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# THRILLING ADVENTURES

FEATURING

## FLAME OF THE PEACOCK

By S. GORDON  
GURWIT



A THRILLING  
PUBLICATION

FIGHT  
FOR  
FREEDOM  
By JACKSON  
COLE

# The Money Making Marvel of the Age!

## PICTURE RING SELLS TO EVERYONE!

SAMPLE  
RING

From Any  
Photo You  
Send Only

48¢

Hand Tinted in Natural Life Like Colors. 10c Extra

It's here! The hottest, most sensational, most gripping selling idea of the age! THE PICTURE RING — the ring men and women everywhere, rich and poor, young and old want to wear and keep their loved ones close. Why? Because on this beautiful ring is permanently reproduced any photograph, snapshot or picture of some loved one. Yes, reproduced clearly and sharply and made part of the ring itself so it can't rub off, come off or fade off. This sensational new idea is making an unbelievable hit. Men and women everywhere, without an hour's selling experience — are taking orders of orders a day and making dollars profit on the bargain. And now, in your territory YOU can cash in big, every day, with this exciting sure-fire profit-maker and earn money so easily, it will seem like play to them.

## SELLS TO EVERYONE! A Treasure Remembrance Its Value Beyond Price!

Once women carried pictures of their loved ones in lockets; and men carried them in watch cases. Those days are gone, but the desire to carry the portrait of a loved one is as strong as ever. Not until the amazing secret process for transferring pictures to rings was discovered, was it possible to revive this great old custom and to satisfy the hunger of every human being to express again this grandest of all sentiments. How mothers and fathers will welcome this opportunity to wear a ring with the most precious setting of all — a picture of their beloved child. How happy every man and woman will be to keep alive the memory of a departed one by carrying with them always, night and day, this beautiful Picture Ring.

## Order Your Sample Ring Now! You Don't Risk a Penny!

Never before has anything like this come your way. No competition from anyone — no looking for prospects (they are all around you) — no carrying a big stock or putting any money into goods. Simply showing your sample ring a few times a day, if you only start with your friends and neighbors, will be enough to give you an endless chain of orders. We cut away all red tape and are ready to send you a SAMPLE RING at occasionally low special wholesale price of only 48c. The minute you take it out of its all beautiful Gift Box you are ready to go after the orders. Rush the coupon below for YOUR sample ring NOW! That's all the effort you need. It will do all your selling for you. And we make it easy for you to obtain this sample ABSOLUTELY FREE OF A PENNY COST under our liberal offer.



PICTURE RING CO.

DEPT. B-26

12 TH. & JACKSON STREET  
CINCINNATI, OHIO



## Beautiful Permanent Picture Ring Made

From Any Photo or Picture

For only \$1.50 retail—look what you offer! A made-to-measure cost-like ring adorned with the most precious setting in the world—a reproduction of the picture of a loved one. The ring itself can't tarnish.

It will wear forever with ordinary care. The picture of the loved one is clearly, sharply reproduced with surprising faithfulness and becomes an inseparable part of the ring. It can't wear off, rub off, or fade off.

## Make Pockets Full of Dollars Just Wearing Ring!

Can you imagine a more novel, more unusual gift than the Picture Ring? How can any man or woman find a more beautiful way to express loving sentiment than giving a wife, a child, a parent, a friend, a sweetheart, a Picture Ring with the donor's portrait expertly reproduced? What a surprise! 10 orders a day is an easy goal—25 orders a day are not too much to expect.

## SEND NO MONEY!

Hundreds of customers write they wouldn't take a fortune for their rings if they couldn't get others. \$3.50 and even \$10.00 would be a small price for the PICTURE RING—but as a special offer we send you the beautiful PICTURE RING, made from any photo or picture you send for only 48c! Don't wait. Rush the coupon at once for the sample ring on our NO RISK plan and see for yourself what a whirlwind money maker this is for you. ACT RIGHT NOW!

MOTHER

HUSBAND

BABY



## SEND YOUR RING SIZE NOW

PICTURE RING CO.

Dept. B-26,  
12th and Jackson Sts.,  
Cincinnati, Ohio.

RING SIZE

Enclosed is photo. Please rush my Individually made Picture Ring and mailing equipment. Will pay postman 6c plus few cents postage. It is understood that if I am not entirely satisfied, I can return ring within 5 days and you will refund my money in full. Hand Tinted in Natural Life Like Colors. 10c Extra.

Name, .....

Address, .....

City, ..... State, .....

NO MONEY RISK! Rush away today at our low wholesale price of 48c per ring. (Just 10c extra for hand tinted color.) Rush the coupon at once for the sample ring on our NO RISK plan and see for yourself what a whirlwind money maker this is for you. ACT RIGHT NOW!



# If You Had Only 10 Days to Live

**S**UPPOSE the doctors told you that you had only ten *days* more to live! What would you give to have another ten **YEARS** of gloriously healthy life? "Anything in the world," you would say. But, unfortunately, it would then be too late. **NOW**, while you still have many more years to live, is the time to fortify yourself against later troubles.

Are you getting paunchy around the waistline—worried about constipation, heartburn, short-wind, nervousness, continued tiredness? Or are you too thin, underweight, anaemic—always getting hacking coughs and colds, frequent headaches? Then here are some interesting facts it will pay you to read:

## Constipation Is Only ONE of the World's Plagues

One of the most common ailments today is Constipation—so common that many people do not realize the serious results of it. Just think what would happen if the sewers of any city were clogged and did not drain out daily. Disease and death would break out everywhere! That is exactly what begins to happen in your system when you are chronically constipated. Yet to end Constipation is not very difficult providing you have no organic ailment.

But Constipation—common as it is—is only **ONE** of the world's plagues! Another is just the result of pure carelessness—many of us simply let our general physical condition "go to seed." We "take our bodies for granted"! First, we may begin to notice that we are getting a "little heavy around the waist." We do nothing about it. Suddenly we are amazed to find that we have a real "pot-belly." To our dismay, we find we are **FAT**! And no wonder! . . . because **all** of our processes are slowing up, due to lack of attention and healthful stimulation. Just carelessness. We get nervous, jumpy. Flabby, sluggish. Short-winded. Pepless. We begin to look old, feel old. Yet are **NOT** old in years! Even our hair gets lifeless, caked with dandruff. It starts to fall out and—another shock!—**DOES NOT COME BACK IN!**

## "You Have Made a NEW MAN of Me"

I have helped over many thousands of men (of all ages and in all parts of the world) **WIN OUT** over conditions like these. Men write me, saying: "You have made a New Man of me!"

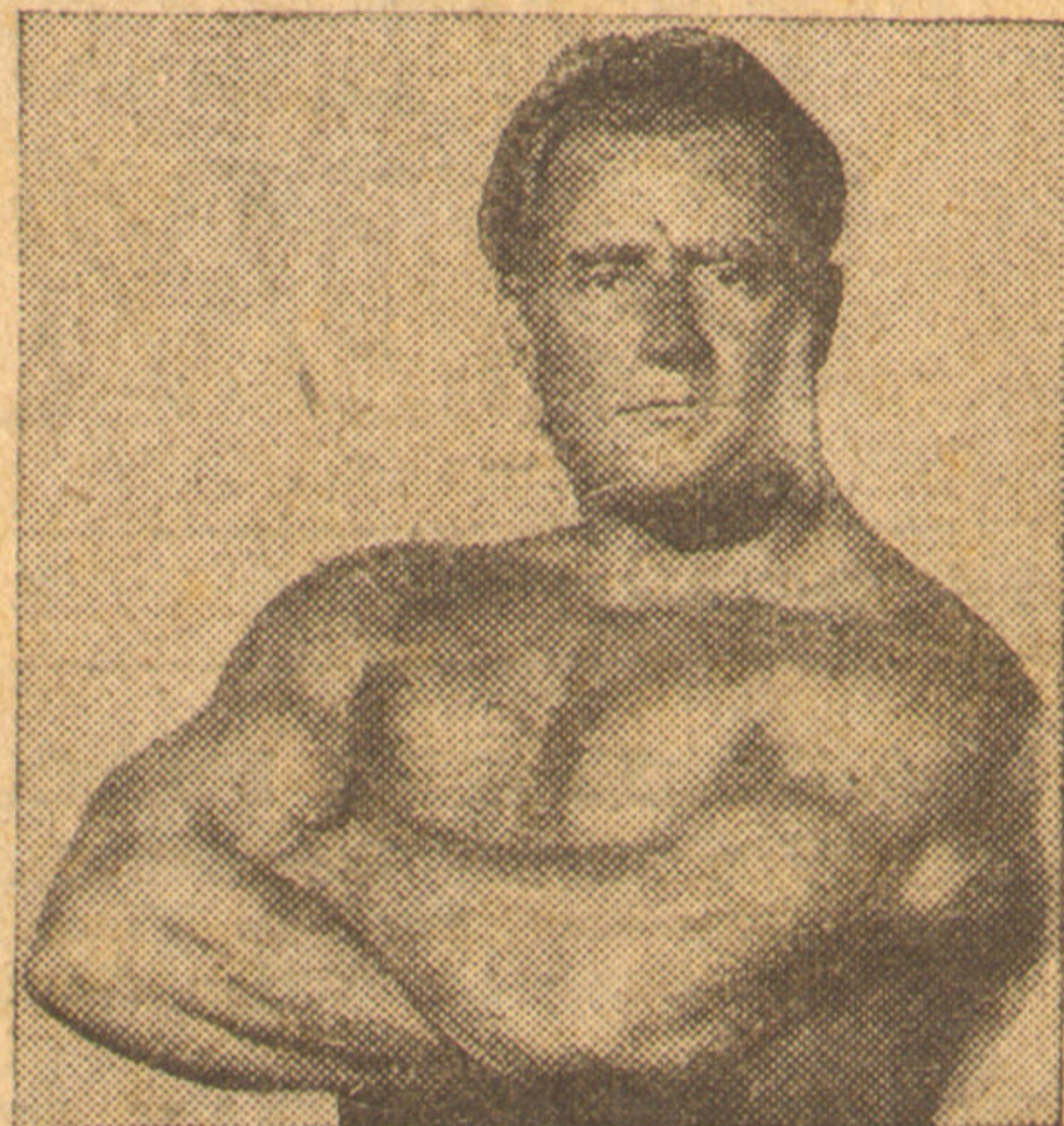
My records show, for example, that I have helped relieve of Constipation nine out of ten of my clients. My method of body building tones up your entire system—actually overhauling your body. I give exercise and life to those numerous little-used muscles in your body that begin to shrivel up and atrophy. I do not believe in any weights, springs or other old-fashioned, dangerous methods. My system of Dynamic Tension is natural and effective, and may easily be applied right in the privacy of your own home!

## FREE 48-PAGE BOOK

To you who are interested in adding years of health and happiness to your life I would like to send a copy of my book telling how I have helped thousands of others.

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Don't you think this is worth investigating. For the mere cost of a postage stamp! Just write your name and address carefully on the coupon here and I shall immediately send you a copy of my book, "EVERLASTING HEALTH AND STRENGTH," and full particulars. Of course this places you under no obligation, and I also want you to know that no one will call upon you to try to sell you anything. Merely address: Charles Atlas, Dept. 77-F, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.



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Holder of the Title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man"

Author of "Everlasting Health and Strength"

of which 972,000 copies have been distributed!

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"You have done more for me in one month than others, at 10 times the cost, did in one year. Today at 51, I feel younger than I did at 31."—P. A., Chicago, Ill.

"Has given me a new and finer outlook on life. Being 'body-conscious' is certainly much more constructive than just enduring poor health. I have lots more pep, and, after being cursed with constipation for many years, I find it gone."—L. C. C., Phila., Pa.

"My nervous troubles have vanished and constipation is a thing of the past."—G. T. F., Ohio.

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# THRILLING ADVENTURES

Vol. XXX, No. 1

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

June, 1939

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(See Coupon on Page 111)

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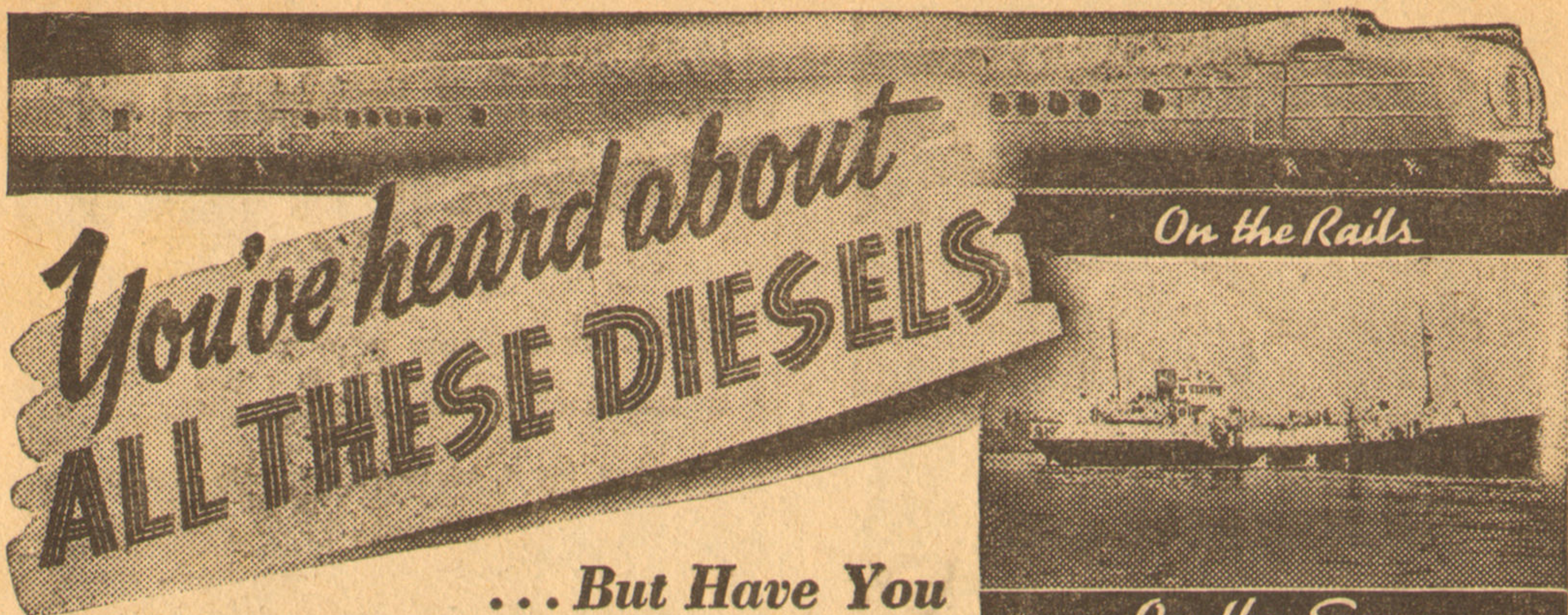
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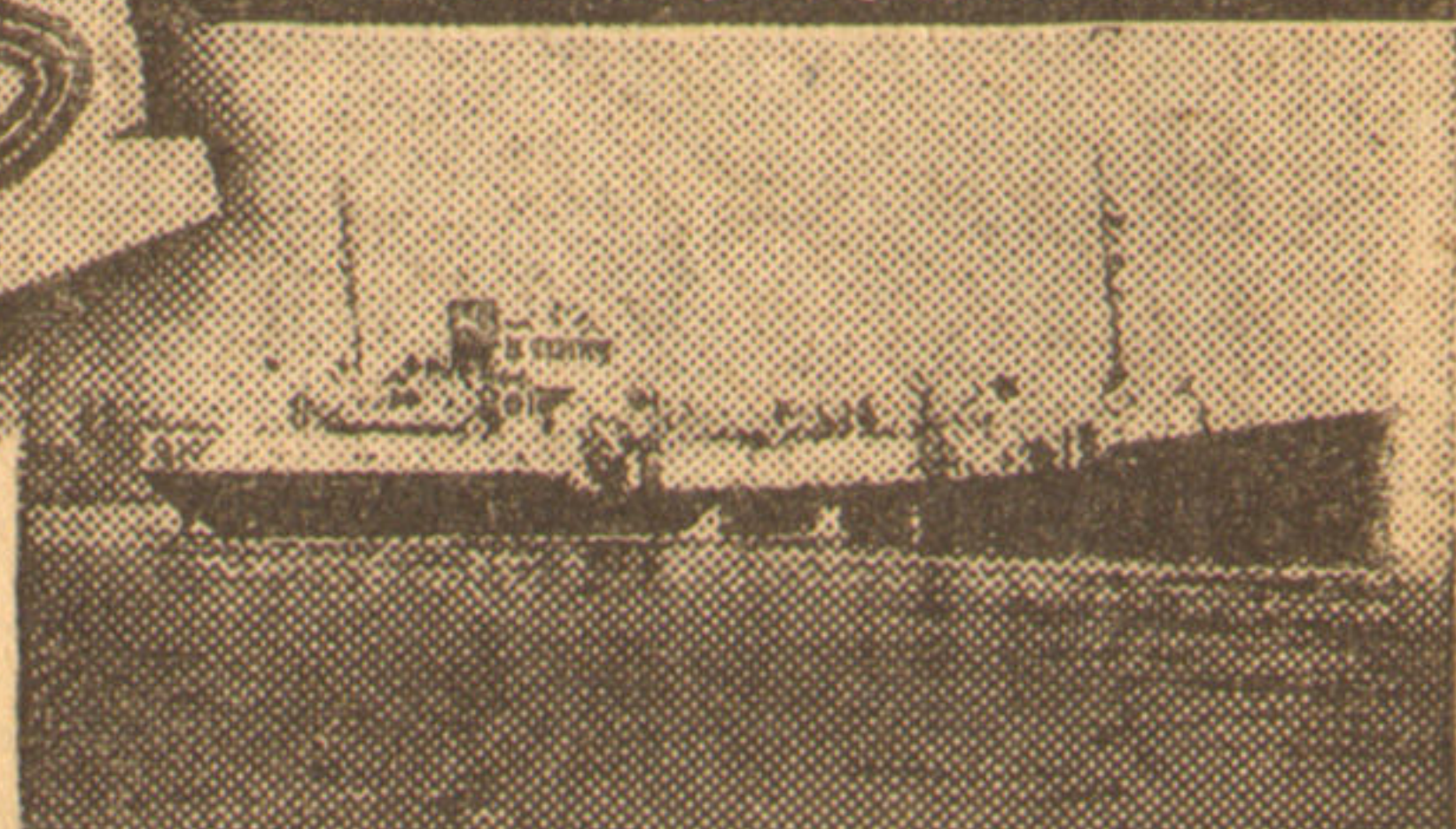




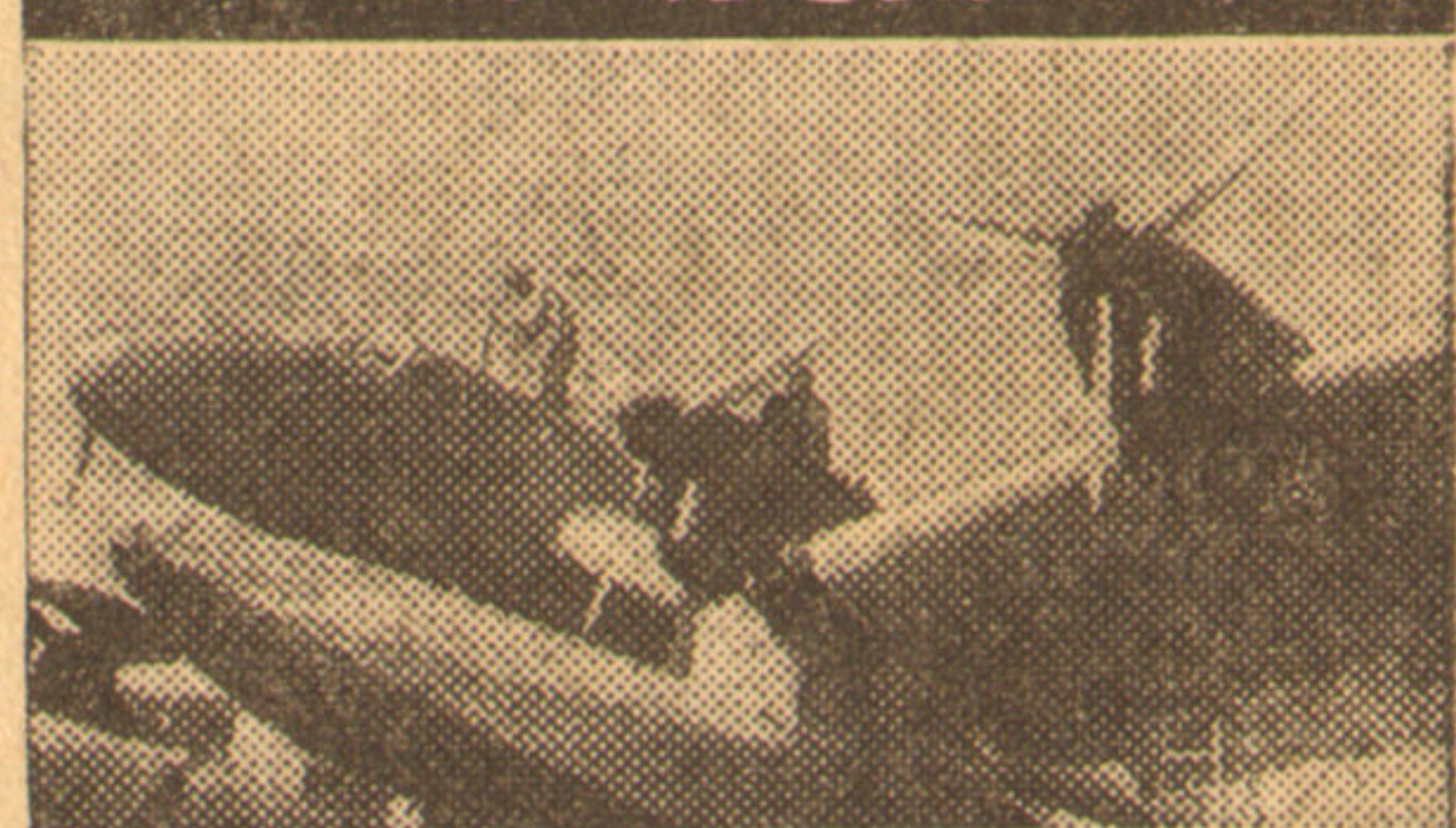
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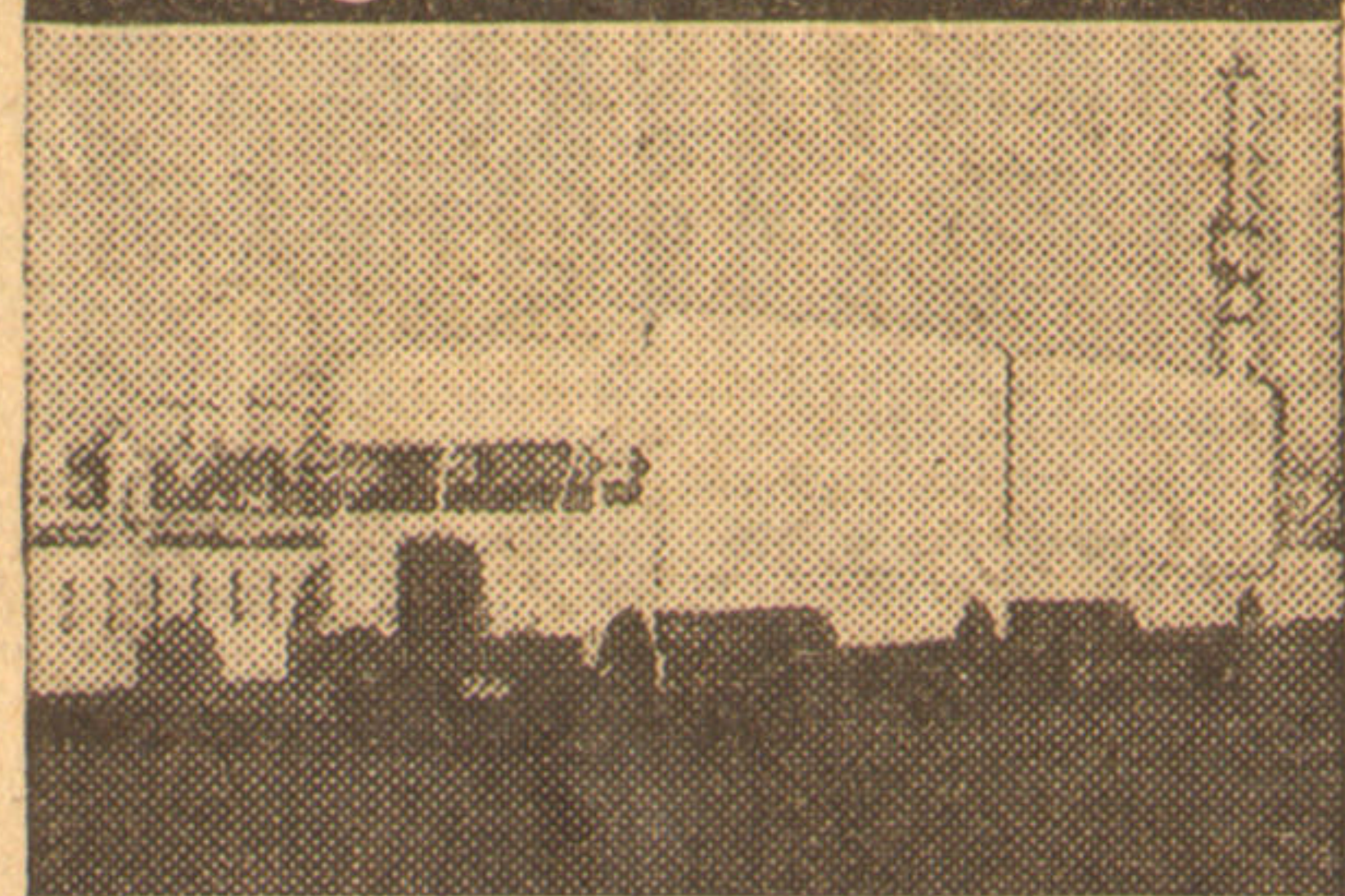
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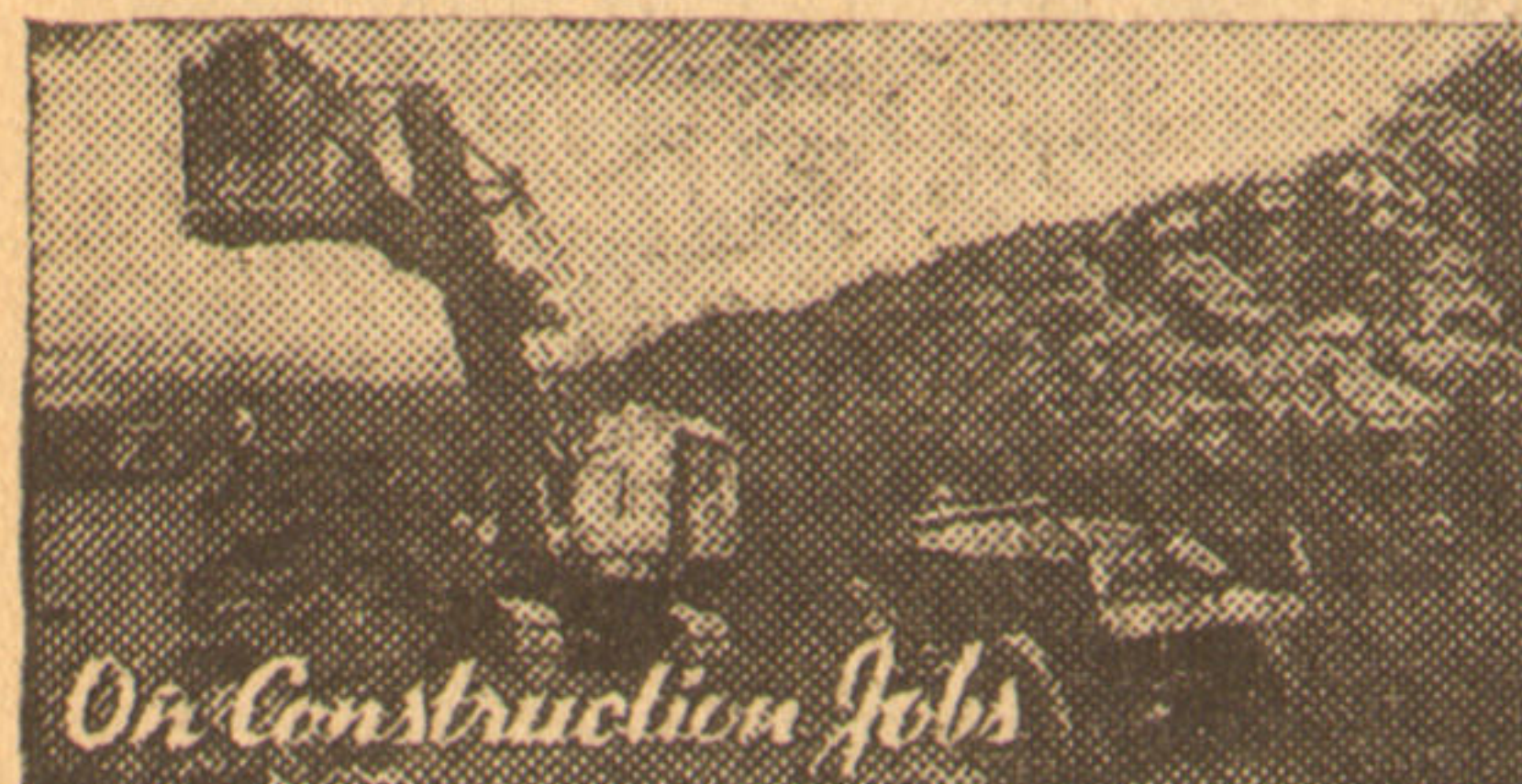
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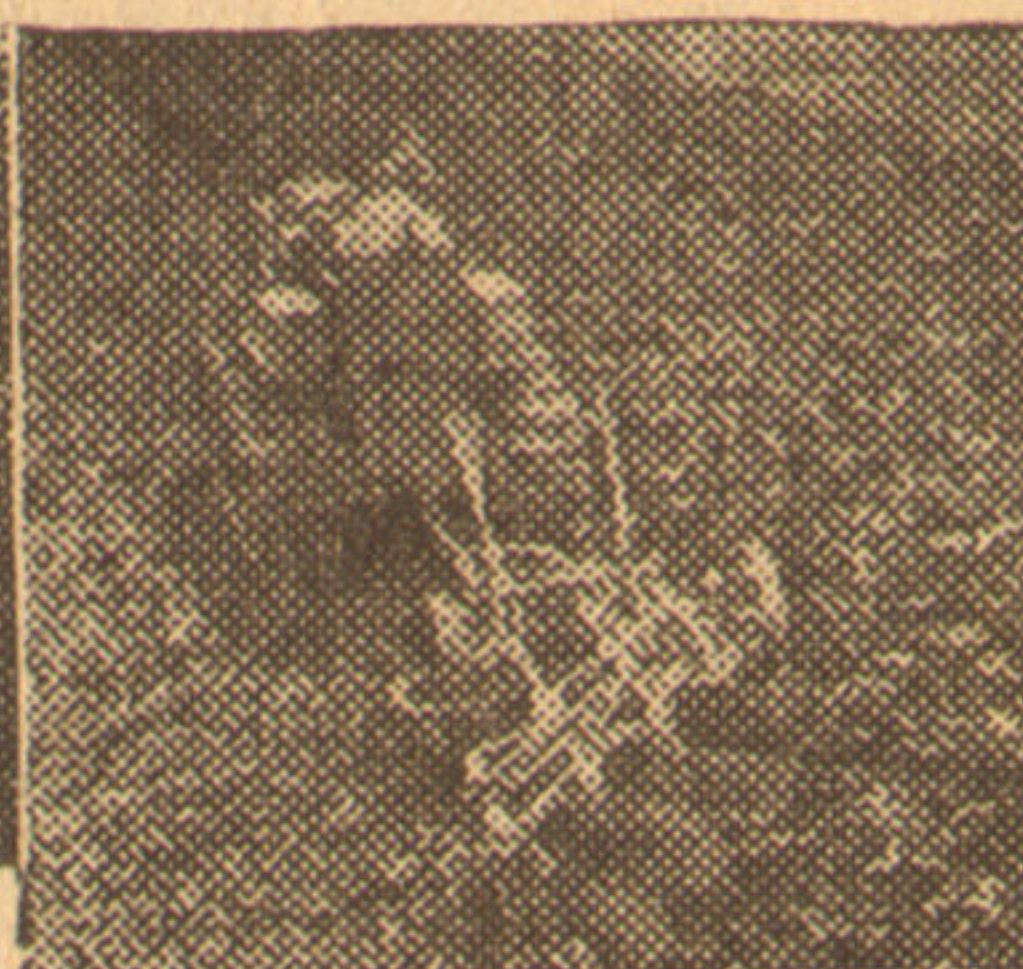
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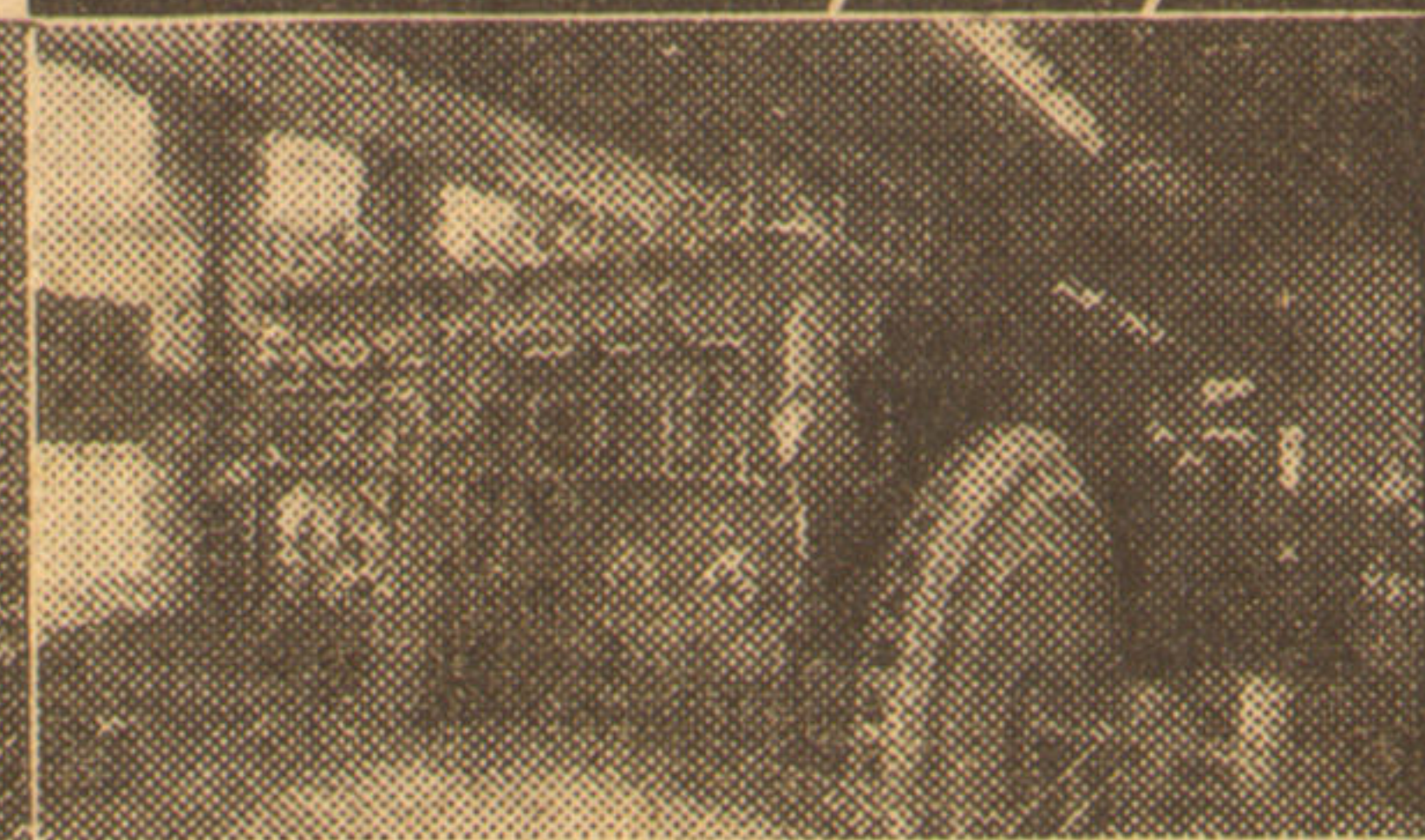
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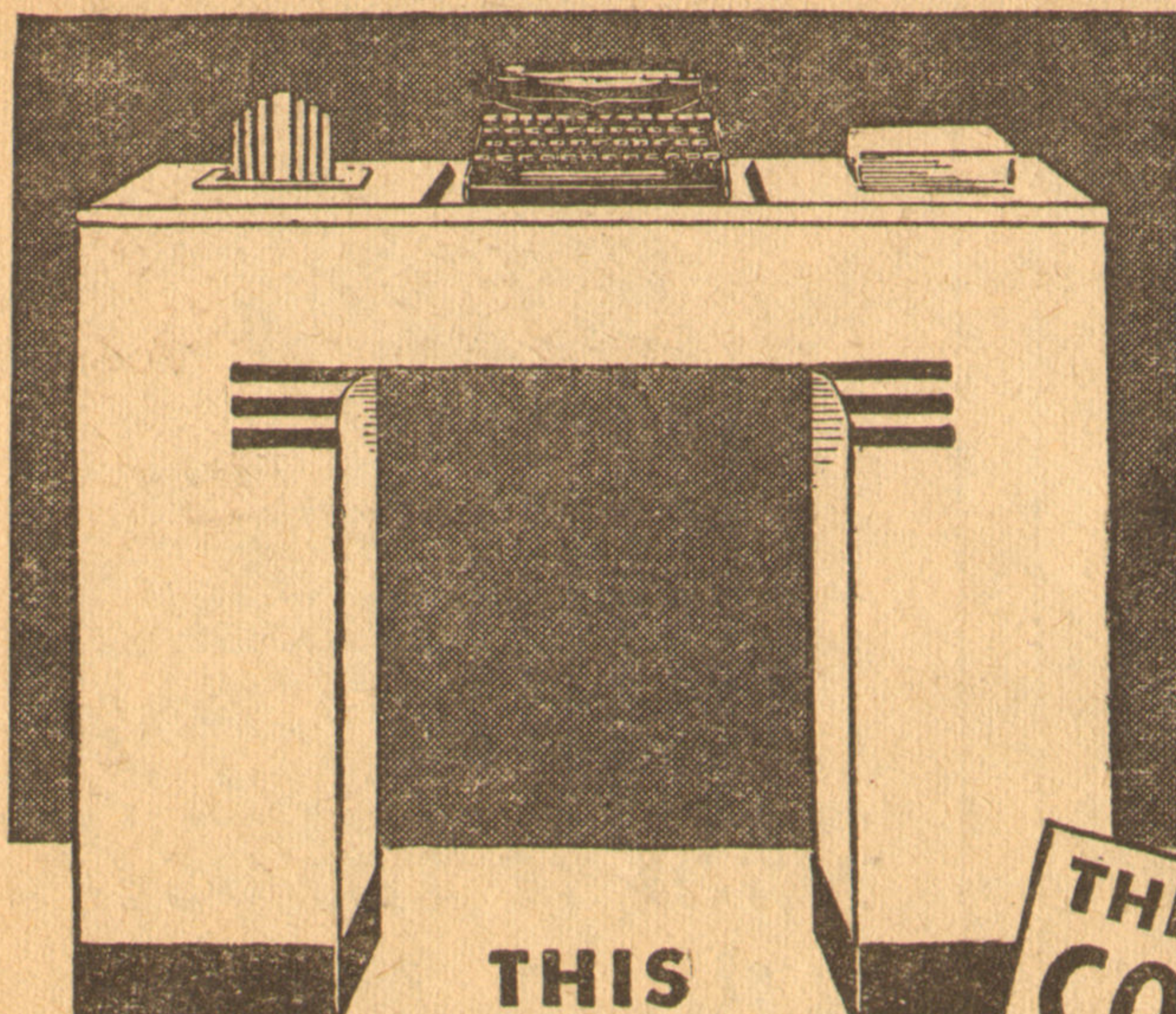
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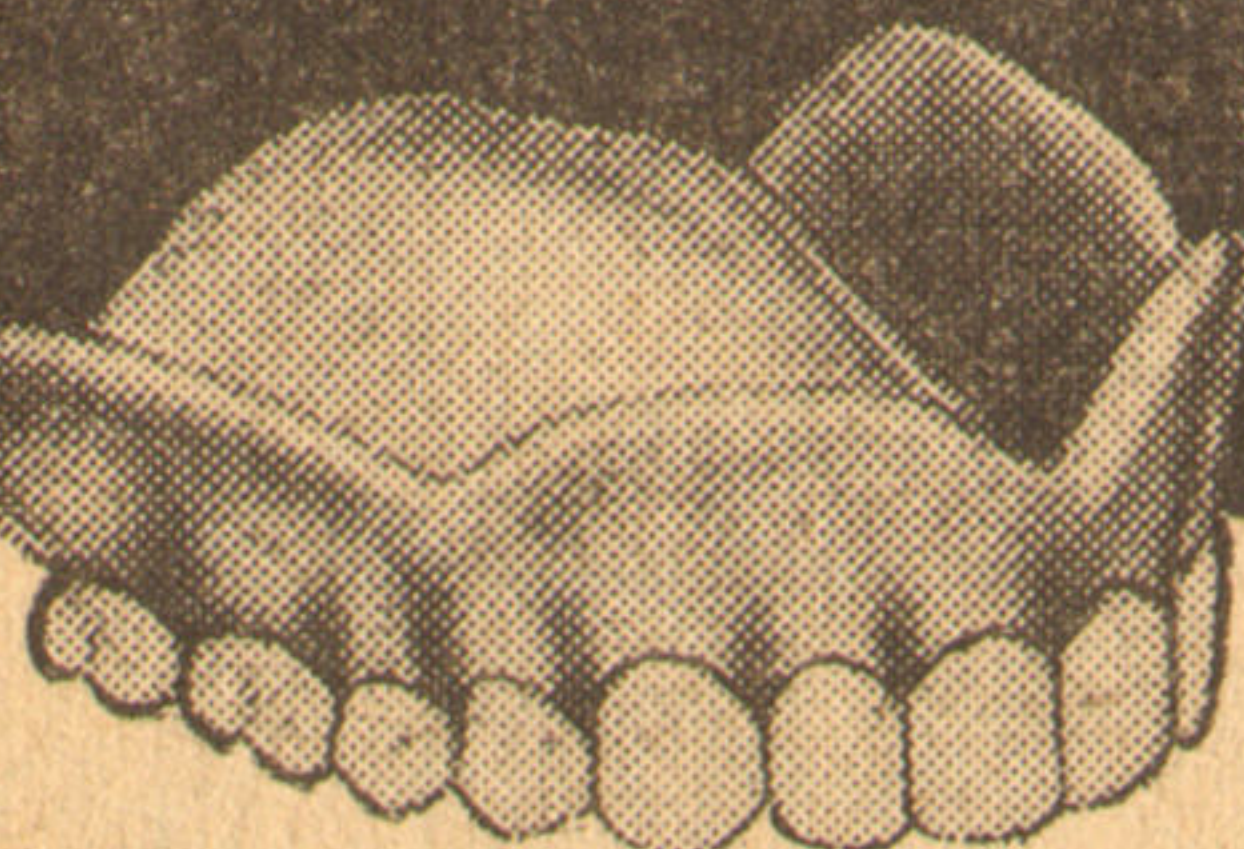


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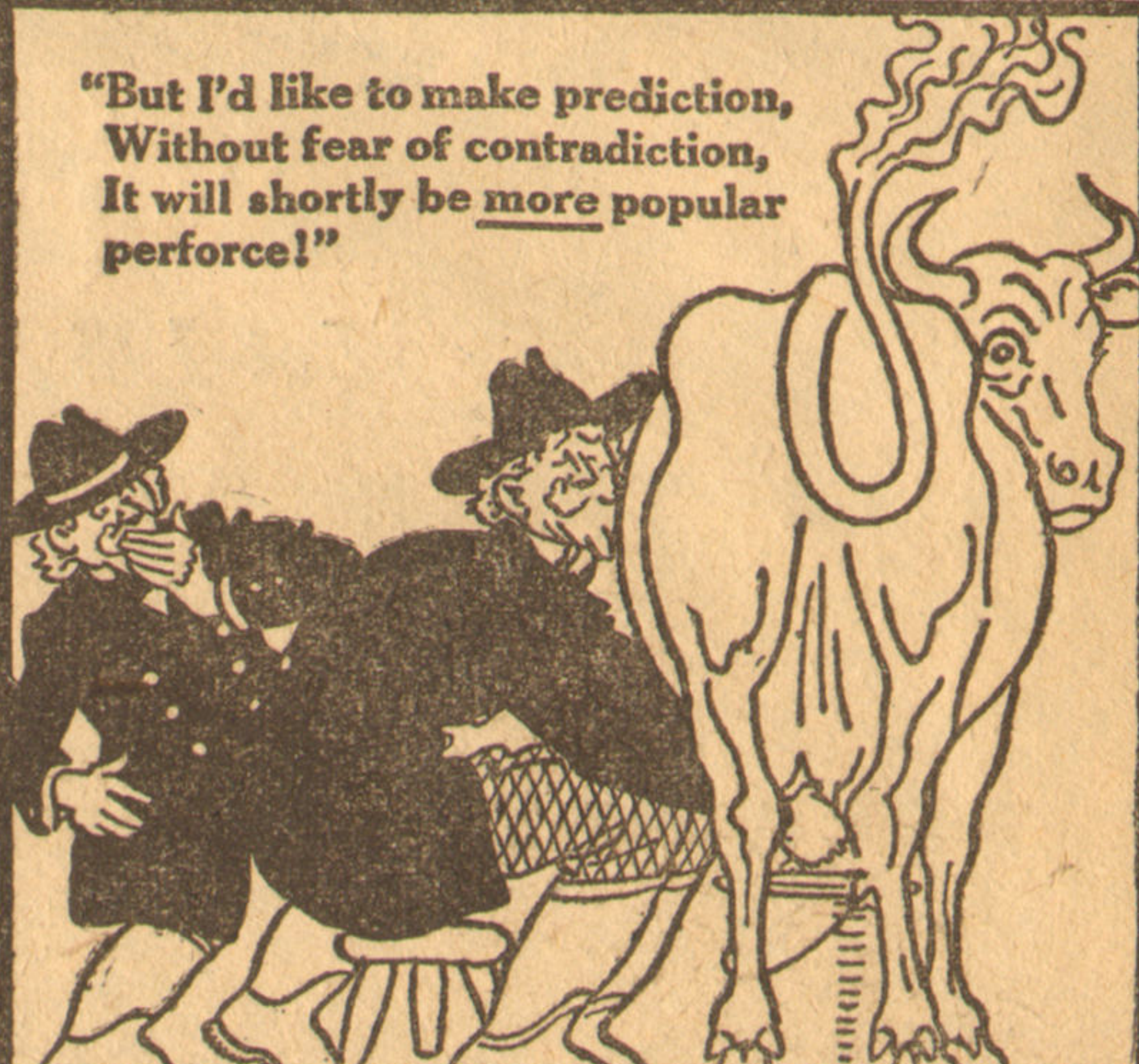


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"Yes, Mr. Moore,  
Yes, Mr. Moore,  
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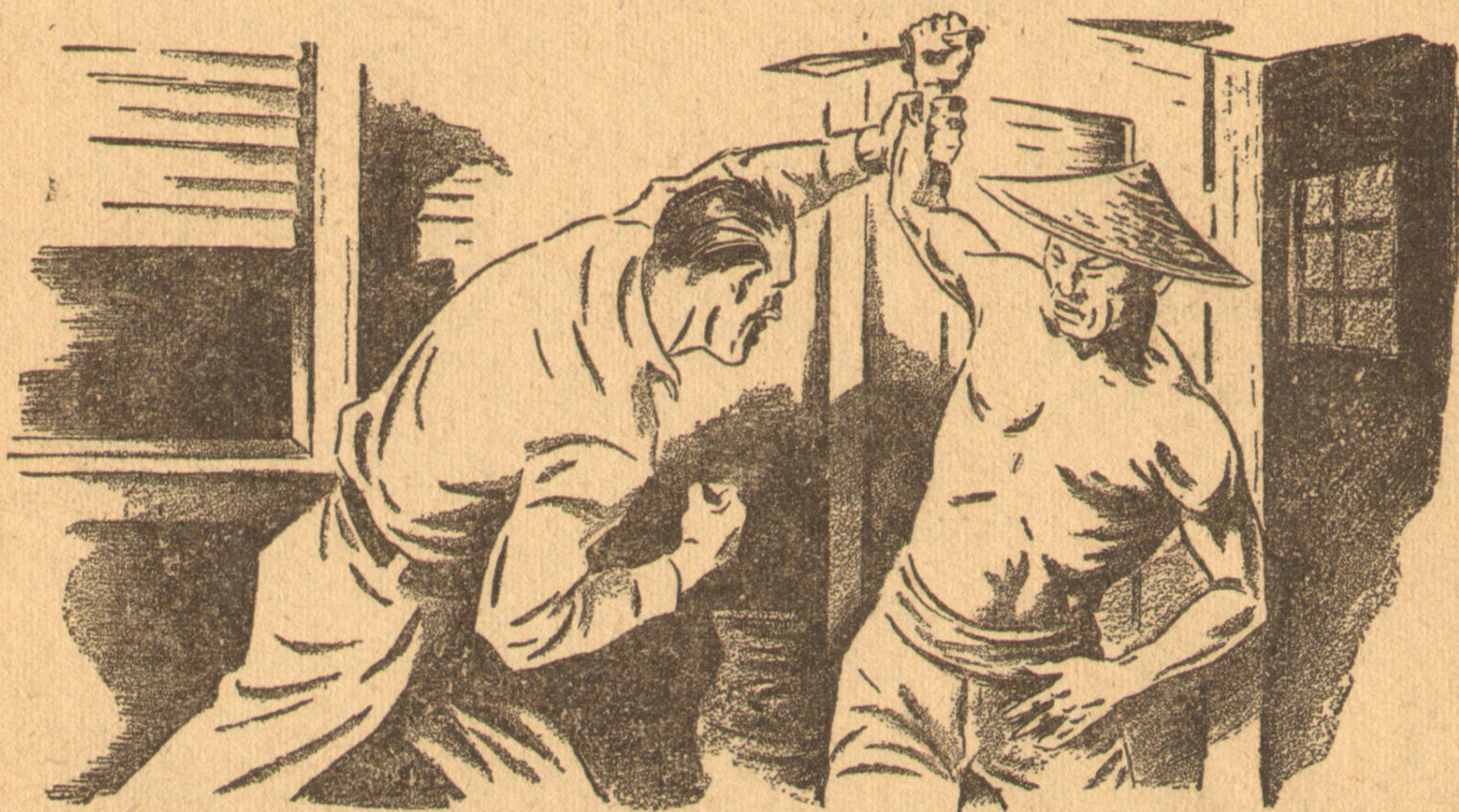
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# Flame of the Peacock



*Thorne caught the knife in time and drove a right to the coolie's solar plexus*

*Jim Thorne Fights Ruthless Spies as He Speeds on a Mission of Peril and Mystery in War-torn China!*

By S. GORDON GURWIT

*Author of "Floating Gold," "A Deal in Dragons," etc.*

## CHAPTER I

### *The Trailing Rickshaw*

**J**IM THORNE became aware of the rickshaw behind him in a sudden, intuitive flash, as is the way of a man whose life depends on quick observation.

