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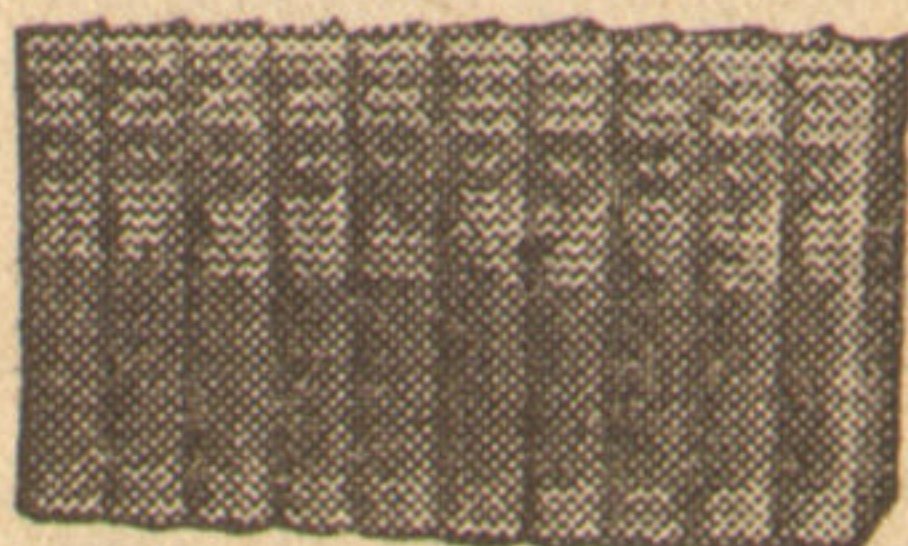
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# The GLOBE TROTTER



**H**EARTY greetings, fellow Globe Trotters! Just give me time to shuck my duds and read my mail, and I'll be right with you. Things happen so fast in this world of ours today that a man hardly has time for a chat—much less a visit—with his friends. Here it is, with another month gone by since we last jawed with each other, and—

Say, I've got a better idea. No good reason why you should do any waiting on my account. We can go over the mail together.

Let's see now—there's a letter I've been expecting. Sit down, friends, while I look. If it's here, I'll find it in a minute. Here it is—from an old friend of yours and mine. And I think he's made a pack of new friends with this issue of **THRILLING ADVENTURES**, because he's the author of the bang-up yarn that leads off the number—**CURSE OF THE DEVIL DOCTOR**. None other than E. Hoffmann Price. To the old-timers among you, he needs no introduction, and you new readers of **THRILLING ADVENTURES** will feel that you've known him a long time after you read his letter. He has a way of getting his personality over even in cold print, and we who know that vibrant personality can appreciate the achievement.

So glance over my shoulder, Globe Trotters, and read the words of a chap who stays put less than any other man I know:

Dear Globe Trotter:

The heading may puzzle you. "Old Station" is a hamlet on the bank of Hat Creek, the site of an Indian massacre in 1854, when the first stage coaches began to run from Sacramento to Yreka. Today, there is a filling station, and I have just massacred a steak while sitting in front of a whopping big fire—which last is mighty nice of an evening at an elevation of something over 6,000 feet.

Just returned from a 17-mile drive over rugged lava beds, and along mountain trails, heading for what I consider the weirdest landscape this side of the craters of the moon: Cinder Cone, perhaps the most recent volcanic blow-up in the United States.

But this is a digression. After all, you want to hear about **CURSE OF THE DEVIL DOCTOR**. I can't help but say, though, that while I sat on the crater's edge of this cinder cone—nicely cooled by now, thank you—it seemed to me that some devil doctor in his wilder moments had created the stretch of devastation that reached out for miles in every direction.

Well, let's switch from Hat Creek to Burma.

Burma probably has more wizards per square mile than any other place on earth, and more demons. The Burmese language indicates this. For instance, *hmaw sayah* is a general term—"won-

der worker." Then, *sohns*, like our Pyada Sohn, are black magicians, magicians with evil aim. The *wehzah* is generally beneficent, and this class is sub-divided into "mercury wise men," "iron wise men," "medical wise men," and finally the *inn wehzah*, who is learned in cabalistical signs, magic squares, roughly a sort of numerologist.

"Inn" refers to the signs these wizards draw. For instance, paint a certain *inn* on your house, lightning can not strike it. Also, if you don't like your neighbor, a malignant magician will for a reasonable fee sell you an *inn*, which, when put on the neighbor's door, will insure an early and devastating thunderbolt. You can get an *inn* tattooed on your body to protect you against sword-strokes or bullets.

It is said that all these *inns* fail when the bullet comes from a high-powered and well-aimed modern rifle!

You mustn't get the idea that the Burmese are slap-happy just because they believe in *inns*. Consider the home-made powder, the unreliable muskets and the crudely cast slugs, or even chunks of scrap iron—all used by natives of countries where rifles are extremely costly. Many a man naturally would have what he thinks are miraculous escapes.

Suppose a high-pressure magician had sold *inns* to 50 Burmese men, some time before a tribal feud. Bum ammunition, bum marksmanship, and the law of averages combine to permit a lot of survivors—and the wizard's charm gets the credit. Remember how some of us old-timers used to filter bum whiskey through cotton batting, or charcoal, and then blithely drank it? Or, we touched a match to a bit of it, and if it burned with a blue flame, we were sure it wouldn't give us blind staggers, palsy, or paralysis of the optic nerve? We ended by believing that the tests just mentioned were really scientific—and science is the American equivalent of magic.

Our science works better. It is a bit more precise, but the man on the street does in a way regard science much as the Burmese regard magic.

But can we entirely ignore magic? In my yarn, I had our *sohn* use a modern and very deadly chemical to blind his victims. Paraphenylene diamine and several closely related dyes were actually used in cosmetics and with tragic results. However, I do not mean, by my rational explanation, to imply that Asiatic magic is all fakery. Our psychologists learnedly define it as "auto hypnosis," or "mental suggestion." Even so, does *that* explanation really explain? If their explanations are really explanations, why can't they or why don't they give harmless demonstrations?

Most of us believe in hunches. That is getting close to a belief in magic. Ever add your age and your license plate number and buy a lottery ticket? If so, you mustn't rib the Burmese! As a matter of fact, I once dreamed of marking a Chinese lottery ticket. I dashed to the nearest Chinese lottery seller, grabbed a brush and a blank, and "spotted" the ticket. It paid off, 90 to 1. But I don't advise pushing that idea too far! Asiatic magic has its limits.

Not long ago, I met a short, stocky little man with a quizzical eye and a head shaped pretty much like a honeydew melon. His name was German, but I had a hunch there was more to the story. He had not spoken a dozen words before I was convinced he was very much at home in Central Asia. Realizing that a direct question might be a boner, I asked him if he spoke Magyar—a

(Continued on page 9)

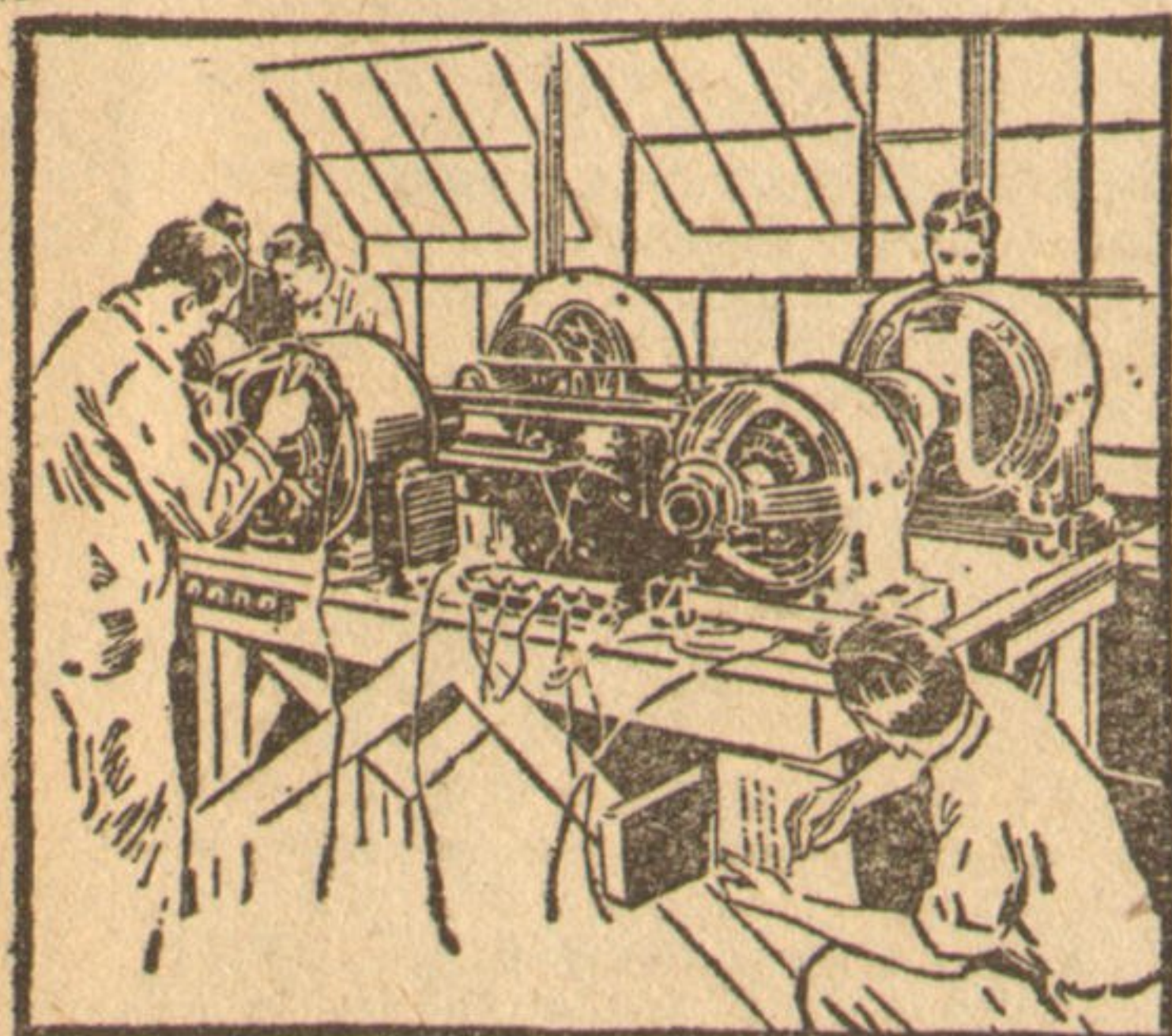
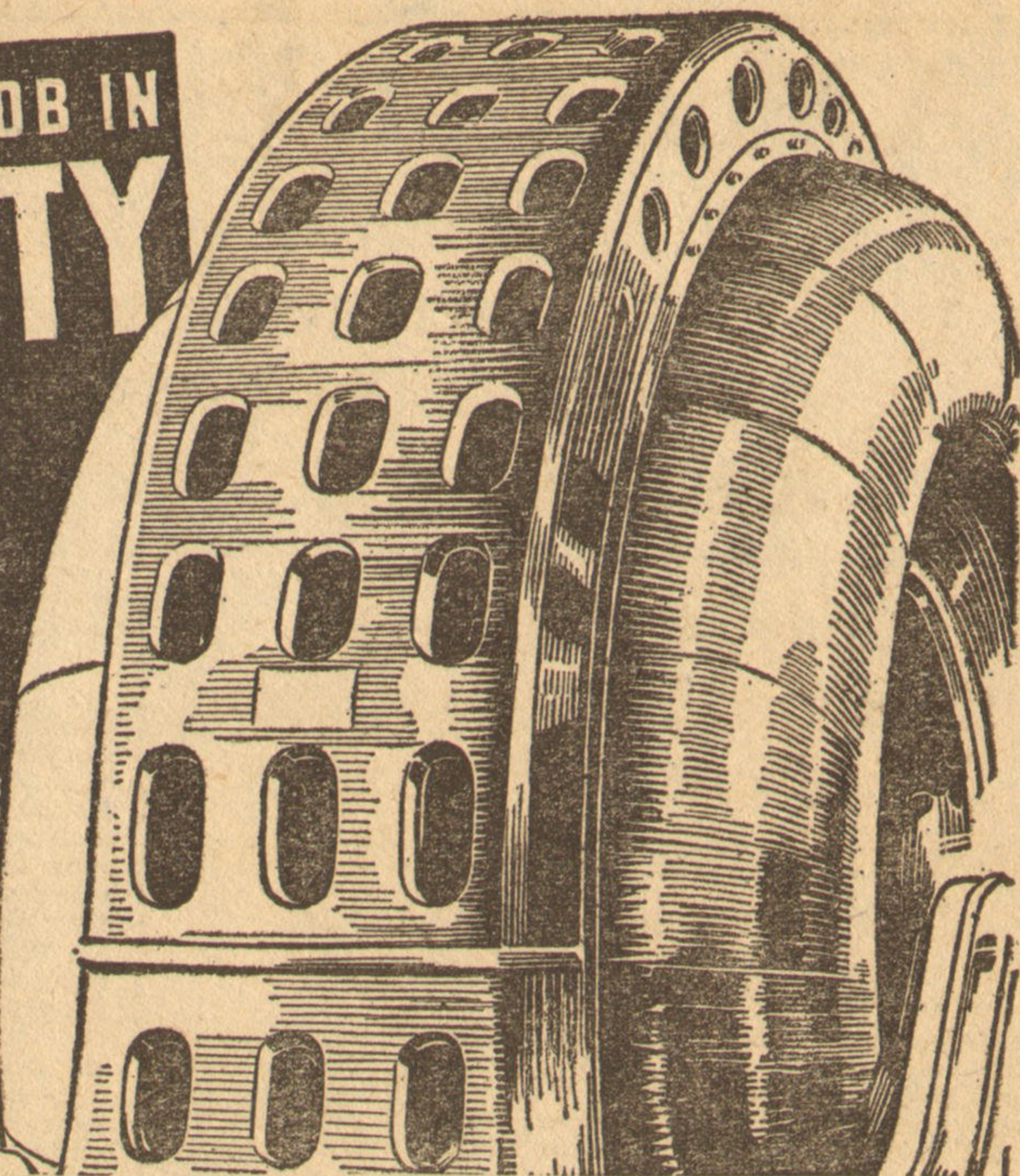


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novices as well as seasoned  
veterans.**

Make no mistake—this is no novelty—no flimsy creation which the inventor hopes to put on the market. You probably have seen nothing like it yet—perhaps never dreamed of the existence of such a device—yet it has already been used by corporations of outstanding prominence—by dealers of great corporations—by their branches—by doctors, newspapers, publishers—schools—hospitals, etc., etc., and by thousands of small business men. You don't have to convince a man that he should use an electric bulb to light his office instead of a gas lamp. Nor do you have to sell the same business man the idea that some day he may need something like this invention. The need is already there—the money is usually being spent right at that very moment—and the desirability of saving the greatest part of this expense is obvious immediately.

**Some of the Savings  
You Can Show**

You walk into an office and put down before your prospect a letter from a sales organization showing that they did work in their own office for \$11 which formerly could have cost them over \$200. A building supply corporation pays our man \$70, whereas the bill could have been for \$1,600! An automobile dealer pays our representative \$15, whereas the expense could have been over \$1,000. A department store has expense of \$83.60, possible cost if done outside the business being well over \$2,000. And so on. We could not possibly list all cases here. These are just a few of the many actual cases which we place in your hands to work with. Practically every line of business and every section of the country is represented by these field reports which hammer across dazzling, convincing money-saving opportunities which hardly any business man can fail to understand.

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

Going into this business is not like selling something offered in every grocery, drug or department store. For instance, when you take a \$7.50 order, \$5.83 can be your share. On \$1,500 worth of business, your share can be \$1,167.00. The very least you get as your part of every dollar's worth of business you do is 67 cents—on ten dollars' worth \$6.70, on a hundred dollars' worth \$67.00—in other words two thirds of every order you get is yours. Not only on the first order—but on repeat orders—and you have the opportunity of earning an even larger percentage.

**This Business Has  
Nothing to Do With  
House to House Canvassing**

Nor do you have to know anything about high-pressure selling. "Selling" is unnecessary in the ordinary sense of the word. Instead of hammering away at the customer and trying to "force" a sale, you make a dignified, business-like call, leave the installation—whatever size the customer says he will accept—at our risk, let the customer sell himself after the device is in and working. This does away with the need for pressure on the customer—it eliminates the 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! While others fail to get even a hearing, our men are making sales running into the hundreds. They have received the attention of the largest firms in the country, and sold to the smallest businesses by the thousands.

## EARNINGS

One man in California earned over \$1,600 per month for three months—close to \$5,000 in 90 days' time. Another writes from Delaware—"Since I have been operating (just a little less than a month of actual selling) and not the full day at that, because I have been getting organized and had to spend at least half the day in the office; counting what I have sold outright and on trial, I have made just a little in excess of one thousand dollars profit for one month." A man working small city in N. Y. State made \$10,805 in 9 months. Texas man nets over \$300 in less than a week's time. Space does not permit mentioning here more than these few random cases. However, they are sufficient to indicate that the worthwhile future in this business is coupled with immediate earnings for the right kind of man. One man with us has already made over a thousand sales on which his earnings ran from \$5 to \$60 per sale and more. A great deal of this business was repeat business. Yet he had never done anything like this before coming with us. That is the kind of opportunity this business offers. The fact that this business has attracted to it such business men as former bankers, executives of businesses—men who demand only the highest type of opportunity and income—gives a fairly good picture of the kind of business this is. Our door is open, however, to the young man looking for the right field in which to make his start and develop his future.

**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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# THE GLOBE TROTTER

(Continued from page 6)

language that many Germans from Austria might well know, yet Magyar is a central Asiatic language, or was, 1,000 years ago.

He spoke Magyar—and more than that, he knew Central Asia inside out. He knew the difference between the Osmanli Turki accent and Seljuk Turki, a distinction which no phony ever heard of. What's that got to do with Burma? More than I expected at the start.

He told me of meeting a few magicians, soothsayers, lamas, in Central Asia, Mongolia, Turkestan, and Burma, which is just south of Turkestan's extreme eastern angle. There was a soothsayer who told him what the old folks back in Europe were doing at that very moment, and then made the traveler actually see the events. Skeptical, he wrote home to check up. The wizard had hit it on the nail. Call it auto-hypnosis, pal, but how did the traveler hypnotize himself into seeing an event 6,000 miles away? Or how did the wizard know, if he did the hypnotizing?

I do not answer these queries. I have to take the traveler's word for this event. But I was inclined to believe he was the real article after he cracked off about the difference between the Osmanli and the Seljuk accent.

Our Pyada Sohn in the story is of course a renegade Buddhist. Buddhism has been grafted on to the more ancient beliefs of Mongolia, and the Himalayas, which are north of Burma. The orthodox Buddhism is kindly, and one of its outstanding precepts is: **PEACE TO ALL LIVING THINGS.**

Well, with all that discussion of Asiatic magic, I ended by giving a picture of the typical malignant magician. And I am not too sure that some of his fellow adepts could not have gotten similar effects without using chemicals, though I doubt that the skeptical white man would be affected by a native curse as natives would.

For the rest, Burma's natural wealth makes it a fascinating locale, and that is always half of any story. The world's finest rubies come from the mines at Mogok. There is a lot of oil, too, and American petroleum engineers, using American methods, are the outstanding operators. There are other minerals; coal in the Shan States, in the Upper Chundwin, Pakkoku and elsewhere; gold at Myitkyina; tin and wolfram in Mergui; amber, tourmaline, zircon, and garnet. In 1910, a ruby was found in Mokog, and sold for 3 lakhs of rupees,

(Continued on page 10)



Okmulgee, Okla.  
Hazelton, Pa.

Des Moines, Iowa  
Sioux City, Iowa

## Look Men!

Here's a Partial List of States, Cities and Institutions in which **GRADUATES of I. A. S.** were placed in positions as **Finger Print Experts!**



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State of Ohio	Victoria, B. C.
Duluth, Minn.	Baton Rouge, La.
Detroit, Mich.	Atlantic City, N. J.
Pueblo, Colo.	E. Lansing, Mich.
Idaho Falls, Idaho	Globe, Arizona
Ogden, Utah	London, Ont., Can.
Lorain Co., Ohio	Henryetta, Okla.
St. Paul, Minn.	Seattle, Wash.
Pittsburgh, Pa.	Fondale, Mich.
Lincoln, Nebr.	McAlester, Okla.
Birmingham, Ala.	Negaunee, Mich.
Columbus, Ohio	Lawton, Okla.
Havana, Cuba	Crown Point, Ind.
New Haven, Conn.	Bay City, Mich.
Great Falls, Mont.	Roanoke, Va.
Galveston, Texas	Glendale, Calif.
Pensacola, Fla.	Hawaiian Islands
Stillwater, Okla.	Drumright, Okla.

Miami, Florida  
Orlando, Florida  
York, Pa.  
El Paso, Texas  
Everett, Wash.  
Schenectady, N. Y.  
Alhambra, Calif.  
Livingston, Mont.  
Saginaw, Mich.  
Fort Collins, Colo.  
Bedford, Ohio  
Huntington, W. Va.  
Salt Lake City, U.  
Taft, California  
Jamestown, N. Y.  
Phoenixville, Pa.  
Rochester, N. Y.  
Media, Pa.  
Dayton, Ohio  
East Chicago, Ind.  
Green Bay, Wis.  
Nocona, Texas  
Neenah, Wis.  
Kingfisher, Okla.  
Centralia, Wash.  
Bismarck, N. D.  
Bloomington, Ind.  
Cuyahoga Falls, O.  
Rock Island, Ill.  
Philadelphia, Pa.  
Astoria, Oregon  
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State of Iowa  
State of Idaho  
State of Colorado  
Lima, Ohio  
Selma, N. C.

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**NORTHWESTERN SCHOOL OF TAXIDERMY**  
Dept. 4171 Omaha, Nebraska

(Continued from page 9)

roughly \$100,000 in U. S. This find, I think, started everyone in the neighborhood to digging.

Having fictionized the teak and the oil industries, I don't know but what the ruby mines at Mogok ought to come next.

In the meanwhile, I'll be talking to the old-timers up here about the Indian wars, and the local volunteers who were organized shortly after a lot of the settlers were nicely settled by the hostile tribes. The volunteers took the warpath, and massacred a heap of Indians, thus making it a stand off, you might say. Tomorrow, I expect to scale the 10,453 foot volcano in the back yard, and climb down into the crater. It's not as dangerous as it sounds, since there's only a bit of steam hissing up in one or two spots.

Give my greetings to all the Globe Trotters, and if you hear of any volcano collectors, have them drop me a line, particularly any who have had a good look at Colima, on the Mexican west coast. My next run down there is to include scaling Colima, and I'd appreciate a few tips from any of the boys who've beaten me to it.

Yours for bigger and better volcanoes.

**E. Hoffmann Price.**

Well, that's quite a letter. I think we can give E. Hoffmann Price a rousing vote of thanks for it. And any of you folks who've taken a crack at climbing Colima—just get in touch with me and I'll pass the tips on to Author Price, pronto.

### Drawn from Life

The great artist, Van Gogh, was not a studio painter. By that I mean that he didn't shut himself up within four walls and paint pictures. No, he went out and mixed with life and people, saw life in its many aspects, the bad and the good, the ugly and the beautiful. Great pictures were the result.

Similarly, it is the author who draws upon actual experience who produces the best stories. Needless to say, E. Hoffmann Price is such an author. Johnston McCulley, who wrote GUNSLINGIN' GALLIGAN for this issue, is another. He promised he'd write me from California, and his letter ought to be among the batch I'm skimming through now. Wait a minute now—doesn't seem to be here. Say, if that son-of-a-gun—

Well, here I was, getting all steamed up for nothing. I knew Johnston wouldn't break a promise. Take a squint, Globe Trotters:

Dear Globe Trotter:

It is an axiom of fiction writers that usually the best qualities of about half a dozen persons combined are necessary to give proper weight to a hero. In the case of "Gunslingin' Galligan," this was not necessary.

I knew personally the prototype of Galligan. I met him in Colorado years ago, and ran across him again down in Arizona later.

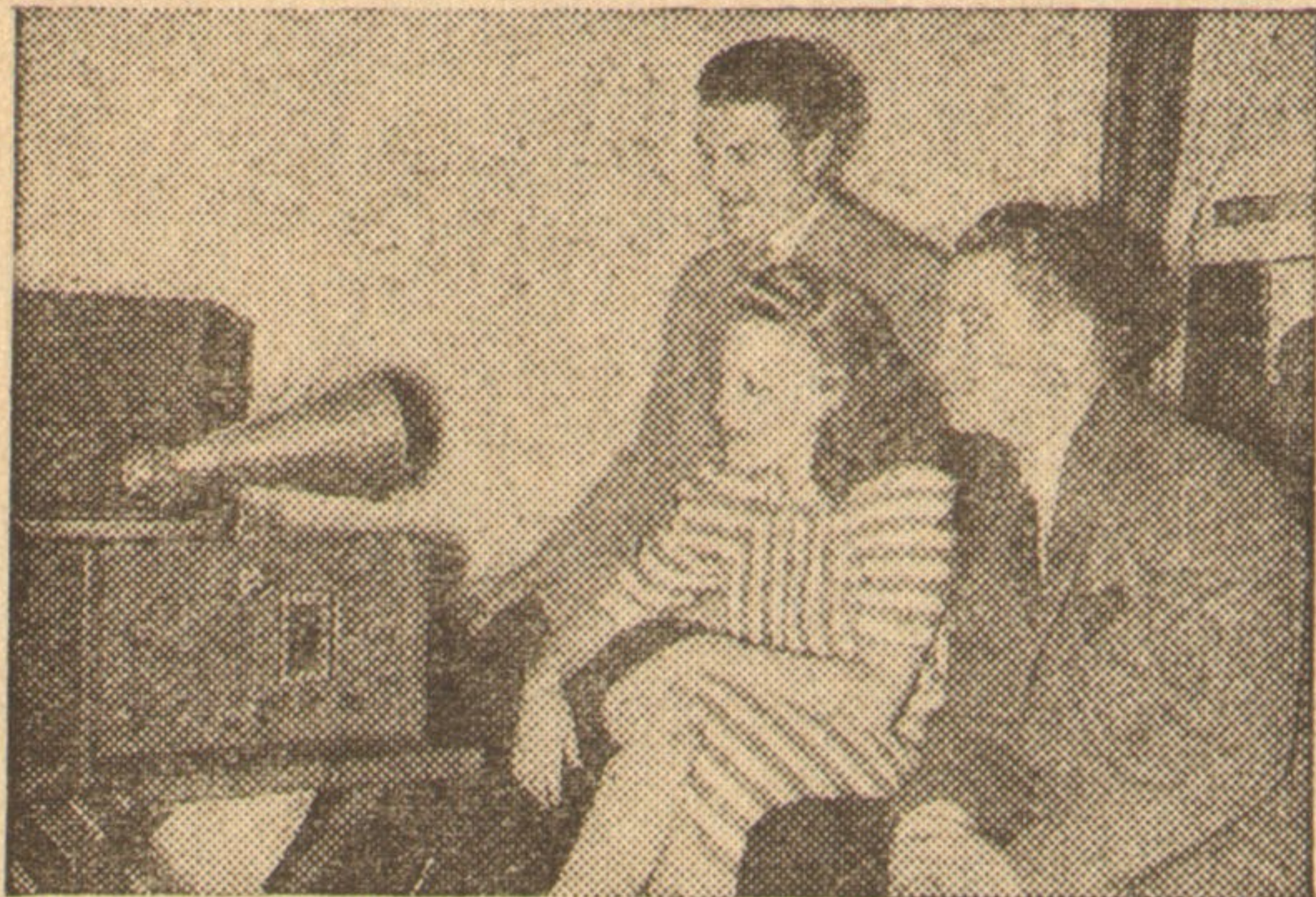
He was a wanderer, but not a range tramp. He could always get and hold a job, but he wanted to see the country. He was always self-sufficient—physically, financially and in every other way I could see. Courage was as ordinary with him as making a run for the chuck-wagon at mealtime. He had had his battles, but was not a trouble hunter. And those who knew him were too wise to go hunting trouble in his vicinity.

He was a six-foot specimen of strength and agility. He spoke quietly, but there was strength in his quiet voice and something which compelled instant obedience to his orders. When a man got to know him, he found, underneath, an almost child-like simplicity and a kindly feeling for all mankind. He loved horses and dogs, and would stop

(Continued on page 12)



# MAKE YOUR OWN RECORDS AT HOME



Charlie Barnet with Judy Ellington and Larry Taylor, vocalists in his band, listen to a record they just made with Home Recordo.

Now a new invention permits you to make a professional-like recording of your own singing, talking or instrument playing. Any one can quickly and easily make phonograph records and play them back at once. Record your voice or your friends' voices. If you play an instrument, you can make a record and you and your friends can hear it as often as you like. You can also record orchestras of favorite radio programs right off the air and replay them whenever you wish.

## Find Out If You Have Professional Talent

The movies . . . radio . . . stage in both Broadway and Hollywood are ever seeking new talent.

Before spending money for an audition, make a "home record" of your voice or instrument and mail it to a reliable agency . . . you might be one of the lucky ones to find fame and success thru this easy method of bringing your talents before the proper authorities.

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You'll get a real thrill out of home recording. Surprise your friends by letting them hear your voice as though it were broadcast. Record a snappy talking feature. Record jokes and you will become the life of the party. Great to help train your voice and to cultivate speech . . . nothing to practice . . . you start recording at once. No other mechanical or electrical devices needed. Everything necessary included. Nothing else to buy. Just sing, speak or play and HOME RECORDO unit which operates on any electric or old type phonograph will do the recording on special blank records we furnish. You can immediately play the record back as often as you wish. Make your home movie a talking picture with HOME RECORDO. Simply make the record while filming and play back while showing the picture.



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Send entire HOME RECORDING OUTFIT (including 6 two-sided records) described above by return mail. I will pay postman \$2.98, plus postage, on arrival. (Send cash or money order now for \$3.00 and save postage.)

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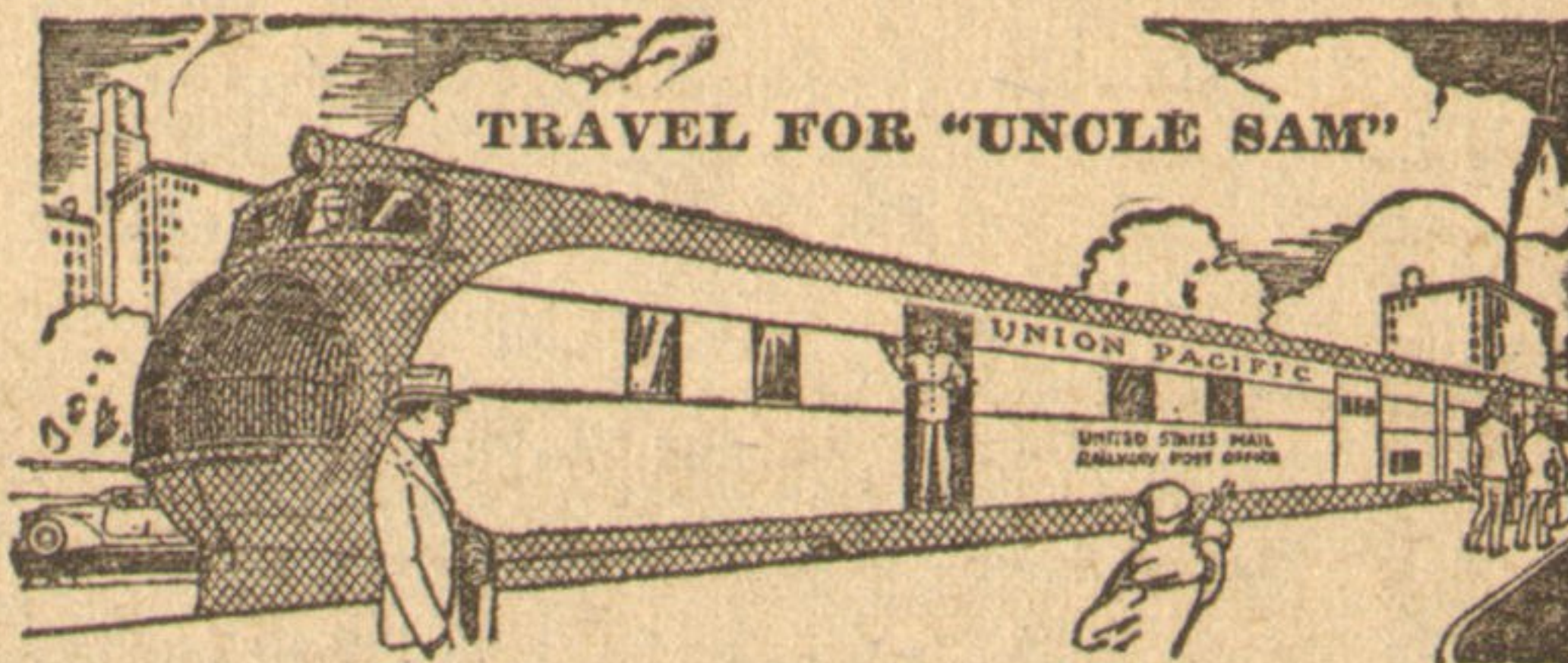


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(Continued from page 10)

his pony to watch a bird. He had a great sense of humor, and had a multitude of friends. He never had enemies—for long.

He was foreman of a big horse ranch in Colorado, and the next in line for the job was a youngster who wanted to marry and settle down. So "Galligan" pulled a fake row with the boss and got himself fired so the youngster would get his job. That's what "Galligan" said, but others thought he just wanted to move on. He was afraid of getting "settled" himself, said it was an indication of old age creeping up on a man.

In the prototype of "Galligan" was enough stuff for a dozen heroes. It isn't often an author runs across a gold mine like that.

Regards to all the Globe Trotters, and I hope they like Galligan as much as I liked the original. Johnston McCulley.

Well, I for one would certainly like to meet the original of Galligan. Johnston, if you ever run into him, how about persuading him to drop us all a line? It would be a thrill and a pleasure for all of us to hear from a man who furnished the inspiration for GUNSLINGIN' GALLIGAN.

#### *The Mailbag*

Now, if you'll just bear with me while I light a smoke, I'll come up in a jiffy with a batch of letters from all you folks. It'll be sort of reading your own mail at the same moment as it's received by the party on the other end. Who says a human being can't be in two places at the same time? We do it in THRILLING ADVENTURES!

Let's see, now—here's one. Say, this chap seems to like us.

Dear Globe Trotter:

Thanks for one of the finest books on the market. I have enjoyed THRILLING ADVENTURES for a long time, and look forward to them for a still longer time.

I am twenty years old, and a student at Northwestern University.

My hobbies are science, especially physics and chemistry—magic, and of course reading books. I also save stamps and coins.

My favorite study is mathematics, and I enjoy mathematical studies of all kinds.

I am enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope, to obtain a membership card. Keep up the good work. Sincerely yours,

Alfred F. Lopez.

24 Havre St., East Boston, Mass.

Well, it's readers like Albert Lopez that give us the pep and zest that enable us to keep up the "good work." Here's a tip for you, Albert. You can give yourself considerable additional reading pleasure by adding to THRILLING ADVENTURES on your list of favorite magazines several of our companion magazines that would most certainly appeal to one as scientifically inclined as you are. How about taking a look at THRILLING WONDER STORIES. And, for magic, get yourself a copy of THE GREEN GHOST DETECTIVE. Those magazines, plus THRILLING ADVENTURES, will certainly furnish you an exciting but balanced reading diet.

Next! Take a look at the date line, Globe Trotters. Shanghai, China! We certainly get around, don't we?

Dear Globe Trotter:

I would like to get a membership card in the Globe Trotters' Club.

Furthermore, I'll be glad to correspond with everyone interested in adventures. Hope to get some pen pals all over the world, and no letter will go unanswered.

Let me tell you that I never read a better magazine than yours. Hope to get an answer from you.

Very truly yours,

F. M. Sternfeld.

324 Rue Roi Albert, c/o Barcelona, Shanghai, China.

Well, here's our answer, F. M. Sternfeld: we welcome you to membership in the G. T. Club. We hope you get lots of letters, and we know you'll be as good as your word in answering them.

From China we jump back to the good old U. S. A., and the state of New Jersey:

Dear Globe Trotter:

A friend of mine just gave me some issues of THRILLING ADVENTURES to read, and I enjoyed them immensely.

So much so that I would like to become a member of your Globe Trotters' Club, and also to get some pen pals.

My hobbies are stamp collecting and bicycle riding. I also enjoy reading and movies. I certainly would like to hear from stamp collectors from all over the world and to exchange stamps with them. I'll be looking forward eagerly for letters, and I'll reciprocate in every case.

Yours truly,

Charles Geist.

1112 Marion St., Camden, New Jersey.

The rate at which THRILLING ADVENTURES is getting new readers is mighty gratifying and warms the cockles of this old Globe Trotter's heart. We're glad to number Charles Geist among our readers and members.

Speaking about getting around, travel, and globe-trotting—all the adventures don't occur in the far places. I suffered a unique pleasure here in the midst of the Manhattan jungle just a couple of Sundays back. If any of you Globe Trotters know anything about New York, you understand how distressfully hard it is to visit your friends in this man's town. In fact, it is more of an effort, a trek, an expedition, to get into your car (or duck down into a subway) to visit a friend a couple of miles away than it is out in the Middle West to slide under the wheel or into the saddle to travel twenty miles for a chin-fest. (Palaver in some sections; pow-wow on the reservations; kaffee-klatsch in Milwaukee. So, take your choice.)

#### *A Salute to Brother Potts!*

But to get to the point of this story. Realizing the Herculean effort, the Trojan energy, the Spartan stoicism and fortitude it takes to clap on your hat and set forth in this wilderness of five great boroughs of traffic lights, traffic cops, and plain and fancy traffic to venture from one point to another for purely social purposes, can you imagine a man engineering a two-car expedition to drive forty miles out Long Island to pitch three games of horseshoes at Sunken Meadow Park, and then promptly loading back into the vehicles and joining the usual motorcade back to town!

Think of it! Contemplate it! Toss that into the saga bag with the epics of Northwest Passage, Peary's treks to the North

(Continued on page 112)



**THIS MAN DIDN'T BELIEVE HE  
COULD LEARN MUSIC BY MAIL**



**THIS MAN DECIDED TO TRY THIS  
EASY, SHORT-CUT METHOD!  
(P.S. You should hear him play now!)**



# Do *You* Smile at the Idea of Learning Music by Mail?

## *Here Are Some Facts That May Surprise You!*

**YOU HAVE** undoubtedly heard of the U. S. School method of teaching music by mail. This remarkable system of instruction has been in operation for over forty years and more than 700,000 people in all parts of the world have enrolled for it. Men, women and children of all ages and from all walks of life have taken up their favorite musical instruments this convenient, money-saving way. They have studied the piano, violin, guitar, accordion and, in short, every kind of popular instrument.

### ***No Special Talent Required***

Many of these pupils did not know one musical note from another when they enrolled. Many had previously tried other methods of instruction without success. And not a few were frankly skeptical. They doubted whether it was possible to learn music by mail, just as you may doubt it.

To some of these "Doubting Thomases" it came as the surprise of their lives when they actually heard themselves playing. Simple popular melodies at first, then more and more advanced pieces, all the way to Grand Opera.

One after another, pupils testify to the amazing ease with which they learned, and the fascination and pleasure they found in the lessons. They say it was "easy as A. B. C."—"so simple that a child could understand"—that "with all the wonderful photographs and diagrams to guide you, you simply cannot go wrong"—that "it's really fun to learn music this easy, fascinating way."

