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By LT. SCOTT MORGAN

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SHADOW THRONE

A Complete Action Novel

By E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Missing Page

Why Trained Accountants Command

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

High Salaries

GET this straight.

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

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

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

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

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

He knows the intricacies of government taxation.

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

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

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

Some Examples

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

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

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

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

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

And What It Means to You

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

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

Preliminary knowledge of bookkeeping is unnecessary. You will be given whatever training, instruction or review on the subject of bookkeeping

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

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

Check, sign and mail the coupon NOW.

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Name.....

Present Position.....

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*Names available on request.

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THRILLING ADVENTURES

Vol. XXXV, No. 2

OCTOBER, 1940

Price 10c



SHADOW THRONE

A Complete Novel of Mexico

By E. HOFFMANN PRICE

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I OWE MY JOB TO THE N.R.I. COURSE. I AM FOREMAN IN A RADIO FACTORY, MAKE MORE MONEY, AND HAVE TWO N.R.I. MEN HELPING ME.

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MY LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEM PAYS ME ABOUT \$35 A WEEK BESIDES MY RADIO WORK. IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR YOUR COURSE I WOULD STILL BE MAKING COMMON WAGES.

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TOPTON, PA.



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If you can't see a future in your present job, feel you'll never make much more money, if you're in a seasonal field, subject to lay offs, IT'S TIME NOW to investigate Radio. Trained Radio Technicians make good money, and you don't have to give up your present job or leave home to learn Radio. I train you at home nights in your spare time.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make \$30, \$40, \$50 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers, dealers, employ installers and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make \$30, \$40, \$50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make \$5 to \$10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, Police, Aviation, Commercial Radio, Loudspeaker Systems, Electronic Devices are other fields offering opportunities for which N. R. I. gives the required knowledge of Radio. Television promises to open many good jobs soon.

Many Make \$5 to \$10 a Week Extra In Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets

which start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your Course I send plans and directions which have helped many make \$5 to \$10 a week in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 method of training makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

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Act Today! Mail the coupon for my 64-page book, "Rich Rewards

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in Radio." It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my course in Radio and Television; shows more than 100 letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope or paste on a penny postcard—NOW!

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Age.....

Name

Address

City State

FOR MEN OVER 40

An Opportunity Offered You By a Man Who Built a Nationwide Business After the Age of 55

Starting from scratch, but with a business device that thousands of companies have since installed, the writer of this advertisement has proved that the seasoned, mature man has nothing to fear from life if he works in the right field. So many of our most successful men are well beyond forty, that we are addressing this advertisement to more such men, feeling that they will be a definitely greater asset to us.

Not A "Get-Rich-Quick" Scheme

Please understand. The only way you can make money with this proposition is by showing results. But take a look at the following: A. O. Davis of New York who made \$110.77 clear in one day (SEVEN were REPEAT orders); E. L. Taylor, Virginia, \$58.35 in a single day; L. F. Strong, Kansas, \$163.38 profit in two days. If a few others interest you, read about these: C. W. Ferrell, who passed 1,000 sale mark, each paying from \$5 to \$60 net profit per sale; I. J. Keuper, Delaware, over \$1,000 clear his first month, and so forth, more than we can mention here.

Not "A Morning Glory"

As a sound business man, you ask, "Is this a flash in the pan that will be here today, gone tomorrow?" The answer is that we have now been a national factor for over ten years, yet have barely scratched the surface because you can't get around to see hundreds of thousands of prospects even in ten years. We have men who have been with us for years, still with us today, busy, making real money, plenty of it, and happy to be with us.

A Proved, Valuable Business Device

First, and briefly (not much space left now)—We sell an invention that does for anywhere from less than 2% to 10% of the former cost a job that must be done in probably 99% of the offices in the country. 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. It has been put into use by schools, hospitals, newspapers, etc., as well as thousands of large and small businesses in 135 lines. Practically every line is represented by these field reports we furnish you, which hardly any business man can fail to understand. And you make a minimum of 67 cents on every dollar's business — on repeat orders as well as first orders — and as high as \$1.167 on each \$1,500 business done.

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 handicap of trying to get the money before the customer has really convinced himself 100%. You simply tell what you offer, showing proof of success in 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!



No Money Need Be Risked

In trying this business out. You can measure the possibilities and not be out a dollar. If you are looking for a business that is not overcrowded — 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, get in touch with us at once for the rights in your territory — don't delay — because the chances are that if you do wait, someone else will have written 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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Step Up Where You Belong

What Is Your Present Level of Preparation?

The **FIRST** proof of personal ability is your capacity to see the *need* for training and to **GET IT**. The man or woman who doesn't *realize* that education is **VITAL** to success—or who says he or she "doesn't have time," "hasn't the money" or that study is "too hard"—simply lacks one of the *fundamentals* of the **ABILITY** to make good. *American School (Chicago) graduates* by the thousands have **PROVED** that anyone who **WANTS** an essential education **CAN HAVE IT**. *You can, too!*

You Are Only **HALF** a Man Until Training Rounds Out Your Ability and Experience

To make your natural **ABILITY** pay you *profits*, and to get jobs that give you the *kind* of **EXPERIENCE** that promotes constant progress, you practically **MUST** back that *ability* with **TRAINING** combine *experience* with **EDUCATION**. Using only a **PART** of your **SPARE** time, you can train **AT HOME** for the good position you want. If it is **WORTH** having, it **DEMANDS** training and is **WORTH** your effort!

Write for Facts No Obligation

Make up your mind to enjoy the **GOOD** things in life. Have **FAITH** in yourself, in your country and in your future. *Expect Success* and get ready for it. Write for **FREE** Bulletin **TODAY**. (See coupon.)



Gets Only the "Leavings"

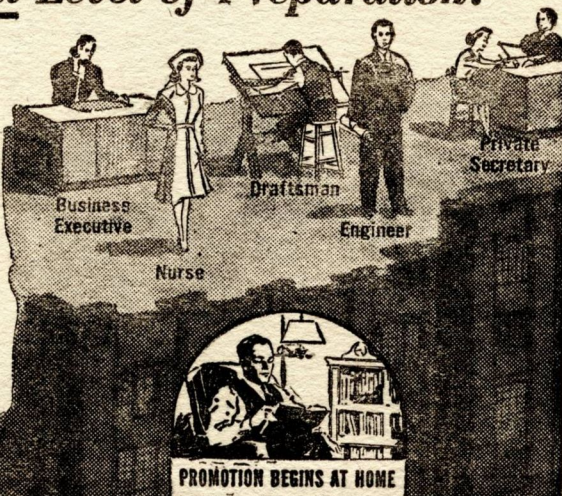
With only grade school education, you are **VIRTUALLY CONDEMNED** to the low pay, menial jobs that others **DON'T WANT**... because **THEY** are trained for better things. Home study can fit **YOU** too for more desirable, better paid positions.



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U. S. Bureau of Education figures prove that the average high school graduate earns \$16 a week more than grade school graduates.

You can complete our simplified High School Course in **SPARE** time at home, as **FAST** as time and ability permit. **MANY FINISH IN 2 YEARS**. Equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college, pre-professional examinations, business, industry, Standard texts. Diploma. Or if you've had some high school, **FINISH** now. Credit for subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. Low tuition, easy terms. 1897—endorsed by educators.



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More than 150 noted educators, engineers and executives helped prepare American School courses. An **Advisory Board** of 20 outstanding authorities—each an active leader in his field—is consulted when our work is prepared or changed. A Staff of competent instructors—homestudy *specialists*—works closely with the individual student. Why continue in an underpaid, overworked job—subject to periodic layoffs? *Step up where you belong*, into well-paid, pleasant work where you command the admiration and respect of others. For full details, mail coupon **RIGHT NOW!**

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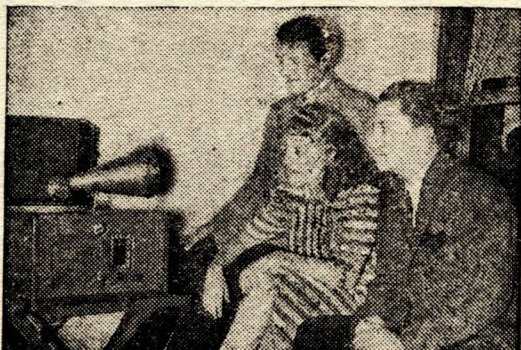


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and other famous orchestra
leaders use
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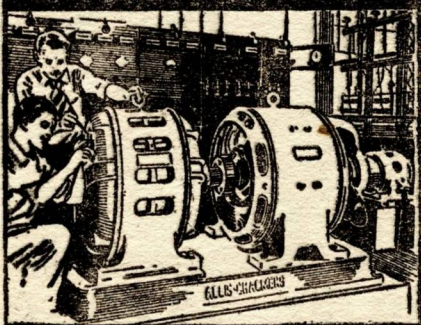
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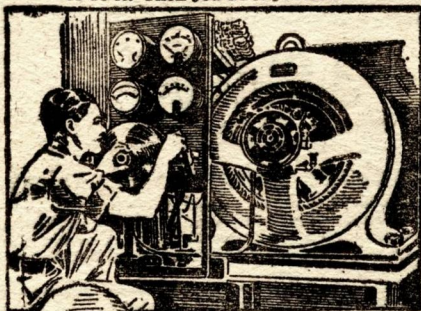
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Not a Correspondence Course

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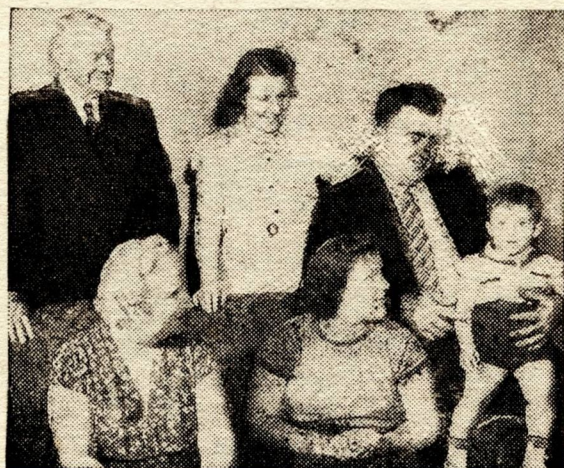
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\$2,000.00

Maximum Indemnity for
Auto Accidental Death

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Maximum Triple Indemnity
for Travel Death

LIBERAL BENEFITS SHOWN IN TABLE BELOW

The amount of insurance payable upon the death of any of the persons insured hereunder shall be the amount set out in the following table for the attained age nearest birthday at death of such person divided by the number of persons insured hereunder immediately preceding such death.

**Table of amount of insurance purchased by a
monthly payment of one dollar.**

Attained Age at Death	Natural or Ordinary Accidental Death Amount	Auto Accidental Death Amount	Travel Accidental Death Amount
1-40	\$1000.00	\$2000.00	\$3000.00
41-50	750.00	1500.00	2250.00
51-55	500.00	1000.00	1500.00
57-62	300.00	600.00	900.00
63-68	200.00	400.00	600.00
69-75	100.00	200.00	300.00

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Bankers Insurance Bldg., Jefferson Sta., Desk 35, Chicago, Ill.

Please send details and tell me how to get the Family Group Policy for free inspection.

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Required. In a Short Time You
Start Playing Real Tunes!
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SHADOW



For the Sake of the Down-Trodden—and a Red-Haired Girl—Simon Bolivar Bailey, Ex-Union Army Captain, "Intervenes" to Help Juarez Drive an Emperor Out of Power!

CHAPTER I

The "Patriots"

SIMON BOLIVAR BAILEY liked New Orleans, though the town disliked him and all other "damn Yankees."

The river breeze brought the tang of chicory-flavored coffee from the French market. Somewhere, closer at hand, a Negro cook was preparing a savory pot of gumbo over a charcoal

fire. Bailey's stern mouth relaxed a little, and his deep set eyes brightened.

"Oysters, and ham, and shrimp," he told himself. "Crab and chicken and okra."

But only a native cook could enumerate the spices that made a former Union officer forget his duty for a moment.

Bailey no longer wore the blue uniform of the Union Army, but his

THRONE

By
E. HOFFMANN
PRICE

*Author of "Scourge of Allah,"
"Swedish Indemnity," etc.*



Boiley drilled the
rider between the
eyes

erect carriage made him conspicuous, despite his deliberate pace. He might as well have worn the gold-mounted saber he had won for gallantry in action, during the capture of Atlanta. And behind all the Creole courtesy of the past few days there was resent-

ment at the presence of a Yankee. The treasure chest for Banito Juárez was in constant danger, for the South sympathized with the emperor whom Napoleon III had established in Mexico.

A victoria drawn by two sleek

horses came toward Bailey. A Negro in livery held the reins, and another sat beside him on the box. Bailey looked up at the girl who sat in back, slim and white and shapely against the cushions. There was a red glint in her high-piled hair. He could scarcely distinguish her features, but the proud tilt of her chin, and the set of her shoulders made him continue his scrutiny.

The girl started, leaned forward. She had the advantage of the street light. In a flash, she noted the black mustaches and close-cropped, pointed beard, the jutting nose, tanned face, the lean cheeks of the Yankee officer. Just a word to the coachman, and the impatient horses halted and pawed the cobblestones.

"Captain Bailey!" she called. "You must be Captain Bailey."

He lifted his hat, took a long stride forward.

"Miss Kendall—you, of all people, in New Orleans!"

She extended a slim, gloved hand.

"Simon, how delightful! We've often spoken of you since you left Atlanta. Why didn't you write?"

BAILEY shrugged, and his eyes clouded a little. This business of driving Emperor Maximilian out of Mexico had involved secret meetings with the Secretary of State, and once, even, a personal conference with President Johnson. But these were things Bailey could not tell the girl from Atlanta.

"I wasn't sure how a Yankee's letters would be received, Jane," he said.

She smiled, patted his arm.

"My parents appreciated the way you kept your men from looting. How you kept that quartermaster officer from requisitioning father's favorite horse. And protecting those cattle we hid—"

Bailey laughed. "Well, I did risk a court-martial! Later, I wasn't sure but what you were quite justified in

being sweet and friendly, just to save the plantation house, though I'd have done my best anyway."

He was certain that Jane Kendall's weeks of friendliness had come from more than trying to placate an enemy, but he bluntly tossed her that challenge.

"It wasn't entirely that, Simon," Jane protested. "Any more than I was your only reason for protecting us from some of those ruffians in your army."

"I'm glad to hear you put it that way." He glanced back at the doorway he had just left. It opened into the house of L. D. Campbell, United States Minister to Mexico, who insisted on staying in New Orleans instead of going to his post, south of the Rio Grande. "Will you be in town long enough for me to call?"

Jane considered for a moment. "Of course! Why not this evening?"

The driver flicked his whip. Jane leaned back against the cushions. Bailey wondered what she was doing in New Orleans, but he could hardly ask her. The late war had caused so many upsets, and he did not want to bring up unpleasantnesses. Though the horses and the servants indicated that the Kendalls had not been as hard hit as many of the Southern planters. . . .

Jane lived on Royal Street, near the Esplanade, Bailey discovered when he went to call. She came to meet him herself and he followed her across a courtyard, and down an arcade whose Moorish arches made him feel that he was already in Mexico. Up North, or even in Atlanta, Jane would not have found her light cape enough protection in January. A charcoal grate in the Adam fireplace took the slight chill from the high-ceiled room.

The Negro maid took Jane's cape. "Evenin', Cap'n Bailey, suh," she said. "Suah a s'prise, seein' y'all in N'awleens."

"I hope it's pleasant, Amelia."

He was thinking, "No more slaves in our country. But all Mexicans are slaves, with that damned Maximilian and his foreign troops holding the capital. It's up to Benito Juárez..."

He wondered where the fugitive president of Mexico was making his headquarters. Whenever one of Benito Juárez' followers fell into the hands of Maximilian's troops, a firing squad settled the issue. And unarmed civilians, suspected of favoring the liberator, had met a similar fate, ever since the emperor had signed the murderous "Black Decree."

Bailey had no official status, no written orders. He had only the guarded words of the Secretary of State:

"The President does not wish armed intervention in favor of Benito Juárez, does not wish to send General Sheridan across the Rio Grande. Officially, we are to remain neutral, now that Napoleon has agreed to have Marshal Bazaine leave Mexico. But the President would appreciate it if you gave Benito Juárez material encouragement."

The country was full of patriotic societies who collected funds for Juárez, that grim Indian who asked odds of no man. Americans slipped over the Border to join his army. Other Americans smuggled guns over the river.

"Very well, Mr. Secretary," Bailey had answered. "Between here and New Orleans I can raise fifty thousand dollars. New Orleans is full of Mexican patriots."

THE last move of Bailey's mission was pending now. Four former enlisted men guarded three chests of gold, and the fourth and last installment was expected any day. That very night, perhaps. All this flashed through his mind during the moments while he and Jane sat before the cheery fire.

"I'm sure you're wondering why



Simon Bolivar Bailey

I'm alone in New Orleans?" she said finally.

That was strange, but the war had upset all precedents and conventions.

"It's too pleasant here for wondering," he told her, smiling, but she insisted on explaining.

"While Father is closing out his affairs in Atlanta," she said, "I'm opening this new house. He's going into business here."

At her gesture, Amelia, the plump Negro maid, brought in a tray and decanters. Jane took a drop of Madeira.

"If that's some of your father's brandy, I know what my choice will be!" Bailey said.

"This is Spanish," she answered, "but you'll like it, anyway."

Presently, however, there was something he did not like—a caller whom Amelia announced as "Mistuh Castro." He was a Spaniard, with heavy black hair brushed back from his broad forehead. As he turned sharp eyes on Bailey, he twisted his luxuriant mustaches. Before Bailey could get more than a general impression of

the handsome stranger, Castro was bending over Jane's hand.

"Odd that I've not met this fellow before!" Bailey thought.

There was something soldierly about Castro. His slim waist, square shoulders, precise and deliberate gestures all spoke of the parade ground, of command. A beard accented the length of his jaw, and his long nose gave strength to his sharply modeled face.

The embroidered vest, the high-heeled boots and snug trousers, testified that here was a Mexican dandy, an *hidalgo* beyond any doubt. And not a chocolate drinker, as they called most of the drawing-room soldiers in Mexico.

"So you are from the North, Mr. Bailey?" Castro asked when he had completed the elaborate formalities of greeting. "This makes your presence an added pleasure tonight. Me, I am an expatriated Mexican, as you doubtless guess. But I am much interested in the fate of my unhappy country."

"We all are, Mr. Castro." Bailey spoke guardedly.

"Is your President going to intervene?"

"I'm sure it won't be necessary." Bailey shook his head. "And I don't know how much public sentiment will influence him against the Emperor Maximilian."

Bailey sensed that the Mexican disapproved of Benito Juárez. Castro was not quite subtle enough.

Half an hour later, Bailey called for his hat. He was uneasy, for \$50,000 in gold, however well guarded, oppressed him with responsibility. So he left, promising to drive with Jane down the Esplanade, the following morning. He wanted to learn more about Castro.

Bailey went on foot to Bourbon Street, until he passed the Old Absinthe House, where Creole laughter and guitars and tinkling glass made a

cheerful sound. In the middle of the next block, he unlocked a heavy door that opened into a courtyard. A brisk voice challenged him. The hammer of a revolver clicked, and a square-faced man flicked the shutter of a bull's-eye lantern.

"Oh, it's you, Captain," the man apologized. "Sorry, sir."

"You're quite right, Harley," Bailey assured.

"When do we leave, sir?" Harley asked, as he locked the door.

"Has that other chest arrived?"

"No, sir. But while I was out, getting some oysters, an hour ago, I heard that Juárez is in Chihuahua City. That he whipped the tar out of a bunch of Maximilian's Austrians and Belgians. But he was short of powder, so couldn't give them half the hell he should have."

BAILEY seated himself at his desk. Burwell, the other man on watch, sat on the three piled-up oaken chests. He was chewing tobacco, spitting at a cockroach, and fingering a drawn Colt. The other two guards slept on cots in the further shadows. They were fully dressed, except for their boots and hats.

"If that's right, maybe we'd better not wait," Bailey said. "Though Campbell didn't mention it."

"Campbell," Burwell observed, "is a hell of a minister to Mexico!"

"I don't blame him, though." Bailey chuckled. "Following Juárez from town to town and risking a firing squad isn't fun. He's right when he says he can't leave New Orleans because of his health."

"These damn civilians!" Burwell spat again.

A knocking at the door half an hour later, brought Bailey to his feet. Harley followed him across the court.

"Who's there?" the guard demanded gruffly.

"Ees for Captain Bailey," the answer came in heavily accented Eng-

lish. "Hurry! Ees someone watch us maybe."

Bailey looked through the loophole that pierced the panel. Three men stood there, two of them holding a small chest. It was locked and iron bound.

"Open up, Harley!" he commanded. "Looks like the Mexican patriots."

The men came in carrying the chest.

"For the formality, you understand, I must have your receipt, Captain," one said. "The patriots demand this. Ees not a reflection on your honor, ees joost business, no?"

"Quite right, *Señor*," Bailey answered in Spanish. "This way, please."

"So this is the last one?" Burwell got up for a look at the treasure, when Bailey broke the seals.

The two Mexicans stepped back.

"Arriendo, have you the papers?" one said, after fishing vainly in his vest pockets.

"*Que carai!* I thought you had them."

BAILEY did not twist the key in the lock. He turned toward the huddle of men.

"That's all right," he said. "I'll draw you a receipt. That'll save you a trip back."

He heard the key twist. Burwell was eager for a look at the gold. That was only natural. But what followed was not. A blast shook the room. Dense fumes stifled Bailey, and the concussion dazed him. As he whirled, he saw Burwell and Harley sprawled against the wall. A blow floored Bailey. He had not a chance to get to his revolver.

The two sleeping guards awoke, leaped to their feet, and drew weapons. Pistol fire cut them down, and a kick in the stomach took Bailey out of action.

The two strangers whirled and seized the real treasure chests, leaving only the dummy.

CHAPTER II

The Flight



THE two wounded guards were groaning beside their cots. Burwell and Harley were stunned, blinded, muttering. They could not understand how gold had exploded. Bailey gritted his teeth, and wriggled toward the revolver that had been kicked from his grasp. He caught the walnut stock. White-faced and shaking, he gained his feet and stumbled dizzily into the court.

The gloom was dancing. His ears roared. Then he sighted the fugitives, just as they approached the gate.

"Quick, *Señor Général!*" one cried. "The coach—where is it?"

"Waiting," said the man outside the gate. "With the other chest!"

That was the voice of "Mr. Castro!" Bailey's fury drove him. He fired, once-twice-thrice! Answering slugs thudded about him. Mexican marksmanship was as bad as his own. He was too groggy to hit a moving and half visible target.

Then the gate slammed. A coach clattered down Bourbon Street. Simon Bailey, staggering to the paving, saw it round the corner. The street lights gave him a momentary glimpse of Jane Kendall's caller, Mr. Castro.

People pouring out of the adjoining houses all hampered Bailey. In the uproar, he could not make himself heard, and he could not move. When he fought his way through the chattering spectators and got to the corner, the coach was out of sight.

Soldiers, ever on the alert for post-war rioting, came on the double, with bayonets fixed. An officer with a drawn saber led them. A squad of cavalry clattered up, scattering the crowd. Hot-headed, not understand-

ing what was going on, the crowd hurled rocks and cursed the soldiers. In a matter of moments, a full grown riot surged through the French Quarter.

Bailey ducked an earthenware crock and shouted to the officer.

"Lieutenant, there are men injured in that house! Give me a hand!"

The note of command in his voice, and the Yankee inflection won him a hearing in the uproar. The lieutenant shouted to his sergeant, who took command.

"What happened, Mr. Bailey?" the lieutenant demanded.

"If you don't mind, I'd rather confer with the commanding officer," Bailey said firmly. "I am in New Orleans on special duty. Please attend to these poor fellows, and get me a horse."

The lieutenant had heard voices like that before, in battle—even, unshaken, full of iron.

"Very well, sir," he said, and saluted.

Later, at the barracks near the end of the Esplanade, Bailey conferred with General Purdy, a fat man whose blue tunic seemed full of watermelons.

He had a drooping red mustache, and a red face. As he sat there, listening, he propped his spurs on the desk top, fumbled with his saber knot, and spat tobacco juice out of the window.

"That Mexican," the general cut in, and planted his feet on the floor, "must be Miguel Miramón, judging from your description."

"What?" Bailey rose, fists clenched. "The former President of Mexico, now helping Maximilian of Austria hold the throne against Benito Juárez? Coming to New Orleans to get Southern support for the emperor?"

"Exactly that, Captain Bailey!" General Purdy's big fist made the inkwells dance all over the desk. "With

forged passports. We've been tolerant of Mexicans, assuming they were all patriots. By hell, sir, I'll have his hide! I'll . . . Orderly! Damn it, Orderly!"

An enlisted man dashed in, nearly collided with the desk, and saluted. "Yes, sir?"

THE general wrote for perhaps two minutes.

"Get this to Major Winfield, at once!" he commanded, and turned to Bailey. "Captain, that Kendall woman is behind this! Half these Johnny Rebs are for Maximilian! They want an empire in Mexico, so they can secede again and beat us! By hell, sir! That girl is a spy, a traitor! An accessory to robbery and murder."

Bailey straightened. "Begging the general's pardon, sir, but she's of a fine old family in Atlanta. I'm sure she wouldn't engineer murder and robbery. Even if she is mixed up in an Imperialist plot."

The general glared. "We'll see if she's at home. She's mentioned in my orders to Major Winfield. A cordon is guarding every exit from the city. What are your plans, Captain?"

"I'm chasing Miguel Miramón to hell and back to get that gold, sir. Please look after my wounded men. They are former soldiers. Unofficially, they are as much under the President's orders as I am."

The general thrust out his hand. "I admire your courage. The robbers can't get away. I'll have Miramón shot for inciting riots. As for the girl—"

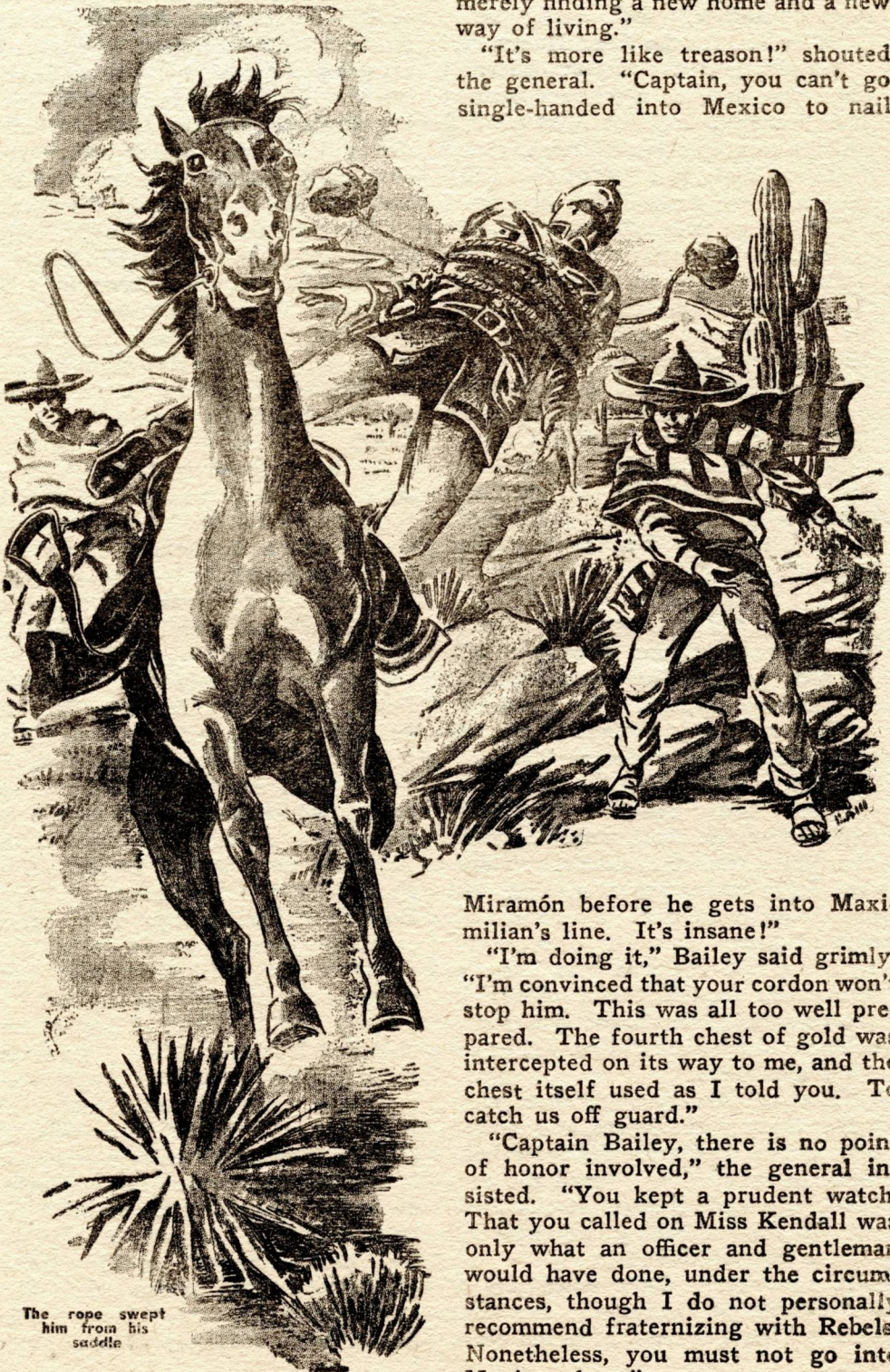
"Begging the general's pardon, but I do not think Miss Kendall realized what it would all come to. She may be, as you say, conspiring with Mexican Imperialists. These Southerners have been ruined by the way—"

"Blasted rebels! Under martial law, she's as guilty as Miramón!"

"According to their lights," Bailey went on, "supporting Maximilian is

merely finding a new home and a new way of living."

"It's more like treason!" shouted the general. "Captain, you can't go single-handed into Mexico to nail



The rope swept him from his saddle

Miramón before he gets into Maximilian's line. It's insane!"

"I'm doing it," Bailey said grimly. "I'm convinced that your cordon won't stop him. This was all too well prepared. The fourth chest of gold was intercepted on its way to me, and the chest itself used as I told you. To catch us off guard."

"Captain Bailey, there is no point of honor involved," the general insisted. "You kept a prudent watch. That you called on Miss Kendall was only what an officer and gentleman would have done, under the circumstances, though I do not personally recommend fraternizing with Rebels. Nonetheless, you must not go into Mexico, alone."

"I'm sorry, sir, but that is what I must do and will do."

"Why . . . By the Lord Harry, sir! I am giving you a direct order. I want you here as a witness against Jane Kendall. Against Miramón! I am here to keep order in this city, and damn my boots, if I do not do so, if I have to shoot every Rebel in town!"

The general was red, sweating, and puffing. Bailey squared his shoulders.

"Sir, I am under direct orders from the President," he said. "I present his compliments to the general and demand full cooperation."

General Purdy stood there, choking and blinking for a moment. Then he doubled up, slapped his thigh.

"Very well, Captain. Good luck! But I'll get that gold—I'll get them before they cross the river—I'll shoot them—I'll hang 'em higher than Haman! I'll—"

BAILEY did not hear the end of it. He was hurrying down the hall. An orderly waited with his horse.

"How are my men?" he asked.

"Two seriously wounded," he was told. "They'll all recover. The blast just stunned them."

When Bailey reached Jane Kendall's house, his heart sank. A guard of soldiers was at the door. Amelia, the Negro maid, was screaming and protesting innocence. There was no sign of Jane.

"I'm afraid she was into it up to her neck, Captain," the officer in charge said. "Her absence isn't coincidence. Lucky she did go. The general's too severe."

"Thanks," Bailey said, shortly.

He returned the salute, and trotted toward his quarters. Half an hour later, he was riding toward the outposts. He made a complete circuit of the pickets, and each guard reported, "Not a sign of them here."

It was nearly dawn when Bailey had completed his rounds. He went back to headquarters with his fears

confirmed. Miramón and Jane had eluded the cordon. At dawn, troops would trail the carriage that must be crossing Louisiana with galloping horses. Gunboats were already heading down toward the Delta to patrol the gulf. But whether they were sought by land or sea, the fugitives had won the first heat in the race.

"They'd not risk sailing," Bailey reasoned. "Their best chance would be to drive or ride through Rebel territory. Every Southerner will help them, all the way to the Rio Grande. And a slick fellow like Miramón can sneak through Juárez' thin lines and get to Maximilian's army with the loot."

As he rode toward the Mexican Border, Bailey's wrath cooled into solid determination. Miramón was his enemy, but a daring and crafty one.

"I'll nab him," Bailey resolved. "But not for Benito Juárez to line up against a stone wall. I'm settling Miramón myself!"

Jane Kendall, however, was a different problem. Her treachery bit deep. Miramón, conferring with Jane regarding Southern sympathizers and the Federal attitude toward the emperor, had perhaps heard of the accumulating treasure for Juárez. And Jane had set him on Bailey's trail. She might well have known of Simon Bailey's presence days before their seemingly chance meeting.

"After I helped her dad hide those cows from our quartermaster," Bailey bitterly said. "After I had a man shot for looting. After I protected their plantation house. Damn it—"

But he was glad that Jane had escaped from New Orleans. Though General Purdy's severity was becoming a national scandal, and outraging even the Northerners' sensibilities, he was still in the saddle. If Jane had been arrested, nothing short of a Presidential pardon could have saved her. They had hanged Mrs. Suratt, as an accessory after the fact,

for having sheltered the conspirators responsible for the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. No wonder the South was bitter!

The evasions, the sullen receptions Bailey got on his hard ride across Louisiana convinced him that he was on the right track. The fugitives must have gone that way. Finally, at the Sabine River, a Union sympathizer gave him his first definite clue. Miramón and Jane were heading for Del Rio.

This was logical, for not long before Benito Juárez had cleaned all the Imperialists out of Nuevo Laredo and Matamoras. Not even Miramón would risk passing through that section. He would have to go well westward, to avoid Monterrey, another Juárez stronghold.

But before he reached the Rio Grande, Bailey was able to dispense almost entirely with deduction and inquiry. He picked up the trail of pack animals, a day's march beyond the village where Miramón had abandoned his coach. But Miramón still had a good start, and he was riding hard.

At Del Rio, Bailey was not surprised to meet a former Confederate officer—one he had captured at the siege of Atlanta. The tall Texan recognized Bailey, and hailed him.

"Light and set, Captain! What brings you here, a-ridin' like yuh was that day yuh was chasing us?"

Bailey chuckled. "I didn't think you and I'd have to shoot it out when peace was declared, Clayman. I'll have a drink with you, but no time for more."

"Yuh look tired," Clayman said, and cut off a chew, as the two wandered into a nearby saloon.

"You look like you're raising cattle these days." Bailey deliberately evaded the well meant question. When he saw the Texan's eyes narrow and his lean face change, he added, "I don't mean to be unsociable,

but that's all I can say. I'm on Government business."

Clayman cocked his boot on the brass rail, stared into his glass of whiskey.

"That's enough, then. Shucks, I reckon we have to leave hatin' to civilians. We fit and we lost. Some of you Yankees fit fair, too."

"Thanks." Bailey met the Texan's hand halfway. "I'm mighty glad to hear you say that. Being one country is worth something, after all."

CLAYMAN digested that, then gestured for a refill.

"Look-ee here, Captain Bailey, I might as well tell yuh. I know what yuh're lookin' for down here."

"Maybe you do." The captain nodded. "You aren't aiming to stop me, are you?"

There was no challenge in Bailey's voice. His smile was good-humored, quizzical. Clayman shook his head.

"No. Jest the contrary, providin' yuh'll give me yore word as an officer and a gentleman to see that Jane Kendall don't get hurt."

The ex-Confederate grinned at Bailey's look of amazement. This was becoming a bit thick. The grapevine telegraph had outraced him clear across Texas.

"You know I'm not the commanding general in this or any other district!" he objected.

"Shore, yuh ain't. But where yuh're goin', there's worse than Union generals. Will yuh protect her?"

"I did my best for your company," the captain said slowly, "when we quit shooting and talked it over. I did as much for Jane Kendall's folks when we were quartered at their plantation. But I can't promise more."

"I reckon that's enough, Captain Bailey. She had to cross the Border with Miguel Miramón. That skunk's bomb trick in New Orleans got her mixed into it, even though she never aimed to do any such dirt. So she's

got to run. Too damn many Union generals lookin' for her."

"You don't like Miramón, eh?"

"Don't like a thing pertainin' to Maximilian," the Texan said flatly. "A lot of us Rebs like emperors—I know that—but me, I'm jest onso-ciable enough not to. No, sir, I can put up well enough with plain Mexicans, but dang my hide if I want any Austrians and Frenchmen and Belgians and Hungarians and such-like hootin' around south of the river. Specially not when they got this here emperor idea."

"I'm looking for Miramón," Bailey said. "Just Miramón."

Clayman chuckled. Jest Miramón and fifty thousand in gold. . . . Now, they crossed the river, and they went this way—"He began to trace lines on the bar. "We didn't know about the gold, at the time. Every Mexican along the river is all for Juárez. Miramón made out he was, though he wore another name. None of 'em knew who he was till too late."

"When did they go through here?" asked Bailey.

"Day before yesterday. Say, thirty-six hours."

Bailey drained his glass. "I got to be riding."

Clayman extended his hand. "Good luck." He eyed Bailey, anxiously. "Captain, yuh look sick-like. Is it something yuh et?"

Bailey shook his head. "No. It's that promise I made you. If Jane Kendall is caught behind the Juárez lines with Miramón, Benito Juárez will settle them both. A great man, but tough. To his Indian mind, a traitor is a traitor."

He turned to the door. Clayman stretched long legs after him. "You wait a minute, Captain," he said with determination. "I'm gettin' some vittles and my travelin' guns. I'm goin' with yuh."

