unturned.

He found Cawnpore in the beginnings of panic. Havelock was coming!

Hindus snarled that the Moslems had betrayed them. Mohammedans retorted that the Hindu leaders had their own cowardice to thank for the present situation. All looked to the Nana for some word, some move—and the Nana caroused with his drunken women.

Among the crowd in the great hall, Edward Scott now moved with some purpose. His attire being that of a Moslem officer, he whispered into Moslem ears strange tales of Hindu treachery, a hint of Hindu boasts as to the fate that would eventually overtake the followers of the Prophet, a rumor here, a sneer

there. He was feeding the flame of hatred that smoldered in that hall, and his efforts were bearing fruit. While the drunken Nana played straight into his hands! Once let open strife break out in Cawnpore, and Scott's opportunity might come.

Steadily he worked his way across the vast smoke-filled hall. The press grew thicker. Moslem was glaring at Hindu as the surge of the crowd thrust them together. A group of excited sowers, butted their way toward the dais, yelling that they had news.

"The British will be here in the morning to kill us all!" one yelled.

"They beat us today at the Pandu Naddee!" another shouted.

"And at Maharajpur!"

"They took all our guns and killed hundreds!"

"We have been betrayed!"

They pressed on, bawling their news while behind them the rising murmurs grew more ominous. Scott followed in their wake as they cleared a path through the excited mob; he was anxious to hear their full report.

There was a stir at the left of the dais, where a small door was suddenly flung open. Several of the bodyguard began thrusting the crowd back. Out of this door swarmed five men. They were stripped to the waist, and their naked torsos, their loin-cloths, their bare feet, even their necks and faces and turbans were covered with clotted blood. In their hands they bore long knives, crimson with gore from hilt to point. Devilish grins distorted all five faces, but their eyes were the eyes of damned souls in the nethermost pit.

Even the hard-bitten sepoys and sowers in the hall, even the Nana's guards who had borne so forward a part in massacre and horror, shrank from the ensanguined five who strode forward to the dais brandishing their bloody knives.

A wave of silence swept backward from the dais over the crowded hall of audience. The Nana had raised himself to his feet. He stood there, swaying a little, his eyes widening,

wine dribbling from his pendulous lower lip.

The five lifted their red knives on high.

"It is done, O Maharajah Sahib!" they cried with one voice through the awful silence.

"You have slain all—all?" shrieked the Nana, starting forward, his mouth working horribly. "Not one remains to babble lies in the ears of the British general?"

"Not one, Protector of the Poor! We have broken three knives each in your service. Every one of the white memsahibs, every one of their puling brats have been destroyed by our good blades and now howl in hell!" yelled one of the butchers. "By the four arms of Kali we swear it!"

"We entered the Bibigarh by one door and came out at the other, slaying as we went!" squalled another. "Look at our feet! See, we have waded ankle deep in infidel blood!"

"It is done! All is done!" boasted a third.

"Not all!" roared a terrible voice, as silence fell again upon that horror-palsied hall. "One thing remains—the justice of the Sirkar!"

AS ONE man, the five turned to see a tall figure rush upon them with uplifted sword, a figure clad in British scarlet, a figure which to their dreadful consciences must have seemed indeed the incarnate vengeance of outraged England.

Once that sword fell, and the head of the first butcher rolled and thumped across the floor to the very foot of the Nana's guarded dais. Twice it fell, and a slaughtered brute collapsed across his comrade's headless body. A guard thrust a spear suddenly at the avenger, ripping the turban from his head; but not quickly enough to save the third victim, who reeled away screaming, trying with his left hand to stop the blood which spurted from the stump of the arm he had raised to save his neck.

The other two, maddened by fear, plunged into the crowd, stabbing

recklessly with their knives in an endeavor to hack their way through to escape that sword of vengeance. He who bore the sword pursued, but his foot slipped in a pool of blood.

The Devil's Wind swept through the room, guttering the torches and tossing the smoke about in fantastic shapes. The Nana, cowering amongst his officers, stared at them as though he saw in the writhing vapor the accusing ghosts of the innocent dead.

Meanwhile the guards, sepoy, courtiers closed round Edward Scott in a howling, screaming jam; they tore away his sword, they thrust him forward in the grasp of twenty hands before the shrinking Nana.

The fine frenzy that had possessed him, that had set a red veil before his eyes and ripped from his soul every vestige of caution and foresight, leaving only berserk fury, passed from him then. He became again—too late—the cool and calculating soldier.

For he was a prisoner, close held to the judgment of a man who knew no mercy. Slowly the tumult stilled as men waited to hear the words of doom.

Recognition dawned in the Nana's eyes.

"You!" he said slowly, licking his lips. "So, *Sahib!* There are accounts to settle between us. They shall be settled now. Bring in the wooden stake and impale this spy here before my eyes!"

"Nay!" shouted a Moslem sowar boldly. "No more of your devil's tricks, Maharaja Sahib! He is a brave soldier. Let him die a soldier's death!"

Fifty voices echoed the shout. The waving blades pressed toward the dais. The Nana was no man to withstand them.

"Have your way. Have your way. What matter, so the dog dies? Shoot him, then. Outside in the courtyard. But let it be at once." He indicated with a gesture a scowling Mohammedan defadar. "Pick ten troopers and see it done."

"As Your Magnificence desires," said the dafadar with a hint of

mockery in his tone. He strode forward, shoving aside the guards who held Scott. "Come along, spy—since die you must."

"Fools that we are!" shouted a wounded sepoy, tearing the shako from his bandaged head and flinging it at the Nana in his excitement. "Why do we not send this sahib whole and sound to the British general in token that we sepoys had nothing to do with the killings in the Bibigarh? The British come on swiftly, vengeance in their hearts. They will spare none. Must we all perish because a Brahman is a butcher?"

"Well spoken!" bawled a Moslem sowar. "The Nana sent us to do this thing, but we fired into the ceiling! Then he called in his murderers. Let us send the Englishman as our pledge that we have not warred with women!"

But a fat Hindu had other views. "Dead men tell no tales!" he yelled. "What is done is done. Let there be no pale-skinned dog left to bear witness!"

A roar of acclamation greeted this delightful sentiment. It was plain that the Moslems were outnumbered. The Nana was whispering furiously to Azimulla. Scott thought he saw a way to turn the tide.

"Listen to me, men!" he roared in an interval of comparative silence. "I speak here for the Sirkar! What has been done in the Bibigarh is beyond forgiveness. Havelock will be here tomorrow. His men will leave not a soul alive in Cawnpore when they know—unless you take this swine who calls himself a king and turn him over to British justice!"

"Shabash!" howled twenty Moslems at once. Scott had struck the right note.

"Will you all swing on gallows sewn up in pigs' skins, you sons of the Prophet?" demanded Scott in stentorian tones, riding the crest of the wave.

Cries of horror rose high. A hundred Moslem swords were out. Hindu blades flashed in answer. In another second the hall would have been a shambles.

"Are you all mad?" rang a high clear voice.

The rear of the hall was suddenly bright with new-come torches which glittered on weapons and armor. In an arched doorway, framed by its marble pilasters, stood a slender, commanding figure, magnificent in silvery mail-shirt and crested helmet, a drawn sword uplifted.

The Rani of Jhansi!

"Will you let one sahib betray you to your deaths? Must you war among yourselves when the accursed Christians are at your very gates?" shrieked the Rani.

At her words, the sowars of the firing party closed round Scott as though recalled to their senses. The woman had power; men obeyed her instinctively. She was one born to command. By sheer magnetism and showmanship she dominated that savage assembly. Scott tried to answer her, but the dafadar shoved a pistol in his face and bade him be silent.

"Will you trust me? Or this dog of a Christian?" demanded the Rani, striding forward, every inch a princess and a warrior. Men cleared her path as by magic. Beside her trotted Hajjur Rao.

She passed Scott with a glance in which triumph flamed; she had stilled the storm—for the moment. Scott's great opportunity had passed.

SHE gained the Nana's side, whispered insistently in his ear. The Nana started up. Scott thought his face showed more consternation than pleasure.

"You have it?" he cried aloud.

The Rani shook him by the shoulder.

"Not so loud, fool!" she snarled. They talked then in whispers for a little.

The Nana's eyes, never still, roved till they fell on Scott.

"What are you waiting for, dafadar? Did I not bid you shoot that English dog against the wall outside?" demanded the Nana angrily.

The Rani's eyes too rested on Scott's face. They were twin enigmas of darkness, but they held no

hint of pity. A regal woman scorned!

The dafadar took Scott by the arm; the Nana plucked at the Rani's garments.

"Tomorrow," he babbled, "tomorrow you and I ride together to Bra—"

"Vishnu give me patience!" interrupted the Rani. "Get yourself sober. Then we shall talk!"

IN BITTER despair Edward Scott was marched out of the roaring hall into the soft night, into the star-canopied courtyard where death waited in the shadows.

A party of drunken Hindu courtiers paused to watch the firing party and laughed as though at an amusing comedy. The voices of men of both religion rose in angry dispute all about the walled enclosure.

"Against the wall there!" ordered the dafadar, pointing to a space beneath a flaming cresset. "There will be light enough to see."

They placed Scott with his back against the rough stones. The firing party lined up, perhaps ten paces away. All were Moslems, Scott noted.

"Load!" ordered the dafadar.

The men took out each a cartridge from his pouch and bit the end. The ramrods rang in the barrels of the Enfield carbines. The scattered groups in the courtyard stopped quarreling and gathered to see the white man die.

"Ready!"

The ten carbines rose waist high. The big hammers clicked back. The percussion caps were placed on the nipples. The light from the cresset glistened on the muzzles of the carbines, smeared with the grease from the cartridges.

Scott laughed aloud.

"A brave man, this," one of the firing party exclaimed. "He laughs at death."

"I laugh at you, fools!" retorted Scott. "Fools whom even Hindus laugh at—while they befoul your souls to eternal damnation!"

"What mean you?" cried the dafadar, in brittle tones. Men's tempers

were on edge that night in Cawn-pore.

"This!" retorted Scott. "You have mutinied against the Sirkar, whose salt you have eaten, because liars have told you tales of cartridges greased with pigs' fat which you would have to bite. Your Hindu masters have made these lies come true. The Nana has served you out with cartridges that were indeed greased with the fat of pigs. Look at the muzzles of your carbines! Pigs' fat! And you have tasted it! Look and believe!"

Scott had no means of knowing what manner of lubricant was on those cartridges. But he played on the credulity of the native mind, the terrible, childish credulity which was the chief fundamental cause of the mutiny, the powder to which the plotters laid their trains. A credulity which was now reinforced by the rising tide of religious hatred.

Half the men jerked their carbines down from the "ready" and felt of the muzzles. A howl of bestial fury went up as they found their fingers smeared with grease. The roisterers near the doorway, too drunk to pay any attention to Scott, chose this moment for an especially loud burst of merriment.

"Hear the Hindu dogs laughing at you now!" cried Scott. "They came to see the fun!"

Three sowars whirled round and fired at the Hindus on the word.

"Kill!" howled the dafadar, going suddenly quite mad with pent-up fury. He rushed at the Hindus with his sword, forgetting duty, orders, everything but his yearning for Hindu blood.

"To us, brothers!" yelled a Hindu into a window of the hall. "The Moslems are killing all of the religion!"

Men of both factions poured out of the hall. The courtyard was a mass of fighting, screaming fanatics. Pistols roared; swords flashed high, descended, and rose again, their brightness dimmed with blood. The firing squad were all in the thick of the fray, their duty utterly forgotten.

Scott darted along the wall seeking an exit. He found a door, open and unguarded; its sentry had joined the riot. It gave into a garden; here the outer wall was low.

Scott pulled himself over, dropped into a dark and narrow street, and fled for his life while behind him the shots and shrieks and clash of steel rose ever higher to the silent stars that brooded over the city of blood.

CHAPTER VII

The Rock Temple at Brahmavarta



INHABITANTS of the village of Gura-gunj, wretched and much-plundered had long since fled from that mud-walled hamlet.

In what had been the village street, Jemadar Sher Singh of the Regiment of Ferozpur gave thanks to God for his sahib's safe return out of the Nana's hands, while Scott spoke with the girl Ann Reynolds.

The young lady was in no pleasant frame of mind. "I'm too tired to ride. I want to rest. And I will not be ordered about the country by you, Mr. Scott! I—"

"You'll do just what I tell you, Miss Reynolds," Scott interrupted wearily, "because it's your duty. Havelock must be advised at once of the state of affairs over there in Cawnpore." He gestured toward the red glare of flames in the northern sky, the inevitable mark of turmoil in an Indian city. "They're cutting each other's throats, and Havelock can march in almost unopposed. He must know, he must know at once, and act while the chance is still his. You understand? It's your duty!"

"Duty again, I suppose? Everything must be sacrificed to that precious duty of yours," muttered Ann.

"Everything," agreed Scott. "I'm really giving you the best chance I can, Miss Reynolds. My choice is between sending you to Havelock and leaving you here. I did the best

I could for you when it did not interfere with my mission; but I cannot take unnecessary risks on your account. Where Sher Singh and I are going, we cannot possibly be burdened with a woman."

He tried to put a crisp finality in his tone.

Ann sobbed, and clung to him suddenly; her face glistened wet in the light of the risen moon.

"How can you be so hard?" she asked piteously. "You're so brave—so strong. Please let me stay with you? I—I'm afraid."

Scott steeled his heart.

"You must mount and ride," he said in a harsher voice than he meant to use. "Really there is very little danger. You'll find Havelock at or near Maharajpur on the Grand Trunk Road. Here is a sketch I've made of the country. Follow the route I've marked, keeping well away from Cawnpore and steering east by the stars and the light in the sky over there. You'll get through. The missy-baba's horse, jemadar!"

"I think," said Ann Reynolds, "that you're the cruellest man I ever met. And the bravest."

Sher Singh led up a saddled horse. The girl mounted.

"You have my message for Havelock all straight?" Scott demanded.

"Yes." She tried to make her voice firm, but it *would* tremble. "I'll get through! I'll do my duty too, Mr. Edward Scott!"

Her sudden laugh was almost hysterical; she bent from the saddle, kissed Scott full on his upturned, astonished face, and sent her horse bounding with a sharp slap.

"That is the way with women, Sahib," Sher Singh observed sententiously. "The worse you treat them, the more they kiss you. Ai! Many women have I known, and all are the same."

"Don't be a fool, Sher Singh," snapped Scott, thoroughly annoyed. "Now to business. Have you had some sleep?"

"A little, Sahib. Enough for the present."

"I'm dead for it," Scott confessed. "No use trying the impossible. I'll

snatch a couple of hours; you keep watch. We must be on the march at dawn."

"None shall disturb your rest, Sahib," Sher Singh promised quietly.

Scott flung himself down on a folded horse-blanket, a saddle for his pillow.

He intended now to trail the Rani and the Nana when they left Cawnpore to secure the treasure. The name of the treasure-place was Brahnavarta, which was also the local term for the Nana's seat at Bithur, west of Cawnpore, on the Ganges. Very likely the two were not far apart. Baji Rao in his old age could not have transported his treasure far without taking too many people into the secret.

The Nana could not start before dawn. He had made one night march, had had little rest and had been drinking heavily. The Rani must also be exhausted. When they started, they would be followed.

This time Scott would not fail. He would return to report success to Colonel Neill—or he would not return at all. And upon that grim resolution, Edward Scott fell asleep.

THREE days later, haggard and worn, Scott and Sher Singh lay in the midst of a thorny, miasmatic thicket looking down into a little grassy glade on the edge of a reeking swamp. On the other side of the swamp rose, sheer and abrupt, a red sandstone cliff.

The hands of men long dead had fashioned, out of the solid face of this cliff, two great pillars covered with obscure carvings and topped by elephant's heads. Between the bases of these pillars rose a flight of worn steps, the lowest lapped by the black water of the swamp. They ended at a small platform, deep in a square recess in the cliff, and bearing an altarlike block of stone, hewn, like the pillars and steps and platform, of the living rock itself.

Behind the stone block, again, in the rear face of the recess, could be seen a great round boss of bronze, polished and gleaming even in the semi-darkness of its cavern-like re-

reat. It seemed to be set in the rock-face as an ornament. There was no visible sign of any door or hole in the cliff other than the recess itself. All the stone work was worn by the hand of time; was incredibly ancient. How ancient, Scott could not even guess.

Into the glade, perhaps a hundred yards away, was filing the company which Scott had been tracking all those three weary days. Not a red-coat, not a sepoy or a sowar on the company's uniform was to be seen.

There was the Nana's fat figure, seated in haughty splendor upon the elephant that had born him from Bithur. He was leaning now over the side of the crimson howdah, talking to a horseman who rode alongside the great beast. The elephant was surrounded by mounted guards, fifty or sixty of them, armed to the teeth with every variety of spear and sword and dagger and firearm. Their bedraggled finery made a splotch of garish color against the green of the jungle from which they had just emerged by a narrow trail.

Behind them, keeping a little distance even as they rode into the glade, came another cavalcade of almost equal strength, and similar appearance save for the elephant. These men rode close about a slender, mailed figure, very erect on a great white horse, her crested helmet flashing in the rays of the afternoon sun. The Rani of Jhansi rode with as fine a seat and gallant a bearing as the best guardsman of them all.

The two troops halted in some disorder at the edge of the great jhil, opposite the rock-carved pillars. Between them they left a space of a hundred feet or so, across which the horsemen of the twin escorts looked at each other with ill-disguised hostility and suspicion.

"They do not seem to trust each other any more, Sahib," murmured Sher Singh into Scott's ear.

In the Nana's troop, a trumpet blared harshly three times. But the men did not stir. Was it a signal? Were they summoning some ghostly

garrison in the "temple" across the jhil?

"Do you think the treasure is over there, Sahib?" Sher Singh asked.

"I am sure of it," Scott muttered. "They have not come to this desolate spot for nothing."

His weary thoughts were puzzled as well as desperate. He had followed his quarry for three days. The first day they had gone only to Bithur. The last two days had been occupied in a circuitous wandering through country lanes and by-paths, to finally reach this rock-temple, less than a single full day's march from Bithur. Scott had noted that the Nana's people took the lead. This would indicate that only he, and not the Rani, knew the exact whereabouts of this "secret Brah-mavarta." The Nana was, then, deliberately misleading the Rani. To gain time, of course, for some purpose not yet apparent.

Again the sound of a trumpet interrupted his thoughts. This time it sounded from the Rani's troop, as clear and silvery in tone as the Nana's trumpet had been harsh. Three times it echoed from the grim cliff.

THIS time there was an answer—of sorts. Something stirred behind the altar-stone. Out into the sunlight crept, on hands and knees, a living creature which could be identified as human only when, on the topmost step, it at last stood upright.

Shrouded from head to foot in a filthy brown robe fitted with a hood which entirely concealed the face, and with mitten-like attachments to the sleeves so that not even the hands were exposed, the man or thing or whatever it was swayed and tottered and grasped at the altar for support.

"He is a very holy man," muttered the awed Sher Singh, Sikh though he was. "I have heard of his kind. They cannot show any part of their bodies. They live in darkness all their lives. They are only allowed one eye-hole in their hoods, and that only for use when

absolutely necessary. They are very holy."

The holy one moved forward, lowered one foot to the next step, let himself down. Slowly, falteringly, he felt his way to the bottom step. He was evidently very weak, either with extreme age or as a result of his ascetic practices.

From the lowest stair he stepped out into the black scum of the jhil, sinking at once to his knees.

Scott could hardly repress a cry of horror; for instantly the dark surface of that swamp came to writhing life. Snakes of all sizes swarmed toward the invader of their sanctuary, lifting their ugly heads about him, hissing viciously as they coiled and uncoiled in his path. They wriggled across patches of swamp-~~grass~~, swam through pools of water, pressed on as though united in their resentment of this human intrusion.

The "holy man" paid them not the slightest attention. He waded on, splashing and sloshing through the muck and viscous pools, brushing aside the serpents as though they were mere phantoms. Baji Rao's treasure was well-guarded, indeed.

"I would not do that for all the wealth of Hind!" muttered Sher Singh.

The wader reached the opposite bank, where stood the riders of the Nana and the Rani, staring at him in silent awe. He shook out the long dripping skirts of his gown, and from his cowed head, sunk upon his breast as though in prayer or meditation, came a shrill voice, cracked yet commanding:

"O son of Baji Rao! Heir of the Peishwas! Speak to me the words of power!"

The Nana's fat figure was already descending from the howdah. He hurried forward through the lane his horsemen opened in their ranks. He salaamed very low before the holy man. And he spoke, briefly and low.

The head of the guardian of the treasure moved in affirmation.

"Now give me the golden keys!"

The Nana produced a gold-mesh purse and handed over something that gleamed dull yellow into the mitted grasp of the other.

"There is but one!" protested the shrill voice, carrying easily on the soft breeze to Scott's fascinated ears.

The Nana said something and drew back.

"Aye! I know!" shrilled the hooded one. "Laksmi Bai, daughter of Kings, stand forth!"

CHAPTER VIII

The Treasure of Baji Rao



SUMMONED, the Rani slid from her horse and approached the holy man as the Nana drew back and climbed again to his howdah. She, too, salaamed before the presence; she, too,

handed over a dull-yellow gleaming object.

Scott was sick.

"Now I give thanks to Vishnu the Preserver, who has cast over me the shield of his protection that I might live until this day of fulfilment!" rose the shrill voice from the hood. He turned and moved into the swamp again.

Scott watched him intently. Sher Singh was silent, awed to the depths of his superstitious soul. He lay at Scott's side without a sound save the sharp hiss of indrawn breath.

Again the snakes swarmed round the legs and knees of the wading man. Again he passed on, utterly indifferent to them. He stood at last on the steps, climbed up them one by one, obviously almost at the end of his strength yet, seemingly, urged on and sustained by some inner power.

He reached the platform, passed round behind the altar. Now in the dim rear of the recess, it was hard to follow his slow and painful movements.

Utter silence fell upon those who watched, across the jhil. Hardly a stirrup leather creaked. Even the

horses were frozen to immobility.

A faint series of clicks sounded from the recess. The hooded one was bending over the bronze boss. And suddenly, the rock opened. A dark slit, perhaps two feet wide and six high, appeared where before there had been but solid sandstone.

The figure of the cowed priest glided into the opening and disappeared. He came out again, bearing in his arms an iron casket, which he set on the altar. A hundred breaths escaped in one simultaneous sigh.

He turned. The slit in the rock closed with a soft thud. The cowed one, standing behind the altar, faced the assemblage. He flung out his right hand in a throwing motion. Two golden gleams in the sunlight—two splashes on the dark surface of the jhil.

Scott's eyes followed the nearest: and his head snapped round to meet Sher Singh's gaze.

"Did you see that, jemadar?"

"Aye, Sahib!" The Sikh's eyes glittered as he spoke.

The cowed figure was descending the steps, staggering under the weight of the casket. For the third time he traversed the shallow swamp, braving the snakes. He emerged upon the bank, laid down the casket.

A hundred pairs of eyes were upon him as he manipulated the lock, threw back the lid, and poured out upon the grass a glittering heap of gold-pieces. Yet no man stirred.

"The treasure of Baji Rao!" he announced. "Let those who presented the holy keys, let those who spoke the holy words claim their treasure. So is my trust fulfilled!"

He took a backward step.

"I have finished!" said he. "My work is done. The sands of my life have run out. I go to my reward."

One mitted hand gestured toward the rock temple.

"Let none profane the holy place, empty now of all save the spirits of those who built it!" he screamed. "May the curse of Siva the destroyer visit him who dares to set foot within those sacred pillars! May his bones turn to water! May his

muscles shrivel! May his eyes rot in his head! May maggots thrive in his belly while he yet lives! And may he burn in the fires of hell forever when Siva claims his own!"

A shudder ran through the ranks of the horsemen at this terrible curse.

THE cowed one turned and walked into the jhil. He staggered as he went. Halfway across, his feet sinking into the soft mud beneath a tussock of grass, he stopped, turned, faced the bank where the men of the Nana and the Rani still watched in fascinated, awe-struck stillness.

Slowly, slowly he sank down. His knees buckled beneath him. His shrouded arms rose once—as in supplication to unseen gods of the firmament.

"Receive thy own, O—"

His voice broke in a shrill rattle. He crumpled into a heap of dirty brown cloth there in the midst of the snake-infested swamp. A score of serpents gathered round him. They lifted their wicked heads high, struck—and struck again. Over his body they writhed and swarmed until none could tell whether the dark heap in the marsh was human or serpentine.

Over that place of death brooded an ominous silence, a silence which was broken by the voice of the Nana speaking a sharp order.

Azimulla, his faithful adviser, dismounted and moved slowly toward the pile of gold. At the same moment the Rani darted forward. She and Azimulla reached the treasure at the same moment; together they bent over the glittering heap. A sharp cry of disappointment rang from the woman's throat.

