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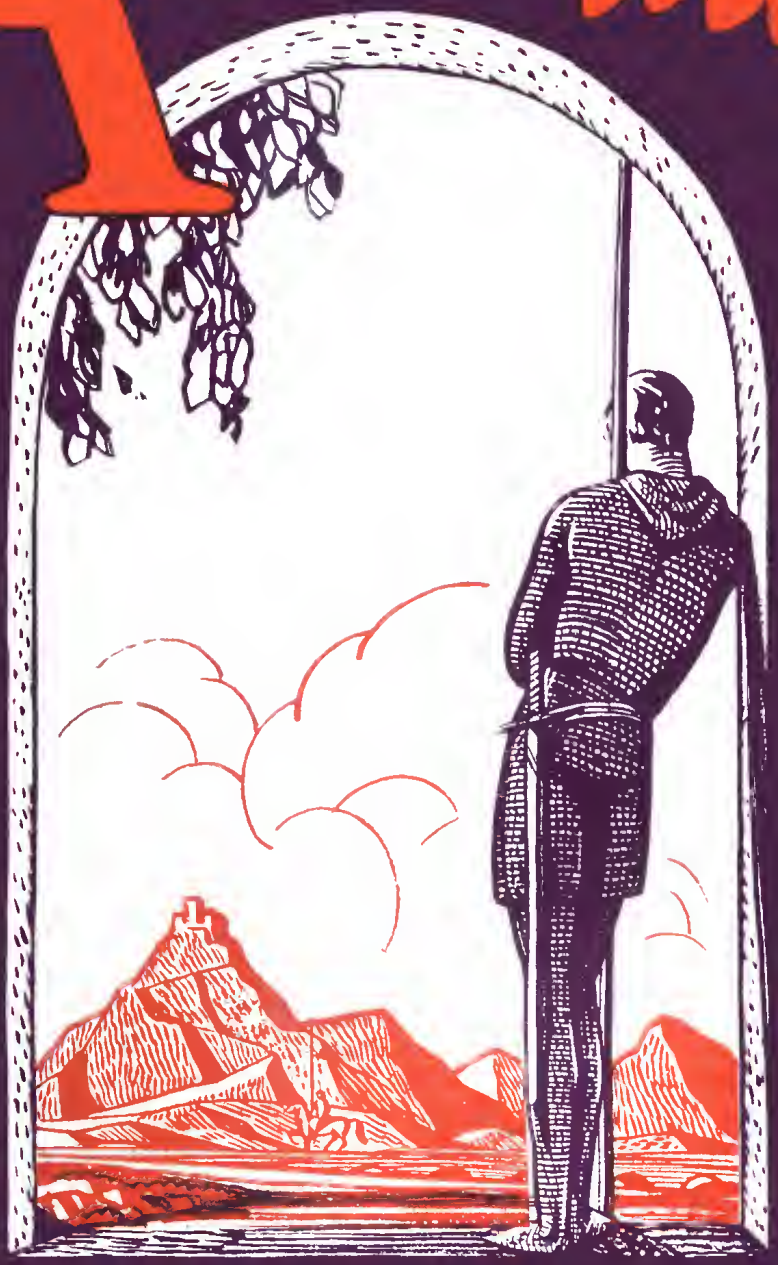
ADVENTURE

25 Cents

Adventure

July 1st



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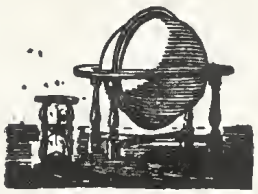

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

1927

VOL. LXIII NO. 2

Joseph Cox
EDITOR

Contents for July 1st

ADVENTURES IN THE MAKING
Advice and Reports on Outdoor Activities

Decorations by ROCKWELL KENT

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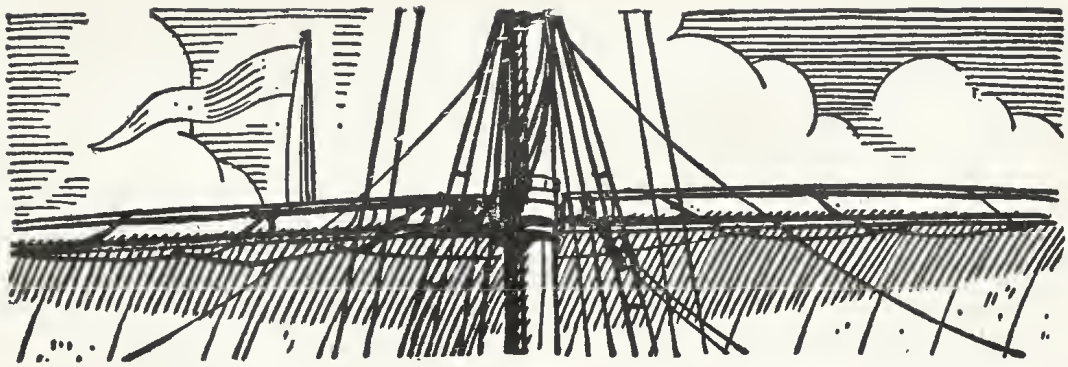


RETIRED

BY

Bill Adams

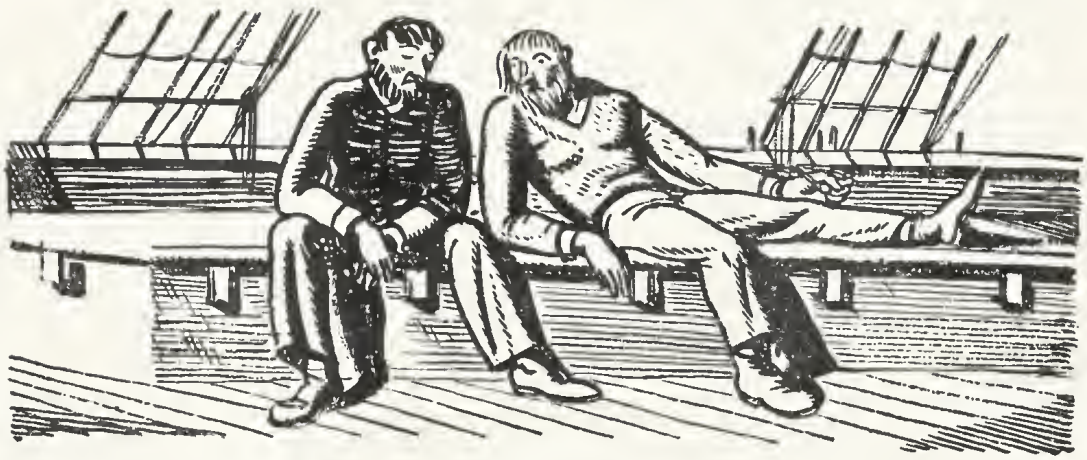
FROM morn to night all day he sits by far Stavanger fjord,
And all day long he dreams upon the wonders of the Lord.

His head is white. His hands are gnarled. His eyes are childish bright
As all the day, Stavanger way, from morn to fading light,
He stitches sails for fishing boats. A sailor from the sea,
He stitches sails for fishing boats, with children by his knee.

He sees great pods of whales swim past. He sees the moonlight mist,
Its pale bow arching to the sky. He sees the amethyst
When day wakes from mid-ocean bed. He hears the petrels cry,
And sees high, staggered mastheads reel against a lowering sky.
He sees a hundred shining ports, and magic names of ships.
Old choruses ring on the air. A hurricane there whips
The tropic seas to sheets of foam. A berg rolls past— The fjord
By far Stavanger in the morn's a glory to the Lord!

Old Thorlief Gansel's left the sea. Old Thorlief Gansel's home.
By rock and reef Stavanger way the blue sea breaks to foam.
And all the day, Stavanger way, beside his sunny fjord
Old Thorlief Gansel dreams upon the wonders of the Lord!

Sold Foreign



THE DAY was hot for the time of year. There was no breeze. The sun shone down from a clear blue sky on to the high wooded banks of the River Fal and on to the tramp steamers rusting at their moorings and the little white cottages and the grass-grown landing stage where two elderly fishermen sat and smoked and mended their nets.

An old Ford taxi came slowly down the steep, winding road under the trees and drew up some twenty or twenty-five yards away from the ferry.

A young man in a gray suit and soft gray hat alighted, paid the driver and then, carrying his raincoat and a leather kit-bag, walked briskly toward the two fishermen.

He was an ordinary looking young man, lean, bronzed, clean-shaven and of middle height, with nothing in his appearance or upright bearing to distinguish him from any other young man of the same age or build. And yet neither of the two fishermen had any doubts at all. The moment they saw him they knew him for what he was.

"He's royal navy," said one.

"Aye. Orf'cer, too," said the other. "No mistakin' un!"

The young man halted and stood gazing toward the tramp steamers moored in midstream.

"Is that the *Ormesby?*" he asked.

"Yes, sur," said one of the fishermen. "Been layin' up 'ere nigh on three years."

"She's sold," said the other. "Sold foreign, sur, an' leavin' for Cardiff, Wales, this afternoon."

The young man in gray nodded.

"I know. I wonder if you could row me across."

"We could, sur," said the fisherman who had last spoken. He rose to his feet. "You want the captain?"

"I'm going as second mate."

The two fishermen grinned at each other.

"Wrong, ain't we?" said the one.

"Ah!" said the other. "Me an' my mate here thought you was royal navy! An orf'cer."

The young man in gray said nothing by way of comment. Nevertheless, as it so happened, the fishermen's first inference had been correct.

A BROAD-SHOULDERED old man in a captain's uniform leaned over the bulwark rail of the *Ormesby.*

"What d'you want?" he growled.

Fierce, pale gray eyes with the tiniest

W. TOWNEND *Tells of a Young Mate and His Strange Berth*

of black pupils peered out from under heavy-tufted eyebrows. A protruding lower lip and big, hawk-like nose gave the weatherbeaten face a belligerent, hostile air.

The young man in gray reached the top of the accommodation ladder.

"Are you Captain Dallory?" he said pleasantly.

"I am. What about it?"

"My name's Wendell. I'm making the trip to Cardiff as second mate."

The look of blank amazement in the pale gray eyes gave way to anger.

"Second mate! *You!*"

"Yes, sir," said Wendell. He set his leather kit-bag down on the rusty deck, searched in an inside pocket of his jacket and produced a letter. "This is for you, sir."

As the broad-shouldered old man read, his lips tightened. A dull red flush showed in his shriveled cheeks.

Wendell stood between the rails and the saloon deck-house, under the port wing of the lower bridge, and gazed curiously about him.

Never before in all his life had he seen a ship in so terrible a state. Wherever he looked he beheld rust. He was filled with scorn for men who could exist a day, even, under such conditions.

He reflected presently that for three years or more the ship had been laid up, and that in that time not one penny, perhaps, had been spent on paint. His contempt ebbed. He was ashamed of himself for having judged without being sure of the facts.

He turned his head and found, to his embarrassment, that the keen gray eyes with the tiny black pupils were staring at him somberly, and he felt—stupidly enough, he knew—that it was useless to try to hide what was in his mind, for the man under whose command he had deliberately put himself could read his thoughts as easily as he had read the letter.

"So you're an officer in the navy, are you, Mister?"

"Yes, sir," said Wendell.

"What the —— do you want on board a craft of this kind?"

"They said you wanted a second mate, so I offered my services. For the fun of the thing, that's all, sir."

"For the fun of the thing!" said the captain in a thickish voice. "What d'you mean? And who told you I wanted a second mate?" He passed his hand across his forehead and his uniform cap with the gold-braided peak tilted to the back of his gray head. "It's this way, Mr. Wendell—Wendell is the name, ain't it?—I've been waiting all morning to welcome an old shipmate of mine; he said he'd be here last night. In this letter it says he's had an accident and couldn't come and you're going in place of him."

"Yes, sir. Yesterday morning a motor-bus knocked him down and they had to take him to hospital. Nothing serious, they said, but his fall shook him. He sent word to the office to let you know. I was there when his message arrived, seeing a friend. When I heard I asked why shouldn't I make the trip from the Fal to Cardiff instead. Matter of fact, Captain, I'm on leave. Been in hospital myself. Fever and bullet through my arm—Persian Gulf, Arab gun-runners. Fed up with doing nothing; due to spend a week with some friends in South Wales, so I'm saving my railway fare by going by sea."

He grinned and waited to hear what the captain would have to say to him. But

as the captain remained silent he went on quickly:

"There's nothing wrong with me now. I'm as fit as ever I was in my life."

A faint smile crossed the captain's face. He said gruffly enough:

"You mean, I take it, I needn't fear you won't be able to do the work, eh? Such a thought never entered my head. You may keep your watch, if you like; on the other hand it wouldn't make much difference to me, Mister, if you turned in and stayed in your bunk all the way from here to Cardiff. No offense, Mr. Wendell, but you see what I mean, don't you? Are you a friend or a relation of any of the directors, by any chance?"

"Not exactly, Captain Dallory. My father holds some stock in the company and a cousin of mine's the secretary. That's all. What made you ask?"

"No particular reason, Mr. Wendell. The fact is, I had command of the *Ormesby* for nigh on twenty years. And now the poor old ship's been sold foreign and I asked the owners if they'd let me take charge for the last time. Do you understand? They said I might. For old time's sake I thought I'd get hold of a couple of mates and two engineers who'd been shipmates of mine on board. That's why, Mister, when I heard you were coming as second mate and that old Tom MacGuire was in hospital I didn't like it. My plans had gone wrong."

A thin, gray-faced man wearing a white jacket and tight black trousers emerged from the saloon alleyway.

"This is the steward," said the captain. He raised his voice. "Steward, come here!"

"Yes, sir," said the thin, gray-faced man.

"Steward, this is Mr. Wendell. He's going as second mate instead of Mr. MacGuire. Take his things and show him his room. And, Mr. Wendell, if there's anything you want to make things a bit more comfortable, let me know. And remember, even if an old tramp steamer like this isn't any great shakes after a cruiser or battleship, we're not quite uncivilized in the merchant service, whatever they say."

He ended in a shout of laughter that sounded forced and artificial.

As Wendell followed the steward he took with him an uneasy impression that Captain Dallory was laughing not so much at his own wit as to hide a worry that he had not yet attempted to explain.

AT MIDDAY dinner in the little maple- and teak-paneled saloon Wendell met the *Ormesby's* other officers —the mate and the two engineers. To his dismay he found that they resented his presence on board.

The mate was an enormously stout old man with a round, red face and white hair and large blue eyes that gave him an appearance of perpetual astonishment. His name was Price.

"Captain Price," said Captain Dallory. "Retired last year, but making the trip for the same reason as the rest of us."

"Mate of the *Ormesby* for five years, Mr. Wendell." He wrinkled his forehead and frowned. "And you're royal navy, are ye, Mister? Well, well! Met the navy once or twice during the war, didn't we, Captain Dallory! Yes, Mister, we met the navy!"

Wendell felt that in Mr. Price's opinion the navy was of little consequence, and for the moment he was inclined to be angry. And then the mood passed and he smiled.

The old chief engineer, thin and bald and gray-bearded, MacPherson by name, shook hands with him limply and looked down at his soup plate and smiled to himself. Presently he raised his eyes.

"So you're makin' the trip to Cardiff, are you, Mr. Wendell? Aye, ye would. For the fun o' the thing, eh? It's a pity."

Wendell was startled.

"Why a pity?"

"The voyage is so short. It'd do ye guid to see what like o' life it is at sea."

The second engineer, Mr. Hennessy, chief engineer of the firm's newest and biggest ship and spending his few days between Western Ocean voyages on

board the *Ormesby*, did not even offer to shake hands. He slid into his place quietly, nodded to the captain and Mr. Price and began on his soup.

And here, at least, Wendell could definitely sense hostility. The second engineer was a square, broad man, with black hair and black brows and heavy, blunt features, clean-shaven and sallow-skinned. From the expression in his small close-set eyes he was the type of man who would cheerfully go out of his way to be disagreeable and pick quarrels and nurse grievances without cause.

Never before had Wendell doubted his popularity, whatever the company he was in. Now for the first time in his life he found himself regarded with indifference, if not with actual dislike. His pride was hurt. He refused to be crushed, however, and made up his mind to ignore insults and exert whatever charm of manner he possessed to force these four sour-looking shipmates of his to be friendly. It would not be easy, he knew.

For a long time nobody spoke. The tension grew more and more noticeable. It seemed to Wendell that each of the men seated with him at the table had secret fears of what he might say or do.

The captain sighed.

"Queer, being back again, ain't it?" he said.

The fat mate looked up from his plate of roast beef and fried potatoes and cabbage and beans.

"When I seen the ol' *Ormesby* last night it was like—like turning back a page in a book." He stopped. The red in his chubby face deepened. He laughed awkwardly, as if ashamed of himself. "Romantic, ain't I? But, lord, what a mess! Beats me why any one should think it worth while buying the old ship at all. Nothing but junk! Scrap iron!"

"It's no' the engines are junk, onyway," said the old chief engineer. "Barrin' the dynamo, which needs new bindin' wires an' canna be used, there's nothing amiss in the engine-room. It would be worth ony yin's while takin' the engines oot of her an' puttin' them into anither ship. Twenty-five years old an' as guid as the old *Ormesby* ran her trials!"

"They've had some knocking about, too," said the second engineer. "Do you remember that time in the Red Sea, Mr. MacPherson, when the L. P. piston rod carried away at the neck of the taper in the crosshead?"

"Aye," said the chief. "A vera guid job we made of it, too. Piston an' rod an' broken cover lashed doon, the L. P. valve drawn an' stowed, the steam ports plugged in the valve face, casing cover rejointed an' we reached Aden compound."

The captain's hard, weatherbeaten old face crinkled into a wry smile.

"Do you remember the tail end shaft off the Canaries?"

"Aye. For yince my heart sank. But we managed it, Captain Dallory, we managed it!"

"We always did, Mac, somehow. There was only the one voyage I gave up hope and that was the time we were thirty-three days across the West'ard, with a cargo of manganese ore for Philadelphia."

"When the ore shifted, eh! Roll! Aye, I thocht we'd roll richt over and never come up again!"

"A clean sweep," said the captain. "Top bridge and boats, ventilators, wheel-house and funnel— All gone!"

"Bad enough," said the mate, "was when the *Ormesby* went ashore in the Saint Lawrence in the fog, and the ice threatening to shut down on us."

"Aye, bad enough!" said the captain. "I made certain I'd lost my ticket if not my ship."

"Pilot on board?" asked Wendell briefly.

"Pilot!" said the mate scornfully. "Mister, you've a lot to learn. You take a pilot because you've got to. If the pilot makes a mistake, it's the skipper who's fired. That's justice and common sense!"

"Seems queer."

"You'll find lots of queer things, going to sea in tramp steamers. The navy's different. The navy's a sheltered trade."

There was a sudden silence. Wendell

half rose to his feet and then dropped into his chair again.

"You're —— polite, I must say! What do you know about the navy, any of you?"

The captain who was stirring his coffee looked at him thoughtfully.

"We're old enough to know all that there is to know."

"Mr. Wendell," said the chief engineer, "you're an observant young man. Tell us, how old do you think we are?"

"I couldn't say," said Wendell.

"I'm sixty-nine," said the captain.

"I'm seventy," said the chief engineer.

"I'm sixty-six," said the mate.

"I'm fifty-eight," said the second engineer, "and as tough as they make 'em!"

"I'm twenty-four," said Wendell.

"An' me," said the steward, giving him a cup of coffee, "I'm sixty-seven. I left my pub in South Shields to make this here trip to Cardiff. The missus says it's a sign I'm in my second childhood at last. Beggin' yer pardon."

He grinned and retired into the pantry.

"He's landlord of a public house in South Shields," said the captain. "He owns house property and he's got money in the bank. If I'd gone to sea as a steward and used my wits same as him, my old age would be prosperous, too. But he calls me 'sir,' if that's any help."

"South Shields is a long way from Cornwall," said Wendell. "I wonder it was worth his while coming."

"Mister," said the second engineer, "Captain Dallory here came from Liverpool; Captain Price—Mr. Price—from Newcastle; Mr. MacPherson from Aberdeen; myself from Glasgow by way of Dublin. Does that surprize you?"

"Ye ken, Mr. Wendell," said the chief engineer, "the *Ormesby* is no' an ordinary tramp."

"The *Ormesby's* made history," said the mate

"Mr. Wendell," said the captain, "did they never tell you the story of how the *Ormesby* sank the U-boat that got the cruisers?"

"No," said Wendell, "I never heard about that."

"You wouldn't." said the second engineer. "The navy doesn't go out of its way to give credit to the merchant service, does it? It hogs what little there was, itself." He smiled unpleasantly. "I wasn't on board myself, worse luck!"

"I'd a ship of my own," said Mr. Price, and his chubby face was sad. "So I wasn't on board, neither. I'd rather have been in that there scrap than anything else in the war!"

"Mr. Wendell," said the chief engineer, "ye maun come doon into the engine-room sometime and I'll show you where the shell tore through the bulkhead and burst without stoppin' the engines. Killed the third engineer, though, and the donkeyman, and wounded me and the second."

"They shelled you, eh?" said Wendell.

"Tell him, Captain," said Mr. Price.

"There's nothing to tell," said the captain. "They shelled us, yes. They weren't going to waste good torpedoes on an old tramp, not in that light! So they shelled us. Something went wrong with the steering gear; the helm jammed. The man at the wheel was killed and the second mate was killed and we went traveling around in a circle, full speed, with no one to look after the engines and the shells bursting all over us.

"I thought we were finished. And then the steering gear got to working again and the ship answered her helm and we made straight for the submarine and by some everlasting miracle went slap through her shelling and cut her in two. That's all, Mister."

The chief engineer clucked his tongue.

"Aye, that's all. God forgive ye, Johnny. Mr. Wendell, Captain Dallory's left oot the best pairt o' the story—hoo we stoppit the engines when they fired a shot at us an' signaled they wantit to talk, an' hoo they closed in on us, an' hoo the captain here rang doon the engine-room 'Full Ahead,' an' hoo — a-weel, what's the guid? I ocht to ha'e had mair sense an' told the story myself.

"Mr. Wendell, ye wudna think to look at him noo that after he was woundit in four places Captain Dallory took the wheel himself, wud ye? Weel, it's the truth! He sank the U-boat that got the two cruisers in the yin afternoon, an' the Germans swore that they'd get the *Ormesby* an' us, too."

"They did," said the mate. "The *Ormesby* was sunk in the Channel in 'eighteen."

"Sunk!" said Wendell.

"Aye," said the chief, "sunk! But we got into shallow water first. They wanted ships badly in those days, if ye remember, so the divers clapped a patch on to our side an' the water was pumped oot an' early the next spring we were yince mair earnin' enormous dividends for the owners."

"The war was over by then," said the second engineer.

"Aye, the war was over," said the captain. His face was set in grim lines; his pale gray eyes with the tiny black pupils seemed to be gazing across the little saloon into space. He rested one elbow on the table and propped his chin on his clenched fist. "Aye," he said, "the war's over and the Germans have got the *Ormesby*."

"How do you mean, the Germans have got the *Ormesby?*" asked Wendell.

"What's the sense in askin' a stupid question like that?" said the second engineer. "You know as well as we do the ship's been sold to the Germans! Why pretend?"

Wendell was furious.

"You'll take that back!" he said. "What are you insinuating now? I never knew the ship had been sold to the Germans! How should I?"

"Didn't they tell you in London?" said the fat mate. "Think, Mister, before you answer. Here's something we'd like to know, all of us: What the —— brings you aboard?"

"I'm here for the run, round to Cardiff," said Wendell. "I told you. Is anything the matter?" He glanced at each of the four hard faces in turn and saw in each a distrust and a doubt that chilled him. "You'd think there was some reason why you fellows didn't want me on board."

"That's nonsense," said the captain heavily. "We're glad to have you, Mr. Wendell. Only, of course—only—"

He broke off and glanced uneasily across the table and rubbed his chin with his fingers.

"Only what?" said Wendell.

The steward appeared in the doorway.

"Couple o' tugs comin' up the river, sir."

"That'll be for us," said the captain. He rose to his feet. "Well, we've got to get busy."

"Mr. Wendell," said the chief engineer, "come doon to the engine-room sometime this afternoon an' I'll show ye the marks of that shell-burst an' ye'll see for yourself what like a marvel it was the engines kept movin'."

The captain nodded.

"That's right, chief. Mr. Wendell, go where you like, see what you can. And when you're an admiral you'll be able to look back on the trip and tell them what going to sea in tramp steamers means."

IT WAS evening. The sun had set and the western sky glowed with crimson. Near the horizon was a long band of mauve cumulus cloud. The sea was a deep blue-green color in which was reflected the flaming sky.

The *Ormesby* was lifting to the swell of the Atlantic.

Wendell, dressed now in an old and shabby blue suit, paced to and fro from one wing of the upper bridge to the other, deep in thought.

Why he was not wanted on board remained a mystery he could not solve. Was it because he was navy that these tramp steamer men disliked him, or what? What possible reason could they have for objecting to him, save prejudice?

He had seen neither the chief engineer nor the second since dinner. He had had his tea by himself in the saloon after the captain and mate and the chief had had theirs. The second engineer, so the

steward had said, should have been with him, but had sent up word to say he was too busy to leave the engine-room. Wendell had known he was avoiding him purposely.

He stood in the port wing of the bridge and gazed southward toward where a big liner was coming up Channel, bound for Southampton, perhaps, or Cherbourg, or Plymouth.

He heard a footstep and, turning, saw the captain.

"Wind's getting up."

"Yes, sir," said Wendell.

The captain stood by his side.

"She's been a fine old ship in her day, Mister—as fine in her own particular way as that liner yonder. Finer, perhaps." He paused and went on again in a lower voice. "I served my time in sail, Mr. Wendell, before the mast. I got my ticket, square rig, and then changed over to steam. Seems queer, don't it, a man brought up in sail feeling the way I feel about an old tramp steamer? But there it is. A fact!

"You see, Mister, she did her bit in the war. That counts, don't it? Wouldn't you have thought, now, the owners would have kept her, or had her broken up in one of the yards at home, or not sold to the Germans, anyway? The man who bought her is a Hamburg ship-owner. He saw the old ship lying up in the Fal, he knew her story, and that's why he wanted to get his hands on her. See? To degrade her, like! Hard, ain't it?"

"Yes, Captain, it's hard," said Wendell.

He could see the queer old man's point of view and he sympathized.

The helmsman struck eight bells. The fat mate hauled himself up the bridge ladder, grunting.

"Breeze has freshened since six o'clock, ain't it? No matter, anyway."

The helmsman was relieved. He gave the course to Wendell.

"Nor'west by west, a quarter west."

"Nor'west by west, a quarter west," repeated Wendell.

"Going to turn in and get some sleep, Mr. Wendell?" said the captain. "I should if I was you. You're not long out of hospital, are you?"

"Up at midnight for another four hours, Mr. Wendell," said the mate. "You'll need some sleep!"

"I suppose I shall," said Wendell. "I'm tired."

He gave the course and climbed down the bridge ladders and went to his own room off the starboard side saloon alleyway.

For half an hour or so he lay on the settee in his shirt sleeves, under a blanket, smoking and trying to read a magazine by the light of an oil-lamp above his head. Tired or not, he had no particular wish to undress and climb into his bunk. In spite of the wide-open port, his room smelled close and damp and unaired. He grew more and more wakeful.

Soon after two bells there came a tap on the door.

He raised himself on one elbow.

"Come in," he said.

Captain Dallory stood in the alleyway.

"Not in bed yet, Mr. Wendell?"

"Not yet, sir. Betwixt and between." He hesitated, surprized and a little annoyed. "Was there anything you wanted me for?"

"No, Mr. Wendell. No. Just thought I'd see how you were getting on."

He withdrew quietly.

Wendell did not move. Why should the captain have taken the trouble to come and inquire whether he had turned in or not? What —— business was it of his?

And suddenly all the vague suspicions that had lain dormant in his mind rose to the surface again. What the —— was wrong with everybody? All desire for sleep left him.

He flung off his blanket and stood up, put on his jacket and sweater, wound a white scarf about his neck and crept cautiously into the alleyway. Then, after locking the door of his room and slipping the key into his pocket, he made his way to the bridge deck.

The night was dark. The moon had not yet risen. Low down in the west a

faint band of yellow marked where the sun had set.

He walked slowly past the No. 3 hatch toward the engine-room and halted by the open doorway of the fiddley.

The captain came out of his room on the lower bridge and stood at the head of the ladder that led down to the bridge deck. Wendell watched him. He turned at the sound of footsteps and saw the lean steward shuffling toward him from the direction of the galley. Without in the least knowing the reason, he felt it would be as well if the steward did not see him, and so slid through the fiddley door and waited, between the ash-hoist engine and the ventilator, until he had passed.

When he looked out through the doorway he saw that the captain was talking to the steward on the bridge deck. It was ridiculous, Wendell knew, but he felt they were talking about him and was glad he had locked the door of his room.

And then he remembered the chief's invitation to visit the engine-room and climbed down the long steel ladders that led past the 'tween deck bunkers to the stokehold, where two grimy firemen stared at him in surprize.

"Evening," he said. "Care for a smoke?"

They accepted his cigarets and thanked him.

"Which of the engineers is on watch?" he asked.

"The chief," they said.

"I'll go and have a chat with him," he said.

Stooping, he moved along the narrow, dark alleyway between the starboard and center boilers, pulled open the steel door and found himself in the engine-room.

The light of the few dim burning paraffin oil-lamps made it difficult to see, but the chief engineer was not visible either on the front platform or on the middle grating. For a while Wendell stood and watched the cranks whirling round and round in their pits and listened to the thrum and rumble of the engines and the clacking of the pumps. Presently he passed between the H. P. engine and the boilers to the back platform where the lighting was worse than in any other part of the engine-room.

But here again there was no chief engineer.

And then Wendell realized that he must have gone up the shaft tunnel to oil the stern gland or the shaft bearings or whatever it was engineers did oil in the tunnel, and he was no longer puzzled by his absence. He was lighting his pipe, standing by a dome-shaped evaporator near the after bulkhead when he heard the sound of quick footsteps overhead and, looking up, saw the burly figure of the second engineer hurrying down the ladder that led from the cylinder tops to the front platform.

Wendell did not care whether Hennessy saw him or not. On the other hand, he had no real desire to speak to him and did nothing to attract his attention.

When Hennessy reached the front platform he stood gazing anxiously in the direction of the boilers and stokehold. It seemed that he was listening. His attitude, the way he held his head, the poise of his body, indicated a sense of danger. After a time, as if reassured, he turned and walked quietly toward the thrust recess.

The chief's voice spoke from the door of the tunnel.

"Everything a' richt, Mr. Hennessy?"

"Everything's all right, Chief. All clear."

Wendell crossed the shaft between the thrust bearings and the main engines.

Hennessy had his back toward him and was talking to the chief who stood just inside the tunnel door.

Wendell descended the two steps from the front platform and approached. Apparently the beat of the engines muffled the sound of his footsteps.

He heard Hennessy say—

"Got the fuse fixed, Chief?"

"Aye. The charge is tamped doon. It's time. Are ye ready?"

A wild and incredulous amazement swept over Wendell. He said harshly—

"What the —— do you want fuse for?"

Hennessy whirled about. Wendell saw fear in his sallow face and dark anger and hate. Something hard struck him on the forehead. He was conscious of a stabbing pain in his spine and darkness enveloped him as he fell.

"HOW DID it happen?" said a voice. "I don't understand even now."

"Hoo did we ken he'd come into the engine-room frae the stokehold just when Hennessy had gone up to the top gratings to see was everything clear? When Hennessy came doon he was on the back platform."

"Hiding?"

"I dinna ken, Johnny. He was there, onyway. Hennessy an' I were talkin' when he spoke to me an' asked what did we want the fuse for. Hennessy knockit him doon with a wheel spanner."

Some one—the captain—uttered a little groan.

Wendell opened his eyes.

He lay on the settee in the captain's room on the lower bridge. He felt limp and helpless. His head was throbbing from the pain of his wound.

Very dimly he remembered being carried up the ladder; he remembered feeling the cool night air on his face; he remembered some one asking what was wrong and some one else, the man carrying him, saying he had fallen and cut his head. And then once more he had known nothing until the voices of the captain and the chief engineer had roused him.

"What happened?" he asked.

The captain sat in his chair at his flat-topped desk, watching him. Wendell was bewildered by the fanaticism in the fierce gray eyes.

"Mr. Wendell," he said, "if you give any trouble—"

Wendell struggled into a sitting position.

"Captain," he said, and he pointed toward the chief engineer leaning against the bulkhead. "Captain, Mr. MacPherson there and Mr. Hennessy are planning to do some damage to the ship!"

"Mr. Wendell," said the captain, "listen to me! I don't want to threaten you or have to be harsh, but we're desperate men. Do you understand me?"

For the first time since he had come to himself Wendell saw the automatic pistol in the captain's right hand.

He was shocked.

"Do you mean, Captain Dallory, seriously, you'd use that thing?"

"I do, Mr. Wendell. Don't try my patience too far! Whatever happens from now on is no business of yours! Get me? You'll see what you're told to see; you'll say what you're asked to. You'll be deaf, dumb, blind, at my orders! You'll not only obey instructions while you're on board; you'll obey them as long as you live!"

"You mean I'm to do just what you tell me to do, whatever it is?"

"I mean just that, Mister!"

"What's the scheme, Captain? Insurance? Go ahead, tell me, and then shoot—if you want to shoot! Or shoot without telling, if you prefer. I'm not interested, one way or the other. But I tell you this much: If you don't shoot, I'll make England too hot for the lot of you! Go ahead, you —— old mummy, shoot! I'm not afraid, and you needn't think it! Shoot!"

The captain and the chief engineer stared at him.

"Mr. Wendell," said the captain. His thin hand clawed at his lower lip. His forehead was dotted with beads of sweat. "Mr. Wendell, I'm in earnest."

"So am I," said Wendell. "Shoot! You daren't!"

"Mr. Wendell," said the captain, "I shouldn't have taken the line I did. I'll tell you this much: Your coming on board in the Fal was bad enough, but this here being in the engine-room at the wrong time has ruined the lot of us. It will ruin us, that is, if you talk!"

"Why should it?" said the chief engineer.

The captain turned his head and gazed at him. He shoved his cap on to the back of his scalp. His eyes shone.

"Mac," he said, "you're right. Why

should it? Mr. Wendell, listen! You wouldn't be bluffed into keeping quiet by the threat of a bullet. Right! I respect ye! But the rest of us, the chief engineer, the mate, me and Mr. Hennessy, we're not going to be bluffed into not doing our duty by the fear of you talking. Talk, if you like, Mr. Wendell, and be —— to you for a low-down, sneaking, brass-bound pup! Get me? And if you can hold your head up again, after giving us poor devils away, why, by ——, I'd rather be me in prison than you parading around the quarter-deck of some —— battleship!"

"I've got a headache," said Wendell. "I can't argue. You've said too much or not enough. What is it?"

"Mister," said the captain, "I told you the *Ormesby's* history. When I heard my old ship was sold, I made up my mind the Germans would never have her. You wouldn't understand, of course. You navy people would as soon see them ships that got put through it at Jutland sold to the Germans as sunk in Scapa or anywhere else. All right, you let me do the talking now, Mister—don't interrupt!

"I went to Aberdeen and I saw the chief. He agreed. I ran into Hennessy. He heard what I'd got to say, and though he's got no love for anything British he came into the scheme; right's right all the world over! Sinn Fein or no Sinn Fein, he feels what we feel about the *Ormesby!* Captain Price I met in Newcastle on my way back from seeing the chief. A dozen words and he was packing his bag. MacGuire, him as was going as second mate—he'd been with me as mate the time we was shelled by the submarine—I asked as well."

"Suppose they'd refused to come in," said Wendell.

"I knew my men," said the captain. He paused and looked anxiously over his shoulder toward the closed door. "If you want to know why I took four others into the secret, Mister, it was because I had to make sure nothing went wrong. There'll be an inquiry and questions. Let's leave that, anyway, for the present. There's more queer things happen at sea in six months than happens on dry land in sixty! I'm not worrying about inquiries. The idea was mine, but the way of working it out was the chief's."

"An' Hennessy's!"

"Aye, Hennessy's! And now, Mr. Navy Man, when you get ashore, safe and sound, which you will, please God, you go straight to the owners, then to the admiralty. They'll most probably give you a medal. And then to the Board of Trade. Tell them what happened. You may. I don't give a ——! By that time the *Ormesby*'ll be where the Germans can't get her, or the owners, or the —— shareholders, either! And as I say, if you ever hold your head up again, I'd rather be me, in clink than you!"

"Captain," said Wendell, "I'd like to shake hands."

"Thank you, Mr. Wendell. You've taken a load off my mind."

"Time's up," said the chief. "Listen!"

Through the open port there came a muffled booming sound from the after part of the ship.

Some one went running down the ladder from the upper bridge and on down the ladder that led to the bridge deck.

"The deck's tilting already!" said the chief.

Presently Wendell heard shouts. The engine-room telegraph jangled. The door was thrown open and a wild looking deckhand thrust his head into the room and yelled:

"Cap'n, we've struck somethin' aft! Tunnel's flooded! Ship's doin' down by the starn!"

The captain jumped to his feet.

"Chief, you'd better see what's wrong! Mr. Wendell, if you're feeling well enough, get along and see that lifeboat's swung out ready to lower!"

He disappeared through the open doorway.

The chief engineer smiled.

"I'm an old man, Mr. Wendell, but if thon plan o' mine comes off, I'll no' ha'e lived in vain. I'll ha'e helped save the *Ormesby!*"

"WAY ENOUGH!" said the captain. The men who had been rowing away from the sinking ship rested on their oars.

The crowded lifeboat pitched heavily.

Wendell, wrapped in his overcoat, his aching head bound in rough bandages, shivered. The spray that came dashing over the weather gunwale had drenched him to the skin already. The night was bitter after the heat of the day.

"Not long now," said the captain.

The *Ormesby*, a dark mass upended against the yellow disc of the moon, was sinking. The after deck was submerged. The bow rose higher and higher out of the water. The sharp cutwater tilted back toward the horizontal.

"She's goin' quick," said a deck-hand. "That wreckage we 'it must have smashed clear through the tunnel into the Number 5 'old!"

"Come up just under us as we passed!"

"D'you know, fellers, seems to me we struck one of them old floatin' mines. Sounded that way, any'ow."

Wendell heard Hennessy utter a soft, pleased little laugh.

"A mine! Holy Moses! That was it, Chief, a mine!"

The water had reached the funnel. The moon's reflection on the short, white-crested seas dazzled the eyes. The roar of the steam escaping from the exhausts deadened the sound of the voices of the men talking.

Wendell heard Price, the fat, red-faced mate, shout—

"There'll be no raising her this time, Captain!"

"Look, by ——!" said the captain.

The funnel had vanished. The fore-part of the vessel stood straight out of the water, like a tower, remained poised for an instant, motionless, then slid out of sight, smoothly.

There was a dull crash of an explosion under water and then silence.

"Puir old lass!" said the chief engineer.

"Aye," said the captain, "she's gone! She's cheated the —— Germans the second time. They'll not have her!"

Hennessy said—

"The owners will be blessing the mine that sunk us, or whatever it was, I bet!"

"Act of God," said Wendell shortly.

He felt sick and tired and the ache in his head was worse.

Hennessy leaned forward and patted his knee.

"That crack on the forehead ye got when ye—when ye fell, lad—does it hurt?"

"No," said Wendell. "It's nothing. Mr. Hennessy, I'd have suffered worse gladly to be where I am now, to see what I've seen, to know what I know."

"Thank ye," said Hennessy. "I understand."

"Give way," said the captain. "Give way, m' sons, we've got a long, hard pull before us!"

"Not so long," said Wendell. His keen eyes had seen in the distance the red and green sidelights and the mast head-lights of a steamer. "They've sighted our rockets."

In This Corner

Clancy and the Rabbit's Foot

By EDWARD L. McKENNA

THE LOCKER-ROOM is as dim as a chapel and it smells of collodion and sticky liniment. The preliminary boys dress in here. Some of them are dawdling about waiting for a good look at him. They may grow up and battle him, some day.

Here he comes. It's *him!*

Trample-trample-trample down the stairs, and a loud, carrying voice like a gale of wind:

"Come on, Champ! Watch your step, now, Jimmie me boy. Hah, it's like old times to be fightin' in this club again. Do you mind the time we fought Allentown Joe Murphy in this club, hey? Hey, Champ? Two rounds. A good tough boy, too."

That's Terry Robinson. Yeah, that's Terry Robinson, used to be a horse-trainer. Clancy's the first guy he ever managed. Wot luck, huh, to roll a natural the first crack out of the box— Ah, pipe down, will ya? Here they come.

A big, ruddy-faced man with white hair. A smooth looking man with black eyes and a big black pearl in his tie. And the champ.

A tough lookin' mutt, ain't he. You said it. Packy McDonough give him that ear. I seen it, over in the Pioneer.

Tough looking. Why wouldn't he be tough looking? St. John's Orphan Asylum. The Catholic Protectory. The back of a United States Express wagon. The Boys' Club, 10th Street and Avenue A. Humpty Jackson's gang, or what was left of it. First fight was private, in a stable to the right of Whitney's at Sheepshead Bay. That's where Horseshoes Durnwald got a-hold of him. Terry Robinson used to be Durnwald's stable-boss. Durnwald's the fellow with the black pin in his tie. They say the Champ'd do pretty near anything for Durnwald.

"Come on, Jimmie. Down to this end.

"Hello, boys."

"Hello, Robbie! Hello, Robbie! Hello, Robbie!"

A new voice, defiantly raised—

"Good luck, Champ!"

But the Champ follows Robbie silently, and Durnwald brings up the rear.

Gees! Can you feature that? The high-hat stiff— Aw, ferget it. He's always that way, before a fight. Like he was full of hop. He dunno you said anythin' to him. You'll see him afterward, down at the Hind Leg, puttin' it away, and he'll be all right. I hope the dinge

puts him away, the big stiff! The dinge might, at that. —full of hop. Does he sniff it, huh? I heard he sniffs it— Nah, only the booze. And he trained for this bout, what I mean. He better. The dinge is no pork-and-beaner. If the dinge slips him one in the darby-Kelly— You said it.

The little dressing-room at the end of the lockers. Terry Robinson locks the door. "Now, then, Jimmie me boy."

Clancy sits down and fumbles with his shoe-laces. His mouth is set like a rock, but his hands are nervous.

"Lemme help you, Jimmie. Set back, take it easy."

The champion of the world speaks—

"Nah!"

"Let him help you, Jim," says Durnwald.

Clancy straightens up obediently and lolls back. Terry Robinson unlaces his shoes. Then the champion leaps up and rips from his collar a necktie that yells that it cost four dollars. He has a silk shirt on and silk B. V. D.'s.

"Here ye are, Jim, the old green tights."

Old green tights is right. Patched and mended a million times. He won't throw them away, because the first time he wore them was the night he knocked out the Englishman, over at the Garden. Saint Patrick's night, it was. A lot of liquor has been thrown into the water since then.

"And here's your new bathrobe, kid. Ain't it a dandy?"

It ought to be. It was made for a mandarin.

"Look, Jim. The sleeves is wide, see? Ye won't have to cut them to get it over the gloves. There ye are, me boy."

A pause. The champion's ice-blue eyes widen. He fumbles in the pockets of the new bathrobe.

"Where's me rabbit's foot?" he asks.

And fear lays its hand upon Robinson's heart and he is silent, for once.

"Come on, gimme it. Me rabbit's foot."

"Jimmie—Jimmie—I—I didn't take it out of the pocket of the old bathrobe—I—I—we'll send out and get ye another one—we'll— There's coons around here—we'll get one. It'll be all right."

Clancy's hands open and shut, open and shut, and he looks helplessly at Durnwald.

"There isn't time, Jim," says Durnwald. "We're late now; we didn't start till the last minute, because— The dinge is in his corner by this time. Didn't you hear them a minute ago?"

"Nah, boss."

"Let him wait," says Robinson.

"Nah. He'll think I'm scared o' him."

"Nah, he won't. He's shakin' in his shoes up there waitin' for you. Let him wait. Jimmie, sit down. Sit down and take it easy. I'll go and get you one."

Durnwald gets up.

"I'll get him one," he says.

Robbie opens the door for him and, as he turns to go, he says something softly, so that the champ won't hear.

But he need not be anxious, for Clancy is sitting there, staring at his elkskin shoes and his hairy legs, and saying things to himself!

"Me rabbit's foot. This is the night. This is the night. I'll get it tonight, sure. The dinge. The black ones is always tough. He ain't yellow. That was a nutty stunt, trainin' at the beach. Should "a" gone to LeClaire's. A big black guy— He fights foul, and the referees in this town don't break 'em clean in the infightin' like they do in the big burg. Leave him try it once, just once. Leave him try it.

"I'm gonna get it, tonight—

"Ah, ain't I the Champ? Ain't I licked 'em all? Burt Kelly and Wild Kenny and the Jint? And—and—that bozo on the coal barge, up at New London, he had somethin' on his bandages—what was his name? He was some dirty fighter!

"The dinge fights foul—

Hear 'em countin' over you. You're in the dark and you hear it, one-two-three-four! In the dark. Gees, you can't get up, and you gotta get up. One-two—A-agh.

"I'm through. I'm done. It ain't in my shoes. It ain't there no more. I tell

my dogs, 'Come on!' They don't come. I'm slowin' up.

"I ought not to have et that big hunk of steak at noon.

"A big black guy. I'm done. Tonight I get it. Me rabbit's foot. One-two-three-four. And your friends out there bet their jack on you, and them lousy bums giving you the razz because you're a champ.

"I'll show 'em. I'll show 'em. Tonight is not my night, but I'll show 'em anyhow. Let him fight me dirty, once. Let him try. He can lick me, can he? Gees, I wish the boss would come back.

"It's all Robbie's fault. He lost me rabbit's foot."

OUT IN the town the boss is running along South Street, the Broadway of darkytown. He passes an old colored woman carrying a live goose in her arms. Stores where kinky hair is straightened. Photograph galleries. Restaurants. Barber-shops. He's looking for a butcher-shop. Rabbits, this time of the year? He can only try. Durnwald is a gambler, too, and he knows too much to laugh at superstition. He looks doubtfully along a side-street, a dingy little street, dark and ominous looking. There's a store, a butcher's. But on the way, there's another kind of store.

"Lucky Stones and Charms," its says. Try him anyway.

"No, boss. No, sir. Rabbit's foot I ain't got. I give you a luckystone, boss, that'll cure the rheumatism, or the colic in the stomach. Look now, this one here, this was buried with them dead people, in Egypt. A mummy, yes, sir. This here one is an idol, sir, from a tribe in the Niger River—"

"No, no, a rabbit's foot. Sorry."

"You ask me for a rabbit's foot, sir. You got that idea from a colored man. Why don't you take advice from a colored man that knows something, sir? What I'm trying to sell you, sir, is something that we've known about for hundreds of years. Thousands of years, sir."

"Uncle, tell me. Have you a charm that cures a broken heart?"

The old colored man straightens up suddenly.

"Sir, I will ask you something. Did you ever hear of the Lady Hathor?"

"Race-horse?" said Durnwald.

"No, sir. The Lady Hathor was a goddess."

Durnwald looked at the wizard anxiously, and as he looked, the skin prickled the back of his neck.

"I must get back," he said quickly. "Uncle, here's a dollar. Much obliged."

But the old negro muttered softly to himself, as he turned a little red stone in his palms. He was apparently talking to some persons sacred to him. Hathor, Durnwald heard him say, and then some other names—Ishtar or Ishtel, or something like that. Suddenly he stopped.

"Sir, you made fun of me just now. You know that I can't cure no broken heart. A man like you knows that. I'll tell you something else. You've got it, too, a broken heart. Would you like me to read your fortune?"

"I would not," said Durnwald, grinning.

"I don't read the palm, not for people like you. I—"

"No. I'm in a hurry, uncle."

"Yes, sir. And you're—afraid, too. Now, I tell you what I can do. I can give you a charm. A charm that won't do you no good. I can't help you. You're—you're on—your way, sir. But this charm, you can do this with it. You can take it and make a wish, for your—for your—for some one you love. And it will maybe do them some good. And it will maybe give you a little disappointment, too. A disappointment, yes, sir. But that'll be for you."

"How much, uncle?"

The negro smiled, politely.

"Twenty-five dollars, sir. Twenty-five dollars is nothing to you—"

ALL THIS while a half-naked man in a silk bathrobe waits and thinks, and shuffles his feet and pays little attention to Terry Robinson.

"Sure, Jim me boy, you can't lose to him. That fight at the docks, in Cairo, Illinois, Scranton—the day Sysonby won and Durnwald had twenty thousand on him at one to three, one to three, mind ye! When I was a boy, back in the old country— 'Member the Englishman? We could always beat the English—sure, we beat 'em with slings and stones and pick-handles and bare fists. Ye can't lick us, Jim; it can't be done, that's all. I remember me grandmother, the Lord have mercy on her, telling me about one-eyed Terrence O'Ruarc, that fought the four Englishmen on the top of a hill, the top of a hill, do ye mind. He—"

Tonight. No more champ after tonight. Where's the boss? Where's Durnwald? I'll go nuts. The dinge is up there, in his corner. Waitin'. Laughin' and telling his friends hello, and waitin' for me.

"What's that? What's that?"

"Jim— It's no use."

No use. What's he sayin'?

"No use. Durnwald told me. Ye needn't worry. The fight's fixed. It's fixed for you to draw. The dinge won't hurt ye. He'll go easy on you. Ye can pile into him, he'll just clinch and hold on and tie you up. He wants to fight ye on the Coast, for Coffroth, Coffroth, ye mind. Ye'll get your end. Durnwald fixed it."

"He what? He what?"

"Durnwald fixed it. He done it through Moe Goldstein. I don't know whether he got all his bets coppered or not. He was layin' eight to five, nine to five, anything. Why, ye can get five to seven on the dinge at the ringside now. I guess he's coppered, all right."

He went to get me rabbit's foot. He—

"I guess he's out there, now, circulatin' around the ring, tryin' to find out how he stands. I guess he—"

A shout. A wild man on his feet, menacing.

"Come on, yah dirty, sneakin', double-crossin' thief, yah. I'll show yah. Draw, huh? I'll draw yah. Come on, I'll kill yah. I'll kill him. That's what I'll do. I'll kill him. I'll—"

Rap - rap - rap. Lucky that Robbie didn't lock the door again. It opens. It's Jack McGuigan, who runs the club.

Mac comes in.

"Ready yet, Champ? They're hollering for you."

And a half-naked man goes gibbering past him on the run, and you can hear him pelting up the stairs.

"Is that man right?" says Mac threateningly, anxiously.

But Robbie is running, too, after the Champ.

"Yes, Mac. I'll say he's right!" he throws back as he goes.

And when Durnwald came in to the club, with a red stone in his pocket that cost twenty-five dollars, and a rabbit's foot which he purchased for twenty-five cents from a colored boy, the fight was all over and they were still working on the dinge. Two rounds, it was, and the champ was never better.

And Durnwald, who had come to see that fight all the way from Lexington, Kentucky, pretty nearly cried. He'd won quite a good deal of money, but that wasn't his main interest in prize-fighting.

Any more than it was Jack McGuigan's. Poor Jack. I hope, where he is now, they're letting him arrange bouts between Goliath and Hercules, winner take all, and the promoter take nothing but the fun he gets out of it.

Hard-Luck McDonald

BY MEIGS O. FROST

"HARD-LUCK" McDONALD, as he was known throughout the tropics, was an ex-regular from the American Army. He had fought through the Nicaraguan revolution of 1910 with the American battalion under General Gabe Conrad. He had been involved in an attempted revolution that failed in Brazil. That uprising was ruthlessly crushed. McDonald, shot in the hip, fled into the jungle. Crossing the country through savage tribes, he reached the Amazon and made his way down the river in a native canoe. It was months before he saw a doctor. The wound in his hip got infected, and left him so badly crippled that for a long time after he reached the coast he had to be hoisted on the back of a horse and could only move around by riding.

In 1911 the Bonilla revolution in Honduras was on and General Lee Christmas was in command of the American adventurers with the rebels. Hard-Luck McDonald hit Honduras broke and looking for a job. The rebels had machine-guns, just as they were shipped, all knocked down. Nobody seemed to understand how to assemble them. McDonald tackled the job and made good. They made him a colonel at $350 gold a month.

The revolutionists won, and formed the government. Hard-Luck McDonald went from Puerto Cortez to Tegucigalpa, the capital. There, in a cell in the cuartel, he found an old dynamite gun. It had lain there ever since some Honduranian official had bought it from America. Nobody understood it.

McDonald chuckled when he saw it.

"Why, there's an old friend of mine," he said. "I saw it in action in the Spanish-American war."

It was an astounding gun. It had two barrels, one above the other. The upper barrel was loaded with a charge of dynamite. The lower barrel was loaded with black powder. When you fired the charge of powder in the lower barrel, the compressed gases were supposed to rush into the upper barrel, driving out the dynamite up to two thousand yards away. It exploded on contact, like a high explosive shell.

Over Tegucigalpa among the wild American adventurers sped the news that Hard-Luck McDonald was going to shoot the dynamite gun. A couple of hundred soldiers of fortune rode out into the hills with him to see the exhibition. McDonald had native soldiers dig a trench and mounted the gun on the edge of it. He loaded the gun with a half-charge of dynamite. He stretched himself at full length in the trench, while everybody hastily retreated to a respectful distance. Then McDonald pulled the lanyard. The dynamite blasted a huge hole a thousand yards away in the side of a hill.

Everybody cheered wildly. McDonald, proud as Punch, loaded again with a full-strength charge. McDonald disdained to stretch out in the safety-trench. He stood up and pulled the lanyard. There was a terrific blast. Men and fragments of metal whirled through the air in all directions. Miraculously not a man was killed. And here Hard-Luck McDonald proved that his name was rightly given. He was the only man wounded.

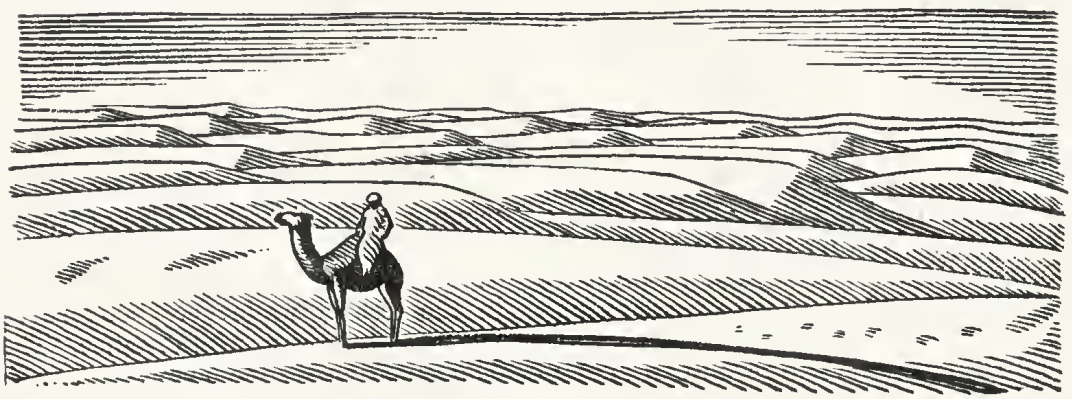
But the hard luck part of it only lasted until he got to the hospital. The fragments that wounded him had cut certain twisted muscles in his crippled hip—and when he walked out of the hospital his limp was gone!

McDonald's hard luck held to the last, however. He died in a hotel room the night before he was to leave for Canada to join the Princess Pats for overseas service in the World War.

Charles the Bold

A Complete Novelette of the French Colonials in the Sudan

By GEORGES SURDEZ



THE DOWNPOUR had ceased. The night was warm and moist, the stars veiled by mist. The native soldiers were grouped outside the temporary shelters, huddling under blankets around the small fires. The smoke drifted slowly, and the smell of charred wood and stewing rice hung in the air.

The detachment, sixty infantrymen from the First *Tirailleurs* and thirty riders from the Second *Spahis*, led by Captain Choquard, had for their mission to end as quickly as possible the warlike activities of a band of Mekduf Moors. After a pursuit of seven days they were no nearer the completion of their task than at the start. Tonight the troops were camped near the old trail that leads from Nioro to Nema, across the Sudanese Sahel.

Sergeant Courfay had removed his coat and boots, and lolled in comfort, back resting against a bale of cloth. Not far away, before the officers' tents, Captain Choquard and Lieutenant Espigny, of the infantry, were conversing. Espigny held a bottle between his knees, chipping off the wax with the blade of a penknife. Evidently Espigny had learned that the task of opening wine was not to be left even to a trusted servant.

The cork came out with a loud report, a report that jerked upward seventy-five black faces from the folds of cloth hoods. When the cause of the detonation was discovered, giggles fused shrilly and, for a brief period, there was a chorus of amused grunts.

Espigny held up the bottle.

"Come over here, Courfay, and have a drink," he invited.

Courfay drew his long form erect, strode leisurely toward the two and sank again, squatting on the straw mat that offered protection from the damp earth. The flame carved his features from the darkness: long nose, firm lips, a high forehead beneath the high crimson *chechia*.

His short cropped red hair glinted like polished copper.

"This is good to wash out the palate, young fellow," Espigny announced gravely. He was twenty-eight, only three years older than Courfay, but his two gold stripes gave him the privilege of age.

As Espigny filled the tin cups with wine, Captain Choquard wordlessly offered the sergeant a cigaret.

"Too bad Lieutenant Marjolet is not with us," Courfay remarked.

"Console yourself," Espigny suggested with mock sympathy. "Tomorrow he will be seated here and you will be roaming north in your turn." He lifted his cup high. "Thanks to luck! I'm not in the cavalry!"

Espigny was slender, narrow-shouldered, with a neck rather too long, thin lips that twisted too often in a sardonic smile. Courfay could not succeed in liking him, in spite of the lieutenant's democratic attitude. While invariably courteous he managed to inject into his speech a sort of virus that spoiled one's enjoyment. Espigny's eyes met others frankly, but were less frank than most shifty eyes. They seemed to have an outer surface of frosted glass over the gray pupils, to shut off at the same time prying glances and his own thoughts.

"Health!" Choquard said.

"Health!" Courfay agreed, lifting his cup.

"Health! Wealth! Happiness!" Espigny added. "And success to you, Courfay, on your next leave to France!"

"My next is my first," Courfay corrected him. "I have been here two and a half years and this is my first leave."

"Yes," Espigny agreed musingly. "When we first met, near the border of Sierra Leone, you had just come out. There was the bloom of youth in your cheeks and the innocence of the baby in your blue, blue eyes!"

Courfay involuntarily brought his hand to his cheeks. He knew that they were yellow now, for he had not been teased about his fresh complexion of late.

"The bloom is gone—with the innocence," Courfay said with a laugh.

Choquard passed a handkerchief over his glistening skull, bald, he claimed, from wearing a sun helmet for fifteen years. The captain had spent most of his time in the Tonkin and had been lately sent to the Sudan. He turned toward Courfay.

"What were you doing near Sierra Leone?" he asked.

"I joined Lieutenant Espigny, who was on observation there, officially to watch Malinkemory, brother of Samory, and in reality to keep an eye on the British column under Colonel Ellis, for those were the days before the conference had established the Say-Baraoua line."

"Courfay was sent to me because he spoke English well," Espigny added quietly.

"That was during the dry season, Captain," Courfay resumed swiftly. "And I must say, for all its evil reputation, the climate there was better than it is up here in the Sahel at this particular time."

Choquard, whose habit it was to keep to one subject, ignored the last remark made by the sergeant.

"You speak English?" he insisted.

Again Espigny spoke:

"Yes, and German, a bit of Spanish. Our friend Courfay is a well educated man, Captain."

Courfay's lips quivered. Espigny had no equal when it came to discovering another man's sensitive spot. The lieutenant had deliberately aroused Choquard's interest because he knew the sergeant had reason to keep certain matters quiet.

Choquard demanded precision.

"Seems to me," he said thoughtfully, "that your assignment to the cavalry school has been held off for a long while. Sacred ——! Men who know nothing become officers. And a man like you stays a sergeant two and a half years, when the need for good subalterns is constantly felt."

With grave solicitude, Espigny refilled Courfay's glass.

"Courfay had a temporary set-back,"

he announced. "You have but recently arrived, Captain, and you don't know."

"Sick? Wounded?" Choquard asked.

"Neither, Captain," Courfay replied. "Demoted to corporal from sergeant a year and a half ago, just when I was due to go home for a commission."

"Yes," Choquard acknowledged, simply. He was silent, then tactfully tried to change the drift of the conversation. But Courfay was determined, now that the matter had been broached, to give no half-truths.

"A question of discipline, Captain. I offended Lieutenant Marjolet—"

"Charles Marjolet, who is with us now?"

"Yes. The offense was public, the lieutenant had no choice. I had trained a group of men. Lieutenant Marjolet inspected them, and had some criticism to offer. I—was foolishly sensitive and spoke out of my turn."

Choquard nodded.

"Lieutenant Marjolet is hard to please, I know," he said. "Until one knows him well, he seems harsh—and all of us speak hastily once or twice in our existence. But what matters a year or so to a man your age?"

"In Courfay's case," Espigny pointed out, "it mattered this much: Over twelve months lost, during which Courfay has done things that would have won him the cross, had he been an officer."

"Who can tell?" Courfay scoffed.

The lieutenant was making too much of the episode. Marjolet had not only been within his rights, he had done his duty that day in Bandiagara. Courfay, perhaps too engrossed in his own studies, had neglected the inspections trusted to him. And all had come out for the best. Courfay was now assigned to attend the Saumur cavalry school and would leave for France at the end of the present expedition. So certain was his promotion that the officers, including Marjolet, already treated him as a comrade rather than as a non-com.

Courfay fervently hoped that Espigny would not longer feed the conversation on that line. The appearance of the native sergeant, Moussa Diara, coming to report to the captain, fortunately diverted Espigny's attention.

AFTER the negro had left Choquard smiled.

"Diara feels duty bound to report that the sentries are alert every two hours. You trained him, didn't you, Espigny?"

"Yes. Brought him up by hand, so to speak. His is a fantastic story."

"How?"

"One day, when I was recruiting in Kankan, a long, loose-limbed black entered the room. Well muscled, sound, he was accepted into the *Tirailleurs*. He was young, eighteen or nineteen. So far, nothing extraordinary. He might have been any of the half hundred recruits I selected that day.

"He surprized me by answering my questions as to probable age, previous occupation, etc., in fluent French, with a marked Parisian accent. He informed me that he had decided upon the army as a worthy career and intended to work up from the ranks, the more thoroughly to learn the ways of the negroes."

Choquard laughed. Diara, if not black as soot, was at least a deep chocolate with a glint of red when standing in the full glow of the noon sun, manifestly a blend of Bambara stock with Coast Senegalese.

"I asked him his name," Espigny went on, "and he called himself, Monsieur Moise Lion—Mr. Moses Lion. Gently I informed him that a French name among a long list of native names would bring special inquiry from the Kayes Headquarters and suggested that he give me his real name, his native name. That cleared up the mystery: He is Moussa Diara, which means the same thing.

"I drew his story from him. When but a small boy he had entered the service of a white trader in Medina. His rise was meteoric: Pan-scrubber, cook's aid, house-boy, table-boy, butler. After three or four years in Medina, his master failed

in business. But he had some affection for Diara and took him to Paris, undoubtedly thinking to keep a splendid servant cheaply.

"Moussa Diara was not a fool. He soon discovered that his master, a big man in Medina, Senegal, was nothing much at home. Also, he found out that the wages paid him were below the current scale in France. He cut loose from old ties, ruthlessly. For six or seven years, Diara did everything: Page in a hotel, shoe-shiner at railroad stations, a period as 'local-color' in a pseudo-Algerian night dump of quality and, finally, he was hired as a living advertisement for a famous shoe-polish.

"It was then that the long dormant pillaging instincts of his race stirred in his bosom. He helped himself to various tempting delicacies in a store and was arrested. The few days in jail did not annoy him—fed gratis, no work to do. But the judge decided that he should be shipped back to Senegal, where his lack of responsibility might be better understood.

"Diara was broken-hearted, but could not avoid deportation. In Africa, he did not prosper. He was too bold and talkative for Europeans to employ as a house servant or clerk. Moreover, he resented corporal punishment with threats of legal action. He joined a native trader whom he had impressed with his sophistication. But the morals of the child of the bush had been irreparably spoiled by the sojourn in France. The elegance he showed in dress, the very stiffly starched shirts and collars he wore, all had a strong appeal for the dusky beauties belonging to his associates.

"The inky-Romeo was roughly invited to go away, and tales of his iniquity spread. Shunned by black and white alike, the army was the only opening for him to crawl into. And here he is, after two years in the service, a sergeant, and unless I am a poor prophet indeed, a future colored lieutenant or captain. He has the black's ability to pick up languages, and an added dose of craftiness gathered on the boulevards. Men have risen high with less baggage."

"Fantastic," Choquard remarked. "I had a Chinese cook in the Tonkin. Gradually I discovered that he had lived in Paris, London, Berlin, a year in Peru and three years in San Francisco, America."

"I know an old black, now in Goa, I believe," Courfay said, "who had served in Mexico as private in the Nubian Battalion."

Espigny laughed.

Courfay wondered what he was about to say, for the lieutenant had the queer smile that preceded his sly thrusts.

"Speak as you wish of fantastic careers among natives," the lieutenant declared, "but the most fantastic carecr of all is that of Marjolet."

"Why?" Choquard challenged.

"A study of most unexpected developments. Why Marjolet is a lieutenant in the Sudan, a man who many claim will rise to high command, instead of a plodding lout tending his ancestral vineyard—that is the story."

Espigny paused and smiled.

Choquard had leaned forward. And Courfay was interested quite as much as the captain. Marjolet was somewhat of a legendary character in the Sudan. His courage and luck were proverbial. But no one had been able so far to tell just where he came from, and the events that had brought him to his present estate.

"EVOKE the picture of a ragged lad, shuffling his wooden shoes in the dust," Espigny began softly. "A lad who rose in the morning to milk the cows, who drove the cart to market on fair days. In the fall he helped gather the grapes on the sun-kissed hills of his native Burgundy; then, with the rest of the family, he trampled the fruit in the big vats. Papa Marjolet, a farmer, also owned several acres of grape-vines. Probably even then Marjolet was a daredevil—agile, strong, the village Achilles.

"I had an aunt in Dijon and I spent several of my summer vacations in the

region where Marjolet was brought up. Perhaps he was one of the little ruffians who stoned me one day because I wore city clothes."

"Very likely," Choquard admitted, with a grin. "His intolerance was given him by nature as was his marvelous strength."

"The lad grew into a young man, a powerful young man, no doubt, the sort that accept the challenge of the fair-day wrestlers. Again, probably, he was like the majority of the peasant lads, none too keen to serve the Republic in the ranks. Like others, he hoped fervently that the military physicians would discover something that would make him unfit to bear arms, without keeping him from his own work in the fields. But he had neither flat feet nor a weak heart. And he was assigned to a dragoon regiment.

"From that time on, my story will no longer be supposition. I know the captain who commanded the company in which Marjolet entered as a raw recruit. In fact I happen to know officers of that particular regiment well. On my last leave home, I happened to mention Marjolet. To my surprize, my friends recalled him well, which proves that even then he had personality.

"Marjolet reported to the barracks in a blue blouse and work-shoes, rather awkward in gestures, but with a straight, fearless glance and an almost insolent way of twisting his upper lip that warned of trouble should any one interfere with that savage spirit. He could barely read and write, but was willing to learn and attended the evening classes.

"On the whole, he was a fair soldier, with a particular fondness for horses. Where others tried to cut their turn of stable-guard, he asked nothing better than to nurse the beasts all night long, with an occasional nap in the oat-bin. In the fencing room he showed little *finesse*, but wonderful power. He was drunk but once, when his comrades doped his beer. But he gave no promise at the time of rising even to sergeant. After his time of service was over he would go home, settle down, marry, raise husky sons who would in turn become soldiers, later to marry and so on.

"Then came Duville. You know him, of course. The great painter of battles. A large, bearded fellow with the inspired face of a priest. He was at the time engaged on his panorama showing the fording of a river in Russia, and needed details on dragoons' uniforms under the First Empire. There were piles of records for him to consult, and the ten o'clock bugle sounded before he was well into his work.

"Marjolet's captain had been assigned to aid him. Duville never stirred for hours, save to take notes and make little sketches on the back of his paper. The captain, respecting the great artist, did not disturb him. At two o'clock in the morning, Duville rose with a sigh of satisfaction. Discovering the lateness of the hour, he wanted to go back to town and find a hotel room. But it was early spring and bitter cold. The captain offered him a cot in the room he used when on service in the barracks.

"At five, the bugle rang out. The captain was awakened by an exclamation from Duville, who was at the window. Duville had seen Marjolet who, feeling the need of a wash after a night in the stables, had stripped to the waist in spite of the cold and was splashing in the trough. Duville said that Marjolet had a perfectly muscled torso.

"The lucky Marjolet was given leave of absence by the colonel and followed Duville to Paris, to pose for him. You recall the big painting so often reproduced in magazines, 'Fording a River?' Long lines of dragoons marching toward a river, other helmets glinting in the distance. Do you remember the group at the right-hand corner—a field-forge, a group of dragoons holding horses and a smith bending over his portable anvil?"

Both Choquard and Courfay nodded.

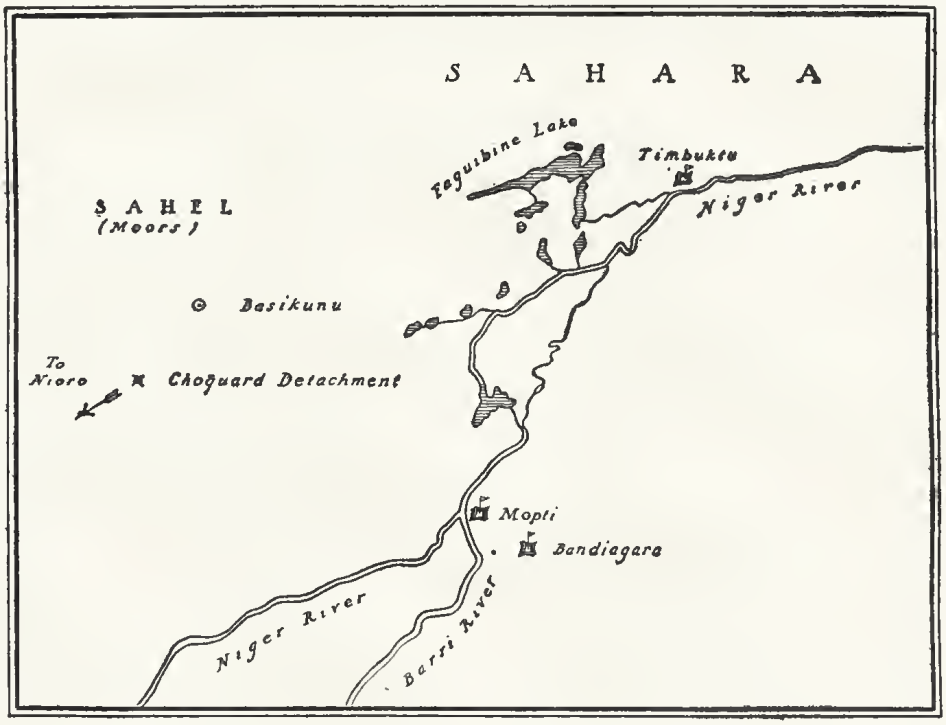
"The smith has his back to the beholder and is naked to the waist. The pads of muscles on the shoulders, the shoulders themselves, the mighty arms,

the wiry calves bulging even through the heavy cloth of the breeches, are those of Marjolet. If you are a student of art you may admire the perspiration oozing with great naturalness from the skin. If you are an athlete, you may envy the academy of the model.

"The painting was a success, and Duville somehow gave the credit to the magnificent figure in the foreground. The regiment of dragoons, whose predecessors he had chosen to place in his work, gave him a big dinner. Marjolet was came, to go to the Sudan, his application was granted.

"He came to Africa firmly resolved to live up to the expectations of Duville and of his chiefs: The Man with the Muscled Torso could do no less than become a hero. And brave he was. He won the Military Medal and the Legion of Honor in one year.

"Nevertheless it was still a matter of doubt whether he was officers' timber. Then he was placed under Jacques Sorbier. Yes, Captain Sorbier, who was



called in and congratulated. Duville proclaimed that the private was a survival of the vigorous type, the men of iron who had followed Napoleon. The colonel could not make him a marshal of France right away, but he placed him on the promotion list.

"Marjolet became a corporal, then a sergeant. Duville had brought him from obscurity to regimental fame. He was the pride of the unit—out of the whole army he had been picked for a model by the great Duville! Nothing was too good for him, and when the call for non-coms Marjolet's equal in courage, almost his equal in strength, and had been born a gentleman. I said that Sorbier *was*. He is not dead, but *is* no longer a soldier.