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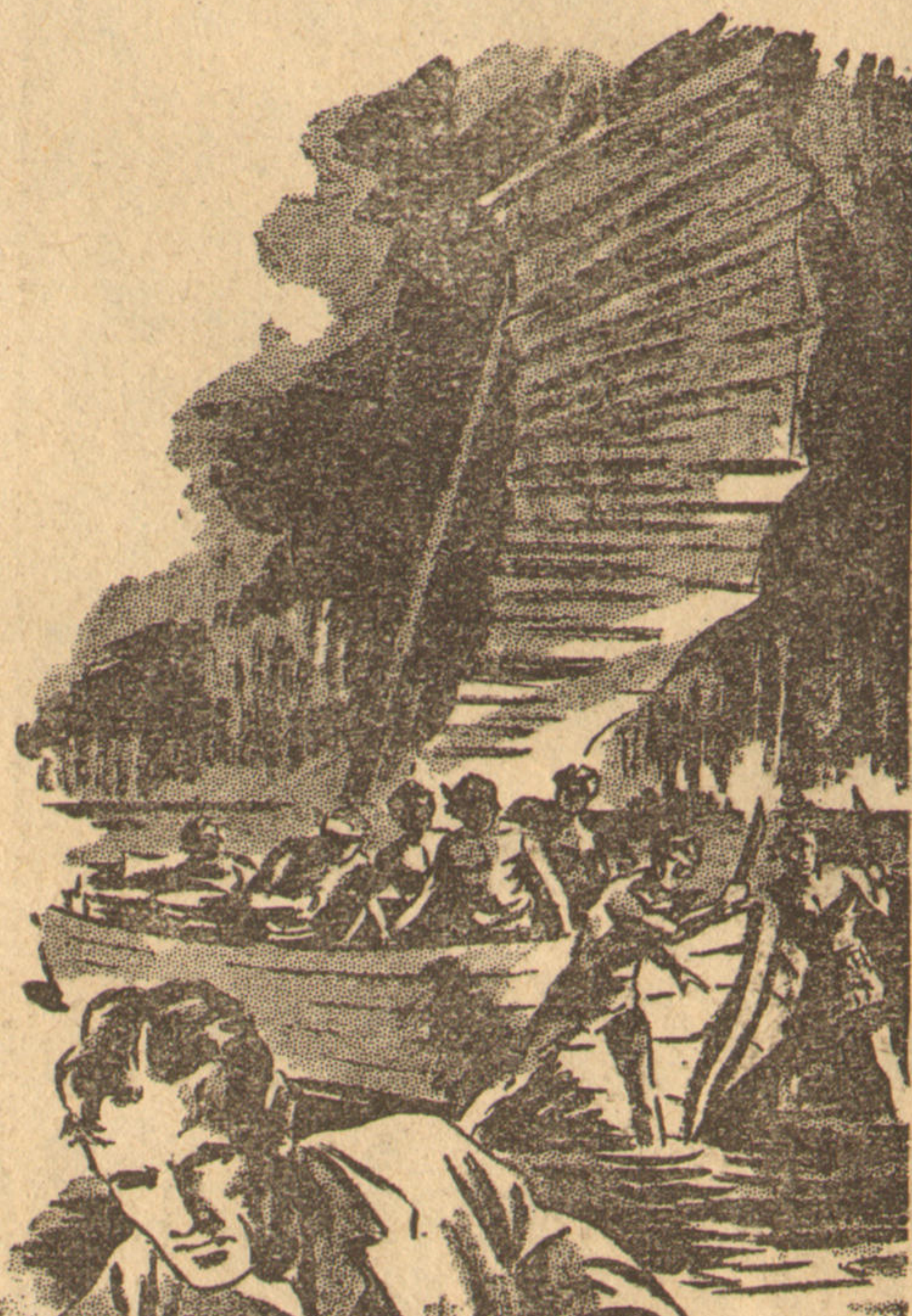
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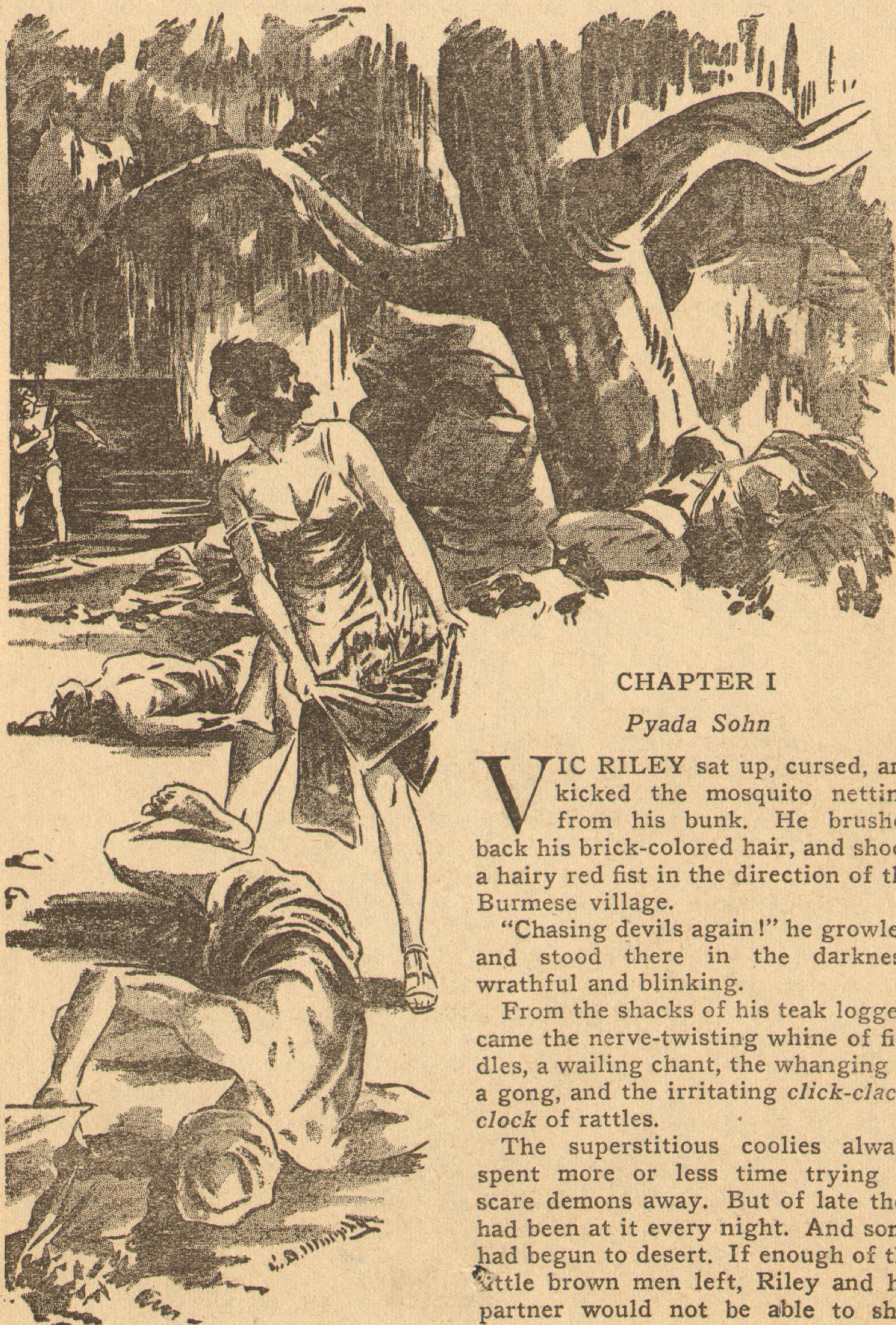
*Grim, Unknown Doom Stalks  
the Jungle as Vic Riley Fights  
with Savage Frenzy Against  
Pyada Sohn's Spell of Evil*

With savage hatred,  
Riley drove the bam-  
boo spear into the  
man's body





# DEVIL DOCTOR



## CHAPTER I

*Pyada Sohn*

VIC RILEY sat up, cursed, and kicked the mosquito netting from his bunk. He brushed back his brick-colored hair, and shook a hairy red fist in the direction of the Burmese village.

"Chasing devils again!" he growled, and stood there in the darkness, wrathful and blinking.

From the shacks of his teak loggers came the nerve-twisting whine of fiddles, a wailing chant, the whanging of a gong, and the irritating *click-clack-clock* of rattles.

The superstitious coolies always spent more or less time trying to scare demons away. But of late they had been at it every night. And some had begun to desert. If enough of the little brown men left, Riley and his partner would not be able to ship



enough teak logs down to Moulmein to make expenses.

Then he listened for a moment to the drone of white men's voices out on the veranda, at whose copper screen uncounted insects hummed and whirred maddeningly. There was McIntosh, the hatchet-faced forestry inspector; Harley, who owned the adjoining teak lease; and Riley's partner, Wayne Gray. Glasses tinkled, and soda swished in whiskey.

Worry and long hours had shortened Riley's temper. He was about to thrust his head into the hall and shout something, when he overheard enough to make him check his outburst.

"Make us any decent offer, Harley, and we'll take it," Gray was saying.

So Gray was quitting? The muttering of the coolies, the solitude, the climate were getting under his partner's skin, were they? Not that Riley blamed him, but he himself wouldn't back down under fire.

He did not blame Gray. Burma was a madhouse. From dawn to dusk, through all the pitiless heat of the forest, the little brown men plied their axes. But once shadows made the trunks of teak and *pyinkado* and *padauk* blend in a murky purple glamour they hurried home. At night no native willingly leaves his village enclosure, for Thagyamin, King of Demons, opens the gates of Tawadeintha and releases millions of malignant *nats* to spread terror and disaster.

"You might convince your partner it'd be worth his while to sell," he heard Harley say. "Then I'll approach him."

Riley, barefooted and in his pajamas, stalked down the hall to the veranda that ran the entire width of the bungalow. The first one to note his arrival was McIntosh, the sandy-haired Scot who was making a routine inspection to check up on violations of forestry regulations. Before he could speak, Reily snapped:

"I'm not selling. Harley, the quicker you get out, the happier I'll be! You

had plenty of time to talk business with me before I turned in."

"But my dear fellow—" Harley blinked and tugged at his straw-colored mustache. "I'm sorry—ah, I mean, I've given you the wrong impression—"

"My partner," Riley cut in, "can't offer me any argument that you couldn't have. There's something crooked about it, or you'd have included me when you brought the matter up. Or did you just this minute happen to think you wanted to buy us out?"

**H**ARLEY gulped and reached for his hat. He had worked himself into a false position, and he knew better than to argue. Gray, however, stood his ground. He was shorter than Riley, and square rigged. His hair was black, and he had bushy dark brows and a rugged chin.

"See here, that's no way to act," Gray protested. "I told Harley I wasn't sure how you'd take it, that you had the jitters and were hard to talk to. And this just about proves I was right."

"So you really want to sell?" Riley said. "Why?"

"Well, I've just heard from my ex-wife. She wrote and said we'd been a bit hasty about the divorce, that we could make a go of it if I'd move to Singapore where I can buy into a business."

That could be true enough, Riley told himself, but somehow, he felt that his partner had hastily cooked up a story.

"You can't sell without giving me an option on your interest," he said.

"All right, buy me out!" Gray challenged.

The hatchet-faced Scot muttered something and tactfully left the veranda. He took the remainder of the whiskey bottle with him. Harley left without further words. Outside, his syce had been waiting with horses. Master and man rode through the for-



est, toward their own camp. As the sound of footfalls faded, Riley said to his partner:

"That was all baloney about your ex-wife."

"Shhh!" Gray gestured toward the hall, and lowered his voice. "We better get out, Vic. There's something brewing among the coolies. Some forest devil is worrying them, and they're likely to walk out on us."

Riley gestured toward the village, from which the chanting and music came with undiminished volume.

"I'll say there is! And if that doesn't scare the *nats* away pretty soon, it'll drive me nuts."

With a shaky hand, Gray reached for his untasted whiskey.

"We'd better sell out to Harley and let him see if he and his syndicate can make this lease pay. We're getting nowhere, and if we have a lot of labor trouble, we'll be washed up."

Riley's jaw jutted out a little further.

"To hell with that!" he blazed. "Harley's company nearly squeezed us out the first couple years, and now that we've just about made good, they want to buy. And another thing. There's McIntosh. If he's an inspector, then I'm a millionaire! Those are forged credentials."

"How do you know?" Gray asked. Riley shrugged.

"I'm judging from what he doesn't know about woods. He can't tell *sit* from *taukkyan*. My guess is that Harley's giving us the old squeeze in a new way."

Gray frowned and his mouth hardened.

"Maybe you're right, Vic. And there's been a strange native hanging around the compound ever since the coolies began getting jittery."

"You mean Pyada Sohn?"

"Yeah."

"You know what the name means?"

"Wizard. Devil doctor. A specialist in black magic."

"See how it all fits?" Riley said.

"Harley puts Pyada Sohn to work, scares our coolies silly, and—hell, you were going to sell out! Where's your guts?"

"All right, Vic." Gray sighed. "I'll see this through with you."

Riley felt somewhat better when he returned to his small room. His partner, always impulsive, seemed to have changed his mind. But for all this reassurance, Riley did not like the sinister note of the fiddles.

The maddening sound finally tortured his nerves to exhaustion. He lay there in a stupor that was neither sleep nor wakefulness. There was nothing he could do against Pyada Sohn, for the fellow had such a hold on the superstitious natives that at the first attempt to run him out of the district, they would all desert.

And Burma, Riley realized, had gotten under his skin. The forest was a brooding mystery. Yellow-robed priests chanted in jungle buried temples. The solemn *bong-bong-bong* of ritual bells in a far-off monastery occasionally broke into the nearby fiddle screeching and wailing. And above the tall trees, deserted pagodas reached like leprous fingers toward the moon.

They were warning fingers to remind newcomers that this ancient land had exterminated kings and gods, sent whole cities away in flight.

## CHAPTER II

### *The Wizard's Curse*



THE following morning, a dozen coolies were missing. Maung Hkin, the headman, offered some lame excuses. But none of the elephant drivers had quit, so Riley and Gray carried on, after sending a messenger to a village some miles away to get additional coolies.

The sun blazed down. Each day, Burma became drier. The teak trees



had shed their broad leaves, making a crackling footing underneath. Once the rains came, and the creeks were all flooded, there would be no more wood cutting. The men would be busy getting the logs to the broad Salween, so that they could float downstream to Moulmein.

Riley and his partner ignored McIntosh, who solemnly pretended he was checking the trees which had been girdled the previous year. Each tree was marked on a chart. Gray hitched up his khaki breeches, slapped his boot a resounding whack with his riding crop.

"We'll make it," he said.

Riley nodded.

"Looks like the talking-to I gave the coolies did some good this morning. Best day's work yet."

And it kept up until late afternoon. Axe strokes echoed. Elephant drivers prodded their grunting beasts, shouted to them in elephant language as they used tusks and trunks to move the ponderous logs toward the creek.

The big fellows were weary. They wanted their bran and meal and molasses and grass. They wanted their bath in the reed-fringed lake, not far from the stables. They wanted to snort and trumpet and splash each other with water, while ducks and snipe flew away in alarm.

Riley went to the panting axemen.

"Over there," he said, and indicated the next tree to be felled.

But before the coolies had fairly gotten to work, they ceased chattering, dropped their tools, and slowly backed away. Riley, startled by the sudden move, turned around.

A fat man had stepped to the edge of the cleared space, emerging from the bamboo undergrowth. He wore a yellow robe, and his scalp was shaven. He was Pyada Sohn, bloated and oily and menacing.

"Back, O Man!" he intoned. His voice was like serpents moving through dry grass. "From here on, the

forest is sacred to the king of demons. Thagyamin will curse you and send a million *nats* to haunt you."

The wood cutters yelled and ran. Men some distance away ceased working. In a moment, they also were seized by panic. Riley cursed and took a step forward.

"Tell them to come back, or I'll skin you alive!" he roared.

But it was Gray who exploded. He lashed out with his riding crop. Pyada Sohn's billowing yellow flesh quivered under the blows. It was like flogging jelly.

"You will, will you?" Gray raged. "As if we haven't enough to contend with!"

He slashed the wizard's face. Red welts criss-crossed it. Pyada Sohn did not raise a hand. He stood there, as though all but his slanted eyes were dead. Riley, though he could understand his partner's wrath, bounded forward and caught Gray's hand, wrenched the riding crop from him.

"Keep your head," he warned.

Gray, flushed and panting, whirled on his partner. His black lashes made his eyes seem soot rimmed. His black brows twitched. Then, abruptly, his fury faded.

There was something uncanny about Pyada Sohn's soft voice and body. What made it worse was the way he endured those whip cuts, unmoved.

"O Man," he began, "you have struck the friend and brother of the night prowling *nats*. Before another day passes, fire shall burn your eyes. Fire shall race through your head. Fire shall blaze in your skin. You will pray for the eyes to fall out of your head, and finally your prayer shall be granted!"

**P**YADA SOHN raised his hands. He went on, slowly, in that sing-song voice that carried all the way to the cowering coolies.

"Look your last at the sun. Look your last at the forest, for a million *nats* shall torture you day and night



until the gods of mercy take your eyes from you."

**H**E TURNED and stalked into the brush between the untouched trees. Gray swore, reached for his revolver. But Riley stopped him.

"Don't make it worse. He's said enough now to put every coolie on the run. We'd be in a jam if we can't get some new ones."

McIntosh was standing there, gaping. Then, without a word, he crossed the clearing to get his pony. Riley and Gray followed soon after. They mounted and crossed the petroleum line that ran all the way from Painkyon to the Salween River, and thence to Moulmein. Far off in the hills, oil drillers had tapped more of Burma's wealth.

"By the time we cut new roads and work another section, the rains will be here," Gray muttered.

Riley forced a laugh.

"Forget it. It's the best curse I ever heard. But I'm damned if I know why Pyada should pick on us. That petroleum pipe line goes right through his sacred spot. Nearly as I can remember, the men that ran the line didn't have a bit of trouble."

"This country is lousy with *nats*," Gray swore. "Some day I'll go bugs from hearing the word. What with Harley wanting to buy us out and this McIntosh guy being a phony, I've a notion to kick the pants off him."

"He may actually be an inspector," Riley countered. "Maybe he got his job by pull instead of by knowing his business. We'll find out in time. In the meanwhile, your job is not losing your eyes."

Gray thought that that was a joke. But Riley was not too sure. He did not believe in curses. Well, not exactly. Curses did funny things to natives no doubt, but white men weren't affected. He hoped they weren't, anyway. Oddly, it upset Riley's stomach every time he pic-

tured that malignant, fat man stoically enduring those whip lashes.

That night, Riley and Gray and their unwelcome visitor sat on the screened veranda of the tin-roofed bungalow. Insects buzzed and whirred, beat themselves to pieces against the copper mesh. McIntosh chewed a black cheroot and stared into his whiskey glass. Having announced his intention of leaving in the morning, he apparently had nothing more to say.

Apparently there would not be a general walkout of the superstitious coolies. In the thorn-walled village, fiddles screeched again, and rattles *click-clock-clacked*. Burmese music would under any circumstances drive a white man crazy, but after what had happened that day, it was nerve-twisting torture.

When they heard the whang of a gong, both partners started as if prodded by hot iron. Gray stamped down the hall, and in a moment came out with a rifle. Fury twisted his face.

"First a curse, now that!" he yelled. "I'll stop their damn' music!"

"Cut it out." Riley seized the gun. "Don't let it get under your skin. They wouldn't bother with all that devil chasing unless they were going to stay. They figure that with the curse being pointed at you, personally, they're safe enough. In the morning I can get them organized."

Gray gulped his drink. Then he stumbled into the house.

Riley sat there. Presently, despite the eerie wailing in the village, he heard Gray snoring. Later, swarming insects found their way past the screen. They should not have been able to get through the fine mesh, but here they were. Riley finally tired of slapping and scratching. Those that did not bite contrived nonetheless to irritate his throat and face and bare shoulders.

Much as he tried to deny it, he knew that he was on guard, waiting for native malice and magic to strike.



But apprehension, without any supernatural forces, could slowly wear a man down, weaken him, so that all Burma's plagues could afflict him. His very attitude, he began to sense, was playing into the hands of Pyada Sohn. He went to his room then.

**I**T WAS cool when Riley awoke, and the loggers had at last stopped their outrageous music. But another sound shook him. Gray was tossing and groaning and muttering in the adjoining room.

"What's the matter?" Riley asked.

"Uh—say, listen." Something in Gray's voice made his partner shiver. "My eyes. They hurt."

"What?" Riley sat bolt upright. Fresh sweat cropped out on him. He was thinking of Pyada's curse. "It's just the dust and glare. I'll get some of that lotion from the medicine cabinet."

Gray stumbled around in the gloom and said he could wait on himself. But Riley was not moved by solicitude alone. He was afraid, and he had to settle that fear at once by looking at his partner.

Gray could hardly face the lights when Riley snapped them on. His eyes were inflamed, and the lotion didn't do a bit of good. His face was tense and twitching.

"My head's splitting," he said through clenched teeth. "God, what a headache!"

"You took a few drinks too many," Riley said brusquely.

There was a long silence. A chilly breeze twisted into the room and made the loosened edge of the window screening scrape a little. That was how the insects had come in.

"Something stung you," Riley added, pointing. "The mesh is torn out of the sash."

Gray's voice shook when he finally spoke.

"See if you can find any bites. It's that damn' wizard. That curse. Just like he said."

Around dawn, he was delirious. He laughed, cursed, and despite Riley's efforts, he was clawing at his eyes. McIntosh, routed out of bed, stood there scowling and rubbing his chin.

"The poor devil's eyes are like old wounds," he quavered. "No, it's no insect bite. They've all bitten me and none ever did that."

The natives had some opium in the compound. They ate it to prevent fever. Riley gave his partner a few pellets, and watched him succumb to the narcotic. And as the sun rose, he went out to put the coolies to work.

Maung Hkin, the headman, refused to cut anywhere within half a mile of the section that Pyada Sohn had cursed.

"He is a powerful wizard," the gray-haired Burmese said. "It is well if we obey him."

By noon, Riley was thoroughly frightened. Gray's eyes had developed ghastly ulcers. As the opium wore off, his partner screamed and pressed his temples. He could no longer see, and it sickened Riley to look at him. Gray's arms and chest were now red with a burning rash.

"Listen here, McIntosh," Riley said to the Scot. "You have a motorboat, and you're taking us to Moulmein." Before there was time for protest, he added: "You're no more an inspector than I am. Whatever game you're up to, you better learn a new one!"

### CHAPTER III

#### *Strange Visitor*



APES in the vine-festooned trees along the river bank mocked Riley as he squatted under the awning beside his partner. Parrots chattered, and water fowl rose with drumming wings. McIntosh stared at the brown-skinned native who piloted the launch,



deftly dodging sandbars and waterlogged stumps. The hatchet-faced Scot had his back to Riley, whose revolver was always ready.

Here and there, the ruins of gigantic temples rose above the jungle. The sculptured faces of gods and demons glared down at the sputtering boat and its terror-haunted passengers. Long before they reached Moulmein, Riley learned the truth. There was not a chance for Gray's eyes. Once, when the opium wore off, the stricken man muttered:

"Hottest night I ever saw. Where are you, Vic? God, it's dark!"

**P**YADA SOHN'S curse was working out to the letter.

One evening, the gilded pagoda spires and the mosque minarets of Moulmein came into view, where the sluggish Salween emptied into the Gulf of Martaban. Elephants trumpeted and squealed as they left their tasks in the lumber yards along the odorous waterfront. A *muezzin* was calling Moslems to prayer, and in the monasteries, shaven-headed Buddhist priests chanted rituals in Pali, while others beat the hollow, booming *kaldets*. That last sound made Riley shudder. It reminded him of the forests, and of Pyada's curse.

As the launch wound in and out among the hundreds of Chinese junks, Malay *prahus* and lateen-rigged Arab *dhow*s in the harbor, Riley saw the big oil storage tanks, and the low, black tankers that carried petroleum from Burma. It was grotesque—the smell of oil in a land of wizardry and black magic.

Once the launch was moored, Riley had McIntosh phone for an ambulance. Moulmein was just that much modern. But from every hillcrest, a pagoda rose, slender, like a finger raised in warning. They reminded the town that but for the efforts of holy men, demons and wizards would close in.

"Got to snap out of it," Riley told

himself, as he watched the hospital orderlies put Gray into the ambulance. As the engine rumbled, he called to the driver: "Wait a minute!"

To confirm his outrageous story about Pyada Sohn, some white witness was necessary. In his anxiety, Riley had for the moment forgotten McIntosh. When he turned back to the jetty, the launch was gone. It must have shoved off without engine power. Somewhere, hidden by that tangle of dark hulls that raised a forest of masts, a motor spluttered. McIntosh was gone.

Riley's first impulse was to call the bearded Sikh policeman who stood by, impersonally regarding the ambulance. Then he changed his mind. His story was too unconvincing.

At the hospital he finally did tell the doctors what had happened. They regarded him curiously, and then they became over-solicitous. They agreed too readily that backwoods wizards had strange powers.

"Quite so, Mr. Riley," one doctor said. "Unusual chaps, these mystics."

"Come out with it!" Riley snapped. "You think I'm crazy, huh?"

"Now, I wouldn't put it that way, old man," he said soothingly. "But you've had a severe trial. A bit of fever. Overwork. Get a few days rest while you're waiting to hear how your friend is doing."

Luckily Riley had not told the police about McIntosh, the inspector who didn't know a thing about the somewhat uncommon *thingadu* wood.

"They'd throw me into the booby hatch," he thought. "Which seems to be what someone wants."

He stayed at the Bellas Hotel, which was on Strand Road, and faced the western waterfront. For two days he poked about the city. In the bazaars, the obscure native quarters where Hindus and Chinese, stocky Burmese and black Tamils and turbaned Arabs rubbed elbows and regarded each other with mutual contempt.



In Moulmein, a white man is very conspicuous. But there was no trace of McIntosh. He was not listed at any of the clubs to which every "*pukka sahib*" belonged. Apparently, no one had ever heard of him.

Finally, wearying of evasive reports from the hospital, he went in person to inquire. But they would not let him see Gray.

"He's quite comfortable, Mr. Riley," he was told.

"See here!" Riley blazed. "What do you mean, 'comfortable'?"

Grimly they told him that Gray had died that morning. The smooth-spoken doctors were puzzled, but entirely too ready to agree that curses might affect a white man. Spells undoubtedly did finish natives, readily enough. And then Riley began to understand why he had felt that he had been under constant scrutiny. For his lack of any logical explanation, he was under suspicion.

Someone was watching him now. Whether some devilish envoy of Pyada Sohn or native spies of the British police, he could not guess.

That night, Riley headed up the river in a dugout paddled by a native crew. Curse or no curse, he was going to settle his account with Pyada Sohn. The whole land was a mystery, with its deserted cities and temples. It was stranger than strange, weirder than weird. No white man would ever fully and clearly understand a country in which native superstition and black magic still existed.

When Riley reached his teak lease, he was surprised to find that the coolies had not deserted.

"As long as we stay out of forbidden ground," they explained, "we will not be harmed. The curse was only against your partner, who struck a holy man."

There was no trace of Pyada. Several times, Riley rode into the forbidden quarter. There were no trails, no shrines, no signs of sacred trees with offerings set at their trunks. There

was nothing to show that any native cult had taken this quarter for outlandish demon worship. Jungle grass had almost hidden the path of the pipe line which had been laid several years previous.

THAT evening, the creak of a bullock cart broke into Riley's pacing up and down the veranda. Maung Hkin came running up to him.

"A white *memsahib*!" he panted. "She is looking for you."

Sleek brown women in gaudy skirts and jackets trailed after the village headman. They were giggling and chattering. They had never seen a white woman before and were naturally curious.

Riley blinked, thrust his cigar into his mouth. But it was the wrong end. He spat out the hot ashes, dropped the butt and tramped on it.

"Dammit!" he growled. Then, to Maung Hkin: "Bring her to the bungalow."

Already he could see the lumbering cart of jungle wood, its ungainly wheels groaning and wobbling. A skinny brown fellow in a loin cloth prodded the hump-backed bullocks. Another trotted along to grease the wooden axles. Then he saw the pale face of the girl who was wedged in among the luggage and rations that loaded the vehicle.

They regarded each other silently. The native chatter ceased. All except two women, who whispered in Burmese:

"This is the accursed *sahib*'s widow. She comes for vengeance, like the female cobra."

News traveled rapidly. The weary girl had large, dark eyes, and her lovely face was lined from the arduous trip over river and jungle trail. A Chinese *amah* in silk jacket and trousers clambered to the ground to help her mistress alight. Then Riley found words.

"You're Mrs. Gray—Wayne's—er—former wife?"



"Widow," she corrected, smiling a little.

Mona Gray was young, slender and shapely. Judging from the serviceable khaki—or it might be gabardine, Riley could not tell in that tricky light—she was sensible enough to leave frills at home. Also, she was a puzzle. He sensed that in spite of her easy self-possession she was on guard against him. A not quite concealed wariness lurked in her long-lashed eyes and smile.

She was out of the cart before he could give her a lift. Her hands were small and well kept and competent. Mona, he realized, had deftly evaded the choice of either snubbing him, or offering him her hand. The situation was awkward from the start.

As he followed her into the bungalow, he felt that the veiled suspicion of the doctors in Moulmein had come to camp. An outright accusation would have given him a chance. As it was, he had no defense he could offer.

"You know what happened?" he began, ill at ease.

Not a trace of a frown marred her smooth, low forehead, yet her eyes seemed just a shade too narrow, too reserved. Mona nodded.

"Burma is a strange place," she said. "I'm sure you're wondering why I'm here."

He could not tell her how much he did wonder.

"Wayne and I weren't divorced," Mona went on.

"He never discussed that with me," Riley said, frowning.

"Probably not." She sighed and shook her head. But she gave him not a glimpse of whatever emotion the uncanny tragedy had aroused in her. "So it seems I'm in the teak business now."

"You are," Riley said grimly. "I hope you like it. Now, as far as I can see, the partnership is dissolved, but for all that it's up to me to buy your interest if you wish to sell. I can't

raise the money for some time. If you insist, you can demand your share and I'll have to sell to anyone you can find."

"Mr. Harley and his syndicate, for example?"

Riley made a wry grimace. She had him cornered, and he knew that she knew it. If he objected the vague net of suspicion would draw tighter. Leave it to this calm, cool girl to make the most of Moulmein's whispers. All he could say was: "I'll send a runner to tell Harley you're here."

"You're very kind," Mona said.

She did not intend any irony, but Riley's long pent-up fury and fear snapped his nerves.

"Kind, nothing! That damned syndicate was out for us, one way or another! I'm out on a limb, and I don't blame you. But here I am!"

"So you think Harley sent Pyada Sohn to cast a spell on Wayne?"

Before he could answer, she was on her feet. The sleek-haired Chinese *amah* followed Mona to the room which Wayne Gray had once occupied.

The everlasting whirr and buzz of insects made Riley's skin creep. The horror of Gray's sightless eyes still haunted him. Finally he put on his boots and went to the stables. Unreasoning rage drove him to seek a showdown with Harley.

## CHAPTER IV

### *In the Enemy's Camp*



THE shaggy Shan pony snorted and trembled, scenting a leopard. But a shot from Riley's revolver frightened the invisible prowler, and he continued along the trail. The sturdy little horse made good progress, in spite of the deep ruts made by countless elephants' feet during the rainy season.



Bats whisked through the murmuring gloom, and mosquitoes swarmed in maddening, invisible clouds. And once the glowing eyes of a python stared out of the darkness, unwinking, slowly moving as the reptile hung down from a branch.

Riley hurled a stick, and the snake drew back, recoiling from a prey that it sensed was too large. The trembling pony responded to the spurs. Riley had no misgivings, for small pythons were nothing compared to the problem he faced. He was not yet certain what he would do, or how he could keep Harley from buying Mona Gray's share in the estate.

Riley had invested too much work and hardship to allow himself to be frozen out by any syndicate. It was no longer a matter of money, but a point of honor with him.

Suddenly he sensed that something was stalking him. He could feel a lurking presence nearby. There was scarcely a rustle in the tall grass. Once a double snap of a dry stick made him rein his horse to an abrupt halt. The pony was not disturbed. There was no alarming scent, and that was why Riley's fear grew. The horse was used to human scent and was not worried. Riley began to guess who cunningly paralleled his path, who deliberately broke bone dry branches.

When it happened once too often, he drew his revolver and blasted away at the sound.

"You rotten devil!" he raged. "You lousy—"

There was a soft laugh, then the voice of Pyada Sohn.

"One by one, they court the doom," the witch doctor intoned. "O Man, can you frighten the friend of demons? O Fool, did you not see enough of the curse of the burning eyes?"

Riley fired, but the mockery did not cease. The shots merely blotted a word or two.

". . . now you seek Harley, and

you find a fool—a blind fool. . . ."

The sinister accents on "blind" sickened Riley. Fury drove him on. He barely succeeded in checking the impulse that urged him to charge into the jungle and corner Pyada Sohn. But some remnant of logic told him that he could not catch the wizard, that to follow would be to invite the curse. Maybe the curse was already on him. The word "blind" still rang in his ears.

His eyes smarted, his lids itched, pain throbbed in his temples. In some dark thicket, a Burmese wizard laughed deep in his fat throat. His jellylike body must be quivering in repulsive waves. But before the hideous destruction of the cornea set in, Riley swore he would settle Harley. Harley must be behind this, though how, he could not begin to imagine.

Unless it was that poor Gray's death had cornered Riley, forcing a sale, which the widow had a right to demand. He had forgotten entirely about McIntosh, whose strange disappearance in Moulmein had robbed him of any sustaining testimony.

As he rode, Riley told himself:

"Dust and glare and those damn bugs. Of course my eyes would burn. Why wouldn't I have a headache. . . . Hell, I'm ready to bite ten penny nails in half."

But still he remembered Gray's sad plight.

So Riley was reckless when he heard the yapping dogs inside the thorn-walled village near Harley's logging camp. Somewhere, an elephant was browsing. The occasional hollow note of the *kalouk* that each beast wore about his neck broke into the whir and whisper and mutter of the night. It was late, but lights glowed in Harley's big corporation bungalow.

**B**EFORE any house servants could come out, Riley had kicked at the compound gate. Unlocked, it swung open. Then he bounded up



the six foot stairway to the veranda. Harley, startled, flung away his newspaper and came to the screened door. His expression changed several times in the seconds during which the two men glared at each other.

Then Harley's pale brows dropped to their normal position.

"I say, this is a surprise," he said finally. "Nothing wrong, I trust?"

The fumes from Harley's pipe were fragrant. In a nearby smoking stand were the butts of several black cheroots, but Riley scarcely noted them. He caught but ignored the odor.

buy Mrs. Gray's interest. Have a drink—a cigar, eh, what?"

He found the box, entirely ignoring Riley's accusations.

"Skip the refreshments," Riley growled. "You're well posted. Mona Gray just arrived this evening."

"To be sure, to be sure. A runner from a downstream village told me this morning that she'd be in this vicinity. I'd like very much to talk to her. But see here, old chap. You mustn't think we're trying to force your hand."

He blinked, patted his eyes with a

## *A Dangerous Menace Stalks America's Border* *in*



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"Plenty wrong," he snapped. "Sit down, you! I've come to talk business."

"My word!" Harley's jaw sagged. "What business?"

"Your buying Gray's widow's interest in my lease. Clever, you and your native stooge, Pyada Sohn. Blinding Gray, killing him, forcing my hand."

"My dear fellow," Harley said very pleasantly, "you mustn't excite yourself like that. I'm terribly sorry about the tragedy. Beastly fellows, these native wizards. Too bad poor Gray offended the blighter. Now it's quite true that my company would like to

handkerchief. They were red-rimmed, and in spite of his bland manner, he frowned a little. But Riley had no taste for details at the moment.

"Don't try to soft soap me, you cheap chiseler!" he burst out. "You and your stooge, Pyada Sohn and that phony McIntosh. You've all teamed up to freeze me out. You got poor Gray as the first move."

Harley's smile of reassurance became a bit pained and unconvincing now. He edged back, warily but gradually as Riley took a sudden step forward.

"Now, now, you're a bit unjust, Mr.



Riley," the manager said. "But I'll speak to Pyada Sohn about this business of curses. Tricky beggars, these natives."

Harley seemed not to realize that this soothing approach was whipping Riley to a frenzied rage. Inside he was as red as his hair, as his freckles. The cumulative effect of the meeting with Pyada Sohn, and those hints as to his being slightly balmy back there in Moulmein shook Riley's judgment. He jerked his revolver into line.

"Listen, Harley," he said, hoarse with fury. "If anything happens to my eyes, so help me God, I'll blow your guts out. Before I'm blind, I'll do it! I met your stooge along the trail, and whether it's a curse or a chemical he uses, you're through!"

**H**ARLEY edged away. His face became greenish. Riley took another step toward him.

"My eyes have been raising hell ever since I met Pyada, and once I'm sure, I'm filling your belly with lead," he raged on. "Damn you! I heard Gray scream and groan. I saw his eyes rot and slough off. But I'll give you the best payoff I can before it gets me, unless you call Pyada Sohn so I can settle with him. So he can unwind his curse, or give me an antidote!"

Riley's approach had a certain grim logic.

Then he saw Harley's glance shift and his expression change. There was a tang of fresh cigar smoke whisked in by the droning fan.

McIntosh! Riley knew now what had for moments eluded him. He tried to whirl, to cover them both. But a numbing blow made his legs buckle. The brightness of the veranda became a whirling blackness, and Riley did not hear the hatchet-faced Scot mutter to Harley:

"Mon, ye were nearly a goner. I wonder if I killed him."

Harley sank into a chair, and clawed for the bottle of whiskey.

## CHAPTER V

### *Baited into a Trap*



TERRIFIC headache and nausea were Riley's first sensations. Someone was shaking him. He sat up then. The first gray of dawn was making the ceiling light look sickly. McIntosh was

bending over him. His eyes were bitter cold.

"You foxy devil, what did ye do to Harley?" he demanded.

"What's the matter with him?" Riley's wits were too foggy for more than dim recollection.

"Listen!" McIntosh ordered. "Listen to him!"

The groans that slipped between gritted teeth came from the adjoining room. They reminded Riley of Wayne Gray in the first stages of the horrible disease that had eaten out his eyes. The shock brought Riley to his feet. He swayed dizzily.

"My God," he muttered. "What could I have done? You fool, didn't it happen to my partner? He was cursed, that's what."

"Cursed?" McIntosh snorted. "Ye threw something, some poison."

"Let me see him. Damn it, you sneaked up on me. You must have been watching. What could I have thrown?"

McIntosh muttered something deep in his throat.

"Weel, that may be, and it may not," he said then. "Go along, but mind ye, no tricks. I've got this pistol of yours."

One look at Harley's eyes was enough. The curse had made sufficient progress during Riley's unconsciousness to leave not a doubt.

"Did you see Pyada Sohn?" demanded Riley of Harley. "Speak up, man! And don't lose any time. Hurry him to Moulmein, McIntosh!"

"A few hours before you arrived,"



Harley answered, "the beggar met me at the elephant stables and warned me not to try to buy Mona Gray's lease. I told him I'd flog him within an inch of his life if I ever saw him again."

"Did you actually hit him?"

"Just once." Pain choked Harley's voice for a moment. "If I'd only killed him! I could have."

A soft laugh came from the shadows outside. Chickens were cackling, gamecocks crowing, and a dog, smelling the sunrise, yapped in the village. But these sounds could not muffle that whispering, eerie laugh, and the sinister words that followed:

"O Man, another fool is blind. Flame shall consume your eyes, flame shall eat you until the gods of mercy give you release!"

McIntosh cursed, bounded into his room and came out with a shotgun. He knocked the window pane out, leveled the weapon, and cut loose with both barrels. Screaming pellets raked the foliage. The blast awakened the drowsy coolies. But there was a laugh, far off now, saying that McIntosh had missed as Riley had.

The Scot, still gripping the fuming weapon, turned on Riley.

"Go away and stay away, ye bird of ill omen! And don't think that keeping that timber will profit ye so much. Pick up your weapon and go!"

Riley took his revolver, whose remaining cartridges had been removed. As he rode through the awakening camp, he saw that coolies had already hitched up a bullock cart to hurry Harley to the river.

A race against burning horror, a vain race against Burma's jungle mysteries and malignant spells. He was too weary, too shocked to try to make any sense out of it. Harley, he now knew, was a victim, not a conspirator. Harley trusted McIntosh, whoever the impostor might be.

AND now Riley could not sell and leave. That Mona Gray suspected him, he was certain. So did

McIntosh, or else he pretended to, which was just as ruinous. Too, Pyada might be the "inspector's" secret ally in some hideous and unfathomable game of mutilation. But Riley's own eyes no longer pained him. Irritating insects, futile rage, the simple power of suggestion and Pyada Sohn's mocking words, had made him for a while feel the symptoms that had tortured Gray.

His coolies were at work when he reached the boundaries of his own lease. Maung Hkin's wrinkled face could not conceal its wonder at Riley's return. Soon the rains would break that blasting heat. First a cloud the size of a man's hand, then an ever strengthening wind, then pelting downpour. But regardless of the amount of teak worked to the Salween, it would profit Riley little enough.

Mona Gray was on the veranda when he got there. She wore a robe of Chinese silk. Rest had erased the fatigue lines from her face. She was lovely now, though something in her dark eyes troubled Riley.

"I'm afraid you can't deal with Harley," he said.

"Why?" she demanded.

The Chinese *amah* silently withdrew.

"The curse got him," Riley answered.

He could not guess what went on behind that smooth, sweetly curved face.

"How horrible!" she exclaimed. "But Mr. Harley is just one of a firm. They can't all be cursed by this Pyada Sohn, can they?"

"It's a wonder Pyada doesn't know that," Riley said.

She shrugged.

"It's hard to fathom the Burmese magician's mind. Now if you don't mind, I'd like to rest a few days before I go back to Moulmein. The other members of the firm could deal with me I'm sure, now that Mr. Harley isn't expected to live."



She could have stayed in Moulmein in the first place, and Harley could have communicated by courier. At the most, a few weeks might have been wasted. Then Riley reminded himself that this was the widow of a friend who had perished horribly. He could not give her the obvious answer. But more than ever, his first thought ate at him.

"She's here on a pretext to finish me," he thought. "She thinks I'm guilty, and I can't defend myself."

**H**E WENT to his room then, and he knew it had been searched. Carefully, skilfully, yet trivial details betrayed the fact. But for his suspicions of Mona, he would never have noticed that the razor case did not quite match up with the marks in the dust film on the shelf. Someone had lifted and opened the case, which had not been touched for months. Riley had long since ceased putting the razor away after using it.

But until Mona accused him, he could not protest his innocence.

Toward sunset, the silence of the Burmese village made him uneasy. Suddenly he realized that for an hour or more, he had heard no chatter of native women, no sounds of chickens or dogs or pigs. Nor had the first of the elephants come in from the forest. Beasts and men alike were strangely absent.

He hurried toward the thorn-guarded stockade, and the shacks half hidden by toddy palms, mangoes, and tamarinds.

The women had slipped away stealthily, a few at a time. Dimmed by distance, he could just hear the hollow note of a *kalouk*. A driver and his elephant were hurrying to catch up with the others. Rather than risk Pyada's wrath, the coolies had secretly told the women to leave. The reason seemed plain enough. Now that Harley had been stricken by Pyada Sohn's wrath, it was no longer safe to work anywhere in the region.

For a moment Riley began to feel that there was really something in Burmese logic. Then his stubbornness flared up. He could not quit.

He ran to the stables and saddled up his pony. He would ride after the deserters, bribe, browbeat, shame them back to the job. That they had sneaked away, hinted that they had been timid about declaring themselves.

Dusk settled rapidly. At the best, it would last only a few minutes, and then tropical gloom would seize the forest.

"They must be scared silly," he muttered, drawing the saddle cinch tight. "Or they'd never travel at night."

Something worse than Thagyamin and his million fiends threatened them. The further the coolies went, the harder it would be to herd them back. For a moment he thought of returning to the bungalow to tell Mona Gray. But she had her Chinese maid, and Mona seemed equal to anything. Her veiled suspicion made him very bitter.

Pyada Sohn was behind all this, and beating the Burmese wizard once and for all was the only way that Riley could keep his lease in operation. That drove him on, past the reed-fringed lake, and down the trail. The water was now an evil black opal, and treacherous shadows wove and wheeled in the depths of the forest ahead. Only a few minutes more, and then blackness. And in the night, the demons would come out from hiding.

Behind him, the lights of the bungalow glowed. Riley was now at the edge of the clearing. Mona, for all her suspicions, was Gray's widow. A dozen yards in the forest, he halted, irresolute.

"I'll give her more time to hunt for the truth," he bitterly told himself. "The quicker she finds out she's mistaken, the better."

After he had traveled a few yards more he heard a woman scream. He



wheeled his pony and galloped back. The cry was not repeated. There was no answer to his hail. And it was not until he was quite close to the bungalow that he saw the blurred figures, just beyond the reach of the veranda lights. These he could barely distinguish. Nothing was clear except that they moved.

He fired a shot, deliberately aiming high.

"Halt!" he shouted.

A familiar voice answered him.

"O blind fool, stay where you are. She has offended the king of demons and with his own hands he will weave the curse."

"I'll shoot!" Riley yelled. "Halt or—"

"You'll hit her, and then will it be well with you?" Pyada mocked.