An hour later, Captain Bailey, with Clayman beside him, forded the river,

and rode into the vast, flat expanse of Northern Mexico. Sage and cactus, gray desolation as far as the eye could reach. The only sign of life was a thread of smoke rising from a far-off *jacal*.

CHAPTER III

The Chase



CAPTAIN BAILEY was glad to have a companion, though he had lurking qualms. He did not know whether Clayman was moved by Southern chivalry, whether he had a

deep personal interest in Jane Kendall, or whether he was Miramón's ally. Too honorable to settle Bailey by treachery, he still might be bound to block his enterprise.

"I shouldn't have let him come," he told himself. "But he knew, and if he's against me, he'd have followed anyway."

At a squalid village, some miles south, the two riders halted, and warily surveyed the clutter of brush *jacales*, the distant herd of goats. Brown women in blue skirts plodded barefooted down the street. Several men squatted in front of a small store, snoring.

"We can risk it," Bailey said. "You speak Spanish, don't you?"

"Shucks, I can dream in it! How about you?"

"I *habla* enough to talk to Juárez," Bailey answered, though he could almost have matched Clayman's whimsical claim. "You and me need some Mexican clothes. This is a hell of a place to start, but let's go."

When they left, they were wearing holiday clothes that the poorest villages seemed to have in reserve—embroidered velvet jackets, high-crowned hats, heavy with silver braid, and boots similarly adorned.



While the ex-Confederate wrangled about the price of the boots, Bailey questioned some loafing men.

"Si, Señor," one said. "A man with a beard and large moustachios. He rode like Satan on horseback. With *una roja*. A beautiful girl, ay chinga'o, with red hair!"

Miramón and Jane. And the trail confirmed this answer. One of the pack horses was heavily loaded. Fifty thousand dollars in gold was a concentrated load. Miramón, with Mexican disregard for an animal, had not adjusted the burden as well as he might have. The hoofprints told the story. Bailey had scarcely come to this conclusion when Clayman confirmed it.

"Shucks!" he snorted. "Plain as day! And they ain't makin' the best time, neither."

This last was not quite accurate. Four days passed, and the fugitives were not sighted. Far off, the Sierra Madre's blue bulk rose to the sky. Once, Bailey saw vultures circling low. A dark something sprawled in a clump of mesquite.

"Good Lord!" he muttered, and licked his dry lips. "That's right

where their outfit was headed for."

They prodded their jaded beasts. Several times, Bailey had traded horses at *haciendas*, and each time it seemed for the worse.

As the riders approached, the vultures rose, lazily and contemptuously. The wind had not yet blotted out footprints, nor scattered the cold ashes of a fire. Jane and Miramón were not in the sparse thicket near the slimy waterhole. Just a horse was there.

"She made him shoot it," Bailey said. "No Mexican ever bothered."

Clayman nodded, then pointed. "They're short of vittles," he declared. "He cut a hunk of meat off the critter and left the rest."

Bailey cinched up his belt. "If I was a bit hungrier, I'd chaw some of that horse meat myself!" he said emphatically.

Clayman grinned bleakly. "Some-thing like us Rebs, that last month of the war. Hell, we'd of et the vul-

tures if they'd been any we could reach!"

It was good, in that barren expanse, to know that hatred was left for civilians. After a week at trying to pick each other off, Bailey had accepted Clayman's sword, and in his own tent had given the hungry Confederate bacon and coffee and jam from the North.

As they pressed on, they got news of Juárez. Escobedo, now general of the Mexican Northern army, had driven the foreigners back toward the capital. In shell-blasted villages, they found heaps of men in Belgian and Hungarian uniforms, lying before bullet pocked walls.

"Juárez is a tough hombre," Clayman observed, wheeling away from the desolation. "Us boys up yonder, we were jest playin' war, I reckon."

Bailey chuckled grimly. "Maximilian is shooting civilians to scare them out of helping Juárez. Don Benito has to meet him halfway."

TWO days later, they found a village still smoldering. The *peons* had not yet come from hiding. The retreating Imperialists had made a clean sweep before their retreat.

"Warn't a retreat," Clayman said. "Hell, they was runnin' and General Escobedo chasing 'em till their pants dragged. Miramón won't go this way."

"His trail does," Bailey stubbornly insisted. "And you don't know Miramón. Look-ee here, Clayman! If we tangle, he's my man."

The tall Texan shrugged. "That's fair, all in all."

Succeeding marches confirmed Bailey's hunch. The crafty Miramón had skillfully avoided the clashes of Imperialist and Juárezista troops. He had daringly stuck to the region where the confusion of battle afforded protection to offset its peril. Each day increased Bailey's respect for the man who, once President of Mexico, had let his resentment against Benito

Juárez drive him into alliance with the Austrian usurper.

It took such a man to venture into the States, steal \$50,000, and then hamper his retreat by taking his accomplice with him. There was a streak of loyalty in Miramón. Perhaps, according to his lights, he was no more a traitor than sturdy Clayman had been, fighting the Union Armies back home.

"Ain't far to Zacatecas," Clayman said, one afternoon.

The sun beat through the clear, thin air. The horses breathed with difficulty, not being used to the elevation. It exhilarated Bailey, and made up for lost sleep. A fierce energy burned out his weariness. His beard now hid most of his face, and Clayman peered through a sandy hedge.

"Don Benito Juárez," Bailey said thoughtfully, "will be sore as hell if he meets us before we get that treasure. Listen, Clayman. It's my fault it's stolen. You better ride back. This isn't your funeral."

"Yuh want me to take yore watch back to yore pappy?" drawled Clayman.

Bailey grimaced. "No. He named me after Simon Bolivar, the liberator of South America. And now I've gone and lost the money that was going to liberate Mexico. I've got to see Don Benito, no matter what he's likely to do. And you know that saying about birds of a feather."

"He'll think you and me cached it for ourselves? Why, the dirty—"

Bailey raised his hand. "He's been doublecrossed many times, remember. He's got to be tough and suspicious. You get out while you can."

"You go to hell, Cap'n! I'm not a Rebel any more, and so yore orders are mine."

They bore down on the trail. It was hot now. Miramón was behind Zacatecas, dangerously close to Benito Juárez and General Escobedo's army. He was waiting for a chance to break

through, never dreaming of pursuit from the Border. And that night Bailey was certain enough to press on instead of camping.

The two trailers finally dismounted and tethered their horses. Ahead was a ravine. There was no glow, no smell of smoke—just the odor of coffee, and *tortillas* baking on a hot rock.

Inch by inch, Bailey crept along. If it became a shooting scrape, no telling how Jane would fare. It had to be a surprise.

Suddenly, Clayman's fingers closed on Bailey's ankle. The Texan wriggled up beside his halted comrade. "Listen!" he whispered. "Hosses. Cavalry, by Gawd. A patrol—"

The sounds were scarcely perceptible, but a soldier's ear could distinguish the muted voices of military accoutrements.

"We don't need help here," Bailey answered.

"That ain't what I meant," Clayman began, but it was too late for further parley.

MOMENTS later Bailey rose, with pistol leveled, from behind a boulder and faced the concealed camp of the man and the woman who baked *tortillas*.

"Get up, General Miramón!" he ordered. "You're my prisoner!"

Miramón was not even startled. "*Que carai!* You, *Señor* Bailey?"

"Me, all right, giving you a chance for a man's death, instead of facing a firing squad."

Jane Kendall had risen, and she stood there, pale and fearless. Then Clayman popped up, guns drawn.

"There's the gold, Captain," he said.

Jane's tawny hair gleamed, but little else was left of her loveliness. She wore a red skirt and a shawl, like a native woman. Brush and thorns had long since destroyed her hosiery, and in place of shoes she wore raw-

hide *guaraches*. As her hands slowly curled tight, Bailey saw how she and Miramón had suffered. Her eyes were desperate, deep sunken, like her cheeks.

"Get your horse and ride," Bailey said to her. "My business is with him."

"I didn't know about the bomb," she said. "For your sake, I'm sorry, but I've seen Juárez at work, sitting in his black carriage like a horrible idol, watching the firing squads shoot down prisoners."

"Traitors, Jane," Bailey said grimly. "Now mount and ride."

Then Miramón took a hand. "*Señor Capitán*, Don Benito's patrols are near, looking for us. They will shoot her as well as me."

"That's why she gets her chance. Your clever trick made her leave New Orleans."

"Let us both go!" Jane's eyes blazed, her chin rose. "Or let us both be taken to Don Benito's firing squad."

"You're crazy!" But Bailey knew that she meant it.

"I don't want to be in a world with assassins like you Yankees and Don Benito!" Jane said defiantly. "If the emperor drives him out of Mexico, I'll be happy, no matter what happens!"

Miramón smiled. His black eyes were narrow, his speech deliberate.

"That patrol comes too close *Señor Capitán*," he said. "I see that you do not like women facing a firing squad. Now listen. There is no more fear in me than in you. I am covered with two men's guns, but I can and I will draw mine. You will fire first—it makes no difference. The Juaristas will hear."

"You damn fool!" Bailey snapped. "You'll lose your life and the treasure Maximilian needs. And Juárez will shoot Jane as a spy."

"Stupid *gringo!*" Miramón shot back at him. "She means more to you

than Don Benito. And do you believe what she said to you? That she hates you? *Que carai!* She merely hates Yankees, not you, the man. Now fire, so the Juaristas will come and arrest her."

"Captain," Clayman whispered, "he is right. He's got yuh neatly cornered."

Miramón deliberately fingered the butt of his gun. Gesture and eye challenged Bailey to fire.

"Señorita, be pleased to load up the pack horse," he said coolly. "I cannot help you. I must finish drawing this pistol, so the captain will not be shooting an unarmed man."

Slowly, the Colt slipped from the holster. Bailey was sweating. His teeth hurt from clenching them.

"They'll hear if you fire," Miramón went on. "It is nothing to me. You know Don Benito's 'justice.' Will he spare one who has robbed him of the gold he needs, just because she is a woman?"

Jane was saddling up. The gold coins clinked as she lifted the first heavy chest into place. The patrol was nearer now. Fear and fury shook Bailey.

"You damn skunk, hiding behind her skirts!" he flung at the Mexican.

Miramón kept his temper. "I accept all that for His Imperial Majesty, Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico."

Bailey holstered his gun. "Go and help her," he snapped. "But once you're beyond the Juarista lines, I'll nail you before you can reach Maximilian!"

There was scarcely a crackle of brush when Miramón resumed the trail. Bailey turned to Clayman.

"He has more guts than I have," he said, with reluctant admiration. "All or nothing. And he sure takes all."

"He ain't got it home yet," Clayman reminded. "Before yuh skin a bear, yuh got to shoot him first."

Bailey evaded the patrol. Revealing himself would have exposed the fugitives.

He could not risk explaining his presence until Miramón had taken Jane through the lines.

CHAPTER IV

General Juárez



WITHIN three days Bailey and Clayman were in sight of Zacatecas. From a crest they could easily see how the town swarmed with troops. The sun was reddened by the rising

dust of mule trains. Rations and munitions were coming to Don Benito's latest capital.

The Texan's keen eyes narrowed as he pointed toward the crowded plaza.

"See that black carriage? Bet Don Benito's in it."

Bailey caught the glint of a silk hat, heard the "vivas" in the city. There were few uniforms in the densely packed throng, but gun-barrels gleamed, as did the blades of *machetes*.

Brass cannon were parked in the square, and horsemen cleared the way for the black carriage.

And all the while, men in brown and gray *serapes* filed out of the hills. Some were trudging barefooted, some rode horses, some donkeys. Many wore scarlet *képis* taken from Foreign Legion dead.

Others of the soldiers had stripped off tunics and jackets with burnished buttons, and the gold braid of officers—grotesque and gruesome trophies—matched up with white cotton *pantalones*.

"This isn't your party, Clayman," Bailey finally said. "I'll smell hell when I face Don Benito. You'll be implicated."

The Texan was stubborn. "I'm stickin'."

That evening they entered Zacatecas. Ragged sentries halted Bailey and Clayman. Under guard, they were taken to the *comandancia* that faced the cathedral at the further end of the square.

The plaza was dotted with little fires where Mexican women cooked pots of *frijoles* and *chili* for the soldiers. Without these camp followers there could be no army. Then bayonets prodded Bailey and Clayman down a corridor. Ahead, torches flared, orderlies and officers milled about, shouting, cursing, waving orders as they dashed into and out of the center of all that activity—the office of Don Benito Juárez, the Indian who defied an emperor.

For the first time Bailey was afraid, facing the man who looked up from the neat desk. His brown hand still moved, writing as he spoke to aides, to the officers on either side of him. Somewhere, near at hand, a ragged volley ripped the curtain of sound. A firing squad was at work.

Bailey jerked from the impact, but Don Benito's quill precisely shaped the intricate flourishes that made his signature authentic. As he did so, his cold eyes nailed the prisoners.

"You have news of General Miramón, *Señor*?" he asked. Tell it to me."

He squatted rather than sat in his

big chair. Lank black hair accented the shape of his flat head. His rugged face was disfigured by a suffused scar.

Just sixty-one years old, Bailey knew, but Don Benito could have been any age. That face was like an Aztec sculpture, with the suggestion of human beast, god and serpent all in one.

"I have been chasing Miramón from the Border," Bailey informed. "In New Orleans, he stole fifty thousand dollars in gold I collected from your friends in the United States."

The cold eyes did not flicker. White collar, black string tie, black frock coat, on an Aztec idol! The big hands, awkward-looking but agile, kept the quill scratching for a moment. Another volley crackled outside.

"You didn't notify any of my forces in Monterrey?" asked Juárez' cold voice.

"We trailed Miramón farther west, *Señor Presidente*."

"You could have had help in Chihuahua City," Juárez accused. "In a dozen places. But you wanted the glory yourself. And now he is through our lines."

"Yes." Bailey bowed his head.

"You heard that last volley?"

"I did."

"Miramón should have faced that squad," Benito Juárez went on. "You

[Turn Page]



have robbed my soldiers in more ways than one."

Bailey told his reasons. Benito Juárez listened without comment until he heard the end.

"You could not have come closer to treason," he said then. "Fifty thousand dollars would buy the supplies I need to crush the emperor quickly. You have heard the squad taking care of traitors, out there in the patio."

AN OFFICER came in, saber drawn. His holstered pistol reeked of freshly burned powder. He had just given a few captives the *coup de grâce*. In his other hand he had a paper.

"This warrant was not signed, Don Benito," he said.

Juárez' eyes flickered down for a split-second. He took in the list of names at a glance.

"You shot them, Captain?"

"Not without your signature, Don Benito."

The pen scratched. "You were right, but waste no time."

The officer hurried away.

"You could have stayed away from here," Don Benito continued to Bailey.

"I could not. No more than I could have called for help before Jane Kendall got through your lines. I have come to tell you what direction Miramón followed, if you promise to return Jane Kendall to the Border, unharmed."

"If I do not promise?"

"Then find Miramón yourself, *mi muy Señor Presidente!*"

Bailey heard Clayman's sharp intake of breath. Juárez' drooping lids did not flicker, nor did his lips tighten. He just stared, unblinking. The officers in the high-ceiled room ceased talking among themselves. The volley that clattered outside made them start.

"If I do promise?" Juárez said.

"I will take whatever men you give me and I will recover the gold. If I succeed, you have no quarrel with me. If I fail, do as you please."

"So you take my word, as to *Señorita* Kendall, a plotter against the Republic of Mexico?"

Bailey shrugged. "All those *peones* under arms, out there, would not follow a man whose word was not good."

Juárez almost smiled. "Did it occur to you that I might hunt Miramón myself? And dispense with your services, which have not been valuable, thus far?"

"I thought of that. I took that chance. It was my duty."

"You are somewhat of a fool, *mi muy Señor Capitán*. But you are a man of honor. Be pleased to accept our hospitality. I have accepted your parole."

His attention was already elsewhere.

"Go, *Señores*," an aid said, touching Bailey's arm. "Possibly you will live through this, though I have my doubts. For days he has counted on that gold. The republic needs it. So does that devil of a Maximilian!"

Later, when Bailey dipped into a pot of *frijoles*, he said to Clayman:

"The unpleasantest damn man alive, that Benito Juárez! He must be a genius, getting men to follow him."

Clayman's grin was wry.

"It's a cinch his winnin' ways never done it. Even his officers are gettin' tired of firin' squads."

Bailey looked up at the poster on the 'dobe wall near the fire.

"Read that Black Decree of Maximilian's, and see why Juárez is tough. It scares people away from the emperor, and gives those barefooted *peones* a little more heart. Anyway, Juárez is giving Mexican prisoners a chance. Enlisted men, I mean, if not officers. As for the Foreign Legion, they had their chance to back out, with Bazaine."

"Reckon this Indian hombre will

back yuh to a wall if yuh don't make good?" Clayman drawled, and Bailey shrugged.

"Nothing Benito Juárez does could surprise me a lot. But he's what Mexico needs. These folks have been slaves for four hundred years. Benito Juárez was a barefooted peasant kid from Oaxaca. Under a republic, even a mismanaged one, he learned to read, and became an *elected* president. Under the best emperor in the world he couldn't have done that."

THE Juarista officers made no secret of anything. Mexico, they said, was now in full revolt, and would with sheer numbers and ferocity overwhelm Maximilian and his army of Europeans and native supporters.

"Listen, *Señor*," one of them told Bailey. "Escobedo started with eleven men and formed the Army of the North. And this Porfirio Diaz, he escapes from prison with one friend. The next night he has fourteen men, and they capture the garrison of Tehuiztenco. Forty of the prisoners join him. And then what? He routs a squadron of cavalry at Acatlán. In four weeks, *Señores*, he has won three battles, captured forty cannon and three thousand muskets and leads an army. *Ay chinga'o!* Wait till we corner Maximilian, and we'll trim his swallow-tail beard for him!"

"Do you think Don Benito will have him shot?" asked Bailey.

The officer laughed. "Figure it for yourself. What did Maximilian do but shoot our two generals, Salazar and Arteaga!"

These details, and many others, some of which had never reached the States, told Bailey the story. According to latest reports, the only centers controlled by the Imperialists were Mexico City, Vera Cruz, Puebla, and Querétaro.

On the other hand, the Imperialist soldiers were disciplined and in-

cluded Count Khevenhuller's Hussars, Baron Hammerstein's infantry, Count Wickenberg's regiment of *gendarmérie*, as well as eleven batteries of field artillery. And all the Imperialist forces were now concentrated, whereas the Juaristas, hemming them in a vast circle, were a thin line.

In the morning, Bailey and Clayman led a platoon of cavalry out of Zacatecas. With fresh horses, and moving openly, the scouting party lost little time in picking up the trail of the fugitives.

"Like I told you," the former Union Army captain said to Clayman, "they couldn't go any other way, from the place where we nailed them. They had patrols to dodge, and they had to swing clear of Zacatecas, and then the way those ravines lie, they'd have hell's own time with tired horses."

But once the trail was cut, the Mexicans took the lead. This was their territory. Many of them had been mule drivers, others had herded sheep in the mountains, and they knew every pass that threaded the Sierra Madre.

"I think we've got an edge," Clayman said, that afternoon, as the dusty column halted in a pass so high that the altitude made his head whirl. "Miramón ain't no mule skinner, and he won't know about the short cuts."

"Don Benito's general at Zacatecas used to drive mules over these mountains," said Bailey.

"You mean Mariano Escobedo?"

"Uh-huh. That dark fellow with the thick lips and squarish chin and high forehead. The solemn-looking chap at headquarters, standing behind Don Benito's chair. There never was a mule skinner in Emperor Maximilian's family, not for the last thousand years anyway."

Clayman chuckled. "More I think of it, more I figger yuh wasn't crazy, tryin' to help these Mexicans. Allowin' for everything, it's a mite more like home than what this Austrian

hombre is tryin' to make out of the country. Listen, is he as loco as they say?"

"A nice fellow, I heard in New Orleans," Bailey answered. "A good amateur painter. An amateur sailor. He writes poems and understands music. A pleasant chap, but his generals and ministers are using him to loot Mexico. If he hadn't been born the son of an emperor, he'd be a harmless citizen somewhere. The poor devil is trying to live up to an out-of-date tradition. He never heard of a mule skinner being a general, or a sheep herder being a president."

"Looks like," said Clayman, as he broke a piece from a black cigar and added it to the cud that swelled one cheek, "that Jane Kendall'd begin to see the point."

"I hope she does."

The sun was low when the Mexican captain joined Bailey.

"Señor, it is not far to go," he said. "Look at that dust. Pack animals. That traitor, Miramón can't be more than ten miles ahead."

CHAPTER V

Bailey Takes a Trick



BY ALL rules, the pursuit should have halted. However, the fugitives pressed on, so they would soon be worn down. Patience, dogged endurance, not exhausting bursts of speed are what win. But Bailey was eager, and the

Mexican soldiers already saw Miramón backed against a 'dobe wall. So they rode, rocks clattering down sheer drops, horses slipping on glassy shelves.

Jagged crests cast purple shadows, far ahead. The ravines were already dusky. The distant plain was masked by haze, ruddy and dancing from the

lowland heat. Once more Bailey saw the fugitive pack train.

The Mexicans shouted.

"That's them!" Clayman said.

"How do you know one's a woman?" Bailey demanded.

"I don't know how, but I jest know."

The tall Texan's intuition was guiding him. Something about those far-off, tiny figures told him that one was a woman, one a man. Bailey's heart began to thump. The distance was still too great for rifle fire. The few Winchesters in the party could not reach so far, and the muzzle-loading muskets had still less chance.

Another twist in the dusky ravine. Bailey, anxious for first sight of the pack train, pressed toward the front. No telling what those vengeful Mexicans might do.

And then he heard the yell, just as he rounded the corner. The fugitives were now plainly in sight. So also was the large body of troops encamped at the further edge of the plain into which the ravine opened. They were Imperialists. Bailey had scarcely recognized that fact when a volley of musketry crackled from the rocks and trees that broke the approach to the plain.

The surprise would have been mutual, but for Miramón's recent passage. As it was, the Imperialist outposts had been warned. Their first volley emptied half the saddles of the pursuing party. Bailey's horse dropped, kicking and screaming. Clayman, untouched, dismounted and then ducked for cover.

"Hold 'em, Captain!" he yelled above the confusion, and opened up with his Winchester carbine.

The Mexican officer ignored his wounds, and drew his saber. Cursing, blasting away with a revolver, he rode about.

"Back, cowards! If you run now, they'll finish you all!"

Fast retreat up the ravine was im-

possible under enemy fire. Digging in to fight would be as bad, for the Imperialists could scale the slope and shoot down behind the frontal cover. Already puffs of smoke blossomed from the rocks far overhead, and ricocheting slugs zinged and whined. A haze of powder blotted out what little light remained. Ahead, the plain danced in the red glamor of mirage.

But the Juaristas quickly recovered from their panic. They settled down to business, cursing jammed cartridges, ramming home fresh ones. Bailey jerked his Winchester from beneath his dead horse, and laced the enemy with bullets. His deliberate, accurate fire broke the triumphant rush. For a moment, it looked as if the Mexican captain had only to sweep away the remnant and skirt the plain.

But he showed more valor than sense. Instead of taking cover, once his men were reorganized, he remained on horse. Half a dozen bullets had driven dust from his tunic, but without hurting him. He turned in the saddle, flourished his saber.

"Forward!" he roared. "Rush them, you sons of dogs!"

The men grinned, drew *machetes*. Then a volley knocked the hot-headed captain from the saddle. His horse bolted. Bailey could feel the sudden rush of panic, of crushing fear. Clayman groaned as he reloaded his revolver. The outposts had rushed their reserve to the line, and the wavering fire gave them a free chance. One hot-head had restored the Juaristas' courage; another had to give them fresh heart.

BAILEY lunged, snatching the bridle of the captain's horse. He was dragged half a dozen yards, then he got the beast under control. He flung himself into the saddle, booted the horse, and leaned down to pick up the captain's saber.

Clayman yelled and headed for the

sheltered horses. The Juarista detachment caught the fever as they saw Bailey, pistol blazing, spur his mount straight for the reinforcements.

Just what happened, Bailey never knew. He heard the shouts, the drumming hoofs behind him, and Clayman's yell. He holstered his empty revolver, and slashed out with his saber. He was through the line, and the remainder of his men clattering after him, howling and firing.

"By the left flank!" he commanded.

The survivors wheeled, *machetes* swinging. Somehow, they had won through, just four men left of a platoon. A troop of cavalry was fanning out across the plain. As he galloped, Bailey realized the truth—a whole army was slipping up on Zacatecas.

"Whoever gets through," he cried, "tell Don Benito! And someone's got to get through!"

Hungarian lancers were in the lead, their gold braid gleaming through the dust. Lance heads twinkled. A crescent of steel was to enclose the four riders.

Bailey just evaded the widespread foragers. Another troop, dismounted for accurate fire, raked the plain with carbines. And before Bailey reached the shelter of darkness and broken ground, only Clayman and one Mexican were with him.

Wounded men, wounded horses, and hard-riding patrols, eager to cut them off before they could give the alarm in Zacatecas! That was what confronted Simon Bolivar Bailey that night, as he helped his comrades bandage themselves. . . .

Though Bailey finally eluded the Imperialist pursuit, he had been driven far west of Zacatecas, and he now faced the problem of swinging back. Fresh horses, and the guidance of the surviving Mexican, gave him his chance of success.

And one morning, before dawn, the three survivors charged down toward

Zacatecas. Swirling mists blotted the sleeping town. Roosters crowed, and burros began to bray. A sentry in a closely wrapped *serape* challenged them.

"Don Benito is awake," the sentry said, when he recognized them. "In there."

Candlelight was a sickly yellow inside a barred window. Bailey went down the hall and found the Mexican president at his desk.

Benito Juárez seemed not to have moved during the days that had passed. His frock coat had not a speck of lint, his shirt and white collar and black tie were perfect. So was the silk hat that gleamed from a peg on the nearby pillar.

Across the room a few exhausted aides snored as they slumped across littered desks. But Don Benito, when he ceased writing and looked up, was fresh. No one could tell whether he had just arisen, or whether he had worked all night.

"You have the gold?" That same flat voice, those same unblinking eyes, that lank black hair, parted precisely and plastered down against his squarish head. "Where is it?"

"An army is making a surprise raid!" Bailey said hastily, and gave the details. "We are the only ones left of the platoon."

Don Benito pondered for a moment.

"You failed, and yet you came back? How long is my patience to last?"

"That makes no difference," Bailey snapped. "I came back."

Don Benito awakened his aides. Calmly he gave orders, then picked up his pen and resumed writing. He seemed to have forgotten the three haggard messengers.

"Señor," Bailey protested, "Miramón is hoping to capture you, as well as the city! That's the idea of the surprise!"

An orderly came running in.

"Is my carriage ready for the road?" Juárez asked coldly.

"Sí, Señor Presidente!"

JUAREZ went back to writing. As officers, aroused by the summons, came hurrying in, he addressed one, then the other calmly, as though he had heard the sun would soon rise. Bailey stepped nearer.

"Señor!" he repeated. "Perhaps I did not make myself clear. On the way, I picked up news. The emperor wrote to the commander of that surprise force—"

Juárez selected a paper from one of the heaps, and gave it to Bailey.

"Put it back when you have read," he said. "I am very busy. *Buenas dias, Señores.*"

It was a copy of an order signed by the emperor, asking the general not to execute Juárez on capture, but to send him to the capital for trial. Captain Bailey went out, shaking his head.

"That damn Indian ain't human!" Clayman muttered. "He knew all about it, and there he is!"

"But he didn't know it was coming this morning," Bailey said. "He's busy—only he's calm about it."

Trumpets were braying, and drums rolled. Men scurried about, troops formed in the plaza. In a nearby courtyard, men were hitching up Don Benito's horses. They gleamed, as did the paint and the metal work and the glass of the carriage. Others were loading in rations, a field desk, blankets.

"Looks like a hearse, and it's just right for him!"

Then far-off musketry rattled. Cannons blasted the air. A six-pound shot tore a great chunk out of the cathedral belfry. Orderlies began galloping as the battle developed. Sunrise had brought hell to Zacatecas!

Clayman and Bailey, their ears trained to the sounds of combat, could read the signs as though they were

taking an actual part in the desperate struggle not far from the outskirts of the city. The surprise had not been nipped in time.

Those damned guns! Six-inch and eight-inch balls flattened buildings, tore crashing tons of brick and stucco from the cathedral, from the jail, from the *tiendas*, from the *comandancia* where Don Benito still lingered.

His coachmen fumed, paced, and gnawed their mustaches. The horses snorted, worked themselves into a lather as the grooms tried to keep them from bolting. Three of them had been provided for him by *Señor Calderón*. Their names were *El Relámpago*, a "rosillo;" *El Monarca*, and *El Vapor*—Lightning Flash, Monarch, and Steamboat.

And all the while, the howl and thunder of battle came nearer. Musket balls now zinged overhead, and the wind blown mists thickened, now being mostly powder smoke, choking and sulfurous.

Bailey shouldered his way through the stream of orderlies who ran in and out of the *comandancia*. Juárez was still at his desk.

"Don Benito!" Bailey shouted above the confusion. "The enemy is almost here! Four thousand men!"

That bronzed face twisted in a half smile. "Thank you."

Juárez supervised the fumbling of the aides who stuffed papers into leather cases. Colonel Carlos Noriega, commander of the president's personal guard, stamped and cursed, and told his adjutant to rush the reserves into the streets that entered the square.

Miramón was sweeping everything before him. The artillery was no longer firing. It was galloping forward to new positions, and lancers were harassing the rear guard of the beaten Juaristas, harrying them toward town. Juárez' empty carriage jerked forward as the horses took fright.

"Wait!" Bailey jerked Clayman

away from his restive mount. "We'll drive that carriage!"

As he spoke, he hurled himself at the head of the bolting team, and let his weight drag them to a halt. He flung the reins to Clayman, who had bounded to the box.

"Just a second—I'll be with you!"

Juárez, sitting his restive red horse, was waiting for a tangle of pack animals to make way for him. His personal guard was retreating, foot by foot, stubbornly disputing the way to the square. Bailey leaped, snatched the Mexican president's silk hat.

"*Con permiso, Señor Presidente!*" he shouted, and put on the headgear. "I'm wearing this and riding in your carriage!"

HE WAS on his way before anyone could guess his intention. Clayman lashed the spirited horses. The black carriage clattered away, leaving the square at a right angle to Don Benito's retreat. The guard, cracking before the rush of Miramón's victorious troops, had not noted the beginning of the trick. They saw only the famous carriage, and the silk hat that gleamed through dust and smoke.

An officer yelled, waved his saber at what he thought was the headgear of Benito Juárez. His cry made the broken guard stiffen and resist the enemy. Miramón's troops closed in on the town, abandoning their pursuit of the defeated Juarista army. Capturing Juárez was more important than blotting out a dozen regiments.

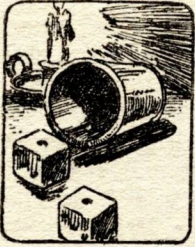
Slugs raked the street. They spattered through the carriage. Clayman slumped for a moment, then recovered. Civilians, watching from the roofs, hurled pots and bricks and beams at the Imperialists who now charged after the vehicle.

Bailey kept his back turned to the pursuers. At times he stiffly lifted the silk hat, acknowledging the shouts of the citizens who cheered what they thought was the escape of Benito

Juárez. In the dust, the billowing smoke, they could not pick details. And this gesture brought more and more soldiers on Bailey's trail.

CHAPTER VI

On to Querétaro



AS Bailey cleared the outskirts, the carriage rocked wildly over boulders, into ditches, and across fields. He saw Juarista fugitives making an easy escape. The whole

advance guard of Miramón's army was after that carriage.

Lancers swung clear of the town, and paused to reform. Others pursued as individuals.

"Whip those fuzztails, get to the highway, or we're sunk!" Bailey cried.

The pursuing horses were tired, the men were weary from an all-night march, and the let down after the tension of hand-to-hand fighting now overcame them. On the other hand, Bailey's four horses were fresh. He was gaining.

Or so he reckoned, until he saw that the enemy was settling down for a long run. If they could not get him with musketry or a quick sprint, they would track him down. But for the moment, Bailey did have the advantage.

Two riders, however, kept close. They had splendid mounts. Both were officers. Their gold braid and their sabers gleamed. They reloaded their revolvers and fired as they galloped.

"Get those ambitious buzzards 'fore they let daylight through us!"

Bailey looked back. One of the pair of men following was Miramón, bent on giving the emperor a personal present — Don Benito's head. The other was an Hungarian hussar. His brass cuirass proved that. The protecting breastplate made him a hard

target for a pistol. And Miramón was worthier game.

Bailey stood up, revealing himself over the back of the careening carriage.

"Hey, there, Miramón!" he shouted. "I dare you to come closer!"

The general recognized the tall figure and the voice. He waved his saber and challenged.

"Wait, *Griego*! You and me! This is excellent!"

But Clayman was not pulling the horses in. The fiery general lost his temper, spurred his own horse. The beast stumbled, just as Bailey cut loose. The rider went down in a heap, and dust hid him. Before the target could appear, the range was too great.

So Bailey drew a fine bead on the other rider. He drilled him between the eyes, and there was a second billow of dust. The horse galloped on, saddle empty. . . .

Two days later, a troop of Juarista cavalry met the black carriage. As they convoyed it back toward Zacatecas, the captain said to Bailey.

"Don Benito wishes to thank you, personally."

"For pulling the pursuit away from him?" Bailey laughed. "Hell, that was fun!"

"But no, *gringo mio*! He was not afraid. *Válgame Dios*, do you not know what happened today?"

Bailey did not. The captain thumped the medals on his chest.

"Victory followed on our embarrassment. General Escobedo caught Miramón at the *Hacienda San Jacinto* and he still chases that traitor. It was simple. All Miramón's efforts went to catching this god-favored black carriage. We circled, we caught him on the flank!"

Later, in Zacatecas, Bailey got all the details together, and learned how hot-headed Miramón had been caught off guard, his army routed. And one hundred and one captured Imperialist officers had been sentenced. The

firing squads had scarcely finished their work when Bailey reported.

Juárez rose to meet him.

"Señor Presidente," Bailey said, "I regret that your hat is full of bullet holes."

Juárez gestured. Another hat was hanging on a peg.

"I had one in reserve for emergencies, *Capitán mío*."

"The treasure, *Señor Presidente*. Will you give me more time!"

"Say no more about it. We have just taken another customs house on the coast, and the emperor cannot make our fifty thousand dollars last forever. Go with us to Quéretaro. We have captured twenty-two cannons.

out, his generals and Mexican followers would be sunk without a chance. They are, anyway, but he's man enough to stick with them."

And on March sixth, the Juarista army surrounded Quéretaro. There were skirmishes, all indecisive. Then General Regules Corona arrived. But in spite of that reinforcement, the emperor might have cut his way through and ridden to the coast, to join the French troops of Marshal Bazaine, who had not yet embarked. Maximilian, however, still stuck with his supporters.

Bailey, watching the siege with field glasses, often saw the emperor. His height, his white uniform, his forked

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

CITY OF BLOOD by Henry Kuttner

A Complete Novelet of the Crusades

PIECES OF HATE by Reeve Walker

A Search for Buried Treasure

STRANDED GUNS by A. Leslie

A Novelet of the Western Plains

They will blow Miramón's fortress around his ears."

THAT was the longest speech that Bailey had heard Don Benito make.

On the evening of the tenth of February, the army heard that Maximilian had left Mexico City, so as to spare the capital a siege. He was heading for Quéretaro, to join Miramón's army.

"He's crazy!" Clayman said to Captain Bailey. "He could have slipped out of the country. He must know what'll happen if Don Benito nails him up there in the mountains."

Bailey shook his head. "Give the devil his due. Maximilian has the old Hapsburg tradition. If he ran

blond beard made him conspicuous. The Juarista snipers in the rifle pits facing the city wasted hundreds of rounds trying to pick off Maximilian, but the range was too great. That was what they said when they came back from outpost duty and gathered about campfires. But Bailey shook his head. He had managed to get too many glimpses of that handsome usurper.

"The poor devil wants to die like a soldier," he said to Clayman. "They're short of grub and fodder, his men are discouraged, and he led them into this mess. That's why he can't die."

"The damn fool!" Clayman spat tobacco juice into the coals.

"But he meant well. As far as I can figure from bits I heard at headquar-

ters today, Maximilian wanted his forces all concentrated so he could dicker for terms, for an honorable surrender for fellows like Miramón, Marquez, Majía."

"You mean, dicker before Don Benito knows the hole card is a deuce?"

Bailey nodded. "Yes. A household officer—López—is slipping through the lines to parley with Escobedo. Either parley or pave the way for his own run-out."

THE next day, they learned why Maximilian courted death. The beautiful Empress Carlotta, who had gone to Europe, months previous, to persuade Napoleon III to face American wrath and let Bazaine's French troops support the shadow throne, was now insane. The ambitious girl who had egged Maximilian into accepting the dangerous crown had cracked under the strain of facing repulses in Europe, for Napoleon III had turned thumbs down on her pleas.

One night, toward the end of March, the Imperialists made a sortie. Muskets crackled, cannons blazed, but it all came to nothing; anyone could see it had been no more than a display of fireworks. Bailey was puzzled until he learned that Marquez and twelve hundred horses had escaped from the city. The Juaristas had made their escape easy.

Spies filtering in and out of the lines had told Juárez why this maneuver was planned. Marquez was to go to Mexico City and Puebla to get Maximilian's remaining garrison, so that the empire's entire forces would be in Querétaro. And the cunning Indian had facilitated that move. The vise was closing.

The Juarista forces now numbered forty thousand, whereas less than a quarter of that number held Querétaro. But when they tried to press their advantage, they were heroically repulsed. Desperation was stiffening the emperor's garrison. And one night,

Bailey went to Don Benito's headquarters.