"Sorbier led thirty *Spahis* north against the Tuareg. The exploits of that small group, with only two white men to lead them, remind one of a page of Homer. To tell the truth, they were all picked men, those blacks under Sorbier, men with five to eight years' experience, who had cheated death so long that they felt secure.

"One afternoon, the group encountered a mob of Tuareg warriors who stood their ground, having come out of the desert to do just that, regardless of the reputation of their opponents. There was a preliminary fusilade, then the *Spahis* charged headlong, for that was Sorbier's system; despite cold reasoning, it succeeded oftener than not.

"Naturally, Marjolet took the right of the line. The trio of Tuareg, detached to kill him, vanished under a shower of thrusts and swings. But, as I have said, these Tuareg were particularly eager to prove their worth against the French. They used their short throwing spears and broad-bladed swords with enthusiasm.

"Sorbier, approaching a dismounted warrior, point forward, had his thigh pinned to the saddle by a throwing spear. The officer killed the warrior. But two others took his place. One clutched at the bridle of Sorbier's horse, while the other tried to slice the Frenchman's head from his shoulders. Sorbier, hampered by his wounded leg, was almost powerless, but warded off the first blows with his saber. The third or fourth stroke severed his hand at the wrist.

"Marjolet's attention was attracted by the howls of triumph from the warriors. Accounts vary as to the distance he had to cover to reach Sorbier's side. Some say twenty-five, some fifty yards. But all the blacks will swear that it was not the horse that carried Marjolet, that Marjolet flew through the air holding the horse between his legs!

"His saber clove the head of the nearest of the men, and somehow escaped his grasp. Temporarily disarmed, Marjolet struck the other with his clenched right hand. Thus rid of immediate danger, he leaned from the saddle and picked up Sorbier's blade. He took his chief to the rear where he dressed his wound as well as he could under fire.

"Another would have retreated. Marjolet attacked again. And if a section of infantry had not appeared miraculously when no infantry was believed to be in the vicinity, the *Spahis* would have been killed to the last man.

"Sorbier's forearm had to be sacrificed. Amputation of the right arm above the elbow, a tendon severed in his leg, Sorbier was crippled, so useless that he could not even be employed at a desk. Marjolet was given special leave to go back to France with Sorbier. The officer faced life as a cripple bravely. As for Marjolet, he was sent to Saumur and obtained his second-lieutenancy with ease.

"Sorbier was of course grateful to Marjolet, and invited him to visit his family in a vast property owned by them near Tours. You don't know perhaps that the elder Sorbier is a senator and was at one time minister of war. He is immensely wealthy. Marjolet's arrival coincided with the national elections. Passing through a near-by town, he overheard a speech in which the army was vilified.

"Marjolet, in full uniform, medals glittering on red tunic, leaped to the platform, tossed the orator to the ground below and invited those who accused professional officers of cowardice when not backed by their men's bayonets, to come toward him.

"His fists quelled the brawny machinists, the burly teamsters. It was claimed that he did better work than a police squad might have done. He seems born for the spectacular, and received a genuine ovation when recognized, for even the anti-militarists had taken pride in his prowess.

"Sorbier has a younger sister, a pretty, dark eyed little woman, fond of poetry and all that soft stuff. Whether Marjolet can talk persuasively to women, whether it was gratitude for what he had done to save her brother, I don't know. It may be that sheer muscle power appeals to women, and Marjolet, after all, is not far from handsome. Sorbier senior could not refuse anything to the man who had saved his son. To make it short, the Burgundian farm lad obtained Sorbier's daughter, in just and holy wedlock. A strange pair."

Choquard smiled.

"Napoleon, a poor Corsican, married Marie-Louise, daughter of the oldest reigning family. All proportions considered, there is nothing unusual in Marjolet's marriage."

"It is not generally known that Marjolet is married," Courfay remarked. "And what is he doing out here in that case?"

Espigny smiled.

"He may not be refined, but he has the crafty quickness of perception native to the peasant. He knows well what attracted his wife—his bravery. He was keen enough to understand that if he remained in France at her side permanently—I don't know quite how to express it—well, that his charm would wane early.

"He must always be 'Charles the Bold.' Since the nickname has been given him he has actually tried to look the part. When he goes on leave, he has sufficient prestige to last him over three months. His origin, his manners, are all forgiven. He is a hero."

THROUGHOUT Espigny's tale, Courfay had been wondering when the inevitable criticism would come. It was not the lieutenant's custom to praise a man as highly as he had praised Marjolet.

Choquard shifted his weight lazily.

"You knew Miss Sorbier, Espigny?"

"Yes. Had for a long time. I tell you, I was not the least surprized of all her friends to see her give way to impulse."

"Eh," Choquard noted. "I begin to understand."

Espigny flushed, but as Choquard was still something of an unknown quantity he dare not resent the remark. Courfay, trying to keep from smiling, shook with inward amusement. For all his artful sarcasm, Espigny had revealed more than he had wished to reveal. He was the son of a wealthy man, a man who had owned textile mills and sugar-refining plants in northern France. Evidently Espigny considered himself a better match for the daughter of Senator Sorbier than the ex-farmer.

But the captain was not finished.

"I can not see, Espigny, that being born a peasant is a thing to be ashamed of. It is probable that your ancestors scratched the soil for a living. That was the first task of men. Even admitting your viewpoint as worthy of consideration, when the worse that can be brought up against a man is his birth, I consider that man a success."

Courfay did not believe that this would make for perfect amiability between the two infantry officers, but he mentally applauded Choquard. However, recalling his rank, he was discreet. One should not stick a finger between revolving cogwheels, and the tale concerning Marjolet had been addressed, more particularly, to Choquard.

Espigny twisted his fingers nervously, obviously disliking the turn given the conversation.

"Not only do you talk like a child," Choquard resumed pitilessly, "but you forget the French Revolution, which wiped out class distinction. Marjolet is a splendid officer. That's all that concerns us in judging him. Your story, shorn of its personal comments was interesting. But were either young Courfay or myself indiscreet—"

Silence followed; a decidedly cool feeling had fallen upon the three. Choquard, placid as ever, rolled a cigaret between his fingers, hesitated, then tossed it to the nearest private.

"Going to bed," he said. "If Marjolet comes back with any important news, awake me, Espigny. Good night."

He disappeared into the farthest tent, lowered the curtain.

Espigny watched him until he was hidden from view, then shrugged.

"Sour old fellow. Probably pushed a plow in his days, too."

"Unlikely, Espigny. Military family for five generations."

Espigny eyed Courfay suspiciously.

"You agree with him?"

"I'm scarcely to be considered as a judge," Courfay evaded.

"Right. You have your own grudge against Marjolet," Espigny stated with deliberation. "What I was about to say when Choquard pounced on me is that Marjolet is not brave, that he has little real valor. He is a bluff."

"A good bluff, then—"

"Do you know why Marjolet is brave, or seems to be?"

"For the same reason that my hair is red, Lieutenant."

"No!" Espigny snapped: "Marjolet is brave because he firmly believes himself to be protected against danger."

"How did he come to that conclusion?"

"Superstition. He wears a string of medals beneath his tunic, around his neck. And to be quite safe, he purchased a Moslem amulet in Timbuktu, guaranteed to ward off steel and lead. Like the peasant who nails a night-owl to his barn door to ward off evil spirits, he hangs amulets about his neck. Convince him that his faith is ill-placed and his fine front will crumble."

Courfay laughed.

"Nonsense! Rot! All of us, very nearly, have some object that we cling to, a sort of unofficial fetish. Captain Choquard, I have noticed, has a tiger claw for a watch-charm. I have a few links of steel chain that I picked up, while in barracks in France, that for some reason I could never bring myself to throw away. You wear a ring of no great value, which probably you wouldn't part with for money. Marjolet bought the amulet for a joke, I say."

"A joke? When Marjolet bought it he had not yet married a wealthy woman. And he paid five hundred francs in silver for it. Moussa Diara told me. He got it from Marjolet's boy. Protection against steel and lead."

"That does not insure him against fever, sun-stroke, dysentery, itch, snake-bite, poison, the fangs of a wild beast, the horns of a buffalo. If he felt fear normally, Lieutenant, wouldn't he be afraid of those? Also, fear may exist regardless of danger, and the amulet does not protect him against fear, does it?"

Espigny looked up. His eyes clashed on those of Courfay with an almost perceptible impact.

Very deliberately, he picked up another bottle, resumed the patient chipping of the wax. Again came a sharp report. Again the blacks were startled.

"We'll drink this before going to bed," Espigny said, filling the cups.

He looked down at the red liquid, smiled a last time.

"Your health, Courfay! You're an intelligent man!"

THE IMMEDIATE cause of the affair between Courfay and Marjolet in Bandiagara had been a rusty butt-plate on a carbine. When Marjolet had discovered the spot of red on the dull steel, he had addressed the instructor, Courfay, loudly, before the hundred and fifty blacks and the score of white men gathered for the inspection.

"Sergeant!" his clear voice rang through the air. "From your notes I understood that you had proved a good instructor in France. I regret to say that I can not compliment you on your work out here."

Courfay had served in the Sudan under good-natured chiefs for months, men who were not as severe in the enforcement of discipline as they would have been at home. Marjolet had paused, Courfay thought, to listen to an excuse.

"In France," the sergeant replied, "I had a difficult task drilling stupid peasants, but they at least spoke my language. These blacks are almost as stupid, and do not comprehend French. I have repeatedly—"

"Enough!" Marjolet shouted. "—— bungler that you are! Blame yourself, not your men. I don't know what keeps me from sending in a report. You ass!"

Courfay lost his temper, unwisely.

"A man may act an ass once, Lieutenant, and not be one. But there's no mistaking his identity if he brays."

The enormity of the offense had

brought utter stillness. Marjolet's voice lowered to a conversational tone.

"I hope that you'll say that you were hasty just now—"

"I've said what I've said, Lieutenant."

"You compel me to report you."

Fortunately for Courfay, his past record was sufficiently brilliant to sway many in his favor. His sentence had been mild. Demotion to corporal, cancellation of leave, with an official warning. In eight months he had been reinstated to his former rank.

Moreover, the reply he had made to "Charles the Bold" had brought him a certain popularity. The anecdote, repeated in every post of French West Africa, had been distorted into something much more pungent. Courfay knew that Marjolet's equals still teased him about his loud voice.

Espigny, in his ironical narration, had involuntarily taken away the last shred of resentment that Courfay had entertained against Marjolet. For he realized now that his reference to peasants had seemed to the lieutenant a scantily veiled slur.

To Marjolet's credit, after sending in the report he had been forced to write, due to the public offense, he had never again evidenced, by word or action, that he bore the non-com a grudge. On this very expedition, when it would have been possible for him to harass the sergeant unmercifully, he had treated him with easy cordiality, insisted on doing more than his share of the tedious patrol work in the swamped fields. And, as Courfay had just discovered, he had not even informed Choquard of the sergeant's slip from grace.

So that Courfay retired to his tent and slid between his blankets with a new feeling of loyalty and understanding for his immediate superior. Also, new admiration for Captain Choquard, who defended a subordinate of whom he might have been jealous. Truly, among such men, Espigny was an exception.

But there were others of his type higher up. The plight of the detachment showed it.

Captain Choquard had arrived in the Sudan with a fine reputation made in Dahomey, Madagascar and Indo-China, highly recommended by his superiors. For some reason, however, he had aroused the enmity of some one in power.

The detachment under his orders was not too well composed. Half of the infantrymen were recruits without long training. It was plain that the information given Choquard was willfully scanty. He had been ordered north at the worst season of the year, and without absolute necessity. The band of Mekduf Moors was not misbehaving more than usual at the time, merely profiting by the belief that the French would not start out during the rains.

And Choquard had been seconded by the cavalry lieutenant, Marjolet, a man of proved courage and ability, but notoriously hot-tempered, a man hard to handle. Without doubt it had been expected that Marjolet, who disliked to see a troop poorly led, would clash very soon with his chief who was a novice in the Sudan.

But Choquard combined diplomacy with military ability. While keeping the reins, he had not checked the excitable Marjolet, had spared his pride by consulting him before every move and, when not agreeing, had coolly explained his reasons for disregarding the counsel.

Instead of showing eagerness to come to grips with the Moors, to begin his career in Africa with a crashing success, to wear his soldiers out with constant marching and counter-marching, Choquard had progressed steadily, moving from one site to another at leisure with the bulk of his forces, while the cavalry patrols sought the enemy, kept him informed, ready to take advantage of the first false move by the native chieftain.

Despite the rain, and fevers to be caught in the marshes, the detachment did not count more than four men unfit for duty. Choquard had the deft hand of a master leader. His years in the Tonkin stalking the Black Flags and river pirates, who could teach even the Moors

patience and bush strategy, had hammered the captain into a steel blade, that bent but did not break, that was ready at all times to flash out and strike.

Choquard had brought the same imperturbable calm in his relations with Espigny. For days, he had endured the caustic comments of the slender lieutenant, biding his time, stalking him in the maze of his arguments, finally to pounce upon him tonight. Choquard was but one or two years over thirty, although he appeared much older. The climate of Indo-China does not preserve youth in the Occidental. With a little luck he would rise high. Higher, possibly, than either the crafty Espigny or the truculent Marjolet. Courfay hoped that, in the future, when he came back to the Sudan with a commission, it would be his fortune to serve under Choquard.

One might learn much from the captain.

"WHOSO a musketeer would be
Must jest with Death right merrily;
To insult mete out quick disaster;
Shoot straight and fast; drink straight,
and faster."

"Marjolet is back," thought Courfay.

There was no mistaking the lieutenant's barytone.

Although the sun had not risen, Marjolet, with superb contempt for other men's rest, was heralding his return. Singing at all times, that was another of his peculiarities. As a general rule martial songs with a swinging rhythm. Marjolet was fond of music, and his buglers were always among the best in the *Spahis*.

"He sounds happy. He has news," Courfay murmured.

He thrust his legs in his breeches, slipped his feet in leather sandals and went out.

Marjolet had ridden his horse to the captain's tent, and was calling out loudly.

Choquard came out with a lantern. He was in his night-shirt. Muscular hairy legs protruded, a rather rotund stomach bulged the white cloth, a stomach that was kept within reasonable limits during the day by an abdominal belt over which the leather belt was buckled.

"What's all the noise about, Marjolet?"

"We located them and they showed fight, Captain. In a little village not far from here, which they had been looting. I don't know whether the whole bunch was there. We picked up three dead when we got in."

"Why didn't you send for me?"

"Bah! They'd have gone by that time, and anyway, I didn't have a man to spare. As they say in the guessing game, we're getting warm!"

"Probably they'll slip away, gain the desert and then good-by."

"Oh, no! They have business in another village. One of them was not dead when we reached him, and he talked."

"Strange that he did."

"Not at all." Without more explanation as to his method of obtaining information, Marjolet slid from the saddle, threw the bridle to the nearest native private. "Take him to my orderly and tell him that if the horse isn't well taken care of, he will be. Hello, Courfay."

"Good morning, Lieutenant."

"Will you see that everything is in order among the *Spahis?* In the meanwhile, I'll talk with Captain Choquard."

Choquard invited him into the tent, and Courfay, after replacing the sandals with boots, woke up the cavalrymen. Those who had just returned with Marjolet were allowed to rest while their comrades took care of the horses. The sergeant inspected the thirty saddles, the carbines and sabers. He discovered nothing wrong. The black, careless in barracks about his weapons, nurses them as a fond mother cares for a first-born, when his life depends upon them.

At sunrise all was ready, and Courfay went back to report.

He found Marjolet in his tent, standing in a shallow tub while an orderly threw water over his back.

"Sit on the cot or you'll be splashed," Marjolet advised.

And, as he reported in detail the condition of men, horses and equipment, Courfay looked at Marjolet as if he had never seen him before.

The lieutenant permitted his hair to grow long, in large shocks that tumbled about his ears and over his forehead. This forehead, sloping and wide, revealed at the same time inborn pugnacity and intelligence of rare caliber. The eyes, deeply sunk under the arches of the brow, were blue-black, as if chipped from hard, polished mineral by an expert jeweler. The nose was long, the nostrils wide. A short black beard lengthened the face. The mouth, firm-lipped, was surrounded by deep grooves of determination. The teeth were white and strong, like live ivory. The high cheek-bones, the lines about the eyes, gave Marjolet a mask of rare power, in which were combined the elements of courage and dogged resolution, qualities not always found together.

Many times, Courfay had seen Marjolet naked. But he had never consciously noticed the splendid grace of the torso. Below the tanned neck, the skin was white and smooth. There was not a blemish from shoulder to heel. On the larger swells of the muscles rippled smaller muscles, so that at each move Marjolet appeared to vibrate. The overlapping muscles that inclosed the ribs were as distinguishable one from the other as on an anatomy chart. The flat abdomen, without an ounce of fat, contrasted with the paunch of Choquard.

Marjolet dressed to the waist and the orderly held his shirt out. Before accepting it, the lieutenant reached out, took from the lid of his tin trunk a string of metal discs, which he placed around his neck. Then followed a longer necklace of leather, from which hung a small oblong packet of the same material, doubtless the Moslem amulet mentioned by Espigny.

Many times, on the field after an engagement, Courfay had slit open such amulets to ascertain the contents. Marjolet's was probably similar—a pinch of dust, ashes or powder, or a bit of paper on which was scrawled a verse of the Koran. These amulets were not efficacious in foiling the death-dealing bullet or sword, as was proved by the fact that they were found on corpses.

Marjolet did not try to hide the charms from the sergeant. He passed his head through the shirt, fastened the buttons, the loose cuffs flapping about his wide wrists.

"Ready!" he announced a moment later. "I have brought back a piece of antelope meat for breakfast. After the ride I had last night, I can enjoy a cup of coffee."

Choquard and Espigny were already seated at the folding table. The Bambara cook had sliced the antelope meat into thin slices and, after a diet of tinned meat, the change was welcome.

Gathered about the cast-iron pots and the copper saucepans, the negroes were dipping their long fingers in the boiled rice drenched with spicy sauce. Those who had already finished their meal were gnawing *kola* nuts for dessert. They were all happy. The two major pleasures of the blacks are dancing to the tomtoms' cadence and eating much good food.

The captain spoke of Marjolet's report and the plan of action he had suggested.

"Lieutenant Marjolet had obtained information," he said. "Cheikh Sid Hamet does not intend to leave the region without looting the negro village situated—" He illustrated with the tableware. "Suppose that these plates are the flooded fields that cup the village in question, the narrow lane is the direct path. Lieutenant Marjolet suggests that the *Tirailleurs*, who can pass where horses can not, file quietly to dry land behind the village. In the meanwhile the *Spahis*, commanded by himself and Sergeant Courfay, will show themselves on the front trail, causing the Moors to move back on the uncertain paths behind the village, where we will have them

floundering under the fire of our Lebels."

"Pardon me, Captain," said Marjolet, "but I would like a few *Tirailleurs* for support. When they find themselves shut off in front, they may ebb back upon me. Ten rifles will do."

"You'll have them. Which of the non-coms do you prefer?"

"Moussa Diara. He savvys quicker than the others and there won't be much need for courage. When it comes to skull-smashing, I prefer a real, home-bred black."

Espigny left the table, to return with a map.

"Can't use that thing," Marjolet stated without hesitation. "Whoever did it blundered on this region."

"There's only one thing wrong with the plan," Espigny declared. "A small thing, which may mean a great deal. Will the Moors go to the village? I doubt it. They will suspect—"

"We can but try—" Choquard exclaimed with impatience.

"How can we depend upon what the prisoner said?" Espigny queried.

"Trust me," Marjolet invited. "He took a long time to talk. I threatened to shave his head completely if he did not speak the truth, and I made him swear to it according to his own code. Still he lied manfully, but in the cross-examination I obtained what I sought. A sort of system of mine by which I extract one truth from three or four lies which do not connect. To check up, I told him my conclusions, and one look at his face was proof that I had guessed rightly."

Courfay had seen, in Kayes, an officer connected with the Intelligence Service, a veteran of the Arab bureau of Algeria, who, by deft questioning, approaching the core of the inquest from several angles in turn, finally isolated the truth. Not an easy lore to acquire. Marjolet had doubtless succeeded.

"In that case," Espigny admitted, "we have a fair chance. Yet the plan is so old, so time-worn, that it seems impossible that the foxy Hamet will fall into the trap."

"The trite, well tested move is surer of success than the innovation," Choquard said gravely. "There are but a limited number of moves in warfare; what counts is the time and the place. We knew when we started out that our ultimate tactic would consist of an enveloping movement. The sole problem was the site and the hour. We now have three elements: movement, position, time. There is a fourth, but that no man can control. It is variously known as luck, fate, destiny."

"Right," Espigny agreed. "Although there are those who claim destiny can be shaped by man. A sorcerer, a witch-doctor, makes a living out of the belief in his power to change destiny."

Choquard glanced at his watch, evidently saw that he had time, and only then replied:

"There have been a few cases of solidly proved predictions, I admit. But never of actual control of the future."

"How can any one tell?" Courfay protested. "When the desired event comes to pass as promised by the sorcerer, he claims the credit. He is as sure of himself as you are of your contrary opinion."

"I side with the captain," Espigny announced. "And for example, we have with us now a man whose destiny has been tampered with. None the worse for it, as far as I can see. No less a person, than you, Marjolet."

"I?" Marjolet exclaimed. "What have I to do with it?"

"You served in the Tomas Rebellion a year ago, and if reports are true, smashed quite a few skulls. I passed through Boola-Town—you know, the greatest trade center for *kola* nuts in West Africa—some months ago, and was told that a certain Zerecoky, a sorcerer, had cast a spell over the 'big Frenchman.' Knowing that he was protected from death by the spirits, he had not tried to match his magic against another's magic, but he had attacked the unprotected spot. Zerecoky had killed his chicken, taken out the vital organs, macerated them in the proper sauce for the proper time. Then

he had stabbed the mess with steel needles after the approved fashion of enchanters the world over. Thus he believed that he was injecting fear into Marjolet's heart. An absolute failure as we all know."

"Where's that Zerecoky?" Marjolet demanded suddenly and violently.

"Unfortunately for Zerecoky, he chose a direct method against the post commander of his village, a hard-souled lieutenant, ex-Foreign Legionnaire. He poisoned his food. The officer, finding himself writhing in pain, his palate burning, had immediately drunk milk and saved himself. To connect the attempt on his life with the official poisoner was not a long process. In spite of his protestations of innocence, the lieutenant invited him to test his power against six eight-millimeter bullets. I arrived just in time to see Zerecoky's carcass exposed for the edification of the populace."

Marjolet laughed nervously.

"Why didn't you speak of this before?"

"Forgot it until the topic was brought up. It's all nonsense, anyway. By the way, did you ever hear the tale of the major who paid a sorcerer to bring him his promotion to colonel?" Espigny laughed.

"I have," Courfay replied. "I even heard his name spoken. But that same major finally went into an asylum for the insane, for he had a large spider in his ceiling. Too much absinthe, too much enjoyment, too much everything."

"By the way," Marjolet put in. "What happened to the ex-Foreign Legionnaire—after?"

"After? What could happen after? The officer was reprimanded for execution of a native notable without due trial."

"I mean—did Zerecoky's spell end with his death?"

"All sorcerers will assure you that the spell works after their death. A matter of protection, to avoid assassination on general principle. But as far as I know the officer in question is still alive. Moussa Diara was with me and knew of Zerecoky. He may have forgotten, however."

Marjolet called for Moussa Diara and questioned him, pretending amusement.

"I remember," Moussa Diara said, "very well. In those days Lieutenant Marjolet was disliked, for it was soon after the fighting. But those tales are nothing but inventions to scare old women, and a Frenchman laughs at them." Diara laughed. "It was also said that Zerecoky had not acted alone for his people, but also at the request of a Frenchman. Men had seen the Frenchman speaking with Zerecoky—"

Choquard rose impatiently and signaled to the bugler.

The *Tirailleurs* passed the straps of their packs over their shoulders and formed in line. The servants folded up the table and closed the food crates.

"When you please, Lieutenant Espigny." Choquard said.

Espigny swung into his saddle, blew a whistle.

"Shoulder arms. Column by one—march."

"We'll be in position by three o'clock, Lieutenant Marjolet, at the assigned spot." Choquard rapidly reviewed the situation. "We have farther to go, owing to our turning movement. You are mounted. Try not to give them alarm too soon." He shook hands first with Marjolet, then with Courfay. "Be careful, both of you. Aside from pure altruism, I hope not to have heavy casualities to report, for my own sake. Good luck."

Espigny was already in the lead, the thin column of infantry, blue backs and crimson *chechias*, filed on the narrow path that crossed the flooded plain on the northwest, between the glistening pools left by the rain. Choquard took the lead of section number two, immediately followed by the long line of bearers plodding with resignation under the heavy head-loads. A squad of riflemen brought up the rear.

Marjolet watched the captain, shrunk under his white helmet, shoulders sagging.

"Fine man!" he said admiringly. Then

he turned to Courfay. "Do you believe all that stuff?"

"All what, Lieutenant?"

"Sorcerers, spells, fetishes?"

"No. Enough trouble comes to us from natural sources without looking for men to add to it."

Marjolet lifted the sun-helmet from his head, yet without exposing his skull to the sun—an unwise procedure in the Sudan. He ran his fingers through his thick black hair and scowled. He appeared about to speak again to Courfay, but ended with a shrug.

"Moussa Diara!" he called. When the black sergeant was standing beside his horse, he gave him final instructions, "I want you to bring your men behind us about two kilometers. Don't fall behind too far if you can help it. But above all, don't show yourself before the firing becomes heavy enough to make you sure we are engaged. I don't want those fellows to know there is a single rifleman east of the village until it is too late.

"You understand. Not one of your men must be visible to the enemy's scouts. In case you do as I say and we clean out the Moors in good style, you can count on me to boost you for your promotion. If you do anything to bring failure I'll boot you as you've never been booted before. I know you well, Diara, and no excuse will be accepted."

On several occasions before Courfay had seen that the cavalry lieutenant, while appreciating Diara's ability to understand and speak French, had no feeling of esteem for his fighting qualities. To genuine Sudanese, Marjolet rarely spoke a harsh word in a serious tone.

The *Spahis* moved forward at a walk, and in an hour were in contact with the advance scouts of the Moors who fell back without showing fight.

"Dropping steadily eastward and leaving an opening between themselves and the bulk of their band, they are trying to create the impression that their band is in the east," Marjolet explained to Courfay. "Unless otherwise informed, we would follow them, while the majority of the long-haired pirates looted the village to their heart's content. He handed Courfay the field glasses. "Look at that chap on the white horse."

The rider indicated, on a mount somewhat larger than the *Spahis'* horses, was clad in blue cloth, his head bare. His hair and beard, unshorn, growing as they pleased, framed his thin, fine-featured face. A short carbine rested on the saddle before him. Through the glasses Courfay could see him guide his mount with his lean shanks while one hand held the gun and the other was held high to shade his eyes.

"A perfect type," Courfay agreed.

"In the official files of the government, Courfay, you can read in learned reports that these fellows, Sahel Moors, are not equal in military valor to the Moors of the Senegalese Adrar or those from the Tafilalet Oases on the other side of the Sahara. Yet they are the same breed. The Moors here do not give trouble such as the others do, because our bases are within a few days. Place them two hundred miles farther north, in the sand-dunes, with us away from water and supplies—" Marjolet laughed. "I have even seen it written that the Moors are the highest type of negroes in the Sudan. Semite and Ethiopian are one to the casual observer. He sees a man who calls himself a Moor and shows the thick lips and heavy jaw of the negro, and from then on classifies all Moors with the blacks.

"Obvious conclusion," Courfay decided, "that one should not judge by appearances."

"In no case," Marjolet approved. "There are things that men should not judge, because they never have studied them, and would not understand them if they tried."

"An Englishman named Shakespeare said something of the sort some centuries ago."

"I have heard that name," said Marjolet. "Did he serve under Marlborough?"

Courfay was suddenly reminded that the lieutenant, although he had fully

acquainted himself with military and African subjects, had launched out in life without education. To discourse of literature at the present moment did not appear important to the sergeant.

"I believe so, Lieutenant," he replied.

While apparently unaware of the stratagem employed by the Moors, Marjolet had edged his troop of riders northward, so that he was between the village and the curtain of horsemen. His intention was to follow them leisurely—a scant half-score—until mid-afternoon, when he would turn and dash back to blockade the main trail.

The lieutenant halted upon the crest of a low swell, straightened in the saddle to seek out the scouts.

That Charles Marjolet resembled his namesake, the illustrious Duke of Burgundy, could not be denied. As Espigny had said, Marjolet might shape his hair and beard in imitation of the duke, but the profile, the forehead and nose, the scornful twist of the lips, nature had granted him.

In other days he would have been a splendid leader in spite of his peasant origin. The Middle Ages counted many such figures, who led pikemen and *gens d'armes* behind the kings and dukes of France. Even in modern days, less friendly to the man who offers nothing but courage and muscles, with a purely warlike intelligence, Marjolet had gravitated to a sphere of action best suited to him. Fate had not allowed that fierce energy, that immense strength to waste within the narrow limits of the home village.

A complete throwback who, like his ancestors, would willingly have preceded each action with a solemn appeal to some occult power recommended as a help. Courfay had read of medieval commanders who had sought everywhere for a man who would summon his Satanic majesty to appear that they might exchange their salvation for a few years of earthly power. These men also had worn amulets under the steel corselet oftener, probably, than Christian emblems.

Unconsciously theatrical in attitude, Marjolet sat in the saddle like a conqueror, left fist resting on the hip, right hand holding field-glasses and reins. He posed quite as much as the black *Spahis* who swelled their chests in the red tunics and clamped the chin straps of their pipe-clayed helmets tightly about their jaws.

Marjolet ended his contemplation and ordered six men to trot after the skulking Moors. Then he invited Courfay to come nearer.

The sergeant saw with surprize that his lips were twitching, his face drawn.

"LISTEN, Courfay. You bear me no grudge for what happened in Bandiagara, do you?"

"No, Lieutenant. You were in the right."

"That doesn't matter. If I talk to you not as an officer to sergeant but like a poor —— in trouble to a friend, will you repeat what I say?"

"No."

"Because I don't want any more talk about me. There's been too much as it is. I'm a peasant, that's understood. And I've never hidden it. When they brought out the big plow, to try and wean the negroes from the *daba*,* I shed my coat and showed them how to handle it. Up to a year ago I wouldn't have cared. But now I've—reasons for not wanting to seem ridiculous."

"Naturally enough, Lieutenant."

"I've been wondering what was the matter with me for the past six or seven months. I never used to think of danger, and now I do. Not just a little, but often. Espigny's story, this morning, made me see the reason. I know it sounds crazy to you, but I believe that—spell business."

"You've dwelt on it ever since," Courfay replied lightly. "Think of anything long enough and it will gradually seem more and more reasonable."

"But why did I feel fear even before he spoke? Yesterday, when I saw a few

* Native plow in form of a crooked stick.

of the enemy in the village before me, I had to make an effort to order the men forward. For a moment I was tempted to withdraw quietly, but they were all looking at my back, I knew, waiting for my hand to go up and signal them to go forward and attack. I remembered in time who and what I had been, what they thought of me. But just in time, Courfay, just in time."

"You're lucky if you don't have that feeling of reluctance before every show, Lieutenant. I have. With a hundred guns going off you can't help but feel at least one bullet will find you."

"That's not my case. I wouldn't be afraid, Courfay, if I was sure that a bullet would end me definitely and for all time. What I fear is breaking down in the middle of an action and running. After what I have been—" Marjolet repeated.

Courfay waited for him to go on, not knowing what to say.

"Here's what I wish you'd do for me, Courfay: Today you keep an eye on me. If I show fear, if I turn around, put a revolver bullet through my skull."

The sergeant glanced at the *Spahis*, grouped a few yards away in the shade of a small tree.

"From a purely technical viewpoint, Lieutenant," he said in a bantering tone, "your request is impossible to grant. I am the only man in this group who carries a 92 model revolver, save yourself. Admitting that I would do it, I would be degraded and shot; for the blacks are not blind, and the autopsy would prove their statement."

Marjolet gloomily accepted the objections.

"I'll have to watch myself, and if the desire to get out becomes too strong, use my own gun."

Courfay could see that Marjolet was not joking. The lieutenant would shoot himself as readily as he had shot others. He regretted that Choquard was not present. The captain, with his gentle logical reasoning, would find a way to halt matters before a tragedy occurred.

"I saw you this morning when you came back," he said. "Heard you singing. Not a trace of worry." He paused. "You did not sleep. You are merely fatigued, which does not make for strong will."

"Strong will or not—"

"You'll shoot yourself? A fine thing to do! Personally, I believe that all that ails you is being tired. Even a man of your robust constitution cannot go thirty-six hours without sleep and be quite himself. We have four hours free. Have your blankets spread under that tree, take a couple of quinine pills and try to rest."

"I once went three days and three nights without rest and I did not feel it."

"Try, just the same. It won't harm you, will it?"

"I guess not."

Marjolet lay down on the blankets while a sort of canopy was erected to shelter his head from the light. He was asleep soon.

"He considers suicide one moment and drops off to sleep the next," mused Courfay. "Yet he maintains he is on the verge of a panic. What a queer animal he is!"

No more than Marjolet, did he believe that sleep would cure his fear. But at all costs, he must try to keep the lieutenant alive until he joined Choquard. He was not altogether unselfish in this; that Marjolet and he had quarreled in the past was well known. If anything happened to Marjolet that appeared in the least strange, gossip would spread.

Courfay wandered idly among the *Spahis*, occasionally seeking in the distance the moving red spots that were the cavalrymen detached to keep the enemy scouts at a safe distance. The white sergeant felt very much alone among this score and a half of blacks.

There was a private among the *Spahis*, a man less rangy than the Bambara and Tukuleur negroes. His name was Waty, and he claimed to belong to a tribe that he called *Douy*. It was known only that he came from somewhere near the Liberian frontier. This fellow was not popular. He was not a follower of Allah,

nor did he proclaim belief in any of the best-credited fetishes. He worshiped strange gods of his own, kind gods, evidently, who permitted him to drink and eat what he wished at all times of the year. Often Courfay had conversed with him, pitying his isolation, although Waty did not seem particularly disturbed by it.

Today, Waty had walked a few feet away from the others, had doffed coat and helmet, and was sprawling in the hot sun, back pressed against the ground, arms shading his eyes. From the thick lips hung a pipe with a curved stem and a copper lid. He smoked peacefully.

Courfay sat down beside him.

"Chore?" Waty inquired.

"No. Thou canst rest longer," Courfay informed him.

Reassured that he had no hard task to do, the negro sank back. His pipe empty, he searched the pockets of his trousers for tobacco, and pretended that his provision was exhausted. Courfay gave him a package of his own weed. Waty preferred the native leaf-tobacco to the finer mixtures that the white men used, but when he did not have to pay for it he obtained as much as he could from his superiors.

"Savvy sorcerer?" Courfay asked, after allowing a discreet pause for Waty to light his pipe.

"Savvy much," Waty assured him without false modesty.

"As much as—" Courfay mentioned a private who enjoyed a reputation as miracle-worker.

"Him no savvy nothing. Him small boy. Me, man."

In Courfay's mind a plan was shaping—not a very civilized plan, but the lieutenant seemed past reasoning. An imaginary ill might be healed by an imaginary cure. Just how good a tool Waty would prove, Courfay did not know.

"Savvy chicken palaver?" he asked.

"Yessah. I go for woods long time, when I be small boy."

Courfay had heard that the natives of the big forest sent their youths into the bush for long periods, there to learn the lore of the woods and the intricacies of witchcraft, as well as tribal traditions. Waty was not a full-fledged sorcerer, or he would have been wielding power in his village instead of being a *Spahis*. But if he knew a part of the ritual Courfay could pass him as an adept to Marjolet.

The sergeant pulled from his pocket two five-franc pieces, which he held in his palms in such a manner that the sun shone full upon them. The coins had a magic all their own and Waty became immediately alert.

"What I do, eh?" he exclaimed.

Ten francs were more than a fortnight's pay. And Waty understood that, in exchange for a yet unknown service, they would be his.

"Catch chicken," Courfay suggested.

Waty rose immediately, and disappeared in the direction of the horses.

Courfay did not doubt but that he would find a live chicken. The *Spahis* are technically light cavalrymen, and light cavalrymen at all times have been noted for looting. Negro horsemen like chickens and find them in the most unexpected places. The white officers, kept by decorum from joining in the raids for food, often had poorer fare than their followers.

WATY was gone a half hour. He returned with a chicken trussed securely by the legs.

"Be ten sous more," he announced, making it clear that he had been compelled to purchase the fowl at an exorbitant rate.

Courfay laid a hand on Marjolet's shoulder to awaken him.

"Time to go?" Marjolet asked, with a puzzled glance at the sun, the clock of the true bushman.

"No, Licutenant. I've been thinking your case over carefully. You may be right in your suspicions that you are ridden by a spell. I don't believe so, but I may be wrong. We are not in France. We have a man here, named Waty, who comes from the big forest. He is something of a sorcerer himself and he may be able to help."

"What?" Marjolet repeated.

"Fight the spell by a spell of his own."

"That's an idea!" Marjolet approved immediately.

Courfay indicated Waty, who remained discreetly at a distance. The *Spahis* had moved closer, but the sergeant sent them away without great show of courtesy. He did not care to have the exact happenings of the next few minutes spread through the Sudanese garrison towns.

Waty evidently was not one of those sorcerers who need face-paint, feather and rattles. He removed his *chechia*, squatted and signified that he was ready.

"First, we want to know if there is a bad fetish on the lieutenant," Courfay said.

"Yessah."

The black produced a little knife from his garments, held the chicken in the left hand and drove the narrow blade of yellow metal into the little neck. The pinioned bird spun in a circle, in a medley of gurgles and squawks. Courfay, not altogether pleased with himself, turned his head away until the noise stopped.

Waty then glanced at the sun, noted in what direction the chicken had fallen and died. His thick lips moved, and his nostrils were swelling.

"Yessah, Sergeant. Bad fetish live."

"Canst thou drive it away?"

"I try."

The sorcerer resumed operations. He slit the chicken open, tore out the entrails and the organs. With all the attention and importance of a gypsy fortune-teller, he scanned the bloody mess before him, and made motions with his hands.

"I can do," Waty said, at last.

"Go ahead."

Waty rose and went back to his horse, sought for something in the saddlebags. Neither Courfay nor Marjolet spoke while he was gone.

The negro returned with a lump of yellow stuff that proved to be wax of some sort. This lump he laid on a cloth he had brought with him, and his fingers moved expertly. Puzzled at first, Courfay soon saw that he was molding a statuette, to be used in the counterplay against the supposed spell that had been cast on Marjolet.

With startling rapidity, the figure took the shape of a man. Then, as Courfay looked on with growing astonishment, Waty indicated the face. A long nose jutted upward, the forehead and chin lengthened grotesquely. Scarcely believing his eyes, the white sergeant saw increasing resemblance to some one he knew.

Marjolet, seated with his elbows resting on his knees, and his chin in his hands, looked on without remark.

With his thumbs, Waty modeled a long neck, with a swelling center.

Again, the black murmured low words, chanting in a monotonous voice:

"*Yeh nata ramah! Bokere makbo!*"

The words belonged to no tongue known to Courfay.

The sorcerer picked up a twig to finish his statuette. A line of indentations marked a row of buttons, revealing clearly for the first time that the figure was not that of a native. Then, with solemn care, Waty ornamented the arms at the wrists with two streaks dug in the soft stuff.

Evidently the man was a lieutenant.

Waty produced a steel needle, about the size of a knitting-needle, with which he pierced the heart and liver of the chicken repeatedly. He chanted faster and faster. At length he handed the instrument to Marjolet.

"Hit!" he invited.

Marjolet glanced at the figure, at the needle. Suddenly his face wrinkled and he laughed. Courfay, who had found it difficult several times to retain the composure of a man engaged in witchcraft, exploded in his turn.

"We belong in a padded cell," Marjolet said.

Waty, however, was offended by this hilarity. He urged Marjolet to strike, and his voice rose. Even the ten francs

given him by Courfay was forgotten. The white men gathered that, unless the ceremony was completed, he, the sorcerer, would lose influence with the powers he had summoned.

"Better go through with it," Courfay declared. "After all, we called upon him. That's the worst of being —— fools, a man can't stop when he's had enough."

Waty, with a superb gesture, picked up the lay figure and stood it on its clumsy feet. Picking up a twig, he stabbed the ground, to indicate to Marjolet just how to strike. But Marjolet, impatient, eager to get the rites concluded and forget his stupid fear, struck an horizontal blow, as if sweeping with a saber. The needle struck the statuette above the knees. With a ridiculous sagging, the wax figure collapsed, lay stretched out back upward.

"That's all, Waty. Go now," Courfay said.

Marjolet wiped his face.

"The proof that there's nothing in that stuff is that I couldn't go through with it seriously. It would be better for us to attend to business." He pulled out his watch: "That madness took more time than we believed. It is almost eleven."

Courfay, for reasons of his own, sought Waty at the earliest opportunity.

"I savvy that be Lieutenant of *Tirailleurs* thou didst make," he said. "Who has spoken?"

"No one."

"No one," Courfay repeated musingly, "no one stole Demba's woman's cloth, too, I suppose."

Waty shuffled, with a sulky grin.

Ouali Demba was a non-com of *Tirailleurs*, well along in years, who had fallen in love with a young beauty of fifteen. The romance ended happily and Demba married his heart's desire. Depriving himself of tobacco, even of *kola* nuts, having sent away his three other wives, Demba spent his all for the adornment of his wife.

A particularly beautiful bolt of cloth given the woman as a present had vanished, supposedly stolen. Demba had roamed about seeking the culprit. And Courfay had seen Waty and the little wife in deep conversation, and had also seen the black make off with a bundle under his arm. Not a nice trick that Waty and Madame Demba had played upon the non-com of infantry, but Courfay had kept silent, not wishing to bring about a tragedy; and, to tell the truth, he was more concerned with the fighting qualities of his men than their moral standards.

African blacks are seldom jealous in the sense that a white man uses the word. Usually the affair is settled on a cash basis. Demba was likely to prove the exception.

"If Demba hears who no one is, it will be bad," Courfay suggested.

"Moussa Diara speak to other sergeants last night," Waty explained hastily. "*Tirailleur* lieutenant tell Diara what to say to *Spahis* lieutenant. Diara, he says Frenchmen be big fools, same as blacks."

Courfay had suspected as much. Diara, who informed his chiefs of his comrades' misdeeds, also informed his comrades of the white men's weaknesses. With an ape-like alertness, he had understood that Espigny was playing a trick upon Marjolet. And he had been unable to refrain from talking. Waty had kept his ears open, blended certain knowledge with probabilities to arrive at the startling conclusion that it was Espigny who had cast the "bad fetish" over Marjolet.

Marjolet, hands in pockets, his confident bearing as evident as usual, strolled up and down, impatient for the moment to go forward.

"You know," he stated when Courfay joined him, "that thing looked like Espigny."

"Somewhat." Courfay laughed. "Part of the ridiculous business. Waty took as model the nearest white man."

"I might as well tell you that Espigny has it in for me. We used to be good friends, and one day, when we were together in Paris we met my first captain,

captain of dragoons. He must have talked to Espigny, for Espigny went with some sort of a tale to my friend Sorbier, my wife's brother, you know. Old man Sorbier was not an Espigny. I had told him frankly who I was and he had even gone to visit my parents. Espigny, I suppose, can't help being what he is. He has been nasty."

"Don't worry, Lieutenant. Captain Choquard and I both understand."

"Why is it that between officers there is always this petty bickering, this gossip, this slander? Oh, I'm no better than he. Here I am, speaking to you."

"Part of the profession," Courfay said philosophically. "And we are no different than others. I had occasion to hear a few writers speak together once. Men that were referred to in print as the 'talented So-and-so, whose exquisite prose, etc.' became 'that redundant ass.' Artists, the same thing. I dare say you take men anywhere and they will gossip as much as women."

Marjolet smiled.

"True. I heard my father refer to a neighboring land-owner in this manner: 'Thinks he's clever and doesn't even know how to trim a fruit tree'."

THREE o'clock.

Before him, four hundred yards away, Courfay could see the village. Nothing more than a few dozens of huts, some with flat terraces, others with tall conical straw roofs. Poor villages in this region, populated by hybrids of many races, men who appeared to inherit defects rather than the better qualities. They were a prey to the raiders, even now that the French flag gave them official protection. Long centuries of bowing before the superior fighting ability of the Moors and Tuareg had snapped their spirit.

The *Spahis* had dismounted, to occupy the nearest spread of land emerging from the marsh sufficiently to afford firm footing. The horses had been led back out of range. Their guards would prove a match for the scattered Moorish scouts in the rear. And, coming nearer rapidly, could be discerned the red skull-caps of Moussa Diara's infantrymen, arriving now that the fusillade had begun.

Coached by the two white men, the cavalrymen were obtaining fair results with their fire. The Moors, although sheltered by the outflung walls of the village, fired too high to do much damage. The bullets kicked up the water hundreds of feet to the rear, or were lost in the foliage of a cluster of trees at the entrance of the trail.

Moussa Diara arrived with his ten riflemen. The horses were brought to the spot again and the *Spahis* mounted. Choquard, with the bulk of the detachment, was presumably stationed on the other side of the village, and it was up to Marjolet to make a demonstration serious enough to send the Moors under his rifles.

Marjolet rode to Courfay's side.

"It has just occurred to me," he said, "that, while we are sending the others out on a narrow trail under Choquard's fire, if the Moors decide to hold the village we have to ride forward under their fire." Marjolet had paled under his tan to a yellow hue, not pretty to behold.

"That's so," Courfay agreed.

The two looked at each other for a moment, then Courfay led the way. Surprize was manifested among the *Spahis* when they saw that Marjolet would only proceed with the second group. The path was at some places eight feet, at others four, never much less. A few missiles buzzed near, then the Moors left the defense, making their retreat through the village streets and unwittingly falling into the trap laid for them.

The village emerged from the marshy plain completely, being erected on a rise of soil. Once on this firm footing, the *Spahis* spread out and Marjolet rode boot to boot with his sergeant.

"They've gone," Courfay reassured his chief.

"Then why doesn't Choquard fire?"

"Probably doesn't want to give himself away before he sees us coming out on the

other side, fearing that they would sweep back and fight us from behind walls indefinitely."

They entered the main street of the village, and the *Spahis* divided into smaller parties, each to reach the western end after searching their allotted area. Courfay galloped straight through and, taking a small black and red flag carried by a native corporal, waved it high.

He could see the Moors, perhaps two hundred and fifty in number, nearing dry land. Choquard, he knew, must have concealed his men among the bushes that were to be seen beyond.

A bugle sounded and the Moors halted. Some of them turned back toward the village, only to halt in hesitation when the *Spahis* opened fire.

"Seems that all is going well," Marjolet remarked.

"Poor devils," Courfay grumbled. "They'll be wiped out without a chance to fight back."

Marjolet turned toward his men, ordered them to dismount and prepare to fire. Moussa Diara and his squad gained the top of the huts, from where they could fire more effectively.

"Three hundred meters—" Marjolet called.

Diara called out in Bambara, then in Dioula, not giving the figures but telling the natives just where to slide their back sights. Courfay dreaded the next few minutes of massacre. In plain sight, crowded together, without possible shelter, the Moor horsemen were doomed. The negro population of the village issued from concealment and massed to behold the scene, with squeals of delight.

Courfay despised them, these servile people, unable to fight their own battles; yet so eager to see their ancient masters butchered by a stronger foe.

"Choquard can't seem to make up his mind," Marjolet said. "Well, we might as well start it!"

He gave the order to open fire. Almost immediately, however, Choquard's bugler sounded, "Cease firing." The privates obeyed.

"What's the matter over there?" Marjolet wondered.

"I don't know," Courfay grunted. "The sooner this is over with the better I'll like it."

Marjolet, who had the glasses, suddenly exclaimed:

"Officer showing himself— It's Choquard, alone—coming forward!"

Courfay saw a white figure come from the bushes and enter the trail. As the captain drew nearer it was seen that he held his arms high above his head and that he wore no belt, which meant that he had left sword and revolver behind.

"He'll get himself shot," Marjolet predicted.

"Maybe not."

"He doesn't know these men."

But Choquard was not fired upon. He came up to the first of the Moors who had dismounted to meet him. And Choquard offered his hand to the native chieftain. There was a pause, then Choquard and the Moor disappeared among the men and horses crowded on the path.

"He's coming over here," Marjolet said.

Marjolet and the sergeant rode forward to meet him. Choquard was not as agile as his companion and several times the Moor steadied him with one hand. Finally, the four met, two hundred feet from the huts, in full view of all the combatants.

"I speak no language this gentleman understands," Choquard said.

"Courfay is the linguist," Marjolet put in.

"Courfay, tell him how many rifles we have on either side of him."

Courfay had mastered Arabic sufficiently to express himself fluently.

The Moor listened gravely, and stroked his beard. Six foot two or three, bearded, his head bare save for the thick, long, coarse hair, his face appeared tiny above his great figure draped in blue.

"Try to make him understand, Courfay. We could wipe him and all his men out in ten minutes. But we don't want

to. For immediate terms, he must give back to the villages that which he took today. He must promise to go back to his own camp in the north."

Courfay translated, and Sid Hamet replied, at length.

"He asks about his guns, Captain. And his camels which are a few miles northeast of here."

"We can't disarm these men altogether. They can keep one rifle in ten. As for his camels and the loot he has already taken, he can have them for all I care. We can not go way back and make him return all he owns to the original possessors. He must promise not to fight us again this season."

"There's nothing so easy for them as to lie," Marjolet protested.

"We have to choose between belief and butchery," Choquard insisted. "And *pardieu*, none of us wish to shoot helpless men. Tell Sid Hamet that when he comes to make his peace at Timbuktu with the military governor, the rifles will be given back to his people. Tell him that he must see he can not fight us—that we have come through the Sudan from the sea and that we are here to stay. The sooner he becomes our friend, the better for him, for he must give in some time."

Courfay, although far from a scholar in the tongue, did not lack crude eloquence.

"He says that he will go to Timbuktu to write on the paper, to make his peace with the French chief. He wants to know how much he and his people will be compelled to pay in taxes."

Choquard smiled.

"Ah! That's the rub with all of them. Tell him, far less than he has paid for rifles to fight us with."

Hamet's eyes sparkled. He talked rapidly.

"We should take him as hostage to Timbuktu," Marjolet said to Choquard.

"That's just what he proposes," Courfay informed them. "He will come with one of his sons and four notables. He says that as long as the will of God has been made clear there is no sense in delay. Thus, there will be no need to seize the rifles, for his life will answer for the promise that they will not be fired at the French."

Hamet summoned his son, a man not very much younger in appearance, with the same tall figure and features. There was much loud talking, hissing ejaculations, gesturing. Then Moussa Diara was summoned and the hostages placed in his charge. With the leader, his son, and four lesser chiefs guarded by ten bayonets, the Moors were allowed to stream back into the village, to abandon their loot and then to leave for the spot where the camels had been left.

"I must thank you, Marjolet," Choquard said. "Had it not been for you I'd still be trying to locate these fellows. I can see that you don't belong to the clique that sent me out here at this season. To tell you the truth, I won't be sorry to report a successful end to my mission. Any wounded?"

"One. Not serious."

"And one man who accidentally breaks his leg can scarcely be called a big casualty. Espigny will get a leave out of it, and his leg will be all right in two or three months."

"Espigny?" Courfay repeated.

"Yes. You know he brought a few cases of wine along with him. As long as the thirty-five centimes paid the bearers did not come out of the government's coffers, I had nothing to say. It was his business. And—" Choquard smiled—"no man should sulk against his palate. We must admit that we drank with him often enough.

"Well, on the way over, I had left his private servants with his wine some distance behind. One of the bearers fell with the favorite vintage and the case plunged under water. Espigny dismounted, made his way back and directed the salvage operations. For a few moments a half dozen men wallowed in muck up to their thighs. Espigny, with his brisk manners, stood on the path, gesticulating.

"I was getting enough of it and I ordered him to either hurry or abandon the wine. It was about eleven o'clock, and I had no time to spare. In his eagerness, Espigny slipped and one leg went under. Somehow, in extricating himself, he wrenched it so that it broke. The thigh bone. When he tried to stand erect, he cried out and sagged forward, fell flat on his face."

Courfay remembered the statuette, sagging and sinking to the ground as the needle held by Marjolet struck the legs.

"So that I left him with three *Tirailleurs* and his bearers, to make himself as comfortable as he could and to fish out his wine!"

"COURFAY! Come here," Choquard called out.

The sergeant threaded his way between the sleeping soldiers, back toward the tents. He passed the shelter in which the Moors were quartered without special guards, for Choquard, pointing out that they had volunteered to come with him, had forbidden Marjolet to place sentries around them.

In another shelter lay Espigny, with his leg in splints.

"Sit down," Choquard invited. He brought a tin cup near. "Have a drink. Espigny went to enough trouble to bring it up and it would be a shame to take the bottles back full. Now, what's the matter? You wish to talk to me?"

"I, Captain?"

"You're not your usual self. Ever since we came back to this camp you've been wandering about like a disembodied soul." Choquard indicated Espigny's tent. "You don't desire to brood on one thing until you become as bitter as he?"

"If I talk I am betraying a confidence."

"I'll keep your secrets better than you're doing yourself," Choquard promised with a smile.

Courfay told him what he had said to Espigny, in effect that Marjolet was not proof against fear. He reminded the captain that Espigny had opened his subtle campaign the very next day. He narrated his conversation with Marjolet, the latter's confession of his fear, culminating in the rites performed by Waty. With a growing sense of ridicule he told of the blow struck by Marjolet against the limbs of the effigy.

"You understand," he went on, encouraged when he saw that Choquard was still serious. "I don't believe in the —— rites."

"Espigny had it coming to him," Choquard declared. "I hope that it won't be your misfortune to serve with him again. From the first he tried to establish a union between himself and you against Marjolet, using your past disagreement as a lever. Whether occult or natural, his accident was well deserved. You find men such as he sowing discord everywhere."

"But do you believe there was any connection between our—our foolishness and his accident, Captain?"

"Off-hand, I should say no. Logically we can't see it as anything save one of those coincidences that have bolstered faith in the occult for centuries. Seldom are they met with as precisely as in this case. Truly, I can only say that I don't know. Some claim that there is power in thought, direct power. As near to our age as a century ago you'd both have been liable to suffer for practising witchcraft.

"Most men affect to speak of sorcery with a smile. No one has ever discovered anything while being amused. If you arrive at your conclusions by accepting the opinion of the majority, you would believe. For, among white men, there are a good fifty per cent. who, to some degree or other, believe in charms. And in other races, the belief is firmly anchored." Choquard paused gravely. "However, Sergeant Courfay, having constituted myself a court of law, I acquit you and dismiss Marjolet with a suspended sentence."

"Thank you, Captain," Courfay said with a wide grin. "But frankly, Lieutenant Marjolet is a man who needs assistance, assistance beyond my power

to grant him. It is not the fact that he is married, for Senator Sorbier could give him a soft garrison in France easily enough. Something has happened inside of him, a queer change."

Choquard rubbed his smooth skull thoughtfully.

"Wait a moment," he asked.

He sat motionless, save for the flicking of the cigaret ashes into the fire. Courfay, who had first liked the captain from instinct, now came to a feeling of near veneration for him.

Not many men in Choquard's place would have given up the opportunity to win a bloody victory, return to the base with a sensational report. He had been satisfied with a tactical success that would not bring fame, when there might have been crosses, medals, promotion. Choquard had the greatest quality to be found in a soldier—humanity.

"Tell me, Courfay, what was Marjolet's goal when he started life?"

"Lieutenant Espigny told us—to be a good farmer."

"Shifted unexpectedly to a professional soldier, with his education, or rather his lack of education, the double braid of lieutenant was his ultimate goal, which he did not expect to attain until he was somewhere near forty, close to retirement. That's the lot of officers who rise from the ranks, nine cases out of ten. He may have aspired even to become a captain. Not a few succeed. But that's the end, the absolute end, for the majority. A major requires a certain poise, a certain distinction, not to be found in an ex-peasant lad, Marjolet thought."

"Yes, probably."

"Now, under thirty, he is certain to obtain his commission as captain within six months. He thinks there is nothing else to struggle for. He has arrived at the spot for which he started. And what happens when a man attains his goal, unless he has deliberately moved it a notch higher as he climbed up?"

"Quite so," Courfay admitted, although he did not see just where Choquard was leading.

"Marjolet wishes to remain alive now, at all costs, to remain at the top. It doesn't matter to a climber if he falls off the lower rungs, but it's annoying to stand at the top and then fall. A case in point: Michel Ney, Marshal of France. From poor boy to the highest rank in the French army. On the way up, a marvelously able man; at the top a quibbler and not always a good comrade. Came Russia and retreat. Another goal ahead—Ney shone like a star. Came Waterloo, and Ney outdid all his past exploits. Faced with death, he died a hero. That's Marjolet's case now. Give him a goal and he will forget his fears."

Choquard was silent, Courfay mused over the arguments just presented.

"Also," Choquard resumed abruptly, with a note of irritation in his voice, "Marjolet is expected to be brave. He knows it. He is in the position of the beautiful woman who fears the first wrinkle and brings it to her face by staring in a mirror hours on end. Courfay, too much success is as bad as too little."

It was not long before Marjolet reappeared and joined them.

"I was giving sound advice to young Courfay," Choquard told him. "He'll be back here with a commission next year. And he informed me that his intention is to get a transfer to France after one sojourn here as an officer. What is your opinion, Marjolet?"

"France has its good points," Marjolet said musingly.

"Yes, but I warned him that if he goes back without the stripes of major on his sleeves, his career will halt with a jerk. He'll have to wait his turn among thousands of others, without the chance of showing himself better than the others. Up to captain the climb is straight, but the hardest leap is from that to major. The place to take that leap is out here. Don't you think so, Marjolet?"

"I hadn't—why, I guess it is," Marjolet agreed. "In France the school officers get preference."

"Not always," Choquard corrected. "I'm a school officer. I've tried it. But in many cases— And Marjolet, had you stayed in France where would you be? You count something like eight years in the service, don't you?"

"Yes. I'd be a sergeant-major, and my head would be so dulled by routine that I'd be hoping for a pension and not worrying about a commission."

Courfay looked at Marjolet. The lieutenant's face was settling again into determination, not the mask given the features by long habit, but an inner fire that glinted in his eyes. Again, Marjolet was dreaming of the future, his spirit had received a new force.

When Marjolet had left, Courfay turned to Choquard with sincere admiration.

"I believe you struck the right chord, Captain."

"I think I did. Without undue pride, Courfay, I think I have some success as a mentor for puzzled souls. My only regret is that I can not be my own doctor!"

He offered his hand to Courfay.

"By way of further acquiring your gratitude, I'll mention you in my report so that you'll be off for school with high notes," he said.

"I've done nothing worth reporting," Courfay replied.

"I know it. But it will pay you for the times when you did do something worth while and were forgotten. I like to balance scales."

Choquard entered his tent.

Passing before Marjolet's quarters, on his way to his shelter, Courfay saw the lieutenant through the opening, seated on his cot, reading by the light of a lantern. In the last forty-eight hours the sergeant had come to a sort of intimacy with his superior, and he made his presence known. He was curious to hear Marjolet's conclusions on the climax of the expedition.

Marjolet put the book away, and Courfay noticed that the green cover was that of a well known tome on military science. With typical impatience, Marjolet had started for the top. So intense was his new resolution that it apparently had wiped the past from his memory. He spoke of army matters and questioned Courfay as to the best method to learn German, a language necessary to a superior officer in the armies of the French Republic.

"Wise man, Choquard," he interjected after a space. "But a bit soft."

"On the surface," Courfay indicated.

At this point, Waty entered the tent and handed an object to Marjolet. The lieutenant gave the *Spahis* a few silver francs and dismissed him.

"Thought it only right to give him a little money, because we laughed at him," Marjolet explained clumsily. To his credit it must be said that he was a poor liar, for his face flushed and he stood, hesitating, before finding the words to go on. "I bought an amulet. Not that I believe in them— And after all, why keep it around?"

Marjolet went outside and Courfay saw him toss the object just purchased from Waty into the nearest pile of embers. Instead of returning immediately, Courfay saw him move, unfasten his collar. An instant later, the lieutenant flung his arm forward again.

"I don't want to hear anything more of this nonsense," he said, when he reentered the tent. "We were a pair of fools, you and I." He offered Courfay a cigaret.

Later, when Courfay left the tent, he smelled the stench of burning leather and searched the ashes with a rapid glance. There was no visible trace left of the amulets, neither that of Waty's manufacture, nor that which preserved the lieutenant from "steel and lead."

Not only had Marjolet thrown away five hundred and some odd francs, but in the act of destruction Charles the Bold had lived up to his name.

Showing the

An Artillery Sergeant

An Article

By

LEONARD H. NASON

NOT so long ago I crossed the North Atlantic from New York to Cherbourg. It was not a very pleasing experience for me. It was spring, but the ocean was wild and day after day there was the same horror of gray tumbling seas, flying spray and stinging, driving rain. In addition, I was ill.

I would have taken to my bunk and lain groaning therein the five or six days that we were at sea, but my wife had already taken to hers, and we had with us our two children, who were not affected in the slightest and who were in my charge. If I lay down they mounted me as one would a horse. It was only by remaining erect that I was free from having my hair pulled or my ears dragged, or my necktie hauled out of its place and used as reins to jerk my poor tortured neck from left to right.

So I stayed on my feet and wandered about the spacious decks or, if it became too cold, I sat in all the chairs in turn in the Palm-Garden, or tried to decide what the mural paintings in the social hall represented, or rode down in one elevator and up the next.

My fellow passengers did not seem to be sympathetic. They were, for one thing, much older than I. I had looked very earnestly the second day out at every one's buttonhole to see if there was any evidence there of former service. I did see one man and pursued him about the glass-inclosed promenade—oh, so nicely inclosed, with big plate-glass windows, so that the rain and the cold can't come in—until he paused to light a cigaret.

Then I approached diffidently and gave the hailing sign.

"What outfit, buddy?"

"Marines," said he shortly. Hm-m! Well, there are lots of good guys that were Marines just the same.

"Were you with the Second?" I asked.

"No, I was in the Canal Zone."

Ah! So he moved away, trailing cigaret smoke majestically behind him, leaving me to contemplate the cold gray sea.

Yet again, that same day, as I sat in the oak-paneled smoking-room six inches deep in a great leather chair, a man approached—a nice comfortable looking sort of man.

"How would you like to start a little game of bridge?" he said to me. "We can easily pick up another couple. I've been spoiling for some action all day."

Wife Around

goes back to the battlefields

"Gee," said I, "I'd like to, but I don't know how to play. But if you'd like to fade me a couple of bits—"

I took out of my pocket two small pieces of bone and rattled them together.

He looked at me in horror. No, he did not care to. He did not understand the game. No, thank you, just the same. He went away hurriedly. Imagine! And he wanted action!

I went out to a solitary part of the deck where there was no glass, no deck chairs, no passengers—just row upon row of boats, piled one into the other, provisioned with water and food, some of them even with wireless, waiting, ready, with ropes all neatly coiled, for the Welin davits to lower them overside in an eye's twinkling. But peril was very remote, almost beyond the realm of possibility.

Here was this great ship, the greatest and the finest afloat, and every man aboard, even the gold-laced captain, ready to jump if I yelled, and to pacify me if I were enraged, and either to bring me or command to have brought, sandwiches, tea, cigarets, a nice steak, a cold fowl, a pack of cards, a book, a blanket or a golf club to play golf on the deck course.

Yet I was dissatisfied. I was ill. I hated the ship and all on her, and my mind kept going back to a crossing I had made ten years before when I had had a better time.

Ten years? No, nine. Nine years. The war was declared ten years ago or thereabouts, and it was on the first anniversary of its declaration that I was at sea. Nine years ago, and it seems but yesterday. A man grows old fast, they say, after he passes twenty.

Ten days we had been at sea on the old *Powhatan*, rolling around and climbing up and down the seas. I don't know how many troops there were aboard, but I know there were too many. There was no glassed-in promenade on that ship, and it was only the lucky man that could find room for the sole of his foot above decks, but we were having a good time just the same.

By day we sat about, if we were lucky enough to find a place on the ladders, derricks, winches and the piles of life-rafts, with a life preserver for a cushion. We had been in the submarine zone for four days, and every one had to carry a life preserver with him at all times. Circulation about the ship was very difficult, due to the encumbrance of the ladders and gangways, but with a little effort a man could get around. A password would have to be given, perhaps, thusly—

"Hey, shove over a little, will yuh, so a guy can get by?"

And the countersign—

"Lookout where you're puttin' them hobnails!"

"Well, get the —— outta the way then!"

Sometimes a soldier would dispute the passage by force of arms. And, too, two sailors would often come boiling out of their quarters under the forecastle and fall to with might and main. The day that could not count at least two fights was an uncommon one.

But these encounters were of short duration, because every one would rush to see the fight and the press would be so great that the fighters would have no room to swing and would even be caught in eddies of the crowd and separated. The tedium of the day at sea broken in this manner, we had no need for social halls or oak-paneled smoking-rooms.

For us there was no captain's dinner or ship's concert or masquerade. But we had something better. There were some colored labor troops aboard, and if a soldier had a quarter that he had saved from the heavy crap and black-jack games of the first few days at sea, he could hunt up another soldier that had a quarter, and these two would go aft to where the labor troops were.

It was easy enough to find two dusky giants that would fight vigorously for one minute for a quarter apiece. Man, what a minute that was! They would slug each other with blows that sounded, at least, as if they would have slain an ox. There was no bell nor any call of time, but the minute once expired, the two gladiators ceased fighting instantly. Maybe they counted the blows they landed on each other.

Well, once the fight was over, down on their knees they would plunk and shoot crap to see which one would have the half-dollar. Best three out of five rolls took it, whereat the winner would be gone to the canteen to spend it, and the loser would philosophically turn to the rail and look at the bounding billow. I can not help but feel that if the Transatlantic companies could stage a fight about the decks once in a while, how much pleasanter the voyage would be!

Another suggestion I would like to make is to have less luxury. Behold now the dining-room. A place of thick carpets, gleaming linen, small tables, each with its soft light and array of glittering silver, seven or eight or more forks and knives to confuse a man. There is an orchestra, too, in a balcony under the high, glass-domed ceiling, and it plays gently all through the meal.

By the great folding doors, as one enters, is a sideboard at least two yards square, and on it all manner of food such as a man never saw before in his life. There is, for instance, a fish, baked whole, stuffed, and upright on the dish in a sea of what looks like port-wine jelly. This fish has a red pepper in his mouth and a very curly streak of whipped cream down his back.

Beside him is a whole ham, covered with a light yellow *glacé*, beneath which a man can see a beautiful picture of a farmyard and a girl and birds. There are lobsters there, roasts of beef, a whole suckling pig gamboling on a field of mint jelly and nibbling at a whole garden of artificial flowers made of truffles and hard-boiled eggs, and the whole surmounted by a great cake of ice, frozen in the shape of a Spanish galleon or a modern battleship or a basket of flowers with an electric light burning in the center.

All this to tickle the sluggish appetite. Whose appetite? The stewards', perhaps, or the orchestra's, or maybe the headwaiter's. I am one of those, of whom I am assured there are a great many, who is all right until he gets down into the dining-room. My visits thereto are few and fleeting, but in the few brief moments that I spent there, I was alone, save for one or two unenthusiastic passengers, the stewards, the orchestra and that great mountain of food at the doorway.

Yet on that faraway April day on the transport, how raging was my hunger! We fed at twelve-thirty, in a black, noisome hole under the forward well-deck.

There was no floor—just steel deck-plates and a raised hatch-combing to fall over in the darkness. All around were wooden tanks, into which they let sea-water, and then ran steam into it, to heat it. These tanks were to wash the messkits in.

The ship would roll, and the steam pipes on one side would whistle and screech, and the steam would pour out into the compartment. Then, as the ship rolled back, they would gurgle and choke and bubble, to screech and hiss again a minute later. The water in those tanks was hot enough. Many a time the old transport would point her nose in the air for an extra mountainous sea, then the tanks would slop over, and out of the darkness would come slipping and whispering a half-inch wave of hot salt water, sliding along the deck and burning all the poor soldiers that hunkered there, eating out of their messkits.

Yet it never spoiled their appetites, nor was there one of them who would not, an hour before dinner time, be hunting for a good place in the line. Perhaps now, if, instead of painting pictures on ham and having very red lobsters crawl over mashed potato waves, the companies that run the big ships would form a mess-line an hour or so before every meal and give each passenger a messkit and a tin cup to rattle, the passengers' appetites would be better.

We had a great line on the *Powhatan*. We ate at twelve-thirty, but by quarter of twelve the line would be formed, would run up one ladder and down another, in and out of the narrow alleys, between the close-packed bunks and stretch clear way up to the officers' deck. It was always getting astray and chasing its own tail.

Once on a time the poor gobs were late getting their fresh water issue. The sailors used to line up every day on the forward well-deck and get a pail of fresh water to wash their clothes in. There was a tap there and some kind of a plumber or boatswain's mate or what-not used turn this tap with a wrench and supervise the issuing of the water. He evidently was the only man on the ship with a wrench, and until he deigned to come and turn the tap the gobs had to wait.

On this day he was later than usual, the chow line formed and began to shuffle and clatter its sinuous way about the decks. Somehow it got ensnared with the line waiting for water. Then there was shoving and pushing and requests to "Go on, now, soldier, shove off or I'll douse one of your side lights!" and challenges, "Who you shovin' there, gob? I got as much right on this deck as any flatfoot!"

A position near the head of the line meant a lot to a soldier, because he could eat once, and get in the line for seconds and, if the line were long enough, he might even get thirds. They tell me the boys on the foreign ships fed pretty poorly, but on the ships that the Yankee gobs took over they ate like kings. I never had better. But I never got more than seconds, try as I would. I think some of those chow hounds sat down in place at the head of the line and never moved from it throughout the voyage.

We had a submarine scare the last day out, at noon, just as we started to serve chow. It was the real thing, no false alarm, because a sub came right up between us and the *Martha*. In a second both ships had their guns trained on it, but that's all they did. If there had been Army crews on those guns, both ships would have let go a broadside and sunk each other, but the sailoring men kept their heads and held their fire.

I don't know, the Navy seemed to be better organized than we were, somehow. If there were four ways to do a thing, of which three were right, the Army would do the fourth.

Well, anyway, the sirens blew and alarm bells rang and every one came up to take to the boats. When they got on deck they took more interest in the sub than they did in going to their boat stations. There must have been a young school of the U-boats around us, because periscopes kept coming up all the time and the destroyers went mad with joy, dropping depth bombs and setting off

their guns. And the troops on our ship ran from bow to stern and stern to bow, according as the participants in the fight shifted. All but the head of the chow line. The first fifty in line stayed below.

"Naw, we won't come up," they said. 'Naw, we don't wanta see no submarine! We been here a coupla hours an' we ain't gonna lose a good place to see the Kaiser himself! If she sinks we c'n run up the ladder an' jump overboard."

Ah, what a crossing that was! Nine years ago. I leaned on the side of the lifeboat and thought about it for a long time. And then, just when I had no desire for human companionship, one of those pests that there are on every ship drew near and addressed me.

"The weather is frightful," said he.

"Yuh!"

"It's terrible to think of paying all this money to travel and just be miserable," he continued. "This is just the beginning of it. Expense and cold and nasty cooking until we see Hoboken again."

"Well, why don't you stay home?" I inquired.

I had a headache and he bothered me. He went away after that. Yet he might have asked me the same question. A man never knows what a good country his own is until he goes to another. But let me explain.

Two years ago I became obsessed with the idea that I ought to write a book. A man, so I was told, may write for the magazines all his life and never be recognized as an author until he gets out a book. I used to believe all I heard in those days. Another man told me that living was cheaper in France than at home. That's a subject for debate also. But this matter of writing a book and saving on expense and having the proper atmosphere in which to work was mostly a blind. The truth was that I wanted to come back to France.

I wanted to see what it would be like to be able to walk about at any hour of the day or night anywhere, without keeping an eye out for an M.P. I wanted to go up to the battlefields and to roam up and down them erect on my feet, and not crouching and crawling and dragging my nose in the dirt like a rooting hog all the time.

I wanted, for instance, to have a look at Lecharmel and see why it took so long for us to drive the Germans out of it. Château Thierry I wanted to revisit and the woods where we had our first battery position and where I was when I heard my first barrage. I wanted to see all these places, to see how much they had changed, if there were any souvenirs around; in short, to see them all once again when I could give all my attention to the scenery and not pay so much attention to what was flying through the air all the time.

And in addition I wanted to show my wife these places. So often she had been present at an impromptu Old Soldiers' Reunion and, the other participants having departed, she had looked at me with an amused expression and remarked that she wondered the heavens didn't open and a thunderbolt fall on me during the recital of some of the tales that I had told.