The wizard was right about that. In that devil's blend of darkness and dusk, Riley could be sure of nothing. There were two men carrying Mona. No, there were three, and Mona was not there. This was a bluff. Then he thought that he could distinguish the whiteness of her arms, the pale gleam of her legs. They weren't carrying her, they were dragging her along. He thought he heard her muffled cry.

**B**UT whatever it was, the figures became dimmer. Riley spurred his horse. The vague figures shifted, but they could not evade his sudden rush. A savage rage blazed red in Riley's brain. Nothing counted now but to blast Pyada Sohn's bulbous body into red jelly.

Without warning his pony fell, pitching him into the brush that lined the path which led from the clearing. He lost his pistol, and before he could recover it, half a dozen wiry little men landed on him. They kicked and pummeled as they swarmed over him. They crushed him breathless, slugged him dizzy. As they lashed his numbed limbs with withes, Riley heard Pyada Sohn's evil chuckle.

Too late, he realized that Pyada

Sohn had used Mona to bait him into a trap. Beyond any doubt, the witch doctor had ordered the stealthy desertion of the coolies, correctly judging that Riley would hurry after them, and thus leave an opening for slipping up on the bungalow and the two women.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Secret of the Devil Doctor*



**QUICKLY** the barefooted natives tied their captives to bamboo rods and carried them silently into the forest. Bit by bit, where starlight found its way through gaps in the jungle's roof, Riley identified the place where his coolies had been logging.

"Soon you will be well in the forbidden forest," Pyada Sohn said to him. "What happened to the others will be pleasure compared to what waits for you two!"

It seemed, finally, that the sinister column was following the pipe line which ran all the way from Painkyon to the Salween River. Riley lost all track of time. The rattan withes that held him to the bamboo rod bit into his flesh and numbed him. They spiraled about him, and supported his weight.

If Mona was conscious, she gave no sign. The sinister procession moved silently through the brush, weaving in and out, seemingly avoiding the thorns and branches that slashed the prisoners.

Finally the column filed down a ravine. Mists from the sluggish river billowed up the rocky cleft. The reek of petroleum became perceptible, then strong enough to blot out the jungle smells, every odor, in fact, except the pungent scent of dried fish and spices.

A dim red glow came from a cavern in the ravine wall just ahead. The



cleft widened. Wiry little men came from small caves and the shelter of overhanging ledges.

They chattered in Burmese, half a dozen at once addressing Pyada Sohn. He answered some, and those who carried the prisoners replied to the queries of others. Men came from a boat whose masts reached above the river bank. The bearers dropped the captives, and gathered about the wizard doctor.

Riley was close to Mona.

"What happened?" he whispered.

"My *amah* screamed," she told him, low-voiced. "It startled me, and I ran into the room. She was lying there, unconscious. Then I caught a glimpse of that horrible fat man. I didn't have a chance. I—I did misjudge you, Vic. Do you think—"

She did not complete the question, but Riley knew what she meant.

"I don't know what this is, or how he'll do it," he said. "But we're in for the same devilish thing that got Wayne and Harley. We're among a cult of jungle wizards." He cursed. "This damned rattan. It's not awfully tight, but it's sharp and won't give."

"I'm not tied with rattan," she whispered. "Can you wriggle around your stake and get at my wrists?"

As he gnawed at the knotted clothesline that held Mona, Riley heard Pyada speaking to his men. Bit by bit, he understood why the ravine reeked of petroleum. The jungle wizards had tapped the big pipe line. They were stealing the crude oil, loading it into river boats and carrying it to the gulf.

Without drilling a well, without any machinery, they were carrying on a profitable business. No wonder they had a *sohn* whose gruesome spells guarded the corner of Riley's teak lease! Continued logging would finally have exposed the source of their rich profits!

"We'll put them in a dugout later," the wizard was saying. "By the time they're picked up, they'll be beyond

speech. No one will know where it happened, except that they were cursed as those other fools were."

"Does it always work?" one of the men asked.

Pyada laughed.

"Give me a little more light, and watch!"

Someone fanned the fire. The flames leaped up in the nearby cave, and the glow made a small hell out of the oil-scented ravine. Most of the odor, Riley realized, came from the boat.

Far back in the ravine, he got a glimpse of a valve. It must be the one that released the petroleum from the pipe that tapped the main line. In another cavern he saw lengths of pipe. Apparently they were joined together so that they would reach the boat. Once it was loaded, the piping was taken down and hidden.

WITH the departure of the boat, there would be little petroleum left to make a betraying reek. Certainly none that would be noticed by the river bargemen as they plied their way.

Pyada watched while two of his men laid the captives face up. Apparently he did not notice that Riley's efforts to liberate Mona's wrists had been partly successful. His indifference, however, was reasonable enough. The whole crew was armed with broad-bladed *kukris*. They ceased chattering and spitting betel nut juice. They waited, breathlessly, for the wizard to begin his spell. Even if the captives had been able to make a sudden break, their chance would have been less than nothing.

Numbed and cramped, they would be recaptured before they could get toward the steep wall of the ravine. And if he had been armed, Vic Riley could not have beaten the odds. These were *dacoits*, jungle desperadoes, who had turned from pillaging villages to an easier, safer way of plunder.

Pyada chuckled. In the waxing light of the fire, his yellow body quiv-



ered like a monstrous jellyfish. He gleamed with perspiration and reeked of *patchouli*. He made a gesture with his pudgy hands. Somehow, they seemed snaky, and his eyes gleamed with malignant deviltry.

"You saw what I did with words," he said, speaking English, lest Mona miss his meaning. "Now I shall give you the sevenfold curse that the king of demons put in my fingers."

Mona screamed, writhed against her bonds as he bent over, tearing her hands free. Her wrists and knuckles bled. She raked his round face. Pyada did not speak. He did not have to. Several of his ruffians caught her wrists, pinned them to the rocks.

Then Pyada delicately stroked her brows and eyelashes. As he did so, he repeated the spell that had blinded Gray and Harley.

Slowly he rose, rubbed his hands together, and for a moment contemplated his work. Then he turned to Riley.

"The fire demons follow my touch," he chanted, bending over to apply his moist, pudgy fingers to the captive's eyebrows. "And all the fiends of Tawadeintha will darken the eyes that have seen what they should not see."

Riley yelled and squeezed his lids together. The venomous words, the hated contact of those soft, moist fingers sickened him, made him shudder and break out in a sweat that drenched him as he struggled against the cutting rattan bonds. Already, he could feel the fiery irritation that had doomed Gray. The memory of the horror he had carried to Moulmein left no room for reason.

He cursed hoarsely, writhed and twisted in futile fury. He did not hear the chatter of the *dacoits* as they followed Pyada Sohn toward the waiting boat.

It was Mona's hand that checked his despairing mutter.

"Keep your eyes closed," she whispered. "But keep on shouting. It will give me a chance to untie you."

After a frantic outburst, he asked her:

"What good'll it do? They'll get us with their knives."

"That would be better," she answered, "than letting that poison do its work. It isn't jungle magic. It's something worse."

Riley did as Mona bade him. Pyada was occupied with his *dacoits*. Two unarmed prisoners could not get far. As long as that white fool lay there and howled, everything was all right.

Mona tore a strip from her robe.

"Maybe it'll help if I wipe your eyes," she said. "Maybe the stuff hasn't sunk in enough."

Her hands trembled, and so did her voice. But Riley's courage was coming back. She seemed to know the secret of Pyada's wizardry. It was a chemical, a poison, not a spell. And with the confidence gained from his new ally, his fighting spirit took command. There was still a chance.

SOON his hands were free. He tore away the strands that spiraled about him, and clawed at the rattan knotted about his ankles. He was free, finally, but his legs were numb and cramped and dead. His eyes smarted, but he did not know whether it was from perspiration or from the venom Pyada had touched to his lashes. He looked about.

Pyada's men were preparing to cast off in the river, though half a dozen remained on the bank with the devil doctor. Riley clambered to his feet, and steadied himself with the bamboo pole. It was three inches in diameter, but light enough. Mona was free now.

"Can we risk it now?" she whispered. "We'll make some noise trying to climb. We can't get at the river, yet—"

"Do what I say," he interrupted, and spoke quickly, tersely.

When she nodded agreement, he added: "I'll give 'em hell. I'll hold 'em, and you'll have your chance."

Without waiting for an answer,



Riley charged. He held the bamboo rod like a lance. He yelled—an insane, throat-cracking yell. Pyada Sohn started. His *dacoits* whirled with him, drawing their short-bladed, heavy *kukris*.

"Don't cut him down, catch him!" the wizard shouted. "You fools, we don't want him chopped up!"

But one *dacoit* had slashed out with his awkward weapon. Riley parried as with a quarterstaff, whirled and smashed another alongside the man's head, knocking him into the water. He recovered, thrust with the long rod, catching the next one full in the face.

The sharp end made the *dacoit's* features a red blot. He dropped to the ground, blinded and screaming.

Riley went wild. He forgot Mona's share in the game. That was when he cornered Pyada. The bamboo stake, sun-hardened and sharp where a clean stroke had shorn it diagonally when it was green, was like a spear. Riley's weight drove it deep into the pudgy wizard.

Pyada writhed and howled. He was like an insect on a collector's pin. A few seconds more and he was dead. Now that his weapon was useless, Riley seized a ragged rock to heave at the startled *dacoits* who came rushing from the boat.

That was when Mona scooped up the burning brands in the robe she had stripped off. It smoked, smouldered, but its folds protected her hands. She hurled the blazing mass into their faces, just as they landed on the oil-soaked bank. And the *dacoits'* clothes were petroleum drenched.

The oil flared up. The sluggish current had not yet spread what oil had leaked during the loading of the drums, which were camouflaged under brush to make the craft look like one of those plying up and down the river gathering fuel. The fire leaped the short gap between bank and hull. The surface of the water blazed.

Flame lapped the railing, spread to the cargo.

The brush caught fire, and then the oil cargo flared up. Riley hurled his rock. It knocked the leading *dacoit* back into the choking fumes and the fire that danced over the oil-soaked earth. The man's saturated garments blazed in an instant. He was a human torch.

"Run for it!" Riley yelled. "Get out of here, quick!"

He scrambled after her, up the steep wall. But there was no pursuit. Flames reached after them, but the center of the furnace was the ground nearest the boat. If any of the crew swam under the fiery surface of the river, they still had to take their chances with the crocodiles. But Riley did not think of this until he and his companion were stumbling through the jungle.

"We've got 'em," Riley panted, as he lifted Mona back to her feet. "No matter what happens to us, they burn first." He paused. "Here's the main pipe line. Hang on, because we've got to run if the brush catches fire. . . ."

**L**ATER they plunged headlong into a small pool. And before they had struggled through the reeds on the opposite bank, there were voices and lights ahead. McIntosh and half a dozen natives came pounding down the pipe line trail. Riley was too exhausted for further effort. Then he learned that resistance was not necessary.

It was not until the victims of jungle magic reached the boat that Riley understood the background of the tangle.

"Ye were right," the Scot explained. "I'm not a forestry inspector. The company was missing an uncommon quantity of petroleum, and as near as we could figure out, the loss was somewhere in your lease. We thought that when ye told that wild story about Pyada, ye had settled a partner who was trying to sell out his share.



And at the same time, discourage natives from logging and uncovering that ravine where the thieves had tapped the line.

"It wasn't until after ye had left Moulmein that we learned what had killed Gray. When Harley was 'cursed', I put him on a boat and doubled back to watch ye some more. Before I left Moulmein, the doctors learned what made the curse work. So I brought what they called an antidote. If it does ye two any good, it'll probably help Harley."

"I'M NOT Mr. Gray's widow," Mona hastily explained to Riley. "I was helping the oil company. We figured that a so-called widow would have a better chance to catch you off guard."

"Then Pyada Sohn didn't know who you were and thought that Harley might buy your interest and start cutting timber?" Riley asked.

Mona nodded.

"I did search your bungalow, looking for the poison we thought you had used. The stuff that Pyada must

have applied to your partner and to Harley, as they slept."

Riley turned to the sharp-faced Scot. "You think Harley will pull through?" he asked.

"I think so. We got him to the hospital in time. It wasn't magic. It was—" He frowned, grimaced. "It was paraphenylene diamine. Treacherous stuff. It was used in the States for dyeing eyelashes and brows. A number of women died from the stuff. A lot more went blind. Some seemed halfway immune. Maybe it depended on the strength of the mixture. But that devil doctor didn't want it weak, ye can depend on that!"

"Paraphenylene diamine!" Riley shuddered, and said to Mona: "So far, it looks as if the emergency treatment McIntosh brought just in case you were 'cursed', is going to work."

Mona smiled.

"I think you're right, Vic," she said. "And I'm awfully glad. You'll be needing your eyes."

"I will. Especially to be seeing you whenever I'm in Moulmein. And that'll be often, you can be sure."

●  
NEXT MONTH

## SHERIDAN RIDES AGAIN

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●

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# Caulks Make Sawdust Fly

By CLAY PERRY

*Author of "Catfoot Rolls His Own," etc.*



Catfoot stepped in and flattened the man with one terrific blow

*When Furtive Teeth Gnaw at Catfoot Carney's Logging Camp, He Pussyfoots to Corner Rats Masquerading as Mice!*

**T**OM "CATFOOT" CARNEY cut across the empty yard of the Catfoot Logging Company. Sawdust flew up from his caulked shoes as he zigzagged to avoid soft spots where a man would sink to his knees. Tom's father, "Key Log"

Carney, had covered the ground with chips from whirling circular saws, but the yard had been unused since his death. Every stick of good lumber was gone. It was a desert of pine and cedar dust, a gray oasis with little promise in its appearance.



But there was promise in the long line of men who stood on the splintered plank walk, though most of them were grizzled and clad in faded, patched clothes. The first man in line, a brawny oldster, read aloud from a blackboard beside the office door.

WANTED:

Fifty lumberjacks and rivermen. Old-timers welcome. Catfoot Logging Co., Inc.

"What's that 'Inc' mean?" he asked of 'Pegleg' Lane, who sat just inside the door, whittling on a slab of red cedar.

"That means incorporated, 'Bigger,'" responded Pegleg. "It means Tom Carney's president, I'm treasury. Ma Carney's vice-president, and Airy, my niece, is secretary. She'll spill the ink. This here gadget is a skid to screw on the end of my wooden leg so I won't sink in sawdust or mud. Any more questions?"

"What's keepin' Tom so late?" demanded Bigger promptly. "He'll have to get up early in the mornin' if he's goin' to get that Cedar Lake timber down here and make the sawdust fly before the fifth of next month."

"The bank don't open till nine," replied Pegleg uneasily. "Tom had to go cash his checks that he won at the contest last week. Airy, yuh got the time-book ready to sign 'em?"

A girl with rich brown hair was busily pasting pages in a book.

"All ready as soon as Tom gives the word," she responded. "I hope he makes out all right, Uncle Pegleg. Oh, here he comes!"

Carney's close-cropped, rusty-red hair seemed to be standing on end with his haste and excitement. He paced along with the peculiar side-to-side spring of the expert log-cuffer that he was. He had amply proved it a few days before by winning the world's championship at the annual birling tourney. He came bounding up the steps and into the room, his sharp caulks crunching into the pine floor. His face was grim as he shot a

quick glance to the line of men that were waiting impatiently outside.

"Is it all right to start signing them, Tom?" asked Arethusa.

Catfoot shook his head. "I don't know. I gotta tell 'em the situation. Then we'll see."

**H**E STEPPED to the front door. Mustering an attitude of confidence and determination, he called out loudly.

"Mornin', men. Sorry to keep you waitin'. I went to pay the town treasurer the taxes on the Cedar Lake timber my dad cut and decked before he died, and to get a loan to finance this job. I found there'd been a change in the board of directors, and a change of heart. Deacon Hornbull is chairman, now. He won't lend us a nickel, but he did offer to buy us out for a client. It looks like a squeeze play.

"The Catfoot Company has a contract to deliver two million feet of seasoned cedar, and one million of white pine on a hurry order from the Great Lakes Shipbuildin' Corporation. They're buildin' some of them new, light chasers for the Navy. It'd be a real order, all right."

"Consarn it, yuh didn't sell out, did yuh, Tom?" demanded a short, squat old fellow with a curved steel hook where his left hand had been. "Them outside concerns don't pay any kinda wages."

"No, I didn't sell," replied Tom. "But I can't pay any wages in cash, right now."

He put it so fiercely that Arethusa gasped, and Uncle Pegleg stabbed himself in his wooden leg.

"The outfit that wants to buy is the International Trading Company of Chicago. They want that two-year-seasoned timber mighty bad. They hoped to pick it up on the tax sale but I fooled 'em. They had a timber cruiser up there, waitin' to appraise it. As soon as they found the taxes would be paid, they authorized the bank to bid for it, anyway.



"They want to ship that timber to the West Coast. I suspect that means it's goin' to the Orient for another Navy. That's why I wouldn't sell. The Catfoot Logging Company wants to deliver it where it'll do the most good. We've got the contract. We've got the timber. We've got the mill. But—"

"By the Holy Old Mackinaw!" shouted "Hooks" Harmon. "You'll get the men. We'll sign up anyhow, and yuh can pay us off in time-slips, against cash on delivery."

"I don't know whether the stores will honor time-slips as they used to in the old days," Tom said regretfully. "Things have changed. It's hard to get credit, and it may be two months before we can collect cash. But we gotta deliver the timber in booms at this yard within two weeks. Well, grub goes with the job, anyhow, and Ma Carney will cook."

"Yeah?" burst out a sturdy young fellow just ahead of Hooks Harmon. "If Ma cooks, I'll sign!"

But a little way down the line was a muttering, sharp-eyed man of middle age. He wore a nondescript outfit, yet his caulked shoes were brand-new. Some of the men turned to listen to his grumbling. Bigger Brown looked back at the disturbance.

"Hooks, it's up to us old-timers to stop any lay-down talk like is goin' on back there," he stated. "Tom's got to get his men. Come on, you scissor-bills and river-hogs! Three cheers for Catfoot Carney and the United States Navy!"

"Three chairs, a bench and a spittoon for the International Tradin' Corporation!" responded Hooks Harmon. He stepped out of line and started back, flourishing his steel hand. "If they's a sneakin' foreign spy around here, we'll put the hooks to him."

AS HE came opposite the sharp-eyed stranger, the man dodged as if he feared he would be hooked. The man behind him gave him a shove.

For a moment, it looked as if there would be a fracas. But Bigger Brown, Hooks Harmon and the other oldsters, working together as if by agreement, quieted things down. They kept the men in line and Brown was first to scrawl on the time-book:

#### BEN BROWN AND TEAM

"That is team-work, Mr. Brown!" exclaimed Arethusa, with a warm smile at the old fellow. "We can use those big bays of yours."

"I reckoned so," grinned Bigger. "And they need the exercise."

The line moved up. Hooks Harmon declared that he was foreman with a truculent swagger that made Arethusa laugh.

"You leave it to me to get grub and supplies," Pegleg was saying to Tom, in private conference. "What this town needs is more credit. If we get the crew up there to work, it means new life for Cedar River. Deacon Hornbull has been putting the screws on long enough. I bet we get almost every man in that line."

"I was scared stiff," confessed young Tom Carney.

Looking over Arethusa's shoulder he grinned as he saw the names and qualifications. There were experienced lumberjacks, from teamsters to sky-hookers, from boom-tenders to white-water river-hogs. Six teams of horses were promised. Most of the old timers were bringing their own tools, a welcome addition to the sketchy outfit that the Catfoot Company owned.

To the surprise of Tom, Hooks Harmon and Brown, the hard-faced stranger stepped up and signed:

#### JOHN JACKSON, SCALER AND TALLYMAN

Tom regarded him closely. He didn't like Jackson's looks, but he decided that he'd prefer to have him where he could watch him. Besides, he did need a scaler on the job.

When the line had passed, Arethusa counted up and reported with glee that forty-nine out of fifty-five in the



line had signed. Tom took Pegleg and Arethusa more deeply into his confidence.

"I didn't dare tell 'em the whole story," he said. "It would stir up trouble in town and I'd have to give straw bail for a dozen jacks to get 'em out of jail before we get 'em out of town. We've got trouble ahead. The County Board recently voted to put the Cedar Lake dam under the Flood Emergency clause. That gives control of the water level and the sluice-gate to the Board.

"Deacon Hornbull is chairman of the Board. He has heavy mortgages on Jens Jimson's resort development up there—those cottages, overnight cabins and the refreshment stand he built close to the gate. Everyone knows the Deacon controls the Board. There's somethin' funny about his attitude. I don't like it."

"Well," drawled Uncle Pegleg, "there'll be the primary election the first Tuesday next month. The Deacon's term runs out then."

"But nobody's got the nerve to run against him," declared Tom. "He'll get the nomination easy. You know that's the same as election."

"Sure, somebody's got the nerve!" grunted Pegleg, snapping his knife shut. "I have! I'm gettin' up my petition papers right now."

He rose and stumped out the back door to take the sawdust shortcut. Forgetting his hand-made skid, he hurried toward Main Street. Tom shook his head doubtfully at Arethusa, but she was smiling confidently.

"Uncle Pegleg has a lot of friends," she said.

**T**HE old lumberman had lost his leg in a jam, trying to save Key Log Carney, who had been drowned when tons of logs rolled down on him in the river. Crippled, Pegleg had retired and become the town cobbler, specializing in making, repairing and caulking drive shoes. His little shop was a favorite hangout for the old-

timers of Cedar River. He called it the Cedar River Loafing Post in humorous imitation of the Cedar River Trading Post, across the street. The Trading Post, a huge general store that sold hardware, feed, grain, and agricultural implements, was run by Klaus Seiber, a clever, industrious gentleman of German extraction. With Teutonic precision, Seiber always did his loafing in Uncle Pegleg's shop from twelve-ten to exactly twelve-thirty.

Uncle Pegleg found customers waiting, as he knew he would. All of them were seeking repairs on their rusty shoes. Ostentatiously he turned to the wall, the placard that hung over his bench, which stated:

To Trust Is Bust. To Bust Is Hell.  
No Trust—No Bust, No Hell.

Then he went to work as if pegging steel caulks and brads in oak leather were the most important thing in the world.

At twelve-ten, Klaus Seiber dropped in and sat down on the low stool that was always reserved for him.

"How's business?" inquired Pegleg, without pausing to look up.

"Rodten!" exploded Seiber. "How you get it so much vork, *Herr Lane*?"

"I got forty-nine new customers," declared Pegleg. "And so will you have. Nope, it'll be fifty-three, countin' the corporation."

"Gustomers?" piped Klaus, his eyes popping wide. "From where?"

"Out of these shoes," replied Pegleg. "Forty-nine men are goin' to work in the woods for the Cedar River Loggin' Company."

"You are spoofingk me," Seiber grinned unhappily.

"Nope. When I get elected to the County Board, there'll be lots of buyin' to be done, too."

"Vot iss idt I'm hearingk?" gulped Seiber hoarsely.

"Listen hard," advised Uncle Pegleg.

In ten minutes, Klaus had heard



things that caused his eyes to bulge more than ever. He was the most surprised man in Cedar River until two minutes of three, when Deacon Hornbull received him at the bank.

"I haff come to make a deposidt," Seiber announced.

The banker rubbed his hairy hands together and licked his thin lips. Seiber was the rare customer who put money in the bank but never borrowed any. Klaus dragged out a battered old wallet. Fumbling in it, he removed a batch of promissory notes. He laid them on the counter and coughed deprecatingly.

"What—what is this?" choked Deacon Hornbull. "Mean to tell me you've been taken in by this wildcat outfit for two thousand dollars? Why, this isn't worth the paper it's written on!"

"But idt's better. See, *Herr Lane* his name wrote on dem. He is goingk to be a member of the Gounty Board dis fall. Already he has godt forty-eight gustomers—I mean voters on his petition papers. Anyhow, his vord is as good—"

"As a wooden leg!" shouted Deacon Hornbull. "Why, the old fool, he can't be elected anything! Think's he'll beat me out, eh? But I can't take these notes, Klaus. The directors refused a loan to the Catfoot Logging Company this morning."

"Dot's vhy I did it," explained Klaus patiently. "Iss my vord no goodt?"

"Your word? Why, of course, Klaus. Any time, any time. Did you endorse—No, you didn't. I don't see any endorsement."

"For vhy should a gorporation dot is godt a contract to deliver timber for Navy boats haff to haff a endorsement?" demanded Seiber, playing with his man like a cat with a mouse. "If idt iss so dot it ain't goodt, den I haff to draw oudt my cash. How much my balance iss it, now?"

Deacon Hornbull pulled at his wing collar as if it choked him, though it fitted like a horse-col-

lar on his stringy neck. He picked up the notes as Klaus Seiber reached for them.

"Well—ahem— Now, Mr. Seiber, if you need ready cash, I'll hold this paper for you until— You haven't really made a cash loan to this wildcat outfit, have you?"

"Not exactly. Credit idt iss dot makes der sawdust fly. Not vildcat, but Catfoot is makingk idt fly in dis town, puttingk to vork men dot neffer had a chob but W.P.A. since Key Log Carney killed was. Cedar River has been goingk to der dog-house. You see, I giff dem credit. Dey giff me notes. Dose men pay me in time-slips for goodts und cash vhen dey get paid on delivery of timber. I come to my bank to discount dese notes, or else I got to take out cash."

"Discount them?" groaned Deacon Hornbull, going green.

"Vell, deposit dem on my account und I keep der cash inside der bank, except a couple thousand from der check accountt."

**D**EACON HORNBULL capitulated. He knew when he was caught where the hair was short. He found the sensation less pleasant than catching others that way. He counted out Seiber's two thousand dollars. But he was sweating profusely, though his blood ran cold.

That night, he called a special session of the County Board. It was true that Cedar River had been going to the dogs for some time. Men were out of work, taxes jumping, real estate depreciating and industry dead. Only a thin stream of tourists spent a little money as they camped briefly by Cedar River.

But most of the tourists and vacationers went to Cedar Lake, ten miles up the river. A cottage and cabin colony was being developed at the south end, near the dam and the gate which controlled the principal water supply for Cedar River. It was here that Deacon Hornbull, through the Log-



gers' and Lumbermen's Bank, had heavily invested in mortgages, particularly in the new Jimson development. Jimson had built the development of red cedar logs. The only nearby source was the Carney sections, five miles from the dam.

The lake was shaped like an hourglass, narrow in the middle, where high-wooded knolls squeezed it. There was no complete vista up and down the lake. Logging operations at the north end would not annoy the tourists at the south, save for the brief sluicing through at the dam, when the drive was run out into the river.

Jens Jimson had been appointed caretaker of the dam and sluice-gate, with authority to raise or lower the gate, or to add extra flash-boards. Naturally he acted under directions from the County Board. As public convenience and necessity were supposed to dictate, they controlled the water level.

At the special meeting of the County Board that night, Deacon Hornbull asked for and received discretionary powers to exercise the Flood Emergency ruling. He spoke to the other two members at great length about the revival of the logging industry. Cautiously he hinted that the Loggers' and Lumbermen's Bank was interested in its success. Then he mentioned that the Catfoot Logging Company was going to need flowage through the gate for its drive.

Deacon Hornbull was taking rapid steps to pave the way for reelection. Abruptly he had found himself actually backing the Catfoot Company to the tune of two thousand dollars, despite his refusal of a direct loan of a similar amount. Now he dared not openly obstruct the job, for Lumberjacks had votes. With Pegleg Lane as a rival candidate, there was danger of losing their previous support.

Meanwhile, Catfoot Carney, Arethusa and Ma Carney had been very busy mustering men and materials for the march on Cedar Lake. An

added recruit to the crew was Jim Galawayosh, a Sioux Indian from Minnesota. Tom had defeated him in the semi-finals at the Rodeo and had promised him a job.

Jim had once worked for Key Log Carney, which would have been enough proof that he was an expert riverman. His stolid, hard-working squaw was immediately made assistant to Ma Carney.

It was no small job, getting an army of fifty men into the woods, without benefit of motor-trucks. There was only one wheezy old 'gator, the logging-tug that towed the wanagan, or river cook-house, on a raft and a string of *bateaux* up the stream. Then, with winch and cable, it would have to drag itself over the dam to the lake.

But in hiring old-time jacks, Tom had been wise. Bigger Brown took charge of the remuda of draft horses. He hauled high-wheeled travoys up the road to the dam and along the crooked trail to the head of the lake. Most of the men, with "turkeys" on their backs, hiked it in their newly repaired boots.

Within twenty-four hours, the skids were being stretched from the huge piles of cedar and pine logs that had been decked up in the clearing. The sun, wind and rain had well seasoned them for over two years. The logs were to be "landed" in the lake, and held in booms until time to start them down to the gate, towed by the old 'gator when the wind was with them.

Tom said nothing to Jens Jimson about sluicing the logs through. He didn't know of the Board's changed vote. But three days later, Jimson sent a message up to Tom, notifying him of the vote, and asking when Tom wanted to sluice through and what toll charges he would pay.

Tom mustered two husky oarsmen. Taking Arethusa with him for the ride and to act as witness to the negotiations, he sped down to Jimson's. One of the oarsmen was the stranger



who had signed as John Jackson. Jackson could row splendidly. He said he had been a Navy man once, and wanted to get his hand in at the oars again.

Jackson had made himself handy about Tom's camp. Apparently well informed about the value of timber, he was quick at figures and knew how to use the logger's steel-tipped scaling rule rapidly and accurately. Later, a scaler for the contractor who was purchasing the timber would check the scale, then measure the logs for diameter all over again, on delivery.

Tom did not intend to pay a toll of any sizable amount. He hoped to make a deal with Jimson to trade some good cedar logs for cabins, in payment for the sluicing rights.

He found Jens at one of the overnight cabins, admitting a party of tourists. The visitors' car bore Illinois license plates, and their baggage included a remarkable amount of fishing tackle. There were four in the party. The leader was a portly, florid-faced man with a strong foreign accent, obviously German.

"He looks like a Chicago gangster," Arethusa whispered to Tom. "I mean, that's how I imagine one might look and talk—as if he owned the earth."

The visitor was loudly questioning Jens about the fishing, wanting to know if there were any source of pollution near the lake.

To Tom's surprise, Jackson spoke up.

"No pollution to this lake, mister, but a nice, clean, logging job at the upper end. I bet you'll find good lake trout, up there in the deeper part."

As if drawn by a magnet, the four tough-looking tourists turned to Jackson and began plying him with questions. It seemed perfectly natural. Tom paid little attention to their conversation.

**H**E TOOK Jimson and Arethusa to the stand, to offer his proposition. Arrangements were made with

little difficulty. As it happened, Jimson needed some cedar logs.

"But here are some tourists who want to go fishin'," Jimson said. "I don't want no sluicin' done while they're here. It stops the fishin' on the river, and makes it rotten on the lake."

"I've got to make delivery at my yard by September fifth," Tom argued. "It's August twenty-eighth. I have to start dumping logs in tomorrow. When the wind is right, I'll tow them down with the 'gator. It'll take three days to run the drive down-river, even with a good head of water and the best luck. So I'll have to start sluicing day after tomorrow. Will you keep the gate closed with an extra flash-board on, till then?"

"If the County Board says so," replied Jimson shortly.

"What are the orders now?"

Jimson shrugged. "The tourist don't want water that's too high or too low. If it's too high, it gets wet from seepage down here. If it rains, it would have to be run off."

"Not much chance of a good rain till mid-September," Tom declared.

He suddenly realized that it was the worst time for angling, with unremitting heat and a full moon. He began to suspect something that looked like another squeeze play. He remembered that the primaries came on September first. An awkward climax might develop, whichever way the votes went. If Deacon Hornbull won, he would grow more arrogant than ever. If he lost, he would be just as dangerous, for he would hold office until January first and could control the Board at will.

"There'll be plenty of run-off with the drive," he told Jimson. "I'll need a heavy head of water for the big pine. I'll sluice that out first. The cedar rides high and can go down on slack water."

That night, Arethusa sent a message to her uncle by a tote-team that went to Cedar River for supplies. Pegleg



was acting as commissary in town. At the same time, he was vigorously promoting his campaign for County Supervisor. The note asked him to get a direct order from the County Board to have the gate kept closed until Labor Day. She suggested that he make a public appeal to patriotism, in view of the nature of the logging contract.

But Pegleg did not make a public appeal. He made a declaration to Deacon Hornbull through the mouth of his friend, Klaus Seiber.

Next morning, though, the level of the lake was down two inches on the pine pole gage that Tom had set beside his main boom, in front of camp. By noon, it had crept up an inch. The fall and rise was not alarming. But if the operation were repeated, it would become a real problem. Evidently the gate had been left open all night, but had been closed early in the morning.

By mid-afternoon, the water was half an inch higher. Catfoot was relieved when he saw the party of anglers in an outboard motorboat, trolling the upper part of the lake. Little as he liked the looks and actions of the quartet, he wished them luck with trout. Abstractedly he went about his business, preparing to land logs behind the booms.

**C**ATFOOT CARNEY'S crew worked on time as if they were racing against evening. They ate like wolves from Ma Carney's generous table. Old Bigger Brown expressed the opinion of the crew when he spoke up suddenly out of the customary silence of the grub-pile.

"Ma, you must think yuh're cookin' for giants. That's the third big platter of flannel-cakes yuh brung in. You must be Paul Bunyan's aunt."

"You shut up, Bigger Brown!" retorted Ma, highly pleased by the cryptic compliment. "I'm not that old, even if you are. And let me tell you, Mr. Brown, I don't count my chickens at all!"

During the evening, Tom missed the scaler and sent a bull-cook to find him. The boy reported that Jackson was out on the main boom. Tom found the scaler kneeling over the marked pole. Jackson rose so quickly that Tom thought he saw something slip from his hand into the water.

"What'd yuh lose?" Tom asked as Jackson came ashore.

"Nothin'," replied Jackson. "I was just takin' the level. It's up two inches again."

Tom glanced at a white rock that rose from the water. On it was a mark he had scratched with a peavey before setting the gage.

"Your eyes must be pretty bad," he said. "I don't see it."

"Go and look at the gage for yourself," snarled Jackson, as if offended. "What makes yuh think I lost somethin'?"

"You've lost some time," retorted Tom grimly. "They're waitin' at Number One Skidway for your scale."

"Look here, Catfoot," growled Jackson. "I'm gettin' pretty damn tired of never havin' no real money. You can get that pack of idiots to kill themselves for a lot of lousy paper, but I want my dough."

"I can't give it to you till I get paid," Tom said patiently.

"Then I quit—and I'm takin' plenty of men with me!"

Tom wasted no words. He stepped squarely in front of Jackson and flattened him with a blow to the chin. He had found several of the younger jacks rebellious about accepting scrip. Now that he was certain who had stirred up the trouble, he saw a chance to end it.

Indian Jim, who was acting as boom-tender, came running across the traverse-boom with a pike-pole in his hand. But Jackson made no effort to retaliate.

He picked himself up and strode toward the wanagan.

"Get your time and the girl will cash it for you," Catfoot shouted after



him. "Then yuh can hoof it over the hill."

Through Uncle Pegleg's financial maneuvers, Tom had been provided with enough cash for just such expected emergencies as this. As he walked out on the main boom to the gage, Indian Jim followed silently.

"Well, I'll be damned!" Catfoot muttered. "It shows a rise of exactly two inches since mornin'!"

"Someone hammer him down," Indian Jim grunted.

He lay down on the broad boom. Shading his eyes with his hands, he peered into the water, which was six feet deep. Grimly Tom was examining the top of the pole.

"Yeah, it's been hammered down, all right," Catfoot replied.

Jim began fishing with his pike-pole. He brought up on its hook a small ax with a leather thong.

"So that's what he did to try to make me believe the lake had risen more than it has," gritted Tom. "I'll give that jasper more than his time!"

**H**E WENT looking for Jackson but the scaler was missing.

"He didn't come to the office at all," Arethusa said. "I thought there was something peculiar about him, and those fishermen down at Jimson's, too. I heard him talking to the man who looks like a gangster. He said there was good fishing in the river—if the gate was open. I'll bet they got Jimson to open it last night and that there's some connection between them and Jackson. If we don't stop that, we'll lose our headwater."

"Let's not lose our heads, Airy," advised Tom. He turned as Indian Jim came in, his face clouded. "What's up now, Jim?"

"*Bateau* gone," the Indian reported. "Think maybe Jackson took it."

Tom summoned Hooks Harmon, Perchy Johnson, Bigger Brown and another brawny jack. In two *bateaux*, they headed for Jimson's.

As they landed near the stand

which was brilliantly lighted in the gloom, Tom handed each man a dollar.

"Go over and buy some soda and listen," he said. "If you hear fish-talk, listen hard. If you see Jackson, send Jim and let me know. I'll be at the gate. Keep together, and if you hear me yell, 'Come and get it,' come running."

Water was roaring through the wide-open gate when Tom reached it. He grabbed the lever and jammed the gate down, checking the flow. As he did so, he saw the outline of the missing *bateau*. It was tied up to a stake near the sluiceway. Hardly had the torrent been cut off when the door of the cabin, where the Illinois party was staying, burst open. Five men rushed furiously toward the dam.

"What the hell yuh think you're doing with that gate?" yelled a voice that Tom recognized as Jackson's.

He looked around for a weapon to meet the mass attack. There was nothing near save the oars in the *bateau*. But before he could jump for it, Jackson was almost upon him. Tom met him with a headlong rush, fists swinging. The ex-scaler went down with a smashed nose.

"That's what I want to ask you, yuh skunk," Tom panted.

A second assailant was trying to close in. But there was room for only two to face each other on the narrow dam. Tom forced the big florid-faced man back and wheeled to fight off Jackson. The scaler had leaped up and was weaving in.

"Come and get it, boys!" Catfoot yelled.

One of the thugs spotted a strong flashlight on Tom. The light blinded Carney. He missed a swing to Jackson's face. They clinched, swaying between the deep, rocky gorge of the river and the lake. Tom tore loose as the man with the light shouted:

"Get out of the way, Jackson! Let Gruner plug him!"

Tom whirled and leaped for the *bateau* below. He struck it squarely



amidships, his caulks biting into the boards. The shock snapped the thin old rope and it floated free just as a shot rang out and a bullet whistled across the gate.

Tom ducked and went overboard. Clinging to the gunwale for shelter, he roared a warning to his men as five more shots spat out. Two bullets struck the *bateau* but were stopped by its thick plank sides. The flashlight wandered, seeking Tom.

"Look out for the jacks!" the ex-scaler yelped in terror. "Give 'em the gat, Gruner. They'll tear our faces off with their caulks!"

**T**HE cone of light swung on the running jacks. Tom saw Bigger Brown hurl himself feet-first at the big thug with the gun. Then the man with the flashlight was struck by a human cyclone in the shape of Hooks Harmon. The light described a wild arc and went out.

Jens Jimson came scurrying from the stand with a big electric battery lantern. He flooded the scene, revealing a fight that raged from land to water and back again.

Tom waded ashore with an oar in his hands and raced after Jackson, who was running for the cabin. The ex-scaler was cut down by the oar that swung across his legs from behind. Tom landed heavily on him, and pinned him down.

Struggling and cursing, the four plug-uglies were soon overpowered. Now they lay with caulked boots at their throats, threatening them not to move.

"What the hell is this?" Jimson howled. "What's the idea of beatin' up my tourists? I came back from town and hear a lot of noise goin' on. And my woman says, 'Jens, they're fightin' our guests, and'—"

Tom cut off his saga.

"So they sent you away, huh?" he snapped. "Jens, you're a special constable, appointed by the County Board, aren't you? Ain't you sup-

posed to protect this dam and gate?"

"Sure I'm a constable. What about it?"

"Arrest these thugs for sabotage on a Government supply job!" Tom demanded. "Jackson is their spy, and Gruner is boss of the gang. They didn't come here to go fishing. They aimed to cripple this log job. Why did you let them open that gate?"

"I didn't let them!" Jimson retorted angrily. "I went to town for somethin'. I just came back now. But you ain't makin' me arrest my guests. All they wanted was to fish in the river."

"All right, I'll call the sheriff," Tom stated coldly. "Maybe you're in cahoots with the outfit, Jimson. Let me tell you what they are. Jackson is the sneaking cruiser that was up here a week before we came in on the job. Him and the rest are alien enemies."

"I don't believe yuh," blurted Jimson. "He made the reservation for the party to fish."

"You'll make a good witness, Jimson, even if you're a rotten caretaker and constable," growled Tom as he headed for the phone at the stand.

The sheriff arrived at daybreak, accompanied by Deacon Hornbull and Pegleg Lane, the rival candidates. At almost the same time, a *bateau* landed with Arethusa in the bow and three huskies at the oars.

"We heard the shots," she told Tom. "We waited only till we could see to start down. Did you get hurt? Is everybody all right?"

"Well, not your gangster and his pals, which includes Jackson," replied Tom. "Indian Jim tied them up for safe-keeping. Sheriff, I've got some written evidence here that I found in the cabin they were in. These letters and telegrams connect this gang with the International Trading Company of Chicago. And—"

"My boy, you've done a great job!" bleated Deacon Hornbull, pulling nervously at his collar. "The F.B.I. woke me up with the phone this morning, calling from Washington. They



want these fellows. I had no idea that they were agents of an enemy country. The International Trading Company has been forced out of business."

**U**NCLE PEGLEG handed Tom a thick envelope, addressed to the Catfoot Logging Company. Tom looked the contents over quickly, for the envelope bore the return address of the Great Lakes Shipbuilding Corporation. He grinned as he handed the letter to Arethusa. Deacon Hornbull began talking fast, smirking and rubbing his hands together.

"I want you to know, Tom, that you can have your loan. You see, this town has been victimized by so many wildcat companies. . . . You remember how they handed out scrip against cash on delivery, and then shut down camp and sneaked out in the night, after selling their timber. Well, I thought you were running that kind of outfit. What else could I think, Tom? You didn't have any money, and the Catfoot Company's been closed down for so many years now. . . . Anyhow, you can have that loan any time you want it."

"Thanks, but I don't want any loan from you," Tom replied curtly. He turned to Pegleg and smiled ostentatiously. "How's the campaign coming?"

"Oh, that's all over," chuckled Uncle Pegleg. "I went and withdrew in favor of Deacon Hornbull. I wasn't really aimin' at office, son. I jest wanted to work up some credit for your loggin' company, and yuh see—it worked! Deacon Hornbull's learned himself a lesson. Why, he's the most patriotic feller in Cedar River, outside of me and Klaus Seiber."

Catfoot's smile widened to a grin for a moment. When he felt the wind blowing through his hair, he wet a finger and held it up.

"The wind's in the north, and risin', Hooks!" he shouted. "Get up to camp and start the 'gator on Number

One Boom. We're sluicin' through to-day."

Deacon Hornbull tugged at Tom's sleeve.