"Half a lakh! Not more! Is *this* the treasure of thy father, O Dhandu Panth?"

The Nana stood up in the howdah, craning his neck to see better.

"Half a lakh?" he called, stupidly, in the tone of one who cannot believe his ears.

"Aye! Is this the price of an empire?" screamed the infuriated Rani,

kicking the gold pieces with her booted foot so that they flew all about in the grass. "This would not buy a village midden! I have ten times as much in my own coffers! Bah! Thy father laughs at us from the grave. O fool! O liar!"

She turned and strode to her horse.

Azimulla and one of her officers began picking up the gold and dividing it into two parts. Ere they had done, the Nana's elephant was being driven out of the glade; the heir of the Peishwas had collapsed in the howdah, and no other word came from him. As for the guardsmen, they were crowding each other in their anxiety to get away from that place.

The Rani followed, at the head of her own escort. And though she still held high her proud head, she slumped a little in the saddle, as one in whom high hopes are forever dead.

So she rode into the gloom of the jungle and vanished from Scott's sight.

The last hoof-beat, the last jingle of scabbard and stirrup died away. Silence returned to the ancient Place of Pillars.

"We follow, Sahib?" whispered Sher Singh at last.

"No. Wait and watch," bade Scott, unmoving.

Even as he spoke, the dark object in the midst of the jhil stirred.

"Ah-h-h!" breathed Sher Singh.

The cowed head lifted, turned this way and that as though seeking for hidden danger. Then, with a sudden lurch, the guardian of the treasure rose to his full height, snakes sliding from his shoulders and lap as he did so.

"Round through the jungle. Cut him off. Get him—alive!" Scott muttered sharply.

The cowed man was plodding toward the bank. His head was still turning and twisting anxiously. Evidently his first concern was to make sure that none of the guardsmen had remained behind to watch. He reached the bank, climbed up, shook slime from his garments. A soft

laugh was muffled in the folds of his cowl.

A laugh that died in a gasp of horror. For from the jungle there stepped out two grim, hard-faced warriors with drawn tulwars.

"Not quite so fast, Hajjur Rao!" said Scott.

They were upon their quarry while still he stood paralyzed by astonishment. They ripped back the hood from his head, revealing a plump round face and eyes that blinked in the bright sunlight. He licked his thick lips.

"Beware what you do, friends!" he said. "I am Hajjur Rao, cousin of Nana Sahib. He will pay you well to deliver me alive at Bithur; he will be quick to avenge any harm done to my person."

Scott began to see light in many dark corners.

"Search him!" he ordered.

Hajjur tried to dodge aside at this, but strong hands were upon him, ruthless hands which ripped away his dirty robe—and found, in one sleeve, two wedges of gold. The long trail had ended.

Scott had the key, both keys, at last, and happiness shook him so that his hand trembled as he clutched them.

"He threw two gold-pieces into the jhil as a bluff," Scott gloated

to Sher Singh. "Unfortunately for him, one of them hit flat and skipped. We saw it. I knew right then there was treachery on foot, and that this man was in on it."

The prisoner said nothing. Beneath half-lowered lids his eyes darted from one to the other of his captors. He saw naught to give him hope. No hint of mercy was on either face.

"Now," Scott went on, "he kept these keys for a purpose. The purpose of a key is to open a lock. These keys fit but one lock; that one over there. Which leads to the conclusion that there is still something behind it worth having. Lead the way, Hajjur!"

He shoved the man toward the jhil.

"But the snakes, Sahib!" protested Sher Singh.

Scott laughed.

"The snakes are harmless," said he, tasting the scummy water on one fingertip. "This is a fresh-water swamp. Have you lived so long in this country and do not know that there is not a fresh-water snake in India which is venomous?"

"It is true!" exclaimed the Sikh. "Fool that I am."

They stepped into the jhil without more remark. The snakes swarmed round their booted legs, [Turn Page]

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poking their heads at them, opening their mouths to hiss. They kept steadily on, driving Hajjur before them.

Once Scott paused. "See those crumbs of food floating on the water? Somebody taught those snakes to come and be fed; that's why they swarmed all round. He knew. He was feeding 'em while he squatted there and pretended to be dead."

Together they reached the temple steps. Scott stamped the mud from his boots and ascended, awed by the air of sanctity and age which hung round the place. Sher Singh booted the reluctant Hajjur up to the platform.

The recess was open to view, contained no hidden niches, no chance of ambush by lurking foes. They rounded the block of stone: and both stopped short. A man lay there—a corpse!

Scott bent over the limp, emaciated figure which lay on its face behind the altar and pointed to a dagger hilt which stuck out from between two prominent ribs.

"He's been dead for hours. Murdered, poor old chap."

"The feeder of snakes!" was the Sikh's comment.

"Yes. This is the legitimate guardian of the treasure, of course. Now we know why the Nana led the Rani all over hell's half-acre—to give this murdering dog time to get here, kill this poor fellow and familiarize himself with the surroundings. The Nana was in a spot. He didn't dare murder the Rani and take her key; she has too many powerful connections. So he cooked up this scheme. He didn't mean to split any treasure with her. Not much."

"But the gold, Sahib?"

"The gold was nothing to what's behind that bronze lock."

Scott was now examining the bronze boss which jutted out of the sandstone wall. He remembered Neill's warning about hidden gunpowder and he was very careful. The boss contained two wedge-shaped holes. Into the uppermost

one he fitted one of the gold wedges. It stuck. He tried the other, and this one went home with a sharp click.

Scott now discovered that he could give the great knob of bronze a half-turn, which brought another orifice uppermost. The remaining wedge fitted this; the boss turned again. A long crack appeared in the rock. A thick, narrow door of sandstone, of which the bronze boss was in the center, swung slowly back under the pressure of Scott's shoulder.

Within was a small rock-chamber which exuded a musty smell. It contained absolutely nothing save two small niches carved in the stone. One was empty. In the other stood an iron casket very much like the one which had been emptied of its gold by Hajjur.

Scott swung it out of its place, set it on the altar stone and closed the stone door. The lock of the casket had been recently broken, from which fact Scott deduced that Hajjur had made very sure of what he was about.

The Englishman threw back the lid. And stood tongue-tied by the blazing glory of the heaped jewels which filled the casket almost to the brim. Diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires mingled in magnificent profusion.

"By the splendor of God!" gasped Sher Singh. "This is loot indeed, O very wise and fortunate Sahib!"

Scott slammed the lid shut. Hajjur, cowering against the altar, moaned deep in his throat. Scott tore off his cloak and wrapped the casket up. He bound all fast with strips torn from the cloak's edge.

"Take it and guard it," he said to Sher Singh, and the Sikh's eyes glowed at this proof of trust.

They waded back through the snake-pools and reached the farther bank, driving Hajjur before them.

Sher Singh gestured toward the prisoner.

"Shall we take this along or—?" he made a significant gesture.

Scott looked at the man, who had relapsed into a sullen silence. No

doubt he ought to let the Sikh cut that fat throat, but of course he couldn't. He stood suddenly quite still, his eyes fixed on the prisoner's neck.

It was a plump neck. The skin was soft with years of easy living. Soft and sallow—and free of the slightest scratch or scar. Yet if this was Hajjur Rao, he should still bear the marks Scott's dagger had left that night in the tent on the Kalpi road.

"Hajjur Rao!" said Scott sharply.

The hanging head jerked up. For just an instant the eyes widened, yellow, roving eyes like a tiger's—then their lids veiled them. In that moment Scott knew. This was the Nana. The man on the elephant had been Hajjur. No wonder he'd kept his distance from the Rani!

"What is your will?" the prisoner muttered.

Scott opened his mouth to speak a death sentence. But the words died unuttered. He would bring his prisoner in to Cawnpore, where Have-lock had without doubt established himself by now. It was altogether fitting that Dhandu Panth, the Nana Sahib, should expiate his greatest crime on the spot where his victims had died beneath the knives of his butchers.

"Put him on a horse and tie his feet beneath the horse's belly," Scott ordered. "Ride beside him, Sher Singh. If we are attacked, or if he makes the least attempt to escape, run your sword through his body."

"Understood, Sahib!"

They made their way to the spot where they had left their horses. With his own hands Scott strapped the chest behind the saddle.

Then his voice rang out joyously:

"We ride for Cawnpore! Mount! Forward!"

For the first time in days there was a little song of triumph in his heart. He had not only gained the treasure of Baji Rao, but he was bringing in the Nana Sahib to taste in person the justice of the British Raj.

All about him, as he rode, the jungle was strangely silent. Presently he realized what made it seem

so. There was not a breath of air stirring.

The Devil's Wind had ceased to blow.

CHAPTER IX

The Well of Cawnpore

"White hands cling to the tightened rein,
Slipping the spur from the booted heel.
Tenderest voices cry 'Turn again!'
Red lips tarnish the scabbarded steel.
High hopes faint on a warm hearthstone:
He travels the fastest who travels alone."

The Story of the Gadsbys.

CAWNPORE.

The Building known as the Bibigarh was a small affair of two rooms, with a veranda giving on a tiny walled courtyard, in one corner of which was a well. This well



had now been filled in with fresh earth, and a rude wooden cross erected above it.

Overlooking the Bibigarh was a more pretentious structure of yellow stone and plaster, where the Nana had kept some of his women during his "reign" in the city. In a corridor of this building, outside a sentried door, Edward Scott and Sher Singh, in borrowed uniforms, paced back and forth on the morning following the capture of the treasure and the Nana.

Scott had breathed no word to any man of the identity of the prisoner. Even the prisoner himself did not know Scott had penetrated his secret. For Scott wanted to deliver that tremendous news to the British commander in person.

At one end of the corridor was a window which looked down into the courtyard of the Bibigarh. They had set up a gallows there, from which three grisly corpses swung. From the Bibigarh itself came shrieks of agony, mingled with the whistle and crack of a lash.

An officer hurried along the corridor.

"Hallo, Bruce!" said Scott, recognizing the intelligence officer. "Can

I see the Military Governor now?"

"I'll tell him." Bruce's face darkened as he looked out at the Bibigarh. "That was a dreadful business," he muttered. "They threw the bodies down the well. We left them there and filled it in. What else could we do? But we're taking a vengeance that all India will remember."

As he spoke, too muscular, half-naked men emerged from the doorway of the Bibigarh, dragging between them a limp and bleeding form. Behind stalked a British provost-sergeant. Straight toward the gallows they went, and the sergeant ran up the wooden steps to adjust another noose.

"The floor in there is an inch deep in clotted blood," shuddered Bruce. "Every mutineer we can catch is being tried by drumhead court-martial. If found guilty of having anything to do with killing any European, he's being taken into the Bibigarh and compelled, under the cat, to clean up his allotted portion of the floor with his tongue before being hanged."

The terrible implications of this sentence to either a Hindu or a Moslem struck Scott, for a moment, speechless. Defiled—defiled beyond all hope of any life hereafter—condemned to utter perdition!

"Yes," he managed to say at last, as the sergeant shoved the cowering wretch off the gallows to jerk and kick at the end of the rope, "yes, you have devised a vengeance which will be whispered of in the bazaars for generations."

"If we could only catch the Nana and serve him so!" growled Bruce. "Well, I'll go inside and tell the Chief you're waiting."

A moment later he reappeared. "Right this way, Scott!"

"Come along, Sher Singh," ordered Scott. "This is your show as much as mine!"

They strode through the doorway and stood at salute. From behind a table there rose to greet them—Neill! Brigadier-General Neill, now—and Military Governor of Cawn-

poore. He thrust out a hand which gripped Scott's in hearty welcome: he greeted Sher Singh likewise.

"Well done, Captain Scott," said he. "Very well done. Shabash, Risaldar Sher Singh!"

He flicked with one finger the pages of Scott's written report, which had been delivered, sealed, to the officer on headquarters duty an hour before. It was a full report of all Scott's doings since he had left Allahabad, except as to the identity of his prisoner.

Neill motioned to a chair, as Bruce went out and closed the door.

"SIT down, Captain. Don't look surprised; General Havelock has given me some authority in the matter of local and temporary promotions, and you've deserved a step. Miss Reynolds, by the way, got safely to General Havelock—thanks to you. Sher Singh is risaldar from this day. Now then—this prisoner you've brought in. Wait!" as Scott was about to speak. "First I want you to read this dispatch which has just come up from Calcutta."

He handed over an official paper. It was a brief order, signed by one of the Members of Council on behalf of the Governor-General, directing that "any persons of princely rank or lineage who might be accused of participation in the rising against the Government of India," should not be dealt with summarily by civil or military courts, but be sent under guard to Calcutta where their cases would be disposed of by the Supreme Government.

"No Indian raja or prince has ever been executed for any murder or treachery, however vile, by British authorities," Neill said slowly. "Not in all the history of our rule has such a thing been done. The custom has been to assign such persons to a certain place of residence, under some surveillance, but under conditions of comfort and even luxury. They are maintained as pensioners of the State. Hrrrmph! The present Governor-General is already becoming—er—noted for his clemency. I thought the dispatch might

interest you. But I'm talking to you now as James Neill talking to a young friend. You understand?"

"Perfectly, sir," said Scott in a low voice.

Sher Singh, standing respectfully behind Scott's chair, of course, understood not a word of this English conversation.

"Of course," Neill continued, "if such a princely personage *should* pay a very striking penalty for particularly atrocious offenses, even though his true identity were not known to us at the time, the fact would soon become known in native circles. They have a way of discovering these things. The effect would be most salutary under present conditions. Most salutary. Those chiefs who were wavering would find a new reason for remaining firm to their allegiance; those who have cast their lot against us would perhaps seek pardon while yet they had the chance.

"It is, of course, your duty to make a full report of your mission. But, as an officer who has seen much service, I can advise you, my boy, that there is more to a soldier's duty than can ever be found between the covers of the Queen's Regulations."

HE paused, cleared his throat and leaned back in his chair.

"Now, Captain Scott," he went on in curt official tones, "as Military Governor of Cawnpore I am ready to listen to anything you may have to say to me officially. I gather from the guarded statements in your report that you have brought in a prisoner whose identity you do not care to commit to writing, but who may be a personage of considerable importance. If my inferences are correct, I must advise you that your capture of this prisoner may result most happily for you. A brevet as Major and the C.B. is the least you could expect from a grateful Government when the news reaches Calcutta."

There was another pause.

"Before you say more, Captain," Neill continued, "let me tell you

that your action in the matter of the treasure of Baji Rao has probably saved British rule in India from destruction. If those jewels which you turned in to my paymaster this morning had fallen into the hands of the Rani of Jhansi, they would certainly have been used to seduce the loyal regiments at Nagpur to support the exiled Bhonsla. We are now certain on that point. There are four regiments of the Nagpur contingent, and five of the Madras Army at that crucial station.

"And if the infection of mutiny once spread from the Bengal Army to that of Madras—God help us all. But for this service you can receive, as I told you before, no recognition. You will have your share of the prize money, but the inner history of that treasure will be most jealously guarded in the secret files of the Government."

Again the general paused.

Warm satisfaction filled Scott's heart. He *had* been of some service, then. More than he'd ever imagined. Let the civilians at Calcutta guard their precious secret. Scott had his reward.

As for the Nana—

Scott's gaze went out through the open window to rest upon that well with its pitiful wooden cross.

He knew Neill did not expect him to lie in an official report. But it was unthinkable that the Nana should live to fatten on a British pension, while lesser villains paid the penalty of the crimes he had conceived.

Scott nodded, suddenly. There was a way—let the murderer be condemned out of his own mouth. He could, of course, know nothing of that Calcutta dispatch!

"The prisoner is under guard below, sir," Scott said. "May I have him brought in for questioning?"

Neill looked up with a quick frown. Scott met the general's piercing gaze with unchanged expression.

"Very well," said Neill at length. "As you please."

The order was given, and there

was silence thereafter in that room until the prisoner was marched in between two grim-looking jabi troopers, with drawn tulwars. The British provost-sergeant followed and stood at attention.

"Your name?" demanded Neill in Hindustani.

"Hajjur Rao, Sahib," came the instant reply, as the yellow eyes shifted from face to face beneath the half-lowered lids. "I am an innocent man, Sahib. May my blood turn to water if I speak not truth! All that I have done, I was compelled to do by that dog of dogs, that conscienceless villain, my cousin, Dhandu Panth."

"Ah!" said Neill. "Indeed."

He picked up a few sheets of paper from his desk, glanced at them. His harsh jaw tightened beneath his beard. His eyes were twin points of steel.

"We have not been ill-served by our native agents in Cawnpore, Hajjur Rao!" he snapped. "We know but too well *all that you have*

done." He repeated the words with sinister emphasis. "I will take the responsibility of dispensing with the formality of sending you before a military court. You recognize this man as Hajjur Rao, Captain Scott?"

"That is the name he gave me, sir, and to which he answered when so addressed," Scott answered, while the grey of awful fear crept up the prisoner's cheeks.

"Very well!" Neill's voice cracked like a whiplash. "Sergeant, take charge of the prisoner! To the Bibigarh with him!"

"But, Sahib—" The wretched Nana started forward. The sergeant caught him by the scruff of the neck, whirled him around and flung him toward the door.

"There," reflected Scott, as the escort dragged the shrieking Raja away, "goes a majority and a decoration for Edward Scott. But the price is too high."

Neill smiled at him as though reading his thoughts. Both men were good soldiers.

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He tried to get to his knees

**A Badman Tries To Frame the Law and Hell Pops When
Clint Stearman Calls the Schemer's Bluff!**

By WILLIAM L. HOPSON

Author of "They Laughed and Flew and Died," "Code of the West," etc.

AN unusual tightness thinned the lips of Sheriff Clint Stearman as he looked out through the open window in the jail office and saw the rider. The man jogged up the middle of Sage Flats' single street toward the red stone building with the barred windows; and though Clint couldn't see the hard features at that distance, only one man in the Southwest rode with

right arm akimbo and knuckles resting against his hips above one of the heavy Colts.

"Buck Davis!"

The whisper brought flooding back bitter memories of a certain night four years ago that always made him wince. Things had happened that night that he'd told himself were not his fault and should be forgotten.

The rider came on and swung

down in front of the jail. Unaware of Clint's cobalt stare through the open window, his harsh lips spread in an expectant grin.

"Well, well, if it ain't my old pard Clint!" he chuckled when he jingled through the door. "Howdy, Sheriff! How's it feel to be a badge-toter, pard?"

Clint looked at him, hard.

"Yo're a fool, yuh murderin' son," he said icily. "Yuh oughta knowed better than to come here."

"Why, Sheriff!" protested Buck Davis in a mocking voice. "I didn't know yuh'd be ashamed of yore old pard."

"Look at them reward posters here on the wall behind me," replied Clint in a dangerously soft voice. "Yuh done right well for yoreself in the past four years. 'Harp' Lawson's right hand man now, eh? Shuck them guns, Buck."

The outlaw made no move to obey. Instead, he gave a simulated sigh of disappointment. "To think my old pard would turn ag'in me jest because he's a sheriff now. Clint, I wouldn't a thought this of yuh."

BUCK was toying with him as a cat toys with a mouse, Clint well knew. He could see the jeering contempt in the outlaw's close-set eyes. Clint came to his feet and half leaned across his scarred desk.

"I never was yore pard," he said evenly. "I happened to fall in with yuh when I was broke an' huntin' a ridin' job. When we rode into town that cold night an' went to the hotel, I didn't know yuh was goin' to pull a stick-up."

"Now, Sheriff," grinned Buck Davis derisively, "yuh know good an' well yuh had yore own gun out."

"I'd pulled it to offer it to that clerk for a room for us an' some grub money until I could get a job," answered Clint. "When yuh saw the safe door open an' money in the box inside, yuh jerked yore own gun.

Yuh shot that old man down in cold blood."

"Pard, I didn't do no such thing," protested the killer volubly. "I thought I saw him go for a gun under the counter. How was I to know different?"

Clint sneered coldly. "Yuh knew, all right, an' I had to run for it. No jury in that country would have believed my story. I'm only regrettin' I didn't put a couple of slugs through yuh before I broke for my horse. Take off them gun-belts, Buck!"

The facetiousness swept out of the outlaw's unshaved visage and left it as hard as the white plastered walls of the room. "Listen, Mister Badge-Toter," he snarled. "I know all about yuh comin' here four years ago, gittin' a job with old man Voorhees on his spread, an' cleanin' up them cow thieves a few months ago. I know about him gittin' yuh elected sheriff last month. I know all about yuh lovin' his daughter, too."

Clint sensed a hidden significance in the other's jeering words. And Davis was right about him loving June Voorhees. Right from the beginning he'd worshipped her. He'd worked hard on Colonel Voorhees' big ranch, saved his money, disturbed though he was by the terrible thing that had taken place back there in his carefully buttoned up past.

Several times he'd started to tell June his secret, and each time he'd fought down the impulse. It wasn't that he feared *her* loyalty. But she probably would have asked him to go to her father, and the old man's stern code brooked relentlessly no overlapping of the dividing line between right and wrong. It would have meant being forced to leave the ranch, separation from June, so Clint had kept silent. After all, it had been Davis, not he—

The voice of the killer sent his

turbulent thoughts scattering to the winds. "Nope, pard, yuh ain't arrestin' me, see? That lussy filly might find out a few things about her lover he don't want her tuh know."

"There's somethin' up yore sleeve, yuh yellow son," said Clint evenly. "Let's have it."

THE killer grinned and rolled a cigarette. With exasperating slowness he lit it, sat down in a chair, and hitched at the heavy belt encircling his waist.

"Well pard, that's more like it. I told Harp he could depend on a' old friend of mine. Funny name his, eh? He got it because some of them twenty-seven men he's killed are probably playin' harps by now in Gabriel's band. Yep, there's somethin' up my sleeve. A bank stick-up."

"I thought as much. What's yore proposition?"

"Well, in fifteen minutes Harp an' the other four boys of the gang are ridin' into town casual-like. They'll clean the bank an' hit fer the Mesa Cuts. Me an' you are ridin' outa town now, me not wantin' to git a' old pal in bad. Yuh'll say yuh was called out on a case, an' by the time yuh get back it's all over. Harp didn't want to cut yuh in, but I told him yuh'd need some money fer a weddin'—"

Clint's blazing eyes stopped him. The killer eased out of his chair and the burning cigarette dropped from the corner of his surprise loosened lips. Before the sheriff could even straighten up, Buck Davis' guns came out in a draw that was magic in speed. The angry muzzles lined Clint's face in menacing steadiness.

"Dump the shells from the cylinders of yore guns an' then chock 'em back in the holsters," harshly ordered the killer. "*Careful, Sheriff!*"

Silently Clint obeyed, the twelve shells lying on the top of his desk.

"There, that's better," said Davis with satisfaction. "Come on. We're goin' fer that ride."

A horse suddenly trotted past the open window from around a corner of the jail and June Voorhees swung down. Slim and lithesome, she wore a snow white Stetson, red silk blouse, khaki colored riding skirt and soft boots. There was a businesslike .38 in a holster at her right hip.

Evidently she'd ridden into town with her father, for Clint now saw him riding on up the street. The sheriff, his face a mask, was backed up against the wall behind his desk. His broad shoulders covered the reward posters with their pictures of Buck Davis and Harp Lawson he'd pasted up only a few days before.

"Act natcheral," hissed Davis in a sibilant whisper, holstering his guns. "One false move from yuh an' I'll kill that gal."

"Oh, hello, Clint," smiled June from the doorway.

"Howdy, June," he said casually.

She came in, took off gloves and Stetson, laid them down on his desk, patting back into place the thick coils of auburn hair around her head. "Dad and I just rode in, Clint. Since you simply *won't* come out to see us any more, I thought I'd immodestly come in and see *you* while Dad takes care of some business at the bank."

Tension charged Clint's hard muscled young body. June's words formed in his mind a grim picture of what would happen in that bank when Harp Lawson and his gunnies started to sack it. There would be a roar of denunciation from fiery Colonel Voorhees as he went for the gun in his black coat pocket; and then Harp Lawson again would prove that his notorious sobriquet was no misnomer. Unseen by June, beads of moisture began to break out beneath his Stetson's sweatband.

He had to get her dad out of that bank!

"I been intendin' to get out that way, June, but I been sorta busy lately," he managed to smile.

"Shore he's been busy," cut in Buck Davis, leering at the girl with bold, admiring eyes. "He was jest gittin' ready to go out on a case with me when yuh come in, wasn't yuh, Clint? We're old saddle pards, me an' the sheriff."

To attempt disarming the killer was out of the question. To make a play for June's .38 would bring death to her from Davis' big guns. Yet, if Colonel Voorhees was in that bank when the Lawson gang entered, he'd never emerge alive!