"*Señor Presidente*," he said, "you do not need that gold any longer. But I cannot go home until I have recaptured and delivered it to you."

"It will be useful after we take Querétaro," Don Benito said. "Although the loss is no reflection on your honor."

"Nevertheless, I will get it, as I promised at Zacatecas."

Juárez smiled. "You *gringos*! You promised to get it if I would spare Jane Kendall. If you failed, naturally I was going to execute you. But later, justice demanded that I pardon you. Now, you want to risk your life to get gold we shall soon have."

"*Señor*," Bailey said steadily. "I am a soldier, and I have to redeem my failure."

The obsidian eyes narrowed. "Are you sure, *mi Capitán*, that you aren't worrying about Jane Kendall? She is in Querétaro, with the Imperialists for whose sake she tricked you in New Orleans."

"I'd heard that, myself," Bailey admitted. "I'm worried. We are good friends, but we always seem to back opposite causes."

"Your fear is unjust," murmured Don Benito. "At Zacatecas, I could not have spared any spy. But as things now stand, I could not let her be harmed."

Nevertheless, that night Bailey passed through the lines to slip into Querétaro. And Clayman went with him.

Hills hemmed in the city, all but one part of which lay in a wide, level valley floor, and that eastern section was on Cerro de la Cruz—the Hill of the Cross. The Querétaro River ran east and west through the northern quarter—a swift, ice-cold stream whose rush blurred the voice of town and camp.

To the southwest, Cerro del Cimarrón's heights dominated the town.

The Juaristas held this crest, and that of San Gregorio, also.

Bailey and his companion wore high crowned hats, *serapes*, and white *pantalones*. They drove four burros loaded with maize and fruit, dried beef, and goat-milk cheeses. Boldly, they went along, and the bell of the leading pack animal heralded their advance.

By night, they could pass as *peones* who had slipped through the Juarista lines to bring rations to the hungry garrison. Tanned, and with their shaggy beards stained dark, they looked the part, particularly if they faced the emperor's foreign soldiers. The Mexicans who supported the Imperialist cause were their main risk, but that could not be avoided.

The Mexico City highway, running back southeast, was the best approach. Once or twice, Juarista sentries fired at the sound of their plodding beasts, but this did not worry Bailey. No one was trying hard to keep a burro train of that small size out of Quéretaro.

But what made Bailey drive his animals off the roads was the clatter of hoofs, and the ripple of musketry, some distance behind. A horseman was galloping recklessly past the pickets which the two Americans had so easily cleared. Juarista yells came from the heights.

"He's through now," Bailey said, a moment later. "They didn't stop him."

The rider was quirting his horse, and mocking the Juaristas whose marksmanship had failed. The reckless dash meant that something important had happened, something that the emperor had to know at once.

"Worth getting it to Don Benito instead," Bailey went on, as he swiftly got to work with some of the cord that lashed the packs on the burros. "Be ready to grab the horse!"

The rider had not a chance. The rope, each end weighted with a rock, hissed out, wrapped about the horseman. The impact swept him from the saddle, arms held to his sides by the coils. He crashed to the hard high-

way, unable to break the fall. His neck was broken.

"WHAT'S he got?" Clayman demanded, leading the captured animal back.

"Dispatches. Sealed." The shape of the pouch, and the leaden discs that secured its mouth, made that clear. "Listen. Instead of taking this stuff to Don Benito, I'm going right into headquarters. Better and quicker than I could as a peddler. This must be bad news. It'll spread, and that'll give me the chance."

"Chance to get killed," Clayman muttered. "Yuh'll be facin' Maximilian, maybe Miramón."

That thought made Bailey's heart thump, as he stripped off the dead courier's uniform and put it on. He ignored Clayman's objections.

"Then I'll drive the burros into town," the tall Texan finally said. "Mebbe I'll be able to give yuh some help when yuh need it."

Bailey laughed as he mounted. "In case I'm flung in the *juzgado*," he said, "you can get me a hacksaw before they back me up to a stone wall."

"I'll tell Jane it's safe for her to come back," Clayman said. "Mebbe that durn fool gal has some sense by now."

But Bailey did not hear that. He was off at a gallop.

CHAPTER VII

Messages for the Emperor



MAXIMILIAN was quartered in the old convent that adjoined the Church of the Cross, at the eastern corner of Quéretaro. The somber building likewise served as barracks for the troops when not on duty.

Sentries in Austrian uniform paced up and down the dark corridors and arcades. They were haggard, weary,

worried; and their faces were pinched from short rations.

Then Bailey met the emperor, simply by refusing to surrender the dispatches to anyone else.

Though it was late, Maximilian was in full uniform. Two tall candles warmed the flesh tints of an oil painting. The lovely Empress Carlotta smiled from the gilded frame. That was enough to give tragedy to that somber room, with its dark, massive table and high-backed Spanish chairs.

Bailey saluted.

"Your Imperial Majesty," he said, "these dispatches were given to me by a dying man. Perhaps I should have handed them to your officers. But it did not seem right to do so. A brave man's last thought was to get them to you."

Maximilian's pale face brightened, and so did his blue eyes. He returned the salute, waved aside the staff officer who stepped forward to spare the imperial hands, and took the dusty case.

"In these times, we are happy to meet loyalty and honor," he murmured.

There was no condescension in that grave voice. This was sincere and hearty praise. Duty justified imposture, yet for a moment Simon Bailey regretted the deception. Maximilian, usurper and invader, was a kindly man, forced by unscrupulous ministers to sign the Black Decree. Bailey was sorry for him.

The emperor's forked beard added dignity to a noble face and stature. The pallor of illness, the slight stoop of shoulders weighted with rank and responsibility. This man was not for war and conquest. Bailey's rush of pity came from the contrast between Maximilian and Benito Juárez.

For an instant, he had an insane urge to cry out, "Ride while you can! I'll help you. You change your mind a hundred times a day, but Juárez never changes!"

He pictured the two, face to face—

a kindly, flexible man against one who was the crystallization of a whole race, dour and unbending. Maximilian's traditions put him above the fear of death, but Juárez came from a race so used to doom that there was no qualm to conquer. Bailey had wondered if Don Benito's revolutionary rabble might not fail, but now he knew Maximilian's end was so certain that this no longer seemed a war, but rather an execution.

That passed in an instant. Standing at attention, he watched the emperor's face, saw the beard twitch, and knew that the carefully hidden Hapsburg chin was not equal to the impact. Then Maximilian straightened.

"Get Colonel López," he said to an aide.

It was now Bailey's time to be shocked. The sharp-faced, smartly turned-out colonel was no stranger. Several times recently he had been in Escobedo's quarters. This man, Maximilian's intimate friend, had free access to Don Benito's general.

"We'd better confer with Miramón and Mejía," the emperor said to López, when he arrived a moment later. "Marquez was defeated at Puebla."

This was becoming ticklish. Miramón was one person Bailey did not want to meet. But one could not walk out on an emperor. One had to be dismissed. And Maximilian, receiving this savage blow, had forgotten that a courier stood at attention before him.

A false move would be conspicuous. Bailey stared at his own reflection in a mirror. There was not a chance that Miramón would fail to recognize him.

"They're all dead men—" The thought raced through Bailey's giddy brain. "Maximilian—Miramón—Marquez—Mejía. It looks like my name ought to start with an 'M'."

MEJIA came in, swarthy and stolid, though infirm from illness and wounds. But López! That handsome *chocolatero*, so appealing

to Empress Carlotta's fancy, and for her sake still kept as a household intimate, was no man to confer with the enemy, now that the vise had closed on Quéretaro.

A TINKLE of spurs sounded a moment later, in the hall. Maximilian's face brightened.

"Ah—General Miramón. We are sorry to disturb you. Please be seated. We have bad news. This brave man—"

He gestured toward Bailey.

Bailey clutched one of the dark stains on his tunic and collapsed. Two sentries came in at Maximilian's call. The emperor told them to carry their valiant comrade to the household physician. The chubby German doctor got out his instruments, expecting to probe for a bullet, or dress a wound that had been neglected.

Bailey had an answer for that.

"Please don't bother. I feel like a fool. I wasn't wounded, just worn out. All riding, no eating. The emperor must think—"

"Ach, no! He called me, his own physician, instead of sending you to an army surgeon. Here, let me get some brandy. Some broth."

Later, when the doctor shuffled out with his candle, Bailey sat up and tried to think things out. The Imperial war chest must be near the emperor's suite. And anyone who got into this section reserved for Maximilian and his staff was in a preferred position; this was much better than coming as a peddler with choice fruits and meat, as Bailey and Clayman had planned.

The tall Texan must be in the tavern they had agreed upon, waiting for the market to open in the morning. Nothing to do but get into the imperial treasury, which was somewhere in a crypt or cell of the convent. In this makeshift capital of Maximilian's, the trick could be turned. But Bailey had started with the idea of taking several days to spy out the situation, and now that he was unex-

pectedly in headquarters, where he could not long remain, he was left confused.

He went to the door, and slipped softly down the dark corridor. Beyond him, sentries guarded the outer approaches to Maximilian's suite, their attention fixed on what came from the street, not on what approached from within.

Bailey paused at the emperor's door. He heard López' persuasive words:

"Your Imperial Majesty, I am confident that an honorable surrender can be arranged. The Juaristas have tried half a dozen times to take the town by assault, and they have failed."

"No, López!" Maximilian said. Juárez would be content to have me surrender and leave the country, but you and Mejía and Miramón—he will show you no mercy. There can be no surrender to save me."

Bailey grimaced. That shadow emperor still did not recognize reality. Márquez, seeing the doom, had made a pretext of going to Mexico City to get reinforcements to attack the Juárez rear, and he had been permitted to slip through the Juarista lines with twelve hundred cavalry. Collusion, treachery. And López likewise knew the truth, so he had gone to confer with Escobedo.

Bailey retraced his steps, and went deep into the somber passages of the convent. Finally he came to a lantern-lighted corner. There was a heavy door, massively bound in iron, locked and sealed. Two sentries stood there, muskets grounded. That they did not walk a beat indicated that this was either a prison or a treasure vault—and the seals proved it was the latter.

"Two," he muttered. "I can handle 'em. But four boxes of gold?"

Slowly he retreated. He had a dozen devices for distracting and tricking the sentries, but marching out to the street with the treasure was something else. Suddenly, it came to him. He could do it, but he would have no

time to find Jane Kendall. Maybe it would be better not to see her until the shadow throne fell, anyway.

So he went back toward the conference room, and crouched in a niche where once the image of a saint had been.

AN HOUR passed, and a second. The tolling of the cathedral bell, in the square outside, marked the chilly march of the night. At last Miramón and Mejía and López took leave of the emperor. They bowed formally, and went separate ways. Bailey followed López.

He encountered the colonel at his own door.

"A moment, *mi señor coronel!*"

López started, turned, stood there with his lantern. The sudden summons at that hour had given him no time to get an orderly to light his way. He frowned.

"*Que carai!*" he said suspiciously. "For a wounded man—"

Bailey's pistol was the answer to that.

"Figure it for yourself," the Yankee officer said, as he leveled the weapon. "I brought true news to the emperor, but otherwise I am not what I seem. Nor are you, either, you double-dealing *chocolatero!* You do not remember me, but spies are everywhere, and I saw you, leaving General Escobedo's quarters."

"Spy!" the colonel muttered, confusion displacing fury.

"You think the emperor has none?" Bailey laid it on. "He looks trusting enough, but he's no fool. Why do you think I pretended to faint from exhaustion? To keep you from recognizing me. You might have seen me when I saw you, on these nights—"

Bailey gave the hour of the one visit he had particularly noted. "Now, I have not yet reported to the emperor."

The colonel forgot the insults. That proved how shaken he was.

"Listen here!" he said hastily. "I am not a traitor. I work for the emperor's good."

"Do you think he'd believe that?" sneered Bailey. "Do you?"

Bailey was gambling. Perhaps, relying on a trusted friendship that had survived revolutionary hatred, López had ventured into camp to bribe Escobedo. But the colonel's answer reassured Bailey.

"You are a man of daring and judgment. It is true, I went secretly, without authority. If you discredit me, I lose the last chance of serving a man whose fantastic code of honor makes him stay here to be murdered by that Juárez! Whatever your duty is, you must set it aside. Help me trick Maximilian into saving himself."

Bailey shook his head. "Marquez was a traitor. The Juaristas deliberately let him take twelve hundred horses through their lines because they knew he would not return with reinforcements. Unfortunately, Porfirio Diaz did not know that, and cut them to pieces. You're a traitor, and I—" he thumped his chest—"I am the faithful servant of Maximilian von Hapsburg, Emperor of Mexico! Go now, let him tell you how the appearance of bloodstains made him send me to his personal physician." Bailey cocked the heavy Colt. "March! Or I drop you."

"You can't! You fool, I've been—"

"A member of the household. You danced with the Empress Carlotta. You commanded her personal bodyguard in the capital. Yes. But I can shoot and run. Or shoot and stay, knowing my duty was well done!"

Sweat cropped out on López' sleek face.

"I am not afraid of that!" he tried to boast. "But only I can save Maximilian. On my word of honor. Has that ever been questioned?"

"It has never been tested by trouble and defeat," Bailey said coldly.

López' shoulders sagged as though

his epaulettes weighed a hundred pounds apiece.

"Then shoot!"

"Maybe I am unreasonable," Bailey said. "Since the emperor has such a true friend in you, I am needless. I shall leave, so that if you make any mistakes, I will not see. But I can't leave the country empty-handed."

López took him for one of the foreigners in the imperial service, which was logical. Likewise, López was Mexican enough to see the point when a man remembered that it is embarrassing to leave a country with empty hands.

"I can arrange for you to travel in comfort," he said quickly.

This was Bailey's opening. He pressed it. López, one of the emperor's intimates, could easily open the treasure cell. The sentries might gossip, but before it reached Maximilian's ears, Querétaro would be betrayed to the Juaristas. This was no more than a guess, but the first half was soon confirmed.

CHAPTER VIII

No Place for Emperors



LOADING the four chests of gold on the burros which Bailey and López got from the tavern was a job for the sentries. Clayman should have been asleep in the courtyard with his animals, but he was not there. After all, Clayman could take care of himself, and duty took precedence.

"Colonel," Bailey said to López, "you have only to get me through the lines of the Juaristas. You can arrange for a pack train to pass, which is more than I could do."

Bailey had to leave the four burros, but there was no help for that. He had to accompany the colonel to the stables, to see that there was no

slip in getting horses. A sleepy hostler crawled out of a pile of fodder and saddled two *palominos*. In a few minutes, Bailey and López mounted. The Mexican colonel, disarmed except for his saber, took the lead down the rutted alley that led to the Plaza of the Cross.

A detachment of troops were marching across the square.

"Careful, Colonel," Bailey said, in a low voice. "Your epaulettes are clear in the dark, and I can put a shot right between them."

This was ticklish business. López was no coward. His ready acquiescence put Bailey on edge. If actually a traitor to Maximilian, López would hate to see another supposed turncoat walk off with the gold. Sweat cropped out on Bailey. Up until now, tension had kept him cool and reckless, but now that he had the treasure, he was shaken. It seemed absurd, impossible. He drew his revolver, lest his quaking hand fail to find his gun in a pinch.

López was now at the mouth of the alley. The hoofs of his mount clacked metallically on the ancient paving. Then the burros, unshod, *click-clocked*, with short paces, trotting to keep up with a horse's walk. The relief guard was in the center of the square.

They halted in place.

"*Que pasa?*" the officer challenged.

López answered, giving his name, and then returned the salute.

Bailey's breath exhaled, shudderingly. He had López buffaloed!

Then Bailey's heart stopped and with the promise of never resuming its beat. A man came from behind a pilaster at the alley mouth. The hammer of a revolver clicked on Bailey's left. Simultaneously, a hand caught his wrist. Someone was popping up from his right.

Before he could jerk his gun hand free, and fire in either direction, a man muttered:

"Get off that horse before I blow you off!"

It was Clayman, still wearing his high-crowned hat and *serape*. A long and sickening instant passed before Bailey recognized the voice.

"What in hell?" he snapped then.

Clayman gasped. "Damn it, Captain! That uniform fooled me. Back there, I didn't have a chance to see the messenger, and that hombre ahead, too. My burros missin'. I seen 'em come in, so I waited to find out what for."

It took just that long for Bailey to realize that the hand that had blocked his revolver was soft, feminine, trembling. He glanced to his right and saw the white face and the shawl that concealed the girl's hair.

"Simon, I wanted to get out," Jane Kendall whispered. "Go home."

"Colonel López is getting me through the lines," Bailey answered. "You two drive the burros. I'll follow."

Jane wore the dark garments of a *peon* woman. For her to plod along with Clayman would not attract anyone's notice. During the moments it took to cross the plaza, Bailey asked himself, over and over, "How come? Why's she so glad to see me? Or is she scared out?"

Clayman had found Jane, and must have explained his presence in Quéretaro. She had willingly accompanied him. But all this was beyond Bailey, nor did he have time to ponder. The caravan had scarcely reached the outskirts of the town when there was a ragged volley, just ahead. Then shouts, answering fire.

BULLETS whisked overhead, and up the slope. Bailey saw spurts of flame. He spurred his horse and shouted to López:

"Not a move, you! If this is your trickery, call it off or I'll blow you in half!"

Then Bailey picked words out of the confusion; there were shouts.

"*Viva Juárez! Viva Juárez!*"

And men came at the double, bayonets fixed.

Bailey and Clayman drove the burros off the road.

"They've broken through," he cried, and spurred his horse to within arm's reach of López. "Juárez has surprised the outposts!"

The alarm had reached the garrison. Church bells clanged, civilians tumbled out of their houses, shrieking and chattering. Soldiers poured out of the barracks. Somewhere, in that confused tangle, Emperor Maximilian was preparing for his last stand.

"You did this," Bailey said to López, as the panic-stricken Imperialists surged back toward town.

López did not answer. The advancing Juaristas were not firing. Their measured tread spoke of a deliberate advance, not a rush to overwhelm by surprise. López shouted to the approaching horsemen. He called Escobedo's name. The general and his staff trotted forward and out of line.

"Now what, López?"

"This fellow!" López gasped. "Trying to make away with the imperial treasury, before the town fell. Seize him, his burros. Four chests of gold!"

Bailey laughed. "Hello, General!" he cut in. "If you want Maximilian's treasure, you better hurry on. This is what I came to get, and I've got it. López just made a little mistake, that's all."

Escobedo recognized him.

"Get along and mind your business, *Señor*," he said to López. "You have safe conduct in your possession. If you think you can talk Don Benito out of a share of this gold, you're welcome to try, but"—he spat—"I think you've served your purpose."

The words and Escobedo's tone left Bailey no further doubts. López had instructed the outposts to admit the Juarista troops. But in the days to come there would be many questions as to that. Some would claim that López admitted the Juaristas by or-

der of Maximilian himself. Others would insist that López was bribed. Still others would declare that the colonel acted in what he believed was the emperor's best interests, never dreaming that Juárez would insist on a death sentence.

"*Mi General*," Bailey said to Escobedo as he rode on, "there doesn't seem to be much fighting to be done."

The general listened a moment to the uproar. There was little firing.

the highway down which the advancing Juaristas marched, Bailey said: "I'm still a bit groggy."

"About getting the treasure?" Jane clung to him and shivered a little. "The craziest thing I ever heard of. And the bravest."

"What I meant was, I still can't believe I've found you, and that you are willing to go back."

"I knew I wasn't in danger from Benito Juárez. Captain Clayman told me."



*Sigurd the Dane Roams the Streets
of Byzantium and the Deserts
of Asia Minor in Search of
Chivalric Honor in*

CITY OF BLOOD

Complete Novelet of the Crusades

By HENRY KUTTNER

Featured in Next Month's Issue



"If Maximilian hasn't got a horse by now, it is deplorable," he said. "*Valgame Dios*, some fool is making a stand at Cerro de la Campana! When they should use this chance!"

This was the hill at the western flank of the city. An officer joined Bailey as escort. Then Escobedo rode into Querétaro. Whether or not Maximilian escaped, the shadow throne had fallen.

Bailey gave Jane a hand, and then helped her to the saddle in front of him. As they rode along the side of

"What else did he tell you?"

Jane looked up, and in the gloom, he could just catch the gleam of her eyes.

"That you were worried about me. That you'd forgiven me for the trick Miramón and I played you in New Orleans, and outside of Zacatecas. That if you recovered the treasure for Juárez, your services to President Johnson would make it easy enough for you to get me back into the States without facing charges as Miramón's accomplice. Really, Simon, I never

expected Miramón to resort to such a murderous trick!"

"I didn't think you did," he admitted. "And I can clear your way back to the States. Among other things, New Orleans has another military governor, not as vindictive as General Purdy. And martial law won't last much longer anyway. Are you still a Rebel, Jane, and still in favor of emperors?"

She shook her head, and her curls brushed his cheeks.

"Not after seeing an empire from the inside, Simon. I saw how double-dealers made a fool out of Maximilian, saw how Maximilian himself, such a nice, pleasant man, was so horribly incompetent! I knew that the only reason he was emperor was because of his family. I think our way is better."

"Even with Yankees tramping on the South?"

"Even with Yankees, Simon. Captain Clayman, the way he stuck with you, helped you—after you'd been enemies—finally set me thinking. You fighting men didn't hate each other. Why then should . . . Oh, Simon, I've been an awful idiot, but at the time it seemed we Southerners should help Maximilian!"

The following day, Bailey heard the news. The emperor, instead of making good his escape, had deliberately thrown away his chance. He would not abandon his generals to Benito Juárez' wrath.

"I promised myself Miramón's hide, but I can't get it now," Bailey said to Jane. "I don't even want it, I guess."

"Is he dead? I'm sorry. A brave fellow, and a grand gentleman."

"He will be, soon. He was captured, along with Mejía. They wouldn't leave the emperor."

Later, Bailey and Jane and Clayman went to Benito Juárez. He received them at once. The recovery of the fifty thousand dollars had given Don Benito an uncommon respect for

Americans. He forced that mechanical smile, rose and bowed to Jane.

"Señorita, I have congratulated Captain Bailey. It seems that he has decided to love his enemy. And that this is mutual. Accept my best wishes. I am happy now that we did not catch you and General Miramón, just outside of Zacatecas."

"Señor Presidente," Bailey said, "you have been kind enough to thank me for trifles I have done for your cause. Let me ask a favor. The life of Miguel Miramón. A brave man and a loyal one to the emperor he mistakenly served. I promised myself a meeting with him. If he faces a firing squad, I will have to break that promise."

"You can now, Don Benito," Jane cut in. "You're victorious."

"Captain," Juárez said, "how is it that you have not asked me to spare Maximilian?" He pointed at a heap of messages and telegrams. "Everyone else has."

"I also have a telegram. From the President of the United States, asking me to presume on my personal favor with you, and intervene. In a way, Don Benito, I am for the moment an ambassador. Our President's personal representative."

Juárez' brows rose. He smiled a little. So that is why you went to Querétaro? To prove your faith, later to influence me?"

"Yes."

DON BENITO folded his arms. Bailey read the answer before the relentless Indian spoke.

"In spite of the great kindness, your president showed me, in spite of your own valor and high sense of honor, I must refuse. The sentence of the court-martial is demanded by the public welfare. For the good of Mexico, Maximilian of Austria and his two generals must die in the morning. It is not a monarch who will face our rifles, but monarchy. We will not execute merely several

reactionaries, but reaction. It will not be a few traitors who die, but treason itself!"

Bailey knew then that if all the rulers of the world appeared in person they could not win a pardon for those three gallant gentlemen. He bowed to the man in the frock coat.

"That black carriage which you drove with such distinction, Captain Bailey," Don Benito said. "Consider it at your disposal for your trip to your home."

Once outside the headquarters building, Jane said:

"Simon, I've nothing to pack up, and you and Captain Clayman haven't much more. Let's get out—now. The more I see of this country the more I think that Rebel and Yankee haven't such awful differences to settle."

So they left Quéretaro before Maximilian and Miramón and Mejía went up the slope of Cerro de las Campanas to prove to Europe that the new world was no place for emperors.

●
NEXT MONTH

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On the Road to Amurang

By LOUIS L'AMOUR

Author of "From Here to Banggai," "East of Gorontalo," etc.



Ponga Jim whirled to face Brophy

Ponga Jim Searches the Deadly Southern Waters for Undersea Craft—and Discovers That the Enemy Employs Underhanded Craftiness Instead!

WHEN he reached the road, "Ponga Jim" Mayo hesitated. Behind him, the wide, cool veranda of the Dutch Club echoed with soft laughter, the click of billiards, and the tinkle of glasses. There was a glow in the sky over Gländestan Way. But Ponga Jim's eyes turned toward the Puncchar Wharves, where the *Semiramis* was tied.

His frown deepened. Balikpapan

was no place for an empty ship. But it was better than having it at the bottom of the Molukken Passage, like the *Silver Lady*.

He hitched his shoulder to shift the heavy Colt automatic. Abruptly he faded into the shadows of the shrubbery, gun in hand.

"Jim," a voice called softly. "Hold it."

A drunken seaman was staggering down the road in stained dungarees and a grizzle of gray beard. He lurched closer, peering into Jim's face. Ponga Jim slipped the gun back into its holster.

"Damn you, William! If this is the way the British Intelligence works, the enemy will have to fumigate to get rid of you!"

MAJOR ALBERT chuckled. Then he grew serious.

"Jim, don't you own the *Semiramis* now?"

"If you call a down payment owning it. But the way things look, I'll never get a cargo for her. She's lying over at Puncar Wharves, as empty as my pockets will be tomorrow."

"What's the matter? Are the ship-
pers afraid?"

Jim spat disgustedly. "Do you blame them? The *Arafura*, gone without a trace somewhere in the Sea of Celebes. The *Viti Queen*, last sighted off Flores. And now it's the *Silver Lady*, with a thousand tons of tin. In case you don't know, tin is valuable stuff. And a half dozen sailing craft gone."

"I know, Jim. Japan has threatened for years to take all the Far Eastern Dutch and British colonies if England went to war in Europe. There won't be a British or Dutch ship in the Indies within thirty days!"

Ponga Jim whistled. "Submarines?"

"We don't know. Subs demand a base."

Jim stared thoughtfully down the dark road. Thousands of islands, with lagoons, streams, and bays—

"You know all these damn islands, Jim. Now, if you were going to hide a submarine base, where would you do it?"

"There's a lot of places on Halmaheira, on Buru, or Ceram. But there are places along the coast of Celebes, too. Nobody really knows these islands yet, William. But if I were going to base subs, I'd pick a spot on the Gulf of Tolo."

"That's Celebes, isn't it?" Major Albert asked.

"Yeah, an' not a track or clearing for miles and miles. A lonely country with cliffs and canyons six hundred feet straight up and down. Waterfalls and rapids that plunge over a wilderness of rocks. William, there's jungle back there that would turn a monkey's stomach sick with fear!"

"Listen, Jim," Major Albert said slowly. "I'm going to do you a favor. In return you can do me one. Li Wan Chuang has a consignment to deliver that means a contract for him. The *Silver Lady* was to handle it. The cargo goes to Amurang, Menado, and Wahai."

"What a pal you are! Between Menado and Wahai is the Molukken Passage. And on the bottom of the Passage is the *Silver Lady*! You wouldn't put a guy on the spot, would you?"

The major grinned cheerfully. "You wanted a cargo, didn't you? All I ask is that you keep an eye open for a sub base."

"An' go prowling around the Gulf of Tolo and get my rudder shot off? Listen, you scenery bum. I'll keep my eyes open, but I'm not getting the *Semiramis* sunk, running errands for you."

"Ssh!" Major Albert whispered suddenly. His voice became querulous, whining. "I sye, Guv'nor. Let a chap 'ave the price of a beer?"

"A beer?" Jim snapped harshly. "Here's a guilder. That ought to get you off the streets."

Jim spun on his heel and strode down the road. A car swung around a bend behind him. For an instant, its headlights sharply revealed three men. Ponga Jim's breath came sharply, and his hands slid from his pockets. He walked toward them.

Everyone in the islands knew Pete Lucieno. Short, fat, and oily, he participated in everything crooked in the Indies. With him were Sag Dormie and a huge man with a great moonlike face. Sag Dormie was known all too well in the islands. He had done time in the States and Australia. Some said he'd escaped from Devil's Island penal colony. He was kill-crazy. The big man was new. Looking up into his face, Ponga Jim felt his hackles rising. The man's eyes were dead.

Years before, in the States, Ponga Jim had been climbing a mountain. Pulling his head over the edge of a great, flat rock, he found himself staring into the ugly eyes of a rattlesnake. That snake's eyes had been blank like these.

Ponga Jim looked at Pete and grinned insolently.

"What are you doing in Borneo? I thought they were putting a bounty on rats."

PETE LUCIENO'S eyes narrowed. "At least my ships have cargoes," he said softly. "They don't lie rusting at the dock."

"Yeah? Some people will carry anything for money. But you can have that stuff. I've got my own cargo. Sailing tomorrow for Amurang, Menado, and Wahai."

"Where?" Sag Dormie leaned forward intently. Jim noticed that Pete's eyes were eager. "Taking the Molukken Passage?"

"You bet! Want to come along? There's always room for rats in the bilges." Even as Jim watched Sag, he sensed the real danger was in the placid, fleshy man beside him.

Sag's hatchet face twisted into a sardonic smile.

"Through the Molukken Passage? I want to live a few years yet!"

"You are too sure of yourself, Captain," Lucieno said, his beady eyes gleaming from under his brows. "What of the *Silver Lady*?"

"Cap Marlin was my friend," Ponga Jim said coldly. "He was sunk. I only hope the guys who got him come after me."

He brushed by them and strode along the road. There was work to do, and a cargo to load before daybreak. Yet he was uneasy. It has been only a matter of weeks since he had thrown Pete Lucieno for a loss by preventing the landing of munitions on the coast of New Guinea. Lucieno would never forgive that. What was more natural than that he should know this threat that hung over the masts of British and Dutch shipping? Who else would dare locate a submarine base in the islands?

Jim walked up the gangway. A slim, dapper young Chinese stepped from the shadows behind the companionway.

"Captain Mayo? I am Li Wan Chuang. I have been informed you would transport some cargo for me. I took the responsibility of ordering it on the docks in readiness."

"Yeah—okay," Jim said, startled. "You surprised me. Chinese in these waters don't often speak good English. On second thought, neither do the white men."

"I went to the University of California for two years and took it very seriously. Then I went to the University of Southern California for two years. Now I take nothing seriously."

"We're going to get along," Ponga Jim grinned. "Do you know the chance we're taking?"

Li nodded. "But I must make delivery at once. And you have a reputation for getting results, Captain Mayo."

"It'll take more than that," Jim said crisply. He spun on his heel. "Mr.

Millan! Get those hatches open and tell Haynes to power the winches."

It was hours later when he went below. The *Semiramis* was already dipping her bow into the heavy seas. The deck was still a confusion of lines and gear. It was going to be good to lie down. And he'd need all the rest he could get.

Opening the door, he stepped into his cabin. The wind caught the door, jerking it from his hand. He turned and pushed it shut.

When he looked around again, he stared into a gun muzzle. Beyond Sag Dormie, Pete Lucieno and the other man were sitting on a couch.

JIM hesitated. It was only for the flicker of an eye, but he found there wasn't a chance to shoot it out. Sag had him covered, yet was out of the line of fire of Lucieno and the big man. Ponga Jim relaxed.

"Visitors, I see. Just where do you boys think you're going?"

"Dussel thought this would be a good way to go to—to Menado," Sag said. "So we moved in when you weren't looking. I've been wanting to see how tough you were." He struck suddenly, smashing the back of his hand across Jim's lips.

Ponga Jim felt something burst inside and then dribble away, leaving him cold with anger. But Sag Dormie's gun was steady, and he did not move. Lucieno had a gun out, too. Mayo tasted blood in his mouth. He started to lift his hand to his mouth. The gun butt was just inside his coat—

"He's got a gun, Sag," Lucieno said. "In a shoulder holster. He carries it so always."

Sag jerked the gun from Mayo's holster and stuck it in his belt.

"I'll handle this. You won't need a gun any more, Captain Ponga Jim Mayo."

Dussel moved his big body, and the settee creaked.

"You are to proceed as if nothing

had happened, Captain Mayo," he said. "You will go to Amurang, discharge cargo there, then on to Menado. I trust you will be discreet. Otherwise it might be necessary to take steps."

"You think you'll get away with this?" Jim queried casually. "You got to go top-side sometime. What happens when the crew finds out?"

Dussel smiled, his pulpy flesh folding back like sodden dough.

"They know already. The last two cases you hoisted aboard contained my men. By now they have taken command. Your crew will do the work. My men will superintend it. Job Dussel does not make mistakes."

"I wonder about that. Do you think I'm going to take this lying down? And when this is over, what happens?"

"It is immaterial to me how you take this. When this is over, you and your ship will lie at the bottom of the Molukken Passage."

Dussel's voice was utterly final. For the first time in his life, Ponga Jim felt a rush of desperation. His eyes met Dussel's and fastened there. In the gross, white body before him was cold brutality, a ruthlessness almost reptilian. This man would stop at nothing.

Ponga Jim pushed the cap back on his head and slipped his thumbs behind the broad leather belt.

"Nothing to lose, eh?" he said. "I like it that way, *Herr* Dussel. You guys can pilot this ship. These are dangerous waters. But if I get knocked off anyway, what's it to me?"

Dussel's heavy-lidded eyes gleamed.

"I thought you would understand, Captain. You will obey orders carefully. You have heard of the Malay boot, Captain? It is child's play to some of the tortures I could use. If you don't obey—" He smiled. "But you will."

Ponga Jim shrugged. "You win."
Job Dussel's face remained folded back in a flabby smile.

Turning, Ponga Jim went topside. Daylight had come, and the sun was sparkling on the choppy sea. Thoughtfully he climbed the companionway to the wheel-house.

Slug Brophy, his chief mate, was standing watch. His tough, hard-bitten features were surly. In either wing of the bridge lounged a man with a Luger automatic. There was another in the wheel-house. When Jim walked into the chart room, the man followed to the door, standing aside to let Brophy enter.

"Keep everything quiet, Slug," Jim said. "We hold this course until we get out of the Strait. We're calling at Amurang and Menado before we make the Molukken Passage, then south to Wahai."

Ponga Jim paused. The guard was still standing in the door. Jim's finger touched the chart.

"I expect *Herr* Dussel to take over after we get into the Passage." Jim touched the chart again, and his voice was precise. "We'll have to be careful right here. It's a bad spot, where things usually happen. Until then it should be plain sailing."

Slug nodded. "Okay, Cap. I get it."

The days were bright and sunny. The old *Semiramis* rolled along over the sea, doing her ten knots without a hitch. The crew moved carefully. Ponga Jim slept on the settee in the chart room. No further words were spoken. Yet he knew the crew was ready and waiting. But they didn't get a chance. *Herr* Dussel remained below, usually in conference with Lucieno.

Sag Dormie was wearing two guns openly now, and there were ten armed white men. Slowly Ponga Jim's spirits ebbed, but he continued to watch. There was bound to be a break.

It was almost midnight, and he was to go on watch. He swung his feet down from the settee. Pulling on his woven-leather sandals, he heard the lookout sound the bells, warning of a ship to starboard.

Instantly he was on his feet. He could see the squat, powerful mate on the bridge. Not far away, the two guards engaged in low-voiced conversation. The guard in the wheel-house was nodding against the bulkhead. It was one chance in a million, and Jim took it.

His hand groped for the switch controlling the light on the topmast. He began switching the light on and off, his eyes intent on the topmasts of the approaching ship.

LI WAN CHUANG, BALIKPAPPAN,
ENEMY ABOARD GET WORD M. W.
A. SIGNED MAYO.

He was sending the message the second time when one of the guards saw the flickering light. As the guard leaped from the deck of the wheel-house, Jim slammed a vicious right to his chin. He toppled back. Just as the two guards jammed in the port door, Jim sprang out. A bullet shrieked after him. He went down the companionway, crashed into *Herr* Dussel, just issuing from the captain's cabin.

Mayo hurled a terrific right at Dussel, and missed. A smashing right sprawled him to the deck. He sprang to his feet, amazed at the huge man's astonishing speed. Jim stabbed out with a wicked left. He might as well have hit a wall. A powerful blow struck him on the chin, and he rolled back against the bulkhead. Before he could get in the clear, two more vicious punches hit him.

STAGGERING, Jim tried to crouch. An uppercut jerked him erect. A lightninglike right cross sent him spinning. Dussel followed, for a killing punch. Jim struggled to his feet, rolled away, then circled warily.

He wanted to tear into the giant, battle him to the wall and beat him down. But there was no time for that. Even if he won, there were the other men.

Job Dussel was crowding him into a corner. Jim backed away carefully. Suddenly he reached back and grabbed the rail. He kicked out viciously. The blow caught Dussel in the chest, staggered him across the deck.

With the agility of a panther, Jim leaped over the rail to the main deck.

He landed running. A bullet smashed into the hatch coaming nearby. Another one whipped by his ears. He threw himself to the deck, landed on one shoulder. He rolled over to momentary safety behind a winch.

Something hard lay under his hand—a wooden wedge used for battening a hatch. The sky had clouded over, and a few spattering drops of rain were falling. In the glare of occasional lightning, he could see four men with rifles on the bridge. Two more were on the captain's deck, where he had battled Dussel.

Coming forward were Sag Dormie and three thugs. Behind him was the tightly battened No. 1 hatch. Beyond that was the fo'c'stle, above it the fo'c'stle-head, and nothing else but a spare ventilator lashed to the steam-pipe housing, and a small hatch into the forepeak. Of course there was the anchor winch. But he couldn't see a possible hiding place.

Instinctively Jim knew these men were out to kill him. Crawling to his feet, grasping the wedge, he waited. At a distant flash of lightning, he hurled the wedge. He had the satisfaction of hearing the solid smack of wood against flesh. A gun roared, but it was a chance shot. He knew he hadn't been seen.

