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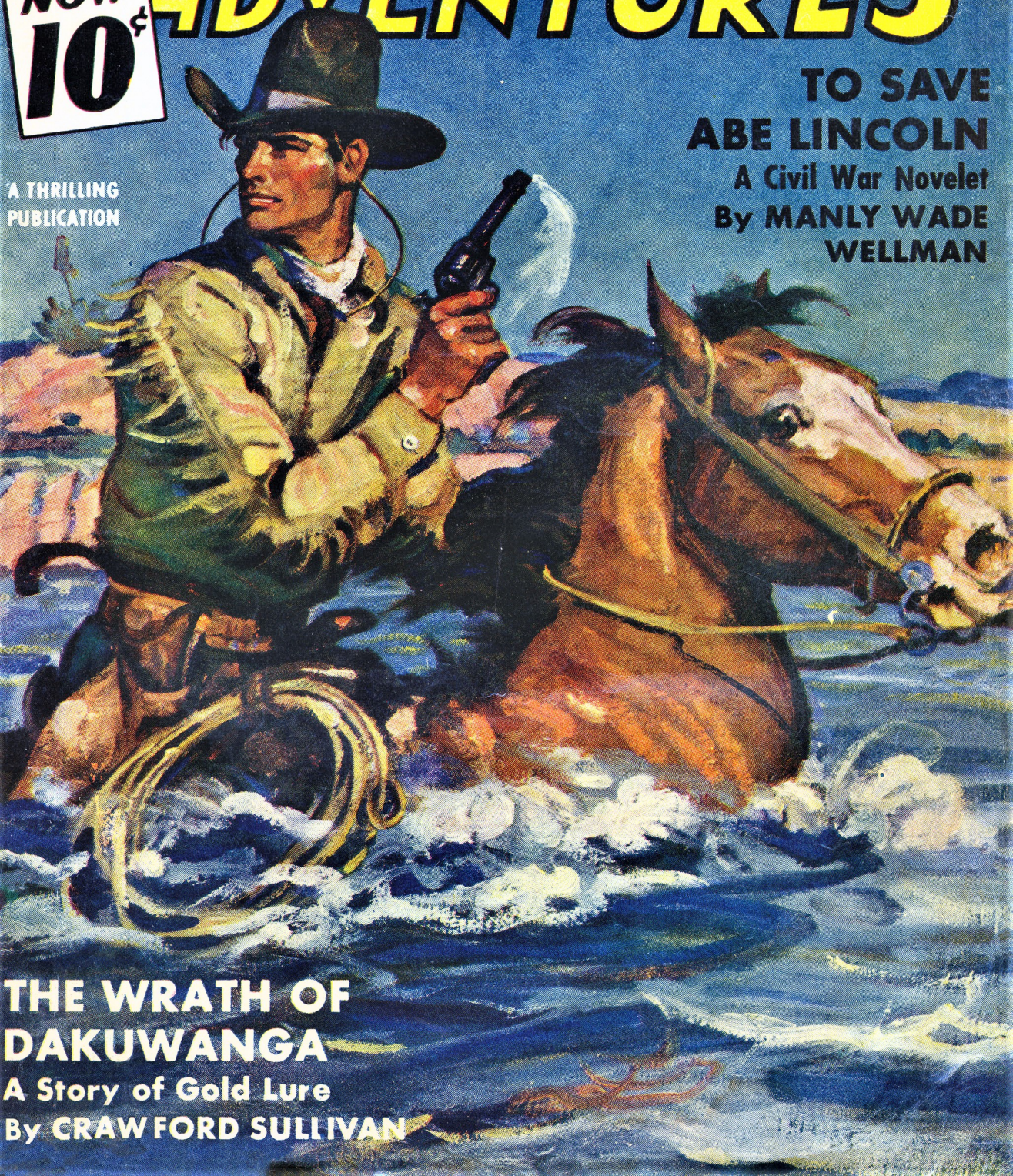
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A THRILLING
PUBLICATION

THRILLING ADVENTURES

TO SAVE
ABE LINCOLN

A Civil War Novelet
By MANLY WADE
WELLMAN



THE WRATH OF
DAKUWANGA

A Story of Gold Lure

By CRAWFORD SULLIVAN

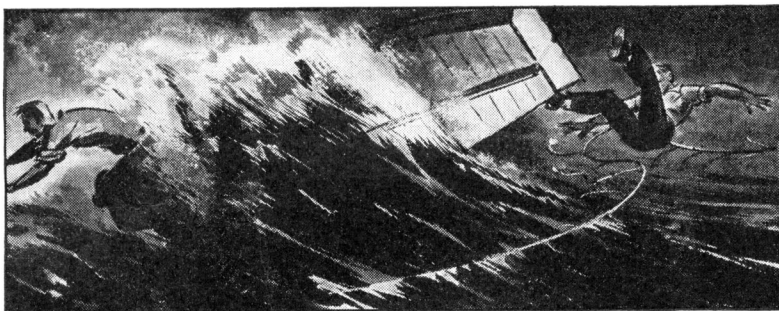
"THE HEAVY LINE DRAGGED ME TOWARD ETERNITY!"

A true experience of C. J. LATIMER, Warren, Ohio



"ANOTHER FISHERMAN and myself had just finished setting a heavy trot-line in Lake Erie," writes Mr. Latimer, "when a sudden treacherous squall lashed out of nowhere and churned the water into towering waves.

"A WAVE SMACKED us broadside, and over we went! Then I felt a heavy drag on my leg. I was caught in the trot-line and was being pulled to my doom. In the darkness, my companion couldn't untangle me!



"BUT ONE OF OUR PARTY ON shore brought his flashlight into action. Its powerful beam cut the distance and darkness—and in a minute I was free. I shudder to think of what might have happened except for those dependable 'Eveready' fresh DATED batteries!

(Signed)

C. J. Latimer

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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 cost them over \$200. A building supply corporation pays our man \$70, whereas the bill could have been for \$1,600! An automobile dealer pays our representative \$15, whereas the expense could have been over \$1,000. A department store has expense of \$88.60, possible cost 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 in your hands to work with. Practically every line of business and every section of the country is represented by these field reports which hammer across dazzling, convincing money-saving opportunities which hardly any business man can fail to understand.

**Profits Typical of
the Young, Growing Industry**

Going into this business is not like selling something offered in every grocery, drug or department store. For instance, when you take a \$7.50 order, \$3.83 can be your share. On \$1,500 worth of business, your share can be \$1,167.00. The very least you get as your part of every dollar's worth of business you do is 67 cents—on ten dollars' worth \$6.70, on a hundred dollars' worth \$67.00—in other words two thirds of every order you get is yours. Not only on the first order—but on repeat orders—and you have the opportunity of earning an even larger percentage.

**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—whatever size the customer says he will accept—at our 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 headache 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 that 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 so convincing as our offer to let results speak for themselves without risk to the customer! While others fail to get even a hearing, our men are making sales running into the hundreds. They have received the attention 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 man working small city in N. Y. State made \$10,805 in 9 months. Texas man nets 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 \$60 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.

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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 overvalued—a business that is just coming into its own—on the upgrade, instead of the downgrade—a business that offers the buyer relief from a burdensome, but unavoidable expense—a business that has a prospect practically in every office, store, or factory into which you can set foot—regardless of size—that is a necessity but does not have any price cutting to contend with as other necessities do—that because you control the sales in exclusive territory is your own business—that pays more on some individual sales than many men make in a week and sometimes in a month's time—if such a business looks as if it is worth investigating, go 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 to us in the meantime—and if it turns out that you were the better man—we'd both be sorry. So for convenience, use the coupon below—but send it right away—or wire if you wish. But do it now. Address

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THRILLING ADVENTURES

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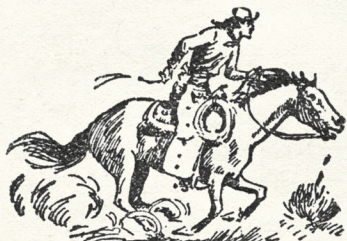
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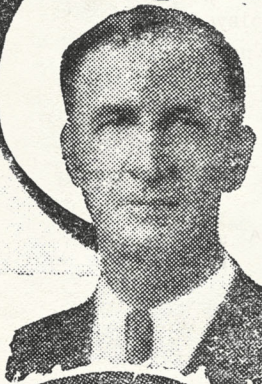
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The GLOBE TROTTER



JAMBO, fellow globe trotters!

It seems very natural for me this month to convey my greeting to you in this way—the greeting of Africa. For Africa, as you probably know from reading my previous columns, has been very much on my mind, and I can tell you now that the promise I made of bringing Africa to you in all its vividness will at last be redeemed in the truly blazing and thrilling June issue of **THRILLING ADVENTURES!**

In that issue you and I will “go into the blue.” That phrase too, like my greeting, is appropriately African. For it is the way men speak, in Africa, when they are about to set forth on a journey. That is what “going into the blue” means—a departure, a leave-taking, a *safari* to far places. And the distances which men may travel in Africa are so great, and the sky above them so blue, that they know a peculiar sense of freedom in their loneliness and seem journeying always toward that beckoning blue horizon which makes them say in response to the question: “Where are you going?”—simply “Into the blue. . .”

Next Month—TARZAN!

Next month, then, as I have promised, you and I will go into the blue with—**TARZAN OF THE APES!** What better companion could we have? Who knows the jungle better? Who can better teach us its ways and acquaint us with it, its denizens, friendly and hostile?

I am glad to express my thanks here to Edgar Rice Burroughs, creator of Tarzan, who wrote **TARZAN AND THE JUNGLE MURDERS** especially for us, thus making it possible for you and I to journey into the blue in the June issue of **T.A.**, and to share excitingly in Tarzan's latest adventure.

Jambo, Edgar Rice Burroughs—gold-miner in Oregon, cowpuncher in Idaho, cavalryman in Arizona, trekker into the blue, creator of the world-famous Tarzan!

In this column, heralding the publication of **TARZAN AND THE JUNGLE MURDERS**, we spell out the next issue of our magazine—**T-(hrilling) A-(dventures) R-Z-A-N!**

The Living Past

Last month I promised you also that in

Manly Wade Wellman's Civil War novelet, **TO SAVE ABE LINCOLN**, the past would be made to live again. I don't think I was mistaken, was I? Manly Wade Wellman has generously acceded to my request for a letter on the subject. Here it is:

Dear Globe Trotter:

To my way of thinking, the War Between the States was not only the most dramatic and important epoch in all American history, but also had as its star actors two of the three greatest Americans—Abraham Lincoln and Robert E. Lee. That I, and many others, can revere almost equally these two leaders of desperate rivalries should not be a mystery any more; because the deepest hopes and sympathies of Lincoln and Lee were alike American. They never met, but they respected each other. They knew each other's honor and value. This story tries to show how, even in the bloodiest and bitterest moment of the struggle, they were striving for what was basically the same thing—idealistic American liberty and independence.

If my assassination plot seems far-fetched, I can but say that it is based upon an actual murderous project, which came to naught only by the merest chance. There were a number of people who wanted to kill Lincoln. John Wilkes Booth made two abortive attempts before he finally succeeded. Lord Charnwood, in his Lincoln biography, demonstrates that assassination of Lincoln was possible at almost any time during the war, by a brave man; and the Confederacy, though it lacked almost all things else, was never short of brave men. That they were honorable men also is shown by the fact that Lincoln lived until Lee had surrendered, and that his death came, not from a Southern warrior's hand, but from the pistol of an unbalanced noncombatant, whose deed was immediately and totally repudiated by the South.

For my protagonist, I have tried to construct a Virginia officer and gentleman, with the virtues and limitations of his time and *metier*. I wish there had been a real man of such type, to forestall Booth that night in April, 1865, at Ford's Theater.

Manly Wade Wellman.

The South Seas

The South Seas have long been a favorite stamping ground for adventure fiction writers. Few of them know the fascinating coral island as well as Crawford Sullivan, author of **THE WRATH OF DAKUWANGA** in this issue. Here is what Crawford has to say about it:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Despite half a century of missionary influence the old superstitions of Fiji still exist. Witchcraft has not died out entirely, and the ancient rite of *drau ni kau* is practised even in the more populous regions.

I found this rite particularly interesting. Seems that if a native has an enemy he first manages to acquire a portion of the enemy's clothing—possibly a shirt-tail or part of a sulu skirt. The witch doctor then performs a ritual, and the bit of

(Continued on page 9)

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THE GLOBE TROTTER

(Continued from page 6)

cloth is buried in some remote spot. Soon after that the enemy begins to die. He wastes away slowly day by day, and unless he manages to find the buried object he is certainly doomed.

This may sound preposterous, but an Australian miner who had spent five years on the island of Taveuni told me that he had seen the curse performed two or three times and that in every instance the victim died.

Another superstitious custom which exists throughout the islands is the giving of *tambuas*. The *tambua* is the tooth of the sperm whale and is regarded as sacred. In the old days many a man was killed by the power of the *tambua*, among them the Rev. Mr. Baker, who was the last white man to be eaten. Today *tambuas* are often exchanged between government officials and chieftains as a symbol of trust and esteem. These whales' teeth are very old, and the supply is limited, so it is against the law, I'm told, for tourists to carry them away. I located one for sale in a Chinese store—price ten bucks, which is quite a bit to put out for a yellow whale's tooth.

The Fijians made no idols, but they regarded every unusual thing in nature as sacred. Odd-shaped stones, weathered volcano plugs, the shark and ferocious barracuda, all were deified. Incidentally, the home of Dakuwanga, the shark-god, is the tiny island of Benau off the southeast tip of Vanua Levu, where THE WRATH OF DAKUWANGA takes place.

Hope this bit of additional color will be of interest to the Globe Trotters. By the way, any reader who still doubts that a shark will attack a man without provocation would do well to talk with a certain native who is selling missionary tracts around Suva. Since his last swim in Suva harbor he hasn't had any arms.

Sincerely,

Crawford Sullivan.

The Mailbag

Whew, what a mail! If this keeps up, we'll have to have our own Post Office branch. But I'm not complaining. The more the merrier, especially when they're like the following:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Your column worked again. When you printed my last letter asking the whereabouts of Ralph Barnard, an old pen pal secured through your column seven years ago, I had slim hopes he would even see it, but it seems he still reads the magazine (who wouldn't?). It wasn't long after the issue was printed that he answered it from Los Angeles, California. After leaving me five or six years ago, he trotted about the globe a bit, then settled in California, where he now has a business of his own.

Now, Globe Trotter, I've got itching feet again. I'm getting tired of running a boat up and down the same channel every day of the year for a local outfit. It's getting so that I know every fish and crab in Baltimore harbor by their first names.

I told you in my last letter that my wife and I wanted to sell *Heloise*—that's our boat—buy a yawl and sail around the world. The war has put a crimp in that. Besides I would have to work at least two more years to raise the necessary funds.

We mulled over different plans and finally settled on the following: We would sign on four or five persons, male or female, before a U. S. Shipping Commissioner. These persons would share the initial expenses, such as fuel, provisioning, etc. We'd start out for the West Indies, taking in all the places ordinary tourists can't get to. Whenever a chance crops up, to make a little money with the boat, we'd do so.

When we tire of the West Indies, we have South America, then the Pacific Islands. After that? It's too far on the future to say.

This venture will not be any bed of roses or Cooks tour. The crew will have to have stamina and the ability to take things with a smile. They must have the "Three Musketeers" spirit of all for one and one for all, and all for the ship. There

(Continued on page 108)

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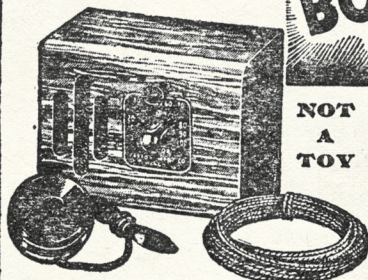
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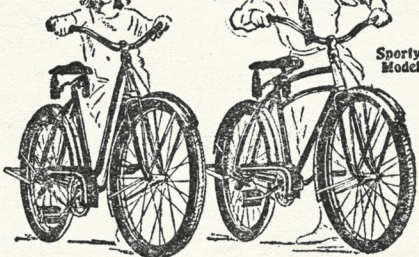
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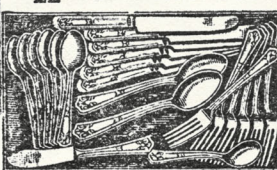
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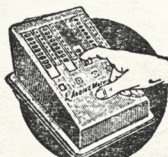
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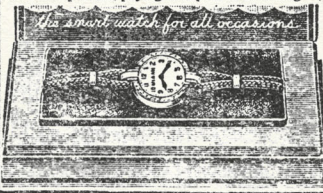
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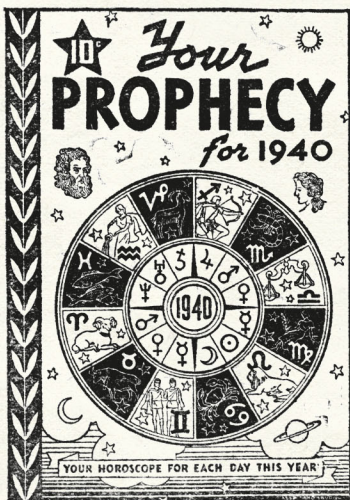
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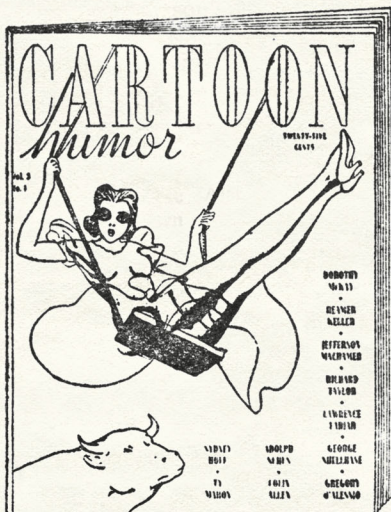
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CHAPTER I

Strange Command

THE shabby columns of gray and butternut splashed on through the shallows of the Potomac. It was chilly even this early in September. Some soldiers bore their shoes slung from their necks or musket-barrels. Others had no shoes to conserve.

Stonewall Jackson rode across the river ahead of the infantry. Bearing his old forage cap in his hand and

bowing his bearded head, he prayed for the success of this venture into enemy country.

A Virginia baritone, hoarsened by a year's outdoor campaigning, set up a song. Others joined in, singing with distant-eyed nostalgia.

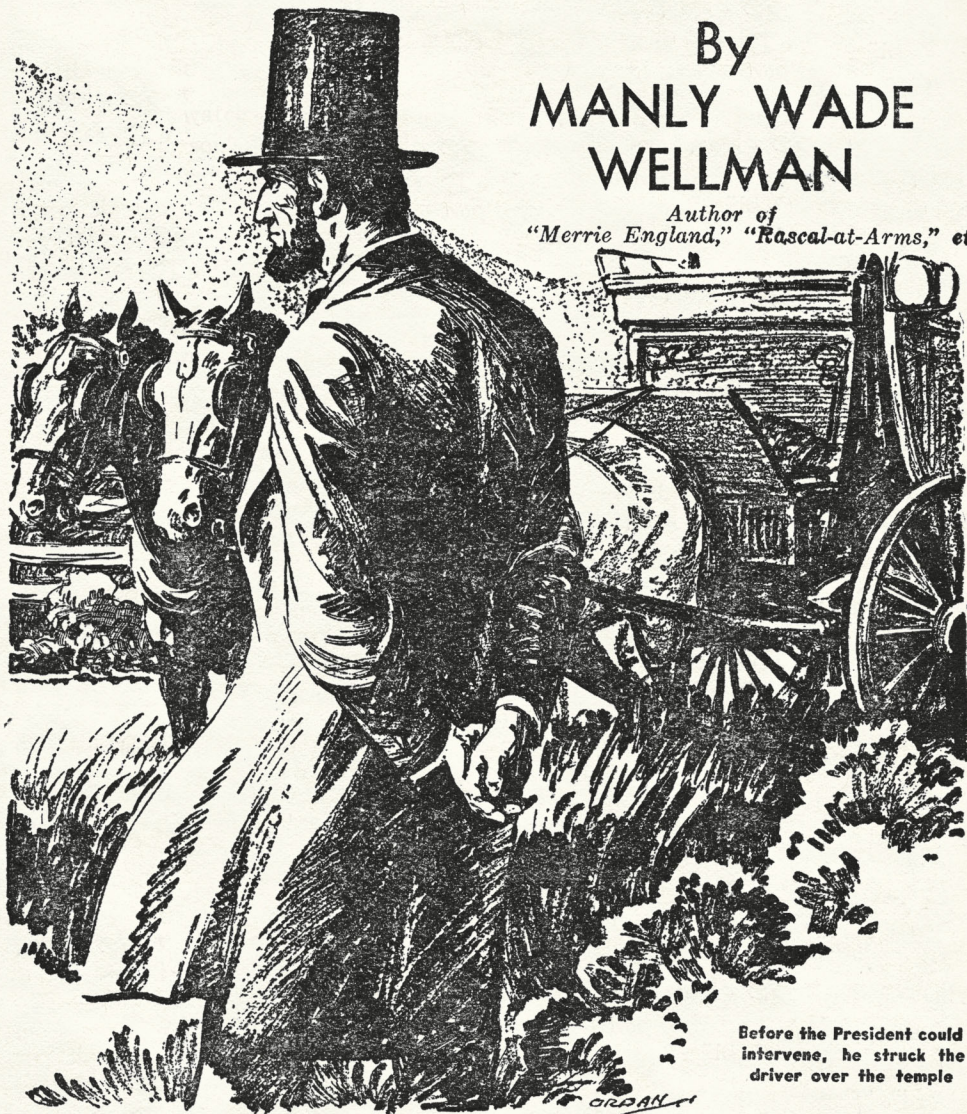
Dear mother! Burst the tyrant's chain,
Maryland, my Maryland!
Virginia should not call in vain,
Maryland, my Maryland. . . .

Then, with wheels churning mud, rolled the cannon and the supply wagons. Most of them had been cap-

ABE LINCOLN

By
MANLY WADE
WELLMAN

Author of
"Merrie England," "Rascal-at-Arms," etc.



Before the President could
intervene, he struck the
driver over the temple

tured during the summer from Yankee invaders. As for Jeb Stuart's cavalry, that had crossed over long ago. Now they were spread screenwise in front—all but one captain, who sat his big bay expectantly and a little ruefully before the commander who had asked him to wait.

General Lee was all of silver-gray—beard, hat, coat, gauntlets, the very horse he rode. He returned the cap-

tain's salute, but paused to scribble orders. One told the cavalry to make headquarters at Frederick, ten miles north. A second would send Jackson swooping upon the blue garrison at Harper's Ferry. He smiled at the marching song, as though he hoped that Maryland would indeed rise. That would confirm the Southern victory, already half assured in this second autumn of the War Between the

States. Then he had time to address the waiting officer.

"Captain Marcum Story, I think? Second Virginia Cavalry, commissioned after Gaines Mills? General Stuart says that you are resourceful and dependable. You have your country's interests at heart. You have never failed in a mission, however important or dangerous."

"General Stuart flatters me, sir," replied Captain Marcum Story. He was young and medium-sized, but lank enough to ride light and graceful. His cavalry mustache was a lighter brown than his weathered face, and his eyes were as blue as the September sky. "I'd hoped," he went on wistfully, "that General Stuart would see fit to employ my talents at the forefront of the advance—"

General Lee put a hand into his inside pocket.

"I have even sterner employment for those talents, Captain," he said, and produced a letter. "Will you come closer? This is secret as well as important."

THE bay charger sidled within touch of the gray. General Lee opened the letter and continued.

"What I am showing you comes from a man who thinks to please me. His father served under mine in the War for Independence, and his loyalty I do not question. As to his judgment—but read for yourself."

The troops, still singing, formed in battalions as they left the water and moved forward watchfully. Story took the offered letter and read:

Dear Genl Robt Lee

You will be glad Im sure to heare that the days of the tyrant is numberd Sept 6 old Abe Lincon will be kiled as he deserve. With him gone therel be no holdin the Sothern boys I am swore not to tell this but I must tell you so you can act accordin Long live the Sothern confedarasay

Your obdt servnt

Lucius Ambler

Cottage Corners
Sept 1 1862

Story, trained to be quick of deci-

sion and appreciation, yet paused for long moments to digest what he had read. Lee's voice broke in upon his musings.

"Well, Captain, do you see what it means?"

"Why, that Old Abe—Lincoln, the Yankee President—"

"Will be assassinated, and on September sixth. Tomorrow! Captain Story, I want you to prevent it."

"Prevent the death of Abraham Lincoln?" demanded Captain Story, struggling to understand. "The general feels that Lincoln would—serve us better alive?"

"I am convinced of it." The silver-bearded jaw was firm, the brown eyes deeply bright. "Consider, Captain. Today we begin an invasion of the North. It comes propitiously, after our victories on our own soil, and the lowering of Northern morale. We have driven McClellan once. We may do so again." Lee silently exulted at the thought. "Such a success on Northern soil might gain us Maryland. It might move the tardy government of England to recognize us. It might induce Mr Lincoln to talk peace."

"Peace!" cried Captain Story.

Lee glanced at him shrewdly.

"Your tone shows that the hope of peace is as dear to you as to myself. It is also attractive to Mr. Lincoln. He is our adversary, sir, but kind and understanding. It is only that he is utterly sincere in his wish to preserve the Union." Lee paused. Story remembered that his commander had been, up to the moment of Virginia's secession, an earnest Union man himself. "You must realize why his life is valuable to us. When peace is discussed, we want a sane and honest man to deal with. Without Lincoln, there can be no peace."

"Not even if we rout McClellan?"

Lee shook his head. "Lincoln's place in Washington would be taken—by whom? Perhaps an intolerant zealot, a bloodthirsty hater of all

things Southern. His heart would surely be hardened by his predecessor's foul murder. The deed would certainly be laid to us, not to a handful of deluded conspirators like Ambler.

"The North, just now undecided, apprehensive, half pacifistic, would rally. Even if we wiped out McClellan's last man, millions would rise. No," Lee said emphatically. "Lincoln must be saved. The North must not even know that he was in danger."

STORY handed back the letter. "The general detaches me for this service? All I can say, sir, is that I will do it, or die."

"Do it and live," Lee bade him.

They exchanged salutes, and Story gathered up his reins and rode away.

His preparations were few and quick. He sought out friends on various regimental staffs. From one he borrowed a black hat and a dark broadcloth cloak without military insignia. From another he took a civilian saddle. Regretfully he left his saber behind and took instead two Navy revolvers. A short double-barreled pistol he thrust into his waistband. Under the cloak he wore his uniform. Only his boots could be seen, and they would not betray him. If captured, he could drop the cloak and still be a soldier, entitled to the honors of war.

Thus prepared, he rode off to the east.

Not once, since the First Manassas, had Captain Marcum Story taken time to study the rights and wrongs of the conflict. They had all seemed clear to his young viewpoint. The South was a persecuted, courageous nation of heroes. The North was a pack of invaders and looters.

But now he was being sent to save the life of Old Abe Lincoln, the King Yankee responsible for everything from Fort Sumter to the advance on Richmond. It wasn't a question of

right or wrong, deserved death or deserved rescue. Justice was out of it. Lee had shown that. Expedience was all that was involved.

Well, maybe the day of crusaders was past. Story hoped he was a good enough soldier to obey orders, at least. He'd save Abe Lincoln but he'd never brag about it.

He knew by repute the little cross-roads community of Cottage Corners, from which Ambler had dated his letter. It was northeast of Washington, a stop on the underground route whereby contraband goods and intelligence were smuggled South. It might easily be a spy rendezvous, a conspirators' lair. From where Lee forded the river it was a good sixty miles to Cottage Corners. Story might reach there well after dark.

Behind him as he departed rose a new verse of the marching song.

Thou wilt not yield the vandal toll,
Maryland, my Maryland!
Better that fire should on thee roll,
Better the shot, the blade, the bowl,
And crucifixion of the soul,
Maryland, my Maryland!

That songwriter knew damned little about war, thought Story. If Maryland escaped battle under any terms, she'd be well off. War had frazzled the romanticism, though not the idealism, out of him.

He made slow progress. At the town of Oak Junction waited a whole regiment of Union cavalry. Story left the road. He walked on foot through swampy woods, one hand clamping his bay's muzzle lest it whinny and betray him, the other holding a revolver. Beyond was a guarded bridge. He avoided it, wading an icy creek.

He then came upon a crowded turnpike, and lost himself in its traffic. At sundown he had supper in a little inn, eating without a candle lest someone see his gray jacket beneath the cloak. When he finished, a fine half moon had come up to show him the way. Continuing his ride, he spoke to other wayfarers only when need-

ful, hardening the r's and shortening the diphthongs of his Virginia speech.

COTTAGE CORNERS was not even a town—only a clump of five houses, all in one angle of the crossroads. There were no lights except in a square-fronted building that looked like a small general store.

Before this lighted house Story dismounted. Drawing his cloak tight, he rapped on the door. Only silence was within, but a shadow moved in the lamplight. Somebody peered through the glass pane of the door before it opened.

Story had seen taller men, but none so large all over. The figure in the doorway towered at least six feet five. Yet it was so broad and thick, from far off it must appear grotesquely stunted. A great bony block of a head rode necklessly upon shoulders a full yard across. Inside the sleeves of a tentlike coat bulged arms like knotted hickory beams. Coarse hair, banged on the brow, shaded staring, challenging eyes. The monster's slab mouth opened.

"Well?" came a gruff roar.

"I'm looking for the home of Mr. Lucius Ambler," replied Story.

"What for?"

Story drew himself up truculently, like a terrier to a mastiff.

"If it is any affair of yours, sir, Mr. Ambler is my cousin and I'm visiting him on family business. Which is his house?"

The bulk on the threshold shifted ponderously from leg to leg, like a shackled elephant.

"Well, now—"

"Wait, Harkins," said another voice, inside the lighted room.

Story heard the lively bustle of approach. A slim white hand appeared from behind to clutch the big man's sleeve. That hand guided the giant to one side, and Story confronted a second stranger.

This was a gentleman, or Story counted himself no judge. He was

small, with an elegant dancer's figure, modish garments, braid on the frock coat, a profusion of cravat. The face was of a delicate handsomeness—palely clear, with a curly forelock, close-trimmed black side-whiskers, a chiseled Greek nose, burning eloquent eyes. But the mustache was waxed to a debonair gaiety that Story dolefully knew he himself could never approximate.

"Mr. Ambler's cousin, you say?" asked the paragon. "Welcome, sir. I am a friend of Mr. Ambler. He is good enough to let me lodge here at his little shop. My name is Mingleton, Mr.—" He paused expectantly.

"Story," replied the other, who saw no reason to take a false name. "If you'll point out my cousin's house, I'll be grateful."

The whitest of teeth gleamed cordially under the gay mustache.

"But, Mr. Story, I will conduct you myself! A pleasure, sir." The man who called himself Mingleton came out on the porch. "Harkins," he called over his shoulder, "will you see to this gentleman's horse? Come, Mr. Story."

Story resented this empty-headed interest in his affairs, but he could not well refuse. He fell into step with Mingleton. They had not twenty yards to go, to the nearest of the other houses.

"Here is your cousin's home," chattered his guide. "Dark, but I dare say he is still awake. You will speak to him alone, I suppose? Good night, sir."

He bowed and walked off. Story mounted two steps and knocked at the door of Lucius Ambler's house. From inside came slow movements, then the flare of a light. A bolt grated, and the door opened halfway. Out poked a bearded head.

"What is it?" asked a sleepy voice.

Before Story could reply, Mingleton called back cheerfully.

"He came—tonight of all nights—saying he was your cousin, Ambler!"

Ambler gulped out a startled oath,

and shoved the door all the way open. He stood revealed. A sturdy middle-aged man in an old flannel nightgown, he held a shotgun across his chest. Even as the door swung wide enough to give him room, that shotgun whipped to his shoulder, threatening Story.

CHAPTER II

The End Begins



STORY ducked under the barrels, clutching Ambler's wrists and seeking to disarm him. But there was a rush of great feet coming from behind. Mighty hands snatched him up like a child. A moment later he was rushed into the house, held by Harkins, while Mingleton deftly searched him, snatching away his double-barreled pistol.

"Present for you, Ambler," he chuckled.

He gave the pistol to the bearded one, who grunted and laid it on the table beside the lamp.

Harkins became aware of Story's uniform under the cloak.

"Look," he growled. "He's Secesh!"

"Secesh," repeated Mingleton, and licked his lips. "Pull his cloak clear off. . . . Well, an officer—the bars of a captain. Better and better. Ambler, meet your kinsman, Captain Story, C.S.A."

"He's no kin of mine," said Ambler at once, glaring.

"No, and no captain. And certainly no Confederate! He's a Yankee spy who got wind of this, and came by himself to trick and betray us!"

"Let's finish him," snarled Harkins.

Mingleton's curly head shook.

"No, no. We may need him. Tie him up."

Harkins slammed Story into an armchair. Story wrenched free, and then something crashed against his head.

He subsided amid a rain of sparks in the blackness of his head. . . .

When his wits crawled slowly back, his head ached. He was bound to the chair, wrists to the arms, ankles to the front legs. His captors were grouped in front of him, along with a fourth.

The newcomer was lean, with a pointed beard and a shaven upper lip. His hollow eyes were hard.

"Captain Story," said Mingleton with mock deference. "May I have the honor of presenting our colleague, Mr. Wolmuth?"

Wolmuth cleared his throat. "You had better talk, spy," he boomed deeply. He had some kind of foreign accent.

Story met his eyes.

"Listen to me. If you are going to kill Lincoln—"

"Didn't I say he found us out?" laughed Mingleton. "Well, sir, if we kill him, what then?"

"It will damage the South," Story told them earnestly. He tried to remember all that Lee had said. "We're trying to win fairly. We want a sane and honorable man to talk peace with at the end. If Lincoln—"

"Ah," interrupted Mingleton once more. "If Lincoln is killed, you were saying, some harsh, vengeful soul would replace him? That will be sad." The handsome head shook with simulated gloom. "Touching concern—in a fraud and a spy!"

"Who sent you, Story?" Wolmuth spoke again. "If that is your name."

"It's my name," snapped Story. "And Robert E. Lee sent me."

"Oh, to be sure, General Lee sent him," cried Mingleton airily. "It's logical that the South wants to save Lincoln, and sends her brave Captain Story to arrange it!"

His laugh was joined by those of Harkins and Wolmuth. Ambler remained silent, glaring at Story.

"One thing is certain," put in Wolmuth gravely. "We must do the business tonight, not tomorrow. Lincoln drives the road nightly. He will have

made the trip already. But he will come back before midnight."

"You're going to kill him tonight?" cried Story. "I understood—"

Mingleton nodded at him.

"You knew our plans, then. I have hopes of you. Gentlemen," he said to the others. "Will you grant me a few moments alone with Captain Story?"

THEY filed into a rear room. Ambler, going last, closed the door behind him. Mingleton drew a chair close to Story.

"I shall explain some things, sir," he said softly. "I shall also quiet your further protestations by saying that I believe your claim. I know you are a Southern captain, executing the orders of General Lee."

"Then, in heaven's name, believe me. Lincoln's life is necessary to the Confederacy!" cried Story.

"I believe that, too." Mingleton stroked his mustache. "But you must understand me as well. I, who have planned this adventure, have not taken the Confederacy into consideration. I am killing President Lincoln for my own ends."

Story tugged at his bonds.

"Then, whether you are Northerner or Southerner—"

"I am neither," Mingleton interrupted silkily.

"No?" demanded Story. A new question drove into his brain. "Are you the agent of some other government?"

Mingleton nodded. "Yes. A government across the sea. I shall not name it. This American civil war—"

"War between the states," corrected Story automatically.

"Whatever it is, it greatly interests certain minds abroad. But what if it ends before the two sides are exhausted?" He spread his delicate hands as if in horror of the thought. "That would hamper us. But, by striking down Mr. Lincoln, I hope to strike down another president—Mr. James Monroe."

"Monroe died long ago," said Story.

"His achievement still lives. I refer to the policy which bears his name. The Monroe Doctrine."

Monroe Doctrine. . . . Story had thought little of it lately. Didn't it maintain the freedom of all western nations? What did Mingleton mean?

As if reading the question in Story's mind, Mingleton went on.

"Your war is to be encouraged to the end. Which means that we want one side obliterated, the other victorious but exhausted. A dead Lincoln will cause an aroused North, a desperate South. Meanwhile, the outmoded Monroe Doctrine, with its rebuff to more civilized powers, will be no more." He snapped his slim fingers. "My own nation will come into its proper place, with an empire in this hemisphere. Perhaps it will even include some of the States now fighting against each other."

"You damned pirate!" Story snarled. Again he surged against his bonds. Mingleton laughed.

"You lose dignity, Captain. Pause and wonder why I have told you this. Why have I put you in possession of valuable information? Why do I promise to leave you alive behind me? Not only that. I will give you for companion the one possible convert to your side. Ambler, an American and a Southerner like yourself."

"You're fantastic," was all that Story could gasp.

"Yes," said Mingleton. "Ambler is our one honest member. We included him because his home and store are a proper base of operations. He thinks we are Southern sympathizers like himself. Wolmuth, however, is as devoted to my government as myself. He has worked with me before. Harkins is a dull lump from the New York slums, in it for the money I give him. I, sir, am the real villain. . . . But now I leave you. I invite you to convince Ambler."

He called to the others, who came in.

"Ambler," said Mingleton. "Take charge here. Keep this prisoner safe. When we return, we'll knock three times and speak the password. If anyone else tries to enter, shoot this spy at once."

"I understand," said Ambler, his bearded mouth firm.

"Take Story's horse," Mingleton addressed Harkins. "It's a fine one, and strong — good enough to carry even your weight. It's better than the other, anyway. And now we leave." He ushered Wolmuth and Harkins out, pausing at the front door to bow mockingly. "I wish you two a pleasant evening together."

ABRUPTLY he was gone. Ambler sat down in the chair Mingleton had occupied. He had tucked his nightgown into a pair of woolen pants. Now he laid his shotgun across his lap.

"I ought to shoot you," he grumbled. "I don't know why Mingleton ordered you kept."

"Ambler," replied Story earnestly, "how can you be such a fool? I see the whole plot now. You're being deceived, exploited."

"Don't call me no fool!" warned Ambler deep in his beard.

He raised his shotgun. Despite the threatening gesture, Story persisted.

"Mingleton isn't a Southerner, not even American. He's an agent of a foreign power that wants to wreck both North and South. Lincoln's murder will cause that. Then these foreigners will come in and pick up the pieces."

Ambler barked a short, throaty laugh.

"You're crazy," he sneered. "I might have known you'd try some cock-and-bull story. But I don't swallow everything. It'll take better lies than that to fetch me."

Story remembered Mingleton's words.

"I invite you to convert Ambler," he had said.