Clint made his play, then, hoping that Davis would let him get away with it.

"June," he began, speaking rapidly, "Buck and I are old saddle pards. We're both wanted over in Arizona for murder in a hotel stick-up four years ago. No—don't interrupt! Yuh might as well know everything now. I don't love yuh an' never did. That's why I quit comin' to see yuh."

HE said it harshly, cut him though it did to see the terrible look of shocked disbelief in her eyes. Slowly the color drained from her face, leaving it pale. Davis was staring, amazement and puzzled suspicion on his face.

"Why, Clint, you—you're joking!" gasped the girl.

He stepped aside, pointed to the reward picture of Davis. It took no second glance to identify it with the hook-nosed gunman standing there with them, hands on his gun-butts.

"I'm not joking," snapped Clint. "In fifteen minutes Harp Lawson and his other four men are going to rob the bank. Yore father's a stubborn old fool, and I don't want to see him stay in that bank. He's just hard-headed enough to go for his gun, and the shooting will attract attention. Give me yore word yuh'll not spill anything an' I'll let

yuh lope after him. Tell him I want to see him in my office pronto. It's his life against a quiet stick-up. Otherwise I'll have to lock yuh in a cell until we get away."

Horror and bitter pain were in June Voorhees' dark eyes. Words welled up into her soft throat but did not come forth. Quickly she regained her composure. A look of scorn blazed in her face.

She said frigidly, "Very well, Clint Stearman, I give my word I won't try to frustrate your—plans. You may lock Dad and me in a cell while you make your getaway."

She ran out the door to her horse, mounted, and spurred into a lope toward the bank a hundred and fifty yards up the street.

"What kind of a play is this?" snarled Davis.

Clint shrugged. "It works both ways, Buck. With that old range bull safely locked in a cell, he'll be out of danger, an' Lawson will have a lot better chance of making a quiet getaway."

"That's a slick idea, hombre," grinned the killer. Then his eyes suddenly grew crafty. "An' jest to make it look better me an' yuh ain't ridin' outa town, see? We'll jest meet the boys at the bank. With yuh in sight nobdy'll think of a holdup till it's too late."

Up the street June Voorhees and her father came out of the weather-beaten bank, mounted hurriedly and came loping back. They swung down outside the jail, and through the window Clint heard her voice in brief explanation. There came an angry roar. The old cattleman came storming into the sheriff's office.

"Yuh, Clint Stearman, are as dirty a pup as—"

"Cut it!" snapped Davis, guns out. "Shed that long coat with the gun in it. You, gal, drop that gun-belt! Both of yuh git in that cell."

The two obeyed and Clint banged the door. He kept his eyes away

from June's face. Her father was raging.

"I warn yuh yuh can't get away with it, Stearman!" he gritted through the bars. "I'll have a posse after yuh before yuh hardly get out of town if yellin' will attract attention. But I'll keep June's promise. Yuh're safe until after yore friends leave town."

"Come on, pard," chuckled Davis. "We're goin' to the bank now. With you in sight nobody'll pay any attention when Harp an' the gang ride in. They're due about now."

The Colonel's black coat with the gun in it and June's own belt were on the floor by Clint's feet. He weighed his chances, saw sudden death lurking in the killer's gun muzzles, and stepped over the weapons.

HIS lips were a thin, white line as they went out and mounted. Yonder, at the far end of town, five men were casually jogging into sight. Ranchers, for all of their appearance. Clint and his captor rode toward them.

He and Davis would arrive first at the bank's porch. They were riding side by side, the outlaw on Clint's right. The afternoon sun gleamed brightly on his badge. Unnoticed by Davis, whose hard eyes were mostly for the false-fronted building ahead on the right hand side of the street, Clint's left hand went to the loops in his cartridge belt and extracted two snub-nosed .45s. He eased the Colt from its holster and, holding it out of sight on the off side of his horse, managed to flip back the cylinder catch. He inserted one of the shells.

His fumbling fingers, as he tried to turn the cylinder, dropped the second cartridge.

He silently cursed his luck, for there was no time to make another try. Lawson and the others were coming closer. Clint slipped the

heavy Colt's bright cylinder slowly around five times and eased it back into the holster, hoping the oncoming riders had noticed nothing unusual. Perhaps, seeing him riding with Davis and apparently armed, they would think him in on the deal.

"Now here's the set-up," came Davis' tense voice, low pitched but vibrant. "We git down in front of the bank an' wait fer them easy-like on the porch. All of us go in except Beady, who's stayin' in his saddle with the hosses an' actin' as lookout. If that cashier who changed a bill fer me last week while I was lookin' over the dump don't git fool notions we kin clean out the vault in two or three minutes an' jog outa town. He's a sorta skinny little cuss with glasses so I won't bear down too hard when I bend a gun barrel over his head."

"Get this, Davis," warned Clint frostily. "Harman is a little Eastern lunger out here for his health. He's got a wife an' two youngsters. *Sabe?*"

The outlaw grunted morosely. "Then he'll likely have sense enough to not try pullin' anything funny. But we got to quiet him, an' that goes fer any customers, too."

"Then it's lucky I got the Colonel outa that bank," returned Clint grimly. "There'd a been hell to pay."

They pulled to a halt in front of the porch, the killer careful to keep Clint in view, and not letting him get his horse between them. In this move Buck Davis showed his worth by taking no chances with his prisoner. Clint's hopes of an unexpected draw—of using the lone cartridge to best advantage—of grabbing the wounded outlaw's guns as the Lawson gang came close, all were dashed as Davis, hands close to his Colts, gave a low-voiced command for him to get on the porch.

Through the open front door they could see the bespectacled little cashier, busy at something behind

the wicket window. The bank appeared deserted.

Lawson and the others rode up, and it was Clint's first glimpse of the man who boasted twenty-seven notches on his guns. He was about forty, heavy-set, with red-rimmed eyes that now flashed a silent query to Buck Davis, who gave a slight nod.

"Well, here's our friend, Sheriff," loudly said Davis for the benefit of anyone within hearing. "Come on in with us, Clint, I want yuh to witness this deed."

To Clint he said under his breath, "Git on inside."

Harp Lawson and three of the gunnies dismounted and came stomping carelessly onto the porch. Out of the corner of his eye, as he went into the bank, Clint noticed the baggy-faced, uncouth, bulgy rider who kept his seat, holding the horses. This would be Beady.

HARMAN, the near-sighted little cashier, looked up and peered through thick-lensed glasses as the six "cowmen" clumped toward him. The front half of the building was separated from the cashier's compartment and vault by a shoulder high counter built across the middle. On top of it, reaching almost to the ceiling, was the heavy wicket wire netting supposedly erected for protection.

Harman recognized Clint. "Why, good afternoon, Sheriff—" he began and broke off with a weak little cry when he saw the guns in the hands of Davis and Lawson.

He saw the three men, one carrying a canvas sack, ducking toward the swinging panel in the counter at the left of the room. He heard Buck Davis' hard voice clip to Lawson, "Watch this lawdog, Harp. His guns are empty, but watch him." and follow the three men. The truth flashed into his mind. A holdup! Then—he went for a gun!

It was a terribly foolish thing for the little man to do, but he did it. His skinny hand dipped up from behind the window with a nickel plated .32 five shot revolver of cheap make in it, and for the second time within five minutes Clint, biding his time, had his plans wrecked. He saw the right hand Colt of Harp Lawson's tip up ever so slightly. The twenty-eighth notch!

A picture of Harman's wife and kids came before Clint's eyes, and his left hand streaked to the one-shot left Colt. Buck Davis caught the movement, gave a roar of warning, and instinctively whirled, even though he thought the sheriff's weapons empty.

But Clint made no effort to kill the outlaw. His only thought was to save the life of the game but foolish little man with the wife and two youngsters. To his agonized mind his left hand weighed like lead as it came up in a blur.

He was leaping forward when the Colt bucked its single cry and gushed flame. An ear-splitting explosion rocked the confines of the bank. A stream of dark red spurted from Harp Lawson's thick neck. He went down in a sodden heap and Clint went down with him, dropping his useless Colt and grabbing for the dead man's guns.

Harman's .32 cracked lightly and Davis' left hand six-shooter roared back a double answer, his other gushing streaks of death floorward where lay Clint and the body of Lawson. The other three outlaws slapped hands for iron, running toward the door. A sledge-hammer blow slammed against Clint's ribs and burned him with invisible fire. He thumbed the hammer on a Lawson Colt. He thumbed it again and again at the rage contorted face of Buck Davis.

But the face did not move and more streaks of fire clawed at Clint Stearman's body. He heard himself

dimly yelling his frustration. He did not know that Buck Davis, sagging against the counter, was dead on his feet, that the three escaping outlaws were shooting as they ran. He found Lawson's other much notched gun in his hand, somehow, found it bucking and bucking toward the door as he tried to get to his knees.

Then the floor came up to meet him and he knew no more.

"Ah—he's coming to!"

THE glad cry of a woman's voice came to Clint Stearman out of nowhere. He managed to open his eyes, struggled to sit up. His head was bandaged and old Doc Benson was peering at him through his specs. June was beside him, too. The bank was jammed solid with excited men and women, all trying to talk at once. Colonel Voorhees came pushing his way through, stepped over the body of Lawson weltering in a pool of red, and bent down.

"How're yuh feelin', son?" he inquired.

"Harman, did they—did they—"

"Only wounded, Clint," said June, misty-eyed.

"The others—we got to get a

posse after them!" groaned Clint Stearman, and again June pushed him back.

"No need for that, Clint," said June's father. "The three of 'em were piled up together in the door when the crowd came runnin'. Only the man outside got away. Lordy, but that was a cleanup, son. Harman told us all about it. I owe yuh a lot for gettin' me outa here before they came. Just lay still till they come with some blankets. Me an' June are takin' yuh home."

Clint settled back, the pain forgotten. He looked up at the girl, and she knelt down beside him.

"June, honey," he whispered, "I'm sorry about—"

"Hush!" she rebuked him softly. "You didn't think you fooled me, did you, Clint?"

"Yuh mean yuh saw the shells on the desk an' knew my guns were empty?"

She smilingly shook her head. "No, darling, I'm not that much of a sheriff. But I've a woman's heart, and I knew something was wrong when you said you didn't love me. As for the other—the hotel robbery—no matter what happened that's our secret."

Next Month: TROUBLE SHOOTER, an Action-Packed Novelette of the West by CHUCK MARTIN



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*He smashed at
Mikouline's face
with his empty gun*

CHAPTER I Settlement Bombing

MAYNE emerged from the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank as a platoon of U.S. marines was swinging past along the Bund.

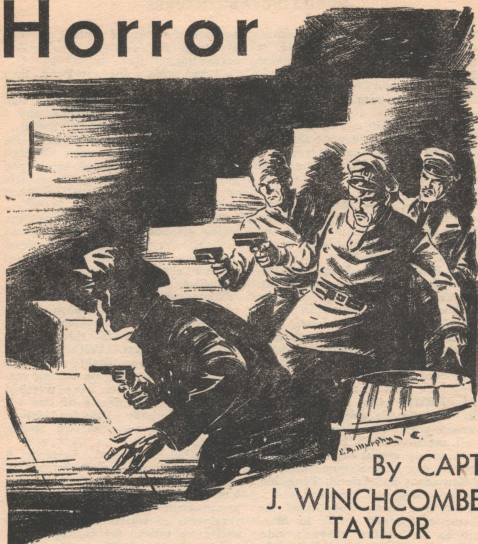
His right hand rose in salute that was distinctively his own; for while

index finger and thumb were held straight, the other fingers remained crooked. They had healed so years before, after being cut to the bone while gripping a knife blade aimed at his heart. This crippled hand had earned him the title of "Club Fist" throughout Eastern Asia.

As he watched the marines disappear among a mass of rickshas,

An American Soldier of Fortune Fights

Horror



By CAPT.
J. WINCHCOMBE-
TAYLOR

Author of "Sabers of Vengeance," "Lost, Stolen and Strayed," etc.

autos, street cars and pedestrians, his hawklike features became wistful. Once he, too, had worn a U.S. uniform; back in A.E.F. days, before he had become the most daring white adventurer in the Orient, a lone wolf who laughed to scorn the efforts of Chinese, Japanese and Russian officialdom to destroy him.

Glancing occasionally at the

muddy Whangpoo, with its sampans, junks, steamers and the warships of many nations, he began studying faces among the polyglot crowd, reading expressions ranging from bored indifference to stark fear.

And there was cause for fear. China and Japan were again waging undeclared war, and again there was fighting in the Japanese-controlled

Against Royalist Foes In War-Torn China!

suburbs north of the Settlement. Sporadic bursts of firing could be heard, and above the river Nipponese seaplanes were droning. Thousands of refugee Chinese were streaming in, spilling over into the Settlement itself.

A taxi, careening out of the Bund almost ran Mayne down. Cursing, he jumped back; then recognized a beautiful face peering at him from the cab's window.

Sonia Yezhov!

He saw her look of recognition, saw her lips about to cry out. Then a hand closed over her mouth and she was jerked back from sight. The taxi sped away.

Club Fist had good cause to remember Sonia and her father, Count Ivan Yezhov. More than once he had clashed with them; in Mongolia, Khansu and elsewhere. And now apparently, she was in danger. Her kidnapers, he thought sardonically, must be his own unwitting allies.

ENTERING the Palace Hotel, Mayne made for the lounge. Tourists, guests and Shanghailanders of all races—though Japanese were conspicuously absent—were drinking or taking tea. Mayne caught sight of his lieutenant and friend, Feng Ma, weaving among the crowd.

"I am late, Born-before-I-was," the Chinese apologized softly in Mandarin as he reached Mayne's side. "I flew your airplane from the Hungjao Airdrome. It is well you decided upon its removal, Heaven Born, for the soldiers wished to commandeer it." He leaned nearer to whisper: "I was followed here, Lord, by an old enemy who even now lingers outside. The 'Hairy Barbarian,' Yezhov."

Mayne stiffened. What brought Yezhov here when, apparently, his daughter had just been kidnaped? Or had she?

He was telling Feng what he had seen when there came the staccato crash of anti-aircraft guns.

Men—some women, too—started for the exits. Mayne had reached the Nanking Road exit when he rec-

ognized the roar of a plane's screws overhead, followed by a whistling screaming.

"Down!" he yelled at Feng, then grabbed an excited American girl tourist and dragged her with him to the floor. A terrific flash and a great explosion rocked the hotel.

Shattered window glass burst inward, ripping like razors through human flesh. Screams, cries and groans arose, there was the rumble of falling masonry outside, then stunned silence.

But instantly there came the whine of another bomb. The second detonation ripped the breath from his lungs, while the entire hotel seemed about to collapse like a house of cards.

Mayne scrambled up. Just ahead of where he had been crouching was the legless body of a Chinese who had been blown in through the wrecked entrance. With Feng at his heels, Mayne dashed out into Nanking Road, dodging falling masonry. Parked autos were wrecked and ablaze. The flames of one silhouetted the body of its dead driver. Human limbs were strewn among the debris.

Appalled, he stared skyward. A single Northrup bomber, with Chinese markings and with one wing low as if in trouble, was streaking away amid bursting A.A. shells, fragments of which rained down to add more toll to the carnage.

Since boyhood Mayne had seen war, had seen death in all its forms, but never anything like this shambles.

"Ambulances! Phone the hospitals!" he rasped as aghast people began streaming from the hotel. Like a human dynamo he galvanized stunned spectators into action.

He raised a sheet of corrugated iron so hot it burned his fingers. Underneath lay the headless body of a Chinese newsboy. Nearby was a well dressed Portuguese girl stenographer, with a shorthand notebook beside her. At the intersection of Nanking Road and the Bund, three Europeans were crawling like stricken animals over the writhing

or still bodies that carpeted their way.

Mayne's linen coat went to provide bandages for ghastly wounds, then his shirt. Feng's gorgeous silk robe, too, was used.

Suddenly Feng touched his chief's arms. "Look, Heaven Born!"

Mayne stared at the horrible figure Feng indicated. Crawling on elbows, one leg dragging uselessly behind and his chest oozing blood, was Count Ivan Yezhov!

Old grudges forgotten in the realization that the scheming Russian was now suffering the tortures of hell, Mayne raced to him and pillowed the lolling head on his arm. Yezhov's left foot had been blown off, and his chest was a mass of pulped flesh and shattered bone.

"Bandages!" Mayne jerked at Feng, his left fingers closed like vises to compress the Russian's spurting artery.

"Here!"

THE American girl he had protected was ripping off her skirt, tearing it into wide strips. As he bound strips tightly around the Russian's footless leg, the sufferer's eyes opened, concentrated in recognition. "Club Fist!" he wheezed. Then, desperately: "Save her! Sonia!"

"Tell me!" This ex-plotter and enemy must explain quickly—while he could.

"Fiend incarnate—has her!" Yezhov mouthed. "Fool that I was to listen! He has begun! Whole world must suffer—because of—his madness!" His fingers clutched Mayne's arm. "You I have hated, have fought. Pardon, and save her. I—I would have betrayed him, so she must suffer. Was trying—to find you—to save her—from that devil!"

"What devil? Where's he taken her?" Mayne saw Yezhov was sinking fast. "Quick! I promise!"

"Boris Mikouline—new house, Szechuan Road, near—park." Bloody froth drooled from his lips. He fell back and the rattle in his throat told that his tortured soul had fled.

Ambulances were screeching to a halt and attendants were loading

victims aboard. Only those with a chance for life were taken; the rest were left to scream and writhe until death came.

When Mayne and Feng reentered the Palace, everything was in chaos. The top stories were on fire. The wounded had been brought in from the street and were being given first aid by employees and guests.

Mayne took Feng into the wrecked bar where he forced the shaking barkeeper to serve them stiff drinks. A few men drifted in.

"Damn the blasted Chinese!" one was raging. "They must be crazy to play Japan's game like this! The whole world'll turn against 'em. Deliberately bombing the Settlement!"

"Those last ones dropped smack on the Great World Amusement Park!" another shouted hysterically. "It was jammed with refugees and thousands were killed!"

Feng's impassiveness had forsaken him. "I cannot understand, Older-than-I-am!" he murmured agonizedly. "It is unthinkable that Chinese aviators have deliberately slaughtered their own people and friendly Outer Barbarians!"

Quietly the American took him out. The fire was under control and guests occupying rooms on the lower floors could go to them. Not until they were in his suite, however did Mayne speak.

"If Chinese pilots *did* drop those pills," he said grimly, "it was because they were both hit or their bomb racks were damaged. But I'm not sure they were Chinese."

Bathing hurriedly, he changed into a fresh suit, buckling on his multi-pocketed body belt and taking an automatic and extra clips.

"We do not depart tonight, Lord?" Feng asked tentatively. "The girl?"

"I gave my word," Mayne said simply. "Besides, I've a mind to find out what Yezhov meant when he yelled 'He has begun!'"

"The house, it must be in Hongkew where the fighting is, Lord," Feng said. "There are many Dwarf Islanders there, for it is near their Naval Headquarters."

"We're not going there—yet."

Mayne smiled enigmatically. "We're visiting an old friend in the Russian quarter—and I hope he'll be glad to see us."

CHAPTER II

Plotter Against the World



AN hour later, Mayne and Feng were entering a ramshackle tenement house in an alley off L'Avenue Joffre. Mayne felt sick and weak from what he had seen as they had passed the amuse-

ment park. Thousands lay dead or maimed around the Great World. Only a fiend could have dropped bombs there wittingly.

Mayne led the way down a stairway to the tenement's basement. Groping his way along the warren of passages, he knocked upon a door and a quavering voice answered. He and Feng entered. In the center of the small room an old man sat writing at a rickety table. He peered up at Mayne.

"Who wishes anything of Stenko Razine?" he demanded in querulous Russian.

"Club Fist!" Mayne answered in the same tongue.

The other's crafty old face lighted. "*Akh*, it's long since I heard that voice," he cackled. "What brings the valiant *Amerikanyetz* here?"

"A name." Placing a bundle of paper money on the table, Mayne bent forward. "Who is Boris Mikouline?"

As if he had been struck, Razine sprang up, his eyes wide with fear. "No!" he choked hoarsely. "No, I know nothing, I swear!"

Mayne's left hand gripped the Russian's throat. "Peace, dog!" he grated. "We understand each other, you and I. Remember that day in Urga, ten years ago, when you betrayed me—for a handful of gold? Remember how in turn you betrayed to me your friends who wanted to murder me? You've always lived by

treachery. Yet once I saved your miserable life and you swore by the God you've forsaken you'd be my slave forever. Who is Mikouline?"

The bloodshot eyes of the unfrocked priest who once had lived in the court of the Tzar, were glazed with horror.

"Kill me!" he choked. "Do anything you will, terrible Club Fist, but do not question me more!"

Moving behind him, Feng gripped his arms.

"Is it your wish that we use persuasion, Heaven Born?" he murmured. "*Aie*, but it would be pleasant to settle old scores!"

Producing a silken cord, he wound it expertly around Razine's forehead, his fingers twisting it. Fear widened the old Russian's eyes. Well he knew that brand of torture. Men's eyes had been known to burst from their sockets under the tightening of such a cord.

Mayne stared down at the squirming man. He had no wish to hurt him, but Razine must tell.

"Who is Mikouline?" he asked once more.

The ex-priest's head jerked pitifully, sweat running down his withered face.

"*Akh*, *akh*, it is my death you seek!" he sobbed. His eyes looked around desperately, fastened imploringly upon Mayne, but Club Fist was inexorable.

Razine stared wolfishly at the pile of money, then nodded slowly. Feng released his arms. Slowly he picked up his pen, paused irresolutely, then wrote rapidly:

*Hetmen of the Amur Cossacks.
The Avenger!*

Dropping the pen, he tore the paper to shreds and burned them in the candle's flame.

"You have killed me," he gasped, but his clawlike fingers clutched the money.

"No," Mayne said grimly, "but I will if you betray me this time."

But threats could not make the cringing old scoundrel tell more. Clearly he was crazed with terror.

"Long life to you, Stenko Razine,"

Mayne said, finally, bowing sardonically. "We'll meet again before long."

But barely had he and Feng passed outside the tenement when they heard a muffled shot from below. People were running to learn the cause and Mayne signed for Feng to go also. When the Chinese returned he said somberly as he and Mayne hurried into the crowded Avenue Joffre: "The old man is dead, a pistol in one hand and the money in the other."

Night fell swiftly and beyond the Settlement's northern boundary, where the Szechuen Road reaches Hongkew Park, crowds of terrified natives were being herded before the bayonets of Japanese marines. From westward came the steady rattle of small arms and the occasional burst of heavy shells from Japanese warships. Burning factories and houses lighted the entire area.

MOST of the refugees were striving to reach the Settlement and swarm past the cordon of U. S. marines and British regulars to safety within; but two were working steadily against the tide, though careful not to draw attention from the impatient, blow-dealing Japanese. Both were ragged and one seemed old and feeble. It was a perfect disguise, for this was not the first time that Club Fist had passed for a coolie. Gradually, the pair worked themselves to the horde's straggling rear.

"The side street!" Mayne breathed. A moment more and they had been swallowed in its darkness.

"Now for the house," Mayne muttered. "The only one around here."

They stole along Szechuen in the shadows. They had to feign death as a Nipponese patrol clumped by. When the marching feet had died away, Mayne stared through the reddened night toward a new brick house that topped its neighbors by a full story. The house beside it had been hit by a shell and twisted forms lay in front of it.

No light showed from the brick house. Mayne was wondering—

Why risk his life attempting to rescue a girl who had been his enemy? But he had given his word to a dying man. Besides, had Chinese pilots accidentally caused this slaughter, or was there some more terrible reason for it? And who was this *Hetman* of the Amur Cossacks, this Boris Mikouline whom Yezhov had died cursing and for fear of whom that wily plotter, Stenko Razine, had committed suicide?

The screeching *whoosh* of a large shell crescendoed before exploding into devastating orange-red flame fifty yards down the road. But even while hot splinters and great chunks of paving were raining down, Mayne and Feng were darting into the ruined house. Groping in the dark interior, they mounted a shattered stairway and gained the upper story. In one room lay the body of a well dressed Chinese.

Using a pencil flashlight, Mayne located a ladder leading to the flat roof. He clambered up it to the coping and stared at the second-story window of the brick house, barely five feet across an intervening passageway.

"The ladder," he whispered, and Feng obediently disappeared. From his money belt he took a small diamond, one of several he carried as being the most transportable form of wealth and slipped it into his mouth.

Footsteps were passing along the passage below as Feng returned with the ladder.

Mayne peered over the coping. Three persons had halted before a side door in the brick house. Two were escorting a woman who moved as if under restraint. They disappeared within, but not before the woman made a choking sound that told she was gagged.

Mayne's eyes gleamed. Sonia! He turned to help Feng with the ladder.