He had skirted the International Settlement to this part of the Bund with an uneasy, growing sense of being followed. He paused to light a cigarette in the shadow of a godown and looked back. There was a passenger in the rickshaw behind and the coolie pulling it seemed to stall

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for time. Thorne's eyes flared momentarily with a banked flame.

He walked on. Why should anyone follow him? Certainly, no one, bound on plunder, was rash enough to way-lay him here, on the busy Bund! Why should they? He knew of no reason. He was not important and he was not rich; he was merely an obscure free-lance dealer in semi-precious jade antiques.

He had no enemies he knew of. And his business had dwindled to the vanishing point as the conflict between the Chinese and the Japanese dragged on.

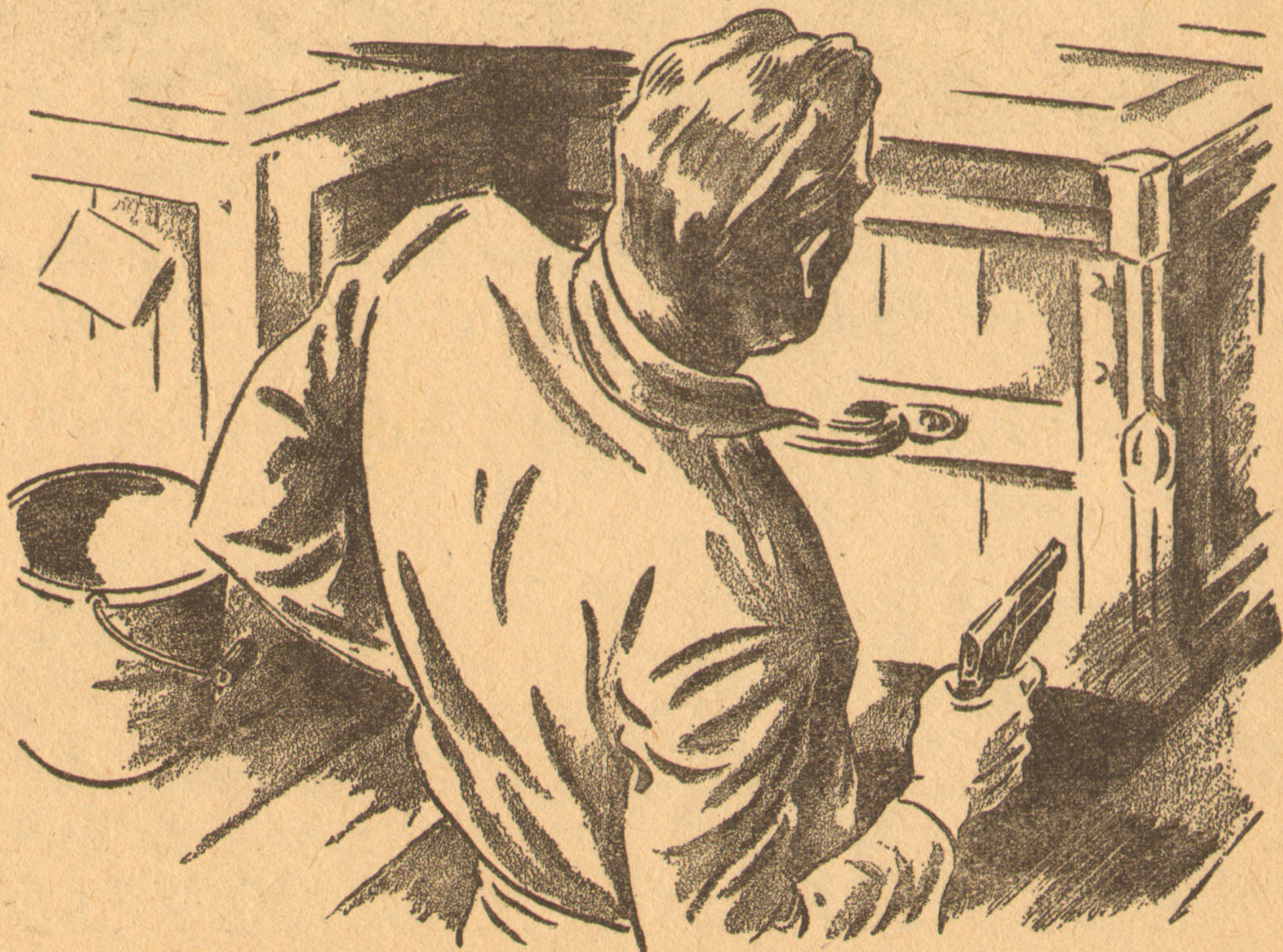
He wondered how long he could make a living if business conditions, in China, continued to slump as they had in the past few months. He was fed up with Shanghai. He thought, wistfully, that if he had a small stake, he would return to the States—and Occidental sanity.

The rickshaw, behind him, idled along. Well, if anyone was following him with felonious intent, or made

one suspicious move he would put the fear of God into whoever it was!

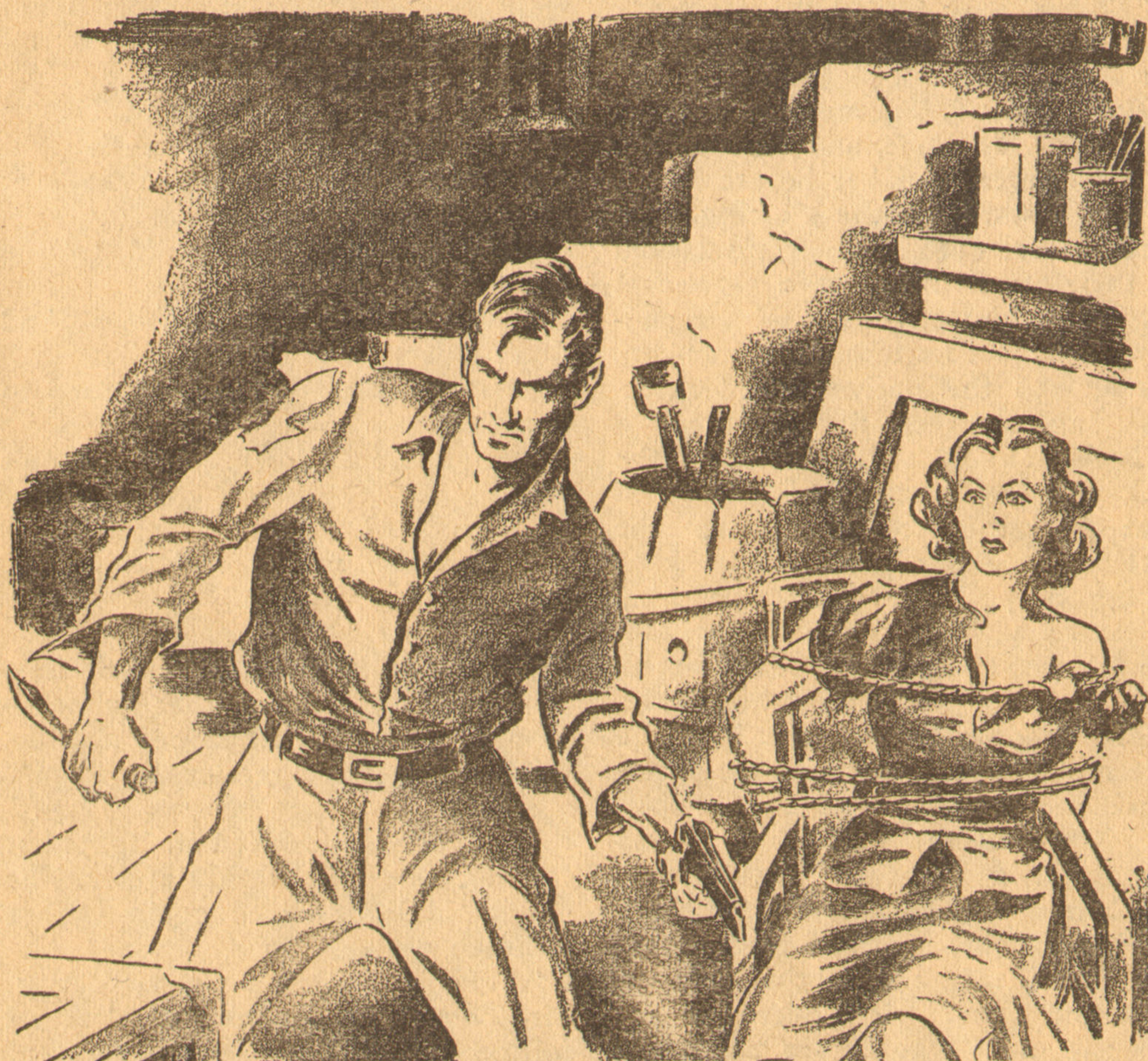
It was a sunny August day, with no dust blowing, and the air, over Shanghai's Bund, had a tang and a sparkle to it. A singsong girl with a white enameled face and a scarlet mouth, mincing along to a discreet rendezvous, eyed him with a direct look and smiled an invitation to him out of eyes as bright and hard as onyx. Thorne grinned and walked on, stabbing a discouraging glance at a group of whining beggars.

A professional letter writer bowed and called an invitation. Complacent, fat Chinese merchants passed him, riding in rickshaws. He watched the human motley with interest: a shaven lama; an aged Chinese houseboy, leading a young white child by the hand; a jittery English remittance man; a khaki-clad legation *shimbo*; a ravaged-looking Russian, with a scowling, monolithic face. They were all as unreal as figures in some fantastic pageant.



"All right, Thorne—stick 'em up!" Hoffer had him covered





*The American halted in the act of cutting the girl's bonds*

Then suddenly, he was aware of commotion and excited voices behind him. He could see a growing huddle of Chinese backs, in silk and coolie cloth. They were clustered around the rickshaw he had imagined was following him. The voices arose above the usual clacking and clucking.

Then he saw a slim feminine figure pulled from the rickshaw and heard a shrill, lyric protest. More natives materialized around something he couldn't see.

Thorne went back at a run, his curiosity sharpened. He shoved the crowd aside, and paused. A big Mongol, in European dress, was tugging at a small Chinese woman. She was dressed in Western clothes, and was trying vainly to break away from the

grip of the big Mongol holding her.

Her face was a pure oval, the cheekbones a little high. Her black, lustrous eyes beneath the exquisitely arched brows were dilated and angry, but not afraid. Her small face was thick with paint, the lips a vivid line of orange. Her clothes gave the impression of wealth, with glints of gold and buttons of jade.

A queenly little figure, and lovely, concluded Jim Thorne, even by Western standards—vivid, alluring, bizarrely beautiful. She was East of the East, embodying its allurements and witchery.

To his astonishment, she whirled to him. Except for the occasionally slurred "r's," and an accent that gave it distinction, her English was perfect.



"This—coolie pulled me from my rickshaw, Mr. Thorne! He is a thief—a liar! Help me, please!"

For a second, Thorne was startled. She knew his name, and he was sure he had never seen her before in his life. He stared at the alluring face, meeting her eyes. Something flashed in their startled depths, a glow that tugged at him strangely with a sudden intimacy, born on the moment. He shoved the native crowd aside, towering over them like a giant.

The Mongol, still clutching the girl, yammered excitedly to the crowd that he was of the police, that the girl was under arrest, and he kept trying to pull her away with him. When he saw Thorne start forward, his furious, triangular face contorted, and a knife appeared from his sleeve.

Thorne swung from the hip. He felt the Mongol's jaw and teeth collapse, and the man went down, upsetting the rickshaw and some of the interested spectators. Jim Thorne grabbed the girl's arm and literally carried her through the crowd, charging the line like a football player. Men and women fell over one another to make way before this tank-like advance.

A tall, white-turbaned traffic Sikh, in uniform, was coming at a run to investigate. Thorne pulled the Chinese girl up Legation Street, into the lobby of the Hotel du Nord and through the crowd there to the bar. They went through the bar at a run and into Mimosa Street. There, too fast for pursuit and unobserved, Thorne pushed the girl into a small cafe.

There was a young French *sous-officer* sitting in a booth, with a golden-skinned Eurasian girl. Otherwise, the place was deserted. The dinner hour had not as yet started.

Jim Thorne motioned the girl into a booth and sat down opposite her. It was not paint on her face he decided then, but a natural clear pallor gave that effect. She had a small,

well chiseled nose and a short upper lip. The girl was very pretty.

A waiter came shuffling over.

"You get one drink first," Thorne said to the Chinese girl, "then we'll have a bit of explanation. What'll it be?"

"Old-fashioned," she said to the waiter. "I need it."

"Two," supplemented Thorne. "And don't chisel on the whiskey."

The waiter left. Thorne turned to the girl.

"You were following me, weren't you?"

She nodded. "I was."

"You knew my name," he stated. "What's it all about?"

**T**HE drinks came. She drank hers quickly, smiled, her almond-shaped eyes surveying the cafe sharply.

"You have a cigarette, perhaps?" she asked.

He nodded, produced it, lighted it for her. She inhaled, gratefully. The enigmatic light flared again in her obsidian eyes.

"A habit I picked up at Vassar, Mr. Thorne," she explained. "Yes, I followed you. I was on the point of calling on you—with a *chit*—when I saw you leave your hotel. So, I followed, seeking a chance to approach, where no one could see."

"Why?" he asked, sharply.

"Because," she said, "it was not to be known that I talked to you. This is the situation: Certain people know you to be honest and fearless. We have need for such a man—an American—who can do us a service. He will be very well paid—but there will be danger. You see, I was watched—I was stopped. If you hadn't been there, I might have been knifed. Yes, even on the Bund! And that coolie would have escaped in the crowd."

"Oh, like that, eh?" said Jim. "Sounds interesting. Let's have it all."

"You know the old Manchu Kwan, Chow Fang?"



"Very well! He's one of my best friends here."

"You know a man named Markham, in San Francisco?"

"Yes, I used to sell him a lot of jade when business was good."

"The venerable Kwan, Chow Fang," she went on, "has sent you a small package. A jade box. I have it here. You are to deliver it to Mr. Markham, in San Francisco. He will pay you twenty-five thousand dollars, American, for safe delivery."

Thorne's smoky eyes blazed for a moment. "Let's have it," he said tersely, "and consider it safely delivered."

SHE handed him a small, paper-wrapped package. He slipped it into an inside pocket. The girl looked around fearfully at the empty cafe, leaned over the table and talked earnestly for a few minutes. Thorne nodded now and then.

"I get it," he said, finally. "Leave the rest to me. What's your name?"

"Tso-yin," she told him, smiling.

"Okay, Tso-yin." He nodded again. "I won't fail you—or the old Kwan. I guess he knew that."

"Mr. Thorne," she said, "I must repeat to you—there will be danger. Those who know you seem to think it will not matter. That is one reason you were selected; but I caution you to be careful and on watch always."

"Don't worry about me," he reiterated. "I'll take care of myself and the package too."

"I will pass the word to our people," she said, "that you have undertaken the mission. They will watch over you as much as possible. Trouble is coming here fast, as you know."

"I'll catch the first ship out." He paused, and asked curiously: "Tell me—if this contact with me was dangerous to the messenger, why was a girl sent?"

Before his direct scrutiny a delicate warmth spread in her cheeks. Her little figure drew back.

"It was thought that less suspicion would be created if a girl acted," she murmured, and added tensely: "Watch Fritz Hoffer. He works under the protection of his Embassy, and we can do nothing about him."

He nodded. "I see. I'll watch him, if I see him. Can I escort you somewhere—see you safe?"

"No—please! You leave me here. Be careful, Jim Thorne."

"Right!" Thorne said tersely.

His gray eyes flared briefly, scenting adventure. He bowed, paid his bill, then swung out into the seemingly deserted street.

Thorne sensed trouble when he arrived at his little hotel, which sat on the northern edge of the International Settlement. Firecrackers were spluttering in the street, always a prelude to something, in China. And China was in chaos, he knew, tense to the point of explosion with the excitement of impending events. That bothered him little, but what caused the slight frown on his lean face, deeply bronzed by years of Asiatic sun, was the European who stood across the street—a tall, heavily-set man with straw-colored hair.

He stood idly in front of a nearby apothecary shop. He looked like a pre-war German baron, with cold, milky-blue eyes and a mouth like a wolf trap. His pipe-clayed shoes, his white *topi*, were faultless. He wore a suit of nankeen silk and carried a swagger stick. A big coolie stood near him.

Some instinct keener than reason tolled a curious warning of danger deep in Thorne's subconsciousness. He knew the man as Fritz Hoffer, a familiar figure around Shanghai. He had heard that Hoffer was a gem trader and exporter; others said he was a spy; another version was that he was a Japanese Intelligence agent. No one was sure. Hoffer was a mystery. Jim Thorne looked him over briefly, keenly, and did not like what he saw.



In his room, he tied the little bundle under his left arm. He touched the .45 automatic in his shoulder holster, and a bleak grin flitted across his tight face. His mission was supposed to be a secret, yet something whispered to him that Hoffer knew of it.

A soft knock at the door made him whirl with the feline ease of a jungle cat. Thorne weighed close to two hundred pounds, but it was all tight bone and muscle, and he moved with the flashing ease of co-ordinated steel springs. His curious, one-sided smile came to his thin lips. He unlocked the door and flung it wide, stepping back to one side.

A small Chinese, in civilian dress, wearing glasses, smiled at him. Thorne's right hand paused at his coat lapel, arrested. The little Chinese smiled again, noting the significant gesture.

"Mr. Thorne?" he asked, in excellent English. Thorne nodded. Without invitation, the Chinese stepped into the room, closed the door and locked it. "I came to warn you that powerful interests have learned of your mission, unfortunately," he said.

"So?" said Thorne. "Well, I can take care of myself."

The Chinese nodded. "Mr. Thorne is respected in China," he acknowledged. "Otherwise this mission would not have come to you. Much depends on your fulfilling it." His bland gaze measured the inscrutable tall man in front of him. "I am Sam Ying," he volunteered, "of General Chang's Intelligence. Care to look over my papers?"

He extended a flat leather wallet. Thorne took it and glanced through it. It established the little man's identity. He handed the wallet back.

"Seems to be conclusive," he said. "And just what is my mission, Mr. Ying?"

Ying smiled. His speech, however, was sober.

"The jewel that the old Kwan,

Chow Fang, sent you to deliver in San Francisco, to Mr. Markham, means that China will have more money to pay for defense. We need it urgently, for there is grave trouble, Mr. Thorne. A new campaign will start soon. It may interest you to know that what you carry was once the property of the Dowager Empress, Tsze An, the last of the Manchus of the Pure Era. It was known as the 'Flame of the Peacock,' because of its color."

Thorne stared. This coincided with what Tso-yin had told him.

"You say," he began, "that others know of this?"

Ying nodded. "They will try to stop you. We will guard you as best we can, but we can't follow you everywhere."

"Why can't these people be arrested?"

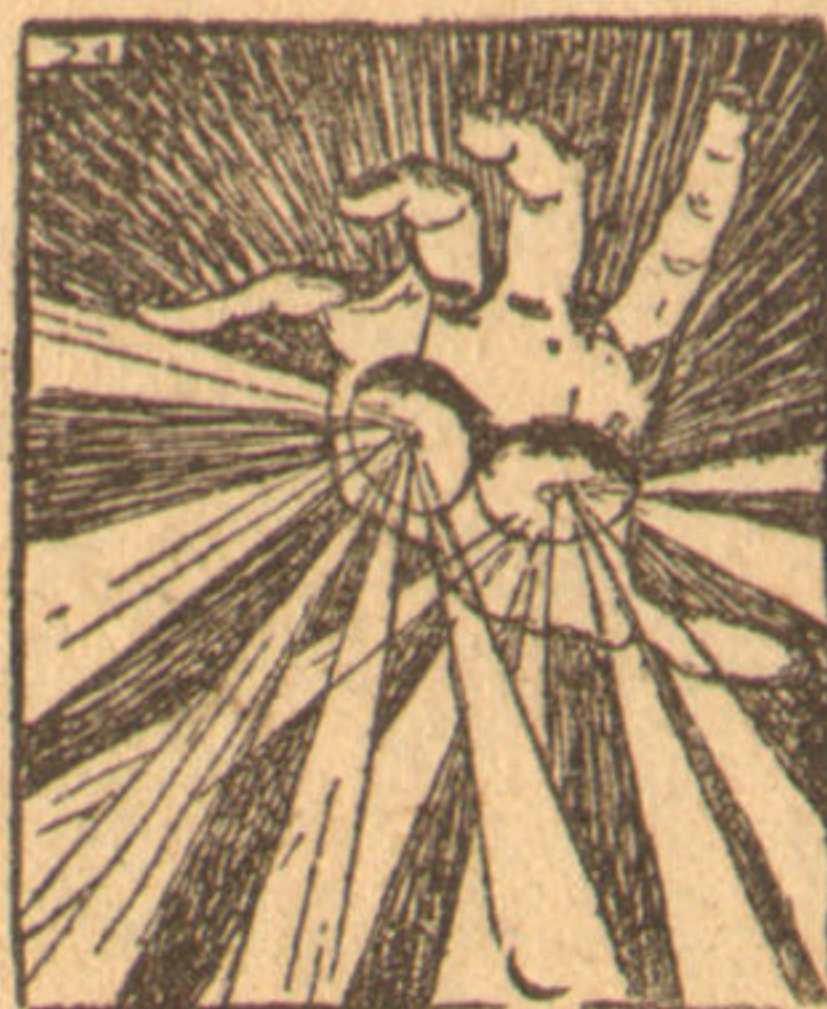
Ying shook his head. "China can afford no further complications with other nations—supposedly friendly nations. We have trouble enough now. If we arrested foreign nationals now, without positive proof, there would be trouble with powerful European nations, looking for an excuse to further pick the bones of China, China, as a nation, cannot act openly in this matter. No state of war exists, you see. It's up to you. And watch Fritz Hoffer!"

"I see," Thorne said thoughtfully.

Sam Ying bowed three times and left, his smile courtly.

## CHAPTER II

### *The Blow Falls*



LEFT alone, Jim grimly decided that he was going to earn the money this venture would bring him. He needed it badly. He was not bound by any diplomatic red tape that would restrict his actions. As far as he was concerned,



it was a business deal, with himself acting as a trusted selling agent. He was determined to complete his commission and it would be too bad for anyone who tried to stop him.

He was not interested in Chinese or Japanese diplomacy, or the touchy game of international politics. He was tired of the Orient, and needed the money this mission would bring him to set him up in business, back in the States. His reputation, he guessed, as a dangerous man to meddle with, was known to those who had selected him for this job. They knew he would not be lightly turned aside; that he would meet force with force.

Then another knock sounded on his door.

"Who is it?" he called.

A Chinese voice said, in sing-song: "Come message, illustrious maste'. Much hurry—*fy tee!*"

Thorne grinned, savagely, and flung open the door. But he was not quite ready for the immediate fury that almost overwhelmed him. It was the big coolie he had noticed near Hoffer—and the native had a knife, broad and long, the typical weapon of the sampan *fokie* of the Yangtze.

Jim Thorne caught the man's knife hand in time and stepped back half a pace. He drove a roundhouse right into the coolie's solar plexus. The big native seemed to pause in midair, then he collapsed like an empty bag and sagged to the floor. He twitched slightly, then gasped and lay still.

Thorne had once floored the heavy-weight champ of the Asiatic Squadron twice in one round, before his hitch in the Navy was over. The sailors, in the fleet, had called Jim Thorne's fists, "Sudden death."

The little hotel was strangely still with a deep silence.

Thorne's eyes were on the silent coolie. The fellow was out for some time to come. And there had been no time lost in attempting his life! A tight smile tugged at his lips.

He saluted the coolie ironically, packed his few belongings in his grip and went downstairs. There was no sense in taking useless chances. He had best go to the American Concession, in the International Settlement, and stay there until he could catch a ship out of Shanghai.

He paid for his room and entered the little cafe. He ordered almond cakes and *miyaki* (spiced mellon,) and some tea. As he waited, he watched the busy street. Chinese groups stood around and talked earnestly.

**H**OFFLER, cool, imperturbable, came in with another white man. They sat down at a nearby table and ordered tea. Thorne measured them both with a sharp curiosity. Hoffer looked like a calm, dangerous man. Suddenly, Hoffer arose and, smiling disarmingly at Thorne, walked over to the American's table.

"Hello, Thorne!" he said amiably. His eyes went to Thorne's bag on the floor. "Looks like trouble brewing here, eh? Leaving Shanghai?"

Thorne's face froze. He did not believe in, or even like, diplomacy.

"Hoffer," he said tersely "let's not fence. I don't like it. I don't like you. I know who you are, and I have an idea why you're here. If you want to keep yourself in one piece, keep away from me. If you don't—I'll take you apart."

Hoffer's eyes narrowed and grew glassy as skim ice. He compressed his lips and shrugged.

"All right, Thorne," he agreed, suavely. "If that's the way you want it that's the way we'll play it. I'll see you later."

"Not if I'm looking," Thorne told him coldly. "I won't stand for any prying into my affairs from you or anyone else. Remember that. If you try it—it will be your own fault if something unhealthy happens to you. Don't say I didn't warn you."

Hoffer smiled with a grim hatred.



"Americans never do have any tact!" he remarked cuttingly.

He turned and went back to his seat. He said something quietly to the other man, then they both left the cafe, leaving their tea untasted. . . .

**J**IM THORNE could never remember exactly how he entered the International Settlement. There had been a fearful explosion, and he had staggered out of the wrecked dining room, dazed. An air bomb! Shanghai was suddenly being shelled!

He walked without conscious effort, as in a dream. The shock of the explosion had jarred him loose from his customary control, and he fought the anesthesia of it as a sick man fights an engulfing sleep.

Soon he was dimly conscious of a stream of Chinese—men, women and children, a solid train that flowed in the streets carrying their pitifully meager belongings. Dimly he knew what had happened, for it had been expected. The Japanese had launched another offensive intended to cow the Chinese populace.

Then he remembered. He felt suddenly of his side. Yes, the package was still tied under his arm. Relief flooded him.

He had the jade box and the green Tsze An diamond safe enough, but how long could he keep it with war breaking in Shanghai?

The roar overhead increased. Vast detonations shattered the air. He felt for his automatic. It was safe in its spring holster. He went on.

He had no conception of time or place and he could not shake the fog out of his brain. Bubbling Well Road, the center of Shanghai's night-time gaiety, was littered with dead and dying. Bombs fell from the sky, buildings shattered and people were blown to quivering bits.

He saw Chinese merchants closing their doors and pasting lucky Fu paper triangles over them. A gash in

his scalp was drooling blood down his cheek. He wiped it away and it stopped bleeding. Big guns boomed from the Whangpoo. He had to get to the International Settlement—he *had* to! Fires were breaking out everywhere.

He fought his way through a mob to get to the hastily erected barbed-wire fence that surrounded the Settlement. Uniformed *Shimbos* helped him through since he was a white man. Men clustered around him. The wound in his scalp had stopped bleeding, but it throbbed fiercely. He tried to talk, but nausea clogged his tongue.

He had only enough consciousness left to see a girl taking him by the arm. Her head was like a dim flame. He could not see her clearly.

"This man's hurt," he heard her say, as from a great distance.

Whirling blackness rolled over him, and he pitched forward and fell. . . .

Jim Thorne seemed to swim up from waves of darkness. His sight blurred, then focused on a white ceiling that swam with dancing black spots. He seemed to be in a bed, and a girl sat by his side. She had red hair and green eyes, bright as jewel jade. Her poppy mouth smiled.

"Better?" she asked.

Thorne was still dazed. He stared at her until the girl flushed. Then the pounding din outside claimed him.

"I think so," he said. "What happened to me?"

"You passed out," she told him. "You had a bad scalp wound. The doctor dressed it last night."

"Last night? How long have I been here?"

"You slept all night. The doctor gave you something to make you sleep and said you'd be all right in the morning. Are you feeling any better?"

"I'm afraid I'll live." Thorne grinned weakly.

Memory returned. He pressed his



arm against his side. The reassuring pressure of the little package caused him to sink back, satisfied.

"Where am I?" he asked. "And are those big guns?"

"You're in our house," the red-haired girl told him slowly. "I had you brought here when you dropped unconscious. Yes, those are the Japanese big guns, destroying Shanghai. They've been shelling the town constantly." She shuddered. "It's in ruins. Thousands have been killed."

"Who are you?" asked Jim, directly.

"I'm Ginger Barret. This is our home. My father's John Barret, of the International Oil Company."

Thorne nodded. He knew who John Barret was.

His head was throbbing fiercely, but he had to get up and send a cable. He had an important and difficult mission to see through. The dull thunder outside never seemed to stop.

"I've got to send a cable to the States," he told Ginger Barret. "I have to catch the first ship out of here."

"The cable office is closed," she said, somewhat grimly. "You don't seem to realize that Shanghai is a shambles. All night people have been killed by airplane bombs and shells from the warships. The streets, outside the Settlement, are running blood!" She shivered. "All the Legation troops are at the barbed-wire, trying to keep out terror-ridden mobs that are trying to break in here for safety!"

"I've got to get out," he persisted stubbornly. "I've got to make arrangements to sail for San Francisco."

"There are no ships leaving," she informed him. "My dad cabled from Manila for me to come there, but I can't. Dad and I are fed up with the Orient. We're going home for good."

He looked out of the window, trying to digest all this. War! Beyond the confines of the International Set-

tlement, he could see the flare of huge fires streaking the morning sky. He heard the heavy crash of ships' batteries and the abrupt chattering of machine-guns. These were punctuated occasionally by the hollow roar of airplane bombs. War! The crashing, savage voice of hatred!

"Who took off my coat?" he asked.

"I did."

He stared at her, wondering what she had thought of the package under his arm. Apparently it had not been touched. His pistol and holster lay upon a chair. His eyes narrowed. If anyone, uninitiated in the handling of the jade box he carried attempted to open it, it would mean instant death.

**H**E LOOKED at Ginger Barret again and liked her. She was very lovely. She seemed to know what he had been thinking about.

"No one touched—what you have tied under your arm," she volunteered. "I imagined it was important, so I covered it up while the doctor was patching up your scalp."

"It is important," he said. "Very much so. My whole future's in that package. Thanks for taking me in, Miss Barret."

"That's quite all right. You're welcome to stay here, if you like. Quarters are pretty scarce in the Settlement today."

"No, I won't bother you further. I'll go on my way."

Ten minutes later, dressed, Jim Thorne was on the street. He could not believe his eyes. Death gibbered everywhere. Legation soldiers were busy at the barbed-wire thrusting back the crazed hordes that sought sanctuary within. Even as he stood there a heavy bullet took a man in front of him through the chest, and splashed through. The man wilted with a queer, astonished gurgle.

Thorne glanced up sharply and saw Hoffer down the street. Instantly, the man was gone again in



the scurrying crowd. Thorne checked his impulse to follow. It would be useless in this mad horde, with bullets singing everywhere and no one knowing if they were strays from the fighting outside the Settlement—or purposely directed.

He left the Settlement and went to the Non Coms Club, but the rooms were deserted. At the consul's office, that official, dizzy-eyed with worry, promised him and Ginger Barret a berth on the evacuation steamer. And then Thorne found out that accommodations in the Settlement were at a premium and none to be had. He had to have a private room, so he turned back again to the Barret home, forcing his way through horror-ridden streets that were as unreal as a nightmare.

Ginger Barret's Chinese *amah* met him at the door. She was shrewd-eyed, wrinkled as parchment. She bowed him in, and Ginger came toward him. Her eyes were frightened, and her lips trembled slightly. She tried to smile.

"It's horrible out there," she said. "Ghastly!"

"Don't look," he advised. "If your invitation still holds good, I'd be grateful if you'd let me stay here until the ship sails."

"Please!" she begged. "I'd feel lots safer with a man in the house. There was a big, blond man asking for you, after you left."

"For me?" he asked sharply.

"Yes. I told him you had left. I didn't like his looks."

He was watching her face, his eyes grim. Hoffer! The girl returned his scrutiny and smiled bravely, even as she winced before a suddenly accelerated burst of vicious gunfire in the distance. Something curiously stirring swept over Jim Thorne—some kind of recognition that this was *the* girl. He knew, suddenly, that this was the one girl he had always, subconsciously, been looking for.

"I'll stay," he murmured. "Don't

leave this house. If you don't mind, I'll use that bedroom in back for a few minutes."

She nodded. "Of course," she agreed.

### CHAPTER III

#### A Spy Appears



THORNE closed the door of the back bedroom and pulled off his coat and shirt. His massive chest was encircled by a silken band, and under his armpit a small chamois leather bag was tied. He detached the bag and from it drew a small jade box. It was elaborately carved and inlaid with amber ideographs, and an engraved amber button protruded from the front.

Thorne's eyes narrowed contemplatively. He had been warned that on no account was he to press this button, for a small, fixed needle would enter his thumb and kill him almost instantly. However, he had been entrusted with the secret of opening the box.

He gently pressed the sides. It sprang open. On a crumpled nest of rich Chinese silk lay a green-tinged diamond about an inch square. The green tint was slightly malignant, and it seemed to shoot spears of varicolored flame as it gathered the light and reflected it. About sixty or seventy carats in weight, it was not one of the world's great diamonds, but it was rich in legend and as the Chinese girl had told Thorne, it had once graced the throat of the Dowager Queen Empress, Tsze An.

An American dealer had agreed to pay two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for it, and Jim Thorne had been selected as agent go-between. This money was to be used for the defense of China. A curious end for a royal jewel of the Imperialistic "Pure" Dynasty!



Staring, fascinated, at the big gem, Thorne was suddenly conscious of eyes watching him. He tensed, but he made no move. Slowly he closed the jade box and laid it on a chair. His automatic lay on the bed. He made no move to get it.

Overhead whistled shell after shell, screaming across the International Settlement, carrying messages of death to Chapei. Suddenly, Thorne whirled and his hand streaked to the automatic. A twist and he was facing the one window at his back.

He saw a furious, triangular Mongol face at the window, obsidian eyes that flashed from the jade box to his face and remained in fixed surprise for a moment. Then the automatic in Thorne's hand crashed—to be drowned by a providential burst of gunfire from a nearby street.

**V**ACUOUS astonishment froze on the Mongol face at the window. A black hole sprang between the eyes. The head wavered and slid from the sill as a marionette slides from view. Jim Thorne sprang to the window. The man was dead before he hit the ground.

Thorne's lips were tensed and thin. Not a Mongol after all, he thought, as he looked down, but a *thuggee* from the south, one of those terrorists who killed silently. There was a thin, silken, weighted cord in the dead man's hand that told the story.

Thorne heard the red-headed girl's footsteps clicking hurriedly toward the door.

"Are you all right?" she called.

"Okay," he answered. "Coming out in a few minutes."

"Oh! I thought I heard a shot."

"Lots of them," he called. "There's a little private war going on near the Jesfield Bridge, I guess. Be right out, Miss Barret."

This time he pulled the shade down and took off his shoes. With his pocket-knife, he worked furiously for a few minutes. Then, with the

jade box in his pocket, he left the bedroom.

"I believe," he said to the girl casually, "that a stray bullet hit a man near the back of the house. I'll get him out of the way."

Ginger's eyes watched him in silence. She shuddered and nodded.

"Please do," she said, at length.

He did. He dumped the dead thug over the back fence of the isolated Barret home and then dragged him to the alley corner. A misdirected bomb, from a cruising plane, had just dropped and shattered part of a building there, and the people on the street were scattering in terror. Flames began to lick at the debris. Thorne dumped the thug and ran back to the Barret home, screened by shrubs and trees.

Ginger Barret was standing at the back door as he came in. He slammed the door shut and stood looking down at her.

"What was it?" she asked.

"Bomb," he told her. "On the corner. Better stay indoors."

She walked back to the living room of the bungalow. Thorne glanced around him. A graceful Ming vase stood on the mantel over the stone fireplace. A grin flitted over Jim Thorne's bronzed face. He took the little jade box out of his pocket.

"This," he told her, "is the reason for some of the strange things you're wondering about. I'm supposed to get it out of China—to San Francisco—and there are some people determined to stop me."

"What is it?" she asked curiously. "A talisman? It looks like carved jade, with topaz engraving."

"Amber," he told her. "It isn't very valuable in itself, but it contains a valuable gem. I'm going to hide it here"—he pointed to the Ming vase—"until it's time for us to board the steamer for Manila. I'm beginning to believe that it might be dangerous for me to carry it around. Do you mind?"



"Of course not! May I see it?"

"You may," he said, nodding, "but be careful how you handle it. It's a deadly thing, despite its beauty."

She drew her hand away instantly. "Oh!" she exclaimed. "I wouldn't touch it for the world!"

"Please say nothing of this to anyone else," he requested. "I'll pick it up before we board ship."

He placed the jade box in the bottom of the vase, and whirled as the girl exclaimed. They stared at each other as there came a yelping, high-pitched cry from in back of the bungalow. A throaty curse sounded from a male throat.

Thorne was out of the room like a flash, leaving Ginger with a little gurgle of astonishment on her lips. He was just in time to see the old *amah* flung roughly to one side, like a doll, as a big man went through the door into the back yard. Hoffer! He recognized the tall man in a flash.

He made a flying tackle and closed with the blond European. Both crashed to the earth and Thorne caught the sharp glint of steel.

A knife! His fingers closed on a big wrist that had the toughness of steel. He bent it back to avoid the peril of the knife. His left fist thundered home a short jolt to Hoffer's ribs, eliciting a startled grunt.

Hoffer writhed like a python to break the hold on his right wrist, wriggled free of Thorne's weight, cursed fervidly. Thorne's hold did not break. He swarmed all over the blond man, until Hoffer twisted suddenly to one side and darted his left hand into his shirt.

Something was thrown into Jim Thorne's face—something powdery. It struck his chin with a soft tap, and a cloud of pain engulfed him. His eyes burned with an agony that grew intense, his nostrils were stung as by a flame, and his lips seemed to be afire.

He rolled to one side from the excruciating pain, but did not release

his hold on that wrist. The sudden fear of blindness leaped into his mind, for the substance seemed to threaten the destruction of his eyeballs. He bent back the wrist of his antagonist in a concentrated fury. Hoffer uttered a sharp cry and the knife left his nerveless fingers. He brought up his knee into Thorne's groin, and twisted free.

**J**IM THORNE came to his feet like a cat, jerking out his gun at last, but his burning eyes were blurred with tears. All he could see was a dark, running shape. He cut loose at it, but without results.

Pepper! He realized what it was then. It had struck his chin, his eyes—squarely—his mouth. A vast relief flooded him when he tasted it and knew what the powdery stuff was. He had feared it was some insidious Oriental poison, but this would soon wear off. It had not been pleasant for an active man to contemplate, even for a moment, the possibility of being without sight for the rest of his life.

The struggle had been furious, but short. Eyes still streaming, he turned to the house. He could see Ginger through the watery blur—but he could see! He wiped his eyes with a handkerchief, blinked, and felt the fires in them abating.

Hoffer was a slippery, treacherous enemy, one whom it would pay to watch closely. A white man who preferred a knife to a gun. You had to watch that sort!

A little cry broke from Ginger, and her eyes were startled.

"He—he—tried to kill you!" she chattered, aghast.

"That was the general idea," said Thorne, grinning weakly.

"Oh!" whispered the girl in a shocked voice. "I didn't realize that—that—"

"That the little jade box meant things of this sort?" He added quietly: "Maybe I ought to take it—"



and myself—out of here, and not subject you to possible—”

“I’m not afraid,” she said, meeting his eyes in a level exchange.

He stared into her jade-green eyes with a look of wonder on his face, and a question pounded in his brain. Lovely as a flower, he thought, but there was steel in her, too.

He did not answer her at once. He went back into the living room and she followed. For an instant his sharp eyes swept to the Ming vase, focused, the pupils retracting. Then a deep and secret mirth lay far back in their frosty depths.

The Chinese *amah* had picked herself up. She came to the door, disheveled and frightened. Her eyes went to Thorne, then to the girl.

“What happened?” Jim asked her, sharply.

“My make prayer,” she choked excitedly. “Got plenty fine joss—he kill Japanese soldier-man, maybe. Then, I look see—”

“What did you see?” snapped Jim.

“See one piece man, in hall, quiet—like listen to Missy and Marster talk. I make cry—he lun—” She paused.

“I see,” Thorne said grimly. “You say he was standing in the hall, listening to us?”

The *amah* nodded, her eyes still frightened.

“Where was he standing?” asked Thorne.

“By kitchen door.”

“Then,” said Thorne, “he couldn’t see us?”

The aged Chinese woman shook her head negatively, muttered something and left, rearranging her clothes.

“Please,” Ginger Barret begged, “don’t leave me here alone until we’re ready to go aboard ship.”

“Okay,” Thorne promised. “I’m staying. Maybe that’s best—now.”

“How could that man have entered this house so silently?” Ginger asked. “I didn’t hear a thing! Do you suppose he heard what you said?”

Thorne shrugged. “I don’t know any of the answers just now, Miss Barret, but I have a hunch I’m going to find out!”

**A**N ABRUPT lull in the firing of the big guns outside brought an aching silence. The August day was hot, and the confused murmur of many voices came to them. The streets of the International Settlement were crowded with refugees and residents, watching six bombing planes that droned overhead.

“Lock all doors,” Thorne told Ginger Barret, “and don’t leave this house until I get back. I’ll be back as soon as possible, but I must make absolutely certain that you and I have reservations on the next ship out.”

The Chinese *amah* came in again, sobbing tearlessly, ranging herself near her young mistress, as if for protection. Thorne’s eyes flashed, momentarily, to the Ming vase, and Ginger’s eyes followed. She gave him a barely perceptible nod as he turned and left the house. He knew, without knowing why, that this girl could be trusted. She might be frightened, but there was hard steel in her makeup.

He found a bicycle on the front porch and mounted it. Every street in the International Settlement was a seething bedlam of excitement, and was massed with moving refugees. White-turbaned Sikh policemen tried in vain to keep order. The crowds surged with a blind panic, for the lull did not last long, and within minutes the firing had started again.

Thorne went through the barricade of barbed-wire and sand-bags and pushed his way along. The dead lay everywhere, and wounded groaned from doorways. At Pootung, a Chinese anti-aircraft battery began to sprout black blobs in the sky; and on the horizon, lightninglike flashes told of the heavy guns on the Japanese battleships, anchored at sea, off Woo-



sung, all spouting death at luckless Shanghai.

Then, in a back street, for the first time, he noticed the vultures. They sat on a pile of debris and upended stones, black fat scavengers, loathsome and ominous. By morning, they would be so weighted with the hot flesh of men that they would be unable to fly. He picked up a stone and threw it at them, and they lumbered reluctantly into silent, heavy flight.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### *Hoffler Strikes*



JIM THORNE fought his way to the Consul General's office and found it in a feverish uproar. But he made certain of the necessary arrangements to leave on the *President Jefferson*, which was to carry the first lot of American refugees to Manila.

He returned to the Barret home through a deserted back area, trying to make better time. He entered a narrow street, hushed in the awful tranquility of death. A bomb had fallen here, gutting several houses and the street. The inhabitants lay in the mute grotesqueness of sudden and violent death.

The Barret house was silent. Some sixth sense warned Thorne to approach with caution. He did, skirting the house and climbing in through a kitchen window that faced the back yard.

The Chinese *amah* lay on the floor, to one side, her head a bloody pulp. Her pain-glazed eyes opened and surveyed him.

"Missy!" she gasped, in a whisper. "Take her—chop-chop. I make pray to velly good joss—"

"Who?" Thorne demanded hoarsely. "Who? Where?"

Her eyes wavered in agony. The thin patina of death was on her yel-

low features. She shuddered and lay still. Jim Thorne arose. The *amah* was dead. The Barret bungalow was still and hushed.

"Up with your hands!" suddenly snarled a voice behind Thorne and he whirled to face Hoffler!

A big automatic was pointed at Thorne's stomach. Viciousness was written all over Hoffler's fleshy face, in the little, glinting, pig eyes, in the mouth screwed tight with an intense satisfaction of cold-blooded triumph.

Jim Thorne raised his hands, his arctic eyes unwinkingly probing into Hoffler's. He said nothing, for it was not his way.

"Got you cold, Thorne!" gloated Hoffler. "I figured you'd come back. This is as far as you'll ever go again. Came after the girl, didn't you? Well, well—such chivalry! Still, I'm glad you came, Thorne. Very glad!"

His easy victory seemed to have worked Hoffler into a frenzy of vicious triumph. He threatened Thorne with various kinds of weird, revolting deaths, his thick finger lacing around the trigger of the automatic. He seemed loath to terminate this moment of triumph over a hated enemy, and savored each morsel of conquest, of savage satisfaction in taunting Jim Thorne before he pulled the trigger.

"Americans!" he sneered. "A nation of weak-kneed gangsters! Come to think of it, why should I drop you here? It might be a good idea to show Ludwig and the girl what happens to interfering Americans. Might change the girl's mind about a few things, eh? I eat bad little Americans, Thorne."

"So?" said Thorne. "Not afraid of indigestion?"

"Hardly!"

"Don't you want to trade the girl's safety for a chance at the Tsze An diamond?"

Hoffler grinned. "I'll get that anyway. I know it's hidden somewhere in the living room."



"You'll never find out where, unless I tell you."

"Oh, I think so! It's in that room. Might save time, however, to have the girl tell me where it is."

"She won't tell you, because she can't. She doesn't know. And sooner or later someone will show up here. This is the American Concession, Hoffer, and American marines are somewhere around."

**H**OFFLER sneered in contempt. "I won't be here long enough for them or anybody else to interfere," he gloated. "And there's so much shooting going on no one will pay any attention to a little in here, eh? She'll tell me, or I'll take the room apart. I know it's there."

"She can't tell you, you fool! I told you she doesn't know!"

Hoffer's short laugh was sarcastic.