It had been deliberate on Mingleton's part, that setting forth of his real reason for seeking Lincoln's death. Too late, Story realized how fantastic it would sound to Ambler. Far from profiting by what he had learned, Story had only damaged himself by talking about it. He tried to marshal new persuasions.

"I'll make a guess," he said at length. "The assassination is planned to take place not far from here." He watched Ambler's face, and saw that the shot had gone home. "And there are still some hours before your friends strike."

[Turn Page]



A SKEPTIC IS CONVERTED

ANN: I dread taking this awful-tasting medicine. It leaves me weak as a kitten.

RUTH: You're foolish to take a cathartic like that. Try my stand-by ... Ex-Lax.



ANN: Why: this tastes just like fine chocolate! But will it really work?

RUTH: Yes, indeed! Ex-Lax is effective—yet it doesn't upset you.



LATER

ANN: Thanks to you and Ex-Lax, I feel wonderful this morning.

RUTH: I know you would! In our family we all use Ex-Lax! It's so dependable.

The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet *gentle*! No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowel movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax next time you need a laxative. It's good for every member of the family.

10¢ and 25¢



Ambler's hard stare of rage softened a little, as the eyes widened with amazement.

"You've been finding out lots of things, haven't you?"

Story was able to judge by these words that besides knowing the destined place of attack or ambush, Ambler was informed on other matters. Not everything had been kept from this dupe of Mingleton. He might even now have been riding with the assassins, but for Story's arrival and the resultant complications. The prisoner continued.

"I guessed that because Mingleton told Harkins to take my horse. I've ridden a long way today—sixty miles—and my horse is tired. Mingleton would take it only if there was a short way to go. But there will be some time—hours, perhaps—allowed for rest before the stroke and the dash away. Isn't that right?"

Ambler did not reply. Story felt sure that the bearded man would have denied it if he could. He went still further along his new tack of persuasion.

"General Lee thinks kindly of you. He'd be proud if you would help by smashing up this plot."

"I'm helping General Lee my own way," returned Ambler bleakly.

Story looked at him levelly.

"Your father was a brave man, I judge, or he wouldn't have ridden with Light Horse Harry, the father of Robert E. Lee. My grandfather was in the War for Independence, too. He was with Marion in Virginia, and then with Colonel William Washington when Tarleton was defeated. When he was alive, and I was just a little boy, he talked of seeing Light Horse Harry Lee. He never dreamed Americans would fight Americans."

A GAIN Ambler touched his weapon significantly.

"I don't want none of your damn Yankee talk."

"What if I told you that General Lee showed me a letter you wrote?"

"I'd call you an all-fired liar," was the immediate reply.

"But it's the truth. I can even quote it." Story thought for a moment, then began:

"Dear General Robert Lee. You will be glad, I'm sure, to hear that the days of the tyrant—"

Lucius Ambler gave a wordless cry and sprang to his feet. The muzzle of the shotgun quivered in Story's very face.

"You Yankees have captured him!" he charged shrilly. "Got him and his staff—maybe his whole army—Found my letter, and now—"

His finger found the trigger. His thumb drew back the hammer.

But Story knew how to face a gun. He kept his eyes fixed, not on the staring weapon, but upon the face of the man who held it. He replied, as evenly and impressively as possible.

"No, Mr. Ambler. Lee's still at the head of his army, and has led it into Maryland. The South was never so far from defeat."

"Huh?" The gun-barrels drooped. Ambler's face softened again. "If I could believe that! If you could prove it!" He paused, considered, and then grounded the butt of his gun. "All right. How long they been in Maryland?"

"We crossed today, at Noland's Ford. The cavalry first, and General Stuart disposed them to scout and develop the enemy front."

"If I believed you," said Ambler again, "if I thought you told the truth about coming from General Lee, I might—" He suddenly flung out a question, with a cunning air. "What kind of a looking man is Jeb Stuart?"

"Tall and thin, with a big brown beard and dandy uniform," said Story at once. "But don't judge me by that answer, friend. Many a Yankee knows what Jeb Stuart looks like—and would like to forget."

"That's right. You know Jackson's men?"

"Some of them. Jackson crossed at

the head of the infantry, with the Stonewall Brigade."

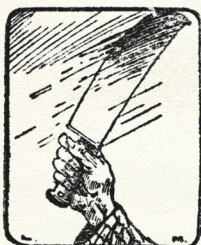
"Stonewall Brigade," repeated Ambler eagerly. "You know the Second Virginia Infantry?"

"Colonel Allen's regiment? Yes, I know some of the officers."

"Officers. Mmmm— Yes. There's a Captain Scaife, or is there? Do you know him, or am I just making the name up?"

CHAPTER III

The Death Seat



ABOVE the beard the eyes were crafty, and the butt of the shotgun came off the floor again.

"I know a Captain Scaife, though not well," replied Story, wondering if his life depended on the words. "He commands Company F — or G, I'm not sure. His first name, I think, is Matthew."

"Matthew Scaife, you say?" Ambler did not call the answer right or wrong, but stared the harder at Story. There might be something of yearning hope in the light that came into his eyes. "What does he look like, then?"

"Captain Scaife is not tall, but strongly made," Story made careful reply. "He is a very fine shot with the pistol, and has some knowledge of medicine. Studied to be a doctor before the war, I hear. He has a thick, dark beard and bright eyes. In many ways he resembles yourself, Mr. Ambler, except that he is younger."

"That's a good picture of him," said Ambler hoarsely. "He's my sister's boy, her oldest."

Once again the gun-butt thumped on the floor.

"He comes from Monroe, Virginia," said Ambler. "Ever been in Monroe?"

"No, but my brother was an attorney at Lynchburg, just a few miles away.

He's now on the staff of A. P. Hill. Probably he knew the Scaifes before the war." Story drew a deep breath. "In Matthew Scaife you have a fine nephew, sir, and I think that in you he has an honest uncle."

Ambler sat down abruptly.

"Go on. Tell me everything. Explain why you're doing this—and why Mingleton should be doing what he's doing, if it's wrong."

"I've told you my side, and that of General Lee," replied Story, full of new hope. "As to Mingleton, I'll hazard another guess. If he was honest in the plot, he'd have killed me. But he leaves me alive, under your guard."

"Until he returns," added Ambler, "and knocks and gives the password."

"But what if he knocks the wrong knock?"

"Why, I expect I'd shoot you—"

"Yes!" Story fairly shouted. "He'll knock at the door. Not the signal, and he won't give the password! He'll stampede you into killing me. That'll be the end of me, and you, too!"

"How?" demanded Ambler. "How?"

"He'll dash off then, with his three friends. You'll be left here, with everybody running in at sound of the shot, to find you stranded with a corpse to explain. You'll be imprisoned, maybe hanged. And you're the only man who could incriminate Mingleton!"

"Thunder, it could be!" exclaimed Ambler. His hand tugged furiously at his beard.

"It will be," insisted Story. "You're useful to him no more. He only wanted your house as headquarters. Now you're only a piece of dead timber."

"It could be," Ambler muttered again. "Those three would whisper together, and leave me out, time and again. Like I was an outsider."

"I've proved to you that I was a Southern officer," Story pleaded desperately, "and that General Lee gave me his confidence in this matter."

Ambler rose and carried his gun

across the room, leaned it in a corner, and turned to face Story.

"If there was still time to save Lincoln, you'd do it?"

"Do it or die," replied Story, as he had replied to Lee.

"It's set to happen on the Seventh Street Road," Ambler spoke rapidly. "You know where that is, not far from here. There's a hospital, out in the country but inside the defense picket lines, for convalescent Yankee soldiers.

President Lincoln goes out there almost every night to visit. He goes in a closed carriage, with only a driver. Generally stays late—midnight.

"Mingleton has bribed the driver to always take him at a certain time, along a certain route. At one point there aren't any houses—a grove of trees where men and horses can hide." He came a step toward Story. "Well, what you waiting for? Why ain't you going?"

"Because I'm tied!" Story yelled.

Ambler had forgotten. He ran to Story, knelt and tore the bonds loose. Story rose, chafing his wrists. Ambler was offering the pistol that had been laid beside the lamp.

Story thrust it inside his jacket. He snatched up his fallen cloak and hat.

"A horse?" he asked.

Ambler led him quickly through the rear of the house. In a ramshackle shed, the two of them saddled and bridled a big, solid roan.

Ambler said that this had been Harkin's mount, deserted for Story's better charger.

Hand on saddle-horn, Story paused for a last word.

"Got another horse, Mr. Ambler? Why don't you clear out?"

"I was going to, after the killing," Ambler replied.

"There won't be a killing," Story assured him. "Not of Lincoln, anyway. Go south, now. Here, I'll give you some help."

From his pockets he took all the paper money he had and thrust it into Ambler's fist.

"Confederate scrip," he said. "Good anywhere south of the Potomac. Good luck, sir."

They shook hands. Story mounted and rode away.

He came quickly to the outskirts of Washington. There he asked a Negro pedestrian the way to the Seventh Street Road, and sought out a hard dirt wagon-track parallel to it. Putting the roan to a canter, he went some distance and inquired at a cottage the way to the military convalescent home. When he had come near to it he followed a side track to the Seventh Street Road. He waited under a tall elm at one side, within view of the institution's gates.

HE WAITED a full hour, shaking with a nervous tension that baffled and enraged him. The slice of moon was almost at zenith when he heard a wheel creak and the drum of hoofs. He saw emerging from the driveway of the convalescent home a dark closed carriage. Two horses drew the vehicle into the road and it came toward him, headed in the direction of Washington.

As it drew abreast of him, Story shook his bridle and rode out, trotting beside the left fore wheel. Standing in his stirrups, he spoke to the driver.

"Hst!" he said softly. "I've got a message from Mingleton."

"Not now," the driver mumbled back nervously. "Too close to the guard back there at the home. Later—"

"It's important," Story insisted. "You must listen. You know who I'm talking about?"

"Mingleton? Yes, but—"

"Pull up," Story ordered.

With a protesting exclamation the driver did so.

"What is it?" asked a pleasant, drawling voice from within. "Why are you stopping here?"

Story leaned toward the carriage, shot out both hands and seized the driver's leg. With a sudden heave, he dragged the man from the box. Both came heavily to earth. The driver sprawled but Story landed upon his feet.

The carriage door opened. Someone sprang out into the moonlight.

Story's first impression was of a frame as tall as that of the monstrous Harkins, but far more spare. The man's height was increased by a tall chimney-pot hat.

"What is happening?" asked the drawling voice again.

Story knew at once who spoke. He caught the driver by the collar and hauled him erect. His other hand drew the pistol.

"Treason, Mr. President. This driver has sold you to a band of assassins."

"My ankle's sprained," moaned the fellow he had collared.

Story thrust his pistol-point under a slack jowl.

"Confess," he ordered. "You took money from Mingleton. He was going to waylay this carriage."

"Yes—that's so—" whimpered the driver, in abject fear of Story.

That was enough. Story struck him over the temple with the pistol. The driver collapsed, and Story dragged him to the ditch at one side. Returning, he stood at attention before the towering President of the United States.

"Sir," he said, "few words are best. The plot to kill you will harm all America, North and South. I hope to bring it to nothing. I hope, Sir, that you believe me. I have little time for proof."

A BRAHAM LINCOLN actually smiled, though not happily.

"I have long expected such an attempt," he replied. "I hoped to trust my driver, but his words and manner convicted him just now." The mighty shoulders shrugged, the tall hat wagged. "Well, I never thought to run from danger when it came. What do you look for now?"

"Mr. President," said Story, "I respectfully request that you help me. The plot, though exposed, is not defeated. There are reasons why it must be dealt with by me alone—with you to approve and aid. Three dangerous men wait to ambush this carriage."

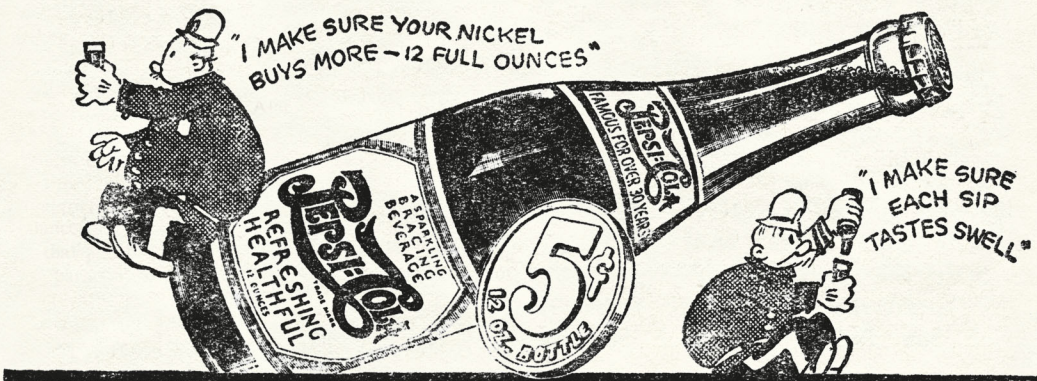
"What then?" asked Lincoln.

"Let me take your place in the carriage, Sir. If you will mount the box as driver and go back to Washington the way you came, you will be called upon to pull up. Do so at the command. You will seem to be the accomplice-driver. You will be safe. I'll do the rest."

Lincoln gazed at Story, for about the time it took him to breathe four times.

"I agree," he said. "Your reasons

[Turn Page]



must be good ones, honest ones. I place myself in your hands."

"Thank you," replied Story saluting smartly.

Knotting the reins upon the roan's neck, he struck its rump with his hand. It sprang away, startled, along a side-track in the direction of Cottage Corners. It would return to Ambler's stable in time to help him on his flight south.

PRESIDENT LINCOLN doffed his high hat and threw it upon the seat of the carriage. Quickly he mounted to the box and took the lines. Story entered the carriage, pulled down the blinds. He relaxed against the cushions. He heard the President cluck expertly to the horses, and the carriage resumed motion.

He loosened his cloak and took off his own hat. His pistol he kept in his hand. Suddenly he felt almost peacefully weary. Here in the dark heart of the carriage, sitting in the place of Lincoln and courting Lincoln's danger, Story stretched out his legs.

He sighed and was serene.

Minutes passed quietly by. Nothing happened. Could some warning, an intuition perhaps, have balked the conspirators from their attempt? If Story only knew the exact place of ambush—but he did not. This was the only way. If any of the three escaped him, Lincoln's life would still be in peril. The mission entrusted by Robert E. Lee to Marcum Story could fail. He must not let it fail!

At that instant of his meditations came the challenge he had half given up.

"Stand!" rang out the booming voice of Wolmuth.

Lincoln, on the driver's box, reined the team to a halt.

There was a rush upon the door to the right. Story came off his seat, dropping to one knee on the carriage floor, pistol raised. The door was assaulted, torn open.

CHAPTER IV

America First!



IT WAS Mingleton who came first to the carriage. One hand was on the catch of the open door, the other lifted a big revolver. Story, kneeling before him, scowled into the

handsome face at a distance of a bare fifteen inches. The inward flood of moonlight may or may not have helped Mingleton to recognize Story. At least he could see that this was not Lincoln.

"Why—why—" stammered Mingleton, confused.

Seeking only to understand what had gone wrong, he leaned far into the carriage, peering as though to find Lincoln in the deeper shadows.

Story clapped the muzzle of his pistol to the center of Mingleton's chest and shot him stone dead.

The graceful figure sagged inward, like a fallen roll of blankets. Story ducked lower, letting the weight of the body lie against him. Mingleton's torso hid his, the dead man's shoulder-point jutted above his own stooped head.

He was just in time. Both Harkins and Wolmuth, following their leader, fired their own revolvers again and again. Six shots blazed out at a range of less than four feet. Story heard the heavy thud of bullets into Mingleton's body. He felt the dead man surge against him with the force of the impacts. The carriage quivered as the frightened horses plunged and sought to flee. But the powerful hands of the President on the box held them from a runaway and fought to control them. And no lead pierced the shield of flesh that protected Story.

Harkins and Wolmuth stopped shooting, began to jabber loudly. Their torrent of words drowned each

other. Story thrust the dead Mingleton from the carriage door, so that it fell violently, like a great puppet. At the same moment Story drew up both feet and sprang out himself. He landed erect in the road, straddling Mingleton's body. The cloak jerked from his shoulders as he jumped. He stood revealed in his cavalry jacket of Confederate gray.

"I'm Captain Marcum Story!" he thundered.

As he had hoped, the pronouncement gave pause to the two foes re-

muscles were too mighty to be subdued. His left arm whipped around Story, hugging him close. The gun, despite all efforts to hold it away, began to push around into firing position.

"I'll kill you," grunted Harkins above Story's tossing head. "I'll kill you—"

The gun hand forced itself within inches of a target. A dip of the muzzle, and it would be the end. In a new grimness of desperation, Captain Story shot out his head and set

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maining. In the moment gained, Story aimed at the nearest. It was Wolmuth. He sent his second and last bullet straight between the wide, astonished eyes.

Before Wolmuth had collapsed, Story hurled his empty gun at the huge Harkins and charged in after it.

The missile struck somewhere, staggering Harkins only momentarily. With both hands Story seized the huge fist that held a revolver. He desperately wrung and twisted in an effort to gain possession of the weapon. But Harkins recovered. His

his teeth in that great hand, just at juncture of wrist and thumb. He bit with all the strength in his jaws. He heard Harkins yell like a wolf. Then the revolver exploded once, almost in his ear.

He was too deafened to catch the fall of the weapon from the paralyzed fingers of his opponent. Next instant Harkins had released him. The giant tore his hand free, and stood panting and staring.

Story kicked the fallen gun away into the bushes at the side of the road.

"I'll kill you," roared Harkins again.

The giant closed in like a bear on a hound. Like a hound, Story slipped backward on the defensive. Then, standing suddenly, he rose on tiptoe and struck Harkins on the jaw with left fist and right. The big man's teeth clicked with the force of the blows. But he did not reel or retreat. Again his left arm gathered Story in. His right hand dived into a pocket and brought into view a huge clasp-knife, such as sailors and hunters carry.

Story struck at the knife, but the other was not to be disarmed twice. Still crushing his smaller adversary to him, enduring a rain of blows on chest and stomach, Harkins lifted his right hand to his mouth, trying to pull the blade out with his teeth. He failed, cursed. He pressed Story closer. With his left hand free for a moment, he opened the knife with a loud snap.

Story heard that snap, like the signal for his own destruction. He made a last floundering jerk with all his weight, to tear himself free. He succeeded only in wavering backward, dragging his captor with him. Behind him, out of his sight, sprawled Mingleton's body. His boot-heels struck that limp obstruction, slipped out from under the weight they supported.

Story fell, heavily and flatly upon his back. With him and directly upon him crashed the huge weight of Harkins.

Both of them lay still.

Story found himself gazing up into the sky, dusted with stars that winked and danced before his eyes. The moon rose higher still. He could see it. Harkins lay full upon him, seemingly tense, but neither moving nor speaking.

He himself felt no pain except that of exhaustion.

Was that the way a stab-wound worked? Story had never been wounded before, save by a minie ball

at Catlett's Station. His first move would tell where the knife had entered his body. He set his teeth and wriggled sidewise. Harkins made no effort to pin him down.

Story rose to his feet. The front of his jacket was drenched with blood, but still he felt no pain.

Harkins lay face down and silent in the churned dust, looking more ungainly huge than ever. Story hooked a boot under him. With a quick heave he turned him over.

The great lumpish face stared up with wide eyes and slack mouth. Against the barrel-chest a big right fist was clenched. Around it spread a great dark stain.

At the moment when the two had fallen, Harkins had been holding his knife daggerwise. The point had turned toward himself. The tumble and shock had driven the blade squarely into his own breast.

Gazing down, marshaling these facts in his beating brain, Story realized that his whole struggle, one against three, could not have taken more than thirty seconds. Mr. Lincoln had only just calmed the plunging carriage-horses.

AFTER that desperate, noisy battle, Captain Marcum Story suddenly felt that the world was strangely still and lonely. It was as though the three men he had slain were the last fellow-creatures alive, and now he was solitary on an empty planet. But, as he leaned against the side of the carriage, fighting for breath, a slow drawl addressed him.

"Sir," said President Lincoln, descending from the box, "I doubt if even my most imaginative critic would predict that I'd say thank you to a rebel."

Story realized that his Confederate gray was now revealed. He straightened and moved backward a pace. He had remembered hearing that Lincoln was once the strongest wrestler on the old Illinois frontier. He did not

wish to clinch with anybody again, ever.

"Mr. President," he replied formally, "please don't thank me. I saved you only to serve my own country."

"You're really a Confederate?"

"Captain Marcum Story, Sir. Second Virginia Cavalry, Stuart's Division." He saluted, Southern style, palm outward.

"Thank you, Captain," was the grave rejoinder. "Does this mean that I am your prisoner?"

"No, Mr. President. You're free to go. But I beg you. Please be more careful; don't drive unguarded." He remembered all that Lee had said. "We can't afford to have you die, Sir. Not until peace comes."

President Lincoln stooped into the carriage door as a derrick stoops, picked up his hat, and smoothed the nap against his sleeve.

"A little marred," he commented, "but still serviceable—like myself."

He put it on, and the brim shadowed his full dark eyes and big nose. Only the wide mouth and the short fringe of beard showed in the moonlight.

"Yes, I hope to live until peace is at hand," went on Lincoln. "Captain Story—you said that was your name—I am glad to hear that your people think kindly of me. It is the most comforting thing I have heard since this war so unnecessarily began."

Story refused to comment on the unnecessary.

"Mr. President, we're trying to make a gentlemen's war of it."

The big, sad head shook. "Impossible, Captain. Gentlemen fight in wars, but cannot ennoble them. Yet I shall not forget what you say. It makes me hope that friendship will follow the war."

"I hope so, too," ventured Story.

Lincoln cleared his throat. "It may not be the time for a joke, but I am reminded of one. In the West an officer of our Northern army led a force to occupy a captured town. He considered himself dashing, and said

to one of the ladies there: 'If all Southern girls were as pretty as you, I would have no desire to conquer them.' And she replied. 'If all Northern soldiers were as ugly as you, I would have no desire to conquer them.'"

Lincoln chuckled softly to himself.

"There it is, Captain. I doubt if either side has conquest in mind. We both have ideals. If we are true to them, I daresay that they are right, both North and South. The situation—"

"Your pardon, President Lincoln," said Story. "I am not a proper person to discuss such things with you. I am no diplomat, nor do I represent my nation's government. I'm only a soldier. But this much demands to be said. By the deaths of these would-be murderers, you have been saved to America."

"To America?" Lincoln repeated.

"I pronounce that, Sir, as an American," Story told him.

REMEMBERING how fantastic Mingleton's tale sounded, Story forbore to repeat it. He contented himself with adding:

"I have become sensible that there are greater divisions than the one between North and South. Despite the war, there are situations where we two peoples must and shall stand together."

"Then let me reply thus. When the fighting is over, I hope to deal with your people as though they had never been away." Lincoln paused and looked into Story's eyes. "Take that message back with you, to whomever sent you."

"Thank you, Sir," said Story.

Lincoln rummaged in his pockets, produced a bit of paper and a stub of pencil. He wrote hurriedly, and offered the paper to Story.

"A pass for you, Captain. I can't afford to have you captured by my pickets."

"Can't afford to have me captured?" echoed Story.

The wide mouth smiled softly. "No. We understand each other a little, you and I. But this business must not be told. Your friends would call you a traitor for saving me. Mine would call me a fool for letting you go."

Story pocketed the pass, and Lincoln held out his hand. It was a strange hand for so tall and ungainly a man. It was big enough to swallow Story's fingers, but it was as slim and delicate as an idealized plaster model in an art school. And its grip still had the strength of Lincoln's wrestling days.

Turning from Story, the President mounted again the box of his carriage. He shook his lines. The horses

moved away in a burst of speed toward Washington.

Story found three saddle-horses tethered in the thickets to one side. There was light enough for him to recognize his own bay, the one that Harkins had taken. Quickly he mounted and rode in the direction that would take him around the city and away toward Frederick.

Lincoln's pass would satisfy picket posts. By dawn he would be free. Before noon he could join his command. There was fighting to be done, and he need not doubt the right of his cause. But never again would he think of Lincoln's men save as folk to be convinced and, in the final analysis, sided with. No matter how the war ended, the surviving Americans must stand together.

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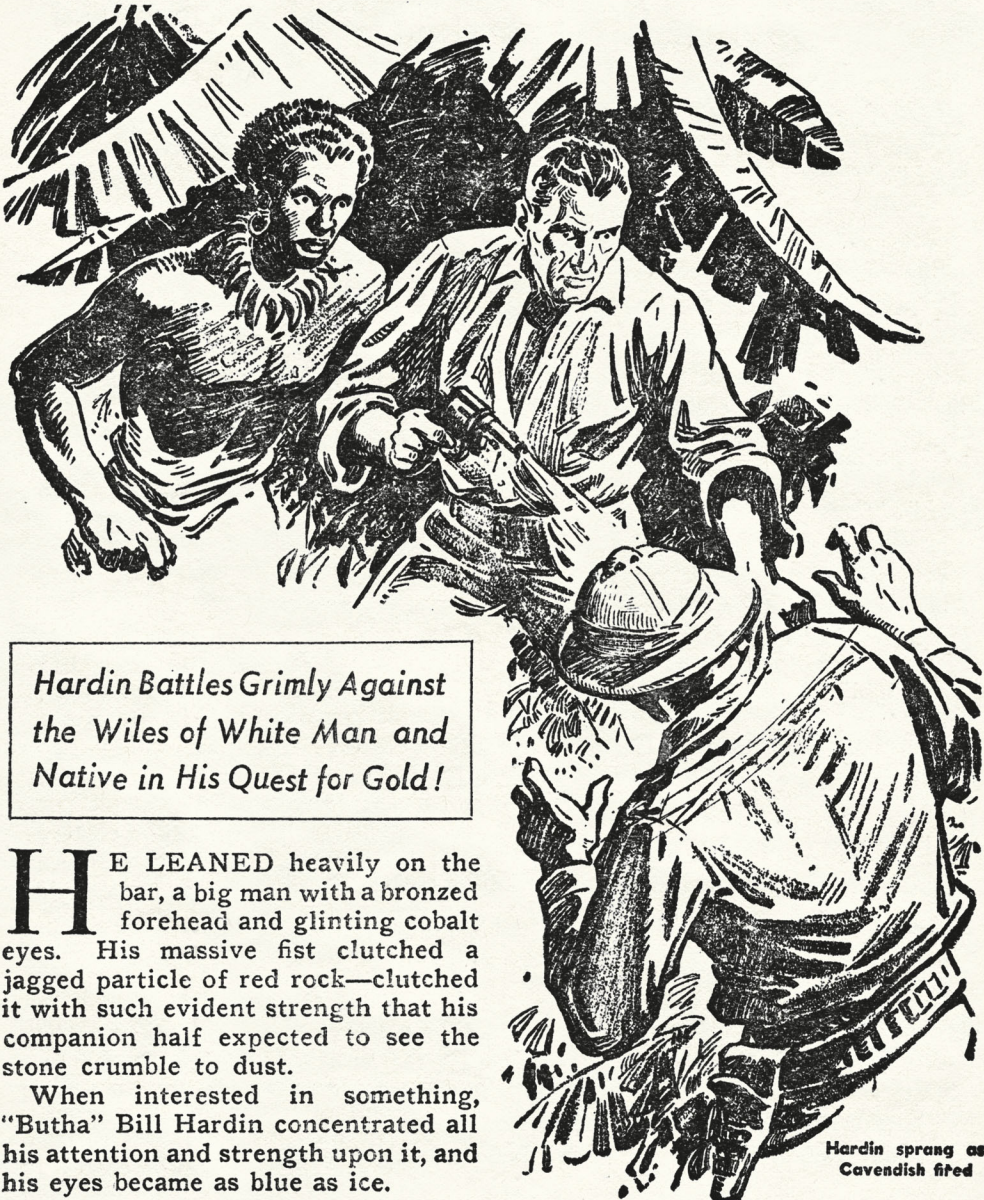
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The Wrath of Dakuwanga

By CRAWFORD SULLIVAN

Author of "Black Beast of Doom," "Sign of the Skull," etc.



*Hardin Battles Grimly Against
the Wiles of White Man and
Native in His Quest for Gold!*

HE LEANED heavily on the bar, a big man with a bronzed forehead and glinting cobalt eyes. His massive fist clutched a jagged particle of red rock—clutched it with such evident strength that his companion half expected to see the stone crumble to dust.

When interested in something, "Butha" Bill Hardin concentrated all his attention and strength upon it, and his eyes became as blue as ice.

Hardin sprang as
Cavendish fired

"Where'd you get this, Collins?" Butha Bill asked.

Relaxing his grip, Hardin let the stone clunk to the bar and turned to the grizzled man at his side.

"Thakaundrove," replied Peter Collins. "I haven't shown it to a soul before you. How much is it worth?"

"Can't tell, offhand," said Hardin. "But if there's more where this came from—"

"Lots more," declared Collins. "I know gold when I see it." He took a drink of whiskey and brushed a few amber globules from his shaggy mustache. "I'm afraid to file a claim without proper advice," he continued. "You've been working for the land commission; so maybe—"

"Sorry, gentlemen. After closing time."

The half-caste bartender pointed at a rusty alarm clock and commenced wiping the mahogany industriously. Butha Bill Hardin covered the drinks with a five shilling note and started to leave.

"We can talk better aboard ship," stated Collins.

He jammed the red stone into his coat pocket, picked up his umbrella and followed Hardin outside. For a few moments the two men stood on the arcaded sidewalk, peering into a driving tropical rain.

Except for a yellow, flickering glow in an Indian laundry, the street was dark and deserted. As the saloon door slammed shut, the light inside the building winked out, and a pair of eyes stared furtively from a crack in the boarded window.

COLLINS opened his umbrella; held it high in an effort to cover Bill Hardin's bare head. Passing a dank row of copra sheds which bordered the canal, they made for King's Wharf.

Moored opposite the harbor master's tower was a salt-caked, seven-hundred ton steamer. The *Mirama* was Peter Collins' only property. For

nearly a decade the old man had sailed around the Fiji group hauling copra, but of late the price of copra had fallen so low that Collins was on the verge of bankruptcy.

Bill Hardin knew of Collins' predicament. He knew that the trader had mortgaged his ship to a hawk-faced importer called Cavendish. If Cavendish foreclosed, Collins would become a penniless derelict.

The red stone in Collins' pocket offered a ray of hope, however. The island mining companies were always on the lookout for new territory, and this specimen seemed to be a high type of gold bearing ore.

"I'll make you my partner," proposed Collins. "Help me stake out a claim and file it proper. You've been surveying that Thakaundrove coastline—"

"For five years," Hardin cut in. "Now I'm heading back to the States, where they don't eat dalo or drink chemical beer."

"But this is a chance to get rich," insisted Collins. "A chance to—"

Two thin, steely hands grasped Peter Collins' throat from behind, yanking him backward.

The umbrella fell in front of Hardin's face, and before he could push it away, a heavy weapon split the taut cloth, landing on his forehead.

Crumpling to his knees, Hardin rolled into the flooded gutter. His eyes were misty, but he could see a squat, turbaned figure before him armed with a steel pipe.

The pipe swished again, cracking Hardin on the shoulder blade. If the first blow had dazed him, the second restored the cold, fighting calm that had made Butha Bill Hardin a formidable name along the coast of Thakaundrove.

Gaining his feet, Hardin waited for the assailant to strike once more. As the pipe fell, he caught the full force of it with outstretched hands.

The dull, dead smack of steel on calloused palms gave way instantly to

a harsh scream, and the Indian lay writhing on the sidewalk, his turban soaked in blood. Wielding the pipe, Hardin turned to the spot where Collins had fallen.

Two muddy figures were writhing beside a pile of lumber. In the gloom, Hardin caught sight of a white, flowing garment, heard Collins' guttural curses.

As he reached the spot, there was a low groan, a flurry of white, and the second Indian hurdled the lumber pile with one leap.

Hardin chased the marauder through the dock shed which bordered the canal; crunched his weapon against a bony cranium. There was a flat splash from the end of the wharf. Hardin stared vainly toward the water but could hear no sound but rain splattering into the canal like buckshot. Hurriedly, he retraced his steps.

The skeleton of an umbrella lay in the gutter, but the man in the bloody turban had disappeared. Collins was helplessly huddled by the lumber pile. Hardin knelt at his side.

"You got to do it, Bill," the old man mumbled. "I need money—to pay off that blighter, Cavendish. My boy, Lomba, will take you there—in the *Mirama*. You make a map of the claim—file it legal. Don't trust anybody. You saw how them devils got us from behind."

"Sure," said Hardin softly. "But you'll be okay by—"

He dropped one hand to the trader's shirt and found it warm and sticky. The hilt of a small clasp knife protruded from Collins' side. Quickly, he patted the trader's coat pocket. The jagged particle of red rock was missing.

Standing on the *Mirama's* bridge, Butha Bill Hardin watched the red rooftops of Suva melt into a green hillside. Black clouds hung ominously over grotesque volcanic pinnacles, but beyond the reef, the sky blended into the blue of a sparkling sea.

Hardin leaned on the rail, watching a gang of chocolate-skinned natives, straighten dunnage on the well deck. There were no white men in the *Mirama's* crew. Peter Collins knew how to get the most out of natives, and, in turn, he had won their confidence and respect.

"You think Skipper Collins be well soon?"

Hardin turned around and found himself facing a stalwart brown man whose handsome features were unmatched only by his wealth of woolly black hair. The Fijian wore a red sulu and a clean white shirt. He spoke in a low, musical voice hardly moving his lips.

"If the doctor knows anything, Collins will be out of the hospital in a month," Hardin replied. "His future depends on us, Lomba, and on whether we find the gold."

Lomba nodded. "It lies high on Korombasanga," he stated. "Near village of my fathers. Trail begins near copra plantation of Tonky Jones."

Hardin's bronzed forehead crinkled thoughtfully. While surveying the east shore of Natewa Bay, he had encountered the swollen, bulbous creature known as "Tonky" Jones.

Since most of his plantation was located on native-owned land, Jones had a natural antipathy against government engineers. After beating two of Hardin's native assistants unmercifully, Jones sent word that the American would be shot on sight if he dared enter that territory again.

Bill Hardin tapped the bridge rail with his knuckles and smiled mirthlessly. He was a man who always remembered a favor and never forgot a wrong.

PLOUGHING across the Koro Sea, the *Mirama* circled into Natewa Bay early one morning and tied up at a rickety pier which extended from the green, gold-rimmed shore.

As the plank was lowered overside,

a corpulent man in white drill pushed through the crowd of gabbling natives and advanced to the end of the pier. The man's piggy eyes narrowed when Hardin appeared at the head of the gangway. His hand dropped to his belt and came up with a stubby automatic.

"Stay where you are, Hardin," came the blustery rumble.

Hardin's craggy features were expressionless. With a steady stride, he started down the plank. A look of perplexity crept over the other man's face. He knew that Hardin was not the one to walk foolhardedly into a bullet.

Evidently the American had something up his sleeve. Tonky Jones was angrily disconcerted.

"I'm not bluffing," Jones rasped. "This is my property."

"Don't get excited," said Hardin, pausing at the base of the plank. "I'm not here for the government. All I want is to pass through."

"I'll see you in hell first!" blazed Tonky Jones.

"It's a date," drawled Hardin. With a slight shrug, he turned toward the ship's side.

Tonky Jones stepped forward vengefully, gunsight searching for Hardin's shoulder blades. Anticipating Jones' action, Hardin heeled completely around, and a crackling explosion burst from his coat pocket.

The shot creased Jones' hip, spinning him off balance. Twirling a blue revolver on his fingertip, Hardin sprang and sliced his gun butt at the planter's ear. The blow fell short, and Jones angled his automatic toward Hardin's forehead.

Flame shot past Hardin's eyes, blood flowed from his temple, blinding him momentarily. A cold, methodical rage arose within him, releasing the tremendous physical force of which Bill Hardin was capable.

A smashing left to the jaw sent Tonky Jones sprawling. Gouging his knee into Jones' belly, Hardin seized

the man's wrist and pressed it vise-like against the planking.

Glaring through a bloody haze, he raised the revolver and hammered the butt at his enemy's hand. The first blow crunched a set of flabby knuckles and broke the planter's hold on his automatic.

Relentlessly, the gun went up again, descending like a ponderous sledge. Jones' fingers turned to a crimson smear, and a harsh yell strained his blue-veined throat.

Temples throbbing, Bill Hardin stood up and glared at the quivering heap of blubber.

"Now we're even," he said huskily. "It'll be a long time before you handle another pistol."

Clutching his mangled hand, Tonky Jones lumbered across the wharf and disappeared into an iron-roofed house which was half hidden by flowering pandanus.

After bathing his face in salt water and smearing his gashed forehead with tropical ointment, Bill Hardin collected his surveying instruments and started with Lomba for Mount Korombasanga. Following a winding trail into the bush, the two men were soon buried in a moist, shadowy jungle.

HIGH upon the side of Korombasanga, smothered in rain clouds, lay the plateau of Mamanda. It was here that Bill Hardin scoured the mountainside for traces of red gold-bearing ore. The traces were not hard to find, for they were limited to the vicinity of a deep, tangled gorge.

After a week of prospecting, Hardin learned that the gorge cut through the lode diagonally, exposing it on two sides. Staking the claim, he drew up a map outlining its exact location.

As they were leaving camp, Hardin folded the map carefully and placed it in a leather pouch which hung at Lomba's side.

"Don't let it get wet," he cautioned. "It's worth a fortune."

The native exposed his white teeth in a confident grin.

"My village is day's walk from here," he announced. "Tonight, first time in many year, I sleep under my father's roof."

Hardin nodded his approval. The thought of a dry mat and a hot dinner sounded inviting. Since there was no visible trail down the rugged ribs of Korombasanga, he allowed Lomba to take the lead.

A slight movement rustled the brush as they clambered over the edge of the plateau. Bill Hardin failed to see the figure stalking them or the sinister face glowering through a barrier of giant ferns.

Several times during the day Lomba paused, as if sensing an evil odor in the air; but it was not until twilight that he decided to reveal his suspicions.

"We must hurry," he declared abruptly. "Someone follows."

His eyes probing the green welter of vegetation, Hardin saw something stir within a gloomy clump of yaka. Pulling Lomba to the earth, he dropped behind a fallen tree just as a screaming bullet lashed overhead.

While the forest hurled back a rattling echo, Hardin's hand went to his hip-holster nervelessly.

The fading light filled the jungle with an eerie purple glow that made perception increasingly difficult, and within fifteen minutes the forest was a gray, grim shadowland.

Hardin crawled to the end of the log and crouched there, muscles taut.

"My village lies to the south," Lomba whispered. "Follow the stream."

Bent low, the native ran a few yards across open ground and plunged into a shoulder-high stand of cattails.