"Draw back the ladder when I'm inside," he whispered. "And if I'm not out in an hour—go to the Japs and swear this joint's a nest of Chinese spies!"

"I obey, Lord," Feng said dubiously, "yet my poor reason is filled

with disquiet. That is a house for foreboding."

Raising the ladder over the coping, they slid it forward silently until its end rested upon the window sill. With Feng supporting it firmly, Mayne crawled across. He peered into the room, which was dark and seemed empty. He could feel the panes vibrating under the distant explosions. Finding the window locked, he began cutting a circle under the catch with his diamond. When a shell screamed over and exploded nearby, he thrust his sleeve-protected hand against the circle and broke the glass segment inward, then thrust his hand through and turned the catch. An instant later he had raised the lower frame, climbed inside, and Feng had withdrawn the ladder.

Flames from burning buildings cast an uncertain glow within the unfurnished room. The door was locked, so he took a miniature combination tool kit from his body belt and began work, his ears straining for sounds from below. Once he caught the murmur of voices, but they were blotted out by the rumbling guns.

Removing the knob and lock casing, he gripped and turned the key which was in the lock on the other side of the door with fine pliers. Then he was outside upon a landing, near a stairhead. Relocking the door but keeping the key, he crept downstairs. The voices became clearer, coming from two different rooms on the ground floor. Russian was being spoken.

Needing a hiding place in case of emergency, he stole past the two occupied rooms and gained the hall's rear. Under the stairway he found a curtain-screened recess in which clothes hung, but with enough space for concealment. He returned to the nearer room door and listened.

"Kouloff is late!" he heard. The speaker's tone was acrid, malevolent. "If he is not here in ten minutes, General, he must be located and watched. At the least sign of negligence or disloyalty, have him erased."

"Excellency, I myself answer for Colonel Kouloff's loyalty," came a half pleading reply. "To reach here across the whole Settlement from L'Avenue Joffre is doubly dangerous tonight. I beg you, have patience!"

"The time for patience is passed, fool!" the other snarled. "Kouloff promised news. Where is it? If the Chinese have discovered the trick, I must know at once and make other plans. Think! At this moment the whole world is hearing that Chinese pilots have killed their own people by thousands! And foreigners! You are sure Americans, English and French, too, were casualties?"

"I saw their bodies myself, Excellency," was the answer. "Yes, and some of our own unfortunate people too."

"They died for a great cause, our people!" the other voice snapped. "Tomorrow there will be talk of reprisals against the Chinese. Then I'll drop a few Japanese bombs! At last! America, England and France involved; then the Soviets. Then Germany will strike the Reds from the west, thinking to win the Ukraine. Chaos! The bitter years are past, Ermloff. Within six months I shall command fifty thousand heroes; within a year I shall be czar of all Russia and the Soviet rats will be blown to the winds. Down on your knees, imbecile. You are in the presence of your future emperor—Boris Mikouline!"

AT LAST Mayne understood. Mikouline planned to embroil the powers, planned to cause another world war infinitely more terrible than the last, so that out of the resulting chaos the White Russians could return to their native land—with him as their czar!

It seems incredible, fantastic, yet Mayne could not forget what he had seen that day; the mutilated bodies, the writhing dying. His teeth bared and he was drawing his automatic when two men entered the side door beyond the staircase. Barely in time he reached the alcove as the two knocked discreetly upon Mikouline's door.

But when they had entered he resumed his post, in time to hear Mikouline snarling: "—moments delay, Colonel, and you would have known my displeasure. Your report!"

"Highness, after you and General Ermloff landed, we placed the dead Chinese pilots back in their airplanes, then smashed the machines as though they had crashed, and set them on fire. We are certain we were not observed. This evening the Chinese issued a statement to cover their apparent blunder, saying the machines were so damaged by Japanese fire that the bombs were dropped unavoidably. They do not suspect the truth."

"Good! Good!" Mikouline gloated. "Next?"

"Highness, Razine is dead. I reached the window outside his room just as an American and a Chinese left him. I was too late to hear what passed between them, but the American had given him much money. I called through the window, and at sight of me he screamed he had not betrayed you. I shot him, put the gun in his hand, then escaped."

BUT the American?" Mikouline snarled. "By my Father's beard, who is he?"

"I caught up with him in L'Avenue Joffre, Highness. Captain Rhankov here joined me and recognized him as the adventurer called Club Fist."

"Club Fist!" Mikouline's tone indicated he had heard the name before.

"We trailed him and the Chinese to the Settlement, where they entered a native house," Kouloff continued. "While Rhankov went for additional help, I watched. Alas, Highness, many Chinese entered and left there, but no white man reappeared. Later, posing as police officers, we raided it, but did not find him."

"Fool! Dolt!" Mikouline raged. "You allowed yourself to be tricked! Find him, kill him or expect my punishment!"

"Highness!" Kouloff pleaded.

"There is more. We have learned that Yezhov, badly wounded, was aided by this Club Fist!"

"The girl!" Mikouline cried, hoarse with fury. "Ulov said she tried to attract some man's attention in the Bund. Perhaps he was this Club Fist. Take her below. I'll make her talk!"

Mayne barely regained his alcove before men came out, moving down the hallway. He heard the faint creak of a heavy trapdoor being raised; then feet descended stone steps. Sonia was being taken somewhere below.

The trapdoor was reclosed and all was silent, save for the firing outside, closer now. Cautiously, but futilely, Mayne groped on his knees to locate the trap. Then, using his tiny flashlight futilely discovered a tile in the floor smaller than the rest. He pressed upon it and a rectangular slab arose, revealing concrete steps leading below.

"Banzai!" came a Japanese cheer outside, followed by the chatter of a machine gun.

"Kill the Dwarf Islanders!" came Chinese countercries.

Rifles cracked and hand grenades exploded, with death screams, moans, and confused shouts intermingling.

But Sonia was below, at the mercy of a power-lusting madman, so, swiftly and silently Mayne descended the steps, cautiously lowering the trap. At the bottom of the steps an electric globe lighted a narrow passage that gave into side chambers. The roof supporting the hallway floor was massive concrete. Evidently Mikouline had planned his headquarters with devilish forethought. Even howitzer shells could hardly destroy this subterranean dugout.

"Number Two-seven-two. Report immediately!" monotoned a voice from within a doorway on the left, followed by the clicking of an operator plugging in on a switchboard. "Number Three-five-six. Report immediately!"

Gliding along the wall, Mayne risked a glimpse within. The chamber was small and the opera-

tor's back was turned to the American. He faced the switchboard, calling other numbers and ordering their owners to report. Suddenly he rose and disappeared into a connecting chamber.

Save for the switchboard and a chair, the antechamber's only furniture was a low cot near the doorway. Swiftly Mayne dived underneath it. He wriggled over a pair of shoes and the resulting sounds seemed like explosions in his ears.

Once in position, however he could peer into the inner chamber, though his vision was blocked by the operator who was standing rigidly at attention.

"Two-seven-two and others report the impossibility of reaching here at present, Highness," he was reporting. "Chinese troops are attacking furiously to drive the Japanese back to the naval barracks. We are temporarily surrounded."

"He and the rest must get through!" came Mikouline's snarl. "Tell them so!"

The man returned to his switchboard and for the first time Mayne saw Mikouline. Small, hunched, with talonlike fingers and wearing the medal-bedecked, gold-trimmed green uniform of the Azov Cossacks, he was more Tartar than Russian, with drooping mustaches and a yellowish, crafty face that seemed to portray all the world's vices. "Fiend," Yezhov had called him, and fiend he seemed now as he stared gloatingly at a figure on a low table.

IT WAS Sonia, bound, gagged, and with most of her clothing ripped from her so that her white flesh gleamed lustroously under the electric lights.

"Ungag her," Mikouline purred, with a Satanic smile. "Sonia Ivanovna, your cursed father is dead. He has escaped my vengeance, but you have not. Now, speak. Did you betray my plans? Did he?"

"Oh, God!" she choked. Then defiantly: "If he did, I am glad! My sorrow is that your tools caught me before I, too, could expose your madness."

"Enough!" Mikouline whipped an ornamented dagger from his belt. "Now," he breathed sibilantly, "talk! You tried to speak to the *Amerikanyetz*, Club Fist, from the taxi. After retribution had fallen upon him from the sky, your father died in this Club Fist's arms. Where is he? How much does he know? The truth, or I'll slash that beautiful body of yours to shreds!"

It seemed suicidal to intervene, yet Mayne knew that this inhuman beast would torture the girl, cutting her a little at a time until she screamed for the mercy of a death blow.

As he saw the knife descending toward her cringing body, he shot at the green-clad devil.

Even while the report was reverberating throughout the great dug-out, he had sprung up, whirled upon the operator who was fumbling for his own weapon, and shot him. He bounded into the larger chamber, where men were drawing guns.

"Kill the Hairy Ones!" he yelled in Mandarin, as if to a swarm of followers. His gun roared once, twice, and a figure crumpled and fell.

But he knew his ruse could not serve him long, even in his Chinese coolie disguise. These men had faced perils and humiliations for twenty years; were hard, bitter, ruthless. He emptied his magazine at them, knew someone was shooting back.

Then he saw Mikouline, his yellow face slug-seared, about to fling the knife at him.

At sight of this torturer of women, Mayne went berserk. He leaped at the man, smashing at the bestial face with his empty gun, hurling the would-be czar to the floor.

Bullets flamed toward him across Sonia's helpless body, cracking deafeningly against the concrete walls. But the men were afraid of hitting Mikouline and the shots went wide. Thrusting his own empty gun into his belt, Mayne scooped up that of the man he had shot.

Desperate hands clutched at him,

ripping his rags off down to the waist.

"He's white!" screamed a man who wore captain's insignia. "Great God, see his right hand! He's Club Fist!"

Then Mayne's bullet found the man's heart. The rest, Mikouline included, seemed to be momentarily stunned by the revelation and in their brief hesitation Mayne emptied the rest of the pistol's magazine at them, flung the useless weapon at a man who was about to shoot, then swinging Sonia over his shoulder plunged through the doorway and raced for the steps.

"After him, dolts!" Mikouline raged frenziedly. "Akh, I bleed like a pig!"

CHAPTER III

Pursuit



AT the stair top, Mayne had to place Sonia down while he thrust upward against the heavy trap. A gun slug mushroomed against the step upon which he was standing but he hoisted Sonia through the trap, scrambled after her

and immediately reclosed it.

Panting, he stood upon it, faint jerks showing that those below were trying to raise it. Suddenly from outside roared deafening gunfire. From the adjoining wrecked house came the blast of a hand grenade, followed by a machine gun's chatter. Mayne cursed. Feng must have been driven away, might even be dead.

As he stooped to free Sonia's bound feet and hands, a hoarse voice challenged from the hallway's front:

"Who are you? Answer or I shoot!" A flashlight bathed Mayne and Sonia in its glare.

"Sonia Ivanovna!" another voice gasped. "Quick! She's being rescued!"

A shot blazed and the sting of a bullet along his bent right leg toppled Mayne over beside the girl,

removing his weight from the trap-door, which slammed open, thereby deflecting another bullet intended for Club Fist.

"After him, imbeciles!" Mikouline was screeching. "I'll kill the man who lets him escape!"

A few seconds more and Mayne would be hemmed in. Already a head was protruding through the trap's rectangle of light. Ignoring his wounded leg, Mayne swung Sonia over his shoulder again and charged up the hallway straight toward the spitting gun that threatened his escape.

Suddenly Sonia screamed and jerked spasmodically. Mayne crashed into a body, heard an oath and a crash. There came one more stab of flame and a bullet spat past so close that the burning powder stung his face. But he had gained the staircase and was racing up with it, stumbling under the girl's limp weight.

Though he had gained a few seconds, hot lead thudded after him as he reached the first landing. He raced on up to the next floor, with feet pounding in pursuit. With his free hand he fumbled in his belt for the door key. It was gone! No time now to burst in the door; he was brought to bay. Then the flash of a shot from below showed him an upright ladder at the landing's end, a ladder to the roof.

He reached it and began to climb, his pursuers close now.

"Save yourself!" Sonia gasped. "Leave me!" But he merely laughed defiance.

"There he is!"

There came the hollow click of a hammer striking empty and a snarled curse from the useless weapon's owner. Mayne gulped thankfully. Moonlight bathed him as he emerged on the roof. Dropping Sonia, he reached back and gripped the ladder's top, tore at its supports until they gave.

Bullets coughed upward, hitting the ceiling below or coming through the opening as he hauled the ladder up. Baffled yells told of his pursuers' fury.

Briefly he lay panting beside the girl; then recharged his gun with his last clip. He had done it! He had snatched Sonia from Mikouline, and unless the men below could get another ladder, he was beyond their reach, though someone was shooting up through the ceiling in the hope of hitting him.

Rising, he stared around, and saw that inadvertently he had a ringside seat above a vaster and more terrible nocturnal fight. From all directions at ground level came winking stabs from machine guns, rifles and pistols, with occasional orange-yellow flashes of grenades. Chinese and Japanese were fighting hand to hand in the streets or were storming or defending houses. North and west great fires were gutting factories and homes, so that half Hongkew suburb seemed to be burning. Only southward, where the Settlement boundary began, was there tranquillity.

Hastily he freed Sonia of her bonds. But he knew that even if he could escape from the roof now, there would be small chance of winning free with a white girl through those fight-crazed Asiatics.

"Are you hurt?" he asked her.

"My arm—but it is nothing," she murmured, though he could feel blood welling from a wound in her left arm. "But, Club Fist, you! I cannot understand. Why have you risked so much for me? Whom do you serve?"

"Myself—and maybe the rest of the world too, this trip." Then, amazingly, he laughed. "Besides, I don't often get the chance of being helpful to an old and trusted enemy, my dear."

Heavy shells, both Chinese and Japanese, were exploding everywhere as he crept to the trap and tried to listen. He thought he heard movement, but could hear no voices.

Sonia was pleading to know how her father had died. She wept softly as he told her.

"There were many things he did that were unworthy," she whispered. "I am glad he died trying to make amends."

She explained more of Mikouline's plans. Throughout China he had arranged for "incidents" to happen that would cost European lives, so that the powers would intervene.

"Our people obey him blindly, because they believe he can restore us to our homeland," she said sadly. "But they don't know him. The worst Red leaders can't compare with him for cruelty. He is mad with the lust to kill and torture."

She told Mayne that during the World War Mikouline had been a Russian ace and called "The Cosack Avenger" because he had bombed so many German-held towns.

"Quiet!" Mayne said abruptly. He handed her the pistol. "They're building a platform of furniture to reach the trap. Some of 'em will try to climb up while the rest keep shooting through the ceiling. Don't fire unless you have to."

HE hurried to the coping and tugged at one of the blocks. As a stray bullet from the fighters in the streets whirled past his head the block came away suddenly. He loosened a second and a third.

Shots kept smacking against the house.

Sonia cried out sharply as bullets came ripping up through the roof in all directions. Mayne heard the girl firing, then he was beside her, hurling one of the heavy blocks down through the trap.

There was a rending crash and a scream as the chunk of coping smashed upon the improvised platform. Groans of agony answered him as he flung down the two other blocks.

"Amerikanyetz dog!" Mikouline yelled. "Timorevitch, Danielovitch! Keep shooting! He cannot escape this famous Club Fist, and I promise he will give us great sport."

Before long the steady smash of bullets ripping through the roof drove Mayne and Sonia away from the trap. They crouched against the coping-denuded wall.

"It's not long until dawn," Mayne encouraged. "When it's light Feng, my lieutenant, will find some way

of rescuing us—if he's still alive himself."

He flung himself as a shield against the girl as he heard the quick scream of a shell. The whole roof seemed suddenly to leap upward in a vast sheet of flame—then, darkness—

* * * * *

MAYNE opened his eyes to become aware at once of intolerable aches; of someone pressing close to him. Dazedly he realized that it was Sonia. Acrid smoke burned his throat from a vast pit over which his legs dangled.

Then he understood. The shell! Two sides of the house had disappeared into a smoking mass of debris, and he and the girl were lying precariously upon a small sagging section of roof upon which he was anchored because the three crooked fingers of his right hand were hooked around an exposed length of joist. Only those muscle-locked fingers had saved him from sliding to certain death.

"Don't move!" Sonia whispered. "A piece of coping hit your head. Then, half hysterically: "I remembered Club Fist's bent fingers, so I used them to anchor you! But the wall will fall with us soon now."

"Mikouline!" he muttered. "I guess he's trapped in that dugout of his, with tons of debris on top of the trap."

"There's another exit through a tunnel that comes out in the house across the road," she said. "If he's managed to get through the fighting, he's probably on his way to fly over the city, camouflaged as a Japanese bomber!"

Her words were a challenge that cleared Mayne's brain. "I've got a date to fly over the town, too," he said grimly, "and it's not too late to keep it."

Warning her to cling to the wall top, he gradually drew himself away from the abyss until he, too, could grip the wall and release his bruised, torn fingers from around the joist.

Day was coming and through the

billowing clouds of smoke he glimpsed, in the streets below, many still bodies in uniforms, both Chinese and Japanese. Sporadic firing continued, but it looked as if the combatants had fought themselves to a standstill.

An ominous cracking reminded him that the wall would not remain up much longer. Then he saw that a telephone pole stood within five feet of the wall's corner. If only they could reach it!

"Follow!" he ordered curtly and, testing every inch, began working his way along the coping, foot by foot toward the pole. Some of the wires had snapped and were curled around the others or dragged on the ground. One was wound around the lower part of the pole. If they were still live wires, he realized grimly, he and Sonia would be electrocuted.

At warning cracking of the wall he swiftly told the girl his plan. She gasped with horror, but then nodded. Gingerly a bullet smacked the wall just below him and Sonia cried out warningly as he balanced on the coping, judging the distance. A knot of Japanese marines were firing up at him, believing him to be an enemy.

He leaped, hands outstretched. Once again Club Fist's crooked fingers served well, for they caught one wire and held him until he could grip it with his left hand, while his swaying feet sought a lower strand for support.

He was gyrated giddily, but at last was secure. He faced the house wall, looking up at Sonia.

"Jump!" he commanded, left arm outstretched to catch her.

She obeyed instantly. For one terrible instant he feared he would miss her, then he felt a terrific drag on his arm and he clutched at her desperately. The wires swayed and sagged terrifyingly under their combined weight.

Pi-ing! One wire snapped as a bullet struck it. He cursed savagely.

"Put your feet where I do and work toward the pole," he jerked.

But the pole was still a yard off when there came a fresh burst of

firing. Chinese soldiers were swarming below, led by a ragged civilian who fired an automatic at the Japanese with one hand while he waved upward at Mayne with the other. Feng!

Bombs crashed and men died, but the Japanese were forced back.

"Let the woman fall, Heaven Born!" Feng yelled up, and mysteriously some of the soldiers were holding an outspread blanket.

Mayne let the girl go and she plummeted downward into the blanket.

Waves of utter weariness overtook him and nothing else seemed to matter save that he had kept his word to Yezhov.

Shouts and a rumbling crash jerked him to alertness. Half of the house's remaining wall had toppled, narrowly missing the soldiers. Feng was shouting at him. He unhooked his crippled fingers from the wire—and jumped.

Scarcely had he struggled free of the blanket's enveloping folds, when Feng caught his arm and dragged him away. The rest of the wall toppled.

CHAPTER IV

Unmarked Plane



OVER blazing, smoke-obscured Hongkew, Japanese seaplanes and Chinese scouts were snapping and darting at each other like ill-tempered terriers.

Above the Settlement's boundary line, however, Mayne's Avro Anson was patrolling like a soldier on sentry duty. The twin motors hummed, yet he found no pleasure in them, for this was the first time he had been aloft during a scrap without taking part in it.

He glanced below and identified the damaged Palace Hotel. In one of its suites Sonia was resting, cared for by Eunice Price, the American girl he had protected the

day before. He'd cleaned up one part of his job. Now for the rest.

As he watched the swooping, zooming fighters, his fingers itched to hurl the Avro into the midst of things. As an ace of both the World War Royal Flying Corps and the U. S. Aviation, he took note of these Asiatic fledglings almost with scant regard.

But would Mikouline carry out his plan? Would he draw suspicion upon the Japanese flyers by bombing the Settlement from a ship wearing their insignia, as yesterday he had drawn suspicion upon the Chinese?

Mayne's gaze concentrated where the Whangpoo emptied into the great Yangtse River. Man-made clouds of smoke were being whipped into fresh activity by the wind, but from the China Sea typhoon clouds were rolling in to add further destruction.

Feng had come forward from the dorsal gun turret. "Look, Lord!"

He pointed. There were no Japanese airdromes in the west, yet from that quarter two Nipponese-marked bombers were winging toward the city.

Mayne banked sharply and started to climb. By the way those ships were being handled, he knew their pilots were masters. He prayed that one was Mikouline. At all costs those bombers must not get over the Settlement.

Feng's turret guns chattered as a Chinese scout, suspicious of this strange Avro that carried no insignia, had swooped to investigate. Mayne grinned. Feng's tracers were making pretty lines ahead of his compatriot's nose, warning him off.

The two bombers were nearer, keeping close together, but not yet near the Settlement. The Avro seemed to become animate under Mayne's touch. He tripped a long burst from his bow guns and his tracer bit into the nearer ship's tail. As it dived smartly out of range he saw a blood-red saber painted on its fuselage.

Taut with the lust for battle, he flung the Avro down after it, his

bow guns chattering their deadly song. The bomber rolled expertly to avoid the blast, but as Mayne flashed above it, he could see into its cockpit. The goggled pilot was Mikouline!

Suddenly, however, the Avro dropped a full hundred feet and rain splashed the cabin windows. The first squalls of the typhoon had arrived.

Skidding around, Mayne climbed,

bomber was at him again. Feng's guns flamed in reply.

"Keep him busy till I finish this one, Feng!" Mayne yelled.

Firing regularly, he kept after his quarry. Suddenly it sheered off, heading away from the city, apparently in difficulties.

"Not this time!" he growled, as he shot the Avro after the bombing ship.

The fleeing bomber was well over

All the Thrills of Oriental Combat in **SHADOWS OVER CHINA**

A Complete Novel of Far-East Menace

By **RICHARD B. SALE**

Famous Author of "Is a Ship Burning?"

"Chance Has a Whip," etc.

**FEATURED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF
THRILLING ADVENTURES**



sensing his opponents' strategy. While one hoped to keep him engaged, the other would slip past him and get above the Settlement. From the ground it would look as if the Avro's attack had made the pseudo-Japanese pilots uncertain of their location, so that if bombs were dropped, the cause would be put down to faulty judgment.

Mayne hurtled to head off the second machine, flinging lead at it in long, well timed bursts. He yelled exultantly as his tracer ripped into its top wings. Then the other

smoke-obscured Hongkew. Mayne brought his ship's nose up fractionally, then tripped his trigger once more. Watching his bullets creeping toward the Russian's cockpit, he pulled up at the exact second and zoomed. The bomber seemed suddenly to stand still; then a great flash burst it into a hundred fragments.

"One!" Mayne exulted. Now for Mikouline!

But complications followed. For three seaplanes, naturally believing that the two bombers were fellow

Nipponese, were hurtling to wreak vengeance upon this unidentifiable Avro. Mayne cursed fervently trying to shake them off the newcomers and keep close to Mikouline, who was again edging toward the Settlement.

"Out of my way, Japs!" Mayne snarled. He had no wish to blast down any of the Island Empire's ships. But warning bursts were futile now. Soon he was on one seaplane's tail.

"That'll larn ye to stay where you belong!" he mocked, firing at its rudders.

Then a Chinese scout joined in. Tracers were crisscrossing as it became a battle royal while scudding rainclouds obscured the pilots' vision and the increasing wind tossed their machine hither and yon. A fantastic combat against both human enemies and the elements. Yet always Mayne managed to keep between Mikouline and the Settlement.

SUDDENLY the bomber was full in his sights. But even as he was tripping his triggers, he halted. No! To kill this swine in mid-air was to give him a hero's death. Two demons showed in Mayne's hard eyes.

Ignoring both the Chinese and Japanese he began harrying Mikouline, yet careful not to hit any vital spot. The game was not all his way, however, for once when an air pocket flung him momentarily out of control, the Cossack was swift to take advantage, getting off a burst that shattered the windows within a foot of Mayne's head.

But Mikouline was no match for the American, who began relentlessly jockeying Mikouline nearer to ground; far from the Settlement and above soggy rice fields and straggling villages.

Then Club Fist delivered the matador stroke. Coolly and with perfect science he shot away most of the Russian's tail. Mikouline must land now and risk blowing himself up if things went wrong.

Like an avenging demon, Mayne followed him down, even conceding him grudging admiration for the way he landed his cargo of death

without destroying himself. He saw Mikouline taxi to a halt, climb out and begin to run across the fields.