"You're not fooling me, Thorne! You're underestimating my powers of—ah—shall we call it persuasion?"

"Hoffer, I'm telling you the girl can't tell you. Not that she would, even if she did know."

"No?" taunted Hoffer. "Any girl will tell anything, when I get through with them."

Jim Thorne's teeth clicked shut tightly. His muscles tensed and ached with the desire for physical contact with this rat who knew no decency.

"I can about imagine," he clipped tightly. "If you touch that girl, if you subject her to the slightest indignity—"

"Yes? What will you do about it, Mr. Yankee Doodle?" Hoffer's mouth grew cruel. "What do you think I'm going to do with you? I think one guess will be enough, eh? In this madness, the sound of a few more shots—" He shrugged. "Turn around and walk to that door. I'd like to show my friend, Ludwig, what I do with tough Americans. The girl will be interested, I'm sure. Once she sees, she'll talk!"

Thorne turned and walked, his

hands still held high. Hoffer walked behind, gun poised.

"No tricks!" he snarled, in warning. "No funny work! I'll blow your liver out if you try anything!"

But before the words were out, already Thorne had acted with the speed of light, taking his one slim chance. He leaped straight up into the air and his hands fastened on the transom. His body swung up like an acrobat's on a trapeze. He heard a startled grunt behind him and Hoffer's gun blasted below. Then Jim Thorne's feet flashed back with the speed and force of a battering-ram and caught Hoffer in the middle before he could shoot again or snap out of his bewilderment. He uttered a coughing grunt and went down in a heap, his automatic slithering along the floor.

Thorne dropped and slid for the gun, then dropped to a crouch in a corner, with the automatic clutched in his fist. Hoffer was out cold, but he had said that he wanted to show Ludwig what he did with tough Americans. That meant that Ludwig was in the house. And from what Hoffer had said Ginger was here, too.

He waited, eyes on the door that led to the dining room of the bungalow. Then from somewhere inside, he heard furtive footsteps. His finger tightened on the trigger.

"Hoffer!" a voice called presently. "Where are you? I heard you shoot. Where are you?"

Thorne growled something inarticulate, deep in his chest, to make it sound like the guttural voice of the man he had knocked out.

The door swung open suddenly and Ludwig entered—the same heavy-set man Thorne had seen with Hoffer before. He stood, gun drawn, peering suspiciously. Then his eyes widened and a yelp of fright came to his lips as he made out Hoffer's prone figure.

He whirled upon Thorne instinc-



tively, sensing that the American was in the dark corner. His gun roared, and a bullet bored in the wall behind Thorne's head with a crushing "spat!"

The gun in Thorne's hand bucked and roared, and Ludwig jerked as though he had been spun about by some invisible hand. He swayed, dropped his gun and crashed forward on his face. The bullet had torn open his neck and shattered his spine. He was dead before he hit the floor.

Jim Thorne arose. He tied the unconscious Hoffer up with his handkerchief and a tablecloth that was handy. He picked up the dead Ludwig's gun and put it into his pocket. Then he swiftly explored the house. There was no sign of Ginger, and he began to wonder what Hoffer had meant when he had hinted that the girl was here. Then he recalled that though this was a bungalow, that the place had a cellar.

In a small room, in the cellar, he finally found her, tied to a chair. The place evidently had been a trunk or storage room. It had one small window, which was boarded up, and was illuminated by a small globe which burned in a wall bracket.

Thorne's blood boiled, sending gleams of ominous flame into his gray eyes. The girl was securely bound to the chair. Her clothing was in disarray, ripped from her, showing that she had put up a fierce struggle. Her mouth was expertly bound, but her eyes flew to meet his, round with terror and humiliation. She moaned softly.

The binding cords had cut into the delicate softness of her smooth skin. Marks on her bare arms and face showed she had not submitted without giving a good account of herself, however futile. She struggled and twisted, moaning with pain, her face streaked with tears.

"Okay, Ginger," Thorne said encouragingly. "Don't be frightened. I'll get you out of here in a jiffy."

Her startled eyes recalled to him his own appearance, clothes awry, hair disheveled. He had no idea then that it was his eyes and the fixed, crooked smile that disturbed the girl more than any other evidence of violence in his appearance—those cold, ruthless, light-gray eyes, like glass, that stared at her. And what she saw in their depths at the moment was not pretty to look at though it was not meant for her.

He shifted the automatic to his left hand, found his pocket knife and began hacking the cords from the girl. He was totally unprepared for the harsh voice that sounded from the doorway.

"All right, Thorne! Hands up—and back away!"

**H**OFFLER again! Thorne cursed fervently. He thought he had put the man out of his way, but Hoffer had recovered consciousness and somehow had managed to free himself. And here he was, his mouth twisted with an animal rage! He had another gun in his fist, a small automatic. Again Thorne cursed, this time at his own stupidity in not searching the crafty Hoffer's pockets.

Ginger seemed frozen with fright. She was almost freed, but her mouth still was bound. She sat rigid, staring, her eyes enormous, filled with horror.

Thorne stood with his hands up, his strange eyes on the big Hoffer. The man's features were contorted with a frenzied hate that was scarcely human, and he was drooling at the corners of his mouth with the insane lust to kill.

"Drop that gun!" he spat hoarsely, bending forward.

Jim Thorne dropped the gun. No sense in doing anything else. Hoffer had the drop on him. True, he might shoot and kill Hoffer, but he would be killed in return, and that would leave Ginger here alone, tied, in a house that already held two dead. In



his pocket was the dead Ludwig's gun, an ace in the hole.

"Get over in that corner!" snarled Hoffer, advancing, his gun pointed. "Back away from that gun, damn you!"

"What corner?" Thorne asked coolly, not moving an inch. His icy eyes bored into Hoffer's, glassy, unwavering.

"That corner!" snapped Hoffer.

Without thinking, he pointed his gun to one side. And that was what Thorne was tensed and waiting for.

He leaped with the lunge of a striking cobra, just as Hoffer's gun wavered the scant inch. Hoffer switched the gun back and fired, but not before Thorne's left hand had smashed forward, catching Hoffer's wrist and flinging the gun up. The bullet hit the ceiling, bringing down a shower of plaster.

**T**HORNE drove forward, heaving a fist that caught Hoffer full in the face. It was a blow to fell an ox. The big man staggered back, mouth-ing foul curses—but he did not drop his gun. He closed with Thorne in a fury of bull strength. His gun cracked again—and instantly darkness, utter and complete, enshrouded them. Hoffer's bullet had accidentally smashed the wall light.

Thorne sent home another right that connected with an audible thud, then dropped to the floor. His alert eyes had marked the spot where his other gun had fallen, and he wanted that, too. His fingers, groping swiftly, found it.

A streak of saffron flame stabbed above him and to one side, but he did not return Hoffer's fire. It was too much in line with where Ginger had been sitting when he had last seen her. He could not see an inch in front of him now, but neither could Hoffer, of course. A tense silence smothered the room after the shot, broken only by the muffled sobbing of the girl.

Jim Thorne crouched and waited. The silence became eerie. This must be brought to a head quickly, but he couldn't shoot it out here, endangering the life of the helpless, bound girl. Still, he made no move, no sign. He was waiting for Hoffer to give away his location by some movement.

He could hear Ginger trying to complete freeing herself; could hear her movements and her frantic breath. Hoffer must be crouched close to the floor, he decided.

A slight rasp came from one side. Jim shut his teeth tightly. This was what he had been waiting for. Hoffer's nerves were none too good, and the waiting in the dark was driving him to action—either to get away or to bring the struggle to a conclusion. Thorne reached out abruptly toward the sound—and touched the sleeve of Hoffer's coat!

Instantly, there was a shot from Hoffer's gun, a despairing moan from the girl across the room. Thorne's heart contracted. Had she been hit? He fastened savagely on Hoffer's gun wrist and heaved himself at the big, unseen body. He whirled with a sudden ferocious strength, taking Hoffer's arm with him. Hoffer screamed with pain.

The arm went limp and the gun thudded to the floor. His left hand groped furiously for Thorne's throat. Thorne brought his gun down with a smashing impact on Hoffer's skull. The man gasped, shuddered convulsively and went limp. He was completely out.

"Are you hit, Ginger?" barked Thorne. "Are you hurt?"

"N-no!" Her voice was weak, trembling. "But the bullet went past my head!"

"A miss is as good as a mile," called Thorne. "Glad you got the gag off."

He arose and felt his way over toward the sound of the girl's voice. Hastily he finished unfastening her feet from the rungs of the chair.



Then he picked up the chair and smashed out the boarding of the one small window. A shaft of late sunlight poured into the dismal room. Hoffer lay silent, his scalp bleeding. The girl stood hunched, shivering, her horrified eyes riveted to the bloody figure on the floor.

"What happened here?" Jim Thorne asked her.

"They forced their way in and asked for you," she said, "and I told them you were out. This one wanted to know where the jade box was, and I said I didn't know. He told me not to lie, that he knew it was somewhere in the house. I wouldn't tell, so—" She paused.

"Go on," Thorne said tersely.

"I—don't remember much of what happened after that. I know I got raging angry when one of them hit my old *amah*, and—"

"I know," Thorne said gently. He could not tell her now that her Chinese servant was dead.

"Some American marines went past," she went on, "and I started to scream, but this—this big brute struck me. He threatened to kill me if I made any noise or attracted any attention to the house. I still wouldn't tell them anything, so they brought me down here and this man said he'd shoot me if I made the least noise."

Thorne nodded. She went on:

"I guess they thought I might"—she flushed hotly—"that I might have the jade box concealed on my person." She paused a moment. "They almost tore the clothes off me, searching me, and—and—" Again she paused, painfully embarrassed.

Jim Thorne's eyes glinted frostily. "I see. You can't stay here, Ginger. Have you any friends where you could spend the night, until we go aboard?"

"Yes, there's Dr. Henderson's house. He lives a few blocks down. A friend of Dad's and mine."

"Let's go! I'll pack all your clothes

and belongings and bring 'em to you later."

"Is—" she paused. "—my *amah*—"

"I'm sorry, Ginger. She's dead. There's also a dead man upstairs. We'd better clear out at once."

She shuddered violently. "I wouldn't stay in this house for anything!" she cried. "What will happen to this man here?"

"Hoffer?" Thorne's crooked smile was fixed. "Nothing. He's out, for the time being. I'm leaving him right here. Come on—let's get out. I'll come back later and pack. In the meanwhile, I want to make sure you're in safe hands. It's almost dark, and this will be a bad night in the history of Shanghai!"

## CHAPTER V

### *Sam Ying Reappears*



IT WAS dark when Hoffer opened his eyes. He sat up, cursing. Then memory came back to him. The house was silent. That fool American and the girl were gone. He groped his way upstairs, then he risked a flash of a small electric torch he carried.

Not a living soul was in the house. There was only the dead *amah*—and Ludwig. That was a shock to Hoffer.

He made his way to the empty living room, wondering if Thorne had taken the jade box with him. Certainly, the girl had not worn it on her person. Perhaps Thorne had it, after all. Still, they might have left without it. No harm in having a look.

He had no gun, but there was a long knife in the back of his waistband. One needed a weapon in Shanghai, just now, with all hell loose outside. The firing was still going on out there.

His eyes roved the room and, for



some reason, fell on the blue Ming vase. Something clicked in his mind. He thrust his hand into it. The neck was too small for his big forearm, so he ruthlessly smashed the delicate, priceless vase on the fireplace. And there, before him, lay the precious jade box with the inlaid amber ideographs!

He gloated fiercely. Thorne had been frightened away without it! The fool was so much concerned with the girl's safety that he had forgotten the priceless diamond!

**P**ERHAPS it was a board that creaked, perhaps it was the sixth sense of the hunted that warned him, for he crouched suddenly, listening. On impulse, he reached up and put the jade box within the metal cup of the hanging chandelier. Then he clicked out his flashlight.

He was reaching for his knife when the lights flashed on, all at once, and he saw a small Chinese standing in the doorway. He was dressed in European clothes and wore glasses. The Chinese had a big Luger in his hand and it was pointed at Hoffer's chest.

Behind the first Chinese were three others, similarly dressed, all armed. Hoffer's glance flashed to the windows that opened on the front porch. No chance. He could see that there were others out there.

"Keep your hands raised," warned the Chinese in the doorway in English. "If you move, I shoot."

Hoffer's inherent insolence returned. He was in the International Settlement, neutral ground, and his Embassy would back any play he made. There was arrogance in his sneer.

"What's the idea?" he snarled. "You're a fool, Sam Ying! You know that if anything happens to me my Embassy will act at once. I'm supposed to check in every night and if I don't—"

Sam Ying smiled, thinly. "Things

have changed, Hoffer," he said. "Before, when there was no state of war, we hesitated; now, since there is open fighting, we act. China comes first—now."

"What of it?" demanded Hoffer. "What have I to do with the state of war or China?"

"I think you'll find out!"

"I don't know what you're talking about!" snapped Hoffer.

"Too bad," said the imperturbable Sam Ying. "Other Chinese agents have watched you and Mr. Thorne, here in Shanghai, as much as possible. Unfortunately, we lost you both in the confusion. Very pretty young lady named Tso-yin thought we might find you here. She is very clever. Extremely necessary you do not interfere with Mr. Thorne."

He snapped a clicking command to the other three men, not moving a facial muscle. With flashing speed Hoffer was searched and bound. He snarled like a trapped leopard, threatening disaster through his Embassy, but Sam Ying paid little heed. His black eyes roved the room and took in the shattered pieces of the Ming vase. A thin smile twitched at his lips and his shrewd eyes slitted.

"You look for the green stone, I see," he observed. "Mr. Thorne is a bit too smart for you? Can't find green diamond, eh?"

There was murder in Hoffer's eyes but also a shrewd glint under the hooded lids that escaped the keen Sam Ying.

"If you don't release me," Hoffer's voice rose in sharp demand, "if any harm happens to me, Ying, my Embassy will raise the roof off China and you know it! We're in the Settlement, remember, and this is neutral territory!"

"Hardly!" interposed Ying, sarcastically. "Listen!"

The sharp crack of rifles and the dull roar of big guns muttered outside. Somewhere, in the immediate distance, there was the metallic



clanking of tanks, rumbling to action.

"Untie me!" roared Hoffer. "I'll yell murder! There are American marines policing these streets—"

"My men are all around the house," interrupted Ying, calmly. "No danger of interference, Hoffer."

Hoffer's mounting, terrific rage or his gradually growing apprehension proved his undoing. His face was ugly with congested blood, with contempt.

"If I don't check in at my Embassy tonight, safe and sound, you know what will happen!" he roared. "And I'll stop Thorne and that damn girl from leaving Shanghai! You know what the Japs will do when I talk!"

Ying's face froze into a yellow mask. The jet black eyes glinted like polished shoe buttons.

"Very well, Mr. Hoffer," he said coolly. "You will check in at your Embassy tonight—but you will not talk. And you will not interfere with Mr. Thorne."

He barked another command to his three silent companions. Hoffer's face went pallid, for he understood Chinese. Horror drenched his features with sweat, a mad fear glazed his eyes.

"No!" he shrieked. "No! You couldn't do that! You can't do that to me! My Embassy—"

At a nod from Ying one of the silent Chinese struck Hoffer down with his pistol butt. He went to the floor, unconscious. The two others took a hand. A runnel of blood flowed from Hoffer's mouth. He stirred, but another expert tap on the head from the same pistol sent him back into the black depths of unconsciousness.

Five minutes later Sam Ying nodded to his confederates. His glance swept the room. His lips smiled when he looked again at the shattered vase. He knew what Hoffer had been looking for, but his clothes

and his person had revealed that he had not found it. Ying's smile broadened. He had great faith in Jim Thorne.

At a sharp command, the others withdrew. Sam Ying snapped off the lights and went to the porch. Out of the shadows came a tiny, doll-like Chinese girl.

"Thorne?" she asked swiftly.

Ying bowed. "He is not here, Heaven-born, and the fat pig has not found what he sought. Nor will he talk. Thorne, to all appearances, is gone—and safe. Hoffer remains—silent."

She nodded with the swift comprehension of a mind given to intrigue. The pallid, pretty face and the black eyes turned to blazing Chapei.

"No harm," she murmured in Mandarin, "must befall Jim Thorne."

Sam Ying saw that the painted lips smiled tremulously, that the lucent eyes were blurred.

"Yes, Heaven-born," he murmured.

Without another word the girl stepped down from the porch and was lost in the shadowy street. In another minute, the Chinese Secret Service men had vanished and the Barret house lay in silence and darkness.

Inside, Hoffer lay, grievously wounded. And overhead, in the chandelier, reposed the little jade box where Hoffer had thrust it. Sam Ying, for all his sharp eyes, had failed to see it and knew nothing of it. . . .

**I**T WAS an hour before Hoffer stirred. He groaned with a torturing pain and, as memory flashed over him, terror gurgled in his thick throat—and found a horrible confirmation. He had boasted that he would talk, and Sam Ying had ordered his tongue cut out!

Sheer madness swept him for many minutes when he realized what had happened to him. He was weak from loss of blood and his mouth was a mashed pulp. He lay groaning with stupefied horror for many minutes,



unable to muster his muscles or his nerves.

Finally, when his first terror had dimmed before the awful, irrevocable certainty, he sat huddled, venomous as some huge snake, wounded to the death but still dangerous; plotting vengeance of such stark horror as rarely entered human imagination.

He would never be able to speak

him strength. The green diamond! It was worth a king's ransom! He would have plenty of money to prosecute his vengeance.

Heat flooded his veins again. A red glow began to dance dimly in the windows. Hongkew and Chapei were in flames. Good! He wished that all China would burn, for his own pain was now intolerable. Avarice, how-

INDO-CHINA, LAND OF SECRET MYSTERIES AND STRANGE CUSTOMS, IS THE EXOTIC SETTING FOR PERILOUS INTRIGUE!



## BLACK BEAST OF DOOM

By CRAWFORD SULLIVAN



A TWO-FISTED NOVELET  
COMPLETE IN THE NEXT  
**THRILLING  
ADVENTURES**

again, but he was still alive! He would live for vengeance, and he would have it, if it took him all his life! He was a strong man and he would survive this terrible wound.

The green diamond! It was still in the chandelier! Ying had missed that. Painfully, groggily, he arose. Loss of blood and nausea made him sway crazily, but he managed to get the jade box.

Greed and hatred, a growing, fantastic plan of vengeance—all gave

ever, drugged it somewhat. Excitement dulled its edges.

He turned the jade box over in his big fingers. His sunken eyes were aflame with a madman's fires. This was the box that held the priceless green diamond of Tsze An—the Flame of the Peacock—worth a fortune!

He glanced around the silent room. Should he open it here or take it with him to his own quarters? Tense excitement swept him. The faint red light that filtered in through the win-



dow was enough. He saw the amber button and jammed his thumb down on it.

The button gave inwardly, but a needlelike pain lanced through him. He dropped the fanged thing in surprise. Then, unable to find it again, he staggered recklessly to the wall, found the light switch and pressed it. Luckily, the electric current in the Settlement had not yet failed. He saw the jade box.

He picked it up and pressed the amber button, on the edge this time. That was when he saw that there was a fixed, thin needle that came through the button's engraved center when it moved inward—and a hoarse gurgle welled to his bloody lips. He had lived in China a long time.

He knew the guile of the Oriental mind.

Poison! He had been poisoned! Sheer terror made his voice rise to a shriek. Then it dropped to a groan. His throat felt constricted and his eyes bulged. He felt the hot blood surge through him in a mad riot. He dropped the jade box and it flew open when it struck. He saw, then, that it was empty. The green diamond was gone! Thorne had outwitted him. He staggered to the door.

He was a strong man, and so it took him longer to die. He fought the poison, vaguely horrified, his lips slowly retreating from his gums in the sweeping agony. He went down to the floor and his heels drummed in a mad spasm on the carpet as he was caught in an uncontrollable convulsion.

Froth and blood drooled from his purpling lips and he retched once or twice. Finally, he lay still, a horrible, grimacing dead man, trapped by the cunning of an ancient craftsman who had devised this swift death for those who sought to plunder the sacred gem of his empress.

And from the hallway, the dead *amah's* glassy eyes seemed to contemplate the big Hoffer with a grim

malice and a mysterious amusement. . . .

So, several hours later, Jim Thorne found Hoffer, swollen and contorted, his sightless eyes still mirroring the fright and the agony of his death. Thorne's keen eyes read the story of the pulpy mouth. Hoffer might even have survived that—but it was Thorne's trap that had signed the big spy's death warrant.

Thorne stood a moment and looked. Then he picked up the jade box and put it into his pocket. Since he had first seen the *thuggee* at the back window at this house, the green diamond had been in the heel of his shoe. But he wanted the jade box as a memento.

Ginger was safe at the physician's home, and was to stay there until sailing time tomorrow. He had seen no sign of the guards that Sam Ying had said would watch him. Perhaps, he thought, he had lost them somewhere in the fantastic confusion that had overtaken the International Settlement and all Shanghai.

Mindful of Ginger's directions, he went about packing all her personal effects and clothes, as well as her father's, for Ginger would not again enter the house where the dead *amah* lay. He had borrowed the physician's car and when he had finished packing he piled everything into it. On his way back, he stopped and informed the civil authorities that there were three dead people in the Barret house. . . .

**O**VER four hundred Americans, men, women and children, went twelve miles down the Whangpoo the next day, under constant fire. The *President Jefferson* was anchored some eight miles to sea and looked like a speck on the horizon. The fighting had reached a new intensity, and shells whipped through the air most of the time.

There was not room enough on board the relief ship for all the ref-



ugees, so Jim Thorne was glad to draw a cot on the deck, while Ginger was to share a cabin with several other women.

As the ship put out to sea, bound for Manila, Thorne stood at the rail, looking at the distant shore. He heard the dim thunder of the guns, saw the cloud of black smoke that was the funeral pall of the "Paris of the Orient." It was his last glimpse of China, he knew, for he was through with wandering.

Suddenly, he was aware of Ginger Barret at his elbow, also staring at the distant shore. She was marvelously lovely, standing there, and the sudden stirring of his blood told him that this was no passing fancy. Curiously, it flashed over him that his father, too, had married a girl whom he had met in a distant land—his mother. He grinned. *Kismet!*

"Well, good-by to Shanghai!" Gin-

ger said. "Dad cables that he's never going back. We're going to settle in San Francisco. I'm glad of it."

"That's where I'm bound," said Thorne. "I'm going into business there. Which all means that I'll be able to see you. Look at me, Ginger."

She turned to look at him and something electric, curious, passed between them. They both understood. Jim Thorne knew, with firm conviction, that here was the one girl he could ever love—the girl he wanted for his wife.

"Ginger," he whispered, "I got you into an awful jam, and I didn't mean to. But I'm hoping you'll let me spend the balance of my life looking after you, to make up for it."

There was no affectation in her manner as she looked at him with steady eyes. Only honesty—and love.

"I was hoping," she said softly, "that you would say that."

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

## SENIOR THE KEED

*A Timely, Action-Packed Complete Novelet  
of Mexican Mines*

By LOUIS C. GOLDSMITH

CHANGE TO

# Mint Springs

AND KEEP  
THE CHANGE!



Ask for this quality Kentucky Straight Bourbon. It's easy on your pocketbook.

A PRODUCT OF GLENMORE



# PIRATE'S PAY-DAY



*Scarface was fighting desperately  
for a quick victory*

*When Plunderers Menace  
the Tropic Seas, Phillip  
Leigh Exacts Vengeance  
at Sword's Point!*

By  
**KARL F. WILSON**

**P**EERING beneath the low-hanging screen of leaves, his body prone on the ground, Phillip Leigh studied the ship his lookout had reported to him. That she was a pirate, he had no doubt, and that she belonged to one Jean Descartes, known as "Scarface," he was fast coming to believe.

Many of the ship's crew had already landed on the beach, and were disporting themselves on the sand. Not fifty yards from Phillip Leigh, a dozen men were setting up an awn-



ing. Boats, piled high with casks, drew in to the beach, where a score of rogues, frolicking like schoolboys, lifted casks to their shoulders and started off for the jungle.

Leigh turned his head to the right where lay Thorpe, his second mate, and O'Neil, a seaman, watching with grim faces.

"They're here for water," he whispered.

**I**T WAS then he saw the boat. In the bow, facing the stern, sat a tall figure, splendid in black velvet and plumed hat. Side by side on the center thwart sat two women, while behind them crouched a huge, half-naked figure, chocolate in color. Phillip Leigh knew the latter for a Cimaroon, one of that strange, fierce race born of Indians and escaped slaves.

Some of the pirates ran out into the water to draw the boat up on the sand. The man in the bow sprang ashore and turned to assist the women, but they arose, skirts lifted, preparing to step into the water. Like a flash, the Cimaroon was before them. Stooping quickly, he lifted one of the ladies on either arm and carried them to the beach. The man in black velvet laughed and turned about.

Leigh's left hand clenched into a fist, while the knuckles of his right whitened about the barrel of his musket. There was no mistaking that countenance of the black-velvet-clad man. Once strikingly handsome, it was marred by a scar running across forehead and cheek, giving the left eyelid a sinister droop and the face a permanent leer. It was Scarface.

Bitterness welled into Leigh's throat. Three years ago, in 1640, when news had reached him of the death of his father and brother at the hands of Scarface, he had given up his plantation in Virginia to return to the sea. Out of Plymouth a year later in the *Swan*, with a hand-

picked crew, every one of whom had a score against the pirate, he had spent two fruitless years scouring the ocean for the buccaneer.

And now, when a fight with two pirates had left him battered and crippled, half his crew dead, his ship careened for repairs on the other side of the island, Scarface stumbled upon him. True, Leigh had built a fort on the beach with the guns of the *Swan* studding its log-and-stone walls, but only thirty men with sound skins, under the command of Brundage, his first officer, awaited his return.

Thorpe's steady, whispered curses aroused Phillip Leigh.

"Quiet!" he whispered.

"—saved himself a couple women," Thorpe finished.

Leigh thought of Thorpe's sister, taken by Scarface on her way to the Carolinas. Compared with Thorpe, his own call for revenge was slight.

"You won't help them by getting us discovered," he whispered to Thorpe.

As Scarface and his prisoners approached, Phillip saw that the women were very young, hardly more than girls. Blue-black hair glinted in the sun. He caught the flash of great, dark eyes.

"Nothing like getting your feet on land to put new life in you," Scarface said as he stepped under the awning. The hated voice was clear in Leigh's ears. "And I like life in my women."

The pirate sat on cushions brought from the boat.

"Sit down!" he ordered.

Seizing the taller girl's arm, he jerked her to the cushions beside him. She whirled away. Her reply was too low for Phillip Leigh's ears, but her face was eloquent of loathing.

"O-ho! The fire returns already. For that I'll collect a kiss."

Leigh saw the girl's body bent roughly against Scarface. She struck



at his head. At the same time, the second girl flung herself upon the man, sobbing, striking at cheek and neck.

"Let me knock 'im off Cap'n," Thorpe was begging. "Just one shot."

Leigh's heart thudded jarringly. His breath whistled in his nostrils; his eyes were narrow slits. However, he reached out a restraining hand.

"Wait. Not just yet."

Scarface had flung the second girl from him, and now he lowered the fist he had raised to strike the one he held in his arms.

"No," he said. "I'll save a little of that beauty for my men. And when they're through with you, Miguel, there, can have you. Hey, Miguel, how you like to be sweetheart to the ladies you served?"

Leigh glanced at the Cimaroon with new interest. Evidently he had been the girls' servant, but was a pirate now. He touched Thorpe's arm.

"A shot from ambush isn't my idea of an end for Scarface," he said. "And we'd have the whole crew on our necks. Besides, if he does what I think he will when his water-party returns, we may have a chance to help those girls."

"Just so we get 'im some time," Thorpe grated.

**T**IME seemed to drag. The pirates, scattered over the sand, played or lolled in the sun. Under the awning, Scarface amused himself by letting handfuls of sand trickle through his fingers, while he talked to the girls. The prisoners, however, were stonily silent.

Phillip Leigh's muscles began to cramp and twinge from holding one position, but he was afraid to move for fear of discovery. Little sounds from the men beside him told him that they, too, were suffering. He envied the Cimaroon his ability to stand for what seemed hours, motionless, arms folded across his chest.

Then he heard the sounds he had

been waiting for—voices in the jungle, men crashing through the underbrush. From the green foliage, a score of men erupted. It was the water-party, empty-handed.

"Captain! Captain Descartes! A ship! A ship over there!"

The pirate crew flocked up, forming a knot around the excited men. A babble arose. Scarface stood under the awning and shouted for quiet.

"A ship!" he said. "Merchantman? Some of the brotherhood?"

One of the water-party laughed. "Know who it is? We went as far as the beach and looked her over. It's the *Swan*!"

There was dead silence. Then Scarface's low ejaculation:

"The *Swan*! Phillip Leigh, by God!"

"An' they're careened, Cap'n. High an' dry. They've got a fort on the beach, but not a man in sight."

Scarface chuckled. Then he threw back his head and roared.

"The *Swan*!" D'ye hear that, boys? Phillip Leigh! There's pickings for you. He's got the treasure of at least three honest rogues in his hold. And he's careened over there."

The buccaneers responded with a roar. Scarface held up his hand.

"We'll surprise them," he said. "Damn their fort! Get your muskets. Look alive now!"

Leigh's eyes glittered. "That's just what I hoped for," he whispered. "Now if Brundage just lets them come out on the beach."

The pirates filed into the jungle, leaving three of their number to look after the girls. Miguel was ordered to join the raiding party.

Leigh waited until the three pirates, holding fast to their prisoners, turned at last from watching the others vanish into the jungle.

"All right," he whispered. "We can't shoot. Rush 'em!"

But even as the three men, muskets in one hand and drawn blades in the other, drew themselves to a



crouch, there was a flurry of action on the beach. Involuntarily, they checked. The taller girl had flashed a hand to the bosom of her dress. A sliver of steel glittered in her fist. The pirate holding her let out a startled oath, which changed to a yell as she struck. Blood spurted from his shoulder. He sprang away.

"Rush 'em!" Phillip Leigh cried, leading the dash across the sand.

The tall girl had whirled now to the ruffian holding the other girl. But he had seen her coming. He flung his charge from him and caught the darting knife hand. The stiletto fell to the sand. A savage blow knocked the tall girl sprawling.

Then the wounded pirate looked up to find Phillip Leigh and his men almost upon him.

"Hey! Look out!"

He snatched a pistol from his belt and fired pointblank at Leigh, but Leigh had thrown himself to hands and knees. When he came up, he ran the man neatly through.

Spinning around, he saw a second pirate go down beneath the combined attack of Thorpe and O'Niel. The third pirate, cursing luridly, was trying to hold the smaller girl before him as a shield. She fought him off. Then Leigh's blade licked out and the pirate was down, writhing.

Phillip Leigh glanced about him, looked down at the three dead pirates. The fire of battle still flooded his veins. His rapier quivered in his grip. But it was all over. He turned to the girls.

"We are from the ship across the island," he said. "They'll have heard that pistol shot. There's no time to lose here."

The girls were staring. Then, as a musket cracked aboard the ship, the taller girl stooped quickly and retrieved her stiletto.

"The ship! Yes! Yes! Come, Maria."

As more muskets cracked, Leigh herded his charges across the sand. Once in the jungle, he turned sharply

to his left, leading through the underbrush until lack of breath forced a halt. He listened. There was no sound except their own breathing.

"That damned Cimaroon will track us down," Thorpe panted.

"We're away for the time being, at least," Leigh said. To the girls, he said: "I am Phillip Leigh, master of the Swan."

"In Cardenas, we hear of you," the taller girl answered. Her English was heavily accented, her voice low, musical. "I am Carlotta Mendez, daughter of Don Fernando. My sister, Maria."

**T**HEY pushed on. Part way across the island, the deep thunder of cannon rumbled on their ears. More faintly, they heard the popping of muskets. But in a short time the cannonading died, only the reports of muskets reaching them. It was a slow, dropping fire, however, and Leigh knew that the pirates had been repulsed.

The sun was halfway across the western sky when Phillip Leigh and his party at last stepped from the shelter of low sand dunes and made a dash for the fort. Yells arose in the jungle. Muskets cracked. But the distance was much too great for damage to be done.

Brundage, Leigh's first officer, met him as he scrambled over the wall into the enclosure.

"Thank God, you're back," he said, gripping Leigh's hand.

Leigh made him known to the girls, and then led them to a corner of the fort, the safest place he could find, where he told them to stay. They refused.

"You have been wounded," Maria said. "Give us water and bandages."

Leigh looked at the girls, admiration in his eyes. Their dresses were ripped and torn. Perspiration dewed their foreheads. There was grime on their faces and hands. But throughout all that had happened, they had



made no outcry, spoken no word of complaint.

He saw that they had water and bandages, and then, with Brundage, moved to a gun emplacement.

"How are we fixed to hold out?" he asked at once.

Brundage's face was serious. "Food and water in plenty," he said. "But we used more powder than we thought in that last sea-fight."

"I thought as much. What about the men?"

"They're taking it all right. We've been in tight spots before."

**L**EIGH turned to the beach. Dead pirates lay there, but the man he hated most was not among them. Scarface was still free. Trapped here on the beach, only thirty of his crew unwounded, it began to look as if Scarface would be free long after Phillip Leigh had ceased to bother him.

Late in the afternoon, Carlotta and Maria joined Leigh and Brundage at a gun emplacement. Leigh learned that the girls had been on their way to an aunt in France when Scarface had taken their ship.

"We are grateful to you," Carlotta finished, "if only for a few more hours before we must use my stiletto." She touched her dress.

"It won't come to that, *Senorita*," Leigh assured her. "We came out here to put an end to Scarface, and put an end to him we shall."

"But how, *Senor Phillippe*? Your powder, it is low. Your men, so many wounded." She looked at the set of his jaw, at his eyes as he squinted at the jungle. "Ah, when you look so, I think you will do it."

Leigh's face softened as he glanced at her. He turned to his mate.

"Brundage," he said, "it's only a question of time until he sails his ship around the island and bombards the fort. But I think he'll wait until his water casks are full before he does that. While he's waiting, we'll take

a few men, slip across the island, and steal his ship. We can get off here under cover of her guns."

Brundage continued to stare at the beach. Finally he nodded.

"That," he said, "is all that is left."

The short twilight of the tropics gave way abruptly to full night. In spite of the starlight, the beach lay, a dim blanket, between dark sea and black forest. Leigh, with Thorpe and thirteen others, slipped over the wall and stole quietly down to the water-line.

A half-mile to the north, Leigh found dunes behind which his men could safely rise from their crouch. He led into the jungle. An hour in the pitch blackness, where serrated leaves scraped his skin and roots clutched at his feet, and he called a halt in a little clearing.

It was here, at the rear of the line, that Leigh discovered the girls. They had dressed themselves in man's attire of shirt and breeches. Rapiers hung in baldrics. They carried muskets in their hands.

"You!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

"You need sound bodies," Carlotta replied. "Wounded men can fight in a fort. We fire muskets, we fence and we row."

It was impossible to send them back. Cursing softly, Leigh plunged into the blackness again.

At the edge of the jungle, he looked past the gaunt skeleton of the awning to where waves lapped the sterns of half a dozen boats. Beyond, a black silhouette, lay the pirate ship.

"Boats drawn up and no guard," he said in a low voice. "They must think they have us properly trapped. Well, our best bet is to pose as part of the crew returning. You, Thorpe, take seven men and go up the anchor chains at the bow. I'll lead the rest over the waist." He turned to the girls. "Stay out of sight, behind the men."

The men loosened cutlasses, saw to



the priming of muskets, and then boldly followed Leigh out of the jungle. They had traversed two-thirds of the distance to the boats when a shout broke the silence. The boats seemed to boil, spewing dark forms.

Stunned, Leigh halted. His scalp crawled. There was a gone feeling in the pit of his stomach.

"Fire!" he yelled. "Fire!"

His voice broke the paralysis that had gripped his men. A ragged volley cracked. Some of the pirates fell. Bursts of orange flame answered, and then the two forces locked in a shouting, stamping mob.

Phillip Leigh knew at once that his little band was hopelessly outnumbered but he had no time to think of that. Steel grated on his rapier, muskets clubbed at him. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Carlotta and Maria, back to back. Then something struck him from behind. He was on hands and knees. The last he remembered seeing was a booted foot spurning the sand. . . .

**W**HEN Phillip Leigh came back to consciousness, he felt the hard planking of a deck under him. Water dripped and ran from his face and hair. His head ached. Struggling, he managed to sit up, only to catch a second bucket of bitter seawater full in the face. Laughter arose.

The moon had risen, and he saw that he was on the pirate ship. About him, sitting or lying on the deck, was what was left of his little band. To one side, held firmly, stood Carlotta and Maria.

Then he looked up, to see Scarface leering down at him, the moonlight revealing clearly the scar from which he took his name.

"Well," said the pirate, "I am not flattered by your opinion of me. Thought you could take my ship behind my back, did you?" He chuckled. "No, I am not flattered. But I am grateful for the return of the two little pigeons to their coop."

Then, as Leigh remained silent, Scarface lifted one booted foot, planted it firmly in the prisoner's face, and shoved. Leigh's head struck the deck and agony shot through him. He lay still.

"Drag that scum to the forecastle!" Scarface roared. "Tie 'em up to the bunks. And tie these wenches in my cabin."

Leigh was yanked to his feet. He felt sick, nauseated. A leaden weight rode his shoulders, bent his head. He had failed.

But not yet. His arms had not been bound. The rough grip of his handlers was none too firm. And then the man on Leigh's right shifted his hold. With a sudden wrench of his body, he tore his right arm free. A slashing blow to the neck felled the second pirate. Like a flash, Leigh sprang over the bulwark in a curving dive.

The water glittered for an instant beneath him, and then he struck and was under, swimming with all his strength. When his lungs would stand no more, he rose, gasping for air to continue.

There was a shout of discovery. Muskets banged and pistols spat. The balls chirked into the water around him. He heard Scarface bellow for a boat. Then he was under again.

To reach the shore, with a boat pursuing, he knew would be impossible. Strangely enough, now that he was free, the pirate ship offered his only refuge. Deliberately, he rose to the surface.

The moonlight revealed him at once. More muskets cracked. Dimly he heard men scrambling into a boat. Suddenly, as if he had been hit, he threw up his hands and sank.

Immediately he struck out under water, this time directly for the ship, and when he rose, the dark hull loomed close above him. A few noiseless strokes and he reached up one hand, found enough purchase with his nails on the rough wood to hold him, and there he clung.



A boat pulled away from the ship and was rowed back and forth in the water, but Leigh could see that the search was half-hearted.

"Must ha' got 'im," a voice called.

"All right. The barracuda will finish him. We haven't all night."

That was Scarface. The boat drew in to the ship and Leigh clung silently under the bulging hull. He heard Scarface telling off a score of men to work the ship and man the guns. Then men scrambled down, clattering, into the waiting boats. Leigh let himself sink while the rest of the crew got away for the shore.

Quietly, then, he swam toward the ship's stern. He sought for a rope, a forgotten Jacob's-ladder, anything that might let him regain the deck, unseen. There was nothing.

Anchor chains clanked, blocks creaked and rattled. There were shouted orders and the sound of running feet. The ship heeled slightly in the water, began to move.

Leigh swam faster, with increasing panic. He was almost run down by the slowly swinging hull. And still no means of gaining the deck offered itself. He reached the stern and then, as the vessel swung, he caught at the rudder-post and scrambled to a precarious position beside it where the overhang of the stern cabins hid him from sight.

**A**T DAYLIGHT, soaking wet, cramped, his body numb, Phillip Leigh stared with bloodshot eyes at the shore gliding slowly astern. They had rounded the island in the night and were beating up toward the fort.

It was voices, drifting down from the cabins above, that finally drove the fog from his brain. Carlotta and Maria! He looked up, but the overhanging stern blocked his vision.

Almost immediately there were sounds of activity on deck. The anchors let go with a rattle and roar. The ship lost weigh. Voices clamored on the beach. They were at the fort.

Leigh heard Scarface bellow a command, and the guns of the ship thundered. Every move was agony but somehow, clutching the rudderpost, he managed to stand upright.

Thunder on the beach now. The ship quivered as she was hulled. An answering roar from the decks above and the bombardment was on. A single gun spoke above Leigh. Then his fingers caught at the sill of a cabin window. He dangled in mid-air.

Blood roared in his ears. Fire shot along his arms. He kicked and struggled, seeking for a toe-hold. His foot caught, held, and with a heave and shrug, he tumbled into the cabin.

"Phillip! Cap'n Phillip!"

It was Thorpe's voice, dim in his ears. Lights still flickered before his eyes. He lay still, panting, waiting until he could see through the dimness. Then he made out the form of his second, bound tightly to the leg of a massive table. There was blood on Thorpe's wrists from his struggles with the ropes, but his haggard face shone with an incredulous joy.

"Damme!" Thorpe cried. "Where have you been?"

"Hanging on the rudder-post," Leigh answered. He hauled himself to his feet and limped to the wall on which hung a naked rapier. "Wait till I get you loose."

The edge of the rapier sawed at Thorpe's bonds and in a moment they fell to the floor. Thorpe scrambled to his feet, and seized Leigh.

"I knew you were up to somethin' when you went over-side."

Leigh shook his head. "We're together again. That's all I know."

His voice was thick with fatigue. He turned to the table and rummaged through the drawers, finally drawing out a case in which lay two pistols.

"Thought there'd be something like this around. Take them."

He held the pistols out to Thorpe, who looked to their loading and priming, and then thrust the weapons into his belt.



"Cutlass is more my speed," he growled.

"Where are the girls?" Leigh asked.

"In the next cabin to this one."

"All right. Let's go."

Leigh led the way through the stern window again. Clutching the carved woodwork, they made a precarious way to the adjoining windows, and a moment later stepped into a dim cabin.

"*Capitaine* Phillippe Leigh! *Senor* Thorpe!"

The girls' amazed voices were al-

dling of an after gun. Leigh counted four dead pirates.

But even as he counted, a ball from the fort plowed into the bulwarks just under the muzzle of one of the guns. The heavy piece whirled backward, crushing one of the pirates, and flying splinters cut down two more. That reduced the odds. Brundage was making good use of what powder he had left. Leigh closed the door.

"How many of our men were left?" he asked.

"Eight, I think, not counting our-

## A FIGHTING YANK FOREIGN LEGIONNAIRE FACES THE TOUGHEST BATTLE OF HIS LIFE

IN

# SCOURGE OF ALLAH

*A Smashing Story of Syrian Treasure*

**By E. HOFFMANN PRICE**

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

most drowned in the thunder of the guns. Leigh saw that both girls were bound, as Thorpe had been, to the legs of a table. It was the work of a moment to cut them free.

With a glad cry, Thorpe sprang to a stand and picked up a long cutlass. The girls, half sobbing in Spanish, caught at their rescuers, clung to them. Leigh pushed Carlotta aside.

"You'll be all right now," he said.

"All the time, we knew you would come," Carlotta told him.

"What's the orders, Cap'n?" Thorpe asked. He brandished the cutlass.

Leigh crossed to the door and opened it a crack. Smoke billowed across the deck where the pirates yelled and toiled at their guns. Overhead, feet stamped where Scarface personally superintended the han-

selves. They're tied in the forecastle. We could slip up there without being seen and free them."

Leigh shook his head.

"Scarface is on the poop, and the breeze is keeping the smoke cleared. He'd spot us before we got halfway." For a moment he looked into Thorpe's eyes. "There's a surer way, but—" He left the statement unfinished and stared at his second mate.

Thorpe's eyes narrowed. His jaw set.

"Let's have it."

"All right. There's a swivel-gun on the poop, and the chances are ten to one that it's crammed with bullets. You and I can gain the poop and knock off Scarface's gun crew. Then you turn the swivel-gun on the pirates in the waist. They're all at the



starboard batteries. Wait until you have a knot of them and take half a dozen when you fire. I'll take care of Scarface. As soon as you fire, step to the head of the companion and hold it."

He turned to the girls. "When you hear the swivel-gun go off, you two run forward, keeping on the port side and behind the deck-houses. Cut the men free and tell them to arm themselves with anything they can find. Cutlasses, belaying-pins—anything."

He looked back at Thorpe. He knew what was passing through his second's mind. There were two ladders to the poop. What was to prevent the pirates in the waist from swarming up one while Thorpe held the other? Their act would provide a better chance to free the crew, but it meant death for Leigh and Thorpe, beyond any doubt.

"There's more here than you and me," Leigh said. "The señoritas, the crew. Once the ship is taken, Brundage can take care of the rest."

"I'll need a match," Thorpe answered simply.

"Use a pistol."

"*Capitaine! Capitaine Phillippe!*" Carlotta caught at his arm. "You are so grim. Don't—don't get hurt!"

Phillip Leigh patted her shoulder.

"You know what you are to do? You have your knife yet?"

Carlotta reached into the bosom of her shirt and drew out the blade.

Leigh nodded. "Then you just do your part, and we'll be all right."

As he led through the door, he heard Carlotta calling:

"Phillippe! Don't hurt Miguel!"

**T**HUNDER on the deck, the sting of burned powder in his nostrils. Phillip Leigh did not feel the quivering planks beneath his feet. He seemed disembodied, floating. He caught a glimpse of the toiling gun crews, saw Miguel's shoulders heave and gleam. Then he was at the ladder

to the poop. His rapier flashed as he laid hold of the railing. Strangely, as he mounted, he thought of a scaffold.

His eyes came level with the poop-deck, above it. Scarface, with two gunners, moved about a smoking cannon. Then Scarface turned.

At sight of Phillip Leigh, the pirate's jaw sagged. With a wild oath, he jerked a pistol from his belt and fired, the ball whistling past Leigh's head.

A pistol cracked, and one of the gunners clutched at his breast and fell. The other, startled into action, whipped out his cutlass and rushed to the attack, with Scarface following him.

Sight of the man he was seeking brought Leigh completely to his senses again. A hot flood welled up inside him. He felt his tired muscles quiver with sudden desire.

A cutlass gleamed. He parried the blow, returned a short thrust that pierced the pirate's throat. Then Scarface was upon him.

Leigh sprang to one side, came on guard. The rapiers grated and whined. Dimly he heard Thorpe's yell, and then the swivel-gun boomed. There was screaming in the waist, but Leigh could not spare an instant from Scarface.

Around and around the two men stamped, Leigh fencing as he never had before, Scarface fighting desperately for a quick victory. It was the man's very desperation that kept him from his end, for Leigh discovered that his tired arms were not equal to the task before him. He was on the defensive. Sweat stung his forehead as he tried to keep his elbow close to his flank, his blade circling.

Voices yelled in the waist. Over Scarface's shoulder, Leigh caught a glimpse of Thorpe at the head of the ladder, his cutlass flashing. He writhed away from a quick thrust.

Suddenly he disengaged and sprang back in amazement. There, at the port



ladder, huge shoulders glistening, a chocolate-colored giant swung a heavy cutlass. Miguel was holding the port companion.

Scarface's blade leaped in. Leigh twisted and steel grated on his ribs. He felt sick. The blade stabbed again, cut his thigh. He staggered back. For a moment he managed to hold the pirate off. Then he felt his blade twisted, whipped to the right and then to the left. It was coming. He saw it in Scarface's leering countenance, in the poise of his body. The pirate straightened.

Leigh half parried. Steel pierced his shoulder. He was down, with the pirate poised for a death thrust.

"Scarface!"

Still poised, the pirate checked, and Leigh rolled free.

There, swaying on his feet, running blood from a dozen wounds, stood Thorpe, a pistol in his right hand. Dirt and blood distorted his face, but through it his teeth gleamed in a white grin.

"Through the belly," Thorpe said. The pistol cracked.

Scarface screamed and dropped his rapier. He clutched his middle in agony. Grimly Thorpe watched as the pirate bent lower and lower, finally crashing to the deck. Then, very quietly, he, too, sagged and fell.

Even as he lay on the deck, the ship seemed to be wheeling about Phillip Leigh. He tried to get up, but his

arms collapsed. Dimly he heard cheering, but whether from buccaneers or seamen he could not tell. He thought he saw Carlotta's head at the top of the ladder to the poop, and then a gray cloud enveloped him.

When he regained consciousness, he was lying on a couch in one of the cabins. Carlotta sat beside him, her cool hand on his forehead.

"Phillippe," she whispered. "Phillippe."

At the low sound, Brundage moved into Leigh's vision.

"Thorpe?" Phillip asked.

"With Miguel in the next cabin," Carlotta told him. "Maria is with them. Miguel was no pirate, Phillippe. He pretend so he can be with us."

Phillip looked up at Brundage, inquiringly.

"We got off," Brundage told him, "with every living soul. I've laid a course for Barbados."

"The pirates?"