Well, if we went to France I could show her the places where these things happened.

For instance, the time that the battery commander and several more of us were in a partially constructed dugout. It didn't have any roof, or any walls; it was just a hole in the ground, but it was *in the ground*—that was the attraction. It was raining shells and the battery wasn't firing, this to show Fritz that we really hadn't any hard feelings against him and that he'd better lay off shelling us. He didn't seem to be impressed, as I remember.

Well, we sat there and shook the dirt out of our ears when one landed near-by, and lighted a cigaret from time to time and were bored with the war. *Zooong!* I thought at first some one had jumped down into the hole. I looked. It wasn't some *one;* it was some *thing!* It was a great big dud, an eight-inch or even twelve-inch shell—that is, it looked as if

it were that size—and it was still spinning.

Boy, if that thing had landed on its nose this space would have been occupied by an article on another subject! That was the closest escape I had. My wife would never believe it. So I had brought her to France to show her the place.

There was another favorite story of mine that happened later that same day. After the shooting was over we had come out of our holes and begun to think about supper. We were sitting around rather sadly, waiting for chow to come up from the kitchen and looking at what was left of Number One and Three pieces, which had had direct hits land on them during the course of the afternoon, and thinking what a job it was going to be to clean the place up and make a decent battery out of it again.

The Boche were throwing freight-cars at a crossroads about a half mile behind us, and every once in a while one of them would hoot overhead and go clattering on its way to the distant road. We were glad they weren't intended for us.

And then the cook appeared, tottering with the weight of a great pan full of canned willie stewed up with tomato. We hailed him with joy. Just then one of those aerial freight-cars came howling along headed for the crossroads, making as much noise as would fifty real ones on a down grade. The cook heard it and thought it was tagged for us. He made one wild leap for the funk-hole beside Number One piece, tripped and fell flat. The pan of slum curved into the air, turned over, deposited its contents with a flop on the recumbent cook and then, descending empty, landed on his head with a dull clang. Well, we laughed till the tears ran down our cheeks.

"Come on now," we said, when we could speak, "get up off your face and go get us some more slum."

"I can't," said he very dolefully, getting up, "I used up all the canned bill there was to make that panful."

Well that was one of the places I wanted to show to the wife. I was going to show her just how the cook was coming along the causeway, and just where he was when he heard the shell coming, and how he fell.

I brought my two children on this expedition also. I wanted the whole family to to know that their husband and father was not always what he had since become, a person to draw pictures of, cows and to stick paper dolls together and to carry up innumerable drinks of water after one is in bed at night.

No. There was a time when this down-trodden person that will get down on his knees and be a horse to be ridden, or a lion to be hunted at command, was a very fierce sergeant of field artillery who cursed and swore and was a person to be feared, a man that had bared his breast to the bullets and his nose to the gas, from Jaulgonne to Montfaucon.

I was going to show them all where I did this and where I did that, the place where I suddenly came on a German machine-gun crew changing their position—I think they ran, too, but I never stopped to see—the place where we looted the honey out of a beehive full of gassed bees that came to themselves and stung us gloriously when we went back there the next day, and the place where I was when I heard my first barrage and first saw the Germans coming for me.

My married life didn't give me these gray hairs. I got them in that one short minute. And, now that I am on the subject, I am inclined to agree with a great American that history is bunk. Having been present while some of it was being made, I have been quite astonished to read it afterward. I have read in all the books and in all the reports that the Allies knew to the hour that a big drive, the peace offensive, was scheduled for such a day and such an hour, and that the allied guns began to shell the German lines an hour before the German bombardment began. No! Not where I was!

I was in the observation post on the front line, and that very night the officer with me told me that the infantry that occupied that sector was going to pull off a big raid at daybreak and that they

planned to cross the Marne and even get up into the houses we could see over there on the farther bank. Also, when the bombardment started, it was German. I *know!*

I went up out of that shallow dugout like a rocketing partridge. The hills across the river were outlined with flame just as if there were a forest fire over there. Our artillery didn't give a peep for at least five minutes. And, furthermore, after daybreak the next morning, when I had found my way back to a regimental P.C., the colonel and a French major there interviewed me. They wanted to know what was going on. All the wires were destroyed long ago, all the runners killed or wounded, all communication gone; nothing to do but sit and watch the house being knocked down around their ears.

"Ah, well, it's just a demonstration," said the French major, when I had told my tale.

"Did you see any Boche?" asked the colonel.

"Yes, sir," said I. "They've got ropes strung across the river and they're pulling themselves over in boatloads. Fossoy is full of 'em."

"Not posseeble!" said the French major.

He even had the nerve to ask me how I knew the men in the boats were Germans. I hadn't spent much time on that river bank, inasmuch as I was an artilleryman armed with a pistol for which I had no bullets, but I stayed there long enough to see a couple of thousand or so Germans running around the fields, and more on the other side, marching in close formation and with their wheeled transport, as if they were on a practise march. Well, well. We disabused their minds of that idea, so we did.

So, then, I had brought my family to see all these places and, incidentally, to have a good look at them again myself. I had often told my family that they need have no fear about getting lost in France with me as a guide, that I had often found my way from one corner of it to the other, and that with no map, no money and no authority for travel. They began to lose their confidence in me, however, about the time we landed at Cherbourg.

I had told them we would get off at a dock and instead we went off on a lighter. My wife asked me what the funny little men in the red-and-blue caps and the very baggy bright blue trousers were. I said offhand and carelessly that they were a special regiment of French infantry, *chasseurs à pied* or something like that. It was not long before we discovered they were customs inspectors.

"Ah, well, how should I know what they are?" I protested. "I never saw any of them before. When we landed during the war they didn't have any such thing. We had to carry everything we owned on our backs and hike ten miles or so with it from the dock to the rest camp. If all these tourists were only allowed to bring ashore what they could carry in an infantry pack, and then made to walk ten miles with it in place, there'd be no need for customs inspectors now, either."

"At last," said I, after we had been comfortably installed in the boat train, "this begins to look like home. You see these boys' size freight-cars along the track? Those are the famous '*40 hommes, 8 chevaux.*' See the sign by the door? Lots of people think those signs are left over from the war, but not so. They are required to be placed on all freight-cars by law.

"It's a foolish law, like most laws. Those words, '*40 hommes*' mean forty men without packs, and yet in practise we used to get forty-two, three, or four men, with all their equipment, into one of them. And man, weren't they cold! If Sherman had made a trip from Havre, say, to the Neufchateau area in one of those and in the dead of winter along with forty-two or three other men, so that there wasn't room to even sit down, he would have had a much stronger opinion about war."

"Isn't that terrible!" said my wife. "What you must have suffered riding around in them!"

"Me? Ride in one of those? Never!" said I. "Listen. You see on the end of most of those little cars is a kind of tower? There's where the brakeman rides. It has two doors and a seat inside. Well, I was sergeant, you remember, and while the outfit was being loaded I'd make for one of those towers. Then I'd get in, put my pack across from one door to the other so that they couldn't be opened, then sit down on the seat and stretch out. It wasn't much warmer than it was down in the car, but it was a lot less crowded."

Ah, those were the happy days! I remember riding in one of those towers the night my battery went up to the front. It was on the front end of the first troop car and we sat there, two on the seat and another on the footboard. Ahead of us was a long line of flat-cars, loaded with the battalion's guns and wheeled transport, and away off in front of them we could see the toy engine that was pulling us.

It was in the spring, and the countryside was a beautiful green. We could see little white houses, and cows going home, and far-off poplar-lined roads with people on them, and girls used to come to the doors of the houses and wave their aprons to us. It was nice and warm, there was a beautiful sunset, we had our bellies full of good old army bacon and eggs and were smoking corn-cob pipes that the Red Cross had given us.

We thought that there wasn't any better fun on earth than going to war. And yet a week later those two lads with me were dead, killed by the first shell that the Germans fired at our battery.

My family were disappointed in me again after we had reached Paris. I had difficulty in directing the taxi driver, but we wrote down the name of the hotel on a piece of paper and so got to it. I have since decided that the taxi driver didn't speak French. Lots of them don't. You don't need to speak French to drive a taxi, when ninety per cent. of your clients show you an address on a card or write it on an envelop.

After all we can't blame the French for being a little irritated at foreigners. If we had to stand in front of the City Hall and wait an hour or so until a taxi driver came along that could understand us when we directed him in English to take us to the Hoboken Ferry, and if said taxi driver didn't care very much about taking us because he knew he could pick up a Frenchman a little farther on that would give him a bigger tip than we would, we'd probably feel a little hurt.

The family got another shock when I did not know where to go to see about a room. I tackled the man who's all hung up with medals and gold lace, and asked him whether I could have a room. He directed me on. I found out afterward he was the *concierge*, whatever that is. Then we had to give the history of our lives, instead of registering as we would in America. This was a new one on me. I expected them to tell me I'd have to go down to the M.P. station to have my travel orders stamped before they'd give me a room, but they didn't.

"I thought you knew your way around France!" exclaimed my wife, when we had at last gotten ourselves a room. I made no reply. What good would it do to explain that, in the good old days of the war, when a man wanted to sleep he used to sidle up to the first Adrian barrack—a sort of portable dog-house—that he saw, and say sort of off-hand like—

"How's chances on a flop?"

Or there were places like Is-Sur Tille, or Langres, where a man changed trains, where, after he'd shown his orders, they would just usher him to a portable barracks and tell him to pick out his bunk. He ate when chow call blew, without waiting for any further invitation, and slept and ate, slept and ate, until he'd hear his name read off, and he'd know it was time to be going on to some other stopping-off place.

Of course that system wouldn't work very well if every one had a wife and two children along with them. But we straightened ourselves out after a while. France hadn't changed a bit. We

learned to figure things as we had to at home during daylight saving. If a man made an appointment for two o'clock, that meant standard time and you should really go at three, and if they promised you a suit for Monday, that meant a week from Monday.

Working on that basis we got along very well and were rarely disappointed. The trains ran just as they did during the war. When it was time for the train to go the *chef de gare* would blow a shrill whistle, then all the boys and girls would boil out of the bar and run for the train. Then when the engineer thought it was time to start, he would blow the engine whistle, then the *chef de gare* blew a cow's horn and unrolled a red flg, which he waved slowly, singing some kind of a song. Then the engineer would blow *his* whistle again, and the train would go on to the next station, where every one would get off and rush into the bar again.

"There," said I to my family, "didn't I tell you it was lots of fun to travel by train in France?"

"Yes," said the family, "it's fun if you're not in a hurry."

Now there! That's the American of it. In a hurry! In a hurry to do what? To get somewhere so you can hurry on to some other place.

"We aren't in any hurry," said I, "because we're only going to Chatter Theery. That'll be our first stop."

Ah, what a great town is Château Thierry! The last time I had seen the railroad station the glass roof over the platform was a wreck and the big roundhouse where they keep the suburban locomotives was a roofless ruin. They had cleard out the wire that used to run from tree to tree across the Paris-Metz road, but it was still the same road, and I got a great thrill out of being able to walk along it and to pause and take a good long look between the houses at the heights across the river, instead of skipping across those open spaces like a goat, wondering whether the snipers could see me through the burlap camouflage.

And the hotel! I remembered that hotel when it used to be a château, and I asked if we could have the corner room. I'd slept in it during the war.

"In this room," said I, "I spent the night of July 10, 1918. I had come down into the town and it was too dark to get back to my battery." (I don't know what my mission was, probably a search for "likker" in company with another sergeant.) "I asked permission to sleep in the cellar, but it was too full. They had a first-aid station there and a post of command, and what room there was in the cellar was taken up with sleeping quarters for the officers and medical personnel.

"Any one extra could sleep upstairs in the bedrooms. You see any little bouquets that were tossed us from those hills over there would most likely explode when they hit the roof, or on their way down through the ensuing floors, to the ruination of any one in the rooms near-by."

So we—the family and I—slept in that room that night, calmly and peacefully, in the same room where I had turned in nine years before, in hobnails and tin hat. I hadn't slept much that night. Installed in one of the neighboring gardens was a machine-gun crew trying to shoot off all the ammunition they could find, and from time to time a German-made lollypop would land close by and I'd have to get up and look out the window to see where the next one landed to make sure that they weren't trying to get a bracket on the house I was in. Then some time about three A.M. a squadron of planes went by, going home from raising ructions in Paris, and one of them laid an egg on the railroad station. That finished sleep that night for me.

A square yard of plaster fell off the ceiling on to me, what little glass was left in the windows blew out, and every gas alarm in the Marne valley began to go. That was a favorite trick for a gas guard. He'd be all alone in the cold night and on the slightest excuse he'd beat the alarm and wake every one up so he'd have a little company.

The next day we went forth to see the battlefields. They looked just the same to me as they always did. I went into Petit Bordeaux Farm, where we had a battalion P.C., and the farmer and I drank some beer he'd made himself, and we had quite a chew. He took me out to show me a red number on a tree in his lane and wanted to know what it was. He said he had found a lot of them on the place, here and there.

Well I told him what it was with great glee. It was a geodetic point, or a *point de cheminment.* It had something to do with triangulation of the sector for the artillery. You had a table, and in the table you hunted up the coordinates of a tree with the figures painted on it in red, 49. Then with those coordinates you could find your exact location on the fire map.

That fire dope was terrible stuff. They used to send down barometric data from a balloon every two hours, so that you could figure corrections in range for atmospheric conditions, and by the time a man had his corrections figured there would be a new set of data coming down. I used to know all that, but I forgot it. It took too much time to do.

We used to point our guns north and let 'em go. If I saw any shells falling in the Marne I used to phone back to increase the range. They might not be shells from my battery, but it wouldn't hurt to raise her nose another couple of hundred yards. The country over there was crawling with Boche, and if you didn't hit one you'd hit another.

I went into this in some detail with the farmer, because my wife was listening and I wanted her to see not only what a keen soldier I had been, but how well I spoke French. She thought I did very well, not speaking French herself, but she did feel that the farmer didn't need to have looked so stupid as if he were not understanding a word.

Ah, well. We went on to see something else, I forget what it was, and she lost a shoe in the mud and knocked a pair of nice new silk stockings for a goal, but didn't complain, and said she enjoyed herself immensely. A girl that marries an ex-soldier has a lot to contend with, after all.

The next day things went better. We met another American couple in the hotel and the husband had been running, the wife breathless all over the hills, hunting dugouts and P.C.'s and places where this one had been wounded and that one killed, to send back pictures of to the home town. He had been with a National Guard outfit, where everybody came from the same town, to which they went back after the war.

We made a sort of business arrangement after a few days. He and I would shin up and down the hills together and the two wives would stay in the hotel and put the other guests on the pan.

It worked fine. His division had been in the vicinity of mine, all the time, but we hadn't ever passed through the same towns, so we had no occasion for any of these futile arguments about which division took which town, or whether or not on a certain occasion one division went hurriedly away and the other division had to jump in and plug the gap. Things worked so well that we did the Argonne together. We came one day upon the foundations of an old German power-house.

"I was with the outfit that took that," said I.

"No," said my friend, "not this one. My outfit took this one."

"I fear you're wrong," I replied.

I named the date and the hour. So did he, but his was the day after mine.

"Aw, how could your bunch of volunteer firemen take a power-house a day after we had taken it?" I demanded.

"You've got another power-house in mind," said he.

When we got back to the hotel we looked it up in one of our many "Guides to Who Won the War" and found that neither of our divisions was credited with being in the sector at all. We found the explanation, though, about a week later. We were both right and if we had had

representatives from several other outfits there, and they had each and all profanely and obscenely argued that their particular organization had taken that power-house, they would have all been right.

When we were at Romagne we asked Jack McGurty. He's the searcher there, the man that goes out in the woods day after day, hunting unlocated dead. He finds them, too. He knows every inch of that great battlefield. He can tell about all the obscure, bitter fights, the unknown struggles that took place in those thickets and those lonely stretches of brambles. He can point out the places where this or that platoon, company or battalion was surrounded, cut off and either destroyed to a man or eventually rescued. He knows, because he finds the dead there, even to this day, lying as they fell.

Some of the men that took part in those fights don't know even now how desperate was their case. They remember they were in a certain place several days, that it rained very hard, that they were shelled heavily, now by the Germans, now by the Americans, and that at a given moment their food gave out and their ammunition ran low. Then, eventually, other troops came in and the situation cleared.

If the survivors were to be told that they had been cut off from their own lines for twenty-four or forty-eight hours, they would be highly astonished.

But Jack knows. The Germans used to take their own dead away and bury ours each night, and Jack can tell, by the method employed, who buried a man. He can read the story of a fight, now, as plainly as if it took place last night. He can tell you how this runner tried to get through from the beleaguered platoon, and show where the machine-gun was that had been posted to prevent just such an attempt, and how, once the platoon or company or regiment even, had passed a certain point, a force of machine-gunners—not many, either, but enough—had just slid in behind them, like a great door closing, and there they were. Then the Germans pounded them with artillery or hammered them with machine-gun fire until they were all dead; fear of being themselves cut off forcing the Germans to retire.

Let those Americans who are inclined to feel apologetic about their own country's part in the war visit the Argonne and try to imagine how it felt to struggle around in those wet woods while the enemy strewed the place with bullets from a concrete dugout.

So we asked Jack about the power-house, and it seems that we were both right. Each outfit that went through would rush the place, throw a few grenades around, and move on, being in a hurry to get to some hills behind it. So the Germans who, when the attackers had got too close, had sneaked into a sluice-way that they had there, would then come and pepper the next outfit that came along. This went on for two or three days, until the Germans ran out of ammunition. Then they surrendered to yet another outfit that hadn't had any casualties there and hence would be inclined to receive them hospitably.

Ah, that was a great trip. I enjoyed it immensely. And so did the family. I bought the children some brass shell-cases in Verdun, that they could slam down on the floor in the hotel and make a noise like the Fall of Rome, and I am sure my wife was very pleased to have seen all the places where her husband fought and bled and nearly died.

"It was a great trip, wasn't it?" I asked, on our way back to Paris. "Aren't you glad you came, even if it did rain once in a while?"

"Oh, yes," said she, "I wouldn't have missed it for the world. And then if we hadn't come we wouldn't have met the Blanks, and she has given me the names of just the shops in Paris that I tried so hard to find and couldn't."

A Deserter at Valley Forge

A Military Interlude

By ERNEST HAYCOX

THE HUT was both cold and dark. There were no windows to admit the light of the waning day, but through every crack and chink penetrated the sharp, bitter air of January. Alva Jukes, standing in the doorway, saw only white ovals of faces staring upward from the wretched pallets and, though he was a brash, hard-tempered man, oft called upon to witness suffering, the sight of so much unnecessary misery fed the latent rebellion in his Scotch-Irish heart. He struck a posture, put a hand to a hip as if caressing a sword-hilt and mimicked the voice of a colonel well known but not well loved by the brigade—

"And what have you got for supper, my brave fellows?"

The answer came back to him in mock respect from half a dozen throats—

"Fire-cake and water, sir!"

"Ah," purred Jukes, plucking at an imaginary cloak, "and what have you for breakfast, sons of freedom?"

"Fire-cake and water, sir!"

"And now, my laddies, tell me what you eat for dinner."

"Fire-cake and water, sir!"

Jukes, grinning dourly through his whiskers, joined them in the chorus—

"God send our commissary of purchases to live on fire-cake and water."

Snow blanketed Valley Forge, dampened the lesser camp sounds and made the crackling-cold air seem doubly severe. A cart, loaded with wood, crept past the hut, drawn by ten or twelve men hitched to a rope; men who moved with dreadful slowness, heads bent, feet slipping on the ground. Here and there fires burned on the brigade street, surrounded by the feeble and the ragged. An officer rode by—a queer sight with a counterpane covering him from head to foot and a shawl, wrapped turban fashion around his head. Alva Jukes stared at these scenes with somber eyes, his hatchet-faced visage growing more and more pointed.

"What's become o' the fire I left burnin'?" he asked. "—— of a crew you are to let it die!"

"There ain't no more wood, Serg'nt," croaked a remote voice. "I give it the last lick an' a promise, but it didn't seem to help. Here's a letter fer you—come by the courier a small time back."

"Hey, a letter?" muttered Jukes. "An' who'd be writin' to me?"

He crossed the threshold and met a man's outstretched hand. Retreating to the open, he broke the seal and spread the paper before puzzled eyes. It took some time for him to decipher the illiterate, poorly formed scrawl, for he had no more education than the common run; but at last he mastered the sentences, face settling.

D'r son, you been gone 2 years now, ain't it time to come hame I ben worrit for y'r helth, the Neely boys went to war for 3 months an come hame braggin fit to kill. Y've did your share, pa is doin porely, seems he cant get his wind back after the cold. I never eat but think you must be starvin. Come hame, y'r lovein mother.

He folded the message and tucked it in his pocket. Some one coughed spasmodically, ending with a strangled sigh.

"I don't figger there'd be room left in the hospital er I'd go. Serg'nt, you better look at Will Cordes; he ain't answerin' no questions lately."

Jukes stepped around a body and knelt in a corner.

"Will, me lad, 'tis a poor time to be sleepin'." There was no answer and Jukes' hand, crossing the man's face, found it stone cold. "Will," said he, sharply, "you'll be freezin' unless you move about. Come now."

He spoke to unheeding ears. His fingers, resting over the flat chest, found no reassuring movement. He rested on his knees for a long period, while a dismal silence pervaded the hut.

"I reckon," said a husky voice, "he's done passed out, eh, Serg'nt?"

Jukes rose.

"I'll be gettin' a buryin' detail. 'Tis the third from this hut in a month. Well, he was a strong lad or he'd gone earlier."

Another voice broke in:

"Jukes, you heard anything 'bout them clothes supposed to be comin'? Fella told me a ship was in from France with enough to supply the hull army."

"Huh," said Jukes, retreating to the doorway. "All I heard was the Congress had sent a committee down here to see why we ain't satisfied."

"—— the Congress! What've they ever done fer us? Yah, sendin' a committee! All they do is send committees! Washington could've won this war by now if Congress was anything but a pack o' shilly-shally lawyers! Look at poor Will—the boy'd never died if the cursed Congress had only kep' us in clo's an' vittals. —— the Congress fer a pack o' spineless, jealous rats! They talk fine but they ain't got spunk enough to take keer of the army. Better keep their noses outen this camp or they'll have no army."

It was a white-hot indictment, spoken in half hysterical tones. All the man's fears, all his outraged emotions, unleashed by the death of a comrade, went into the diatribe. At the end he was left with his breath coming in gasps while the others of the hut muttered their approval. He had spoken the almost unanimous opinion of the army, an army who daily saw the carts wheeling a dozen bodies like that of the unfortunate Will Cordes through the streets. Jukes, though possessed of tempestuous emotions and a stern sense of justice, bridled his feelings with a sardonic pressure of lips and retreated from the hut.

Turning up the street, he trudged toward the hospital tent, a long, thin figure with the face and eyes of a malcontent. Nature in forming him had done him injustice; for he was not as bad nor as ill-disciplined as the sullenness of mouth and cheek would indicate. The expression was an inheritance from Covenanting

ancestors, people who had never found life an easy affair. Nevertheless, men gave him the compliment of legends. His taciturnity in camp and his profane frenzy in battle made him a known figure throughout the brigade.

He reached the hospital hut, left a report of the dead man and retraced his way through the snow, observing here and there footprints edged with crimson. It made him all the more bitter-eyed and his sharp nose sank nearer his chest. He passed several fires and came again to his own cheerless hut. He tarried only long enough to take an ax leaning by the door and went on, aiming for a stand of timber beyond the brigade street.

A certain shapely tree drew him through a deep snowdrift. Getting a position knee deep in the snow, he sank the bitt of the ax into the bark and sent the chips flying.

"Guess paw must be doin' poorly," he muttered, between blows. "Else why should maw be spendin' money on a letter? That cussed Bige done said he'd provide fer 'em while I was gone."

But then Bige was only a shiftless cousin, too afraid of his own skin to join the army, and perhaps two years' providing for the family had set him to grumbling. Born grumblers, all the Jukes. He balanced the ax and measured the fall of the tree; he too, he decided, was a grumbler.

His labor was arrested by a sudden disturbance in the street. A lieutenant strode along the line of huts shouting:

"Turn out, men! Turn out for grand parade! Turn out, Pennsylvania!"

Jukes stared at the graying sky and left the bitt of the ax buried in the tree, determining to finish the chore when he had returned from parade. Floundering through the drift, he reached the street, only to be assailed by an entirely new and unexpected commotion. The men were turning out, no doubt, of that; but they were coming not with muskets and belts, nor in the usual lethargic manner. They emerged from the huts bearing pots and pans, beating them together, sending a racket toward the leaden sky and breaking into a chant that, started by one voice, was immediately taken up by others until the camp rang with it.

"No meat, no soldier! No bread, no parade! Poor Dick a-freezin'! No meat, no soldier!"

The officer raised his arms futilely while the ragged soldiers made a ring around him. At every instant fresh voices joined the chorus and more pans swelled the tumult. Jukes, elbowing his way to the fore of the circle, saw angry faces, sick faces, faces that were flushed and faces that were ghastly white.

The whole affair had an undertone of desperation; they were not men revolting from discipline; they were men who had very nearly reached the limit of endurance. Ill, discouraged and brooding over the obvious injustices done to them, one man's catch-phrase had set them off. Jukes' temper flamed in sympathy. He reached the center of the throng in time to hear the lieutenant, an angry and puzzled man, sing out:

"Stop it, men! D'you want to turn this camp upside down? —— of an example we'll make for other regiments. Stop the infernal racket!"

He was too young to command influence and his words were drowned by the redoubled cry:

"No meat, no soldier! No more firecake an' water!"

One side of the ring parted precipitately and four horsemen, led by a plump brigadier with ruddy cheeks, forced a path to the center. The brigadier leaned over to catch the lieutenant's words. And then as suddenly as all this racket had began it subsided, leaving the crowd moving uneasily, some exhausted, others implacably rooted to their places. The brigadier's face was very solemn, and when he spoke it was not in anger but with compassionate gravity.

"You do yourselves ill, gentlemen," said he, "to create such a disturbance. Must we win battles from the enemy and lose them among ourselves? Fie that there should be such dissension! Come now, what's the root of all this?"

The silence was so heavy that the crackling of wood on a near-by fire echoed like gunshots in the frosty air. A voice sang out—

"Jemmy Rice, you speak fer us."

Jukes waited several moments to hear the man's voice. At last he turned and sought through the crowd until his eyes fell upon Rice—a tumultuous character of his own company who had the readiest tongue for grievances in all the camp. But Jemmy Rice was silent now in face of the brigadier. For this was akin to mutiny and he had no stomach to put himself up as a ringleader to be shot.

Jukes, waiting further, closed his fist and took a pace forward where the brigadier's searching eyes might find him. The wild rush of feeling that sprang upward, had it been allowed to escape, would have sent a torrent of angry words upon the officer. Jukes checked it, lips turning thin from the effort. His somber face met the brigadier not defiantly but as an equal speaking to an equal.

"A man died in my hut this afternoon fer lack o' food an' lack o' blankets. Died on the ground with nary a straw beneath him. There's four others in that hut an' none fit to be abroad. *That's* what we raise Cain about."

The brigadier inclined his head.

"I am aware of the misfortunes of this camp. Every officer worth a grain of salt is aware of them. Don't you think we spend our days trying to make conditions a little better? But what help d'you expect by this conduct?"

Jukes, looking beyond the brigadier, caught sight of his captain, an angry man indeed that one of his own company should be spokesman of rebellion. He squared his shoulders and proceeded:

"We ain't doubtin' your efforts. But it don't seem in the power o' officers to help us, so we try raisin' our own voices. We ain't had meat fer six days. Last rations o' bread were plumb moldy. Clothes—well, we don't expect none, never havin' had an issue since October. There's half o' this company in the hospital an' more waitin' to get in when beds are empty. As fer pay, I ain't seen a scrap o' money fer fourteen months. Now we hear there's a committee of the Congress comin' down to see why we ain't satisfied. Well, sir, God grant they come to this company fer information!"

The swelling echo behind him told Jukes he had spoken the brigade's mind. The captain's face was black as thunder but the brigadier never changed a whit.

"You are mild enough. Were I inclined I could add to that tale of misfortune and make it darker still. Gentlemen, your grievances are my own. But it will never do to break down like this. It only gives our enemies a chance to strengthen their position. Nothing will ever convince me you are the kind to sully your honor by sedition. I want you all to disperse to your huts. Meanwhile I may tell you there is at this moment wagon-trains bound for camp with warm clothes and fresh beef. Now, gentlemen, retire to your quarters."

The brigadier, looking over their thoughtful countenances, knew he had broken the back of resistance. They had given his words attention and that meant they were still reasonable. Being a kindly man, he clinched his victory with mildness.

"Many of you are very weak. Considering that, we will omit grand parade tonight. The guards will be posted informally."

The men broke from the ring one by one, slowly returning to their huts. The brigadier and his staff rode away. Jukes, profoundly affected, trudged down the street, breasted the snow bank and caught the handle of his ax. A dozen blows brought the tree down and he set to cutting off branches and sections. Perhaps a half-hour passed at this occupation and the gray dusk fell without warning while he meditated over the plight of his comrades. His recent speech had made him aware of his own personal troubles, too, and as he chopped at the log he thought again of his folks at home.

"That Bige," he muttered, "allus was a no-'count. As fer them braggin' Neely boys, they never was worth powder

to blow 'em up. Paw must be doin' poorly."

He drove the ax into the log and loaded his arms with split wood. Stumbling back to the hut, he began shaving a stick of kindling. He built a teepee of the splinters and went to the adjoining fire for a burning brand to start his own blaze. A flame shot upward and caught the sticks. Some one in the hut called to him:

"That you, Jukes? Didn't you see the notice?"

Jukes piled more wood on the fire.

"What notice?"

"Fella come down from captain's quarters with a notice an' posted it to our hut while you was gone. Better see what it says."

Jukes took up a flaming branch and carried it to the hut wall. There, stuck to a log where the company orders were usually put, he found the following announcement, written in the clerk's bold hand:

From this day Jem Rice will be sergeant of the company, taking place of Alva Jukes, returned to the ranks.
—Fleming, Captain.

He stood there for a long time, reading the notice thrice over, making sure of its import. The captain's dark, angry glance had borne fruit and he, Alva Jukes, was to lose the tabard of authority he had won by his own reckless effort. To lose it for speaking nothing but truth; and, what was more unfair, to lose it to a man who had not the courage of his beliefs.

The wild, Scotch-Irish rage gave power to his hand. The burning stick smashed against the notice and sputtered, lighting and consuming the paper.

"Let 'em fight their own war, then!" he cried, ducking into the hut. "I've done my share!" He went to his corner of the gloomy place, rolled together his bundle of belongings and took his rifle. Going out, he stopped to add fresh fuel to the fire. "Better come an' take care o' this now," he called back.

Ploughing through the snow, he was swallowed by the night. But he hadn't gone twenty yards before he stopped, put down his rifle and bundle and went back to the fallen tree. He collected another armful of wood and packed it to the fire, grumbling—

"Ain't a blessed one o' them boys able to lift a stick."

A moment later he had vanished again, turning his course to pass the pickets, bound homeward, a deserter from Valley Forge.

The farther he traveled the more powerfully did the bitter resentment effect him. At last he cried out to the black winter sky.

"May the Lord strike me dead if ever I see the army again. —— the Congress! Let 'em fight fer their own freedom if they're so sot on it. A pack o' shilly-shally lawyers an' argufyers!"

HE WAS a tough, canny fellow, Alva Jukes, and capable of sustaining himself through hard affairs. That night, a great deal later, he turned off the road and slept in a barn. At the first crack of day he was away, bearing in his pouch two ears of dried corn, which was his only food for the next ten hours. His course led him northwesterly along a pike, aiming straight for the backwoods part of the State, toward that land he had left better than two years before.

As he traveled he kept good watch behind for patrols that swept the environs of Valley Forge. He was not of a mind to be taken and marched back before a summary court. And so it was that, when his eyes spied horsemen coming along the road, he dropped into a stand of trees and let them pass. They were a few officers on a reconnoitering party and after they vanished around a bend he came from concealment.

At the joining of highways some distance farther along, he chose the lesser used route and soon was slogging through drifts of snow. The sky was lowering and beyond noon the flakes began to drift slantwise through the air. It was

about this time, too, that he considered himself removed sufficiently from the army to abandon his precaution and to give all his attention to the road ahead.

The fact that he had left camp without leave bothered his conscience not at all. He was only doing what hundreds of others had done before him. Indeed, members of that army regarded their enlistment agreements as flexible contracts. Active campaigning kept them together, but when winter set in and the chance of battle was remote they sat before their fires and listened to the call of the home people who needed their help. Then the brigades dwindled. Jukes, bending against the drifts, defended his course with arguments that seemed to him perfectly valid.

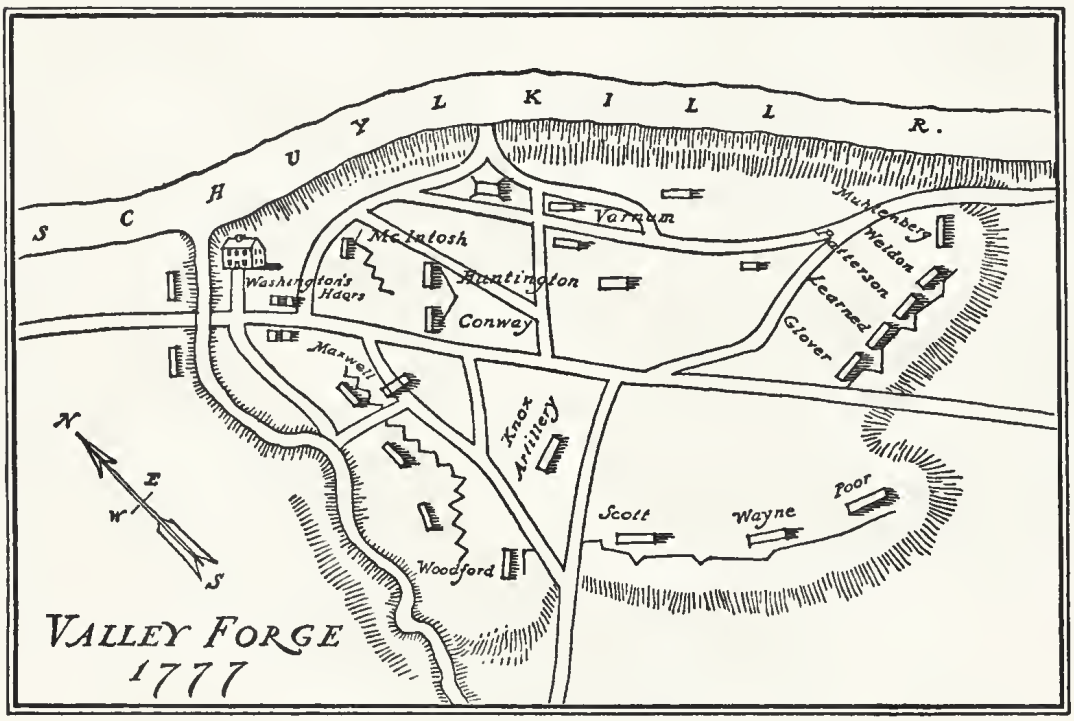
"Two years 'thout a single leave," said he. "Ain't that enough fer one man? Let some o' these proud fire-eaters at home try their luck. I done my share."

He was shrewd enough to know that there were many thousands of able-bodied citizens who had never answered the call to colors and who were perfectly content to let others do their share of fighting. To men of Jukes' nature, endowed with a keen sense of justice, this was only an added argument as to the propriety of his act. He had done far more than his share. Now let some other take his place.

Even so, his thoughts turned now and then, as the afternoon advanced and he found himself in strange country, to that dark and miserable hut where his comrades rested, all but helpless.

"I reckon there'll be grand parade tonight," he mused. "Well, there won't be many turnin' out fer it. No they won't. An' I bet they let the fire die again. As fer poor Will Cordes—the cussed Congress c'n take the blame fer that."

The graying shadows came again, flecked by softly falling snow. Here and there, at wide intervals on the road, he passed farmhouses with lights gleaming through the windows and sparks showering from chimneys. He might have turned in and asked shelter, but a stubborn pride kept him away. He was not a



straggler, nor could he stomach the thought of begging at doors. He trudged on, waiting for dark to come that he might crawl into a barn overnight.

His keen ears caught the sound of hoofs and he turned to find a solitary figure riding out of a side road and turning his way. Jukes resumed his march, stolidly indifferent. Nor did he cast another glance behind, although he heard the traveler coming nearer; instead, he took the side of the highway, prepared to let the other pass. The traveler came abreast and reined in, speaking courteously.

"A bad day to be afoot, sir."

Jukes shifted his gun to the other shoulder and looked up to see a plump, benign face. The man was of a quality, a country squire, well dressed and bearing with him a pride of place. A pair of blue eyes beamed from beneath bushy brows, singularly penetrating eyes. Jukes felt the full weight of their scrutiny and was roused to sudden watchfulness.

"I've marched in worse times," said he, noncommittally, still holding aside to let the man pass.

But the elderly gentleman was of a social nature.

"Doubtless you come from Valley Forge," he suggested. "Going home, possibly, on leave."

"Take it that way," assented Jukes, not entirely pleased at the deception but considering it the better policy.

The elderly gentleman looked at the forbidding sky.

"It will snow heavily all night. You had better take shelter soon. There's a tavern a mile down the road. You'll find it agreeable."

"Tavern," grunted Jukes. "Where'd you figger I'd get money to spend in a tavern? I ain't been paid in fourteen months."

"But you most assuredly can't sleep in the open," protested the squire. "It's devilish cold these nights."

Jukes looked at the man's fine clothes with sudden resentment.

"I've slept in worse. An' there's plenty o' barns along the way."

"Nonsense. Let it not be said of Pennsylvania that she neglected her soldiers. We'll stop at the tavern and I shall have the fellow take care of you overnight. Consider yourself as my guest."

"And who," demanded Jukes, "might you be?"

"I, sir, am St. Louis Cotton, of Cotton Hall and member of the Pennsylvania Assembly."

"A lawyer of the Congress?" demanded Jukes, flinging up his head.

"Not of the Continental Congress. I have not that honor. But of the Pennsylvania Assembly."

The distinction was not fine enough to check Jukes' animosity. Here was one of the gentry who debated and dallied and broke their promises and appointed futile committees while the army starved.

"—— your hospitality!" he cried. "I take nothin' from shilly-shally lawyers. 'Tis your kind that makes misery fer the army. 'Tis you who eat well an' sleep warm while the rest o' us go without!"

St. Louis Cotton, esquire, sat bolt upright in the saddle and blew through his nose.

"That is cursed impertinence, sir. I offer you the gratitude of a State and you answer it like a wagon-master. I see you are another of those infested with disrespect for the people's legislatures. There is some sinister influence at work amongst you."

"Influence o' an empty belly," retorted Jukes. "An' what do you fine gentlemen accomplish, I'd like to know? When we ask fer vittals an' food we get smart promises. We starve an' you tell us we eat too much meat anyway. You're a pack o' scoundrels an' the country'd be better without you! 'Tis no credit due you General Washington wins his battles!"

The squire held his peace and Jukes, looking upward through the fast thickening dusk, could make out the ruddy face screwed to the point of apoplexy.

"Fire away, old man," he added contemptuously. "Give us some o' them

pretty words you use so nice on committees."

The squire spoke with a commendable restraint—

"I suppose members of the army could do better, were they elected to serve in the Congress?"

"There'd be no shilly-shally, I tell you."

"When you grow older," said the gentleman, "you will know better. If a body of angels came together they would fall to quarreling in these terrible times. It is not human nature to be forever agreeable, no matter how desperate the cause. You soldiers forget, too, that every State has its word in the councils of Congress, and seldom do all States agree. Each has its own interests to watch. Perhaps the Congress makes unfulfilled promises, perhaps it errs in judgment. It is a body without power, my friend. It can ask flour and beef of the States, but only conscience can make those States supply the need. Do you forget that?"

Jukes grunted, disquieted. The old gentleman handled words as he handled a gun. He could not oppose the argument because he had no knowledge. But of what use reason when the misery and misfortune of Valley Forge was there to confound all the fine talk of lawyers. If they wanted a free country why didn't they find means of helping their soldiers?

"'Tis strange," said he, "how you gentlemen draw pay an' wear fine clothes no matter how you disagree. An' it's a cussed example you set the country by runnin' off from Philadelphia every time a British gun sounds within fifty miles. A fine example!"

"I can plainly see," snorted the old gentleman, "that you are a malcontent. You say you are on leave? Where is your paper to show it?"

"I'll show no papers," said Jukes, stoutly.

"Then you are a deserter. ——, sir, I've a notion to clap a pistol at your head and turn you around for the provost guards."

Jukes slipped the musket from his shoulders.

"Mind your business, old fellow, or I'll knock you off that perch."

They came to a halt, facing each other as the dusk gave way to darkness and the snow fell about them in redoubled thickness. Jukes laughed grimly.

"Stick to your debatin', old man. You c'n do better at it. Leave the guns to a fightin' man. Le's go, now. I ain't got time to waste on a fat old turkey-cock like you."

St. Louis Cotton swore softly, putting his horse in motion.

"You *are* a renegade—a desperate ruffian, better out of the army than in it."

"Good enough to kill Englishmen though, ain't I? Good enough to believe in your fine promises when everything looked mighty black. Now you an' your blue-blood friends c'n fight fer your own necks. I'm through!"

They turned a curve of the road and had sight of a tavern hidden amongst trees, not a hundred yards away. Jukes bit his words in two and came to a halt. A door of the tavern stood wide open, with the yellow light making a lane in the snow. And up that lane filed a squad of men dressed in the uniform of British dragoons. The door closed behind them, leaving Jukes with dry lips and a question on his tongue.

"There a camp o' those animals hereabouts, old feller?"

"My eyes, they're —— poor," said the squire. "What did you see?"

"British dragoons," muttered Jukes, peering through the darkness. "Saw six go inside. Wonder—"

The squire was swearing.

"That patrol again! Sweeps this part of the country frequently. No camp this side of Philadelphia. ——, I'd like to put a stop to it! If I had another man or two."

"Hold on, old feller," interrupted Jukes, surprized at the former's warlike speech. "You ain't the one to do any fightin'. If they'd ketch you usin' a gun an' wearin' civilian clothes they'd hang you."

"Tut," said the squire. "I bear a colonel's commission in the militia."

"Milisher, huh? Well, anybody could be an officer in the milisher. It's no-'count."

Jukes was on his knee, head thrust forward, as if trying to penetrate the darkness. The squire dismounted from his horse, muttering.

"If you weren't such a rascally fellow and we had another one or two—"

"Old man," broke in Jukes, "I'm goin' to do a little scoutin'. Stand fast till I come back."

He slipped his knapsack to the ground and swiftly advanced, the aggressive Scotch-Irish spirit rousing at the proximity of the enemy and a daring plan working through his canny head. Within ten yards of the place he stopped, hearing the champing of a bit. After some moments of intent observation he decided no guard had been left with the animals and moved around the corner of the tavern to a window. The light sparkled through the frosted panes. Jukes removed his hat, raised himself cautiously and commanded a clear view of the interior.

His count had been right. Six of them, headed by a sergeant, were seated around a table; six solid looking fellows with vests loosened to the heat of the room, saber points clanking on the floor. The tavern keeper moved across the boards with steaming cups and disappeared in the kitchen a moment, reappearing with a platter of meat. Jukes located the inner kitchen door and ducked down, grinning dourly.

"They'll be feedin' some minutes," he muttered, working his way back. "Well, we'll give 'em time to hang themselves."

He cruised around the yard and reassured himself there was no guard with the horses, going so far as to put his hands upon the hitching rack and take another knot in each of the tied reins. If any of them wished to get away in a hurry they'd find unexpected difficulties. He moved back to the squire's position.

"Six of 'em," said Jukes. "Mr. Milisher Colonel, you got any weapons?"

"My pistols. D'you mean you've got spirit enough to flush 'em?"

"Well, fightin's my trade. You talk loud but I ain't sure you'll stand fire. Milisher never do. Howsoever, if there's any gimp in that fat skin o' yourn come along. I want you to go to the front door an' wait until you hear me shout. Then you shout—as loud as you can, breakin' in. I'll be comin' through the back way. Le's go."

The squire tied his horse to a fence and followed Jukes until they were within a few paces of the tavern.

"Wait until you hear me," admonished the latter, "then make all the noise you can."

He turned away. Another furtive glance through the window showed him the dragoons had turned to industrious trenchermen and he skirted the wall of the house until he saw a crack of light coming through a rear door. He tried it gently and found it gave way. At that point he stopped to affix his bayonet, then shoved the door open and let out a cry loud enough to startle every echo in the countryside.

The door slammed against the inner wall and Jukes, musket advanced, careened through a hot kitchen, had a momentary glimpse of a frightened woman shrinking back, and arrived at the front room. He cried again—a high, wailing, half savage yell—and burst upon them at the moment the squire, obeying instructions to the letter, burst through the front way, waving his pistols.

"Surrender, gentlemen, or you die!"

The table went over, sending the dishes to the floor with a crash and clatter. Dragoons flung themselves against the wall, sabers flashing, pistols out.

"Charge 'em!" yelled the sergeant. "Kill the devils!"

Jukes' musket roared; smoke filled the room and the sergeant's face sagged. He fell to the floor, knocking aside the weapon of one of his men.

"Come on, Pennsylvania!" shouted Jukes, his face afire.

He was as a man gone stark mad, teeth bared and eyes flashing. The bayonet met a saber and knocked it aside. The room shook with gunshots and he felt the powder burn his cheeks. Through the sudden sweat that dripped over his eyes he saw his bayonet point turn to bright red. The squire's hoarse voice cried encouragement and summoned aid from the night. His pistols spoke and then he was borne out of sight by a dragoon retreating from the wild man with the face of fury who slashed and struck and parried and lunged with a crimson bayonet.

The room was in semi-darkness, swimming with smoke; the fireplace glowed dully, reflecting on the sergeant's sightless eyes. The squire, from the outer shadows, sent back a great cry:

"Keep at 'em, my boy! You've bagged the birds!"

"Swords down!" shouted a disheveled dragoon, sagging at the knee. "We're taken. Put up your gun, man!"

There were two of them standing against the wall, one with a streak of blood across his face, the other staring sullenly.

"Gad," said he, "we've been taken by a cursed savage! Quarter!"

Jukes swayed in his tracks, black hair fallen about his face, sweat rolling across his whiskers. At some point in the mêlée the cloth of one sleeve had been ripped by a saber and it hung away from his skinny arm, making him all the more a nondescript figure. The flaming fervor slowly faded from his eyes and he dropped the point of his bayonet, suddenly tired.

They had done well enough. The sergeant and two others were dead on the floor; two were prisoners and one had fled. The tavern keeper thrust his white jowls out of the kitchen door and Jukes barked at him—

"What's your politics, fat-face?"

"I'm a good patriot. Ye ——, y've wrecked my place!"

"Thank your luck I ain't wrecked you," growled Jukes. "Pick up that gun and hold these fellers to the corner."

He slouched toward the door, bent on retrieving the dragoon who had fled. But there was no need of that. For there he lay, in the patch of snow just beyond the doorsill. And beside him, one arm still gripping a pistol, was the squire, St. Louis Cotton, of Cotton Hall and member of the Pennsylvania Assembly. Jukes bent over, moved by a sudden, generous pity. The squire's plump face was turned up ward and his lips twitched.

"My boy," he whispered, "if you're a straggler, go back before it's too late. No matter how you feel—go back. 'Tis not the time to desert the country. The act will haunt you later, and your sons will hate you. Go back."

"Aye," muttered Jukes, "it's somethin' I'd most made my mind to this minute."

But St. Louis Cotton never heard that, for he was dead, carrying on his ruddy countenance that same pride of place. Jukes stared somberly. At last he turned back to the room.

"Alva Jukes wa'n't born to run off," he muttered. "They'll be changin' guards at this minute—and who's to help those poor devils to keep the fire goin'?" He thought of the old gentleman with admiration. "A plucky old cock. Maybe he's right."

The tavern keeper gave up his gun.

"I had better look after the squire."

"Get help to bury 'em all," replied Jukes gruffly. "Now, fat-face, bring out somethin' to eat an' tally it to the account o' Pennsylvania."

A half-hour later he was bound back to Valley Forge with two prisoners and six horses, the saddle of each one bearing the king's crown. Jukes smiled dourly as he plodded through the dark, swirling night. After all, they could not do much to a straggler who returned in that royal fashion.

Play-Actin fer Gents

Letters of a Wandering Partner

By ALAN LEMAY

Grand Eegil, Thursday, 1878

DEER BUG EYE,

This thing is getin worser an worser Bug Eye, evry time I think the worst is over sumthin else hapens to make it all mor teribil, an I tel you frankly Bug Eye that if I ever get back to Indianna I wil never cum trapin in the Black Hills agen. So help me Mozus Bg. Eye this time I meen it.

Yestedy I rote you a long letter tellin you in detale wy I hav ben delaid Bug Eye an wy it is that I hav now ben gone 6 wks without cumin back with the grub. An now I hav went to work an misplased those darn letters, ware coud they be Bug Eye, an now it all will hav to remane secrut until I see you, I am dingety—— if I wil rite all that stuff over agen.

But I wil say that wat hapened was that wile I was in Dedwood I bot a Gold mine in Grand Eegil with the muney I found in the Hen Crick jale, an I started to Grand Eegil on the Dedwood coach, carrin the deed an titil to our gold mine in my carpit bag. An the driver an fellers on the coach went to work an robed ther own coach, an steelt my carpit bag insted of ther own sachel, wich they apeered to be trine to steel. An I got mad an flang ther old sachel down the side of the mowntin, an rode to Grand Eegil on wat was left of the coach after the horse had ran away and bustid up most of it. An wen I got to Grand Eegil I snuck away throo the crowd onotised, I did not feel like explanin everthin rite then.

Wel Bug Eye the mor I think about it the mor pecooler it seems that the gards and the driver on the stage coach shoud go to work an rob ther own coach an steel ther own sachel. I noe positive that they did not meen to steel my carpit bag becaus I had swich sachels with them so mine woud be safer, they did not noe that in the dark. Wy shoud they hav gards on the Dedwood Coach anyway Bug Eye. Sumtimes I think Bug Eye ther must hav ben sumthin in that sachel that did not belong to them, sumthin

worth muney. I do not noe wat to think, an I do not giv much of a woop, wat I am worrin about is ware is my carpit bag now.

So I am delaid agen Bug Eye, I can not cum back with the grub yet. I noe you are starvin to deth on Elk Mowntin, but you will hav to keep at it a littel wile longer an jest hope fer the best. I noe by this time you probably think you are dyin, same as you always do wen ther is the leest littel thing the matter with you, but do not worry, you are not goin to dy haf as eesy as you think, you tuff old billy gote you.

Yr. Obeedint servant

Hank

P S I wil giv this letter to the 1st feller I see ridin tord Elk Mowntin, I noe you wil be worrin, an sayin pore Hank I bet he is in trubbel agen. An you wil probly be rite, it is a saif bet Bug Eye, yore pore pardners life is jest 1 long serys of winters.

No plase in perticler,
Friday, 1878.

DEER BUG EYE,

I new it Bug Eye, heer I am no plase a tird hungry man, plumb wore out frum runin an frum holdin my temper in. I feer I wil never heer the last of that darn old Dedwood Coach, sumtimes I wisht I had staid with you on Elk Mowntin, I woud jest as leef starve to deth 1 plase as another. An I shore do not like the habit they hav got into around heer of shootin at a feller evry moove he makes, and if he dont make any mooves at all they shoot him anyway.

I was sleepin under 2 or 3 buk bords in a waggin shed Bug Eye, sudnly I woke up with the feelin I was bein run over by a waggin. Shore enuf Bug Eye, wen I looked around I see 1 of the buk bords had mooved off an was standin about 6 ft. away. I coud heer a teribil argyment goin on in the buk bord.

1 feller sed we hav ran over a log, wat are logs doin in ther, giddap Mariar, an the other feller sed wate Bill that was not a log, it was eether a hog or a corps, I hav run over both an I otter now. An the other feller sed I gess you are rite, I wil bet the drinks it was a hog, becaus they woud not put a corps under a waggin, they would leeve it ly in the street, an the other feller sed an I wil bet you it is a corps an rase you 2 drinks, becaus if it was a hog he woud of squelt wen we run over him, an the other feller sed I will call you, mebbe I am rong but I dont think so.

Wel Bug Eye, they clum down offen the waggin, I was still ½ under a cupple of other waggins, all I coud see was 2 eenormus pares of boots, I thout heer is sum life-size men at last.

1 of them sed see it is a corps, hogs do not ware boots, an he giv me a kick in the shin, an I sed Hay. Then the other feller sed no you are rong it is a hog, corpses dont ly around callin fer hay. An the other feller sed that old goke was funny inst but this is no laffin matter, lets go get the 3 drinks you owe me, and the other feller sed owe you ——, you bet it was a corps an it is not a corps, it is alive an kikin, I win. An the other feller sed How do you figger, I was the neerest rite, an the other feller sed, no I was the neerest rite because a live man is closer to a hog than a corps, espeshully a feller that trys to get out of payin his debts by pertendin he is mor ignornt than he is even.

With that Bug Eye they both begun shoutin at eech other an talkin at 1 an the saim time, an I was tird of heerin a argyment about wether I was a ded man or a live hog so I crole out frum under the buk bord. An the 2 fellers was only littel short fellers about 6 feet tall, they must of ben warin oversize boots.

As soon as they seen me they stopped shoutin an stood starin at me about 2 minnits an ½, an I begun to get nervus an sed wat are you starin at, an 1 of them sed look Bill that is the feller that cum in with wat was left of the Dedwood Coach, an the other sed how can that be, the Dedwood Coach feller was jest a ordinary size feller, this feller heer is as big as a man on a mule, an the other sed wel mebbe he walked out of the croud on his hands an gnees, anyway this is him,

I woud noe that foolish fase anyplase in the Black Hills. An the other feller sed I am glad to noe that, ther is a big reward on this fellers hed fer robin the coach ded or alive, stik up yer hands you big ox you. And he pulled out a pistol at me Bug Eye an I sernly was mad, but I did not want to hert him so I held my teribil temper in.

The feller with the pistol sed I am glad I cot you, I need the muney. An the other feller sed O you do do you, wel dont ferget that I discuvered him an it is my reward, an the other feller sed you did like —— I new him as soon as we run over him, I only let on he was a hog so he woud not get suspishus, an the other feller sed dont try to be funny an mebbe I wil giv you part of the reward, you do not diserve it you cheetin bum, an the other feller sed 1 mor werd like that an I will jump rite down yer throte an the other feller sed taik a look at this nife first an the other feller sed touch that nife an I wil shoot you in 2 peeces, an the other sed try to shoot me an you are a ded man. An they begun shoutin an hollerin at eech other agen Bug Eye, an I walked off.

Wel Bug Eye I had alredy desided I was not goin to like Grand Eegil, so I startid to walk back to Dedwood on an empty stumick, I am a game feller Bg. Eye but I noe wen I am beet. An I had no mor than got to the edge of town wen heer cum a lot of fellers runin out of the sloon that was in frunt of the waggin shed an they all startid for me, an sum other fellers cum runnin out of the other saloons, an sum of them jumped on horses an mules an some lep on buk bords an wipped up ther teems, an everbudy tride to jump on sumbudys bukbord an the peepul on the bukbords tride to throw them off, an sum fites startid about horses an 1 thing an anuther Bug Eye, I dont noe wat all but they was all makin fer me, I sernly did notise that.

An it maid me mad Bg. Eye, but I held my temper in, an desided I woud not wip the entire town rite then an ther, not on a empty stumick at leest, an I desided to run down the rode a peece an find me a club an nock them down jest 2 or 3 at a time as they cum up. So I trun an run like a ¼ horse, an got me a leed of about a kwarter mile, an heer they cum.

Wel Bug Eye, you noe how I can run, I compleetly outrun the fellers on foot an on mules, bimeby ther was not anybudy after me but about 20 fellers on horseback, an pritty soon sum of the horses begun ganin on me, an I thout I was goin to have to turn around an teech them Grand Eegil fellers a lesson 1nst an fer all, a goke is a goke, but it can be carid too far. But all at 1nst I hit on a plan, an I trun off the rode an took to the brush, an soon lost all sines of persoot. An I looked myself over an found that all the bulets had missed, an ther was not anythin the matter with me excep 1 sore leg, the 1 that I am carrin the buk shot in.

Now I ask you Bug Eye, is that any way fer a town to treet a visitin sitizen. Grand Eegil is the onfriendliest town I ever see, an if I dont stan them all on ther eer nex time I go back ther my name is not Henry Clay Montgomery.

This country has got so a man can not go frum 1 plase to anuther in saifty without makin it his life werk, an if you an me is goin to go on trapin together Bug Eye you wil hav to go after the grub yerself nex time. I am sick an tird of bein imposed on by you or anybudy else Bg. Eye, an the mor I think about it the madder I get.

Yr. Obeedint Servant,

Hank.

Neer Peg Leg,
Summer, 1878.

DEER BUG EYE,

Hallyloogy Bug Eye, we are rich men, atchelly rich Bg. Eye, an now we can go back to Indianna an ride in carridges an ware hi hats an get sent to the legislacher, an this time ther is no mistake about it it is the reel thing.

The mor I thout about the driver an the gards on the Dedwood Coach robin ther own coach Bug Eye the suspishuser I got, an I sed to myself, those fellers was up to dishonest devilment of sum kind, ther must hav ben sumthin that was not

thers in that sachel, sumthin they was trine to steel.

So firmly I went back an looked fer that sachel, ware I thrun it after they had took my sachel by mistake. An it took me 3 days to find it Bug Eye, but you noe wen I start a thing I never giv up, so I found it an opened it with my nife, an wat do you spose Bug Eye, it was full of little sqware gold bricks about the size of my fist.

So that was wy the gards an driver robed ther own coach, I hav figgerd out they was carrin that gold fer sumbudy, an ment to steel it fer themselves. An now I hav found it an it is ours, an that is not steelin, finders keepers, huh Bug Eye, an anyway they hav not brot back my carpit bag with the deed an titil to our clame in Grand Eegil. I am glad they took it now, Halyloogy Bg. Eye, aint that wat you say.

I dont noe how much muney the gold is worth but I bet it is anyways a $1000000 dolars, an as soons I can get fed up agen I wil buy a coach an six horses an load it with spoon vittles an cum after you on Elk Mowntin. I noe ther isunt any rode to Elk Mowntin but I wil hire fellers to make 1, nothin is too good fer my pardner wen we have a $1000000 dolars.

I am settin restin on the gold sachel rite this minnit Bug Eye, an now I am going to Peg Leg to eet about 40ty meels an as soon as that is done I wil hire a feller to take this to you, an then buy the coach an foller. Heer I go Bug Eye.

Yr. Obeedint Servant,

Hank.

P S I dont noe wat this country is cumin to Bg. Eye, the porky pines is gettin smaler an smaler in size, and the 3 I cot today hardly made a desint meel for a ordinary size wolf.

Hidin in a hole I dug neer Peg Leg
Summer 1878.

DEER BUG EYE,

I am delaid Bug Eye, heer I am no plase with a peece of my eer shot off. I dont noe how soon I wil be abel to cum with the grub or if I ever wil or if I wil ever get out of this darn plase alive, all is mizery Bug Eye.

No sooner did I get into Peg Leg Bug Eye wen I run into a feller cumin out of a sloon an he was a littel short feller an wen he bumped into me he fell over like a bottel. And he took 1 look at me an jumped up an run back into the sloon yellin Bloody merder the jint that robed the Dedwood Coach is out in the street rasin hell, an as soon as I herd him yell that I new the beens was spilled.

Wel Bug Eye you noe how quick my brane werks, I see I was goin to hav to hav time to think, so I looked at the sloon doore an it was 3 inch oke, so I shut it an sat down agenst it to think. Nex minnit shore enuf Bug Eye all the fellers in the sloon flang therself agenst the doore beetin on it an woopin an yellin. Evry dang 1 of them an his brother had got the idee he woud rosh out in the street an capcher the feller that robed the coach an collect the reward, they thout I was the 1 Bug Eye.

Wel I sat thinkin with my back agenst the doore to hold it shut, an they was bangin on it an you coud feel the bulets chugin into it. An I was a sad man Bg. Eye an wundrin wat to do. In a minnit a littel short feller cum along with guns all over him an he showed me a littel tin star out of his pockit an he sed I am the marshal, wat goes on heer. An I sed I am jest sittin heer an he sed you better let them fellers out, an I sed noe an he sed I meen it do you want to get shot. So I riz up to my full hite Bug Eye, holdin the doore shut with 1 hand an he looked surprised at sumthin. Then I made a grab an got him by the neck an let the doore fly open an shoved him at the mob an yelled heer he is, an stepped around the corner of the bildin.

Wel Bug Eye I gess it was all strangers in the sloon, they didunt noe the marshal I gess, they grobe him an took his guns off an about 1 dozen fellers took him by the arms an legs an held him up over ther heds an carrid him off down the street to the jale.

I laffed fit to split Bug Eye, an stood ther wachin, an that was ware I made my

mistake. Becaus in about 1 minnit a lot mor fellers cum runin out of other sloons an the fellers that mobbed the marshal cum runin back, an a bulet took out a peece of 1 eer Bug Eye, I will never look the same agen.

Wel Bug Eye I took my sachel of gold under 1 arm an run throo the genl store and got 3 hams under the other arm an the storekeeper upped with the longest buflo gun I ever see, an I kiked it out of his hand an he fell over an nocked down a empty shuger barl. An you shoud of see him skuttle into that barl on hands an gnees, jest like a badger Bug Eye.

So I kiked the barl agenst the doore, an piled boxes an things on top of it to hold the doore shut, an shore enuf heer cum all the fellers in Peg Leg I gess, drunk or sober, woopin an hollerin an shootin, an it was a good thing fer me Bug Eye ther wasnt any windows, jest log walls.

Ther wasnt any back doore eether, so I had to clime up on a lot of stuff an butt a hole in the roof, an clime out that way carrin my gold sachel an my 3 hams. Ther wasnt anybudy in back of the store at all. I walked around in front and looked at the croud, an ther was about 300 fellers ther growlin an hollerin an yellin kill the big merderer, kill the stage robber, set the bildin afire an make him cum out.

So I went in the emty sloon across the street an no 1 was ther an I drunk a bottel of wisky. I coud of drunk 40ty bottels without no 1 notisin, but I noe wen to quit. If I did not noe enuf to take it or leeve it alone I woud of lerned by this time Bug Eye from wachin your mistakes.

An then I walked quitely out of town, an I dont noe wat becum of the storekeeper, or wether they burned him or not like they was amin to, an I dont giv a woop neether. Wat good is a $1000000 dollars Bug Eye if evry 1 keeps shootin at you an shootin off part of your eer. If they keep this up I will get hit with a bulet, littel do they care Bug Eye, sum peepul havunt any sense.

The mor I thout about them hapenins in Peg Leg Bug Eye the mader I got, an finly I got so mad that I dug a hole an cashyed the gold in it an went about 1 mile away an dug anuther hole an hid myself in it, an heer I am. An I hav desided never to go to Peg Leg agen, an it will serve them rite. Hardship has wore me down Bug Eye, I am not the saim man I was wen I wipped the entire town of Hen Crick, tho now that I hav eet 2 of the hams I feel a littel better but not much.

Yr. Obeedint Servant

Hank.

P S Wat kind of a man are you anyway Bug Eye, if you were any kind of man at all you woud not stay ther starvin on Elk Mowntin by this time you woud be lookin round heer to see wat had hapened to yore pore pardner, an help him out of his trubbels. I spose I shoud be used to your ignornt ways by this time Bug Eye, I hav noen you fer yeers, an never yet did I see you in the rite plase wen needed.

Neer Peg Leg, Summer 1878.

DEER BUG EYE,

Things is lookin up Bug Eye, I will say this fer these Black Hills, a feller can make muney heer faster than anyplase I ever see. A $1000000 dollars in 1 day, I gess that is pritty good Bug Eye fer a feller jest startin out. An I gess you are pritty lucky Bg. Eye to hav a pardner that wenever he goes out after grub he cums back with a $1000000 dolars. It is too bad evry 1 aint got a pardner like you got, but I feer it is impossibul.

I now hav a plan Bug Eye that wil fool evry budy in the Black Hills, an pervent them shootin me on site like they ben doin. I am goin to asoom a disguise Bug Eye.

Nex time you see me Bug Eye I will not be no feller with short black wiskers seven foot tall in a coon skin cap. I wil be a littel short feller with long red wiskers an specktickles an a hi plug hat. You wil say how is Hank goin to make hisself look like that. Wel Bg. Eye I am goin to find me a red horse an stawk him an been him with a rok, like I did our Louise mule that time I got mad. An I wil make

wiskers out of his tale. An I wil make me a pare big floppy pants out of a blankit, so I can walk with my gnees bent an be a littel short feller without no 1 notisin the diffrunts. I gess I will hav to steel the plug hat, I don't think I can make 1 that will look rite.

I am telin you this so you wil noe me wen you see me, no 1 else is in on the secrut.

Now I have got to find me a red horse, heer I go Bug Eye.

Yr. Obeedint servint

Hank

Neer Peg Leg, Saim day.

DEER BUG EYE,

I hav changed my mind Bug Eye I am not goin to be no littel short feller in a plug hat I am goin to be a injun skwaw.

I coud not find any red-tale horse but wile I was lookin fer 1 a bulet wizzed passed my eer, I shore am glad 1 went passed fer a change, an I made a run an dove in sum bushes an cot me a Injun. I did not hav any trubbel cetchin him Bug Eye his foot was broke an he cold not get his gun loded agen in time to plug me.

Wel Bug Eye he was a mad Injun but wen I had choked him a wile he was reddy to act almost as reesable as a human bein. So I begun talkin to him in Choctaw but he was ony a ignornt Soo an pertended he dident understand anythin, so I choked him sum mor an then he agreed to everthin I sed. Rite then I got a idee, an I made him trade cloes with me an giv me his gun. Ony I kept my shert an hat, he dident hav any.

So now I am a Injun Bug Eye, I got mockasins that fit pritty good an sum of them 2 peece buk skin britches 1 peece fer eech leg, an a blankit dirty enuf to proove that I am the reel thing not a fake.

Ony the britches legs woud not reech but a little way above my gnees, I shoud of cot me a bigger Injun Bug Eye, so I hav desided I wil hav to use the blankit fer a skert an be a skwaw insted of a buk. It is a good thing I did not let you cut my hare Bug Eye, it is now jest about long enuf to brade.

Ony 1 thing kind of spoils my Injun skwaw get-up Bug Eye an that is my black wiskers, I hav not had time to shave sinse I left Elk Mowntin to go after grub, an my wiskers is neerly 1 foot long. Whoo ever herd of a Injun skwaw with long black wiskers Bug Eye. I feer I will have to shave with my skinin nife, gosh how I dred it.

Ther is meny advantiges to the Injun disgise Bug Eye, 1 of them is that if I want to pass off any of that gold I wil hav no trubbel. No 1 ever worries about ware did a Injun get his gold, did he rob a stage or wat. All they are thinkin about is how are they goin to get it away frum him.

Yr. Obeedint servunt

Hank

Neer Peg Leg, July 1878

DEER BUG EYE,

I hav got myself into a very pecoolar posishun Bg. Eye, I am now a play acter in a show, an I wil hav to admit Bug Eye that I am very scary an suspishus about wat wil the upshot be. You wil say Hank a play acter wat the —— heer, how did it all cum about.

Wel Bug Eye I finly got my nerve up to shave with my skinin nife so I woud look mor like a Injun skwaw than I coud make out to do with wiskers on. An I had sum kind of nut hulls I found that is sumthin like Indianna walnuts an made a pritty good stain, an it stang like everthin in the seventeen or eiyteen plases ware I cut my fase an got in my eye, but made me look Injun shore nuff wen I got it all on. An I braded my hare an rubbed ham rind on it to look like bare greese. It took me pritty neer 3 hours to get fixed up usin a crick fer a lookin glass an wen I was done I sware Bug Eye I did not noe how I was going to keep the Injun buks off, I looked so plum reelistic.

Wen I finly looked up ther was a slick lookin feller standin across the crick with a plug hat an a fancy vest an a long tale cote an muddy britches an a shot gun on his arm. He sed Good mornin an I sed howdy. An he sed I hav ben watchin

you all mornin an you are jest the man I am lookin fer. I made a grab fer my gun that I got from the Injun an sed you wil never take me alive an I started to shoot him. But he thrun up his hands an sed wate you hav misunderstanded me.

I made him leeve his shot gun an wade the crick, an then he set down an we had a long talk.

He sed I run a medisin show, an I sed wat is that. He sed well we go to a town an we put on a show with all kinds of stunts. Frinsance he says. An with that Bug Eye he pulls a american flag out of my shert pockit that I wil sware it was not in ther wen I got up this mornin, an he takes a china hens egg out of my good eer, an takes my hat off an pores about a pint of water out of it an hands it back about ½ full of boiled rice.

I never see the like Bug Eye, fer a minnit I did not noe wether I better shoot him or lite out an make a run fer it. I was a serprised man Bug Eye, but I soon overcum it, an I says you can not fool me, them is nothin but tricks. An he sed you are a smart man, you hav gessed it.

Well I sed wat then. After we hav drew a crowd he sed we sell medisin. He pulled a bottel out of his pockit, heer is sum of the medisin he sed, it is good fer man or beest. An he ripped off a long string of things it was good fer, I lost track of them all, but they took in all the 10 or 15 diseeses you think you are suffrin frum Bug Eye, an you woud of got sum new idees fer ailments you could hav Bug Eye if you coud of herd him. You woud go crazy about this medisin Bug Eye.

Ware do I cum in I sed. He sed well this is a Injun medisin, Kickapoo Injun. He sed the feller that has ben actin Injun fer us wen we was in the eest did not cum west with us, an we need a new feller to act like a Injun fer us. I sed wy not get a reel Injun ther is sernly enuf of them round heer, too darn meny to soot me. An he sed we hav tride that but peepul do not like it, I gess they woud rather be fooled.

I sed I never herd of a deel like that in the Black Hills I do not think it wil werk heer, Peepul noe too danged much about Injuns. An he sed a good skin game will werk anyware in the werld, an I hav found he sed the very peepul that should noe better is always the worst suckers of them all.

Wel I do not think it wil werk heer, I sed it has never ben tride. An he sed all the mor reeson it wil werk, they hav never see it befor. It takes nerve he sed but the mor nerve a sckeem takes the mor muney it always makes. An if it ain't nervy to bring a Injun medisin show into Injun country frum the eest, then I do not noe wat is, he sed. We wil show you how to play-act he sed an wen we hav stuck sum fethers in your hare you wil look grate. An wat is mor we wil give you 3 skware meels a day.

I started to argy with him Bug Eye but he sed I am a eddicated man, jest leeve me do the thinkin an we wil get along grate an nobudy wil noe the diffrunts. Wel Bug Eye it is a releef to hav sumbudy but me do sum thinkin fer a change, I hav ben with you fer 3 yeers an I am tired of thinkin fer 2.

An the 3 meels a day finly desided me Bug Eye agenst my better jugment, an I sed I woud try it 1nst. So now your pore pardner is takin a awful chance an hopin fer the best.

I am sorry I am delaid Bug Eye, but wen you reelize I am now play-actin a Injun in a medisin show in the worst Injun country you will reelize I am lible to be still ferther delaid any minnit. I never herd of the like Bug Eye, but I sernly hope it will be all rite like this feller says. Persnly I think I hav a grate chanse to get shot.

Yr. Obeedint servunt,

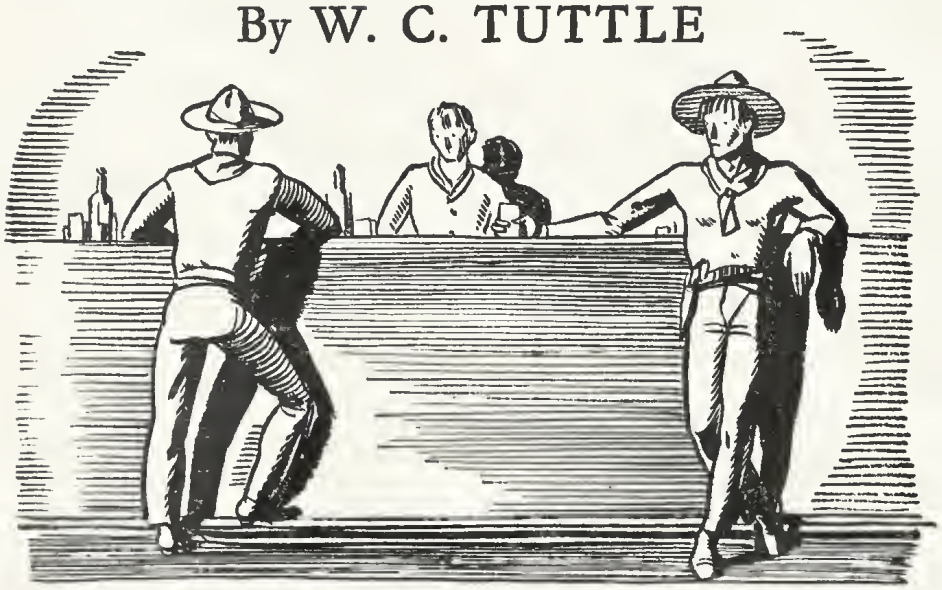
Hank.