"Hang on!" Mayne warned Feng, and brought the Avro down so fast that he had barely time to set his landing gear. But when the ship shuddered to a halt, it was within fifty yards of the fleeing Russian.

Drawing his automatic as he leaped outside, the American started after Mikouline who turned back to meet Mayne.

The Cossack's first shot ricocheted off a stone just ahead of Mayne and went whining through the half blinding rain squall.

"Well, Mikouline, I got down off that roof!" Mayne mocked savagely, and Mikouline halted, stockstill, his evil face frozen with amazement.

"Club Fist!" he gasped.

"Drop that gun!" the American grated. "Drop it, damn you!"

Slowly Mikouline's talonlike fingers opened and his pistol dropped upon the soggy ground. His hate-filled eyes were glittering.

"Amerikanyetz swine!" he said.

Almost within hitting distance Mayne dropped his own gun; crouched to leap. Shooting was too good for this devil!

Mikouline screamed out a curse and whipped a knife from his belt. But Club Fist was too experienced not to be prepared for such tricks. He leaped aside to avoid the deadly upward jab. They circled, one making lunges with the flashing blade, the other adroitly avoiding them.

"Heaven Born, let me kill the Northern dog!" came Feng's panting plea, but Mayne shouted savagely for him to keep away. He alone wanted to settle with this *Hetman* of the Azov Cossacks.

Suddenly he sprang forward, avoiding Mikouline's slash and crashing against him so hard that the man fell backward. Instantly Mayne had torn the knife from his grasp and flung it aside.

"Now!" he howled exultantly.

What followed was an almost insane trial of strength. Civilization sloughed off these two straining, smashing humans who reverted to

the primitive. Blood streamed from faces and torn and bitten hands. Once Mikouline had Mayne underneath and, with animal-like screams, strove frantically to gouge out the American's eyes. Mayne smashed at the demoniac face until Mikouline sobbed with agony and loosened his hold.

With superhuman strength, Mayne battered the torturer with terrible blows until Mikouline's features were a pulp.

Then he got his crooked right fingers on the Cossack's windpipe. Arms flailed at him, but he scarcely felt their strength as he stared down at the ghastly face of this man who loved to torture and kill. Sickened by his own handiwork, Mayne hesitated—until he remembered those poor bodies around the Palace Hotel and the shambles in the amusement park.

"Maybe I should—take you back—to Shanghai!" he panted. "A million men there—all aching to get—hands on you!"

But already Boris Mikouline was dead.

* * * * *

"**Y**OU'RE crazy!" Eunice Price stormed. "She's the most beautiful creature in this man's town, yet you sit there and say you're not interested!"

Mayne squirmed uncomfortably. His face was bruised and puffy and

he ached in every joint. Certainly he was not in no mood to argue.

"I didn't say I wasn't interested," he defended. "I merely said that Sonia and I will get on better if we remain enemies. It would be a pity to spoil the record."

"Says you!" the American girl jibed. "Giving her a thousand dollars, because you won't be around to look after her! Gee, you're one swell guy!"

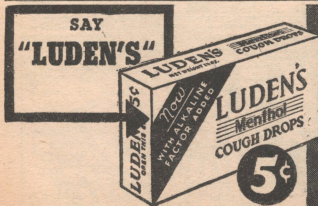
Mayne flushed. "I've got to go," he said diffidently, rising. "I'm flying to Nanking this afternoon. Tell Sonia to take a long rest. I want her right on her toes when she's ready to pick opposite sides from mine again. When we're on the same team, she gets hurt."

"Tell her yourself," Eunice sniffed. "Here she is."

A door had opened and Sonia entered. She was pale and weak and her arm was in a sling, but her dark eyes were glowing. Wordlessly she crossed to a window. Mayne joined her and together they stared across the Bund at the muddy Whangpoo where American, British, French and foreign warships were moored, their guns ready but silent.

"But for you, my friend, they, too, might be firing," she murmured. "You have done much."

Slowly his right hand rose in salute, then swiftly he left the two girls. Club Fist had dared Fate once again—and won!



From a MEDICAL JOURNAL: "The researches (of these doctors) led them to believe that colds result from an acid condition. To overcome this, they prescribe various alkalies."

Because
BUILDING UP YOUR
**ALKALINE
RESERVE**
HELPS YOU TO
RESIST COLDS

Ace Jordan

By
Bob Mackay

IN THE YEAR 2338 TSING QUONG, A MONGOL DESPOT, THREATENED TO OVERTHROW WESTERN CIVILIZATION IN HIS MAD DESIRE FOR WORLD CONQUEST.

ACTING AS A SECRET AGENT OF THE CONFEDERATION OF AMERICAN NATIONS, I HAD THWARTED QUONG'S PLANS FOR THE CONQUEST OF EUROPE AND ASIA. KNOWING THAT QUONG PLANNED TO RELEASE DEADLY GERMS THROUGHOUT AMERICA AS FIRST STEP TOWARD THE SUBJUGATION OF THE WESTERN WORLD, HARDMAN, MY SUPERIOR IN THE SERVICE, AND I HAD ENTERED QUONG'S CAPITAL AT KARAKORUM IN THE GOBI DESERT. WE SEPARATED, LEAVING OUR PLANE OUTSIDE THE CITY. I WAS ARRESTED AS SOON AS I ENTERED THE CITY.

REALIZING THAT I KNEW MANY SECRETS OF MY COUNTRY'S STRATEGY, QUONG ATTEMPTED TO GET THIS VALUABLE INFORMATION BY PLACING ME IN HIS THOUGHT-TRANSFERENCE MACHINE. HOWEVER, LILLITH SARK, AN EURASIAN GIRL, AND ONE OF QUONG'S LIEUTENANTS, CAME TO MY AID TOGETHER WITH KAI-HAI, A CHINESE SECRET SERVICE MAN.

BY THEIR REVERSING THE MACHINE, I LEARNED MUCH OF WHAT QUONG KNEW. AS WE WERE ABOUT TO ESCAPE, QUONG'S GUARDS BROKE INTO THE ROOM AND CORNERED US.

KAI-HAI SUDDENLY SEIZED MY ARMS FROM BEHIND. HE HISSED A MESSAGE INTO MY EAR.

QUICK! OUR ONLY CHANCE! I'LL PLAY THAT I AM STILL LOYAL TO QUONG!

IT SEEMED LIKE A DESPERATE CHANCE, BUT THE SLOW-THINKING MONGOLS FELL FOR IT.

PLACE THEM IN OUR STRONGEST CELL UNTIL THE MASTER RECOVERS!

YOU WIN THE TRICK, KAI-HAI!



OUR MASTER WILL SOON RECOVER AND WILL HOLD ME RESPONSIBLE IF THESE TWO ESCAPE HIS VENGEANCE. I WILL STAY WITH YOU TO SEE THAT THEY DON'T TRY ANY TRICKS!

FROM THE CELL, I SAW KAI-HAI JAB HIS HYPODERMIC NEEDLE INTO SOME CHAIRS. HIS POC PUDED FROM HIS POCKET. THE GUARD DID NOT NOTICE IT.

WILL YOU FELLOWS HAVE A SMOKE? I'LL BE RESPONSIBLE IF THE CAPTAIN MAKES TROUBLE ABOUT IT!



THE DROPPED CIGARETTES PUT THE GUARDS INTO A SUDDEN JUST AS KAI-HAI RELEASED US, THE NEW GUARD WAS BEING POSTED. WE COULD HEAR THEIR FOOTSTEPS. HURRY! QUICK! THERE IS A DUNGEON NEAR HERE. QUONG WAS THINKING SECRET ESCAPE ABOUT IT IN THE MACHINE. I DON'T KNOW WHY!

THAT MUST BE THE SECRET PASSAGE. THAT I KNOW IS SOMEWHERE HERE. THIS WAY!



WE GOT INTO THE DUNGEON AND WERE SAFE FOR A FEW MINUTES. TO MY SURPRISE, I FOUND HARDMAN IMPRISONED THERE.

DO YOU REMEMBER, WELL, HOW IN THE WORLD DID YOU GET A MEANS OF ESCAPE FROM HERE, ACE?

HERE, HARDMAN! DID THEY CAPTURE YOU TOO?

ENT ON YES, THEY CAUGHT ME AND I'VE BEEN HERE EVER SINCE!



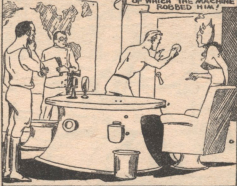
I SEEMED TO KNOW THAT THERE WAS A STONE, WHICH, PRESSED UPON, WOULD OPEN A HIDDEN DOOR, OR ENTRANCE TO A PASSAGEWAY. AT FIRST I COULDN'T FIND IT. SUDDENLY I RECOGNIZED THE STONE, RIGHT BEHIND HARDMAN'S HEAD.

WHY, THERE IS THE STONE! WHAT? OH, YES, RIGHT BEHIND MY HEAD AND I NEVER KNEW IT! I'D HAVE BEEN OUT OF HERE A LONG WHILE AGO IF I'D KNOWN THAT!



I PRESSED THE STONE AND A TRAPDOOR OPENED IMMEDIATELY UNDER WHERE HARDMAN HAD BEEN SITTING. A PASSAGEWAY LED FROM THIS TO WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE QUONG'S PRIVATE OFFICE, A PLACE LILITH AND KAI-HAI HAD NEVER SEEN.

I SEEM TO KNOW THIS COMB! I LOOK FOR HIS CODE BOOK. IN IT, I AM SURE, ARE NOTES THAT WILL RESTORE TO HIS MEMORY ALL THE INFORMATION OF WHICH THE MACHINE ROBBED HIM!

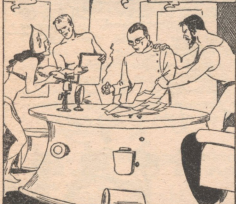


I FOUND THE CODE BOOK, ALSO SOME MAPS BEARING ON QUONG'S CAMPAIGN IN AMERICA. I FOLDED THEM AND PUT THEM IN THE BOOK.

DON'T YOU WANT THIS TO CARRY IT IN?

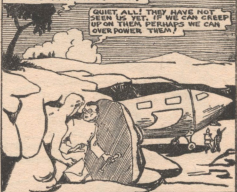
IT MIGHT BE WELL TO BURN THE PLACE AND DESTROY HIS RECORDS!

DON'T DO THAT! THE SMOKE WOULD BRING THE WHOLE MONGOL ARMY DOWN ON US!



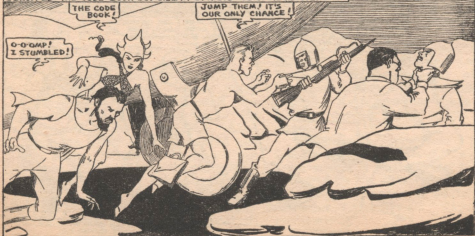
THE SAME PASSAGEWAY THAT HAD LED US TO QUONG'S OFFICE CONTINUED ON TO A POINT OUTSIDE THE CITY. AS WE EMERGED I SAW OUR SHIP GUARDED BY TWO MONGOLS, ALMOST DIRECTLY BEFORE US.

STRANGE THAT OUR PLANE LANDED ALMOST ON THIS SECRET PASSAGE INTO THE CITY, AND THAT THE MONGOLS FOUND IT SO SOON.



QUIET ALL! THEY HAVE NOT SEEN US YET. IF WE CAN CREEP UP ON THEM, PERHAPS WE CAN OVERPOWER THEM!

AS WE CRAWLED UP TO SURPRISE THE GUARDS, HARDMAN STUMBLED AND FELL, ALARMING THEM. I GOT ONE AND KAI-HAI TOOK THE OTHER. I DROPPED THE CODE BOOK BUT LILITH SPRANG OVER AND RECOVERED IT!



THE CODE BOOK

JUMP THEM! IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE!

O-O-OOMP! I STUMBLED!

[Turn Page]

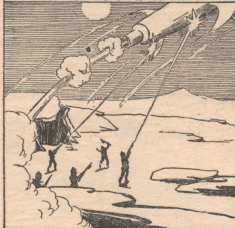
KAI-HAI AND LILITH GAINED THE SHIP. I TURNED TO SEE HARDMAN KNEELING OVER THE MONGOL. I HAD SLUGGED. IT SEEMED TO ME THAT HE WAS SAYING SOMETHING TO HUA

HURRY, CHIEF!

JUST A MOMENT! I WANT TO SEE IF HE HAS A GUN WE CAN USE!



WE GOT OFF IN TIME. THE MONGOLS STARTED SHOOTING, BUT THEIR BOLTS WERE NOT POWERFUL ENOUGH TO HARM OUR PLANE



IN THE DISTANCE MORE MONGOLS WERE COMING UPON THE RUN. HARDMAN ACTED LIKE A PERFECT FOOL. I HAD TO DRAG HIM TO THE PLANE. LUCKILY, KAI-HAI APPEARED IN THE DOORWAY AND BROUGHT DOWN THE LEADERS OF THE APPROACHING MONGOLS WITH A FEW WELL PLACED BOLTS FROM AN ELECTRIC RIFLE



LILITH CAME TO ME IN THE PLANE AND ASKED IF I WERE HURT. I LOOKED DOWN INTO THE EYES OF THIS STRANGE, PRIMITIVE WOMAN, EYES THAT WERE GENTLE NOW

LILITH, YOU WERE WONDERFUL TO SAVE ME AS YOU DID. WHY DID YOU DESERT QUONG AND COURT ALMOST CERTAIN DEATH TO SAVE ME FROM HIS MACHINE?

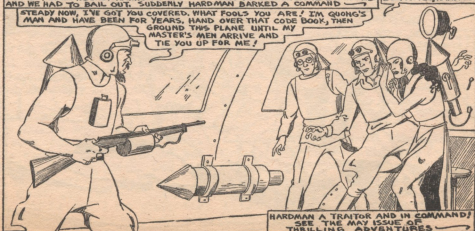
WELL, ACE, WHAT DO YOU THINK?



I WAS GLAD TO GET INTO SOME DECENT CLOTHES. SOON WE HEARD THE ROAR AS ONE OF QUONG'S POWERFUL PLANES TOOK UP THE PURSUIT. FEARING ATTACK, WE ALL PUT ON ROCKET HARNESES IN CASE OUR PLANE BECAME DISABLED AND WE HAD TO BAIL OUT. SUDDENLY HARDMAN BARKED A COMMAND

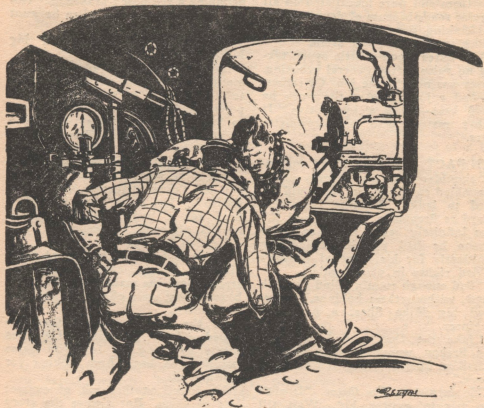
STEADY NOW, I'VE GOT YOU COVERED. WHAT FOOLS YOU ARE! I'M QUONG'S MAN AND HAVE BEEN FOR YEARS. HAND OVER THAT CODE BOOK, THEN GROUND THIS PLANE UNTIL MY MASTER'S MEN ARRIVE AND TIE YOU UP FOR ME!

I THOUGHT YOUR ACTIONS HAD BEEN SUSPICIOUS, HARDMAN



HARDMAN A TRAITOR AND IN COMMAND! SEE THE MAY ISSUE OF THRILLING ADVENTURES

Jim Gates, Fighting Fireman, Squares Off for a Savage Bout with Gold Thieves on an Alaskan Freight Train!



For a moment Jim Gates stood toe to toe with his old enemy, swapping blows

Runaway Gold

By JOHN A. THOMPSON

Author of "Extra Freight," "Border Boomer," etc.

POWDER-DRY snow swept through the murky railroad yards. Inside the little wooden depot at Shelton, a knot of hard-faced men ringed the cherry-red stove.

They talked in gruff undertones, cursing the North, blaspheming the day they ever went to work on the

hundred-mile wildcat railroad that threw its twin threads of shining steel across the treacherous frozen tundra from Nome, Alaska, to the up-country mining camps on the Kougarok River.

Most of these men were "no-bills," railroad outlaws, the flotsam and jetsam of their craft. Men who once

held Brotherhood cards, but who had lost them and were blacklisted on all regular roads because of drunkenness, rail-kinking, passing block signals, or piling up the cars too often.

Jim Gates stood a little apart, taking no voice in the general grouching. Gates was new on the job. Or rather, he had a job again at the work he liked best—firing a locomotive. It didn't matter who his crewmates were.

IN FACT, Jim Gates, blond, square-shouldered, grinned openly at the assembled anvil chorus. He could afford to laugh. Bucking the extra board as fireman on the "N. and K." was infinitely better than the bitter season he had put in prospecting fruitlessly for his share of Alaska's fabled riches in placer gold.

"Bad enough runnin' blind through snow, without them holdups," grumbled big Mike Shea, a passenger engineer.

"Jake the Dutchman killed, and his fireboy wounded, high-wheelin' a bullion Special down to Nome last week."

He turned to Jim Gates. "It ain't no grinnin' matter, kid. Wait till yuh've had lead slung at yuh while yuh're bendin' over a coal scoop tryin' to make the Kougarok Divide."

"Yeah, he'll be singin' a different tune 'fore he gets down to Nome," wheezed a ferret-faced freight conductor. He swung toward the new fireman. "If yuh was smart, you'd have played sick, 'stead of lettin' them call yuh for Seventeen. Heavy freight, and the toughest hogger on the pike handlin' the throttle. Son, he'll work yuh till yuh sweat blood on them upgrades. He'll rawhide yuh to a frazzle. That's Morgan Kinley for yuh. Mean as snake pizen."

Everybody laughed but Jim Gates. The young fireman's face had suddenly drained of all color. His eyes froze to the cold-green color of glacier ice, as he moved toward the door and yanked it open.

Morgan Kinley! Gates' head was pounding. So Kinley was the toughest hogger—engineer—on the pike!

"Yuh sure scared him, Bert," mumbled a red-nosed brakeman. "Notice how white he was when he went out?"

"Yellow, mebbe," suggested big Mike Shea.

Gates lowered his head against the storm as he hurried across the yards toward the cab of the low-driven, powerful little locomotive that was to haul Seventeen's drag of loaded freight cars down to Nome. There couldn't be another Morgan Kinley! Somehow, Gates was sure of that.

His mind went back to the States, and the Transcontinental and Pacific Railroad. Jim Gates' first job. He'd fired for a hogger there, a bull-necked, pig-eyed, loud-mouthed bully—Morgan Kinley.

There had been a matter of some piled-up freight cars, merchandise strewn over the main line, and a few boxcars that were effectively reduced to splinters.

In the official inquiry that followed, Kinley got out of the mess nicely by lying. It left Jim Gates holding the bag. And looking for another job.

He found another job, of course; lots of them. But always the story of those wrecked boxcars caught up with him. Jobs grew scarce. Roads just weren't interested when he applied for work, although they needed men.

That was why Jim Gates tried gold prospecting in Alaska. Now he was railroading again—on a hard-bitten outlaw pike. And his old Nemesis in person was the hogger Fate had picked to ride the front end with him on his very first run!

Almost breathlessly, Jim Gates swung up into the engine cab. There was no recognition in Morgan Kinley's dark eyes as the fireman climbed aboard.

"Tallowpot," he rasped, "when yuh're firin for me, yore job is to stay here and keep steam in this kettle. Where in blazes yuh been? Toastin' yoreself in the depot with the rest of them bums?"

It was the same old Morgan Kinley. Jim Gates' fists clenched. "Can

that stuff, Kinley!" he snapped. "I'm Jim Gates. Remember me?"

"Gates? Never heard of yuh. And don't pull none of yore salty lip on me, savvy?" The hogger's hand reached for a heavy spanner wrench that lay on the right-hand seat-box. "Git down there and git them fires roarin'!"

Jim Gates plucked at Kinley's sleeve. He deliberately supplied a few details as to his identity and where, and when and how the pair had met before.

"Oh, yeah?" Morgan Kinley stood up, the wrench in his hand. He spoke patronizingly.

"That's ancient history, and this ain't the time to bring it up. I'm glad yuh're gittin' along, kid."

Unmindful of the danger signals burning in Jim Gates' eyes, he went on. "I won't say nothin' about yore past, Gates. But I'll tell yuh this, lunkhead! You keep me a decent head of steam on this jack goin' over the Divide. Or, by God, I'll break yore damn skull in!" He waved the spanner menacingly.

Jim Gates edged in closer. "Whose head, Kinley?"

"Yore head, damn yuh!" Kinley snarled.

WITHOUT warning, he chopped the wrench viciously at Gates' jaw. Gates ducked. The glancing blow would have crunched bone had it landed squarely, sent him spinning backward. He rebounded, his fists knotted, the battle glint blazing in his eyes.

Morgan Kinley raised the wrench for another blow, but took a steaming right on the left ear that toppled him over the seat-box. He dropped the wrench, staggered to his feet, and rushed Jim Gates with short pile-driver body blows.

Then a left uppercut, beautifully aimed, hurled the fireman back against the sharp metal of the coal tender. Jim Gates picked himself up, tore into the hogger again. Morgan Kinley was the older man, heavier built, and much more experienced in rough-and-tumble fighting.

But Jim Gates knew what he was fighting for. It made him numb to the pain of Kinley's raining fists. Jim Gates was trying to wipe out an old score!

The fighting was necessarily at close quarters, confined to the narrow deck-plates of the engine cab. But it drew the attention of the men working in the yards. Gradually a knot of railroaders gathered about the locomotive.

A lucky blow by Jim Gates spun Morgan Kinley perilously near the open gangway. His foot slipped, and he clutched frantically at the hand-rail to keep from crashing to the cinders. The next instant he was back again, hammering relentlessly at the fireman, forcing him slowly back against the red-hot firebox doors.

Jim Gates tried to slug his way out of the pinch. Kinley's right caught him on the mouth, slapped him back against the searing boiler. There came the sudden stench of burned flesh and smoldering denim as the fireman's side crashed into the firebox doors, when he fell. Morgan Kinley towered over him, waiting for him to rise.

Rolling away from the heat, Jim Gates regained his feet with a sudden catlike spring. For a moment he stood toe to toe with his old enemy, swapping blows. Blood streamed from his mouth, and a cut where the back of his head had crashed against some outjutting metal. But Kinley's eyes were badly blackened, swelling in horrible blue-green welts of battered, pulpy flesh.

A switch engine lumbered down the neighboring track, clanging its warning bell. When it came opposite the cab in which the fighting raged, it stopped, its engineer and fireman crowding over for a better view.

Both fighters were breathing heavily by the time Pat Clancy, the burly yardmaster, rushed up to the crowd gathered around the freight engine. He heard the thump and thwack of fist on flesh as he pushed his way through the throng.

"What's the row?" he demanded.

"I dunno," replied Joe Cassidy, Seventeen's head-end brakeman. "Seems the new fireman and Morgan Kinley got tangled up."

"Kinley'll kill the youngster. He's a butcher with his mits."

"The kid seems to be doin' all right," grunted the brakeman.

There was more than a spot of Irish in Pat Clancy. He generally kept away when the men were fighting. He hated to spoil a good scrap. But this time he interfered. He did not want a needed fireman slaughtered by the road's outstanding slugger.

Even on the N. and K., trains had to be run more or less on schedule. Some sort of order had to be maintained among the ruffians that largely composed its roster.

Grimly Pat Clancy climbed into the cab. "Cut it out! Both of ye!" he barked, grabbing Jim Gates and shoving him to one side. Then he faced Morgan Kinley.

"Put them fists down, ye murderin' spalpeen! Schmidt's been tryin' tin minutes to give ye a highball! We're runnin' a railroad here, Kinley. And an engine cab ain't no prize-ring!"

Clancy turned to the expectant railroaders on the cinders below.

"'Tis a draw I'm callin' this donnybrook," he announced. A cheer went up.

"It ain't finished yet!" snarled Morgan Kinley in an ugly undertone.

"Yuh're darn right it ain't!" Jim Gates snapped, wiping blood from his face and picking up the coal scoop, as he kicked open the firebox doors.

Seventeen pulled out of the yards at Shelton fifteen minutes late. The freight gained speed on the few miles of level tangent that would bring it to the tortuous, curving grades by which the railroad climbed the craggy, pine-crested Kougarok Mountains.

For the time being, at least, both Kinley and Jim Gates forgot personal differences. Putting their train safely into Nome—and, if possible, picking up the time already lost—was apparently paramount in their

minds. Personal grievances could be settled later.