He reached the forepeak, waited tensely. Aft, on the bridge, he heard Dussel roaring.

"Go ahead, you fools! He's not armed!"

It was only a matter of minutes. He was trapped. The forepeak was a hole without exit. Behind him was the bow, dipping slightly with the roll of the ship.

He heard a moan on the ladder to

port, then one to starboard. He crouched. A thought struck him. He crept close to the rail. He heard two men reach the fo'c'stle-head on the port side, not twenty feet away. Someone else was just stepping from the companionway, even closer.

Ponga Jim knew he could hesitate no longer. He crawled through the rail and lowered himself over the side of the ship. The bow dipped. For an instant he felt a wave of panic.

Clinging desperately, he grabbed through the hole of the bow chock. A slip meant a plunge into the dark waters below. He shifted his other hand to the chock, then lowered himself into the flukes of the anchor.

It was a wild gamble, but his only chance. He thanked all the fates that the *Semiramis* was blunt-bowed. A light flashed on, off, then on again.

"Chief!" Dormie shouted, his voice incredulous. "He's gone. He's disappeared!"

"Search the forepeak, you damned numbskull!" Dussel roared. "If that devil gets away, I'll kill you. Search the fo'c'stle, too."

Crouching on the flukes of the anchor, Ponga Jim waited tensely. The old barge would soon be dipping her bows under. After that his time would be short. Feet pounded on the deck. He heard the men cursing.

"Maybe he slipped past," Dormie grumbled. "It's dark enough. He couldn't hide here."

A WAVE splashed over Ponga Jim's feet. The bow dipped and black water swept over him. He clung to the anchor, shivering.

Minutes passed. Feet mounted the ladder again. He heard a man muttering. Then the fellow walked across the deck and stood by the bulwark overhead.

Another sea drenched Jim to the skin. He clung to the flukes, trying to keep his teeth still. The ship gave a sickening lunge. His feet fell clear, and for a moment he hung clear as

the bow lifted. Then lightning flashed.

As he pulled himself up, he saw a man leaning over the bulwark. It was Longboy, one of his own crew.

With a roar, a huge sea swept over Jim. The *Semiramis* lifted her bow.

"P-s-s-t!" he hissed sharply. Longboy looked down, startled. "Get a line," Jim whispered. "It's the skipper." The man wheeled from the rail. In an instant, a line dangled in front of Jim's face. He went up, hand over hand. Just as the bow dipped under another big one, Jim tumbled on deck.

"Lookout!" a hoarse voice shouted. "Come to the bridge."

"Getting too rough here," Jim commented. "They'll have you stand watch there. Tell Brophy I'm safe, but be careful. Then you three stand by. I'm going to start something, and damned quick!"

As Longboy hurried aft, Ponga Jim went down the companionway, into the fo'c'stle. What he wanted now was a weapon. It was dark inside.

Suddenly a cigarette glowed. It was a guard. In the faint red glow of the cigarette he saw the glint of metal. The guard's head turned.

Ponga Jim swung. He had only the mark of the glowing cigarette, but it was enough. He felt bone crunch under his fist. The man crumpled. Jim struck a match.

A frightened face peered from the curtains of a bunk, then another.

"Out of those bunks now!" Jim snapped. "I'm taking over." He picked up the guard's Luger, fished two clips from his pocket. He turned on the powerful Lascar behind him. "Where are these fellows? You just came off watch, didn't you?"

Abdul nodded. "Two mans in crew's mess. Two mans below. One man on poop-deck. Three on bridge. Small fat man, he sleep. Two other mans sleep. Big fat man, he talk thees Dormie."

"Right. Abdul, you get that man on the poop-deck. Then you, Hassan, Mohamet, Chino, get the two men be-

low. Chino, slip on this man's coat and cap. Go to the ladder an' call them. They'll come up."

"Yes, Tuan. We understan'." The four men slipped out on deck, their naked feet soundless in the rising storm.

Ponga Jim turned to the two men who remained. They were short and powerful men, alike as two peas. Both wore green turbans.

"Sakim, you and Selim go aft. One of you tell Millan. Then meet me by the crew's mess."

Dampness touched his face. He stood grasping the rail. A wave, black and glistening rolled up, then swirled by. A storm of spray swept across the deck. He tasted salt on his lips. Rain and spray beat against his face. The green starboard light stared down at him, a solitary eye. It was going to be a bad time before morning.

HE STARTED aft, walking fast, his knees bending to the roll of the ship. Job Dussel wanted a showdown, and he was going to get it. Jim couldn't wait for Menada, not even for Amurang. Maybe his message would get to Li Wan Chuang, maybe not. It was a chance he couldn't afford to take. Major Albert had said that not a British or Dutch ship would arrive for days.

What the plan was, he could only guess. One thing he knew—they had done for Cap Marlin and the *Silver Lady*. Now they threatened peaceful vessels that carried no munitions, no soldiers, only traded quietly among the islands. Ponga Jim's jaw set hard, and his eyes narrowed.

Suddenly he laughed. He caught the rail of the companionway to the deck outside his cabin, swung up. His hand was on the door, the Luger ready. A light flashed across him from the bridge. The Luger snapped up and roared. The light crashed out. He heard the tinkle of falling glass, then someone moaned. There was a shout from the wheel-house.

Ponga Jim jerked the door open.

"Get 'em up!" he roared. He stopped, amazed. The room was empty!

He sprang inside, rushed to the adjoining cabin. It was also empty. Wheeling, he raced for the door. From above came a shout, a shot. Aft, he heard sounds of confusion. He leaped to the deck outside his cabin door. A blast of wind and spray struck his face.

A guard stood in the opening of the amidships passage. Even as Jim's eyes caught the flash of movement, the rifle roared. A shot clipped by his head. Jim fired. The man staggered, then jerked up the rifle again. Jim fired again. The man dropped the rifle and grabbed his stomach with both hands.

Jim made the bridge in two jumps. He came face to face with Brophy. The Irishman was grinning.

"Everything under control, Cap! You got one, I got one, an' the other got away. Get Dussel, Dormie?"

Jim's brow creased. He was staring aft. Something had slipped up somewhere.

"No. They weren't in the cabin."

He strode into the wheel-house. Longboy was standing there with a rifle. The man at the wheel was grinning.

"Steady as she goes," Jim said. He turned to Longboy. "Get in the chart room and open the port aft. Watch carefully. Shoot to kill."

Abdul appeared around the corner of the deck-house. Behind him were Chino and Hassan. When they reached the bridge, Ponga Jim looked quickly from one to the other.

"Two we kill. Mohamet, he die, too."

Ponga Jim sighed wearily. "Chino, you stand by here. Brophy, keep this bridge. Don't let anybody but our men come up."

Jim slipped cartridges into the Luger. He started down the companionway. It was blowing a gale

now. Every few minutes the sea came roaring over the bow and swept aft, gurgling in the scuppers.

Selim was standing in the door of the galley when they went aft. Sakim was just beyond. Both were watching the door of the crew's mess.

"How many?" Ponga Jim asked.

"Two. They stay still, Tuan. Something funny."

Ponga Jim stepped quickly to the mess room door. The two men sitting at the table were dead. One was the man he had shot in the passage. The other was probably one of those killed below. They had been propped up to delay pursuit.

FIVE men killed, and one of his own. Gunner Millan came running down the passage, gun in hand. "Where'd they go? What the devil's happening?"

Ponga Jim shrugged grimly. "I wish I knew. We got five of them. There are five left, besides Dussel, Lucieno and Sag Dormie. We got them out-numbered two to one, but half our boys are on duty."

"Listen, Cap," said Slug Brophy, running. "That guy Dussel radioed some ship. I heard him tell Lucieno they were going to meet us in Himana Bay."

"That's the answer," Jim cried. "Dussel decided to hole up until help comes. He doesn't want to waste his men."

"But where is he?" Millan asked.

"Somewhere aft. Either the poop or below." Ponga Jim turned to Brophy. "You better get back on that bridge. No traffic in here, but you never can tell. Swing north about thirty degrees. I'll give those guys at Himana something to think about."

Brophy went forward, teetering with the roll of the ship. Jim motioned to Selim.

"You an' Sakim stand by with the rifles. If one of them shows his noggin, blast it off. Abdul, you an' Hassan turn in an' get some sleep. Gunner,

radio Amurang, Gorontalo, or some place. Get in touch with Major Albert or Li Wan Chuang. Try to get some dope on a converted merchantman."

"You don't think it's a sub?" Millan asked.

"If it was, they'd never pick Himana Bay. There's a native village, and a sub would attract too much attention. It's only a few hours across the peninsula to Gorontalo. An armed freighter could lay there a week."

Dawn broke, with the sun bright and the sea choppy. Ponga Jim was drinking coffee in the wheel-house when Selim came up with a rush.

"Men gone!" he shouted. "He take boat off poop. All gone!"

"What?" Jim demanded. "Well, maybe it's good riddance."

He stood up and raised the binoculars.

"Selim! Get below and turn out the crew. Send Millan to me."

Gunner Millan came running. He was minus a shirt, but had strapped on a gun. Ponga Jim turned quickly.

"Go aft and jerk the cover off Number Five. Then hoist out that gun you'll find in the 'tween decks under canvas. I want it mounted aft. You know how to handle that. Lucky this damned old barge is a war veteran an' still carries her gun mounting."

"Where'd you get the gun?" Millan asked.

Jim grinned. "I knocked over a load of munitions a few weeks ago. That gun looked good, so I kept it and sold the rest. Unless I'm mistaken, we're going to have the fight of our lives. I didn't get the idea until Selim told me Dussel an' his boys got away—"

"Got away?" Millan cried.

"Yeah, they launched that lifeboat from the after wheel-house. It was a gamble, but they took it. The weather broke about four bells. They'll contact that cruiser of theirs."

"It'll take them a couple of days to get to Himana," Millan exclaimed. "By that time we'll be in Amurang."

"No they won't," Jim said. "There's

a radio in that boat. Himana Bay isn't more than thirty or forty miles from where they left us. Even if the radio wouldn't do it, they could sail with the breeze they've had since they started." He pointed with the hand that held the glasses. "There's smoke on the horizon. Unless I miss my guess, that will be them."

MILLAN clambered down and Ponga Jim crossed to the wheel.

"Swing back to eighty degrees. At four bells, change her again to one hundred and thirty degrees."

Longboy mumbled the course back to him, and Jim walked back to the bridge. It was going to be a tight race. Changing course was going to bring them up on him faster. But it was going to take him in close to the coast, nearer Amurang, in waters he knew and where his shallower draft would be an advantage. The other ship was doing at least fifteen knots to the *Semiramis*' ten.

Slug Brophy came up, looking tough.

"This is going to be good, Cap. Ever see Millan handle one of those big guns?"

"He used to be on the *Hood*. I never saw him work."

"That guy could knock the buttons off your shirt with a sixteen-inch gun." Brophy chuckled. "He could knock off anything with our four-inch gun."

Ponga Jim glanced aft. "She's coming up fast. Looks like about forty-eight hundred tons."

"Yeah," Brophy muttered. "An' riding fairly low. But she's not loaded by a damn sight."

Ponga Jim pointed to a spot on the chart.

"See that? That point is Tanjung Bangka. Right about here is a patch of reef. She lies in about a fathom and a half. Loaded the way we are, she will give us just enough clearance. You're taking her over."

"Maybe she's not so deep now, Cap.

What if there ain't that much water?"

"Then it's going to be tough. We're going over, and I only hope that monkey back there follows us!"

Ponga Jim ran down and hurried aft. Selim, Sakim, Abdul, and Hassan were all standing by with rifles. Millan crouched at the gun with two men.

Smoke leaped from the bow of the other vessel. A shot whistled overhead. Another blasted off to starboard.

"Get that gun if you can," Jim said quietly. He picked up a rifle. "I want that monkey in the crow's nest."

Whipping the rifle to his shoulder, he fired three times. The man in the crow's nest slumped forward. His rifle slid from his hands.

Millan's gun roared. Jim saw the shell smash into the bulkhead of the forward deck-house. The gun crashed again. At the same instant a shell blasted open Number Four hatch, ripping a winch and ventilator to bits.

"There goes my profit on this trip," Jim said. "I never did care for war."

Millan's gun crashed. They saw the shell shatter the enemy's gun. Millan fired, then again. A shot struck the *Semiramis* amidships. Mayo winced.

He ran to the rail and glanced at the faint discoloration of the reef.

"A fathom and a half is right," he said cheerfully. "I must report that to the Hydrographic Office. Get that after gun when she strikes the reef. When we swing alongside, let them board us. They will, because they'll be sinking!"

"Are you nuts?" Millan protested.

THERE was a terrific crash astern, a grinding scream as the bow of the pursuing ship lifted over the reef. With a tortured rending of steel plates, the big freighter slid over the reef, canted sharply to starboard. Ponga Jim turned and raced for the bridge.

"Hard to port!" he yelled at Brophy. "Swing around and come in alongside."

Millan's gun banged, then again.

Someone was shouting from the bridge. Rifle shots swept the deck of the *Semiramis*. Back aft, Millan was coolly battering the larger ship to pieces. The shells were smashing the superstructure into a mountain of twisted steel.

The *Semiramis* slid alongside. Ponga Jim dived for the ladder, gun in hand. A bullet slammed by his head, went whining off over the sea. He snapped an effective shot at a big German sailor.

The main deck was a pitched battle. Abandoning his gun, Millan was leading the Lascars to stem the tide of men leaping from the rail of the wrecked ship. From the bridge, Slug Brophy was working two guns, firing from the hips.

Ponga Jim fired twice. Something struck him a terrific blow on the head. He pulled himself erect, feeling the warm rush of blood down his face. Something smashed into the bulkhead beside him and he found himself staring at a mushroomed bullet. With an effort, he pulled himself around.

Sag Dormie was standing on the edge of the ruined Number Four hatch. Just as Jim looked up, Sag's gun blossomed fire. Miraculously he missed. Ponga Jim's gun swung up, roaring a stream of fire and lead.

Blank astonishment swept over Sag's face. Still trying to lift his gun, he toppled back into the black maw of the hatch.

Shooting and slugging furiously, Ponga Jim leaped into the brawl on the main deck. Hassan was down, his body riddled. Big Abdul stabbed and ripped a heavy knife at a circle of enemies. Jim's shot cut one of them down. Another man wheeled to face him. Mayo slammed him with the barrel of the gun. The man wilted.

But where the hell was Dussel? Blood streaming down his face, Jim stared around. He saw him, standing on the bridge of the other ship. As he looked up, Job Dussel saw him, beckoned.

Jim cleared both rails at a leap. Job met him at the top, his white, pulpy face wrinkled in a smile. Then the big man leaped.

But this time Jim was ready. Rolling under a left, he slammed each fist into the big man's body. Dussel crowded his back, swinging. When he tried to duck he was caught with a wicked uppercut that knocked him back against the wheel-house. There was no chance for boxing. It was a matter of standing toe to toe on the narrow bridge and slugging.

Dussel hooked a vicious right that knocked him to his knees, then shot out a kick that Jim barely evaded. Staggering to his feet, Ponga Jim was blinded by the blood from his scalp wound. He scarcely felt the terrific driving force of those blows that rained about his head and body. Driving in, he weaved and bobbed. He felt only the killing desire to batter that gross body against the bulkhead, to drive him back, back, back!

KNOCKED sprawling to hands and knees. Dussel toppled forward, and Jim sprang up behind him. The big man was on his feet in an instant. But Jim whipped a short, wicked right hook into that rising pulpy face.

Like a brick landing in a pool, the big man's features seemed to splash. With a cry of mortal agony, Dussel sprang back, blood streaming from a fearful gash across his cheek.

Ponga Jim stared. The huge, hard body, seemingly so soft, was impregnable, almost beyond injury. But the face—

Jim crowded closer, swinging both hands. A blow staggered him. But he went under and whipped up a left hook that bared Dussel's cheekbone. A terrific right knocked Dussel sprawling along the bridge.

Someone was shouting at Jim. He looked up, dazed. A slim white cutter had swept up, scarcely a half dozen yards away. Standing on the bow was

Major Albert, immaculate in a white and gold uniform!

"Jump, you slug-minded clown!" Major Albert yelled. "That damned old scow is sinking under your feet! Stop playing slap-hands with that beef trust slugger."

"William," Jim gulped. He suddenly felt relaxed and empty inside. "You look sweet enough to kiss. Am I seeing stars or are those gold buttons?"

"Jump, damn you!" Albert roared. "If you don't, I'll come after you!"

Jim stared around. The water was creeping over the decking of the bridge!

Jim sprang to the rail of the bridge, off into the water. Panting and dripping, he was hauled aboard the cutter. He could see the sturdy old *Semiramis* standing off. The crew let out a cheer and dived into the water, swimming for the cutter.

"Look!" Major Albert said suddenly.

On the bridge of the sinking freighter. Job Dussel had tottered to his feet. His wide, repulsive face was horribly smashed and bloody. The white shirt hanging around him in shreds revealed his great body. Instead of fat, enormous bulges of muscle hung over his arms and shoulders. His torso was like the trunk of a vast tree!

Staggering to the rail, Dussel toppled blindly into the water. With a grinding crash, as though it had waited for that instant, the freighter slipped down into deeper water. Only swirls of water marked the spot. . . .

PONGA JIM turned to Major Albert.

"William," he said. "I got so busy there at last, I never did find out where your sub base was located."

"You said the Gulf of Tolo before you started," William grinned. "That gave me a lead. Then the *Valapa Bay* relayed the message you sent with the mast light. I knew if they were aboard the *Semiramis*, it was because they had

to get to the Molukken Passage, or to some boat en route. That pointed in the same direction. We investigated, and found the submarine base.

"You see, Dussel and Lucieno didn't dare show themselves on a British ship. The Dutch were watching for them, too. Then the boys found you were going to Amurang, Menado and Wahai, so they slipped aboard. Job Dussel sank the *Silver Lady*. He also sank those other ships, sank them

without a chance. He was aiming at paralyzing the entire trade of the islands—and he came damned near success. He was a brute, all right!"

Ponga Jim Mayo wiped the back of a hand across his bloody mouth.

"Yeah, he was a brute," he said. "But, William"—Jim pointed back at the reef, where the waters were stirring slightly over the rocks—"that guy could fight! Boy, how that guy could fight!"



PIECES OF HATE

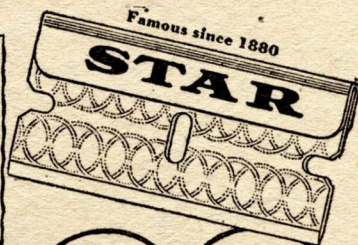
A Gripping Story of Buried Treasure

By REEVE WALKER

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE



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Whaling in the Antarctic

By CHARLES S. STRONG

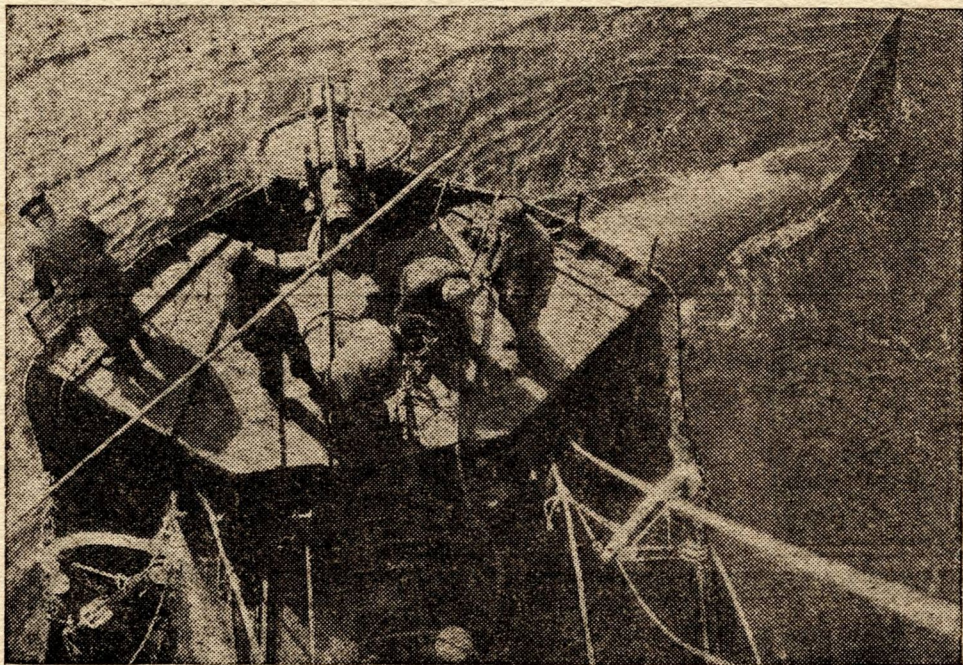
Explorer, Traveler and Historian
Author of "Dominion for Rent," "Blitzkrieg in 1520," etc.

The Saga of Modern Vikings Who Pursue the King of the Seas—Whalers from 1864 to 1940!

EVERY year, about the middle of April or the first of May, Americans are stirred to the depths of their romantic souls by the announcement that the whale-factory ships are back from the Antarctic, tied up to some unromantic pier at Staten Island or Boston Harbor. Memories of the whaling days immortalized by Herman Melville in *Moby Dick* are

rekindled. To inhabitants of the Down East section of the country, they bring visions of Nantucket ships and Cape Codders heading "down to the sea in ships," leaving wives and children behind, wondering whether they would ever return.

Ever hear of a Nantucket sleigh-ride? Probably you haven't. But that was the name given to the thrilling

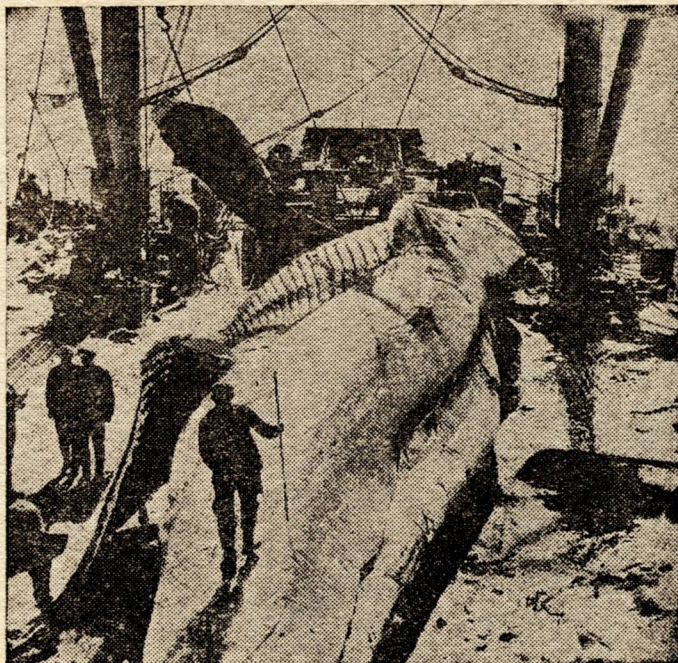


Hauling in a harpooned whale, note the harpoon gun on the whaler's prow

●

The Latest in a Series of Thrilling Adventures from the Pages of History

●



Cutting up a whale on the deck of a floating factory.
Antarctic whaling grounds

and exciting journey that took place when a hand-thrown harpoon landed in the back of a whale, and the big mammal decided to make a fight. He would start traveling. If his course was straight ahead and on the surface of the water, then the redoubtable whalers were willing to stay with him and enjoy the ride. If, on the other hand, he decided to head for the bottom in a "crash-dive", the boys in the whale-boat had two alternatives.

They could let their lines run out in the hope the whale would either bleed to death or lose his breath before he reached the end of the rope, or they could cut him loose, hoping that later on they would find the harpooned whale dead, floating on the surface of the water. A harpoon always bore the name of the whaling ship, and when a harpoon was found in a whale, the ethics of the other hunter demanded the surrender of the carcass.

Henry Hudson, Whaler

Well, whale-hunting has changed a good deal since Henry Hudson de-

cided to go whaling. Henry was in the whaling business long before he thought of discovering the Hudson River. As a matter of fact, Henry did such a good job for his Dutch bosses that when he established a whaling station on the Svalbard Islands in the Arctic Ocean, it ultimately became the largest city in the Dutch Colonial Empire, even rivaling modern Batavia in the Dutch East Indies. Sounds rather hard to believe, doesn't it?

Svend Foyn Experiments

But with all of the attention we may give to the Nantucket and Dutch whalers, the real palms must necessarily go to the Norwegians. They are the ones who have made whaling a big business, and even though a good deal of foreign competition has come into the field, the Vikings of the North still pursue the giant whales as persistently as their ancestors chased the ships of other nations.

The rise of Norwegian whaling tactics has been comparatively recent—when we consider that Hudson did his stuff back in the 1600s. This industry

has centered around three towns in Norway, and around half a dozen men. The first of these, and perhaps the most important was Svend Foyn.

Svend was born in the city of Tonsberg in Vestfold County, Norway, in 1809. He spent a good deal of his childhood and youth moving up and down the coast to Sandefjord and Larvik, watching the whalers set out in their sailing vessels for their jousts with the huge mammals of the North Atlantic.

When he became old enough to stand in the bow of a whaleboat and balance himself while he held the heavy harpoon, he also set out on the job that was the chief source of income for the inhabitants of Vestfold. But he wasn't content with the business of throwing the unwieldy harpoon over many yards of open sea from the prow of a bobbing boat. Svend Foyn decided that there must be some better method of rounding up the huge, blubber-bearing mammals.

Whaler Foyn was in his middle-fifties when he finally got enough time to himself to climb down off the bow of his whaleboat and devote himself to experiment. During the years from 1864 to 1868, with varying success, he put these experiments into practical form. Each time he thought he had the idea worked out, he sought one of his friends in Vestfold and went out on the Atlantic and Arctic whaling grounds to try out his equipment. Finally the Svend Foyn gun became a practical weapon.

The Harpoon Gun

The current version of this formidable whale-killer is a gun that looks like a combination of an overgrown trench mortar and machine gun moulded into one. The harpoon that is fired from the gun is four feet long and weighs something over a hundred pounds. The explosive cap is equipped with a time fuse which is set to go off three seconds after striking the whale. Behind the cap there is a set of four

hinged barbs which open out in the body of the whale.

The rope, known as the warp, is attached to a ring. This ring is set in a slide that runs along most of the length of the shank. When the harpoon is ready for use, the head, forepart of the shank, and the ring, are all in front of the gun barrel, and the rope is coiled on a plate projecting over the ship's bows.

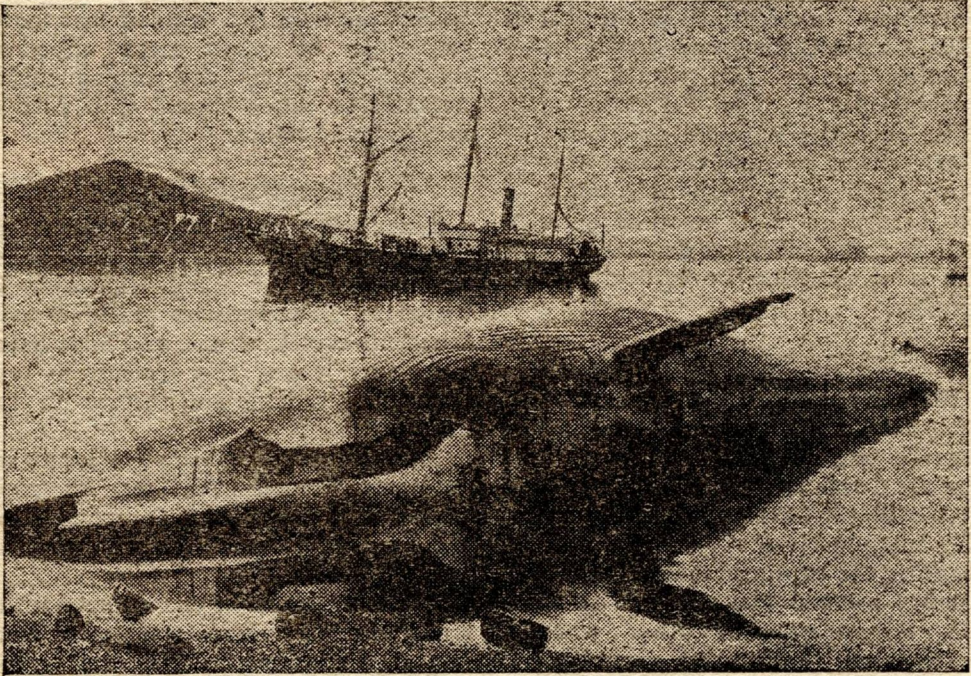
The explosive charge that fires the harpoon consists of a cotton bag of black powder which is fastened to an hour-glass-shaped wooden buffer topped by rubber discs and fitted into the barrel. Most of the guns are muzzle loaders, although breech loaders are sometimes used. The range of the harpoon gun is somewhere between thirty and forty yards.

With his gun mounted on the whaleboats, Svend Foyn and his men were now able to head out into the North Atlantic whaling waters with the feeling that they were going to have a good catch. But then another one of the limitations of the old-fashioned method of whaling made itself felt. The whale hunters now had a more efficient method of *capturing* whales, but the whaling men, after capturing one or several whales, still found it necessary to blow them up and then tow them in to short stations for the flensing and boiling operations.

Far Flung Bases

In order to extend operations, the Norwegians began establishing bases farther from their own coastal waters. By the turn of the twentieth century, there were Norwegian whalers operating from bases in Iceland, the Faeroe Islands, the Shetland Islands, the Hebrides, Ireland and finally Svalbard. Here, on islands that are a part of Norwegian territory, the Norwegians found themselves following in Hudson's footsteps three hundred years later.

But Svend Foyn was not to live to see all of these expansion activities



Whale brought ashore to processing station, Spitzbergen whaling area, Arctic Ocean

that were a result of his harpoon-gun inventions.

Svend Foyn did live to see the Iceland whaling stations opened in 1882 and the Faeroes whaling grounds established in 1893, but when he died the following year, it was with the knowledge that other whalers from Vestfold were working on improvements that would extend whaling from the Arctic and North Atlantic waters to those around the South Pole.

One of Svend Foyn's neighbors at Sandefjord, Christ Christensen conceived the idea of having whale-factory ships which would follow the hunters, take care of the catch, flense the whales and boil the oil. This would make it possible to eliminate a good deal of the whale carcass that was of no value.

The Floating Factory

Developing the floating factory idea in 1903, Christensen finally teamed up with C. A. Larsen of Larvik, and in the two years following, they set out to establish the highly profitable

whaling industry in the South Seas and the Antarctic.

There was a real hurry and bustle in the city of Sandefjord in the autumn of 1904 when Christensen and Larsen fitted out their expedition. Nearly all of the old whaling families in Vestfold had one or more members in the expedition, and since they knew something of the limitations of the Atlantic whaling grounds, they hoped that this pioneering project would again bring the prosperity that they had known for forty years before.

The money for the first South Atlantic whaling station was put up by a number of wealthy Argentinians, and the company settled on the island of South Georgia, calling their colony by the picturesque name of *Grytviken*. In spite of the Argentine capital, the ships, equipment and implements, as well as the leaders, officers and crews were Norwegian.

While the experiments on the floating factory were still going forward at Sandefjord, the land station in South Georgia went into profitable

operation. In addition, in the fall of 1905, Christ Christensen finally had a floating factory that would operate successfully in the Antarctic area. This time the national spirit of the Norwegians, so often subdued only to flare forth again with new vigor in the fifteen hundred years of its saga and recorded history, demanded that the new company be typically Norwegian.

Big Business on the Sea

With the money and the good wishes of the Norwegians behind it, Christensen's first floating factory set out for the South Seas and finally moored at the South Shetland Islands. After the introduction of this method of treating the captured whales, the float-factory method was adopted by British, Argentine and other whalers coming into the hunting grounds.

Even though Svend Foyn didn't live to see the extension of whaling through Christ Christensen's floating factories, he had some idea of what might be done in this direction when several Norwegian whalers using the Foyn gun and the land-station technique made attempts at whaling in the West Antarctic Islands and the Ross Sea in 1892. They did not have very much success here, however.

In the years that preceded and followed the war, whaling grew into a big business. At the same time, the master-minds of the industry in Vestfold were still working on many newer methods of production. Even with the floating factories it was necessary to tow the whales around, to spend at least part of the time on the whale with huge flensing knives, clipping off blubber so that it could be hoisted aboardship for further treatment. If a whale carcass happened to tip over while some of the flensers were aboard, it was a case of man overboard, and often it meant that they didn't come up.

A. Jahre and Melsom Brothers of Larvik and Sandlfjord put their minds

to this problem and decided that there ought to be some more effective method by which the whales could actually be taken aboard ship with a minimum of effort.

Transatlantic Whaler

This brings us to an interesting sidelight that may stir faint memories in the minds of many transatlantic travelers. The steamers of the Swedish American Line are, and have been for many years, the leaders in appointment, cuisine and service on the Atlantic.

Many a globe-trotting American in the days following the war traveled on the *S. S. Stockholm*, forerunner of the luxury liners *Gripsholm* and *Kungsholm*.

While eclipsed in the transatlantic trade, the *Stockholm* was to become one of the leaders in the whaling industry as a pioneer floating factory with the Sorlie hauling-in slipway. This made it possible for the twentieth-century whalers to again meet the challenge of the Ross Sea, and this time the business proved very profitable indeed.

As an indication of the growing importance of these fisheries, we might mention that in the 1925-26 season, the Norwegian Pelagic or open-sea whale fisheries accounted for 17,184 barrels of whale oil, while eleven years later the take was 1,158,665 barrels!

The groundwork that Svend Foyn, Christ Christensen, P. Sorlie, A. Jahre and the Melsom Brothers had laid was definitely improved upon in the years following the first floating factories with their Sorlie hauling-in slipways.

Between the 1928 and 1930 seasons, eleven new companies were started. Of these, nine were Norwegian, one was Danish and one was British. However, all eleven companies were organized on Norwegian initiative and with Norwegian leadership, crews and workers.

These new companies, like their predecessors, were now based upon pelagic whaling, and were self-dependent in everything except extra supplies of bunker coal. The first Norwegian floating factories had been vessels of 1,500 to 3,000 tons, with a production capacity of 150 to 350 barrels per day, and could carry a supply of 5,000 to 12,000 barrels before being forced to return to their bases. Nowadays, however, the floating factories are ships of 12,000 to 18,000 tons, like the *Stockholm*, and they handle a production of 1,600 to 2,500 tons a day, and have storage capacities of from 80,000 to 120,000 barrels.

The International Whaling Convention

Naturally, with millions of barrels being produced each year, the supply of whales was in danger of depletion. The Norwegian Government was the first to realize this, and in June, 1929, a law was passed relating to the capture of right whales in all waters, and

regulations were put into effect regarding the killing of females accompanied by young. The International Whaling Convention adopted at Geneva in September of 1931 was based entirely on the Norwegian Act.

So whaling is not only the stuff of which adventure novels and action movies are made, it is a big-time industry with international regulations—and now, besides the Norwegians, the British, and the Argentines, more recently the United States, Germany and Japan have come into the field.

Henry Hudson would find things a lot different compared with his early activities in Svalbard and Hudson Bay, and even the people in the Faeroe Islands think back thirty years to the days of ninety and one hundred ton whales as they chase small white whales and porpoises in rowboats. Times have certainly changed, as the whaling industry moves south, and grim-jawed Vikings follow it.

Photos by Courtesy Norwegian Travel Information Bureau.

Watch for Another Thrilling Adventure
from the Pages of History by CHARLES
S. STRONG in Next Month's Issue of
THRILLING ADVENTURES

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new Power came into my life. After 43 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure, this strange Power brought to me a sense of overwhelming victory, and I have been overcoming every undesirable condition of my life ever since. What a change it was. Now—I have credit at more than one bank, I own a beautiful home, own a newspaper and a large office building, and my wife and family are amply provided for after I leave for shores unknown. In addition to these material benefits, I have a sweet peace in my life. I am happy as happy can be. No circumstance ever upsets me, for I have learned how to draw upon the invisible God-Law, under any and all circumstances.

You too may find and use the same staggering Power of the God-Law that I use. It can bring to you too, whatever things are right and proper for you to have. Do you believe this? It won't cost much to find out—just a penny post-card or a letter, addressed to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 16, Moscow, Idaho, will bring you the story of the most fascinating success of the century. And the same Power I use is here for your use too. I'll be glad to tell you about it. All information about this experience will be sent you free, of course. The address again—Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 16, Moscow, Idaho. Advt. Copyright 1939 Frank B. Robinson.

HOWLER OF



The killer's guns snaked up and roared,

A Complete Action By GALEN

Author of "The Star Target,"

CHAPTER I

The Cry of Evil

THREE miles above the Circle Dot headquarters, on the northeast trail through Diabolo Pass, "Tonopah" Lawson grimly sat his saddle. His slate-gray, expressionless eyes were narrowed to mere slits. He listened intently.

The sound that had halted him was wild, inhuman. Starting on a low, whistling note, it grew to a nerve-shattering shriek that wailed through the valley, and died as suddenly as it had been born. Then he heard a laugh that was crowded with all the evil

Sneering Murder Rides the Range When

THE HILLS



but Tonopah was even faster

Western Novelet C. COLIN

"Lobo's Roundup," etc.

of the world. As the laugh died to a fiendish chuckle, he heard the clatter of hoofs. The sounds seemed to come from nowhere — as if some ghostly cavalcade galloped across the cloudless morning sky.

Tonopah Lawson might have shivered with dread, but that laugh was real to the grim rider. Slowly, as the sound of hoofs across the sky faded, his lean face changed. With thin, high-bridged nose and prominent cheek-bones, level eyes and thin mouth, it was a face that had been called handsome. But now it became a mask of deadly hate.

"It's Granado! I've found him—after two years! I've reached the end



a Cowpoke Challenges a Killer Fiend!

of the trail. . . ." His eyes narrowed still more, and his hands caressed the butts of his low-thonged guns. "Ghost stuff. Wailin' an' moanin' out of the sky. Might fool a hombre who didn't remember that laugh. But I know it's him!"