P S I wil giv this to sumbudy ridin tord Elk Mowntin, an I wil rite you the noos about how this darn thing cums out jest as soon as I noe the worst.

P S S If anythin hapens to me Bug Eye pleese send my ½ of the $1000000 dolars back home. I sernly hav a unlucky feelin Bug Eye, I dont noe wy.

Thicker Than Water

By W. C. TUTTLE



THE TWO men faced each other across the little table in the living-room of the Circle Spade ranch-house, in the light of a single oil lamp.

Jack McCoy, known as "Angel", was rather tall, well muscled, with features as clean-cut as a cameo. His skin was almost as white as milk, his hair as black as jet, and he wore it long in front of his ears—a swinging curl of inky-black against his white cheek. His eyes were brown, shaded by sharp-cut brows. There was no denying the fact that he was handsome.

Just now he wore a white silk shirt, with a red handkerchief knotted around his throat, black trousers tucked into the tops of a pair of fancy high-heeled boots—and about him was an odor of perfume.

Rance McCoy, his father, and owner of the Circle Spade ranch, had nothing in common with his son. He was about fifty years of age, grizzled, hard-faced, with a skin the color of jerked venison. His eyes were gray, and there were scars on his face which showed lighter than the rest of his skin; scars of many battles. Rance McCoy had been a fighter in his time. There were other scars which did not show, where hot lead had scored him time and again.

He was tough, was Rance McCoy; an old gun-man, afraid of nothing—not even of his handsome son.

"Well, all I can say is that you've got some —— queer ideas," said Angel slowly.

"Mebbe I have," said the old man.

"No maybe about it," said Angel sneeringly. "Lila is of age and I'm of age. If I want to marry her, it's none of yore business."

"You think not? Well, everybody is entitled to an opinion. I've told yuh about me, Angel."

"Yeah, and I don't think much of yuh."

Angel got to his feet and stood there, looking down at his father.

"I knew all along that Lila wasn't my sister," he said slowly.

The old man lifted a hand to fend the

Starting a Serial of Hashknife and Sleepy

light from his eyes, as he looked up at his son.

"Billy DuMond told yuh, Angel?"

"Ten years ago. He said you killed her father and then adopted her."

"That drunken thief!" muttered the old man.

"Who—Lila's father?"

"No, Billy DuMond."

"I don't know anythin' about that part of it," said Angel. "He merely told me that she wasn't my sister. You don't deny that, do yuh?"

"No, I don't deny it."

Angel slowly rolled a cigaret, watching the old man's face.

"Maybe you think I'm not good enough for her, eh? Was that why you were willin' to give me my share of the cattle and let me buy out the Eagle? Wanted to get rid of me, eh?"

Angel laughed harshly and lighted his cigaret over the top of the lamp-chimney.

"There wasn't any question of gettin' rid of yuh," said Rance McCoy slowly. "It was yore own proposition. You wanted to run a saloon and be a gambler, so I gave you yore share of the cattle. I sent Lila away to school. It cost me a lot of money to educate her, Angel."

"I don't doubt that."

Angel exhaled a cloud of smoke through his shapely nostrils.

"But as far as you marryin' Lila—you'll not," declared Rance McCoy flatly. "I raised the two of yuh together, and I know all about both of yuh. I've heard that yo're a crooked dealer, Angel. Men don't hint things like that unless there's some truth in it. Crooked at cards, crooked at everythin'!"

Angel McCoy jerked forward, his dark eyes glittering in the yellow light.

"Crooked, am I?" he laughed harshly. "No man dares say it to my face. They come and whine to you, do they? And you believe things like this of yore own son! That's why you won't let me marry Lila, eh? All right. I'll tell Lila that she ain't yore daughter. I'll tell her you killed her father. I'll tell—"

"If you do," Rance McCoy's old face twisted and he leaned forward, shoving his right shoulder against the table, "if you do, Angel—I'll kill you. A long time ago you ceased to be my son. Oh, you'll get an even break. I never killed any man without givin' him an even break."

"Even break!" exclaimed Angel. "What man ever had an even break with

you? I've seen yuh draw and shoot, Old Man."

The old man laughed mirthlessly. Few men could draw and shoot with Rance McCoy.

"You always did lose yore nerve in a showdown," he said.

"I never lost my nerve," growled Angel. "But this ain't a shootin' proposition."

The old man studied him for a space of several minutes.

"Angel," he said slowly, "what does Lila know about this? She wouldn't marry her own brother. What have yuh told her?"

Angel smiled crookedly and rested his elbows on the table.

"Well, if you've got to know—she knows."

"She knows?"

"I told her tonight."

"You told her tonight?"

"That you ain't her father, yes. No, I never asked her to marry me—not yet. But by ——, I'm goin' to ask her!"

The old man got slowly to his feet, disclosing the fact that he wore a holstered gun. Angel also wore one, and the mother-of-pearl handle flashed in the yellow light. With a twitch of his left hand the old man jerked out a drawer from the table and produced an old deck of playing-cards.

He dropped them on the table and looked sharply at Angel, who was watching him curiously.

"Shuffle 'em," ordered the old man.

"What's the idea?"

"I'm givin' yuh an even break, Angel. Yo're a gambler, and I'm givin' yuh a gambler's chance. Shuffle the cards and let me cut 'em. You can do the dealin'. The one who gets the ace of spades—shoots first."

"You mean—" Angel hesitated.

"You know what I mean, you yaller pup!"

Angel flushed quickly and reached for the cards. His long fingers riffled the cards with mechanical precision. Time after time he split the deck, until it seemed as if he were trying to wear out the cards. The old man's keen eyes watched those hands, and there was a half-smile on his lips.

"That's enough," he said drawlingly. "Let me cut."

It seemed to Angel that the old man studied the deck rather carefully before he made the cut.

"The one who gets the ace of spades shoots first, eh?" said Angel, and it seemed as if his voice trembled.

The old man nodded.

"Go ahead and deal."

Angel hesitated.

"This is foolishness, Old Man. If I shoot you, they'll hang me for murder. Lila's upstairs."

"She don't know you're here."

"But the shot would wake her up."

"How long do yuh think it'll take yuh to get away? You talk as though yuh already had the ace of spades. I'll take my chances. Go ahead and deal."

Angel shuddered slightly. It was all so ridiculous, this idea of dealing for the first shot. But the old man did not seem to mind. There was not a tremor in the gnarled hand that rested on the old table-top.

"Go ahead and deal, you coward," he said coldly.

With a flick of his fingers the gambler threw the first two cards—ace of hearts, six of clubs. There were fifty more cards in the deck.

King, jack. It was the king of spades.

"Hittin' close," said the old man.

Angel licked his lips and dealt the next two slowly—ten, deuce.

"How far for the first shot?" he asked hoarsely.

"Width of the room. Can't miss. Deal."

Queen, deuce.

"Runnin' small on yore side," observed the old man.

Angel licked his lips again and his right hand trembled, as he dealt himself a trey to Rance's second king.

"Why don'tcha git it over with Angel?" taunted the old man. "Losin' yore nerve?"

But Angel did not reply. His eyes were staring at the cards as they fell. The deck was getting thin now. Not over a dozen cards left. It was difficult for him to swallow.

The oil was low in the lamp and it had began to smoke a little.

Six cards left. Ace of diamonds, seven of hearts. Only four left. His hands felt heavy as lead. He wanted to say something, but his mouth was too dry. With a super-effort he managed to deal the next two cards—two deuces.

There were only two cards left in his hand; two old dog-eared cards that held his fate. He stared down at them as if fascinated. He looked across the table at the face of his father, who was laughing at him. Slowly his right hand went to his lips—a hand that trembled a tattoo against his mouth—and with a strangled word he dropped the two cards on the floor, turned on his heel and stumbled to the door. He flung the door open, and a moment later came the staccato drumming of his horse's hoofs, as he rode swiftly away from the ranch.

The old man still stood beside the table, a half-smile on his lips as he looked down at the cards. Then he stepped around the table and picked up those last two cards—a six of hearts and the joker. Then he swept up all the cards and opened the table drawer. Looking up at him from the bottom of the drawer was the ace of spades. It had been left there when the deck was taken out.

"Busted his nerve," whispered the old man. "Lucky thing that old joker was bent enough to lift up the deck and give me a chance to cut it on the bottom. Still, I didn't think he had nerve enough to deal fifty of 'em—I wouldn't have had, that's a cinch."

ANGEL McCOY rode back to Red Arrow, his mind filled with mixed emotions. Although it hurt him deeply, he was obliged to admit to himself that his father had out-gamed him. He tried to explain to his conscience that the whole thing had been a colossal piece of melodrama, that he feared to get the ace of spades. He was a good shot. There was little doubt in his mind that his first shot would settle the whole argument, and he would have been branded a murderer.

There had never been any love lost between himself and his father. Their natures had always clashed. But Angel, even with his cold-blooded nature, did not want to be branded a parricide.

The whole thing seemed so ridiculous now. Lila had been away to school for five years, and had returned a beautiful young lady, one to turn the head of any man in the country. She was not his sister, and he could conceive of no reason why he should not marry her—if she was willing. She knew now that Rance McCoy was not her father and, since she was of age, could do as she pleased.

Angel rode up to his own stable, at the rear of the Eagle saloon and gambling house, put up his horse and entered the saloon by a rear door. The Eagle was rather a large place for a Western town. It consisted of an oblong room about sixty feet long by thirty feet wide, on the right-hand side of which was a long bar, and in the center and on the left-hand side were sundry tables and gambling paraphernalia.

At the rear of the saloon were two private rooms, one of which was used as sleeping quarters by Angel. During the week there was little play at the Eagle, but on Saturday and Sunday, when the Red Arrow cowboys came to town, there was plenty of business.

The first man Angel McCoy met as he came into the place was Billy DuMond, a man about the age of Rance McCoy, slouchy, unshaven, partly drunk. He was employed as a cowboy with the Half-Box R outfit, owned by "Butch" Reimer. Angel had known DuMond for years.

"Hyah, Angel," DuMond greeted him owlishly.

"Hello, Billy. I was kinda hopin' I'd see yuh."

Angel drew DuMond aside and lowered his voice.

"I just had a run-in with the Old Man, Billy. He knows you told me about Lila, so you better steer clear of him."

DuMond wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and swallowed dryly.

"Lemme git yuh straight, Angel. Yuh told him I said it?"

"Yeah, that he killed Lila's father and then adopted her. You told me about it ten years ago, yuh remember?"

"Uh-huh. Well," DuMond cuffed his shapeless hat over one ear and stared at Angel. "Well, what did yuh drag me into it fer? I don't want no trouble."

"A man don't get into trouble by tellin' the truth."

"The —— they don't! I knowed a horse-thief that told the truth—and they hung him. And you told old Rance McCoy that I said—I—Angel, I'm shore sorry yuh told it."

"You scared of him, Billy?"

"Well, by ——!" snorted DuMond, cuffing his hat to the opposite side of his head. "Any old time I git m' spark of life blowed out, who's goin' to light her agin'. Don't you re'lize that yore Old Man is danger's? He'll shoot."

Angel laughed shortly.

"I reckon yo're right, Billy. I'm sorry."

"Sorrow won't help me none."

"Did you know Lila's father?"

"No! By ——, I don't know nothin'! I don't even 'member tellin' yuh anythin'. Ten years ago! Must 'a' been drunk. Who's this here Lila yo're talkin' about, Angel?"

"Oh, go to ——!" snorted Angel, and went on toward the bar, where he met Butch Reimer and Dell Blackwell, one of Reimer's cowboys. Butch Reimer was of medium height, with wide shoulders and a face that might well have belonged to a prizefighter of the old bare-knuckle school. Several years previous to this time Butch had been kicked square in the face by a sharp-shod horse. There were no plastic surgeons at that time, so Butch's face had merely healed up, leaving a crooked nose, twisted mouth and a misplaced eyebrow, not to mention numerous indentations never intended by nature, even in her most uncritical mood.

Dell Blackwell was a lithe, olive-complexioned, black-haired cowboy; an inveterate gambler, and reputed a bad man to start trouble with.

"I just got nicked for a hundred in yore —— carté game," growled Butch. "Drew a four and a five, but the —— dealer turned a natural!"

"Butch had a system," smiled Blackwell. "Always won his first bet, yuh know, so he slapped down a hundred as a first bet. What's new, Angel?"

"Not a —— thing, Dell."

"Have a drink," growled Butch. "I hear Lila's home."

"Yeah," said Angel shortly.

"Growed up much?"

"Sure."

"——, yo're sure talkative. Where yuh been—out to see the Old Man?"

Angel nodded moodily.

"I thought so," grinned Butch as he filled his glass. He knew that Angel and his father usually quarreled.

"What made yuh think that?" demanded Angel.

"Jist from yore actions. Oh, I don't blame yuh. He jist the same as told me to keep to —— off his place last week. And I'm goin' to stay off, too. Ask Dell why."

"Cinch," laughed Dell. "I dropped in there a couple weeks ago and found the Old Man practisin'. I tell yuh, he was shootin' pepper cans off the corral fence at sixty feet. Stuck up six in a row, about two feet apart, and hit every danged one of 'em. You jist try hittin' three-inch squares every time at sixty feet with a .45"

"I can jist hit my hat at that distance," grinned Butch, "and I wear the widest thing Stetson makes."

"And you jist shoot good enough to win my money," said Blackwell, laughing.

"Somebody will kill him one of these days," said Angel.

"Yeah—send him a bomb by express. Let's have another."

MORNING at the Circle Spade still found Rance McCoy humped in his chair beside the table in the old living-room. The lamp had burned dry long since, and the chimney was soot-streaked. "Chuckwalla Ike" Hazen, the old cook, was in the kitchen, wrestling with the cooking utensils. Chuckwalla Ike was a weather-beaten old desert cook, crooked in the legs from riding bad horses in his youth, with his left elbow slightly out of line from stopping a bullet.

Chuckwalla wore a long, sad looking mustache, and his head was as bald as a baseball. His nose was generous, and one cheek was habitually pouched with tobacco. He was clad in a sleeveless undershirt, overalls and moccasins, as he peered into the living-room at Rance McCoy.

"Up kinda early, ain't yuh, Rance?" he drawled. "I was—uh—by ——, I reckon I better put me on a shirt. Plumb forgot we've got a lady among us. Say, whatsa matter with yuh? Look like —— this mornin'."

"I'm all right," said Rance huskily.

"Which yuh ain't a-tall. Yuh can't fool Chuckwalla. What time does the Queen of Sheber come among us f'r nourishment?"

"I dunno," wearily.

"Well, I s'pose not."

Chuckwalla scratched his shoulder against a corner of the doorway.

"By ——, she shore growed up purty, didn't she, Rance? Five year ago she was a tow-headed kid with long legs and freckles, and she used to yell at me, 'Chuckwalla Ike, go set on a spike,' and now she pokes out her hand and says, 'Mr. Hazen, how do yuh do?' There's only one thing that improves with age, and that's liquor."

"They grow up," said Rance slowly.

"Don't they? Well, I s'pose I'd better scare up a flock of biscuits; she allus liked 'em. Mebbe I better put on a shirt. She might not like a cook in dishabelle, as they say. And my lingeree is kinda mournful, too. And yuh might tell Monty Adams and Steve Winchell to cut out their profane greetin's to me this mornin'. As far as the human voice is concerned, this ranch-house leaks like a sieve."

Rance McCoy turned his head and looked curiously at old Chuckwalla.

"You heard what was said last night?"

"That don't bother me," said Chuckwalla quickly. "But I shore as —— was curious to know who got that black ace and quit on the job."

"I got it," said Rance softly, glancing toward the stairs.

"Uh-huh," Chuckwalla opened his mouth widely, blinked his eyes and backed toward the stove, where he turned and began shaking up the fire. Rance walked out to the front porch, and the old cook looked after him, a quizzical expression in his eyes.

"Rance," he said to himself, "yo're addin' lies to the rest of yore sins."

Rance McCoy sat down on the steps of the old ranch-house, which had been his home for eighteen years. There were a few stunted rose-bushes in the yard. Near the corner of the house grew a gnarled cottonwood tree. The barb-wire fence sagged badly in spots and the weeds grew unmolested. To his left was the long, low stable and beyond it was the series of pole-corrals. On the hill beyond the stable a bunch of cattle were stringing away from the ranch water-hole in the willows. Several miles away to the south he could see a streamer of black smoke from a train heading toward Red Arrow, northwest of the ranch.

The Circle Spade had never been a big cattle outfit. Only two cowboys were employed by Rance McCoy.

He had never been well liked in the Red Arrow country. Gun-men are usually respected, but rarely liked. They let old Rance alone when he came to town and got drunk, which he did at rare intervals; but never "blind" drunk.

He could hear Monty Adams and Steve Winchell, the two cowboys, noisily washing their faces at the old wash-bench near the kitchen door and joking with Chuckwalla Ike. Came a step on the

porch, and he turned to see Lila. She was a tall, slender girl, her shapely head piled high with a wealth of golden-blond hair.

Her eyes were slightly red, as if she had been crying. She leaned against the side of the doorway and looked at the man she had always believed to be her father.

"How didja sleep, Lila?" he asked.

She shook her head slowly.

"Not very well."

"Uh-huh."

His shoulders hunched beneath his coarse blue shirt and he turned his gaze away from her.

"Well, go ahead," he said slowly. "No use sparrin' around. Angel told yuh a lot of things last night, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, what do yuh think about it?"

"Oh, I don't know what to think. He said you killed my father."

Old Rance lifted his head and stared across the hills, his left hand caressing his stubbled chin.

"Yeah, he told me the same thing, Lila."

"I heard what was said."

"Didja? What did yuh hear?"

"You—you forced him to deal those cards."

Rance laughed harshly.

"Busted his nerve, didn't I?"

"Did you? Do you suppose he would have shot you if he had drawn the card?"

"I hope so; I hate a quitter."

"But you are his father!"

"It never meant much to Angel."

"Would you have shot him?"

"If I had drawn that ace of spades—sure."

She did not know that the ace of spades had been left in the drawer.

"Where is my father buried?" asked Lila softly.

Rance McCoy shook his head.

"I can't tell yuh, Lila."

"Does Billy DuMond know?"

"He don't know anythin' about it, except what he heard."

Chuckwalla Ike came to the doorway and called—

"You folks ready to eat?"

"Better go in and eat, Lila," said Rance.

But Lila shook her head; and after a sharp glance at Rance McCoy, Chuckwalla went back to the kitchen, complaining to himself.

"Where is my mother?" asked Lila.

"Yore mother?" Rance frowned heavily. "Oh, yeah—yore mother. Well, I dunno, Lila."

"Didn't my father tell you?"

"No-o-o, he didn't say."

"But you killed him."

Rance McCoy hunched his shoulders helplessly.

"Let's me and you not talk about it, Lila. It's all gone and forgotten now. You've been my little girl ever since yuh wasn't knee high to a nail; yo're still my little girl."

The old man's voice was not very steady and he did not look at her.

"It's not forgotten," said Lila bitterly. "Why didn't you tell me a long time ago? I haven't any right to—I'm not your daughter. You haven't any adoption papers, have you?"

Rance shook his head sadly.

"Wasn't anything like that, Lila. I didn't never want yuh to know. I wish I'd killed Billy DuMond before he ever told Angel. The drunken bum ain't hardly fit to hang on the hot end of a bullet. Angel wants to marry yuh, Lila. Mebbe yuh heard him say it last night. But don't do it."

"That has nothing to do with the case," said Lila evenly. "You know I can't stay here any longer."

Old Rance turned and looked keenly at her.

"You—uh—you can't stay here?" he faltered.

"Don't you see how it is?" helplessly. "I don't belong here. I—I'll try and pay you back for what I've cost you. I don't know how it can be done, but I'll try. You've been good to me."

Lila turned abruptly on her heel and went back into the house. The old man sank a little lower on the step when he heard her tell Chuckwalla she did not

want any breakfast. She was talking to the two cowboys, but Rance could not hear what was said.

A few minutes later Monty Adams came out to him. He was industriously picking his teeth and trying to appear at ease. Monty was tow-headed, rather flat-faced, and of medium height.

"Lila asked me to hitch up the buckboard and take her to town," said Monty. "Is it all right, Rance?"

"Sure."

Rance cleared his throat noisily, but did not look around. When Monty went back into the house Rance got up and walked down to the stable. He sat down on an overturned box and looked gloomily at the ranch-house. He watched Monty and Steve hitch up to the old buckboard, and saw Chuckwalla carry Lila's trunk out to the ranch-house porch.

There was no good-by spoken. Lila came down and Steve helped her into the vehicle. She shook hands with Chuckwalla and drove away with Monty. Steve sauntered down to the bunkhouse, followed by a collie pup that carried a piece of board in its mouth.

Chuckwalla sat down on the porch and rolled a cigaret. He looked up quizzically as Rance came up to the porch, but the owner of the Circle Spade said nothing. For possibly five minutes they sat there together, saying nothing. Chuckwalla was the first to break the silence.

"Wimmin," he said solemnly, "do beat ——."

"Men, too," said Rance sadly.

"Yeah, that's right, Rance, they shore do. If I was you, I'd slap Billy DuMond to a peak and then kick the peak off."

Rance McCoy smiled bitterly.

"What would yuh gain by that, Chuckwalla?"

"I dunno. Mebbe he ain't worth the effort, Rance. Oh, you can set there and pull yore old poker-face, Rance McCoy. But I know yuh. I know how yuh feel toward Lila. It's jist like takin' pincers and pullin' out yore finger-nails. I may not have a —— of a lot of brains, but I ain't dumb.

"She ain't showin' any sense, I tell yuh. My ——, you've done everythin' for her. What if yuh ain't her daddy? Yuh shore been good to her, old-timer. Even if yuh did kill her real father. I don't know a —— thing about it, and I don't want to. I've been with yuh goin' on to eight year, Rance, and her own dad couldn't 'a' been better to her. It's that —— school she's been to. They done give her top-heavy ideas, that's what."

"I know," said Rance softly. "But don't blame her too much. It was a shock to her, Chuckwalla."

"To know you killed her dad? Shucks, what's that? She didn't know him no better than I knowed Gineral Custer—and I don't hold no grudge agin' the Injuns. That's why I allus say that women do beat ——. There ain't never been no women in my life, Rance. And I was a likely critter in m' youth. Lotsa girls looked sideways at me."

"And now yo're jist a cow-outfit cook," said Rance seriously.

"Yea-a-ah—and what are you? Owner of the outfit, eatin' yore —— tough old heart out over a girl that don't deserve it; father of a son that ort to be kicked in the pants and showed the error of his ways. You ain't got no edge on me, Rance. I tell yuh what I would like to do. How much money have I got comin'?"

"About eighty dollars, Chuckwalla."

"Plenty. I've got a notion to go to Red Arrer and git so drunk that all m' previous libations would look like the mornin' meal of a day-old calf. I ain't been drunk since they quit callin' the Platte River Nee-brath-kah. That's what's makin' us old, Rance. By ——, pretty soon me and you will be so —— old we'll be preachin' temp'rance."

Old Rance shook his head sadly.

"I'd be scared to, Chuckwalla. If I got six drinks under my hide, I'd kill somebody."

"Well, don't be so —— finicky about it. Come on in and throw some ham and aigs into yuh. Yessir, I b'lieve it's time that me and you blowed off steam.

Eighty dollars, eh? Sounds like joy-bells to me. Jist forget that little lady with the queer ideas. If she marries that jug-headed son of yours, she'll still be in the fambly."

MONTY ADAMS took Lila to Red Arrow and she got a room at the Valley hotel. She had little to say to Monty on the way to town except that she would probably stay in Red Arrow until she heard from some friends in the East. Angel saw them drive up to the hotel, and lost no time in joining them. When he saw Lila's baggage he knew she had left the Circle Spade, and was secretly glad. Monty drove the team over to the Eagle saloon, leaving Lila and Angel together.

"I left the ranch," she said simply.

"That's what I thought, Lila. Well, I suppose it was the best thing to do. What are yore plans?"

"I haven't any, Angel. I just think in circles. But first of all I want to have a talk with Billy DuMond."

"I'm afraid yuh won't," smiled Angel. "Bill is scared of his life. I told him the Old Man knew what he told me. He's scared of Rance McCoy—and I don't blame him."

"Not after what happened last night," said Lila.

Angel's face flushed hotly.

"You heard that, Lila?"

"I did."

"I'm sorry about that. But it doesn't matter, I suppose. I lost my nerve, Lila. It was one of the most cold-blooded games I ever heard about. But that was like him. The man has no conscience, no nerves at all. He's a born killer. Friendship means nothin' to him."

"I wonder if it does," sighed Lila.

"Not a thing in the world. He don't know the meanin' of the word 'friendship.' Oh, I don't care if he is my father. I'm old enough to know things. He's been good to me, in his own queer way. But we never agreed. Last night was the climax. If he had drawn that ace of spades he'd have killed me."

"I think he would," said Lila. "Anyway, he said he would."

"And been glad of the chance," growled Angel. "Well, I'm all through with him. I'll get somebody to help put yore trunk into the hotel, Lila. You just stay here until yuh make up yore mind what yuh want to do, and don't worry about the money end of it. The owner of this hotel owes me a fat gamblin' bill, and this will be a good way to collect it."

IN SPITE of the fact that the town of Red Arrow was on a transcontinental railroad, and with the advantages of being a county seat, it had never grown beyond its original cow-town stage. Perhaps it was because no one was interested in Red Arrow except those who lived there before the railroad came through the valley. It was not a division point, and many of the trains only stopped on flag.

Red Arrow Valley was about ten miles wide at this point, with the Little Smoky Range on the west, and the old lava beds on the east. The valley ran southeast, and the Red Arrow River ambled its way down through the valley with many a twist and turn.

The nearest town to Red Arrow was Welcome, fifteen miles to the southeast. Between Red Arrow and Welcome was the Curlew Spur, where loading pens had long been installed for the convenience of the cattlemen south of Red Arrow.

The Circle Spade ranch was about six miles slightly south of east from Red Arrow. Directly south, and about the same distance from town, was Butch Reimer's Half-Box R. Northeast, five miles from town, was the JML outfit, owned by Jim Langley, and about three miles north of town, on Coyote Creek, was the 77 horse outfit owned by Henry Cave.

Red Arrow town had a business district which was really only about one block in length. The buildings were all of weatherbeaten frame structure, sans paint. The valley hotel and the court-house were two-story buildings, but the biggest

structure was the livery stable. The streets were of three varieties—dust, snow or mud, according to the season.

The long arm of the law was represented by "Slim" Caldwell, sheriff, and two deputies, "Chuck" Ring and "Scotty" McKay.

Prior to becoming a citizen of Red Arrow and getting himself elected sheriff of the county, Caldwell had been a Texas Ranger. He was a tall, colorless individual, inclined to do considerable resting.

Scotty McKay almost became a member of the famous Royal Northwest Mounted Police. The only thing that kept him out was the fact that he wasn't able to qualify. Scotty was a bow-legged little Scot, with a tilted nose, a bushy head of sandy hair and an exalted opinion of Scotty McKay.

Chuck Ring was a huge figure of a man, with a voice like a bull's, a huge mop of black hair and a manner as gentle as that of a playful grizzly. Chuck was prone to gross exaggerations. A single rattlesnake, according to Chuck, became a "million of the darned things". At times his imagination soared to such heights that he even astonished Caldwell, who was no second-rate liar himself.

It was nearing the middle of the afternoon when Rance McCoy and Chuckwalla Ike came to Red Arrow. They tied their horses at the Eagle hitchrack and went across the street to the Cattlemen's bank. There Rance McCoy drew enough money to cause the cashier not a little wonder.

"Yo're pullin' out quite a hunk, ain'tcha?" queried Chuckwalla, rather amazed at Rance.

"Why not?" asked Rance gloomily. "It ain't worth nothin' to me—now."

Chuckwalla understood. Old Rance had saved for Lila. He had given Angel his share of the Circle Spade; so now there was no inducement left for him to make or save money. He gave Chuckwalla eighty dollars, and they went back to the street, where they stood on the edge of the wooden sidewalk and studied the situation.

"Whatcha want to do?" asked Rance.

"Git drunk," said Chuckwalla. "O-o-o-oh, there is a land of co-o-o-orn and wi-i-i-ine, and all its riches truly mi-i-i-ine."

"Don't sing."

"I forgot, Rance."

They stepped off the sidewalk and went diagonally across the street and up to the Red Arrow saloon. Rance had never been in the Eagle saloon since Angel had bought it.

Butch Reimer was at the bar talking with the bartender when Rance and Chuckwalla came in. Butch had been drinking quite heavily, and his tongue was noticeably thick.

"Hyah, Rance," he said, grinning broadly. "Well, if here ain't old Chuckwalla Ike! What're yuh doin'—celebratin' a birthday?"

"Yuh might say we are," agreed Chuckwalla, yanking hard on one side of his mustache. "What're yuh absorbin', Butch?"

"Cawn juice," drawled Butch. "Say, Rance, I heard yuh was lookin' for Billy DuMond."

Old Rance shot him a sidelong glance.

"Didja?"

"Yeah."

They drank thirstily and clattered their glasses on the bar.

"Holy ——!" snorted Chuckwalla. "Either I'm gittin' awful neck-tender or they're puttin' dynamite in the hooch. I jist laid m'self a blister from gullet to gut. Whooee-e-e!

"That stuff is twenty year old," declared the bartender.

"Yeah, it's shore got all its teeth."

"Yo're gettin' old," declared Butch, laughing.

"Like ——, I am!" flared Chuckwalla. "When I left Gila Flats I was the best man in a radium of fifty miles and I been gettin' better every day. I ain't never run, and I ain't never been whipped. Gimme more of that venom."

For more than an hour they leaned against the bar and drank what was commonly known as "rotgut". Chuckwalla

grew mellow, but the stuff did not seem to affect old Rance. He became just a trifle more serious, more polite. Several times he hitched his holster to a more convenient position, and Butch blinked thoughtfully.

"You spoke about Billy DuMond," reminded old Rance.

"Yeah, I did," admitted Butch.

"He's still with yuh, ain't he?"

"Oh, sure."

"Yeah."

That was all. Old Rance took his drinks calmly. Chuckwalla sang bits of songs, using the same tune for all of them. Butch wondered whether it wouldn't be a good idea for him to warn Billy DuMond to keep out of Red Arrow. But Butch was getting rather drunk, and his friendship with DuMond became of less consequence with each successive drink.

Finally old Rance sighed deeply and announced his intentions of going to the Eagle saloon.

"Tha's a good idea," agreed Chuckwalla. "Le's have a little action. C'mon."

They went down the street to the Eagle and went inside. Angel was in a poker game, and he looked curiously at his father and his two undeniably drunk companions. He felt that his father had absorbed just as much liquor as the other two.

They had a drink. Old Rance hooked his elbows over the top of the bar and gazed around his son's premises. Angel, apparently absorbed in his game, kept an eye on the old man, who walked steadily over to a black-jack table where one cowboy was making two-bit bets, and threw down a twenty-dollar bill.

His two cards showed an ace and a jack—a natural—and the dealer paid him thirty dollars. Old Rance left the fifty on the board. He won on the next deal, and let the hundred ride. The dealer looked curiously at the hard-faced old man. Hundred dollar bets were uncommon at black-jack.

Another ace and a jack fell to the old man, and the dealer counted out a hundred and fifty. That was left with the hundred, and again the old man won. There was now five hundred in front of old Rance.

"You playin' for the pile?" queried the dealer.

Old Rance nodded. His two cards showed two kings. After a moment of inspection he drew out his roll of bills, counted out another five hundred, split the two kings and indicated that he would make a double bet. His next two cards were an ace and a queen, making him twenty-one and twenty. The best the dealer could do was to make eighteen.

Slowly he counted out the money to old Rance—one thousand dollars. There was now two thousand on the board. The dealer wet his lips and stared at the old man. He shifted his gaze and looked at Angel, who got up from the poker game and came over to the black-jack layout.

"Deal," said the old man.

The dealer looked at Angel for some kind of a signal.

"Two thousand dollar bet," said the dealer nervously.

"Hundred dollars is the limit," said Angel softly.

Old Rance looked coldly upon his son.

"I thought yuh run a gamblin' house," he said. "Yuh can play for a hundred in the bunkhouses."

"I've got sixty dollars in the bank," said the dealer.

"Take yore money and go home," said Angel.

"No nerve, eh?"

"I don't want yore money."

"Yo're a liar—yo're jist scared."

Angel flushed and shoved the dealer aside, picking up the deck, facing the cards and shuffling them. The poker players halted their game and came over to the layout.

"Two thousand dollars that you get the ace of spades," said old Rance softly.

Angel did not look up from the cards, as he said—

"This is black-jack; place yore bets."

"Two thousand," said old Rance.

Angel dealt snappily. Old Rance's

hand showed a six and a deuce. Quickly he covered the cards, indicating that he would not draw. Angel turned over a king and a five. He studied them thoughtfully. He did not think there was a chance in a thousand that his father would stand-pat on less than seventeen. Then he drew his card—a seven-spot, making him twenty-two.

With a flip of his fingers he turned over the old man's cards—six and a deuce; a total of eight. For several moments he stared at his father. If he had stood on his original fifteen he would have won the money.

"Mebbe I'll git a natural next deal," said the old man. "Gimme my two thousand and deal for the pile."

"Four thousand?" whispered Angel haltingly.

"Shore. A natural would win me six thousand."

Angel hesitated. Four thousand dollars was more than the Eagle could afford to lose. Still, he might win. It was against the law of averages for the old man to continue winning. He had won six times straight already.

"Deal 'em," growled the old man.

Slowly Angel dealt the four cards. Old Rance turned his two cards face up on the table—a ten and a five.

"Hit 'em," he said.

Angel flipped the card to the table. It was a six, making old Rance's count, twenty-one. Angel turned over his cards disclosing a jack and a seven, making a count of seventeen. If old Rance had not disclosed his hand, Angel would not have have drawn. But now he was obliged to draw. His first card was a deuce. Angel swallowed heavily and flipped the next card. It was an ace. His hand counted twenty. Another ace would give him a tie with the old man.

With an exaggerated motion of his two hands holding the deck, he quickly stripped off a card and flipped it over. It was the ace of spades. Not a word was spoken for several moments.

"The house takes half of all ties," said Angel coldly.

"You've got yore half," said old Rance dully. "You never put up yore two thousand. Deal 'em agin'."

Angel shuffled them carefully, taking plenty of time, and when the old man cut the cards, no one seemed to know that Angel slipped the cut, and the cards were back where they were before the cut.

Old Rance drew a queen and a trey, while Angel's hand showed an ace and a jack—a natural. He swept in the two thousand, a grin of derision on his lips. For a long time the old man looked down at the green top of the table. He heaved a deep sigh and dug down in his pocket, drawing out the money he had received from the bank. He had drawn twenty-five hundred dollars, eighty of which he had paid to Chuckwalla and five hundred and twenty had gone to enrich the Eagle saloon. His ready capital now totaled nineteen hundred and eighty dollars. He spread the bills out on the table.

"Deal," he said softly.

"One bet?" asked Angel.

"Jist one."

"You ort to deal, Rance," said Chuckwalla.

Angel looked quickly at the old cook.

"Where do you come in on this?" he demanded.

"Jist the same, I think he ort to deal."

"Oh, all right."

Angel shoved the deck over to old Rance, who shuffled them carefully and dealt himself a count of sixteen.

"You draw first," said Angel. "Yo're playin' against the house."

"I'm set. How many do yuh need."

"I pay eighteen," said Angel hoarsely, indicating that he had seventeen.

Old Rance shook his head sadly and turned away from the table. Angel smiled and looked for the deck of cards, as he picked up the money, but the deck had disappeared. The only cards on the table were the two-card hands, with only old Rance's two face up.

"Who took that deck?" demanded Angel quickly.

But no one seemed to know. Old

Rance and Chuckwalla were already outside the place.

"That's —— funny!" said Angel hotly.

"You got —— well paid for it," laughed one of the men.

"Yeah?" Angel swept up the money and went to the rear of the room. The loss of that deck seemed to annoy him. He came back and walked to a front window, where he looked out. Old Rance had gone into the Shanghai Café, but Chuckwalla was sitting on the sidewalk looking through what appeared to be a deck of cards.

Old Chuckwalla was drunkenly deliberate. He sorted out the different suits, holding them between his knees. Chuck Ring and Scotty McKay came along, stopping to watch the old cook.

"Ar-re ye fixin' to tr-r-rim somebody?" asked Scotty.

"Betcher life," grunted Chuckwalla.

"Yo're drunk, Chuckwalla," boomed Chuck Ring. "Lemme fix up yore deck. I shore can mingle a cold deck, if I've got plenty time."

"Let 'm alone," said Chuckwalla seriously. He put all the suits together, got unsteadily to his feet and went into the café. Old Rance was seated at a table. Chuckwalla sat down heavily at the opposite side of the table and leaned on his elbows.

"Rance," he said solemnly, "yo're a —— fool."

Old Rance squinted painfully at Chuckwalla, but said nothing.

"'F I remember rightly, yuh never even seen the seventeen that Angel had in his last hand."

Rance shook his head slowly.

"You had the king of clubs and the six of hearts, Rance. Look at this."

Chuckwalla took the deck from his pocket and spread out the club and heart suits. It showed a missing king and a six spot. Rance lifted his eyes and looked inquiringly at Chuckwalla, who spread the other two suits. The ten of diamonds, trey of spades and the ace of spades were missing.

"He had the ten of diamonds and the trey of spades in his last hand!" said Chuckwalla angrily.

"What about that ace of spades?" asked old Rance.

"He held that out, you danged fool!" exploded Chuckwalla. "He stole that ace of spades to keep yuh from winnin' four thousand dollars from him, and he stole it agin' t' use in case he needed it."

Old Rance shifted his eyes thoughtfully.

"'F I was you, I'd go back and kill him, Rance," declared Chuckwalla. "Son or no son, he's a thief!"

Old Rance turned his eyes back to Chuckwalla.

"He didn't steal that last pot, Chuckwalla. He miscounted his hand. I should have looked at it."

"He stole tha' ace of spades on yuh."

"Did yuh see him steal it?"

"No, but he did."

"Yuh can't prove it, Chuckwalla."

"I can't prove he did—no! But it ain't in the deck, so he must 'a' stole it agin'."

"And that's yore only evidence that he played crooked?"

"What more do yuh want?"

Old Rance slowly reached in his pocket and took out the ace of spades.

"The ace of spades is a fav'rite card of mine," he said slowly. "And I don't like to have folks use it agin' me. What are yuh goin' to eat, Chuckwalla?"

The old cook lifted his eyes from the ace of spades and looked at the bland-faced Chinaman, who was waiting to take their order.

"Got any crow, Charley?"

"Clow?" The Chinaman blinked.

"Big, black bird, Charley."

"Oh, yessa, I *sabe* clow. Me no got. You like clow?"

"Sometimes I have t' eat it, Charley. Better bring me some ham and aigs."

In the meantime Chuck Ring and Scotty McKay had gone to the Eagle, where they learned that Angel had won twenty-five hundred dollars from old Rance McCoy.

"That's a lot of money," declared

Chuck, accepting a drink on the house. "I seen old Chuckwalla separatin' the suits of a deck of cards over there on the sidewalk, and I wondered who he was tryin' to freeze a deck on to. Here's how, gents."

"Separatin' the suits, eh?" said Angel thoughtfully.

"I'll bet that was yore deck," said one of the men. "But what was his idea of separatin' the suits, I wonder?"

"Probably tryin' to see if it was a full deck," laughed the bartender.

"Well, he ought to know it wasn't. There was four cards left on the table. I saw Angel tear 'em up and throw 'em in a cuspidor. Old Chuckwalla Ike's drunk."

Angel nodded slowly, thoughtfully. He knew—and deep in his soul he cursed old Chuckwalla heartily as he turned away from the bar and went back to his room.

"Kind of a funny deal," said one of the men. "It ain't none of my business, but nobody seen Angel's cards on that last deal. He jist said he'd pay eighteen, which would indicate that he had seventeen. But did he? The Old Man walked right out, and Angel tore up them four cards."

"He wouldn't cheat his own father, would he?" asked Chuck.

"I didn't say he did. But on one hand he drew a deuce, ace, ace, to tie the Old Man's twenty-one."

"That don't pr-r-rove anythin'," said Scotty.

"It don't. But if it had been anythin' but an ace, it would have busted the Eagle."

"The devil looks after his own—mebbe," grinned Scotty.

"With a little personal assistance," laughed Chuck. "But it's nothin' to us. Personally I like Angel. The Old Man is a hard character. But as far as that's concerned, none of us are growin' any wings."

LATER on in the evening Billy DuMond came to town and Angel took him to the hotel to see Lila. DuMond didn't want to go. He had been sure to find out that Rance McCoy was not in town before he would come in, and he didn't want to say anything more. But Angel insisted that he tell Lila all he knew about it.

They went up to Lila's room. Billy DuMond slouched on the edge of a hard chair, doubling his old hat in his nervous hands.

"Like I told Angel, I dunno anythin'," he said to Lila. "I jist heard things a long time ago an' I—I prob'ly was drunk when I told Angel what I did."

"What did you tell Angel?" asked Lila.

DuMond twisted the hat a few more times.

"Well, I dunno how true it is. A feller told me a long time ago that you wasn't Rance McCoy's girl. He said yore name was Stevens, an' that old Rance killed yore father in a gun-fight. You was a little baby, I reckon, an' there wasn't no place to put yuh. Angel's mother jist died a while before that, an' somehow old Rance kinda adopted yuh."

"And that is all you know about it?"

"Yes'm. I don't want to git dragged into it, ma'am. It's none of my business."

"And my father's name was Stevens?"

"That's the name."

"And where did all this happen?"

"I ain't right sure," said DuMond. "It seems to me that it was in the Twisted River country. This feller that told me about it mentioned a town named Medicine Tree. It's been a long time ago, yuh know, an' I might be mistaken."

"Thank you very much," said Lila.

"Oh, yo're welcome, ma'am."

Du Mond got to his feet, thankful that the interview was over.

"I—I hope yuh won't say nothin' to Rance McCoy."

"Don't mind him," said Angel quickly.

"That's all right t' say," DuMond grinned sourly.

After Billy DuMond had left the room Angel asked Lila what she intended doing.

"You heard what I told the Old Man the other night, Lila. When I said I wanted to marry you I told the truth."

"But I don't want to marry anybody—yet," said Lila. "My mind is all upset and I hardly know what to do. Angel, I was wondering if they have already engaged the teacher for the coming term of school? I could qualify, I think."

"We can find out, Lila. I know the trustees. But then I'd a lot rather have yuh marry me. I'm makin' good money."

"Not yet, Angel."

"Well, all right," grudgingly. "I'll find out about the school. But you know what I told the Old Man, Lila. Yo're goin' to marry me some day. How are yuh fixed for money?"

"I have enough—if I get that school."

"Well, if yuh need any just yelp."

Lila promised she would, and Angel went back to his business.

But in spite of the fact that Angel was well liked by the cattlemen of the Red Arrow country, his trade fell off badly in the following days. Where he had been able to use four dealers, he was now able to handle his games with but two men. On the next pay-day the Red Arrow saloon got the big play.

Nothing was said, but Angel knew that in winning the twenty-five hundred from his father he had caused somebody to have a deep, dark suspicion that there had been something crooked about the game. And this suspicion had been voiced sufficiently to cause the gambling public to seek its games elsewhere.

ANGEL had made no effort to see the school trustees in behalf of Lila. He did not want her to teach the school. That savored too much of independence—and Angel did not want Lila to be independent. He did not know that she had seen them and had secured the position, because she did not mention it until everything was settled.

Old Rance McCoy received the news with a grim smile.

"Which means she ain't aimin' to marry that crooked son of yours, Rance," observed old Chuckwalla, thankfully.

"Yuh don't know he's crooked," retorted Rance.

"Mebbe not, but his games is all shot to ——."

"Yuh mean that the gang has quit him, Chuckwalla?"

"Jist about, Rance. The Red Arrer is doin' the bulk of separation. The fool and his money ain't goin' near the Eagle these days."

"Chuckwalla, did you tell anybody about that deck?"

"Nossir. Didn't need to, Rance. There was other men at that table and they had eyes in their heads. I tell yuh, Angel made a —— big mistake."

"Four thousand dollars would have busted him flat."

"Nobody hates a square gambler that goes busted."

"Do yuh reckon they're sayin' that Angel crooked me out of that twenty-five hundred?"

"Mebbe not sayin' it, Rance."

"Believin' it, anyway."

"Somethin' like that. I look for Angel to sell out or close up pretty quick."

"He's got everythin' he owns tied up in the Eagle."

"Owns!" snorted Chuckwalla. "He didn't own anythin'. You was a big enough fool to give him a third of the Circle Spade stock. He didn't deserve anythin'. You paid him a puncher's salary since he was big enough to work, and then gave him that split of the stock. Yo're a —— fool, Rance!"

"Mebbe."

"Mebbe! Yuh make me sick. I suppose you'll sell off half the stock you've got left and give the money to Lila."

"She wouldn't take it."

"No, I don't reckon she would. She always was an independent little critter. But Angel—well, he took anythin' that wasn't tied down. And you kinda favored him, Rance. I used to kinda wonder why it was, but since I heard what I did that night, I re'lize things. Blood is thicker 'n water, after all is said and done."

Old Rance turned and looked at Chuckwalla wistfully.

"Wasn't I good to Lila?"

"Good? Shore yuh was. But yuh kinda favored Angel."

"I've tried to be good to both of 'em, Chuckwalla."

"I know yuh did, Rance. ——, don't mind me."

"Yes, sir, I tried to be," wearily. "It was pretty rough in them days—when my wife died. She left me with the baby. I didn't know nothin' about babies, Chuckwalla. But I learned about 'em."

Old Rance smiled wanly.

"Oh, I shore learned 'em. There wasn't many women in that country, and them that was there had plenty to do without helpin' with mine. Packin' a six-gun in one hand and a diaper in the other. And then—I took another, Chuckwalla. Them two was almost of an age. ——, they couldn't even talk English. Angel talked what sounded like a Cree language, while Lila runs pretty close to Navajo. I got so I could *sabe* both of 'em.

"It wasn't no fun. My ——, I turned milkmaid. Fact. Got me a cow."

Old Rance sighed deeply and shook his head.

"She was a good cow."

"And yuh worked like—to raise 'em—for this."

"Yeah. Well, I didn't have this in mind, Chuckwalla."

"Well, I reckon it'll turn out all right, Rance. You've played the game straight with the kids. But yo're all through. They took the play away from yuh."

Chuckwalla got up from the steps and started to go into the house, but stopped. Angel was riding in through the old ranch-house gate. He dismounted at the porch, and stood with one foot on the lower step. Old Rance glanced up from under the brim of his sombrero.

"Howdy, Angel," he said.

"All right," replied Angel thoughtfully, looking at Chuckwalla. "You might as well stay, Chuckwalla. I want to talk with both of yuh."

Chuckwalla came back and leaned against a porch-post.

"I'm comin' right down to brass tacks," said Angel coldly. "What did you two say about me after that game the other day?"

Old Rance McCoy studied his son's face for several moments.

"Just what do yuh mean, Angel?"

"Chuckwalla swiped the deck of cards," said Angel slowly.

"I shore did!" snapped Chuckwalla. "And I found—"

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed Rance hoarsely. "This is for me to talk about, Chuckwalla. Now, what about the deck, Angel?"

"That's what I want to know," said Angel angrily. "Since that day I haven't had two-bits worth of play in my place. I've had to cut down to one man, besides the bartender; and if this keeps up I'll have to shut up the place. What I want to know is, what did you two say about me?"

Old Rance shook his head slowly.

"Yo're wrong, Angel; we didn't say a word to anybody. Was there somethin' crooked about yore dealin'?"

"Didn't say anythin', eh?" Angel ignored the question.

"There was other men around the table," reminded Chuckwalla. "They wasn't blind, young feller."

"You keep yore —— mouth out of this!" snapped Angel. "You took that deck over there on the sidewalk and—and—"

"And what?" demanded Chuckwalla. "You know —— well what I done with it, Angel! Don't start gettin' tough with me, or I'll hang yore hide on the fence."

"Chuckwalla," said Rance mildly, "I'd like to talk with Angel alone."

"Shore thing."

Chuckwalla went into the house and began preparing a meal.

"Well, go ahead and talk," said Angel impatiently.

"You do the talkin'. Yo're more interested than I am."

"I'm sure interested enough," agreed Angel. "Do you think I made a crooked deal against you?"

"I watched pretty close, Angel."

"You would," sneered Angel. "You never trusted me very far."

"Too far—mebbe. But that's outside the question. No matter what me and Chuckwalla thought, we kept still, Angel."

"Well, somebody talked," growled Angel. "My business is all shot—and it all happened that day. I haven't dealt a card in my place since. I know what they're sayin'. I'm no fool. They think I skinned you out of that money. They're sayin' that Angel McCoy was so crooked he skinned his own father. They say that you knew I skinned yuh. Oh, I heard it. No, I didn't hear it said, but I heard it was said."

"That ain't a—a good reputation, is it, Angel?"

"Reputation be ——! My business is—"

"Worth more than yore reputation, Angel?"

"Money talks."

"It does to some folks."

"Don't talk to me about reputation!" cried Angel. "Yore own won't stand much, yuh know."

Old Rance blinked slowly, but the lines of his old face did not change. Perhaps his eyes clouded momentarily, but he was not looking at Angel.

"What do yuh want me to do?" he asked dully. "Why did yuh come out here, Angel?"

"I wanted to find out what you or Chuckwalla had said."

"We said nothin'."

"Uh-huh."

It was evident that Angel did not believe this.

"You heard that Lila was goin' to teach school?"

Old Rance nodded.

"Yeah, I heard she was."

"I wrote to Medicine Tree to find out more about her father—about Jim Stevens."

Old Rance turned slowly and looked at Angel, his eyes as hard as flint.

"Yuh did, eh? And what business was it of yours? What do you care about him?"

"Lila wanted to know more about him."

"Billy DuMond talked some more, eh?"

"No, not any more. He told me all he knew a long time ago. But that ain't got anythin' to do with my troubles. If this keeps up, I'm broke. I've got to prove I played on the square with you."

"How?"

"I'll be —— if I know."

"Did yuh, Angel?"

For several moments the young man looked at his father, turned on his heel and went back to his horse.

"I suppose it's the proper thing to do—to squawk about a crooked deal when yuh lose a few dollars," he said as he mounted his horse.

Old Rance watched him ride away. Chuckwalla came to the doorway carrying a skillet in his hand and looked down the road, where a cloud of dust showed the swift passing of the horse and rider.

"And I suppose yo're feelin' sorry for him," said Chuckwalla.

Rance nodded slowly, but did not look around.

"Blood's a —— of a lot thicker 'n water, but if he was my son I'd kick the seat of his pants up so high that they'd tilt his hat forward."

"You never had a son, didja, Chuckwalla?"

"No, thank God!"

"Amen," said old Rance piously.

"Is that supposed to be a smart remark?" asked Chuckwalla.

"No, I just thought it fit the case, Chuckwalla. If yuh never had a son, yuh ain't fit to pass judgment on a father."

"I suppose there's a lot of truth in that remark. But I know Angel pretty well, Rance. By golly, I'm glad Lila's got a job. She'll make good. And she won't demand no split of yore money, old-timer. There's a girl!"

"Yeah," muttered Rance. "She's independent. But I—I wish she'd stay here and be independent."

THE FALL term of school was about ready to start, and Lila was offered board and room with the Parker family. Jim Parker was proprietor of the Red Arrow general merchandise store, and was also one of the trustees of the school

Jim Parker was a big, bluff, opinionated sort of a person. On the other hand, Mrs. Parker was a little lady, the kind that is old at forty. Her sole aim in life was to take care of their two children and make Jim comfortable. She welcomed Lila for companionship, and Jim welcomed her for what instruction she might impart to his offsprings.

Angel did not like the idea of Lila's living with the Parker family, because of the fact that he and Jim Parker had never been friends. Angel had never mentioned marriage to Lila since the day they had talked with Billy DuMond. In fact, he had seen little of her.

No one had asked Lila why she had left the Circle Spade, and it seemed that many thought it was because she was merely starting out to make her own way in the world. No hint of the suspicions against Angel McCoy had come to her ears. She did not know that Angel had written to the sheriff of Medicine Tree, seeking information concerning what had happened to Jim Stevens years ago.

Quite a number of the Red Arrow cowboys had looked with favor upon Lila McCoy, but none of them had summoned up enough nerve to visit her at Parker's home, except Slim Caldwell the sheriff. He had known Lila for years, and came to congratulate her on her new job. It took him from eight o'clock to midnight to offer his congratulations, much to the amusement of Jim Parker, who sat with them all that time in the living-room. Slim resolved to get even with Jim at the first opportunity. And Jim Parker added insult to injury when he told Chuck Ring about it.

Chuck's version was rather fine.

"And there they sat all night long, Lila asleep in her chair and Slim and Jim glarin' at each other until about five o'clock in the mornin', when Slim went to sleep. Jim wakes Lila up and she goes to her room, and Jim goes to bed. Slim didn't wake up until Mrs. Parker starts gettin' breakfast and then he sneaks out."

All of which did not set so well with Angel McCoy. He was in the proper frame of mind to take Chuck's version without reservations. Things were going worse with Angel. He had kept only one dealer, and was thinking seriously of cutting him off the payroll of the Eagle.

And it was about this time that Lila heard Jim Parker talking to another man about Angel McCoy. They were discussing the business at the Eagle, and Parker remarked that Angel had no one to blame except himself.

"You know what they're sayin," said Parker. "He took twenty-five hundred away from old Rance McCoy, and some of the boys say it was a crooked deal. I never heard the old man say a word about it—but he wouldn't."

"I guess it was a crooked deal all right," agreed the other man. "Doesn't seem to be any secret."

Lila went to her room to think it over. Angel a thief! Dealt a crooked game to beat his own father! And old Rance McCoy had given him the money to buy out that gambling house. She went downstairs and talked to Mrs. Parker, trying to find out what she knew about it.

"Yes, I heard about it," admitted Mrs. Parker. "I didn't want to say anything about it, Lila. Angel has made a lot of enemies over it and had practically ruined his business."

"But he surely wouldn't steal from his father, Mrs. Parker."

"Honey, a gambler don't recognize relationship. Angel always was a queer sort of a boy—rather cold-blooded. I don't care if he is your brother."

"But he isn't," said Lila softly. "Oh, I don't think there is any use of keeping it a secret. That is why I left the Circle Spade ranch. Haven't you wondered?"

"A little, yes. Others have wondered, too. But I supposed it was merely because you wanted to earn your own living."

"Rance McCoy is not my father, Mrs. Parker. He—he shot my father when I was a baby. I don't know why, but he adopted me and gave me his name. Angel and I are no relation. My father was named Stevens."

"Well, heavens above! Can you imagine that? Honey, that's like something you read about. A-a-a-w, don't cry about it! You can't help it, can you? Pshaw! Did Rance McCoy tell you?"

Lila shook her head quickly, her lips trembling.

"A-Angel told me. Rance McCoy didn't deny it."

"Well," Mrs. Parker thought it over carefully. "Well, I don't think that it's so bad. Rance took care of you and gave you an education. You've got to give him credit for that."

"Oh, I do give him credit. But I'll pay him back for all that."

"If I know anything about Rance McCoy, he ain't looking for pay. And it'll take you a mighty long time to ever earn enough to pay him back."

THE NEXT day was pay day on some of the ranches and, it being Saturday, nearly all the cattlemen came to town. The Red Arrow saloon was crowded with chap-clad gentry all day. Some of the boys would drop in at the Eagle, buy a round of drinks and go out, none of them offering to buck the games.

Jim Langley came in from the JML, bringing Jess Fohl and "Roper" Briggs, two of his cowboys. Langley was a well built, dark-faced man, whose hair was sprinkled with gray. Langley was not a mixer, and seldom came to town. Chuck Ring swore that Langley had a "past".

"Don't talk much," observed Chuck wisely. "Does a lot of thinkin'. And he packs his gun too handy for a feller that ain't exactly easy in the mind."

But there was nothing reticent about Fohl and Briggs. They were a tough pair, and they wanted it understood. Both were less than thirty years of age. Fohl was bow-legged, his head typically Prussian. Briggs was wry-necked, had little chin, and a pair of tiny blue eyes which were so round that it gave one the feeling that here was a piece of human taxidermy in which the workman had inserted bird-eyes in a human head.

These three men had a drink at the Eagle, sized up the place curiously and went over to the Red Arrow to find out the why-for of the boycott on the Eagle. And they found out. Several of the boys were just drunk enough to speak plainly about Angel McCoy. Billy DuMond was there, drinking plenty, but keeping an eye on the front door and keeping his gun handy.

The lamps were already lighted when Langley and his two men came to the Red Arrow. The games were crowded.

"Well, is it true that Angel crooked the old man out of twenty-five hundred?" asked Langley, talking to those at the bar.

"He did!" said DuMond emphatically. "Not that I give a —— about it, yuh understand. Me and old McCoy ain't been friends for years, an' I hope I live long enough to tip over his tombstone, but it was a dirty deal. Angel's a crook, if there ever was one."

DuMond hammered on the bar with his glass and indicated to the bartender that they would drink again.

"Old Rance was in town today," offered Eddie Marsh, one of the 77 punchers. "I seen him at the bank."

"Thasso?" DuMond cleared his throat harshly. "Mebbe he knowed I was comin' in, and that's why he pulled out."

"Yo're crazy," declared Butch Reimer. "He'd fill you full of lead before yuh could reach to yore gun."

"Like ——!" flared DuMond. "He ain't so fast. You gimme an even break with that old —— an' I'll—I'll—"

DuMond's voice trailed off into space. He was staring at the back-bar mirror as if hypnotized. Butch Reimer leaned forward, staring into the mirror too. Directly behind them stood old Rance McCoy, his stony old eyes looking at them in the mirror. DuMond choked softly. His elbows were on the top of

the bar, and it seemed that he was unable to lift them off. Langley turned and looked at the od man.

"Hyah, Rance," he said smiling. "Long time I no see yuh."

But the old man's eyes did not shift.

"Turn around, DuMond," he said softly.

DuMond whined deep in his throat, a sort of strangle. With a supreme effort he drew his elbows off the bar and turned around, his hands held almost shoulder-high. He blinked at Old Man McCoy painfully. The old man had his hands testing on his lips, his head thrust forward.

"Let yore hands down, DuMond."

"No," said DuMond hollowly. "I—I—what did yuh say, McCoy?"

"Yuh can't draw from up there, DuMond. Let yore hands down to yore waist. I'm givin' yuh that even break yuh wanted."

"Even break?" Du Mond's eyes turned and he looked around at the smoke-hazy faces of the many men in the place. There was nobody directly behind McCoy. DuMond's eyes were full of tears, as if he had been looking at a bright light.

"You wanted an even break, yuh said," reminded old Rance evenly.

"Not me," said DuMond in a strained voice. "Oh, ——, not me, McCoy. What I said was—"

DuMond swallowed heavily, but was unable to go ahead with his explanation. Rance McCoy moved slowly ahead until he stood within a foot of the shrinking DuMond. Then he deliberately slapped DuMond across the mouth, knocking him back against the bar. But DuMond did not drop his right hand. His left slowly went to his lips and he stood there, leaning back against the bar, the back of his left hand held tightly against his lips, as if to ward off a blow. There was a crimson trickle down his stubbled chin below the protecting hand.

"Get out of here," commanded Rance McCoy, pointing toward the open door. "Get out of here, you pup; I want to talk to the *men!*"

And DuMond went, still holding his right hand high, his left hand guarding his bruised lips.

Old Rance watched him leave the place, then turned to the men who had seen him humiliate Billy DuMond. He stepped in against the bar and turned to face them. His hard old eyes looked from face to face as he said:

"I know what's been said about the Eagle. You've heard that Angel McCoy is a crooked gambler and that he stole a lot of money from me. That's a —— lie and the man who says it is a liar!"

No one contradicted him. He gave them plenty of time. Then:

"I've played cards before a lot of yuh was born, and I know a crooked deal. It's none of my business where yuh lose yore money, but I jist wanted to tell yuh that I'm goin' to play mine at the Eagle."

Then he surged away from the bar and walked from the place. The room had been silent from the first word he had spoken to Billy DuMond, and no one spoke until McCoy had left the place, but now they all tried to talk at once.

Langley and Butch Reimer left the bar together and went across the street, followed by nearly every man in the Red Arrow, impelled as they were by curiosity.

But Angel McCoy was not there; he was sitting on the steps of Jim Parker's home, trying to argue Lila into agreeing to marry him. But all his arguments were fruitless.

"Well, yuh can't teach school all your life," he declared.

"I can if I want to, Angel."

"Oh, I suppose yuh can. Mebbe you was foolish to quit the Old Man the way you did. You'll never get anythin' more out of him. I got my share, I'll tell yuh that. I got more than you'll ever get."

"I have no gambling game to entice him," said Lila meaningly.

Angel got quickly to his feet.

"So you heard about that little deal, eh?" angrily. "That's why you act so cool, is it? What is there about it to bother you, I'd like to know? Who told you about it?"

"It doesn't seem to be any secret, Angel."

"Secret! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! No, I guess not."

"It doesn't seem to amuse any one, except you, Angel."

"No?" Angel moved closer to her in the dark. "You don't see anythin' to laugh about, eh? Well, I don't either. I'm not laughing because it's funny. Every cent I own is tied up in that saloon. And these—hypocrites have boycotted me. They don't *know* it was a crooked deal. Old Rance McCoy came in there to beat me. He drew twenty-five hundred from the bank to try and break me.

"But he failed. I know my own game. I'm not in that business to let anybody break me. I went into it to make easy money."

"But he is your father, Angel."

"What of it? You think blood is thicker than water, eh? Not in my business. Everythin' is grist that comes to my mill. They think I'm crooked, eh? I'll sell out here and go to another place. You come with me and I'll see that yuh wear diamonds, Lila. I can make more money than you ever seen. Think it over. My ——, you wasn't born to teach school or marry a forty-a-month puncher."

"Thank you, Angel."

"What for? I mean every word of it. Don't let old Rance McCoy worry yuh."

"Does he think you played a crooked game?"

"What if he does?"

"Don't you want the respect of your father, Angel?"

"What good will it do me? The respect of Rance McCoy!"

"You are a queer son, Angel."

"Am I? Well, I'm what I am—and I'm satisfied."

"Satisfied to be known as a cheat?"

Angel laughed angrily.

"Who cares? Nobody can prove I cheated him."

"You can, Angel; and you must have a conscience."

"Not a —— bit! That's somethin' that wasn't in the McCoy family, so where could I inherit it? I don't mind tellin' you that if I had played a square game, I'd be broke now. That ain't admittin' anythin, is it? Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Well, you think it over, Lila. It's the difference between wearin' diamonds and—and what yo're goin' to do."

Angel walked away from her, and she heard the rusty hinges of the old gate creek behind him. She shivered slightly and drew the pale blue shawl closer around her shoulders. She had not seen Rance McCoy since she had left the ranch, and in spite of her prejudice there was an ache in her heart for the old man who had raised her. He had been so glad to see her when she came back from the East, after five years of school. He had not said much, but she could see the pleasure and happiness in his eyes as he held her off at arm's length and looked her over.

And she had been glad to see Angel. Somehow she had forgotten that Angel had been nicknamed for the same reason that a fat cowboy was usually known as "Slim". He was a handsome man now, the handsomest man she had ever met, and he had told her that he loved her, almost in the same breath that he had told her she was not his sister. His whirlwind method had left her breathless, and she could not remember now just what she had told him.

But he was still the same Angel McCoy, cold-blooded, headstrong, sarcastic. She remembered one Sunday when Rance had taken them to Sunday school at Red Arrow. Angel was about ten years old. The lesson had made a strong impression on him, and late that afternoon one of the cowboys had found him out behind the stable, crucifying a cat against the corner of the corral fence.

Old Rance did not whip him. Lila could not remember that Rance had ever whipped Angel. He had whipped her. Somehow she held that against him now. He would not whip his own child. He had never whipped her very hard, but it was the humiliation more than the actual pain.

She remembered that old Rance had whipped a cowboy who had slapped Angel. It was nearly a gun-fight. Angel had cut the strings all off the cowboy's saddle and was using them to braid into a quirt for himself. Old Rance whipped the cowboy, and then paid a saddle-maker to put the strings back on the saddle again.

He had always protected Angel. She had heard Angel talking back to him one day, and old Rance had said:

"All right, son. Some day you'll be twenty-one. Until that time, yo're a kid. When yo're twenty-one you'll be a man—and I'd shoot a man for sayin' what you've just said to me. I don't quarrel with kids, but just remember what I said."

And she had seen Rance McCoy kill a man. Lila was twelve at the time. It was over a branding deal, she remembered. The men were all standing around the corral gate, and she had climbed halfway up the fence near them. She remembered that one of the men was standing apart from the rest, and his face was very white. Then she heard him say—

"McCoy, yo're a liar!"

There were two shots fired, spaced less than a second apart, and she saw this man crumple up and fall on his face. It was such a shock that she nearly fell off the fence. Then some one picked her off the fence, and she turned her head to see it was Rance McCoy. He said to the men:

"You saw and heard it all, boys. Better get the sheriff and tell him about it."

Then he had carried her to the house and told her to run along and play. It was the first time he had ever picked her up since she could remember. And she had rather resented it, because she was then twelve years of age.

It was growing cool out there on the porch, so she went into the house and sat down to read. Mrs. Parker was busy upstairs and Jim Parker had not come in from the store.

Angel McCoy went straight back to the Eagle. There were men on the porch of the saloon, and he wondered at the number of them. Rather breathlessly he shoved his way into the place and looked around. There were at least thirty men in the saloon and quite a number of them were crowded around the black-jack layout. There were no players at any of the other tables, because there were no dealers. The bartender was working at top speed.

Wonderingly, Angel worked his way around to the black-jack table and stopped against the wall. Old Rance McCoy and three other men were playing. Near the end of the table stood Chuckwalla Ike, puffing industriously on a frayed-out cigar, closely watching the dealer.

Old Rance was betting with hundred dollar bills, and as Angel watched him he lost five in quick succession. In his left hand he clutched a huge roll of currency, from which he stripped off bill after bill.

"Let's make it worth while," said old Rance. "Here's five hundred."

Angel watched the old man win the bet. The dealer's eyes flashed quickly around the crowd and he saw Angel.

"Let it ride," said the old man. "Why don't some of yuh buy into this game? I don't want to hog all of it."

Several of the cattlemen made small bets, as Angel moved around behind the dealer.

"There's a hundred dollar limit, gents," said Angel easily.

Old Rance looked at Angel quizzically.

"Hundred dollars, eh?" he queried. "That's too slow."

"It's shore too heavy for me," laughed Jim Langley. "I'm limited to five dollar bets myself. Rance is the only millionaire around here."

Old Rance slowly pocketed the money, after throwing a hundred dollars on the table, and the deal went on. Angel backed away and went around to the stud-poker table, where he laid out the chips and broke open a new deck of cards. The table filled in a few moments. In the larger houses there is a dealer, who merely does the dealing and takes care of the rake-off for the house, but in a

place like the Eagle the dealer takes an active part in the game, passing the buck each time to indicate which player is to be dealt to first.

There was no limit in the stud game. Chips ran according to color, from twenty-five cents to ten dollars. The cowboys played a cautious game. A forty-dollar pay-check would not last long in a game of that kind, unless the player either played in luck or used good judgment.

Old Rance won consistently. Hundred after hundred went to swell the roll of bills in his pocket. The rest of the players merely piked along, causing the dealer little concern.

"Rance is a thousand to the good," announced a cowboy, who had come from the black-jack layout to look at the poker game.

Angel bit the corner of his lip and blinked at his cards. He could ill afford to lose a thousand, and he knew the old man was on a betting spree. Ten minutes later the dealer came and spoke softly to him—

"Eighteen hundred to the bad, Angel; and I'm out of money."

"Close the game," said Angel.

A poker player withdrew from the game, and old Rance took his place. He threw a hundred dollar bill across to Angel.

"Table stakes, Angel?" he asked.

"Table-stakes," growled Angel, meaning that a player could only bet the amount of money in front of him.

The old man drew out his enormous roll of money and placed it beside his chips. Angel eyed the roll closely. There were thousands in that roll. He did not know that old Rance had drawn every cent of money he had on deposit in the bank—a total of seventy-five hundred.

Old Rance's first open card was the ace of spades. He looked at it and laughed. It was the best card in sight, and the old man threw ten yellow chips—one hundred dollars worth—into the pot.

The players promptly passed. None of them felt like taking a chance, even with only two cards dealt in each hand. Angel sneered openly and covered the bet. He realized that the old man was aiming the bet at him. Angel had a queen buried and a ten-spot in sight.

The next two cards showed a king for Rance and another ten for Angel.

"Pair of tens bet a hundred," said Angel.

"Make it two hundred," replied Rance, taking the money off his roll. Angel acquiesced, after considering another raise.

The next two cards showed another ace to Rance and a queen for Angel. This gave Rance two aces in sight and an ace in the hole, while Angel's two tens and a queen in sight gave him queens and tens. Rance promptly bet a hundred dollars, and Angel just as promptly boosted it a hundred.

Rance grew thoughtful, and after due deliberation he raised the bet another hundred. Angel called. A gasp went up when Rance drew another ace, and Angel a ten.

"Three aces bets," drawled Angel.

Old Rance made a motion as if to turn over his buried card, but hesitated and checked the bet. Angel bet two hundred dollars—twenty yellow chips.

Rance laughed softly, eyeing Angel's three tens and the queen.

"Up three hundred," he said quietly, as he deliberately peeled off more bills.

It was Angel's turn to be thoughtful. He had a ten-full on queens. Those three aces worried him, but he was too deep in the pot to stop now. Slowly he counted off fifty of the yellow chips, fingering them softly. Then he shoved them into the center of the table.

"Up two hundred," he said.

Old Rance eyed Angel coldly as he peeled off the amount of the raise and tossed it to the center. He counted off three hundred more and added it to the huge pile of money and yellow chips.

"Three hundred more?" asked Angel hoarsely.

Old Rance did not reply; he did not need to. Angel's hand trembled as he counted out the required amount in chips.

"Just callin' me?" queried Rance.

"Looks like it, don't it?" growled Angel.

Old Rance turned over his fourth ace. He had won eighteen hundred dollars in one hand. Angel looked dumbly at him, as he returned the monry to his roll and stacked the piles of yellow chips. Old Rance had already won thirty-six hundred dollars from Angel. But the evening was young. Angel spoke to the dealer, who stood behind him—

"Bring me some yellow chips."

And when the man came with the chips he said to him:

"Open the black-jack game, Bud; it looks like a big night."

Angel was game. He didn't have enough cash to redeem those yellow chips. He had only had a trifle over three thousand in cash to start the evening play, and there was less than a thousand dollars of his money left in the bank. But Angel was a gambler, and he had no intention of letting the old man get away with all that money.

There was nothing spectacular about the next hand. Rance dropped out after the second card, and Jim Langley won the pot. But on the next hand old Rance called a five dollar bet by Jess Fohl, and boosted it a hundred.

"Tryin' to run everybody out?" asked Fohl.

"A runner ain't got no business in this game, Jess."

He looked straight at Angel, who flushed redly and called the bet. The rest of the players dropped out. Fohl cursed over the loss of his five. He had a pair of sevens, back-to-back, and didn't want to drop, but the hundred was more than he could stand.

In sight, Rance had a six, and Angel had a five. Angel reasoned that Rance must have a six in the hole, in order to raise the bet. Rance drew an ace, while Angel drew a nine. It cost Angel another hundred to draw, but he did not raise.

Angel drew a six the next time, and Rance drew a trey. It was Rance's bet, but he checked it to Angel, who promptly bet a hundred, and Rance merely called the bet. The next two cards showed a nine to Rance and a four to Angel.

Neither player had a pair in sight.

"Ace, nine bets," droned Angel, and Rance promptly bet the usual hundred dollars, and Angel passed. He turned over the ace he had buried, and shut his lips angrily when old Rance disclosed a deuce of clubs. Angel's ace, nine, six, five would have beaten Rance's ace, nine, six, trey.

"Of all the —— fool bettin'!" exclaimed Chuckwalla, who was still trying to smoke that frayed-out cigar. "Winnin' over three hundred dollars on ace high."