"Still on the island. We used our last cupful of powder on them." Brundage's face turned sober. "The *Swan* is gone, Phillip. I turned our guns on her and blew out her stern so they couldn't use her."

Phillip Leigh's eyes closed for an instant. And when he opened them, only Carlotta was there. A faint smile touched his lips. He raised his good hand to hers, and then let his eyes shut once more.

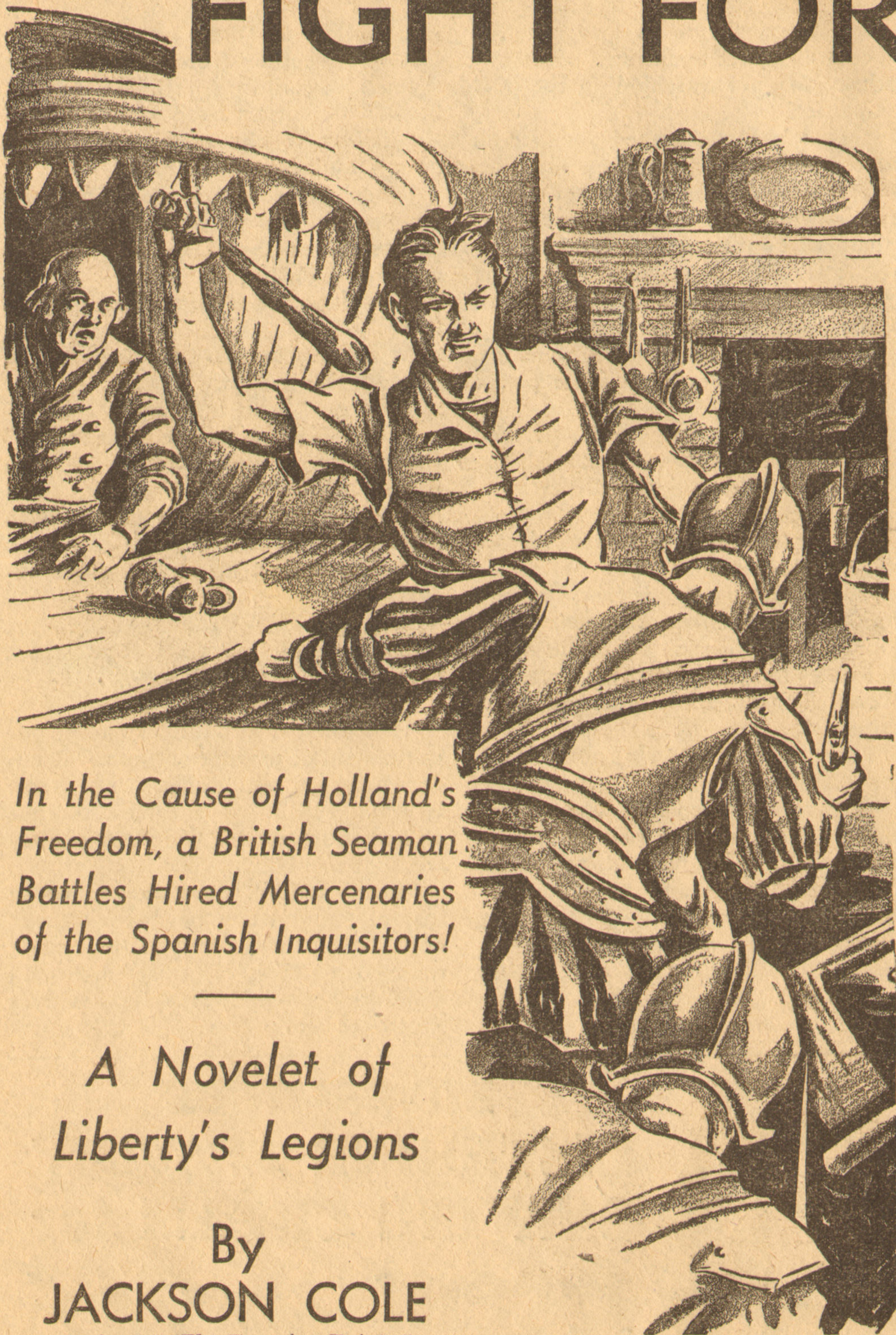


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# FIGHT FOR



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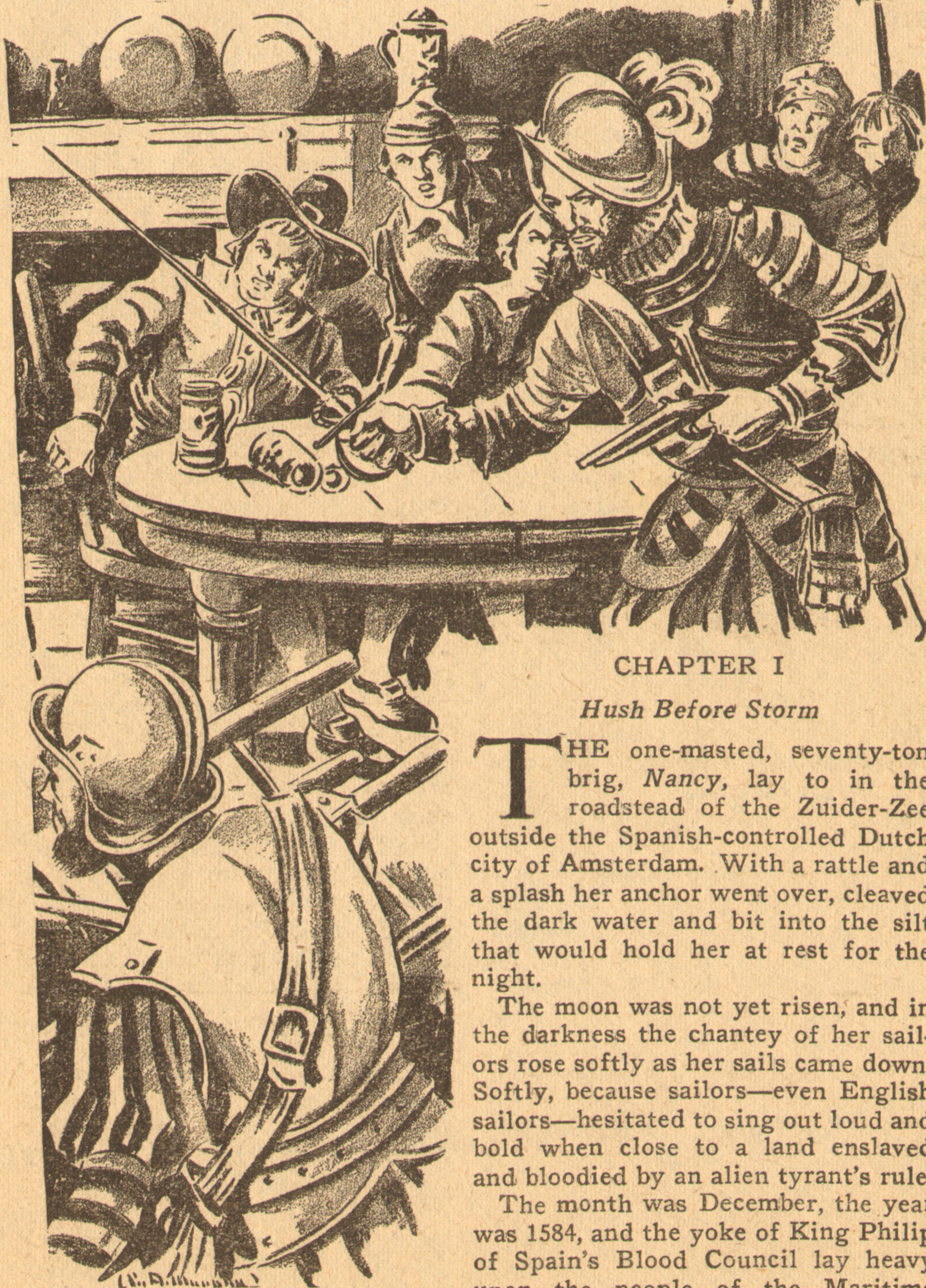
By  
**JACKSON COLE**

*Author of "The Egyptian Knight,"  
"Bwana M'Kubwa," etc.*

*Tim brought the cudgel down on the*



# FREEDOM



*muscular neck below the headpiece*

## CHAPTER I

### *Hush Before Storm*

**T**HE one-masted, seventy-ton brig, *Nancy*, lay to in the roadstead of the Zuider-Zee outside the Spanish-controlled Dutch city of Amsterdam. With a rattle and a splash her anchor went over, cleaved the dark water and bit into the silt that would hold her at rest for the night.

The moon was not yet risen, and in the darkness the chanter of her sailors rose softly as her sails came down. Softly, because sailors—even English sailors—hesitated to sing out loud and bold when close to a land enslaved and bloodied by an alien tyrant's rule.

The month was December, the year was 1584, and the yoke of King Philip of Spain's Blood Council lay heavy upon the people of the Maritime Provinces.



The *Nancy's* captain and her first mate stood at the brig's taffrail and stared out across the Zuider-Zee toward the scattered lights in the houses of the city. Such light, made by whale oil in lamps, the people of Holland still had, but the light of freedom had gone from their hearts. It was of this that the first mate, Timothy Waynesmith, was thinking, while Captain Miller thought merely of how long it would take him to clear his cargo, take on another, and set sail for England and home.

**T**IMOTHY WAYNESMITH'S chest heaved as he took in air and then expelled it in a kind of sigh.

"Lad," the stocky captain said, glancing sideward and upward at his chief officer, "ye breathe as though ye would take in all the air there is and leave not a whiff for others."

"No, Captain," Waynesmith said quietly, "I breathe so deep because this is not English air but Dutch, and a man must take on ten times the quantity of it to get a free Englishman's lungful."

"Aye, lad, these are cruel times for the Dutch under Spanish rule, but 'tis no business of ours."

"Isn't it, Captain?" Timothy Waynesmith's blue eyes flashed.

"Why, no. 'Tis no skin off a Britisher's back."

"'Tis skin off every Britisher's back when the whips of the Inquisition scourge the skin from the backs of Dutch men, women and children!" Waynesmith flashed.

"Hush, lad! Don't talk so loud. Voices carry far across the water."

"Let them carry to King Philip in Spain then! I'll not hold my tongue aboard an English ship! No skin off a Britisher's back? 'Tis skin off *my* back. I don't feel free when a people we think good enough to trade with are in bondage to an alien king."

"Tim, trade's one thing; fighting another people's battles is another."

"It's *our* battle too." Waynesmith

had lowered his voice but it was not less intense for that reason. His strong hands gripped the rail and his powerful muscles rippled beneath his shirt. "Can't folk understand that Philip's conquest of Holland would make the Spanish Empire the most powerful on earth, and that then Philip would be in a position to go on and conquer *us*—England! What would become of our liberties as Englishmen then? No, the Dutch people aren't fighting for themselves alone, they're fighting for us too, for *our* liberties. And Englishmen would see that, blast them, if they could see any farther than their fog-bound noses.

"This is no ordinary war, Captain. This is a life and death struggle, and we Englishmen ought to be in it, or at least help the Dutch with volunteers, money, and weapons. The Dutch are fighting for their religion, for their homes, their wives and families. The Spanish armies of King Philip give no quarter and show no mercy. It makes no difference whether a town surrenders or is taken. The Spaniards put its people to the sword—men, women and children alike.

"King Philip and his Inquisition are determined to crush out the life of these provinces, to stamp out the religion of the country, and to leave not a single man, woman or child alive who refuses to bow the knee before them. Well, the Dutch are equally determined to give their lives to the cause of religious liberty. Could there be a better cause? Isn't every human being entitled to worship in his own way, according to the dictates of his own conscience? Is it right to hate and persecute those whose race and religion are different from ours? Tell me that, Captain Miller."

The captain was long in answering. He took a clay pipe out of his pocket, loaded it with "tobacco"—that strange weed which Sir Walter Raleigh had but recently brought over to England from the Indians in the American wilderness—and, applying struck flint



to tinder, lighted it. When it was drawing well, he withdrew it from his mouth and said:

"Lad, 'tis a long speech ye have made, and a powerful one. The questions ye ask I have no ready answer to. Yet, if I mistake not, ye have been leading up to something. Underneath all your questions I seem to hear another, unspoken. Ye seek leave to go ashore, do ye not?"

The tall young seaman was startled and his bronzed face flushed beneath its weatherbeat.

"You're a sharp man, Captain," he said. "I do."

"And don't ye know, lad, that Alva, the Spanish governor, has issued an edict forbidding shore leaves to the crews of foreign vessels, the reason bein', as ye well know, that English sailors who feel as you do have been joinin' the armies of the Prince of Orange to fight against Spanish rule—"

"And for Dutch freedom and religious tolerance," the first mate finished for him. "Yes, I know that. But I'm not crew, sir. I'm a ship's officer. The edict doesn't apply to me."

"No it doesn't," the captain granted. "Spanish law ain't your law. But captain's law is. Will ye admit that?"

"I will."

"And if I ordered ye to remain aboard, ye would remain, would ye not?"

"You haven't so ordered yet, sir. I couldn't rightly know the answer to that question until you did."

The captain's mouth opened to issue a command, then closed, the command still unspoken. He looked at his first mate undecidedly.

"Tim, lad," he asked in a quiet voice, "were ye minded to volunteer?"

"I can't right say, sir," Tim Waynesmith replied in a voice equally low. "My intention in going ashore was to look up a Dutchman, *Mynheer* Van Pieter by name, who was a good friend of my late father, and to give him a watch which my father wished

him to have. As to whether I had other and deeper intentions, perhaps I did and perhaps I didn't. I can't say."

CAPTAIN MILLER'S anxiety did not diminish at this response.

"Mister Waynesmith," he said soberly, "I seek not to abuse a captain's authority. I would hesitate to say to any officer of mine whose feet hungered for the touch of Mother Earth: 'No, ye may not go ashore.' But ye worry me sore, lad—Mister Waynesmith. Ye have a quick lip and a hot temper. What's on your lung is on your tongue. To make matters worse, ye've a youthful heart on fire with a people's wrongs, added to which ye've notions of your own as to what Englishmen should do about it."

"In short, lad—Mister Waynesmith—if I let ye go ashore, I'd take no man's wager that ye would not get into trouble with the Spanish, perhaps get into jail, and mayhap even end with your neck in the gallows-rope. And lad, ye are but a humble seaman, like myself. Your trouble would scarcely cause a ripple in the court of our good queen, Elizabeth. But"—the captain's voice quickened—"I won't say no to ye. I won't say yes and I won't say no. Ye may do as your own conscience dictates."

Their hands met. "Thanks, Captain," Waynesmith said in a low voice. "That's what the Dutch people are fighting for—so that all men may do, work, worship, as their consciences dictate."

"The bo'sun will row you ashore," Captain Miller said quietly.

Five minutes later the stocky captain, leaning on the rail, gazed across the waters at the dark patch receding shoreward. The *plashing* of the oars came to his ears.

"There goes the best mate I ever had," he muttered.

He tapped out the ashes of his pipe, and the burnt tobacco of America fell



into the dark smooth waters of the *Zuider-Zee*.

"Fare ye well, Mister Waynesmith," the captain of the *Nancy* murmured.

## CHAPTER II

### *What Peace?*



LIKE most sailors, Timothy Waynesmith was accustomed to making his first stop when ashore at the handiest tavern, there washing the seasalt from his throat with a beaker of beer or three

fingers of stronger waters. Tonight he sought something in addition—information—the which could not be more certainly obtained than at a sailor's inn.

Accordingly his long legs, with their rolling gait, carried him up the quay and to the door of a tavern whose lamp-lighted sign, swinging in the night breeze, identified it somewhat ominously as the "Whale's Mouth." Like Jonah of old, Tim entered.

It was the bar that gave the tavern its name. Shaped to resemble the jaws of the sea leviathan, with the ivory-white teeth of a right whale jutting from an overhanging beam, the drinker at such a bar might well fancy that he had come face to face with the spouting monster himself.

To Waynesmith, however, who had been on a three years' whaling voyage when only sixteen, this replica of a whale's jaws was tame indeed. Thrusting head and shoulders into the "mouth," he rapped with his stout, gnarled stick upon the bar—a stick he always carried when ashore, a more effective weapon than it looked because it was lead-weighted in its knobbed head.

The barkeep seemed to appear from within the in'nards of the whale, through a little black door out of which he had to come crouchingly before rising to his full height. A sober

Dutch face looked into Waynesmith's own.

"What would ye, English sailor, who rap with such impatience upon my whale's lower jaw? Cannot a man have peaceful sup with his family?"

Waynesmith leaned further forward. "Can any Dutchman have peaceful sup with his family these days?" he asked quietly.

Fear leaped into the eyes of the tavern keeper. He looked past Waynesmith at the others in the room. The fact that the English sailor had replied in Dutch was no matter of surprise to him. Many of them had command of the language. What frightened him was this Englishman's implied criticism of King Philip's rule. It had become an offense in Holland even to listen to such talk, much less make it. Waynesmith, however, had sufficiently remembered Captain Miller's warning to keep his voice low.

"What would ye, sailor?" A look of friendliness but also of warning passed from the Dutchman to Timothy Waynesmith.

"I seek the road to the village of Vordwyck, where resides one *Mynheer* Van Pieter. I have come ashore to pay him a visit, he having been friend to my father."

At mention of the name, the innkeeper's face lost even more of its ruddy color. He swallowed hard, his Adam's apple jumping. Then, in a voice still lower than before, he said:

"The road to Vordwyck is but two miles. You would have to travel much farther than that to find *Mynheer* Van Pieter."

"Why, has he moved, then?"

The Dutchman's replying voice was now a whisper. "He has *been* moved—moved into a shallow grave after being hanged by the minions of the Blood Council. The road to heaven is long, Englishman. If you wish to live until your hair, now russet, turns gray, you will not see *Mynheer* Van Pieter very soon."



Timothy Waynesmith's lips were tight-compressed, but his eyes were hot.

"How—how did this come about? What crime did he commit?"

"Have I not said that you would have to seek him in heaven? The crime, Englishman, of being Dutch, which was the crime, too, of his wife and daughter."

"They—they too?"

The Dutchman nodded, spoke a single word, but soundlessly. Waynesmith saw only his lips move.

"Dead . . ."

**A** VOICE suddenly cut in behind them.

"Speak up, Dutchman! You know that whispered conversations are not allowed!"

Timothy Waynesmith might have had a hot temper, but he could also upon occasion exercise an iron control over his nerves. Accordingly he did not immediately whirl upon the speaker, who had spoken Dutch with a thick German accent. He was able, therefore, to see the color drain completely out of the tavern keeper's face. The tavern keeper's lips moved, but again no sound came. It was as though fear had paralyzed his vocal chords. But the tall seaman, reading the lips, knew that the Dutchman's involuntary response had been:

"Now . . . see what you have done."

For answer Timothy Waynesmith dropped one eyelid in a slow, reassuring wink.

But the other eye glowed with hot lights. Slowly the *Nancy's* first mate turned.

He immediately picked out his man—a man still seated, at a table a little off to one side, dressed in the uniform of a Spanish officer, with a long sword dangling on the floor from a loosened belt. The man's ruff, slightly open at the throat, revealed a portion of the cuirass of chain-mail encasing his chest.

The man was not Spanish, he was

German—Waynesmith could tell at a glance. And he made a shrewd guess at the officer's identity—Carl von Aert, in command of the German mercenaries fighting under King Philip's colors, honorary member of King Philip's Blood Council as well.

"Hired butcher of women and children," the seaman thought. "No whispered conversations, eh? Soon you'll be telling the Dutch not to talk at all, and then to stop breathing. Well they might, rather than breathe the foul air of bondage. All Amsterdam may be under your thumb, butcher, but I know at least one man who will shout when you command him to whisper!"

"Sir," he said aloud, fixing wide unblinking eyes upon the officer, "my conversation with this gentleman is private. I am familiar with many strange laws of many strange lands, but I have yet to come across a law as strange as the one which seeks to regulate the loudness and softness with which people may converse together. So—"

Timothy Waynesmith's chest heaved; the hot temper against which Captain Miller had warned him seemed to gather with tidal force in his breast all at once.

"So—" he said, "be good enough to keep your butcher's nose out of my business!" He ended with a thunderous shout, his heavy stick coming down upon the floor with a punctuating crash.

For several seconds there was dead silence in the room, a silence accompanied by aghast looks, open mouths, dry lips, gullets jumping as men swallowed hard. The Dutch patrons of the tavern—lighter-men, sailors, roustabouts—hardly dared look at one another, scarcely believed they had heard aright. The terrible von Aert, defied to his teeth! Good round Dutch words laid on like the slaps of a heavy hand across his cruel mouth!

And the uniformed mercenaries—some from Germany across the Rhine,



others from Italy beyond the Alps—were not less aghast. Yet they did not move, waiting for von Aert to give the command. The presence of these foreign soldiers in the armies of King Philip was proof that this was not a war of one people against another people, not a war of the Spanish people against the Dutch people, but a conscienceless war of a tyrant king, a bloody governor, a cruel Counsellor and a brutal body of Inquisitors against a country struggling for independence and religious freedom.

In the momentary silence, when everybody in the room seemed frozen into positions like so many statues, there was time for thoughts to course swiftly through Timothy Waynesmith's heated brain.

"I've done it now," his mind flashed. "Yon butcher there has but to draw one of his pistols and put a bullet in my roiling guts to bring his insulted nose back into joint again. Even so, the thing will not be entirely without profit. Dutchmen have heard a free man speak. The lesson will not be wasted on them. Some effect it will have—the story will spread. Aye, 'tis not a total loss, if it makes Dutchmen resist their oppressors.

"Curse me, though, I'm forever letting my heart run away with my head. The thing to do is not to die for freedom, but to live and fight for it! And how are you going to do that, Timothy my boy, with that butcher's bullet in you? But hist, not so fast; you're not dead yet. Yon butcher there, if he draws his pistol—I'll do my best to give him back a split skull for his murder-meant bullet."

His swift, hot thoughts, during which his eyes were none the less on the alert, were interrupted by the cold dry voice of von Aert. There was a murderous light in the Blood Counsellor's small green eyes. One corner of his mouth twitched, outward sign of the hate that rocked inside of him. And suddenly, even before those thin cruel lips issued their command, Tim

Waynesmith saw why he had not been shot down at once. Von Aert held such a death to be too merciful.

**A**CCORDINGLY Waynesmith was not surprised when von Aert said, quietly:

"Arrest him."

Instantly, before the soldiers had time to move, Waynesmith rapped out:

"Not so fast, Mister Whoever-you-are! If I'm guilty of an offense against Holland's laws, I'll submit to arrest and trial. Be good enough to inform me, then, upon what grounds you are ordering the arrest of an English citizen!"

"You are not in England now," said von Aert, wetting his thin lips as though in anticipation of sights and sounds to be seen and heard later in some subterranean torture chamber, "nor do I see any need of accounting for my actions to a common sailor who is ashore in defiance of an ordinance forbidding foreign seaman to set foot on Dutch land."

"And you," snapped Waynesmith, with a swift glance at the Dutchmen in the room, as though asking them to pay particular attention to his next words, "are you Dutch, or a foreigner? If the latter, what are you doing on Dutch soil?"

The question, so logically phrased, seemed to bring all the German's gall and bile to his face. Nevertheless he kept control of himself, still anticipating, as Waynesmith well knew, his revenge to come.

Von Aert tapped his sword. "I am here by virtue of this," he bit out through twitching lips.

"Truth forced from the lips of wickedness," the tall seaman shot out like a flash. "The sword and nothing but the sword! The Dutch people do not want you!"

To himself Timothy Waynesmith thought grimly: "Might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb. Nothing that I could say could make the



butcher's intentions toward me any worse!"

The thought took but the fraction of an instant and did not noticeably halt his speech.

"I am here as an officer of a ship which runs in the Anglo-Dutch trade," he said. "The difference between you and me is that the Dutch people want me and *hate* you, want our mutual commerce and hate your blood-drinking sword! And I remind you that as a ship's officer, your blackguardly ordinances don't apply to me."

Von Aert was a patient man. He could wait.

"Very well," he said almost lazily, "you will be arrested for disturbing the peace, unsettling the minds of the people and making seditious utterances."

"Peace," said Waynesmith softly. "What peace?"

"Arrest him," von Aert said again. "He is growing tiresome."

"Peace," Timothy Waynesmith repeated, drawing back a step. "What peace?"

And with the words he struck!

### CHAPTER III

#### *The Call of Alkmaar*



IT WAS as though a whirlwind had roared suddenly in the Whale's Mouth.

Up to the very last second von Aert's mercenaries, accustomed to the peaceful submission

of Amsterdam citizens, had expected this Englishman to yield. At the most they had looked for merely defensive resistance from him; certainly they had not expected him to take the offensive. And that one second's leeway gave Tim Waynesmith the advantages of surprise, momentum and attack that can be so decisive in determining the outcome of at least the initial stage of a battle.

He was far outnumbered. There were six of von Aert's hirelings. Von Aert himself made seven. Waynesmith had no weapon save his oaken stick—they had pistols, halberds, dirks. One had a cross-bow, von Aert had his sword. But he was faster than they, not weighted down with a steel breast-plate. And he had one added advantage that was mighty though intangible. They were hireling *fighters*, but he was a fighting *freeman*!

He took that one backward step—the step that had deceived them into thinking him defensive but which was really intended to give his body clearance and spring—and with a shout of exultation sprang forward!

The stick whirled about his head. The two soldiers who had been detailed to the immediate business of arresting him, jerked the pistols out of their belts. The stick made savage sound, cutting the air as lightning cuts the sky to make thunder follow. Tim Waynesmith brought it down, not upon the steel headpiece that would have repelled the blow but against the muscular neck, its lead-weighted knob crashingly hooking beneath the ear and jaw.

The soldier tumbled down into paralysis and death, the single blow having smashed and torn apart the body's great Third Nerve. But the stick did not stop moving. It swooped and smoked with an underhand motion along the floor. Oak met bone, as Waynesmith sent the head of his weapon crashing against the second soldier's ankle.

Encountering the bone and breaking it, nevertheless the stick incredibly kept moving, completing its savage upward arc—testimony of the tremendous strength with which the blow had been delivered, for the soldier's broken foot went up in an involuntary half-kick. The next instant he crashed on his back to the floor.

"Stand away from harm, Dutchmen!" Waynesmith roared out of his



heaving chest. "This brawl is my guilt . . . not yours!"

The warning was not needed. The patrons had already sought refuge behind tables and chairs. But strangely enough not one of them had sought the accessible safety that lay outside the tavern's door. Dutch eyes watched, missed nothing; Dutch hearts burned.

There was a flash of flame. The second soldier, still on his back, had discharged his pistol. The ball tore through Waynesmith's sheepskin-lined short jacket of Scottish wool, beneath his arm socket. A moving target, his heart had flashed out of line between the aim and the trigger-pull.

Simultaneously a voice sounded, high-pitched in desperation.

"Take him alive, fools! I want him alive!"

It was von Aert, in a panic lest his slower but more terrible vengeance be taken from him. Von Aert had stood up at last, behind his table. His belt was hooked now, his sword was out, gleaming nakedly in the light from the oil lamps. He watched, as though he were a commander on a hilltop overlooking the operations of his army battling in the valley below. But his eyes were not cool as a general's might be. They were hot with hate.

Waynesmith heard von Aert's words even in the midst of thrusting the stick, stiff-armed, into the belly of a soldier plunging at him with halberd extended.

"You'll never take me alive or dead, butcher!" he shouted, and the Dutchmen, hearing him, marveled to detect in the words a kind of tremendous laughter.

The knob of the stick unerringly found the yielding flesh below the breast-plate. The breath went out of the halberdier as his eyeballs shot up in agony and his face went white. He doubled up, forward; his spear weapon dropped from his hands. Behind the stricken soldier Waynesmith saw an upraised battle-axe.

He let fall his precious stick. What he had to do now could not be accomplished with it. He jerked his man backward with him, his powerful hands tightening on the man's waist. He lifted the inert body some two feet off the floor: then, with a tremendous heave, sent it crashing into the man with the mace.

There was the sound of a skull splitting, the horrible spurt and spatter of blood. Human head had met axe head, and one soldier had unwittingly slain the other.

"Kill him, kill him!" von Aert was now crying.

Forgotten was his hot dream of torture. This Englishman was a Samson who would kill them all in the attempt to take him alive!

Through Timothy Waynesmith's throbbing brain flashed the knowledge that the advantage given him by von Aert's original desire was no longer his. Three soldiers still remained in combat, and now they could use their pistols. Two were slow to react to von Aert's altered order; one was not.

Waynesmith swooped, recovered his stick. But a stick was no weapon against pistols that could be fired from a distance, though that distance be measured only in feet. The bullet in that leveled pistol was likely to find home in an English seaman's head or heart.

**B**UT something happened. The shot was never fired. The foot-soldier tripped and went sprawling. Waynesmith did not see what had caused him to do so—did not see a Dutchman, from his hiding place, thrust out his cudgel between the soldier's legs and trip him.

But von Aert had seen. With a curse he came around from his table shelter, still ten feet away from Timothy Waynesmith. With swift strides the German crossed the room, passing behind the two remaining soldiers. He leaned over a table, his sword struck down. It emerged dripping, and the



British seaman knew then what had saved him. The Dutchman's cudgel rolled out from under the table, mute testimony of what had happened.

But there had been no time to prevent von Aert's murder of Waynesmith's saviour. The broken-ankled halberdier had drawn his second pistol. The tall seaman lunged, brought his stick around. The pistol went flying, kept company by the bone-splinters of a shattered wrist.

From Waynesmith's overcharged chest words roared out as he scooped up the dead Dutchman's cudgel and flung it into the face of the cross-bowman.

"Curse you!" he shouted. "Do you think I want to break men's bones? Why don't you go back to your homes, where you belong, and fight your oppressors *there*, instead of helping your own oppressors to slaughter an innocent people who want nothing but independence and the right to worship God in their own way? Curse you, von Aert! Why don't you use your sword against my stick? I'd not stop at breaking *your* bones, all of them!"

**I**NFLAMED, the German started forward. Waynesmith advanced to meet him. Suddenly he stopped.

Von Aert stopped too. There was the sound of the tramp of feet without. The light of hope leaped into von Aert's face. Waynesmith read the meaning of that look aright. Fresh soldiers, attracted by the sound of the fight, were coming, and von Aert saw the possibilities of his originally planned vengeance returning. The Englishman knew that the time for retreat had come. He could not fight an army.

Out of the tail of his eye he saw that the little black half-door, out of which the tavern keeper had first emerged, was partly open. He recalled that the tavern keeper had closed it behind him, so he concluded, correctly, that the tavern keeper must

have opened it for his benefit—opened it furtively, with his boot heel perhaps.

A troop of halberdiers appeared in the doorway!

Waynesmith whirled, shouting:

"I'm in this war from now on, von Aert!" And he hurled himself into the jaws of the whale!

Over the bar he vaulted. Once there, crouched, he paused for a single breathless instant to perform a strange act of kindness.

"For your own good and safety, inn-keeper," he whispered pantingly, and with the words gave the Dutchman a sharp rap with his stick upon his pate—a stunning blow but not a fracturing one. "Now von Aert won't hang you. He'll be thinking you tried to stop me."

The next instant he was through the little door, running low across the floor of a lighted kitchen. A woman and two children crouched fearsomely in a corner—the inn-keeper's family.

"Bless ye," the sudden visitation whispered to them. "I'll have supper with ye another time."

He was out the side door and in an alley a second later. He broke into a run. He had to get out of the city fast, get into open country, for all Amsterdam would be on the watch for him. It didn't occur to him to make a dash for the water, get back to his ship. He was in the war now, and he knew that Captain Miller would not be surprised if he did not return. The captain had prophesied truly—Timothy Waynesmith had volunteered.

He broke from the alley and ran full-tilt into an armored figure, helmeted, with the visor pulled down. The figure recoiled, swung a battle-axe. The impact had caused Waynesmith to drop his stick. That was fortunate. He caught the half of the axe with both his hands as it swooped, letting his hands come down in the blow's continuing arc to avoid breaking his finger bones. The flat of the axe hit the ground, rebounded with



spent force, and he wrested it from the hands of the armored man.

No sound came from Waynesmith's lips. If the other gave tongue with curses the visored helmet muffled them. The silent and terrible drama lasted but a second. The axe went up, came down in a swift arc of doom. It bit through neck-guard, gorget—split the links of the chain-mail cuirass and stopped with its sharply tempered Toledo steel imprisoned between severed ribs. Waynesmith let man and axe fall together, retrieved his stick, and sped on.

The next two hours were nightmarish. It took him that length of time to get out of the city, although without pursuit and the necessity of hiding, he could have accomplished it in half the time.

He did not know that the armored man he had killed was Francesco Llanos, von Aert's most important spy, who knew many languages and had many disguises, and who had donned this last disguise in order to obtain information about the dissatisfaction among the mercenaries over arrears in pay.

Llanos's last disguise had not protected him against his own battle-axe in the hands of an English seaman. Thus, merely incidentally, while on the run, Tim Waynesmith had struck a further blow for freedom.

But even that knowledge would have been powerless to allay his fatigue or satisfy his hunger. His aching muscles cried out for rest, his powerful body needed food to replace the energy he had burned up.

He was like a tired stag hunted by hounds. He had hidden in alleys, in rain barrels—not empty barrels but ones full of water, for his pursuers would have looked into the empty ones. So he had held his breath until the danger had passed, and emerged dripping and shivering in the night air, to get warm again in flight, the clothes drying on his back while growing wet with sweat beneath.

Now he ran low across a flat field which had yielded wheat in summer. The dark shapes of two structures loomed—a windmill and a farmhouse. Waynesmith hesitated. He had to have food. But could he chance contact with other human beings yet?

It was six of one and a half dozen of the other. He went pantingly up to the door, raised his stick to knock—

The door opened. A low Dutch voice said: "Come in—quickly."

**M**ARVELING, Waynesmith obeyed. The entrance hall was in darkness. He felt a friendly hand on his arm. It guided him to a room in which a single candle burned. In the room were a woman and a boy of sixteen. On a table a plate of cold meat was set. A pitcher of hot milk was beside it.

"Eat," the Dutch farmer said softly. "Afterward I will take you down the cellar, where you can sleep without fear. I would offer you our own bed, but you will be safer from detection below, should the soldiers come this way again. You can remain there all day tomorrow, for I presume you prefer to travel by night."

Waynesmith's eyes were wide. He gulped.

"I—I don't understand," his voice cracked. "You—you seem to know who I am."

"My boy, Hans there," the farmer said, "was out looking for our cow, which has the *wanderlust* sometimes. He saw you running the fields. Then he was stopped by a detachment of soldiers. They asked whether he had seen such a person. He said yes, and pointed in the opposite direction. When he returned, he told me of it. Then I saw you pass by the window. I knew it must be you, so I let you in. But eat, friend, eat—the milk will grow cold."

"But—but I still don't understand," Waynesmith murmured. "You speak as though you know me."

"I do not know your name," the



farmer replied with a smile, "but I know you are the Englishman who defied von Aert in the Whale's Mouth and single-handed slew or disabled seven of our alien oppressors. The news traveled ahead of you, friend. By tomorrow it will have reached Utrecht and by the end of the week it will be all over Holland. You will need no money in your journey, friend."

"Timothy Waynesmith—Tim for short," the seaman said with a bow toward the farmer's wife.

His legs were trembling and he sank into a chair. But still he did not eat, listening intently to what the farmer was saying.

"You will need no money, Tim. We Dutch will feed and shelter you wherever you go. Where, by the way, do you want to go?"

"I seek the army of the Prince of Orange."

The farmer's face grew grave. "The Prince and his forces are at present in the besieged city of Alkmaar, in the north. The reports from there are not good."

"How bad are they?" Waynesmith asked.

"Bad enough for me to warn you that you may be on your way to join a losing cause. If Alkmaar falls, it will probably mean that the battle of all Holland for independence and free worship is lost."

"And if Alkmaar does not fall?"

"If Alkmaar does not fall," the farmer said slowly, "its successful resistance against the forces of King Philip will awaken every Dutch citizen to the fact that victory and freedom are possible. It will inspire other cities to resist and revolt—even Amsterdam, which is most under the Blood Council's thumb."

"Peter," the farmer's wife broke in, "leave off talking and let our guest eat."

"I go to Alkmaar," Waynesmith muttered.

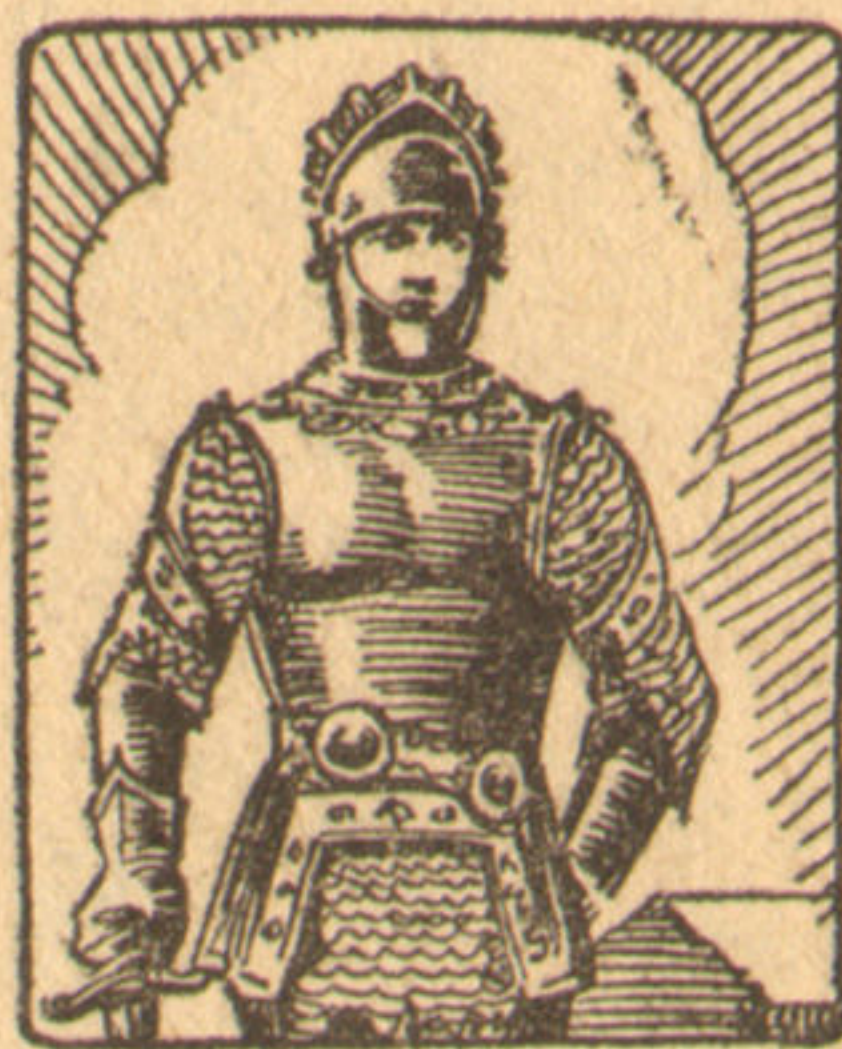
"Yes," said the farmer's wife in a

soothing voice, "but first you must eat, then sleep, then hide for a day. Then you can go to Alkmaar. Son"—she turned toward her young Hans and her eyes held a yearning light—"gaze upon this man, grave his name and face on your memory, and if the time ever comes when you can work and worship in freedom, in a land free from invaders, you will know that you owe it in part to him."

Young Hans gazed upon Timothy Waynesmith as he ate. And Timothy Waynesmith, as he ate, thought over and over again: "I go to Alkmaar, I go to Alkmaar. . . ."

## CHAPTER IV

### *Through Foe and Friend*



TIMOTHY WAYNE-SMITH, in the hunted days and nights that followed, moved ever northward, traveling in darkness, hiding and resting by daylight. The Dutch farmer, Peter Van

der Tey, had spoken true words. The news of the British seaman's exploit in the Whale's Mouth traveled ahead of him, guaranteed him secret welcome, food and shelter in farmer's cottage, miller's mill, burgher's manse. Also, ahead of him traveled the proclamation of Governor Alva, offering a reward for his betrayal and arrest.

But the lips of all Dutchmen were sealed as to his whereabouts. Still more important, his exploit had awakened in the hearts of the people the will to resist their oppressors. Farmers took their fowling-pieces out of hiding and cleaned them, sharpened their scythes to a keener edge, their cattle-butcher knives to a more deadly keenness. The seeds of revolt were sprouting, secretly preparing to bear fruit.

Yet all depended on what happened to Alkmaar. If Alkmaar fell, the seeds



would rot in disheartened ground, the will to resist would degenerate into the wretched acceptance of defeat. And the Dutch Republic, guaranteeing freedom to all races and creeds, Protestant, Catholic, Jew — *all!* — would never be born.

When Tim Waynesmith fled Amsterdam the siege of Alkmaar had already been going on for a month. Governor Alva had written to King Philip:

If I take Alkmaar, I am resolved not to leave a single creature alive. The knife shall be put to every throat. . . .

The citizens of Alkmaar, and the soldiers of the Prince of Orange, now woefully reduced in numbers, did not have to read that letter to know what would be their fate if Alkmaar fell. They resisted.

Time and again the attempt was made by the besiegers, under the immediate command of Don Frederick, to take the city by storm. Attack after attack was launched against the Frisian gate and upon the red battlements on the opposite side.

Yet never, even in Haarlem, which had recently fallen, had the attack of King Philip's minions and mercenaries been received by more dauntless breasts. Every living man of Alkmaar was on the walls. The storming parties were assailed by cannon that were worn out, that burst apart, but always there were fresh batteries of cannoneers to risk manning pieces of artillery that were even older.

Musketry and pistol fire rang out with the true aim of true Dutch hearts beating for freedom. But there were not enough muskets and pistols to go around. Boiling water, pitch and oil, molten lead and unslaked lime took their places.

Hundreds of tarred and burning hoops were flung by the Dutch and skillfully quoited about the necks of Alva's soldiers, who struggled to extricate themselves from these fiery collars. And as fast as any of the

invaders planted foot upon the breach they were confronted face to face with sword and dagger wielded by the burghers who hurled them headlong into the moat below.

Burghers, farmers, docksters, fishermen, were withstanding the disciplined armies of King Philip.

But food within the city was running low, the population was on half rations—and then the winter freeze-up came. The moat froze, ice formed outward from the river banks and finally lay in a solid sheet. The forces of King Philip withdrew to the center of the river, encamped there, and settled down to wait.

They could not take the city by storm. They would starve it.

It was at this stage in the siege that Carl von Aert arrived to take over the command of Don Frederick.

**F**IVE days later another man arrived, not openly like von Aert—secretly, stealthily. He was a tall man with a sailor's gait. His cheeks, formerly sunburnt by days aloft on a ship's masthead, were now blackened with frost-bite and slightly sunken. His eyes held a burning light.

For two days this man made no attempt to enter the city. No lookout on the battlements saw him, no sentinel of King Philip's army caught a glimpse of him. Yet he saw them, and for two days, circling the city like a wolf seeking a lair, he studied it, its defenses, in the attempt to decide on a place of entry.

On the night of the second day he ate the last of the food put up for him by a Dutchwoman in the village of Egmond aan Zee. Then he made for the moat. A stick swung at his side. Now and again he dropped to the ice, and his eyes, invisible because the night was fortunately moonless, gazed burningly across at some outpost sentinel, patrolling the moat, but at a safe distance from it, lest one of the besieged send a vat of boiling liquid down upon him.



This last fact gave the man with the stick his chance. There was a far-flung line of such sentinels, but they were far enough apart, each from the other, for a man sufficiently quick and noiseless to dart between two of them on the instant when they stood with their backs turned to each other at the ends of their patrol points, and farthest apart from each other.

There being no moon, the man with the stick cast no shadow. A blotch of blackness, his body, given momentum by a crouching run, slid in prone position to the moat's edge. He dropped down into it.

**B**UT his task was only half done. The other, more dangerous half consisted in the perils from the besieged themselves. If he were sighted, they would take him not for friend but for foe. That was why he had studied the city so carefully, and had selected the red tower on the opposite side for his place of entry.

From his belt he uncoiled a long strong rope, fashioned a noose. Then, whirling it about his head, he sent it aloft. It snaked up and settled quietly down around the tower's stone corner post. Without waste of time, except to thrust his stick into his belt, the man began his climb. He could scarcely believe that he had not yet been detected. But he knew the reason for it. Alva had given up the attempt to storm this tower as hopeless, the Dutch knew it, and accordingly had relaxed their guard.

Clambering like a monkey, he was midway to the tower's top when his heart clapped with a great thump against his ribs and momentarily paralyzed his tongue. A dark shape—the upper half of a man's body—leaned out above him. He felt eyes looking down at him. He saw the shape of something long and slender. A sword!

Then a voice came, addressing not him but another. The man was leaning out.

"Give me your sword—I'll cut away

the rope. The cursed mercenary will break his bones on the ice!"

The man on the rope found tongue, in the desperate hope that what had happened throughout his long trek to Alkmaar would hold good equally in the city itself—the racing of his name ahead of him.

"I am friend, not foe," he panted up. "You break Timothy Waynesmith's bones if you break mine!"

The ensuing second seemed to stretch away into eternity. The chance was remote that anyone could have got into Alkmaar after the first week of the siege. Then Waynesmith felt a tug upon the rope. For a moment he could not believe it. He was being hauled up, not being dashed to pieces on the ice below, but actually being helped to scale the tower!

A minute later he was within the city!

There were four men on the redoubt. Only one was a soldier, although all had muskets. The other three were plain Dutch citizens, their faces and figures flickeringly illumined by the light from the torch one of them carried.

The soldier with the sword was trembling.

"*Mynheer* Waynesmith," he breathed. "My God, what did I almost do! This sword almost cut the rope!"

They were grasping his hand now, exclaiming and all talking at once.

"How did news of me reach Alkmaar?" Waynesmith asked curiously when they finally let him speak.

"One man managed to enter the city a week ago."

"Tell me who and where he is, so that I may give him my thanks. I owe my life to him."

"You will have to give your thanks in heaven. He was one Israel ben Ezra, descendant of a Sephardic family driven out of Spain by Ferdinand in 1492, living until recently in the village of Egmond. He had a sick married daughter in this city. He decided to use this as a pretext for



asking permission of the Spaniards to admit him, although what he really wanted was to tell the whole city about you, knowing well that the people needed heartening of that kind. But when, in his trustfulness, he petitioned Alva, Alva gave him over to his brutal mercenaries.

"They beat him unmercifully and threw him into the moat to drown. But, like Joshua of old, there was warrior blood in the old Hebrew. He swam unseen beneath the Frisian gate and gasped out the tale of Timothy Waynesmith before he died. Fortunately you spoke your name when you hung on that rope. It would not have been enough for you to say you were friend, not foe. We are too familiar with the Blood Council's treachery."

"How goes it with the city?" Tim asked.

"Not good. We hunger. We are not starving yet, but small rations keep our hunger perpetually alive. By tomorrow our meat will be completely gone. All animals—dogs, cats—have been slaughtered and devoured. The people are eating rats and mice, when they can catch them. The outlook is black. Starvation, surrender—"

"When all Holland is getting ready to throw off the oppressors' yoke," Waynesmith cut the speaker off passionately, "is no time to speak of surrender. Take me to the Prince of Orange!"

Two of the citizens had already left the tower. The soldier now led the way for Timothy Waynesmith. And as they moved along cobbled, crooked streets, the city seemed to begin to murmur and vibrate. As on the British seaman's journey to Alkmaar, now when he was within the city, the news of his coming ghosted swiftly ahead of him. The streets began to fill with women and children, with citizen soldiers taking a hasty absence from their posts. The voices of the populace arose.

"Quiet," Waynesmith kept repeating as he walked along. "Quiet. The

work to be done must be done in silence. But take hope. Only it is dangerous to risk a suspicion reaching the outside that something unusual is afoot within."

And the populace took up the command, repeated "Quiet," and the excitement died down on the surface but remained at a fever-pitch beneath. And Timothy Waynesmith was led into the headquarters of the Prince of Orange.

## CHAPTER V

### *The Stick of Freedom*



WILLIAM of Orange, sometimes called William the Silent, had seen his armies defeated, his plans for Dutch liberation overthrown, his countrymen massacred by the thousands, his co-re-

ligionists burnt, hanged and tortured, and the promises of help made to him by Elizabeth of England and Charles of France unfulfilled. Yet never had he reached such a low point of despair as in these dark days of the siege of Alkmaar.

As a result, the visit of this intrepid Englishman about whom he had heard so much was like a ray of light in a very dark world. But he was a hard-headed man, he knew how little men could accomplish singly and how close he was to defeat. He welcomed the coming of this Englishman merely for the opportunity of thanking him for what he had done in the name of the Dutch people. The Prince of Orange did not believe in fooling either himself or others.