His slate-gray eyes searched the valley again, holding for a moment on the ranchhouse in the center. Three miles away, it was plain through the thin, high air. Then his gaze swept to the wooded slopes of the circular valley.

A few moments before he had been about to ride down to the Circle Dot. But that was before the eerie wailing and the laugh. He neck-reined his black from the trail and took to the timber, riding slowly and taking advantage of every bit of cover. But even his keen trail sense failed to warn him of the crouching form behind a fallen tree. A pair of weasel eyes studied him, and a wolfish face writhed in a mixture of fear and blood-lust.

The slinking form rose and followed, silent and deadly. Only Tonopah Lawson's natural caution in watching every side kept a knife from flicking out of the brush to cleave his back.

At intervals, as he circled to the east, Lawson pulled to a stop and swept the valley below. Each time the slinking form faded into the brush. At the north end of the valley, Lawson drew up in the shelter of a huge boulder. He scrambled to its smooth top and lay there a full twenty minutes, studying the Circle Dot headquarters.

SIX riders left the corral and raced east. He watched them until they disappeared in the mouth of an arroyo. After ten minutes, they did not reappear. A frown furrowed his brow and a feeling of uneasiness swept over him. He shook his head and studied the Circle Dot again. The house

looked no larger than a cigar box, and the two men out near the corral were no more than ants.

"If I can read sign, that murderin' skunk, Granado, is runnin' this spread ragged," Lawson muttered. "Them six riders was proddin' to head him off. But where in hell did they wind up?"

He shook his head, and rose to a sitting position. Something jerked him around as if a giant hand had spun him. He caught a fleeting glimpse of a slim form and a swarthy, evil face. Then metal like a streak of flame hurtled toward him. He threw his body sideward as the knife skimmed the top of the boulder. Its point raked his leg and thudded against his side. But his heavy cartridge belt caught the point, and only the very tip bit into his flesh.

He leaped to his feet. The six-gun in his hand roared. A thin, high-pitched scream—the form disappeared. Lawson leaped from the boulder and charged into the brush. Ahead of him darted a slender, wiry figure. Teeth bared in a snarl, Lawson swept his gun up. But at that instant the runner pitched forward into the leaf mold, feet tangled in a clump of vine.

Tonopah Lawson leaped toward the slumped figure. His right hand darted down. Grasping the ragged collar, he jerked the figure erect, to face him. He almost released his hold. For he gazed down into the oval, brown face of a woman. Young, hardly more than a girl, she was very pretty, even if she was part Mex. Sulen black eyes looked into his, and red lips pouted angrily. The slim shoulders twisted, trying to loosen his grip.

"No yuh don't, sister," he growled. "Yuh tried to knife me, an' I'm findin' out why."

"Take your dirty han's from me!" she demanded angrily.

Tonopah Lawson shook her. "Speak

up! Who are you? Why did yuh heave that knife?"

"Me, I don' throw the knife. I have not seen you—" Suddenly the black eyes went wide and the color drained from her face. "Look behin'!"

Tonopah Lawson half whirled. Something struck him on the back of the head. A thousand stars exploded in front of his eyes. Blackness descended, and he slumped, an inert heap upon the ground.

* * * * *

TONOPAH LAWSON had guessed right. Granado was running the Circle Dot ragged—clear to the last frayed, tattered edge. But the Circle Dot did not know the killer as Granado. To Tom Hammers' outfit he was the "Howler." While Lawson was hearing that nerve-shattering sound on the trail, the Circle Dot hands were at the corral, preparing to head toward the east range.

They had heard that grim warning a dozen times in the last three months, but it had not lost its horror. Foreman Jerry Travers stood grasping the saddle-horn. He remained motionless, but his face hardened. He stared at the snow-capped peak that almost overhung the Circle Dot on the south. The others stood stiffly, listening. Bill Wiggin was halfway up the corral. "Chuck" Conner was bent over with hand stretched out toward his saddle.

The same tenseness held the Circle Dot owner, old Tom Hammers, at his desk in the little office at the house. His face was bleak, and his gnarled old hands clenched into tight fists on the desk. His gaze caught for a moment the envelope that peeped from beneath the worn tally-book. Then he muttered curses between set teeth.

The only man apparently unaffected was glum old "Tequila" Jake, the cook. Back of the house, he kept right on hanging out his dishcloths to dry. His seamed, scarred face did not change expression and his head did

not turn. But everyone on the Circle Dot knew that Tequila Jake was stone-deaf. He could not hear thunder. Some of the hands almost envied him. He shot a slant-eyed glance at the men near the corral, apparently amused by their queer, strained attitudes. He turned and shuffled back to his kitchen.

A full minute passed, and the wail was not repeated. Jerry Travers drew a long breath, and relaxed. But the icy hand was still on his heart as he swung into his saddle and headed toward the house. Old Tom Hammers was standing on the gallery now, and the foreman rode close. He leaned toward the rancher.

"Yuh heard the Howler, Boss. We are in for it again. More stock run off—mebbe another hand plugged. I don't believe in ghosts, Boss, but that Howler shore has got me proddy! If we could only see him. . . ."

"Another raid like the last, an' the Circle Dot is ruined," Hammers said. "We've lost a thousand head in three months. Half our herd!"

"I know," Travers answered bitterly. "But what can we do? We tried to draw him into the open, but it ain't no use. He ain't human, Boss! Looks like he can't read a waddy's mind. But I reckon there's one blessin'. Miss Virginia ain't here. Circle Dot ain't no place for a woman—now."

Tom Hammers' face went bleak. "But she's comin' home, Jerry. Due today or tomorrer. That letter yuh brought yesterday said so. That's why we got to wipe out the Howler this time."

"Comin' home!" Jerry Travers' voice was almost a whisper. "She'll be comin' down Diabolo Pass. Anyone else know?"

Tom Hammers stepped closer, glancing over his shoulder. No one was close but deaf Tequila Jake, but still he spoke softly.

"Nope. Why did yuh ask, Jerry? Thinkin' the same as me—that the

Howler knows what we're goin' to do before we do it?"

Jerry Travers nodded. "Danged if it don't look like it. Shore looks like he got hisself a spy here."

"Can't think much else, son. We ride east an' he strikes west. Head north, an' he raids the south range."

"Got any ideas?" A deadly look swept into Jerry's eyes.

"Not a suspicion yet. But there's one hombre I can trust! That's you, son!"

"Thanks, Boss. But that ain't helpin' now. An' we got to do something pronto. With Miss Virginia comin' home—"

"She's all I got," Tom Hammers said softly. "But we'll stop the Howler, son! We're layin' a trap for him—jest you an' me! Last night I told the hands to bring in that herd of steers from the west range today."

THE foreman grinned. "An' yuh want us to head east instead. Is that the idea? Yuh figger the Howler will be tryin' for the fat ones on the east slope."

"Nope," Tom Hammers stated firmly. "Yuh're headin' east like I ordered."

"But the Howler'll be—"

A grim smile played across the rancher's lips.

"If there's a Circle Dot rider passin' him the word, he's got my orders already. An' we ain't givin' the spy a chance to make a change."

"But yuh don't think he can do that?"

"Don't know where he meets the Howler, or signals him. That's why yuh're headin' west. Yuh'll ride west, son—but yuh'll swing off into the mouth of that arroyo back of the creek. Double back east, keep below the skyline, an' ride hell-bent. We gotta keep the Howler away from Diabolo Pass! It ain't the herd I'm thinkin' of now. My little girl'll be ridin' the pass."

"It'll work, Boss! We'll clear the range of him an' his outfit!"

"Wish I was ridin' with yuh. But my rheumatiz—"

Jerry Travers shot another look at the house, but Tequila Jake was nowhere in sight. Jerry Travers smiled grimly. Interested only in his kitchen, that was old Jake.

Back at the corral, Jerry Travers' gaze searched each face for a hint of treachery, but he did not find it. He barked an order.

"Fork yore hulls, an' be shore yore guns slip free! We're ridin' west pronto!"

"But the Howler—" Chuck Conner began. "He'll raid the east slope, I'll bet my best Stetson."

"Aint' had no luck so far in out-guessin' him," Jerry said grimly. "No reason to think we can do any better today."

If Jerry Travers could have seen the evil smile that lurked on a wolfish face, could have caught the rasping orders that came from the corner of a twisted mouth, he would have known he had spoken the truth. But he could not see across six miles of rocks and canyons. He could not know that Granado, the Howler, knew Virginia Hammers was coming. And he knew the trick the old rancher and his foreman had planned.

The Circle Dot riders swung into the west trail, riding at top speed. They turned into the arroyo at Jerry Travers' orders, and pulled up in the depths of the slash.

Swiftly Jerry told them of the new plan. Then he turned to Chuck Conner.

"Yuh're runnin' the outfit, Chuck. I ain't ridin' with yuh. Miss Virginia is comin' over the Diabolo Pass trail, an' I'm headin' that way to see she gets home safe."

He whirled his horse and disappeared in the thick timber. Chuck Conner straightened and barked an order to his men.

CHAPTER II

In the Howler's Lair



TONOPAH LAWSON'S awakening was more painful than the blow. During those agonized moments he was aware of mumbling voices, a dim light and a terrible throbbing in his head.

But slowly he gained a faint impression of his surroundings. Flat on his back, he could see rough-hewn slabs above. When he turned his head, hazy, shapeless figures danced in the light of an oil lamp.

Between these intervals, though, he lived over the last two years of his life. Again he was with Tobe Brewer on the little Lazy L spread, two hundred miles north—the spread he and Tobe had bought with their lifetime savings. Startlingly real in his dream was the black night, with lightning splitting the sky, the rain slashing down, and the little herd ready to stampede.

He and Tobe fought to hold them, had almost won, as the storm died down. Then the slog of hoofs in the mud, and before they sensed what was happening, a half dozen shadowy forms surrounded them. Nobody spoke, yet guns blazed. Tobe Brewer pitched from his saddle, dead. A slug hit Tonopah's shoulder, another had smashed his thigh. A heavy fall—then darkness.

Tonopah Lawson's teeth ground in his delirium, and wordless sounds moaned from his dry lips. The voices hushed for a moment. Then came a devilish, spine-curling laugh. That sound penetrated Tonopah Lawson's brain, for the same laugh had reached him in the storm two years ago. He could never forget it. It would always point out Tobe Brewer's killer, no matter where he heard it.

For two years he had been following the trail of the laughing killer.

He had learned the name—Granado—and nothing more. But back on Diabolo Pass, and here where he lay, were the only times he had heard the laugh since Tobe Brewer died. Under the lashing goad of the sound, he awoke. He had reached the end of the trail. He had found Granado!

He forced himself to a sitting position. His head whirled, but his hazy gaze swept the room. He sat on a bunk in a shadowy corner. A smoky oil lamp on a table in the center of the room was the only light.

A half dozen men sat around the table, playing cards. They were stubble-bearded ruffians, all of them. Then his straying gaze picked out another—slim, pasty-faced, expressionless—who sat apart. Tonopah Lawson was conscious of an almost physical clash as his gaze met those glittering eyes. A wolfish smile flicked across the pasty face, and he heard that laugh again.

Tonopah Lawson was face to face with Granado! The killer did not change position. His voice was soft, but venomous as a sidewinder.

"Our frien', Tonopah Lawson, ees awake, Gregorio."

A man at the table crashed his chair back with a startled oath. He leaped to his feet and whirled. His hand streaked to the knife at his hip. Granado grinned, then laughed. The hideous sound bit into Tonopah Lawson's brain, sent a surge of strength through him.

He staggered to his feet, hands dropping to his thighs. But he realized that his holsters were empty. That did not stop him, though. He took a step forward. Gregorio's blade slithered from the sheath, but Granado's orders stopped him. A mirthless smile twisted Lawson's lips. He brushed past the half-breed and faced Granado. The killer had not moved.

"It's been two years since yuh gunned Tobe Brewer," he rasped.

Granado's eyes glittered. "So long

as that, Tonopah Lawson? An' for all thees time you have hunt me, no?"

"Yeah, to blast yuh down like yuh killed Tobe Brewer!"

GRANADO shook his head in mock sadness.

"Too bad, Lawson. For now you have come to your own death. I have known you were hunting me. But now you have become troublesome."

Lawson's eyes did not blink, and the expression on his grim face did not change.

"Yuh tried to down me once, an' it didn't work, Granado."

"You owe your life to Senorita Lupe Alcazar. Without her help, you would be dead weeth a knife between your shoulders. Gregorio ees jealous. He resent that you know her. Eef she not beg heem, he would have keel you."

"He tried an' missed, back at the big boulder."

"Eet was orders that you be take alive. Wounded, perhaps—but alive. I have promise heem he keel you when the time come."

"Thanks. But when I die, Gregorio'll be in hell a long time."

Granado arose from his chair. Tonopah Lawson sensed that the killer was through with baiting, that the next move was due. But he was not prepared for the order.

"Take heem to the cell weeth the others. Feed heem, an' give heem plenty blankets."

A squat man rose from the table.

"I shore been honin' to see someone wear them shackles with the spikes inside."

Granado shook his head. "No shackles, Braden. He cannot escape. An' he must be strong for Gregorio when the time come."

"But the window—"

"He cannot reach eet. An' eef he does, there are still the rocks. Do as I say, Braden."

Grumbling, Braden and a lantern-

jawed hombre led Tonopah Lawson from the room. After a dozen yards of pitch blackness, he felt a walled-in passage. Then they descended ten rough stairs and entered another passage. Around a sharp bend was a faint streak of light on the rock floor. He knew it came from beneath a door.

The chunky Braden knocked three times. The slab door swung open and Lawson caught a glimpse of an oval, brown face and wide black eyes. Braden shoved his prisoner into the dimly lighted room.

Lawson's eyes narrowed. The cell was cut from live rock, rough-walled and damp, with only a single chair and two double-deck bunks on the far side. His eyes held upon two shapeless bundles on the bunks. As he looked, they moved. He caught his breath sharply and took a half step toward the bunks. Braden's growling voice stopped him.

"Lawson, I'm leavin' yuh with Lupe. An' I'm warnin' yuh, she can trigger a six-gun or fling a knife better'n a man!"

The squat killer and his companion backed out of the cell and slammed the door. Tonopah Lawson stood motionless, gazing at the black-haired girl who stood against the wall.

Lupe Alcazar spoke first, her lips parted in a mirthless smile. But her black eyes smoldered with hatred, or something closely akin. But her gaze seemed to sweep past him. Involuntarily his eyes followed her look.

"We meet again, no?" she breathed. "An' thees time Lupe Alcazar have gun an' knife!" When Tonopah Lawson did not answer, the girl's lips twisted angrily. "You do not speak because I am girl from Mejico, no? You theenk you are better, because your skin ees white—"

Tonopah tightened his lips, but he was trying to understand her fury. It was more than mere personal dislike. She dropped her hand to the

butt of a gun that looked too large for her slender figure.

"You are like all men—eyes only for the *senoritas* weeth yellow hair an' weak blue eyes. All right, greengo, there ees one you are welcome to."

SHE gestured at one of the bunks. Tonopah Lawson leaped toward the bunk. The brown girl's mirthless laugh followed him as he pulled the blanket away. He gasped, for he looked down into a pair of the bluest, most fear-stricken eyes he had ever seen, a white, lovely face with a halo of corn-colored hair. Then Tonopah Lawson saw the fear fade slowly and a look of relief take its place.

"You—you are not—Gregorio." The words were hardly more than a whisper.

Lawson shook his head. "Me, I'm Tonopah Lawson, a cowpoke that got hisself caught by Granado. Prisoner, same as you. An' yore name is—"

"Virginia Hammers. My father is Tom Hammers of the Circle Dot. This Granado—the Howler—caught Jerry Travers and me."

"The Howler? A right good name, next to 'back-shootin' murderer'!"

He caught the metallic laugh behind him, and turned to hear the half-breed girl.

"She ees pink an' white, no? Yellow hair an' blue eyes that speak to all men. But she ees boun', while Lupe Alcazar ees free!"

Tonopah Lawson gave the dark-haired girl a single glance, before he turned back to Virginia Hammers.

"Yuh say Granado kidnaped you an' Jerry Travers?"

"They caught us this morning on Diabolo Pass. Brought us here, shackled us in handcuffs and leg-irons to these bunks. Jerry—Jerry is hurt. I don't know how badly."

Lawson whirled to the other bunk. Lupe Alcazar's chuckle followed his movement.

"Thees *senorita* weel not be so beau-

tiful when Granado feenish weeth her."

"Mebbe Gregorio will have something to say about that."

Lawson grinned at the jealousy that distorted Lupe's face. Then he knelt beside the other bunk, pulled down the blanket from a pale, pain-twisted face. Jerry Travers opened his eyes. He glared up at Tonopah.

"Why don't yuh finish me, yuh polecat? Yuh woman-fightin' skunk! If I had my hands free, I'd—"

"Steady, feller. I ain't one of Granado's pack, an' Miss Hammers ain't hurt none."

"Yuh—yuh ain't one of the Howler's outfit? Then who are yuh?"

"Name of Tonopah Lawson, but that don't make no difference. Don't look like I'm much help, but I might be if yuh'd tell me what happened."

CHAPTER III

Tricked!



HALTINGLY Jerry Travers told of the plan and how it went awry. He described how Granado and his pack jumped him and the girl, the terrific blow, and the awakening just now. Tonopah Lawson nodded slowly and said:

"Then the Howler shore knew yore plan."

"Been suspectin' someone on the Circle Dot, and figgered we had him stopped. I ain't got the least idea who he is, but I'll get him yet!"

"Yeah, but that ain't important right now. We gotta get back to the Circle Dot."

"No chance for me. If Miss Virginia is shackled, we'd need about a dozen files to get loose."

For a moment Tonopah Lawson remained hunkered beside the bunk. A hazy idea was beginning to take shape. There were plenty of twisted trails here, but one might lead to safety.

He turned and glanced at Lupe Alcazar. Why should Granada leave her alone to guard his prisoners? Slowly he nodded as he saw a possible reason. He rose and strode toward the half-breed girl.

She faced him, hand on six-gun butt. He grinned, and nodded to the two forms on the bunks.

"Gregorio took a fancy to the gal, huh? An' yuh don't like it."

"Gregorio ees a peeg, weeth eyes for every woman. I hate heem!"

"Hate the gal, too. Yuh'd kill her, if yuh dared to."

"Me, I'm not afraid."

"Afraid of Gregorio's knife, an' I don't blame yuh. But there's a better way. If she was free, headed back for the Circle Dot—"

"She weel not go free. Granado weel feenish her!"

"Mebbe. But Gregorio will never forget her if Granado kills her. It'd be better if she escaped."

"An' Lupe Alcazar weel die een her place! I do not like your advice."

"Yeah. But suppose yuh're found, shackled in her place. Suppose yuh say I knocked yuh out, an' escaped with the girl. . . ."

The half-breed girl's eyes opened wide for a moment before she shook her head.

"Who has the keys to the shackles, Lupe?"

"Gregorio," she whispered unwillingly.

"Yuh could tell him the yeller-haired girl suffers from the shackles. He'd shore loosen them fast, wouldn't he?"

"He would do anything she ask!" Lupe snapped.

"Try it. Granado would blame him for her escape. Then yuh save Gregorio by pleadin' with Granado, and Gregorio'll love yuh for savin' his life."

Lawson read her wavering in her eyes, and smiled inwardly. Here was the one thing that would trip up the

killer—he did not know the heart of a woman.

"It'll work, Lupe," he said softly. "It's the only way to win Gregorio back."

Apparently undecided, Lupe Alcazar walked slowly toward the door. Tonopah Lawson watched until it closed behind her. Then he leaped to Virginia Hammers' side. In swift words he told her his plan.

"But we can't leave Jerry here!" she protested.

"She'll unlock you an' let us shackle her. Then we take the keys an' let him out of his irons."

He halted, for he heard footsteps outside the door. He tiptoed to the position he had been in when Lupe Alcazar had left him. She slipped into the cell, a key-ring in her hand.

"Gregorio was like putty when I speak of the yellow-haired senorita," she snarled. "He weel pay for eet!"

Tonopah Lawson grinned and reached for the keys. But her six-gun leaped up and covered him.

"Back to the corner, greengo! I will unlock only the girl. The *chico* does not go."

She glided to Virginia Hammers' side, quickly unlocked the irons. Then she whirled toward the barred window and hurled the keys into the darkness outside. She faced Tonopah Lawson, a cold smile on her face.

"Thees yellow-haired cat ees free, an' you weeth her. You can make your escape through the window. After that, eet ees your own lookout."

"But you gotta be shackled in her place! How'm I gonna put them on you?"

"I weel fasten the irons, after you go weeth your blue-eyed senorita. Swiftly—before I change my mind!"

TONOPAH LAWSON realized that there was no other way. A few moments before he might have taken a chance. But she was alert and deadly as a catamount, and Jerry

Travers protested against his hesitation.

"Don't worry about me. Get Miss Virginia home. They ain't figgerin' oh killin' me—yet! They're savin' me for tradin' stock. They want the Circle Dot, need it for headquarters while they're runnin' wet cattle across the line. I'm safe till they can wipe out the whole Circle Dot." Virginia Hammers protested tearfully, until Jerry spoke again. "Yuh got to go! Not much time, either. Granado may get to worryin'."

"Granado ain't botherin' us to-night," Lawson said evenly. "I got a hunch he means for me to escape an' tell the Circle Dot that you an' Miss Virginia are prisoners. Otherwise he'da shackled me, an' put a man here to watch."

Jerry Travers smiled grimly. "But he wasn't countin' on Lupe Alcazar's jealousy, huh?"

THE bars of the window were loose in the crumbling rock. As Lawson wrenched them free, he was more certain than ever that Granado planned on his escape. He hoisted his body up and squeezed through the opening. His hands clutched the ledge and his feet dangled. There was nothing but blackness below. It might be a drop of a thousand feet.

He let go and hurtled downward. But he brought up with a jarring crash almost instantly. He straightened and called to the girl. Her face appeared at the window, her eyes wide and fearful. That nerve-shattering laugh cackled now from inside the cell. A scream bubbled from Virginia Hammers' lips as rough hands dragged her back. Then Tonopah Lawson heard her shrill words, muffled by a hand over her mouth.

"Run! Tell Dad—"

Black rage surged through the puncher's veins. He had been tricked by Granado! The Howler must have prepared the whole situation, know-

ing from the start what Lawson would do. Tonopah cursed his own stupidity. Every impulse urged him to scale that wall to challenge Granado. But cold reason won.

He turned, closed his eyes tightly, then stared into the darkness. Immediately he began to distinguish objects. The tumbled peaks loomed up shapelessly, and the valleys were only deeper splotches. Then he looked down. He shivered when he saw that he stood on a six-foot ledge. Beyond the rim was intense blackness.

"He let me go, knowin' I'd carry the word to the Circle Dot. I'm carryin' it—but he shore is gonna be surprised at the answer!"

To the right the ledge seemed to slope down gently, and he took that way. At every bend he halted, but not a sound reached his ears. The dim light of dawn made the stars begin to fade. He had so little time. . . .

He hurried—and stopped when he rounded a shoulder of rock. His heart beat furiously, for he heard the ghostly laugh of the Howler!

For twenty seconds it lasted, then died abruptly with that fiendish cackle. But now Tonopah Lawson knew the Howler's secret. For a hundred yards ahead of him a yawning hole appeared in the rock wall, which had been smooth a moment before. That was where the sound came from. The whistling of the wind rushed from a twisting passage through the mountain. Some peculiar formation magnified it, at the same time magnifying the laugh and the clatter of hoofs. Then he heard a voice, low but filled with evil.

"You are free, Tonopah Lawson, to carry my message to Tom Hammers. Tell heem that hees daughter ees a prisoner. But she weel be unharmed eef he leave the Circle Dot, never to return. Tell heem to speak hees decision to hees men, an' the Howler weel hear of eet. *Adios, Senor Tono-*

pah Lawson—until we meet again!"

The sound died out and the yawning hole closed. Tonopah Lawson sped along the ledge toward where the passage had been. But in the growing light he saw nothing except a narrow, irregular crack. There was no hidden spring or lever to open the rock from outside. Tonopah Lawson hitched his belt tighter and headed down the sloping ledge toward the Circle Dot, six miles away.

ALERT eyes studied Tonopah Lawson for the last mile to the Circle Dot ranchhouse. When the riders returned the day before without Jerry Travers and Virginia Hammers, grim anxiety had gripped the spread. Tonopah Lawson slipped from the timber into the clearing. Tom Hammers stepped from behind a boulder, six-gun in his gnarled fist.

"Stay out, hombre!"

Lawson stopped, shoulders hunched and legs trembling from his long walk. He waited silently for the next order.

"Who are yuh? Where yuh from, an' where yuh headed?"

"Name of Tonopah Lawson. Head-in' for the Circle Dot, with word for Tom Hammers."

"Start talkin'. I'm Hammers!"

The puncher drew a shuddering breath and slumped wearily on a boulder. Hammers stood spread-legged, the six-gun still covering him. He listened to Lawson's story with hardly an interruption, his lips grim and straight. He shook his head slowly when Tonopah finished.

"All I can do is what he tells me, stranger. The Howler's got me hog-tied. He knows Virginia's worth more to me than all my cattle an' range. Let's head for the house. I'll talk to my hands like he says."

"Listen, Hammers," Tonopah interrupted. "I been thinkin' there's lots of things that don't add up in this here deal. In the first place, it ain't

like Granado to let yuh get out alive. An' it's a plumb cinch he aims to drill me. Yuh'll be a fool if yuh reckon he aims to keep his promises. Mebbe we can find another way."

"Yeah? What way? We been tryin' to smoke him out into the open for three months."

Tonopah Lawson remained silent while he looked closely at the old rancher.

"If I could fix it so yuh could meet the Howler, would yore outfit stay hitched?" he asked at last.

"Ain't one of 'em wouldn't ride where I lead. They'd all swap lead with the devil for Virginia an' Jerry Travers!"

Lawson shook his head. "Yuh're forgettin' one of 'em, Hammers—Granado's spy."

Hammers' eyes smoldered and his grim lips were a straight line.

"Yeah," he admitted savagely. "There's one skunk I'd give my right eye to get across my sights. But he's slick as b'ar-grease, Lawson! I ain't got no notion who he is."

"Yuh jest know 'em too well, Hammers. I ain't never seen one of 'em, except Jerry Travers. Don't know nothin' about 'em, so mebbe I can spot the doublecrossin' polecat."

"I don't know, Lawson," Tom Hammers said doubtfully. "For instance, there's Bill Wiggin. He worked for me over—"

"Don't tell me nothin'!" Lawson broke in. "I'd rather start from scratch."

"All right, feller. I'm at the end of my rope, willin' to try anything once. Now tell me, what's the right play?"

"We'll head for the house. Don't say nothin' about what happened last night. Let on that I'm a wanderin' cowpoke an' give me a chance to study the outfit. Then at breakfast yuh tell 'em what happened an' that yuh gotta obey the Howler."

"Yeah? Then what?"

"Nothin'—for an hour. Give the spy a little time."

"Sounds kind of loco to me," Hammers grunted. "But I'll try it!"

LAWSON studied the eight or ten Circle Dot riders with keenly appraising eyes that afternoon. He listened to their talk, caught their suspicious gaze upon him. When he stretched out on the bunk assigned to him he reviewed the Circle Dot riders.

Chuck Conner, apparently grimly loyal to the Circle Dot. Bill Wiggin, a thin, wiry fire-eater and a Circle Dot man from the word go. "Buck" Burleson, Sandy Loomis, Charley Scott—He had not detected a sign that had made him think one was a traitor. Even old Tequila Jake, silent, hard-bitten and soured, seemed harmless enough.

Tonopah Lawson was no nearer a solution when he closed his eyes and tried to sleep. But he was too tired and sore, and his aches and bewilderment kept him awake.

Breakfast came early at the Circle Dot. The sun was scarcely up when Tom Hammers pushed his chair back and stood up. He leaned forward, his gnarled fists on the table.

Lawson's gaze swept the grim circle of riders. His eyes held for a moment upon Tequila Jake, the cook, leaning against the wall by the kitchen door. Apparently the dour old man realized that something was about to happen, even if he could not hear it.

In clipped words, Tom Hammers retold Tonopah Lawson's story. He paused for a moment, scanning the startled faces of his men. Then his fist crashed down on the table.

"One of us is passin' information to the Howler! That man is listenin' right now! This is for him, as well as the rest of yuh."

Tonopah Lawson was tense now, leaning forward, his darting eyes in-

tent upon the riders. He caught a dozen different expressions—rage, hatred—everything but fear. But on only one face did he detect a fleeting glimpse of what he hunted. He drew a long breath, scarcely hearing what the old rancher said, for his veiled eyes watched that one man.

"Whoever he is," Tom Hammers continued, "he's worse than a murderer! But he's got me tied so I can't move. Let him signal the Howler that I'm agreein' to his proposition. Tomorrer mornin' we'll pull up stakes and—"

Suddenly the weird shriek of the Howler throbbed out hideously, welled up—stopped—then ending in the soul-searing cackle and the clatter of hoofs. Tom Hammers' chair crashed to the floor as he whirled toward the door.

"The Howler!" he yelled. "He's waitin' for the signal!"

CHAPTER IV

The Skunk Trap



WIFTLY the Circle Dot riders sped to the door and crowded through. Tom Hammers followed slowly, and Tonopah Lawson took but a single step.

Only old Tequila Jake appeared not to catch the meaning of the excitement. He grunted the gibber of a deafmute, turned and shuffled back into the kitchen.

Tonopah elbowed his way through the crowd on the gallery, and stood leaning against the post that held up the gallery roof. Tom Hammers trembled beside him.

"Got any ideas?" Hammers whispered anxiously.

Lawson stared at the peaks to the east, trying to make out the ledge that crossed the rock wall six miles away. Picturing Granado and his killers emerging from the tunnel, he

did not answer. He had caught a movement out of the corner of his eye. But a twisted grin played across his face, for it was only old Tequila Jake, hanging out his wet dishcloths on the line. Lawson's eyes went back to the peaks. After a moment he whispered softly for Tom Hammers' ears.

"The Howler knows yore decision now, Hammers."

Tom Hammers jerked as if he had been shot. His grizzled brows drew down above narrowed eyes, his lips tightened.

"Yuh mean—"

Tonopah Lawson shot a glance at the Circle Dot riders. Chuck Conner and Bill Wiggin were heading for the corral. The others were scattering aimlessly around the ranchyard. Old Tequila Jake was back in his kitchen again. Tonopah Lawson spoke in a whisper.

"The Howler knows yuh're givin' up. Now it's time to change yore tune. Call yore hands, tell 'em yuh're stickin'—fightin' it out!"

"Tell 'em what?"

"Jest that!"

Tom Hammers straightened. "I shore hope yuh're right, stranger. If yuh ain't, we're in for plumb hell. . . ."

The Circle Dot hands whirled and ran back at the old rancher's call. Tequila Jake must have sensed the tenseness of that moment, too, for he thrust his head out of the kitchen window. Tom Hammers gave his orders.

"We ain't givin' in to the Howler! Jerry Travers an Virginia will be killed if we do. So we're fightin' him to the limit. Tonopah Lawson knows the hideout, an' he's leadin' us to it. We're ridin' at sundown. Oil yore guns an' fill yore belts!"

Tonopah Lawson scanned their faces, caught the changing emotions. Then his hand darted to his holster where his borrowed six-gun hung. He leaned forward, his back to the

punchers and his eyes upon a man in the ranchyard.

Tequila Jake had clumped from the kitchen door with another handful of wet dishcloths. He made for the line, not even looking toward the punchers. He lifted his hands to hang a cloth beside the others on the line.

Lawson's six-gun swung up, barked viciously. The bullet tore a jagged hole through the cloth in Tequila Jake's hands. The old cook whirled toward the gallery. Tom Hammers stood open-mouthed, staring at Lawson. The punchers gaped in angry bewilderment.

There's yore doublecrossin' spy!" Lawson rasped. "Grab him!"

"But—but that's Tequila Jake," Hammers protested. "He's deaf as a post—can't even hear it thunder!"

"Makes no difference who he is. He signaled the Howler, an' he's tryin' to change the signals right now."

"But I tell yuh he can't hear. He don't know what's goin' on!"

BUT Tequila Jake had dropped the cloths. A look of deadly rage contorted his face as he ducked beneath the line and edged toward the brush. Lawson leaped from the gallery and raced toward him. Tequila Jake hunched lower. He eyed the puncher venomously as his hand darted for his waistband.

"Yuh think yuh're slick, yuh blasted range-tramp!" he rasped. "But yuh're right. I did signal Granado! An' I'm gettin' you before I head for his hideout. I fooled them dumb cow-nurses into thinkin' I was deaf an' I woulda tricked you, too, if Hammers had told yuh about me."

Tonopah Lawson waited, his six-gun still holstered. Tequila Jake's weapon leaped into his fist and barked. But Tonopah Lawson moved with deadly speed. His six-gun spat flame and lead as it swept up, and it was the barest fraction ahead of Tequila Jake's. ,

A bullet screeched above Lawson's head. But his drilled a neat black hole in Tequila Jake's forehead. The old cook jerked erect, teetered on his toes, then pitched forward on his face. Tom Hammers ran to Lawson's side, a strange, awed expression on his seamed face.

"I heard what he said, Lawson! He wasn't deaf, an' he was Granado's spy!"

Lawson nodded. "Yeah. He signaled with them dishcloths. Played deaf to get the inside of all that was goin' on. He figgered it looked natural for him to be hangin' out them cloths."

"But yuh jest came to the Circle Dot, an' yuh found out pronto. Yuh must think we're plumb idiots."

"Nope," Lawson denied. "Yuh knowed a lot about Jake, but only what he wanted yuh to know. I started from scratch, so I didn't have to unlearn."

HAMMERS whirled and faced his riders.

"You hombres saw what happened. Yuh know who smoked out the spy an' downed him. From here on, you an' me are follerin' his orders! He'll help us whip the Howler. . . ."

Tonopah Lawson read quick assent in the faces of the Circle Dot hands.

"All right, hombres," he replied. "But I'm warnin' yuh, there'll be a heap of lead flyin'!"

"We don't mind the lead," Chuck Conner snapped. "Not if we get a chance at the Howler an' his lobos."

"Yuh'll shore get that chance," Tonopah Lawson said evenly. He turned to Tom Hammers. "We got some details to work out. Better do it in yore office. But yuh might pass the word that we're ridin' at mid-night!"

A dozen grimly silent riders swept out of the Circle Dot ranchyard at twelve—every one of the Circle Dot hands except Tom Dorgan, and that

young puncher cursed the low card that had kept him at home. The cavalcade headed silently for the towering peak overhanging the valley on the east. Tom Hammers rode at the head, for he knew every dim trail.

But when the riders swung out of the timber and took to the narrow trail sloping gently upward, Tonopah Lawson edged past Hammers. The old rancher smiled grimly in the darkness. Here was a hombre to ride the river with! Lawson pulled to a halt under cover of a bend in the wall, a hundred yards below the crack that marked the mouth of the tunnel. He spoke softly.

"Conner and Wiggin, loose yore ropes. Yuh're doin' some climbin'. I want yuh square above that hole when it opens." In clipped words he gave them their full orders. Then he turned to the others. "Five of yuh stay right here till the fireworks start. Gun anyone who tries to get past!" He turned finally to the old rancher. "The rest of us'll slip along the wall. Have to leave our hosses here. Can't risk bein' seen."

"But Virginia—an' Jerry—" Hammers began.

"No time to explain. Let's get goin'!"

In three short minutes the Circle Dot men were scattered. Conner and Wiggin were climbing up a crack in the wall that led to the rim, fifty feet above. Lawson, Hammers and three other grim riders edged along the ledge, keeping close to the sheer wall. The others settled down in tense silence to wait.

Tonopah halted where the crack marked the hidden door. He pointed it out to the old rancher, then shot a glance along the ledge. He thought he caught a dim glow from a spot a hundred yards farther up. He caught his breath sharply. That was just what he had hoped to see, but he had been afraid it would not be there. He urged the men to a faster pace.

They stopped directly below the dim light that came from that spot twelve feet up the rock wall. Lawson leaned close to Tom Hammers, and spoke in a whisper.

"That's the window I climbed out of. Miss Virginia an' Jerry Travers are inside. Bend yore shoulders. I'm takin' a look!"

"They're in there? Then I'm goin' in, Lawson! I'll blast—"

"Steady, Hammers. Nobody's goin' in yet. An' yuh're too heavy to climb up. Here, give me a lift."

From Tom Hammers' shoulders, Tonopah Lawson could barely reach the jagged window ledge with his fingers. But painfully he caught the rough slab and dragged himself up until he could look through the opening. For a moment he could make out nothing in the dim light. He squeezed his eyelids together, opened them. The shadows resolved themselves into recognizable things—the double bunks along one side, the single rickety chair, the shapeless figure, muffled to the ears, over by the door.

Lawson's gaze darted back to the bunks and the motionless bundles upon them. Then he drew a sharp breath, for there were three instead of two. Even while he looked, the third one moved and a groan of agony reached his ears.

It was a woman's voice. He knew that, filled though it was with deadly pain. And with that knowledge, another certainty swept over him. That certainty was startling in its abruptness. He knew they were Virginia Hammers' groans—and he would rather die than have her harmed. He knew, with the lightning understanding that was part of his training, that the yellow-haired, blue-eyed girl was more to him than just another woman. She was the one woman in the world whom he loved. The very suddenness of that knowledge made it all the more intense.

She was in agony, tortured by Granado's wolf pack. All thought of caution vanished from him, and his face twisted into a deadly snarl. With almost superhuman effort, he hoisted himself up through the window. He was halfway inside when the muffled figure at the door darted toward the bunks.