"Nerve," corrected old Rance easily.

"Nerve!" sneered Angel. "You raised that first bet with a deuce in the hole and a six exposed. Yo're crazy."

"Just nerve," said Rance coldly. "Somethin' you ain't got."

"You think I ain't?"

Old Rance leaned across the table, looking steadily at his son.

"How much nerve have you got, Angel?"

"I've got enough."

"I wonder if yuh have. I've got about thirty-nine hundred of yore money right now, Angel. Have you got nerve enough to bet me another thirty-nine hundred that I don't get the first ace off the deck?"

Angel stared at him, his eyes half-closed. Thirty-nine hundred more. Still, luck might be with him this time. It was a chance to win back all he'd lost.

"Neither of us will deal," said Rance softly. "We'll let Jim Langley deal to us and we'll cut to see who gets the first card."

"All right," said Angel, trying to make his voice sound calm.

Rance won the cut and leaned back indifferently while Jim Langley shuffled the deck. Angel cut the cards first, and when Langley presented the cards to Rance, he waived the right to cut them.

"Are yuh all ready?" asked Langley nervously.

"Let 'em go," said Angel.

"By ——, an ace!" exploded Chuckwalla.

It was the first card off the deck—the ace of spades.

Jim Langley slowly replaced the deck on the table and stepped back. Angel stared at the card, licked his dry lips and finally shrugged his shoulders. Seventy-eight hundred dollars! He looked at his father, who was leaning one elbow on the table, calmly counting the yellow chips.

"You got enough?" asked Angel hoarsely.

"Yeah," said Rance.

He stacked the chips and shoved them over to Angel, who mechanically counted them before placing them in the rack.

"Is this game goin' ahead?" asked Langley.

"In a few minutes," said Angel.

He looked at his father, as he got to his feet.

"Come on and I'll cash yuh in," he said. The old man nodded and they went to the rear of the saloon, entering Angel's private room.

Angel shut the door and leaned back against it, while the old man stood near the center, staring at him.

"Yo're broke, eh?" said Rance coldly.

"Yeah, I'm broke," admitted Angel. "I ain't got enough money to keep my games open. I've got about nine hundred in the bank."

"And you owe me about six thousand dollars," said Rance.

"Yeah."

Old Rance studied the face of his son for several moments.

"Yuh stole an ace the other day, Angel."

"Well?" Angel did not deny it.

"Everybody knows it," said Rance softly. "It ruined yore business. I brought the business back for yuh, and now yuh ain't got enough money to keep it rollin'. Here!"

He drew out his roll of bills, stripped off the eighteen hundred he had won at the black-jack game and gave it to the wondering Angel.

"Now," said Rance, "give me yore I. O. U. for the full seventy-eight hundred."

Angel's eyes brightened quickly.

"You mean you'll take my I. O. U. for that—"

"I always was a —— fool," said the old man bitterly. "Go ahead and write it out."

Angel sat down at his table and quickly wrote out the I. O. U., which the old man accepted.

"Go back to yore games," said old Rance, "and see if yuh can't deal fair."

They went back into the saloon and Angel opened the poker game again. Old Rance went to the bar with Chuckwalla and had a drink. The old man had had several drinks before the game, and now he piled in several more. Chuckwalla held his smudging cigar in his gnarled fingers and tossed down drink after drink.

The black-jack game playing dwindled to nothing, and the dealer closed the game until some customers should show up. In the meantime he went across the street and up to the corner to the post office.

Old Rance left the bar and went over to the poker table; not with any intention of playing again, but merely drawn by the fascination of the game. In a few minutes the dealer came back, handing Angel a letter as he came past the table. Angel glanced at the postmark on the letter. It was from Medicine Tree.

Jim Langley dropped out of the game and old Rance took his chair. He indicated with a shake of his head that he did not wish to play. Angel signaled to the dealer to take his place, and as soon as the substitution was made he went over to the end of the bar, tore open the envelope and began reading the letter.

JIM PARKER closed his store at nine o'clock and went home. He had heard that Rance McCoy was bucking the game in the Eagle, plunging heavily on the black-jack game. But Parker was too tired to go over and see just what was going on.

Lila was in her room, which adjoined the Parkers' bedroom. She was reading

when Jim Parker and his wife came up to bed, and she heard them discussing what Parker had heard.

"Oh, the Eagle is filled up, they tell me," said Parker. "I didn't go over. One of the boys said that old Rance had a roll of bills that would choke a horse and he's bettin' 'em high. What Angel will do to him will be plenty."

"Hasn't Rance any sense at all?" said Mrs. Parker.

"Oh, I don't know," replied Parker sleepily. "Maybe he don't know that Angel is a crooked dealer. He wouldn't expect his own son to steal from him, would he? I'm glad tomorrow is Sunday."

"Somebody ought to warn old Rance," said Mrs. Parker.

"Well, don't try it, my dear. It's none of our business. If he wants to go against a crooked deal—let him go."

"How much money do you suppose he'll lose, Jim?"

"Who—Rance? All he's got. No, I'm not jokin'. Rance is a gambler, and he'll bet as long as he's got a cent."

Lila got to her feet and picked up the pale-blue shawl. She could go downstairs without passing the Parker room; so she tiptoed softly down, let herself out through the front door, which was never kept locked, and went quickly out to the street.

It did not take her long to reach the Eagle saloon. Some cowboys stared at her as she came into the light, but she paid no attention to them. A cowboy was at the bar, singing a plaintive melody in a drunken tenor, and there was a babel of voices, the clatter of poker chips.

Angel was back in the game again. She could see the back of Rance McCoy's grizzled old head, his sombrero tilted forward to shield his eyes. The room was full of tobacco smoke. Chuckwalla Ike saw her first. He blinked foolishly and stumbled toward her, trying to tell her to get out of there, but she eluded him and came in behind old Rance, putting a hand on his shoulder.

Angel was dealing, but halted quickly. Every one in the room was staring at her. Old Rance turned his head and looked up at her white face, a puzzled expression in his eyes.

"What do yuh want, Lila?" he asked.

"Don't play against him," she said hoarsely, pointing at Angel. "Please don't. He admitted that he dealt crooked to you. He's a cheat. He—he told me he did."

The room was silent. Angel's face was hot and he surged to his feet, kicking back his chair.

"That's a lie!" he hurled at her. "I never told yuh any such a thing. You get out of here! This is no place for you."

Lila faced him defiantly.

"I came to tell Rance McCoy what you did to him, Angel. If he wants to play now—all right."

"You came to warn him, eh?" sneered Angel. "Playin' politics, are yuh? Tryin' to get in good with the Old Man. Lemme tell yuh somethin' about yourself. I just got a letter tonight. Yore father was a thief—a bank-robber! He was killed—"

Old Rance sprang out of his chair and leaned across the table toward Angel.

"Shut up, you dirty pup!" he gritted. "Give me that letter!"

"What if I won't?" snapped Angel.

"Then I'll take it off yore dead carcass!"

The old man had swayed sidewise and his right elbow was bent slightly. The men behind Angel sagged aside quickly.

"It's in yore coat pocket," said Rance warningly.

Slowly Angel reached into his pocket, took out the letter and flung it down in front of his father. Quickly the old man tore it into small pieces, flinging them aside with a flip of his wrist.

The men were staring at old Rance, wondering what it was all about. They did not know what Angel knew about Lila's parentage, and they thought Angel was accusing old Rance of being these things.

Old Rance reached back and took Lila by the arm.

"It's all right," he said brokenly.

"Yuh can't expect it to always work out jist right. C'mon, Lila."

They walked out together, the crowd staring after them. Angel's face was a little more white than usual as he dropped back in his chair, ready to resume the game. But the players cashed in their chips and went out, until no one remained in the place except Angel, the other dealer and the bartender.

Rance walked as far as the gate of the Parker home with Lila. Neither of them said anything until they reached the gate, when Lila said:

"Oh, I'm sorry it happened. I simply had to tell you. But I—I guess I forgot he was your own son."

"That's all right, Lila; it was thoughtful of yuh to even think of me."

"But that letter—" faltered Lila. "What letter was it?"

"I dunno," slowly. "Forget it."

"But he—he said my father was a thief and a bank robber."

Old Rance was silent for several moments.

"I don't reckon Angel got the truth of the matter," he said softly. "You forget it, Lila. Good night."

He turned and faded out in the darkness, going back to the main street. The bulk of the crowd had gone back to the Red Arrow, and there was much speculation regarding what had happened at the Eagle.

Old Chuckwalla Ike had gone back there with the crowd, and was drinking prodigious quantities of raw liquor. One of the men asked him what Angel had meant by telling the girl what he did. But Chuchwalla swore he didn't know.

"Angel's crazy," he declared. "Allus been crazy. Never did have the sense that God gave geese in Ireland."

"Well, he shore got trimmed," declared Jim Langley. "Think of dealin' first ace for five thousand! I figure old Rance won pretty close to eight thousand from Angel; and if Angel can pay him off, I'm an Eskimo."

"Old Rance owns the Eagle right now," stared another. "He shore paid Angel for his crooked dealin'."

Old Chuckwalla got pretty drunk before he left the Red Arrow and went on a hunt for old Rance. The Eagle was dark. Chuckwalla managed to paw his way along the hitch-rack and to locate his horse. It was only after several tries that he was able to get into the saddle. Once he went all the way over to the horse, but had presence of mind enough to cling to the reins.

"Shore gittin' active in m' old age," he told himself, as he tried to get his foot out of his hat. "Ain't many men of my age that can leap plumb over a bronc in the dark."

He finally got seated and rode out of town, swaying in his saddle and trying to sing. It was about eleven o'clock when he reached the Circle Spade. By this time he was sober enough to unsaddle his horse, turn it loose in a corral and go up to the ranch-house, there he went to bed. His horse had picked up a small stone in the frog of its right front foot and was limping badly, but Chuckwalla didn't know it.

TO BE CONTINUED

Adventure's Abyssinian Expedition

FIRST REPORT BY GORDON MacCREAGH

DJIBOUTI, French Somaliland. The colony so glorious of La France; and typically so. Let the traveler be wary of French colonial officialdom. First, of course, *les passeports*. A fiercely polite gentleman comes on board ship as soon as the flag announces "clean ship" to make certain that no person not properly accredited shall set foot upon the jealously guarded soil.

And, having seen the passports and carefully scrutinized the full collection of French *visés* with all their array of stamps, he takes them away with him, "for examination." He gives the passenger a rain-check which must be delivered next day in person to another fierce gentleman in the bureau of police who has to enter in a ledger one's father's profession and one's mother's maiden name and age, and who receives with amazed incredulity an American's plain assertion that he does not know his mother's age.

By the official clock this process of questionnaire, with its attendant delays and interruptions, dawdles away seventy-two minutes; and then the traveler, if he has satisfied the official that he really is a person of no evil intent and that he honest-to-goodness intends to take the first train out of the country, receives another rain-check with which he can finally redeem his passport from yet another official who trails him to the train to see that he is keeping his word about getting out.

But before that final release comes *la douane*. Let the traveler be forewarned, and thus forearmed against the French colonial *douane*, the complete antithesis of the swift easiness of the mother country. Twenty-two cases! *Mon Dieu*, this is an invasion! They must be opened, every one of them. *Monsieur le douanier* is desolated that these cases are all nailed down and reinforced with strap iron; but it is his unhappy duty to see that nothing contraband passes through the colony. That the cases are passing through in transit does not matter. There are certain contrabands that must not even pass through.

Disgruntled European nationals stamp off to their consuls to get the matter straightened out. Americans, vaunting themselves as being of the greatest nation on earth—and having no representation at Djibouti—go hopefully to the British consul. That gentleman is willing to be helpful, but remains vague as to causes. One senses intrigue and, if wise as to the normal channels of gossip, goes to the hotel keeper and suggests a

petite verre at one of the little round tables in the veranda.

This hotel keeper is a Greek and has a national aptitude for intrigue. From him one learns the scandal in a single terse sentence. Abyssinia, he explains is a country rich in mineral wealth and surrounded on all sides by England, France and Italy. That is all. He grins and throws his hands out, palms uppermost His very silence implies, "nuff sed." But noting still the bewilderment on one's face, he laughs aloud and continues.

"But I forget. You Americans do not understand international politics."

He elucidates the gossip of the cafes at unctuous length. It condenses down to the bald accusation that the three interested parties, watching each other like jealous cats on a fence, have agreed among themselves for the common advantage that certain articles shall not pass into Abyssinia except under special dispensation. The principal and most obvious of these tabus, of course, are all such articles as may come under the heading of "military supplies."

Enlightened, one returns to the *douane* to proceed according to one's individual resourcefulness.

In this case—and in this one only—I had been forewarned by a good friend who knew something about Abyssinia. I was able to understand now what all the official subterfuges really meant. I asked the *agent douanier* whether there had not arrived a letter or a cable or something from the minister of war in Paris. The agent did not know, but he would immediately go in and inquire of the chief of the *douane*. In a moment the chief himself came out.

Ah, meestaire the distinguished, the explorer American of the *Adventure!* But certainly there had been a cablegram from the minister of war. The little matter of sporting weapons for so well accredited a party, pouf, it was nothing! Monsieur would declare only the number and type of the weapons and the quantity of ammunition and—with deprecating hands—would pay a small import tax, and all would be well.

I have not yet been able to understand the meaning or reason of an import tax on weapons passing through the country unused; but it was not too exorbitant—two hundred and sixteen francs altogether—so I paid it, and in another minute two imposing cartloads containing twenty-two cases of expedition equipment passed untouched through the gate.

But another pitfall of amazing officialdom gaped before me almost at the custom-house gates. I was in Djibouti; I had safely passed two colonial bureaus. But there was another, more inexorable than either—the bureau of the *chemin de fer*.

The railroad official suddenly exhibited an astounding state of mind. It mattered not that I was on French soil, having legally passed the customs with weapons in transit; they couldn't accept my "munitions," as they called them, for transport unless I could produce some sort of authority to show that I had a right to take them out of French soil into Abyssinia. From where was I to get such an authorization? That they did not know, but authorization I must have.

So, being American, I went to the Abyssinian consul, an altogether charming young man who spoke a French that shamed my blundering efforts, and laid my troubles upon his desk. He smiled gravely. Mine was no new story to him, and he discussed means of circumventing the bureaucratic complex. Half diffidently I told him that I had in London obtained a priceless letter from a member of the Abyssinian nobility to Ras Taffari Makonnen, the ruler of the country.

"Splendid," he said. "I will wire to His Imperial Highness."

He did. I don't know what he could have said, for he had not even seen the letter; and as for myself, since it was written in Amharic, I could not even guess at its import. But the following day there came a telegram from the Ras authorizing entry into Abyssinia, free of all imports, duties and taxes, of my whole

twenty-two cases of equipment, inclusive of all guns and ammunition.

That at last was sufficient for the consciences of the railway officials. They accepted the gear for shipment by the next train and they charged me more than four times the value of a first class ticket for "excess baggage." But that train didn't go till three days later; for only two trains leave Djibouti each week for Addis Abeba, the capital of Abyssinia.

Three days of leisure, after my frenzied runnings between colonial bureaus, to be spent somehow in Djibouti. Somewhat a feat of endurance. Djibouti is all that it has been cursed for, and more, and earns the right to be added to the places listed as being the last that God made. Situated just round the lower end of the Red Sea in the Bay of Tajurrah, it is hot —hotter even than Aden, just across on the Arabian shore. Built on a flat dust heap, it is a place of permanent sirocco. Glare-goggles serve to keep the flies out of one's eyes, but not the blowing sand.

It has been said that there are twenty-seven trees in Djibouti. I didn't see all of them. There is a Greek hotel; and if one doesn't like that one there is an Armenian hotel. There is a European quarter consisting of the consulates and of three import houses whose function is to transmit goods into Abyssinia. It has a tiny public park that contains most of the trees and simmers in the sun.

There is a Yemen Arab quarter that festers in the heat. There is a polyglot quarter that stinks. There is a Somali quarter that does it with tenfold ferocity. There is a camel market and a goat market that look down upon the two foregoing as mere amateurs. And there are flies and drains. Aloof on a sand bank is the railroad station, and exclusive behind stone walls near the jetty is the governor's mansion which, surrounded by carefully fostered shrubbery, looks as if it might be cool—as low as a hundred, perhaps.

Yet in spite of all, credit is due to the colonial administration in that Djibouti is as habitable as it is. Frightful tales are told about it before the white man came in. A settlement on the edge of a burning desert where the whole water supply has to be dumped out to deep and brakish wells has distinctly offered difficulties to colonization.

To those of us effete ones who live in our home cities and think of hotels in terms of Statlers and Commonwealths, frightful tales can be told about the best hotel in Djibouti. A flat, two storied building with a deep, cloistered veranda along its front; in the rear, a place of smells and acrid camel-dung smoke which one discovers to be the kitchen; a network of common electric cord attached with upholstery tacks to plaster walls and wooden partitions for the lights; appalling sanitary arrangements; and not a window in the place.

One sleeps with wide open doors and hopes that sneak thieves are not too active in Djibouti. One sleeps, that is to say, if one is of robust constitution, for the mosquito netting is patterned after a Swiss cheese and the beds are actively inhabited. And then, possibly a morning or two later, one comes across a faded and fly-specked sign hanging half torn from behind a door warning guests that everything should be kept under lock and key, as the management will not be responsible for any loss.

For relaxation in Djibouti one can hire a Levantine guide to take one after dark to see an Arab dance or a Somali dance or a Soudanese dance. The guide hints leeringly that if one is in luck one may witness something shocking. It has been my experience that this dark suggestion is the whole stock in the trade of all Levantine guides. In sheer boredom one decides to see the Yemen Arab in his lighter moods.

An Arab dance consists of two drums and a reed pipe and a half dozen men who jump and stamp their feet. The guide suggests that at the Somali dance there will be women, and leads to a more noisome part of the town. A Somali dance consists of two drums and a reed pipe and a half a dozen men who jump up and

down. But it is true there are women. They beat the drums; sometimes they get up and jump and stamp their feet.

The guide remains unabashed and says that it is the Soudanese dance that is his real *pièce de résistance.* A Soudanese dance consists of two drums and the regular complement of men and women; only here the women sit at opposite ends and hoot shrilly to one another at intervals. The guide demands fifty francs and gets ten—and is satisfied.

Into this town of disappointments and delays and adamant bureaus there came a German, calm, collected and loaded down with a motion picture camera and a full field equipment. Though he was, of course, a deadly rival to the representative of Pathé, the whole of our party, looking upon him as a brother of the trail, hastened to warn him of the obstruction which beset his path and which he must quickly set about overcoming if he hoped to catch that train.

And he thanked us and said yes, he knew all about those things; he had, in fact, come prepared. Special permits and passes had been issued to him as long as a month before and he had nothing to do but board the train and go through. The German minister at Addis Abeba had supplied all the necessary information and obtained all the necessary documents, and the German consul at Djibouti was looking after the handling of his gear.

This is good for our *amour propre* to contemplate.

From Djibouti it is a three-day railroad journey to get to Addis Abeba, for the train travels only by day and passengers stop off for lunch at mid-way stations and for bed and dinner each evening. The reason for this is that the hinterland Somalis are a people who have ever been turbulent, and that beyond them, in the Danakil foothills, lives a woolly tribe of spearmen called Dankalis, who regard the railroad with its telegraph wires as a heaven-sent supply of material out of which to make copper bracelets for their arms and hammered pot-leg slugs for their stolen rifles.

Some little while ago the railroad found the strain of keeping up the copper supply to be too heavy a drain on its working budget and decided to replace the looted sections with cheaper iron wire. The Dankalis, deeply wounded by this unsportmanlike action, retaliated by coming down on moonlight nights and removing whole sections of track; and some of the young bloods invented the game of lying by the track and hurling their broad-bladed spears through the train windows and then running screaming with laughter into the night.

So now trains run only by day; and at intervals along the track one sees tiny square blockhouses with loop-holed walls. One sees also now and then somber Dankalis with shocks of matted hair leaning on their spears and thinking of what they'd like to do if they dared, by day.

And each evening at the stop-over stations, passengers are put to the inconvenience of bundling out of the train with every last item of baggage. For some strange Gallic reason it doesn't seem possible to let passengers off with just their overnight suitcases and to lock up the train, which stays right there on the track till next morning.

Each evening as the train pulls up, the first class car and the second class car—there is only one of each—are besieged by a gang of yelling porters, Somalis, Arabs, Hindus, who climb in through the windows and fight with each other to grab whatever pieces of baggage they can and hand them out to their confederates outside; and once outside and out of sight in the hands of these indiscriminate and unlicensed porters, who can guess how much of it will ever reach the hotel?

Passengers must fight back—physically, to the extent of wrestling their dunnagea way from insistent pirates who understand neither English nor French and who laugh hugely, thinking it a wonderful joke that a white man can curse them in blood-curdling Arabic. When the fighting is over and the passenger is counting over his rescued pieces there

comes a belated, shabby Arab with a badge in his yellow turban, who says:

"I am hotel, marshter. I got it man here."

This identical procedure happened at each stop over; and the experienced travelers of the road offered the coldly cynical explanation that the local unlicensed pirates have established the prerogative, under threat of dire beating, that the hotel runner should let them have their chance first.

The railway journey of three long days is deadly enough, though the cars are comfortable. First and second class are included in a single coach divided by a partition and are identical in every way except that the fare is just half in the latter case. But, alas, the white man's prestige demands that he travel first.

The first day is one of parched heat, traversing the Somali plain where dome-shaped anthills dot the desperate barenness and the miserable Somali huts look exactly like them. Long, well beaten footpaths wind away into the heat haze, and one wonders what these unhappy folk live upon and why; for there is no sign of water and nothing grows round the huts.

In the mid-distances towering white columns ascend and drop abruptly, bringing a vague conjecture of smoke signals among the desert tribes. Till the train passes right through one of them, and then the choking sand-blast that envelops everything proves that they are not signals but whirling dust-devils.

With the first evening the train begins to climb the foothills of Dire Dawa where the frontier customs and a Greek hotel await one. The customs is a scuffling madhouse, for every article of hand-baggage of every passenger must be opened and passed, even though it will all be carried back to the train next morning. First, second and third class passengers swear and struggle cheek by jowl; and it's first come, first served, and no favors.

Next to myself, with his elbow in my chest, was a naked Somali with something dead in a basket; and since his lungs were louder than mine he got through first. It was a forcible reminder that I was in Abyssinia, free and independent Ethiopia where the white man is not supreme.

The hotel is a pleasant surprize—clean and cool and situated in an oasis of orange-trees with flaming bougainvillea and pink honeysuckle climbing over the veranda trellises. The Greek who owns it is a brother-in-law or something to the Greek in Djibouti, so he knows just what prices to charge the rich Americans.

The next day—at an uncomfortable six-thirty again—the train begins to wind into rolling foothills; winds with apparent unnecessary tortuousness where a short trestle across an intervening dry water-course would have saved, in many instances, as much as two or three miles.

Gazelles stand and gaze wide-eyed at the train and iguanas scuttle into holes at the base of anthills—holes big enough to shelter a bear. It is explained by a Frenchman, one of the railway officials who takes a propriety pride in showing off the wonders of the country to strangers, that the protective instinct of gazelles urges them out into the desert places where there is no water to nourish the carnivores that might prey upon them; and that *le bon Dieu* has for this purpose bestowed upon gazelles the gift of never needing water. Following up this interesting theory, I couldn't refrain from asking him whether *le bon Dieu* had also endowed gazelles with the apparently equally necessary faculty of living upon sand and loose pebbles; and he replied with wise thoughtfulness that who could tell? Perhaps they were able to extract some form of nutriment from the sand.

That day winds itself to a long-drawn close at Hawash, where the train suddenly turns a last bend and comes into a mimosa and cane forest, the drainage system of the Hawash River, a considerable stream that goes down and loses itself somewhere in the thirsty sand plain that we have left, for it never reaches any sea.

The Greek at Hawash has received a

telegram from his cousin at Dire Dawa and dinner is all ready for us. He was in America during the war in the candy business, out of which, in seventeen months, he made enough money to buy his present wayside monopoly. So he hails us as compatriots and makes us free of his pomegranate and papaya trees.

From Hawash the train winds steadily up through good country. Rolling grass land and mimosa scrub. Bird life suddenly is prolific. Baboons sit up like Somalis and bark at the train. Guinea-fowl scratch in the dust with unconcern. Antelope offer shots impossible to miss. But the tawny things that move suggestively behind the bushes and that one hopes to be lions are only gaunt camels that seem to roam at will and belong to nobody. Local people tell us, however, that lions can be heard any night and that leopards are a pest.

As the day wears on, game is less and stations are closer. We are reaching the wide spread purlieus of Addis Abeba, where every man who is anybody has a rifle and a host of armed dependents and the country has been shot clean.

And still the train winds and winds and winds. Impatient Americans exclaim against the amazingly foolish distances which could have been avoided by just the tiniest bridge, and brag that an American engineer could have cut that road by at least one third. But an old-timer passenger laughs and says:

"Not foolish, *mon ami*. For consider, I beg of you. Is it not that much more money can be made in building a long distance than in building a short? And since it was the French government that paid, *v'là*, what would you?"

Evening draws near and some one presently points and says—

"Why, that must be Addis."

And so a cluster of whitewash walls and galvanized iron roofs set in a eucalyptus forest turns out to be.

I, personally, was disappointed in the approach, for I had read accounts of the grandeur of the scene, and since the town stands at an elevation of eight thousand feet I had expected something of the orchid-festooned gorges of Darjeeling in the Himalayas or the massive jaggedness of La Paz in the Bolivian Andes. But to Addis Abeba the rise is so gradual that, in spite of its eminence, the town has the appearance of being pleasingly situated in hilly country.

As the train squeals round the last curve and strains up the last rise, round wattle-and-daub huts with conical thatched roofs become thicker; till their quaintness which was at first intriguing merges into the commonplace, and the commonplace into their real inherent squalor. Then everything is blotted out by clumps, by groves, by forests of Australian eucalyptus trees. The train rolls through a tall avenue of clean drug-store smell and stops opposite a twenty by thirty corrugated shed which is the terminal station of Addis Abeba.

And then the fight with the howling horde of porters begins again, till the Greek who owns the "Imperial" Hotel arrives with a strong-arm squad and explains that his cousin has telegraphed from Hawash and that rooms are waiting for the distinguished Americans, who thus duly arrive at Addis Abeba, the capital of Abyssinia, and find, of course, that the best rooms in the hotel have long ago been reserved for their German fellow traveler and for the Italian who was wise enough to travel up in the identical comfort of the second class.

ARRIVED in Abyssinia at last, I am surrounded by a thousand absorbing things to investigate: A fascinating people; a purely feudal system in force; slaves who refuse freedom; a ruler who traces his descent direct from Solomon and the Queen of Sheba; a nation unique in having maintained its freedom unconquered as far back as its history reaches—and it goes back into ancient Egypt; the only people in Africa who have won a war and exacted an indemnity from a European power; and werewolves; and much more that I haven't even heard of as yet.

But they must wait, all of them. To us of *Adventure* something more absorbing calls. There is a tale of a man-eating hippo that demands attention to the exclusion of everything else. About four days' trek from the capital is a lake called Abiata where a herd of hippopotami hide by day and come out at night to eat the villagers' barley and melons.

Arrussi Gallas, those people are; described by some explorers as being, with the Masai, the most warlike of the African tribes. At a near-by lake, Zwai, a German has been trying to establish a farm to raise coffee and ostriches; and the scandal that is bruited abroad whispers of a comely half-breed girl and of the usual innocence betrayed and of an impassioned appeal to angry tribesmen. And they, with adequate dispatch, have chased the settler away and burned his crop.

Two weeks ago the Abyssinian government followed the usual procedure of goverments in such cases and sent a punitive expedition of seven hundred soldiers to restore order, with the quite usual result. The Gallas quietly disappeared in the face of so strong an armed force, and the expedition has returned with a full report of the damage done—and with the story of the hippo.

It seems that an old bull, tired of being shot full of pot-leg out of old "gras" rifles, has turned savage and has bitten one or two canoes in two and horribly mangled several natives who have come upon it on its marauding trips, and have tried to drive it out of their mellon patches.

IN THE foregoing report of travel much has been said about twenty-two cases of baggage.

Imprimis, there is the Pathé camera man—who in himself explains away most of the cases. Cameras. The newest development of Carl Akeley's wonderful field camera with a battery of lenses of various tele-focuses. A pair of "Eyemo" automatics that can be snatched up and brought into action as quickly as a press Graflex. And, of course, a Graflex. Then film. Miles of film; heavy stuff, packed in strong, chunky boxes. And acres of film packs. Pathé have supplied their camera man with all the latest equipment in the business; and results all depend now on the man behind the gun.

Then guns and ammunition. You who have outfitted for an expedition of six months know what an appalling number of smallish cases are required for the heavy equipment.

Then come those one or two inevitable trunks that I always resent. One starts blithely for the trails. A few woolen shirts and socks, some strong boots and a bed roll. All good, comfortable stuff that packs close with a friendly feel. Those and the guns. One can lavish attention upon them and forgive them their weight.

But, and alas! In order to get to the back trails of allure one must travel first in formal steamboats and through civilized towns, and one must stay at some jumping-off place or other to make up one's safari—and may heaven forgive those last stage residents for their conventions of dress that they have built up to be ikons.

Above all, if one expects official help, one must call upon, and later dine with, officials; and officials in the far away corners of the earth have built a religion out of dress suits.

The impedimenta already enumerated ought to explain away twenty-two cases easily enough. But yet further and cogent excuse is forthcoming. The camera man has brought a wife as far as the last jumping off place. And I have one who won't believe that there is any "last" place. The next is always the most insistently alluring, says she. And wives, too, need largeish trunks.

My party, therefore, in the immediate case of the man-eating hippo, means my wilful wife, my meek self and a guide, with the usual complement of pack-mules, boys, cook, etc. The camera man stays in the city.

The guide is a gem of flawless worth. On him depend our highest hopes. We shall see. We and the Red Gods. We shall see.

The Old

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By

LYMAN BRYSON

THE NOSU tribes live on the other side of the Yangtse Valley. No one knows much about them, for they are savage and shy. The Yunnan Chinese to the south know least of all, perhaps, for their ideas about them are full of prejudice and terror. They rule their Nosu brethren, but they do it by keeping out of their way as much as possible and pretending to themselves that orders are respected. No sane Chinese official is likely to go across the river to find out whether the Nosu men are obeying the inescapable edicts of the Middle Kingdom or, as it is called now, the Republic.

The Yangtse makes a great bend to the south there. Its gorge is the natural boundary between Yunnan and Szechuen, but Szechuen people are far away in other parts of their vast province and the Yunnanese across the gorge have to suffer the Nosus as neighbors and as an administration problem. The hills are ragged and mighty, being the eastern little brothers of those ranges where the great rivers of Asia take their high beginning and spread out in a fan over the world—the Yangtse, the Salween, the Mekong.

On their own side of the river the Chinese have built stone towers, each on its own cliff, to run to whenever the Nosu wild men come across. The ferry-boats are always tied up at night on the Chinese side. Every precaution is taken to see that the Nosu hillmen stay at home. If they come visiting they find their Chinese hosts either locked up in the towers or run away. A few "tame" men of the "black blood" live on the Chinese side, contemptuously and temporarily accepting the mandarin's rule.

Even the Nosu women are dangerous. They stride over the rocks with bare unbound feet and can walk like men.

These are the things that many people knew about the Nosus. They were well enough known to have come often to the attention of Mr. Peter Williams. Mr. Williams lived, when he was stable anywhere, in Shanghai. But he was not one of those who lock themselves in that nest of artificial Westernism and say they inhabit China. He wandered. The American interests who paid the sometimes shocking expenses of his wanderings learned a good deal about the real China from his reports. The reports came from far afield and were very often prophetic. They spoke of regions where business "will" be done, if the slow arm of commerce ever reaches that far.

Williams wandered into Chaotung, the largest city near the Nosu territory, one spring day. His appearance startled the solitary missionaries there. Mr. Rutherford and his wife and their two assistants had almost forgotten that some men have blue eyes. The amazed Rutherford children had really never known how white

Earth-Eye

White Sorcery in the Chinese Hills

men look; they considered their parents and the other inhabitants of the missionary compound as unique beings.

Williams was not interested in the strangeness of his advent in that far-off corner, however; as far as he could see it was a dull, commonplace Yunnanese town. Except for the fortress towers on the hills.

"I think I'd better go across the river," he remarked to Mr. Rutherford, "and see what these Nosu fellows are like."

Mr. Rutherford began to tell him a lot of things he already knew.

"Yes, yes," said Williams, 'I know the reputation of the Lolos—"

The missionary was aghast.

"Not Lolos!" he cried. "That shows how little you really know about them—to call them Lolos! That may be safe enough in Shanghai but not out here in *China!* Why, my dear man, there are four Nosu boys in my mission school. They are refugees from family feuds across the line. They may not love their people much. But the ten-year-old—the littlest one of them—is capable of putting a knife in your back if he hears you calling his people Lolos!"

Williams blinked. His blue eyes, looking out rather casually from under his light bushy brows had seldom any expression more intense than curiosity.

"I hope you teach them better manners than that," he said, mildly.

But Mr. Rutherford was an earnest man.

"I mean it," he said. "You people from the port towns don't have the faintest notion of conditions out here—"

"Exactly," interrupted Williams, still mildly. "That's why I want to find out something."

"You'll never come back to tell about it." Mr. Rutherford was grim. He stood up from the black Chinese chair upon which he had been sitting stiffly and paced across the room. Perhaps the fact that in fourteen years' residence on the edge of the hill-men's country he had never thought of going across might have made him more insistent upon the impossibility of doing it. "You'll never come back—

and of course, I'll get blamed for not stopping you."

"Not your fault." Williams also stood up. He was an inch shorter than the missionary, but heavier. His strength was not adequately indicated by the swing of his shoulders, but he looked apologetically capable of taking care of himself. "What do they talk anyway? Do they understand Chinese?"

"Not mandarin certainly. The chiefs

probably know a little of our Yunnan dialect."

"That'll do. I can handle that all right—with the chiefs. Where can I get an interpreter who can talk their regular lingo? And I'll need a coolie or two, I suppose—although I can live on cold oatmeal if I have to. It wouldn't be the first time—"

"Do you insist?" Mr. Rutherford wrung his hands eloquently.

"I suppose," said Williams, ignoring his host's distress, "that somewhere around here you could find me an interpreter who could be depended upon."

Mr. Williams did not exactly insist. He simply went ahead mildly with his plans and took it for granted that every one would help him. Mr. Rutherford stopped wringing his hands and got him the best interpreter available, one of his own students who had been born across there in the hills but had been a resident of the missionary school for ten years. He was eighteen years old, eager and talkative, but respectful toward the ways of his beloved teacher or any other Westerners.

His name was Oo-Meng, conveniently shortened to the last syllable. Meng very probably thought that all Americans had the same dispositions and the same purposes in his country. The quiet, obstinately devoted Mr. Rutherford was an American. This new person, fully as quiet as the missionary, although with a more searching candor in his blue eyes, was also an American. Hence, in Meng's mind, they were the same. And indeed there was nothing much in their appearance to indicate rather striking differences, although these differences might have been a warning to any one invited to accompany Mr. Williams into unexplored territory.

His friends considered it quite characteristic of Williams that he had once gone into a Chinese prison and run the risk of summary execution merely to protest against the sort of treatment which a corrupt judge meted out to one of his Chinese associates. The machinery of extra-territoriality had been got under way—not by his request, but in feverish haste—by a badly scared vice-consul whom Williams' friends had told about it. Williams himself was calmly prepared to dare the whole mandarin population to execute an innocent man.

Such things happened to him often but they never went into his reports to the head office in Shanghai. "The best scout for business in Asia," the head of the office called him. "He has tact." The head of the office probably never did learn that Peter Williams' chief exercise of tact was in telling only the least interesting part of what happened to him.

II

IT WAS not a formidable cavalcade which set out to penetrate the hill country several days later. They had a three days' journey from the missionary compound of Mr. Rutherford at Chaotung to the banks of the great river. For that first lap Williams took only his young interpreter. Rutherford had a friend, a great landowner, who lived above the ferry at the village of Shin Chan Keo, and from him Williams expected to reinforce his expedition with coolies to carry his light baggage.

"Don't like too many people around," he said. "They get in the way."

Mr. Rutherford bade him good-by with honest tears in his eyes.

"I hope they turn you back," he said fervently, three times over. "I hope they turn you back."

"See you again in a couple of months," answered Williams. "Much obliged."

As he tramped over the mountains with the young Oo-Meng Williams pumped the interpreter methodically. Was he afraid to go among the hill tribes? Why should he be? was Meng's eager answer; he was a Nosu himself. It was only the Chinese who were afraid of the hill-men because the hill-men could fight and the Chinese couldn't. That was simple enough. And they would certainly respect a white man; they were hospitable. The only difficulty, Meng believed, would be the chance that some powerful Earth-Eye might take a notion to hold him for ransom. Earth-Eyes did that sometimes. Of course, no power could control them. And what, asked Williams, peering out from under his light brows curiously, what was an Earth-Eye?

They were walking westward in the early morning through a high meadow

where their feet had a soft carpet of young edelweiss flowers. The rough peaks lifted all around them, blue and gold in the morning sun. A distant tower was the only sign of humanity here and the mystery of the mountains seemed to be not danger but endless peace.

Meng was slender and light and his quick eagerness beside the cool manner of the American made him seem even younger than he was. His dark eyes and the yellowish tinge of his smooth cheeks made the readiness of his English speech surprizing; he had not wasted his ten years in a missionary school. With a mastery of the difficult Western tongue he had acquired also a worshipful and often expressed belief in the power and goodness of Western men. An American would be perfectly safe among the Nosu hill-men, if only the Earth-Eyes—

"They are chiefs, you understand, Mr. Williams. My people in the hills have a very simple system of government, not very different from what you used to have in Europe centuries ago. Every man owes allegiance to some superior, and at the head of all are the Earth-Eyes. They are absolutely independent of everybody—except some other chief who has more fighting men."

"What do you call them? Earth-Eyes? Why Earth-Eyes, Meng?"

"Why, because—well really, sir, I don't know. It never occurred to me to wonder because I have always heard them called that. Just as our tribes are called the 'black bloods'. How could any one tell the origin of names that are so old—that have been used for so many, many generations?"

"It doesn't matter, of course. Are all Nosus hostile, as Mr. Rutherford seems to think?"

"No. The tribesmen that we meet will be simple and friendly. I'm sure of that, Mr. Williams. They'll be curious about you because many of them have never seen a white man. They'll think you are strange and wonderful. But the Earth-Eyes are not simple, faithful men—" Meng paused and stared away across the meadows toward the peaks that lay ahead of them. "They have too much power. Some of them have traveled into the Chinese country and have Chinese ideas of luxury. My own father was killed trying to run away from a chief who oppressed him. He had got clear over south of the river, but he was followed. That is how I happened to be picked up by Mr. Rutherford."

"Yes," answered Williams with his attitude of mild thoughtfulness. "I suppose I really ought to make a visit to the home of one of those chiefs."

Meng stopped in his tracks. He looked

as if he might not go another step. But when Williams turned and looked at him inquiringly, he laughed suddenly.

"Of course," he said, "that is exactly what you would say. You are a brave man, Mr. Williams, and I am not afraid to go with you.'

As they approached the village of Shin Chan Keo they came again to intensive cultivation. Right up to the banks of the Yangtse the Chinese pushed their industrious farming. Orange and pepper trees lined the valley and the level places were thick with carefully tended cotton. On this side the river was industry. Across on the other side was the sharp contrast of the wildest jungle. Its rankness was a warning of the men that lived there but to the eye of Williams it had an irresistible appeal.

The coming of a white man into Shin Chan Keo, the tiny village by the ferry, made the usual sensation. The inhabitants of the town dropped all the business of their laborious lives and devoted themselves to the fascinating opportunity of watching every move the stranger made. Meng, pushing arrogantly among them, demanded the way to the home of the landowner, the friend of the missionary Rutherford, to whom they had a letter and who would furnish them with coolies.

Williams took refuge in the unspeakable tavern which was the only resource for strangers in Shin Chan Keo, while the Nosu boy made further inquiries. He was tired of hearing himself discussed in shrill impudence by crowds of pushing villagers who supposed of course that he could not understand what they said. He had had to kick one enterprising watcher out bodily before he could be alone among the incredible greasy smells of the inn. When the inn-keeper apologetically announced that there were two men who wanted to see him—on business—Williams laughed. That was impossible.

The inn-keeper was very sorry, but it was true. There were two men, and he whispered—

"Nosu!"

The two men who entered when Williams nodded were swarthier and heavier than Chinese and their clothes had a different look. Their trousers were short, coming only just below the knees, and their tunics were belted in with narrow sashes. Above their slanting eyes their foreheads were bound tightly in narrow turbans. One of them, the older one, had a cast in his left eye that gave him the effect of watching over his shoulder. His face had a strange expression, partly because the sinister obliquity of that eye was belied by his insinuating smile.

Williams was thinking he would have to wait until Meng came back to interpret for him, but the crooked-eyed one spoke to him, elaborately respectful, in Chinese. The Yunnanese dialect was difficult, but he could follow. They had heard that the stranger was going across the river into the hill country.

"What?" Williams was surprized and annoyed. "How in the world did you discover that?"

"It is said in the village," answered the Nosu, smiling.

While the American was wondering how indiscreet Meng might have been, talking in the market-place, the Nosu hill-men explained that his name was Po-Yeh and his companion, who was also his brother, was Sho-Hu. They were the stranger's friends; upon that point he was insistent. Because they were friends they wanted to journey across the river for a distance into the hills under the stranger's protection.

"Under my protection?" asked Williams. "But you are Nosu men. What can I do for you?"

"We will protect each other," answered Po-Yeh with his ingratiating smile.

"But I don't understand."

It was really very reasonable, according to Po-Yeh. There had been so much brigandage on the roads recently that he and his brother, who had been in Chinese territory for some weeks, hesitated about starting back to their home. They were sure no one would molest a Westerner, and if any one did, why, of course, the

Westerner had magic weapons that would make him invincible.

"I have heard of the weapons of Western men," Po-Yeh concluded knowingly.

It seemed to Williams the sort of invitation he was least likely to accept. But he bade Po-Yeh and the silent Sho-Hu a polite good-by and promised to consider it. Within half an hour the eager Meng came back sadly crestfallen.

"I have discovered where the friend of Reverend Rutherford lives—oh yes," he said. "But I have discovered also that he is a cross and suspicious old man—"

"I don't care anything for the gossip you picked up in the streets," Williams interrupted.

"No, Mr. Williams, you don't, of course. But I picked up more than gossip. I discovered that orders have been issued to prevent you from going across the river. Mr. Rutherford must have spoken to the governor. They fear for your safety."

"In that case," Williams stood up and walked across the little room, "we'll have to get started before they stop us."

"But you can not go without coolies or guides, sir."

"Well—" Williams considered—"at any rate I'm going. I have already found two guides and if necessary we'll get somebody to carry some supplies on the other side."

Young Meng stood with his mouth open. Only by that did he betray the fact that his regret over being stopped here at the ferry was unreal. But Williams knew well enough that Meng was hoping all the time that something would prevent their going. In the beginning he had anticipated a simple little excursion across the river and a few miles into the jungle-covered hills. A glimpse or two of the hill people would be enough for the Westerner. But when he discovered that this crazy American intended to seek out a chance to visit the stronghold of an Earth-Eye, to go in spite of definite instructions from the authorities, Meng sighed. He did not try to withdraw. He continued to hope for the worst.

"And who, sir, may these guides be?"

"I'll let you talk to them."

And Williams sent Meng to seek Po-Yeh and Sho-Hu and find out what he could about them. In the meantime he slept. In spite of a constant hubbub of quarrels and bargaining and carousing just outside his door in the court of the inn and, in spite of the jagged, inhospitable bench under his weary body, he took a dreamless rest. It was characteristic of Williams that when things looked worst and he most needed repose, he could sleep anywhere instead of being unable as most men are to sleep on the eve of trouble.

When he awoke it was late afternoon. Meng was sitting in his room waiting impatiently for him to awaken. Meng had more news for him. This time there could be no doubt about it. They absolutely could not cross the river in the company of those two Nosus, Po-Yeh and Sho-Hu. The boy's animated face indicated the exciting nature of his tale.

"These men, Mr. Williams, these Nosu men, have a feud on with Mr. An. If we cross the river with them we are lost, absolutely lost—"

Williams, rubbing his eyes, interrupted him before he was well begun.

"Look here, now, Meng. Since I arrived in Chaotung a week or so ago everybody I have met has done his best to show me that I can't find out anything about these fellows over there in the hills. Mr. Rutherford says it can't be done. He turns me over to you. You start out by saying it is a simple matter, and then as we get closer to the river you begin to find all sorts of difficulties you didn't happen to think of before. We have a letter from Mr. Rutherford to some old potentate here in Shin Chan Keo and you tell me he and the authorities will keep me from going if they can.

"A couple of Nosus invite me to go with them and you say that would be suicide. For heaven's sake, Meng, why make all this fuss? If you want to stay here—if you're anxious for a chance to quit me, say so. Otherwise, since going

with these two fellows is our only chance, we'll take it."

Meng shook his head.

"You don't understand, Mr. Williams. It's the old Earth-Eye. This Earth-Eye, Mr. An, is a terrible person." He screwed up his face solemnly. "I assure you, sir, he is a very terrible person. He is ruling Earth-Eye in this district, and if these two fellows are his enemies they are marked men."

"But they are going across aren't they—and they know the country?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then what do I care about their feuds with this Mr. An? I'm in a hurry and I'm starting across the river tomorrow morning on the first trip of the ferry. You go ahead and make whatever arrangements are necessary."

Another momentary accession of reflected courage came to Meng. He shuddered; then he smiled.

"All right," he said. He waved a hand. "As I believe you say sometimes, sir—'And that's that!'"

III

THE FERRY over the Yangtse at Shin Chan Keo, a government enterprise as badly managed as government enterprises are likely to be in that part of the world, is a rickety boat which seems likely to fall to pieces every time it crosses the swirling Yangtse water. When it does fall to pieces it will be splintered a few moments later in the seething rapids below, and whoever rides it on that last journey will never reappear to complain.

On the south side are the cotton and sugar-cane fields of the Yunnan farmers; on the other the no-man's land of jungle behind which the hill tribes live. The boat always seems reluctant to leave on it's first morning journey; the Chinese fields are safe and civilized.

The ferryman and his little crew blinked in disgust when Williams and Meng, accompanied by Po-Yeh and Sho-Hu, and trailed by a little caravan of burden-bearing coolies, arrived at a much too early hour and demanded immediate transportation.

The chief ferryman was not at all sure that the river was in shape to be crossed at all that day. The signs were not propitious. Just look, please, at that murderous current! Besides—well, besides—he did not feel like traveling. His head ached—

"He has heard that they don't want you to cross," Meng whispered in Williams' ear. "Probably he has orders."

Williams walked unconcernedly on to the little deck of the ferry-boat and Po-Yeh followed him. Po-Yeh was not unconcerned, however. He put into the forbidding expression of his crooked face and the carriage of his sturdy shoulders all the contempt for a Chinese ferryman that a Nosu hill-man could feel. Even the raging river itself might have been expected to be a little intimidated if it had not been half Nosu itself. Sho-Hu doubled Po-Yeh's strength by marching on also and Oo-Meng trotted after. The coolies straggled.

The captain of the ferry sat in his place like an obstinate immovable image; he might be frightened of these strangers, Americans and Nosus, but he was frightened also of the mandarins who did not want people making reckless excursions into the hills. That was natural enough in the mandarins. Nobody else had ever wanted to. The ferryman did not argue the matter. His manner said enough.

Williams thought of unmooring the boat and seeing what he would do to save himself from the current, but that was dismissed as foolish. It probably wouldn't work.

Po-Yeh had walked over before the silent Chinese captain and stood with folded arms.

"You expect to go back and forth between your dirty village and the other side a good many times more before you drown, I suppose," he said in Yunnanese.

The captain blinked. The face of Po-Yeh was thrust close and an expression of cold ferocity came over it.

"If you don't get over now and hurry

about it, some of my friends will wait for you on the other side some bright morning. You won't drown, you fat dog, but you'll wish you had!"

Whether he was frightened then or not, the Chinese saw a way to save face before the mandarins. He was obviously being compelled by force to transport these wild men. He gave his orders. The ferry-boat swung out into the stream and headed for the rapids as if intending to shoot them. The great sweeps bent against the rushing water desperately.

It was only just in time. From the bank they had left they heard a Chinese shouting. A man was there, solitary in the morning loneliness, shouting angrily that he had come with commands from the *yamen* that no one was to cross that day—absolutely no one. They were to come back. Williams waved his hand politely to the distracted messenger and put his hand to his ear as if he couldn't understand what was being shouted. Po-Yeh stood by the captain effectively. Far down on the north side they stepped out on the shore which is part of China but knows no Chinese law.

ALL THAT first day, they climbed the rough paths of the nearest hills toward the village where, according to Po-Yeh, they could spend the night. The air was warm only while the sun was high. In the late afternoon it began to be chilly; the nights evidently would be cold. Williams used his time trying to find out the story of the feud between the talkative Po-Yeh and the chieftain, Mr. An. It was of no importance as a reason for not traveling with Po-Yeh and his brother, but it might be illuminating as to the ways of the Nosus and their lordly Earth-Eyes.

Po-Yeh was quite willing to tell. Evidently he had counted on telling; he expected sympathy.

"It was about a woman," he began, "but the woman was my own sister."

He went on to explain rather more in detail than was necessary how Nosu women differed from their sisters on the Chinese side. They not only scorned to bind their feet; they scorned also to be bound by the caprices of men. They were free and vigorous and brave, worthy companions of Nosu warriors. Po-Yeh was very contemptuous about the Chinese of both sexes.

But evil things did occur sometimes even among the Nosus. This Earth-Eye, Mr. An, was so powerful that he thought he could do anything. And he had taken the little sister of Po-Yeh into his house, after capturing her by trickery and force. She was held there, a prisoner—a slave to an old man.

"If I had been in my home when the ruffians of the Earth-Eye came," said Po-Yeh, "I would have saved her from this, even if I had had to kill her before their eyes. But I was not there. One of the Earth-Eye's men got into our house by a ruse—he pretended to be a traveler who had lost his way. Then he opened our gate to twenty men, and while my mother screamed and called on the spirit of my dead father to help her, they carried my sister away." Po-Yeh stopped in the path, grinding his teeth and scowling in a spasm of savage anger. "Then of course, because he had wronged us, the Earth-Eye went on persecuting me and my brother. We had to find shelter for a while on the other side the river. Now perhaps things are a little quieter."

"How are you going to get your sister away from him?" asked Williams.

That question went unanswered then for they made an abrupt turn in the path and Williams stopped. It looked as if they had come to a jumping off place. There was a path ahead for a few steps, but it swung up along the sheer face of a great overhanging cliff and dwindled to nothing. He had seen trails all over China, paths, and bridges and fords exceptionally perilous, but never one like this. The chasm fell away rapidly on the left hand side and the irregular but smooth-worn shelf of the path, wide enough only for a foot, climbed to a vertiginous height. It went around the upper shoulder of the cliff, a mere wrinkle

in its slippery stone. He looked at Po-Yeh and, though he saw in the Nosu's crooked gaze a challenge, Williams asked casually—

"Shall I go on ahead?"

Sho-Hu took the lead, however, with Williams following and Po-Yeh just behind. They appeared not to think about the coolies, trusting them to get themselves and their burdens over empty air if necessary.

All except Williams were clad in sandals. The footgear of the two Nosus and of Oo-Meng was substantial; the coolies had flimsy straw contrivances, but they carried extra pairs. And Williams knew the reason. The sandals clung to the stone; his own leather, in spite of hobnails, grated and slipped. He put his right hand on the cliff side and watched for handy crevices.

The men were silent. Step after step was serious business enough. Williams was cool-headed; he did not fear dizziness. But he was not a Nosu. He turned once to look down on his left. The cliff bulged a little below the path so that they were suspended there, and the first visible thing down through the clear air was the purplish-green blur of the pine trees, so far away that they were only a stain in the bottom of the world.

Williams hesitated. His right hand, feeling automatically for a cranny, pulled away a bit of stone. He moved to take a step forward and his foot slipped. One foot went over the edge and he was down on his knees before he felt a grasp on his coat. Po-Yeh's hand held him by the slack of his coat just under his armpit. In a moment Sho-Hu had turned and was braced to support him. The abyss had wavered for an instant in his surprize, but it sank away in its place. He was steady again.

He laughed shamfacedly.

"When we get over—" he muttered, and they went on.

On the other side, when the trail widened again and became possible for merely human feet, he thanked Po-Yeh briefly.

"You saved my life," he said and offered a hand. The Nosus took his handshake awkwardly and Po-Yeh, looking with one eye back toward the pass, gave a handsome, magnanimous smile.

"We were to help each other, weren't we? It was a bargain?"

Williams assented heartily. He scarcely noticed the look which showed how genuinely happy Po-Yeh was to have put him under an obligation.

In a hour of further climbing, up and down, they crossed an easier pass. As they turned down on the other side, they saw the cluster of large buildings that made a Nosu village. On that side of the hills the jungle had been cleared for fields of maize. There were two or three flocks of goats grazing on the smooth slope and several spirited looking little horses were tethered under the trees.

The habitations were four or five huge tribal hotels of wattle and daub walls, roofed with thatch. They were crowded close together around a narrow court-like street and there people could be seen moving busily around. The invading party paused at the top of the pass. Williams studied the village curiously and Meng reassured him.

"Here everything will be all right, sir. These are simple people and they will be hospitable."

While they watched, there appeared to be some sort of commotion in the village. Several men ran out of the end of the street beyond the buildings and pointed upward toward the strangers.

"They will send some one to greet us and find out who we are," said Po-Yeh. "We had better go down slowly."

As they went they felt a sudden chill in the wind. The low afternoon sun was blotted out by a billowy thunder-cloud coming suddenly over the mountains, threatening and magnificent.

Three men were climbing rapidly toward them. As the two parties approached each other Williams made out that two of the men were clad, like Po-Yeh and his brother, in short tunics and trousers and had small turbans on

their round heads. Both of them carried heavy guns. The third bore himself with a swagger. About the middle of his body he wore a belt of some sort of armor which looked like polished ox-hide. He was evidently a person of importance and Williams, with Meng by his side, stepped forward to meet him. They were in a narrow part of the path with thick bushes on both sides. The one with the leather armor held up his arm and spoke.

"He says he has come to greet you," explained Meng, in Williams' ear.

At Williams' direction Meng answered the man's greeting. They were come in peace. For a few moments there was a rapid colloquy.

Then Meng explained in English.

"It is as I expected, Mr. Williams. This man is one of the officers of the Earth-Eye, Mr. An. The word that a Westerner was coming into Mr. An's territory has traveled ahead of us. He wants to know why we are here and what we are going to do. I'm afraid we are in for—"

The first explosive roll of thunder over their heads drowned out his words. The Nosus did not deign to glance at the approaching storm.

"Tell him we would like to visit the Earth-Eye's castle," said Williams. But he was used to dealing with interpreters. He could see by the expression on Meng's face that some deception was in the air and he repeated, "Tell him what I said, Meng!"

"I will, I will, Mr. Williams. But first he wants to know how many of us there are."

The Nosu officer spoke rapidly, and Meng turned and looked up the path behind them. Only the three coolies were there, waiting with their burdens like patient cattle. Po-Yeh and his silent brother had vanished. The men from the village said they had counted seven on the pass; now there were only five.

"What shall I tell them?" Meng looked nervous.

"Tell them we are five—as they can see for themselves—and that I am chieftain from the eastern end of China who wants to visit their chief in friendship."

The officer of the Earth-Eye received this message with a flourish of respect. Then, instead of turning and leading the way back down toward the village, where now a crowd of men and women and children was assembled to await the advent of strangers, he struck off at a swift pace toward the north.

"The Earth-Eye will know about us at once," Meng muttered dismally.

With the other two messengers who had come up from the village, Williams and Meng, followed by their bearers, went on down the hill. There was a great clamor around them, but it did not seem to be, for the moment, unfriendly. It was perhaps no worse than the swarming curiosity of the Chinese people who might have been met in the market-place of some hill town on the other side the river, in civilization."

The children hid behind their mother's skirts and looked at Williams' European garb with gaping astonishment. The women were not tittering and shy like Chinese women. As he had been led to expect, Williams had to stand the closest examination from them. They stared in his face and pulled at the cloth of his coat to see how it was made.

All the hill people were freer in their attitude than any Chinese he had ever seen. Their curiosity was as evident; it might even have been more simple and childlike. But they had a different sort of self-confidence. Their physical sturdiness, with greater range of height and breadth, gave a meaning to their characteristic way of holding up their heads and looking the stranger boldly in the face. These villagers were poor people; their clothing showed it as much as the hut-like rudeness of their dwellings. But many of them wore heavy brown cloaks of a wonderful homespun texture. Some of them had fine old-fashioned weapons. If they lacked anything, it was evident they were not aware of it, and asked nothing of outsiders.

They examined Williams and gave

him the chance he wanted to study them. He admired the firm reserved faces of the men, more aquiline and level-eyed than the Chinese, with a pleasing symmetry in spite of the invariable strong jaws and the high cheekbones.

But, partly because he had forgotten in long years in China that women can ever be fearless, he was most interested in the Nosu women. Three half-grown girls surveyed him steadily. Their grave, dignified faces were framed in their heavy black hair which hung in two long braids almost to their knees. They wore blouses of coarse cotton with large figured geometric patterns and short white skirts. One of them had long cotton trousers under her skirt but the others had bare calves and bare, travel-hardened feet.

Williams was not accustomed to feeling alien in any group of people. He had the easy adaptability which is instantly recognized as friendliness and bridges over without difficulty the differences of race and custom. But these Nosu women had a quality of frank aloofness about them, something remote and unfathomable. They looked as if they lived by a system of their own wild logic, imbued with a passion that would be human but mysterious.

One girl gave him a glance, half-appealing, half-contemptuous, but touched with the complete majestic unself-consciousness of a wild animal. When she let her gaze wander over him, taking in all the details of his outlandish dress, he looked down at her feet and saw that a split in the toughened flesh of her heel was sewed together with a cotton thread.

The men, some of whom carried handy knives, looked him over solemnly and, when Meng made a little speech of explanation, they all nodded as if the matter was clearly enough understood. One old fellow, evidently a headman of the village, motioned for Williams and Meng to follow, and led the way.

As they turned into the village court, or street, the storm broke. Williams had been watching the rolling clouds with an occasional glance, but he was unprepared for the appalling down-pour which broke loose in an instant. The afternoon glimmer was wiped out and they were in a swirling, rain-filled darkness. The crowd of village people scuttled away into the houses, their shouts scattering faintly in the noise of wind and thunder and rain.

Williams put down his head and followed as well as he could until at the door, through which he could see the light of a log fire, he was assailed by a pack of snarling dogs. They were more like wolves than household friends. One had him by the coat before the headman drove the beast away with a merciless blow of his stick. The others crouched around him and he was pushed through them roughly. Breathlessly, soaked and torn, he stumbled into the safety of the Nosu home.

Instead of offering any apology for this reception to his guests, the headman shook his head humorously and chuckled to himself. There was no pretense of gentle manners here. Williams shook the water from his clothes and shrugged his shoulders.

They were in a long, narrow room. The only light in the dusk was from the stone fireplace at the farther end. An iron cooking pan was on a tripod above the fire. Three woman and two men, evidently members of the headman's family, came in after them. They were waved to seats on a mat by the fireplace. The blazing logs made that end of the room much too hot and the cold air chilled their backs, but Williams and Meng gathered chummily with the family. Their coolies had disappeared at the door.

An hour later, after a ceremonial drink of his host's fiery wine, Williams was gnawing a tremendous chunk of boiled goat, part of a supper which had been led in bleating and slaughtered before his eyes with savage lavishness.

All evening long, with the help of Meng, until the boy was tired and sleepy, he conversed with his Nosu hosts. He began to know something about their needs and their desires, their customs, their

resources. He already had the basis for a long report to that office in Shanghai where men speculated on what could be made in the factories of America and sold—if not now, then some day later—in the hills of Szechuen. They were not left alone; even when it came time to sleep the man of the family lay down before the fire and their guests were expected to do likewise.

"Mr. Williams," Meng whispered in English, "what became of those two—you know, on the pass?"

"Ran away from the Earth-Eye's officer, of course. Use your head, Meng. They'll show up again."

IV

IT WAS chilly dawn when Williams awoke. His Nosu hosts were all gone from the mats on the floor of the great room. The fire was out. Through the door and the holes in the roof the wind was whistling. The sun was up however, the day would soon be warm. He gave Meng a push to break that young man's slumber. Their host, the tall headman, came into the room as they sat up. Meng rubbed his eyes and listened to the Nosu's greeting.

"He says," Meng explained, "that the officer of the Earth-Eye is back and has a message for you."

With a swagger which entirely disguised the fact that he must have been traveling most of the night and part of that time through a bad storm, the officer in the leather girdle entered. He handed over a scroll of Chinese paper and Williams found on it, beautifully inscribed, an invitation to the Westerner.

> *If the man from outside can speak Nosu—or even Chinese—he is welcome to visit the castle of An, the Earth-Eye. But if he can not expect to converse with me let him go back across the river at once where he will be safe. The Earth-Eye has no time to protect men who can not discuss wisdom with him.*

"Write an answer," said Williams to Meng. "Tell him we will start at once."

One of the men from that village would show them the way to the castle, said the officer. They could expect to arrive there after one day's easy journey, that same night if they set out at once. He would hurry ahead and give notice of their coming. With a hardy smile he was off again.

"What does he mean by a day's easy journey for us?" Williams asked.

Meng guessed that it would be twenty English miles.

"Doing it himself three times in about twenty-four hours?" remarked Williams, wondering.

"My people on this side the river are men," Meng answered proudly. His face was animated and eager again. "When I get on this side, Mr. Williams, up here in these hills, and see what Nosu men ought to be, I am almost sorry sometimes that I was brought up in the mission school. I am polite—I am learned—I can speak English—I can understand the Westerner's books. Oh, yes. But could I go sixty miles over a mountain road in a day and a night?"

His American friend looked at him intently.

"That's all right, Meng. You Nosus are men—all of you. When do we start for the Earth-Eye house?"

As Williams had expected, when their little procession had made a few miles, with the guidance of a villager, away from the town and farther into the hills toward Mr. An's castle, the lost Po-Yeh, shadowed by his brother, greeted them in the path. The Nosu villager looked curiously at these strangers, but they made their peace with him quickly in their own language and Po-Yeh began asking excited questions in Chinese. What had the officer of the Earth-Eye said? Was the American going on to the Earth-Eye's house? Would he—

"Wait," interrupted Williams. "First let's find out what happened to you. Where did you go? I thought we were going to 'protect each other.' "

Po-Yeh smiled. His grin appeared to widen the angle of his sinister eyes.

"The retainer of Earth-Eye An would have known me at once," he said. "He would have told Mr. An that my brother and I are back on this side the great river again. We must keep hidden as long as we can."

The village guide complained to Meng that they were being delayed. Po-Yeh easily solved that difficulty. They would go on together.

"Not all the way to An's house, you understand," he added hurriedly, "but only so far as it necessary to make a bargain."

"Bargain?" Williams inquired, falling into his mile-devouring stride.

Po-Yeh's long legs kept pace with him easily.

"When we were last talking—" he began.

"Just before you pulled me up out of the bottom of China?" Williams interpolated.

"Exactly. Just before my good fortune in being of service to an honored stranger, you asked me how I expected to get my sister out of Mr. An's house. Didn't you? Yes. That is what we must make a bargain about—getting my sister away from Mr. An."

The curious blue eyes of Mr. Williams rested for a moment on Po-Yeh's face. There was never anything about Williams to suggest his impulsiveness. He always looked the innocent and curious man, competent, perhaps, but not given to wild impulses. Even the cross-eyed Nosu did not guess that there was an immediate natural response in the mind of this stranger to the suggestion that he himself might have something to do with getting a girl out of an old ruffian's hands.

Po-Yeh went on glibly:

"You are going into his house. You will see things. Perhaps you can bribe one of his servants for us. Perhaps you could let us in secretly some night. Perhaps you could even—" Po-Yeh paused— "perhaps you could even help her to get away and we could meet you outside before they discovered—"

"You're the coolest fellow I ever saw in my life," Williams remarked. "*Perhaps* I could go into this old terror's house as a guest and steal his girl. Perhaps."

Williams laughed. It was absurd that any Oriental could guess that he was very likely to do something very much like that if the impulse struck him. It would not have been the first crazy venture of the kind.

"But she is my sister!" Po-Yeh cried. "I can never get into his house without help. I am a poor man. He has hundreds of soldiers—bandits, they are—but there isn't any law to hold him. My sister suffers. If you could only get some sort of word to her that we are trying!"

"Well—" Williams considered. "You helped me on the trail, Po-Yeh. I'll tell you what I'll do." He lowered his voice so that their village guide could not hear, although of course he could not understand their Yunnanese talk. "You fix a meeting place somewhere—you can't very well camp too close in the Earth-Eye's territory. If I find a chance to help your sister I'll send you word. Meng can fix up some way and I'll suggest what we are to do, if we can do anything—" He stopped and laughed aloud. "It's a piece of foolishness in any case. But if I can do anything I will."

"I knew, I knew!" shouted Po-Yeh. "The magic of the stranger can do anything."

"So that's the excuse for your faith in me, is it?" asked Williams. "You think I'm a sort of a heap big medicine-man?"

Po-Yeh answered:

"Of course. If you were not a magician you would never think of going into Mr. An, the Earth-Eye's, house."

"Even on his invitation?"

Po-Yeh laughed with cynical wisdom.

"The poor villager will keep his word, but why should a great man have any honor?"

"I must say you have a low opinion of your chiefs," said Williams dryly.

Po-Yeh pointed down over a field of open grass where the wild flowers were blooming freshly in the clear air. Near the bottom of a little gorge was another village, a smaller one, evidently no more than a large farmstead.

"I have friends there," he said. "They are relations of mine and they would help me if they could—even against the Earth-Eye. I can be found there, and if not, the headman there will know where I am. If you need to prove that you are my friend, show him this."

He handed over a little string of coral beads cut in strange fashion.

"And how, do you know?" asked Williams, "that I won't betray you to the Earth-Eye?"

"Because I have been told in Chaotung that men of your tribe are like the village Nosus—they keep their word."

"Well, you've guessed right about us for once," answered Williams. "Let's hurry on."

Po-Yeh and his brother made a sign of friendship and dropped away from them over the side of the hill toward the farmhouse. From here on, Williams was thinking, a man ought to keep his bearings pretty clear in his head. He watched the path and the contours of the hills alertly, for mile after mile until they topped a rise, and saw across a deep chasm a white tower on the very peak of a brush-covered mountain.

V

THE OLD Earth-Eye's castle was an eagle's nest. One path went up to it along the ridge of the almost conical mountain to whose peak it clung, and on all the other sides the rocky cliffs fell away without visible foothold. From the top of the tower a lookout could watch the passes in all directions and could see any attacking force for hours before it got even to the foot of the climb. A single man, perhaps two or three, might make their way over the boulders and through the scrub under cover of night, but the fortress seemed large enough to house a hundred men or more and could repel the storming of several times that number. It was not necessary to come closer than the point from which they looked across at it to know that its masonry walls would be sturdy and its loopholes narrow. Two blockhouses were several hundred yards apart, astride the path.

"Hospitable looking little bird-roost, isn't it?" Williams commented.

Meng appeared to be having a temporary loss of courage again. He shaded his eyes and stared at the castle, muttering something to himself.

"You will never believe the things that go on in places like that," he said. His voice was low, as if even at that distance he thought it wiser to be cautious in discussing Mr. An. "This Earth-Eye is an old man and all his life has been spent in learning cruelty and practising on his enemies. Even many of his own people hate him because he takes their possessions away from them and oppresses them and makes them fight in his quarrels with other chiefs. They have tried to kill him but he is as wise as he is cruel. He has traveled as far as Yunnan-Fu. Some say farther. He knows the ways of Chinese people. He reads the classics and they say he has an altar where he carries on mockery instead of worship. If he worships any god it is the devil himself."

"You know all these things, do you? Or are you only repeating market gossip?"

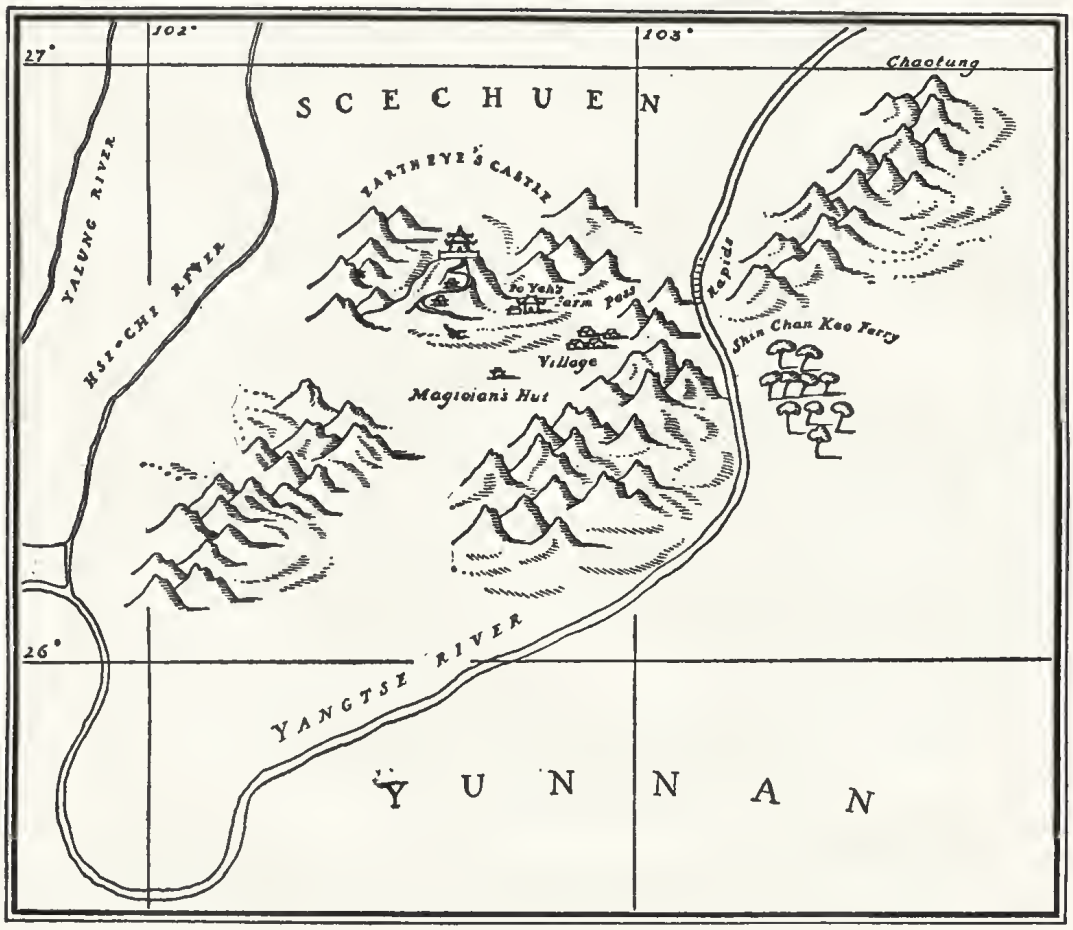
"Is it reasonable to suppose that he can be a gentle and humane man when the whole world is afraid of him?" asked Meng.

"As to that," said Williams, "I'll know more in a day or so."

He plunged down the hill toward the foot of the Earth-Eye's path.

In an hour, over the boulder-strewn trail, they had reached the first blockhouse. There they were met by their friend with the leather girdle who led the way upward, all smiles and welcome. Before a gate at the very top of the hill he stepped aside and motioned for Williams to go through first. The American did so.

The gate closed behind him. Meng and his three coolies were shut out. He was alone in a narrow stone passageway; the door closing behind him rang with a heavy solid sound as it came into place. There was no way to go but forward. He walked along the corridor, was sullen, but they evidently had their instructions, for they did not stare. One of them said something under his breath and the others laughed contemptuously. The soldiers of the old Earth-Eye were not like the villagers, simple and honest primitives. They were instru-



angry at this first sign of insolence and when another officer met him at the other end and made a sign of greeting he only scowled.

"This begins bad, my friend," he said, although he knew the man could not understand him.

The courtyard was spacious. Two or three Nosus were lolling, garrison fashion, in a corner. A twisted tree grew there and some of their accoutrement was hanging in its lower branches.

The look these men turned upon the American as he walked across the court ments of power and felt their position.