"I hope you don't feel angry at my misguided action," he pleaded. "I really thought it would be best for our town."

"It ain't that," Tom replied. "That letter Uncle Pegleg handed me gives us all the credit we need. We're gettin' fifty per cent of the contract as soon as we land the first log at my yard in Cedar River, providin' the rest are through the sluice. Naturally you're gonna give Jimson his orders, ain't yuh?"

Deacon Hornbull nodded hastily and rushed off. The sheriff crammed the five prisoners into his car and headed toward the town jail.

**S**AWDUST began to fly from the circular saws at the Catfoot mill the day that Deacon Hornbull was elected. But more than two hundred votes had been written in for Uncle Pegleg, causing the victor to take his triumph modestly.

On Saturday morning, Klaus Seiber was so excited that he broke his rigid custom. Instead of waiting until twelve-ten to visit the Loafing Post, he waddled in at half-past ten.

"For der first time since I start business in Cedar Riffer," he blurted happily, "I haff to hire extra clerks und anodder cashier. How else can I take care of so many cash gustomers? By golly, idt's credit vot makes der dust fly from der dog-house!"

"It's caulks like these here ones I'm nailin' on that makes the sawdust fly," amended Uncle Pegleg. "These are Tom's new drive shoes. He wore out a pair on that first drive, and he's gonna need these."

"First drive?" echoed Seiber baffledly.

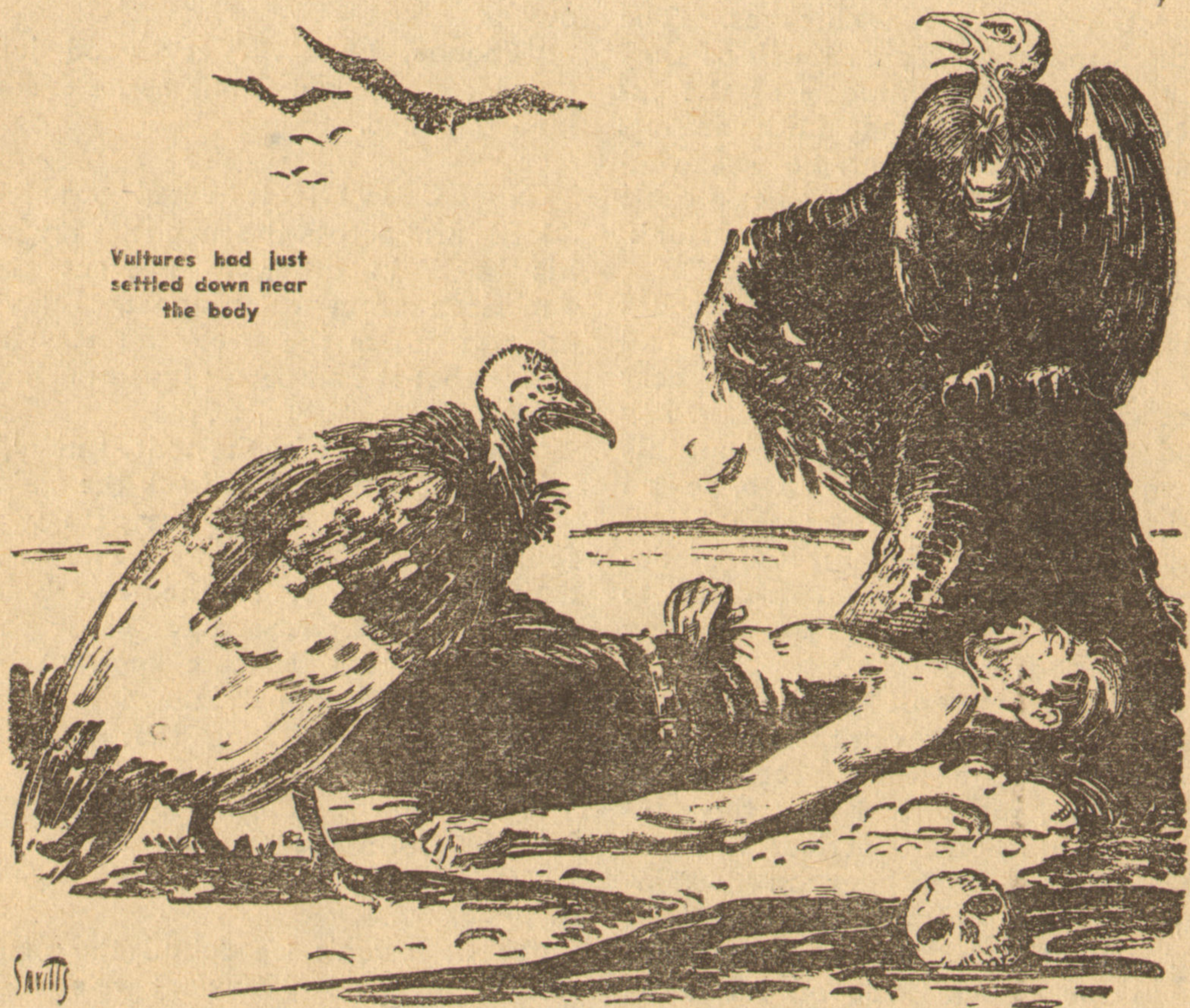
"Yep," gloated Uncle Pegleg. "The first of plenty more. We got another big contract, by the Holy Old Machinaw!"



# At the Bushman's Water Hole

By WILLIAM DE LISLE

*Author of "Frozen Gold," "Death at the Eighteenth Hole," etc.*



Vultures had just settled down near the body

**A** FLAMING sunset with the sun itself hidden behind the barren mountains to the west—a red glow, the color of blood, upon the sand dunes that stretched everlastingly north, east and south—five or six salt-pans amidst the dunes, looking now as if spread with pink snow—that was the whole visible world of the five men encamped on the arid plain at the foot of the mountains.

Gert and Klaas, the two Hottentots,

*Jeff Donley Bucks Treachery in a Land Where Water Is Sweeter than Diamonds and Emeralds!*

having fed to repletion on roasted gemsbok, lay like logs before the fire. Jeff Donley, the slim, good-looking Brooklyn-born Yankee, called "Lucky" because apparently he was born that way, was fixing the de-



tached sole of a shoe to its upper with fine wire unwoven from a Kaffir bracelet. Crane and Ashford, the bosses of the expedition, sat apart, poring over a rough map with intense concentration.

That Lucky wasn't singing at his labors did not indicate any sudden change in his habitually cheery nature. He was day-dreaming—or, to be exact, counting his chickens. The others might worry as much as they pleased over the outcome of the expedition—Lucky had faith in his name. At the moment, he was wondering how soon he could get a cable off to a certain young lady in Brooklyn, telling her the good news.

Like the dreamer he was, he could visualize the scene at the other end of the world. He could almost hear the comments of his friends. They had all been so skeptical about his chances when, three years ago, he had shipped as mess-boy on the *West Carbria* for the sole purpose of deserting her in Capetown in order to see something of Africa—his long cherished dream.

Of course, they all knew back home about his adventures in the Dark Continent during the three years he had been there, for he had kept them informed: first, on his arrival at Capetown; then, a week later, on his joining a traveling circus, and thereafter for almost three years, after every jump the circus made on its interminable tour of the South African states. Yes, they knew all about that, all right.

What they didn't know, though (not even Katie), and wouldn't know yet for a while, was that Lucky Jeff was actually coming back to Brooklyn a millionaire, or pretty close to one, as the result of this expedition on which he had set out just two weeks ago. Or so, at least, he thought, which was just about the height of confidence when you considered that so far nothing of an encouraging nature had been accomplished, and that,

for all he knew, the whole thing might turn out to be a wild-goose chase.

He kept on dreaming and fixing the shoe, and when the shoe was fixed he stopped dreaming and sauntered across to the other two whites.

"Here you are. You couldn't have had a better job done in Capetown." He handed the shoe to Crane, its owner.

"Thanks, Lucky. Very good job, indeed," remarked Crane as he examined the shoe.

**I**N RECEIVING it he had sprawled his arm across the map that lay on his knee, in order to prevent the American from scanning it. Lucky did not notice the trick, nor was he aware that it had been played on him before.

"Just throw it in the tent, Lucky," said Crane, giving him back the shoe.

Lucky departed, and the map was folded up and put away. The two men strolled over to the waterhole which was their reason for being encamped in this desolate spot. Ashford peered anxiously down into it.

"I wonder how long that water's going to last?" he mused.

"Don't worry. It'll last long enough for us to find the diamonds."

"You seem pretty damn sure about it."

"Well, haven't we found the map reliable up to now? Haven't we struck the legendary Bushman's Waterhole on the edge of the salt-pan country, right where the map places it? Isn't there a range of mountains to the west? And haven't we seen through our glasses a huge dune shaped like a kneeling camel to the north?"

"Yes, yes—that's all very well, Crane. But the fact that there's a range of mountains doesn't prove that a dry river-bed run down its middle like the backbone in a herring. In fact, I don't know when I've heard of anything more unlikely."

"Well, all I've heard since I've been



in Africa is that nothing is so unlikely that it can't happen," returned the other.

"All right, let's suppose, for the sake of argument, that there is a dry river there. That still doesn't prove we'll find a way into it. And even if we do, who's to say we'll find the water-worn holes with the diamonds? What proof have we got there are any diamonds, anyway? What more likely than that the man who found the place scooped the lot?"

"You forget the factor of water. The story has it that his bones, his diary and the bag of diamonds were found by wandering Bushmen near this waterhole, which he had just failed to reach. It stands to reason that a man, in danger of dying of thirst, wouldn't wait to make an exhaustive search."

"Maybe he did, and that's why he died," objected Ashford mournfully.

"Say, what's bitten you tonight, just when we're in sight of success?" Crane demanded.

"Oh, I don't know. It just seems that the nearer we get to it, the more jumpy I get. Success means a lot to me—more, I daresay, than it does to you."

Crane tensed. "That's where you're wrong."

"It means winning the only woman in the world for me," Ashford threw at him somewhat pettishly.

"What makes you think it might not mean just that to me?"

They stared at each other with a new interest.

"My girl's being badgered by her family to marry a man twice her age, with money," confided Ashford with unwonted expansiveness. "She's promised to hold the marriage off till I've tested this story of the diamonds."

**H**HE TOOK a wallet from his pocket and extracted from it a photograph. Crane took it from him and gazed at the fair, shallow face pictured there.

"Very pretty," he remarked, though secretly he thought that a girl with a face like that had probably married the other man by now.

"The picture doesn't do her justice," Ashford said eagerly.

"Here's mine," said Crane, holding a small case open to display a miniature. It was as though they were discussing pieces of property.

Ashford saw an exquisite, flawless face, raven hair and eyes of the intensest, most passionate blue. But, though awed by such perfection, he didn't fail to note a touch of hardness about the set of the red mouth.

"A beauty!" he exclaimed in hushed tones.

"Married," volunteered Crane with his wry, tight-lipped smile, as he put the miniature away.

"Married!"

"Yes, married the wrong man a year before we met. If we make good on this diamond hunt, she's promised to leave her husband and go away with me."

"Has she, though!" exclaimed Ashford, but the suspicion crossed his mind that a woman with a mouth like that would be quite capable of leaving Crane later on if she found someone with more money.

"We'd better have the boys fill up the water-casks and bottles from this hole tomorrow. Then there'll be no miscalculation as to how far the darned water will go," suggested Crane abruptly.

"I'll get Lucky to tell them," Ashford said vaguely.

"I imagine," mused Crane aloud, "that tomorrow, taking our bearings from that dune shaped like a kneeling camel, we should strike the passage leading through the mountains into the river-bed. We ought to allow two days for locating the holes with the water-borne diamonds and for collecting them. Then there's the trek back. We can easily carry water and food for four days, can't we?"

"Who's 'we'?" asked Ashford.



"You and I, of course. Since there's no washing of gravel to be done, we shan't need more water than we can carry. The Hottentots can stay in camp with the wagon until we get back. We don't want them to know anything."

"And Lucky?"

"Oh, damn that Yank! Look here, we don't want him nosing around those pot-holes, do we? He's never seen the map. Let him explore the mountains to the south for the pass."

"Right," responded Ashford with alacrity.

"It was a mistake to put him wise to the object of this expedition. Of course, we had to have somebody who could speak the Hottentot lingo, but I believe he'd have come for a fixed wage."

Crane glanced sidelong at his companion.

"A third is a big slice to pay out to somebody like him, look at it any way you like," mourned the other.

**T**HEIR eyes met, and an understanding look passed between them. The silence that followed was not a very comfortable one.

"Wouldn't it be funny if the Yank should have a girl, too?" said Ashford at last, with an awkward laugh.

"He has," said Crane. "He showed me her picture one day—a snapshot taken at Coney Island, he said. Sort of pretty, but—typical American, if you know what I mean. Diamonds to a girl like that would be about as bad as the proverbial pearls cast before swine."

"Anyway," remarked Ashford with a querulous note in his voice, "it isn't as if we were cheating him out of anything. We'll pay him fair and square for his services. Let him save up in the worthy way of his class. What's that maddening saying he's always quoting about the longest way around being the shortest way home? Let him live up to it."

"Righto!" said Crane emphatically.

**L**UCKY, sent searching in the wrong direction, naturally found no ravine leading into the mountains. For three days he explored the range as far as a man carrying his own water could do so. The fourth day he spent on the precipitous mountain nearest the camp, in search of game. He wasn't able to climb high enough to shoot the chamoislike klipbok, however, and by late afternoon had bagged nothing save a couple of unwary rock rabbits. With these dangling from his belt, he climbed to a high point to take his bearings.

Immediately below him, he saw the camp. Scanning the sand dunes to the east, he noticed a dark patch among them, and guessed it to be a patch of the small juicy melon called *t'samma*, which has saved many a man from dying of thirst in the Kalahari Desert. Turning to the northeast, he made out the figures of two men toiling over the dunes toward the camp—Crane and Ashford returning from their search of the diamonds. Excitement seized Lucky.

While he still watched, the two men disappeared in a hollow between the dunes. Almost immediately afterward a tiny puff of smoke rose out of the hollow, and Lucky, grinning with satisfaction, lowered his glasses.

"That means they shot a gemsbok for supper," he thought.

Down the mountainside he clambered at a pace that threatened his neck more than once. It was fully three-quarters of an hour later when he reached the camp, but, to his surprise, Crane and Ashford had not yet arrived. Flinging the rabbits to the boys with terse instructions to cook them, he laid his gun in the wagon and took a long pull from one of the water-bags. His own hung empty from his shoulder. Refreshed, he went to the fire and began kneading meal into dough for biscuits.

It was while he was so engaged that he saw Crane come limping into the camp. Ashford, he guessed, was



following with what he could carry of the gemsbok or the bustard they had shot.

Crane, as was only natural, went to the wagon for a drink. What was not so natural was that afterward he disappeared without a word into the tent. Lucky, waiting excitedly to hear the result of the search, felt distinctly put out. At last, unable to stand the suspense any longer, he left his biscuits and stepped over to the tent. As he looked in at the opening, he saw Crane sitting there with his face buried in his hands.

"Well, Boss, what's the good news?" Lucky asked eagerly.

As the sound of his voice, Crane looked up with a start. Lucky saw that his face was haggard and strained.

"Ashford's gone," he answered tersely.

"What?" queried Lucky in bewilderment.

"A leopard got him in that damn river-bed. We'd just decided there were no diamonds and that we'd better be getting back when the leopard got poor Ashford."

"Jimminy!" whispered Lucky, remembering the puff of smoke he had seen issuing from the hollow into which the two men had disappeared.

"We'll start back for Upington in the morning. The sooner we get out of this cursed desert, the better," Crane said feverishly.

**H**E HAD avoided looking at Lucky after that first glance, but the silence made him uneasy and now he looked up furtively. He saw Lucky standing staring at him with his mouth open and horror in his eyes. Ungovernable fury seized him.

"Damn you! Don't you believe me?" he shouted, reaching for his rifle.

Instinctively Lucky jumped backward and out of the tent. Running as only the hunted can run, he reached the wagon and stretched out a hand

for his rifle. But it was not where he had left it. One precious second he wasted in a panic-stricken survey of the wagon. Then he realized that Crane must have taken the gun and carried it into the tent. Not a second too soon he ducked, then dodged behind the wagon.

Cut off from the dunes, there was nothing for it but to make for the mountains. So, bending low and zig-zagging, he left the slight cover of the wagon and raced into the open toward them. Again and again Crane fired at him as he ran, and again and again missed. Lucky's maneuvers and the fading light confused his aim.

Soon Lucky, who was fairly fresh, had passed out of range. Not until he was winded, however, did he stop to make sure he was not being pursued. Then he threw himself down on the ground to ease his bursting lungs.

"He's a killer, that's what he is," he gasped.

He was just beginning to get his breath when he heard the thud-thud-thud of running feet. He jumped up in a panic, but was reassured at seeing the two Hottentots approaching. Evidently they too, having no desire to be murdered, had fled from the Baas with the gun. His first feeling was one of relief. Then, as he saw that neither of the men had a water-bag and remembered that his own was empty, his heart sank.

"It's no use trying to rush the wagon. The moon's rising, and it'll be as light as day in a little while. On that plain he'll see us coming a mile off. And he'll sit and pick us off one by one. If we had water we could trail the wagon into the dunes tomorrow and make a rush for it while he's sleeping."

"Plenty water on mountain," announced Gert.

They rested where they were until the moon was flooding the earth with stark white light. Then Gert took his bearings and led the way up the mountainside. Crawling along the brinks



of precipices whose depths were mercifully hidden, climbing up and over dangerously hung boulders, leaping across chasms, they came some two hours later to a narrow cleft in the solid face of the mountain. Gert disappeared into this, and Lucky and Klaas followed.

They were now in absolute darkness, feeling their way along with their feet. But high above them showed a strip of sky studded with stars that, from this aspect, seemed of an impossible brilliance.

**W**HEN they had groped along in the darkness for some time, Gert clicked a warning, and Lucky found himself negotiating a sharp right-hand turn. Suddenly he came out into a wide rock-chamber open to the sky and flooded with bright moonlight.

Opposite him was piled a mass of convulsed and riven rock with a large pool of water at the foot of it. From a transverse layer of shale above, water trickled, while the rocks and walls of the fissure were hung with dripping maidenhair fern.

With a shout, Lucky made for the pool, scooped up a handful of water and, peering into it, saw that it was crystal clear, tasted it and found that it was ice-cold and sweet.

"And to think you two goofs knew all about this spring while we were drinking that muddy stuff down at the waterhole!" he ejaculated.

But he didn't bother to translate it to them. Naturally they would explain that a pit of muddy water close at hand is more to be desired than spring water in the mountains—which is the Hottentot point of view. Also he had quite enough to do to explain to them about the sudden homicidal tendencies of Crane.

Baas Crane, he told them, had shot Baas Ashford among the dunes near the camp. Why, he could not say. But perhaps the two men had found "bright stones" in the dry river in the

mountains and Baas Crane had wanted them all for himself.

Oh, was that the place they had been seeking? questioned Gert contemptuously. The place where the *blind kippers* were to be found in holes in the river-bed? Ya, he knew *that* place.

"Long ago, a Dutchman picked up *blind kippers* in the river-bed," volunteered Klass. "But the bushmen were very bad in those days and shot him with poisoned arrows."

"Holy smokes! So you knew about the diamonds all the time?" breathed Lucky.

"Ya, I take you there," said Gert, guessing at Lucky's meaning.

"You give plenty coffee and tabaki at Upington and I take you to a pan over there where you pick up many—oh, very many—bright green stones," offered Klaas, gesturing toward the east.

**L**UCKY whistled. "Green stones" might mean peridots, green garnets, tourmalines, or chrysoprase, or they might mean—emeralds. He questioned the Hottentot, who described the precise crystallization the emerald takes.

Again Lucky whistled. Then, regretfully, he shook his head. He explained that their whole concern just now must be to get out of the desert alive.

Gert asserted that rain had fallen in the east, in the vicinity of the emerald pan, long enough ago for the place to be over-grown with *t'samma* by now.

Lucky, remembering the patch he had seen that afternoon, quite believed this. But he knew there would be no *t'samma* patches for a couple of hundred miles of the journey south. For men in their plight, the project was obviously impossible. Still, it was exasperating to think he might be saying good-by to a fortune. He told himself he would get someone to finance him later, if he ever got safely



to Upington. He also told himself that "the longest way around is the shortest way home," but for the first time in his life he didn't believe it.

Gert and Klaas piled up rocks before the entrance to the chamber to keep leopards out. Then they lay down and slept. Not so, Lucky. Besides being cold, he was desperately hungry. He lay on his rocky bed reckoning their chances of existing until they could obtain possession of the wagon and overcome Crane. With no gun to shoot game, he told himself grimly that he would have to eat scorpions and snakes, like the bushmen.

**A**LREADY, down in the plain, Crane, having watered and inspanned the oxen, was trekking over the dunes southward, determined to keep going through the night. He told himself that the other three men wouldn't dare leave the vicinity of the waterhole on the morrow when they discovered that he had gone. He imagined them camping beside it until all the water was drunk, and then dying miserably of thirst.

On the other hand, if they attempted to follow him with only one waterbag between them, and no gun, their doom would be swift. And the vultures and hyenas would see to it there'd be nothing left to show how those men died—those three men and Ashford, whom he had left for dead, lying on his face in the hollow with a bullet in his back.

Another incandescent day. Lucky and the Hottentots had trailed the wagon without coming up with it. Then thirst had forced them to trek for their lives into the *t'samma* zone to the east. Making a wide detour which kept them within reach of the juicy melons for about four days, they loaded up with them and struck across country to where Lucky reckoned they ought to strike the trail of the wagon again.

In the blazing noonday heat, they

came upon it. But, most startlingly, they found, running parallel with it and only a few hours old, the track of a second wagon. And this wagon was making, not for the south, but for the north.

With a great deal of excited clicking and arguing and pointing, the Hottentots explained the mystery. It was not the track of a second wagon that they saw, but another track made by the one they had been following. Apparently Crane had been forced by want of water to turn around and trek back toward the Bushman's Waterhole.

Gradually it came out that the Hottentots, with characteristic laziness, had failed to fill the casks in the wagon as Lucky had ordered. Crane must therefore have set off with empty casks, without discovering the omission. No wonder the oxen had covered the ground at such a pace that they had been unable to come up with the wagon. At most there could only have been three or four gallons of water aboard her.

Since oxen can trek for four days without water in the desert, Crane had evidently not discovered his plight for some time. Then he must have pushed on to the next waterhole on the route, which, as Gert assured Lucky, would be dry at this season. Finding that out, he had then turned and trekked desperately back for the Bushman's Waterhole at the foot of the mountain.

"Will he make it?" questioned Lucky.

The Hottentots shook their heads doubtfully, pointing out that the oxen had been going very badly at this point and were evidently suffering from want of water.

All through the day they followed the fresh trail without coming within sight of the wagon. They themselves were weak from their scanty diet of desert vermin and could only travel slowly. However, by nightfall, it was evident that they were gaining rap-



idly on the other man. All along the route they had come upon stores and equipment, thrown out by Crane to lighten the load, and that night they were able to eat *roster kook* made from an abandoned bag of meal.

THE following morning they came upon both wagon and oxen abandoned on the trail. The oxen were, apparently, at their last gasp. They revived, however, when given *t'samma*. Lucky allowed them to rest until nightfall. Then, by dint of traveling slowly, and going on short rations themselves that the oxen might have as many of the *t'samma* as possible, they managed to get wagon and team to a *t'samma* patch of considerable extent.

For twenty-four hours the oxen were allowed to rest and browse, while the Hottentots loaded up the wagon with *t'samma* and Lucky went after gemsbok with his gun, which he had found in the wagon. Then, with plenty of gemsbok biltong for the journey, and in spite of Gert's assertion that the pan with the emeralds was not more than twelve hours' trek from where they were, he set off in pursuit of Crane.

They didn't come upon his spoor until four days later, at the edge of a salt-pan, and not many miles from the camping-place at the foot of the mountains. Evidently the water he had carried with him from the wagon had been exhausted by the time he got to this spot, for his trail was that of a man suffering from exhaustion.

They pushed on for another hour on the trail and then came upon Crane's water-bag, abandoned and empty. It seemed inconceivable to Lucky that a man could throw away his water-bag when within a couple of hours of water.

"Very bad, that. Find boots next," volunteered Gert.

Lucky remembered having heard that a man, dying of thirst in the desert, will strip himself stark naked,

beginning with his boots, and will stagger along in the scorching sun until he goes mad and dies.

Sure enough, within the next half-hour they came upon Crane's boots. Soon after that, they found more of his clothing. Lucky pitched everything into the wagon and tried not to think of the torture of the naked man, staggering and falling in the burning sand. The spoor was not more than an hour old at this spot.

Lucky took *t'samma* and determined to push on ahead of the wagon. He felt that Crane, though he had probably been raving with thirst at this spot, had not given up. He had not wandered away aimlessly into the desert. Also, he had still been wearing his pith helmet and carrying his gun.

By the time Lucky reached the last dunes, however, the other man's footprints were no longer to be seen. Instead, there was the track of a body that had dragged itself painfully through the heavy sand. Yet, still, as Lucky saw, the track followed the original track of the wagon, and still neither pith helmet nor gun had been abandoned.

"He must have reached the water-hole for sure," Lucky mused.

At last he topped the last dune and the plain was spread out before him. His eyes sought the waterhole and found it. Beside the hole lay Crane, motionless, which was only to be expected, seeing that he had probably drunk just as much water as he could hold. But there were vultures there, too, apparently just settled down near the body.

Lucky crossed the plain to the recumbent figure, and the vultures departed. Lucky intended to get the other's gun—in case he was alive. When within a few steps of the hole, however, it struck him that there was a strange rigidity about the man's body. Could it be that he had died within sight of the water he had been too weak to reach?



A few more steps and the rigidity was explained. Crane, lying there with an appalling look of horror in his eyes, half naked, with a little canvas bag slung around his neck, was dead—shot by his own hand.

"Good God! The water in the hole must have dried up!" exclaimed Lucky, since that seemed the only explanation of the tragedy.

He stepped to the edge and looked down. Lying in the water he saw something that had once been a man, but which now had converted the water into putrid, foul-smelling poison.

Lucky drew back with a white face, feeling kind of sick. His eyes marked the trail of a dragging body leading to the opposite side of the hole, just

didn't think it necessary to state that the bag contained only two-thirds of its original contents, or that about two hundred thousand dollars' worth of emeralds were hidden in the bottom of the swag he carried on his back.

As the troopers on their swift camels would reach civilization way ahead of him, they promised to mail a letter for Lucky on their arrival. So Lucky sat down by the camp-fire and wrote to the girl he loved. The effort, when completed, read as follows:

Dear Katie:

Hold tight, sweet—I got big news. Remember how your old man used to always say that if I fell into a sewer I'd come up

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as the trail of Crane's body led to the edge of this side. And remembering a tiny puff of smoke he had seen rising from a hollow in the dunes the day Crane came back to the camp alone, Lucky understood.

**L**UCKY, on his way to Upington, had the good fortune to fall in with a couple of the Camel Police. That night he and the Hottentots dined on canned salmon, coffee, real bread and golden syrup. Afterward Lucky told his story to the police and handed over a wallet containing a photograph of a shallow-faced girl, some letters and a diary; also a miniature of a raven-haired beauty and a small leather bag containing many rough diamonds. He

loaded with diamonds? Well, I didn't fall into a sewer, but I'm sure loaded with diamonds—and, baby, they're *real*, everyone of them! The way it was—oh, never mind now, it's too long to tell. Listen, sweet—I'll be home just as soon as I can get there, and I'll be there just long enough for us to get married, and then you and I are coming back here together. Believe me, baby, this is one swell country. And the nicest thing about it is that it's so darn big it takes years and years to see it all. Just think, I've been here three whole years—and traveling all the time, too—and I haven't seen but just a small piece of it. Oh, yes—while you're waiting for me to come home, you can be practicing shooting. It'll come in handy when you get here—and how!

Well, bye, bye, sweet—see you soon.

Jeff.

P. S. I've already got a name for our first kid all picked out. It's T'samma. Never mind what it means. I'll tell you when I see you.



# GUNSLINGIN'



Swiggysaw  
the gunman's  
sudden move  
and fired first

By JOHNSTON

*Author of "Outlaw's"*

## CHAPTER I

### *Enemy Country*

"GUNSINGIN'" GALLIGAN removed his battered Stetson and tossed it aside before he put his head up and peered over the rimrock. If there was a hostile marksman below he would probably be on the lookout for a cowboy's headgear.

Gunslingin' Galligan did not want a bullet put through his hat, especially if his head was inside.

But no shot greeted him, so he inspected the terrain with a few swift glances. Below him, at the bottom of the hill and fastened to a clump of brush, a dirty white cloth fluttered in the wind. Gunslingin' had noticed it

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When Law of the West Commands, It's

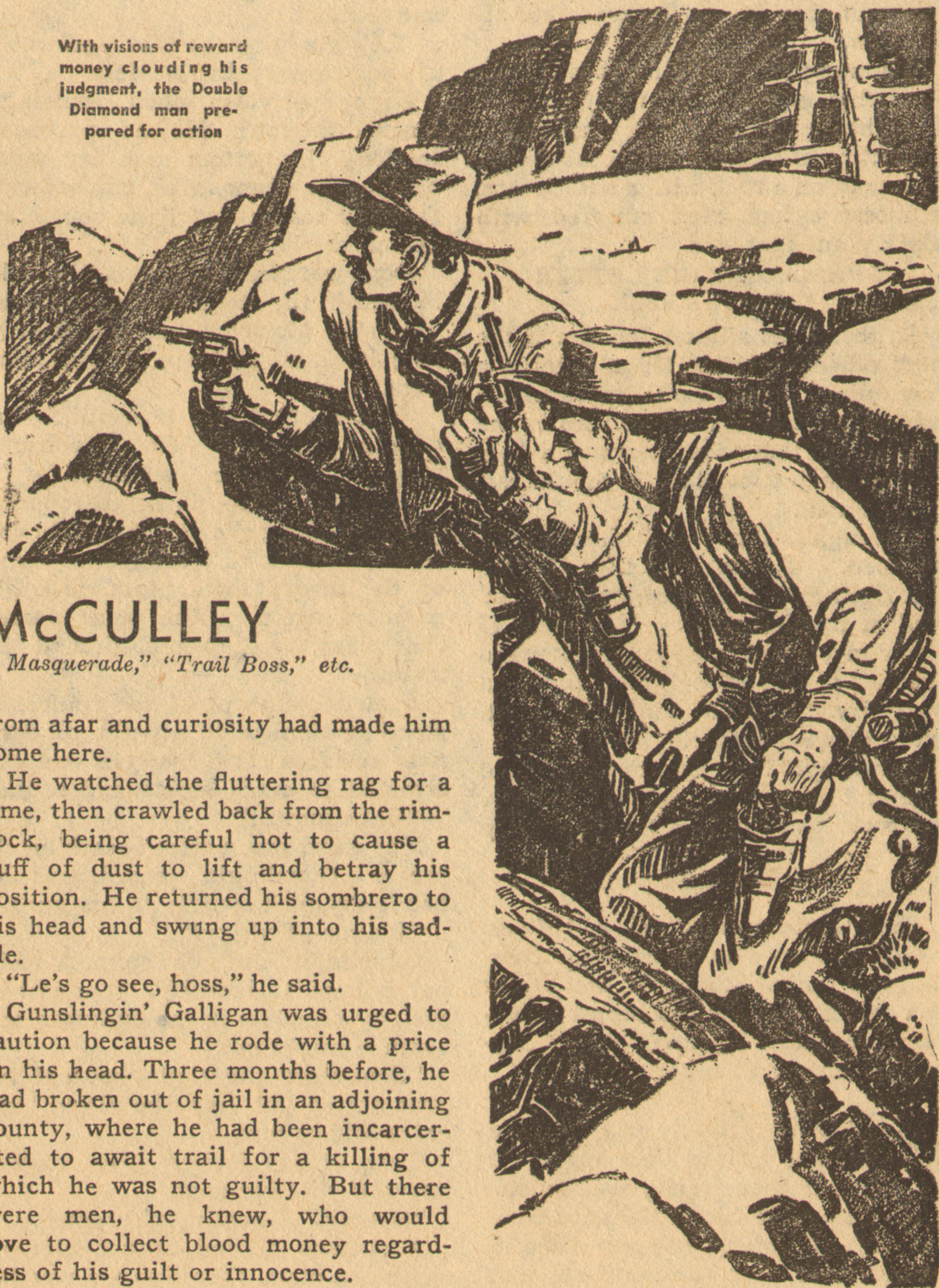
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# GALLIGAN

A  
COMPLETE  
NOVELET

With visions of reward money clouding his judgment, the Double Diamond man prepared for action



## McCULLEY

*Masquerade," "Trail Boss," etc.*

from afar and curiosity had made him come here.

He watched the fluttering rag for a time, then crawled back from the rim-rock, being careful not to cause a puff of dust to lift and betray his position. He returned his sombrero to his head and swung up into his saddle.

"Le's go see, hoss," he said.

Gunslingin' Galligan was urged to caution because he rode with a price on his head. Three months before, he had broken out of jail in an adjoining county, where he had been incarcerated to await trail for a killing of which he was not guilty. But there were men, he knew, who would love to collect blood money regardless of his guilt or innocence.

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Shoot to Kill or Die Where You Stand!

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No gun-blast roared and echoed as he rode down the hill. No slug of lethal lead came smashing toward him. There was no indication of hostility in the blazing Arizona late afternoon.

He stopped his horse beside the fluttering rag, but did not dismount. Now he saw that the rag was merely attracting attention to something else. Below it, on a rock with a flat surface, a message had been smeared with black paint that said:

GUNSLINGIN' GIT LETTER  
LITTLE MESSA.

So there was a letter for him at the post office at Little Mesa, a town a few miles to the north. So excellent was the postal service out here in the wastelands that they informed a fugitive from justice that he should call for his mail.

"Thoughtful of 'em," Gunslingin' growled. "I ride into Little Mesa, and right away hombres start pourin' lead at me from every direction. If I ever meet the cross-eyed coyote who thinks I'm fool enough to walk into a trap like that, I'll take him apart. It's a damned insult!"

Gunslingin' bent over to inspect the sign and saw, down at the bottom of the rock, some smaller letters. They read:

SWIGGY

That would mean "Swiggy" Boles, a cowpuncher who worked for Gunslingin's grandfather on the D Bar Box ranch. Swiggy had been so nicknamed because he never drank anything stronger than soda pop.

**H**AD Swiggy really put out that rag and painted the sign? If so, it meant there really was an important letter in Little Mesa for Gunslingin'. If Swiggy had not done it, it must have been some hombre who knew of the friendship between Gunslingin' and Swiggy. And if the thing was a decoy, and Gunslingin' went riding into Little Mesa with

enemies waiting for him—that would be something else again.

Gunslingin' thought silently for a moment, then gathered up his reins, and nodded.

"Le's go, hoss," he said, and was on his way toward Little Mesa. . . .

Night had come when Gunslingin' reached the town. He had approached it along the bottom of a dry water-course. He dismounted, crawled carefully up to the lip of the coulee and peered at the town.

Dogs were howling as usual. Lights burned in the stores and saloons, and fires still glowed under the cooking pots in front of some of the adobe huts.

"She shore looks peaceful," Gunslingin' muttered. "But a volcano's only a hill till she busts loose."

He returned to his horse, mounted and rode along the bottom of the coulee, which curved close to the corner of the town's little plaza. He dismounted again at the point nearest the plaza and ground-hitched his mount.

Crawling up out of the coulee, he stood motionless in a patch of darkness beside a rock, his eyes and ears strained to catch sights and sounds.

"Gunslingin'!"

The word was a mere breath on the breeze. Gunslingin' tensed, and his hands dropped swiftly to his guns.

"It's me—Swiggy!"

Gunslingin' did not reply. A whisper is hard to identify. It might be Swiggy near him in the darkness, and again it might not.

"Remember the time that old he-goat butted yuh into the ditch?" the voice said to him.

Yeah, it was Swiggy. No outsider knew of that incident.

"Howdy!" Gunslingin' greeted.

A shadow drifted toward him beneath the stars, then Swiggy was beside him and groping for his hand.

"Yuh old rattler!" Gunslingin' said. "How'd yuh locate me so easy?"

"Shucks! I know how yore mind



works, Gunslingin'. I knew yuh'd ride along the bottom of the coulée and come up against the wind, and at night. So I just waited."

"What's it all about, Swiggy?" asked Gunslingin'.

"Yore grandpappy sent me. He had an idee yuh might be over this way. He ordered me to stick out flags and paint signs on rocks. Said yuh'd investigate and git the message if yuh saw a flag, 'cause yuh've got as much curiosity as a woman 'bout new neighbors."

"The heck he did!" Gunslingin' exploded.

"Grandpappy wrote yuh a letter and sent it to Little Mesa, and told me to stick around till I was shore yuh got it. He made me promise I wouldn't tell yuh anything else. He wants to tell yuh hisself."

"How's things at home?" Gunslingin' asked.

"Sheriff Bob Blake's too busy with court to chase yuh any more."

**G**UNSLINGIN' sighed.

"I never killed the hombre they accused me of killin'."

"Hardly anybody believes yuh did, Gunslingin'," said Swiggy. "Yuh want to keep yore eyes peeled. It must've leaked out I was comin' this way to git in touch with yuh, 'cause I've been follered."

"Who by?"

"Well, if yuh was framed about that killin', yuh know who framed yuh—that skinflint Jud Starnell."

"Some of Starnell's men followed yuh, huh? Why?"

"Mebbe thinkin' I'd lead 'em to yuh. Yuh're worth considerable money to head-hunters."

"How many followed yuh?"

"Three, I'm thinkin'. I've been trailed and watched day and night. I caught sight of one of Jud Starnell's punchers onct."

"And what's troublin' the Old Boy? What'd he send me a letter about?" Gunslingin' wanted to know. "Why

didn't he tell yuh to tell me what he wants, 'stead of this dangerous letter business?"

"Yuh know the Old Boy, Gunslingin'. He always wants things done his way."

"Well, it's easy enough now, since yuh've located me. You go git that letter for me and I'll read it."

"I can't, Gunslingin'," protested Swiggy. "The old fool who runs the general store and post office here knows yuh by sight. An' he says he can't give the letter to anybody but you."

"So he's eager for me to come and claim that letter myself, huh? Mebbe he wants a slice of the reward."

Swiggy shook his head.

"He looks like a harmless old coot."

"Quicksand looks harmless on the surface," Gunslingin' said. "Le's go git the letter."

Side by side, they strode toward the corner of the plaza, walking slowly and continually alert. In the maze of drifting shadows, they looked like two of the townspeople.

## CHAPTER II

### *Smoke of Battle*



HEY kept to dark patches and avoided ground where streaks of light struck from store and saloon. Somebody was singing in the saloon and somebody was playing a mouth organ in the store. Nobody was in sight. In front of the saloon, four mounts were tied to the hitch-rail.

"Walk ahead, Swiggy," said Gunslingin'. "Pass the store and glance in. If more'n two men are there, scratch yore head, then just keep walkin' on."

Swiggy Boles went ahead. He shuffled into the streak of light which came from the store door, turned his head and looked in. Nobody was in the store except the old proprietor,

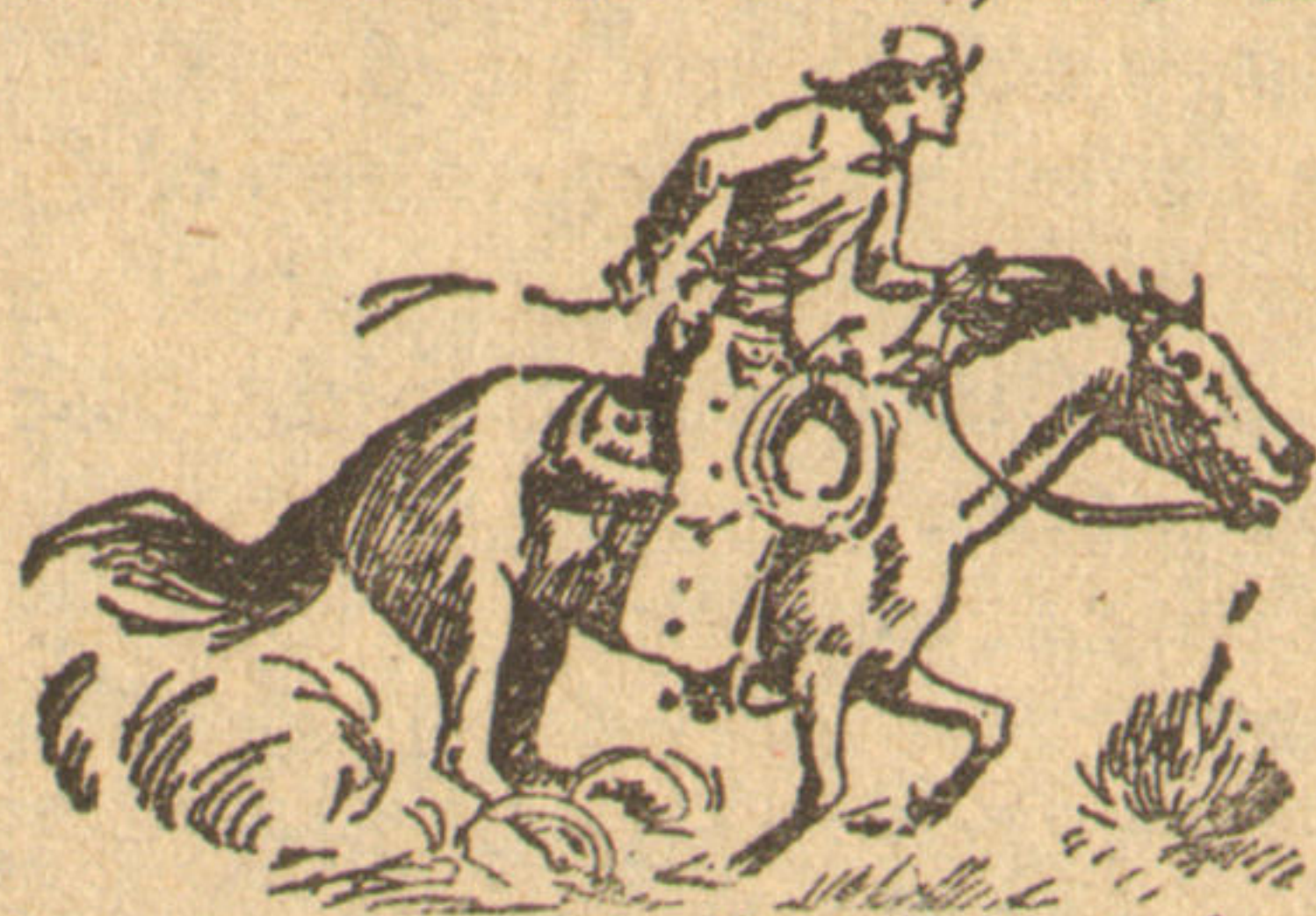


who sat on a stool behind his counter and made his mouth organ moan.