Tonopah Lawson recognized the half-breed, Gregorio. The swarthy hombre had thrown off the blanket that warmed him against the chill of the damp cell. His hand was streaking for his knife. He hadn't seen Tonopah Lawson, though. His glittering eyes were upon the bunk, and a cruel smile played across his wolfish face. Lawson dragged himself through.

Dropping silently to the floor he crouched in the shadow. Now as deadly as Gregorio, he waited with hand on his gun-butt. Just let the Mex so much as touch Virginia Hammers, and he would kill him with less compunction than he would crush a sidewinder. . . .

Gregorio's swarthy hand snaked out and pulled away the blanket that covered the writhing figure. Tonopah Lawson drew a startled breath. It wasn't Virginia Hammers, after all—but Lupe Alcazar! Gregorio leaned over the girl, the point of his knife poised over her throat. His sneering voice reached Tonopah Lawson's ears.

"So the shackles weeth the spikes are painful. They bite eento your ankles an' wrist. They breeng groans and prayers from your lips, eh? Perhaps nex' time—eef there ees a nex' time—you weel not be so queeck to try stabbing Gregorio!"

THE knife came slowly down as Tonopah Lawson watched. Gregorio leered at the girl as she writhed and screamed, trying to avoid the blade. Then Lawson's hand streaked for his six-gun. He triggered the weapon even as it swept up. The

knife flew from Gregorio's hand, clattered against the wall beyond the bunk. The half-breed screeched in startled pain as he straightened and whirled. Tonopah Lawson was out of the shadow now, standing wide-legged, chin thrust out and shoulders hunched forward.

"You—you, Tonopah Lawson! You have—"

The dark hombre's voice was thin and high-pitched.

"I'm back, Gregorio. Back for yore greasy scalp. Back to pay yuh for layin' yore dirty hands on Virginia Hammers!"

The other two muffled bundles were writhing now. The yellow-haired girl managed to push the blankets down from her face. Tonopah Lawson caught a fleeting glimpse of her wide eyes, her lips parted in a tremulous smile. His heart beat like the drum of hoofs against his ribs. Then Jerry Travers was free of his blanket. His pain-twisted face was grim, but a cold smile flicked across it.

"Been lookin' for yuh, Lawson. Knowed yuh'd come."

But Gregorio, with the courage of a cornered puma, was edging back to reach the shelter of the bunk on which Lupe Alcazar lay. As he glided sideward, his hand darted for his holster. Almost too late, Tonopah Lawson caught the movement.

The instant Gregorio's gun barked, the puncher threw himself to the floor. The bullet raked across his shoulder as he dropped, but he hardly felt the sting of it. His own weapon swung up, held on the snarling hombre. He squeezed the trigger. Gregorio jerked erect, spun on his heels like a dying top, and pitched across the shackled girl.

Tonopah Lawson was on his feet, leaping toward him. As the swarthy man's dead body slipped slowly to the floor, the puncher bent over it. His swift fingers found the ring of keys, then he was racing toward

the bunk where Virginia Hammers lay bound.

But at that moment, when the first streaks of dawn pinkened the sky outside, the vast rock door swung open. The wild, high-pitched moaning of the rushing wind welled up and echoed back and forth across the hills and valleys.

CHAPTER V

Showdown



LAWSON stood as if he was rooted to the floor of the cell, brows drawn down and eyes narrowed. Then he moved with even greater speed than before. The key clicked in the irons that fastened Virginia Hammers' wrists, then the shackles at her ankles.

"Can yuh stand, Miss—Miss Virginia?" he asked softly. "Yuh—yuh ain't hurt none?"

Then his eyes read what he had hardly dared hope to find in hers. His heart leaped to his throat. Forgotten for the moment were Jerry Travers, the Circle Dot men outside, even Granado, the killer. Virginia Hammers smiled gently and put her feet upon the rock floor. She straightened and took a step toward Tonopah Lawson. Her knees were strangely weak beneath her, and she stretched out her hands as she staggered forward.

Then Tonopah Lawson's arms were around her. He thrilled as his arms tightened, as he felt the soft-spun hair brush his face. Convulsively she clung to him. He barely caught her words.

"Oh, Tonopah—Tonopah Lawson! I knew you'd come back for me—but I was afraid!"

"I'da come, Virginia, honey. If I'da had to blast my way through that rock wall, I wouldn'ta stayed away!"

But now Jerry Travers' impatient

voice brought Tonopah up with a start. For the first time he was conscious of the rattle of gunfire outside. He led Virginia Hammers swiftly to the bunk.

"Wait, Virginia. I'll be right back."

He sped to Jerry Travers' side and loosed the shackles from the Circle Dot foreman. Travers heaved himself to a sitting position, swung around and put his feet on the floor.

"I can make it," he grunted. "What's next?"

Tonopah Lawson raced to the window and thrust his head through. In the growing light his gaze swept the ledge trail. A cold smile flicked across his lips. Chuck Conner and Bill Wiggin had played their part well. From squarely above the great rock door they had toppled a huge boulder that blocked the door from closing.

Beyond, stabs of orange flame darted from a bend in the wall. Almost directly below Tonopah, three crouching figures were fanning their six-guns in a steady volley. Between the two grim groups, a half-dozen riders were milling uncertainly. Tonopah Lawson made out at least two riderless horses.

Then Granado's bitter, nerve-shattering laugh welled up above the rattle of guns. It died down, and his rasping voice barked an order.

"Back, hombres! Back eento the cavern! We weel cut down these cow-nurses een the darkness!"

As Tonopah Lawson watched, the riders seemed to melt into the shadowy maw of the opening in the rock wall. The Circle Dot men below him leaped forward along the ledge. The others darted from cover, and approached from the opposite side. Chuck Conner and Bill Wiggin clambered down their ropes from the perch above the opening. Abruptly Tonopah Lawson dropped back into the rock cell.

"Travers, Gregorio had a six-gun.

Fill yore fist with it. Virginia, stay here at the window. When it's clear below, drop out onto the ledge, an' head for the valley."

WITH Jerry Travers at his heels, Tonopah sped for the door that led into the twisting stone passage. He did not risk a backward glance to see whether Virginia Hammers had obeyed his orders. It was dark as the inside of a tar barrel in the twisting tunnel through the rock. As Tonopah Lawson ran and felt his way along the dripping passage, he could hear Jerry Travers' labored breathing behind him.

He hurried his steps when he caught a faint radiance ahead. Then he was in the clear for a moment, only to plunge into another tunnel across a few feet of open space. But there were less than fifty yards of darkness, only a single bend, before he felt the thick slab door blocking the tunnel. His groping fingers found the latch, lifted it. The door creaked open.

The room into which he burst was dimly lighted, but he recognized it instantly. It was the very room in which he had faced Granado. But it was vacant now, though still smelling of stale tobacco and strong liquor. He stood in the opening for a moment. Then Jerry Travers was at his side.

"Where are they, Lawson?" Jerry asked, breathlessly.

As if in answer, the pound of booted feet thumped just beyond the door across the room. From a distance came the crash of a six-gun, fired in a narrow space. Then another and another, in regular volley. Viciously the door crashed open. The wide opening was filled with milling men, backing in with their faces toward the gloom beyond.

Tonopah Lawson stood with guns swinging at his thighs. He shot a glance at the Circle Dot man beside

him. Reading bitter hatred and grim determination on Travers' face, he smiled coldly. Then his gaze went back to the Howler's outfit. He tried to pick Granado from the cluster of backs that were turned toward him, but he could not.

Then Granado's spine-chilling laugh welled up again, and Tonopah easily placed the dark murderer. His fist tightened on the butt of his gun as Granado spoke.

"We have them trapped, hombres. Wait until they try the door. Give them time to come een. Then shoot straight an' fas'!"

More feet pounded outside. The killer outfit—six hard-bitten outlaws, besides Granado—edged back into the room, their eyes still upon the door. Then Tonopah Lawson spoke, his voice edged with steel.

"Why should yuh wait, Granado? Why not start the fireworks now?"

The killers whirled, to stare into the yawning muzzles of a pair of deadly six-guns. Startled, they cursed and snarled in fear and rage. A hand darted for a holster. Travers' gun barked. A swarthy hombre threw his hands high, spun half around and collapsed to the floor.

The others drew back, all but Granado. The pasty-faced killer with the twisted brain laughed again. It brought a shiver to Tonopah Lawson's spine, but it also brought memories. Tobe Brewer dying in the storm-swept blackness—his own two-year search — Virginia Hammers, shackled to a bunk!

Granado's gun was in the holster at his thigh. His hand crooked imperceptibly toward the butt, but he made no actual move. His glittering eyes bored into Tonopah Lawson's. Then a snarling, mirthless smile played across his wolfish face.

"So you are gunning for me, no?" he grated. "Gunning for me—when my han' ees empty—like the yellow greengo you are!"

Tonopah Lawson spoke from the corner of his mouth to Jerry Travers at his side.

"Watch the others, Jerry. Granado is my meat." With his eyes upon the wolf-faced outlaw, he swept his hand across his body. Suddenly his gun was in its holster, and his arms were folded across his chest. "We're startin' from scratch, yuh buzzard. It's a break yuh never gave anyone in yore whole rotten life—but I'm givin' it to you!"

EVEN now, Granado's cunning brought Tonopah Lawson to the ragged edge of destruction. For the hombre had sensed what the grim puncher would do—and was waiting for that move. Even as Tonopah Lawson's six-gun dropped into its holster, the killer streaked for his weapons.

They snaked out and up with bewildering speed. Orange flame darted toward Tonopah Lawson. Tonopah turned sideward with swift instinct. A bullet missed his heart by inches, and plowed through his shoulder. He staggered back from the impact of the lead. Granado laughed again, and the sound sent a surge of strength through the grim puncher. He swayed on unsteady legs, his chin out and his shoulders hunched forward.

Abruptly his own hands darted down like a blur. His six-guns came out and swung up with a single lightning movement. Again Granado's six-guns roared, but Tonopah Lawson was faster.

Black spots danced in front of his eyes. He felt his legs giving away beneath him. But Tonopah Lawson saw the round, black hole directly above the long wolflike nose. He saw the Howler of the Hills take a single uncertain step forward, before the swarthy hombre's knees buckled beneath him.

Then Tonopah Lawson felt consciousness leaving him. His last memory was the crashing roar as grim

Circle Dot men burst through the door, the deadly rattle of six-guns. Then fading off into nothing, Tom Hammers' voice shouted exultantly.

When Tonopah Lawson awoke, he looked around vaguely. The surroundings were unfamiliar. The bed on which he stretched was soft and clean. Bright, colored curtains let the sunlight filter through softly. There was a faint fragrance in the air that he could not place.

He closed his eyes again. Perhaps it was a dream, but it was the most comfortable and enjoyable dream he had ever had. He drew a deep breath—and then he remembered. For that breath had brought an agonized groan from his lips. Granado—the bullet that had drilled Lawson's shoulder! He tried to force himself to a sitting position, but he was strangely weak. He groaned again, though he tried to prevent it.

And then he heard soft footsteps hurrying toward him. The tender voice brought his heart to his throat. Soft hands soothed his fevered brow. He dared not open his eyes for fear it was a dream.

"Tonopah — Tonopah Lawson." There was a catch in the soft voice.

Tonopah Lawson opened his eyes. A wan, happy smile twitched at his lips as he looked up into Virginia Hammers' wide, frightened eyes.

"So — I wasn't — dreamin' — after all!" the puncher breathed painfully but bravely.

A tremulous smile came to the girl's lips. Her eyes were misty now, misty with happiness and relief.

"Oh, Tonopah! You're—you're better? I was so afraid—"

BUT now heavy footsteps sounded outside the door. It swung wide, and old Tom Hammers stood framed in the opening. He looked at the man on the bed, then at the lovely girl bending over him. He grinned enormously as he clumped across the room. Then he looked down at Tonopah Lawson.

"Yuh're goin' to make it all right, son—with proper nursin'!" he rumbled. "Jest been talkin' with Doc Winters. He swore he never seen a waddy with quite so much grit in him."

Tonopah Lawson's eyes turned to Virginia Hammers. She flushed rosily, but he grew redder than the Painted Desert.

"Couldn't nothin' kill me now," he murmured boldly. "Why, I jest now found out how much I had to live for. Yeah, I'll live to be an' old, old man—with proper nursin'."

"And—and I'll be with you, Tonopah Lawson, to see that you get it," Virginia breathed.

Next Month: STRANDED GUNS by A. LESLIE



Walk the Plank

By BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR

Author of "Two Tickets to Hell," "Mid-Winter Madness," etc.



Dick Shell lunged with his picaroon
at Muzz Cameron

*Muzz Cameron Made Big Killings
in Fish But When Death's Net
Was Cast at Him He Struck Fast—
With a Vengeance!*

FAR south of the Pointers a rift in the fog gave Muzz Cameron sight of a gray hull, poles spread, gliding across the ground swell. Muzz frowned. He thought he had that particular area to himself. He would rather have seen any vessel in the Hakai fleet marching abreast of him than the *Mud Lark*.

Lousy name for a bank troller! Dick Shell, Muzz thought, had a lousy way with everything. Still, the ocean was free to all men, and if Shell happened along where salmon were striking why that was all right with Muzz.

Muzz ceased staring at that other troller. His bells were clanging. Intermittently, since daylight, he had

been coming on small schools of salmon. Two hours without a strike and then everything jingled. Muzz pulled a double on each bow-line, three on one inside line and one on each pig. Those silvery coho salmon averaged fourteen pounds.

A troller didn't make big killings often. When the getting was good Muzz Cameron got his share. No matter that he was busy hauling and gaffing fish, he kept alert to everything around him. The *Mud Lark* didn't seem to be getting any.

The fog, temporarily, had rolled up like a double-reefed sail. Off seaward it stood in a dense bank, a gray wall against the horizon. But inshore it was only wispy shreds along the green ramparts of the Calvert shore. Muzz looked at the *Mud Lark* sliding along parallel to him and a frown stole over his young, deeply tanned face. Why couldn't a guy be right instead of a human crab?

A noise like the smack of a brick wall falling on a concrete pavement startled Muzz. His gaze, as he swiveled his head to starboard, marked a foaming mound of white. Like an offshore breaker. No breaker there, he knew. All deep soundings. The enormous ground swell of the North Pacific marched in smooth folds. No reef to break that green undulation. Yet something had turned the face of the sea into foam, with a loud noise.

Muzz stared at the spot. Furrowing those endless billows which roll up from the shores of Japan and Siberia, a salmon troller sees strange things sometimes, hears in darkness and in fog many strange sounds. At sea, even more than on land, the unknown may be potentially sinister. Or it may be so simple as to make apprehension ridiculous.

A gray bulk parted the sea a couple of hundred yards off the *Loch Lomond's* flaring bows. It cleaved the surface with the wash of a liner. A small shape shot clear of the water and fell bodily across the vast bulk of

the humpback whale. And then another.

Muzz couldn't see the sharp teeth of the orca tear at the whale's flesh, but he knew how those spotted killers worked. He could see the yellowish patches on their black sides, the wet flash of the high dorsal fin. They struck, with the weight of their body and the lash of a powerful tail, a savage blow. Far more than the gray shark, the orca was the tiger of the sea.

They sounded. That fight would go on below. It would go on until the killers were beaten or they killed the whale. Muzz wondered if there was anything in the tale of a swordfish attacking the whale from below like a mercenary with his sword for sale. He had seen those sea fights before, but never the swordfish with his blade in play.

THEY came up again. The humpback's speed took him clear of the surface. The fall of a seventy ton body and the foamy swirl was what Muzz had heard and seen in the beginning. The killers leaped high and struck again, driving the whale down. They sounded and blew, up and down, until the battle vanished in a fog haze that settled down again over the mouth of Hakai Pass.

Muzz turned to look at the *Mud Lark*. A conflict as deadly if less spectacular than that between the killer and the whale raged in and on that gray boat. Muzz didn't like thinking about that. But he could not get it out of his mind for long.

Probably that war of looks and words had been declared before Muzz met Dick and Nora Shell. But Muzz knew he was the immediate cause of the ugliness—if Dick Shell ever needed cause to be ugly. Funny how a fixed idea, a jealous possessiveness, could change a man from a friend into a brooding enemy.

"Damn a guy with a two-by-four mind, anyhow," Muzz said under his

breath. "Why does he have to pour out all the poison on her?"

An hour short of sunset, in a bight behind Barney Point, five bank trollers in a row swung to one heavy anchor from the middle boat. Their tall, slender trolling-poles, lashed one on each side of the single mast, pointed at a sky of translucent sapphire above a hill where the spruce and yellow cedar made a green slope touched by the last of the sun. Locked in a mirror-smooth bight, with the deep voice of surf just outside, roaring like a thousand waterfalls.

The cove was full of boats, anchored about a fish-collecting camp. There were salmon in Hakai, and the little boats harried them as they ran the pass. But those high-bowed bankers, with deep draft and powerful motors, were the aristocrats of the fleet. They worked sometimes for days out of sight of land on offshore banks.

In harbor they flocked together in little groups, perhaps to make up for the solitude in which each ranged on the banks outside. Of this five, the *Mud Lark* lay outside to starboard and the *Loch Lomond* farthest on the port side. Four men who manned the other three sat on a hatch on the middle troller's deck.

Yet Muzz was the first man across the boats, at a short, sharp scream from the *Mud Lark's* cabin. Perhaps, because subconsciously he was listening, expecting some sound, dreading it. He was down the steps to the cabin floor before the feet of the others touched the *Mud Lark's* deck.

Shell had his wife jammed against a bulkhead, choking her. His strong, hook-scarred fingers clutched her neck. He shook her as a wolfhound would shake a small terrier. His lips were drawn back from his teeth in a wolf snarl. He mumbled hoarse, inarticulate phrases. Over his bowed shoulders Muzz could see Nora Shell's gray eyes bulge in their sockets.

From behind, Muzz clamped one arm around Dick Shell's bull neck.

He twisted his own body and heaved. He turned Shell over his head, scraping and bumping him on the carlins above and dumped him with a crash on the cabin floor between a berth on one side and the galley stove and sink on the other.

HE LIT on Shell's back with his full weight, caught one wrist and bent the arm cross Shell's back. He had him pinned like that, face down, helpless, when Summers dropped down the steps and three others after him.

"Plumb cuckoo," Summers said, looking at Nora's bruised throat. "I see what he was at when you nailed him, Muzz. Let him up. We'll talk to him, on deck."

Muzz got off Shell who rose to his feet. His eyes were glassy. His mouth quivered. Muzz motioned him to the companion steps. Bud Summers pushed him along. Muzz turned at the pilothouse door. On the berth lay an open suitcase. Nora Shell was putting things in that case. Muzz didn't say anything. Nor did she. He followed the others out.

Muzz was half-a-head taller than Shell, not quite so thickly built. He loomed over Shell, the coolest man in the group. Only there was a peculiar glow in his eyes, a certain forced amiability in his tone.

"A man, unless he loses his head entirely," Muzz said, "doesn't choke his wife. Whatever the trouble may be, you can't do things like that. It just isn't done, here or elsewhere. When you get one of these black spells of yours and must have at somebody, try picking on somebody your own size and strength, not a woman."

Johnny Carr said stiffly:

"You're a damned ugly-tempered gorilla, Shell. I've seen times an' places where the boys would hang you to your own mast for that."

"Do you remember Sticky Parsons beating up his wife in Quatsino a couple of years ago?" Muzz went on

in that same impersonal tone. "They took him to Vancouver and gave him six months in Okalla, and thirty lashes on his bare back. Are you askin' for somethin' like that, Dick?"

Dick Shell stared at them bleakly. He steadied himself against the boom, level with his head. The little triangular riding sail on it flapped gently in a light air that blew through the cove. His eyes were steady on Muzz Cameron and they burned. His mouth quivered.

A man can look wild. Dick Shell did. Muzz stood within arm's length of him. If within Muzz there stirred any of the passion that shook the other man, it didn't show. His attitude was casual—and watchful.

Without warning Shell broke down. He swayed on his feet, blinking, muttering incoherently, tears streaming down his dark face. Like a little child that had burned his fingers.

"For the love of God!" Bud Summers murmured.

It embarrassed them all, that spectacle of a hard-boiled fisherman, an ugly-tempered fighting man, going to pieces like that.

"That's all, Dick," Muzz said. "Forget it. Try to act like a man. You make your own troubles, not any outsider."

They let it go at that. Went back to their own boats. Bud Summers followed Muzz into the *Loch Lomond's* cabin. The others sat on deck, watching, listening. They were uneasy.

Muzz and Bud didn't talk about that scene. They sat smoking in reflective silence.

Feet tapped on deck. Nora Shell looked down on them.

"Bud," she asked, "will you row me over to the fish-camp?"

"Sure," Bud nodded.

MUZZ watched her get down into Bud's dinghy. She had the suitcase and a black bag. She carried in one hand a little round felt hat with a pheasant feather sticking out

of the crown, a caracul coat over one arm. She was still dressed in the gray flannel slacks and red sweater she wore fishing.

Dick Shell didn't appear. Sulking, brooding in the *Mud Lark's* cabin. Muzz knew how he acted. Muzz had lived beside them the last winter. Perhaps, he reflected, it would have been better if he hadn't. But Muzz had nothing on his mind nor on his conscience. He watched Nora slide across the still water to the buyer's scow. Maybe that was the end of all that bickering. When a man and a woman reached the hating stage, it was time to tear the blanket in two.

The Shells, it seemed, had torn the blanket in two. Bud Summers came back, hauled his dinghy to his own deck and joined Muzz again.

"Well," he said. "She's quit, an' she says she's through for good. Another ship foundered on the stormy sea of matrimony. She's beatin' it for town on the first packer goin' out. Look at that guy, now."

They watched Dick Shell cast off the lines that moored him alongside the *Carrick*. He shoved away, turned in a half-circle, and dropped his anchor in a clear space.

"Okay by me," Bud Summers drawled. "He ain't been pleasant company lately. Let the bugger play a lone hand if he wants. I'm for Nora. That black-faced guy is just plain nuts, if you ask me."

Muzz didn't say anything. He didn't care what Dick Shell did, where he anchored or who he flocked with. But he couldn't help thinking about Nora bucking up against the world outside. It wasn't a kind world to a woman without friends or a dollar in her pocket. Muzz didn't like that. But there was nothing he could do about it. Nora wouldn't let him.

She had made that quite clear to Muzz early in the spring. She had one priceless asset, courage. Not the shouting kind of courage, just cold nerve. What a fool a man was, Muzz

thought wistfully, to sabotage a partnership like that for nothing but distorted images evoked by his own imagination. Muzz knew that in psychology there was a term for that type of mind, a sick mind, poisoned by its own juices. That didn't make a man think Dick Shell any less disagreeable, less dangerous. It only made him wholly unpredictable.

Muzz shook off those thoughts. In the dusk he turned into his bunk. No matter what befell, a man must eat and sleep. And a bank troller goes short of sleep from May to October. A constant urgency drives him.

He is more than a fisherman. He must be a skilled navigator and a hunter besides, ranging a thousand miles of the north coast, sometimes forty miles offshore. Hunting schools of salmon. Dragging his spoons in lonely waters, in dangerous seas, in fog and tide-rip. Early out. Drive as long as you can stay on your feet and stay awake, if there are salmon to be taken.

Muzz was five miles out from the mouth of Hakai Pass when day broke on a fog-shrouded ocean. In that white haze he could hear other boats. But until noon he saw only such boats as drifted silently by like ghost ships. Sometimes they were only a vague outline, trollers running on compass courses to keep check on their position, dragging brass and silver wobblers fathoms down.

EVERY sharp tug of a struggling salmon was a separate thrill, and another dollar against a winter to come when no salmon ran. Muzz forgot Dick and Nora Shell, as he steered blind in the fog, sticking it until the clock had ticked off fourteen hours and the fish no longer struck at his lures. He had had a good day. As he rolled home the fog thinned to give him a landfall. He forked off his catch about five p.m.

The fish-collecting scow carried an icehouse and gas tank at one end, a store and living quarters at the other.

Between the two buildings there was a clear floor space under a tight roof, where the fish went up on the floor and on the scales.

Muzz got the slip for his catch and went into the store to cash it. The buyer's wife kept store and accounts. That was why Nora Shell took refuge there. A woman, it seems, turns in trouble to another woman. Nobody could molest her on that neutral ground until she got away from Hakai.

Muzz knew she was somewhere on that scow. He wondered, hoping, if she would turn up to say good-by.

He glanced out the channel that led into Barney Bay. Boats were wheeling in, poles up, half a dozen of them in sight. A little fuzzy-headed woman slid thirty-seven dollars across a rough board counter. Muzz went out. Nora Shell stood by a corner of the storeroom.

"I was going on a packer tonight," she said. "But they've offered me a job helping here until the middle of September. Kitty needs somebody to look after the kids and keep house. Thanks a lot for—for everything, Muzz."

"No thanks to me," Muzz said. "Looks like I brought on the lightning."

"It would have come, anyway." Nora shook her brown head. "Dick's that way. And he's been getting worse. He can't help it. No man ever so much as smiled at me that he didn't snarl and bicker about it afterward. It doesn't matter now. It's better. Look, Muzz, don't let him build up a fight with you. Please."

"He has tried," Muzz answered. "You know that. But I don't blow up easy. You know that, too. So don't worry."

"I know. You've been nice to me, like a big brother, if I had one," Nora said sadly. "And I don't want you to have any trouble for that."

Muzz looked down at her. Nora Shell had dark brown hair with a faint wave in it, a small, deeply tanned,

round face with big, gray eyes. She was very small and she had slender, tapering fingers. Petite, slow-speaking, she looked like a doll. But she was as competent as many men, as loyal as a collie dog. She could never have stood Dick Shell if she hadn't been. Muzz had been watching Shell storm and whine and lash himself into baseless furies for a year.

"My interest in you," Muzz said slowly, deliberately, "is not in the least brotherly. But I keep that to myself, because I am not a fool and you've never given me or any other man even half a chance to show it. If Dick had the brain of a Siwash duck he'd know that. I've wondered that you stood it so long. No, I'm not a big brother, Nora."

Nora looked at him soberly.

"Maybe it would be better if I didn't stay around here," she breathed. "But I do need the money I can make in the next few weeks."

"Sure you do," Muzz nodded. He ran his fingers through unruly straw-colored hair. "I'll be around for awhile yet, but I'll stay strictly in the background. Unless you start flying danger signals."

Nora came up close to him.

"Muzz," she whispered hurriedly. "Keep away from Dick. Either in harbor or at sea. He—he's— There's a half case of giant powder in the hold. And fuse. And caps. I've known him to do funny things with powder."

"Huh!" Muzz stared at her. He couldn't understand.

"The *Mud Lark's* coming in. I have to keep out of his sight," Nora said. "Be careful, Muzz."

MUZZ CAMERON shifted the *Loch Lomond* ahead to make room for other boats coming in to unload. He still had to get gas or he would have gone right out to anchor. So he was still on the scow when the *Mud Lark* eased alongside. He watched Dick Shell fork up fish. Shell was an in and out troller. Sometimes he got

very few. Other days he was high boat by a wide margin.

This was one of his big days. He heaved up salmon until there was a mound of those silver torpedoes on the slippery floor. Other trollers stood around, watching the scow man work them into a big iron hopper on a steelyard scale. Over eight hundred pounds! Double anybody else's take.

It warms any troller's heart to be high boat in a fleet of fifty. Profit and prestige goes to a high liner. Yet it didn't seem to mean anything pleasant to Dick Shell. His face was sullen as he stood on the scow, picaroon in hand. He didn't look at the scales or the other men. He stared at Muzz Cameron. Shell was very dark. He hadn't shaved for two days. The stubble on his chin was not half so black as the look on his face.

"Fancy pants," he said sneeringly. "I wouldn't linger around here, if I was you."

"You are not me," Muzz answered.

"You're askin' for it," Shell snarled.

He dropped his picaroon and drove at Muzz. Muzz stood his ground. Every man there had seen Dick Shell fight at one time or another. Nobody had ever seen Muzz Cameron in a brawl. He never argued. He never quarreled. Most of them knew him for a high-line troller with a soft voice and a disarming smile.

No one had ever seen him lay hand on a man until yesterday when he tumbled Dick Shell over his head and pinned him on the floor. For all they knew Muzz might be like Ferdinand the Bull, who never learned to fight. They didn't like to see Dick Shell go for him. But in a mix-up like that outsiders couldn't interfere.

Shell came in a crouch. Muzz watched him bore in. But when Shell struck, Muzz wasn't there. Shell couldn't hit him. Muzz weaved, ducked, blocked. Shell's fists drove like pistons. But he didn't land a blow.

He followed Muzz who retreated,

circling his attacker, and Shell slobbered obscene words with every punch he missed. In that narrow space, on a floor slippery with fish-slime and water, he could neither hit nor corner Muzz. Muzz didn't try to strike back. His hands were wide open, outspread.

And suddenly he dived under Shell's flailing fists. One punch landed with a thud. But it didn't seem to check him. He took Shell about the waist, lifted him bodily off his feet and slammed him on the wet planks with a crash. Shell got up slowly. That fall had jarred him.

And then Muzz Cameron did strike. He knocked Shell down. Stepped back and let him rise to his feet. Knocked him down again. One punch to each fall.

"The guy's dynamite," Bud Summers muttered in another man's ear.

There was neither sound nor fury. Shell had kept his voice low. Outside of those immediately in that covered space between the two buildings on the scow no one knew there was a fight. Shell stayed down a few seconds the second time, shaking his bull head. Blood dripped from his mouth. Then he came up like a tiger, gripping in both hands the picaroon he had dropped when he went for Muzz.

A FISH picaroon has a four foot shaft of ash, a slightly curved steel point about four inches long, sharp as a needle. A strong man could drive that implement clean through another man's body.

Dick Shell lunged with it at Muzz, who stood with his back only a foot from the icehouse wall. Muzz stood still. It seemed as if he were frozen in that posture, that he must be impaled. But at the moment of impact he shifted his body sidewise and the picaroon struck the wall with a thud, with a force that drove the point deep into the wood.

It stuck—and the point snapped as Shell tried to wrench it free. And as it came clear Muzz clamped a half-

Nelson on him and heaved him clear of the floor again. Lifted him above his own head and slung him flat on the hard wet planking. Shell lay stunned by that second fall.

Muzz hadn't uttered a word after that one sentence. He didn't speak now. He glanced down at Shell. Then he stepped down aboard the *Loch Lomond*, and shoved her clear of the scow. Went out steaming slow to the middle of the bay and let go his anchor. He was cooking his supper when the *Carrick* ranged along one side, the *Boy Whale* and the *Summer Day* made fast on the other.

"You ever rattle—professionally, I mean?" Bud Summers asked curiously.

"Huh-uh," Muzz shook his head. "Amateur, yes. Lots."

"You sure got the professional touch," Bud observed. "Took five minutes to bring him to after that last slam. Maybe he'll leave you alone now. You'd think so."

"Maybe he would, if he had anything to think with," Muzz grumbled. "Aw, let's forget Dick Shell."

But he could hardly forget Dick Shell with the *Mud Lark* swinging on her anchor three boat lengths away and Shell sitting on his hatch, humped, brooding, like a black caricature of Rodin's "Thinker." What was he was thinking about, Muzz wondered?

Not being psychic, Muzz had no way of knowing. If there had been present an exponent of that school of psychology which holds that thought is radio-active, that good or evil churning in the mind of a man gives off its own special sort of energy, he might have explained to Muzz Cameron why he went to bed uneasy in mind. Muzz would have understood why he rose with that same vague uneasiness upon him, and found it still troubling him when he plowed out into the diurnal fog an hour before dawn.

Out past the Pointers, nosing into a heavy swell, the *Loch* plunged to

her stemhead. The tide set out through Hakai Pass, meeting the ground swell from the open sea, sharpening the peaks, deepening the green valleys between each rolling crest. Muzz drove a long way out before he drew clear of that tide-rip. Then he lowered poles and ran his lines. Almost immediately he struck salmon.

He watched his gurdies spool in line, holding a leader that shook his arms with the desperate struggle of a salmon fighting for his life. The sun made a strange translucent haze in the fog above. Moving alone, wrapped close in that enveloping mist, Muzz became the fisherman incarnate, oblivious to everything but his work.

He had no premonitions. The clank of a bell when a fish struck, the sharp shaking of a trigger-stick, the slap of a dying salmon's tail in the fishwell, the slow swing of his little ship over those jade billows—there was nothing else in his mind, nothing to tighten his nerves, to make him watchful, wary, ill at ease.

NOT until well into the afternoon. The fog began to lift in patches to open up rifts, and close tight again. Through these occasional clear places, bright with August sun, Muzz presently saw that the forenoon ebb had set him well southward. The Calvert Island shore, all bold granite headlands backed with dense forest, lay over his port beam.

He turned and headed on an easterly course to fetch that shore and troll along it back into Hakai. He had his bearings, and there was—if the fog still held—the loud roar of surf on reef and offshore rocks to guide him. That fog would probably fold up in the mid-afternoon heat.

He picked up the surf mutter on the Calvert shore and turned north. The fog had banked up again. Now, running with the flood tide, he struck salmon. Between tending his lines, steering a course with an eye out for the

lumping-up that marked an offshore breaker, Muzz was busy for the next hour. Then in its own inexplicable fashion the fog ripped apart.

The North Pacific fog is like that. One minute the helmsman moves in a shifting swirl of dense damp vapor. Five minutes later he is in a clear ring of bright sunshine with only a few wisps of white a mile away.

A gray troller hugging a Calvert headland was the first definite object Muzz saw. Away along that shore two or three others moved, like gulls on the swell, rising and falling. Trollers running home. It was late in the afternoon. Muzz didn't need glasses to identify the *Mud Lark*. Nevertheless he turned a pair of binoculars on Shell's boat. Those lenses jerked the gray hull up close to him.

Muzz grunted. Shell wasn't trolling. His poles were up. He was lying-to under a bold point, a point dead ahead on the *Loch Lomond's* course. He wasn't disabled, either. Muzz could see quite clearly what he was up to. He might not have understood what he saw if Nora hadn't whispered to him about that half-case of giant powder, another name for dynamite.

Only here and there and now and then could any fisherman pull the stuff Dick Shell was getting away with under that headland. In a stream where fish bunch in a pool a half stick of dynamite will blast most of those fish to the surface, stunned by the concussion. Among salmon in the sea it could only work where the small feed clustered in a bay or about a steep-to point and the salmon in large schools were harrying those little fry.

But Muzz knew it could be worked. That was why, he thought, Dick Shell sometimes made a killing on a day when other trollers got less than average, and as frequently got less than average when clear weather and other boats compelled him to depend solely on legitimate gear.

He was at this trick now. Muzz, through powerful lenses, saw Shell

stand up and heave. After a little while the *Mud Lark* shifted here and there on an erratic course. Muzz could see Shell lean over to gaff the fish that floated belly up.

Muzz grinned. Illegal fishing. So he was netting in the mouth of a creek. From a logical angle a lot of the fishery regulations were plain hokey. In the North Pacific the total catch is so many million salmon in the season. What did it matter to a salmon whether he came to cold storage or the canning machines by powder, spoon, or the great circular nets of the purse-seiner?"

Dynamiting fish might be classified as unfair commercial practice among the trollers themselves. But, in the salmon industry, it didn't matter to cannerymen, hungry for profit, how they got their salmon.

It didn't matter greatly to Muzz Cameron. He wouldn't blast salmon himself. If Shell could and did, that was for the fishery officers. Muzz would never squawk. But it was, he reflected, like Shell to be hoggish. Shell had to be on top. His ingrown ego tortured him if he wasn't top dog all the time. He had heard others say that Shell kept explosives aboard, but he'd never thought about it.

OBSEVING that kind of play by any other troller, Muzz would have changed course, given him a wide berth. He would have seen not, heard not, spoke not. But if he shifted course now Dick Shell would think—well, maybe it was not wholly what Shell might think.

Muzz was not without that form of egotism called pride. He stood straight on. He didn't admit it to himself, but he would never turn aside an inch for Dick Shell any time, anywhere. And the course he steered would take him right alongside the *Mud Lark*.

Dick Shell sat on his hatch and watched the *Loch Lomond* slide by. When Muzz had left him two cables

astern he looked back with the binoculars. Shell was sitting there fabricating another of those underwater bombs. Muzz could see the yellow sticks of dynamite, the coil of fuse, quite plainly. Muzz shrugged his shoulders. He didn't bother watching astern. And he had run out of fish.

Half a mile farther Muzz decided to call it a day. He got his gear in and his poles up. As he came aft from lashing his bow poles aloft the *Mud Lark* came slashing down on him, bow wave rolling out with a white curl. Muzz opened his throttle to normal cruising speed. The *Mud Lark* was driving.

All out, Shell had a knot an hour over the *Loch Lomond*. With Muzz loafing Shell came up on him fast. He seemed to be pointing right at the *Loch's* stern. That was natural enough, since both laid the same course for Barney Point.

That Dick Shell had any purpose in shaving close didn't occur to Muzz. Not until the *Mud Lark's* bow overlapped his quarter and surged on until she lay abeam, so close that she rocked in the *Loch's* wash and Muzz could almost see the whites of Dick Shell's eyes.

Shell's head thrust through the open window of his pilothouse.

"How'd you like to walk the plank, you rat?" he yelled.

The question didn't make sense, and the epithet only made Muzz shrug his shoulders. He didn't answer.

Then Shell bent out of sight for a second or two. He straightened up, stepped from his wheelhouse to the back deck, drew back his arm and heaved.

The missile that left his hand bounced on the *Loch Lomond's* hatch cover just as she heeled sharply running down a steep swell. Bounced and went overside. Where it hit the water a small geyser spouted, followed by a muffled *whoomp!*

Muzz gasped. He didn't need pictures with that story. Shell was try-

ing to blast him with one of those home-made bombs. And he was just as helpless as the salmon that Shell had been dynamiting off the Calvert shore. There wasn't a boat within two miles. Muzz had no gun. Shell knew he hadn't a firearm aboard.