"Well, Englishman," he said in a strong voice, surprising Waynesmith by rising democratically to greet him, "have you come to die with us?"

"No, sire—to live," Waynesmith answered simply.

"Brave words," the Prince said, his hands now gripping the tall seaman's



arms. "Good to hear. But beyond realization, I fear. Why did you not stick to your ship, Timothy Waynesmith—the wonderful freedom of the open sea? Why did you come to die with a defeated Prince?"

"I repeat, sire," the Englishman answered, "I didn't come to die. And the Prince is not defeated."

His voice quickened, his frost-blackened cheeks were shot with the blood of his inner excitement.

"Sire," he said, "you have been besieged. You could not know what was happening outside your walls. All Holland is awakening. I have looked into men's eyes, I have heard them speak. They are ready to fight. They will fight with what weapons they have, and when those are gone they have the will to fight on with their bare hands. All that they require to keep that will intact, to keep hope alive in their breasts, is that Alkmaar not be taken!"

"Then they ask for the moon," the Prince broke in. "There is no defense against starvation."

"Sire," Waynesmith said respectfully, "forgive a sailor offering advice to a soldier. I am not expert in military matters. But sometimes a fresh mind is able to see things which an old campaigner misses. I have scouted the city's environs. I believe I have seen a way out."

"And that way is not to defend but to attack!" William of Orange said sharply. "Yes, I know! And to what end? Defeat in battle by virtue of superior numbers and superior arms! And a more merciless slaughter of the civilian population than would otherwise happen, for with Alva, the greater the resistance the more brutal the punishment after defeat!"

"I was sure that the idea was not new to you," Waynesmith said, "but there is one element in my plan which is absent from yours."

"And what is that?"

"Victory—not defeat."

"How?"

"Have you ever thought of opening the sluices, the dykes—flooding the country extending out from the rear battlements! A portion of the enemy forces are encamped there. It would reduce Alva's forces by at least that many!"

"But the people—my people—their homes! I could not do such a thing without their consent."

"I have already obtained their consent," Timothy Waynesmith said quietly.

**T**HE Prince sat down. For a minute he said nothing. He reached out suddenly for Waynesmith's stick, took it. He nodded his head several times. He gave the seaman back the stick. He began to shake his head.

"It is not enough," he finally said.

"I know it," Waynesmith answered. "There would still be Alva's much greater force on the frozen river. They cannot be conquered by ordinary means."

"You have in mind, then, some extraordinary means?"

"Yes, Prince."

For ten minutes the Englishman talked rapidly. Listening, two spots of color appeared in the Prince's cheeks. He drew a piece of parchment from the writing table, thrust a *stylus* into Waynesmith's hand. And Waynesmith, understanding what was wanted, understanding too why William was sometimes called the Silent, began to sketch a rough map on the parchment.

When he was done the Prince called out: "Broecken!" A soldier appeared.

"Let all officers and citizen commanders report to me at once!"

The soldier hurried off to carry out the order. The Prince looked at Waynesmith. Again, but more gently this time, he took the stick from him.

"When this is over," he murmured, "if we are still alive, which I doubt, we must give this stick a name. Perhaps the best name for it . . . would be . . . 'Freedom' . . ."



**I**N THE largest of the tents of the Spanish encampment on the frozen river, one man sat and another man paced. The seated man was Alva, oppressor of Holland. The pacer was Carl von Aert.

The aged Alva, bearing upon his face the indelible lines of dissipation and cruelty, was running over a list of names inscribed on parchment. They were the names of the most prominent Dutch citizens of Alkmaar, headed by the burgomaster, and they were all marked for death on the gallows. Of all other able-bodied citizens, from the age of fifteen up, half were to be put to the sword and half were to be impressed as seamen into King Philip's navy.

Von Aert, his face a thunder-cloud shot through with an apoplectic flush, paced like a timber wolf caged. A heavy-piled rug, covering the ice-floor of the tent, absorbed the thud of his heavy boots. His restless walk had a kind of rocking motion to it, and as his body rocked, so his overmastering hate rocked inside of him.

At the moment he was not thinking of the wholesale massacre to come, when the city would surrender, as it must, in spite of the subterranean opening of the dykes and the flooding of the countryside back of the city. That had taken place the day before, with consequent annihilation of an entire Spanish division. No, von Aert was thinking bitterly that he might personally put to the sword every living man in Alkmaar and still be unsatisfied! For the one man—the one man in all the world—the man with the stick—

Alva glanced up, eyed his fellow Blood Councillor appraisingly.

"Still thinking about that Englishman, von Aert?" he asked quietly.

Von Aert stopped short. The purple flush upon his face deepened. He made no answer.

"He will be found, von Aert. He will not get out of Holland. Every port is being watched. And when he

is found, I will make you a gift of him. So be patient, von Aert. Put your mind upon more immediate business. The Dutch can tighten their belts so far and no farther. By tomorrow the city will be ours. Your work will soon be done there, and you will have time to hunt down the man with the stick."

Alva went back to the names on the parchment, and von Aert resumed his pacing. What would these two men have thought had they known that Timothy Waynesmith was within the city's walls! What would they have thought had they known that all Holland was seething with preparations for revolt, awaiting only definite news of the fate of Alkmaar! What would they have thought had they known that Timothy Waynesmith had instigated the opening of the dykes! What would they have thought—

But the next instant they had no time to think. A clarion sound cut the icy air without the tent. Trumpet notes blown by a Spanish bugler pierced the ears of the two men. The call, urgent, eloquent with panic, was "*To Arms!*"

To arms? To arms against what, against whom? Who could be attacking them? The Dutch? Impossible!

The two men grabbed up their swords and sped out of the tent. An astounding sight greeted their eyes. On the part of their own forces, confusion! And from the gates of Alkmaar—

Well might King Philip's soldiers, and the German and Italian mercenaries, know an eternal moment of panicked paralysis! Two drawbridges of Alkmaar were down, had come down with a crash! And their surfaces were not wood but ice. And over them poured the military phalanges of the Prince of Orange's remnants of an army! Over them, with a few great leaps across the frozen ground, and then out upon the river, the ice!

But what was thrice astounding was



the speed with which the Prince's soldiers moved! They did not run, yet they seemed to fly. As each phalanx of musket-armed soldiers debouched on the river itself, the phalanx split to right and left, the members of each wing ghosting up and down river in a flanking maneuver! But the fourth phalanx moved straight out, in a frontal attack, splitting apart only enough for the artillery men immediately behind to bring up and settle the cannon.

The artillery men maneuvered their cannon as easily as they and the infantry maneuvered themselves. For the cannon were mounted on scowlike sledges!

And the soldiers themselves, the citizens behind them, fighters all, were mounted—on skates!

That had been the idea which Timothy Waynesmith had poured into the Prince's ears so passionately. Dutch boys learned to skate almost before they could walk! Every Hollander skated! The Spaniards did not! Besides, they had no skates. And an army on skates would have a mobility, a speed of locomotion, undreamed of in warfare up to that time!

The frozen river was there, it would be the battlefield. And the superiority of Alva's forces, both in numbers and weapons, could be counterbalanced by the two Dutch elements of surprise and speed!

The Prince had listened, had doubted, but had at last consented. Now he was seeing the idea bear fruit. The first two phalanges had already come around the Spaniards' rear and were unleashing a hail of musketry almost before Alva's men, erupting from their small tents or scattering away from the small fires by which they kept themselves warm, had time to reach their own weapons.

But Alva led a disciplined army. Taken by surprise, it did not break. Officers ran, slipped, sprawled upon the ice. But even as they sprawled they bellowed orders. Musketeers

here and there formed into lines, crouched on the ice, fired in orderly volleys. And cannon, heavier than any the Dutch had, appeared on the opposite shore, manned by their watchers.

But why, if those Spanish artillery men were encamped on ground, had Alva chosen to camp his forces on the river itself? He had done so because it was open and because, previously, encamped in the woods, Dutch sharpshooters from the surrounding countryside had made a practice of sniping and picking off his officers. Those Dutchmen were never caught and in fact never seen. And Alva could never be sure that he would not be next. Hence the bivouac on the river itself.

**T**IMOTHY WAYNESMITH, at the head of the citizen-soldiers, saw those cannon.

"Thirty men!" he bellowed. "Follow me! We must spike those guns."

The thirty men, with the Englishman at their head, came skating down upon a crouched line of musket-armed mercenaries. The mercenaries held their ground, discharged a volley. Three of the skaters went down. But the mercenaries had no time to reload. With axes, broadswords and clubbed muskets, Waynesmith's Dutchmen cut them down, broke through, and sped over the ice to the opposite shore.

The enemy cannon had been brought down clear to the edge of the ice. Waynesmith reached them first, amid the *crack-crack* of pistol and ball. His stick was thrust through his belt. Both his hands were free to manipulate a huge broadaxe. To the cannoneers, seeing him in that instant, he was a fearsome figure.

The broadaxe swung! It came with a mighty crash against the wheel of the cannon carriage, smashed it with one stroke, so that the cannon settled over on one side. Similar crashes came from each side of him, interspersed with the crack of skulls as



well as wood. It was over with startling suddenness. The remaining cannoneers fled into the woods.

Waynesmith immediately reassembled his forces and sped out on the river again. He caught a glimpse of the city's battlements, crowded with women and children. The women had known the danger of lowering the drawbridges but had consented to it. Better a thousand times to die after an attempt at victory than to lose their men by the road of starvation followed by surrender!

**A** FIGURE appeared at Timothy Waynesmith's side.

"It goes well," a voice said. "They are breaking. Is it time yet to send off the couriers?"

It was the Prince of Orange, panting, his eyes alight, reloading his two pistols as he sped at the British seaman's side.

"We'll know in a few minutes," Waynesmith panted. "Their retreat is cut off but we can't hold them forever. Sooner or later we must let what is left of them flee. But we don't want that to happen too soon. *Hola!*"

The last word exploded from his chest with the pent-up force of a breaking dyke. The next instant he had left the Prince's side. He had seen von Aert!

But von Aert had seen him too! Von Aert stood in a hollow square of his mercenaries, sword drawn, rising tall amid musket smoke, the cold sunlight glinting on the naked steel.

"After him, Dutchmen!" the Prince cried frantically. "He cannot conquer them all. He seeks but one man! Destroy the others for him! O rash Englishman! Could you not wait?"

Stick out, Waynesmith broke through the hollow square. Two mercenaries writhed on the ice, broken-boned. And the Dutchmen sped up to engage the others.

Then, surrounded by a battle within a battle, ears ringing with the clash

of weapons and the gasps and groans of the combatants, a man with a sword fought a man with a stick.

Von Aert's eyes, alive with hate, were alive with impending triumph too. Here, at close fighting, his antagonist's skates were no advantage, might even be a disadvantage. And a stick was no match for a sword—a sword wielded, moreover, by a master fencer!

But Timothy Waynesmith did not wield that stick as any of von Aert's duel victims had ever wielded their swords. None of the accepted modes of duelling were executed by that stick, none of the parries, feints, thrusts, lunges. And as it is sometimes more perilous for a master fencer to duel with a novice than with an expert, so fear began to come to von Aert—fear and desperation.

Timothy Waynesmith's frost-blackened cheeks flamed fire. His great chest expanded into speech.

"Die damned, butcher!" he cried. "Your sword drinks no more blood!"

With the words, he was wide open for von Aert's deadly thrust. But his stick whirled with incredible rapidity in front of him. Wood rang suddenly against steel. Von Aert's sword shot up. And Tim Waynesmith stopped the stick short at the top of its smoking circle, reversed its course, and felled von Aert with it as an ox is felled. The German crashed upon the ice and his sword shot fifty feet away from him. But he no longer had need of it. He was dead.

Straightening, Waynesmith shot his gaze up and down the river. A hand grasped his arm. He whirled.

"It's time," he said to the Prince of Orange. "Release the couriers. Tell them to spread the news that Alkmaar is Dutch, that Alva's armies are fleeing, and that the people must now complete the task by driving the invaders into the sea!"

It was then that he first became aware of a great and spine-thrilling noise. It came from the city and was



made by the throats of the crowds on its battlements. It was a paean of victory. It was a song of gladness over the fact that now there was food, for the invaders had left behind provisions as well as arms.

All these were gathered up and taken into the city. It took several hours and was finished by torchlight, for the sun had set. Then couriers began to come in from the surrounding country. The armies of King Philip, in retreat, were being met by revolting villagers and farmers. The Dutch people were at last fully launched on their fight for independence, which would not end until they had obtained it.

That night, in Alkmaar's public square, lit by flambeaux and torches, the Prince of Orange faced a tall seaman with frost-blackened cheeks. The town's scribe stood nearby, inscribing on parchment what was being said.

Tim Waynesmith's voice was unsteady. He looked at his stick, which the Prince held. All about him, crowding the square, the people strained to catch what he was saying.

"I thank you, and the Dutch people,

for letting me fight. You will set yourselves free. You cannot be stopped now. And I—all men—will be freer because you are free."

"Yes, Timothy Waynesmith. But we will be freer because of you. The struggle for freedom is long and hard. But it will be won. The right of all men to worship God in their own ways—Holland will offer that right to all—the people of all races and creeds, Catholics, Protestants, Jews—all men. And now, after taking your stick, I give it back to you with my sword. The stick was without a name. Now it has a name. It is 'Freedom.' Take it and take my sword."

Waynesmith took them, buckled belt and sword around him. Then he quietly handed the stick back.

"It would please me if you kept the stick," he said. "Only"—and he smiled—"if I ever need it again, I'd like to know I can have it."

"You can have anything you ask for, Timothy Waynesmith."

"The stick is enough, sire."

"Yes"—the Prince nodded—" 'Freedom' is all that a man needs. With it, he can obtain everything else. . . ."

## THE FANGS OF OTAN

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# The Northwest Passage

*How an American Blacksmith Set Sail to Conquer the Arctic and to Bring Back News of the Ill-Fated Sir John Franklin Expedition!*

*Especially Written for* THRILLING ADVENTURES

By CHARLES S. STRONG

*Explorer, Traveler and Historian—Author of "Washington's First Railroad," "Twentieth Century Lapland," etc.*

**S**PARKS flew from the blacksmith forge on Charles Francis Hall in his shop in an obscure mid-west village. Sweat poured from his sturdy body as heat swept out in shimmering waves from his blazing fire. But the blacksmith's mind was not on the heat, nor the fire, nor his surroundings. In his

mind he was far away—in the far northland, the frozen Arctic. He was living doughty deeds. His heart was with the men who had gone exploring there—Sir John Franklin who had sailed in his famous polar ship, *Erebus*, and Captain Richard Crozier with his own dauntless crew in the good ship *Terror*.

For word had just come that the intrepid explorers and their men were lost somewhere in the frozen wastes! In common with a nation, the blacksmith shuddered over their fate. Expeditions, it was said, were being formed to search for them. Men of strength, of courage, of daring, would be needed. Men who—

Charles Francis Hall raised his brawny arm and brought it down. The sledge clutched in his fist made sparks fly from red-hot metal on his anvil.



*Charles Francis Hall*

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"I'll do it!" he roared. "I'll get them, bring them back—or tell the world of their last resting place!"

### *Faced Difficult Odds*

That decision was one that made the name of Charles Francis Hall, Buckeye State blacksmith, one that is outstanding in the annals of exploration. With little more than his own high courage and determination, he was to face odds that had stopped many a man better equipped—and win through. Obstacles were many, sometimes heart-breaking, but he overcame them.

His first attempt to go to the aid of the men in the heartless clutch of the relentless ice-lands was made when he tried to become a member of the famous Grinnell expedition, hoping to accompany Dr. Kane and Lieutenant De Haven—but he was refused.

He tried it again when McClintock set out with the *Fox* in 1857. Again he was left behind.

There seemed nothing for it but to go himself. But he had no boat. . . .



*Sir John Franklin*

What of it? Very well. He would get one. He did, and called it the *Rescue*, but it had no chance of doing any rescuing of either Franklin and his crew or anyone else in the Arctic, for it was wrecked when a storm



*Relics of Franklin's Expedition*



struck him on September 27, 1860, in Cyrus Field Bay.

There were other ways of conquering the Arctic, though. He tried them all—trudging over ice and snow and Arctic tundra, moving ever northward by dog sled or by leaky small boat—and finally by wearisome years spent with the Eskimos he was sure he knew the secret of the vanished Sir John Franklin Expedition.

### *A Record of Achievement*

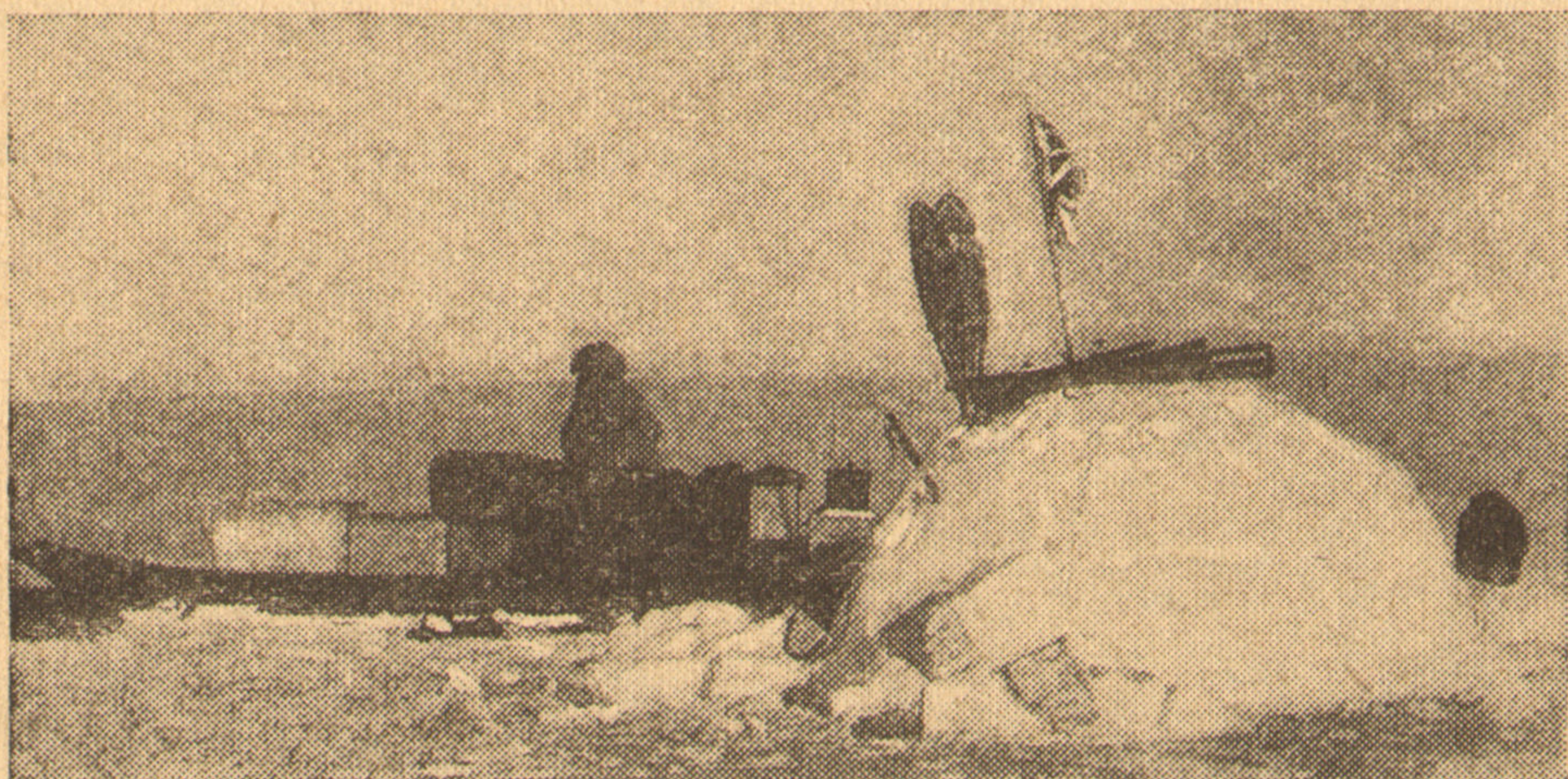
And he was right. For it was finally from the Eskimos that Hall was able to learn what had happened to the explorers and at last give to the

sailed away—and never came back.

As other explorers had done since Hudson's time, Sir John Franklin set out on the same search.

With almost forty years of exploration and adventure behind him—adventure which had taken him from Tasmania and the South Seas to the cold, wind-swept ice cap of the Polar Regions—Sir John Franklin sailed from England in May of 1845. High hope for success was in his heart, and in the hearts of his hand-picked crew—but it did not last long.

Two months later, his ice-shrouded *Erebus* and the accompanying *Terror*, under Captain Crozier's command



*Explorers' Camp at Baffin Island, Northwest Territory*

world the record of their deeds as he read them there in the white and frozen land that encircles the Arctic Pole.

The blacksmith, who had no money, no friends in Washington in powerful place, who had been refused when he had offered his all—his courage and healthy body—had won, when gold poured out freely, and science, and men equipped with all possible aids had failed!

The story of the continued search for the Northwest Passage is epic. Henry Hudson was the first to search for it in the early 1600s, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but whether he found it or not is a secret of the centuries. Romantic tales, though, and legends are in abundance concerning that search on which he

were last seen at the mouth of Lancaster Sound in Baffin Bay. Captain Darnet, master of the whaler *Prince of Wales*, reported that he had seen the two vessels moored to icebergs, waiting for the ice to open so that they could proceed on their course. Their intention was to sail into Baffin Bay, then through Lancaster Sound to Barrow Strait. At Cape Walker, they were to turn south and west for Behring Strait. This Route would have taken them through Melville Sound and Parry Sound.

### *Searching Parties*

When months went by with no further word, from either Sir John Franklin's ship and the accompanying vessel of Captain Crozier, fears were felt for the safety of the more,



than one hundred men. Plans for searching parties were made quickly by both England and the United States. Several rescue expeditions eventually set out, but Americans were chiefly interested in one that was commanded by Lieutenant De Haven of the United States Navy. Two staunch vessels, *Advance* and *Rescue* had been equipped for the De Haven Expedition, the funds having been furnished by Henry Grinnell, a New York merchant and public-spirited citizen. They sailed from New York Harbor on May 24th, 1850.

Most of the searchers for the lost Franklin, both English and Ameri-

west of Cape Riley, at the entrance to Wellington Channel. He found an embankment for a house, with carpenters' and armorers' workshops. But he also found a mute and poignant commentary—three graves of men who had sailed on the *Erebus* and *Terror*.

The simple markers bore the date of the winter 1845-46.

### *The Northwest Passage*

The American expedition arrived two days later and joined in the search. Among the members of Lieutenant De Haven's party was Dr. E. K. Kane, surgeon for the rescue



*Musk-oxen at Cape Sparbo, Devon Island*

can, headed for the spot where the *Erebus* and the *Terror* had last been sighted by the whaler *Prince of Wales*. The first of the rescue expeditions to find any trace of the missing explorers was Captain Ommany of the British Navy, commanding the ship *Assistance*. At Cape Riley, far up in Lancaster Sound, on the morning of August 23, 1850, Captain Ommany and his crew spotted a camp site.

Close investigation showed it to be merely the stone flooring of a tent, a scattering of bird's bones, and a forlorn heap of empty meat cans.

Shortly after, Lieutenant Osborne, who had left England in the ship *Intrepid*, accompanying Captain Ommany, discovered the winter quarters of the missing expedition, three miles

party. He was the first member of the various expeditions—ten of them based at Beechey Island during a single week in August, 1850—who began to collate the information being gathered.

He discovered markings at the camp-site that seemed to be traces of heavy-laden sledges, and judged that they had gone north from Cape Riley. He decided that Sir John Franklin must have gone through Wellington Channel to the Polar Basin. One of the two American boats, the *Advance*, sailed as far as possible in this direction, hoping to learn more, but pack ice finally halted the vessel.

However, Dr. Kane's theory in regard to the Wellington Channel route made such an impression in England that an expedition of five



vessels left the British Isles in April, 1852, under the command of Sir Edward Belcher. Dr. Kane, himself, waited until the spring of 1853, when the same Henry Grinnell of New York who had backed the previous venture, and George Peabody of London outfitted an expedition, and placed Kane in command.

It was on this trip to the polar regions that the Northwest Passage, sought for so many hundreds of years, was actually found! Two vessels passed through it at almost the same time, one coming east from Behring Sea, and the other going west from Baffin Bay.

The *Investigator* under the command of Captain McClure made the trip through from the west, and the *Plover* under command of Captain Kellet sailed through from the east. For this exploit, one that was of world interest, although no relics of the Franklin expedition were found, Captain McClure was knighted by Queen Victoria.

The final British expedition more or less laid the groundwork for the far-reaching and romantically interesting explorations of the American blacksmith, Charles Francis Hall.

### *Lady Franklin's Hopes*

After such repeated efforts to find the lost explorers in the silent North—and failures—further attempts began to seem futile. But there was one person that refused to give up—the ever-loyal wife of Sir John Franklin. With only the faintest hope—if that—of finding any of the members of the expedition alive, Lady Franklin made a last effort to locate her husband. She fitted out the steam-yacht *Fox* at Aberdeen, Scotland on July 1st, 1857, and placed it under the command of her devoted friend, Captain McClintock.

Starting out for Beechey Island, and the last known camp-site of Sir John and his men, the *Fox* was caught in the pack ice off Melville Bay, and finally drifted to the vicinity of Disco.

The boat and its men drifted for ten months, covering eleven hundred and ninety-four miles.

The *Fox* was refitted at Disco, and Captain McClintock made an attempt to regain his lost ground. He had picked up a tombstone at Goodhavn, Greenland. This had been prepared in New York at the direction of Lady Franklin, and had been sent to the Greenland port by a relief ship sent to locate the American, Dr. Kane. There still was hope in her courageous ladyship's heart, but if that should fail her, she wanted to mark the site where her husband had perished in his efforts to advance the cause of humanity.

In 1858, Captain McClintock managed to reach Beechey Island, and erected the monument in a suitable and conspicuous spot. To him, there was only one answer. Sir John and his men were dead, and a monument to their bravery at this spot was altogether fitting.

Then, following a route that took him through Prince Regent Inlet to Bellot Strait and Franklin Channel, he finally brought the *Fox* to King William Land. Here, on the very spot that had been charted by Dr. Kane as the likely Main Camp of the lost expedition, Captain McClintock managed to find remains of the missing men.

At Erebus Bay, named after Franklin's boat, he found a life-boat in which lay two skeletons—all that was left of two men, identified as having been two of the missing explorers....

McClintock's lieutenant, Hobson, had found at Victory Point, at the same time, the record of the death of the gallant Sir John. But what became of the rest of the crew who had sailed with him to a frozen death remained a mystery until Hall, the blacksmith, now glorying in the resounding title of Captain Hall, went into action.

### *Captain Hall Takes a Hand*

Hall, who later reached a pinnacle of fame that made him the commander of the ill-fated *Polaris* Expedition sent out by the United States Navy, was born in Rochester, New Hampshire, but was taken with his family to Ohio when he was still a youngster. Before he devoted his



life to exploration and rescue parties, young Hall tried his hand at many things, including seal-making and journalism, but it was as a blacksmith that he shone best, and this work undoubtedly built up the body that stood him in good stead against the Arctic winters. Even in this trade, however, he chafed at the restraint.

He sought to accompany De Haven, but permission was refused. This only made him more determined. True, he had no money. But he had enthusiastic friends. With their aid he finally managed to get together enough money to buy a small boat. He meant to take it into the Arctic, and make his search alone, or with the possible assistance of the Eskimos.

### *Doom of the "Expedition Ship"*

With his small "expedition ship" as he called the sailing craft, he boarded one of the Arctic supply ships at New London on May 29th, 1860, fifteen years after Sir John Franklin had set out. Hall's aim was to proceed north and west in search of living members of the Franklin Expedition.

His sailing craft was destined to an early doom, however, being wrecked in a storm in Cyrus Field Bay on September 27th, 1860.

The wreck of his ship might have discouraged a less virile and determined man than Captain Hall, but instead it spurred him on. He set out to succeed, and he *would*! He managed to round up a dog sledge, a team, and a leaky boat, and with these remained in the Arctic for two and one half years.

### *Ask the Eskimos!*

From what he had gathered from the natives at Frobisher Bay, he had become convinced that the Eskimos knew the secret of the vanished Sir John Franklin Expedition, and that the only way to break the silence of these people was by living with them and gaining their confidence. These ideas were so deeply rooted in his mind, that he planned a better-equipped return to the Arctic, and so



*The monument at Beechey Island*

that he would know more of what he was about, he decided to live with the natives for five years.

When he did return to "civilization" he brought with him two natives named Ebierbing and Tookoolito.

He renamed them Joe and Hannah, which came easier to him, and they proved invaluable to him later on as guide and interpreter.

Immediately Captain Hall announced that he intended to make a new exploration trip to the polar regions, and many of his old friends came to his aid again. He added to their contributions by lecturing during the winter of 1863-64.

On August 21st, 1864, Charles Francis Hall was back in the Arctic Circle, beginning his five years with the Eskimos. He was put ashore at Depot Island in Repulse bay with his two Eskimos from the bark *Monticello*, Captain Richard W. Chappel, commanding.

His hunch that the Eskimos knew more than they had told proved to be correct. He gained much information that had been withheld from the officers and men of other searching parties for upward of fifteen years.



Besides his actual exploration and research work, he also supplied the men of the crew of the *Monticello* with fresh meat in the shape of musk-oxen, bear, and deer.

The fascinating story of Hall's five years with the Eskimos would fill a heavy tome. But what he learned from his Eskimo friends and what he was able to accomplish as a result of that information is of vital historic interest. For one thing, he learned that one of Franklin's boats with five men aboard, actually made the first trip through the Northwest Passage. For some reason these five survivors had abandoned the boat, in perfect order, and it had been found, frozen in the ice, by the Eskimos in the spring of 1849, near O'Reilly Island.

Hall's search was wide and thorough. He found the skeletons of Franklin's men scattered over King William Land. And he learned one important reason why they had not survived. The natives had refused to assist the lost explorers with food and shelter. Instead they considered their coming only as an excellent opportunity to plunder them.

#### *Cannibalism*

Captain Hall was the recipient of hair-raising confidences of how when the Franklin men were too weak to defend themselves, the Eskimos turned their half wild dogs on them, and permitted the wolflike animals to devour the white men. Rumors of cannibalism among the English sailors, too, were confirmed by Hall's researches.

He believed that the original records of the *Erebus* and *Terror* were still in existence at Cape Victory or Victory Point, but was unable to reach the Point himself, because of a tribal war between the natives of the region. He did, however, collect more than one hundred and fifty relics of the Franklin Expedition from the natives, including personal belongings of officers and men, and fittings from the ships.

In 1865 Captain Hall uncovered the interesting fact that Captain Crozier of the *Terror*, with Lyon, Parry, and

another sailor, had survived the others after the expedition had been almost completely wiped out by cold and starvation. The evidence indicated that Crozier had been alive until the fall of 1864, or while Hall was actually searching for him—nearly twenty years after the expedition under command of Sir John had left England!

#### *Battling with Indians*

Franklin's party had fought a battle with a tribe of Indians near the estuary of the Great Fish River, the American explorer learned, and after this Captain Crozier and two of his men had made an attempt to cross the Northwest Territory, hoping to gain either Fort Churchill or York Factory. At either of these well-known Hudson Bay Company posts they would have found men to aid them. They had been traveling in skin or rubber boats, but their attempt was a failure.

In 1868, Captain Hall had additional information indicating that Captain Crozier and one other man had survived until 1864, and he heard of other sailors in King William Land. But these rumors finally petered out, and at last Hall was forced to the conclusion that no men of the Franklin Expedition were still alive. Not until then did he give up his search and trek south to the limit of the pack-ice. Boarding the bark *Ansel Gibbs* there, he returned to New Bedford, Mass.

#### *A Century of Effort*

Sir John Franklin's Expedition, and the stories of the various searching parties, English and American, will always be among the thrilling adventures on this continent. To this day government expeditions still rummage about on Beechey Island, in hope that they will finally gather the complete story of the climax to the centuries-long effort to locate the Northwest Passage.

And to this day the thrill of expeditions and rescue parties persists. There can be no better proof of that than the excited interest that was  
(Concluded on page 112)



# A Matter of Cash

*—that's All It Meant to  
Francois Renault . . . or  
So He Claimed!*

By  
**JOHN L. BENTON**

*Author of "The Death Penalty,"  
"The Fatal Knife," etc.*

**F**RANCOIS RENAULT sat at his ease on the thin-roofed veranda and sipped appreciatively at his gin.

"Of a certainty," he smiled at the linen-suited, straight-backed men who, even in the heat, stood about stiffly and unrelaxed. "I would say your scientific expedition has a most worthy purpose. You wish to lease the cove from me, and the land adjoining, in order to further your study of marine life. You wish to erect scientific laboratories." He paused to take another sip. "And the rental?"

The tall, blond man who was the leader nodded wordlessly. From a thick wallet he withdrew a sheaf of bills, and counted out five thousand dollars in English pounds. Renault took the money with a smile, placed it in a hip pocket with a slight shrug.

"And the contract?"

The blond man spoke brusquely. "The signing of papers is not necessary, Monsieur Renault. You are dealing with gentlemen."

Renault made a deprecating gesture. "But of course. How indis-



*Tom Payne*

creet of me even to mention it. You will join me in a drink—gentlemen?"

He rang a little dinner bell, and Sam, his Papuan boy, padded from inside the house with a tray of glasses, limes, and another bottle of gin. . . .

The little island of Francois Renault, nearer to Australia than the Philippines, and nearer to heaven than either, nestled serenely in the broad bosom of the South Pacific. A veritable paradise of lush vegetation, coral beaches and calm, magnificent tropic nights, the island did a steady, dependable business in copra, cocoanut oil and mangoes. All of which provided Renault with a medium but comfortable income, kept the natives happy, and assured the infrequent visitor of a warm and friendly welcome.



Not Tom Payne, however. Payne had arrived the night before, dripping wet and unheralded. No one paid him any particular attention the next morning when, refreshed from a night's sleep under the brilliant stars, he went inshore, his strong, easy strides oddly set off by sun-dried white shirt and trousers. He bummed a meal of *taro*, *poi* and cocoanut milk from a native hut. Beachcombers were nothing new on Renault's Island, and this husky, clean-featured white man had a most reassuring smile.

Payne, in his own way, made quite a day of it. He walked up and down the clean sandy beach for hours, tossing shells into limpid lagoons and skipping smooth, flat rocks over the water's surface. He took off his shirt and pillowed it under his head, letting the hot sun bake more copper into his smooth brown back. Later in the afternoon he went for a swim, and a bunch of native boys dived in after him, and they played tag in the warm blue waters until Payne laughingly ducked one of the youngsters and made for the shore, shaking the sea out of his wet hair.

**T**WILIGHT came with its symphony of reds, yellows and deep purples, and swiftly the island and the sea were swept with the soft blanket of night. Night, and Tom Payne was no longer the laughing-eyed beachcomber. Quietly now, like a silent wraith, Payne made his way to the extreme end of the island, his eyes cool but his features hard.

As he approached the sheltered little cove which Francois Renault had leased that very morning, he drew up short, and his eyes narrowed. For a scientific expedition, this outfit was certainly going to work as though they had a hurricane by the tail. Gasoline flares, strewn about the shore and for a hundred yards inland, lighted the labors of some fifty men.

Out in the cove, a steady procession of small dories went to and from

a compact, squat little steamer, riding heavily at anchor in the cove's gentle wash. Payne drew nearer to the headland, strained his eyes in the darkening night. A dory scraped shore, was immediately drawn up by a half-dozen brawny arms. Swiftly and efficiently, bags of cement were transferred to waiting wheelbarrows, which took them fifty yards inshore to deposit them before heavy canvas tents. On the shore already were piles of lumber, bundles of iron rods, and, off to one side, packing cases which might have held anything from construction tools to canned foods.

Payne whistled softly under his breath. "The boys are certainly going at it great guns," he muttered. "Hm-m—this is just the first few loads. They must have enough stuff in that ship to build a fort. Look how low she rides in the water!"

Lips compressing, he slipped off his clothes and made for the black water. His black bathing trunks sagged a little around the waist. He'd left them behind a clump of bushes when he'd gone swimming that afternoon. Not very sensible, he knew, to let the natives see the bulgy little pocket around the waistband which contained the water-proof packet of matches—and the compact stick of dynamite.

Easily he swam toward the ship, drew up beside the anchor chain, breathing deeply. He had made a wide circuit of the ship and come in from the starboard side to escape the dories. The little boats were still going and coming in a steady stream, and evidently intended to keep it up until the late hours.

Face grim, body tensely alert, Payne used a hanging rope to haul himself aboard. There were no sentries about. Obviously every man available had been put to work. Steathily Payne hid behind a pile of packing cases on the deck, watching his opportunity. When a couple of men working in the hold came up for a breath of air and a smoke, Payne saw his chance



and darted down the forward hatch, his bare feet padding soundlessly.

Suddenly there was a sound behind him. Payne whirled, eyes narrowed in the hot, cargo-laden hold. His eyes had already taken in swiftly the bags of cement, the cases of machinery, the engineering equipment. Now he saw the burly, brute-browed seaman emerging from the connecting door which led, probably, to the engine room.

Startled, the man stared at the trunk-clad swimmer with wide blank eyes. Then, sudden comprehension tightening his harsh, heavy features, he opened his mouth to bellow a warning and sprang forward in a lumbering rush, the heavy wrench in his hand raised like a club.

The shout died aborning in his throat. Like a human catapult Payne had launched himself across the hold, his eyes blazing, his right fist drawn back like a leashed mallet. In the twinkling of an eye bone-hard knuckles smashed out, buried themselves in the yielding cartilage of the thick, fleshy throat. The burly man fell back, choking and spitting blood; then brought the wrench down on Payne's left shoulder.

Eyes hard, Payne drew back his fist and shot it home to the burly fellow's midriff. The engine room man said "*whoof!*" as his stomach collapsed, and he crumpled to the board flooring in agony, retching violently. Blowing on his knuckles, Payne reached down, grabbed hold of the wrench and let the brute have it.

Breathing a little more easily in relief, Tom Payne hurried into the engine room and over to a corner. He could hear the waves outside lapping softly against the steel plating. Not a safe cracksman, Payne went to work then with an efficiency which any bank mob would have applauded. He opened the little pocket in his trunks, attached a short fuse to the heavily charged stick of dynamite, and wedged the explosive into a

crevice. Then he lighted the fuse with a safety match, and almost in the same motion was running toward the opposite end of the engine room from which he had entered.

He made his way back on deck, heart beating wildly with strain and excitement, and dived with a soft splash into the mothering sea. He was just breaking water, yards from the ship, when he heard what he thought was a cry of alarm. The engine room man, then, must have been discovered. Ten seconds later there came a muffled explosion; Payne could hear it through the water.

The overladen steamer seemed to rise just a trifle in the gentle swell, then it settled back slowly, rocking a bit from side to side. Payne could see the crew escaping as he swam in a great circle around the cove. And when he reached shore, panting but with shining eyes, the ship had already settled to the main deck in the water, a stranded, sodden, squat shadow in a background of throbbing darkness and yellow starlight. . . .

**F**RANCOIS RENAULT sat on his thin-roofed porch next morning, sipping his gin with the leisure that had been rudely interrupted but ten minutes before by the leader of the expedition, and a half-dozen of his men, white-faced, haggard and bitterly angry. Now they were gone. Renault sighed a little tiredly.

A young man in white shirt and trousers, a little blood stain on the left shoulder, came around the corner of the porch then, nodded easily to the Frenchman and seated himself on the veranda. He poured himself a drink, and downed it in a gulp. He smiled and fixed himself another.

"Your friends left but a few moments ago," Renault observed quietly, but his eyes were smiling.

"They kept me waiting," Payne grinned. "Boy, does this drink hit the spot!"

(Concluded on page 113)



# Ace Jordanan

By  
BOB  
MACKAY

IN THE YEAR 2239, A BRAZILIAN AGENT, DONNA INCALLA AND I WERE SENT ON A SECRET MISSION TO SOUTH AMERICA

AFTER INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES WE FOUND OURSELVES IN AN ANCIENT INCA CITY, RULED BY A WHITE MAN KNOWN AS THE EQUATATOR. THIS TYRANT WAS ATTEMPTING TO FORCE A NEW TYPE OF SUPER-COMMUNISM, WHICH HE CALLED EQUATISM, UPON THE WORLD.

HIS INCA SLAVES WERE IN REVOLT. IN SOME MANNER THEY HAD DUPED DONNA INCALLA, WHO BELIEVED HERSELF TO BE THE SUN-GODDESS, WHILE IN HER EYES I WAS THE GREAT INCA GOD, PACHACAMAC, WE HAD ESCAPED FROM DIRE PERIL UNDERGROUND TO THE INCA GOLD MINES.

BY MEANS OF A NEWLY DEVELOPED RAY THAT PARALYZED THE MIND AND LEFT THE VICTIM A MERE HUMAN AUTOMATON, OBEYING EVERY COMMAND ISSUED, THE EQUATATOR HAD CRUSHED THE INCA REBELLION. LUCKILY, DONNA AND I HAD SECURED TWO RAY GUNS AND TWO SUITS OF BLACK VOLCANIC GLASS.

THESE SUITS RENDERED THE WEARER IMPERVIOUS TO THE RAYS. BY NOW I HAD AN IDEA WHEREBY I HOPED TO THWART THE EQUATATOR. I EXPLAINED MY PLAN TO DONNA AS WE MARCHED ALONG TOWARD THE MINES.

SEE, THE INCAS SUBJECTED TO THE RAY OBEY US. WE HAVE LEARNED THAT WHEN ONCE SO EXPOSED, THE RAY HAS NO FURTHER EFFECT ON THE VICTIM. THEREFORE, WHEN WE MEET THE EQUATATOR'S SOLDIERS, WE SHALL COMMAND OUR INCAS TO CHARGE. THE ENEMY'S RAY-GUNS WILL HAVE NO EFFECT AND THE INCAS WILL OVERPOWER THEM. IT'S SO SIMPLE, I WONDER THE EQUATATOR NEVER THOUGHT OF IT!



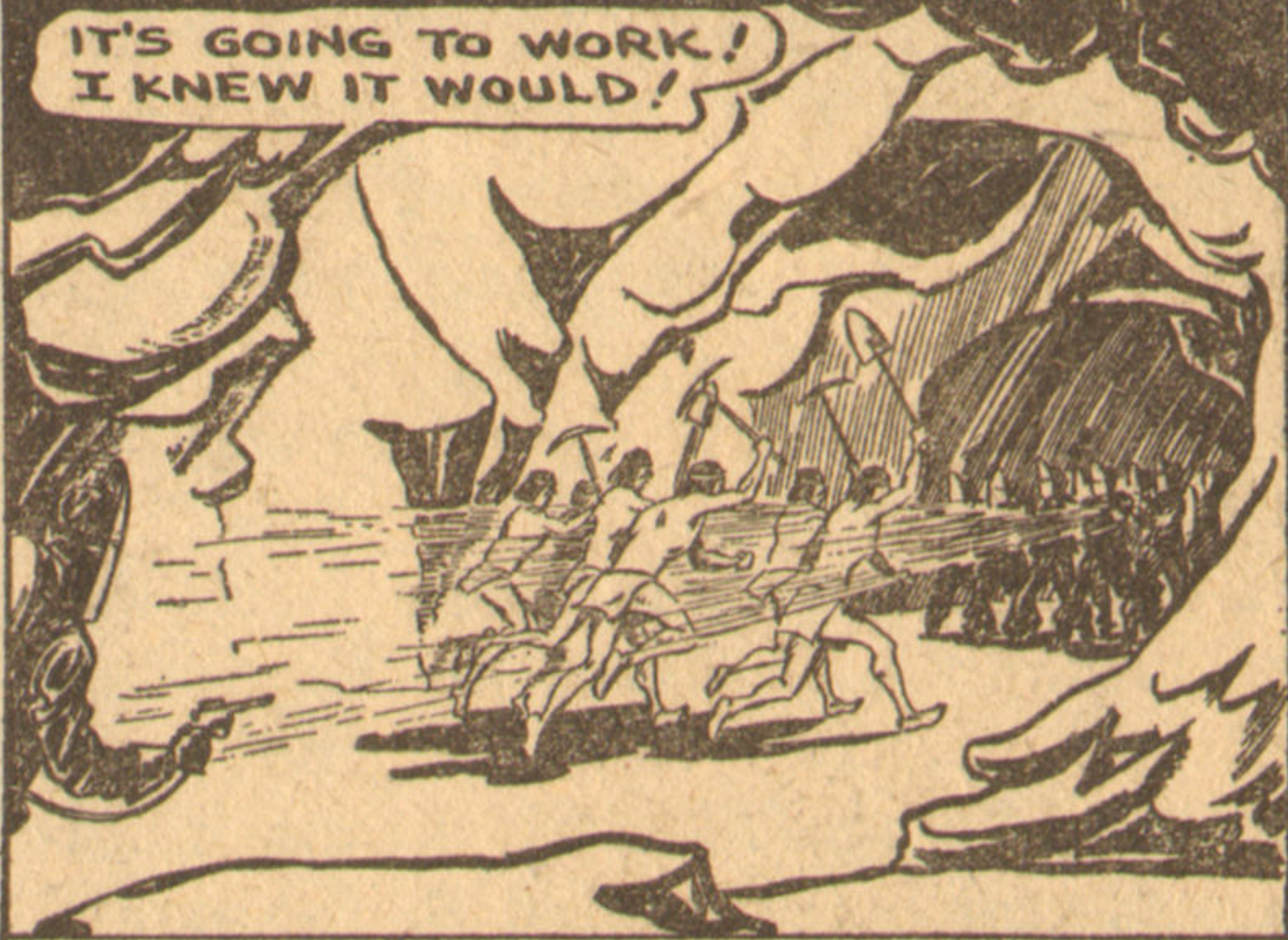
SOON WE CAME UPON A PARTY OF THE EQUATATOR'S SOLDIERS, ABOUT A DOZEN IN STRENGTH.

THE RAYS WON'T HURT YOU, MEN! WHEN I GIVE THE ORDER, RUSH THEM! HIT THEM-KILL THEM-TEAR OFF THEIR BLACK SUITS! ALL RIGHT-NOW, CHARGE THEM! TEAR OFF THEIR SUITS OF GLASS!



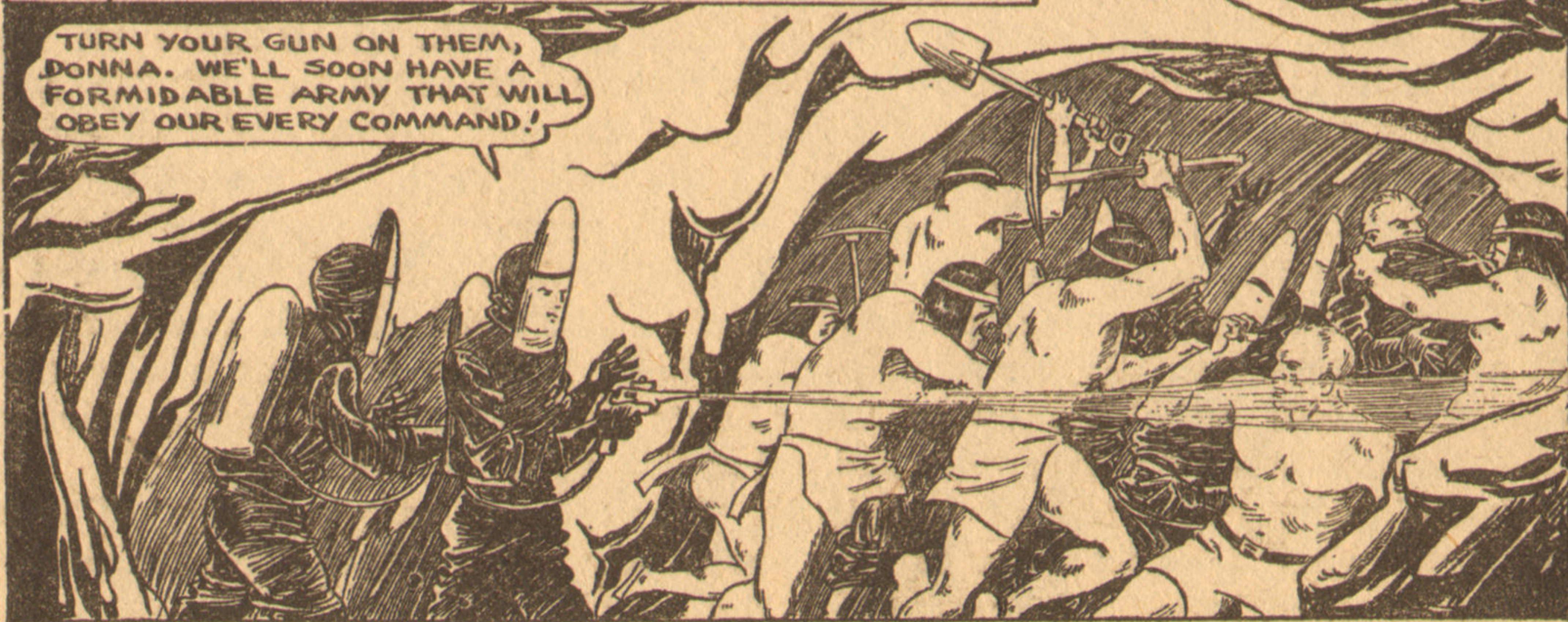
IT WAS JUST AS I HAD SUSPECTED. THE RAYS HAD NO FURTHER EFFECT ON THE INCAS.