On the opposite side of the courtyard was a wider door. It had none of the lacquered elaborateness of a Chinese house, but the wood was curiously carved and the arch had been cut with an eye to beauty. Over it were hung several flat strips of bamboo marked with Nosu characters, charms probably against black magic. Through this doorway Williams was led into a small, low-ceilinged room. On one side near a narrow window sat a man of indeterminate age in a great black Chinese chair.

His face was yellowish brown in tint and his little pointed white beard was scant. A narrow, dark turban was around his head but pushed far back to show the breadth and power of his forehead and his strongly marked brows. He wore a long white coat to his ankles and both his hands were hidden in his cuffs. His hidden hands and the soft-soled shoes on his feet gave him the look of a mandarin, but there was more vivacity in his face than a Chinese would have shown. He smiled slightly and greeted Williams in the Yunnanese dialect.

"I am An," he said, "and master here. You are welcome. No other man of your race has ever honored me with a visit."

There was something mellow and ingratiating about his low voice and his quiet smile. He might have been an old philosopher in a mountain monastery. No echo of the voices of his ruffians in the yard penetrated to this cool austere room. The only furniture to indicate his interests was a low teak table with a pile of Chinese books. A slave-boy came in and offered both guest and host a drink of *sham-shu* in a flat bowl, turning his head aside respectfully so that he would not breathe upon it.

The Earth-Eye discoursed quietly with his visitor, seeming to understand that a stranger might want to know about his people and his rule, although no white stranger had ever come there before. He told how the ways of the Nosus differed from the ways of the Chinese, always with that slight edge of contempt that was in the voice of all Nosus when they mentioned Chinese, and over his bowl of wine he talked the politics of western China. It was only at the end that Williams remembered that he was virtually a prisoner, and as he rose at the old man's invitation to be escorted to an apartment which was to be his own, he asked the question which had been hot on his lips when he entered.

"I had a friend with me," he said, "who was acting as my interpreter. He disappeared at your gate. Could you tell me how to find him now?"

"If your friend was Chinese—"

"He was Nosu."

"If he was Chinese," continued the old man placidly, "he would not be permitted to enter. If he was Nosu he would not want to come farther than the outer gate."

"But he is my friend!"

"You can only trust your host," answered the Earth-Eye with a strange mixture of gentleness and insolence. "I promise you that he will be taken care of."

"Well, then—may I see him?"

"After you have rested, certainly," answered Mr. An. "Will you honor me by coming this way?"

Williams did not see Meng after he had rested, however. He slept that night in a bare, spacious room on the inner court of the great house and shortly after he was awake next morning a servant summoned him with gestures to the reception hall again.

The Earth-Eye was seated by his book-littered table. At his feet was curled a little dog, not one of the wolfish hounds which Williams had seen in the villages but a Chinese pet, long-eared, luxurious. The old man stroked the little beast's silky hair with white claw-like fingers as he talked. He invited his guest to take an early morning breath of air outside.

"I go out on the mountain and look over my little portion of the earth," he said.

They went through the courtyard, followed, Williams noticed, by a single sturdy man-at-arms who carried a sword. He had still his own pistol at his belt. Evidently the right to carry arms was accorded without question even to an unknown visitor.

Beyond the outer gate they looked down the winding pathway toward the blockhouses and the chilly wind from all the heights, smelling of wild flowers, flapped the Earth-Eye's long gown. He strode off at a vigorous pace and Williams kept at his side. He pointed out, as they went, the limits of his feudal holdings in one direction. At an abrupt little twist in the path, where there was a thicket of scrubby bushes, the old man paused.

What happened then was incredibly quick. The smiling morning was completely changed in character by a slight swishing sound. The sound was made by an arrow that came from nowhere and cut through the Earth-Eye's gown just under his arm.

Instantly, breaking with scarcely any noise from the thicket, three men were in the path. One of them fell on the guard and the other two, with silent and business-like ferocity, leaped at the old Earth-Eye.

The weapons were noiseless and the victim was as far as he was ever likely to be caught away from his fighting men. It was a perfectly planned murder except that the presence of a stranger had not been in the plans.

Instantly Williams took sides. His pistol was useless at such close quarters, except as a club. He saw the great knife of one of the three bite into the old man's gown and was amazed when he still stood after such a blow. He brought his pistol down on the head of the nearest assailant and knocked him over. The other leaped clear and the point of his sword in a backward swing missed by an inch Williams' out-thrust arm. But Williams had a chance to use his pistol then. That man went down with a bullet through his neck. The only one left was rolling in the path with the guard. The echo of Williams' shot set up a great commotion in the castle above and men came charging down the path. The Earth-Eye began to shout in a terrible voice.

The remaining assassin jumped up, leaving the guard twisting in the path. This last one was thinking only of escape now. He ran to the side of the cliff and stood for a second on a huge boulder there. Williams shot but missed and the man went over, disappearing completely; when Williams ran to the rock he could see nothing moving among the rocks and the low bushes below. The men seemed to have dropped into a hole in the side of the hill.

The yelling retainers of the Earth-Eye were swarming by that time. The one marauder whom Williams had knocked down, just beginning to stir again, was held by three. The one with the bullet through his throat had not moved. The wounded guard was lifted and carried. On the Old Earth-Eye's face was an expression of rancorous fury, but he was glaring at his own men, not at the helpless assassins, one of whom was evidently dead. He gathered up the folds of his torn gown in one hand and as he turned toward Williams it could be seen that the sword cut which had failed to harm him had been stopped by a leather girdle with metal plates—his armor. He walked up to his guest, his face changed, and made a ceremonious bow.

"I do not forget my friends," he said simply.

VI

AS THE elation of exciting action passed from the mind of Williams he began to feel that he had been tricked by circumstance into a false position. He could never have stood by and seen a helpless gallant old man done to death by thugs. But he had entered this stronghold under at least a half promise to conspire against this old man himself, to rob him of what he doubtless considered a possession. If he made progress now it would be by the help of the trust the Earth-Eye would put in him. And he balanced against that the thought of a free young girl, one of those hardy children of the hills, caught and held in barbarous slavery. It wasn't easy.

There was no question of the Earth-Eye's confidence. Williams was invited to take his evening meal with his host that night, the first time he had been asked to share food. They were alone together at a low table where bowls of rice and deliciously stewed fowl were set, Chinese-fashion, between them. The silky-haired dog was a third at the table, lolling stupidly on a cushion and accepting tender bits from his master's fingers.

There were long exchanges of the elaborate and merely polite conversation

which disguises an Easterner's preoccupations. This was broken suddenly by the Earth-Eye's saying:

"It is not our custom, as it is with the Chinese, to hide our household from our friends. There is one who would like to thank you for kindness to me, if you will permit."

Williams bowed. His light blue eyes dilated suddenly but he kept a gravity to match that of his host when, at a low call from the Earth-Eye, a slender girl came slowly into the room. He was struck first by the wild splendor of her dress. Then, looking at her dark eyes, he saw an expression which could only be fear, the abject trembling fear of a wild creature. He concealed all his emotions, his admiration and his pity, under an imitation of the Earth-Eye's dignity and waited.

"This is Ah-Leh," said Mr. An. "She wants to thank you."

At a sign from him, the girl took a few steps farther toward the table. She was clad in a long white jacket and white Chinese trousers bordered with red. A huge silver brooch of fine workmanship fastened her jacket across her flat childish breast and earrings with suspended silver chains framed her face below the high ceremonial head-dress of dark blue cloth. The cloth, wound like a turban on a frame, made her seem even shorter and slighter than she was. Only her eyes betrayed her fear; her small mouth was parted in a decorous smile.

"She doesn't speak anything but Nosu," said her master, in a suave impersonal voice.

The girl clasped her hands, making a faint tinkling sound with the bracelets on her wrists, bobbed her great coiffure several times and spoke a little speech in singing high tones. When she had finished, the American smiled, forgetting his dignity a little and putting more human warmth into his smile than seemed to be expected. He rose and bowed and asked that some suitable acknowledgement be made to the lady. The Earth-Eye merely waved his hand and the girl, dismissed, backed away hurriedly. They could hear her light feet running across the stone floor of the passage as soon as she had left the room.

"There is another matter which I should like to discuss with you—imposing on your goodness," said Mr. An with no further notice of Ah-Leh's existence. "Can you advise me of any new way to dispose of these men who are responsible for what happened this morning?"

"It was a shameful thing," said Williams, watching him carefully. "There are authorities to turn them over to, aren't there?"

"There is no authority here but myself." The Earth-Eye spoke regretfully.

"I see. But I am not competent to advise you. I know nothing of your ways or your laws."

"There is no law—but myself."

Williams looked down at his empty rice bowl.

"Was the other man caught?" he asked, to gain time to prepare an answer.

"No. He has got away from me—down the hill."

"Then there is only one to punish. One is dead and one escaped."

"Ah," said the Earth-Eye, "the second one to be punished is the captain of my guard. He is least to be forgiven."

The old man reached over to caress his pet and sighed.

"The last time," he said, "there were two men. They were caught trying to pass the second blockhouse. I had them sliced alive—as the Chinese do. It is a very unpleasant death. I hoped it would discourage others. But that was only a few months ago and here today we have this affair.

"My men tell me that the man we have now is a cousin of the one we executed then. You do not know what a life like mine may be, my friend. I have never slept without a guard since I was born. And I have never been free of these mad enemies of mine who envy and hate me and think they will have things better in this land if they can put me out of the way. They don't realize, of course, that

they would have nothing but brigandage and civil war between a dozen little tribal leaders if I were not here to keep things quiet."

He paused.

"Have you tried kindness?"

At this question from Williams, he raised thin eyebrows. It was astonishing how he could change the moral atmosphere of the room with so slight a gesture.

"No," he answered slowly. "No one has ever tried kindness. I know that there are places in the world where men understand mercy. I have read of them—" he waved his thin hand toward his book-strewn table—"but it seems unreal even to me and I am sure any mercy I could ever show my enemies would seem like weakness to them. My own people would think I had gone mad. We do not live by kindness in the hills. Sometime I may make a trial of it."

There was a speculative calm in his manner as if no passion inflamed his judgment. He seemed more than ever like a scholarly mandarin, a man of secluded thought.

"The captain of my guard will be beaten and degraded," he said, still more gently. "That will save his life, which he will not hope for. The one assassin that we have to make an example of will be impaled."

Williams shuddered.

"Does that seem like justice to you?" asked the old man searchingly.

"I think it is barbarous," answered Williams. "But it makes no difference to you what I think. Why should I have to have an opinion on your ways here?"

The Earth-Eye raised his eyebrows again.

"I asked you," he said.

His guest felt a slow chill in the small of his back at something silky but cruel in his tone. He felt himself a prisoner again—not a guest—in spite of the morning's adventure.

"What has an Earth-Eye to do with honor?" Po-Yeh had asked.

Enigmatic, profoundly alien, most dangerous possibly in his friendship, the old man smiled again and changed the subject. He opened a book of thin bamboo paper and showed the difference between the Nosu ideographs and the Chinese. He pointed out their simplicity and talked for an hour about the question to which no one knows the answer: Are the Nosus related to the tribes of Tibet? The tension and the thought of vindictive cruelty had passed from the room.

But late that day, when Williams crossed the courtyard, he saw a group of the Earth-Eye's soldiers squatting around something on the ground. They were watching intently a man staked down with three bamboo poles through his writhing body. His face was black with agony.

The man was a murderer and this was his execution. But Williams, who had himself shot to death the man's companion in the eagerness of a fight, and who had not for a moment felt regret for that act, was utterly dismayed by the thoughtful savagery of this punishment.

He went back to his own room and stood by the narrow window looking out over the sunny hills. The shadow of murder was lurking in all the passes and by every tree. He felt for the moment certain of his purpose. This old man might consider him a friend, but he could not be a friend. He had seen fear in the eyes of little Ah-Leh. If by any chance he could get her out of here and back to her own people it was worth trying and worth more than the friendship of any Earth-Eye.

In the meantime, he asked again for Meng. When Mr. An told him that Meng had of his own accord turned back on the trail he did not believe the excuse. He hoped that the boy would be waiting for him at the little farmhouse which Po-Yeh had set as a rendezvous. It was there he would try to get to if he could escape from the castle with the girl.

The picture of the third member of the assassin's band, who had perched on a rock and then leaped over the hill into

a complete disappearance, stuck in his mind. There must be a path or a hiding place there. But his host did not invite him to walk out of the house again and at the outer gate was always the guard who kept a suspicious eye on him if he came near.

He spent his time for several days studying Nosu books the Earth-Eye gave him. He had long conversations with the old man. They contributed to the exact and exhaustive knowledge of Nosu ways he considered it his chief business to get. Twice he saw the girl. Each time she was called into the room and came timorously. He was confirmed in his belief that she suffered from fear; he was sure it was fear of her master. He found himself sitting and thinking about her sometimes in long hours of idleness, trying to recall the exact expression in her eyes. She had a softer look than the village women, but the wildness was there.

The Earth-Eye had his own apartment at the end of the long stone corridor behind the reception hall. He explained to Williams once, in one of his moments of confidence, that he slept there alone. "With the only woman of my household, Ah-Leh, whom you have seen." Later he added that he kept his own firearms in that room. "Ready, if ever I need to defend myself. This little beast—" he played with the dog's long hair—"is always there and he is easily awakened."

"And that," was the thought going through the mind of his guest, "makes any attempt at night look rather hopeless, but perhaps—"

He saw only one chance of getting the girl away out into the hills. It was unlikely enough that he could get very far with her if he started, but he was willing to try. His one way was to gain her confidence by some sign. Then find a moment in the early dusk when a dash would be possible. The main gate could never be rushed, but along one of the outer corridors there were several windows through which his own body could be squeezed and from them to the ground would be a not impossible drop.

Nearly always in making reckless plans he would be brought up short by a question—not, How could it be done? but, Should he try? The obligation to Po-Yeh was genuine and he was not a man to hesitate about paying off a debt. Po-Yeh was a husky, formidable ally; but he was also a strangely sinister being with his crooked gaze and his crooked mixture of friendliness with furious brutality. How much of what he said could be the truth?

All things were possible here—even that the girl might not want to be taken away. Who was he to interfere?

The real character of the Old Earth-Eye was more complex still. His attitude toward Ah-Leh was indifferent in the presence of a guest. Did that indifference mask cruelty? And even if he were kind, could he possibly be anything but loathsome to that child? They were both Nosus; they lived on the other side of a wall through which the wavering thoughts of Williams could not penetrate. He was always stopped short by his uncertainties, but he came out of restless contemplation always with the thought that probably—*probably*—the rescue was worth attempting in spite of all its moral risk.

These moral risks were so great that they served to disguise in his mind the merely physical dangers. He made a dozen plans and discarded them, studying while he could the calm mask of the Earth-Eye and accepting the favors of gratitude.

He considered making a direct attack upon the old man in his apartment at night. But he had an unreasoned suspicion that he might have more to deal with there than the unaided strength of the old man himself. Arms were concealed in the stone-walled room, and possibly also there were other engines of defense. Ah-Leh herself might have been taught to use a rifle with her tiny hands. A Nosu woman would be capable of that.

He wondered how heavily the old man slept. Tentative but dangerous explorations of the halls of the castle, when every one but the guards pacing in the court

behind the outer gate seemed to have gone to sleep, convinced him that he could, if he had ordinary luck, get to the door at the end of the corridor without being caught.

Then he had the inspiration he had been restlessly waiting for. He found a way to test the inner stronghold. He began by stalking the Earth-Eye's little Chinese dog. The pampered vermin was lazy, and it was a simple thing to make friends with it, to play with it once or twice when it was put out in the courtyard to trot in the sunshine, and then to capture it in a corridor, inveigle it gently into his room and stifle its protesting yaps there with two twists of a towel around its jaws.

At supper that night Earth-Eye spoke of the disappearance of his pet. The guard had been careless, he thought, and let the little fellow dash out the gate.

"He'll come back tonight, of course, when he is hungry. He was not made for living in the hills," said Mr. An. "But I miss him. Have you had a good day, Mr. Williams?"

Williams thanked him.

"And have you found out all you want to know about the lives and needs and manners of our people?"

Williams laughed shortly.

"You are as subtle as a Chinese, sir. That means, I suppose, that you wonder how long I am going to stay in your house."

The old man took the suggestion pleasantly but protested. Surely the friendship between them was a permanent one and years would not be too long for them to spend in pleasant talk together.

"Of course," he added, "in this land one never knows what interruptions will come or what necessities will arise. War, perhaps. There are tribes to the north encroaching gradually upon my people. We live in trouble. You might help me drive them back. You would make a splendid leader for my Nosu troops, Mr. Williams."

But Williams said he would need to be going homeward in a few days, toward Chaotung.

"If I can find my young friend Oo-Meng again and get a guide through your territory."

Mr. An smiled again.

"You could never leave my lands without my protection, my friend. And when you are ready to go you will march with a company of soldiers—in state—to the great river."

Always there was the flavor of studied politeness, mixed with a threat.

THAT night Williams crept along the dark halls from his own chamber to the reception room. He caught a glimpse of a soldier sleeping noisily in the doorway which led into the outer court. Beyond him a sentry paced slowly. The reception room was dark, but the corridor beyond was dimly lighted by a shallow basin of pork-fat where a twisted shred of cotton burned as a wick.

He could see down this corridor from the corner of the reception hall doorway, himself unseen. It was shadowy and grim in the wavering light of the smudgy lamp. At the other end was the wooden door behind which were the Earth-Eye and the frightened little girl, and the Earth-Eye's defenses, whatever they were. From under his coat Williams took the dog, now a much discouraged little beast, and put him gently on the floor.

The dog whined for a moment, stretched himself resentfully, and trotted down the corridor. From the darkness of the reception hall door, Williams watched.

Confidently the dog went toward the door of his master's room until within a yard of it. There he pawed and whined again. One dainty foot was thrust forward, then withdrawn. He seemed afraid to go farther. Several times the gesture of trying the next step ahead was made; each time he drew back. So far as Williams could see there was nothing there but the solid stone floor.

But the dog would not venture farther. He sat on his haunches and began to howl.

Williams cursed him under his breath for fear he would bring the guards, but almost at once the door of Earth-Eye's room opened inward. There was the old man. He had a long rifle in his hands and he peered down the corridor for a time before he gave attention to the dog.

The pork-fat beacon sizzled and sputtered and made shadows flicker on the walls. The old man's hard breath and the whining of the little dog could both be heard. Satisfied that he had no visitor but his returned pet, the Earth-Eye put his gun behind him and reached out his hands. He called encouragingly in a low voice, but still the dog hesitated. He commanded the dog in a firm tone. Gathering his shaking limbs, the spaniel made two quick leaps across the intervening space and Williams saw the heavy stone in the floor dip under the flying touch of his feet. The old man took him up in his arms and shut the door.

If he had walked down the hallway to test that door, Williams would have slipped through the trap of swinging stone. Locked firmly by day, loosened from the inner side by night, it was the Earth-Eye's reception for a visitor who came unasked. Williams started cautiously and thoughtfully back toward his own room. It would not do to be careless in the halls again.

As he turned a corner he saw a figure standing alertly before the door of his room and he knew his time for deliberation was nearly over. Either he must act at once before suspicion of some unfriendly intention was fastened on him, or he must bid the Earth-Eye good-by and leave the girl Ah-Leh to her fate.

He went deliberately up to the Nosu, recognizing him as the leather-belted warrior who had met him in the pass above the first village and had brought him Mr. An's invitation. The Nosu did not appear to be surprized or alarmed at seeing the guest wandering about. But there was an unpleasant grin on his face, like the grin of a confirmed suspicion.

Once back in the comparative security of his own chamber, Williams sat down and tried to go on with his round of puzzles. He was weary of them; thinking was not, in his opinion, the best means of settling any question. There must always be a possible way to cut a knot instead of untying it. He went to sleep at last with the feeling that something decisive would have to happen in another day.

VII

NEXT morning, shortly after dawn, when Williams opened his door, the Nosu was still there, posted as a sentry. He saluted pleasantly and went away.

Very few others appeared to be stirring in the castle. The halls were empty. In the courtyard the only retainers were the sentries of the gate. From somewhere, very faintly, came the sound of singing—a savage, long drawn-out wail, like the mourning cry of a lost spirit.

By one of the loopholes in the wall of the house Williams paused and looked out. The sun, which had just come up, a red explosion from the eastern crests, was hidden already behind the edge of a heavy cloud. A cold wind came whistling in through the embrasure and the unsteady light was menacing.

He went on toward the reception room and stood by the window there. It was only five or six feet from the rocky ground, but below it was the sheer cliff. He heard a soft gasp behind him. Ah-Leh had entered, carrying the spaniel, and at the sight of him she had stopped. Her eyes were widened with surprize. The thought that went swiftly through the mind of Williams was that this was the gift of the fortune he had been waiting for. This at last was an opportunity that was in itself a decision for his question.

He could not speak a word this poor girl could understand. He could not explain to her, or make any plans in which she could play a willing part. If he was to save her he must act on his one chance. She let the spaniel fall to the ground, but before she could run he

was between her and the door to the inner corridor. He was smiling; he looked as reassuring as he could and without hesitation he picked her up in his arms and walked to the window.

The daylight was making no progress against the storm. Thunder was rolling in the air.

She seemed too amazed to struggle. It was easy to swing himself through the opening and to drop, holding her light weight in one arm, to the ground below. He was free then—free in the hills that were visible for miles from the windows of her master's stronghold, and a hundred men would be beating through them within an hour. It was an utterly insane venture.

Williams laughed quietly and led the girl, who still trembled as if overcome with fear, along the wall toward the main path. If he could reach the rock over which the marauder had jumped so confidently after the attack on the old-Earth-Eye, he would find a descent there, or at least a hiding place.

He was thinking swiftly through the next steps in an enterprise which had been almost forced upon him by the sudden appearance of the girl in the hallway. He led her along, his eye on the side of the hill, taking it for granted, since there was was no choice, that she understood what he was doing. She sagged against his arm but did not resist. They were almost abreast of the main gate. It was the place of greatest danger; once beyond there was swifter going and he might make the big rock unseen.

At the angle of the wall beside the gate the girl pulled back. Her fright was leaving her. Her small body stiffened with returned energy. Then, throwing up her head, she began to scream. Williams stopped dead in his tracks. The girl's cries echoed against the walls that hung above them. Williams caught her against his side and put his left hand over her mouth. It did not occur to him to leave her and make his own escape.

Before he could move forward a sentry came around the corner not ten yards ahead and Williams fired his pistol from his hip. The man staggered forward, tripped and plunged down the hillside into the bush. He was out of the way and hidden, but there would be others behind him. It was impossible to think of making a dash down the main path in sight of the gate. Below him the cliff was a mass of jutting boulders, scraggy bushes and sharp ravines. Methodically he crammed a handkerchief down on the scream in Ah-Leh's hot little mouth. Above him from one of the loopholes in the wall he heard a shout.

A drop of rain, icy cold, splashed in his face. His breath came out in a sigh of thankfulness to the watchful heavens. The storm, an ally out of the low black sky, burst over them and he knew there was still a chance. The rain poured and wiped out the daylight. He heard a shot from above but he picked up the girl and slid over the edge to the nearest boulder below. From there he jumped again, down through the scratching bushes and the rain, protecting his burden as well as he could. Twice her weight made him stumble and fall, but he went on and the shouting above grew fainter and fainter, lost in the noise of rain and thunderclaps.

At the bottom of the first ravine he drew in behind a great rock for a moment and put the girl down in the shelter. Three of the Earth-Eye's men, plunging ahead with murderous speed, went by and ran along the level toward the north.

"They'll go in all directions," he said to himself, half-aloud, "but these three fellows at least think I'm going away from the main trail. I'll go south."

He turned and looked at the girl. She was drenched and he could see she was suffering acutely from the cold. Her silk tunic was clinging to her body. She shuddered spasmodically. Her eyes were closed, her face white.

"I'm sorry, little sister," he said. "I wish you could understand me."

He tried to put comfort and reassurance into his voice, but she did not open

her eyes. He took the gagging handkerchief from her mouth. The rain roared and swirled around them. An instantaneously created torrent came over the top of their sheltering stone and spurted out upon the gravelly bottom of the chasm where a little river was already running.

Williams took off his coat and wrapped it around Ah-Leh's shuddering, bedraggled little body and picked her up again. She opened her eyes once. There was no confidence in them. She seemed to be frightened still, but she lay quietly as he carried her out into the rain, southward through the ravine.

It would take several hours to get to the farmhouse where Po-Yeh had friends and where her cross-eyed brother himself ought to be waiting. Meng might be there also. There would be a chance of hiding until nightfall. Williams had learned long since that a difficult job can sometimes be best managed if only one step is thought through at a time.

Beyond the house of Po-Yeh's friends there might be a good many nights of travel over passes where the Earth-Eye's men could block the way. But if the girl could be turned over to her brothers he could go on alone or perhaps with Meng and get across into Yunnan territory. The hills were full of hiding places. But these first few miles had to be slow even though he scarcely felt her weight. On a space of comparatively dry gravel he put her down, and she marched beside him obediently. She walked, in spite of her fragility, with the free swing of a Nosu woman, and he was thankful for that relief.

They came on down the ravine to the place where it opened out into a wider valley. Another great boulder stood guard there, turning the little stream aside. Williams drew the girl in under its leaning side for sake of its slight shelter while he surveyed the valley below.

As they stooped and drew close to the rock, in the half-darkness of the rain, Williams almost brushed the shoulder of a man. He was a Nosu with a long rifle in his hands watching the valley from under the rock. For a perceptible moment they stared at each other, both taken by surprize. Williams moved first and the long rifle clattered in the gravel before it could be leveled. He caught the man cleanly on the side of the head with his first blow. The Nosu went down, getting a second blow from the side of the boulder that left him limp at their feet. Not a sound had escaped him. Williams bound his hands behind his back with his own turban, ripped a piece of his tunic off for a gag, and fastened his feet with his cartridge belt.

"I hope you're found," he was talking quietly to himself, "but not before tomorrow morning."

The gun was too heavy to be worth carrying and it went into the stream.

One side of the valley had a heavy growth of oak trees, scrubby and low, but offering concealment. As he stepped out from under the boulder and into the edge of this patch of woods Williams could see the castle for the first time since he had left it; the storm was clearing and a pale daylight reached the hilltop again. It was far above him. By the gate a figure, tiny at that distance, was standing immobile. With astonishing clearness came the sound of a ram's horn, the overlord's signal to all the fighting men of the tribe. Dragging Ah-Leh by one hand, he ran swiftly through the trees, climbing upward gradually toward the hill beyond which he could find the way to Po-Yeh's hiding place.

Twice he saw little groups of hill-men running toward the foot of the path up toward the castle. They carried their long guns and each of them had his bag of oatmeal over his shoulder, equipment for a campaign. But they had to go to the first blockhouse or meet a party from the castle before they could find out why they were called. Williams pushed on tirelessly, carrying his charge whenever her own light steps flagged. She was crying now, perhaps from weariness, and he talked to her in a patient

monotone although she seemed never to make any effort to understand the comfort he was trying to convey.

VIII

ALL DAY, through the soggy underbrush and over the boulders of the forest edge, they climbed upward, over the hill, down the other side, through a series of steep ravines. There was nothing for them to eat; the noon hour was only a moment's cautious rest.

In the afternoon they had to go much more slowly. It was almost sunset when they came to a ledge from which he looked down at the farmhouse he had been seeking. He paused there, while the girl sank to the ground, utterly done. Her soft-soled cloth shoes were cut to pieces; she was bundled grotesquely in his coat; her face was streaked with the rain and her tears. Williams pointed to the farmhouse below.

"You poor child," he said. "I hope this part of your troubles is over with, anyway." He had an inspiration and pointed again. "Po-Yeh," he said, "Po-Yeh." The sound of her brother's name did not stir her. "Po-Yeh?" Williams repeated doubtfully.

She shook her head and looked up at him with a pleading sadness as if she felt that she had nothing but his mercy to depend upon.

Three men and a woman came out of the farmhouse. The men, like the other retainers of the Earth-Eye whom he had seen hurrying in answer to the ram's horn, were equipped with rifle and meal-bag for a campaign. They started swiftly up the main trail toward the castle. The woman followed them for a short distance, waved her hand and turned toward the south.

It was beginning to grow dark as Williams led Ah-Leh down toward the house. He cut a heavy stick and kept his ears alert for the dogs. There was no light or other sign that any one was left there. Ten yards from the door he was beset by the pack of guardians—more like half-tamed wolves they were—against whose tough hides he whacked his club until they drew back snarling. He beat them as one of their masters would have done and they acknowledged his right to enter. But the single room of the farm house, still warm from the fire whose embers glowed in the chimney, was empty. The bearskins had been taken up from before the fire, the cooking kettle and the tripod were stacked in a corner. Williams put fresh wood on the fire and Ah-Leh sank down where its reviving flames would dry her clothing. She shivered weakly, and Williams wondered whether any other garments for her could be found about the place.

When some one entered the room Williams whirled. It was Meng. The boy ran toward him eagerly but did not answer Williams' weary smile.

"Thank heaven, you're all right," said Williams.

"But nothing is all right—" Meng began hurriedly. "Nothing is right. Here you are with that girl and I am perfectly sure that everything is wrong."

"What do you mean, Meng? Where is Po-Yeh?"

"He's here. He and his brother are hiding in the stable. We heard your fight with the dogs and I guessed it might be you, but Po-Yeh was afraid to come and see for fear it might be some of the Earth-Eye's men."

"Well, then, why isn't everything right—up to now, anyway? Talk to that poor child for the love of kindness and explain to her that we mean her no harm."

Meng began to speak to Ah-Leh in her own Nosu. She shook her head slowly. Meng pointed to Williams and went on volubly. Suddenly he gave a sharp exclamation and turned. Before he could speak again there was a voice from the door. Po-Yeh was standing there and his brother was looking around the door jamb cautiously.

When Po-Yeh's crooked face came into the light, the girl screamed, made a pitiful gesture of pushing him away with her hands and fell over in a faint.

Po-Yeh came forward, smiling, and his brother, perfectly stolid and silent, came into the room.

"She is overcome with happiness to see us," said Po-Yeh in Yunnanese.

"Don't believe him!" Meng cautioned in English.

Po-Yeh gave him an evil glance as if he knew he had lost the boy's confidence. Williams who had risen to greet him, sat down deliberately beside the girl.

"Get me some water quick, Meng," he directed.

Po-Yeh and his brother came closer as soon as Meng had started toward the door.

"I know those fainting fits that my sister has," said Po-Yeh. "I will take her with me and restore her to herself. She would prefer not to stay with strangers any longer."

He stooped over as if to get her away as quickly as possible.

Williams interposed his arm.

"No doubt you are right, Po-Yeh. But she is warm here and she had better be revived at once."

"But she belongs to me," the Nosu snarled, his politeness dropping away from him suddenly.

Williams looked from his crooked eyed rage to the silent brother and saw the brother had put a hand upon his long knife. He got again to his feet.

"What right have you to interfere between me and this woman?" demanded Po-Yeh.

Williams had a flashing momentary recollection of what he had been through since daylight and he smiled.

"No right, especially, my rash friend," he answered. "I make no claim whatever. But she is wet and tired and frightened and she hasn't yet shown any sign of affection for you. I think it is better to wait."

"I refuse to wait."

"Your manner isn't friendly to her—or to me either." Williams unbuttoned his holster. "I don't understand this business, but I have a certain responsibility toward this child—"

Meng had come back into the room behind them, and Williams heard a quick cry from him. Po-Yeh was facing him, but Po-Yeh's brother had moved around to the other side of the girl. Both of them had their knives in their hands now. But Meng's cry came in time. Williams saw that the brother was stooping over the still unconscious girl. His knife was swung above her. William's stepped backward, out of reach of Po-Yeh and his shot at the other was instinctive. His pistol ball caught the brother's upraised arm. The knife fell to the floor and the brother hopped away, crying and cursing, holding his right wrist with his left hand. Po-Yeh hesitated and Williams covered him.

"You are taking a Nosu woman by force!" Po-Yeh snarled. "Do you think you'll ever get out of the Nosu country alive?"

The American ignored that question.

"Travel along after your brother," he said, "I don't like your kind of brotherly affection—and your sudden ideas of murder!"

"You'll never get back to the river!" repeated Po-Yeh moving backward toward the door.

The girl came to herself and sat up, staring wildly. The sight of Po-Yeh, although he was backing steadily away set her to screaming again. The Nosu said something to her in their own tongue that sounded like a threat. She put her hands before her face and fell face downward to the earth again in an abandonment of terror.

"What is he saying, Meng?" Williams shouted. "Quick, before he goes!"

Po-Yeh shouted something at Meng then, loud enough to drown out his answer. The boy ran at him recklessly. Po-Yeh paused in the semi-darkness for an instant. Williams heard the grunt of a man who strikes heavily and he saw Meng stumble to his knees. He ran to the door and blazed desperately at the two dark figures dodging away among the trees, but they laughed at him as they went up the hillside and he did not dare

risk following. He heard them calling the dogs after them as if for fear those yelping brutes would become his allies.

When he came back into the room Meng had slipped over to his side and was pressing with both slender hands against a bloody gash in his throat. He tried to speak, but his words were lost in a gurgling cough. Williams looked from him to the girl who sat shuddering, wild-eyed, helpless and pitiful. He was thinking that his own recklessness had already cost others too heavy a price. Meng succeeded in getting an articulate word.

"Brave—" It was a question. "Brave?"

Williams nodded slowly. He stooped to ease the boy's head with his arm and felt a warm dampness through his shirt sleeve.

"I'm sorry, Meng. I shouldn't have brought you."

"I'm a Nosu," Meng whispered. "Not your fault, sir—"

He sank against the support. His eyes shone for a moment in the dim light, then closed. The tension of the struggle to speak went out of his slender body. He was dead. Williams took up his body gently and put it close to the wall.

IX

BACK by the fire again he stared at the girl and she stared at him, too exhausted to shudder and cry out again.

There was a helpless bitterness in the realization that he was more puzzled than before. The knot was cut, but it was still a tangle. The relation between this girl and the two Nosus who were just out of reach and openly murderous was completely mysterious. And he had no way of solving it. Meng could not explain now. He was sure only that Po-Yeh's whole story had been a lie. Whatever Ah-Leh might have suffered in the house of the Old Earth-Eye, she would be no better off in the hands of these two. The intention of the speechless Sho-Hu, when he stood over the girl swinging his knife, could not have been misunderstood.

Characteristically, Williams pondered the problem of the girl without thinking of his own situation except as the means of escape to the border were incidental to helping her. He had no kit, no food, no extra clothing. His pistol ammunition was badly diminished. And what could he do with the girl if by any miracle of patience he could get her to the river? The ferry at Shin Chan Keo was certain to be guarded by Mr. An's men.

He smiled to himself and said half aloud, for the comfort of hearing some one speak:

"As a commercial investigator you're not so bad. As a rescuer of damsels in distress you're a washout."

He stirred up the fire. He put the sad thoughts of Meng which kept recurring to him resolutely aside. Meng would receive his due praise and regrets in a calmer time. The girl, like a true Nosu, seemed to be oblivious of Meng's body lying in the shadow by the wall.

How to get food for her was the first question, and Williams turned over in his mind all the possibilities. There might be stores somewhere on the farm. The important thing in that connection was speed. They must be gone, if Ah-Leh could possibly stand further travel, before daylight.

He was still many miles too close to the Earth-Eye's castle. Every farmhouse was sure to be searched. Abruptly he gave a little "Humph!" of self-condemnation.

"Of course, of course," he said, and that sound made Ah-Leh stir in her drowsiness and look up at him. He watched her intently to see whether fear could come back into her expression. She looked only dazed and closed her eyes sleepily again.

"That's all settled, I guess," said Williams.

He rose and lifted her to her feet. She was so tired that her head dropped against his shoulder and she slept on her feet. He picked her up, saying to himself—"Looks as if we wouldn't get far until you've had your nap out, anyway."

At the door he waited a moment, looking out over the hillside. It was a chill,

starry night. No traces of the morning's storm were left in the sky, but the earth smelled wet and inhospitable. There was no sound but the restlessness of the trees. Po-Yeh and his wounded brother might be miles away—or watching him from a near-by patch of brush. He realized that he could easily be seen in the faint glow from the fireplace if he stepped through the door.

He went back, put the girl down gently for a moment, content to observe that she slept on, regardless, and he looked for another door. With a blazing stick for a torch he explored the walls. There ought to be another place of egress on the side of the house toward the stables and the granary. He found it, a low door out of the only other room the building possessed. It was on the downhill side of the house. Through this he crept, feeling sure that he could not be seen.

As he walked swiftly toward the nearest of the other buildings he heard a sound a long way off that made him stop. It was the bark of a dog, ending in a yelp of pain. That decided him. He crept back, got Ah-Leh to her feet again, brought her out of the house with him and carried her toward the stables. She murmured something dreamily against his shoulder. In the first of the muddy-floored, unspeakably dirty, outer sheds he found by exploring in the dark what he confidently expected—the place where Meng and the two Nosus had been hiding when he had first appeared at the house, only a few hours ago. There was his kit which Meng had been carefully keeping for him with a water-bottle and a bag of meal, his little bundle of extra clothing and two boxes of cartridges.

"How luck does stay with us," he said to the girl who waited for him at the entrance.

The kit was opened. He pulled a flannel shirt over her disheveled head and another over his own. With the kit adjusted to his shoulders he started on.

"You're going to get your sleep a little farther away from our friends," he said.

He repeated the same thing in Yunnanese.

That dialect was as unintelligible to her as English but he had the notion that it might reassure her a little because it would sound less barbarous than the white man's language.

She murmured something that might have been an answer. She was incapable of thought or feeling then. She was exhausted.

He went cautiously down the hill toward a clump of thick woods, thinking with his incorrigible instinct for counting advantages, that they were fortunate to be on the Nosu side of the river. In Yunnan there would have been scarcely any trees to use for hiding places.

When he stopped and made a place for the girl to lie down under a bush, with his kit for a pillow, he walked back a dozen yards or so to look across the little valley they had traversed to where the farmhouse stood on the other side. He could see nothing at that distance although the light of the stars made near-by things deceptively clear. He listened. Again there was the sound of a barking dog, very far away but echoing in the silence.

He thought it extremely unlikely that Po-Yeh would approach the house again that night, or discover before morning that they had gone. He counted on that to give Ah-Leh her absolutely necessary rest and perhaps for himself to have a chance to sleep a few hours. Satisfied, he crawled under another sheltering bush and let himself go.

IT WAS three hours later, or a little more, when he awoke. The pungent smell of pine needles was strong in his nostrils. His limbs were cramped and stiff. He groaned when he tried to straighten up. But he stretched himself, like an animal, and prowled in the darkness. Had he been wakened by a sound? The girl was a sorry bundle, inert in her nest. From the top of the rise he looked back again toward the farmhouse.

He had counted on Po-Yeh's prudence but not on his cunning. There was a little

red spot of flame marking the place on the other hill where the house must be. It grew swiftly. In the light of the blaze of its own straw roof he saw the house burn where Po-Yeh thought he and the girl—and possibly a wounded boy—would be sleeping.

Williams cursed the Nosu softly but exhaustively under his breath. The killing flames mounted over the house where he might have been but for his own caution, lighting up a space on the hillside and casting a smoky glare upon the sky. The roof fell in. Williams thought of Meng, dying like a Nosu bravely after all his uncertainties and consumed now in a magnificent funeral pyre. No Chinese coffin for him but a proud and terrible burning.

After that, there could be no doubt of Po-Yeh's purpose. He intended to destroy the girl. What other lives it cost did not matter. Williams was a lone soldier—all of one whole army—in a three-cornered war, and he was hampered by possession of the prize they were fighting for. He had a few rounds of pistol ammunition, a few pounds of oatmeal. A good many long Chinese miles of brush and rocky hills lay between him and the river. He gave a passing instant to the hope that the burning of the farmhouse across the valley would be complete enough to make it difficult for Po-Yeh to decide whether he had been caught there or not, then turned to waken Ah-Leh and push ahead a few miles before sunrise.

The next day was sunlit and warm, and Williams rested all day long in a clump of trees where Ah-Leh could be easy on a heap of dry leaves. Twice he saw a group of men moving in the valley below him, but they went on hurriedly, evidently bound on some other business or else pursuing some imaginary trace of him. He heard one group shouting, and discovered by the answering shout which floated down from the crest of a precipitous hill that there were sentries posted on some of the heights. Guards in every pass, too, he thought, and probably forty men by the ferry across from Shin Chan Keo.

When darkness came he fed Ah-Leh a little cold-water-and-oatmeal paste, the fare of the mountain Nosu, which he could swallow only with difficulty himself. She tried hard to eat it but she could get down no more than a few mouthfuls. He was touched by the dutiful struggle she made against her distaste. She walked beside him with the same childish willingness, but her shoes were almost completely gone and her feet were badly bruised.

X

HER LIMPING slowness made Williams decide against his best judgment that he must risk trying at the next isolated house to find some sort of shoes for her. Rags from one of his extra shirts were all he could provide for the early miles of that march, and the sharp stones which littered the paths as well as the forest mold soon cut those into shreds. When, just after dawn, he saw a rough cabin under a clump of wax-trees, he put her behind a boulder and went down to investigate.

There were three dogs, as he had expected, but he had learned how to deal with that sort of reception. At their clamor an old stooped man came to the doorway and stared at him dumbly. Williams stopped where he was and made a sign of greeting. The old man rubbed his eyes and continued to stare, but no change of expression came over his withered face. When the stranger advanced toward him slowly he withdrew from the doorway, turning his back. Williams followed him into the house.

It was only a single foul and poverty-bare room, a hermit's den, and the invader was sure at a glance that no one else lived there but the old man himself who was now poking in his little heap of dying coals and filling the place with smoke. A mangy bear-rug was both bed and chair. In the corners of the room were heaped collections of sticks and

scraps of metal, rags and feathers and rusty broken weapons. Against one wall was a stack of bamboo slabs, newly cut, and on their smooth sides were traced crude Nosu ideographs. Evidently the old man was a magician and a merchant in irresistible charms.

What interested Williams most was the fact that in one piece of cooking equipment, a smutty kettle beside the fire, were the large remains of a stewed fowl. The old man paid no attention to him as he looked around the room. He went back and brought Ah-Leh down to the door. She hesitated timidly and coughed before she would enter. At that —evidently Nosu politeness—the old man condescended to turn. He addressed a sharp question which the girl answered, limping forward toward the fire. At the sight of the kettle of cold chicken stew, tears came into her eyes.

"You're just plain hungry, sister," said Williams in the same voice he had been using, hoping that he could keep her assured of his friendliness although she could not understand him.

But the girl was already talking volubly with the cranky hermit. His excited chatter with her was a droll contrast to the disdainful silence with which he had greeted the strange man who brought her. The pot of chicken went on to the fire and began to steam. They went on talking, pointing sometimes at Williams. Often the girl shook her head emphatically in reply to a question which the hermit appeared to be repeating with insistence.

Williams felt sure of her now. Of the old man's friendliness he had doubts. He spent the day under cover of the hut, patching together a pair of rough sandals which went on awkwardly over the wrappings on Ah-Leh's feet and he pretended to give their host no attention whatever.

In the afternoon, he saw that the old fellow was busily dragging out some of his gear from one of the corners and, when he hobbled through the door, Williams followed. Bending his old legs into what speed he could summon, the old man began to run. Williams called sharply. It was absurd to see the old savage making a desperate effort to get away, but it was risky, too, and Williams chased him down.

There was a volley of terrible Nosu curses but the uninvited guest took the outraged host by the arm and pulled him back. Several sharpened sticks, a handful of straw and a bundle of feathers dropped from his hands. He was allowed to pick them up again. Queer equipment for a dash into the woods, Williams thought, if that was really the plan. But the chance that he was off to summon some of the Earth-Eye's men was too imminently dangerous to be overlooked.

Muttering and still cursing, the old man was put back in the corner by his fire. He turned his back and fussed with the collection of junk he had been carrying. Evening and the protection of darkness was coming on, and Williams was adjusting the shoes to the obedient feet of Ah-Leh, getting ready for the night's journey.

There was a startled exclamation, and Williams looked up. The girl was staring at the hermit. Over his shoulder, from his kneeling position, Williams saw that the hermit was also on his knees. Before him three sticks had been thrust into the dirt floor of the hut and there was a little drinking bowl with a dark, ugly liquid in it. With his left hand the old man was throwing handfuls of dry grass toward his fire, where it flared up with puffs of gray smoke. In his hands, hidden from view, he was kneading something and his muttering had the regular rhythm of an incantation.

Williams stood over him, amused a little at this attack by magic, but realizing that to the girl's imagination it might be very serious. The thing in the wizard's hands, being twisted and tortured by his palsied manipulations, was a straw image. Williams leaned over and snatched it. He caught the old man firmly by the nape of the neck with one hand and rubbed the image up and down his back.

"Abracadabra and be —— to you, you old goofer!" he said and that sounded as

much like white man's magic as anything. "Here's all your impudent cursing back at you with compound usury. You think this straw doll is I, but you're wrong. It's you and this is how I treat it!"

He released the wizard's neck, spat on the straw image and threw it into the fire. Then he pushed the old man over roughly with his foot. The old man lay groaning and shaking with closed eyes. Ah-Leh appeared to be struck with horror, probably at this sacrilegious treatment of a medicine-maker, but Williams laughed and pulled her to her feet.

"I ought to tie this old boy up to keep him from running off and telling somebody," he said, taking counsel with himself. "But if I do he'll probably starve to death, and this is developing into altogether too murderous a business."

He stooped over the old man with a scowl and threatened him with his fists. He made signs, intending to convey that the wizard had best stay where he was while his guests departed.

XI

IN THE first darkness Williams started southward again. Ah-Leh was evidentally reluctant to go. She offered no more physical resistance than she had at any time in their strange journey. Obedience seemed to be her nature. But she had no smiles for him. The look in her dark, subtly evasive eyes was certainly not complete trust.

It might even have been hostility which the soft obedience was intended to conceal. This change in her outward manner Williams attributed to her fear of the sorcerer. He had evidentally violated her standards of respect for the medicine-man. Even that was better than letting her think the old man had frightened him.

They made miles through the edges of the woods, hurrying across the open spaces and keeping clear of the established paths. Since conversation was not possible and her withdrawal resembled sulkiness as the night dragged on and she became wearier, Williams let her alone. He gave her a reassuring word occasionally when helping her over a steep place, but he sank into his own thoughts.

Behind the whole tangle was the pervading presence of the old Earth-Eye. Recollections of him thronged in Williams' memory. His stamp was on the hills and on the savage men who ran at the call of his ram's horns. They were simple, they probably understood very little of his purposes, but they knew he was cruel and they obeyed in fear as well as in pride. The defiance of his luxurious tyrannies was like defying the mountains themselves.

Williams paused in his musings. No, that could not be true. The mountains were free. It was only the strangeness of the old man that made him seem a sort of evil god in a world of his own. The world still belonged to generous men and women. Helpless children, and women like this one trotting sullenly at his side, had a force of their own and a place of their own. Even a gesture against the old Earth-Eye was something. It might be bound inevitably to end in his triumph and in more suffering. Meng was the first victim sacrificed. But the gesture must be made now—out of mere self-respect.

Slogging along, he turned his impression of Mr. An over and over in his memory. He had known so many mandarins. The Earth-Eye was like some of them like some of the Manchus, especially, the evil ones—suavely cruel and as selfish as a barbarian's god. There was that old fellow Tien in Wuchang, he remembered. Tien had given him one of his first lessons in the ways of the *yamen.*

It had been a matter of justice for a Chinese friend of Williams. They had been willing to pay for justice, according to code, but having paid for it, they expected to get it. The friend had all the right of the matter on his side. But old Tien milked him dry and set the bribes of the other parties off against him. Then

he complained, driven at last to desperation. Tien had taken means to close his mouth—but Williams never wanted to complete that story. His friend had meant a good deal to him.

And yet the Earth-Eye was something different after all. Tien and the other mandarins of malodorous politeness had been men of cities, belonging naturally in hives of mingled luxury and squalor. The Earth-Eye, in spite of his alien learning, belonged in his eagle's nest. His men were slaves to him perhaps, but they would never have been slaves to any other. Slugs dressed up in embroidered silk—like Tien of Wuchang—could never have held them even by fear. They were men worth fighting. The Earth-Eye himself was one worth fighting against—a dangerous, adroit, ruthless man.

The girl had stopped and put a hand on his sleeve. When he looked at her inquiringly, coming up from his revery, she put a tiny finger on her lips for silence and pointed ahead. He could see her very dimly in the starlight and he could see nothing at all in the direction she indicated.

They listened. A faint sound of voices came through the trees. Williams moved a step to one side. From her position at his side she had seen, beyond the edge of a great rock, two men close together, illumined by the glow of a little camp-fire. In a step or two more he would have stumbled on them or given them warning of his approach. While he was watching and thinking gratefully that she had been more alert than he, she spoke to him directly for the first time since they had left the castle. Only a name could possibly have any meaning between them.

What she whispered was "Po-Yeh!"

Williams could scarcely recognize the bulky, awkward shape of the one who had called himself her brother. But he did not doubt she was right. If Po-Yeh thought he had done for them all in burning the farmhouse, he would probably be hurrying back across the line, away from Nosu vengeance. Whoever his friends were, he was no friend of the Earth-Eye. It was not surprizing that they had found him off the trail, traveling in their direction.

A shudder of hatred for the man went through Williams. Liar and murderer! There were at least two of them by the fire, possibly more. Pitched battles while Ah-Leh was exposed at his side were not what he was planning for, but if there were only two—Po-Yeh's partner was already wounded, if it was he standing there. A third man came into the little glow.

Williams drew back and Ah-Leh, noiseless as a deer, followed him. His foot caught on a stone and he sprawled on his back. The breaking of a few twigs and the rustling of leaves was a tremendous noise in the silence. Only the darkness saved him. He rolled over to face the camp of Nosus, but did not try to get up. The girl, with admirable self-possession, crouched at his side.

Together, holding their breath, they waited. Po-Yeh cried out inquiringly, turning in their direction. He started toward the noise he had heard. There was only one thing to do and, with a mental invocation to the spirit of the murdered Meng, Williams shot Po-Yeh while he was still a target in the glow of the fire. He spun half around sidewise and went over into a bush.

The two others that were visible multiplied into three, then four. But there were only two guns among them. Those two blazed away over the heads of Williams and the girl and Williams got one more good shot before they scattered away from the light of the fire. His shot brought a howl of pain. Williams began to shout and Ah-Leh, catching his intention, screamed madly. The pistol was emptied at nothing in particular, but the Gideon's ruse worked and the Nosus ran as if from an overpowering army. Taking advantage of their headlong escape, Williams pulled the girl to her feet and started off instantly, veering his course a little to the right, anxious to get as far away as possible before they began to wonder why they were not pursued.

It was a problem of making distance for many hours after that. Williams was grateful to Ah-Leh and he wanted to spare her what he could of fatigue and hardship. He thought he was sure of her. She understood. But the hills grew steeper and rockier, the woody coverts were more scattered, and even in the darkness he dared not go slowly through open spaces. His strength was the more drawn upon because of his constant effort to help her, to watch her as closely as possible, carrying her sometimes, holding her hand along steep paths, on the alert for any signs of falling.

The next day they rested in a little hollow on the upper side of a boulder which hung on the top of a hill. It bulged out of its socket, threatening to roll away into the ravine, and then cleft between it and the slope made a natural nest. The sun gave the limestone a hot and friendly smell. The trees were scanty, but edelweiss covered the slope with a cool foam of flowers. Birds circled over them while they slept, swooping close sometimes to investigate their strange immobility.

XII

WHEN Ah-Leh awoke that evening, she stood up on their perch and looked out over the valleys, filled with a misty pink glow in the sunset. The further hills were dissolving in warm-tinted clouds—a lovely, mysterious wilderness, vast, unmarked by human concerns. Williams looked up at her. She was tiny. A sparrow over the ocean. The tremendous spectacle of the mountains, tinged with the softer reflections of the day's death that burned to the westward, was grotesquely disproportionate for that one sentient onlooker. But she was not awed. Her body, rested from her day's sleep, was quickened with an abrupt purpose. She turned toward him. He had not moved, but she saw his eyes were open. He imagined that a shadow of disappointment went over her face.

She turned toward the north, the way they had come, and pointed. While he watched her with indulgent bewilderment she came over and knelt on the rock at his side. She pointed again and began talking in her light, tinkling voice, seductively pleading with him for something she could not make him understand.

Was she trying to tell him about her life in the Earth-Eye's house? Was she asking some revenge for her wrongs? Or—and this thought was intolerable, but he had to consider its possibility—was she asking him to take her back to the Earth-Eye? When he only shook his head and smiled, meaning that he could not understand what she wanted, Ah-Leh let the animation die from her voice and her face. Two tears rose in her eyes. She clasped her hands and looked away from him.

He did not wonder that her courage was failing. Her strength had been exhausted every day of their journey and even he could not be very hopeful about what was ahead. She must be saying that there could be worse things than the Earth-Eye's protection and he'd better give it up. He decided it must be that.

"We'll make it," he assured her briskly. "We'll get through. Just trust me."

She trotted obediently but sadly at his side when he started south again.

ON THE next night after their camp on the skyline they reached a dead end to all the paths by which they could parallel the main trail. They came up a rising ravine bottom toward a pass which Williams remembered. It was the terrible high ledge where he had almost lost his life coming out—would have lost it if Po-Yeh had not needed him and lent a hand.

The high rock cliffs shut them off in every other direction. It was like a funnel turning them to its only outlet. It might have been possible to make a long detour, retracing their steps for miles, but even that might waste time, for there was no way of knowing that any other scalable pass led southward toward Shin Chan Keo.

They had perhaps two hours to sunrise

when Williams decided to chance it. He could not wait for daylight. Here was the place which would most certainly be guarded if the Earth-Eye's men thought he was trying to make for the ferry. There might even be a sentry clinging somewhere now on that impossible trail. But any delay made capture certain. Luck had been good thus far. They began the climb up the narrowing path.

The trail was difficult in the first half mile because of the numbers of loose small stones rolling under their steps, bruising their feet and making their progress audible in the night stillness.

It narrowed sharply and then, with an abrupt turn, it was only the ledge cut into the side of a cliff. They could see dimly the stone under their feet and a few steps ahead. The chasm dropping away on their left side went down indefinitely into blackness. There was a cold little wind blowing.

Once Ah-Leh's foot pushed a pebble over the edge of the path and it clattered down and down, echoing more and more faintly until they could not be sure whether they could still hear it or not.

Williams, leading the way, went down on his hands and knees. That would make going more painful, but it was safer. Obediently she followed the suggestion. The sharp contours of the roughly hewn path hurt their hands and their knees. They went with snail speed, holding close to the cliff, with blackness and unknown dangers ahead of them and certain death at their right hand.

No sentry would be up here. He felt sure of that now as he got the painful reminders of the trail's impossible difficulty. They would never expect any refugee to try this way at night. He needed only to get across before sun-up and perhaps he could turn aside into some shelter before he came to their guards.

A low moan behind him made him stop. He looked back over his shoulder into the darkness. She had been just behind him. She was no longer there. He felt with his right hand to see how far he was from the edge. It was risky even to stand up and turn around. He listened fearfully expecting to hear her shrieks and the sound of her fragile body falling down the cliff.

For long seconds he was frozen there. The whole desperate, foolish enterprise had come to this pitiful end. The wind blew on his hot face. His body ached with nervous tension and fatigue. But these things were crowded out by a sickening sense of failure. He had been duped by Po-Yeh—that was paid off. On nothing but Po-Yeh's conspiring lies and his own sense of her unhappiness, he interfered in the destiny of this girl and he had brought her to this.

He lay down flat on the rock and closed his eyes.

Again he heard the low moan behind him. Very slowly, using his hand to guide himself up the face of the rock above the path, he stood straight and went back until he could see her lying in a heap. She still wore his coat against the chill; she was no more than a shapeless little bundle. Williams considered calmly how he could manage to carry her on. Her strength and her patience, perhaps even her courage, had been worn out entirely. Her knees and hands were probably giving her a good deal of pain as his own were doing.

He did not permit himself to consider anything but how he could get her over the pass. To pick her up and carry her across his breast on that crazy bridge above the abyss would almost certainly end in their toppling over. If he could only give her some instructions. He spoke to her, putting his whole message in his tone of firm cheerfulness.

She perceived him above her and struggled feebly to her hands and knees again, moaning. It flashed through his mind that there was real danger that she would give up altogether and throw herself over the edge. He placed himself squarely in front of her and held his hands back over his shoulders. He called sharply to make her look up.

Very slowly, clinging to his clothing and rocking him on his balance, she got

to her fect and held up her arms so he could grasp her wrists. Then he straightened and started forward. Her slight weight hung directly and, by brushing the cliffside of the path constantly with his shoulder, he wormed his way farther for fifty yards or more. For a few steps at least the path was widening. Very slowly he bent his knces and let her fcet down to the ground.

But her cramped, exhausted limbs did not support her. She staggered and caught him frantically about the waist. He leaned hard against the wall searching with his fingers for some nook or rock to hold to. He felt his foot slipping. He was himself almost too weary to keep his balance even without her pulling. His fingers found a crevice and one foot, slipping along the smooth rock caught in a slight depression. For a long drawn-out moment they seemed to be hanging suspended. He wondered how long he could hold.

Very slowly he felt her stiffen. She got her feet firmly down, still clinging to him but adjusting their balance a little. She was sobbing in little gasps of fright and weariness. She stood straight at last. Williams showed her how to take hold of the back of his belt and led the way on.

The path had turned downward now and widened rapidly. It was possible to walk in freedom. Within a hundred yards it made a turn around a great crag and became a road. Williams threw himself on his back, panting, momentarily unnerved, and thc girl sat beside him and cried.

He did not try to go farther. They werc both completely spcnt.

The dawn, misty and damp, came up across the mountain over their heads. The crag shut their view off mercifully from thc path. Thcy saw before them a wide, rapidly dcsccnding meadow through which the trail ran without bushes or trees or any other possible concealment. Half a mile away was another isolated Nosu farmstead, several buildings grouped closely together. There was no sign of humanity therc; no smoke from the hole in the roof.

For an hour or more in the early daylight, Williams watched the farmhouse from the side of the pass. The impression of emptiness continued. No one came out to get water for a morning meal. No animals moved around the outhouses, not even dogs. There was no breakfast fire. He ventured nearer slowly and, when he was close, saw that one side of the house was fallen in. There were huge holes in the wattle and daub walls. The place was long since deserted.

He carried Ah-Leh down and explored the place boldly. One small building, whose mucky floor had dried into a sanitary solid condition, had a small platform built up high against the thatched roof—apparently a place for storing grain. That would provide a quick hiding place if they needed it. They could perhaps sleep there in reasonable safety through the day. He scraped out the old fireplace and made a very small fire. Ah-Leh had a breakfast—or a supper—of warm oatmeal, and when he lifted her to the platform in the shed she was already almost aslecp.

XIII

FOR HIMSELF, Williams thought hc might risk an exploratory trip ahead across the meadow to the next turn in the road in order to see what lay beyond. He hoped to see the gleaming waters of the Yangtse flowing just beyond that hill. He remembcred that his last view of it had been not long before they had come on the outward journey to the narrow pass. There was no way to find out but to strike ahead resolutely before the sun got too high and people might be encountered on the trail. He thanked heaven for the early morning laziness of traveling coolies for the first time in a long experience with that characteristic.

He had gone about half-way across the meadow when he heard a shout. It came from a man dircctly ahead of him in the trail who ran forward brandishing a rifle. Williams put his hand on his holster and then realized with amazement that the man was shouting to him in Chinese. In

good Yunnanese the man called to him to stop. There appeared to be no others and, since the man came forward without a threat, Williams let him come.

"Are you the friend of Mr. Rutherford of Chaotung?" shouted the soldier breathlessly.

Williams replied by waving his hand in friendship. The soldier let out a great yell and discharged his carbine into the air. Facing Williams, he gave a salute and stood there grinning broadly as if a great hunt had come to a dazzling success.

"We have come to find you and protect you from the Lolos," said the soldier.

Behind him, scattering across the meadow with enthusiastic speed, came thirty or forty men. A few minutes later another larger detachment came up. At last, an officer, trotting along on a tiny Nosu pony.

"We have come to find you, sir," he said, dismounting respectfully. He was moon-faced, rather greasy-eyed, little fellow in a pretentious uniform. His manner combined obsequiousness with self-importance.

"We are very proud to have rescued you from the terrible Lolos and to discover that what they say about you is not the truth."

"I am grateful, I am sure. I was not worth all your trouble," answered Williams. "I have been for the last hour or two in that deserted farmhouse, and I have not been hurt."

"Good," answered the captain with several spasms of his nervous smile. "We will camp there then until we have had our breakfast. Then we will take you to Shin Chan Keo."

He refused to mount his pony again and, when Williams with equal politeness refused to take his place, they walked side by side.

"And what is it," Williams asked, "that you were told about me?"

"That you had taken—of course, it is an unworthy thing to say, sir, and I hope you will forgive me even for mentioning it, but it is something we can laugh about —they say you stole a Nosu woman out of the Earth-Eye's house—"

He interrupted himself to laugh softly and derisively. His laughter while he watched a hundred men converge toward the shed where Ah-Leh was sleeping made chills go down Williams' spine.

"And you did not believe that of me?" asked Williams.

"I assure you I did not. And I am very happy to find out that it is not true. I am as happy about that as about the fact that my unworthy self and my brave men had succeeded after several days' effort in rescuing you right out of the hands of the savages." He smiled with great satisfaction. "I expect to be rewarded for that. I'm sure you will offer your testimony."

"I will testify that you found me," said Williams.

"In Nosu territory—in Nosu territory!" cried the little captain anxiously. "Remember that we are several hours from the river. We have marched boldly into the country where the savages are up. We have defied the Earth-Eyes, remember, and we are bringing you back safely out of your great danger."

"I'm not out yet." Williams was walking as slowly as possible, trying to make his plans for whatever might happen in the next few moments.

"You'll soon be safe," said the little captain with another nervous smile. "We haven't met any Nosus yet and we can easily get back before they come along." He stopped and his round face became very grave. "But if it had been true, sir, that you had stolen a worthless Lolo wench, then even my men could never have rescued you. They would really refuse to obey me. I believe if they found that you had done anything so foolish—"

"Dangerous?" Williams asked.

"Dangerous, sir?" The captain's slant eyes were opened as wide as they could be. "You could never possibly have gotten this far alive. The Nosus are terrible men and they are savages. Like all savages they have a ridiculous idea of the value of women. Pah! How can men

think any woman is worth fighting for when there are so many?"

"How wise you are, honorable Captain!" said Williams. "What a man of sense!"

"You have lived enough years among us, I am told, to have acquired good sense for yourself, sir," answered the captain generously. "If my poor wisdom pleases you, you might mention that to my superiors also. But to return to the unworthy subject—

"My men complained against going after you when the false report leaked out that you had stirred up trouble among the Nosus by deigning to pilfer one of their gross-footed women. They were hardy as lions when it came to hurrying to the rescue of a friend who had ventured too far among these savages which only we Yunnanese understand. Ah, yes. But they agreed among themselves that they would never make any attempt to bring a stranger and a Nosu woman both back across the river. If there was a Nosu woman—that was the end of it as far as they were concerned."

"Pardon me, Captain, but I can't see why that should make so much difference."

"You can't?" The captain stopped again in his strut toward the farmhouse. Williams kept glancing ahead, expecting any moment to hear a shout or a scream from the little shed where Ah-Leh must be lying, awakened now and terrified by the noise. "You can't?" asked the captain. "Why, they would follow us back across the river if they did not succeed in catching us before we got home. They would burn Shin Chan Keo and a lot of great men's houses and a lot of our standing grain. They would rob and burn and murder—in revenge, you see—that is their foolish way when one of their women is taken away from them by a civilized man.

"They are disgusting barbarians. However, why worry about that? Here you are. We have rescued you after incredible hardships and you are going to thank the viceroy for sending us and the viceroy is going to learn about me and—Think how much more pleasant than if you had been cross-eyed enough to be attracted by one of their slatterns with bare feet like a man's! In that case there would surely have been a raid across the river in revenge and the viceroy would have blamed us."

XIV

HIS COMPLACENT chatter was cut short by a sudden shrill scream. It came from among the houses. A dozen subterfuges and schemes had been running through Williams' mind: Should he make a clean breast of it and try to persuade this silly fool? Should he do nothing at all and trust to Ah-Leh to keep undiscovered? That would leave her at the mercy of the first-comer; she could hope for nothing better than being taken back disgraced to the Earth-Eye's house, and she might meet some worse fate—all to pay for his folly. Should he say, if she were discovered, that she was no one he had ever seen before? What would that bring her, even if it did save him? These hopeless thoughts went through his mind swiftly.

The scream was repeated and there was a tremendous chattering among the men. Williams forced himself to walk slowly beside the captain, unperturbed to all appearance, while the soliders poured out from the buildings as if they had run into a nest of snakes. The captain waddled on, evidently not very curious about the vocal antics of his troopers. Two of them ran headlong toward him and shouted something which Williams did not catch.

The captain began to laugh.

"Come with me," he said, "and I will show you something very funny."

He led the way directly to the shed.

Williams' eyes glanced upward as he went through the ruined door. There was a half-darkness in the place in spite of the numerous holes in the walls and roof. On the ground at their feet sat one of the Chinese soldiers, his knees drawn up before his face, one arm wrapped tight

around his body, the other supporting his face with his hand pressed hard against his jaw. He rocked and moaned and cursed. The captain looked down upon his misery and laughed with a high-pitched snickering joy. He pulled at Williams' arm and pointed at the man and laughed again.

"A wasp!" moaned the man, between terrible curses.

It was a tremendous joke. Williams decided it would be best to laugh, too. He glanced upward again and saw in the dusk near the roof two eyes, frightened and wide, looking over the edge of the platform. Behind him he heard a chorus of laughter and saw that the other men, who had scattered when the victim's first scream had given them warning, were now crowding around to enjoy his misery.

"I think we had best move out of here," said Williams. "Wasps usually live in cities, I believe. If the whole city should be aroused—"

The captain plunged backward through his men and Williams followed. The victim came, after shooting glances of deadly hatred at his friends for their mirth.

"No need to warn my brave men to keep out of that house," said the captain, still in lordly amusement, "they are sensible fellows."

"That's good," said Williams sincerely.

The sting of the wasp was evidently the sole casualty suffered up to now by the valorous rescue party. The band made a cheerful breakfast with only occasional attacks of laughter when some wit called new attention to the swollen cheek of the one who had been stung.

"It would be very profitable for my men and for me to remain here for a week or so," said the captain, "as we will get extra pay. But our consideration for you will control us in a matter like this. We will start back at once."

Williams did not remark that consideration for the possibility of the appearance of few Nosus might have greater weight with them.

"How far did you say it was from here to the ferry opposite Shin Chan Keo?" he asked, as he drank the captain's tea.

"Oh, several hours' march for a tired man like you."

"Is it necessary for you to get back tonight?"

"Not if you don't prefer to hurry. Our unworthy efforts are for your sake. If you would like to stay here—or it might be wise to move a few *li* toward the river and wait there. It would be safer. Then we can spend a day or so, if that would amuse you."

"I'm very tired," said Williams. "Now that I have your protection I think I'd better rest for a day or more before I try to go any farther, even as far as Shin Chan Keo."

They agreed to stay where they were—out of consideration for the great weariness of Williams. He was thinking he could get away in the first darkness and creep back to the house. Perhaps he could even get clear around his rescuers, reach the ferry before they did and get across where he would have at least a fighting chance of protecting Ah-Leh. All morning the men idled, smoking and keeping up a constant chatter, mostly about nothing at all. But they kept away from the wasp-infested shed.

Williams and his host took the second meal of the day seated before the door of the main farmhouse, where a low table had been spread with hot rice and eggs. Williams choked at the thought of how this well-cooked food would taste to the girl on the platform in the shed. The afternoon went by without any evidence of any intention ever to push on toward the river.

The captain assured his rescued guest that he had no idea of doing anything but to provide for his guest's safety and comfort. It seemed to be safe enough here and it was certainly pleasant. The sun slipped across the western ridge and the first chill of night came on, as if the high valley had been suddenly emptied of their warm breath.

The captain shivered.

"It is very trying to have to campaign

over here in the wilderness. But this is as good a camping place as we are likely to find. Don't you agree?"

"It makes little difference to me. Where will your men sleep?"

"They are hardy fellows. They will sleep on the floors of these old sheds—some of them outside, of course. Why do you ask?"

"I was thinking," said Williams, slowly, "that it was a pity that one of the buildings was out of commission because of a nest of wasps."

The captain smiled pudgily.

"You know how it is, sir. They would face a thousand cannons but not one little insect's sharpened tail. They will prefer the ground outside."

"The dews are heavy—"

"What would you suggest? A concerted attack on the wasps?"

"Oh, no. Nothing so rash. I was just going to say that I know a certain trick with wasps that we used to practise in my country—but of course you would not have any faith in my kind of magic."

The little captain leaned forward, intensely interested at once.

"I assure you," he insisted, "that I have the greatest faith in your magic. Haven't I seen the things that missionary doctors can do? Haven't I seen the dead made to rise from their graves?"

"Have you seen that?"

"I have the same as seen it with my own eyes. I had a cousin who saw a missionary doctor bring a dead man to life. Oh, yes. He told me all about it. What is your magic with wasps?"

"It does not always work at once," said Williams. "It takes time. But I am willing to try it."

Solemnly he made up a little package of rice from the dinner table and took a cup of hot tea. "Wasps are the spirit of old women—according to our barbarian beliefs, you understand."

The captain nodded his fat little head, his eyes shining.

"They hate human beings because—well, because they are the spirits of old women." He made mysterious folds in a handkerchief, shrouding the package of food. "They can very seldom be propitiated, but if they are offered food of just the right kind with exactly the right greeting—by one man who comes to them alone—they can sometimes be persuaded to accept the token of goodwill. This all sounds to you like nonsense, of course."

The captain was a little uncertain.

"I do not understand your ways," he replied, "but I am—interested."

Williams chanted over the package—in English—five sections of the multiplication table.

"Give orders that no one is to disturb me or to approach that shed," he commanded and walked straight toward the place, holding the package of food high above his head.

The captain shouted to his men not to push forward curiously as they showed an immediate determination to do.

Alone Williams entered the shed. It was already dusk. He began to talk as soon as he was inside, saying gentle and rather foolish things in English just to convey what he could by the sound of his voice. There was no sign of life on the platform. He called—

"Ah-Leh!"

He could not see whether she was looking over the edge at him or not. He put the water and the rice up where she could reach it. On his fingers he felt a touch, fleeting, scarcely perceptible, but very comforting. She did not make a sound.

He stayed there for several minutes, keeping up his flow of symbolic talk and then went back to report to the captain that the wasps were either very obstinate or else, being the spirits of Nosu old women instead of Americans, were unable to understand him. They refused to come out, he said, and he had escaped a bad stinging himself with the greatest difficulty. The shed would have to remain untenanted, at least for a time until he could try again.

"But did they accept the food?" asked the captain with childish curiosity.

"Oh, yes. That shows they may be won over later. There are a great many of them swarming around in there. I never saw such a city of wasps before. It would be terrible for a man who did not understand beasts of this sort to go in there now."

The captain assured him that his men would be careful. He was a talkative fellow, the captain. He was full of astounding entirely inaccurate tales about the Nosus, the "Lolos"—their ferocity, stupidity, ignorance and the general blatherskitishness of their ways. He knew all about them, of course, because he had been born not far from Shin Chan Keo; his mother had told him the Lolos would get him whenever he was bad; he had seen them raid his uncle's estate when he was still only a child—but he knew how to handle them.

"As you understand the wasps, so I understand the barbarians," he explained.

They sat in the farmhouse by the fire. The captain lolled at his untidy ease upon a bear-skin and his rescued guest sat cross-legged opposite him. The complacent soldier told his tales and recited his own virtues without noticing the abstraction of his listener.

In fact, Williams could not help listening fearfully for a sound that would betray what seemed inevitable sooner or later, that a bold or a stupid soldier had gone into the shed and had by accident discovered the girl on her perch.

"The Lolos can be mastered," droned the thin voice of the captain, "by any man who is brave enough to show that he is not afraid of them. Of course, all wild beasts and wild men are like that. Face them boldly. Show them you are stronger than they are."

He dozed a little in the midst of his oration. He had eaten a good deal for supper. After all his virtues were pretty well known by the world at large, announcing them was not altogether necessary when one felt so drowsy—

Williams waited with tense nerves.

XV

FINALLY there came a sound, but it was not what he had been dreading. It was a sudden yell, muffled half-way, and followed by a moment of silence. Then all around them an explosion of shouts and yells of alarm. Two or three rifles popped; then a fusillade. The little captain sat up in the flickering light of the fire. Williams saw his face go sickly yellow. A sentry who had been leaning just inside the door disappeared. The captain stumbled to his feet and went to the door.