Swiggy shuffled on, and Gunslingin' went forward cautiously. Suddenly Gunslingin' saw a new shadow at the corner of the store building, and knew it was made by the front of a sombrero.

Gunslingin' stopped abruptly and stepped swiftly aside. A gun roared at the corner of the store, and a slug zipped past where he had been an instant before.

Gunslingin's two guns came out of their holsters like twin streaks of lightning, spitting flame and lead, and sending a swirl of smoke to ride on the wind. As he fired, he moved



swiftly again. Bullets sought him from another direction, but Gunslingin' had not remained where his guns had flashed.

He fired at gun flashes himself. Then he heard Swiggy's yell. A man reeled into the streak of light before the store, dropped a gun and sprawled face downward on the ground. A second gunman was firing again from the corner of the store, and a third had opened up from behind a rock some distance away.

Gunslingin' bent almost double and charged at the corner of the building. When he saw another flash of flame there, he fired twice at it, and a shadow sprawled on the ground. Gunslingin' whirled and started running toward the rock.

Swiggy was howling at him, and now Gunslingin' could see him charging toward the hitch-rail in front of the saloon. But some other man got there first, jerked at reins and vaulted into a saddle. He bent over and raked his mount with his rowels, sending

two more shots back toward Gunslingin' as his horse fled into the night.

Then there was a silence which seemed deafening after the din of battle. Gunslingin' quickly reloaded his six-gun. Swiggy was running toward him. Men appeared in the doorway of the saloon.

"I'm Gunslingin' Galligan!" Gunslingin' howled. "Anybody else want to try to git me for the reward?"

There was silence for a moment, then some man called from the saloon door:

"Law officers and head-hunters ain't liked in this town, Galligan. None of us belongs to either of them outfits."

"Fetch a lantern," Gunslingin' ordered.

Swiggy reached his side.

"The hombre who got away was Jud Starnell's puncher," he panted. "He's hittin' for home with the bad news, I reckon."

Four men came from the saloon with lanterns. They turned over the dead man in front of the store.

"That hombre hung around Cactusville, in the next county," Gunslingin' said. "He was suspected of a lot of things."

**T**HEY examined the one at the corner of the building.

"This gent comes from Cactusville, too," Gunslingin' explained. "He posed as a cattle buyer. Stolen cattle, prob'ly. I'll leave the remains with you gents."

The storekeeper appeared, and Gunslingin' went up to him.

"I'm Gunslingin' Galligan, but my reg'lar name is Ed," he announced. "I understand yuh've got a letter for me."

The storekeeper hobbled back inside and returned with the letter. Gunslingin' ripped it open and stood in the light beside the door to read. Swiggy was a few feet away, gun in hand, and on guard.

Gunslingin' read his grandfather's scrawl:

Ed, my boy, I want you should come



home quick. I need your two guns. If you are a true grandson, you'll come. The sheriff will have his back turned.

Your grandfather,

SAM DELCH.

Gunslingin' didn't quite understand. The Old Boy seemed to be in trouble. But why should he need him? He had a middle-aged son, Gunslingin's uncle, who was no sissy. And he had a young grandson who would fight any time.

There were no women now at the D Bar Box. Gunslingin's parents were dead, his grandmother also. And his aunt had died a year before. Gunslingin' didn't understand why his uncle and his cousin couldn't do whatever it was the Old Boy wanted done with guns.

If his grandfather needed and wanted Gunslingin's guns, he could have them! But this mention of the sheriff turning his back, that puzzled Gunslingin'.

He called to Swiggy and gave him the letter to read.

"What are yuh goin' to do, Gunslingin'?" asked Swiggy, after he had finished reading it.

"Goin' home. Can't yuh tell me—"

"I gave the Old Boy my promise I wouldn't tell yuh anything. But I'll say this much—it's important that yuh git home right away."

"Well, what are we waitin' for?" Gunslingin' snapped. "Get yore pony and ride to the coulée where my hoss is waitin'. I've got plenty of ammunition. We'll stop at my hideout."

He turned and swung off through the darkness toward the rim of the coulée. He didn't like this business of his grandfather not telling him what was wrong. When he rode into a thing, he liked to know what he was riding into. And he wouldn't trust Sheriff Bob Blake too far.

"He'll have his back turned," Gunslingin' muttered. "But it wouldn't stop the old sidewinder from bendin' down and tryin' to shoot back between his legs."

## CHAPTER III

### *The Reason Why*



IT TOOK them three days to get home. On the morning of the third day they came to D Bar Box land and rode across a wide meadow toward the buildings. Gunslingin' relaxed. He was out in the open now, and an enemy would have to be out in the open also, and could be seen.

"Cut on ahead," Gunslingin' told Swiggy. "Make shore there's no trick or trap, then signal me."

"Yuh're forgettin', Gunslingin', that this is home," Swiggy said.

"Yeah, but I don't know what I'm ridin' into. Grandpa said he needed my guns. That meant he's in trouble. Mebbe they've done for him by this time and the house is full of hombres waitin' to start gunnin' for me. Hustle!"

Swiggy hurried ahead, Gunslingin' watching him. At the end of the bunkhouse, Swiggy skidded his pony to a stop and spoke to a man who came out. He took off his hat and waved for Gunslingin' to come on.

Gunslingin' rode slowly, warily. He stopped beside Swiggy and got out of the saddle stiffly. Swiggy took his reins and said he'd turn the pony into the corral. Gunslingin' went to the well for a drink, then to the house.

Sam Delch, his grandfather, was sitting in his easy chair at the end of the table in the living room. His face was drawn, gray.

"So here yuh are!" Delch said. "My grandson, Gunslingin' Galligan. A wild, red-headed, shootin'—"

"Did yuh have me come home just to cuss me out?" Gunslingin' asked.

"No," Delch said. "It—it's just my way."

Gunslingin' choked as he watched his grandsire. He had been a pioneer on this range, and was almost eighty



now. He had always been scrappy, but the fire seemed gone out of him now.

"Are yuh sick?" Gunslingin' asked. "Where's everybody?"

"Come with me, Gunslingin'," said old Delch.

They left the house, Sam Delch walking slowly with his head bowed. They went down the lane and turned into a path leading to a small knoll which was surrounded by a white picket fence. It was the D Bar Box burial ground.

When they reached the gate, Gunslingin' saw something which startled him—three new mounds of earth at the heads of which boards had not yet been set. Startled, he glanced at his grandfather. Old Delch seemed to be nerving himself for an ordeal. He pointed a quivering finger at the nearest mound.

"Lew Smith, the best foreman a ranchman ever had," he got out. "Been with me twenty years."

"Old Lew?" Gunslingin' asked. "What happened?"

"Shot by a professional gunman who calls hisself Black Bill Crane."

"And these—" Gunslingin' indicated the other two graves.

"This one was my son, yore uncle. We buried him a month ago, two weeks after we buried Lew. And here is my grandson, the last to bear my name. We buried him two weeks ago. All three of 'em killed by Black Bill Crane."

"But how? Why?" Gunslingin' stammered.

"It was legal enough. He taunted all of 'em into drawin', then beat 'em to it. There were always plenty of witnesses. But he did it deliberate, of course. And the man who hired him was—"

"Jud Starnell?" Gunslingin' guessed.

"Yes. We've no actual proof, but I know. Did yuh ever know what started the trouble 'tween Starnell and me?"

"No," said Gunslingin'.

Delch's faded old eyes misted a little now.

"Yore grandmother. We both wanted her and she wanted me. Starnell wasn't a good loser. He never married, and all these years he's fought me. He's a sick man, bad kidneys. He ain't got long to live, so he decided to hurt me all he could before he died. I've learned a few things."

**H**E CHOKED a little. Gunslingin' waited for him to go on.

"He got my foreman, just to get Crane in practice and to bother the ranch work," Delch went on. "Then my son and grandson. I've been expectin' they'd shoot me, too, but I reckon not. He wants me to live and suffer. The Delches are gone now, all but me. And I—I'm too old. I can't see to shoot worth a damn."

"The Delches ain't all gone," Gunslingin' said. "My mother was a Delch."

"I was waitin' to hear yuh say that, boy."

"I'm understandin' now. Starnell had me framed for that killin' to get me out of the way 'cause I'm good with guns. Then he put his hired killer to work."

"He'd have made a fine man, my dead grandson would," Delch muttered.

"I'm yore grandson, too, Grandpa," said Gunslingin'. "Mebbe yuh didn't like my father, but—"

"Yuh're all I've got left, Gunslingin'," old Delch said. "Yuh'll have the D Bar Box after I'm gone, and yuh can marry Mary Gray and live here—if yuh can keep alive. Le's get back to the house."

As they stumbled down the path, Gunslingin's body was trembling with rage.

"I'll want a hot bath and a good sleep, and some of our cook's grub under my belt," Gunslingin' said. "I ought to be in prime condition by mornin'."



"Condition for what?" Delch asked.

"Yuh don't have to ask that, do yuh? I'll be squarin' with Black Bill Crane, as he calls hisself. Clever, is he? Makes the other man draw, then claims self-defense. I'll give him a chance."

"He lives by the gun, boy. Maybe yuh'd better not try—"

"What I want to know is where's this Crane to be found?" Gunslingin' broke in.

"That's what I was hopin' yuh'd want to know," his grandfather said. "Yeah, yuh're a Delch."

They didn't speak again on the way to the house. The old Chinese cook had breakfast ready, and as Gunslingin' sat down to eat, hoofbeats sounded from the lane.

"Somebody comin'," Delch said from the window. "It's Sheriff Bob Blake."

Gunslingin' had removed his gun-belt, but now he made a quick dive for it and buckled it on.

"Finish yore breakfast and don't talk," his grandfather ordered. "Pretend yuh ain't here."

Sam Delch greeted the sheriff at the door, and the officer came into the room, blinking to get the sun glare out of his eyes. He looked at Gunslingin' as if he didn't see him.

"**A**NYTHING new, Sheriff?" asked Delch.

"I've gathered a mite of evidence, but not enough," the sheriff replied, dropping into a chair. "That gunslingin' grandson of yores, if I could get his ear I'd tell him a few things. If I saw him right now, I'd have to take him in, of course. Hate to do it. Got my doubts that the boy did that killin'."

"I never thought he did," Delch said.

"Mebbe I didn't, either, but the evidence was so strong I had to arrest him," Blake said. "That day in town, Gunslingin' argued some with that

pesky little rancher, Cy Wilkins. A little later Gunslingin' rode out here and yuh sent him back to get somethin' at the store. He got back to town at dusk, and him and Cy Wilkins met behind the store buildin'. There was a shot and Wilkins was found dead with Gunslingin' standin' beside him. And one shell in Gunslingin's gun had been fired."

"That empty shell," Gunslingin' began. "I took a shot at a rattler as I was ridin' in."

The sheriff ignored him.

"I've learned some things," he went on to Delch. "Cy Wilkins was a thorn in the side of Jud Starnell 'cause he wouldn't sell out and was holdin' Starnell up for a lot of cash for them water rights. Starnell wanted him out of the way, and he didn't have any love for Gunslingin', either. He's got a puncher named Dillman who's got a bad record, and Dillman's had a lot of money to spend since that killin'—"

"Meanin' what?" Delch asked.

"I'm just guessin'. I'd say that after Gunslingin' had that spat with Wilkins, Dillman watched for his chance. He saw Gunslingin' and Wilkins behind the store. He shot and killed Wilkins. And there was Gunslingin' beside the body when folks rushed out, with an empty shell in his gun. Dillman did Starnell a big service, removin' Wilkins and havin' yore grandson blamed. So why shouldn't Dillman be havin' plenty of money to spend?"

Gunslingin' saw it plainly then. The sheriff was guessing right. Gunslingin' had said at the time that somebody else had shot Wilkins from down by the blacksmith shop, but nobody had believed him.

"If I was Gunslingin'," the sheriff said, "I'd try to make that rat Dillman tell the truth. And this Black Bill Crane! I know he's a killer, and I can guess who's hirin' him. I know he murdered yore foreman and son



and grandson, Sam. But there were always witnesses that yore men drew first."

"I know," Delch said. "He taunted 'em."

"If Gunslingin' comes home, yuh might tell him that I'll keep my back turned," Blake said. "I'll let Gunslingin' do his work. But them reward notices stay up till Gunslingin' clears hisself, so he'll have to be on the lookout for other hombres who might want to pot him. They can even get him from ambush 'count of them dead-or-alive notices. He'll be in deadly peril if he comes back."

"Hell, I'm back now!" Gunslingin' exploded.

**T**HE sheriff lifted shaggy eyebrows.

"Yuh got a parrot, Sam?" he asked. "Thought I heard somebody say somethin'. But there ain't anybody here but us. Well, I've got to ride on. Goin' to the county seat. And the Cactusville deputy's goin' with me to be witness in a case. The country hereabouts will have to get along without the Law for a few days. Be a good time for Gunslingin' to come back."

Gunslingin' grinned as the sheriff looked straight at him again without seeing him. Old Sam Delch went with the sheriff to the door.

Gunslingin' went to bed shortly after and slept until late in the afternoon. Then he got up, dressed and went out to say "howdy" to the punchers as they drifted in from work.

At sunset, Mary Gray and her father came riding down the lane. Tom Gray owned an adjoining ranch. Gunslingin' and Mary had known each other from childhood, and they expected to be married some day.

"Mary, yuh know what I've got to do," Gunslingin' told her when they were alone.

"I know," she said. "There's nothing else you can do."

"It'll come out all right," he promised.

"Gunslingin', I'm almost afraid."

"This Black Bill Crane taunts the other man into goin' for a gun, then gets him by tiltin' his holster and shootin' out of the bottom of it," he told her. "I've heard of him and his tricks. It might startle him some if an hombre dared him to draw first."

## CHAPTER IV

### *Confession*



**G**UNSLINGIN' slipped out of the house an hour before dawn, before his grandfather was awake. Swiggy was waiting at the corral.

On Gunslingin's orders, Swiggy and another D Bar Box puncher had ridden to Cactusville the night before. They had spread the news that Gunslingin' was home and was irked to find that some of his kinsmen had been killed.

Everybody understood what that meant. Gunslingin' and "Black Bill" Crane would have to meet. Meanwhile, there was the reward for Gunslingin', dead or alive. But only Jud Starnell's men and Crane would be concerned with that. Others would remain neutral. For the sheriff had dropped a hint here and there that Gunslingin' was not guilty of homicide and that the reward might be taken off his head in time.

"I've got yore hoss and my pony ready, Gunslingin'," said Swiggy, when they met in the misty dawn at the corral. "I prodded the cook awake, and he's got coffee and hot grub in the cookshack. 'Tain't right for a man to die on an empty stomach."

"Who the hell's goin' to die?" Gunslingin' snapped. "A fine mental state yuh're in! A man thinkin' like that is half licked already."

They ate in silence, rode quietly down the lane, then left the town



trail to cut across the hills toward Jud Starnell's Double Diamond ranch buildings. Hidden behind brush on the top of a hill, they watched the Double Diamond men preparing for the day's work.

"There's Dillman," Swiggy pointed out. "He uses that spotted pony. Him and another man are goin' to ride alone."

They watched as the Double Diamond punchers scattered to go about their duties. Dillman, on his spotted pony, and another man beside him loped along the lane and left it to go into a gulch.

"Goin' to look for calves tangled in the brush, maybe," Swiggy said. "Won't anybody else be near 'em in that gulch. And the way the wind's blowin' folks around the buildin's won't be able to hear anything."

Gunslingin' grunted. They walked back to their horses, got into saddles and rode. They cut around back of the hill and approached the mouth of the gulch in such a manner that they were unobserved.

At the mouth of the gulch, they abruptly stopped. They could hear Dillman and the other man shouting some distance ahead.

"Let's go!" Gunslingin' said. "I want Dillman alive, if possible."

Coming to where the gulch narrowed and curved, they stopped again to listen and could hear the two men ahead talking. They were but a short distance away now. Gunslingin' got out one of his guns, held the reins in his left hand and prodded his horse into action.

With Gunslingin' in the lead, they galloped around a jumble of rocks and came upon the Double Diamond men. Both were on the ground. Dillman was rolling a cigarette.

"I want you, Dillman!" Gunslingin' shouted.

The half-made cigarette dropped from Dillman's hand. His mouth flew open and his eyes bulged. The man

beside him squawked and stood as if frozen.

"Wh—what—" Dillman gulped out.

"I want yuh for murderin' Cy Wilkins and puttin' the blame on me," Gunslingin' said. "Yuh can reach for yore gun if yuh feel like it."

**T**HE man beside Dillman came to life suddenly. He thought Gunslingin's attention was centered on Dillman, and that Swiggy was watching the pair. With visions of reward money clouding his judgment, the Double Diamond man whipped out his gun.

A six-shooter barked, but it was not that of the Double Diamond man. Swiggy had seen the move, and acted to meet it. The Double Diamond man dropped his weapon and reeled aside, clutching a wounded right shoulder with his left hand.

"Thanks, Swiggy," Gunslingin' said without moving.

"'S all right, Gunslingin'," said Swiggy. "Yuh'd do as much for me."

Gunslingin's eyes were on Dillman.

"Take yore gun out of yore holster and drop it," Gunslingin' ordered him. "Reckon yuh've got sense enough not to make a bad move when I've got yuh covered."

Dillman did as he had been ordered.

"What's all this?" he asked fearfully. "What yuh think yuh're aimin' to do?"

"Why do yuh reckon I'm home, Dillman, with a reward on my head? Why do yuh reckon the sheriff was out to the D Bar Box yesterday mornin'? Everything's known, Dillman. Yuh've been talkin' in yore sleep. They're lookin' for yuh, but I reckoned to find yuh first."

"What are yuh aimin' to do?" Dillman screeched.

"The sheriff'd want me to turn yuh over to him. But a bullet's quicker, and I can say I got yuh when yuh tried to get me."

"Yuh can't do that!" Dillman



screamed. "This man with me's a witness!"

"That's right." Gunslingin' nodded. "We can't have any witnesses left around. So it'll take a couple of bullets."

"Yuh're goin' to murder us?" Dillman gasped in terror.

"You murdered Cy Wilkins, didn't yuh? And yuh tried to put the blame on me."

"Wait, Gunslingin'!" begged Dillman. "It wasn't my fault. I—I was under orders. There's somethin' behind it. You know how Starnell hates the Delch tribe. He hated Wilkins, too. He had me trailin' Wilkins for a week, watchin' for a chance to plug him. And when I saw the two of yuh together, and had a chance to get Wilkins and put the blame on a Delch—"

"Better stop wastin' breath," Gunslingin' advised.

"I had to do it, Gunslingin'!" Dillman was frantic now. "Starnell's a devil. He's got somethin' on me. I had to do what he said. I'm wanted down Texas way, and it means hangin'."

"So yuh killed Wilkins 'cause Starnell ordered yuh to do it?" Gunslingin' said.

"That's it, Gunslingin'. It's Starnell's fault. I ain't goin' to take the whole blame. I'll drag him into it. I'll make him spend some of his damned money gettin' me defended, to save hisself. Think, Gunslingin'! If yuh shoot me now, that'll be all. It's Starnell yuh want, and I can prove he made me—"

"Stop snivelin'," Gunslingin' ordered. "Swiggy, bind up the arm of that jasper yuh shot."

**T**HE wound was taken care of. Then Dillman and the wounded man were tied in their saddles, with their ankles roped beneath the bellies of their mounts, and their wrists lashed to the saddle horns.

"If we're bothered, Swiggy, don't forget to shoot these hombres before we ride for it," Gunslingin' said.

They went through a gulch, over a hill and away from the Double Diamond range. On D Bar Box land, they circled to cut the trail which led to the county seat. This took time, for they rode with extreme caution.

It was mid-afternoon when they reached the county seat.

"In case yuh might forget, now that we're here, Dillman," Gunslingin' warned, "remember what's waitin' for yuh in Texas. I'll tell the sheriff and he'll send yuh back. Tell the truth, implicatin' Starnell like yuh did in the gulch, and yuh'll have some chance. Like yuh said, Starnell will have to get good lawyers to defend yuh to save hisself. Yuh'll swing 'less yuh can implicate Starnell and make the jury think he compelled yuh to shoot Wilkins. If yuh do, yuh may get off with a prison sentence."

"Yuh don't dare ride into this town," Dillman said. "The reward on yore head—"

"The fact that I'm darin' it ought to convince yuh that the truth's known. Prod 'em along, Swiggy."

They came to the end of the street and rode along it, Gunslingin' holding a gun ready. Everybody could see that the two riding between Gunslingin' and Swiggy were prisoners.

"And you," Gunslingin' said to the wounded Double Diamond man, "better remember all yuh heard Dillman say in the gulch. Yuh look like a decent hombre."

"I'll tell the truth," the puncher said. "I ain't mixin' up in any murders. I'm only one of Starnell's hired hands. I only been with him a couple of months. I don't owe him anything."

Sheriff Bob Blake was waiting impatiently in his office, for the approach of the strange cavalcade had been reported to him.

Gunslingin' made his prisoners dis-



mount after the ropes had been taken off them, and he and Swiggy herded them into the office.

"Howdy, Sheriff Blake!" greeted Gunslingin'. "Here I am back. Before yuh handle me, take care of Dillman. He's confessed he killed Wilkins, and this other man heard him. You handle it, Sheriff." He stepped aside, and as he did so he whispered to the white-faced Dillman: "Remember Texas."

Sheriff Blake motioned Gunslingin' and Swiggy aside. Carefully he wrote out a confession and Dillman signed it. Then the Double Diamond puncher signed a statement that he had heard Dillman confess his guilt. After that Dillman was put into a cell, and the puncher into another for safe-keeping.

**G**UNSLINGIN' and Swiggy watched and listened while the sheriff called in deputies, gave them a warrant for the arrest of Starnell, and instructed them to ride out and serve it early in the morning. Then the sheriff turned to Swiggy.

"Swiggy, I reckon yuh brought in these men alone," he said, winking. "If there was anybody with yuh I didn't see him, 'cause if it'd been Gunslingin' Galligan I'd have had to arrest him. And I'd hate to do that."

"Arrest me, hell!" Gunslingin' exploded. "Don't yuh know yet that I didn't do that killin'?"

"Oh, howdy, Gunslingin'," the sheriff said. "Yeah, you're cleared of that murder charge, and I'll call in the reward notices right away. But yuh'd better be careful, 'cause it'll take some time for the news to get around, and some hombre might meet up with yuh—"

"I'll take care of myself," Gunslingin' interrupted.

Mebbe yuh'd be safer in a cell."

"I've got some business to 'tend to first," Gunslingin' said. "Come on, Swiggy."

"Black Bill Crane generally hangs around the Cactusville saloon nights," the sheriff hinted. "Soon as he hears Starnell is arrested he'll prob'ly leave the country, not havin' a job any more."

## CHAPTER V

### *Swiggy Salutes*



**A**S SOON as they were a distance out of town, Swiggy rode ahead, using quirt and spurs and not sparing his tough little pony. Swiggy had certain things to accomplish, especially the spreading of news.

Gunslingin' jogged along an hour after Swiggy had left, intending to reach Cactusville after dark. He was wary of ambush, though he really expected none. Probably Dillman and the puncher with him would not be missed until they failed to return to the Double Diamond ranch in the evening. Gunslingin' was sure nobody had seen him and Swiggy take the prisoners toward the county seat.

Gunslingin' grew grim as he rode. He grieved for old Sam Delch. He knew how his grandfather had loved his son, Gunslingin's uncle. Delch's dim eyes always had grown alight as he had watched his grandson, the youngster. And there was old Lew Smith, the faithful foreman, too! All slain by a hired killer.

He had to make good for his grandfather, Gunslingin' told himself. Old Delch depended solely on him now to square accounts, to live to inherit the D Bar Box, to marry Mary Gray and raise a family and carry on.

Sunset came, then dusk and the night. Gunslingin' stopped a few miles from the town, dismounted and walked around to rid himself of saddle cramp. He drank copiously from his canteen, rolled and smoked a cigarette. He jerked out his guns, flexed



his arms and wrists and fingers. Then he mounted and rode on.

Swiggy had reached Cactusville long before. He had gone into the saloon for his usual drink of soda pop, but had said nothing of his trip to the county seat. The news was out that Gunslingin' Galligan had returned home.

"Yeah, Gunslingin's back," Swiggy admitted. "I understand that he's comin' into town tonight to look for a certain hombre."

Then Swiggy had ridden on out to the ranch to tell Delch all that had happened.

"Eat some grub, Swiggy, then change hosses and hit back for town," Sam Delch ordered. "Take a couple of the boys along with yuh. And watch to see that Gunslingin' ain't hampered any by outsiders, that's all."

Swiggy ate, got a fresh mount and hurried away with two of the men. Then Delch ordered one of his riders to go to Gray's ranch with a message. Gray would send some of his punchers into town also, to see that Gunslingin' had a fair chance.

On getting the news Mary Gray and her father decided they would go to town also, and Delch reached the same decision. He called for his favorite horse and ordered a couple of the men to accompany him.

There was a feeling of tension in town as the night came. Black Bill Crane was there. He had been informed that Gunslingin' Galligan was back and expected to come to town that evening.

"He's the red-headed grandson of old Sam Delch, ain't he?" Crane asked. "I hope he won't try to start any trouble with me. I've had to shoot three of that crew already. Why don't they leave me alone?"

**I**NWARDLY, Crane was exulting. Jud Starnell had promised him an extra reward if he removed Gunslingin', the last of Sam Delch's rela-

tives. He leaned against the bar in the saloon, drinking and watching the door, dropping his hand to his holster now and then, betraying just a tinge of nervousness.

Swiggy reached town with his comrades. Soon Gray and his daughter came in and went to the general store. Then Delch arrived. He went to the store also and sat beside Gray and Mary. They talked of ordinary things, except the principal thing which was in their minds. They strained their ears listening for sounds out in the street and in the nearby saloon.

Swiggy Boles slipped into the store out of the night, and strolled over to Delch.

"'Bout half a dozen of Starnell's punchers are in the saloon," he reported.

"Get our boys in there, then," Delch ordered. "All except mebbe a couple to watch out in the street to see that Gunslingin' ain't bushwhacked before he can get to the saloon and face Black Bill Crane."

"Shucks! They can't ambush Gunslingin'," Swiggy declared loyally. "He's got more eyes than the sky has stars. I'll git the men inside where they can watch the Double Diamond men."

Swiggy spread the word, and the D Bar Box punchers drifted into the saloon, ordered drinks and stood at the bar talking about the approaching roundup. Then Swiggy entered the saloon.

He saw the Double Diamond, and nodded grimly to himself. He knew they would join the fight if Crane lost out.

Black Bill Crane was sitting at a poker table with his back against the wall, playing solitaire. His hat and coat were off. From where he sat, he could watch both front and rear doors.

"You!" he howled at Swiggy Boles. "You're a D Bar Box man, ain't yuh?"

"Yeah," Swiggy replied.



"I understand that Gunslingin' Galligan is back home."

"He got home yesterday mornin'."

"He thinks that he's right fancy with a gun, I understand," Crane said. "Yuh don't reckon he's comin' to try to get me 'cause I had to kill a couple of his relatives, do yuh? He ought to be thankin' me. I understand that makes him Delch's heir. He'd better not try to start any trouble. You tell him—"

"Turn around and tell him yoreself, yuh hired murderer!" somebody shouted at the rear door.

squint in yore left eye. Yuh look like a mess."

"Anyhow, I don't look like I was a half Mex," Gunslingin' replied softly.

Crane's eyes blazed, and he lurched forward a few feet.

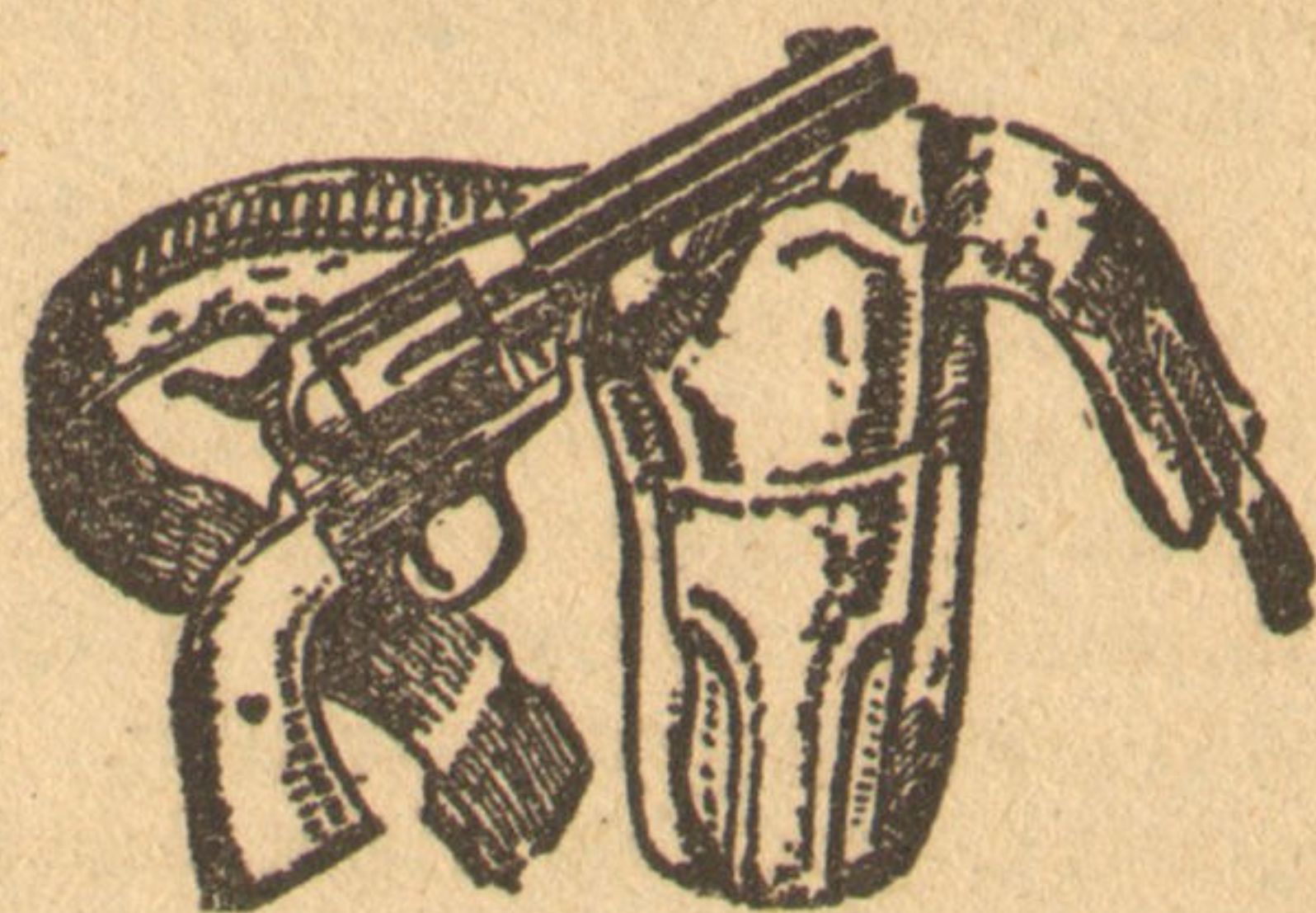
"Yuh're sassy, ain't yuh?" Crane snapped. "Just a sassy, half-baked, red-headed kid who thinks that he's bad with a gun."

"Speakin' of guns," Gunslingin' said, "I've heard yuh're rated an expert with 'em. But I reckon there's some mistake about that."

"How come?"

*Kit Knighton, Lawman, Fights  
Desperately to Remove the Rustler  
Brand from His Family Name in*

## THE CATTLE TRAIL



*A Smashing Western Novelet of  
Blazing Guns*

**By ROLLAND LYNCH**

COMING NEXT MONTH



Everybody in the saloon looked quickly that way as Crane jerked his head and turned. Gunslingin' Galligan was standing just inside, his body bent half forward, his hands dangling at his sides.

"Yuh're Gunslingin' Galligan, ain't yuh?" Black Bill Crane asked.

"That's what some men call me," Gunslingin' replied, his eyes narrowed to slits.

**T**HAT'S shore a crazy mop of flamin' red hair yuh've got," Crane said. "It looks like a brush fire. Yore ears ain't mates, either. Yore nose is twisted and there's a

"In this part of the country, when a reg'lar honest man goes gunnin', he makes it a rule to pull a gun out of a holster before he shoots. Shootin' through the bottom of the holster after tiltin' it is strictly barred. An expert with a gun don't do that, 'cause he's man enough to wait till his gun clears leather before he starts shootin'."

"Yeah? Mebbe yuh've got an idea I couldn't be fast enough if I cleared leather," Crane replied angrily. "I could shoot a half-dozen freckles offen yore ugly face without stoppin'."

"Now yuh're tryin' to make me mad



so's I'll start to draw, huh?" Gunslingin' said. "Then yuh'll shoot me and claim self-defense, like yuh've done before. A real man don't play the game that way, stranger."

"No?" Crane's eyes glittered.

"No. But then a real man don't hire out his guns to murder men, either. I don't reckon I could insult yuh enough to make yuh draw first. Yuh'd be afraid to play square. Yuh're just a white-livered coward, I reckon, with a fake reputation. I'm standin' here, Mr. Black Bill Crane, sayin' that yuh're a cowardly murderer without a single streak of manhood in yore worthless body. Yuh're a human skunk. Now what do yuh aim to do about it?"

There was only one thing Black Bill Crane could do about it, or else lose prestige and be mocked out of the country. He knew this was the showdown, that everybody in the saloon was watching and waiting. His eyes glinted, and his right hand darted down.

Gunslingin' sprang aside quickly, his two hands moving swiftly toward his holsters. His guns came out barking and flaming. Black Bill Crane had cleared leather for once. He wasn't firing out of the bottom of the holster now. His first shot grazed Gunslingin's shoulder.

In the swirl of pungent smoke and leaping flame they faced each other to shoot it out in lead. Through the drifting smoke, those in the saloon saw Black Bill Crane suddenly whirl halfway around and sprawl on the floor lifelessly. Then they saw Gunslingin' Galligan lurch against the bar and collapse slowly beside it, the gun dropping from his left hand, though he retained the one in his right.

Then other guns began barking and flaming, and stinging lead flew about the big room and ricocheted from the adobe walls. Gunslingin's body twitched as a second bullet struck

him. His gun was roaring again and he was making every shot count. Then his gun was empty, and he was out of the fight.

**T**HE fight was soon over. Swiggy Boles and the D Bar Box men had accounted for three of the Double Diamond men, and the latter had dropped their guns in surrender. Men came hurrying in from the street then. Swiggy thrust others out of his way and rushed to Gunslingin'.

"Hurt bad?" he asked, as he knelt.

"Shucks, no," Gunslingin' said. "Only my left shoulder and left leg, Swiggy. Get me a drink. And have a soda pop for yoreself, on me."

"Here's yore grandpa, Gunslingin'," said Swiggy.

Sam Delch had hurried across the street from the store and into the saloon, with Gray and his daughter close behind him. Old Delch's eyes were tear-filled, but he was trying hard to smile.

"Can yuh make it—grandson?" he asked.

"I can make it, Grandpa," answered Gunslingin'. "I'll be up and around in a couple of days."

"There's a ranch waitin' for yuh to run now. I'm gettin' old, and the place needs a firm hand. We'll patch yuh up and take yuh home in a wagon."

Then Delch turned away so Mary Gray could drop on her knees beside Gunslingin' and cry and laugh and kiss him, all at the same time.

"Shucks!" Gunslingin' said, embarrassed. "Ain't yuh got any modesty, Mary? After this here exhibition, I'll have to marry yuh right away to keep folks from talkin'." He grinned.

"If you don't marry me right away, I'll do some talking myself," she said happily.

And that was all. Except that Swiggy Boles, standing at the bar with a bottle of soda pop in one hand, lifted the bottle and gave them a silent salute.



# BLOOD on the RIVER

By  
HENRY KUTTNER

*Author of "City of Blood,"  
"Death Is Where You Find It," etc.*

*Deep in the Wilds of the Yucatan  
Jungle, Joe Kenton Searches for  
Menace as Silent as the Night!*

"O KAY, I'm yellow," Joe Kenton said stubbornly. "I'm leaving you in a spot and maybe wrecking your mine. All the same, I've had enough of this tropical hell-hole. Two years is plenty!"

He turned from Ed Buckley's accusing stare to look out the window of the hot, corrugated-iron office. The *chug-chug* of a pump was muffled by the humid air of this Yucatan jungle. A few crude structures were clustered about the mine entrance, and to the south, the slope ended at the river that flowed down to the coast.

Piles of raw earth were caked dry under the blazing sunlight. And across the waterway the lush green wall of the jungle rose. Kenton's hard young face was grim. Two years of laboriously digging ore out of the ground, and now, just as they were getting out of the red, this new trouble had arisen.

The worst of it was that he didn't dare tell Buckley the truth, the real



Quayle leaned in, pistol ready



reason why he was quitting. He had to make his story convincing.

Buckley, a big man with the shoulders of a bison, and a brown, leathery face, rumped his iron-gray hair and sat down heavily behind his desk. He glanced at Gunther, the bookkeeper, who was scribbling away busily in his corner.

"Mind getting out for a bit, Gunther?" he said.

The other nodded and rose, rubbing his long, thin nose with one bony finger. The door clanged shut after him.

"I don't like to remind you of this, Joe," Buckley said, "but don't you figure you owe me—a little?"

Kenton's face was impassive, his gray eyes chips of steel.

"Think so?" he said. "I earned my keep."

"You—" The mine owner hesitated. Kenton finished it for him.

"I was broke, sure. On the beach. You gave me a job here and made me superintendent. But I did a super's work, and more. Don't think it was easy, either, working short-handed and running on a shoe string."

In the silence the chugging of the pump was like the pound of blood in Kenton's temples. He felt sick and cold inside. This was going to be harder than he had expected. But there was no other way.

"I wish you'd let me know sooner," Buckley said. "This puts me in a bad spot. You said you'd wait to draw your pay till we were solvent, and now—well, pulling out three thousand bucks will leave me short. I don't know if I can meet the payroll next week."

"It's my dough, isn't it?" Kenton snapped. Damn, he thought. If there were only some way of leaving the money with Buckley. He didn't want it, but unless he took the three thousand, some suspicion might arise. And Kenton couldn't afford that. The game was risky enough as it was. He was almost certain that there was a

spy in the mining camp. And it might be anyone.

Buckley's jaw jutted out. Without another word he got up, went to the safe and opened it. He counted out greenbacks.

"There it is," he said finally. "American money."

**K**ENTON opened his shirt, took off a money-belt, and stowed away the currency.

"Thanks," he said "I'm taking a *piragua* downstream. I'll send it back by some *Indio*."

Buckley made no reply. Kenton was chewing his lower lip as he went out of the mine office and strode toward the bunkhouse. Most of the men were down in the mine, or else working on the equipment, whites and natives alike. They were short-handed, and no one could be spared to accompany Kenton on his journey. But that was old stuff.

The whites were used to going downstream alone on their paydays. No more than two of them could be spared at a time, so that the mining operations could be kept going.

Kenton wondered briefly who would be promoted to his post as superintendent. He couldn't think of a suitable man. Not that they weren't willing, but the labor was inexperienced.

It was hell. In a few months the mine would be out of the red and making money. Then it would be easier to keep men, by paying higher wages. Up to now Kenton had had a difficult time hiring enough workers to supplant those who quit, disgusted by the hard work, fever and loneliness in this Yucatan outpost.

He got his clothes—most of them were already in the *piragua*—and went down to the makeshift dock. Settling himself in the small craft, he cast off and picked up a paddle. A glance behind him showed Buckley's giant figure standing motionless in the door of the office.

With a shrug, Kenton started to



paddle. Soon the boat shot around a bend. The green, lush jungle rose on all sides, silent and impenetrable. No, not silent. Parrakeets croaked in a blaze of bright colors. Monkeys slipped from *liana* to branch. Further down were caymans, but there were none this far upstream. Kenton touched the heavy Colt at his belt, and his eyes narrowed. The trap was ready—and he was the bait!

At any moment now, death might strike. The worst of it was that he did not, could not even guess from what quarter the danger might come. But there was danger. That he knew. His vague suspicions had been crystallized by young Godfrey's disappearance.

Kenton's thoughts went back to Godfrey—a keen, round-faced kid, fresh from college, ready for adventure. He had known the boy years before, in the States. And when Godfrey had written him asking for a job he had offered the lad a position in the mine.

"It's tough work," he warned. "But it'll make you tough, if you can stand the gaff."

For five months Godfrey stood it. Then, shaken by fever, he drew his pay at Kenton's insistence and went down-river.

"Get the hell out," the superintendent ordered. "If you don't we'll be burying you *muy pronto*. Come back again when you're on your feet, and we'll hoist some *pulque* to celebrate."

"Guess you're right," Godfrey said, and took his *piragua* down the river. He promised to write, but he did not. He said he would send back a special brand of tobacco Kenton wanted, and that never arrived. Knowing Godfrey, the superintendent gradually came to the conclusion that something had gone wrong.

Then, back in the bush he found a lucky pocket-piece that had belonged to Godfrey dangling from an *Indio's* necklace. The native could tell him

nothing. He had traded shell-money for the piece, which another Indian from some unknown tribe had owned. Kenton started to think things over.

**T**HE river went down for a three days' journey, after which it branched out into five or six channels, all of them forking out to the coast and the roaring little towns that clung to it. Once a man went downstream it was almost impossible to trace him. There were too many boats, tramps and freighters, stopping at the banana ports for cargo.

Beyond the river forks was an enigma, for Kenton. The ores from the mine went down to Casayuga, but that did not mean that the men did the same. On their few days off they went one by one, and two by two, to the roaring ports, to spend their paychecks on liquor and dice and women.

Most of them were wise enough to take only a little money with them on these excursions, banking the rest with the company till the day they decided to quit.

It was curious, Kenton thought, that he had never heard a word from any of those who had quit. They simply vanished. Just as Godfrey had done.

Stories had begun to spread among the men, and Kenton had caught the whispers. The men were beginning to be afraid. Knowing that this might be the forerunner of a panic which might mean a mass resignation—leaving the mine helpless without workers—he decided to take action.