IT'S GOING TO WORK! I KNEW IT WOULD!



THE EQUATATOR'S SOLDIERS, ARMED ONLY WITH RAY-GUNS, WERE HELPLESS. AS THE INCAS RIPPED OFF THEIR GLASS SUITS, DONNA AND I TRAINED OUR RAY-GUNS ON THEM.

TURN YOUR GUN ON THEM, DONNA. WE'LL SOON HAVE A FORMIDABLE ARMY THAT WILL OBEY OUR EVERY COMMAND!





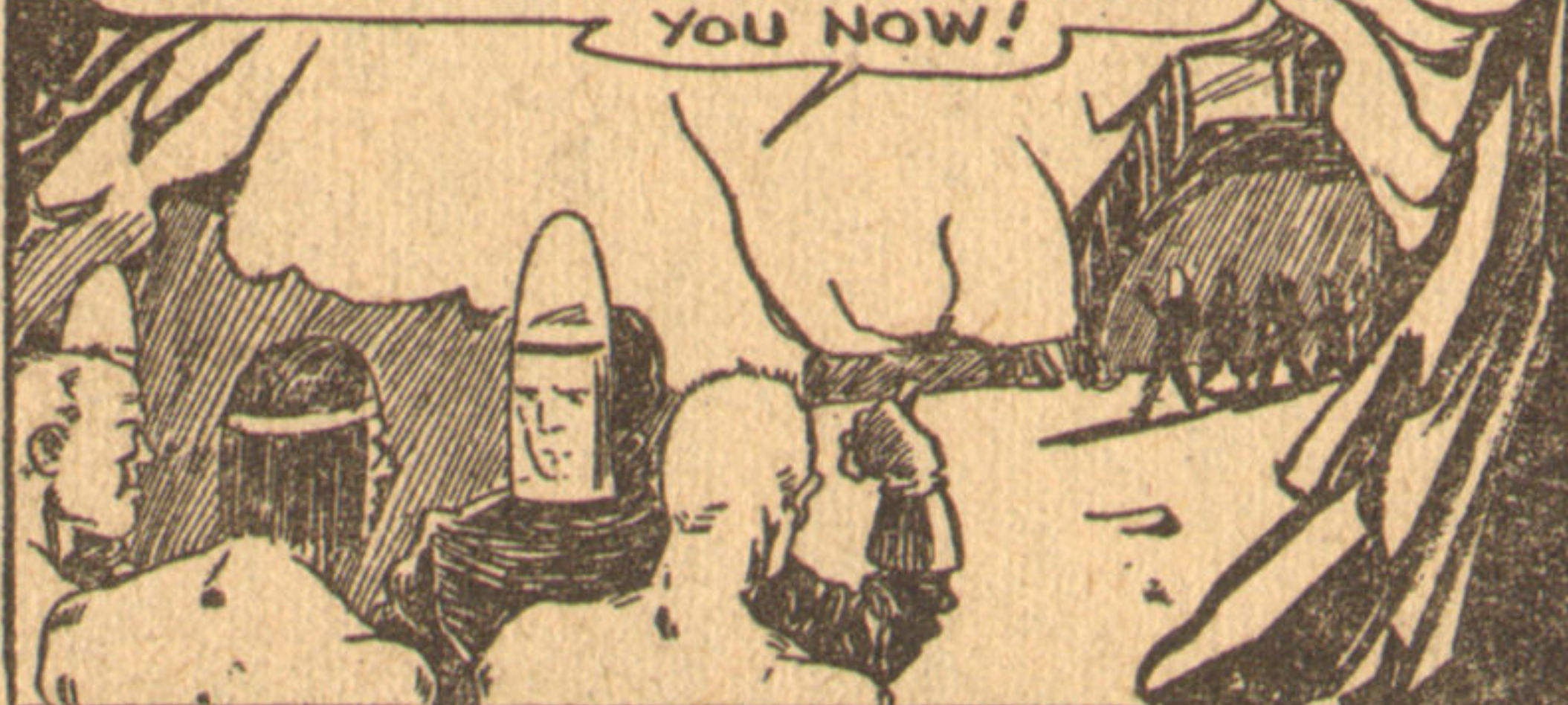
THE COMMANDER AND A FEW SURVIVORS  
RAN OFF WHEN THEY SAW THEIR ATTACK  
WAS HOPELESS—

RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!  
WE MUST SECURE RE-  
ENFORCEMENTS!



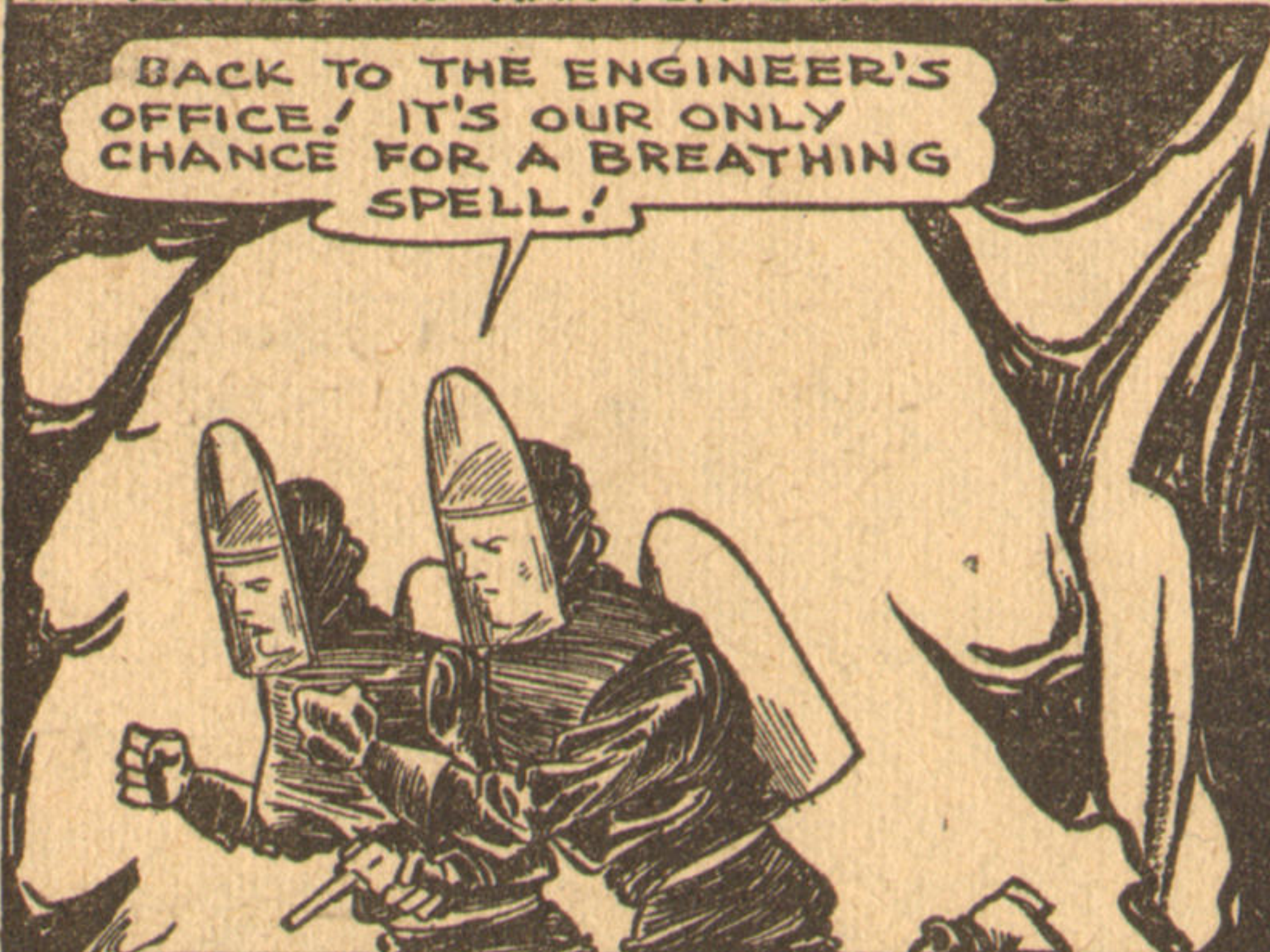
I WASN'T AFRAID OF THEM AS THEY AD-  
VANCED, FOR THE SOLDIERS I HAD CAPTUR-  
ED HAD BEEN SUBJECTED TO THE RAY  
AND WERE COMPLETELY UNDER MY POWER.  
BESIDES, WE OUTNUMBERED THIS NEW  
FORCE—

THERE'S NOTHING TO FEAR, MEN!  
THROW DOWN YOUR RAY-GUNS AND  
OVERPOWER THE ENEMY WITH YOUR  
HANDS. THE RAYS CAN'T HURT  
YOU NOW!



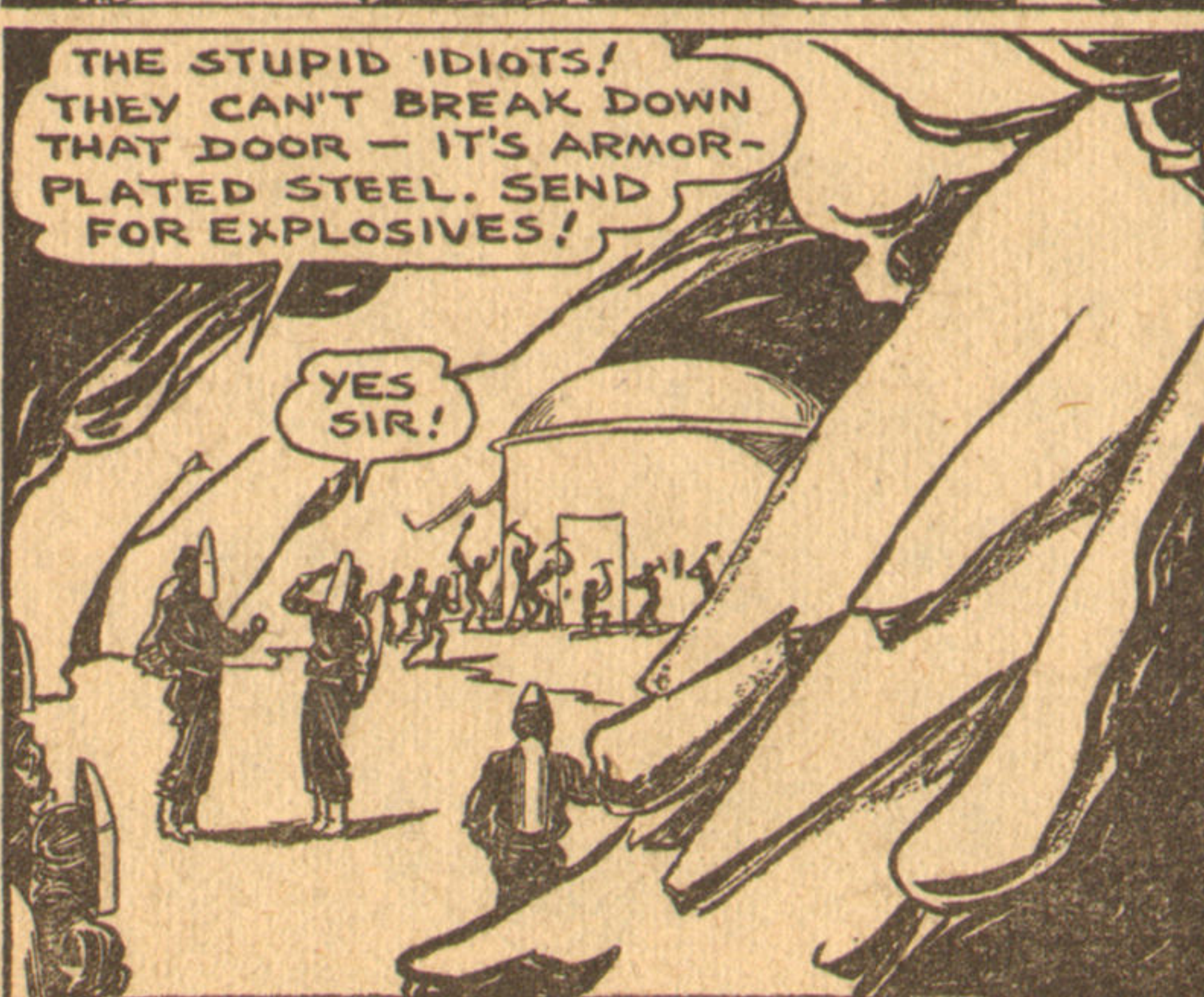
WE TURNED AND RAN FOR OUR LIVES—

BACK TO THE ENGINEER'S  
OFFICE! IT'S OUR ONLY  
CHANCE FOR A BREATHING  
SPELL!



THE STUPID IDIOTS!  
THEY CAN'T BREAK DOWN  
THAT DOOR— IT'S ARMOR-  
PLATED STEEL. SEND  
FOR EXPLOSIVES!

YES  
SIR!



WHILE WE WERE COMPLETING OUR CONQUEST,  
REENFORCEMENTS SENT BY THE EQUA-  
TATOR ARRIVED. I NOTICED THE TWO  
COMMANDERS IN CONSULTATION—

YOU FOOL, TO LET  
THEM OVERPOWER YOU!

BUT THEY'RE UNDER THIS  
OUTSIDER'S COMMAND.  
THEY'VE BEEN SUBJECTED  
TO THE RAY—THEY  
OBEY HIM!

I'LL SHOW  
YOU HOW.  
WATCH ME!



IMAGINE MY AMAZEMENT WHEN THE  
ENEMY ADVANCED, SHOUTING IN UNISON,  
COMPLETELY DROWNING OUT MY COM-  
MANDS. MY OWN MEN HALTED THEN,  
MUTTERING—

THE SOLDIERS MAKE  
SO MUCH NOISE MY  
OWN MEN CAN'T HEAR  
ME. IT LOOKS BAD!

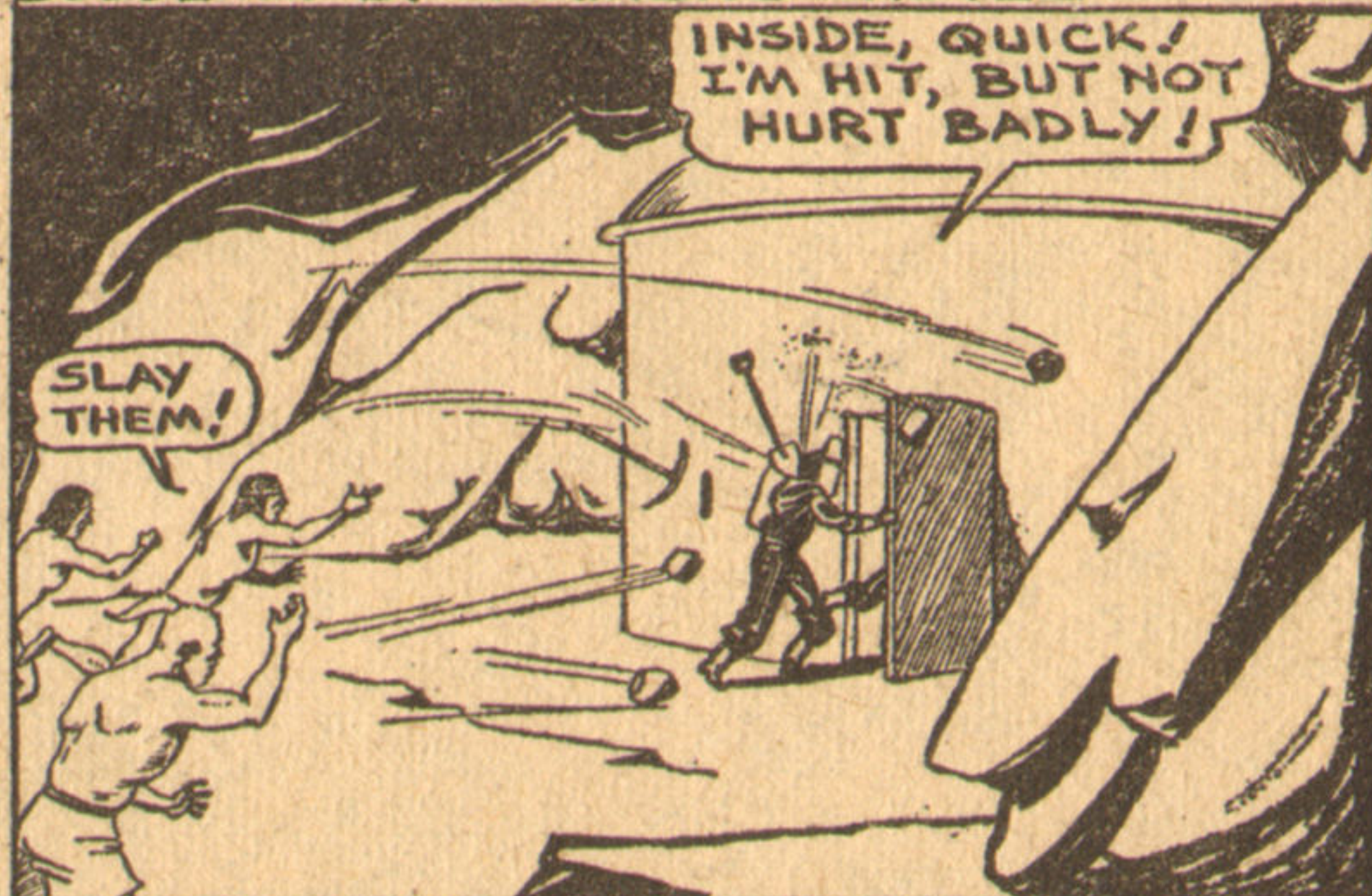
TURN ON YOUR  
LEADERS AND  
SLAY THEM!  
TURN ON YOUR  
LEADERS AND  
SLAY THEM!



WE GAINED THE OFFICE JUST IN TIME,  
AS A SHOWER OF ROCKS AND IMPLEMENTS  
BEGAN TO RAIN ABOUT US. I WAS HIT  
SUDDENLY BY A MINER'S SHOVEL—

INSIDE, QUICK!  
I'M HIT, BUT NOT  
HURT BADLY!

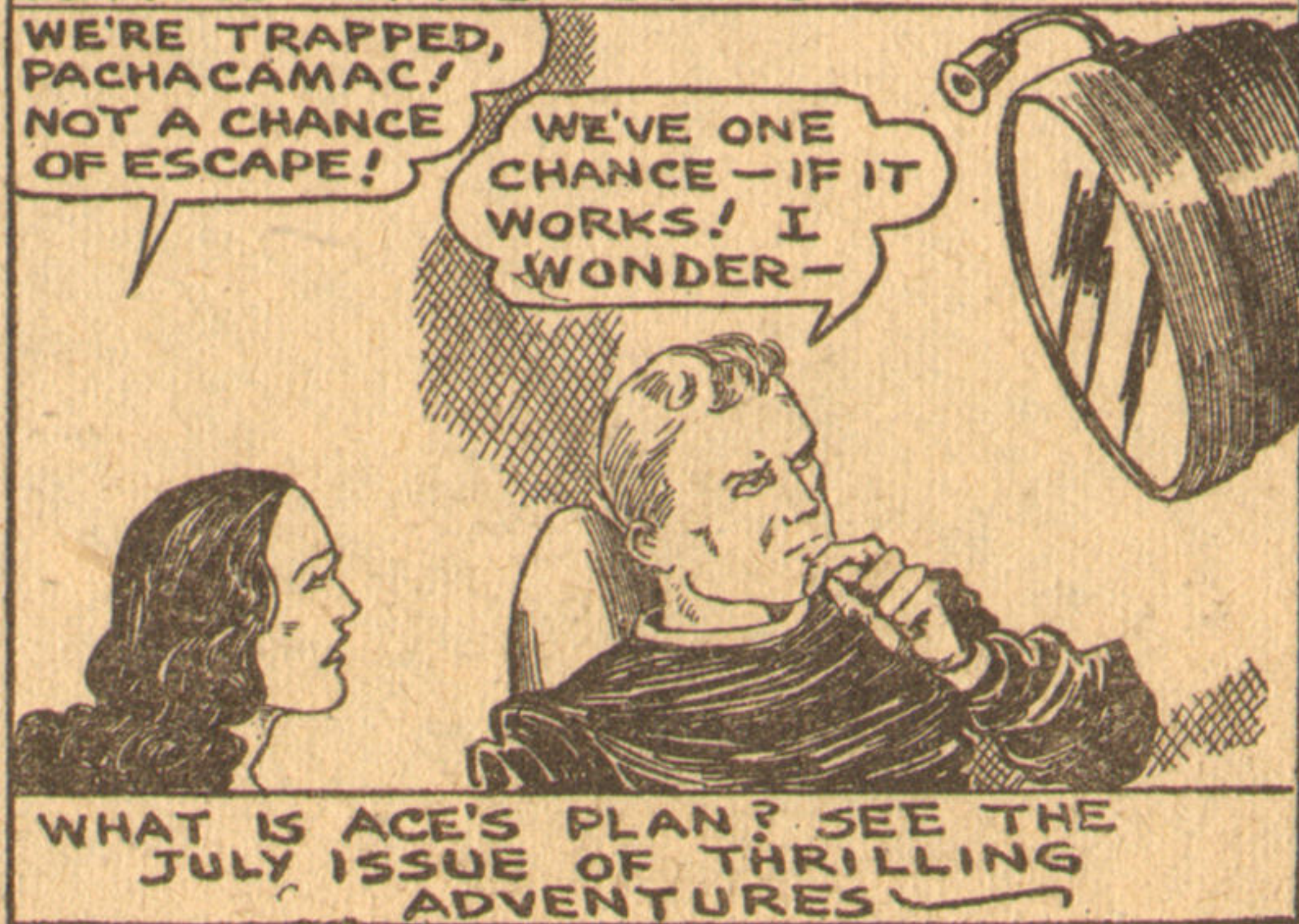
SLAY  
THEM!



IT SEEMED THAT ALL WAS LOST. SUDDEN-  
LY I NOTICED THE RUINED TELEVISION  
SET AND AN IDEA STRUCK ME—

WE'RE TRAPPED,  
PACHACAMAC!  
NOT A CHANCE  
OF ESCAPE!

WE'VE ONE  
CHANCE—IF IT  
WORKS! I  
WONDER—



WHAT IS ACE'S PLAN? SEE THE  
JULY ISSUE OF THRILLING  
ADVENTURES—

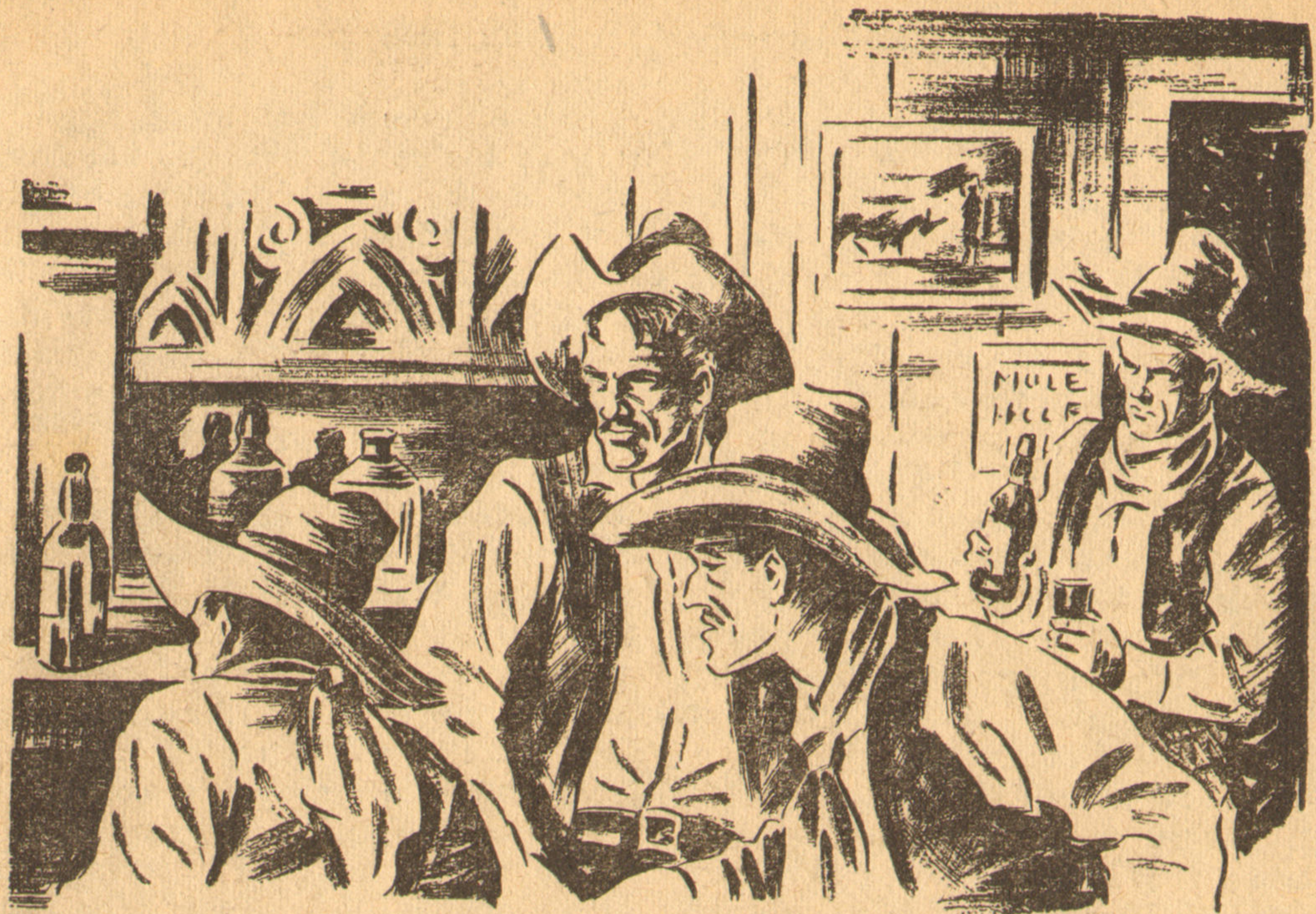


# A Complete Western Novelet



*Randle's right fist cracked against Ringo's rocklike jaw, staggering him against the bar*





# RENEGADE PAYOFF

*Gunsmoke Enmity Stalks the Owlhoot Until the Din of a Stampede Awakens Men to a Realization of a Duty Beyond Battle!*

By ED EARL REPP

*Author of "Hell's Crossroads," "Killers Take All," etc.*

## CHAPTER I *Barroom Battle*

**T**HE lanky A Dot puncher lounging on the bench in front of the Bottoms Up Bar nudged his partner sharply in the ribs.

"Look what the wind's blowed into Lodge Pole!" he murmured, and he

jerked his head toward the lone rider loping steadily down the street. "The tides of hell are gonna rise, pronto!"

"Damned if they ain't!" echoed the other tersely, hoisting his slatlike frame erect. "First time I've seen Jess Randle packin' twin cutters since he hit Big Timber Valley. Looks like that nester man's got his hackles up



and Shang Ringo's drewed his lightnin' at last!"

"Shang'll fry him in his own grease!" chuckled the lanky puncher. "Come on! Let's tell him what's comin'!"

They battled eagerly through the batwing doors to seek out their burly ramrod who was somewhere in the smoke-choked, clamorous saloon. It was filled with A Dot men slaking roundup dust from their parched throats. Elbowing through the noisy crowd, the two punchers shoved up to Shang Ringo lazing indolently against the bar, a glass of red-eye poised in his malletlike fist.

"Jess Randle's ridin' this way, boss, all spread out to six-gun lengths across the britches an' lookin' for trouble!" The lanky puncher grinned.

"Yeah," added the other, "he's freighted down to the hocks for a gunsmoke frolic and sittin' tight in his kak. The look that nester shucked at us'd peel the hide offen an alligator!"

"Shang" Ringo, mountainous A Dot range boss, stiffened. His beady eyes danced with battle lights. He tossed down his drink and a surly grin split his thick lips as he straightened his hulking body to full height. His big fists began clenching and unclenching, as he turned to the barkeep.

"Gimme my guns, Corkscrew!" he commanded gruffly.

The twisted old bronc snapper who now dispensed liquor because an outlaw hammerhead had tramped his spine, shook his head.

"Not unless yuh go outside, Shang. The floors of the Bottoms Up ain't ever been stained by nothin' but knuckle blood. And they ain't gonna be long as I'm roddin' it. Step out on the walk an' I'll hand yuh back yore cutters."

Before Ringo could give voice to the curse choking him, the swing doors battled open. Eyes in the room focused on the young nester framed there beligerently.

Jess Randle had to stoop slightly to keep his cone-peaked JB hat from brushing the top jamb of the door. He was lean and willowy, with the angular frame of a man born in the saddle. Hard work and harder riding gave him the temper of steel. A lonely existence on his little Rocking R spread had stamped his ruggedly handsome face with an impassiveness that was unreadable. His amber-flecked gray eyes were like mirrors that reflected the bitter turmoil of his soul. The toil of a nester fighting a lone fight in an antagonistic country had made him look more mature than he really was. His fine lips were creased into thin lines now, white about the corners.

Before he could step into the barroom, "Corkscrew" was relieving him of his guns with one swift jerk. But when Randle's eyes lit on Shang's gunless thighs, he made no protest. Slowly he stepped toward the A Dot ramrod.

**I**NDOLENTLY, Shang faced him, his elbows akimbo. His lips formed a cast-iron grin and deep scorn puckered his eyelids.

"I'm short ten head, Ringo," the young nester said resonantly. "Through my 'scope I saw 'em bein' hazed into yore shippin' cars from Bald Knob less'n an hour ago. That's ten yuh owe me—or a hundred apiece for prime beef!"

A guffaw swelled from Ringo's throat.

"That's rich!" he roared. "Owin' a damn nester ten head o' cattle because a few scurvied culls that strayed got caught in our roundup. Where was yore rep, nester? Every other spread in the Big Timber sent a man but yore Rockin' R."

A rush of blood to his temples made Jess Randle's hair tingle at the roots. Ringo's arrogance galled him. It had been a bold, deliberate steal, and he knew it. Hot resentment simmered within him.

"If I'd had a rep at yore chuck



wagon," he gritted, "he wouldn't have seen them ten head. Yuh think yuh're big enough in this valley to call it a mistake, Ringo. But I call it plain, ordinary rustlin'!"

**A**LL color fled from Ringo's swart face.

"Why, yuh sin-pimpled son—" he swore luridly. "If a feller rustled everything you owned, he wouldn't tally enough to buy his way into the pore house! As for rustlin'"—his voice dropped wickedly—"that's some-thin' you should know plenty about, Randle! I've checked up on yuh—down Wyomin' way. Before yuh squatted on A Dot grazin' land, yore name wasn't Randle a-tall. It was—"

"Easy, Ringo!" Randle cut in softly. "Don't make me kill yuh for blattin' off yore mouth promiscuous!"

Ringo's barrel chest swelled. "Kill me?" he snarled. "You ain't got the Red McVey bunch at yore back now. You was one of 'em, Randle! Yuh're Jess McVey, brother o' that no good renegade, Red McVey!"

"Yuh're a liar, Ringo!" Randle snapped hotly. "I never rode with Red McVey in my life. Sweet cover-up yuh're tryin', so's yuh can get my land and water the A Dot needs!"

"Yuh're Jess McVey, or I'm a Chink cook," sneered Ringo. "Since Virge Addison got interested in you and yore doin's, old Kim had me smell yuh down. He gave me my orders. I'm relayin' 'em to you. Renegade—get goin' an' don't come back!"

Jess Randle could sense the tightening of the circle of A Dot punchers about him. This was showdown! One against the most powerful outfit in Big Timber Valley. If he allowed this accusation to whip him, he would have to ride on. And wherever he went it would be the same. The name of his notorious, gunslick brother would catch up with him. "Renegade — get going!" Those three words would devil him to the grave.

Six months of hard labor, all his

money and a certain degree of forgetfulness were in that little spread hunkering on the toes of Smoky Buttes. Three years and six months yet to go before the government would give him clear title to the land. A lifetime to go facing down the stigma "Red" McVey had attached to him. The reputation of his owlhoot brother haunted him.

Until now, he had succeeded in burying his identity in the Big Timber. And he had come to love his place, the country—and one of its people. There was a lift to its glorious dawns when the sun painted the Sheep Blue Mountains with pastel shades. Easy comfort to the velvety nights when he could sit on his small corral fence, smoke and commune with the glittering stars; listen to the low murmur of Big Dry Creek as it cut lazy scallops through his land.

And Virge Addison, supple, capable, lovely daughter of the A Dot owner. Her powerful parents had spoiled her a bit, yet she was the true princess of a cattle king. Beneath her proud, haughty exterior beat a heart of gold that needed the touch of tragedy to give her a better understanding of life in the raw. All men knelt to her beauty. All but Jess Randle, the nester of Smoky Buttes. Perhaps that was why she was so interested—and sometimes came to see him, against her father's wishes. But he loved her. His indifference was only a mask to cover his shyness.

Now the skeleton in his closet rattled again. The curse had caught up with him once more. Struggling valiantly as he was, he needed the good wishes of the country instead of its distrust and enmity.

Two things combined to bring about what he faced now—Virge Addison and the long drought. The A Dot could use his water. Kim Addison didn't want him seeing Virge. He could fight down his yearning to see the girl, perhaps make a concession of his water. But face this accusation—



His tone was flat and convincing when he spoke.

"I'm goin' nowhere, Ringo. Nothin' can be gained by runnin'. It's taken me from Cheyenne clear to the Rio Bravo an' back to find that out. A man can't get away from himself—or a reputation. I like it here and aim to stay. I'm also collectin' on ten head o' Rockin' R beef. Jest what yuh got in mind to do about it?"

In the charged silence, he read the hate in Shang Ringo's somber eyes. And he realized that jealousy was the foundation of it all. Shang's swart face reflected all his inner emotions. An inner fire burned to white heat at the mention of Virge's name. Ringo was out to disgrace Randle and eliminate a rival.

The ramrod's huge fists clenched into balls.

"What I'm gonna do is learn yuh that renegades ain't wanted in Big Timber," he ground out. "I got it figgered yuh're here spyin' for yore rotten brother!" And he struck.

Like a steel spring suddenly uncoiling, Jess Randle whipped up his right fist and beat him to the punch. It cracked solidly against Ringo's rock-like jaw, staggered him back against the bar.

A howl went up from the A Dot waddies, a strange admixture of surprise and threat. Shang Ringo was the best bunkhouse scrapper in Montana. And here he was, pinned groggily against the bar by the gaunt nester's first blow. They surged forward, clawing for a chance at the insolent brother of Red McVey.

Ringo's enraged bellow drove them back.

"I'll take his taw 'fore this knuckle-down game is over!" he shouted. "I'm skinnin' this sidewinder alive an' shovin' his rattles down his throat!"

A Dot voices lifted to bedlam. Taunts and insults were hurled at the lone nester. But Randle shut their frenzied clamor from his ears and steeled himself to the avalanche of

blows Ringo would throw at him. He was fighting for more than life now; struggling for the right to hold up his head in Big Timber Valley—fighting to protect his self-respect. For Virge Addison.

He knew he faced a ruthless force. That of gossip and reputation. He must live them both down. His fresh start all hinged on the power in his fists; upon the necessity of winning to let men know he defended his rights; to make men afraid to consider him the brother of an outlaw. To win, was to go on. To lose—

He bellied to Shang Ringo's savage rush.

## CHAPTER II

### *Renegades Not Wanted*



AS COLD and calculating as a robot, Jess Randle lashed at Ringo's burly figure. He scarcely felt the pistonlike blows drilling his body and face. His only urge was to dust away the leering countenance before him with his knuckles.

He saw stolid determination in Ringo's face. Then it turned beet-red as he became more cautious of this willowy youngster who kept at him relentlessly. As blood spurted, Ringo's crimson mask showed fatigue which made his veins stick out.

Randle felt a cold joy in battling. His thrashing arms were making the A Dot ramrod eat his words. Slugging, feinting, jabbing, shifting. He alternated his one-twos—first to the body, then to the head. The ring of excited faces was but a pale and vague background.

Then Ringo seemed to get his second wind. His sneer came again to his lips. He bore down like fresh pressure applied to a juggernaut. Furiously, he swarmed at the nester. Pounding, pushing, pummeling. Desperate now to knock this half-smiling youngster from his feet.



They tangled in a clinch. Like two great bulls locked in death embrace, they grunted to the strain. The only noise now was the squeak of boots on the sawdust floor.

The air gushed sobbingly from Randle's lungs. He fought down the urge to try to twist free from this awful hug. He knew such an effort would spell defeat. Success lay in hugging harder and sapping the strength from his powerful opponent.

Throwing full leverage of his steel-like muscles into that embrace, he could feel the grip of the ramrod slacken. He gulped fresh air into his tortured lungs and clinched harder.

Slowly Ringo bent back. Gasps of astonishment tore from the throats of the onlookers. The saloon was packed now with townspeople who had heard the din.

A savage snarl of satisfaction bared Randle's teeth. He was tasting the cup of victory and finding the nectar sweet. He was crushing the arrogance from this surly ranch foreman. Ringo was whimpering like a child, his back bending like a bow.

Suddenly, the overbalanced weight started them toward the floor. Randle caught the devilish gleam in the cowman's eyes. Then he felt horrible pains shoot from his groin, making his head whirl dizzily. Blackness blanketed his eyes and sickness swept him. He felt the jar as he lit atop Ringo and the ramrod rolled free. Shang Ringo had kned him like a rattler striking in the dark.

Groveling on the floor he tried to rise. He had to get up and continue with his battle. But his nerve-numbed body would not respond. He twitched to the solid thud of boots into his sides.

His body was one hell of misery. Strength had drained from him like wheat pouring from a split sack. Courage that had flamed so brightly within him guttered weakly. He no longer had control of himself. He was conscious only of awful pains as he

sank into a bottomless pit of oblivion. His last conscious thought was that he had lost—lost another battle to arrogant and powerful enemies. It meant riding on; losing all his dreams; Virge Addison; his homestead. His cup of bitterness was full when merciful oblivion took it from him. . . .

**J**UST as Shang Ringo aimed a vicious kick at the unconscious young nester's lolling head, Marshal Clem Cottles burst into the center of the arena. His gun cleared leather, cracking the cowman sharply behind the ear. The ramrod collapsed like a punctured balloon.

The marshal glared at the belligerent crowd.

"These fellers are under arrest for disturbin' the peace," he cracked out. "There's only one way to fight in Lodge Pole town—that's fight with me. A Dot punchers—gig yore ponies for home. Tell old Kim Addison I got his salty ramrod on ice until his fine's paid. The rest of yuh can drink or go home. Makes no matter to me."

"That's Red McVey's brother yuh're jailin', Marshal!" stated someone.

Callously, the lawman turned the prone nester over. His hand stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"I don't care iff'n he's Butch Casiday!" he announced. "He ain't committed no crime but fightin' in Lodge Pole. Until he breaks a bigger law than that—he's in for disturbin' the peace."

The crowd broke up. If they knew their marshal, the young nester had a long stretch facing him in the town jail. The puncher who had spotted Randle riding into town jabbed his partner in the ribs as they moved outside. "Damn if that nester wasn't givin' Shang a whuppin' until the boss' knee caught 'im in the belly," he whispered hoarsely. "He done it a-purpose—I could see that. Shang would a-kilt 'im if Cottles hadn't showed up."

"Yuh're right," muttered the other. "Randle doled out one large helpin'



o' hell 'fore he caved. He had one o' his cow critters outa Shang's hide and was fixin' to get his good name back when it happened. Them two won't have much room now for nothin' but hate. Powder'll be burnt—shore as yuh're born."

**A** CHILLED body brought Jess Randle to his senses. He peered through the slits of his swollen eyes and made out the iron bars hemming him in. Abruptly he sat up. The movement made him sick and dizzy. A rasping voice came from the dark corner of the cell.

"Easy, pard. There ain't much wrong with yuh but broke ribs, a busted nose, mouses under yore eyes, two teeth missin', one ear bloomin' like cauliflower, an' yore belly pushed clean to yore backbone. Once them things mend, yuh'll be good as new."

In the gloom the young nester could make out the slope-shouldered oldster on the cot across from him. A bristly, walrus mustache drooped from under his long and predatory nose. Below it were thin, but kindly lips. An enormous cud of fine-cut bulged his leathery cheek. He was typical of the range men who grow old in the saddle, drift from spread to spread during roundup to pick up small change to see them through the winters. The word "drifter" was deep-stamped on his faded levis and patched plaid shirt.

"Then I'm practically healthy," Randle croaked painfully.

"That's all I could find wrong," murmured the oldster. "And when Placid Parker looks for somethin', he finds it."

"Two'll take yore one," Randall said huskily, with all the humor he could muster under the circumstances, "you wasn't searchin' for this jail."

"Well, now," gulped Placid softly, "mebbe I was. It's one way o' findin' what I'm after."

"Why don't yuh look under yore cot?" murmured Randle. "It might be there."

He sank back through sheer weakness. Bitterly, he thought he knew why he was in jail. After that foul punch, Shang Ringo had hauled him to the marshal for investigation. Well, Clem Cottles would find out what other bounty hunters had. Exactly nothing! But it would take time to send to Wyoming for particulars.

He must get out of here. If he didn't he would lose the Rocking R. The inspector for the government homesteaders was due in three weeks. More improvement on his spread must be shown or the grant would be taken from him. He was grimly resolved to hold it now—to live down the name that had followed him over long and far trails. He must get loose to put up the fence or A Dot cattle would destroy his watering holes. That would mean ruin completely. And God alone knew what was happening to his stock and winter hay.

Groaning with the exertion, he sat up again. Nausea swept him, but he fought it down and rose unsteadily to his feet.

Placid Parker's voice came warningly.

"Easy, son. Or yuh'll have one of them ribs shovin' through a lung. If that happens, yuh'll never face a judge."

"What for a judge?" demanded Randle.

"From the looks o' that hombre in the next pew yuh'll face murder charges," the oldster said blandly.

The young nester peered through the bars into the gloom of the next cell. Shang Ringo lay full length on the little cot, his face a bloody pulp, an ugly lump behind his torn ear.

Randle gasped with incredulity. "I didn't do that! Hell! Last I remember he kicked me in—"

"The brisket," put in Placid. "Marshal Cottles told me all about it. Cussed plenty because he wasn't in on it. Yuh're both up for disturbin' the peace."

A gusty sigh shook the nester. "If



that's all, I'll pay my fine an' get out."

"'Tain't that easy," stated Parker glumly. "Lodge Pole runs one o' them phony *juzgados*. Marshal gets paid accordin' to the amount he takes from the men he arrests. The longer he can keep yuh the more board he can make yuh pay. Somethin' tells me yuh ain't had no experience with lodgin' houses like this."

"Cottles draws wages thataway? What the hell?"

Parker chuckled. "That's right. Ever so often yuh run into one o' these calaboozes that makes the marshal earn his livin' thisaway. The town don't pay him nothin'. He gets his from chargin' them that break the law five dollars a day for beddin' in his jail. Hell! He built this stone jug himself. Yuh'll only get one meal, too. That's why Cottles is so fussy about yuh fightin' without him there to pole-ax yuh. All I did to rate me this juggin' was to get some likker down the wrong pipe and cough too loud. I been here ten days. Gawd knows when I'll get out."

Wearily, Randle sat down. His lips drew into bitter lines. He had his total wealth in his pockets. Fifty dollars. With which he had meant to purchase the much needed wire for fence. If Cottles kept him here for ten days—

Yet, it didn't matter much. He was a beaten man. The secret he was trying to bury had risen to taunt him again. Eyes would stare at him now, fingers point him out as the brother of Red McVey. He was an outcast in this great western empire he had grown to love.

He conjured up the scorn in Virge Addison's eyes when she found this all out. Those eyes would reproach him. And piling on top of all this he was a nester—despised by the big ranchers of the valley.

Thus he ached through the night and until the sun was well up. The first sign of animation from the marshal's office came with the grumbling

of a sleepy voice answering the sharp knock on the jail door.

Randle and Placid Parker heard a feminine voice lifted.

"I've come to get them out, Marshal," Virge's voice came to them.

Randle dropped back onto his cot. He didn't want her to do anything for him. He wanted to work out his own salvation. Already the thought of flight was building in his mind. Somewhere, somehow, he would find a place where the name of McVey was not known.

The marshal and the girl came into the corridor of the jail. Shang Ringo was at the door of his cell now, blinking his aching eyes sheepishly. Virge faced him, arms akimbo.

"I should let you rot here," she said hotly. "When Father took sick I gave you orders not to fight with the men or get the A Dot into trouble. You've made a poor mess of both. I'm getting you out—but you're fired! I won't tolerate anyone going against orders!"

Grumbling, Cottles opened the door. Ringo stepped into the aisle, swung to the nester.

"You!" His voice shook furiously. "Meddlin' with you and exposin' yuh for what yuh are has got my job. But I'll square it with yuh if it's the last thing I do! No damn renegade can make a fool uh me!" And he stamped noisily out.

**W**HEN Cottles opened the nester's door, Placid Parker tried to squirm out.

"No yuh don't!" growled the lawman, shoving him roughly back. "Yuh stay till yuh pay."

"But I ain't got money," pleaded Placid.

"Then I'll find work for yuh, cleanin' out stables!" snapped the lawman.

Virge came toward Randle. He did not look up at her. He could feel the tautness of her lithe body.

"Renegade!" she murmured softly.

He looked at her now, his eyes wintry and bleak. "That's what they all



say," he muttered. "Yuh shouldn't believe different."

"If you told me different—" she began.

He shook his head. "The name's McVey. Jess McVey. Think what yuh want—yuh always have."

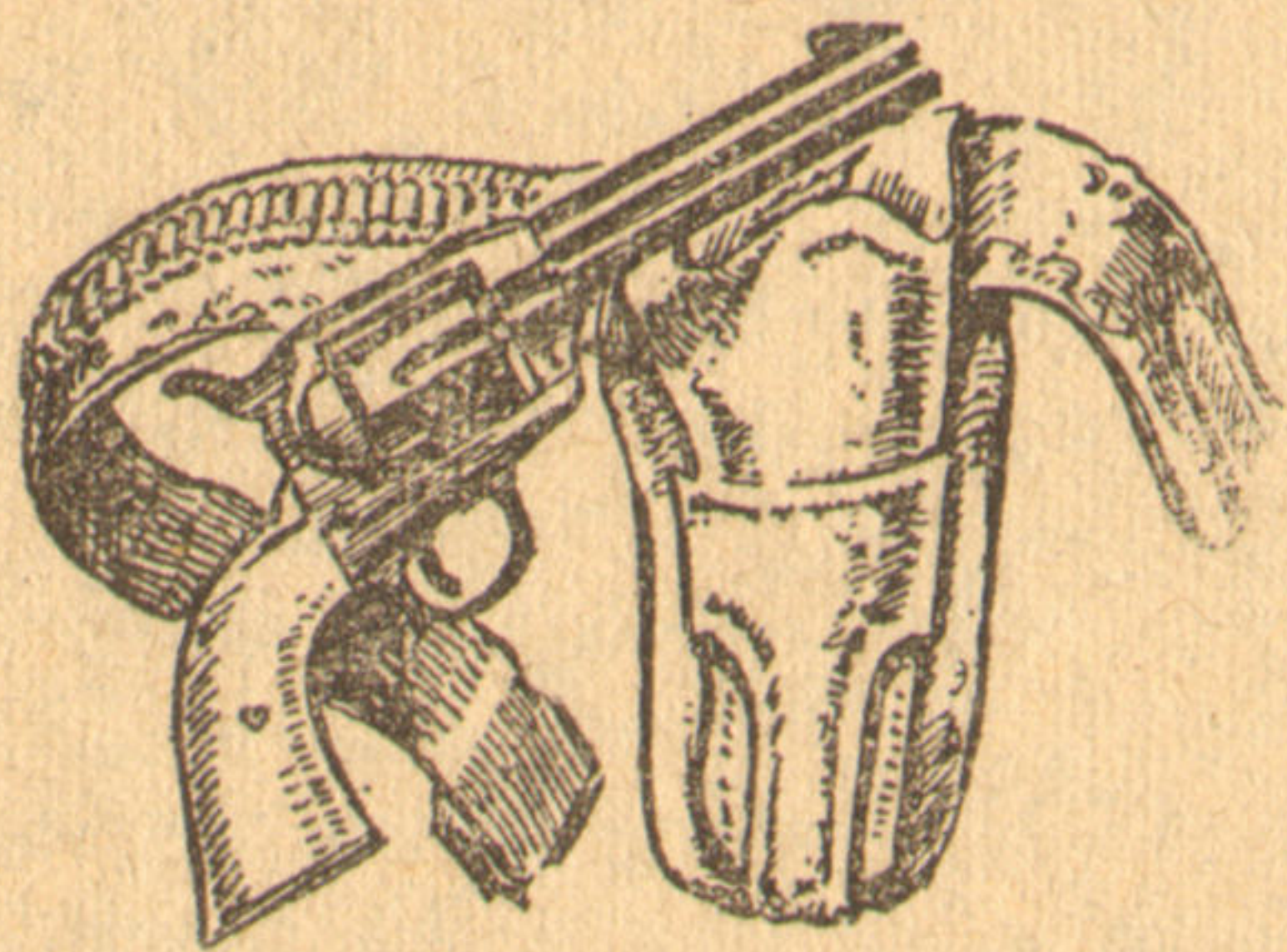
Something seemed to go out of her and her shoulders slumped.