As Seventeen rocked on toward the passing track and lonely telegraph office at the foot of the mountains, Morgan Kinley turned to his fireman.

"We're coming into Goldsite," he announced. "Read 'em for me. I can't see through this damned snow."

Jim Gates leaned out over the left-hand gangway. Snow, whipped by the cold mountain winds, stung his face as he peered ahead. Finally, he caught the dot of a signal light on the semaphore in front of the telegraph station.

"GREEN!" he called across the cab. "Clear board!"

"Green it is," Kinley responded a few seconds later, when he himself made out the signal.

Whistle blasting a challenging *wah-whoowaaa* into the teeth of the arctic gale, the train charged for the foot of the mountains. In a short while the increasing grades began to tell on the freight as its initial momentum gave out.

Gates worked harder than ever over his fires in a desperate effort to keep sufficient steam in the boiler. Tiny rivers of sweat trickled down his soot-blackened face.

Morgan Kinley watched him curiously. Gates could feel the hogger's piercing eyes turned on him at frequent intervals. But contrary to his reputation and his methods of working a hill, as Jim Gates remembered them, Kinley was doing all in his power, with throttle and Johnson bar, to help the fireman out. Kinley even adjusted his cutoff so that the piston strokes would be longer, slower and more powerful, in making every ounce of steam count on the upward pull.

"Bad night to double the hill," he mumbled. "Keep that steam needle dancing." Jim Gates smiled to himself. Kinley was acting almost decent.

"Well, anyway, we don't have to worry about no gold bandits," the fireman shouted across the cab.

Morgan Kinley's lips moved. He

started to say something, started to tell the new fireman what the rest of the crew already knew. Namely, that somewhere in the box-cars, sandwiched in between loads of heavy mine machinery, was the biggest shipment of gold the N. and K. had sent to Nome that season.

A half million dollars in melted bars of yellow metal! No one on the train knew exactly what car the gold was in, not even the freight conductor. Schmidt had been given a "blind" manifest.

Clancy, the yardmaster, and the men who had done the actual loading, were the only ones who knew. The car number had been wired in code to the superintendent at Nome. It was a simple trick by which the railroad officials hoped to move a king's ransom in virgin gold safely across a hundred miles of wild Alaskan wilderness.

AS Morgan Kinley stared at the unwinding slivers of shiny steel curling under the wheels of the pilot truck, a look of crafty cunning settled over his harsh features.

"What the fool don't know, won't hurt him," he decided. And said nothing.

It was no change of heart that prompted the hogger to work his train up the grades as swiftly as possible. He had reasons of his own for wanting to top out on time!

As they neared the crest and the mile-level stretch that would carry them through Peak Valley and out to the down grades on the other side of the range, Kinley stood up behind the throttle restlessly.

"We level off at the next bend," he said to Jim Gates. "Take the throttle and feel how this baby pulls."

To Jim Gates, the gesture seemed an offer of friendship on Kinley's part. He was willing to meet the man halfway.

"Thanks," he said, as he settled down to the controls, thrilling to the throb and power of the iron monster as it responded to his touch. Abruptly the tracks leveled off.

The train snorted into the fanlike

mouth of the high valley that curved in a slow arc between two towering mountain peaks, forming the only passageway for steel across the crest of the Kougarkoks.

Ahead, half buried in the snow, loomed the squat bulk of the Crest telegraph station, whose function it was to okay trains going up or coming down the single-track main line over the mountains. The semaphore in front of the building was up. The light behind it glowed red.

"Stabbed," grunted Gates, shutting off the thread of steam, and reaching for his air-brake control. "What's up?"

Morgan Kinley shrugged his shoulders. But his eyes burned eagerly toward the depot.

Gates watched for the telegraph operator to come out, carrying on his loop the train orders for which the freight had been stopped. Instead, as the engine pulled even with the depot bay and came to a halt under the signal light, a swarm of masked men rushed out across the platform.

A fusillade of shots rang out, bullets spattering against the metal of the cab frame. Morgan Kinley backed into a corner. Jim Gates dropped low, released his air-brakes, reached for the throttle, but the attackers were already swarming into the cab.

"I wouldn't touch that throttle, if I was you!" rasped a cold voice at Jim's back. He felt the twin barrels of a sawed-off shotgun prodding heavily against his ribs.

"Raise 'em," added the voice.

Gates wore a curious smile as he turned to face a masked giant.

"You guys sure caught the wrong train this time," he said lightly. "Unless yuh're lookin' for a load of scrap iron."

"Yeah?" The leader of the bandits jumped into the cab, pushed Jim Gates' face around so he could study it better.

"This ain't Kinley," he rasped. "What in hell happened to Morgan?"

"He's over here," called another of the bandits. "I got him covered. Says he don't know what car the stuff is in."

"We'll make him talk," snarled the giant. "And this punk, too." He thrust his face close to Jim Gates, jabbing at him viciously with his gun.

"Come on, guy, where's the plunder? We ain't got all day!"

The fireman's mind was racing fast. Swiftly he sensed the whole situation. There was gold on the train! And, somehow, Morgan Kinley knew it.

Kinley, then, was in with the crooks!

Gates realized now why the hogger had been anxious to let him handle the throttle. In case of a slip-up it would have been he, Jim Gates, and not Morgan Kinley who stopped a stray bullet.

And with Jim Gates at the controls, Kinley would have a brazen alibi to offer the railroad officials. He'd say Gates had stopped the train for the bandits, that he himself would not have stopped it.

Kinley would lie himself clear, just as he had lied out of that freight accident years ago. That time, Jim Gates had been just a youngster. He took it. But now—well, things were different!

Jim Gates heard gunfire down back by the caboose. The rear-end men were evidently fighting it out with the thieves. Out of the corners of his eyes, Gates spotted the black shape of an engine, smoke curling from its stack, standing above the Crest depot on a siding.

It was the helper engine, always kept at the Crest with steam up in readiness to aid stalled trains in making the steep grades on both sides of the Divide.

"I tell yuh, I don't know which car the gold is in!" The pleading voice was Morgan Kinley's.

Jim Gates didn't know whether the hogger was telling the truth, or just bluffing.

He didn't care. A sudden wild plan had come to him—

There was a moment of confusion as the bandits listened to the firing down by the caboose.

"Better give them fellers a hand,"

suggested the swarthy, dark-skinned leader of the gold thieves.

The giant opposite Gates lowered his shotgun momentarily. Jim Gates ducked, sun-fished almost to the floor, grabbing at the same time for the muzzle of the gun. He yanked it free, swung it like a club at the nearest man.

A shot rang out, the orange blaze of lethal flame almost blinding the fireman. Powder burns stung his cheek, but the bullet grazed harmlessly past his ear.

THE next instant Jim Gates was the center of a wild, struggling mêlée. The bandits were too closely packed to use their firearms. They lunged, struck, swung and clubbed at Jim Gates as he fought his way across the cab.

"Back away, some of yuh, and lemme plug this rat!" snarled the bandit leader. Jim Gates guessed from the stories he had heard, and the man's dark complexion, that it was "Monk" Mosher and his gang that had attacked the train. But he had no time to await verification of the surmise.

Gates was almost at the left-hand gangway as the bandits crowded back to substitute lead slugs for fists and clubbed guns. Snatching roughly at Morgan Kinley's wrist, he dragged the cowering hogger with him as he jumped desperately for the cinders.

"He's got Kinley!" shouted the giant, bringing his shotgun to his shoulder.

"Never mind! Plug 'em both!" roared Monk Mosher.

A burst of gunfire sent lead spattering around the pair as Gates stumbled on the ties, with the protesting Kinley still in his grip. Jim Gates got to his feet. Lead swept the hat off his head. A bullet clipped his shoulder, staggered him.

"This way!" the fireman snapped, darting behind the tender. For a split second the metal walls of the coal car protected them. That is, long enough to allow Jim Gates to jerk open the coupling lever and watch with grim satisfaction as the heavy

cars, still on a slight grade, began to roll back down the mountain slopes.

"They'll get goin' good in a minute," he said grimly.

Morgan Kinley tried to wrench free from Gates' grasp. He slugged at his captor.

"Yuh danged fool!" he screamed, as a haymaker missed the fireman's jaw by inches.

"That ain't goin' to help none! It'll jest bust that box-car full of gold wide open when she turns over on one of them curves at the bottom!"

He broke away, but Jim Gates lurched for him, caught him again.

"No yuh don't," he snapped.

"Yuh got me in a jam once before, Morgan Kinley. This time we're seein' it through together!"

The runaway cars were gaining momentum now, occupying the bandits' main attention. Momentarily, as the thieves chased after the fleeing cars, clung to grab irons and tried to swing aboard, Jim Gates and his prisoner were forgotten. Even when Morgan Kinley called out to the bandits, they paid no heed to his cries.

It was gold they were after! And the gold, locked somewhere in one of the cars of the rocking freight, was rolling down the mountain. In the shouted confusion, Jim Gates, dragging Morgan Kinley with him, made a swift dash for the helper engine on the adjacent passing track, pausing only long enough to line the switch for the main.

Gates had to lift, push and shove the dazed engineer into the cab ahead of him.

"We're goin' to catch that freight before she spills," he rasped. "Only, I'm handlin' the throttle and *you'll* bail coal!"

Morgan Kinley glared about him. He almost beat Gates to the right-hand seat-box as both men lunged for it. Jim Gates shoved the hogger aside violently, found what he was almost certain would be there—a loaded .45, belonging to the engineer of the helper engine!

Gates brought it up triumphantly. "Now bail coal, damn yuh!" he gritted.

The engine was pointed down the main line. Jim Gates was glad of that. It would make easier his delicate task of catching the runaway train and coupling onto it. He eased open the throttle.

The first piston stroke, the first *whoosh* of the exhaust started the engine moving. But it wasn't until the leading truck wheels clattered over the switch-points and onto the main line that the gold thieves, starting down the track where the unguided cars had disappeared around a bend, were aware of what was happening.

A VOLLEY of shots slammed at the engine and its occupants, the gruff bark of blazing .45s mingling with the sharper crack of high-powered rifles.

"They're goin' after the train! Git 'em!" shouted Monk Mosher.

Jim Gates ducked low. A bullet splintered the cab window above his head; shattered glass rained down on him. He saw Morgan Kinley moving furtively toward the left-hand gangway.

Gates' shouted warning had no effect. Morgan Kinley staggered erect in the gangway, screamed at his former allies not to shoot. But his frantic words were blasted out of his mouth by the broadside of lead that poured into him from the bandits' guns.

Eyes glazed, mouth still agape and drooling a sticky stream of his red blood, the bulky hogger slapped back on the iron deck-plates. He lay there for a moment, writhing in final death agony, his body rolling in the cab, his legs dangling out over the open gangway.

On hands and knees Jim Gates tried to reach him, to pull him into the cab. The helper engine gave a jerk as Gates stretched out his hand. All he caught was a strip of wet, blood-soaked, bullet-torn shirt. The lead-riddled body of Morgan Kinley slid grotesquely out through the gangway, dropped with a sickening *plop* to the roadbed.

A slug whipped past Jim Gates'

head. He turned. Two of the gold thieves were clinging to the right-hand grab iron, trying to board the engine. Jim Gates triggered twice. With a wild scream, one of the men let go his hold, disappeared. The helper engine was racing down hill now, swaying and rocking dangerously from side to side.

Jim Gates tried to reach the throttle just as the second bandit gained the deck-plates. The engine lurched heavily around the first bend, almost throwing him to the floor at the very instant that Monk Mosher aimed a pointblank shot at his head. The lurch caused the shot to go wild.

Gates didn't try to rise. There was only a split second of time, just long enough for Mosher to steady himself for another shot, in which to act. Jim Gates charged for Monk Mosher's legs. His arms clasped around them in a fierce football tackle. Mosher swayed a moment, then crashed headlong to the cab floor.

A GUN flamed almost in the fighting fireman's face. A slug ripped through his thigh, tearing the flesh as it ploughed through muscle and sinew. The next instant, Jim Gates and Monk Mosher were locked in a hand-to-hand struggle, rolling over and over on the deck-plates of the rocking engine cab.

Gates' hand sought the bandit's gun-wrist, jerked it back. With a scream of pain Mosher's fingers loosened their hold. The gun fell away. Then Jim Gates started slugging, fighting the murderer with all the pent-up fury in his soul.

Monk Mosher struggled, fought back for awhile, but he had no stomach for the lacing he was getting. Mosher was strictly a gun-fighter. He wanted the odds and the drop in his favor. Hand-to-hand battling was not in his craven make-up. He began to whimper; he whined; he had had enough. His face was a bloody, flesh-pounded pulp.

Jim Gates stood up. He kicked Mosher's gun overboard, found his own weapon bouncing on the deck-

plates over by the firebox door, and thrust it into his pocket.

"All right," he snapped at the cringing Mosher, "git up and grab a shovel! I'll need help gittin' this train into Goldsite." Wild-eyed, Monk Mosher stood up. He glared at Gates.

"Damn yuh!" he rasped. "Yuh ain't got me yet."

He made a sudden dash for the gangway, cleared it in a frantic leap. Jim Gates heard an ear-splitting yell of horror; then nothing more. He ran to the gangway.

The engine was rocking through a deep gorge on a narrow roadbed blasted out of the solid rock of the canyon wall. Monk Mosher had unloaded from the wrong side. His wild jump had cleared the tie ends. Jim Gates caught only a fleeting glance of a dark figure hurtling downward through an eternity of space.

"Phew!" he gasped, as he recoiled involuntarily from the yawning void. "She's sure deep! I wonder what's at the bottom—besides Monk—"

Despite the thunder of the speeding engine, it seemed strangely quiet in the cab as Gates returned to the controls. The wound in his leg began to pain him. His shoulder throbbed. He wanted to close his eyes and rest, but he knew his job was only half done.

With a start Jim Gates realized, as he stared ahead down the ribbons of steel, that the runaway freight was right before him. In fact, he was almost on it. It was traveling slower than he had expected. And when he saw the straining figure on the nearest box-car roof, using a rifle for a brake club as he attempted to tie down hand-brakes, he understood why.

The figure looked up at the sound of the approaching locomotive, yanked his rifle free of the brake wheel, and raised it to his shoulder. There was a puff of smoke, a gun blast. The bullet spanged against the boiler.

Jim Gates picked up his gun, climbed cautiously out on the footwalk, and edged his way toward the forward end of the engine. Another

bullet spatted against the locomotive. Gates crouched, took deliberate aim and fired.

The figure, looming closer every second as the engine approached the box-cars, spun madly and pitched off the roof of the car.

"He asked for it," Jim Gates mumbled, crawling out on the pilot.

THE locomotive, traveling now only slightly faster than the runaway, struck the cars with a dull thump. The couplings smacked together. Gates dropped the locking lever in place. Then he hurried back to the cab.

Using the drag of the engine as a brake, Jim Gates managed to ease the freight down the final slopes of the hazardous mountain grades. Locked wheels on one of the cars almost buckled the train as it jerked around the last hairpin turn.

Gates halted the freight outside the telegraph station at Goldsite, at the foot of the mountains.

The astonished operator rushed out to meet him, wondering how a train could be coming down the mountain without orders. He climbed aboard the caboose. The next instant, he

gave a wild cry as he hit the cinders and dashed up to the helper engine.

"What happened?" he yelled. "Schmidt and two brakemen is lyin' back in the crummy, dead. Sogged in a pool of their own blood!"

Jim Gates stared at the operator in a half daze. "Bandits killed 'em," he said dully.

"Where's the helper engine crew?" the operator demanded. He was trembling with excitement.

"Tied up in the depot at Crest with the brass pounder, I reckon," said Jim Gates.

He smiled weakly, trying desperately to clear his head of the dizziness that threatened to engulf him. His shoulder was numb from pain. His right leg was too stiff to move. He swayed crazily as he stood up beside the engineer's seat-box.

"Gosh, man! You're wounded!" The operator stared at Jim Gates' blood-stained clothes. "I'll wire for a Special, and a doctor."

Jim Gates grinned oddly. "And tell them bone-dome railroad officials I wish they'd let a guy know next time they send a freight out full of gold. Them things give a feller an awful surprise, brother!"

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GUNS of the DEAD

—Speak Against a Wily
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A revolver centered on Rango

THE island of Raratario
broiled under a tropic sun.
It was the siesta hour, but
there was plenty of activity in the
native quarter of Wingtown, a stilt-
city built out over the upper end of
the lagoon and river mouth. The
fresh stream tumbling down from the
jungled peaks inland was the only
clean thing in the vicinity. A stench
of open drains rose from the streets
that led to the spider-web causeways
connecting the close-packed huts
built over the water.

Wingtown, the breeding place of
evil in these southern seas. The
stamping ground of Rango, the
avowed killer of more members of
the Philippine constabulary than any
outlaw still on the loose in the Tua-
moto Archipelago.

Henry Bridger, American member
of that redoubtable band of men who
carried the law into these far islands,
narrowed his slanty eyes against the
glare, studied the oozing waterfront
street. His lips tightened. There

were too many natives in the street ahead. They were too active.

Were he and Parker West walking into the same kind of a trap that had left Jim West, Bridger's partner, dying in this same street? A native riot, a lawman dead. "So sorry, please, but we know not who held the knife." That had been the story handed out.

But "Hank" Bridger knew who had held the knife. Rango! However, it was one thing to know, another to prove. It was also something else to lay hands on Rango. The slippery outlaw was wary as a fox, dangerous as a tiger shark.

For the two months since Jim West's death, Bridger had been working and planning this trap for Rango. Bridger knew Rango's overwhelming curiosity, and was here to see the outlaw snap at the bait.

For Parker West, the dead man's elder brother, carried the bait clutched under one arm. West looked like a drunken beachcomber as he staggered ahead of Bridger. He carried a bottle under each arm. Occasionally he took a swig from one, but kept the other clutched close as though to shield sight of its contents from prying eyes. If attack came his orders were to drop the bottle and run.

Simple enough, but a premonition of disaster shook the constabulary man. He had started to move nearer to warn West that two could play at this game of trapping, when, as though his quickened stride were a signal, two dozen of the fuzzy-haired natives swerved suddenly into the center of the street. They blockaded the space between the two whites.

Over their short, muscular bodies Bridger saw a door open in a long building that extended out over the lagoon. Six brown men with white rags banding their heads appeared, charged toward the psuedo beachcomber.

Rango's killers!

His hunch had been right, Bridger realized—too late. As he plowed forward he saw Parker West hit out

with one bottle, crack down on a diving native, saw him kick out, catch another in the groin, then go down under a shouting, screaming mass of humanity.

Fists pummeled Bridger's body. He fought toward West, gun out, smashing at leering faces, at dragging, tearing hands. Arms tangled his legs, tore at his boots, his whipcord breeches as he fought a clear space about him. Helpless, he saw the head-banded natives lift West's limp form and hurry him into the long building.

A knife flashed before his eyes. He cracked a wrist and a native yowled like a wounded cat. Then as Bridger fired into the street the roar, the concussion half-stunned the brown men clinging to him. He jerked free, plunged toward the open door of the long building. Parker West was somewhere ahead of him, and when he found West he'd find Rango!

A SMOKY coal-oil lamp lighted the hall. Bridger raced the length of it, mouth grimly set. He might be running to his death, but it was his job to rid these islands of Rango. And with his plan miscarrying Parker West would never see the light of day again unless he was rescued at once.

The hall opened into a narrow corridor. A plank door blocked his way. He tried it. The ancient lock held. Yanking his shirt over his head, he folded it about his gun, put the muzzle against the lock and pulled the trigger. The muffled sound wouldn't carry far. If none of Rango's men were near the other side of this door he'd get away with it. If they were—He jerked the door open. Another corridor stretched blankly ahead of him, its walls spotted with peeling, moisture-stained paper. Steam rose from the lagoon beneath.

Closed doors were on either side of the passage. No one was in sight. Evidently Rango had supreme confidence the gang in the street could stop Bridger.

For a moment the lawman considered searching the side rooms, then

decided against it. Time was too pressing.

Rango would get that bottle—if he managed to force West to talk.

Bridger stole down the mat-floored corridor silent as a padding cat. The feel of danger was suddenly all about him. His drawn-steel nerves were quick to pick up the impression. Days and nights of peril had made the constabulary man sensitive to menace.

His slate-grey eyes laced the corridor with a sharp glance. No sound, no sight of anyone. Suddenly he felt the matting floor tremble. It shuddered from under his feet as he propelled himself forward. Space was beneath him, the gurgle of water about rotting piles.

The farther edge of the trap was in front of his straining body. His desperate fingers reached for it. His gun dropped into the lagoon as he stretched forward with every ounce of strength in his wiry body. His crooked fingers caught the farther edge of the matting, slipped, then held again in the crack formed by the opened hinged panel.

FOR a moment Bridger clung, getting his breath. Then he pulled himself up to the solid flooring. His mind whirled at the thought of what might have happened had Parker West disappeared into the oily brine beneath. Their scheme had come that close to failure! Might still fail. Unarmed now, the odds pyramided against the constabulary man, even though he had eluded Rango's first trap! Unless he watched his step he would be just another lawman who had died in pursuit of Rango. But the thought of turning back did not enter Bridger's mind.

The corridor branched sharply toward the deeper reaches of the hodge-podge of huts over the water. At its end he could make out another sagging plank door, open a crack.

A grim smile twisted Bridger's lips. His first break. The mutter of voices floated out to him, punctuated by a man's groan. Pressed close to the wall he slid to the opening,

dropped on one knee, and put his eye to the crack. Horror crawled down his back and rage dimmed his vision momentarily. He wanted to batter the door out of his way, burst in. But he checked the maddened impulse. He had to play this hand carefully if he was to get himself and Parker West out of Wingtown alive.

The room he watched was small, square. Filth covered the floor. In the center, on its tripod, stood a glowing brazier of coals. A pair of small black-handled tongs was turning a cherry-red in the burning charcoal. A short native, protected by a long leather apron, his back toward Bridger, watched the tongs.

Facing the door was Rango. The man's skin was lighter than that of the other natives of Wingtown. He was taller, an obese, imposing figure even in the ragged dungarees and rainbow-hued scarf knotted about his waist. His naked upper body showed scars of many knife battles.

Beside him, clutching the bottle West had carried, was Tobo, his lieutenant. Tobo's skin was almost black, his face thin, body spidery, dark eyes ceaselessly roving.

Rango and Tobo had their eyes on the seated figure of Parker West, whose face was grey with agony. His body was firmly roped to a straight chair. His hands, stretched along the tops of his knees and bound there, were horrible things to see. Already those tongs in the hands of the torturer had seared, mutilated them almost beyond recognition.

The odor of burned flesh seared Bridger's nostrils, sent waves of hate quivering through him.

"Peeg of a white man," Rango roared, "are you ready to tell me where you be coming to get thees *derrotero*?"

Tobo pranced close to the dull-eyed West.

"You hear, white man?"

He shook the bottle in front of Parker West's face. Inside the clear glass of the receptacle was a crumpled parchment, yellow with age. The pen drawing of a Spanish galleon, careened on an atoll like thousands

that make up the Tuamoto Archipelago, could be seen through the glass.

"Wait, Tobo," snapped Rango. "Let me be for refreshing the white man's memory." He took the bottle, tapped it suggestively. "It is for thees map, sar, that I have scoured every village in these islands. And now you are so kind as to be for bringing it to me. Maybe you don't know that thees *derrotero* is the key to enough gold for to make me king of the Tuamotos!

"Thees picture eet tell me planty. Thees plate ship was careened on the Island of a Thousand Palms, maybe for being t'ree centuries ago. Eet was filled with gold of the Incas! Eet was helpless whan pirates come upon it, scuttle eet, burn the crew and captain in oil. To feenish my story, sar, thees men of the brotherhood they bury the treasure on the island in a cave of coral, but they never came back, because a Spanish man-o'-war blasted them out of the water. The survivors they told the tale of gold and death, sar, but none but their *capitan* knew the location of the island. Thees survivors they tell the Spanish their *capitan* have leave the map in a safe place ashore, but the *capitan* is dead, and none of the men know where he was for hiding the *derrotero*.

"Long, sar, have I and many men tried to find the Island of a Thousand Palms. Now I weel find it! But farst, sar, you're going to be telling me how come *you* by the *derrotero*? If you don't talk, my frand here, he know many tricks to play with the red pinchers before I keel you."

Parker West shook his head stubbornly. "I don't know where it came from," he said in a hoarse whisper.

"I don't know how I got holt of it. I wuz drunk, and when I tried to drink from the bottle I found it full of this business. You can burn my hands off, you dirty skunk, and that's all I can ever tell you."

Rango's face darkened. His hand dropped to the hilt of the *kris* jammed through his sash.

"I weel give you one last chance,

white peeg!" The point of the *kris* flicked against West's throat.