Hardin slogged behind, boots sinking ankle-deep in the gelatinous soil. Suddenly Hardin felt the blood leap to his throat, for on his left, not three feet away was an indistinct figure.

A bullet crackled past his elbow.

Before he could return fire, Lomba had wheeled around, plunging at the assassin with clawlike fingers. There was a brief struggle in the brush, followed by a second snapping report, and the native slumped to the ground.

AS HARDIN squeezed the trigger, a fuzzy flame burst at him from another direction, slashing a furrow across his chest. Reeling with pain, he fired twice, but the shots whanged into space.

He dropped to one knee, listening for some sound that would betray his enemies' positions. The mountainside had become strangely silent.

For several minutes Bill Hardin remained motionless. The night was now oppressively dark, with not even a star to shimmer through the dense foliage.

Finally convinced that his assailants had retreated, Hardin crept over to the fallen Lomba and flashed a pocket torch.

The Fijian was breathing heavily, a sticky red hole in his side. The pouch containing the map had vanished.

"Who was it?" muttered Hardin. "Did you see his face?"

The native made a guttural, wordless reply. Glancing about, Hardin saw a trampled blue paper on the ground. It was a half-empty packet of Turkish cigarettes. He pocketed them, lifted the wounded man over his shoulder and stumbled southward. . . .

Late that night Bill Hardin was seated on a mat in the spacious *buri* of a native village. At one end of the grass-roofed house was a trench of glowing coals, and in the center, on a raised heap of matting, lay the rigid figure of Lomba. The native had died without regaining consciousness.

As the wailing of women arose in the village, a grim file of bushy-haired men formed a circle within the *buri*, among them a slender youth wearing a shark's tooth necklace.

Grotesque shadows played across

the bamboo walls while the kava ceremony began and a hunched cup bearer danced down a lane of glistening shells. A booming song shivered the ridge pole, and when every man had drunk, a weird, twisting form appeared in the doorway brandishing a club tipped with conch shells.

Bill Hardin shuddered as the song mounted to a crescendo. He realized that he was watching the forbidden rite of witchcraft—the rite to Dakuwanga, the shark-god.

"O, Dakuwanga!" intoned the witch doctor. "Bring vengeance upon the slayer. Grind him with your teeth. Spit him out with your strong tongue. He shall be destroyed in your wrath!"

"*E dina!*" thundered the squatting villagers. "Truly!"

As a fierce chant mingled with the wailing cries of women, Hardin heard the skies rumble and rain pour in torrents from the eaves.

Lomba was at last sleeping in the home of his fathers.

In the morning Bill Hardin resumed his journey to the coast, accompanied by the native with the shark's tooth necklace. There seemed to be a connection between the attack on Collins in Suva and the ambush on the mountainside, and he kept trying to figure it out.

The two places were over a hundred miles apart and linked only by an occasional ship; so it would have been almost impossible for anyone to follow him. The man who had stolen his map would certainly have a valid claim to the Korombasanga gold.

Perhaps the last attack had been another revengeful act on the part of Tonky Jones. Hardin intended to find out.

A MOANING wind was whipping Natewa Bay by nightfall when Hardin reached the *Mirama*. Entering his cabin, he found a stranger sitting at the table—a lean man with bloodless lips and a hawkish face. Bill Hardin stood frozen in the doorway.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

The man glanced up calmly.

"Taking charge of my property," he replied. "I own this ship. Old man Collins gave me a note which fell due yesterday."

"You didn't lose any time," growled Hardin. "I suppose you're Cavendish?"

The stranger nodded. "I heard that the *Mirama* was anchored here; so I hiked up from Savusavu. News travels fast in the bush. Now that you're aboard, we'll sail for Suva tonight."

"Not until I get a few matters settled around here," corrected Hardin.

"I think it best that we start at once," said Cavendish, drumming his tapering nails on the table. "Purely a matter of form—"

"I'm staying here!" snapped Hardin. "I have some business with Tonky Jones."

"How fortunate," purred Cavendish, motioning toward the alleyway. "Mr. Jones is traveling with us."

Hardin pivoted and looked into a short rifle barrel. Behind the gun was a jowly, vengeful face. Tonky Jones' right hand was swathed in bandages; but the trigger finger remained ominously free.

"You'll do like Cavendish says," stated Jones. "I'll see that you stand trial for criminal assault—"

The decks began to throb, and Bill Hardin realized that the ship was moving.

"Okay," he grumbled. "Nothing I can do."

Jones lowered his gun a trifle; smiled triumphantly. The smile turned to a grimace of rage as Hardin knocked the barrel aside with one arm and hooked a swift uppercut to Jones' chin.

The planter's feet left the deck, and he plumped backward in a rubbery heap which instantly adjusted itself and scuttled for Bill Hardin's legs.

Hardin saw Cavendish coming at him from behind and tried to jump

away—but Jones' arms were locked about his thighs in an instant.

Teetering drunkenly, Hardin tried to reach for his holster. As his fingers touched metal, Cavendish sprang like a lean mongoose, throwing the force of his weight on Hardin's wounded chest.

Bill Hardin toppled into the alleyway, arms thrashing. Cavendish's thin fingers encircled his throat like bands of steel. Whisking the rifle from the deck, Jones whacked the stock against Hardin's skull. A thousand lights whirled through his brain, and the world was suddenly flicked into darkness.

A SLUSH of water across his face brought Hardin back to life with a start. Although engulfed in blackness, he knew that he was in a crazily careening ship locker, with the sea pouring through the porthole.

Staggering to his feet, he clamped the port shut, felt for the heavy wooden door and found it locked. The bows rose and fell sickeningly, and a mighty sea crashed at the hull plates.

The *Mirama* had met one of the many storms which howl through the narrow entrance of Natewa Bay and was in for trouble.

Up to his ankles in water, he attempted to force the door with his shoulder. The ship gave a canting lurch, burying her nose in a mountainous wave, and he was hurled forcefully against a bulkhead.

There was a roaring sound in the alleyway, and the door burst wide, smashed cleanly in twain by an enormous pressure. A hissing torrent raged into the locker, burying Hardin beneath an avalanche of foam.

Gulping for breath, he ploughed toward the flooded alleyway and held fast to a hand rail while the *Mirama* haunched back on her stern, spewing water from the flooded forepeak.

The stem descended again, and he battered his way to the mast, hug-

ging a steam pipe as the sea swept over him. When the bow rose, he scrambled for the superstructure and pulled himself up a ladder to the bridge.

The eyes of a frightened native gleamed over the wheelhouse binacle. Standing behind the helmsman, his pulpy face blanched white, was Tonky Jones.

Hardin wrenched the door handle and stalked into the wheelhouse.

"You damn fool!" he raged. "You can't run from this sea. Swing around, drop your hook and head into it!"

A look of consternation formed on Jones' flabby features.

"Get out of here!" he bawled. "Get out before I—"

A grinding shock sent both men hurtling across the wheelhouse. Tonky Jones kicked out at Hardin and tried to pull himself up by grasping the door handle.

"We're aground!" he gasped. "A reef! Let me go, you blasted fool."

Hardin's fingers were clasped firmly around the man's belt.

"Start talking," he ordered. "Why did you follow me to Korombasanga?"

"I didn't!" The rubbery mouth jerked convulsively.

"What'd you do with the map?"

"I don't know." Tonky Jones swung ponderously and struck Hardin flush on the jaw.

Losing his hold, Hardin fell on one elbow and bounced up in time to see Jones scoot onto the bridge. He darted after him, caught him by the collar as he reached the bridge ladder and then hooked a stiff punch to the planter's ear.

Jones tumbled down the ladder head first and was thrown against the deck house by a boiling wave.

"Cavendish!" he yelped. "Help me—"

THE cry was smothered by a tremendous sea which bulged over the port side, smashing hatch covers into kindling. Bill Hardin clung to

a hand rail as the bridge ladder gave way beneath his feet.

The sea expanded into an oily mass, flushing through the scuppers and depriving the deck of every movable object.

Hardin dropped from the twisted ladder. Curled around the base of a stanchion lay the broken body of a man, head and shoulders hanging upside down. The vessel gave a settling lurch, and Tonky Jones slithered into eternity.

Attracted by the shouting of natives and the gleam of a cluster light, Hardin dragged himself to the boat deck. On the starboard side, high above the churning sea, a white lifeboat swung precariously.

Cavendish was seated in the stern, his lean jaw set grimly, while the natives let the boat descend with deft precision. Since the sea was running to port, the *Mirama's* bulk broke much of the waves' force, preventing the lifeboat from being swamped instantly.

As the hull touched the water, the boat was freed of its ropes and went hurtling into the night like a chip in a maelstrom.

Hardin's last glimpse of the boat revealed a native with a shark's tooth necklace squatting in the bow. It was the same man who had been his guide.

Abandoned on a stranded ship, there was nothing for Hardin to do but wait. The port lifeboat remained intact, but it would have been folly to attempt lowering it.

Gloomily, he made his way to the cabin which Cavendish had been occupying. His fate now depended upon whether the *Mirama's* sturdy sides would outlast the fury of the storm. Entering the cabin, his attention became fixed upon a metal ash tray which had fallen on the floor. Within it lay a crumpled blue packet which had contained a peculiar brand of Turkish cigarettes.

By morning the sky was clear, the

sea flat, and the *Mirama's* stem lay high and dry on a brown reef. Armed with Jones' rifle and a handful of cartridges, Hardin lost no time in lowering the battered lifeboat.

When he reached the shore, he found the native crew cooking dalo over a pit of coals. They told him that Cavendish had headed south at sunup with one guide.

Hardin rubbed his square jaw. South—that meant toward the isthmus which separated Natewa Bay from the Koro Sea.

Unaccompanied, he started in pursuit. The blue cigarette packet had settled his doubts about Cavendish. The Englishman was a scoundrel who would stop at nothing.

After hours of plodding through a dense mangrove swamp, Hardin found the trail. Having once surveyed every inch of this land, he knew that Cavendish was heading for the copra station at Mangui Cove. A ship called there every three weeks, and Cavendish was evidently counting on that vessel to take him to Suva.

THE trail became more distinct by late afternoon, cutting across the isthmus near a native village on the east shore of Mangui.

Bill Hardin advanced through the swamp cautiously. If he could succeed in taking Cavendish unaware, it would be easier to—

Crack!

Hardin dropped his rifle and pitched forward, a burning sensation in his left thigh. Twisting around, he saw Cavendish step from behind a gnarled mangrove, revolver in hand. A few feet away, placidly expressionless, stood the native with the shark's tooth necklace.

Cavendish kicked the rifle out of Hardin's reach.

"Good thing I saw you first," he commented. "How did you get off the *Mirama*?"

Hardin eyed him sullenly; did not reply.

"I suppose Jones blabbed about the map," he went on calmly. "Yes. I've got it, and I intend to keep it. Jones can't hurt me. He's involved too deeply."

"But you're the one who killed Lomba," accused Hardin.

"I remove anyone who blocks my path," said Cavendish coldly. "Your case is no exception."

As the man's bony forefinger tightened, Hardin gritted his teeth and sprang at Cavendish with a superhuman effort. If death had to come, he was determined to face it fighting. The gun splashed fire—but he felt only the pain in his torn leg. Before Cavendish could fire again, Hardin's fingers were clamped about his wrist, and a short, stabbing blow flattened the Englishman's long nose against his cheek. The punch sent Cavendish

bled through the mud on all fours and then raced between the mangroves, his long legs working unsteadily. Like an obedient dog, the native guide scampered at Cavendish's heels.

HARDIN limped behind awkwardly, his trouser leg soaked crimson. Emerging from the mangrove forest, he found himself on the shore of a small blue bay. Beached about forty yards away lay a native canoe, and steaming out from the distant copra wharf was a ship.

A sizzling oath rattled from Bill Hardin's lips as he saw Cavendish pile into the canoe and streak for open water, paddled by the man with the gleaming necklace.

Within ten minutes the Englishman would be able to hail the steamer and climb aboard for Suva with the map

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plopping into the mud with Hardin on top of him.

Bill Hardin's eyes were icy blue. All rational thoughts vanished, and he became again a relentless fighting machine which understood no satisfaction but that of crushing an enemy.

Tearing the revolver from Cavendish's hand, he hurled it into the underbrush and loosed a smashing volley of left and rights into the man's face.

Wriggling like a snake, Cavendish managed to squirm from beneath Bill Hardin's knees and rise to his feet.

Hardin came up with him and rapped out a backhand blow to the ear that knocked Cavendish reeling.

Covered with blood and slime, the Englishman came back doggedly and met Hardin with a left to the jaw. Hardin rolled with the blow and shot back a driving right that shattered his enemy's teeth.

Cavendish went down again, scram-

tucked safely in his pocket. Seated on the shore, Hardin watched the canoe gloomily. The gold claim was irretrievably lost.

Suddenly something happened. For no ostensible reason, the canoe swayed tipsily and capsized. Hardin saw two heads bobbing above the water, and almost immediately another object appeared—a dark, triangular fin.

Cavendish's scream of agony raised the hair on Hardin's neck. Turning away, he limped toward the copra station, and the steamer churned obliviously into the twilight.

A wry, wrinkled man greeted Hardin at the copra station. It was Peter Collins.

"I came as soon as I could break out of the hospital," explained Collins that night, as they were seated on the wide veranda. "After you left, they found the body of an Indian floating in the canal. That was the Indian you chased that night while his brother

stabbed me and stole the gold specimen.

"The police examined the dead Indian's brother and learned that Cavendish had hired them to steal my ore specimen and have it analyzed by a chemist. Finding it had a high gold content, the brother sent a wireless message to Cavendish, who was at Savusavu."

"And Cavendish streaked out for Jones' plantation, expecting to follow me and jump the claim," added Hardin. "That explains why Jones didn't want me to land. He was afraid I'd stake the claim and get away before Cavendish arrived."

"Both of them trailed me, stole the map and then waited for me to come aboard ship. When the crew wasn't looking, they intended to heave me overboard. But one thing bothers me: How did Cavendish know about the gold in the first place?"

"I must have let it slip," said Collins sheepishly. "When I asked him

for an extension on my note, I mentioned the gold, but I didn't show him the ore specimen."

A jingling song floated through the balmy night, and Hardin noticed a group of natives squatted around a kava bowl near the copra shed. The lantern light flashed on a man with a glistening shark's tooth necklace, Collins limped toward the shed; pointed a finger at the native.

"How did you get here?" he demanded. "That bay is alive with sharks!"

"Dakuwanga's wrath is great," replied the man mysteriously. "But the shark-god protects his own."

"But I can't understand how the canoe overturned," muttered Hardin. "There didn't seem to be any reason for—"

Collins tapped Bill Hardin on the shoulder.

"There's always a reason in these islands," he said knowingly. "You see, this man—was Lomba's brother."

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They heard the beat of an engine in the sky

An Interval at Grodz

By JACK KOFOED

Author of "The Miami Kid," "Great Dane," etc.

TOM BAKER hit iron shots off the practice tee at Grodz—crisply, and with beautiful length. His caddie, a middle-aged man from Gydynia limped heavily and enthusiastically after the golf balls.

Olga sat under a tree, slim legs crossed Turkish fashion, and watched him gravely. She wore a blue beret on her golden head, and her dress, in the sunshine, was patterned by the shape of the leaves overhead. Between

shots, Tom turned around, and talked with her.

"I didn't even know there were any golf courses in Poland," he said, "until I ran into that munitions manufacturer in the Ritz bar in Paris . . . what's his name, now?"

"Petroskey. But, you never told me what you were doing in the Ritz bar."

"Just a coca-cola with lemon," Tom Baker grinned, "but the five hundred and expenses Petroskey handed me to play an exhibition match with the pro here, Baranowisc, wasn't hard to take. Besides, I wouldn't have been in the Ritz bar if my wife hadn't left me in the middle of our honeymoon to visit her grandmother in Warsaw."

"The old lady was dying," said Olga. "I had to go."

"I know. I was only kidding." Tom put his iron back in the bag, waved to the caddie, and sat down next to his bride. "Well, the trip is nearly over. Sunday we'll start for home."

"It's been wonderful, darling, but . . . There's something queer happening. I've got a feeling, anyway . . . a feeling something is wrong. . . ."

"Wrong? What could be wrong?"

"I don't know."

SHE fell silent, and they sat there in the September sunshine, watching the caddie pick up balls. It was warm and peaceful. The fairways and traps made Baker think of his own club at home.

"I know," said Tom. "It's funny about hunches and things. Many a time in tournaments I'd wonder about putts, for instance. Some that were well hit would hang on the lip of the cup. Others that weren't so well hit would wriggle around somehow, and drop. I began to think. Was it luck, or were all putts, and everything else, written down in the book before we made them?"

"You mean, are things preordained for us?"

Tom nodded.

"Something like that. In the war the soldiers used to say they wouldn't be hit until a shell or a bullet with their name on it came over. They believed, of course, that the shell was meant for them from the minute it was made. My oldest brother, Mike, worked in a munitions factory. He told me about that, and maybe . . . well, maybe there's more in it than we think."

"It's a crazy idea," said Olga. "I don't believe it. Listen! What's that?"

The sky shuddered with an ominous muttering. They looked up, startled. It sounded like the rumble of gunfire. The caddie came running, his bag of balls swinging. He had a long black mustache and an unhappy look.

"It's war," he said. "I know the sound. I was in the last one. That's why I will not be in this one. My leg is not so good."

"But it can't be," protested Tom Baker. He knew in his heart that it was.

Olga jumped up. "Get your bag and clothes, Tom, and let's start for town," she said. "We've got to get out of here. Our money, clothes, papers—everything are at the hotel in Grodz. We're sunk without them."

Tom looked down the long stretch of green fairway, warm and bright, at the ninth green, perched high on a little knoll. War was impossible . . . it could not come here. Yet, it was, and they were in it. Why? Because Tom had met a Polish millionaire in a Paris bar, and they talked about golf. If he hadn't, Olga would have returned from Warsaw, and they'd be on their way home by this time. Luck? Chance? Sure, you might call it either of those things, that meeting—but was it?

Perhaps everything was arranged in advance by an inscrutable and sardonic power.

They heard the beat of an engine in the sky. The plane came into sight from behind the trees, and since it was

flying low, they could see the Swastika on the wings.

"A Messerschmidt," said the caddie, with a bitter note in his voice. "Why aren't some of ours here to take care of it?"

He picked up the bag, and limped toward the shop. Tom and Olga followed. They said nothing. There was nothing to say.

INSIDE the shop a dusty little man was taking bags out of the racks. He worked methodically, piling them near the door.

"We have an air raid shelter," he said. "That's the place for these things. The gentlemen will be very angry if the clubs are broken." That he might be in danger, too, if the clubs were, apparently made no impression on him.

"Where's Baranowisc?" asked Tom Baker.

"I don't know," said the dusty little fellow. "They are calling up every able-bodied man. Maybe they took him. I am not able-bodied, so they let me alone. After all, somebody must take care of these clubs." He went about his work without looking up.

"Hurry, Tom," said Olga.

The dusty man sniggered. "Some officers commandeered your car. It will be a long walk—a very long walk—wherever you are going."

The young people looked at each other in dismay.

"Well, if they've taken the car there is nothing for us but shank's mare," Tom said. "Come on, darling, we'll start to walk."

"And your clubs?" asked the caddie. "What about your clubs?"

Tom grinned at him, and reached into his pocket for some money.

"I'll carry them. I won the National Open with these sticks, and finished second in the British with them, too. Nobody will get them away from me."

"Nobody will want to," said the caddie. "They'll be using machine guns now, instead of niblicks. Good-by, and

good luck, sir. How I will make a living now, I do not know. There will be no golf here for a long time—if ever again."

Tom and Olga walked into the road. They looked back once. The caddie had started to help the dusty man carry the bags onto the grass before the shop. They seemed very intent on their work. Another plane went over, but they did not even glance at it.

Already the road was filling with frightened people, fleeing from the guns. They were old men and women, mostly, with children, wide-eyed and curious. Some had wagons. A few led cows. All were burdened with pitiful little possessions. One little boy carried a cage that held a canary, chirping brightly in the turmoil.

They told Olga it would be impossible to go to Grodz. The town had been shelled, and was burning. It was already occupied by the invaders. So, they faced the other way, and went with the refugees. What would happen to them without passports or identification papers if they were stopped, they did not know. Besides, they had only a little money in their pockets . . . and Warsaw was a long way off.

Tom and Olga strode along sturdily, incongruous figures in that peasant herd. He was in slacks and sweater, with a golf bag slung over his shoulder; she engagingly beautiful in sport clothes. But they were victims, too, just as the others were. Their lives had been pulled out from under them like a rug on a polished floor.

"If we can reach Warsaw," said Tom Baker, "the American consul will help us get home. That's part of his job. We really haven't anything to be worried about. Boy, how I'm aching to see that first tee at Glen View. I've had enough traveling for awhile."

"We still have a lot of traveling ahead of us," said Olga.

The tide was deepening. More and more people joined it. There was no talk. The only sounds were the

plod-plod of feet—the clack of hoofs—the occasional moo of a cow, or a baby's wail.

Suddenly, everybody shifted toward the side of the road. Two motorcycles, ridden by storm troopers, with holstered automatics slung around to the front of their middles, and rifles strapped to their backs, preceded an automobile occupied by several officers.

The peasants looked sullenly at the soldiers from the corners of their eyes, but kept their heads down and went on walking.

When the little cavalcade came opposite Tom and Olga, one of the officers called out an order, and the machines stopped. An immaculate captain sprang from the limousine, and walked over to them.

"I am looking," he said, "for a man who talks English and plays golf. You seem to fit that description reasonably well."

"I ought to," the pro said, smiling, "I'm Tom Baker, the American Open champion. I was supposed to play a match at Grodz this afternoon, when the war came down on us. My car was commandeered, so Mrs. Baker and I are walking to Warsaw."

The captain fingered the butt of his automatic meditatively. The other refugees did not halt to see what was happening. It was no business of theirs. They had enough terror of their own without bothering about others.

"Let me see your papers," said the officer. "If you are an American, as you say, we do not want to inconvenience you."

The request did not bother Tom Baker too much. In a time of war, of course, everyone was supposed to keep his papers with him at all times. But this was different. War had come out of the morning sky with no more warning than the gunfire that started it. He couldn't be expected to know. The officer would realize that.

"I—why, I left my papers in our

room in the St. Stephan Hotel in Grodz. I was practicing for the match, and it never occurred to me to take anything with me. Then, when the shooting started— Well, it is five miles from the club to the hotel, and we couldn't make it."

There was a grim touch to the captain's smile. "I am afraid that puts you in an unenviable position," he said. "When we bombed Grodz the hotel was destroyed. I noticed that as I drove through. Have you any other means of establishing your identity?"

"Well, in Warsaw—"

"We are very well mechanized, but it will be several days before we reach there. I am afraid the matter cannot wait. Get into the car, please." His manner was still pleasant, but he smiled with his lips, not his eyes.

"What's it all about?" Tom asked. "We haven't done anything, you know, but get caught in this mess."

The officer shrugged his immaculate shoulders. "All I know is that Intelligence ordered me to pick up a man who speaks English and plays golf," he said, but his voice really said, "Of course you are spies!"

IT COULDN'T be. It was impossible. Baker looked at the steel helmets and the guns—at the refugees, trudging by, and heard the thunder of artillery—and he knew it was true. He was on the spot, and had not an idea in the world how he was going to get off it.

Right at this minute, he figured, the boys at Glen View were finishing their round, and streaming into the locker house for a shower and a drink. They'd be ribbing each other good naturedly about shots that had come off—and others that hadn't. Golfers were great guys. Maybe it was because they played such a great game. How wonderful it would be if he were back with them!

It was a million to one they didn't even know a war had started. There was fate for you. He had no more to

do with it than they, yet he was caught in a situation that was bound to be unpleasant and perhaps dangerous. And, if the Germans did anything to him, what would happen to Olga? She had no one to turn to in Poland, now that her grandmother was dead.

More planes roared overhead. The deep-tongued voices of the guns grew heavier. Tom stowed his clubs on the floor of the limousine, and climbed in after his wife. She was pale and quiet.

"Don't be afraid," he reassured her. "Somehow or other, we'll prove our identity."

Tom thought of his talk with Olga. Was it just coincidence—a quirk of circumstance—that they had been confused with a spy who talked English and carried golf clubs? Or, had it all been written down in the book a thousand eons before they were born? He didn't know. Nobody could know.

The motorcycles and limousine turned around and headed their noses for Grodz. No one spoke. The golfer looked out at the fleeing people. His ears were hammered by the increasing sound of bombardment. The closer they came to Grodz the more troops—mechanized troops, appeared. Tanks, automobile-drawn caissons, trucks, motorcycles, cluttered the road, but the sirens opened the way for the captain and his prisoners.

They stopped at the country club. Tom and Olga had left a few hours before. It had been quiet and serene then. Now it swarmed with soldiers. Staff cars were parked before the club-house. Sentries, with bayoneted rifles, marched up and down. Field kitchens smoked in the rough toward the left of the eighteenth fairway. The golf bags the dusty old man and the caddie had piled on the grass in front of the club-house still lay there.

"General von Essen has taken over the club-house as his headquarters," the captain said politely. "It will be pleasanter to wait outdoors while your case is investigated. I regret that it will be necessary to leave a sentry

with you—but otherwise you will not be bothered."

They left the limousine, and seated themselves under the tree where Olga had waited while Tom was practicing. The sun still dappled the grass with leafy patterns, but otherwise nothing was the same. Behind them paraded a young soldier with a coal scuttle helmet and rifle. He seemed a little self-conscious, but said nothing.

"What do you suppose they'll do with us?" the girl asked.

"Nothing," said Tom. "Why should they? We haven't done anything. We'll make them understand that."

But Olga was more practical. "I don't know how—and if we can't, they will be sure we are spies. Then what?" Her voice cracked just the tiniest bit. "I'm afraid we are in a bad spot."

TOM sheared off a grass top with his fingernails. "The captain mentioned a man who spoke English and played golf," he said thoughtfully. "I wonder—I wonder if it could be Baranowisc they want?"

"It might be," his wife agreed. "Baranowisc speaks just as good English as you do. Why not? He was at a club in Illinois for a dozen years before returning to Poland. But what good does that do us?"

"Not much, I imagine. If we could only get in touch with the consul at Warsaw." He fell silent, knowing it was impossible.

They waited. After a while the captain returned. He wore a serious expression.

"I am afraid it does not look good," he said. "You say you are Tom Baker, the American golf professional. Our Intelligence has placed under arrest in the town of Grodz another who also says he is Tom Baker."

"But—that—that can't be . . .!"

"But it is a fact none the less," the officer answered. "I am ordered to bring you to General von Essen's headquarters."

"May—may I go, too?" asked Olga.

"Definitely."

They walked toward the club-house, the captain beside them, the sentry, with his bayoneted rifle, just behind. The artillery fire at Grodz had ceased. Apparently the town was taken. But the mechanized troops still rolled along the dusty roads . . . endless columns of them.

The club lobby that had been so quiet in the morning had become a hive of uniformed industry. A soldier sat at the telephone switchboard. In the room that had been occupied by the manager as his office, General von Essen lounged behind the desk, a smooth shaven man, with very white teeth. Baker could see him through the open door.

The captain led them in. Standing at one side of the room was Baranowisc! He looked stonily at the newcomers and said nothing.

"We seem to have a problem here," said von Essen, bowing toward Olga. "Each of these gentlemen claims to be Tom Baker. It is rather important to find out who is telling the truth, because the one who isn't is undoubtedly the English speaking golf player who is causing our Intelligence no end of trouble with his espionage activities.

"The matter might be liquidated by executing both, but I am a fair man, and would not like to do that. Besides, I am a golfer, too—four handicap at Waldsee, gentlemen — and it would distress me to cut short the career of such a distinguished player as the American Open champion. But, I continue in a quandary. Which one of you is the champion?"

Olga put her hand on Tom's arm. "He is. I ought to know. I'm his wife."

The general said politely that it distressed him to doubt a lady's word, but the two men in the shop—unquestionably the caddie and the dusty little gnome—had sworn the other man was Tom Baker. That was distressing, but not surprising. They would be loyal

enough to Baranowisc to swear anything he wanted them to. Tom knew he could count on the boys around his club if anything of a similar nature happened there. But it left him in an impossible position.

There was no betraying accent to Baranowisc's speech, and Baker could think of no way to trick him into a confession. So what? In the hotel at Grodz had been a dozen people who could have identified Baker, but Grodz was blasted off the map, and the people were either dead or in flight. He looked at the Polish professional, and the man returned his gaze quite coolly. He lit a cigarette, and puffed a blue ring toward the ceiling.

BAKER clenched his hands in an effort to keep his temper. He felt helpless against the conspiracy of fate that had caught him in its meshes.

"I don't know what I can do, General," he said. "I had clippings and pictures in the hotel, as well as our passports. They would have proved who I am, but now—" he shrugged his shoulders hopelessly.

"I know," said Olga. "I know how we can settle this. You are a golfer, General von Essen; a pretty good one, too, if you have a four handicap. You can tell class when you see it—and you know that Tom Baker is one of the greatest golfers in the world. Why not let them play a few holes—and judge for yourself who is telling the truth."

The brigade commander screwed a monocle into his left eye, and leaned back in the swivel chair. He looked up into the girl's pretty, excited face.

"A capital idea," he said. "A most amusing one. Here we are in the midst of a war, and you suggest a golf match! But, why not? Grodz is taken. We do not move on for some hours. What do you say, gentlemen? One of you is obviously the man we want. Are you willing to stake your lives on, say, three holes of golf?"

Tom knew the plan was dangerous. He might go out there, and fizzle things around under pressure. It could happen. But, there was nothing else he could do but accept the challenge. He nodded.

"It's all right with me," said Baranowisc, who probably figured his knowledge of the course would help him. If he refused to play, von Essen would consider it *prima facie* evidence of his guilt, anyway.

The general rose. His staff sprang stiffly to attention.

"Have the men in the shop caddie for these two," he said to an aide. "This promises to be quite the best laugh I've had since coming to Poland."

They emerged into the bright September sunshine. There were two distinct groups. Tom and Baranowisc and Olga went first. Then came the German officers, steel-helmeted and grim, their only decorations the black and white ribbon of the Iron Cross on their tunics.

"I had to do this, Baker," Baranowisc said under his breath. "Of course, I'm the man they want, but I'm not going to admit that. It's just your bad luck that you happen to be mixed up in it."

Luck? Was it luck, Tom wondered. Or was it—

They reached the first tee. The limping caddie picked Baranowisc's bag from the jumble in front of the shop. General von Essen examined it carefully, comparing it with Tom's. Bags and clubs were of American make, and there were neither initials or other signs of identification on them.

TOM swung his driver. He felt stiff and cold in spite of the sunshine's warmth. There was no animosity in his heart toward Baranowisc. What he was doing was quite understandable. Baker could visualize the scene quite clearly. The spy against a wall, white shirt open at the throat, hands

bound behind his back. The squad of soldiers in their coal scuttle helmets. A sharp command . . . the rifles rising . . . spurts of flame. But if Baranowisc did not stand before the firing squad, Tom Baker would.

The whole thing was ridiculous. Why should he be cast in such a role. It didn't make sense. Playing golf for his life and Olga's future! They'd say a writer who figured out a story like that was nuts.

Suppose he could not hit his shots well. A man had to concentrate to do that under any conditions. He remembered the Masters' tournament at Augusta. He had received a wire telling him his mother was very ill—and he had shot an 85 . . . an 85 for Tom Baker! Maybe he would do as badly now. It wasn't impossible. Baranowisc, trained in espionage, might hold together and beat him. Then, what? But it couldn't be. He wouldn't let it. Olga had proposed this match because she was sure of him. He must not let her down. But, suppose it was true that whatever happened was ordained in advance? Then it wouldn't matter how hard he tried. He was licked before he started.

General von Essen looked at his wrist watch.

"Time flies, gentlemen," he said. "Are you ready?"

Baranowisc nodded, and teed up his ball. He seemed quite cool. There was no tightness in his muscles. They flowed easily into a swing that sent the ball screaming two hundred and fifty yards down the fairway. The general clapped his gloved hands together.

"Splendid!" he cried.

Tom tried to relax, but could not. The picture of the firing squad was in his mind—the wonder of this situation in his heart.

In spite of himself, he pressed, and hit a long slice into the rough far over to the right. It was a very bad shot for a man who was known as the straightest hitter in the game. He

tramped over after it, saying to himself:

"A couple more like that, and it will be you, instead of Baranowisc, who'll stand in front of a firing squad. Hit this next one—hit it as you never hit a ball before!"

The lie wasn't bad. It was better than he expected or deserved. Maybe it was luck—or, maybe, fate had ordained him to escape from this situation. Anyway, the idea was cheering, and steadied him. In his state of nerves and doubt, a bad lie might have convinced him he was doomed. But this was all right.

The blade of his iron glistened in the sun—glistened like the bayonets above the torrent of men who were taking Poland. There came a sharp, sweet click. The ball was picked out of the rough grass, and went screaming toward the distant green. Olga clapped her hands together, and cried out in joy. Baranowisc frowned a little. But the Pole wasn't shaken. He hit his ball up to the pin and both men dropped the putts for birdies.

GENERAL VON ESSEN screwed his monocle a little tighter in his eye.

"Capital, gentlemen," he said. "You make it more difficult than ever for me to decide."

They went on to the second tee. This was a one-shotter across a silver patch of pond to a small green set in a plateau. A military mind might have seen a splendid place for a machine-gun nest behind the breast of the hill, but to Baker it was only a comparatively simple golf hole that offered no difficulties to a man who knew his business.

Baranowisc hit a good shot, but the ball did not bite in as he expected, and rolled twenty feet past the flag. Tom had hold of himself now. There were no more shakes inside him. He was fighting for Olga and himself, and their life together—the greatest prize he had ever played for. What were

open championships and money compared with this? The hell with fate and its implications! Maybe a soldier didn't expect to be killed until a shell with his name on it came over—but fate had manufactured no shells for him.

It would be tragic if Baranowisc was executed—horrible beyond words—but the man was a spy. He admitted that himself. Patriotic, self sacrificing, yes, but his life could not be saved at the cost of two innocent people. Tom batted his tee shot to within a foot of the cup. Once more they trudged to the green . . . the officers grim and tight-mouthed, showing no emotion at the grotesqueness of a match that meant life to one man and death to the other.

Baranowisc studied his putt carefully. He was a lean, brown fellow, with blue eyes, and a heavy growth of hair on the back of his hands. Those hands were as firm as though he were casually practicing putts before the exhibition match that had been scheduled for the afternoon. And he hit his ball into the cup from twenty feet away with a smooth steady stroke that left no doubt what the result would be. He did not even draw a breath of relief at the click the ball made when it hit the bottom of the cup.

Olga was standing beside Tom, her face pale.

"What will happen?" she whispered. "There is only one more hole to play. I don't think it will be enough. Baranowisc has been playing so well that even if you beat him the general can hardly make up his mind. If he can't, he'll shoot both of you. I'm sure of it. I can read it in his eyes . . . those emotionless eyes of his."

"But what more can I do than I am doing?" Tom asked.

Olga was right. He had not exhibited sufficient superiority over the Pole to prove beyond any doubt that he was the American champion. But, what else could he do? He hadn't the

faintest idea. He groped in his mind, but came up with nothing.

"You've got to gamble everything on one shot," Olga said. "It must be so sensational that von Essen can't have any doubt about you. Our lives will depend on the way you play it. But, it is our only chance. I feel that in my heart."

THEY were walking toward the third tee. Tom held Olga's hand. It was cold, cold as death. She was frightened beyond anything words could tell.

"You can't just set up a shot like that," Baker protested. "Things aren't done that way."

"You've got to," she whispered. "You've got to. This is our last chance, darling. I know these people better than you do—and I'm sure of it."

Tom glanced sidewise at the general. The hard, intelligent face over the tight uniform collar seemed to show a hint of irritation. This had seemed something of a lark to von Essen—an interval in warfare that would be amusing and, at the same time, conclusive. But it wasn't working out that way. The brigade commander was puzzled, and it annoyed him. He was used to quick, accurate decisions, and now he could not make one.

It was easy enough to say that he wouldn't dare shoot an American citizen, but it could be explained as an unfortunate matter of mistaken identity.

Perhaps Olga was right. It might be better to gamble everything at once—if he could find a way to do it. Tom's keen golfer's eye took in the terrain. The third hole was something over four hundred yards, dog-legging to the right, with a clump of trees and rough in the bend of the dog's leg . . . and more to the left. A fence far to the left indicated an out of bounds. The proper way to play the hole was to hit a drive that was long enough to reach the elbow, and then chip in.

Baranowisc drove one in that exact spot while Tom pondered.

"If," the American thought, "I hook one over there, and then hit a real hell-bender over the trees and onto the green I may be able to settle this thing right now."

Suppose he landed in an unplayable lie. Suppose any one of a dozen different things happened that would make it impossible to bring the shot off? Apprehension struck his heart. But he had the feeling Olga was right. As events were shaping, they were headed for destruction. He had to take the chance, a long and ugly chance.

Baker could hook or slice at will. Any star golfer can. So he hooked the ball—a savage, smothered hook that landed deep in the rough. It was a worse shot than he had hit off the first tee.

"I did that on purpose," he said to von Essen, "because I'm going to come up with a shot out of that stuff that will convince you without any more argument."

The gimpy-legged caddie laughed loudly. They all walked into the rough. Tom kept his fingers crossed. If there was such a thing as luck he needed it now. If things were fore-ordained, he'd find out pretty soon just how things were set up for him.

When he came up to his ball he could not baffle an involuntary gasp of dismay. It lay so close to the wire fence he could not take a stance between them. And if he didn't make this shot a good one his life wasn't worth a dime. He looked at Olga. Her face was white with misery.

"Well," said the general coldly, "let us see your shot."

Baker studied it. There was a way—only one way. He climbed over the fence. Yes, by reaching through the wire, and taking an almost perpendicular backswing, he could hit the ball. No use fooling around . . . no use hoping or praying. All he could do was hit as hard as he could, and see what happened. Back went the

club-head. Down again in a vicious stroke, with all the power he could get into that cramped swing. The ball leaped out of the tangle like a bullet, low and straight, and screaming toward the pin. Everybody knew it was dead to the hole. No one had to walk up to the green to see.

Tom wiped the sweat off his forehead, and smiled at Olga. "I guess it was in the book," he said. "I guess everything is in the book!"

Baranowisc stood there, knee deep in the scrub, his arms hanging, his face dull. He knew it was all over with him.

"Herr General!" cried the immaculate captain. "Look! Look! It is one of theirs!" He pointed to the sky. A plane was swooping down toward them—diving with fearful velocity. By its markings, it was Polish, and the pilot had seen the group of officers. Everyone acted according to his nature. Baranowisc and the cad-dies flung themselves on the ground. The captain pulled his automatic from the holster, and fired at the diving plane.