Williams, standing in the door beside him, saw flashes of rifle-fire all around the farmhouse. Fifty feet away, where most of the Chinese troops had arranged themselves for the night, a hand-to-hand was on in the midst of the camp-fires. The rifle report, however, appeared to be getting farther and farther away instead of coming in from an attacking party. The reports and flashes came from farther and farther down the trail toward the south.

Occasionally dark figures would break from the mêlée among the camp-fires and scuttle away toward the retreating rifle-fire. The Chinese army was in full flight, pausing only occasionally to shoot back in the direction of their enemies, regardless of the chances of hitting their companions. The muffled, choked yell had evidently been the warning of a sentry when the surprize attack began. Without that warning there would not have been so many brave rescuers running to safety down the trail.

The center of the fight was around the fires. The brave captain put all his knowledge of the ways of the Lolos into practise by running as fast as his short legs could carry him.

Williams bent low, went out and crept swiftly along the side of the house toward the shed. No one was near the door. Challenged once sharply by an unseen Nosu who must have heard him, he dodged into the shed. In the darkness he took hold of the edge of the shelf and lifted himself up.

"Ah-Leh," he whispered, and she answered his greeting with a word of Nosu that sounded quite self-possessed and friendly.

As he moved he knocked her little jug of water off the edge of the shelf. It broke on the dirt floor. They sat there together in complete darkness and heard the sounds of the fight swell and diminish. The Nosus were very quiet; the shouts and screeches were all in Yunnanese.

Once or twice Williams felt Ah-Leh shudder but she did not speak. It was curious, he was thinking, for his mind went on speculating in spite of the situation, it was curious to be listening to a fight over oneself and not be sure which side one wanted to get the best of it.

In any case the victory for the Nosus was inevitable. They did not use firearms at all, he judged, from the fact that the shots were all from that retreating mob, his rescuers. The shouting died away. A buzz of laughter and loud talk took its place. Men were circulating all around them, evidently investigating the house and the sheds.

There were soft, scarcely audible steps in the entrance to the shed. Several men were there—it was impossible to tell how many. One of them spoke rapidly in Nosu.

When those Nosu words came, unmistakable and clear, they brought some news to the girl at his side which she must have been waiting for. The flimsy shelf shook with her sudden movement. She rose to her knees and cried out, in a stream of Nosu words that sounded like an appeal—or a command.

Williams did not move. Too late to silence her. He pulled out his pistol, but the shelf, tugged at by four or five pairs of hands, broke down. Ah-Leh slid to the ground. He rolled after her, helpless, into the arms of the Earth-Eye's men.

XVI

HIS HANDS were tied tightly behind his back. His legs were hobbled loosely together under the belly of a little Nosu pony. The Earth-Eye's men marched on all sides of him along the trail to the north. They came to the fearful narrow pass in the first daylight, and he had to dismount and start up on foot, roped to men ahead and behind. There were not more than twenty men in sight. He wondered whether that small band had made the attack on the rescue party, Ah-Leh had disappeared.

She had gone on ahead with her own escort, hurrying back to her slavery. He was very bitter as he climbed the desperate trail for the third time, but his bitterness was chiefly condemnation of himself for a rash fool. He could not help admiring as they went the cool skill of the hill-men in getting over that path. They had him securely bound so that he could not choose the abyss as preferable to facing the old Earth-Eye. They would get him safely across.

But Ah-Leh? He had evidently been a misguided fool from the beginning. She had wanted to be rescued from him. She had been obedient, but was only waiting and hoping to be rescued by the Earth-Eye's men.

Perfidious? No. He had no right to judge. She had made him no promises, unless a frank smile and a trustful hand in his had been promises. He had never consulted her about abducting her from what was, after all, her home. What right had he ever had to suppose she could pierce all the confusing disguises of his alien speech and his Western manners and his brusk kidnaping to see under them his kind intent?

He had known nothing about her except what the crooked-eyed Po-Yeh had told him. Po-Yeh's lies and his own impression that she had been afraid when he first saw her, when she came with her pretty gestures to thank him for saving the life of her master, were all he had ever had to go on. She had been afraid of something or of somebody. It had seemed perfectly clear then that it was her master. Not so clear now.

It had not been so difficult to explain her sudden screaming as they were getting away from the castle. She would

naturally fear to be caught seeming to go willingly, and it must have looked to her that the escape was impossible. Better to scream and placate the master who must inevitably have her again in a few minutes.

He paused in his thoughts and hesitated in the path. The Nosu just beyond prodded him resolutely.

She had helped him against Po-Yeh, but Po-Yeh had given his own murderous plan away too crudely. She had not recognized his name when it was spoken to her, but she had recognized his crooked-eyed, evil face.

Williams tried hard, in his bitterness, to be fair. He had built up out of Po-Yeh's original lie and his own assumptions an imaginary situation and he had plunged into that situation recklessly. It was nobody's fault but his own. Well, he would pay his own share of the cost; he was on his way back to face the man who had discussed calmly the most cruel ways of putting men to death and had tried to devise some punishment which would frighten away all future enemies.

They reached the easier slope on the other side of the pass and he was put on a pony again. He shut his eyes as his mount ambled on and could see vividly the philosophic face of Mr. An as the Earth-Eye had said, "One of my friends, a chief of the 'black-bloods', cut off the kneecaps of two assassins—"

He blamed himself most for losing poor Meng. The boy had warned him that he was risking too much from the beginning. He had been overruled and sacrificed. At least for Meng there had been the death of a brave man, and a magnificent, lonely funeral by fire. For himself, he was thinking, there was shameful torture.

He tested the ropes around his wrists for the hundreth time. They were firmly, expertly tied. They would hold. If he tried to jump from his pony he would be pulled over by the ropes on his feet. He could do nothing, except perhaps keep his mind from brooding on what was ahead of him.

They climbed swiftly through the hills. The white towers of the Earth-Eye's castle hung above them at the end of the steep path.

At the foot of the climb they were met by a little troop of soldiers. Their leader was the Earth-Eye's messenger, the one who had given Williams his invitation to the Earth-Eye's house, the one who had caught him wandering about the house that night only six days ago and had precipitated by his evident suspicion the sudden attempt to break away. He walked straight up to Williams, and the pony was so diminutive that the face of its rider was only a little above the face of a man on the ground.

The Nosu smiled. It was a pleased and happy smile, but not a smile of welcome. It had in it the gratification of suspicion and instinctive dislike. It anticipated, too. The look on his yellow-brown face and in his animal-like eyes was the sign of a foretaste of pleasure, like the quickening happiness of a cat when a mouse is caught and quivers under a playful claw.

He did not offer violence or abuse. His hands, as he undid the ropes on Williams' feet and helped him to the ground, were careful. His close-thrust face was nauseating, but Williams resisted the impulse to lift his bound hands and strike him.

They marched up the path. Three blasts on the ram's horn was a signal from the top to acknowledge triumph.

At the top of the hill Williams was led in through the big gate and across the courtyard as he had been led once before. There were again several of the Earth-Eye's sullen retainers under the stunted tree in the courtyard, beneath their suspended weapons and gear. The only difference was the rope on his wrists. That also was removed. At the door of the reception hall he was freed. When he hesitated he was pushed forward. Three men entered behind him.

XVII

THE EARTH-EYE was sitting by his table. The long-haired spaniel was in the lap of his white gown and his fingers played with its long hair restlessly. His

face was impassive, except for a quick uplifting of his white brows when Williams came into the room.

One of the three men behind the prisoner gave him a sharp jab with the point of a sword. Williams turned angrily and was jabbed again.

"He thinks you should drop to your knees, my friend," said the Earth-Eye, in Yunnanese. "He wants to see you beg for mercy."

"He will be disappointed," Williams replied.

The old man's smile scarcely moved the muscles of his lips and did not reach his eyes. His expression was not gloating; it was melancholy, and his claw-fingers twisted and pulled at the spaniel's hair. He gave an order in Nosu. The three men stepped to Williams side again. Williams had again his instinctive wish to make a wild stroke for a moment's freedom, or for the mere satisfaction of resistance. Some wiser instinct held him quiet and he let them put three turns of rope around his hands again, skillfully disabling him. Then they went out, leaving him alone with the Earth-Eye.

"Sit down," said the Earth-Eye. "You must be very tired."

For a few moments Williams sat before the old man until the steady, bird-like scrutiny from the veiled brown eyes became intolerable. He felt a hot wave of resentment and helpless rage flare up in him.

"Why the farce of caring how tired I am?" he demanded harshly. When he got no answer but the same prolonged stare he broke out in a reckless complaint. "Get it over with!" he cried. "Get it over with!" but his voice sounded loud in the small room and he was suddenly shamed. He pulled himself together and sat silent again.

"Young man," the Earth-Eye spoke abruptly but in his most silken tones, "is there any wisdom at all in your life?"

"Evidently not."

Williams' answer was honest and bitter.

"I don't understand you. All I can do is to presume that you are ignorant and a rash, destructive fool. Your rashness is the natural result of your ignorance. You are not like those savage, brutal fools who tried to murder me on the path. They were senseless. You are capable of understanding and appreciating life—or would have been if you had been civilized when you were still quite young. I have often wondered at the strange barbarous mixture in the characters of Western men. When I lived for a year in Yunnan-Fu, as a young man, I met many Westerners, mostly Frenchmen and Englishmen. You are all alike—ignorant of any ways but your own, and rash.

"I took you in as a friend and I liked you. I enjoyed your talk even when I smiled in my sleeves at the idea that I was expected to believe the things you told me about your own country. Your imaginary wonders seemed to me quite childlike—quite like the things you would boast of doing because, although they are quite impossible and foolish, they are what you would like to do to spoil the world if you could. Machines to speak, iron servants instead of pleasant human ones — foolish, grotesque fancies. The reality of my fierce hills is better than your imagined iron paradise."

Williams closed his eyes. The old man's slow moralizing was the last burden on his complete exhaustion of body and mind. He had a vague sense that the talking went on and on.

"And now," the Earth-Eye was saying, "you commit a crime. It is a natural crime for a young, hot-blooded man, but to an old man like myself who has no heir but who hopes yet to have a son before he dies, the protection of his family—his wife—is more important even than protecting his own existence. All my men see that. For that reason they were very anxious to bring you back alive."

A little shiver went through Williams tired body when the Earth-Eye paused.

"They knew no one could deal with you satisfactorily but myself. They have faith in my ingeniousness."

He resumed his preaching monotone.

"We have customs in the Nosu country that must strike Westerners as strange refinements. We believe in respecting an honorable host. We do not forgive treachery in any relation; we hate it doubly when shown by sheltered guests —one who uses the protection that has been freely given him to injure the man who has befriended him."

"This, I suppose, is the beginning of my punishment," said Williams. "But I am not listening to you."

"You are not listening?"

Williams felt an immense fatigue of body and soul. How much longer must this sort of schoolmaster dreariness go on?

"No," he answered and let his head sink forward because it was too much effort to hold it up.

"Ah, young man, that has probably been the cause of all your folly. You have not listened to those who were older and wiser than yourself."

The Earth-Eye paused again and the room became very still. There was only a dull murmur of voices outside the door where the soldiers waited. The spaniel yawned lazily and turned a little in its master's arms to expose new areas of his body to pleasantly tickling fingers. Williams moved one of his feet and the nail in a worn sole grated on stone. His bound hands were numb. An odor of incense was a trace of poison in the fresh air.

Blackness came down on Williams, a dizzy sickening oppression that was mostly the revolt of his body against strain, but it took away for a time all his spirit. He sagged in the chair. The old man might have been talking on and on; he heard nothing until he was startled by the rustle of a page as the old man turned it in the book he was reading. He had not been talking then; there had not been that interminable, torturing drone of preaching? Nothing was quite real except in painfulness. If he could sleep this would pass. The old man with his still, cold eyes and his lying mouth would pass also. There had been a girl who had led him to this blackness and death; she was gone. It would be safe to sleep. They would never begin to stake him down on the gravel of the courtyard while he was asleep.

XVIII

THE UNDULATING blackness of the world swung round. He came to himself again with a gasp. The Earth-Eye was speaking.

"I have never had a problem so difficult as the question of how to dispose of you. Your suffering ought to be in the sight of every man who is not already afraid of crime—or of me. But you deserve something better than a vulgar death. If I were not so old and tired it might be easier to invent something worthy of you—"

"I am not listening," said Williams.

"Nor begging?"

Williams felt as if something revivifying had been thrown in his face. He fought away the blackness.

"No!" he answered. "Not begging. There won't be any yells for mercy when you put on your show."

A twist of a smile moved the old man's lips and his eyes brightened.

"I hope not," he said. "But those things are often involuntary."

Williams stood up, swaying back against his chair. His bound hands were raised. The Earth-Eye sat quite still.

"But I'll curse you for a murderer and a devil until you stop me. You live by cruelty and pain. Why shouldn't all these men hate you when you oppress them and harry them and use them? I hated you the first time I saw you. You're not human. You think I am desperate now because I know I've got to go through whatever your insane imagination can think up for me. You think I'm going to cry before I'm hurt. You're wrong. I don't even regret what I did. All I'm sorry for is that I failed—and that I saved your life.

"Sooner or later somebody is going to kill you. It will be a better death than you have any right to because it will be

sudden, but it will come and you live in fear of it.

"All I am sorry for is that I didn't have the luck to get one—just one—of your victims out of your reach. It was worth trying but you're too strong—now. You've got back your girl and she'll go on suffering from fear and hate of you. But you can't keep me from knowing what you are—or telling you. I wouldn't ask mercy of a snake that had me cornered. But you're not a snake—not quite. There's just the difference that you can understand me when I tell you that I won't beg. I won't pretend that I am sorry. I tell you to your face that you are a loathsome, horrible, insane old beast!"

Behind the Earth-Eye, Ah-Leh came through the door.

She went steadily up to his chair, touched the spaniel with her hand that came like a fluttering lily out of the blue silk sleeve and sat at the Earth-Eye's feet. Her eyes were cast down. Her face was pallid with emotion and the heavy traces of her physical suffering, but it was serene.

The wrath and fury of Williams died in his throat.

The girl looked up at him once, very shyly, with no fear in her eyes. She folded her hands, hiding them in the ends of her long sleeves, and sighed gently. The room was silent again, but Williams had lost his feeling of helpless exhaustion. He held his head up and waited.

The old man gave no sign that he had noticed the girl, but there was a different quality in his voice.

"Misunderstanding," he mused, "and rashness. But you are right, I am a wicked and a cruel old man. That is my nature and it can not be changed now. What was the name of the man to whom you tried to give this woman?"

His question was startling because it was so matter-of-fact.

"He said his name was Po-Yeh."

"Po-Yeh? Po-Yeh? Where did he get that name?" But it doesn't matter. Whatever he said his name makes no difference. His name was really Vri-Ha and the other with him was Nya-Pa. They are murderers and they are the devoted retainers of my nephew—the man who hates me worst in all the world. He is my heir."

"Po-Yeh is dead," said Williams.

"Yes. So I have learned. And the other Nya-Pa, died—afterward. My nephew will be unhappy because he has lost them before they succeeded in carrying out his plans." He mused for a few moments in silence. "I supposed that I understood men—men of all kinds. I thought I understood even you. When you betrayed me I thought I understood the reason. But I am not so sure, because my wisdom has been questioned by one whom you call my victim—who is living in fear of me, you think. And I have listened to her since she was restored to me.

"She thanked you for saving my life. They were honest thanks. She is a Nosu woman—not a Chinese. She does not lie. When you stole her from my house I was depressed because of the evil that is in all men's hearts, but I was not surprized. I am too old — too wicked myself— to be surprized. I thought I understood exactly why, having seen her once, you would try to take her away from me, although it would mean your death—certainly.

"When she was restored to me a few hours ago, she told me that I must be mistaken about you. You were a strange barbarian, but gentle, she said, and very brave, and she thought there must have been some lie told you that had twisted your mind and confused you. That did not excuse your treachery or your theft, of course, but it interested me.

"I said my nephew hated me more than any man on earth, even more than you hate me now. He is my heir. He hopes some day to have my castle and my lands, and he will make these hills bloody for years if he ever does get them. Only one thing can ever keep him from getting everything I have into his possession—that is that I should have a son.

"I had two sons when I was a young man. They were both killed fighting for me. After them I loved my nephew and I was proud of him. I was glad that he was to have my estates and my people when I died. But I did not die soon enough to please him. He began to hate me and to try to crowd me off the earth that I own. I chose myself a new wife."

He had not given the slightest recognition to Ah-Leh's presence beside his chair. He did not look down at her now. Williams, glancing at her face, saw she had closed her eyes and was leaning her head back, but not listening, giving herself up to her weariness. His own fatigue had gone. He harkened, with a confused sense that words were beating against the sides of his head but conveying a meaning—

"I chose myself a new wife, but in the manner of an Earth-Eye. You are a Westerner and your ways are doubtless different. I chose this girl because, although she was a slave and not fit except by her own goodness and gentleness and intelligence to be the mother of my son, I chose her because I was fond of her. I am not a Chinese. I am a Nosu. I chose the one that I was pleased with and I confess it openly without shame. What I say to you makes no difference, of course. But I would have told you before if there had been a decent and proper occasion even if we had not come to this. I was pleased with her.

"My nephew—who is never named in this house—had no reason for complaining that I had taken a new slave-girl into my family. How could he? But I made her a promise that if she bore me a son I would make her my legitimate wife and her boy should be my heir. She was young and very proud and happy and she told her mother. Women do not always keep dangerous secrets. It came to the ears of my nephew and he saw himself and his plans in peril. He sent the one you knew as Po-Yeh with orders to destroy her—in any way he could. Do you understand all this?"

"Yes, I understand," answered Williams. "Do you think I also was an assassin for your nephew?"

"I would never have thought so. I thought you were a rash and ignorant fool. When you first came to this house this woman was desperately afraid of you—"

"Afraid of me?" The question burst involuntary from Williams.

"It was natural. Are you so unobservant that you did not notice how she trembled and hesitated to come into your presence?"

Williams did not answer.

"She was afraid of you, but she conquered that aversion since you were my guest—and had saved my life. That also was rashness but it served. But neither of us ever thought you were the instrument of my nephew. When you dragged her away she tried to arouse the gate sentries; she screamed. When that did not save her she was wise; she kept as quiet as she could, thinking she would be rescued from you soon and fearing to anger you.

"You did not hurt her; she began to lose her loathing fear of your pale skin and your strange ways. Then you took her into the presence of Vri-Ha, the one you called Po-Yeh, and the other. She had seen Vri-Ha once before. I had him whipped in my courtyard once for his insolence and she had seen him.

"She knew what they had been sent for. You saved her from those two. So she helped you afterward against them—I know the whole story, you see. But she kept on hoping my men would reach you in time and bring her back to me. She thought you would go on being kind to her—at least until you were free of danger. And she knew you would be punished after she was rescued, punished in such a way that no man would ever try to carry her away again.

"And in her wisdom—" for the first time he looked down fondly at the head of the girl— "she told me she thought you had been deceived by the one called Po-Yeh. Your boy gave her a hint. Was that true?"

Williams lifted his head.

"He met me in Shin Chan Keo and told me he wanted my help in rescuing his sister whom you had stolen from his house."

"Ah, yes. That was clever. You are the kind of a person who could be easily fooled by a lie like that."

The Earth-Eye smiled, pleased because the wisdom of the girl was justified.

Williams felt drained of emotion. The Earth-Eye spoke to Ah-Leh and she answered languidly. When he asked her a second question she roused herself, rose to her feet and walked over toward Williams. She came like a Nosu hill girl in spite of her elaborate trappings, free and courageous. She looked into his eyes and then, resuming her manner of deference, she went back and spoke to her master.

"Do you want to know what she says of you? She says you are not afraid and that whatever you tell is the truth."

The Earth-Eye smiled again, and a look of ancient cunning came into his almost expressionless face.

"But she is young and she is easily deceived by youth and bravery. She does not know herself—nor the hearts of young men. She is wise, but she has not the whole truth. I know—even if you did believe the silly lies of my nephew's men—I know that you also saw her beauty and you wanted her for yourself. Is that true?"

"No."

"It is not necessary to lie. This is your time for making your last statement."

"I was sorry for her. That's all. I thought she was afraid of you."

"Well, it is not necessary that you confess everything. That can be forgotten and I will not press you for honesty. I forgive you, because no man could have resisted her."

Ah-Leh spoke again, more spiritedly, with a sudden birdlike gesture of her hands. The Earth-Eye nodded very slowly.

"And she says that you deserve a swift painless death — neither torture nor shame."

The Earth-Eye stood up, dropping the spaniel to the floor and walked across his room once. From near the window he looked out down the steep cliff where Williams had started on his flight.

"But she is mistaken," he said, turning suddenly. "You do deserve a strange punishment and that is what will be given you. You asked me why I had never tried kindness."

He rapped on his table with his knuckles. The girl left the room like a noiseless shadow as four men came, eager and noisy, through the door. The Earth-Eye gave them a soft-spoken command. An instant of silence followed. One of them walked over to Williams reluctantly and slit the rope which bound his hands.

"You are free," said the Earth-Eye.

Williams thought then he would sink in final exhaustion. The waves of blackness went over and over him; there was a vague sound of confusion in his ears. He struggled to keep his eyes on the wavering image of the Earth-Eye's face.

"Thank you," he said, and it sounded like a silly tinkle at a great distance. He shook his head and braced himself. "I am free of something more than danger."

"Yes?" the old man answered, coaxing him to go on.

"I am free of a mistake—of being unjust—"

Abruptly, with a spasmodic energy, the old man stood up.

"Splendid!" he cried. "You are a man!"

"You are a man!" he repeated. "Foolish but wonderful. I would never have thought it possible to do what you have done. You ought to be a Nosu. I wish you were my son." He paused and the traces of old lightnings gleamed in his burned-out eyes. "Stay with me," he said. "Stay here and be a Nosu. I could make you as wise as you are strong and brave. I may never have another son—it is much to hope for. Stay here and fight my nephew, kill him and then, if there is no other, be my heir. Take my house and my lands and my men and be great—"

Williams smiled, his bloodless lips twisting into a grimace. The blackness conquered. In the midst of the old Earth-Eye's enthusiasm, Williams was asleep.

XIX

HE CROSSED the river at Shin Chan Keo again. He had forty men, an escort of great honor, and the Chinese, although more curious about him than they had been before, kept safely at a distance. His guard of honor swaggered him all the way into Chaotung, and several mandarins were sleepless until they went back to their hills.

Williams tried to explain to the doleful and amazed Mr. Rutherford what had happened on the other side. He found it impossible. He did not spare himself; he said it was only his own fault that he had lost Meng. But Meng had died like a brave Nosu.

Williams said he would never be so reckless again, but he knew in his heart that he would.

In his report to the office in Shanghai he did not even try to explain. He wrote:

The Nosu are a strange, brave, honest and friendly people. But I doubt if they need anything from the West just now. Perhaps I may report on them again some time. I am considering going back into their territory, although I notice that they have a strong tendency to make permanent residents out of strangers who come to visit them.

A New Found World

Concluding Our Novel

By ROGER POCOCK

YOU KNOW—or do you?—that our spirits do not die, but return again and again to this world to live over in men's bodies. Here am I, therefore, in the body of Captain B—, wounded in the great war and now slowly recuperating; but the strange thing is that I do not forget my other lives, as generally happens, but recall them much more clearly than anything which ever happened to Captain B—. So for my own gratification and that of Nurse Maryon I am setting down what occurred when I was Leif, son of Eric the Red of Iceland.

A clever lad I was, for when but little I made the crew of my father's ship, the *Fafnir*, grapple and bring home a huge log, very valuable, for wood was scarce with us. But that log was our undoing through the trickery of Katla the witch who had tried to marry my father, and hated us in consequence. She made us believe that Thorgest Skinflint would have us carve the wood into fittings for his son's bridal home—nay, would have it carved with Christian saints, unfit for any decent house.

On the way to deliver the work, next fall, I helped stone Katla to death for her witchwork against Arin the Peacemaker at Newlithe whereby Arin was exiled and his little wife Aud lost her hand. But even in dying Katla called out against my father, saying her curse would yet fall on him.

And so it would seem, but through my fault. For having got the confession of Michael Craftsman, released by Katla's death from bondage to her, we were about to come to satisfactory understanding with old Thorgest, when I started a fisticuff duel with Bear Heliufson, captain of the warship *Flying Dragon*. The crew of the two ships took part, and Thorgest's three sons were drowned. But Skinflint would take gold for honor, so my father lost his lands. Then with three ships and a hundred and fifty followers—men, women and bairn—he proposed fleeing westward to where once as a lad he caught a glimpse of a great unknown land.

When ships were dighted and their crews assembled we sailed to the trial of Eric at Thorsness. There Slaying Stir won my father's case against Snorri, who demanded his life in addition to the were-gelt. Then we sailed to Greenland and made our new home there. On an exploring trip which I led, Grelad, a thrall girl who bore a grudge against me because I

had refused to notice her enticements, incited the crew against me. They marooned me in the land of the Eskimos. But I soon made fast friends of these strange folk, pursued my traitors, who had wrecked the ship, and brought them home to justice.

On a visit to Slaying Stir I nearly took the life of my host by reason of a certain veiled lady's scheming. When I discovered leprosy behind the veil I came quickly to my senses and the mysterious one conveniently stabbed herself. Harold, my Christian thrall, converted me to his faith by the manner with which he endured a torture that the law bound me to put upon him. Then we embarked on our voyage and, after many adventures on strange seas and along unknown coasts, we landed on the continent that is now America, although we named it "Vineland," because of its abundance of grapes. Squirrel, an Indian girl whose difficult but amusing disposition made her none too welcome a member of her tribe, soon attached herself to me. She was so sweet a nuisance as to make me love her exceedingly.

So there was naught to do but marry the impertinent, red-brown little person. Having filled our hold with valuable trading goods, we began our return journey, full of tales of the new world-riding.

CHAPTER X

THE SYBIL

THE STORY of my father's discoveries and my own was told among our people from sire to son, for two or three centuries. Then did the learned monks of Iceland collect the folk tales of our people, setting them down in a fair script on vellum.

The saga of Eric the Red and the Wineland history in the Flatey Book are on my desk as I write, refreshing my poor memories, although they are full of quaint and monkish errors. Here is a passage:

"They sighted Greenland and the fells below the glaciers. Then one of the men spoke up—" that was old Steersman Smith—"and said, 'Why do you steer the ship so much into the wind?' "

I could not tell him that my wife, perched on the tiller, spoiled my steering. Leif answers—

"'I have my mind upon my steering, but on other matters as well.'"

Presently I did see something which made me pinch the wind.

" 'Do ye not see anything out of the common?'

"They said they saw nothing strange.

" 'I do not know,' says Leif, 'whether it is a ship or a skerry that I see.'

"Now they saw it, and said that it

must be a skerry; but he was so much keener of sight than they that he was able to discern men upon the skerry.

" 'I think it best to tack,' said Leif, 'so that we may draw near to them, that we may be able to help them if they are in need; and if they should not be disposed to peace, we shall still have better command of events than they.'

"They approached the skerry and, lowering their sail, cast anchor and launched a second small-boat, which they had brought with them. Tyrkir, bumptious beyond endurance since he found the grapes, asked who was the leader of the party. He replied that his name was Thori and that he was a Norseman. 'But what is thy name?' "

"Leif gave his name.

" 'Art thou a son of Eric the Red of Brattelid?' says he.

"Leif said that he was.

" 'It is now my wish,' said Leif, 'to take you all into my ship, and likewise as much of your goods as the ship will hold.' "

"That was not much.

"This offer was accepted and, thus laden, they held away to Ericsfiord—" it was Einarsfiord, the other being still ice-bound—"and sailed until they arrived at Brattelid."

Three cheers for everybody!

"Having discharged cargo, Leif invited Thori and his wife, Gudrid, and three others to make their home with him. He procured quarters for the other members of the crew, both for his own and Thori's men.

"Leif rescued fifteen persons from the skerry. He was afterward called Leif the Lucky."

The tale is bald as the monk who skimped his ink and vellum to make it brief.

See then the *Flying Dragon* deep laden, decked above the rowers, flaunting the first staysail and *crocaik* ever sét by Northmen, all hands at oars with Harald leading the Sea Rollers' chantey, and the dear fells of homeland ahead, blue under flame-hued ice against the morning splendor.

Blue berg-strewn sea and listless Titans guarding gates of Greenland, gulls gliding in our wake, frost white on deck, my wife pretending to steer while I scanned the long sea line and took the keen home air into my lungs—aye, life was good that morning!

There's the fanged reef with a gaunt, salt-crusted wreck stuck in its weed-slavered jaws, a cluster of starved men frantic to be rescued, sobbing in their weakness, altogether unmanned and broken by their disaster.

There's Thori Goat-Beard, thin, apologetic, asking how much will I charge for setting his folk ashore, afraid that I'll steal the wreck if it's left derelict—all he has to show for a lifetime of mean dealings.

There's Gudrid Clatter, his wife, quite plump and confidential, for she did all the talking and eating while the men were silent. The Squirrel was mightily pleased with Gudrid Frog-in-a-Swamp.

There's Leif the Lucky, bidding his men be patient. Spring is late, with the fiords ice-bound for a month yet, to judge by the snow on the fells. Let's fill the time of waiting by landing our timber at Eric's Isle close by, then load by load salve Thori's cargo and wreckage on sharing terms. Or shall we leave good spoil to please the next sou-wester?

For a month we were busy salving Thori's cargo and ship-timber, then building my new house in Eric's Isle. There I proposed to live with my dear wife, and for the first winter Thori, Gudrid and their servants were to be our guests. But now, out of Thori's tidings and Gudrid's chatter, there arose a new adventure for us of the *Flying Dragon*. Well we knew we could never market in Greenland and Iceland our precious furs, drugs, tobacco, sugar, wine and fruits, the richest cargo ever seen in the Northlands. To get a market we must fare to Norway.

Now from these Eastlanders, our guests, we heard for the first time of the viking Olaf Trygvesson, heir to the Norse kings, yet born in exile, who now reigned in Norway. He was the mightiest

warrior then in the world, the hero of the Christians, the patron of merchants, craftsmen and all seamen and, best of all for us, a friend to Icelanders. He had removed the market of Trandheims fiord from Hladir to Aros on the Nid, now known as Nidaros, his capital. There should we find a ready sale for our treasures, and my seamen were well content to make the voyage so soon as they had spent a week or two at their homes.

I will not pretend that I cared nought for wealth, for if money only flew past like snow in a storm, sufficient stuck to me. Much more I wanted to have Christ's baptism, both for myself and my people, which would be good for Greenland, so I thought; putting an end forever to those demons whom once we mistook for gods. Most of all I wished to meet this young king with a matron behind him, for I had a world to offer him who could get it peopled. In Wineland should arise a greater Norway, aye a greater Europe, true Christ-realm, where there should be no slaying—the millenial land, where He should reign for a thousand years on earth, a thousand years of peace, order and freedom.

WHAT of my wife? I felt that I must leave her for a while. She was with child, she who had been wife to Brooding Owl before she left him, before I had him slain. I made her understand that I could not stay; Gudrid Clatter would look after her until the child was born, weaned and sent to a foster mother. So much did Squirrel fear the main sea that she became content if she might stay ashore.

On our passage up Einarsfiord to Brattelid, Squirrel felt the sunward side of her body glowing alive, while the shadow side of her was dead with cold. Toward the southward the hollows and shadowed slopes were snowclad, while all the land to northward was clothed with flowers. She said that this must be Ghost Land. Presently, at sight of Brattelid, when the clangor of the ship's bell and the men's cheering brought all of our folk from the house, she said that two of these were spirits. And so she always thought of Eric and my mother, who in their age were hale, of a fresh color, with silvery hair and a very sweet majesty of bearing—"like spirits," said my wife, "of great dead chiefs."

Eric was ill pleased with my nut-brown Squirrel.

"And a white maid is not good enough," said he, "why brown? Why not blue?"

To him she seemed outlandish, and many Greenlanders who had not seen the Eskimo, the Indians, or even seamen from the Southlands and the Middle Sea avoided the Squirrel as something uncouth, likely to bring bad luck. She would not be safe in the larger settlements unless I were there to guard her.

All that surprized me, even to some dismay, yet was there no ground at all for my great fear that mother might refuse to have my wife indoors. Indeed the great lady set a cold face toward Gudrid Clatter for her outrageous flirting with my brother Stein, and presently turned the woman out, bidding her sleep in the ship. Her man Thori Goat-Beard went also before there was peace at the hearth.

But why need I fear for the Squirrel? The lass overbold with strangers, the romping hoyden of a vixen temper had been quite changed by love into a gracious lady. Her my mother welcomed, setting up her for example to Gudrid as a true gentlewoman. How Eric twitted mother! She had a greedy love for honey sweets, and made much of the Squirrel, rich owner of large pieces of maple sugar, not to mention the dried fruits and raisins.

Then came the banquet cooked by my wife after the recipes of her own people: Wondrous fine sausages, smoked salmon, corn cake, corn on the cob, clam broth, the daintiest feast which Northmen had ever tasted. At the first horn of our wine Eric forgave my marriage. He had not been so merry since we were exiled, seventeen years ago.

There was a woman called Thorbiorg, the last alive of ten sisters, prophetesses, who used to go guesting and telling

fortunes wherever they were welcomed. We named her the Little Sybil, and she was well liked greeted kindly wherever she went, with a gift from every person who desired her rede. That day of our feast, Patrick, Smith and Tyrkir went forth to a neighbor's house where the Little Sybil was staying, and they brought her to Brattelid in the evening. After the greetings and gifts, Eric led her to his own seat to sit on a cushion of poultry feathers and eat a dish prepared for her, the roasted hearts of all manner of animals.

The little lady wore a dark blue cloak all seamed with gems down to the lower hem. Her necklace was of glass beads. When she came in she wore a pretty hood, black lambskin, lined with white cat fur. Her gloves had palms of white cat, said to be very strong magic, and her staff had twisted brasswork set with precious stones. Her shoes were of shaggy calfskin, and on each latchet end hung three big brass buttons, tinkling as she walked. Her girdle was of touch-wood, because of its magic power, and from this hung a great satchel full of charms.

There was something dainty and catlike in the way the Sybil ate, washed in the silver laver and dried her fine hands with the napkin. Then, bidding the women join a ring about her, she called for the spell song "Warlocks." Mother sang blithely, but since she was secretly become a Christian she had set new words to the tune which made us laugh and sorely vexed the Sybil.

Now Gudrid Clatter had been bidden with old Goat-Beard to the feast, who made much talk about knowing the song, albeit as a Christian she could take no part in such a pagan rite of incantation. Goat-Beard persuaded her, and she sang sweetly. None of us had ever heard so fair a voice. The sorceress thanked her, saying that many spirits had been lured thereby.

"—and many things are now revealed to me. Thine be the first rede, Gudrid.

"Out of bereavement shalt thou come to be a daughter in this household."

You should have seen her husband glaring at my brother Stein! Yet Stein had little to rejoice him.

"Wed thou no Greenlander, lest thy dead have speech with thee. Thy way leads hence over the seas to Iceland, and lineage great and goodly springs from thee. Above thy line shine brighter rays of light than I have power clearly to unfold. Farewell, and health to thee, my daughter."

Now was my sister Asdis, daughter of the house, jealous that Gudrid Clatter should have first pickings of all fortune.

"What of me?" she asked haughtily.

"I see a marriage for money," answered the Sybil sternly. "I see pride and spite lead to a great slaughter, and out of that thy shame."

On that was her rich suitor Thorward Weak eager to break off the match. He would not be married for his money. Yet, as Asdis told me, no woman would ever have him for aught except his wealth, and he was easily managed.

Next was the Squirrel's turn. She had perched on my knee where I sat in the lower high seat, so that the sorceress faced us across the smoke of the long fire. Before her stare we quailed, and it was said we looked deathly.

"I love thee," said the Sybil tenderly to my wife, and her eyes were ever so sad though her lips were smiling. "Would'st thou have luck for thyself or for thy man?"

This I explained to her, and she asked that I should have the luck.

"Oh, man," said the Sybil, " 'ware luck! It drifts thee across the main sea into shame. Yet after thy degradation comes the greatest glory, and weal for thy people out of all their mourning. But for thee is woe unutterable. Then cometh peace."

To Thorwald the Sybil gave a warrior's death in battle, a seat in high Valhalla.

To Smith, Patrick and Tyrkir, it was told that they should keep the hearth, venturing no more journeys. They snuggled by the fire swearing to keep it warm.

To mother the Sybil foretold that she should live apart from Eric. How we all laughed!

For Stein, Gudrid must be a widow, but if she married any Greenlander she would be his bane. I bade Stein light his ship and fare with me to Norway, but he was headstrong, much in love with Gudrid and laughed at fortune-telling.

And Thorwald must fall in battle. I would not have battle or slaughter in our small settlements where men could ill be spared, so I bade Thorwald clear out of Greenland at once, and have his killing elsewhere. He wanted the *Flying Dragon* to go exploring in Wineland, so I told him to take his own ship and let go Fatty Ulf to be his pilot.

So I made Harald Christian steersman of my ship, with Hotblack Smithson for boatswain. For the rest I was most concerned for water casks to replace those which were filled with wine and left behind in Greenland. We were still short of casks when we sailed.

CHAPTER XI

THE HOUSE OF SHAME

LIKE Judas Iscariot I was, as Harald said, a sort of Christian. On a sunny day, after dinner, I could even be generous and give good advice; but in foul weather, or when I was crossed, the heathen inside me came out through the Christian skin. As to that passage of the Western Ocean, I wonder now that my dearest friends endured me. Indeed, we had Loki's own weather week by week, and, when we broached the last cask of our water we found it had leaked dry.

Men with salt-encrusted skins broke out in sores and sickened until they had scarcely strength to bale. Then Hall the Hunter, whose little soul was lost in his huge body, drank the sea water, went mad and died. Two others died at oars. The leak, from a sprung timber in our bows, gained fast upon our last reserves of strength, constraining us to run for the nearest shelter. We made our landfall in the Orkneys.

The first we entered proved to be a strait, between two islands which came so near together that we had not space for the oar-sweep, but stood at last poling our way up the tide, scraping our keelson. Just at the neck of these narrows the channel swung round a cliff on the south side, and on the northern bank we opened a small beach. Here was safe harborage, a landing ground where we could mend our ship, a farmstead and, best of all, running water. The people jumped overboard to get quick to that stream, so that only Harald and I were left to guard the ship.

The steading looked like the hold of some great chief, so ample the house and its outbuildings, so wide and richly stocked the fields beyond. There were thralls at work about the place, but at our coming most of them took cover, while the few able-bodied men ran for their weapons and gathered to guard the house doors. I feared that they might attack, so Harald and I stood with bent bows to cover our men until we had them armed.

Came the steward down from the house, with greetings from the Lady Thorgunna his mistress. What with the colored cloak, the golden chain of office and jeweled staff, that old fowl looked well worth plucking.

He came to the water's edge and, in the Lady Thorgunna's name, asked me whether I brought peace.

I walked to the gangway and threw him a largesse, bidding him tell me whether his lady was young, good looking and unwedded.

"Alas," he sighed, "she is!"

He pointed with his staff to a row of gibbets on which a dozen dead men hung in the wind; the driving sleet clouted on their black shoulders. He pointed with his staff to sunken and bleached wrecks along the shore.

"These be the suitors, these their ships," he said. "The terrible Hersir, my lady's father and her brothers with their four longships, are hourly expected.

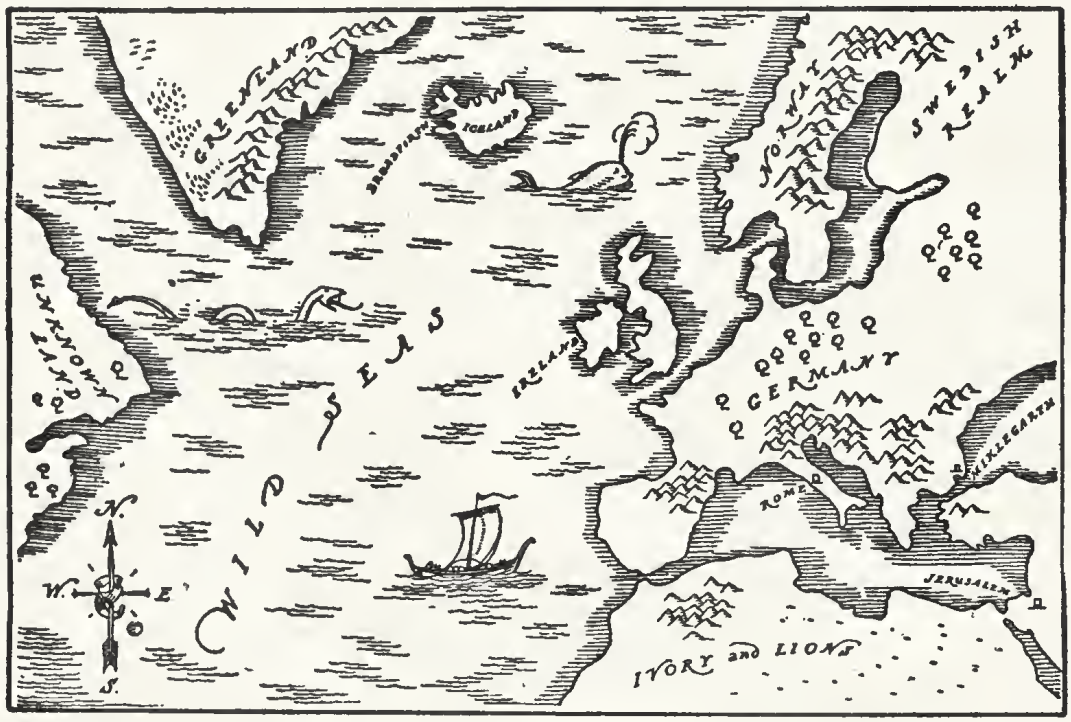
Finding you here, I warn you. Get you gone!"

That I would not, nor could I well confess that I had beached my ship in time to stop her foundering. Seen through the level-driving sleet of that grim day, the house smoke and the glint from the hearth fires belonged to the happy and immediate comfort of my worn-out men, whereas the gibbets and the wrecks might be put off. Nor, after a good dinner, would they look so bleak. Moreover the evident wealth and poor defense of the house explained the steward's misgiving that we might be robbers and his attempt to frighten us away. Besides the lady was young; fair and unwedded. She had sent greetings.

Bidding the steward tell his mistress that I would wait upon her, I got my people on board and under arms; then Harald, Hotblack and I did on our armor and went ashore to call upon the house.

This stronghold of sea robbers was full of plunder. Rich white hangings covered the walls, gold and silver vessels were on the tables, and even the women thralls were better dressed than our Icelandic ladies.

The gracious Thorgunna stood before her high seat, young, tall and stately. The plaits of her black hair, falling in front of her shoulders, reached nearly to her gemmed girdle. Her blood-red robe broidered with gold was set with stars of garnets. Her eyes were dark, suggesting hidden fire, and her mouth ripe. She held



a cup in her hands, and its bowl was a man's skull, garnished with silver and studded with large gems.

"I give you good greeting," she said shyly, and her voice thrilled all through me as she offered the cup of mead. So I drank, and Hotblack after me, but Harald poured the rest on the floor. Hotblack and I forgot many things, but Harald remembered and was faithful. The liquor made my head swim, and I craved for more.

"I was a-weary waiting you," said the lady. "Now you shall send these officers to beach the ship and bring your men to dinner. You are sea-stained and

sea-weary, all longing for the hearth fires, food, rest, mead."

"Aye," said Hotblack.

"So shall you feast and drink," said this gracious lady, "as the dead heroes do in high Valhalla."

My officers having left us, with such a message to the seamen, Thorgunna filled the cup for me and bade me share the high seat. The liquor was in my head and the faint perfume of her stirred my heart. Little she said that day. Only her eyes invited, her mouth challenged, while she plied me with strong mead. That night was I drunk and for a week to come no man among us was sober excepting Harald.

Thorgunna loved me.

"I was a-waiting years, long years," she said, "and now you've come, as I prayed Thor you'd come. My father and my brothers think I'm still a child. They neither give me in marriage nor will they bring me a husband. No man for me to mate with has ever come to this island, until you came."

"And drank," I answered.

"So do all men that ever I saw. All men get drunk."

"And I never, till now."

"Drink," she said. "Forget. Forget the sea—for the sea calls you still. I see that in your eyes, and you would leave. Am I not yours, Leif, and is this not your house?"

"And if your men-folk come?"

"You have your sword," she answered.

So I stayed, pretending to rest my people, mend my ship and buy provisions. And, for all I cared, the ship might mend herself and the rich cargo stay in Thorgunna's barn, my gift to her.

Yet inasmuch as the cargo belonged in part to my sea partners, and as they were not in love with the generous lady, they had misgivings. So Harald wrought upon them, decrying the lady for a witch who by her glamour, held me spellbound with gluttony, drunkenness and sloth until her men-folk came to slaughter us all, seizing our ship and her wonderful New World treasure.

SO FAR the men had needed rest and food while, as to the liquor, I think it eased the strain after their long privation, peril and despair. But, now that Harald spurred them, they roused in earnest to get the ship to rights. I doubt if the man ever slept, for it was he who, when the people took a four-hour spell that night, remained alert until dawn, keeping a lone watch. And so it was that he heard a ripple on the water, a ripple under the forefoot of a stealthy boat creeping in to the beach. He heard the scrunch of gravel as she grounded, saw very dimly the figure of a man taking in sail. To make sure Harald whanged an arrow through the man, Thorgunna's steward as it proved.

"Why did you do that?" asked the steward, who bled at the mouth.

"Else would you not confess your sins," said Harald.

"What I have done was for my lady's sake."

"What have you done then?"

"Roused the Orkneys," answered the steward.

"This at her bidding?"

But the steward died then, leaving the matter unsettled. Harald spent three hours on prayers and burial before he came to the house at breakfast time, accusing Thorgunna of treachery to her guests.

"Ill does it credit you," said the lady, standing up white with wrath, "that you, of all men, should talk of treachery, you that have eaten my bread and salt and murdered my steward while he was on my errands. May I not send my servant to bid my friends to my wedding?"

Nought had I heard of a wedding, but nought had I said concerning my wife yonder at Eric's Isle, a theme too sacred for discussion here. But now I knew that Thorgunna intended to marry me, to make me master of this rich estate, and have me kill her father and brothers so soon as they came home. Aye, faithful as the lady was to them, so she might be to me. And yet I laughed. The mead sang in my head, sang the sword-song

in my head, sang of the battle to come, the slaughter, the corpses washing in the tide, the eagles and the ravens whose banquet was being made ready, all for a woman's love.

I laughed, and my men laughed with me while Thorgunna's scalding anger fell upon Harald. She called him a Christian, for no man else, so she said, could come a-questing to defile her charity with lying, slander, perjury and murder. She bade him leave her hearth, get to the ship and stay there.

So Harald was put to shame that, when the seamen set to work, the very sight of him disgusted them. By noon the whole of them had thrown down their tools and were back in the house getting drunk, the lady giving them liquor to weaken their purpose of making sail on our voyage. By night all were dead drunk, and so was I, while Harald worked on alone until the leak was caulked.

The men of this household were jealous and estranged, showing ill will, keeping aloof in the barn, plotting against us, but as yet afraid to attack. To them went Harald, explaining that, as they wished our Islanders away, so did he wish to get the ship ready for our departure.

Toward that good purpose the thralls helped Harald from noon until late in the evening. As the flood served, they kedged the ship off the beach, moored her beside the quay and partly loaded her.

Moreover, being well bribed, one of them made a chart in the beach sand, showing that the firth which opened south-eastward to the North Sea was foul throughout the reefs, not to be ventured at all unless we had a pilot. Our only line of escape was the way we had come, and that at high tide only. This harbor which seemed so fair, was known to the Orkney men as Death-trap Haven.

Harald slept little that night, but brooded much, and on toward midnight went to the barn for the thrall who had made the chart. This man, being lured to the ship and decoyed on board, Harald put him in irons and locked him in the cabin, just to make sure, in case there were need for a pilot.

And next it came to pass that in the house Thorgunna's tiring maid, being mad in love with Hotblack, roused him at dawn. She made him clear his head in a bucket of water, because she had bad news and he must rouse to action. It was true, she said, that her lady had sent the steward in all good faith, to bid the neighboring chiefs to attend her wedding; but it was also sooth that, dreading his master the Hirsir, the man had gone not on Thorgunna's errand, but with a war arrow to rouse the Orkneys against us. The Islanders that night had sent a messenger to Thorgunna's men, and all of these had fled into the hills. At any moment now we should be beset and, with tears, the maid urged Hotblack to escape before the doom fell.

So, seeing that indeed the men thralls were now gone from house and barton, Hotblack ran to the ship, where he took counsel with Harald. They were agreed that to rouse me was also to awaken Thorgunna, who would defeat their purpose. So they two roused the men with buckets of water and, thus being quickened to a sense of the common peril, they got the women to help filling our water butts, loading the ship and, you may well believe, looting this robber stronghold. The women might like their lady a little, but they loved my Icelanders and made a great game of rolling barrels of beer and mead down to the ship, stealing the gold and silver vessels and carrying off the beautiful white embroidered hangings from the walls. They said they would sail with the ship.

The rifling of the house was not so quietly done but presently it awakened the lady, who came from the bower to scold her maids. She was taken by my men to the barn, where they locked her up to see if her witchcraft could unbar the door. They said they would take counsel as to her fate, but my officers kept them too busy. Still I slept heavily.

Now came a longship into the western channel of the firth and anchored,

waiting for the tide and barring our passage. Next, men were seen in covert upon the skyline, more and more each hour, watching from the hills. Our escape was barred landward and seaward.

At length I awoke and, all disordered, came out of the house into the sunlit barton. There were my men kissing the women good-by or thrusting those back who tried to get up the gangway. There was a longship at anchor sending her boats to cut out our Flying Dragon and up in the hills all round us a movement of armed men, now charging to the attack. On either side of me in the men's doorway stood Harald and Hotblack, my mates, with their swords drawn.

"Will you come," asked Harald, "or will you go back to that which you left?"

"I will come."

So my two friends ran for my armor and weapons, which they fetched and carried, running beside me to the ship. My men were cheering as I came on board and the gangway clanged home behind me.

Now, as the longship's boats came storming through the narrows, we slipped our hawsers, having all sail set and no desire to dally near the shore in that level spear-hail and sharp gust of arrows. The tide, which stemmed us, weakened at its flood, while the good north wind increased as we drew out from shore. As to our pilotage, Harald had Thorgunna's thrall chained to the tiller.

"He prays for high stakes," said Harald, "for if he gets to Norway he is free, but if we touch upon these reefs he dies."

That thrall did live.

The Islanders were fading out astern until we could only catch the far-away skirl of their bagpipes. Oh, it was good to breathe the keen salt savour of the air, to feel the strength of the oar-sweep, to hear the sea-rollers' chantey and to have once more the sense of a hale and honest manhood!

CHAPTER XII

THE COURT AT NIDAROS

IN NORWAY men reckoned Iceland the end of the world. In Iceland men reckoned Greenland the end of the world. In Greenland man reckoned Vinland the end of the world. Yet we, of the Flying Dragon, who came from Vinland, reckoned ourselves as untraveled men, ignorant of the world, because not one of us had ever been to Nidaros. For this the capital city of the Northmen, the very metropolis of our world, was said to have not less than five hundred people. Add to these the thralls, the seamen in the port and the country folk at the cheaping on market days, and you may well imagine the bustle, excitement and whirl of joy which made a visit to Nidaros the greatest event in life, and proper pride therein the stamp of the worldly traveled man.

Yet, while we crossed the North Sea and toiled up Trandheims Fiord, Harald spoke from the break of the poop, very sternly forbidding us to be uplifted or vainglorious. Our souls were all out of order, he said; we had lost our morals, we had no manners, but came as outlandish heathen, uncouth and badly dressed to a fair Christian city, whose pious king would have stones tied to our necks and the whole of us drowned like dogs unless we behaved ourselves, repented of our sins and turned respectable.

So we were all abashed, because we knew that we had behaved very badly, especially if we were found out. Short would our shrift be if word of our late doings reached such a king as Olaf Tryggveson. And so I made the white embroidered hangings which we had taken from Thorgunna's house to be cut into cloaks for us all. White weeds like that made the dress for penitents at Olaf's Christian court, and we were fain to wear the stuff, it being well stolen. We swore to repent all day, and only go off duty in the evenings; and such was our mind as we passed by Hladir point and came up the bay into Nidoyce.

There did we see drawn up upon the beach two longships, the *Crane* and the *Worm*, each with thirty benches of oars. The *Worm* was that dragon which King Olaf took when he slew Raud the Wizard. Her head, neck and tail were of gold, a very beautiful, terrible ship. Beyond, along the beach, were so many longships that at the sight of them my seamen and I changed our minds, resolved now that we would be penitent all day and all night so long as we were at the court of this king. Humbly did we put on our white weeds, and were full of remorse for our sins as we marched, two and two, up the hill into the city of Nidaros. But Harald, who walked beside me, wore no weeds, because he was baptized and free from sin. It rained, so he got wet.

The buildings were so many and so large, all of hewn timber, regardless of cost. At each door the chapmen bawled their wares, and likewise on either side in the main road were rows of booths where hawkers shouted, chaffering with crowds, for it was market day. A man on a stool was speaking in praise of some rare medicine which healed all diseases, besides being the best dubbing for sea-boots.

Horsemen rode, checking impatiently, through the crowd, and wains came lumbering past, their horses decked with bells. The merry farm-wives were bargaining for goods, there were shoals of children, and a mob of seamen rolled by waving flagons of liquor while they roared a deep-sea chantey.

While we made our way bewildered through this uproar, we saw ahead of us that the people crouched as a procession passed them of priests, bearing the Host, attended by boys with censers and tall candles.

"On your knees, oaf!" cried Harald, and I knelt, bidding my men do likewise, albeit the ground was muddy. So the procession passed through kneeling people, who listened in silence to the chanting of the priests. Never before had I seen bald men and beardless as these were, arrayed in long robes like women and singing through their noses. The man who wore most clothes and walked behind was Bishop Sigurd.

He blessed us with jeweled gloves, and I felt that they did me good.

Now came a god, for he seemed more than man, so excellent his beauty and majesty, albeit he wore rough sea-boots and a shaggy rain-cloak. His hair and his short trimmed beard were of red gold, his eyes blue, piercing, flashing, terrible, and his face ruddy beneath the tan, all weathered with little wrinkles of mirth and kindness. He turned as he passed, looked at Harald, who bowed to him most humbly, then stopped and clasped his hand.

"Surely" he said "we met, when we were younger eh, in Man? And yet, the Earl of Man—"

"That was I, Olaf. And you were earl too in those days." Then Harald shouted—

"Vigi! Vigi!"

An old hound came to him, half blind, smelling him wistfully, doubtfully, then of a sudden leaping up to kiss him. "Vigi remembers," said Harald, "the night we sprinkled him and made him Christian, that he might gnaw the bones of the old gods."

"What happened afterward?" asked Olaf.

"When I lost a throne and gained a crown?"

"Of thorns, eh?"

"Of thorns. And I was thrall."

"Of Christ?"

"And of this man's servant—" Harald put his arm about my shoulders—"his seaman, steersman, partner and friend. So I present him, King—Leif, son of Eric."

"Finder of Greenland?" The king's eyes glowed with pleasure, then flashed with quick suspicion. His eyes were burning me, and my men shrank as his glance swept across them.

"What brings you?" he asked sternly.

"We all are Harald's converts to the Christ. We come here seeking baptism."

"Arrived," said the king, "in hangings

reft from some nunnery church! What else is this rose embroidered here, but a token of Our Lady? This is the Sacred Heart. And these—"

I bade my men throw back their cloaks and show the treasure we had concealed for fear we might be beset. I let the gold and silver vessels be placed at the king's feet, for all of them were plunder from Christ's temples. The king's eyes blazed with rage, but I withstood him.

"What do you mean," said I, "by calling yourself Christian, Olaf Tryggveson, when you allow your own Hersirs to go a-viking and to loot Christ's altars? Your subjects robbed Christ and mine restore His goods."

"Boldly you speak," said the king, "and you speak well."

At first sight, Olaf had seemed to me more god than man. Now I know why, for he was like the skies, shedding light and warmth, making the summer radiant all about him, and yet in a moment changed, a figure of the hurricane and the lightning, of night, of terror. No mortal man was ever charged like that, with such intensity of feeling, to love, to grieve, to laugh, to slay.

Because I withstood him like a man he loved me, and with a whimsical smile asked.

"Whom did you rob?"

"Your subject, the Hersir, Ironbeard of Orkney."

"Oh!" The king's sudden laugh pealed like sweet bells. "You rogue! So you've been guesting with that witch, Thorgunna? It seems her little hook hath caught a shark. Go back and burn her!"

"Burn the daughter, eh, because her sire's a robber? Your fleet of thirty-two longships is lying beached in the Nid."

For a moment I thought his sword would leap at my throat.

"Know you," said he, "that I am king of Norway?"

"As I am king," said I, "so far as folk do my bidding. Thus far is Olaf king."

"You too are king?" he bowed to me with mock reverence, and his eyes were smiling.

"Of a new found world-riding," I answered, "whereof I bring you tidings."

"Of Greenland, and what more forlorn and ice-clad fells?"

"We were thirsty on our way here," said I. "Men died of thirst, and yet I saved you a barrel of wine from the wild vineyards. On the forlorn and ice-clad fells of Norway can you raise grapes, and make wine Olaf?"

"Wine? Real wine?"

"You shall judge. We bring drugs, fruits, very precious furs and rare, strange treasures which have no names in our Danish—a ship-load of them."

Olaf turned to Harald, asking—

"Is this man crazed?"

"Not more than is befitting to a king," said Harald, laughing. "Here at your feet are treasures which poor men would not willingly set down in the mud, as we did. We are rich men when we have sold our cargo."

"A new world-riding!"

"Aye, such as Europe. From furthest north in Greenland to further south in Vinland we have discovered two thousand miles of coast, with many island provinces against the mainland, wide sounds and inland seas. Mightier rivers than any we have here pour down their floods out of the unknown uplands."

Our seamen clustered about us, all talking at once, telling the king so much that he put his hands to his ears and asked for peace.

"You good sea-thieves," said he, "shall take these treasures of Christ and render them to His Church. Then you two shall dine with me and we will talk again of this world-riding."

FOR THREE days Harald and I found the men troublesome. Full well they knew that the king had a very short way with the heathen. Those who were in error were punished until they believed. They who were obstinate in unfaith he killed. Any who were wizards he tormented with a worm dropped down their throats or a hand-basin full of red-hot

coals upon the stomach, or other whimsical devices which cured or killed.

And yet our seamen were troublesome, not wishing to yield the gold and silver vessels or the temple hangings, albeit these treasures made Christ's house most beautiful. What with the stately ordering of the Mass, the candles, bells, the incense and sweet music, my comrades liked the Christ-faith pretty well.

Yet they were troublesome. Kiartan the Icelander, who loved the king's sister, had his ship alongside of ours, flying the Greenland ensign. And so my men refused to love their enemies until they thrashed Kiartan's seamen for impudence. Afterward, instead of living a godly, righteous, and sober life, they waxed very drunk and victorious, carrying Kiartan's ensign through the town. They would not eschew sorcery until they had some Finns tell all their fortunes.

To make them meek Harald and I had to beat them over their heads and clap a few in irons. As to being clean, Hotblack said he always caught cold if he washed. I put that matter to proof and he well-nigh drowned in the Nid, but did not catch a cold.

Harald was stern, but as for me I grieved for my crew in secret, for if I had to love an enemy it would fill my days with vexation, and keep me awake at nights until he owned that I had fairly thrashed him. As to being meek, that comes no doubt with practise. I bested the king at juggling with daggers, and in our wager the loser must show meekness. He lost, and clouted me.

Then we made a bargain. I would race him at swimming from the king's bridges down tide to Hladit ship-way, and if I could outstrip him by an ell, he would have the bishop let me off being meek. But the king won. So, running from the ship-way to his house, I beat him handsomely. Then, as the queen was wrath with both of us for running mother-naked into her bower, the king was pleased with me. He made terms with the bishop, that I should do my best in the way of meekness, especially on Sundays.

So I and my ship's company were sprinkled and Harald stood for me as my gossip. Right well was I content to be Christ's man, to shed my sins and worries, to pledge with Harald that I would keep my temper and love my fellows so long as my crew behaved, be faithful to the Squirrel, obedient to my parents, and all the rest. On the way back to the ship, one of my men stole a goose.

ON THE next Sunday the king came to the ship where, from our Vinland stores we made him a feast, besides rich presents. From that time I was his guest, while Harald dealt for the cargo, chaffering with Thorfin Karlsefni, a young chapman. We did well out of that bargain, albeit my seamen spent their gains ere we left Nidaros, flaunting in colored clothes, driving their own sleighs, drinking, gaming, making love to the hussies who teased them.

With the ship shares, also my own and Harald's, he bought good merchandise for Greenland trade. Moreover, I was not at much expense in the king's bodyguard. We fed at his house up above Ship-Crook, and were three hundred men, part Norse, part outlanders, commanded by Thorkel Nosey, the king's brother. 'Twas well that prince's beak went ever in front to lead him, for, had it been placed behind, he had made stern-way.

Of all the guard, Kiartan Olafson, being Icelandic, was the fairest man. First in giant strength was a lad of seventeen, young Thambarskelvir, mightiest of all archers in the world. Tallest, I reckon was Lodvir the Long of Saltwick. Other notable men were Wolf the Red, king's standard-bearer, Thorstein Ox-foot, Eyvind the Snake, Olaf the Lad, Worm Shaw-neb, and Hallfred the Troublous Scald, our Icelandic poet. Oh, but how many more I ought to name! In bodyguard were the fiercest warriors and the noblest men in the northern world, and almost all of them were doomed within a year to give their lives for Olaf.

We had no uniform or pay, parades or duties, but were just soldiers, fighting

men whose presence made the king safe and his justice terrible. Indeed, we were most like a pack of schoolboys, Olaf's chosen comrades.

We went to Mass with him and then had breakfast. We stood by while, seated in his throne, crowned, wearing gold robes of state, he sat for justice, redressed men's wrongs, made an at-one-ment for them in their quarrels, or launched death swift as a flash of lightning on sneaks and cowards.

Toward dinner time Olaf shed his robes of office, but he dressed with the utmost splendor and dined in state, served by the princes and nobles. Merry was the feast, yet those who had any sense ate sparingly. Woe to him who gorged, for nothing escaped the king, who would have that man for fox in the afternoon hunting. Or he would lead us running a race to the fields, where we all helped the bonders at their harvesting. Or we raced ponies, swam, pulled a boat-race or, on foul days, had wrestling, sword-play or quarterstaff.

In all things the king excelled, and he alone could use both hands alike, casting two spears at once. Sometimes we had turf game or the ball game; nobody grew fat at Olaf's court; he had small use for the soft or weak.

And then in the evening, after we had supper, there would be music, rhyming, dancing, or the king played chess with one of us. The men he really loved were those who could beat him at chess. Kiartan and I—the Smooth and the Rough he called us—he treated like younger brothers.

Kiartan was most fair, courtly and noble, a sweet-spoken, gentle gallant. To get away from him at times I would go down to my ship, where she lay with the canvas tilt spread over in her winter quarters. And there was Harald, who abhorred the court because he had been a king and knew the inner guile, the treachery and intrigues of courtiers. He had all Kiartan's gifts, but was sincere, the noblest man, save Olaf, I have ever known.

CHAPTER XIII

OLAF THE KING

AS WINTER drew on and the days were narrowed down to a couple of hours, Olaf and I went out on skis together hunting, living a rough, hard life. The vigor of it braced us.

"The Christ," said Olaf, "got forty days in the wilderness—I can ill spare a week."

The full moon lighted the fells and the snowy woods. Clad in our furs, we sat by our night fire eating oatcakes and cheese, sharing a flask of warmed beer. We were too tired to cook our venison.

"Christ was a carpenter," said Olaf, "a good trade and manly, but too tame for Him. He liked the wilderness and rough men, fishermen, seamen of a sort. The rest of the folk He pitied.

"My seamen and sea-rogues take kindly to the Christ. They swear and get drunk, but Christ is deep inside. So with my fighting men—Christians with heathen skins. I'm sure of them, but not of the chapmen and townsfolk. They have to be Christians outwardly, else I'd twist their tails, but they're Christ-men because it pays, heathen with Christian skins.

"Christ, who walked on the sea and told the storm to hush, who fasted in the wilds and found more faith in a Roman captain than in all Israel, this Christ is the God of the sailors, the wilderness men and the soldiers. In the storm men turn away from Thor and Odin to follow after Him. He must be a very powerful god to go unarmed, when all of us need weapons. So He will always be the god of the strong, fighting nations, not of the weaklings—they and the women folk run after Mary."

"Shall we not say our prayers?" I said, for I was sleepy.

"I have to say my prayers," answered the king, "in my inside, because it's my inside which is always going wrong. So when I walk, or run, or swim, or sit for justice I say my prayers all the time. Why, when I seem to wax wood-wrath quite half my fury is just make-believe.

Ere I was christened it was real rage."

We set to smoking our Vinland tobacco in a pipe which passed between us. Then I was not so sleepy and asked Olaf, while he was in the mood, concerning my new world-riding.

"I offer it to you, King, on this one condition, that you shall take, occupy and rule there, as greatest of emperors. I have not settlers to fill the least of its island provinces, but you have men and ships. There shall be judges to hand-sell peace when neighbors quarrel. No war shall stain with blood the holy soil of Christ-realm. Thralls shall be free men when they come a-land. There shall be refuge for broken men, the victims of bad kings in weary and heavy-laden Europe. There shall be liberty and weal and peace, for Christ shall be king and Olaf shall be viceroy."

In the uncertain moonlight I thought I saw the glitter of a tear on the king's face. A sudden little wind sighed through the timber and the smoke of the firewood drifted in between us.

"Leif," said the king, "you know that my wife is sister to Svein Fork-Beard—"

"Aye—king of the Danes."

"—who gave her in marriage to my friend Burislaf, king of Wendland,* my native country."

"So it is said."

"And she, being Christian, wed to a heathen king, fled in disguise with her maid."

"Aye, dressed as men."

"So Thyri came to refuge with me, from the wrath of Burislaf and of Svein, her brother. And we are wedded. But our baby died, who should have been king after me in Norway."

All this I know.

"Now Thyri mews like a cat," said Olaf gently, "because she is dowerless, penniless here in Norway, and yet in Wendland hath she great estates. She will have me go to Wendland claiming these estates—says I am frightened to go."

*Prussia.

"So, must you conquer Burislaf to get them?"

"He is my friend."

"Yet, if I rede aright, King, to get to Wendland in the Baltic Sea you must pass between Denmark and Sweden, through the sound, between Svein Fork-Beard's Danish fleet and King Olaf's Swedish fleet."

"I do not greatly fear these," said Olaf Treggveson. "The southland men are soft. But when I took this Norse realm, I drove away Earl Eric, who, by his father's right, should have been king of Norway. Eric the Victorious is a Norseman commanding a viking fleet, men staunch as mine are."

"Three fleets?"

"Four—I do not forget the Earl Sigvaldi and his Iomsburg vikings. There are four fleets to fight, ere I win through to Thyri's Wendland estates. I do not want them, but she yowls all night, like a cat, and I go hunting with you, Leif. Fill the pipe again."

"Let her yowl."

"They say, Leif, that I know the art of warring, and in my art, attack is the best defense, because the folk attacked are taken at disadvantage. Wit you well that, if I let them, Eric will rally five fleets—his own, the Dane-king's, the Swede-king's, the Iomburg and the Wendland—all against me."

"It's certain death."

"I hope so," he answered cheerily.

Then I began to think of Nosey, his prying brother, his shrew of a sister and his whining wife. Often had I heard Queen Thyri vaunting her sire, old Blue-Tooth, her mean brother Fork-Beard and the rest of her precious kinsmen, making them heroes, to enrage her coward husband Olaf Tryggveson, the greatest man, the mightiest warrior and the noblest king ever bred in the whole of the Northlands.

"Leave all," said I. "Come west-overseas to the founding of Christ-realm."

"Unless a fellow," said Olaf, "will forsake all and follow Christ he is not fit for a kingdom. There is my trouble, for

if I forsook poor Thyri she is so faithful and so swift that she would catch me. My sister would also catch me, and you know how she confesseth all my sins. And as for Nosey, prying out my designs, why, if I jumped from the world-edge he would be there first, spreading my coming as an awesome secret of state, always in whispers, under his breath, behind his hand, round the corner, very hoarse. I wish I could forsake them, but they are faithful as leeches.

"So I would give all that I have to be what I am, Christ's thrall. But I have Norway in trust for Him, a heavy load to carry on a steep path and a narrow, up the weary years. So I grow tired, Leif, weary and heavy-laden and so very lonely."

"Leave all," said I, "leave all behind you, forsake the world and come west-over-seas to found Christ-realm."

He chuckled softly, stroking his hounds as they slept.

"I have shipping enough," he said, after some thought. My heart leapt that he consented.

"Shipping enough," he went on, "to carry west-over-seas the folk of one of my provinces, Haloga Land or the Trandsheim. So should I leave the rest of my people to be ravished—leave Norway in blood and ashes."

I had not thought. I saw life from its valleys, but he from its heights and summits.

"Then," said I, "trust me to start your colony in Vinland, taking province by province across to the new lands, while you stay here on guard."

The gamesome spirit rose high again.

"Good sooth!" He laughed. "You'd split one herring to make two kippers; the fleet to be with you yonder and with me here, while I stand guard to see my country bleed to death."

He heaped logs on the fire.

"Supposing, then, I were victorious in this coming battle, free of my enemies, strong enough to spare man-power out of Norway—

"Well, learned you nothing this morning from our pack-horse? You saw how he forsook the richest pasture to run, hobbled and limping, a hundred miles to the poor feed down at Nideros. Men will starve at home rather than thrive in exile. Could you charm my hard-headed, gainful, wealthy bonders, make them forsake their homes, lands and wealth, and that for the sorry chance of escaping shipwreck and getting safe to exile? Nay, Leif, I can not spare one ship or one man from the defense of Norway."

SO I SAT brooding, while our camp-fire crumbled down into gray ashes and all my ambition fell bit by bit to ruin. Then, while Olaf slept, a wind came blowing away the ashes.

Like an enchantment was the cold blue moonlight, which gave such glamour that night to Norway's barren fells. It made the bleak snow into a royal mantle which hid the naked rock scraps, the stone-strewn fields, the treacherous moss-swamps, made the lean timber seem stately, hushed the cruel river to a crooning sleep-song. No land has ever bred such men as Norway, or stinted their numbers with like cruelty, or straitened their ways so meanly; for, had the Norsemen only one rich province as nursery for her people, stronghold for their defense, and base for their adventures, the destiny of the nation had been a world dominion.

Norway slept, and when he was asleep no man in his attendance ever dared to awaken him. So I kept very still.

The moon swung down the sky and the dawn widened eastward. So days must dawn, the sun-bright days to come, and nights keep vigil. Years cast their shadows upon the deeps and the slow centuries roll onward, until the memory of my new found world become a myth, fading into forgetfulness. Then the world-heritage which poor Norway lost would fall to some rich heir of all the ages. He, not our Northmen, should establish Christ-realm, that refuge for driven men, where thralls coming a-land should have their freedom and war should be no more.

When Norway woke with the cold he wondered how the frost had flecked my hair with silver, how the night had aged me. I said I had kept vigil for five hundred years and, when he asked me what that meant, I could not answer. With flint and steel I struck a light, made fire and broiled the venison.

We were near home, and come to the waterfall three miles above Nideros, when Olaf bade me halt. I turned round, trod one snowshoe with the other and went headlong into soft snow. When I climbed out the king sat laughing at me.

"Thanks, Leif," he said. "Please do it again. No? I only wanted you to hear me, not to do so much, so quickly and so well."

"Say on."

"Wist you not, Leif, that Christ told us how Elias was reborn as John Baptist?"

"What of it?"

"And Christ said he should come again."

"Well?"

"So, Leif, if Elias is reborn and Christ is reborn, why not you and me?"

"The priests could tell us."

"Nay! Men so lazy will oversleep themselves in paradise and miss their birthdays for the life to come. Let's make a bargain, Leif. Holding Norway in trust, I may not, in this life, join with your venture. But, and we meet when we are reborn in the next life, we two will settle Vinland, eh?"

"So be it, Olaf. And, in token of that bargain, I will not in this life seek aid from other kings."

He whistled softly.

"I had not thought of that!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE SETTING FORTH

SPRING came sweetly that year. Under the low cliffs of Hladir the king had laid out slipways on the strand, and there he built the greatest of longships ever known, with thirty-four banks of oars. She was called the *Long Worm*, but I should say that in those days the word "worm" meant "dragon," so that the name was really the *Great Dragon*. At her launching Olaf let assemble the whole court and named the mightiest of his warriors to form the manning of his flagship.