So he quit, taking pains to make his resignation seem real. He dared not tell Buckley of his plan, for he felt certain there was a spy in camp. If he didn't actually take his pay with him, there might be a slip-up. And the trap must be baited.

But he hadn't quite realized that the mine was in such dire straits. As it was, he dared not fail. He had to bring the three thousand back to Buckley. But first of all this deadly



mystery must be solved. So Kenton sent the *piragua* shooting downstream, his paddle digging strongly into the water. . . .

Bright butterflies flew from the banks where twisted roots made dark little caverns. Howler monkeys sometimes sent up their weird cry. Insects were troublesome, and once or twice Kenton saw the sliding long bulk of a cayman rippling across the river, its snout and eyes visible above the surface of the water, the rest of it a shadow beneath.

The sun dipped behind the jungle wall, and Kenton made camp tying his craft to the bole of a river hardwood. He hesitated before making a campfire, but at last built one and kindled it. He must not seem to be taking precautions, in case there were any watchers. The money-belt around his middle burned like fire.

He slept lightly, but undisturbed, and before dawn he scrambled out from under the mosquito netting and brushed the assortment of bugs from it. He doused his face in the cool river water, drank hot coffee that he had left buried under the coals—a time-saving device—and lit a battered pipe. The first stage of the journey had been completed successfully. But now—

Something on the prow of the *piragua* caught his attention, a curious curving mark that might have been left by the scrape of a rock. Kenton bent closer. An accident? Perhaps. But on the other hand it might have been made purposefully, and for some good reason!

**S**MILING mirthlessly, Kenton cast off the painter and sent the little craft out into the current. The morning mists still clung to the surface, and he watched closely for submerged logs or rocks.

The day dragged past monotonously. Several times Kenton passed *Indio* villages, and brown-skinned figures waved at him as he slid past. The

sun slowly slipped toward the horizon.

Rounding a bend, he came in sight of a small settlement, which was merely a group of native huts. And some distance from them, he saw a frame house, built of jungle wood, and with smoke rising from the chimney-hole in the steeply-slanting roof. Roofs here had to slant, or they would collapse under the driving torrents, during the rainy season.

Kenton hesitated as to whether he should stop for the night here or go on. Finally he decided to keep going. A few *Indios* were wandering about. Otherwise there was no sign of life, save for a native who was trying to manage a balky log canoe at the edge of slow water.

Kenton dug his paddle deeper. The current was a maze of eddies here, and he cried out in warning as the *Indio* in the canoe came spinning out into midstream, frantically attempting to guide his craft. There was a brittle, rending crack.

Cold water closed over Kenton's head. His *piragua* capsized, overturned by the thrusting prow of the log canoe. Spluttering furious curses, Kenton came to the surface and cast an anxious glance around. The native was yelling something, and on the shore figures were running.

"Swim to shore!" a high-pitched voice shrilled. "It's shallow here!"

Kenton hesitated, looking for his *piragua*. It was caught on rocks further down, he saw, and slowly sinking. But natives were running toward it.

"The boys will get your stuff!" the voice yelped.

Kenton struck out for the bank then, and made it in a few strokes. He crawled up, dripping wet, and stood shaking the water out of his eyes.

A tall, gaunt man in stained, discolored tropical whites was moving toward him. Yellow skin hung in sagging folds on his skull-like face. His



jet black eyes were set deep in their sockets, and he apparently hadn't shaved for days. He was carrying a thin malacca cane.

"You're all right?" his shrill voice asked.

Kenton nodded.

"Sure. Lucky there were no 'gators."

"We cleaned those out." The other turned to bawl at the natives, and then grinned at Kenton, baring stained, discolored teeth. "We'll have your stuff ashore directly."

"Damn careless boys you have here," Kenton said. "Don't they know how to handle a canoe?"

"I'll speak to that *Indio*," the gaunt man said, his dark eyes suddenly hooded with reddened, inflamed lids. He looked meaningfully at his cane. "You're from the mine?"

"That's right. Name's Joe Kenton."

"I'm Stuart Quayle," the man said. "Here! You'd better get out of those duds unless you want a dose of fever. Come along. I'll have the boys bring your stuff up to the house and dry it out."

"Thanks," Kenton said, and followed Quayle along the river bank toward the big house. He was wondering. Had the upset in the river been an accident, or a cleverly-concocted trick?

**T**HIS outpost, a clearing cut out of the jungle—what was it? Kenton never stopped here before, though he had passed the place. But he knew that it was a trading post with the *Indios*, run by a man named Harrigan. But there had been no mention of Quayle.

They stepped up on the porch of the house. Quayle swung the door open and brusquely gestured to Kenton.

"Trot along in, Mister," he invited.

The room in which Kenton found himself was like a store, cluttered with innumerable articles used for trading with the natives. Quayle es-

corted his guest through a curtained doorway into a cool, dim room where a *punkah* swung in the shadows overhead, setting up refreshing drafts of air.

Screens kept the sunlight out. Light rattan chairs were set here and there. From one of them a man was rising, a short, fat fellow in neat whites. The man had the round face of a cherub and a waxed, pointed mustache. He was mopping a bald head with a silk handkerchief.

His blue eyes were startled, a bit frightened, Kenton thought.

"Got a guest, Harrigan," grunted Quayle. "Dig up a towel for him."

"My name's Kenton," the superintendent said, extending a hand which Harrigan took after a slight hesitation. "You're the trader, aren't you?"

"Yes," Harrigan said. "I'll get a towel."

Kenton stripped, and rubbed himself down till his sinewy, well-muscled body glowed. He kept the money-belt around his waist. The currency was wrapped in oiled silk and had not suffered by his involuntary plunge. He noticed that Quayle's sunken eyes were intent on the belt.

What was the set-up here? Harrigan was seemingly taking orders from Quayle. He was almost afraid of him. Why? Who was Quayle, who looked like a seedy beachcomber?

Kenton pulled on shirt and shorts that Harrigan tossed to him, and sank down in one of the rattan chairs.

"That's better," he sighed. "Anybody got a smoke? Mine are soaked."

The fat trader extended cigarettes and busied himself mixing a drink, while Quayle pulled up one of the window-screens and shouted out at the natives, who, Kenton saw, were carrying his rescued equipment up to the house.

Outside the window was a large garden, where corn, melons, and other vegetables grew in profusion. Harrigan noticed Kenton's surprised glance.



"I like gardening," he explained. "It's my hobby. You'd be surprised at how many things grow in this climate."

He extended a drink and for a while there was silence. Quayle sank into a chair and glowered. Harrigan nervously drummed pudgy fingers on his knee.

"How about a walk around the village?" Quayle said suddenly. "There's plenty of time before dinner."

"Okay," Kenton agreed. He rose, conscious of a curious expression on Harrigan's fat face. But the trader said nothing as Quayle led the way out of the big house, pausing on the doorstep to destroy a black scorpion unerringly with his malacca cane.

"Damn pests," he said in his shrill voice. "What with ants, ticks, centipedes and tarantulas, you've got to sleep wrapped in cheesecloth like a mummy. Well, come along."

**K**ENTON suddenly remembered something.

"I forgot my gun," he said.

"You won't need it." There was a hint of sardonic amusement in the other's tones. "You'll stay overnight, of course, and your equipment will be ready for you, dried out, by morning. We'll find a boat if yours is wrecked."

"I'll be glad to pay—" the superintendent began, but Quayle cut him off.

"Forget it. Glad to oblige."

Kenton watched keenly as they wandered about the little village which was hacked out of the jungle on the river bank. Natives were busy here and there. Once an *Indio* appeared from the bush carrying a killed *iguana* over his bronze shoulder. The natives might have been thousands of years in the past, living as their ancestors had done. Their ancestors? Scarcely!

The Mayans, Kenton knew, possessed a high level of civilization, long since destroyed by Cortez and

his ilk. There had been great cities on the Yucatan peninsula and in Mexico. But today all that was meat only for archeologists, and the flat, forested peninsula of Yucatan, jutting out into the Caribbean, was a savage country. A country where anything might happen, Kenton thought.

"Here's the *cenote*," Quayle said, indicating a large pool twenty feet wide, fed by a bubbling spring. "Good water, believe it or not." He glanced at a native girl who was filling a gourd on the bank, and Kenton saw an unpleasant glow come into the sunken eyes. The *Indio* noticed it, too, for she edged away.

Quayle bent to dash a handful of water on his sweating, sallow face, and as he did so the girl hurried past. She stumbled and fell against Kenton. His arm involuntarily went about her, and, without warning, he heard her whisper almost inaudibly:

"Danger, Senor! I will wait here—"

There was no more time for more. Quayle straightened, eying them suspiciously. The native girl, her face impassive, went sure-footedly toward the village. Kenton didn't move, though every nerve in his body was shrilling warning. Danger!

Did Quayle suspect the brief interplay? If so, he said nothing, but merely continued to escort his guest about the village. With the swift suddenness of the tropics, night came on. But there was a yellow lantern of a moon, silvering the river into a broad, bright path.

The heat of the day was gone. Yucatan was a land of magic and mystery now, with the rippling of water and strange sounds from the jungle making a chorus that mingled with the low voices of the natives.

"Time for dinner," Quayle grunted and led the way back to the house, swinging his cane.

On the veranda an armadillo—probably a pet, Kenton thought—uncurled and waddled clumsily away, its tapering tail dragging in the dust.



They went through the store and into the adjoining room, where a boy was setting the table. Harrigan sat sweating in his chair, from which he had apparently not moved since they had last seen him.

His waxed mustache drooped disconsolately in the heat, which he seemed to feel more than the others. His face was upturned to the swinging *punkah*.

"Fix yourself drinks," he gasped. "Whew! What heat!"

QUAYLE busied himself with a siphon, decanter, and glasses. Kenton saw a door that led out directly on to the garden, and opened it casually.

"Be right back," he said. "I want to take a look at my luggage." Before any objection could be raised he disappeared into the night, a pulse of excitement rising within him.

He hurried through the garden, almost tripping over the round bulk of a melon on its vine, and melted noiselessly into the shadow of a hut. Flattening himself against its wall, he waited, alert and ready. But he was not being followed.

Having made certain of that, Kenton went on swiftly to the *cenote*, which was almost at the jungle's edge. No one was visible there, and he hesitated, staring around. The black pillars of the trees lifted on the other side of the pool.

Where was the *Indio* girl?

She seemed suddenly to rise from the ground beside Kenton, a soft, warm statue in the moonlight. Her lips were parted, and her eyes were wide with terror.

"Come." The girl's whisper held a vibrant pitch of danger. She took Kenton's arm, urged him into the deeper shadow under the trees. The pool glistened like silver at their feet.

"You said—danger," the white man said softly. "Well?"

"That Senor Quayle, he is a devil,"

she said. "He means to kill you."

"Go on," Kenton said.

"You kill him—yes? Otherwise you cannot save yourself."

"Why do you tell me this?"

There was a silence. Then the girl said:

"I am Tucha. Senor Quayle took me from Pablo, my man, and killed Pablo when he tried to keep me. That was a week ago—"

A footstep sounded, and a black bulk loomed nearby.

"The blue knife—beware of it," the *Indio* girl said in a terrified, frantic whisper and turned to escape.

But she was too late.

Quayle's cane shot out and Tucha tripped over it with a catlike twist. She was up again instantly, but Quayle's hand had fastened in a vise-like grip on her arm. The gaunt man's eyes were little specks of light under the shaggy brows. His sagging, yellow face was corpselike in the moonlight.

"Get back to the house, Kenton," said Quayle in a dead voice. Tucha cried out protestingly, fearfully. Her captor did not even spare her a glance.

The superintendent shook his head.

"Sorry, Quayle. You interrupted a private conversation."

In the moonlight Kenton saw the other's swift movement. The blue barrel of a gun flickered. But before Quayle could bring it to bear, Kenton acted, his foot arcing up like an arrow. He neatly kicked the weapon out of his opponent's hand. It sailed up into the air and fell splashing into the pool.

Kenton went charging in. Caught by surprise, Quayle gave back a few paces, and his cane dropped from his fingers. Tucha was cowering in the shadow, white showing around her pupils. She was making soft, whimpering noises.

Then Quayle recovered, drove a vicious blow at Kenton's midriff. But it didn't quite land. Kenton twisted aside, pumped sledgehammer blows



at his opponent. Quayle closed in, his yellow teeth bared in a snarl of fury. His knees jerked up, trying to grind into Kenton's groin.

**B**RIEFLY agony lanced through the latter, and his leg blocked Quayle's. He struck savagely, furiously, and saw blood gush from the gaunt man's nose as cartilage ground into pulp under his fist. Quayle screamed with rage, and clawed his nails down Kenton's face.

It didn't work. The superintendent was fighting like a machine—remorseless, vicious, inexorable. Quayle was no match for him. He tried to stop a blow with his arm, failed, and went reeling back, his lips split and bleeding. Breath wheezed and rattled in his throat.

"Damn you!" he choked. "I'll—"

"You'll what?" Kenton mocked, and moved forward, head lowered. Quayle let out a harsh, inarticulate cry and dropped to the ground. Involuntarily the other paused, and Tucha cried out in warning.

But Kenton did not see what was happening in time. Quayle's hand found the cane. He wrenched at it—and a thin, silvery blade glittered. A sword-cane!

Quayle bounded up and lunged as Kenton plunged forward desperately. The steel did not penetrate Kenton's chest, where it had been aimed. It drove painfully into his left arm, instead, sending a red-hot flame through his biceps muscle.

Involuntarily Kenton went off guard in his agony, and in that fatal moment Quayle put all his strength into a sledgehammer blow that crashed against Kenton's jaw and sent him down and out.

The ground came up and hit the back of his head. Kenton was briefly conscious of Tucha's hopeless cry, of Quayle's snarling laugh. And then the lights went out completely. . . .

Firelight brought him back to consciousness. He had a splitting head-

ache, and his left arm was throbbing. But the blood had clotted. That was something, anyway.

He was lying in a native hut, and firelight shone through the doorway. Dark figures were passing here and there outside, and a post had been erected near the flames. The girl, Tucha, was bound to it, her mouth effectually stopped by a gag.

Kenton, too, was tied, he realized. He investigated as well as he was able, but the knots were out of his reach. He could only lie helpless, waiting. Was there anything in the hut which he might use to cut his thongs? His gaze searched the gloomy interior, but the hut had been cleared of everything. There was not even a sharp-edged stone on the ground.

A figure paused at the hut's door, peered in, and grew larger. It was Quayle. As he came into the shaft of light Kenton saw, with some satisfaction, that the other's face was cut and swollen, and disfigured with plasters. Quayle's eyes were vicious now.

He swung his malacca cane and it slashed viciously across Kenton's cheeks.

"Keep it up, if it'll make you feel better," the prisoner said. "Why not kill me right now? I might get away."

**Q**UAYLE grinned unpleasantly.

"I don't think you will. I'll kill you, all right, but in my own way. Slowly." His fingers explored the bandage over his nose, and he winced with pain.

"The girl didn't tell me anything," Kenton said. "She was just trying to date me up."

"You're lying. I heard—well, never mind. Tucha will get her lesson, and it'll be a lesson for the natives, too." He swished the stick through the air.

"You'd better kill me now," Kenton said. "I'm warning you, Quayle. If I once get loose, I won't stop till you're dead."

His answer was a sneering laugh. Quayle went out. Kenton heard his



shrill voice issuing peremptory orders.

"Muster around, you beggars! All of you! I want you to see this!"

Kenton tested his bonds again, but it was useless. At a sudden thought, he painfully investigated to see if his money belt was missing. It was, as he suspected. Well, the whole plot was beginning to grow clearer now.

Something moved in the shadow behind him. He turned his head sharply, trying to see in the gloom. The thatch wall of the hut was shaking. A flicker of light slid through it. A machete!

It thudded softly to the ground. From outside the hut, a voice—the voice of a native—whispered:

"Tucha is our friend. You help her, white man. Kill Senor Quayle."

And then the sound of naked feet was heard padding off into silence.

As Kenton maneuvered into a position to use the knife, his mind was working fast. Apparently the *Indios* were under Quayle's thumb, but they didn't like it. Or, at least, they didn't like to see those of their own blood maltreated.

Remembering what Tucha had said about Quayle killing her man, Kenton grinned coldly. The *Indios* were good friends and worse enemies. They might be afraid to attack Quayle, but they would be glad to help Kenton—if that could be done without danger of detection.

The sharp, well-balanced blade made short work of the rawhide thongs. Presently they fell away, and Kenton stood up, massaging his numbed limbs into circulation. His left arm was limp and helpless. If he only had a gun, he thought.

There would be guns in the big house. But could he get there unseen? Apparently all the village was watching the fire and the girl bound to her post. Holding the machete lightly in his right hand, Kenton slipped out of the hut.

Bad luck struck without waiting. A stray cur, wandering through the

village, saw Kenton and set up a harsh yapping. Involuntarily the white man dodged back. But he was too late.

He saw the natives around the fire turn, startled. He saw Tucha twist around to stare. After a momentary pause Quayle came running forward, looming larger and larger in silhouette. There was a gun in his hand.

Kenton hesitated in the shadow of the hut's doorway. Then it was too late for escape. If he tried to run, he would be an easy target for Quayle's lead. He jumped back into a dark corner of the hut. Perhaps Quayle wouldn't see him there, for a moment. And a moment would be enough. Yet, in a rough and tumble scrap, Kenton was fearfully handicapped by his useless arm.

**A**BOVE the shouts of the natives came the thudding of booted feet. Quayle hesitated outside the doorway. Then he leaned in, the pistol ready, a shadowy bulk potent with deadly menace. Finally he saw Kenton.

The latter, flattened against the thatch wall, lifted his right arm as Quayle fired. The haft of the machete was cool against his palm. With all his force he hurled the weapon.

Searing agony tore along his ribs. Quayle shot again as the machete flashed through the air. Then the hut was filled with the booming reverberations of gunfire. Bullets thudded into the ground.

Quayle's head was drawn down, his chin tight against his chest, as though trying to hold the blade of the machete in place. The revolver fell from his hand. Then he slipped silently down and lay motionless in the doorway.

Redder than the firelight was the wide gash in his throat. The knife had found its target.

Kenton sprang forward, scooped up the gun, and hurdled Quayle's body. He cast a swift glance around. The natives had not moved, but running



toward him from the direction of the big house was the trader Harrigan, his fat face glistening with sweat. A Winchester was cradled in his arms.

Kenton lifted the revolver and took aim. But before he could move, Harrigan had taken in the situation. He slowed to a stop by Quayle's body, the rifle falling slowly from his hands to the ground.

"You—you killed him," he gasped in a queer, incredulous tone.

"Yeah," Kenton said, his cold eyes searching. "Well?"

"Thank God," Harrigan whispered. He turned a vindictively triumphant gaze on the motionless body. "I—I was his prisoner, Kenton. Since he came to the river, I haven't known a moment's peace. But you killed him!"

Suddenly Harrigan reeled against the wall of the hut, shaken with a storm of half-hysterical sobs.

"He's dead! Dead!"

Kenton nodded. . . .

Later, under the swinging *punkah*, Harrigan explained. The table at which they sat was heaped with food and liquor, and the trader was thrusting both upon his guest. Feeling again the comfortable tightness of his money-belt about his waist, Kenton allowed himself to relax, though his nerves were still jumping from the recent peril. He sipped champagne that was forced upon him, and watched Harrigan slowly drink himself into a stupor.

"Quayle came here a year ago, yes," Harrigan answered Kenton's question. "He threatened to kill me if I didn't play along. What could I do, Kenton? There was no way to get help. If I'd tried to escape, he'd have shot me. If I'd tried to warn anybody, the same thing."

Kenton nodded, stretching his lean body. The rattan chair creaked under his weight.

"The old robber baron idea—establishing yourself on a trade route to rob the passers-by," Kenton said. "I get the idea, Harrigan. When that

*Indio* rammed my boat and overturned it, it wasn't an accident."

THE trader nodded, reaching for the huge basket of fruit before him.

"It's happened before."

"He must have had a spy in the mining camp," Kenton said slowly. "There was a mark on the prow of my *piragua*."

"It was Gunther, the bookkeeper at the mine," Harrigan explained. "Whenever a man quit and collected his full pay, he managed to cut a mark on his boat, so Quayle could see it and send out a native to cause an 'accident'. He'd kill the man, take his money, and get rid of the body. The 'gators—" He shuddered. "It's been hell. If I could have saved a single man—"

"You're an accomplice, you know," Kenton said bluntly.

"I'll stand trial. I couldn't help myself. . . . But Quayle's dead now. Good God! The man was a devil!" Harrigan shivered, and gulped champagne. "Well, it's over now. More champagne?" He selected a ripe melon from the fruit basket as Kenton shook his head. "Then you'll have to split this with me. First one of the season."

Kenton could not refuse without seeming ungracious, so he watched as Harrigan took a knife from a drawer and deftly split the melon in two, handing one half to his guest. The pulp was moistly yellow, tempting enough to a thirsty man, and Kenton picked up a spoon at his plate. Then he paused, staring at the knife which Harrigan had set down.

The trader was chewing a spoonful of juicy pulp. He looked up, saw the direction of Kenton's gaze, and followed it.

The knife on the table had a blue wooden handle. Kenton was remembering something the *Indio* girl had whispered.

"The blue knife—beware of it."



Harrigan's eyes met Kenton's. For a heartbeat the deadlock held.

"You lousy murderer!" Kenton shouted, leaping up. He heard his chair go rattling down behind him. Harrigan was leaning forward, his fat cheeks sagging, his eyes very bright.

"What—what—" Harrigan stammered.

"A clever trick," Kenton said between clenched teeth. "Poison smeared on one side of the knife, so that only half of the melon is poisoned when you cut it. So that's how you got rid of our miners! You were behind Quayle! He was just your stooge, a fall guy in case anything went wrong!"

The trader's eyes were wide. His lower lip sagged a strange smile.

Kenton sensed rather than saw the swift movement under the table. Harrigan was going for his gun. The superintendent had no time to get out his own weapon. It was in its holster at his side. He simply up-ended the table and hurled it at the other.

A gun boomed, ripping the *punkah*. Harrigan was floundering up, and Kenton dived to meet him. He caught the trader's gun-wrist and squeezed.

But there were powerful muscles under Harrigan's deceptive appearance of fatness. The trader locked his foot behind Kenton's ankle and the two fell, rolling over and over in the jumbled mass of dishes, fruits and foodstuffs on the floor.

Harrigan's wheezing breath was hot on Kenton's throat. The two men were clawing and kicking and slugging in a tangled mass of arms and legs, Kenton desperately maintaining his grip on his opponent's wrist. But slowly, surely, his fingers were slipping from the sweaty skin.

**A** FIXED, horrible smile twisted Harrigan's lips. His free hand moved in a swift motion. It dipped to Kenton's holster and found the gun, yanked it out and tossed it into a corner.

With a frantic twist Kenton managed to writhe atop his opponent. Simultaneously Harrigan's knee jerked up into the other's stomach. The blow made Kenton go sick and giddy. He felt himself being battered around, but he still clung with all his weakening strength to the trader's arm.

Harrigan's gross bulk was again on top, crushing him. He wrenched his wrist free. Light glinted on the gun-barrel.

Suddenly Kenton's groping hand closed on something cylindrical and hard which he did not recognize at first. Staring up through blood-colored eyes at the trader's malevolent, smiling face, he saw the black mouth of the pistol growing larger and larger. . . . Then his hand contracted—on a knife-hilt!

Instinct acted then. Kenton drove the weapon up into Harrigan's chest as the trader's finger tightened on the trigger.

Even so, Kenton would have died, but his opponent did not shoot. Instead, his eyes went wide with horror, and he tried to twist away in a frantic effort to evade the thrust of the knife with the blue handle. The blade that he himself had poisoned.

But he failed. The steel struck home. It dug deep into Harrigan's breast, and the trader screamed and hurled himself back, clawing at the knife-hilt. He fell on his side, rolled over on his back, and lay still. There was an odd, mirthless smile on the fat face.

Kenton got up, sick and giddy. He reeled to a rattan chair and sank down, gasping with pain and weakness.

His eyes were fixed on the motionless figure on the floor.

Harrigan was dead. The robber baron of the river was washed up. And there was still Gunther, Harrigan's spy at the mining camp, to settle with.

(Concluded on page 87)



# THE PATH OF EMPIRE

By CHARLES S. STRONG

Well-Known Explorer, Traveler and Historian

Author of "Crusader of the North," "Dominion for Rent," etc.

*The Spirit of the Early Voyageurs Still Lives in the Heritage of  
Trade and Amity They Bequeathed to America!*



THE sagas of the English trading companies that developed India, Australia, South Africa and Canada during the past three or four hundred years are drama and adventure at their height. Furs, jewels, wide fertile acres of virgin land! Wealth, untouched by the hand of man, there for the gathering by courageous, eager seekers!

The part taken by the British West India Company in this hemisphere, in the colonization of Virginia, the Carolinas, and the islands of the sea is one of history's notable achievements. The expansion of Canada's Hudson's Bay Company, however, though not so well known, is a long and honorable record of heroic exploits that goes even further back than 1670, when it first made its mark on the pages immortalizing the daring and accomplishment of men.

## *Radisson and Groseilliers*

The spirit of adventure that urged these early explorers to adventure is as alive today as it was three hundred years ago—and more. It is not

a year's long, weary journey today into the pine-forested wilderness—thanks to the automobile and the sturdy arms of foresters who have cut trails through the vastness of green slopes, and along waterways shimmering in a Northern sunlight that reflects long, shadowy lines of majestic firs on a still, blue surface. Even so, the modern-day explorer finds the trip from Boston to Hudson's Bay no overnight jaunt.

And during the long hours of travel, speculative memory comes. What must have been such a trip in 1665?

The curtain of Time rolls back, say, to two French-Canadian trappers—adventurers, eager-eyed, far-seeing, with the light of "things to come" in their forward-looking, level vision as they tend their maps.

Pierre Esprit Radisson and Medard Chouart des Groseilliers, were typical of the voyageurs from France who had come to settle Quebec and found great forts at Quebec, Montreal, and the sparse-settled wilderness. Members of a small, but sturdy crew, they had gone to explore the Great Lakes, the Middle West and the Mississippi River.

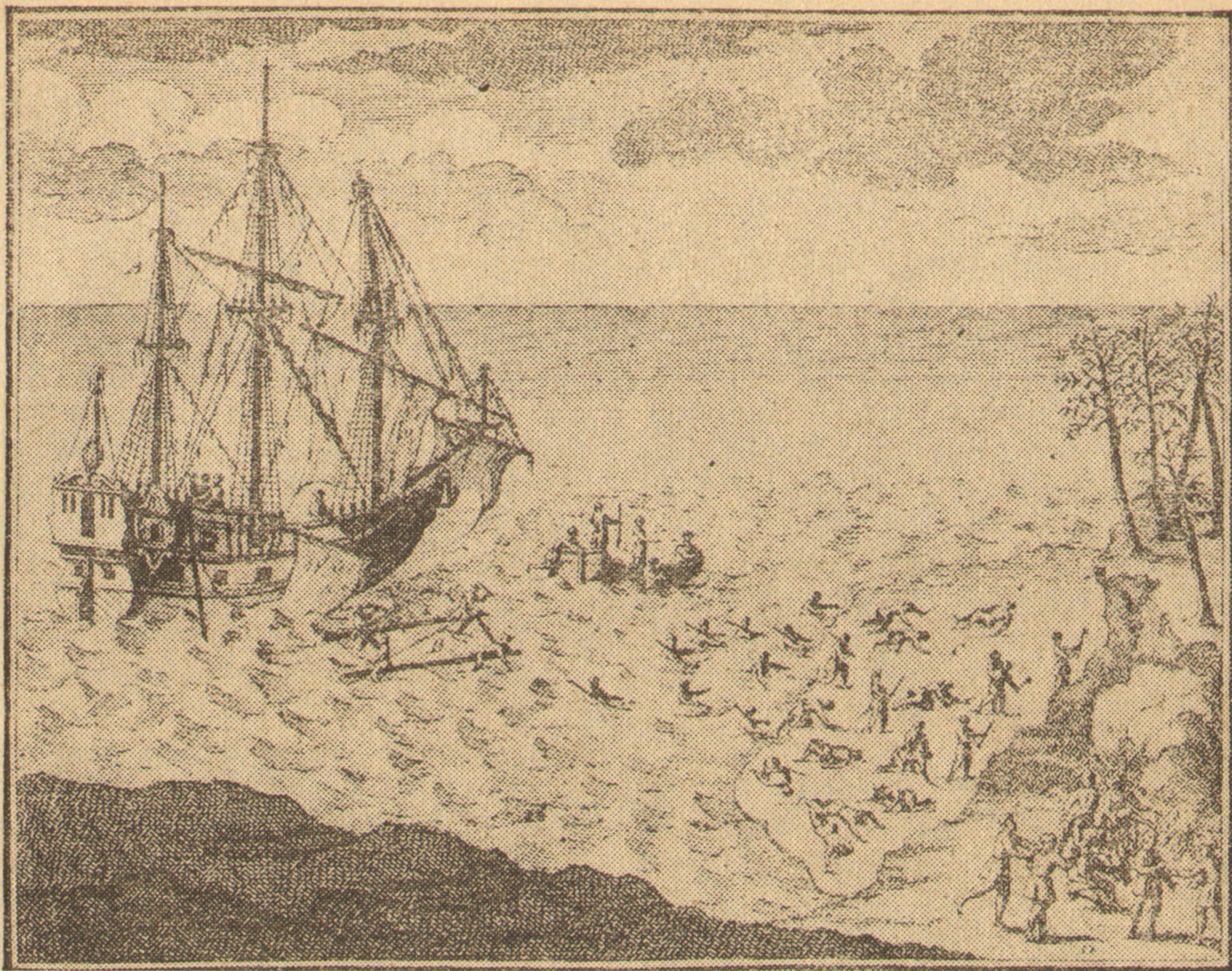
But while La Salle and his men had gone south, Radisson and Groseilliers

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The Pelican running aground in Hudson's Bay, 1697

turned their attention northward, fraternizing with Crees and Ojibways in the wilds of northern Ontario, and in the country of the big sticks around James Bay and Hudson's Bay. The spirit of Henry Hudson was a living, breathing thing there. His mutinous crew had put him adrift in a small boat to die, just fifty years before—and to the Eskimos of this section the Indians who had avidly listened to tales of his great adventure, he still lived. Older men among them had played their part in the unforgettable mutiny of Hudson's crew aboard the good ship *Discovery*. Others were sons of the Eskimos who had fought with Robert Bylot and Henry Green and the mutinous crew when, abandoning Hudson and his eight companions, they had set out on the return voyage for England.

But Radisson and Groseilliers had

no interest in Hudson except that he had pointed the way for them toward furred treasure. To their trappers' eyes the country was Elysium. Beaver, thriftily busy at their picturesque dams around Hudson's Bay amazed, delighted them. Fortune held up a beckoning finger with astounding sources of supply even after they had traded with all the Indians in the neighborhood.

*"For the King of France!"*

As speedily as possible, the two Frenchmen rounded up as much of the furry wealth as they could transport and started south. They were trekking along with one of the first fur brigades to come out of the Northwest Territories, singing cheery French songs, thinking nothing of the *loup garou*, or of other legendary forces supposed to guide or hamper



the French *voyageur*, when suddenly a real formidable obstacle loomed up—a company of the soldiers of the King of France.

The commanding officer's eyes gleamed as he surveyed the two trappers.

"What have you there, *Messieurs*?"

"Prime beaver pelts from the Hudson's Bay district," said Pierre Radisson, gladdened at the thought of military protection.

"So!" The captain cocked his head toward the Indian companions of the two Frenchmen. "And have you a license for fur trading from the government of New France?"

"A license?"

Pierre could not understand. Nor could Medard Groseilliers, who looked at the military man with widened eyes.

"But this is a new territory!" protested Pierre. "We are the first white men ever to have entered it. We have claimed it for the King of France—gladly! But how could we procure a license for an unexplored land?"

But that, or any other argument, was of no avail. Pierre Esprit Radisson and Medard Chouart des Groseilliers were taken, with their furs, before the governor of New France. He agreed that the trappers were operating il-

legally, and confiscated the furs. Infuriated at this high-handed official treatment, Radisson and Groseilliers set doggedly to work to bring their discoveries to the attention of the British Government.

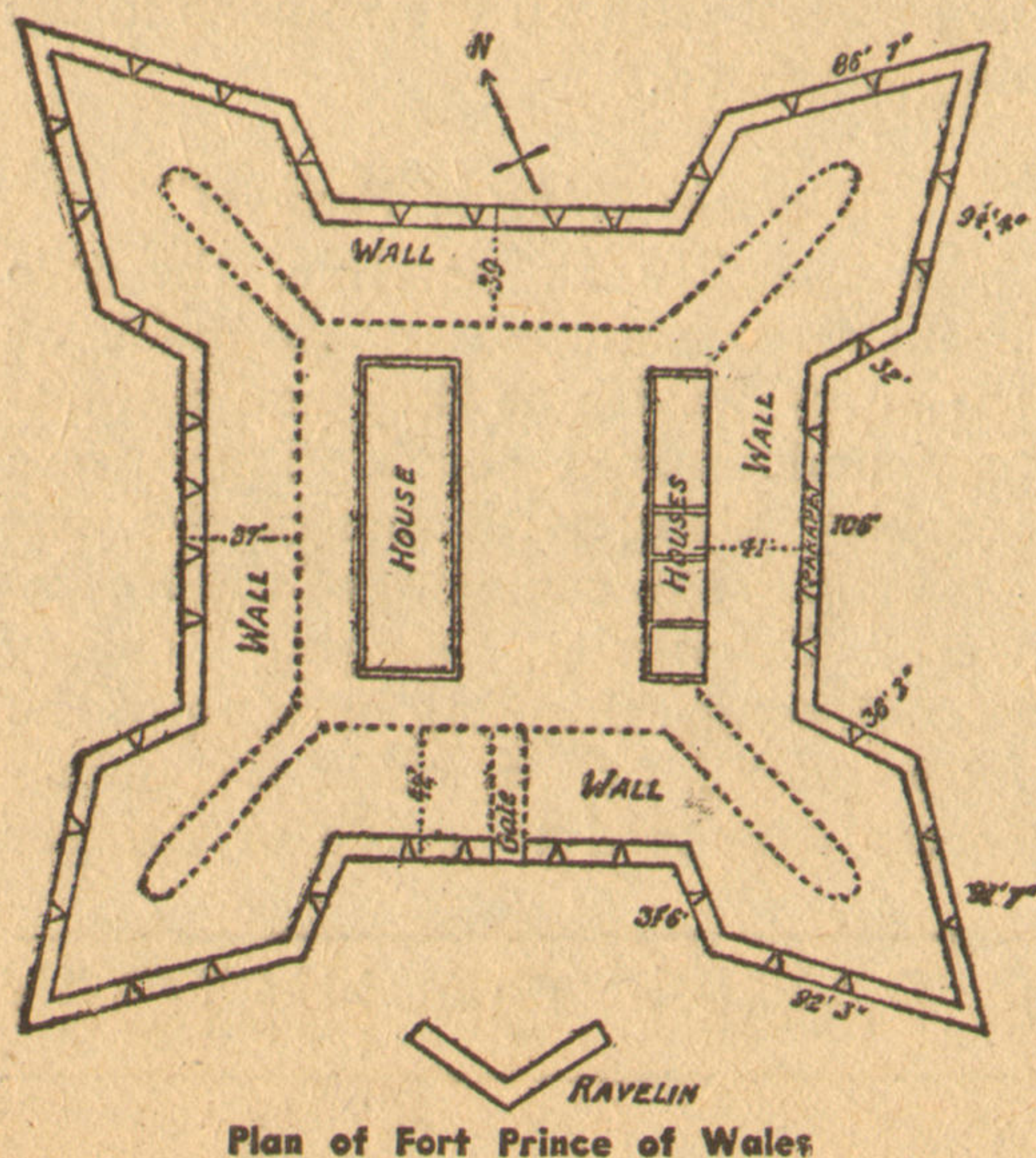
That was difficult, however. In that day and generation men did not barge into the presence of the King of England, even with a proposition to enrich his sovereign majesty by millions—especially in a locale so far away from London.

### *The Company Forms*

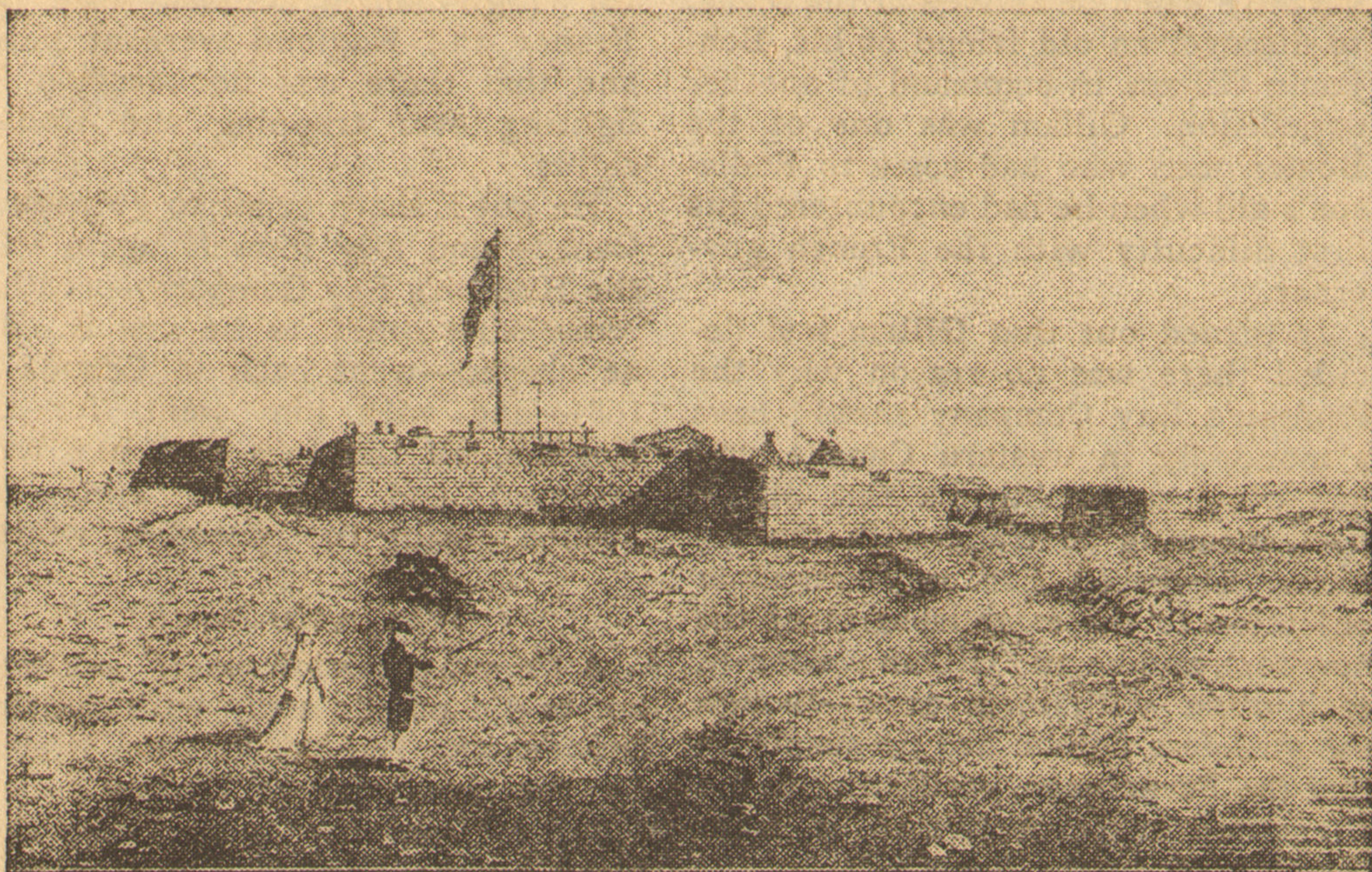
At this time Boston was the center of British activity in the Atlantic area, so the two French trappers headed for the Massachusetts Bay Colony. They had no trouble in interesting certain Boston business men in their story. One man, a close friend of King Charles II, had ready access to the court. He sailed for England at once, accompanied by Radisson and Groseilliers, who on their arrival in England had no difficulty in making obeisance to the king.

Immediately a company, known by the high-sounding title of "The Governor and Company of Gentlemen Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay," was formed. Noble-men and other distinguished citizens of London were made shareholders and Prince Rupert, cousin of the king, was appointed the first governor. Another shareholder, the Duke of York, who later was to become King James the II of England, became second governor.

Groseilliers led the first English party into Hudson's Bay in 1668. Such a success was the expedition that upon its return to England, the king decided to grant the company a Royal Charter, giving it trading and other rights in all of the territory draining into Hudson's Bay. King Charles could have had no idea of the extent of the grant he was making, since at that time western Canada was unexplored land. Not until later







Northwest view of Fort Prince of Wales, Churchill, Manitoba

was it discovered that the Saskatchewan River, one of the leading streams draining into the bay has its source in the foothills of the Rockies on the Alberta-British Columbia border.

The original charter, under which many of the company's interests are still fostered, was issued by the king on May 2nd, 1670, making the Hudson's Bay Company the longest continuously operated business enterprise on the North American Continent.

After having accomplished their revenge by giving the British an opportunity to establish themselves more or less firmly in the area to the west of French Canada, Radisson and Groseilliers unexpectedly had a sudden surge of patriotism. Perhaps, after all, they argued, it might not be amiss to do something or other for their own country.

#### *Old Friends Meet*

Both Frenchmen were of the type to attract friends, and it was not long before colonists and trappers rallied around them. It could not have been otherwise, since both men were nat-

ural born "glamour boys," daredevil adventurers, and among the charter members of ancient and honorable publicity hounds. All eastern New France and New England soon came to know Radisson—or knew of him. His cleverness in recounting his own dramatic exploits saw to that.

Groseilliers was the hard-headed business man. In some ways he was Radisson's emergency brake when some of the more dashing Frenchman's schemes got too wild.

Both, however, managed to get themselves into some pretty situations in which the elements of drama were not lacking. One of these occurred in the winter of 1682-83, when Radisson, commissioned by the Governor of New France to build a fort, had trekked to the upper end of what is now Manitoba and western Ontario on the Hayes River near what is now York Factory. Radisson had just about completed the fort when he heard the sound of guns—from the north, on the Nelson River.

With a party of his men, Radisson plunged into the woods and circled back to the river. And what was his



surprise when he arrived at the scene, to discover an old friend of his, Benjamin Gillam, in command of another expedition. Gillam was one of the Boston men who had come to Radisson's aid when he had encountered his first difficulty with the French governor.