They moved in a clear space where there was no one to see what happened. Ahead and astern the fog had closed in again. Shell could shove right alongside him and throw his bombs in perfect safety. One was bound to land in the *Loch's* working cockpit, or under the gurdy gear where it would go off before he could pitch it overboard.

"Nice work, Richard!" Muzz gritted.

Shell had a cigarette lighter in his hand. He was calmly touching the flame to a short bit of fuse. Muzz could see him plainly. He watched Shell's arm go back. His eye never left that package as it came over in an arc, trailing a faint blue smoke from the fuse-end.

SOMETIMES a man's brain is paralyzed by imminent danger. He doesn't think. He becomes pure act. Something of that sort galvanized Muzz. When Shell threw the first bomb Muzz had a leather jacket in his hand, about to put it on. He still held the jacket. As that sputtering death came arching down on his deck Muzz spread the coat and caught the thing, cushioned the shock.

He was half down on his haunches. His hand closed on three half-sticks of giant powder lashed together by a cord. A thing that looked like a section of macaroni stuck out of one cut stick. It dribbled smoke.

Muzz rose and threw like a catcher pegging to first base. But not in a panic, and not just to get the thing overside. No. He shot it straight back at the man who had launched it. Without aim, so desperate was his haste, merely straight back at the *Mud Lark* with all the strength of a muscular arm.

Even in that surge of fear Muzz' eyes registered accurately. He saw the thing hit Shell, heard the man make a sound like a screech. Muzz couldn't follow the next movement of the bomb, but he saw Shell dive into the small aft cockpit where a troller stands to handle lines and gaff salmon. A deck opening so small a man could barely bend over inside it. The bomb must have fallen in there. Muzz' lips parted as Shell bent down so that his back was a hump just above the coaming.

And then, the whole stern of the *Mud Lark* came apart. Dynamite blasts ninety per cent downward. The whole after deck seemed to lift two or three feet as the planking below her guardrail flew asunder with a force that sent one piece smacking against the hull of the *Loch Lomond*. The *Mud Lark* stopped in her stride. That gaping stern began to settle, the high flaring bow lifted.

Muzz closed his throttle, kicked out his clutch. His way carried him a little past. There was nothing he could do. Three tons of dead weight ballast lay along the *Mud Lark's* keel. Already the sea was up to her pilot-house floor. Her nose pointed straight at the sky as she rose on a swell.

When she settled in the next trough there was visible only the tip of her stem and the tall, slender trolling poles. When the next wave rolled across that spot, there was nothing at all except a few bits of splintered wood floating in a spreading rainbow of oil on the surface of the sea.

Muzz leaned against his own mast. His mouth was dry. His hands shook. That man-made lightning had destroyed Dick Shell as completely as a bolt from the clouds.

No one to rescue. Nothing to salvage. *Spurlos versenkt!* Muzz stared about him at a world which seemed to have a curiously welcome light and color. The fog shut away the boats within Hakai Pass, and such as might

(Concluded on page 113)



THEY WRITE AS THEY LIVE

THE LIFE STORIES OF YOUR
FAVORITE AUTHORS



BACK in September of last year, THRILLING ADVENTURES began a new feature—THEY WRITE AS THEY LIVE, the life-stories of your favorite adventure writers, in the form of biographical sketches written by the authors themselves.

Louis L'Amour, who has been everywhere and done everything, from boxing pugilists to boxing the compass, herewith places his life in your hands. And what a life it is!

The creator of Ponga Jim is only thirty-two—an amazing fact considering how much adventure he's packed into his career so far. And he says that his life has only just begun!—THE EDITOR.

YOU TAKE IT AND LIKE IT

By LOUIS L'AMOUR

A LOT of things were happening in 1908, when I was born—place, Jamestown, North Dakota; date, March 22nd. Earthquakes in Calabria and Sicily killed 76,483

garia, and Chicago won a World Series. Consequently, when I appeared on the horizon of an unsuspecting world tipping the beam at a mere twelve and three-quarter pounds, the event caused excitement only in the bosom of my immediate family.

One of my earliest memories is of being perched on an Atlas to lift me higher at the table, so you can see that I came by my later globe-trotting naturally—I covered the world from the beginning.

As soon as I was conscious of anything, I was conscious of looking at maps, and wanting to go places. Most of my study periods were devoted to tracing routes on the map that I some day wanted to follow, but they were routes that would have been a nightmare to Sven Hedin or Admiral Byrd. Right now a map or chart will stop me dead in my tracks in the middle of a crowded street intersection or anywhere else.

Somewhere along there I stumbled across the stories of Stevenson, and that led me to those of Jack London, Herman Melville and Rudyard Kipling. Most of the time I was going to school, and during the first six or seven years, getting good grades.

After that I lost interest. I'd put on a lot of height and weight, to say nothing of a lot of ideas. There were too many places I hadn't seen, and too many books I wanted to read—and, or so it seemed, too little time for them.

Most of my family before me had divided their time between fighting the



Louis L'Amour

people, there was a financial panic in the United States, a revolution in Portugal, an independent monarchy established in Bul-

wars of the world and writing, and all of them moved west. A lot of them were original settlers, and naturally some of them got around to fighting the American Revolution. (It was a soldier in the company commanded by an ancestor of mine who fired the first shot at Bunker Hill.)

As for the moving, that seems to have been a family trait. Probably some of my ancestors had a lot to do with the sea. One, I hear, was with Sir Francis Drake, but if he got any Spanish gold he knew what to do with it, because there's none left! But whether they were seamen or not, somehow there was a bit of salt in my blood, for as soon as I was footloose I started for the sea.

Experiment with Fists

But before that came about, I started boxing. Right now I can't remember a time when I wasn't boxing. My father and two brothers took a swing at it, and so I just about grew up with gloves on my hands. By the time I was thirteen, and already starting to grow up fast, I was working in the gym with professional fighters.

No kid stuff, for I was sparring with some boys who had a lot of stuff on the ball. Billy Petrolle, afterwards one of the best lightweight and welterweights the country ever saw, was just starting then, and we worked out nearly every day together. He went on to fight Jimmy McLarnin, Tony Canzoneri, Bat Battalino, Barney Ross, Sammy Mandell, and a lot of others, but by that time I'd finished boxing with local talent.

My only regret was that I could only go in one direction at a time, but as soon as I was fifteen, I started south. And I tackled the fight racket myself. Big towns, little towns, regulation rings and makeshift rings, and too many times without any ring at all.

Once I fought in a ring that was about twelve by eight, and the wall was about a foot behind the small end. You could back a guy into the ropes, bounce him on the chin, and watch his head rattle off the wall. It was a lot of fun—if you were doing the bouncing. Because of that wall, we both devoted a lot of time to maneuvers. After one taste of it, I decided if anybody was to get any more I knew who it wouldn't be. It was a draw in six rounds and we both had sore heads for a week.

Down to the Sea

When I was fifteen, I'd missed connections with my family and when they next heard from me I was in Liverpool, England. I'd hitch-hiked to Phoenix, hoping to catch them there, but when they didn't show up I joined the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, stayed with them to El Paso, then rode freights and blinds to Galveston. There I helped unload a banana boat, eating eighteen bananas in the process (the first food in two days) and then went on

to New Orleans. There I had a fight on the docks and wound up by shipping out and going to sea.

If you are fifteen, like the sea, and want to see it best, try a four-mast bark in the Caribbean. She was a tough old Barnacle Bill sort of ship. You took her wheel and your life in your hands. If you swung the wheel to port you didn't know whether she'd swing to starboard, port, or go straight up. Her rigging was patched and worn, her Old Man a drunken bum, her chief mate the toughest-looking and best-natured guy you ever saw.

Ashore in Haiti, a shipmate and I dropped in a waterfront joint to pick up a bottle for a friend who wasn't coming ashore, and we walked right into the middle of one of the nastiest brawls you ever saw. Nine big longshoremen were in an argument with four Norwegians. I don't know who was at fault, didn't even know what the argument was about. All we knew was that just as we reached the bar one dockman swung a knife at the nearest Norsky's ribs. Goldie grabbed his wrist, and then all hell broke loose.

Those aren't pretty fights. You either fight them the way they do or you go out feet first. It was new stuff to me, but I like to walk where I'm going, and when you're in a tight corner you learn fast. Right there I took a post-graduate course in fighting to win.

Chairs, tables, mirrors, windows, and bottles were smashed, to say nothing of noses. Somebody threw a right at me that started from somewhere about six miles south of the equator, and I did the logical thing and fired a right to the body. It was meant for his solar plexus, and I didn't miss. A chin dropped into view, and I tried a left hook on that. Something slammed me in the head as the fellow dropped, and then I saw a guy swinging at me with a bale-hook. The manifold virtues of beer in bottles had never been apparent until that moment. My hand found the neck of the bottle, and you can draw your own picture.

Swinging away with both hands, I got turned around so I could see the room, and just as I turned one of the dockers (he was about six-four) knocked a Norwegian through a window. The plate glass shattered all around him, and the sailor got up. And when he got up he had a long spear of glass in his hands. It was a yard long if it was an inch, and he was roaring drunk. He took one step and swung. Then somebody yelled something about cops, and I went out the door. The last thing I saw was that three of the Norwegians were down, and a big longshoreman was staggering across the room trying to hold himself together with his hands.

Jack of All Trades

Santo Domingo, Ponce, San Juan, Kingston, Tampico, St. Kitts, Martinique, slipped by rapidly, and then in the middle

of a West Indian hurricane the old bark piled up on a reef and broke in two. Morning found three of us lying on a rock, hopping. We kept that up for three days and two nights before a sponge fisher picked us up.

Back in Galveston and broke, we shipped out on a freighter bound for Liverpool and Manchester, England. I was sixteen then, and big as I am now (six-one, and around one-ninety) but I was glad of a quiet trip.

Everything went smooth and pretty. There was a little mix-up in a fish-and-chips shop in Manchester, in which I had only a small part due to the effectiveness of our Dutch second cook who handled two sailors before I could get across the room. There was also a little difficulty in Liverpool, in which a shipmate was short-changed in a waterfront dive. Four of us waiting outside decided to go back with our pal and adjust matters. But it seems our activities were frowned on by the law, and we spent Sunday in jail and paid a pound each for merely taking the place apart.

Your editor tells me there isn't much space, and this has already gone too far, so we'll cut it short. After that I worked with a carnival, barking for a sideshow; picked fruit in Arizona and California; worked in mines in Arizona, California, and Nevada, lumber camps and a veneer plant in Oregon; was a fry cook, a reporter, longshoreman, saw-mill hand; bucked rivets in a shipyard, and was deck-hand on a tug-boat. And all the time I was boxing, sometimes as an amateur, sometimes as a professional.

During the following years I visited and travelled in Japan, China, Borneo, Java, Sumatra, New Guinea, Celebes, the Molukkas, the Straits Settlements, Ceylon, Burma, India, Arabia (sailed a dhow from Aden to Port Tewfik through the Red Sea) Egypt and Morocco. And a few other places. In China I boxed a couple of times, ran a machine gun for Chiang Kai-shek, and left stoking coal on a British Blue Funnel boat bound for Balikpapan, Borneo.

Adventure Spells Trouble

In a little oil town (just a grease-spot around a wildcat well that fizzled) I fought a finish fight of twenty-six rounds with a big Negro tool-dresser. It was for five hundred dollars, winner-take-all. I spent the money in Soerabaya and Batavia.

Adventure is just a romantic name for trouble. It sounds swell when you write about it but it's hell when you meet it face to face on a dark night in a lonely place. But you take it, and after a while you like it. Life these days doesn't give a fellow so much he can get his teeth into. Competition is less personal and physical, more complicated. But there are still a few places where you take it without the fancy dressing.

One is often asked why things happen to some people and not to others. To my thinking it is all because some people are

gifted, or cursed with an adventure-type mind. It is a peculiar mental attitude that can get you into more trouble than four lawyers can get you out of. Some people buy a ticket on a first-class liner and when they get to Shanghai they stop in one of the best hotels. Then they wonder where the adventure is. I landed in Shanghai with forty cents in my pocket, and I had trouble. Call it adventure if you wish.

Anthony Hope gave a perfect demonstration of the adventure-type mind in his story *Sport Royal* some years ago, and if I were to go into detail there would be any number of examples from the present account. However, one will suffice.

Every Inch a Guide

When I landed in Port Said, I was almost broke, and by the time I reached Cairo, I had only three dollars. Egypt was one country I'd always wanted to see. I'd read about the art, religion, politics, and history, but there I stood on a corner in Cairo with the country all around me, and just three bucks.

Eleven months I'd been in the tropics. I was wearing a suit of white drill, and a battered sun helmet I'd bought before I knew better. If anybody looked like Egypt personified, I did. Which was the reason why this young fellow walked up and asked me about a guide. Over at Sheppard's (the heart, soul, and brain of Egypt in a hotel) they had given them a native guide who led them around from bazaar to bazaar. As he got a percentage on all they bought, it was good business, but it wasn't showing them the country as they wanted to see it. So he asked me about a guide.

Now I ask you—what would you do in my place? The logical thing would have been to explain I was a stranger here myself. But I wasn't logical, and I had an adventure-type mind. Also, I was remembering that quatrain from Kipling's *Certain Maxims of Hafiz*:

If he play, being young and unskillful
for shekels of silver and gold,
Take his money, my son, praising Allah,
the kid was ordained to be sold.

So, praising Allah, I told him very seriously: "Well, it just happens that I'm a tourist guide myself" (no lie—I directed one to a hotel in Peoria once), "and at the moment I'm unengaged. It's just possible we might make a deal."

Did we? You guess.

Looking Ahead

There could be a lot more to this, but the space is limited and there must be an end somewhere. Since that time, I've handled a lot of fighters, been a manager, promoter, sportswriter, time keeper, trainer, etc. During all that time I've been writing a little. Here and there a feature article, some sports comment, a column in a couple of small-town papers. I've edited a couple

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*His Back to the Open Sea, His Face to the Foe,
Orison Strand Does a Hero's Job at Dunkerque!*



The grenade dropped into the bowels of the tank

NAZI FURY

By LIEUT. SCOTT MORGAN

Author of "The Lone Eagle," "Captain Danger," etc.

JUST a round dozen of them were left. Of the hundred or so Americans who had been the first to fight in Belgium, these sons of Americans who had served in the First World War, and who had stayed in France after the Armistice, had

been born in France. All had spent some years in the United States, however, for never had the expatriates lacked in loyalty to the United States.

Now the twelve, including Lieutenant Orison Strand who commanded them, stood with their backs to the

sea. Standing with them was a French lieutenant, Pierre Morane, who had attached himself to the little group of Americans because he had no command of his own left. He was dubious about the situation, and still more uncertain about these Americans. They puzzled him. What were *they* fighting for?

"The Germans have us on the run," Morane said. "With the surrender of Leopold we must admit that. Our situation is precarious. We fight a rear-guard action, allowing our English brothers to embark for England. It is of a certainty that we shall be destroyed like rats in a trap, unless, of course, we surrender."

Strand's face went pale.

"Look, Morane," he said, "I speak for these eleven men of mine when I say that even if we know we must die in this action, still we will not surrender."

"With what will you fight?" Morane asked. "Words? I am frank to say that if I were you and not a Frenchman, I would choose not to die. I can see dying for myself; I cannot see it for you."

"It's enough that we can see it," said Strand, simply.

THE conversation took place during a brief lull in the attack by the Germans, who were closing the mouth of their famous pocket around Dunkerque. Through three days of hell, Strand and his men had fought their way back with the retreating British in history's worst rout.

Now, as though the Germans had waited for the conversation to end, great projectiles began once again to drop into Dunkerque.

Orison Strand and his men held to their cover grimly. Their armament could not reach their attackers, who were held back by the flooded waters freed in their line of advance. Rifles could not compete with cannon. And the heart of every last American was

a stone in his breast as, on occasion, his eyes were turned toward the beach, where British, French and Belgian soldiers stood, massed targets for the Germans, awaiting the ships that might or might not rescue them.

"Sheep!" said Strand. "Sheep! Why don't they do something?"

"What can they do, Strand?" asked Morane. "They have done all they can. There is nothing left to do but pray. Watch, and see the fate that must inevitably be meted out to you, unless you break from cover this minute, and join the retreat, hoping that some of you will escape to England."

"Our job, ever so little, is to delay the Germans," said Strand. "We'll do it."

"And when the Germans actually enter Dunkerque?"

"We will take with us as many Germans as we can when we die."

"Brave words, Lieutenant," said Morane. The French officer, unperturbed by catastrophe, smoked an odorous pipe. "Americans are but babies in modern war. They are players of football, baseball, and track meetings."

"They can handle rifles, and bayonets, and grenades, Morane."

"Even when they never get close enough?" asked Morane.

What was the purpose of Morane in goading Strand like this? Strand wondered.

"It is nothing for me to die," said Morane. "My Father is dead, and all my brothers and cousins and uncles. But we fight for our own land. There is a difference."

"I see none," said Strand stolidly.

Dive bombers, laden with death, were racing toward Dunkerque now. They came on in great waves, their roaring drowning out any possibility of further talk. Orison Strand looked along the woefully short line of his men. There were British, French and Belgians scattered all through Dunkerque, but they were

not visible. Like rabbits in a warren, they had taken cover, holding out until the ragged hordes of the "lost armies" should have their chance.

STRAND, noting the eyes of Corporal Grisom on him, nodded to the corporal. It was just possible that one of the dive bombers would come close enough for them to get a few shots at it with rifles—and among the eleven Americans, seven were expert riflemen. Their chances of getting a dive bomber were slim, but desperation might inspire their aim. Corporal Grisom walked from man to man, giving instructions.

"Remember! Don't waste a single shot. Squeeze your triggers. Hit your target!"

"Peashooters!" yelled Morane, into Strand's ears. "Useless. You'd better break and run for it before the Stukas are over Dunkerque!"

Orison Strand shook his head. As the first wave of Stukas came on, nearer and nearer ravished Dunkerque, a great calmness settled on him. He was going to die, and his men were going to die, but by the gods of war they would leave their marks on the Germans before they went, marks in addition to those they knew they had left during the retreat out of the "pocket."

Two eggs dropped from the belly of the first dive bomber. Such devastation had already been wrought in Dunkerque that the place already looked like some grim earthquake on the face of a ravished moon. Soldiers in the rear-guard were under cover among the debris which might yet bury them forever from the sight of their fellows. With a tremendous roar the bombs, striking in the rubble, let go. The ground shook.

Strand whirled to look toward the beach, and the whole peninsula of waiting men, some of whom stood in water up to their necks, seemed to his strained eyes to be vibrating with the

shock of those explosions. Screams, thin and sharp as razor blades, came through the sound. God only knew how many of Dunkerque's defenders had been killed by those two bombs.

Strand wanted to scream, and curse, and command his men to fire wildly at the bombers, which were leveling off, climbing, to pass over Dunkerque for a leap-frog attack on the soldiers on the beach. Instead, he signaled calmly:

"Get them when they level off at the top of their climb. Head the planes a few feet, and fire!"

His men were armed with Springfield—the most dependable, for all their age, of modern small-arms. Strand himself, in ordinary times, could hit a hovering hawk on the wing at two hundred yards with a rifle. Some of his men could do it regularly.

Sunlight gleamed on twelve rifle barrels, which slanted at the sky, moving with the movement of the first of the Stukas. The barking of the rifles was lost in the roar of exploding bombs, the shrieks of diving Stukas, the racketing of motors. But Strand saw the rifle butts recoil against shoulders, and whirled to look at the planes. He prayed as he watched. Was he imagining things, or did two of the Stukas hesitate in mid-flight?

THE Nazis, hit or not, must have caught the gleaming of sun on the rifle barrels, and were smashing toward the spot to wipe out this strongpoint of resistance.

"We're in for it," Strand yelled through cupped hands. "Keep heading the planes, and don't stop firing until you see bombs actually dropping right on top of you!"

The Americans, their faces pale, their eyes bright with excitement, knelt with their backs against the remains of a wall through which nobody could even guess how many German projectiles had crashed, and their

rifles were steady. On came the Stukas, and the rifles spoke spasmodically.

Pride raged fiercely in the heart of Orison Strand as he watched his men squeeze slowly, steadily, surely, on the triggers of their rifles. Even in the face of death, they were holding, taking aim. They were calm in the face of the most ghastly attack modern war could muster.

Beside each man were piles of cartridge clips. When those cartridges were gone, there would be nothing left—except bayonets. And what good were bayonets against planes or tanks?

Again Strand could hear the rifles as he saw the butts go back against shoulders, saw shoulders go limp to take the recoils. He signaled when he saw the bombs start from the bellies of the Stukas:

"Down!"

His men flung themselves flat, making use of every possible cover—slabs of concrete from the sides of buildings, piles of shattered bricks, rubble of all kinds.

With earth-shaking detonations, the bombs let go.

Clouds of choking dust rose, while the whole world seemed to shake. The dust covered the street like smoke billowing from a burning oil drum. Men appeared through it like ghosts seen in some nightmare. Then the Americans were firing again.

Strand, with Morane lying beside him, twisted about, his whole body numb, to see what had happened to his men—to find that there now were but eight of them. The three dead ones, with their glazing eyes looking into the sun through the dust that settled over the pupils, still gripped their rifles. One of them, in the act of firing from a supine position, slowly slid toward his left side, his rifle thudding into the dust, his lax fingers releasing the grip on the butt. The others did not move at all. One

had been sliced almost in two by a piece of flying shrapnel.

EVEN as Strand noticed this, a terrific crash that sounded not at all like the exploding of bombs came from the rear.

"Your men," said Morane, "appear to have got one of the Stukas. But you lost three men!"

"And a Stuka capable of destroying thousands is gone!" Strand shouted back.

"This is only the beginning," said Morane. "Don't be a fool. Of what value are nine men in a ruined city, when it is simpler for you to flee to the beach?"

Strand rose to his feet, looked back and forth along what he could see of the sheltered streets of Dunkerque. He looked toward the beach, where the bombs of the Stukas, and the machine-gun bullets of the Messerschmitts, were mowing the fleeing troops down like ripe wheat. And far beyond that beach the boats of the British were coming.

Not even the famous Taxicab Army of Gallieni, in the First World War, could have been as incongruous as that approaching armada of rescue ships. Ships of the British Navy were riding protection, and above the oncoming ships rode the fighters of the Royal Air Force, smashing, slashing at the German fighters which were trying to keep the small craft from approaching close enough to the beach for the soldiers to be evacuated. Sky and earth and sea were filled with the horror of battle.

"God!" groaned Strand. "And all we have are peashooters! Even if every bullet we fired got a Stuka, what good would it be?"

"You see?" said Morane hopelessly. "Rats in a trap, you can't even touch your enemies, can't reach them. And yet, you tell me that for an idea, you will fight to the death?"

"Yes. Morane!"

Strand turned his eyes away from the peninsula of living, dead and dying on the beach, as a rising shriek came out of the southeast.

"The Germans are shelling the town, Strand," said Morane calmly. "That means that they're preparing for a direct attack by the infantry. But first, we'll feel the weight of more Stukas, and then tanks. Are you still staying?"

"Ask my men," said Strand grimly.

Morane looked at the grim, dirty faces of the Americans, studied each in turn.

"Apparently I do not have to ask," he said.

Projectiles that probed for the lives of men who still clung to the fortress of Dunkerque, were screaming into the city. British ships came close enough to open fire over the heads of the men on the beach, over Dunkerque, to pour shells into the advancing Germans. It was like the crack of doom, like the last day on an earth crashing into cataclysmic ruins.

MORANE picked up one of the Springfields, took the bayonet from the scabbard of the dead man, affixed it. He thrust clips of ammunition into his torn garments, wherever he could find a place for them.

"Should we move to meet the Germans on the inland side of town, Lieutenant?" he asked. "That is, my friend, if you still persist in your foolhardy course of sticking to your guns."

Strand nodded and rose, signaling for an advance. The air seemed to be filled with whining things, any one of which, he knew, could have decapitated him. He heard shrapnel go past on his left, on his right. One might choose the middle course any moment.

Behind Strand and Morane, who walked in the middle of what had once been a street, came seven Americans, taking cover to right and left where they could, pausing at inter-

vals to loose bullets at darting Messerschmitts or Stukas.

"We could still make it, if we retreated to the beach," yelled Morane. "What difference can nine men make in the defense of Dunkerque?"

"If each man among the defenders had the same thought, and acted on it, Dunkerque would be defenseless," answered Strand. "No, we are part of the remnants of the defending machine."

"Fools!" exclaimed the Frenchman. "Each man believing that death may come to others, but never to himself."

A flight of German fighters came over, splattering the street with machine-gun bullets. Strand would have marched into the fire, had not Morane grabbed him by the shoulder, spun him, pushed him into a niche between piles of rubble. A swift glance showed Strand that his men were taking what cover they could find.

Just above the ruined walls of Dunkerque, the Germans were splattering the town like hail upon the surface of a pond. Strand could see the swift march of lead, like an oncoming storm. Then he saw a magnificent thing—French soldiers debouching from cover, kneeling in the ravished street, pouring pitiful fire from rifles into the diving planes. The soldiers, scarcely loosing one volley, flattened out, seemed to become smaller, under the straight-down fire of the Nazis.

A DOZEN died in a breath. They must have known that they would.

But right behind them two Messerschmitts dived into Dunkerque. One burst into flames with a terrific roar. One slid over the top of a wall, ripping out its guts, to fall out of sight beyond.

"A dozen French dead, Morane," shouted Strand. "But they brought down two Germans capable of killing thousands!"

"But *they* are French," Morane

shouted back. "It's suicidal, Strand. You and your men are fools if you don't break and run for it."

"If orders come," said Strand. "Not before."

"And if no one is left to give orders?"

"I am left. But I will not give the order!"

Morane looked back. "Only five men follow us now."

"Have the other two retreated?" asked Strand.

"No. They are dead. Their heads point in this direction."

By a series of rushes, in between the bomb-bursts and long range, high-explosive projectiles, Strand, Morane and the five survivors of the American forlorn hope reached the edge of ruined Dunkerque. Strand instantly signaled for his five men to take cover, selecting a scattered area of debris which would not be likely to be picked out by the Germans as a truly military strongpoint. Corporal Grisom grinned at Strand, and patted a sack which he had dragged along with him. He opened the sack, pulled out a grenade.

"A dollar, Lieutenant," said Grisom, "says I can drop it into the first German tank that offers me a target!"

Morane heard, shook his head disbelievingly.

For what seemed like hours, then, the Americans crouched in the rubble and waited. Tanks began to overrun Dunkerque like a plague of monster locusts. The Americans clung to their cover and waited. A tank paused within fifty feet of them, and a door swung open. A head topped by a *pickelhaube* helmet was thrust out, peered around. Grisom looked a question at Strand. Morane's mouth hung open. Protest, almost terror, was in his eyes. But Strand grimly nodded to Grisom.

Grisom calmly pulled the pin of the Mills grenade he held in readiness. Calmly he took the orthodox stance

by which maximum accuracy should be obtained. The grenade, turning over and over, started on its fatal journey. Midway of its flight, the German started to drop back into the tank, lowering the lid. Strand held his breath. The grenade struck the shoulder of the German, dropped past him—into the bowels of the tank.

A cracking sound came from the tank. It did not move again, nor did the door open. Other tanks appeared. One pushed the stalled tank aside.

"That will bring the moppers-up, Strand," said Morane. "Eyes will have seen whence that bomb came."

"We've already balanced our books, Morane," said Strand. "If every one of us dies, we're still ahead of the game. That one tank was capable of killing more than we number—by a hundred."

"Crazy, all Americans!" said Morane. "Well, here comes the infantry. One grenade, dropped among us . . ."

STRAND whirled on the five men who remained, yelled at them:

"Shall we surrender, or carry the fight to the Germans with our bayonets? We can live if we surrender."

"Naturally," said Morane, "I do not surrender!"

"And why the hell should we?" almost snarled Strand. "Look at my men, Morane!"

The answer of the five had been a swift drawing and affixing of the murderous knives to the bayonet lugs. Strand holstered his automatic, gripped his own bayoneted rifle in his hands, and shouted.

"Every man for himself! Give 'em hell! Take at least one with you."

Strand made a swinging motion with his hand, which meant "forward!" and might also have meant farewell to the surviving five. Then Strand, with Morane at his shoulder, flung himself from behind the pile of

(Continued on page 110)

The GLOBE TROTTER



GLOBE TROTTERS, alerta!—apunten! —fuego!

Also, Globe Trotters, ahoy!

My greeting to you this month is in keeping with the greeting of this issue of **THRILLING ADVENTURES**—an issue of which I am rather proud. Here's hoping that your enjoyment of it matches the pride I have taken in getting it together.

For, you see, the first greeting—*Ready, Aim, Fire!*—is sort of a symbolic expression of E. Hoffmann Price's story, **SHADOW THRONE**. Those words were spoken when Maximilian of Austria, his dictatorship over Mexico at an end, stood before the firing squad that, firing not so much at the man as at what that man stood for, gave to the western hemisphere one more nation "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

It was our beloved Abraham Lincoln who spoke those words. South of the Border another man, Benito Juárez, the Abraham Lincoln of Mexico, took them to his heart, and that was why—as E. Hoffmann Price so vividly shows in **SHADOW THRONE**—Maximilian had to die.

The other greeting—ahoy, Globe Trotters!—is the universal greeting of the sea—and it comes from Louis L'Amour, comes also from Ponga Jim, hero of **ON THE ROAD TO AMURANG**, L'Amour's great character-contribution to adventure fiction.

I've just received splendid letters from both of these authors, as well as from another of your favorites, Scott Morgan. These letters are each, in its way, worthy companion-pieces to three thrilling tales—**SHADOW THRONE**, **ON THE ROAD TO AMURANG**, and **NAZI FURY**. With your kind permission then, fellow Globe Trotters, I am turning this column over to you and them—the readers and the writers. I'm going to listen for a change. First, let us hear from the author of **SHADOW THRONE**, E. Hoffmann Price. He writes from the very scene in which much of the drama set forth in his story took place—Mexico City.

History Come to Life

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am hard at work finishing the yarn about Maximilian of Austria, which I am calling "Shadow Throne." I am dug in at Shirley Court, which is surrounded by a high stone wall.

This court was originally the summer residence of Maximilian of Austria, the Emperor who learned about democracy in front of a firing squad on the slope of *Cerro de las Campanas*. Only a few blocks from here is the most beautiful boulevard in North America, perhaps in the whole world: the famous *Paseo de la Reforma*, a broad avenue which the hapless Emperor built. It leads from the executive offices of the Zocalo to the palace at Chapultepec.

Seventy-five years ago, Maximilian and the lovely Empress Carlotta drove down this boulevard, which is 200 feet wide, except at the "*glorietas*" where it has twice that width. Today, four lanes of high-speed traffic blast hell-bent down the *Paseo*.

In addition, there are two eight-slab pavements, tree shaded, for pedestrians, with stone benches for lounging. These are flanked by one-way lanes for slow traffic, and cars pulling up to the ancient buildings, French and Spanish in architecture, which overlook the avenue. Finally, a pair of narrow sidewalks for pedestrians.

Each *glorieta* is a circle in whose center is a statue, the most striking of all being the one of Cuauhtemoc, tortured by Cortez to make him reveal the hiding place of his Aztec treasure. And at each *glorieta*, diagonal streets intersect the *Paseo*. You must not think I am trying to give you a traffic guide; I am merely giving you an idea of the kind of thing Maximilian went in for. The poor devil was so busy beautifying the city, he didn't take time to figure that the New World was no place for dictators, particularly not the imported kind.

Prowling around in this great city—for even in Aztec days, Mexico City was something to talk about—is the best way I know for soaking up the spirit of those times—which is what I had to do in order to write **SHADOW THRONE**.

Though here is what started it: I was in Querétaro, the city where Juárez finally closed in on the Emperor. An old man, old and leathery and shaky, skin and bones and a thin voice, came up and said:

"*Senor*, you come to see where Maximilian died, where he prayed the night before they took him and Miramon and Mejía to *Cerro de las Campanas*—the Hill of the Bells, you understand?"

I offered him a cigarette.

"*Seguramente, tio*. You know a tourist when you see one. But thank you, I do not need a guide, I have plenty of time, I am not hurrying to catch a train."

"That manifests itself, *senor*." The old man fumbled in his grimy shirt. He wore an old gray serape, and white canvas pants, and his woven leather *guayaches* left him almost barefooted. "You do not hurry like the tourists. You have time to listen to an old man. So you get what these others do not. Listen, let me tell you. And *show* you."

He still fumbled inside his shirt; his hands were skinny, shaky; all his life was in his eyes, and they were very bright.

"Would you believe it, *senor*, that I prayed for the Emperor, that night when the whole world begged Don Benito to pardon him?"

This was all in Spanish; I understood him, but it took me a moment to digest it.

"That was a long time ago, *senor*," I said. There was something about him that made me decide against calling him "uncle" again; he wasn't a beggar, or a tourist-come-on, for all of his poverty.

"*Si, si*. A long time. I was eighteen then, I think. Maybe seventeen. Maybe sixteen. There were many even younger in the army that took Querétaro,

For days there was next to no food. And the Emperor was betrayed. He wanted to die in battle, but the soldiers of Don Benito passed the outposts, and he was taken alive. Doubtless it was necessary to shoot the Emperor, but I and many others prayed for him, that night."

"Don Benito didn't keep you or any of the soldiers prisoners?"

"Of course not, *senor*. I forgot to mention—I was in Don Benito's army, not Maximilian's. But the Emperor was *very valiente*. A great gentleman. He did great wrong, but not from any evil in his heart. A tall, fine man, with a fine beard, a bright yellow beard. I used to shoot at him during the siege. There was no fear in him. He wore a white uniform, with all his decorations—"

The old man had picked a small pouch from the rawhide cord about his neck. With his other hand, he thumped his chest to show how much space Maximilian's decorations had covered.

"But I always missed. I was a good shot. He was a good mark. But I missed—except once, *senor*."

He was pulling my leg. As far as I had learned, the Emperor had not been wounded during the siege. Maybe I had skipped something.

"So you wounded the Emperor?"

"*Si, senor*."

He showed me what was in the little pouch of rawhide—a golden coin.

"I was one of the firing squad. That last shot, the range was so close I could not miss. And this is the money he gave me, just before he stepped up to face us. A piece of gold for each man, so that we would not shoot at his face."

The old man sighed.

"That was a long time ago, *senor*. I cried that day, and then I got very drunk with *tequila*. I was young then, very young. But even now, I remember that day, and I have not shot a man since then."

The coin was a French *louis d'or*, worn almost smooth, but the date was clear enough to show that it had been minted before Maximilian faced the firing squad. Though that was only a half-proof. The rest of his story had the dimness of any old man's recollections. Maybe he was pulling my leg, but what difference did that make? He looked old enough, and only such a memory could make any Mexican keep a gold coin all those years.

I can't prove it, but I think that in talking with that old man, I talked with a man who had shot an Emperor.

That started me off on **SHADOW THRONE**. That scrap of ancient recollection made Maximilian a human being rather than a name. It took a hard man like Benito Juárez to settle the dictator from overseas; but it took a lot of kind, simple fellows like this old soldier to help Juárez.

We hear a lot of muttering about the Nazi menace in Mexico. Probably there are Fifth Columnists. I, for one, don't think they'll get any further than Maximilian did. Simply because the Mexican is not wired up for regimentation. He's the world's greatest individualist.

I saw an outstanding proof of this on the road to the capital, during the rainy season. Half a mountainside, and they make man-sized mountains down there, poured a-roaring over the road, dumping thousands of tons of earth and rock into the ravine below. The slopes, some of them cultivated, were so steep that I wondered how a man could keep from falling out of his maize patch.

All traffic was stalled. Burro caravans were stopped, and it takes a genuine obstacle to do that. During the three days that followed, I foraged for grub in Indian villages I found by following turkey tracks through the jungle. But that's another story—

Two hundred Mexicans set to work with pick, shovel, and dynamite to clear the highway. They swarmed like ants—except that each man was his own supervisor. One spent most of a morning wrestling with a boulder the size of a dining room table. On all sides of him, his fellows were toting small rocks by hand, and dumping them over the edge, or trundling debris in wheel barrels, or shovelling it into the ravine. No one teamed up with the man who needed at least half a dozen assistants, and he did not ask for help.

Inefficient? Sure. The labor foreman, wearing a pair of Colts to keep the boys from fighting, was there as time keeper, I suppose. He never thought of telling the blaster to quit crimping fuse with his teeth. Every man for himself. But somehow, they did make good time.

No, I do not think you can regiment a people who check their guns on election day and then

take their machetes to the polls. Maybe that's not nice. Certainly it is disorderly and lawless. But the more I go into this Mexican business, the more I figure that these rugged individualists have their points. Look what they did to that nice dictator with the swallow tail, blonde beard.

Fellow Globe Trotters, these be propaganda-ridden days, aimed to make us jittery. But with a good supply of guns, and a moment's thought as to how our neighbors down below the Rio Grande disposed of imported "Isms", I do not think we should quake ourselves into a nervous breakdown.

It's still nice and quiet in Shirley Court, and no shooting outside, so far.

Hoping you are the same,

E. Hoffmann Price.

Speaking for myself and for all the other Globe Trotters, E. Hoffmann Price, we thank you for that letter!

Raiders Of The Sea

And now, from Louis L'Amour, the low-down on the foundations of his salty tale, **ON THE ROAD TO AMURANG**:

Dear Globe Trotter:

While the eyes of the world are concentrated on the war in Europe, there is being fought another and more deadly warfare. It is a war of which the major facts will never be known, and only hints of what is happening will come from a few terse and matter-of-fact messages, and perhaps vouchers for money paid to agents. Yet behind the scenes of the war, and most of it many miles from the conflict itself, this secret warfare goes on, a war without headlines or medals.

The Nazi regime, with what is probably the greatest spy system the world has known, is endeavoring to sabotage the efforts of Great Britain to keep her life-lines intact, and to feed her people.