Tom pulled Olga back against the fence, and put his arms around her.

"This is in the book too, I guess,"

he said. "I think what's coming now had our name on it."

"I'm not afraid," she whispered.

The pilot released his bomb, and soared upward again.

There was a vast, obscene explosion.

When the soldiers came running from the club-house, there was nothing they could do for those who had gone out to golf!

IT WAS lunch hour in a Warsaw munitions factory. Two men sat down to eat their bread and meat in the September sunshine.

"It is queer, Wladek," said one, "to think that war is here again. During the last one I worked in an American plant. My mate was named Mike Baker. He had served in the Army himself and had a soldier's superstitions. One was that a man won't be killed except by a shell that has his name on it. Well, last week I scratched the name of Baker on one of the aerial bombs we were working on . . . just to prove he was wrong. I wonder who it will get? . . . for I'm pretty sure there's nobody named Baker in either the Russian or German armies!"

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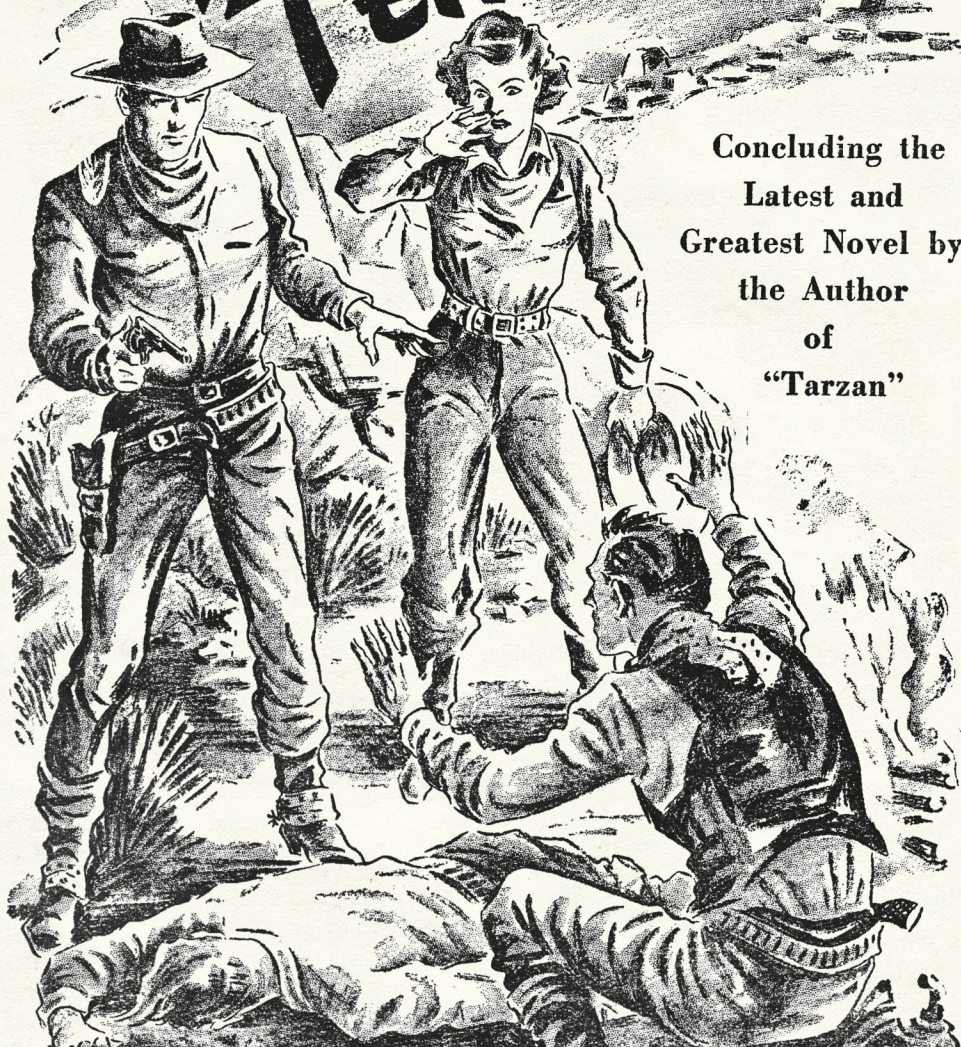
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THIRD AND FINAL INSTALLMENT



Buck Mason

WHAT HAS HAPPENED BEFORE

OLE GUNDERSTROM, wealthy rancher, has been ruthlessly murdered by a mysterious band of night riders. Earlier that same day he had quarreled with Buck Mason, deputy sheriff and ranch owner, over a piece of property that Mason claimed he did not own.

Mason is in love, or thinks he is, with Olga, Gunderstrom's daughter, who is away at school in the East. Because of Olga, Mason has laboriously studied to make himself over into her idea of a "gentleman."

Suspicion fastens on Mason for the murder of Gunderstrom, but before he can be arrested he makes a quick investigation of Gunderstrom's cabin.

Mason finds no tangible piece of evidence there—that is, nothing but an old boot with some markings on it. Telling no one about it, he disappears from the range.

At the T F Dude Ranch, owned by Cory Blaine, Mason turns up in the guise of Bruce Marvel, a socialite from the East. Acting the part of a tenderfoot, he becomes very friendly with Kay White and Dora Crowell, who knew Olga Gunderstrom in the East.

Cory Blaine, while on a hunting trip with his guests, asks Kay White to marry him, but she staunchly refuses his offer. Their guide on the trip is Hi Bryam, whom Marvel doesn't trust. Marvel attaches deep significance to Bryam's refusal to permit him to inspect his secluded cabin.

On the trip Kay's horse runs away with her. Marvel (Mason) rescues her, and does it so skillfully that Blaine suspects that he isn't the tenderfoot he claims to be.

That night Marvel cautiously takes one of Blaine's boots and hurls it into the fire. The next morning Blaine is more than angry because of Marvel's stupid "mistake." But Marvel has done this for a purpose of his own.

In the eyes of the ranch hands and Blaine, Marvel looks very silly because of his insistence that he find another horse's tooth to replace the one that he has lost. He claims it to be his lucky piece. His real reason for this search is to get a look at Blaine's horse that dropped dead after being overridden.

Blaine asks Marvel to leave the ranch, on the



Accused of murder and kidnaping, Deputy Sheriff Buck Mason unleashes six-gun fury that blasts plotting sidewinders from the range!



pretext that he needs his room for some guests coming in from Detroit.

Marvel learns from Dora Crowell that Olga Gunderstrom is coming up to the ranch soon. The young deputy sheriff fears that this might upset all his plans.

For the amusement of his guests Blaine arranges a paper chase. The real purpose of the chase is to kidnap Kay and extract a huge ransom from her father. Two of Blaine's friends, Mart and Eddie, are to do the dirty work.

While Marvel is in town, waiting to take the next day's train to the city, he sees Olga Gunderstrom arriving. But she doesn't see him.

When Cory Blaine and Kay are riding the trail in the paper chase, they are held up and bound by two masked outlaws. They leave Blaine fettered on the trail, but take Kay with them.

In the meantime, Kay's father has arrived at the T F Dude Ranch. Butts, who had been riding with Blaine and Kay, returns to the ranch alone. Dora Crowell becomes nervous because of her distrust of Blaine. She makes John White, Kay's father, inform the sheriff.

When John White calls the sheriff, he speaks to Marvel, unknowingly. Marvel has the livery man get in touch with the sheriff and then rides out after Kay.

Now go on with the story.

CHAPTER XVIII

"Could He Have Done It?"

YES, Kay knew who had been responsible for her kidnaping! Or thought she knew. Though as the minutes and hours of the fearful night had dragged out interminably while her brain pounded with thinking—futile thinking—she had become a little less certain that her instinct was right. A little less positive. And yet—

Of course it was Cory Blaine, she
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CONCLUDING A GREAT EPIC NOVEL OF

thought desperately. He had deliberately led her into that trap!

Then, for the hundredth time, when she remembered how roughly those outlaw devils had treated him, how heartlessly they had left him bound and gagged in the desolate gulch, where he might die before anyone found him, that theory again was somewhat shaken.

Again and again another idea forced itself upon her, though she tried to push it away. Could Bruce Marvel, perhaps, in some way have been responsible? There had been something mysterious about him. Both she and Dora had sensed that; had, in fact, known it. Anyhow, he certainly was not what he had tried to lead them to believe he was, and this fact furnished a substantial groundwork for suspicion.

Those same thoughts, she recalled, had been all jumbled up as she had been forced to ride away with her abductors. They were plainer now, because she could reason more logically. But she was remembering how each time her thoughts had gone to Marvel with suspicion that she had refused to accept them.

Then when the two men had brought her to Hi Bryam's cabin, her suspicion had settled once more upon Cory Blaine, and tried to stay there. But the more she thought, the more jumbled everything was again.

Why had Bruce Marvel chosen to leave the ranch at this particular time? That troubled her, for she knew he had been planning a longer stay. Could it be that the paper chase had given him the opportunity for which he had been waiting? He had refused to go with them to Crater Mountain, too, and what a silly excuse he had given for remaining at the ranch—hunting for horse's teeth!

Bud had said he had quickly given up his search for teeth, too, and he had been off somewhere by himself for hours after that! Had he been meeting these men? Planning what to do? Perhaps knowing about the paper chase the next day all the time, and pretending it was a surprise to him? Why, he might have put the paper chase idea into Cory's head himself!

Logical reasoning, Kay tried to tell herself, but always when it reached that point it stopped right there—against the blank wall of unreasoning belief in the integrity of the man.

"He couldn't have done it—I know it!" she murmured. She sprang to her feet almost defiantly and raised her eyes to the black shadows among the rafters. "He did not do it!" she said aloud.

"What's that?" asked Hi Bryam from beyond the doorway.

She walked out to where the man stood beside the fire.

"Cory Blaine is responsible for this outrageous treatment of me!" she accused, her voice dripping icicles, but her head



Kay White

held bravely high and her voice steady. "Tell him for me that there are two men in the world who will make him pay for it with his life! The one who catches him first will do that."

"Blaine had nothin' to do with it," snapped Bryam. "Such talk as that's like a dumb blonde. . . . Here's yore grub. Yuh better eat it, too. Yuh got a long ride ahead of yuh."

KAY realized the sense of that. If she got a chance to help herself at all, she would need her strength. So, in silence, she ate the rough fare, scarcely tasting it or knowing what it was. The three men with her ate in silence, too, while the four hounds nosed among them, whining for scraps.

"What yuh goin' to do with the dogs, Hi?" asked Mart, after he had finished eating.

"Gotta leave 'em here," rumbled Bryam. "They can rustle plenty grub in the hills."

"Won't they foller us?" asked Eddie.

"Not if I tell 'em to stay here," Bryam said confidently.

"I been thinkin'—" Mart suddenly began. "I—"

"That ain't one of the things nobody's expectin' of yuh," grunted Bryam.

"Well, you listen anyhow," said Mart belligerently. "Yuh better if yuh know what's good for yuh. That damn' campfire down there has done upset all our plans. Everybody knows yuh're batchin' it up here, huntin' lions. If they find yuh gone, and yore dogs here, that'll shore look plumb funny to 'em."

THE WEST BY THE CREATOR OF "TARZAN"

Bryam's evil little eyes shot restlessly from one spot to another. He could see the sense in Mart's argument.

"Well, what's to be done about it?" he asked grumpily.

"Yuh oughta stay here," Mart said flatly. "It'll be a whole lot safer for yuh, and for us, too. Look! If yuh're here when they come, they ain't goin' to suspicion yuh none, and yuh can send 'em off on a wrong trail after us."

"And that's where yore head ain't no good a-tall," answered Bryam. "If yuh come here with the girl, then I musta known somethin' 'bout it. And they'd know I shore recognized the girl, seein' that I seen her every day for two—three days on the lion hunt, and if I was on the level I'd want to know how come. If yuh didn't come here, how could I tell 'em what trail yuh went on?"

"Yuh don't have to tell 'em the girl was here, or that yuh seen her. Jest tell 'em two fellers yuh never seen before ride in over the ridge from the east, bummed some grub and asked the trail to Deming. Then say they rode back over the ridge to the east."

"That would be a hell of a trail to Deming," said Bryam.

EDDIE nodded in agreement.

"Shore it would," agreed Mart. "But ain't it plumb natural that fellers stealin' the girl would high-tail for the roughest country they could find?"

"That ain't such a bad scheme, Hi," Eddie put in after a moment's thought. Suddenly Bryam slapped his thigh and let out a rumbling laugh.

"Nope! It's a damn good one!"

"We'll ride up the canyon a ways," Mart went on to explain, "then cut across to the west ridge and foller that to the One Mile Creek trail. You can easily brush out our trail above camp, then ride up the east trail to the summit, come down somewhere else and ride up again, pickin' another new place to come down into camp. That'll give a fresh hoss trail to the east summit, and they ain't goin' to stop to try and figger out whether there was two hosses or three went up, even if they could, which prob'ly they couldn't."

"Yuh ain't such a fool as yuh look, Mart," Bryam admitted grudgingly.

Eddie rose and stretched.

"Well, let's get started," he said. "Come on, Miss. Yore hoss is ready."

"May I go back in the cabin a moment?" asked Kay. "I left my handkerchief there."

"Well, hurry up," Bryam snapped impatiently.

Kay ran into the cabin, but she did not search for any handkerchief. Instead she gathered up a deck of greasy playing cards that had been lying on the table and slipped them into the pocket of her leather coat. A moment later she was outside again and mounted.

A satisfied expression flitted across her face. There was quite a likelihood, she thought, that these brutal men who thought a blonde was simple-minded, dumb, and

helpless, would find that one defiant little blonde in blue overalls was not so helpless as she looked.

Mart led the way up the canyon, his horse following the trail in the darkness. Directly behind rode Kay, and following her was Eddie. For the time being, at least, they had discarded their original plan of leading Kay's horse, for this would have been most difficult upon the steep, rough trail, zigzagging up the canyonside to the summit of the western ridge.

They had warned her against the danger of attempting to escape, since a single misstep from the trail might easily result in injury or death. Kay knew the truth of that, and shivered. It was from death on just such a trail as this, and not so far away, that Bruce Marvel had rescued her.

IN THE darkness Kay took one of the playing cards from her pocket, tied her handkerchief tightly about it, and when she saw Mart turn abruptly from the trail toward the ridge at their right, she dropped the handkerchief and the card to the ground. In the darkness Mart could not see what she had done.

From time to time she took another card from her pocket and tore it in two, dropping the halves at intervals. The men who had captured her rode on in sublime ignorance that she had clearly marked their way until they entered the main trail leading up the hillside.

Perhaps no one would come that way to see, Kay thought forlornly. Even if they did, they might not interpret the significance of the signs she left. But she had done her best. If someone did chance to see and guess at the truth, she had plainly blazed the trail of her abductors onward from Bryam's shack.

The trail, bad enough in the daytime, seemed infinitely worse at night, yet they reached the summit of the ridge in safety and moved southward on more level ground. Oddly Kay could not drag her thoughts from Bruce Marvel—not as a man she suspected, but as the man only her heart admitted she loved!

And not far away, something she could not suspect, Bruce Marvel's anxious thoughts were of her, with every breath he drew.

With dogged determination, Marvel had followed the trail upward into Mill Creek Canyon. Baldy had responded nobly to the call made upon him, but as the man had done all that he could to conserve his horse's strength, the mount had not, as yet, shown indications of fatigue.

"Baldy, I'm bankin' on yuh," the man murmured, his voice low. "Yuh saved her once and yuh're goin' to again! If we find her at Bryam's it won't be long now. But if they've left and hit the trail for Kelly's in Sonora, you and me got some ride cut out for us. But I reckon we can catch 'em, Baldy. I seen their hosses yesterday, and they ain't one-two with you. No, sir, old feller. Beside you they're jest plain scrubs."

Baldy's ears twitched understandingly in

the darkness, as once again the young deputy from Comanche County lapsed into his usual state of silence. But his mind was active with plans and memories.

He recalled—and how he wished he could forget that!—Kay's tone of disgust when she had reproached him for having thrown Blaine's boot in the fire. She had never spoken of it again, but he knew she had not forgotten it. He had lowered himself in her estimation all right; but he couldn't help it. He couldn't have explained to Kay why he had done that.

He was thankful she hadn't mentioned it again. Any other girl might have harped on it. Yes, Kay was a brick, all right.

Behind him, by several hours now, rode the posse, headed by the sheriff of Porico County, and behind the posse came Cory Blaine. Blaine was uneasy, because there seemed no chance to pass them so that he might reach Bryam's shack first. But they were maintaining a good gait and riding steadily, and if he tried to detour and pass them unseen he would only hit rougher going that would hold him back that much longer.

He cursed the luck that had brought John White to the ranch one day too soon, upsetting all his carefully laid plans. If White had not been at the ranch, Butts could have delayed the forming of a search party until the following day, at least. Except for Bud and the other cowboy, and it had been part of Blaine's plan for them to go out searching the hills, all the others didn't suspect.

Then, at last, in what Cory Blaine thought was his darkest hour, fortune smiled on him, for the posse halted to rest the horses. And it looked to Blaine, watching from a distance, that their halt might be one of considerable duration. For abruptly he saw a tiny fire glowing ahead of him, perhaps half a mile away. He watched it grow as he drew nearer, until at last its leaping flame revealed the figures of men gathered about it, and unsaddled horses tethered nearby. The posse!

"This," said Cory Blaine, and grinned in the darkness, "is what I call luck!"

CHAPTER XIX

A Greasy Playing Card



CORY BLAINE reined his horse to the left, out of the trail, with the intention of passing around the posse, coming into the main trail again ahead of them.

Low hills, cut with washes, came close to Mill Creek at this point and it was necessary for Blaine's horse to pick his way carefully through the darkness. Perhaps a better horseman, or a more considerate man, would have dismounted and led the animal, but Blaine, like other men of his kind, was only a rider and not a horseman.

Nor was he ever instinctively consider-

ate of anything other than his own interests. He was tired and so it pleased him to ride, and his horse, willing and obedient, did its best; though twice it nearly fell.

Blaine had covered half the distance of the detour and was opposite the camp of the posse when suddenly the bank of a dry wash gave way. Horse and rider were precipitately hurled to the bottom. Fortunately for Blaine, he fell clear of the animal, which lay in the bottom of the wash, breathing heavily.

Scrambling to his feet, Blaine approached his mount. Seizing the reins and cursing under his breath, he tried to urge the horse up. The animal did its best to respond to the command, but only fell back upon its side with a whinny. Cursing harder, Blaine kicked the horse viciously, and again the injured animal struggled to arise. It almost succeeded this time, and before it sank to earth again, the pale starlight had revealed to the man the hopelessness of its condition—a leg was broken.

For a moment Blaine stood in dumb, futile rage beside the suffering beast. Then, to his credit, he did the one merciful thing he could do. Drawing his revolver, he shot the animal through the brain—a shot that brought every member of the posse to alert attention.

Far away, along the trail, the shot sounded faintly in the ears of a solitary horseman. He reined in and sat motionless for a full minute, listening. Then he rode on, puzzled, but not diverted from his course.

"NOW what the devil was that?" exclaimed the Porico County sheriff. With the other members of his posse, he had stepped quickly from the fire at the sound of the shot.

"Hey, some of you fellers!" came a voice out of the darkness.

"Who are you?" demanded the sheriff.

"Cory Blaine," came the echoing reply.

"What the hell you doin' there?" shouted a posseman. "Thought yuh was lost!"

The entire posse moved in the direction of Blaine's voice.

"What's wrong, Blaine?" demanded one of them, after they had located the man in the bottom of the dry wash.

"I had to shoot my hoss," Blaine said crisply. "He busted a leg. I tried to get my saddle off'n him, but the cinch ring caught somewhere underneath him. I need somebody to give me a hand."

"What yuh doin' up here anyway?" demanded the sheriff.

"I was follerin' you fellers to catch up with yuh, and I guess I got off the trail," Blaine said. "Then I seen yore campfire, and I was headin' straight towards it, when this had to happen!"

They helped him with his saddle and he walked back to camp with it and his bridle.

"Will one of you fellers let me have a hoss?" he asked. The question apparently aroused no enthusiasm. "I got to get one!" he begged. "Can't yuh see I can't waste a minute? I got to find that girl! You'd

oughta see how I feel responsible for her—bein' with her and all—"

He saw the men looking at him peculiarly, and gave a short, mirthless laugh.

"Oh, I forgot," he said quickly. "Reckon this all's got me 'bout loco. Guess yuh're wonderin' how come I'm here when she's still missin'! And fellers, it's a heap worse'n yuh think. She ain't lost. She's kidnaped! The fellers that grabbed her bound and gagged me—I didn't have no gun—"

Hastily, and briefly, he related the same story he had told on his return to the ranch, after the posse had been there and gone. The men listened with open-mouthed surprise—all but the sheriff who had his own opinions, but kept them to himself. Not even the members of his posse had been taken into his confidence about what he had deduced from the instructions about where to search for Kay White; instructions that had been relayed to him from a mysterious tenderfoot who had showed up at the hotel in town.

"**S**O NOW, yuh see!" Blaine exploded anxiously. "I got to have a hoss! I got to find her! I promised her dad that I would!"

"I don't reckon none of the boys want to hoof it back to town," the sheriff said, unmoved by the man's desperately excited plea.

"I'll pay him a good price for his hoss!" insisted Blaine. "And he can pick up a fresh one at the ranch."

"I reckon," said the sheriff, after a long, thoughtful silence, "that yuh better ride along double with one of us, Blaine. Come mornin', we'll like as not run onto some range hosses."

"I'll allow that's 'bout the best we can do," said a posseman. "Anyhow, we're ready to ride on now, ain't we, Sheriff? We shore got a job ahead of us now, looks like."

The sheriff nodded as the men started resaddling.

When the posse took up the march again, Cory Blaine rode behind one of the men. Another packed his saddle, and a third carried his bridle.

Shortly after dawn, they sighted a cavvy of range horses. Three of the men rode out from the posse and drove them in. One of them was quickly roped and saddled, and once again, to his relief, Blaine had a mount.

To leave the posse and ride on now, though, was impossible, for they were pushing their horses to the utmost, and though the animal Blaine rode was fresh and could have outdistanced the others, perhaps, the sheriff would not permit him to ride ahead of the posse. His reasons were vague, and seemed most unsatisfactory to Cory Blaine.

He chafed beneath the authority of the Law, but Blaine consoled himself with the knowledge that the trail up Mill Creek Canyon was often in plain sight from Bryam's shack. He had the hope—practically the assurance—that the men at the cabin

would see the posse in ample time to permit them to make their escape.

As the gray of dawn began to take on the first faint pink flush of morning, far up toward the head of Mill Creek Canyon, Hi Bryam sat in the doorway of his shack, smoking his pipe. Below him he saw the canyon spread out into a valley, through which Mill Creek wound, its tortuous course marked by the green of the verdure along its banks standing out in bold relief against the purple and brown of the surrounding landscape.

LITTLE specks moved here and there upon the face of the valley—grazing cattle and horses. To the man they were just part of the landscape, attracting no particular attention. But presently another speck appeared and though to an unpracticed eye it might have seemed no different from the others, it brought Bryam to immediate and alert attention.

"That would be Blaine," he soliloquized. "I sorta got a notion he's bit off more'n he can chew this time. Somehow I wish I hadn't had nothin' to do with it. Folks is funny 'bout such things. Yuh can steal somebody's money and nobody seems to get plumb excited 'bout it, except the feller whose money it was. But steal a woman or a kid, and by hell, it's everybody's business! They all want to kill yuh!"

He sat for a long time watching the approaching horseman, then arose and went inside the cabin. When he returned he was carrying his rifle, an old Springfield .30-30.

Sitting down again with the weapon lying loosely across his knees, his eyes were steadily upon the man and the horse drawing constantly nearer. After awhile he arose again.

"That don't look like Cory," he muttered. "Mebbe I'd better hide out till I see who it is."

He walked slowly toward a clump of trees growing part way up on the side of the canyon, perhaps two hundred feet from the shack.

His four hounds, lying about near him, rose to follow.

"Go on back, you," he said, and obediently they trotted back and laid down around the doorstep.

Bruce Marvel rode openly up to Bryam's shack, for he knew it would be useless to attempt to approach unseen. If anyone was there, he knew that eyes had been watching him ever since he had come in sight. And the best way to disarm suspicion, of course, was to avoid suspicious action. To ride up boldly would disarm them.

He believed that Kay was here, but he did not expect to see her, nor did he expect to take her away single-handed from three men. He was certain that she was in no immediate danger, even though he still thought Cory Blaine was with her. It seemed a foregone conclusion to the young deputy sheriff that Cory Blaine had at last shown his hand by kidnaping Kay, and if Blaine's prime object was ransom he



Wheeling in his saddle, Marvel triggered a quick shot that caught Bryam in the shoulder (Chap. XX)

would not harm her as long as there was any hope of collecting that ransom.

On the way up, Marvel had made his plans carefully. He had decided that he would tell whoever was there that Kay was lost and that he was looking for her, apparently with no suspicion that she might be there. Bryam, or whoever else showed, would tell him of course, that nothing had been seen of Kay. It would be believed he was a member of a searching party. Then he would ride on.

BUT instead of directly following the trail to Sonora, which he could not reach without coming into plain view of the cabin, the fact that had made it necessary for him to ride up boldly, he would ride up the ridge on the east. That would lead to it being believed he was hopelessly off the trail.

This ridge joined the other at the point where Dora Crowell had shot the lion. From there, he foresaw no difficulty in finding the One Mile Creek trail, where he purposed lying in wait for Kay and her abductors. And never in his life had he been so thankful for anything as he was for that conversation he had overheard in

Bryam's shack the last night of the lion hunt. It told him the truth now so plainly—that what he actually had overheard were the final plans for Kay's abduction.

As Marvel drew up before the shack he called loudly:

"Hello, the house!"

The dogs had already come to meet him, but there were no other signs of life about the place.

"I reckon when they seen me they must all have lit out," thought the deputy sheriff.

He dismounted, and as the dogs came to nose him, he petted those nearest him, but all the while his eyes were on the ground. From the trees on the hillside Bryam watched him, his vision interfered with by the foliage through which he looked.

"Somethin' familiar 'bout that hombre," he mused, "but I'll be hanged if I can place him." He hesitated to come out of hiding, though, and stood in silence while Marvel remounted and rode on up the canyon.

In the trampled earth in front of the cabin, the young lawman had read a story that told him much. He had seen the fresh prints of horses' hoofs and of the boots of men. And among them the imprint

of a small, high-heeled boot. He was on the right trail!

Just above the cabin, along the fresh trail of three horses, he came to a point where the spoor suddenly vanished. To one side lay a leafy branch freshly torn from a tree. The leaves at its lower end were frayed and dust-covered. As Marvel's eyes discovered it, a shadow of a smile touched his lips.

"Plain as daylight," he thought, and rode on up the trail, knowing that the signs of the passing of three horses had been crudely swept from it.

For about a hundred feet the trail had been brushed clean of hoof prints, then they commenced again, as Marvel had known they would. He rode on for another hundred yards, then suddenly he saw something lying in the trail that started his heart pounding. Reining Baldy in, he leaned from his saddle and picked the thing up—a dainty handkerchief. And it was tied around a greasy playing card.

For an instant he gazed at the scrap of linen. Then, almost reverently, he tucked it inside his shirt.

"Poor kid!" he muttered. "Wonder if yuh thought of me when yuh dropped this—or that I might be lookin' for yuh." He shook his head. "'Course yuh didn't, 'cause yuh don't know how much I love yuh, and that I'd know if yuh was in trouble, and would come huntin' yuh, if yuh was at the end of the world."

Where the handkerchief and the card had been dropped Marvel saw that the horsemen had turned abruptly to the right. Following their trail, he came presently upon half of a torn playing card.

"Paper chasin' has its advantages," he soliloquized, but there was no amusement in his stark eyes. "It learns people tricks they might not have thought of."

But here he did not need the evidence of the card.

The spoor lay plain before him, leading diagonally up the side of the ridge, back in the direction of the cabin.

Somewhere on ahead was Kay—and the devils who would have to answer to Buck Mason, deputy sheriff of Comanche County, New Mexico, for laying a finger on her!

CHAPTER XX

The Damn Dude Points His Quarry



WITH knitted brows Hi Bryam watched the rider, and now for the first time he took particular notice of the horse.

"Hell!" he muttered under his breath. "That's that Baldy hoss that the dude rode. Must be somebody from the T F Ranch, but who—"

The horse and rider were now in plain sight upon the flank of the ridge, and something in the way the man sat his horse, in the way he carried his shoulders, seemed more than ever familiar to Bryam.

At last, with a start of shocked surprise, he recognized the man.

"Well, I'll be double damned!" he ejaculated. "If it ain't that nosey dude! Where'n hell did he get the he-man clothes?"

But that wonder was only a swiftly passing, half unconscious thought with Bryam. He had other and more serious things to think about. In fact Hi Bryam was distinctly worried. He was no intellectual giant, but he had brains enough to see that Marvel was upon the trail of the girl and her abductors and to realize that the man knew he was on the right trail.

Here was disaster! Here was the end of the lion hunter's dream of affluence, his chance at a share of the ransom money! And here, too, was a man who might definitely link him to the crime.

Bryam made up his mind instantly what must be done. He stepped from behind the trees that had concealed him, cocking his rifle. Throwing it to his shoulder, he took deliberate aim, while Marvel, guiding Baldy along the steep hillside, was concentrating his attention upon the spoor that he was following.

Bryam squeezed the trigger. A spurt of dust rose on the hillside on a level with Bruce Marvel's head. And simultaneously with the crack of the rifle, the rider who was Bryam's target was electrified into action.

Almost as though he had been actuated by the same mechanism that released the hammer on Bryam's rifle, Marvel wheeled in his saddle, a .44 ready in his hand.

Bryam was an excellent shot and so sure of himself that he could not have conceived that he might miss such an easy target, and so he had lowered his rifle after the first shot, certain of the result. Perhaps the clean miss disconcerted him, for he hesitated just an instant before he threw the rifle to his shoulder again for a second try—a shot that was never fired. For before he could take steady aim, Marvel's old .44 had spoken. Bryam, clutching at his shoulder, pitched forward upon his face.

MARVEL sat watching the man for a moment. If he had not been killed it was necessary to make sure that he was harmless. Marvel reined in up on the side of the ridge, turning in the saddle to watch Bryam.

"He ain't dead," he muttered. "But he shore ain't in no fix to do any shootin'."

Buck Mason, who had even himself become accustomed to the name of Bruce Marvel, was not heartless, leaving a wounded man to die for lack of help. But there were other and far more important things for him to do than go back and plug the wound of the man who had deliberately tried to bushwhack him.

Even so, he had been near enough for his keen eyes to persuade him that Hi Bryam, weaving to his feet and clapping a hand to his shoulder, was not fatally hurt. And it probably was not the first time Bryam had been forced to attend to his own gunshot wounds. A little red-eye

poured into this one would do the trick until somebody came along—at most any time now.

It was a hard pull to the summit and Baldy's rider rested him twice before at last he rode into the more level trail along the top of the ridge. Here another fragment of a playing card marked the way. At intervals he continued to find them and always they brought a strange lump into his throat—these inarticulate appeals for help that the girl he loved had left behind her.

"She's game," he murmured appreciatively. "She shore is game, and she ain't lost her head, either."

He tried to figure how far ahead of him his quarry was and from the signs along the trail he judged that it could not be more than five hours. His greatest fear and his greatest hope lay in Baldy. The bandits' horses must have rested at Bryam's for several hours, but Baldy had had but two or three brief rests since the previous evening. Yet even now he showed only the slightest indications of fatigue.

"I always thought Bull's-eye was some hoss, old boy," muttered Marvel, "but I guess yuh've got him faded. After a moment he added meditatively: "Though of course Bull's-eye never had nothin' so important as this to travel for."

Marvel was far on the trail toward the south when the Porico County sheriff and his posse rode up to Bryam's shack. The sheriff was in the lead and the first thing that attracted his attention was four hounds that rose bristling and growling from about the body of a man a short distance up the side of the canyon to the left of the shack.

RIDING quickly over to the prostrate man the sheriff dismounted, while the hounds withdrew a short distance, watching him suspiciously. He turned Bryam over on his back and saw that he still lived, though his shirt and the ground beneath him were soaked with blood. There was a trail of blood leading further up also. Apparently Bryam had been able to make his way almost to his cabin after he was shot, before he collapsed.

The wounded man opened his eyes and looked up into the face of the sheriff. Feebly he raised his hand and tried to point toward the east.

"They—they headed for Deming over the east ridge," he gasped.

Cory Blaine, who had been riding at the rear of the posse, quickly rode up and dismounted.

"Who shot yuh?" demanded the sheriff. With an effort that seemed to take all his remaining strength, Bryam answered: "That damn dude, Marvel!"

Weakly he beckoned to Blaine to lean closer.

"Send 'em away," he whispered hoarsely. "I gotta speak to you by yoreself."

The sheriff heard, but hesitated.

"Let him speak to me alone," said Blaine. "I don't know what he wants, but I reckon it's 'bout his family. He never

made no friends with nobody, but I reckon he trusts me more'n most."

Shrugging, the sheriff motioned the other men away. Blaine knelt and bent his ear close to Bryam's lips.

"What is it, Hi?" he asked urgently.

Bryam struggled and gasped. "He—"

Blood rushed from between his lips. He coughed, and there was a rattling in his throat as again he tried to speak. Then he sagged limply to the ground.

For a moment, squatting on his heels, Blaine looked at him. Then he rose and turned toward the sheriff.

"He's done," he said.

"What did he tell yuh?" asked the lawman anxiously, coming forward.

"He never got a chance to tell me nothin'," Blaine said, but the sheriff could not guess that the worry in the man's eyes was not for Bryam. "He jest died."

"Who's this hombre Marvel he was talkin' about?" demanded the sheriff, with the right of the law to be curious.

"He's the feller that rustled the girl—I'm shore of that," said Blaine.

THE lawman's narrowed eyes studied Blaine keenly.

"What makes yuh think that?" the lawman asked.

"I don't think—I know!" said Blaine.

"And I'd oughta guessed what he was up to, the lobo, a long time ago. He was a guest up at my place and he got stuck on Kay. It got so bad that I kicked him out yesterday, but he musta already had everything fixed, for he held me and her up—him and another feller—and took her away from me. I didn't say that before, 'cause I wanted to catch him dead to rights and settle with him myownself. I said I couldn't identify either of them masked men. But I could!"

"He knows her old man is rich and he's lookin' for ransom. He can't be far ahead of us 'cause Bryam ain't been shot long. The trail's hot now and yuh ought to pick him up before dark."

"Hell!" ejaculated the sheriff. "There ain't no trail over this here east ridge to Deming. That's the worst damn country anywheres about."

"So much the easier to get 'em," replied Blaine. "There's three of 'em, and they ain't goin' to travel any too fast—the girl can't stand it. If yuh start right now yuh ought to overhaul 'em before dark."

"There ain't much use," grumbled the sheriff, "but we'll try it. Ain't you comin' with us? Thought yuh was so danged anxious to get him."

"I'll stay here and bury Hi, first," said Blaine. "He ain't got no other friend. Then I'll foller along and catch up with yuh."

"Come on, boys," called the sheriff. "Water yore hosses and we'll get goin'."

As Cory Blaine watched the posse zig-zagging up the steep trail toward the summit of the east ridge, he was unquestionably worried. Uppermost in his mind was the question as to what Bruce Marvel had been doing up here at Bryam's camp on

the trail of Eddie and Mart. Who was the man, anyhow? How had he got a start on all of them, and what had led up to the gun-fight between him and Bryam?

As he tried to visualize what might have happened and the tragedy that had been enacted here at the head of Mill Creek Canyon, he reached the conclusion, from what Bryam had told the sheriff, that his confederates had been successful in misdirecting Marvel onto the east trail. By sending the sheriff and the posse after him, Bryam's dying words had given Eddie and Mart ample time to make their escape into Sonora.

"Things ain't turnin' out so bad after all," Blaine thought. "This is jest the kind of thing I've been lookin' for."

HE watched the riders picking their way up toward the summit of the ridge, but he did not move until the last of them had disappeared beyond the crest. Then he swung quickly into his saddle and spurred up the trail toward the summit of the west ridge, leaving his "friend," Hi Bryam, lying where he had died. . . .

The sun was sinking in the west as Bruce Marvel started the descent upon the south side of the range. Below him lay a broad, desolate valley, and in the distance another range of mountains. Beyond that, lay Mexico.

Level as a billiard table appeared the wide expanse of sage-dotted plain below him, but he well knew that it was a rough and rugged terrain cut by many washes. The trail he was following descended along the summit of a hogback toward the distant valley.

He paused for an instant upon this lofty shoulder of the range, his eyes searching far ahead in the hope that they might find a trace of the three riders who had preceded him. In the distance the outlines of another range of mountains lay purple against the sky, a low saddle marking the pass through which he knew the trail led onward into Sonora.

Far away he thought that he discerned an indication of dust along the trail that his quarry would be following, and as he moved forward again his eyes dropped to a scrap of pasteboard lying on the ground ahead of him. It was half of a queen of hearts. Leaning from the saddle, he picked it up and carefully tucked it in a pocket of his shirt.

"Almost like gettin' a letter from her," he murmured. "The queen of hearts—that would be a love letter. Shucks! I'm gettin' foolish in the head."

He rode on down an easy declivity and twice again he thought he saw dust across the valley. Occasionally a fragment of a playing card appeared in the trail, and it seemed to the lonely rider almost as if he were talking to the girl who had dropped the bits of greasy pasteboard.

Night was falling as he wound down the trail along the lower slopes of the mountains. His greatest immediate concern now was, for Baldy. He had watered the horse in Mill Creek just above Hi Bryam's

cabin, but he had seen no signs of water out across the desolate, barren valley that he was entering.

Also, Baldy had been traveling now for almost twenty hours, with only a few brief rests. There was still a little grain left in the gunny sack at the cantle of his saddle, so once again he halted to rest and feed his mount.

As yet the man himself had felt neither hunger nor fatigue. He was certain that were it not for the shortage of water, both he and the horse could go on for many hours longer.

In the mountains across the valley there was water, so he determined to push on all night, if necessary, to reach it before the heat of a new day beat down upon them, taking its toll of moisture from their bodies.

CHAPTER XXI

"Yuh're Safe Now!"



BALDY ate ravenously while Marvel examined the animal's feet and rubbed the sinewy legs. Then he lay down upon his back for a few minutes, seeking the refreshing rest of absolute relaxation.

"Everything was workin' out so pretty, Baldy," he said aloud, in the way a man accustomed to long hours in the wilderness learns to talk to his mount. "Too bad this had to happen. Another day or two at the most and it couldn't have happened, but you and me will straighten it out yet, old feller."