It turned out that Gillam had decided there was no reason why the Hudson's Bay Company should have a monopoly in western Canada, and had come to establish a fort of his own, meaning to trade with the Indians. Radisson had no immediate objection to the establishment of the new fort, and he and Gillam welcomed each other with open arms—though the guileless Gillam had no suspicion that the Frenchman, vacillating in his allegiance, had transferred it from the English to the French.

But more was to come. Exploring beyond Benjamin Gillam's fort, Radisson saw another ship coming up the river. According to custom, he hailed the ship, and went aboard with some of his men. And the captain of the craft was none other than the father of Benjamin Gillam who had a ship outfitted for exploring by the Hudson's Bay Company.

### *Strange Orders*

Radisson saw at once that his winter's work was cut out for him. By all manner of means he must prevent the two English parties from uniting against him. And he did—for that reason—exercising great dexterity and diplomacy to keep them apart. He finally managed to capture both parties, without firing a single shot, though greatly outnumbered.

After distinguishing himself as such a brilliant strategist, Pierre Esprit Radisson naturally felt that he had earned the gratitude of the French King, and would receive proper recognition when he went back to France. Instead, when he finally did sail for France, he was called before the throne, severely reprimanded

for "high-handed actions," told that France and England were at peace, and that there was no occasion for fighting over trapping and trading rights.

He got a sharp order to go back to Canada and ally himself again with the Hudson's Bay Company—a rather remarkable order, as he saw it. But he obeyed—went back to Canada in 1684—and with him went, for the English, all the furs that had been captured and collected from the French during the preceding winter.

### *War in the North*

A "non-aggression pact," perhaps, but it did not do away with fighting between the English and the French for the possession of Hudson's Bay. All the "Company" posts were captured by the French at one time or another, but through all of these bloody years, the Hudson's Bay Company managed to hold at least one fort, clinching its hold on the fur trade.

One of the encounters—a battle in fact—occurred in the bay when the great French-Canadian sailor d'Iberville, and the British forces clashed. Many times such early Hudson's Bay Company forts as Moose Factory, Albany and York Factory changed hands. At the beginning of 1697, English traders were in possession of York and Albany when the roar of gunfire heralded the greatest sea fight in the history of the Arctic. The French meant to make one more attempt to drive the Company from the bay, and five of their vessels under the command of Pierre Lemoine d'Iberville arrived in Hudson's Strait.

Four English ships had preceded the French by several hours. Naturally d'Iberville had no way of knowing this. While crossing Hudson's Bay, the French flagship *Pelican* became separated from her convoy and anchored off York Factory. The English, however, arrived before the French ships.

The doughty d'Iberville considered

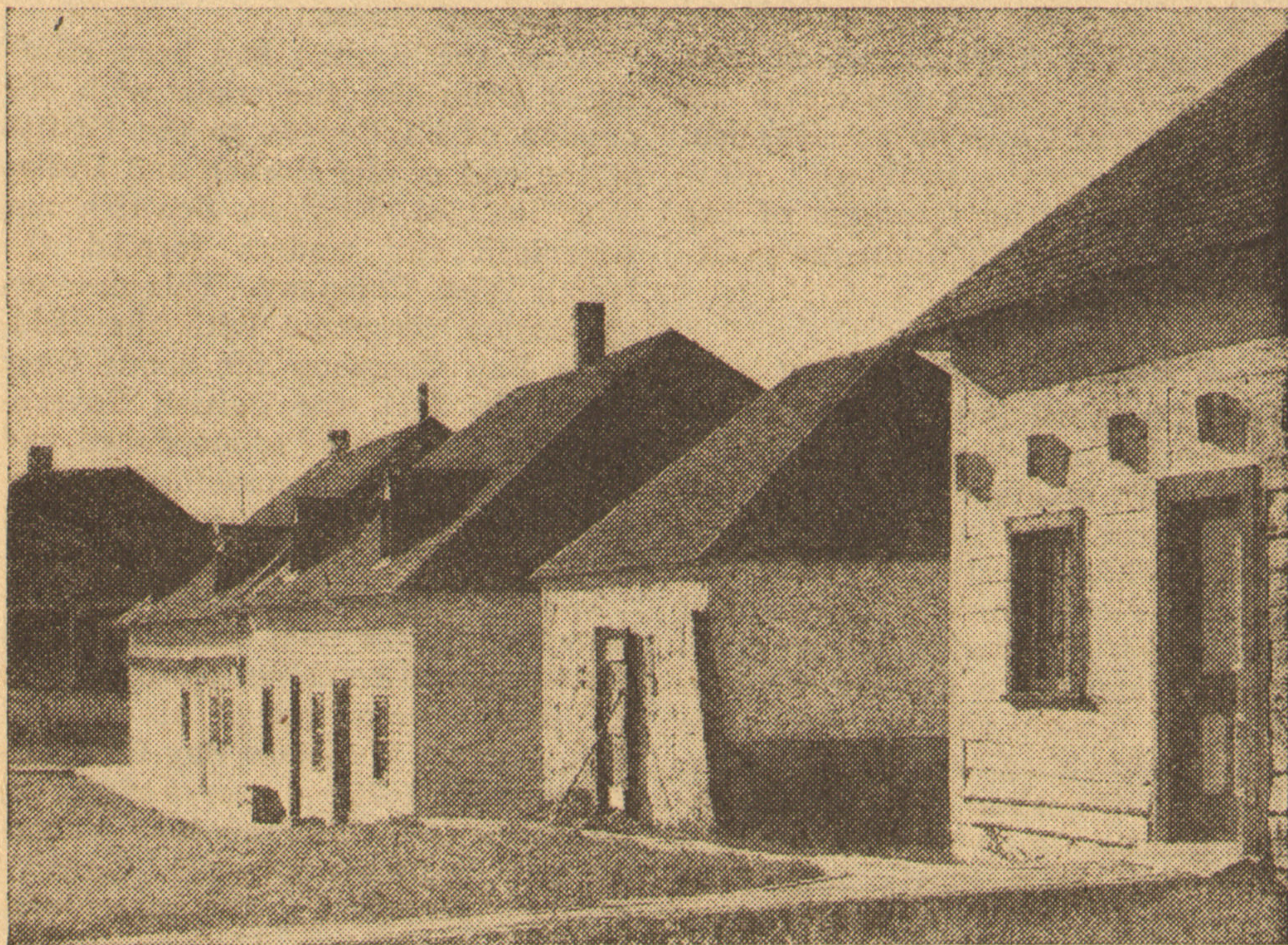


it his duty to take them on single-handed. He was outnumbered three to one, since the fourth ship, the *Owner's Love* was a fire-ship. The three English ships were the *Hudson's Bay*, the *Hampshire*, and the *Dering*.

The *Pelican* was under the command of Captain d'Breville, and became heavily engaged with the *H. M. S. Hampshire*, commanded by Captain John Fletcher. Captain Fletcher

batteries opened fire. The Englishmen returned it, but Captain Fletcher was unable to keep his dinner engagement—for he was killed.

For four hours the English ships raked the *Pelican* fore and aft. Then the *Hampshire* tacked, got to windward of the *Pelican*. The English ship bore down on the French craft, and fired two broadsides when the boats were yard-arm to yard-arm. The *Pelican* returned the point-blank fire,



Old stone and timber buildings, Norway House Post; jail in center

ordered the guns on the *Hampshire* loaded for a broadside, and just before the command for firing, he gave d'Breville the opportunity of striking his colors and surrendering the *Pelican*.

According to custom, social amenities had to be considered, so Captain Fletcher drank a glass of wine to the French captain's health, letting it be known that he expected to be dining with him shortly. Elaborately polite the Frenchman drank the toast. Then, after a signal to his men, the *Pelican's*

and when the *Hampshire* was pulled away from the grappling hooks that fastened it to the *Pelican*, she sank.

The loss of the *Hampshire* discouraged the other English craft, and shortly after its destruction, the *Hudson's Bay* surrendered. The *Dering* escaped to the mouth of the Nelson River. But before she could get there a storm that had given its first puff at the time of the sinking of the *Hampshire* had increased to fury, and the *Pelican* was driven away from the battle zone. At last d'Iberville was forced



to beach his ship six miles north of York Factory.

The other French ships arrived in short order and d'Iberville immediately demanded the surrender of York Factory. Captain Bailey, in command for the Hudson's Bay Company, refused to give up his fort and haggled for terms. Finally he led his garrison out with drums beating and flags flying—and to victory—for the time being.

The status of the settlements in Hudson's Bay was at last settled by the Treaty of Utrecht which was signed in 1713. Under this treaty the area was turned over to the English. The Company established Fort Churchill, now the terminus of the Hudson Bay Railway from the prairies to the sea.

#### *A Little Known Incident*

Fort Churchill is of particular interest to Americans, because of a little known incident which occurred there toward the close of the American Revolution. Fort Prince of Wales, one of the most heavily armed forts in North America at that time, was the gateway to western Canada. When De Grasse and his men were despatched to aid George Washington in his fight against Cornwallis, another French fleet was sent to Hudson's Bay. In a battle fought at Churchill, Fort Prince of Wales was captured, and its garrison, including many British officials, were carried back to France.

Before the news of this dramatic victory reached Europe, however, the treaty of Paris had been signed, and Canada remained English.

Besides the men involved in the various engagements with the French for the various posts, the Hudson's Bay Company has incorporated other interesting stories in its book of famous pioneers. One relates how Henry Kelsey was the first Company man to push westward—the first white man to see the Canadian prairies, the

first white man to see the Canadian bison or buffalo.

Samuel Hearne, another of the famed Hudson's Bay explorers, discovered the Arctic Ocean after an overland expedition that brought many trials and discouragements. He was the first white man to reach the mouth of the Coppermine River—in 1772. Two years later Hearne built the first Company post in what is now the province of Saskatchewan. This post, still in existence, is known as Cumberland House.

After the French had been eliminated from the fur trade with the cession of all Canada to the British at the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, English, Scottish and American fur traders formed the North West Company. This new organization competed with the Hudson's Bay Company for about sixty years. In 1821, the British Government ordered an end to bloodshed, and the two companies combined, retaining the name of the Hudson's Bay Company.

George Simpson is usually acknowledged to be the man responsible for the successful combination of the two companies, even though his connection with the Hudson's Bay Company dates from 1820, a year before the amalgamation. He knew how to handle men, and had the typical Scottish capacity for getting the most work from his employees. He was successfully able to prove that there was enough trade for the expanded Company.

#### *The Company Expands*

In 1826 Simpson became the governor of the Hudson's Bay territories, which then included all of what is now Canada east of the Rockies, with the exception of Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes. The Company, at that time, had the sole right of Indian trade and jurisdiction over all this territory, the sole right of British trade in all the country west of the



Rockies and south to the Spanish Treaty line of 1819. A few years later the Hudson's Bay Company was trading as far south as San Francisco and as far west as the Hawaiian Islands.

Company men explored and charted much of Canada's Arctic coastline, and it was not long before fur trading posts were stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Law and order were administered among the wild tribes of this immense territory by commissioned officers under Simpson—strong men of courage, integrity, loyalty and resourcefulness.

One interesting sidelight on this law enforcement angle was told to me during a recent visit to Norway House, one of the Hudson's Bay posts in the Lake Winnipeg area.

One of the Indians had been sentenced to serve a term in the old company jail at Norway House, but since he was one of the best trappers on the factor's rolls, the prison term was arranged so that it would not interfere with his trapping. Leave it to a Scotchman to find a way to combine business and justice!

### *Path of Empire*

In 1870, two hundred years after the granting of the charter, the Company yielded its chartered rights in the West to the government of the new Dominion of Canada. Keeping pace with changing conditions, the Company turned some of its fur trading posts into retail stores and established the Land Department to take care of its immense holdings.

Today the Company operates two hundred and twelve trading posts throughout the Dominion of Canada, has six large department stores in the West, several small stores from eastern Quebec to western British Columbia. One of the most interesting features of the Hudson's Bay store on Portage Avenue in Winnipeg, is the historical collection of the various post factors, and interesting murals depicting some of the great historic scenes in the Company's two hundred and seventy years of history.

The routes of the *voyageurs*, the fur trappers and traders, have definitely become the Path of Empire.

Photos from Hudson's Bay Company, Canadian Committee.

*Next Month: SIMON BOLIVAR'S FIGHT FOR LIBERTY,  
Another Thrilling Adventure from the Pages of  
History by CHARLES S. STRONG*

## BLOOD ON THE RIVER

*(Concluded from page 79)*

But that could wait. Everything could wait. Everything but a good night's sleep. . . .

"I still don't understand, Joe," said Ed Buckley, still amazed at Kenton's abrupt return. The latter had just finished trussing up Gunther for delivery to the law. "You mean that Quayle, Harrigan and Gunther, here, have been robbing and killing our men?"

"Just that," Kenton said. "I quit my job here so I could see for myself if they'd try to rob me. Well, they did. And before I forget, here's that three thousand. You need it more than me."

He glared at Gunther who lay cowering in a corner.

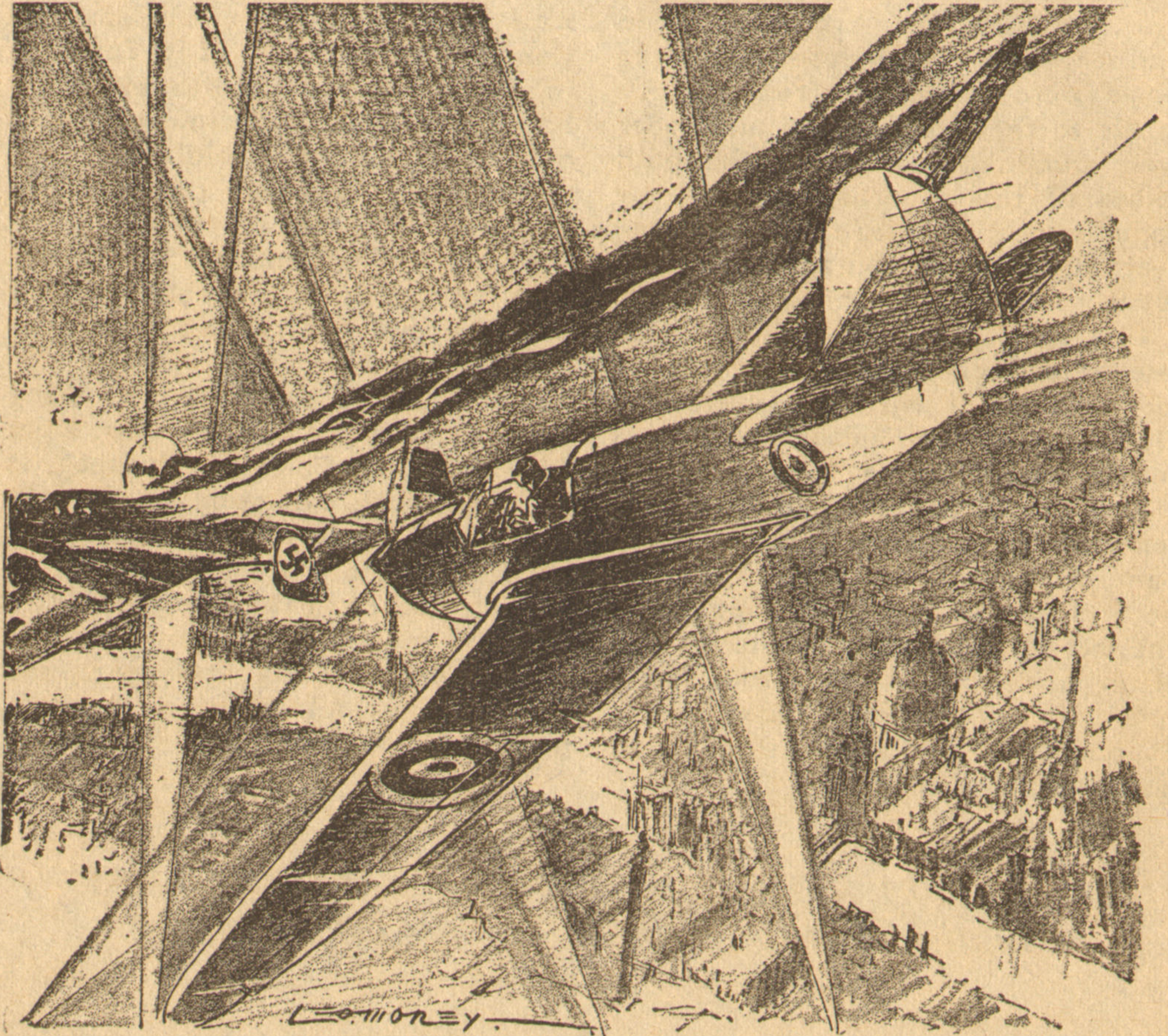
"I'm glad you didn't try to make a break for it, rat. I'm getting sick of killing people with knives."



# The Cloud Buster

By MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

*Author of "Guarded by Fire," "The Scarlet Killer," etc.*



The Nazi ship burst into flames

*To Save London from Being Blasted from the Face of the Earth, Yank Mueller Storms Through a Flight of Nazi Dorniers on a Grim Mission*

**T**OMMY MUELLER leaned his six feet against the filing cabinet and stared out the window at the London park across the way. The place hummed with the activities of workmen and Territorials. They were busy as ants with the erection of anti-aircraft battery defenses. The hooded muzzles of the Bofors .75s poked their slender lengths at the sky, even now ready to

rattle forth their defiance at Nazi bombers.

But the only rattle for the moment was the staccato crackle of Charlie Newcastle's voice, dictating to the stenographer in the inner office. In a moment the girl came out, pencil and notebook in hand.

"How are you getting along with the new boss?" asked Tommy.

The girl wrinkled her nose in dis-



taste for reply, and shook her head at the closed door. Tommy smiled. It seemed that the entire office shared his own feelings toward the new manager of the London branch of the big American aircraft company. Charlie Newcastle had singularly failed to endear himself to any of them, least of all to the test pilot, Tommy Mueller.

It was nearly quitting time now. Newcastle had called Tommy in for a conference at four o'clock and had kept him waiting an hour in the outer office. That was typical of Newcastle, and done deliberately as Tommy well knew. Joan Darrow was cleaning up her desk preparatory to leaving as Newcastle came out.

He glanced at Tommy, then joined him at the window, turning back to look at his secretary. It was evident that he was waiting for her to depart before saying what he had to say. Tommy wondered what was in the wind. Both men turned their attention to the busy park opposite.

"More anti-aircraft guns. Bah! They're not worth the space they occupy," Newcastle said, in that clipped, precise speech of his.

"Oh, I don't know," Tommy returned mildly. "Now that Germany has beaten France they're going to concentrate on England, and especially London. Those guns will be needed here."

Newcastle, twisting his small blond mustache, stared at Tommy. His blue eyes were angry looking.

"And what of it?" he asked, irritably. "The ships have to come within range, don't they? And why should any German bomber come to this far off edge of London? Tommy, you may know a lot about testing planes but it's obvious that you know little of air strategy."

"All right," Tommy said. "I know little of air strategy. Maybe you'll tell me what you would do if you were in charge of a big flight of Nazi bombers heading over London?"

Newcastle looked at him. But Tommy's face was bland.

"What I would do?" Newcastle demanded. "I would do the logical thing, naturally." He turned to the wall map of London between the two windows. "Here is London, for example. Miles and miles of houses, buildings, docks and what have you. Where is the Achilles heel of London? You don't know? I'll tell you, my friend. The Achilles heel of London is right here." He pointed to a section of London near the Tidal Basin. "Here is where the idiotic British army has placed its store of T.N.T., thousands of tons of it."

**T**OMMY MUELLER looked up in surprise.

"How do you know that?" he asked, startled. Newcastle swelled up portentously.

"How do I know that? How do I know a great many things? I find those things out. I have eyes I use and ears that are keen, but no matter. How, you ask me, would I dispose my fleet for an attack if I were moving against London? Simple enough. I would send the bulk of the bombers speeding over the city, attracting the searchlights and interceptor planes. Once they were thoroughly aroused and in the air, my main fleet would pull away to the southward. And while everyone's attention was concentrated on the main fleet, one big bomber would slide out from behind a cloud and attack the Tidal Basin. One lucky hit and London would be shaken to its foundations!"

"As simple as that," marveled Tommy ironically. Aroused by some mocking quality in his tone, Newcastle's eyes grew hard. He cast a glance at Miss Darrow, closing the door behind her as she departed, then turned to Tommy brusquely.

"Enough of that," he said, and licked his lips. "I called you in today to give you some unpleasant



news. I sent my cabled recommendations several days ago, advising the cutting down of the staff here. Today the reply came. I'm sorry to have to inform you that your services will no longer be needed after Saturday of this week." He stared at the test pilot to see what the effect of this news would be. He seemed disappointed at the impassive manner in which Tommy received it.

"Well, I guess that's that," Tommy said at last, his voice as casual as though he were not bidding good-by to a job and salary that meant everything to him, including the only girl in the world who had finally set their wedding date.

**D**INNER that night with Valerie at the Soho restaurant was a grim affair. The girl's blue eyes were dewy with unshed tears and she scarcely touched her food. But she strove to dispel the black cloud of depression that had settled upon Tommy like a shroud.

When he told her that he decided to join the Royal Flying Corps, she didn't voice her protest.

"And they like you, Tommy," said Valerie. "And I'll be happier knowing you were with men who like you, instead of that horrid Newcastle. That man positively hates the ground you walk on and always has."

Tommy shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know why," he said. "I never took the trouble to hate him. He was just a necessary evil."

Valerie started to say something and then thought better of it. She knew why, for one reason at any rate. She had never told Tommy of the letters and phone calls she'd received from Newcastle since that first day Tommy had introduced them at tea. And with each polite refusal he had met at Valerie's hands, his hatred against Tommy had mounted.

Valerie looked fearful.

"I'm—I'm afraid of that man, Tommy," she said. "He means to harm

you somehow, if he can. Please have as little to do with him as possible."

Tommy laughed wryly.

"That situation seems taken care of by circumstances over which I have no control," he said.

He spoke truthfully, even though he didn't realize it, for it was not more than a week later that Newcastle departed from London.

Tommy heard of his departure and of the arrival of the new manager. But by that time he had lost interest. He was in the uniform of the Royal Flying Corps now.

After the enthusiastic welcome and the resulting headache, he threw himself into the joyful task of chaperoning a speedy Hawker Hurricane through the English skies. It was not until nearly two weeks after the departure of Newcastle, that in going through his things one day, Tommy missed his morocco leather notebook embossed in gold with his name, in which he kept his flying notes and air data.

Suddenly he remembered that he had left it in his desk at the office of his old company.

He dropped in one day to recover it. The notebook had disappeared from the desk. No one knew anything about it. It was annoying, but not fatal, he told himself.

His new job was thrilling and the gang he worked with were tops. The C. O. was a leader, not a driver, and a man of rare humor and vast ability. Tommy's period of apprenticeship was nearly at an end. He had little difficulty in mastering the course, requiring only more practice in machine gunning and radio.

"I'll be glad when I can go on patrol next week," he confided to young Sample-Houston over a whiskey and soda at the mess. The two men didn't mention the fact that the squadron had lost two members that week, shot down by a mine-laying Dornier 18-K at the mouth of the Thames. But the memory of Bobby Cartwright and



Reggie Courtney weighed on both their minds. "I'd like to have a go at those Dornier jobs the next time they come over," Tommy said meaningfully.

"You'll be able to have a go at them," said the other flying officer. "That's the third time that same group has run into us. We know the leader's plane, too. He has a newer model of the Dornier. The Diesels are mounted above in pairs instead of singly, and the armament is heavier. The black cross on the fuselage is heavily outlined in silver. We know his name now, as well."

"How come?" asked Tommy curiously.

"The beggar had the nerve to tune in on our wave length the last brush we had with him. Said he'd see us again next week over London. He identified himself as Baron Karl von Neuenschloss."

"He certainly has his nerve," Tommy agreed.

The rest of the gang came in then. Yardly Jones had his guitar and they sang "Pack Up Your Goebbels in Your Old Kit Bag and Heil, Heil, Heil!" and some less worthy ballads. It was an enjoyable evening.

The joyful evening was followed by a most puzzling morning. In the first place, a motorcycle dispatch bearer brought Tommy a letter and was very particular about demanding a receipt. The letter was postmarked Amsterdam and was addressed to Lieutenant Thomas Mueller. He was amazed at its contents. It contained an international Post Office Money Order for fifty pounds. Tommy stared at this, puzzled. The letter bore a Dutch firm name. It read:

Your information relative to the armament and construction of the Vickers Spitfire, new model, has been duly received and payment therefore is herewith forwarded.

My clients desire data concerning the rate of production of the Vickers heavy bomber and such details as you can furnish of armament, fuel capacity and bomb

capacity. This information is to be forwarded to this address with the least possible delay.

THE signature was illegible. Tommy stared at the strange letter, scratching his head in bewilderment. He knew no one in Amsterdam and had certainly sent no information of the Vickers Spitfire there or anywhere else. Then he noted that the letter had been "Opened by Censor."

Memory returned to him then of the messenger and his insistence upon securing a written receipt for the missive.

"What in blazes goes on?" said Tommy aloud, staring at the money order slip and the letter. Suddenly, like a flash of light, there came to him the effect upon a censor of reading a letter of this magnitude.

The whole thing was a mystery. But it came to Tommy that the best thing he could do would be to see his commanding officer at once and place it before him. Squadron Leader Bagley was a good scout.

Tommy had scarcely slipped into his tunic when the commander's orderly knocked.

"Lieutenant, the commander would like to see you immediately at his office," the orderly said.

Instead of meeting the kindly and tolerant squadron leader and putting the matter before him in informal fashion, Tommy found Commander Bagley, cold-eyed and distant, seated with three other officers from the General Staff.

The resulting conference had all the earmarks of a court-martial.

It was plain that none of them, including Bagley, believed his explanation that he knew nothing about the letter or the money order. Finally, when his faltering explanation fell upon stony silence, one of the staff officers drew forth a morocco-bound notebook from a briefcase.

"Have you ever seen this before, Lieutenant Mueller?" asked the staff officer coldly. Tommy took hold of



the book. It was his own notebook, its loose-leaf pages covered with his own handwriting—handwriting that held page after page with notes on all types of British aircraft!

"But, Commander," protested Tommy, "I made these notes when I was working for the American aircraft company. They're ordinary trade notes, such as any employee keeps. . . ." He faltered again. The silence of the listening officers was too much for him. There was a whispered conversation between the four of them. Then Bagley looked up, clearing his throat portentously.

"Much as I regret it, Mueller," he said coldly, "I am forced to place you under arrest until such time as this thing can be investigated more fully and decision made as to whether you will be confined in the Tower."

Tommy's heart did a somersault. The Tower of London! That's where spies were incarcerated before being led out and shot. He turned white, but his eyes were steady as he saluted the four officers and left the room.

His path led him through the mess hall. A buzz of conversation that filled the place suddenly stilled as he entered. He walked through the crowded room in a silence that weighed upon him like an avalanche. Yardly Jones, young Sample-Houston and the rest of the gang busied themselves twiddling their glasses and staring at the table tops as he passed by in silence.

There was still Valerie. He thought of her in the depths of his loneliness. A telephone call brought a frigid response from the usually friendly butler, Viggers.

"No, sir, Miss Valerie isn't at home," he told Tommy. "No, sir, I don't know when Miss Valerie will return, sir. . . . I will tell her you called, sir." There wasn't a spark of friendliness in Viggers' voice.

"And I've spent weeks trying to thaw out that bird," Tommy reflected bitterly.

At five o'clock Bagley's orderly appeared again.

"The commander says, sir, as how you'll be allowed out for half an hour's exercise between seven and half-past seven, sir," he reported, and withdrew gravely.

The only friendly word came from his own orderly who brought him his dinner and surreptitiously slipped a bottle of Scotch whiskey out of his pocket.

"The men down in the hangars is saying there must be some mistake, sir," he comforted. "It's them that sent you this bottle, sir, tellin' me to say 'Cheerio!' for them."

"Thanks," Tommy said gratefully.

The friendly word from the men was as warming as the whiskey they sent and for a while it chased the gloom that had settled upon him. Seven o'clock came and he decided to take his exercise. He slipped quietly down the outside stairway and came out on the field. Cheerful voices came from the hangars where the mechanics were going about their duties.

Suddenly, all talking stopped.

"What the devil is that?" the Yank wondered.

Tommy raised his head sharply as he stood there. From far off, down the Thames somewhere, came the muffled thud of anti-aircraft guns. The sound came nearer as battery after battery took up the thunderous chorus. A single searchlight ray stabbed the sky, followed by another and another, until the questing fingers of light laced and interlaced across the heavens. A siren blared forth near at hand. Suddenly, a flood of men rushed into the hangars. The building behind him throbbed to sudden life.

Fliers ran out in the gloom, hastily donning their flying coats. Young Yardly Jones bumped into him in the gloomy, deceiving half light.

"I beg your pardon," he said absently, then seeing who it was he drew in his breath sharply. He turned



and fled toward the lines of ships being wheeled out onto the tarmac.

The real depth of his gloom did not strike Tommy until that moment. His friends and comrades were rushing joyously to do battle in the air. He could follow their every motion as the motors burst forth into deep-toned hymns of power. Lights flashed on; subdued orders crackled forth. It was a scene of quiet, purposeful activity, as engine after engine took up the mounting chorus and the Merlins sang their battle prelude.

"And here I am, doing nothing," Tommy said bitterly.

Already, the first line was taking off, one plane at a time, in echelon formation. The squadron was half in the air now, their sleek outlines reflecting the massed lights of the field lamps. The roar of anti-aircraft guns grew louder with every passing second. A nearby battery coughed suddenly into action, adding its steel-lunged clamor to the din. The entire squadron was aloft now.

Then Tommy saw the enemy flight. Sleek dark birds passed from behind the shelter of one cloud into the shelter of another. He gripped his hands with such intensity that the nails cut deeply into the palms. The searchlights touched their own fliers for a second and quickly switched away as the flight of Hurricanes throbbed their way higher into the sky.

**N**OW the Nazi Dorniers were out in plain view. As Tommy watched, they suddenly turned and streaked away to the south. Something was hammering at his memory, a jumble of words.

"The Achilles heel of London . . . the Tidal Basin—thousands of tons of T.N.T. . . . send the bulk of the bombers over London, attracting the searchlights and interceptor planes . . . the main fleet would draw away to the south . . . while everyone's attention was concentrated on the main fleet . . . one bomber to slide out be-

hind a cloud and attack Tidal Basin. . . . One lucky hit and London would be stricken to its foundations. . . ."

Tommy's brain shouted the half-remembered words as he peered at the sky above him. It was the intensity of his stare that showed him what few others in the great city saw at the moment. A lone Nazi bomber, slipping and sliding between and behind the clouds, was flying northward—toward the Tidal Basin!

"I've got to stop him!" the Yank almost shouted.

Tommy's heart nearly stopped beating for a second. Then a probing searchlight caught the bomber for a split-second in its beam. In that instant Tommy saw a black cross gleaming with a silver background. And the Nazi bomber had its Diesels mounted in pairs instead of a single mounting! It was the ship of the nervy Nazi leader who had radioed his intentions above the Thames. It was Baron Karl von Neuenschloss himself!

For a second Tommy stood there as if he were made of stone. Then he leaped inside the barracks door, grabbed a flying coat off the nearest hook, pulled it on and ran like one possessed down the tarmac where three reserve planes stood with motors idling. The mechanic standing nearby saw only an officer in a high-collared flying coat. He ran to the nearest plane and gave the Yank a willing hand. Tommy went sprawling into the pit in helter-skelter fashion.

He rammed open the throttle and the powerful ship shot across the field. In a few seconds he had the wheels off the earth, cranked them up into their jackets and rammed the ship's nose at the clouds, straight at that sneaking Nazi plane slipping in and out of the cloud banks.

The clamor of throbbing motors and exploding anti-aircraft shells had moved off to the south now. Tommy glanced over there, saw the squadron high-tailing it after the de-



parting Nazis, and turned grimly to his own quarry.

The Hurricane went up with a hum of power, increasing its speed by lurches. It was a beautiful ship, tuned and singing, every wire throbbing its note of readiness, and the smooth whine of the engine beating a chorus of triumphant desire. Above him, Tommy saw the wraithlike shape of the Nazi bomber pass behind a cloud bank. The Yank tooled his ship into the fleecy darkness of the bank—wet darkness that seemed stifling and in which the plane seemed to be falling illimitably.

The questing beam of a searchlight pierced through a hole in the cloud bank for a second and in its reflected ray he saw the Nazi bomber again and his heart sang.

The Dornier was below him now, driving steadily toward that vital spot, the Tidal Basin and its thousands of tons of T.N.T. Tommy felt vastly alone in the black immensity of space with a fearful responsibility resting upon him. Forgotten was all the bitterness of the last few hours.

"Nothing matters now but my preventing that Nazi bomber from completing his hellish mission," Tommy thought aloud.

Tommy dived at a long slant at approximately the place where he had last sighted the Dornier. He shot into the darkness of a cloud bank and the fingers of the mist stroked his face with their clammy touch. Then he roared into the open space below the cloud, where searchlights were waving their slender lances of light, groping unceasingly in the mist and darkness.

**S**OMEHOW, the Dornier had eluded him. He grew angry. Memory of the deaths of Bobby Cartwright and Reggie Courtney, shot down by von Neuenschloss, returned to rouse his cold rage.

Far ahead of him, almost over the Tidal Basin, he saw the Dornier!

He opened full throttle and rushed down the skyway like a bomb, hurtling toward that evil thing that seemed poised in the sky. The wandering finger of a searchlight touched the Dornier and steadied down suddenly, holding the enemy ship in its grasp. The Dornier lurched sideways into a cloud to avoid the revealing tentacle of light.

The Hurricane reeled off in pursuit, zooming into the cloud bank like some living thing wanting to be in at the kill. It seemed to be guided of its own volition. Tommy scarcely knew that his own hands were at the controls.

The ray of a searchlight flicked over him and clung on. Damn it! Didn't they have any sense down there on the ground, he raged.

He gritted his teeth. Then the searchlight waved him forward, beyond the cloud—pointing the way to the quarry. He knew without thinking that hundreds of field glasses down there on the ground were focused upon him anxiously. The Nazi ship suddenly appeared at his right, circling to get back to its target. He saw pinkish bubbles of light spewing from its top machine-gun cockpit. Something whined past him and a piece of fabric snapped off the left wing.

Then a bullet drilled cleanly through his left shoulder. It was a combination of the smash and stinging pain that flung him back against the seat, helpless for a long second.

"I can't give up!" he swore. "I can't!"

His plane veered and rose with the jerk he gave to the controls. Then he fought for composure and succeeded in righting the plane. After the first shock the shoulder felt numb. How long he could last out without bleeding to death, he did not know. But the Nazi ship was edging back toward that target which was now so near at hand underneath.

"Don't be a sissy, you dope!"



Tommy heard his voice shouting encouragement to himself.

The Nazi ship was fast nearing the danger spot. Tommy flung himself at the sleek enemy craft, the eight guns in his plane edge blazing, although the range was too great as yet to permit accurate shooting. The questing searchlights caught him in their glare for a second and he cursed them again, but they swiftly shifted across the void between him and the Nazi ship, pointing it out. It was as though they were waving him on to the kill, encouraging him and pointing out the quarry.

Life or death seemed of little importance at that second. Crouched over his stick he held the nose of his plane steadily on the target and flew at it like a giant arrow. In that one second, he was heedless of the consequences and meant to smash full into the enemy ship if no other course presented itself. The Nazi plane suddenly turned.

Its guns bubbled again. Steel-jacketed whispers of death poked silent fingers through the cowlings and fuselage of Tommy's plane. But he hurled onward regardless.

They were almost over the Tidal Basin area now. To Tommy came the sudden horrifying thought that should he smash the other ship down in flames, its heavy bomb cargo would inevitably crash into the dangerous area. With that thought, he stepped hard on his left rudder. His ship cartwheeled and for a second the belly of the Nazi ship was at his mercy, from stem to stern. A raking volley from his eight Brownings would have sent it down in flames. But he held his fire.

**T**HEN his face was wreathed in smiles. For the Nazi veered to the right—away from the Tidal Basin. The German plane was turning back to the coast. Tommy was determined to herd it away from the dangerous area.

The questing searchlights then illumined a scene that has seldom been equalled in the air. Tommy went wild. Handling the responsive Hurricane as a skilled fencer handles his foil, Tommy feinted at the German ship, diving now at its tail, zooming, half-rolling, turning and diving again at it broadside, steadily pushing it away from the danger zone.

The Nazi guns bubbled and spewed angrily, seeking to hamstring that elusive shape that repeatedly threatened its safety. The men on the ground and roofs below marveled as the searchlights picked up that unbelievable drama of the skies. The Hurricane was like a tense hawk swooping and diving at the big Nazi bomber, driving it steadily and remorselessly away from that danger area. The anti-aircraft gunners withheld their fire.

Cheers went up from the gun crews as the swooping Hurricane miraculously avoided the streams of tracer bullets erupting from the large Dornier. Tommy pushed the big bomber farther and farther out of the danger area, until both ships were lost in the clouds.

A great lassitude was settling upon Tommy as he shot into the damp mists. Then his radio sounded.

"Who are you?" it asked insistently, again and again before he shook off that feeling of faintness and responded.

"Mueller — Thirty-second Squadron," he answered.

"Well done, Mueller!" was the commendation of the radio operator on the ground.

But it wasn't well done. It wasn't finished—yet. Tommy wondered how long he could last with that blood steadily dripping from the shoulder wound and the queer spells of dizziness that swept over him. Then he caught sight of the sleek body of that Nazi bomber. It had increased the lead between the following Hurricane and itself and was attempting to re-



turn to the area that was its objective.

"Stubborn Heinie!" Tommy said aloud, half-admiringly. He shook the fog out of his head and steeled himself to foil the enemy maneuver. Again he darted and zoomed in and out of cloud banks, brushing within inches of the Nazi craft. The pilot of that plane, after having seen that swift shape hurtling at him so near that death nearly touched him with its grisly finger, again turned and fled toward the open sea.

It seemed to Tommy that he was pursuing the Nazi down a vast canyon and that echoes smashed and roared about him, flung back from illimitably tall cliffs of cloud that walled him in. His shoulder was in great pain. With every beat of his heart, torment thrust itself at his tortured nerves, subsiding in waves of pain that ran all over his body.

It seemed to him that he must at all costs get out of that canyon of clouds. He saw the stars at last through the upper mist and straightened out, squinting and staring at the Nazi plane below him and far ahead.

The clouds had withdrawn to the horizon in great black masses and there was clear going ahead. He glanced down at the earth and noted a queer gray sheen to the surface below him. It took him a full minute to realize that it was not the earth he was viewing, but the sea.

**I**N THE grayish half-light he saw dark shapes huddled beneath him seemingly standing still on the turbulent waters. As his eyesight cleared temporarily, he saw that it was a convoy of ships, the restless torpedo-boat destroyers coursing around its flanks like well-trained sheep dogs. It took him another second to see that the Nazi had also spotted the convoy. The sleek bomber saw a good chance to rid itself of its load of bombs. The Dornier was already set for the downward dive when Tommy, snapping himself out of another engulfing wave

of pain, gave his ship full throttle and hurled himself down the skyways at the bomber.

There came a spewing bubble of anti-aircraft fire from the nearest destroyer. Fleecy tufts of cotton broke above and around the Nazi bomber, but it still sped toward its mark.

Tommy, crouched over his stick, his wavering eyes peering through the Aldis sights, knew that what he must do must be done quickly. How many seconds remained to him before complete unconsciousness overtook him he did not know, but they were few enough. With a final supreme effort he concentrated every nerve and fibre of his being on the trail of the Nazi bomber before him and bore down on it with the speed of light.

Too late, the rearmost gunner saw snarling death hurtling down at his ship. A scattering burst of shots filled the air around Tommy, but he did not know it. His thumb sought and found the firing apparatus on his stick.

His head drooped forward as the eight Brownings blazed their implacable roar of death. The triple glass cowl of the Nazi pilots' compartment dissolved and the remorseless stream of lead drilled its way through flying helmet and skull.

"Got him" Tommy yipped. "I got him!"

The concentrated blast of the Browning guns wavered and wandered back the length of the Nazi bomber, ripping and tearing like a veritable scythe of death. The great ship staggered abruptly and lost momentum. Then a crimson sheet of flame spewed from its broad back. The ship slipped sideways, turned over once and plummeted to the broad bosom of the sea.

A great cheer rose from the crowded decks of the convoy of troop transports, a cheer that shook sea and sky. But Tommy did not hear that cheer. Somehow, as the sea rose to  
(Continued on page 111)



# Roamer of the Wilderness

By R. S. LERCH

*Author of "The Pool of Horrible Death," "The Creeping Devour," etc.*



Silently the Lynx paddled the wounded man down the stream

THE light of the camp fire played fitfully over the kindly features of the little man and held at bay the blackness beneath the surrounding spruces. It barely touched the form of the strong-faced man seated cross-legged at the edge of the gloom, and his re-

When Sneaking Wolverines Torment His Pard, the Lynx Hits the Woods Trails in Search of Sly Revenge!



clining companion whose massive head rested on extended forepaws.

"A wolverine got into your cache by traveling the crust of a high snow drift," the little man said. "He ate much, carried away some, and defiled the rest. This man, coming down with his winter's furs three days ago, discovered it. He replenished the cache with almost the last of his supplies, for he thought you might be badly in need of the food that was supposed to be there."

"Who?" The question was so softly spoken that it seemed almost a part of the murmur of the river at his back.

Instead of answering, Father Picotte leaned forward and added a few sticks of dry wood to the fire, then gazed thoughtfully into the dancing flames. His words were spoken as if in reverie.

"You are a strange man, Dale Hackett, with a strange local history that is recorded only in the fanciful tales of your friends, the Chippewas. You roam the wilderness from Lake Winnipeg to James Bay. From the railroad on the south, you roam north beyond Fort Churchill. Seven years ago you came out of the south, from below the border, presumably a tenderfoot. Within two years you had become the 'Lynx,' an anomaly, a contemporary legend.

"At first you helped the Mounted Police to secure justice. Recently the police have many times found their quarry—too late. Sentence had already been passed and executed. And rumors have said, 'the Lynx.'"

"Who?" came the question a second time, a little sharper but no louder.

The little man glanced slowly around his temporary camp, then continued as though there had been no interruption.