"Then there's only one piece of advice I can give you," she said, her voice trembling. "Renegade—get out! Your kind aren't wanted in Big Timber."

Hurt stabbed Randle cruelly. "Yuh should leave me here," he charged harshly. "Behind these walls."

"I'm only doing this to teach Shang a lesson," she countered quaveringly.

Then she spun away, her shoulders shaking as tight sobs escaped her.



Cottles gazed after her curiously, shook his head.

"C'mon, McVey," he said. "Get to hell out or I'll charge yuh for another day's board."

Dazedly Randle strode from the cell.

"Good luck, pardner!" Placid called after him.

In the front office, the young nester paused in the doorway. From there he could see the towering pinnacles of Smoky Buttes and the serrated outlines of the farthestmost peaks. The Buttes meant home. That jagged horizon meant a new land and escape—temporarily—from the burden Ringo's charges had placed upon him. Slowly he pulled from his pocket the roll of bills he had intended for the fence.

"Parker's fine," he clipped tersely. "Turn him loose. I ain't needin' this."

## CHAPTER III

### *Longrider Guns*



JESS RANDLE, slogging up the street to where his horse had been left, was conscious of the Lodge Pole townspeople pointing him out. Heads turned and whispers were passed. Lips screwed scornfully. It was plainly—"Renegade, move on!"

Jess Randle was—Jess McVey, outlaw, renegade. Even the youngsters made fun of him, threw sticks and stones at him. He was truly an outcast in Lodge Pole—everywhere. It hurt, deeply.

He drew freer breath when he loped clear of the town. But he found no ease for his mental torture. Dejectedly he rode, shoulders slumped, head bowed—prey to body pains and the bleeding hurts of his soul.

The helpless, tremulous way Virge had told him to ride from the valley struck an odd note in his bitter thoughts. Angry, she would have ordered him out in no uncertain terms. But there had been sadness in her voice and she had burst into tears at leaving him. Was it just pity for him?

He could find no other reason for her outburst of weeping. He could not even imagine that it might have been her grief over finding out that the man she loved had been hiding under a false name, cloaking his true identity and—the owlhoot brand.

He could only figure that she was ashamed of knowing him; that she was angry with herself for becoming even remotely interested in him—Red McVey's brother sent here to spy out the land for the notorious Red Button Gang.

When he reached the talus of the Sheep Blues, a great longing swept over him. Behind the up-rearing Buttes was home—the first he had known since his mother had passed on to the Valhalla of frontier women



and he and Red had been left alone to battle out their differences.

The hardships he had endured building that home of his paraded before his mind. He saw himself again coming into this fecund valley to stake a homestead claim. The care he had exercised in selecting his thirty breeders. The hoarding of his money to buy more. The stacking of winter feed. The short visits of Virge. It was all gone now.

It was like being buried alive to turn his back on the one bit of happiness he had known. A ravenous desire to have more of that happiness shook him, rocked him until he was wheeling his horse unconsciously back toward the Buttes. And to him came a grim resolve to hang on, to fight this stigma, to gain peace for his seared soul.

But as he roared around the Buttes and into his ranch yard, a savage cry ripped from his throat. Placid Parker sat among the ashes of his cabin. In the feed lot, his winter stacks were black rings against the brown earth. The Rocking R had been torched to the ground.

Ignoring the drifter, Randle got from his horse like an automaton, peered about. Everything he owned was gone. House, feed, cattle. Shang Ringo had made good his vengeance vows. Randle cursed himself for not coming directly here from the jail. But it was too late now.

Shang's tracks would still be warm, though. He wouldn't have much of a start. The lust to track down this A Dot cruelster and face him through gunsmoke became a living, raging flame within Jess Randle. He turned to his horse.

"No use goin' nowhere," Placid stated cryptically. "Yore home is here."

As if seeing the oldster for the first time, Randle swung to him.

"Was!" he corrected bitterly. "My home's where it's always been—on the trail. But this time I'm not runnin'

to dodge the handle of a renegade. I'm out to be one, full stamped an' double cinched. I've got a man to kill!"

Placid stood up, kicked the dust. "Shore now," he scoffed. "Killin' won't do no good. And buckin' the game'd only find yuh a grave in some law-dog's Boothill. Look around 'fore yuh go off half-cocked, younker."

"I don't savvy yuh," Randle bit out.

"Yuh're blamin' all this on one man by yore talk," said Parker evenly. "Take a good look at the tracks. There was ten in the wipeout bunch. And does this tell yuh anything?"

He pointed to a red button fastened to a stick stuck in the ground.

With a curse, Jess Randle hunkered down by that telltale sign. He had seen it many times before, had run from it all his life. It was the marker of Red McVey, master outlaw, the arrogant longrider whose vanity made him leave marks of his cunning and destruction at the scenes of his crimes. Red McVey had shifted activities to Montana—Big Timber Valley!

**S**LOWLY Randle straightened. His eyes were bleak, blue as chips of glacial ice. Frost dripped from his voice as he muttered:

"Red McVey and his nine hellions! The sign's plain." For a moment he looked narrowly at Parker. "And I'da killed Shang Ringo for this. Mebbe he had a hand in it. Now, instead of one man to grease my guns for—I've got—eleven!"

The oldster saw deadliness in the youngster's eyes. Many times before, during the chores to which he devoted his life, he had seen these same killer lights come into the eyes of men. It was not pretty to see.

"Alone, yuh ain't got a chance," he cautioned sagely. "You paid my way outa that jail, and thereby got yoreself a hand. Placid Parker pays his honest debt with interest. I'll work out them wages any way yuh see fit."

Randle shook his head. "No! When



I paid yore fine I never expected yuh to be beholdin' to me. Yuh're free to ride wherever yuh like. I've got chores to do alone. Mebbe you don't understand." His voice grew vehement. "I've run from hell to breakfast tryin' to escape the name of McVey and its rep. Always its caught up with me. Yuh're the only man I ever told this to, but Red McVey is my half-brother on my stepfather's side, the son of him and my mother. She always begged me to look out for Red, but it was too much of a job. We fought when I tried to make him go straight. But he was born crooked—like his father, a tinhorn, who killed my mother. I killed him for it, and Red, well—I've taken the blame for a lot of his work. I did a year at hard labor in Yuma on his account. He framed me and hung a job on me. He's followed me up and down the country lookin' for a chance to devil me. He knows I gunned his dad for good reasons, but he hates me like poison.

"I didn't expect him to find me here and he wouldn't have if Shang Ringo hadn't checked me up an' it got around. I was exonerated for killin' my stepdad, Ace McVey, and never did another unlawful act in my life. But now I'm goin' to. From now on any dirt that's thrown at my name'll be thrown by *me*!" His voice rose with passion as he went on. "And my real name is Randle—my father's name. McVey adopted me, tried to teach me the tricks of his trade—black-leggin' with iced decks. He—he—"

The lids came down over Placid's pale eyes to cover what emotions showed there. Sympathy for this burdened youngster seethed within him, and out of it was born the understanding of the range-bred.

"I reckon I know how yuh feel, son," he murmured softly, placatingly. "And when yuh bought me outa that calaboose yuh bought a gun hand. Both of us together might pull the stingers outa this McVey bunch. Never had a chance in hell for you—or me—to win

alone. But yuh need rest. Yore ribs need mendin' an' yore stummick can stand some chow. It looks flatter'n a puncher caught in a stampede."

Grateful lights worked their way through the hardness of young Randle's eyes. But he shook his head somberly.

"I can't drag you into this, Placid. This is my personal chore."

Parker grinned indifferently. "I'm stickin' like fleas on a leppy," he stated flatly. "An' mebbe when the smoke clears away yuh'll find yuh ain't so far outside the law as yuh're thinkin'. We're ridin' the river from here on out."

There was a distinct significance in the oldster's words that passed over Randle's troubled head. Warmth flooded him for the loyal oldster and his hand darted out. They gripped, firmly.

"Yore name shouldn't be Placid," Randle told him. "It shoulda been 'Flypaper'."

"Jest one of the many I use," Parker remarked cryptically.

**T**HREE days of imbibing Placid Parker's herb concoctions brought new strength into Jess Randle's body. The young nester helped erect a crude little leanto for shelter. He mended quickly and on the fourth morning he rose and snapped his muscles in stretch. Placid grinned. Without a word the youngster's hands darted to his guns, drew and fired. The makeshift kettle hanging over the fire rolled clangingly to the ground.

"Whee—yeew!" gasped Placid. "I seen a jigger shoot like that onct. Called hisself Wild Bill Hickok. He was a huckleberry with cutters at thirty yards!"

Randle grinned. "I can peel the down off a duck pyrootin' through a tully bog with this pair of lead squirts," he said laughing. "I used to start the home fires in the mornin' without gettin' out of bed."

"Yuh'll be tellin' me next," said



Placid dryly, "that yuh put the gun in gunny."

Randle ignored the harmless jibe. "I'm ready to ride," he announced flatly.

Placid nodded. He had watched the years pile upon this young nester in the past four days. And he had seen the slow winding up of hate within him, like the coiling of a clock spring that would never run down until its task was finished.

Placid Parker was a good judge of men. He knew Jess Randle meant to take the gunsmoke trail and keep it until he or Red McVey was dead. It was peace going to war, the law-abiding yielding to the call of the owl-hoot.

There were things the oldster wanted to tell Jess Randle. He wanted to tell him of himself, of his masquerade. But he couldn't. He was too close to a solution he had been after for months to risk defeat now. He had to talk little, walk light. The men he followed were cunning. He had to play his quiet game, or lose the pot. And he wasn't going to lose.

Ahorse once more, Randle surveyed the remains of his shattered dreams.

"I could of made it go here," he said passionately. "They wouldn't let me."

"She ain't a gonner yet," placated Parker. "The harder the slap, the better it feels when it quits hurtin'. That's why I always like to get the bellyache. Feels so good when she quits. This'll be a real spread in four years, and you'll be roddin' it."

Randle shook his head morosely. "Jest another monument to my failure," he said, and then they were wheeling to the drum of madly racing hoofs.

They had not gone far when Virge Addison swept around the Buttes, burning the trail. A cry burst from her lips at sight of them, a cry that carried no warmth, just greeting under duress. She whirled up. Her eyes were red-rimmed from crying; her lips tight with anger.

"Dad's gone!" she cried out in agony. "Here!" And she thrust a piece of paper at Randle.

The young nester searched her face for sign of friendliness. There was none. She was all feminine fury and scorn and grief. Her direct stare was condemning. He flinched at the stab of her eyes. Absently he unfolded the paper and let the scrawled note leap at him. Puzzled, he read the contents.

A Dot:

Yore roundup's almost in and there ain't enough prime beef left for us to take. So we're takin' the biggest steer on the place. Kim Addison. We figger his tough old carcass is worth five thousand to you. Send one man alone to the foot of Totem Pole Peak. We can see if anybody is along. In three days we'll send you a finger to let you know we're impatient. If the finger looks deader than it should, you'll know the old man's sickness croaked him, which we'll do if the *dinero* ain't forthcomin' *muy pronto*.

This shore beats rustling cow critters all to hell.

And at the bottom was a crudely drawn button done in red crayon—the sign of Red McVey.

"McVey!" the name tore from Randle's throat.

"Your brother!" said Virge scornfully. "I wish I'd left you rot in jail!" Tears welled unbidden to her dark eyes.

A flood of anger engulfed Jess Randle. "Quit actin' up!" he commanded hotly. "Tell me what happened, quick, Miss Addison!"

**T**HE sharpness of his tone brought a rush of crimson to her face.

"You can't snarl at me like that, Jess Randle!" she stormed. "I won't—"

He grabbed her roughly by the shoulders, shook her till her teeth rattled.

"No time for kid stuff, Virge!" he shouted. "Tell me all yuh know! That bunch might kill yore dad, or he might die with his sickness the way they'd treat him! Talk fast!"



## CHAPTER IV

*Powdersmoke Rescue*

**H**IS prompt action sobered Virge instantly. Her shoulders slumped.

"The boys are all out at roundup," she said, her voice trembling. "Shang came back and tried to talk me into giving him his old job again. I would have if he hadn't got fresh and tried to paw me. I struck him and he left, swearing to hurt me some way. I took a ride out to see how the work was coming. When I returned, Dad was gone. That note was pinned to the door. That's all I know."

"That's enough!" gritted Randle. "Shang's mixed up in this. I had a hunch he wasn't tellin' the truth about sendin' to Wyomin' for my record. He was in touch with my brother—that's what. He'd already told Red I was here. That's how I came to get torched out. Red wouldn't miss a chance to devil me. He hates me! An' I hate him! Shang's responsible for all this, figgerin' to make me run. Well, he didn't succeed, damn his—" He ended with a snap of his lean jaws.

Virge's lips curled. "Pretty talk!" she charged. "Made to protect yourself and your brother! You brought McVey here! You plotted this kidnaping of my father! Here's the money!" She tossed the package onto the ground. "Shang might be wild, but he isn't a renegade—like you! Now go release my father!"

Randle leaped from his horse, scooped up the money and thrust it back into the crook of her arm.

"Go on home!" he clipped bitterly. "I'll get Kim back!"

She looked at him queerly. "If you think you can crawl out of this—" she began lamely.

"Shut up!" he gritted ruthlessly, though he knew he never wanted to see her go. But their paths were separated forever now.

Gently he slapped the flank of her pony, sent it loping back toward the A Dot. He looked after her, longing in his eyes, pulse hammering. He jerked his eyes away from her and lifted his reins, swung to his horse and reseated his guns.

"Love's one thing," muttered Placid grimly, "but facin' that gang alone is somethin' else."

"But like love," Randle said hotly, "it'll be a pleasure. You read the note. One man was to come, it said. They can see anybody else from their hide-out. I go alone!"

Then he was hitting a high lope for the Sheep Blues and Totem Pole Peak. Parker's shout was unintelligible. He didn't see the oldster take off in a wide circle to follow.

Nor did he want to look back again toward those blackened ruins. It hurt too deeply. He had seen that home for the last time. And now, his back turned upon it, he gulped in the pungent air, determined that if he lived through the chore facing him at Totem Pole Peak, he would ride on, never to return to the Big Timber.

He was sealing his fate in this one great struggle that Virge might at least think kindly of him in memory. The one thing he yearned to do before leaving was to prove to her alone that he was not the renegade she thought him. If dying would do that, he was willing. First, he must erase the stigma attached to him by Red McVey. He had done his best with Red for his mother's sake. Now, the right thing was to stop the ruthless renegade and his hellions for once and for all, to wipe away their preyings upon society. He knew their mother would rather see Red dead than allowed to continue his crimes. But he found it hard to face his blood kin through gunsmoke.

Jess Randle knew that a man must have the legality of a law badge to justify the killing of even a renegade. This meant the owlhoot trail for him—dim trails, swift rides, shadowy



coverts, the cries of bounty hunters. Well, it had happened before, would happen again. He was but one of many men using the moon for a sun through circumstances.

As Randle wound up the scabrous slants of the Sheep Blues, he was aware of a definite chill in the air. A storm was brewing over the jagged peaks. Thunderheads were shoving their frayed cones into the ominous sky. Already Totem Pole Peak was capped with dense rain clouds. Lightning forked there, thunder pealed out crashingly.

Randle pulled his bandanna tighter about his throat. His lips grew firmer, muscles tighter as he neared Totem Pole. The tall pinnacle sawtoothed into the clouds. Somewhere up there were Red McVey and his Red Buttons.

At the base of the peak he dismounted, blew on his chilled hands to warm them. Every faculty must be on the alert, now, every muscle limber and ready. The odds confronting him were almost overwhelming. But this was showdown. He didn't care how many men he faced, so long as one of them was Red McVey. He was like a man going to death; knew it. And he was unafraid. He was glad. The world held little for him now.

He stiffened, but did not turn as the sound of a scraping boot came from behind him. He waited for the voice he knew would come, cracked at him over gun barrels. The faint smell of a cigarette floated to him from behind the boulder just to his right rear. Then the voice.

"You the A Dot jigger with the cash?" the renegade behind the rock demanded.

Only then did Jess Randle turn, slowly, thumbs hooked in his belts. The man stood beside the boulder, his swart, brutal face lined with threat. One of Red's ten Red Buttons. His spade chin was thrust out belligerently. His horny fists clutched two guns, unwaveringly.

"I'm yore huckleberry," Randle said easily. "Where's Kim Addison?"

Greed was in the outlaw's eyes. He jerked his head up the slants, but his eyes and guns never left Randle.

"After you," he cracked out gruffly.

With cold tides tingling his spine, Jess Randle stepped in the direction indicated. As he brushed close to the man, he whirled with catlike agility. His right gun leaped from leather, shot up and arced down. Its barrel cracked sickeningly on the outlaw's skull. His face was suffused with surprise, then pain as he fell, unconscious. It was a beautiful exhibition of timing, perfect coordination between Randle's mind and muscles, executed with as least sound as possible. A shot would have warned Red McVey.

He ducked up the trail, palming his left gun. He must get to Kim Addison before the alarm was spread. They would kill him at the first sign of trouble. The narrow path turned sharply into an arroyo. Then a sharp voice set him back on his heels. He whirled to see a man standing beside a clump of laurel.

"What the hell yuh runnin' fer, Waco?" the man called. "Why—hey!"

**J**ESS triggered as the man's guns came up. Echoes rolled flatly over the hills. Blood curtained the outlaw's face as he crumpled and rolled down the slope. His jaws clamped tight now, Randle went on. This was it! Every right feeling he had ever possessed was dead within him. In its place was a lust to slay and keep on killing until this whole gang was wiped out or he was dead. He was a machine of destruction, honing to collect in full for all the hurts and burdens heaped upon his shoulders by this band of renegades and their diabolical he-coon.

As he surged on, the arroyo opened out in front of him. In tight against the slant hugged a tiny leanto. A yell broke from his lips as two men jumped from within it and also spraddled old



Kim Addison who lay trussed against the side of the hovel. Flame and lead streaked out at him, and then his guns were bucking in his hands. The two renegades pitched and swayed, writhing down before even surprise could register on their lustful, murderous faces.

The swiftness of the nester's attack was working for him. But he had reached the end of that. Lethal slugs tore at him from renegade coverts as the Red Buttons posted about the arroyo cut loose. One smashed burningly through the calf of his leg. He went down to one knee, but kept triggering. Savagery forced him erect and like a man geared to run the gauntlet of hell, he charged toward old Kim in a desperate effort to protect him. As he reached the silver-haired range baron, he recognized Red's voice above the crescendoing clamor.

"It's Jess!" his brother yelled. "Get the white-livered son!" And he threw up his guns.

But before Red McVey could shoot, the flat, dry clap of shots from another quarter claimed his attention. All eyes focused up the arroyo. Leaping his horse, shooting, came Placid Parker. His voice lifted in shrieking crescendo.

"Come get 'em, boys! The rats are in a trap!"

"Posse!" screamed a renegade, and headed for a rocky covert.

The rest took flight in a frenzied scramble. Randle's guns roared at their backs, quick questions flooding his mind. How had Parker got here? Who were the men with him?

But he didn't stop to look. As he bent down over Kim Addison, the storm broke over the Sheep Blues. Stinging rain slanted down and blue lightning etched the ominous, tumbling skies with silver lances of bright flame.

"Who the hell are you?" blustered the rancher, as Randle fingered the knots of his bonds.

"What difference does it make?" Randle said coldly. "Yuh're goin' home!"

This was the first time he had ever met old Kim face to face. But there was profound gratitude in the oldster's eyes as he searched the hard young visage before him. Then Parker leaped beside them, produced a Barlow that cut the A Dot owner's thongs.

"Where's the posse?" Randle demanded, looking about.

Placid chuckled. "I'm it," he croaked. "Hell! That trick I jest pulled is old, but always new. Specially when yuh're dealin' with men dodgin' the law. They're all alike when it comes to facin' lawdog gunbarks."

"They'll be comin' back," gritted Randle. "Can yuh travel, Kim Addison?"

"Like a burnt calf with the piggin' strings pulled," the rancher said, with a weak grin.

**Y**ELLS and renegade lead slamming away, they ran through the rain. Jess Randle had marveled at the speed of the two oldsters running with him. But he knew that lead prodding a man's tailbone makes even the clumsy travel fast. The cries of the Red Buttons came to them through thunder and gunsounds. He thanked Nature for the storm which was partially covering their retreat.

With death dogging their heels, they made it through renegade lead to where Randle had left his horse. Addison gave out at that point. His illness dug the grit from his old body and fatigue had its way. He slumped to the muddy ground in a pitiful, sodden huddle.

"Go on!" he said huskily. "My old hide ain't worth the hole yuh'd put it in. Come back later and pat me with a spade!"

"You stay where yuh're at, Jess McVey!"

It was Red's voice, freighted with threat.



CHAPTER V

*Renegade Payoff*



**R**ANDLE and Placid spun to that command. Leering, confident, Red McVey had them covered. He had slipped around them and stood beside a boulder just down trail. His tall, angular frame was crouched, and he was ready to fire. Murder was in his smoky blue eyes, in his snarl.

The starch flowed from Randle as he looked at the man he hated. He had been on the verge of triumph, only to have it snatched from his grasp by this ruthless renegade brother. Bitterness shook him to the soul. At every turn his half-brother had whipped him, hounded him, and now he was gloating. Red McVey was at last going to end that misery for all time. Jess Randle knew his last breath would be drawn here, but his courage did not desert him.

"Put down yore guns, Red," he said slowly. "I'll give you yore needin's."

The renegade chuckled mirthlessly. "That last time was plenty, Jess," he drawled. "You always was my betters at knucklin', but I got yuh belly up now. I said I'd make yuh pay for them workin's over yuh gave me and for gunnin' my old man. Well, I've tormented yuh to hell and now I'm sendin' yuh there!"

His knuckles whitened about his triggers. The clatter of hoofs around the bend held up the play. Randle's eyes shuttled to the rider. It was Shang Ringo!

"Jest in time to see him die!" yelled Red. "Yuh'll enjoy this, Ringo!"

Lightning flashed and thunder crashed down. Ringo grinned.

"Nick him an' knock him over, Red," he taunted. "I'll kick his insides out, personal."

The storm unleashed its fury like the pent up drums of doom. Rain beat

down in mocking rhythm. The killer lights in Red's eyes deepened.

A choking cry from Kim Addison stayed Red McVey's triggers. The A Dot owner's hand was pointing shakily down into the valley below. All eyes followed its direction. The lightning-stabbed vista tore gasps from every man's throat.

In the narrow causeway between Totem Pole Peak and Bear Claw Point where the valley toed the mountains, was a lone rider. There was no mistaking her—Virge Addison. Riding through the storm she was coming with the money to liberate her father. The wind was sweeping down from the hills and away from her. She couldn't have heard the ominous sounds behind her. But running shoulder to shoulder, was a dark mass of living destruction. Stampede!

Randle saw it all at a glance. The storm had got in its dread work at the Big Timber roundup and the punchers had been unable to hold the last of the A Dot cattle. In a solid mass of clashing horns, several thousand head of maddened steers were bearing down upon the unsuspecting girl.

"Good Gawd!" sobbed old Addison, and buried his face in his hands.

"They'll tromp her into the mud shore!" cried Placid.

Jess Randle spun to his brother. "Shoot an' be damned to yuh!" he shouted. "I'm goin' after her!"

A strange look leaped into Red's bloodshot eyes as Randle vaulted into his saddle. Then Jess Randle was roaring down the trail. His back crawled as he expected each instant to feel the snag of lead through him. But instead, he heard the clatter of hoofs behind him. He screwed around in his kak. Red McVey and Shang Ringo were riding like centaurs down the tricky slants.

But grimly he detached himself from all thoughts of them. All he could see was Virge Addison, the girl he loved, riding along ignorant of the



fact that death was bearing down upon her. The almost steady roll of thunder blotted out the pound of the death-dealing hoofs. If she would only look back!

But Virge Addison was intent upon only one thing—Totem Pole Peak. Her shoulders were hunched against the storm, head drawn down. And Randle saw that the chances of saving her were slight. But he could at least die with her in his arms.

He drove his horse over low rocks and brush, slipping, sliding in the muck, racing on to certain destruction. And then suddenly—out of the maelstrom of his thoughts—came the realization that Red was not chasing him. Red and Shang were bent on the same mission that drove him recklessly toward doom! Brothers were siding each other in this grim race with death. Outlawry had been discarded and manhood—his mother's heritage to him—had shown through the hard veneer of Red McVey.

Understanding shook him as he twisted his head for a glimpse of Red. The renegade's lips were creased into tight lines—a smile that only death could stamp on a man's lips. And there was a strange light in his eyes. Red McVey didn't look the killer now. Something fine was in his face.

Ringo's teeth were bared in a belligerent snarl, typical of the rough and tumble artist who did all things with a curse on his lips. He, too, was riding as he had never ridden before. And Randle knew—men will kill men, but men will die willingly to preserve the life of a good woman. Real men, these two.

It was a paradox to Randle—Red McVey and Shang Ringo siding him. It was a thousand to one chance that they would die. Yet each had one goal—Virge Addison. Randle could see Shang's motive. He, too, loved the girl. But Red's reason puzzled him.

A quarter of a mile still separated them from Virge. Three hundred yards behind her raced the stamped-

ing cattle, straight for her, blind panic urging them on. Randle's heart seemed to have lodged in his throat. He couldn't make it in time!

He groaned as he saw Virge suddenly become aware of her predicament. Madly she drove her spurs deep. Her pony took fright, reared. Then like a coiled spring it bolted, throwing her in a pitiful huddle on the ground.

Sobbing in his anguish, Jess Randle prayed in his horse's ears. He saw there was only one way to pick her up. That was to quit his horse. And there wouldn't be a chance to win out. Then he was aware of Red racing beside him, and that they were squarely in the path of the stampeding juggernaut.

"Ride on through, Jess!" Red yelled. "We can't turn the trick!"

Yellow after all, Randle thought scornfully. He raced on determinedly, leaped down beside the girl. She was unconscious.

AS HE bent down, Red and Shang went past him. Cradling Virge in his arms, he gauged the distance between them and the writhing mass of horns and hoofs. He groaned. It would be all over in a minute. Not fifty yards separated them. Useless to attempt to escape. It would only prolong their death beneath those grinding hoofs. Thank God Virge would never know what struck her.

The thunder of that living hell was roaring above the storm. He could see the lolling red tongues of the stampede leaders. Lightning cast a blue glow from their long, clashing horns. Their eyes were distended in panic.

Only the range-bred can know the awfulness of a stampede, the terrible flight of storm-maddened cattle. The picture of Virge's cruelly pounded body sickened Randle. He sank down with her cradled in his arms, his eyes closed against the avalanche that shook the ground under him.



Suddenly he was aware of a new note injected into the hideous sounds—the shouts of men, the crack of pistols. His eyes flew open. What he saw sent surprise and admiration coursing through him wildly. A strangled shout tore from his own throat.

Red McVey and Shang Ringo were battling the leaders of the stampede in a reckless effort to turn the brown tide. Fascinated, Randle watched the brave play. Like knights astride fearless charges, the two were knifing into the foremost of the herd, driving their horses shoulder against shoulder, shooting, killing, shouting.

That could not last. No man or

live. He did not see that awful tide pouring past him in two streams. But twenty feet away lay the barrier that had saved his and Virge's lives—grotesque forms huddled at the under edge of a tangled, mangled mass. He saw that through a stinging mist that burned his eyes like molten lead.

He stood up, waving his arms, shouting, his legs straddling Virge. Until the twin streams roared past he kept the maddened brutes from breaking out of line and trampling them. Then he was running toward the pitiful huddles that had once been his enemies. Tears streaked his face. All the hatred and bitterness of his soul was gone now. The sacrifice of Red

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horse could buck that stampede for long and survive. But there was a vague chance that the cattle could be turned slightly, enough to chouse them past. The prayer in Randle's heart was wild and earnest.

Then the front line of the herd erupted in horseflesh, men and squealing animals. In a welter of hoofs and bodies Red and Shang went down. Over the dam made by the two, cattle piled up in a wall that split the rest.

Jess Randle was crying now, unashamed. Red. . . . There were ties between them that he had never suspected, and Red had given his life that he and the girl he loved might

and Shang had been great, supreme. He couldn't hate them now!

He fell to his knees beside his brother.

"Red! Why—why?" he cried.

The bundle of mangled flesh twisted, heaved, and Randle lifted Red's battered head to his lap. Red's eyes fluttered open, managed to focus. Rain pelted his face, washed away the blood, left it pallid as death itself. But he smiled.

"We made it," he choked, and blood bubbled to his lips. "Yuh're a man, Jess. Better, bigger, finer'n me or Shang. All these years I been honin' to trim yore horns. But when I lined



on yore back as yuh forked up to go after Miss Addison, I knowed I couldn't do it." His voice broke and came again in gasps. "Don't ever run again, kid. We're square. This is my payoff for all the hate and trouble I've caused you. So long—pard—" And he died, a set little smile on his battered lips.

Red McVey, renegade, man! Instead of finding a shallow grave such as marked many a longrider's trail, he found peace and the knowledge that he died doing one honorable thing. Jess Randle's stout frame shook with sobs.

Then he crouched at Shang's side. The flame of life guttered faintly within the A Dot's ex-ramrod. He mumbled through a bloody foam, unconscious that anyone was near.

"Dyin' . . . Goin' like a man anyhow. . . . She never did love me. Shoulda knowed that. Well, she's fixed. . . ." And his inane talk was stilled by death.

**S**ICK at the sight of the carnage, weak from the loss of blood, Jess Randle sank into unconsciousness. . . .

The cold rain beating on Randle's face brought him to. He opened his eyes and gazed into the faces of Placid Parker, old Kim Addison and several A Dot punchers who had been following the stampeding herd.

"Virge—how is she?" he asked hoarsely.

"Jarred up a bit, son," Addison answered, "but mighty all right."

Placid's chuckle drew Randle's eyes to him.

"Blockin' that stampede was a sight fittin' to see," he said, glowing. "Never in hell was there three braver men. Jess, I reckon yuh can go back to homesteadin' now and have folks look up instead of down at yuh!"

What had happened in these stirring hours came poignantly to Randle. He shook his head. "You're forgettin' I gunned three men, Parker. The law'll make me answer for that."

"Yuh're a dang fool!" said Placid Parker. "If yore ears was drier yuh'da heard me deputizin' yuh when yuh took off up the Totem Pole trail! I hollered after yuh, but yuh paid no more heed'n a ceegar store Injun. Hell! Yuh was a lawdog all the time an' didn't know it! The reason I held back was I didn't know yore play. I had to be shore. I was, when yuh left to gun down yore own brother. Marshal Clem Cottles put me wise to this case. I been chasin' the McVey bunch from Landusky to Del Norte. When Clem learned you was the other McVey, he put me in yore cell so's I could kinda quiz yuh." He reached inside his shirt. "And here's the fifty pesos back yuh paid my way out with."

Randle stared at him incredulously. Kim Addison chuckled.

"Jess, Grat Dawson, lawdog of the Pinkerton Agency, is handin' yuh fifty dollars! Take it. Placid Parker is jest one of the many names he uses when he's trailin' longloopers. It's his way of doin' business."

Then Virge swooped down on Randle before he could open his mouth.

"I was jest tellin' Jess, Miss Addison," said the lawman, eyes twinkling, "that he could go back to homesteadin'."

Virge's cheeks took on new color as she said, shyly:

"Well, I—I'm ready any time he is!"

And Jess Randle's arms found her. A warm tremor replaced the chill that had gripped him.

"I've only got fifty dollars as a starter," he murmured weakly.

"Fifty dollars and a woman that's willing to help you, Jess," she breathed softly.

Old Kim nudged Placid and nodded to his punchers. All turned away, but couldn't resist the temptation of glancing over their shoulders. What they saw brought knowing smiles. Jess Randle's burdens were gone and the warmth of love was his.



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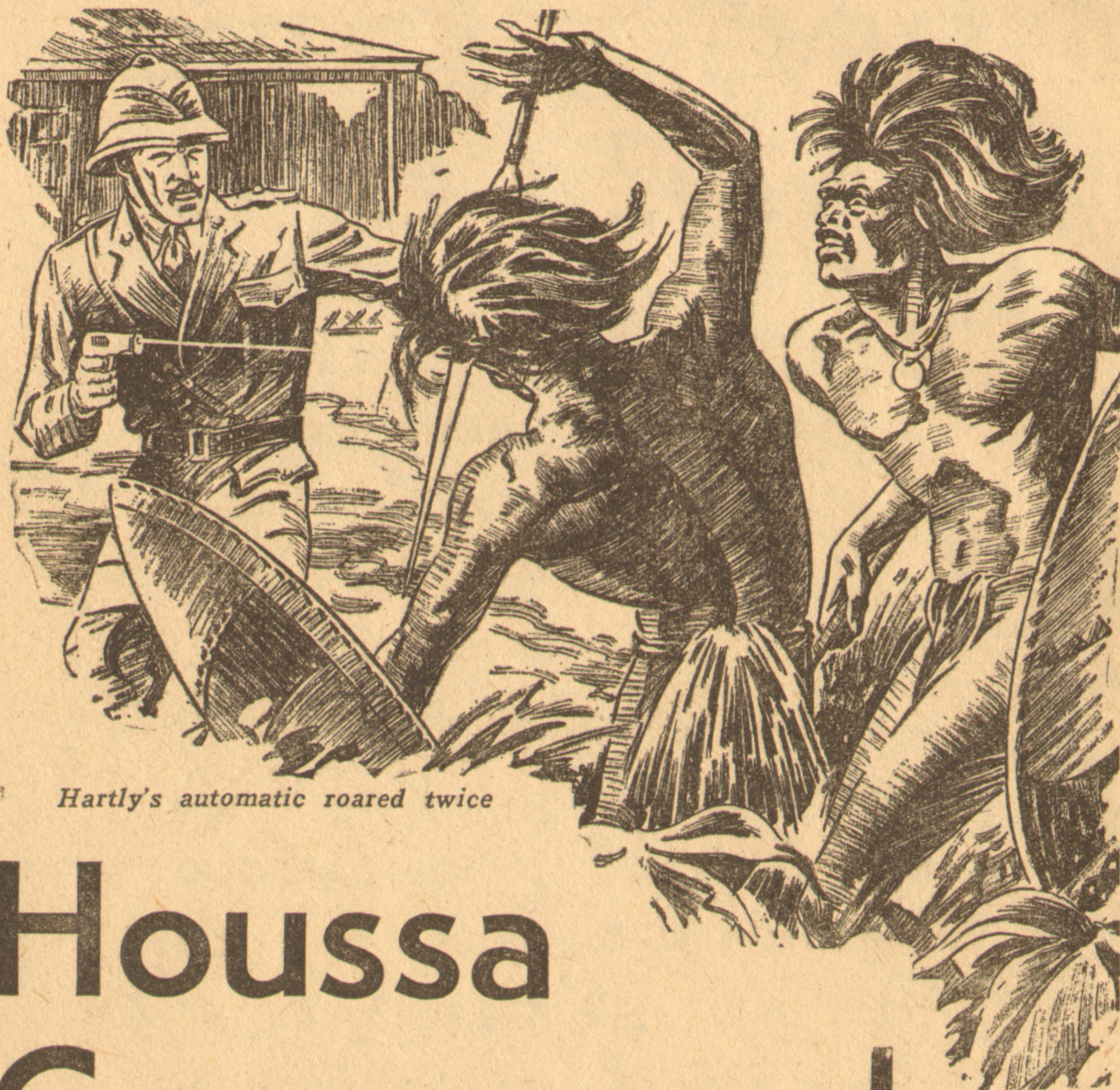
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# RANGE RIDERS

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*Lieutenant Hartly Faces Ochori Death and Mongrel  
Menace in the Congo Jungles!*



*Hartly's automatic roared twice*

# Houssa Command

By CAPT. KERRY McROBERTS

*Author of "Out of the Dark," "Jungle Melody," etc.*

**H**EAT lingered in the deep forests, and over all of the Congo River that flowed through that part of Africa. Wade Hartly, commanding officer of the 8th Regiment of Houssas was keenly conscious of the hot sun, the humidity in the air that made his light clothing damp and sticky. His lean, tanned face was stern as he faced the native

soldiers, and yet his eyes were kindly.

He knew that he must speak simply and directly, for these sixty men who stood at attention in the compound had the minds of children and there was unrest in their hearts because of the rumors of trouble in the River country.

"My children," he said in their own language, "word has come to me of



those who whisper words of evil into the ears of the noble chiefs of the Ochori. The Ochori have begun the 'Dance-of-many-days.' That means many spears, and—much trouble."

A mocking light came into Hartly's blue eyes. "Of course, you understand that I mean trouble for them, not for us here."

One or two of the men in the line barely nodded. They understood just what their commanding officer meant. Jungle drums—the primitive telegraph of the Congo—would carry word back to the Ochori that the officer in charge of the troops of the Commissioner knew what was going on and was displeased.

"That is all," said Hartly. "Dismissed!"

**WADE HARTLY**, lieutenant of the 1st Royal Hertford Regiment, now commanding officer of the 8th Regiment of Houssas, turned and strolled back to his quarters.

He halted as he saw the white man who was lounging in the hammock on the mosquito-netted porch. Hartly's first impression was that a very large and grimy hog, dressed in dirty khaki shirt and shorts, had moved in on him.

The porcine-like individual regarded Hartly with eyes that were very bright and cold, and then managed to sit upright, his fat legs hanging over the side of the hammock. The effect was very much like a pig rising out of a wallow.

"Hot," the man said in a voice that was surprisingly soft. "Beastly weather."

"Quite!" said Hartly. "Hadn't the slightest idea I had a visitor. I'm Hartly."

"Of the Houssas," said the big man. "Sorry I couldn't quite hear your address to the men. Looked impressive from here." He smiled, revealing surprisingly white and even teeth. "Brocton is my name, Carl Brocton."

Hartly eyed the holstered Luger automatic hanging from Brocton's

belt. It was not what might be considered a reassuring addition to the big man's attire. There had been rumors of a white man stirring up the natives. Brocton looked capable of brewing a nasty broth of trouble if he put his mind to it.

"Cooler inside," said Hartly. "Will you have a drink?"

"Thanks." Brocton followed him into the bungalow. "Managed to get some of the Ochori to bring me down river this morning in a canoe."

"Ochori?" Hartly frowned as he produced bottle and glasses. "Surprising they'd bring you. They haven't been very friendly toward the whites in this district of late."

"I had no trouble." Brocton watched as Hartly poured the liquor into his glass. "That's fine, thanks." He sank into a chair and it creaked beneath his weight. "Heard the drums off in the hills when I was coming down the river—wondered if there might be something going on."

"Nothing yet," said Hartly, "but it's always wise to be ready."

Brocton nodded and sniffed at his glass. Suddenly he amazed Hartly by raising a dissuading hand.

"What the devil's the matter?" demanded Hartly, lowering his glass untasted.

"A very distinct odor of burnt almonds," said Brocton, as coolly as though he were complimenting the aroma of an aged brandy. "Potassium cyanide." He shook his big head. "Looks like someone doesn't like you, Hartly."

Hartly got slowly to his feet. His blue eyes were fixed intently on the grimy face of the big man. Very deliberately he reached out, opened a drawer of a desk and pulled out an automatic. He dropped the gun into his pocket.

"Hardly a native poison," he said. "If you—"

"Now, now," Brocton spoke like a father soothing a child. "You forget that I wouldn't let you drink it."



Hartly nodded. His eyes were still watching Brocton. The big man puzzled him. Brocton had certainly done him a good turn. Yet—

"Wonder if I might wash up a bit?" said Brocton.

"Certainly." Hartly smiled. "Hope you don't mind my saying so, but it would do no harm." He nodded toward the hall. "Second door on your left. A bit primitive, but plenty of soap and water."

"Thanks." Carl Brocton's lumbering bulk disappeared into the hall.

Hartly stepped out onto the porch. His orderly leaped up from where he had been dozing in the shade of a palm. Hartly spoke swiftly and softly. The native nodded.

"It shall be done, *bwana*," he said, and hurried away.

Wade Hartly turned suddenly, hearing voices. His eyes narrowed as he saw the procession that had entered the compound—a tall thin white man, followed by a group of native porters, was approaching.

"This appears to be visitors' day," muttered Hartly. He smiled, but the blue eyes were hard.

All at once he heard Brocton's step behind him, felt the hard barrel of an automatic pressing against his spine.

"I have been here for the past two days," Brocton said quickly in his ear. You know me quite well. One good turn deserves another. You understand?"

"Just as you wish," said Hartly quietly. "But I'd put the gun away. It might be dangerous for you."

"Why?" demanded Brocton.

"Take a look to your left."

The big man glanced to his left. A native sat in an open window of the bungalow, covering Brocton with a rifle. Hartly's orderly had obeyed his orders.

"Good," said Brocton, calmly, placing his automatic back into his holster and stepping beside Hartly. "Hoped you weren't quite that much of a fool."

Hartly glanced at the big man. Broc-

ton was so scrubbed and shining that he looked like the prize-winning hog at a county fair.

The third white man had crossed the compound with his natives behind him. Hartly saw that they were not Ochori, but from one of the other river tribes. The man was dark-haired, with hard eyes, and a lean wolf-like look.

"Lieutenant Hartly?" he asked, with a swift glance at the commanding officer of the Houssas, and an equally swift glance at Brocton. "I am Perry Lorain."

"Wanted by the police of three continents," said Brocton softly, but not so low that Perry Lorain did not hear him.

Hartly looked at the sun. In half an hour it would be night, and with it would come danger. Not that he felt he was exactly at a pink tea at the moment. Both Brocton and Lorain looked dangerous—damn' dangerous. Just what either of them had to do with the uprising of the Ochori he did not know as yet.

**I**N A MOMENT'S silence he dimly heard the distant throbbing of the drums back in the hills. His spine prickled. He sensed trouble in the sound. His Houssas knew it as well as he did. He noticed that they had quietly moved into strategic positions, so that they were ready for any unexpected moves upon the part of Perry Lorain and the twenty natives he had brought with him.

"Mind telling me why you are here?" Hartly looked at Lorain.

"Of course not," said the dark-haired man. "I am very anxious to see the Commissioner. If you will tell him I have arrived."

"Front, boy," said Brocton, softly and ironically.

"Sorry." Hartly ignored the big man. "But Mr. Slade is not here at present. He has gone back to England on leave." He looked steadily at Lorain. "I'm acting commissioner, if



there is anything that I can do for you."

"You know this man well?" Lorain nodded toward Carl Brocton.

"Yes, rather," said Hartly. "He's been here for the past two days."

Brocton smiled, and looked very pleased with the world in general.

"Then of course it would be foolish for me to suspect him," said Lorain with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Suspect him of what?" demanded Hartly.

"Of stealing my money belt containing five thousand dollars," said Lorain. "It was taken last night while I camped farther up the river."

"My dear man!" exclaimed Brocton in shocked surprise. "You mean to say that you camped along the river without leaving any of your men on guard?"

"Two of my men were on guard," said Lorain. "This morning I found them both dead—murdered."

"Come in the house, gentlemen," said Hartly. "Perhaps we had better talk this thing over."

Brocton and Lorain followed him into the bungalow. Hartly produced three clean glasses and calmly poured drinks from the bottle of poisoned liquor. Brocton sat watching, his big face expressionless. No movement, no word of protest came from him.

"Not for me, thank you," said Lorain quickly. "I never drink."

"That chap we were talking about, Hartly," said Brocton. "He might have come on ahead, arranged matters to his satisfaction and then turned up again later."

"Right." Hartly nodded, playing along with Brocton. It had grown dark and he held a match to the wick of a lamp. The faces of the three men loomed in the yellow glow.

"Bad form for only two of us to drink. Don't you think so, Brocton?"

"Absolutely," said the big man.

"Please, don't let me stop you," protested Lorain. "You make me feel guilty."

"Do we?" said Brocton, staring at him thoughtfully.

**S**UDDENLY, from the blackness came a scream of mortal agony, succeeded by the high-pitched babble of native voices. Feet padded on the steps of the porch, a Houssa soldier loomed in the doorway.

"They come, *bwana!*" he cried. "Ochori—trouble pretty quick!"

"How many?" demanded Hartly calmly.

He didn't hear the answer. Guns roared in the night, and shrill native yells rose above the sound. Brocton sighed and got to his feet. He drew out his Luger automatic and looked at it.

"Guess this'll be of some use," he said.

Hartly frowned and drew his own gun. "How many of the Ochori?" he again demanded of the Houssa.

"Many of them, as many as—"

Again the answer was cut off. A long spear came hurtling through a window. The native dropped, heart-pierced.

"Put out the lamp," snapped Lorain. A gun leaped into his hand. He aimed carefully at something outside the window and fired. "You're nearest, Hartly, if you don't mind." His casual manner of speech was in strange contrast to the danger of the situation.

"Right." Hartly blew out the lamp, plunging the room of the bungalow into darkness. "Afraid we're in for quite a bit of a show."

"If the natives all up and down the river could be stirred up enough to revolt against all the white men in the Congo," said Lorain's voice out of the darkness, "that would mean trouble enough to keep a lot of soldiers busy. Troops would have to be sent out from the mother country. And with the European situation what it is, that wouldn't be so good, would it?"

"Right!" Hartly fired as he saw dark forms moving toward the bungalow. Two of them dropped, hit by his first



and seconds shots. "It would be to the interest of a powerful nation to hire a man to deliberately stir up trouble along the river."

It was a strangely nonchalant conversation that was thus carried on amid gunfire.

"If the Ochori got away with it, that would be a temptation to the other tribes to follow suit," said Brocton, chiming in from his place at a window on the other side of the room. "But if they didn't even get away with this—" His voice faded and he fired again out of the window.

**H**ARTLY edged toward the door, then dropped down and crawled across the porch. The darkness hid him. He had decided that his place was with his men. Brocton and Lorain could take care of themselves, they had shown that quite clearly.

Like a moving shadow Hartly went down the steps. The figure of a half-naked native came hurtling toward him. Hartly twisted to one side, raised the automatic in his right hand. There was the dull thud of steel against bone, and the Ochori dropped.

Hartly moved on, worming his way through a patch of brush toward the barracks. The sound of firing was loud about him, gun-flame licked at the night. Figures moved about. No longer did the Ochori yell. They were concentrating their attack on the bungalow and the barracks.

Two natives loomed in front of Hartly, so close that he clearly saw them raise their spears for the death thrust. His automatic roared twice—and then there was no longer anyone blocking his path. He went on, running swiftly, and reached a door of the barracks.

"Let me in, my children!" he shouted. "It is your commanding officer!"

A wooden bar was lifted and the door opened. Hartly stepped inside; the door was slammed shut behind him.

He sensed the feeling of relief that swept over the Houssas. They were all right now, their commanding officer was with them. He would know what to do next. Hartly hoped that he could live up to their expectations.

"Ten of you come with me," he ordered crisply. "Full marching equipment, and remember we must get away from here without being seen."

Worried muttering sounds came from some of the rest of the men. As he heard it, Hartly sensed what was in their minds.