So he named Wolf the Red his standard-bearer and Kolbiorn his marshal, with Thorstein Oxfoot and Vikar of Tenthland for bowsmen. He named the forecastle guard, the men of the forehold, the men of the main hold and the afterguard. When he had finished the telling we Icelanders of the guard took note that we were all left out.

"Out swords, Icelanders!" yelled Kiatan, and when we had drawn he bade us each place blade athwart knee for breaking.

"King, must we break our blades?"

"What?" cried the king. "Do you yield Iceland to me, give homage for your lands and pay me scat?"

Not one of us could betray the free land to any king.

"Put up!" he said, laughing heartily. "Put up!"

When we had slung our swords, Olaf took off the golden circlet that bound his head.

"Catch!" he shouted, and sent his crown spinning high into the sunshine. There was a scramble, and Hiallti won.

"Keep it," said Olaf. "You and Gizur the White shall take my crown for a token to the Thingvalla and give my brotherly greetings to that sovereign assembly. Say that I, Olaf Tryggveson, send a crown for King Christ to wear when He reigns over the hearts of Icelanders.

"And you, Leif Ericson, I send as Christ's envoy unto Greenland. Go you, one ship to Greenland and one to Iceland, and make your countries provinces of Christ-realm."

"And for the rest of us?" asked Kiartan.

"What?" said Olaf. "Would you have me lose all my friends?"

Gizur and Hiallti dighted their ship, bade the king farewell and, when the

snow was gone from the lowlands, they sailed. Nor did these gentle envoys fail, for at the Thingvalla that summer they won all Iceland for the Christ.

I could not sail so early because the Greenland coast would still be icebound. So I stayed, helping Olaf in the dighting of the *Long Worm*, the *Short Worm* and the *Crane*, the three ships which he loved as if they were his sons. The king's war-arrow assembled sixty warships, beside the storeships and tenders; with this most powerful fleet he hoped to win through upon his Wendland venture. He was wistful in those days, setting his house in order, and his Icelanders were pledged to be the queen's guard, for there were no men else he trusted with that high honor.

"I shall win through to Wendland—" he told me this in secret—"but I will not win back."

We were at chess that evening.

"Scat!" said he, giving me checkmate. "See, when the royal burg falls and the king is dead, what's left of the great queen? Only a piece of wood. And think you a damp wife maketh a cheery widow?"

Next morning, it being Sunday, we knelt at Mass together, for the last time. Afterward he led me to the edge of Nidholm, where we looked down on the shipping.

"Your *Flying Dragon*," said he, "is cleaned and dighted?"

"Ready, sir."

"I have news," said the king, "from one of my spies. It seems that your friend of the Orkneys, Ironbeard, is not full pleased with you, or with his daughter. Thorgunna says that if it is a boy, his name shall be Leif in honor of his father. Ironbeard is not pleased. So with his sons and their four ships he waits down yonder at the narrows, expecting you to sail for Greenland. He hears that you are sailing."

"I shall sail."

"Will you not wait for convoy with my fleet? Four ships to one, Leif."

"I heard of a king with one fleet who went warring against five. But I shall go in safety."

Olaf was doubtful.

"Olaf," I said, "if Christ wants Greenland christened it is His business to see that I go safely through the narrows."

"That is true," said the king; "and had you shirked this venture, I had misplaced my friendship."

He loaded me with gifts, very royal gifts, but he was the most generous of all men. He gave me a properly shaven Mass-priest, with all the sacred implements of the Mass, and three good teachers to help convert my people.

Moreover, a spy was prompted with tidings that I should not put to sea for at least a week, whereas King Olaf was setting forth that evening with the *Long Worm*, the *Short Worm* and the *Crane* to have dealings with Ironbeard's vikings. The king had his three great ships in a bustle of preparation, while mine lay empty of men. He watched from the hill while the spy set out in a cutter to go "fishing."

The Lord helps those who help themselves to His mercies, and so I told my seamen; but when they knew we were to sail that evening, ready as they had seemed, the whole of them had business ashore. What with their sweethearts, their important business engagements, their excuses as to all manner of things forgotten or postponed, it was full hard a matter to get work done.

Then came the king, wearing a golden circlet such as he had given to Hiallti. He brought one for Harald in his old right as Earl of Man, and one for me in my new right of the new world chiefship. Moreover, crowned as he was, Olaf borrowed an old sark from one of my seamen and made himself ship's carpenter for the day. The king took wages from me, spending the money on beer for the men. So, with a king and two earls by way of foremen, my people worked right well.

Taking long, light spars of seasoned Norway pine, we made of these a bowsprit and a sternsprit for the ship. We stowed the *Dragon's* head and tail, but set up a

false and monstrous canvas figurehead and crook. Then we took canvas, painted red, which we draped on either side of the ship, like a high bulwark, from figurehead to tail crook. To the height of the mast we added a fifty-foot spar.

All Nidaros turned out to see this portent, that a little ship should be dressed up pretending to be bigger and fiercer than the *Long Worm*. To add to our madness, we got two boats in which we set tall masts. When our stores were completed, our visitors a-land except the king, and the priest had come aboard us with his teachers, we took the dinghies in tow with long painters and hauled out into the Nid.

Now was it dusk, as we set candle lanterns, one upon the masthead of each dinghy and one on our own truck, one lantern for a headlight on our false prow and one for sternlight on the false crook aft. All Nidaros broke out into a storm of cheering, for there in the murk they saw no little ship disguised with a brace of dinghies but, by the loom and the lights, the very semblance of Olaf's three mightiest dragons.

I bade the priest lead and we sang the evening hymn.

So the king gave us his blessing and did leave us. That was a sore parting, for my heart seemed broken when I thought of the doom to which he went so gallantly. And yet no king has ever gone to quite so great a death.

I loved him very dearly.

As we made sail the tide had begun to ebb, the wind was light and fair out of the east, with frosty haze. The moon was setting, so it would be dark. There could not be a better night for my venture. Only, while my people were at supper, I saw how the water reflected the lanterns on the dinghy mastheads. These glints upon the water betrayed the dinghies, so, with a sigh of regret, I cast off the painter, thus cutting the specters of the *Short Worm* and the *Crane* out of our ghost-walk. Then I felt better, taking the helm, while the man who steered had supper.

But, supposing myself in Ironbeard's place, commanding four ships at ambush, of course I should have a cable stretched across the narrows to foul any vessel coming, like a fly to a spider's web. If then I were caught like that, my ship oversparred and cranky with her false freeboard, cumbered with petticoats, unable to fight or to run, capsizing upon the cable—

Thus I considered for hours.

Here was the test by which I should stand or fall, by which I was live Christian or dead heathen, by which I proved the Christ against the gods of the vikings. Christ and my ship were strong enough to sink a viking fleet. My ship without Him was as helpless as a dinghy in a whirlpool.

Down on my knees I went and asked Him point-blank which side He was going to take in this adventure. It was His business, and if He sided with the Christian ship what need had we for arms or armor? If we lost, our armor would only drown us, whereas if we went light we might swim ashore. If we disarmed for swimming, that would show unfaith. I kept my folk at arms.

But how could I put my faith to the fullest proof and show great Christ how I relied on His honor?

Not by concealment from the enemy. I let make fires on makeshift hearths and braziers from stem to stern of my ship, and set our tar, pitch, resin, and oil to plenish the flames. The red-painted canvas bulwarks glowed like molten iron in a furnace. The ambushed vikings would think they saw my people burning to death.

Up with the altar and candles on the forecastle, up into full view the priest and the praying-men in their bright robes. The wind was not enough to blow out candles, but the ebb was strong as we felt the suck of the narrows. I had on my crown and mantle, standing at the helm; and on the forecastle head I could catch the glimmer of Harald's coronet, where he stood conning the ship. The rest were on their knees at midnight Mass, and the echo of deep-throated singing came back

to us from the frosty walls of the strait. High Mass in a ship of fire, which seemed the greatest of all sea-dragons!

At last, as we came to the place of uttermost peril, bells, trumpets, horns and drums joined in the triumph of the "Gloria." I had forgotten the vikings. We were Christ-thralls, bringing glad tidings to Greenland. And then the priest lifted his hand to give us benediction, for we had passed the narrows. We were safe at sea.

CHAPTER XV

THE HOMECOMING

WE PICKED up the far-flung landmarks one by one—Fair Isle, the Far Isles, Iceland's white fells and then the frosty, splintered spires of Greenland. Ever I grew more eager for my wife and, if I had been unfaithful, wronged her, betrayed her, so much the greater my amends, my debt to love.

Harald seemed changed. His biting wit was gone, his raillery, his shrewd speech—all softened to a strange, rare tenderness. He had something to say to me, but could not bring himself to speak; he would begin and change the subject, try and then turn away. At last I forced him to have it out.

We were alone on the poop, and in the moonlight Greenland's spectral fells were like dim angels with uplifted wings above the icy sea-mist.

"Remember," he said, "the redes of the Little Sybil and how they are being fulfilled?"

"Ware luck!" so went her redes. "It drifts thee across the main sea into shame."

Aye, so it had. I crossed myself and begged pardon concerning Thorgunna.

"Yet, after thy degradation, comes great glory and well to the people—"

Aye, for we brought the Christ-faith.

"—out of all their mourning. But for thee is woe unutterable."

Mourning in Greenland? Woe unutterable! What of the Squirrel?

"The Sybil," said Harald, and his words were like a knife in my heart," what was her rede to thy wife?"

"She gave the luck to me. The Squirrel had no rede."

"Mourning and woe," said Harald. "I have dreams, and see the dead in Greenland. Last night came Thori Goat-Beard, gibbering, and a cloud of ghosts, new-reft of their bodies. Nay, I did not see your or my wife's face or any other except poor Thori. But be ready, Leif. Do not be caught at unawares. The gusts and storms and hurricanes of passion take the unwary soul aback, down on beam-ends and foundered.

"You have made strong enemies. Odin, Thor, Tyr, Frey, Loki, are the most powerful of demons seeking to destroy you. And they will, but for the pity of Christ."

"If they get my wife," said I, "they can have me with her."

"And if Christ saves her?"

"How shall I know?"

"He tests our faith," said Harald.

Indeed we had strong enemies—fog, berg-stream, icepack, besetting the way home, but neither the dread gods nor Harald's warning could chill warm hearts or still blithe songs or kill Hope, the soul's mirage, as we closed Eric's Isle and drew into our haven. There was my home, and yet no smoke came from the long roof. There was the barton, but not one thrall was out at work. The men's door stood wide open, pigs coming in and out.

As we beached the ship, the sound set a woman wailing within the boatshed. We heard her wrestling with the door-bolts to get out, then saw her part-open the door and peep at us before she dared come farther. At our hail she came to the ship, trailing a torn skirt, dragging ropy hair back from a dirty, tear-stained face, so pinched with famine. It was only when I spoke and she broke into peals of laughter, that we knew her for Gudrid Clatter.

"See you that corpse?" she pointed. "Looks funny doesn't it? And that one—

that's my husband, Thori. Ha-ha-ha! See how his beard sticks up! Nay, that's his head down yonder. The seal broke up through the dais floor, and Thori died in bed. I laid him out on a bier in the house, but he wouldn't stay—for fear of the sea. He came and sat on the edge of my bunk, calling me good wife—me! I'm that thing's good wife! Isn't it a joke?"

I shouted from the forecastle:

"My wife! Where is my wife?"

She took no notice.

"I dragged him out," she said, "out there—and the pigs! But the seal was up in the fish-loft and all the thralls flew from the sickness, leaving the dead in the house. And the seal—I'm frightened of the seal!"

I jumped to the beach and seized her by the shoulders.

"My wife! My wife!"

"How could I bury that, and that, and the dead in the house-beds, or go in there for food? The seal was there in the fish-loft, and my dead man would stand by the bunk to threaten me if I dared to marry your brother, as if— Oh, take me away! Take me away!"

"My wife!"

"Oh, she? You mean the Squirrel?" Gudrid broke from me and tried to climb the stern of the ship, shrieking because she said the seal was coming.

"The seal shall not come. Tell me!"

"Why, when was it? A sennight back? A fortnight? I don't know. How should I know? Let me alone! She and her little baby— When they died I slammed the bunk door on them to keep the seal away. The seal is coming! Take me away! Take me away!"

So her shrieks followed me as I went up into the house; while I was seeing that which I saw there and while I made the fire, still I heard the screaming. Then I piled the household gear on the fire, and the high-leaping flames caught the roof timbers, roaring along the imposts, ties and beams. When I came out at last the screaming seemed to have stopped, and the woman was moaning aft as we put out to sea.

LEIF is a child
And the world is his toy,
So I lead him away
From his gawds and his joy,
So I lead him away—
And the child grows to boy.

Leif is a boy
And the world is so bright,
So I lead him away
From its curse and its blight,
So I lead him away—
And he learns to do right.

Leif is a man
And the world is so brave,
So I lead him away
And his soul shall I save,
So I lead him away—
Lest the world be his grave.

So mother crooned her song. I lay face downward in the flower-strewn grass with my head on her knees, while she combed out my hair, tweaking me sometimes or, with little slaps, making me turn my head.

"I don't think much of your priest," said she. "I showed him my five roosters—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts—and he said they were all wrong, 'specially Acts. Jealous, of course, because the hens admire my roosters, whereas my women can't abide that priest. I never saw a man-prude before. Always shocked too, at me, everybody and everything. One of the teachers, the dark one, is not so ill looking but my lasses makes eyes at him. He has a lot to learn, though, about being human.

"As to Eric—look at his bump! He slouches, glooming about the house, hating the priest. Calls him "that conjurer." You see Leif, now I'm baptized and a true Christian, I can't have a heathen in my bed o' nights, so I've turned your father out. He's very peevish.

"Son, will you build me a church?"

"Aye, mother."

"A large church?"

"Aye."

"It must be very large, son, to hold all the people I'm going to take to Christ-realm when we die."

"So Christ-realm is there?"

I took her hand and kissed it.

"Why, of course!" she said. "Where else should Christ-realm be? The Squirrel waits there for you, Leif."

"You think Christ caught her?"

"My son, she was a better Christian than you were when you left her."

It was then that the tear-storm broke, which saved my reason.

So far my memory is very clear; but from the time when my mother gave me comfort I see events through mist, and the years loom vaguely, peopled by dim forms, and shadows cast by the light of other worlds. In the Eric Saga and some such texts writ by Icelandic monks, also in Sporri Sturleson's "Heimskringla" I see some bits and pieces of events which I can faintly recall or have quite forgotten.

First was the voyage of my brother Thorwald the Helpless, who must needs quarrel with the Indians and died of an arrow driven through his eye. The seamen had him in armor, enthroned, upon a headland, built a mound above him.

Next came the rich young chapman Thorfin Karlesefne from Nidaros. He was big with tidings of Olaf Tryggveson's tremendous doom. That night on which I passed the Trandsheim Narroes, the king had followed me and destroyed the four ships of the Orkney vikings. Thereafter he kept the sea and, having assembled his sixty ships of war, made a prosperous voyage and a good treaty with Burislaf of Wendland. On the way homeward, passing by Rugen I think, he was beset from ambush by the Danish and Swedish fleets, which were easily beaten off. Then came Eric the Victorious with his fleet, who rallied the beaten squadrons and attacked.

Olaf had lashed his ships into a raft or battlefield which he held valiantly, but one by one the outlying vessels were cleared, and cut adrift until there was only the *Long Worm* left, heaped high with the dead, but still impregnable. The forecastle was stormed, the forehold was carried, the after hold was boarded.

Then did an arrow shatter young Thambarskelvir's bow.

"What brake so loud there?" asked Olaf.

"Norway, from thy hand, King," answered Thambarskelvir and, taking sword and buckler, went on fighting.

So at the very last stood Olaf, Kolbiorn his marshal, and young Thambarskelvir, three men at battle with three fleets!

Lest they be taken alive the king and his marshal leapt overside to sink with the weight of their armor. But Thambarskelvir yielded to Eric the Victorious, King of Norway.

Was the world poorer, losing the last the mightiest of the vikings? Nay, we are all enriched, for the valor of Olaf is a thing immortal. It is example, inspiration to children of the Northlands through these nine centuries, and still you may see in the men of modern Norway some little spark which glints from that great flame. It makes the nation honored and the people liked wherever they go through all the distant seas.

But I must tell of Thorfin Karlesefne from Nidaros. The poor fool was dazzled by my sister Asdis. She married him, and they made gainful voyaging and trading in Vinland. But marriage with Asdis! She who for her evil avarice had a ship's company murdered in cold blood! When the thing leaked out, I sat in the judgment seat, declaring her soul to be leprous. I made it Greenland law that it was felony to speak to her, to aid, to succor, or even speak of her so long as she should live.

Then there was Stein's wedding with Gudrid Clatter and, after his ill fate, she married a rich man in Iceland. Of her came a great descent of men.

Years passed, and the poor Lady Thorgunna sent me our son, aged five—a very kindly good lad who became my heir.

Years after that, when Olaf the Saint came to reign in Norway, he had occasion to upset five kings; one of these, old King Raerik, who would not bow to Christ, had to be blinded. Thereafter the old man was wont to creep into King Olaf's bed-place at night to stab at him, and so became a nuisance.

In the annals of my boyhood you may remember the banishment of my dear Arin Peacemaker, he of the Mewlithe

Slayings. This man of the very plain face, who had the ugliest feet ever seen in the Northlands, was serving in the royal household at Nidaros, when Olaf the Saint had to dispose of blind Raerik. So the king said to Arin—

"Take me this wicked old Raerik to be tamed by Leif Ericson in Greenland."

This did Arin, and right glad I was to see him. Moreover I remember King Raerik as an amusing, shrewd and kindly guest. Both he and Arin were warm at my hearth while they lived. I recall, too, that Raerik, being a heathen, I laid his body in row beside my father Eric; whereas Arin had been christened when he served in the Varangian Guard of the Greek Emperors.

Yes, we called him Arin Varanger. Of course you know that Varanger as a surname is altered a little now into Waring, or Baring, but it always means descent from one of the Varangian guardsmen who shielded the rotten emperors of the east.

In Vinland Asdis had given birth to a son, the first-born son of the new world. I had grown gray when this man came, green with sea sickness, to me at Brattelid. He was sent by the Pope, not merely as a priest, but consecrate bishop of Greenland and Vinland. His younger brother was the second bishop, and a long succession ran through the next four centuries. The earlier prelates came seasick and grew lean, the later fattened and mellowed at the Vatican, not to be reft from the sty.

IN MY sere lonely age men called me after my house, Leif Brattelid, Leif Rock-backed. I gave my heart and the bleak years to the weal of Greenland and Vinland, to the planting and nourishing of my little forlorn settlements, to the slow-growing timber trade with Norway, the penurious farming, the perilous fisheries. No soft man could have done my work, for there were witches to burn, wild tribes to tame, and my bickering republicans talked so much about their sovereign rights that I had to remind them at times I was their master. When they had talked themselves out they did what they were told and like good republicans, calling me tyrant the while, monster and despot. Not one was man enough to meet my long sword.

Brattelid is standing yet, they say, the roofless walls staunch through nine centuries; and people go in at the man's door, under the six foot lintel. Eric and Christian and I and Hrut the Big used to bang our heads on that beam when we forgot to stoop.

The Church, of Vinland timber, is all gone long ago, my church of the holy memories, where I buried mother and Harald. My father's Odin-ring of pagan priest-right, Hilda's worn distaff, Harald's gold crown, the Squirrel's belt of little shells, which she gave to mother, my necklace of boyish trophies and many more dear relics were in that church. In the last years I had Eric's high seat moved there, to spite the bishop who was shocked at its heathen carvings. How should the bishop know that Odin's wisdom and Thor's manliness are only attributes of the Lord Christ. The bishop had no such attributes to judge by.

But I had the throne into church where I could sit during the services, and through the long sweet hours between when I could see through the earth-mists into the clear light. So, when I had any Vinland tobacco and the fleas were asleep after dinner, I would smoke. This made the bishop fractious, albeit his censer smoked a deal more than my little pipe.

And sometimes when I could see my wife, out in the clear light which is beyond the earth-haze, I would confess to her the sins which were really worth committing. For who, observing the house-priest in his cassock bashful of showing his ankles, could tell the creature anything stronger than pap? He never fought the hot and blood-red passions or took the devil on at holm-gang, or fell in the reek of gore or lifted up despair into the heights of triumph. I told my house-priest what was good for him, and when he set a penance of so much fasting, he sat at dinner and I

changed dishes with him. These priests are meekly obstinate. I never liked them.

One summer evening after the last service, I fell asleep in my throne and something I heard fall, my pipe I think. The sound awakened me.

The church had been quite empty, but while I slept some people had come in. They had set a trestle table, up where the altar should be, and they were all at supper, a dozen men at least profaning the holy place.

Yet, when I wanted to drive them out, something restrained me, something about these fishermen in sea-stained clothes. They were so quiet. And there was one among them, not a seaman, a man in a shabby tunic, careworn, tired, and strangely radiant and glorious.

When they had finished supper he said grace. Then he took some bread and broke it in little pieces, which he gave to each of the fishermen, saying a few words softly. I could not hear the words.

Then he stood up, and poured wine into a cup, and gave it to each of the men that they should taste. He said a few words to them, but I could not hear.

I had fallen from my throne down on my knees, and my crown was rolling across the floor, as I saw him lifting his hands in blessing. The plate which had held the bread, the cup which had held the wine, shone like the sun in his midsummer strength; and in the splendor of that light I saw my wife and my mother kneeling before the table.

King Olaf was with them, and Harald Christian, Patrick the Scald was there and Michael Craftsman, aye and full many more I had known in my long life. The kneeling people were all about the table, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, multitudes beyond all counting, reaching for miles away in every side, while the whole sky above was thronged with hosts of angels, and with one accord they lifted a song of triumph to such tremendous pealing of trumpets, thunder of drums, clangor of great bells, that earth and heavens rocked.

THERE was savor of violets in the sunny air, and cheerful song of birds, where I lay upon crisp dewy turf, so well content that I would not spoil it by waking. I heard my mother laughing and the Squirrel made little noises, cooing and crooning while she tickled my nose with a feather.

Aye it was true, for I peeped, pretending still to sleep.

"Nay," said mother, "I knew Leif ere you were born, and if you wake him that way he will use bad language. There's one thing which will rouse him from the dead—Welsh rabbit.

"Therefore shall I sing the Welsh rabbit song. You, Patrick, give the tune upon your harp. You, Olaf Tryggveson, shall make the cheese-smell; you, Harald Christian, shall sizzle like the pan. You, Michael Craftsman, be the crackling fire. You, Squirrel, be hungry, with moans of famine and hope. Bend all your wills to it. Now, one—two—three—go!

"There was a Welsh rabbit of royal degree,
With a name twenty syllables long,
And he said he could always pronounce the first three,
But the rest were arranged all wrong.
So, as no one could call him, he never got up
Till the warren was all asleep.
He could not be summon'd for debt, and the shame
Of his rollicking manners and scandalous fame,
Of his infamous habits, impossible name—
For the which the Welsh language alone was to blame—
Made all the best bunnies to weep!
Weep! Weep!
The truly good bunnies to weep!

"'My name's twenty syllables long," he declared,
'And I know it's a capital crime,
But I could not repent the whole lot, if I dared,
I'll repent them a few at a time.'
Yet before he repented of syllables three
The ones he had learned to pronounce,
This Welshest of rabbits fell heir to a name
Much more Welsh than his own, so he coupled the same;
But the hyphen did burst, and his end was a flame
Full of paws and small fur, bits and scraps, tail and wame,
And all the best bunnies did weep!
Weep! Weep!
The truly good bunnies did weep!"

It was not likely I should laugh so and still pretend to sleep; but the sound of crackling fire, the sizzle of the dish, the savor of toasted cheese, did make me hunger—and mightily grieved was I when I saw no Welsh rabbit.

"You shall imagine it," said Squirrel, "as we did, and then imagine you have eaten the same and are full."

She had my head in her lap, and I looked up at the wonder of her loveliness—my nut-brown little lady, arrayed in the hues of maple leaves in autumn. The shy alertness of her was quite unchanged, the look of a sweet wild creature which would startle and run, or turn to fight. I loved her more than ever.

"Wife," said I, "were you not dead?"

"Blessed are the dead," she answered, just like a child repeating lessons, "which die in the Lord. Pr-r-rup!" she chirped. "But I didn't! I died in the faith of my folk and went to the Happy Hunting Grounds—where I was all alone and a very miserable sinner—until your funny old mother sought me there, and found me and caught me and tamed me, she said for your sake, and brought me hither among the Christians to wait for you, a dreary long time. So it's all your fault." She kissed me with a hurried, sharp peck. "So there!"

"See, Leif!" said my mother, standing before me to be admired. "How like you this gold frock? My second best."

Her harsh face had softened to an unearthly loveliness. "Mind you," she asked, "what like I was when I prayed to that false Cat Freya for love and beauty? But now—" She spread her lustrous amber hair across the golden robe, set with great rubies—"thanks to Our Lady—" she dipped a stately courtesy—"am I young forever."

My eyes blinked at the light which rayed from her.

"Boo!" she said. "Ugly old man! Of my begetting, too! Truly my ancient sins find me out, though you do take after your father. Aren't you ashamed?"

Old? Ugly? I leapt to my feet, and looked about me for my walking sticks. They were gone. The swellings were gone from my feet and legs, the dull pain from my loins.

The earth-mists had cleared all away, and I had my sight again, the eyesight of a hawk to see the flower-decked meads, the gracious trees, fair lake and running stream, the noble fells beyond and the blue lift of heaven where the larks were singing. I felt the blood course warm, the glow of early manhood, the lithe, hale strength.

Close by was a young man who knelt strumming a harp, and while he sang the flowers of the meadow turned all their faces toward him as to the sun. He looked up, laughing, and I knew him for Patrick, scald of Erin.

At my feet were three young giants who rolled and tumbled together, just like puppies pretending to snarl and bite. Then they sat up in a row panting, yawping at me, and presently, remembering their manners, became quite grave and grown-up, standing before me, louting, bidding me welcome. Now I saw that these three were dearest of all my friends, Olaf, Harald and Michael Craftsman, clad in a blinding splendor of golden armor. Who should know that one had reigned as the greatest of kings while the other twain toiled as thralls, for now the three were brothers.

"So, Leif," saith Olaf Tryggveson, "I have fulfilled my promise while you lagged all these years."

"What promise, King?"

"The pledge that we made in the snows by Nidaros."

"That we should settle Christ-realm?"

"Aye, and we be settlers and colonists of Christ-realm where thralls are free the moment they come a-land and kings lay down their burdens, where there is rest for all who are weary and heavy-laden, for so Christ giveth His beloved peace."

Then they all departed, leaving my wife and me together in the glades of Paradise.

THE END

The Camp-Fire

A free-to-all Meeting-Place *for Readers, Writers and Adventurers*

SOMETIME last fall one of our writer's brigade intimated that the artist who designed the Norse-American stamps then being issued would have a terrible time of it if he should put a ship similar to those pictured on the stamp on a cover of the magazine. To learn something of the origin of the design we wrote to Washington. Here is the reply of Mr. O. J. Kvale, congressman from Minnesota.

Concerning the alleged errors in the engraved designs for the Norse-American Centennial postage stamps, I am very happy to submit what information I have in my files and have been able to assemble, in response to your queries on behalf of your readers. I regret that it can not be more complete, particularly in reply to the criticisms of the rigging of the sloop.

The viking ship, first, is pictured, as Mr. Bedford-Jones observes, with the Norse and American flags at bow and stern. Many have called attention to this supposed error on the engravers' part, stating that neither flag was in existence at the time of the vikings. The explanation is this: that the stamp carries a picture of the ship which was sailed across the Atlantic at the time of the Columbian exposition in Chicago, in 1893.

The engraving, I believe, is based on a picture appearing on page 3 of the first volume of "History of the World's Columbian Exposition," edited by D. Rossiter Johnson, published by Appleton & Co., 1897. The book is in the Library of Congress. The picture bears the following legend and foot-note:

> "Exhibit of Viking Ship"—an exact copy (with a little restoration) of a Viking ship discovered in a burial mound at Gokstad, Norway, in 1880. It is 75 feet long, 16 feet beam, and was built in Norway. Capt. Magnus Anderson, with a crew of twelve men, brought it across the Atlantic in May."

I can give no authoritative information regarding the points brought out by Mr. Bedford-Jones. I do recall that we were concerned at the time with possible criticisms, one of which was that the artist had painted the pennants against the wind as indicated by the sails. The experts at the time established that pennants often whip into such a position. I merely mention this as an instance of the care which the Department took to correct all possible faults.

Andrew Furuseth, known to all nautical men, insists that the rigging of the sloop is not impossible. Sails, masts and rigging in such an arrangement was very possibly, and perhaps probably in use at that time, he declares. The Department is unable to throw any light on the technical controversy, so I will have to leave it to others to determine.

Facts regarding the ship itself, however, and its history are contained in an address by me in the House, a copy of which I am happy to send you under another cover. If I am able to serve you further in this matter, either personally or officially, please do not hesitate to indicate that service to me.—O. J. KVALE

What other old-time nautical men who have seen the stamp can give us opinions about the possibility of the rigging's being practical?

An excerpt from Mr. Kvale's speech on the Norse-American Centennial, which was the occasion of the issuing of the stamp, follows:

"The story of how the viking ship was built and brought to the exposition is in itself indicative of the spirit that has lived in the hearts of the Norse people throughout the ages. With a fund gathered from every village in the Kingdom of Norway—testing in that way the truth of their traditions—they constructed an exact and a seaworthy replica of an ancient viking vessel dug from the earth in Gokstad, Norway, in 1880. Complete in its detail, with the dragon's-head prow, with highly burnished shields along the sides, with its 32 long oars, its sail and rudder, this little 67-foot boat was sailed and rowed across the entire Atlantic by Capt. Magnus Anderson, with the Norwegian commissioners taking sail as crew. Once in these waters, they brought their vessel to Chicago by way of New York and the Great Lakes."

SOMETHING from Lyman Bryson concerning his long complete novelette in this issue that deals with the southeastern corner of Asia.

So far as I know only two or three white men have ever been among the Nosus and I am not one of them. I have however made a painstaking and laborious study of the lengthy record of S. Pollard, British missionary, who was probably the only one who ever really spent any time among them. Dr. Legendre, a Frenchman, is a source of secondary importance. I have Pollard's book, "In Unknown China" (Lippincott, 1921), and would be glad to send it on to you if any of your young men want to discover what it's all about. I was so fascinated by these folk that I had to do something about them.—LYMAN BRYSON.

WHAT part does the historian—formal or informal—play in the making of heroes?

Here is an interesting theory—particularly interesting to us—brought out by one of you in a letter to Harold Lamb.

Though I have been a rather consistent reader of history in all forms since I was a kid spelling out the "Saga of King Olaf" under the kitchen table with the aid of mother occupied with her daily work, and later enthralled with all of the translations of the medieval yarns and the "Mort de Arthur," etc., which found their way into my hands, yet I think that I can truthfully say that your stories of the ancient Khlit, Kirdy and the giant Ayub are something that I would not have willingly missed. As a picture of a time and place and people that are more or less vague to the very great majority of us, I have found them more than merely entertaining, for I have the feeling that you are giving us the best picture that you can draw of a people and a time that perhaps needed only the proper contemporary historian to have come down to us with equal fame with Roland and Oliver, or the heroes of the Crusades. More power to you.—RALPH E. MOORE.

In his reply Mr. Lamb is able to cite instances tending to prove that Mr. Moore's theory is pretty well founded on fact.

The point made by Ralph Moore in his letter is most interesting. I mean his point about the existence of sagas and chronicles as fine as the old familiar stories that have been our heritage for generations.

I have pondered this letter a bit. The issue is too big for me to deal with.

How many of our familiar hero-figures owe their popularity to an apt contemporary chronicle? And how many of these chronicles are still buried in other languages?

We know the vikings, the crusaders—Roland and Oliver, King Arthur and his knights. We know the Caesars, Bayard, Henry of Navarre, and a host of others. A splendid pageantry of the past. But there are other figures of the pageant, and *chansons de geste* barely known or buried almost beyond reach.

Consider Roland, and his sword Durandal, and that last battle at Roncevalles. Is not the historical Roland—the man who actually lived and served Charles the Great—a much less heroic figure than the Roland of the *Chanson?* The early annals and the Arab chronicle of Ibn Athir present him to us merely as Hroland or Hrodland, duke of Brittany, and reveal Roncevalles only as a rear-guard action in which a number of the Franks were cut off by the Basques of the Pyrenees and slain. The *Chanson* written centuries later by a troubador of Brittany pictures Roland as the leader of the Franks, victim of a plot on the part of Ganelon— beset by hundred of thousands of "Saracens" in the mountain passes.

I do not know in the least what is fact and what is minstrelsy in the Song of Roland; but this much seems sure—the Roland that most of us know is the hero created by the Breton troubador, not the warrior-noble who served Charles the Great. In much the same way, King Arthur and Lancelot and all the familiar sitters at the Round Table are painted for us in glowing colors by one Sir Thomas Malory, who wrote the *Mort de Arthur* centuries after the death of that monarch.

Sir Thomas wrote, indeed, from the early French annals. But these reveal Arthur and his knights in much plainer colors. And we are confronted by the question, "What would the Arthurian legends be today without Sir Thomas Malory?"

These are questions for others to answer. And the *last* thing I wish is to be thought an iconoclast with intent to mar ancient reputations. Roland or Hrodland, he must have been a *man* to inspire the Song of Roland. And Malory must have had splendid models for his epic.

The point being, that without the Breton troubador and Sir Thomas Malory the memory of Roland and the Arthurian knights might have vanished with time, and literature and all of us would have been the poorer thereby. And, given such chroniclers, how many other men of history might live for us today as human beings?

Another angle—the annalist of the Dark Ages and medieval times was a chap of a few words, difficult for us to read today, because he wrote only for his own day, without mentioning more than names, deeds and places. He wasted no effort in description or explanation. The descriptive writer—the fellow who painted in the scene and made the stiff medieval figures lifelike—came later. How much would we know of the crusades without the labors of Sir Walter Scott, or of medieval Poland without the splendid narratives of Sienkiewicz?—HAROLD LAMB.

A FEW words on fetishism from Georges Surdez, in connection with his complete novelette in this issue.

Fetishism is generally confused with Totemism and Religion. This confusion prohahly came from the fact that the witch-doctor cumulated the professions of priest and fetishist, beside his other occupations; Adviser to the tribal chief, physician, surgeon, master of ceremonies on occasions of state, and legal adviser for his chargcs in matters of love and business.

The method of "throwing a spell" described in Charles the Bold, is tbc simplest known. The sorcercrs of Europe employed it for centuries, still employ it, credulous men claim. Tbe sacrifice of a cbicken, I gathered from West Coast negroes, is still an invariable rite in tbe bush for the purpose of casting evil-luck on one's enemy.

It may be objected that figures of wax and clay are rare among blacks, yet I have seen such statuettes, and I have now in my possession a figure made out of some sort of copper alloy, certainly of negro manufacture, for I picked it up between Agboville and Broubrou, Ivory Coast. The statues hewn out of wood, often seen, are religious objects, belong to a diffcrent classification therefore.

Fetisbism is entitled to respect, if only for one motive: It gave birth to Art.

Monsieur Max Begouen, son of Count Begouen, Professor of Prebistory in Toulouse University, himself a distinguished student, bas written a book: "Les Bisons d'Argile" (The Clay Bisons). Aside from being a splendid work of reconstruction and a migbty fine adventure yarn, solid facts are worked into the pages of the book very deftly.

Monsicur Begouen claims tbat the engravings and paintings discovered on the walls of caves inhabited by the prebistoric men were nothing more or less tban figures employed in tbe "throwing of spells" upon game animals. At the bunter's request, for a consideration no doubt, the socerer outlined the hison, reindeer or wild horse that the bunter wished to kill, ornamenting it with a profusion of spears distributed in various vital spots. A sort of prebistoric Coueism: "Day by day, in every way, I'm bunting better and better!"—GEORGES SURDEZ.

GAGS and gagging. Two comrades take exception to the statement that to make it impossible for the gaggee to hoot or snort in a manner that may be heard is much more difficult than fiction writers fancy.

In browsing over your issue of March 15, I was struck by the agnostic testimony of Eugene Stebbings on the gentle art of gagging. This is a charming manifestation of a characteristic of adventurers as thcy gather around their camp-fires or assemble in their luxurious clubs: they are chronic Doubting Tbomases, always ready to protest that thc otber fellow who has just told the tall and exciting tale is a liar of the first magnitude.

I have never practised gagging as an art, but I am tempted to break into this dehate. I believe that Comrade Stebhings is deluded when be claims to he ahle to make "an awful noise" when gagged. He hcars his own gurglings and inarticulate roars, naturally, but he does not know bow far these sounds may he beard by others. Not at any distance, I believe; the groans will be mucb muffled if the gagging has been thoroughly done. If the victim is in a room with closed doors and windows there is not mucb likelihood of the noisc being heard in otber parts of the house or by passersby in the street.

The effort to make these sounds, moreover, will be exhausting; and in a little while, according to my theory of the matter, the gagged person will be effectively reduced to an approximate silence.

Since Mr. Stebbings is so scientific ahout his gagging, let him inform the world if he has tried the "poire d'angoisse" ("pear of anguish") used to silence the jailer when the Duc de Beaufort made his celebrated escape from the chateau of Vincennes, in Dumas's "Twenty Years After." This seems to be a pear-sbaped mechanism which is thrust into the mouth until it fills tbe oral cavity and is then expanded by springs so that it cannot be ejected. I doubt if even a deep-lunged Stebbings could make a sound with that device in his gullet.—CHARLES COLLINS.

In tbe first place, analyze tbe word. "Gag." You know the sensation that word brings to mind! Picture yourself making a loud noise while anyone tickles your throat witb a featber! And that's the only way a gag is effective. The clotb, rope or other soft article is forced over tbe back of the tongue, leaving room for air, but *gagging* the subject. There *is* a possibility of strangulation, but it is slight, and even if the victim felt so minded under the circumstances, the sound could not be heard outside of the room as tbe opening of the throat or even the production of a nasal tone with the glotis dropped brings on a tendency to vomit.

As to gagging, it can be done, but in tbese days of speed and hurry it seldom is. Too easy to deposit some solid object somewbere nortb of the whiskers.

The way I know, at eighteen I had the misguided amhition to outdo Houdini and to tbat end studied and practiced all sorts of rope and handcuff escapes. The only thing that cured me was an offer to appear in one of tbe dime museums alongside of the fat lady. Somehow that idea went against the grain.

But I do agree that it is too easy to say "he gagged him" or "he tied him up" wben the author basn't the faintest idea of how it is done. For that matter, I wouldn't know how to tie up a man with rope sash —cord-size—or bigger so that *I* couldn't get out of it. With smaller size cord that makes really bard knots and cuts deep into the flesh—good fishing line for example—I'd bate to be well tied and just have to go away from there.

The whole thing is not relevant, for if the purpose of the story demands that one party confine another in a certain locality for some time, there are so many actual ways it could be done in real life that the matter of method never spoils my enjoyment of the subject. And fear of, and the unusual situation would bind the party of the second part as strongly as the ropes. Note the "fear of, and the." I don't mean to imply cowardice.

I have never been the gagger or gaggee, and what I pass on to you is second-hand knowledge, but I believe it to be true and logical. If there is any laboratory work to be done on the subject I would prefer that you did it.—A. F. PHELPS.

SHELL collectors, here is a chance to make a practical use of your hobby and help the advancement of science by sending specimens to this Florida museum. Collectors of other natural history material are also invited to contribute.

DeLand, Florida.

My hobby for the last 28 years has been natural history, especially the collecting and study of mollusks, commonly known as shells and snails. My collection to-day being composed of some 75,000 specimens found in almost every country of the world. Almost all are now correctly named (latin) with localities found. There have been discovered and classified approximately 100,000 different kinds of land, fresh water and seas shells to date, and more being found yearly. The scientific study of this particular type of animal life has its practical use the same as any other section of zoology, but to explain in detail would require too much space.

I have now started the Museum of Natural History here in DeLand, and am loaning said museum my entire collection, with the intention of donating it to them when I pass away. I hope that *Adventure* can bring this matter to the attention of its readers, and see if there are not readers who in their travels in out of the way places might be so kind as to extend the helping hand by sending us shells or snails which might attract their attention due to peculiar color, or shape.

There are still many out of the way sections which are practicaly virgin territory as regards conchology or shells. Sections of South America, Central America, Africa, Borneo, China, Persia, etc., etc. One of the studies being the geographical distribution of mollusks, or where the races have their center, these unknown sections represent blank spaces, and any new material found in these territories would assist to complete this particular study.

Besides shells we would also be glad to receive other material of natural history, as it is my hope to make this museum something worth while, especially to popularize natural history, so that our people can more readily appreciate how the rest of the world lives. We can't all travel, and those who are obliged to spend their lives in one spot are some times apt to forget how the rest are living.

We have no endowment, and our only income at present is the membership fees of $5.00 per annum and $25.00 life membership, so we cannot buy material much as I would like to do so. All I can give in return for any donations of material is to display on the label the name of the donator. However I do think that there is a feeling of helping one another amongst the readers of *Adventure* perhaps not found in other magazines, and I hope that some of them will dig down into old boxes, cellars and attics and bring forth some material which is now lying unseen and unused, while if placed on display in our museum could be enjoyed by the public, as well as help us grow.

We are starting in a small way, but there is no reason why we cannot grow, but to do this requires friends. I have never asked *Adventure* for help, but believe that this is a case where I should tell my story as we have nothing to sell, nor any section to boost. Our doors are open to all, regardless of race or creed but until we secure a large endowment we have to ask for assistance. Personally I would much prefer to see our museum grow by many small contributions, rather than be bound down to certain conditions due to accepting financial assistance from one party.—H. J. BOEKELMAN.

P.S.—If anybody wants to know what articles I would prize above any others, there are two, viz. A pefect skin of as near a 30 ft. East Indian python and a shrunken head of the Jibaro South American Indians. Both would give our museum tremendous attendance.

ALL OF you know Captain Dingle as old-time member of our writers' brigade, but probably only a few of you have had the pleasure of meeting him personally, and an enterprising gent with acquisitive instincts is taking advantage of these two facts. He is traveling about the country under the name of Captain Dingle and on the strength of his borrowed identity is fleecing or attempting to fleece such admirers of the captain's as he is able to meet. He has already acquired a motor-boat in this manner, I believe.

So, at Captain Dingle's request, I am asking you to look out for this person of unpleasantly dishonest habits. Having known the captain for some seven years I am well aware of how rotten it must make him feel to realize that his name is being used to defraud the friends he has made through his stories in this magazine and others.—J. C.

ASK *Adventure*

For *free information* and *services* you can't get elsewhere

Indian Runners

WHO SAID Amazons? Here's a type of woman who can carry on her head a basket it would take two of you to lift, and thus burdened, travel faint tropical trails all day, without showing undue signs of strain.

Request:—"In reading the 'The Master Plotter,' written by you and published in *Adventure* in 1920, I remember a certain paragraph relating that an Indian runner had traveled a distance of 297 miles in 24 hours, a very remarkable running feat. The best running feat comparable to this record is that made recently in Mexico, namely, 62½ miles in 9 hours, by two Tarahumare Indians, which, however, hardly approaches the one mentioned in your story. I wonder if this was an actual occurrence. If so—

1. What were the conditions favoring the accomplishment of such an amazing deed?

2. Was the runner who did this an exception in his tribe, abnormally developed in lungs and legs? Are the rest of his tribe as good runners and do they run distances as great in time that compares with that mentioned above?

If you will kindly furnish me with the above information I will appreciate it very much; I intend to show the answer to a friend of mine who displayed considerable skepticism when I remarked on the deed of the Indian runner.

Your mining articles were also very interesting and informative; I have cut them out of the magazines as they appear, and keep them for my information and possible future use. Is there much gold in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador? I know there is plenty in Peru, but don't remember ever having heard of much being found in Chile."—JOHN MURRAY, New York City.

Reply, by Mr. Edgar Young:—1. The conditions of the feat mentioned by me were that the former president, Eloi Alfaro, and six of his generals had been taken out of the jail in Quito and burned alive, and this Indian carried the report. The railroad wasn't running and the wires had been cut. I did not see him run it but I heard it a few days later when I arrived. An American missionary first told me. He had been in Quito when the Indian left. The terminal superintendent, "Chimborazo" Harmon, saw the Indian when he arrived. This was the report that broke down the revolution.

The distance he ran was the entire distance by rail from Quito down to Duran, across the river from Guayaquil. I have not checked this mileage from any time-table. That is the way it is fixed in my mind—297 miles in 24 hours. Of course I hooted at the first report but I heard the thing repeated dozens of times within a very few days after it happened so that I became convinced. People who knew the capabilities of the Quechua runners did not question it at all. Now if you will look in the *World* Almanac you will see that the record those Tarahumare Indians made isn't so much. We have had men who almost *walked* that fast. See the world's records.

2. The runner who made the trip was, I imagine, one of the best local runners, possibly recruited from the mail service; the mail even to this day crosses the Andes on Indian runners' backs. I didn't see this particular man, for he had returned to the high country when I arrived at Guayaquil. I do not know right now whether this Indian was a Quechua or a Napo.

All the high country Indians are runners. Here and there among them is a descendant of the old-time runners, men who were bred for the purpose for several thousand years. They all use cocaine, chewing the leaves and eating nothing while engaged in any gruelling task. Most of them have abnormally developed chests due to the high altitude.

I know the story sounds incredible. I believe it. This is a good sign: I spent some time in New Mexico and Arizona and saw what Indians could do there. I spent a couple of years in Mexico and made the trail from Mazatlan to Guadalajara before there was a railroad, also hiked from the Isthmus of Tehauntepec to Guatemala City. The highland Indians of Guatemala are no slouches on the trail. I have had a woman with a big basket of fruit on her head on the way to market not only keep up with my mule but *beat* it. But these South American Indians of the highlands are faraway and beyond these Mex and C. A. Indians. It is possibly helped a bit by "coke." This drug releases some hidden power. They can run top speed with apparently no tiring.

If your friend doesn't believe that, we can't make him. He can do as I have done. Go to our southwest and see some fair mediocre runners; to Mexico and have Indians trot at his side and converse all day, and at a hill go on away ahead and wait for you; in Central America help a woman put a big canosta of alligator pears on her head (two of you help her get it up) and then see her trot away and then not be able to see her again until dark.

I have walked thousands of miles on tropical trails and was at one time *some* hiker but these people went away from me like a passenger train—American Indians, Mex Indians, C. A. Indians and S. A. Indians all beat me. For a quick heat of about ten miles I believe the ostrich and guanaco hunting Indians of Tierra del Fuego and Patagonia take the prize. They will (and do when they kill sheep) outrun a horse. Can't prove any part of this but this latter I saw. Didn't see the Indian run down the G & Q R. R. but actually am convinced he did it.

Re your query about gold: There is about a million dollars in gold and platinum coming out of Colombia right now. There are two producing quartz mines in Ecuador, both packing the high grade out on Indian and mule back. Read "Adventures in Bolivia," by C. H. Prodgers (Dodd Mead and Co.) for a tip about gold in this country. There are other producing mines but this fellow's book is a scream. Every word of it is true, also.

You are wrong about Chili. In 1894 they had a big gold rush to the Cape Horn region and found millions in the beach sand. It petered out but it will be found again, mark my words.

Aerial Photography

ANCHOR your camera and keep the sun at your rear. The question as to piloting and photographing simultaneously.

Request:—"I am taking the liberty of writing to you for information in regard to some of the small moving picture cameras that are on the market. But first I had better explain the purpose for which I expect to use it.

I am an aviator, unfortunately, and am planning a photographic trip, (by and with an airplane) to Canada, in the mountain country from Banff to Peace River, Alberta. I plan to use a pontoon job and use the lakes, rivers and ponds to land on. This country has not been photographed very much, and so far as I know it has never been photographed from the air. Pictures of that country (taken from the air) would be unusual, and I imagine some one would be willing to pay for them.

If plans work out I have been thinking of using one of the small moving picture cameras, for two reasons. 1. They are light and easy to operate—at least the manufacturers claim they are easy to operate. 2. The initial cost is not so great as a standard sized camera, and the film is also less expensive.

Now the information I would like to have is:

Can these small cameras be operated successfully from an airplane, or fast moving train?

Do you think they would be good for aerial work? I do not suppose that our shots will excede an altitude of 2000 ft.

I am given to understand that the film from one of these small cameras can be enlarged to standard size. Can it?"—W. J. NOLL, St. Paul, Minn.

Reply, by Mr. Sigismund Blumann:—It is not in the province of *Adventure* to recommend any particular make of camera but you should be able to ask the dealer or manufacturer of a motion picture camera whether his instrument will conform to the requirements given below:

Will it take a telephoto lens?

What is the longest focal length lens it will accommodate?

Can such a lens be securely fitted to the lens board or substituted for the ordinary equipment?

Does the mechanism work in any position? That is, does it work pointed upward, downward, and so forth, without clogging?

And now for some advice. Do not think you can pilot your machine and do the photographing at the same time, even when volplaning.

Do not hope for first class viewing over the side. There should be some provision made for aiming from the fuselage such as a round opening about a foot in diameter.

The camera must be anchored to something, say a broad leather strap hung from two supports running from side to side. This not only helps to steady but takes up some of the swing. If this belt be made of heavy rubber it will absorb much of the vibration.

Have your pilot fly so that the sun is behind you or to one side, which will give a relief to the objects photographed.

It is possible to enlarge a very sharply focussed movie film to 5 by 7 if the enlargement is of a subject not complicated in itself by being composed of many minute objects. Or if you do not expect any part of the tiny negative to be enlarged to make the whole picture.

Old Spanish Trail

WHATEVER else the blessings of springtime, this season does nothing to improve the roads in territory often drenched by five-day rains.

Request:—"Would you kindly advise me if it is possible to travel safely to California by way of the Spanish Trail Highway from Jacksonville, Florida, through Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, in March."—MRS. CHARLES W. MILLER, Baltimore.

Reply, by Mr. Raymond S. Spears:—From all I can get about the Old Spanish Trail through from Florida to Arizona, March means a lot of rain and a lot of mud. I'd prefer to swing northward, Atlanta, into Memphis Tenn., and west to Ft. Smith and thence by Ft. Worth into El Paso.

Roads are sure to have a lot of mud in the unpaved stretches, and after my own experiences in East Texas and Lower Mississippi I don't advise that trip. We arrived in East Texas, Gulf District in December and could not get away till May 1st. Rains and mud.

From the jump-off of the hard road 35 miles out of Houston, we had hundreds of miles of mud. This has been improved, roads built, but a year ago my son had terrific experiences in December; and rains through winter, five days a week, mean desolate conditions.

Winter traveling in the Southern States subject always to rains, and now that the heavy rains prevail there, flood conditions in the Lower Valley, I don't believe you would find the trip worth while in March. Sometimes there are gaps of fair weather.

With streams out of their banks as they now are, I'd say do not go in March on Old Spanish Trail. Until this trail is paved from Jacksonville to Austin, Texas, I don't believe it is a pleasure trip route. This is subject, of course, to occasional fair weather conditions.

You might get into New Orleans, go up to Shreveport, go over to Ft. Worth and then on El Paso trip—which is perfectly beautiful in the flower-blooming time. And heavy rains in the deserts insure this wonderful spring display of flowers. I'd swing north, in any event. I mean through Memphis. But at best its a duck-and-dodge proposition in spring as regards rains on the dirt-road sections you must follow.

We found Kansas terrific in May—but west of Austin, except in rainy spells, you'd be all right.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.

2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.

3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.

4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Small Boating *Skiff, outboard small launch river and lake tripping and cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Canoeing *Paddling, sailing, cruising; equipment and accessories, clubs, organizations, official meetings, regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 5742 Stony Island Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Yachting BERIAH BROWN, Coupeville, Wash., or HENRY W. RUBINKAM, Chicago Yacht Club, Box 507, Chicago, Ill.

Motor Boating GEORGE W. SUTTON, 6 East 45th St., New York City.

Motor Camping JOHN D. LONG, 610 W. 116th St., New York City.

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Edged Weapons—ROBERT E. GARDNER, 423 Wilson Ave., Columbus. O.

First Aid on the Trail *Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Health hazard of the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb.

Health-Building Outdoors *How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel, right exercise, food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb.

Hiking CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M.D., Falls City, Neb.

Camp Cooking HORACE KEPHART, Bryson City, N. C.

Mining and Prospecting *Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect; how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and*

economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions on investment excluded.—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Forestry in the United States *Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild animal life in the forests.*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.*—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada *General office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General Information.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign LIEUT. GLENN R. TOWNSEND, Fort Snelling, Minn.

Navy Matters *Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. Maritime law.*—LIEUT. FRANCIS GREENE, U. S. N. R., 2200 Kinzie Ave., Racine, Wis.

U. S. Marine Corps LIEUT. F. W. HOPKINS, Fleet Marine Corps Reserves, Box 1042, Madford, Oregon.

State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., care *Adventure*.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, No. 2 Grace Court, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Horses *Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.*—THOMAS H. DAMERON, 911 S. Union Ave., Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure*.

Ornithology PROF. ARCHIBALD RUTLEDGE, Mercersburg Academy, Mercersburg, Pa.

Photography *Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey or SIGISMUND BLUMANN, Claus Spreckel Bldg., San Francisco, Cal.

Linguistics and Ethnology *(a) Racial and tribal tradition, history and psychology; folklore and mythology. (b) Languages and the problems of race migration, national development and descent (authorities and bibliographies). (c) Individual languages and language-families; interrelation of tongues, their affinities and plans for their study.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, 345 W. 23rd St., New York City.

American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Museum of American Indians, 155th St. and Broadway, N. Y. City.

Taxidermy SETH BULLOCK care *Adventure*.

Herpetology *General information concerning reptiles (snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodiles) and amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders); their customs, habits and distribution.*—DR. G. K. NOBLE, American Museum of Natural History, 77th St. and Central Park West, New York, N. Y.

Entomology *General information about insects and spiders; venomous insects, disease-carrying insects, insects attaching man, etc.; distribution.*—DR. FRANK E. LUTZ, Ramsey, N. J.

Ichthyology GEORGE S. MYERS, Stanford University, Box 821, Calif.

Stamps H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

SPORTS

Football JOHN B. FOSTER, Amer. Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose Street, N. Y. C.

Baseball FREDERICK LIEB, *The Evening Telegram*, 37 Dey St., New York City.

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, 303 W. 107 St., New York City.

Tennis FRED HAWTHORNE, Sports Dept., New York *Herald Tribune*, New York City.

Basketball JOE F. CARR, 16 E. Broad St., Columbus, Ohio.

Bicycling ARTHUR J. LEAMOND, 469 Valley St., South Orange, New Jersey.

Swimming LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Skating FRANK SCHREIBER, 2226 Clinton Ave., Berwyn, Ill.

Skiing and Snowshoeing W. H. PRICE, 160 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Hockey "DANIEL," *The Evening Telegram*, 73 Dey St., New York City.

Archery EARL B. POWELL, Terrace Hotel, Sidney, Ohio.

Boxing JAMES P. DAWSON, The New York *Times*, Times Square, New York City.

Fencing LIEUT. JOHN V. GROMBACH, Military Police, Headquarters, Panama Canal Dept., Quarry Heights, Canal Zone.

GEOGRAPHICAL SECTIONS.—Covering climate, topography, natural resources (minerals, timber, agriculture, live-stock, water-power), commerce and industry, institutions, inhabitants, customs, languages, history, opportunities, living conditions, health, outdoor life, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping, equipment, expeditions, adventure, general information. Additional subjects covered by any expert are mentioned in his section.

The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (See next two sections.)—BERIAH BROWN, Coupeville, Wash.

The Sea Part 2 *Statistics and records of American shipping.*—HARRY E. RIESEBERG, Apartment 330-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C.

The Sea Part 3 *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*.

The Sea Part 4 *Atlantic and Indian Oceans; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.)—CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure*.

The Sea Part 5 *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.*—CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure*.

The Sea Part 6 *Arctic Ocean (Siberian Waters).*—CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure*.

Hawaii DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, 345 West 23rd St., New York City.

South Sea Islands JAMES STANLEY MEAGHER, 5316 Pine Street, Inglewood, Calif.

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4, Quartzsite, Ariz.

Borneo CAPT. BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*.

★ **New Guinea** *Questions regarding the measures of policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered.*—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, *via* Sydney, Australia.

★ **New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa.** TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★ **Australia and Tasmania** PHILLIP NORMAN, 842 Military Rd., Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia.

Asia Part 1 *Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan.*—GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York.

Asia Part 2 *Annam, Laos, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, 345 West 23rd St., New York City.

Asia Part 3 *Southern and Eastern China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, 345 West 23rd St., New York City.

Asia Part 4 *Western China, Burma, Tibet.* CAPT. BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*.

★ **Asia Part 5** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., 60 Rue de l'Amirauté, Tientsin, China, and DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, 345 West 23rd St., New York City.

Asia Part 6 *Japan.*—SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL, San Rafael, Calif., and O. E. RILEY, 4 Huntington Ave., Scarsdale, New York.

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Asia Minor.—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, 345 West 23rd St., New York City.

Africa Part 1 *Egypt.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, 345 West 23rd St., New York City.

✠Africa Part 2 *Sudan.*—W. T. MOFFAT, Opera House, Southport, Lancashire, England.

Africa Part 3 *Tripoli. Including the Sahara, Tuaregs, Caravan trade and caravan routes.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

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Africa Part 5 *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 6 *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria.*—W. C. COLLINS, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 7 *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand.*—CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, Gulfport and Coast Enquiry Depot, Turnbull Bldg., Gulfport, Miss.

✠Africa Part 8 *Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada.

Europe Part 1 *Jugo-Slavia and Greece.*—LIEUT. WILLIAM JENNA, Fort Clayton. Panama, C. Z.

Europe Part 2 *Albania.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C.

Europe Part 3 *Finland, Lapland and Russia.* In the case of Russia, political topics outside of historical facts will not be discussed.—ALEKO E. LILIUS, care *Adventure.*

Europe Part 4 *Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Poland.*—THEODORE VON KELER, 153 Waverly Place, New York City.

Europe Part 5 *Scandinavia.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C.

✠Europe Part 6 *Great Britain.*—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England.

Europe Part 7 *Denmark.*—G. I. COLBRON, East Avenue, New Canaan, Conn.

Europe Part 8 *Holland.*—J. J. LEBLEU, 51 Benson St., Glen Ridge, N. J.

Europe Part 9 *Belgium and Luxemburg.*—J. D. NEWSOM, 4 rue des Toxandres, Etterbeek, Brussels, Belgium.

Europe Part 10 *Switzerland*—DR. ALBERT LEEMAN, Kramgasse 82, Bern, Switzerland.

Europe Part 11 *France.*—CYRUS S. ROBERTS, 38 E. 85th St., New York City.

Europe Part 12 *Spain.*—J. D. NEWSOM, 4 rue des Toxandres, Etterbeek, Brussels, Belgium.

South America Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure.*

South America Part 2 *Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil.*—PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 21 Claremont Ave., New York, N. Y.

West Indies *Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups.*—CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif.

Central America *Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala.*—CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif.

Mexico Part 1 *Northern. Border States of old Mexico Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.* J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Mexico Part 2 *Southern. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—C. R. MAHAFFEY, 236 Fox Ave., San José, Calif.

Mexico Part 3 *Southeastern. Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and states of Yucatan and Campeche.* Also archeology.—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Popular Ave., Takoma Park, Md.

Newfoundland.—C. T. JAMES, Bonaventure Ave., St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland Aiso dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.* Also homesteading.—FRED L. BOWDEN, 5 Howard Avenue, Binghamton, New York.

✠Canada Part 2 *Southeastern Quebec.* JAS. F. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada.

✠Canada Part 3 *Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin.* Also Indian life and habits: Hudson's Bay Co. posts. No questions answered on trapping for profit.—S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck") Box 393, Ottawa, Canada.

✠Canada Part 4 *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada.

✠Canada Part 5 *Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario.* Also national parks.—A. D. ROBINSON, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada.

Canada Part 6 *Hunters Island and English River District.*—T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn.

Canada Part 7 *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.* Also yachting.—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C.

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Western U. S. Part 4 *Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains.*—FRED W. EGELSTON, 1029 Litch Court, Reno, Nev.

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Western U. S. Part 6 *Tex. and Okla.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

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Middle Western U. S. Part 2 *Mo. and Ark. Also the Missouri Volley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Especially wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Middle Western U. S. Part 3 *Ind., Ill., Mich., Minn., and Lake Michigan.* Also clamming, natural history, legends.—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

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Eastern U. S. Part 6 *Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard.* Also sawmilling, saws.—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure.*

Eastern U. S. Part 7 *Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Lost Trails

We offer this service free of charge to readers who wish to get in touch with old friends from whom the years have separated them. All inquiries of this sort received by us, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with the inquirer's name. We reserve the right, in case the inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any number or other name, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and in general to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. For the benefit of the friend you seek, give your own name when possible. Give also your own full address. We will forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal Star *to give additional publicity in their "Missing Relative Column" weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred. Full lists of those unfound are reprinted semiannually. Whenever practicable inquiries will be repeated in newspapers in the town in which the person inquired for was last seen.*

POWELL, GEORGE CARLYLE—Won't you please write to papa or mama? Your sisters Clara and May still live in Grand Island. We all yearn to hear from you. Address your father.—THOMAS POWELL, Lone Pine Farm, Thayer, Mo.

POWELL, GEORGE FRANCIS—Age about 56, weight 170, height 5 ft. 11. Complexion dark. Last heard from north of Omaha on reservation. Write your brother.—THOMAS POWELL, Thayer, Mo.

BROWN, HARRY H.—Last heard from in Northwest Washington, D. C. Employed at the Reliable Service Station.—PAT DILLINGER, 609 South 10th Street, Waco, Texas.

WILL party from Oakland, inquiring for the New Zealand Society write J. E. HAYWOOD, 437 East 61st Street, Maywood, Calif.?

PFEIFER, HERMAN and WILHELM—Their business is plumbing, gas fitting and building in general. They had a shop in Jersey City, New Jersey.—HARRY THOMAS, Charleville, Box 121—Queensland, Australia.

LAWLOR or THEIS, WILLIAM—Blond hair, worked with me years back for the Anticor Mfg. Co., N. Y. City. May have a relative by name of Theis employed with Holmes Electric Co., N. Y. City.—WILLIAM FRIED, 599 West 178th Street, care Cranfield, N. Y. City.

HERBERT—I forgive you. I am almost heartbroken. Please let me hear from you immediately.—(MOTHER) C. S.

FAIRLEY, ROBERT—And son James Fairley and nephew Tom Fairley emigrated to America between 1864 and 1870 from Sunderland Co., Durham, England. Robert Fairley married in Wisconsin. Last letter received in 1886. James Fairley was burned to death at Cedar Creek, Black Hawk Co., Colo. Tom Fairley married there and with his family are in some Silver Mines somewhere in the Rockies. Would like to get in touch with Mrs. Mary Ann Fairley or relatives from Wisconsin. Grandson—DAVID DORWARD, 27 Duke Street, Midgley, S. O., Yorkshire, England.

MCMAHON, THOMAS ANDREW—I have lost my childish faults and regret my mistakes. Please write care *Adventure*. Your wife Julia and son John would like to see his daddy.

APPLEBY, JOHN A.—Formerly occupant of Soldiers Settlement Farm at Sweetsburg, Que.—MR. CAMPBELL, Post Office Box 385, Montreal, Quebec.

BARNA, B. D.—Formerly of Huntington, W. Va., and connected with the Hungarian Miners Journal, please communicate with MR. CAMPBELL, P. O. Box 385, Montreal, Quebec.

GARBETT, HAROLD—Staffordshire, England, Colliery Surveyor (mining). Last heard of 1924 in the U. S., manager of some colliery.—"OLD SALL," care *Adventure*.

LONERGAN, THOMAS JOHN—Formerly of Philadelphia, Pa. "Junior"—Will you please write or come to R. D. H., 3438 No. 18th St., Phila., Pa.? Your brother Jack wants to get in touch with you through me, in confidence.

HOWARD, MILFORD—Disappeared from Erie, Pa., about four years ago following an auto accident. He is not held responsible for the accident. His mother and father are anxious to hear from him or have him come home. Has red hair, he is about 20 years of age.—MR. & MRS. F. A. HOWARD, 521 Wayne Street, Erie, Pa.

HOWEY, JIM, SHEFFIELD, ROY, LYONS, DUTCH—All formerly of Edmonton, Alta.—T. H. WINTERS, 150 West 47th Street, New York City.

MCFARLANE, JOHN D.—Son of Patrick McFarlane, left home at Iverness, Cape Breton, 1912, went to Regina, Saskatchewan. In 1912 a Syrian peddler was selling goods in Inverness, and there met John McFarlane, he was then sixteen years of age. In 1913 the Syrian peddler was in Butte, Mont., and met the same John McFarlane, working on a ranch. Mother. R. E. D.

DAVIS, HORACE LESLIE—Want to learn the whereabouts of any of the relatives of my father, who if he had lived would now be around 88 or 90 years of age. He was originally from Vermont or New Hampshire. Was a Civil War veteran. Understand he was a fifer in the Union Army. Had one brother, I was named after.—FRANK WESTERN DAVIS, care Norfolk Southern Railroad, New Bern, North Carolina.

DOYLE, DEWEY—Last heard of at Hobort, Okla., in 1920. Age 29 years, dark auburn hair, gray eyes, walks with a slight limp in right foot. Any information gladly received by his aged mother.—MRS. L. M. DOYLE, Scandia, Kansas.

SILVA, GEORGE—Of New Bedford, parents lived for years at Grinnell and First Sts., last known home was 159 Rockland Street. He appeared in directory as George S. De Sota; had two webbed fingers. His oldest friend is unable to reach him.—J. R., Box 51, Custer, Montana.

WOLF, JOHN—Of Chicago. Bookkeeper in 1917 for Morgan's later said to have been with packing house. John was crippled and lived somewhere in the vicinity of California Avenue.—J. R., Box 51, Custer, Mont.

THE following have been inquired for in either the May 15th or June 15th, 1927 issues of *Adventure*. They can get the names and addresses of the inquirer from this magazine.

BECKWITH, CLARA; Blaisdell, Jim; Bohac, Charles; Bristow, Robert; Cole, C. C.; Company "A," 8th U. S. Inf. Any member who served between 1899 April to Nov. 1917; Cromwell, Walter Northrup; Drayer, Robert E.; Duggan, Daniel; Esler, Perry; Eve, Ernest; Fredericks, Mrs. James; Funk, Sylvester C.; Giles, Mrs.; Harding, Abe.; Hoffman, Arthur; Holihan, P. J.; Jack; Jesse; Kehough or Kehoe, Charles H.; Lee, Nellie S. (Warfel); Lloyd, Ed.; Lovette, Lorton; Marshall, John; McKim; Moore, James Norman; Morton, Oscar Jackson; Mollie, Mother; Moss, Robert; Nelson, William H.; Paddy; Mac; Jack B.; or H. G. M.; Patterson, Ed.; Sparks, Robert S.; Sponable, Everett; Starnes, Richard; Sunny; Vaughn, Leslie Dexter; Whitehouse, Sidney Charles; Willard; Williams, William Moses.

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Jack W. McGrath.

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SINGING SOLDIERS, by John J. Niles. Illustrated by Margaret Thorniley Williamson. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Modern war is a drab and serious business but it has its highlights, its color and its—song. In Singing Soldiers Mr. Niles has preserved the really original music of the AEF. Because he sought original songs rather than those carried along from Broadway the author got most of his material from the negro soldiers who put a little music into nearly everything they had to do. In most cases he has been able to preserve for us the melodies as well as the words of these real folksongs of the war.—GLEN R. TOWNSEND.

THE TRAVELS OF MARCO POLO. Revised from Marsden's translation and edited with Introduction by Manuel Komroff. Boni & Liveright, New York. The first of the great explorers, and the most remarkable of all, appears in a new edition. Messer Marco wandered over most of Asia and spent a quarter of a century at the court of Kubilai Khan and his story was so incredible in his day that not until the last century has the famous Venetian received credit for telling the truth.

Polo gives us the most detailed—though not the first—account of the illustrious Mongols. He described China, accurately, and gleaned the first knowledge of Siberia, which had been vaguely conceived as the abode of Cimmerian darkness; he told about remote Japan, and unknown Zanzibar and Madagascar—described India with its peoples and precious stones. He penetrated regions that are little explored today—the deserts of Persia, the barren Pamirs, and the Lop desert of the Gobi. He mentioned the sorcerers of Tibet.

Some fourscore manuscripts, copied at first, second or third hand from the original that he dictated in a Genoese prison, have been found and preserved in various museums and libraries; his book has had numerous editions. The chief English editions are Marsden's, in 1818, and the authentic work of Colonel Sir Henry Yule, begun in 1871 and completed after his death by the French scholar M. Henri Cordier, in 1920. Yule spent years in tracing out the peregrinations of Messer Marco, and his translation, supplemented by Cordier's research, comes very close to perfection.

Manuel Komroff explains that his object in the new book is to give the simple narrative of Marco Polo, without the extensive notes and comment of Colonel Yule, and for this purpose he chose the more readable Marsden text, correcting its errors from Yule's work. This would be excellent indeed, were it not for the fact that Yule's translation is more readable than any other, and Komroff has not discovered all the errors in the text he chose.

Opening Komroff's book at random, we find ourselves on page 46, going south with Messer Marco through the sand storms and robber tribes of Persia.

"Marco Polo himself was once enveloped in a factitious obscurity of this kind, but escaped from it to the castle of Konsalmi. Many of his companions, however, were taken and sold and others were put to death. These people have a king named Corobar."

Turning to Yule's work, we read:

"Now that I have told you of those scoundrels and their history, I must add the fact that Messer Marco himself was all but caught by their bands in such a darkness as that I have told you of; but, as it pleased God, he got off and threw himself into a village that was hard by, called Conosalmi. Howbeit he lost his whole company except seven persons who escaped along with him. The rest were caught, and some of them sold, some put to death."

A glance at the original Marsden text shows that Komroff copied down this passage without troubling to alter the awkward "factitious obscurity" (which means unnatural darkness, caused by the dust storm) or to correct the castle, which was a walled village, or to clarify "Konsalmi," which might be *Khana-salm*, or even *Kanat-ul-sham*.

On the page before this Komroff has an account of a Mongol chieftain who captured "a city called Dely," obviously meaning Delhi. At that time the Mongols did not capture Delhi. Turning to Yule, we find "a province called Dalivar." In the original Mss it must have been written *di Lavar*—of Lahore.

This merely illustrates the difficulty of following Messer Marco's footsteps without due care. Komroff's book would be bettered by more notes, or by inserting modern names for Polo's medieval nomenclature. For example he refers to the Eastern Tatars, the Oriental Tatars, and Tatars of the Levant, all of which mean the same thing.

On the whole, Komroff has done his work with care. The book is nicely bound and printed, and—in the absence of a single volume edition of Yule, reasonably priced, and with the weighty notes cut down to a minimum—satisfactory to the man who wishes to add the immortal Venetian to his library. —HAROLD LAMB.

The Trail *Ahead*

The next issue of ADVENTURE, *July 15th*

A Complete Novelette

Winds of Rebellion

By Ernest Haycox

One night in the Black Frigate tavern *Lieutenant Jeffrey Peale* met a certain genial gentleman named *Trevoris*. This gentleman the lieutenant was to meet later behind the British lines when he went on a secret mission for his commander—with an equal degree of surprize for both.

The Tiger Rider

By Sidney Herschel Small

Koreans, *Patterson* had been told a hundred times, have no courage. But this large, white-clad coolie whose features had the stamp of other races, this fellow who alone of his gang spoke Japanese—well, Patterson was not so sure of him.

Boots

By L. Patrick Greene

Through the thorny trails of Africa, through the mysterious jungle paths of the East Coast, his boots had served *Lawrence* well. And though the people of *N'Dabula's* kraal were proud and refused to acknowledge the overlordship of any white man, strangely enough they had deep respect for those boots.

In Full Charge

By Clements Ripley

"Cannibals, huh? Say, ol' feller, this may be the first time I've shipped deep water, but it takes more'n a bedtime story to scare me. I've seen your cannibals in Tahiti and Samoa." But this happened to be New Guinea.

And—*Other Good Stories*

Part II of Thicker Than Water, Hashknife *glimpses the* Ghost, by W. C. Tuttle; Obligato, *Clancy fights a dummy*, by Edward L. McKenna; Bride of the Sea, *a figurehead of envy*, by Richard Howells Watkins; Beelzebub the Bane, *when the major took a hand*, by Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson; Among Those Rescued, *the Swede mate was a pacifist;* Jean Louis, *the gentleman with the rapier*, by Post Sargent.

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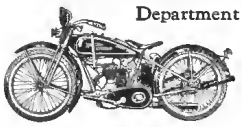

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