Baldy looked up from his oats and gazed reflectively at the man. His ears twitched his answer.

"I used to think Bull's-eye was the finest hoss in the world," the man said again, "but I reckon he'll have to take his hat off to you after this trip. 'Course, he never had no such chance as you, Baldy. Reckon no other hoss in the world ever had such a chance. Yuh're goin' to be a reg'lar hero, feller—packin' me all them miles to save the sweetest thing the sun ever shone on."

It never occurred to Marvel that he might fail, so sure was he of his horse and himself. It was not egotism but self-confidence, coupled with the knowledge that he must not fail, which gave him assurance. Also, long ago it had become his creed that right was might, and that sooner or later retribution was sure to overtake the evil-doer.

"Well," he said presently, rising to his feet, "I reckon we'd better be hittin' the trail. We've loafed long enough."

He laid the blanket upon the horse's back, carefully smoothing out the wrinkles in the cloth, then he lifted the heavy saddle from the ground.

"Here's where one of them postage stamp saddles I've been talkin' about so much recent shore would come in handy," he remarked. "There really ain't no sense in a

hoss packin' all this weight, which ain't no use in a case like this."

Baldy appeared not even mildly interested in the relative merits of stock and English saddles. He grunted to the tightening of the forward cinch, and when he felt the rear cinch touch his belly he flattened his ears and reached back in that peculiar gesture of viciousness with which most horses indicate their disapproval of cinches in general, and rear cinches in particular.

The trail lay dimly visible before him as Bruce Marvel turned Baldy's nose again toward the south. Before long it dropped into the mouth of a wide canyon, which it followed downward for a couple of miles. Crossing the canyon, which here turned toward the right, it rose abruptly again to higher ground.

BEFORE the rider then there lay once more the wide expanse of valley that was now but a black void, rimmed upon the south by the black outlines of the mountains, with the low saddle in the distance the only landmark to point the way.

"It's jest like a great big black curtain turned upside down," mused the man. "It hides everything and makes a feller wonder what's behind it. She's out there in it somewheres—wish I knew jest where. She don't guess I'm here, and I reckon it wouldn't make any more difference to her if she did than if it was Bud or some other feller. But it means a plumb lot to me—it means everything."

His soliloquy came to an abrupt pause, as far away in the distance a point of light shone unexpectedly and mysteriously against the black pall.

"That shore was an answer, all right," he said aloud. "That light jumpin' up like that right when I was wishin' I knew where she was. They shore must be crazy to light a fire now, unless they think they got such a start that nobody can catch up with 'em anyway."

He was moving on again now, and at the same time endeavoring to restrain himself from urging Baldy to a faster gait. His own great urge was to span the distance between Kay and himself with all speed—to span it with Seven League boots. But his better judgment prevailed and he saved his horse at the expense of his own nerves. He chafed, though, at the slow progress toward the goal which seemed now in sight. So near—yet so far!

For a great deal of the time the light was hidden when the trail dropped onto lower ground and always he feared that he might not see it again. But at intervals his view of it recurred and always it grew larger as he approached. At last, just before the first streaks of dawn had lighted the eastern sky, he topped a little rise of ground and saw the fire in plain sight a few hundred yards away. It was burning low now, mostly a mass of glowing embers, and he could distinguish nothing in its vicinity.

He reined in his horse and dismounted quietly, praying that if this were the camp

he sought, the horses that must be staked or hobbled nearby would not discover Baldy's presence and nicker a revealing welcome.

He led Baldy back along the trail to lower ground where the horse would be out of sight of the occupants of the camp. Tying him to a low bush, Marvel returned in the direction of the campfire. As he approached the higher ground from which it was visible, he dropped to his hands and knees.

Taking advantage of the bushes which dotted the ground, he crawled slowly forward, inching his way along so silently that there was no sound of rustling leaves. The stars had faded from the eastern sky and the first gray light of a new dawn was showing above the horizon.

CAREFULLY the man crept forward. He had to make every possible effort to avoid premature discovery, for he was not sure just how many men he would have to face. And he must not fail!

He did not believe that Cory Blaine had been with the party that had left Bryam's not long before he had arrived there himself. For when he had seen Blaine ride away from the ranch with Kay, at the start of that paper chase that had had such dire consequences for her, Blaine had been riding a horse called Pudding Foot—and probably was still topping the same mount. For surely he would not have taken a chance on returning to the home ranch for a fresh mount.

In the way he always noted horses, Bruce Marvel had taken note of Pudding Foot on several occasions, telling himself that the horse certainly came rightly by his name, for he was truly remarkable for the roundness and size of his hoofs. Marvel was sure he would have recognized the prints of Pudding Foot's feet, and he had seen no sign of them anywhere along the trail.

Of course there was the possibility that Blaine might have joined Kay and her captors by another trail. If that were the case, the New Mexico deputy sheriff might have three desperate men to contend with, instead of two.

There was also the possibility that he would find no one about the campfire. With that thought, there came to Marvel the first physical indication of the nervous tension under which he had been laboring. He broke into a cold sweat at the thought that, after all, he might not find Kay here.

At last he had wormed his hidden way to within a few yards of the glowing embers, though they were temporarily hidden from him by a low bush that had offered him concealment as he crawled forward. Removing his hat, he raised his head slowly until he could look over the top of the bush. In front of him, plainly visible in the gray light of the new day, he saw a man sitting by the fire, half reclining against a pile of saddles. On the ground, beyond the fire, two forms were stretched.

Marvel replaced his hat and rose slowly to his feet, a .44 in each hand. He ad-

vanced softly toward the man sleeping against the saddles, and in moments was close enough to see that one of the other figures was that of a woman. He breathed an almost audible sigh of relief. Beyond the camp three horses were standing patiently.

ALL this he took in in a single brief glance. Then he spoke.

"Stick 'em up!" he snapped sharply.

"It's all over! I've got yuh covered."

Instantly the three awoke, scrambling up, half awake.

"Stick 'em up!" snapped Marvel again, and the hands of the man by the saddles shot above his head.

But the other man leaped to his feet, yanking a gun from its holster.

It all happened so quickly that Kay, awakened from a sleep of utter physical and nervous exhaustion, scarcely realized that she had seen a man killed, that it was not all a part of the nightmare her whole experience had been. She was only vaguely conscious that sharp words had awakened her, and that as she opened her eyes she had seen a sudden streak of fire, heard the bellow of a deep-voiced gun; and that then the man she had been hearing called Mart had pitched forward upon his face and laid very still, his body almost touching her feet.

"Get up!" said the terrifying man with the smoking gun to the man huddling against the saddles. "And keep 'em up! Face the other way."

The dawn light was dim, and everything was dancing and swimming before Kay's eyes so that she couldn't see well, but there was a note in the man's voice that was familiar to her. It was not Cory Blaine's voice. Could it be...

Only once before had she heard Bruce Marvel speak with a tone of authority, and then his voice had not been hardened by long-suppressed hate and anger. So she recognized only a strange familiarity in his tones. His clothes meant nothing to her, for she had never seen Marvel dressed like this before, and it was not yet light enough to distinguish his features.

She saw him slip one of his own guns into its holster and remove the weapons from Eddie's holsters. Then he turned to her.

"You all right, Kay?" he asked. "They ain't hurt yuh none, have they?"

And with the sudden change in his tone, she knew him then!

"Bruce!" she cried, her voice choked with sobs of gladness. "I—" the sobs choked other words in her throat.

"Yuh're all right now, Kay," he assured her gently. "There can't nothin' happen to yuh now. Yore dad's at the ranch and we'll have yuh back there to him in no time. But tell me first, did either of these men harm yuh? If they did, I'm goin' to kill this other one now. I ain't goin' to take no chances with the law makin' him pay. It lets too many sidewinders like these fellers get away."

"I never done nothin' to her," quavered

the man by the saddles who held his hand high, and in a voice that was barely articulate, so muffled was it by some impediment of speech.

MARVEL snorted contemptuously.

"No," said Kay. "They treated me all right—especially Eddie." She nodded toward the living man. "He's Eddie."

"Yes," said Marvel, "I know Eddie. I've been looking for him for a long time."

"Who the hell are you?" demanded Eddie, gathering some courage. "I never seen yuh before."

"And that smart aleck who thought he could beat me to the draw after I'd drawed, would be Mart, wouldn't he?" snapped Marvel.

"Who are yuh, anyway?" Eddie snarled, but his face showed that he was not easy in his mind as his words of bravado would indicate.

"It wouldn't do yuh no good to know now, hombre," Marvel said, with a shrug. "When yuh shoulda known who I was was a couple of days ago."

He stepped quickly over to Mart and, stooping, recovered the gun that had dropped from the man's hand when he had fallen, and also extricated the other from its holster. Then he laid all four weapons beside Kay.

"Watch 'em," he said. "That feller may not be dead. I ain't got time to examine him now. But I can fix this shore enough alive one."

Taking a tie rope off of one of the saddles, Marvel secured Eddie's wrists behind him.

Kay sat in bewildered silence, partially overcome by the sudden turn in her fortune, and partially by her surprise at seeing Bruce Marvel in this new rôle. Here was no man playing a part, and she realized that for the first time she was looking upon the real Bruce Marvel. As the light increased she saw that the clothes he wore seemed a part of him.

Her heart beat painfully as she recalled her doubts concerning him—not real doubts, at that, but bad enough. She wanted to say something to him. She wanted to ask his forgiveness, but she did not know how to say it, so she kept silent.

"Got any grub in camp, Eddie?" asked Marvel. "I ain't eaten for so long I've forgot what it's like."

"There's food in a coupla of them bags," Eddie said sullenly, nodding to the pile of saddles.

Marvel searched the bags. In one he found a frying pan, a coffee pot, and some tin cups. And in another bacon, potatoes, and a can of coffee. Besides that, there were three canteens, one of which was full, and another that had some water in it.

"I reckon this'll do," he said. "Hungry, Kay?"

"Not very," she said, and smiled at him tremulously.

"Well, yuh better eat," he said crisply. "We got a long pull ahead of us yet and yuh've got to hang onto yore strength."

CHAPTER XXII

The Evidence of Three



MARVEL busied himself preparing their frugal meal, and when it was ready, he served Kay. After that he freed Eddie's hands that he, too, might eat.

While the outlaw ate, Marvel squatted on his heels directly in front of Eddie, staring at him steadily, much to Eddie's discomfort.

"Where's Blaine?" he demanded suddenly.

"He—" Eddie began, before he thought, apparently, disconcerted by Marvel's stare. Then he hesitated. "How the devil do I know where he's at?" he growled in his blurred voice.

"Listen, Eddie, I know all about you," said Marvel flatly. "Come clean and mebbe it'll go easier with yuh. Yuh're expectin' Blaine—don't deny it! When do yuh expect him, and what trail's he comin' on? If yuh don't answer, or if yuh lie to me, and Blaine comes on us unexpected, yuh're goin' to be in the way of my first bullet!"

Eddie thought a long time, but decided that discretion was the better part of valor. Anyway, he didn't like this man's eyes. They bored right through a fellow.

"He's travelin' the same trail we come on," he finally said grumpily. "He didn't aim on catchin' up to us till after we got to—" He stopped short.

"Till after yuh got to Kelly's place in Sonora," Marvel finished easily.

"If yuh know so damn much, what's the use of askin' me?" grumbled Eddie.

"None," said Marvel. "But we're goin' back to the T F by a different trail, and if we meet Blaine on that trail, yuh can kiss yoreself good-by, hombre. I don't want no unexpected or promiscuous shoot-in' while I got Miss White with me."

"There ain't no other trail to the T F. Leastways no shorter one."

"Oh, yes, they is," Marvel observed loftily. "When I was jest a button I helped my old man trail some cattle up from the Border this-a-way, so I know there's another trail. Besides, there's water on it."

Eddie contemplated Marvel for a moment. "You must be the hombre that planted all the willows on the cricks in this part of the country," he said. "Funny I never seen yuh before."

"I told yuh yuh'd seen me before. Yuh saw me day before yesterday."

A sudden light of recognition dawned in Eddie's eyes.

"Why, you're that damn dude!" he almost shouted.

The shadow of a smile touched Marvel's lips. "We'll be movin' on now," he said, and turned toward the girl. "It's mighty hard on yuh, Kay, but I don't see no way out of it. We couldn't stay here in a dry camp nohow, and I shore don't want no rumpus with Blaine while yuh're with us."

He eyed her lovingly as he spoke.

"Don't think of me," she said quickly. "Do whatever you believe the right thing to do. I'm tired, of course, but I'm far from being exhausted." She smiled, with a certain memory that Marvel would not understand—but Eddie did. "You'd be surprised how well dumb little blondes can take it."

"Yuh're shore a wonder, Kay," he said admiringly, as he busied himself with the rope with which he was again securing Eddie's wrists.

He removed Eddie's cartridge belt from around the man's waist, then handed it to Kay.

"Strap this on," he said, "and take one of these forty-fives. I'm hopin' yuh won't need it, but I'll feel safer if yuh have it."

As she followed his instructions, he walked out and brought in the three horses, which she held while he saddled and bridled them.

"Where is your horse?" she asked.

"I hid him over yonder," he said, nodding toward the brush. "We'll pick him up on our way out."

"What are you going to do with him?" She nodded her head toward Mart's body, but would not look at it.

"I can't do nothin' with him, 'cept pile a few rocks on to keep the buzzards and coyotes off," Marvel said slowly. "We ain't got nothin' to dig a hole with and we ain't got time if we had. I might pack him in on his hoss, but we'll mebbe need the hoss. One of ours might give out. So it's better to jest pile on the rocks. There ain't no other way, Kay. Even that's too good for him."

His tone was as hard as his words, for they reflected the contempt he held for the dead man.

SHE said no more, but walked off looking into the dull horizon of early morning while he hastily covered Mart's body with rocks. When she heard no more clatter she came back and mounted Light-foot, taking care to keep her eyes from the rock mound that covered Mart.

Marvel boosted Eddie into the saddle. Then he mounted Mart's horse and the three rode to where Baldy was tied. He then got from his saddle and loosened Baldy's tie rope.

"Reckon I'll give yuh a rest, old feller," he said, in answer to Baldy's welcoming whinny and, handing the lead rope to Kay, he remounted Mart's horse. "I'll lead Eddie's hoss," he told her, "and you foller with Baldy. It's been a long time since I've been over this trail, but if I remember right there's water in the next ten or fifteen miles."

Since the unexpected arrival of Marvel and the rapid and grim sequence of events that followed, Kay had scarcely spoken. Perhaps the shock to her nervous system, already weakened by fatigue, had left her dazed, but now as she rode along the trail in the rear of Marvel and Eddie she had time to review the happenings of the past hour.

Uppermost in her mind, quite naturally, was the killing of Mart. Never before had she witnessed tragedy at such close range, and she was impressed more by the horror of the casualness of it, perhaps, than by the death itself. It seemed to her that a man who might have been forced to shoot a dog would have evidenced more feeling in the matter than Marvel had. He'd had to kill Mart, or be killed, she supposed. But if he had only shown a little more emotion about it—or the least bit of regret!

She almost shrank from the thought of being near him, and then realized that this was only a natural reaction, resulting from her own violently torn emotions, rather than any rational consideration of the events leading up to the deed. Bruce Marvel had killed for her, too—she had to think of that!

Still greater remorse than she had felt before, for her vagrant thoughts rose up to choke her. She was an idiot—a squeamish little fool! She ought to be ashamed of herself for any such unjust thoughts she had harbored.

Eddie rode in sullen silence, his weak, stupid face a study of hopeless dejection. Luckily for him, he was still blindly unaware of the legal penalty for kidnaping, but he knew the rough and ready justice of the men in this part of the country only too well. Which raised within his mind the vision of a lonely figure suspended from a tree.

He did not like the picture. It gave him a most uncomfortable sensation about the neck, and so his mind groped muddily for a plan of escape.

Marvel, constantly alert, rode in the lead. Occasionally he turned in his saddle and scanned the country for signs of pursuit. He was oddly happy, and as an outward expression of that he hummed snatches of a well known cowboy song that was more notable for its doleful lugubriousness than for any intrinsic value it possessed as a work of art.

Thus, each occupied with his or her own thoughts, the three followed the dim trail toward the north. . . .

Mounted upon a comparatively fresh horse, Cory Blaine made good time along the trail from Bryam's shack toward the south. Before darkness had fallen, to obliterate all signs along the way, two features of the spoor had puzzled him. Fragments of torn playing cards appeared so often in the trail as to convince him that someone had been blazing it for a purpose. He could only assume, as had Bruce Marvel, that Kay White had been smart enough to do that.

THE other sign was not quite so plain, but he thought that it indicated that four horsemen instead of three had preceded him. Accustomed to depend on his men mainly in such matters, his trailing ability was not so great that he could be positive of this. Nor did the signs tell him that three of the horsemen had preceded the fourth by several hours.

So sure was he, however, that Bryam had misdirected Marvel toward the east that he succeeded fairly well in convincing himself that he was in error in believing that four horses recently had passed along the trail.

He rode all night, and with the coming of the new day he saw that the spoor had been dimmed, and in some places obliterated by the footprints of nocturnal animals. By night, they love to follow man-made paths, the open, dusty parts of which are the plazas of the little folk of the wild, where they come to stroll and play.

But for such things Blaine had neither eyes nor thoughts as he strained to peer into the distance ahead in search of some tell-tale moving things that might indicate the whereabouts of those he sought. The sun had been up an hour or more now, and in the clear air he could see a long way.

"If Marvel did foller 'em and caught up with 'em," he thought with grim satisfaction, "the boys shore musta gunned him. But if he got the drop on 'em he'd be comin' back this way. That case, I'd oughta be meetin' him pretty soon."

He loosened the gun in its holster and redoubled his alertness.

"It ain't that I'm afraid of the damn dude," he apologized to himself, "but he might be lyin' in wait for me behind some bush—him and his funny panties, tryin' bushwhackin'. If I ever get the chance I'm goin' to shoot them panties full of holes, more especial if he's in 'em."

The trail dropped into a hollow, then rose again to higher ground. As he topped this rise he saw something just ahead that brought him to a sudden halt, and his gun from its holster. It was a pile of rocks beside the ashes of a fire, with a man's boots sticking out, and a battered Stetson nearby.

At first he thought it must be Marvel, because he hoped it was. He had to know, though, so he rode closer and, after convincing himself that there was no one around, he dismounted. It was but the work of a moment to tumble the top rocks aside and reveal the body of the man beneath. When he saw that it was Mart he cursed with heated fervor.

For a moment he stood looking down at the dead man.

"Dead as a door nail," he muttered. "Then that dude was on the trail, damn him!" He stooped and ran his hand inside the dead man's shirt. "He ain't plumb cold yet. That means whoever done this ain't far off."

SEARCHING the ground he found the spoor of four horses leading off toward the north. Mounting, he followed for a short distance until he convinced himself that they had taken a different trail back. Presently he drew rein. Nowhere ahead could he see any sign of horsemen.

"If it is that damn dude," he said, "he's lost hisself, which will give me a chance to get back to the T F ahead of him. Then

it'll be his word against mine. He's likely got Mart's and Eddie's hosses, but yuh can't tell me he's got Eddie. Eddie's slick. He likely high-tailed when the dude threw down on Mart. Musta caught both them damn hombres asleep, though, and like as not without their guns handy."

For a few minutes Blaine sat his horse there, puzzling out his problem. Then the light of a sudden inspiration was reflected in his eyes.

"No," he said, half aloud, "it'll be better'n my word against his! It'll be mine—and Bryam's and Mart's, though they'll be jest dead evidence. The three of us together oughta be able to put a rope around that lobo's neck!"

Blaine was a hard rider. He never gave any thought to his horse, but only to the necessity for speed. Now he wheeled his mount and spurred back along the trail he had come, bent on reaching the T F Ranch ahead of Marvel, hoping fervently that it was Marvel who had overtaken his two confederates and presumably rescued Kay.

His horse would hold out as far as Bryam's. There he could change to Bryam's horse, which he had seen hobbled and grazing near the cabin. He could reach the ranch long in advance of Marvel all right, even though through some trick of chance the dude was not lost, as he believed, and was able to find his way back to the T F without delay.

CHAPTER XXIII

A Bad Man From Way Back



PUSHING along the dim trail to the north, Marvel was actually aware that their horses were beginning to weaken from fatigue and thirst under the heat of the burning sun. He no longer hummed his sad little tune, for he was genuinely worried, harassed by the haunting fear that the spring where his father had camped years before might since have gone dry, or that he might miss it entirely.

Perhaps he had staked too much upon his ability to find that waterhole. If their horses gave out and they were left afoot in this arid waste, they would be in a pretty hopeless situation. For himself, it was all in a day's work, but he was thinking of Kay.

Why had he taken this chance? Yet when he considered the fact that if he hadn't come this way that Kay must inevitably have had to face the dangers of a gun battle between Blaine and himself, he still believed his decision had been a wise one. Once again his self-confidence asserted itself and he became strong in the conviction that they would find water within a few miles.

"This hoss of mine ain't goin' much further," came a mumbling complaint from Eddie suddenly.

Marvel turned in his saddle. For some time he had had to drag the other horse along with a couple of turns of his rope about the horn of his saddle. Now he saw that the beast was staggering and weak. He reined in.

"We'll switch yuh over to this hoss," he said, "and I'll ride Baldy. How's yore hoss comin', Kay?"

"He seems to be holding up pretty well," she said bravely. "He hasn't the weight to carry that the others have."

"Yuh better get back on the trail to Bryam's where we can get water," growled Eddie. "They ain't no water here."

"Shut up! admonished Marvel. "I'll ask yore advice when I need it."

Dismounting, they rested their horses for several minutes. Marvel considered the advisability of abandoning Eddie's horse, but finally decided to take him on as far as he would go. If he could get the horse to water, and for a rest there for a couple of hours, the animal might recuperate sufficiently to prove useful to them before their long ride was over.

Shortly after they took up the march again, Baldy lifted his nose in the air and pricked up his ears. Almost immediately the other horses did the same, the four of them pushing suddenly forward with accelerated speed. Marvel breathed a sigh of relief.

"What's the matter with the horses?" called Kay from the rear of the four-horse procession. "They act as though they saw something."

BRUCE MARVEL nodded.

"They smell water," replied Marvel, turning to give her his cheerful grin. "It makes 'em feel good. But take it from me, it don't make 'em feel half as good as it does me."

The horses moved forward eagerly now, and with vitality renewed by anticipation of the opportunity to quench their thirst in the near future. The change in the spirits of the mounts seemed also to revive the riders. It was with much lighter hearts that the three rode on beneath the pitiless rays of the Arizona sun. Marvel gave Baldy his head in the knowledge that the animal's instinct would lead him unerringly to the nearest water.

Ahead of them stretched what appeared to be an unbroken expanse of rolling brush land, lying arid and uninviting in the shimmering heat of the early morning sun.

Presently there broke upon Marvel's vision the scene for which he had been waiting, the picture he had been carrying in his memory since boyhood—a large, bowl-like depression, in the bottom of which green verdure proclaimed the presence of the water that might mean the difference between life and death to them.

As they dropped over the edge and rode down a steep trail leading toward the water, Eddie contemplated the back of the man riding just ahead of him.

"Dude!" he muttered. "Humph! He ain't no dude. Wonder what long-eared,

locoed son-of-a-gun ever hitched that moniker onto this bozo?"

"Yuh speakin' to me, feller?" asked Marvel, for he had heard Eddie's mutterings, although he could not make out the words.

"Yuh say you and yore old man trailed cattle thisaway when you was a youngker?" asked Eddie.

"Shore."

"What made 'em think yuh was a dude?" demanded the blurred-voiced man.

"Who said I was a dude?" asked Marvel.

"Why, Butts, he said—" Eddie stopped in confusion.

"So yuh know Butts, too, eh?" asked Marvel.

"I seen him once," Eddie said laconically, and Marvel laughed.

"Don't worry, Eddie," Marvel consoled. "You ain't give nothin' away. I told yuh I know all about yuh—all five of yuh."

"Think yuh're smart, don't yuh?" mumbled Eddie. "But yuh ain't got nothin' on me. They ain't no law against my knowin' folks."

"It ain't so good for yore health to know some folks too well, though, Eddie," Marvel reminded meaningfully. "I can think of three—mebbe four—of 'em offhand right now. There used to be five, but one of 'em's dead, and mebbe another one is by now, if he didn't get a bullet hole plugged right pronto."

EDDIE looked up quickly from contemplation of his saddle-horn.

"Who's the one with the bullet hole in him?" he asked.

"Bryam," replied Marvel.

"Did you gun him?"

"I had to, Eddie. He was shootin' at me with a thirty-thirty, and for a lion hunter I will say that he was a damn poor shot."

It went against the grain for Marvel to speak of this shooting fray, but for reasons of his own he wished to break down this man Eddie's morale. Somehow he had to put the fear of God—or man's justice—into him. If Eddie had Bryam to think of now as well as Mart, he would worry that much more over his own possible fate, and break the easier under the strain when the time came.

The balance of the trail into the bottom of the depression was negotiated in silence. Marvel noted with relief that green grass grew over a considerable area around the spring. He had not even dared hope for such good fortune.

They halted beside a spring of clear, cold water that ran a hundred yards or so before it sank into the earth again. Below the main spring they watered their horses, permitting them only a little at a time. Marvel took half an hour at this, releasing Eddie's hands that he might assist, while Kay filled their canteens for them to quench their own thirst.

Then the two men hobbled their horses and turned them loose. Marvel secured Eddie's wrists again and the three threw themselves upon the ground to rest.

Marvel made Kay lie at full length and relax. He wet his bandanna and brought it and laid it across her forehead. Eddie needed no invitation to lie down, though he grumbled at the uncomfortable position his bound wrists necessitated. Marvel lay where he could watch the trail down which they had come into the depression and where, at the same time, he could watch the horses. They might be the first to give warning of the approach of a pursuer.

Occasionally the man turned his head and looked at the girl lying quietly a few yards away. How soft and small she looked! Even the sight of her gave him a strange sensation in his breast—a sudden fullness.

"It's jest like I wanted to cry," he thought, "but I don't want to cry. I want to sing. There's somethin' about her that always makes a feller want to sing when he's close to her."

PRESENTLY he saw by her steady, gentle breathing that she had fallen asleep. He half rose then and hitched himself over close to where Eddie lay. The man looked up at him.

"I want to talk to yuh, hombre," Marvel said.

Then, in a low tone that would not awaken Kay, he talked steadily for several minutes. The changing expressions on the face of his listener denoted various reactions, the most marked of which were surprise, consternation and fear.

"I ain't askin' yuh nothin'," he said in conclusion. "There ain't nothin' to ask yuh. I jest been tellin' yuh. Now if yuh know what's good for yuh, yuh'll know how to act."

As he stopped speaking he drew a large pocket knife from his overalls and opened one of the blades. Then he drew one of his forty-fours, the wooden grip of which bore many notches, the edges of most of which were rounded and smooth and polished by the use of many years. As Eddie watched him, fascinated, Marvel cut a notch below the older ones.

"That's for Mart?" asked the prisoner. "And mebbe yuh'll make another one for Bryam when yuh find out for shore?"

Marvel nodded. "And there's room for some more yet, Eddie," he said.

"You make all them?" asked Eddie.

"No." Marvel shook his head. "These guns were my father's."

"He musta been a bad man from way back," commented Eddie in frank admiration.

"He weren't nothin' of the kind!" said Buck Mason-Bruce Marvel proudly. "He was a sheriff."

"O-o-h!" said Eddie.

For two hours they rested there, and while they rested, Cory Blaine drove his faltering mount ruthlessly along the back trail toward Bryam's.

They had had several hours' start of him, but their rest and the killing pace that he was traveling might easily permit him to overcome the handicap. Marvel had no idea of it, but Cory Blaine knew well

enough that it was a race now, with much perhaps depending upon who reached the T F Ranch first.

For two hours Marvel allowed Kay and the horses to rest and recuperate. Then he aroused Eddie, removed his bonds and the two men went out and fetched the horses back to the spring. Not until they were saddled and ready to ride did he arouse Kay.

"I hate to do it," he said, as she opened her eyes to the gentle pressure of his hand on her shoulder, "but we got to get goin'. We can't make the ranch tonight, but if the hosses hold out we oughta pull in some time after breakfast in the mornin'."

CHAPTER XXIV

A Question of Veracity



AS BRUCE MARVEL'S small party mounted and rode away from the life-saving spring they had found, Cory Blaine was looking down on Bryam's small shack from the summit of the ridge near the head of Mill Creek Canyon. His horse, blowing and trembling, faltered at the edge of the steep trail, pitching down into the canyon. As Blaine urged him forward, the animal took a few trembling steps, they swayed and dropped in his tracks.

"Hell!" cursed Blaine. "Now I got to hoof it clear to the bottom and pack my saddle to boot. Of all the damn luck for a man to have with hosses, mine beats all by a mile!"

It was like Cory Blaine to blame on "luck" the faltering or collapsing of one horse after another on him, that was distinctly his own fault.

Trudging down the steep trail beneath the weight of the heavy saddle, he caught occasional glimpses of Bryam's body lying where he had left it. Above, on ragged wings, great black birds swung in easy, majestic circles. Occasionally one of them would swoop lower, but four bristling, growling hounds kept them at bay.

In the shade of a tree near the shack, Bryam's hobbled horse stood patiently, switching his tail in a perpetual battle with the flies. Always he rested in the shade during the heat of the day, before going out to graze again on the meadowland below the shack.

Two of the hounds came menacingly toward Blaine as he approached, but he circled them, and when they saw that he was not coming nearer to their dead master, they stopped. But they stood watching him as he saddled and bridled their master's horse, removed the hobbles and rode away down the valley. . . .

The guests of the T F Ranch were at breakfast when Cory Blaine rode into the corral and unsaddled. No one had seen him arrive and he went directly to the bunkhouse. When he entered, Butts was just

pulling on his boots, the other men having already gone to breakfast.

The two men eyed one another.

"Did yuh get the girl?" demanded Butts.

"Hell, no!" snarled Blaine.

"Where is she?"

"That damn dude beat me to it," snapped Blaine. "He's got her."

"Yuh don't mean that Marvel feller?" demanded Butts.

"Yeah."

"Yuh seen him and didn't plug him?"

"I didn't see him."

"Then how do yuh know he's got the girl?" asked Butts.

"He killed Bryam."

BUTTS was astonished.

"The hell yuh say!"

"Yeah. And Hi lived jest long enough to tell who killed him. Then I follered the dude's trail to where he come up with Eddie and Mart and the girl."

"He took her away from them?" asked Butts, but his eyes were almost popping out at all this unbelievable information.

"He plugged Mart, and I reckon Eddie must be clean across into Mexico by now, if he's still runnin'—which he prob'ly is. And without no gun. I seen where the damn dude and the girl rode off, leadin' Mart's and Eddie's hosses, but they took the wrong trail, and I reckon they're lost somewheres in the hills."

Butts looked worried; shook his head. "Mebbe they're lost," he said, "and mebbe not. But they'll get here some time and when they do here's one hombre that's goin' to be missin'. You better high-tail with me, Cory, while the gettin's good. That damn dude plays in the all-firedest luck! It's jest like him to come trailin' in here 'fore we can get saddled. Me—I'm on my way pronto!"

Butts started to reach for the warbag under his bunk, but Blaine's heavy hand on his shoulder stopped him.

"Don't be a fool, Butts!" he snapped. "When the folks hear my story they won't never hang it on us. I got it all figgered out. And believe me, that feller Marvel is goin' to swing for the murder of Bryam and Mart, to say nothin' of what he'll get for runnin' off with the girl for ransom."

Butts stopped his hurry, staring hard at the man whose conniving brains he had so long taken for granted.

"Yuh shore yuh can do it, Cory?" he asked slowly.

"I know I can. You stop yore damn fool jabber and come along with me now. I'm goin' up to the house and give 'em some facts that'll make their eyes bulge out. 'Course, seein' that dude is shore shot with luck, there's an off chance he did pull one of his rabbits out of his funny hat and throwed his loop over Eddie, but I can account for Eddie, if he's along."

"If he ain't, I can say Marvel killed him along the way—or mebbe that there wasn't nobody but him and Mart in on the deal. Come on! I ain't killed one hoss and damn near killed another to get here ahead of Marvel for nothin'."

"All right," Butts agreed reluctantly and uneasily, "but I'd feel a whole lot safer if I was headin' for somewheres else."

"That would be jest tellin' the whole damn county yuh was guilty," sneered Blaine.

THE two men approached the porch of the big house just as the guests were coming out from breakfast.

"Cory!" cried Dora Crowell, stopping stockstill.

John White hurried forward as the two men came up the steps.

"Any news, Blaine?" he asked worriedly, and it was plain from his haggard face and bloodshot eyes that he had spent a sleepless night, and long, agonized waking hours.

"A lot of it, sir," Blaine said confidently, as the guests clustered about, eager and attentive.

"For God's sake, tell me!" shouted White, plainly at the breaking point.

"Well, I trailed the abductors as far as Bryam's cabin," Blaine said. "They was three of 'em. I guess Hi musta tried to interfere with 'em, because Marvel shot him."

whether Marvel killed the other feller, too, or made a prisoner of him, or finally persuaded him to come along with him. But before the shootin', Marvel said he was comin' right back here and claim the reward. He even got Kay to promise not to accuse him by threatenin' to kill her and her father, too, if she did. I tell yuh he's a bad one—and he's comin' in here with a story 'bout how he rescued Kay. . . . It shore was a lucky thing I come on that feller Mart when I did."

A LONG, oppressive, poignant pause followed. Dora Crowell broke it.

"What happened to Mart?" she asked, trembling, but with a queer light in her eyes. "Where is he?"

"He died right after he told his story to me," Blaine said somberly.

"One would have thought such a desperado as Marvel would have made sure that both his victims were dead before he left them," observed Dora. "Careless of him to have left both Bryam and that Mart alive long enough to tell their stories and accuse him."

"I reckon he thought they was dead," Blaine said.

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"Marvel!" That shocked cry was a chorus.

"Yeah, Marvel," Blaine said soberly. "I was always afraid of that feller. That's why I kicked him out. I knew right along he was after Kay."

"How do you know it was Marvel?" demanded Dora.

"Hi told me and the sheriff and everybody jest before he died. The sheriff and the posse was there at the time. They heard him. Then the posse rode one way and I rode the other, lookin' for trails. I found the kidnapers' trail leadin' down towards Sonora. I rode all night and in the mornin' I come on where they'd camped. They weren't no one there 'cept one feller who was shot through the chest. He was still livin', and he told me how it happened.

"He said his name was Mart, and that him and another hombre had been hired by Marvel to work for him, but he hadn't let on to 'em what he was goin' to do till the last minute. When he got to this camp, this feller Mart said he wouldn't have nothin' more to do with it. He told Marvel he was goin' to quit, and the other hombre wanted to quit, too, and then Marvel shot this feller Mart.

"He said he musta been unconscious a long time and didn't know what happened after he'd been shot. He didn't know

"What do you suppose has become of the posse?" asked White. "Could it be possible that they have overhauled Marvel?" He sighed. "And I thought I was such a reader of men! I would have banked on that young Marvel."

"The posse went in a different direction from the one I took," Blaine told him. "Ain't they back yet?"

"No," White said, his lips grim and hard. "But I certainly hope they're here when Marvel comes in, so they can make an arrest. I shall telephone and leave word for the sheriff at once, though." His eyes grew ominous. "I'll see to it myself that Marvel doesn't get away!"

"I reckon yuh better do that, Mr. White," Blaine said thoughtfully.

"I just can't believe it!" Birdie Talbot whimpered as White stepped into the house to telephone. "Bruce was such a nice young man."

"It doesn't seem possible," Miss Pruell sighed tremulously. "It doesn't seem possible at all."

"I ain't surprised none," Butts put in, altogether too long out of the limelight to suit him. "I always said there was somethin' wrong 'bout that lobo, but I don't see how he ever killed anybody with a gun. He musta snuck up on 'em while they was asleep. Or mebbe when they seen his panties they committed suicide."

"I don't know nothin' 'bout that," said Blaine, "but he shore is one bad hombre." "I don't believe a word of it," said Dora Crowell flatly, looking Blaine steadily in the eyes.

The man flushed. "It's a good thing for you yuh're not a man," he mumbled.

"Perhaps it's a better thing for you that I am not, Cory," she said, her voice icily accusing.

Blaine turned away.

"I ain't goin' to stay here jawin' with no fool girl," he said angrily. "I ain't had no sleep for two nights, and I'm goin' to turn in."

With Butts at his side he walked back toward the bunkhouse.

RIGHT after the two men had left, an excited discussion of Blaine's charges against Marvel started up. Some agreed with Dora, while others took sides with Blaine. Miss Pruell reiterated that she just couldn't believe such a thing about Mr. Marvel. Birdie Talbot seemed suddenly to have changed her mind.

"I guess he must be guilty," she sighed, "after all Cory has told us. We have known Cory much longer than we have Marvel,

The porch was deserted when Bruce Marvel and Kay and Eddie rode into the ranch yard!

CHAPTER XXV

Doubly Accused



IN SILENCE Bruce Marvel led the rescued girl and his prisoner to the foot of the porch steps, and when they had dismounted he told Kay that she had better go to her room immediately and get some rest.

"Reckon the reason nobody's around is that they're all out lookin' for you," he said. But even as he spoke John White stepped out onto the porch. With glad cries father and daughter rushed into each other's arms. There were tears in the man's eyes, while Kay sobbed until her whole slight body shook.

"You're all right, darling?" the father choked.

"All right, Dad!" she managed to tell him through her sobs. "And we have no

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and there's no reason why we should not believe him. You know, I always did suspect something odd about Marvel. I suspicioned him right away when he kept refusing to play bridge."

"It does look pretty bad for Marvel," said Bert Adams, "and perhaps it seems worse to some of us, because we know that he was not what he pretended to be. But there was something else about him that the rest of you don't seem to recall that comes pretty near to convincing me that he is guilty of all that Blaine accuses him of."

"What's that?" demanded Benson Talbot.

"His eyes," said Adams, lips tightening.

"Why, I think he has nice eyes," quavered Miss Pruell.

"He has the eyes of a killer," Adams said confidently.

"Slush!" snapped Dora Crowell.

Oiga Gunderstrom who was in the group had not entered into the discussion because she knew nothing of either Marvel or Blaine. In fact, the whole matter seemed to bore her, and she turned away.

"I'm going to my room, Dora," she said. "I think I shall lie down for a few moments."

She left first, then one by one the guests drifted into the house to read or write letters, or to rest.

one to thank for that but Bruce—Mr. Marvel."

JOHN WHITE'S face hardened, but Kay did not see that, for her own face was buried on his shoulder.

"I know all about that, dear," he said tightly. "Now you go to your room and get some rest. I'll talk to Mr. Marvel."