West drew a deep breath into his lungs, shook his head stubbornly.

Bridger struck the door with his shoulder. It jarred loose on its rotten hinges, hit the floor inside with a bang. Unarmed, the tall American lunged toward Rango.

"Drop that knife, you dirty snake!" he gritted.

A gun roared from the side of the room. Tobo crouched there, a .45 in his hand. Smoke curled from the muzzle. The gun barked. Lead droned over Bridger's head.

Rango laughed evilly. The bunched muscles in his naked forearm knotted. He drove the *kris* into Parker West's throat with a twisting, slashing motion. West's head lolled forward, half severed. Blood from a cut jugular spurted onto Rango's brown torso. He ripped the knife free and whirled toward the plunging American.

Suddenly Bridger's anger turned to cold calculation more deadly than any rage. Rango had wantonly murdered West. He'd pay for that!

IN mid-stride he shifted like a broken-field runner. The dripping blade of the *kris* slit the cloth of his shirt under his arm.

Then Bridger was past Rango, eyes fastened on the bandit's brutal-faced torturer who stood by the charcoal fire, his mouth open, his slow brain seeming unable to comprehend this turn of events. The red-hot tongs tangled in his thick fingers.

Tobo chattered like a monkey, but the warning came too late. Bridger's fist, with all the power of his moving body behind it, caught the torturer full in the face. His other hand grabbed at the man's wrist, ripped away the glowing tongs. His left pistoned out again. The blow sent the native tottering back against Tobo. Both went down in a tangled heap.

Bridger ducked and whirled. Rango towered above him, *kris* poised, a snarling grin on his face.

Bridger flung up an arm. The tongs caught Rango under the chin.

The man screamed horribly. The odor of singed flesh was sickening. Bridger hit him again.

"Some of your own medicine," he said grimly.

Rango's knees buckled. Bridger snatched the revolver stuck through the other side of the outlaw's sash, whirled toward Tobo. But the spider-like native wasn't there! Only the unconscious torturer.

Somewhere in this room was a secret panel through which the little native had slipped! He had gone to rally Rango's men.

Gun in one hand, Bridger hurled the tongs across the rooms, grabbed the knocked-out Rango and hauled him into the passage. There was just the barest chance that Bridger might make it to one of the empty rooms that lined the longer hall, and hide himself and his captive there until the hue and cry was over. If he could hole up until night fell there might be a fair chance of getting the murderer out to face the justice he so richly deserved.

Moving fast, he got the unconscious outlaw to the turn in the passage, rounded it. A rising tide of voices met him as a dozen squat natives charged through the door that had closed the other end of the passage.

That ruined the lawman's plan of hiding in one of the rooms. He'd be smoked out in no time. There were six cartridges in the gun he had taken. Sheer numbers would overpower him when they were gone.

There was only one chance to get out of this alive, and it was mighty slim.

He dropped Rango's arm—there'd be another meeting with the outlaw. The *derrotero* would insure that. He broke into a run down the long hall straight toward the gang of natives rushing him. His strange action halted them momentarily. Then they came on again.

Bridger fired twice. The leading native howled, legs caving under him. It halted the others. Tobo had not told them this wild-eyed American was armed. Bridger kept his eye on the floor, searching for the trap-

door that meant escape, if he hit it right. If he didn't, it meant death from the knives of Rango's killers!

He marked the space, gathered his muscles under him, leaped into the air and came down with the full weight of his two-hundred-pound body on the spot where the floor had slipped from under him before.

THE trap crashed under him. One moment he saw surprised brown faces in front of him, then they were gone as he plunged deep into the waters of the lagoon. Dodging the close-grouped piles he swam as far under water as his breath would carry him. He rose to the surface, caught a breath and submerged again.

Suddenly Bridger knew what it felt like to be the hunted instead of the hunter. The word would go out that the constabulary man was alone here, that it was Rango's orders that he die.

Every hand but one in the whole of Wingtown would be turned against him now. That one man was a Chinese merchant whose trading schooners nosed in and out of these little known islands of the Tuamotos. Once Bridger had aided Sam Soy, and the Chinese would not forget. Bridger would be safe if he could reach the merchant's *godown*, a mile or more down the lagoon. If he could execute the dangerous passage and Sam Soy would do him a favor, he'd still make Rango pay for the murder of Jim and Parker West.

Somehow Bridger did make it. A little over an hour later he sat across a diminutive tea-table from Sam Soy. The Chinese wore a robe of black, topped by a black skull-cap with a golden button atop it. His moon face turned gravely on the bedraggled figure of the constabulary man.

"You wish me to loan you a swift *vinta* that will get you where you wish to go as fast as Rango's black schooner can make the passage?" he murmured. "You wish only two of my men to accompany you. But why so few? Half of all I possess is yours."

Bridger's craggy face, lined with

fatigue, broke into a grim smile. "I know," he said, "but I won't jeopardize more than a pair of your boys. They stand a swell chance of getting killed along with me."

* * * * *

A NAMELESS reef of coral came out of the sea at dawn. The *vinta* heeled to the sharp breeze, drove swiftly closer. Bridger scanned the sea for a sign of a shapely black schooner, but not a sail dotted the empty horizon.

Danao, a golden-brown Polynesian, came swiftly back from the high prow of the *vinta*.

"Master," he said, "within the lagoon I see black ship with sails furled!"

Bridger came to his feet, balancing to the sway of the *vinta*. He looked straight into the Polynesian's eyes. "Danao," he said, "there will be trouble and danger ahead. Once through the barrier, you and Colu can swim to shore. I will sail the *vinta* in alone."

"We will face Rango's guns with you, master," Danao said, and he turned back to his crouched position beside the mainmast.

The thunder of long waves marked the out-curving of the reef, showed the smooth narrow opening into the quiet lagoon. The opalescent water mirrored the low flatness of a coral *atoll*. Palms clustered thickly there, coming down almost to the white scimitar of beach. Two palms against the skyline of fronds stood higher than all the rest.

Bridger fastened his eyes on them. His mouth grew white with tension. Jim West was buried beneath those trees!

Singing lead brought him out of his reverie. Bridger's eyes sparkled dangerously as a grim surge of elation coursed through him. It would be man to man here on this lonely coral *atoll*. Rango would not run while there was the lure of pirate gold to hold him here.

Bridger barked orders in Polynesian. The two hands trimmed sail. The *vinta* heeled toward shore, running before the wind.

Dipping into the small shelter amidships, Bridger came back stripped but for shorts and an oiled-silk packet in which were his gun and a few cartridges. He tied the bundle about his waist.

"Danao go?" the Polynesian asked eagerly.

"Stay," Bridger directed. "Hold the black ship's attention. I've got to get ashore unseen, reach the tall, twin palms before Rango—"

He slid over the stern, and with a stroke that barely disturbed the surface struck out for shore. Rango's ship was more than a half mile away. Unless some of the outlaw's men had glasses, they would never spy him. Their beating him here lowered his chance of success. If they had already run the devious lines of the map—

He slid ashore behind a low, jutting point, made the cover of the close-packed palms and underbrush. Brush stirred about him. Six figures in ragged dungarees, naked to the waist, stepped out and circled him. Five of them carried glinting knives. The sixth held a long-barreled .45. Rango!

The man's chin and brow were bandaged. His eyes were dull, as though he had done little sleeping in a long time. But they brightened at sight of Bridger.

"So you think you can be for outsmarting Rango, eh? Well now, you're going to be for dying." Gently his fingers touched the bandages. "And I'll be seeing it is not easy."

Bridger's heart plumbed bottom. Rango alone had a gun, but he knew from experience that these natives were more dangerous with knives than with revolvers. In his hands he still clutched the oiled-silk package with his gun in it, but there would be not the slightest chance of getting it out.

Rango strode over to him, heavy gun held close to his side. The outlaw's face twisted with rage, frustration. His slant eyes began to flare. Bridger felt the muscles across his stomach knot. Rango was mad, literally. His one insane desire to kill, kill!

"You've got the *derrotero*?" he bit out swiftly.

Rango threw back his curly head and laughed. There was nothing pleasant in the sound. His blunt fingers yanked the yellowed sheet from the knotted sash at his waist. His hand trembled as he smoothed it open.

"You have know planty about this," Tobo, Rango's spidery lieutenant, said softly to Bridger. "I have tole the chief."

"Be for telling me why, white man," Rango interrupted, "that this map instead of taking us to a coral cave with the gold in it, should be for leading us to a pair of palm trees high and dry in the center of the island?"

"Answer!" Tobo snarled.

A knife pressed suddenly into the small of Bridger's naked back. A shudder rippled through him. He'd seen the remains of whites carved by these fiends.

"**D**ID you dig beneath the trees?" he asked.

He held himself tensely. Everything depended on the answer.

"No," Rango said. "The map is crazy. Why should we?"

"Take me there," Bridger said in soft tones, "and let me have a shovel. I'll show you the treasure!"

The group was quiet, tense. There was no sound but that of a shovel scraping away sand. Tobo stood to one side. He had Hank Bridger's revolver in one hand, a knife in the other. Rango stood directly across the slowly deepening pit from the tall American. The fire of avarice gleamed in his eyes. Circling them all were the four quiet knife-men.

Bridger dug until the pit was almost waist deep. He took one more shovelful from the pit. But the sound was different. The point of the shovel had touched metal.

Rango and Tobo started toward the pit.

"Wait!" Bridger said, and stooped again. He stood, and in his hands was a small, brass-bound box. Coolly, he raised the lid of the little coffer and dropped his hand inside it.

The hand came out swiftly. The round eye of a revolver centered on Rango.

"The treasure!" Bridger grated.

Rango's jaw dropped foolishly. But the spidery Tobo's finger contracted convulsively, and his gun smashed a vicious report into the morning quiet. The slug caught Bridger in the shoulder, flung him back against the side of the pit. He triggered from there. Tobo clutched his stomach, folded across the edge of the pit, corkscrewed into the bottom of it.

Rango's gun blazed and Bridger felt the nausea of pain creeping over him. A flung knife threw sand into his face. He fired again. Rango went down on his face, rolled over, and lay there, coughing blood.

Bridger turned painfully. The four knife-men had fled. With their chief down their stomach for this fight was gone. There would be tall tales told about the food-pits in the villages on the many islands. Tall tales of how a devil reached up from the bottom of a pit and handed the white man a gun that killed each time it spoke.

Grimly Henry Bridger crawled from the pit. Blood cascaded down his body. He felt very tired, but his work was done. Then he saw Rango's lips moving. There was a question in the dying man's eyes.

Bridger knelt beside the outlaw.

"You didn't find a coral cave, Rango," he said quietly, "because I drew that map. It took me a long time because I had to fake its age. I knew I could bait you with a fortune of Spanish gold if I couldn't any other way."

"Treasure," whispered the outlaw.

"Yes," Bridger said, "treasure, Rango. You murdered Jim West, and I buried him here, on the little island he loved. I buried his guns with him, a few feet above the casket. I vowed then that I'd get you, Rango, and that one of Jim West's guns would avenge his death—even if Jim couldn't pull the trigger." Bridger's voice faded into a whisper. "And I'm not so sure that he didn't at that!"

But Rango didn't hear him. The outlaw was dead.

Adventure THRILLS

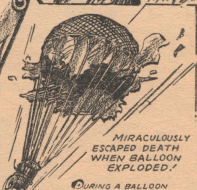


BRAVING THE PERILS OF THE JUNGLE YOUNG ADVENTURER AND HIS WIFE STRUGGLED TO FIND THE MYSTERY OF THE NILE

FACING WHAT SEEMED ALMOST CERTAIN DEATH FROM POISONED ARROWS OF HOSTILE NATIVES, SAMUEL BAKER AND HIS YOUNG WIFE, IN 1863, STRUGGLED THROUGH A LAND THAT "NO WHITE MAN HAD EVER SEEN" AND SOLVED THE MYSTERY OF THE NILE.

WHEN THEY FIRST BEGAN EXPLORING THE TWISTED TRIBUTARIES OF THE NILE IN ABYSSINIA, THE BAKERS WERE REPORTED TO BE BRITISH SPIES WHO WERE "DENYING THE WAY FOR SOLDIERS WHO WOULD BREAK UP THE POWER OF THE SLAVE AND IVORY TRADE." SEVERAL ATTEMPTS WERE MADE TO KILL BAKER. FINALLY, ENCOURAGED BY HIS WIFE, THEY REACHED THEIR GOAL AND DISCOVERED LAKE NYANZA.

AFTER EXPLORING THE REGION, THE BAKERS BROUGHT OUT OF THE JUNGLE INFORMATION REGARDING THE MYSTERY OF THE NILE AND ITS SOURCE. BACK IN ENGLAND THE BAKERS WERE HIGHLY HONORED BY THE QUEEN.



MIRACULOUSLY ESCAPED DEATH WHEN BALLOON EXPLODED!

DURING A BALLOON ASCENSION IN 1838, JOHN WISE, FAMOUS AMERICAN PIONEER OF THE AIR, WAS CAUGHT IN A VIOLENT THUNDER-STORM. AS THE LIGHTNING FLASHED THE BALLOON EXPLODED, AND WISE WAS SAVED BY A MIRACLE. THE FABRIC SPLIT AND FORMED A PARACHUTE THAT FLOATED SLOWLY TO THE GROUND AND SAFETY.

ADVENTURER SOLD AS A SLAVE WHEN CAPTURED ON A GUN-RUNNING EXPEDITION

DURING THE FAMOUS TOURMALINE GUN-RUNNING ADVENTURE IN MOROCCO, 1897, CAPTAIN DE REYA AND FOUR OTHER ENGLISHMEN WERE CAPTURED BY REBEL TRIBESMEN. AN ESCAPE WAS PLANNED AND AFTER OVERPOWERING TWO GUARDS CAPT. DE REYA MADE A DASH THROUGH THE WILD AND ROCKY COUNTRY NEAR THE PLATEAU OF ARKISIS.

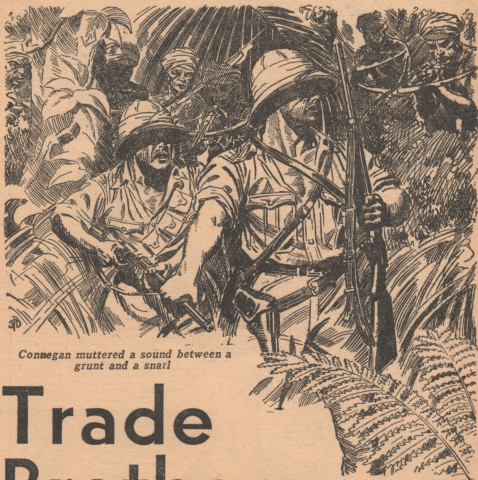
AFTER WANDERING FOR TWO DAYS A NUMBER OF THE CAVALRY OF THE SULTAN'S TROOPS CAUGHT DE REYA. HOWLING AND FIRING THEIR LONG GUNS THEY HURDED THE RE-CAPTURED MAN TO A CAMP AND INFORMED HIM THAT HE HAD BEEN SOLD FOR 400 DOLLARS AS A SLAVE TO THE SULTAN. HOWEVER, AFTER REACHING MAGADOR HE WAS RELEASED FROM A LIFE OF SLAVERY THROUGH THE INTERVENTION OF QUEEN VICTORIA.



HOLDS WORLD'S RECORD AS DOG-SLED DRIVER!

LEONARD SEPPALA, WHO IS THE MOST FAMOUS DRIVER AND RACER OF DOG-TEAMS OVER THE SNOW-COVERED TRAILS OF THE FAR NORTH, HOLDS THE WORLD'S RECORD FOR WINNING MORE DOG RACES THAN ANY OTHER LIVING MAN. HE IS SEVERAL TIMES WINNER OF THE ALL-ALASKA SWEEPSTAKES AND SET A RECORD OF 76 HOURS FOR THE TIME OVER THE 410 MILE COURSE.

Stalking Doom and Savage Torture Dog the Trail
of Two Partners in Steamy Bengal Jungles!



Connegan muttered a sound between a grunt and a snarl

Trade Brothers

By L. L. FOREMAN

Author of "Pride of Pinalino," "Trigger Treats," etc.

A TWANG, a singing hiss, a soft thud. Big Tersh Blake ducked, swore, and watched Chee Ling crumple.

"Got him in the neck," he growled. "Same way they got the others."

Coarse growth choked the narrow path. Dank malarial mist blanketed the jungle in a ghostly screen. Giant stinging nettles, hidden under trail-

ing lianas, brushed flesh and left the itching torture of their tiny barbs. Far away the great boisterous river of the Upper Salwin sent out its muffled booming as it raced toward the Bay of Bengal, a thousand miles to the south.

Little Peter Connegan swayed up to his short, slim height, cursing as he fingered his rifle. He glared into

the lazily drifting mist, his red head flung back, a challenge in the twist of his lips. He was half crazed with fever and rage.

"Why don't they get us, too?" he rasped hoarsely. "Hell, they can see us plain's they could Chee Ling."

Blake bent over the Chinese. The thin bamboo arrow had broken off near its fire-hardened point where the long notch had been cut for holding the sticky aconitum poison. That was how the wild Lissoos fashioned their cross-bow missiles. They broke off upon striking, leaving the poison-daubed barb deep in the victim.

SLANTED black eyes, glazed with agony, stared up at the big white man. Blake nodded, and slid a sweat-grimed hand down the stock of his heavy rifle. Chee Ling was asking for death.

Tersh Blake did what he had done for five other coolie porters in the past two days. When the sharp, savage bark of the rifle died away, he jerked his gaze from the stilled figure.

He was a hard man, rough and tough, but cold-blooded killing, even for mercy's sake, was not in his line.

They trudged on, climbing and sliding along the slippery, rain-soaked path; two white men, stalked on all sides by creeping death. Peter Connegan had had to take two paces to each stride of the tall, powerful Blake.

"Think we'll make it to the river, Tersh?" he asked breathlessly.

Blake did not look back.

"What's your guess?" he growled. Once he would have given a friendlier answer, perhaps laughed. Once he would have slowed his pace for Peter Connegan. They had been partners for years, trading where even the most trade-hungry did not go.

But that was before they met Lola Lecorse, down in Rangoon. Her gold-and-white loveliness had made both of them think strange things, unfamiliar things such as marriage, a settled home.

They had fallen hard for Lola. It

had changed them. Each knew the other too well to be fooled by an airy manner, a too-careful avoidance of her name. And each knew, when the matter of this long-projected trip into the Lissoo country came up, what the other was thinking.

One successful trip meant a small fortune. Plenty of turquoise in the Upper Salwin Valley. A few of the blue stones dribbled out at times, by way of the Mekong, and found their way across the frontiers into Burma, French Indo-China, and even as far as India.

So they had started, with bolts of bright blue cloth for trading goods. The Lissoos would trade for cloth when they would trade at all. With their coolie porters they had followed the Mekong gorge across the Burma-Chinese frontier and up into Yunnan province.

There had been warnings in plenty, from Chinese and Europeans alike. The wild Lissoos of the high Salwin range were savages; they killed all strangers, and their tribes were always at war with one another. The Chinese Government claimed authority over them, but never tried to collect taxes. Even the war lords did not bother that lonely, outer fringe of mountainous wilderness.

Blake and Connegan had dealt before with savage people, and made friends with them. They shrugged off the dire warnings. At Lu-po Pass, leaving the Mekong, some of the coolies had deserted. Then a few Chinese-Minchias had balked within sight of the high, craggy banks of the tumbling Salwin, and thrown down their loads, refusing to cross into the land of the dreaded Lissoos. They would not even help pack the loads across the long, swaying, single-rope strand of twisted bamboo splits that passed for a bridge. They wished to go on living.

Blake and Connegan crossed with their six remaining coolies eighteen days ago. The Lissoos were wild enough, they had found, but not hostile. And plenty of turquoise here. The Lissoos brought it forth in dirty little leather sacks, haggled like old

crones, and clawed greedily at the trade cloth.

Back to the Salwin River the little trading party had started with a fortune in turquoise. Blake carried it in a rawhide satchel slung over his shoulder. He had picked only the bluest and best shaped stones.

He and Connegan had joked a little about the warnings that had been given them; almost got back to their old, easy, careless friendship. When they had finally heard the boom of the Salwin, Blake had broken into a whistle and Connegan had hummed a tune.

THEN had come the first arrow from out the tangled wall of jungle, and the beginning of a furtive, crawling, hunted flight. Forty-eight hours of it had given Blake the disposition of a hungry timber wolf. Little Connegan, who liked to do his fighting in the open, was near the breaking point.

The mystery was what frayed their nerves. Never did they get more than a flashing glimpse of their stalkers. Never did the arrows come except singly, at long intervals. It was as though the Lissoos were playing with their victims, striking them down one by one, leaving the two white men as the final prey.

With a sudden oath Connegan whipped his rifle to his shoulder and fired into the dense brush at a sickly scarlet blossom that swung gently as though moved by something behind. A low sound came as though someone uttered a dry chuckle. He fired again, a swift surge of berserk rage sweeping caution aside.

A big hand swiped down and tore the smoking rifle from his grasp.

"Losin' your head?" Blake grated, cold anger in his eyes. "Keep down, or you'll get an arrow in your neck!"

Connegan glared. "Gimme back my rifle! I'll shoot all I want an' be damned to you!"

Bloodshot eyes clashed. With a shrug Blake flung the rifle to him.

"Go ahead, then, you crazy half-pint! I'll give you a mercy shot when they stick you!"

"You'd like that, huh?" Connegan

flashed at him. "Yeah, you'd like to get out alone, take the turquoise, an'— But she promised me she'd wait till I came back!"

Wild, crazy talk. The brittle utterances of a man half insane from fever, lack of sleep, and the frustrated craving to fight his way out of a merciless death-trap. At any other time the cooler-headed Blake would have understood. But he, too, felt like striking at anything within reach, just to release some of the pent-up fury of the hunted.

He might have dismissed the delirium-inspired words, even now, but the little devils of fever were beating in his brain too. The reference to Lola stirred him to quick retort.

"Liar!" Blake's dirt-streaked face twisted in a sneer of contempt. "She promised me! Why, she wouldn't look at a sawed-off runt, when—"

"Easy, Tersh!" Connegan's face showed pale and drawn under its dirt and stubble. He was touchy about his size. Even when normal, he flared up when it was mentioned. His right forefinger curled over the trigger of his rifle. "Don't push me too far, Tersh!"

Blake's black eyes, slitted and dangerous, lifted to Connegan's set face. The bantam Irishman's eyes glinted as hard and dangerous as his own. Both were fighters, with only a thin veneer of civilization that fitted them none too snugly. Both welcomed the open break.

Twang! At the sudden vicious note both men ducked, but the hiss and following thud beat them to it. A broken arrow-head stuck in the butt of Blake's rifle, the dark, ill-smelling poison splashed on the varnished walnut.

Again the sharp twang of a released bow-string, the *tock* of the point striking home. A mate to the first arrow-head struck into the splashed blob of sticky poison, the broken shaft flying off into the overhanging leaves. Then three more in quick succession whispered their brief song of warning.

Connegan jerked back as two buried themselves into a tree-trunk six inches from his head. He fired

from the hip without taking time to sight, pitching his shots blindly into the thick foliage. Again came that faint, sardonic chuckle.

"They're all round us!" breathed Blake. "They got us!"

They crouched low in the rank growth, waiting, seeing nothing; no one. Myriad insects discovered them, attacked faces and hands, filling the silence with their whines.

A faint rustling grew on all sides, following the thin piping of a bird. Peter Connegan uttered a sound between a grunt and a snarl and swung up his rifle.

Blake knocked its muzzle down, threw a long arm about the little man, and held him powerless.

"Keep your head, Pete!" he muttered, and ranged his narrowed eyes along a ragged circle of drawn cross-bows, arrow-tips, squat figures clad in dirty hempen rags, and brutal, high-cheeked Mongol faces.

The slanted, dull black eyes of the Lissoo warriors stared impassively at the two white men over leveled cross-bows. Almost noiselessly they had slipped out from cover. Now they stood as though awaiting the next signal, bow-strings drawn, slender arrows ready to be released, fingers resting on carved bone triggers.

BLAKE thought of Chee Ling and the other five porters; of the aconitum poison that killed slowly, agonizingly, and very surely. In a village to the south, some friendly warriors had put on a show for the white trader with their deadly *nu-kong* cross-bows. Some of them had hit a skull at sixty yards, time and again.

A savage impatience broke the last of Blake's restraint.

"Well?" he barked. "What d'you damn brush-dusters want?"

He flung out the challenge in his drawling Montana brand of English. He knew little Lissoo, and the Lissos knew no Chinese. They were an off-shoot of the Tibetan tribes, isolated for centuries from the outside world by their mountain wilderness, their jungle valleys, and their stark savagery.