"You appear suddenly, and leave suddenly, and no one knows where you will be seen next. You live in debt. Always there seems to be some

obligation you must pay to one who has wronged or befriended you or one of your comrades. Rumor has it that you have discovered a vast deposit of placer gold, but that you visit it only when in need of money for yourself or some friend. And now this man who befriended you by replenishing your food cache has become another creditor to be repaid. Is it not so?"

He waited. There was no reply. The silence dragged on.

"He is the young trapper, Dave Evans," Father Picotte admitted at last. "Do you know him?"

"I know him. He trades at White-water Landing."

The missionary nodded. "He had a most successful winter. His canoe was loaded with peltry, marten, fisher, wolverine, mink, even some of the white arctic fox that wandered farther south than usual."

**D**ALE HACKETT arose. The great beast lying at his feet stood up. Its dark, shaggy body was long and powerful. Its head, with the erect ears of a wolf, was high as the tall man's waist. There was blue Dane in the massive jowls and broad head, and timber wolf in the shaggy hair, lithe ease of movement and bushy tail.

"Thank you, Father. I have heard that the breed, Amik the Beaver, was given whiskey by a white man. He got very drunk and burned your mission at Trout Lake. Now he has seen the error of his ways and is rebuilding the little church with his own hands. And the white man who gave him the whiskey has left the country and is not likely to return soon."

Hackett turned toward the birch canoe resting on the shelving rock at the edge of the river. Father Picotte arose and walked after him.

"You have heard?" He smiled gently as he echoed the tall woodsman. "You could have had nothing to do with these changes of heart, could you?"



The stern features of the woodsman relaxed. His lips parted for a flashing instant in an answering smile. Then he lifted the canoe into the water, motioned with a hand.

"In, King!" he ordered while he braced the stern of the craft between his knees.

The big dog leaped lightly and landed in the space before the bow thwart. Hackett stepped into the stern. With the same swift motion, he shoved the canoe out into the stream.

"Good luck, Father," he called, dipping the paddle into the water.

"Peace go with you ever, my son," the missionary replied. Watching the little craft move into the current and grow indistinct in the gloom, he added: "Like his namesake, the Lynx travels much at night."

The Lynx traveled not only that night, but throughout the next day. He made long portages, crossing from one river to another, following trails known only to himself, and ignoring the easier, well traveled routes. He moved in an almost straight line toward Whitewater Landing. The light pack and birch canoe appeared little more than a slight inconvenience to the long-legged, powerful man.

"By early evening, he completed the portage that brought him to the shores of the Wild Goose. There remained but one more portage, a ten-mile carry that cut across a long bow of the river, a portage that no one else ever used. After that carry it was but half a day's travel down the river to Whitewater Landing.

He floated the canoe and started for the portage, two miles away. He had gone scarcely half the distance when he swung the canoe back to the bank. A thread of smoke ascended from the midst of a balsam thicket a short distance from the shore. Yet no beached canoe or other sign of occupancy indicated that anyone was camping at the spot.

He stepped softly onto the sand of the beach. Instantly he found that this deserted camp site had a story to tell. There were blackened embers where a small cooking fire had been extinguished by water. Around it was a confusion of tracks, most of them mere indistinct hollows in the sand. But where the sand was damp near the river's edge, he noted the distinguishing print of a boot heel and, at another place, of moccasins. On the shore were the furrows cut by two canoe keels when the craft had been thrust into the water. Other spoor led back into the balsam thicket.

A long, patient examination of the many signs along the shore began to form a picture in the mind of the Lynx. Only then did he follow the woods trail. In the center of the balsam clump, Hackett found fewer signs. But these carried even greater interest than those on the shore.

**T**HE pencil of smoke that had attracted his attention arose from a hole in the ground near the base of a balsam. A fire had been built there and left untended. The unburned wood ends still remained at the edge of the hole, but the smoldering fire in the center had eaten deep into the combustible mold. Something had broken the little blisters on the smooth bark of the balsam some three feet above the ground. The Lynx examined them closely.

Then he knelt beside the hole and picked up a short piece of *babiche* thong. It was blackened and brittle. A tiny piece of charred hide lay near it. Its thickness suggested it was moosehide from the sole of a moccasin.

Dale Hackett finally turned back to his canoe. From his pack he took a pail and filled it with water. He made more than twenty-five trips with water before the thread of smoke completely disappeared. When he re-



turned to the canoe the last time King, who had been nosing around the camp, was lying at the water's edge, worrying something he had found. On command, the dog brought it to his master. Hackett took from the reluctant jaws the dark brown pelt of a big mink.

**W**HEN Hackett finally made camp, it was at the far end of the ten-mile portage that cut across the wide bend of the slow, placid Wild Goose. He crawled into his light sleeping bag. The night breeze brought him the muted murmur of Balsam Rapids, five miles up-stream. At his feet, King was stretched out where his sensitive ears and nose would catch the faintest message on the air.

Two hours past midnight the dog awoke, lifted his head, and faced up-river. A low growl rumbled in his throat. Hackett's eyes opened. Like the dog, he was immediately fully conscious. He noted the alert attitude of King and slid out of his sleeping bag, one hand reaching for the rifle lying beside his pack.

Again the dog growled low. Hackett heard it then, a thin, high sound he could not identify. He moved to the water's edge. King stalked beside him and both their heads turned up-river. A hand on the dog's rising hackles quieted the animal. The sound came again, distinct and recognizable this time—a high, wild, crazy peal of laughter. A second interval of silence was followed by a burst of maudlin song in a masculine voice. The song was interspersed with laughter and shouted oaths. The sound died.

Beneath his hand, Hackett could feel the dog suddenly begin to tremble. He looked down. The beast's eyes glowed greenly in the silver moonlight. His lifted lips bared the murderous white fangs in a growl that was half whine, half snarl. This

huge animal feared no man nor any beast roaming the northern wilderness. But he was deathly afraid now, terrorized by the voice of insanity that was drawing closer through the sinister night.

Hackett's glance shifted from his companion to the upper reaches of the river. Something moved on the surface of the water. Again came a peal of wild laughter, a snatch of song whose words were a collection of disconnected curses. Then he saw it. It was a long, narrow raft with what looked like a man seated in the center of it. The sudden rising of the human form to a sitting position had caught Hackett's attention. After the burst of sound, the man appeared to lie down again.

Quickly the Lynx launched his birch bark and met the raft in the middle of the stream. The raft—three driftwood logs bound at the ends by ropes of willow bark—was flimsy, ready to fall apart in the first swift water. It must have been constructed at the foot of Balsam Rapids, Hackett thought.

A single sharp look at the man who was mumbling incoherently identified him to Hackett as Dan Evans, the trapper who had replenished the robbed cache. He put up no resistance when the Lynx rolled him over the gunwale into the canoe. His last outburst of laughter and singing curses had ended in semi-collapse.

On shore, Hackett pillowed the man's head on the pack while he built a fire. By its light he saw why the man was delirious. Long-dried blood matted his hair where a blow had cut the scalp. But this wound merited only a cursory examination. It was the man's legs and arms that needed close inspection.

From wrists to elbows, the arms were a mass of red, angry flesh exposed by broken blisters. The sleeves of the woolen shirt, reaching only to the elbows, were charred at the edges.



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Below the man's calves, the remains of the moccasins hung like spats, the lower parts burned away. His feet were in the same condition as his arms, swollen and blistered. The flesh seemed to have been literally cooked, with forest dirt ground into it.

Dale Hackett straightened after his examination. His narrowed gray eyes were cold and glittering, hard and fierce as King's wolfish eyes. He set to work swiftly, hanging a pail of water to boil over the fire. Digging an oilskin kit from his pack, he took out a little bottle containing white pellets and a hypodermic syringe. He finally extinguished his fire, placed his pack in the canoe, and approached Dan Evans. A few moments later, the trapper was deeply asleep. The dirt had been cleansed from his wounds. Silently the Lynx put him into the canoe and pushed out into the stream.

Two miles below the camp site, a narrow creek flowed into the  
(Continued on page 102)



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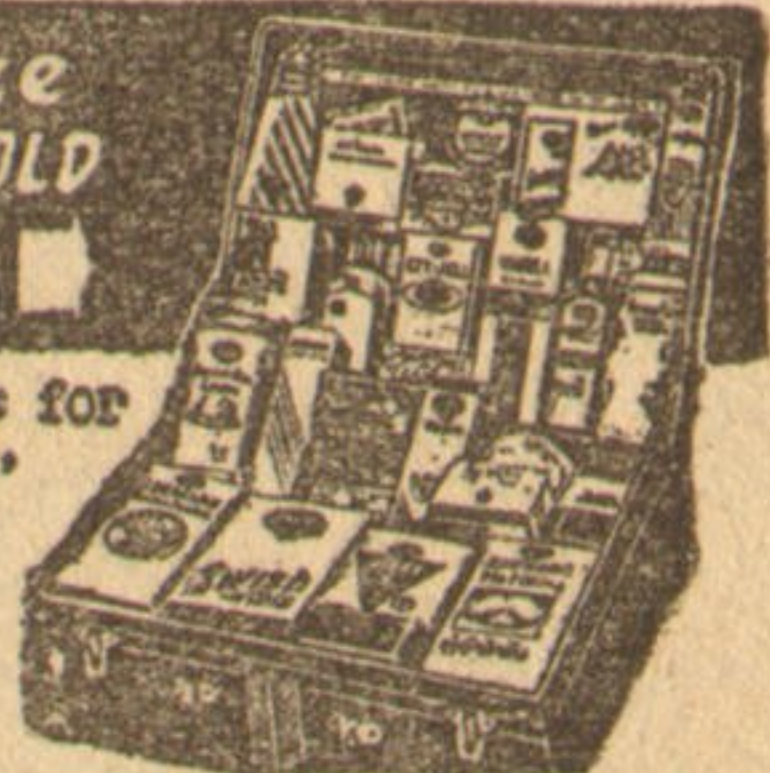
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(Continued from page 101)

Wild Goose. Hackett turned into it. He tracked where necessary, waded the stream and hauled on a moosehide rope. By poling at times, and when possible by paddling, he worked his way to the foot of a rapids. Here he made two trips through the bush, once with the sleeping man, the second time with the canoe and pack.

**A**CROSS the water of the small lake, to the shores of which he had portaged, arose the wigwams and loaf-shaped lodges of a Chippewa village. In the dawnlight, cooking fires had begun to send their columns of smoke into the cool morning air.

A motley collection of mongrels raced barking to the water's edge. They backed away when King showed his teeth. A word from Hackett and the big dog leaped from the canoe, but refrained from charging the Indian dogs. A young squaw and a buck hurried toward Hackett as he stepped into the water and eased the craft gently forward to the beach.

"*B'jou*, Pishu," nodded the buck, grinning slightly as he called Hackett by his Indian name.

Hackett nodded. "*B'jou*, Jim and Mary. I have here *ah-go-se chimook-aman*, a most sick white man."

The squaw and the buck approached and looked down into the canoe. Pity softened the dark eyes of the young woman as she knelt to examine the arms and feet of the sleeping trapper. Hackett spoke to her in Chippewa.

"I must go. I will leave him with you. Listen carefully so that you will make no mistake. Have you plenty of tea?"

The young squaw shook her head.

"*Kawin kago*," she murmured.

"None at all? Then you must gather many cedar leaves. They have the medicine—tannic acid—in them the same as tea. Crush them and boil them, making a strong brew. Let it

cool. Then cover his arms and feet with clean, dry cloths and pour on this brew. Keep adding the brew until the flesh turns dark brown and a hard crust is formed over the wounds. When he awakes, tell him to lie quiet until I return. Understand?"

The squaw nodded. "*Ne-se-totam*."

Hackett lifted Evans and carried him to their hogan. It was one of the loaf-shaped buildings. The floor was matted with clean balsam bows, the sides rolled up from the ground so the cool breeze drifted through. He laid the trapper on a bed of spruce boughs, then turned to the brave.

"Jim, it is possible that I may need your help, and also the help of some of the young men. Will they be in camp for the next day or two?"

The buck grinned eagerly.

"Some of them are always here. They will be glad to help Pishu, who has done so much for them and their families."

"I may be back then, and require help suddenly. I go now to Whitewater Landing. Have you been there lately?"

The Indian shook his head.

"Charley One Knife returned just before daylight, though. He had gone to buy cartridges for his rifle. He said two men were there, traders new to the country. One of them was a big man with black whiskers. He was the trader who tied my Uncle Joe Moose to a tree last winter. He built a fire under him till he told where his most valuable furs were hid, then robbed him. These two men had just sold Whitewater Pierre many fine pelts. They said they had traded for those furs far to the north, along the Churchill River. They took money for the pelts, but few supplies."

"They got the pelts on the Churchill, yet they brought them clear to Whitewater instead of trading at Oxford House?"

The Indian looked long at Hackett, his face expressionless.



"Pishu, my brother, knows something," he said quietly.

"What he doesn't know, he will find out," Hackett retorted in a sharp voice.

**I**T WAS early afternoon when Dale Hackett lifted the birch bark onto the floating dock at the clearing. A big log trade building and a collection of smaller cabins comprised Whitewater Landing. With scarcely a glance at the two canvas canoes overturned on the beach, he strode to the veranda of the main building. A wrinkled little man with skin the color of Indian smoke-tanned moosehide waited there. His white mustache lifted in a smile that showed half a dozen discolored teeth.

"'Bout time you was payin' us a visit, Dale," he greeted the Lynx. "Begun to wonder if you'd left the country for good."

At the same time, he flicked his eyes sideward, with the faintest gesture of his head to indicate the trade room behind him. The Lynx barely nodded to indicate that he understood there were visitors inside.

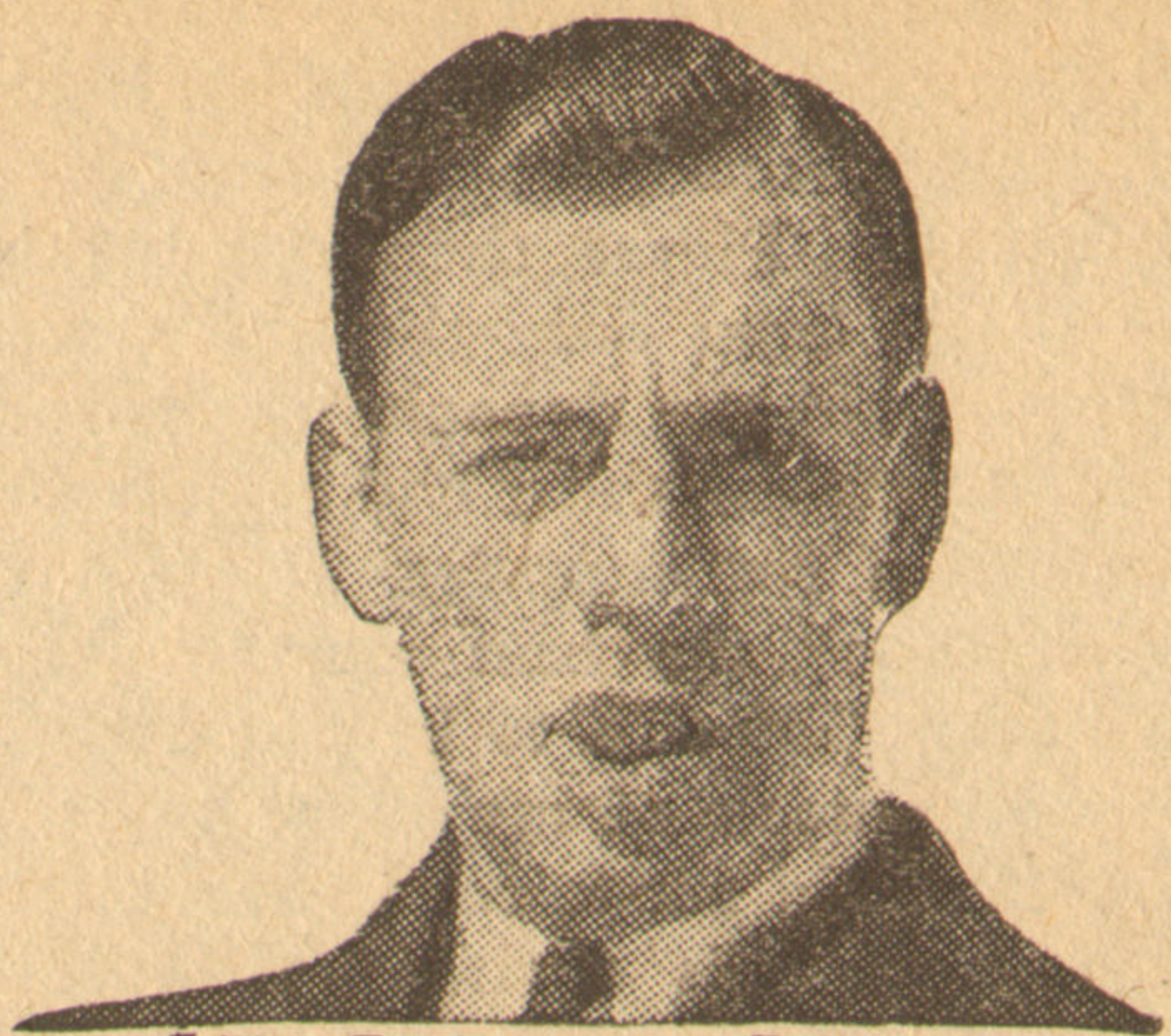
"Been doing a little prospecting," Hackett stated as Whitewater Pierre stepped aside for him to enter the trade room.

"Any luck?" the trader asked carelessly.

But his wise old eyes mirrored his quick surprise. It was unlike the taciturn woodsman to offer gratuitous information—unless there was a purpose behind it. He waited, prepared to follow Hackett's lead.

The change that appeared in the tall man would have seemed slight to a casual acquaintance. To old Whitewater Pierre it was revolutionary. Hackett chuckled, then his mouth widened in a grin. Even King, walking at his heels, looked up at the unaccustomed sound from his master.

(Continued on page 104)



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*(Continued from page 103)*

The Lynx drew from inside his buckskin shirt a small, fat hide sack.

"Heft this, Pierre, then look inside. And that's from only the first dozen pans. Found the deposit just before my food got low and I had to quit and come down for supplies. I want to buy some of the best marten skins you have. They're to be put around the pretty neck of my niece in Boston. Never did get to send her a birthday present this spring. Now let's hustle. I want to start back and reach the Balsam Rapids portage before camping. Oh, you got company, huh?"

Abruptly he stopped talking, glancing toward the two men at the far end of the long counter, ostensibly looking over the trade goods on the shelves behind it. Whitewater got part of Hackett's play, but the rest of it still had him puzzled. Nevertheless he played up to the Lynx.

"Sure, two traders just in yesterday. Meet Flame Doan and Flip Tarney, Hackett. They're new travelin' traders in this territory, but they brought in as fine a collection of pelts as I seen this year. Since they come, I won't have no trouble fillin' your order for prime marten pelts. Got some beauties."

**H**ACKETT'S manner had become suddenly and quite obviously reserved. The big man with the full, black beard, thick lips and piggish little eyes chuckled ponderously. His eyes seemed to shine with good humor, but the Lynx noted that their depths were veiled.

"Me and Flip understood, Hackett, and you don't need to worry. Me and him just cashed in on our gold mine. We done right well, so we ain't huntin' for more just yet. Not like takin' on a tough job like prospectin', anyway. Besides, we just been talkin' about headin' south this afternoon and makin' Nelson Lake before dark.

We ain't hornin' in on your find, so you don't need to be scared."

Whitewater Pierre fought back a strangled cough. He had to turn his back to the men, jerking his hand up to his mouth to smother the raucous laugh that had almost got away from him. Dale Hackett, however, grinned in relief, his sudden fears apparently gone. He nodded agreeably as Flame Doan's little partner, whose false teeth clicked audibly whenever he spoke, chipped in.

"That's right, Hackett. In fact, we was just on the way to load our stuff." Flip turned to the trader. "We'll take them blankets you offered for the extra canoe we won't be needin' no more, and then we'll shove off."

**LD** Whitewater Pierre went to the other end of the counter. He pulled down two heavy wool double blankets from a shelf and passed them over. Flame Doan nodded his massive head to Hackett.

"Luck with your mine, mister," he rumbled, and stalked out.

Flip Tarney encircled the rolled blankets with a sinewy arm and followed his partner to one of the smaller cabins. A little later, Whitewater and Hackett watched the two shove off and head south. Hackett carried out a load of provisions, then returned to the trade room.

"One skin will be enough," he said quickly. "It doesn't have to be marten, or prime, just so it's one of those Doan and Tarney traded in."

Whitewater Pierre's eyes twinkled as he eagerly shuffled into the storehouse behind the trade room. When he came back, he draped a couple of weasel skins across the counter.

"Up to your usual stunts, eh, Hackett? And I know there's no use askin' questions. But maybe you'd anyhow like to look at the underside of the right forepaw."

"What do you think I got these for?" Hackett asked tonelessly.



Whitewater's grin broadened, exposing all six of his widely spaced teeth.

"To look at the underside of the right forepaw," he returned.

In the red glow of the sinking sun, Dale Hackett headed back north, up the Wild Goose. His long arms and powerful strokes drove the craft at better than three miles an hour against the current. Just before midnight, he reached the camp site at the foot of the portage around Balsam Rapids. Here he unloaded his supplies and built a bright fire.

When the fire of dried poplar was going, he built a framework of green split birch above it. The birch, as it dried, would burn and gradually ignite the sticks above it. The fire would continue burning without further replenishment for a couple of hours, enough to advertise the camp site even though Hackett would not be there.

Silently the Lynx slipped into his canoe, motioned King into his accustomed place. With his light pack and rifle before him, he headed downstream. This time he kept to the dark shadow close to shore, moving quietly as the silent flight of the horned owl through the wilderness night.

King's low growl gave the first warning. A murmur from the master quieted the big dog, but he stood with his head thrust past the bow and turned toward the opposite shore. As they rounded the bend ahead, Dale Hackett saw the spot of light. Opposite it were two figures moving about.

Keeping to the blackest of shadows near shore, he passed the spot and crossed the river a mile below. Once more he put in at the narrow creek that entered the Wild Goose. But now he left the canoe where paddling became impracticable, and headed across country at a tireless trot. On

(Continued on page 106)

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(Continued from page 105)

the shore of the little lake, he took off his buckskin shirt, left his rifle and the contents of his pockets beside it on the shore. He dived into the water, swimming with powerful strokes for the Indian village.

IN THE little cove that had hidden their fire from all but a short stretch of the river directly opposite it, one of the two men stirred in his new heavy wool blanket roll. He muttered, grunted and opened his eyes. Without rising, he glanced around, poked the coals of the fire and added a few sticks of dry wood. Then he sat up, reached across and shook his companion.

"Snap out of it, Flip!" he whispered. "That lanky swamp rat'll be hittin' the trail by daylight. We gotta get closer so's to see where he leaves the river. We close in later and do our work. Got a hunch he'll be a tough proposition to get information out of, so we ain't stagin' our show where we're likely to be interrupted."

The little man sat up in his blankets, blinking and clicking his teeth as he muttered curses. He sniffed the air, his nose twitching like a rabbit's. When he looked around, his eyes darted here and there uneasily.

"I still got a hunch that guy wasn't all he made out he was. Down Nipigon way, I heard a half-breed trapper from this country tellin' tales about someone he called 'Pishu,' the lynx. If this guy's that Lynx, we walked right into—"

"He's the Lynx," came a calm voice from the dark woods behind them.

Both heads jerked up, then snapped around toward the back of the little cove. The widening circle of light from the rising fire glowed on the tall man who had come noiselessly through that tangle of bush. Motionless, with rifle barrel resting carelessly across his left forearm, he stood like some giant emissary of



Nanabozhoo, the all-powerful god of the Chippewa.

Flame Doan's hand darted under the blankets, whipped out with an automatic. Before the gun leveled, the figure in the gloom snapped:

"Look behind you!"

Gun half-raised, Doan checked his movement instinctively as he slowly turned his head. A murderous snarl chilled his blood before he had completed the turn. Eight feet behind him crouched the huge blue Dane, the savage blood of wolfish ancestors glittering in his slitted eyes, gleaming from his bared white fangs. The hairy fingers of Flame Doan released their grip on the automatic. At the low command of his master, King relaxed. But his fierce eyes never shifted their glower from the two men.

Dale Hackett stepped into the little glade and stood tall and impassive before the men who still sat in their blankets. His voice was cool, devoid of all emotion, and his features were as expressionless as his voice.

"A trapper who befriended me was visited by two men while he slept. He awoke and was clubbed into unconsciousness. The men took his peltry and canoe. They were afraid to murder him. But before they left, they tied him to a balsam and built a fire under his feet. They left him tied to the tree, knowing that if he had the nerve to bear the torture of working around the tree, the fire could burn away the thongs around his wrists.

"He could get loose, but he would be too late to follow them, even if he were able to walk. The trapper marked his pelts by putting three tiny punctures in a line in the skin of each right forepaw."

Hackett drew from a pocket the dark brown skin of a mink and tossed it on the ground before Doan and Tarney. His cold, emotionless voice continued.

(Continued on page 108)

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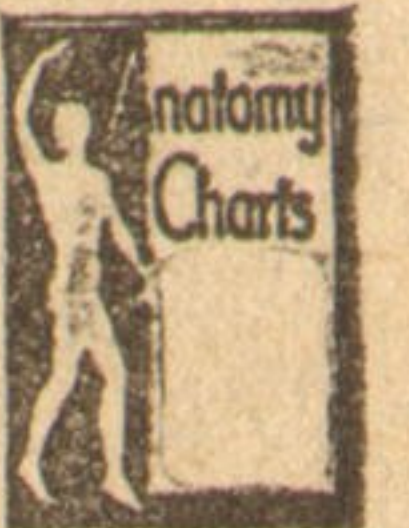
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(Continued from page 107)

"Yesterday two men traded several thousand dollars worth of fur to Whitewater Pierce at the Landing. On the underside of the right forepaw of each of the pelts were three tiny punctures in a straight line."

He drew from his pocket two weasel pelts and tossed them down beside the mink.

"Last winter one of these men tied up a Chippewa near Fort Nelson and built a fire under him. The agony made the trapper reveal where he kept his most valuable furs. The man then robbed him. That old Indian was also a friend of the Lynx."

**D**URING the silence that followed, Flame Doan glanced surreptitiously toward his partner. The little man, whose hands were hidden beneath his blanket, nodded almost imperceptibly. Doan jerked his head at the two skins and his heavy voice rumbled truculently.

"You're crazy. I don't know what the hell you're talkin' about. Anyway, them skins're no proof that'd stand up, and you know it. Why—"

"Look behind you," Hackett snapped for the second time.

His quiet voice had risen sharply, aimed unmistakably at Flip Tarney. Involuntarily the little man's head jerked around. His hand had been easing slyly toward the top of the blanket. It dropped swiftly.

Behind him stood three Indians. Their gun barrels were centered directly at Flip Tarney's head. Hackett made a motion with his right hand, then stepped closer to the fire. Two more bucks slipped noiselessly from the woods. They were carrying a stretcher of two ash saplings with hides lashed between them. On it, his face gray and drawn beneath its deep tan, his forearms and feet bulky with white, damp bandages, lay Dan Evans. He looked blearily at the two men beside the fire and let out one strident curse of identification.



Hackett's rifle swung, its muzzle seeming to cover both men at once. Flame Doan, fear welling to the surface of his piggish little eyes, glared around wildly. Flip Tarney hastily brought his hand out from beneath the blankets. It was empty, and he began whining for mercy. In a voice that was low and terrible, Hackett asked:

"Where is the money Whitewater Pierce gave you for Evans' peltry?"

Flame Doan forgot his fear and swore viciously that they had no money with them. Whatever they had received had been left on deposit at the Landing. But the terrified Flip Tarney remembered the stories he had heard of the Lynx. He squealed as Hackett took a long stride toward him.

Hastily he pointed to the smallest of their packs, lying between the two men.

Hackett made a motion with his head. The Chippewa, whose squaw had followed Hackett's instructions in taking care of Dan Evans, strode forward. He picked up the pack and dumped its contents on the ground. A bag of coin and a package of currency were the last of the bundles to drop out. The Indian gravely gathered them up and laid them on the stretcher beside Evans.

Then he stepped forward and fished out the two automatics Tarney and Doan had concealed beneath their blankets. Quickly he picked up their rifles. At last he drew rawhide thongs from his pocket and the three bucks with rifles stepped around to the front. Under the menace of the gun muzzles, only verbal protests came from Doan and Tarney. When their arms were bound at their backs and their legs tied at the knees, Hackett turned to one of his friends.

"Jim, my camp is located at the foot of Balsam Rapids. Do not touch the food here. It may be needed.

(Concluded on page 110)

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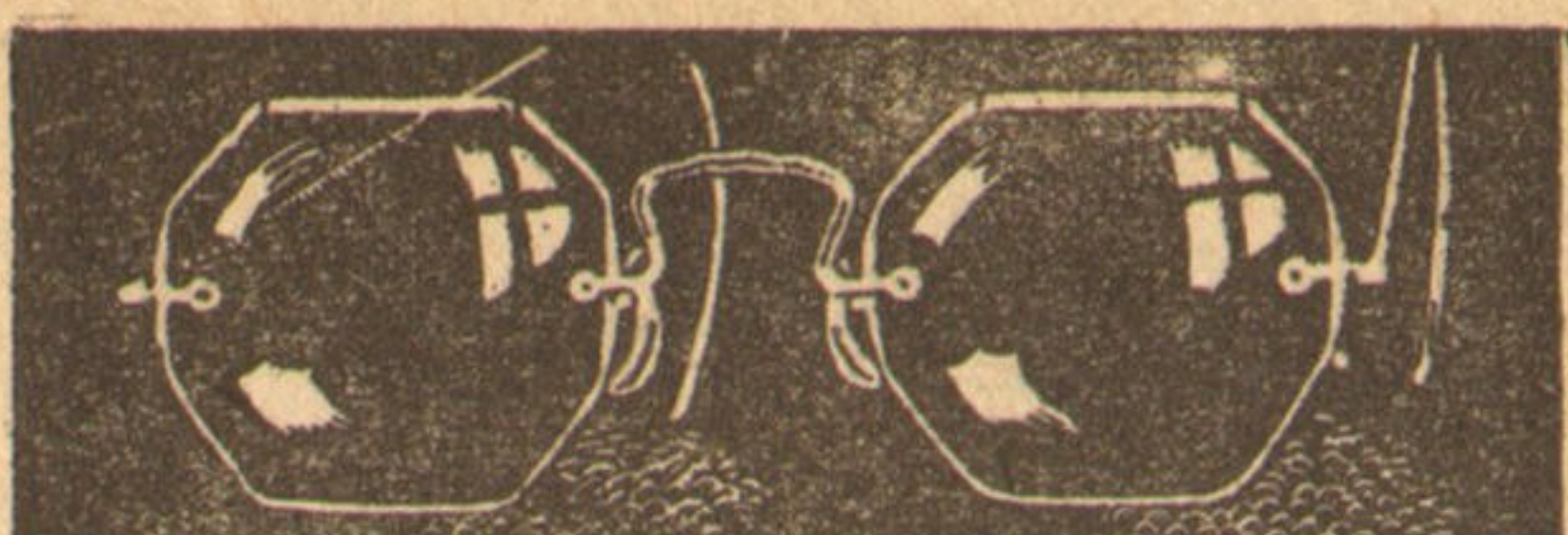
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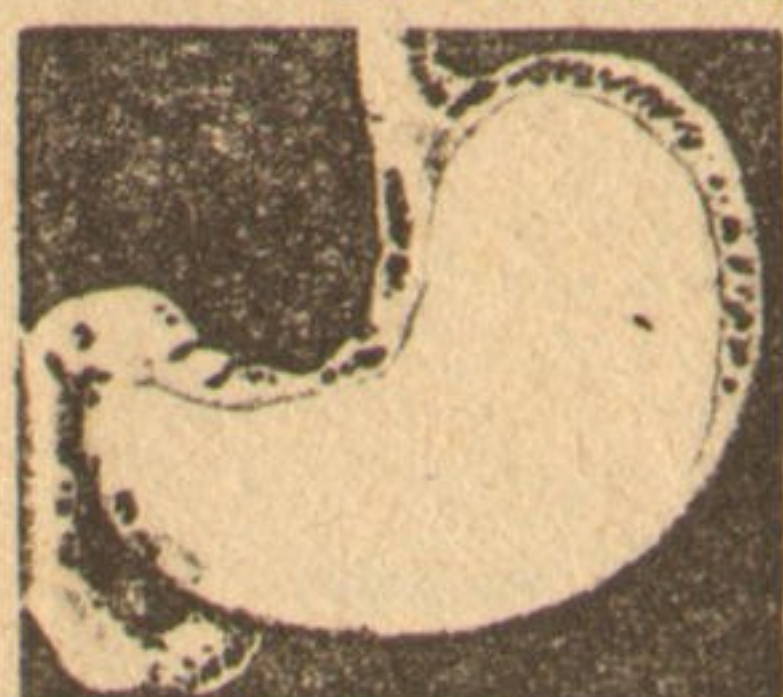
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(Concluded from page 109)

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The native nodded, his dark eyes beginning to glow.

"N'shin—good," he murmured. "We will be at your camp before daylight, I think. The big one is tough, but he will learn his lesson quickly."

He stepped forward, knelt, and began to unlace the boots Flame Doan had failed to remove when he had rolled up in his blankets. Hackett turned toward the spot where he had beached his canoe below the camp. At the edge of the fire glow he halted, looked back, and spoke to the two prisoners.

"Strong tea, cooled and applied to burns, will remove much of the pain. It will form a protective coating which will allow new skin to grow beneath."

Then he turned and disappeared without replying to the cries of the two men.

A CANOE moved silently across the moon path out on the river. In the bow, a huge dog turned his head toward the spot of firelight on shore. As he listened to the human howls, the animal's teeth gleamed white in what may have been a canine grin.

In the stern, a strong-featured man wielded the paddle in long, even strokes. He did not glance toward the fire. But deep in his gray eyes appeared a light that may have been satisfaction in the knowledge that one more debt was being duly canceled.



## THE CLOUD BUSTER

(Continued from page 96)

meet him, he worked the stick and rudder bar. And then inky blackness descended upon him like a wave. . . .

After what seemed countless eons of time he woke to the throbbing of a giant engine. The thin wall of a destroyer quivered next to his ear.

"Have a spot of this, old chap," a kindly voice said, and something warm and fiery was slipping down his throat, choking him but strangely enough clearing his eyes and head. Tommy gazed across the narrow cabin to another bunk. Then he was certain that he was dead and seeing things. For the white face of Charlie Newcastle, odd-looking in some queer uniform, stared at him from beneath a bandaged head.

"Who—what—?" He pointed a shaking finger at the apparition.

"That fellow? Oh, that's Baron Karl von Neuenschloss, the fellow you downed. . . ." The man's voice seemed to trail off. Karl von Neuenschloss! Neuenschloss was German for Newcastle! Charles Newcastle, Karl von Neuenschloss. What a fool he had been not to see it! And then something else came to him. He struggled up, frantic.

"He's a spy," Tommy said angrily. "He doublecrossed me. Sent a fake letter and a money order."

"We know all about that, old chap," the naval officer said, beaming. "He confessed. Take it easy now and rest."

Tommy sank into a dreamless slumber, lulled by the throbbing engines of the destroyer. He awoke from that dreamless slumber to a delightful dream. It seemed to him that Valerie's warm lips were pressed against his hand. Her voice murmured something about having been out pleading frantically with the War Office when he telephoned her. It was all very pleasant somehow.

(Concluded on page 112)

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(Concluded from page 111)

Being a national hero had its drawbacks, he realized in the days that followed. What with newspapers, cameras, a decoration pinned on him by a grave-faced young man at Buckingham Palace, and all the rest of the routine of public acclaim.

But no man is a hero to his valet. His orderly insisted that he was responsible for the heroics.

"He was powerful low in his mind," the orderly said to Bagley's man, "before he swigs that bottle o' whiskey. It's after that he goes cloud bustin' and takes the bloody Nazi bomber out to sea and sinks it. 'Cloud Buster,' they calls him, and he sure busted the one big cloud that was hangin' over him!"

## THE GLOBE TROTTER

(Continued from page 12)

Pole, Livingston's work in darkest Africa, Byrd's expeditions to Antarctica. Eighty miles, mind you, in one afternoon for the sole purpose of pitching three twenty-one-point games of horseshoes! I tell you I was practically shanghaied.

That indefatigable Globe Trotter's name is Potts, and I'm saluting him here and

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now as a suitable member of the Globe Trotter's Club, the board of directors, and an expedition to Mars, not to mention life on the Mississippi.

And here I've gone and taken up so much space eulogizing Brother Potts that we haven't space for any more letters this month. But before I run the leather strap through the eyelets of the mail bag and snap the padlock, let me suggest that any of you armchair adventurers, voyagers, seafarers and wayfarers who have hectic week-ends or real adventures of your own—from the sublime to the ridiculous—recount 'em to us all in your letters you write in. For I'll tell you a chummy, social secret. After all, we are all more or less gregarious and garrulous, and we like to hear anecdotes about each other.

I think I'll offer as a prize for the best letter sent in next month in this vein one of the horseshoes Globe Trotter Potts and I pitched the other Sunday.

### OUR NEXT ISSUE

I mentioned something about the Mississippi a few paragraphs back. There must have been something prophetic about it. Have we got a swell costume story picked out for you! The vivid, colorful, heart-achy days following the Civil War in that lovely gem of a city on the Mississippi—New Orleans! You're going to enjoy this novelet of the glamorous South in the days before the industrial era.

The author, Sam Merwin, Jr., has done a splendid job on SHERIDAN RIDES AGAIN. He has brought the old times and days and ways back to life for us in a lovely pageantry of soldiers and ladies and adventure in a period that is gone, but which still haunts us with its tender memories and delicate aura of yesterday that is like a poignant perfume.

As naturally and automatically as we, historically, have drifted from such times to the hardier and sturdier, lustier and pioneering of the West, our second featured novelet for next month is a strong story of the days of the cattle drives. Across the great plains of our grazing cattle country, riding along behind the undulating backs of hundreds and thousands of Texas longhorns, mouths and nostrils covered with silk neckerchiefs to keep out the stifling dust churned up by thousands of thundering hoofs, we will gallop along with Author Rolland Lynch as he rides herd on a stampede of words in THE CATTLE TRAIL.

And there will be other hand-picked stories by virile writers for your entertainment. Don't look now, but I think I'll have a very interesting announcement to make to you in the next issue. If you can't make out a neat literary lunch from all this—well, you ain't a good traveling companion.

I'll meet you here next month. And don't forget those "funny experience" letters.

—THE GLOBE TROTTER.

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28x4.75-19		2.45	1.25	33x4	2.95	1.25	33x5	3.75	1.75
29x4.75-20		2.50	1.25	34x4	3.25	1.35	35x5	3.95	1.75
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31x5.25-21		3.25	1.35	34x5	4.25	2.25	36x8	11.45	4.95
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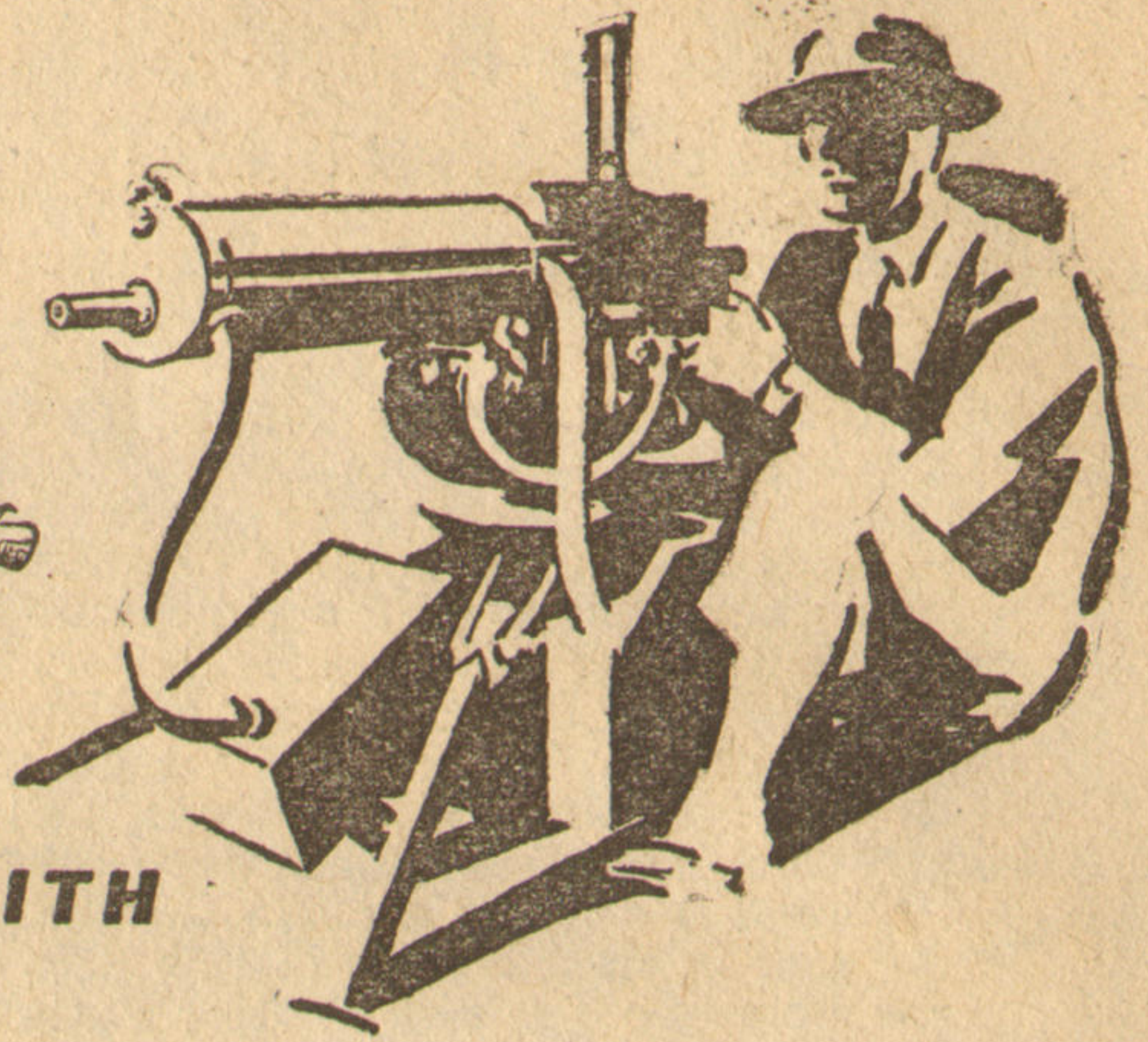
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