She turned and smiled through her tears at Bruce Marvel.

"I haven't thanked you yet," she said, "but sometime I'm going to try."

"Never you mind the thanks," he said, grinning at her. "You get to bed."

When she had gone, White clomped down the porch steps and faced Marvel.

"Blaine is back," he said.

"I reckon as much," said Marvel. "Where is he?"

"He told us the whole story." White's jaw was a hard line, his eyes flashing fire. "I ought to kill you, Marvel, but you brought her back unharmed, and I owe you something for that. I am going to give you a chance to get away. The sheriff is on his way here now. You get away from here as fast as you can move, and I'll tell the sheriff I'm not going to prosecute."

Marvel looked at the older man for a moment, eyes narrowing, lips drawing into a grim line.

"Yuh shore didn't need to tell me Blaine was back," he said evenly. "I ain't goin' to try to tell yuh nothin', Mr. White, 'cept that yuh're all wrong. I'm thankin' yuh for what yuh're tryin' to do for me, but I'm not goin' away. Kay knows the truth, and so will you after yuh've talked to her. I had nothin' to do with her kidnakin'."

"It's no use, Marvel," White said shortly. "Blaine's story is too circumstantial. And with a man accusing you of his murder with his dying breath—"

OLGA GUNDERSTROM came onto the porch as Marvel shook his head and was about to turn away. As their eyes met the girl stopped short, and her eyes went wide.

"Buck Mason!" she exclaimed. "Whatever—"

"Olga!" he cried, and started up the steps toward her.

"Don't come near me—murderer!" she screamed, shrinking back.

"Why, I had to shoot them two, in self-defense, Olga," he said, puzzled. He had not expected any such acting as this from the Olga he thought he knew—Olga, the range girl who understood such things. "Don't yuh see? Bryam was shootin' at me with a thirty-thirty and the other feller tried to draw after I had him covered."

"I don't mean those two!" she said, her eyes black with accusation. "You know who I mean!"

"Olga!" On the instant he caught her meaning. "You wouldn't believe that about me! I've been so shore yuh'd know I never done it!"

She shuddered, and shrank further back against the wall.

"I know your kind," she said icily. "No instincts of decency. Just a common brute who can think of nothing else but to kill!"

He looked at her in bitter silence for a long moment. Pain, disillusionment, sorrow made raging chaos in his brain, but the only outward expression of that was the reflection of sorrow that lay deep in his eyes. He turned away, hesitated, then moved slowly around toward John White.

"I'll turn this feller over to you, sir," he said dully, indicating Eddie with a gesture. "Hold him till the sheriff comes."

"I told you I'm not going to prosecute," White said sharply, though still in his eyes was the anger and hate that he was trying to suppress, and which might at any moment burst into an uncontrollable blaze.

"Mebbe yuh're not goin' to prosecute, Mr. White," said the young cowboy deputy sheriff, who at that moment sloughed off the last shred of his Bruce Marvel identity, and was again Buck Mason—as he would be henceforth. "But I am. I'm a deputy sheriff and I deputize you to take custody of this prisoner."

"Don't let that Buck Mason get away, Mr. White!" cried Olga. "Do something! He killed my father!"

"What can I do?" asked White, with a shrug. "He's a known killer and he's carryin' two guns, while I'm unarmed. I might as well be his prisoner, too. I'd like

to oblige you, Miss Gunderstrom—in fact, nothing in the world would give me more pleasure than to break your Buck Mason in two with my bare hands! But I'm afraid here's something we'll have to leave to the law."

IN HER room, Kay had not fallen instantly asleep as she had been so sure she would, if she ever got there. She was too troubled. There had been something in the way her father had listened to her praise of Marvel that had seemed cold and austere. Perhaps it was only her intuition, though, that brought her out onto the porch just at the moment Olga was pleading with her father.

"Something must be done!" cried Olga. "He must not escape!"

"I have telephoned the sheriff," said White. "He's back with his posse, and is on his way here now."

"But that will be too late!" Olga's excitement was rising to hysteria. "He may get away and no one will ever be able to catch him again!"

"Who may get away?" demanded Kay, who had come up unnoticed.

"Buck Mason, the murderer of my father!" Olga screamed.

"Buck Mason?" Kay was puzzled. "Who is he?"

Her father pointed with a gesture that was in itself an accusation toward the man Kay had known only as Bruce Marvel. He was leading the horses into the corral.

"He is Buck Mason," John White said, from between tight lips.

Kay stood in shocked silence for a moment, looking at the man unsaddling the horses in the corral.

"Buck Mason!" she murmured, then whirled on Olga. "He may be Buck Mason," she flared, "but no one can ever make me believe he's a murderer!"

"It is immaterial to me what you believe," snapped Olga. "And if your father won't—or can't—arrest him, Cory Blaine will!"

She leaped down the steps of the porch and started running toward the bunkhouse. Kay raced after her.

"Don't!" Kay pleaded. "You don't know what you're doing! They'll kill him! All they want is an excuse."

Olga stopped for an instant, whirled to face Kay, her eyes blazing.

"That's what I pray to God they will do—kill him!" she said, between clenched teeth. "He killed my father!"

Olga turned and ran on toward the bunkhouse. Kay broke into a run, too, and outdistanced her, but Kay was not heading for the bunkhouse. She was panting for breath, her eyes terrified, as she reached the corral, where Mason was just turning the horses into pasture. As he fastened the gate he saw her.

"I thought I told you to go to bed," he said sternly.

"Bruce!" she cried. "Hurry! Hurry! Get away from here! That girl—Miss Gunderstrom, I suppose, from what she said—has gone to get Cory Blaine to ar-

rest you! He'll not arrest you—he'll kill you!"

HE shook his head.

"Why should I run away, Kay?" he asked, refusing to catch her worried excitement. "Don't tell me you think I killed Olga's dad."

"I don't care whether you did or not! I don't want them to kill you, and they will! They won't give you a chance, Bruce!"

"It's worth bein' killed a dozen times, Kay, to hear yuh say that," he said softly. "But don't you worry. Get back to the house quick, in case there's goin' to be any shootin'. I can take care of myself, now that yuh've warned me."

Breathlessly, Olga Gunderstrom broke into the bunkhouse. Butts was sitting on the edge of his bunk rolling a cigarette, and Blaine was already stretched out on another bunk, asleep.

"Buck Mason is here!" she cried. "The man who murdered my father! Don't let him get away!"

Blaine sat up suddenly on his bunk with a jerk.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"The man who murdered my father is here!" Olga cried again. And then, because she still knew men of this type, she added quickly: "There's five thousand dollars' reward for him, dead or alive."

"Where is he?" Blaine leaped to his feet.

The girl pointed through the window to the corral. "There he is," she said.

"My Gawd!" exclaimed Butts. "If she don't mean the damn dude!"

With all haste the two men buckled on their cartridge belts and guns.

"You run on back to the house in a hurry, Miss," urged Blaine, but she did not see the gleam of triumph in his eyes.

"Be careful!" begged Olga. "He's dangerous."

"Shucks!" scoffed Butts, as the girl left the bunkhouse and hastened toward the ranchhouse. "That hombre couldn't even hit a tree at fifty feet."

Kay reached the house a moment after Olga.

"What did you do?" Olga demanded, as she marched up to face Kay. "Did you warn him?"

"Of course I did," Kay said, giving Olga look for challenging look.

"Then you're as bad as the murderer!" Olga accused, her eyes flaming again.

In the moment's deep silence, the two girls glared at each other. Then, with a world of meaning in her short, mirthless laugh, Kay turned contemptuously toward the open doorway.

Olga started pacing up and down the open porch like a caged tigress. In the doorway Kay paused as her father came out of Cory Blaine's office.

"I wish you would come with me, Father," she said. "You must listen to me. You must know the truth." Then suddenly: "Where is Eddie?"

"You mean the prisoner?" demanded

White. "Oh, he's tied up as tight as a Scotsman's purse strings and stowed away in the office."

Obediently he followed his daughter into the house.

Eddie, sitting in a chair in the office, saw Olga pacing back and forth past the office window. He had heard her accuse Marvel as the murderer of her father. He had heard her call him "Buck Mason," and a faint light burst upon his dull intellect. Now he understood much that he had not understood before. And, seeing, he not only recognized the immediate necessity for escape, but saw a hope for its accomplishment.

As Olga approached the window again, he hailed her. She stopped and looked into the office.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Let me loose," he whispered huskily, "and I'll help Blaine and Butts get that feller Mason for yuh! I got it in for him myownself, and two of 'em ain't enough. He's plumb bad!"

She hesitated. Why not, she thought, for her mind was obsessed only with revenge. Quickly she stepped into the office and untied the knot that secured Eddie's wrists. His hands free, he quickly untied the cords about his ankles. Then he sprang through the doorway, vaulted over the rail and started diagonally across the valley toward the hills.

"Wait!" called Olga. "You're going the wrong way."

"The hell I am!" gritted Eddie, bursting into a fresh spurt of speed.

He knew where he was going, and he was on his way!

CHAPTER XXVI

Gunplay!

LOOKING after Kay from the corral, Buck Mason watched until she reached the safety of the house. He stepped inside the stables, withdrew his guns from their holsters, and examined each carefully. Then he waited.

Butts was the first to emerge from the bunkhouse. He wanted that five thousand dollars reward on Mason's head badly, but Cory Blaine was more interested in having Mason out of the way. He was willing for Butts to take the initial risk. He could have the five thousand.

Neither man knew that Kay had warned Mason, so they advanced with confidence, Blaine a little to the rear and to Butts' left.

Butts was a hundred feet from the stable door when Mason stepped out into the open. Instantly flame streaked toward him as Butts fired. It had looked as if Buck Mason's arm had been hanging down from his side, that he was unarmed, but at the instant Butts' weapon had come up, Mason fired from the hip.

Shouting curses, Blaine triggered as



Butts stumbled forward, a bullet through his forehead. But in his blind rage Blaine missed—and Mason's gun was blazing again.

At the sound of the first shot, the guests had poured out onto the porch, shouting and screaming. Birdie Talbot was in hysterics, and as Blaine crumpled while Mason's second shot was still echoing, Olga Gunderstrom screamed and fainted. Kay stood tense and white, her hands clenched, her nails biting into her palms.

"Thank God—oh, thank God!" she kept repeating, over and over.

Spraddle-legged, Mason stood there with a smoking gun in each hand, shooting defiant glances about for other enemies. His head jerked around as two men rode into the yard at a gallop, spurred by the sounds of gunbattle.

They took in the scene by the corral at a glance. One was the sheriff who had led the posse after Kay; the other a gray-haired man whose very posture, as well as the competent way he held the gun in his hand, spelled lawman. The guns of both riders were up as they jumped their horses for Buck Mason. He leaped back into the stables as a shot from the Porico County sheriff's gun roared. The bullet buried itself in the door frame.

"Put up yore gun, Sheriff!" shouted the gray-haired rider. "I'll get him without no gunplay." He rode slowly toward the stables. "It's all up, Buck!" he called out. "Limber up yore artillery and come on out. I'll see yuh get a square deal."

INSTANTLY Mason stepped from the doorway.

"Hello, Boss," he said, and then his lips twisted wryly as he shot a glance at the smoking weapon in the Porico County lawman's hand. "Why the gunplay?"

"Yuh're under arrest, Buck," the gray-haired man said soberly. "Let me have yore guns."

"What yuh arrestin' me for, Boss?" Mason's steel-gray eyes widened with surprise.

"For killin' old man Gunderstrom," the sheriff of Comanche County said dully, then shot a defiant glance around. "But I won't never believe yuh done it, Buck! However, I got a warrant for yore arrest, and the law's the law. This hombre with me's the sheriff of this here county, so I reckon yuh gotta come along with us."

Mason unbuckled his cartridge belt and handed it, with the two weapons in their holsters, up to the sheriff.

"Tie yore hosses and come up to the house, Boss," he said. "I got a long story to tell, and there's others besides you I want to have hear it. Incidental-like, Boss, I got the gang that killed Gunderstrom."

"Who done it?" The sheriff of Comanche County started, but the beginning of a broad grin was quivering around his mustached lips.

Mason pointed at Blaine, lying in the dust of the ranch yard. "He done it," he said soberly.

"Yuh'll have hard work provin' that, young feller," snapped the other sheriff. But then he did not know Buck Mason, and was not thinking of an old boot, as was his brother lawman.

As the three men walked toward the house, a body of horsemen was approaching from the south, riding down from the Mill Creek trail—a section of the original posse that had been detached from the main body to search in a different direction. They were now slowly returning to the ranch to report failure.

Those in the lead lifted their heads sharply as they saw a man running toward the brush along the river, for in any cow country a man on foot is always an object of suspicion, especially if he is running for cover. Instantly the men put spurs to their mounts to intercept the runner. He stopped, though, before they overhauled him. Eddie's hope for reaching cover was gone, and he had to face it out.

"What's yore hurry?" demanded the foremost rider, as they caught up to him.

EDDIE'S eyes were wide, staring.

"I come out to meet you fellers," panted Eddie, his brain spurred to surprising activity. "Saw yuh comin'! Listen! Buck Mason, the hombre that killed old man Gunderstrom over in New Mexico, is down to the stables an' two of the T F outfit are tryin' to get him! Better get there pronto! They might need help!"

"Bring this hombre in," ordered the leader, "and come on! No time to waste!"

So it was that the last squad of the posse galloped into the ranch yard just as Mason and the two sheriffs ascended the steps to the porch.

"Hello, Sheriff!" a posseman called. "Yuh got yore man?"

"Shore have!" the sheriff of Porico County shouted back. "Double got him! Not only did he run off with Mr. White's gal, but he's the sidewinder that killed old man Gunderstrom over in Comanche County! Reckon he's the head of this here gang that's been raisin' hell in New Mexico and Arizony for the past year."

He failed to mention that he had believed he was going to catch Hi Bryam for that little matter, as well as for kidnapping Kay White when he had first started out from town with his mysterious tip. He had always been suspicious of Hi, holing up there in the mountains alone. But this was just as good. Better!

Olga had come to life before Buck Mason and the sheriffs reached the porch. But she was no longer hysterical, raving, accusing. Her nervous ordeal had left her silent and exhausted as she stared with wide eyes at the man who had been her childhood playmate and whom she believed had slain her father. She saw the slender blond girl in blue overalls rush to Buck Mason and cling to his hand.

"Oh, Bruce! Bruce!" Kay choked. "I'm so glad—so glad!"

"Why, Kay, a whole army couldn'ta killed me after you come to warn me," he whispered.

"Who's this girl?" demanded the Porico County sheriff.

"She's my daughter," said John White.

"The kidnaped girl, huh? And hobnobbin' with the man that grabbed her. What the—"

"He did not kidnap me!" Kay announced defiantly, her eyes flashing as she whirled on the lawman. "He saved me! Two men named Mart and Eddie took me away from Cory Blaine, but what I suspected then, I know now—Cory arranged the whole thing! This man risked his life many times to ride after me. Why, even Eddie will tell you that. Where is Eddie, Father?"

● LGA shrank fearfully in her chair, but tried to tell herself they would never find out what she had done. The way Eddie had been going, he should be far away by now.

"Why, there's Eddie with the possemen!" exclaimed John White, stopping on his way to the office to bring out the prisoner he thought was there. "How did he get loose?"

"That musta been Eddie we picked up," exclaimed a posseman. "He shore was high-tailin' it for parts unknown." He gave Eddie a shove. "Get on up there on that porch, hombre. Somebody wants to talk to you."

"Remember what I told yuh, Eddie," Mason said, as the outlaw passed him.

"Shut up!" snapped the Porico County sheriff. "Don't try influencin' no witness around here."

"I was jest remindin' Eddie to tell the truth," drawled Mason coldly. "Sometimes it ain't so easy for him to remember that."

"Eddie," asked Kay, "who got you to help kidnap me?"

Eddie looked about as though searching for someone. His eyes finally came to rest on Mason's face.

"He must be dead," he said.

"Yes, he is," Mason said seriously.

"Go on, answer the young lady's question," urged the sheriff impatiently. "Who got yuh to kidnap her?"

"Cory Blaine," said Eddie, not daring to lift his eyes.

"Didn't this feller, Buck Mason, have a hand in it?" demanded the sheriff.

"Naw," said Eddie. "He come after us. Hi Bryam tried to kill him and Hi is dead. Then Mart tried to beat him to the draw and Mart's dead. The only kidnaper this hombre done was when he kidnaped her away from us."

"Well, mebbe he didn't kidnap the gal." The sheriff from Porico County drew a hard breath of disappointment. "But he shore killed old man Gunderstrom, and I want you folks here to bear witness that I took him single-handed and that I'm entitled to all the reward."

"Before yuh spend any of it," Mason said dryly, "mebbe yuh better listen to me for a minute. I got to tell my story in court, but there's reasons why I want these people here to know the truth." He turned to the sheriff of Comanche County. "Mind if I tell it, Boss?"

"Shore, Buck hop to it," replied the New Mexico lawman.

"Well, in the first place," said Mason, "for the benefit of some who don't know it, I'm a deputy sheriff of Comanche County in New Mexico."

[Turn Page]

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and as a result of that little talk with God a strange Power came into my life. After 42 years of horrible, dismal, sickening failure, everything took on a brighter hue. It's fascinating to talk with God, and it can be done very easily once you learn the secret. And when you do—well—there will come into your life the same dynamic Power which came into mine. The shackles of defeat which bound me for years went a-shimmering—and now?—well, I own control of the largest daily newspaper in our County, I own the largest office building in our City, I drive a beautiful Cadillac limousine. I own my own home which has a lovely pipe-organ in it, and my family are abundantly provided for after I'm gone. And all this has been made possible because one day, ten years ago, I actually and literally talked with God.

You, too, may experience that strange mystical Power which comes from talking with God, and when you do, if there is poverty, unrest,

unhappiness, or ill-health in your life, well—this same God-Power is able to do for you what it did for me. No matter how useless or helpless your life seems to be—all this can be changed. For this is not a human Power I'm talking about—it's a God-Power. And there can be no limitations to the God-Power, can there? Of course not. You probably would like to know how you, too, may talk with God, so that this same Power which brought me these good things might come into your life, too. Well—just write a letter or a post-card to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 179, Moscow, Idaho, and full particulars of this strange Teaching will be sent to you free of charge. But write now—while you are in the mood. It only costs one cent to find out, and this might easily be the most profitable one cent you have ever spent. It may sound unbelievable—but it's true, or I wouldn't tell you it was.—Advt. Copyright, 1939, Frank B. Robinson.

"That's right," said his gray-haired superior. "He's my chief deputy—and a finer one never drew breath."

CHAPTER XXVII

Why He Burned the Boot



THE Comanche County sheriff's announcement came as a surprise, as well as spreading consternation in some quarters. But Buck Mason was not waiting to note reactions. He had much to say, and he meant to say it without delay. He plunged into his story at once.

"To begin with," he started his explanation that was to take in much territory, "on the afternoon of the night Gunderstrom was killed I rode up to his shack to talk about a line fence that's been a matter of dispute between our families for twenty years. I couldn't get no satisfaction out of the old man, but there wasn't enough at stake for me to kill him." He glanced at Olga. "Anyway, me and his daughter was playmates ever since we were kids. I liked her better'n anybody I knew. I couldn't have killed her pa.

"The next mornin' when the killin' come to light, and the boss sent me over to investigate, I seen three things that interested me. There were signs at the tie-rail that five hosses had been tied there the night before. There was the footprints of five men, two of 'em easy to identify if I ever seen 'em again. One feller had a heart-shaped piece of metal set in the bottom of each heel that left a plain imprint. Another had the biggest feet I ever seen on a man.

"When I went into the house I seen one of Ole's boots lyin' on the floor in front of the cot, like it had been kicked around. I examined it and seen the imprint of that metal heart on it where the killer had stepped on it real hard. . . . Say, did yuh save that boot, Boss, like I asked yuh to?"

"Yeah, and we seen that heart-shaped mark on it," said the sheriff. He smiled complacently. Buck Mason was getting right down to his killer in an old boot, just as the sheriff had prophesied he would.

"What caliber bullet did the coroner say killed Gunderstrom?" Mason asked.

"Forty-five."

"And you know, Boss, I've never packed nothin' but my old man's forty-fours ever since he died, don't yuh?"

"Yeah, I told 'em that." Again the sheriff nodded. "They don't nobody think yuh done it, Buck—cept Olga."

"There was another thing I forgot to tell you," continued Mason. "The hoofprints of the hosses showed that one of 'em had a big piece broken out of the inside of the off hind foot, which made it mighty easy to track."

MASON cleared his throat, went on: "They rode awful fast and I never did get within sight of 'em, but I could

foller 'em easy, 'count of that broken hoof and the heart-shaped imprint of the feller's heel, when they dismounted to rest, and old Big Foot. I trailed 'em right to the town on the railroad here, and then I kinda made myself to home in the saloon, and finally I got to askin' idle questions about everybody around. I heard about this feller Cory Blaine and his dude ranch. Somebody said he'd jest come from his mine the day before, and said Blaine shore was a hard rider, because his hoss was plumb tuckered out when he come through town. I'd never heard of any rustlin' gang usin' a dude ranch for a hideout before, but if they were doin' it, it was shore a good one.

"None of that was enough to hang 'em, though, so I cached my bridle and saddle, hopped the train to Denver and telegraphed this Blaine for accommodations on his dude ranch—said I was from the East on my way to the Coast and jest took a notion to drop off. As soon as I got word from him that he could take care of me I bought a lot of funny clothes like I'd seen pictures of in magazines, and come down here to the T F, expectin' to clean up everything in a couple of days.

"But it wasn't so easy. There wasn't nobody with a heart-shaped piece of metal in the heel of his boot. There wasn't nobody with the biggest feet in the world, and there wasn't no hoss with a broken hoof.

"The first clue I got—a darn slim one, at that—was when Dora and Blaine were discussin' Gunderstrom's killin'. Do yuh remember, Dora, that yuh said I must be a terrible man because I shot Mr. Gunderstrom right through the heart while he was lyin' asleep?"

Dora nodded. "Yes," she said, "I remember."

"And then Blaine spoke up and says, 'Between the eyes,' and you said, 'It didn't say that in the paper,' and he said, 'Mebbe I'm mistaken.' Seemed to me Cory Blaine knew too blame much about that murder.

"The next day we went on a lion hunt and still there wasn't any boots with hearts on 'em, or big feet, or broken hoofs.

"But when we got up to Hi Bryam's cabin and I seen Hi's feet and seen how him and Blaine and Butts acted like pards, I got a real hunch. I worked it to set down beside Hi on the step of his cabin one night, and put my foot alongside his, and there was jest the difference that I'd measured between the length of my foot and the length of the big prints around Gunderstrom's cabin—about an inch and a half, I should say.

"It was a hunch all right, but no shore thing till the last night of the lion hunt when I eavesdropped on a talk between Blaine and Bryam and Butts that told me plain that the three of 'em were workin' together on some crooked deal."

HE TURNED to Kay's father. "It was a good thing I overheard that talk, Mr. White. I didn't know it at the time, but it was the outline of a part of the

plan to kidnap Kay. So when I heard she was missin', I knew just where to start out from."

"Thank Heaven for that!" White murmured fervently.

"I was gettin' closer now," said Mason, "but I didn't have anything to pin on Blaine, though I was dead shore he was the killer. I knew the boss here would save the bullet that killed Gunderstrom, so I was particularly anxious to get hold of a bullet that had been fired from Blaine's gun. I done that one night by askin' him to let me shoot at a target, and bein' a tenderfoot"—he grinned—"I accidentally on purpose missed even the tree. But when nobody was lookin' I got a bullet I'd fired into the ground. Got it here now for comparison when yuh get back home, Boss."

"About this time somebody dropped a remark about Blaine's hoss droppin' dead from exhaustion after he come in from his last trip. 'Course that made me want

He looked almost shyly at Kay.

"Some folks thought it was a mean thing to do, but they didn't know why I done it. And it worked. For the next day after we got back to the T F Ranch, Blaine comes out with an old pair of boots on. They'd been awful fancy in their day, and shore enough when I follered his footprints to the corral I found out they had brass or some other kind of metal hearts set right in the bottom of the heel. That was when I high-tailed for town and sent that letter to you, Boss."

BUCK MASON paused to let that sink in, then continued:

"I had two of 'em now, and I was pretty shore of Butts, because he was an ornery cuss, and him and Blaine was mighty thick. I was thinkin' considerable, too, about what had been said about a feller with a harelip or a busted mouth or somethin' callin' up on the telephone and sayin' Buck Mason killed Ole Gunderstrom. There

FEATURED COMPLETE IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE!

TARZAN

AND THE JUNGLE MURDERS

A BRAND-NEW COMPLETE NOVEL

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

A BREATH-TAKING MYSTERY OF AFRICA!

to see that hoss pretty bad, so I started talkin' about hoss teeth." He looked at Dora Crowell and grinned again.

"Oh, I knew you weren't as crazy as you tried to make out," she said lightly. "If you did have me fooled for awhile."

"If Cory Blaine had been as bright as you, Dora," he commended, "I never woulda caught him. I'll admit yuh had me right worried for a while, too. Yuh saw too much." Then he went on more seriously: "What I jest had to have to clinch the whole business was a heelprint with a heart on it. Blaine never wore but one pair of boots—jest ordinary boots with nothin' fancy about 'em, so I made up my mind that he'd jest have to change his boots. The night before we got back from the lion hunt I threw one of his boots into the campfire while he was asleep, and made believe I'd thrown it at a coyote that musta run off with it."

wasn't nobody around with a harelip, so I just sorta forgot that while I fussed around about a good luck hoss tooth till Blaine let Bud take me to hunt for one.

"I got him to take me to that hoss of Cory's that had fell dead, and shore enough there was a piece broken out of the inside of the off rear hoof. I shore had Blaine tied up then, and was only waitin' for the Boss here to come when this kidnabin' blew everything to pieces.

"It kinda helped, at that, for it give me a line on the other two hembres, Mart and Eddie. I spotted Eddie the same day Bud took me huntin' hoss teeth. I seen Cory Blaine ridin' over the hills, so I shook Bud and follered Cory and seen him talkin' to two hembres down in a dry gulch. I wanted a closer look at them two, so I rode to where I come plunk into 'em."

He shot a whimsical glance at Eddie. "Remember, Eddie?"

The prisoner nodded sullenly. "I pretended I was a dude and lost, and when Eddie spoke I was right shore I had Number Four, and prob'ly the other feller was Number Five. Eddie talked like he had a harelip. Got about half his tongue shot away once. He told me about it in camp yesterday.

"Yeah, Eddie told me a lot of things yesterday. Some of 'em I'd rather not tell right now, but I found out that the five of 'em—Blaine, Butts, Bryam, Mart and Eddie—was the gang that's been raisin' all this hell for the past year. They were with Blaine when he went to Ole Gunderstrom's cabin, but it was Blaine who shot Ole."

Olga got up from her chair and marched up to Eddie. She seized him by the shoulders, her eyes blazing into his.

"Is that the truth?" she demanded, shaking him viciously.

"Leave me go!" he cried. "I didn't do it."

"Is Buck Mason telling the truth?" she repeated. "That's what I want to know!"

"Yeah, he's tellin' the truth," Eddie said sullenly.

"I don't believe you!" she flared. "Buck killed my father! Why should Blaine have wanted to kill him?"

OLGA didn't know what to believe.

"Because yore old man was tryin' to doublecross him, that's why!" Eddie spat out, for he didn't like this kind of handling. "He used to handle the stock we rustled and we'd cached a lot of money at one of his ranches here in Arizony. He wouldn't never give us our share of what he got on the hosses and cattle we rustled. And then, jest before Blaine gunned him, he come to this Arizony ranch and grabbed most of the money we had hid there. That's why Cory Blaine killed him, if yuh want to know!"

Olga swayed slightly, and Mason started toward her, to support her.

"Don't touch me," she said, her teeth clenched. Then she steadied herself and, head up, slowly entered the house.

"I'm sorry," said Mason. "I didn't want to tell that." He sighed. "Well, I guess that's about all. Some of you folks have

been mighty nice to me and I wanted yuh to know the truth. Mebbe yuh don't know it, but I felt worse about them funny pants and the boot straps than I did about bein' accused of killin' a man. I could clear myself of a killin' in court, but I might never live down them pants." He laughed a little ruefully. "I'm thinkin' mebbe, too, I didn't do such a good job of talkin' Eastern as I thought I'd learned myself to do. Reckon I won't try it ever again—which won't hurt my feelin's none."

The sheriff of Porico County cleared his throat. "Reckon we'll be goin', Sheriff," he said to the New Mexico lawman. "You can take care of the prisoners all right, can't yuh?"

"You take Eddie, and I'll take care of Buck. Reckon that indictment against him will be squashed at the preliminary hearin'."

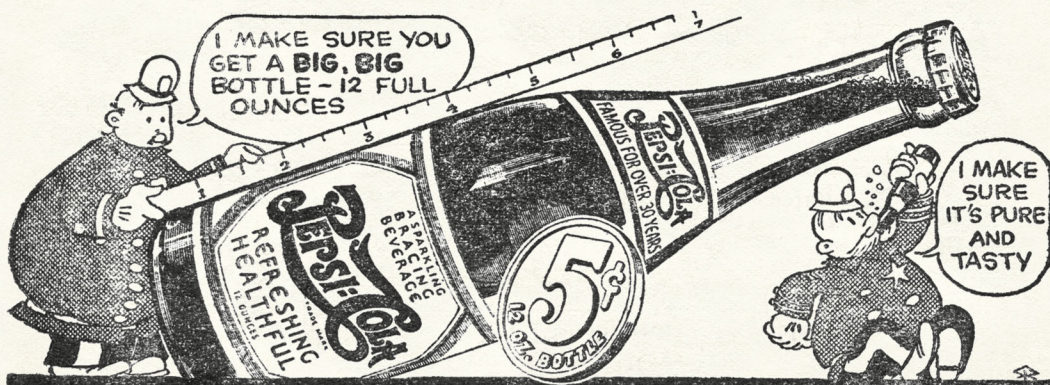
"Reckon so," said the somewhat mollified Porico County sheriff. "But he'll have to appear here at the coroner's inquest on the shootin' of these four hombres. I'll see that he ain't delayed none, though. Good-by."

"What yuh want to do now, Buck?" asked his gray-haired superior. "Start for town now, or wait till the cool of the evenin'?"

"I want to go to bed," said Mason. "I ain't slept for two nights."

He was up early the next morning, for it does not take youth long to recuperate. Moreover, he was ravenously hungry. As he stepped out in the cool, fresh air of the morning, he saw a girl walking toward the river, a girl he might not have recognized except for her gold hair, for the lithe body was clothed in smart sport togs, like the illustrations he had seen in his magazines. He had too often watched the sunlight playing in that hair to fail to recognize it, though, and so he, too, hastened toward the river.

When, a few minutes later, Dora Crowell stepped out of the ranchhouse to fill her lungs with the early morning air, she caught a glimpse of a figure standing among the cottonwoods by the river. When she looked more closely and saw that the one figure was really two, she smiled and turned her eyes in another direction.



WHITE HELL

*In the Vengeful Flame of a Savage
Indian's Eyes, Dave Carter Reads
the Signs of a Snowy Doom!*

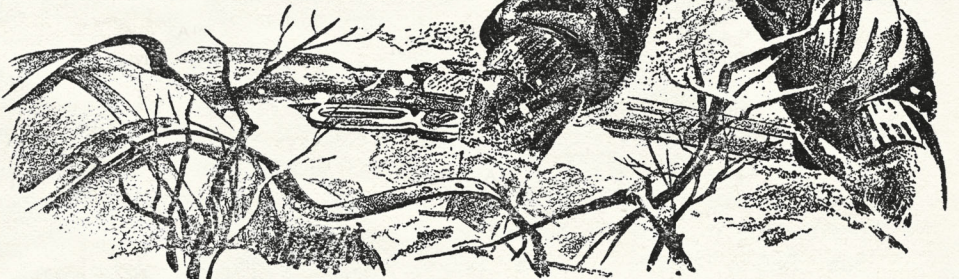
By HAROLD F.
CRUICKSHANK

*Author of "Bigwoods Buccaneers,"
"Famine Trail," etc.*

DAVE CARTER, one of the best known trappers and prospectors north of 62, looked penetratingly into a pair of smoldering dark brown eyes.

Those eyes belonged to Payuk, a Yellowknife Indian. For a moment, as Carter looked into the depths of the smoky flame in Payuk's eyes, he seemed to retrieve a picture of a scene along the trapline, less than four years ago. He had caught Payuk pilfering his fox sets. First, he had warned the Indian. The next time he caught him, Payuk had received a terrific beating before being handed over to the police. He was sentenced to two and a half years in the penitentiary.

But the memory died out an instant later. Since Payuk had been freed,



He leaped in and caught Payuk's knife hand in both of his and hung on grimly

Carter had gone out of his way to help the Indian along. He hoped the man had learned his lesson, and Carter had given him lots of help toward earning an honest living. And the Indian had been grateful. He had even helped Carter's partner, Curt Jensen, out of a tight fix last spring when the ice was breaking up.

And now, the Yellowknife was bringing Carter a message from Jensen. Apparently Curt had been obliged to change plans to accompany Carter by plane to their winter trapping zone at Lac du Gras.

"So Curt can't join me right off, Payuk," Carter intoned pleasantly. "Goin' down in two weeks, huh?"

"Dat so, Carter. Two weeks. Him fetchum down main winter supplies."

"But why didn't he write me a note?" Carter asked.

"Heem bit seek in the hand. 'Urt heem! So he pay me fi' dollar bring you message."

Dave Carter frowned. This was a piece of bad luck, but still not very serious, if Jensen came down in two weeks' time with full supplies and equipment. By that time, he would have their camp established in that remote country of isolation on the edge of the Barrenlands.

There was a plane coming down from Aklavik tomorrow. He would be ready for it. He would sling together a light outfit. There was no need to tote in too much stuff. Jensen could arrange the commissariat.

Carter tossed a five dollar bill to Payuk. A thin, enigmatic smile toyed with the Indian's inscrutable features.

"Wait. Don't go," Carter clipped. "I'll give you a note to Curt. If I don't like the look of things at Lac du Gras, I'll likely move on to Lac du Sauvage. I'm taking my small collapsible canoe along."

As Carter scribbled his note to Jensen, Payuk's eyes grew wide and staring. That probable move to Lac du Sauvage, it interested him.

"Okay. Now you may go, Payuk,"

Dave clipped. "Glad you've forgotten our old trouble."

But Payuk had not forgotten. . . .

PILOT JIMMY SANSONOM brought his big Lockheed down to a landing in a narrow neck of Lac du Gras. Together, he and Dave Carter rigged up the canoe and paddled the equipment ashore.

Carter noticed a deep frown furrowing his friend's brows.

"Something giving you a bellyache, Jimmy?" he asked with a grin.

For answer, Jimmy flung out an arm to embrace the scant equipment strewn on the beach.

"Any man who'll come down to a God-forsaken country like this, with barely two weeks supply of grub, an' no proper winter outfit, is nuts, Dave," Jimmy jerked.

"Yeah! But I've told you Curt's comin' down in two weeks, haven't I, sourpuss? Curt's likely onto something at our gold claims, too. Figures we might make a strike there. Anyhow, Curt's our banker. I couldn't afford to buy enough stuff for longer than a couple of weeks."

Carter said it with a grin. He knew that Jimmy Sansom knew that his credit was good at any trading post.

"Stayin' the night, Jimmy?" he asked.

Jimmy cocked an eye at the weather, and nodded.

"Think I will, Dave. I don't like that damn scud. But say, brother, are you sure Curt'll be down, that he knows exactly how you're fixed here?"

"Hell! Haven't I told you I sent word by Payuk? But if you're worried, Jimmy, why not give Curt a call on the way out? Tell him little Davey arrived okay, and for him to be sure to be down in two weeks' time, bringing all winter supplies."

But Jimmy Sansom shook his head.

"I'd surely do that, Dave," he clipped. "But I've got orders to fly non-stop to Fort Smith. A sick youngster has to be flown to the outside for

treatment. And, Dave, this is my last trip down north here. I'm being pulled into the head office at Winnipeg. Promotion, I guess. Maybe a swivel chair job for awhile. That's why I'm worried about this crummy little batch of payload you brought down here."

"Well, forget it," Dave Carter blurted. "I may have to shift camp alone. May get caught in blizzard weather. Wouldn't I be in a hell of a jackpot, caught with a big outfit? I'll be okay, Jimmy. And say, Curt and I intend to prospect this country at the spring break-up. If we hit anything, I'll stake a claim for you."

AT DAWN, Carter watched the Lockheed until it vanished into the brown cloud scud. He was suddenly conscious of his aloneness—alone in one of God's most forgotten hinterland spots.

"Great guy, Jimmy," he breathed, as he turned his canoe and paddled back to shore. Then, with a shrug, he set to work to establish his camp.

At night, as he sat munching bannock, he seemed unable to oust thoughts of Payuk. Despite his desire to be fair, there was something strange about the Indian buck's actions. He couldn't put his finger on it exactly, but it made him uneasy.

"Better forget the jasper," Carter told himself. "A feller could go loopey thinkin' too much."

He smiled at the term, "loopey." It was one he had picked up from the flying boys.

"Ou-u-u-u-u-u-u—O-o-o-o-o-o."

Carter started, and cocked his head. That long, resonant wolf call was not an unwelcome sound. But later, when the bark of a dog fox reached his hearing, he perked up with great interest.

"Best fox country down north," he mused. "Curt and I'll sure cash in this winter, with any luck." Carter crossed his fingers, and grinned. . . .

Three weeks later, as Dave Carter awakened one morning, he started at

the wail of a blizzard wind. Already snow was banked high about his tent walls.

Curt Jensen had not yet shown up. For a full week now, Carter had been forced to ration out his meager grub supply. He had already begun to hunt for ptarmigan, but he'd only brought in a couple of boxes of ammunition for his high-powered Savage rifle, and it was expensive shooting grouse with Savage ammunition.

Not yet had Carter started to worry about Curt. It was highly probable his partner had had difficulty at this season getting a plane. It was the between-season period, when all the north flying services were busy while the lakes were open.

It occurred to him that this site was not the best he could have chosen. As soon as the weather cleared, he shipped his stuff aboard the canoe and paddled on up to Lac du Sauvage. There, he found a sheltered spot on a small island.

But he was barely established when winter swooped down with relentless fury. Soon, it would be impossible to bring in a plane. The flying service would have to wait until the lakes froze, so that landings could be made on skis.

For the next week, as day followed night and winter tightened, Carter began to wonder. A ship could land now, he thought, but still there was no sign of Jensen. Sub-zero weather began to show its teeth, and Carter's clothing was scarcely right for this sort of weather.