A warehouse burns, a cargo-boat breaks, a ship sinks, or men are found dead. These are a few of the surface indications of the secret struggle. Naturally, much of this hidden warfare will take place in the East Indies, the locale of my story, **ON THE ROAD TO AMURANG**.

Only after the World War was over did we learn that the commerce raider *Wolf*, an unassuming tramp freighter of eleven knots, had slipped out of the Baltic and carried hell on the seas to British and neutral shipping. In fifteen months she cruised 64,000 miles and sank 135,000 tons of shipping, depending on captured ships for food and fuel. During that time she laid mines at the harbor entrances of a dozen ports. These commerce raiders attacked not only Allied ships, but those of neutral nations, such as that of Ponga Jim Mayo.

Ponga Jim's sympathies are with Great Britain, obviously, but in the larger sense, his war with Nazi and other saboteurs is a war of defense. Ponga Jim is a fellow who slugged his way to the top in one of the world's toughest games. He sticks to the rules when the other fellow does, and when the other fellow doesn't, it is every man for himself. In a time when nations are at war the small ship owner must decide whether to leave the sea altogether, or to fight it out. Being the kind of a guy he is, Ponga Jim is going on.

Recent statements by President Roosevelt and Ambassador Grew have drawn attention to the situation in the East Indies, and in fact, the situation is much more serious than it would appear. Most of our tin and rubber, essential for either war or peace, come from those islands.

Japan, impoverished by her futile and losing struggle with China, is reported to be looking with longing eyes toward the vast wealth of the Indies, those strange and mysterious islands that have drawn treasure hunters since the dawn of time. Aside from tin and rubber, they are one of the world's greatest producers of petroleum, to say nothing of sugar, copra, quinine, cinchona-bark, copal, tea, coffee, pepper, nutmeg, tobacco, sisal, gums, trepang, shell, pearls, diamonds, and gold.

There's no place on earth like it, for it is a world in the making. Where a few years ago there was a reef below water, there is now a drying reef. Soon a little sand will be washed up, then some bird droppings, a palm seed, a tree, then an island. It changes almost while you watch it, as any experienced navigator of those islands will tell you.

A few years ago, on a tramp freighter, we

steamed for three days through a sea covered with pumice from volcanic eruptions. At night we could see their red flares against the sky, by day the smoke. On the island of Java alone there are 125 volcanoes. Everywhere it is growing, changing.

Long before Columbus, Da Gama, and Magellan sought the Spice Islands, the Arabs had been there, and before the Arabs the Chinese and Malays. For these islands are as old as history and as young as tomorrow. Many of the islands have yet to be surveyed, others are uncharted and almost unknown. Yet along the rivers diamonds are found, pearls in the lagoons, and gold along the reefs.

Probably there are more wonders and interesting sights per square mile there than on any other place on earth. Take the colored lakes of Gellimoe-toe, one blood-red, one jade-green, one a deep blue, each in its separate crater, yet side by side. There is a place in the Karakatang Islands where a huge column of water occasionally shoots high into the air, fired from some subterranean cavern with terrific force. There are headhunters and cannibals, pirates, and the huge dragon lizards of Komodo. Down in the Kisar Islands are old fortifications, memories of a time 200 years ago when the garrison was entirely forgotten by the Dutch government, and so gradually mixed with the native population.

I first reached these islands stoking coal on a British Blue Funnel boat, and the sight of one of those pale blue stacks with its black band around the top will make me sweat to this day. Over a hundred degrees in the shade on deck, and I was down on the floor plates with one other white man and a crew of Malays. One of them blew his top one day and ran amuck, taking swipes at everything with a number ten scoop. He came for me yelling and swinging that scoop, and I ducked the first swing and started a right, but a piece of coal under my foot rolled and down I went. If it hadn't been for Tommy Tucker, our hundred and ten pound boss stoker and a spanner, I'd probably have checked out right there on the floor plates.

IN ON THE ROAD TO AMURANG I've tried to give you the story of commerce raiding and sabotage in the Indies, and the experiences of one man who incurred their enmity, and knew how to fight his own battles. Ponga Jim isn't a mythical hero, he's just a guy who believes in the direct method and who wants to get along, and if he can pick up a few dollars at the expense of the enemy, that's his good luck. Also, he's healthy enough and Irish enough to enjoy a good scrap.

I hope you and the readers will enjoy reading about Ponga Jim, and incidentally, to know that he's lifted, almost entirely from life. Good luck to THRILLING ADVENTURES, and to the readers.

Sincerely yours,
Louis L'Amour.

Our sincere thanks to you, Louis L'Amour!

Second Generation

Give ear to Scott Morgan as he explains so eloquently how NAZI FURY came to be written:

Dear Globe Trotter:

During the First World War, I specialized in the bayonet. I taught hundreds of men how to rip the guts out of the enemy while preserving their own reasonably intact. I still remember, word for word, the grisly indoctrination talk, which transformed a man who hated the sight of cold steel into a man who could handle it as though it were part of himself, and with as little feeling as though the composite were a metal robot, without heart, soul or mercy.

Many of my men came home from France to tell me how this thrust, jab or parry had saved their lives—and cost the lives of their enemies. But there were many who did not come back. Had they failed to duck? What had happened to them? Some of them were killed, of course. There is no such thing as a hundred percent victory in war. But this is what happened to some of them:

They stayed on in France because they had fallen in love, either with French gals, or with France. They settled down in France and carved homes and businesses out of a foreign land, just as their pioneer forefathers here had carved homes out of the wilderness. They became part of France. They lived at peace with their chosen people, and the families of their wives. They learned French,

but did not forget their English. They stayed on and on.

In twenty odd years they fathered sons who grew up in France. Did they pass on their knowledge of the bayonet to their sons? Perhaps, never guessing that one day they would need it. And so, I thought, when the Second World War broke, those men of mine would be among the first to join up, go into Belgium. With them would go their sons, to defend their new land, with all the fanatical loyalty that, during the First World War, countless German-Americans, gave to the United States.

That the oldest fathers would go down first in the Battle of Flanders seemed certain. I could guess this because I know that I myself could no longer "soldier" for hours on end. After forty, one slows down. Only their sons would survive, and not all of them.

To go back a bit, did I mention the fanatical fury of German-Americans in the First World War? Yes. I remember a brother officer, one of the greatest machine gun officers who ever lived, who had this to say of a battle in which he disposed the machine guns:

"Und dere is somethings I want to tell you about machine guns in dot scrap! Ye put some here, some dere, and py colly did ve give does Chermans hell!"

He sure had, as rows of French and English decorations testified. So, could my heroes in NAZI FURY have been any less loyal to their salt? Naturally, not. They fought for it to the last as, in my heart I know they must have fought in actuality. Given that as a starter, and some knowledge of military tactics, I was able to do NAZI FURY.

Sincerely yours,
Scott Morgan.

The Mailbag

A very nice letter—the kind of letter every editor likes to get—comes out of the Deep South to lead off this month's batch of correspondence:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I would like to be enrolled as a member of the Globe Trotters' Club and to correspond with THRILLING ADVENTURES readers all over the world. Enclosed you will find my entrance coupon for membership.

I am already corresponding with readers in four different countries and can say that their letters are very interesting. I would like to obtain pen-friends from South America and Canada as well as in other countries.

I have not seen many girl's names in the Globe Trotter list, but would be pleased to have my name added. Two of the recent features in THRILLING ADVENTURES which I particularly enjoyed were "To Save Abe Lincoln" and "Sweden's First Ski Patrol." I hope to receive a number of pen-friends soon.

Cordially yours,
Miss Caroline Weiss.

504 Anthony Road,
Ocala, Florida.

Glad to add your name to the list, Caroline, and hope it results in your making many new pen pals.

A letter from way down under:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am enclosing my application for your Globe Trotters' Club which I hope will be accepted. I don't know if I can claim kinship with the real Globe Trotters, but I have done my share of traveling, starting off in Ireland and ending up out here, where I hope to stay put for a while at least.

As well as the countries I saw in Europe, I have traveled over most of the state of Victoria, working mostly—stock rider, shearer, and taking an interest in gold mining.

I have never seen America and I am writing to you now in the hopes that I can get in touch with some folks in the western states who will write to me. Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours sincerely,
John M. Dungan.

3 Avoca Street,
S. Yarra, S. E. I.,
Victoria, Australia.

How about it, Westerners? Drop a line to John M. Dungan, of Australia.

And here's a nice long one from the Middle West.

Dear Globe Trotter:

I have been intending to write you for the past five years—but I just couldn't seem to get a letter started. However, here I am at last.

In my opinion, **THRILLING ADVENTURES** ranks with the best of the present day publications. It is very interesting, and has furnished me with many hours of thorough enjoyable reading. Another thing in its favor is the fact that it is above both "literary and moral reproach." It has very few equals and no superiors in the adventure magazine field.

Now for a complaint. My complaint is against the readers who are never satisfied with the stories which you publish. They are always complaining about some stories which they do not like, taking up space in your magazine and keeping the stories which they like from filling every page of **THRILLING ADVENTURES**. They seem to forget the fact that there are other readers who may be interested in the stories which they personally dislike.

All I can say is: When I come to a story which bores me slightly, (it has not happened yet and I have read nearly every issue published) I stop and remind myself that the stories which I don't like may give a great deal of pleasure to some other reader. Long live **THRILLING ADVENTURES**!

How about some stories of early American history? In troubled times like the present I believe that your readers would really enjoy reading stories which remind them of the fact that they are a free people, living in a country where they can freely give speech to their thoughts.

If you can find space in your magazine for this piece of literary butchery, it would please me immensely.

Sincerely yours,

Walter J. Diggs.

6804 Dorchester Avenue,
Chicago, Ill.

Well, Walter—there is your letter, published as you desired. It's a right nice letter, too, and we're glad you think as highly of **THRILLING ADVENTURES** as you do. What you say has a lot of good will and common sense to it. We can't agree with you a hundred percent though—in the matter of criticism, that is. Praise is good, sure, and we're always glad to get it. But we're glad to get criticism too, when it is justified.

It keeps us on our toes and helps us to make **THRILLING ADVENTURES** what you all want it to be—better and better. So, Walt, if ever you find anything to criticize, you really needn't hesitate to let us know about it.

And don't wait so long before writing to us again.

From Texas comes a call for more of Ponga Jim:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am writing you to ask you to keep up the good work in your new series of stories—those about Ponga Jim. I have only read the one—"From Here to Banggai"—but I certainly shall look for more in the future.

The character of Ponga Jim seems to have been drawn from real life by one who really knows such a character, and how to portray him to the best advantage. It certainly makes the story alive in the minds of the readers.

I think the story was very well written, and I would like to read more on the same character, and by the same author. Could it be arranged?

Sincerely,

Ruthmary Garoutte.

Marshall, Texas.

(Continued on page 108)

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(Continued from page 107)

How'd you like the October issue, Ruth-mary? A letter from Louis L'Amour, the autobiography of Louis L'Amour, and a Ponga Jim story by Louis L'Amour. Satisfied?

Dear Globe Trotter:

I have just started to read your interesting stories and I like them very much. I have done some traveling myself, when I was in the U.S. Navy. I have been in China, Philippines, Hawaii, Panama, Cuba, Sweden, Denmark, Holland and England. I was very much interested in the Philippines and still am. Some day I hope I can join an Expedition going into the wilds of the Islands, as I do believe there may be Spanish gold buried there. Some of the olden day Spanish forts are still standing. What might the jungles there reveal? I had the pleasure once of talking to a Pigmy chief. I am interested in gold hunting here in our own States, would like to hear from someone who is interested likewise. Enclosed is my coupon, along with self-addressed envelope. May I have an early reply?

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THE NEXT ISSUE

An exciting feast of fiction in the offing! That's our next issue, the November issue, of **THRILLING ADVENTURES!** The proof of the pudding, of course, is in the eating, but we cannot resist uttering these words of praise for the stories and features scheduled to appear in **THRILLING ADVENTURES** next month.

There isn't a more vivid writer than Henry Kuttner, who contributes **CITY OF BLOOD**, a rousing tale of the Crusades, of Constantinople and all the mystic atmosphere of Asia Minor. What's more, the author has promised to tell us how he came to pen this stirring yarn.

A. Leslie, prince of western story writers, has contributed something spanking new in westerns. The name of the story is **STRANDED GUNS**. Enough said. It'll be quite a surprise!

Then, **PIECES OF HATE**, a stirring tale by Reeve Walker, and all those other stories and features which make **THRILLING ADVENTURES** tops in the field. Something to look forward to!

Keep those letters coming in.

—THE GLOBE TROTTER.

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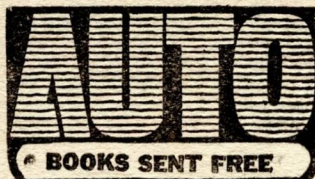
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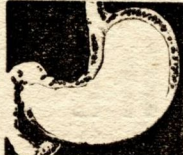
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NAZI FURY (Continued from page 103)

rubble where he had been crouched. Instantly an auto-rifle began to chatter, off to his left. Bullets sang past him, kicked up rubble at his feet. From the hip, because he was so close he could not miss, Strand sped a bullet to the body of the German with the auto-rifle. Then he flung himself aside, rolling down into a pit to escape bullets that stormed at him from every side. Morane piled on top of him, grunting, cursing.

Strand did not wait. He had marked the location of that auto-rifle, and he began crawling. By the time that he reached the dead German his uniform was in rags, and blood bubbled from a dozen flesh wounds. He knelt above the dead German as a grenade burst somewhere behind him. Either Grisom had taken toll again, or a German grenade had fallen among his little handful of men.

He filched ammunition from the dead German. He hefted the auto-rifle, noted that it was undamaged. Morane, against the slanting side of a pile of rubble, motioned to him. Strand crawling up beside him, looked over.

A line of moppers-up, hurling potato-mashers, firing pistols and auto-rifles, was moving into the street, shooting at everything that moved.

Bullets from the rear whispered past the ears of Strand as he dropped the muzzle of the auto-rifle, set it to chattering, playing the muzzle so that bullets hosed along that thin line of moppers-up. The line went down like a row of ten pins.

Instantly hell broke loose about the heads of Morane and Strand. Keen eyes, alert for every strongpoint, had marked the spot whence the bullets had come from the auto-rifle to strike down a score of men.

Choking, Morane and Strand rolled down into the pit again. A German grenade plopped into the crate. Mo-

rane grabbed it, hurled it back, without pausing to see whither. The sharp crack of its explosion came when it had scarcely cleared the crest.

"Lie still, fool!" Morane yelled into the ears of Strand. "Lie still, and you will be left for dead or taken prisoner. It will then be all over for you! As for me . . ."

BEFORE Strand could stop him, Morane had lunged to the top of the pile of rubble, the auto-rifle in his hands. Standing up there, legs wide apart, the French officer began hosing Germans with the bullets that were left. Then something struck him, an invisible something that seemed to kick him in the pit of the stomach. The rifle fell from his hands, and he rolled limply back into the pit, falling across the body of the American.

The next thing Strand heard was the voice of the Frenchman. Morane was not dead, and there was a twisted grin on his face.

"The man is a fool!" Strand heard him murmuring in amazement. "His men were fools! Americans are crazy. They think bullets won't kill them."

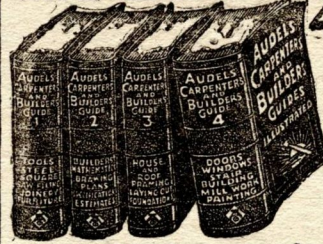
Strand struggled erect to examine his companion. He became aware that they were surrounded by a dozen Germans, blond youths who watched them as though they were a pair of strange insects. One of the Nazis was gnawing on a piece of black bread. All were sweaty, grimy, and horror-eyed.

One of them swung his rifle to cover Strand's breast. The American only shrugged. This was it. He spoke calmly to the Frenchman.

"Now I understand Nazi fury, Morane," he said. "These boys are kids who have been scared stiff by a mad leader and world conditions they cannot understand. They are frightened to death, making the most dangerous

(Concluded on page 112)

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(Concluded from page 111)

animals on the face of the earth."

"That," said the German with the pointed rifle, "is a *verdamnt* lie!"

But his voice broke on a shrieking note, and tears rolled down his cheeks. He bent his head to keep the prisoners from seeing.

LATER, the two prisoners had the opportunity to see both German and Allied communiques on the capture of Dunkerque. The German read:

Dunkerque has fallen. Its capture presented little difficulty. Some prisoners were taken.

Strand swallowed hard, while Morane swore softly. Then they silently read the British communique.

Dunkerque fell into the enemy's hand today. Rear-guard actions aided in the evacuation of our troops. The loss was negligible.

The two men stared at each other, bleak-eyed.

"I thought we were in a battle," Strand said finally. "I guess I was wrong. It was just a tea party."

"Yes," Morane murmured. "Just a tea party—with blood for tea. And now we are prisoners. We can't even let our friends know we are alive."

"Prisoners escape," said Strand grimly, significantly.

Morane smiled, offered his hand. They had been through a lifetime together in a few hours, these two.

"I think," said Morane softly, "I shall enjoy escaping with you."

NEXT ISSUE

CITY OF BLOOD

A Novelet of the Crusades

by **Henry Kuttner**

STRANDED GUNS

A Quick-Trigger Western Novelet

by **A. Leslie**

PIECES OF HATE

A Treasure Hunt Story

by **Reeve Walker**

THEY WRITE AS THEY LIVE

(Concluded from page 97)

of trade papers, written a book of verse (including one of the bloodiest on record), and the usual stuff.

When the hurricane hit Miami in '26, I was off the coast on a Standard tanker, towing a barge. There were a couple of typhoons in the China Sea, a night on a schooner with just one Bugi seaman when one of those black, vicious squalls they call a *barat* blew down off the mountains. We were at anchor in the roads at Menado, a very exposed position.

One way or another, I've lived most of what I'm writing, and that isn't the half of it. I've only started both the writing and living, and before many months are past I may be mailing stories from the East Indies or South America.

So there it is. A rough sketch, with a lot left out as there always is, and a lot that remains to be done. If you scatter some good hunting and fishing through that story, too damned many missed meals, some wet, nasty nights riding freights, and some wetter, nastier nights aboard ship, you've got the yarn.

About those missed meals: I've heard a lot of guys say they never missed any but they'd postponed a lot. Mister, I've missed some meals I'll never catch up with!

WALK THE PLANK

(Concluded from page 94)

be still at sea. The fog was coming down like a curtain on that final act.

Soon it would close in on Muzz and the *Loch Lomond* again. Better, he thought, make that headland off Welcome Harbor, just in case it came thick and did not lift again. He could beachcomb in to Barney Point from there, with his eyes shut.

Muzz shoved in the clutch and opened the throttle. He shook his head with a shuddery twist of his lips as the *Loch* gathered way. Somebody was sure to ask when he got in if he had seen the *Mud Lark* anywhere.

He would have to tell them that he saw the *Mud Lark* down along Calvert Island. He would also have to tell them that nobody would ever see the *Mud Lark* or Dick Shell again. He wondered if they would believe him when he told them why. Anyway, he had Nora's story to back him up. He knew, now, that it was this she was warning him against.

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20x4.50-21	2.40	1.10	1.00	20x4.50-21	2.40	1.00x5	20x4.50-21	3.65	1.00
20x4.75-19	2.45	1.20	1.00	20x4.75-19	2.45	1.30x3.85	20x4.75-19	3.75	1.75
20x4.75-20	2.50	1.20	1.00	20x4.75-20	2.50	1.30x3.85	20x4.75-20	3.75	1.75
20x4.75-21	2.55	1.20	1.00	20x4.75-21	2.55	1.40x3.85	20x4.75-21	3.95	1.75
20x5.00-19	2.60	1.20	1.00	20x5.00-19	2.60	1.40x3.85	20x5.00-19	4.15	1.75
20x5.00-20	2.65	1.20	1.00	20x5.00-20	2.65	1.40x3.85	20x5.00-20	4.15	1.75
20x5.00-21	2.70	1.20	1.00	20x5.00-21	2.70	1.40x3.85	20x5.00-21	4.15	1.75
20x5.25-19	2.75	1.20	1.00	20x5.25-19	2.75	1.40x3.85	20x5.25-19	4.15	1.75
20x5.25-20	2.80	1.20	1.00	20x5.25-20	2.80	1.40x3.85	20x5.25-20	4.15	1.75
20x5.25-21	2.85	1.20	1.00	20x5.25-21	2.85	1.40x3.85	20x5.25-21	4.15	1.75
20x5.50-19	2.90	1.20	1.00	20x5.50-19	2.90	1.40x3.85	20x5.50-19	4.15	1.75
20x5.50-20	2.95	1.20	1.00	20x5.50-20	2.95	1.40x3.85	20x5.50-20	4.15	1.75
20x5.50-21	3.00	1.20	1.00	20x5.50-21	3.00	1.40x3.85	20x5.50-21	4.15	1.75
20x5.75-19	3.05	1.20	1.00	20x5.75-19	3.05	1.40x3.85	20x5.75-19	4.15	1.75
20x5.75-20	3.10	1.20	1.00	20x5.75-20	3.10	1.40x3.85	20x5.75-20	4.15	1.75
20x5.75-21	3.15	1.20	1.00	20x5.75-21	3.15	1.40x3.85	20x5.75-21	4.15	1.75
20x6.00-19	3.20	1.20	1.00	20x6.00-19	3.20	1.40x3.85	20x6.00-19	4.15	1.75
20x6.00-20	3.25	1.20	1.00	20x6.00-20	3.25	1.40x3.85	20x6.00-20	4.15	1.75
20x6.00-21	3.30	1.20	1.00	20x6.00-21	3.30	1.40x3.85	20x6.00-21	4.15	1.75
20x6.25-19	3.35	1.20	1.00	20x6.25-19	3.35	1.40x3.85	20x6.25-19	4.15	1.75
20x6.25-20	3.40	1.20	1.00	20x6.25-20	3.40	1.40x3.85	20x6.25-20	4.15	1.75
20x6.25-21	3.45	1.20	1.00	20x6.25-21	3.45	1.40x3.85	20x6.25-21	4.15	1.75
20x6.50-19	3.50	1.20	1.00	20x6.50-19	3.50	1.40x3.85	20x6.50-19	4.15	1.75
20x6.50-20	3.55	1.20	1.00	20x6.50-20	3.55	1.40x3.85	20x6.50-20	4.15	1.75
20x6.50-21	3.60	1.20	1.00	20x6.50-21	3.60	1.40x3.85	20x6.50-21	4.15	1.75
20x6.75-19	3.65	1.20	1.00	20x6.75-19	3.65	1.40x3.85	20x6.75-19	4.15	1.75
20x6.75-20	3.70	1.20	1.00	20x6.75-20	3.70	1.40x3.85	20x6.75-20	4.15	1.75
20x6.75-21	3.75	1.20	1.00	20x6.75-21	3.75	1.40x3.85	20x6.75-21	4.15	1.75
20x7.00-19	3.80	1.20	1.00	20x7.00-19	3.80	1.40x3.85	20x7.00-19	4.15	1.75
20x7.00-20	3.85	1.20	1.00	20x7.00-20	3.85	1.40x3.85	20x7.00-20	4.15	1.75
20x7.00-21	3.90	1.20	1.00	20x7.00-21	3.90	1.40x3.85	20x7.00-21	4.15	1.75
20x7.25-19	3.95	1.20	1.00	20x7.25-19	3.95	1.40x3.85	20x7.25-19	4.15	1.75
20x7.25-20	4.00	1.20	1.00	20x7.25-20	4.00	1.40x3.85	20x7.25-20	4.15	1.75
20x7.25-21	4.05	1.20	1.00	20x7.25-21	4.05	1.40x3.85	20x7.25-21	4.15	1.75
20x7.50-19	4.10	1.20	1.00	20x7.50-19	4.10	1.40x3.85	20x7.50-19	4.15	1.75
20x7.50-20	4.15	1.20	1.00	20x7.50-20	4.15	1.40x3.85	20x7.50-20	4.15	1.75
20x7.50-21	4.20	1.20	1.00	20x7.50-21	4.20	1.40x3.85	20x7.50-21	4.15	1.75
20x7.75-19	4.25	1.20	1.00	20x7.75-19	4.25	1.40x3.85	20x7.75-19	4.15	1.75
20x7.75-20	4.30	1.20	1.00	20x7.75-20	4.30	1.40x3.85	20x7.75-20	4.15	1.75
20x7.75-21	4.35	1.20	1.00	20x7.75-21	4.35	1.40x3.85	20x7.75-21	4.15	1.75
20x8.00-19	4.40	1.20	1.00	20x8.00-19	4.40	1.40x3.85	20x8.00-19	4.15	1.75
20x8.00-20	4.45	1.20	1.00	20x8.00-20	4.45	1.40x3.85	20x8.00-20	4.15	1.75
20x8.00-21	4.50	1.20	1.00	20x8.00-21	4.50	1.40x3.85	20x8.00-21	4.15	1.75
20x8.25-19	4.55	1.20	1.00	20x8.25-19	4.55	1.40x3.85	20x8.25-19	4.15	1.75
20x8.25-20	4.60	1.20	1.00	20x8.25-20	4.60	1.40x3.85	20x8.25-20	4.15	1.75
20x8.25-21	4.65	1.20	1.00	20x8.25-21	4.65	1.40x3.85	20x8.25-21	4.15	1.75
20x8.50-19	4.70	1.20	1.00	20x8.50-19	4.70	1.40x3.85	20x8.50-19	4.15	1.75
20x8.50-20	4.75	1.20	1.00	20x8.50-20	4.75	1.40x3.85	20x8.50-20	4.15	1.75
20x8.50-21	4.80	1.20	1.00	20x8.50-21	4.80	1.40x3.85	20x8.50-21	4.15	1.75
20x8.75-19	4.85	1.20	1.00	20x8.75-19	4.85	1.40x3.85	20x8.75-19	4.15	1.75
20x8.75-20	4.90	1.20	1.00	20x8.75-20	4.90	1.40x3.85	20x8.75-20	4.15	1.75
20x8.75-21	4.95	1.20	1.00	20x8.75-21	4.95	1.40x3.85	20x8.75-21	4.15	1.75
20x9.00-19	5.00	1.20	1.00	20x9.00-19	5.00	1.40x3.85	20x9.00-19	4.15	1.75
20x9.00-20	5.05	1.20	1.00	20x9.00-20	5.05	1.40x3.85	20x9.00-20	4.15	1.75
20x9.00-21	5.10	1.20	1.00	20x9.00-21	5.10	1.40x3.85	20x9.00-21	4.15	1.75
20x9.25-19	5.15	1.20	1.00	20x9.25-19	5.15	1.40x3.85	20x9.25-19	4.15	1.75
20x9.25-20	5.20	1.20	1.00	20x9.25-20	5.20	1.40x3.85	20x9.25-20	4.15	1.75
20x9.25-21	5.25	1.20	1.00	20x9.25-21	5.25	1.40x3.85	20x9.25-21	4.15	1.75
20x9.50-19	5.30	1.20	1.00	20x9.50-19	5.30	1.40x3.85	20x9.50-19	4.15	1.75
20x9.50-20	5.35	1.20	1.00	20x9.50-20	5.35	1.40x3.85	20x9.50-20	4.15	1.75
20x9.50-21	5.40	1.20	1.00	20x9.50-21	5.40	1.40x3.85	20x9.50-21	4.15	1.75
20x9.75-19	5.45	1.20	1.00	20x9.75-19	5.45	1.40x3.85	20x9.75-19	4.15	1.75
20x9.75-20	5.50	1.20	1.00	20x9.75-20	5.50	1.40x3.85	20x9.75-20	4.15	1.75
20x9.75-21	5.55	1.20	1.00	20x9.75-21	5.55	1.40x3.85	20x9.75-21	4.15	1.75
20x10.00-19	5.60	1.20	1.00	20x10.00-19	5.60	1.40x3.85	20x10.00-19	4.15	1.75
20x10.00-20	5.65	1.20	1.00	20x10.00-20	5.65	1.40x3.85	20x10.00-20	4.15	1.75
20x10.00-21	5.70	1.20	1.00	20x10.00-21	5.70	1.40x3.85	20x10.00-21	4.15	1.75
20x10.25-19	5.75	1.20	1.00	20x10.25-19	5.75	1.40x3.85	20x10.25-19	4.15	1.75
20x10.25-20	5.80	1.20	1.00	20x10.25-20	5.80	1.40x3.85	20x10.25-20	4.15	1.75
20x10.25-21	5.85	1.20	1.00	20x10.25-21	5.85	1.40x3.85	20x10.25-21	4.15	1.75
20x10.50-19	5.90	1.20	1.00	20x10.50-19	5.90	1.40x3.85	20x10.50-19	4.15	1.75
20x10.50-20	5.95	1.20	1.00	20x10.50-20	5.95	1.40x3.85	20x10.50-20	4.15	1.75
20x10.50-21	6.00	1.20	1.00	20x10.50-21	6.00	1.40x3.85	20x10.50-21	4.15	1.75
20x10.75-19	6.05	1.20	1.00	20x10.75-19	6.05	1.40x3.85	20x10.75-19	4.15	1.75
20x10.75-20	6.10	1.20	1.00	20x10.75-20	6.10	1.40x3.85	20x10.75-20	4.15	1.75
20x10.75-21	6.15	1.20	1.00	20x10.75-21	6.15	1.40x3.85	20x10.75-21	4.15	1.75
20x11.00-19	6.20	1.20	1.00	20x11.00-19	6.20	1.40x3.85	20x11.00-19	4.15	1.75
20x11.00-20	6.25	1.20	1.00	20x11.00-20	6.25	1.40x3.85	20x11.00-20	4.15	1.75
20x11.00-21	6.30	1.20	1.00	20x11.00-21	6.30	1.40x3.85	20x11.00-21	4.15	1.75
20x11.25-19	6.35	1.20	1.00	20x11.25-19	6.35	1.40x3.85	20x11.25-19	4.15	1.75
20x11.25-20	6.40	1.20	1.00	20x11.25-20	6.40	1.40x3.85	20x11.25-20	4.15	1.75
20x11.25-21	6.45	1.20	1.00	20x11.25-21	6.45	1.40x3.85	20x11.25-21	4.15	1.75
20x11.50-19	6.50	1.20	1.00	20x11.50-19	6.50	1.40x3.85	20x11.50-19	4.15	1.75
20x11.50-20	6.55	1.20	1.00	20x11.50-20	6.55	1.40x3.85	20x11.50-20	4.15	1.75
20x11.50-21	6.60	1.20	1.00	20x11.50-21	6.60	1.40x3.85	20x11.50-21	4.15	1.75
20x11.75-19	6.65	1.20	1.00	20x11.75-19	6.65	1.40x3.85	20x11.75-19	4.15	1.75
20x11.75-20	6.70	1.20	1.00	20x11.75-20	6.70	1.40x3.85	20x11.75-20	4.15	1.75
20x11.75-21	6.75	1.20	1.00	20x11.75-21	6.75	1.40x3.85	20x11.75-21	4.15	1.75
20x12.00-19	6.80	1.20	1.00	20x12.00-19	6.80	1.40x3.85	20x12.00-19	4.15	1.75
20x12.00-20	6.85	1.20	1.00	20x12.00-20	6.85	1.40x3.85	20x12.00-20	4.15	1.75
20x12.00-21	6.90	1.20	1.00	20x12.00-21	6.90	1.40x3.85	20x12.00-21	4.15	1.75
20x12.25-19	6.95	1.20	1.00	20x12.25-19	6.95	1.40x3.85	20x12.25-19	4.15	1.75
20x12.25-20	7.00	1.20	1.00	20x12.25-20	7.00	1.40x3.85	20x12.25-20	4.15	1.75
20x12.25-21	7.05	1.20	1.00	20x12.25-21	7.05	1.40x3.85	20x12.25-21	4.15	1.75
20x12.50-19	7.10	1.20	1.00	20x12.50-19	7.10	1.40x3.85	20x12.50-19	4.15	1.75
20x12.50-20	7.15	1.20	1.00	20x12.50-20	7.15	1.40x3.85	20x12.50-20	4.15	1.75
20x12.50-21	7.20	1.20	1.00	20x12.50-21	7.20	1.40x3.85	20x12.50-21	4.15	1.75
20x12.75-19	7.25	1.20	1.00	20x12.75-19	7.25	1.40x3.85	20x12.75-19	4.15	1.75
20x12.75-20	7.30	1.20	1.00	20x12.75-20	7.30	1.40x3.85	20x12.75-20	4.15	1.75
20x12.75-21	7.35	1.20	1.00	20x12.75-21	7.35	1.40x3.85	20x12.75-21	4.15	1.75
20x13.00-19	7.40	1.20	1.00	20x13.00-19	7.40	1.40x3.85	20x13.00-19	4.15	1.75
20x13.00-20	7.45	1.20	1.00	20x13.00-20	7.45	1.40x3.85	20x13.00-20	4.15	1.75
20x13.00-21									



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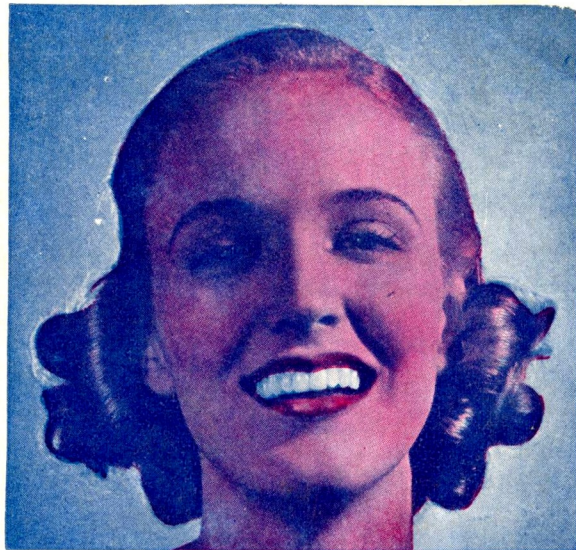
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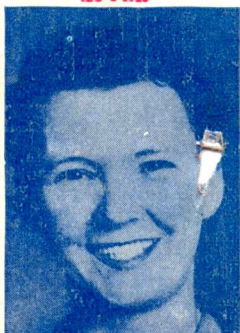


Posed by a Professional Model

THE TESTIMONIAL LETTERS WE PUBLISH are communications that customers have sent to us without solicitation and without pay. We have large numbers of such missives. We never print anyone's letter without previous consent. We believe that each of our customers who has written to us enthusiastically in endorsing our dental plates is sincere. We do not, however, imitate or represent that you will receive the same results in any instance that those customers describe. What is important to you is that when you pay for our teeth, WE GUARANTEE IF YOU ARE NOT 100% SATISFIED IN EVERY RESPECT WITH THE TEETH WE WILL MAKE FOR YOU. AFTER YOU HAVE WORN THEM AS LONG AS 60 DAYS, WE WILL GLADLY REFUND TO YOU EVERY CENT YOU HAVE PAID US FOR THEM

BEFORE

AFTER



Mrs. Elsie Boland of Norton, Kansas, writes:
"Enclose find two pictures. One shows how I looked before I got my teeth; the other one shows how I look afterwards. Your teeth are certainly beautiful. I have not had mine out since the day I got them except to clean them."



Harry Willoughby, Adairville, Kentucky, writes:

"I have received my teeth and am PROUD OF THEM"



Mrs. Geo. G. Conklin, Bridgeport, Connecticut, writes:

"I received my set of teeth. I wear them day and night. I have good reason to be well pleased with them. Thank you very much"

MADE - TO - MEASURE DENTAL PLATES DIRECT FROM OUR LABORATORY TO YOU!

We make to measure for you **individually—BY MAIL—**Dental Plates for men and women—from an impression of your own mouth taken by you at your home. We have thousands of customers all over the country wearing teeth we made by mail at sensible prices.

AT ROCK BOTTOM PRICES

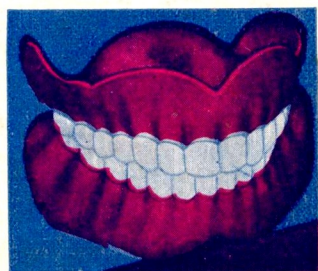
If you find out what others have paid for theirs, you will be astounded when you see how little ours will cost you. By reading our catalog, you will learn how to save half or more on dental plates for yourself. Monthly payments possible.

ON 60 DAYS' TRIAL

Make us prove every word we say. Wear our teeth on trial for as long as 60 days. Then, if you are not perfectly satisfied with them, they will not cost you a cent. Isn't that fair enough?

WITH MONEY - BACK GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION

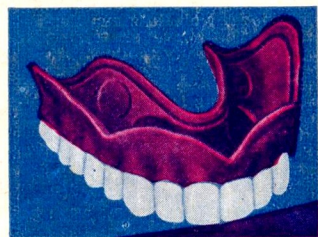
We take this risk. We guarantee that if you are not completely satisfied with the teeth we make for you, then any time within 60 days we will immediately refund every cent you have paid us for them. We take your word. You are the judge.



HAND-CARVED SET



PARTIAL



ROOFLESS

TRY our practically unbreakable **ROOFLESS PARTIAL** and **TRANSLUCENT** plates. Our dentures are set with pearly-white, genuine, porcelain teeth; constructed from high-grade materials, with expert workmanship, to give long service. We make all styles of plates. A dentist who has had many years' experience in making dental plates supervises the making of each plate.

FREE

IMPRESSION MATERIAL. Catalog with our new low prices and information. Don't put this off. Do it TODAY. CLIP COUPON OR WRITE. A one cent postcard with name and address plainly written is all that is necessary.

We also Repair or Reproduce Old Plates—48-hour Service

UNITED STATES DENTAL COMPANY

Dr. Ernest French, Supervisor of Laboratory
1555 Milwaukee Ave., Dept. A-82, Chicago, Ill.

MAIL THIS COUPON NOW
FREE UNITED STATES DENTAL COMPANY

Dept. A-82, 1555 Milwaukee Ave.,
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Send, without obligation, your **FREE** impression material, catalog and information

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....
(Print Clearly)