Amazingly, and incredible to the shocked ears of the white men, a voice answered in English:

"You!"

A figure moved out from the silently menacing band. Tall, poised, commanding, he wore blue cotton instead of crudely woven hemp. A high shako of shaggy black camel's hair covered his shaven head and made him appear even taller. Bracelets and heavy ornaments of silver and cornelian hung from his neck and wrists. While the faces of the others were dull, brutish, coated with the unwashed sweat and dirt of years, his was clean, sharp-boned, austere. Alert intelligence showed in the smoldering black eyes, thin-lipped mouth and aquiline nose.

Blake swallowed his shock of surprise. "Who the devil are you?"

"Devil?" The ghost of a humorless smile accompanied the clipped word. "I am Teng-lu, the Ni-pa—devil-man—of La-tou-wa-de."

Connegan struggled in Blake's hard grip. "Leggo!" he spat. "Let me show 'em what a rifle'll do!"

"Pipe down!" muttered Blake. "This bird isn't going to scare easy. He's probably lived on the Coast. A gun's nothing new to him. He's the Ni-pa, the local big shot."

"I don't give a hoot what he is or where he's been!" grunted Connegan. "Him an' his creepy mob! Look at him—grinnin' at me!"

The Ni-pa was smiling—amusedly, aloofly, half scornfully. It stretched his flat lips across his yellow-brown face like a bloodless gash. He stepped closer with slow dignity his cross-bow slung over one shoulder.

Blake's quick, observing eyes reminded him that a little gold was reputed to be found here in the valley of the Lissoo. The four-foot stock of Teng-lu's cross-bow was not of thick wild plum wood, as were others. It had the dull yellowish glint of beaten gold.

Teng-lu tapped Blake's rawhide satchel, and calmly opened the flap to peer in at the loose blue stones.

"You have traded well," he commented, with a dry chuckle. "I hoped you would. That is why I allowed

you to pass through my country." His English was remarkably clear and fluent, not the chopped pidgin-talk of the Coast coolie.

He closed the flap. "And now," he purred, "you will visit my village, La-tou-wa-de. It has no turquoise, and little gold. But you will, I think, find it—interesting. We cannot offer the stranger the comforts of the great cities—London, Paris—"

"What d'you know about London an' Paris?" snarled Connegan.

"I have lived in those places," murmured the Ni-pa, "and in many others. Nature gave me a great curiosity. When I was a boy, many years ago, I left my people. I came back a man of great wisdom." He said it simply. "Sometimes I was a servant to the white man. But not always. I learned quickly his weaknesses, his follies, and profited from them. But let us go now to La-tou-wa-de."

"Yeah?" Blake met the calm eyes of the devil-man.

Teng-lu slid his gaze to the poison-coated barbs in Blake's rifle-butt, glanced pointedly at his savage mob of animal-faced warriors.

"H'm," growled Blake. "Pete, I reckon we better go!"

Teng-lu chattered something, and the crowd of ragged, smelly figures closed in. With his irritating calm, he grasped Blake's rifle and tugged. His masklike smile and blank eyes mocked the white men.

The big American relinquished his weapon. "No help for it," he muttered to Connegan. "He wants yours too, Pete. Let him have it."

"Over his damned head!" rasped Connegan, then stiffened as a grimacing Lissoo took deliberate aim with his murderous *nu-kong*. He let go of the rifle, breathing hard.

Teng-lu uttered another sharp command, his keen, ageless face full of assured authority. It was as though he flung curt words to obedient mongrels trained to obey. The party started on up the steep path, Teng-lu leading the way.

As though at the end of a staged act, the Lissoos dropped their pose

of stolid silence. They chattered noisily, darted significant looks of mischief at the two white men, and cackled. They were savages, entirely callous to feeling. Mercy was totally unknown to their primitive minds.

Innate cruelty showed in their eyes, in their dirty, brutal face. It was shown by the murderous type of weapon to which they had clung since before the time of Marco Polo. The deadly *nu-kong* and the poisoned arrow were perhaps all that was left of an ancient civilization to this lost off-shoot of the Tibetan race.

LA-TOU-WA-DE proved to be the usual miserable collection of rain-sodden huts, thatched with coarse grass, low-eaved, and jumbled together. A stockade of alder logs partly surrounded it, protection against raids from ever-warring neighbors.

Blake and Connegan were led to a hut. Even Connegan had to bend almost double to enter the low doorway into the odorous, stuffy interior. Connegan sat down on the crude stone hearth in the center of the one-room hovel, pulled off his boots, nursed his blistered feet, and swore.

Blake looked thoughtfully at his satchel of turquoise stones. "I wonder why they let us keep 'em?" he muttered.

"That all you got to worry about?" grunted Connegan. "Try wonderin' how we're goin' to get out o' this fix." He stopped short as Teng-lu ducked in through the doorway.

The Ni-pa picked up the satchel, the faint, mocking smile stretching his flat lips again.

"You are brothers in trade—yes?" he queried. "How long?"

"Uh-huh, we're brothers," Connegan said, well knowing the Ni-pa meant partners. "Notice the family resemblance?"

The Ni-pa did not grasp the heavy irony; or, if he did, ignored it. Perhaps to his eyes they did look alike, just as most Orientals look alike to Occidental eyes.

"That is fortunate," he breathed.

"I have a trade to make. I will trade this"—he shook the satchel—"for ten repeating rifles and two man-loads of bullets."

"What in blazes!" snapped Blake. You've already got the only rifles we—"

"Those are not enough," interrupted the Ni-pa. "I want more, and many bullets. My men can be trained to use them. With such weapons we shall kill all our enemies. We shall own all the valley and the mountains around it, from the Burma border to up beyond Lo-ma-de."

"Quite a program," commented Blake.

Teng-lu's keen eyes were glowing now. Ambition lighted them.

"I shall be great!" he proclaimed. "With the turquoise and gold we take from the other villages, I shall buy more guns, train all my warriors how to use them. Then I shall lead them across the river, smash the cowardly Minchia tribes, and add the Mekong to my kingdom!"

"Quite a program," repeated Blake softly.

HIS eyes were hard. So were those of Connegan. The people of the villages to the south had shown friendliness, trust. And in the Mekong country were white missionaries and their families. Women and children.

"You will help me," stated Teng-lu. "You will bring in the guns. One of you will take the turquoise, buy the ten rifles and the bullets, and pack them in. The other will stay here a prisoner. If the one who goes does not come back in sixty days, the one who stays will die—and I will tell you now how the Lissoo makes death!"

He bent, pointed through the low doorway.

"You see that thing hanging to the stockade? That was a man, a Minchia trader who dared to come too close to the river. He was fastened to the stockade by a wooden spike driven up under the skin of his back. His feet did not touch the ground. We had sport with our

(Continued on page 104)

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(Continued from page 103)

cross-bows, driving arrows through his arms and legs. The arrows had only a little poison on them. Then we left him. He died slowly. For two days and nights he howled. The poison made his body swell—"

"Yeah," said Blake, his face pale. "Nice, eh, Pete?"

Connegan nodded, his fingernails digging into his palms.

The Ni-pa backed swiftly to the doorway, paused, stooped to retreat.

"When you have had rest, I shall come back," he murmured, his smile was a devil's grimace. "One will be ready to go."

"An' if not?" snapped Blake.

Teng-lu shrugged. His answer was flat and mocking. "There is room for more than one on the stockade!"

Blake looked at Peter Connegan. Connegan looked at Tersh Blake. "Well?" Both said it together.

"We're out on a limb," growled Blake. "I wonder—" He bent to stare outside.

Connegan shook his head. "Your wonderin' isn't so good today, Tersh. Not a chance. They're squattin' out there all round this hut, watchin' like buzzards."

They sat down. Blake stretched out, arms folded under his head, and stared unseeingly up at the thatched roof, crawly with bugs and insects. An hour went by.

"Y'know," observed Connegan, breaking the silence, "that Minchia must've died hard? Two days. Ugh!"

"He must've," agreed Blake.

Again they exchanged that look, half guilty, half hesitant.

"One of us could go, Tersh," Connegan finally blurted.

"An' not come back?"

"Uh-huh. Couldn't come back, not with rifles an' ammunition for that devil an' his pack to stage a slaughter. White people across the river. Lansell, Vanburgh, Doctor Lerue, an' their families. No, he couldn't come back."

"Might come back with some soldiers, maybe." Blake made the suggestion, knowing its weakness.

"Wouldn't do any good. They'd have plenty time to duck off an'—

Why beat round the bush, Tersh? One of us has got the chance to go. He'll have the turquoise, an' he can—make up some kinda yarn to tell Lola."

They got up, faced each other. In this minute they were partners again, trade-brothers, men who had cemented a very strong friendship through many a hazardous venture.

"Which one, Pete?" asked Blake.

"I—I dunno." Connegan's voice was husky. He managed a stiff, crooked grin. "You got any suggestions?"

He sat down again, to wipe the broken, bloody blisters on his feet with a torn rag from his shirt.

"That's a pretty bad pair o' feet," remarked Blake. "Told you those boots were no good when you bought 'em." He thrust a big hand into his pocket, drew out a soiled miniature deck of cards, and began shuffling them.

PETE CONNEGAN looked at the cards, nodded, and went on easing his tortured feet. A minute later he looked up again.

"Ain't they 'bout shuffled enough, Tersh?"

Blake shifted his eyes. "Oh—yeah. I was just thinking." He spread the cards fanwise, facedown on the dirt floor. "One pick, high card wins, eh? All right, take your pick, Pete."

Connegan reached out. For just a second his grimed hand hesitated. There was so much at stake. To the winner, life, a small fortune, Lola. To the loser, sixty days of waiting in a filthy, smelly, bug-ridden hovel, then two days of hell, followed by a death that would come as a blessing.

All on the picking of one card.

He chose a card, turned it over. It was the nine of clubs.

Blake's big hand almost covered the spread-out pasteboards. He fumbled for an instant, then turned up his card. The queen of diamonds.

They were quiet for a full minute. Blake cleared his throat.

"Sorry, Pete," he muttered.

"'S all right, Tersh." Connegan

stared at the floor, then his crooked grin came back.

"Can't expect to be handsome an' lucky too, eh? You might's well get started, before the Nipper changes his mind." He raised his voice to a shout. "Hey, Nipper!"

As footsteps padded outside they shook hands, the quick, hard grip of men who thus express what they cannot put into words.

"We had a lot o' good times, Tersh."

"Sure had, Pete. Listen, I'm goin' to—"

The Ni-pa's blue-clad figure blocked the low entrance. He came in, looked at the cards on the floor. His nod showed that he understood.

"Which?" he inquired.

"Me." Blake lifted the satchel by its strap, slung it over his broad shoulder. "S'long, Pete."

"S'long, Tersh."

Then Blake was gone, Teng-lu with him. Connegan followed them to the door, found himself staring at the grisly object hanging on the stockade, and abruptly turned his back. He limped back to the fire-blackened hearth and sat down.

Sixty days—then death. The thought kept repeating. He swore, tried to pin his thoughts on something else. The cards caught his eye. He gathered them up. Solitaire; he was going to be playing a lot of that during the next sixty days. Maybe he could teach one or two of the Lissoo guards how to play poker.

He came to himself with a start, found he was still shuffling the cards and staring. That wouldn't do this early in the game.

It occurred to him suddenly that there was something wrong about the feel of the deck. Too slim. He frowned. Heck, half the cards were missing. Tersh must have left some in his pocket.

Well, maybe he could manufacture some kind of solitaire, anyway. He thumped through the cards to see what he had. He had all the spot cards, it looked like, and the queen of diamonds. No other face cards.

(Continued on page 106)



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(Continued from page 105)

No aces. All the high cards were missing, except that queen of diamonds. Queer.

It was minutes before he got it. It hit him like a jolting blow. He shot to his feet, the cards scattering to the floor. It couldn't be! Tersh do a thing like that? But there were the cards.

"Stripped the deck—palmed the queen! That's what he did! Cheated me, left me here to—" The sudden savage lifting of his voice brought bony Lissoo heads poking through the entrance. "The two-timin'—"

STRIDING ahead of Teng-lu Tersh Blake heard faintly the commotion of voices in the village half a mile back. The dense growth and thick trees muffled it, but the sound carried up here to the higher ground.

He shook his head slightly. Dirty trick to play on Pete. No help for it, though. Pete was the logical one to stay behind, with his bad feet and all. Small, tucked out, lame, he couldn't do what a big man could.

Couldn't have convinced him, the fiery little scrapper, of that, though. He thought he was as good as any man, come fight, frolic or women.

And there was another reason for electing himself as the one to go. Connegan always lost his bearings in the dark. Couldn't follow a trail, and this trail would puzzle a Sioux Indian.

With lowering darkness came intermittent rain and gusts of wind that rustled the tree-tops. At the crest of a peak, Teng-lu called a halt.

"When it is light the bridge can be seen from here," he said. "You will come to it if you go straight toward that high crag that looks like a thumb. I leave you now."

The crag thrust up against the night sky miles away, barely discernible. The river could not be seen at all, but its roar was loud, even at this distance.

"Draw a line on that high crag, eh?" Blake nodded, and unhitched the satchel strap to rub his shoulder.

"Say, do your fighting men know what you're planning for em?"

"They know nothing. I tell them nothing." The Ni-pa's tone was laced with aloof contempt. "Does a general tell plans to his men? When the time comes they will obey me, just as they obey me now."

"You got things pretty much your own way," Blake drawled, and hoisted the satchel again. "You just do things, give orders, an' they don't ask any questions, huh?"

"I am the Ni-pa," said Teng-lu simply. The fanatic glow in his black eyes showed through the darkness and the pelting rain. "Some day—soon—many more men will fear me, bow to me."

"That," breathed Blake, "is just dandy!"

He swung the stone-laden satchel in a vicious arc. Teng-lu's golden cross-bow hit the stony ground with a dull clank.

Both men snatched for it. Teng-lu, snarling like a mad dog, whipped an arrow from the leather quiver at his belt, and jabbed. Blake dodged, swinging the satchel again, aiming an upward, lifting stroke, at the yellow streak of split bamboo. The satchel smashed against the arrow, swept it upward, and Teng-lu uttered a gasping cry. His tall, blue-clad body swayed and he pitched sideward to his knees.

For a few seconds he balanced, making queer sounds, then went limp. Under his chin, driven deep into the neck, the long sliver of poisoned bamboo looked sinister and wicked.

Forcing down his repugnance Blake bent over the tumbled figure, and rolled it clear of the golden cross-bow.

* * * * *

"Yeah, it's gold, all right."

Tersh Blake shifted uncomfortably on the divan. Lola Lecorse's soft silk cushions always gave him a faint feeling of uneasiness; in his opinion they weren't made to sit on, but just to look at.

"You can see where the bow was fixed on the end," he went on. "I

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broke it off. That slot was for the trigger thing. Well, as I was saying, this Teng-lu bird got the arrow right in his own neck, an' he—"

"Horrible!" murmured Lola absently, and weighed the long stick of gold in both her white hands. "Is it worth much?"

"Huh? Oh—that there? Yeah, 'bout two thousand dollars. Four hundred quid, English money. Fellow offered that for it this morning. Well, Pete was back in the village, o' course, hollering his head off, see? Joke of it was, he didn't know I'd planned to—"

"And did you bring back all those diamonds?" Lola lifted her big blue eyes from the fascinating stick of gold. "Have you got them with you, Tersh?"

"TURQUOISE, not diamonds," corrected Blake. He was finding out what many another man had found out; that it was a bit difficult to tell a straight story to some women without being side-tracked.

"Turquoise? Oh! I thought you said diamonds." A shade of disappointment edged Lola's voice. "Ain't —isn't that a sorta bone stuff?"

Blake shook his head. "Mebbe it's tortoise-shell you're thinking of. Turquoise is kinda greenish blue. It's a stone." He cleared his throat. "So I took everything offa Teng-lu—"

"Valuable?" Lola brightened up again.

"Well, he had some silver ornaments an' things, but none of it worth much, 'cept that cross-bow. He was— Oh, you mean the turquoise? Yeah, they're plenty valuable. Got an agent selling 'em on commission right now, here in Rangoon." Blake mopped his forehead. "Le's see, where was I? Yeah, Pete was hollering bloody murder. I heard him when—"

"He was a funny little guy, wasn't he? That red hair of his." Lola nursed the metal stock on her knees. "So he got left behind, eh? I bet he hollered, all right. That's the best

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thing those Irish do is holler.
'Specially the little 'uns."

She moved closer to the big man, let her flimsily-clad shoulder touch his. But she kept hold of the golden cross-bow.

"I don't like little guys," she confided. "I like 'em big and strong, and dark. And smart, too. I'm sure glad it was you came back 'stead of Pete. Gee, all those turquoise're yours, eh? You want me to keep this old bow-thing, Tersh? Gee, thanks! You gonna stay—"

* * * * *

BLAKE swung into the crowded waterfront bar, picked his way to the corner table and sat down.

Pete Connegan quit fiddling with the miniature deck of soiled cards. An hour before, he and Blake had matched cuts—with all fifty-two cards present—for the honor of first calling on a lady. He swept Blake's face with quick scrutiny.

"Well? Do I call next, or—"

Blake poured himself a generous drink from Connegan's bottle before answering, and downed it. "Suit yourself. Better not, though. She might figger you're a ghost. Y'see, she thinks you didn't come back."

Connegan squinted. "You told her that? Didn't you tell her how you come back to the hut in the dark, dressed in the Nipper's duds, an' got me? Whatsa matter—got modest, or something? Heck, I'll tell her! I'll tell her how you had to carry me across that rope bridge, with all those damned Lissoos yelling after us—"

"I tried to tell her all that." Blake poured himself another drink. "Got as far as telling her 'bout that cross-bow stock being gold, an' her interest kinda wandered off. I let her keep that cross-bow. Keepsake, she called it."

Connegan got up, a grin splitting his nut-brown face.

"No, I wouldn't advise calling on her," said Blake. Slowly and deliberately, his eyes on the table, he handed it out. "She told me I was smart, leaving you behind. Best

(Concluded on page 110)

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(Concluded from page 109)

thing the Irish do, she says, is holier. She don't like the Irish, anyway, 'specially the little guys. Funny little Irish red-head, she called you. It was just about then"—he ended thoughtfully—"that I left."

Connegan thumped back into his chair. His eyes widened, narrowed, then blazed. His face went white, red. Even his hair seemed to quiver and bristle, as the full sense of the words sank in and boiled up a Hibernian kettle of outraged pride, bubbling indignation, and choking wrath.

"She—she said that?" His bellow made heads turn.

Blake nodded. "She wanted some o' the turquoise. But I figgered that gold thingummy was plenty enough keepsake from both of us. We're a pair o' dumb mugs, Pete. Have a drink."

Two bottles later, Connegan said carefully: "That boat we were looking at this morning. Nice little bottom, eh?"

"Neat an' sound," agreed Blake. "Cheap, too. Give her new riffin', an' she'd be a daisy."

"We might," said Peter Connegan, "take another look at her. I was thinking—"

"So was I," said Tertius Mullarney Blake.

They scraped back their chairs and went out arm in arm.

THE GLOBE TROTTER

(Continued from page 6)

troops—is the most amazing fact about this amazing and awful year.

For one thing, there was no leadership. There was, very certainly, a plan: but it was a vague plan, and was executed in various places in different ways by men who thought first of their own personal ambitions and afterward of the common cause: men such as the Nana Sahib, heir of the Peishwas, who fancied himself the restorer of the Mahratta power which once had ruled all the west and center of Hindustan. Of all the rebel leaders, perhaps the most resolute and resourceful, as well as the most ruthless, was the Queen of Jhansi, who afterward fell, fighting in a trooper's armor, in the fierce swirl and cut-and-thrust of a cavalry melee.

But there was another reason for the sepoy failure, a greater reason: and that was the quality of the British officers in the

key places. Some of these failed when the test came—like Colvin at Agra, or Hewitt at Meerut. But for the most part they acted, swiftly and resolutely and without reckoning the cost or even the possibility of failure—the only kind of action which truly impresses your Oriental, be he Arab, or Japanese or Hindu or Pathan. The two Lawrences, Nicholson, Havelock, Edwardes, Neill, Outram, Hodson of Hodson's Horse, Colin Campbell, Hugh Rose, Eyre—the Red Year wrote the names of all these and many more bright on the roll of Britain's heroes. And their spirit so won the admiration of the chiefs of the Punjab, the fierce and warlike Sikhs who had but just felt the weight of Britain's sword, that these followed them as one man, as did the no less gallant little Gurkhas from the mountains of Nepal.

The tale of Neill's terrible vengeance for the massacre of Cawnpore as related in the story is true enough. James Neill was a hard man. They called him Neill the Avenger, and spoke his name in whispers; for many a year afterward. There was scarce a tree along his line of march but bore human fruit for crows to pluck. And there was a tragic sequel which may be of interest:

On March 14, 1887, that fine native cavalry regiment, the Central India Horse, was on parade at Augur. The commanding officer was Major A. H. S. Neill, son of the General Neill of Cawnpore fame. Just as the regiment was formed, a sowar (native trooper) rode suddenly from the ranks straight at Major Neill. Drawing a pistol as he came up to his commander, he shot him dead from his horse. Then, without making any resistance, he surrendered himself into the hands of the other officers, saying that what he had done had been ordained from the days of his infancy.

The sowar's name was Mazar Ali; his father had been Suffur Ali, a defadar (sergeant) of the mutinous 2nd Light Cavalry of the Bengal Army. He had suffered under Neill's order that those proven to have taken part in the massacre must clean

(Continued on page 112)

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(Continued from page 111)

a square foot of the blood-stained floor with their tongues before being hanged. On the very scaffold, Suffur Ali had cried out to the crowd begging that some one would take word to his family at a nearby village, laying upon his infant son the command that he avenge his father's shame, in the fullness of time, either upon General Neil himself or any of his descendants. And this vengeance Mazar Ali, as he felt bound to do, executed thirty years later. Truly India is a land in which strange things may happen!

As for General Neill himself, he fell, sword in hand, at the very gate of the Residency of Lucknow and in the very moment of victory, leading his beloved Madras Fusiliers to the relief of the besieged garrison of that place. His death took place but a few weeks after the time of my story.

The fate of the Nana Sahib is shrouded in obscurity. He is said to have fled, after long pursuit and many wanderings, into the wilderness of the Himalayas and there to have perished miserably of exposure and hunger. But it is also whispered that the Nana Sahib was not the fugitive who was so long pursued, at all; that he escaped beyond the seas, or remained hidden in India. Of all this there is no proof, any more than there is proof of that other rumor, on which this story is partly based, that he, too, striving to escape in disguise, fell victim to Neill's vengeance at the Bibi-garh of Cawnpore. If I might choose, I would prefer to believe the last; surely a fitting end for such a monster.

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have stirred you to your very depths; especially so because of the chaos that is bleeding China of today. That the world holds, by and large, no sympathy for the expansion activities of Japan is neither here nor there. Undoubtedly, Nippon has its own internal stress, unrest, and problems. The point is that it pierces the heart and revolts the mind that this ancient and venerable land of a gentle civilization lies trampled and war-torn beneath the feet of so-called modern progress.

Looking Ahead

While we are chatting of China, that land of quaint charm which produced a sage for the ages among other notable things—Confucius, let's peer ahead. Next issue brings us a savory and sizeable morsel in the novel, **SHADOWS OVER CHINA**, by Richard B. Sale. *Globe Trotter* Sale has sailed far along the seas of literature and high adventure since he first embarked. His latest book—**IS A SHIP BURNING?**—has virility, vividness, and consummate craftsmanship. Dick brings a freshness and vigorous style to letters that is as crisp as a snappy winter morning, as absorbing as a pet problem, and as breathless as a roller-coaster ride.

We are proud to remind you globe trotters that we printed the first magazine story Dick Sale wrote. And you'll like this one we're bringing you next month. We promise.

TROUBLE SHOOTER is a dandy western novelette by the old reliable Chuck Martin. And there are others. You are going to enjoy the next issue of **THRILLING ADVENTURES** to the fullest. But don't let it completely make you forget the spring plowing, round-up, gardening, or house-cleaning.

See you next month.

—THE GLOBE TROTTER.

P. S. A partial list of members of **THE GLOBE TROTTERS' CLUB** will appear in the next issue. Meanwhile, keep those application coupons and letters of comment, criticism and suggestion, rolling in!

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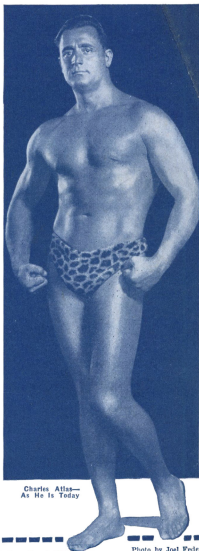
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