By the first week in November, the lake was frozen tight enough to allow the landing of the biggest sky clipper down north, but none came!

Carter busied himself along a short trapline, but his luck wasn't very good.

Tonight, he sat under a clear sky, and watched the northern lights shudder across the Milky Way, or teem earthward in a mad riot of cascading brilliance.

Suddenly, from close in, there came a wild chorus of wolf snarls. Carter tightened his grip on his Savage. The heavy, early snows had dealt the gray devils a hard blow. All game life seemed to be shut in, and the timber wolf bands became bolder and bolder.

Alarm, concern, began to batter at Dave Carter's ruggedness. For the past two days he had been successful only in bagging one single ptarmigan. Not for some weeks could he expect to find sign of caribou. According to his reckoning, the huge migratory herds of these north deer should pass to eastward, within a mile or so of the camp. But Dave Carter realized that they might pass in the night and he might miss them completely.

If Jensen were delayed much longer, and if there were no caribou— The contemplation of such a situation caused Dave Carter to shudder.

THE next two weeks, he subsisted on fragments of ptarmigan and a couple of stringy, nauseating fox hams. He had begun to cure the first fox pelts he took. He needed them for extra clothing and for bed covering.

He became grimly determined to stick things out and refused to allow panic to possess his mind.

He had long since sworn a solemn oath that never would he allow himself to get "bushed," as a number of strong men had in the desolate loneliness of similar circumstances.

But when a man's belly is not only flat, but sucked in by persistent hunger pangs, when he is forced to eat such vile food as fox meat without salt, it's hard to maintain one's stoicism.

From day to day Carter munched along his trapline, often cursing as he discovered that wolves and ravens had beaten him to the sets. Many prime pelts had been gouged by talon and beak, or ripped and torn by strong wolf fangs.

Tonight, he mumbled as he shivered by his campfire. He had

eaten fox for supper, and retched violently.

If only he had salt! God! Even the fox meat would have been better with salt.

The sudden close call of a wolf pack leader startled him. Ordinarily, along the white trails, he had never feared wolves. But here, in this God-forsaken, famine-stricken hinterland, there was no telling what might happen. A fall, a broken limb along the trapline—

A quiver rippled along his spine. He heard a slight noise and spun, to stare into a half-circle of gleaming greenish-red orbs.

Jerking up his rifle, he commenced a rapid fire, snapping shot after shot, as the gray devils bounded to deeper cover. And then a low oath escaped the trapper as he realized how much valuable ammunition he had wasted.

His mind became cluttered with gloomy thoughts of Curt Jensen. His eyes took on a feverish gleam. He tried to oust such thoughts, but they grew and fermented in his troubled brain.

"Likely he made the strike, an' sold me out," Carter mumbled. "God! It must be somethin' like that, or he'd have been here!"

He moved inside his tent to refill his rifle. Now he toyed with a lone cartridge. He set the Savage to one side and fished out his pocket knife. On the brasswork of the lone cartridge, he scratched the initials, "C.J." for Curt Jensen.

"I'm savin' it, Curt," he swore softly. "Savin' it for you, an' I'll come out of this, somehow, an' find you if I have to track you half around the world."

With a strange, broken sigh, he slipped the cartridge into an empty pants pocket.

But more than two hundred miles distant, Curt Jensen was making a grim fight of his own, as he suffered the tortures of hell from a gangrenous ankle.

Jensen had done the right thing by

Dave Carter. When first he suffered the fracture of his right ankle from a fall at the prospect diggings, he had dispatched Payuk at once with a message to Dave, advising him that he could not possibly join him now, until around the first two weeks of January.

An itinerant mining doctor clapped a cast on Jensen's ankle, and had left him in the care of Payuk and Payuk's greasy squaw. Jensen had paid Payuk twenty dollars to take that hurry-up message to Carter. He was paying the Indian and his squaw five dollars a day to care for him.

But he awakened one morning to find himself alone. Being forced into doing his own chores, he hurt his crippled limb again. Gangrene had set in, and only by a miracle was he discovered and transported to the hospital at Aklavik.

Here, a doctor and nurse were putting up a great fight to save an amputation. For a long time it seemed that this operation was imminent. And then, one evening—for the first time in weeks—the surgeon smiled across at his chief nurse.

"Doctor," the girl asked eagerly, "he will—"

"We've licked it. He'll be all right. Glad, aren't you?"

The girl smiled as she nodded.

But she would have to nurse Curt for some weeks yet. In his delirium, he called incessantly for Dave, Dave Carter.

Then came the doctor's verdict.

"About the fifth of January, Jensen. You can do what you like, then, but take my advice and go easy on that foot for some little time after. For heaven's sake, don't get it frostbitten."

Jensen grinned his thanks.

"I'll be good, Doc. So long as I can fly out to join my partner, by the second week in January, I haven't much to kick about."

Then a frown clouded his face. He was thinking of Payuk, and

his desertion. He'd likely hunt him out before he left by plane to join Dave. Hell, there was a beating coming to that damn deserter! And, he had trusted him with the message—

But at this moment, Payuk was miles away. Alone, he rushed into the northeast. With the money Jensen and Carter had paid him, he had bought an outfit such as would last him for weeks, and now his dogs hauled him in the direction of Dave Carter's camp. By now, Carter would have many prime fox pelts, for there was no trapper so skilful as Carter.

By now, according to Payuk's reckoning, Dave Carter would either be dead, or so weak from starvation that to kill him without leaving a trace of the murder, would be easy.

Gaunt, hollow-cheeked, Dave Carter started from a sleep that was more a semi-coma. A strange wail had reached him, a high-pitched wail which, although resembling a wolf call, was not such a call. It was the howl of a husky dog!

"Gosh! I hope I'm not going loopey," he half moaned. But there was that call again. It was the howl of a dog, and it brought a new hope surging through the trapper's badly spent being.

As he got from his bunk, Carter reeled unsteadily. He shook violently as he wrapped more crudely-cured fox-pelt clothing about him.

But though he listened for an hour, he heard no more calls of that strange dog.

A wolf shape leaped across the small clearing in front of the tent. Carter spun and involuntarily jerked up his rifle, but he did not shoot. There weren't many cartridges left, and what there were, he must save for the caribou.

But he built up a fire, hoping the smoke tang would carry to the owner of that stray dog.

As he hunkered before the small blaze, his left hand closed over that lone cartridge in his pants pocket.

Again he inwardly began to curse Curt Jensen.

"Damn carcajou," he snarled. "You send me a message by Payuk that you'll join me in two weeks, from the time I left. Thought you'd write out a death warrant, huh? But I'll fool you yet, Jensen!"

A thick, strange chuckle escaped him as he squeezed tightly on that initialed cartridge.

And then he listened to the padding of wolf paws about his camp, a camp which throbbed in the grim silence of a white hell.

Payuk, the man who had made out Dave Carter's sentence, moved cautiously eastward now. He was between du Gras and du Sauvage lakes. But his long trip by dogsled had not been without misadventure. Large wolf bands had harassed his dog team, scattering them, and now Payuk came on alone.

He chuckled thickly as he reviewed his grim plot to kill Dave Carter by starvation. He had been paid to advise Jensen that his partner might possibly shift camp to Lac du Sauvage. Only he, Carter, and Jimmy Sansom knew of this change. *Ayaie!* It was part of his scheme that Jensen should never receive that message. And Jimmy Sansom had already left the country!

As the howl of one of his escaped huskies reached him, Payuk came to a sudden halt. He swore bitterly. *Ayaie!* If Carter were alive, that dog might help undo Payuk's plans. But Payuk assured himself that no man could possibly have remained alive in this famine-stricken belt of isolation. No, not even the great Dave Carter.

But all at once a low gasp escaped the Yellowknife. He smelled smoke.

"Smoke! *Tonnerre de bleu!*" he snarled. "Eet is from Cartaire's camp. He is alive!"

That smoke came from the direction of Lac du Sauvage!

Payuk tightened his grip on his rifle. This would mean the changing

of his plans. He would have to advance with even greater caution. But he would be patient. He would wait and watch. Dave Carter must pay for that long prison term Payuk had served. . . .

CAME the caribou!

Dave Carter awakened from a fitful sleep as though from some bad nightmare. He caught that strange rumbling sound, a sound punctuated by a clashing, clacking noise as if a big timber belt was being harried by a half-gale. But there wasn't even a strong breeze tonight. And then it dawned on Carter that what he heard was the movement of that large migratory band of caribou whose antlers clashed in close-packed formation.

Quickly he girded himself with as much of those tattered garments as he could stand. The fox pelts, improperly cured, stank. They nauseated him, but they kept him from freezing.

The long-drawn call of a wolf pack leader brought back a lot of the trapper's wits. He must hurry, or there was a chance that large bands of raiding wolves might turn that huge caribou herd.

High overhead a wisp of pale lemon-yellow light streaked the sky. Before he was a hundred yards from his tent, the sky seemed to crack wide open, to pour down a fiercely beautiful cascade of brilliance.

Carter was obliged to rest from time to time as he trudged on toward the clacking herd, and then, as he topped a rise of land, just beyond the lake, he glimpsed them—thousands of sweating bodies, whose eyes glowed with fear as the wolf creatures rushed to attack.

He watched a big lead bull rear high, and come smashing down with his sharp forehooves on the back of a wolf. But in another moment, almost before the bull had regained a normal position, he buckled at the hindquarters and slumped to the snow. He had been hamstrung from the rear.

The stench of the fear sweat of those many bodies was nauseating.

Quite unconscious of the fact that a pair of human eyes watched him, Carter started to shuffle to a point of vantage. The first of the big caribou herd had been split by the wolf bands. The trapper wanted to catch a smaller band of stragglers.

Now he jerked up his Savage and commenced firing. These antlered beasts represented life to Dave Carter. But at his back, screened by a scrub patch of brush, sat Payuk, watching, waiting. He was still watching as Carter dressed the deer he had dropped.

Dave Carter cooked and ate a quantity of caribou steak at once, but he was careful not to overeat. He chuckled grimly as he constructed a small handsled with which to transport the quartered carcasses back to camp.

HE WAS almost spent before he lifted the last quarter of venison to its cache site near the tent, at the end of the next day.

And days slipped by. In a week, there was no single vestige of offal at the scene of the great slaughter.

Then, in the throbbing short hours of the night, Carter listened to the stirring of creatures outside his tent. But he was satisfied that he cached his meat out of the reach of wolves.

But as time dragged on, he found that a number of the caribou quarters were missing. This worried him. Hell! It seemed as if some human being had pilfered his cache. Surely the wolves could not have reached the meat.

He listened for the tell-tale crunch-crunch of snowshoes. Tonight, he heard it, but the sound was mystifying. At dawn, he hunted over a wide area, but could find no man sign—

The following night, he heard a mad cacophony of wolf sounds close in. He could hear fangs ripping, tearing. They were at his meat supply!

Not bothering to ponder the question of how those hungry wolves

had brought down his meat from the platforms, Carter hurried outdoors and scattered the snarling band with a few shots. Then a low groan escaped him as he inspected his caches. Only a small part of one front quarter of venison was left to him.

At daylight, he picked up the sign of a human marauder. He found places where snowshoe tracks had been carelessly brushed out. Carter followed them for some distance, then lost them again.

Now his heart pounded fiercely. He returned to camp and at once made plans to get out on the trail of that human carcajou. The revelation of the grim discovery was unnerving. Dave Carter was physically weak, but he was firmly resolved to hunt down that thief, if it was the last act of his life.

With his ax, he hacked off what meat he could salvage from that last front quarter. This he fried up and stowed away in a trail sack.

As a pale yellow sun struggled fitfully to penetrate the deathly frost-fog, the trapper kicked into the thongs of his snowshoes.

But not until afternoon did he definitely strike a positive man trail. Head down, teeth gritted determinedly, he followed on.

Two days dragged on, with Carter relentlessly following that snowshoe trail. He moved with the utmost caution, realizing the other's cleverness. He was quite sure that from time to time his quarry was back-tracking, circling to cut Carter's own trail.

A whipping blizzard wind held him up for some hours, and in that grim hiatus, he discovered that his right foot was frosted. This alarmed him. He stopped, rubbed it with snow.

As the storm lulled, he moved on, painfully on. At last his quarry's tracks began to swing sharply back. Carter picked up a very definite trail. He was able to determine by the snowshoe track that the man wore Indian rackets.

On— On— His right foot gave him the torture of seventeen devils, but he had vowed never to leave this trail until he had made the payoff.

Just before dusk, Carter slid cautiously into a patch of scrub thicket. His nostrils quivered, for in the rare atmosphere he had picked up man scent.

He was quivering in every limb, and then suddenly a twig cracked at his back. Carter spun to gasp as he glimpsed Payuk, a long-bladed knife brandished.

"Payuk!"

With this exclamation, Carter leaped to one side as the Indian rushed.

With a suddenness that was amazing, new vitality had come to Dave Carter, a strength which the realization of Payuk's perfidy brought.

The Indian sprawled as he missed with his first lunge. Quickly Carter kicked out of his snowshoe thongs. He caught his attacker with a looping right hand smash to the face.

Payuk slumped to his knees. But he had more strength than Carter. And he was flushed with the insane desire to kill.

"Car-taire," he half sobbed. "Mucha Satan! I keel—keel for sendin' me down to outside, to jail. I fool yuh. I geeve you wrong message from— Unh!"

Carter snarled and lunged in a flying tackle. He felt Payuk's form drop beneath him, and sag in the soft snow, but Carter's breath was almost knocked completely out, and he struggled to regain it.

Payuk was playing fox. He was unhurt. Now, with a suddenness that startled the white man, he jerked up his lithe form, tossing the trapper from him.

Carter rolled and came up to butt Payuk as the Indian rushed him, but just then he glimpsed the knife. He leaped in and caught Payuk's knife hand in both of his and hung on grimly, twisting, twisting, until the

butt of the knife hasp rested against his own chest.

A grim thought flashed to Carter's brain. He realized his weakness, his inability to fight this half insane Indian much longer.

SUDDENLY, with his last ounce of strength, Carter hurled himself over backwards.

A low cry of triumph escaped Payuk. He felt that at last he had the opportunity he had waited for. He fell heavily forward with Carter's body. As he felt the point of his own knife strike his chest, it was too late to save himself.

He crashed down, uttering a thick scream, a gurgling sound, as his blood spilled out over Carter's clothing.

For minutes the white man lay quivering beneath the limp shape of the Indian. He felt the convulsions of death ripple through that quivering body, and for a brief moment, he passed out.

It was some time before he could drag himself out from under, and then, as he got to his feet, his legs buckled. He was suddenly weaker than ever.

Wisely, he built a fire, and from Payuk's pack took strips of moose jerky. For a long moment he ate in silence. He was suddenly disturbed by a stirring in the thicket. Wolves were gathering at the scent of blood.

Carter tried to retrieve Payuk's rifle, but found it plugged full of snow, and useless. He made a frantic search of his pockets for ammunition for his Savage, and snapped shot after shot into the leaping gray devils. He was on the verge of panic. Never had he known wolves so bold.

He kept up a fire through the night, a sleepless night, for his foot pained him terribly. Now and then he dozed off, only to awaken with a start.

He realized fully that Payuk had followed him in to rob him of his fox pelts, and to kill him. But in his weakened condition his mind was badly

cluttered with a misunderstanding of the whole situation.

But he did realize that before he left for du Sauvage, he must erect a cairn over the body of Payuk. Carter was not one to shirk a responsibility. There must be an investigation into the death of Payuk. And if he came out of this white hell alive, he intended to make full report to the police.

Days crept by, with no surcease for that throbbing pain in his foot. He was unable to get about and as he lay in the loneliness of his tent, he was haunted by the thoughts of Payuk's dramatic death.

Suddenly he started and gathered his rifle close to him. His face grew grim. He remembered in his last search for ammunition back where Payuk had died, he had been forced to slip into the breech of the Savage that last shell, the shell initialed for Curt Jensen. He nibbled on a hunk of moose jerky, waiting, watching, for what—he had no idea.

Toward late afternoon, with dusk threatening to creep in, Carter awakened from a doze conscious of a roaring sound in his eardrums. He tried to clear them, and seemed to succeed. It was a strange experience, one that startled him.

Shadowy shapes were padding about his campsite. He glimpsed a great gray shape hunched just outside the tent flaps.

A low gasp escaped his cracked lips. He slipped his forefinger inside the trigger guard.

"I'll get you, you gray devil," he croaked. "I got one shell left, one..."

Mumbling, he slipped back into another stupor.

When next he awakened it was to the definite crashing of rifles. A blasting, close-in shot sang in his ears. He heard the bullet thump into a body outside. At first he thought of Payuk, and then—he heard someone shouting his own name.

"Dave! Dave!"

"Curt Jensen!" Carter gasped. "It's Curt. He's coming in to—to get it!"

The spent man struggled to command his wits. He shoved himself to an elbow, his whole body quivering with strange excitement. First, there was Payuk, and now Curt Jensen, the man who had sentenced him to this white hell—

Came the crunch, crunch of mukluks, and then Dave glimpsed a man shape through the canvas of the tent. He jerked up the Savage and pulled. But only a sharp, metallic click responded.

"Dave! Good God, man!" Dimly Carter recognized the man. He was not Curt Jensen, but, of all people, Jimmy Sansom.

With a low moan, Dave Carter slipped back on his bunk, and out into the claiming maw of a merciful swoon.

DAVE CARTER'S bearded, hollow-cheeked face forced a thin smile as he felt a strong arm close about his shoulders.

He had been out a long time. It was Jimmy Sansom's arm that supported him.

"It was all Payuk's doing, son," Jimmy clipped. "Curt broke his ankle—had a hell of a time! He sent Payuk down to you at once, with word that he couldn't possibly join you before some time the first two weeks in January. . . ."

"I— There's no need to tell me any more, Jimmy," Carter cut in. "I can see how Payuk doublecrossed us both. But, he's payed off. Yeah, Jimmy, he's dead."

In a halting voice, he told of his experience with Payuk.

Outside, Curt Jensen worked at the fire. He was heating canned pea soup for Carter. Already, he had given his partner's frosted foot a lot of attention, and was satisfied that there was no danger of gangrene.

Carter watched his shadowy shape moving around the fire. He shuddered,

and was glad then of Jimmy Sansom's supporting arm.

"Tell me, Jimmy," he said. "How come you're back north again?"

Sansom grinned.

"Just for the same reason you hang on down here, Davey boy. It gets you, doesn't it? I just up and raised hell down at head office, and here I am. Thank God I did come back, or Curt, sure as hell, wouldn't have known where to find you."

Jensen came in with a can of soup. He grinned into his partner's face.

"Down the hatch, Davey," he chuckled. "Man, but I'm glad we were here in time! Think of it—all these months an' I didn't know you'd come in with a two weeks' outfit. Geez!"

There was no reply from Carter. He was staring through the steam of his soup at his Savage rifle.

When he was through drinking, he called to Jimmy Sansom.

"Bring me the Savage, Jimmy," he asked. "Gee! I might have killed you, huh? Good luck that shell was empty. I must have been nearly four parts loopey."

Jimmy Sansom brought the Savage, and watched Carter speculatively as he ejected the lone, empty shell.

Dave Carter picked it up from the bed and glanced sharply down at those scratched initials.

He felt a strange emotion surge through his body as he closed his hand over the cartridge. Now he shot a glance at the fire. The way to those

flames was clear. Steadying himself, he tossed the shell to the blaze, where it was instantly swallowed.

In a few moments, those initials would be forever blacked out. Curt Jensen must never know of Dave's shaken faith!

"More soup, Davey?" Curt asked.

Carter started from a grim reverie.

"Yeah, please, Curt."

As the can came toward him, Dave Carter reached out a hand and closed it over one of Jensen's.

Curt Jensen would never know that the mistiness of his partner's eyes was not due to the steam of the hot soup.

As he finished his second can of soup, Carter turned to Jimmy Sansom.

"You'd better tote Payuk's body out to the police post," he said softly. "I'll scribble out a report for Sergeant Wild. I'm not goin' to shirk responsibility for my part in that killing."

"Nuts!" cracked sharply from Jimmy Sansom's lips.

"I'll fix that up with Wild," he clipped. "It'll be a wonder to me if the government doesn't hand you out a bonus, Dave, for ridding the north of a human carcajou who wasn't fit to live, a swine who sentenced you to four months in this—this white hell!"

Curt Jensen nodded his approval, and his face grew taut. For the next week or so, he would do all the work, while Dave Carter regained his health. And then, together, they would make this white hell pay off. And from all the sign, it would pay off plenty.

College Humor

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CENTS

THE BEST COMEDY IN AMERICA

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Drums of the Orchori

By CAPT. KERRY McROBERTS

Author of "Houssa Command," "Spirit of the River," etc.



Hartly grabbed
the native by
the throat

STIFLING heat hung over the jungle as Lieutenant Wade Hartly marched his native troops into the parade ground of the barracks.

The lean, blue-eyed officer swung around to face his men.

"Company halt!" he commanded,

*Hartly of the Houssas Comes
Back to Solve a Riddle of
the African Jungle Depths!*

keenly conscious of the hot sun, the humidity in the air that made his

light clothing damp and sticky. "At ease!"

Shy grins appeared on the faces of the sixty native soldiers, halting with smart precision. Each dropped the butt of his rifle to the ground beside his right foot. Lieutenant Hartly of the 133rd 1st Royal Herford Regiment, now commanding officer of the 9th Regiment of Houssas, had returned with his men from a tour of their section of the Congo. All was well within the land.

Hartly knew that these men he commanded had the minds of children and the courage of lions, and that now they were as eager for praise as little boys who had been exceptionally good.

"My children," he said in their own language. "With me you have traveled up and down the river. In the country of the Orchori and in that of the Akasava tribes, we have found peace—and that is good. It is because these people fear the might of the Houssas that they remain quiet. We must keep them so." He smiled. "That is all—company dismissed."

He turned away, heading toward his bungalow, as the native troops went to the barracks laughing and chattering in their native tongue.

Hartly suddenly stopped and looked about him with a puzzled frown. Where were the ten men he had left on guard at the compound while he had been away for two weeks with the rest of the regiment? Where was Perry Lorain, hard-faced, dark-haired member of British Intelligence who had remained at the barracks for the past few weeks as Hartly's guest?

"Can't say I like this at all," muttered Hartly softly.

He reached the bungalow and climbed the steps of the mosquito-netted porch. Then he stopped and stood staring at the figure sprawled out on the porch floor. It was Perry Lorain lying there, the point of a long native spear sticking into his heart.

For a long time Wade Hartly stood there, his eyes bitter, and the lean jaw hard. He had gone to school with Lorain. All through the years they had been friends—and now this. The commander of the Houssas sank into a chair and began to swear softly, for there were times when a man must curse instead of weep.

FINALLY he reached down and touched Lorain. The flesh was cold. The Intelligence man had been dead for some time. It seemed to Hartly that he had aged a thousand years in the brief time that had elapsed since he had dismissed the men and reached his quarters.

"Have to bury him, of course," he muttered. "Useless to try and ship the body back to his people—it's a long way from here to London."

He frowned as he heard a familiar sound coming from the distance. It was the throbbing of native drums. At first only one or two of them and then more and more of them booming up and down the river.

His native sergeant came running across the compound. There was a look of fear on the native's face and his eyes were rolling.

"What's wrong, Sergeant?" demanded Hartly, stepping to the door of the porch.

"We find ten men in bunks in barracks, Bwana," said the sergeant. "Ten men from regiment you left on guard when we go away. Now those men all dead!"

"Dead?" exclaimed Hartly. "And lying on their bunks—how were they killed?"

"Don't know, Bwana." The native soldier shook his head, and then his eyes grew wider—he saw Perry Lorain lying on the floor of the bungalow porch with the spear sticking in his body.

"White man dead?"

"Yes." Hartly looked intently at the sergeant. "You hear the drums, Chado?"

"Drums talk of big trouble," said Chado. "No longer is there peace in the land. The Orchori and the Akasava only pretend to be quiet when we go through their lands—now they take up spears—"

"And spears mean trouble!" interrupted Hartly quietly. "Come on, Chado—we'll go see about those dead men in the barracks."

A few moments later Lieutenant Hartly marched into the big log building with the sergeant close behind him. A wave of relief swept over the Houssas as they saw their lean, blue-eyed commander. Their commander would know just what to do, he would tell them how their comrades had been killed so mysteriously.

Quietly Hartly examined the dead men lying on the bunks, searching their bodies for wounds and at first not finding any. There was a certain rigidity about each corpse that indicated they might have been poisoned.

He turned suddenly, his job only half finished, when he heard a rumble of voices at the door of the barracks. A white man stood there, a tall man dressed in white linens with a white sun helmet on his head. Some of the Houssas were keeping him from entering.

"All right," commanded Hartly in the native tongue. "Let him in."

THE white man advanced as the soldiers stepped aside. Beneath the white linen jacket the lieutenant caught the bulge of a .38 in a shoulder holster. Cold gray eyes gazed into his own.

"Lieutenant Hartly?" asked the tall man. "I'm Danton, from Intelligence. Been sent down the river to look up Lorain. Bit of a job on hand they want us both to take over."

"You know Paul, then," said Hartly. He envied the new arrival for being able to remain so clean and cool after making the long trip downriver.

"Know Paul Lorain? Oh, yes, quite," Danton smiled. "We've been through more than one spot of trouble together. Splendid chap, Paul."

"Yes, he was," said Hartly slowly. A tiny red feather about the size of his little finger caught his eye and he reached down and picked it up. "Be rather a shock to you as it was to me."

"What will?" Danton looked puzzled. "Afraid I don't follow."

"Learning that Lorain is dead," said Hartly. "He was killed by a native spear." The lieutenant glanced down at the dead man he had been examining. "Hope you don't mind if I go on with this—must be done, you know."

He lifted the native, looked for an instant at the tiny wound in the back of the dead man's neck and then gently lowered the body back down on the bunk.

"Ten of them," said Danton, glancing around at the still figures lying on the bunks. "How were they killed?"

"Poison," said Lieutenant Hartly.

He turned to his men and issued orders. The native soldiers were to bury their comrades at once with military honors. When everything was ready, Hartly would take command of the troop.

"Come along, Danton," said Hartly. "I'll take you to my quarters. Lorain is still there, poor devil."

They walked across the parade grounds toward the bungalow. Beyond the compound, the jungle brooded in the hot sunlight. To the east they could see the Congo, and both men knew that it wound its way for fully three thousand miles through this African country—that here a million odd square miles of territory were ruled by the Commissioner and governed by a handful of ragged soldiers—Hartly and his Houssas.

"You've got a visitor," said Danton. "You know him?"

Wade Hartly saw there was a

heavy-set man seated on the porch of the bungalow. He held an express rifle across his knees and he was busy cleaning the gun with a silk handkerchief. He glanced at the two men and nodded.

"Good morning," he said. "I am Doctor Blunt." He looked at Hartly. "You are the officer in charge here?"

"Yes. Lieutenant Hartly of the Ninth Regiment of Houssas, in full command during the absence of Commissioner Slade." Hartly glanced at the porch floor. "What did you do with the body, Doctor?"

"I placed it inside on one of the bunks. The spear is standing there in the corner." Doctor Blunt opened the breach of the rifle and blew through the barrel rather feebly. "Poor Perry."

"Then you also knew him?" said Hartly quietly, his eyes on Danton, and his hand on the butt of the .45 automatic in the holster at his side. "Splendid chap, *Perry Lorain*."

"My error," exclaimed Danton. "I was sure his first name was Paul." He smiled. "Silly of me, wasn't it?"

"Very," said Hartly.

DOCTOR BLUNT snapped the breech of the gun closed. He held the weapon carelessly in his hands but the muzzle was aimed directly at Danton. For an instant Hartly looked at the doctor. There was a faint twinkle in the eyes of the heavy-set man.

"We all make mistakes," he said. "Like the one made by the native that killed Lorain. Perry was murdered by a spear that struck his chest with such force that it penetrated his heart." The doctor looked at Hartly. "Could you throw a four-foot spear with that much force here on this porch, Lieutenant. After all, the porch is not more than eight feet long."

"No, I don't believe I could," said Hartly. "If you'll pardon me, gentlemen, I'll wash up a bit."

He went back through the bungalow

to the kitchen. There was a basin standing on a table with no water in it, a cake of soap was lying beside it. Hartly picked up the soap and found it was still damp.

"Nervy beggar," he muttered as he drew some water from a pail and washed. "But why? That's what I can't understand."

He dried his face and hands on a towel and then returned to the porch. The distant drums were still pounding in the jungle. Hartly knew he would have to act quickly to prevent a native uprising.

"Something has certainly stirred up the Orchori," he said.

"And the Akasava, too," said Doctor Blunt.

"A white man has been telling them that all of the English are going to be driven out of this part of Africa," said Danton. "Lorain would have recognized that man if he saw him. Intelligence knows him by sight."

"They're coming!" snapped Hartly as he caught sight of shadowy figures creeping nearer to the compound, and realized that the heavy gate of the stockade was standing wide open. "I'm going to stop them."

His automatic was in his hand as he dashed down the steps of the porch and raced across the parade grounds. He did not look back to see if the two other white men were following him. He dashed through the open gate and his gun roared as a native uttered a weird yell and raised his spear for the fatal throw. The black man dropped before he could fling his weapon, a bullet in his heart.

Then more painted natives of the Orchori tribe loomed in front of Lieutenant Hartly, only to go down beneath a withering blast of gunfire. The automatic was swiftly emptied. A big native leaped at Hartly with a war club in his hand. The lieutenant flung the automatic full into the face of the black, stunning him. Then Hartly leaped forward. One hand

(Continued on page 112)

BLACK FURY

By TOM CURRY

Author of "The Buffalo Hunters," "Frontier Guns," etc.



Martin used his shot gun and its blast stung them to shrieking pain

Hate and Hidden Death Lurk in the Dark Jungle to Destroy Steve Martin's Important Mission!

MARTIN wondered how he looked to the Dutchman. He tried to hide the tension under which he labored. Van Voorts listened very politely. He was older than Martin and had come out to Dutch Guiana trained with his meticulous care that the Dutch bestow on their Colonial administrators.

"Dividends," Martin said gruffly. "I mean to make the mine pay. That's why the company sent me."

The Dutchman felt a surge of pity for the tall man. Under veiled lids he took in the American's rugged lines, the high cheekbones and the eager blue eyes.

He spoke very careful English, picking each word as though it meant life or death.

"I will tell you," he said at last, "that the task is more difficult than it appears."

"Why?" Martin wanted to know.

"The bauxite deposits are only a hundred miles upriver. I've engaged laborers and we start tomorrow. I'll dig out the stuff, ship it in lighters to the coast and transfer it to freighters. What else?"

Van Voorts did not directly reply. He looked out the screened window. Northward the Surinam pushed its amber flood through diked land into the Atlantic. To the south, beyond the rice and cane plantations, lay the jungle. And in the jungle—

Steve Martin was trying to get it straight. Why so many managers for Aluminum Incorporated had failed until—well, till they hired an engineering graduate whose sole experience had been as an underling in mines within the corporate limits of the United States.

"It is a hard life up there," Van Voorts remarked. "No one in Guiana cares for the job." He finished his beer slowly, methodically. "Would you walk up the street, please?"

Martin shrugged. The coffee house was comfortable and his legs were tired from running around, arranging this and that. But he rose and followed the stocky, white-clad figure into the blazing sunshine.

Paramaribo was clean as a whistle, a slice of Old Holland diked out on the South American coast. There was a solid brick church with ivy-grown walls that might have been picked up and brought intact from New Amsterdam; and well-built homes; a Bowling Club, a field where the big airliners landed. Sometimes the faces seen on the streets were a shock; there were strange mixtures, Javanese and Negro, Chinese and Negro.

IT WAS part of the color of Paramaribo, which in the light of day looked so quiet and sane, but which at night, with the wind blowing heavily from the jungle and the lanes filled with strange peoples, seemed an entirely different world.

The Dutchman led Martin to the

waterfront. He came to a halt before a saloon.

"You see that thin man with the white mustache, in the khaki topee?" Van Voorts asked. Martin nodded and his companion went on very softly, "If I were you I would talk to him. He knows the river better than any man in Guiana."

"What's his name?"

"Smith. If he refuses to help you, do not go to the mine. Now I will leave you."

Martin wondered why but he was very anxious to speak to Smith. The thin man looked very old. He sat at a table with an iced drink before him, turning the glass in bony brown fingers.

Martin went over to him.

"Mr. Smith?" he inquired.

The man's eyes turned up to fix his. He realized that Smith was not old. He was perhaps fifteen years beyond Martin but that was still young. His hair and mustache were flour white, eyebrows as well; the flesh of his emaciated face was dry and deeply lined.

Suddenly he smiled, or rather, he showed his teeth.

"Sit down," he invited. Martin thought his voice was slightly on the shrill side.

Martin pulled out a cane-seated chair and let his body sink into it. There was an athlete's grace to his movements. The clothes he wore were wrinkled, but they showed off the breadth of his shoulders and the latent power of young manhood.

"I'm on my way upriver," Martin told him. "I'm going to make the Aluminum Incorporated Mine pay dividends."

Smith still fingered his glass. He dropped his gaze from Martin's.

"So," he repeated softly, "you're going upriver. And you're going to make the mine pay dividends. That's fine."

There was nothing in the words themselves. It was the way Smith

said them that made antagonism flare in Martin.

"You see," Martin went on, "I'd like you to work for me. As a guide. What'll you take?"

"You want me to work for you—as a guide. What'll I take?" That habit of ironically parroting what Martin said was infuriating. It made him feel childish.

"Yes. What'll you take? I've hired laborers and we start tomorrow."

"Don't," Smith said.

Martin was still irritated from the thousands of details necessary to his start. The mumbo-jumbo of the older inhabitants grated, too. He stuck out his chin and looked tough.

"Will you work for me?" he demanded.

The glass Smith held suddenly cracked. The fluid in it spilled across the table and dripped on Martin's knees. He thrust back his chair. Smith was staring at his own fingers, at the blood trickling from them. The smile was still on his thin, weather-beaten face.

"Run along," Smith snarled. "Go home. Do you hear?"

FURY seized Martin. His face was red as a beet as he jumped up, towering over Smith. "You're a fool, Smith. You're as cracked as—as that glass!"

He realized that Smith was blazing with a rage transcending Martin's own. Why, he did not know and he did not care. He felt Smith's antagonism and that was all he thought of.

"Get out!" Smith ordered contemptuously. "Get out, greenhorn. Go away before I hurt you."

The idea of this scrawny, burnt-out rat hurting him was so ludicrous that Martin laughed. He took a step toward Smith. If Smith wanted to be tough—Martin's fists were tight. He could easily lift Smith out of his chair and fling him across the room.

Smith had a revolver strapped at his waist but that meant nothing to

Martin. He could easily disarm him, he thought. Smith didn't move.

Martin pulled himself back, surprised at his own violent reaction. He had just met Smith, yet here he was, at blows. Smith was too small, too weak to hit. Martin relaxed, and Smith's derisive grin widened.

"Afraid?" he sneered.

Martin turned away with a curse and then he saw the big blacks who had silently come up behind him. There were four of them and they wore short pants on under-developed legs, but their chests and arms were enormous. They watched him calmly, faces roughened by cicatrices.

They had been summoned by Smith. Probably, Martin decided, his bodyguards. He shrugged, stepped between two of the blacks and walked to the door. Smith's derisive laugh followed him out into the hot sunshine. Martin shook himself, strode back toward the small hotel where he was staying.

The first gray of dawn was up when Martin started. The big company launch, laden with provisions and equipment, towed flat barges behind it crowded with black laborers hired in Paramaribo. He had had to pay them a month in advance before they consented to go with him. They were a nondescript lot, wearing rags, riff-raff from the coast. They jabbered among themselves, their voices lost in the deep throb of the engine and the swirl of yellow water against the bows.

They passed plantations, with dikes to flood rice fields. Comfortable homes showed on the banks, but soon these grew farther apart.

Martin looked on the greatest of jungles through a haze of heat that throbbed with humid weight. Giant palms fringed the oily banks, patches of waxy water lilies in their shade; trees fought for life, cedar and crabwood and mahogany. Greenheart and mara that some day might sail the seas as ships. The bush was bound

in a monstrous mass by lianas and vines, presenting a solid, ominous wall. A thick, sweetish odor overhung all of it. In the perpetual shadows ranged the tapir, the ant-eater and sloth, snakes and lizards. Monkeys chattered through aerial ways, dotted with vari-colored birds and butterflies.

To the tall American this was exciting. The strain eased off. He was, at least, started on his way. He felt he had overcome the first obstacle, in the proving of himself.

"I am going to beat you," he muttered.

CLOUDS of insects swarmed with them as they slowly pushed up-river. A snouted cayman slid off a shining black log into the green scum of a backpool. Martin watched the bulbous eyes sticking from the water.

They tied up close to sunset. Martin stood on a lighter as camp was made.

He was not the first to see the long dugout which rounded the curve, coming upstream. A half-breed riverman, in charge of the launch, pointed that way. The motley crew of coast Negroes Martin had brought to work the mine ceased work to stare wide-eyed.

The dugout was thirty feet long, carved from a single tree trunk with the skill of the Bush-Negroes. Four blacks squatted in it, sending it upstream with easy, long strokes, keeping to the bank where there was less current. Under a piece of canvas that served as an awning sat a man in a topee.

Martin recognized the white mustache and brows in the thin yellow face. The bones of Smith's right hand were visible through the seered flesh as he gripped the side of the boat.

Martin's laborers jabbered excitedly. It seemed to him that they were upset at the sight. The huge-chested Bush-Negroes hardly deigned to glance at them though the man they

were paddling up the Surinam stared at the camp, finally resting his eyes on Martin.

"Boni—Djuka," Martin heard a black say.

Smith made a sign. The Boni ceased to paddle strongly so that the dugout remained stationary opposite the barges. Martin felt that old animosity surge up. Blood flushed his face as Smith, without greeting them, looked them over. The hundred coast blacks grew more alarmed at this scrutiny. As yet nothing had been said.

Then the big Bush-Negro in the dugout's stern raised his fist high. He opened it and let something drop into the river, and the current slowly carried it off, bobbing on the surface. It brought a gasp from the dry throats of Martin's men. They seemed stricken by fear. Martin sensed their terror in their uneasy, rolling eyes.

"What's that?" Martin demanded of the engineer.

The breed essayed a weak smile. "Sar, that men air Boni, a Djuka tribe. Live up here. They drop it in water."

"I saw that. What did they drop?"

"A toad, just a dried toad, sar."

Martin knew from hearsay about Voodoo, that it was universally practiced in Guiana. He understood that the dropping of the obia charm into the water was a warning. Panic was spreading among his men.

He snatched up a small-game rifle leaning against a packing case, threw a cartridge into the breech, raised it to his shoulder and pulled the trigger. The bullet struck the floating toad, knocked it a foot out of water, tore it so it filled and sank. It was an expert shot and its effect on his men was as he had hoped. They took fresh courage from his defiance.