"Drive the fear out of your hearts," said Hartly in the native tongue. "Do not all of you know me well enough to be sure that I will never desert you? It is because I have a big plan to rid us of the attacking Ochori that I order ten men to come with me now. You must believe that it will be soon that we will return. I go to bring up reinforcements — great reinforcements."

"We hear and believe, *bwana*," said native voices out of the darkness. "As you say, it shall be."

"That is as I wish it," said Hartly. "With the coming of the morning sun there will be a great fear in the hearts of the Ochori who have dared to attack the barracks of the Houssas this night. They will return to their villages like little children who are frightened by the darkness—and there will be peace in the land."

In the small hours before the dawn, ten men under the command of Hartly of the Houssas made their way stealthily out of the barracks. They escaped unseen beneath the barrage of rifle fire laid down for them.

Later, as the first rays of morning sunlight broke through the clouds, Notiki, one of the lesser chiefs of the Ochori, watched from a brush-tangled rise that overlooked a pass two miles from the barracks of the Houssas, and not far from the river.

Notiki stood tall and straight, a giant native who wore no more than a loin cloth, and the ornaments befitting



a man of his rank. Over him stole a glow that was not caused by the warm sunlight that broke through the clouds bringing with it the heat of another day. That glow was caused by exultation.

For was Notiki not sure that the warriors among his people had routed the white lord and the Houssas at the barracks. Soon there would be no law in the land, save that of the Ochori and the other tribes.

And then Notiki heard it! From the direction of the river it came. The clear notes of a bugle. To the chief it was as though the sound foretold the end of the world. He stood tensely, eyes fixed on the opening against the jungle growth that was the lower end of the pass.

A squad of Houssas appeared, marching smartly in formation of fours, with a white officer stepping briskly in the lead. Across the entrance of the pass they went and disappeared. Behind them came a second squad, then another and another.

Notiki stood there counting them, and as he counted he grew sick at heart. Never had he realized that there were so many of the Houssas. For half an hour they continued passing, fully five hundred of them he counted, and he realized that the white officer who had gone on ahead was marching them toward the barracks.

A great fear for the safety of his own people swept over Notiki. He must warn them of their danger—get them away from the barracks before that huge mass of reinforcements arrived.

Like a frightened deer he sped through the forest and the brush, running with fear licking at his heels. He reached the woods just beyond the barracks and found that the Ochori were marshaling their forces for a final attack. A number of them had died, for the Houssas in the barracks and the two white men in the bungalow had battled valiantly all through the long night.

Hurriedly Notiki told them what he had seen, and as his own people listened they too grew afraid. Like shadows, they drifted away to disappear into the jungle, and soon the post was deserted.

"They've gone," said Brocton, staring out of a window with tired eyes. "What the devil drove them away?"

"I don't know." Lorain watched the big man. Not for an instant during the long night had these two dared entirely to trust each other. "It might be a trick of some sort. Wonder what became of Hartly?"

"Probably commanding his men from inside the barracks," said Brocton. "The old fighting spirit, like hell!" The big man snorted derisively.

From the east there came the sound of a bugle, the notes clear and sweet in the silence of the warm morning. Across the compound came a squad of eight men, and a native sergeant and a bugler. Wade Hartly of the Houssas marched smartly in the lead.

"Like hell, did you say!" Perry Lorain smiled mockingly at Carl Brocton. "Looks like you were right about the old fighting spirit. Only eleven men—and in some way they managed to terrorize the Ochori to such an extent that they all ran without even attempting to fight!"

"Yes," said Brocton somberly. "But how?"

**H**ARTLY halted and voiced a command. The bugler raised his horn to his lips and blew "Assembly." Out of the barracks trotted the rest of the regiment of Houssas, falling swiftly into line and standing at attention.

"There will be no more trouble in the river country, O my children," said Hartly. "No longer will the chiefs of the Ochori dare to lift their heads when it is known among the other people of the land that they have run from shadows. Little children playing in the dust of their huts will mock them for their lack of courage." He



smiled a tired smile. "And they will know there is still law in the land. Dismissed!"

Chattering delightedly, the native soldiers broke ranks, eagerly questioning the ten men who had been with Hartly.

Hartly walked toward the bungalow. The blue eyes in the lean, tanned face were hard and his right hand rested on the butt of the automatic that hung in a holster at his hip.

**B**ROCTON and Lorain stepped out onto the porch, making an elaborate show of replacing their guns in their holsters.

"Nicely done," said Brocton. "But I still don't quite understand it. What happened, Hartly?"

"The Ochori are a primitive people," said Hartly, as he dropped into a chair. "They believe what they see. I was sure that they would have some one watching the pass near the river—there was always danger of a few more soldiers coming to our aid from that direction."

"There was someone on watch?" asked Lorain, as Hartly paused.

"Yes. I had one of my men scout around before dawn to be sure. After that it was quite simple. I merely marched a squad of men past the opening at the lower end of the pass, then had them sneak back out of sight and march by again. A bit monotonous, but from the distance it must have looked like quite an impressive army."

"Quite a trick!" Brocton laughed. "Anyway, you certainly stopped any further idea of revolt among the natives."

"I hope so." Hartly abruptly drew his gun and covered the big man. "Must be quite a disappointment to you, Brocton."

"What the devil do you mean?" snarled Carl Brocton, his eyes dangerous.

"Yesterday evening you said you hoped that I was not quite a fool." Hartly smiled. "I'm not, really."

"Far from it," said Lorain quietly. "Always much smarter than I was at school and all that." His gun also covered the big man. "Often used to tell you so, didn't I, Wade?"

"Yes, but I never believed it." Hartly smiled at Brocton. "Stirring up the natives the way you have been doing has been clever, Brocton, but after all, stealing that money belt from Lorain was rather foolish. It was a side issue, and conspirators like you should avoid side issues. I suppose the temptation was too much for you. But I presume the temptation was purposely put in your way. Right, Perry?"

"Quite," said Lorain. "The money is marked of course, and sending a man up as a thief is so much better. So much less chance of international complications. Stealing five thousand dollars and murdering two natives." He shook his head. "Bad, Brocton. Probably get you life in jail at the least."

"Nice of you to make yourself at home here like you did yesterday," said Hartly, watching the big man. "You were watched from the moment you arrived, of course. My orderly, a very unobtrusive sort of chap, saw you put the poison in the liquor bottle, of course."

"But I warned you," protested Brocton. "I didn't let you drink it."

"I know." Hartly nodded solemnly. "You planned it that way. My life in danger, and you stepping in at the right moment. You knew that Lorain was headed this way, and wanted me to be on your side when he arrived. If you could convince me he was the white man who had been stirring up the trouble among the natives, all the better for you. I must say the hints you dropped were well done."

"You might have believed him if I'd been a stranger," said Lorain. "But that business about my being wanted by the police of three continents was a bit thick."

"Maybe not," said Hartly with a grin. "You quite look the part, Perry."



You chaps in Intelligence certainly do enter into the spirit of the thing."

"Damn you!" Carl Brocton like a wild boar snatched at the gun in his holster. "You will never take me in alive."

He fired, the bullet plowing into a pillar of the porch just a foot to the left of Hartly's head. From a window of a bungalow a rifle roared. Brocton fell like a tree, a bullet in his head.

"Too bad," said Hartley, staring down at the dead man. "That orderly of mine is so impulsive when he thinks I'm in danger."

"Perhaps it's just as well," said Lorain, gazing at the corpse. "What nationality would you say he was, Hartly?"

"Mongrel, I think, with the worst of all of them in him," said Hartly. He got to his feet. "I'll have this taken care of right away." He motioned to the native orderly and said a few words. "Come on inside, let's have breakfast." He smiled at the intelligence man. "Nice to have someone to talk to while Slade is away."

They went inside the house without a second look at the corpse. Men had to be hard in this river country, it was the only way. Lorain knew that, and there was not the slightest doubt of it in the mind of Hartly of the Houssas.

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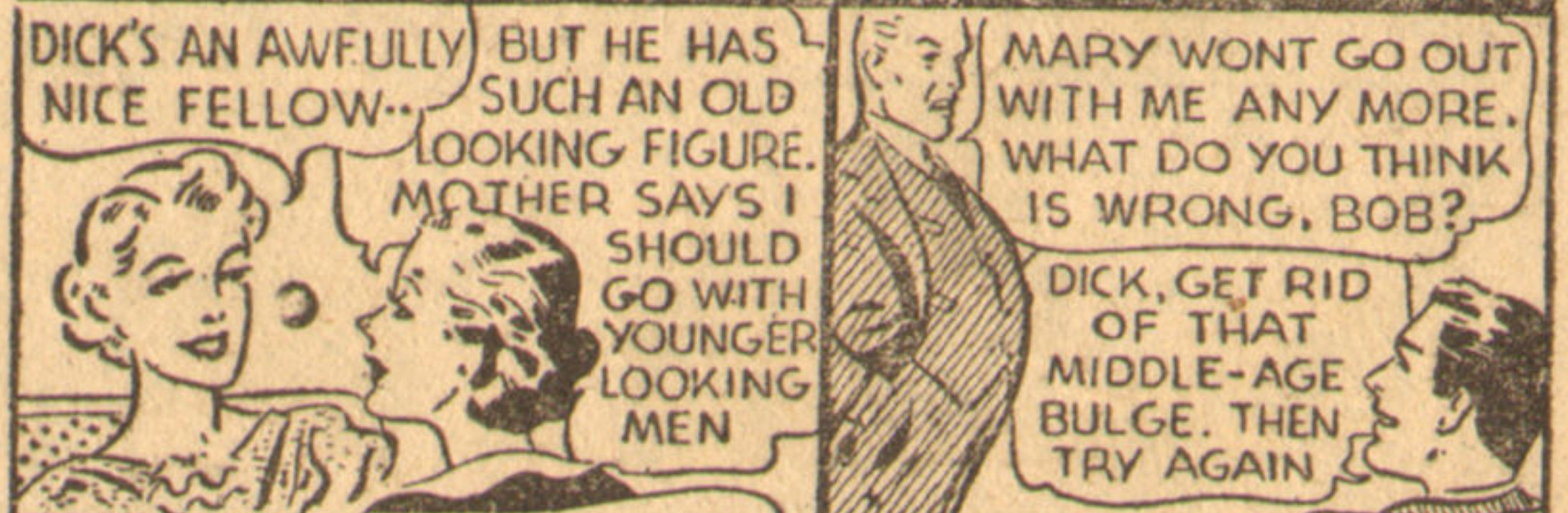
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Every once in a while, some expedition from a faraway land comes home to report amazing discoveries, traces of past and present civilizations of whose existence we were not even aware. Even though the great explorations of the past find no counterpart in the adventures of today, it may well be that when this troubled world finally settles down again, private societies and governments will resume their interest in bringing to light the deep, mysterious unknown lands of this earth.

## *"The Lost World"*

A great many of you Globe Trotters must remember the old silent motion picture, "The Lost World," based on the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's imaginative, thrilling novel of that title. The locale was in South America, on a great plateau inhabited by prehistoric monsters. Huge, incredible animals such as the brontosaurus and the dread *Tyrannosaurus rex*, literally "king" of them all, as the word "rex" (Latin for "king") implies.

The *Tyrannosaurus rex* was an interesting reptile, something you would not like to meet walking down the hall at night. In fact, the hall would have to be very large, and the flooring quite solid. For Mr. T rex was a gentleman known to be 47 feet in length, and quite terrifying. He was also 20 feet in height, and the greatest meat-eater of all time, with vicious teeth six inches long and an inch wide.

The brontosaurus, on the other hand, was herbivorous—an eater of vegetable matter. But no kangaroo, friends, even though he didn't eat meat. This gigantic lizard was unarmored, but it had four legs with elephantine limbs and feet, long giraffelike neck and a very small head and brain. When Brother Bronto really wanted

to grow, he could attain a full length of 70 feet.

And when these two animals—*Tyrannosaurus* and *brontosaurus*, meat-eater and vegetarian—met in battle, it was something to see and chill the heart. In "The Lost World," the brontosaurus got the worst of the argument and was knocked off a precipice, taking half the cliff with him.

Another terrifying creature was the pterodactyl—a huge wing-fingered bat lizard, with a reptile's jaw and body and massive, leathery wings to which fingerlike claws were attached. This little bird measured at least 40 feet in length, had a wingspread of at least twice that much, and was never kept in a cage and fed lettuce.

## *The Zahl Expedition*

All of these monstrosities came to mind the other day when we read the report of the Zahl expedition to the British Guiana-Venezuela section of South America. Dr. Paul A. Zahl, research associate of the Haskins Laboratory in Union College, at Schenectady, N. Y.—home of the famous General Electric research laboratories—made his most important find in the discovery of a truly lost village of aboriginal Indians.

These Indians had built their village in a huge gorge, nearly half a mile above sea level and yet more than a mile below the top of Mount Roraima, British Guiana and Venezuela. This was the approximate locale for "The Lost World"; and, incredibly enough, here Dr. Zahl found an authentic animal which may very well be the survivor of the prehistoric age which Conan Doyle depicted.

This creature was an ant some two inches in length; the largest, presumably, on earth. At any rate, we never want to come across any while out in the woods. This little beggar is called *dinoponera grandis*, and he doesn't like to play marbles. In fact, Dr. Zahl captured some 2,000 of these ants, and had the misfortune to be bitten by just one of them. One was enough. He got stung on the leg and the limb became partially paralyzed for almost two hours!

The Indians, however, were the most interesting discoveries. These simple, un-



spoiled folk, according to Dr. Zahl, lead a virtually untroubled existence, with happy and harmonious relations the keyword among all. Which recalls to mind the poetic races of the South Seas, before the white man came. But it is hardly likely that anyone will want to "civilize" these people living under the summit of majestic Mount Roraima.

### Giant Waterfalls

Dr. Zahl also discovered two great waterfalls each surpassing the drop of Niagara Falls by ten times. The first one is at the lip of a previously uncharted gorge from which the Uitshi River plunges between 1,200 and 1,600 feet. Further down the Zahl party found the second falls, with its roar so thunderous and awesome that the Indians in the village had never dared to discover the reason for so much noise.

There are, then, still distant, mysterious lands to explore; still great discoveries to be found; still great achievements to be made in the never-charted realm of exploration. To Dr. Peter A. Zahl, congratulations for proving to us once again that exploration is still one of man's greatest adventures!

### Bigger Than Chicago

Well, that's something we didn't know—that Shanghai, China is a larger city than our own Chicago. We asked S. Gordon Gurwit to write something about himself and his experiences, and the author of this month's bangup novelet, *FLAME OF THE PEACOCK*, lost no time in replying. Take the floor, Gordon.

Dear Globe Trotter:

Shanghai, the locale of *Flame of the Peacock*, is—believe it or not—a larger city than Chicago, with more population, and far more cosmopolitan and sophisticated. Most Americans won't believe this, but it happens to be true. "The Pearl of the Orient" has for years been the spy center of the East, and it has been said that anything could happen in Shanghai.

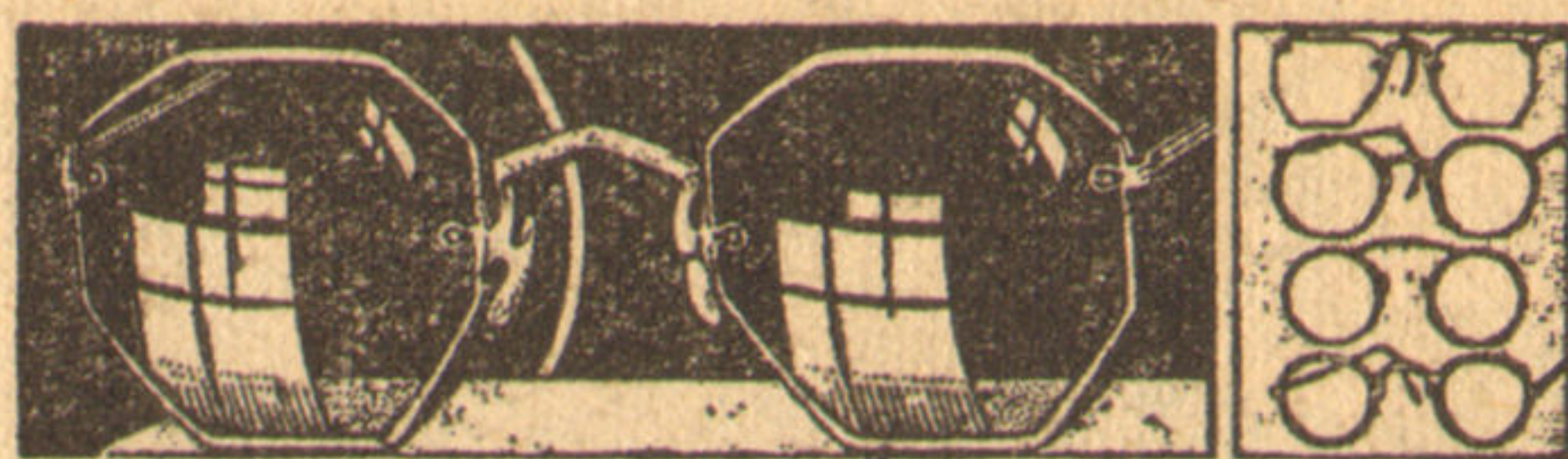
Due—according to my family—to a misspent youth, I first saw this town long ago, before the fighting of 1932 had damaged any part of it. Frankly, I was amazed. Skyscrapers, taxis, boulevards, hotels—I hadn't expected this in ancient China. I had a letter of introduction to a staff member of one of the news-gathering agencies, where I was supposed to try for a job as reporter, so I called a taxi and went there first.

A job was necessary if I was to stay in Shanghai, since there wasn't too much money in the frayed wallet I carried; and I certainly did want to stay there. Well, I was lucky—I got a temporary job because another reporter was under the weather and I was to fill his place until he got back.

I found a boarding house in the International Settlement and set out, freshly fed, to explore this fascinating city. My duties were to cover the incoming liners and the Custom House, which is on the Bund—and the Bund is the riverside boulevard that runs along the Whangpoo branch of the Yangtze River. The Bund, alone, can furnish material for a dozen stories. Some day we'll write them, maybe.

But it was in the teeming streets of Chapei and Pootung and Hongkew—neighborhood in Shanghai—that I found my greatest interest after the day's work was turned in and the urge for exploration and adventure could be indulged. Even those days the Japanese Concession, near Chapei,

(Continued on page 108)



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**AT ALL STANDS**

(Continued from page 107)

was policed by ronins—Japanese muscle men—and they had a nasty way with foreigners who came poking around, so I didn't get far there. But in adjoining Chapei I met an old Chinaman who ran a tea house. He spoke fair English and was one of the old school Chinese.

He first told me about the legends of the last empress' fabulous jewels, and how they had been scattered all over when the Manchu dynasty collapsed. A member of his family had come upon one of them, and with it came instructions to deliver it to a certain man in Shanghai. During the night, the jewel was stolen.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Oh, he died," said the old Chinaman. "With honor."

"With honor?" I asked. By this time I had bumped into the fatalistic code of the Chinese; which, I confess, is a bit beyond western comprehension.

He explained how his relative had swallowed gold leaf, which closed his throat. The man had sat down calmly and died. He had failed in an important mission, and that was the only way out for him, so he took it. What happened to the jewel no one knew. I prided myself on being a pretty shrewd reporter, having chased news, elusive and otherwise, in many cities, and for a moment, I had an idea that I'd take up the search for the missing jewel.

But if you stroll through Chinese sections and hear the many tongues spoken, anything from Mandarin and Cantonese to Shambo and Shensi, you begin to understand that without a knowledge of half a dozen Chinese dialects you'd be lost. I gave that up.

Naturally, another focal point for a young fellow on the loose was the night life—the night clubs and cafés on Avenue Edouard VII, on Thibet Road, the Bund. Another young man and I—he was also a boarder at the same place where I stayed—used to take in the night spots together. He was an old resident of Shanghai and worked on the *North China Press*, and he seemed to know everybody in town.

We sat watching a floor show one night when he pointed out a very attractive young woman who sat at another table.

"A White Russian," he said. "Refugee from the Bolsheviks. They say she used to be a countess. Now they say she's a spy."

I stared. First, of course, I thought of Mata Hari. The girl didn't look like a spy, to me.

"Who does she spy for?" I asked.

My companion smiled and shrugged. "They say, for China. You know, Japan grabbed off Shantung, from Germany, at the beginning of the World War. China didn't like it and boycotted Japanese goods. Then Japan agreed to sell the territory to China, and China bought it back. Now, China and Japan and Germany are all fishing, under cover, for control. Lots goes on in Shanghai, under cover."

The chorus came out and they were very pretty girls, even by western standards. My friend chuckled.

"Ever seen anything prettier in the States?" he demanded.

"Only the Ziegfeld peaches," I confessed, for the specially chosen Chinese chorines were unusually good looking.

We sat and smoked and talked and I watched the "spy" to see if she would do anything out of the ordinary, but she didn't. She was joined, later, by a fine-looking man in evening clothes, and they sat, smiling and talking.

"That egg," volunteered my friend, "is a steamship official. His hair and mustache will give you his nationality. I'd give a back tooth to know what they're talking about. They say he's quite thick with the Germans here. Your guess is as good as mine."

"Looks like the makings for a front page yarn," I ventured.

"Yeah!" he agreed. "Only you'll never get it."

A month later, the beautiful young woman was found with her throat slit from ear to ear in her house, in the French Concession. So maybe there was a story brewing between these two. I never knew.

For another month I rambled through the native quarters and went home when the clock on the Chamber of Commerce building showed one and two in the morning; and one day, when I got to



the boarding house, the Chinese houseboy told me that "one-piece" man was waiting for me.

It was the reporter whose job I had. He was recovered fully and wanted to meet me and find out if I intended to stay. Since he had a wife, I told him I'd quit and let him have his job back.

Two days later, I left Shanghai bound for Hong Kong and Macao. I had always wanted to see those two towns and a restless wanderlust drove me on. Anyone with a nose for news could, even then, sense the antagonism between the Chinese and the Japanese; so in 1931-32, when the first open breaks came between them, I was not surprised. I had anticipated that fighting by writing a dozen stories about it.

Every now and then I mull over my notebook for story material and come across old notes made in Shanghai. At these times this great modern city rises up again in my mind, twentieth century and yet Oriental and bizarre—and still the spy capital of the East! In one of these retrospective moments, the idea for *Flame of the Peacock* was born.

S. Gordon Gurwit.

St. Petersburg, Florida.

The "spy capital of the East." That's a good name for it, Gordon. Thanks for your interesting letter; and, as our Chinese friends would say: "May your shadow never grow short!"

#### From Our Readers

Our Globe Trotters boast a large variety of activities, interests and hobbies, as you'll see by these typical passages from the following letters. Come on, friends, don't be bashful; drop us a line any time, and let us know what you're doing. We're always glad to hear from you and, through this column, to let other Globe Trotters know what you're doing.

The first letter comes all the way from overseas. The writer is John B. Blake, and he gives his address as Caravan 32, in care of Penvenen Camp, Perranporth, Cornwall, England. He says:

At last I'm joining up with the Globe Trotter Club! Have been a regular reader of THRILLING ADVENTURES for years. Magazines come and go; but T. A. remains and it gets better and better each year.

Well, I'm down here in Cornwall, the southwesternmost county of England, doing a spot of prospecting. This county is rich in minerals; silver, gold, tin, etc. As the Government isn't backing any syndicate to start operations, I'm just taking a look-see around, and having quite an interesting time of it.

I'd be glad to answer any questions about this part of the country, and England, that you fellows would want to know. I can also tell you about Spain, France and Ireland. Especially Ireland. Can spin an exciting yarn about the Black and Tans and their little fracas in the Emerald Isle after the war.

Okay, John. Here's a real pen pal for you Globe Trotters. Next a few lines  
(Continued on page 110)



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(Continued from page 109)

from Jack Cales, 1509 Grand Ave., Phoenix, Arizona. Jack feels the old wanderlust creeping up on him, and before we know it he'll be off again. He writes us:

I am twenty-one years old, was born in Texas, and have spent the greater part of my life in the country along the Mexican border. Have worked my way from Georgia to Arizona, and I am using this experience as a backlog to work my way around the world, my greatest ambition.

In the next year or so I'm going to try to work my way to Central or South America. Perhaps some of you Globe Trotters can lend me a helping hand on this. I'd greatly appreciate any advice you'd like to give me. I can read, write and, of course, speak Spanish, and that should certainly be a help.

No doubt about it, Jack. Spanish is a great language to work with; and many people think our future as a nation lies to the south, in the Latin American republics. Good luck on your trip, when you shove off!

No letter-parade would be complete without hearing from a sea-going Globe Trotter. Let's look in on the adventures of Frank Zumba, 3101 Quentin Road, Brooklyn, N. Y.

During twenty months on the sea I've had plenty of experiences, which have taken me to the Cape Verde Islands, Trinidad, Bermuda, South America, and to some thirteen ports along the southern and eastern coasts of Africa.

On my way to Capetown, South Africa, from New York the weather was terrible. Oh boy, that was something! When the ship rolled the deck hit the sea, and when she pitched, the propeller rose clear of the water. It took us thirty days to make Capetown. As if that weren't bad enough, I was laid up with malaria in Beira, East Africa.

I could even go back a bit and tell you about our trip to Mombasa, East Africa, in April, 1937, when we arrived on a rainy day and left twenty days later—the rain still coming down in sheets!

On my last trip we ran into the worst weather of all; that hurricane which swept the eastern coast of this country in September, 1938, and raised such Cain in New England. We were headed for New York from Trinidad, and the waves that that blow threw up on deck were something to see.

"Stormy weather," eh, Frank? We hope that sunny skies and brisk winds attend your next sailing. And mention not that New England hurricane! Our old jalopy broke its heart on those ravaged Massachusetts highways, and it cost us fifty bucks for repairs.

Thanks for your letters, Globe Trotters, and let's see some more of 'em, pronto!

### *Liberty at the Crossroads*

Nowadays, when freedom and dictatorship seem to be constantly at each other's throats, it's heartening to come across such great yarns as Jackson Cole's dramatic novelet, **FIGHT FOR FREEDOM**, which is in this issue. About his story, Mr. Cole has this to say:

Dear Globe Trotter:

The fight for freedom of the Dutch people against their Spanish oppressors, in the 16th and 17th centuries, finds a counterpart today in Spain and China. And, need I add, in Czecho-Slovakia, which even as I write this has fallen asunder, deserted by her "allies" and bereft of her original frontiers of defense.

History, it would seem, moves in cycles. There is a period of tyranny, sometimes extending a gen-

eration or more, which in the end is succeeded by a popular revolt against oppression, economic and political, and the denial of such elementary human rights as religion, freedom of speech, press and assembly.

In **FIGHT FOR FREEDOM**, I have delved into history in an attempt to recreate the atmosphere and tension of the late 16th century, when the Spaniards, under King Philip the Second and his minion, the Duke of Alva, governor of the Netherlands, strove ruthlessly to put down rebellion and were successfully defeated at Alkmaar by sturdy, determined burghers who had never known the benefits of military discipline and tactics.

Which, need I say, points an interesting parallel for today!

With good wishes,

Jackson Cole.

New York City.

Well, Mr. Cole, our answer to that is the old standby: "History repeats itself." Maybe that's why historical novels and stories are so popular today. People like to read in the past to get some idea of what can happen all over again.

### *Information, Please*

Our friend, Ed Earl Repp, author of this month's exciting Western novelet, **RENEGADE PAYOFF**, has his eye on a little trip across the Pacific, and is anxious to get a few tips from you Globe Trotters who know your way around. How about it, fellers?

Dear Globe Trotter:

I haven't much to say about **RENEGADE PAYOFF**, but I would like to palaver with some of you Globe Trotters who've been down around the Philippines.

I'm scheming to take a little pasear down that way within the next year or so and don't want to bother with the main ports, where all you see is what the Chamber of Commerce points out to the tourist. I prefer to hit into the less-known section of the Islands, where a feller stands a chance of losing his head and getting some first-hand yarns for spinning in **THRILLING ADVENTURES**.

It's been my pet idea for a long time—and it's hard to say what will happen to it when my boss and severest critic gets wise—to take a tramp steamer to Manila, there buy or charter a good 30 to 40-foot ketch and sail clear around the Islands, touching at the most out-of-the-way ports they have.

No doubt many of you old Globe Trotters have been down around that part of the world and can give a lubber like me in search of adventure some idea where a copious dish of the same can be found there. Fool, am I? Maybe I am, but I think I can take it. I know what slugs sound like when they come whistlin' at you, and I don't think I'd more than flinch if some Igorote took a swipe at me with a bolo of kris.

You never have to worry about the bullets that miss you or the bolos that fail to connect with your hackles. It's the ones you don't hear that count. Well, I'll be most grateful to any of you fellers who'll drop me a line telling me "not to miss this place or that," and when I get there, you can bet we'll take 'em in or lose our heads trying. How about it?

Best wishes,

Ed Earl Repp.

4144 Crisp Canyon Road,  
Van Nuys, California.

Happy landings, Ed! But if you hear drums in the deep tropic night, the slither of snakes, the whispering creep of phantom shapes—well, my friend, you asked for it.

### *Next Month's Issue*

Clear the decks for action! For its July issue, **THRILLING ADVENTURES** has



scheduled a sure-fire roster of favorite authors and swell yarns. Leading off will be Crawford Sullivan's great complete novelet of the vast Indo-China jungle: **BLACK BEAST OF DOOM**.

Indo-China—that mysterious French possession which dazzles the senses with its ancient secret temples, its strange customs and its capacity for intrigue! In **BLACK BEAST OF DOOM** you'll find a story which in colorful background and tense action surpasses Crawford Sullivan's record for great story-telling!

With Mexico and the United States about to negotiate for return of expropriated properties, you'll want to read this exciting fiction feature in next month's issue—Louis C. Goldsmith's **SEÑOR THE KEED**, a novelet of the Mexican mining country. Timely, colorful, packed with action—**SEÑOR THE KEED** makes good!

And, in the same breath, Syria—another land where strife is now rampant. Danger, unknown peril, mysterious burnoosed Arabs—they're all in **SCOURGE OF ALLAH**, E. Hoffmann Price's dramatic story of Syrian treasure, with a fighting Yank Foreign Legionnaire as the two-fisted hero!

Not to mention our usual fare of short stories and special features, particularly selected for your adventure fiction entertainment. Every yarn hits the jackpot for thrills and suspense!

That's all, Globe Trotters—except this one announcement: don't fail, you readers who are not yet members, to take advantage of your opportunity to join our  
(Concluded on page 112)

The Globe Trotter,  
THRILLING ADVENTURES,  
22 West 48th Street,  
New York City.

I wish to be enrolled as a member of the *Globe Trotters' Club*. I am interested in adventure and will endeavor to answer all questions asked me by other members regarding the places with which I am familiar.

Name .....

Address .....

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To obtain a membership card, enclose  
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Foreign readers are required to send International Reply  
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6-39



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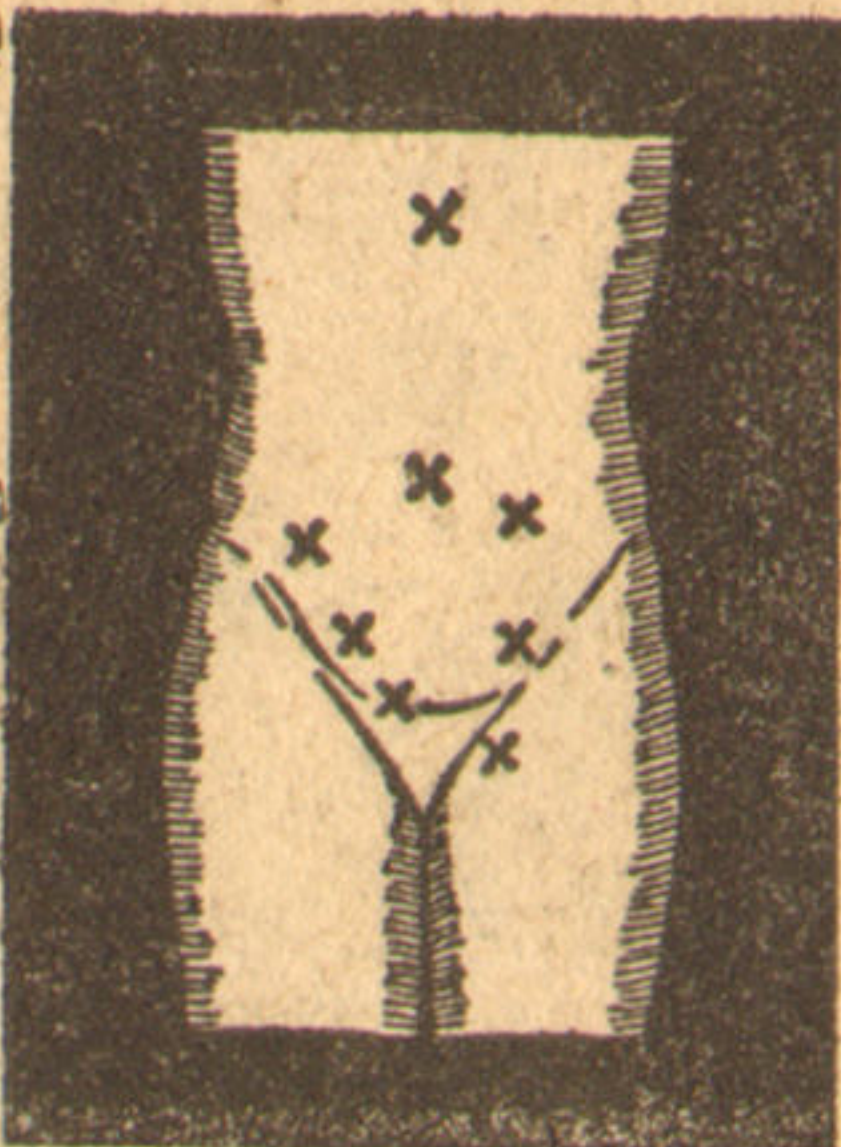
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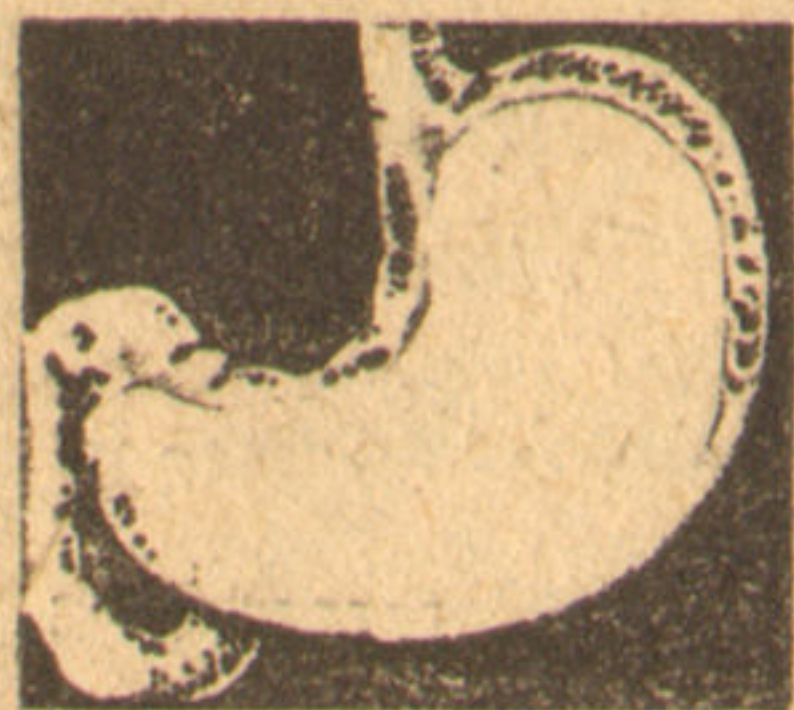
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(Concluded from page 111)

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Which brings us to the end of the trail for this issue, Globe Trotters. Be back with you again in July, with more yarns and more letters. Until then, keep your chins up!

—THE GLOBE TROTTER.

P. S. See page 8 for a partial list of members of the GLOBE TROTTERS' CLUB.

## THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

(Concluded from page 72)

shown recently for the missing Russian polar fliers. Nor will the Antarctic expedition of Lincoln Ellsworth and Herbert Hollick-Kenyon ever be forgotten. Or the search for Roald Amundsen, after his attempted relief of the ill-fated airship *Italia*, an expedition in which I had a small part. On North America, Canadian and American veterans of the Arctic still remember the epic search for the McAlpine air expedition to the Magnetic Pole, another search with which I was identified.

Warmly clad men and women still sit beside their fires and get a marvelous vicarious thrill from the exploits of men in the frozen wastes!

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EVERY MONTH



## A MATTER OF CASH

(Concluded from page 75)

Renault lit a cigarette. "You got my message?"

"Ten days ago." Payne took the proffered cigarette. "That's pretty good time, coming from Manila."

Renault nodded. "Of a certainty. A ship dropped you ashore two nights ago?"

Payne smiled mysteriously. "I chartered a boat as soon as I got your message."

The Frenchman was amused at that. "Quick workers, you soldiers of fortune. The last one I sent for took eleven days to get here from Australia last year."

Payne goggled. "The last one?"

Renault nodded. "But of course. The Japanese were here only a year ago, and they too liked my little cove. Yesterday it was the representatives of another power. Apparently my cove seems an ideal secret naval base. I would not know about that, *Monsieur*. I am only a patriotic French citizen minding my own business."

Tom Payne's eyes were big, and then he grinned hugely. "Business was good, eh?"

Francois Renault shrugged. "So-so, my friend. A fair profit—not as much as from the Japanese. Now, how much do I owe you?"

"Nothing but my expenses," Payne grinned. "It was a pleasure to scotch their plans!"

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29x5.00-19	2.55	1.25	
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.25	
6.25-17	2.90	1.35	
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35	
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35	
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35	
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35	
5.50-17	3.35	1.40	
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40	
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45	
6.00-17	3.40	1.40	
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.40	
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.45	
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55	
32x6.00-21	3.65	1.55	
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32x4	2.95	1.25	30x5	3.65	1.65
33x4	2.95	1.25	33x5	3.75	1.75
34x4	3.25	1.35	35x5	3.95	1.75
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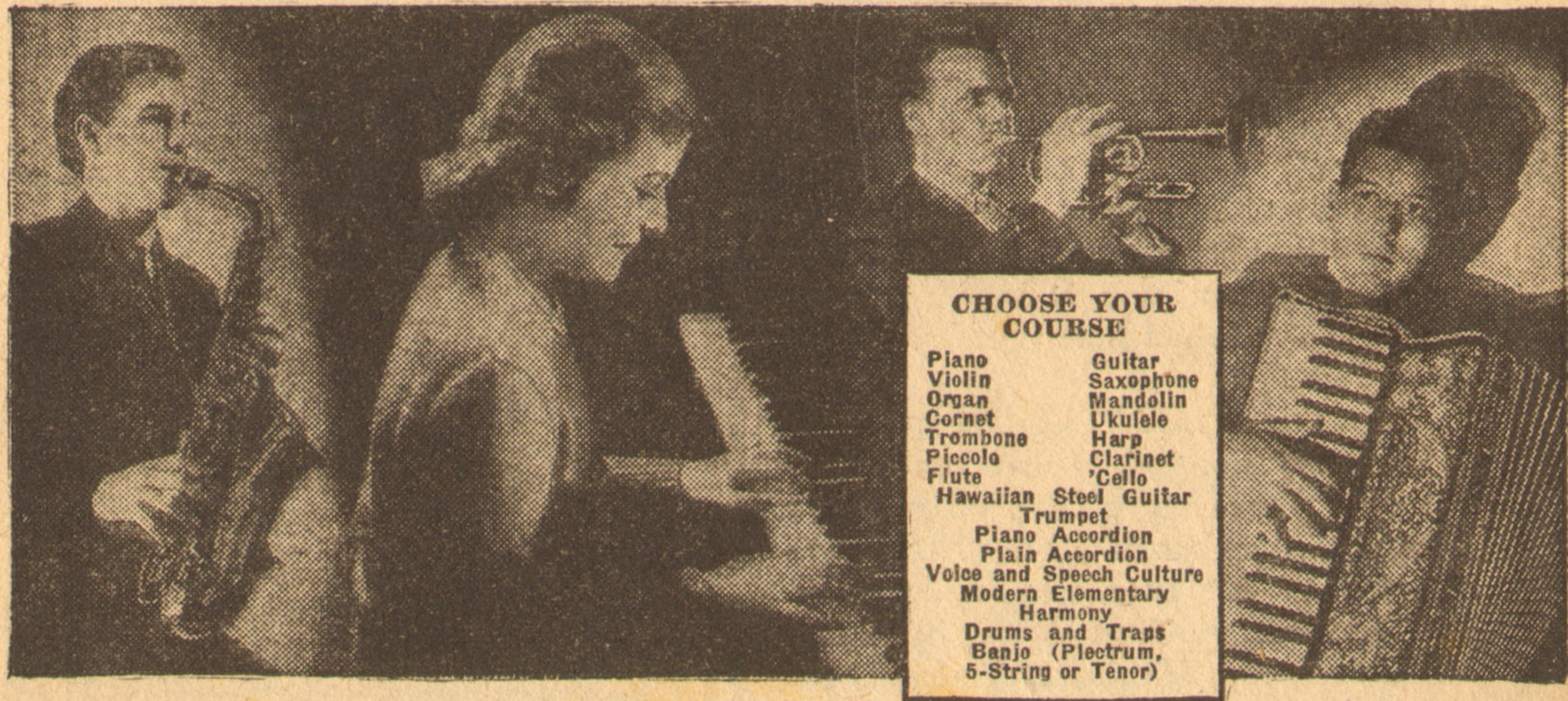
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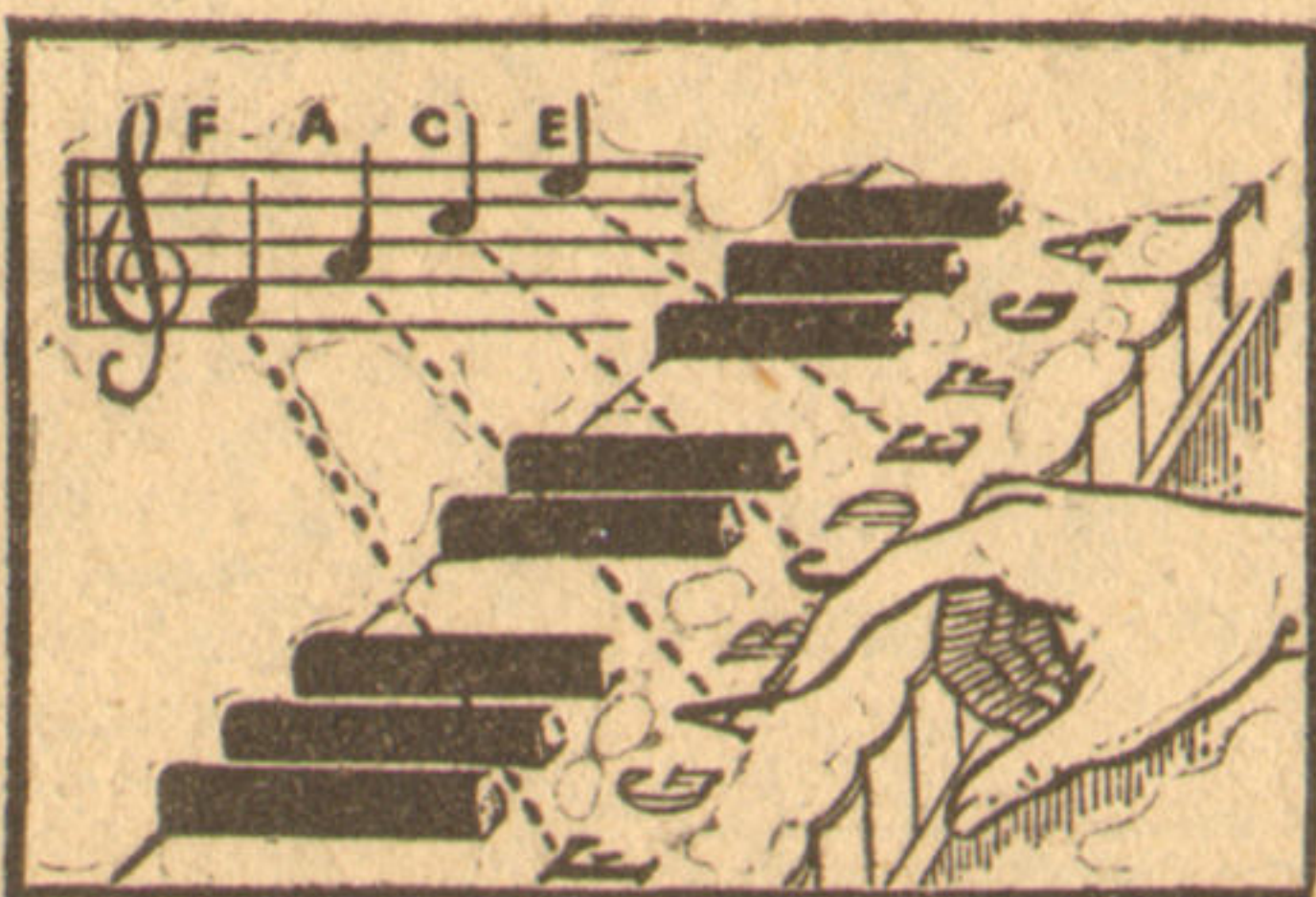
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### Some of the Savings You Can Show

You walk into an office and put down before your prospect a letter from a sales organization showing that they did work in their own office for \$11 which formerly could have run them over \$200. A building supply corporation pays our men 10%, whereas the bill could have been for \$1,000. An automobile dealer pays our representative 3%, whereas the expense could have been over \$1,000. A department store has expense of \$100.00, possible one if done outside the business being well over \$2,000. And so on. We could not possibly list all cases here. These are just a few of the many actual cases which we place at your hands to work with. Practically every line of business and every section of the country is represented by these field reports which business men everywhere are studying. These reports show how business men who have tried other money-making opportunities which hardly any business man can fail to understand.

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### This Business Has Nothing to Do With House to House Canvassing

Nor do you have to know anything about high-pressure selling. "Selling" is unnecessary in the ordinary sense of the word. Instead of hammering away at the customer and trying to "force" a sale, you make a dignified, business-like call, leave the installation—wherever the customer may be well accept—out of risk, let the customer sell himself after the device is in and working. This does away with the need for pressure on the customer—it eliminates the handicap of trying to get the money before the customer has really convinced himself 100%. You simply tell what you offer, showing proof of success in other customer's particular line of business. Then leave the invention without a dollar down. It starts working at once. In a few short days, the installation should actually produce enough cash money to pay for the deal, with profits above the investment coming in at the same time. You then call back, collect your money. Nothing is convincing as our offer to let people reveal for themselves without risk to the customer! While others fail to get even a hearing, our men are making sales running into the thousands. They have received the approval of the largest firms in the country, and sold to the smallest businesses by the thousands.

## EARNINGS

One man in California earned over \$1,600 per month for three months—close to \$5,000 in 90 days' time. Another writes from Delaware—"Since I have been operating (just a little less than a month of actual selling) and not the full day at that, because I have been getting organized and had to spend at least half the day in the office; counting what I have sold outright and on trial, I have made just a little in excess of one thousand dollars profit for one month." A Connecticut man writes he has made \$15.00 in a single day's time. Texas men earn over \$300 in less than a week's time. Space does not permit mentioning here more than these few random cases. However, they are sufficient to indicate that the worthwhile future in this business is coupled with immediate earnings for the right kind of man. One man with us has already made over a thousand sales on which his earnings ran from \$5 to \$80 per sale and more. A great deal of this business was repeat business. Yet he had never done anything like this before coming with us. That is the kind of opportunity this business offers. The fact that this business has attracted to it such business men as former bankers, executives of businesses—men who demand only the highest type of opportunity and income—gives a fairly good picture of the kind of business this is. Our door is open, however, to the young man looking for the right field in which to make his start and develop his future.

### No Money Need Be Risked

In trying this business out, you can measure the possibilities and not be out a dollar. If you are looking for a business that is not unscrupulous—a business that is just coming into its own—on the upgrade, instead of the downgrade—a business that offers the better relief from a hardtime, but considerable expense—a business that has a prospect practically in every office, store, or factory and which you can get home—regardless of size—that is money but does not have any great cutting to come with an ever increasing cost—that because you control the sales in exclusive territory in your own business—that has more in some individual sales than many men made in a week and income in a month's time—that such a business looks as if it is worth investigating, get in touch with us at once for the rights in your territory—don't delay—because the chances are that if you do wait, someone else will have written us in the meantime—and if it turns out that you were the better man—well it won't be long for us to contact you, so do come here—but send it right away—or wait if you wish. But do it now. Address:

F. E. ARMSTRONG, President  
Dept. 40477, Mobile, Ala.

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