THE man known as Smith looked at the spot where the toad had been. The purl of water, the screech of a brilliant red-and-green parrot smashed the primeval quiet. A bead

of sweat slowly trickled from Martin's hair roots and ran down his determined face. He wanted to turn the gun on Smith. The thin man's antagonism infuriated him, it was so senseless.

"Do you know anything about him," he growled to the half-breed engineer.

The engineer answered in a low voice.

"Sar, they call him 'Smitty' on the rivaire. He verree power-ful, live with Boni. The coast men do not love the bush-dwellers."

"That's plain—say, here comes some more!"

Half a dozen long dugouts, crammed with sleek-muscled Bush-Negroes, rounded the bend, paddles flashing swiftly. Spears and guns were visible. The laborers lost all heart at the warlike array and melted back into the confines of the shore. Martin stood where he was, and the engineer, wanting to run but ashamed to, waited nervously behind him.

In the largest, ornately carved dugout, under an awning, sat a gigantic black. On his great head he wore a top hat, while his barrel chest bulged out of an unbuttoned, once white shirt. Light struck the metal plaques clanking on his breast. Though he was not helping the others, he held a fine paddle in hand, the blade shining with gold sheathing, handle beautifully carved, embossed with more precious metal. It was a ceremonial blade.

In guttural tones he sang out to Smith, who shrugged, pointed at the lighter where Steve Martin stood, rifle in hand. The dugouts swung in, never losing their steady beat. The chief, ceremonial paddle high, plaques clinking, stepped up beside Martin and stared into his eyes.

The Bush-Negro chieftain saw a stalwart figure. He had shoulders that matched his own, a stern, lined face and steady blue eyes. Seeing the black in his ludicrous dress, Martin felt no inclination to laugh, for the

chief gave an impression of majesty.

Smitty's dugout turned to the bank, went in. A slim bushman, with a reddish tinge to his hair, scars criss-crossing his gargoyle face, forehead stained with white clay, leaped up beside the chief. He moved with the nervous agility of a monkey, uttering sharp cries, pushing at Martin with long hands. He attempted to shove the white man, tried to snatch away the rifle.

Ticklish as the situation was, Steve Martin could not permit such a play. Though he knew what the consequences might be, he raised his left hand and shoved the wiry Bush-Negro so hard that the man lost his footing and sat down, hard, nearly falling overboard. He was up in an instant, screeching with fury.

The big chieftain uttered a guttural command and the sharp-faced fellow suddenly froze in his tracks, turned and scrambled back to his place in a dugout. Then the chief spoke to Martin.

"*Odi, Bak's.*" The voice was deep, resonant, like the boom of a drum. His black eyes were concentrated on Martin.

A COLD, high-pitched voice addressed Martin in English. "Answer. This is Chief Zimbi, of the Boni tribe. That's his nephew Sedefo you're shoving around." It was Smith that spoke.

"What's he want?" demanded Martin. He was aware that all his men, even the engineer, had ducked out of sight when Sedefo had come at him.

"He greeted you," Smitty replied, "and wants to know what you're doing on his river."

Martin gave Smith a quick, hot glance. "Tell him I'm glad to meet him, that I'm here to run the bauxite mine. I hope he won't give me any trouble."

Smith addressed Chief Zimbi, who shook his head, pointed downstream, and waved upriver. "*Adiosi—waka*

koni." He strode to his dugout, and stepped in.

"What's that?" Martin inquired.

A grave expression was on Smith's face.

"Zimbi says he's in a hurry now," he snapped, "but if he finds you around when he comes back there'll be trouble. I'll tell you this, myself, as I did in Paramaribo: go home. These men hate people who dig up their land. They think you're courting disaster for them by letting the *yorkas*, ghosts, out of the earth."

Martin laughed. His nerves were tight and he was worn out. He faced them all alone.

"I have a concession from the Dutch Government to mine up above. No one's going to stop me."

Smith shrugged. "You won't get far. The Dutch have no real control over these tribes." The thin, white-haired man, without any word of farewell, turned and stepped back into his seat.

Chief Zimbi was already on his way upstream, and the others followed. Martin stood, staring after the armed blacks. Strangely he felt no animosity toward Zimbi. It was Smith on whom his anger was concentrated. His hands clenched the rifle and an impulse he could not check caused him to throw the muzzle up, fire into the trees. He clipped leaves from a branch overhanging the water, under which Smith's dugout was passing.

The delicate crack of the rifle rang across the river. Zimbi looked back over his shoulder. Smith kept his face rigidly turned upstream. Squatted under his awning, the man did not turn.

Martin swung, his face burning hot, and called the engineer, who came out gingerly.

"Supper," Martin snapped.

Thick velvet night fell. It dropped like a vast blanket of doom over the bush. Rustlings, squeals of victims, the howls of blood-hunters, sounded. The weird cries of howling monkeys

startled Martin to sweating alertness, his hands seeking his guns. In the distance drums sounded.

But dawn did come. And the next afternoon they reached the mine. Martin stepped out on the rotting pier built along the river bank. There was a clearing but the jungle was fast reclaiming it, and he saw his first job would be to cut back the encroaching growth with machetes.

THERE were two bungalows, one for his use, the other for an office and store. Barracks for the workers stood near the pit in which the bauxite, delicate pastel shades gleaming, lay close to the surface. The barracks were rough poles stuck upright in the earth, thatched with palm fronds. A simple matter to repair. Under Martin's directions, unloading commenced.

Tired as he was, enervated by the dank climate, he felt triumphant. The coast blacks worked well enough. Now and then, he noticed, one would pause, stare southward at the tall jungle wall, cock his ear and listen to the ever-thumping drums beyond.

That night he crawled gratefully into his hammock. The night was thick with sound, noises of animals and insects, and the confusing rumble of the drums. He slept quickly, despite the heat.

When he awoke the sun was high, sending its rays through his windows, striking his face. He knew it was late. He should have been roused earlier, and wondered why his servant had failed to obey his order of the night before. Dressing was a simple matter. Quickly, he pulled on his shorts, a thin shirt, slipped his long feet into sandals and, picking up his sunhat, stepped out on the rickety veranda.

The river sound was clear in his ears. He stared out across the clearing but saw no movement in or around the barracks. Something scolded from a tree but it was a monkey. Puzzled, Martin walked to the long shacks and

peered in. They were empty of workers and the scant packs were gone.

He went to the pier, but before he reached it he saw that the launch and barges were gone.

Then the war spear caught his eye. It was eight feet long, fastened to the bole of a huge greenheart tree. The sharp, flat point dripped with crimson gore—or it was red mud, daubed with berry juice. The spear pointed down river to the coast.

He stood, jaw sagging, looking up at it. Its significance was plain to the simplest mind—a warning that unless the direction indicated were quickly taken, death would strike. There might be more Voodoo meaning but it served its rough purpose.

"That's the end," he growled aloud.

The gory spear swam before his eyes. He knew this spelt total ruin. Without laborers he could not mine the bauxite. Those in New York who trusted him would not pay those all-important dividends. As for himself, his career was finished. He had failed.

Then he began to grow angry. Fury seized him, mounting higher and higher until his heart beat with hot blood, pounding in his ears. His fists were tight and he shook a little. It was a black, blind fury transcending fear, all thought of the fact that he stood alone in a Guianan jungle streams, inexperienced, in danger.

WITH a hoarse cry he grasped the spear, ripped it loose and hurled it into the river.

He had no boat in which to follow the deserters. The half-breed engineer, if he had wished to stay, would have been overcome, forced to do as the blacks wished. The current would take them silently downstream, till the running of the engine would no longer be audible at the camp.

It was Smith's sneering, thin face that thrust itself on Martin's heated brain. He cursed Smitty, shaking his fist upriver at the mocking wilderness.

A panorama of the events which had led him to this hopeless spot passed through his mind. He remembered his unsophisticated excitement in New York when they had offered him what seemed to be a high salary to go to Guiana. The trip down, the first impressions of a naive youth to a foreign land—and he had not even taken out a pound of bauxite. First crack out of the box he had been cheated, robbed, ruined!

Most men would have sat down, waited till a dugout happened along, returned to Paramaribo. But Steve Martin had a stubborn streak in him. Revenge drove him on.

After a while he went to his shack. His guns were there and he strapped on a Colt automatic pistol, shoved half a dozen extra clips of ammunition into the belt pockets and slung a double-barreled shotgun across his shoulder.

"I'll kill him!" he grated hotly.

That he was starting out to murder a man did not seem strange to him. It fitted this land and the fury that held him. He could hear the village drums, the drums of Zimbi. They were loud on the breeze, ominous. They did not sound far off. He started south, past the barracks and the mine, and broke into the bush.

His hands were free to wield the machete. After leaving the cleared spaces, he found difficulty in following the river. Wherever any light could get through, the foliage was dense as a stone wall, interspersed with thorns and tripping vines. Slashing madly at the bush, his face was bleeding, arms and hands cut. His breath came in short, panting gasps, and a cloud of mosquitoes hung over him, biting cruelly.

It was even harder than he had expected. He was forced to detour inland, far out of his way, following the line of least resistance. So he broke through the matted growth where the river let in the light and came to spots where walking was not so difficult,

(Continued on page 103)

Sweden's First Ski Patrol

By CHARLES S. STRONG

Explorer, Traveler and Historian

Author of "Finland's Fight for Freedom," "Congo Drums," etc.

White Clad Men on Snow Runners Are Nothing New Under the Scandinavian Sun—They Go Back to 1520!

TO MOST American readers, the newspaper mention of the importance of ski-patrols in the recent Finnish-Russian winter campaigns has been the first indication that this method of locomotion

might be an important factor in military activity. But to the people of the Scandinavian countries it is a thing of song and story reaching far back into the past. There in those Norselands, where children learn to ski almost as soon as they are able to walk, history and legend are rich with accounts of the exploits of men on skis.

Let us recall one of the most famous of these—the first instance in which skis played a crucial part in Scandinavian military tactics—the Dalecarlia Ski Patrol. The time was the sixteenth century, the years 1520-1521, and Gustavus Vasa was successfully arousing the Swedes against King Christian II of Denmark in the struggle for Swedish independence.

A Remarkable Leader

A remarkable leader—this Gustavus Eriksson Vasa—living in a remarkable era. He was born at Lindholmen, Sweden, on May 12, 1496, just about the time Christopher Columbus was getting down to the business of exploring the Caribbean and South America. He received the education of a nobleman in Uppsala, the Swedish center of learning, and along with his formal education there was instilled in him that nationalist spirit and hunger for Swed-



Gustavus Vasa, King of Sweden



From a painting by Johan Gustaf Sandborg
Gustavus Vasa speaks to the Dalecarlians at Mora, Christmas Eve., 1520

ish independence that characterized his fighting father, a Swedish Senator.

Upon leaving college in 1514, he joined the armed forces under the command of Sten Sture. His first three years in the army saw his participation in merely minor skirmishes, but in 1518, at the famous battle of Brankyrka culminating in the defeat of Christian II, his performance in battle led to his being selected by Sten Sture for particular distinction.

This distinction took a peculiar form. Christian II, defeated in battle, resorted to trickery. Under a flag of truce he came to talk with Sten Sture, suggesting that they both go to Stockholm to discuss terms. Sture was willing to end the bloody struggle, and was open to any reasonable offer. Christian, pointing out that he was surrendering his own person, suggested that

Sture give the Danes six of his leaders as hostages, as a guarantee of Christian's own safe return from the peace-meeting.

Sture agreed. Gustavus Vasa was one of the six men selected.

No sooner were the six Swedish leaders, including Gustavus, on board the Danish ship, than the captain, on orders from Christian II, weighed anchor and started for Denmark. The peace negotiations at Stockholm broke down. But, instead of being returned to Sweden, Gustavus and his five associates were imprisoned in the fortress of Kalo on the east coast of Jutland, although Christian had been allowed to return to Denmark.

Flight

Gustavus was not the sort to take captivity easily. It was difficult to escape from the fortress, but escape he did—true, after almost a year of

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incarceration. He made for Luebeck, one of the ancient Hanseatic Cities on the north coast of Germany. From here, by a bold dash through the Gulf of Bothnia, he managed to reach the fortress of Kalmar on Sweden's East Coast. This was one of the few strong points in Sweden that were still in the hands of Sten Sture's men. Sture himself was dead.

Christian had learned of Gustavus Vasa's escape. He threatened reprisal, and demanded the return of the prisoner. The Swedes refused. Gustavus, not wishing to jeopardize Kalmar's safety, headed northward toward Dalecarlia. Here he hoped to be able to rally the peasants and organize a new army that would fight against the Danish king and relieve the pressure on Kalmar.

Somehow the Danes got wind of the plan and sent a patrol of soldiers after him. Gustavus arrived at the village of Falun, capital of Dalecarlia, just a hop-skip and a jump ahead of the Danish army. He was concealed and cared for by the loyal peasants.

The Blood Bath

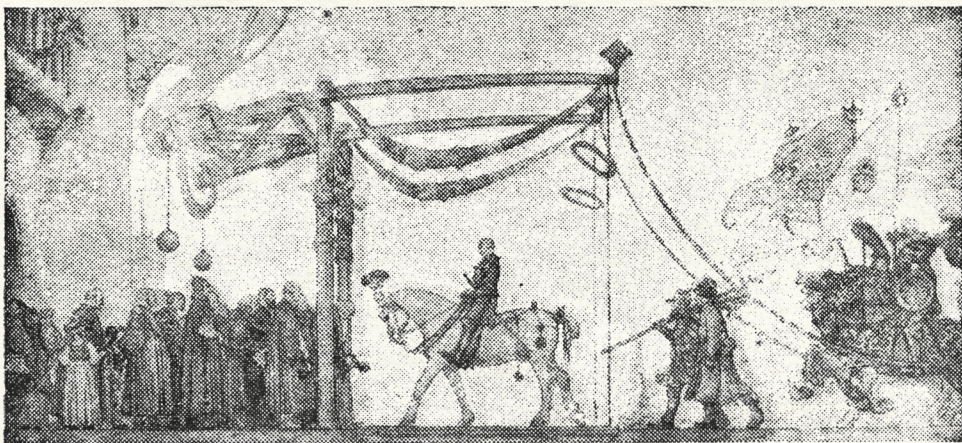
The Danes, certain that Gustavus was hiding in Falun, began a house to house search. The good lady who was sheltering the future king of

Sweden warned him. Her house was built on the edge of a ravine, and while the Danes were going through the first floor of the house, Gustavus and the woman made a rope of sheets, and he was lowered into the ravine from the second floor window. He was off and away, a fugitive. As the future king fled, his enemy was preparing to ascend the throne. In November, 1520, ninety of the leading nobles in Sweden were invited to Stockholm to attend the coronation of King Christian II as king of Sweden. Christian said that this would show doubters that the whole Swedish people were back of him. But what Christian said and what he did were two different things, as will soon be seen.

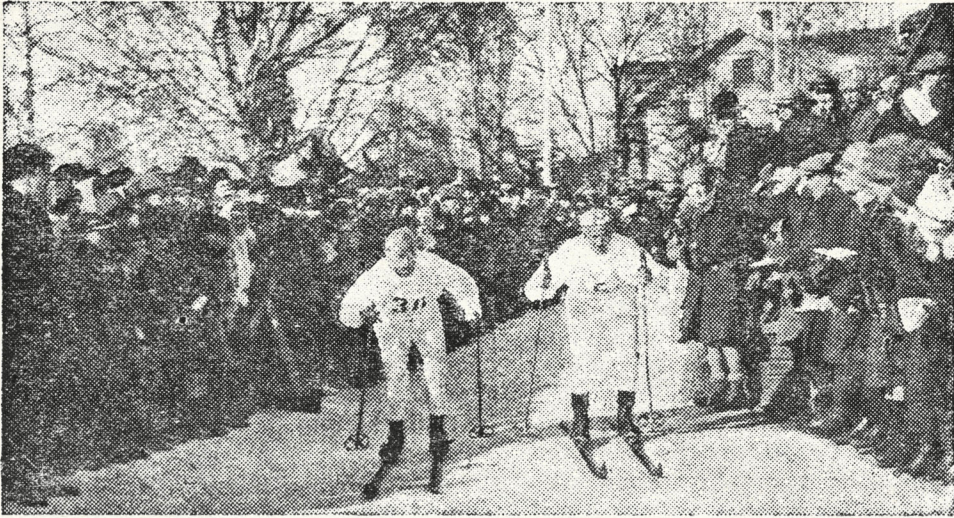
The Swedish leaders attended the coronation. Among the group was Erik Johansson, Gustavus' father; and his brother-in-law.

At the height of the ceremonies, the ninety Swedish noblemen were set upon by Danish soldiers, and beheaded in the brutal massacre that has become known in history as the Stockholm Blood Bath.

News of this horror came to the ears of Gustavus Vasa. He felt that it was the brand that would at last light the spiritual fires of the Dalecarlians and turn them against the



From a painting by Carl Larsson
Triumphal Entry of King Gustavus Vasa, Midsummer Eve., 1523. Stockholm, Sweden



P. Hedlund and Sven Utterstrom completing the Vasa Run commemorating the final incident in Gustavus Vasa's flight from the Danes, 1520

Danes. But the description of the Blood Bath was so horrible that none of the farmers would believe it. It was, to them, just an idle rumor that would be proved false in time.

Gustavus' speech at Rattvik in his attempt to rally the Dalesmen was heard by one of the Danish agents. Without the support of the Dalecarlians, Gustavus was again forced to flee. He went into the less frequented parts of the country, and worked for a month as a field worker. More than once he owed his life and safety to the generosity of the peasant women.

And gradually news filtered up from Stockholm to the Dalecarlians that confirmed Gustavus Vasa's story of the Blood Bath. They gathered at Mora on Christmas Eve, 1520, and proclaimed the absent Gustavus Vasa the head of their own and the other communes of Sweden.

The Great Race

They then went to his last hiding place up in the country to bring him back to Mora in triumph. But Gustavus Vasa was gone. He had given up hope of immediate aid from the Dalecarlians, and was fleeing into

Norway for sanctuary. The hills of Dalecarlia and the trails to the Norwegian border were covered with drifting snow. Other millions of flakes were drifting down through the trees, blanketing the countryside and blocking the woods trails.

The Dalecarlians had to do something quickly. Now that they had declared themselves in opposition to King Christian, his wrath would descend upon them, unless they could rally under Vasa and turn against the Danes.

Through the farmers in the district, the Dalecarlians learned that Gustavus Vasa was heading, alone, toward Salen, near the Norwegian border. Two of the fastest skiers in the patrol were ordered to overtake Gustavus Vasa and bring him back to head the army in the War of Liberation. They managed to catch up with Gustavus early on Christmas morning. Overjoyed, he accepted the leadership of the farmers.

He came back to Mora with the ski patrol, and in an inspired speech at the Mora church on Christmas day, announced that acceptance.

It was the spark that kindled the flame. As soon as the Dalecarlians

took the initiative under the leadership of Gustavus Vasa, the loyal Swedes in other parts of the country again began to rally against the Danes. After eight months of preparation, Gustavus Vasa led a large force against King Christian II at the battle of Vesteras and won. This engagement was followed by the successful siege of Uppsala, and on August 24, 1521, Gustavus was proclaimed Administrator of the Kingdom of Sweden—not yet king.

It took the greater part of the next two years to round up the remnants of the Danish troops scattered over the length and breadth of the peninsula. Thus, it was not until June, 1523, that the Swedish Diet felt sufficiently strong to declare the Union with Denmark dissolved. The Act of Dissolution was promulgated at Strengnas, and Gustavus Eriksson was proclaimed King Gustavus Vasa. (The surname, Vasa, comes from a black, vaselike insignia on the coat of arms of the family.)

Two weeks after the proclamation of Strengnas, Gustavus Vasa entered Stockholm in triumph.

A Perpetual Commemoration

How is Gustavus Vasa, the George Washington of Sweden, remembered today? With a statue or statues? There are many memorials in granite and bronze in Sweden—there is the Carl Milles statue in the Nordisk Museet in Stockholm, and there is the Anders Zorn figure in Mora. But the Swedish people have another

memorial to Gustavus Eriksson Vasa.

Remember how Gustavus, fleeing toward Norway and believing all was lost, was overtaken by the Dalecarlian Ski Patrol and brought back to lead the Swedish people in their fight for independence? Well, every year there is held in Sweden an event that is known as the Vasaloppet, or Vasa ski race. It is characteristic of the outdoor Swedes to express themselves in the healthful and exciting ski sport, and at the same time commemorate that famous event in their history.

The Spirit of the Dalecarlians

The distance from Mora to Salun—the Vasa Run over which those Dalecarlian skiers raced to overtake Gustavus—is about fifty-seven miles. The record for the trip is a little more than three and one half hours.

There is one difference between the race those Dalecarlians ran to overtake Gustavus and the race that is run today to commemorate that stirring event. The race today is run in the opposite direction, since the original route was almost entirely uphill, and no matter how good a ski racer is, he would prefer to come downhill at least part of the time.

Skiers of the past and skiers of the present! We may feel sure that with the spirit of the Dalecarlians behind them, Swedish volunteers have been a welcome addition to the ski patrols fighting for Finland.

Photos from American-Swedish News Exchange and Swedish State Railways.



COMING IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

GENGHIS KHAN, THE SCOURGE OF ASIA

*Another Thrilling Adventure from the
Pages of History*

By CHARLES S. STRONG

BLACK FURY

(Continued from page 97)

though he sank to his ankles in muck.

At noon the sun was directly overhead, heating the roofed jungle to the temperature of a steambath. It was seldom that a ray could pass through the thick-massed leaves above, that dripped moisture on rotting leaves and dead wood forming the floor.

He paused to bathe his burning face in a small tributary stream. Over the thumping of his heart and the quinine-ring in his ears, he heard the drums, closer, almost at hand.

Yet so deceptive was their sound that the sun was well down before he staggered through, looking out on a rough field planted with yams and wild grain. To his left, on the river, stood the beehive roofs of the Bush-Negro village. A primitive scene, with boats drawn up on the bank, and a group of howling, painted blacks dancing around a smoky fire.

Panting for breath and fervently wishing to look the place over and locate Smith before he was discovered, Martin crouched at the edge of the bush, watching through swollen eyes. Howls, the smash of tenor and bass drums, rang on the humid air.

A strange, low sound came to him from the right. He raised his gun quickly, as it again startled him. Looking over, he saw a large, sandy hummock in the field; and, as he stared, something stirred.

He crept quietly around until he was closer. Now he found it was a man staked out on the giant anthill. Tiny black specks crawled over his face, over the naked skin of his body, hardly visible, so thick were the stinging insects.

Martin gasped, took a step toward the writhing figure on the hummock. Strong lianas bound the victim in place. He was on his back, his head thrown back.

(Continued on page 104)

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(Continued from page 103)

He was upon the man before he recognized him. It was Smith, whom he had come to kill! But the stunned fury which had animated Steve Martin burned away instantly at this sight. Horror came in its stead. Had he met Smitty, man to man, that morning, he would have shot him.

He could leave Smith there. It would not be long until the ants revenged Martin. But he leaped in, slashed at the lianas with his machete. The poles that they were fastened to shook with the power of his attack and the strands parted. He freed Smith, who rolled off the anthill, lay prone in the dirt.

STEVE MARTIN dropped the machete, grabbed Smith's shoulders and pulled him away from the swarming ants. He began to brush the insects off. Smith still breathed, in short, swift sobs. His body and face was swollen, red and raw with blood. He was terribly bitten, and twitched as Martin poured water from his canteen into his open mouth.

A shrill scream, spitting out water, issued from the thin man's lips. He threw out both arms spasmodically, knocked the canteen from Martin's shaking grip. Somehow, Smith managed to struggle to his feet. He stood rocking crazily, turning as though blinded.

A loud shriek came from the village, and the mob of armed blacks started at them on the run. Martin drew his Colt and sent a couple of bullets over them. As they still rushed on he fired wildly into the mass, and a man fell, rolling head over heels. The rest paused, hurled spears at him, a wild volley that whirled into the bush.

Smith pulled himself up. One eye was partially open and though in agony, he had regained his senses.

"Give me a hand—this way," he gasped. He drew Martin into the bush.

"Hold 'em off—kill as many as you can," Smith panted.

They were coming on, to kill. Martin used the shotgun and its blast stung them to shrieking pain, but there were forty of them rushing. Martin began to retreat along the line of the field, jumping from tree to tree, firing now and then when he had a chance. He realized that Smitty was gone and melted into the bush.

"Smitty!" he called hoarsely.

Spears clipped leaves close to Martin as he dodged this way and that, looking back to shoot at the infuriated Bush-Negroes. In the midst of them, haranguing them on, he recognized Sedefo, the chief's nephew.

Martin stumbled, nearly fell, banging his shoulder against a tree. He was gasping for wind, worn out from his long run. A shrill whoop of defiance rang out. The pursuers slowed, stopped and turned. Martin, looking across the clearing, saw Smitty's naked figure on the other side, dancing up and down, cursing them.

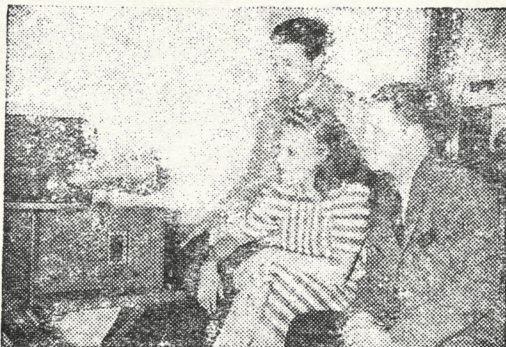
THEY started for him, led by Sedefo, whose reddish hair gleamed in the sunlight. The sight of Smith made them forget Martin.

The blacks were halfway across the clearing when Smith suddenly jumped back to the edge of the bush and stooped. Then he straightened, arm flashing out. Martin did not know what had happened until afterward. He was dimly aware of an ear-splitting explosion that knocked him flat. His next sensation was that it was raining. A great cloud of smoke covered the world, cutting off his view. Dirt and bits of rock pattered down.

The hot breeze was clearing away the smoke as Martin seized his shotgun and crawled out of the bush. Beyond, in the haze, Smith still jumped up and down, yelling with delight. A few shattered wrecks tried to creep from the mess where the band of blacks had been.

(Continued on page 106)

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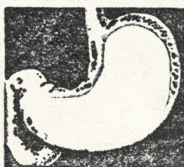
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Fox Building, Philadelphia, Pa.

(Continued from page 105)

Martin staggered toward his enemy.

"I knew I'd fix 'em once I got my hands on that dynamite!" Smith shouted. "Had it hidden out here, just in case." He lost his footing, his knees caving in. Then he whirled and collapsed.

Steve Martin managed to lift the limp form and carried Smith to the huts. The village seemed entirely deserted. He laid Smith down in one of the shacks, and began to hunt for water and food. After a time he realized he was watched. He felt eyes scrutinizing him from the bush. An old man finally came out, pointed at Smith.

"Dede?" he asked.

"Dead—? No."

The old fellow turned, signaled. Black women and children, cripples, more oldsters, came out of the jungle. They stared at Martin, and some of the women began to tend to Smitty.

Martin was exhausted. He lay down and slept.

On the following day Chief Zimbi, with a hundred fighting men, rode in from upriver. He saluted Martin, and went into the hut where Smitty lay. He had evidently been informed by waiting messengers of what had transpired during his absence.

Soon Steve Martin heard Smith calling him. He entered the hut. The chief and the prostrate man looked at him.

"Well—what about it?" demanded Martin. "What's Zimbi going to do to us for killing his nephew?"

"Give us medals," replied Smith. "Don't you understand, Martin? Se-defo was a bad actor. He wasn't considered good enough to go with the war party upriver, and it made him

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furious. Sedefo talked those left behind into revolt. They took over the village and planned to kill Zimbi when he returned."

"And you?" Martin asked. "Weren't you good enough to go?"

"I didn't go—for a reason," Smith answered.

A sun ray fell on the scarred, grim face. In that face Martin read pride, a terrible pride that drove the man Smith.

He sensed the effort it was for Smitty to speak.

"My reason," Smith admitted, "was to ruin you. While I had my mind on that, Sedefo led his revolt. I was busy making sure you couldn't succeed at the mine."

"But why—why?" cried Martin.

SMITH pulled himself to a sitting position.

"Once," he said, "I was you, Martin. Young, without experience, yet with a desire to win out as an engineer. I opened up your mine. Labor trouble and the difficulties here, made me fail and those in New York fired me. That was years ago. Now you see me, Zimbi's prime minister, an outcast from my race."

Understanding flooded Steve Martin. "Then it was you, all the time, preventing us from getting the bauxite. You scared away the laborers, you planted that spear. Zimbi doesn't care if we take the ore out!"

Smitty nodded. "I lied to you, about what Zimbi said, Martin, down below. He simply told you to go ahead, that he was in a hurry, as there was some trouble with another tribe upriver. He likes you, admires you and feels sorry for you."

Hearing his name, the majestic Bush-Negro spoke.

"He says," Smith explained, "he'll furnish you with labor, better men than you could get on the coast, because you saved the village. You'll get your bauxite—and dividends!"



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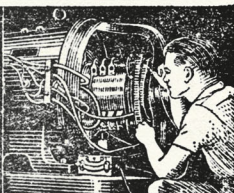
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THE GLOBE TROTTER

(Continued from page 9)

is no object to this venture, except to satisfy a craving for adventure, itching feet, and to get away from a conventionalized way of living. All we will be is a tramp yacht, tramping the seas, following dreams, worshipping at the feet of the Goddess of Luck and a winterless sun.

The *Heloise* is a 50 foot motor vessel, six years old. She was formerly a deep sea fishing boat. She is comfortable and has all modern conveniences. I don't have bunks enough for a full complement of the crew so it will be necessary for some to sleep in hammocks.

I expect many responses to this letter. You fellow globe trotters who read this and feel the urge to apply, can make things easier for me and your own chances by giving me all the necessary information about yourself in your first letter, and if possible send a small photo or snap of yourself. I will endeavor to answer all letters.

If you are not sincere, or have anyone dependent on you, please do not apply. In the past I've been ready to accept an applicant, only at the last moment to receive a request from his parents or some one, not to accept him, as he either wasn't of age or they were dependent on him. I've also had letters from people who dreamed they would like to go, only they would back out at the last moment.

So there you are, fellow globe trotters, and thank you, Globe Trotter. I've tried to repay your past services by spreading the name, THRILLING ADVENTURES, wherever I go. Once, a newspaper wrote up one of our cruises. The reporter wanted to know how the crew got together. I explained your magazine to him. When the story was printed, they didn't print the name of your magazine, but complimented it by saying: "The crew met and got together through the column of a magazine that caters to adventurers."

Sincerely,

Capt. Belton R. Rey, Jr.
Yacht "Heloise" Marks Marine Railway,
Hanover & Cromwell Sts., Baltimore, Md.

Sounds interesting, doesn't it, globe trotters? I'm sure that Captain Rey will hear from a lot of you, and I think he has been wise to point out the possibilities of hardship as well as romance, as a conscientious captain should.

Our next correspondent is evidently a staunch believer in getting around.

Dear Globe Trotter:

I read your February issue with interest, because it seems to me to be packed with authentic stuff—especially the stories of South America where my chief interest lies. I'm eighteen, grad of high school, and am going to see some more of the Western World before college.

I have seen most of the west coast of South America. In a month or so I'm going to do the same for the east coast.

In closing, I want to say to your younger readers, of my own age—if you are healthy, stronger than the average, and can take it, then get going, because you can have a lot of fun adventuring over the world. But get half an education first.

Yours for more adventure,

Jim Richards.

8439 W. 4th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Good advice, that—about getting an education first. Thanks for your letter, Jim.

Here's a note from a Virginian who's interested in the West.

Dear Globe Trotter:

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 of me by other members regarding places with which I am familiar.

My hobbies are collecting things from foreign countries such as pictures, especially those of

plant and animal life, things of historical importance, etc. Am also very interested in the western U. S., as I was born there and lived there until 1938.

Yours truly,
Charles W. Ross, Jr.
R. F. D. No. 4, Richmond, Va.

From all the way across the sea an applicant for membership writes:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am enclosing an entrance coupon to join the Globe Trotters, and would greatly appreciate being put in touch with an American boy or girl of my own age.

I have visited both Paris and Norway, as well as most parts of England and Wales, and will endeavor to answer all questions about those places.

I live in an industrial city, but I spend all my holidays on a farm. Lastly I might state that I go to a new type of school—it is rather like your technical colleges in America, except that it does not specialize in any particular trade.

Yours sincerely,
A. Peter Vernon.
78 Woodgate, Leicester, England.

And from Pennsylvania comes a request for information:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I have read the latest issue of THRILLING ADVENTURES and thought the stories were swell. This is the first time I've written to you, and there's a lot of things I'd like to get off my mind.

First, I'd like to know if your writers have any stories on the finding of Aztec treasures, South Sea Islands, and the French Foreign Legion. Second, I'd like to have a few pen pals who are fliers. Well, so much for that. Hoping to hear from some pen pals, I remain,

Yours truly,

Ellsworth Simpson, Jr.
926 South Avenue, Wilkinsburg, Pa.

(Continued on page 110)

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(Continued from page 109)

Well, Ellsworth, I'm sure that if you continue to be a steady reader of **THRILLING ADVENTURES** you'll find in it a variety of stories that will fill your every desire. Diversity of locale and subject matter is one of the salient features of **THRILLING ADVENTURES** Magazine.

The reader whose note follows is a very obliging person:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I wish to become a member of the Globe Trotters Club. Have just returned from a trip which included the West Indies, Venezuela, British and Dutch Guiana, Madeira, England, Scotland and France.

If I can furnish any info on the above places, will be glad to do so.

Yours for many more issues,

Frank E. Hart.

8 Jones Street, New York City.

Your offer is appreciated, Frank Hart. No doubt you'll hear from your pen pals.

Here is a very gratifying letter from a first-time reader:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Have read your magazine, **THRILLING ADVENTURES**, for the first time, and I think it is a great magazine.

As for traveling, I have had the old travel bug as long as I can remember—32 of the United States, about 100 miles of Mexico, and about 1,500 (round trips) into Canada at several places. All by automobile.

Travel by boat—mostly lake freighters on the five Great Lakes. Next spring or early summer I leave again for California by way of Yosemite National Park and the Canadian Rockies, and down to Santa Monica, where I plan to stay as a permanent home address for the future. I hope later trips will be much farther off.

I would like to hear from other Globe Trotters all over, particularly along the new route and from out in the west.

Yours truly,

Walter M. Williams, Jr.

12525 Lake Avenue, Lakewood, Ohio.

The last letter we have room for, but by

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

City State.....

..... Age

My hobbies are.....

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Foreign readers are required to send International Reply 5-40 Coupon or American stamps.

no means the least interesting, comes from a member of a great organization.

Dear Globe Trotter:

I would like very much to join your Globe Trotters' Club.

I am a boy scout and have gone away with my uncle on his boat for three summer vacations. He, by the way, has a membership card No. 877, issued by Mr. J. S. Williams.

I am interested in hiking and history. Am going to take up amateur photography now. I am glad you are having the new series of History Stories. I think your magazine is swell. My uncle gets it all the time. He saves it for me, and I watch out that he does. Good luck to your club. Should any boy scouts write to me, I will answer right away.

Sincerely,

Louis Coley, Jr.

421 Mechanic Street, Perth Amboy, N. J.

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All are welcome to join the **GLOBE TROTTERS' CLUB**. It is a world-wide organization with members hailing from every corner of the globe. The only requirement for admission is your sincere interest in adventure.

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The Next Issue

I've already given you the big news about the June issue of **THRILLING ADVENTURES**—a new Tarzan novel by Edgar Rice Burroughs—**TARZAN AND THE JUNGLE MURDERS!** I know that you will look forward to its publication as we looked forward to Mr. Burroughs' writing it for us. Don't miss T-(hrilling) A-(dventures) R-Z-A-N for June!

To add to the banquet, there will be a stirring western action novelet by M. Howard Lane—**OWLHOOTER'S LAST STAND**. Also short stories and departments which measure up to the high standards set for **THRILLING ADVENTURES** by its readers.

Go into the blue with Tarzan in the coming **THRILLING ADVENTURES!**

See you a month from now. So long.

—THE GLOBE TROTTER.

P.S. Readers who desire information on railroad, steamship or bus schedules and rates anywhere in the world may obtain same by writing to **THRILLING ADVENTURES TRAVEL BUREAU**, 22 West 48th Street, New York, N. Y.

N. B. To clear up any possible misunderstanding, The Globe Trotter Department has now discontinued its offer of cash awards for letters of especial interest printed in the Globe Trotter column.

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DRUMS OF THE ORCHORI

(Continued from page 90)

grabbed the native by the throat, while the savage caught Hartly by the left arm with his own right.

The native raised his war club to strike. From Hartly's right a rifle cracked and the native dropped. A bugle blew the signal for charge. The Houssas led by the sergeant, Chado, were coming on the run, firing as they advanced.

As they felt the hail of lead streaming about them, the attacking Orchori and Akasava began to beat a hasty retreat. But the Houssas were still firing steadily. The loss among the natives would be so heavy that it would drive any further thought of uprising out of their minds. Wade Hartly was sure of that.

He let his men drive the natives away and then ordered the Houssas back into the compound. They closed the gate and climbed up on top of the stockade, still sniping at the retreating natives.

HARTLY went back to where Doctor Blunt and Danton were standing on the steps of the bungalow. Danton was holding the doctor's rifle in his hand and he was covering the stocky man.

"This is the man we want," said Danton. "He's the one who's been stirring up trouble among the natives."

"That's a lie!" snarled the doctor. "He's the one."

"Yes, I know." Hartly calmly placed a fresh clip of cartridges in his automatic. "After all, you are guilty, Danton." His gun covered the tall man. "Would you mind taking your rifle and his automatic away from him, Doctor."

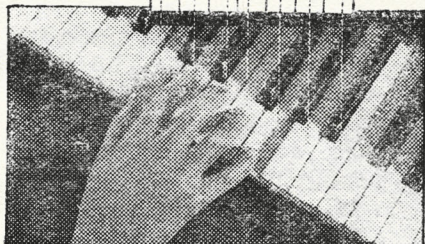
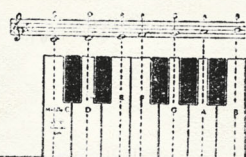
"Certainly." Doctor Blunt snatched the rifle away from Danton. He found the automatic in the shoulder holster and drew it out. "But how did you know, Lieutenant?"



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Actual color photographs. Before the harvest—inspection of a crop of better-than-ever tobacco grown at Willow Springs, N. C., by U. S. Govt. methods. (Below) H. H. Scott looks over some fine leaf after it's been cured.



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